

Notes from Local Interest Group 25th August 2016

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), Dainis and Wendy Ozols, Jude Hurn, Gareth Jenkins, Richard Martin, Joan Lloyd, Alen Harrison, Sue and John Ievers (and Ellie their guest from France), John and Juliet Lewis, Doreen James, Val and Mike Head, Tim Francis, Pauline Gill, Evelyn Bally, Peter and Pauline Spode, Richard Harris, Sally Matthews, John and Margaret Price (Hay), Chris Rose, Bill Johnson, Roy Lloyd, Margaret Warne, Pat Williams. Geoff Cable and Janet Russell were visiting "guides".

ML began the evening by welcoming everyone to Rhosgoch for our visit to the village.

Rhosgoch is dominated by the bog, which originally extended much further than it does today. The village is situated at a crossroads with links radiating out to Kington, Bryngwyn, Glascwm, Painscastle, Brilley and Clyro. This makes it a real hub for the surrounding area. In terms of paper evidence, ML said that the tithe map of 1844 is as far as we can go back.

We started our tour by stopping at the Old Pub, shown on the map as Rhosgoch Inn. However, on a map of 1888, it is referred to as The Rose Inn, but this could be a misspelling. It consisted of a kitchen, parlour, bar, back kitchen and pantry, with five bedrooms. Outside, it had a two-stall stable, a cow house and barn, a smith's shop and a hen house. The pub closed in about 1921.

Opposite the pub, an old lane is shown on the tithe map and this led to a cottage which was owned by a Margaret Powell (who lived at the Tump). It is possible that this cottage was unoccupied by this time (1844).

Further along the road, alongside Amberwood, ML showed us another old lane. This one led to Great House and was called Bishop's Lane as that was the name of the family who lived at Great House for many years. The Pugh family bought Great House in 1906 when the Bishops moved to Sheepcote, in Clifford. After this, we stopped at Folly Cottage; this has also been called Old House and Pool House at different times. From around the 1880s, it was a shop. In the early 20th century, this was run by Tom the Shop. He served in the Hereford regiment during WW1 and he lost his legs in the conflict. He played a very big part in Rhosgoch's life. Folly Cottage is one of the "original" cottages in the village and it was probably built in the 18th century; it is clearly marked on the tithe map.

Our next stop was Hermon Chapel, where we were welcomed by the Minister, Geoff Cable. Geoff told us that the chapel had been built on a former cock-baiting site. Here, John Price (Hay) talked to us about John Griffiths of Portway, to whom he (JP) is related. On the 1844 tithe map, there is no building here, even though the congregation already existed; they must have met elsewhere. The chapel building was opened on 3rd August 1849. (For the information that JP told us, please see the notes from the Local Interest Group dated 31st March 2016.) JP has also found a reference to the chapel in the minutes of the Woolhope Naturalist Club, who visited the chapel during their field trip to Bryngwyn and Rhosgoch on Friday 29th August, 1879. They were "hospitably entertained by Mr. Griffiths, of Portway, whose family had resided there for upwards of 500 years".

Before we left the chapel, Mike Head thanked us all for visiting and invited us to come to Sunday services. He also extended an invitation to us all to join the congregation at the Sankey Service on 4th September at 2.30 pm.

The Mill was next on our itinerary. Before we walked down the road to have a look at the site (from a distance), Janet Russell and Margaret Warne talked to us about the building, which has been in their family, the Powells, for about 400 years. Certainly, it has always been said that the mill was owned by the family in the early 1600s, although there is no written evidence. In 1974, whilst Janet was an architecture student at Cardiff University, she did many scale drawings and plans of the mill as part of her degree course and she had brought this wonderful resource for us all to see. It is an amazing record of how the mill used to be. Sadly, the mill is now in a state of disrepair and is too dangerous a site for us to visit close up. On the gable

wall they have recently found a date – from the end of the 19th century, when there must have been some repairs/alteration made. Tom Powell, Janet and Margaret's uncle, ran the mill for many years carrying on the family business after his brother John. WW2 put an end to flour milling in Rhosgoch (as in other mills in the country); flour started to be imported from Canada. According to Tom, the local corn was too poor for flour and so it was milled for animal feed instead. Janet and Margaret can still remember the wonderful mill pond and they said that the building was lovely from the outside, but very dark and noisy inside. Their Grandmother churned butter in the dairy and kept a "good and tidy house", but she was a strict lady. The water supply for the mill came from the dingle and therefore out of the Bachowey. The cousins remember the mill working when they were children in the 1960s, but not full time. A quotation from *The Buildings of Wales – Powys, 1979* by Richard Haslam states that "Rhosgoch Mill is still in working order and has been grinding corn for 450 years."

ML added some more information about the mill that she had discovered but said that there was some confusion over how many mills there were in Rhosgoch. She has only found one reference to a mill named Rhosgoch Mill, and this came from a Court of Augmentations document of circa 1550. In a court case, the defendant, Hughe ap David of a water mill called Mylyn Roose, is accused of taking water from Hothnant Mill. But where was Hothnant Mill? It must have been downstream of the Mylyn Roose mentioned. ML has also found out that, "in 1563, Thomas ap Hoell ap Eignon and Thomas Vaughan wanted to lease (for 40 years) Mitton Poole and rebuild Melin Hothnant to save the Queen (Elizabeth I) any costs". As part of her research, she has also discovered that the crown mill of Hothnant and the fulling mill near Painscastle were leased to James ap Meurig from 1506-1531. These two mills were also mentioned together in a document of 1608. So, is Hothnant Mill which was still on record in 1784, when it was assessed at 3s 4d, actually Rhosgoch Mill? ML said that there were more questions than answers about the mill in Rhosgoch. Margaret and Janet agreed to talk to another cousin who has done lots of research on the mill to see what they can find out.

On our way down the road to see the mill site, we stopped to look at the spot where the mill leat crossed the road. This leat is clearly shown on the 1889 map of the village. There is a small ditch here now. However, there used to be a ford at this spot and a photo from a 1924 car rally shows a vehicle crossing this ford. The photo also shows Tump House – this was later demolished. The dip where the mill pond used to be, on the village side of the mill, is also quite obvious from the road although it is now overgrown. The mill is also very overgrown and barely visible from the road, although you can see the TV aerial sticking out above the vegetation.

From here, we walked back up to the chapel and turned right. Half way along this road we stopped to look at the site of White House, which is shown on the old maps but which was pulled down many years ago. It was a small farm with a few fields. There was another cottage roughly where Pentre View is located and ML speculated that this could have been Bridge End. There is no certainty about this, but there was a ford here and a footbridge over the stream.

After turning left to finish our tour of the "Triangle", we stopped under two yew trees at the end of the track leading down to the bog. There was probably more than one house here – Yew Tree Cottage, Crossway and Ebenezer Cottage are all names that have been recorded. In around 1840, a new house was built here and James Mainwaring ran a school from it in the 1860s and 1870s. Along the lane to the bog, there was another cottage about half way down and then Common Cottage or Ducks Ford, which was situated at the bottom. In the garden of this last cottage is the site of a former sawpit.

Our last stop was Horn Castle, or The Castle, where we were the guests of Richard Harris and Sally Matthews. Just in front of the house, Richard pointed out a shed which had once been "The Shop". It had previously been located near the chapel where the postman used it as the sorting office. Roy Lloyd remembers coming from school to buy sweets at the shop once it had been relocated to The Castle's garden.

Richard told us that the earliest written record he can find of Horn Castle is in 1773 and the earliest record of Rhosgoch is on a map of 1755. However, he believes that the site may have been continually occupied since Neolithic or even Mesolithic times. He has found a number of artefacts in the garden, including some flint tools one of which could be from the Mesolithic period, after the last ice age. Other finds include stone spindle whorls, which are a sign of domesticity, and many pieces of pottery, including some possibly from Buckley, N Wales, N Devon, and one which may be Talgarth or Whitney Pottery. He thinks that, due to the tight cluster of finds, there may have been a wooden structure on the site for many years before the stone house was built. More recently, the tithe map shows that the border of the land that belongs to The Castle was a small stream, which was later straightened. He has a lovely collection of maps of the local area and of Radnorshire, one of which dates from 1610. From 1903, for many years, the ownership of The Castle went with the Inn. It is named as Horn Castle on some maps and written records, but it had previously been known as Rosegoch or Rhosgoch. There is a record of a dissenters meeting in 1791 at 'The House of Thomas Brothers, called Rhosgoch'. Richard says that he has found only one other place with the name Horn Castle in UK, a town in Lincolnshire. He has researched the meaning of the name and has found that it could be from the Anglo Saxon, meaning an enclosure or fortress on a bend or a corner; alternatively, it could be from the Latin which means more or less the same. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that there was a Roman road which came through the locality.

As a conclusion, ML suggests that it seems more certain than ever that Rhosgoch as a village is very new. She believes that The Castle probably existed as a small farm, that the Old Inn was a small farm on the side of the road that picked up passing trade and shod horses, and that there were the mills using the water coming out of the bog or the Bachowey before it flowed on to Painscastle. She thinks that in the 1700s there were enclosures, especially on the south side of the road. Possibly, all of the area from the present bog to the golf club bridge, and maybe even further on, was part of the bog and people drained parts of it and divided the land up into small fields and built their cottages there. There were five such houses, if we count White House. The village is so different from Painscastle, which in general has large fields surrounding the village. This suggests that Painscastle farms are old established farms, as the small-holdings are nearer to the hill.

We are most grateful to Richard and Sally for inviting us into their house and for so generously providing us with most welcome refreshments; many thanks go to them. We would also like to thank Janet Russell and Margaret Warne for giving up their time to come to talk to us about the Mill and for showing us their fascinating documents. We are very grateful to John Price for enlightening us about the life of John Griffiths, Portway. Furthermore, we would like to thank Geoff Cable and the congregation of Hermon Chapel for making us feel welcome and for giving us refuge when it was raining. Once again, on everyone's behalf, I would like to thank Maureen Lloyd for her organisation, her boundless enthusiasm and all of the hard work that she puts into researching the field trips for us.

The next meeting will be on the fourth Thursday of the month, September 22nd because of a clash of dates with the Gardening Club.