



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 54 Medi 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, i edrych ar ein llyfrgell sy'n cynyddu'n gyson ac ar nodweddion eraill.

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

NEWSLETTER 54: September 2025

OUR WEBSITE

<http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk>

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

From the Chair – September 2025

This summer we spent two glorious weeks [though far too hot] in Austria, and was reminded that the concept of a 'Ty Hir' was not unique to us, and although not a feature of modern Wales is still common in this part of Europe with stock and people sharing the same roof, with animals kept in at one end of the building and humans living in rooms at the other end, often accessed through a central passage and they farm the land in patches just as we did with farmers having quillies in open field. Even today it is not common to see fenced fields in Austria.



But summer is now over and holiday a fading memory. With the evenings drawing in and nothing worth watching on television, it's time to pick up on furthering what DOWHG is all about - researching old houses. There are still many houses out there worth discovering, so if you know of any do let us know.

Please remember as well that The Discovering Old Welsh Houses Newsletter is a fantastic source of information for us all. So, if you have any ideas or articles you would like to see included in the next edition then do get in touch with us. Perhaps you have been interested in a particular building and would like to tell the group all about it, or there is a particular geographic area or family that you have been researching that has thrown up something really interesting. We are also always really interested in any announcements about upcoming events and activities that are related to what we do as well.

For those doing research, or who haven't yet and want to have a go, here are some websites that are worth a regular look at as they regularly update their contents.

Some time ago I contacted local history groups to see if we could work together, and had this response from Gwynedd FHS.

" We would be more than happy for you to share what we have on offer as a society that may be of interest to your members. I think the best way of sharing it would be to include our website address in your bulletin, with an extra link to all of our branch meetings within. The branch meetings information is currently quite empty but will fill up over the next 2 months, as the branch secretaries upload their programmes for the 2025/6 winter season of events"

<https://www.chtgwyneddfhs.cymru/en/home>

Other sites to keep an eye on include:

Clwyd Family History Society

<https://www.clwydfhs.org.uk/>

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales

<https://rcahmw.gov.uk/>

Archwilio – this provides public access to the Historic Environment Records (HERs) for Wales and is maintained by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts

<http://www.archwilio.org.uk/>

National Library of Wales

[National Library of Wales - Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru](#)

There are of course many other interesting websites including our local archives. If any member knows of other sites – do let the newsletter editors know, and they will make sure that they are included.

Janice Dale

Chair

September was Cadw's Open Doors month with many historic buildings that aren't always open to the public being accessible to all, some that usually have an entry fee being free, and a number of events and talks being carried out.

The details of what was happening in Denbigh were sent out to members and there were lots of things going on there and elsewhere in Wales, so hopefully you all managed to visit at least one property.

As part of the Open Doors month, one of our trustees gave a talk about researching historic houses in Flintshire at the archives in Hawarden which was fully booked and resulted in a lot of interest in what we do.

News and articles from the branches

Due to illness and other life events, at the moment we don't have all our branches operating as usual unfortunately, so if you would like to help with any of these please let us know. You don't have to be a whizz with IT or research and it can be as much about a social event, as doing research or learning about new houses if you want – provided there is some link to historic houses obviously, however tenuous!!

Our Anglesey and Denbighshire branches are doing sterling work though, with the Denbighshire Branch meetings and events having been opened up to Flintshire members.

Summer 2025 – Anglesey Branch

Since our last update we have had two excellent and well attended visits, firstly to Gwenfro Uchaf which was a National Garden Scheme setting, open to groups. This was a last-minute change due to our planned house visit becoming unavailable. However, we had a fantastic afternoon following lunch at Oriel Mon and a visit to the exhibitions on show. We drove over to the garden just outside Llangefni, where our hosts were so generous with their time showing us around their extensive grounds. The sun shone and we wandered around the gardens, which had a lovely Welsh cottage, where we enjoyed tea and cake on a beautiful sunny afternoon.



Our July Visit was to the fabulous Plas Penmynydd, where the Tudor dynasty all began. We were welcomed to the property by the Tudor flag flying at the end of the lane. Sixteen of our members joined us for the visit and we had another lovely sunny afternoon to enjoy this beautiful house and gardens. The owner, Richard gave us all the historical background to the house where Owain Tudor was possibly born, grandfather to Henry VII and then down through the royal lineage to our current Royal family. Richard was very generous with his time giving us the freedom to wander around the house, which defies description really. Everyone really enjoyed this visit staying in the mind long after it finished. We hope the photographs do it justice.



Our final visits of 2025 are as follows:

17th September - Cefn Coch – a 17th century Hall type house, nr Llanfaethlu

15th October- The Tudor Rose house (Castle St, Beaumaris) and Alma House in Beaumaris followed by a visit to The Bull – very historic local hostelry!

Denbighshire Branch Update

The Denbighshire branch have been busy doing lots of house history research and Tyn y Celyn is one house that they've been researching. Here is their report on it.

Tyn y Celyn – one more former hall house for Bryneglwys!



Tyn y Celyn with older house part to the left and 'newer' house to the right (Jenny Lees)

Tyn y Celyn lies near the village of Bryneglwys - now in Denbighshire, but in an area that was once part of the ancient Kingdom of Powys, and within the ancient *commote* of Iâl [Yale]. A recent DOWH architectural visit ¹ suggested an early to mid-16th century origin for the oldest part of *Tyn y Celyn*, with the tie beam illustrated below morticed into cruck 'blades' at each end, and slots for the uprights of a former timber screen or partition below. A 'spur' supporting a rail is also pegged into the right-hand cruck blade, and these features are evidence that the now stone-walled house would have been originally timber-framed.



¹ Visit by Martin Cherry; details in a full DOWH house history to be published later in 2025.

Tyn y Celyn's marked downslope siting suggests it may originally have been a longhouse with a byre or shippon at the lower end, and a drainage cross channel to keep animal waste away from the upper ground floor living quarters (consisting of two rooms divided by the cruck truss). Above this, the upper parts of the cruck pair [below] are carefully preserved under a replaced roof, and signs of smoke-blackening on the crucks suggest that, when still open to the roof, the hall may possibly have been originally heated by an open hearth on the floor.



From previous research we know of several still existing houses, that lay within a few miles of *Tyn y Celyn* in the 16th century. These include *Ty Gwyn*, a 'gentry type' late-medieval hall-house dendrodated by DOWH to originally **1447**,² and *Pentre isaf*, for which DOWH's illustrated *Architectural Record* shows its post-and-panel dais partition with original doorway.³ *Plas yn Iâl*, formerly called *Allt Llwyn Draig Goch*, is also thought to originate from around 1450, and *Caenog*, nearby, but in Gwyddelwern parish, is dendrodated to **1550-52**.⁴ (Interestingly, in **1732** Margaret, daughter of *Gentleman* David Jones of *Ty Gwyn*, married David Vaughan of *Moel Fodig*, son of William Vaughan of *Moel Fodig* and *Caenog*).

Returning to *Tyn y Celyn*, in perhaps the early nineteenth century, the lower end of its old part was replaced by a more commodious house, and we know from the date stamp on a postcard (belonging to the present owner Iâl Parry) that the 'newer' house - now joined to the older part, resembled the image below by 1904. This house appears to have been quite 'grand' at the time, and it has been fascinating trying to find who might have owned the property then!

² https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%2020208_HH%20_40_Ty-Gwyn.pdf

³ See also NPRN (National Monuments Record of Wales) number 27649.

⁴ See '*Caenog – once land of the Cistercians*' in *Cynwyd Scrapbook Five* - online as a 'page flip' book at: <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>



By 1699 Edward Lhuyd, in his book *Parochialia*,⁵ listed thirteen houses for Bryneglwys parish, with *Plas yn Iâl* and *Bryntangor* considered to be 'Houses of Note' (most important at that time), so we initially investigated whether *Tyn y Celyn* could have belonged to either of these estates. By 1615 thirteen-year-old Magdalen Rogers, daughter and heir of John Rogers-Wynne of *Bryntangor*,⁶ was married to 10-year-old future *Baron of Cymer* Humphrey Hughes II of prestigious *Gwerclas*,⁷ probably an early arranged marriage to protect the estate of an heiress in advance of a father's death, and another Bryneglwys connection was the marriage of *Gwerclas* daughter Dorothy Hughes to Captain Thomas Yale of *Plas yn Iâl*.

But by the 1841 *Tithe Apportionment*, although the *Occupier* was **John Jones** with just over 93 acres, *Tyn y Celyn* was owned by another huge landowner, **John Lloyd Salisbury Esquire**.⁸ John had inherited not only nearby *Blaen Iâl*,⁹ but also the huge *Galltfaenan* estate on the 1791 death of his father's cousin Margaret Jones, née Salusbury, who had bequeathed it to him on the condition that he took the surname Salusbury.¹⁰ So *Tyn y Celyn* may previously have been part of the estate of *Blaen Iâl*, in neighbouring Llantysilio parish? The Lloyds of *Blaen Iâl* were descended from *Baron of Gwyddelwern* Elisau ap Gruffydd, born c.1440, with a David Lloyd 'of *Blaen Iâl*' by early C16th, and 'the manor and mansion house of *Penbedw*' purchased from relative **Owen Thelwall of Blaen-Ial** in 1675 - for £1,360!

Whichever estate owned *Tyn y Celyn* before 1841, we know from the 1868 *Poor Law* valuation list that **Townsend Mannering Esquire**, through marriage to John Lloyd Salusbury's daughter **Anna Maria**, was then landowner for *Tyn y Celyn* as well as for nearby *Tal y Bidwal Fawr* and *Fach, Cefn y Bidwal, Ty Helig* and *Ty uchaf*. By 1873 the *Galltfaenan* estate measured 10,686 acres, all in Denbighshire; Townsend's heir was Charles Salusbury Mainwaring, a keen genealogist, but Charles's heir Randle sold *Galltfaenan* in 1926.

⁵ *Parochialia* – at Ruthin archives and also online.

⁶ *Bryn Tangor* does have the 'arch-braced central cruck of a hall house'; photographed by DOWH in 2018, but by then just encased in an agricultural building.

⁷ https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20110_HH_27_Gwerclas-2019.pdf

⁸ Will of John Lloyd Salusbury of Henllan, Denbighshire, (PROB 11/2159/125), 11 September 1852: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D29019>.

⁹ Images of a cruck-framed barn at *Blaen Iâl* are viewable at <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/31676/images>

¹⁰ *Galltfaenan*, Henllan (Denbighshire), was purchased by this branch of the Salusburies of *Lleweni* in C16th.



In the early 1920s *Tyn y Celyn* became the home and farm of **Henry Parry**, followed by his son **Hadyn Parry** and Hadyn's wife **Harriet Livia**, and now their son **Iâl Parry**. Harriet was sister of **William Hughes Jones**, whose fascinating extended family story is told in the articles of DOWH's *Cynwyd Scrapbook Four*,¹¹ with memories and photographs kindly provided by William's daughter **Megan Hughes Tomos**.¹² William's uncle was **Edward Jones** of *Hafod y calch*, subject of another DOWH house history,¹³ and as well as farming *Plas yn ddôl*, William lived as a child at *Tai Mawr, Cwm Main* - later in the 1920s assisting father Lewis Jones at *Gwernbrychdwr* – yet another property with an intriguing history!¹⁴

Tyn y Celyn also lies in an area identified by DOWH as promising for further research – the area between Corwen, Llangollen and Llandegla which also includes the parishes of Bryneglwys, Llansantffraid Glyndyfrdwy (Carrog), Glyndyfrdwy, Rhewl and Llantysilio. Of Lhuyd's 1699 dwellings listed for Bryneglwys parish, buildings with the same or similar names still exist at *Deio, Tal y bidwal bach, Tal y bidwal fawr, Pentre isaf, Tyn y wern, Ty'n y rhos* (or *Plas yn rhos*), *Bryn yr orsedd, Cae Madog uchaf, Ty mawr, Ty Gwyn* and *Y Pant Hoyw*. Some may of course be later buildings on the same sites, but present exciting opportunities for research! *Tyn y Celyn* was not listed by Lhuyd, but as it was presumably there by 1699, it probably had an earlier name.

Space here only permits inclusion of a fraction of the fascinating information we have already gleaned on Tyn y Celyn, which will form part of a fully referenced DOWH house history! The information in this article has been researched and provided by myself, Pam Buttrey, Martin Cherry, Anne Falloon, and by Iâl Parry together with his partner Sarah.

Jenny Lees, 2025.

If you would like to get involved with any of the activities and research carried out by the branches, please get in touch. There is often tea and cake involved!

¹¹ *Cynwyd Scrapbook Four*, online at <https://www.discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/page18.html>

¹² William's own memoirs can also be read in his Welsh books *Casglu Cwysi*, 1989, Gwasg Carreg Gwalch.

¹³ https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/den%20138_HH_26_Hafod-Y-Calch.pdf

¹⁴ https://discoveringgoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/mer%20059_HH_41_Gwernbraichdwr.pdf

DENDROCHRONOLOGY IN NORTH WALES: SPOTLIGHT ON THE EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY

When Margaret Dunn founded the Beddgelert History Society, the precursor of DOWH, in 2000 to study the historic houses scattered across the local landscape, she hoped dendrochronology would help develop a more reliable timeline and when two houses dated, everyone involved 'got hooked on dating more'. And how right she was! We've been hooked on dating ever since: over 150 buildings have been tree-ring dated in the north (representing over 200 building phases). Where has it got us? A new dependable tree-ring date always thrills owners and researchers alike and it helps develop the Welsh building chronology: the more individual tree-ring dates we have, the better the chance of dating buildings in the future. It helps deepen our understanding of climate change over recent centuries. And it helps us refine—if not always answer—some of the big historical questions. Two of the most exciting new discoveries are discussed below.

Among the most interesting dates obtained recently show considerable building activity in both town and countryside during the early decades of the fifteenth century. The dearth of tree-ring dated houses prior to 1400 has plausibly been explained by the ravages of the war of independence between the followers of Owain Glyndŵr and the English king. It may be stretching credibility to argue that everything was destroyed - there are churches in Wales with eminently flammable thirteenth-century roofs still standing. It is known from documentary and archaeological evidence that smaller-scale peasant cruck-framed houses were the norm - one fourteenth-century source records that a cruck fell on a man and killed him, presumably during assembly - but none may be seen today: perhaps the crucks were earth-fast and rotted away. Archaeology suggests that the halls of the *llysau* of the Welsh princes were aisled, and perhaps memories of this tradition passed down through the generations: conceivably one or two may still have been standing in the early 1400s. But we might be looking for the wrong things. The population of Wales was tiny in the fourteenth century, barely a quarter of a million, and the number of elite houses (those most likely to survive) would always have been very small. Even so, Wales had the densest concentration of castles of any country in Europe, perhaps as many as 750 overall. Not all of these would still have been occupied in 1400, of course, but many possibly were. Glyndwr's house at Sycharth, so affectingly described by Iolo Goch, was in effect a castle with a motte and bailey, a hall probably situated in the bailey, and the whole complex set among gardens, orchards, vineyards and a hunting park. Mottes adjacent to houses known to have been occupied in the fourteenth century are quite numerous and it is certain that some of the leaders of regional society in the fourteenth century lived in stone castles rather than wooden houses.

But there is something in the idea of a great rebuilding after the Glyndŵr war especially in such places as Ruthin and Conwy, both attacked by Glyndŵr and Edeirnion, where widespread destruction is documented. Prince Hal (the future Henry V) boasted that he had laid waste a fair and prosperous land there. Recent tree-ring dates confirm this picture. Aberconwy House (Conwy, 1420d) was until recently the earliest tree-ring dated town house in Wales, built by a merchant as Conwy picked itself up after the war: substantial damage and the costs of repairs are recorded in the royal accounts. Aberconwy has been displaced in the charts by Gorphwysfa in Ruthin, an open hall and cross wing house dated 1413/14d. Ruthin shows every sign of a town finding its feet again, a process carefully nurtured by its lord (and Glyndŵr's arch enemy), Lord Grey of Ruthin. His great stone castle in the town still stands and he built a fine new timber-framed court house (1421d) and encouraged his tenants and neighbours to build and regenerate the town (Nantclwyd 1434/5d and more in the 1450s and '60s). We know little about the pre-1400 houses of Ruthin; perhaps they were flimsy and vulnerable to conflagration. But contemporary references to destruction often contained

an element of special pleading and the manorial court rolls show little interruption in the legal and commercial life of the town. The extensive rebuilding most likely reflects a period of renewed confidence and prosperity.

Gorphwysfa, Ruthin, the earliest scientifically dated town house in Wales: 1414



Exterior. The hall to the left and the cross wing to the right



The framing of the wing, robust carpentry but strangely unadorned: was this an aesthetic choice or was the house built in a hurry?



The end wall of the open hall which was heated by a louvre.

In the countryside, a parallel rebuilding was taking place. As Richard Suggett has pointed out, large, ambitious cruck-framed houses of the first half of the fifteenth century appear on the scene, as it were, fully formed and they seem never to have reused timber from earlier buildings. They are not experimental or tentative but emerge from a well-established tradition, both in terms of plan and construction technique. But as Peter Smith observed, it's not a Welsh tradition. The houses are more akin to those of Lancashire and the English border counties from where many of the Englishmen appointed to govern North Wales originated—Puleston, Stanley, Bulkeley, Salesbury to name a few. These men exerted enormous power, not only by virtue of the local posts they held, but also by marrying into powerful local dynasties, buying and inheriting estates and cultivating a keen interest in Welsh customs and literature. This created a political climate that favoured cooperation rather than conflict and many (perhaps, prior to the Wars of the Roses, most) posts below the highest (such as sheriff) were held by native Welsh, some tracing their lineage back to the age of the princes.

As a result of a recent DOWH-led dendrochronology project in Edeirnion we have identified the two earliest gentry houses in North Wales. Cadwst, Llandrillo (Denbighshire, formerly Merioneth) was

built in 1417*i*. It follows one of the classic medieval forms with a 2-bay open hall divided by a monumental full cruck with storeyed ends in alignment.



Cadwst, Llandrillo, Denbighshire (formerly Merioneth)

Henblas, Llandderfel (Merioneth) was built in the mid-1420s. The timbers of the hall were felled in 1424*i* and those of the wing in 1425*i*, and this probably represents a single building campaign in 1425 or 1426 (built while the wood was still green and pliable). The hall preserves what was once a common feature, but which rarely survives, a set of three doorways leading from the passage into the service area and detached kitchen. The former commote of Edeirnion (the easternmost part of historic Merioneth), retained a high degree of Welsh autonomy from the Edwardian settlement to the 1530s: like nearby Plas Uchaf, Cynwyd (1435*d*), now owned by the Landmark Trust, these houses possibly belonged to two of the barons of Edeirnion who, sensing the changing tide, rapidly switched their allegiance to the crown.



Henblas, Llandderfel, Merioneth. The screens passage truss of 1424: a rare survival—the central doorway probably led into a passage leading to a detached kitchen, the other two into service rooms or a buttery and small private parlour.

Further research in the national archives and another campaign of dendrochronology is being planned.

** NOTE The convention is to add 'd' to a date derived from ring-width dendrochronological assessment; 'i' indicates the date is derived from stable oxygen isotope assessment. Tree-ring sampling and ring-width analysis were carried out by the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory (Dan Miles, Martin Bridge, Ross Cook) and the University of Swansea Dendrochronology Laboratory (stable isotope analysis by Neil Loader and Danny McCarroll). Analysis of Gorphwysfa was carried out as part of the Ruthin Dendrochronology Project: dating by Tree-Ring Services (Andy Moir), building analysis by Archaeodomus (Ross Cook).*

Dendrodated buildings from the first half of the fifteenth century in North Wales

c. 1385	Basingwerk Abbey, Flintshire. Trusses removed from gatehouse. The earliest dated timber domestic range in Wales.
1413/14	Gorphwysfa, Castle St., Ruthin. Box-framed open hall and cross wing. Earliest complete town house in Wales.
1417	Cadwst, Llandrillo, Denbs. Cruck-framed 2-bay open hall and storeyed ends. The earliest gentry house in North Wales.
1417/18-20	Aberconwy House, Conwy. Merchant's town house, stone with timber-framed jettied 1 st floor.
1421	Old Court House, Ruthin. One of the earliest bespoke courts in Britain. Timber-framed.
1424/5	Henblas, Llandderfel, Mer. Gentry house with cruck-framed open hall and box-framed cross wing. The passage screen with its three doorways to the service area is rare.
1430	Ty-coch, Llangynhafel, Denbs. Cruck-framed gentry open hall house.
1429-30, 1432	Hafod, Rhiwlas, Llansilin, Denbs. Major gentry aisled hall house.
1434/35	Nantclwyd House, Ruthin. An elaborate multi-phased timber-framed town house.
1440, 1441	Y Faner, Llanelltyd, Mer. Unusual plan; possibly monastic guest house.
1441/2	Castle St. Conwy. Jointed cruck town house, possibly a merchant's house although later occupied by the vicar of Conwy.
1447	Ty-gwyn, Bryneglwys, Denbs. Full cruck-framed gentry house with distinctively carved king post.
1438-1446/7	Hengoed, Llanfwrog, Denbs. Substantial gentry hall house. Some 496 rings were measured in one cruck—note the name of the house!

Martin Cherry, 2005

** Have you found a feature in a house or its garden or outbuilding, that you'd like to know more about? We are going to start having a feature on 'features' in the newsletter, so please let us know if there is anything you think we should include. **

Our long-term Webmaster Peter Masters has had to step down due to ill health. We are sad to lose his expertise and dedication to all things IT and wish him a speedy recovery.

FOR YOUR DIARIES.

Here is the programme for the next few zoom lectures for 2025-6.

Wednesday 8 October at 7 pm: Paul Davis, a professional surveyor and author of the highly acclaimed *Forgotten Castles of Wales*, notable for its stunning graphics.

Houses in the Hills: dendrochronology and the farmhouses of upland Gwent

An opportunity to learn about the results of a survey of historic farmhouses (backed up by a programme of tree-ring dating) that were built before the heavy industrialisation of the Valleys—an area largely neglected in the classic study of Monmouthshire by Fox & Raglan.

Wednesday 19 November at 7pm: Dr James January-McCann, the Place Names Officer for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

Collecting place names in the north.

James will explain the work of the Royal Commission, which maintains the statutory List of Historic Place Names, an invaluable source for historians and anyone with an interest in Wales's heritage and landscape. How useful are place and field names in understanding the development of estates and farmsteads? We should soon find out!

Wednesday 10 December at 7pm: Nathan Goss, Director Nathan Goss Conservation

Breathing life back into Strata Florida

The great Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida is well looked after by Cadw but some of the buildings around it have fared less well. Working with the Strata Florida Trust, Nathan who runs one of the leading conservation companies in Wales, explains the thinking behind saving the buildings and bringing them back into new educational uses.

Wednesday 14 January at 7 pm: Dr Liz Green, the Senior National Curator, Architectural History, at the National Trust.

Architectural History in the National Trust

The National Trust is one of the power houses for research in architectural history—on buildings, furnishings, landscapes and the way buildings were used—and Liz has a unique overview in that her responsibilities extend over both Wales and England.

Keep an eye on your emails for additions to these, so that you don't miss any!

