



DARGANFOD HEN DAI CYMREIG DISCOVERING OLD WELSH HOUSES



NODDWYR/PATRONS

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

Dathlu Treftadaeth Cymru drwy astudio tai traddodiadol a bywydau'r bobl oedd yn byw yn ynddyn nhw.

CYLCHLYTHYR 40 Mawrth 2022

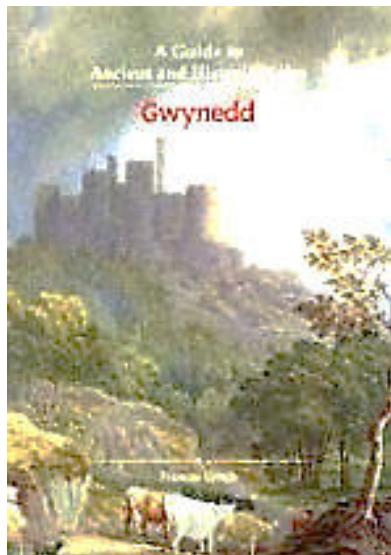
GWEFAN: <http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk> yw prif sianel cyfathrebu'r Grŵp. Ewch i'r wefan i weld ein llyfrgell sy'n tyfu a nodweddion eraill. Fel arfer mae'n cynnwys manylion digwyddiadau diweddar a digwyddiadau sydd ar y gweill. Cyhoeddir fersiynau Cymraeg a Saesneg y Cylchlythyr hwn ar wahân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

FROM THE CHAIR by Richard Cuthbertson

Slowly the evenings seem lighter and we all begin to think, with Chaucer, of going on pilgrimages. A brave band turned up on a very cold miserable day to look round Ty Du in Llanberis earlier in January. The day could hardly have been worse weatherwise, but they all showed extreme fortitude. This set me thinking about how fortunate we are in the group to have such enthusiasm. How fortunate too, to have so many members with specialist knowledge in our areas of interest. If we are to go on pilgrimages we need a good guide and none could surpass the wonderful books by one

of our members, Frances Lynch, where in her *A Guide to Ancient and Historic Wales. Gwynedd (and Powys)* published by CADW 1995, she effortlessly takes us round the built heritage of Gwynedd and Powys. Each site is chosen with care to be representative of its type (sometimes uniquely so!). Excellent information is given as to where you can park your car and how far you have to walk to reach each

destination. There are more than 300 choices, which would keep the most enthusiastic of our members going for years and years. If you have not got copies I think your local libraries will be able to find them for you. They are a treasure chest of interesting outings, invaluable in these days of Covid, when it may be sometime before we can return to our much loved excursions. Thank you all so much for your support.



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

NEWSLETTER 40 March 2022

OUR WEBSITE <http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.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

NEWS UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY by Margaret Dunn

We hope that you enjoyed your Christmas, even if it may not have included all your usual activities. I had a different but contented time self-isolating prior to a successful operation, while my husband briefly visited the family. Here we are already in February and we wish everyone a peaceful, healthy and active 2022. Maybe you will soon be busy searching the newly released 1921 census returns! It has been good to hear of several face-to-face branch meetings, carefully organised to keep us all safe. The visit to Ty Du, Llanberis, was very well attended despite the bad weather. Probably many of us are looking forward to meeting up again, at least outside for the time being. Hopefully opportunities will increase as the weather improves and the virus declines.

It has been so good to see so many members at our monthly talks. We are very grateful to all those who have given such excellent Zoom presentations. A huge thank you! The varied topics have proved to be very popular, with around 50 at the talk by Dr Martin Bridge, 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. We also hear of a number who are continuing with their house history / community history research at home and in Record Offices. Do let your branch secretaries know if you need ideas or help to choose what to do next.

DOWH Website We were delighted that the new DOWH website was launched in early December 2021. We do hope that you are enjoying using it. It should be both clearer and easier for members and others to find out about who we are, what we do, what we offer and how to access our re-catalogued reports. We owe all the website users' group our thanks, and especially to Peter for the huge amount of work he has undertaken. We are currently reviewing the layout of individual reports and adding additional reports as

we receive them. Please do let us know if you are aware of any reports not currently on the website, especially any with which you have been involved.

The **DOWH Houses Database Project** continues to collate and check the records on over 1,000 houses so far visited, and, as a searchable database, will aid branches and the whole group prioritize future research and activities after the pandemic. There have been some unavoidable delays but this phase of the database should soon be completed. In the next phase all branch secretaries and their branch members will be invited to use their local knowledge to check the entries relating to their unitary authority. A brief guide will be circulated before that phase starts.

The **DOWH's Parishes Project** continues to develop at varying rates in the branches 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 in 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 after it has been checked by branches.

House History Research also continues wherever members and branch secretaries select houses. The DOWH **Executive** meet each month (except August) to guide the current developments and the **Trustees** meet every 3 months; do let your branch secretaries have your ideas and comments to pass on to them. The next Trustees' Zoom meeting will be on 2nd March 2022. Details of the **June AGM and Annual Lecture** will be circulated when the details have been confirmed.

Please remember to renew your **Membership** by 1st April. (Individual membership £15, Joint membership £20). Fiona Gale and branch secretaries have been contacting anyone with incorrect or overdue subscriptions, or with Gift Aid queries; Fiona can be contacted by email at membership@discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk or by phone on 07718625606 or 01824 520231.

Zoom lecture series (all lectures at 7 pm) Details supplied by Martin Cherry

Wednesday 9 February 'North Wales houses and their occupants in the hearth tax of 1662-1674' **Elizabeth Parkinson**, Senior research fellow at The Centre for Hearth Tax Research at Roehampton and an affiliate at the Cambridge group for the History of Population and Social Structure. Author of *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax Assessment of 1670*, South Wales Record Society (1994).

Tax records may be repetitive but not necessarily tedious. Dr Parkinson has studied the hearth tax records for well over twenty years across many of the counties in England and Wales. She will explain in her February talk how best to understand the documents having first located the most legible. Using several examples of old Welsh houses, she will show how teasing out details from the tax records can add immeasurably to the study of a house and its occupants.

Wednesday 23 February 2022 'The Homes of our Ancestors 50,000,000 years ago to 1400 AD' **Richard Cuthbertson**, DOWH Chairman

A bit of a tongue in cheek overview for your edification and entertainment!

Wednesday 9 March 'Bees and bee keeping before the modern hive (1851)' **John Townsend**, a DOWH trustee and keen beekeeper'.

John will be talking about honey-bees and bee-keeping from the post-medieval period up to 1851 when the beehive as we understand it today was invented. He will cover the importance of bee products (wax, honey and mead) as well as the physical signs of bee-keeping that can still be seen in various structures on farms and in gardens. Two further lectures will follow, so keep these dates in your diary as well. Fuller details nearer the time.

Wednesday 6 April 'Framing and the mortice and tenon: how to think like a carpenter' **Andy Hyde**, Member of DOWH and the VAG, furniture maker and carpenter.

Andy will look at the long history of the mortice and tenon and its critical role in the development of timber framing and will raise interesting questions about why we develop traditions as we do.



Henllys from Caerwys main street

Wednesday 11 May 'Introducing Henllys, Caerwys: a Jacobean court house' **Sarah Maitland-Jones**, DOWH member and owner of Henllys.

Legend has it that in 1523 and 1567 this ancient structure was host to the Tudor Eisteddfodau granted by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Sarah proposes a better candidate for these events but, in a 'virtual tour' of the house, will explain how it has been re-purposed over the centuries and may contain some surprisingly early fabric. She will welcome input from the audience!

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

CONWY BRANCH

Conwy Group were well represented at the Tŷ Du visit in Llanberis. Mr D. & Mrs G. Jones, Mr & Mrs R. Brotherton, Mr Richard Jones and Mrs A. Morgan. Despite the exceptionally windy, wet weather we all enjoyed the visit. Thanks to Richard Cuthbertson for the visit to a house with an interesting history, and the tea and coffee! Gill Jones and Jane Parry-Evans have also been working on house and family histories.



Granite memorial plaque to Conwy Scouts

New memorial to Conwy scouts who died in World War 2
by Ray Castle, Group Scout Leader of 1st Conwy Scouts and Rowen Scout Camp Warden

In 2020 DOWHG paid (*from the Conwy Tesco Community Projects grant fund*) for the publication of a booklet giving information about Conwy scouts (established in 1910) who died in World War 2. A local funeral director, Phil Lambert (an ex-Conwy Scout) has donated a granite plaque listing the scouts names. This plaque has been installed in a new wall at Rowen Scout Camp in the Conwy Valley. On 14th November 2021 (Remembrance Sunday) a ceremony was held at the camp to commemorate those fallen scouts and a wreath was laid by the plaque. There were several speakers, a prayer and one minute's silence. The silence was ended by

piper Danny Blair, a 1st Conwy Young Leader, playing the lament "Flowers of the Forest". This piece was composed in 1513 after the Battle of Flodden Field in which the Scots were defeated by English forces. The booklet details can be seen on the website "History Points". The lament played by Danny can be seen on YouTube by searching "Conwy Scouts War Memorial Nov 2021".

Inventories of Personal Effects Part 2 by Gill Jones

See Newsletter no. 21 June 2017 for Part 1

Some of the most important items included in inventories were the beds and bedding. They represented a high proportion of the total value of all the household goods, which is why they were passed down from generation to generation. Bedrooms were often used as places to receive visitors, and so a house owner had an opportunity to show off his wealth by having very expensive beds and bedding.

The early beds had fairly simple frames. A '**tester**' or canopy was added as early as the 13th century, but this was not initially attached to the bed but suspended from the ceiling. Later, half testers began to appear. They were attached to a high headboard and had curtains attached to them. Some inventories include an item called a '**hilling**'. This term seems to have been used for a variety of different types of covers. Listed as follows - '**testour, three curteyns and the hylling**' - it suggests a type of canopy or roof-like structure over the bed. In other contexts, it may have been a coverlet or a cover for a table.

The more elaborate four poster beds arrived from Europe in about the 15th century. They were usually made of oak and were often heavily carved and hung with expensive



Half tester

fabrics which kept out draughts and provided some privacy. The hangings were described as '**curtains**' and '**valances**'. The beds were often raised high off the floor, sometimes so high that it was necessary for step stools to be needed in order to climb onto them. This type of bed frame was generally known as a '**standing bedstead**'. It often had a '**truckle**' or '**trundle bed**' underneath which could be rolled out for a servant or sometimes a child to sleep on.



A modern version of a standing bedstead and truckle bed

This painting of the 'bed of the Tudors' was sketched by Edward Pugh of Ruthin whilst on his walking tour of North Wales at the end of the 18th century. He discovered the bed at a nearby house. It had apparently been purchased from a sale at Plas Penmynydd. He wrote in his journal,

"Mr Williams has now in his house a valuable relic, which, until lately, was not known to have been such; it is an ancient bed of the Tudors, made of oak, nearly square, and very low, being only about thirteen inches from the floor; it has four pillars, beautifully turned. The design of the ornamental headpiece is very elegant, and curiously carved; in the centre are the coat of arms and supporters; on each side of which are four Egyptian Termini, supporting the architrave. He had bought it for nine shillings, not supposing, from its odd and unfashionable appearance, that it was so valuable an acquisition. The bed is a little injured by worms, but when the age is considered, it must appear to have been well preserved. It has upon it in some places small marks of gold leaf; whence we may suppose it was gilt in better days."

Making a bed

A bed was made up of several layers. Ropes or woven straps

were strung across the bed frame through holes in the side rails and the footboard and headboard to support the mattress. The first layer was an '**under mattress**' or '**pallet**' which was firmly stuffed with wool, straw or chaff. The bags which formed the outer cover of the mattresses were known as '**ticks**'. These were made of closely woven material so that the filling could not escape. Next came the '**featherbed**', which would have been expensive and was also well stuffed. They were often valued according to their weight. In the 1740 inventory of Thomas Parry of Rhos Fynach in Llandrillo yn Rhos, there is mention of several sets of '**featherbeds and boulsters**' which together weighed 90lbs, 80lbs, 72lbs and two of 65lbs, and three pillows weighing 7lbs. In total they were valued at £6 5s 3d. The inventory also mentions '**bedsticks**'. These were short posts



Plas Penmynydd - the bed of the Tudors

which slotted into the side frames of a bed in order to keep the mattresses and bedding in place. Plas Mawr in Conwy has some examples.

Less wealthy people would probably have had a '**flock bed**' stuffed with bits and pieces of wool, but even those were valuable enough to be mentioned in wills. Next came a '**bolster**' which stretched the whole width of the bed and was covered by a '**head sheet**'. These were gradually replaced by pillows with covers known as '**pillow beres**'. The sheets came next and could be of linen, silk or cotton. Some of the best ones were made of Rennes linen from Brittany. In the Inventory of Henry Williams' of Maes y Castell, dated 1658/9, there were ten '**Holland pillow beares**', five '**flaxen pillowbeares**'; nine paire of fine '**sheetes**'; fifteen paires of '**Hampton sheetes**'. These were also all of very fine quality. Henry Williams was descended from the Penrhyn and Cochwillan families. He led a very profligate lifestyle and eventually had to sell most of his possessions, including Cochwillan Hall.

Warmth came from the following layers – blankets which could be made of wool, '**fustian**' (a coarse fabric made from

a mixture of cotton and linen); '**quilts or counterpanes'** (stuffed with down, flock or feathers). The finest ones were made of two layers of silk with a down filling quilted together with a running stitch. The top surfaces would also be decorated with embroidery or appliquéd designs. Less affluent households were more likely to have had cotton counterpanes with flock fillings and be simply decorated with quilted patterns. Finally, the uppermost bed layer was a '**coverlet**' (bedspread) which being on show, was also often very richly decorated.

Servants or poorer people generally slept on '**pallets**' (straw filled mattresses). Their blankets or '**caddows**' would have been made of coarse wool. Henry Williams' inventory also includes some of these less expensive fabrics - a '**red cadowe**', a '**green cadowe**' and one '**coarse cadowe**', and '**searen fustian pillowes**' (waxed fabric). In the porch chamber, where a servant appears to have slept, there was '**one truckle bedstead, one flockebed, one boulster, one cadowe, one blankett, one little table, one hilling**' (table covering) valued at £1 10s.

ANGLESEY BRANCH

Our Tŷ Du visit by Jan Lewis, John Davies and their dog *Bobadog*

It was a dark and stormy day when John and I attended the society visit to Tŷ Du, which happened in the pouring rain and a howling gale! It might have been a terrible experience, but after doing so few trips out during the Covid pandemonium, it was actually a delightful experience - lovely to meet up with members (even if we all looked like drowned rats), and interesting to see the house in real life (much better for me than pictures). Must have been an idyllic spot before the factory arrived! Thanks to Richard for providing the follow-up visit and further talk about the history and plans for the future; also for his kindness and forethought in bringing drink-making facilities, plus keeping his van warm for anyone needing shelter. It was a treat for us afterwards to leave our sodden anoraks in the car, and retire for sustenance to Pete's Eats. We look forward to more hysterical historical excursions in the coming year.

CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

Hafodydd Brithion - one name, two farmhouses

by Margaret Dunn

In DOWH Newsletter 39, December 2021, (page 6) John Townsend's article titled "A Merioneth Oddity - or is it?" concluded by requesting information of any other farmhouses where the house name had been moved to another house on the same land. I have no idea how rare this is, or who else knows of other examples, but it appears



Hafodydd Brithion today

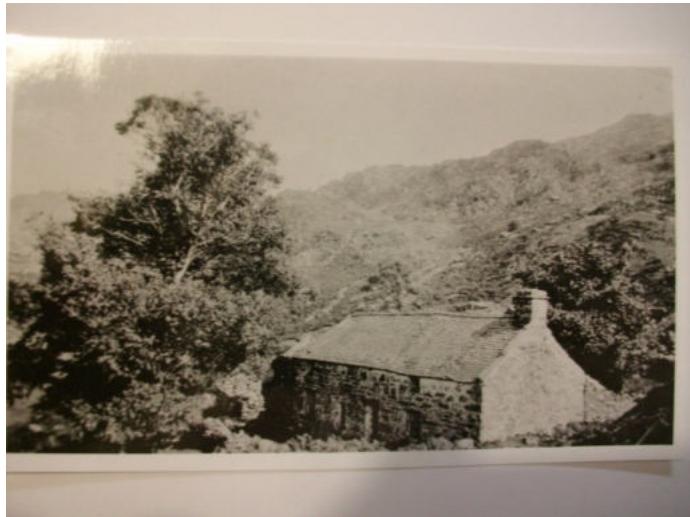
to have also occurred at *Hafodydd Brithion*, formerly in Nanmor township, also originally in Merioneth. However, in 1895 Nanmor became part of Beddgelert parish, Caernarfonshire, and is now within Gwynedd.

Hafodydd Brithion is a large upland farm and sheepwalk stretching from the watershed running from Cnicht towards Moel Siabod along the S.E. side of the Nantgwynant valley, reaching downhill as far as the upper boundary of the former monastic lands granted by Llewelyn to the Cistercian house of Aberconwy founded circa 1189 and which became the Caernarfonshire / Merionethshire county boundary. The old house is situated at NGR SH 641494, approx. 700 ft (250m) above sea level, lying along the slope at the end of a partly engineered unsurfaced track running N.E. from the ancient track running from the former Glaslyn estuary of Traeth Mawr near Aberglaslyn, towards Pen y Gwryd, Llanberis and also to the Conwy valley. Although thought very remote now, it was originally close to both the medieval route described above, and also another ancient track crossing the *col* between Nantgwynant and Dolwyddelan, with its castle and routes south and eastward towards London.



Old Hafodydd Brithion today

The old *Hafodydd Brithion* was a stone-built storeyed farmhouse. It is first recorded in the 1623 Ardudwy Crown Rental which states “Gr’ ap Re’ pro Hafodydd Brithion 0s 3d”. A Gr’ ap Re’ also paid rent of 1s 0d [5 p] on Sygun Uchaf in the Nanmor township. That house, near Beddgelert, may be that now called Sygyn Fawr, as the earlier ownership is linked. A Gruffydd ap Robert’s son Robert, of Sygyn, was living in 1626. (J.E.Griffith, *Pedigrees of Anglesey and Caernarvonshire Families*, 1911, p.220).



Old Hafodydd Brithion circa 1920

Hafodydd Brithion was part of a large sheepwalk of over 1,000 acres which, under the pressures of increasing population later became divided into two separate farms, *Hafodydd Brithion* (E. ‘summer dwellings in the speckled uplands’) and Llwyn yr Hwch (E. ‘grove of the sow [female pig]’). (C. A. Gresham, Nanmor Deudraeth, *Journal of Merioneth Historical and Record Society* 1978, vii. pp. 97-121.) By the eighteenth century the tenants had had generations of relations farming various farms over the watershed in Dolwyddelan. Today stock is still gathered, sorted and the Dolwyddelan sheep returned to the adjacent Dolwyddelan farms over the mountain ridge. The (in)famous William Jones (1782-1863), a *Hafodydd Brithion* shepherd lad, gained several occupational opportunities with local gentry families, eventually married an heiress at Bath, and as William Lloyd Caldecot Esq. became the sheriff of Caernarfon in 1822 - 23.

Early in the 1800s, *Hafodydd Brithion* and its neighbour, Llwyn yr Hwch were still part of the small estate of the Roberts family of Sygyn Fawr, and by 1828 both had been left to a relation, David White Griffith of Bodegroses, Pwllheli. In 1853, to pay off his debts, he sold them to Henry McKellar who died in 1862 leaving the Sygyn estate to his wife. On her death in 1886 the estate passed to her son in law Samuel Wix who in 1889 sold *Hafodydd Brithion* to I. O. I. Priestley, the owner of another local estate. By 1909 he was planning to repair the old farmhouse and outbuildings. However, the Vawdrey family of Plas Gwynant bought

Hafodydd Brithion which adjoined their small estate and, around 1911 decided to build a modern house on a new site. Soon a new farmhouse (approx. NGR SH 640492), with inside toilet facilities, was built about a quarter of a mile below the old house at approx. 600 ft (180m) above sea level, where there is a more level patch of land, close to the same rough track up to the old house and the new house took over the name.

The last people to live in the old “Fodydd” were Joseph and Maggie Richards and they had left by 1922 to move to another farm. The old house was then used as an outbuilding. It was a derelict ruin when I first saw it in the 1950s. The new farmhouse is storeyed and has detached farm outbuildings, all built on much more level ground than that up at the old house. A small stone-walled reservoir was built nearby but has not been in use for the last 60 years. In the 1950s the new house and farm were said to be last place where transhumance was practiced in Wales, with the family moving down in winter to their lowland holding and their children spending one term in one school and two in another about fifteen miles away. It is still home to the same farming family who have been there almost since the second house was built, with part of the family living on a lowland holding and travelling up to care for the stock. I first came to a neighbouring cottage on an adjacent small holding in 1947 for the long school holidays and from then on explored all over the mountainsides, but did not then appreciate the importance of the semi-ruinous nearby farms and cottages.



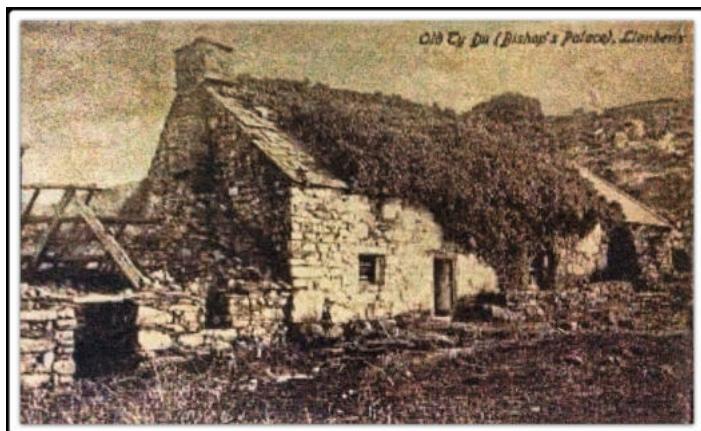
Old Hafodydd Brithion unroofed circa 1961



There and back again by Peter Masters

On the morning of January 6th 2022 a dedicated group of people travelled Hobbit-like from the Shires, on an incredible journey to the mountains of Snowdonia where, nestling amongst the moss-covered boulders on the hillside high above Llanberis, are the remains of the dwelling of Bishop Goodman, where he resided during the dark times of the interregnum in the 1650s.

The fascinating story of this good man was recounted to us by Richard Cuthbertson in a recent 'Zoom' talk. So we were eager to see this humble but important house. Although now a ruin, it has been saved from dereliction by Richard, its current owner, who has made the building secure and rescued many important parts of this historic house, to whit some roof timbers, several windows and other architectural features, with a plan to restore the



house to its former glory.

Thank you all for travelling halfway across north Wales in the most appalling weather, to walk ¼ mile to stand in a derelict building in the pouring rain and a howling gale, drink tea and pay £2 for the privilege. If you did not make it, you missed a great experience which must be the best value for money had this year (so far). Thank you Richard for taking the time to talk to us about this important historical house.

I have received the following appreciative comments on Richard's talk.

"As I live fairly near Llanberis I made a visit to the Ty Du site the week before the scheduled visit. I walked up from Llanberis on a dry sunny day and got a feeling of what it was like in Bishop Goodman's day. It has many interesting features notably in having had an upper storey with fireplace, quite unusual in such a poor area. One has to wonder why the Bishop chose to live there instead of in Ruthin where many of his family lived and where his endowment is based. Maybe it was the remoteness which appealed at that point in his life. What were also very fascinating to me were the remains of the 2 rooms adjoining the gable end where in the early 20th century sphagnum moss, collected on the adjoining hills, was stored before being sold for medicinal purposes. A fascinating site still with many secrets, I feel, and well worth a visit but preferably in good weather." Audrey

"A great day, (many thanks to Richard) and a meal afterwards at Pete's Eats was greatly enjoyed." Jan

"Strangely despite the rain, we enjoyed the whole experience." Maggs

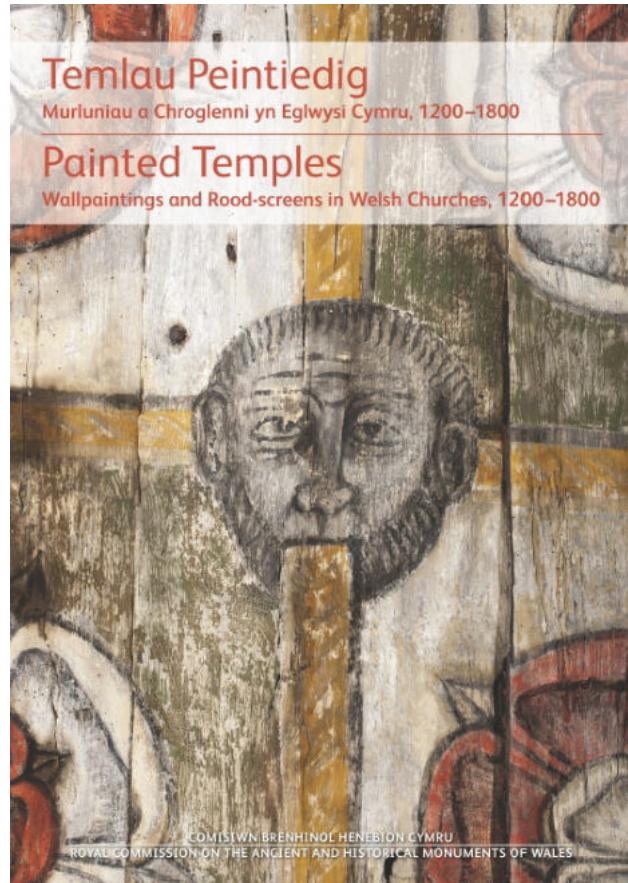
MERIONETH BRANCH

A publishing milestone in the history of Welsh Churches by Martin Cherry

(Review of *Painted Temples. Wallpaintings and Rood-screens in Welsh Churches, 1200-1800/Temlau Peintiedig. Murluniau a Chroglenni yn Eglwysi Cymru, 1200-1800* by Richard Suggett with Anthony J. Parkinson and Jane Rutherford, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales/Comisiwm Brenhinol Henebion Cymru Aberystwyth, 2021. 366 pp. 250 figures, mostly in colour. ISBN 978-1-871184-58-7. £29.95. Written in both Welsh and English).

Historic churches have been particularly vulnerable during the last two years of pandemic, closed to the public for much of the time, impacting on income and maintenance, exacerbating a trend of closures, re-orderings and other rationalisations. This fabulous new book is both a celebration of an extraordinary artistic legacy and a plea to double our efforts in securing its long-term future.

By any measure, *Painted Temples: Wallpaintings and Rood-screens in Welsh Churches, 1200-1800* is a publishing triumph and remarkably good value for money (especially if, as a DOWH member, you order it before the end of March - see note below). Richard Suggett, the principal author, has distilled more than one hundred years of research, much of it secreted away in the records of the Royal Commission, into a lively and highly readable text. This is adorned with over 200 wonderful colour photographs, mostly taken by Iain Wright. Two exciting chapters (by Jane Rutherford and Anthony Parkinson respectively) tell two remarkable stories, one about the discovery (in 2008) and conservation of the internationally



important painting scheme at Llanfarcan (Glamorgan) that includes the exquisite St George (pictured), and the other about the removal of the threatened church of St Teilo (Llandeilo Talybont, Glamorgan) - wall paintings included - to St Fagan's National Museum of History, where its vibrant colours astonish visitors used to the pale monochrome that characterises most churches today.

The story starts in earnest with the great rebuilding of churches in Wales during the 'long fifteenth century' - around 1420-1530, not coincidentally a period of frenetic house building, too - when aisles, chapels, towers and bellcotes were added, bells hung, naves and chancels re-roofed, walls painted, rood screens erected and adorned and the whole interior lit by stained glass and studded, jewel-like, with painted effigies and candelabra, and lit with

scores of candles. The interiors of all of the 900 medieval churches that once existed in Wales would have been brightly painted inside, even the most modest, and in many cases rendered externally, too - the land of the poets 'sparkling' with white churches. Chapters 2 and 3 look in detail (with abundant illustrations) at rood screens (there is evidence for these at about 300 churches) and wall-paintings. The great age of church wallpainting was cut short at the Reformation when the iconoclasts wreaked havoc - not mindlessly (as Rowan Williams reminds us in the foreword to this book) but as a necessary part of

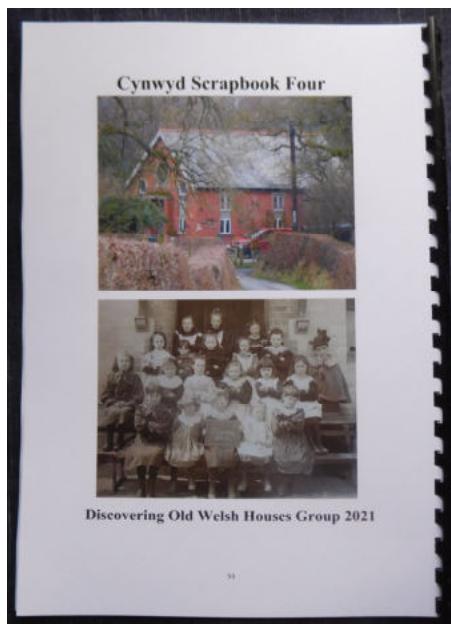


The figure of St George, St Cadoc's Church Llancarfan, uncovered by Jane Rutherford and Anne Ballantyne in 2008. This sophisticated and beautiful fifteenth-century wall painting was possibly paid for by Sir Thomas Bawdrip, Richard III's constable of Newport, as part of an extensive scheme, most likely part-financed by pilgrims passing through. © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW)

combatting superstition and renegotiating symbolic priorities. Most books on the subject stop here, but *Painted Temples* takes us further in looking at the adornment of seventeenth and eighteenth-century churches and the rediscovery of medieval art and the delight in colour in the early nineteenth century.

This book is a delight; very big and heavy (it's best read on a lectern!) it literally sparkles with pictures. It graphically conveys the richness and vibrancy of Welsh church art over six hundred years. **DOWH please note** There is a 10% discount for DOWH members until 1 April. To order visit the Commission's shop at <https://shop.raahmw.gov.uk> and use the code DOWH10 at the checkout. This will automatically reduce the price to £26.96 - cheaper than Amazon! It's

worth remembering that if you join the Friends of the Commission, which is free to do, you get 10% off all books all the time as well as regular news updates and invitations to our events.



DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

Cynwyd Scrapbook Four by Jenny Lees

Published in November 2021, this is the fourth in the series presenting our evidence-based DOWH research in a form accessible and enjoyable for the general public. With 51 pages and over 55 original photographs, ranging from the 1890s to the present day, this fourth installment also covers areas of Merionethshire, Denbighshire and Conwy extending well beyond Cynwyd itself - readers of previous DOWH publications having contacted us from as far away as New Zealand with fascinating new information on ancestors connected with our local area! Article titles from the book include



Sunday School outing at Tre'r ddôl

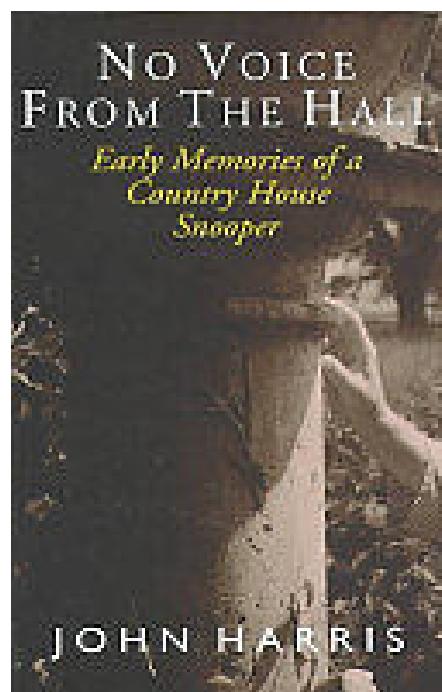
- . Henfaes isaf - another cruck framed hall house for Llangar!
- . From Cynwyd to Cwm Cynllwyd - and beyond
- . Hidden Histories of Cwm Main
- . Once upon a time at Plas yn ddôl
- . Tithe Martyrs and a Poet - from Llangwm to Cynwyd
- . From Gwerclas to New Zealand- a Williams family diaspora
- . To the far reaches of the parish - from Cynwyd to Ddwyryd
- . Tre'r ddôl – the community, its chapel and its school
- . Plas yn ddôl gan Megan Hughes

The book is on sale in aid of DOWH for £5, available from Jenny Lees at leesjenny@gmail.com (1st class postage £2.39 for one book or £3.35 for up to about 5 books; 2nd class postage £1.99 per book or £2.90 for up to 5 copies).

FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

Branch report to March 2022 by Wally and Margaret Barr

Our next branch get-together was to be in January 2022 for a late Christmas lunch and tour of St. Asaph cathedral; however, we sadly had to put this plan on hold because of government guidance in the New Year. New guidance suggests that now things are starting to look up (fingers crossed!) so we are hoping to get some meetings arranged where we can all enjoy each other's company and the fun of having stimulating speakers once again. This will start with a talk by Janice Dale, DOWH representative for the Denbighshire branch, in the springtime. Janice will be telling us about the Fifth Dimension - all will be revealed in due course!



Disappearing Stately Homes - review of John Harris, *No Voice from the Hall* by Margaret Barr

I have just finished reading a book my brother sent me for Christmas. It is '*No Voice from the Hall - Early Memories of a Country House Snooper*' by John Harris.¹ The houses are mainly found in Middlesex, Kent, Hampshire, Nottinghamshire, Buckinghamshire, and Lincolnshire. There is one in Shropshire, and he did manage to gain access to Erddig. In many ways it makes for rather depressing reading to hear of all the wonderful houses that have been lost, but I feel that I have learnt things too and thought I would share these with you.

Harris mostly visited these stately homes in the 1950s and he attempts to explain why matters had come to such a sad state at that point in time in particular. From the 1870s onwards Britain was affected by the great agricultural depression. Many landowners were in debt and the money from agricultural rents failed to cover the interest. Many big houses started to sell their contents.

During the First World War death duties were imposed which hit the landed gentry badly as they often had more than one estate. Houses began to be demolished. Also families were affected as so many sons had been killed in the conflict.

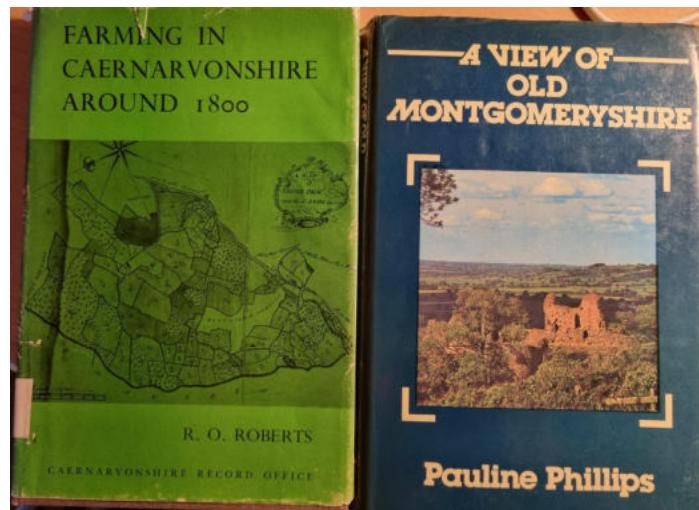
During the interwar period landowners struggled to keep their estates, but the Second World War was the final straw for many. The Dunkirk spirit kicked in and many houses were offered to the military or for hospital use, and other buildings were actually requisitioned. During the war the houses were not well maintained and suffered badly from having multiple occupants for the war effort. Harris makes an interesting point about Erddig not being requisitioned as, without electricity and with a poor water system, it was described as uninhabitable - although the Yorkes still lived there!

The result of all these factors was a huge wave of house sales and demolitions in the 1950s and 1960s. As Harris states "in 1955, one house was demolished every two and a half days."

John Harris's book is very readable although controversial in some of the methods he often used to gain access to the houses. I was also interested to find out that he is very critical of Pevsner (of '*The Buildings of England*' fame). Here is a typical cutting comment about a visit that saw Harris and Nikolaus Pevsner visiting the same house "When Nikolaus's '*Norfolk*' came out in 1962, I saw that he had managed to get most of the facts wrong. So much for clipboards."

I feel that I ought to finish with some degree of positivity. Each chapter is just a couple of pages about a

house with photographs taken in the 1950s. As I read, I have been checking online to see where the houses are on maps and have come across details of the fate of the buildings. But there is some comfort here. Mostly it states that the house was demolished at such and such a date, but at other times it says that the buildings have now been converted into apartments, hotels or even are run by the National Trust. Also I came across several photographs of the buildings now, where the houses look well preserved and cared for - in a much better state than when John Harris visited.



BOOK REVIEWS

From my bookshelf by Janice Dale, Denbighshire Group

With the miserable weather over Christmas I took the opportunity to read a trio of books, two of which have been sitting on my bookshelf for some time. Although not directly relating to Denbighshire or my own parish of Llandrillo, they provide a good background to what else was going on around about. *A View of Old Montgomery*, turned out to be one of the best reads about the general history of Wales I have come across, and at £2.50 was a good buy.

Farming in Caernarvonshire around 1800, turned out to be a survey of part of the Vaynol estate. An enlightening read - anyone looking for properties on the estate should dip into it - it lists many of the holdings leased out by name, lessee and undertenants, the state of the land, and most surprisingly for me was the number of houses with mud walls and thatch and in terrible condition. Many of these houses would have had to be built in subsequent years.

I finally dipped into *The Itinerary in Wales* of John Leland in or about the years 1536-1539, and down-loaded from <https://ia600907.us.archive.org/26/items/itineraryinwales00lelauoft/itineraryinwales00lelauoft.pdf>

¹ Harris J. (2000) *No Voice From The Hall; Early Memories of a Country House Snooper*, John Murray, London.

Not an easy read, but I was thrilled to find this mention of Hendwr

*"Dernion commote the beste woddid of al Merionithshir.
It hath yn the greate valley by De River good corne.
It bredith good horsis
Henetour, i.e. vetus turris. In this commote ys the ruin of
Toure Kenuyn² [nomen viri] now caullid Yr hendwr*

L. Vetus turris means *old tower* which corresponds with W. Hen Twr, i.e. Hendwr. Nomen viri means *man's name*. The name is unfamiliar to me in the context of Hendwr [which was one of the main houses of the Barons of Edeyrnion].

STOP PRESS

We are much saddened to learn of the sudden death of Jenny Carpenter, an active member of our Merioneth branch until she moved to South Wales. We offer our condolences to her daughter Eleanor Carpenter, a Conwy branch member, and to all her family.



Martin Cherry's article for the Merioneth branch

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Martin has supplied this pleasing additional photo of All Saints Church, Llangar, Merioneth which by an oversight was omitted from its proper place in his narrative. He remarks 'quite domestic in scale and appearance. Richard Suggett draws interesting analogies between churches and houses - here, as with medieval houses, the upper end

(chancel) is built into the bank; the bell-ringing (working) area (to the left) corresponds to the lower (service) end of the house, the porch to the cross passage, the large window illuminates the rood screen (as with the screen at the dais end of the hall), dividing the building into communal space (nave/hall) and private or sacred space (chancel/upper end). The rood screen no longer survives at Llangar, but there are remains of medieval wall paintings here.

