

## Notes from Local Interest Group Visit to Great House, Llandeilo Graban 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021



Apologies: Wendy & Dainis Ozols, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Joan Lloyd.

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), Ken Lloyd, John & Margaret Price, Elsa Harflett, Bronwen Jenkins, Helen Barnett, Carole Gibbs, Diana Lloyd, Erika Cunningham, Marjorie & Gail Jones, Cherry & Victor Williams, David & Anwyn Price, Jenny Francis, Ros Coles, Tim Francis, Anne & Howard Dean, Penny Williams, Grace Davies, Joan Hughes.

ML welcomed everyone to Great House, Llandeilo Graban and introduced our hosts, the current owners of Great House. Dilys Jones who bought the farm when she was married in 1959, her son Glyn with his son Rhys who now farms Great House, and daughter Carys.

ML started by reading some notes from the paperwork of Great House which was at one time called Llandilo Hall. The first document was a marriage settlement by Hugh Beavan gent in 1657. The farm was in the Beavan family until the late eighteenth century. In 1774 it was bought by Balliol College Oxford along with the exchange of land in Shropshire and two farms in Llanbister. Balliol College received the investment from Richard Greaves who left land in his will in 1704. The proceeds from the legacy were to provide two scholarships from Ludlow free school to Balliol College and if there were no suitable scholars in Ludlow, it was open to scholars from Shropshire or Radnorshire.

In 1774 an Act of Parliament was passed in order for the Masters of Balliol College to buy Great House in exchange for the two farms in the original will. Great House was rented to David Price and later to William Williams. Amongst the paperwork were descriptions of the farm, as well as new buildings and repairs carried out over the hundred years of Balliol College ownership.



In 1874 Great House was sold to the tenant, whose family farmed it until 1936 when the Evans family became tenants, and it was nice to see Marjorie Jones nee Evans returning to the place where she grew up. In 1959 the Jones family bought Great House and have continued to farm it ever since. The farm is still the same size (177 acres) as it was back in the eighteenth century.

Glyn then opened the cover of the well which is just outside the door of the house, it was estimated to be about 40 feet to the bottom with the walling of the sides in beautiful condition. Glyn then took us on a tour of the old buildings. First we looked at the T shaped barn, the piece parallel to the yard is believed to be older than the other part. The two parts were at one time separate with a wall between, it has now been opened to make it one space. The side nearer the yard was covered with plastic zinc in 1982 while the far side is still covered with stone tiles. Despite some decay from probably at least three centuries, the old beams were still magnificent. We then inspected the new block of buildings which had been re-built in 1853 and which cost just under £100. The outside is in wonderful condition and looks set to last another century or so. Glyn then showed where the old pig's cots had been and the privy as well as pointing out some of the changes to the house. There was a granary with outside steps on the end of the house and Marjorie told the story of the bull chasing a man up those steps and he, the bull, was very reluctant to go back down! The paperwork shows there had been a kiln in the house for drying the grain.

The group then moved into the house. In the kitchen Glyn showed an aerial photo of the farm in the early 1970s as well as some maps which covered the whole parish. The kitchen fireplace has a huge beam above with a central piece providing a connection for one of the ceiling beams. There was a baking oven alongside the fire at one time. Glyn then took people on a tour. The house is considerably altered from its medieval beginnings. In the middle room the stairs have been moved (1992) and a new passage discovered from the kitchen. The front room has a huge beam above the fire which had a bread oven at the side. On the opposite wall is the built-in dresser which has probably been there for several hundred years. There are signs of a fire in the house on both the first floor beams and in the attic and it seems that maybe the kitchen with the granary above may have been built on to the original house. Although the house is much altered from its original structure, it has plenty of interest linking the old with the new, so ensuring that it will continue to be lived in for many more years.

The family provided coffee, tea and biscuits and there was much talk and reminiscing which rounded off a lovely evening which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. We would like to thank the Jones family for the time and effort which they put in to provide such a wonderful evening.