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Darganfod Hen
Dai Cymreig



Discovering Old
Welsh Houses

**HAFOD YR AFR
LLANGAR (CORWEN)**

SJ 0668042370



Jenny Lees

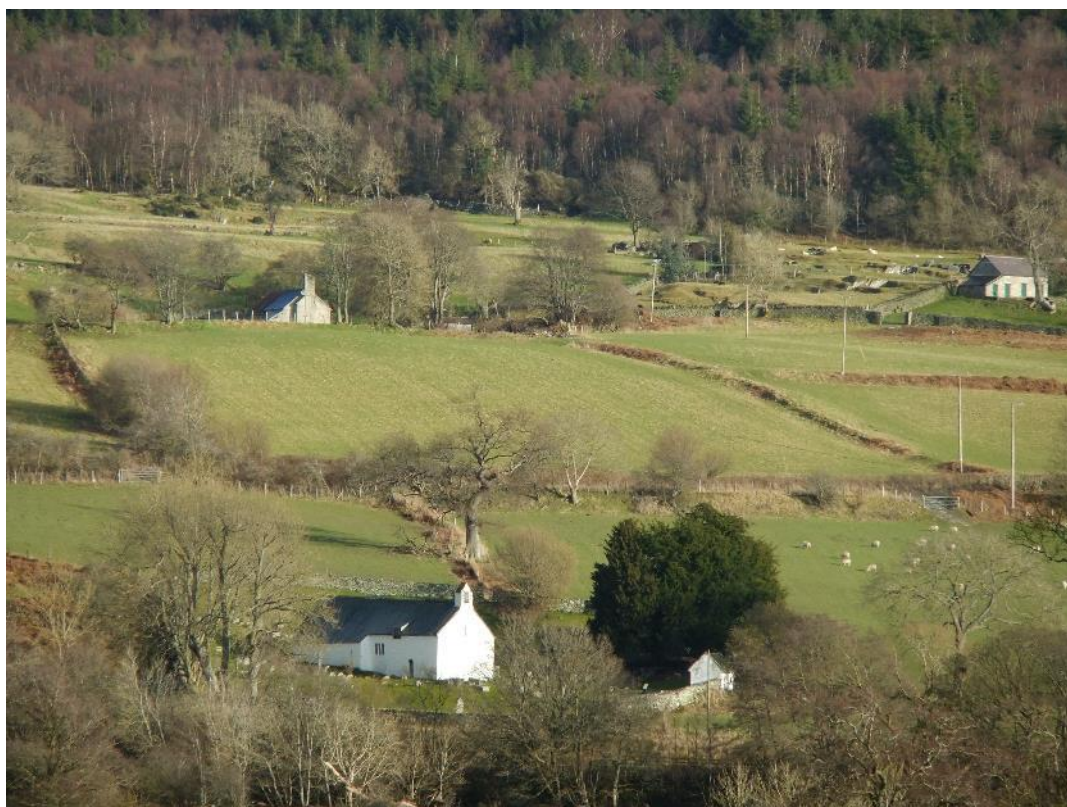
April 2025

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Hafod yr afr, Llangar SJ 0668042370 April 2025

From outside its front *Hafod yr afr* looks like a 19th century farmhouse, but its oldest timbers have now been dated to the mid-16th century ¹ and it originated as a medieval hall house during the period when the Barons of Edeirnion still ‘ruled’ the parish of Llangar.



Hafod yr afr above Llangar church and Bryn Saint outbuilding top right (Jenny Lees)

These barons were descendants of **Madog ap Maredudd**, last Welsh Prince to rule the whole of the ancient Kingdom of Powys, and while Madog's great grandson Gruffudd ap Iorwerth became Baron of Cymer,² Gruffudd's brother **Elise ap Iorwerth** became Baron of Llangar. We know that these brothers were among those raiding Oswestry during a 1282 campaign, burning the town and causing damage estimated at £2,500 in silver,³ though by 1284, with North Wales ‘annexed’ to the English crown, these Barons had received a royal pardon! The

¹ See Appendix Ten, p. 19 below.

² See Jenny Lees, ‘A Quest for Cymer in Edeirnion and its Barons. Part I: c.1200-c.1700’, Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society (JMHRs), Vol. XV111 (II), 2019, pp.129-40; also A. D. Carr, ‘The Barons of Edeyrnion, 1282-1485, Part One’, JMHRs, Vol.4, 1963, pp.187-93.

³ J. Conway Davies, *The Welsh Assize Roll*, p.352, cited in A. D. Carr (1963), p.190.

brothers' domains of *Cymer* and *Llangar* were separate *townships* within Llangar parish, and the site of *Hafod yr afr* lies within the former *township* of Llangar, just above Llangar church.

By 1435 the Barons of Cymer had built what is now named *Plas Uchaf*,⁴ another medieval hall house lying just across the valley from *Hafod yr afr*, and presumably the original Llangar barony is likely to have been somewhere in Llangar *township*. But due to having only an under-aged female heir in C14th, the Llangar branch of the Barons of Edeirnion did not prosper within the *township* of Llangar as much as some of the other branches,⁵ whose important local lineage descending originally from **Elise ap Iorwerth** is described in the article *Cryniarth Rescued for Posterity* in Cynwyd Scrapbook One.⁶



Cusped cruck blades in the higher part of Hafod yr afr, with later wall behind

Nevertheless, *Hafod yr afr* is likely to have been associated in some way with the original lands of the Barons of Llangar, and the existence of some decorative cusping of timbers [above] suggests that it may have been a hall house of 'gentry' rather than 'peasant' status,⁷ so of some importance. It may have had a different name originally, and possibly only acquired the name of a *hafod* [summer dwelling] for a lower lying farmstead after the main Llangar barons' lineage continued elsewhere. This farmstead could have been *Gwerclas*, the

⁴ See https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20023_HH_32_Plas_Uchaf.pdf

⁵ See A. D. Carr, 'The Barons of Edeyrnion, 1282-1485, Part Two', JMHRs, Vol.4, 1964, p295.

⁶ *Cryniarth Rescued for Posterity* in Cynwyd Scrapbook One, <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>

⁷ See Richard Suggett, 'Crucks in Wales', in Nat Alcock, P.S.Barnwell and Martin Cherry ed. (2019), pp.298-9.

estate of which claimed to own *Hafod yr afr* by **1766** (page 6 below), but by **1580** and probably much earlier, some of *Llangar* township formed part of a very extensive ‘property empire’ owned by the Salesburys of Rug.⁸ Although an Edeirnion baronial court was once held at Cynwyd, none of its records remain, as they are said⁹ to have been burnt by Baron Hugh Hughes of Gwerclas (died 1725) in a dispute with his neighbours – destroying any written evidence of ownership! But the Barons of both Cymer and Llangar had also inherited lands as descendants of Madog ap Maredudd’s illegitimate but recognised son Owain Brogyntyn - reputed to be by *the daughter of Maer Du of Rug*,¹⁰ and later **Piers Salesbury** (died 1548) also owned *Rug* property through marriage to **Margaret Wen**, daughter and heiress of *Rug’s* **Ieuan ap Hywel ap Rhys**.¹¹ So *Hafod yr afr* could well have been built by the Salesburys of Rug, then later purchased, leased (or indeed its ownership merely claimed once court records had been burnt!) by the Barons of Cymer and *Gwerclas*, at some point prior to the marriage settlement of their large **1776** estate.¹² (Interestingly, a **1660** ‘Lease of possession of manors or lordships of *Glyndoverdwy* and *Rug*’¹³ mentions ‘2 out of lands of *Humphrey Hughes Esq*’ [of *Gwerclas*]. As the later *Schedule of Gwerclas Mansion and Demesne lands as it was before being mostly purchased by Rug in 1824*¹⁴ has an added catalogue pencil note in the archives saying it ‘reverted back’ to Rug by purchase, *Hafod yr afr* may have been part of *Rug* property that was later claimed or leased by *Gwerclas*).



⁸ Estate and family records of ‘Salesbury of Rhug, co. Merioneth, and Bachymbyd and Pool Park, co. Denbigh, later the barons Bagot, 1243-1801’, Records no.490 and 503.

⁹ Gwallter Mechain in *Burke’s Landed Gentry*, 1846, p.608n, cited in A. D. Carr, 1963, op. cit., p.191.

¹⁰ Philip Yorke, *The Royal Tribes of Wales*, 1799, p.120.

¹¹ Sadie Jarrett (2024) *Gentility in Early Modern Wales – The Salesbury Family 1450-1720*, p.72.

¹² Plas Uchaf was originally known as Cymer before the Cymer barons moved to Gwerclas by around 1600.

¹³ XD2/27, 1660, Gwynedd Record Office, ‘Lease of possession of manors or lordships of *Glyndoverdwy* and *Rug*’.

¹⁴ XD2/3888: *Schedule of Gwerclas Mansion and Demesne lands as it was before being mostly purchased by Rug in 1824*.

Llangar church viewed from below Hafod yr afr, site of the burials listed below

Although we may never know who originally lived in *Hafod yr afr*, we do have a probable property transaction from as early as **1470**¹⁵ for the site of *Henfaes isaf*,¹⁶ another cruck framed mediaeval hall house just the other side of Cynwyd, so some other source of early documentary evidence for *Hafod yr afr* may still come to light! We do know that by **1729** *Hafod yr afr* was the home of Yeoman **Edward Nicholas** (see p.5 below) and as the name **Nicholas** is very unusual in Llangar Parish Records, the C17th parish records below could possibly have connections with *Hafod yr afr*. It should be noted that *ap* meant 'son of' before official surnames were introduced, and that Llangar parish records only started in 1614, after which the earliest ones only occasionally gave the name of a person's actual dwelling.

1624, 8th April: Burial of William **ap Rees ap Nicholas**.

1625, 8th April: Baptism of **Hugh, son of Evan ap Nicholas**.

1625, 24th June: Baptism of **Gwen**, daughter of **Robert Nicholas**; followed sadly by the 12th May **1629** burial of **Gwen, vch.** [daughter of] **Robert Nicholas**.

1655, 6th January: Baptism of **Catherine**, daughter of **Robert ap Evan Nicklas**.

1632, 3rd July: Burial of both **Hugh ap Robert Nicholas** and **John ap Robert Nicholas**, '*his brother, not far before*'.

1636, 17th October: Burial of **Evan ap Nicholas**.

1647, 2nd December: Burial of **John ap Evan, Sexton**. (This could of course be the son of a different Evan, but another Sexton did live at *Hafod yr afr* in C19th - see page 8 below).

1655, 6th January: Baptism of **Catherine**, daughter of **Evan ap Robert Nicklas**.

1660, 26th May: Burial of **Evan ap Robert Nicholas**.

As mentioned above, these persons may have been relations of **Edward Nicholas**; buried **1729, 1st April** as of '*Hafod yr afr*'.

¹⁵ 1. Margaret verch Grono ap David ap Plethyn. 2. Jevan ap Madog ap David. Lease of a tenement at Henvaes; 4 years, renewable, rent 12d. Given at Kynwyt Vawr on the Vigil of St. Michael the Archangel, 1470.

¹⁶ See Cynwyd Scrapbook Four, <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>



Hafod yr afr viewed from neighbouring Bryn Saint, with *ffridd* above (Jenny Lees 2016)

Although in the online version the first few pages of the 1729 Will ¹⁷ of **Edward Nicholas**, ‘*Yeoman, C, Llangar*’ are said to be of parchment too creased to film, the *Inventory* section gives a fascinating impression of not only lifestyle and possessions, but also of rooms existing in the house at that time. His household possessions, as was customary at the time, are listed room by room, and ‘**Kitchen**’ items included two *Chests*, a *Table*, four *Stools*, two *Chairs*, two *Iron Potts*, three *Pewter dishes*, seven *Spoons*, a *Little Pot*, *Nogins* (small cups or mugs), eight *Pales*, one *Cro* (possibly a hook or fish hook?), one *Pan*; one *gradel* (griddle?), one *pare of tongs*, and one *Candlestick*.

In the ‘**Buttry**’ were 1 *Churn*, 1 *Firkin* (a small barrel or tub for butter or liquids), 1 *Bench*, 1 *Little Tub*, 1 *Block* and 3 *Earthen Potts*. The **Large Chamber** items included 1 *Bedstead*, 1 *Cubboard*, 2 *Little Chests*, *Bed Cloaths & Linnens*, 3 *Sacks*, 1 *Bagg & a Wallett*, 1 [?] *Pillion* (a kind of saddle), 1 *old saddle*, 1 *pack for sowing & other small things*, *Implements of Husbandry*, and 2 *Mares* and a *Colt*. But the **Little Chamber** was only listed with one *Bolster*.

There was no mention yet of a *parlour* at this time, and dendrochronology commissioned by DOWH ¹⁸ suggests that when first built as a cruck hall house, *Hafod yr afr* consisted of a two-bay central hall with service and parlour bays to either end, but it also appears to have almost immediately been floored, with a large chimney constructed at the lower end where the huge inglenook is now visible (page 7 below). So possibly either or both the *Little* and

¹⁷ **1729**: Will of **Edward Nicholas, Yeoman, Hafod r Afr, Llangar**, (SA/1729/153). The online version of the main part of the will says it is too creased to film, but the *Inventory* can be read on <https://viewer.library.wales/23681#?xywh=-1586%2C0%2C6533%2C3519&cv=2>

¹⁸ Dendrochronology report summary in Appendix Ten, p.19, and building report in **Appendix Eleven**, p.19

Large Chambers of the Inventory might have been on an inserted first floor - though this may have been only a partial floor in *crogloft* style.



Also included in Edward's **1729** Inventory were 2 oxen, 4 young heifers, 7 of [some type of] sheep, 41 sheep, 4 cows, one yearling *calfe*, one *Little calfe*, *Powltry*, and Geese -suggesting that *Hafod yr afr* was at that time a year-round working farm, rather than a *hafod* used only in warmer months. The cusped cruck 'blades' (p.3 above) were part of the original medieval hall, but later on this part probably provided livestock accommodation - a low row of massive upright slate slabs divided a slated floor section, possibly for threshing, from the un-slated part. The total value of '[£] 46 – 04 -06, reflects the comparatively large value of livestock among possessions of the time, and the witnesses were **Thomas and Robert Cadwallader**. The section to the left of the picture above contains the cusped cruck blades of the original medieval hall house (at this section's lower end), and interestingly the ends of crucks can also be seen on parts of the outside rear wall of the house!

Although there do not then seem to be Llangar Parish Records mentioning the name *Hafod yr afr* for the period 1729 to 1774, we know from the **1766 Marriage Settlement** of **Hugh Hughes Lloyd** of *Gwerclas* and his future wife **Margaret Walmesley**¹⁹ that *Hafod yr Afr* was by then part of *Gwerclas* estate, with this very extensive property transaction including:

'And all that Chief Quitt or Fee Farm Rent of 6d issuing out of Messuage tenements and lands in Llangar, formerly in tenure of Edward Nicholas afterwards of Margaret vch Edward and now of William Evans Clerk and called Hafod yr Afr'.

¹⁹ *Marriage Settlement* (DD/GA/652) in Denbighshire Record Office.



Hugh Hughes Lloyd was a direct descendant of the Barons of Cymer who had moved in around 1600 to *Gwerclas* from medieval *Plas Uchaf*.²⁰ By 1766, and possibly centuries before, *Gwerclas* had gained ownership of most of the Cynwyd farmsteads and village, though later much of the estate was sold to Rug following family financial misfortunes.

1745, 19th August: **Maria Charlotta Pryse** of *Rug*, as part of her 'LEASE OF POSSESSION of moiety of lordship and manor of Glyndower [Glyndyfrdwy] with chief rents', inherited 'messuages, tenements, lands and rents in Llangar, in occupation of Hugh Hughes, Esq., Mrs. Elizabeth Humphreys, Margaret Edwards, Hugh ap Humphrey and Mrs. Robert Owens'.²¹

Hugh Hughes was of *Gwerclas*, but it is also interesting that a **Margaret Edwards** had also inherited the tenancy of *Hafod yr afr* after her father's 1729 death. (The *Havod* listed in this document -the only property apart from *Rug* specifically mentioned by name- is actually *Hafod y calch*, situated across the valley and at that time known only as *Havod* or *Hafod*).²²

²⁰ *Plas Uchaf* was formerly called *Plas o Cymmer* or just *Cymer*, presumably referencing the nearby confluence or *cymer* of the rivers Alwen and Dyfrdwy, or Dee.

²¹ Gwynedd archives XD2/78 [[N.L.W. Rug 370.]]:

https://diogel.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/DATRhagorol/RhestrEitem.aspx?iaith=en&rhif_archif=12&rhif_rhiant=53874&rhif_tudalen=8

²² https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20138_HH_26_Hafod-Y-Calch.pdf

Returning to the 1766 *Gwerclas* Marriage Settlement, this also suggest that, as well as the tenure of *Hafod yr Afr* being continued by **Edward Nicholas's** daughter **Margaret**, by 1766 it was in the tenure of **Wiliam Evans** B.A - interestingly *Rector* of Llangar church from 1762 to around 1783.²³ It is not clear whether he would have lived there himself, as the burial at Llangar of a **David Hughes**, *Hafod 'rafr*, was recorded on 27th March 1774, but what is now called *The Old Rectory* would have been only a short walk away across the fields.

1802: We know from a Welsh family gravestone inscription in Llangar churchyard (image page 12 below) that **John Llwyd (Lloyd)** in later records), who occupied *Hafod yr afr* by the 1838 tithe assessment, was born in *Bodheulog* on 19 March 1802. This gravestone also tells us that **between 1833 and 1850** seven children were born at *Hafod'r afr* to him and his presumed wife **Catherine Hughes**, born 27 Jan 1809 at *Cwm isa*: **Peter** 24 Oct 1833; **Eleanor** 13 March 1836; **Humphrey** 20 July 1838; **Susan** 22 July 1842; **John** 15 Aug 1844; **Thomas** 23 March 1847, and **Robert** 22 March 1850. Two older children were also recorded: **Edward** born Sept 1830 at *Cwm isa* and **Hugh** born 18 Jan 1832 at *Ty'ucha*, Cynwyd.

1838: '*Apportionment of the Rent-Charge in lieu of tithes - Parish of Llangar, Merioneth, 28 September 1838*' [Appendix One, p.14]. *Hafod yr afr* was now owned by **Griffith Howel Vaughan** of *Rug*, presumably following the *Gwerclas* estate sale of 1824,²⁴ with *Occupier John Lloyd*. John later moved to *Ty'n y berth* nearer Cynwyd village, where he died in 1889, but between 1841 and 1889 is said to have been both *Clerc Festri'r Plwyf* [Parish clerk?] and *Clochydd* [Sexton] for Llangar, and later for Cynwyd church of St John the Evangelist, which replaced ancient Llangar as the site of worship in 1856.²⁵ John was probably responsible for bell ringing as well as grave digging, and he and his son **Robert** who followed him were said to have carried out 1,241 burials between them!²⁶

As John was *Sexton*, it would be interesting to know whether **John ap Evan, Sexton**, buried at Llangar on 2nd December 1647 and possibly son of **Evan ap Nicholas** (buried there on 17th October 1636), also lived at *Hafod yr afr* – situated conveniently close to the ancient church!

²³ Trefor O. Jones (1975) *O Ferwyn i Fynyllod*, p. 45.

²⁴ Gwynedd archives XD2/3888: 'Schedule of Gwerclas Mansion and Demesne lands as it was before being mostly purchased by Rug in 1824'.

²⁵ <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/church/st-john-evangelist-cynwyd>

²⁶ Trefor O. Jones op.cit., p. 55.



1766 façade of the home rebuilt by Hugh Hughes Lloyd of Gwerclas (Jenny Lees 2016)

Although the extent of the land attached to *Hafod yr afr* in 1838 may well have altered since the homestead was first built, the *Tithe Apportionment* field names probably originate much further back, and *Gwerclas* itself later retained field names similar to those in Humphrey Hughes' 1662-74 *Memorandum Book*.²⁷ The *Hafod yr afr* field names (**Appendix One**, p.16) give a picture of a holding which, although fairly small, contained an impressive variety of agricultural land. The largest field, listed as *Ffridd* ['mountain pasture or sheep walk'], covered over eight acres above the house, and just beyond its boundary is marked another, but unnamed, *House and Garden*. This was presumably the *Ty'n y Mynydd* listed in 1975 as being a ruin in the *ffridd* of *Hafod yr afr*, but said according to an *Assessment* of 10th December 1836 to have been last inhabited by an **Evan Roberts**.²⁸ Possibly this was originally built as a *ty unos*, but now it is said to be 'just a heap of stones!'

Hafod yr afr land in 1838 also included three adjacent fields lying below the present Cynwyd to Corwen road -sloping down to the bank of the river Dee and providing access to water for grazing livestock and a home for the geese (this was later interrupted by the railway line). *Cae banadl* [Broom] *tan fford* may have been a field specifically set aside for growing this plant for animal fodder, as was once the case with Gorse, and although actual woodland was not shown on the tithe map for *Cae [y]n coed* ['field in/of the wood'], this could have once been 'woodland pasture', as cattle and swine used to be grazed within woodlands.

Between the *ffridd* and the lowland pasture bordering the river were four more *Hafod yr afr* fields, including one named *Dryll* [piece, fragment or portion], which seem suggestive of

²⁷ *Memorandum Book* (1662-74) of Humffrey Hughes, Gwerclas, Meirionydd Record Office, Z/M/572.

²⁸ Trefor O. Jones (1975), op. cit., p.144.

previous medieval field systems,²⁹ and between *Hafod yr afr*'s boundaries and the higher reaches of the *Berwyn* mountain range, the *Tithe Apportionment* records a large area of woodland - presumably predominantly broad-leaved before more recent conifer plantations?

From 1841 censuses began, and the Llangar Parish one for *Hafod yr afr* was 'headed' by **John Lloyd** (35), with wife **Catherine** (30), sons **Edward** (10), **Hugh** (9), **Peter** (7) and **Humphrey** (2), and daughter **Ellinor** (5). (**Appendix Two**, p.15.)

1851: The Llangar Parish census for *Hafod yr afr* has not yet been found, but in the 1861 census *Hafod yr afr* was now headed by **Hugh Pugh** (60), *Farmer and Keeper* born in Trawsfynydd. His wife **Anne** (58) was born in Llanfachreth,³⁰ as were their unmarried *Carter* son **John** (28) and *Dairy maid* daughter **Jane** (26); also listed were *Grandson* **Hugh R. Pugh** (7), born in Gwyddelwern, and *Servant* **Lewis Davies** (15), *Agricultural labourer*. (**Appendix Four**, p.17.) It is interesting that **Hugh** was listed as *Keeper* as well as *Farmer* - possibly being gamekeeper on *Rug* estate's *Berwyn* moors, which were conveniently situated just above his home at *Hafod yr afr*. (The sport of driven grouse shooting is said to date back to around 1853, becoming more popular as railways made it easier to get to the moors, and shotguns became breech-loading).

In 1863, on 19th June, **Hugh Pugh's** *Farmer* son **John Pugh** married **Jane Evans**, daughter of *Innkeeper* **William Evans** of the *Blue Lion*, Cynwyd - a tavern featured in *Cynwyd Scrapbook Two's* article *Blue Lion Memories*.³¹ It is also interesting that **John** was *Farmer and Cattle dealer* when *Executor* of his father's will in 1877, as the village taverns provided accommodation and grazing for drovers who took huge herds of beasts from Wales towards England, with one of their drove routes leading down from *Mynydd Mynyllod*.

1868, 8th August: Marriage of *Gardener* **Humphrey Lloyd** (30) *Bachelor*, *Plas isa*, Llangar, son of **John Lloyd**, *Farmer* [who had been at *Hafod yr afr* from the 1830s] to **Anne Rogers**, *Spinster*, of *Tai bach*, *Cymdy*, daughter of **Edward Rogers**.

1871 census: *Hafod Yr Afr* was still headed by **Hugh Pugh** (70), *Farmer of 30 acres employing one Son*, with wife **Anne** (68), their now *Widowed Agricultural labourer* son **John** (38), unmarried daughter **Jane** (36), unmarried *Joiner* son **Lewis** (30), *Scholar* grandson **Hugh W. Pugh** (6), and *Visitor* **Hugh R. Pugh** (17), *Gardener*. (**Appendix Five**, p.17.)

1877, 9th April brought the death of **Hugh Pugh**, *late of Hafod yr afr*, parish *Llangar*. His will was proved at St Asaph by his sole executor **John Pugh**, *Farmer and Cattle dealer of Hafod yr afr*, with the Probate valued at 'under £500'. (*National Probate Calendar*).

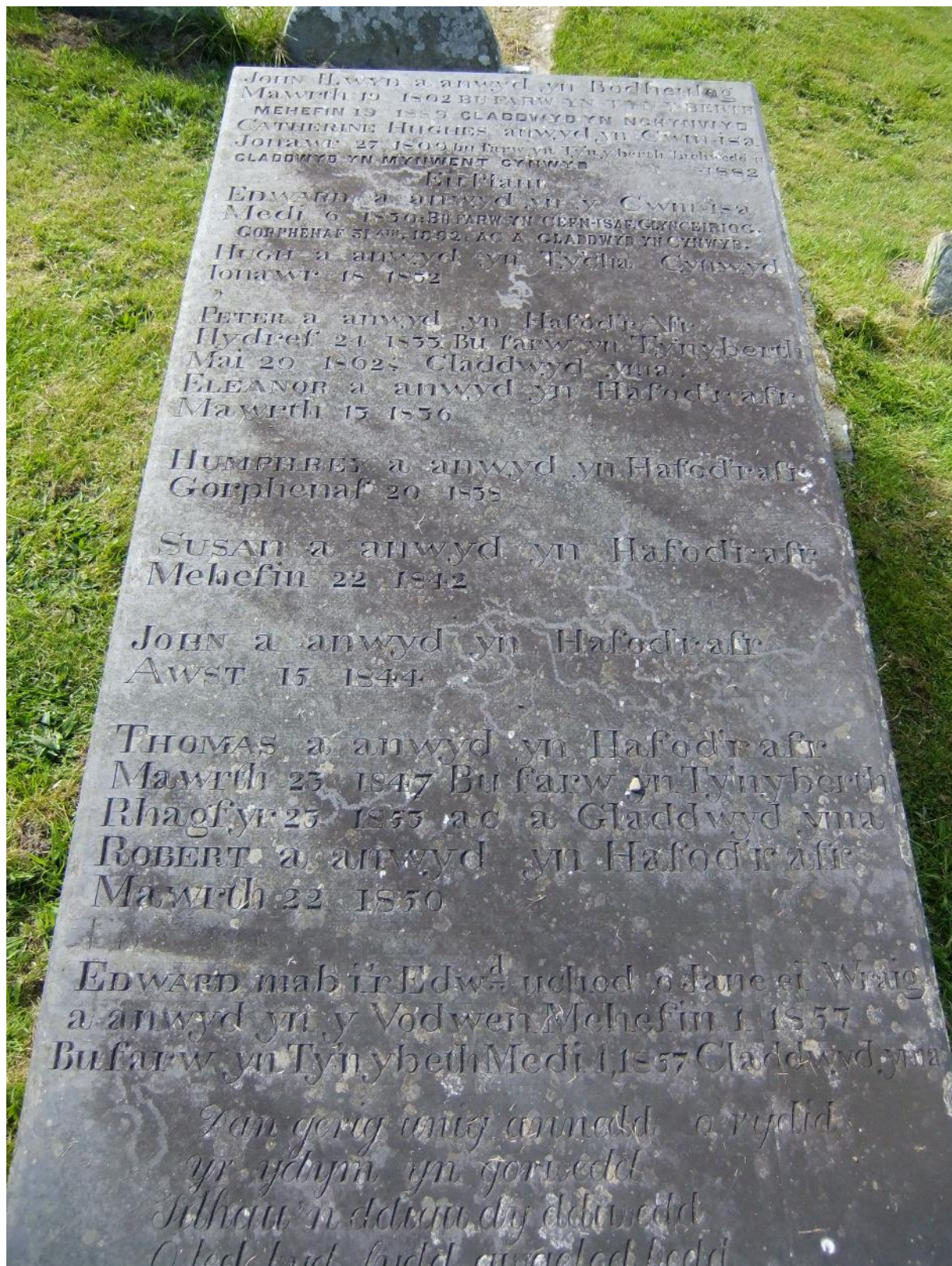
1881 Census: Following his father's death, *Hafod yr afr* was headed by **John Pugh** (47), now *Farmer of 35 acres* and remarried to a second wife **Sarah** (35), born in Llangollen, Denbighshire, with grandson **Hugh W. Pugh** (16), *Scholar*, and **John Lewis Pugh** (3). (**Appendix Six**, p.18.) But by 1888 the tenancy of *Hafod yr afr* returned to the **Lloyd family**;

²⁹ Alfred Neobard Palmer and Edward Owen (2nd edn. 1910), 'A history of Ancient Tenures of land in North Wales and The Marches'

³⁰ **Hugh Pugh** of *Nannau* and **Anne Evans** of *Ystymgwadnau* [?], both in the parish of Llanfachreth, had been married there on 5th November 1828.

³¹ *Cynwyd Scrapbook Two*, <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>

perhaps as **John Pugh** had died by April 1889 (p.13), and could have already been unwell?



Llwyd [Lloyd] gravestone in Llangar graveyard (Jenny Lees)

1888, Dec. 19: '1. Hon. C.H. Wynn. [of Rug] 2. **Humphrey Lloyd**. TENANCY AGREEMENT for tenancy of farm, lands and premises called *Hafod yr afr*, parish Llangar, at an annual rent of £23.0.0.'³²

Humphrey Lloyd had - initially rather puzzlingly, 'headed' the **1881** census for the rather grand *Plas Isaf*, Llangar³³ as just *Gardener*, aged 42, together with wife **Ann** (40), daughters **Merry** (12), **Catherine** (8) and **Sarah** (4), and son **John** (6). But later an explanation was discovered - his very affluent employers, featured in the article *Plas Isaf - Another Edeirnion Dynasty: Part Three*,³⁴ were not in residence in North Wales at the time of the census!

1889, 7th April: The death of **John Pugh** at *Hafod yr afr* was followed in **1889**, 7th May by the *Administration of the Personal Estate* of '**John Pugh**, late of *Hafod yr afr*, *Cynwyd*, *nr. Corwen*, *Co. Mer*, *Farmer and grocer*'. This was granted to his widow **Sarah Pugh**, '*Relict: Value £116 9s 2d*'. [*National Probate Calendar Will*]. As John had been also a grocer, it would be interesting to know where the groceries were sold, and from whence they came!



Llangar Church interior with restored medieval wall paintings (Jenny Lees 2018)

1891 Census: *Farmer Humphrey Lloyd* (52) now headed *Hafod yr afr*, with wife **Ann** (49), born in Llanarmon, Denbighshire; *Farmer's daughter Catherine A.* (18), *Scholar daughter Sarah* (14), and *Gardener's Apprentice son John* (16). (**Appendix Seven**, p.18)

³² XD2/2308:

https://diogel.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/DATRhagorol/RhestrEitem.aspx?iaith=en&rhif_archif=12&rhif_rhiant=63486&rhif_tudalen=2

³³ Census RG11/5538/49

³⁴ DOWH *Cynwyd Scrapbook Five* was published in December 2023, and is also online at https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Publications/Cynwyd_Scrapbook-5.pdf

20th Century

1901 Census: *Farmer Humphrey Lloyd* (62) still headed *Hafod yr afr*, but was now a *Widower*; with daughter **Catherine** (28) now listed as *Cook*; daughter **Sarah** (24) as *Dairy maid*, and *Lodger John Attwood* (58), born in Stafford, listed with employment *Gardener*. (**Appendix Eight**, p.18)

1903, 7th December saw the death of **Humphrey Lloyd** of *Hafod yr afr*, with probate granted on 18th March 1904 to **Robert Lloyd**, *Farmer*, with *Effects* £299-1s-11d.

1907, 31st December: **Catherine Anne Lloyd** (35), *Ty'n y berth*, Llangar, daughter of **Humphrey Lloyd**, married John Ellis (35), *Farmer*, Salop, but sadly died on 5th Nov 1910.

In the **1911 Census** *Hafod yr afr*, now listed with five rooms, was headed by *Labourer on farm* **Evan Jones** (51), born in Llangar, with wife **Martha** (51), born in Ruthin, and daughters **Elizabeth** (11) and **M. Ellen** (9) - both at school and born in Llangar, (**Appendix Nine**, p.18). But tragically, following the outbreak of World War One, not only was their son **Griffith Thomas Jones** killed in action in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in October **1917**, but his brother **Robert Samuel Jones** also died of wounds the following year.³⁵



Rear view of Hafod yr afr (Image courtesy of Cassa Townsend)

In July **1918** the **Hon. Mrs. C.H. Wynn** (of *Rug*) made an agreement ³⁶with **John E. Thomas** of *Bryn Awen*, Corwen parish, for the tenancy of the '*messuage and lands called*

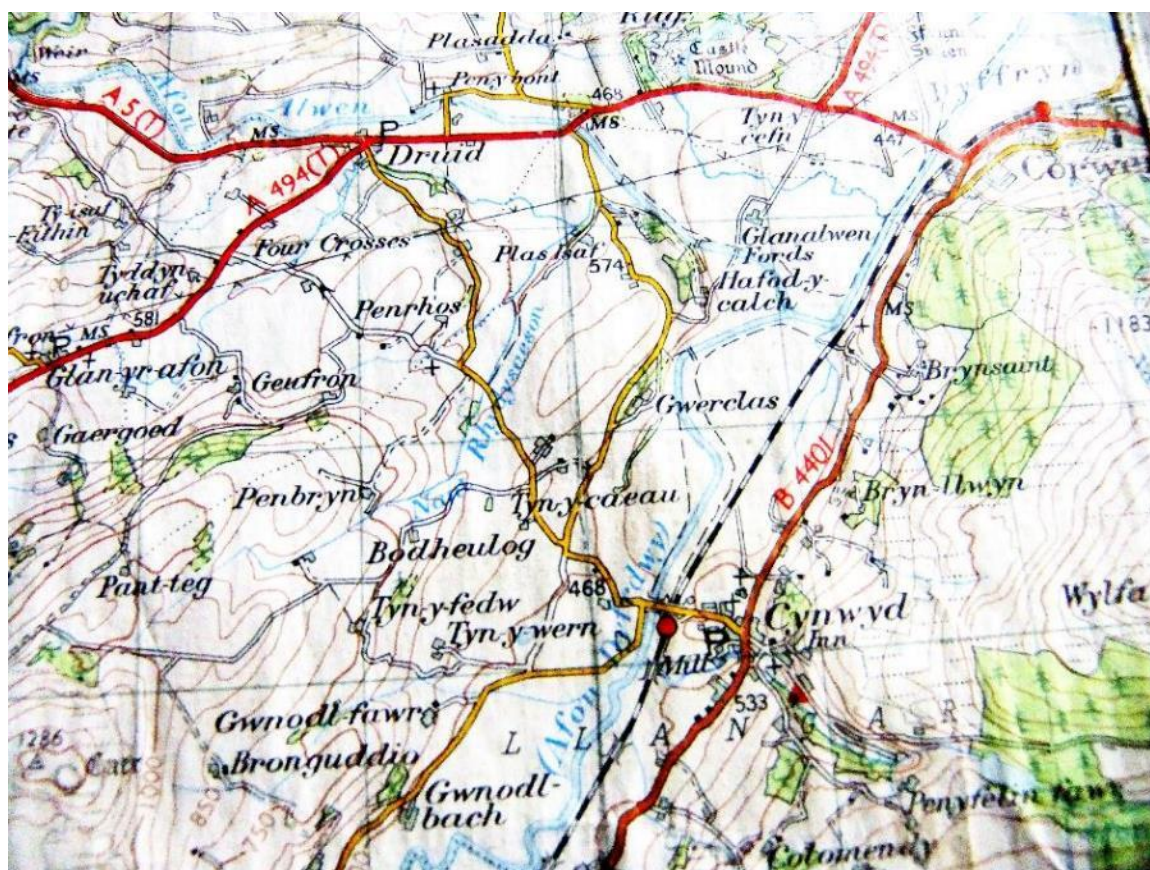
³⁵ <https://ww1.wales/other-counties/merionethshire-memorials/cynwyd-war-memorial/>

³⁶ XD2/2383,
https://diogel.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/DATRhagorol/RhestrEitem.aspx?iaith=en&rhif_archif=12&rhif_rhiant=63486&rhif_tudalen=9

Hafod-yr-afr in Llangar parish, annual rent £35, but at some time before 1920 (in an undated document³⁷) the tenancy was granted to **Mrs. J.E. Thomas**; so maybe her husband had died?

In 1988 Peter Smith³⁸ drew attention to the very significant historic features of *Hafod yr afr*, which had been purchased from the *Rug* estate in 1961 by **Hilda Myfanwy Townsend** (née **Jones** and descended from a Cynwyd family) and her husband **Eric Townsend**. This amazing historic property has since then passed down through two further generations of Townsends, and is currently undergoing sympathetic ongoing renovation under the stewardship of the **Townsend** family.

Although both *Hafod yr afr* and Llangar church can now only be reached from the road between Cynwyd and Corwen, until the early 1980s a since washed-away footbridge between *Hafod-y-calch* and *Gwerclas* linked the west side of the valley and its inhabitants with the former township of Llangar. The bridge is marked on the 1950s map below; *Hafod yr afr* is not named but shown above *Bryn Saint*, and *Plas Uchaf* (unnamed) is just south of *Plas Isaf*.



³⁷ XD2/2394:

https://diogel.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/DATRhagorol/RhestrEitem.aspx?iaith=en&rhif_archif=12&rhif_rhiant=63486&rhif_tudalen=10

³⁸ **Peter Smith (1988)**, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside: Hafod-yr-afr* is mentioned in his lists for maps, which indicate half-timbered houses (Map 10 pp.380-384), crucks (Map 12, pp. 395-97); cusping in roof trusses (Map 20, pp. 416-7) and ornate open roofs (Map 43, pp.510-12).

The fascinating recollections³⁹ of **May Parry** describe how, while living at *Plas Uchaf* with leaking roof before its subsequent rescue from dereliction, she worked at *Gwerclas* and crossed Afon Dyfrdwy to visit relations at *Hafod yr Afr*. And it was a sad day when families could no longer just walk across the river to visit friends on opposite sides of the valley!

Appendix One:

Apportionment of the Rent-Charge in lieu of tithes - Parish of Llangar, Merioneth, 28 September 1838 (National Library of Wales ref, AC388/ R3)^{40, 41}

Landowner	Occupier	No. referring to the plan	Name and Description of Lands and Premises	Quantities in Statute Measure [Acres, Roods and Perches]	Amount of Rent-Charge ⁴²	Suggested English translation by J.L.
Griffith Howel Vaughan [Rug]	John Lloyd	303	<i>Hafod yr afr</i> house and garden	0-3-26		Summer dwelling of/ with the goat
..	..	304	F[f]ridd	8-3-6		Mountain pasture or 'sheep walk'
..	..	305	House and garden	0-0-16		
..	..	306	Dryll	2-0-38		Piece, fragment or portion
..	..	307	Erw tan ty	2-1-35		'Acre' ⁴³ below the house
..	..	308	Erw [lub?]	1-1-20		[Glebe?] acre
..	..	309	Cae canol	1-1-8		Middle field
..	..	310	Cae [y?] n coed	1-1-19		Field [in the?] wood
..	..	311	Coed ⁴⁴	1-3- 0		Wood

³⁹ Cynwyd Scrapbook One, <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>

⁴⁰ <https://places.library.wales/viewer/4562249#?cv=11&h=303&xywh=267%2C359%2C698%2C432> (list).

⁴¹ <https://places.library.wales/viewer/4622417#?cv=&h=303&xywh=16936%2C5092%2C2843%2C1515> (map).

⁴² This column records 'Amount of Rent-Charge apportioned upon the Several Lands, and Payable to the Rector.'

⁴³ Erw literally means an acre, as but fields would have been named much earlier, may have indicated a previous arable *quillet*.

⁴⁴ Small area of woodland right on the riverbank,

..	..	312	Cae banadl tan ffordd	2- 0- 17		Broom [the plant] field below the road
..	..	313	Cae nant	2-2-32		Field of the stream
..	..	[Total]		25-0-17	[£] 3-18-0	

Appendix Two: 1841: Census for Hafod yr afr:

John Lloyd	35	Farmer
Catherine Lloyd	30	
Edward Lloyd	10	
Hugh Lloyd	9	
Peter Lloyd	7	
Ellinor Lloyd	5	
Humphrey Lloyd	2	

Appendix Three: 1851: Census for Hafod yr afr: Not yet available.

Appendix Four: 1861 Census for Hafod yr afr (RG9/4308/?1)

			Marital status	Occupation		
Hugh Pugh	Head	60	Married	Farmer and Keeper	Merioneth	Trawsfynydd
Anne Pugh	Wife	58	Married		Merioneth	Llanfachreth
John Pugh	Son	28	Unmarried	Carter	Merioneth	Llanfachreth
Jane Pugh	Daughter	26	Unmarried	Dairy maid	Merioneth	Llanfachreth
Hugh R.Pugh	Grandson	7			Merioneth	Gwyddelwern
Lewis Davies	Servant	15		Agricultural labourer		

Appendix Five: 1871 Census for Hafod yr afr (RG10/5681/17)

			Marital status	Occupation		Where born
Hugh Pugh	Head	70	Married	Farmer of 30 acres employing one son	Merioneth	Trawsfynydd
Anne Pugh	Wife	68	Married		Merioneth	Llanfachreth
John Pugh	Son	38	Widower	Agricultural labourer	Merioneth	Llanfachreth

Jane Pugh	Daughter	36	Unmarried		Merioneth	Llanfachreth
Lewis Pugh		30		Joiner	Merioneth	Llanfachreth
Hugh W. Pugh	Grandson	6		Scholar	Merioneth	Gwyddelwern
Hugh R.Pugh	Visitor	17		Gardener		

Appendix Six: 1881 Census for Hafod yr afr (RG11/5538/53)

			Marital status	Occupation		
John Pugh	Head	47	Married	Farmer of 35 acres	Merioneth	Llanfachreth
Sarah Pugh	[2 nd] Wife	35	Married		Denbs.	Llangollen
Hugh W. Pugh		16	Unmarried	Scholar	Merioneth	Llangar
John Lewis Pugh		3			Merioneth	Llangar

Appendix Seven: 1891 Census for Hafod yr afr (RG12/4636/)

					Where born	English or Welsh spoken?
Humphrey Lloyd	52	Head	Farmer		Llangar	Both
Ann Lloyd	49			Denbs	Llanarmon	Both
Catherine A. Lloyd	18		Farmer's daughter		Llangar	Both
John Lloyd	16		Gardener's Apprentice		Llangar	Both
Sarah Lloyd	14		Scholar		Llangar	

Appendix Eight: 1901 Census for Hafod yr afr (RG13/5247/19)

					Where born	English or Welsh spoken?
Humphrey Lloyd	62	Widower	Farmer		Llangar	Both
Catherine Lloyd	28	Daughter	Cook		Llangar	Both
Sarah Lloyd	24	Daughter	Dairy maid		Llangar	Both
John Attwood	58	Lodger	Gardener		Stafford	English

Appendix Nine: 1911 Census for Hafod yr afr (RG14/625/14)

					Where born
Evan Jones	51		Labourer on farm		Llangar

Martha Jones	51	Wife		Ruthin, Denbs.
Elizabeth Jones	11	Daughter	At school	Llangar
Ellen Jones	9	Daughter	At school	Llangar

The house was listed with 5 rooms.

Appendix Ten: Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory Report by Dr M. C. Bridge FSA and R. Cook FSA. ⁴⁵

‘Summary: Two crucks from the primary phase have a combined likely felling date range of 1522–52, while a beam in the service range has a heartwood/sapwood boundary date of 1522, suggesting a slightly later felling date range of 1533–1563. However, there is no evidence that the house ever functioned as an open hall, being floored very rapidly with a large chimney at one end ... *Hafod yr Afr* (NPRN 28477) is a farmhouse near Cynwyd in the Upper Dee Valley, in the historic county of Merioneth, North-East Wales. The house evolved over a number of phases, with the earliest dating to the mid-16th century. At this time, the house was constructed as a cruck hall house with a two-bay central hall with service and parlour bays to either end. The house appears to have never functioned as an open hall; evidence suggests it was floored, almost immediately, into a storeyed dwelling, with a large chimney constructed at the lower end of the house. By 1800, the house had undergone significant change, with the two downhill bays converted into a double-fronted house, with up-hill byre. It was recorded on the Crucks (map 12), Cusping in roof trusses (map 20), and Ornate open roofs (map 43) in *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* (Smith, 1988)’.

Appendix Eleven ⁴⁶

An extract from the historic buildings record (Martin Cherry & Ross Cook, April 2024). The complete version may be found on the Discovering Old Welsh Houses website.

‘**Situation** – Hafod yr Afr occupies a partially levelled site, slightly sloping down from east to west at 629 ft (191.7 m) above sea level, overlooking the Dee. It lies within the historic parish of Llangar and Cantref of Penllyn in the commote of Edeirnion.

Place Name – The direct translation of Hafod yr Afr into English is Summer Dwelling of the Goat.

Highlights – Timber framed, full crucks, tree-ring dated to mid-16th century. Open hall quickly modernised within a year or two by partial floor insertion. Byre superseded by the present kitchen, probably associated with livestock being accommodated elsewhere on the farm. The higher-end rooms at the opposite end to the shippon/kitchen were rebuilt as a barn, probably in the 18th century. The rapid conversion of open halls into fully-floored houses in the mid-16th century seems to have been fairly common—there are several other examples identified in the vicinity. Was this driven by fashion or economics or a mix of the two?

Summary – Superscript numbers refer to sections below.

Originally the house was timber-framed. (1) Dendrochronology has established that it was built in the middle decades of the 16th century. The two surviving crucks were dated to 1522-52, while a beam in the outer room dated to 1533-63. (2) Two full cruck frames survive, one dividing the open hall (T2 on plan),

⁴⁵ See full report on DOWH website at https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/ODL/den%20132-TRD_Hafod%20yr%20Afr.pdf

⁴⁶ See full report also on DOWH website at https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/ABR/den%20132_BR-Hafod%20yr%20Afr.pdf

the other marking the division between the hall and what was probably the service end (T1 on plan). (2) The hall was of 2 bays divided by an open truss with decorative cusping at the apex. This survives, but radical adaptation took place shortly after, or possibly even during, construction. The lower (open) bay of the hall to the west was floored over and, at ground-floor level, divided equally into two small rooms by an east-west partition. (3) The upper bay of the hall was never floored, nor was it heated: it may have been used for storage. It may have been at this time that the walls were built or rebuilt in stone. This included the construction of a large chimney at the low end to provide heat to what became the hall/kitchen; the bressummer and the joists in the lower bay of the hall are both ornamented with chamfers and stepped hollow stops. (4) This turned the domestic quarters into a conventional 2-unit storeyed house. An inventory attached to the will of Edward Nicholas, yeoman (1729) indicates four rooms—the kitchen, the buttery (the former lower end bay of the hall), with one little and one large chamber above. (5) No tree-ring dating was possible for the later phases, nor for the present barn, but they do not look to be coeval: the kitchen and barn may be 18th century. A lean-to under a catslide roof was added to the north (the cold side) of the kitchen, perhaps a dairy—it is marked on the 1875 OS map. Several 20th-century improvements include re-roofing, the addition of gabled dormer windows and a small porch.

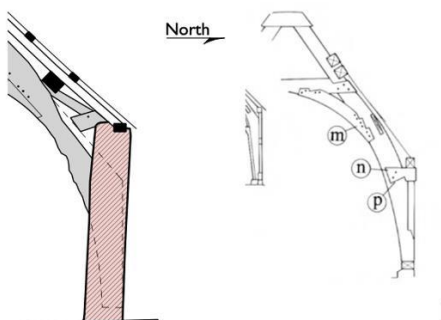
Discussing the evidence.

(1) It is common to find medieval houses in North-East Wales that were originally timber-framed, the walls later being rebuilt in stone. At Hafod yr Afr, the cruck trusses extend fully down to the ground (the feet of the north blades of both T1 and T2 are visible externally). The crucks would have been attached to the wall plate by 'cruck spurs' and, remarkably, one of these survives (although displaced)—see Fig 1. The re-casing of houses in stone, which often involved the flooring over of the open hall and the provision of enclosed fireplaces with chimneys, usually followed on considerably later. But here, the lower end of the hall was floored over almost as soon as the house was finished, perhaps even during its construction.



Fig 1 The original house was timber-framed. The cruck truss blades would have been secured to the wall plate by a spur, removed when the stone walls were built. Amazingly, although the wall plate has gone, one spur survives, out of kilter and no longer of much use.

Top: the cruck blade of T2 with the spur displaced. Bottom left, detail of cruck at Hafod yr Afr; bottom right, a spur in place (marked as 'p').

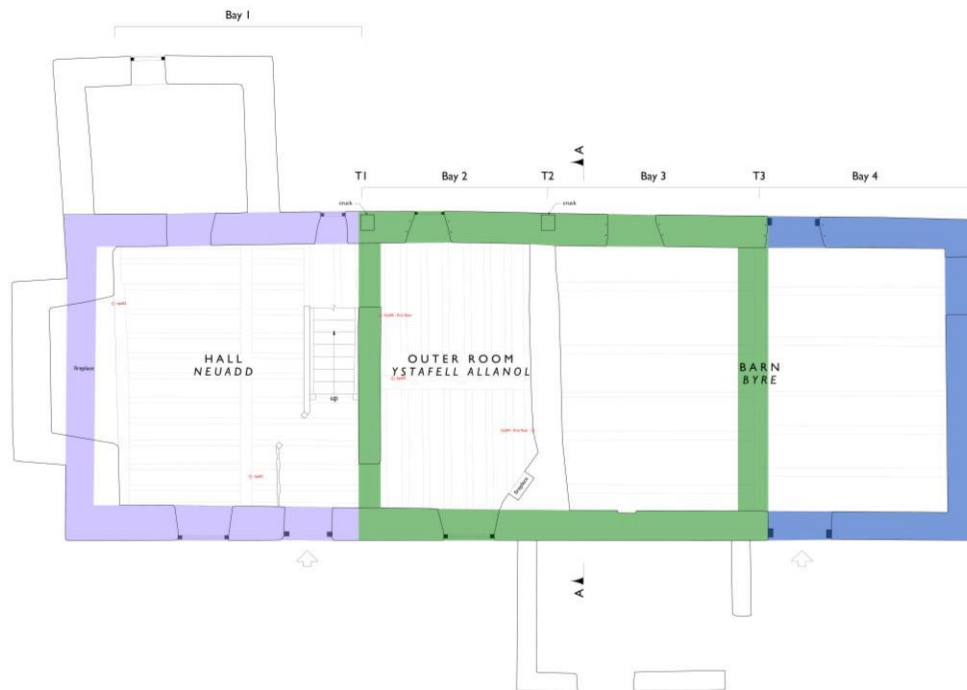


(2) Dating. Dendrochronology establishes that the primary construction phase (that is the cruck trusses) lies within the date range 1522-52 and the axial beam of the floor inserted into the lower bay of the hall very slightly later (within the range 1533-63)—an important detail discussed in (3) below. Samples were taken from the kitchen (bressummer and ceiling cross beam) but failed to date.

(3) The classic form of house in rural areas of North Wales in the fifteenth and much of the sixteenth centuries comprised a hall, open to the roof and heated by a central hearth that blackened the roof timbers over time. To one end of the hall was a storeyed section (private room above, parlour below) and, to the other, a service room for the storage and preparation of food and drink, in some cases this bay acted as a byre or shippon for cattle (making it a ‘longhouse’). There were many variations on this theme. During the sixteenth century (sometimes later, rarely earlier) timber- framed houses containing an open hall were modernised, a process that usually involved rebuilding the walls in stone, inserting a floor into the hall to create an upper chamber and providing more efficient heating (fireplaces were introduced, sometimes timber but usually stone). These phases were often staggered over a period of several years and generally followed on a generation or more after the initial construction.

At Hafod yr Afr, however, modernisation—or at least its initial stage—was compressed into a very short period: a ceiling was inserted into the lower end of the hall shortly after or possibly during the initial construction of the house. The hall timbers were not blackened by a central hearth (although by this time, new open halls were usually heated by a fireplace with chimney or fire hood) and, as Peter Smith observed, the cusping to the open truss was left incomplete. He speculated that this might have been because the money ran out or the ‘cusping sub-contractor’ had fallen sick! That there was a change of plan is borne out by the dendrochronology. Although the tree-ring date results give us date ranges rather than dates specific to a year or so, they confirm that the flooring over of the lower end of the hall took place very soon after the first phase. As to why this should be remains uncertain: a decision not to complete the decoration would have been made at the setting-out stage (probably off-site) so it was planned rather than a spontaneous on-site decision. So, the original builder wanted an open hall with cusping and decorative long pegs but, as built, the truss was closed and the lower bay converted into two small rooms, divided by a partition (since removed but the mortices and peg holes can be seen on the underside of the (dated) axial ceiling beam). Did the property change hands? Whatever the case the new room has good-quality details, both the main beam and the joists being chamfered and stopped (step and run-out stops).

(4) The original house most likely conformed to the traditional 3-unit ‘tripartite’ arrangement of a hall flanked by a ‘lower end’ and a ‘higher end’—the terms ‘lower’ (service rooms) and ‘higher’ (domestic/living spaces) indicating status —distinguished by different colours in Fig 2. Of this, only the 2-bay hall (green) survives. The lower end usually took the form of a service room or rooms, and was invariably positioned down-slope (so it was ‘lower’ in two senses, physically as well as socially).



2.

Fig 2 The outlines of the original house are conjectural. Key: green = 2-bay hall; blue = the 'higher end' (parlour with chamber over); mauve = the 'lower end' (service room or rooms).

A sequence of changes to the original house can be postulated. Shortly after construction the open cruck truss (T2) was closed up by a substantial stone wall including some massive slabs at ground level. The open bay to the E remained open, presumably used for storage. The W bay, as we have indicated, was floored over to create two small rooms (divided axially), possibly a pantry and buttery. The lower section of Truss T1 was infilled in stone—so any evidence for access into the low end has gone—the upper section being already closed with staves and plaster. There is no clear evidence of a 16th-century doorway at 1st-floor level suggesting that the former low end bay remained single-storey when it was changed to the hall. The floor over the hall appears to be somewhat later: the carpentry details are different in character to those of the buttery/pantry, much cruder, the joists not even chamfered. This floor probably coincides with the remodelling of the front elevation of the house in the 18th century. The joists at the W end now rest on a re-used transverse beam and may relate to an earlier floor arrangement: the present situation is rather cobbled together. As is often the case, the position of the stairs for this secondary phase is not clear.

(5) The change in function of the two ends of the house was a major upheaval and must, one assumes, reflect a change in the farming economy. By the time of the death of Edward Nicholas, a yeoman farmer, in 1729 we find a four-room house (kitchen with all the accoutrements needful – pots, dishes and a griddle; a buttery also appropriately equipped with tubs and pots and two bedchambers, one (as is often the case) used for storage as well as beds and linen for sleeping in). The most valuable assets (in total) were the livestock—a small number of cows, oxen and heifers (in aggregate the most valuable) and 41 sheep—but no goats! During the 17th and early eighteenth centuries it became increasingly common for livestock to be placed in free-standing buildings away from the house. The tithe map (1838) shows two small buildings to the S of the house, quite possibly these included a byre, and towards the margins of the cultivated land adjacent to the ffridd another house with garden. Unfortunately, the tithe map does not extend further E—it is possible that the then tenant farmer (John Lloyd) had lands here, the returns for which do not survive. The inference to be drawn from this is that by the 18th century, there was adequate accommodation for livestock away from the house and that the present (18th century?) barn stored dry goods’.

Fig 3(below) The tithable part of the estate of John Lloyd of Hafod yr Afr in 1838 outlined in red. The tithe apportionment gives the farm as 25.5 acres, possibly an under-estimate since it may have extended to east

in to the ffridd, but there is no map or apportionment record for this area (unshaded on Fig 3). Most of his fields were contiguous with the exception of one outlier (appropriately called 'Dryll' meaning 'broken piece, fragment or limb')

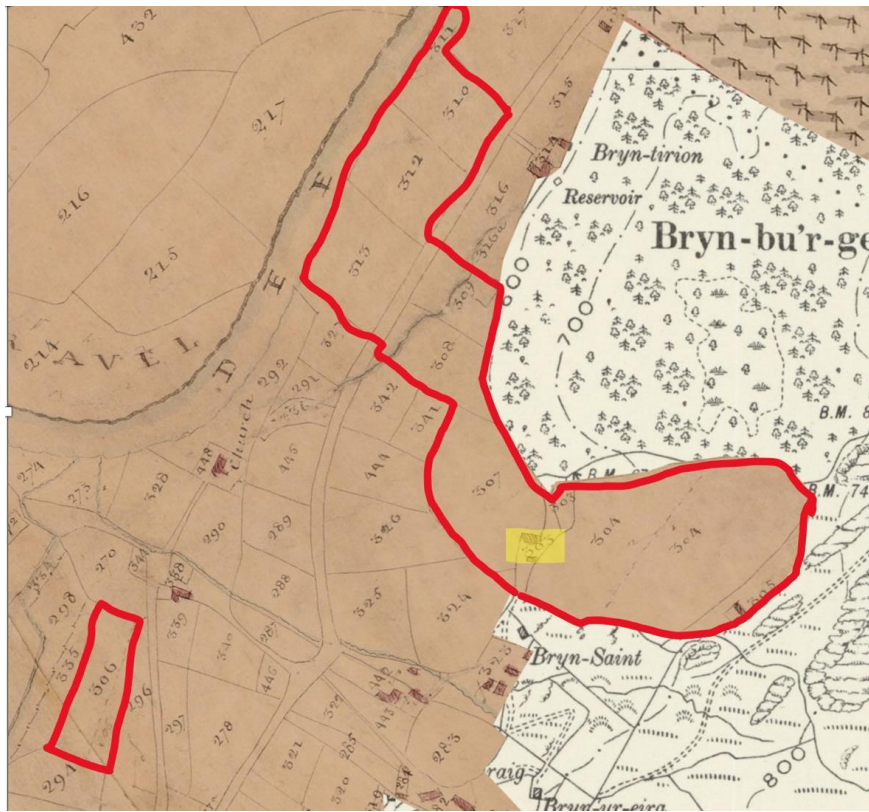


Fig 4 OS six-inch to the mile 1888-1913 from the National Library of Scotland.

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Enormous thanks are due to Martin Cherry of DOWH for arranging dendrochronology and building assessment and interpreting its results for readers of this house history; to DOWH colleague Pam Buttrey for assisting with this research, and to the Townsend family for making the whole project possible by encouraging and kindly hosting our field investigations.

Jenny Lees, April 2025

