

Notes from Local Interest Group Meeting 30th January 2025

Present (in Hall): Matt Williams, Cherry & Victor Williams, John Price, Maureen Lloyd, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Allison Joyce, Dawn Richards, Jane Lloyd, Jackie Mills, Celia Jones, Brian Williams, Jenny Francis, Tim Francis, Elsa Harflett, Bronwen Jenkins, Sylvia Bigglestone, Gaynor Price, Robert Davies, Sarah Cope, Gina Goodge, Richard Harris, Robert Collingwood, Lucy Trench, Val Price, Grace Davies, Marion & Ben Lally.

On Zoom: Wendy Ozols, Mike & Val Head, Jennifer Lewis, Sylvia Illingsworth, Marilyn Price, Ann & Howard Dean, Gill Price, Penny Williams, Steph Williams, Margaret Price, Margaret Evans, Juliet Lewis, Richard Price, Paul & Sue Buckingham, James Davies, Nicky Williams, Evelyn Bally, Diana Lloyd

Apologies: Dainis Ozols, Joan Lloyd

ML welcomed everyone in the Hall and on Zoom and said that it was wonderful to have such a large audience for these two interesting talks, including people from abroad. She also welcomed both of tonight's speakers, Matt Williams and Cherry Williams.

The Martyr of The Storm, Rosa Blanche Williams (1886-1925)

Matt Williams began by explaining that Rosa Williams was his Great Grandmother. He said that the story of her demise whilst trying to reach home in a blizzard in December 1925 is very well known locally, and that he would be talking more about her life tonight.

Rosa's parents were John and Elizabeth Parry, née Jacobs. She had six sisters – there had also been a brother (John Wilfred) who had died very young. The girls were:

Edith (1879-1949) – who married David Davies from Longtown and they had five children.

Alice (1881-1958) – who married twice, firstly to Philip Price and then to Tom Greenhow.

Annie (1882-1943) – who was a successful milliner who went to live in Rochester, in Kent. She married Tilden Holland.

Lucy (1884-1974) – married to Charlie Price.

Rosa (1886-1925)

May (1888-1930) - she had TB as a child and was very sickly. She married Daddy Davies.

Daisy (1889-1958) – she married Tommy Price and had eight children.

Rosa Blanche Parry was born at Llywnpenderi, Llowes. She married Richard Thomas Williams, who was born in Winforton in 1889. (He died in 1952 at Penygenhill, Llanigon.) In 1911, they are both recorded on the census, with Tom being listed as a farmer in Llowes (with his father) and Rosa as a lady's maid in Eaton Bishop. They married in April 1914, when Rosa was already pregnant with their first child. Soon after getting married, and just before the outbreak of WW1, they went to Australia to live. They left London in June 1914 and arrived in Melbourne on 24th July, just four days before the war started.



Matt explained that his family knows a great deal about Rosa and her life in Australia because they have many of the letters that she sent home; these have proved to be an amazing resource when investigating the family's history. Her letters were detailed and really nicely written, giving insights into life in Australia (and the journey out there on the ship), as well as human stories and things that she observed.

Rosa and Tom arrived in Australia and settled in Mildura, Victoria, which was a fruit growing area and where Rosa's uncle (Hamer Jacob) was already living with his family. Her uncle was a dairy farmer. From her letters, it is possible to tell that Rosa was homesick, although she did appear to be happy at the start of their stay in Mildura. She obviously missed the landscape of home, as well as her family and the people she had known. She was also very interested in how much things cost. Her relationship with her Uncle and Aunt (Jennie) was not as good as it could have been; it had started quite well but had deteriorated. She felt that they were rather too extravagant!

Although there was a war going on in Europe, it must have seemed very distant and she only mentions it very occasionally in her letters. She was obviously worried about the impact that it was having on her family back home, especially her sister Annie who was living in Rochester.

Rosa was very frugal and also a hard worker. She and Tom were not paid very well, but she managed to buy what they needed but couldn't grow for themselves. She found the summer heat very difficult to tolerate; it must have made the work seem even harder.

In 1916, they were able to buy their own property as a result of their hard work and Rosa's ability to save. They both had money saved in banks back in the UK and they arranged for that to be transferred out to Australia. At first they went into partnership with a Charlie Cotterell, but by 1917 they had bought Charlie out. They continued to work very hard on their plot and were able to make

a reasonable living growing fruit. They produced raisins, currants, sultanas, oranges and lemons, and kept a cow, pigs and fowl. Rosa said that she made 8-10 lbs of butter every week.

The last letter the family has that was sent from Australia is dated March 1918. The family has no details about when Tom and Rosa returned to the UK, but they can surmise that it was after the birth of the fourth child (who was born in Australia in 1919) and before that of their fifth, who was born in Llanigon in 1920. After this birth, they moved to The Pant in Rhulen. Again, Rosa's letters give an insight into family life. One of her daughters, Mary, had gone to live with Rosa's sister, Lucy; it was not unusual in those days for children to go to live with relatives. In her letters, she talks about having a very nice, but quiet Christmas in 1921, as well as an aborted trip over the hill to get to market because of the bad weather (a somewhat prophetic statement!). In fact, she talks about going to the market at Hay quite regularly. She always had eggs to sell, as well as chickens and ducks. She often went up onto the hill to pick wimberries. Life must have been quite hard because she and Tom had six children to look after. The last letter of Rosa's that the family has is dated June 1925, to Annie.

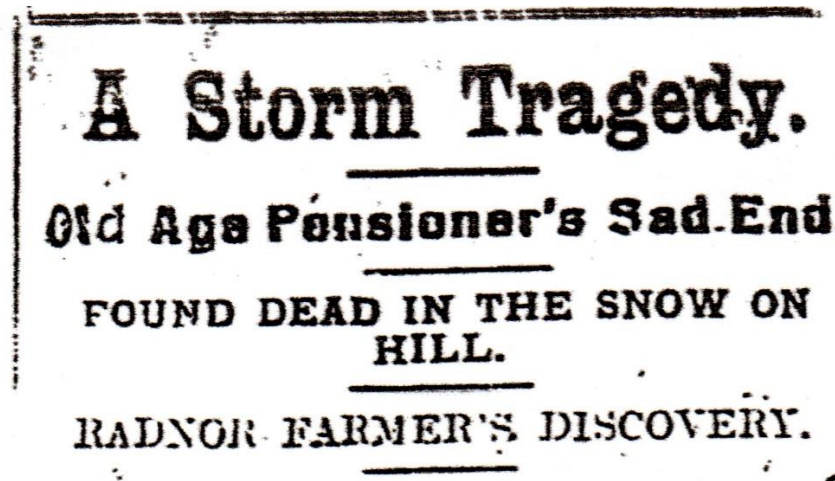
On 22nd December 1925, Rosa left The Pant at around 8am to travel the 12 miles to Hay to go to market before Christmas; it was her son, David's, fifth birthday. It would have taken her about three hours to get there on horseback. Matt reckons that she probably stayed in Hay for about two hours before beginning her journey back home. On her way home, she had made a brief stop in Painscastle, and she left there at about 4.30pm. She rode up onto the hill in a heavy snow storm, anxious to get home because of her son's birthday. Evidently, the weather proved too much for her and she came off her horse and got lost; Tom found her horse at the hill gate at 10am the next day, without Rosa. He followed tracks in the snow and eventually found her body about 2.25 miles from Painscastle.

The inquest into her death took place at Painscastle on 28th December. It was reported that Rosa's body was badly cut, bruised and scratched where she had been struggling to free herself from the barbed wire fence. She was holding a bag full of groceries. It was obvious that she had been following the fence in an attempt to reach the road. The conclusion of the inquest was that she had died of syncope (fainting and exhaustion). Matt showed us a copy of her funeral card, the funeral having been held at Llanbedr Church. Rosa is buried at the Baptist Chapel in Painscastle, and there is a stone on the hill commemorating her and marking the spot where her body was found. She was only 39 years old.

Matt showed us a photo of her six children as adults. He told us what happened to them after their mother's death. The eldest, Jack, stayed with Tom on the farm until the early 1930s. He married a "land girl" called Kitty. Jack died in 1962. Ivor also stayed on the farm with his father until he was 17 years old, when he joined the army for his National Service. He then went on to be an accountant in Stafford. The two daughters, Mary and Rene, went to Rochester to live with their Aunt Nan (Annie). Mary married a butcher and Rene a solicitor. David went to live at Wellington with his Aunt Lucy. He had three children with his first wife and another with his second. He was a successful dairy farmer. Allan went to stay with Aunt Edith in Longtown. He eventually returned to live with his Father and Elsie (née Williams), who Tom had married in 1933 at Penygenhill, Llanigon.

A Second Story of a Snow Tragedy in the 1920s

Cherry Williams began by saying that she would be telling the story of Eliza Lloyd, 1855-1929, whose death on a hill in a blizzard echoed that of Rosa Williams. Cherry had come across this lady's story quite by chance when she had been helping someone discover his family roots in the Colva/Gladestry/Newchurch area.



Starting with a record of the inquest into Eliza's death, which had been held in the Town Hall in New Radnor on February 16th, 1929, Cherry has been able to find out quite a bit about her, her life, her death and her family. One of those giving evidence at the inquest was a Mr John Morris, who said that he was a first cousin of the deceased. (Cherry would come back to him later.)

Eliza Lloyd was a spinster of 74, living in temporary lodgings at Rhos, Trewern and Gwaithla (previously of Lussin, Dolau), when she died. Her father's name was John Lloyd and he was a farmer. She was in receipt of an old age pension which she collected from Dolau post office, some 11 miles from where she was living. On the day that she died she had taken the following route: from Lussin to Dolau PO, then on to Penybont and back along the Rhayader to Kington road as far as Forest Inn. From here, she left the road and followed tracks along the hillside, heading towards Rhos where she was living.

At the inquest, she was described as physically strong and it was said that she knew the countryside well. It appears that she had left Rhos on Friday 8th February to collect her pension in Dolau and that she had stayed at Lussin, at the home of John Deakins, until the Monday (11th February). Also on that Monday, she had collected groceries from a shop in Penybont.

Two farmers gave evidence of having seen Eliza from afar on Monday 11th. Mr Jackson, of The Foicey, Llanfihangel Nant Melan, had seen her at 3.30pm and Mr Wall of Blaenycwm, Old Radnor, saw her at 5pm. In both instances, she was walking towards Burl Hill. It was snowing heavily, bitterly cold and there were several inches of snow on the ground. Conditions were therefore extremely difficult.

Eliza's body was found on Wednesday 13th February by Mr David Griffiths who lived at Pentre. He had been out looking for his sheep in the snow. He spotted her umbrella first; it was lying open on the ground on the rough track. He then realised that there was a body there too. He alerted another farmer, Mr Abell who lived at Burl Farm, and he went to fetch Dr Fawsett and PC Tantrum.

Like Rosa, Eliza had died of syncope “caused by exhaustion due to exposure and intense cold”. Her body was found on Burl Hill and so, even more tragically, she was very nearly home. Apart from the umbrella, she also had a bag of groceries, £2 in Treasury notes drawn at Dolau PO, two new picture postcards and a newspaper dated 9th February, with her name written on it. She is buried at Gladestry.

Cherry went on to tell us more about Eliza and her family, things that she has found out from some quite extensive research. Her Grandfather was William Lloyd (1796-1860) who was born in Glascwm. He farmed at Lower Llwyn Tudor in Rhulen. William was married twice and the eldest of his three children from his first marriage was John Price Lloyd (c1823-1875). John married Margaret Williams in Rhulen in 1853. In 1855, Margaret gave birth to twin girls in Cwmfillo, Rhulen, **Eliza** and Margaret, but she died in childbirth. John and the small girls went to live in Lower Llwyn Tudor with his stepmother, Ann, and two half siblings, when his father William died in 1860. The 1861 census shows John Price Lloyd and the twins (aged 5) living at the house.



Cwmfillo

In 1867, John married for a second time (to yet another Margaret Williams!) and they continued to live at Lower Llwyn Tudor, which was a farm of 60 acres. Three more children were born. By the 1871 census, Eliza’s twin sister was still living at the farm, but not Eliza; by this time she was a servant at Trebarried, Llandefalle. The Lloyd family stayed at Lower Llwyn Tudor into the 1900s; they are recorded as living there on the 1901 census, but not on that of 1921.

Cherry then told us that she wanted to find out more about John Morris, who had said at the inquest that he was Eliza’s cousin, and also she wanted to know about Eliza’s life. As she had already told us, Eliza’s grandfather, William, had married twice. He had a daughter with his second wife and she was also called Eliza; this would have been “our” Eliza’s step aunt. This step aunt married a John Morris. They lived, at various times, at Lower Cwmtwrch, Glascwm (1871), Wood Farm (1881) and Kilbiggin (1891) which were both in Gladestry and Pentre in Walton (1901). This family was very kind to Eliza and she returned to stay with them throughout her life. Cherry thinks that this explains why she is buried in Gladestry amongst the Morris family. The inscription on her grave reads, “Late of Pentre, Walton”.

Whilst doing her research, Cherry found an article in the Powys Family History Chronicle from 1993. It had been written by a S T Morris (Stanley), who was the grandson of Eliza and John Morris. The title

of the article was, "My Eccentric Kinswoman Eliza Lloyd of Rhulen (1855-1929)". Cherry gleaned a lot about Eliza from this article. She had worked as a live-in servant and housekeeper in different locations such as Dolau, Llanfihangel Nant Melan, New Radnor, Trewern and Gwaithla, and sometimes even further afield. When she was in her 60s, she spent some years with John and Eliza Morris' son, John L Morris, and this was the man who had attended the inquest into her death. John and his wife, Elizabeth, lived at Tyn-y-Wain, Llanfihangel Rhydithon. This might help explain why her pension was paid at Dolau PO.

Very little is known about Eliza's early life except that she moved about a great deal. The author (Stanley Morris) said that she was well educated, being able to read and write; in fact, she was an avid reader and would read the Hereford Times and Radnor Express from cover to cover. He described her as "timid, a loner and a solitary eccentric figure who shunned society". Stanley was obviously fond of Eliza. When she had come to stay with his family, he had been at Llandrindod Wells County School and she would be the one getting the breakfast and lighting the fires in the morning before he set off to Dolau station to travel to school. He was usually last to bed at night after doing his homework, except for Eliza who he believed never went to bed! Stanley was one of eight children and so he would really have appreciated the help and attention that he got from her. When Stanley's family moved to Herefordshire, Eliza would often stay with their near neighbours, Lizzie and John Deakins at Lussin, Dolau (John had worked part time on the farm for the Morris family) and this would explain why she had been at Lussin the weekend before she died.

Cherry said that she had thought a great deal about Eliza's life without a mother, being raised by a step grandmother and then a step mother. However, she was pleased to learn that the Morris family cared and look out for her throughout her life of service.

To conclude, Cherry made the point that the two stories, that of Rosa Williams and Eliza Lloyd, had so many parallels: how far they would ride or walk for their everyday needs; both coming to a tragic end on a hillside whilst trying to reach home in atrocious weather and so nearly making it; and, the link to Rhulen – Cwmfillo, Lower Llwyn Tudor and The Pant are all so close to one another. Both stories so tragic and so sad.

At the end of the meeting, ML thanked the two speakers for their incredibly interesting and well researched talks. It was fascinating to learn more about Rosa Williams, who obviously has a very strong link to Painscastle, and also to learn about Eliza Lloyd who had died in tragically similar circumstances. It just goes to show how difficult life must have been for rural folk in years gone. We are extremely grateful to both Matt and Cherry for giving so generously of their time to come to speak to us.

Refreshments were served as always and gave people in the hall a chance to talk to the speakers. ML thanked the team for providing the tea and coffee. As always, a very big thank you goes to John Price for making it possible for the Zoom audience to join the event. We are all so very grateful to him.