

Notes from Local Interest Group 28th April 2022

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), Jennifer Lewis, John Price, Wendy Ozols, Cherry and Victor Williams, Tim Francis, Helen Barnett, Avryl and Roy Lloyd, Richard Thomas, David and Anwyn Price

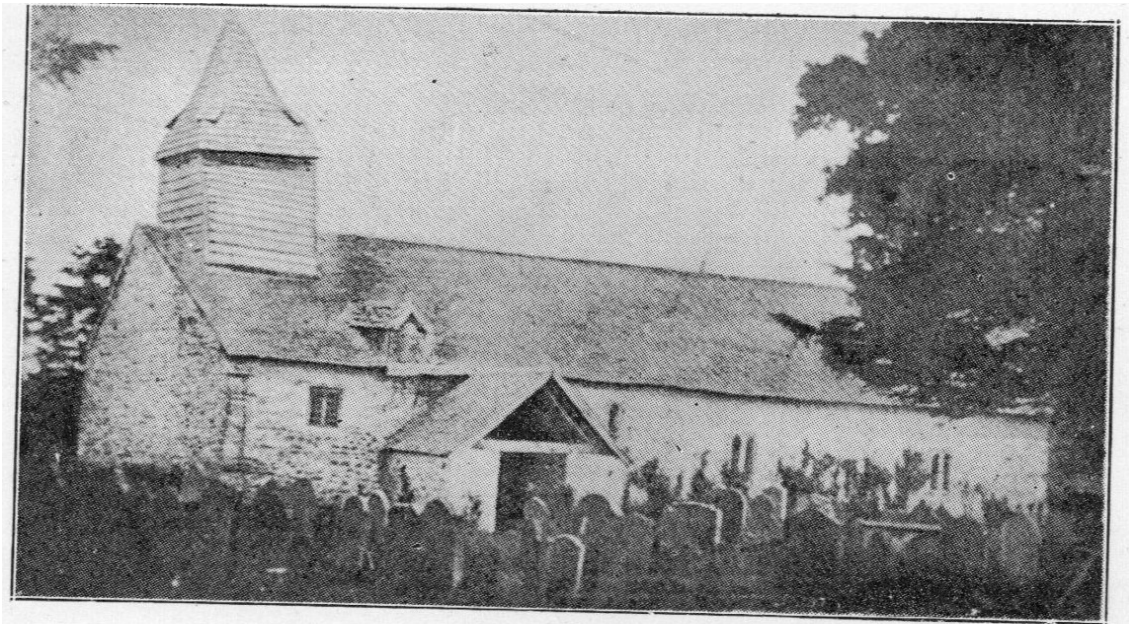
On Zoom: Dainis Ozols, Annie Tong, Jenny Francis, Elsa Harflett, Celia Jones, Bronwen Jenkins, Sylvia Illingsworth, Eva Morgan

Apologies: Evelyn Bally, Joan Lloyd, Howard and Ann Dean

ML welcomed everyone in the Hall and on Zoom and introduced Jennifer Lewis, our speaker for the evening. Jennifer belongs to the Powys Family History Society, and she is also their librarian for Radnorshire. The aim of the Society is to help all those interested in family and local history of Powys to research information relating to families and communities in Breconshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire.

A History of Llanbadarn Fawr Parish (through the censuses of 1841-1891)

Jennifer began by telling us that the presentation was based on a dissertation that she wrote in 1998 for a degree course through Aberystwyth University. She went on to say that, although this talk focuses on Llanbadarn Fawr, the same process and sources of information could be used to research a similar history of Llanbedr-Paincastle parish.

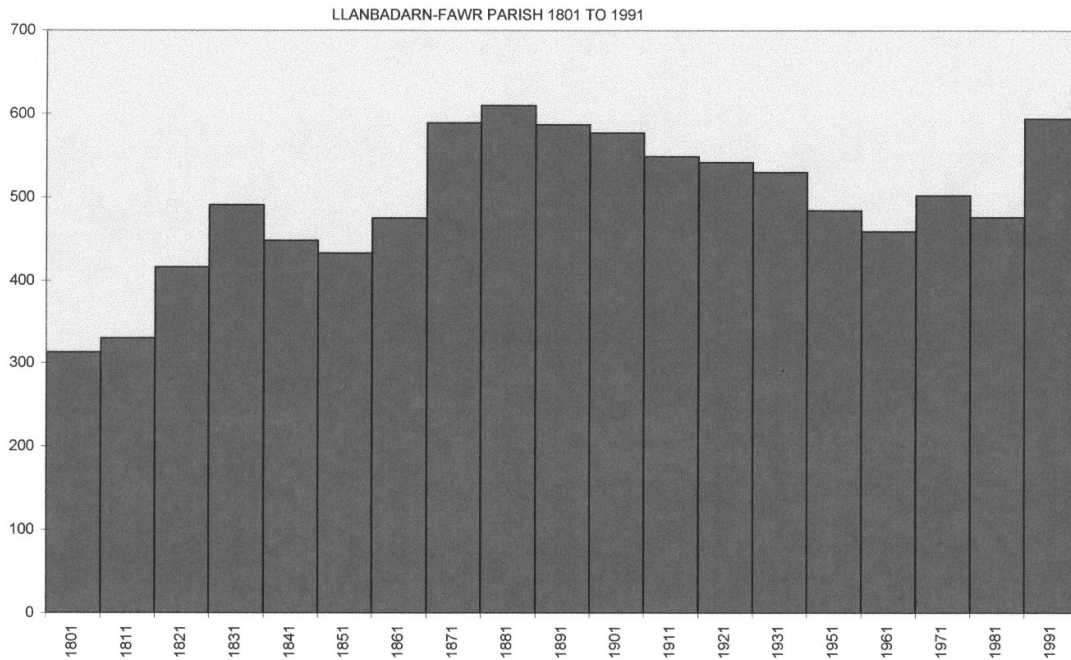


L LANBADARN-FAWR (OLD) CHURCH.

Jennifer started her talk by showing us a photo of the old Llanbadarn Fawr church; it was rebuilt between 1878 and 1879. The church is on the west side of the A483, about 0.5km south of Crossgates. There followed a slide showing the number of houses, families and the population of the parish between 1801 and 1901. The early censuses (1801-1831) were quite limited in terms of data and were conducted because the government wanted to know what manpower was available throughout the country. This manpower might be required for working on the land to produce food

for a growing population, and also as soldiers. Between 1801 and 1891, the population in Llanbadarn Fawr almost doubled, with the largest increase being recorded when the railway arrived between 1861 and 1871. During this period, the number of families increased by 33, the number of houses by 26 and the population went up by 114. From this date on, the population had not changed by very much by 1991 (the most recent census available when Jennifer wrote her dissertation - 1991 pop. around 600).

Chart1



Between 1801 and 1831, the census data showed how many inhabited and uninhabited houses there were in the parish, together with the number of families. The 1841 census was the first to record details of every person and household in Britain. Ages, occupation and where people lived were also recorded. Subsequent censuses detailed the same information, but in the 1841 census ages were rounded down to the nearest 5 (eg someone aged 26 would be recorded as being 25) and this can cause some confusion when tracking individuals for family history purposes. Those aged between 1 to 15 were recorded accurately. From 1851, the correct ages were recorded. The census data record for Britain is complete except for the 1931 census, the records having been destroyed in a fire; also, there is no census data for 1941 because of WW2.

Each census record starts with a brief description of the enumeration area. Sometimes, the boundaries change, as has happened for Llanbadarn Fawr parish. Parishes could include what were described as "townships" – a township being an inhabited place with an area/population larger than that of a village. In the censuses studied by Jennifer, the parish of Llanbadarn Fawr included Penybont village, west of the River Ithon. The direction enumerators travelled can be seen by following the routes of the named farms; this can also be very helpful when trying to track down places that have disappeared. The area covered by an enumerator was what was considered he could go round in one day. As the censuses went on, more than one enumerator was required for some parishes to cope with the increased population and inhabited houses.

Jennifer went on to show us photos of pages from the census data that she studied. They are all handwritten and can sometimes be difficult to read. In England enumerators did not always

accurately record the Welsh names, so some interpretation is needed. On the 1841 sheets, children's ages are recorded accurately with adults' ages rounded down; place of birth simply reads Radnorshire. By 1851 the correct ages are shown and place of birth now lists the parish name, or in some cases the hamlets. Many of the records start with Penybont Hall; this was an important house within the parish. By 1891, the languages spoken by the people listed are also recorded. Very little Welsh was spoken in this part of Radnorshire, so nearly all are recorded as English speaking.



Jennifer then showed us some photos, beginning with Crossgates shop and post office (now a tattoo parlour!). Crossgates itself is not a parish, it grew as a settlement because it was on a crossroads with two toll gates in the centre of the village. The parish of Llanbadarn Fawr gets its name from the church, not a village. Crossgates is the main settlement in the parish, and it is highly possible that there might originally have been a village around the church, but that it moved to its current position towards the toll gates and the turnpike road. Another photo showed the Builders Arms, also in Crossgates. This pub was built in the 1860s when the railway was being constructed through the parish. It has been a hotel as well as a pub. Also, within the parish is Penybont Station, although this is not actually in Penybont, but about 1km east of Crossgates. This station was a parcel depot for a wide area, and also cattle were brought here to be loaded onto trucks.

Next, Jennifer went on to talk about the occupations that were found within the parish over her study time period. In 1841, top of the list was agricultural labourer, with 60. Jennifer noted that the enumerator might class a smallholding of less than five acres a farm, with a farmer occupying it. In the next census the same place could be occupied by the same person, but he would be described as a farm labourer. Female servant was second with 38 and farmers third with 28. The list included workers that one would expect to find in a parish at that time, eg dressmaker, clergyman, wheelwright, and so on. Although there is a teacher, no scholars are recorded. The 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses were all conducted before the Education Act 1870. In 1851, 38 scholars were recorded; they were probably taught in the church. Thereafter, the Church Hall was a school, and

then as the number of scholars increased a new larger school was built. For other years in her study, Jennifer recorded that the number of students increased from 83 in 1861 (1 master) to 120 in 1891 (2 teachers and a schoolmistress). Jennifer showed us a photo of Church House and Church Hall.

By 1851, the number of occupations listed had increased from 30 (1841) to 52, and the range was more diverse. However, agricultural labourer and farmer still topped the list with 73 in total, and there was also a category "farm servant", another name for farm labourers. Six of the people listed were "ministers" of one sort or another, which seems unusual.

By 1861, the number of occupations listed had gone down to 43, including 13 bailiffs. This was quite important, especially in terms of water bailiffs because poaching on the River Ithon was a problem. 24 carters were also recorded and these would have been related to the building of the railway. However, agricultural workers still dominate the list.

In 1871, 73 occupations are recorded, 21 of which are related to the building of the railway, such as railway labourer, railway goods porter, railway engine fitter, etc. This was a poor time nationwide for agriculture and it is possible that many agricultural workers had gone to work on the railways. Jennifer showed us a photo of Penybont station looking very smart. It had a nice garden and a very big yard. There is no longer a proper station building there, but trains will stop on request (this is on the Heart of Wales Line from Swansea to Shrewsbury) and there is a shelter for passengers. (ML added at this point that the station had been very important for Penybont Races, which started in 1921. The horses would arrive by train in the early days and so the development of trotting here was very dependent on the railway. As well as the horses, the trains would also bring in the punters from South Wales!) Although the numbers working on farms had decreased significantly, agriculture-related jobs still dominate the list.



Penybont Railway Station

There were also 73 occupations recorded in 1881. Jennifer made the point here that there were no police recorded in any of the censuses. The police station and gaol were not in Llanbadarn Fawr parish, but over the river Ithon in Penybont in Llandegley parish. By now, the railway had been built and so the number of workers in related occupations had gone down. There were still 73 occupations recorded by 1891. This is the first census to show what language people spoke. Out of a population of 587 in Llanbadarn Fawr, only fourteen were Welsh speakers or bilingual. Agriculture was still the major employer, but the proportion of people employed in this sector had been steadily declining.

Jennifer next showed us lists of the origins of the population in each of her study years. In 1841 87% of the population had been born in Radnorshire. By 1871, with the building of the railway, many people had come from Shropshire, particularly from places, like Bucknell, following the line of the railway. By 1891 72% had been born in Radnorshire and so, even though the percentage had gone down, it had not reduced by a great amount. Not surprisingly, the lists are dominated by people

born in neighbouring or nearby parishes, although it was interesting to note that in 1891 two people had originated in India. This might be related to the proximity of Llandrindod Wells, an important Victorian spa town.

To complete her talk, Jennifer said that it was much easier these days to research local history, thanks to Ancestry and Find My Past, both of which are available on line. She added that the 1801-1831 census records can be accessed at Powys Archives and that the data from 1841 onwards (to 1921) are available on line. It would be interesting to use these sources to do a similar study of Llanbedr-Painscastle parish.

After some questions and comments from the audience, ML thanked Jennifer for her most interesting and meticulously researched talk. The old photos were a wonderful addition to the presentation and helped to break up the data. Thank you to Jennifer for giving so generously of her time to come to talk to us. Hopefully her talk will give people the inspiration to research our area – a possibility for a future LIG talk?

Next month's Local Interest Group will be a visit to Newchurch. Unfortunately, there will be no opportunity for a Zoom audience on that occasion. We will meet in the village at 7pm on Thursday May 26th – details to be circulated by ML before the visit.

Many thanks to Avryl for making refreshments for those in the hall.

A special thank you as always to John Price, whose technical wizardry enables us to hold the hybrid meetings, always much appreciated by the Zoom audience. We could not do it without him.