

Cynwyd Scrapbook Three



Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group

Denbighshire Branch

2018

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Introduction

This is the third of the popular Cynwyd Scrapbook series published by our Discovering Old Welsh Houses (DOWH) group. We are a charity whose vision is to celebrate Welsh heritage through the study of traditional houses and the lives of the people who lived in them, and our work includes:

- Recording the architecture of old houses - particularly those built before 1700 - and tree ring (dendro)dating their timbers when appropriate
- Researching the history of each dwelling and the lives of its occupants
- Exploring local landscape, community, social and economic history

Our research is done by volunteers, under the guidance of experts from the archives, universities and learned societies of Wales. Our findings are made available on an “open access” basis to anyone interested, and are shared by:

- Publishing individual house histories on our website:
<http://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/>
- Contributing articles to a variety of books and journals
- Discussing research with colleagues at local DOWH groups

All three Cynwyd Scrapbooks are part of our Denbighshire DOWH group activities. We invite readers to get in touch and the response to date has been fantastic! Local readers are often amazed to find records of their houses dating back hundreds of years, and readers from other parts of Britain and beyond have contacted us with information or queries about their own heritage.

Membership of Discovering Old Welsh Houses supports the vital work of preserving our heritage and entitles you to the following:

- Guided visits to private historic houses in North and Mid Wales
- Our illustrated and bilingual quarterly newsletter
- Lectures, study tours and house history workshops
- Membership of your local DOWH group
- Support with researching the history of your own or other old houses

You can join at:

<http://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/membership/index.b.html>

or by contacting our Membership Secretary on 01824 704404, 07891 366581
or zoehenderson123@btinternet.com

For more information about any of the articles and research in this book, please contact leesjenny@gmail.com

Confidences of an Eighteenth Century Baroness: Part Two

In *Cynwyd Scrapbook Two*¹ I shared some of the fascinating confidences of Margaret, Baroness of Cymer and wife of Hugh Hughes Lloyd, that are contained in letters to her friend Elizabeth Baker.² The anecdotes below provide further glimpses of local life in the 1770s - from the social round of North Wales gentry to domestic life at *Gwerclas* and talk of British politics.



Arch at Gwerclas leading to cobbled yard and service wing (Jenny Lees)

Friends, Neighbours and Fine Food

Hugh Vaughan, of *Hengwrt* and later of *Nannau* near Dolgellau, is said to have been recklessly extravagant,³ but seems to have been very generous to the household at Gwerclas! Elizabeth Baker was acting as personal secretary to Hugh Vaughan, and one occasion Margaret asked her to thank him for sending oysters, commenting that she had received:

“very handsome plenty during the time Mr and Mrs Myddleton stayed at Gwerclas ... Mrs Myddleton declared she was sorry to break up our Party which is now reduced since this morning to Miss Myddleton and Mrs Heaton”

We learn also that the Myddletons stayed for about ten days, with Mrs Myddleton providing a side of lamb and ordering their son to bring Margaret a rump and sirloin of beef with asparagus after they were *fetched home*.

These visitors were probably members of the local gentry, as Margaret had previously talked of dining at *Nantclwyd* to meet a “Major Myddleton and his Lady.” But personal visits to the homestead of *Ucheldre* were seemingly not on Margaret`s social calendar, as she confided in Elizabeth:

“.. here is a vast deal of Company at Ucheldre, 4 Equ[i]pages besides Numbers of Horse Gentry: so I send them 6 fat Chikins a Greene Goose and a qr [quarter?] of Lamb: for I have not nor ever shall forget Mr Vaughan`s presentments to me. Tho` I do not visit the family, I wd be a good Neighbour in everything else & they have been Civil in the Sparling Season in sending them[?] hither”



Ucheldre near Gwyddelwern (Jenny Lees, 1980s)

Although Ucheldre⁴ had once been owned by the gentry family of Meyrick before passing to the illustrious Kyffins of Maenan, it was apparently occupied at the time of Margaret`s visits by tenant farming families. My research on the *Sparling Season* has so far only revealed that a *sparling* may be a fish now rare in Scotland – but maybe my local readers have other suggestions?

An understandable preoccupation with the weather!

Despite Margaret`s privileged life style, it must have then been difficult and even dangerous to travel on unmetalled roads in poor weather – and Telford had not yet built the coaching route that was to become the modern A5! In October 1773 Margaret complained that she was *almost depressed by the uncommon severity of the weather* and was *condemned to Perpetual waters at home*.

Interestingly, weather records for this period do suggest above average rainfall, and on another occasion Margaret asked Elizabeth to keep for her:

“a Twelvemonths Journal of the Weather that I may do the same & compare them. Begin in Jan and end in Decr. I select 6 of my Corrispondents for this purpose in difrant parts of the country and when my design is complete I will give you each a Cobby of the whole”



Pont Gwerclas between Gwerclas and Hafod y calch – now sadly washed away!

In June 1775 Margaret also mentioned *the fort* – probably the area later known as Gwerclas Mound or The Mount. This was once thought to be the possible site of a medieval castle but is now considered more likely to be a prehistoric burial mound of Bronze Age or even earlier origin; possibly adopted later as a prospect mound ⁵. It overlooks an area of gravel still tossed around by the river during present day storms and Margaret wrote:

“My Ideas are wholly fixed upon 6 Men and 4 Wheelbarrows wch [which] I view from the fort removeing a Mountain of Gravel. I began My attendance at 5 yestermorning & at 6 oclock this, & sorry I am to leave the pr [poor?] Creatures on Monday. Tell Mr Vaughan our improvements go fast on.”

I'm not sure why the men would have needed such close surveillance - and do wonder what improvements were achieved by moving all that gravel!

Family Life and a wider world

Although the deaths of Margaret`s children`s are not mentioned in her correspondence, we know from Llangar Parish Records that she and her husband Hugh suffered some very sad losses. Their second son Edward was buried in February 1773 at the age of four, a daughter Catherine-Dorothea may have been both baptized and buried in 1777, and their third son Robert died in 1784 at the age of fourteen. Their first son and eventual heir, Richard Hughes Lloyd, is pictured on page 8 below.



Llangar church, presumed burial place of Margaret`s children (Stephen Lees)

It is also easy to forget, while reading of Margaret`s personal concerns, that during this period Britain became involved in not only the 1775-1783 American War of Independence but also the associated 1778-1783 Anglo-French War.

Margaret was evidently aware of such situations. In October 1778 she observed to Elizabeth:

“... nor can peace be too highly valued when we consider the distressed conditions of our People in America” and on 29th November she wrote:

“I have just heard read a formal declar.n of Warr from the French Court with many other disagreeable informations & am enclined to believe we shall soon be strip.d of all we possess except our Virtues & Abilities”



References

1. Jenny Lees (2016) *Confidences of an Eighteenth Century Baroness: Part One and Near Calamity at the Corwen Races* are both in *Cynwyd Scrapbook Two* by Denbighshire Branch of the Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group, or available from leesjenny@gmail.com
2. National Library of Wales, *Elizabeth Baker* 183 to 232, Elizabeth Baker Papers, 1740-1798. My transcripts above, from the original handwritten letters, retain Margaret`s 18th century wording, but I have added modern punctuation and spelling when the text is unclear. (I am hugely indebted to my colleague Pamela Buttrey M.A. for bringing these letters to my attention).
3. Philip Nanney Williams (2016) *Nannau – A Rich Tapestry of Welsh History*, Llwyn Estates Publication
4. The History Of The House Called Ucheldref
http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20004_HH_24_Ucheldref.pdf
5. <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/306597/details/gwerclas-moundthe-mount>

Jenny Lees 2018

Dark Deeds and Drovers at Mynyllod

We know that in 1631 a **Hugh ap Jeuan Lloid, yeoman**, had a 21 year lease¹ for 20 shillings a year from William Salesbury of Rûg for the *messuage or tenement called Tythyn Moel y Lladdfa* in the township *Kymer and Llangar*. Hugh was also covenanted *to grind all his grain at Melin y Rug*, his landlord's mill, and the **John Edward ap Hugh** of *Moel Lladdfa* who was buried in 1690 (Llangar Parish Records) could well have been his grandson.



Moel Lladdfa, near Nant Rhyd y Saeson (Jenny Lees 2018)

But the name of the hill *Moel Lladdfa* may have originated before the earliest dwelling was built nearby. As *lladdfa* means a killing or massacre and *moel* a bare hill, one wonders whether it was the site of some ancient battle? The stream running past *Moel Lladdfa* is called *Nant Rhyd y Saeson* (stream of the ford of the Saxon, or Englishman) and the earliest “Englishmen” known in North Wales were probably the Saxons. So there could have been a massacre in this area as far back as the 5th or 6th century, or at any time later. (There were 12th century battles on the nearby Berwyn between the English king and the Welsh princes, who had apparently gathered their forces together at Corwen).

Moel Lladdfa also features in the ancient legend of *Llan Garw Gwyn* (church of the white deer or stag) which attempts to explain both the name of Llangar

church and why it is so far from Cynwyd. In this story the foundation stones disappeared each night from an original church site near the village, and by some divine communication the builders were instructed to start again where a white deer was seen. While being hunted, the stag hid at the site of *Bronguddio* (*cuddio* meaning to hide) and was killed at nearby *Moel Lladdfa*.²

Another version of this legend is recounted in a 1693 letter³ to Edward Llwyd, keeper of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, from John Lloyd of *Blaen y ddol*.



Blaen y ddol (now Blaenddol) near Corwen, (Jenny Lees 2016)

In this version the borders of the parish were said to extend as far as the deer should run, and interestingly John Lloyd tells Edward Llwyd that:

“To authorise this Relation, there are Red Dears upon this Mountain to this day ... This induc'd me to use a Stag for my Seal as my Praedecessor did before me, who was wont to relate this storie wth a great Deal of Confidence.”

This early version does not mention Bronguddio (legends become elaborated over the centuries!) but *Bron Guddia* appears in Llangar Parish Records with the sad 1705 infant burial of **John**, son of **Robert Edmond**. By 1766 *Bron Gyddio* was named part of *Gwerclas* estate in a Marriage Settlement⁴ between Baron Hugh Hughes Lloyd and his future wife Margaret, with lands including *Cae*

Pella y Ddwylfryd (field beyond the two fords) and “free liberty of Sheepwalk, and Turbary and of Cutting and digging up of Turf and peate upon Mynyllod.”

In March 1814 **Eliza Rees** of *Bron Guddio* was baptised at Llangar, daughter of **Gwen Roberts** and **William Rees** who was occupying *Fron Giddio* when the Gwerclas estate was sold in 1824. By the 1851 census widow and *Farmer* **Gwen Reese** (67) was heading the *Bronguddio* household, with two unmarried sons and ten year old grandson **David Davies**, then in 1891 *Head* **Edward Davies** (41) and his younger siblings, **John**, **Prudence** and **Winnifred**, were all unmarried and each listed with occupation *Farmer*.



Farmyard at Fronguddio, formerly Bronguddio (Jenny Lees)

From medieval times or even earlier, the taverns of Cynwyd provided accommodation and grazing for the drovers who took huge herds of beasts from Wales towards England, with one of their drove routes believed to lead down towards the village from Mynydd Mynyllod.⁵

The dwelling of *Siamber Wen* (pictured below) lies on the lane winding down from *Fronguddio* to the river Dee, and a 1615 document⁶ also mentions the field name *Tir Lewis y Gwartheg*:

“a message or tenement called y Siamber wenn and parcels of land called...Cae r saer [field of the builder or carpenter] ...Tir y Clawdd, Tir Lewis y Gwartheg, Erw yn ol y Bara, abutting on y Talare dvon [?]....in the tenure of **Elise ap Morgan**, in the vill of gwnodle, commote of Edernion, co. Merioneth”

The Welsh word *tir* refers to land or territory and *gwartheg* means cattle, while *gwarthegydd* can refer to either a drover or cattle raider!

So was **Lewis y Gwartheg** a drover? In 1622 the prosperous drover **Thomas Lloyd of Mylton** in Kent (born in in the parish of *Llandderfel*)⁷ obtained a *Mortgage* from William Salesbury of Rug⁸ for property including “lands, etc., belonging, in the tenure of Robert Salesbury, gent., in the township of Gwndole, and a messuage or tenement called *Y Siamber* in Botteulog and all lands, etc., belonging in the township of Kynwyd Vawr in a place called Botteulog, all in cmt. Edernion, co. Merioneth”.

Llangar Parish Records tell us that a **Catherine Lewes** of *Chamber Wenne* was buried in July 1661, but by 1677 or earlier *Siamberwen* in *Llangar* was home to **Gabriel Humffreys** and his wife **Elizabeth**, with sons **Elisha**, **Gabriel**, **William** and **David** and daughter **Diana**.



Siamber Wen Bach to the left and the main farm of Siamber Wen on the right (Jenny Lees)

Gabriel appeared to be well connected, as the several overseers appointed in his 1677 Will⁹ included *William Salisbury of Rug*. He was probably from the prestigious estate owning Humffreys family of *Maerdu Mawr*, as his brother and nephew, both called William, were *of Maerdu*. Interestingly, the *base* (illegitimate) son of Gabriel’s daughter **Diana** with a **Humphrey Lloyd** was listed in the parish records as **Hugh Humphreys** when baptised in 1700, and the 1731 *Bond* (SA/1731/97) of a further **Gabriel Humphreys** of *Shamber*

Wenn, Llangar, Yeoman mentions **Diana Humphreys** as *Spinster*. By 1838 *Siambwrwen* was still occupied by a **John Humphreys** and in the ownership of Griffith Howell Vaughan Esq of Rhug).

Today the main house of *Siamber Wen* and adjacent cottage *Siamber Wen Bach* (previous page) form the home of Leonard Harrison, who has provided the following fascinating information about the buildings. It is not yet certain which parts are the oldest, but during replacement of the *Siamber Wen* lounge floor its original timbers, laid directly on the earth, were thought by a surveyor to be second hand timber dating from around 200 years ago. Interestingly, Len also says that, on opening a blocked off area to the right of a *Siamber Wen* chimney breast, remains were found of an extraordinarily narrow and awkward spiral staircase embedded into the wall!

It is also possible that water power may have been used on a small scale at *Siamber Wen Bach*. Although there may not have been any strong flow of water, there is slight but inconclusive evidence for a small and very crude water wheel, powered and controlled from a reservoir at the top of the hill. A previous owner also told Len that he remembered butter being churned there by means of a horse gin - a mechanism in which a horse is harnessed to a wheel, and as it walks around gears engage and turn a drum.

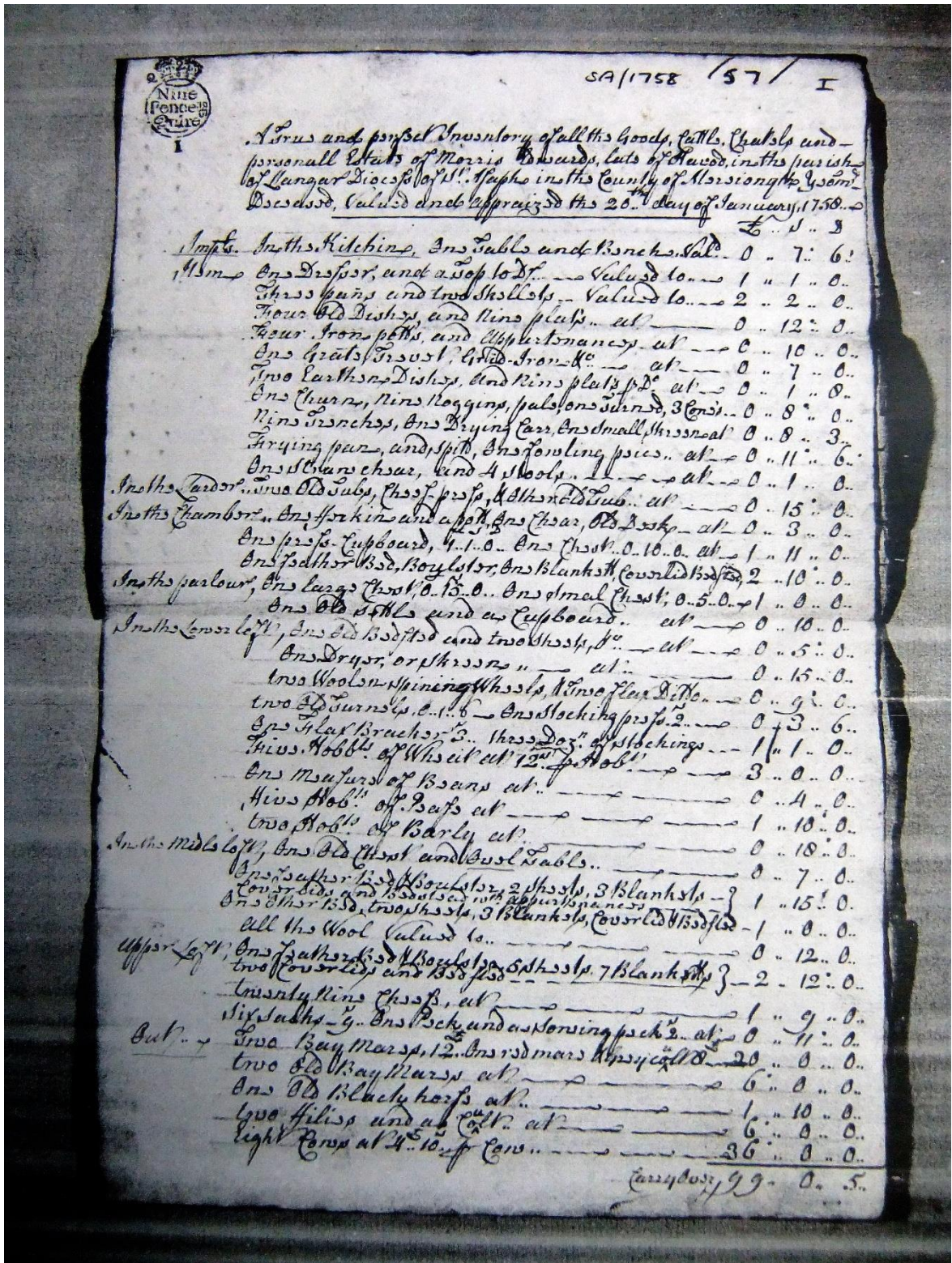
1. 1631 Jan 15th, XD2/1204 at Gwynedd Archives [N.L.W. Rug 1067].
2. T. O. Jones (1975) *O Ferwyn i Fynyddlod* page 43
3. *Llythyrau John Lloyd* page 102 National Library of Wales Journal
<http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk/browse/viewpage/llgc-id:1277425/llgc-id:1284002/llgc-id:1284106/get650>
4. Denbighshire archives at Ruthin (DD/GA/652) Galltfaenan Manuscripts
5. *The Drovers` Roads of Wales* (1977) by Fay Godwin and Shirley Toulson, pp.125-28.
6. Bachymbyd Records of Salusbury of Rhug, Bachymbyd and Pool Park, later the barons Bagot, 1243-1801: Number 576, **1615**
7. See DOHWG house history of *Gwernbraichdwr* (online by 2018-19)
8. Bachymbyd record no. 646.1622, June 6:
9. The Will of **Gabriel Humffreys** can be read online (SA/1677/79)

(Further details of my research on *Fronguddio* (formerly Bronguddio) and *Siamber Wen* can be obtained from leesjenny@gmail.com)

Jenny Lees 2018

Home Comforts at Hafod y calch

It is fascinating to imagine how people might have lived in one's home in times past, and my earliest evidence of life at Hafod¹ comes from the 1758 Inventory² of *Morris Edwards of Hafod*, reproduced in its beautiful script below.



Morris`s possessions are listed by room, including a *Kitchin, Larder, Parlour, Chamber* and *Lower, Middle* and *Upper Lofts*. Possibly the *Lofts* were not lofts in the English sense, as the Welsh word *llofft* can mean just an upstairs room or gallery. All the *Lofts* contained beds, and in the *Lower Loft* were also two woollen and two flax spinning wheels - plus peas, wheat, beans and barley.

Curious to find out more about the itemized objects, I discovered that different spinning wheels were needed for different materials. Flax wheels were used for spinning linen, and below is an example of a treadle-operated flax wheel from the relevant historical period - with its bobbin, flyer and distaff.



Flax wheel from around 1750, image courtesy of the Science Museum

Apparently flax fibres are very tough, so it is not surprising that listed in Hafod`s lower loft was also a contraption called a *Flax Bracker* (breaker)! The *Middle loft* contained *All the wool* and the *Lower loft* contained a stocking press and *Three dozn. of stockings* – probably made of wool from Hafod`s sheep?

Cooking at this time was presumably done over an open fire, as the *kitchin* items on the 1758 inventory included a *Grate, Trivet, Grid Iron* and *Spit*. But what could the nine *Noggins* and nine *Trenches* have been? Noggins were apparently small cups or mugs, and a trencher was at this time probably a roughly cut square or circular wooden plate.

In 1758 there were also *Four Iron Potts and Appurtenances* listed at Hafod, but we know from the 1765 *Will and Bond*³ of Morris`s widow, **Margaret Jones**, that she left *my daughter Elizabeth Prys by my first husband Richard Prys* her largest brass pan, while her daughter **Jane Morris** by “*my last husband Morris Edwards*” received her second best brass Pan and *the Clock*. This could have been a longcase or “grandfather” clock of the 18th century type pictured below.



Catherine Morris, the youngest daughter, inherited from Margaret *the Feather Bed and Bedstead that I lye upon with their Appurtenances ... the best Dresser in the Kitchin and all the Pewter thereupon and the Chest in my Room with the Letters M.E upon ... and the little Fruit Cupboard over the Window by the Mantle Piece in the Kitchin*”

1767 is the first date when the name *Hafod-y- calch* (as opposed to *Hafod* or *Havod*) occurs in historical records I have found so far. Was this when Hafod`s limestone quarry⁴ was expanded, or when new limestone was used to enlarge

the house? The drone picture below (taken by a friend during repairs after trees fell on Hafod in a 2014 storm!) shows the Georgian east extension of three storeys plus cellars, with an older part behind concealed below a Victorian roof.

A staircase with ramped handrail now ran right up to the new attic rooms. This would have allowed far more room for servant accommodation - and it is of interest that, in Hafod`s 1851 census, twenty- three year old *House Servant Anne Jones* was listed as *deaf and dumb*, with place of birth not known.



The 1777 Will of **John Williams**, *Hafod, Llangar, Merioneth, Gent*, a very wealthy gentleman and uncle to **Sarah Jones** who was living at Hafod from at least 1765, made provision for the *Maintenance and Education* of Sarah`s daughter “*Sarah the infant*”. He also bequeathed to this child *all my Furniture in the little Parlour and the Cupboard in the Kitchin at Hafod*. So did this suggest that Hafod was already then of a size to have more than one parlour?

By around 1891 the pre-Georgian west part of the house had been given a new south façade with wooden casement windows, and a bathroom built within a north facing “catslide” extension. Wide slate shelves lined the shaded room

below where the butter was still churned in the 20th century, with water being pumped up from a well in the field below and an external bakery/brew house. At some stage occupants had also gained the comfort of the *Ty bach* pictured below - concealed neatly beside the Georgian end of the house behind a box hedge screen and with two tiny windows for illumination.



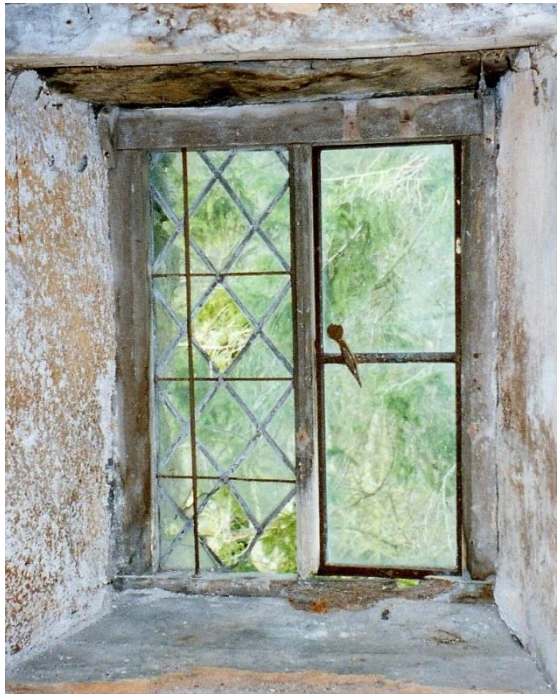
Tess Lees at Hafod y calch (Image by Stephen Lees)

By the 20th century Hafod y calch had undoubtedly become a very efficient Victorian farmhouse! And perhaps the last extra comfort (before we installed central heating!) must have been the 1923 agreement between Robert Vaughan Wynn of Rhug and **Robert Edward Jones** of Hafod for “a supply of electricity generated at the Cynwyd Hydroelectric Station, for the term of one year, with a minimum payment of £12.10.0d.”

References

1. See detailed *History of Hafod y calch* (2013) by Jenny Lees (which includes my transcriptions of the relevant historic documents). Online at http://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20138_HH_26_Hafod-Y-Calch.pdf
2. St Asaph Probate Records (SA/1758/57) *Bond of Maurice Edwards, Havod, Llangar, Meirioneth, Yeoman*. His *personall estate* amounted to £183 11s 5d before deductions were made.

3. St Asaph Probate Records (SA/ 1765/740) *Will and Bond of Margaret Jones, widow; Township Hafod, Parish Llangar, Merioneth*. Her burial is in Llangar Parish Records as *Margaret Jones of Hafod, Widow* - her earlier or maiden name rather than that of her first or second husbands.
4. See *The Lime Quarry at Hafod y Calch* by Jenny Lees in *Cynwyd Scrapbook One* (2014), currently out of print but available online at <http://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/cat/catalogs/cynwyd-scrapbook/pdf/complete.pdf>



Attic window at Hafod y calch (Jenny Lees)

The Mysteries of Cymer by Jenny Lees (2014), also in *Cynwyd Scrapbook One*, may be of further interest as it considers the history of Hafod in relation to the neighbouring historic properties of *Gwerclas* and *Plas Uchaf*.

Jenny Lees (2018)

Remembering Dai Morgan Evans

How sad it was to hear last year that Professor Dai Morgan Evans had died on St David's Day 2017, his 73rd birthday. Born on the Wirral, Dai grew up in Chester and studied archaeology in Cardiff before joining the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in Wales¹.

He helped bring into being the Welsh Archaeological Trusts and published a transcription of the *Llangar Churchwardens' Accounts*², which provide such a valuable glimpse of our local life in the 18th century.



Dai worked with English Heritage, was Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London and on both the National Trust Archaeology Panel and the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Advisory Group. He also advised on the design and building - using only tools and materials available in the 4th century AD - of a replica Roman villa in Wroxeter, beside which he is pictured above.

In his later years Dai became a visiting professor at the University of Chester, beginning research in North Wales again and initiating a new study of medieval Eliseg's Pillar, near Valle Crucis. He also produced a very illuminating series of articles on *Llangar - Church and community in the early eighteenth century*³ and began correspondence with me about ownership of the gentry pews in Llangar church³

In February 2014 Dai wrote to me: "Your house - Hafod y Calch is certainly the 'Hafod' of the pew ... I remember well coming up to lecture [to our local Edeyrnion

Historical Society] - a very lively group of people and I am glad that it is still going strong. As you will have seen I've spent four years writing up aspects of Llangar ... but there are still some aspects to work on.”

Sadly however, he also told me that he was undergoing medical treatment that was sapping his ability to work, and this was to be the last of our conversations.



Llangar church with gentry box pews and medieval wall paintings (Image Stephen Lees)

I hope that, in some small way, the research by members of our Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group continues to build on Dai Morgan Evans` meticulous and pioneering work on Llangar!

References

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/apr/17/dai-morgan-evans-obituary>
2. Llangar Churchwardens` Accounts (DRO NTD/467 at Ruthin archives) transcribed by David Morgan Evans, Inspector of Ancient Monuments
3. D. Morgan Evans, *Llangar -Church and community in the early eighteenth century, Part 4: HIERARCHY, LITURGY, FIXTURES AND FITTINGS* in Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society Volume XV1 (2013) Part1V, pp.358-379.

Jenny Lees

A Quest for Brynberllan!

Although no actual documents referring to *Brynberllan* have been found from before the 1700s, it is thought to have originated in the mid 16th century as a timber-framed and storeyed house. Its generous and very decorative use of timber suggests that it was then a building of some importance, but it seems *Brynberllan* must originally have had a different name!

Dendro (tree ring) dating showed that one of *Brynberllan*'s roof timbers came from a tree felled in winter 1525-26. But this may have been a reused beam, possibly from an even earlier house on the site, as the other roof timbers (dendrodated 1552-53) suggest the present house was built in around 1553.¹



Upstairs room at Brynberllan (Image by Anwen Lloyd)

It would at that time have consisted of a hall and parlour at ground floor level with two “chambers” above - the *principal chamber* being of two bays with a beautiful arch-braced central truss. There may also have been a timber-framed chimney hood before a new stone chimney stack was added to the original south gable². *Brynberllan*'s sturdy “plank and muntin” screen partition contains carpenter's numbering marks in scratched Roman numerals, and also the initials **HW**.¹

From Llangar Parish Records³ we know that **John**, son of **Thomas and Ellin Jones**, township *Cynwyd Fawr*, was baptised at Llangar in 1749, followed by baptisms of the couple's children **William** (1751) **Jane** (1753) **Peter** (1755) **Rebecca** (1757) and **Thomas** (1760), all recorded for *BrynyBerllan*. Sadly

infant Peter Thomas of *BrynyBerllan* was buried there in March 1756 – within a period of years with many infant deaths, some recorded as from smallpox.

We know from a 1766 Marriage Settlement⁴ concerning the properties of *Gwerclas* estate that **Thomas Jones** (and previously an **Owen Williams**) was then in occupation of the following property:

“Messuage Tenement or Farm – *Bryn y Berllan* Barn Stable cowhouse and Two Gardens Lands – yr Erwi Minefordd Dwll [or drull?] y Ceiliog Badda ucha Badda issa Cae pwll Llegedyn Erw aber Gwnodle y Goed Ddolran[?] Glantristion Doe y Bont Caer Gwdnoliad Erw Bryn y Daintur [?] Erw Bant, Cae ty popty, yr Erw hir and pen y ddol Turf and peat *Berwyn*. Townships Cynwyd fawr and Boteulog, Parish Gwyddelwern.” (The document contains little punctuation!)



Llangar church with Hafod y calch and Derwen Las in the distance (Jenny Lees 2018)

Curiously, in the 1783 Will of **Elenor [Ellin] Jones** of *Brin Berllan*, parish Gwyddelwern (SA/1783/103 at the National Library of Wales) she asks to be *decently and privately Buried in the Churchyard of the Parish of Corwen*, so could this be because she describes herself as *Spinster* so not legally married? Elenor bequeathes to son **Thomas Jones** *all the Cattle and Horses* and all the *Corn, Hay and Straw*. Daughter **Jane** receives the *Clock and Best Featherbed*; daughter **Rebecca** £40, and sons **John** and **William** one shilling each, with the remaining household goods and furniture shared between Thomas and Jane. A **Thomas Jones** of Bryn Berllan, aged 24, was buried in 1818, then in 1824, with

the sale of Gwerclas estate, *Bryn Berllan* was acquired by Rhug estate (XD2/3887).

In 1873 *Cae'r bont* and *Penpalmant* cottage and garden were part of the tenanted farm of *Bryn Berllan* (Z/DW/227 at Dolgellau archives); occupier **Richard Evans**. Richard was also listed as *Head* and farmer at *Bryn Berllan* in the censuses from 1851 to 1881 and buried in May 1884 at the amazing old age of one hundred and three! (Llangar Parish Records).

Peter Lloyd, previously of *Ty Nant* as evidenced in the photograph below on page 27, was a tenant at *Bryn Berllan* from 1915-1926 (Rhug Estate Records). His son William, pictured below, sadly died of appendicitis aged only 26.



William Lloyd, Bryn Berllan 1920, died 10th February 1928 (Image courtesy of Gwenan Roberts)

We know from Rhug estate records that Roderick Owen (pictured below) was a tenant at *Bryn Berllan* between 1936 and 1950, and June Lister⁵ recounted how twice a year May Parry Owen drove her family's sow over the hill from *Gelli Golen* to *Bryn Berllan*, to be served by a Mr Owen's boar!

In 1972 Rhug estate sold the house and buildings of *Bryn Berllan* to Alec and Jenny McGuinness, keeping the farmland with the estate, then Bryn Berllan was sold to myself, Anwen Lloyd⁶ and my husband Brian.



Mr and Mrs Roderick Owen, parents of Robert John (Image courtesy of Gwenan Roberts)

We bought Bryn Berllan March 1999 as a rundown old farmhouse and adjoining barn conversion, with the intention of renovating it and turning it into a lovely home for our young family. Little did we realise that we would be living in a 16th century box framed farmhouse! There was little evidence of the old house left; the post and panelled walls in the kitchen and bedroom had been covered up and the roof trusses had been hidden by a ceiling.

My earliest childhood memory of Bryn Berllan was as a dairy farm selling bottled milk around Cynwyd. Very many years later I thoroughly enjoyed researching the fascinating history of our home in collaboration with our Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group - though at times it was very frustrating trying to find how Bryn Berllan had come to belong to the Gwerclas estate!

Returning at last to the mystery of who built Bryn Berllan in the 16th century, our local DOWHG group is still “on the case”! Could the initials ‘HW’ on the plank and muntin screen partition give a clue? and was it the home of a family member of one of the Barons of Edeyrnion? Brynberllan was quite small when compared with major baronial residences such as Llangar`s *Plas Uchaf*, but extravagantly built for a home of that time in this area.



Bryn Berllan, aerial photograph from about 1971 (Anwen Lloyd)

One possible lead is that the 1723 Will of Thomas Lloyd of *Tyfos* (SA/1723/55) bequeathes money to several sons in law (names of daughters not mentioned!) including **Thomas Evans** of *Bryn y Berlen*. Llangar Parish Records list the baptism in 1705 of an Evan Evans, son of **Thomas Evans** and Anne, and the baptism of a **Thomas, son of Evan Llywelyn** and Margaret in 1674.

The name **Llywelyn** is very unusual in Llangar Parish Records but was used by families of the local Barons of Edeyrnion⁷, so this increases the possibility of a connection. (The Llangar Parish Records, however, do not extend back further than 1614).

There are also some Llangar residences referred to in historical documents with names no longer used today, for example the “GIFT of messuage called *Tyddyn y Gors* and *y plas bychan*, township Keven Kymer, [? Pa (rish) Llangar]”in 1532 from Robert ap Gruffith ap Res, baron of Ederneon [Edernion]to Gruffith ap Robert ap Gruffith ap Res,⁷ presumably his son?



Peter Lloyd, son of William and Catherine Lloyd of Gwnodl Fawr (p35) at Ty Nant (Image courtesy of Gwenan Roberts)

References

1. For a very detailed Architectural Record for Brynberllan see http://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library-h/denbigh_abr_reports.html
2. <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/412071/details/brynberllan>
3. Dolgellau Archives Z/M//344/25, Llangar Parish Register Vol II 1720-1762
4. DD/GA/652: Indenture 4 parts, 17 April 1766 (part of the Galltfaenan MSS concerning the estates of the Salusbury family of Galltfaenan).
5. “THERE`S NO SENSE IN IT!” The Life story of May Parry Owen by June Lister in in *Cynwyd Scrapbook One*
6. House history of Bryn Berllan by Anwen Lloyd (2012) http://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library-h/denbigh_histories.html

7. A.D.Carr : The Barons of Edeyrnion, 1282-1485, Part 1: Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society Vol.4 (1963) pp187-93; Part 2 in same journal 1964 Vol.4 p p289-99.
8. Newborough collection (online): **XD2/1244**, 1532 Oct.

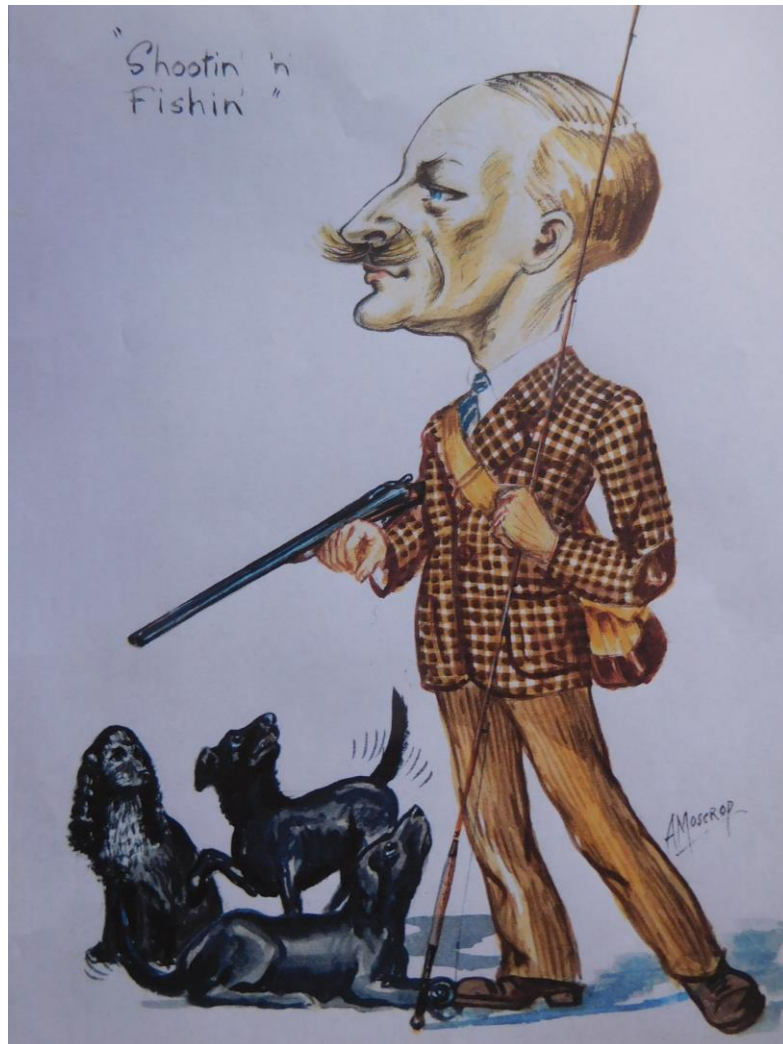


Bryn Berllan, Cynwyd, now home to Anwen and Brian Lloyd and their family

Anwen Lloyd 2018

A Most Colourful Cynwyd Character – Memories of Major Leslie Dow

To many of our local readers, Leslie will always be remembered as the “**Major Dow**” who presided over Corwen’s Owain Glyndwr Hotel when it was a haven for the fishing and shooting fraternity; later living at Llangar Rectory before moving to near *Brynllyn Lodge*, Cynwyd. Below are some memories kindly shared for our readers by Leslie’s friend and neighbour **Betty Booth** (of Cynwyd Scrapbook Two’s *Blue Lion Memories*) and his nephew Ian Kibble.



Portrait of Leslie Dow by a fisherman (Image courtesy of Ian Kibble)

Major Leslie Dow joined the Second World War in 1939, later suffering severe hearing loss at the battle of Tobruk in Libya. At the end of the war he lived for a year or so near Pitlochry in Scotland before taking on the Owain Glyndwr Hotel together with his wife, “Ron”. His nephew Ian Kibble, with whose family Leslie lived for a while, writes:

“I spent nearly all my summer holidays in Corwen, where shooting and fishing filled my days and I shot my first grouse at the age of fourteen. He was a hard task master ... and would nip

the barb off the hook of my fly, saying that it was more important to present the fly correctly on the water than to catch a fish – strange encouragement to a young boy! He made me walk for miles carrying a shotgun loaded with two empty cartridge cases until he was satisfied that I could be trusted with a loaded gun. But it all worked because eventually I became a reasonably proficient sportsman and ensured that my own son was equally but not so rigorously taught to behave in the field - and I'm happy to say that he has passed it all onto his two sons.”

Leslie was extremely deaf in his later years and Betty Booth communicated with him by either writing words down or miming their letters. When he became bedridden and lived next door to Betty and her husband Stan, Leslie would ring to ask questions and they would reply via a telephone tapping code - with one vibrating tap meaning “Yes” and two taps “No”!



But the deafness does not appear to have curbed this retired Major`s intrepid sense of adventure! Betty remembers how Leslie built an amazing yacht while living at Llangar Rectory (pictured above) where he also had a market garden. The boat was moored at Holyhead and Leslie took relatives and friends with him to be the “ears” on his expeditions. On one occasion their vessel became completely lost in the fog until one of Leslie`s passengers, neighbour Simon Irvine, heard distant voices which helped them navigate towards the shore - and their landing place turned out to be - Porthmadog!

Acknowledgement:

Many thanks are due to Heather Burnley, niece of Major Leslie Dow, for helping with the collection of this information.

Our ancient township of Gwnodl: The First Six Centuries!

We may never know the origin of the fascinating name Gwnodl, but one suggestion¹ is that *Gwnodl* is a corruption of *Gwynhoedl*, the name of a 6th century saint contemporary with Beuno and Aelhaearn. His name could derive from *gwyn* (white or holy) and *hoedl*, meaning life. (The ancient chapel of *St Gwnod* and *Neithon* also once existed near *Pont-y-capel* bridge, Llangwm).²



1949 map showing Gwnodl fawr, Gwnodl bach, Bronguddio and Tyn-y-wern Gwnodl

Some of the oldest records are spelt *Gwnodle*, so the ending *le* could be a mutation of *lle*, meaning a place. An associated idea from the author of *Blaengwnodl Uchaf Memories*³ links *Gwnodl*'s name with the ancient legend⁴ concerning Llangar church and a deer. As the word *cŵn* means dogs, she suggested that the hunting party set up to track down and kill the deer obtained their hounds from Gwnodl - "place of dogs." But what we do know is that a local *township* called *Gwnnodl* certainly existed by 1293, as it was then listed as having 16 taxed tenants.⁵ Some of the dwellings included within this township at various times in its history are *Gwnodl Fawr*, *Gwnodl Bach*, *Blaengwnodl Ucha*, *Blaengwnodl Isaf*, *Siamber Wen* and *Bron Gyddio* (now *Fronguddio*).

It is uncertain which of these sites the oldest documents refer to, as they just give the name *Gwnodle*, but one reference⁶ describes *Gwnodle* as property belonging to **Ieuan, second son of Baron of Hendwr Gwion Llwyd**, and lying

within the lordship of Glyndyfrdwy. Ieuan, who also inherited nearby *Branas Isaf*,⁷ was said to be living in 1389. His great-great grandson **John** married **Jane**, the daughter of **Robert Wynn** of powerful *Maesmor* in Dinmael, and it is believed⁸ that this John and Jane were involved in the building of the splendid bridge at Cynwyd dated 1612.



Tyfos viewed from the road between Cynwyd and Llandderfel (Jenny Lees 1980s)

Their son, **Robert Wynne ap John ap Owen, gent**, inherited *Gwnodl* and was living in 1596.⁶ His grandson **Robert Wynne** married **Gwen Lloyd**, daughter of Thomas Lloyd of nearby *Tyfos* (pictured above) and their son **John Wynne, Gent, “Gwnodle”** (baptised 1639) married **Margaret Price**, followed by their children **Robert** (1660), **Rice** (1662), **Richard** (1665), **Elizabeth** (1668) and **Charles Wynne** (1671).

By the 1600s the name **Watkin** also appears in Llangar Parish Records in relation to Gwnodl. I am not yet sure which residence these early records refer to, but in 1617 **John Watkins** married a **Blanche Pyers** (possibly from the Pyers Wynne family of Plas Isaf). Baptisms of their children follow between 1621 and 1646 (**Catherine, Margaret, Ffrancisca, Elizabeth, Hugh, Robert, Gwen, David, William** and **Thomas** (whose mother **Blanche** is recorded as daughter of **Peirce**). There is also a 1628 bond (Bachymbyd record no.588) from a **John Watkins of Genodle**, gentleman, with Piers ap Robert Wynn of *Kymer and Llangar* and Robert Piers, *his son and heir apparent*, to William Salesbury

of Rug, and from 1662 Hearth Tax records,⁹ we know that a **John Watkins** paid tax for two hearths in the township of *Gwnodl*.



Gwnodl Fawr in around 1900. From left, John Roberts and wife Elizabeth, daughter of William Lloyd and Catherine (p35 below). Image courtesy of Gwenan Roberts

In October 1670 **Blanche Wynne**, wife of **John Watkins, Gwnodl**, was buried at Llangar, followed by the 1677 burial of **Margaret Hughes of Gwnodl, wife of William Watkins, Gent**. So presumably the **William Watkins** described in the 1681 Llangar *Notitia*¹⁰ as living with three servants, his old father and four children aged seven, five, four and three, was the widowed son of John? (**Blanche** (1673), **John** (1674), **Katherine** (1675), **Elizabeth** (1676) and **Hugh Watkins** (1677) were baptised at Llangar).

After the burials in 1688 of a **Robert Wynne, Gent, Gwnodl** and of **Margaret Price**, wife of **John Wynne, Gwnodl** in 1689, the surname **Lloyd** appears again when the 1703 Llangar Churchwardens`Accounts record payment of 3s 3^{1/2}d from **Mr Thomas Lloyd for his land in Gwnodl**. In 1801 **John Lloyd of Gwnodle** (St Asaph Probate Records SA/1801/13) left £100 to each of his children **Peter, Thomas, Edward, Humphrey, Susannah and Margaret**; £5 each to his siblings Kenrick and Margaret, and the rest of his *Personal Estate, Goods and Chattels* to his wife and executrix **Ellin**

We know that the celebrated bard **Peter Llwyd or Lloyd** (1765 to 1842) lived at **Gwnodl Fawr**¹ and the 1830 Will of **Ellin Lloyd of Gwnodl** (SA/1834/88,

proved 1834) shows that her eldest son and executor **Peter** inherited the *residue* of her *personal Estate, Goods and Chattels*.



Detail of Peter Llwyd`s bardic chair (Image courtesy of Gwenan Roberts)

Son **Thomas** was left £80, *a press cupboard, the bedstead and hangings in the room above the kitchen*, and his mother`s share of the sheep called *Swch sheep*, while son **Humphrey** received £80 and five Oak Chairs. Son **Edward** gained £60, and his daughter Susan a cupboard in the kitchen *with the initials SU on it*.

Ellin`s daughters married into nearby families, with daughter **Margaret** (wife of **Thomas Griffiths** of Colomendy) bequeathed £60 plus the cupboard in the kitchen *with the initials KJ on it* and *one half of the Pewter dishes*. Ellin`s granddaughter **Ellin Jones** of *Hafod Bleuddyn* received £50 and grandsons **John Lloyd** of *Bodheulog*, **John Griffiths** of *Colomendy* and **John Lloyd** of *Penlan* inherited £10 each, while granddaughters **Ellin** (daughter of Edward) and **Elizabeth** (daughter of Humphrey) each received *One feather bed*. By the time of the 1838 Tithe Apportionment, *Gwnodl fawr Buildings and Croft*, with an area of 2acres 2r -17p, was owned by *The Poor of Llanrhaidr* but occupied by a **Humphrey Lloyd**, while an **Edward Edwards** occupied *Gwnodl bach House and Field*

Seated outside *Penlan Bach* in the photograph below (courtesy of Gwenan Roberts) is **Elizabeth Lloyd**, originally from *Gwnodl Fawr* and daughter of **Humphrey Lloyd** and **Elizabeth Davies**. The little girl is believed to be her granddaughter Lizzie, eldest sister of Jane Wynn Jones of *Hendre*. From the 1854 Will of **Elizabeth Lloyd**, *Gwnodl fawr*, we learn that her daughter **Elizabeth**, who inherited her mother`s side saddle and *wearing apparel*, was

married to **Edward Rees**¹³ of *Penlan bach*. Son **John** received *the Featherbed, Bedstead and Bedclothes in which he usually sleeps together with the Press cupboard now stationed in his Bedroom* and Elizabeth`s three sons and executors **Peter, William and Humphrey** received the rest of her estate



The 1884 Will of **William Lloyd** of *Gwnodl Fawr* bequeathed to his wife **Catherine Lloyd** £50 plus the furniture which *she brought with her from Gwnodl bach* - including an *eight days Clock in Oak case, Oak Chest of drawers, dresser and Cupboard with glass Panel*. Daughter **Elizabeth** received £50 and her maintenance; son **Thomas** £50 plus £10 *towards apprenticing him*, and son **Humphrey** William`s *Silver Watch and Chain* plus £10, with the remainder divided between sons **Humphrey, William, John, Hugh and Peter**.

Below are **Mary Lloyd Roberts** and **Elizabeth Jane** in **Peter Lloyd**`s bardic chair. Their mother was **Elizabeth**, daughter of **William Lloyd** and **Catherine**, who married **John Roberts**. (Image courtesy of Gwenan Roberts).



Gwnodl was also a township, and in Part Two of this article I plan to write about all the “Gwnodls” and their occupants within the 20th and 21st centuries.

1. Trefor O. Jones (1975) *O Ferwyn I Fynyddlod* pp 16-17
2. <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/24087/details/pont-y-capel-llangwm>
3. *Blaengwnodl Uchaf Memories* in Cynwyd Scrapbook One
4. See *Dark Deeds and Drovers at Mynyllod* in this book
5. J. and L. Beverley Smith 2001) *History of Merioneth* Vol. 2 p 223
6. *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Fourth Series No. XXX April 1877 P102-105 *Gwnodl In Glyndyfrdwy*(Cae Cyriog MS; Harl. MS.1969.) From Llangar Parish Records we also know that **Elin** and **Gwenhwyfar**, daughters of a Robert Wynne ap John ap Owen, were buried in around 1616. **Catherine Lloyd**, wife of **Robert Wynne ap John ap Owen** was buried in 1631, and **Robert Wynne** in February the following year.
7. <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/content/branas-ucha-%E2%80%93-house-history>
8. See Elwyn A. Jones, *The Cynwyd Dee Bridge* in this book
9. Owen Parry, 1953, *The Hearth Tax of 1662* in Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society Vol. II (I) p 24)
10. DRO NTD / 1829: *The Notitiae of the Parishes of the Diocese of St Asaph* (SA/MISC/1492)

Jenny Lees 2018

Once upon a time at Glan Alwen

Sadly, only the magnificent farm buildings now remain from the once important estate of Glan Alwen - lying north of the Glan Alwen fords just across the river from *Hafod y calch*. There does exist a reference to a *Plas Owain, Glanalwen, Cymer, Llangar* - possibly a home of the early Barons of Cymer before they inhabited *Plas Uchaf* by 1435, but we don't know where exactly they lived.



Glan Alwen viewed from across the Alwen fords (Jenny Lees)

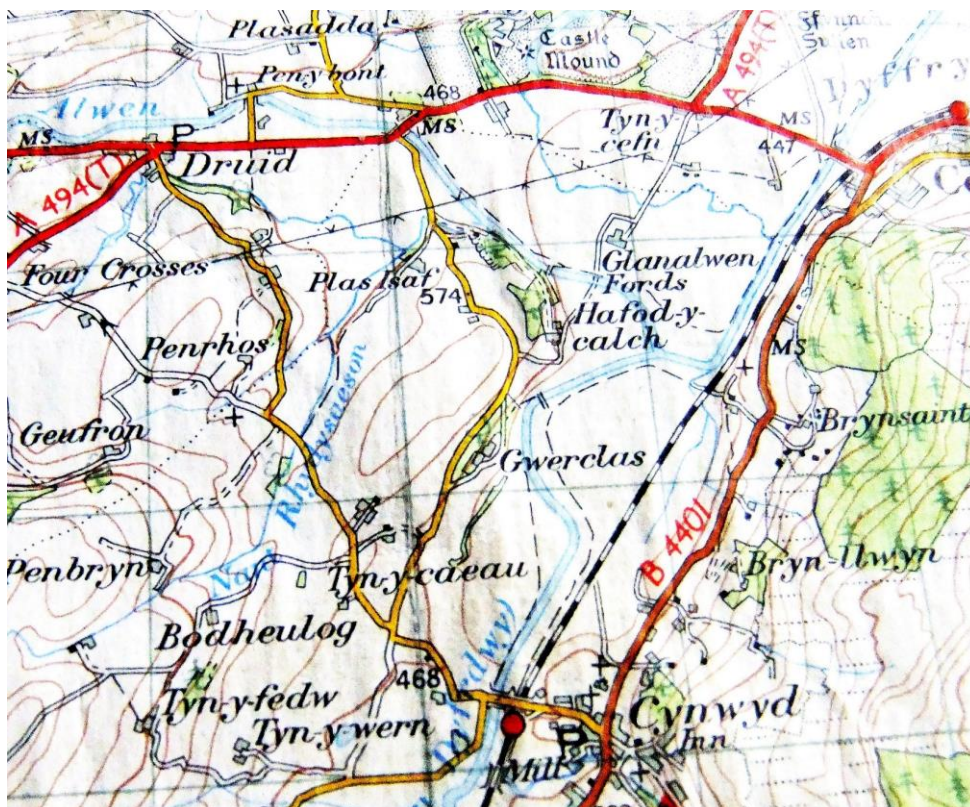
But we do learn from Burke's *Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry* of a **Humffrey ap Elisau** “of Glan Alwen in Llangar and Maerddu in Gwyddelwern,” whose grandfather **William ap Ievan** was *seated at Llangar*.

Humffrey's son was **Captain William Humffreys** in the army of King Charles 1st during the Civil War and sold the Glan Alwen estate in the 1640's to his wife Dorothy's brother, **Edmund Meyrick**^{1,2} of *Ucheldre*³. Then there is a 1643 Will for a **Griffith Ap David Ap Evan, Glan Alwen, Cymer**,⁴ seemingly one of a family associated with *Glan Alwen* for the next three centuries who later adopted the surname **Davies**. Griffith had high enough status to be recorded in the 1643 Llangar Parish Records as *buried in church*, and his residence of

Rhwng y Ddwy Afon (between the two rivers) seems to have been an old name for *Glan Alwen*, lying at the confluence of rivers Alwen and Dyfrdwy (Dee).

Hearth Tax records for *Kymer and Llangar* in 1662 do not give addresses, but show payment for two hearths by a **David ap Gruffith**, possibly for Glan Alwen? Also suggested⁵ is that **Edmund Meyrick**'s payment for two hearths in 1665-6 might have been for Glan Alwen, but this could have been the tax for *Hafod y calch* as Edmund owned a gentry pew for *Hafod* in Llangar church.

In 1668 (Denbighshire archives XD2/1216) **William Salesbury of Rug** and John Owen of Rug, clerk, leased Glan Alwen and lands in *Kymer and Llangar* to a **Lewis Meyricke** of *Graves Inne* (Denbighshire archives XD2/1216). But by December 1683 the Will of **Griffith Davies, Glan-alwen** (St. Asaph Probate Records, SA/1683/123) suggests that he himself was a landowner, with *Messuages, Lands and Tenements* in the Parish of Llansantffraid (later Glyndyfrdwy) as well as in the parishes of Llangar and Corwen.



1949 map with the unnamed buildings of Glan Alwen just above Glan Alwen Fords

Griffith's wife **Margaret Roberts** had been buried at Llangar in February of the same year, but he mentions his daughters **Anne, Jane, Mary, Lowry, Alice** and son David. He also makes provision for the *maintenance* of an unnamed granddaughter - was she the illegitimate daughter of his son David, as the 1683 **Bond of David ap Griffith of Glan Alwen**, deceased (SA/1683/124) mentions

his “natural” daughter? Interestingly, David’s Inventory includes the valuation of oats and barley *in the ground* and *timber in and about the house*, in addition to *household stuff, implements of husbandry, wearing apparel* and livestock. A David Griffith of *Glan Alwen* was buried in May 1683(Llangar Parish Records).

By 1743 we know from the *Merioneth Quarter Sessions Rolls* for the Hundred of Edernion⁶ that a **David Davies of Glanalwen** was one of only two freeholders for the township of *Cummer* who qualified to serve on juries - the other being John William Jones of *Cevn Cymmer* (now *Cae Mawr*).

And by 1796 the widowed **Griffith Davies**, holding both *Glan Alwen* and *Kefn*, had now become *Gentleman*, with younger children **Edward, Hugh, Margaret, Jane, Elizabeth** and **Ann** plus eldest son **David Davies** (SA/1796/74).

Griffith’s *Gentlemen* friends John Lloyd of *Trewyn* and Robert Evans of *Corwen* were entrusted with £440 from Griffith’s *personal Estate* - to invest in lands and finance for the benefit of Griffith’s descendants.



Old type of farm machinery at Glan Alwen barns

It seems that Griffith’s heir **David Davies**, Glan Alwen, *Gentleman*, never married, but his 1816 Will (SA/1816/89) provided from his *real Estate* for his spinster sister **Margaret Davies**. She received *Board, Lodging, Maintenance and all manner of necessaries at Glan Alwen for the term of her natural life* and David’s *natural daughter* **Mary Davies** was also to receive £400, either upon marriage or if and when she should choose to leave *Glan Alwen* unmarried. Griffith’s friends Morris Edwards of Bala and Edward Edwards of Corwen,

were to manage the finances and brother **Edward Davies** inherited Griffith's *personal Estate*.

Although as late as **1930** the burial of one more **David Davies, Glanalwen** (66) was recorded for the Parish of Corwen, by the time of the 1838 Llangar Tithe Apportionment a **John Jones** both owned and occupied Glan Alwen, with 38 acres and field names including *Cae Ysgubor* (barn), *Cae`r Berllan* (orchard) and *Fallen Fanadl* (*banadl* meaning broom). A John Jones of Bala was a witness to the 1816 Will of David Davies (as was also Cadwalader Jones, *Limeman* at nearby *Hafod*) so there may have been a connection?)



Glan Alwen outbuilding as approached from Telford's toll road (now the A5)

The **1871** census records at *Glan Alwen* a **Camber** family who had formerly lived in the East Indies. Wife **Mary Camber** had been born in Benares and daughters **Hester, Noah** [?] and son **Augustus** in Assam, but daughter **Augusta** in Scarborough. Also listed were a *Governess, Nurse, Cook, Housemaid* and *Groom*. But as a *Cowman* and *deaf and dumb Dairy Maid* were listed separately for Glan Alwen, did they lodge in one of the outbuildings?

However, by 1891 the census records only *Farmer William Evans* with a *Housekeeper* and just one *Agricultural Labourer*. And in 1901 *Glan Alwen*'s garden was recorded as part of Rhug Estate, with Coflein⁷ stating:

“This garden is depicted on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of Merionethshire VII, sheet 16 (1901). Its main elements on that map include parterres, woodland, walled garden, quadrangular enclosure, pond, orchard, lawn (possible), antiquity (contrived)? and river.”

No garden or house remain at *Glan Alwen* within the peaceful and productive organic farmland of today, but hopefully my research on the lives of its ancient owners and inhabitants will contribute to giving them a place in history!



Glan Alwen outbuilding looking towards the A5

1. P.J.Y.W. Lloyd, 1881, *The History of the Princes, the Lords Marcher, and the ancient Nobility of Powys Fadog*, VI, p 43.
2. House history for *Ty'n llan*, Gwyddelwern:
http://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20013_HH_22_Tyn-Llan.pdf
3. House history for *Ucheldre*, Gwyddelwern on DOWHG website
4. *St Asaph Probate Records* are at the National Library of Wales.
5. William Irvine`s notes on the 1665-6 Lay Subsidy Roll E 179 (Gwynedd archives, Z/M/344/ 16-18)
6. *Merioneth Quarter Sessions Rolls* for the Hundred of Edernion
7. <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/265145/details/glan-alwen-garden>

Jenny Lees 2018

Dŵr Mawr, Llangar-The Great Flood in 1846

The following fascinating account is said to be an extract from *Hynafiaethon Edeyrnion* by Dr Hywel Cernyw Williams¹ (personal communication): “The weather had been exceedingly hot, no clouds and clear sky. At about 5pm on 3rd August 1846 there was a great change. The sky became enveloped in dark ominous clouds, the sun being hidden from view and it was almost dark. The people became very frightened and thought something was about to happen. Dreadful peals of thunder accompanied by vivid flashes of lightning saw further signs of coming storm. Suddenly torrents of rain began to fall, thunder rolled, lightning flashed and rain continued to fall far into the night. A terrible darkness set in and there was no sign of abatement. The lightning lit up the scene for a moment and revealed an awful sight. People frantically scurried about frightened. Many left their houses to congregate in safer places.

Rain ceased in early morning of 4th August and there was a terrible scene of havoc. Corwen streets were torn up, the valley was an expanse of water. Never before had such a flood been seen. Streams were raging torrents, barrels of beer floated in the Harp Hotel. **Pritchard**, the proprietor, was nearly drowned when trying to cross from one room to another. He was swept away, but fortunately caught hold of a branch of an apple tree and perched himself up the tree until the water subsided and assistance came.

The only record of drowning was of **Mrs Jones**, *Lletty*, Llangar who was drowned when trying to cross the brook. (There is a reference to a story about **Huw Davies** rescuing children, but until now I have failed to find the story). *Ty Nant Isaf Gogryn* was also washed away during the storm. This house was situated near *Nant Gogryn* where *Ty'n y Berth Cottages* are now. The tenant at the time was Thomas Jones, who just managed to rescue his wife and himself in time.

The old Wesleyan Chapel in Corwen suffered great damage. Torrents of water rushed through the chapel, benches floated in the water and windows were broken. The water rushed also through the Corwen Rectory's windows. Where the Midland Bank now stands a huge stone came to rest. A queer character, a little the worse for drink, mounted the stone and preached at the top of his voice an impromptu sermon – one sentence only has been handed down: “Like this was the destruction of Jerusalem.” For about 30 years afterwards the 3rd of August was set apart to offer thanks for the town's deliverance. This custom shows some idea of the magnitude of flood”

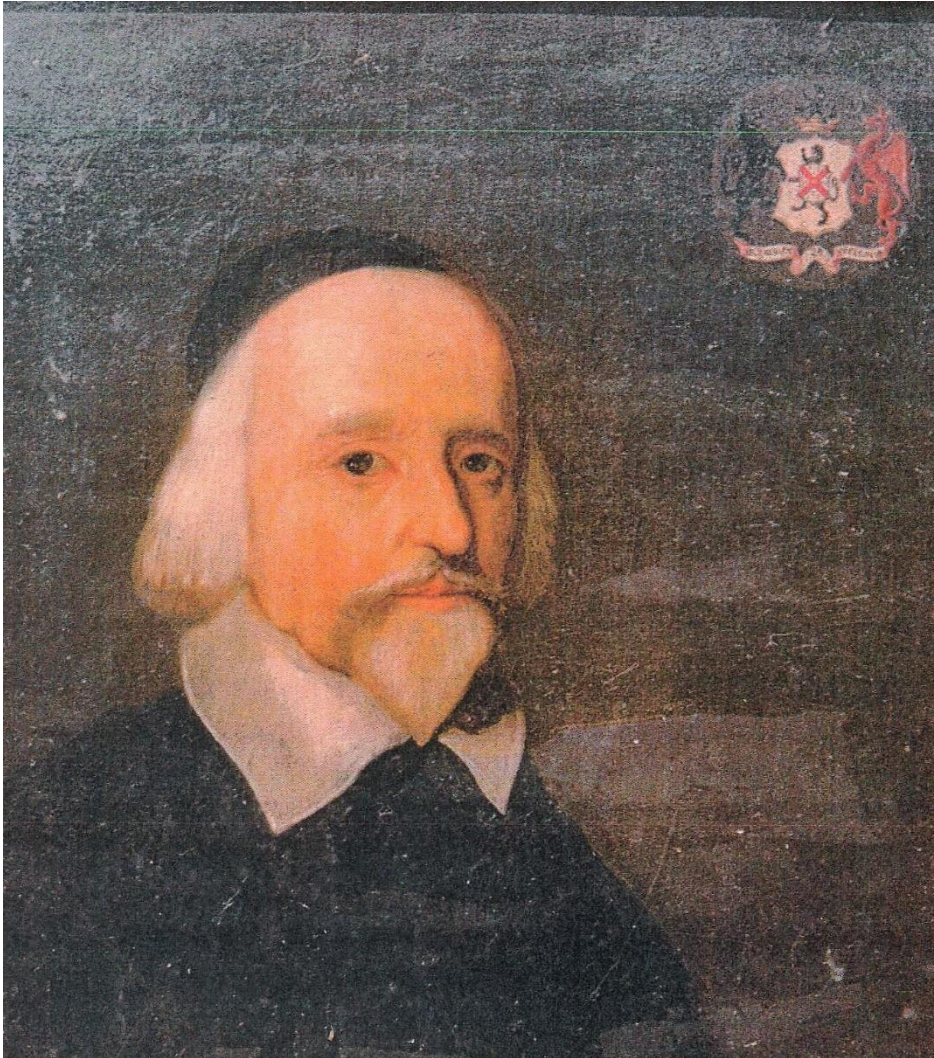
Interestingly, in 2013, Dr Cerys Jones of Aberystwyth University, discussing research on past and present flash flooding, mentioned the heavy rain on high ground in Ceredigion that led to flash flooding between the 30th July and 2nd August 1846. Two men on horseback died near Talsarn when swept away and there was extensive damage along the rivers *Aeron*, *Arth*, *Peris* and *Cledan* to bridges, houses and chapels, as well as to *Llansanffraid* cemetery.²

1. Dr Hywel Cernyw Williams, who was buried in Corwen in May 1937, was in charge of the Baptist churches at Cynwyd and Corwen between 1868 and 1918.

2. <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2013/08/title-139152-en.html>

Our Farming Heritage: Part One

Some interesting details of early local farming practices are contained in the *Memorandum Book* (1662-74)¹ of **Baron Humffrey Hughes** of Gwerclas. His personal recording of agricultural activity shows the rotation of *wheat, pease, barley* and *oates*, and mentions sheep *heeded ... On Berwyn by Thomas ap John ap Hugh* as well as *Sheepe in the Enclosures*. And we learn the exact date in 1664 on which the *hogg sheepe* were sent to the mountain -the 25th of March.



Humphrey Hughes of Gwerclas, High Sheriff of Merionethshire 1670

Around a hundred years later in February 1774² Baroness Margaret Hughes Lloyd, living in a new house on the same site, sent her friend Elizabeth a *Memorandum for cultivating the demesne and lands at Gwerclas, Given by Mr Eames*. This seemed to be very up to date farming advice at the time,³ and the fields of *Cefn y fedwen* and *Cefn clover* (which also appear on the adapted 1838 tithe map below) were to be treated as follows:

“Plowing them something deeper than Usual for Turnips – in April or May ... and to harrow the whole till it becomes quite fine picking off and burning the Couch grass and other foul [fat?] weeds, in the beginning of June to lay on the Manure consisting of lime and stable dung, the proportion to each are 25 hobi[e?]ts of lime and 8 Loads of dung if it can be procured – Plow in the lime and dung as it is spread on the fallow and sow the Turnip seed from the 20th to the 30th of June The Turnips to be cast upon the ground with sheep”



Adaptated tithe map: Gwerclas field names in black and Hafod names in red (Jenny Lees)

By this date more varied crops were now included in the instructions for yearly succession – barley followed by oats, clover, hay and then wheat before finally sowing turnips again in 1779. But we are also warned that:

“It may be objected that Mutton fed on turnips is ill tainted, but ... the butchers will give a better price for it, & by taking the sheep from the turnips when fattened & giving them a little Hay for 6 or 8 days until they are slaughtered, the flesh regains its flavour & will be as much superior to the grass Mutton as it exceeds it in fatness”

And we even learn where to buy the seed: “The quantity of turnip seed one Pound to an Acre. Half the ground to be sown with Green Top, the other half the Norfolk Red Top, and may be bought of Mess.rs Buirton & Forbes at their Seed Shop Birmingham.”

Farming has often been combined with other occupations, and *The Lime Quarry at Hafod y Calch*⁴ describes how in 1849 about 50,000 bushels of lime were burned annually at the *Gwerclas* and *Havod* rocks. Lime was burned with peat and spread on the farmland, and in the 1871 Census widowed Jane Jones of *Hafod* was listed as *Lime Burner* as well as *Farmer* of 120 acres.



Ploughing match at Dolydd Hafod (Hafod y calch) 1913, with William Jones, Penlan Bach and Roderick Owen, Bryn Berllan. (Image courtesy of Gwenan Roberts)

Over the years between the 1940s and the present day, five brothers from Cynwyd`s Bodden family worked at many of our local farmsteads. Aneurin was at *Bodheulog*, Nedw at *Felin Isaf*, Will at both *Cae Mawr* and *Hafod y Calch* and Emrys Bodden at *Gwerclas*. Emrys still farms *Tyn y Berth* today, together with his brother Berwyn and his own son Gareth, and he and his wife Dorothy share here some fascinating tales of farming life over the last seventy years!

Beginning work in 1947 at fifteen, Emrys remembers being sat on a wall outside the Post Office when Stephen Tudor of *Gwerclas* asked him “Will you work for me?” By the age of seventeen Emrys was shepherd to *Gwerclas* and driving the farm`s flocks of sheep to wherever they grazed on the mountains.

On the *Berwyn* his shepherding route would lead through Cynwyd village and beyond *Felin Uchaf* to the open mountain, and somewhere in what is now forest was a well known as *Ffynnon Sobri*. Apparently it gained this name because

lads walking over from *Llangynog*, returning at 9pm from a night`s drinking in Cynwyd, would sober up by quenching their thirst there! Sometimes Emrys also drove sheep for other farms such as *Bodheulog*, from where the flocks travelled on the ancient Berwyn mountain trackway to *Swch Cae Rhiw, Llanarmon*.

Many farming activities were carried out communally in those days. A threshing machine would be passed from farm to farm between October and March, with 10 to 12 people working together on each occasion, and *Gwerclas* and *Hafod* each took two or three days` labour to complete the task.



Rhug Estate`s Cartshed-granary at Hafod (Jenny Lees, December 2018)

Sheep dipping was also communal and there were originally sheep pens belonging to *Bryn Eryr* (at that time a farmhouse) in the heart Cynwyd village. When it came to shearing time, about 1500 sheep would be gathered into the large Gwerclas field, lying between *Hafod* and Gwerclas, that Emrys still calls *Gamog* (*Gamog fawr* on the tithe map above). As he and Dorothy say, farming was a more sociable and less lonely occupation in times past!

Another activity taking place from farm to farm was the slaughtering of pigs. John Parry “Pant” (of *Pant Gruffydd*, now called *Pant Teg*) worked by day with Emrys`s father Dai Bodden at a local quarry. But at around 6pm John would go to a particular farm to kill their pig or pigs). Next night he would do the same for a pig at next door`s farm, but also return to the previous farm to prepare the carcass which had been left for a day to hang there.

Gwerclas farmland spans both sides of the Dee and Emrys remembers how, while crossing *Pont Gwerclas* with only a rope to hold on to during repairs, his sensible dogs refused to follow and swam across the fast flowing river instead!

Very many years ago Emrys`s brother Will, who sadly has now died, told me how he and three other farm workers used to “sleep in” at Hafod. They would join the Jones family for breakfast while old Edward Jones presided over reading aloud from the Bible. On the plaster walls of the granary at Hafod (pictured above) people have inscribed their names from at least 1897, and we see from my snapshot below that Will`s name remains there among them!



A lot of the “graffiti” was written by children, some of whom recorded their age, weight and height) and we don`t know how old Will was when he wrote this. But we do know from Emrys that his brother may have been only 12 when he started at neighbouring *Cae Mawr*; looked after by the farmer`s family there.

In Part Two of this article I hope, with the help of anyone who has tales to tell, to record more of our areas`s fascinating farming history!

References

1. Merfyn Wyn Tomos, *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society* 2014 Vol.XVII, Part I, pp 1-25)
2. Gwerclas House History on DOWHG website
3. Overton, M, 1996, *Agricultural revolution in England, the transformation of the agrarian economy 1500-1850*, Cambridge University Press).
4. Article by Jenny Lees in *Cynwyd Scrapbook One*, pp12-13

Jenny Lees 2018

Plas Isaf - Another Edeyrnion Dynasty: Part Two

Part One of *Plas Isaf – Another Edeyrnion Dynasty*¹ told how the ancient demesne of *Plas Isaf* played an important role in Edeyrnion`s history – from at least the time of **Robert Wynne Pyers**, who died there in 1642-3, to the 1703 burial at Llangar of **Owen Eyton**, Rector and Vicar of Corwen.

Following Owen`s death, his eldest son **William Eyton** paid 7s 0d for the 1704 church *mise* in the *Township of Cymor* (Llangar Churchwardens`Accounts) and William`s Will² (1709-10) funded residences for the widows of Merionethshire clerics at *Coleg y Groes*, Corwen. (As he was of *Plas Warren*, Ellesmere, Salop when he died, William had perhaps made an advantageous marriage?).



Coleg y Groes beside St Mael and St Sulien's Church, Corwen

Interestingly, we learn from the 1714 *Bond* (SA/1714/121) of **John Eyton**, another of **Reverend Owen Eyton**`s sons, that **Kenrick Eyton**, the Rector of Corwen in 1704 who was aged 18 when at Jesus College Oxford in 1689,³ was John`s *naturall and Lawfull* brother. So was Kenrick Owen Eyton`s illegitimate son? (His name does not appear in *Llangar Parish Records* alongside the baptisms of **Owen Eyton** and wife **Margaret Wynne**`s children; **William, Owen, Gerard** (buried an infant 1669), **Rice, Henry, Robert** and **John** are

listed prior to **Margaret**'s sad burial on 7th January 1680 – perhaps in childbirth as **Thomas Eyton Plas Issa**, was buried next day.

By 1714 Owen Eyton's son **Robert Owens**, married to **Martha**, was paying 14 shillings church *mise* for *Plass- issaf* as well as 13s 4d for *Llangar* - more than that paid by *Gwerclas* - and by 1789 the Will of **William Owen, Plas Issa, Gent** (SA/1789/85) put in trust *All and singular my Messuages, Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments.... in the several parishes of Llangar, Corwen and Llandrillo*, for the *use and behoof* of his niece **Catherine Owen**.

Catherine Owen, heiress of Plas Isaf, married Hugh Davies of *Penybont*⁴ and her daughter **Margaret Davies** of *Plas Issa* married **John Manners Kerr** in 1814.⁴ Margaret died without children and left *Plas Isaf* to her husband John, who later married heiress of *Maesmor*, Katherine Lloyd, in 1829 at *Llangwm*.⁴



Plas Isaf viewed from Nant Rhyd y Saeson (Jenny Lees 2016)

The 1825 sale catalogue for *Gwerclas Estate*⁶ mentions that *Coed Coppa Diri* - presumably the wooded area between *Copar Derw* and *Hafod* later known as Jubilee Wood - had timber belonging to *Gwerclas* but *pasturage* owned by the *Plas Isaf Estate*, and cattle grazed in this wood within living memory.

John Manners Kerr of *Plas Issa* was High Sheriff of Merionethshire in 1838, and of *Maesmor* in his 1843 Will (National Archives, PROB 11/1979/274). He was still landowner of *Plas Isa* in 1838, but with tenant **John Jones**.⁵ *Llangar*

Parish Records list the 1830 baptism of **Winifred Jones**, daughter of **John and Mary, Gent, Plas Isaf**, and this family feature in the 1841 census for *Plas Isa*.

In 1861 there was still a **Miss Jones** at Plas Isaf, as *The North Wales Chronicle* for Saturday January 5th observed that: “The neighbourhood of Corwen has been remarkable, from time immemorial, for the benevolence of the rich in providing for the poor and entertaining their children during this severe season of the year. A sad loss to scores of poor families was the death of the charitable Lady Vaughan, Rhug, and it was thought by many that, after her decease, the good old days of Christmas trees, tea parties, dinners, &c., would be over. But we are happy in being able to state that good King Christmas has vouchsafed to his subjects, in this part of his Christian realm, excellent cheer this year again, through the kindness of **Miss Jones, Plas Issa**, who ... has shown herself to be a most charitable, benevolent and pious lady.”

This article also relates that on December the 27th: “The Cynwyd Sunday School and the boys and girls from the Corwen House of Industry [the workhouse?], were invited to Plas Issa, where they partook of an excellent dinner; Miss Jones, Mrs. Wagstaff, and Miss Wagstaff, (Rhug), Mrs. Taylor, and Master and Mine Taylor, (Colomendy), and the Rev. W. Williams, (Llangar Rectory) kindly waiting upon them. After dinner, several carols and glees were sung. The party then went out into the open air, where some kicked the football, others played bandy, &c. When they were nearly tired, they all proceeded to see the two Christmas Trees, which were beautifully decorated and brilliantly lighted, very much to the credit of Mr. T. Ashton, the butler. Here each tried his chance and obtained two or three useful prizes. After returning thanks to their kind benefactress, and partaking of some cake and wine, they parted much delighted”

And *Plas Isaf*’s excellent tradition of hospitality continues today! It is now the home of the Jones family, who run both their organic farm of 540 hectares and provide a venue for events in their meticulously restored (Grade II listed) historic barn and beautiful terraced gardens.⁷

1. Jenny Lees (2016) *Plas Isaf – Another Edeyrnion Dynasty: Part One* in Cynwyd Scrapbook Two
2. Will of William Eyton, Gwynedd archives, XD2 / 394.
3. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/alumni-oxon/1500-1714/pp440-479> and *Llythyrau John Lloyd* (Cylchgrawn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru – XVII. Page 201 mentions Ken Eyton’s father’s house, *Plas Isaff*, Llangar.
4. <http://humphrysfamilytree.com/Kerr/john.manners.html>
5. Apportionment of the Rent-Charge in lieu of tithes for Parish of Llangar, Merioneth, 1838, 25 September (NLW AC388/R3)
6. (XD2/ 3888) *Schedule of Demesne lands of Gwerclas upon purchase by Rug in 1824*
7. <https://www.plas-isaf.co.uk/about-us/>

Jenny Lees 2018

THE CYNWYD DEE BRIDGE by Elwyn Ashford Jones

Throughout the centuries many attempts have been made to bridge the river Dee, but due to its width and strong currents this was not an easy task. It is possible that the first bridge to cross the Dee was built by the Romans at Deva (Chester). A stone bridge was built on the same site during the Middle Ages and is still known today as Handbridge. In 1345 the Llangollen bridge, one of the Seven Wonders of Wales, was built by John Trevor of *Pengwern*, who was bishop of St. Asaph at the time.

There is no record of any other bridges built across the Dee between Llangollen and Bala towards the end of the Middle Ages, but in 1612 a bridge was eventually built to cross the river Dee at Cynwyd and its 400th anniversary was celebrated in 2012. The late Trefor O. Jones, a local historian and author of *O Ferwyn i Fynyllod*, believed there could have been a previous bridge on the site that was swept away by the great flood of 1610 - the same flood that swept away the church at *Llansanffraid Glyndyfrdwy* (Carrog today), though we have no historical evidence of this.

The date 1612 has been rather crudely carved on the parapet of the bridge with the letters IWI appearing above the date - IWI denoting the name of John and Jane Wynn of Gwnodl (most probably *Gwnodl Fawr* today.) The Wynn family were well-known local gentry and descendants of Roger ap John Wynn's family at Llandderfel. John Wynn of Gwnodl married Jane, daughter of Robert Wynn of *Maesmor* near Maerdy/Dinmael and these two were most probably responsible for the erection of the Dee bridge at Cynwyd.

The bridge has four main arches traversing the river and on the northern side there are three smaller arches to allow excess water through during floods, which occurred frequently in the past. It is difficult to ascertain whether another three small arches were constructed on the southern side, as the bridge here was widened and heightened during the building of the Corwen and Bala Railway in 1865-66 (in order that the minor road crossing the Dee bridge could proceed across a high embankment and over the new railway bridge). At the foot of the embankment on the Corwen side the ruins of an old cattle shed can still be seen. This was

originally a small cottage called *Pig y Bont* (End or Tip of the Bridge) and the name has now been re-used for another house in the village.

The Dee bridge is a narrow stone-built bridge with only space for a single vehicle to cross at a time. On both sides are several triangular nooks, ideal for fishing with a rod in the river below or spending a summer evening gossiping and admiring the wonderful scenery. In Spring 1989 the bridge was closed for 5 to 6 months so that Whitley Brothers contractors could carry out essential work to strengthen it for 21st century traffic. Traditional mortar was used between the stones, to retain the historic character of the bridge and enhance its appearance.



Cynwyd village with road to the right leading towards the Dee Bridge

Before the bridge was built people crossed the river by boat. On a piece of common land about three hundred metres upstream from the bridge there are traces of an old cottage called *Pen yr Erw* which was originally the ferryman's cottage. Once the travellers crossed the river safely they would proceed along the old road through Ifor Williams Trailers' factory site to *Bryn yr Eryr* in the village and then up the *Trystion* valley and over the Berwyn mountain. This road at one time was known as 'The Old Oswestry Road' and probably reached as far as the old town in Salop.

Some historians have maintained that this road was originally an important Roman road between Kanovium (Caerhun) in the Conwy Valley and Wroxeter near Shrewsbury. In a field by the bridge there are traces of an old house called *Pen Palmant*. 'Palmant' is the Welsh word for pavement, so was the supposed Roman road paved? Undoubtedly, the crossing near Cynwyd bridge is an ancient crossing and can be traced back to the Roman period or even further. As this was an important and vital bridge during the 17th century, several poems were written about it, including one 'englyn' by a Thomas Evans of *Hendre Forfydd*, *Llansanffraid Glyndyfrdwy* (Carrog), indicating the precise date of its construction.

Mil chwechant gwarant gwirwyd – da oeswr
Oed Iesu pan godwyd;
A deuddeg ion union wyd,
Pand tu ganoes pont Cynwyd.

(*Mil chwechant*: one thousand and six hundred; *deuddeg ion* : twelve years.)

Another englyn involving the bridge was composed by a local bard called Mathew Owen of *Tŷ'n Llwyn*, Llangar. Once, when he was invited to attend a banquet at *Gwerclas* Hall, Mathew Owen decided not to travel through the village of Cynwyd and over the bridge but rather to cross the river directly by boat. On returning late at night and worse for wear, he was nearly drowned in the strong currents. In the poem he vows never to cross the river in a boat at night again while there is a bridge nearby!

'Da'i ddim i gafnu yn y cyfnos, - i bant
Os bydd pont yn agos;
Af gefn dydd i gafn diddos,
'Da'i i gafn neb ar gefn nos.

('Cafn' today means a trough but in the old days it also meant a boat and 'cafnu' – boating)

Elwyn A. Jones.

(This is a translation by the author of his Welsh article in *Cynwyd Scrapbook Two*)

Cynwyd Scrapbook Three



Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group Denbighshire Branch

2018

