



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 ynddyn nhw.

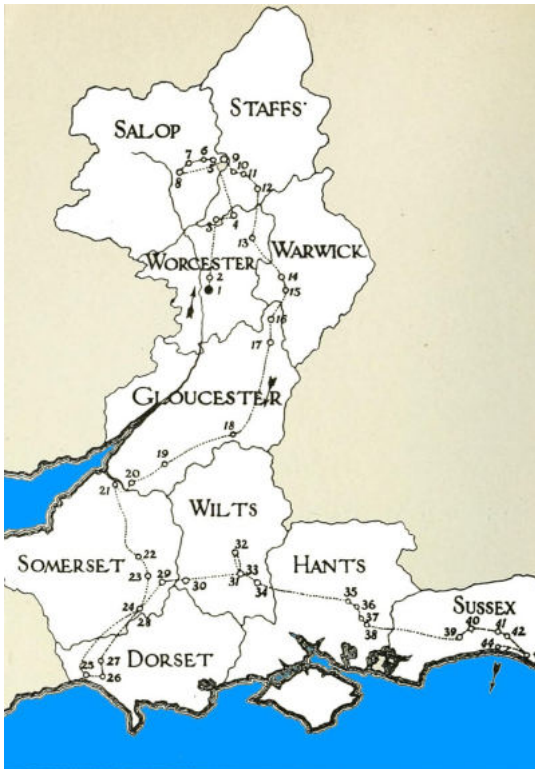
Celebrating Welsh Heritage through the study of traditional houses and the lives of the people who lived in them.

CYLCHLYTHYR 37 Mehefin 2021

NEWSLETTER 37 June 2021

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



Route of King Charles's escape

FROM THE CHAIR by Richard Cuthbertson

Summer must be just around the corner, but it's still so cold, especially at night where I can hardly remember so many frosts. It would be ideal weather to be going on House visits, but I must encourage you all to make up your own agenda and go and see a House you are interested in, even though all you can do is peep over a hedge !

I have been reading a lot about the very romantic story of the escape of King Charles II after the Battle of Worcester on September 3rd 1651. Many of the places he went to and the houses he stayed in still exist and I am amusing myself by planning a trip to follow in his footsteps. He had to deal with forests, swamps, wild heaths and desolate moorland where there is now either urban sprawl or well drained

farmland; yet the houses remain. I vividly remember many years ago speaking to an old vicar who lived opposite Dolbadarn Castle and he told me how in his childhood a young lad drowned in the bog between the castle and his house. It reminded me that the landscape we see today has changed in many ways. We rarely catch this in our studies and house histories. Maybe we should try harder to represent this somehow.

I would like to thank you all for the excellent numbers we achieve at our zoom talks, also to thank our speakers and to assure you that we have a most interesting program for you - going on almost to the crack of doom !

Last of all, how wonderful it is that the posts of the DOWH officers can change so smoothly, with excellent people leaving and excellent people replacing them. We thank them all. It is a sign of a happy and healthy organisation.



A descendant of the oak tree in which King Charles hid, photographed in 2011

NEWS UPDATE FROM THE SECRETARY by Margaret Dunn

We hope that you are all keeping well and still finding plenty to keep you busy. Thankfully, we are now gradually receiving our vaccines, but with the spread of new variants, it seems we may not be able to meet face to face for quite some time. We do not anticipate undertaking further tree ring dating until after summer 2021 at the very earliest. We are enjoying the monthly meetings on Zoom and thank all who have given presentations, as well as Peter Masters who hosts the meetings. We hear of many who are continuing with their house history research. Please let your branch secretaries know if you need ideas or help in choosing what to do next.

Zoom meetings These popular monthly Wednesday meetings start at 7.15p.m. and members are requested to join at 7.00 p.m. It is now hoped to include a discussion after each talk. Joining details are circulated each month by Peter Masters.

May 19th N.B. CHANGE of talk **“Interpreting a Country House”** Matthew Rowland, doctoral researcher, ISWE, Bangor University.

June 16th 6.15 p.m. AGM (papers to be circulated beforehand) then 7.00 p.m. Annual Lecture **“New Insights from Dendrochronology”** Dr Martin Cherry, former Research Director at English Heritage, Past President of the Vernacular Architecture Group and DOWH trustee.

July 21st **“Discovering Old Welsh Houses - Past, Present and Future”** Margaret Dunn, DOWH founder and Secretary.

There will be no meeting in August.

Autumn 2021 onwards A varied programme is being finalized for the next year as it is not clear when face-to-face meetings will be able to recommence. Also many more members are participating in zoom meetings than were attending former gatherings. We hope to start actual branch meetings when that is safe and wise.

The **DOWH Houses Management Database Project** is progressing very well; it is collating and checking the records on all houses so far visited, and will aid prioritizing future research and activities after the pandemic.

The **DOWH Parishes Project** is developing at varying rates in each branch; 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 Management database.

House History Research continues wherever members and branch secretaries select houses. The DOWH **Executive** meet each month and the **Trustees** every 3 months; do let your branch secretaries have your ideas and comments to pass on.

Membership secretary Fiona Gale has now taken over from Zoe as Membership Secretary. We want to thank Zoe Henderson for all she has done in this role for almost ten years. It has been particularly important over the last year when we haven't been able to meet in person but have been able to enjoy online talks. Fiona will soon be contacting anyone with incorrect or overdue subscriptions, she can be contacted at 07718625606 or 01824 520231 or by e-mail membership@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk

DOWH Treasurer. We are delighted to report that Rosemary Brotherton, Conwy branch, is taking over from John Townsend as our new treasurer. There will probably be a period of joint working for a short while. We are immensely grateful to John for his hard work over the last 8 years and we are glad that he will remain an active trustee with other roles, especially with the Parishes Project and the House Management Database. Lastly, DOWH is grateful for the grants received from the Marc Fitch Fund and the Tesco Bags of Help Community Scheme, and for the continued support from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

CONWY BRANCH

Report to June 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 hopeful that the Welsh government will be announcing further easing of restrictions quite soon.

Personal Diaries by Gill Jones

Sometimes, when Ann Morgan and I are researching the history of a house, we come across a diary written by one of the owners or occupants of the house. This can potentially be a really valuable source of information about the occupant's or owner's everyday life.

The Parry family, who owned and lived at Tywysog, Henllan were staunch Catholics. Robert Parry (c.1540-c.1612), younger brother of Richard Parry (d.1613) of Tywysog, was a poet and he was also famous for his diaries, which are now held at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. He started them in 1558 in order to record the

mistreatment of Catholics in the reign of Elizabeth I, but in later years, they also contained entries relating to family events, his frequent trips to London and his visit to Italy. After the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, Parry was stripped of his

on a secret burial with a priest in attendance. A public ceremony in the church eventually took place several months later.

"M'd that upon Sunday being the iiiith day of October 1612 the fun'all of the said S'r John Salusbry knight was celebrated."

Peter Roberts also records a number of clandestine marriages, but as his chronicle predates the 1753 Marriage Act, they would not have been deemed illegal. The following is one example from 1626.

"Md' that Upon Saturday being the 4th day of November 1626 about twilight one John ap Richard of Coyber and Elizabeth Lloid (one of the daughters of Evan Lloid) were clandestinely married in the chappell in Wickwer by John Williams clerke."

Robert Wynne (1738-1798) of Garthewin kept a diary in which he recorded events concerning his family, friends and neighbours. He regularly attended local funerals and he also enjoyed marriages and christenings.

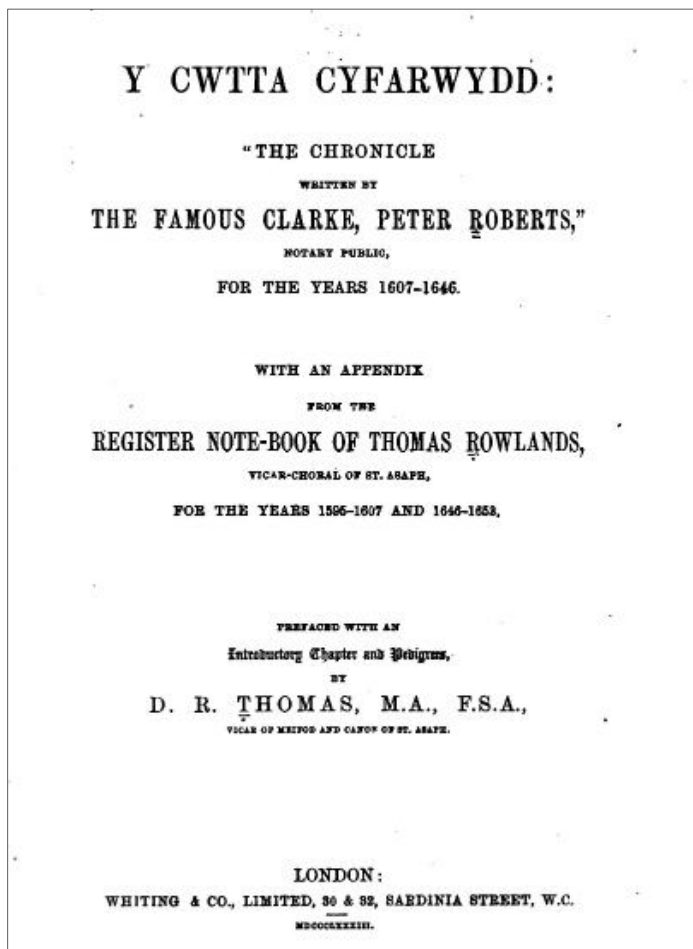
After the death of John Salusbury of Bryn y Barcut in 1768 he wrote, *"Heard Mr. Salusbury of Bryn y Barkitt died of dropsy."* A few days later, he wrote,

"Mr Salusbury's funeral: 12 bearers, 4 mourners, 4 clergy and tenants. It was the largest coffin I ever saw over 3ft 4ins and 2ft deep, and very long. Said to weigh 1,200lbs."

On 13th November 1776, his entry read "This day was married at Bath, Miss Salusbury of Bryn y Barkitt to Mr. Jocelyn, an officer in the Navy. She is a very fine woman." When Robert Wynne died in 1798, someone else, possibly his wife, wrote in the diary:-

July 25th. Died at Trefriew, near Mold, to the unexpressible grief of his family and friends, Robert Wynne esq. of Garthewin aged 66. He was remarkably cheerful the preceding evening, went to bed at 10 (his accustomed hour), was taken ill about 4, and expired in the short space of one hour, without a groan. He was interred in the family vault in Llanfairtalhaiarne Church, on Friday Aug. 3 about 2 in the afternoon ... He was a cheerful companion, a steady friend, a good neighbour, and a truly honest man. With God rest his soul."

The Rev. John Foulkes of Mertyn Hall, Whitford, and Llanrydd, appears to have spent much of his time, prior to his marriage, with "jolly company" indulging in pleasurable activities. He was happy to spend time with both trades people as well as gentry. Diary entries from 1762, record that he drank and had "great funn" in the White Lion in



property, and he and his wife were placed under house arrest. They entrusted their son, Ffoulk, to Jesuit priests who took him to safety in France and gave him the pseudonym John Portland.

Peter (Piers) Roberts (b.1578), who lived at Cefn Meriadog near St. Asaph was a 'Notary Public' from about 1599 and admitted as 'Proctor of the Consistory Court' in 1624. He kept a diary between 1607 and 1646 which is known as 'Y Cwttta Cyfarwydd'. It chronicled notable local events. The following rather curious entry concerned the death and burial of Sir John Salusbury of Lleweni in 1612.

"Mem.- that Uppon Fridaye, being the xxivth daie of July, about ten of the clocke in ye morning, Syr John Salusbrie of Lleweni, in ye Co. of Denbigh, Knt.(father of Mr Henrie Salusburie of Beraine, grandson to Catrin Heiress of Beraine, who married ye daughter of Syr Thomas Myddelton of Chirk Castle, knight), died att his House of Lleweny, (and as the report was) was buried that night."

This is odd because he was supposedly a staunch Protestant, although other members of his family had Catholic sympathies. Maybe someone in the family insisted

Ruthin (now the Castle Hotel) with " P. Kyffin and the doctor costing him 1s 5d + 5d. He "got drunk with Parson Maurice Roberts and Maurice Barker" and "played quadrille (a game developed in France in the early 18th century) and lost nothing - remarkable!"

There are numerous entries relating to him playing cards and mentioning the sums of money he won or lost; and he frequently dined with his mother and sister, Jane. On one occasion, he travelled to Oxford via Birmingham and Stratford, and on January 3rd, he mentions "the flying highwayman being apprehended". He also attended the Chester Races and enjoyed hunting. One entry from his travels records the following account. N.B. Vails (tips) were sometimes paid to servants by visitors.

Vails at Mr.Bennet's	2s 6d
Vails at Coddington	1s 0d
White Horse, Mold	1s 2d
Crown, Ruthin	0s 6d
Turnpikes	4d

And he obviously liked silk stockings and "paid one guinea for 2 pairs and 3s for a silken knee garter."

This is only a very small selection of entries from a few diaries. There is a short on-line talk which was produced by the Arts Society during the first lockdown in 2020 which is entitled 'Rescuing Unwanted Diaries' by Irving Finkel. It's well worth watching.

<https://www.connected.theartsociety.org/talks-lectures>
and
<https://www.thegreatdiaryproject.co.uk>

Further note on Peter Roberts (1578- c.1646), attorney and chronicler by Emeritus Professor Robert Thomas Jenkins, (1881-1969)

Born 2 February 1577/1578, son of Robert ap Hywel ap Rhys, of Bron-yr-wylfa, near St. Asaph, and his wife Agnes - a Griffith of Gwern-eigrion; he probably went to St. Asaph cathedral school. By 1599 he was notary public at St. Asaph, and in 1624 (30th June) he was appointed proctor in the bishop's court. In 1606 he married Jane, one of the daughters of David ap Lewis ap Gronw, of Meiriadog; and he lived in one of the houses on that estate till 1622, when his father left him sufficient money to build the house of Fron-goch nearby. He had a son and four daughters. The time of his death is not known, but the entries in his chronicle come down to the end of 1646. He wrote *Y Cwttā Cyfarwydd*, a most interesting assemblage of information about the history of the region around St. Asaph; it extends from 1607 down to 1646, and was printed in 1883 by D. R. Thomas (see title page opposite), on whose preface the present note has been based.

ANGLESEY BRANCH

Report to June 2021 by T.P.T.Williams

The second lockdown has of course curtailed any activity. We are delighted to hear that Sue Hurst, who had previously announced her retirement from the post of Group Secretary, has agreed to continue in office for another year.

Cefn Coch Llanfechell communicated by T.P.T.Williams

In Anglesey It has proved difficult to identify new candidate houses for DOWH research much outside Beaumaris. We are envious of the ease with which our Merioneth colleagues seem able to locate new sites in good preservation, almost at will. However, if a window of opportunity opens this year between easing of lockdown and the onset of a third wave, perhaps Cefn Coch will prove worthy of attention.

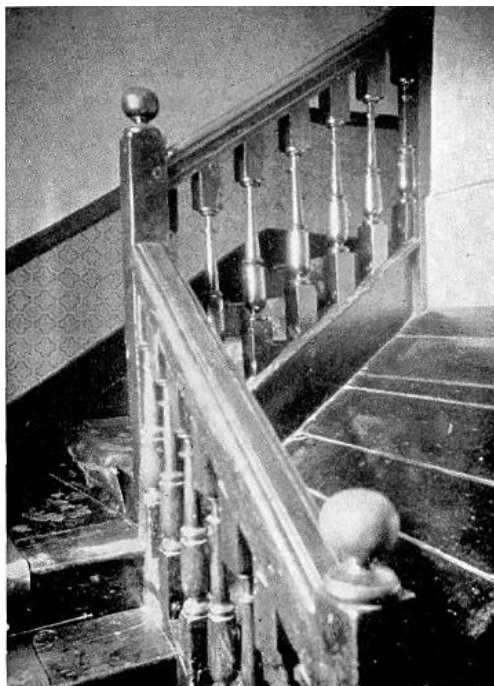


Cefn Coch Llanfechell circa 1936

Cefn Coch in Llanfechell (NPRN 15637, Map Reference SH39SW, Grid Reference SH3425090720) is a C17th central-hall type of house, altered and extended in the C19th and extensively modernised in the 1980s when it was re-roofed, elevations were rendered and new doors and windows installed. David Lloyd, Rector of Llanfechell (b.1691) bought Cefn Coch from Richard Roberts of Rhosbadric, Aberffraw; he married Ellen, daughter of famous diarist William Bulkeley of neighbouring Brynddu. Their daughter inherited the farm and married William, 3rd son of William Meyrick of Bodorgan.

From there, Cefn Coch passed down through the Meyrick family to **Thomas Meyrick (1718-1763), who is apparently buried near the north end of the house's rear elevation.** He was a notable preacher and the house is thought to have been used for services in the mid-C18th. The farm is recorded in the 1842 Tithe Schedule of Llanfechell as being owned by Edmund Edward Meyrick and

was then a holding of over 85 acres (34.43 hectares) farmed by Jane Hughes; it finally passed out of the hands of the Meyrick family when sold in the late C19th.



Cefn Coch C17th staircase circa 1936

Cefn Coch is a 2-storeyed gentry-farmhouse with a 3-window main range, attics, a lower 2-storey single-window range in line to the south and a gabled porch wing at the junction of the two ranges. It is rendered over local stone, with square quoins, a slate roof and exposed stone stacks at the gable ends. The main range is broadly symmetrical, with a shallow central gable surmounted by a chimney stack over the entrance. This has a doorway, not original, flanked by narrow windows. The window in the outer bays and the narrower window over the doorway have been renewed within earlier openings. The end-chimney stacks are diagonally set, with the larger principal stack at the left hand gable. The lower range to the south has an enlarged or inserted window to the north and a small window alongside beneath the eaves, with all detail modern.

The two-storeyed, gabled porch, advanced at the junction, is a later addition with an arched ground floor entrance and a small window above, again with modern detail. The rear elevation has scattered fenestration and a rear doorway into the main block. Within the main block is a central hallway, with principal rooms leading off to left and right. A corridor to the rear leads to the south wing. The C17th dog-leg staircase has turned balusters, a moulded handrail and square newels with ball-finials. The stairs continue beyond a doorway, as plain oak stairs up to the former servant quarters in the attic. The roof has pegged and collared hewn trusses. There is a hewn beam in the ground floor rooms, which runs along the length of the house (now covered). The south block is thought, by the

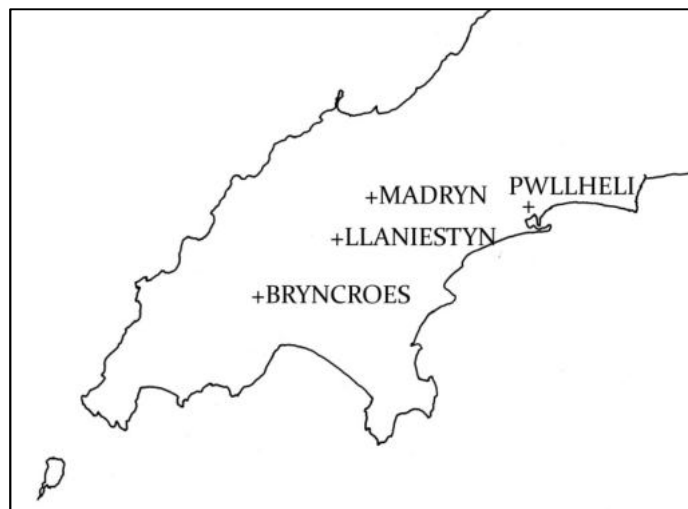
owners, to retain the original inglenook fireplace, now enclosed. There are shallow panelled doors throughout. *All details courtesy Coflein, Cadw and J. Hill, RCAHMW.*

CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

Report to June 2021 by Peter Masters

There has been little or no formal activity since January as a result of the second Covid-19 lockdown.

No Trouble at the Mill by Tom David



Sites in Llŷn

One class of document that can illuminate the lives of the people who lived in the traditional houses that we study is the Quarter Session records. In Caernarfonshire they survive incomplete between 1562 and 1870 (XQS at the Record Office). They provide vivid glimpses of quarrels and everyday events. Here is an example from Llŷn.

In October 1658 a gang of gentlemen and yeomen (John Wynne, late of Penllech, Edward Lloyd of Bryncroes, and six others) assembled unlawfully at Bryncroes (which is between Pwllheli and Aberdaron), with intent to disturb the public peace, unlawfully entered the mill called Melyn Ganol belonging to Arthur ap David, and assaulted the said Arthur and ejected him from his mill (XQS/1658+59/M/30). What was going on? Arthur had bought the mill from this Edward Lloyd, along with the Mynachdy estate, in the eastern part of Bryncroes. Ten years later he died, and bequeathed what looks like posthumous protection money: he left an annual payment to Edward Lloyd and his son Hugh Lloyd, on condition that they should in no way sue, implead, trouble or molest his son Hugh Arthur for the lands. So it seems that Edward Lloyd was not happy with the terms of the sale.

Arthur ap David is an intriguing figure. It is clear from his Will that he had bought a lot of land, in Bodegroes, Bodfel, Abererch (all near Pwllheli) and Cerniog (on Mynydd Nefyn) as well as Bryncroes, and had lent a good deal of money to

various gentlemen, much of it on mortgage. It does not appear that he inherited any land. One of his specific bequests was to his daughter Sidney Arthur and to his grandchild Wm Williams, which makes it highly likely that he is the 'Arthur ap David of Madryn' who appears on the Brondanw pedigree, and who was the 7 x great-grandfather of Clough Williams-Ellis. Where exactly at Madryn, one wonders? Madryn is about four miles north-east of Mynachdy. Was he renting part of the big house from Thomas Madryn, who was one of the most powerful men in the county at the time? The 1642 marriage settlement of Sidney and William Roberts is in the National Library (Plas Brondanw 29-31). It is dated the month before the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1652 all of them (Arthur, Sidney and William Roberts) seem to be living in Llaniestyn and getting into arguments with the miller's wife (XQS1652/123 and 130) - but the only mill in that parish appears to be Melin Madryn.



The ruins of Arthur's Mill today

So Arthur seems to have prospered in the years of the Civil War by shrewd loans and perhaps by milling; but the origin of his capital isn't clear. There is no evidence that he was a lawyer, which was one way to become rich. Edward Lloyd had perhaps borrowed money from him on the security of Mynachdy and Felin Ganol, and had been unable to pay the interest. Or perhaps they disagreed about the extent of the lands transferred. According to Griffith's Pedigree (p 297), Edward Lloyd's grandson Henry got back possession of the estate, not by troubling or impleading Arthur's grandson Arthur Hughes, but by marrying the

latter's daughter Sidney - a good ending, if Griffith's version is true: their monument in Pistyll says that they 'liv'd happily together upwards of fifty years and died much lamented by their neighbours and acquaintance.'

MERIONETH BRANCH

Report to June 2021 by Martin Cherry

Although no meetings or house visits have been possible during lockdown, the Parishes Projects has made progress. Phase 1 research for seven parishes is either well advanced or complete. This will have identified most of the pre-1750 houses that survive, including ruins. In many cases some desktop research has also been undertaken. The sum total of houses recorded that might justify further work or even in some cases a full house history and survey, stands at 283: quite a haul! One cruck-framed house in Llanelltyd parish has been tree-ring dated by Ross Cook (independently of DOWH) to 1573. A contract of exactly that date between two brothers that sets out the details of where the materials should be sourced and the building timetable, was discovered by Peter Thompson. A fuller account of this will appear in a future Newsletter.

News from Ceredigion communicated by Martin Cherry

Some parts of Wales are well served by modern county histories and another of the Cardiganshire series has recently appeared: Volume 2, *Medieval and Early Modern Cardiganshire*, edited by Geraint H Jenkins, Richard Suggett and Eryn M White, published for Cymdeithas Hanes Ceredigion Historical Society in association with the RCAHMW by the University of Wales Press (Cardiff, 2019). (Volumes 1 and 3 appeared earlier.) DOWH members will find much of interest here on landscapes and politics, the growth of gentry estates and education, castles and churches and above all Richard Suggett's substantial chapter on 'Medieval Dwellings and their Successors'. "Substantial" you may ask! How come, since the county is known to be among those with the fewest surviving houses pre-dating the mid seventeenth century? That fact raises intriguing questions. While the quality of buildings is often linked to levels of prosperity and access to markets, Cardiganshire does not appear to have been more disadvantaged in terms of remoteness than Pembrokeshire to the south west or Merioneth to the north, both of which have many fine survivors from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, stone predominating in the former, timber decoration and framing in the latter. The availability of building material may explain the absence of old buildings: given the poor local stone, the vernacular material in Cardiganshire was mud. A clay or earthen house (*tŷ pridd*, *tŷ o bridd*) is a vulnerable thing (although well shod with a stone footing, plastered and well roofed, cob houses

survive in Devon from the fourteenth century, sometimes with their smoke-blackened thatch). Churches in the county were normally stone walled, and Richard shows examples of wagon and king-post roofs to make the point that the medieval Cardy carpenter was alive and kicking. Archaeology and praise poems further demonstrate that medieval houses here were of similar size and layout as were those in adjoining counties. Interestingly, the tradition of houses where the main rooms were open to the roof - startlingly similar to the medieval open hall house - survived



Stone and clay-walled single storeyed thatched cottage at Llanon (Ceredigion), a rare survivor of a once common type

in cottage architecture well into the nineteenth century (and some are still to be seen). After some fascinating general sections, the chapter presents a number of case studies. Two struck me as particularly fascinating. At one excavated house (Llanerch Aeron) a coin from the reign of Edward III (mid fourteenth century) was embedded below a layer of ash signifying that the house burnt down around 1400 and was never rebuilt. Did Owain Glyndŵr pay a visit, or Prince Hal en route to Aberystwyth? And a fully cruck-framed gentry house of the sixteenth century (Gwastadgwrda, Abermeurig), contrary to normal expectations, was fully storeyed from the beginning, suggesting that crucks remained popular even after open halls had gone out of favour.

Plans are afoot to start a new West Wales Historic Buildings Group/Grŵp Adeiladau Hanesyddol Gorllewin Cymru aiming to identify vernacular buildings of historic interest in Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and (eventually) Pembrokeshire that date to pre-1750. Ross Cook, the prime

mover, writes: 'The current narrative in Ceredigion is largely of the wholesale rebuilding of medieval and early-post medieval dwellings and farm buildings from around 1750. With so many minor valleys and vales in the county, it seems unlikely that every single one of them was replaced in their entirety!' Details ross.cook@archaeodomus.co.uk

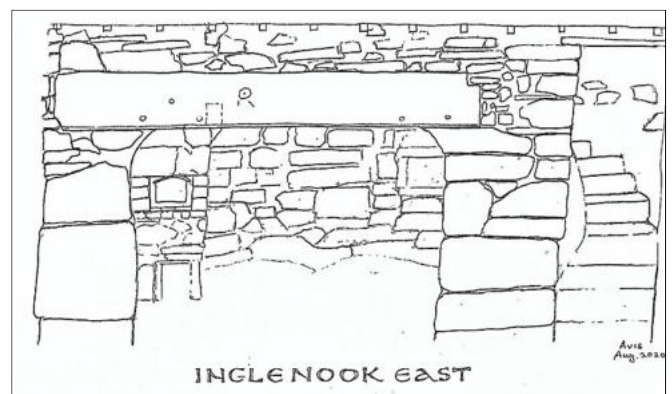
A fireplace at Plas Meini, Llan Ffestiniog, Gwynedd

by Avis Reynolds communicated by Martin Cherry

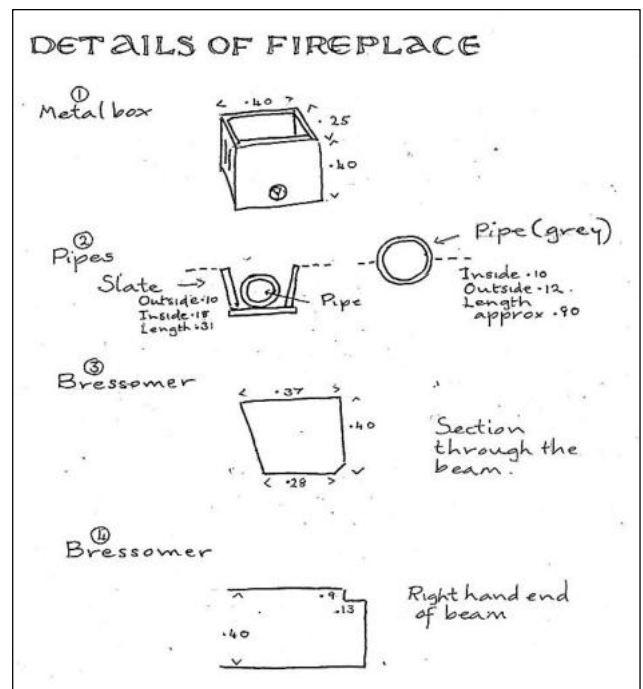
The Discovering Old Welsh Houses group was called in to Plas Meini by the new owners who had started restoration and had discovered what they thought was an old house of interest. When first viewed, the building was in the process of being renovated. A new roof had been installed and the most modern fireplaces had been removed, and the large fireplace was exposed with the bread oven and the stone spiral stairs to the right.

In the Rent Roll for 1623 it says that 'John Robert plas meini and tyddyn gwraig leuan goch, pay the sum of 1s 0d'. The house has a fireplace and stairs at either end of the building and they look very similar but, according to a reference in the Hearth Tax of 1662 for Merioneth, page 27, it says that there is only one fireplace. Which is the older?

In a quote from the book *Hanes Plwyf Ffestiniog* by G J Williams (1882), page 216, it says: 'Aeth hen dy Plas Meini ar dan oddeutu 1768 ac adeilwyd yr un presenol yn le. Y mae E. Ll. Lloyd, ysw U. H., wedi adeiladu palasdy bychan yn ymyl yr hen adeilad, a gelwir hwn ar yr un enw.' Translation: 'The old Plas Meini house caught fire around 1768, and was replaced by the present one. D. Ll. Lloyd, Esq. J.P. built a small mansion next to the old building, and is called by the same name.' We know that the house we are working on is the older one. The new larger building is only about fifty yards away and is well documented. The fire damage must have been restored as the building appears on the census maps and was a holiday let until recently. I have taken quotes from Lloyd's *Encyclopaedic Dictionary* to describe two technical words in the text: an inglenook is 'the corner by the fireside' and an angle is 'a fire or a blaze or fireplace'. A bressomer or bressumer is 'distinguished from a lintel by its bearing the whole superstructure of a wall, instead of only a small portion over an opening'.



The inglenook at the east end of the building has stone mural stairs on the right-hand side. It is situated at the gable end of a rectangular structure. There is a corresponding inglenook at the opposite gable end of the building. A fireplace is also on the upper floor, above the inglenook (not excavated) now blocked in. On 21 July 2020 a start was made to excavate the fireplace at the east end of Plas Meini (the older building of the two). When first viewed the building had just been reroofed, fire grates had been taken out and the inglenook was exposed along with the bread oven. During the first week the workmen stripped the plaster off the walls. In the second week the upstairs wooden floor was removed. In the third week the tiles were taken up from the ground floor which had the fireplace. In the fourth week the concrete under the tiles was taken up revealing building rubble and the pipes; also the new upper storey floor was re-installed. Two weeks later the whole floor was resurfaced including the fireplace, and the oven was no more. The fill inside the fireplace below floor level was disappointing as the whole area was filled in with old brick and rubble down to a natural soil layer.



The bread oven (now demolished)

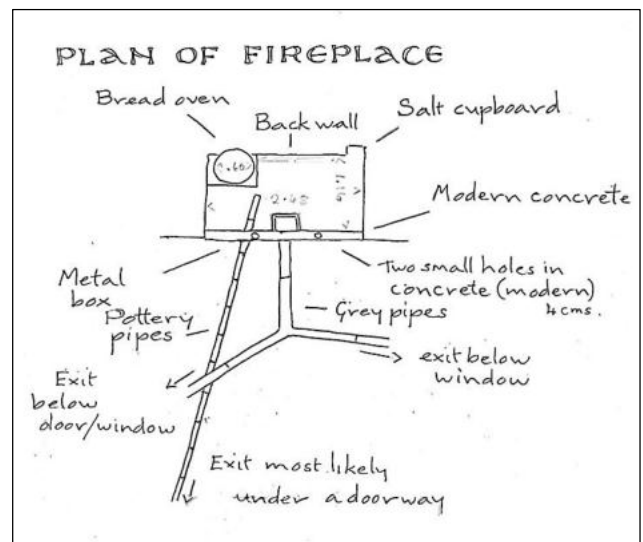
The bread oven was mainly built of shaped stones. There might have been some brick but it was difficult to identify. The surround of the oven door was of metal with a narrow slot behind to take air up the chimney. The oven was mostly freestanding but extended slightly into the back wall. The stokehole also extended into the back wall some distance but it had been filled in with cement before measurements could be taken. It is possible that the stokehole exited to the outside.

The bressomer

The bressomer measured 2.43 metres in length by 0.40 metres in depth. The cross-section is shown on the drawing on page 32. The right-hand end of the bressomer appears to have been severed at some time. There is a small piece cut from the top right corner and the end itself is a very straight cut, unlike the more natural end of the left-hand end. It is also noticeable that the stonework to the right of the bressomer is of small stones which were very loose. There were various marks scored on the bressomer, including a circle with a pivotal point in the centre, initials and various scratch marks. There was no indication that there was ever a slate floor in the room. There is what looks like a hard earth floor below the rubble and the broken building bricks.

Slate gully

The slate gully which crossed the room must have been inserted earliest. The slate was not roofing slate. It measured two centimetres in thickness and was cut to a specific size. Three slates made up a section, one at the base and two sides sloping gently outwards. Originally there would have been a slate covering but this must have been removed when the pottery pipe was inserted later. The pottery pipe of course did not need



a cover. The gully extended through the room to exit under a door. The channel and the piping were embedded into the earth floor.

Brick-coloured piping

This piping was resting in the slate channel crossing the room to exit below a door to the outside. The people putting this piping in took advantage of the existing route. These pipes were of a pot construction measuring one foot in length and four inches in diameter. The first pipe in the fireplace was situated near to the oven but a little to the right. If there was any attachment to the pipe it was lost years ago.

Metal box and grey pipes

The top of the metal box structure was level with the tiled floor of the modern room. The base of the box was set in concrete. The concrete was resting on a natural compact bright brown surface. After the builders had removed the tiles and the concrete and the brick rubble from under the concrete the

metal box was able to be seen in its entirety. There was a round opening at the base with a grid across it. Connected to the round opening were pipes (of a greyish colour and about a metre in length) of the same diameter as the opening into the metal box and extending into the room for about two metres where it divided and crossed to opposite walls and presumably exiting through the walls.

Finds (from inside the fireplace)

There was one piece of pottery in among the rubble and brick. A piece of bent metal was also found. I imagine these have nothing to do with the fire and have been imported with the general rubble.

In conclusion

I first came across pipes set in below floor levels a few years ago when a group of us were on an archaeological excavation in Cwm Penamen in the Lledr Valley where we worked on several old stone houses. At that point we thought the channels of slate slabs were for draining water seeping into the buildings from the steep slope behind the stone houses. Some of these were, but the ones coming from the fireplaces were there in order to get a draught for the new smaller grates that had been installed when coal became available. The pipes at Plas Meini connected to the metal box were for a through draught after the fireplace had been reduced in size. I think the metal box must belong to the later brick fireplace, but I am not sure what part the box played in the working of the fireplace. Perhaps one of our members could explain? It would not have been to collect the ash as it would have been very difficult to scoop it out from the top and would block the flow of air.

I would like to thank the owners of Plas Meini for allowing me free access to the house. The excavation took place during the Covid pandemic in August 2020 and I had the place to myself at weekends. It was interesting to follow the progress of the builders as they uncovered the different levels of the room and this made it possible for me to get more information of the progression of the pipes across the room.

For more information on history, occupants and architecture, visit the website of the Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group at www.discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk.

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DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

Report to June 2021 by Janice Dale

There has been little to report since January due to the extended lockdown caused by the second Covid-19 wave.

5th Dimension - Poetry and Images of North Wales Houses by Janice Dale

Why 5th Dimension? The DOWHG produces 4 reports of houses that have been investigated - House Histories, Dendrochronology, Architectural Reports and Architectural Drawings. These reports are all very factual, but I wanted to add something more colourful - about the people who lived in or owned these places and also locate other historic Welsh houses of note which can be found via the poetry and images available.

I would like to thank Gill Jones who reminded me that images need not just be a picture - a mental image can be formed from a written description, and where better to find this but in a diary. I came across this description

"... The scene of benevolence that's annually perform'd here on xmas eve vizt. Six ancient men, twelve women and as many boys as females, had a table spread for them to dine, the men and women being first finished, each had sufficient for another day to carry home and each woman two shillings. Mr Vaughan and his three sones attended, to see that every thing was done decently; the sight gave me a sensation productive of tears, which were augmented by hearing the persons prayers, as the received their benefaction"

Mr Vaughan was at Rhug, and the year 1782 and shows his charitable nature inviting them to his home. The above description can be found in "The Old Order based on the Diary of Elizabeth Baker" by Ben Bowen Thomas. To date over 700 houses in North Wales have been identified as 'of interest' and of these some 142 have a house history, so there is plenty of scope to find images and poetry. The National Library of Wales will be a major repository in which to carry out research, as it has a collection of some



Old Plas Rûg circa 1778 Moses Griffith

950,000 photographs and their portrait collection has the largest collection of Welsh portraits in the world.

I want to organise workshops using photography and art at some of the houses already on record. We will also look at poetry and other printed sources associated with a

particular house, to give us a flavour of the life of the people living there and to create a wider understanding of the lives of the people who we have encountered in our research - all of this will be possible thanks to a 'Tesco Bags of Help' grant.

I have secured the help of a professional photographer and an artist to assist in these areas, and also someone who can help with the poetry. To do this I would like to form a group interested in looking at these areas - so if anyone is interested in joining, do please let me know at jadale22@hotmail.co.uk



RUG near CORWEN.

Another view of Old Plas Rûg Arch. Camb. 1887

The House History Hour communicated by Fiona Gale

Working with the #HouseHistoryHour team of leading UK house historians, *Family Tree* held the House History Show, online, on May 15th 2021.

The House History Show is aimed at all those interested in tracing the history of buildings and the people who once lived in them. The combined expertise of the #HouseHistoryHour team of experts Prof. Deborah Sugg Ryan, Dr. Nick Barratt, Karen Averby, Melanie Backe-Hansen, Gill Blanchard, Ellen Leslie, Keith Searle and Cathy Soughton - bring together a wealth of experience and provide inspiring presentations on the records and research skills needed to help you to trace the history of a home. The full-day programme includes a one-hour Keynote: A House Through Time - which features a conversation with historical consultant Deborah Sugg Ryan and research consultant Melanie Backe-Hansen from the popular BBC series *A House Through Time*. The day also comprised presentations and discussions. Topics during the House History Show and in the forthcoming summer lecture series include: 'Terraced House Tales: New 19th Century Housing and its Occupants', 'Stepping Sideways: How to Step Round Brick Walls', 'Keynote: Sources for House History', 'London: Building Storeys', 'Don't Judge a House by its Plaque', 'Back to the Land: The National Farm Survey, Inland Revenue Survey, Tithe & Land Records', 'Who's Been Living in My

House?', 'A Virtual View: Online Sources', and 'The Interwar House: From Tenant to Home Owner'.

The House History Show was held online on 15th May 2021. Tickets at £45 included the full day of presentations and the series of four summer house history lectures that will be running from 20th May. Individual tickets for the summer lecture series are also available, £10 each, as is a ticket bundle for the summer lecture series, £25. Find out more about the programme and book your tickets at <http://familytr.ee/house>

FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

Report to June 2021 by Wally and Margaret Barr

Obviously, like other branches, the activities of the Flintshire Branch of DOWH have been limited by Covid restrictions. However some work has taken place.

One thing that has happened is that we have begun to distribute some of the copies of the house histories that we had printed. These have gone to individuals who were involved with the research. Archives and Libraries will receive copies when the situation gets back nearer to normal.

Jean Jones is nearing the end of her history of The Old Post Office, Llanasa. Carys Biddle and Margaret Barr have started on the house history of numbers 1 and 2 Water Street, Caerwys. This was formerly one property called Canol y Dre. The timbers of this cruck-framed building have been dendro-dated to 1465.

Childhood Memories

 by Gina Skyner

As a child, along with my sisters and cousins, a visit to my Granny Smith's at Tyn Rhos, Llanfynydd was filled with excitement. The house was always busy and there was a lot to do. Tyn Rhos was one of three 'connected' properties on the western side of Llanfynydd, on a hill. The others were Rhos Isa, the farm at the back and Rhos Ucha, the 'big' farm complex higher up the mountain. As children, we were allowed to go up to Rhos Ucha and look at the 'devils on the wall'. These were old stone carvings of various animals which we found fascinating. There was also an old chapel with an arched window and a small steeple with a bell. Formerly called 'Rhos y Maen Hir' there had been a standing stone in the grounds, now lost.

Tyn Rhos had the date 1740 built into the stonework on the front of the house and there was a collection of ruins at the side of the property, suggestive of an older occupation. We were allowed to play in the ruins if we were careful. Other games included 'tickling trout' in the nearby stream and telling each other stories in bed at night. The 3 boy cousins all slept in one big bedroom and the 4 girls in another. When jumping on the bed, one had to be careful not to head-bump the huge black beam which jutted down

into the room. Every evening we had to perform a 'concert piece' on the piano or sing a song, with my Granny Smith accompanying. Schubert songs were the favourites along with arias from the oratorios of Handel and Mendelssohn. On Sundays the radio came out, the large liquid accumulator batteries were checked, the switches turned on and after crackling sounds, whistling and necessary twiddling and tuning, the sounds of hymn singing filled the room - only to be drowned out as my Uncle Rupert's amazing tenor voice soared above them.

The inglenook was massive, with beautifully polished horse brasses on its big black beam. It was big enough to contain two small chests of drawers and a big range with ovens and hobs for kettles and pans. There was always a huge fire burning, summer and winter. There were mysteries here too. What was behind the door next to the inglenook fireplace? Granny answered 'spiders' if you asked. One day she opened the door to clean it out and she was right - the cobwebs were huge! She had decided not to use it as there was no window in there and it smelled a bit damp. There were other small cupboards set into the walls too and the window sills were very, very deep. The house had a dark passageway leading into the kitchen which was a wooden extension at the back, built into the sheltering wall which protected the house. A partition wall inside would occasionally be moved to open up the hall or to make the parlour bigger. There was a walnut tree in the garden and a well which we were warned to stay 'well' away from. This 'forbidden' place was often the subject of the night time story time as we invented its dead bodies, which could be murder victims! It's a wonder we ever got to sleep! There were legends about the house. It was supposedly an unlucky house, the horses refusing to pull the beams to the site when it was being built.

Granny Smith chose to move to Llanfynydd when her husband's work took him from Liverpool to Southampton. Tyn Rhos had been used as their holiday home until then. She loved the house and so did I. Llanfynydd is situated in the valley of the river Cegidog which joins the river Alyn beneath Hope mountain. Offa's Dyke runs through the valley and a Roman presence was noted in the nearby Ffrith village. Formerly a part of the old parish of Hope, then a township of Uwchmynydd, it became the new parish of Llanfynydd in 1845. Old houses of note in the area are Trimley Hall, Farm and Bryn Yorkin.

FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Once again members have resolutely declined to be deterred by a second lockdown and have contributed an excellent set of articles. We hope that by the time the next issue is due, individual groups will have more outside activity to report.

This issue is experimental in that it has been decided for a number of reasons, including the not unimportant one of financial economy, to attempt to use machine translation to achieve the Welsh language version. Whether this will be entirely successful remains to be seen and we shall welcome all comment and criticism, especially if constructive.



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