

The Landmark Trust

LLWYN CELYN History Album Volume I: History



'...this is your prototype, who, season by season
Against siege of rain and the wind's attrition,
Preserves his stock, an impregnable fortress
Not to be stormed even in death's confusion.
Remember him, then, for he, too, is a winner of wars,
Enduring like a tree under the curious stars.'

- *A Peasant* (1946) R.S. Thomas

Caroline Stanford

April 2019

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BASIC DETAILS

Built	1420
Listed	Grade I
Tenure	Freehold owned by Landmark
Opened as a Landmark	October 2018
Conservation architect	John Goom of John C. Goom Architects, Evesham
Structural Engineer	Tom Hill of Mann Williams, Cardiff
Quantity Surveyor	Adrian Stenning
Building analyst	Richard K. Morriss
Landmark project manager	Richard Burton
Main contractors	I J Preece & Son of Wormbridge, Hereford
Roofers	Rowlands Roofing Limited of Hereford
Below ground archaeology	Headland Archaeology
Ecology	Wildwood Ecology Ltd of Caerphilly
Dendrochronology	Prof. Neil Loader & Dr. Danny MacCarroll of UK Oak Project at Swansea University, & Dan Miles of Oxford Dendrochronology Unit.
Timber sampling	Ross Cook of Archaeoscan.
Additional documentary research	Professor David Austin, Ian Bass.
Artists-in-residence	Catherine Baker, Toril Brancher, Stefan Caddick, Jamie Lake and Clare Potter.

Supporters of Llwyn Celyn

We are hugely grateful to the 1,230 supporters who gave their financial support so generously to make the restoration of Llwyn Celyn possible. They include:



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The National Lottery**
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund

**Cyllid a godwyd gan
Y Loteri Genedlaethol**
ac a ddyfarnwyd gan Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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We are also grateful to the generous supporters who have chosen to remain anonymous, and numerous others who supported the appeal, including those who took part in the Landmark raffle which helped to support this project.

Thank you!

Landmark also has had help and input from an exceptionally large pool of people as we learnt about Llwyn Celyn and its setting.

We would like to thank especially:

Pip Bevan; Emma Davies and Edwina Bell from Llanthony Secunda; Mary & John Evans; Dr Oliver & Caroline Fairclough; Meic Haines, Andrea & David Jackman; Tim Jones; Jim Keates; Cordelia & Colin Passmore; Simon Powell; Eddie Proctor; Dr Richard Suggett of RCHAMW; Douglas Wright; all at Lower Stanton Farm;

All our volunteers who worked so hard on site in all weathers...
And all members of the Llanthony Valley & District History Group.

We couldn't have done it without you!

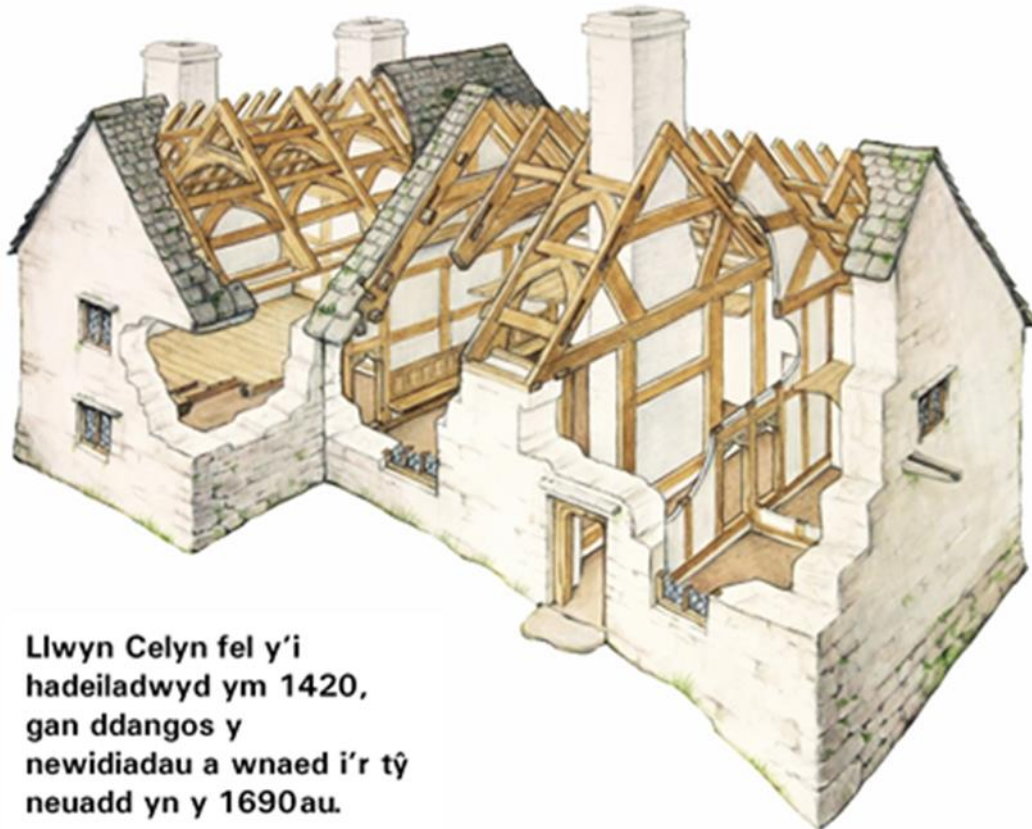


The Llanthony Valley & District History Group celebrate news of the HLF grant in 2015. Initiated through HLF funding, by the time Llwyn Celyn opened in 2018, the group had over 120 subscribing members – or around 1 in 10 valley residents.

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LLWYN CELYN ISAF

Mae dadansoddiad o bren Llwyn Celyn, adeilad rhestredig Gradd 1, wedi datgelu i'r tŷ gael ei godi ym 1420. Prin y mae wedi newid er diwedd yr 17eg ganrif, a'r cyfnod hwn yn bennaf y mae gwaith adfer Landmark yn ceisio ei adlewyrchu. Er gwaethaf yr holl ymchwilio, ni wyddom i sicrwydd bwy gododd y tŷ gwreiddiol yn Llwyn Celyn, na pham. Pan gafodd ei adeiladu fel rhan o ystad Priordy Llanddewi Nant Hodni, roedd Cymru newydd ddiodef cyfnod go drafferthus. Dilynwyd sawl ton o'r pla rhwng 1349 a 1400 gan ddirinistr dan ddwylo'r ddwy ochr elyniaethus yn ystod Gwrthryfel Owain Glyn Dŵr ym 1401-15. Ychydig iawn o esiamplau o bensaernïaeth werinol sydd wedi goroesi o'r cyfnod, ac fel tŷ preswyl mawr ei fri mae Llwyn Celyn o'r herwydd yn drysor mwy gwerthfawr byth.



Mae Llwyn Celyn wedi cadw ei gynllun llawr canoloesol nodweddiadol. Ar y dechrau roedd ganddo neuadd ganolog â thair cilfach, agored i fyny hyd at drawstiau godidog y to, y codai'r mwg iddynt o'r tân yng nghanol y llawr. Ystyrir hwn yn dŷ sylweddol ei faint am y cyfnod, a'r neuadd oedd y gofod byw canolog i'r teulu i gyd. Eisteddai meistr y tŷ wrth fwrdd mawr ar y pen 'uchaf', a nodwedd brin yw'r fainc sefydlog sydd wedi goroesi yma. Ar ben 'isaf' y neuadd, y tu ôl i bared neu sgrîn o bren, rhedai coridor traws, a'r tu draw i

hwnnw safai'r bwtri a'r pantri, lle y cedwid nwyddau gwlyb a sych yn y drefn honno.

Nodwedd angyffredin arall a orosodd yn wyrthiol yw'r heulfa ddeulawr. Fe'i cyrhaeddid, mae'n debyg, drwy ddringo grisiau troellog tynn rhwng y waliau i fyny o'r neuadd. Er i'r grisiau ddiflannu erbyn hyn, daethpwyd o hyd i'r drws pigfain a arweiniai iddynt yn ystod y gwaith adfer. Darparai adain yr heulfa siambrau preifat hardd ar gyfer 'arglwydd' neu feistr y tŷ. Gellid ei chyrraedd hefyd ar y llawr isaf o ben uchaf y neuadd, trwy ddrws â gorddrws pren drosto â cherfiadau cain yn cynnwys dwy darian heb eu haddurno. Mae dau orddrws hyfrytach byth i'w gweld yn y coridor traws. Mae'r rhain i gyd yn nodwedd eithriadol mewn tŷ preswyl Cymreig.

Mae'r cwpl to a orosodd yn fwy angyffredin fyth. Bwa sy'n cynnal y to yw cwpl, ac mae'r 'spere truss' yma'n fersiwn fwy addurnol ohono sy'n ymestyn i lawr i'r llawr isaf, ac ynddo agoriad sy'n creu mynedfa seremonïol i neuadd. Yn Llwyn Celyn, gellir gweld prenïau'r cwpl o hyd yn y coridor traws. Cyn i'r simnai a adeiladwyd ei atal, roedd agoriad canolog yn y cwpl to hwn yn caniatáu golwg uniongyrchol ar y ddau orddrws braf yn y coridor traws o'r bwrdd uchel. Mae'n amlwg bod Llwyn Celyn wedi cael ei adeiladu ar gyfer un mawr ei fri, efallai i briordy Priordy Llanddewi ei hun hyd yn oed.

Mae hanes Llwyn Celyn ynghlwm wrth Briordy Awstinaidd Llanddewi Nant Hodni, a oedd piau'r tir lle y'i codwyd ers dechrau'r 12^{fed} ganrif. Diddymwyd y priordy ym 1538, ynghyd â Llanthony Secunda yng Nghaerloyw, yr oedd wedi cael ei gyfuno ag ef ym 1480. Erbyn hynny roedd Llanthony-yng-Nghymru'n dŷ crefyddol go ddryslyd.

Prynwyd ystadau'r priordy ym 1546 gan gyfreithiwr cefnog o'r enw Nicholas Arnold, ac aros ym meddiant yr un teulu a wnaethant tan 1726. O hynny ymlaen bu Llwyn Celyn yn fferm dan ofal tenantiaid. Cyfnod o ffyniant angyffredin oedd yr 16eg a'r 17eg ganrifoedd i denantiaid ffermydd ystad Llanthony. Diolch i rentiau isel ar brydlesi copihold hir a phrisiau cynyddol eu cynnyrch, arhosodd elw'r tir ym meddiant y tenantiaid yn hytrach na mynd i bocedi'r tîrffeddiawyr. Arweiniodd hyn at greu dosbarth o ffermwyr-denantiaid boneddig ac iwmyr ffyniannus, annibynnol eu bryd. A hwythau'n ffermio llethrau serth, roedd ganddynt hawliau pori yn ogystal ar dir comin a gwastatiroedd ar y brigau. Mae natur ddaearegol y mynyddoedd yn cynnig cerrig safonol ar gyfer adeiladu mewn blociau sy'n hollti'n naturiol. Golygai hyn y gallai'r ffermwyr godi ffermdai a thai allan cedyrn safonol, sydd i'w gweld hyd heddiw ar draws y dyffryn.

Un o'r llinachau ffermio pwysig hyn oedd y teulu Watkins o Llwyn Celyn, a ymgwymerodd â gwelliannau sylweddol yn y tŷ tua 1690. William Watkin, neu ei frawd Thomas efallai, a osododd nenfwd yng ngofod agored y neuadd i greu siambr fawr uwchben ar y llawr cyntaf newydd. Esgynnid iddi i fyny grisiau newydd o bren a osodwyd wrth ochr simnai newydd enfawr ar gyfer lle tân a

ffwrn fara (y daethom o hyd iddi y tu cefn i le tân o'r 20^{fed} ganrif). Ar yr un adeg, ychwanegwyd cegin ar wahân wrth gefn y tŷ, a ffwrn fara arall. Codwyd tŷ anifeiliaid ac adeilad bach arall yn yr un cyfnod wrth ochr yr ysgubor ddyrnu (sydd felly yn hŷn na 1695), a mwy na thebyg y tŷ seidr a'r twlc mochyn hefyd. Y teulu Watkins a greodd Llwyn Celyn fel y'i gwelwn heddiw, ac ychydig a newidiodd ar ôl eu hamser hwy yn y tŷ. Roedd gan y fferm bellach yr holl adeiladau arferol a oedd eu hangen i fod yn hunangynhaliol: ffwrn ddyrnu, tŷ seidr, tŷ anifeiliaid, stablau, twlc moch a thai o'dyn ar gyfer sychu brag i facsu ac ŷd. Gellir casglu felly mai ffermio cymysg – tir â'r da byw – oedd yr arfer yma, gan wneud y gorau o gaeau ffrwythlon y dyffryn a thiroedd diffaith yr ucheldiroedd.

O ganol y 19eg tan ganol yr 20fed ganrif, y teulu Jasper a ffermiodd yn Llwyn Celyn. Ym 1958, fe brynwyd Llwyn Celyn gan eu perthnasau Tom ac Olive Powell, a'u meibion hwy, y perchnogion presennol Trefor a Lyndon, sy'n dal i ffermio'r tir o'i gwmpas o hyd. Erbyn yr 21ain ganrif, roedd adeiladau Llwyn Celyn wedi dirywio'n arw dan effaith canrifoedd o law a'r dŵr a ddisgynnai o'r llethrau. Yn 2007, aeth Cadw at y Landmark Trust i ofyn am gymorth. Trefnwyd cytundeb caffael cymhleth trwy gymorth grantiau oddi wrth Cadw a Chronfa Goffa'r Dreftadaeth Genedlaethol, a'i gwnaeth hi'n bosibl i adeiladu cartref newydd i'r teulu Powell.

Mae'r athroniaeth sy'n sail i'r gwaith atgyweirio ac adfer am gadw cymaint â phosibl o adeiledd gwreiddiol y tŷ, gan ddychwelyd iddo yr olwg a oedd arno tua 1700, yn syth ar ôl i'r nenfwd a'r simnai gael eu gosod yn y neuadd. Golygai hyn ddadwneud rhai o newidiadau'r 19^{eg} a'r 20^{fed} ganrifoedd. Rhoddodd prosiect adfer dros ddwy flynedd waith a phrofiad i lu o grefftwyr a pheirianwyr, a throsglwyddwyd crefftau a sgiliau traddodiadol i brentisiaid ac ymwelwyr fel ei gilydd. Cafodd muriau Llwyn Celyn eu tanategu yn y cefn a'u clymu'n anweledig at ei gilydd drwyddi draw â gwial resin; cafodd cyplau to gollyngedig a phreniau eraill eu sythu'n ofalus a'u had-osod yn eu lle dyledus â phegiau; cafodd y toi eu tynnu'n gyfangwbl a'u hail-osod gan ddefnyddio teils newydd o Gwm Olchon gerllaw. Cafodd pren pydredig ei docio yn ôl yn geidwadol fel y gellid sgarffio pren derw cadarn yn ei le.

Codwyd cerrig y lloriau i osod system gynhesu odanynt, a chodwyd bwyler sglodion pren ym mloc yr hen stablau. Sefydlwyd system wely cyrs i drin carthffosiaeth a gwellhawyd y systemau draenio ar draws y safle. Prin y bu angen adnewyddu'r gwaith maen, ond cyflawnwyd cryn dipyn o waith ailbwyntio a phlastro, gan ddefnyddio mortar calch traddodiadol bob amser. Yn nes ymlaen, glanhawyd y paent du oddi ar y trawstiau a gorddrysau pren godidog. Daethpwyd o hyd i nifer o drysorau yn ystod y gwaith: yn ogystal â lle tân y neuadd a'r gilfach ar gyfer ffwrn Fictoriaidd yn y gegin bresennol, datgelwyd y drws bwaog cudd yn y neuadd, ynghyd â'r ffenestr a wynebai'r dde ar ail lawr adain yr heulfa. Darganfuwyd dau hen esgid ynghudd (i

amddiffyn y lle rhag gwrachod o bosibl), un ohonynt o'r 17eg ganrif, a gadawyd y rhain yn ofalus yn eu gorffwysfa dan y bargod.

Atgyweiriwyd tai allan Llwyn Celyn mewn modd sy'n sicrhau bod eu golwg ar y safle amlwg hwn yn newid cyn lleied â phosibl. Y tu mewn iddynt, fe wnaethom yr hyn oedd eisiau i hybu eu defnydd yn y dyfodol. Mae'r hen dŷ seidr bellach yn ystafell wely ac ystafell ymolchi; y drws nesaf iddo, mae'r hen odyr sychu brag (sydd dan glo'n barhaus) yn gartref heddiw i dŵr oeri er lles yr ystlumod, y buom yn ymdrechu trwy gydol y prosiect i fodloni eu hanghenion a'r gofyniad statudol i gydlynu â hwy. Mae gan yr ystlumod ofod wedi'i dwymo hefyd dan do'r tŷ seidr. Yn yr hen stablau, â graffiti llawn cymeriad yn dal i addurno eu drws hollt, y mae'r peirianwaith gwresogi a thrydanol.

Diolch i gefnogaeth Cronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri, bu nifer sylweddol o bobl leol a gwirfoddolwyr yn chwarae eu rhan yn y prosiect. Mae gwirfoddolwyr wedi cyfrannu drwy gydol y prosiect yn ystod pedair Wythnos Dreftadaeth wrth ei Gwaith, lle buont yn cofrestru i ddysgu a rhannu gwahanol sgiliau, gan blannu perthi newydd, helpu i atgyweirio waliau sychion, ailbwyntio, glanhau lloriau coblog, gwyngalchu ac yn y blaen.

Mae'r gymuned leol wedi chwarae ei rhan hithau ers dechrau'r prosiect. Ymgynghoriadau â'r gymuned a arweiniodd Landmark at weddnewid Ysgubor Ddyrnu'r 18fed ganrif gan greu manau addysgol ac arddangosiadol cymunedol, gan gynnwys tŷ bynciau sylfaenol a fwriedir ar gyfer ymgeiswyr am Wobr Dug Caeredin. Mae hen feili'r defaid yn darparu lle delfrydol yn yr awyr agored ar gyfer y gweithgareddau crefft traddodiadol sy'n dal i ffynnu yn y dyffryn. Bydd ystafell ar agor yn ystod y dydd yn hen dŷ'r anifeiliaid i ddehongli hanes y dyffryn i gerddwyr ac ymwelwyr eraill. Mae partneriaethau wedi cael eu sefydlu â chyrff lleol, ynghyd â grŵp hanes lleol llewyrchus. Ac yn olaf, bu gennym bedwar artist preswyl yn ystod y prosiect: dau artist, llenor a ffotograffydd, a greodd rychwant o weithiau wedi'u hysbrydoli gan Llwyn Celyn. Mae Channel 4 wedi cynhyrchu rhaglen ddogfennol ddwy-ran ar destun prosiect adfer Llwyn Celyn. Derbyniodd Llwyn Celyn ddau ymweliad hefyd gan Noddwr Landmark, eub y Tywysog Siarl; daeth am y tro cyntaf cyn i'r gwaith ddechrau ym mis Gorffennaf 2014 wedi i'r grant galluogi gan Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri gael ei gadarnhau, a'r eildro ym mis Gorffennaf 2018, wedi i waith adfer y prif dŷ ddod i ben. Ar ddiwrnod poeth iawn, plannodd y Tywysog goeden afalau yn y berllan, a honno'n amrywiad hynafol Cymreig o'r enw Brith Mawr. Efallai iddi dyfu yma'n draddodiadol.



Llwyn Celyn when Landmark first visited, in May 2007.

Summary

Grade-I listed, Llwyn Celyn has been dated by timber analysis to 1420. The house has changed little since the late-17th century, and it is chiefly this period that Landmark's restoration seeks to highlight. Despite much research, we still do not for sure who built this core house at Llwyn Celyn, or why. When constructed, the house was part of the Llanthony Priory estate, and it was built just as Wales emerged from a period of great upheaval. Successive waves of plague from 1349 to 1400 were followed by the destruction of Owain Glyn Dŵr's Rising of 1401-15, done by Glyn Dŵr's army and the English alike. Very few vernacular Welsh houses survive from this period, and this makes Llwyn Celyn, as an exceptionally high status house for its day, all the more intriguing.

Llwyn Celyn still has its classic medieval floorplan. As first built, it had a 3-bay central hall, open to fine roof timbers, up to which smoke rose from a fire in the middle of the floor. This counts as a large house for the day, and the hall was the central living space for the whole household. The master of the household sat at a big table at the 'high' end, and the fixed bench here is a rare survival. At the 'low' end of the hall, beyond a wooden screen or partition, ran a cross passage, and beyond that were the buttery and the pantry, for storing wet and dry goods respectively.

The two-storey solar wing is primary, and another rare feature. It was probably reached by a tight, intramural spiral stone staircase leading up from the hall (now lost) but whose pointed doorway was uncovered during the restoration. The solar provided fine, private chambers for the 'lord' or master of the household and was also accessed at ground floor level from the high end of the hall through a finely carved wooden doorhead with blank shields. There are two even finer doorheads in the cross passage. These doorheads are exceptional in a Welsh domestic context.

Equally unusual is the survival of a spere truss. A truss is an arch that supports the roof, and a spere truss is a more decorative one extending down to the ground floor, with an opening to provide a ceremonial entrance to a hall. At Llwyn Celyn, its timbers can still be seen in the cross passage. Before the chimneystack blocked it, a central opening in this spere truss gave a direct view of the two fine doorheads in the cross passage from the high table. Llwyn Celyn was clearly built for someone of great status, perhaps even for the prior of Llanthony Priory himself.

Llwyn Celyn's history is bound up with the Augustinian Llanthony Priory, which from the early 12th century owned the land on which Llwyn Celyn is built. The priory was suppressed in 1538, along with Llanthony Secunda in Gloucester, with which it had been merged in 1480. Llanthony-in-Wales by then was a religious house in considerable disarray.



Llwyn Celyn on completion in summer 2018, one of the driest summers on record.

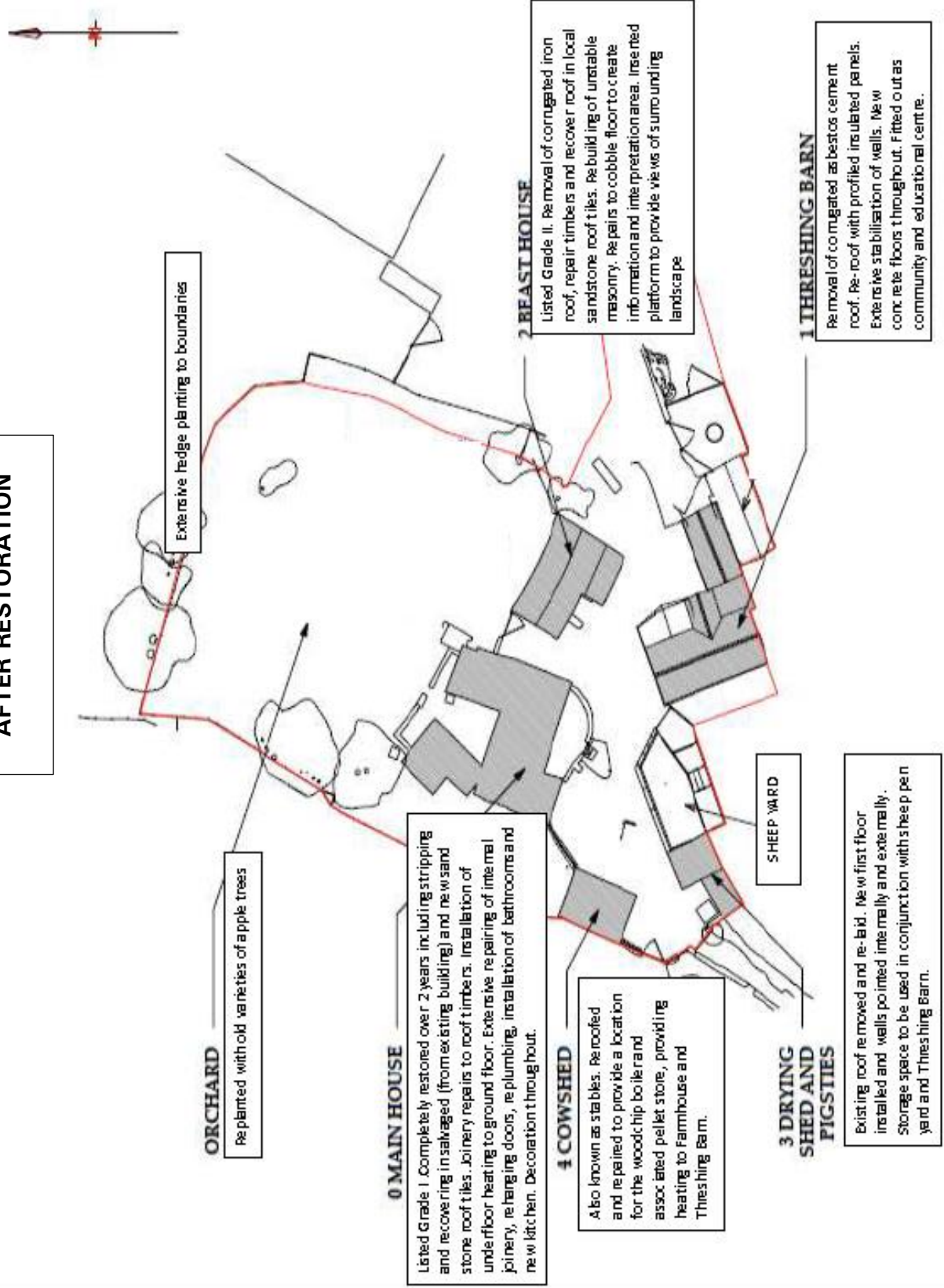
The priory estates were bought in 1546 by a rich lawyer, Nicholas Arnold, whose family owned them until 1726. From then on, Llwyn Celyn became a tenanted farm. The 16th and 17th centuries were a time of unusual prosperity for the Llanthony tenant farmers. Low rents on long, copyhold leases and rising produce prices meant the profits of the land stayed with the tenant farmers rather than passing to the landlords. This created a class of independently minded, prosperous yeomen and gentry tenant farmers. They farmed steep slopes, but also had grazing rights on common and waste land on the peaks. The mountains' geology yields good building stone in naturally cleaved blocks. All this allowed the farmers to build other good, sound farmhouses and outbuildings, which still dot the valley today.

The Watkins of Llwyn Celyn were one such farming dynasty and around 1690, big improvements were made in the house. William Watkin, or possibly his brother Thomas, inserted a ceiling into the open space of the hall to create a large chamber above on the first floor, reached by a new wooden staircase put in alongside a huge new chimney stack for a fireplace and bread oven (which we found behind a 20th-century fireplace). At the same time, a separate kitchen was added at the back of the house, with another bread oven. A beast house and little building beside the threshing barn (which therefore predates 1695) were built in the same years, and probably the cider house and piggery too. The Watkins created Llwyn Celyn as we see it today, and after them, little changed in the house. By now the farm had all the usual buildings needed for self-sufficiency: a threshing barn, cider house, beast house, stables, pigsty and kiln houses for drying malt for brewing and corn. As these reflect, the farming done was mixed, arable and livestock making the best of both lush valley fields and the high mountain wastelands.

From the mid-19th to the mid-20th century Llwyn Celyn was farmed by the Jasper family. In 1958, Llwyn Celyn was bought by their relatives Tom and Olive Powell, whose sons Trefor and Lyndon still own and farm the land around. By the 21st century, Llwyn Celyn's buildings were in a state of severe dilapidation, its fabric suffering from rain and run-off from the hillside. In 2007, Cadw and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority approached the Landmark Trust to help. A complicated acquisition deal was struck, enabled by grants from Cadw and the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and allowing a new home to be built for the Powells.

The agreed philosophy of repair retains as much original fabric in the main house as possible, gently returning it to its appearance c.1700 when the hall had just been ceiled over and the chimneystack inserted. This meant the reversal of a few 19th and 20th century changes but little else. A two-year restoration project involved many skilled craftsmen and engineers, and saw traditional craft skills passed on to apprentices and visiting groups. Llwyn Celyn's walls were underpinned at the rear and invisibly stitched back together with resin rods throughout.

**LLWYN CELYN SITE PLAN
AFTER RESTORATION**



Dropped roof trusses and other timbers were carefully straightened back into place and re-pegged; the roofs were entirely removed and replaced, using new tiles from the adjacent Olchon Valley. Rotten timber was cut back conservatively and sound oak scarfed in. The stone-flagged floors were lifted to install underfloor heating, and a wood chip boiler installed in the former stable block. A reed bed sewage treatment system was established and drainage improved across the site. Little stonework needed replacing but there was a great deal of re-pointing and plastering, all done with lime mortar. Later black paint was cleaned from the very fine beams and doorheads. Discoveries were made during the works: as well as the hall fireplace and the alcove for a Victorian range in today's kitchen, the blocked arched doorway in the hall was uncovered, and also the first floor south-facing window in the solar block. Two old shoes, one of 17th-century date, were found concealed (possibly against witchcraft). We left them in situ in their hiding places under the eaves.

Llwyn Celyn's outbuildings were repaired so that their appearance on this prominent site changed as little as possible. Internally, we did what was needed to ensure their future use. The former cider house is now a bedroom and bathroom; the former malt drying kiln (kept locked) next to it now holds a cooling tower for bats, with whose needs, and the statutory requirement to meet those needs, we struggled throughout the project. The bats also have a heated roof space above the cider house. The former stables, with characterful graffiti still on its split door, houses heating and electrical plant.

Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund's support, there has also been significant local and volunteer involvement. Volunteers have contributed throughout the project through four Heritage at Work weeks, for which volunteers signed up to learn and contribute various skills, planting new hedges, helping repair dry stone walls, re-pointing, cleaning cobbled floors, limewashing and so on.

There was also considerable community involvement from the start of the project. Community consultation led to Landmark transforming the 18th-century Threshing Barn into flexible educational and exhibition spaces for community use, including a low-key bunkhouse. The former sheep yard provides a good outdoor space for traditional craft activities, which thrive in this valley. An interpretation room about the valley and its history has been created in the former Beast House for walkers, open during daylight hours. Partnerships have been built with local bodies, and a thriving local history group has been started in the valley. Finally, there were four artists-in-residence during the project, two artists, a writer and a photographer, who produced a range of work inspired by Llwyn Celyn. Llwyn Celyn's restoration was the subject of a two-part television documentary made for Channel 4. Llwyn Celyn received two visits from Landmark's Patron, HRH the Prince of Wales, the first before work began in July 2014 on confirmation of the enabling grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and again in July 2018, when restoration of the main house was just complete. On a very hot day, the Prince planted an apple tree in the orchard, an ancient Welsh variety called Brith Mawr (Big Speckled). Perhaps it grew here all along.



The 'hand' of the Black Mountains.

THE BLACK MOUNTAINS

'See this layered sandstone in the short mountain grass. Place your right hand on it, palm downward. See where the summer sun rises and where it stands at noon. Direct your index finger midway between them. Spread your fingers, not widely. You now hold this place in your hand.

The six rivers rise in the plateau towards your wrist. The first river, now called Mynwy, flows at the outside edge of your thumb. The second river, now called Olchon, flows between your thumb and the first finger, to join the Mynwy at the top of your thumb. The third river, now called Honddu, flows between your first and second fingers and then curves to join the Mynwy. The fourth river, now called Grwyne Fawr, flows between your second and third fingers and then curves the other way, south, to join the fifth river, now called Grwyne Fechan, that has been flowing between your third and your outside finger. The sixth river, now called Rhiangoll, flows at the edge of your outside finger.

This is the hand of the Black Mountains, the shape first learned. Your thumb is Crib y Gath. Your first finger is Curum and Hateral. Your second finger is Ffawyddog, with Tal y Cefn and Bal Mawr at its knuckles. Your third finger is Gadair Fawr. Your outside finger is Allt Mawr, from Llyisiau to Cerrig Calch and its nail is Crug Hywel. On the high plateau of the back of your hand are Twyn y Llech and Twmpa, Rhos Dirion, Waun Fach and Y Das. You hold their shapes and their names.

*...Press your fingers close on this lichened sandstone. With this stone and this grass, with red earth, this place was received and made and remade. Its generations are distinct but all suddenly present.'*¹

Key to panoramic map:

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Llanthony Priory | 10 Partrishow |
| 2 Sugar Loaf | 11 Llanthony Valley |
| 3 Bryn Arw | 12 Capel-y-ffin |
| 4 Cwmyoy | 13 Llanvihangel Crucorney |
| 5 Llwyn Celyn | 14 Skirrid |
| 6 Hatterall Ridge | 15 Olchon Valley |
| 7 Ffwddog | 16 Crickhowell |
| 8 Grwyne Fawr Valley | 17 Rhiangoll Valley |
| 9 Abergavenny | 18 Grwyne Fechan Valley |

¹ Extracts from Raymond Williams, *The People of the Black Mountains*, Vols I & 2 (1989 & 1990). Williams, a writer and academic, was born in Pandy, a few miles from Llwyn Celyn.



Llwyn Celyn before work began, set within its ancient field pattern.

Introduction

The Landmark Trust first heard about Llwyn Celyn in 2007, from Cadw and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. Listed Grade I, the farmhouse had long been identified as one of the most important surviving domestic houses in Wales, for its fine joinery and unusual two-storey solar range, built at the same time as its open hall. In the late 17th century, the hall was ceiled over and a staircase and chimneystack were inserted. Little had changed since then, so that this evolution of domestic architecture can still be clearly read in the house.

Although still partially inhabited by its farmers, in 2007 Llwyn Celyn was in a desperate state: emergency scaffolding had been in place since the early 1990s, the roof was leaking and water ran off the hillside through some of the ground floor rooms. Cadw and the National Heritage Memorial Fund offered Landmark grants to allow the purchase the house, its outbuildings and the field below. There followed a complicated acquisition process that included the construction of a new farmhouse for the owners, so that they could continue to farm their land around. This acquisition process finally came to fruition in 2014.

Work on site began in summer 2015, initially restricted to the outbuildings as we navigated bat legislation. Along the way, there were many exciting discoveries, but perhaps the most astonishing was the ground-breaking oxygen isotope analysis of timber cores that had failed to yield a date fix from conventional tree ring analysis. On a stylistic basis, we had judged that Llwyn Celyn was built around 1481, a plausible date since this was when Llanthony Priory was merged with its daughter house in Gloucester. Instead, the dendrochronology revealed that the main house was built in a single phase, with timber felling dates of 1418/19 at the solar end and 1420/21 at the service end. This makes Llwyn Celyn an even more exceptional survival, in having been built so soon after Glyn Dŵr's rising (1400-1415). To understand its full context, we need to begin to soon after the Norman Conquest.



The ruins of Llanthony Priory today, in its wild and lonely setting at the north end of the valley.

The early history of Llanthony Priory

Llwyn Celyn's history is inextricably linked with Llanthony Priory, on whose lands it was built. Surviving primary medieval records for the priory are few, lost or destroyed in the turbulent centuries in between, but enough is known to be confident that Llwyn Celyn remained part of the Llanthony Estate throughout all its later ownerships, right up until the estate was broken up in the late 1950s.

The extensive ruins of the priory, a few miles further up this steep-sided, glacial valley within the wider Vale of Ewyas, have fascinated and inspired visitors and artists for centuries. The Marches were a frontier region in the early Middle Ages, an often expendable buffer zone between prosperous lowland to the east (England, with its Anglo-Norman feudal manorial system and literate, Latin-based administration) and rugged, untamed Wales (the Welshery, governed by Welsh princes jostling for power and invoking the oral tradition of Cyfraith Hywel (the Laws of Hywel), named after the tenth century prince, Hywel Dda). The friction between these two visions of society lasted at least until Henry VIII's Acts of Union in the 1530s, and quite frequently erupted into outright hostilities.

William I had granted Dore Valley to Walter de Lacy, who came with him at the Norman Conquest in 1066. De Lacy took his name from his home seat at Lascy in Bayeux, and he soon accumulated other lands in Shropshire, Herefordshire and the Marches. The de Lacy lands had passed to Walter's son Roger by the Domesday Book in 1086. The Domesday entry records that the Vale of Ewyas 'does not belong to the castle [of nearby Eywas Harold] nor to a hundred', illustrating how such grants by a centralised Anglo-Norman administration nibbled away at the Welshry as it shifted its sphere of influence ever westwards.

After the death in ambush in 1093 of Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth (or South Wales) there came more rewards to the Lacys.



The lordships of the Marches as they were in the 13th century.

William 'Rufus' II gave to another of Walter's sons, Hugh de Lacy, lordship of the Vale of Ewyas, whose principal estates were Stanton Lacy, Weobley and Ludlow. This strategy of creating powerful barons to colonise and subdue these western fringes of the English kingdom was always a gamble for English monarchs, the Marcher lords frequently pursuing their own ambitions in preference to the king's. Even in recent decades, Ewyas (which includes most of the Llanthony Valley but also extends north) has alternated between inclusion in English or Welsh counties. The River Honddu (*pr.* Honthey) that runs through the Llanthony Valley is the middle one of the five rivers that run through the Black Mountains. The planting of religious institutions based on Rome was another tool of Anglo-Norman colonisation, and with the founding of Llanthony Priory, this valley became a remarkably constant tongue of Englishry extending deep into the Welshry,

(In this context it is interesting to note that almost all the names in the Black Mountains are Welsh or of Welsh, rather than of Saxon or Anglo-Norman, derivation. Stanton, immediately to the south of Llwyn Celyn and often called 'Sta[u]nton in Gwent' in the documents, is a rare exception, the manor possibly named as an outpost of the de Lacy's main seat at Stanton Lacy in Shropshire, although Stanton was in the ownership of the Lordship of Bergavenny by the time it was given to the priory. To the east, Oldcastle and Redcastle in the Olchon Valley are other toponyms indicating Anglo-Norman foundations.)

The priory's early history is unusually well-documented, with three contemporary 12th-century sources.² The story goes that around the year 1100, a nobleman called William de Lacy was out hunting in the deep forest of Ewyas, where he came upon a ruined chapel dedicated to St. David.

^{2 2} These are *Llanthony History*, by an unnamed monk of Llanthony writing c. 1203.; *Mirror of the Life of the Venerable Robert de Betun, Bishop of Hereford*, by William of Wycombe, an early prior writing a biography of his predecessor as prior, and passages in *Journey Through Wales* by Gerald of Wales, who crossed the Llanthony Valley in 1188. In common with many monastic chronicles, these medieval voices can be entertainingly biased in their accounts.



The mostly 13th-century ruins of Augustinian Llanthony Priory still speak today of this astonishingly opulent plantation of Anglo-Norman power – but also of the bleak and threatening setting that confronted those early canons.



William was a knight (and possibly kinsman) of Hugh de Lacy, by now a powerful Marcher lord. In a narrative not dissimilar to that of St Julien l'Hospitalier and other medieval romances, William de Lacy was so inspired by the peace and holiness of the spot that he decided there and then to dedicate himself to solitary prayer and study. He was joined by Ersinius, a former chaplain to Matilda, the wife of Henry I.

One contemporary account relates that William needed some persuasion to adopt a monastic rule by founding a more regulated house, preferring a quieter life of contemplation. But soon some forty other canons (as Augustinian monks were known), mostly English, soon joined the pair. A church was built and consecrated in 1108, dedicated to St John the Baptist (appropriately enough given its wilderness setting, but significantly not to the Celtic St David). In 1118, the Augustinian rule was adopted and the priory formally constituted. The little chapel's full name – Llandewi-nant-Honddu or St David's chapel by the river Honddu – became contracted to Llanthony.

The land around the priory site was the first endowment from Hugh de Lacy by 1118, and became the heart of the home manor of Cwmyoy, in whose parish Llwyn Celyn still sits today. A lay church at Cwmyoy was built soon after to serve the parish. Other endowments soon followed. According to a later copy of a purported 1127 charter, these included 'Baranau' from the powerful Brian fitz Count, Lord of Bergavenny to the south.³ This was plausibly Bryn Awr, the mountain immediately south of Llwyn Celyn and the native name for Upper Stanton Manor. Stanton once had its own manor house, said to have been by the river Honddu, although this is long gone.

Initially the priory thrived, a tongue of Norman manorial custom stretching into yet unsubdued Welsh lands. However, little love was lost between the local population and the monastic interlopers, who were mostly from Anglo-Norman or English families.

³ PRO 115/77 1127, <https://actswilliam2henry1.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/h1-llanthyony-2013-1.pdf> [accessed 13:38 15/08/18] Charters of William II and Henry I Project, David X. Carpenter, University of Oxford.



Early medieval seals from Llanthony Priory.



All that remains of Llanthony Secunda in Gloucester today. The buildings have also been recently restored with help from the HLF, with close contacts built between its team and Landmark's own at Llwyn Celyn.

The anonymous 12th-century history of the priory gives a sense of how beleaguered the canons often felt, describing the local population as 'savage, without any religion, vagabonds and delighting in stealth; they had no settled abode, but removed as the wind and weather inclined them.'

During the Welsh uprising consequent upon the 'Anarchy' of Stephen I's reign after the death of Henry I in 1135, such hostility came to a head. The canons were forced to flee and seek refuge at the Bishop's Palace in Hereford. By 1137, they were at an alternative site then just outside Gloucester, given them by Milo fitz Walter, Earl of Hereford. This hastily constructed daughter house became known as Llanthony Secunda (or Llanthony-by-Gloucester) to distinguish it from Llanthony Prima in Wales.

By the 1170s, stability had returned sufficiently for canons to return to their mother house in Wales, leaving their outpost in Gloucester. A period of renewed patronage mirrored a revival in the fortunes of the de Lacy family, and included significant endowments in Ireland where Hugh de Lacy II had been granted the Lordship of Meath. These Irish revenues from Co. Meath in the hinterland of Dublin centred on a cell at Colpe with control of the port at Drogheda, and enabled the building of the church and claustral buildings at Llanthony Prima from c.1180 to 1230, whose impressive ruins survive today. They were fertile lowlands ideal for livestock as well as arable farming, and well placed for produce and revenue to be sent to Wales. The Irish endowments largely sustained both Llanthony priories through the following centuries (Secunda was endowed with lands around Duleek).

Gerald of Wales, one of the most ambitious and charismatic of 12th-century churchmen who aspired to be (but never became) Bishop of St David's, passed through the southern end of the Llanthony Valley on a preaching tour with Bishop Baldwin in 1188, recruiting for the Third Crusade. While their route did not take them to the priory itself, Gerald's description of the valley in the late-12th century suggests he knew the priory itself well.



Hugh de Lacy II (died 1186) was Llanthony Priory's biggest patron and a powerful lord in Ireland too. Gerald of Wales described him thus: "...a swarthy man with small, black deep-set eyes, a flat nose, an ugly scar on his right cheek caused by a burn, a short neck and a hairy sinewy body. He was short and ill made in person, but in character firm and resolute, and of French sobriety. He was very attentive to his private affairs, and in office a most vigilant public administrator. Although much experienced in military matters, he was not fortunate as a general. After his wife's death, he fell into loose moral ways. He was very covetous, and immoderately ambitious of honour and renown."

The tower of Babel being built by masons, English c. 1350-75. Such techniques were no doubt employed to build Llanthony Priory. (BL, Egerton MS 1894, f. 5v).



Gerald's colourful account holds a certain nostalgia for the days before the monk's flight led to the founding of Secunda and this short extract evokes the medieval rivalries and tensions of the Marches:

*As they sit in their cloisters in this monastery, breathing in the fresh air, the canons gaze up at distant prospects which rise above their own lofty rooftops, and there they see...mountain-peaks which rise to meet the sky and often enough herds of wild deer that are grazing on their summits.... This was formerly a happy, delightful spot most suited to the life of contemplation, a place free from its first founding and to itself sufficient. Once it was free, but it has since been reduced to servitude, through the boundless extravagance of the English, its own reputation for rich living, uncontrolled ambition, the ever-growing vice of ingratitude, the negligence of its prelates and its patrons and, far worse than all of these, the fact that the daughter house, become a step-daughter, has odiously and enviously supplanted its mother.'*⁴

In 1241, the de Lacy line came to an end with the death of Hugh de Lacy II's son Walter, so ending the family's patronage and prominent support. With hindsight, Llanthony Prima had now reached the height of its wealth and power. Despite being taken into royal custody in 1276 due to financial problems (perhaps the result of ongoing raids), its value was recorded as £230 in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291, making it wealthier than, for example, the neighbouring Cistercian abbeys of Dore or Tintern, even if still more modest compared with great Benedictine foundations in Wales.

In 1325, Edward II issued the priory a new charter that confirmed its earlier endowments and this led to more construction. The charter also reconfirmed the priory's rights to 'all hunting and warren in the bounds of their lands' and, unusually, its full jurisdiction over theft, violence against the person and hunting rights, things more usually subject to Crown or Common Law. The priory also had the right to administer justice through holding courts and even erect its own gallows. Within its desmesne, the priory was, essentially, a law unto itself on behalf of the English Crown as well as of Rome.⁵

⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales*, p.98 (Penguin Classics, 1978.)

⁵ *Cal. Ch.* Vol III, p. 475; *Edward II Charter*, 274.



Variations on Llanthony Priory's coat of arms, from stained glass in churches appropriated by the priory. The one from Bromsberrow, top left, was used as the basis for the curtain designs at Llwyn Celyn.

From George Roberts, 'Some Account of Llanthony Priory, Monmouthshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Vol 3 (1846).

At that stage, Cwmyoy was by far the largest manor in the priory's valley holdings, some 8000 hectares of fertile valley land, woodland and upland grazing. It was the priory's richest source of income outside its Irish estates. Even at the priory's Dissolution in 1538 Cwmyoy manor was valued at £47.2s.0d, half the value of the priory's entire holdings.

However, times in these medieval borderlands were never easy. In 1348, the priory was again taken into royal custody due to financial problems,⁶ and while such legal cases were often based on special pleading to justify acquisition or control, it seems the priory was indeed suffering from poor leadership, lax discipline and general disorder. The most extreme incident was recorded in 1376 when John Wellington was among those who assaulted Prior Trinbey while he was celebrating the office of the dead, gouging out his eyes. We know this because twenty years later, Wellington was pardoned by the pope in 1395, whereupon he became prior himself. Perhaps not surprisingly given such an atmosphere, the Poll Tax return of 1381 reveals only seven registered canons compared with thirteen in 1377.

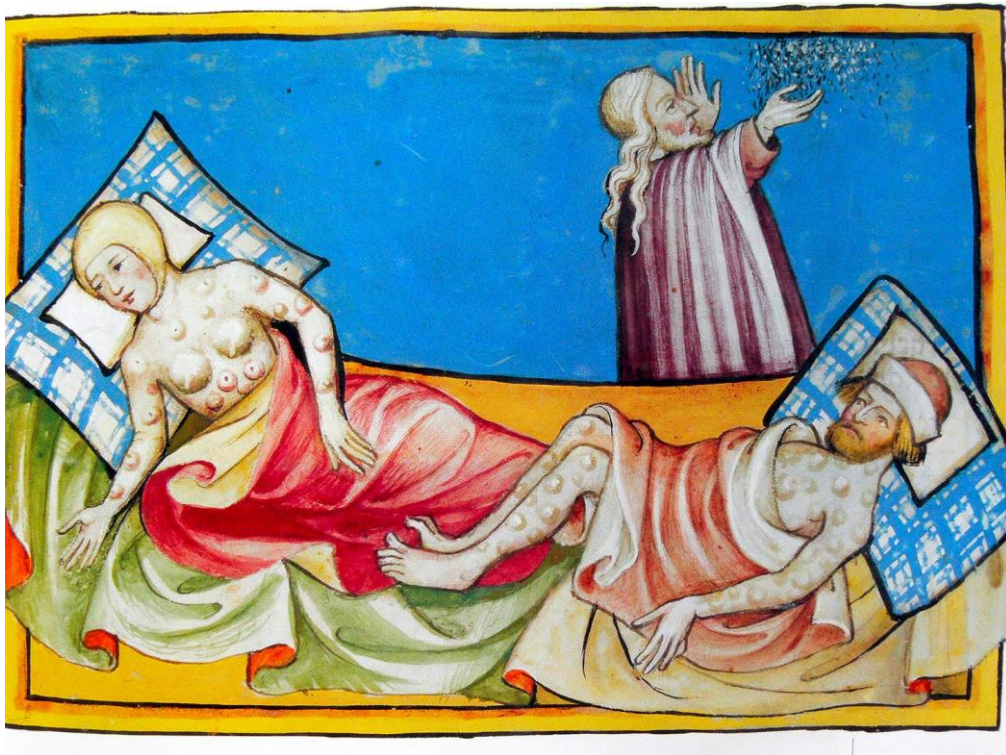
(Such numbers may seem small for such mighty and extensive priory buildings, but reflect the status of the canons as well-born, educated men. The priory and its immediate landscape was mostly a busy, populated place, of priory officers, and servants, visiting tenants and lay and ecclesiastical visitors, travellers and pilgrims, traders, stone masons and workmen, packhorse men and waggoneers.)

⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Vol. VIII, p.217

Preamble to Llwyn Celyn's construction: Plague and Revolt

As the record approaches 1420, as the date of Llwyn Celyn's construction, and we begin to contemplate who might have built such a house and why, some wider context on the late 14th century is needed.

In 1349, the Black Death (Y Farwolaeth Fawr or Great Pestilence as it was known in Wales) had arrived in Wales. In March it raged through the eastern half of the lordship of Abergavenny, claiming even its lord.⁷ Records show only a third of rents could be collected, the Prior of Bergavenny experiencing similar problems. Large tracts of desmesne lands were left uncultivated and could not even be let because there were no tenants left. The effects of such depopulation were all pervasive in the agriculturally reliant food chain: tax records reveal how returns from secondary products like butter and oatmeal also plummeted, as sales of corn and stock virtually ceased.



The Black Death (bubonic plague) spread fast across Europe from 1348 and struck swiftly. 80% of those infected died within 3-5 days.

⁷ For a detailed account of the effects of plague in the area, see Rees, William, The Black Death in Wales, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 3 (1920), pp.115-135.

Successive waves of plague followed, decimating the population and disrupting land cultivation. While we do not know that plague reached Llanthony Priory, it seems likely that it did, whether in 1349 or the successive waves that followed in 1369 (the Second Pestilence). The halving in the number of canons between 1377 and 1381 is certainly suggestive of something catastrophic. Manors, with their integrated way of life, suffered most. While it is true that effects could be very localised, the decay in rents directly caused by pestilence continued to be recorded for many decades in, for example, the manor of Usk, and in the lordships of Monmouth and Oldcastle, WhiteCastle and Redcastle immediately to the east of the Llanthony Valley. The grazing grounds of Dore Abbey were now rented by the lord from the canons. It is hard to imagine that the priory and their manor of Cwmyoy escaped entirely unscathed.

Ireland too was having a difficult century, and it is likely that this important flow of revenue to the priory was also affected. Almost continuous famine and pestilence were exacerbated by invasion by Edward, brother of the Scottish king, Robert de Bruce. At such times, Secunda had to provide for its Irish canons and it seems likely Prima did too. At some point Llanthony Prima seems to have lost control of Drogheda harbour. After drastic reductions, Secunda revenues seem to recover by 1381 but then 'by 1408...whatever gains may have taken place seem to have been lost again.'⁸ We can infer a similar position for Prima since their holdings were in the same area. In times of scarce resources, the canons and their agents became extremely litigious, with hard-fought legal cases about one or two missing lambs and the lengths tenants would go to conceal them. The canons, meanwhile, neglected their own responsibilities in Ireland, coming under attack from the Papal Court for failing to appoint rural deans to minister to local congregations.

One noticeable effect of the plague years was a growing practice of letting the desmesne lands, as a pragmatic means of receiving at least some income

⁸ Arlene Hogan, *The Priory of Llanthony Prima and Secunda in Ireland 1172-1541* (2008), p. 205.

in the absence of feudal labour to cultivate the land. This meant that instead of land being directly held from the lord of the manor and cultivated largely through the customary service owed by the villeins in return, land was rather rented to tenants in return for a cash rent or 'farm', with consequent erosion of services due. The particular nature of such tenures on the Llanthony estate will be discussed later; suffice to say here that the known creation of Llwyn Celyn in 1420 may well be an illustration of such 'farming out' in the post-plague decades.

Parcels of manorial land, and the tenements of dead bondsmen, were snapped up by freemen and enterprising villeins, who could build up quite considerable holdings. One such was Meuric ap Adam of Whitecastle, just a few miles from Llwyn Celyn, an upwardly mobile peasant who took on up his neighbours' vacant arable and pasture and oversaw the repairs to the castle, stepping into the shoes of the Duke of Lancaster as defender of the district. 'The landscape of social and territorial power was being transformed in the south-east in these decades.'⁹

Most historians agree that by the late 1390s, lords in the Marches (and we may presumably include Llanthony's powerful prior with them) had achieved a remarkable recovery, battenning down the hatches as they tightened the screw ever more tightly to extract customs and labour from an already subjugated local population. Even Prior John de Yatton ended up in prison in 1386 (along with many other Welsh abbots and priors) for failing to render the tithes and subsidies he was charged with collecting for the king. Prima's priors owed canonical obedience to the Bishop of Hereford because of the many churches they held in his diocese. When the bishop carried out a visitation of 244 churches in his diocese in 1397, dilapidation was found at 83 sites. Of Prima's nine churches, only two had no defects, *omnia bene ibidem*.¹⁰ As it

⁹ R. R. Davies, *Plague & Revolt* (p.228.

¹⁰Meaning 'All things are well here.' Ian Bass, *Llwyn Celyn Documentary Research* (November 2017), p. 4.

has been estimated that Herefordshire's population had fallen by 58% between 1290 (75,502) and 1377 (30,230) such desolation is unsurprising.¹¹

General insubordination inevitably increased in such troubled times. In May 1381, the villeins of Abergavenny rose up against their unpopular lord, Sir William Beauchamp, and his lady in the castle, and slew Sir William Lucy, Sir William's steward. Accelerated by the effects of pestilence the simmering cauldron of social resentment and unrest, was coming to the boil.

In 1400, it finally boiled over in the last and greatest Welsh uprising against English rule under the mighty figure of Owain Glyn Dŵr (anglicised as Owen Glendower), who claimed descent from the princes of Powys. Richard II was on the English throne, and Glyn Dŵr served as his knight. He was a cultured man, educated at the Inns of Court, and also a proficient fighter. His seat was at Sycharth, a place that took on the aura of Camelot as Glyn Dŵr was eulogised by bards like Iolo Goch.

Richard II had been deposed by Henry IV 'of Monmouth' in late 1399, and for the next few years the English kingdom was in disarray as Henry fought challenges on multiple fronts: in Scotland and Ireland, in France and in Flanders, and the Percys in Northumberland. In this wider context, the immediate catalyst of the Rising was petty enough: Glyn Dŵr fell into a fierce personal dispute with Lord Grey of Ruthin, whom he claimed was discrediting him with the new king. Glyn Dŵr took on the ancestral title of Prince of Powys, and with a small band of followers, attacked Grey's lands. From there, the revolt soon snowballed. Henry IV and his teenage son, the future Henry V, were soon firefighting on all fronts, as Glyn Dŵr formed a tripartite agreement with the French and the Percys to divide the kingdom into three. In Wales it was a guerrilla war: Glyn Dŵr's allies among the other Welsh chiefs were experienced men like himself; while the English trundled along the valley routes, the Welsh travelled swiftly and unpredictably across the uplands.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 14.



Owain Glyn Dŵr's seals depict him as both a mighty warrior and a wise ruler.



Henry IV, also known as Henry Bolingbroke or Henry of Monmouth, seized the crown from Richard II. He spent most of his reign fighting off attacks on all sides: as well as Glyn Dŵr, the Scots, Irish, French, Flemish and Percys of Northumberland all challenged his authority.

English communications often failed, policy and tactics were made up on the hoof. Initially very successful, Glyn Dŵr's uprising rapidly gained control of large areas of Wales. It was a period of enormous upheaval and destruction as both armies raged to and fro. The Black Mountains were to be at high water mark of Glyn Dŵr's ascendancy, and in this febrile atmosphere there surface brief glimpses of Llanthony Priory and of the chaos of the surrounding area.

On 13 September 1403, for example, Henry granted powers to William Beauchamp, lord of Bergavenny and Ewyas Harold,

*'to receive into the king's peace any Welsh rebels of the lordships of Melyneth, Werthrunyon, Comotoydur, Elveld, Clyfford, Vowmenede, Ewias Lacy, Ewias Harald, Monemouth, Whit Castell, Skenfryth, Grosmond, Overwent, Netherwent, Boghred and Glasbury, saving to the king the forfeiture of their land and goods.'*¹²

The Beauchamps were also benefitting: the day before, Henry made a

*'Grant for life, with the assent of the council, to the king's kinswoman Joan de Beauchamp, lady of Bergavenny, of all the lands late of Gruff' ap Henri of Ewyas Lacy [9m NW], Cadogan ap Howell Vaghan of Elvell and John Peres of Usk [18m S] in Wales and forfeited by reason of their rebellion in the company of Owin Glyndourdy and others.'*¹³

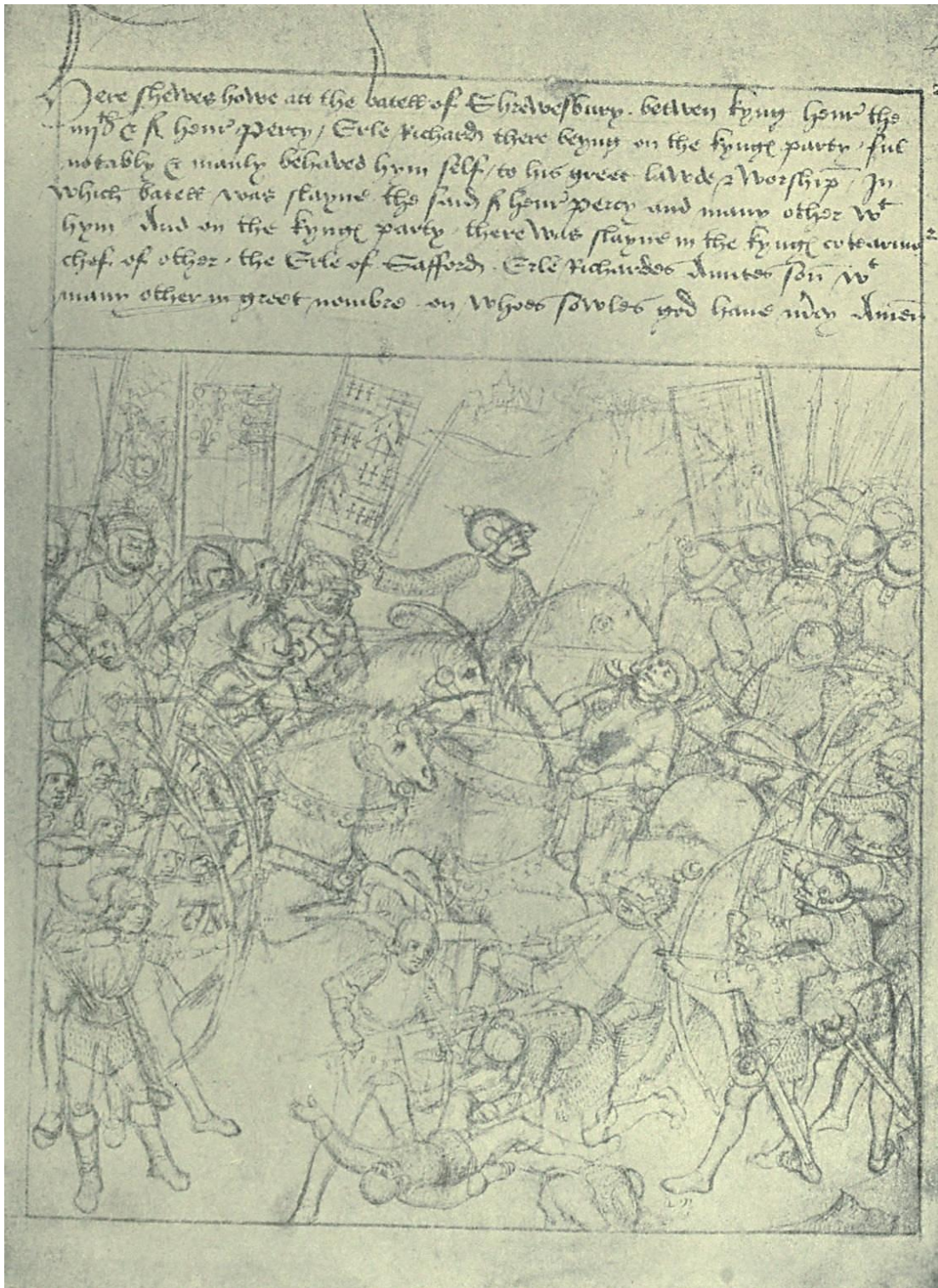
Yet less than a year later, in June 1404, Henry was writing from Doncaster:

*'Order to the sheriff of Hereford to cause proclamation to be made and to assemble all the king's lieges of the county, knights, espauires, archers and all other fencible men, to go with the king's kinsman Richard Duke of York, whom the king has ordered to go with all speed to the castle and town of Bergavenny for their rescue; on information by letters sent from the marches of Wales and the relation of trustworthy persons of those parts that the king's kinsman William Beauchamp, lord of Bergavenny, now staying in person on the safe custody of the castle and town, is so destitute of men of arms and archers that he and his men and the castle and town are in the way of perdition through the assault of the Welsh rebels. By the King.'*¹⁴

¹² *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1401-5, p. 294

¹³ *CPR* 1401-5, p. 267

¹⁴ *CPR* 1401-5, p. 440.



The *Beauchamp Pageant* gives a rare glimpse into the troubled Marches in the early 1400s. It tell the story of the life of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. Here, Beauchamp leads a charge at the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403, when Henry IV's forces defeated Henry 'Hotspur' Percy from Northumberland.

Through the summer Henry issued a stream of instructions for the provisioning of the relief forces:

*Commission to escheator and sheriff in the county of Hereford to provide victuals for the victualling and garnishing of the castle and town of Bergavenny and carriage for the same to the value of 100 marks to take to the said castel and town in the company of the king's kinsman Richard of York and other lieges of the king going on their rescue.*¹⁵

The church too was expected to contribute: on 6th November 1404, the king is at Coventry and orders Richard Kyngeston archdeacon of Hereford to gathering monies from abbots and churchmen in the Marches,

*'for payment to men at arms and archers to abide in those parts upon the safe guard thereof and to resist the Welsh rebels if they should invade the realm.'*¹⁶

The levy includes £13 6s 8d from Llanthony Secunda and £4 from 'the prior of Llanthoney in Wales' (the sums an indication of how far Prima had fallen behind its former daughter house). Assuming the payment was collected, this is an important proof of Prima's loyalty to the English Crown as the native Welsh forces roamed the Black Mountains.

The town of Abergavenny was indeed burned by the rebels in 1404, although William Beauchamp held out in his castle. Hay-on-Wye was also torched, and Brecon besieged. Edward Mortimer, the great Earl of March, was taken by the rebels and held prisoner. Then in August, 1404 Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, defeated Glyn Dŵr at Mynydd Cwndu, near Tretower. The Welsh forces retreated down the Usk Valley but ambushed the pursuing English near Mitchel Troy, killing many and chasing the rest into Monmouth. It seems sure in such circumstances that the Black Mountains provided refuge for the rebels, both as they headed south east in advance and, eventually, back the same way in retreat, as their high water mark was reached.

¹⁵ CPR 1401-5, p441

¹⁶ Calendar of Close Rolls, 1401-5, p. 395.

Nor were monasteries in any way immune from the violence, as the sacking of Strata Florida by the English forces in 1401 made clear, the monks being evicted as alleged sympathisers of Glyn Dŵr. It seems the king's forces may have been taking possession of lands in Ireland that belonged to Prima, with adverse consequences for the prior himself: on 8th November 1404, this disclaimer was issued:

*Notification to all officers in Ireland that the king holds John Wellyngton, prior of Llanthony Prima in Wales, to be a loyal subject; on complaint by the latter that certain lands and possessions of his in Ireland have been taken into the king's hands on the suggestion that certain enemies of his that he was a rebel and adherent of Owain Glendurdy.*¹⁷

The priory's Irish revenues must have taken a consequent hit.

There were English victories at Grosmont and Usk in 1405, and at some point in this chaotic year, Glyn Dŵr's forces sacked the Llanthony Prima, for on 10th September 1405 the king, now in Hereford, issued:

*'Licence, for 5 marks paid in the hanaper [a wicker container] by the prior and convent of Llanthony Prima in Wales, and because the priory is situated among the Welsh rebels, and is so much destroyed and wasted by these that the prior and convent have no house in which their goods can be safely kept, for Hugh Harper, clerk, John ap Griffith, chaplain, and William Harper of Welyngton to grant mortmain [inalienable ownership] to them in aid of their maintenance of a messuage in Hereford, held of the king in free burgage [property held for rent or service] and not exceeding the value of 25s 8d yearly.*¹⁸

It was 1135 all over again. This is however further evidence that Prima remained loyal to the king, whose provision of a refuge is in marked contrast to the treatment of the canons of Strata Florida four years earlier (even if this sorely diminished band of Prima brothers still had to make a contribution to the royal hanaper, and then pay rent). We do not even know who Llanthony Prima's prior was in these years, John of Wellington's tenure having

¹⁷ CPR 1401-5, p. 455.

¹⁸ CPR. 1401-5, p. 38.

apparently ended in 1404. Perhaps the prior was by now safe in Gloucester, or just perhaps, 'William Harper of Welyngton' was now the nominal prior.

By now, Glyn Dŵr's uprising was in retreat, eventually suppressed by the superior English resources. Glyn Dŵr was driven from his last strongholds in 1409, but avoided capture despite the large rewards offered by Henry V. Never betrayed to the English, his death was recorded by a former follower in 1415.

What, then, of the state of the priory and its lands between its sacking in 1405 and the construction of Llwyn Celyn in 1420? After such turbulent times, the first half of the 15th century is almost a vacuum in our knowledge of the priory. As late as 1448, the Prima canons are pleading for exemption from taxation, the canons *'having declared that their lands and possessions are so wasted by the wars of Henry IV in Wales, by deceases of their tenants and other mishaps and by impositions and charges, that they cannot support divine service and other incumbent charges.'*¹⁹

By 1415, we know William Crumpe was prior of Llanthony Prima, but the last mention of him is in Easter 1417, and then the list of priors is silent until John Pembruge, who held the position from 1447-69.

In 1408, the officials of the Irish Llanthony put together a cartulary (a collection of copies of the legal documents and charters relating to the priory's earlier endowments). This was a wise move given the ongoing chaos in Wales and the Marches, when the primary proofs might not survive, and also as a pre-emptive measure against counter claims by the now more powerful Secunda house. From this cartulary, we can catch glimpses of the state of affairs at Prima to within a decade or so of Llwyn Celyn's construction in 1420, but apart from a handful of mid-century additions, the cartulary stops in 1408.

¹⁹ CCR, 1 Jan 1448.

From this cartulary and from successive licences issued by the king to the prior to allow Adam Elmeley and Luke Hamelyn to be the prior's attorneys in Ireland,

*'that they [the priors] may dwell in the realm of England and their proctors in Ireland may dispose of their tithes, portions, fruits and other goods, after payment of tenths and other charges to the king, and send all their goods to England, in aid of their maintenance, notwithstanding the absence of the priors from Ireland or the said ordnance.'*²⁰

These licenses date back to Richard II's reign when a statute of 1380 decreed that non-resident owners of land and benefices in Ireland were required to contribute to defence. In 1401 the barons of the exchequer had launched an inquisition against Prior John de Welyngton for being absent from Ireland since 1396, despite drawing an income of £60 pa after expenses. Adam Elmeley, who had collected the money and appears to have had an astute legal mind, appeared as the prior's proxy and argued that the prior had permission to remain in Wales and that his proctors were allowed to dispose of the tithes, portions and goods yielded from the Irish estates back to the mother house.

This was eventually accepted, and after a ten month confiscation of Irish income by the Exchequer, Henry IV issued new letters patent allowing the prior to live in England/Wales and receive the full income after payment of taxes.²¹ Revenues were therefore still (or again) flowing from the Irish estates when Llwyn Celyn was built, although if we may take the 1401 evidence that this yielded £60 pa net, the yield is not high and we can infer no sudden upswing in income from Ireland around 1420.

As further evidence of the continuing parlous state of Prima's Herefordshire advowsons (i.e. churches to which the priory had the right of appointment as lord of the manor), they were granted exemptions from the royal levy of a

²⁰ CPR, 1413-16, 8 September 1413. These licenses are issued in 1410 for three years, and in 1413 and 1432 for twenty years.

²¹ Hogan, p. 209-10.

tenth of their tithes in 1419, 1425, 1445, 1465 and 1474.²² The parishes were simply deemed too poor or too ruinous to be thus taxed by the Crown, and there is no reason to doubt that a similar situation reigned in the Llanthony Valley itself.

Who built Llwyn Celyn?

It therefore a great puzzle who had the resources to build such a high status house. Richard Suggett of the RCAHMW, who published the seminal book *Houses & History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire 1400-1800* (2005) has been involved at all stages of the Llwyn Celyn project. He makes the point that Llwyn Celyn's date is exactly right for an identified group of 'lordship' status houses built in the recovery period after Glyn Dŵr's revolt. Like Llwyn Celyn, they are all H-plan with spered trusses at the entry to the hall and include other features of archaic and high status joinery.

'These houses with halls of two bays belonged to an emerging gentry class who might dominate a particular parish or township. The examples dated have a long chronology extending from 1430-1555/6....[Such halls] belonged to relatively wealthy families, influential at a local level but also fully part of a national Welsh-language culture. These families claimed descent from the Welsh lords of their regions, and the itinerant bards composed numerous praise-poems in their honour and preserved their genealogies. A gentry hall is instantly recognizable by its ornate central truss, the pride and joy of the owner of the house, which usually survives smoke-blackened and embedded in an inserted seventeenth-century chimney and is usually visible now only at loft level.'²³

Llwyn Celyn's hall is three bays wide, and its 1420 date pushes the date span ten years earlier. These facts merely serve to reinforce its rarity, while also placing it in a particular and identified context. There are three main hypotheses for who built Llwyn Celyn, and why:

²² Bass, pp.11-12.

²³ Richard Suggett, *Houses & History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire 1400-1800* (2005), p.27.

1. A prior's house

As Llwyn Celyn stands on priory land, one explanation is that it was built as a recreational house for the prior of Llanthony. Edward Impey, who has studied prior's houses, considers Llwyn Celyn to be of a scale and status consistent with a prior's house. These were powerful men, often of noble birth, and significant landowners; the pair of wooden shields in the solar doorway could have been intended to hold the prior's personal arms and the priory's next to them. Llwyn Celyn is also the right distance away from the priory (such prior's houses are generally 2-10 miles from the parent house; Llwyn Celyn is about 6 miles from Llanthony Priory). Its construction could therefore have been part of the priory's reassertion of control over the southern end of its home manor. However, Augustinian canons were required to say mass daily, whether in the priory church, a private chapel or a parish church. We have found no evidence either in Llwyn Celyn or on its site of a private chapel such as a prior would have required. If there was ever one here, it has long been swept away. (There is a 15th-century chapel, now much degraded as a farm building, across the fields at Upper Stanton Farm. This appears as late as John Speede's map of Monmouthshire published in 1620, but no direct connection with Llwyn Celyn has yet been established.)

Edward Impey also estimates that Llwyn Celyn would have cost £75-100 to build in the 15th century. If Ireland was yielding around £60 pa, and when Llanthony Prima as a whole was worth just £112 1s 5d at its Dissolution in 1538, the construction of a Llwyn Celyn in the early stages of a period of recovery seems unwarranted extravagance indeed. It could be imputed that the claim in 1481 that the prior had 'wasted and squandered' the priory's resources could refer to a project like Llwyn Celyn – but sixty years after the house's construction, this feels a tenuous connection.

A court house for the monastery is another suggestion, to put things in order after the Rising, but the same objections regarding available resource applies.

2. A steward's house for Cwmyoy manor

David Austin identified that there was an existing steward's house in Cwmyoy village itself, so if Llwyn Celyn was built for a steward, it would have been an additional one. Certainly, like the prior, a steward would have had use for the kind of ceremonial space that Llwyn Celyn presented in its original form.

The steward of a manor was a powerful and often wealthy man, often exercising the lord's (or here, the prior's) authority over the manor demesne with little oversight and much profit to himself. One of the measures imposed after the 1284 visitation of Llanthony Prima by John Peckham, then archbishop of Canterbury (who found the remote house in total administrative and spiritual disarray) was the appointment of a layman as steward. The priory was at its most wealthy at this time, the 1291 *Taxatio Ecclesiasticus* recording it as worth some £230 pa.

The first secular steward of Hothneyslade or Cwmyoy we can identify by name is David ap Gwilym ap Morgan, appointed before 1481 and who remained in post until 1524.²⁴ He seems also to have been steward of Oldcastle. Steward was a high standing position: Morgan had a salary of 40s a year and was a member of the gentry, and lord also of the manors of Llandewi Skirrid (just a few miles south east of Llwyn Celyn) and Arkstone in Herefordshire, a JP and a sheriff of the county. Charles, Lord Herbert and his son Henry both cast covetous eyes on the position in the 1520s before it went to James Nicols, probably by reversion of the grant to the prior. The steward exercised much of the priory's authority in estate management and public order administration, and Morgan was assisted by (or perhaps delegated to) a lieutenant, two sergeants, a constable and a gaoler. He was succeeded by James Nicols and then by William Vaughan, who was still in post in 1535. David ap Gwilym ap Morgan's tenure as steward for more than forty years

²⁴ Austin, p26.

speaks of the stability of the valley, and of longstanding day-to-day power in lay hands, for all the monastic ownership.



The window commemorating Daffyd Gam, who fought for the English Crown during the Glyn Dŵr rising, at St Teilo's Church, Llantilio Crossenny. Gam died fighting at Agincourt.

Such posts were not inherited, but it is possible that one of David's predecessors, rich from subleases and perks, snapped up the Llwyn Celyn site at the far end of the manor but on a key communications node, to build a house worthy of his status. If he didn't yet have an armorial bearing, he might certainly have anticipated acquiring one, to add to shields placed ready on the solar doorhead.

3. The house of an aspiring landowner in search of gentrification

When we move into the post-Dissolution period, we will certainly encounter wealthy and self-assertive farmers living at Llwyn Celyn. As we saw above in the case of Meuric ap Adam of Whitecastle, in the earthquake of land redistribution after the Glyn Dŵr rising, some such could do very well in the aftermath of such upheavals. There were other means to get ahead than simply staying put and surviving; for those who fought in them, late-medieval wars and a rich prisoner to ransom, or hitching your star to a successful earl or monarch, could make a man's fortune.

One such local example was Daffyd Gam, golden-haired knight and Lord of the manor of Llantilio Crossenny, some ten miles from Cwmyoy, and where he is commemorated in a stained glass window in St Teilo's church (and also in Brecon Cathedral). David Gam (which rather less glamorously means lame or squinting) was of ancient Welsh lineage in Brecon. He became a squire of Henry Bolingbroke when the latter was Lord of Brecon and before he deposed Richard II to take the crown. Gam remained fiercely loyal to the English Crown throughout the Glyn Dŵr's rebellion, for whom he had a loathing that was fully reciprocated. Glyn Dŵr himself is said to have burnt down Petyn Gwyn, one of Gam's manor houses. Gam's gripping life is of only tangential, illustrative relevance here, as a striking and local example of a native family flourishing under the rule of the English aristocracy, and then king. He served with archers at Agincourt in 1415 (by when he was 65 years old) and was knighted by Henry V on the battlefield, where he lost his life intervening to save his king, according to Tudor historians.



PLATE V C.—HENDY, LLANTILIO CROSSENNY.
West side: solar, hall and blocked screens entry.

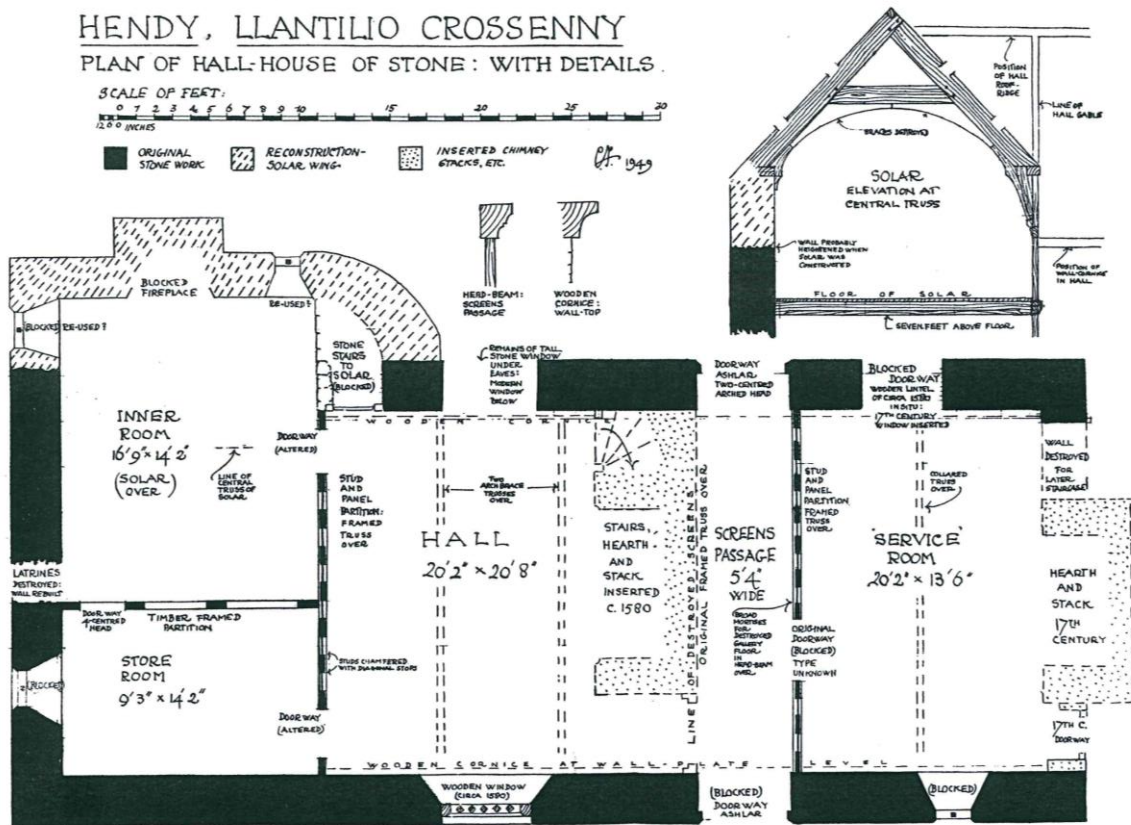


FIGURE 48.—Hendy.
Plan, and (insert) section of solar.

Hendy, in Llantilio Crossenny (a manor that belonged to the Gam family in the 15th century) is very close in dimensions, plan and later development to Llwyn Celyn, albeit with its solar range flipped in orientation. When surveyed by Fox & Raglan in the 1940s, Hendy still had a staircase to the upper floor of the solar range, leading off the high end of the hall. Today its Grade II listing describes it as a cartshed, with the melancholy rider that 'A single C17 chamfered ceiling beam is the only internal feature that now survives of the former hall-house.'

Gam did not return to enjoy the fruits of his loyalty, but it seems sure that the grateful king rewarded his descendants, who rose within two generations to be among the highest in the land.²⁵ At a lower level, such a man could have inveigled the lease of a prime spot from the Llanthony steward, perhaps the site of a former, flimsier house destroyed by the rebels, and built a house such as Llwyn Celyn. He too might plausibly have had the doorhead shields carved, ready for an imminent and hoped-for elevation to knighthood.

And it is, just perhaps, worth highlighting the coincidence that the nearest house we have found to Llwyn Celyn for size, floorplan and inclusion of integral spiral stairs leading off the high end of the house to the first floor of a two-storey solar range is Hendy, at Llantilio Crossenny, a manor formerly belonging to the Gam family.²⁶

Llanthony Prima's final chapter: merger and Dissolution

There is no evidence to contradict the view that Llanthony Prima did no more than limp its way through the middle of the 15th century, pleading and gaining exemptions from its role as tax collector to the Crown. As we have seen, there was no sign of the upsurge in building seen at other ecclesiastical sites from the mid-15th century. Royal government was in any case still in periodic disarray for most of this period, as the Yorkists and Lancastrians battled their way through the Wars of the Roses. Henry V had died in 1422, to be succeeded by the minority of Henry VI, who emerged into adulthood as a timorously pious and feeble-minded king.

²⁵ Shakespeare includes his name in the list of dead noblemen in *Henry V* and he is generally taken to have been the model for Ffluellen, Shakespeare's archetypal Welshman. Gam's daughter Gwladys ferch Dafydd Gam, Seren y Fenni (the Star of Abergavenny), made two good marriages, the first to Sir Roger Vaughan, who also died at Agincourt. Her second was to Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan Castle who survived the battle, and with whom she was buried at Abergavenny Priory where their effigies may still be seen. Their son became the extremely powerful William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke (1423-1469) who took the surname Herbert.

²⁶ This high status house, identified by Fox & Raglan in the 1950s, never had its modernisation and has become a barn – if it indeed survives. It is discussed in more detail below.

In the random way of history and birth right, Llanthony Prima coincidentally ended up on the winning side, at least in its lay patron. The Llanthony Valley lay cheek by jowl with several lordships of the Marches: Grosmont, Skenfrith, and White Castle were all in the lordship of the powerful Earl of March. The 5th Earl was Edmund Mortimer (1390-1425), a loyal and important vassal of Henry V with a complicated claim to the throne of his own. As a child, he was used as the basis of plots during his minority, but he became a valued companion of Henry V who granted him a livery of estates in 1413, possibly including the patronage of Prima. In 1415, Edmund married Anne Stafford, through her further enhancing his own royal descent while always remaining true to Henry V. When Edmund, 5th Earl died without issue, the title of Earl of March passed to Richard Plantagenet 3rd Duke of York, through the claim of his mother, Anne Mortimer, daughter of the 4th Earl of March. When Richard of York died in 1460, the earldom of March, including the patronage of Llanthony Prima, passed to his son Edward, who the following year became Edward IV.

This right of royal patronage may have played a part in the successful move in 1481 by Henry Deane, prior of Llanthony Secunda in Gloucester, to take over the former mother house in Wales. Its daughter house in Gloucester, closer to sources of patronage and power, had thrived. In 1481 Prior Deane (later Archbishop of Canterbury) obtained from Edward IV the union and subordination of Llanthony Prima to Llanthony-by Gloucester, for a payment of 300 marks.

Deane's justification was that Prima's liturgical observance and financial management had sunk to an unacceptably low ebb, although the merger is as likely to have reflected Secunda's ambition to accumulate further estates and governance. Such absorption of smaller, struggling religious houses were not unusual, although rarer for site of such former glory. The documents are frustratingly silent on Llwyn Celyn, but we know from later estate documents that it passed with the rest of the Prima holdings into the control of Llanthony Secunda. In 1538, both Llanthony Priors were dissolved by Henry VIII. The value of Llanthony Secunda's holdings, at £648, were worth considerably more than its

rundown Welsh outpost at just £112. However, as Llwyn Celyn and the Llanthony estate entered a new phase of existence, there are signs that tenants in the valley were faring better than their landlords.

The Arnold Years 1546-1726

In 1546, Llanthony Prima and its Monmouthshire and Herefordshire holdings were bought from the Crown by Nicholas Arnold (1509-80). Arnold was a Gloucester lawyer, and served Thomas Cromwell until 1539. He was Clerk of the Crown in Wales and served as a knight of the shire in all the Parliaments from 1545 to 1571. He was knighted c.1550, was a member of the Council of the Marches and held a number of other important local offices. He led an active and often vociferous political life in Gloucester and London. His main seat was at Highnam just outside Gloucester, some 40 miles due east of the Llanthony Valley.

Cromwell's commissioners visited the four remaining canons at Prima on 17th March 1538. They reported back to Cromwell that Llanthony had surrendered but that they had not surveyed the lands of either Prima or Secunda because Nicholas Arnold, a member of the royal household, and 'Mr Porter' (Arthur Porter, another Gloucestershire lawyer) maintained that Cromwell was happy for them to have the two 'according to the value certified for the payments of the tenths.' It's an interesting illustration of how casual such disposals could be, although the Arnolds came to regret their lack of due diligence once they encountered the entrenched and assertive tenants in the valley.

Nevertheless, they replaced the canons as the valley landlords for almost 200 years. At Sir Nicholas's death in 1580, his son John inherited, followed by his own son, Nicholas, in 1606. Nicholas II (1599- c.1665) acquired Llanvihangel Court as the family seat in 1627. He was succeeded by his son, John Arnold (1635-1702), a fierce and argumentative Protestant who persecuted Jesuits in Monmouthshire. When John II died in 1702, his heir Nicholas III took on the estate. In 1726, perhaps frustrated by endless legal wrangling, Nicholas III sold the estate to Edward Harley of Brampton Bryan.



The arms of Sir Nicholas Arnold, knight, from a heraldic roll dating from c.1576 showing arms of people associated with Ludlow Castle and the Council of Wales and the Marches. Arnold was one of Thomas Cromwell's men, and so well placed to snap up the apparently desirable Llanthony estates.



Llanvihangel Court, seat of the later Arnolds, dates from the late-15th century. This original house was considerably extended in all directions. Its current appearance dates largely from 1599, and from the various additions and improvements made by Nicholas Arnold II after his purchase of the property in 1627, and more by his son Edward Arnold in c1673.

The troubles first surface in 1606 when John I died. He was possibly in financial difficulties, having rented out his Llanthony manor and dying in debt to the Crown, and his son Nicholas was just six years old. One William Cooke, who had married into the family, disputed John I's own inheritance, and now tried to claim wardship of the boy. John's mother persuaded William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke to obtain it instead. Herbert then had the wardship assigned to his steward, Thomas Morgan. Until Nicholas Arnold attained his majority in 1620, Morgan ruthlessly exploited the estate to his own ends to an enormous estimated sum of £20,000 according to claims later made by Nicholas II himself. (It may or may not be a coincidence that the steward of Cwmyoy from 1481-1524 was also a Morgan).

In 1612, with William Cooke still trying to claim the estate, an exhaustive survey was made of the lands, modes of tenure and titles to every copyhold in the Llanthony estate, under the authority of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Helpfully for us, the welter of associated documents cast much light on who held the lands in the Llanthony Valley, as forensically researched on Landmark's behalf by Professor David Austin, and to great insight on Llwyn Celyn.²⁷

The trail begins with an inquiry commissioned in 1611 before a jury of the tenants and local gentry. It is hard to escape the conclusions that the exercise was all part of Morgan's strategy for lining his own pocket, whether at landlord's or tenants' expense.

This enquiry is of particular interest for the light it sheds on the probable position before the Dissolution. The depositions confirm three key points:

1) that there were no freeholders save one in the valley ('they say that they find no Freeholder that holdeth his lands of the same manor [Cwmyoy] or that doe belong to the same except the said John Parry'²⁸). This was in contrast to over the ridge in Grwyne Fawr where freehold did occur, and to neighbouring Stanton which had always been a freehold manor in its own right despite belonging to the priory.

²⁷ David Austin, *The House and Context of Llwyn Celyn, Monmouthshire: A Study of Documents and Landscapes*. A Report to the Landmark Trust, October, 2014, p. 35, NLW CFL 5/15. [report available online via www.landmarktrust.org.uk]

²⁸ Austin, p. 3., NLW CFL MS f.5v. §3.



Example of a 17th-century copyhold lease, showing the uneven edges that could be matched to the manorial Court Roll (this lease relates to the Manor of Slaidburn and is included purely for illustrative purposes).

2) that none of the landholders could pass their holdings on by customary inheritance ('they find not any customarie holder of Inheritance within or belonging to this manor'²⁹).

3) that transmission of any property from one tenant to the next was by formal assignment through indenture and copy entered on the Court Roll.

In a case brought by Nicholas Arnold III in 1703, the tenants maintained that their copyhold tenure was 'according to the Customs of the said manor in the several reignes of King Henry the 8th, Queen Elizabeth, James 1st Charles 1st *as by the Court Rolls and evidences may appear.*'³⁰ In other words, the tenants' case in defence of their by now extremely favourable copyhold leases is that such leases have been in place since before the Dissolution – and their claim was at the time backed up by surviving records at least as far back as the Dissolution.

These copyhold leases or 'Coppies' as they were called, were granted by the lord of the manor to the first tenant for a one-off entry fine (or fee). This tenant then had the right to 'assign' the copy to the next tenant as long as this was recorded on the manor's Court Roll. The tenant and lord each kept a copy of the lease, often the same piece of parchment cut in half in a wavy line, so that the two copies could be married up again in case of future dispute.

Typically, copyhold leases were for three lives: in other words, there could be two such onward assignments before the copy and the tenure had to be surrendered to the lord for re-granting (or for assignment to someone else) after payment of another entry fine. In the meantime, the rent was held at the level agreed at the start of the lease. In return for this stability, the tenant owed the lord certain responsibilities and services, such as mending the lord's roads and bridges, helping with harvest, and maintaining his own house and outbuildings for which he was allowed to take resources from the lord's forest and waste lands.

²⁹ Austin, p. 4, NLW CFL MS f.5v.§4.

³⁰ Ibid, Harley MS 17/14, f.4, dated 1703. My italics.

This was fairly standard practice through the medieval period, even if more than a little archaic by the 17th century, as independently minded tenants became less and less willing to fulfil their side of the bargain in provision of services to the lord.

What makes the Llanthony leases highly unusual was that they were issued for durations of four lives rather than three. Llanthony tenants could therefore enjoy their property for four generations, which could mean for 100 years or even more, all at the same low 'chief rent' agreed at the start. They also enjoyed unusual freedom in their onward assignment of their leases: they could sub-let it, mortgage it for debt, even sell it, provided the transaction was recorded in the manorial court records.

One wonders whether Sir Nicholas Arnold was aware of this local quirk when he cleverly acquired the estate by the backdoor. Earlier court cases reveal that the priory was actively managing its temporal estates into the 14th century. As that troubled century wore on and land values fell steeply through neglect after the Pestilence, tenants' labour services were increasingly replaced by cash rent or 'farms.' As a general trend, feudal tenure arrangements were replaced by such copyhold leases under the supervision of the steward, and it may be that in the remoteness of the Llanthony Valley, these exceptionally favourable terms reach right back into the monastic period. The 1481 charter to merge Prima with Secunda not only refers to monastic mismanagement, but also to 'certain secular persons who were farmers of the priory estates' as being involved in the wasting and despoliation of the church and its estates.³¹ Perhaps the favourable four lives leases arose through the connivance of tenants and stewards, but certainly it sounds as though Henry Deane and his men were aware of something awry, even if Sir Nicholas Arnold was not.

During the period of rising inflation, population and food prices in the 16th and 17th centuries, copyhold meant the real value and return on the land stayed in the hands of the tenants rather than passing to the landlord. By the 17th century, a copyhold farm might be rented from the lord for fixed sum of 2 shillings a year, and then

³¹ Roberts, 1846, p.227.

sub-let for £20 or £30. The legal status of 'tenant' (especially perhaps through our modern eyes) was deceptive in terms of the real income and disposable wealth of the farmer and, as local church memorials attest, such tenants aspired to be called 'gentleman'. Some were able to use their disposable wealth to acquire other leases and enlarge their farm holdings. These are the people who became minor officials of the manor and churchwardens, who arranged good dynastic marriages, who appeared in court to contest with their lords and who brokered social power at the local level for generations. They were not gentry, but could aspire to be.

It is such men that lived at Llwyn Celyn, and in this period, we can finally identify named tenants. The first is William John Richard (who we can perhaps infer was William ap John ap Richard), mentioned as copyholder of Tir Loyn Celin in 1597, for an annual rent of 8d in the 1612 manorial survey.³² This 1597 lease was probably a renewal of a previous copyhold for Llwyn Celyn dating back to the monastic period. Llwyn Celyn's holdings seem to be about 60 acres, although William had a further 56 acres on the higher ground above the house. By 1611, this latter acreage was in other hands with a cryptic reference to the involvement of 'William Watkin, gent.' William Watkin was one of those examined under oath in the 1611 inquiry, and his namesake was present in 1597, probably as steward of the manor. We will meet the Watkins again.

Soon after 1611, Llwyn Celyn passed to William George, who in his will proved on 16th January 1657, styled himself as 'Gentleman of Cwmyoy, Monmouthshire.'

³² Austin, p. 5. NLW CLF MS 5.15, f.25v. #91. As an illustration of what good value this was, in 1353 in the immediate aftermath of the Black Death, the desmesne of White Castle was let by its lord to three 'farmers' (i.e. tenants for cash) for 12 years at 6d an acre for land and 3s an acre for meadow, to allow the repair of the grange and the ox house. 8d for four lives for Llwyn Celyn's 60 acres seems remarkably low, even in 1597.

The Watkins of Llwyn Celyn

William

Takes on Llwyn Celyn in 1656. ?*d.* 1720.
styled a gentleman.

|

[or was there a William II?]

[‘Of Llwyn Celyn’ in 1717
with his brother Thomas and nephew Job.
Possibly the WW of Cwmyoy whose will
was proved in 1720. Another William Watkin
was buried in St Martin’s Cwmyoy
churchyard in 1748]

|

[Thomas *d.* 1740

Brother of William, father of Job,
died a ‘yeoman’ and
not of Llwyn Celyn
at his death]

|

Job (1696-1756)

Llwyn Celyn lease assigned
to him by 1719.

|

James

Lease assigned by 1756,
sold Llwyn Celyn
back to the estate in 1762
for £20 in lieu of debt

It was William George who led the first action against Nicolas Arnold II, as the tenants now kicked back against their landlord's, rather than steward's, attempts to circumnavigate their customary tenure.

The tenants tried to institute a new custom, that land should be held by inheritance, but lost their case. Nicholas Arnold II became a tragic victim of these doings, imprisoned for debt in the King's Bench in Southwark in 1642 and 'dying there to defeat his creditors' some twenty years later c.1665. That he died in prison may have been in part to ensure that his goods and lands were not taken as payment for his debts. During all his long imprisonment and the Cromwell years therefore, steward and tenants were left to their own devices – at least until John Arnold II inherited the estate at the Restoration, unencumbered by debts of his own.

When William George died in 1656, and although he left two other properties to his son, he assigned Llwyn Celyn, without explanation, to William Watkin, possibly the same as, the William Watkin we met in 1611. This was to be the beginning of Llwyn Celyn's most significant dynasty. Though living with his brother Thomas at Llwyn Celyn, William I (or possibly a William II) held another three properties consolidated into one block at Blaencoy further up the Llanthony Valley. Remarkably, in 1717, Thomas Watkin was the fourth life of William John Richard's 1597 lease of Llwyn Celyn, still at a rent of 8d; of the 56 acre tenement and an enclosed block of the commons called Y Pant for 1s 4d, and of another five fields to the west for 1s 4d.³³ This was a highly successful farming family.

As a result of David Austin's careful analysis of these complex documents, we can say with confidence that Llwyn Celyn's significant refurbishment in the 1690s was carried out by William Watkin, or possibly his brother Thomas.

³³ Austin, p. 6 and p. 45 ff.



Other houses in the Black Mountains were being built with two floors and integral chimney stacks from a century or so before Llwyn Celyn was ceiled. This example is Tyn-y-Llwyn at Partishow, timber dated to 1598-9). With its open hall, Llwyn Celyn would have seemed old-fashioned by the time the Watkins took it on in 1656, and inserted the hall ceiling c. 1690.



The Watkins carefully saved and re-used parts of the 15th-century dentilled cornice from the hall at Llwyn Celyn.

As described in more detail in the restoration volume of this album, and with timber felling dates confirmed by multiple isotopic timber analysis, we know the Watkins ceiled over the hall, and added the chimneystack, staircase and rear kitchen leading off from the cross passage. The beast house was built in the same years, and also a little single-storey link building with a hearth against the east wall of the threshing barn. The threshing barn therefore predates the 1695/6 felling date attributed to the link building (stylistically, the barn is very similar to other late-17th-century ones in the valley). Not dated so far, but plausibly of the same phase, are the cider house and the grain kiln/piggery.

There is, however, something intriguing about how the Watkins chose to approach the refurbishment of Llwyn Celyn. Firstly, the 1690s is quite late for such adaptation of the medieval open hall format to take place, even in this remote area. Other high status houses in the valley, like Tyn-y-Llwyn at Patrishow (1598), had been built to this more modern configuration for the past century or so. Llwyn Celyn must have seemed very outdated in 1656. Secondly, the Watkins chose to retain a somewhat archaic mood. They re-used the 15th-century dentilled cornice on the screen to the staircase (which they moved at some stage from the other side of the chimneystack to its current position) and, even more surprisingly, they chose to keep and even enhance the high end of the hall. There is debate whether the fixed bench at the high end is 15th- or 17th-century; the panelling behind it certainly 17th-century stylistically. Most tellingly of all, the magnificent, 13-foot 'Llwyn Celyn table', so tragically put up for sale at auction to reach a prohibitive selling price during Landmark's restoration project, is dated 1690. It was the Watkins' table. William and Thomas Watkin clearly saw themselves 'holding court' at Llwyn Celyn in a very traditional manner.



The fine memorial to 'Job Watkins. Gent. Of Llwynkelin' on the south wall of the nave of St Martin's Church in Cwmyoy.

Job Watkins [sic, now] (1696-1756) has a fine memorial plaque on the south wall of St Martin's Church, Cwmyoy where, like his predecessors before him, he is styled 'Gent.' We also see a rare glimpse of a female inhabitant of Llwyn Celyn in his little 3-year old granddaughter Anne, presumably James's daughter, who predeceased Job by three years and is included on Job's memorial plaque. Perhaps it is a poignant reminder of a favourite grandchild in the Watkin dynasty. The Watkins created the Llwyn Celyn we see today, and we now know that it is their house that Landmark's carefully worked out philosophy of repair has prioritised, as the privileged position of the Llanthony estate tenants reached its zenith.

The Watkins also weathered the rent war, outlasting the Arnolds who gave up the struggle in 1726 when John III sold the Llanthony estate to Edward Harley. By now, though, the landlords were finally gaining the upper hand. The writing must have been on the wall when Job died. Just six years later, in 1762, his son James, encumbered by debt despite (or perhaps because of) the family's other holdings, surrendered the farm to the estate in return for £20. In 1775, the farm was leased to David Price for a rent of £50 pa, a far cry from the 8d under the 1597 lease and a graphic illustration of how rents rose in the 18th century. From this point on, there is a sense that Llwyn Celyn, while always a significant farm in the area, began a long decline in prosperity, its tenant farmers now more subject to the ravages of a bad season or a feckless generation.

Llwyn Celyn: from 1800 to the present day

In 1799, the Harleys sold the estate to the poet and aesthete, Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864). Landor fell in love with the romantic ruins of the priory and began to build a new house overlooking it at the Siarpal farm. He planted thousands of trees there. But Landor was often absent and hopeless at managing the estate. He was scathing of his tenants, declaring 'drunkenness, idleness, mischief and revenge' to be the main character traits of the Welsh. Plagued by debt and lawsuits, in 1814 he left Britain for Italy where he spent most of the rest of his life. He can have had little impact on the tenants' lives, and certainly no positive effect, but his descendants owned the estate until after the Second World War, when it was sold off piecemeal.

As a further example of the tightening of the landlords' grip, in 1799 Llwyn Celyn with 148 acres is recorded under a single lease to Thomas Williams, for a yet more steeply increased rent of £70 pa. It seems at least some of the various parcels of land previously held by the Watkins have now been consolidated into a single holding, under a radical overhaul by the modernising land agents of the Georgian period.

It is perhaps no surprise that by the 1820s the tenancy has changed again, now held by William & Mary Morgan, to whom the parish registers reveal four children were born at Llwyn Celyn between 1823 and 1829. By the 1841 census, the tenancy has changed again, to 35-year-old Benjamin Davies and his wife Mary, who had four children under nine at the census.

For many decades in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Knight family were the land agents of the Landor estate. An inventory of goods and equipment held at Llwyn Celyn in April 1848 survives among the Knight Family Archive, two lists in a pocket book made by the Knight of the day. Presumably the inventory was made at the point at which William and Mary Morgan vacated the farm, although the reason for the demise of their tenancy is not clear, nor for the inventory itself, which gives a snapshot of life on the farm in 1848.

Inventory 1.

A valuation made the 14 day of April 1848 at Llwyncellin of Goods and Chattels

8 Cows Calfs at £10 10s	£84 0 0	
1 Bull at £10	£10 0 0	
3 / 2 years old steers	£18 0 0	
2 Heifers Do.	£9 0 0	
9 Yearlings Cattle	£30 0 0	
1 6-year old Horse	£20 0 0	
2 ould Cart Horses	£18 0 0	
2 – 2 year old Colts	£12 0 0	
1 Hackney mare	£8 0 0	
6 Couples at £1 1s each	£6 0 0	[should be £6 6s?]
2 Dry Ewes at 14s each	£1 8 0	
6 yearling sheep 10s each	£3 0 0	
1 Sow and pigs	£4 0 0	
1 Sow	£2 0 0	
4 Store Pigs	£4 0 0	
Implements		
1 Waggen	£6 0 0	
2 Brood wheel Carts	£12 0 0	
2 Wheel cars	£4 0 0	
2 ploughs	£1 6 0	
2 pair of Harrows	£1 4 0	
6 sets of Harness	£5 0 0	
1 winnowing machine and measures, sacks etc.	£6 0 0	
20 acres Growing wheat	£60 0 0	
10 Bushells [ditto] at 6/- per bushell		
27 Bushells of oats	£5 0 0	
Growing crops of clover	£2 10 0	
Turnip cutter	£1 10 0	
2 Hall lockes	£1 0 0	
3 Dozen of hurdles	£1 0 0	
Wheat 20 bushels	£8 0 0	
Barley 12 bushels	£3 12 0	
Household furniture	£50	
3 acres of wheat 40 bushells at 6d bushell	£12 0 0	
Chaff engine	£2 0 0	
Turnip Drill and roller	£1 10 0	
Ground roller	£1 0 0	£415

From this we can deduce a thriving mixed farm, combining arable with livestock.

By the next census in 1851, the tenant was Thomas Griffiths, aged 58 and farming 140 acres. He lived at Llwyn Celyn with his 83-year-old mother Mary, his wife Blanche and their four children, all in their late teens. This rapid turnover of tenants in these fifty years speaks of a quite different mindset to farming in the valley. No longer, it seemed, did tenants settle in for multiple generations, with an attendant commitment to invest in the farms.

However, in the early 1850s, the tenancy passed to the Jasper family, who became well known local figures and provide our second Llwyn Celyn dynasty right down to Landmark's acquisition of the site in 2014. First came Michael Jasper (1807-1884), who had been farming 30 acres in view of Llwyn Celyn on the opposite slope at Little Llwrgey. His wife Mary died in 1858 (their headstone stands beside the path behind St Martin's Church).

Michael Jasper is still at Llwyn Celyn in the 1871 census, farming 120 acres with his eldest son William, William's wife Ann and their young daughter. Also present are Michael's younger son John (aged 22) and a young female servant. In 1877 William Jasper took over the tenancy from his father, although his wife Ann sadly died the following year. A poignant entry in the Cwmyoy School logbook for 31st July 1879 records 'James Jasper absented himself all without his father's knowledge' (James was 6 at the time) and the following day, 'Mary Jasper told me that her father had punished James.' (James's elder sister Mary was 9. She would die seven years later, of tuberculosis).

In 1881, both Michael and William are still widowers. William has his four children under twelve to look after, so the household includes a 45-year-old housekeeper called Elizabeth Parry, a servant girl called Mary Walker (15) and 17-year-old farm hand called Arthur Rew. In 1882, William Jasper remarried,

to Elizabeth Jones, with whom he had seven children including Adeline in 1886 who lived at Llwyn Celyn until her death in 1943.³⁴

These were not easy years for Welsh farmers; although the advent of the Newport, Abergavenny and Hereford Railway to Llanvihangel Crucorney in 1854 had opened up the valley, from the 1870s food prices tumbled as cheaper food arrived from the Americas and Antipodes. Marginal land was abandoned and there was depopulation as the young drifted to the towns and mines of South Wales in search of employment.

Even so, there is a sense from oral memories that the late-19th century was another golden era for Llwyn Celyn. Michael Jasper was an expert ploughman, winning many a plough match and hedging competition. (These were revived in the valley in the 1960s around the annual Llanthony Valley & District Show, held on the first Saturday in August. Llwyn Celyn itself was proud to host the annual hedging and dry-stone walling matches during the restoration project). When Michael died in 1923, his funeral procession to Cwmyoy stretched for almost half a mile down the valley.

William Jasper also thrived as a farmer, employing up to seven farmhands. In summer, he took casual labour, often homeless men who tramped the hills looking for work and who would sleep in the outbuildings. Food was usually taken out to them, although occasionally they were invited inside, especially if they had been coming for years. They were sent on their way with a parcel of food as well as their wages, and a bottle of the home-brewed cider or beer for which Llwyn Celyn was well known at the time. The women did all the cleaning and preparation of the cider (or brew) house but the actual brewing process was men's work.

William was also a church warden and a parish councillor, and as part of his duties distributed poor relief to the deserving poor of the parish, sitting at the long high table as his predecessors had done for 200 years.

³⁴ Adeline Jasper told her memories of family life to her niece Xarifa Cooper, née Jasper, who has provided much of this information. There are many of the extended Jasper family still in the valley.



**Elizabeth Jasper
outside Llwyn
Celyn, c. 1935.
Elizabeth married
William Jasper in
1882.**



**Adeline, Jack and Elizabeth
Jasper.**

Thanks to Adeline's niece Judith /
Xarifa Cooper for providing these family
photos.



**Henry 'Ted'
Jasper, c. 1935.**

After Michael's death, his third son John 'Jack' Jasper took over the farm. Born in 1896, he had a slight limp after breaking his hip as a young man and suffered ill-health all his life despite living to the age of 90. Quite late in life, he married Gladys Powell, who was many years his junior. During the war, still childless, the couple took in a pair of evacuee brothers, Richard and John Gilden, who were evacuated from Folkestone in Kent on 2nd June 1940, aged fourteen and six respectively. John Gilden got in touch during the restoration project, and near the end of the project came back to reminisce at Llwyn Celyn and with other valley residents who remembered the war years. John lived with the Powells for ten years or so, first at Llwyn Celyn and then when they bought, and moved on to, Church Farm at Llanddewi Rhydderch. John eventually moved away to train as an engineer, and remembers his time with Jack and Gladys Jasper with great affection. John's memories of life at Llwyn Celyn when it was still a thriving farm are reproduced as an appendix.

The Llwyn Celyn table was taken in lieu of rent during Jack Jasper's tenancy by Mr Knight, the Landor land agent who lived at Llanthony Priory. Certainly the table was still in the house in 1906, and John Gilden remembers it in situ when he lived at Llwyn Celyn, when harvest feasts were held at it. Local anecdote has it that when threat of confiscation was first made, Jack responded that Mr Knight would never be able to get it out of the building. Mr Knight returned with men to remove the window, and the Watkins' 1690 table was duly hauled through.

As Landmark's historian, I saw the table just about fitting into the entrance of the Knights' home beside the Llanthony Priory Hotel, when Mrs Knight was still alive. She was quietly insistent that the table was specifically listed in her husband's will and belonged to her. There was no question of restitution. When Mrs Knight died in 2012, the table was put up for sale at auction. A local Landmark supporter pledged a truly generous sum to allow Landmark's furnishings manager John Evetts to bid for the table – but sadly it went for several times what we had had expected.



The Llwyn Celyn table, bearing the date 1690 at the centre of its upper rail, in Mrs Knight's entrance hall at Llanthony Priory in 2012, and as it appeared in the auctioneer's sale particulars in 2013.



When Jack Jasper moved on in 1947, the lease of Llwyn Celyn passed to his brother-in-law, James Abraham Thomas 'Tom' Powell, and here we enter fully into living memory.

After the war, Mrs Mangioni Landor decided to dispose of the Llanthony Estate through Cooke & Arkwright of Bridgend.³⁵ In 1953 an attempt was made to market the estate as a single entity. The sale particulars record the estate as,

'comprising 3342 acres of enclosed ground and 3566 acres of mountain grazing.

28 rearing farms and small holdings, 8 cottages, one hotel and woodland; grouse shooting and trout fishing. Gross rental, £2,265 p.a. (outgoings, tax etc £1,894 10s 6d)). The farms (let on annual agreements) vary widely in size, there being 8 large holdings (305 to 100 acres), 13 holdings between 100 and 50 acres, 7 small holdings (50 – 12 acres) and 4 cottage holdings. Tenants are mainly engaged in sheep and cattle rearing.'

The particulars included a description of Llwyn Celyn:

Llwyncelyn Farm

149.349 acres

*Let to Mr J A Powell at £120 (less £91 and £4 4s 1d tax)**

Farmhouse contains – Parlour, kitchen/living room, back kitchen with usual offices, 3 bedrooms, dressing room, lumber room and adjacent Old Brew House

Spring water supply; bucket sanitation [like every other house in the valley at the time]

Farm buildings – stable and horsebox, loft over; 2 pigsties; Chaff house; Cowshed with 13 standings; 2 cowsheds with 4 standings each; Barn; Implement shed with granary over; cattle shed; French barn.

Land is on an even slope reaching up to the crest of the hill dividing Llanthony from Cwm Coed y Cerrig; also an area of good land on both sides of Afon Honddu.

³⁵ Gwent Record Office, Misc Mss 1725/2. Thanks to Oliver Fairclough for this transcription.

At this date, only one of the other estate farms had a bath. A couple had an Aga or Esse range heater, but these were installed by the tenant, not the estate. Land tax assessments for Cwmyoy show William Jasper paying £95 rent in 1916. This increased to £105 in 1939, an amount still being paid by Jack Jasper in 1947.³⁶ The estate was clearly in need of modernisation, and such rentals were not sufficient to achieve this. Perhaps not surprisingly, the estate failed to sell as a whole, and instead was disposed of piecemeal, mostly to sitting tenants.

As part of this gradual dispersal, according to the Land Registry Tom and Olive Powell bought Llwyn Celyn from the Landor estate on 5th June 1959, with 176 acres. For the first time in its history, Llwyn Celyn was owned by its inhabitants. Tom Powell too was a respected local figure, and annual sheep sales were held in the field below Llwyn Celyn, with anyone who bought one of Tom's sheep invited back for a drink at the long table in the hall. Tom and Olive had four children, Rosemary, Trefor and Lyndon, and Glyn who died tragically young in an accident on the farm in the 1960s. It's said Tom and Olive never recovered from this.

Olive found the hall at Llwyn Celyn too cold and uncomfortable (even though the inglenook hearth had been filled in by a 1950s fireplace of beige tiles) and moved the main living space instead to the service end rooms beyond the cross passage, knocking down the partition wall to create one larger room the full width of the house, and installing a oil burning range. The house never acquired mains water although electricity was installed in 1958.

Rosemary, Trefor and Lyndon have given us memories of their lives at Llwyn Celyn, and these too are appended. They remembered carrying water to the house in buckets, and the slaughter of pigs in the back yard, the carcasses strung up for the bristles to be singed off and the blood to drain in the back kitchen. The flitches were hung in the hall.

³⁶ Gwent Archives D426-10, Cwmyoy Lower



Tom Powell, who lived and farmed at Llwyn Celyn from 1947 until his death in 1990.

Washdays were hard work. A copper had to be boiled up (after carrying in the water) before the clothes were scrubbed out on a washboard and put through a mangle by hand.

At Christmas, presents were put in on the window sill of the south facing window of the upstairs hall. The lead-up was a busy time when the poultry were plucked for sale at Abergavenny market – ‘Mum was all feathery.’ Sheep were by now the main farming activity, roaming free on the mountainside, which made it very important that each farm clipped their ears with their mark. Unmarked sheep were sold for charity. All the farmers came together at shearing time.

Olive died in 1979 and Tom in 1990. Both are buried in the chapel graveyard at Capel-y-Ffyn – the church/chapel distinction is of course one of the fault lines that runs through the Llanthony Valley. Rosemary had married and moved away from the farm, so Trefor & Lyndon Powell then inherited the farm, still of some 140 acres. By now, the buildings were in serious decline and Cadw erected an emergency roof over the farmhouse. The Powell brothers had retreated to live in just two rooms: elsewhere there was water running through some of the rooms, floorboards were rotten and the roof was leaking. Cracks were opening up in the walls and there was still no mains water.

Eventually, in 2008, Cadw contacted the Landmark Trust and asked if the charity would step in to give this ancient, Grade I house a secure future before it fell down. It was immediately clear to us that Llwyn Celyn in the state it was in was exactly the sort of building Landmark exists to save. However, there could be no question of compulsory purchase and in any case, we have no endowment to enable such a purchase.

The importance of the building was such that, once a valuation had been provided by the District Valuer (of a magnitude that surprised us all), Cadw and the National Heritage Memorial Fund generously funded an in-principle purchase, on condition that the Powells used the money to build a new

farmhouse on their land so that they could continue farming it. This was to be built before the full purchase could take place. There then followed several years of delicate negotiations between Cadw and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to agree the location and design of the new house, which stands at the corner of the trackway leading up to Llwyn Celyn. Landmark finally took possession of Llwyn Celyn in February 2014, once the new house had been completed and the Powells had moved in.

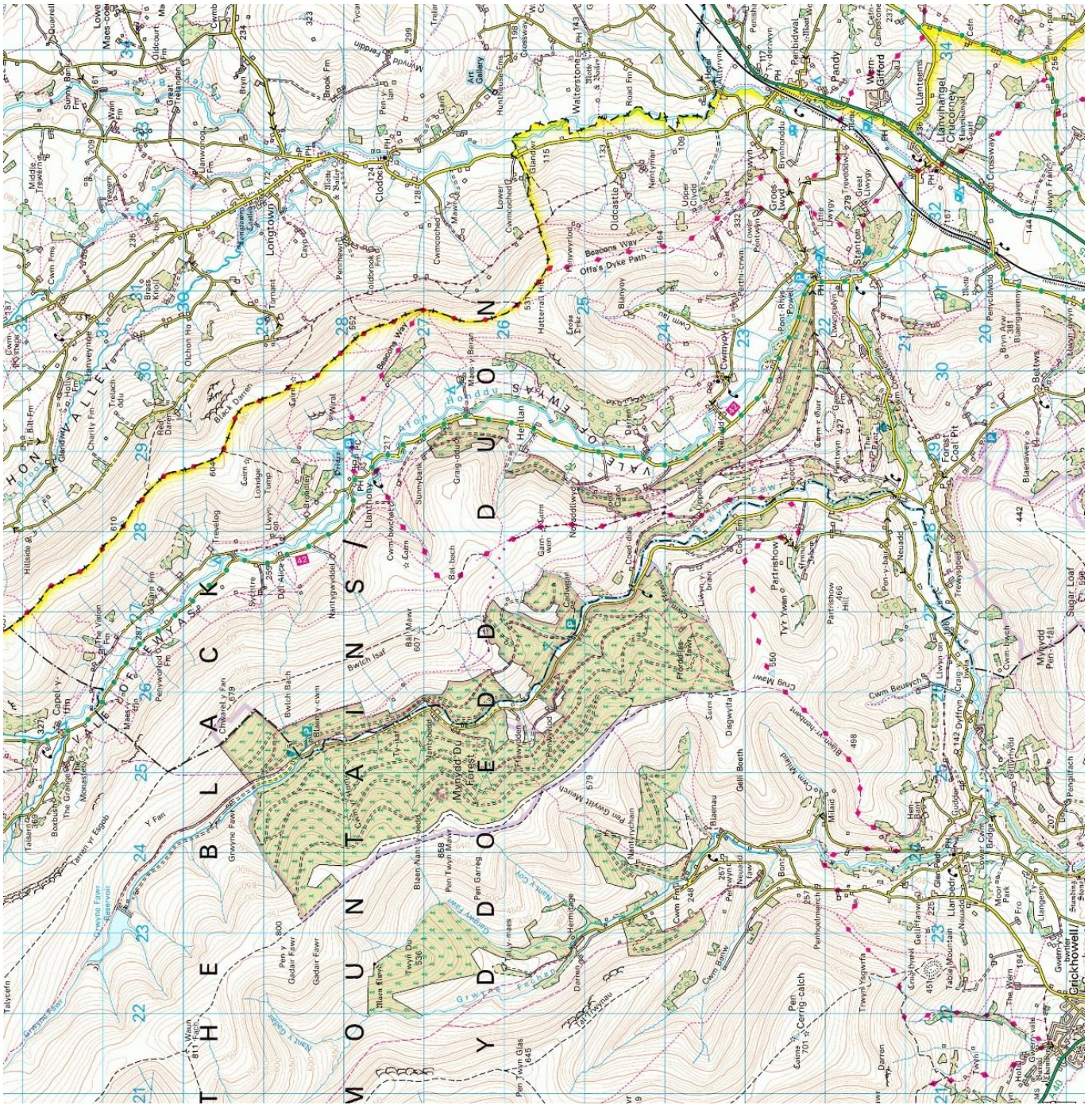
Meanwhile, a major appeal had been launched to raise the £4.2m needed to repair the site and bring the whole back into sustainable use. In the summer of 2014 we heard the wonderful news that our Heritage Lottery Fund application for £2.4m had been successful. With much hard work and persistence by Landmark's Development team and the generosity of our supporters, we were able to close the appeal, and work began on site in late summer 2016. The story of the restoration works and associated outreach and engagement activities is told in a separate volume.

Llwyn Celyn in its Landscape

Llwyn Celyn's site is a prime one. It stands in a natural bowl at the confluence of the Llanthony and Grwyne Fawr Valleys, embraced by the curling ends of Haterill Ridge and Grwyne Fawr (pr. Gruner Vor), which in turn clasp the Ffwddog (pr. Futhogg) ridge. Eddie Proctor's detailed case study of the Llanthony monastic landscape traces the medieval communication routes through the valley, and his work explains the traces still visible in the landscape today. Much of the network of paths and tracks that radiated from the valley remains, a web of winding farm lanes, deep holloways, stone-paved terraces, drift tracks and diagonal paths that traverse the hillside and are known locally as rhiws.

Llwyn Celyn's site was just off a key junction on the main road leading south from Hereford to Abergavenny, a major route into the interior of Wales. Llwyn Celyn's acreage of mixed rich arable and pastoral land was also bounded to the north by another pathway that leads up onto the Ffwddog ridge, another key medieval route leading northwest into the interior. It certainly overlooks the southern entrance to the valley, but it should be remembered too that the priory had strong links to its Herefordshire estates to the northeast and to Gloucester 40 miles east. Ancient routes to these swooped directly over the Hatterall ridge at the head of the valley, providing more direct routes than today's metalled roads. George Roberts, a 19th-century antiquarian, noted that sources often referred to the Hatterall ridge as 'the ordinary way to Llanthony.'

Proctor disputes the received wisdom that pre-modern roads were primitive and non-permanent, finding instead evidence of the haulage of heavy goods and a thriving trade economy in the medieval period. For this, a well-constructed and maintained communications network would have been essential, especially for efficient landowners like the monasteries.



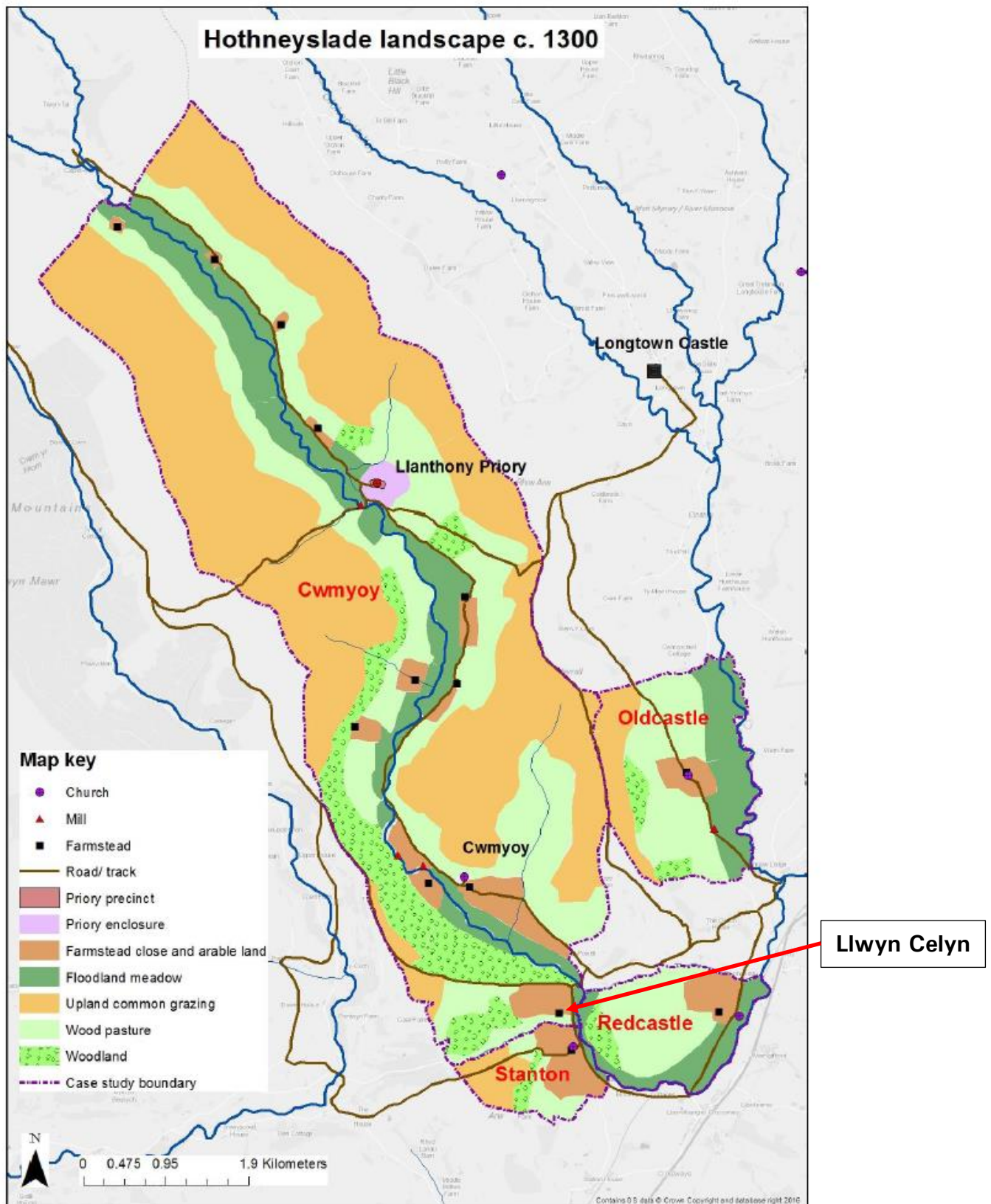
Not to scale.

(By 1679, an entry in the Cwmyoy memorial book records that 'we find the way leading from Llanthony to Footway... only a bridleway', an indication of the now diminished status of this once important monastic route, as the centre of gravity shifted from the priory's Herefordshire estates to post-Dissolution landlords the Arnolds' seat at Llanvihangel Crucorney. A post-Dissolution feature of the landscape still clearly discernible in sections today is the mountain wall, probably built in the 17th century. Running for nearly fifty miles, this marked the boundary between the upland commons and enclosed fields, its upkeep a matter of communal responsibility.)

Today's valley road is largely post-medieval in its section south of the priory. In the medieval period, the boggy valley floor was largely avoided in favour of upland routes, although the stretch immediately below Llwyn Celyn from the Queen's Head is thought to be part of the old valley way, after it had crossed the Honddu by the ancient bridge, Pont Rhys Powell. This bridge carried the old east west route from England into Wales as it crossed the southern stretch of Cwmyoy.

The path then followed today's public footpath through today's Upper Stanton [Manor] Farm and up and over the northern shoulder of Bry Awr to Pont-y-Escob (or bishop's bridge) at the mouth of the Grwynne Fawr. This was the route Gerald of Wales took with Bishop Baldwin on the latter's preaching tour of 1188. This track, via Llanthony Priory, became part of the pilgrim's way to St David's Cathedral on the west coast in Pembrokeshire. The 13th-century preaching cross now preserved in St Martin's Church at Cwmyoy was found in a field atop the Hatterall ridge, almost certainly put there to deepen the spiritual significance of the weary pilgrim's journey.

Even as a major route, this route is representative of how the old ways picked their way haphazardly through occupied and demarcated land. A branch off the route headed northwest onto the Grwynne Fawr by taking a steep turn west around Llwyn Celyn's own holdings at their northern corner.



Postulated landscape and land-use in Hothneyslade (another term for the lower Vale of Ewyas) c. 1300, inferred from the 1612 survey of the Llanthony Estate. With thanks to Eddie Proctor.

It is clear even today that an ancient track runs more or less north-south through Llwyn Celyn, perhaps a way of cutting off the corner and emphasising the importance of its site.

To the immediate south of Llwyn Celyn, the boundary of Cwmyoy manor with Stanton manor ran along or near today's Forest Coal Pit road. Llwyn Celyn therefore stood definitively in the manor of Cwmyoy, which is named interchangeably with Llanthony and Hothneyslade in manorial references. There is no record that the Llwyn Celyn holding exercised any manorial authority in its own right.

It may well be that today's Llwyn Celyn was built on the site of an earlier building but if it was, no traces of this were found during restoration. As is true for Wales as a whole, there is no surviving evidence of early medieval vernacular buildings in the area so that Llwyn Celyn's 1420 construction date may well make it the earliest surviving house in the Black Mountains, a high status representative of the local population's settlement of the cultivable land and rich pasture in the valley.

Oral memories of life at Llwyn Celyn

John Gilden's memories

In July 2018, when Llwyn Celyn's restoration was almost complete, John Gilden visited the site with his wife and daughter. In June 1940, John was evacuated, age six, to the valley with his brother Richard. Richard, a strapping fourteen-year old, was 'picked out' in Cwmyoy Village Hall by the Jaspers but refused to go unless they took his little brother too. In the event, Richard moved back to England in a couple of years, but John spent a happy decade or so living with the Jaspers. His day of reminiscing with us continued at a little tea party for other valley residents who remembered the wartime years, and the following verbatim captures his memories of Llwyn Celyn in the many conversations that day.

After moving with Jack and Gladys Jasper to Church Farm at Llanddewi Rhydderch, John eventually moved away in the 1950s, to study engineering at college in Staffordshire, even though he felt the Jaspers would have been glad if he had stayed to take on their farm.

Start of the journey

"I grew up in Folkestone till I was six and then we were all transported [the children] to the railway station – Central Station. Mum gave me a Lyons fruit pie for the journey. We could only carry one case – a cardboard case – a gas mask which was compulsory and a luggage label round your neck to say who you were. We were transported to Abergavenny produce market where we were fed and then we were split into groups – our group came up to this valley. We were separated from the girls, they went elsewhere on the other side of the Skirrid."

"We were transferred to Cwmyoy Memorial Hall which was a galvanised building with some kind of lining inside. We were all lined up against the wall – 30 of us foreigners – and the farmers had to pick, all they were interested in was the boys who could work. It got down to my brother and me; nobody wanted us. My brother said 'I'm not going without my brother' and so the Jaspers reluctantly took me. That was the beginning of our association with the Jaspers."



Gladys and Jack Jasper (right) with a teenage John Gilden behind.

Below: a valley school photo. John Gilden is second from the left in the front row. His brother Richard is in the centre of the back row.



Arrival

"We arrived on the 1st of June and then on the 2nd of June we had to go to church and from that I asked 'where's the school?' Mr Jasper said 'no problem, go up the hill and past the Queen's head and you can't miss it.' I thought 'they've killed the Queen and stuck her head up on the hill!'

Accents

"When I first arrived, I couldn't understand Gladys or Jack. Their English sounded completely different. I was a Southerner and they didn't understand me either. We got over it in a fairly short period of time."

Sleeping arrangements

"If you go up the stairs, there's a room on the left, that's the room me and my brother shared – there were no windows and a black hole which frightened me to death! Next to that was a bigger room and Jack and Glad slept in the end room with an anti-room – I remember that Ewan was born in that room."

Arriving at LC as a 6 year old

"First of all I was scared stiff of going to the toilet. It was a plank of wood with two holes in and I was frightened of falling down the hole! At home we had a tap, with cold water but still a tap. Here you came out to a stone trough – there was a tunnel bringing water down from the hills and that was our drinking water, well it was our water for everything! We washed in it and in the winter I remember having to break the ice, you didn't do too much washing then!"

Bathing

"It was probably more hygienic to do your 'jobs' in the field than do it up here, so that's what we did. Very little soap was involved in washing as it was rationed. We had big blocks of washing soap."

"In the kitchen there was a tin bath which was used on washing days, but not every week. Once every fortnight you had a bath in the washing water."

Helping on the farm

"I helped on the farm from an early age. I learned to milk a cow, cool down milk on a ridged cooler with water running through the middle. We then put the milk into churns – there was no sterilisation or anything like that. We then transported the churns to the bottom of the lane to a big slab [it might still be there today, I don't know]. The lorry would then collect the churns."

Cows

"Jack had around 25-30 cows and they had a tame cow, a Jersey. That's where I learnt to milk a cow, the poor old girl!"



John Gilden's return to Llwyn Celyn in July 2018, and a tea party held with wartime contemporaries in the Cwmyoy Memorial Hall the same day. L to R: Ivor Watkins, Joan Watkins, John, Ann Trotman, Edith Davies and Mary Griffiths. John passed away in April 2019.



Crops

"In the spring, unlike now, they'd sow the seeds by hand. Swedes and the like all in a row. When they'd germinated we'd have to hoe them out to thin it down and make good gaps in between."

"A couple of horses dug trenches with a backhoe and then they'd hand drop potatoes in. This was in a field by the pub up the road – it was really fertile. We'd then have to hand dig the potatoes."

Haymaking

"At hay time we'd cut hay with a scythe and a couple of horses. Then the hay was turned by hand until it was dry. We'd then put it into bundles to put into the barn. They had an old lorry on the farm and I had to drive it. I must have been only eight! When we got to the end of the road, somebody would get in and turn it around and I'd drive it back again."

Days off

"The only day we got off was a Sunday – it was a six day working week. Not only me but Mr and Mrs Jasper too. Not only did Mrs Jasper do the housework but she also worked out in the field."

Feeding the animals

"Part of the job was feeding the cows and sheep during the winter. We'd put corn out in the corner of the field. We'd have to keep the sheep away from the food and then the crows would come and we'd shoot them – they were such a nuisance."

Pigs

"The Minister of Agriculture gave permission for farmers to have two pigs during the war. The trouble was that they didn't say how big these pigs could be – they were massive, although most of it was fat. They were slaughtered out here and hung on a beam to cut the hairs off and gut them. They were hung on the nails in the downstairs hall. The hams and the shoulders were shared amongst the farmers. When one pig was killed, they'd swap with each other. Jack shared with his friend Mr Bevan."

"Towards the end of the season in summer there were a few flies about and the bacon was full of little holes. Weavils – most of them fell onto the floor but others were put into the frying pan – the pan was so hot that they were dead pretty quickly. I remember we'd have a fried egg too but there was no need to turn the egg because there was so much fat in the pan!"

Eggs and chickens

"I'd have to pick the eggs up and being a naughty boy, I'd seen people swinging a bucket of water around and thought, 'perhaps I can try that with eggs' – it didn't work and I smashed up all the eggs."

"Not many chickens were eaten because they were a luxury. Mostly they were sold at Abergavenny produce market."

Meat shortages

"Illegally, not here but on other farms, when people fell short of meat there would always be a sheep which had 'broken its leg' and that would be slaughtered. Its fleece was hidden from inspectors and the sheep would be shared between everybody. That was life in those days."

Chicken hatchery

"The chickens were hatched in the dining room [now the solar ground floor bedroom]. It was a heated space. They reared a serious amount of chickens, one lot of eggs hatched and a new lot of eggs went in – all through the year."

Flour rationing

"Gladys had the eggs for the cakes but the problem was getting the flour. Perhaps she managed to swap eggs for flour?"

The farm

"It was a big farm with sheep, cattle, a couple of pigs and wheat/corn as well as the straw and hay. There used to be a tractor outside with a big belt going into the Threshing Barn."

Thresher

"The thresher went from farm to farm with a special tractor with a fly wheel on to put the belt on. It was of wood construction apart from the paddles or flails used to break up the corn. I don't know who owned it but there was a contract that it would go from farm to farm."

Cider making

"There was a cider apple orchard at the back, we'd wait until the apples fell and they were picked up and put into what I suppose you'd call sacks and then put into the press. It was a big hand press made of two stones or wood. You'd turn something to make them come together to press the apples. There was a spout at the bottom where the juice would come out. The juice was put into buckets and carried into the back room and then put into casks. They were left to ferment for six months and then topped and corked."

The casks

"The casks were made of oak with steel bands and I suspect they were bought at Abergavenny market and had come from the brewery in Hereford which was a big brewing area. They always insisted on having used barrels rather than new." "There were three 40 gallon barrels in rotation – at harvest times the barrels didn't last long at all! They lasted a little longer in the winter."

John's dog

"I got a dog from Abergavenny market but it started sucking eggs. Jack said – I'll take care of that – and started putting mustard on the eggs. The dog didn't stop so Jack shot it and told me to go and bury it. It's buried in the corner of a field. I saw him shoot it and I shed a few tears."

Horses on the farm

"At the beginning of the war there were no tractors and so horses were still used on the farm. Jack had a minimum of four horses, I think maybe even six – four working, two resting. Jack's favourite was 'Bright', that's the one I used to ride bareback. I wouldn't have touched the others, they'd all have thrown me off! People talk about farmers not having feelings but Bright was the favourite horse and was never sold. The others were sold, presumably to France, but Bright stayed on the farm until she died."

Tractors

"In 1942 the Americans had a relationship with us and the old Fordson tractors came over. They'd have mudguards on the wheels about 30cm wide and we used to sit on them. Unfortunately that's how the eldest boy died – health and safety didn't exist back then."

Going to market/fuel rationing

"I'd go to Abergavenny market, by then Jack was upmarket and had a car – fuel was very limited and just used to go to church or Abergavenny."

"The government said 'hey there's a fiddle going on here' and added dye to agricultural fuel so that you couldn't use it in a private car. If you got caught you'd be in a lot of trouble. Where Jack got the petrol from, goodness knows!"

Market days

"Jack took sheep to Abergavenny market, he sometimes took the odd cow who was getting past its life and a few chickens too. We'd sell them on the open market. I presume the people buying were inspected so that they weren't sold to people who didn't use it for rations."

Christmas

"I remember getting up very early, very excited. I came down the stairs and in the fireplace was a big box. Inside was a clockwork train – I don't know whether my parents or the Jaspers bought it, but that was marvellous!"

"We always had a fantastic Christmas meal – we ate goose, there were always a few geese on the farm for that purpose."

Snow

"The government allowed us to buy wellingtons to walk through the snow to get to school. It was extremely cold but we walked from here to Cwmyoy

Primary school, which I'd guess, is around two or three miles away. I got plenty of exercise!"

Playtime

"The time to play was in the playground at school, but we didn't play – we fought! Them against us, the 'vacees – there was big rivalry as we were foreigners."

Welsh speaking

"No Welsh was spoken at all at school and in fact I don't think the Jaspers spoke Welsh."

Cwmyoy School

"We got to Cwmyoy School and of course I suppose there were 25 students in the school – we doubled it and they didn't know what to do with us. There was no paper, pens, nothing – we were given slates and some sort of scratch things. There were two teachers; one primary school teacher who was very nice and the headmistress who was not so nice. I was left handed and every time I wrote with my left hand, I was whacked!"

Community

"Everybody around here always helped each other out, they all shared produce. At harvest time the hall would have 10, 12, 15 people all sitting on the bench and they had beef – Mr Procter was the butcher – and vegetables which they'd grown themselves. They'd drink the cider – not just a bit of cider but a lot! It was a hard life but in a way enjoyable. I was allowed the cider too, but even if I wasn't I'd have helped myself anyway. Only occasionally I was a little wheezy on cider!"

Church Farm

"Because of family ties and that Jack and Gladys had no children, they had to pass the farm on to Tom Powell and so we moved to Church Farm. I think I eventually had 10 changes in school until I went to Abersache Technical School which was a mining school as we were in mining country."

John's own family

"Dad had an engineering business in Folkestone and he had to move. He came here for around three months until Ministry of Work found him and sent him to work in Gloucester in a factory making big guns. He and my mum lived in one room with a shared kitchen – he hated it so he applied for a job in Nigeria. He was posted on a bachelor contract for three years. After the three years he was allowed to take my mum but no children were allowed which is why I stayed with the Jaspers for 10 years!"

Rosemary, Trefor and Lyndon Powell's memories



Trefor & Lyndon Powell outside Llwyn Celyn in 2010.

In October 2012, we interviewed Trefor & Lyndon Powell and their sister Rosemary, now Griffiths, in what was then their kitchen at the service end.

How is it different from when you were children?

Rosemary: We used to carry water for drinking and everything. From the lane down the back. There was a well at the bottom. We used to carry buckets of water, for washing, drinking, everything.

Trefor: it was before my time. Only when it froze, that's the only time I remember carrying water.

What sort of farming did your father do?

Lyndon: When he came here first of all he was milking. He had cows and sheep. He used to sell milk. He used to milk by hand. When the electric milking machines came around he tried that. The machines had a glass bowl

where the milk would collect, but the cows kept kicking them and breaking the glass tops. Dad went back to milking by hand.

Rosemary: We didn't have any electric here until I was about 15/16. That would be in the 50's. 1958 sort of time.

Did you sell the milk on to the locals?

Lyndon: A lorry used to come around and collect it. We had to carry the milk down to a lorry in the lane. When it snowed we had to dig a track out to carry the milk down to the lane. Next morning it would be all filled up again!

Rosemary: 1947 was a really bad year and then in 1963.

What sort of cows?

Lyndon: Ayrshires and Friesians. They were tied up in the cow sheds in the winter. We had to clean them out every day. We had hill rights on the mountain so we ran the sheep on the mountain. We had to round the sheep up on the mountain, then gather the cows up and then go and milk them.

Rosemary: And we had pigs. We used to kill a pig to have bacon round the year. We would breed a pig especially to kill for bacon. Someone used to come here and kill the pig and then it would hang in the pantry.

Lyndon: Then we would set it out there and light a fire of straw to burn all the hairs off. We had a scraper thing to clean it off. Then you would put the pig on a ladder and drag it in and hang it up at the back for a few days. Then the chap would come back and cut it up. Then we would take it and Mam would salt it on the salting stone.

Rosemary: Salt the bacon, make faggots.

Trefor: It would hang on the hooks in the other room once it was salted.

Would that last you for the winter?

Rosemary: Yes. We used to have bacon quite often.

Were you self sufficient as a family. Did you grow vegetables?

Rosemary: Mum did yes. Potatoes, Swedes, peas.

Lyndon: The garden used to be over that end (pointing out beyond the front door). But she felt it was too far away, so it was moved to the back.

Trefor: She had the poultry out there, so she would go to the poultry and then into the garden.

Rosemary: At Christmas we had turkey. We took turkeys to Christmas market.

Lyndon: We had chickens too. We would feather them out the back.

Rosemary: We had our own eggs.

As children did you all help with all the tasks on the farm?

Trefor: We had no choice!

Where did you go to school?

Rosemary: To Cwmyoy school, the three of us. Then to Abergavenny.

Lyndon: They closed Cwmyoy School. Then I went to Forest Coal Pit School and they closed that so then I went to Abergavenny.

Rosemary: I walked to school when I first went. 2½ miles. There was a bus on a Tuesday and some children would get on and get off further up, but I never used the bus. It was quite nice. We take our time and look for bird's nests in the hedges on the way up. I suppose we got there on time. We were wandering about and nosing, but we must have got there otherwise we'd get told off!

How is the community spirit in this area? Have you noticed farms closing?

Lyndon: There are quite a few farms gone or been split up.

Trefor: They all used to run the mountain. But now there aren't as many using the mountain.

Rosemary: Most of the farms round here would use the mountain to put sheep on. Then they would all get together at a set time to gather them together to shear them. You'd have to get all the sheep down and then divide them up.

How did you tell one sheep from another?

Lyndon: They have an ear mark. There are different ear marks for different areas and they are in a book. You use a pair of garden shears to make the mark in the ear.

[brought out a sheep mark book, issued by Min of Agriculture]

What is the local breed of sheep?

Lyndon: We've got some Stafford cross and some Welsh. And we've got some Easy Care.

Rosemary: They don't have to shear them. It sheds its wool.

How many in your flock?

Lyndon: About 700 ewes. No cows.

Did you eat lamb often?

Rosemary: They did. I wouldn't eat it. But we don't now.

Was this the kitchen?

Rosemary: No. When we first moved in it was in there. [the hall? Or dairy?] Out there in the back is where Mam did the washing. This was actually two rooms when we first moved in. There was a parlour this end, there was a fireplace and then that end, there was an old stove under where the window is.

Trefor: There was a cast pipe going up the wall. Mam took it out when she put the sink here.

Rosemary: We lived up in the other room and we had the black lead grate, to put a pot on or the kettle on over the fire, and the little trivet at the side for putting the iron on.

Lyndon: Because it was such a big chimney, the heat didn't go out into the room, but up the chimney. Mam wanted it put different so that the heat came into the rooms.

Rosemary: So the food was kept up in the dairy [now the ground floor bathroom] because we had cold slabs up in there. And Mam had cupboards there and she also had an iron stove/range to do the cooking.

Rosemary: Most of the food was done on the range and later she had an oil stove up in the other room.

What was washing day like?

Rosemary: Well that was the old wash board in the sink. Mam used to rub the clothes up and down with the soap. And she used to put the gas boiler on. But first of all I suppose it went on the fire in a big pot. So Mam had to heat all the water up to be able to do all the washing. Some clothes used to get boiled. She also used to use the 'blue bag'. It's a little block of blue colouring in muslin and they would put that in the water so it made the clothes whiter. And she had a mangle as well to put the clothes through to get all the water out. And we had to carry the water up when I was young to do that. Wash day was always on a Monday, never any other day, just Monday.

Mam used a block of soap, household soap. No washing powder as such. She rubbed the soap up and down on the clothes on the corrugated wash board. And of course then she had to do the ironing with the flat iron. Two of them. One would be heating whilst she used the other one. Heating up on the range.

Trefor: She had a paraffin one years later. A paraffin iron.

Rosemary: Most things were cotton. I know Dad's shirts had the detachable collars then. Shirts with the studs and they were attached along the back. And they were starched. And the table cloths and things like that.

How many people worked on the farm in its heyday?

Lyndon: brother: One person. But then in harvesting time, one neighbour would help another neighbour next door. You'd go and help them and then they'd go and help you.

Rosemary: And the Mam would feed all of them for lunch and tea. They would come in and sit at the table.

Lyndon: There used to be gypsies staying in a layby, cutting grass to feed their horse. They started at the far end so Dad couldn't see.

Rosemary: We used to get an old gypsy wagon going through. An old red one, a horse drawn one. It was quite nice to see that.

Did you use horses or tractors at the beginning?

Lyndon: It was cart horses at the start. Ploughing and everything. Stabled on the farm

When was the last horse made redundant?

Lyndon: The tractors came late 50's.

Rosemary: When I went to college Dad was driving one.

Trefor: Old Standard Ford.

Rosemary: To do the corn we used to have a contractor come round with a threshing machine. He used to travel round and do all the farmers corn.

The wheat was harvested by hand?

Trefor: You had a binder to cut it up and then you had sheaves. You would stack them up in the field for a few days. You would have to turn them inside out to dry them. Then you had this threshing machine which would get the corn out.

Would did you do for fun as young people?

Rosemary: We didn't do anything really. I used to sing and I would go round to anniversaries and concerts to sing. That was my enjoyment really. I didn't have any friends round here, there were no girls round here. There was a Youth Club up at Forest Coalpit but I wasn't allowed to go. Dad was very strict. I was able to go to Eisteddfods and anniversaries and I used to go to chapel and local concerts where other people used to take part. ITV did a thing in Cardiff and some local people went and I sang solo. I played piano and mother played piano. That was that in a way, until television came along. And holidays, we just went to stay with relatives. Our cousins would come here and we would go to them.

Lyndon: Our uncle who used to live here before Mam and Dad, we used to go there for a holiday. Our Uncle's family were here for a 100 years. The Jaspers. They were renting from Llanthony.

Rosemary: Mrs Jasper was Mum's aunt.

Lyndon: He [Jack Jasper] had a dairy at the top of the field so he could keep more cows. But the estate wouldn't allow him to do it. So he (Uncle Jack) packed up and moved off. This came up for rent and that's when Mam and Dad came along. It was them (Jaspers) that were here when they took the table. They fell out over the rent, couldn't agree terms, so they said they would take the table out. They (Jaspers) thought they can't take it out from here but they took the window out. He agreed to it that they could take the table, thinking that they wouldn't be able to take it out.

Did you go to church?

Rosemary: A Baptist chapel, between Cwmyoy and Llanthony. We had to either walk or ride a bike. Because my father was from the top end of Llanthony, he used to go to the chapel up there, before he married, and that's where Mam and Dad are buried. We used to go there, they had a Good Friday tea. So we always went there once a year. Mam and Dad didn't go to chapel every Sunday, but I had to go.

What was Harvest Festival like? Did you take stuff along?

Lyndon: Yes, we used to take Swedes and vegetables.

Rosemary: We wouldn't just go to our local ones, we would go to Forest Coal Pit as well. Everybody locally went to each other's chapels.

Lyndon: We had more to do with Cwmyoy and Llanthony, but our neighbour went to Pandy, to chapel there.

What about the rooms upstairs?

Rosemary: The first one as you go up to the top of the stairs on the right, that was a bedroom. Then you've got a landing going across behind it. Well the far room there we never used it was for storage I guess. So then the back room was a bedroom.

Lyndon: Mam and Dad used to sleep there one time. Then they moved to the middle one and we was in the back room at one time. And then we moved to this one (pointing overhead).

Rosemary: The workmen used to sleep in the one above the front.

Lyndon: We had one chap who used to go out for a drink when he finished working and he'd come back late and he's creep up the stairs so Dad couldn't hear him coming back. So Dad put a swede at the top of the stairs and a bit of string coming back to the door. So when he opened the door the swede came and hit him.

Rosemary: We did have another brother. He was killed when he was 6½ and I was 8. He fell off the tractor.

Trefor: It had a mowing machine on the back.

Rosemary: Because it was after that that my father got really strict, I suppose. He never got over it. He was called Glyn. Glyn was sat on the front of the tractor on the tools box, my Gran came up on the bus and she'd got ice cream. He was so excited about this and he just fell off the tractor.

Rosemary: When Glyn died, Gran came to stay for a while. When Mam had Lyndon she stayed with some relatives in Abergavenny before she came with Lyndon, to have a rest really.

Where were you born?

Lyndon: Cottage hospital

Lyndon: The other thing I remember is that we had a barn fire out there. Dad went to market. There was an extra bay on the metal shed, nearer this way. A spark from the fire started the barn off. And Dad was in town. Someone went into town to tell him the barn was on fire.

Rosemary: We were in Abergavenny when the fire started and someone told him. Nan had an oil stove in the dairy and Dad thought that that had caught fire, but it wasn't, it was the hay. The barn was full of hay. It was Christmas Eve??

Lyndon: They were here til Christmas Eve. Had to haul all the hay into the field to let it burn out there.

What was Christmas like?

Rosemary: At the top of the stairs, by the window there's a black beam, and we put our stockings there and our presents used to be there for us. But leading up to Christmas Mum was always busy feathering because she always took the poultry to market. First it started off with geese and then turkey. We always went to market before Christmas so we would be quite tired. Because you would be feathering until the early hours and then get to market about 5 o'clock in the morning to the stall to lay your poultry on. The market was in Abergavenny at the Market Hall. And you would stand there all day until it was all sold and the money from that bought your Christmas presents I suppose. I remember I wanted a bike for Christmas one year. I used to hunt round the farm looking to find my presents and never found them. But we always had Mum's brothers' workmen down for Christmas lunch, always. But Wilfred never came. We always had goose, until the later years and then we had turkey. Mum used to make all the pudding and all the cake. Always had a Christmas tree from the local Forestry. Dad used to buy it off them. We had paper decorations, I used to make them in school, the old paper chains.

It must have been hard work on a farm when it snowed.

Rosemary: Dad used to go up the mountain to dig sheep out. It was March/April for the lambs. But they were always down at the farm.

Fuel for the range:

Lyndon: Bit of both wood and coal. When we used to have the black grate in there, the workman used to cut a great big long log, bring it in and push it up the chimney.

Trefor: you could sit right in front of the fire, and watch it moving down.

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LLWYN CELYN: A TIMELINE

1093	Rhys ap Tewdwr [note surname!] king of Deheubarth or S Wales killed in ambush. Castles constructed at Cardigan & Pembroke; William Rufus II rewarded his barons with land in Wales, incl Lacys who got district of River Wye and the lordship and castle of Ewyas; principal estates were Stanton Lacy, Weobley and Ludlow.
End 11thC	William de Lacy, kinsman of Hugh de Lacy, becomes hermit in small ruined chapel, St David's chapel by the Honddu brook' -> Llandewi-nant-honddu -> Llanthony.
1103	William de Lacy at Prima joined by Ersiniuis, former chaplain to Mathilda.
1107	Hugh de Lacy founded priory dedicated to John the Baptist – appropriate for the wilderness.
c1108	Priory dedicated to St John the Baptist and housed in the 'humble chapel of St David the Archbishop.'
c1118	Community had become Augustinian priory, Hugh de Lacy had endowed it with most of Vale of Ewyas.
1127	Purported charter of donation of Bryn Awr to the priory by Brian Fitz Count, Lord of Bergavenny.
1135	Death of Henry I, resurgence of Welsh unrest.
1136	Canons flee to Bishop Robert de Betun in Hereford when Welsh rebels seize the site. Prima reputedly despoiled of its books, deeds, charters by Secunda under its prior William of Wycombe (1137-c1150)
1136 (or 5?)	Foundation of Llanthony Secunda in Gloucester by Milo (or Miles) Bohun, Earl of Hereford who led the rebellion against Stephen I. Next 10 generations of Bohuns were buried at Llanthony.
1150-c1175	Clement is prior, wrote a <i>Harmony of the Gospels</i> , a standard work for 1400 years translated by John Wycliffe.
1180	Hugh II de Lacy enables start of construction of Llanthony Prima priory church. His endowment to the priory includes the Honddu valley.
1186	Death of Hugh II; son Walter's continuing endowment especially of Irish lands enables completion of Llanthony Prima church 1200-30.
1199	King John confirms Llanthony holdings by charter [first year or reign]
1204	Final split between Prima & Secunda begins.
1205	Llanthony Prima becomes independent of Secunda.
1217	Llanthony Prima building complete
1301	Walter de Fruoestre's Chronicle: fire reduces abbey church to bare walls.
1317	Secunda devastated by fire.
1346	Attacks by the Irish on monastic holdings in Meath.

1349	The Great Death (Y Farwolaeth Fawr) in Wales. Plague also arrives in Ireland. 1361, 1370, 1383 and 1398.
1361-2	Plague in Wales (the children's pestilence) and Ireland.
1370	Plague in Ireland. Break in cartulary 1326-78.
1376	John Wellington future Prima prior is among those assaulting Prior Trinbey while he celebrates the office of the dead, incl gouging out his eyes, pardoned by the Pope 1395.
1376-91	John Yatton prior of Prima
1377	Accession of Richard II
1380	Statute of Absentees Rich II of 1380 required a contribution to defence from non-resident Irish landowners & holders of Irish benefices.
1381	Good profits reported from Ireland.
1383	Plague in Ireland.
1396-1404	John Wellington Prior of Prima.
1398	Plague in Ireland.
1399	Accession of Henry IV
1399-c1415	Revolt of Owain Glyndwr. Llanthony valley briefly under Welsh rule.
1401	Inquisition, barons of exchequer who accuse prior of Prima of absenteeism in Ireland since 1396, contrary to ordinance of Richard II. Letters patent from Rich II proved prior had permission to remain in England and that his proctors in Ireland were allowed to dispose of the tithes, portions, goods etc. This was accepted though the convent was compelled to give up the income of the Irish Llanthony from Sept 1400 until May 1401 when H IV issued new letters patent allowing prior to remain in England.
May 1481	Villeins of Abergavenny rise against their lord Sir William Beauchamp, besiege him and wife in the castle; slay Sir William Lucy, the lord's steward.
1402	John Wellington Prima prior gains permission from Henry IV to appoint Elmley & William Hanley as his attorneys in Ireland.
1403	Abergavenny burnt down. Pardon, at the supplication of the king's kinswoman Joan de Beauchamp, lady of Bergavenny, to Gruff' ap Henri of Ewias Lacy, who lately rose against the king in the company of Owyn Glendourdy, and other Welsh rebels (evidence of unrest in valley).
1403	Grant for life to the king's kinswoman Joan de Beauchamp, lady of Bergavenny, of all the lands late of Gruff' ap Henri of Ewyas Lacy [9m NW], Cadogan ap Howell Vaghan of Elvell and John Peres of Usk [18m S] in Wales and forfeited by reason of their rebellion in the company of Owyn Glyndourdy and others. Amassing of lands by Abergavenny lordship?
1404	Wm Beauchamp of Abergavenny under desperate siege in his own castle; even the messenger sent for relief force is captured. HIV calls up men from district for defence.

Nov 1404	Richard Kyngeston archdeacon of Hereford is gathering monies from abbots etc in the marches 'for payment to men at arms and archers to abide in those parts upon the safe guard thereof and to resist the Welsh rebels if they should invade the realm.' Incl £13 6s 8d from Secunda and £4 from 'the prior of Llanthoney in Wales.' [so it doesn't sound as if Prima is disloyal even if poor]
Nov 1404	Notification to all officers in Ireland that the king holds John Wellyngton, prior of Llanthony Prima in Wales, to be a loyal subject; on complaint by the latter that certain lands and possessions of his in Ireland have been taken into the king's hands on the suggestion that certain enemies of his that he was a rebel and adherent of Owin Glendurdy [sic!]
March 1405	Glyn Dwr defeated at Grosmont.
May 1405	Glyn Dwr defeated at Pwyll Melin near Usk - Llwyn Celyn's district is at the heart of Glyn Dwr's demise.
Sept 1405	Licence for 5 marks paid in the hanaper by the prior and convent of Prima 'because the priory is situated among the Welsh rebels, and is so much destroyed and wasted by these that the prior and convent have no house in which their goods can be safely kept' for Hugh Harper, clerk, John ap Griffith, chaplain, and William Harper of Welyngton to grant mortmain [inalienable ownership] to them in aid of their maintenance of a messuage in Hereford, held of the king in free burgage
1408	Latest doc in Llanthony Ireland cartulary.
1410	Attorneys appointed in Ireland, the prior of Prima 'staying in England.'
1413	Accession of Henry V
1413	Attorneys (again) appointed in Ireland, the prior of Prima 'staying in England.'
Sept 1413	20 year permission for exemption from statue of absentees, and for Irish Attorneys to send all their goods etc to England (i.e. none staying in Ireland as contribution to defence?)
1415	William Crumpe is Prima prior. (Last appears in the records Easter 1417.)
1420-1	Main house at Llwyn Celyn built
1422	Death of Henry V, start of minority of Henry VI
1432	Repeat of 1413 exemption from dues for prior as absentee from Irish estates.
1447-69	John Pembruge is Prima prior.
1448	Exemption of John Pembruge, prior of the priory of St John the Baptist, Lanthony Prima, Wales, and the convent of that place and their successors from appointment as collectors of tenths, taxes, tallages or other quotas or subsidies; they having declared that their lands and possessions are so wasted by the wars of Henry IV in Wales, by deceases of their tenants and other mishaps and by impositions and charges, that they cannot support divine service and other incumbent charges. [still pleading poverty 20 years after LC built] Pembruge d. 1469.

1461	Patronage of Llanthony Prima passes to Crown under Edward IV as Earl of March
1469-81	John Adams ap Adam is Prime prior
1481	Llanthony Secunda by Gloucester assimilates Llanthony Prima. Reginald de Braose is Prima prior in 1481.
1501	Henry VII stays at Llanthony, raises Henry Deane Bishop of Bangor to be Archbishop of Canterbury. First & last monk to be so elevated.
1504	John Chester is Prima prior.
1524 & 1536	Henry VIII's Acts of Union uniting Wales with England (Monmouthshire only officially part of Wales in 1974 when Gwent was created). 1524 John Abyngdon is Prima prior.
1538	Llanthony Priory suppressed.
1546	Llanthony Estate acquired by Nicholas Arnold (1507-80)
1597	LC copyhold property in Cwmyoy manor, granted to William John Richard for 8d pa. He also held another adjacent property of 56 acres for 1s 4d. The whole 100-200 acres.
1611	Wm John Richard still held LC but other property reassigned.
c1620	LC assigned to William George, Gent.
1630	William George a leader of a tenant case against the manorial lord.
1642-51	Civil War, records lost, weak manorial control to c1700
1656	William George died, LC assigned to William Watkin.
1669	William Watkin reacquired 56-acre with Y Pant (an encroachment) added.
1690s	Major remodelling of LC: hall ceiled, kitchen built, chimney inserted.
1692	Thomas Watkin son of William acquired further adjacent holding at rent of 1s 8d
1703	Tenants begin court case against Nicholas Arnold as lord of the manor.
1717	William and Thomas Watkins and Job, son of Thomas, all said to be 'of LC.' Thomas holds LC, now about 150 acres.
1719	Tenant case referred to the Lord Chancellor's court.
1720	Death of William Watkin
1726	Llanthony Estate sold to the Harley family, Earls of Oxford
1733	Thomas Watkin died, LC assigned to his son Job.
1733<>1740	Job died and son James Assigned [? Though Job's memorial says d. 1756. Another Job?]
1762	James Watkins surrenders LC to the lord, Edward Harley for payment of £20, because of debt.
1775	LC leased to William Price for £50 pa
1799	Llanthony Estate bought by Col Sir Mark Wood. LC now a farm of 148 acres and rented for £70 to Thomas Williams.
1800	Priory church east window collapses
1803	Sir Richard Hoare witnesses fall of great west window of Priory Church
1807 (or 8?)	Llanthony Estate sold by Col Sir Mark Wood to poet & writer Walter Savage Landor
1811	Llanvihangel Railway Co incorporated by Act of Parliament.
1814	Llanthony Estate placed in hands of trustees continues in Landor family ownership.
1821	Nantyglo to Abergavenny tramway opens, with junction at Llanvihangel.

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1820s	William & Mary Morgan at Llwyn Celyn: children born 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829.
1837	Collapse of 4 piers in priory south arcade prompts consolidation measures.
1841	Llwyn Celyn: Benjamin Davies (35), wife Mary (32), Thomas (9), Jane (7), Mary Ann (5) Bridget (3)
1848	Llwyn Celyn: Inventory (Knight family archive) implies a change of tenancy
[1849]	['Michael Jasper and wife Mary née Davies took on LC tenancy' - not according to census]
1851	Llwyn Celyn: Thomas Griffiths (58) farming 140 acres, mother Mary (83), wife Blanche (59), offspring William (21), Thomas (19), Charlotte (16), Mary (14). Michael Jasper takes on tenancy soon after (was farming 30 acres at Little Llwygy farm in 1851).
1853	Hereford, Monmouth & Newport Line opens. Llanvihangel & Pandy both have stations.
1871	Llwyn Celyn: Michael Jasper, 120 acres; eldest son William & wife Ann [née Beavan] & young daughter, plus younger son John and female servant.
1877	William Jasper (1846-1923) takes tenancy
1878	Death of Ann Jasper.
1881	Llwyn Celyn: Michael & William Jasper (both widowers), plus William's four children Mary (11), James (8), Sarah Ann (6), Margaret (4) plus Elizabeth Parry (45) housekeeper & Mary Walker (15) servant & Arthur Rew (17) servant/labourer.
1882	William Jasper resident at LC and marries Elizabeth Jones. They have 7 children.
1884	Michael Jasper died, buried at St Martin's Cwmyoy. William took over LC.
1886	Adeline Jasper born.
1907	Llwyn Celyn: major repairs (Savage Landor Estate ledger)
1923	Death of William Jasper. Tenancy remains in family. Jack (John Warren) Jasper (b. 1896) takes over?
1943	Death of Elizabeth Jasper.
1947	Llwyn Celyn: John (Jack) Jasper relinquished tenancy, taken over by his brother-in-law Tom (James Abraham Thomas) Powell.
1951	Ministry of Works takes charge of priory site.
1958	Tenants Tom & Olive Powell buy Llwyn Celyn from the Landor Estate. Offspring Rosemary (b. 1943), Trefor (b. 1949) & Lyndon (b. 1953) & Glyn, a son who died young.
1979	Death of Olive Powell
1990	Death of Tom Powell; buried at Capel-y-Ffyn. His sons Trefor & Lyndon inherit Llwyn Celyn
2014	Llwyn Celyn bought by the Landmark Trust, the purchase 100% funded by Cadw & the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

Priors of Llanthony Prima

PRIORS OF LLANTHONY PRIMA		Relationship with Secunda
1103-	Ernisius	
-1131	Robert de Bethune	
c. 1131-6	Robert de Braci	
1137-c. 50	William of Wycombe] mother house, conjoined
c. 1150-69	Clement. D. S. Th.]
c. 1174-89	Roger of Norwich]
c. 1189-1203	Geoffrey of Henlawe, physician]
c. 1203-5	Martin]
c. 1205-13	Roger ?of Godestre	Priories separate
1224-7	Walter	
	Stephen	
1236	Walter	
1241-2	David	
1251	Thomas	
1253	Simon	
1265-7	Walter ?de Haya	
1276-95	Nicholas	
1296-1301	Thomas of Gloucester	
1303-14	Walter de Langley	
1316	John of Kingston	
1321-67	John of Rufford	
1338-57	John of Gloucester	
1362	Adam	
1363-76	Nicholas de Trinbey	
1376-91	John de Yatton	
1396-1404	John de Welyngeton	
1415	William Crumpe	
1447-69	John Pembruge	
1469-81	John Adams (ap Adam)	
1481-	?Reginald de Braose] Prima assimilated by
1504	John Chester] Secunda
1524	John Abyndon]
1527	Richard]
1534	John Ambrose]
1537	H(enr)y Wydon]
1538	David Kemp <i>alias</i> Mattheuwe]
1538	Prima dissolved	

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