

Notes from Local Interest Group 27th April 2023

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), Malc Gonnella, John Price, Wendy Ozols, Sue Lawler, Elsa Harflett, Bronwen Jenkins, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Jenny & James Martin, Iris Lloyd, Joan Hughes, Jacqui Mills, Tim Francis, Cherry & Victor Williams, Grace Davies, David & Anwen Price

On Zoom: Dainis Ozols, Margaret Price, Jennifer Lewis, Marilyn Price, Eva Morgan, Sylvia & Mansell Illingsworth

Apologies: Helen Barnett, Joan Lloyd, Allison Joyce

ML welcomed everyone and introduced the speaker for the evening, Malc Gonnella.

The History of the Old Post House and Y Dyffryn

Malc started by telling us that his talk would be about more than just his home, Y Dyffryn. He would be talking about the history of the property, garden (including Checkley and Castle Field) and a two acre meadow on the road out towards Llanbedr, all of which were part of the same property from some time in the 1700s until the 1970s. He would also be talking about the people who had owned and/or lived in each of the properties through the years.



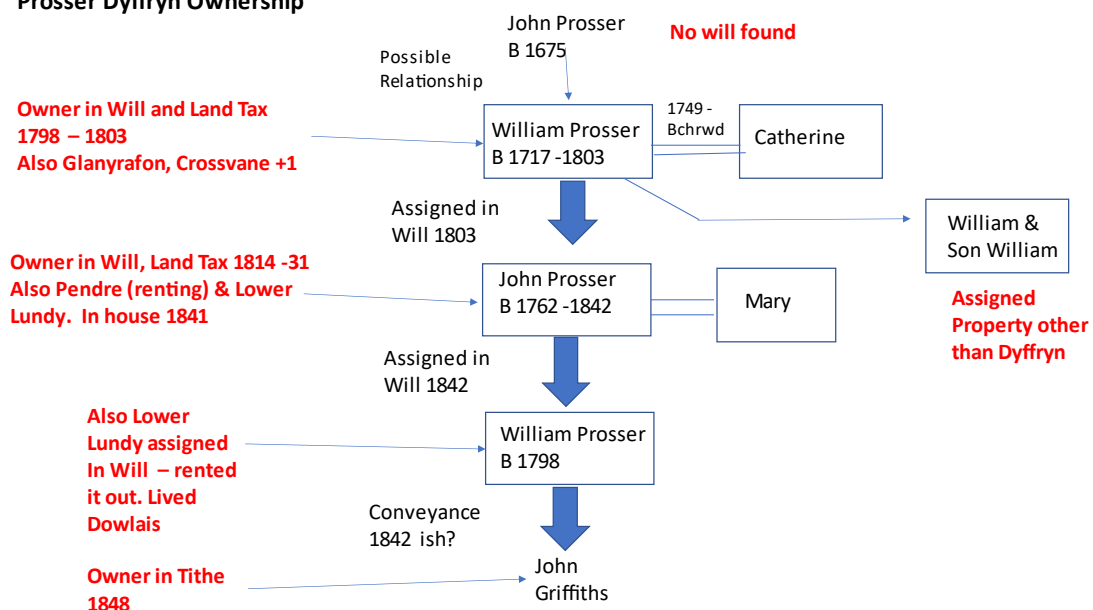
The Old Post House (L) and Y Dyffryn (R) (2023)

Malc and Sue (Lawler) bought Y Dyffryn in 2021. They were very keen to learn more about the history of their house and so Malc has done a considerable amount of research in order to find out as much as he could. Malc was keen to say that this is very much a “work in progress” and that there is yet more to discover. For example, there are no detailed maps of Painscastle before the Tithe Map and early OS maps of the 1840s and he has found no photos from any date earlier than the 1930s. He has been helped along the way with information and/or photographs by Maureen Lloyd, John Price, Iris Lloyd, Cherry Williams, Grace Davies and Roy Lloyd, and he thanked them all for their valuable input. This talk is based mainly on data from the censuses (from 1841) and information from deeds and wills. One difficulty that he found when doing the research was the variations in the spelling of the name of Y Dyffryn.

Malc has not been able to discover exactly when the building now known as Y Dyffryn and the Old Post House was built, but his best estimate is that it was some time in the late 1700s. Although a surveyor has estimated construction as having been some time between 1830 and 1850, evidence found by Malc proves that this is too late. By the time of the 1848 Tithe Map, the property is clearly shown and it was owned and occupied by John Griffiths. He also owned land by Glanyrafon and he was a founder of the Adullum Chapel.

The first census available to Malc was 1841 and this has very limited data. At this time, John Prosser and his family and a servant were living in "Dufrin", as well as a William and Mary Williams and an 8 year old child. (Was it already divided into two properties?) Malc has managed to go further back than this census and an extract from the Land Tax register of 1831 in Powys Archives also shows John Prosser as the owner of the property, with a Mrs Higgins living there. Malc has also found, in the register of deaths, that a Daniel Griffiths was living at "Dufrin" in 1823. Another discovery, the Land Tax register of 1798, shows William Prosser as the owner/occupier. William left the property to his son, John, when he died in 1803 and when John Prosser died in 1842, he left everything to his son, William. The following flow diagram shows what Malc has found out about the Prosser family ownership of the property.

Prosser Dyffryn Ownership

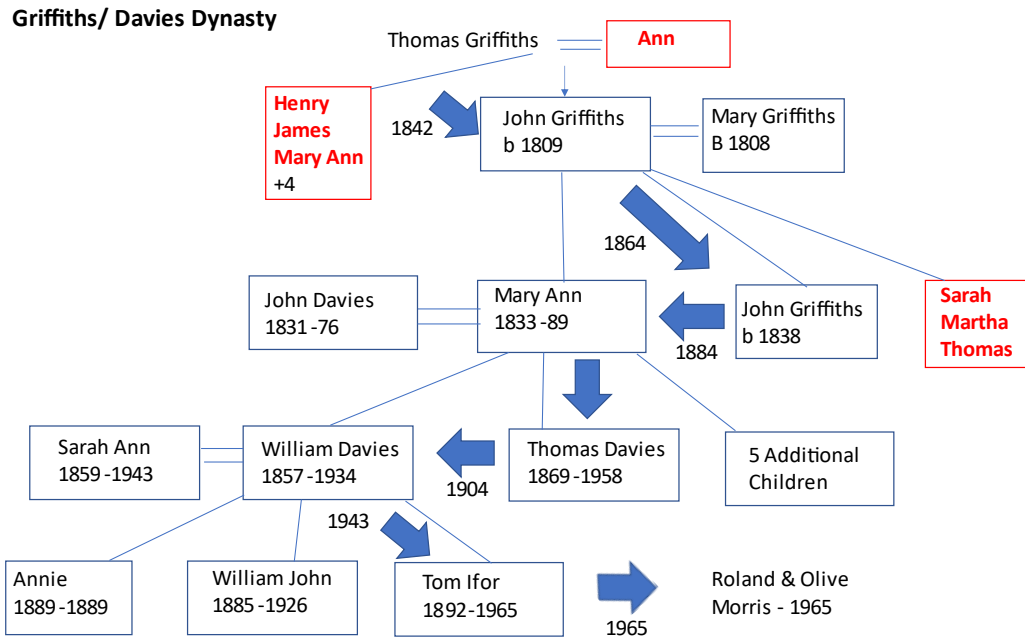


As has already been stated, by 1848 the property was owned by John Griffiths. The 1851 census shows the property divided into three: Dyffryn Row was occupied by Ann Williams, a clergyman's widow; New Inn - occupied by the Owens family (since Mr Owens was a Baptist minister it seems unlikely that the property was actually an inn); and a second property called Dyffryn Row occupied by Henry Griffiths (John Griffiths' unmarried brother) and his mother and a servant.

On the flow diagram on the following page, the blue arrows show how Y Dyffryn was passed down through the generations of the Griffiths and Davies families. Anyone shown in red also lived in the house at one time. Between 1842 and 1965, members of the same family owned and/or lived in the property.

By the 1861 census, the property was still divided into three: New Inn was occupied by John Davies, a grocer, and his family (his wife, Mary Anne was the owner John Griffiths' daughter); Dyffryn No 2

was lived in by John Griffiths' two unmarried brothers; and, Dyffryn No 1 was occupied by William and Anne Williams and their children.



In July 1864, the property was put up for auction by John Griffiths, but it is possible that it did not sell because it is recorded as being owned by his son (also John) up until 1884. The 1871 census shows that John and Mary Ann Davies and family were still living in what was now called New End (formerly New Inn). Dyffryn Row was occupied by Ann Williams and her family and Duffrin was occupied by Thomas and Ann Davies and their family. Nineteen people in all lived in the three properties, quite a squeeze!!

The 1881 census shows the property as just two houses, New End and Duffrin Row, the latter now being unoccupied. New End was by then a Post Office and Mary Ann (now a widow) is shown as being the post mistress. She lived there with six of her children. Duffrin Row was being used as storage for the Post Office. In 1884, Mary Ann bought the property from her brother, John Griffiths. When she died in 1889, her youngest son, Thomas (aged 19), took over and, by the 1891 census, he is listed as the post master, living in the house with his two sisters and an uncle. Thomas was still living there, with an aunt and one sister, and working as the post master by the 1901 census.

In 1904, Thomas' elder brother, William, bought the property and came back to Painscastle after having run a shop in Merthyr for some time. He played a very large part in the Painscastle community and was a deacon at the Adullum Chapel. Thomas moved to Lywnpia near Tonypany and set up a shop there. The 1921 census shows the Post Office as being occupied by William Davies, his wife Sarah Ann, son William and a servant. When William died in 1934, Sarah Ann inherited the property and when she died the Post Office was left to a younger son, Tom Ifor. Tom sold the Post Office to the occupants Roland and Olive Mabel Morris in 1965, thus ending the Griffiths/Davies families' long association with the property.

Roland and Olive had met when they were both working at Lane Farm, Rhosgoch. They had moved to Painscastle in 1932 to take over the running of the shop and post office when the Davies family retired to Cusop and they continued to run the establishment for nearly forty years. Their daughter,

Elizabeth (Betty), married Tom Lloyd from Castle Farm. Betty was well-known within the community and had incredible knowledge about Painscastle and its residents. Grace Davies filmed her reminiscing and telling stories and this recording proved an invaluable resource as Malc was doing his research. Betty's father, "Pop Morris", delivered the post on horseback and he was filmed by BBC Wales in 1963, when it was said that he was the last post master in Wales to do so. Even during the snow storms in 1947, he only missed one day in a period of nine weeks of atrocious conditions. He was awarded the BEM in recognition of his "lifetime of devoted service". Roland was also a member of the Home Guard during the war. Mr and Mrs Morris ran the post office and shop until 1971 when they retired to their new bungalow next door – Checkley.



"Pop" Morris on his horse, Grassie.

The Post Office was sold to Glyn and Dilys Williams from Evenjobb in 1970, after Roland and Olive had divided off the land on which they built Checkley. Mr and Mrs Williams only kept the property for about two years, selling it to a lady from Bristol, Miss Harman, in 1972. She secured a grant, together with planning permission, to develop the property, which she spilt into two – the Old Post House and Y Dyffryn. The Post House was sold to Frank Haworth and Y Dyffryn to the Taylors. Until 2005, the Taylors played a large part in village life; Pat was in the WI and Bob was on the parish council. The Taylor's daughter, Margaret, and her husband Paul moved into Y Dyffryn in 2005 when Pat died. Changes were made to the house at this time. Since moving in, Malc and Sue have made further changes to the house – Y Dyffryn. The Old Post House is owned by another couple, Jackie and Mike.

Malc ended his talk by saying, "Watch this space!" He has further research to do and hopes to be able to fill in some of the gaps and maybe even discover exactly when the property was built.

ML thanked Malc for an extremely interesting talk. A phenomenal amount of research had gone into his presentation and it was great to see some input from long-time Painscastle residents. We are extremely grateful to him for his efforts and for providing us with a most enjoyable and educational presentation.

The evening ended as always with refreshments, kindly made by Avryl Lloyd and Iris Lloyd. This is one of the best parts of the evening as it gives people an opportunity to talk to the speaker and to swap stories. Thanks as always must go to John Price, the technology wizard, whose expertise allows for our wider audience on Zoom to also enjoy the talks.