



DARGANFOD HEN DAI CYMREIG DISCOVERING OLD WELSH HOUSES



NODDWYR/PATRONS:

Syr Simon Jenkins, FSA, FRSL; Dr Eurwyn Wiliam, MA, PhD, FSA

*Dathlu Treftadaeth Cymru drwy astudio tai traddodiadol
abywydau'r bobl fu'n byw ynddynt...*

CYLCHLYTHYR 33 Mehefin 2020

*Celebrating Welsh Heritage through the study of traditional
houses and the lives of the people who lived in them.*

NEWSLETTER 45 June 2023

EIN GWEFAN

<http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk>

yw prif sianel gyfathrebu'r Grwp defnyddiwch hi i
weld mwy o fanylion am y digwyddiadau diweddar
ar rhai sydd ar ddod, ac i edrych ar ein llyfrgell sy'n
cynyddu'n gyson ac ar nodweddion eraill.

OUR WEBSITE

<http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk>

Is the Groups main channel of
communication please visit it to see details of
recent and forthcoming events and to look at
our growing library and other features.

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Chair.....	1
A message from the new editors.....	2
News update from the secretary.....	2
From the incoming secretary.....	3
News and articles from the branches.....	3
Zoom lecture series 2023-4.....	11
Feature article: Diary of a renovation.....	11
STOP PRESS: New book on North Wales.....	13

FROM THE CHAIR by Janice Dale

Half way through the year already, and life gets more hectic. All my good intentions for catching up with my research projects hasn't happened, what with still working, the family and the distraction of gardening – the same things that, no doubt, affect you all, there never seems enough time in the day to fit everything in. I am still trying to research houses in the township of Faerdref here in Llandrillo, as well as Cadwst which is going to be included in the Edeyrnion Project, for which funding is now in place. I am looking forward to seeing if the timbers can be dated this time. Here in the Dee valley much of the oak was fast growing and couldn't be dated using dendrochronology, but hopefully the Cadwst timbers will give us a date using the new isotope method.

I am also looking at the history of Tai Teg in Derwen, and this is proving challenging, as there are three houses [though Coflein says there were four – no evidence of a fourth yet in my research]. Being a small parish everyone knew everyone and so all the vital records are so vague, and trying to fit families into a particular house is proving interesting. In past research,

tithe schedules that I have looked at have been in the ownership of a few big landlords especially round here,



but Derwen has multiple owners – not part of the big estate pattern. I can only assume at some time that one of the big estates sold off so many of the farms in Derwen.

I know many of you are beavering away at your own research so I will be keeping an eye on the website to see any new additions. But in the meantime I hope you are all enjoying the summer.

A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW EDITORS by Wally and Margaret Barr

What do you enjoy in your DOWH Newsletter and what would you like to see changed? Is there anything you think we should add to the Newsletter or something we should remove? DOWH belongs to all of us and your views are important. If you would like to contact us do please email, we're at flintshire-branch2@discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk. We'd love to hear from you!

NEWS UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY by Margaret Dunn

This is an interesting time of change and development for DOWH. Quite a number of people are about to retire, or have just done so, and this is not surprising as many have been working hard with DOWH since the early days even before the establishment of the name Discovering Old Welsh Houses with its constitution in 2012. Back then we were led by an Advisory Group originally with no separate county branches, mainly following the targets of supportive grant aiding bodies. It is difficult to recall and we would probably not have believed how much has been achieved with no paid staff. Or may be that it why - so many enthusiastic volunteers bringing so many skills and various expertise from across north Wales. It would not be right to highlight individuals from a closeknit team; but as years have gone by, some like me have, with age begun to slow down, or been overtaken somewhat by technology, whilst others have moved on to new fields & other interests.



In summary, as you will have read in the annual report, Ann Morgan retired in January & with Gill Jones will no longer be running the Conwy Branch, although both will continue their skillful house history research and Gill will remain a trustee. Sue Hurst, having continued running the Anglesey Branch for longer than she originally offered, is now standing down, and we are delighted that someone has just stepped forward. Peter Masters is retiring from running the Caernarfon Branch in order to concentrate on his IT, website and Zoom activities, having managed all of them combined for many years. Martin Cherry is stepping down from running the Merioneth Branch so that he can concentrate on his role as Research Co-ordinator. Terry Williams has been managing four editions of the Newsletter a year with great skill for several years, and his role will now be taken over by Wally and Margaret Barr, whom we warmly welcome. We thank them all for all they have undertaken over so many years and wish them well in whatever

they do in all the spare time that in theory they will now be able to enjoy. This does mean that at present the number involved in local activities & events may vary depending on how branches' and more general activities' develop & whether more members want to help organize such events. Since Covid 19 lockdowns local involvement has varied and numbers on house visits are only slowly increasing again. However, it is positive that increasing numbers are attending the monthly talks held on Zoom.

I am delighted to welcome Alison Montgomery as she develops her new role of being our secretary; and also Dr Frances Richardson, who has already played roles as speaker & house historian, as she too, with Alison, becomes a trustee. It is time for DOWH to be refreshed with the numerous developments such as the Parish Projects, the Database and the new projects such as the Edeyrnion Project. We hope that members will consider whether there may be aspects of DOWH activities where they may be able to take part in new ways to enable DOWH to go from strength to strength.

After this AGM I will not disappear all-together, but hope to again undertake house histories which have been set aside over recent years and to join in various activities. I have found it so exciting to work with such an

innovative group which is much valued across north Wales & I want to thank you for all the friendships formed and hard work successfully undertaken together with such good results.

FROM THE INCOMING SECRETARY by Alison Montgomery

My passion is rural vernacular buildings (especially farms) and I have a PhD in History and qualifications in heritage management and building conservation. In my current job I'm a historic buildings researcher for a large conservation architect and historic buildings consultancy and in previous posts I've worked for building preservation trusts, an archaeological unit and various community heritage projects.

I'm currently based in northwest England, where I'm a volunteer with the Chester Heritage Festival. I'm also the Hon Secretary of the Milestone Society (<https://www.milestonesociety.co.uk/>), which is interested in not just milestones but also toll houses, finger posts, boundary markers and more!

Megan Huggins

We are very sad to hear of the recent death of Megan Huggins, a long-standing member of the Group and a keen supporter of its activities in Merioneth. She worked hard in service of Merioneth historical studies not least as the membership secretary of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society.

NEWS AND ARTICLES FROM THE BRANCHES

ANGLESEY BRANCH

Report by Sue Hurst

On Anglesey Terry Williams gave a well-received illustrated talk in March about the mainly lost old buildings of Anglesey for 10 people at the Archives in Llangefni. Because of a misleading article in the newspaper, suggesting it was an Open Day, the owner postponed the visit to Plas Bodafon in May. A visit to Llangadwaladr Church took place on May 23rd, led by Andrew Davidson chief archaeologist at Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, for 8 people but unfortunately the church was locked, so it is hoped to re-visit on Tuesday September 12th along with Aberffraw church and possibly Trefdraeth. Tuesday May 30th sees a garden visit in Llanfachraeth courtesy of Jan and John. As well as a chance to enjoy the garden, and perhaps have a train ride, it will be an opportunity to discuss the future of the Anglesey branch since no-one has put themselves forward to be the new secretary. A further visit is planned to Plas Berw on Wednesday June 21st.

There will also be a special Discovering Old Welsh Houses Fundraiser at Plas Penmynydd, near Llangefni, Anglesey, on the B5420, on Saturday July 15th 2pm - 5pm.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Admission will be £10. The owner of Plas Penmynydd, Richard Cuthbertson, will give an introductory talk about the house at approximately 2.15 pm. This will be followed by a talk by Peter Fielding entitled "Deciphering a carved lintel dated 1546 AD" which refers to a date stone over the door and a connection with the Tudor/Tudor family. There will be no official tours of the house, but guests are welcome to explore the house at their leisure and also the grounds. Refreshments will be available in the kitchen area for the whole afternoon. Disabled parking is available close to the house but the main parking area will be in the field on the opposite side of the B5420 road to the access lane to Plas Penmynydd.

CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

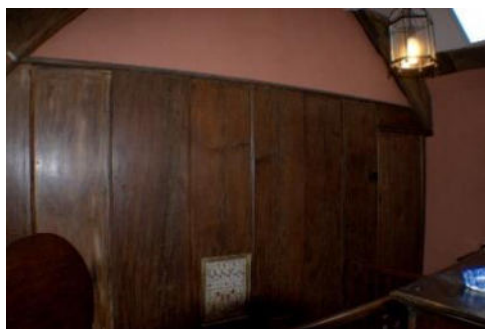
Report by Peter Masters

House visits included a visit to Rhos, Penrhyndeudraeth, in February. Our March visit was a repeat visit from last year to Hafod Ruffydd which was so popular it was oversubscribed, so a return visit had to be arranged. Not surprising when you see where it's located. Other house visits were to two Ty Mawr's.



Our April visit was to Ty Mawr, Criccieth, a substantial house of Snowdonian type presenting several features of mid/late sixteenth century date including voussoir-headed openings, and two tiers of cusped windbraces.

Tŷ Mawr may be of greatest significance as one of the very few sites in Wales definitely associated with an early modern practitioner of medicine: it was also known as 'Tu William feddig', the house of William the Doctor.



Our May Visit was to Ty Mawr No. 2 at Nantlle, a storeyed Snowdonia house with its ornate quatre foil Trusses and a rare Latrine shoot [Garderobe].

Forthcoming Branch events

We have a planned house visit in June to Ffridd Isaf, Rhyd Ddu, a return visit from a pre-covid event. The average visitor numbers were encouraging at around 14 per session. The online booking has been shown to be successful and a useful way of keeping track of people and events.



July 5th: Rearranged guided tour of the Caernarfonshire Archives, Caernarfon. Meet there at 1.30 p.m., at the entrance by Doc Victoria. Park & Pay area is opposite Y Galeri. Refreshments available. Max 15. Cost £3. Book by 28th June with Margaret at brynbedd1@gmail.com.



July 27th Descriptions of Medieval Nantgywnant: Landscape History Pre-Sixteenth Century: A short guided walk & light refreshments. Cost £3. Discuss future plans. Book by 20th July with Margaret at brynbedd1@gmail.com. Meet at Bryn Bedd, Nantgywnant near Beddgelert, LL55 5NL at 2.00 p.m. Directions will be sent on bookings.

Sept tbc: Ty'n Twr / Ty York, Bethesda. Medieval home of Bishop John Williams. To be confirmed

ARTICLE: The Old Houses of North Wales. By Peter Masters



Many of the houses we encounter in our quest to find houses with suitable timber for dating are exceptionally well-preserved, with many layers, going back to at least the 15th century and often provide evidence for a substantial 16th-century expansion, all illustrating ways of life and agricultural practices that have typified the houses of North Wales for centuries. Many of the houses have retained features that so often might have been ripped out with little or no record. The Elaborate carpentry in the roof trusses, the 17th-century timber-panel partition walls and remarkably well-preserved painted panels show how the owners aspired to the aesthetic tastes of polite society during this period.



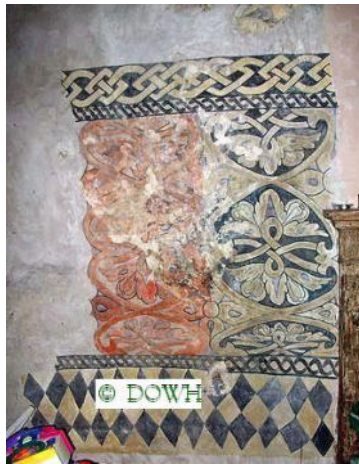
Trefoil Roof Truss

A well-worn groove in the flagstones between the kitchen and parlour demonstrates how long they have been in constant use. The often-adjointing barn demonstrates the farm's prosperity, and this sometimes reveals evidence of an older dwelling. These houses help illustrate how farming and agriculture developed in north Wales, and their fabric and detail have architectural and aesthetic significance. It also presents a challenge. Many of the houses have been in the same family, either tenanted or owner-occupied, for generations. The dilemma for us is that a sale can bring the threat of alterations which - however well-intentioned - risk incalculable harm to historical and archaeological interest.

We are not a reporting authority nor do we wish to be so, but a published Dendro report, Building record or illustrated House history may bring an unwanted interest in the property by Planning authorities, National or local, seeking to protect the historic environment. It is something of which we need to be mindful.



Medieval Stencilled/Painted Panels



' Wall painting mid 1500



In/Out Partition

P Masters
30/03/2023

CONWY BRANCH Report by Gill Jones

I am standing down as Branch Secretary of the Conwy Branch after the AGM in June, but I will remain an active member of the Group. I have been the Branch Secretary since 2012 and I think it is about time I made room for someone else to take on this responsibility.

I joined the Group as a Conwy Branch member in 2011 and attended an introductory day at the Denbighshire Archives in Ruthin. At this point in time, a number of old houses in Penmachno had been identified as possibly being suitable for dendrodating. Consequently every member of the Branch was expected to take on the task of researching the history of at least one of them. I was actually given three – Plas yn Glasgwm, Blaen Glasgwm Uchaf and Coed y Ffynnon. I had previously done some family history research and so I had some idea of how to go about it. However, I was very grateful for the extra help that Frances Richardson gave me because I was not familiar with things like the wide variety of estate documents. After completing the history of these three houses, I was then able to assist other Conwy Branch members with three more – Dylasau Isaf, Dylasu Uchaf and Dugoed. After that I teamed up with Ann Morgan and together we have researched the histories of numerous other houses. Working with Ann made the process more enjoyable because we usually had lunch out on the days we visited the various Archives, and she has also been an excellent proof reader of my notes.

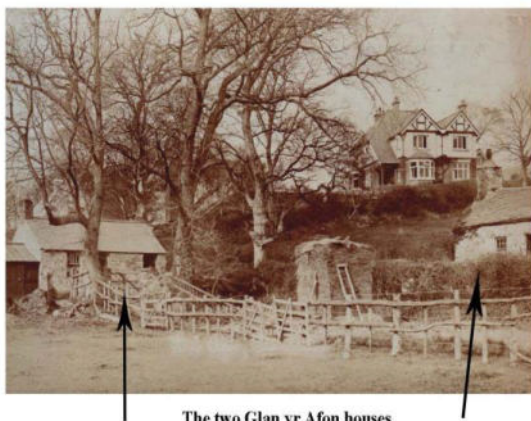
In April 2023, we had an interesting visit to Penmaenmawr Museum where we were given a short talk about the development of the settlements of Dwygyfylchi and Penmaenmawr and had a chance to look around the various displays. In May, Peter Masters is going to complement the visit we made in March to see the effigies of Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch and Hywel Coetmor, with a zoom talk on the Knights of North Wales.

ARTICLE: Houses that have Disappeared from the Parish of Llanddulas. By Gill Jones

Many old houses in Wales have been demolished or allowed to become ruinous. The reasons are many and varied. In Llanddulas, almost twenty known individual houses have disappeared or are now in a ruinous state; and at least ten terraces of small stone-built workers' cottages have also been demolished. Should there, perhaps, be a database somewhere recording the names and locations of these former dwellings?

When William Lloyd was consecrated as Bishop of St.Asaph in 1680, he instructed his clergy to carry out a census of the population in his Diocese. This is known as the Parochial Notitiae for St.Asaph. It was carried

out between 1681-1686. The entry in 1686 for Llanddulas records that there were 21 households with 69 people, twenty of whom were children under the age of 18 years.



The two Glan yr Afon houses

A few years later in 1699, Edward Lhuyd recorded the village as consisting of a small rectory, five or six cottages, and a mill. One of these cottages - 'Ty yn Glan yr Avon bel' - is now just a pile of stones (SH908 777). In the 19th century there were two houses known as Glan yr Afon. One is said to have been a cowshed which was subsequently converted into a dwelling. The original house was inhabited until the 1950s and since then has been allowed to fall into ruin.

Llindir Farm (SH905 778) was not recorded by Edward Lhuyd but there is a lease dated 1681 and in 1707, it appeared in a list of properties for sale by Maurice Wynne to Robert Wynne (*of Voelas, his kinsman*). This house and the adjoining cottage were occupied until the 1950s and then allowed to become derelict.

They have since been demolished to make way for a modern housing development.

Pentre Gwyddel farmhouse (SH901 779) stood above the Llanddulas quarry and had a date of 1655 carved above a door. It had a large chimney, and on the outside of the eastern wall was a hemispherical projection which was situated at the back of the grate and formed a large oven. Edward Lhuyd recorded it as Y Pentre Gwydhyl owned by Mr. Jo. Owen. By 1901, the farm was recorded as uninhabited. It was demolished in 1938 when the limestone quarry was extended. Local folklore relates that this may have been the house where two skeletons were discovered under a flagstone during the demolition process.

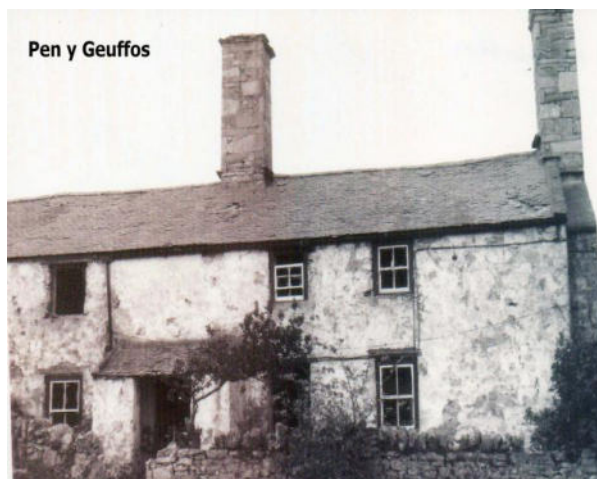


Pen y Geuffos (SH903 771) was located just across the boundary with the parish of Llysfaen. The burial of Hugh Jones miller of 'Penygeuffos' was recorded in the parish registers in 1680. Edward Lhuyd recorded it in 1699 with the owner named as Mr. Dd. Williams. It was still occupied in 1911 but was eventually demolished when the quarry expanded its area of operation.



Two 18th century houses which have disappeared are Fynnon Goli (SH901 783) and Ty Croes (SH899 783). The first was recorded in a rental in 1707. Thomas Jones paid Mr. Wynne £2 per annum. In the 1843 Tithe Survey, Edwin Oldfield esq. was recorded as the occupier with 2 acres 3 roods 6 perches of land with £1 0s 6d due to be paid to the Rector. Ty Croes, was recorded in the parish registers in 1768 when Dorothy Williams d/o Pierce and Catherine (nee Hughes) was baptised. In the early 19th century, William Williams moved from Llindir Farm to Ty Croes. The Tithe survey of 1843 recorded it with 6 acres 3 roods 1 perch of land in the occupation of William Jones. Both houses were occupied until the 1970s when they were demolished to make way for the new A55 Expressway. Ty Croes Lodge still remains at the entrance to the old driveway.

In 1849, the London-Holyhead railway was constructed through the village. At least two buildings were lost – Cindwm (SH906 785), about which very little is known, and no photographs depicting it have so far been found. It was still inhabited in 1843 when the Tithe survey was carried out, and was owned at the time by Lloyd Hesketh Bamford Hesketh esq. of Gwrych and occupied by John Hughes who held just 1 acre and 16 perches of land for which he paid no tithes. The other building, Tai-yn-Glan-y-Mor, was somewhere near the sea and as its name suggests, may have consisted of more than one dwelling. It is recorded in a lease from 1681, when Evan Vaughan lived there and ownership passed from Maurice Wynne to Robert Wynne. In 1707, William ap Robert paid £2 a year in rent to live there.



St Cynbryd's churchyard in the village was surrounded by a cluster of houses called Tyn-y-fynwent and Tai-yr-eglwys which were occupied mainly by agricultural workers. They may have been recorded in the 1841 census under the collective name of Tai-yn-Llan and were probably demolished when the bridge over the River Dulas was rebuilt and the road was widened. Another cluster of cottages just outside the churchyard, known as The Square (SH908 781), sustained damage on the 20th December 1940 when German airmen dropped two landmines on the village on their way back from a raid on Liverpool. They were later demolished to make way for a new housing estate.

These are just some of the oldest known houses which have disappeared from the village. Of the others, which were mainly built in the 19th century, some were demolished to make way for new housing developments; others when the main road through the village was widened in the 1960s.

Gill Jones

Extra note from Gill

The George Owen 1602 survey for Anglesey, Carnarvonshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, and Merionethshire is now available on our website. Access it from the home page, then use the dropdown menu below the research button called 'research guides'. Or click on the following link.

<https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page38.html>



DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Jenny Lees

Since Christmas, Denbighshire branch has assisted in procurement of grants from both Woodtiger Fund and VAG, to be used together with money from existing branch funds for our new DOWH Edeirion project. This focuses on recording and dating Edeirion houses and farm buildings that appear stylistically to date from early C15th to late C16th, and will also look at whether gentry and 'peasant elite' were using different

architectural forms to distinguish status during this important transitional period. Four suitable houses have now been identified for hopeful dating during June.

In March our joint meeting and tour arranged by Flintshire branch at *Nantclwyd y Dre*, Ruthin, with a presentation on the Ruthin and District Dendrochronology Project by Fiona Gale, was followed by a visit to historic *Berain*, Llanefydd, kindly hosted by the owners.

Our next DOWH 'field' visit will be on **Thursday 20th July** at 2pm to **Wynnstay House**, Well Street **Ruthin**, LL15 1AN; previously the already Grade II Listed Wynnstay Arms Hotel, <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300000945-wynnstay-arms-hotel-ruthin/photos/271116#.ZDFfoHbMLIU> and now transformed by the amazing restoration programme of its current owners. Please book with me on leesjenny@gmail.com or 01490 412315 - I can send further information and liaise re transport if needed.

There will be **no Denbighshire branch meeting in August**, but by September we will be 'catching up' with carrying out and recording our DOWH Parishes Project research on pre-1750 dwellings!

DOWH house histories of *Bryn Brith* (Corwen); *Cadwst* (Llandrillo); *Caenog* (Gwyddelwern); *Hafod yr afr* (Llangar), and *Henblas* (Llandderfel), are among those now in progress. Our outreach in Edeirnion and Penllyn (Bala) areas has resulted in potential community material for a 5th DOWH 'Cynwyd' Scrapbook' to be published later in 2023.

FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Wally and Margaret Barr

In April the branch met at a mid-17th century gentry house, Colomendy, near Afonwen, where a talk was given on the history of the house. In May we met at Brithdir Mawr, Cilcain, a house dating from the fifteenth century or earlier. Our branch meeting, on June 19th, will meet in the evening at Llanasa church and then members will have the opportunity to go on to visit nearby Hendy Groes, a house dated to 1674 by DOWH. Please book through Wally Barr at flintshire-branch2@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk

There will be no branch meetings in July or August, though some members will no doubt visit Plas Penmynydd on Anglesey for the open afternoon on 15th July – further details are given on p.3. In November Margaret Barr will give a talk on researching house histories to Flintshire History Society.

ARTICLE: Why might people in the 17th and 18th centuries have been watching eagle-eyed when their neighbours were buried? By Margaret Barr



Caerwys church 1896 (Wikimedia Commons)

The short answer to this question is that they were looking to see what material was being used to cover the corpse.

I was looking through parish records of the early 18th century in Caerwys in an attempt to find something about tenants from Canol y Dre for the house history that Carys Biddle and I are researching. I began to get intrigued as I found references such as ...

Ann Roberts was bur^d. the 20 of April 1718} A certificate was brought for buring the s^d corps in woollen according to the Act in that behalf made.

Tho. son of Rich^d. Jones by Anne his wife was bur^d. 17th of Feb 1718} The Warden's Certificate of affidavit was brought for buring y^es^d. corps in woollen according to law. y^e 28 of Feb 1718.

This was all new to me so I looked for information on the internet. I discovered that there had been an Act passed in 1666 and a second, and rather more famous, in 1678 An Act for Burying in Woollen - repealing the first. The aim was to promote the English woollen industry, protecting it from foreign imports and new materials.

"No corpse of any person (except those who shall die of the plague) shall be buried in any shift, sheet, or shroud, or anything whatsoever made or mingled with flax, hemp, silk, hair, gold, or silver, or in any stuff, or thing, other than what is made of sheep's wool only."

<https://historyhouse.co.uk › articles › buried in wool>

The shroud had to be of wool or the clothes that the corpse was buried in. An affidavit had to be provided within 8 days stating that the burial complied with the Act. Rather than involving officials of the parish as stated, more often than not, the affidavit would be sworn and certified by the priest at the same time as the burial of the person.

Anyone going against the Act would be fined £5. Half of the fine would be given to the poor of the parish and half to the informer – so this encouraged people to watch closely and inform on their neighbours.

It was not at all a popular thing as people often wanted to be buried in their finest clothes. Some people would rather pay the fine and they soon worked out that if someone in the family actually informed the authorities then the fine would be reduced by half (as the informer was paid!). The act was not repealed until 1814 but in fact the practice of woollen burials had died out and had been ignored for quite a while before that.

I wonder when it began and stopped in Caerwys. More research needs to be done.

Margaret Barr

MERIONETH BRANCH

Report by Martin Cherry

There were three house visits during the year, all of them well attended (upwards of twelve) and we are grateful to the owners for their hospitality and for allowing us freedom to roam.

In June 2022, we visited Llwyn Hwlcyn (Llanfair parish), listed but with a very perfunctory description that did not prepare us for what we saw – a very well preserved, high-status Snowdonia house, probably of the late sixteenth century, but with unusually narrow bays between the trusses, all very finely detailed and finished. There were many other distinctive features and we hope to go back and carry out a full building record. In the afternoon we drove down to the coast to look at the evocative medieval Llandanwg Church almost buried in the sand dunes and saved from ruin by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in the 1880s.

October 2022 saw us high in the hills above Llenelltyd: Blaen-y-cwm is a hitherto unrecorded cruck house occupying a farmstead on the very margins of cultivatable lands just below the rough moorland. As is so often the case, part of the old house was demolished to make way for a comfortable Victorian range which is all that can be seen as you approach the house from the valley – a great surprise. As with Llwyn Hwlcyn, a house history has been prepared, and in this case a full survey: we hope to have the houses assessed for tree-ring dating in due course.

Finally, in November, we visited Tyddyn Llidiart (Dyffryn Ardudwy), a house with farm buildings, which at the time of the tithe survey was the centre of a prosperous livestock farm of 65 acres. Looking deceptively straightforward from the outside, the house was more complicated and we hope to piece this together when we come to survey the house.

ZOOM LECTURE SERIES 2023-4

From our Research Co-ordinator Martin Cherry

Wednesday 11 October 2023 at 7pm

Edward Parry is a retired history teacher who has researched and published widely in the field of art and architecture in Wales. His excellent recent book, *The Glories and the Wildness of North Wales* is reviewed on the final page of this Newsletter.

Exploring North Wales with the Rev. John Parker, 1798-1860

The Rev. John Parker (1798-1860), artist and antiquary, produced an astonishing body of work over several decades and a large collection of paintings, drawings and journals that are held at the National Library of Wales. He was incumbent of two parishes either side of the Welsh border and made dramatic changes to both churches. He travelled widely in Great Britain but it was Snowdonia that he loved and he made a succession of visits to the area that are recorded in his journals and in hundreds of sketches and paintings.

This talk focuses on North Wales and examines his achievements as a landscape artist and also a recorder of the architecture and furnishings of many churches in the area, many of them subsequently drastically altered. His watercolours and pencil drawings are of immense cultural value and are also of great beauty.

Wednesday 8 November at 7 pm

Ross Cook is an archaeologist and experienced dendrochronologist who, working with the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, has done a lot of sampling and analysis for Discovering Old Welsh Houses. He runs his own archaeology and heritage consultancy out of Lampeter and is archaeologist for St David's Cathedral as well as to Christchurch Priory, Dorset.

Recording Ruthin - Investigating the historic buildings of a town and its countryside.

Those of you who know Ruthin (or heard Gareth Evans talking to us about the development of the town last February) will appreciate the rich legacy of medieval buildings in the town. Recent tree-ring dating in and around Ruthin, has revealed a large number of early buildings, many from the fifteenth century, that reflect its status, together with the wealth of the surrounding parishes. This talk will contain 'hot off the press' material!

Wednesday 6 December at 7 pm

Helen Williams-Ellis worked as a TV producer and director, overseeing programmes with a focus on Welsh subjects. She then did her doctorate on the life and image of the early modern gentlewoman Catrin of Berain. She is on the Advisory Board of the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates based at Bangor University. Her talk is entitled *Sex, Power, Marriage: Katheryn of Berain and her Four Husbands*. Katheryn of Berain was married four times. Why did she marry – whom did she marry – and how did she become known as the 'Mother of Wales'?

FEATURE ARTICLE: DIARY OF A RENOVATION

By Angie Sutton-Vane and Glyn Davies

The renovation of Plas yn Bwl House

In the Spring of 2018 we bought two Grade II* cottages called Nos 1 and 2 Plas-y-Bwl on the outskirts of Caergwrle. From the front the cottages sit prominently at the top of a cul de sac; at the back, however, they peter out into low extensions and ruinous walls nestling into the steep side of Hope Mountain. Despite being listed in 1962, by the 1980s a row of adjoining and derelict cottages had been demolished and the

surrounding land (including within the house curtilage) redeveloped into a small estate of houses. At around the same time the family who owned the cottages were given a council grant to rectify what were undoubtedly sub-standard living conditions. Sadly, during this process flagstone floors, hearths and ranges were removed, a new concrete floor with a plastic damp proof membrane was laid throughout both cottages, the space was divided up into a series of small rooms and lobbies with walls replastered in cement render.



Fig.8: Suggested phasing, based on the ground floor plan, north to bottom.



The image (above left) shows the Floor plan with periods of construction: Heritage Impact Assessment by Richard Morriss, 2020.

It took nearly 2 years to get listed building and planning consent but finally by 2022 the Heritage Impact Assessment and bat surveys had been done, an archaeologist had been appointed and we were able to start work in earnest: repairing the roof, stripping out the 1980s interventions and returning the cottages to one beautiful house.



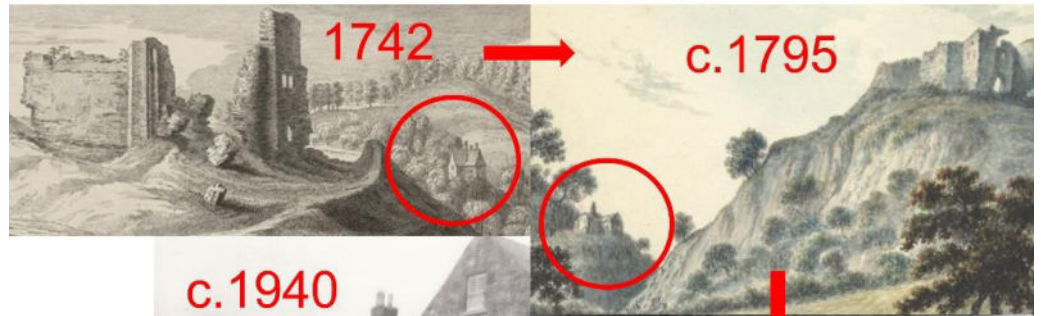
The house remains an enigma: we know from the listing that the Victorian frontage and additional row of cottages had been built on the remains of a late medieval residence belonging to the de Bolde family – Norman knights from Bold in Lancaster. The de Boldes had close connections to the powerful Stanley family who owned much of the land around Caergwre. We hope renovation work will unlock some of its secrets – we’ve already uncovered

what appears to be the remains of an arrow slit on the stunning medieval stone spiral staircase, and an inglenook fireplace hidden behind a 1970s hearth. But we still don’t understand why the staircase abruptly stops mid-air beyond the first floor – was it repurposed from the (by then) ruined castle, was the house built on the remains of a chapel or was it built as a fortified tower house?

The house now has its own Instagram and FB pages at [welsh.house.rescue](https://www.instagram.com/welsh.house.rescue) where we plan to share the restoration story and discoveries.

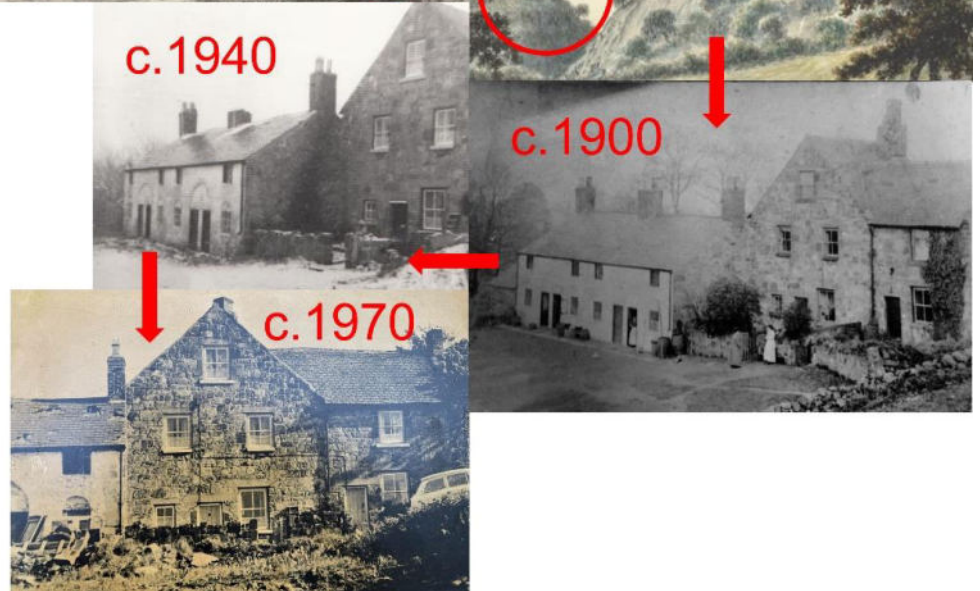
Images of Plas yn Bwl (right)

The north west view of Caergwrely Castle, in the county of Flint by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck, 1742, National Library of Wales



South aspect of Caergwrely Castle by John Ingleby, c.1795; intended as material for Thomas Pennant's *Tours in Wales*, National Library of Wales

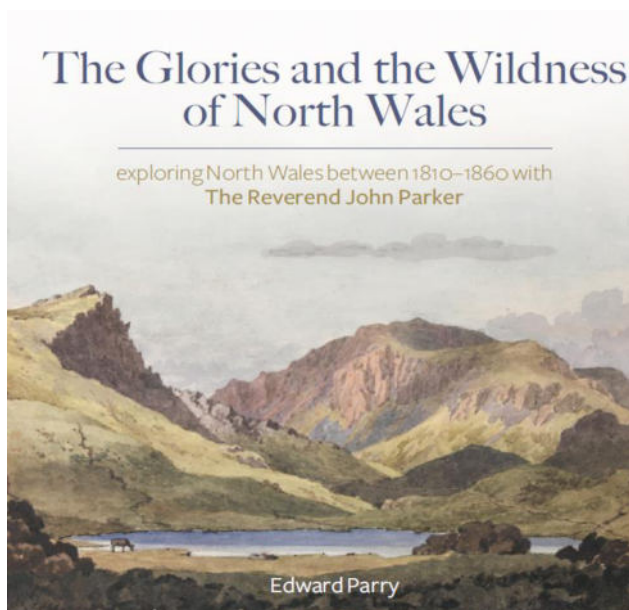
Old photographs of the cottages: Sources unknown – shared on Face Book.



Diary of a Renovation is a new feature and we hope to hear more from Angie and Glyn in future issues of the Newsletter.

STOP PRESS: NEW BOOK ON NORTH WALES

The Glories and the Wildness of North Wales By Edward Parry



Those of you who enjoyed Michael Freeman’s talk to us in October of last year on tourists’ descriptions and illustrations of Wales in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries will love this book: short, profusely illustrated and very nicely produced by Carreg Gwalch. Edward Parry is a retired history teacher who has researched and published widely in the field of art and architecture in Wales: he carries his learning lightly and this book will be a delight to both the general and the specialist reader.

John Parker (1798-1860) came from Shropshire gentry stock, which gave him easy access to houses throughout Wales and the March. He went to Oriel College, where the High-Church Oxford Movement originated, and as a young cleric was imbued with the spirit of the Gothic Revival: he restored and embellished his first church at Llanmwyrewig (Montgomeryshire) and after he moved to a new living at Llanblodwel (near Oswestry) in 1844 rebuilt

the church there: this, along with the associated school and schoolmaster's house are among the most idiosyncratic buildings of their day.

Parker's design for his own parish church of St Michael, Llanblodwel, near Oswestry (1846-56) is shown below (bottom right), built largely at his own expense – described in the Buildings of England as 'certainly fantastic...a demonstration of staunch individualism'. © Selwyn Ray (2022) taken from Historic England's National Heritage List.



The image (left) shows 'Dolgelly and Cader Idris', a watercolour sketch by Parker, from the book reviewed here. Where he picked up his artistic skills is uncertain – maybe from art masters at Eton or members of his own family – but painting, sketching and touring became his great passion right up until weeks before his death. Although he travelled widely, he became intoxicated with Snowdonia and he made many visits there: he thought the scenery superior to that of Switzerland – 'in general of a softer and more general kind, it is wild sweetness that prevails throughout'. His landscapes are both atmospheric and keenly observed (as the picture on the cover of the book confirms) and the views he made of buildings, such as the square at Dolgellau are important

records and, for churches, especially the exquisitely worked screens, are often the *only* record we have. Parker could sometimes be dismissive of things we value today – Gwydir he found dull but he would cheer up if he discovered even the smallest fragment of gothic craftsmanship as he did there ('excellent...very masterly' he purred).

Edward Parry's account is enlivened with much detail of the logistics of travel before and during the first decades of rail travel. Improvements in the standards of turnpikes and hotels were marked during the period, as was the technology of coach suspension – great if you could actually get on the coach – and timetables appear to have been assiduously adhered to (do you hear that Transport for Wales?). The streamlined express service from Oswestry to Capel Curig took five and a half hours: the bus service now, taking a less direct route, takes three and three-quarters: an improvement of sorts.



The Glories and the Wildness of North Wales (ISBN 978-1-84527-845-8) in paperback is available from bookshops at £16 or cheaper if you buy on-line. Michael Freeman's massive and fascinating website on early tourists in Wales can be accessed at <https://sublimewales.wordpress.com>. Parker's many journals of his visits, not only to Wales, but also through much of Great Britain and Ireland and the Continent, are deposited with the National Library of Wales, where they can be consulted, but, sadly, are not yet accessible digitally.

Note: Edward Parry, author of *The Glories and the Wildness of North Wales*, will be giving the DOWH Zoom talk on this subject on 11 October.

Martin Cherry

