

## Notes from Local Interest Group 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019

**Present:** Maureen Lloyd (ML), Ken Lloyd, Wendy and Dainis Ozols, Cherry and Victor Williams, Avryl and Roy Lloyd, Stephen Lloyd, Seren Lloyd, Neville Harley, David Lloyd, Rita Goodwin, Iris Lloyd, Grace Davies, Richard Thomas.

**Apologies:** Edwina Griffiths, Jenny Francis, John & Margaret Price

ML welcomed everyone and said how good it was to see that so many had braved the most inclement weather to get to the meeting, especially our speaker, Cherry Williams.

Cherry started by saying that her talk would be based on her Great Grandmother's diaries. She was joined by some Lloyd family members including ones who had travelled from Kington and even Sleaford in Lincolnshire to be at the meeting. She went on to say that coming up to Painscastle in the snow had reminded her of her days as a midwife when she had often been called out in similar weather to deliver babies. She had been born within a mile of the Adullam Hall in Painscastle and used to take part in village events, including the Anniversaries and Eisteddfods, standing up on the stage in the very same hall that she was in tonight. She went to Painscastle School, then on to Rhosgoch when it opened in 1953 and from there to Llandrindod Wells Grammar School. After that she became a State Registered Nurse and Midwife practising for 41 years in the NHS. She recalled that during her childhood it was usual on a Sunday afternoon to visit family, extended family or just go for a ride out in the car. Her father would point out places where family lived and tell stories along the way. Since his untimely death in 1975 she has tried to keep those memories alive and so her interest in Genealogy began. She had learned from her father's cousin, Margaret, that her Great Grandmother had kept diaries and eventually she tracked these down. Her aunt had given them to her eldest daughter and she in turn gave them to Cherry. They are very fragile; some are written in very small Eagle Insurance diaries, but most are in exercise books. The earliest diary dates from 1898.

Her Great Grandmother was Mary Lloyd, née Herbert. She was born in Colva in 1858 to Mary Herbert (née Tuck, from The Castle in Painscastle) and Moses Herbert and she lived through the reigns of three monarchs, Victoria, Edward VII and George V. She lived at Dan y Fron; the farm with 80 acres had been bought by her father for £3000 in 1874. She had one brother, John Herbert. She was privately educated at Newchurch Rectory, a school run by Rev David Vaughan, and was at the school in May 1870 when Kilvert called by. When she left school she worked at home helping her mother. She married Evan Lloyd at Colva Church on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1886 and together they farmed Dan y Fron. Between them, they had ten children with eight surviving into adulthood. Evan was quite a local character and was very involved in the local community. He was a staunch non-conformist and local preacher, and he also had great veterinary skills, very useful for the local farmers. He also served as a councillor and guardian for Colva Parish.

In places, Cherry told us, the diaries are very hard to read, but they are fascinating once you have made the effort. They give a wonderful insight into local dialect. Mary uses "tuck" for took and "yast" for yeast, and she also refers to it "powring with rain". Throughout, she refers to Evan as Dada. Every year, she ends with the same phrase, "Here endeth the year", together with a little summary, some of which are very emotive.

Mary's first diary dates from 1898 when she would have been 40 years old and she had already had eight children, seven of whom had survived. Cherry explained that she had selected some snippets

with which to start her talk in order to give us a flavour of what they contain; there is obviously quite a bit of repetition from year to year. Most of the entries are short, but you can learn a great deal about Mary's life from even the shortest of them. She mentions in February 1898 that her fourth child, Arthur, had gone to school for the first time. This was Newchurch School, more commonly known as Cwmgwillim, which had been opened in 1880. On Shrove Tuesday of the same year she writes that Evan had attended the funeral of Uncle Richard Croose. During his life, Richard had given a plot of ground for the building of Newchurch Chapel and later another for a burial ground. In April that year she went to Newchurch Post Office to send a telegram; this must have been for something important as it cost quite a bit of money at the time. On Michaelmas Day in 1899 she records that Evan made some "besoms", a broom made from a stick and twigs. On October 9<sup>th</sup> of the same year she records that baby Alfred (her youngest son) arrived and that there had been a doctor in attendance, again something which would have had to be paid for in the days before the NHS. In December of that year a Mr Price calls "to do the harmonium." Cherry said that it is noticeable in the diaries that music was very important to the family at Dan y Fron, both singing and the playing of instruments, and that they regularly participated in performances in Colva, Newchurch and further afield. Another aspect of life that the diaries bring out is the importance of neighbours; people helped one another and there were many callers, both family and friends, many staying overnight. Cherry said that it is apparent from the diaries that Mary was an incredibly busy and hardworking woman. She kept house and helped in the fields and with the animals, even though her health was a little troublesome and, according to her entries, she suffered from many headaches.



Mary Lloyd in the garden with her Bible

For the rest of the talk, Cherry had divided Mary's entries into a number of sections in order to give us a taste of rural Radnorshire life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These sections are: home, travel, farm, occasions, WW1, voting, church and family.

**Home:** Mary had regular days for washing, which she would take down to the River Arrow. Ironing would follow once the washing was dry and this included "doing up the collars", ie starching. She bought very little and was as self-sufficient as possible. Eggs from the hens, butter and dressed fowl were sold to earn some extra income and she had a kitchen garden where she could grow things for the family and for sale. July and August saw her daughters spending long days on Newchurch and Glascwm hills picking whimberries. She preserved many of the things they grew or foraged to keep

them going with jams, jellies, pickles, etc, through the year. She also took in lodgers. Mary milked the ewes and made cheese which she took to Newchurch to sell. Baking was a weekly event and the Lloyds would take their grain to Rhosgoch mill to be made into flour. Mary mentions that she had to get up at 4.30 am in December 1915 in order to get to the Christmas market in Hay to sell her dressed poultry. The feathers from these fowl were not wasted and she would wash and sort them so that she could use them to stuff feather beds and pillows. The eggs she would sell to regular customers. When they were in season, mushrooms and watercress were picked and sold. Each February, and often in November, pigs would be killed and the meat would be shared with neighbours, who would repay the favour when they killed their own animals. Meat was salted to preserve it and Cherry showed us a photo of the family's salting table which dated from 1771. Mary was also an accomplished needlewoman and she did lots of mending. On top of all of this, she liked her house to look nice and so cleaning and white washing are mentioned regularly in the diaries. Her daughters, Gerty and Dolly, worked alongside her until they married but, even so, she would have had very little time to herself.

**Travel:** From the diaries, it is apparent that Mary walked for mile after mile, and she also got around on horseback or in a pony and trap (and Cherry showed us a wonderful photo of the family's rig with Evan and her brother John from c 1900). None of these provided any shelter from the elements and winters were often severe. She would regularly go to Kington and Hay, either to shop or to sell goods. For the whole of her life she would have had to pay a toll to cross the Hay bridge (these charges were discontinued in 1933 – after Mary's lifetime). In her diaries, Mary mentions walking home from Walton, walking to Sunny Bank and Clyro and she would regularly go by foot to Hay; these involved quite significant distances. In 1913, she mentions travelling by train to visit friends in Tillington, boarding at Whitney-on-Wye station and leaving it at Credenhill. In 1926, the bus arrived in the area and she could use it to go to Hay and Kington, but she would have to walk to Newchurch or Gladestry in order to get on it.



Evan Lloyd leading the rig with John Herbert seated

**Farm:** At Dan y Fron, there was very little machinery and the farm depended on heavy horse and manpower. The farm work followed the rhythm of the seasons. In January and February, the cattle would be fed in the sheds and the sheep would be out in the fields. The men would be tending to the hedges and ditches at this time. March and April were the months when the fields were ploughed and harrowed ready for the root crops and lambing would take place out in the fields. In April, the

cattle were moved to Newchurch Hill to graze. Drills were cut in the fields ready for oats, barley and wheat to be sown. In June, the sheep were washed in the River Arrow and this was followed by shearing. The wool was packed and taken to Hay for grading; this happened in a building now occupied by The Granary café. After shearing, the sheep were dipped, using water carried up from the river. In around June, the muck was taken out to the fields for spreading. Later, the hay was cut by hand and the women would help with this task, as well as bringing the tea down to the men in the fields. The hay was gathered into ricks and then thatched with rushes. September and October would see the grain harvested, again mostly by hand. Horse-drawn binders were used to simplify the task of gathering the crops. Root crops would also be harvested; these were mainly used for winter fodder. Autumn also saw the hedges being trimmed and firewood being collected from Dorthy wood. Using the apple crop, cider would be made at Great House and Llanpicca. This was a very popular drink at harvest time. Mary mentions the arrival of steam traction in the area from 1914 and this was used to help the framers to thresh the grain, with the traction engine making the rounds of the farms in the area. She also writes that she helped with winnowing of the grain crop, but she does not say what was used to do this. The sheep and cattle would be walked to market, either in Kington or in Hay. Horse sales took place in Huntington and the horses would be taken to Tom Lloyd in Newchurch for shoeing. Summing up in 1923 she mentions a national Foot and Mouth epidemic which closed the markets.

**Occasions:** In 1912, Mary reports that there was much excitement about “an airship in Pentwyn Meadows” and she had taken her children to see it several times. This was actually an aircraft, flown by a Denys Corbett Wilson. He had set off from Hendon in a race with his friend, Damer Leslie Allen, to complete a flight between GB and Ireland. During the flight, he had been forced to land near Hereford and, rather than waiting for his mechanic to arrive with the correct oil for the aircraft, he bought some locally. It was the wrong grade and so he was forced to land again after having engine problems. This time he landed in Colva and here he drew a big crowd. His mechanic eventually arrived with the correct oil and he took off, bound for Goodwick in Pembrokeshire. From Goodwick, he took off on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, landing 100 minutes later in County Wexford. This was the first complete flight between GB and Ireland. Sadly, his friend (Allen) disappeared over the Irish Sea. (Colva was part of this great history.)

**WW1:** The war features quite significantly in Mary’s diaries, especially after her son, Jim, was called up (despite having gone to tribunal). Jim was enlisted in May 1916, firstly into the Machine Gun Corps in France, later serving in the South Wales Borderers in Mesopotamia. Mary records that she wrote to him often and sent him parcels regularly. In April 1919, Jim wrote to say that he had gone to India, but later that month, much to his mother’s delight, he returned home. Sadly for her, Jim and his father “had words” in August 1919, after which Jim left home. It is possible that he had not fully recovered from the rigours and horror of the War about and his father would not have known what he had been through.

**Voting:** In November 1922, Mary records that she went to vote. This would have been her first opportunity to vote at an election, after the passing of The Representation of the People Act in 1918, which gave the vote to married women over the age of 30. She recorded that she used her vote in two more General Elections.

**Church/Chapel:** Mary’s family were regular churchgoers, although Dada and the rest of the family supported the chapels. Mary walked to church every Sunday and sat in the same seat. Each year, Mary would help to decorate the church for harvest and Christmas. She also mentions Sunday School treats and Cherry showed us a photo taken at an outing to Newchurch Quarry. In 1914, she mentions that she went to Bryngwyn for the opening of the Church Hall. She writes about socials, anniversaries and

isteddfods which took place at the chapels. It is obvious that her family was very involved in the local community (hedging and ploughing matches also get quite a few mentions).

**Family:** Family was very important to Mary and she loved them dearly. She saw a good deal of family tragedy, all of which is recorded in the diaries. She also mentions happy events, such as her daughter Edith's wedding. Her first grandchild was born in October 1912; sadly, some of her grandchildren also died. In 1918, Edith's son was born (this was Cherry's father). In December 1919, Edith had another son, Trevor. In April 1922 Dolly lost her baby. Dolly gave birth again in April 1923 and this time the baby survived. Sadly, in August 1924, Dolly died in childbirth. In 1928, her daughter Gerty and son Alfred both got married. In April 1929, Gerty had a baby, but neither survived. Mary was heartbroken by the death of these two daughters; she had been so close to them both and they had worked alongside each other for the whole of their lives. These diary entries were pure grief and palpable heartbreak. Cherry has obtained copies of the death certificates and found that Gerty died of a pulmonary embolism and Dolly of placenta praevia. These deaths would be preventable now but in the 1920s they were major complications. Mary's last diary entry was on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1929; she died in October, aged 70. Dada (Evan) died the following February, aged 70, and they are both buried in Colva churchyard.



Evan and Mary Lloyd with their eight surviving children

Cherry concluded by saying that she is very proud to be the custodian of Mary's diaries. She had put them out for us to look at, together with a display board with documents and photos from her family's history. She is full of admiration for her Great Grandmother and thinks that her daughter, Cherry's Grandmother Edith, must have been "a chip off the old block" as she was also extremely resilient, "a strong woman who would turn her hands to anything".

ML thanked Cherry for coming to give us such an illuminating talk. Many of those present were either related to Cherry or could remember some of the places and practices that she had told us about, which made her talk even more interesting and relevant. We had all had a wonderful evening – it had certainly been well worth the effort of venturing out on a very cold and snowy evening.

As always, the meeting ended with refreshments kindly made by Avryl Lloyd (despite there being no water in the Hall because of frozen pipes!).