



CWM DULAIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CWMDEITHAS HANES CWM DULAIS

Newsletter - Cylchlythyr

January/ February 2021

We were all looking forward to 2021 in hope and expectation of some normality yet here we are still in lockdown and unsure of how we might get back to normal. But, at least the days are extending and the introduction of the vaccination programme promises more optimism.



Sadly I have to report the death of a long standing and pro-active supporter and member of the Club, Hywel Francis.

As many will be aware, he was a local boy from Onllwyn, son of Dai Francis who also made his own mark on the Valley story. With an academic background in History and historical studies, Hywel dedicated his life work to the furtherance of his personal, political and social values. In his case, this involved the stimulation and enrichment of the Dulais Valley, its people and the community. Along with his wife Mair to whom we extend our sincere condolences, he contributed to the programme of events of the Society and encouraged its evolution as a vital organisation contributing along with many other groups to the improvement of lifestyle and in particular education in the community. The Society remembers him with appreciation and will endeavour to remember and honour his ideals in future when activities recommence.

During the “closure” of the Society the committee continues to respond to enquiries and researches local information and sources of interest to the Club. Tithe maps are one such source.

Tithe records: a short account of the maps and apportionments



Fig. 1 Tithe map extract – Bryndulais, Seven Sisters

A recent enquiry related to a local farm in the valley raised a question of historic ownership, occupancy and tax liability. Such information is to be found in Tithe records and maps. As these maps are different in many ways cartographically from modern maps of today direct comparison can be awkward.

Initially, back as far as the 11th century, tithes were a custom by which payments (taxes) in kind e.g. crops, stock, wool, and milk, for example comprising a 1/10th part of the yearly profits from cultivation or farming, were collected from parishioners for the support of ecclesiastical buildings and clergy. With the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 16th century their land holdings fell into lay hands often the local

aristocracy who took over responsibility for the tax collection and payment. As time went on, rather than payment in kind, it was easier to use cash equivalents possibly based on the contemporary corn price.

Clearly, a record of the amounts due with a definition of each area, its ownership and type of feature e.g. house, field, woodland, etc., was required alongside some graphic indication of their extent i.e. a map. Often in the initial processes of this definition the local peoples involved were perfectly aware of the lay of the land but as time goes on the layout evolves by agreement, sale and transfer or by law as with the 18th century Enclosure Acts. By the time of the Tithe Commutation Act in 1836 definitive documentation in the form of maps and text description were required. Hence the Tithe record documentation consists of two parts:-

- 1) the maps themselves locating land use information (see Fig 1) and...
- 2) records (apportionments) indicating the details of charges due (see Fig 2).

<i>William Davia</i>		<i>Bryn Dylais</i>		
2464	<i>Cae Keeg issa</i>		2	2 38
2465	<i>Wood</i>		3	8
2466	<i>Cae Keeg</i>		2	1 32
2467	<i>Cae Keeg gend</i>		3	2
2468	<i>do ucha</i>		6	3 24
2469	<i>Coed cae maur bryn dylais</i>		195	2 14
2470	<i>Ynys Clovers</i>		2	3 32
2471	<i>Bryn maur bryn dylais</i>		14	3 33
2472	<i>Caudraimbach bryn dylais</i>		14	3 11
2473	<i>Coed Cae bach</i>		2	3 27
			75	3 1

Fig. 2 Tithe documentation/ apportionments – Bryndulais, Seven Sisters

Tithe maps were produced between 1838 and 1850 to ensure that all tithes were paid with money rather than produce. An almost complete set of the tithe maps for Wales is held in the National Library of Wales as part of the as part of the Cynefin project.

The maps were initially intended to conform to a cartographic survey standard countrywide. However, since the local landowner was responsible for the survey and preparation of the map and surveying costs were high for such detailed land measurement, it was soon apparent that consistency in quality was unlikely to be achieved! The intended production scale of 3 Chains to One Inch (1:2376) subsequently varied substantially. In Wales only 50 sheets are considered “first class”, i.e. adhering to the required standard, from a total of 1091 with many of those others rated little better than topographic sketch maps.

Ideally for research purposes, direct comparison of these tithe maps with more recent Ordnance Survey large scales and modern satellite images would be desirable. But given the considerable variation in standard and accuracy already mentioned doing so traditionally using the old paper sheets is not easy. Some means of adjusting the scales to a common standard is needed. Of course we also have to consider whether the maps both have North at the top? It does not always follow; the OS do orient to the North but then which North applies? Magnetic, Geographical or? In the case of Tithe maps, the sheet was often oriented to fit the area. If North is a bit off does it matter?

Then there is the matter of scale consistency and accuracy: as already mentioned a “sketch” map might be deemed sufficient. How does it match to the newer scientifically measured and calculated maps of a more modern era?

To overcome these difficulties it is now possible using digital mathematical techniques to “stretch and bend” digital copies of each map to match international reference systems based on Latitude and Longitude, OS Grid References and satellite navigation systems. The process is called georeferencing (see Fig 3) and allows the maps to



Fig. 3 Tithe map & Satellite extract overlay - Bryndulais, Seven Sisters

be compared as overlays or side by side. Such georeferenced images of the Tithe maps are available online for public use at the National Library of Wales.
(To view old Ordnance Survey maps with their modern equivalents online, look at the National Library of Scotland which provide this facility also covering Wales and England.)

Sources of information:

[Tithes - The National Archives](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/tithes/)

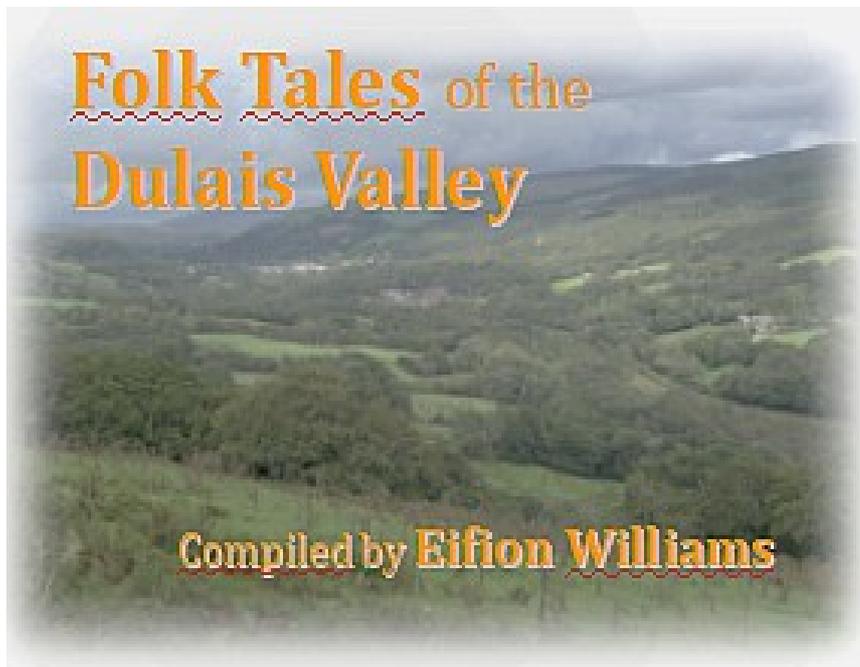
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/tithes/>

[The Tithe Maps and Schedules | The National Library of Wales](https://www.library.wales/collections/learn-more/maps/tithe-maps-of-wales/the-tithe-maps-and-schedules/)

<https://www.library.wales/collections/learn-more/maps/tithe-maps-of-wales/the-tithe-maps-and-schedules/>

[Explore georeferenced maps - Map images - National Library of Scotland \(nls.uk\)](https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15&lat=51.77115&lon=-3.70832&layers=6&b=1)

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=15&lat=51.77115&lon=-3.70832&layers=6&b=1>



Ann Twiddle

Background information:-

“Twiddle”:- We 'twiddle our thumbs' when doing nothing. Ann Twiddle - so called as she was a very good basket maker - local farms bought her baskets. - she was in great demand.

Rhos-y-Gelynen - house at the highest point in the Dulais Valley.

Ras:- Race as in Mill Race, a water feed channel, which in this case ran alongside Rhos-y-Gelynen where the Iron ore miners washed the earth and mud off the raw ore (large stones). It was then carried in pannier-bags, slung over the backs of horses, to the Wenallt Iron Works in Cwmgwrach the remains of which can still be seen today.

The Story

Behind Rhos-y-Gelynen stood a long "shed" where the miners and the carriers were billeted and it was Ann's job to look after them - cleaning, feeding, etc. After a while Ann felt like a change of employment.

She thought that working on some farm or other would suit her with the chance of finding suitable material for her basket making.

So at the Hiring Fair in Neath (today's September Fair) Ann stood in line with others seeking employment (farm workers, maids, drovers, etc) as was the custom. The potential employer would interview the men and women standing in line in front of the Blue Bell Hotel.

Ann was approached by a kindly, gently spoken farmer and his wife. She liked them immediately and when they offered her a position, she accepted it at once. An unexpected bonus came her way, when they told Ann that they farmed Cefn yr Ych Fildre, a farm above Coelbren – a farm that Ann could see

from Rhos-y-Gelynen. After Ann had accepted a Shilling from the farmer and his wife which sealed the transaction, she was in the employ of Cefn-yr-Ych Fildre. The shilling given to all those who found employment was the bond; an agreement, this bond was very rarely broken by either party. Ann was as happy as a sandboy working on the farm, the farmer and his wife were kind to her and on her "days off" she could walk over the valley Rhos-y-Gelynen. She was well fed and ate her meals with the family.

But after about three months, the atmosphere in the farm changed, her employers became distant and less friendly. The food she was given was not so good or as plentiful as previously. She began to lose weight and sores broke out on her lips and face. She thought of walking home, but the shilling played on her mind. She could not bring herself to break the bond.

One day a Pedlar (a basket maker) called at the farm. He was shocked when he saw how unwell Ann looked and the sores on her lips and on her face. He took Ann one side out of earshot of the farmer and his wife and promised to bring a salve for her sores. Needless to say Ann was happier now that someone was looking after her. She was too ashamed to go home as she was and afraid that some one would tell her to break the bond which of course was something she felt that she could not do.

Alas! There was no sign of the Pedler's return. Ann felt really let down but in due course he did keep his promise. Although Ann felt sorry that she had doubted him, at the same time she was very happy. After exchanging pleasantries with the farmer and his wife, the Pedler asked if he could walk around the farm with Ann. The farmer consented. Away from the prying eyes of Ann's employers, the Pedler gave Ann the promised salve and cautioned her that when she was applying it to the affected sores, she should be extra careful that the ointment did not come in contact with her eyes. As they walked around the fields he also showed Ann what herbs and plants she could eat to supplement her meagre diet.

Slowly, by eating the plants and herbs recommended by him, Ann's health improved and the salve worked wonders curing the sores. Ann was being ultra careful in avoiding her eyes and washing her hands after every application. But one day as she was attending to her sores, her mistress called her to help with some chore. In her haste to please, she did not wash her hands and as she brushed some hair from her face the salve touched one of her eyes.

What Ann saw with the affected eye was a completely different world. The farmer and his wife were two horrible creatures, too ugly and grotesque to describe. Almost fainting with fright Ann closed the afflicted eye; everything was as before. She was too frightened to open the affected eye and for days saw everything with the 'good' eye. When she did pluck up enough courage to open both eyes what she saw made her realise why the farm was so clean and tidy. There were dozens of small ugly looking creatures, all busy working around the farm. It was obvious to Ann that the farmer and his wife were the bosses and that these creatures were their slaves.

Ann did her best to work with one eye closed, but one day with both eyes open, Ann saw that one of these creatures was hurt badly. Ann, being kindness itself, went to the creature's aid. Unfortunately, the farmer saw this, ran over, grabbed hold of Ann and demanded to know how she could see the creature. Ann refused to tell him. He stood back to strike her. Ann turned very quickly and ran away towards Rhos-y-Gelynen naturally. Down through the fields she ran, with the farmer in pursuit; as she glanced back the creature revealed who he really was. The Devil himself was giving chase and what was more frightening he was gaining on her!

Ann had almost reached the River Purddyn when the Devil caught her and started dragging her back towards Cefn yr Ych Fildre. Not far away the Vicar of Coelbren (probably contemplating a sermon) was walking through the fields. Being too far away to help Ann directly, he did the only thing he could do; he picked up a stone and hurled it at the struggling pair. Miraculously the stone became a boulder in flight, the Devil had to release Ann to dodge the boulder and in his temper picked up another stone to throw back at the Vicar. This became a boulder and it was the Vicar's turn to avoid being hit. Ann taking advantage of the situation crossed the Purddyn over the bridge known to this day as Pont -y-Gwr Drwg (the Devil's Bridge) and ran home.

The Devil, realising that Ann had escaped, threw a last stone at the Vicar; in his temper, he stamped his foot on the ground and disappeared in a cloud of smoke.

The Vicar determined to go to Rhos-y-Gelynen to comfort Ann. He walked towards Onllwyn and crossed by the bridge known as Bont y Firad (The Vicar's Bridge).

{Just in case: if you don't believe this story - go to the Camnant area - cross Pont y Gwr Drwg – and look along the banks the stream to see the boulders!} *Ed.*

Yr Onllwyn – Industry and poetry

When I saw Tim's article remembering the Khartoum tip and colliery in the last Newsletter, I was reminded of my brother's words. He said, one day when looking at the colliery ruins....

“No one would believe that at 2 o'clock every week day about 200 men would be standing here.”

Poetic thoughts:

'Rwy'n cofio gweld yr Onllwyn
Yn bentre hardd ar dwyn,
Ond beth a welaf heddiw,
Yw caeau'n llawn o frwyn.

Translation from *Microsoft Translator*

*I remember seeing Onllwyn
A beautiful hamlet on the hill,
But what I see today,
Are fields full of rushes.*

More Folk Tales

Tons of Gold

A 'dyn hysbys', a wise man or Wizard predicted that there was a fortune buried underneath Mynydd y Drum. In fact, there were “*Tons of Gold*” which he could retrieve if only he could find a man brave enough to help him! To achieve this meant spending a moonless night standing alone with the Wizard on top of the Drum. Only one man came forward - a certain John Gethin - one brave man?!

The Wizard with his arms full of books, spells and candles led John Gethin to an eerie spot on the dark, dark mountain. The Wizard lay down his magic aids and then proceeded to draw a figure EIGHT on the ground - the only numeral that has no beginning and no end. It shone in the darkness.

He placed the shivering John Gethin in one circle of the figure 8 with the instruction that he should stay in that ring whatever happened. He himself entered the other and lit a candle to see and read his spells. For what seemed ages to John Gethin nothing happened.

Suddenly, the whole mountain was alight and thundering towards John was a very large Bull full of Flames. John Gethin was petrified but, although shivering with fright, he made himself stay in the circle and the bull disappeared. The Wizard acknowledged John Gethin's bravery and carried on consulting his books. Again the whole scene was ablaze with light and thundering towards John Gethin was a Wheel of Fire. This time John Gethin could not hold his nerve and scrambled out of the ring. No sooner had he done this, than the Wheel changed into the Devil and started carting the terrified John Gethin away. The Wizard seeing John's plight rushed out of his circle and grabbed John. A Tug of War ensued. The Wizard stood no chance, so cunningly, he pleaded with the Devil to let him keep John Gethin whilst the lighted candle he was holding lasted. The Devil agreed and forthwith the Wizard blew out the candle. The Devil, realising that he had been tricked, spat a few words at John Gethin and the Wizard then stamped the ground and disappeared.

The Wizard instructed John Gethin to take great care of the candle and to keep it in a cool safe place. However, despite the care taken, in time, the candle wasted away and so did John Gethin's health. He took to his bed when the candle came to an end and so he died. Nothing remained of either. On the day of the funeral, a lump of clay was placed in John Gethin's coffin....

{OK - but what happened to the Tons of Gold? was it Coal – Black gold? } *Ed.*

... and some with a human touch

My late uncle told a story about a work-mate both working in a mine. His mate was working on his own in a heading (still and pillar) when he heard a terrific crash of drams and chains coming from the nearby stall. As my uncle pointed out to me "*noise under ground is echoed and re-echoed*" enough to terrify one, especially a worker on his own. When his friend went to investigate, as far as he could see there was nothing that could have caused him to have such a fright. He told the tale to his work mates when bathing in the pit head baths. They laughed and pulled his leg saying that he was dreaming or that he'd been drinking.

The following day they all sobered up when a colleague was killed in that very district. My uncle ended the story saying that his friend was never the same after his experience.

The Toili

This account is from a friend who was told from his mother who, he said, would not lie to her son. My maternal great-grandmother lived in the village of Ystalyfera. One fine day she went for a walk along the towpath of the nearby canal. After walking for some distance, she saw a funeral procession coming towards her on the same path. Because the path was so narrow, she had to stand back in the bushes and could not understand why a cortège would choose to use the canal towpath. As it passed no-one talked to her, but she could hazard a guess as to who was dead as she recognised the mourners.

She hurried home and admonished her children for not telling her that "*so and so*" had died; telling them of her experience. Her daughters replied saying that the person in question had been seen shopping that very morning and that their mother had been fantasising.

Some short weeks later the daughters had to apologise to their mother. The person in question died and the coffin was carried to the chapel along the towpath because the body could not be taken out through the front of the house.

{Toili – Death/ funeral notice} *Ed.*

Answers to last issue's Word Names Stack.

Clues

- 1 Valley Museum under conservation (4,4)
- 2 Metal coating factory (3,5)
- 3 Article title relating to General Gordon (8,3)
- 4 Main river in valley (4,6)
- 5 Oldest town in valley (Cymraeg) (8)
- 6 Valley stream near Coelbren (4,5)
- 7 Canonised Welsh/ Irish man (2,7)
- 8 Old foundry on Pyrddin River (6,9)
- 9 Geological stratum providing fuel resource (4,4)
- 10 Roman road (4,5)
- 11 Evans Bevan's daughters' place (5,7)

CEFN COED
TIN WORKS
KHARTOUM TIP
AFON DULAIS
CREUNANT
NANT LLECH
ST PATRICK
BANWEN IRONWORKS
COAL SEAM
SARN HELEN
SEVEN SISTERS

Using letters in blue, block spells out

CWMDUL AIS H S

{Any complaints about answers, apply to the 'Wizard' - see Folk Tales above!!} *Ed.*