

Notes from Local Interest Group 25th January 2024

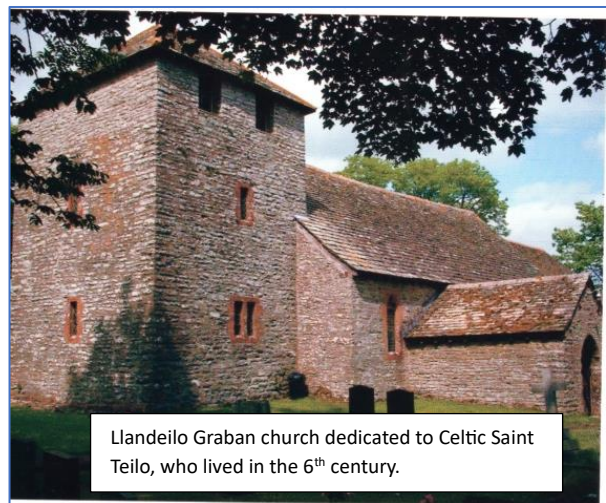
Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), John Price, Mollie Moore, Dawn Richards, Gina Goodge, Grace Davies, Ken Lloyd, Iris Lloyd, Roy Lloyd, Sue Lawler, Malc Gonnella, Victor & Cherry Williams, Vivienne & Stephen Thomas, Juliet Lewis, Celia Price, Helen Barnett, Sue & John Ievers, Alison Duncan, Janet Russell, Margaret Warne, Evelyn Bally, Rob Davies, Richard Harris, Sue & Paul Buckingham, Elsa Harflett, Bronwen Jenkins, Erika Cunningham, Edwina Griffiths, Jenny & James Martin.

On Zoom: Carole Gibbs, Margaret Evans, Wendy Ozols, Sylvia Illingsworth, Llewellyn Breese, Jennifer Lewis, Angela Jones, Avryl Lloyd, Marilyn Price, Allison Joyce, Jenny Francis, Ann & Howard Dean, Richard Thomas, Diana Lloyd, Gethin Davies, Margaret Price, Lisa Lloyd

Apologies: Tim Francis, Joan Lloyd, Robert Collingwood, Lucy Trench, Eva Morgan, Amanda Giles, Dainis Ozols.

ML welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that she would endeavour to provide a run through of the local history of Painscastle from the time of the Normans up to the twentieth century; 900 years of history condensed into an hour.

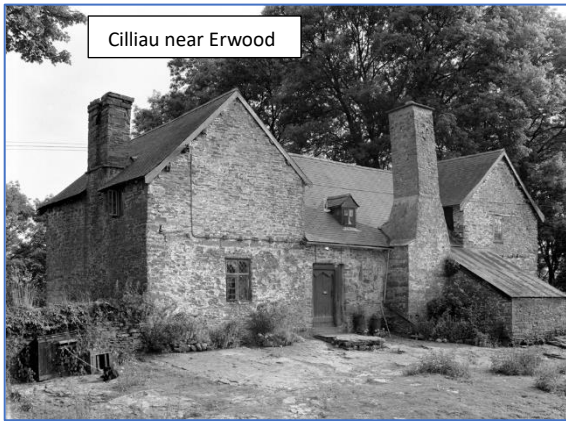
Her starting point was 1093 with the death of Rhys ap Tudor King of South Wales, which encouraged the local Norman lords to extend their territories into Mid and South Wales. The de Tosny family, who were lords of Clifford Castle along with the Baskervilles, moved up the Wye and then inland up the Edw to establish castles at Aberedw and Colwyn, Hundred House. Ralph de Tosny took over all of Elfael, a manor which extended down to the Wye. The de Tosny family spent most of their time on their estates in France and it was Pain Fitz John, administrator and loyal supporter of Henry I, who built the castle at Painscastle, probably in the late 1120s or early 1130s. When he died in 1137 the castle and manor fell into Welsh hands. After briefly returning to Norman occupation under William de Braose, by 1150 it was again under Welsh control. In 1195 the Normans were again in control of Painscastle and it was in 1198 that one of the most famous events took place with the siege of Painscastle followed by the battle where, according to the chronicler, 3700 Welsh men lost their lives and the Bachawy river ran red with blood. It was at this time that William de Braose probably built the second castle at Colwyn, this time in stone. The early 1200s saw Llewelyn the Great extend his influence in the area, but in 1231 King Henry III moved to Painscastle and rebuilt the castle in stone, with Ralph de Tosny returning as Lord of the Manor. In 1265 Llewelyn the last, a grandson of Llewelyn the Great, was given Elfael by the crown, but he was killed near Cilmeri in 1282 and even before then the local steward, Ifor ap Gruffydd, probably from Llysifor (Llanshiver), had changed sides and become a King's man. In a 1265 survey there were 100 burgesses in the town of Painscastle making it as important as Montgomery or Welshpool. Fifty years later it had shrunk to half. The 13th century was one of agricultural development as the number of mills on the Bachawy testify, both grain mills and fulling mills, suggesting a strong market for grain and wool. This was a time of building in stone - castles, abbeys and churches - although the local churches have much older foundations as the dedication to Celtic saints such as Teilo and Padarn illustrates.



Llandeilo Graban church dedicated to Celtic Saint Teilo, who lived in the 6th century.

In the 14th century the male line of the de Tosny family died out and so the Beauchamp family, the Earls of Warwick, were lords. It was also the century of poor weather resulting in poor harvests, and then from 1349 several outbreaks of plague saw communities decimated. As the Beauchamp male line died out Elfael became part of the Neville manors, with Anne Neville the heiress becoming Richard III's wife and queen of

England. In the 15th century Elfael became part of the Duchy of Lancaster, part of crown lands. It is from this time that the earliest local houses were built with Upper House, Painscastle, probably built for the steward



Cilliau near Erwood

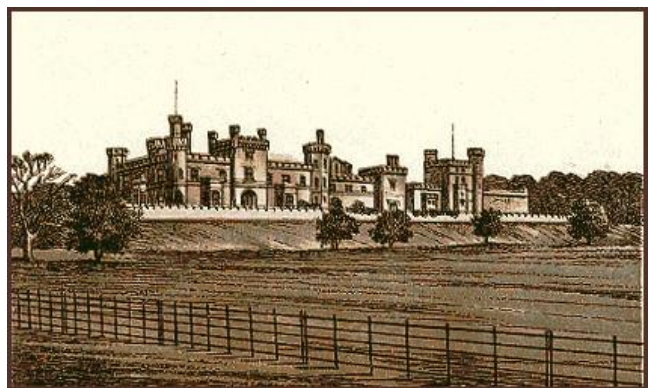
of the manor. Radnorshire was created in the 1536 and 1542 Acts of Parliament. This was the time of the Reformation of the church and the dissolution of the monasteries, which saw large areas of land on the market. In Elizabethan times Roger Vaughan from Clyro took over and the Cilliau near Erwood was built by the chief constable of Painscastle in the 1550s. In the 17th century the area had another connection with royalty when King Charles I and his army came through. By this time Elfael had been broken up into smaller estates, the main one, Maesllwch, was still referred to as Lower Elfael, and in the late 17th century was owned by Charles Lloyd

who was descended from the Vaughans. He gave the land for Maesyronnen Chapel, one of the first chapels to be built after the Act of Toleration granted Nonconformists freedom to worship in their own buildings. Many of the local houses in the area were built or re-built during this time. Painscastle had a weekly market and fairs from the 13th century and the fairs continued as three sale-days into the 19th century. From Tudor times Painscastle had been on several major drovers' routes, after they crossed the river Wye at Erwood or came over the hill from Rhulen, as they merged on their way to England. There were at least six or seven pubs in Painscastle, some of them with blacksmiths attached to shoe the cattle before they travelled on to Herefordshire. There were also pubs in all the villages along the way.



MAESYRONNEN CHAPEL

With the Industrial Revolution, many estates were purchased by businessmen who had made their fortune in coal or iron, while some like the Baskerville family still had their country estates, having come over with William the Conqueror. Elfael was still run as a Manor with a Court Leet every six months, appointing the mayor and constable of the borough of Painscastle. Walter Wilkins, who had made his money in the East India Company, bought the Maesllwch estate in 1775. He re-built Maesllwch Castle and the family added to the building in Victorian times. The local schools of Painscastle, Llandeilo Graban and Newchurch were built in the 1870s. The local chapels were also built in the 19th century, two in Painscastle, Hermon Chapel in Rhosgoch and Moriah at Penbryn. Local administration was taken over by Radnorshire Rural District Council in 1889 so the Court Leet no longer functioned and gradually the state took over all aspects of civic life. The heirs to both the Baskerville estate and the Maesllwch estate were killed in the First World War so the estates were broken up and sold. Maesllwch was used as a Canadian hospital in World War II and then, from 1942, by the Land Army. Much of the house was demolished in 1951 leaving a much more manageable house.



A Summary of Painscastle through the centuries	
11th	Elfael taken over by the Normans
12 th	Castle built at Painscastle in wood
13 th	Stone buildings castles, abbeys, churches
14 th	Decline in agriculture, Black Death
15 th	Glyndwr rebellion
16 th	Radnorshire is born, Dissolution of Monastries
17 th	Increase in Drover trade. Religious divide
18 th	New estates set up Agriculture booming
19th	Enclosures District and Urban councils formed
20th	Break up of estates

The talk was an overview of local governance from medieval times until modern times and how it affected Painscastle and the locality through the ages.

Thanks to the ladies who served tea, coffee and biscuits in the hall giving social time for discussion and debate.