

## Local Interest Group 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

**Apologies:** Adrian Chambers

**Present:** Maureen Lloyd (ML), Gwyneth Guy (GG), Wendy and Dainis Ozols (DO), Grace Davies (GD), John Price Hay (JPH), John Price Rhosgoch (JPR), Peter and Pauline Spode (PS & PSp), Avryl and Roy Lloyd (AL & RL)

ML opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. There were two main topics for the meeting.

### **Kilns for drying corn**

**ML** started by telling us about the indenture (dated 1825) which she had brought back from the group's visit to the National Library in Aberystwyth in December. Not only does this confirm that what is now New House in Painscastle was originally the Black Ox pub, but it also mentions various buildings belonging to the Black Ox, including a kiln. The actual location of this kiln is not yet known. This kiln must have been added as New House was not new in 1825! As a result of this discovery, ML has done some research in order to find out more about kilns in the local area. She had brought along a kiln tile for everyone to see. This has come from Lower Llanddewi where there used to be a kiln for drying corn. On a visit to the house, ML had been shown the tile by the owner. There were quite a few of these tiles and they all have holes in them and are of varying patterns.

**GG** said that she had seen a kiln at Llanddewi when she had surveyed the old house some years ago; the old house no longer exists. She also said that she had found a catalogue showing different kiln tiles. (This catalogue was passed around for people to see. The tile was also passed around.)

**GG** went on to say that there is another kiln at New Buildings. She believes that the kilns were about 2m across, and that they were often located within buildings. They were funnel-shaped. The heat came from below (that's why the tiles have "holes" in them) and the corn sat on top of the tiles; it was continually turned in order to help it dry. These kilns were nearly always located somewhere near a water mill and most were built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. All of them are brick built. She speculated that there might have been a wetter period which made it necessary to dry the corn in kilns as they were mostly built within quite a narrow period of time. Another kiln was built at Busnant at Glascwm. Apparently the farm workers here used to sit around the kiln and tell stories, keeping warm at the same time.

**ML** said that the catalogue of tiles gave the names of different places and the various styles of tile associated with them, which is very interesting.

**GG** mentioned that there are fields Gwernfythan called Hop Fields and that this might indicate that kilns were also being used for drying hops.

**GD** mentioned a farm called Gwernalwye in the local area where hops were definitely grown in the past.

**PS** asked whether the kiln mentioned in the catalogue at Bronllys still exists.

**ML** said that this is at the Honey Cafe and it can still be seen. She has spoken to Jude Hurn, whose family still owns the premises, about it. It was a malt house.

**PSp** said that the catalogue shows that the style of the kiln tiles varies from county to county.

**GG** asked whether tile patterns can be tied to specific companies.

**ML** thought not.

**JPR** said that in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries corn would have been stored within the house, in the attic in many cases. This is because it would have been warm and dry high up in the buildings. At his home, Llwyn y Meibion, the grain had definitely been kept in the attic and there was a hand grinder attached to the frame of the roof.

**AL** said that this was also the case at Pendre where grain still occasionally comes down the beams from the attic to this day.

**GD** said that, at Lower House, so much grain had been kept in the attic over the years that it had weighed down the floor and caused cracks in the ceiling and walls.

**ML** asked if anyone knew whether New House had a granary as it would make sense to have a kiln next to a grain store.

**AL** said that it had.

**DO** said that it was common in the past for pubs to brew their own beer so they may also have had kilns for drying the grain – and New House was the Black Ox pub.

**PS** asked whether the grain is stable once it has been dried.

**ML** explained that it really depends on whether the grain is going to be used for malting or for being kept as grain (eg for flour or for planting to produce next year's crop). Obviously, the malted grain would be allowed to ferment. The other grain would be stable once dried.

**GG** said that she has photos of the Old House at Lower Llanddewi which she will bring to show us.

**JPR** asked where the mill in Newchurch had been located.

**ML** suggested that they might have used Milton Mill, which is only about 2km from the village.

### **Rev'd John Griffiths, Portway**

**ML** invited **John Price (Hay)** to tell the group about the research he had been doing into John Griffiths of Portway. The full transcript of **JPH**'s research is available from **ML** or **JPH**.

Using nearly 30 pages of newspaper reports dating from between 1840 and 1870, **JPH** has collected a great deal of information about Rev John Griffiths of Portway. He was 19 when he took over the farm from his Father in 1832. At this stage, he had not been ordained. He became disenchanted with the absent vicar of Bryngwyn and inspired by the preaching of Rev Richard Lloyd who lived at Glanyrafon in Painscastle, and who was the preacher at Llanbadarn y Garreg congregational church.

In 1849, a chapel was built at Rhosgoch (Hermon Chapel) and it was opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> August of that year. It cost £88.7s.4d to build and had a stable sufficient for six horses. John Griffiths (not yet a Rev) was one of the men behind the project. There were three services on the day of the opening,

each with a different preacher. A further service was held the following Sunday. The congregation of the Hermon Chapel had existed before the building; they had met in another venue.

No-one knows who the land on which the chapel was built belonged to but it is possible that the tithe maps may show who owned the field and **ML** agreed to see whether she could find out. (The site for the chapel was part of Great House Farm and was owned by James Morgan and occupied by Edward Bishop). The stable attached to the chapel (mentioned above) was probably where the current kitchen now is. **JPR and RL** said that the mounting block can still be seen.

At this point **GG** suggested that a search of the Non-Conformist records would probably yield further information.

For some years, John Griffiths (as a member of the chapel) took the services on some of the Sundays. In 1852, after refusing many earlier requests, he was finally ordained – on 5<sup>th</sup> October – in Hermon Chapel itself. The service lasted for nearly 3 hours and involved 5 ministers. It was later reported in the newspaper that Rev Griffiths was an impressive speaker. John Griffiths died, aged 69, on June 18<sup>th</sup> 1882, and he was interred in the graveyard attached to the chapel. During his time as pastor, the chapel had been renovated and Rev Griffiths had borne a large proportion of the cost.

During his life he had been a well respected and trusted member of the community, acting as one of the Commissioners for executing the acts for granting a Land Tax and other rates and taxes. He also regularly preached at Maesyronen Chapel in Glasbury between 1860 and 1861 and was presented with "a copy of Barnes' "Notes on the New Testament," in eleven volumes, for his acceptable and gratuitous labours for the last year." He was frequently called upon to be chairman at various chapel meetings in Aberedw, Llanbadarn y Garreg, Painscastle, Hay (The Globe), Llanwhimp and Maesyronen. In addition, he was a member of the Hay Board of Guardians for many years, with local farmers and dignitaries who included the Rev. R. Lister Venables of Clyro as Vice chairman (whose curate was the diarist Rev. Francis Kilvert).

Incidentally, when Rev. R. Lister Venables married for the second time he requested that no fuss or public celebration be made. Rev. John Griffiths was chairman of a group of local farmers in the area who gave 500 lbs of excellent beef to the poor of the parish to mark their marriage. He was also one of the committee who went to see the happy couple and gave "a very chaste and handsome silver inkstand bearing the inscription, "A Wedding Present to Mrs. R. Lister Venables from the Tenantry and Parishioners of Clyro 1867."

Rev. John Griffiths' name was still remembered in the local press 35 years after he died, in a funeral report of Mr Jones, Portway, Bryngwyn, "who came into the neighbourhood some 30 years ago, taking over the farm owned and occupied by the Rev. John Griffiths, the loved pastor of Hermon and Painscastle for over 40 years".

After this very interesting presentation by **JPH**, refreshments, kindly made by Avryl, were enjoyed by all.