



DARGANFOD HEN DAI CYMREIG DISCOVERING OLD WELSH HOUSES



NODDWYR/PATRONS:

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Dathlu Treftadaeth Cymru drwy astudio tai traddodiadol a bywydau'r bobl fu'n byw ynddynt.

CYLCHLYTHYR 48 Mawrth 2024

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

NEWSLETTER 48 March 2024

EIN GWEFAN

<http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk>

yw prif sianel gyfathrebu'r Grŵp - defnyddiwch hi i weld mwy o fanylion am y digwyddiadau diweddar a'r rhai sydd i 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.



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FROM THE CHAIR by Janice Dale

How quickly the year goes by, it hardly seems any time at all since I was wishing everyone a merry Christmas, and now spring at last seems to be here and a chance to get out and about, so before the gardens dry out, now is an excellent time to get out and look at a few old houses or get to know your home area in more depth – and for those who joined the last excellent zoom talk by Scott Lloyd on mapping and the Deep Mapping project, I hope this is an incentive to go out and explore. Scott has given us a list of websites where we can access old maps, so if you haven't looked at any of these sites, please do. I love a good map, and I have been lucky enough to have acquired a couple of papers from the 1909 'Literary and Musical Festival Llandrillo' on 'Lost Houses of the Area', [Llandrillo in Edeyrnion]. Being able to access old maps has enabled me to find out where most of the houses referred to were once upon a time. Though now mostly ruined, they still have a story to tell. I must also say a big thank you to Martin Cherry for putting together such a good programme of zoom meetings for us.

HOUSES MANAGEMENT DATABASE & THE PARISHES PROJECT

by Jane Parry-Evans

Members have been asking what the difference is between the Houses Management Database and the Parishes Project, and why DOWH needs both. I have therefore been asked to write this article for the Spring Newsletter which I hope will give some clarification.

When DOWH first formed and houses were being identified as possible candidates for dating, county lists of houses were created from suggestions by members, invitations from owners and from various other sources, such as Peter Smith's book, Houses of the Welsh Countryside. However, it was quickly realised that such a list would be difficult to keep updated and in 2018, it was agreed that DOWH needed a Houses Management Database which records only essential information about each house of interest, e.g. whether it has been visited, whether it has been dated, whether any reports exist, and any Cadw and Coflein reference numbers. This would, in effect, be a management tool rather than a research database.

Over several months, the earlier lists of houses were collated into a single database, were checked for location and their current status by Margaret, and any references added from Coflein and Cadw. At the time of writing, the Houses Management Database contains 1306 houses. Each is assigned a unique reference number, and the database can be queried to answer questions such as "How many houses have we visited so far?", "Which houses have been dated?" and "Which houses have been identified as worth another visit?"

To identify any interesting early houses that have been missed, a different and more systematic approach is required which involves looking, parish by parish, at all potential sources of information about pre-1700 houses. This approach formed the basis of what became referred to as the "Parishes Project". A Word template was created that was easy for branches to complete and volunteers were asked to check a variety of sources to find houses that had not previously been researched.

Inevitably, many houses will be identified in the Parishes Project that are already on the Houses Management Database. However more information can be held for each house on a Parish Word template, including images, which can then form the start of a house history. If a house is already on the Houses Management Database, then its unique reference number should be entered into the Parish Word Template so that there is cross-reference.

It is very important that houses found during the Parishes Project that are not already on the Houses Management database are added to it, so that we have an overview of how many houses have been located and can extract up to date lists of potential candidates for further research. To enable this, those members working on the Project can request read-only copies of the latest database version from myself and an empty Excel Template to enter any newly found houses. If preferred, I am also happy to attend Branch meetings, in person or by Zoom, to add new houses to the database during the meeting.

At present, the Parish Word Templates are saved locally at branch level and the Houses Management Database is saved on my personal computer. Ideally both the Database and completed Parish Templates should be saved in a central workspace that is accessible to members. However, this requires some investment to establish and, whilst other means suffice, the priority is to identify houses in the Parishes that have not yet been researched.

There are still Parishes to be investigated so, if you are interested in checking out potential sources of information about pre-1700 houses and entering information into the templates, please do get in touch! The email address is: housesdatabase@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk.

NEWS AND ARTICLES FROM THE BRANCHES

ANGLESEY BRANCH

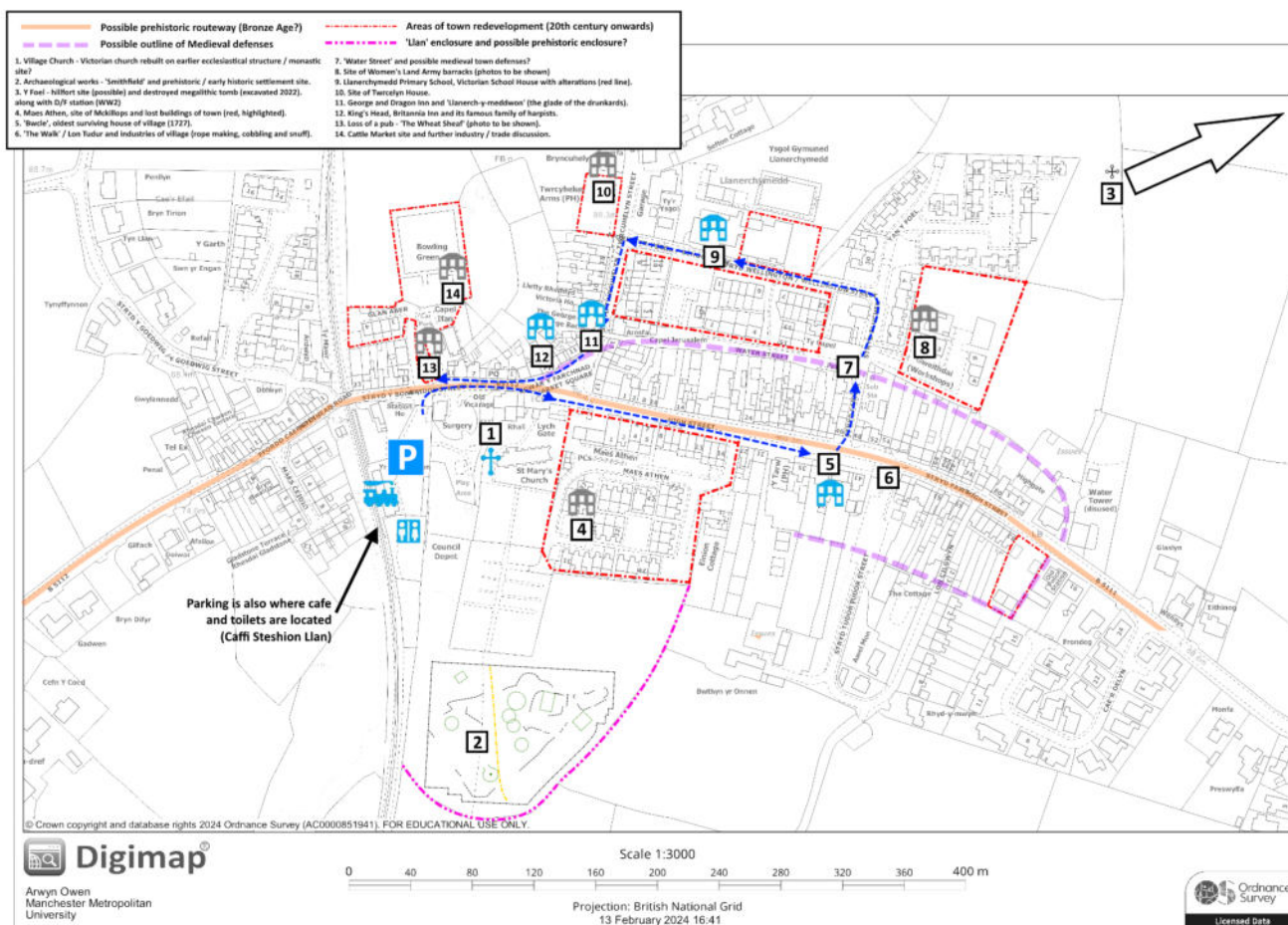
Report by Clare Latham and Brenda Simpson

News from the Anglesey Branch – Changes in Personnel

Following a very interesting and enjoyable 2023 season of visits, our key Visit Organiser, Sue Hurst is taking a step back and whilst she will continue being an active member of the group, Brenda Simpson and Clare Latham have agreed to share the visit planning role going forward – with lots of support from other members of the group. Brenda and Clare are both new members of the Anglesey branch but as they have really enjoyed the visits attended so far, they were keen to try and help them continue by stepping into this visit organising role but they are both very keen to get as much support as possible, both from the Anglesey branch and the wider County group.

Planning for the 2024 Season of Visits for the Anglesey branch is well underway. Their next confirmed event will be:

April Event – 10 April 2024 @ 2pm – A Guided Walk around the Archaeological & Historic Highlights of Llannerch-y-medd



Llanerch-y-medd nestles in the heart of Anglesey and boasts a long history of habitation from pre-historic settlement to medieval Celtic Monastery. The town reached its zenith during the 18th century as a bustling market town. There are newly discovered prehistoric sites including a settlement near the village alongside two previously unrecorded prehistoric tombs nearby – a ring cairn near Mynydd Mwyn Mawr and a destroyed megalithic tomb atop the tallest landmass in Central Anglesey – the Foel to name but a few of the sites on offer as can be seen from the map.

This guided tour will be led by Ash Owen on 10th April 2024 with the rest of the season visits currently in planning.

Our branch thanks go to Sue Hurst for all her efforts in planning our schedule of visits over the past years. Brenda and Clare can be contacted via: Anglesey-branch@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk

CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

Unfortunately illness has hampered branch planning in recent weeks, though it is hoped things will be moving on again shortly.

CONWY BRANCH

Branch members have decided that future meetings will take place if and when any branch member requests one or has an idea for a visit or topic to discuss. In the meantime, some house history research is likely to continue.

DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Jenny Lees

Although numbers attending our winter house visits in the '*Berwyn foothills*' were curtailed by icy conditions, in December we enjoyed a tour and splendid tea at *Cadwst*, Llandrillo (below), kindly given by the owners - and isotope dating results are hopefully due soon!



Branch visit to Cadwst



Branch members at Cadwst

In January we also received a warm welcome and delicious tea at *Brynberllan*, Cynwyd (below), with the additional benefit of discussion by some of our DOWH architectural experts:

Martin Cherry writes:

“*Brynberllan* has been dendrodated: the roof timbers were felled during the winter of 1552-3 and it seems likely that the house was constructed in **1553**, or within a year or two after this date. There is an excellent building survey by Ric Tyler on the DOWH website:

https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/ABR/den%20027_ABR_19_Bryn%20Berllan.pdf.

We are finding more and more houses like this, dating from around the middle of the sixteenth century, which were two storeys from the beginning and quite compact, with two rooms to each floor. The house now has stone walls but was originally timber-framed: the photo shows that the end wall was once decorated with diagonal braces and the spaces in between were infilled with boards. It must have made quite a visual impact as you approached it from the road. But mysteries remain: because the rebuilding in stone removed much of the evidence about how the original house worked, it's difficult to be sure where either the fireplace or the stairs were situated: in other words we don't know for sure how they kept warm or how they got to bed! But as we're finding more and more houses of this type and date, with a little more study we should be able to resolve some of these quandaries. One thing is certain—no expense was spared in the use of timber beyond what was needed for structural stability!”



Branch visit to Brynberllan

DOWH Denbighshire branch *Cynwyd Scrapbook Five* was published in December 2023 and copies are selling well at £5 each (with additional cost for postage when required). As copies of *Cynwyd Scrapbook Four* sold out quickly, more copies of book five were ordered this time, so plenty are left -please contact me at leesjenny@gmail.com if you like a copy. (I can also bring copies to any North Wales meetings that I may attend, for potential distribution).

Our house histories of *Cadwst*, *Caenog*, *Hafod yr afr* and *Henblas*, following DOWH dendrochronology and building assessment in 2023, are still not quite completed - but only because we keep making more exciting discoveries about their early history! Following a Woodland Trust visit invitation from a local Edeirion contact, we have also almost finished a house history for *Llennyrch*, Talsarnau; previously dendrodated to **c.1542–69**:

https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/ODL/mer%20070%20_ODL%20_Llennyrch.pdf.

We are still awaiting results of isotope dating for *Henblas*, *Llandderfel* and *Henfaes isaf*, *Cynwyd*, as well as for *Cadwst* – it apparently involves a very complex process!

A further meeting at *Hafod y calch*, Corwen, is arranged at **2pm on Thursday 21st March** for anyone who would like to hear about or discuss research findings, and a house visit and meeting at *Plas Isaf*, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, is arranged for **2pm on Thursday 25th April**; please book with me on leesjenny@gmail.com or contact me for more details if you would like to come, as numbers may be limited.

Article by Jenny Lees

Eight hundred years of Llangar parish history. Part Two: 1660-1800

Part One of this article (1160 -1660) saw Baron of Cymer **Humffrey Hughes II** of Gwerclas fathering an amazing seventeen children with his first wife **Magdalen**, and fighting as a Royalist and Commissioner of Array during the Civil Wars.¹ *Gwerclas* prosperity continued, and by the time of **Hugh Hughes Lloyd's 1766**

¹ See also full references in my article 'A Quest for Cymer in Edeirion and its Barons: Part I: c.1200-c.1700' (2019) in *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society* (JMHRs).

marriage to English heiress **Margaret Walmesley**, their *Marriage Settlement* ² listed around forty *Gwerclas* estate properties in and around the village of Cynwyd -usefully for us giving occupants' names as well as the rights of each homestead to cut or dig 'Turf and Peate' on the *Berwyn* or *Mynyllod* moorlands.



1767 façade of the present house of Gwerclas (Image courtesy of the owners)

By 1767 **Hugh Hughes Lloyd** had built the present house of *Gwerclas*, to which Marcus Binney observed (in his 2007 book *The Perfect House -500 of the best buildings in Britain and Ireland*) virtually no alterations had been made since becoming a tenanted farm on *Rug* estate in 1824. One of our most exciting archival finds has been the collection of original handwritten letters³ from **Margaret Lloyd** of *Gwerclas* to her close friend **Elizabeth Baker**, who resided between 1771 and 1778 at *Hengwrt* while acting as personal secretary to **Hugh Vaughan**, of *Hengwrt* and later *Nannau*. Hugh had relations at *Rug* and Margaret's letters provide a fascinating glimpse of 1770s life - from social engagements with North Wales gentry to details of *Gwerclas* farming practices and **Margaret's** schemes to

help the poor. My partial transcriptions of her letters are in the articles *Near Calamity at the Corwen Races!* and *Confidences of an 18th Century Baroness* in **Cynwyd Scrapbook Two**, and *Confidences of an 18th Century Baroness: Part Two* and *Our Farming Heritage: Part One* in **Cynwyd Scrapbook Three**; readable online as 'Pageflip' books or downloadable from our DOWH Cynwyd book series at <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>

Hafod y calch, known historically as just *Hafod* or *Havod*, lies half a mile from *Gwerclas* within an important 'outlier' of Carboniferous limestone, in which surface workings of a medieval lime quarry have been found. With downslope siting thought to be *unmistakably medieval in origin*, for some time before 1703 *Havod* already possessed a gentry pew in *Llangar* church - originally owned by the **Meyrick** family of *Ucheldre* before ownership of *Havod* and the pew passed to **William** and then **Roger Salesbury** of *Rug*. We know this because Reverend **Owen Eyton** of neighbouring *Plas Isaf* had evidently appropriated *Havod's* pew, as in 1703 his son and executor **John** asked Roger Salesbury's permission to *bury the Corps of my said father Owen Eyton* under the *Havod* seat! ⁴

By C17th *Hafod* had become a 'lobby-entry' house with at least one inserted chimney, then by around 1800 an elegant Georgian east 'wing' was added before being made into a substantial Victorian farmhouse by 1900. The 1777 will of wealthy *Maltster* and *Gentleman* **John Williams** of *Hafod* had left at least £800 to each nephew and niece; rather pleasingly specifying for each niece that this was for '*her sole and separate use and Benefit during her Natural Life*', and not subject to the '*Debt or Engagement of her present or future Husband*'.⁵



Hafod y calch Georgian east wing with pre C17th parts behind to the left

² Denbighshire Record Office DD/GA/652: (part of Galltfaenan MSS).

³ NLW, *Elizabeth Baker 183 to 232*; kindly drawn to my attention by DOWH colleague Pam Buttrey.

⁴ D. Morgan Evans, *Llangar -Church and community in the early eighteenth century, Part 4*, Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society, Vol. XV1, 2013, part 4, pp.358-379.

⁵ See https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20138_HH_26_Hafod-Y-Calch.pdf

For each year from **1703** to **1764** the **Llangar Churchwardens' Accounts**⁶ contain not only the *Church Mise* payments due from named persons, but also fascinating details of the churchwardens' expenses! These included items such as 2s [shillings] spent at nearby *Stamp* (then a tavern) when parishioners met to choose new churchwardens; 1s for washing the surplice; expenses at the Court of Correction at Llandrillo, and constant repairs to the church.

Wardens changed every year, with even **Roger Salesbury** of *Rug* and **Hugh Hughes** of *Gwerclas* taking their turn, and in **1704 Hugh Hughes** was paying the highest contribution within Llangar parish of 13 shillings 4 pence, with the total *mise* being £2 12s 1½ d.

After the tragic **1924** death on Everest of his son Andrew, also known as Sandy, **William Irvine** moved to *Bryn Llwyn*, Llangar, and his meticulously researched *William Ferguson Irvine Collection of Llangar and Edeirnion papers* contain invaluable information, including transcriptions from the Latin of items from early British Museum manuscripts. His articles in the paper *Yr Adsain* included in 1942 '*Llangar Parish Register 1720-48*', which has extracts from the register of **Rev. Edward Samuel**, Rector of Llangar. This sometimes tells of tragic events, as



Llangar church with Hafod y calch across the confluence (Courtesy of Gareth Hughes)



Bryn Llwyn viewed from Hafod y calch, Tynllwyn concealed above right (Jenny Lees)

when in July **1736**: '**Lewis Humffrey**, weaver, of *Rhiwaedog*, "was drown'd in Dee near Crogen and found 9 days after swimming like a Cork towards Corwen Bridge."

Although an Edeirnion baronial court was once held at Cynwyd, none of its records remain, as they are said⁷ 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 DOWH research shows that by **1580** and probably much earlier, some *Llangar* properties formed part of a very extensive 'property portfolio' owned by the Salesburys of *Rug*,⁸ who maybe built *Hafod yr afr*, Llangar; dendrodated by DOWH to mid C16th and with house history pending!

Space here does not permit discussing further Llangar houses existing in 1660-1800, but *Part On*⁹ describes those built before **1660**, and *Part Three* will describe

⁶ Llangar Churchwardens' Accounts (Denbighshire Record Office DRO NTD/467), transcribed by David Morgan Evans, Inspector of Ancient Monuments.

⁷ Gwallter Mechain, *Burke's Landed Gentry* (1846) p.608, referenced in A.D. Carr (1963) *The Barons of Edeyrnion, 1282-1485, Part 1*, JMHS, Vol.4 (1963), pp187-93.

⁸ Estate and family records of 'Salisbury of Rhug, co. Merioneth, and Bachymbyd and Pool Park, co. Denbigh, later the barons Bagot, 1243-1801', including records no.490 and 503.

⁹ <https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/news/Newsletter-No%20044-E.pdf>

developments from around **1800** to today. Full DOWH histories for Llangar are already published on <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page14.html> for *Brynberllan*, *Gwerclas*, *Hafod y calch*, *Plas uchaf*, *Ty Mawr* (near Druid) and *Ty'n llwyn*, with briefer information in the **Cynwyd Scrapbook** series on houses including *Cryniarth* (Book 1), *Ty'n y wern Gwnodl* and *Brynlwyn* (Book 2), *Moel Lladdfa*, *Fronguddio*, *Siamber wen* and *Gwnodl fawr* (Book 3), *Henfaes Isaf*, *Y Ddwryd* (Druid) and *Penlan fawr* (Book 4), and *Plas Isaf* (Books 2 and 3). Books One to Four are all now online at: <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>, and printed copies of **Cynwyd Scrapbook Five** are also now available to purchase.

Although in the later Middle Ages Cynwyd is thought to have been the commotal centre of Edeirnion, by 1975 Trefor O. Jones' book *O Ferwyn I Fynyddlod* listed over four pages of 'ruins' in the Cynwyd area, with only a few since restored! It is due to owners' preservation of their historical features that the houses researched so far by DOWH still remain - and I'm quite sure that there are still more to be discovered!

FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Wally and Margaret Barr

In January the branch met at St Winefrides, Gwespyr. This house is one wing of larger building that first opened in 1857 as a local school. The building is in the scholastic gothic style¹⁰ and was funded by Sir Pyers Mostyn. It is composed of two large halls; the boys being taught in one and the girls in the other. The teachers lived in the two attached wings. Closed as a school in the 1930s the building now offers four separate domestic units. At the kind invitation of the neighbours to St Winefrides, branch members also had the opportunity to visit one of the adjoining halls.



Visit to Lletty, near Mostyn



Lletty, also known as The Honest Man

In February we met in the Lletty, originally a hotel built on the coast road in Mostyn in the late 17th century and once known as 'The Honest Man'. This building has recently been renovated and is now open as a pub. The landlord, Nick, showed us the downstairs interior rooms which are open to the public and we had a glimpse of the corridor behind the bar where you could see evidence of the original outside wall. The building had been neglected for several years before Nick and Jen began their renovation of it. He told us some of the history of this fascinating building, which was owned by the 18th century naturalist, traveller, writer and antiquarian Thomas Pennant. We later enjoyed tea and biscuits provided by Nick and listened to the words of Pennant, who wrote about Lletty in 1796.¹¹

Our March meeting is to be held in The Old Post Office, Llanasa, on 20th, where we will be joined by Gill Jones, DOWH Conwy branch member, who will be sharing her knowledge of Church Houses. Our April meeting will be

¹⁰ According to Hubbard E (1986) *The Buildings of Wales: Clwyd*. Penguin Books Ltd., p.444.

¹¹ Pennant T (1796) *The History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell*, pp. 49-51.

at Brithdir Mawr, Cilcain, on Monday 22nd at 2pm and pending visits to old houses over the next few months will include Plas Yw, Nannerch; Henblas Hall, Tremeirchion, and Colomendy, Ysceifiog.

ARTICLE by Veronica Hay Colomendy, Ysceifiog

In this article we are describing a dovecote in Ysceifiog parish, near Caerwys, Flintshire. The house is called Colomendy. This is the Welsh name for a dovecote. Dovecote buildings are often free-standing structures, as in Erddig and Penmon, but less often the pigeon lofts are found in the upper floors of farm buildings¹², as is the case with Colomendy in Ysceifiog. The owner is of the opinion that the dovecote (which gives the house its name) was one of the early buildings of the farm and that the house was built sometime after. There is some evidence that the family may have occupied the row of buildings which house the dovecote at one end, prior to this. There was a date of 1659 inscribed on a beam in the threshing barn in the building that houses



**The Dovecote
(the external staircase is to the left)**

the dovecote. The main house has a date of 1663 on the tympanum on the west gable end. There are about 60 holes for the birds in this dovecote and the entrance to the holes is L-shaped which gives more space and protection to the birds.

In the middle ages only the elite were allowed to erect and maintain dovecotes and the rights to do so were strictly controlled by law. However, in Elizabethan times the laws were relaxed and this enabled the lesser aristocracy to build their own dovecotes. In fact they became a kind of status symbol - demonstrating that the owners had a significant amount of land. Peter Williams, who built Colomendy in Ysceifiog, a man proud of his lineage, would have been very keen to impress in this way.

According to William Twigg, Planning (Environmental) Section, Delyn Borough Council in 1976, dovecote owners would have to have a certain acreage of land or otherwise the birds would feed on the crops and stores of landowners nearby. In the early 1980s the present owners had no birds and were given three pigeons which bred profusely so that, in time, numbers rose to 70 or more. Problems arose when a neighbour alleged that the pigeons were feeding on barley that she had stored in a barn next door. Having consulted the council it was arranged for a man to deal with the problem with a rifle.

What was the function of the dovecotes? They provided a source of fresh meat during the winter months after the slaughter of the other animals in November (known as the blood month). Also the feathers of the birds were used in mattresses and the manure was used to put on gardens. As agricultural methods improved, animal meat could be available in the winter and, with the arrival of refrigeration, the need for dovecotes declined and the buildings were neglected.

We wonder how many other houses with the name Colomendy are known by DOWH members in North Wales?



Nesting boxes inside the dovecote

¹² Lloyd G (1965-6) *Flintshire Dovecotes*. Journal of the Flintshire Historical Society, 66 (22), pp.78-82.

MERIONETH BRANCH

Further plans for branch events are not available at present.

ZOOM LECTURE SERIES 2024

From our Research Co-ordinator Martin Cherry

Wednesday 10 April at 7pm

Martin Cherry DOWH trustee

After Glyndŵr: Building in an age of anarchy

Over the last decade or so, a substantial number of buildings in Wales have been securely tree-ring dated to the fifteenth century, several of them built during or within a few years of the Glyndŵr wars. Others – houses, courts, shops and churches – can be dated by analogy to around the same period. At a time of acute political uncertainty, who built them – and why? (The subject of the talk might be adapted if there are any exciting new research results to announce.)

Wednesday 8 May at 7 pm

Dr Jenny Day Research Fellow, University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth

“The fair court of St Bernard”: the poets’ view of the Cistercian abbeys of Wales.

The medieval poets can tell us a lot about buildings and the life that went on in them. Dr Jenny Day is an expert in this field and working on a book on poetry relating to Valle Crucis Abbey. Her talk will look at the architecture at Valle Crucis and other houses, and about the broader material culture relating to burials, worship and feasting.

Wednesday 19 June at 7.15 pm after the AGM (note this is the third Wednesday of the month)

This lecture will follow Discovering Old Welsh Houses AGM scheduled for 6.15 pm.

Robin Grove-White is Professor Emeritus of Environment and Society at Lancaster University and Chair of the Advisory Board, Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates, Bangor University.

My Dad the Communist Landowner and Other Anglesey Tales (provisional title)

FEATURE ARTICLE: DIARY OF A RENOVATION

By Angie Sutton-Vane and Glyn Davies (angelasuttonvane@outlook.com)

The renovation of Plas yn Bwl House: Part Four

My last article puzzled over the origins of the name Plas y Bwl or Plas yn Bwl and I had some useful feedback so thank you. However, some further digging in records has revealed that certainly in the 1400s it was called Plas y Bowld or Bolde, reflecting the name of the original family of Lancashire knights who owned it and it remained as such for several centuries. The first reference to it as Plas y Bwl which I’ve found is in 1699



Repairs in reclaimed oak to the roof valley timbers



when Edward Lhwyd briefly describes it as “anciently a house of good note belonging to ye Bulls, at prest. it is Mr Young’s” so I wonder if it was a simple case of misunderstanding what he was told? Returning to the house as it is now, and our work, we finally got our listed building and planning consents, with all conditions discharged, in June 2022, a wait of just under two years.

Our plan was that Glyn would undertake the majority of the work on a full-time basis as this was really the only way we could afford to complete it. Glyn joined the family building business working with his father

and brother in and around Aberystwyth and they carried out the restoration of local churches. He then moved onto working for the well-established conservation and restoration company of Herbert Read where he undertook restoration of carved wood, for example, the badly burned Staircase House in Stockport. With Glyn’s last job as a



Thick Welsh reclaimed slates arrive from South Wales complete with lichen



Finds in the roof – giant nails and oak pegs

cabinetmaker at Silverlining in Wrexham, and with my background in conservation, museum work and history we felt equipped with the necessary skills to take on the project.

Glyn began two huge projects in the spring of 2022. First, building a fully self-contained cabin in our adjoining paddock so that we could live away from the building site and yet be close by. Second to address the main roof with its wonderful humped ridge and heavy Welsh slates. Storm Arwen had accelerated early losses, breakages and slippage of slates and we suspected the large oak beams of one of the main roof valleys were in a poor state of repair. We would only know the full extent by erecting scaffolding and stripping back the slates and this revealed our worst suspicions with sections of the beams coming away in handfuls of wood dust. Our tight budget took a huge knock early on with prices of materials up by 50% following the double whammy of Covid and Brexit. Glyn spent weeks searching for suitable reclaimed oak timbers from salvage yards, and





The Topping-out Ceremony

heavy Welsh slates which are now as rare as hens' teeth and were eventually sourced from a demolished hospital in South Wales. With the house exposed to the elements we were, at least, blessed with a beautiful hot summer. The roofing work was complex and in places where the slates were level with the coping stones on the west gable careful construction of hidden lead flashings were required. Always a perfectionist, Glyn became a first-rate slate-cutter and lead-dresser and the finished work was beautiful. By October 2022 we were able to hold a very exclusive topping-out ceremony and by early 2023 were safely ensconced in our cosy new home.¹³

(Angie and Glyn have taken us all on an exhausting journey through their renovation of Plas yn Bwl, and we hope they can now enjoy a well-earned rest in their beautiful home! - Eds).

BOOKS ...BOOKS ... BOOKS ...BOOKS ...BOOKS ...BOOKS ...

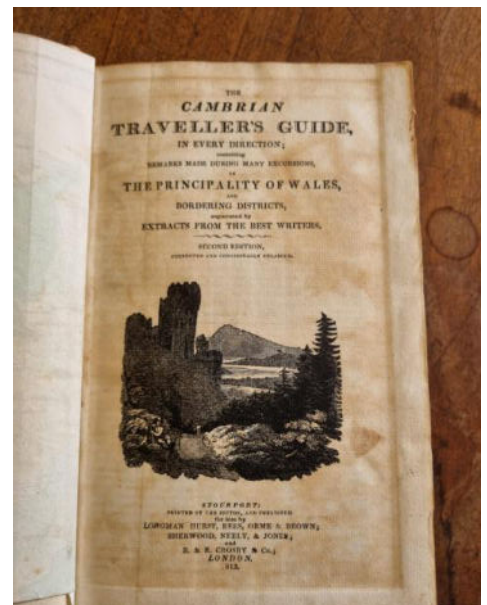


This is a new feature of the Newsletter. If you have any reviews, comments, thoughts or recommendations of books that you think might be of interest to our members, why not let us know?! We'll be happy to print your comments, letters or articles. Just email us at flintshire-branch2@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk

ARTICLE by Janice Dale On my bookshelf

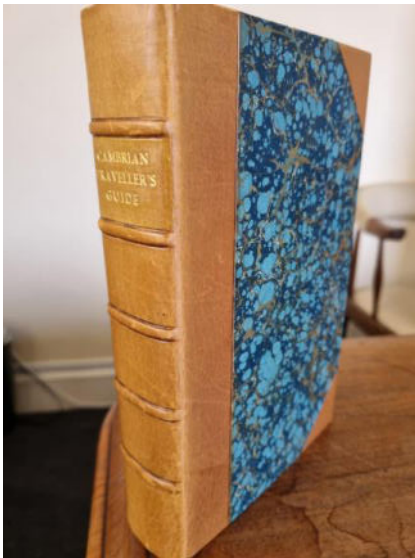
If you are ever up in Northumberland, do drop into Barter Books in Alnwick [<https://www.barterbooks.co.uk/>]. It's a place where you can spend hours trawling their second-hand books [they also have an in-house café with good food and coffee – need to keep up strength whilst wandering around the bookshelves].

It was here that I picked up '*The Cambrian Traveller's Guide, in every direction; containing remarks made during many excursions, in the principality of Wales and bordering districts, augmented by extracts from the best writers*', published in 1813. It has been rebound but includes an original map.



The Cambrian Traveller's Guide

¹³ Note from the editors: we had to look this up, though no doubt many of you avid building restorers already know. A Topping-out ceremony is traditionally a builders' rite held when the last beam is placed in situ on the top of a building during its construction.



The author recommends to the traveller: *to purchase a sure footed pony which you may relieve by walking at intervals. However, if walking becomes exceedingly painful when blisters upon the feet result from this exercise,...this inconvenience may be prevented by wearing strong pliant and easy shoes ... and soft flannel or woollen socks ... if blisters should arise ... bathe with equal quantities of vinegar and luke warm water, and apply a thin liniment of wax and oil with a little sugar of lead; some apply a compress of brandy with an equal quantity of vinegar of lead and anoint with oil.*

There are some delightful descriptions of places visited – on travelling towards Bala we came in sight of the river Treweryn .. *the mountains here assumed a less lofty character than those we had traced in the morning and the vale on our right increased in beauty and richness. The cottages had, however a more wild and uncomfortable appearance than those in Caernarvonshire and instead of being covered with slates and furnished with chimnies, they were ill thatched and the apertures for the smoke were very rude...*

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On visiting Llanelltyd the author comments ...*This place serves as port to Dolgelle and many small vessels are built here ...*

Dolgellau is described as *having irregular streets and the houses mostly ill built ...it's manufactory of Welsh flannels employs a great number of hands. The kind of woollen cloth called Gweu or Webs also occupies the inhabitants of this neighbourhood. Every little farmer makes webs and almost every cottage has his loom ...*

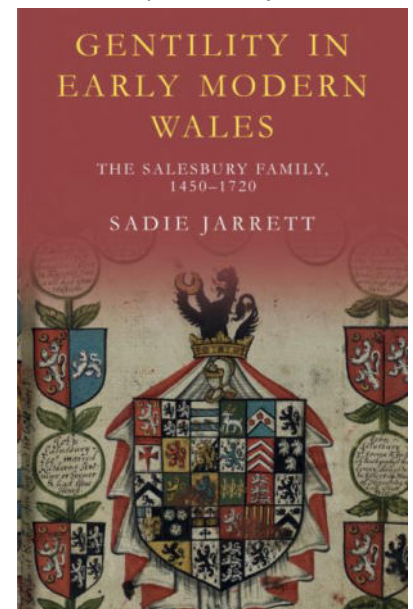
How things have changed, but books like this give an insight of life all those years ago.

BOOK REVIEW by Martin Cherry

Sadie Jarrett *Gentility in Early Modern Wales. The Salesbury Family* 1450-1720 (University of Wales Press, 2024). ISBN 978-1-83772-096-5; eISBN 978-1-83772-097-2. £24.99 (paperback). This book is also freely available on a Creative Commons licence from: <https://www.uwp.co.uk/app/uploads/9781837720972.pdf>

It is great news that this eagerly awaited and important book has now seen the light of day. It is the first full-length published study of this significant family, taking the story from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and the author exploits a substantial and largely hitherto untapped body of documentary sources from many collections in Wales, London and California. The chronological range is particularly helpful since it allows an overview of the progress of one branch of a major gentry clan over the longue durée. The careful consolidation and acquisition of property (and power) from the late Middle Ages, through purchase and marriage, is chronicled (they inherited Rhug in the mid-sixteenth century) and we see their horizons expand by the seventeenth century to include Ireland and the wider Atlantic world. William Salesbury (1580-1660) could boast that a combination of trading and piracy in the North Atlantic provided the wherewithal for him to live later 'on that fortune he had by his owne industry'. But it was land and

the income derived from rents and natural resources (which included minerals) that provided the bread and butter - and the traumas. Court cases over title to land could take a decade or more to resolve, even when the Chancellor was a friend of the family, and their glacial progress remind one of the worst excesses



described in Bleak House. Violence pervades the scene at almost every step, the family safeguarding their interests by mobilising armed men when necessary: many incidents appear to have been fuelled by alcohol and it is curious how many affrays took place in churchyards. Much emphasis is placed on the ability and wisdom of the paterfamilias: some took great care to ensure a smooth succession, seeking the support of trusted friends to oversee the estates if the heir was a minor; but things could go badly wrong - under the management of reckless 'Captain John', income by 1611 had fallen from £707 p.a. to £30! But there was a gentler side to the family saga. The household created a hospitable and secure base for family and retinue alike and the role of women was central, even though often hidden in the record: charity, mercy, welcome, creating a sense of well-being (making the great house 'a place where we are sheltered... a fine place to frequent') were female attributes critical to the effective working of the local polity: they, as much, perhaps more, than male bravado, 'prospered her shire'.

Sadie Jarrett is good in bringing women out of the documentary shadows as her other publications have demonstrated. And, although of Lancashire extraction, the family integrated into Welsh society both by marriage and culture: although bardic tradition declined during the period covered by this book, the family retained an 'intense interest' in Welsh language scholarship and (by around 1600) had a library of over 600 books at Rhug. And, of course, although not discussed at length here, the achievements of William Salesbury of Welsh Dictionary and New Testament fame, although he belonged to a cadet branch of the family, would have reflected gloriously on the wider clan.

Finally, it is worth noting that this book was greatly aided by a generous grant from Lord Newborough (owner of the Rhug estate) which funded the author's doctoral fees - and our Chair, Janice Dale, is singled out in the acknowledgements as a particular champion of the project. Also worth registering is the role of the participating libraries and publishing houses that sponsor the Creative Commons scheme that enable works such as this to be downloaded by anyone free of charge: that really is making access to knowledge for all a reality!

STOP PRESS!

Free to Collector

An old microfiche reader. In working order. About 17inches/43cms tall. Also Parish Register fiches for:- Denbigh 1683-1739 & 1739-1812; Capel Garmon 1696-1841; St.Asaph/Llanelwy 1593-1750 & 1750-1812; Llanrhaedr ym Mochnant 1678-1812; Henllan 1684-1812; Llanrhaeadr yng Nghinmeirch 1676-1812.

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