

Notes from Local Interest Group Meeting 22nd September 2016

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), Tim Francis, John Price(Hay) (JPH), Jenny Francis, Mike and Val Head, Doreen James, Sue Farmer, Wendy and Dainis Ozols, Edwina Griffiths, Gareth Jenkins (GJ), Jude Hurn, Richard Thomas, Roy and Avryl Lloyd, Deri Jones, Richard Harris, Grace Davies, Sue and Phil Griffiths.

Apologies were received from: Richard Martin, Peter and Pauline Spode, Gwyneth Guy (GG).

ML welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the purpose was to tie up some of the strands from the summer's visits.

1. Chapels

This item was led by JPH. He has found some more information about the local chapels with help from GG. The first came from the Transactions of the Radnorshire Society (TRS) (Vol 25 1955) and an article called "Dissent in Radnorshire" which shows a record with a date of 17th September 1791. This lists places registered as dissenters' meeting places and includes reference to "the ground and house of Thomas brothers, called Rhosgoch, parish of Bungwyn" (sic). Could this be Horn Castle? The next mention came from a National Library of Wales journal (1963) and it says that "20 ranters" from Clyro worshipped at Llanbedr Painscastle in 1829-30, (a total of 40). It also says that there was no meeting house at Bryngwyn. The next piece of information again was from the TRS, Vol 21 1951, "The Rise and Spread of Non-conformity in Radnorshire" and this explains the term "ranter". They were Primitive Methodists, who split from the Wesleyan Methodists in the early 19th century. Their enthusiasm is what earned them the name "Ranters". JPH then went on to tell us a little about Charles and John Wesley. On 4th May 1743, John Wesley came to Builth, at the invitation of the rector of Maesmynys, Mr Phillips where he preached, with Marmaduke Gwynne and Marmaduke Prothero (Justices of the Peace) standing each side of him. Charles Wesley married Sarah Gwynne, the daughter of Marmaduke Gwynne of Garth in 1749.

A daughter of Marmaduke Protheroe married John Jones of Llanfared, later an early Welsh Moravian, who was a member of the Moravian Society in Rhosgoch (Radnorshire) and by circa 1790 was an assistant pastor for the Leominster congregation. *The Moravian Church is one of the oldest Protestant denominations in the world and was founded in the early 15th century in Bohemia (present day Czech Republic) by Jan Hus.* John Wesley was a member of the Moravian church for a short time after his evangelical conversion in London, May 1735, after returning from an unsuccessful appointment in Savannah, Georgia Colony, America.

In the Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Field Club, Vols. 10-14, (1915) there is mention of Moravian services being held in Rhosgoch, at a farmhouse then called 'The Rest' and now called 'The Horn. (Credit to Ginny Guy for finding this information)

JPH went on to show us a copy of an article from The Hereford Times, 20th March 1847, which recorded two meetings held in the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Painscastle, kindly lent for this occasion to the *Congregational* Church of Glanyrafon for the ordination of the Rev Henry Jones as Pastor.

JPH then posed the question, "when did the Primitive Methodists leave their chapel in Painscastle and when did the Congregationalists move in?" The History of Congregationalism 1912, Page 199, states, "A little later than 1849 the Primitive Methodist chapel at Painscastle was offered for sale and

purchased by the Congregationalists". Information from the Religious Census of 1851 shows information about the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Painscastle and states that it was erected in 1828 and that average attendance was 25. The preacher was Thomas Jones, Pencwm. Another record (Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent, 13th March 1852), shows that there were 35 worshippers at the chapel. There is also mention of the Adulam Chapel (Baptist) with a congregation of 80, Hermon Chapel (Independent), Rhosgoch, with 100 and Moriah, Llandeilo Graban (Baptist) also with 100. The dates of erection are also given: Adulam – 1848, Painscastle PM – 1827, Hermon – 1849 and Moriah – 1832. We were shown some photos of the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Painscastle; it has now been sold and is being converted into a holiday let. Avryl Lloyd said that the foundation stone from the chapel had been removed from the building and was in safekeeping.

ML thanked JPH for all of his work and said that there was still much to be discovered about the chapels.

2. Mills

This item was also led by JPH. He showed us a record from A History of Radnorshire, showing a catalogue of the Crown Lands in the county. This shows that the tenant of Melyn Hothnant was Richard Biddle; the gross annual rent was 3s 4d. Another document clearly states that Rhosgoch Mill was formerly called "Hodenant Water Mill" and that the "Inventory of Crown Lands" in 1784 mentions this and also that he was 1 year in arrears. In 1939 the owner was Mr William Powell (85 years old) and he inherited the mill from his uncle. "He had the reputation of being a good grinder of wheat as well as of cattle food." He and his wife, as well as the mill, are mentioned in Kilvert's Diary. The mill was listed in 1995 and was then described as "an unusually well-preserved watermill with its machinery intact. It had worked until the 1950s, one of the last Radnorshire mills to do so." This information comes from the CADW Listed Buildings database. JPH presented us with some old photos of the mill (in the days before it became overgrown) from various sources.

ML then talked to us about some of the research that she has conducted. She has seen an indenture from the end of the 17th century which confirms that Hothnant Mill is Rhosgoch Mill. In 1608, the mill was a Crown Mill – owned by the monarch and leased out to a miller. At the same time, there was a fulling mill in Painscastle, this made wool into felt. Fulling mills predate the weaving process. Rhosgoch Mill called Hothnant at that date, is also mentioned in a list of Crown Mills dating from 1784. Other local mills are also mentioned at this date. Gladestry Mill was owned by the engineer James Watt.

ML showed us some extracts from old maps of Painscastle Mill – an 1816 survey of Walter Wilkins' land, the 1838 Tithe Map and an OS map dating from 1887. She told us that there were two mills in or near Rhosgoch, but the actual location of the second is still a mystery. She would also like to know where Mytton Pool was located and more work needs to be done on this. She has ordered a document from the National Archives at Kew which may be able to shed some light on the matter.

She then went on to show us old maps of Rhosgoch. The 1817 map shows the "village" as a dispersed settlement with no sign of the obvious "triangle" at the centre of the village today. On this map, Portway is shown as Broadway. She then put the 1830 map alongside for comparison and this showed the beginnings of the "triangle", on two sides. By the Tithe Map of the 1840s, the "triangle" is fully formed and the pool behind Hermon Villas is also marked, as is the Mill, but there is no Hermon Chapel. Also marked is the Rhosgoch Inn. On a still later map, a possible leat is shown, but there is still no sign of the second mill and more work needs to be done on this.

3. Mill Walk in Kington

Gareth Jenkins (GJ) led the final item of the evening. He had gone on a walk as part of the Kington Walking Festival and ML had asked him to "report back". The walk was led by local expert, Alan Stoyel. Kington had a total of 14 water-powered mills, with a variety of functions, and the walk took in many of these. These mills were located on the Gilwern Brook (locally known as Back Brook) and on the River Arrow.

GJ showed us a photo of a plaque which talked about the first piping of fresh water to the town in 1831. A water tower was built and the water was pumped up from Crooked Well. The tower held 700 gallons, a very small amount by today's standards. The water tower can still be seen and is located near the church.

The first mill that GJ told us about was a leather mill (now a private house) on Back Brook. This hammered leather to make chamois. It later became a fulling mill. Down by the brook, and running alongside it, there is the course of the old tramway from Eardisley to Burlingjobb; the trams were horse-drawn. The brook also has a number of weirs. Here the water was collected on the upstream side and was taken off into leats. The first one on Back Brook took the water down to Crooked Mill. Because the water was silted, it was taken from Crooked Mill and let out onto neighbouring fields in order to add nutrients to the soil.

Kington used to have both a foundry and a forge and these used water to power the hammers. In places in the town you can still see cast iron kerbs alongside the roads and many of these have the makers' names on. The forge and foundry buildings are still standing today.

Arrow Bank Lodge is built on the site of the old tannery. Here, the water wheel was used to break up oak bark which was used to make the tanning solution. Nearby is the obvious leat, which takes water from the Arrow and which also puts water back into the river.

Further down this leat are Turner's Mill and the mill owner's house. The sign reads "J & P Turner, Est 1801, Corn Merchants". The water turbine here is still used to grind corn for animal feed. The leat at this site is very large and is alongside the Arrow.

Crabtree Mill was near to the entrance of the current recreation ground. This was a woollen mill and was fed by a very long leat from the Arrow. Further along the river is Hergest Mill. Inside, the mill workings can still be seen and the owner has been restoring them painstakingly. You can see the oak shafts which are linked to the mill stones upstairs. The mill stones come from France – the rock is less liable to breaking up.

4. Garth Gun

For the final section of the evening, we were shown some footage of film recorded by Grace Davies and Estyn Meredith of the restoration of the gun on The Garth, in October 2000. Details of this event have been covered in previous notes and are also available on the community's website, <http://www.painscastle-rhosgoch.co.uk/>

At the end of the evening we enjoyed refreshments, kindly made by Avryl Lloyd and Edwina Griffiths.

Thanks are due to John Price (Hay) and Gareth Jenkins for all of their hard work and for making the evening so interesting and enjoyable.