



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.

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

CYLCHLYTHYR 49 Mehefin 2024

NEWSLETTER 49 June 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

I am sitting writing this whilst in Northumberland on holiday, but was reminded of home in Wales when yesterday we were walking up in the Cheviots and passed the site of the Battle of Homildon Hill, just west of Wooler, now called Humbleton Hill. This battle was in 1402. The Scots were always quick to capitalise on political unrest, and of course this was just two years after Owain Glyndwr's revolt, which meant that Henry IV had to turn his attention and resources to Wales. This gave the Scots the opportunity for a concerted attack on England. The 10,000 Scottish army advanced as far as Newcastle, looting along the way, before turning back. Hampered by booty it was slow progress back to Scotland giving time for the English, some coming from Shrewsbury having previously been diverted to Wales and the Marches and the troubles there, to intercept the Scottish army. This battle has been described as the greatest victory for the longbow in battle and the Scottish forces were defeated.

Henry Percy, the Earl of Northumberland and son Henry Hotspur, sided with Henry IV, but with many Scottish leaders taken prisoner, Henry IV's internal and Welsh problems meant he was not keen for these Scottish lords to return home leaving them to fight against him again. King Henry refused to let the Scots be ransomed

and this act became one of the many grievances that the Percys had with the Crown, leading to the Percys giving their allegiance to Owain Glyndwr and rebelling against King Henry.

This snapshot of history made me think of the link between Wales and Northumberland. Wooler from North Wales by modern roads is some 250 miles, and today takes approximately 5 hours to drive. What must have it been like for those archers to walk that far and then undertake a battle.

NEWS AND ARTICLES FROM THE BRANCHES

ANGLESEY BRANCH

Report by Clare Latham and Brenda Simpson

Our visit year got off to a flying albeit, wet, windy and very cold start in April with our guided tour of Llanerchymedd. 12 plucky members turned up in April for the visit led by our own Ash Owen who is currently doing a PhD into the geo-archaeological history of Anglesey. Llanerchymedd boasts a long history of habitation from pre-historic settlement to a medieval Celtic Monastery reaching its zenith in the 18th century as a bustling market town though the market square is now a rather disappointing mini-roundabout. We learnt



Church interior

about the town's reliance on the now disused railway line and the plethora of shoemakers that were once based there. Ash took us on a tour of the church where we saw evidence of a medieval window in the tower and the graveyard is the resting place of the County Whipper! Ash had brought a rucksack full of artefacts that he had found on digs in local fields over the years which we explored over a warming panad in the local café following our tour.

Sadly, our May visit to a converted farm building in Coedana had to be postponed due to bereavement. In preparation for the visit, we did some research at the splendid Anglesey Archives. Using Land Tax Reports, Tithe maps and the Bishops' Transcripts, we traced people living at the farm as far back as 1726 when a Robert Buckley was in residence. We will be able to see some of the original trusses and fireplace still in situ so we look forward to the rearrangement of that visit later in the year.

We have an interesting schedule of outings in development for the rest of the year including a private house in June. We have a guided visit to *Hafoty*, a Cadw listed Hall House outside Llanddona in July and the opportunity to explore the 'Mapping Anglesey' exhibition at

Oriel Mon in September with input from the exhibition's curator. We are planning a return visit to Anglesey Archives to round off our year in October.

CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

Unfortunately illness continues to hamper branch planning, 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.

Article by Gill Jones Medieval Church Houses

Medieval church houses were the equivalent of church halls. Most date from the early 15th century. Their main purpose was to accommodate the festivals and church 'ales' (drinking parties) which raised money for the church. They were held under the guardianship of the churchwardens not the rector. The dates of the 'ales' were not generally fixed and so the churchwardens decided when they would be held and how the money would be spent. Examples are - Leet ales, Lamb ales, Clerk ales, Whitsun ales, Bride ales (wedding feasts). Surviving examples are common in the west country and some research has been carried out there, but very little has been done in Wales. The main source of information appears to be in Church Wardens' Accounts, but these are also rare in Wales for the early period.

Prior to their existence, festivities took place in the nave of the church. Medieval parishioners were perfectly comfortable using their churches both as secular meeting places as well as religious ones. After a while, Church authorities began to question whether it was appropriate for alcohol to be consumed on church premises; and about the same time, the open space in churches had started to fill with pews. The festivities were banished to the churchyards. Eventually parishes were encouraged to build 'church houses', although it wasn't compulsory. They often looked like farm buildings. They were always adjacent or close to the church. They typically had one long undivided room on the first floor – open to the roof which was accessed by an external flight of stairs. This was where the revels took place. The downstairs rooms were heated by a large fireplace and would have been used for brewing and baking.

For the Puritans such merry-making was unseemly. Under Oliver Cromwell it was banned. (There had been earlier attempts to suppress church ales in the reign of Edward, but they appeared again under Mary.) Redundant church houses were converted to other uses to benefit the parish, for example schools or almshouses. Some were rented to the former housekeepers, who continued to brew and sell ale, turning the buildings into ordinary alehouses.

A possible example of a Church House in North Wales is the former Queen's Hotel, Cerrigydrudion (For more information - see the house history on the DOWH website)



c.1875 Queen's Head



Queen's Hotel c.1900

DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Jenny Lees

In April we enjoyed an exciting tour and splendid tea at *Plas isaf*, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, kindly provided by its DOWH member owners who had told us of its ancient timbers!



Plas isaf, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd - lower-level part of house

The house was new to DOWH, but after a brief visit Martin Cherry writes:

“The present house is perhaps early 18th century, as its proportions and parlour details would fit well with this date. It is set along the contour, but incorporates and partly overlays an older house built on the downhill slope - difficult to date, but likely to be late C16th. Here one room with wide ceiling joists is connected by a doorway with re-used head (possibly C16th) to an end room with more slender joists; this was extended by a large stone fireplace with a possibly C17th adjacent spiral stair. As this range is timber-framed, the stone fireplace could have replaced an earlier timber one, and on initial inspection the early range could date from around 1580-1620, with the main house range dating from around 1690-1710.”

Even without the benefit of dendrochronology, this is very exciting and we are working on a house history which has already suggested some important North Wales owners! Our house histories of *Cadwst*, *Caenog*, *Hafod yr afr*, *Henblas* and *Henfaes isaf* are still not quite completed (we are awaiting isotope dating results for *Cadwst*, *Henblas* and *Henfaes isaf*), but our house history for *Llennyrch*, Talsarnau, previously dendrodated to c.1542–69, is now on:

<https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/ODL/mer%20070%20 ODL%20 Llennyrch.pdf>

In addition, during April and May some of our branch members greatly enjoyed attending Flintshire branch visits to both *Henblas Hall*, Tremeirchion, and *Brithdir Mawr*, Cilcain, and we have been joining with them to research house histories straddling our county boundaries.

TWO NEW DOWH HOUSE VISITS ARE NOW ARRANGED FOR JUNE:

7.30 pm on WEDNESDAY 12th JUNE: Our Denbighshire branch meeting and house visit to **LLEWENI HALL**, around 2 miles from Denbigh, kindly hosted by the owner: see

<https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300001060-lleweni-hall-including-stables-to-the-ne-denbigh>.

2pm on THURSDAY 20th JUNE: Two houses in the **Pennant valley** above **Llandrillo**, said to have records from the 17th century; **Pant y Llyn** and **Bryn Penllyn**.

Please book with me asap at leesjenny@gmail.com if you would like to come to either or both these visits, and I can send directions and more information about the houses.



Plas isaf, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd - upper level parlour

DOWH Denbighshire branch *Cynwyd Scrapbook Five* copies are continuing to sell well at £5 each (with additional cost for postage when required); please contact me if you like a copy.

Article by Jenny Lees (contact: leesjenny@gmail.com)
Into deepest Denbighshire – houses of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd

Our branch **Parishes Project** quest began with tracing houses listed by **Edward Llwyd** in *Parochialia* (1699), and we've now headed northwards from Edeirnion to the parish of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd! Of those still existing today, Edward Llwyd's *Houses of note*, listed together with **1699** owners' names, include **Cefn côch** (Mr Ambrose Thelwall, a minor); **Coed Talwrn** (previously *Koed y Talwrn*); **Eyarth** (Mr Thomas Wynne); ¹ **Eyarth ycha** (Mr Rhys Price); ² **Ffynogion** ('belongs lately to Capten Edw Pryce, now to Mr Newton of Kaethleyen Shropshire'); ³ **Garth Gynan** (belongs to Col Wms by his lady); ⁴ **Plas Einion** (Mr John Lloyd); ⁵ **Plas Newydd** (John Roberts of Havod y Bwch); ⁶ **Plas Uchaf** (Col. Williams),⁷ and **Tŷ Brith** (owned by John Vaughan).



Tŷ Brith (Jenny Lees 2017)

None of the above houses yet have individual DOWH house histories, but **Garthgynan**, once home to **William Wynn**, son of Baronet **Sir John Wynn** of Gwydir, features in our DOWH history of *Gwernbraichdwr*,⁸ and DOWH members have visited *Plas Uchaf*, *Plas Newydd* and *Tŷ Brith* (once home to poet Simwnt Fychan, c.1530-1606).⁹ Our research so far has been mostly online, and we are still investigating whether more of Edward Llwyd's *Houses of note* still exist: for example **Krickor**, as a *Cricor Mawr* farmhouse and outbuildings appeared in 1912 *Llwyn Ynn Estate sales particulars*,¹⁰ and **Sinet ycha** and **isa** (belonging to Mr Purifoy in right of his wife

¹ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300020508-eyarth-hall-llanfair-dyffryn-clwyd#.Y5jfH3bP3IU>

² https://www.bangor.ac.uk/archives/Documents/NewsletterApril2019_002.pdf

³ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300000821-ffynogion-ruthin#.Y5TdChbP3IU>

⁴ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300000778-garthgynan-llanfair-dyffryn-clwyd#.Y5omMHbP3IU>

⁵ <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/27714>

⁶ <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/27762/>

⁷ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300000717-plas-uchaf-llanfair-dyffryn-clwyd#.Y5PO-XbP3IV>

⁸ https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/mer%20059_HH_41_Gwernbraichdwr.pdf

⁹ <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/35414/>

¹⁰ <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/archive/6011320/>

Mrs Jane Lloyd of Sinet isa) – do they still exist at or near Sinet Farm?

Some 1699 *Houses of note* may now be ruined or derelict; possibly including **Pwll Kallhad** (Pwllcallod), belonging 'lately to ye Lloyds but now to My Lady Jeffreys of Acton';¹¹ **Bryn** (Mr Edward Price),¹² or **Bacheirig** (belonging to Mr Thomas Lloyd and described in a fascinating *Rhuthun Local History Broadsheet*).¹³



Llwyn Ynn Hall (Coflein)

Sadly, we do know that **Llwyn Ynn**, a magnificent mansion owned in 1699 by *D L Parry Esq*, was mostly demolished before 1985, although the service wing (to the right of the picture on the left) still appeared in a *Listed Buildings at Risk* report in November 2013.

In *Parochialia* Edward Llwyd also listed 'Other houses' – which of course are equally important to DOWH! These included **Berth**;¹⁴ **Ffynnogion Vechan**, (perhaps on the same site as Ffynnogion); **Hendre** (possibly now *Nant yr Hendre?*); '**Kastell Lhys enw** [name] **tŷ Bychan**'; **Nammor**; **Llanbenwch**, and **Plas Bedw** (owned

in 1699 by *John Davies*). **Plas Isaf** was owned in 1699 by *Mr Roberts of Havod y Bwch*, who also owned **Plas Newydd**, and is briefly described in this DOWH newsletter's Denbighshire branch report.

As well as indicating houses existing by 1699 in numerous North Wales parishes, the owners' names collected by Edward Llwyd (the renowned antiquary and keeper of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum) provide invaluable clues when compiling DOWH house histories. Our research briefly summarised above in this article - eventually to be available on our DOWH database, is also available from myself as a 14-page WORD document containing further historical details, references and illustrations. (Not intended for publication, this research is designed as a 'work in progress' to which readers can add information or inform us of errors – and may also inspire you to help compile house histories and/or host DOWH visits!)



Plas Newydd (Jenny Lees 2017)

¹¹ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300021225-primary-house-at-pwll-callod-efenechtyd#.Y5caHnbP3IU>

¹² <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/300016598-bryn-ucha-llanfair-dyffryn-clwyd#.Y4p1dXbP3IU>

¹³ <https://www.ruthinhistoryhanesrhuthun.org/broadsheet-36>

¹⁴ <https://historicplacenames.rcahmw.gov.uk/placenames/recordedname/c5d8a543-96e4-43b0-a169-1717291f22ec>

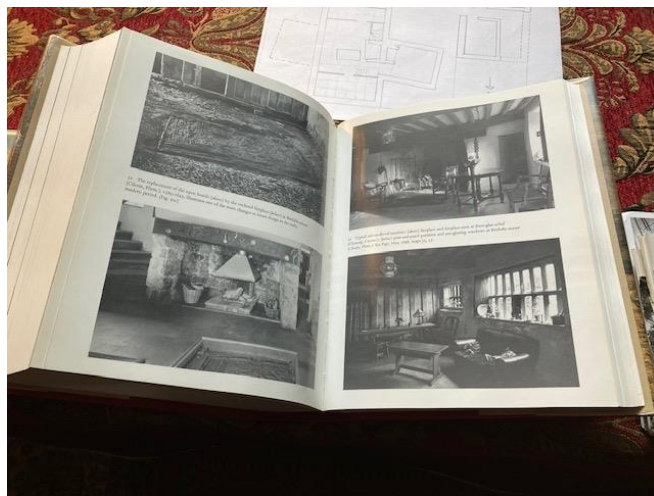
FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Wally and Margaret Barr

In April the Flintshire branch visited Brithdir Mawr, Cilcain, a 17th century (though possibly earlier) open hall house possessing the rare features of a central hearth and pre-glazing windows



Visit to Brithdir Mawr



The central hearth and pre-glazing windows of Brithdir Mawr (from Smith P, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, 1988. RCAHMW)

The following month, 16 members visited Henblas Hall in Tremeirchion. There are indications that, like Brithdir Mawr, this seemingly early 17th century house may be considerably older. The owner is directly related to Thomas Pennant, the renowned 18th century Welsh naturalist, traveller, writer and antiquarian.



Members visiting Henblas Hall
(Jenny Lees, 2024)



Henblas Hall (Jenny Lees, 2024)



Later in May, branch members had a DOWH stand at the Heritage Day in the village of Llanasa, where around 100 visitors were able to see the work of the Group.

In June we are planning to visit C17th Colomendy, Ysceifiog, and future visits this year will include a moated house - Plas Yw, Nannerch - and a tour of C16th Pentre Farmhouse in the Greenfield Valley Heritage Park.

For further details of all visits and meetings please contact Wally or Margaret Barr:

flintshire-branch2@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk

MERIONETH BRANCH

Further plans for branch events are not available at present.

ZOOM LECTURE SERIES 2024-5

From our Research Co-ordinator Martin Cherry

Our zoom lecture series has been in place since 2021. Set up originally to keep communications going within the Group while covid kept us housebound, it proved to be a popular way to bring members together over such a wide area as North Wales so we've retained the format. The county-based branches remain the fora for face-to-face contact. The first three talks have been arranged and this will take us through to Christmas (details below). The remainder of the programme is being planned. The main aim is to achieve a decent variety of topics to suit most tastes as well as a reasonable geographical coverage across our area. If you have ideas about subjects or speakers, please do let me know. As branch activities fluctuate—some are in rude good health while others are 'resting' as actors say—it would be good to focus on local activities for one of the sessions, new discoveries and exciting places visited, and I hope to put one branch in focus each year.

On **Wednesday 9 October 2024**, Matt Osmont, Practice Director at Donald Insall Associates will kick the season off with a talk on the challenges of conservation—giving historic buildings a sustainable future—looking in detail at Plas Gwyn, a wonderful sixteenth-century gentry house on the Llŷn, and Porth Mawr, one of the gatehouses in the town walls of Caernarfon.

On **Wednesday 13 November 2024** Mary-Ann Constantine, Professor at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, will discuss the tours and writings of Thomas Pennant as part of her work on the 'curious travellers' who put North Wales on the map—at least for southerners, assuring them that it 'might be safely visited'—and providing a rich source for building and family historians.

And on **Wednesday 11 December 2024**, by popular acclaim, a return visit from Scott Lloyd, research manager for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales. He spoke to us before about early nineteenth-century ordnance survey mapping and this time will focus on the varied pre-Ordnance Survey mapping that survives for North East Wales which can be helpful in researching the history of houses. The talk will also discuss some of the different issues surrounding their use and look at how they can be used in a digital age.

Look out for any changes in theme or title on our website. Confirmation will be sent to all members in good time and on the day before the lecture. Details on the 2025 programme will follow a little later.

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



Note from the editors: 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?! The books don't have to be professionally published and can be manuscripts, like the diary in Tim's article below, or simply extracts or parts of documents. We'll be happy to print your comments, letters or articles - just email us at:

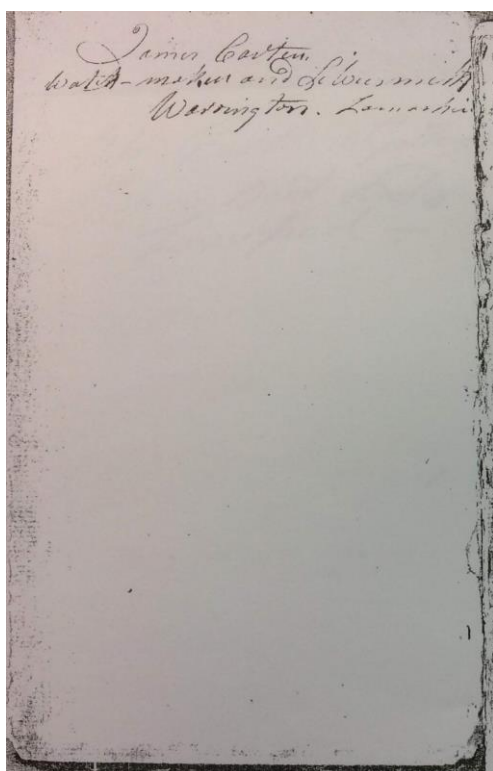
flintshire-branch2@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk

ARTICLE by Tim Biddle

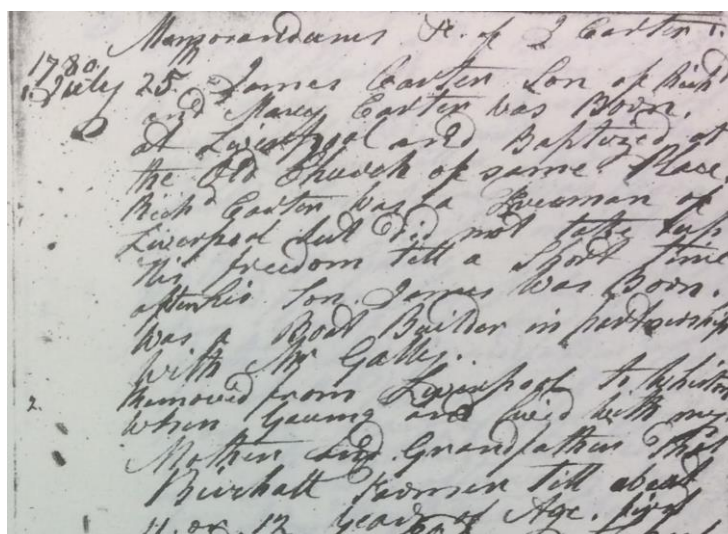
Watchmakers in the Warrington area

My 3 times great grandfather James Carter (1780 – 1848) was a watchmaker in Bridge Street, Warrington. In his surviving diary which he describes as a 'memorandum' the daily events of his life and work are recorded.

The opening page states: *James Carter son of Richard Carter and Mary Carter was born in Liverpool and Baptised at the Old Church of the same place. Richard Carter was a Freeman of Liverpool but did not take up this freedom till a short time after his son James was born, was a boat builder in partnership with Mr Galley.*



The Memorandum, page 1



The opening page of the diary

Removed from Liverpool to Whiston when young and lived with his mother and grandfather Thomas Birchall, farmer, 'till about 11 or 12 years of age, James, who appears to be an only child, makes no further reference to his father. After leaving school he went to live with his uncle George Birchall, a clockmaker in Bridge Street Warrington. He served a 7-year apprenticeship and eventually took over the business, valued at £240.

Transcription from the memorandum of a watchmaker's tool kit

An amount of Sundry tools belonging to me are in back shop

- 1 levering tool backing Cutter pinions*
- 1 Balance tool*
- 1 Pr of closers for riveting pinions*
- 1 Marking tool for followed holes*
- 1 tool for burnishing screws*
- 1 Pair Large*
- 1 Pair Large*
- 1 tool for freeing cutter wheels*
- 1 plate*
- 1? Cam for? Bailing from Pinion*
- 1 Block for slurry stone Dust*



Clock works

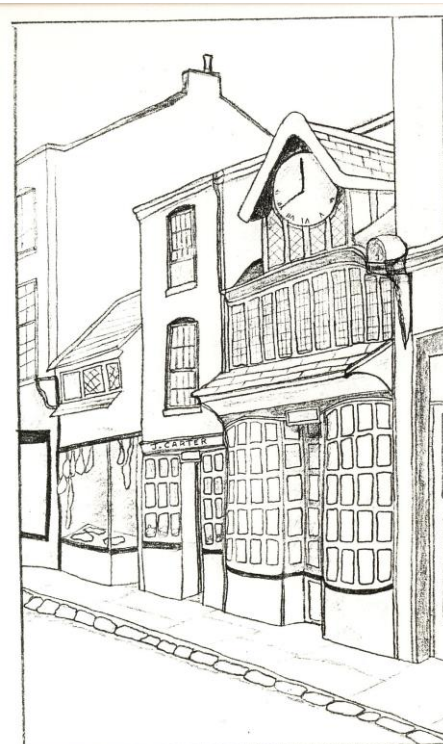


Carter clockface

The shop was surmounted by a large clock on the second floor of the building in the old medieval street which survived until redevelopment in 1907. Warrington was part of a local cycle of watchmaking although it never made watches itself. The town manufactured pins, pinions, pinion wire, files and tools. These were sent up the river Mersey to Prescott and the surrounding area where they were used to fashion watch parts. Prescott was the only place in the country where this specialist process occurred.



Carter's shops 1855



Sketch showing Carter's shops (artist unknown)

After the rough or 'in the grey' movements were assembled they were transferred 8 miles downstream to Liverpool. The Liverpool craftsmen completed the finishing, engraving, casing and so on creating a saleable product. The watches were finally returned to Warrington and given the name and serial number of the retailer who marketed the finished product.

It should be noted that in Warrington pins were made by child labour working in appalling conditions.

One of James Carter's Pocket watches is preserved in Warrington Museum which also displays one of his long case clocks. James married Margaret Simcock from Prescott. The Simcocks were well known craftspeople in the 'movement making process' in clockmaking.



Carter Clockface



Carter Long Case Clock



A Carter Clock

AND NOW A QUIZ ...

HOW WELL DID YOU READ YOUR NEWSLETTER?

1. In what northern hills has our chairperson been walking?
2. When was the Battle of Homildon Hill?
3. What is Ash researching for his PhD?
4. In the 17th century who banned the merry-making in Church Houses?
5. In what year was *Parochialia* first published?
6. What are the two rare features of Brithdir Mawr?
7. Who will be giving the Zoom talk on the challenges of conservation?
8. Whose great great great grandfather was a watchmaker?
9. Who might use a levering tool?
10. Can you send your news, views and book reviews to the DOWH Newsletter editors?

Good luck!



ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. The Cheviots; 2. 1402; 3. The Geo-archaeological History of Anglesey; 4. Oliver Cromwell and the puritans; 5. 1699; 6. A central hearth and pre-glazing windows; 7. Matt Osmont; 8. Tim Biddle; 9. A watchmaker; 10. Yes! Send them to us at flintshire-branch2@discovingoldwelshhouses.co.uk

