



DARGANFOD HEN DAI CYMREIG DISCOVERING OLD WELSH HOUSES



NODDWYR/PATRONS:

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

Dathlu Treftadaeth Cymru drwy astudio tai traddodiadol a bywydau'r bobl fu'n byw ynddynt.

CYLCHLYTHYR 52 Mawrth 2025

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

NEWSLETTER 52 March 2025

EIN GWEFAN

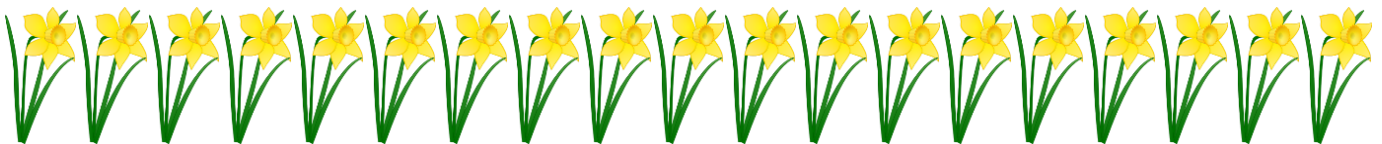
<http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk>

Yw prif sianel gyfathrebu'r Grŵp - defnyddiwch hi i weld mwy o fanylion am y digwyddiadau diweddar a'r rhai sydd i ddod, ac i edrych ar ein llyfrgell sy'n cynyddu'n gyson ac ar nodweddion eraill.

OUR WEBSITE

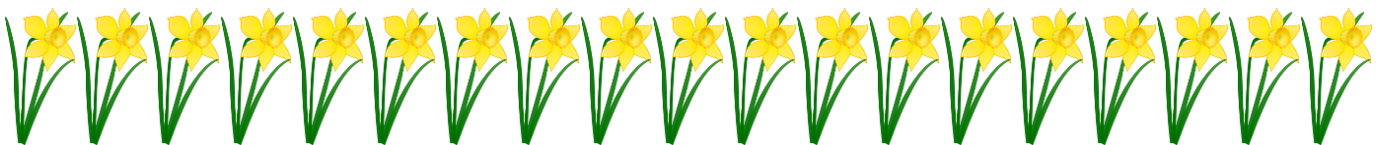
<http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk>

Is the Groups main channel of communication please visit it to see details of recent and forthcoming events and to look at our growing library and other features.



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FROM THE CHAIR

By Janice Dale

Being of a certain age [ok I will admit to being over 21], I decided that there are certain things my brain does want to take on board – one of them being new technology and computers. But after a chance conversation with someone I decided to revisit a piece of work I did many years ago on Cilan farm in Llandrillo. On brushing the dust off this, I realised I might have confused references to the township with Cilan farm.

I then reflected that over the years I had been unconsciously accepting and using the computer applications more and more. It is a long time since doing any research meant going to various archives, I remember only too well lugging giant ledgers at St Catherines House in London looking for BMDs and going to Somerset House for wills.

Like many of you, I now do most of my research sitting comfortably at home as there is now so much online and I regularly use NLW and NLS. Many record office schedules are now online as well; I can create a wish list for when I can get to a RO, or even order them so they are quickly accessible.

There is now one app which even I find useful and found easy to use. A while ago a little icon appeared on the bottom of my computer screen – it turned out to be Copilot, an artificial intelligence programme. Even I found this easy to use – specifically on looking at the Merioneth Lay Subsidy Roll 1292/3 for Cilan township. The book informed me there were 9 paying the tax – not as many as some other townships in the parish. They paid £1 18s 2d as part of the £28 13s 6d for the whole parish. I wondered what the % was. Not an overly difficult thing to work out, but using copilot I got the answer back quicker than I typed the question in. It not only gave me answer [6.66%] but showed me the workings out. There's hope for me yet!

LORD DAFYDD ELIS THOMAS: A Tribute

A Tribute from Richard Cuthbertson

I'm sure most of you will have heard the very sad news that Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas died on February 7th; he was 78. He helped our group in many different ways and he had a genuine passion for the work we do. His passing is a great loss for us, but even more so for Wales to which he devoted his whole life.



I first met Dafydd more than 50 years ago when he was already making a name for himself in the world of Politics. He was born in Carmarthenshire, but moved early to Ceredigion and then on to University at Bangor. He came from a Chapel background in the best sort of way, and carried Christian principles of truth, integrity, and compassion through his whole life. His career was meteoric and when first elected to the Westminster Parliament he was the 'baby of the House'. He was a very attractive character and had no sense of self-importance. Rather he was kind and sympathetic. His interests were legion, but his knowledge of the culture of Wales gave him a bedrock which served him splendidly throughout his whole life. I do not intend to go through

his many Public Appointments and the drive and energy that he brought to the very many Public bodies on which he served. There are many obituaries on the internet which cover his work of public service. He was always more than a CV list.

His thinking developed throughout his whole life and he was not afraid to change his position or his party allegiance. His greatest constant was to be true to himself and to the benefit of Wales and all its citizens, its environment and its culture and language. We shared many long journeys to London and Cardiff, but he was always happiest and most relaxed when we approached home. The greatest Welshmen of the 19th. and 20th. centuries, towering figures such as Lloyd George or Aneurin Bevan, despite their achievements did not materially alter Welsh life, but Dafydd did. I cannot resist the temptation to compare him with Owain Glyn Dwr. That great Prince of Wales wanted an independent State with its own Parliament, its own Universities, and a sustained language and culture to be proud of. He mainly failed in these objectives but Dafydd succeeded and this must be his outstanding epitaph.

We in our little Discovering Old Welsh Houses Group occupy a small corner of that vision. We would not have done so well without his help and encouragement. Let his memory be sacred to us.

Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas was our patron from 2008 to 2020

HOUSES MANAGEMENT DATABASE & THE PARISHES PROJECT

Please note ... The DOWH Database and the Parish pdf file were described by Jane Parry-Evans in DOWH Spring Newsletter, no.48, last year:

<https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/news/Newsletter-No%20048-E.pdf>

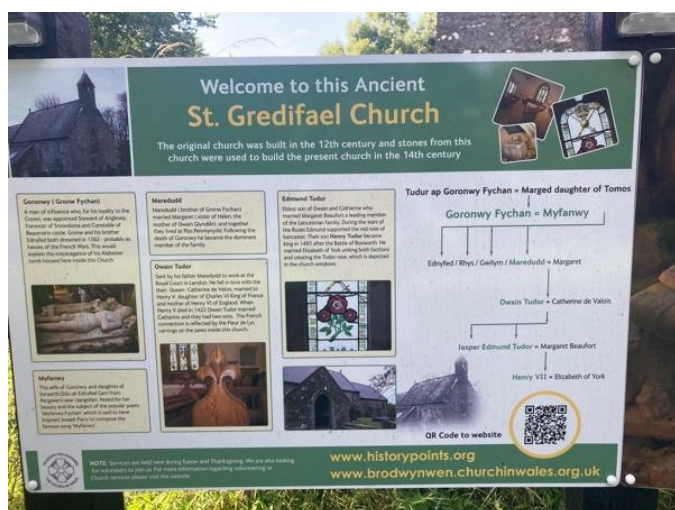
Any members who are interested in accessing the Database and Parish pdf file are welcome to contact Jane via housesdatabase@discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

ANGLESEY BRANCH

Report by Clare Latham and Brenda Simpson

We have been having our usual Winter sabbatical here on Anglesey so no visits to report on, though a few of our members have been back to Anglesey Archives to research their own houses. We are now coming out of Winter hibernation and sorting ourselves out for the 2025 season, kicking off on 16th April with a double guided visit, firstly to St Gredifael's church in Penmynydd with its Tudor connections.



We will then move from the church for a talk and visit to the Penmynydd Alms Houses also known as the Lewis Rogers Almshouses, which are currently disused, but there are plans to bring them back into use for the benefit of local people.

These tiny homes built around 1620, were originally designed to house the destitute of 'good and honest' character and were occupied for the best part of 400 years and managed by trustees. The idea for the almshouses originally come about because of the will of a barber surgeon, Lewis Rogers, who died in London in 1618. Due to a lack of funds in his estate the scheme was taken on and expanded by his friend Lewis Owen – who had been a 'Serjeant of the King's

Larder' to James I'- and is believed to have connections to the Tudor dynasty of Penmynydd. The last residents moved out several decades ago and since then they have remained unoccupied and have fallen into ruin.

In May, we are planning to go 'off island' with a visit to Plasglasgwm near Betws-y-Coed. Built circa 1573 as an estate farm by Dr John Gwynn of the Wynne family of Gwydir, descendants of Owain Gwynedd, last king of North Wales.

Carefully restored by the present owners over the last thirty years, Plasglasgwm, together with its range of agricultural outbuildings and land is an unspoilt example of a farm holding of the sixteenth century. Structural oak timbers in the house have been dated 1571 & 1573. The house features large oak lintel beams to the two chimneys, including, in one, the original brick-lined bread oven. There are also surviving slate floors in parts of the house, oak floor boards, oak beams and ceiling timbers, and evidence of original door and window features.

We are hoping to call at the National Trust site, Ty Mawr Wybrnant on our way back. A 16th century house that is the birthplace of Bishop Morgan who translated the Bible into Welsh.

CAERNARFONSHIRE BRANCH

Unfortunately illness has hampered branch planning, though it is hoped things will be moving on again shortly.

CONWY BRANCH

The Conwy Branch has not held any meetings during January and February but on March 13th Tony Scharer will be giving a talk at the Conwy Library with the title - "Aristocrat and Rogue – the tale of two English settlers in 19th century Betws y Coed."

Gill and Ann completed the history of Plas Ucha in Llanefydd shortly before Christmas. It is Grade II* listed. The report is on the Discovering Old Welsh Houses website in the Conwy section.

DENBIGHSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Jenny Lees

After icy and stormy weather disrupted plans for a January meeting at *Hafod y calch*, Corwen, it was great for our Denbighshire DOWH branch to be joined here on 13th February by members of the Flintshire branch. It was still too cold to comfortably view the property's exterior and outbuildings, but the photo below shows its usual summer south façade!

There was considerable excitement at our *Edeirnion Project* news that we now have isotope dendro-dating results as early as **1417** for *Cadwst*, Llandrillo yn Edeirnion, plus **1424** for the original *hall* and **1425** for the *cross wing* of *Henblas*, Llandderfel! Isotope dating for *Henfaes isaf*, Cynwyd, is also due to be carried out at Swansea University before too long.



Also really exciting was to hear from one of our Flintshire branch members about *Mertyn Hall*, originally in Whitford parish and formerly photographed in perhaps around 2006 on:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mertyn_Hall_near_Holywell_-_geograph.org.uk_-_284950.jpg .

Current Flintshire branch research on its local history is proving fascinating!



House histories are largely completed for *Cadwst*, *Caenog* (Gwyddelwern), *Hafod yr afr* (Cynwyd), *Henblas* and *Henfaes isaf*, but are still awaiting finalised architectural reports. We hope to also complete histories for *Plas isaf* (Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd), *Pant y Llyn* and *Bryn Penllyn* (both near Llandrillo), *Llwyn Lleiaf* (Betws Gwerfil Goch), *Bryn Brith* (Corwen) and *Lleweni*. If you would like to see drafts of research so far on these properties (not including details of current owners unless they want this), do contact me at leesjenny@gmail.com.

DOWH 'Outreach'- so important in encouraging owners to preserve historic features by making them aware of their significance - has been prioritised through personal and online contacts, as well as DOWH publications, and it is pleasing to have been asked by a local council for advice about significant historic properties to include in their own literature.

Regarding specific areas for further research, members mentioned interesting historic properties within an area including the parishes of Llantysilio and Llandegla, in which we hope to soon arrange a DOWH visit. In addition, the whole further north of Denbighshire is a 'Garden of Eden' full of tempting but unvisited historic properties, so do let me know if you could possibly procure a DOWH visit to one of them, and I can make the arrangements!

It was great to have been also invited by Conwy DOWH branch to their event with the talk by Tony Scharer on 13th March, and future meeting venues will include *Brynberllan*, Cynwyd.

FLINTSHIRE BRANCH

Report by Wally and Margaret Barr

Unfortunately, due to the sudden onset of health problems, we will not be able to take an active role in running the Flintshire branch for the foreseeable future. If, in our absence, you feel able to play an active role in organising events for the Flintshire branch do please let us know and we will be very happy to assist in whatever way we can. Please contact us through wallybarr@yahoo.co.uk or phone 01745 888622.

MERIONETH BRANCH

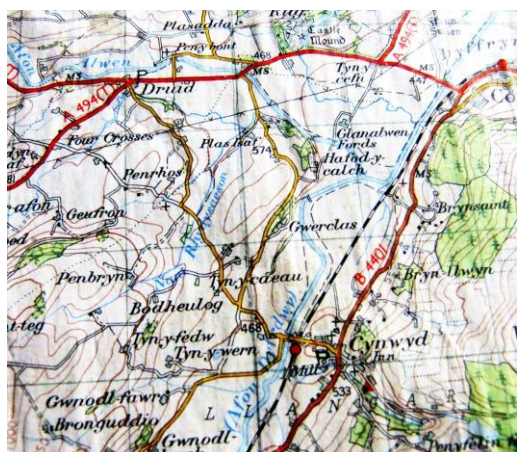
Further plans for branch events are not available at present.

ARTICLE

By Jenny Lees

Eight hundred years of Llangar parish history: Part Three - Hafod y calch

Hafod y calch, known historically as either *Hafod* or *Havod*, lies between the medieval hall house of *Plas Uchaf* and *Gwerclas*, and near the confluence of rivers Alwen and Dyfrdwy. On the 1953 O.S. map below *Plas Uchaf*'s unnamed buildings are marked just below *Plas Isaf*.



The site of *Hafod* was important at an early date, as it lies within an 'outlier' of Carboniferous limestone, and geologist E. Neaverson found surface workings of a medieval quarry there. With its downslope siting thought to be unmistakably medieval in origin, *Hafod* may have been one of the *Llangar* properties forming part of a very extensive 'property portfolio' owned by the **Salesburys** of *Rug* by **1580** - and probably much earlier.¹ By **1703** '*Havod*' already possessed a gentry pew in *Llangar* church, owned then by **Roger Salesbury** of *Rug*, and while a **1747** *Rug* document gives only tenants' names for most estate properties, it specifically names the '*capital messuage called Rug and Demesne lands thereto belonging ... And all that Messuage, Tenement and lands called Havod*'.²

I'm not yet certain why *Havod* was evidently of particular significance to *Rug*, but the **1704** *Llangar Churchwardens' Accounts* listing headed '*Havod Lands*' is interesting. This could refer to older patterns of land ownership around *Havod*, as '*lands*' can mean strips of land or *quilllets* within a *common field* system. Another possibility is that *Havod Lands* were summer pastures for *Rug*, as under the *Welsh Laws* a tract of summer pasture was assigned in every *commote* to the lord and servile tenants, sometimes in the lowlands, and called *hafod-land*.² The *Dyfrdwy* (Dee) valley fields below *Hafod*, which flood during winter months, could have provided such pasture, and before quarry excavation these fields would have rolled on upwards from *Rug* towards *Mynydd Mynyllod* - the **1838** tithe map shows the *Hafod* field *Cae Glas* in separate parts below and above the now overgrown and wooded quarry!

¹ Estate and family records of 'Salisbury of Rhug, co. Merioneth, and Bachymbyd and Pool Park, co. Denbigh, later the barons Bagot, 1243-1801'; including records no.490 and 503.

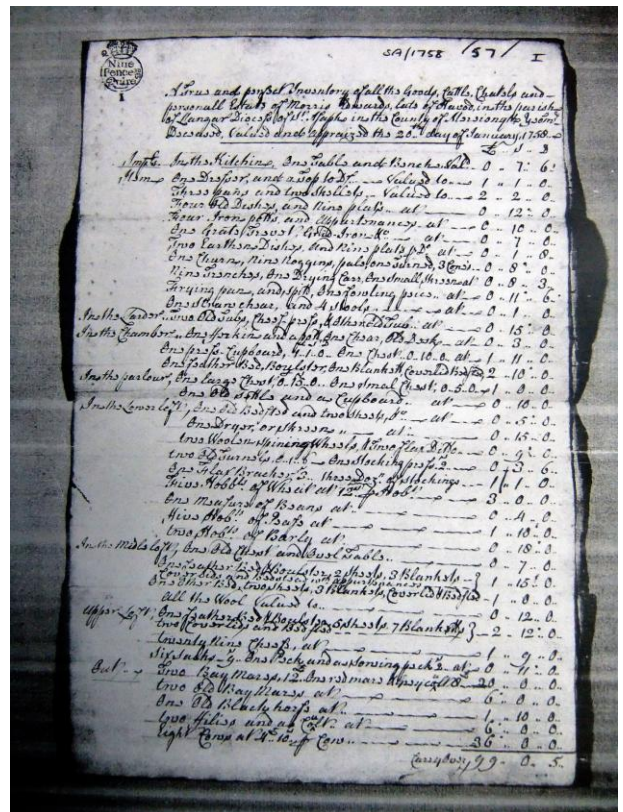
² Alfred N. Palmer and Edward Owen, *A History of Ancient Tenures of land in North Wales and the Marches*



Straight vertical joints on the south front of *Hafod* suggest that before the late Georgian extension the house had become of *lobby entry* type, with a former doorway opening into a lobby at the side of the chimney - later occupied by the present Victorian pantry. Steep slate steps lead down beside this from the present kitchen to the former *parlour*, pictured here with a C17th ceiling beam and central chimney to the left.

(Note however that the fireplace *bressummer* replaced a badly burnt brick arch and beam, discovered on opening the inglenook in 1978).

From the *Llangar Parish Records, Churchwardens Accounts* and Censuses, we can tell who actually lived at *Hafod* from 1729 onwards, when **Elizabeth Maurice of Hafod**, wife of **Rice Pierce** was buried on 3rd January, followed by her husband **Rice Pierce of Hafod** that October. In 1712-1713 a **Rice Pierce** was paid 6 *shillings and 6 pence* for 5 *hobbets and a halfe of lime*, with the churchwarden paying 1s 3d separately for its transport from *Havod* to *Llangar*, and the descendants of **Rice** (or **Rhys**) and **Elizabeth** continued to lease *Hafod*. We can get a fascinating idea of life there from the 1758 *Bond and Inventory*³ of deceased **Yeoman Morris Edwards, Havod, Llangar**, whose possessions are listed [below] in rooms including *Kitchin, Larder, Parlour, Chamber* and *Lower, Middle and Upper Lofts*; probably not 'lofts' in the English sense, as Welsh 'lloff' can mean upstairs room or gallery. All these *Lofts* contained beds and in the *Lower Loft* were 2 woollen and 2 flax spinning wheels; a stocking press; *Three dozn. of stockings*, and *Peas, Wheat, Beans and Barley*. The *Middle Loft* included *All the wool*, and the *Upper Loft* 29 cheeses as well as a pack of seed for sowing.



³ Full transcripts of this, plus references to all the research described in this Newsletter article, are in https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20138_HH_26_Hafod-Y-Calch.pdf See also 'Home Comforts at Hafod y calch' and *Our Farming Heritage: Part One* in *Cynwyd Scrapbook Three*.

Inventory items listed for the *Kitchin* (my transcript from the handwritten document) were:

		£	S	D
One Table and Benchs	Valued at	0	7	6
One Dresser and a Top to Dr. [Dresser]		1	1	0
Three Pans and two Skellets		2	2	0
Four Old Dishes and Nine Plats		0	12	0
Four Iron Potts and Appurtenances		0	10	0
One Grate, Trevet ...Grid Iron &° [etc.]		0	7	0
Two Earthen Dishes and Nine Plats Do. [ditto]		0	1	8
One Churn, Nine Noggins, pals, One [?]Turned, 3 [?] Cone`s		0	8	0
Nine Trenches, One Drying Carr, One Small Skreen		0	8	3
Frying pans (s?) and Spit, One fowling peice		0	11	6
One Straw chear and 4 Stools		0	1	0

The *Noggins* were apparently small cups or mugs, and a *trencher*, probably at this time a roughly cut square or circular wooden plate. The *fowling piece*, a historic firearm designed for shooting of birds, would have been useful with both land and water birds nearby, and the *Chamber* contained *one ferkin and a pott* with chair, desk, *press cupboard*, chest, *feather bed*, *boylster*, *blankett*, *coverlid* and *bedsted*. In the *Parlour* was just a large and small chest with one old bottle and cupboard, whereas by **1765** the *Will and Bond* of Morris`s widow **Margaret Jones** mentions ‘*the best Dresser in the Kitchin and all the Pewter thereupon ...and the little Fruit Cupboard over the Window by the Mantle Piece in the Kitchin*’.

But Morris`s **1758** *Inventory* suggests that his wealth lay in agricultural assets rather than household possessions – *Hafod*’s livestock including 8 horses, 8 cows, 2 oxen, 5 calves and 70 sheep, and also listed are agricultural implements including *plow*, *harrows*, *reaping hooks*, *hedgehook* and *carts*, with 130 *hobbts of Oates in the Barn* plus Wheat, Barley and Peas.



Hafod later became ‘grander’, with an elegant Georgian staircase spiralling up two floors to servants’ attics, capacious cellars and an elevated terrace facing the approach across *Glan Alwen* fords from Telford’s coach road (now the A5). The older house temporarily became a service range for the new house, including upper part servant accommodation, and the 2014 image shows the Georgian extension with behind it the Victorian addition encasing *Hafod*’s oldest parts, and earlier byre and granary opposite. An **1811** date stone on a large cowshed, with window shutters matching those of the house, demonstrated continued expansion of the farm when cattle began to be wintered indoors, needing more or larger

outbuildings. Did the **1777** inheritance left by wealthy *Gentleman Maltster John Williams of Hafod* facilitate this?

Alongside farming activities, in **1849** 'Gwerclas and Havod rocks' were 'the only places in Merioneth producing white lime, where about 50,000 bushels are burned annually ...The argillaceous limestone ... derives its chief value as a manure from being burned with peat, the ashes of which become intermixed with the lime.' By the **1871** Census Hafod was headed by widowed **Jane Jones, Farmer and LIME BURNER** of 180 acres employing 14 Labourers and 2 boys, and the quarry continued to be active until the late 1960s. [right: Hafod lime kilns]



Hafod was still a 'thatched house in repair' in a probably early C19th *Rug* valuation, but by around **1891** the pre-Georgian part of the house was given a new south façade with casement windows, and a north facing 'catslide' extension with bathroom above shaded service rooms where butter was churned and pigs butchered. By **1933** Col. **Robert Vaughan Wynn** of *Rug* leased Hafod y Calch Farm to **Edward Jones**, whose family's fascinating story I explored, together with old portrait photos, in the *Cynwyd Scrapbook Four*⁴ article 'From Cynwyd to Cwm Cynllwyd -and beyond!' In the mid **1950s** Edward's son **Dai Jones**, wife **Betsi** and their young family moved from Hafod to nearby *Plas Isaf* with their farmland holdings changed to exclude Hafod lands across the Alwen (needed by *Rug*), but to include new land on the *Berwyn*.

However, following a late 1960s arson attack largely destroying Hafod's farm buildings, the house itself became empty and vandalised for at least eight years before we purchased it from *Rug* in **1977**, with only a few of over twenty rooms completely habitable! But Hafod largely retains its 19th century 'evolution', as our family has lived here ever since, gradually renovating the house with retention of period detail and saving outbuildings from dereliction!

ZOOM LECTURE SERIES 2025

From our Research Co-ordinator Martin Cherry
ZOOM LECTURE SERIES

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of Peter Smith's Royal Commission volume *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, a book that broke new ground not only for Wales but for the study of traditional buildings in the UK. To celebrate, two talks: one specifically on Peter Smith and his achievement, the other taking a longer perspective over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both will raise questions and queries still left unanswered and in need of further research.

Wednesday 9 April 2025 at 7.00 P.M

Richard Suggett, the doyen of Welsh traditional building studies and more besides will be well known to you all. He trained under Peter Smith at the Royal Commission, where he became Senior Investigator, and has since spearheaded the study of Welsh houses and churches, covering new ground and throwing new light

⁴ Our DOWH Cynwyd book series is readable online as 'Pageflip' books or downloadable at <https://www.discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>

on familiar places. He will speak to us about Peter and his achievement: 'The Man, The Book and The Legacy'.

Wednesday 14 May 2025 at 7.00 P.M Please note change of date from the original announcement.

Duncan James, Architectural historian. - 'The Early pioneers of the study of traditional buildings in Wales and England' Duncan is a leading authority on traditional buildings in England and Wales. He is the author of many studies particularly on the houses and churches of Herefordshire and the Marcher counties. In this talk he will be looking at the some of the leading figures of the nineteenth century but will focus on research in Wales in the twentieth and suggest where future directions of study might lead.

STOP PRESS!

A reminder for your diaries!

DOWH AGM 2025

The DOWH AGM will be held on Tuesday 10th June 2025, at Gwydir Castle, Llanrwst.

And from Peter Masters...

CAERNARFON & DISTRICT HERALD: 1926. POTATO DIGGING AT 102 ...

Mrs. Elizabeth. Williams, Tanybwllch, Llanaelhairn, Carnarvonshire, who will celebrate her 102nd birthday at Christmas, was able to assist her son in digging potatoes on the farm this week. Mrs Williams comes of an old Welsh family. 'She. has twelve children and seventy descendants. Her mother and sister lived to be nearly 100 years, and her son, also from Llanaelhairn, celebrated his golden wedding two years ago.

The Caernarfonshire Farmers Union were shown a 5-shilling piece received from Mrs Elizabeth Williams aged 102 as her first membership fee.

