

Notes from Local Interest Group 30th October 2025

Present: Llewelyn & Linda Breese, Aisha, Usman and Manha Kahn, John Price (JP), Mo Lloyd (ML), Cherry & Victor Williams, Allison Joyce, Janet Russell, Mollie Moore, Avryl & Roy Lloyd, David Davies, Cynthia Tunley, Joan Lloyd, June Lewis, Sharon Davies, Lottie Worthington, Gina Goodge, Iris Lloyd, Grace Davies, Joan Hughes, Ruth Jones, Celia Jones, Elsa Harflett, Bronwen Jenkins, Lisa Lloyd, Diane & Ginger Moore, Stuart Hulse, Rob Davies,

On Zoom: Wendy Ozols, Rosemary Chainey, Sue Lawler, Margaret Price, Jennifer Lewis, Angela Jones, Diana Lloyd, Dave Latham, Chris Smedley, Sylvia Illingsworth

Apologies: Dainis Ozols, Sylvia Bigglestone, Helen Barnett, Leonie Waithman.

ML welcomed everyone, especially the “international guests”. She explained that Cherry Williams would begin the session with some background information about the Breese family and that Llewelyn Breese would then take over. Llewelyn is on a visit to Wales from Canada where he now lives, but he spent his early life in Radnorshire.

Breese with an ‘S’ – an Introduction

Cherry started by telling us that the Breese family were originally from Montgomeryshire; Breese is a common surname there. The family were farmers in the Llanidloes area. Cherry’s husband, Victor, is part of the family because his mother was a Breese; he and Llewelyn second cousins.

Cherry has found a record of an Andrew Breese born in 1781; his wife was called Jane. He was a farmer in Montgomeryshire. His son, Thomas (1812-1887), whose wife was called Sarah, farmed between Llanidloes and Caersws. They had eleven children, but Cherry has only found records for ten of them. One of the sons, Andrew (1850-1899), was Victor and Llewelyn’s great grandfather. Cherry and Victor have visited the farm where the family lived (Gellylefrith) and were told that there were Breeses living there for probably around 500 years, up until around 1960.

This son, Andrew, married Margaret Lewis from St Harmons and they had nine children, many of whom were boys and so the family name lived on. William Thomas was son number four and he was Llewelyn’s grandfather (known as Bill).

Victor and Llewelyn’s great grandfather, Andrew, lived in Trefeglwys on a farm called Cefn, but he later moved to Colva – to Cnwch. Later still the family moved to Dorthy between Colva and Newchurch (1891-1898). Andrew died, aged just 49, with his son, William, present at his death. For reasons Cherry has not been able to ascertain, Andrew is buried in Franksbridge Chapel. Margaret stayed in Dorthy until 1914; she died in 1916 and is buried St Mary’s Church, Gladestry. Llewelyn’s grandfather, Bill, lived in both Cefn and Dorthy. He went to Cwmgwylm School, as did all of his brothers and sisters. Apparently their attendance was not very good and some of the children were kept away from school by their parents for weeks at a time. In 1909,



Llewelyn at the Cnwch during his recent visit

William married in Rhulen. He farmed in many places in the area and died in 1917. He had three children, Mary Jane, William Edward (Ted) and Victor Breese.

Throughout the generations, the Breese family were farmers, firstly in Montgomeryshire and then in Radnorshire and this is how Llewelyn (the main speaker for the evening) came to be born in our local area.

Llewelyn Breese – A Life

At this point, Llewelyn Breese took over as speaker. Firstly, he thanked ML for inviting him to come to talk to the Local Interest Group. He has been an active participant in the group for some time, but from Canada and joining the meetings on Zoom.

He began by telling us that he was born on May 22nd, 1940, in Llandeilo Graban. In 1941, his parents bought The Pant farm in Rhulen and this is where he lived until he was 19 years old. He has many memories of his childhood but one which sticks in his mind is witnessing a “dog fight” between a German plane and a RAF one over Rhulen during WW2. The German plane was shot down and crashed on the hillside above “Pigtail”. People would come to stay in Rhulen and ask to be taken to see the crash site and so Llewelyn earned a bit of cash guiding them there. For quite a long time there were pieces of the wreckage at the site, but they have long since disappeared.

When Llewelyn was 7 years old he became very ill with pneumonia and pleurisy. His father managed to make it to the nearest telephone to call for a doctor. It was a hard winter in 1947 and the roads were completely blocked with snow and so there was no way that the doctor would have been able to drive to Rhulen to examine him. So the doctor caught the train to the nearest station at Aberedw and Llewelyn’s father went to meet him on one of the farm’s horses.

Llewelyn attended Rhulen School and he says that he was an annoying and precocious child. When he was only 11 years old, his parents decided to send him to London, on his own, to see the sights, and he was taken to Hereford to catch a train to Paddington. The family had some friends in London who put him up and told him which buses to take in order to see as much of the city as possible, and so he went off on his own each day. He got to see all the main places of interest, including St Paul’s and the Whispering Gallery and Windsor Castle, where he managed to get an unofficial guided tour of the bell tower, which was closed to the public but he managed to talk his way in!

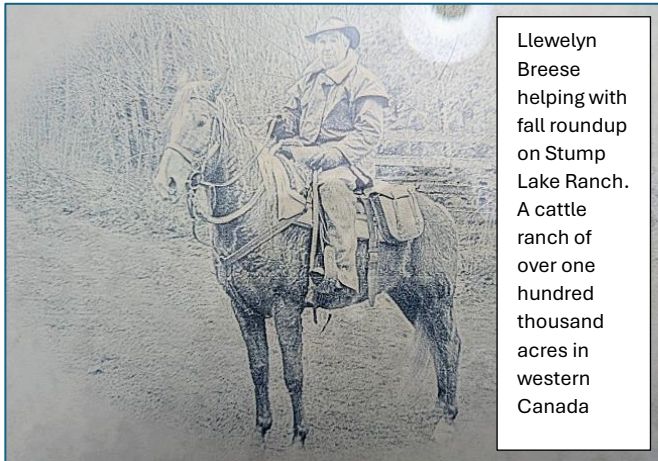
He says that his childhood in Rhulen was quite normal for the son of a farming family. He remembers them buying their first car (in 1947) and tractor, both of which were bought with the all-important “wool cheque” that his father always waited for with bated breath as it was such an important source of income.

By the time he was 15 years old, he had decided that he would like to go to college and so he needed to earn some money. (Farmers did not pay their own children for working on the family farm.) To this end, his father found him a job on a farm in Builth Road where he lived in. In those days, workers were only paid once a year and so he eventually had two year’s salary saved up. Subsequently, he went off to college – a bible college in Barry - where he spent two years. He had his own motorcycle by then so he could get around quite easily. Whilst he was there, the president of a bible college in Toronto came to visit his college; he met this man and was invited by him to go to Toronto to study for four years.

After qualifying, he became a pastor in a Baptist Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba and he remained in this job for eight years. However, as he grew older, he began to find that his religious beliefs collided with his scientific knowledge and he no longer felt able to preach and so he left the ministry. This rendered him unemployed. In his role as pastor, he had become aware of the unfair agricultural policies that were affecting farmers and so he wrote a lengthy argument criticising the government, and this was published in a paper. This brought him to the attention of the Premier of Manitoba and he

was invited to go to talk to the state cabinet about the issues he had raised. He subsequently found himself employed in local politics and he was invited by the Minister of Agriculture to take on a department, but he did not want to do the job and so he left the job and was unemployed once again.

Then, he saw a programme on television about the invention of the snowmobile. The Canadian Government was giving snowmobiles to the indigenous people living in northern Canada because they had lost the art of dog sled construction. However, there was little or no training given in the use of the snowmobiles; they were proving dangerous and many accidents ensued. Llewelyn approached the Hudson's Bay Company, which had the contract to supply the snowmobiles, to ask whether they would be willing to buy dog sleds from him if he could find a way of providing them; they said that they



Llewelyn Breese helping with fall roundup on Stump Lake Ranch. A cattle ranch of over one hundred thousand acres in western Canada

would. So, Llewelyn found a way of doing this – he found a construction plant and workers, he ordered large quantities of oak for the sleds and then he began delivering dog sleds to the Hudson's Bay Company. Eventually, the indigenous people started to make their own dog sleds and the HBC had to buy these instead.

By this time, Llewelyn and his wife had, sadly, parted and Llewelyn decided to move to the west coast of Canada. He got a job as a manager of a waterfront recreational facility in

Port Alberni on Vancouver Island. After a few years doing this job, he was approached to do a report for the state of British Columbia on substance abuse (both alcohol and drugs) in rural indigenous communities in the state. This involved travelling to very remote communities.

Whilst doing this work, he met Linda (a barrister) and they started up their own law firm in 1990. They focused their company on helping people to move to Canada from other countries, especially those where there was conflict. Immigration into Canada involves quite complicated paperwork and so their company helped people with this. Initially they worked with Korean immigrants and so Llewelyn travelled to South Korea quite regularly. He also went to Hong Kong from where he would take the train into China. Over about thirty years, they helped more than 20 000 people from 140 different countries to come to live in Canada.

The company has particularly concentrated on helping to get people out of places of conflict. One of these was The Sudan. Llewelyn was given a list of contacts of people, predominantly engineers, in Sudan who were keen to leave the country because of the conflict in the country. Because these people thought they were in danger, Llewelyn had to hide their contact details (in his shoes) when he arrived in the country to help them. He was arrested at Khartoum Airport and had to face a great deal of interrogation about why he would want to come to the country in a time of war. Luckily, he had an influential contact in Khartoum who arrived to get him released. Llewelyn was given a limo and driver so that he could meet the people who wanted to get out of the country and he was accommodated in some comfort in an old colonial hotel in the city. He was given cartons of cigarettes to give to guards at road blocks so that he would be allowed through. Nonetheless, there were some potentially dangerous moments during his stay when he thought that he might simply “disappear”.

Linda and Llewelyn began to sponsor children in the Philippines to enable them to get schooling and university places. Now, they also get much of their office work done in the Philippines since opening up an office there. The office is managed by a young lady who was once one of their sponsored youngsters.

At the end of the meeting, ML thanked Llewelyn for his most interesting and entertaining talk. What an amazing life he has led and what incredibly important and rewarding work he has done. Llewelyn has a definite gift for being able to see an opportunity and finding a way to be proactive. In his early 70s, he even found a way to revive his tractor driving skills by taking a “job” on a potato farm, helping to plough the fields for a local farmer. When asked what he might have done had he stayed in Rhulen, he said that he probably would have become a farmer, but that he might not have done a very good job. Instead, he has had such a varied and fascinating life, dabbling in politics, meeting interesting people and helping a great number of those wishing to get into Canada along the way. Definitely “a life well lived”.



One of the tractors where he could demonstrate his love for farm vehicles

ML thanked the ladies who made the refreshments at the end of the meeting and also John Price for, yet again, managing the technical side of the event.