



# DARGANFOD HEN DAI CYMREIG DISCOVERING OLD WELSH HOUSES



NODDWYR/PATRONS

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

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traddodiadol a bywydau'r bobl oedd yn byw ynddyn nhw.

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

## CYLCHLYTHYR 38 Medi 2021

## NEWSLETTER 38 September 2021

**GWEFAN:** <http://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk> yw prif sianel cyfathrebu'r Grŵp. Ewch i'r wefan i weld ein llyfrgell sy'n tyfu a nodweddion eraill. Fel arfer mae'n cynnwys manylion digwyddiadau diweddar a digwyddiadau sydd ar y gweill. Cyhoeddir fersiynau Cymraeg a Saesneg y Cylchlythyr hwn ar wahân ond anfonir y ddwy fersiwn i bob aelod

**OUR WEBSITE** <http://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk> is the Group's main channel of communication. Please visit it to look at our growing library and other features. Normally it contains details of recent and forthcoming events. The Welsh and English versions of this Newsletter are printed separately but both are circulated to all members

### FROM THE CHAIR by Richard Cuthbertson

I hope you are all beginning to feel that at last we can begin to get out and about and visit the wonderful historic sites that surround us. Even if we only stick to our own Parish there is much to uncover. John Townsend has run a very successful seminar about how we can all help and plans to repeat this in September; members will be contacted with details pretty soon.

We have, in one form or another, now been going for 15 years and we plan to have a modest celebration of this at 2 pm on Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> September at Plas Penmynydd. Most people know the venue and I hope will feel comfortable meeting up there. Full details will be circulated soon. I have already had visits from two groups and we all felt that we were able to cope quite safely. I look forward to welcoming you ! With very best wishes to all.

### NEWS UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY by Margaret Dunn

We hope that you are keeping well and either enjoying the good weather or finding shade to keep you cool. Maybe like me, you have been busy out of doors and leaving the DOWH research to the "midgy" evenings and wet days! It has been so good to see lots of members at our monthly ZOOM meetings. We are very grateful to all those who have given such excellent presentations. A huge thank you! The varied topics have proved to be very popular and we have been joined by members from as far afield as the USA! Many thanks also to Peter for hosting the meetings and to Fiona for circulating the details to members.

The RCAHMS have, through DOWH, linked with a house owner in Denbighshire and undertaken tree-ring dating sampling in late July at a cruck-framed house. We eagerly await the results. With the continuing spread of new Covid variants, it seems we shall not be able to meet face-to-face indoors for quite some time. However very small groups from several branches have started to meet outdoors for guided community walks and for Parish Project rambles

seeking old houses so far only noted online. We also hear of a number who are continuing with their house and community history research at home and in Record Offices. Do let your branch secretaries know if you need ideas or help in choosing what to do next.

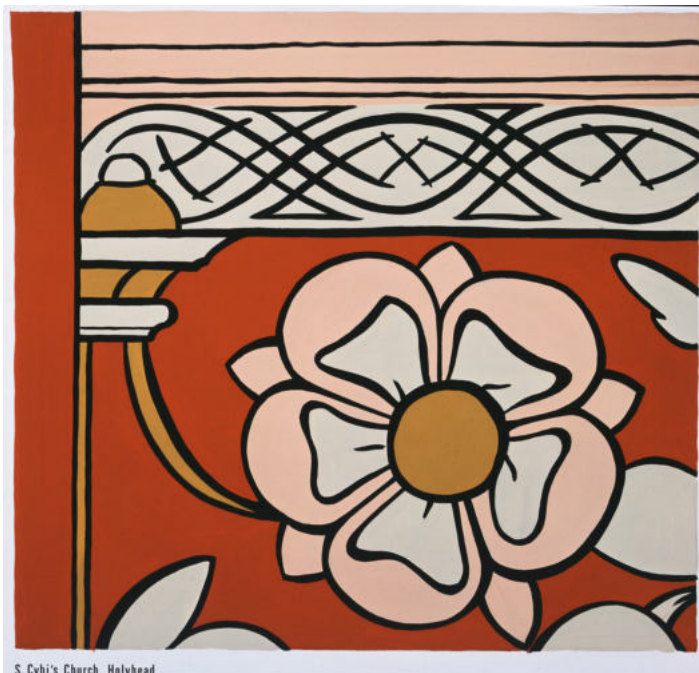


The late Peter Thompson with Martin Cherry at the launch of "Cruck Building: A Survey"

### 2021-2 DOWH Lecture Programme

The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all to adapt and one innovation adopted by most voluntary societies such as ours has been to deliver lectures by Zoom. This has proved popular and attendances have generally been far higher than for lectures held in physical venues. Our membership and branches range across a large geographical area - from Holyhead to Flint, Dolgellau to Prestatyn - making it difficult for many people to get to talks at the other end of the region. As a result, we have decided to continue holding group lectures by Zoom. We recognise that face-to-face contact is an important aspect of our activities and hopefully, as restrictions are eased, branch activities will resume, with real meetings, workshops, talks and visits.

All talks (except 9 December) will be on the second Wednesday in each month and will start at 7 pm. They will be given in English. Reminders and Zoom invites will be sent to all members nearer the time and fuller details of each presentation will be available on our new web site (going live later this summer!) Fuller details about the 2022 programme will also appear in the December Newsletter.



A beautifully painted Tudor rose in St Cybi's Church, Holyhead, with colours restored. *Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW)*

**8 September 2021 Discovering Historic Wall Paintings in Wales** Richard Suggett. Zoom. Richard is Senior Investigator for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. He has published widely in the fields of traditional architecture and social history and is currently completing a major book on wall paintings in Welsh churches. His talk will provide a survey of the range of wall paintings surviving in houses and churches.

**13 October 2021 New insights from dendrochronology on the houses of North Wales.** Martin Cherry. Zoom. Postponed from June. Martin, a DOWH trustee and Past President of the Vernacular Architecture Group, examines the ways in which scientific dating has confirmed or changed our understanding of architectural change in North Wales, looking in particular at the impact of the Glyndŵr rebellion and the post-war settlement and of the emancipation of bond tenure under the early Tudors.

**10 November 2021 Tŷ Du, Bishop Goodman's house in Llanberis - can it be saved?** Richard Cuthbertson. Zoom. One of two talks that look in depth at a single house.



Nearly 200 buildings have been scientifically dated in North Wales, much of the work commissioned by DOWH. The earliest tree-ring dated house is the remarkable Aberconwy House in Conwy, of 1420.



Tŷ Du, Bishop Goodman's house in the seventeenth century, still with its roof on, from an old postcard

Richard Cuthbertson, DOWH Chairman, looks at the extraordinary history of Tŷ Du, once the home of Godfrey Goodman, Bishop of Gloucester (d. 1656), who used it as a refuge during the Civil War and, at his death, left it to support his charitable work in Ruthin: but the building is now in a bad state - has it got a viable future?

**9 December 2021 (N.B. Thursday) The Pub Unwrapped and the Golden Age of Pub-building.** Geoff Brandwood. Zoom. Something different and festive: a well-known architectural historian, Geoff is a former chairman of the Victorian Society and has co-authored and edited a number of books on pubs. He has played a key role in the Campaign for Real Ale's fight to preserve historic pub interiors. He will take us on a virtual exploration of one of our great British institutions, focusing on their surviving historic pub interiors. He will show how the pub as we know it was essentially a Victorian creation with a truly magnificent flowering in the closing years of the nineteenth century. He will illustrate some of the (all-too-few) Welsh pubs which remain relatively unspoilt.





The Pub as we know it was invented by the Victorians and took on many forms, from the simple singe-room bar to the flamboyant gin palace. Here, the Albion, Conwy, adopts a domestic revival style to create a warm, comfy but elegant retreat.

Full details of the winter/spring programme for 2022 will appear in the December Newsletter, but do keep the following dates free.

12 January 2022 **The mysteries of tree-ring dating: explaining the science of dendrochronology.** Martin Bridge. Zoom.

9 February 2022 **Welsh houses in the hearth tax 1662-1674.** Elizabeth Parkinson. Zoom.

9 March 2022 **Bees and bee keeping before the modern hive (1851).** John Townsend. Zoom.

6 April 2022 **Framing and the mortice and tenon: how to think like a carpenter.** Andy Hyde. Zoom.

11 May 2022 **Introducing Henllys, Caerwys: a Tudor court house.** Sarah Maitland-Jones. Zoom. The second in-depth focus on a single house.

The **DOWH Houses Database Project** continues to progress well; the project is collating and checking the records on all houses so far visited, and, as a searchable database, will aid branches and the whole group prioritize future research and activities after the pandemic.

The **DOWH's Parishes Project Workshop** held in early July was well attended and was a great success covering many people's queries; a follow up workshop will probably be held early in the autumn. The Project continues to develop at varying rates in each branch as additional parishes are included, with some branches choosing to undertake different aspects out in the parishes such as checking if houses still exist, are derelict or ruins, and photographing house exteriors (from public footpaths etc); do contact your branch secretary to receive the formatted sheet and for news about which parishes near you still require checking.

When completed this information will be added to the Houses Database.

**House History Research** continues wherever members and branch secretaries select houses. The **DOWH Executive** meet each month (except August) and the **Trustees** every 3 months; do let your branch secretaries have your ideas and comments to pass on. The next Trustees' Zoom meeting will be on 15<sup>th</sup> September.

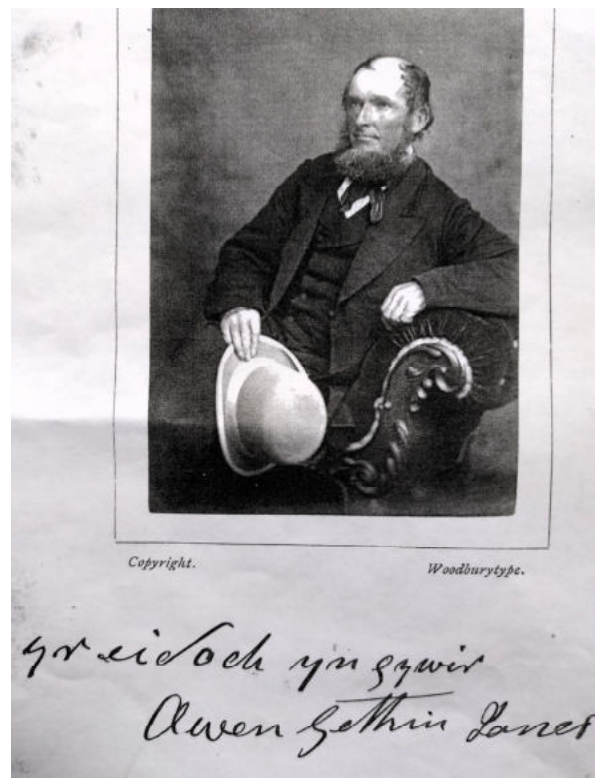
**Membership:** Fiona Gale will soon be contacting anyone with incorrect or overdue subscriptions, or with Gift Aid queries; she can be contacted by email at [membership@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk](mailto:membership@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk) or by phone on 07718625606 or 01824 520231.

## NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

### CONWY BRANCH

**Report to end August 2021** by Ann Morgan and Gill Jones

Conwy Group members have followed their personal interests or been working on village housing, Scouts Association, ancestry and newsletter articles. Clearly no home visits were possible but we are more optimistic that the Welsh government will be announcing final easing of restrictions soon.



**Owen Gethin Jones** by Ann Morgan

Owen Gethin Jones (1816-1883) of Penmachno, Conwy, North Wales is known to some local people, but I suspect

many who pass under the fine stone-built railway bridge known as Pont Gethin know very little about the man who built it. The bridge is a few miles south of Bettws y Coed on the A470.

Owen Gethin Jones was born at Tyn y Cae, Penmachno to Owen and Grace Jones. His father was a stone-mason and joiner and he passed on these skills to his son Owen. It is said that Owen loved carpentry and his first major work was building a 'factory' near Pandy bridge, Penmachno.

In 1843 he married Ann, daughter of William Owen, Coetmor and they lived at Dolydd. In 1852 he bought Tyddyn Gethin. Gethin and his brother-in-law and nephew set up a construction company. He was involved in the building of Penmachno Vicarage and school, Plas Bryn Derwen, Llan Station and the church in Bettws y Coed. He was also involved in building several railway stations on the Blaenau Ffestiniog to North West Coast Line including Pont Gethin. Gethin had many other abilities - he wrote poetry and essays and gave lectures. A book published after his death, *Gweithiau Gethin* (Gethin's Works) recorded his poetry and a long poem (*W. awdl*) won him the bardic chair at the 1876 Llanrwst Eisteddfod.

He also wrote *englynion*; these are 4-line verses (a bit like a haiku) and can be humorous or serious and embrace subjects such as marriages, births, deaths, nature, local characters, elections, new fashions, smoking and religious topics.

Gethin was also interested in history and wrote a book about the history of Penmachno, *Hanes Penmachno* (The History of Penmachno). Other books written by him are *Ysbytty Ifan a'i Hynafiaethau* (Ysbytty Ifan and its Ancient History), *Hanes Plwyf Dolwyddelen* (The History of Dolwyddelen Parish) and *Cartref Doctor William Morgan* (The Home of Doctor William Morgan - translator of the Bible to Welsh in the 16<sup>th</sup> century).

Gethin wrote about many of the farms in his area and when researching some of the C16th houses in Penmachno e.g. Bennar, Coed y Ffynnon, Dyllassau Isaf, Hafodwryd and Dugoed, we found his poetry and histories very useful and interesting.

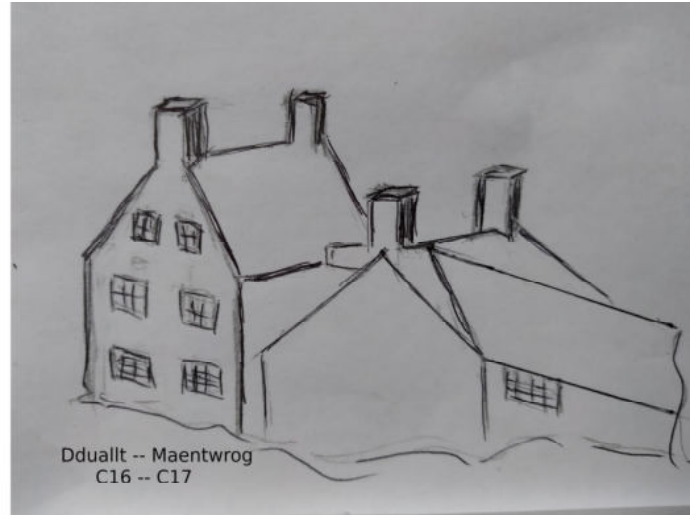
This man came of humble beginnings but was truly very able - a builder, carpenter, engineer and literary figure, a polymath of his age. As this is only a brief summary of Gethin's life, I recommend for further reading Vivian Parry-Williams' *Plwyf Penmachno* and Gethin's *Hanes Plwyf Penmachno* which can be ordered through the North Wales Public Library. I believe also that an English translation is available on disc.

### Taxes - Hearth, Window and Land by Ann Morgan Hearth Tax

During our House history searches Gill Jones and I have found the Hearth tax records quite useful as they can add

information to the body of knowledge being gathered for a particular house.

The Hearth Tax was introduced in England and Wales on 19 May 1662. Householders were required to pay a charge of 2 shillings per annum for each hearth, half of the payment being due at Michaelmas and half on Lady day. Exceptions were people receiving Poor Relief and houses worth less than 20 shillings a year. In 1664 the revision of tax made it payable by all who had more than 2 chimneys. In 1689 this tax was abolished.



Chimneys and windows of Dduallt, Maentwrog

Our first success came as quite a surprise. In Caernarvonshire archive, searching for Maenan Hall hearth tax we were given the original 8 - 9 inch wide scrolled record. We spotted Maenan township, Conwy clearly recorded with the Hall having 5 hearths. Some other examples we found are Foxhalls, Denbighshire (12 hearths), Berain (5 hearths) and Penrhyn Old Hall (3 hearths).

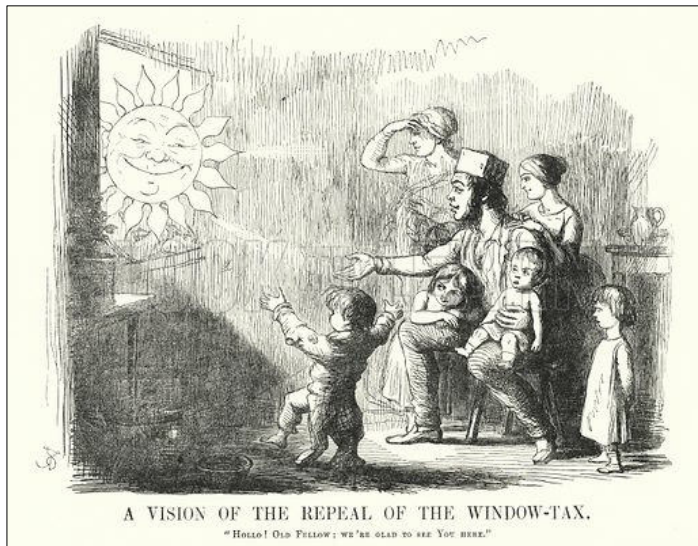
I have also searched for Hearth Tax records on microfilm. This can be tedious and the films can be hard to read. Here is a tip to make it easier to find your house or owner. Just follow the column recording the number of hearths - anything over 3 should be checked. This speeds up the search considerably.

This is only a brief introduction to the subject of Hearth Tax. For more information, note that on 9th February 2022, Elizabeth Parkinson (University of Roehampton) will give a lecture 'The Hearth Tax in Wales with special reference to Glamorgan' (provisional title) via a forthcoming DOWH zoom meeting.

### Window Tax

Records of Window Tax, when available, can be useful when a house has been partly or wholly demolished. This tax was introduced in 1696 in the reign of William 3rd and Mary and is said to be the method by which revenue was raised to compensate for the losses due to clipping of coinage. It was finally abolished on July 24th 1851 after pressure from doctors and others who argued that lack of





The caption reads *Hello! Old Fellow, we're glad to see you here.*

light was detrimental to health.

The tax had two parts. The first was a flat rate of 2 shillings (one shilling is nominally equivalent to 5p) per house and the second part was an additional tax depending on windows exceeding 10 in number. 10 to 20 windows were taxed at 4 shillings and 20-plus windows at 8 shillings. Cottagers too poor to pay Poor rates or Church rates were exempt.

It was not a popular tax and some tried to avoid paying the tax by boarding or bricking up some windows. Occasionally such 'bricking up' can be seen on an older building. It is said that the expression 'daylight robbery' comes from this tax as it was seen as a tax on light.

### Land Tax

The Land Tax was levied between 1692 and 1963. Originally it was a tax on real estate and personal property but by the 1730s it was levied mainly on land ownership. For example, when researching Plas Penmynydd, Anglesey, we looked at the Land Tax records in the Anglesey County Archives. Here we found the name of the occupier, after 1772, and the amount of the tax assessment. This information was very useful to us as it added documented information to the house history, naming the occupants of the house on a given date.

This is a brief introduction to 3 types of taxation from which much information can be gleaned by the researcher. I hope you find it useful.

### ANGLESEY BRANCH

**Report to end August 2021** by T.P.T.Williams

There has been no formal activity to report. However, an initial meeting with the owners of Cefn Coch, Llanfechell (see NL37) is scheduled for September, with a view to further visits to this C17th *plas*.

### Trwyn Penrhyn, Llanfwrog, Anglesey by T.P.T.Williams

Anglesey is short of new candidate pre-1700 houses to investigate and so we cannot afford to neglect even faint clues. Trwyn Penrhyn (usually just Penrhyn) farm and associated holiday park are situated on the west coast of Anglesey opposite Holyhead. Although shown on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps, it is not mentioned in any of the standard references such as RCAHMW, CADW, Coflein or Listed Buildings Wales.

However, there exist sea charts of Holyhead Bay and adjacent coasts drawn up by Captain Grenville Collins, Hydrographer to Charles II. They show few land details but one location is clearly marked *Penthrine* and is undoubtedly that of present-day Penrhyn. The adjacent coast is undistinguished and without prominent marks visible from the sea, so it is possible that there was a prominent building on the site in the second half of the C17th. Nothing more is yet known but if we finally emerge from Covid more work is clearly needed.



### CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

**Report to end August 2021** by Peter Masters

Other than steady progress with the Parishes Project there is little to report.

### Hidden houses by Peter Masters

In her recent Zoom Talk Margaret Dunn spoke of the "hidden houses", modern-looking houses which have had a makeover or undergone renovation rather than restoration, which to all intents had little of interest to offer but sometimes retained enough details to give a tantalizing glimpse of the their past glory.

Whether this was in a distant or more recent past, it was valuable because it meant a continuity of occupation on the same site and usually using the same footprint. By using shrewd observations, old documents, and careful building



recordings, the House Detectives can read the scene and create an image of what stood before.

This practice of makeovers is a long-established means of making the most of what you have and continues even down to the most basic houses.

Our humble abode is 100 years old this year. A parcel of land was bought from the Church In Wales by a local farmer for the sum of £290, and a plot of this land was sold to John Williams, quarry man of Llanaelhaearn and Sarah M. Green for £20 with a covenant stipulation "that there must be built a suitable bungalow and 'offices' on the said land".



The subsequent building erected was a corrugated tin and timber construction. The building was to remain largely unaltered for 48 years. New owners in 1966 made some alterations and modernisations but very little changed until 1975 when the property again changed hands and Planning



Consent was granted to extend the Kitchen and 'add new external walls, whipped in grey pebbledash, re-roof and widen the access'.

One of the stipulations was that the re-roofing was to be carried out in natural Welsh slate; the original corrugated roof is still under the slates!

Also tucked away in subsequent internal alterations and decorations are to be found the original tongue-and-groove internal walls, remnants of the sheeting and a tantalising half of a door! Intriguingly, this where the kitchen extension abuts the original building [at right in second picture].

There were three such houses built here, the middle one later being demolished in 2015 and a new build erected. The other remaining house had the sheeting removed and replaced with marine ply which was covered with "chicken wire" to provide a key for the cement render.

There are numerous houses of similar construction in the area, indeed in the region; in many respects they were the Snowdonia house of their time and hopefully they will become the historic houses of the future.

There are also instances of Tŷ Unos houses being updated in the same or similar ways. Ironically it is the ones which have been best preserved which have not survived.



## MERIONETH BRANCH

Report to end August 2021 by Martin Cherry

As with the other branches, there is nothing to report from Merioneth, except steady progress on the Parishes Project.

## Who built Y Faner - Monastic upgrade or Lancastrian Regional Headquarters ? by Martin Cherry

The parishes project for Llanelltyd has thrown up lots of interesting houses but by far the most significant is Y Faner (Vanner), situated on the perimeter of the monastic enclosure of Cymer Abbey. The building timbers were felled in the summer of 1440 and spring of 1441, meaning that building could have got underway as early as the summer of 1441 or within a year or two of that date since the greener the wood, the easier it is to work. So, the most likely date of construction would be at some point between 1441 and 1443. It has received quite a lot of specialist attention, notably from Peter Smith (in volume II of the *History of Merioneth*, pp. 447, 470-1). Y Faner has puzzled historians. Its plan is most unusual. It differs from the usual medieval arrangement where the cross passage separates the open hall and private rooms on one side from the service area (sometimes containing accommodation for livestock) on the other. At Y Faner, the cross passage is at one end of the house. The heavily smoke-blackened 4-bay open hall has a striking arch-braced roof with two tiers of cusped wind braces. The rear wing, accessed from the high (or dais end) of the hall, seems to be of the same date as the hall and





Y Faner from the SW, close to the perimeter wall of Cymer Abbey. The door leads into the end cross passage - the house appears never to have extended to the left. The open hall (the floor was inserted in c. 1900) is to the right.

was similarly open to the roof. It differs in its details from the hall and, unlike the hall, its roof is clean (i.e., not smoke-blackened by a central hearth), so it must have had an integral fireplace, now gone (the present fireplace is an insertion). There was also a cross wing beyond the hall, since demolished. It is the most ambitious house of its date in the county.

The precise purpose of the building remains uncertain. Standing as it does on the edge of the precinct, perhaps even just outside it or adjacent to the gatehouse, it is generally considered to have been the abbey guesthouse. Some have speculated that it was the abbot's private house. Upgrading monastic guest houses was not uncommon in the fifteenth century and by then, although the founding fathers of the Cistercian Order would not have approved, abbots were keen to enjoy the benefits of more private space and better facilities. But Cymer's finances were very shaky at this time - it was always a poor establishment - and it seems improbable that the abbey would have been in a position to pay for the project by itself. Looking at the events around the time of its building provides some clues - and some surprises, since the 1440s were turbulent times for the abbey, not at all the sort of environment where you would expect lavish investment of this sort.

The struggle for power at the court of Henry VI, where the weakness of the king encouraged the growth of factions that excluded the less favoured from power, spilled over into local politics. This became particularly intense in parts of Wales where a vacuum was created as a result of the exclusion from major local offices of Welsh-born nobles - a legacy of the post-Glyndŵr political settlement. The Stanley family especially, kings of Man and powerful in the north-west of England, saw an opportunity to build a Lancastrian power base in North Wales, and gradually gained an

ascendancy there in the 1440s and '50s. So great was the tension locally, that a conference was held at Harlech in August 1443 to 'try to still the tempest of feud and violence' in Meirionnydd.

Feud and violence spilled over into church affairs. At some point, probably in 1442, John ap Rhys, the abbot of Cymer, forcibly ejected the abbot of the neighbouring Cistercian monastery of Strata Florida, imprisoned him in Aberystwyth Castle and then took his place. On the reasonable assumption that the post of abbot of Cymer was now vacant at this point, John Cobbe was elected, but no sooner was he in post than Rhys returned and forcibly ejected him, stole the abbey's seal along with other goods, made grants and leases of land and surrendered the precinct to 'diverse riotous misdoers'. Cobbe appealed to the king to take the abbey into royal protection. The Lancastrian stalwart, Sir Thomas Stanley, controller of the royal household, chamberlain and justiciar of North Wales and a key royal agent in North Wales and the north-west of England, was duly granted custody in February 1443 along with some of his friends and family. By this time a new abbot was in place, Richard Kyrkeby, possibly a member of a family with strong Lancastrian sympathies. He went on to



The west tower of Cymer Abbey, added to the thirteenth-century church possibly in the 1440s. The corner closest to the viewer contained an internal stone stair. There is no external access. It gives every appearance of having been defensive.

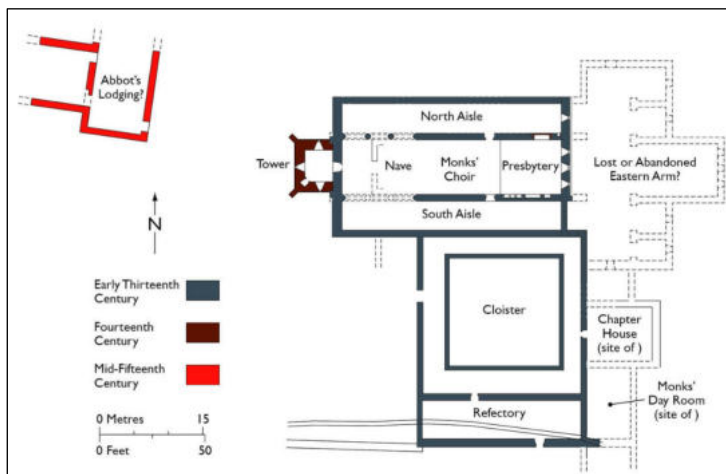
be abbot of Basingwerk where he got embroiled in further disputes.

So, who built Y Faner and why? There are more candidates than one would wish for! Also, there is no dependable list of abbots with their dates of office. It is not clear when John ap Rhys was appointed although, as we



Buck bros. print of 'Cumner' Abbey in 1729 includes Y Faner

have seen, he was in post in 1442. Rhys's predecessor, John Llanestell (Lancaster), was abbot in 1398 when he was appointed a papal chaplain, but it is not known when he died. Why would he have started building 43 years on and so close to death? John Cobbe hardly had time to get his feet under the desk. John ap Rhys is a possibility - he was clearly a man with pretensions and determination - but I wonder if the driving force behind the building was an abbot at all. Construction in 1443, when Stanley was appointed keeper of the abbey, is more likely. I suspect that Kyrkeby, a monk from Aberconwy Abbey whose family would have been known by Stanley, was brought in as a front man and Y Faner built, in effect, as a local headquarters for the Stanley clan from which to dominate the local area and milk the abbey's estates. Its unusual plan suggests it might have served as accommodation for men passing through - hence the plausible theory of its having been the abbey guesthouse - with two big open spaces, one a conventional hall, the other a large kitchen: we do not know what the now lost north wing looked like. Furthermore, the 'end-passage plan', although rare nationally, tends to be associated with the north of England - Stanley country - although there is one other in North Wales.



General layout of Cymer site Courtesy CADW

Further study may reveal more late-medieval fabric in the adjacent house and the farm buildings to the east of the abbey. But one structure seems particularly significant given the turbulent times: the west tower of the abbey church. This is clearly an addition to the church and where a date has been hazarded it's been placed in the later fourteenth century. But there are no diagnostic features to confirm this. The small single-light windows to the ground floor and the internal circular stone stair in the south-west angle give the whole structure a defensive appearance. Undoubtedly its ostensible use was to contain bells (expensive items!), but could it also have served as a retreat in case of trouble? Castles throughout North Wales were hurriedly repaired in the years following the Glyndŵr war and the troubled decades that followed. The existence of a defensive tower (now lost but portrayed in a nineteenth-century water colour) at nearby Dolymelynlyn makes a defensive role for the Cymer tower perfectly feasible. Could this then date from the same time as Y Faner? This may be a speculation too far but it provides food for thought as to how people lived in such turbulent times.



General layout of Cymer site Courtesy Coflein

## DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

Report to end August 2021 by Jenny Lees

Other than steady progress with the Parishes Project there is little to report.

## Tithe Martyrs and a Poet from Llangwm by Jenny Lees

As always with DOWH research, compiling a house history for *Cysulog*<sup>1</sup> led to intriguing new discoveries about the area's past inhabitants, and one unforgettable source was Hugh Evans' 1931 work<sup>2</sup> *Cwm Eithin*. This intriguing volume, set in the countryside around Cerrig-y-drudion, recounts not only the events of Hugh's youth but also the fascinating tales and memories of his grandparents' generation. Born at Cwm Main, Llangwm in 1854, Hugh moved in 1875 to Liverpool, where he founded the newspaper *Y Brython* and





Cysulog, nr. Maerdy, photographed during initial renovation.  
Jenny Lees 2017

is buried, but he died in 1934 at Pen-y-bryn, Cynwyd, having married Jane Williams from that village.<sup>3</sup>

Edward E. Jones of Cysulog was one of the 'Tithe Martyrs' (*Merthyron y Degwm*) whose story is told by Hugh Evans. In the early 1880s prices for agricultural produce were extremely low, but when local farmers asked for reduction of their tithes, based on crop value, not all local clergy agreed. After around eighty farmers refused to pay in 1887 Ecclesiastical Commissioners attempted to seize their property, but crowds gathered at threatened farms to prevent this. At *Fron Isa*, home of Hugh's cousin and her husband Thomas Hughes, a forced sale of two cows was tried, but by the time the auctioneers arrived

*'All the people of the district were there also - every farmer with his stout stick and the farm servants with cudgels, while the womenfolk encouraged them to give battle to the authorities. The auctioneer put the cows up for sale but not a penny was bid'.*

The crowd prevented an attempt to 'distrain' the unsold cattle [seize in lieu of rent or money owed] and Hugh Evans heard that some 300 people 'escorted' the auctioneers and their police protectors along the Holyhead road. Other farm sales were also prevented by a system of watchers lighting beacons on high ground to warn of the auctioneers' approach. At one point a distraining party was made to kneel on the road, sign a promise not to come again anywhere in England or Wales to attempt to 'sell for Tithes' and finally, to wear their coats inside-out to show repentance! After they were accompanied by a screaming crowd for five miles to Corwen railway station, proceeding with a red flag in front and a black flag behind, about 15 of the leaders were charged with preventing officers from removing cattle and causing 'a riot on the highway'. In July 1887 the *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser* announced that 31 people were on trial for an *Anti-tithe Affray at*

*Llangwm*, including E. E. Jones, 'son of John Jones, *Cysulog*'. But by the time of the Assizes the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had realised the strength of public feeling, so the prosecutors agreed not to press charges on condition that the defendants admitted they had broken the law, and the Judge 'bound over' the accused for £20 each. In March 1888 the *Llangollen Advertiser* reported E. E. Jones as among those speaking at a Welsh Land League meeting in Corwen Assembly Rooms, where 'deep sympathy' was expressed for the farmers whose goods were being sold for tithes. Hugh Evans' opinion was that the tithe martyrs 'did much to secure the disestablishment of the Church in Wales'.



The Tithe Martyrs; Edward E. Jones of Cysulog is seen at second from the left in the back row



The plaque at Pont y Glyn commemorating the local tithe martyrs (Jenny Lees 2021).<sup>4</sup>

On 4th October 1907 the *Llangollen Advertiser* announced that David Ellis of *Penyfed*, *Tynant* and his cousin John Evan Jones of *Cysulog*, both at Bala County School, had been granted scholarships following the Central Welsh Board Examination. But tragedy was to strike the families of both cousins. In 1910 John's father John David Jones of *Cysulog* died after being gored by a bull and John Evan Jones, working in a Liverpool bank at the time, had to return to run the family farm. Then in 1918 David Ellis, born at *Penyfed* in 1893 and nephew of John's mother Harriett Elinor Jones,

mysteriously disappeared in Macedonia while serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps during World War One. David (Dei) had already become a celebrated bard before the war and his life and work are celebrated in a fully illustrated biography.<sup>5</sup> He also features as protagonist in a novel by his army friend, the Welsh war poet and dramatist Sir Albert Evans-Jones, known also by his bardic name Cynan.



Penyfed, Tŷ Nant, home of the bard David Ellis. Jenny Lees 2019

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2. Hugh Evans (1931), 'Cwm Eithin'. My extracts in this article are from the English version *The Gorse Glen*, translated by E. Morgan Humphreys (1948), The Brython Press.
3. Dictionary of Welsh Biography,  
<https://biography.wales/article/s-EVAN-HUG-1854>
4. I am grateful to Anwen Lloyd of DOWH for alerting me to the location of the Pont y Glyn bridge wall plaque, and to the photograph of the Tithe Martyrs.
5. Alan Llwyd and Elwyn Edwards (1992), *Y Bardd a Gollwyd: Cofiant David Ellis*, Cyhoeddiadau Barddas, Llandybie. I am indebted to Professor Gruffydd Aled Williams for providing references to the biography and novel.

## FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

### Report to end August 2021 by Margaret and Wally Barr

Very gradually we are making tentative moves out of Covid lockdown. On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July, in searing heat of 26 degrees, a small group of members clutching water bottles and wearing hats, were taken on a tour of Caerwys town. This was led by 2 members of the Caerwys Historical Society - Carys Biddle and Vicky Jones. Carys is also a member of DOWH. There were 8 people present. It was a very informative tour, and the town has many plaques on houses explaining their historical significance. Vicky also peppered the talk with experiences from her own life, as she has

always lived in the town and was the daughter of the local vet. Two buildings of significance for us were the Old Court which Margaret Dunn, Peter Thompson and Martin Cherry visited last year, and nos. 1 and 2 Water Street. The latter was formerly known as 'Canol y Dre'. An Architectural Report was compiled on the building by Ross Cook, Peter Thompson and Martin Cherry in 2019 and Carys Biddle and Margaret Barr are working on the house history. Dendrochronology has put the primary phase of building at 1465. The afternoon ended with very welcome refreshments at tables outside the 'On the Corner Café'.



### Reflections on past Study Tours by Wally Barr

We look forward to re-starting house visits and Study Tours as soon as possible. In the meantime, perhaps those who have been on previous Study Tours might enjoy the memories of reading about these again, and hopefully those members who haven't yet tasted the delights of a DOWH Study Tour might also like to have a flavour of the experience.

There have been five Study Tours so far and, as former DOWH events coordinator, I worked closely with Margaret Dunn and others in organising some of these. Though this short piece can only mention some of the wonderful places visited, each Study Tour has had its own distinct focus and its own memorable moments. Whilst every Study Tour has followed a similar pattern - usually spanning three days, staying in an interesting venue and consisting of visits through the day and talks in the evening - each has been uniquely different from the others.



### **Tour one**

Our first Study Tour in October 2012 took us to South Wales to explore St Fagans National Museum of History, where Dr Gerallt Nash, Senior Curator, gave a personal guided tour of the site. We also stopped at Cosmeston Medieval Village, Penarth, for a walk around this fascinating reconstruction. In all we visited four sites, beginning with Tretower Court, Crickhowell, and ending finally at Hafod y Garreg, the oldest dated house in Wales. Dated to 1402 it is only a little younger than the houses represented at Cosmeston village, which is set in around 1350.

### **Tour two**

In July the following year, 2013, the group visited a number of the timber-framed houses on the Mid-Wales Border. One particularly interesting feature was seen on the journey down when we were given a guided tour of Ty Mawr, Castle Caereinion. For myself, the most memorable thing about this limewashed box-framed house was the smoke hood, dendro-dated to 1631 and seen in the photograph. Somewhat surprisingly the hood is made of wattle and daub, but rather than burning to a frazzle the moment the fire is lit it seems the daub would set into a form of ceramic that could withstand the heat of the blaze.

The tour was led by the very knowledgeable architectural historian Duncan James. We stayed in the Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford and Duncan provided the evening lecture. The next day we went on to visit the picturesque and historic buildings of Weobley and Leominster, followed by Ludlow and Presteigne on the third day. Throughout this time, we had the benefit of Duncan's extensive knowledge of building techniques and the history surrounding the many fascinating buildings and villages we saw.

### **Tour three**

In May 2014 members visited some of the older houses of North-East Wales. Unusually, on this Study Tour some of our members were non-resident, the others staying in Beaufort Park Hotel, Mold. On the way to the hotel we climbed the motte at Sycharth, where the castle - burnt to the ground by the future Henry V in 1405 - was the birthplace of Owain Glydwr. Led by Spencer Smith of GAT, we heard some of the poetry of the time, written in praise of the castle, its occupants and grounds. We also called at Leeswood Green Farm (C15th), Plas Teg Jacobean house near Pontblyddyn, and later, historic Denbigh, Nant Clwyd y Dre and Porth y Dwr in Ruthin. The sights and talks were informative and quite exciting to arrange (requiring almost split-second timing to negotiate at least two separate buses criss-crossing the countryside so as to split the group and not over-laden those dwelling in the houses we visited).

### **Tour four**

In 2016 we made a tour of the Timber-Framed Houses of Montgomeryshire. Expertly led by DOWH members, Nick and Eva Moore, twenty-nine of us set out in our rather large coach on an epic tour through some very narrow and windy roads. Taking in several wonderful buildings we each were provided with a splendid information booklet to read as we went. Amongst the many interesting places visited was our hotel itself - Gregynog Hall - a fascinating and historic mansion near Newtown. One particularly memorable house was the Vicarage in Berriew. Here the plan was to appreciate the house from outside, but when we arrived the vicar very kindly, and quite unexpectedly, allowed all of us to wander around his beautiful home, an exceptional example of early C17th timber framing (the house is shown on the front cover of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of Peter Smith's *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*).

### **Tour five**

In September 2018 the next tour, with twenty-six members and friends, visited the ancient buildings of Cumbria. We stayed centrally in Carlisle at the Hallmark Hotel and were ably assisted by members of the Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group, who provided daily leadership for our visits and informative lectures in the evenings. On the journey to Carlisle we called in for a tour of Newbiggin Hall, Penrith, a private castle dating from the early C14th. The next day we saw Clay Dabbins houses in Burgh by Sands, like Leigh Cottage in the photograph (mid C17th-early C18th). In areas short of stone and timber, Clay Dabbins were made using earth and clay. Clay is mixed with sand and straw, then layered around a cruck frame, and the roof is thatched.

The following day we visited Lanercost Priory (1169), a fortified farmhouse (known as a bastle) near the Roman fort of Epiacum, and the picturesque town of Alston. Here the early houses, like the bastle, had their living quarters on the first floor. On our return trip we called in at Dove Cottage, home of the poet Wordsworth. Whilst this has been a whistle-stop tour, I hope it's fired your enthusiasm for the next DOWH Study Tour.

### **Childhood Memories - image of Tyn Rhos by Gina Skyner**

*In the last Newsletter we published Gina's fascinating account of her childhood memories of her grandmother's house at Tyn Rhos, Llanfynydd. By an oversight an excellent image she provided of this house was omitted and is included below to complete the story. Apologies to Gina ! Ed.*



## FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR

### Articles, booklets and books written by DOWH members and others on DOWH-related subjects.

We request members to send details of printed articles etc on DOWH-related topics to the DOWH Newsletter Editor to share with other members. This is the first list and covers recent publications.

**Cruck Building: A Survey.** Edited by Nat Alcock, P.S. Barnwell and Martin Cherry. Published by Shaun Tyas, 2019. Includes the following chapters of particular interest to readers in Wales: *Crucks in Wales* by Richard Suggett and *The Afterlife of Cruck Houses: Modernisation and Obsolescence in North Wales* by Martin Cherry and Peter Thompson.

**Rev. Henry Rowlands of Llanidan and the discovery of the Juvenius englynion** by T.P.T. Williams. The Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club 2020 *Transactions*, pp. 69-80.

**A Prism for his Times: Late-Tudor Anglesey and Hugh Hughes of Plas Coch** by Robin Grove-White. The Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club 2020 *Transactions*. Book Review by Prys Morgan pp. 99-102.

**A Fireplace at Plas Meini, Llan Ffestiniog, Gwynedd** by Avis Reynolds. *Vernacular Architecture Group, Newsletter* April 2021 No. 80 p.29.

**Bryn Moel, Dolwyddelan** by Sue Buck. *Gwreiddiau Gwynedd Roots - Journal of the Gwynedd Family History Society*. 2021 Spring /Summer Vol 1. No.80 p.6.

**Olrhain Teulu o 'Stiniog** by Ann Penelope Morgan. *Gwreiddiau Gwynedd Roots - Journal of the Gwynedd Family History Society*. 2021 Spring /Summer Vol 1. No.80 p.30.

**Teulu Siop Gogerddan neu Siop Fawr, Tal-y-sarn** by J Dilwyn Williams. *Gwreiddiau Gwynedd Roots - Journal of the Gwynedd Family History Society*. 2021 Spring /Summer Vol 1. No.80. p.32.

**Ismael Williams, Master Mariner** by Sue Hurst. *Gwreiddiau Gwynedd Roots - Journal of the Gwynedd Family History Society*. 2021 Spring /Summer Vol 1. No.80 p.47.

**An Iron Age Feast: Excavation of a Shell Midden at Parc Coed, Llanfrothen, Gwynedd** by Clive Hudson. *Archaeology in Wales* 2019 Vol.59 p.11.

**Excavations at Conwy Vicarage Gardens** by I. P. Brooks. *Archaeology in Wales* 2019 Vol.59 p.79.

**A looped palstave found by Nick and Margaret Smyth in Llwyngwrl, Merioneth** note by Frances Lynch. *Archaeology in Wales* 2019 Vol.59 p.122.

**Caerwys, 1 and 2 Water Street** by Ross Cook, ArchaeoDomus. *Archaeology in Wales* 2019 Vol.59 p.129.

**Pontrickett, Ceiriog Ucha** by Ross Cook, ArchaeoDomus and Martin Cherry, *Discovering Old Welsh Houses. Archaeology in Wales* 2019 Vol.59 p.136.

**Hendre Farm barn, Gwyddelwern** by Ross Cook, ArchaeoDomus and Martin Cherry, *Discovering Old Welsh Houses. Archaeology in Wales* 2019 Vol.59 p.140.

**A Quest for Cymer in Edeirnion and its Barons: Part I c.1200 - c.1700** by Jenny Lees. *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society*. 2019 Vol XVIII part II, pp. 129-40.

**A Quest for Cymer in Edeirnion and its Barons: Part II c.1700 - c.1900** by Jenny Lees. *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society*. 2020 Vol XVIII part III, pp. 254. [Part 3 will be published in the same Journal (2021) this autumn]

**The Quest for Cymer Part One: Hafod y calch, Gwerclas and Plas Uchaf** by Jenny Lees. *Clwyd Historian/Hanes Bro Clwyd, Gaeaf/Winter* 2013/14, Rhif/No. 69, pp. 2-17



**The Quest for Cymer Part Two: Some 18th Century Confidences** by Jenny Lees. *Clwyd Historian/Hanes Bro Clwyd*, Winter 2017/18.

**In DOWH Cynwyd Scrapbook One (2014)** by Jenny Lees  
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The lime quarry at Hafod y Calch, pp.12-13  
Cryniarth Rescued for Posterity, pp.14-16  
The Mysteries of Cymer, pp.22-28  
A Cynwyd Timeline, pp.59-63 (with June Lister)

**In DOWH Cynwyd Scrapbook Two (2016)** by Jenny Lees  
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Our own medieval hall house - Plas Uchaf, pp.2-7  
Near Calamity at the Corwen Races! A true tale from Gwerclas, pp.8-10  
Ty'n y Wern Gwnodl, pp.11-16  
Confidences of an 18th Century Baroness (Part One), pp.17-22  
William Ferguson Irvine - an unsung hero, pp.23-30  
Brave local pioneers in the 18th century!, pp.31-34  
Our finest Medieval Historian - Professor Sir Rees Davies, pp.35-36  
Blue Lion memories, pp.37-41 (with Betty Booth)  
Plas Isaf - another Edeyrnion Dynasty, pp.49-52

**In DOWH Cynwyd Scrapbook Three (2019)** by Jenny Lees  
[https://www.discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/cat/catalogs/Cynwydd-Scrapbook-3/pdf/save/bk\\_1.pdf](https://www.discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/cat/catalogs/Cynwydd-Scrapbook-3/pdf/save/bk_1.pdf)

Confidences of an Eighteenth-Century Baroness: Part Two, pp.4-8  
Deeds and Drovers at Mynyllod, pp.9-13  
Home Comforts at Hafod y calch, pp.14-19  
Remembering Dai Morgan Evans pp. 20-21  
A Most Colourful Cynwyd Character - Memories of Major Leslie Dow, pp.29-30  
Our ancient township of Gwnodl: The First Six Centuries, pp.31-36  
Once upon a time at Glan Alwen, pp.37-41  
Our Farming Heritage: Part One, pp.43-47  
Plas Isaf - Another Edeyrnion Dynasty: Part Two, pp. 48-50

**The Quest for Cymer-in-Edeirnion and its Barons - From Medieval Plas Uchaf to Eighteenth Century Gwerclas and beyond** by Jenny Lees  
<https://www.ruthinhistoryhanesrhuthun.org/cymer-in-edeyrnion>

**The Record of Caernarvon for the commote of Nantconwy** by Frances Richardson. *Caernarvonshire Historical Society Transactions* 2018/19 Vol .78 p.31.

**Re-discovering medieval Nantconwy** by Frances Richardson. *Caernarvonshire Historical Society Transactions* 2018/19 Vol.78 p.41.

**Pwllheli Bricks "Does dim plwc yn y Cymro"** by Tom David. *Caernarvonshire Historical Society Transactions* 2018/19 Vol.78 p.62.

**Discovering Old Welsh Houses** by Margaret Dunn. *Cambrian Archaeological Association* website February 2021. The Cambrian Archaeological Association is 175 years old!

