



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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Celebrating Welsh Heritage through the study of traditional
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CYLCHLYTHYR 42 Medi 2022

NEWSLETTER 42 September 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

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

FROM THE CHAIR by Janice Dale

A new chair - well perhaps not so new, but this is where I will be, as your new chairman for future zoom meetings and talks, consigned to my garden shed/office as I outgrew the office in the house with 30 years of local history of Llandrillo, and an ever expanding library of reference books.

Following our move to Wales, and with no internet resources available at that time, I became immersed in the history of my adopted village - a project I guess I will never truly finish, and I never dreamt that after hearing Margaret Dunn's talk some ten years ago, and thought how well it fitted in with my interests, I would end up leading the group

I would like to thank Richard Cuthbertson for all his hard work and leadership during his time in office. My fellow trustees are an extremely knowledgeable and dedicated bunch and with their help I hope we can thrive in the foreseeable future.

I still go out to work, as I have the best job in the world working for Lord Newborough at Rhug, but I would like to say to all our members that if there is anything I can help you with, do not hesitate to contact - I might not be the quickest at responding because of work, but I will do my utmost to reply and help in any way I can.

NEWS UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY by Margaret Dunn

Thank you to Richard and Welcome to Janice



Richard Cuthbertson

As most of you will already know, Richard Cuthbertson has decided to step down from his role as Chair of Discovering Old Welsh Houses in September, when Janice Dale will take over. I have known Richard for over forty years, sharing many joint interests in Welsh history, archaeology and especially old buildings. His enthusiasm is catching and his knowledge seems boundless. Richard was involved right at the start of the journey over twenty years ago, which has grown into the Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group. His expertise in building construction has been of great benefit to us and to the various householders seeking guidance in maintaining and restoring their ancient homes. He seems to have been involved at one time or another with most heritage organizations in Wales and has always given wise suggestions regarding whom to contact or what approach to take as DOWH considered new ideas. Richard has always freely and willingly shared his expertise - and his Plas Penmynydd home - opening it to

members of the Group and to the public more widely on many occasions. We will miss him in his role as a wise and supportive chair, but understand his decision to step down, to make more time to enjoy his other interests. As DOWH explores new ideas and approaches as we move into the future, we are delighted that he will remain as an active and wise DOWH trustee. To Richard we say a huge THANK YOU for all you have done with and for DOWH over so many years.

Most of you will know Janice, who is also a longstanding and very active member of the group, having been secretary of the Denbighshire branch since it was set up. She works part-time in a senior role on the Rhug estate and enjoys a wide network of contacts and much valuable expertise. We warmly welcome her to the post of Chair.

RICHARD SUGGETT will be very well known to you as a long-term member of DOWH from its early years and, as a senior investigator with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monument of Wales, a very active partner in our work, not least as co-author of *Discovering the Historic Houses of Snowdonia*. Richard has recently retired from the Commission where he made an enormous contribution to the understanding of historic buildings (both houses and churches) and the social history that lies behind them. We wish him the very best for the future - and are heartened to know that he intends to remain active in the field and we hope as a DOWH member.



Richard Suggett

OBITUARIES We are sad to report the passing of three members, DAVID DIXON, PATRICK BILLINGTON and JENNY CARPENTER and we send our condolences to their families and friends. Obituaries appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

BRANCH EVENTS It has been great to hear that most branches have been able to arrange one or more events since Easter 2022 and these are noted later in this newsletter, along with branch programmes for the coming autumn. We hope that members are now feeling more confident about participating in meetings and events. Members may book to attend events held in any branch area.

EVENT for ALL Following the June AGM and annual Lecture on the Restoration of Ruthin Castle by Fiona Gale, many thanks are due to Fiona for leading a much appreciated July guided walk around parts of old Ruthin.

The **DOWH WEBSITE** continues to grow as members complete additional House Histories. Almost 30 Tree-Ring Dating reports from the early years of DOWH have been collated by Martin Cherry and recently added to the website under Caernarfonshire and Merioneth. Do pass any completed reports to your branch secretary for forwarding to Peter Masters and adding to the website.

PARISHES PROJECT We are still looking for someone to help coordinate this project. Please contact the secretary or John Townsend if you would like further details about taking on this role for two years. Branches are developing their detailed parish by parish search for pre mid1700s houses in various ways. Some are collating on line documentary evidence only; others include visits to ascertain whether the property is still inhabited and take external photographs; others are concentrating on one parish at a time and noting which might be suitable for Tree Ring Dating or House History research. It is all very useful and should assist selection of priorities when Tree Ring Dating / Building Recording may be again undertaken. Thank you to all involved in this important project.

The **DOWH HOUSES DATABASE** continues to add information as it is received from Branch secretaries whenever fresh houses are visited. It is hoped to arrange meetings with branches when Jane Parry-Evans will explain how the database can be used.

DOWH MONTHLY ZOOM TALKS for autumn 2022: Details are included later in this Newsletter. Thank you to Martin Cherry for arranging the programme and to Peter Masters for hosting the meetings.

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING Further details will soon be circulated about a practical training conference organized by VAG and DOWH on 1st and 2nd October based in the Ruthin area. For details contact martincherry@btinternet.com.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DOWH Lecture Series Autumn/Winter 2022

All talks (except 7 December 2022) will be held on the second Wednesday in each month and will all start at 7 p.m. They will be given in English. Reminders and Zoom invites will be sent by email to all members nearer the time. Fuller details about the 2023 programme will appear later in the year. Please note that your microphone will be muted when you enter. Please leave it muted until the end of the talk, when there will be an opportunity for questions. It would also be helpful if you would turn your video off as this helps the quality of the presentation.

Wednesday 12 October 2022

Michael Freeman, Curator, Ceredigion Museums 1991-2012; Honorary Research Fellow at the National Museum of Wales. 'Welsh homes, 1770-1840: tourists descriptions and illustrations'

This talk will look at the nature of the evidence for homes in north Wales recorded by hundreds of tourists and artists during their visits between 1770 and 1840. 'Picturesque' cottages and other buildings might have formed attractive features in the landscape for artists but do their illustrations and written descriptions reflect reality, or did they just conform to a generalised perception of Welsh homes during those decades?

Wednesday 9 November 2022

Dr Frances Richardson, University of Oxford, Department of Continuing Education. 'Shops and shopkeepers in early nineteenth-century Wales'

Frances has been involved with Discovering Old Welsh Houses for many years and contributed a major chapter to *Discovering the Historic Houses of Snowdonia*. Her latest research investigates the number and distribution of shops and shopkeepers in early nineteenth-century Wales. Questions include whether shops were mainly concentrated in market towns or how far they had spread to rural areas, and what goods different types of shop sold. How important were older methods of selling through markets, fairs, chapmen or direct from producers? In addition to the obvious shopkeepers - grocers, drapers, milliners, ironmongers, druggists and general shopkeepers - how many craftsmen and women such as shoemakers, tailors and dressmakers keep shop, and what proportion were owned by women? And why was the proportion of shops per inhabitant lower in Wales than England at this period?

Wednesday 7 December 2020 (NOTE the date)

Andy Hyde, DOWH Member, furniture maker and carpenter. 'How to think like a carpenter'

Andy's talk will look at how carpentry is more than sawing timber and cutting joints. A structure must be conceived before it can be built. Raising a frame is first a mental act before it is a physical one. Thinking like a carpenter is a cultural act.

CAN YOU HELP?

One of our members who writes out her research longhand has recently completed an interesting House History on another Merioneth house and is asking if any member situated anywhere could possibly undertake the typing over the next few months. The author lives near Harlech. If you are interested in knowing more about this project, please contact secretary@discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP

Fiona Gale will be contacting anyone with incorrect or overdue subscription, or with Gift Aid queries; she can be contacted by email at membership@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

CONWY BRANCH

George Owen's Survey of Wales 1602 by Jill Jones

This early, little known survey published in 1823 in *The Gentleman's Magazine* Vol.93 Part 2 p.512 was carried out by George Owen of Henllys (1552-1613), well known Welsh historian and naturalist, author of *Description of Pembrokeshire*. He was educated in law at the Inns of Court in London. During his life he collected antiquarian information about Wales, including its heraldry, genealogy and historical buildings and structures. He notes the following houses in Denbighshire and Flintshire. It would be interesting to compare these names with those in Edward Lhuyd's *Parochialia* from about a century after Owen's time.

Denbighshire

Generosi

Johannes Salisbury,
Richard Trevor, Miles
John Lloyd, Miles
Robert Salisbury
Edward Conway
Edward Thelwall
Richard Leighton
David Holland
Wm. Middleton
William Wynn
Hy. ap. Jevan Lloyd
Thomas ap Howel
Edw. Lloyd
John Edwards
Owen Brereton
Robert Tunbridge
Peter Mytton
Gryff Wynn
Geo. Cure
Richard Parry
Gilbert Gerard
Morgan Broughton
Kinwrig Eyton
Tulk (*Foulk*) Lloyd jun.
Thos. Price
John Wynn Decka
John Puleston
John Puleston
Edw. Eyton
Edward Billet

Mansions

Miles Llywenn (*Lleweni*)
Trevalyn (*Rossett*)
Bodildris (*Llandegla*)
Rûg
Bryneuryn (*Rhos on Sea*)
Plasyward (*Rhewel*)
Marchwiall
Yvardre (*Y Fardre*)
Gwaynynog (*Henllan*)
Lanvair
Soflwyn
Horseley
Llysasey (*Ruthin*)
Chirck
Burras (*Wrexham*)
Caeryvallen (*Ruthin*)
Glaenclwyd (*St.Asaph*)
Y Berth ddw (*Llanrwst*)
Cadwgan (*Esclusham*) Soro
Foysoy (*Tywysog, Henllan*)
Pantyskir
Yscoed (*Holt*)
Eyton (*Wrexham*)
Toxhill (*Foxhall*)
Plasgellin (*Plas Iolyn*)
Royton (*Bangor is y Coed*)
Berse (*nr. Wrexham*)
Llwyn y Knottie (*Wrexham*)
Rywabon
Greysford

uxores

Ursula fil. com. Derby
Catherine d'Robt. Puleston
Margt. Fil. John Salisbury
fil. H.Bagnol, militis
fil. John Puleston, militis
fil. Tydyr ap Robert
fil. Wm.Morton
Helena fil. John Owen (*incorrect - Dorothy d/o Jenkyn Lloyd of Berthllwyd*)
fil. John Conway
f. John Salusbury, Militis
Jane f. et haer Roger ap Howell Rees

Soror Wm.Gerard, Milit.

fil. Salisbury de Canrwst
Edw.Brereton
Blanch fil. Edw.Thelwal
fil. Wm.Almer
fil. Hy.Percy

Anna Conway
fil. William de Caernarvon

Katherine fil. Edw.Wynn ap Howell
fil. Gravener de Eton bote



Memorial to George Owen in Nevern Church

Evan Lloyd Jeffry
Richard Clough

Eglwysvagh
The Green

Margaret fil. Et haeres Morris, Jo. Ap Ellis ...

Flintshire

Thomas Mostyn
Thos. Hanmer, Miles
Roger Puleston
John Conway, Miles
Wm. Hanmer
Piers Mostyn
Thos. Ravenscroft
Edward Morgan
Robert Davids
John Lloyd, Regist.
Wm. Dymoch
Roger Mostyn
John Moseton
Thos. Evans
Peter Pennant
John Conway
George Hope
Robert Salisbury
Wm. Lloyd
Roger Brereton
Wm. Thomas Griffith

Mostyn
Hanmere
Emrall (*Worthenbury*)
Penrythan (*Bodrhydden*)
Fennes (*Bronington*)
Talceray (*Talacre*)
Brecton
Goldgreve (*Golden Grove*)
Gwanney
St.Asaph
Wellington

Bangor
Northoppe

Guven Egran
Broughton
Leude Brooke
Houghton
Howton
Pantylungdy

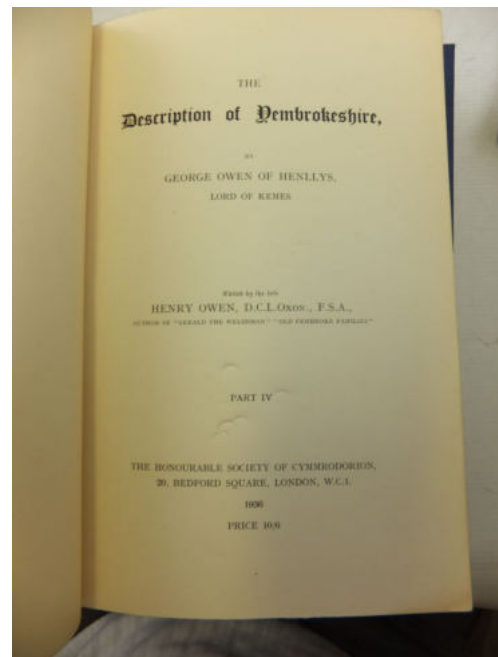
fil. Petri Mostyn
fil. John Salisbury, Milit.
fil. Geo. Bromley, Milit.
fil. Edward Morgan
fil. Dimocke de Wellington
Lowrey Conway
fil. Roger Brereton de Halton
fil. Johannis Davids
soror Thos. Ravenscroft Vannol

soror Wm. Hanmer de Fennes

Jane fil. Jo. Edwards de Chircke

Jana fil. Doct. Elice Price

Maria fil. Jo. Edward de Chircke



Title page of George Owen's *Description of Pembrokeshire*

generosus = noble, *high-born*, *uxor* = wife, *miles, militis* = soldier, *soror* = sister, *filia/ fil.* = daughter

ANGLESEY BRANCH



Cefn Coch visit June 2022

DOWH Anglesey Branch visit to Cefn Coch, Llanfechell on 1st June 2022 by Margaret Dunn

At last we are able to restart our local visits and meetings! Fourteen of us met on a sunny afternoon to see and learn about this very interesting farmhouse. Mrs Heulwen Williams gave us a warm welcome and Terry Williams spoke about many of the intriguing features of the house and its inhabitants, giving us an informative handout. The farm had belonged to the Bodorgan estate and at present relatively few documents are available for research. We enjoyed a sumptuous tea and were shown round inside the house in small groups. Numerous documents about Cefn Coch had been laid out for us to look at. Very little seems to have been recorded about this large house, probably built by the sixteenth century with a possibly earlier phase. The branch

discussed researching it together as a group, probably in the autumn, using as a basis the research already undertaken by Terry, Heulwen and Sue Hurst. We hope to revisit soon to assess whether any original timber is suitable for tree-ring dating. We are very grateful to Charles and Heulwen Williams for their hospitality.

Coming events

Wednesday 31st August

2 p.m. Rearranged visit to Penmon led by Andrew Davidson, Chief Archaeologist, GAT. Cost £4, car parking £3 which includes access to the road leading to the

Thursday	September 8th	Point. Andrew will show us around the main site and then move on to the Point. The cafe will be open if anyone wishes to visit after the walk. 2 p.m. <i>Guided tour of Beaumaris</i> , led by Margaret Dunn and Terry Williams. The walk may include entry to some of the buildings which have previously allowed entry to visiting parties. Cost £3, numbers limited to 12, so as not to block pavements etc.
Wednesday	October 12 th	2 p.m. <i>How to get the best out of the DOWH website</i> , by Peter Masters, probably at the Archives, Llangefni. TBC.
November	Date to be confirmed	<i>How to use the DOWH Database</i> , by Jane Parry-Evans probably at the Archives, Llangefni, TBC .
December	Date to be confirmed	Lunchtime meal / social; venue t.b.c also.

For further details and booking contact Sue Hurst at bootlanesue@sky.com

CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

Visit to Tŷ Mawr June 8th 2022 by Peter Masters



Several intrepid members of the Caernarfon branch ventured to the northern limits of the old county of Meirionnydd to visit Tŷ Mawr . The assembly point was the car park at Aberglaslyn from where we then proceeded in convoy by a circuitous route up into the remote foothills where Tŷ Mawr sits atop a knoll . This interesting Hall House was restored in the 1980s.

Marshalled up after parking, Margaret Dunn gave us a brief introduction to the house and some "Crib Sheets" with some house history and general information including the dendro dating results of several timbers within the house. Re-assembling inside the house, we

were given a broad and detailed overview by Margret on how to "read" a house and how to look for important details and try to understand the property's place in the landscape and the role it played in the wider community. There were several discussions about the trusses and windbraces.

The house was built c.1530 and smoke blackened rafters would suggest that the original house had a central hearth open to the roof, although in its early life a fireplace was inserted adjacent to the

arch-braced truss. Armed with a list of questions we set about

exploring the building. The first point of interest was the fact that the building was "rubble" built in a dry-stone style without mortar. The cross-passage doorways were both vousoir in style and there were wooden mullioned windows - but were these modern reproductions an accurate representation of the original?

As the weather was a little unsettled, we had a hurried picnic before returning whence we came. Altogether a very enjoyable afternoon ! As ever we are grateful to the owners for allowing free access to their remarkable house and especial thanks to Margaret for her expert guidance.





Caernarfon guided walk 7th July 2022 by Peter Masters

This was led by Rhys Mwyn, the well-known local archaeologist and historian. He led ten of us around the Slate Quay and then upstream near the Seiont, pointing out many scarcely known aspects of the town's history, personalities and culture, finishing up by the old Grammar School and *Hen Waliau*, the Roman "storage depot".

Pwllheli guided walk 6th September led by Iwan Edgar, Local historian.

Some places are still available. Book online at

https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/events_booking.html

Spotting building phases in an old building by Margaret Dunn

Many times it is not possible to study the interiors of buildings during the Parishes Project or other research visits. However it is surprising how much can often be spotted from an exterior view, especially in winter. I have known this currently unused small farmhouse / holiday home since the 1950s but only recently stood and looked carefully at the gable end. *Gerynt*, (NGR SH 634486) lies with its gable end tucked into the mountainside alongside an upland single track lane currently in Beddgelert parish. It was formerly in Merioneth and is listed in a 1624 Rental of James 1st. The accompanying image reveals several changes in the roof line, a multi-phase rear extension, a gable end blocked window, large foundation stones and other alterations. The main fireplace is in the upper gable end. A detailed house history has not yet been undertaken, so the dates of various phases have not been identified.

Houses mentioned in recent research by Dr Tom David

Dr David writes in response to our plea for information about



Gerynt

what members have been researching: "Here's an article - I wonder if DOWH members might be interested. It's discursive and unillustrated, neither of which is particularly helpful! (And they've embedded a video, which is a bit annoying.)

https://www.newyorker.com/science/elements/making-new-climate-data-from-old-timber?utm_source=Nature+Briefing&utm_campaign=58af189f3e-briefing-dy-20220509&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c9dfd39373-58af189f3e-45825362"

Contact details if you would like further information: tom@david4.plus.com

MERIONETH BRANCH

Jenny Carpenter

John Townsend writes 'It is with great sadness that we report the death earlier this year of Jenny Carpenter, one of our longest serving members of Merioneth Branch. Jenny was a very active member - she was a joint author of our Cwm Maethlon booklet and helped manage its launch in Aberdyfi in 2018. She was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable contributor to the Parishes Project for Llwyngwrl and the surrounding area. Jenny also spent much time researching her family history and her home at Bodwylan, Llwyngwrl which has several interesting features both in the house and outside. Jenny hosted two very enjoyable and well attended summer afternoon get-togethers for Merioneth members at Bodwylan. In 2020 Jenny moved to be nearer her son in Pembrokeshire - not least because the mile journey from Llwyngwrl to her home was mostly via a very bumpy and muddy farm track! Although being some distance away, she continued to keep in touch with friends and colleagues and was always keen to know what was going on in Merioneth. We will remember her for her hard work and knowledge of Merioneth, her cooking skills - especially cakes and biscuits - and her friendship.'



Report by Martin Cherry



Llwyn Hwlcynd end elevation with the small window that lights the stone spiral mural stair which survives intact.

Just one group visit to report since the last Newsletter - to Llwyn Hwlcynd, not far from Harlech. The 16th or 17th-century house is listed, along with some attractive 18th and 19th century farm buildings, but is not well described: the house turns out to be much more interesting than the listing description would lead one to expect, with a 'Snowdonian' plan comprising two rooms with fine framed ceilings, a spiral mural stair and a splendid very well preserved roof structure. We hope to return and make a proper record of the building later in the year. Planning for the autumn season is advancing and details will follow in due course.

Sorting out the houses at the top of Cwm Mynach - a Merioneth mystery resolved?

by John Townsend, Ross Cook and Martin Cherry

A tree-ring date of spring 1573 and a bond drawn up in May of the same year requiring that a house be built within twelve months, all in the same part of the same valley. Too good to be true? After checks and double checks, we think we've nailed it. This short paper is a small tribute to Peter Thompson who first recognised the importance of the dating evidence and was working on the houses of Llanaber when he died in 2021.



Llwyn Hwlcyn spiral staircase

1630s. Further down the valley is Cwm Mynach Canol, the main subject of this paper. Last (for our present purposes) is Cwm Mynach Isaf sited further to the west of the river but which is now no more than a pile of stones next to a modern house of the same name.

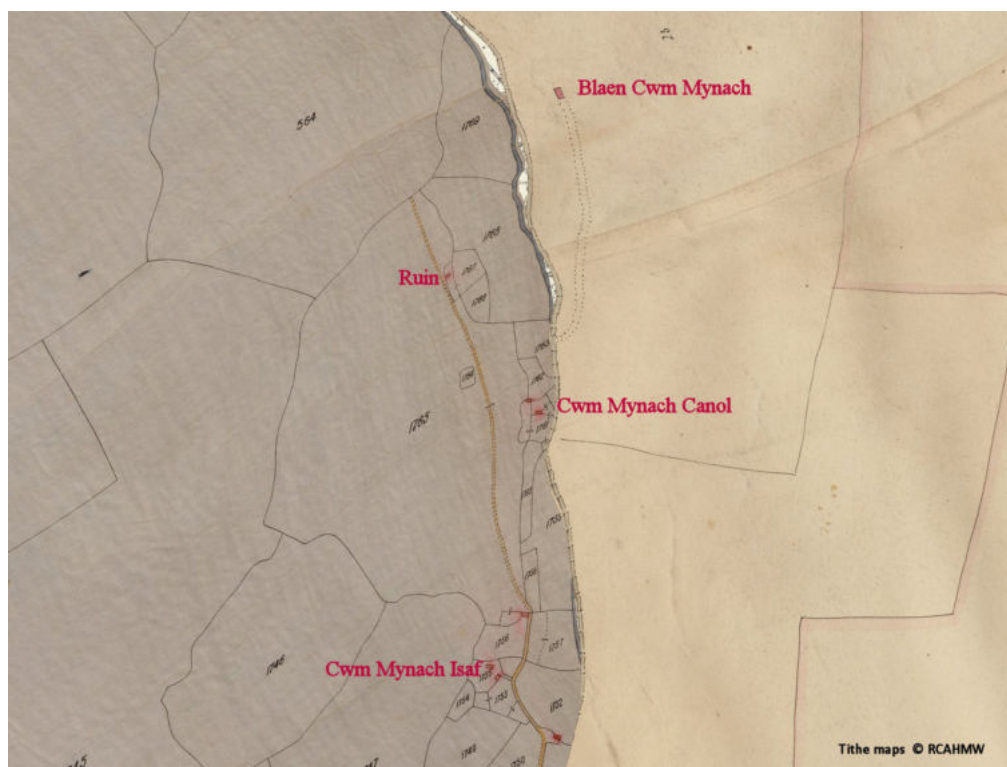
We are fortunate in the survival of a cache of documents that was brought together to provide evidence about the transfers of lands in Cwm Mynach from 1538 to their acquisition in 1637 by Thomas Meyrick of Tan y Bwlch (now in the Merioneth archives). The most interesting for us is a bond dated May 1573 (Z/DV/301). At this time Hoell ap Hoell and Jevan ap Hoell, presumably his son, lived together in the mansion house of a tenement called 'kwm menech'. An agreement between them divided the property and secured for Jevan the lower part of the tenement that ran towards land belonging to their neighbour Lewes ap Jevan ap David (more of this in a moment). Jevan had the right to gather wood growing on Hoell's portion (for fire and building) as well as to take his beasts and cattle through Hoell's half to get to the mountains. There is also a clause relating to the enclosure of land. Of particular interest is the obligation on the part of Hoell to build a mansion or dwelling house on his own lands, yield it up to Jevan by the following May, and guarantee him 'quiet possession' of it.

Between Llanelltyd and Bontddu is a small valley called Cwm Mynach. It runs from the Mawddach estuary north for just over four miles, after which it merges into the rough grazing lands of the Rhinog mountains. There is a small cluster of houses called Tai cynhaeaf at the bottom of the valley; otherwise, the character of the settlement is one of scattered farmsteads. We have been interested in houses at the top of the valley ever since one of them (Cwm Mynach Canol) was dendro-dated to 1573.

First, let's look at the surviving houses as they are at present. Blaen Cwm Mynach occupies an imposing position at the head of the valley as befits one of the houses singled out by Edward Lhuyd in his *Parochialia* (compiled towards the end of the 17th century). Although it is now a stone-built late-Georgian house with gable chimney and a central passage, it contains a massive re-used bressummer (mantel beam) that may have been from the previous house on or near the site. None of the former farm buildings contain anything pre-1800. Blaen Cwm Mynach is in Llanelltyd Parish - the other houses are in Llanaber, something that caused us a bit of a headache at first as we shall see. Close by is an un-named ruin on a high ridge on the west side of the valley. Peter Smith recorded it as an end-chimney house with a cross passage - its dimensions and location at the hub of a series of sheepfolds and closes suggest it was the house of a livestock keeper rather than an independent yeoman farmer, possibly an employee of the Meyrick family after they acquired estates in the valley in the



Map 1 Map showing the position of Cwm Mynach.



Map 2 Houses referred to as shown on the tithe map of 1842

Blaen Cwm Mynach was the principal mansion house on the tenement (where both father and son were living in May 1573), then the house Hoell built for Jevan is what is now known as Cwm Mynach Canol - that is, between Hoell's house and Cwm Mynach Isa.

The clinching evidence is provided by the tree-ring dating of Cwm Mynach Canol. What presents itself to the modern visitor is a late-17th century house with queen-post trusses characteristic of that period, extended in the 19th. But, now hidden away from view, is the fragment of a cruck truss that belonged to the original building. This has a felling date of Spring 1573 as does a re-used purlin. It is generally assumed that building followed on from the felling of the timber within a year or two, that is before the wood got too hard to handle easily. Evidently, Hoell was preparing for the building in good time: timber for a cross-beam was felled in Winter 1571 and the bressummer (or mantel beam) over the fireplace between 1563-5. Massive mantel beams needed to be hard and resilient, rather than green and pliable, and tended to be ear-marked and felled a good few years before use. The tree-ring analysis suggests that the 1570s timbers were harvested from the same woodland and the bressummer from another source, although not necessarily far away.

Up until the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, the entire valley formed part of the Llanelltyd grange of Cymer Abbey. Although the consensus among historians is that by 1535 'virtually the whole of the abbey's lands had been leased', there is no hard evidence for leases in Cwm Mynach, but the strong likelihood is that the farms here would have been tenanted at least from the opening decades of the 16th century if not earlier. After the Dissolution, security of tenure might have been difficult to secure at first. When the king's commissioners came to check on the situation on the former monastic estate of Cymer, thirty individuals asserted that they held a lease but could not provide written evidence (indentures) to prove it when required to do so. When the freehold of the estates passed to the crown, clarity was not necessarily achieved, especially when responsibility for collecting rents was farmed out to individuals and institutions like the borough of Harlech. But by the 1570s and '80s, some relative stability was established and farming families felt emboldened to erect new houses and enclose new fields. The building of Cwm Mynach Canol should be seen in this context

There are some complications about identifying the new house in question. Hoell promises to build a house for his son on his own land. The detailed description of the site - from 'avon kwm menech' to a place called 'y fyches newyth' and thence to a rock 'as the ditch ledeth' - does not help us locate it on either large-scale maps or within the present landscape, but the property of Lewes ap Jevan ap David can safely be matched with Cwm Mynach Isa (downstream from Hoell's and Jevan's land). The fact that Blaen Cwm Mynach was in Llanelltyd and the site of the new house in Llanaber threw us at first, but there is no reason to doubt that Hoell's tenement straddled the parish boundary. And in any case, the

future possession of the former was not at issue. If, as seems plausible,



Fig 1 Cwm Mynach Canol as it is today. The 1570s house was situated between the two chimney stacks.

- and the evidence of tree-ring dating is tending to confirm something of a 'great rebuilding' during these years, in South Merioneth and more widely. More firm dates from documents and scientific dating should help us test this theory.

The details of the tree-ring dating report will be published in *Vernacular Architecture* and a fuller version will appear on our website in due course.



Fig 2 Cwm Mynach Canol - the in-situ stub of a cruck blade (now concealed) that was felled in the spring of 1573 @ Ross Cook, *ArchaeoDomus*

Timely reminder by Martin Cherry

Some of you may be interested in taking advantage of a great training opportunity - the Vernacular Architecture Group annual building recording course is being held this year in N.E.Wales (in collaboration with DOWH). VAG members are given priority but since DOWH is an affiliated society, a small number of places will be available to DOWH members. Numbers are restricted and not all applicants are lucky, but feel free to apply to Rebecca Lane if you are interested (see below). If you wish to chat informally about what the course entails, contact Martin on martincherry@btinternet.com or on 0771 6993652.

Introduction to Vernacular Architecture course (training conference) North Wales 1st-2nd October 2022 by Rebecca Lane

The Vernacular Architecture Group is intending to again offer a short weekend conference aimed at those who are new to looking at vernacular buildings and/or would like the opportunity to learn more. The format is intended to be along the same lines as the two previous weekend conferences (and on the general system

of the VAG Spring conference) - that is based on visits to buildings rather than papers. There will be an emphasis on introducing people to examining buildings, covering basic vocabulary, some of the typical forms of vernacular buildings and how we go about investigating them.

The dates have been confirmed as the 1st and 2nd October. The conference will focus on buildings in North East Wales, in the area where the main spring conference was held in 2018, but focusing on Denbighshire. There will be some material sent out prior to the conference, to help introduce people to the basic concepts, and plan forms, that will help with what we will see. This might be particularly useful for those with no previous experience of looking at historic buildings.

We will visit two or three properties in the area over the course of the weekend, to look at a range of features. On Saturday evening there will be an opportunity for discussion about personal interests and ways to access training and other learning opportunities, via the Vernacular Architecture Group, the county recording groups and other organisations, as well as a chance to get to know other VAG members. As in previous years accommodation and food will need to be organised on an individual basis, although opportunities to purchase food etc will be factored into the schedule. Lifts to and from buildings will be organised on arrival on Saturday morning.

At present the likely schedule is for a 10.30am start on Saturday morning, and we will aim to finish by 4pm on Sunday. We hope that will allow most people to book only one night's accommodation to help keep costs down for everyone. Please feel free to contact me on the details below if you would like to express an interest in attending, and I will send out the booking form when it is available. We will also look to advertise the course beyond the existing VAG membership, if space allows. Contact Rebecca.Lane@HistoricEngland.org.uk Telephone 01793 414775



Don't forget to use our website, recently re-designed and upgraded by our brilliant webmaster, Peter Masters, at <https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk>. All our newsletters are available there together with a range of booklets written by branch members, viewable as e-books (click on Newsletters / Booklets). In between Newsletters it's worth checking into 'Events' to see what's coming up. And, over the last few months we've updated our reports and incorporated all the tree-ring dating reports published over the last few years including those commissioned by bodies other than DOWH. The early tree-ring reports that we commissioned ourselves were quite sparse on general information so we've enhanced these to make them more useful. At present you will find 160 house histories, 85 historic building reports and 136 tree-ring dating reports - an archive of 381 reports, all easily accessible via the 'Reports' page (just follow the on-screen instructions), a great research resource! And new ones are being added all the time.

DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

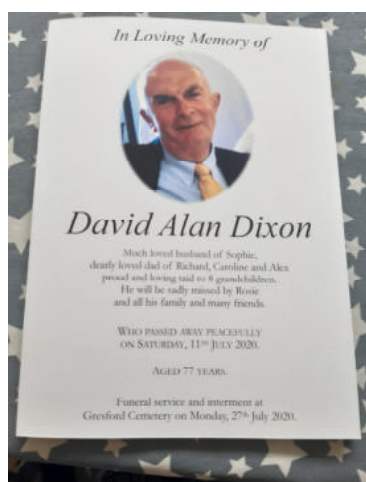
Patrick Billington

We are sad to announce the recent death of Patrick Billington and we extend our sympathy to Rita, his wife of 63 years, and his family. Patrick and Rita were very active members of the DOWH Denbighshire branch from its early days until they moved to Glyn Ceiriog about four years ago. They lived at Ucheldref, a fascinating house near the Rhug farmshop (see house details on the DOWH website) for 35 years and frequently gave hospitality to branch meetings in their large farmhouse kitchen. We miss their contributions and all they both brought to DOWH. The following are extracts from the funeral eulogy given by his son Stephen.

"He was a warm, friendly, peaceful man in so many ways, from his eccentric lifestyle, his philosophising, his love of music, his commitment to ecology and wildlife, and interests in engineering and computing. He had a vibrant personality and he was always a captivating person to talk to, even if it was sometimes a struggle to follow his thinking. He had strong values but equally a rather dismissive view of politics and the wider bureaucratic state.

Patrick had a very dry sense of humour, laughed a lot and was very easy going. He loved being with young life, including children and birds with a particular nurturing instinct that led you to believe that both birds and children were being fed the same things! Whilst highly intelligent, with a tremendous memory for the most random facts, he could easily forget what he had been sent to a shop for and come back with something totally different, much to Mum's patient despair. He would often forget where he had put things, including glasses and wallets which would sometimes take a while to track down; mugs of tea which were sometimes left in the garden and turned up months later.

He enrolled on the world-famous degree course in Forestry at UCNW Bangor in 1958, motivated by the significance of forestation and climate change, a view that was only just emerging! He taught and then lectured at Hatfield Polytechnic before the draw of Wales brought them back to start up a Field Studies Centre. Running a business was never a strong point and Dad soon settled into an idyllic life surrounded by books, trees and nature!"



David Dixon

We have recently heard of the death of David Dixon and extend our condolences to his family and friends. He was an early north east Wales member of DOWH even though not able to attend many meetings. His memorial card reads *In loving memory of David Alan Dixon who passed away peacefully on Saturday 11th July 2020, aged 77 years.*



Patrick Billington

Visit to Nant y Pandy, Glyndyfrdwy in June

On one of the hottest afternoon's in June, we finally managed a branch event. Not exactly to do with old houses, but the chance to see how an industry changed the area from an entirely, poor rural area into a 'new' village. In 1850 there were just 78 houses, but with the coming of the railway and the demand for slate, a quarry and slate mine were developed, and of course the processing needed a whole infrastructure - hence the development of Nant y Pandy. The industry was to last for about 100 years, but now nature is reclaiming all the old buildings.



Nant y Pandy visit



Ruthin visit

Visit to Ruthin in July

Another fine afternoon for our July meeting. Following on from Fiona Gale's zoom presentation on Ruthin Castle, Fiona led a walk in Ruthin. We were also joined by Neil Redfern, the director of the Council for British Archaeology. We had a quick look St Peter's church founded in 1310 and the restored old court house before moving on to the castle. Seeing the remains of the castle brought home the enormity of the project being undertaken by the Ruthin Castle Conservation Trust. From the money collected from members for this event, a donation has been given to the trust. For those who couldn't join us you missed a fascinating afternoon and an excellent cream tea.

Welcome to Jenny Lees as new Branch Secretary

As I have taken on the role of Chair for the Group, I am handing over the Denbighshire Branch to Jenny Lees - thank you Jenny for taking this on.

FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

Report to September 2022 by Margaret and Wally Barr

In June ten members of the branch met together at Gladstone's Library in Hawarden. The meeting heard a talk given by Margaret Barr and Gina Skyner on their research into the fifteenth century house Terfyn, near Cwm (available from the DOWH library at

https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20182_HH_35_Terfyn%20History%20Final.pdf

The name Terfyn means 'end or boundary' and indeed the house sits on the border between Trelawnyd and Cwm parishes. On the 1st July the same talk about the history of Terfyn was given to the Rhuddlan History Society by Margaret and Gina. The next branch meeting will be held at 2pm on Monday September 19th at St Winefrides, Gwespyr, the home of Wally and Margaret Barr. St Winefrides (listed as a Grade 2* building) is one wing of what was built as a school in the mid-nineteenth century by the Mostyn family. This meeting will include the opportunity to visit both the original living quarters

of school staff (St Winefrides) and the adjoining school hall, now renovated into a comfortable family home for neighbours of the Barrs.

In October the branch will meet jointly with Caerwys Historical Society for a talk on Flintshire place-names. The speaker will be Hywel Wyn Owen, co-author of *Place-Names of Flintshire* and will be held in the Town Hall in Caerwys on the evening of Thursday 20th October.

It is planned that the speaker at our November meeting will be Jane Parry-Evans, who will describe the extensive and valuable DOWH database she has been working on from numerous elements of data provided by members of DOWH. The date and time of this meeting is yet to be confirmed. December is a time for a social gathering. Venues, dates and times are to be confirmed.

Crow-stepped gables in North Wales by Irene Brightmer



Plas Mawr Conwy

Although this distinctive and decorative roof feature is often associated with Scotland and eastern England, it is also common in parts of North Wales, and was introduced into our region as early as Elizabethan times. The feature is a stair-shaped design usually at the top of a triangular gable end of a building. But it may also be used on facades or even form false fronts of buildings without gable ends. Crow-stepped gables probably originated in Flanders where the oldest examples date from the 12th century, and the style subsequently spread throughout northern Europe.

Sir Richard Clough (1530–70) from Denbigh, a wealthy and highly influential merchant, and an agent of Queen Elizabeth, was responsible for bringing the style to North Wales. He lived in Antwerp and when he returned to Denbighshire in 1567 he built two houses which still survive: Plas Clough his main house, and Bach y Graig in Tremeirchion, possibly built as a warehouse and office, only part of which still stands. They are both important as the first brick-built houses in Wales. The architect was from Flanders and it is likely that the bricks were imported.

The typical Flemish crow-stepped gable was used at Plas Clough and was subsequently copied widely in the grand houses and substantial farmhouses then being built in our region. The best-known and most easily visited are probably Plas Mawr (1576-85) in Conwy and Faenol Fawr (1597) now a hotel in Bodelwyddan. But

there are many others, including lesser old farmhouses to be found ‘hiding off the beaten track’. It is always a delight to come across another one, a reminder that our region had far-reaching connections in centuries past. In his comprehensive 1975 book on “Houses in the Welsh Countryside” the author Peter Smith mapped 48 examples, which showed a marked concentration in Clwyd and Conwy.

Perhaps you have your own favourites and can collect your own list as you visit old houses with your branch of DOWH? And it may be that the Parishes Project will eventually reveal more than Peter Smith’s count, as branch members review the old buildings in our region parish by parish. I shall be interested to discover which parish has the highest number of these striking picturesque features.



Faenol Fawr Bodelwyddan



Pwll Halog Cwm



Golden Grove Llanasa

FROM THE WEBMASTER by Peter Masters

Following a successful season of Zoom meetings with many distinguished Speakers several of whom were from our own membership, a portfolio of recordings of these talks has been created and can be viewed online via Youtube by following the links on our website These speakers include Richard Suggett RCAHWW, Dr Martin Bridge Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory Oxford, our own Richard Cuthbertson, John Townsend and recently Fiona Gale.

Eight recordings in all so far on a wide range of historical topics are available online on our website in the Membership section /Zoom Talks <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page24.html>. A new programme of speakers for the autumn season is being arranged and details will be available on the website soon; see the Events page.

The website redesign is proving popular and all the available reports for Tree Ring [Dendro] Dating, House Histories and Building Recording are being reviewed, updated and have had a new front cover added to give them a uniform house style. All the Newsletters are also available on the website via the Newsletter link. Also available through the Newsletter page are several Publications, which although not necessarily House Histories are nonetheless important works of research into social history relevant to our project. These excellent Publications are produced by some of our Members and include Cwm Maethlon, Cynwyd, Plas Penmynydd and Llanddulas.

With the lifting of restrictions, Branches are venturing out again to visit Houses and sites of interest. As spaces are often limited it is again possible to book online; this facility opens up the events to members who are not necessarily from the organising branch and helps the organisers keep track of the bookings. Keep watch on the website Membership/Events Bookings page.

FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Due to an unfortunate error in assembling the various contributions to NL41 from their many original and disparate formats, a part of a sentence of the penultimate paragraph of Martin Cherry's article on Dolgellau for the Merioneth Branch was omitted (bottom p.6 to top p.7). The sentence should read

'By the late seventeenth century (possibly before), the town's centre of gravity had shifted a few hundred yards to the east: a picture of about 1800 shows an informal open space for trading (Fig 2), which in and after 1830 was transformed into a proper square, the only part of Dolgellau that could be called 'planned'. The nineteenth century saw much change...'

Profuse apologies to Martin.



New Chair Janice Dale sends this charming sepia tinted photograph of a fine house taken in 1903. Can anyone identify this house? Janice is Estate Administrator for the Rhug Estate and can be contacted at JaniceDale@Rhug.co.uk or Rhug Estate Office, Corwen, Denbighshire, North Wales, LL21 0EH Tel: 01490 413 000 Ext 2.



TESCO Bags of Help

