

Notes from Local Interest Group 30th January 2020

Present: Maureen (ML) & Ken Lloyd, Wendy & Dainis Ozols, Cherry & Victor Williams, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Ruby Bagley, David & Anwyn Price, Val Price, Evelyn Bally, Neville & Pat Harley, Iris Lloyd, Joan Lloyd, Sue Farmer, Donald & Gladys Lloyd, John & Margaret Price, Afan & Dot Jones, Huw Jones, Grace Davies, Richard Thomas, Juliet & John Lewis

Apologies: Clare Jones, Lucy Trench, Richard Harris, Jenny Francis

ML welcomed everyone, remarking on the very good attendance, and then introduced Cherry Williams, our speaker for the evening. She and Cherry would like to acknowledge the invaluable help that they have had from: Afan & Dot Jones, Donald & Gladys Lloyd, Ken & Val Price, Mickey & Joy Farmer, Huw & Clare Jones and John & Margaret Herdman. To all of them, very many thanks. ML will contribute "extras" throughout Cherry's talk.

Glanyrafon from the early 1800s

Cherry began by saying that "glan" means river bank and "afon" means river and the farm is aptly named with its location on the Bach Howey in the parish of Llanbedr. Today the "Glanyrafons" are known as Glanyrafon, Groesvaen and Fron Howey, but it was not always so.

ML talked briefly about a deserted settlement which is thought to be located in one of the fields to the SE of the farm buildings at Glanyrafon. An aerial photo, taken in 2010, shows earthworks at the lower end of this field, probably a rectangular longhouse, measuring approximately 15m from north to south. The photo shows this as a visible soil mark when part of the field was ploughed, but there is no evidence of this building on the ground. ML went on to say that this could be the remnants of an ancient settlement and that it is possible that there has been a habitation at Glanyrafon for many hundreds of years.

Cherry continued by showing us the 1841 census data for the farm, which is referred to as Llanyrafon. At this time, the Rev Richard Lloyd, "farmer", was living there with his family – daughter and two sons – as well as four servants. Richard (aged 35) was born in Gwenddwr and he had been the pastor at Llanbadarn-y-Garreg before coming to farm at Glanyrafon. When Richard Lloyd moved to Glanyrafon he formed the only non-conformist chapel between Maesyrnnon and Llanbadarn-y-garreg, a distance of 12 miles. His congregation grew to such an extent that services were held at both Glanyrafon and the Wern, near Rhosgoch. It was not until 1839 that Hermon Chapel, Rhosgoch, was founded and at a similar time the primitive Methodist chapel in Painscastle became Congregational.

Richard died in November 1845 at the age of 41 and is buried at Maesyrnnon Chapel; there are memorials to him and his wife, Mary (who predeceased him in 1840 aged 38), in the chapel. Their three children who died in infancy and a daughter who died when she was 18 are also remembered there.

ML then showed us the Tithe Map of 1847. The farms which are the subject of this talk were then in the ownership of three different people, Thomas Lowden (who had two of the four "lots"), Walter deWinton and Thomas Weare. The plots owned by Lowden (down by the river) were actually occupied by William Sheen (who had 115 acres) and Tomas Lloyd (who had part of Glanyrafon Meadow). The deWinton plot (53 acres) was occupied by Thomas Tuck and the Weare plot (51 acres) by William Sheen. Cherry said that in 1841 there is a record of William Sheen living at Perthycoley, Bryngwyn. William died in 1848, aged 60, at Glanyrafon and by the time of the 1851 census Septimus Sheen had taken over as head of the family there. Septimus (the seventh son) was married to Hannah (née Smith from The Hom, Clyro) and they had living with them their two young sons, his widowed mother, four

farm servants and two house servants. Septimus and Hannah had married in 1846 and it appears that they started their married life at Glanyrafon. (Cherry added that the Sheen families in Radnorshire are all connected and she has traced this direct line back to 1660. However, in a book about the surnames of Wales, 1813-1837, the name Sheen was almost totally confined to the Colwyn Hundred in South Radnorshire.) It would appear that Septimus was "converted" by Rev Richard Lloyd whilst he was still a teenager and Cherry read a section from his "In Memoriam" which said that his "conversion was real, for he turned out a consistent, earnest and zealous Christian disciple and worker."

In the 1861 census, Septimus and Hannah were still at Glanyrafon, with their son, Henry, and three daughters, as well as two house servants, one agricultural labourer, one carter and a cowman. By the 1871 census, the workers had been reduced to two farm servants, but the children were still living with them. By 1881, the household had been reduced to Septimus and Hannah, one daughter and 4 farm servants. Henry had returned to the household by 1891.

Henry Sheen had been to Aberystwyth University and, later, he was a JP, a Radnorshire County Councillor and the first Radnorshire District Councillor. He was also a poet and hymn writer and Cherry has a copy of a book of poems that he published (in 1909), called "Heather Bells". In addition, he was a preacher and at some stage he changed from the Church to the Chapel. In 1911, Henry (then aged 61) married a woman half his age; he was obviously besotted and this is obvious from a poem he had written about her.

Henry's father, Septimus, died at the age of 74 in 1893, and he is buried at Hermon Chapel in Rhosgoch. A very long and fulsome "In Memoriam" says that "his coffin was handsome and substantial" (obviously a sign of his importance). It says that he had served as Deacon and Treasurer of his Congregational Church for years and that he taught at Sunday School. Cherry read some extracts from the "In Memoriam", including a section which said he was "not a drone in the hive, but a labourer in the vineyard.....He never attributed his success in life to his own exertions, but his words were "God has been good to me".

After Septimus died, his eldest daughter, Margaret (46), her husband, Thomas Lloyd, and five of their ten children returned to farm at Glanyrafon. They had previously been at The Bush, Brilley. Margaret and Thomas appear on the 1901 and 1911 censuses. However, Thomas died in 1911 (aged 62), leaving Margaret as head of the household; she died in 1928 aged 76. Both are buried at Hermon Chapel.

Glanyrafon was on the Maesllwch Estate (there was some link between the deWintons and Thomas Lowden). After WW1, in May 1919, the estate was sold off in lots at the Drill Hall in Hay on Wye. Glanyrafon (116 acres) and Noyadd Gristley (107 acres) were lots 1 and 6 respectively.

In the sale brochure, Glanyrafon farmhouse is described as stone and slate with rooms on the ground floor, which included offices, and five bedrooms. There were many farm buildings including: open cart shed, pigs' cot, cow house with granary over, barn, beast house, calves' cot, five-stall stable and three-bay French barn. Detached from the main buildings were: cart and implement shed, root house, two beast houses and a calves' cot. (Cherry thinks that this must be Groesvaen buildings.) Noyadd Gristley was described as "Sheep Walk, Enclosed Lands and Cottage and Gardens". The Lloyd family bought and farmed Lots 1 and 6 (ie Glanyrafon and Noyadd Gristley) with Gordon Samuel Lloyd (Cherry's great uncle) at the helm until 1936 when the farms were purchased by Radnorshire County Council for £3800.

Cherry told us a little about her great uncle Gordon Samuel. He was, apparently, the first man in the Painscastle area to own a car, a Ford Model T, although others claim the same accolade! He was Superintendent of the Sunday School and would have 30-40 children attending each week. It was also said that he was very generous and would buy sweets for the children when he went to the village shop. When he sold the farms to the Council, he, his brother Martin and his sister Maggie moved to Mortimer's Cross where they lived out their lives.

After WW1, there was an urgent need to provide smallholdings, especially for returning servicemen. Radnorshire County Council divided their purchase into three holdings, known today as Glanyrafon, Groesvaen and Fron Howey.

Glanyrafon was a homestead and nine fields, totalling 57 acres. The first tenant was Reggie Sheen Lloyd (Gordon Lloyd's nephew). He was followed, in 1940, by John Henry Lloyd. In 1952, Alwyn Jones took over the tenancy and he was followed by his son, Afan, in 1982 and his grandson, Huw, in 2008.

Groesvaen was described as a new build with old existing barn and buildings. It had eight fields and some hill land, totalling 83 acres in all. The first tenancy was allocated to E Garnett Davies, but he died before coming to the farm. So, the first resident tenant was actually Walter Morgan, followed by William Alfred Lloyd (Cherry's father) in 1945 and Mickey Farmer in 1995.

Fron Howey (a second new build) had 86 acres. The first tenant here was W T Morgan from the pub in Painscastle, then known as the Maesllwch Arms, followed by his son Hugh. They were followed by Ken Price in 1964 and then Mark Bowkett in 2018, when Ken and Val retired and moved to Painscastle village.

Cherry then explained that the next part of her talk would consist of her own memories, together with those of people who lived or still live at the three holdings.

Glanyrafon

Between 1940 and 1952, John (Jack) Lloyd, his wife Rene and their son, Donald, were the tenants. John was the brother of Tom Lloyd who lived at The Castle in Painscastle and Nancy Price, Pencaenewydd. Donald has talked to Cherry at length about his time at Glanyrafon. Sadly, his father was not in good health and died in 1950, aged only 31. As a result, Donald spent a good deal of time living at The Castle with his uncle. He remembers that, at Glanyrafon, the water came from a well at the back of the house and that there was a pool in the middle of the farmyard. They had two carthorses, Madam and Darby, and his father also kept a stud stallion; people would bring their mares to Glanyrafon for breeding. Donald recalls when a Fordson tractor arrived in the mid-1940s. They farmed Hereford and cross bred cattle and Clun Forest and Cheviot sheep. At one time, they had an Italian PoW staying and working on the farm, in common with many other local farms. He thoroughly enjoyed fishing in the Bach Howey. There were not many farm buildings, but they did have a deep litter house for poultry. When his father died, his mother remarried and, in April 1952, they had a dispersal sale, before moving. Diverse items are listed for sale, including tractors, a mowing machine, a horse rake, swathe turner, turnip drill, and many others.

Since 1952, the tenancy of Glanyrafon has been held by three generations of the Jones family, Alwyn, Afan and Huw. Alwyn and his family moved here from Dolybongham, Llowes. As well as farming, Alwyn did pig killing and he was active in the local tug of war, coaching the very successful Rhosgoch team. He was also a champion hedger, teaching this skill at Clyro Court School and to the YFC. In addition, he was a good singer and was in several choirs.

Afan and his wife Dot took over the farm from his father in 1982, retiring in 2008. He told Cherry that it was a good farm – the ground was good in dry times, but it could get wet. When he was younger, there was always a horse on the farm, and they stocked with sheep, cattle and the odd pig or two. 1.5 acres of the farm's land are across the river in Llandewi Fach parish, and this gives the farm rights on the Begwns. Afan said that the well that Donald can remember is still functional, but that the pool in the yard has been filled in.

Huw and Clare Jones now live at Glanyrafon. Huw farms sheep – Texels and Beltex Cross. He produces a large number of rams each year. The land that was once Noyadd Gristley is now attached to Glanyrafon (the sheep walk). Recently, Huw and Clare have undertaken improvements to the house, revealing many old features, such as an impressive inglenook fireplace; Huw told us that the beam

above the fireplace is 14 feet long. There is a fascinating cobble floor in the "cellar", which Donald remembers from his childhood. Wood panelling has been stripped back and doors discovered. Afan thinks that the house could date back to the 1500s and it may have been added to, possibly having been built in three stages. Huw said that he thinks that there was a farriery there at some stage. However, no-one is sure where the meeting house (used by Rev Richard Lloyd and his congregation) might have been.

Groesvaen

Cherry told us that her father, William Alfred Lloyd, came to Groesvaen from New House, Painscastle, in 1945. He was the second tenant of the farm and his father, Septimus Lloyd, acted as guarantor for the rent. There were just over 83 acres and the yearly rent was £80. She showed us a copy of the original agreement, which stipulated a number of strict rules relating to the tenancy, such as keeping the holding free of weeds and well manured. The family started farming with 36 sheep, four cattle and a horse. The house had been built in the 1930s, it had three bedrooms and two small living rooms, a small kitchen with pantry and a larder with a salting stone. It was pretty basic in terms of facilities and always very cold, but it had one distinguishing feature, its round window.

The road boundary ran from the Sand Quarry to the bottom of Tuck's Allt. This narrow roadway was called "Watery Lane" by the local roadman Vernon Davies, which was an apt moniker because water coming off the fields belonging to Lower Lundy and Fron Howey would fill the road and flow all the way down to Glanyrafon, causing much erosion in the process.

At Groesvaen, Cherry remembers that there were some old stone buildings on three sides of an enclosed yard, but whether there was ever a dwelling there no-one knows. Old maps show the name Croesvaen (eg a map of 1831); could this be an indication that there was more here than simply farm buildings? Cherry speculated about the meaning of the name; "Croes/Groes" can mean "cross" or "crossroads", and Clare Jones said that "vaen" could mean "stone" (a mutation of "maen"). Could Groesvaen therefore mean "stone cross"?

There was a large barn, some cowsheds with a range joining the barn, more animal housing and general sheds, together with a stone water trough. There was also a new steel French barn. At the bottom of the range, in the floor of the stone barn, was a dipping tub and people from the local area would bring their sheep here to be dipped.

Cherry's main memories of the farm mainly date from before she was 11 years old, because from then on she was only home at the weekends, later leaving to follow her career path. She remembers that the family did eventually replace the Tilley lamp and candles with gas, then electricity from their own generator and finally mains electricity. They eventually got a Rayburn to take over from the black lead grate, but the house did not seem to get much warmer! The Council also installed a bath in the kitchen, which was a little bizarre!

There were many sheep, cows (mostly Hereford cross Shorthorn or Hereford cross Friesian), suckler calves, a pig, a few hens and always horses. Cherry remembers a mare called Little Mary who won many races.

Her father was very active in the community. He killed and cut up pigs for people and, furthermore, he was always on the Painscastle Show and Sports Committee.

Groesvaen was a mixed farm and it had "good ground" near the house. The hill ground of Noyadd Gristley was ideal for sheep. They grew crops and fed pulped mangolds to their cattle over winter. They also grew corn and black sprig oats. All the hedges were cut by hand with a hook. Cherry's father was known to be a good shearer and he "shored Radnorshire style". Harvesting was very hands-on, but later he bought a Massey Harris baler and was much in demand locally as a result. Cherry also

remembers when the Lister Elevator arrived because this put an end to the hard work of pitching bales up into the barn.

As the family grew, William diversified and started a livestock haulage business with his brother, Trevor Lloyd of Upper Lundy, and his nephew, Ken Lloyd. This kept them all very busy.

Sadly, William died in 1975 and Cherry's mother continued at Groesvaen until 1995, when the farm tenancy passed to Mickey and Joy Farmer. This tenancy was for just 40 acres, the hill ground at Noyadd Gristley being added to Glanyrafon. The Farmers keep sheep and Mickey also runs a busy agricultural contracting business. The house is now double glazed and has a decent heating system.

Fron Howey

In the 1940s, Hugh Morgan followed his father, William Morgan from the Maesllwch Arms, with the tenancy of Fron Howey. Hugh and his wife Eileen had the farm until 1964, and they raised a family of six there. By this time, Hugh had bought The Bailey at Bryngwyn and so the family moved on.

In 1964, Ken Price of Llanbachowey was allocated the tenancy and he moved to Fron Howey in 1965 with his wife Val. The farm was still 86 acres but, initially, there were not many outbuildings, just a cowshed and a French barn. Over the years, Ken added to these. He kept sheep and cattle and Ken says that it was "a good sheep farm". However, there is a good deal of steep ground facing the sun and the soils are shallow and the ground rocky in places. This meant that the land became "burned" very badly in bright sunshine and would take a long time to recover. Over the years, Ken improved about 30 acres of rough ground and turned it into good grazing land, quite a task on such steep slopes.

The water supply for all three dwellings (Glanyrafon, Groesvaen and Fron Howey) has always come from Fron Howey's top ground but, because there was never a good supply, frequent shortages have been an issue.

In 2018, Ken and Val retired and moved to Painscastle village. The tenancy was taken over by Mark Bowkett. Mark works full time during the week and so most of the farm work gets done in the evenings and at weekends. Cherry remarked that this is a sign of changing times within the farming community.

To conclude, Cherry said that she still has a mystery to solve and that is why Groesvaen is marked on all of the old maps even though there were just farm buildings there. She feels that the place might hold some greater significance and that this requires further research on her part.

She also said that, in her family, the name Septimus has had "a good run", and there are many more in the extended Sheen family. Her great, great grandfather was Septimus Sheen, her grandpa Lloyd was Septimus and her father had a brother called Septimus Sheen Lloyd. Maybe he should have been Septimus Septimus, because he was the seventh son of a seventh son!

ML thanked Cherry for her most fascinating and illuminating talk, which was interlaced with slides, poetry, stories and maps, keeping us all entertained. A lot of hard work and extensive research had gone into the preparation of the evening's talk and we all showed our gratitude in the usual manner.

Refreshments were served by Avryl Lloyd and Iris Lloyd and there was a good deal of chat afterwards in what appeared to be a Glanyrafon reunion. A most enjoyable evening had been had by all.