

THE TRANSACTIONS
OF THE
RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY

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Edited by Professor Peter J Conradi and Adam Fenn.

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THE RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1930

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Mr Stephen Roderick

THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: it is, as always, with great pleasure that I welcome you again to the annual general meeting of our Society, this time to its seventy-seventh meeting and the sixth occasion upon which I have had the honour of addressing you as your president.

Since we last met, Lady Delia Mary Dillwyn-Venables-Llewelyn in her ninety-sixth year has left us for glory. A good number of our Society attended her funeral at the parish church of Newbridge on a very cold Saturday morning last December, and if we didn't have a cold when we went there, we certainly did when we came back. An appropriate obituary appears in the forthcoming volume of the *Transactions*. But let us now gratefully remember this gracious former president and faithful friend of our Society by standing for a moment in silence.

Lady Delia may you rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

The project whereby the National Library of Wales proposes to undertake the digitization of the journals of selected Welsh local history societies, of which our society is one, has attracted enthusiastic interest amongst our membership and we are very grateful to Ms Gwyneth Guy, Ms Catherine Richards, and Mr Adam Fenn, for their interest in what is happening and for the time and effort they have taken in explaining to the executive on several occasions what this important project is all about.

On Wednesday 15 August 2007 your executive held an extraordinary meeting at Powys Museum, by kind invitation of Ms Heather Pegg, one of the Museum's curators, where we were joined by representatives of the Brecknock Society and Powisland Club, and addressed by Mr Martin Locock of the National Library of Wales about the project. More will be said about this later on in this meeting, but for the present let me express my pleasure in seeing our Society taking an active role in calling the meeting with our fellow societies and initiating discussion on this topic which will inevitably have a considerable influence of our future history and development.

Happily, I can also report that our lost cottages of Radnorshire project has not lost its momentum and there was, for example, a meeting in New Radnor in March whereat Lloyd Lewis gave a talk on his work around Rhaeadr for the project and others have been working individually on their own areas. It is hoped soon to get a website working so that all the information individually gathered can be uploaded.

The Society's lecture programme was well supported, thanks largely to Sadie Cole's imaginative choice of lecturers whose subjects embraced the Elan Valley Aqueduct, whose escape from the attentions of the IRA always amazes me, medieval church screens, and the Mappa Mundi, and we look forward to hearing Richard Suggett this evening lecturing on the Houses of Radnorshire, having our copies of his magnificent book on the subject tucked under our arms waiting for his autograph.

Sadie Cole and Ruth Jones between them see to it that posterity will receive an accurate account of our executive meetings as well as seeing to the ever growing amount of correspondence which the Society receives. The librarians, Messrs John Barker and Geoffrey Ridyard continue to supervise the gentle growth of our library, keeping it up to date with their discriminating choice of suitable acquisitions whilst Joy Ashton and Norma Baird-Murray are always ready by appointment to receive readers in the Society's room in Coleg Powys. Norma also continues to arrange the Society's excursions which this year included an experience of being transported on the newly restored Transporter Bridge over the Usk at Newport and the architectural delights of Tredegar House, and Ludlow.

Our treasurer, Mr Tom Idris Jones, though not enjoying the good health we would wish him, has performed another year's magic with our accounts, keeping them as our honorary auditor, Mr Stephen Roderick, has once again been able to certify as being to the best of his knowledge, true and accurate. Some may say, however, that our credit balance, to use a current buzz word, has become somewhat obese. One reason for this is that we have had no applications for financial assistance from scholars and students. This may be due partly to poor publicity by the Society and partly to the modesty of would be applicants. But be this as it may, your executive hopes to hear from some worthy candidates over the next year.

Adam Fenn in his editorial role continues to maintain an enviably high standard of presentation in our *Transactions* as well as commendable variety in the subjects of their contents, whilst at the same time mastering the implications, academic, legal and practical, of digitization for journals such as ours.

Our gratitude is due to the consistently faithful attendance of all the members of our executive committee, both elected and co-opted, encouraged, no doubt by the hospitality offered us by Heather Pegg, joint curator of the Museum, and her impeccable taste in black chocolate biscuits.

The Field Group, under the vigorous leadership of Anne Goodwin continues to flourish and we congratulate them on their contempt for the wet summer in their outings.

Now I would like to conclude on a personal note. Looking back on the events of my life I could, I think, safely claim to be the most short-listed man in history. I always managed to disgrace myself at the interview, so never got the job. On the other hand I did get a lot of good advice from my interviewers which I have tried to remember and apply to myself. One of the best of these precious nuggets came long ago from a headmaster of King's School, Taunton where I aspired to become school chaplain. 'If you come here', said he 'don't overstay your welcome: the time will inevitably come for you to leave the stage'. And he was so right, and the time has now come for me to leave the presidential stage of the Radnorshire Society which I have occupied for the last six years. So now I give the Society the traditional year's notice that I shall not seek re-election next year, and at the same time I shall lay down my part of the editorship of our *Transactions* which I have held since volume fifty-four was published twenty-three years ago in 1984. It has been an immense honour to be your president but we all know what happened to Lady Thatcher when she told a dismayed audience that she just wanted to go on and on. They saw to it, by none too commendable methods, that she didn't. There is a lot to be said for the wisdom of those societies which elect presidents annually. It gives many more deserving people an opportunity to serve the Society and at the same time it gives the Society a regular opportunity to express its gratitude to those who have served it well. Those of you who were fortunate enough to be taught Roman History in your younger days will remember Cincinnatus, who having done his bit for the Roman Republic returned to his plough. Cincinnatus, regarded as a model of public behaviour in many respects, stayed in office for only sixteen days before returning to his plough, so I have, as it were, rather overdone it, but now it is my intention to return to my plough, and to neither stand for election to any other offices in the Society nor to accept any other honour which by mistake might come my way, whilst promising to pay my annual subscription with unfailing regularity and never, never to ask anyone 'When are the *Transactions* coming out?'

Griff Rees, or to put it more formally, the Reverend Gruffydd Nicholas Rees, BA, of St David's College, Lampeter and Wycliff Hall, Oxford has been a member of our executive since 1979 and though a mature octogenarian probably has the best attendance record of us all. Moreover he has been in holy orders for fifty-nine years and will long be remembered as Radnorshire's answer to George Herbert as a model country parson. It seems therefore more than appropriate that one of my final presidential acts should be to join with Alwyn Batley and propose that the Society should enrol Griff as one of our vice-presidents. Griff does not hear as well

as once he did, so I think our proposal should be greeted by us all standing on our feet, with tumultuous, sound barrier breaking, applause.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much, and we will now proceed, with Alwyn Batley's help, to the rest of the agenda.

RWD Fenn

THE SECRETARY'S REPORT

The work of the Society seems to expand on an annual basis which must be proof of a successful Society. There has been a full and varied lecture programme beginning with Mr Edward Parry speaking on Funerary Monuments in Powys and the Border following last years AGM. In the spring our programme began with Mr Noel Hughes of Severn Trent Water giving a graphic illustrated lecture on the construction of the Elan Valley Aqueduct together with details of its history during the century following its construction. This was held at the Offa's Dyke Centre in Knighton. At Rhaeadr in March Mr Richard Wheeler gave a beautifully illustrated talk on Medieval church screens of the southern Marches highlighting some extraordinary and intricate carving that is to be seen in several Radnorshire churches. Mr James Anthony spoke at Presteigne about the Mappa Mundi and the Hereford Cathedral chained library reminding us of this unique artefact so near to home. All these lectures were very much appreciated by a large audience proving their continuing value as a link with a wide local audience.

The executive committee has continued to meet quarterly and as always members of the committee have overseen the smooth running of the Society. We have continued to keep a watch brief on planning applications and taking appropriate action if it is considered any may have an impact on the county's heritage.

An extra-ordinary of the committee was held to discuss the digitization of the Society's *Transactions* to which members of the Powisland Club and the Brecknock Society were invited to hear a presentation by Martin Locock of the National Library of Wales.

The Society became a member of the Welsh History Forum and as such mounted an exhibition at the re-enactment of the Battle of Pilleth. It is hoped to increase the number of such displays and exhibitions at local shows and fetes in order to publicise the Society and attract new members.

The website, now updated by Ms Emma Brown, continues to be a welcome addition to our resources and in conjunction with other websites has attracted several new members as well as other enquiries. I feel it is an

important asset and indicates that the Society is adopting new methods of disseminating information and publicity. Our thanks are due to Ms Brown.

I represented the Society at the AGM of CPAT with whom we have maintained cordial links with Mr Bob Silvester attending meetings of the executive committee. We have also have Ms Catherine Richards of Powys Archives and Mrs Heather Pegg of the Radnorshire Museum in attendance at our meetings. We are also extremely grateful to Mrs Pegg and her staff for providing us with an extremely pleasant and functional venue for our executive meetings.

It now remains for me to say how much the support of the executive committee helps me in my work as Hon. Secretary. I feel I must mention in particular Mr Alwyn Batley and Mrs Anne Goodwin without whose help I would find the task most arduous.

Finally I crave the indulgence of the Society for any failures.

Sadie Cole

THE EDITORS' REPORT

The editors are hoping to bring out volumes 77 (2007) and 78 (2008) within a calendar year. This unusual proceeding requires some comment. Volume 78 (2008) will be the long-awaited translation by Mr Dai Hawkins of Ffrancis Payne's *Crwydro Sir Faesyfed* (1966/8), 'Exploring Radnorshire', originally published in two volumes as part of a series of guides to the counties of Wales and among Welsh readers long considered a classic text with a deservedly high reputation. No more appropriate audience for the translation of this book concerning the cultural history of Radnorshire than the membership of our Society seems likely to be found and, in this way, we also hope to correct recent delays in publication of the *Transactions*. We are grateful to Mr Payne's sons Ifan and Ceri Payne for their permission. It will make a longer issue than normal.

This volume starts with a welcome tribute by Mr Keith Parker, to the outgoing editor Revd Dr Roy Fenn. His tribute stands by itself but members may also note the tribute by Anne Goodwin below and an article-review by Professor Richard Shannon of Roy Fenn and Sir Andrew Duff Gordon's *Life of George Cornwall Lewis*. The *Transactions* for the years 2007 and 2008 are edited by Professor Peter J Conradi and Mr Adam Fenn.

Professor Conradi is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Kingston University. His most recent books include *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (2001) and *Going Buddhist* (2004). His *At the Bright Hem of God: Radnorshire Pastoral* (Seren, 2009) is a study of the mid-Welsh March, and some of

its writers and contemplatives. He owed past numbers of the *Transactions* a great debt whilst researching this and the article entitled 'Seers and Remembrancers' in the current volume is taken from that book. His *A Writer at War* is due out in 2010 with Short Books, and he is currently writing a life of Frank Thompson for Bloomsbury. He has lived partly in Radnorshire since 1975, the year he became a member of the Society.

Changes in editorships naturally bring in their wake changes of emphasis and this may be a good occasion on which to 'flag' these. The overall length of the *Transactions* may in future – after a much longer than usual edition for 2008 for Payne's 'Exploring Radnorshire' – somewhat contract. While some exceptions may naturally be made, and there is no absolute exclusion clause on longer articles, shorter length submissions are now very welcome: articles of no longer than 5–6,000 words (maximum). We would distinguish here articles proper from somewhat shorter article-reviews of around 2,000 to 3,500 words, a length that allows the writer amplitude to explore local topics discursively and, where appropriate, personally. This volume of the *Transactions* contains three article-reviews, by Paul Binding, Roy Fenn, and Richard Shannon. Apart from this, first-time contributions are particularly welcome, and a sub-committee has explored ways of encouraging these and the executive committee has agreed to offer prizes. For a note about such prizes see page 25.

Other innovations within this volume include the transcript of a programme broadcast on BBC 2 Wales and two fold-out pages illustrating, in a collaboration between Richard Wheeler and Margaret Gill, this year's central article on the screen at Llananno.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL BINDING is a novelist whose most recent novel *My Cousin the Writer* was very well-received, and who has also published books on Eudora Welty and Ibsen, and a study of the world's first atlas, *Imagined Corners* (2003). He was deputy literary editor of *The New Statesman*, and reviews widely in, among other places, *The Spectator*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Independent* and *Independent on Sunday*. Four of his books are being reissued this summer as 'Faber Finds'. He has lived on the Shropshire side of the Welsh March for twenty years.

ALAN EREIRA is an award-winning documentary TV film-maker and writer specialising in historical subjects. He has worked closely with Terry Jones, ex-Python and polymath, for many years.

DR MARGARET AV GILL, BA, Ph.D. After taking a degree in ancient history and archaeology, she became an authority on the Mediterranean

bronze age, writing many papers on Minoan/Mycenaean glyptic art, and later published the small finds from the Byzantine excavations at Sarachane and Amorium. While serving as deputy director of the city museums of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and keeper of applied art at the Laing Art Gallery, she produced articles on Newcastle and York silver, Tyneside pottery and the Beilby/Bewick engraving workshop. She was then appointed curator of Tunbridge Wells museum and art gallery. Since retiring to Glasbury-on-Wye, she has interested herself in local church history and botany, and is currently working on botanical illustrations for the Marcher Apple Network's *A Welsh Marches Pomona*. Her publications include: *A Handbook of Newcastle Silver* (1978), *A Directory of Newcastle Goldsmiths* (1980), *Royal Tunbridge Wells in Old Picture Postcards* (1983), *Tunbridge Ware* (1985), *Amorium Reports, Finds I: The Glass* (2002), and *A Survey of the Ceramic Tiles in the Churches of Radnorshire* (2005).

TERRY JONES is a Welsh screenwriter, film director, comedian, actor, children's author, popular historian, political commentator and TV documentary host. He has a home in Montgomeryshire and is best known as a member of Monty Python's Flying Circus.

JAMES ROOSE-EVANS is a distinguished director of the British Theatre who founded the Hampstead Theatre in London and whose many productions include his own adaptation of Helene Hanff's *84 Charing Cross Road*, for which he won awards on both sides of the Atlantic for Best Director and Best Play for his productions on Broadway and in the West End. He is the author of more than fifteen books, the most recent, published in August 2009, being *Opening Doors and Windows: A Memoir in Four Acts*, and *Finding Silence: 52 Meditations for Daily Living*, both published by The History Press. He is also the first British theatre director to be ordained a non-stipendiary priest, and has preached in Westminster Abbey, and many cathedrals. He regularly leads workshops on rituals for daily living. His other books include: *Inner Journey, Outer Journey: Finding a Spiritual Centre in Everyday Life*; *Passages of the Soul: Ritual Today*; *One Foot on the Stage: The Biography of the Actor Richard Wilson*; his perennial *Experimental Theatre*, also *Directing a Play*, with foreword by Vanessa Redgrave, and *London Theatre*. He is also the author of a sequence of seven children's books, *The Adventures of Odd and Elsewhere*, and has edited the wartime journals of Joyce Grenfell, *The Time of my Life*, as well as her letters to her mother, *Darling Ma*. His connection with Radnorshire, where he lives for part of each year, goes back nearly forty years.

RICHARD SHANNON is Emeritus Professor of Modern History at the University of Wales Swansea, and the author of a highly acclaimed two-volume biography of Gladstone. His most recent books include *A Press*

Free and Responsible (2001) and *Gladstone, God and Politics* (2007). He lives in London and in Radnorshire, where he first put down roots in 1975.

RICHARD WHEELER combines work as a part-time conservation officer with professional photography and writing. He studied English and art history at university and has from childhood been passionately interested in ecclesiastical art and architecture. Although he currently lives near Banbury in Oxfordshire he was born and brought up in Herefordshire and is the author of *The Medieval Church Screens of the Southern Marches* (Logaston, 2006).

Peter J Conradi
Adam Fenn

THE LIBRARIANS' REPORT

In the course of my previous report I mentioned how substantially the library's collections had benefited from the generous gifts of a variety of donors. I can now report that in the year under review we received a particularly interesting and welcome bequest from the estate of a former member of the Society, the late Miss Anne Powell of Eardisley. This consisted of three volumes representative of the genre known as the 'picturesque tour'. Accounts of such excursions became fashionable during the period of the Napoleonic Wars, when access to the Continent was restricted, and often centred on Wales and notably the Wye Valley. Some of the more celebrated picturesque tourists, such as Thomas Roscoe, are already included in the library and the acquisition of works by the lesser known, but perhaps more spontaneous travellers will be a valuable addition to our holdings. The works in question are:

NICHOLSON, G: *The Cambrian Traveller's Guide ... in the Principality of Wales* (1813).

SKRINE, H, *Two Successive Tours Throughout the Whole of Wales* (1812).

WARNER, Revd R: *A Walk Through Wales in August 1797* (1798).

Other accessions during the year are listed below in abbreviated form; fuller entries may be found in the computerised catalogue.

CADW: *Caring for Prehistoric Funerary and Ritual Monuments* (2005).

CADW: *Caring for Historic Monuments on the Farm* (2006).

- CADW: *Caring for Historic Landscapes* (2007).
- DAVIES, JL and JONES, RH: *Roman Camps in Wales and the Marches* (2006).
- DAVIES, P: *Sacred Springs: In Search of Holy Wells and Spas in Wales* (2003).
- FOSTER, D: *Radnorshire 1851 Census. Vol. 12, Hundred of Colwyn* (1997).
- GILL, MAV: *Some Notes and Comments on the History of SS Cynidr and Peter, Glasbury-on-Wye* (2005).
- HOBBS, T: *The Pubs of Radnorshire* (2006).
- HOWSE, WH: *The History and Legends of Stapleton Castle* (1947).
- HUGHES, CPF: *This Little School: The Victorian Schools of Radnorshire* (1995).
- HUGHES, RE: *Cwm Cul a Garw: Nodiadau ar Hanes Cymoedd Claerwen ac Elan* (2006).
- JENKINS, GH: *A Concise History of Wales* (2007).
- MOORE, J: *Louis Osman (1914–96). The Life and Work of an Architect and Goldsmith* (2006).
- OWEN, DH: *Local History Studies in Wales* (2005).
- OWEN, HW and MORGAN, R: *Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales* (2007).
- POWYS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY: *1901 Census. Guide to Places and References ... Radnorshire* (2002).
- ROBERTS, K: *Lost Farmsteads: Deserted Rural Settlements in Wales* (2006).
- THURLBY, M: *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales* (2006).
- ZALUCKYJ, S and J: *The Celtic Christian Sites of the Central and Southern Marches* (2006).

JR Barker
 GW Ridyard

THE EXCURSIONS ORGANISER'S REPORT

Wednesday 6 June 2007, thirty-four members of the Society travelled to Newport, Monmouthshire to visit Tredegar House and the Transporter Bridge.

Tredegar House and park are situated on the western side of Newport, about two miles outside the city. It is one of the architectural wonders of

Wales and one of the most significant late seventeenth-century houses in the whole of the British Isles. Part of the building dates back to the early 1500's. For over five hundred years it was the home to one of the greatest Welsh families, the Morgans, later Lords Tredegar.

The Morgans who built the house and laid out the park became Barons and then Lords Tredegar. Llewellyn Morgan was living in a house on the site in 1402, but it was not until the late fifteenth century that the substantial stone house was built, of which one wing remains. The Morgans played a noted part in politics and society. In 1792 the estate passed to Sir Charles Gould who assumed the name Morgan, and increased the wealth of the family considerably by his entrepreneurial activities in coal, iron, canals and tramways. He was responsible for the Golden Mile of tramway, which ran through the estate to the docks and brought in a vast £3000 a year. The next Sir Charles did much to develop the dock area as did his son another Sir Charles who became the first Baron Tredegar in 1859. The Second Baron Godfrey Morgan was perhaps the most famous of them all. He had survived the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava in 1854; there is a memorial in the garden to Sir Briggs, the horse that carried him in that battle.

The house was sold in 1951, so the great estate of 50,000 acres was no more; 90 acres of the park and garden survive. After twenty-three years as a school, the house together with the ninety acres of parkland was purchased by Newport Borough Council, and in 1976, a major programme of restoration and refurbishing began. Over the past twenty-six years, tremendous progress has been made and today over thirty rooms have been restored and are now open to the public.

Our party divided into two groups for the tour of the house. Both groups had knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides to tell them the history of the house and the families who had lived there.

History does not relate what the family thought of their legendary seventeenth-century member, pirate and buccaneer – Henry Morgan.

Back on the coach we moved on to the Transporter Bridge. Completed in 1906, this unique Grade I listed structure is the essence of industrial development in Newport. Designed by the eminent French bridge engineer, Ferdinand Arnodin, this 'Aerial Ferry' was built to provide safe passage across the river Usk, with its great tidal range, and thus enable the development of the Orb Steelworks on the east bank of the River.

Standing some 75 metres above the river, the bridge is a significant landmark in Newport. With its 210 metre span, it is the largest remaining example of a transporter bridge left in the world and has international significance. Transporter bridges were developed at a time when motorised

road transport was starting and many ships still used high mast sails. Most of these bridges were constructed between 1893–1916. The bridge at Newport is arguably one of the finest examples.

The bridge provided a crossing at all stages of the tide using a ‘gondola’ suspended from a high level travelling frame, which in turn allowed shipping to pass freely beneath it. For most of the last century the Transporter Bridge operated every day except Christmas. Wear and tear on the bridge led to its closure in 1985 whilst funding was sought for its restoration. This was achieved and at a cost of £3 million the bridge was brought back into full working order in December 1995.

The bridge is again closed for maintenance and we were fortunate in having it operated especially for us, and so we glided slowly across the River Usk on a lovely sunny afternoon. Some of the more energetic members climbed the 300 steps to the bridge’s high-level walkway, from which there are magnificent views across Newport and the Severn Estuary.

Norma Baird-Murray

THE FIELD SECTION REPORT

This has been another successful year for the Field Section. We began with our quiz at the Severn Arms, which my team won! The lunch on 25 February, at the Metropole, was much enjoyed by all, with Margaret Newman-Turner recounting her fascinating life with glimpses of Churchill at Chartwell, many years at sea, and eventual return to the Welsh borders, the land of her fathers!

In March we visited the National Record Library and Search Room, Aberystwyth and were told about their many treasures, and saw maps and records of Radnorshire.

The theme this year was ‘Our Industrial Heritage’ and the first visit was to Presteigne in April on a very hot day. Keith Parker had been ill so Mr John Moses took us round and told us many interesting facts about Presteigne’s past. On 13 May Brian Lawrence should have shown us around Rhaeadr, but it was so wet he cleverly rearranged the whole event. We met at the Elan Valley visitors’ centre and watched the excellent film there and then went up to Penygarneg dam, where we were taken down *inside* it by the warden. This was quite an experience; a great afternoon in spite of the constant rainfall.

Rain again affected our picnic in June. We met at Diserth church and Gwyneth Guy gave us a fascinating talk about the metamorphosis of

churches and of that church in particular. As it was so wet the adjacent caravan site kindly loaned us their dining room. Isobel Forbath and John Powis arranged our July meeting at Knucklas. We visited the O'Learys; she is a designer and he is a marvellous stone mason and carver, and besides making unusual grave stones, he has worked on important buildings including the Houses of Parliament. Isobel spoke to us about the viaduct and we then visited Tony Hall's Castle Hill Pottery. His pots go to many places, from the Eden Project to Japan. While we watched he made a very large pot in two parts and then joined them together. Our afternoon concluded at Isobel's house where she and her husband gave us all a lovely tea. Mark Davies from Knighton brought along his marvellous collection of local postcards and an unusual square violin!

On 12 August we met at Pen-y-bont, with Canon Geraint Hughes as leader. He told us about the Severn Arms and we saw the remains of the ford that preceded the bridge. Canon Hughes spoke to us from the rostrum of the fast disappearing market and we visited Pen-y-bont Hall and the Blacksmith's Shop. Finally we visited the Thomas Shop, where we enjoyed tea and could see the National Wool Collection and other enterprises.

On 9 September we enjoyed a visit to Dolhir quarry near Old Radnor. Jim Sinclair, production manager for Tarmac Western, took us into the quarry and told us about its history and its present work. We went to see Harry Jones, a well-known former employee and also saw part of the track of the old tramroad that preceded the railways. Afterwards Titly Junction was visited, with a ride on the small train, followed by tea.

During the year several members have been busy taking part in the recording of the lost cottages project, which will obviously take several years to complete.

Sadly we have lost three members this year, Bob Deakins, Harry Ingram, and Leslie Lewis, who all regularly attended many of our events. They are all much missed.

Our AGM was held on 28 October at the St John's Hall, Llandrindod. Our officers and committee remained the same and we have a healthy bank balance. It was followed by an excellent illustrated talk on mills by Alan Stoyel of Kington.

I would like to thank all those who organised our events this year, our committee and officers, especially our treasurer, Joy Ashton and our secretary Anne Goodwin who is so enthusiastic and puts so much time and trouble into this organisation.

Ruth L Jones

POWYS COUNTY ARCHIVES

Throughout the year approximately 1,200 visitors used the Archives service, with around the same number making enquiries by letter or email. In addition, over 150 hours of research have been undertaken as part of our paid research service.

Staffing levels remain the same at the Archives. Catherine Richards, formerly Archives Manager has now become County Archivist for Powys. Dianne Foster, Research Assistant since October 2002, retired in October 2007. Dianne has a long association with Powys Archives having worked as a volunteer through the 1990s. Dawn Gill, Archives Assistant, was nominated for the Powys County Council Customer Service Awards 2007, and was commended for her work at Powys Archives. In total sixteen members of staff from Powys County Council were recognised for excellent customer service in a new council award scheme. Catherine Richards continues as Chair of the Welsh County Archivists' Group (WCAG). She also represents the WCAG at the meetings of the Association of Family History Societies (Wales), and continues to attend the meetings of Archives and Records Council Wales (ARCW) on behalf of Powys County Council.

In 2006 the National Archives (TNA) introduced a pilot self-assessment exercise for local authority archive services in England and Wales. The questionnaire completed by each service was arranged in five main sections, and the returns scored by staff from TNA. The scores achieved by Powys Archives compared with the Welsh and UK national averages were as follows:

SECTION	POWYS ARCHIVES	WALES AVERAGE	UK AVERAGE
Governance	49%	50.5%	52.5%
Documentation of collections	39.5%	54%	53%
Customer responsiveness	51%	58%	67%
Searchroom and other public services	56%	57%	59.5%
Buildings, security and environment	39.5%	45%	49%
Preservation and conservation	31.5%	46%	49.5%
Overall Score	44.5%	51.5%	55%

The scores achieved by Powys Archives allowed TNA to judge the service as one-star (the range of options were no-star, one-star, two-star and three-star). Services had to score at least 30% on all the sections listed above in order to achieve a one-star performance.

From April 2006 and through the spring of 2007 Powys Archives contributed to two all-Wales projects funded by CYMAL (Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales). The first, CatalogCymru, which started in January 2006 and continued through 2006/7, is a national research project which aims to develop a strategy to increase access to archival collections in Wales through addressing the issue of uncatalogued collections. As part of this project uncatalogued holdings were accessed and scored against various factors, including increased pressure for access to material in relation to the Freedom of Information Act, the level of cataloguing required (high, medium or low), whether cataloguing was affected by conservation needs, and whether the collection could be considered to be of local, regional or national significance. At present Powys Archives does not have a large cataloguing back-log, but the audit now undertaken of our collections for the CatalogCymru project, and the scores which have resulted, will help us to prioritise our cataloguing programme in the future.

The second CYMAL project saw the appointment of a Research and Development Officer, under the direction of Archives and Records Council Wales (ARCW). The aim of this project has been to collect information on users and non-users in order to create an audience development plan for archive services in Wales. Again this strategic project funded in 2006/7 laid the foundations for a further grant funded work for ARCW in 2007/8 which will include: the appointment of a programme manager to co-ordinate and manage a portfolio of projects for the creation of a virtual national archive for Wales; a review of previous consultation exercises, including CatalogCymru; and the development of a marketing strategy for archives in Wales.

With the help of grant funding worth £5000, Powys Archives has now acquired the CALM cataloguing system especially designed to help manage archive collections. Previously Powys Archives did not have a system which allows comprehensive index searching of our catalogues by personal-name, place-name or by subject – which is becoming increasingly problematic for those of you who want, and expect, our finding aids to provide the information you require more quickly and more efficiently. Over the next couple of years staff will be steadily inputting our catalogues into the CALM database.

Through 2007/8 free access to the Ancestry website has been extended by a further grant from CYMAL, again to all archive services, but also this year to include all libraries and museums across Wales. This hugely popular website with sources such as the British census 1841–1901, birth, marriages and deaths from 1837, and many more family history resources, is usually accessed by paying a subscription fee.

The Friends of Powys Archives group now has a membership of nearly 250 individuals, families or societies. Our quarterly newsletter, *Almanac*, continues to go to all Friends, Council Members, libraries and secondary schools. Newsletters are also exchanged with Archive Friends' groups across Britain. A new volunteer from the Friends group has joined the Archives team, and is making good progress with helping staff to catalogue unlisted collections. Ann Roberts from Llandrindod has completed the listing of the Milford Hall collection, a donation of records received by Powys Archives in 1999. The Milford Hall collection contains family and estate papers from the Lewis family in Newtown, including correspondence from JM Barrie, the creator of Peter Pan, and the First World War poet Siegfried Sassoon. Ann is now assisting with other collections, including the cataloguing of Montgomeryshire inquest records, 1848–1957. Beth Williams continues her excellent work by indexing the patients' records from Talgarth Hospital. This year Beth has also worked on uncatalogued depositions and summary convictions from the Breconshire Quarter Sessions. She is currently indexing the Caersws workhouse admission register, 1844–1849. A small number of Friends continue to transcribe and index school log books, by working on digitized copies of these volumes at home. Angela Jones from Guernsey has completed the transcription of Gladestry school log books, 1940–1987.

This year, Powys Archives has been involved in a number of outreach activities in order to promote the service. For instance in May, Powys County Council held a 'Learning at Work' day as part of Adult Learners' Week. Powys Archives was involved by placing a display in the Members' Lounge in County Hall and providing free goodie bags containing leaflets on family and house history research. On the day we also teamed up with the BBC Wales bus that was parked outside the Archives, and provided free access to the Ancestry website to Council staff. In March 2007 Catherine Richards ran internet workshops at Coleg Llandrindod for International Women's Day. The display case outside the Council Chamber in County Hall continues to highlight collections held by the service and has housed seven small exhibitions over the past year, including records from Radnorshire Friendly Societies, an early collection of Breconshire Sales Particulars and a small collection of apprenticeship bonds from Llanfechain in Montgomeryshire. In October 2007 Powys Archives put together an exhibition, featuring around thirty-five postcards, for Llanwrtyd Town Council. This was part of a weekend of entertainment for visitors from Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. During the Second World War Bromsgrove School was evacuated to Llanwrtyd and since then strong links continue between the two communities.

Powys Archives 2006–2007 *Annual Report* was published in April. This summarises the work undertaken by staff and a full list of accessions received. Details of accessions received during 2007 with particular reference to Radnorshire are as follows:

OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC RECORDS

Photograph of pupils and teachers of Stanage (Stanage, Weston and Stowe) School c.1893 [Acc 1764]

Plan of proposed Community Centre Rhayader 1972 [Acc 1778]

Leaflets and booklets relating to Quarter Sessions, Friendly Societies, by-laws, etc. from Breconshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire 1834–c.1930 [Acc 1734]

Bound volumes of Powys County Council committee minutes 1997–2006 [Acc 1735]

Tithe apportionment for Glascwm parish 1837 [Acc 1762]

Rate book, parish of Rhayader 1843; Notebook, setting out tithe rent charges paid in Nantmel parish [?1855–1861] [Acc 1779]

Copies of acts of parliament relating to Breconshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire 1865–1866 [Acc 1789]

Court registers and minute books, from various petty sessional divisions of Radnorshire 1877–1988 [Acc 1792]

Records from Llanbadarn Fynydd Community Council: Tithe Map 1840; Minutes 1895–1931; Accounts 1900–1928; Rate books and rate payment receipt books 1914–1926 [Acc 1793]

NON-OFFICIAL RECORDS

Family papers and photographs of the Hurst Family of Llandrindod Wells c.1870–1993 [Acc 1740]

Notebook of David Griffiths 1816–1838; Programmes for Agricultural shows, theatre productions, races, fun days, etc. 1935–2006; List of Rhayader attested Fairs and Marts 1962; Sales catalogues, Rhayader Market 1976–2006 [Acc 1741]

Bills from local tradesmen, and grocery lists, the property of Miss Griffiths of Llancoch, Llangunllo and Castle Hill, Knucklas 1907–1912 [Acc 1747]

- Marriage settlement of John Jones of Trefonnen, Radnorshire 1707; Mortgage of property in Llansanffraid-yn-Elfael 1732; Lease of watermill at Llanbadarn-y-Garreg 1792 [Acc 1748]
- Eisteddfodau programmes, Breconshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire 1952–1964; Calendars of prisoners for Brecknock and Radnor Assizes 1942–1943 [Acc 1752]
- Digital copy of a photograph of Thomas Lant of Llandrindod Wells and his workforce 1930s [Acc 1754]
- Parish Magazines for Rhayader 1981–2007; Rhayader Town FC programmes 1998–2002; Rhayader Carnival programmes 1980–2006 [Acc 1756]
- Deeds relating to Crossway, Cregrina 1855–1979 [Acc 1761]
- Two albums of photographs and memorabilia of the Radnorshire Militia, and successor battalions C19th–C20th [Acc 1766]
- Religious Society of Friends: Llandrindod and Pales Preparative Meeting minutes and associated documents Nov 1993–Sep 2002 [Acc 1771]
- Llanddewi Ystradenny WI: minutes, accounts, annual reports and programmes c.1930–1987 [Acc 1772]
- Diaries of Joseph Wilding, preacher at Cwm-y-geist, Llanbister 1872–1923; Copy of ‘The Journal of Susannah Wilding’ c.1900; Copy photograph of Cwm-y-geist Sunday School c.1910; Copy of ‘The Autobiography of Joseph Wilding’ 1915 [Acc 1773]
- Title deeds relating to the Green-Price family of Knighton and Norton Manor 1811–1903 [Acc 1776]
- Llanyre Millennium Committee: Programme and ticket for fund-raising events 1999; Minutes and accounts 1999–2001; Folder of photographs of properties in the parish of Llanyre, with details of the owners and their families, written by themselves 2000 [Acc 1778]
- Four volumes of ‘War Memorials in Radnorshire’ 2007; one volume of ‘Adopt a War Grave’ 2007; Projects carried out by the Radnor Federation of Women’s Institutes [Acc 1780]
- Minute book for Llanddewi Ystradenny WI 1986–1990 [Acc 1794]
- Additional records from Grosvenor WI. Llandrindod Wells: Minutes 1986–2002; Committee book 1987–1996; Attendance record book 1987–2004; Three Llandrindod Wells scrapbooks 1999–2000; Grosvenor WI scrapbook 2000; Graph of voluntary activity in the community by members n/d [Acc 1797]

Catherine Richards

A TRIBUTE TO THE REVD DR ROY FENN

Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of the vice-presidents of the Radnorshire Society, I have been given the honour of paying tribute to our president, Revd Dr Fenn, who, as you all know, has relinquished his role as both president of the Society and editor of the *Transactions*.

At last year's AGM Dr Fenn indicated his wish to step down and not to seek a further term of office. He has been our editor since 1984 (almost a quarter of a century) – and our distinguished president for the last six years.

Although he has been suffering poor health for some time, he has continued to attend our executive meetings and with his son, Adam, has planned the next edition of the *Transactions*.

It has been through his editorship, aided by Adam and Jim Sinclair, that the Radnorshire Society has gained its highly esteemed reputation for academic excellence, maintaining the high standards set by his predecessor, the late Christopher Newman – and continually researching material of interest not previously explored. In addition, his numerous other publications, based largely on material connected with Radnorshire and Herefordshire will be a source of enjoyment and erudition for future generations.

We also pay tribute to Dr Fenn's many talents as a gifted speaker – not only to our Society but to many other prestigious bodies such as the Cambrian Archaeological Society who met in Llandrindod Wells in 2004 – the always large audiences were captivated, educated, and regularly amused by his ready wit.

We live in times of rapid change – the digitization of our *Transactions* has already begun and will soon be available on the Internet – many future readers and researchers of history will owe a great debt to Dr Fenn for his knowledge, expertise, and enthusiasm in recording the history of the county of Radnor – and further afield.

It is my privilege, here today, to acknowledge his outstanding contribution to our Society. We wish him well in the future and a speedy recovery.

Anne Goodwin

RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2007

INCOME			2005/6
Members' subscriptions	5,040-00		
Part subscriptions/donations	209-75		
Subscriptions for 2007/8	<u>75-00</u>	5,324-75	5,375
Sales		141-00	145
Grants		nil	500
Refund of members' Income Tax		802-43	774
Building Society interest		704-09	568
Monies from excursions		619-00	1,330
Other income		<u>nil</u>	<u>1,290</u>
<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>		<u>7,591-27</u>	<u>9,982</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Printing of <i>Transactions</i> for 2005		2,125-00	3,156
Purchase of books for library		148-79	224
Insurances		277-50	277
Hire of rooms. Meetings/lectures	58-00		
Library	<u>75-00</u>	133-00	188
Lecturers' fees etc.		149-00	75
Donation (Friends of Llandrindod Wells Hospital)		25-00	25
Membership of other societies		184-50	63
Grant to student		500	nil
Cost of excursions		631-50	1,231
Administration costs			
Sound system	179-09		
Equipment hire	25-00		
AGM press notice	27-00		
Flowers	20-00		
Stationery	104-26		
Printing etc.	131-29		
Librarians' expenses	10-16		
Treasurer's expenses	36-46		
Secretary's expenses	<u>414-29</u>	947-55	952
Other expenses		<u>nil</u>	<u>1,325</u>
<u>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</u>		<u>5,121-84</u>	<u>7,515</u>
NET INCOME		2,469-43	2,467
Balances as at 30.09.06	Bank	75-67	
	Building Society	<u>19,500-00</u>	19,575-67
Add Net Income for 2006/7		2,469-43	2,467
Balances as at 30.09.07	Bank	295-10	
	Building Society	21,750-00	<u>22,045-10</u>
			<u>19,576</u>

LIABILITIES OF THE RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY

Estimated cost of printing the *Transactions* for 2006 £2,300.

Audited and found correct 12.11.07
Stephen Roderick

Tom Idris Jones
(Hon. Treasurer)

WELSH JOURNALS ONLINE

WELSH JOURNALS ONLINE is a National Library of Wales project, funded by JISC, to digitise the most important twentieth century journals relating to Wales and make them available, free to all, on its website <<http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk>>. This will form a major corpus of 600,000 pages of text from 90 journal titles.

Our publication has been approached for inclusion in the project, and we have agreed to contribute our material. In recognition of the rights of copyholders, we are approaching past contributors for permission to include the individual articles.

We will be sending out letters and permission forms to all those for whom we have current contact details, but it is unlikely that we will reach everybody. We would therefore be grateful if contributors (or their heirs) could contact us if they do not receive a letter and form.

The National Library of Wales has made a commitment that should a rights holder come forward after the material has been placed on the website, it will be removed if requested. A full list of the titles involved is posted on the project website.

PRIZES

The following prizes will be offered for three years and the scheme at that point reviewed.

1. A Roy Fenn Prize of £250 will be offered for an article published in the *Transactions* deemed to have made a special contribution of an understanding of Radnorshire history and culture.
2. A prize of £100 for a first article by a new contributor.
3. A prize of £100 may be offered for another article, such as an article-review, at the discretion of the judges.

ROY FENN: AN APPRECIATION

Keith Parker

I AM SURE THAT ROY FENN'S decision last autumn to resign from his posts as president of the Society and as honorary editor of the *Transactions* came as a great surprise to many members. It is only fitting that a tribute should be paid to the great contribution he has made to the Society over many years and as an old sparring partner of his, now a close academic friend, I feel privileged to undertake the task.

I first met Roy more than forty years ago when I attended a series of lectures he gave in Presteigne on houses of note in the Middle March. They were an excellent introduction to the history of the area and were delivered in a most entertaining manner, as were all his lectures, for Roy has the gift of lightening his scholarly approach with flashes of dry humour and witty, sometimes acerbic, asides. I wonder how many of our present members were led to join the Society as a result of hearing one of his lively expositions.

Roy has also been a frequent contributor to the *Transactions* since 1967, with more than twenty papers, often in collaboration with JB Sinclair, on a wide range of subjects from the early Church, by way of Thomas Becket and James Watt to Richard Green Price, the Radnorshire landscape and occasional ventures into ecclesiology. These articles were written in an easy relaxed style which, without compromising his high standards of scholarship, made the subject matter easily accessible to the general reader and in doing so, revealed a talent to be both admired and greatly envied.

In 1985, Roy assumed editorial responsibility for the *Transactions*, at first with JB Sinclair, and then, from 2000, in conjunction with his son Adam. Even with some division of labour, the editorship involved considerable effort, securing a range of suitable articles for each issue, negotiating with printers, undertaking the necessary and sometimes very laborious task of sub-editing, and seeing each issue through printing. In short, editing the *Transactions* is the equivalent of seeing a book through to publication each year, a laborious process which can be fraught with problems and which Roy undertook for more than twenty years. However, he saw the editorship as involving more than overseeing the practical process of publication, for in addition to providing the interested layman with an insight into current research into Radnorshire's history and culture as well as meeting the needs of family and local historians, he regarded the *Transactions* as a means of maintaining the Society's high standing in academic

circles and thus an important element of his editorial role. That he succeeded in doing so can be seen from the frequent citations of articles in the *Transactions* in the works of professional historians and its high take-up by academic institutions.

In 2001 Roy succeeded Lady Delia Venables-Llewelyn as our president and as such could no longer remain exclusively in the editorial ivory tower, but was constrained to steer a way through the procedural shoals of executive committee meetings and AGMs and to preside impartially over discussions of controversial planning applications. Some of his presidential duties he no doubt found enjoyable, notably participating in the celebration of Thomas Jones' bicentenary and welcoming the Cambrian Archaeological Association to Llandrindod Wells for its Autumn Conference in 2004, though possibly on that occasion he may have been confused as to which presidential hat he was wearing at any given time. Other issues such as the digitization of the Society's *Transactions*, posed a more difficult challenge and one hopes that the proposed five year time lag will suit both the interests of the National Library of Wales and those of the Society.

In addition to all of his sterling efforts on behalf of the Radnorshire Society, Roy has still found the time to write extensively, his most recent publication being *The Life and Times of Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Bart*, which is reviewed by the Gladstone biographer RT Shannon in this volume of the *Transactions*, to catalogue local family archives, to play an active role in other societies and in the Open University, and to cultivate a wide range of other interests. Having shed his Radnorshire Society responsibilities we can hope that Roy will now enjoy a little more leisure, but knowing him, we can also anticipate further publications. We all wish him well for the future.

THREE DOCUMENTS IN THE PARISH ARCHIVES OF THE WYE VALLEY GROUP

MAV Gill

FOLLOWING AN INTERREGNUM IN 2002, the old vicarage at Glasbury-on-Wye was placed on the market. Prior to its sale, the room containing the parish archives of the Wye Valley group was emptied and its contents re-sorted by the diocesan archivist. Many of the most important records relating to the church of St Meilig at Llowes (and to the churches of St Peter and All Saints at Glasbury) were then transferred to the National Record Office at Aberystwyth without the consent or knowledge of the parochial church councils, and some seemingly unimportant papers were destroyed. The removal of a significant part of the archives to the opposite side of the country now hampers any detailed local study of the churches' history. This article is based on research recently undertaken to produce a series of short historic leaflets and longer illustrated booklets; it deals briefly with three of the churches in the group, providing the historic background to a collection of documents that fortunately remains within the parishes: a watercolour sketch of Clyro church prior to its rebuilding, a design for mural decoration that formerly adorned the chancel of Llowes, and the architect's drawings for the restoration of Betws Clyro including a plan and elevations of the old church.

CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS, CLYRO

The church of St Michael and All Angels at Clyro was almost completely rebuilt in 1852–53. Little is known of its earlier history. One may conjecture that the medieval church was constructed sometime during the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, being listed in an assessment of *c.*1291 under the name of Royl;¹ and that it suffered from the ravages of Owain Glyn Dŵr, necessitating a partial rebuilding at the beginning of the fifteenth century. According to the report by commissioners of Edward VI on chantries in the county of Radnorshire, two pence out of the rent of an acre of land in the parish 'hathe bene alwais paid towards the fynding of a light before the Image of our Lady yerely', an image that was probably destroyed during the Commonwealth period.² All that remains of the medieval building is the lower section of the tower, some timber and other materials that were used nearby in the construction of Ashbrook House, and individual articles such as the medieval piscina or lavacrum (which had lain discarded for

many years in the vicarage garden before being attached to the north wall of the chancel in 1938)³ and the thirteenth-century font (which may also have found its way into the garden when the old church was demolished, before being transferred to the chapel of ease at Betws Clyro in 1879).

In contrast to the paucity of physical remains, there is a fair amount of documentary material relating to the structure and appearance of the old church, particularly during its latter years. When compiling his history of Radnorshire in about 1818, the Revd Jonathan Williams described it as consisting of:

a nave, chancel, tower, and a porch. The nave and chancel are separated by a partition of timberwork under a pointed stone arch. The tower, containing five musical bells, has three ranges of lights, one light of the lancet form in each range. The lavacrum is placed on the right hand immediately after entering from the porch into the church. The pews are regular & uniform. The pulpit is covered with crimson cloth & velvet: And the whole presents a decent appearance. The East window contains three lights, divided by stone mullions supporting trefoil arches, and is also separated by an ornamental stone transom; sustaining two lights in the head of the arch under trefoil arches. In the chancel, on the right side of the communion-table, and against the east wall, is the following inscription: The Rev. Edward Edwards died June 19th 1808....⁴

Writing in the 1830s, Samuel Lewis referred to the church as:

an ancient edifice, consisting of a nave and chancel, with a tower, which, having been partly demolished, is covered with a shelving roof: the font is of considerable size, and there is a large piscina at the entrance, which formerly contained holy water. The chancel was rebuilt in 1823, as appears by an inscription on a tablet over the door, by the Venerable Archdeacon Beynon, prebendary of Brecon....⁵

Further details about the medieval church can be gleaned from eighteenth-century presentments made by the churchwardens. There is evidence of a side chapel. In 1706 the wardens reported: 'the litle Chappel of the Court of Clyrow that joins to the great Chancell to want reparation'; still out of repair eleven years later, they maintained that the chapel 'upon the north side of the Chancell ... aught to be repaired by the occupiers of the court of Clyrow'. In 1717 they noted that the chancel wanted 'Seats to be erected within the same', only to complain in 1720 that some

were now placed 'too near the Communion table', while in 1725 'a Seat erected by one Agnes Prosser without any legal authority' was considered 'offensive both to minister and parishioners'. In 1728 the church windows wanted 'glassing' (not for the first time!), and the 'floor to be made even'. From 1728 to 1737 among the articles lacking was a 'hood for the minister' (canopy above pulpit), and in 1730 the pulpit stairs were out of repair. After the middle of the century, the authorities were concerned more with the morals of the parishioners than the condition of the building.⁶ In visitation returns made to the bishop in reply to specific questions during the first half of the nineteenth century, the roof of the church is described as covered with tiles or 'country slate' (i.e. stone), and the chancel (after it had been rebuilt in 1823) as covered with slates; there was also one casement.⁷

When the old church had been demolished and work was underway on the new, the vicar's wife wrote to her brother-in-law that: 'no curiosity or relic of any sort was found in the old Building'; however, where the gallery had been a fresco was revealed on the wall behind, depicting the figure of Death with scythe and hourglass. In parenthesis she remarked that this was 'by the same Maestro probably who painted Moses & Aaron'.⁸ This may imply that in addition to the readily identifiable Old Testament characters there was other mural decoration, including perhaps ornamented texts of the Lord's prayer, creed and ten commandments, and maybe the royal arms.

Many of the external features noted in the written accounts are visible on the only known illustration of the old church: a tinted drawing of 1850 (Fig. 1). Though worn and stained, it clearly shows the squat tower with its saddle-back roof surmounted by a weathercock, the nave with three dormer windows in its stone-tiled roof (one a casement lighting the gallery at the west end) as well as two windows in the south wall, and the sturdy porch. The walls of both nave and porch are lime-washed. In the east gable of the nave the remains of tiles from the roof of the medieval chancel can be seen jutting from the wall above the slate roof of the 1823 chancel. Over the door is the inscribed tablet noted by Samuel Lewis, while the east window is recognizable as that now built into the side wall of Ashbrook House. The side chapel to the north is not visible in the drawing, having perhaps been demolished when the new chancel was built (though it may merely have been hidden from the artist's view).

In a visitation report made to the bishop in 1851, Clyro church was described as 'an old building kept in as good a state of repair as is practicable'.⁹ However, at a vestry meeting on 22 September of the same year, it was resolved that 'in consequence of the dilapidated state of the Church and the deficiency of the accommodation therein, a committee be appointed



Fig. 1. Tinted drawing of Clyro church in 1850, prior to its rebuilding (*Clyro Parish Archive*).

to consider the matter', that the committee 'employ a competent Architect ... to furnish plans and estimates', and that the proper application forms be obtained from the Public Works Loan Office. At the next vestry meeting on 27 December 1851 an estimate of the cost for 'rebuilding, enlarging and improving the said Parish Church and building a Vestry room' having been obtained (amounting to £1320), it was decided that application be made for a loan of £800, which would be repaid out of the local rates over the next twenty years. The design of Thomas Nicholson of Hereford was adopted 'subject to any Modifications which the Building Committee may hereafter deem expedient', and the committee was authorized to 'advertise for tenders, enter into contractions, and cause the building work to be executed'.¹⁰ The church was to be completely rebuilt (apart from the old tower) but while the chancel was to be constructed on its earlier foundations, the body of the church was to be enlarged with the addition of a north aisle. The Revd Richard L Venables was later to write: 'It is a great evil to have a Church too large for its congregation, and Clyro is an example'.¹¹

The memoir of the Revd Venables summarizes the programme of rebuilding:

In the Autumn of 1851 and the Spring of 1852 I was much occupied in raising funds, settling plans and making preparations for rebuilding Clyro Church which was quite dilapidated. In the Summer of 1852 the old Church was pulled down and the new one was begun. It was roofed in before Winter and completed in the Spring of 1853. There was, as is usual, a building committee, but the chief trouble and responsibility fell on me.¹²

On 2 May 1852 the last service was held in the old church, and the following day demolition began,¹³ the labourers working from four in the morning till nine o'clock at night. The foundation stone was laid by the vicar's mother (Sophia Venables) on 22 May 1852,¹⁴ and on 6 July 1853 the new church was formally opened. The opening ceremony was said to have been attended by 800 people.¹⁵ During the interim, divine service had been held in a temporary church constructed of wood with a felt roof.¹⁶

When it was decided to rebuild the church, Archdeacon Beynon's chancel was scarcely thirty years old and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England were now responsible for any repairs. Although in a 'sound and substantial' condition, the vicar considered it 'tasteless and unsightly' and proposed to remodel it to bring it into harmony with the new church. Before giving their consent, the commissioners required a guarantee that the new structure would be 'fully and in all respects completed in a substantial and workmanlike manner', with a deposit of £100 to be repaid on completion as security against their being 'saddled with any liability from changes to the chancel'.¹⁷

The contractor responsible for the rebuilding was William Jones of Brecon. Stone from local quarries was used for most of the structure but the dressings were of finer Bath stone.¹⁸ In the original specification for the chancel, the floors were to have been laid with Minton's plain square tiles, in black and buff set diamondwise and interspersed with pattern tiles.¹⁹ However, in the interval between the preparation of the specification and the actual laying of the pavement, William Godwin of Lugwardine near Hereford had begun production of encaustic tiles on a large scale, so it was decided to use Godwin tiles throughout the building. They were laid in the same chequer design, but using pattern tiles in a red and buff colouring that made for a mellower effect.²⁰

Initially all the windows in the new church were glazed with plain cathedral glass; gradually over succeeding years many were replaced with stained glass. First was the east window with its scene of the Crucifixion. This was erected in 1864, in memory of Thomas Baskerville Mynors Baskerville (who had contributed substantially to the cost of rebuilding the

church) by his widow and children. Members of his family were commemorated in other windows: the east window of the north aisle in memory of his widow Elizabeth Mary (died 1890) appropriately depicts Ss Mary and Elizabeth, the chancel window with the figure of St Michael is in memory of his daughter-in-law Bertha Maria (wife of Walter Thomas, died 1892), and the window in the nave portraying Jesus and John the Baptist is in memory of his daughter Gertrude Alice Elizabeth (died 1893). The window in the chancel depicting St Cecilia was erected in memory of Cecilia Christina Macfarlane (died 1899). By the 1890s the singers no longer occupied the gallery in the tower; in 1891 the churchwardens were 'requested to take steps for closing up the Gallery at the West end of the Nave in such manner as shall be most seemly and in agreement with the appearance of the Church',²¹ and in 1893 a stained glass window in memory of Catherine Harriet Eaton and Catherine Matilda Finzel (both died 1892) was installed.²² Its subject (Moses with the tablets of law) may have been chosen in deference to these ladies' memories of the paintings that had decorated the walls of the old church forty years earlier.

Monuments from the old church were stored temporarily in a shed in the churchyard; when restored to the walls of the new building, they were placed at either end of the north aisle. Two of the memorial tablets attached to the east wall were originally in the chancel while the marble monument with a mourning female figure in relief leaning over urn set at the west end of the aisle had formerly been in the nave.²³ However, a brass plaque on the chancel wall records the presence of an earlier burial vault beneath.²⁴

As work progressed on the new church, it was felt that 'we must contrive to improve the unsightly old Tower which looks more hideous than ever'.²⁵ At the opening ceremony there was reference to the proposed restoration of the tower, and the raising of its height.²⁶ A statement of the building account drawn up a week later, shows that although the cost of rebuilding the church had been in the region of £1500, a balance remained available towards the restoration of the tower.²⁷ In 1865 Thomas Nicholson's plan was approved and Mansfield's tender accepted.²⁸ The lower part of the tower was duly repaired and the ridged roof replaced with a further stage. In the medieval tower there had been four bells.²⁹ When the second bell cracked, two local families (the Howarths of Cabalfa and the Griffiths of Lloyney) commissioned Henry Williams in 1708 to recast all four ancient bells, making of them a ring of five smaller bells. An extra pit for the tenor was added to the old frame. By 1804 one of these bells had cracked and by 1845 a second was out of order. When another cracked in the 1880s, the three broken bells were sent away to be recast by John Warner & Sons of London, and the wheels and frame were 'put into thorough repair'.

The bells were all re-hung and rung for the first time on 24 June 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. In 1892 a new clock by Benson was given by Walter Thomas Mynors Baskerville.³⁰

Over the years since the rebuilding of the church, there have been further repairs and renovations. In 1908 when the walls were again coloured, a new text in ornamental lettering was painted over the chancel arch: 'Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise', while the walls of the chancel itself were described in a contemporary account as 'most tastefully decorated, and ... a credit to the painter's art'.³¹ As none of this (apart from the inscription) has survived later redecoration, the nature of the tasteful decoration is uncertain, but in certain lights it is possible to imagine a pattern of straight lines imitating brickwork adorned with stencilled floral motifs. Familiar with the chancel murals at Llowes, Clyro vestry may have wanted something similar.

CHURCH OF ST MEILIG, LLOWES

Like its neighbour, the church of St Meilig at Llowes was almost completely rebuilt in middle of the nineteenth century. Christianity had been brought here in the sixth century by the Celtic saint, whose feastday is commemorated on 14 November.³² The location of the monastery that he founded and where 'after serving God earnestly with hymns and prayers, fastings and vigils, he rested in peace, distinguished for his virtues and miracles'³³ is debated. Some would place it in the hills near Croesfeiliog (Meilig's cross), and others above Meilig's well on Bryn Rhydd Common, where there are ancient earthworks. The most likely site is beneath the present church. Wherever it stood, the primitive church of St Meilig was probably a simple timber-framed structure, perhaps rebuilt and enlarged several times before being replaced by a stone edifice at some time during the massive programme of church building that took place in the twelfth century or subsequent to the invasion of the marches by Llywellyn ap Iorwerth in 1231.

One of the earliest references to the medieval church occurs towards the end of the twelfth century in the autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis, who was a friend of the Llowes anchorite. From his account of Wechelen's miraculous acquisition of the Latin tongue,³⁴ it would appear that the hermit's cell abutted Llowes church and had a window in its wall through which he was able to observe the altar, listen to the offices and call the priest to the opening immediately after the service; however, there is no indication as to whether the church and adjacent cell were stone structures. Although St Meilig's church may already have been rebuilt in stone earlier in

the twelfth century, this may not have happened until somewhat later, during less turbulent times. When Pope Nicholas IV granted a tithe of church emoluments to Edward I in 1288, Llowes was valued at £8.³⁵ Whether the building suffered damage during the insurgency of Owain Glyn Dŵr is unknown, but it seems likely in view of the 'extensive alterations and repairs, principally in the later style of English architecture' noted by Samuel Lewis in his brief account of the church in the 1830s.³⁶ Jonathan Williams' description of the old south window also suggests a substantial rebuilding in the early fifteenth century.

Although no picture of the medieval church has yet been identified, its general appearance can be visualized from details recounted in Jonathan Williams' manuscript:

It consists of a nave, a chancel, separated from the nave by a timber railing, a low square tower containing two bells, & having three ranges of lights on each side, and crowned with a weathercock, and a porch, on the right side of which the lavacrum is placed. The entrance into the belfry is from the churchyard. On the south side of the church is a window divided by stone mullions into three lights under trefoil arches: the same is repeated above: The pointed arch of the window contains two small lights under trefoil arches. In the chancel, on the south wall, are suspended the armorial bearings of the antient & respectable house of Howarth. The family vault lies beneath. On the same wall are inscribed the arms of the family of Robarts, of this parish: Likewise sepulchral memorials are fixed of the family of Pugh, of Gaer, in this parish. Over the chancel-door, which opens into the church-yard, is a small & neat tablet, having this inscription: "Infra jacet Thomae Griffith filii Thomae Griffith de Llwyney, armigeri: Obiit primo die Januarii 1709, aetat. 33. Resurgam". Also a sepulchral memorial & escutcheon of the family of Jones, of this parish.³⁷

The 'timber railing' may have been remains of a rood screen, and the mention of two rather than three bells may have been because for many years only two of the medieval bells were rung, the tenor being cracked.³⁸ Some of the old slit windows are still visible (although blocked) in the masonry of the tower, the lower part of the tower being all that remains of the medieval church.³⁹ Of the funeral monuments listed by Williams, not all were returned to the walls when the church was rebuilt.

Further details of the old church can be gleaned from the churchwardens' presentments during the eighteenth century. There are references to windows that 'want Glassing' (1700), the 'Church to want Tiling and the

Church walls to want Whitening' (1701), and the chancel to be 'out of repair' (1702). In 1715 they noted 'the floor to want paveing' and 'the seats not conveniently placed'; in the 1728 the floor of church and chancel was still 'uneven', though at some date before the end of the century the floors were paved with stone flags.⁴⁰ An indenture for the lease of the parsonage and parish church dated 4 March 1723 contains the proviso that the leaseholders repair the floor of the mortuary in the chancel.⁴¹ According to the visitation return for 1813: 'Every part of our Church is in good repair, the Roofs are sound, the windows glazed, the walls plastered and whitewashed ... the shutters are opened occasionally. we have no casements'.⁴²

By 1851, only the chancel was in good repair. The churchwardens reported that the church was out of repair, and in particular: 'The Roof is falling in, about 23 of the rafters are broken and the Church is kept up by props and is consider(ed) dangerous to enter'.⁴³ James Watkins and Thomas Hughes were paid 2/6d for 'examining the state of the Church';⁴⁴ and perhaps as a result of their report, it was determined not merely to repair but to rebuild Llowes church. An alternative venue had first to be found in which to hold services for the duration of the reconstruction; the schoolroom was repaired (including liming of the walls and glazing) and duly licensed for the purpose.⁴⁵

On 2 February 1852 a grant application for the rebuilding was sent to the Incorporated Church Building Society, together with a printed appeal listing sums already subscribed, and the architect's schedule dated 31 January 1852. It was signed by Thomas Nicholson of Hereford. In a covering letter, Mrs Julia de Winton of Maesllwch Castle explained the urgent need for repairs:

the roof of the church has now been propped up for nearly two years with bare poles, & the late stormy & such weather threatens to bring down the whole structure, whereby we may lose all that is valuable in the present church.

In April the Revd John Williams informed the society that although 'we are still short of the amount required, notwithstanding we hope to commence our work in the course of next month. It is quite unsafe to use the old church in its present state'; in November he wrote that the original plan had been set aside and another adopted, the style of which would be 'altogether superior to the former one ... The building is not yet commenced, but will be commenced about February'. On 7 February 1853 a new schedule was submitted by Messrs WJ & AH Worthington of London. In due course the grant was transferred and increased to £75;

when the work was completed and the money paid, an iron tablet (which is preserved at the back of the nave) was placed in the church acknowledging the condition of the grant: that 134 seats should be for the use of the poorer inhabitants of the parish.⁴⁶

Vestry and building committee meetings had been held from April 1852 onwards.⁴⁷ On 23 April 1852 it was decided to apply for an advance of £250 from the Public Works Loans Office under the provisions of the Act of Parliament 5 *Geo. IV* c.36. The incumbent was authorized to advertise for a plan, specification and estimate and to offer five guineas for the successful submission; and on 20 November it was agreed unanimously to adopt the plan of 'Dominus Vobiscum's'. The architect met with the committee to discuss various alterations, working drawings were produced and tenders were sought. On 4 April 1853 it was resolved that the lowest tender for the rebuilding according to the Worthington plans and specification (that of William Jones of Brecon for £943-15-0) should be accepted. The work was to be completed by 22 November 1853. Sadly, the Revd John Williams did not live to see it; he died in September 1853 (his memorial slab is on the north wall of the nave). Already there were problems with the builder, who was on the verge of bankruptcy. The following March the building committee met to decide what steps should be taken on account of the 'backward state of the Works'; at the end of May work on the church stopped altogether, the workmen having refused to continued without payment of the wages due to them. Eventually, David Thomas (a Brecon solicitor) undertook to pay the workmen and complete the work on behalf of the contractor, with William Jones still superintending the work. Although the architect's certificate of completion was signed in April 1855, the church was not actually finished until June.

When the opening ceremony was held on 26 June 1855, the cost of the rebuilding was reported to be about £1,200.⁴⁸ During the course of construction £700 had been paid to William Jones in instalments, with an unspecified amount paid to David Thomas for the '8th & last instalment'. In August a letter arrived from the official assignee of the now bankrupt Jones stating that a sum of £300 was still owing; a few weeks later members of the building committee were appalled at receiving notices from the attorneys demanding payment of £1853-3-2 'being the balance due in respect of the work done'. The matter was placed in the hands of their solicitor. Some of the correspondence is transcribed in the vestry minute-book, but the outcome is not recorded, although a further £250 was apparently borrowed to pay for part of the extra expense incurred.

According to the revised specification, the entire nave, chancel and porch were to be taken down to ground level, the foundations of the chancel and

porch removed, and the tower taken down to the belfry.⁴⁹ Of the old fabric, only such of the roof timbers as were 'good & sound' might be re-used in joisting and sleepers, and only stone that was 'sound and free from all imperfections' might be re-used in the walling but 'none to appear on the outside face without being properly dressed with the hammer'. All the new walling was to be of stone 'to be obtained from a quarry now open adjoining the Churchyard'; the dressings were to be of Harleydown Bath stone, the floors of good local paving stones, apart from the vestry and chancel, which were to be boarded or tiled respectively. The windows were to be glazed throughout with crown cathedral glass in small diamond quarries. Sums of £8-0-0 and £1-10-0 were to be provided in the estimate for a weathervane and an ornamental cast iron cross on the east gable; a magnificent weathervane with cast iron ornamentation (made by William Jones of London) now surmounts the tower, but the gable cross is of stone. In 1990 the cockerel was re-gilded and placed at the apex of a new pyramidal roof.

In 1853 Worthington had specified that the windows throughout should be glazed with diamond quarries of plain cathedral glass. By the time the church was completed in 1855, stained glass for the chancel windows had been donated, all from the same maker: Thomas Ward of London. Henry William Beavan (c.1800–1852) had been one of the church's benefactors. The east window with its lancets containing pictures of the four Evangelists, their symbols in the roundels above, and the Last Supper in the apex was erected in his memory by his widow.⁵⁰ On the south side of the chancel, a window depicting Christ blessing the little children was given in memory of young William Francis Parry Elmslie, who died at Whampoa in China in September 1853. The adjacent window appropriately shows Christ calming the storm. This was presented as a thanks offering for the safe return of Captain Richard Collinson (brother of Julia de Winton) and his ship *HMS Enterprise*.⁵¹ The north chancel window with its scene of the Madonna and child receiving the adoration of the shepherds was likewise given by the de Winton family, in memory of Octavia Ramsey who died in childbirth in October 1850. The tiny window in the gable above the chancel arch depicting the Holy Dove descending was installed at the same time, but its donor is unknown. The first floor of the tower originally served both as a ringing chamber and as a musicians' gallery; in 1885 the plain glass in its west window was replaced with stained glass showing the Transfiguration of Christ with Moses and Elijah on either side. This was made by Cox, Buckley & Co. of London, apparently after a design by Edwin Papendiek Vulliamy, and was donated by Mrs Frances J Hill (widow of Walter de Winton IV of Maesllwch).⁵² In 1900 it was decided to fill the tower arch opposite with a glass partition.⁵³ In the north wall of the nave, the double lancet with Ss

Michael and George and the crest of the Royal Air Force above was erected in 1946, in memory of Kenneth George Charles Davies, missing in action in February 1942.⁵⁴

Of the original flooring associated with the 1850s restoration,⁵⁵ stone flags remain only in the tower and two narrow spaces in the nave (either side between the front pews and the organ and pulpit). On 2 June 1886 a vestry meeting was held to consider an offer made by Miss Elizabeth Beavan to replace the pavement in both the nave and the chancel with new encaustic tiles as a memorial to her brother (John Phillips Beavan). Her offer was accepted and on 15 August the re-flooring was dedicated 'to its holy use'. The tiles and drawings for their arrangement were supplied by William Godwin & Son of Lugwardine near Hereford, the manufacturers probably also providing skilled paviors to lay the pavements.⁵⁶ The best of the old red and black ceramic tiles from the chancel seem to have been cleaned and re-laid in the porch, a loose tile proving that these too had been supplied by Godwin of Lugwardine.

Under the east window is a strip of majolica tiling bearing the inscription: *THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME*'. This and a skirting of chocolate tiles along the north and south walls are all that remain of the tiles that once extended half-way up the walls of the sanctuary. They were given in 1891 by Charles Beavan in memory of his father; at the same time Miss Beavan offered a corona of lamps in memory of her parents. A photograph taken soon after completion of the mural shows the complex arrangements of pattern tiles, which were probably highly coloured, designed by William Godwin & Son of Lugwardine and installed by the manufacturer.⁵⁷ The walls above the tiles appear to be without decoration.

The interior of the new church had been plastered throughout according to the specification, an account of the opening ceremony describing only the chancel ceiling as something special: 'plastered between the timbers, and coloured ultra-marine blue, powdered with gilt stars'.⁵⁸ In 1892 detailed designs for painted decoration to cover the upper parts of all four walls of the chancel were produced by Robert Clark of Hereford (Figs 2–3).⁵⁹ His drawings show a pattern of lines in Indian red on a light creamy yellow ground imitating brickwork, each 'brick' painted with curling foliage, with a band of rosettes outlining the doors, windows and the lower edge (above the tiles and choir stalls), and a scrolling foliate frieze beneath the wooden cornice.⁶⁰ In one place on the wall, a fragment of paint has flaked away revealing a patch of yellow and red beneath; this suggests that Clark's design was indeed executed (although since over-painted in plain cream). The circumstances surrounding the creation of the drawings and their realization are unknown; there is no reference in either the vestry min-

utes or churchwardens' accounts to any colouring of the chancel at this period. Presumably the cost was borne by a private benefactor, perhaps a member of the Beavan family.

In a visitation return for 1851, the ten commandments are said to be 'on the north side of the church';⁶¹ these and other texts may have been painted on the lime-washed wall of the old church. According to the specification for the new church, the creed, Lord's prayer and ten commandments were to be written on 'slabs of $\frac{3}{4}$ " slate in English characters in blue letters with ornamental principal initials and red secondary ditto to be fixed on each side of the east window'. The slabs were made. They probably were fixed initially either side of the east window and remained there until the decoration of the chancel in the 1890s. At a vestry meeting on 21 April 1900 the vicar and churchwardens were empowered to re-erect the tablets 'at their discretion'.⁶² Three of the tablets (the decalogue being inscribed on two) are now mounted in the nave either side of the chancel arch; the fourth rests against the south door of the chancel. After the reformation it was compulsory for every parish church to display the royal arms, painted on canvas or board, or directly onto the wall plaster. The royal arms in Llowes church date from the period of George III (1760–1820) and are painted in oil on canvas.⁶³

CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, BETWS CLYRO

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century (and probably long before), the tiny church of the Holy Trinity at Betws Clyro has been a chapel of ease attached to Clyro parish church, with services held there only during the summer months.⁶⁴ Although clearly of medieval origin, nothing is known of its earlier history. From occasional references in the churchwardens' presentments,⁶⁵ we learn that the bell was cracked and ought to be recast (1704–08), and that the chapel was out of repair (1715) and required tiling, plastering and the windows glazing (1729). These repairs probably were carried out, the local bell-founder Henry Williams recasting the bell at the same time as those of Clyro in 1708.⁶⁶ After that, in common with many other churches in Radnorshire, the medieval chapel suffered from years of neglect, and by the 1870s the building was in dire need of restoration. Its condition was so dilapidated that the crumbling north wall of the nave had to be shored with wooden props.⁶⁷

When Frederick R Kempson of Hereford drew his plans for its restoration, he included drawings of the north and south elevations, and the ground plan of the old church (Figs 4–5).⁶⁸ From these and the specification⁶⁹ it can be seen that the basic structure differed little from the build-

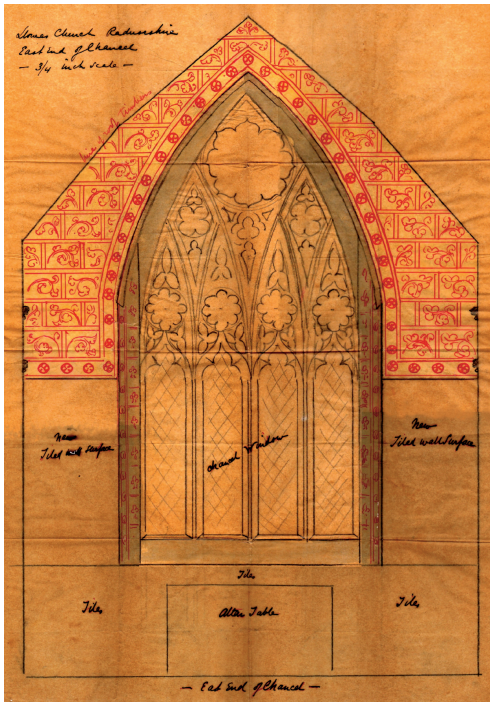


Fig. 2. Design by Robert Clark for the east end of the chancel at Llowes in 1892 (Llowes Parish Archive). The design for the elevation of the chancel arch facing east is similar.

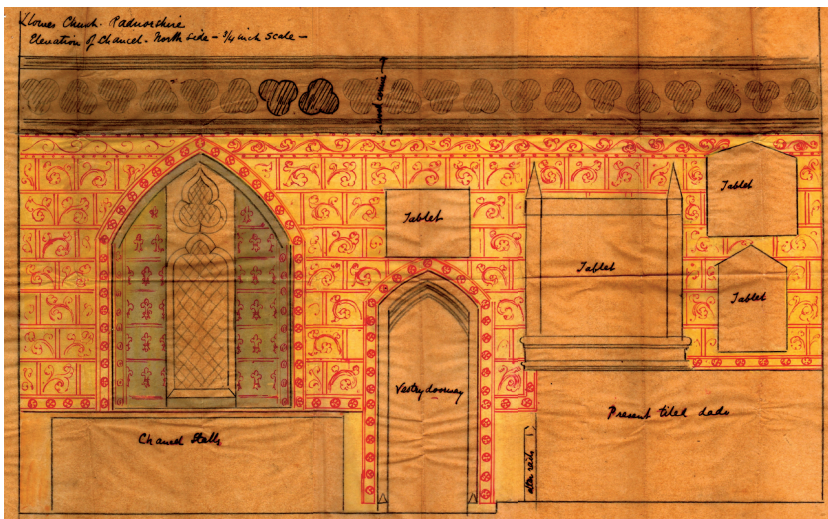


Fig. 3. Design by Robert Clark for the north side of the chancel at Llowes in 1892 (Llowes Parish Archive). The design for the south side is similar.

ing that was to replace it. It was exactly the same size and shape with a louvered bell-turret at the west end surmounted by the same weathercock; but it was roofed with stone tiles, entered by a flat-topped door and lit by only three south-facing windows, one in the wall of the chancel⁷⁰ and two dormer windows in the nave. Inside, the floor was level; and the passageway between the box pews and the open area of the chancel were probably paved with stone slabs. Opposite the door, a wooden staircase led up to a gallery across the west end, above the vestry. The communion table was set off-centre against the east wall; and the font was towards the east end.⁷¹

In 1876 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were approached regarding the rebuilding of the chapel, but declared themselves 'not in a position to make any contribution'.⁷² At a meeting of the Clyro vestry on 23 April 1877,⁷³ Kempson's plans and specification for the restoration were discussed and approved. A building committee was appointed and a preliminary estimate obtained from Thomas Price of Hay, who was eventually awarded the contract. Faculty was granted on 8 March 1878,⁷⁴ the petition to the Bishop of St David's stating that the total expense was estimated at £400⁷⁵, the whole of which sum had already been promised. Restoration work began immediately. By the end of May the walls were 'nearly up ready to receive the roof timbers' and by the beginning of December it was finished, apart from 'two or three alterations'⁷⁶ and the internal fittings.⁷⁷ However, the architect's certificate of completion was not signed until nearly a year later.⁷⁸

Although the church was pulled down to be completely rebuilt on new foundations, the roof timbers were carefully dismantled, numbered and stacked on the site; they were afterwards in accordance with the specification, cleaned of any colouring and re-fixed in their original positions, only decayed sections being replaced with new wood. However, the architect insisted that the wall plates and ridge were to be new, and in places the framework was to be strengthened with iron straps. The retention of so much of the original timber has preserved the medieval character of the building. The fourteenth-century roof is divided into six bays with alternating arch-braced collar beams and scissor trusses with king-post pendants, supported on corbelled wall-posts. In the chancel section, the centre truss rests on corbels, carved with enigmatic figures holding shields. Wearing long, high-necked gowns and what appear to be crested coronets, they may represent angels rather than humans, mouldings above the shoulders and extending downwards being suggestive of wings. The figures would once have been coloured, and the 'shields' painted with heraldic devices, or ancient lettering if they represent the stone tablets of the law rather than armorial shields. Below the scissor beam at the division between the chancel

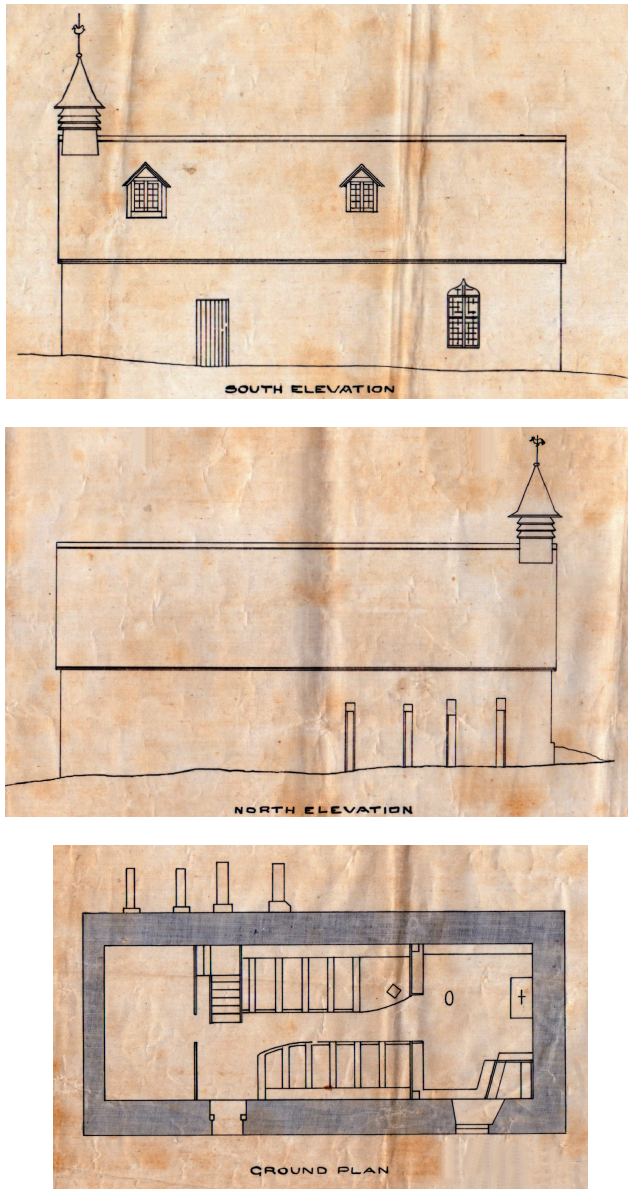


Fig. 4. Details from the architect's drawings of Betws Clyro chapel dated March 1877, showing the old church 'as at present' prior to its rebuilding (*Clyro Parish Archive*).

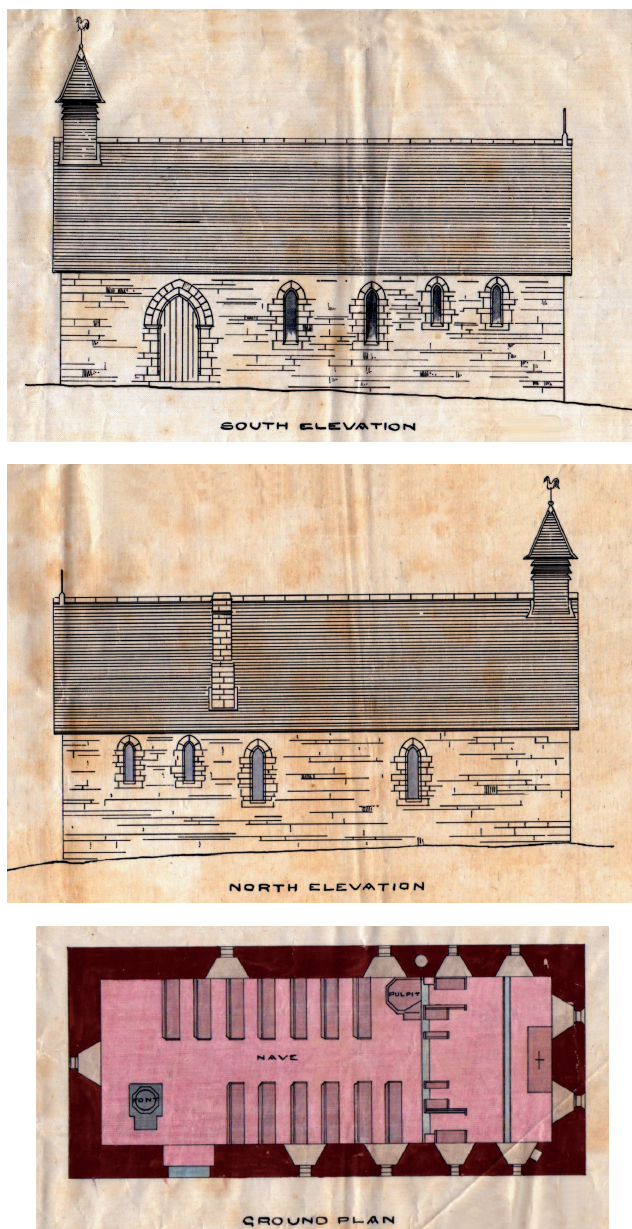


Fig. 5. Details from the architect's drawings of Betws Clyro chapel dated March 1877, showing the proposed restoration of the building (*Clyro Parish Archive*).

and the nave are the remains of a screen dating from about 1400. Mortises along the top of the beam indicate that there was once a tympanum; but there is no evidence of a fence screen below. On top of the head-beam the parapet of twelve open bays and tracery is presumably from the front of a former loft.⁷⁹

According to the specification, the roof was to be covered either with Broseley tiles or 'the old stone tiles made good with new as the architect may direct'; in the event, slate was used with only the ridge covered with Broseley cresting. While the dressings were to be of Grimshill stone, 'native stone, using up as much of the old stone as possible and making good with new' was to be employed for the walling. Throughout, the floors were to be paved with tiles from William Godwin of Lugwardine's encaustic tile works at Withington near Hereford.⁸⁰ The manufacturer probably supplied designs for the arrangement of the tiles, as well as skilled paviours to lay the pavements. It had been intended to provide a new font, altar, pulpit and seating. However, funds were short and when the time came for the new fittings to be ordered, it was suggested that the old thirteenth-century font from Clyro church might be reused at Betws. Thomas Price duly repaired it, providing a new shaft and base.⁸¹ The pulpit was to have been placed in the northeast corner of the nave. When the builder accidentally installed the pilot stove for the new under-floor heating apparatus in the wrong place, it was decided to position the pulpit in the opposite corner, although the church was not actually provided with a pulpit until 1912.⁸²

In 1989 the tinted quarries of cathedral glass in the three lancets at the east end were replaced with stained glass windows, designed by Charles Broome of Hereford, in memory of Harold Layton (1913–1986).⁸³

NOTES

1. *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae P. Nicholai IV c. 1291* (London, 1802), p. 274. The 'Ecclia de Royl' was assessed at £10-13-4.
2. JT Evans, *The Church Plate of Radnorshire* (Stow-on-the-Wold, 1910), p. 101.
3. Clyro Parish Archive: faculty dated 26 October 1938.
4. Hereford Reference Library: manuscript of Jonathan Williams, *The History of the County of Radnorshire* (c.1818), p. 432. An abbreviated version of the manuscript appeared as a series of articles in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 3rd series, 1–4 (1855–1858), and in book form (Tenby, 1859). *A General History of the County of Radnorshire Compiled from the Manuscript of the Late Rev. Jonathan Williams & Other Sources* (Brecknock, 1905) edited by Edwin Davies contains more extensive

excerpts; only one word is absent from the description of Clyro church, but significant details are omitted from the description of the church at Llowes.

5. Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (London, 1st edn. 1833).
6. National Record Office, Aberystwyth: St David's Diocese SD/CCB/55.
7. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/196 (1824), 198 (1828), 202 (1845) and 205 (1848).
8. NRO: Llysdyham mss B2730, letter dated 19 June 1852 from Mary AD Venables to George S Venables.
9. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/207 (1851).
10. CPA: Vestry minute book 1851.
11. CPA: letter dated 30 April 1877 from Richard L Venables (vicar of Clyro 1846–1873) to William E Prickard (vicar of Clyro 1873–1880).
12. OW Jones, 'The memoir of Richard Lister Venables', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 64 (1994), pp. 71–72.
13. NRO: Llysdyham mss A41–42, diaries of RL Venables 1852–53.
14. NRO: Llysdyham mss B1256, letter dated 24 May 1852 from RL Venables to GS Venables, containing an account of the laying of the foundation stone.
15. NRO: Llysdyham mss B1268, letter dated 7 July 1853 from RL Venables to GS Venables.
16. CPA: Clyro church accounts (1852). The building account to 14 July 1853 lists payment of £40 for the temporary church, with extra for 'felt for covering roof', insurance premium 'when a stove was placed therein (building entirely of wood)', and a fee of £1 to the bishop's secretary for the license.
17. Church in Wales Record Office, Cardiff: Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England papers 1735, correspondence dated 18 December 1851 and 21 February 1852.
18. *Hereford Times*, 16 July 1853.
19. ECE papers 1735, Thomas Nicholson's plan and specification for chancel dated April 1852.
20. For details of the tiles see MAV Gill, 'Victorian floor tiles from the parish churches of the Wye Valley Group', *TRS*, 68 (1998), pp. 70–72, and 'A survey of floor-tiles in the churches of Radnorshire', *TRS*, 73 (2003), pp. 81–82.
21. Vestry minute book 1851, vestry meeting 30 March 1891.
22. CPA: Church accounts 1891–1910, entry 5 November 1893, 'Paid carr. of Mr. Eaton's window 15/4'.
23. Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary*.
24. The Revd John Powell and members of his family were 'interred in the vault beneath' from 1819 to 1828.
25. NRO: Llysdyham mss B2730.

26. *Hereford Times*, 16 July 1853.

27. Clyro church accounts 1852, building account to 14 July 1853. The total of £1558-8-6 includes £1248-4-0 'Total payment to Contractor' and £20 'Remaining to be paid to the Contractor when the Church walls shall have been colored', £33-12-0 'estimated value of teamwork, hauling' 512 tons of local stone for the walls, the cost of the temporary church, solicitors' and architect's fees, and £74-3-3 'Available balance towards the Tower &c'. Powys County Archives Office, Llandrindod: RC/E/CLY/S/131, subscription list printed June 1853 values the subscription in teamwork 'at 8s per day for a Cart and two Horses'.

28. Vestry minute book 1851, vestry meeting 4 February 1865; Clyro church accounts 1852, payments on 12 December 1865 of £186-19-0 to Mr Mansfield, contractor for 'work in restoring Clyro Church Tower' and £11-10-6 to Mr Nicholson, architect. A sketch of the church made in 1865 by Kilvert's sister Dora shortly before the heightening of the tower is reproduced in C Barber, *Exploring Kilvert Country*, (Abergavenny, 2003), p. 27.

29. For details of the bells see MAV Gill, 'Concerning some early Radnorshire bell-ringers', *TRS*, 76 (2006), pp. 76–87.

30. CPA: Terrier and inventory 1900. The massive wooden hatchment on the north wall of the side aisle was placed in the church after the death of Baskerville in 1897. It is painted with the impaled arms of Thomas Baskerville Mynors Baskerville (1790–1864) and his second wife Elizabeth Mary (née Guise). Thomas had assumed the Baskerville surname and family arms by royal license on succeeding to the estates of his cousin in 1818; having had no issue by his first wife, he remarried in 1837. Walter Thomas was their eldest son (Davies, *History of Radnorshire*, p. 380).

31. *The Radnorshire Standard*, 10 October 1908. A similar account appears in *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 15 October 1908.

32. For details of St Meilig see S Baring-Gould, *The Lives of the Saints*, 16 (London, 1898), p. 326, JD Davies, *St Maelog – A Brief Long Life* (Llandfaelog, 1995), and MAV Gill, 'The cross-slab in St Meilig's church, Llowes', *TRS*, 71 (2001), pp. 36–38.

33. H Williams (trans.), *Two Lives of Gildas by a Monk of Rhuys and Caradoc of Llancarfan* (London, 1899), p. 15.

34. HE Butler, *The Autobiography of Giraldu Cambrensis* (London, 1937), p. 126. Explaining how he had acquired his knowledge of Latin (albeit a peculiarly ungrammatical form of the language), the hermit said that after a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he had returned and shut himself in his cell. Here he grieved that he could not understand Latin, neither the Mass nor the Gospel, until one day at the hour of eating, he called for his servant at the window but no one came. Hungry and weary he fell asleep. On waking: 'I see my bread lying on the altar. And going to it I bless the bread and eat it; and straightway at Vespers I understand the verses and the words which the priest say in Latin, and likewise at Mass.... And after Mass I call the priest to my window with his missal and ask him to read the Gospel of that day ... and afterwards I speak Latin with the priest and he with me'.

35. *Taxatio*, p. 274.
36. Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary*.
37. Williams, History of Radnorshire (mss), p. 451.
38. For details of the bells see Gill, 'Early bell-ringers', pp. 76–87.
39. When the church was restored, the ancient font which probably dates from the Early English period when the medieval church of Llowes was first built in stone (although some believe it may be Norman or even pre-Norman) was made redundant. Its basin was used for many years as a flower container in the garden at nearby Brynrydd, before being returned to the church by Colonel Beavan. In 1956 it was raised on a new base, and pews at the back of the church were removed to make space around the font and the Celtic cross.
40. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/CCB/55.
41. NRO: Skreen and Velin Newydd papers 569.
42. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/191. When questioned in 1807 as to whether there were casements in the windows to open for the free passage of air, the vicar replied 'No. Our churches are not built so air tight, as to require it here in the country' (SD/QA/187).
43. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/207.
44. NRO: Parochial records, Llowes No.7 vestry minute and account book accounts 1851–52.
45. NRO: Parochial records, Llowes No.7 accounts 1853–54; St David's Diocese SD/DS/340, license for holding divine service.
46. Lambeth Palace Library, London: Incorporated Church Building Society papers 04444.
47. NRO: Parochial records, Llowes No.7.
48. *Hereford Journal*, 11 July 1855; similar account in *The Silurian; or South Wales Advertiser*, 14 July 1855.
49. Llowes Parish Archive: Specification of works for rebuilding the Church of Saint Meilig ... March 1853.
50. Joanna Beavan also gave an exquisite watercolour drawing of the east window in a gilded Gothic frame 'as a token of affectionate regard'. It now hangs on the north wall of the nave, but it is uncertain whether the gift was actually to the church in the first place, or to another member of the family.
51. In 1849 he had been appointed to command an expedition by way of the Bering Strait for the relief of Sir John Franklin (lost with his ships the *Erebus* and *Terror* in his quest for the North-West Passage); sailing from Plymouth the following January, he was in the Arctic from July 1850 until August 1854.
52. LPA: letter dated 29 November 1884 from Frances J Hill; Parochial records Llowes No.7, vestry meeting 10 April 1885.

53. Parochial records Llowes No.7, vestry meeting 21 April 1900. The present screen was installed in 1992.
54. LPA: faculty dated 15 February 1946.
55. At least some of the flags used had been salvaged from the old church, as those on the tower floor include earlier grave slabs.
56. For details of the tiles see Gill 'Victorian floor tiles', pp. 83–85 and 'A survey of floor-tiles in the churches of Radnorshire', *TRS*, 74 (2004), pp. 123–126.
57. For details of the mural tiles see Gill 'Victorian floor tiles', pp. 85–87 and 'A survey of floor-tiles in the churches of Radnorshire', *TRS*, 76 (2006), pp. 76–87. By the 1920s many were loosening and falling from the wall. In 1931 it was resolved at a vestry meeting that they should be repaired, but on the very day that Edgar Evans of Hay came to do the work the vicar received a letter from Miss Beavan (a relative of the donor), in which she expressed her dislike of the tiles. The vicar accordingly instructed Evans to scrap the lot!
58. *Hereford Journal*, 11 July 1855. This scheme was restored when the church was redecorated in 1989.
59. LPA: set of four drawings with designs for each wall of the chancel. Until 2002 they were tightly folded into a small envelope inscribed with Robert Clark's name and dated December 1892. Unfortunately it would appear that during the re-sorting when the drawings were removed to ease the creasing, the envelope (which was the sole evidence for the name of the artist and the date) was not retained.
60. A note on the drawing for the elevation of the chancel arch facing east states: 'the ground work to be of a light yellow colour similar to existing tint. The red lines & decoration to be in Indian Red'.
61. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/207.
62. Parochial records Llowes No.7.
63. They were restored and reframed to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Elizabeth II in 2002.
64. Williams, *History of Radnorshire* (mss), p. 417; Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary* (3rd edn., 1845), p. 87.
65. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/CCB/55.
66. Gill, 'Early Radnorshire bell-ringers', pp. 76–87.
67. *Hereford Times*, 29 November 1879 account of Harvest Thanksgiving service at Clyro, at which the offertory was devoted to the restoration of the chapel. The wooden props are visible in the architect's drawing (Fig. 4).
68. CPA: set of four plans of Betws chapel Clyro dated March 1877.
69. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/F/36, faculty file contains a copy of the specification.
70. CPA: letter dated 30 April 1877. The Revd RL Venables recalled having 'been obliged to send a man out in the middle of the service to drive away cattle grazing

in the field and attracted as cattle usually are by curiosity till there was imminent danger of their breaking the window with their horns'. His successor also recalled the cows that 'used to look in through the window when the service was going on' (letter dated 30 May 1914 from Revd WE Prickard to Revd David Griffith (vicar of Clyro 1910–1918)). Following the rebuilding of the chapel the surrounding land was fenced in, and later formally sold by the trustees of the Cabalfa estate to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for the nominal sum of £5 on the understanding that it should never be used for burials (conveyance dated 6 October 1914).

71. A sketch of the interior of the old chapel looking towards the east end was made by Kilvert's sister in 1865 (Barber, *Kilvert Country*, p. 99).

72. ECE papers 54300, resolution of the estates committee 3 August 1876.

73. CPA: Vestry minute book 1851.

74. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/F/36.

75. CPA: letter dated 30 April 1877. Revd RL Venables suggests that if there is 'difficulty in raising £500 (£400 or £500 always means the larger sum) why not meet the emergency by an iron church which will stand for years, and which though ugly outside may be made very church like inside'.

76. CPA: letters dated 27 May and 2 December 1878 from Kempson's office.

77. CPA: letters dated 28 February, 25 April and 16 June 1879 from Kempson discussing the altar, pulpit and stalls. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/ 231 and 234. In the visitation report of 1880 the vicar explained that the chapel had been opened the previous midsummer and 'temporary fittings added'. In 1883 there was still no pulpit provided. In the old church there had been a 'Reading Desk which is also used as a Pulpit' (SD/QA/ 207) and 'a Font not in the western part' (SD/QA/215).

78. CPA: certificate dated 30 October 1879.

79. FH Crossley and MH Ridgwsay, 'Screens, lofts, and stalls situated in Wales and Monmouthshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 100 (1949), pp. 222–223.

80. For details of the tiles see Gill, 'Victorian floor tiles', pp. 72–75, and 'A survey of floor-tiles', *TRS* 2003, pp. 68–70.

81. CPA: letter dated 14 April 1879 from Kempson's office to the Revd WE Prickard; also letters from Thomas Price dated 3 April and 8 June 1879.

82. CPA: letter dated 14 April 1879. Frederick Kempson's drawing for the plan and elevation of the pulpit that was formerly in the parish archive seems to have been mislaid (hopefully not destroyed!) during the re-sort of 2002. NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/234 report dated 14 May 1883: 'The Chapel has been lately rebuilt but no Pulpit provided'. *Parochial Magazine for the Archdeaconry of Brecon*, 29/5 (May 1911), p. 92 and 30/6 (June 1912), p. 122.

83. CPA: faculty for installation of lancets 30 January 1989.

SEERS AND REMEMBRANCERS

Peter J Conradi

AMONG THE POETS who have celebrated mid-Wales are three that make a triptych. Ruth Bidgood celebrates life in the sparsely populated hills of northern Breconshire and is without question *the* pre-eminent poet and historian of upland mid-Wales. Roland Mathias was born in Talybont-on-Usk in Breconshire and lived in Brecon for many years. RS Thomas was a bird of passage. He and Mathias left a number of Radnorshire poems, six of which have overlapping subject-matter.

Bidgood was born in Glamorgan in 1922, went up to Oxford to read English, and served during the war in Alexandria. The daughter of a Welsh-speaking vicar, she returned from working in London to settle in Abergwesyn in the 1970s and it was there that she found herself as a poet. 'All the steps of my life have brought me home' ('Roads').

She wrote between 1974 and 1980 a series of seven scholarly articles on the families of Llanddewi Hall, the 'big house' at Llanddewi Ystradenni, published in the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, using letters, land deeds, wills, ledgers and tombstone inscriptions to recreate the life of the district over many generations. Her interest in local history – 'the more local the better' she once said – was further developed in her *Parishes of the Buzzard* (2000), a study of the twin upland parishes of Abergwesyn in northern Breconshire, among the most isolated in all Wales.

Through much painstaking research, Bidgood recreated eloquently the religious, social and agricultural life of a little-known community. Her book celebrated ways of being typical of rural mid-Wales: individualistic to the point of eccentricity, in which, to take one random example, one Congregationalist minister, nick-named 'the dog-deacon', admitted into chapel on Sundays only 'well-conducted, *seriously-disposed* dogs'. Any dog showing signs of frivolity was duly hit on the nose with a shepherd's staff. Another Independent minister, the patriarchal radical Kilsby, scandalised his hearers by musing about whether, on the Day of Judgement, God would bother to judge Kilsby's neighbours one-by-one, or whether He might simplify matters and to avoid 'losing time' over such fools judge them instead in lots like sheep at an auction!

Her book is not an exercise in nostalgia. As she said of Abergwesyn, 'I have never wanted to escape from the world by coming here – this *is* the world.' It was a world following the old hill-pattern of isolated farmsteads linked by narrow tracks, many of these now lost or, in local parlance, 'gone

down'. Churches, schools and inns had also gone, the small valleys of Irfon and Gwesyn dotted alike with ruined houses and disused fields. Her poetry is interested in absence.

What is evanescent evokes in Bidgood a tender curiosity, and her poetry and historical interests are part of one project: she is a poet of place with a sense of the sacred. 'What is forgotten cannot be healed,' she wrote ('Unhealed'). So the writer becomes a necessary remembrancer, an objective chronicler of the pains of change and loss, and thus also – perhaps – a priest-like healer. One pleasure of reading her is how self-effacing she is – cheerfully free from what one of her poems terms the 'draggled old bitch-hound' of Self.

This subtraction liberates her to imagine the lives and loves of others. One poem is entitled 'Letter' and imagines a woman addressing her sister on the subject of 'the Great Harshness of the Winter / amid these Rough Welsh Hills / and the long Hours of Darkness ... these things weigh heavy on me'. This persona fears that spring might never return, but loses her fear within the need to minister to her sick husband. The poem is an artful mini-novel. In a similar spirit she also writes sequences of 'found poems': centuries-old letters tellingly set out as verse.

All is transient. She knows this intimately: in 'Leasehold' she comments mordantly that the only lie is any promise of permanence. Such unshowy perceptions – constancy is an untruth, mutability the law of existence – work to bring her poems mysteriously alive. If the present is, as one early poem notes, haunted ('The Given Time'), it is haunted not just by the shadow of the past but equally by its own shadowed future, such instability rendering it mysterious too.

Thus in another early poem – 'Little of Distinction' – the poet records being surprised by joy at a visit to a place that quite unexpectedly offered much, including views of 'the miles on hazy miles / Of Radnorshire and Breconshire below, / Uncertain in the heat – the mystery / That complements precision'. Objectivity and numinousness go hand in hand.

Such mystery has its under-side. Not only that it makes present time itself into 'A boundary zone / between known and known; / a place of blurred identity' ('Question'). But then darkness, night and desolation invade the poems. As in the sequence 'Valley-before-Night', where poetry itself is all that helps hold these alarming forces at bay. So the poet is herself an agent of light, each poem resembling the open fire that acts as 'a charm against death-wish darkness' ('Log Fire'). Winter is an active force, too, with the 'high white silence' of 'Blizzard'; the memory of two brothers who 'lived, in their solitude, / a present that was most men's past' but now, thirty years after they died, are fading 'into ultimate snows' ('Shapes in Ice').

She elegizes an old lead-mine ('Carreg-y-Fran') as also the sexual loneliness of the men who worked it; recreates in words the Old Pump House at Llanwrytyd. And the deadening arrival of conifer forests with the felling-machines that accompany them, and the arrival on the coast of an oil-slick exercise her too. Everywhere she hears the tic-toc of time.

Above all, there is the dereliction of houses, together with the loss of all the noisy life they once contained. For example, 'The Hermitage' evoking a visit to find the ruin of an ancient house. Or the final day of human habitation at 'Cefn Cendu' – where 'One beauty died / when the last owner, leaving, shut the door / And heard for the last time an echo / follow him from empty rooms'. Here the poem itself arguably constitutes another version of the echo that the last owner was listening out for. Or 'Hennant' where a tree grows out of each corner of what was once the house.

How well she writes of such farms, the disappearance of which can numb the onlooker and excite wonder too at all that supervenes: silence, rank grass, trees ... Or religious houses like the Abbey at Strata Florida where, instead of the vault of the Cistercian roof, 'we look up and find / only our own late August sky'.

Bidgood is interested in legends such as King Arthur's, in angels, and in Edward Thomas. She can capture, as could DH Lawrence or for that matter, Kilvert writing his lucid diary-prose, the mysterious otherness of animals: the stupid panic of a sheep caught in a hedge, making life hard for those wishing to free it, to a bantam wonderfully stalking 'in miniature grandeur', and then a pig, a ferret, a squashed hedge-hog, a coquettish mare. Then there are a scattering of poems to ancient peoples other than the mid-Welsh: Mayans, Aran Islanders, Romano-British, for the last of whom she writes epitaphs.

The poems I love best chronicle little domestic scenes. 'Snow' evokes the poet falling asleep at a film on telly, while a short winter day's devil-dance of tumbling snow outlasts and dwarfs the indoor entertainment. 'Here, outside, / night, a blind and silent valley, / and snow falling, snow falling'. Repetition here is no cheap device, but enacts the unceasing patience with which snow brings its deathly changes into a world which it makes into its own.

'New Telephone' observes the laying on a hot and airless day of a new phone cable up which 'Back and fore, words will dance and stumble, check and flow'. The welcome arrival of a breeze, for which onlookers have long waited, is at last compared to 'an enigmatic hint, / like ambivalent words / waiting in the wires'. Both breeze and telephone are welcome harbingers of change.

She is no simple Luddite, but an objective observer of mid-Welsh life,

and a celebrant of all that nourishes and sustains it – telephones included. In a recent poem called ‘Yard in Winter’ Bidgood asks us and herself the question what it is that an accurate perspective might confer on the human and natural scene on which she gazes? And finds the moving answer ‘a sort of gratitude; a sort of love’.

*

Houses fall into ruin and die. So do poets. The landscape of good poetry itself recalls mid-Wales, each time depopulated when the old voices ‘go down’ like houses. Later new talents invade and colonise. And meanwhile across the unpeopled spaces poets hail one other and their readers: poetry, after all, having always functioned among other things as a species of long-distance conversation. So the death of RS Thomas in 2000 prompts Ruth Bidgood to address his spirit, starting ‘Now is the time / of the dark house, / the empty shore’, measuring how much he and his work meant to all his readers and thus how big a gap Thomas left behind him (‘Bereft’).

Bidgood was not alone. Under the heading ‘Death of Welsh poet’ the *Mid-Wales Journal* reported on 29 September 2000:

RS Thomas, the foremost Welsh poet writing in the English language, who died this week, was no stranger to the Presteigne area, for he lived in a cottage close to the town for some time, a few years ago. He later married Betty Vernon, the widow of his close friend Major Richard Vernon of, Titley, who survives him, and with whom he lived near Criccieth in North Wales.

The Rev Ronald Stuart Thomas ... was 87 and a former priest of the Church in Wales, and he had been ill for some time. His friendship with the Vernons goes back many years, at least as far as the days when they were neighbours in North Wales and he pursued his hobby of bird watching, which he shared with Major Vernon. Mr Thomas was greatly attached to Alice, Mrs Vernon’s daughter by a previous marriage, who later lived at Norton, near Presteigne, and following her untimely death a few years ago, he read a poem which he had specially written for her funeral service ...

We do not at once associate RS Thomas, greatest of all twentieth-century Welsh poets in English, with mid-Wales: rather with the mountain fastnesses of the West and North in which he passed his last years. And yet he had twelve notably productive and contented years as vicar of Manafon in Montgomeryshire, from 1942 to 1954, the one place and time his only child Gwydion remembered as being happy. And after the death of his first

wife Elsi on March 10 1991, his future second wife Betty Vernon with her husband took him in during the winter of 1994, at Burcher Cottage, Titley, outside Presteigne. This period is missing from both biographies of him thus far published. The marriage of RS Thomas and Betty happened one month after Betty's first husband Richard died at Titley in July 1996.

Betty's daughter Alice Maitland, who had a husband, a son of eleven, and a daughter of fifteen, was gravely ill when Thomas published the moving poem 'To a Lady' in his 1995 volume, *No Truce with the Furies* (p. 24):

I don't know
 who I write to,
 the frocked girl,
 pretty but pert,
 or the grown-up
 mother, doll-less
 but dolled. Nor
 does death either
 who, liquidating
 her lungs, applying
 irons to her heart,
 discovers, astonished,
 a being somewhere
 between both, perter
 than a child, prettier
 than a parent, and
 wiser than each
 of them in the way
 she treats his fumbling
 familiarity with contempt.

Alice died, aged 40, in March 1997, and Thomas attended her burial in Norton, outside Presteigne, reading his remarkable farewell poem, 'For Alice', which pays tribute to her stoical courage and her showing of an 'affirming flame'. In the first stanza Alice pretends to be immortal purely to reassure family and friends. In the second Alice soothes the poet's terror too:

Seeing those small bones,
 her breath a butterfly
 endeavouring to escape her;
 her eyes wounded
 by failures of taste

never to be mentioned,
I gave my breath rein
only to see how
it was brought up short,
trembling and then becoming
quiet again under
the stroking of her infirm smile.¹

Thomas is remembered hereabouts dressed in tweed jackets and cavalry twills like that retired Brigadier class of Englishmen for whom, despite all his passionate anti-Englishness, he reserved such strange respect, sharing after all, both their reserve and their cold formality. Here, as his son Gwydion recorded, he was able to indulge his hankering to be an English country gentleman. Indeed his second wife Betty Vernon hunted.

And Thomas had earlier written four other Radnorshire poems. One, published in 1975, is 'Llananno', and pictures the poet stopping by the small church with its fabulous rood-screen on the river Ithon, waters that convey a 'quiet insistence on a time older than man'. He stops in order to declare his independence from the speed and aggression of modern life; inside the church he finds a serene presence 'that waits for me til I come next'. Like the hills in the Psalms, Llananno is a place that offers spiritual sustenance.

His other three Radnorshire poems by a strange coincidence share topics with his near-contemporary and fellow-pacifist Roland Mathias, founding father of post-war Anglo-Welsh literary studies who lived for many of his latter years in Brecon. Mathias admired Thomas but also differed from and debated with him. While Thomas was an Anglican, Mathias, born in Talybont-on-Usk, son of a Welsh-speaking Congregational army chaplain, had a strongly Nonconformist conscience. He returned to Wales in 1948 as headmaster of Pembroke Dock Grammar School. It was there, during his ten-year appointment, that he took a leading role in founding *Dock Leaves*, a magazine which, as *The Anglo-Welsh Review* from 1957 took as its principal aim the healing of the breach between writers in Welsh and their counterparts writing in English; as editor from 1961 to 1976, Mathias insisted that English-speakers had a part to play in the cultural life of Wales. This, together with Nonconformism, puts him at odds with Thomas.

Their shared Radnorshire subject matter begins in the 1940s with two lyric poems about Maesyrnonnen (field-of-ash). This most beautifully preserved of all early chapels in Wales has been well described by TJ Hughes in his recent, admirable *Wales's 100 Best Churches*. Standing alone among

the hills above Glasbury, Maesyronnen began life as a barn ‘long, low and earth-brown’ adjoining a sixteenth-century farmhouse with a sundial on one of its gables and a small minister’s or keeper’s cottage. Although it was not formally registered as a Congregational chapel until 1697, the names of ministers painted on the pulpit go back to 1645: the Toleration Act in 1689 finally allowed Dissenters, though still excluded from universities and public office, freely to worship in licensed meeting houses. Maesyronnen, with its early furniture and tie-beamed roof alike wonderfully intact, is the closest we can get today to the first chapels of 300 years ago. The essence of all later chapel design and positioning, Hughes points out, is here: two joined communal tables dated 1728 dominate, at the heart of the congregation, not railed off at an altar as in the established Anglican churches, together with a big seat – *sedd fawr* – for Deacons.

Here is a setting deliberately echoing the earliest Celtic churches: simple, communal, conveying the sense of a small like-minded gathering pressed up close; and a survey of 1715 shows attendance at 250. Cromwell is said to have visited and the early Methodist George Whitefield to have preached. Bruce Chatwin in *On The Black Hill* unmistakably used Maesyronnen as the original for the similarly-named Maes-y-felin: here he stages the long final sermon that presages Lewis’s death, which explains how Chatwin wishes us to understand all the life that has preceded it.

One August day just after the war RS Thomas visited only to find the doors locked, and so started to imagine the life within. He wrote his fine sonnet, ‘Maes-yr-onnen’, that opposes what he calls ‘the stale piety, mouldering within’ to an ecstatic vision ‘You cannot hear as I, incredulous, heard / Up in the rafters, where the bells should ring, / The wild, sweet singing of Rhiannon’s birds’. His first biographer explains that Rhianon, a figure from the *Mabinogion*, typifies for Thomas the highest seal of Welshness, her birds with the gift of quickening the dead and entrancing the living. Thomas later recorded that there at Maesyronnen he had a visionary realisation whose essence was that: ‘there is no such thing as time, no beginning and no end but that everything is a fountain welling up endlessly from immortal God’. This understanding his sonnet struggles to convey.

In an essay in Welsh entitled ‘Two Chapels’ written soon after, he nonetheless compares Maesyronnen unfavourably with Soar-y-mynydd, perhaps the most remote and astonishing chapel in the whole of Wales. It stands near the banks of the river Camddwr on the road from Tregaron to Llyn Brianne. Here, among the bog-cotton, pilgrims still make their way to hear preachers – under a wall-painting announcing that ‘*Duw Cariad yw*’ – God is Love – discourse in the old and fervent Welsh style which centuries

ago was said to have caused a so-called *tân grug* – a fire in the heather or wildly spreading enthusiasm. Soar-y-mynydd belongs to the third generation of Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapels and evoked in Thomas a sense of something he approvingly calls the Welsh soul, rather than the Welsh spirit – evidently the lesser of two goods.

By chance Roland Mathias also came to Maesyronnen, which he chooses to spell without hyphens, around the same time in the 1940's, and wrote a longer poem with the same title. Mathias's poem is full of the living detail that marks him as a poet, as well as the mandarin obscurity that frustrates some of his admirers – 'tenebrate' here for shadowy, for example. He was for much of his life a schoolmaster, and his poetry explores history with care and pedantry alike.

Mathias's Maesyronnen chapel, long and white, leans 'beyond the lordly hedge'. Within, he sees the 'dusty hymn-books only ten years old' that indicate that the chapel has come down in the world 'to indicate the poor and present few' to oppose to its braver past. He sees, too, the 'stiff-necked family pew' where worshippers attended to passionate sermons against the sinfulness of the Established Church as well as castigating their own sins.

While Mathias denied looking over his shoulder at his older contemporary, he nonetheless wrote a long 1972 essay in which he objected to Thomas' 'needless sectarian asides' and occasional confusions.² And he took issue with Thomas very directly in another poem called 'Sir Gelli to RS', where Thomas is the 'RS' referred to in Mathias's very title.

Sir Gelli Meurig or Meyrick was an Anglesey-born squire who rose to be Lieutenant-General and, through marriage to Elizabeth (Margaret) Lewis, came into Radnorshire lands. Thus Sir Gelli inherited the late medieval court at Gladestry and an estate at Llanelwedd on the Wye, both in Radnorshire; he also owned Wigmore Castle. The Earl of Essex memorably rebelled against Queen Elizabeth, inciting her anger by his failures in Ireland against its 'rebels'. Sir Gelli duly sought financial backing for Essex among Herefordshire squires with Catholic sympathies, and was consequently caught and executed with Essex on 13 March 1601. His estates were confiscated but later restored in part to his son Roland and daughter Margaret at Lucton and Eyton in Herefordshire.

Thomas in the late 1960's had written 'Sir Gelli Meurig (Elizabethan)' in which Sir Gelli becomes the very type and figure of Welsh quisling or traitor, his crime not at all that of conspiring against Queen Elizabeth, but entirely that of turning his back upon his native Wales, toadying to the English. Thomas's Sir Gelli is typical of Welsh turncoats over the centuries who deserted their homeland for 'the town / And its baubles' – for fine clothes and power. 'Helplessly they dance / to a mad tune, who at home /

In the bracken could have remained / Humble but free'. His beheading, by implication, is apt punishment for such greedy opportunism. As Thomas memorably puts the matter, Sir Gelli is no more interesting than a mere 'Welsh fly / Caught in a web spun / For a hornet'. 'Betray Wales and deserve to die' is the moral.

In 'Sir Gelli to RS', written a few years later,³ Roland Mathias awards Gelli right of reply. Indeed Gelli challenges Thomas across the centuries to a duel (!) his poem ending 'I'll blood you sharply an [= if] you'll not declare / Which of us left an innocence in Wales'. Mathias's Sir Gelli – by contrast – always kept faith with his country and his cause alike, never dazzled by baubles, fine clothes or by London, which is after all only 'a place / To pass through for a Welshman, always was': London in this poem is the port from which Sir Gelli reached Cadiz on the Queen's business – he was knighted for his part in the capture of that city – as well as the place he meets his come-uppance. The poem showcases much picturesque detail about life and language in sixteenth-century Britain; and it champions a more tolerant vision of the complex, necessary compromises of Welsh history than the extreme and simplified picture advocated by Thomas.

Mathias and Thomas shared one further Radnorshire topic, this last overlap an accident. Between 1955 and 1957 Mathias composed 'Cascob', about a place he had visited one summer holiday afternoon. It runs:

Just here's the middle of a silence that
Has already sung the centuries like a gnat:
The valley's middle too, by the hill sound
Topping the trees. Perhaps the full circle, for the bound
Of the churchyard circles and the black yews
Are markers. Each on the circuit ropes and scres
Giddily, wind having caught it widdershins
At the clock's three. No true arrest. For two pins
I'd leave in a hurry, were it not absurd ...

Blank wall facing west, belfry of weather-board
Raised on a druid's mound, none of it
Reassuring. Within, a brass of familiars, habit
Of clergy, pater, pater, pater, noster, noster, noster
Three times for Saturn. O save our sister
Elizabeth Lloyd from spirits, amen. Behind
My back is a thin medieval tongue, the wind
Carrying it woodward, tang and tone.
Service at three. Who is it coming? Afternoon, afternoon.

The thin hymn wavers to the circuit hedge.
 The yews grimace at my ear, there, at the edge
 Of being. Sister, sister, night follows day
 Out of these bounds, loping beyond the yews, away
 Giddily over wall and number and ken.
 Quiet these centuries. Who is it going now? Amen, amen.⁴

It was the difficulties of this ‘strange’ poem that led Mathias’s best critic Sam Adams, to edit and explicate his collected poetry, with endnotes to gloss difficult allusions. Adams drove up the two and a half mile single track road hidden in an eastern fold of the Radnor Forest to Cascob some thirty years ago, noting that the place was not even mentioned on certain maps, though it appears in the Domesday Book. He was in pursuit of the writer TJ Llewelyn Prichard (1790–1862), who collected and published tales and adventures of the so-called Welsh Robin Hood Twm Shon Catti and on this quest he knocked on my front door.⁵

Prichard had stayed at the old rectory – to which I re-directed Adams – at various times during the second quarter of the nineteenth-century, finding at the rectory there, home of his loyal friend, the Revd William Jenkins Rees, rest and succour, and access to a library to assist his own historical studies. Rees was rector of Cascob for some fifty years and notable among the *Hen bersoniaid llengar*, that group of Church of England clergymen who fostered Welsh culture in the first half of the nineteenth-century, often in the face of apathy or opposition from the bishops of the Established Church. Jenkins’s rectory must have featured as a kind of Welsh Abbotsford. Adams found the house – now a farmhouse – a rather imposing, if altered, whitewashed building in the midst of its fields.

The church drew him back. Here Adams quickly found the memorial tablet to the Revd William Jenkins Rees, ‘Priest, Author, Antiquary, Litterateur’, whose grave he had sought outside in vain. As though in preparation for visitors, a few sheep had been turned loose in the graveyard to trim the long grass but, while leaving ample droppings, had hardly begun to get to grips with the task. On a dank day with scudding clouds, he thought it an eerie place, or perhaps recollection of Mathias’s poem made it seem so.

Mathias misses the fact that the north side of the church is virtually unbroken wall since it was the traditional side of the devil; as also the related fact that parishioners huddled to be buried exclusively on the sheltered south side. Mathias neglects the myth that the last Welsh dragon is said to be sleeping in the Radnor Forest and that if any of the five churches on the edge of the Forest dedicated to the Archangel Michael – of which Cascob

is one – should fall, it is said that the dragon will escape and terrorise the neighbourhood once more.

Yet the tension between pagan and Christian absorbs the poet. Apart from the objectivity of ‘service at three’ – half a century later this is still the time of the monthly services – many uncanny aspects of the place are singled out by Mathias, starting with the fact that it is one of Wales’s circular churchyards. Then there are its black yews, one of which fell victim to the hurricane of October 1987, thought to be between one and two thousand years old. Both the yews and the circle keep out those timeless evil spirits that invade our world through corners, just as the gnostic abracadabra charm from 1700 hung inside the church protects one Elizabeth Lloyd from ‘hardness of heart’.

He mentions the five-foot-high ‘druid’s mound’ on which the church tower sits, though recent excavation declares this little more than the remains of an earlier collapsed tower. He even makes the wind blow ‘widdershins’: counter-clockwise and so counter-natural. Finally he singles out the abracadabra charm, a protective incantation dating from 1700 to preserve ‘Elizabeth Lloyd from all witchcraft and all evil ... the witches compassed her about [sic] but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them Amen ***** pater pater pater Noster Noster Noster’. Mathias believed that the father of Queen Elizabeth I’s sometime astrologer John Dee, possible model for Shakespeare’s white magician Prospero in *The Tempest*, and conjuror of the souls of the dead, was born two miles away at Nant-y-groes.

Elizabeth Clarke too noted Radnorshire folk who visited a so-called ‘conjuror’ in the early twentieth century, and there is plenty of evidence of the survival of magical belief in Radnorshire into the present age. And yet impressive as Mathias’s poem is, it evokes somewhere different from the place where I have slept better than anywhere else on the planet for more than a third of a century. Not to be a little superstitious, it has been said, is to lack generosity of spirit. Despite this, and living so close to this churchyard that I can watch its bluebells, wild daffodils and quiet gravestones from my bedroom window, I have never experienced it as threatening, only as a place of magical peace.

Perhaps Adams is right that the poem’s subjects are the terrors of mortality and the mixing of Christian present and pagan past. TJ Hughes too, argues that at Cascob more than anywhere else can still be felt the ‘deeply wooded world of dark-age Wales’.

By coincidence RS Thomas once again also published a poem – using a Welsh spelling – on the same place. It comes in a 1978 collection and is called ‘The Sign-post’:

Cascob, it said, 2
miles. But I never went
there; left it like an ornament
on the mind's shelf, covered

with the dust of
its summers: a place on a diet
of the echoes of stopped
bells and children's

voices; white the architecture
of its clouds, stationary
its sunlight. It was best
so. I need a museum

for storing the dream's
brittler particles in. Time
is a main road, eternity
the turning that we don't take.

Few Welsh hamlets can boast of having been celebrated by both RS Thomas and by Roland Mathias, the two greatest Welsh poets recently writing in English. Time and silence feature in both. That Cascob sits towards the end of a cul-de-sac, impassable, leading nowhere, strongly contributes to its sense of mysterious isolation, somehow pocketed in a space-time of its own, a magical kingdom. Both Thomas and Mathias associate Cascob with the idea of being lost in time; but while Mathias's is sinister, menacing and particular, Thomas's place is innocent, dream-like and general.

Both poets explore the idea of escape. Mathias wishes to leave Cascob behind, Thomas to get there; and Thomas makes a conceit of never having visited. His 'stopped bells' – the school closed in the 1940's – and 'stationary sunlight' symbolise that timeless world which, he teaches us, 'is the turning we don't take', a place of ambiguous longing. Cascob here is, in other words, another version of Abercuawg, a perfect place of lost delight, subject of an important essay of his, and never-never land of his imagination to which he aspired.

*

The glory of west Wales, Thomas wrote in his *Autobiographies*, is its changeable weather. It blows in off the Atlantic accompanied by rapidly

passing effects of light and shade that hold the attention and compel poetic awe. 'The Small Window' written in the 1960s, starts:

In Wales there are jewels
To gather, but with the eye
Only. A hill lights up
Suddenly: a field trembles
With colour and goes out
In its turn ...

That is marvellously accurate; recognisable in mid-Wales too. The poet goes on to take a side-swipe at the incomers who crowd and dirty the view with their breathing. This sequence is of a wonderfully-caught natural effect followed by nationalist sentiment and the reader will decide which part of the poem works best. Justifiable hatred can make for good art, but not often for great art, and Thomas's oeuvre also contains some malevolent attacks on neighbours and family.

He returned to this theme of miraculous momentary illumination in another short lyric written ten years later, called 'The Bright Field':

I have seen the sun break through
To illuminate a small field
For a while, and gone my way
And forgotten it

In 'The Bright Field' en-lightenment (literally) is related not to anglophobia, but rather to Moses's burning bush, a transiently bright taken-for-granted beauty that could connect us to eternity itself. This time the aesthetic leads on not towards the political, but the spiritual.

Byron Rogers's prize-winning biography, *The Man Who Went Into the West* skilfully presents a sacred monster who first inspires in us incredulity and laughter, but gradually later compassion and awe. Here is both an unmistakably great poet and a pitifully frail human being. He starts by impersonating an upper-class Englishman, and ends play-acting a member of the Welsh *gwerin* who has to be rebuked by the then Plaid Cymru leader Dafydd Elis Thomas for echoing the French extremist right-wing leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. This followed Thomas's proclamation that the death of an English incomer in an arson-attack on his holiday cottage would scarcely weigh in comparison with the jeopardy threatening Welsh culture.

Stephen Spender once pointed out how naturally hatred and nostalgia cohabit, a truth Thomas demonstrates. He 'hates' the English, he hates the English-speaking Welsh for abandoning their language, and despises many

of the Welsh-speaking Welsh for not defending it. He hates the industrial revolution, the twentieth century and the modern age in general. Like Kilvert he hates London, where he swears he can smell evil on stepping off the train. He is scarcely a lover of his fellow man, preferring bird-watching, and has a tortured relationship to his God. He conjures Welshness into existence through the power of *hiraeth*, his passionate sense of loss and the intensity of his love and longing.

Poets are allowed to be contradictory: Thomas fits the bill. He declined to teach his only child Welsh or even speak it with him, sending him off to a posh English boarding-school instead. Although sometimes capable of acts of quiet kindness, he is remembered – to put it mildly – as an eccentric minister of the Church, hiding behind hedgerows to avoid his flock and answering one parishioner's 'What a lovely day' with the riposte 'We can see that', vaulting a churchyard wall to avoid having to talk to mourners at a funeral he had just conducted, bursting out laughing and unable to continue reading in church when the week's notices sunk to the banality of a Mothers' Union meeting. He became notorious for his offensiveness to callers at the door as on the phone. His son Gwydion believes that they had few or no friends; no-one stayed the night, and few visitors were not 'rubbished' afterwards. Gwydion cannot be a wholly dispassionate witness. But few dispute that Thomas was distant even with friends, impatient and disdainful of activities other than Art and its accomplishment.

Gwydion remembered Manafon, where the family was happiest, as a place where his stoical and admirable mother Elsi, a richly gifted painter, made purses out of moleskins, and rabbitskin berets and waistcoats he had to wear. Elsi also painted dead animals and the house featured an assortment of owls, moles, rabbits, and squirrels gathered from road-kill and awaiting resurrection in her paintings, strung up in the orchard to see off the worst of the rotting and allow the skulls and skeletons to be revealed. Elsi used to draw them, stuffing them with cotton wool and formaldehyde, and hope for the best.

His parents' final years at their tiny cottage Sarn on the Llŷn peninsula after 1978 were yet stranger. Elsi, finding the central heating radiators un-aesthetic, had them ripped out; she recorded in her diary a temperature indoors even with the fire lit of only one degree above zero. Water oozed down the walls and Gwydion saw mould growing on his father's shoulders. Elsi painted with her feet in a cardboard box containing a two-bar Belling Electric stove, burning herself severely on several occasions. She would sometimes climb a six-foot ladder into the loft, where you could not stand up, the roof being only about four and a half feet high, and work and sleep up there, the mice scurrying around her.

Ruth Bidgood points out in *Parishes of the Buzzard* how deeply English such Rousseauism is: no Welsh person in their senses embraces domestic hardships they have spent bitter centuries trying to escape. It is always incomers who find living at subsistence level without mod cons attractive, and read into such austerity a spiritual significance. The picture emerges of an austere aesthetic-bohemian couple heroically unfitted for modern life. And yet it may well be exactly this heroic estrangement that helps make of him a great international, as well as so great a Welsh poet. Thomas – the lonely priest tormented by unbelief – is a figure out of Ingmar Bergman.

Although Thomas in his introduction to his selection of George Herbert's poetry for Faber championed Anglicanism and was hostile to dissenting 'misery and mortification', Thomas himself abounds in the sense of sin without great hope of redemption. His invention of Iago Prytherch, the peasant hill farmer living in solitude who haunts many poems, is an alter ego. Real hill-farmers with their quick wit, wry humour, and careful love of gossip are a different species from Thomas's desolate personification. He finds redemption chiefly within poetry, which offered the only miraculous cure for despair that can move and speak to us all, regardless of denomination or nationality.

In 1968 Thomas wrote the text for *The Mountains*, a limited edition illustrated book now out of print and changing hands for over £500. A passage from which this present essay draws its title and epigraph runs:

But the hill remains, keeping its perennial freshness. Life with its money and its honours, its pride and its power, seems of little worth if we are to lose this. This it is that haunts men, that epitomises Wales in a phrase – the bright hill under the black cloud.

*I'r estron, os myn,
Boed hawl tros y glyn;
I ninnau boed byw
Yn ymyl gwisg Duw
Yn y grug, yn y grug*

I don't know who wrote those words, but they translate like this:

Let the stranger, if he will,
Have his way with the glen;
But give us to live
At the bright hem of God
In the heather, in the heather.

We have met these lines before. Thomas himself translated them – freely – from the Welsh and he quotes them three times over forty years: from ‘A Welsh View of the Scottish Renaissance’ and ‘The Depopulation of the Welsh Hill Country’ to *The Mountains*. The lines ‘Give us to live / At the Bright hem of God / In the heather, in the heather’ evidently spoke intimately to him.⁶ His translation is beautiful, moving and memorable. Here are lines that wring an aesthetic and moral victory out of historical defeat. The English may have won the prosperous valleys and glens: but the Welsh secretly took the real prize – to live in the uplands, on the bright hill under the black cloud, their proximity to God and to heaven alike guaranteed henceforth by nothing less than the landscape itself.

The passage continues:

It is to this that men return, in thought, in reality, seeking for something unnameable, a lost Eden, a lost childhood; for fulfilment, for escape, for refuge, for conquest of themselves, for peace, for adventure. The list is endless. The hills have all this to give and more: to the broken mind, peace; to the artist, colour; to the poet, music; to the brave man, consciousness that he has looked into the eyes of death and has not flinched, hanging upon the rock face with the wind clawing at him.

It is in the Welsh hills that RS Thomas, like Ruth Bidgood and Roland Mathias, finds the solitude, time and silence that provide the soil from which inwardness grows; inwardness that encourages the writing of poetry. England may have won many of the battles, but in some sense, if Thomas is right, Wales secretly won the war.

NOTES

1. Opening poem in the limited edition *Six Poems* (1997).
2. Roland Mathias, ‘Philosophy and religion in the poetry of RS Thomas’, *Poetry Wales*, 7/4 (spring, 1972), pp. 27–45.
3. Written 1966–8.
4. Sam Adams (ed.), *The Collected Poems of Roland Mathias* (2002), p. 175.
5. Adams writes of this visit and of his growing involvement with Mathias in *Moment of Earth, Poems and Essays in Honour of Jeremy Hooker*, edited by Christopher Meredith (2007). Thomas Jeffery Llewelyn Prichard, 1790–1862, is the subject of a monograph by Sam Adams in the Writers of Wales series (2000).

6. Dr Jason Walford Davies writes that ‘Thomas probably came across the stanza in John Cowper Powys’s article “Welsh Aborigines” in the influential periodical *Wales* in 1943 when he was at Manafon, Montgomeryshire [an article subsequently collected in *Obstinate Cymric* (1947)]. But it is equally possible that Thomas heard it as part of the oral tradition at Manafon.... The critic M Wynn Thomas, interestingly, has suggested that Thomas echoes the stanza in his poem “A Welshman in St James’ Park”’: letter to the author.

TERRY JONES'S GREAT MAP MYSTERY

Terry Jones and Alan Ereira

IN SPRING 2008 BBC 2 WALES broadcast 'Terry Jones's Great Map Mystery'. Written, directed, and produced by Alan Ereira, this comprised four programmes, each concerned with one of the four first ever road maps of Britain, made by John Ogilby during the reign of Charles II, and each charting a different route through Wales. The Radnorshire Society is grateful for Mr Ereira's permission for us to publish the transcript of the first programme, concerning what the county historian WH Howse termed 'the Great Road to Aberystwyth', through Radnorshire.

Anyone who has walked the very narrow, deeply sunken track up the Cwm lane in Cascob must have wondered how this was ever designated a 'Great Road'. The programme offered an interesting and curious hypothesis. Ogilby's maps, whose funding vastly exceeded Ogilby's resources, had a political agenda. Charles II had signed a secret Treaty of Dover with the autocratic Louis XIV, a treaty exposed by Parliament in 1672 as implying a plan for an autocratic and a Catholic Britain. Parliament as a result imposed the Test Act on all UK citizens to undercut any untoward pro-Catholic tolerance, and penalise Catholic worship. 'Terry Jones's Great Map Mystery', based on original research,¹ concerned the fact that Ogilby's maps had an underlying political agenda sympathetic to the King.

Any member interested in viewing all four episodes to follow the whole story can approach the executive producer, Simon Mansfield at <simon@modern-tv.co.uk>. So far as the first programme on the road through Radnorshire is concerned, the following transcript suggests that the Great Road – at most then a track for pack-horses – was a 'map of the future, not the past': it proposed a route by which silver mined on the coast near Aberystwyth might later be transported to London to help finance Charles II's schemes.

THE ROAD TO ABERYSTWYTH

TERRY JONES: I'm about to embark on a very odd journey. I'll often be travelling on roads that don't exist in a world that is quite frankly baffling.

VOICE OVER: I'm following the world's first road atlas, John Ogilby's *Britannia* of 1675.

TERRY JONES: Ogilby's *Britannia* is a set of strip maps tracing the roads of seventeenth-century England and Wales, and I've been fascinated by it ever since I bought a facsimile over thirty years ago. And I've often wondered what it would be like to travel those roads, particularly here in the land of my birth. So I've set out to trace four of the roads in Wales to see what's happened to them.

VOICE OVER: I want to know where and what they were then and what they are now, if they exist at all! It's the first road atlas of the British Isles. Well, of anywhere really. But it turns out to be a bigger puzzle than I'd expected. Because this isn't the innocent map it's been taken for. In it is hidden the blue-print for a revolution – but that only emerged when I actually made the journeys.

PROFESSOR RONALD HUTTON: I'll have to hand it to this particular programme. You actually seem to have discovered something new about history. The first road atlas of Britain has dirty political fingerprints all over it.

VOICE OVER: The mystery begins on page one. Medieval pilgrims going to Jerusalem could consult a strip map showing where they could stop each night. But that measured the roads in days – *journées* in French. Ogilby's roads are measured in miles, and there's a hundred of them. Each strip runs from bottom to top of the page (Fig 1); uphill climbs are shown with a peak at the top, descents with a peak at the bottom. And they show churches, houses – even gibbets! Ogilby's *Britannia* was the definitive road-map of England and Wales in 1675. So why does it start with a road to Aberystwyth? Jerusalem had been thought of as the centre of the world. Aberystwyth wasn't. Why on earth would the sophisticated gentlemen of Pepys' London be bothered with charting these roads to nowhere? Because Aberystwyth was exactly that: nowhere. Before Ogilby's map people found their way around using itineraries – lists of places on the road from A to B. There wasn't an itinerary to Aberystwyth. Was there even a road? Aberdovey, where the customs house was, yes, but not Aberystwyth. There were less than a hundred houses there.

JOHN DAVIES: Well I'm intrigued that the first map he's got is London to Aberystwyth. I would like to think that's because everybody in London had a huge itch to come to Aberystwyth. I'm not entirely convinced of that, certainly not the Aberystwyth of the late seventeenth century when it was a very tiny place. The castle was highly ruinous because it had been blown up after the Civil War, so you're talking about a very very small port in the middle of Cardigan Bay not the most important port in Cardigan Bay in fact. So the desire to reach here at all costs would I think strike many people as a little peculiar.

TERRY: But there was a road to Aberystwyth?

JOHN DAVIES: There was a track to Aberystwyth certainly (laughs).

VOICE OVER: So the Great Road atlas begins by sending me up some laughable track that no-one used. That doesn't make any sense, does it? Ogilby's road enters Wales in the small town of Presteigne (Fig 2).

TERRY: Well, at least it seems like a small town now. But it wouldn't have done in the seventeenth century. Here's how Ogilby himself describes it:

VOICE OVER: A large and well-built Town where the Assizes are kept for the County of Radnor, has a well-frequented Market on Saturdays, especially for barley, which is here Moulded in good quantity, with several good inns for Entertainment.

TERRY: Right, from Presteigne here, the road crosses a little rill past the little village of Discoed over another rill to the village of Cascob (Fig 3) up a hill to the forest of Bleddfa. Let's see what happens. Over the rill, just as Ogilby had it. The sign of Cascob. Ah, here's the hill. It all does fit in with the map as Ogilby drew it. I don't know why I'm surprised, but I kind of am.

VOICE OVER: The whole point of the map was to be scientifically accurate. Ogilby sent surveyors out to measure every inch of some 26,000 miles of roads.

TERRY: So how did they go about measuring the roads? They had a thing called a waywiser. This was a contraption with a wheel about three feet in diameter and it was connected to a dial, a mechanism with hands that could measure miles up to ten. And then you had to start again. And you pushed it along with a handle. Well, rather like one of those things over there. Hang on a second! Hey!

VOICE OVER: That's Philip Burden, who actually owns one.

TERRY: Ah, Philip, what age is this waywiser?

PHILIP BURDEN: This example dates from about 1800.

TERRY: It's still working?

PHILIP: Yes, it's still working. The mechanism and everything still works fine.

TERRY: Do you reckon it's still accurate?

PHILIP: No reason why the accuracy should be wrong. In the early days their big problem would have been the dirt on the roads and not lifting it off the road

TERRY: Oh yes, you've got to keep it clean. In other words, I guess you get a bit of mud on that ...

PHILIP: Exactly.

VOICE OVER: So some poor chap had the job of scraping dirt off the wheel as it rolled along for perfect accuracy. And yet I'm losing confidence.

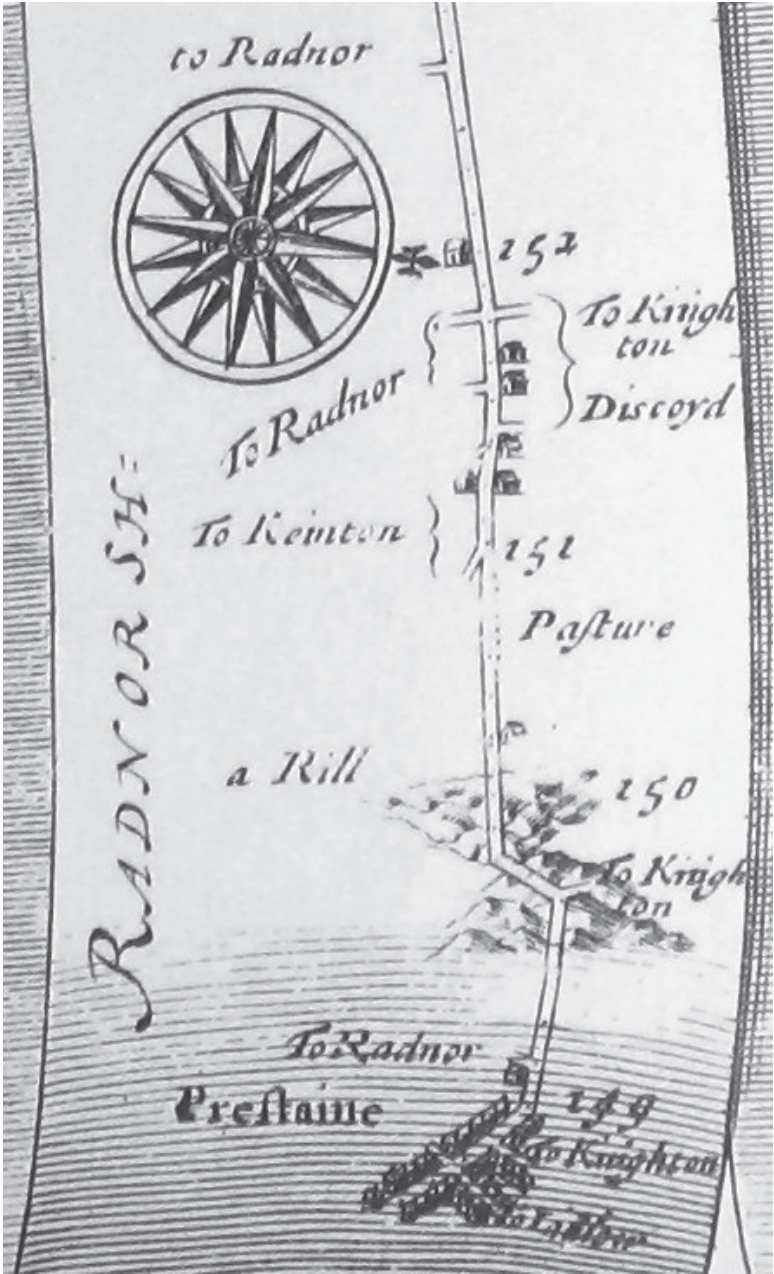


Fig. 2. Presteigne to Discoed (Ogilby's *Britannia* 1675).

This road simply seems too small to be a major highway.

TERRY: Peter, you're a local resident here. I'm having a bit of trouble following Ogilby's road here. I just want to be quite certain. Now the road is so small here I can't really believe that this is actually the main road from London to ...

PETER J CONRADI: Well, it was the Great Road to Aberystwyth and it gets narrower and steeper and it's on a sunken track which it's hard to imagine anyone passing. But it gets worse. You take a right at the blasted oak. And good luck.

TERRY: Thanks a lot.

PETER: That's all right.

VOICE OVER: There's the blasted oak. What did that sign say?

TERRY: Well this is getting extremely, er ... narrow ...

VOICE OVER: There's the forest's right ahead, and it just suddenly gives out.

Well I guess we open the gate and here we go into the forest. This can't be right. There's no road in the right direction.

TERRY: I don't know where I am.

VOICE OVER: Whatever happened to the magic of television?

ALAN: OK we didn't have time to recce this bit. We're supposed to be going across there. Er ... We're up in here ...

TERRY: In Cascob.

ALAN: Yeah. We're on here. And you said that you knew we were there.

TERRY: We need some support, I think.

ALAN: Yeah. Um, that's a wrap! (Laughter).

VOICE OVER: So I've come to see Dave Evans, at an outfit that specialises in helping television presenters cope with maps.

TERRY: Well, we've got an original copy of the 1675 printing here.

DAVE EVANS: Nice handy pocket map.

TERRY: Yeah. Wouldn't like to have to carry this around. And I mean, what we've found is, that he's pretty accurate a lot of the time but then you just get absolutely lost. I mean, like we set out from Presteigne and went up here, Cascob here, but here, about the forest of Bleddfa, we just couldn't see what he was talking about. You know, his road seems to go straight on. But there wasn't anything there.

VOICE OVER: Dave can read an Ordinance Survey map like a tracker following a beast.

DAVE: What we do have, we've got fairly accurate distances, and we've got compass rose points. If we look at the map then we start at the church in Presteigne. Now we know that we found Discoed ...

TERRY: Oh, there's Discoed.

DAVE: So, and we know that Presteigne to Discoed was ...

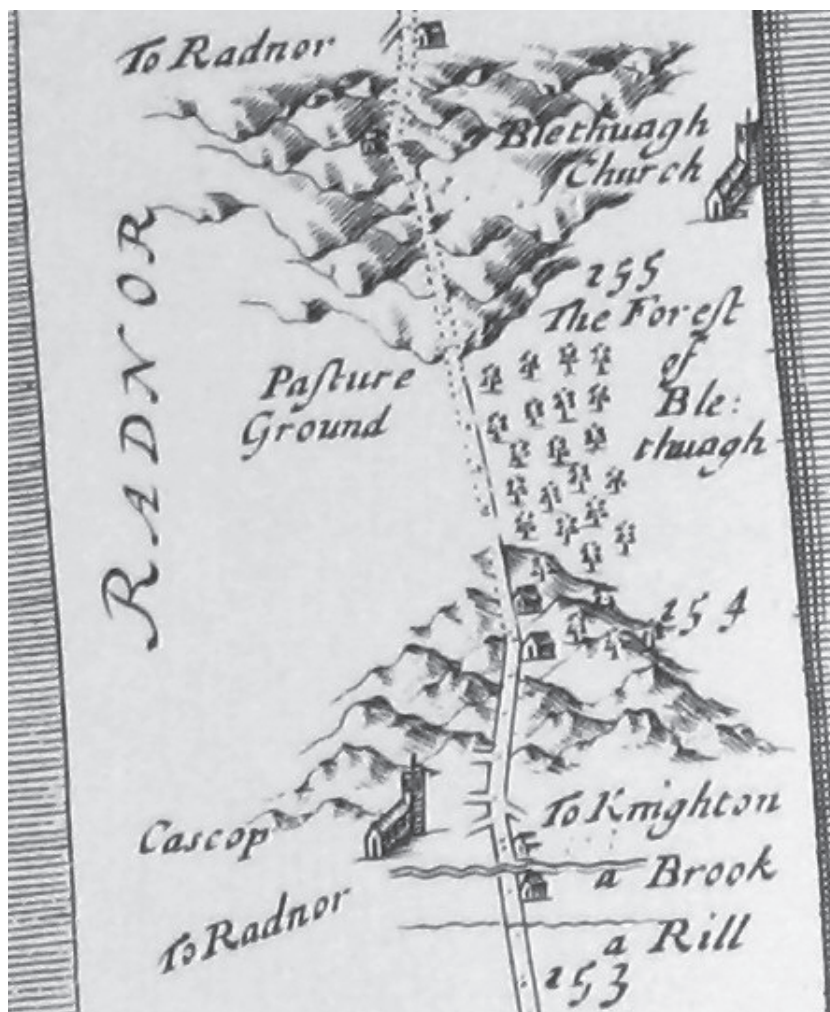


Fig. 3. Cascob to Bleddfa (Ogilby's Britannia 1675).

TERRY: Two miles, three furlongs.

DAVE: So we need to take two and a half miles to get there. So if we start to plot the route along this road here we will get to Discoed by staying on this road at 2.4 miles

TERRY: Oh right. So it's not too far out.

DAVE: So it's not too bad at all

TERRY: And then we've got another two miles three furlongs to Cascob.

DAVE: OK, two miles, just over. As the crow flies it's just over two and a half miles so he probably took a fairly decent route. Now this road follows the valley so it's probably a fair assumption that they would have followed the valley. From Cascob here he ascends a hill.

TERRY: He ascends a hill, and then you get on to pasture ground on the left and the forest of Bleddfa on the right.

DAVE: OK, and this is where you got lost.

TERRY: This is the forest. Yes.

DAVE: These are forestry commission roads. They're very straight, they circle the outside of the woods very well and they're fairly modern roads. However what you do have is a very obvious road coming up through the middle, along ...

TERRY: The road here.

DAVE: Exactly, along the ridge ...

TERRY: Yes.

DAVE: Follows the edge of the forest footpath and then drops all the way down ...

TERRY: Ah, I see, yes, that would have been the ...

DAVE: I think it's a fair assumption to say that's probably going to be the route he took.

DAVE: We've completed it, fifty-five and a half miles from Presteigne to Aberystwyth. It's been plotted. The *pièce de résistance* which will really make your life easy is a GPS receiver.

TERRY: You mean I don't have to carry ...

DAVE: You don't have to carry these things round with you.

TERRY: Or the laptop. So this is the map put onto a GPS ...

DAVE: So what we've done – we've done more than that – we've transferred the map onto a GPS. We've also transferred your route onto that.

TERRY: This is Ogilby's route?

DAVE: Ogilby's route, onto a 1:50,000 scale map, onto a hand-held device. So when you're actually out following the route you'll have real-time positioning on the screen with the route to follow. So as long as you keep the red dot, which is you, on the blue line which is Ogilby's road, touch wood, you'll be able to stick on it.

TERRY: Gosh. Well, no excuses.

DAVE: No, accurate to about five metres. So really no excuses.

TERRY: Now, that's more like it. So that's where we went wrong before, so I think we go through there. Got it. Well, Aberystwyth, here I come! All I've got to do is keep the red dot on the blue line. Should be easy. No, no. So that's that. OK.

VOICE OVER: John Ogilby says that this road is 'almost everywhere re-

plenished with good Towns, convenient Entertainment, and delightful Prospects.' I'm beginning to wonder just what John Ogilby's credentials for map-making were. This portrait of him was drawn during the rule of Oliver Cromwell, when Ogilby was in his early fifties.

TERRY: But Ogilby certainly wasn't a map-maker at that time. He was actually earning a living by translating classical Latin poetry into English. And he was actually becoming quite famous for it. But that was his fourth career.

VOICE OVER: He was, above all, a product of his own salesmanship – and I wonder if he was less Mr Reliable, more Wizard of Oz. I think I need to check out this Great Road with a bit of local knowledge. Ellis Lewis farms here.

TERRY: Where is the actual road?

ELLIS LEWIS: Down between the bushes there, down through there and through the ford through the river and up around to the farm.

TERRY: Right, we need to go down into there do we?

ELLIS: Yes.

TERRY: So we're still on the yellow-blue line yeah?

ELLIS: Yes.

TERRY: This was the Great Road?

ELLIS: Yes, it used to be a ford here.

TERRY: Yes, it's a bit squashy under foot actually.

ELLIS: It's a bit wet down here.

TERRY: Lets not go, OK.

ELLIS: Very wet down the dip.

TERRY: When you were a boy could you actually see the road, the old road?

ELLIS: Yes, well the road has been put there – late fifties it was put there.

TERRY: Before that you were using the old road?

ELLIS: Yes, we were using the old road and going through the river with ...

TERRY: And what was it made of, what kind of surface was it?

ELLIS: It was stone, old stone road and it used to go up and round up to the top but a lot of the neighbours now have filled them in.

VOICE OVER: So there was some kind of road, but I'm still not sure how far to trust Ogilby.

TERRY: Ogilby had no qualifications. Instead of going to school as a boy he'd had to earn money to get his father out of debtor's prison.

VOICE OVER: But he didn't save up the pennies he made. He spent them on a lottery ticket and – Bingo! Father was out of prison and there was money left over. He had luck, looks and charm – and he didn't fancy school. So little Ogilby invested the cash in being apprenticed as a dancer. And then danced for King James' beloved, the Duke of Buckingham.

TERRY: The Duke of Buckingham liked pretty young men. In fact he was pretty gorgeous himself and James I was particularly fond of him. In fact the King said the Duke had the finest legs in the kingdom.

VOICE OVER: The Duke gave pretty dancing John the job of leaping about in court masques to delight King James.

TERRY: His dancing career reached its grand finale when young John leapt too high, too far and broke a leg. That was the end of career number one. And it looks like it's the end of our road! Ellis said that the road further up has all been ploughed up! So looks like it's back to the car, chaps.

VOICE OVER: So I bypassed the problem and picked up the Great Road a couple of miles further on, where it has managed not to vanish entirely. The so-called Great Road came to an end at the market town of Rhaeadr (Fig 4). But Ogilby's road carries on.

TERRY: Once we get out of Rhaeadr the road could get quite interesting. According to the text that goes with Ogilby's map ...

VOICE OVER: Having left the Enclosed Way a mile on this side Riadergowy, your road continues altogether open, as well as Mountainous and Boggie even to Aberistwith.

TERRY: Oh good, I can't wait!

VOICE OVER: So he's pretty much given up pretending this is a road at all. Not that he ever came here. Ogilby was no explorer. But that never stopped him producing maps. He'd never been to America or China, but he'd already published atlases of both. Ogilby was a chameleon. He had been a dancing teacher and a theatrical impresario – until the Puritans shut down the theatres. So then he learned Latin and Greek and started translating classical poetry.

TERRY: And what's more people seem to have thought he was pretty hot stuff. In fact when the monarchy was restored, Ogilby was asked to present the poetical part of Charles II's coronation.

VOICE OVER: At the coronation, Ogilby must have found himself surrounded by rich people he could sell things to. Perhaps that's why he suddenly launched himself as the publisher of luxury books.

TERRY: Career number five was a tremendous success. The King liked his beautiful books, and of course what the King liked, the Court liked, even Samuel Pepys became a collector. It was all going swimmingly. Until one night in 1666 London went up in smoke and along with it Ogilby's entire stock. I mean, just picture yourself: you're sixty-six, you've just seem everything you possessed burned to ashes. Do you give up and settle for life as a pauper? Not if you're John Ogilby!

VOICE OVER: Obviously London would have to be rebuilt. And before that

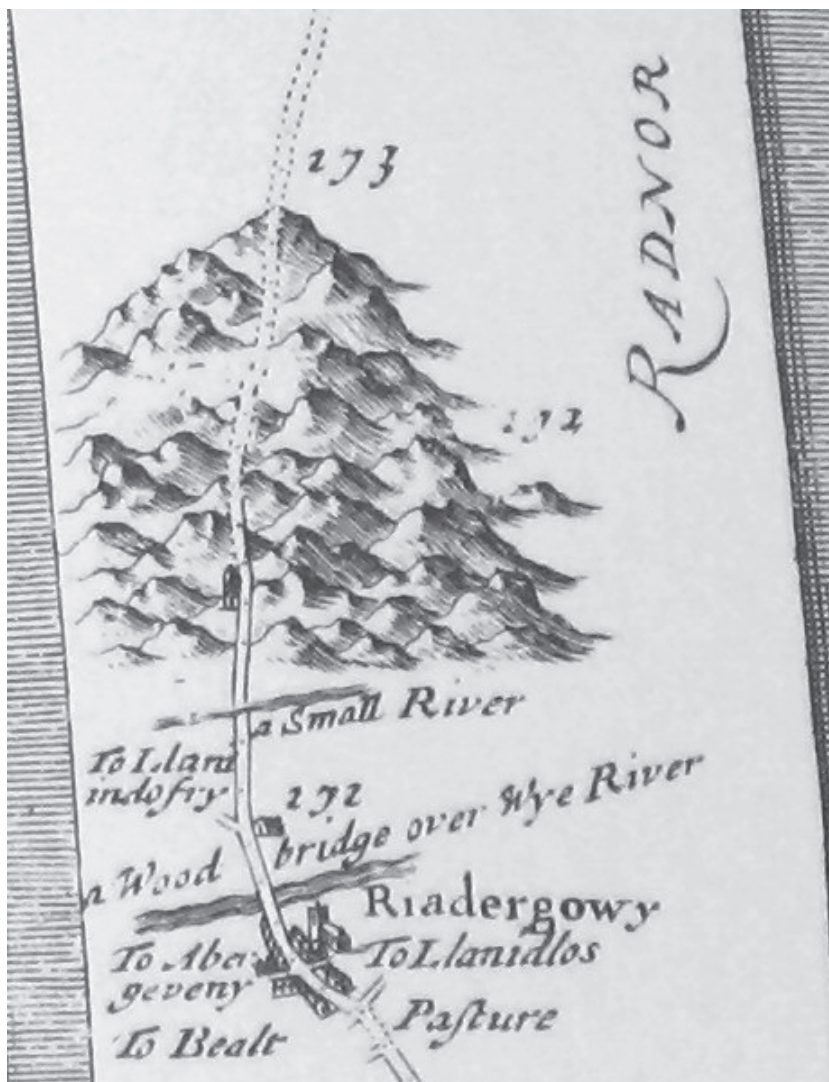


Fig. 4. Rhacadr (Ogilby's *Britannia* 1675).

could start, the ruins all had to be surveyed, measured, and mapped. TERRY: Which is how that map came to be drawn. It was the work of a team of surveyors commissioned by the Crown. And one of them was an elderly, bankrupt gent. with a pronounced limp. John Ogilby had embarked on his sixth career – Surveyor of London – and soon he was

to be surveyor of the world, for he was appointed Cosmographer Royal, delineator of the entire cosmos – including this bit. Where, as his map explains, ‘the road becomes a kind of morass’.

VOICE OVER: Who ever thought that this was a road? This was a track for cattle, geese and sheep. In fact the only people who travelled this way to London were cattle drovers, the Welsh cowboys who brought the beef of which England was so proud. I arranged to meet Professor Richard Moore-Colyer, an authority on Welsh drove roads.

TERRY: How are you?

PROFESSOR RICHARD MOORE-COLYER: Hello Terry, well cold, miserable, nevertheless, in reasonable order.

TERRY: Well, according to the GPS we're still on Ogilby's road here, getting nearer to Aberystwyth, and this is the bit on the map where he says ‘pasture or moorish ground on either side’. But, what must it have been like before it was tarmacked?

RICHARD: Well I mean if you look at the landscape around it was very much as it would have been in Ogilby's time, and cattle and other animals going along this road would have spread right across.

VOICE OVER: They went to England to get fat.

RICHARD: The quality of the pasture and the availability of the nutrition was inadequate really to fatten them up whereas of course down in England you had these wonderful fattening pastures which were ideal for finishing both cattle and sheep. They were one of the few groups of people, if you like, that actually travelled. I mean they'd travel possibly with three or four hundred cattle and there'd be half a dozen or more men with these cattle.

VOICE OVER: Ogilby's huge expensive atlas could hardly have been aimed at Welsh drovers. Besides, according to Erwyd Howell, a shepherd near Aberystwyth, even the drovers' dogs knew the road better than any map-maker.

ERWYD HOWELL: These dogs have obviously been on that journey many times and some of the drovers have been bigger wags than others ...

TERRY: Yes.

ERWYD: Sold their dogs, maybe to farmers ...

TERRY: Yes.

ERWYD: In England somewhere ...

TERRY: Yes.

ERWYD: And of course after a couple of days these dogs found a way out and got loose and made their way home. So it was like selling a homing pigeon, wasn't it?

VOICE OVER: And just what kind of dog could walk from London to Wales

by itself without even buying a map? Apparently it was a Cardigan corgi. A corgi? Yes, it turns out those little short legs were ideal for these journeys.

ERWYD: They were called heelers because they nipped the heels of cattle and after a nip at the heel the follow on was a kick.

TERRY: So they're specially bred to avoid the kick.

ERWYD: Avoid the kick yes because they were probably starting with dogs like these and found that when they got to London they had less of them.

VOICE OVER: So who did want this map? Just here at Cwmystwyth, Ogilby's map marks some lead mines. Significant? The map should read 'Exposed, barren'. So we shivered our way to the mines. And that's when I found out that these mines produced something slightly more interesting than lead. Silver.

RICHARD: Silver mined here was carried away to Aberystwyth castle where it was minted into coins which were used actually to fund Charles I's military activities during the Civil War.

VOICE OVER: So this road suddenly makes sense. Charles II and his friends would have wanted to know exactly where this is. Some of them visited mines and drew pictures.

RICHARD: With these mines being what they were with the silver potential this would be a road that eventually would become important, in their view. Of course in Ogilby's time it would have been just a rough track, and travelling along that road would have been extremely arduous indeed.

TERRY: It would have been pretty dangerous.

RICHARD: It would have been dangerous certainly for wheeled transport which in fact at that time wheeled transport on this road would have been pretty well impossible.

TERRY: And now in a no expense spared re-creation of the scene the production has instructed me to demonstrate exactly how the ore was shifted from the mines of Cwmystwyth. Sweat! Thanks. In fact in this part of the world where there was no wheeled transport this was actually the only way of transporting heavy loads. More sweat please!

VOICE OVER: And this was the women's work. Men were underground, in thirty miles of tunnels.

RICHARD: One of the first things that a miner's wife did when she got married was to make a shroud, in the event of possible flooding and this sort of thing.

VOICE OVER: The men came up at night, and then things got bad.

RICHARD: There are plenty of examples in the legal records of rape, of assault, murder among mining communities and certainly they were not

places where you would wander late at night, put it that way.

TERRY: It sounds as though it was a pretty rough place with a pretty rough lot of people.

RICHARD: Yes. We have evidence of babies being born, for instance, to young girls who had been assaulted by miners and often a girl who found herself pregnant to a miner or indeed to anybody else would frequently go away, have this baby and without anybody else knowing would quietly put it down a mineshaft or indeed even in some cases throw it into the pigs so it would thereby disappear.

VOICE OVER: Today, this is rated as one of the most beautiful roads in Britain. Its grim past has been forgotten, and tourists come for the pleasure of being here. And so I finally arrive at Aberystwyth. Knowing now that the real traffic was in the opposite direction. And of course it wasn't what we'd call a road at all, just a drover's track. And I'm beginning to understand why this is the first road in the book. It's a clue to the book's real meaning. John Ogilby certainly made great claims for it. He said it aimed at 'Reviving and Propagating the great Soul of the World, Commerce and Correspondency ... establishing a Present Greatness, or laying Foundations of a Future Glory.'

TERRY: Well, that's what Ogilby's book of maps was supposed to do. And that's why the first map in it heads straight off for the remotest, most underdeveloped destination you could possibly find – Aberystwyth! – the Timbuktu of seventeenth-century Britain.

VOICE OVER: This isn't a map of anything real. It's a map of what might be. It's a map, as Ogilby and his friends saw it, of how Britannia's future was being imagined. In this book, cattle tracks, foot-paths, and pilgrim ways, were spun into real roads that just hadn't happened yet.

TERRY: And in doing that, it opens up the foundations of the world we're sitting in. At the heart of Ogilby's maps of the roads of Wales, is the idea of change. They're route-maps for the way we were to be taken out of his world and into our own.

JOHN DAVIES: I think Ogilby was looking forward to the twenty-first century with a useful AA atlas in his car showing the A44 from Chipping Campden to Aberystwyth. He knew it would be there eventually so he wanted to show that he knew what the future was about, yes.

VOICE OVER: But I'm going to discover that it's not just Ogilby that's leading me down these roads to the future, but a far more sinister character. The hidden master of a dark cabal.

NOTES

1. Mr Ereira wrote to the editors of the *Transactions* in September 2008: 'Modern historians have tended to dismiss the commitments in the Treaty [of Dover] as aberrant and not taken them seriously, so Parliament is generally regarded as having over-reacted [by passing the Test Act]. Little attention is now paid to the fact that Louis had committed himself to supplying an army as large as Charles' own, and that Thomas Clifford, a member of the Cabal, drew up a paper labelled "the scheme" specifying what needed to be done to ensure that the army was staffed with reliable men right down to the level of Deputy Lieutenant, and which fortifications needed to be created or strengthened to hold the country by force.'

"The scheme" has been largely ignored, and no modern historian has thought there was any real planning for an absolutist coup. They have treated the project as a weird little oddity. It does look, though, as if Ogilby's *Britannia* fits right in with "the scheme", which would perhaps explain why the Privy Council was called together to report on it on the very eve of the Dutch War (during the 'stop on the exchequer'), and why they advised not only that it should be approved, but that the business of raising the finance be supervised by the Crown. This was, of course, not dealt with in the programmes. So the Treaty seems to move into a much more central position, and the Test Act seems to be less paranoid than has been supposed. My own interest in Ogilby came from the fact that I have long been interested in the patterns that linked the scientific, philosophical and cosmological revolutions of the mid-seventeenth century with the political upheavals of the time. Ogilby looked like an interesting link in the chain.'

THE LATE-MEDIEVAL ROOD-SCREEN AND ROOD-LOFT AT LLANANNO

Richard Wheeler

THE CHURCH OF ST ANNO stands next to the river Ithon, a mile north-west of Llanbister in Radnorshire. The structure is a modest one. Indeed, from the outside it seems unlikely that it might contain anything ‘worth bicycling twelve miles against the wind to see’, in Betje-man’s memorable phrase. And yet, inside stands one of the great treasures of Welsh church craftsmanship: a late-medieval rood-screen and rood-loft, datable to c.1500, and trimmed with some of the finest carved decoration to survive anywhere in Wales.

Although Llananno’s screenwork might reasonably be described as substantially complete, two factors constrain our proper understanding of these fittings. Firstly, both rood-screen and rood-loft have been subject to a variety of material changes down the years. These have included alterations to their fabric and appearance; the loss of important associated fittings; and changes entailed in their re-erection in a new church. Secondly, the loss of roughly ninety percent of medieval screenwork from Welsh churches has robbed Llananno of context: the general context of an age when such fittings were universally employed in Welsh churches; and the specific context of a time when all of the relatives of the rood-screen and rood-loft at Llananno were extant.

My aims in this article are essentially twofold. The first is to detail the changes made to the screenwork at Llananno, in order to give an account both of what exists today and of the original appearance of the screenwork. The second is to rescue the fittings from their present isolation, by setting them within British, Welsh and finally local screen-building contexts.

INTRODUCTION

During the later Middle Ages (c.1300–1500) almost every church in England and Wales was furnished with a rood-screen. In the fifteenth century most churches were also furnished with a rood-loft. Both fittings take their name from the Crucifix – or Rood – customarily located over the rood-screen and rood-loft at the east end of the nave. The word ‘Rood’ is a corruption of the Saxon word for a cross (*rod*, *rode* etc.) but later came to be applied to the Crucifix: the Cross with the figure of Christ upon it.

The Rood was generally flanked by the figures of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist. However, other accompanying figures, including saints, angels, all twelve Apostles and even the two thieves, are also recorded.

The Rood (sometimes called the Great Rood in order to differentiate it from other Crucifixes found throughout the church) was located high up at the head of the nave, and could occupy one of several sites here. The earliest setting seems to have been upon an independent rood-beam, typically at or above the height of the apex of the chancel arch. With the arrival of rood-screens the figures usually remained on the rood-beam above the screen (the head-beam of the rood-screen generally being seen as not lofty enough for the purpose). Where a rood-loft surmounted the rood-screen, the figures usually occupied one of the two upper beams of the loft – most frequently the one to the west. This latter was also known as the rood-beam or candle-beam. Sometimes, however, the figures occupied the easternmost beam, as at Llanellieu in Breconshire. Roods were generally fixed in place by dowelling the foot of the Cross into a rectangular mortise hole in the upper face of the beam (though in the case of Llanellieu the dovetail foot of the Rood was slotted into the western face of the beam). Occasionally, the Rood was suspended from a beam spanning the church at or about the level of the wall-plate, as was the case at Cullompton in Devon.

Located beneath the Great Rood, the rood-screen formed a partition between the nave and the chancel beyond. In churches with a chancel arch the rood-screen usually stood under, or immediately before (i.e. to the west of) the arch. In through-churches with no chancel arch (which are abundant in Wales, and of which Llananno is an example) the rood-screen would extend across the full width of the nave from north wall to south. In larger churches with side aisles that extended east of the nave to flank the chancel (of which Old Radnor in Radnorshire is a rare Welsh example) the rood-screen would extend north and south of the nave to span the side aisles as well.

The rood-screen had several functions. Principally it formed a physical demarcation between spaces of lesser and greater holiness: a liturgical division stipulated by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The already potent sense of mystery associated with this fenced-off part of the church was further intensified at key points in the religious calendar, such as during Easter Week, when a shroud (or rood-cloth) would be draped over the Rood and its attendant figures; or during Lent, when a Lenten veil would be hung before the High Altar.

Rood-screens were also used as a showcase of devotional imagery. Typically (and this is especially the case in the churches of the South-West and

East Anglia) the wainscot panels of rood-screens would be painted with depictions of religious figures, often saints. More prosaically, the rood-screen formed a legal demarcation between the nave, which belonged to the parishioners, and the chancel, which belonged to the clergy.

The vast majority of surviving rood-screens date from the fifteenth century. By this period their usage was near-universal in English and Welsh churches. However, the survival of several fourteenth-century screens, together with a handful of thirteenth-century examples, confirms that the fitting was in use in earlier centuries.¹ Among the earliest surviving rood-screens are those at Thurcaston in Leicestershire (*c.*1220); Kirkstead St Leonard in Lincolnshire (of *c.*1230–40); and Stanton Harcourt in Oxfordshire (of *c.*1260). In Wales, no medieval screenwork exists that certainly pre-dates the fourteenth century.

Roughly 1,000 substantially complete medieval rood-screens survive in England and Wales. Prior to the Reformation the figure was nearer to 10,000. Patterns of survival vary, but most counties (with the exceptions of Northumberland and Cumbria) have something to show. Just two areas, however, could justifiably be described as rich in medieval screenwork: the counties of Devon and Somerset in the South-West, and those of Norfolk, Suffolk and Lincolnshire in East Anglia. In the South-West, Devon is pre-eminent, with almost 200 churches still containing medieval screenwork. Next door, Somerset has at least sixty. On the other side of the country, Norfolk has more than 200 churches containing medieval screenwork, while Suffolk and Lincolnshire have roughly 100 apiece. More than half of the medieval screenwork to have survived in England is thus concentrated in just five counties. For Wales, the south is at least quantitatively richer in medieval screenwork than the north, with Radnorshire having 12 churches containing substantially complete screens.

The rood-loft, although essentially a coeval development within churches, seems to have come into widespread usage later than the rood-screen. The rood-loft formed a gallery over the rood-screen, and was typically accessed via a mural stairwell (or 'rood-stairs') cut into the wall at the east end of the nave. Like the rood-screen it surmounted, the rood-loft has several constructional variants. The gallery might extend only to the west of the rood-screen (as at Betws Newydd and Llangeview in Monmouthshire), or it might extend both to the west and the east (as at Llanfilo in Breconshire and at Llananno).

In churches with relatively narrow naves the rood-loft's principal supporting beam to the west (the bressumer) could be simply embedded into the nave walls and left otherwise unsupported; or it might be prevented from sagging by a pair of posts (as at St Margarets in Herefordshire and

Bugeildy in Radnorshire). In order to prevent the bressumer from sagging in wider churches (including those with side aisles, such as Old Radnor) a series of sturdy cross braces was concealed behind the loft vaulting.

The primary function of the rood-loft has long been debated. It is worth saying first of all that, in contrast to the rood-screen, no authority ever prescribed the addition of the rood-loft to parish churches (and, for that matter, none ever sanctioned its removal): the fitting evolved, as did the later desire to rid churches of it. Of the principal uses put forward, two remain the most compelling. Firstly, that the gallery was used to access the rood-figures, for instance to veil the figures at key points in the religious calendar, or to light candles and lamps for them along the rood-beam (thus *candle-beam*). And secondly, that it was used as an elevated platform from which the sung word or the spoken word (in the form of the Gospel) might be delivered.

Documentary evidence exists for both of these uses, and for several others besides. The presence of a piscina in the wall fabric at rood-loft height (e.g. at Burghill, Little Hereford and Wigmore in Herefordshire) confirms that rood-lofts were also used to house altars subsidiary to the main altar (these were typically dedicated to the Holy Cross). Muniment chests were sometimes secured in rood-lofts, the door to the rood-stairs presumably being locked for the purpose. And, in what can be understood as later appropriations of an existing and convenient elevated space, organs were also occasionally located in rood-lofts; as were pews for higher status members of the congregation.

Of the twenty-three substantially complete medieval rood-lofts to survive in their original positions in Britain, twelve can be found in Wales.² The majority of surviving rood-lofts date from the second half of the fifteenth century or the first quarter of the sixteenth. Physical evidence for rood-lofts of an earlier date is sparse. However, the remains at Llanellieu in Breconshire belong to the fourteenth century, and those at Pixley in Herefordshire may even antedate these.

Although rood-lofts are rare today, they are at least more numerous than the Roods themselves. Prior to the Reformation this form of religious sculpture enjoyed near-universal currency in the churches of England and Wales. However, of the thousands of rood-figures that are believed to have graced churches during the Middle Ages, not one survives intact or *in situ* today. In fact, just four mutilated Christ figures (together with a single Mary figure) survive from 400 years of wood-carving: one Rood from each of the four centuries.³ Thus, from being among the most abundant of church fittings, rood-figures now count among the very rarest.

One other fitting associated with the rood-screen and rood-loft should

be described here: the screen-tympanum. This typically comprised a boarded or plastered partition which extended up from the easternmost parapet of the rood-loft, to fill in either the chancel archway above loft height in a divided church; or the space between the top of the loft and the nave ceiling in an undivided church. As well as resulting in the total compartmentalisation of nave and chancel it also gave a solid background (as opposed to the glare of the east window) against which the rood-figures might be viewed. The backdrop formed by the tympanum was often painted, either with a depiction of the Last Judgement and Resurrection (together referred to as 'The Doom', as, famously, at Wenham in Suffolk) or with a simpler form of painted decoration, such as the stencilled red and white roses found at Llanelieu in Breconshire.

THE CHURCH OF ST ANNO

Before examining Llananno's rood-screen and rood-loft in detail, it is first necessary to consider its church; for the story of a church's screenwork is inextricably linked to that of the church in which it stands. Indeed, to do so in the case of Llananno is doubly important, for the screenwork here has seen the inside of not one, but two churches.

Unlike the rood-screen and rood-loft standing within, the current church of St Anno is a creation of the nineteenth century, having been erected in *c.*1877⁴ to replace an earlier structure that had occupied the same site next to the Ithon. Descriptions of the old church survive in several forms: in a handful of brief written accounts penned by visitors in the nineteenth century; in a trio of annotated floor plans drawn up by the surveyor John Meredith between 1834 and 1837;⁵ and, most comprehensively, in an illustrated article and set of plans and elevations, all produced by the architect of the new church, David Walker, in the 1870s.

The early written accounts speak of, 'a small antique structure consisting of a nave, chancel, porch and low tower'⁶ and of 'a very small church ... Nave and chancel having no exterior distinction'.⁷ These descriptions are confirmed in particular by Walker's plans and elevations of the old church, drawn up in 1876 (Figs. 1a and 1b). These depict an archetypal, small, rural Welsh church; similar to St David's, Rhiwlen in Radnorshire, and possibly of a similar date (St David's seems to be of *c.*1300). The timber south porch at Llananno was later, and probably belonged to the fifteenth or sixteenth century. It was drawn by the Revd John Parker in 1828 and features a large trefoil opening over a four-centred arch. It is reminiscent of those found at Aberedw in Radnorshire and Crickadarn in Breconshire.

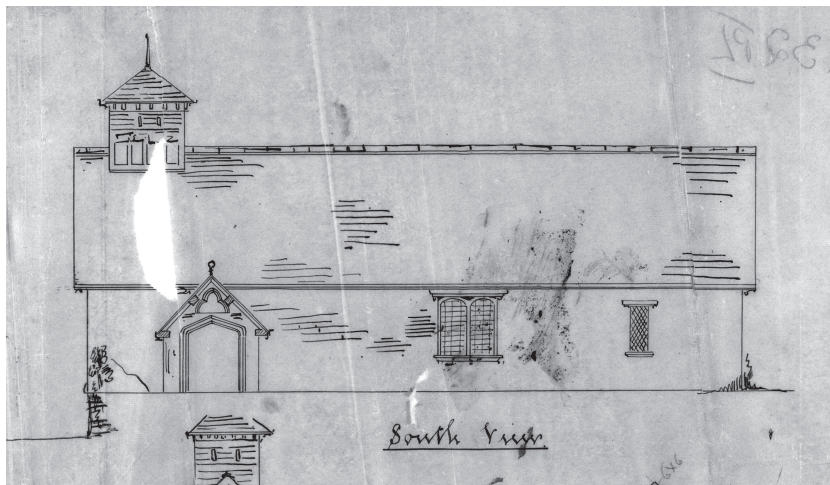


Fig. 1a. Walker's 1876 south view of the old church of St Anno.

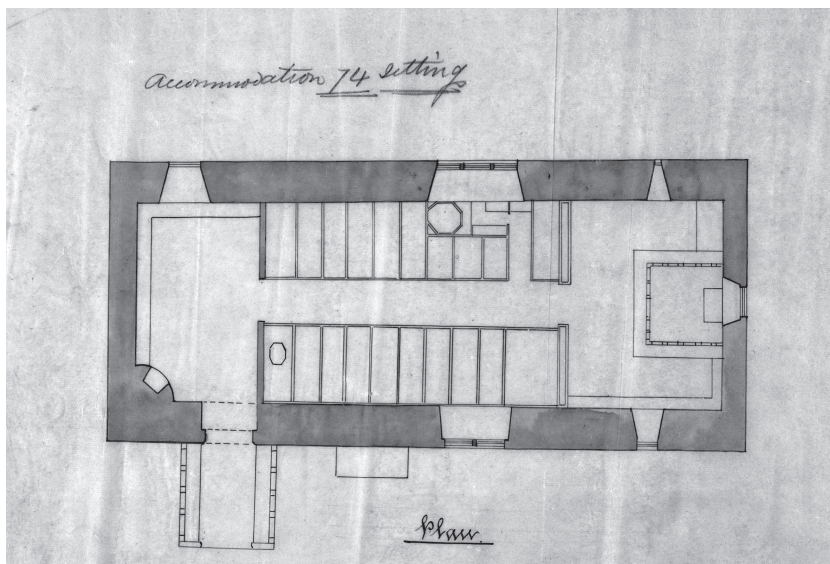


Fig. 1b. Walker's 1876 floor plan of the old church of St Anno.

From Walker's east view, it appears that the external stonework was probably painted (and may even have been rendered). The windows, which lack tracery and almost certainly belong to more than one date, comprise simple round-headed or rectangular openings, and include a small lancet at the east end. The church is topped by a weather-boarded bell-turret, similar to that found at St Margarets in Herefordshire.

Walker's plan view (Fig. 1b) depicts typically deep walls (c. four feet thick for the north and south walls) together with the layout of the internal furnishings. The pews, which could apparently accommodate '74 sitting',⁸ are noteworthy. They were box pews (something suggested by Walker's plans and confirmed by his drawing of the interior looking east). Panelling from a box pew forms a vestry of sorts at the west end of the current church (bearing the date 1681 and the name of the churchwarden of the time, David Lewis). Jacobean pews of this type are found in other churches in south Wales, including at Diserth in Radnorshire, Llanfilo in Breconshire and Llangeview in Monmouthshire. Both Walker's and Meredith's plans also show what appear to be benches variously lining the walls of the chancel and, in the case of the Walker plan only, set against the west end of the nave.⁹ Of the two octagonal forms shown in the Walker plan (but not the Meredith plan), that nearest to the door is the font, while that on the north side of the nave is the pulpit (the footing for this can still be seen in the floor of the current church).

The church's screenwork appears in two of Walker's drawings pertaining to the rebuild: the plan view shows the sill of the rood-screen, while the longitudinal section shows the rood-screen and rood-loft in much-simplified cross-section. The plans, at a scale of one eighth-of-an-inch to one foot, indicate a nave width (and thus screen and loft length) of almost exactly 20 feet. A further drawing by Walker – this one a view east down the nave showing the screen and loft in detail – was used to illustrate an article on Llanwnnog which appeared in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* in 1874.

It is clear from Walker's article of 1874 – and from his elevations, specifications and drawings – that by the 1870s the old church at Llananno was in a state of serious disrepair; and it seems from this and other evidence that the church was no longer fit for purpose. Walker describes the church as 'dilapidated', referring later to 'its present sad state of neglect and decay'.¹⁰ A letter written two years later by the vicar David Lewis begins:

This church within my Parish having become so far dilapidated as to its dangerous state, it has been determined by Mrs. Stephens of Castle-Y-Vale (also at present acting as Church Warden) to take down and rebuild the church at her own expense.¹¹

The commission for the new church was awarded to the Liverpool architect David Walker. A set of Walker's elevation drawings and specifications for the rebuild survives. Whilst we cannot be certain that these documents were not superseded by later drafts, here it will suffice to say that they largely accord with what was built, the one deviating from the other in the details only.

Walker's new church differs from its predecessor in several ways. The new building has a slightly more upright, less 'Welsh' (i.e. squat or low) stance compared to the old church; there are extra windows (one each in the north and south walls of the nave); and there is a coped stone bell-cote where once there was a short weather-boarded bell-turret. Setting these differences aside, however, for the purposes of this account the new church can be treated as essentially a like-for-like replacement: a small, single-chamber structure whose screen and loft together form the sole demarcation between nave and chancel. For the screenwork itself the most significant differences lie in the relative dimensions of the two buildings; for variations in building footprint and wall thickness mean that the nave of the new church is slightly wider than that of the old church.

The undisputed wonder of the rebuilding of St Anno was the decision to retain the medieval screenwork from the old church and re-erect it in the new church. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that such a course of action was largely atypical for the nineteenth century. Such furnishings were not generally valued as they are today; they were often seen as a hindrance to proper worship, or as an undesirable later addition that compromised the integrity of a church's interior. Furthermore, having suffered the depredations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the neglect of the eighteenth century, many were in a poor state of repair by the nineteenth.

In Llananno's case, the retention of the screenwork during a straight restoration of the existing structure would have been cause enough for celebration. Its retention during the construction of an entirely new church, which afforded the perfect opportunity to do away with the fittings altogether, is close to miraculous. During the nineteenth century other Radnorshire screens were not so fortunate. Writing in 1949, Crossley and Ridgway note that, for Radnorshire, 'Of thirty or more screens existing at the commencement of the 19th century, less than half remain even in fragmentary form'.¹²

In accounting for the decision to retain Llananno's rood-screen and rood-loft, it is worth saying first of all that pragmatism or a desire to save money can probably be discounted; for whilst the discarding of the screen and loft would have necessitated the creation of some new form of demarcation between nave and chancel (in what was, architecturally speaking,

a through-church) the integration of the original screen and loft in a new church would have been problematic, time-consuming and costly.

It seems probable that it was Walker himself who championed the retention of the screenwork at Llananno. However, if it was not him but another, it is at least certain that he would have been wholly supportive of the scheme. Certainly, Walker's contact with the church in the early 1870s (and with, perhaps, the vicar and church warden for example) must at least partly explain how it was that it was Walker and not another architect who came to be involved in the rebuilding of the church.¹³

Walker's general concern for medieval screenwork is conveyed in a series of short, illustrated articles published between 1870 and 1874¹⁴ in which he gives sympathetic accounts of the screenwork at Newtown, Llanwnnog and Llananno. His concern for the screenwork at Llananno is made explicit in the final paragraph of the last of these articles (published just three years before the architect began work at Llananno):

In conclusion I must remark that it is to be deplored that this ancient church, – an edifice possessing such interesting relics of the art wood-work of the period, – should be permitted to fall into irretrievable ruin, and that its present sad state of neglect and decay should render imminent the destruction of the fine example of ecclesiastical woodwork it contains.¹⁵

Walker's general conservation-mindedness is further confirmed in his specifications for the rebuilding of the church. These are measured in tone and precise in language, and include numerous references to the careful retention of fittings and fabric, even when these elements were not to be reused in the new church. The section relating to the rood-screen and rood-loft carefully specifies that the furnishings be retained intact during the dismantling process. The instructions are clear-cut and startling:

... the screen which is to be most carefully stayed and shored and enclosed with overlap jointed slabs to secure it from the actions of the weather during the progress of the rebuilding of the Church securely braced and stayed in such a manner as the architect or clerk of Works shall direct.¹⁶

Given the intention to raise the new church on the existing footprint, Walker here proposes to dismantle the old church while leaving the old screen and loft standing, then to rebuild the new church around the propped-up and encased furnishings. His desire that the screenwork be

‘stayed and shored’ acknowledges the biggest problem with this scheme: namely that the structural integrity of the screen and loft would be severely compromised when the nave walls were taken down (both components being supported by principal beams embedded into the stonework of these walls).

THE ROOD-SCREEN AND ROOD-LOFT

In order properly to track the alterations made to Llananno’s rood-screen and rood-loft during and following the rebuilding of the church, it is important first to outline what is known of the fittings as they stood in the old church. In this regard we are fortunate to have both a series of annotated drawings and paintings made by the Revd John Parker in 1828 and 1830;¹⁷ and an article and several drawings made by the architect of the new church, David Walker, in 1874.

Parker’s illustrations comprise numerous detail images – some in pen and some in watercolour – together with a watercolour painting depicting the whole composition of screen and loft (Plate 1). With regards to this main image, it is important to note that although Parker is generally a reliable and careful illustrator of church woodwork, and although this image largely accords with what we see today, it cannot be relied upon as either an entirely accurate or an entirely dispassionate visual record of Llananno’s rood-screen and rood-loft as they stood at the time of Parker’s visit.

Walker, too, provides us with a number of detail images, together with a drawing depicting the whole composition of screen and loft as seen from a similar viewpoint to the Parker image (Fig. 2). Walker’s illustration, although not without anomalies of its own, is almost certainly the more reliable of the two, and accords more convincingly with the other available sources.

With more than 40 years elapsing between the painting of Parker’s main image of Llananno’s screenwork and the drawing of Walker’s, it is perhaps unsurprising that what is recorded in each should differ markedly. However, not all of the differences can be accounted for merely by the passage of time or by the deterioration of the fittings in the intervening period.

As the earlier of the two illustrations, Parker’s painting (Plate 1) will be considered first. This shows a rood-screen and rood-loft that are strongly Welsh in character, in both their construction and carved decoration. The rood-screen is framed up between a head-beam above and a sill at floor level (the latter broken by the doorway). The screen is composed of four open bays and one narrow ‘blind’ bay to either side of a central doorway,

which takes the space of two-and-half bays. A chamfered middle rail runs unbroken between the nave walls and the door-posts. Dowelled into the top of the middle rail are mullions that extend up to the head-beam above. These are aligned with muntins in the wainscot below. The wainscot is otherwise plain-boarded.

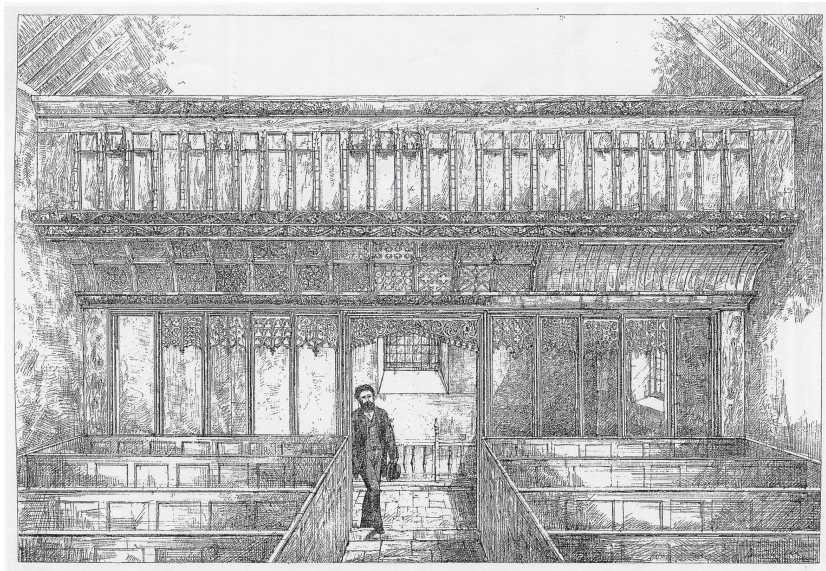


Fig. 2. Walker's 1874 drawing of the rood-screen and rood-loft.

The open bays to either side of the doorway are square-headed and contain tracery of six different designs (two of the designs being repeated). Each tracery head is framed beneath by a pair of trefoil arches. The door-head is framed beneath by a four-centred arch. The resultant spandrels have been filled with a series of Catherine Wheels that diminish in size towards the apex. The cumulative effect of the screen's tracery is of a lacy fringe dropping down from the underside of the head-beam.

The head-beam of the screen carries the half-rounds needed to return the mouldings of the uprights over each bay, together with a single carved trail: a version of the water-plant described by Crossley and Ridgway as, 'probably the finest rendering of the water plant as a decorative motif in existence'.¹⁸ This trail is not clearly shown by Parker in his main image, but appears in one of his detail watercolours (Fig. 3), as do the two trails found on the bressumer.

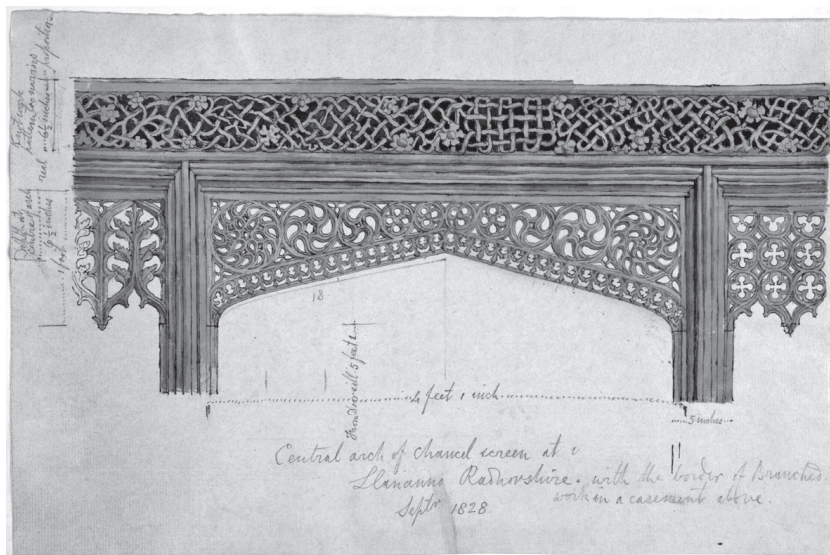


Fig. 3. Parker's 1828 illustration of the central archway of the rood-screen, showing the water-plant trail on the western face of the head-beam (it now occupies the eastern face).

From the head-beam of the rood-screen, the coved underside (or soffit) of the rood-loft above extends to meet with the bressummer beam to the west (the same occurs to the east, but this is not visible in Parker's main image). On the western side the soffit is divided into rectangular panels by a single horizontal rib intersected by a series of vertical ribs, with bosses at the intersections. Parker's main painting shows 36 soffit panels here. However, his carefully wrought detail drawings (Figs. 4a–4d) show 30 carved panels and two blanks: thus 32 panels altogether. Given that the screenwork was eventually lengthened and there are currently 34 panels, it seems certain that Parker made an error in his main painting, rather than in his more carefully rendered detail studies of the soffit panels.

Parker's detail drawings confirm what is suggested in his main painting inasmuch as that the soffit panels echo the tracery heads of the rood-screen below. Specifically, the panels are of seventeen different designs (six of the designs appear once, ten appear twice and one appears four times). Ignoring its curve, the western soffit is pitched at an angle of roughly 45 degrees, ensuring that even those seated towards the rear of the nave could enjoy at least the lower of its two rows of panels.

The bressummer (into the back of which the vertical ribs of the soffit dis-

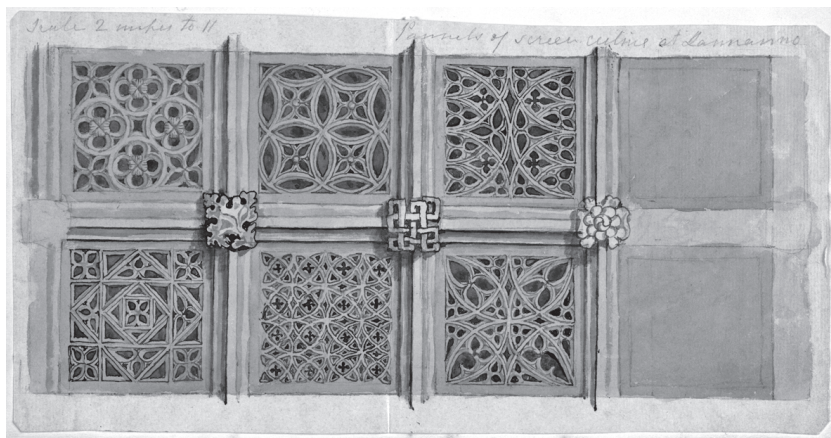
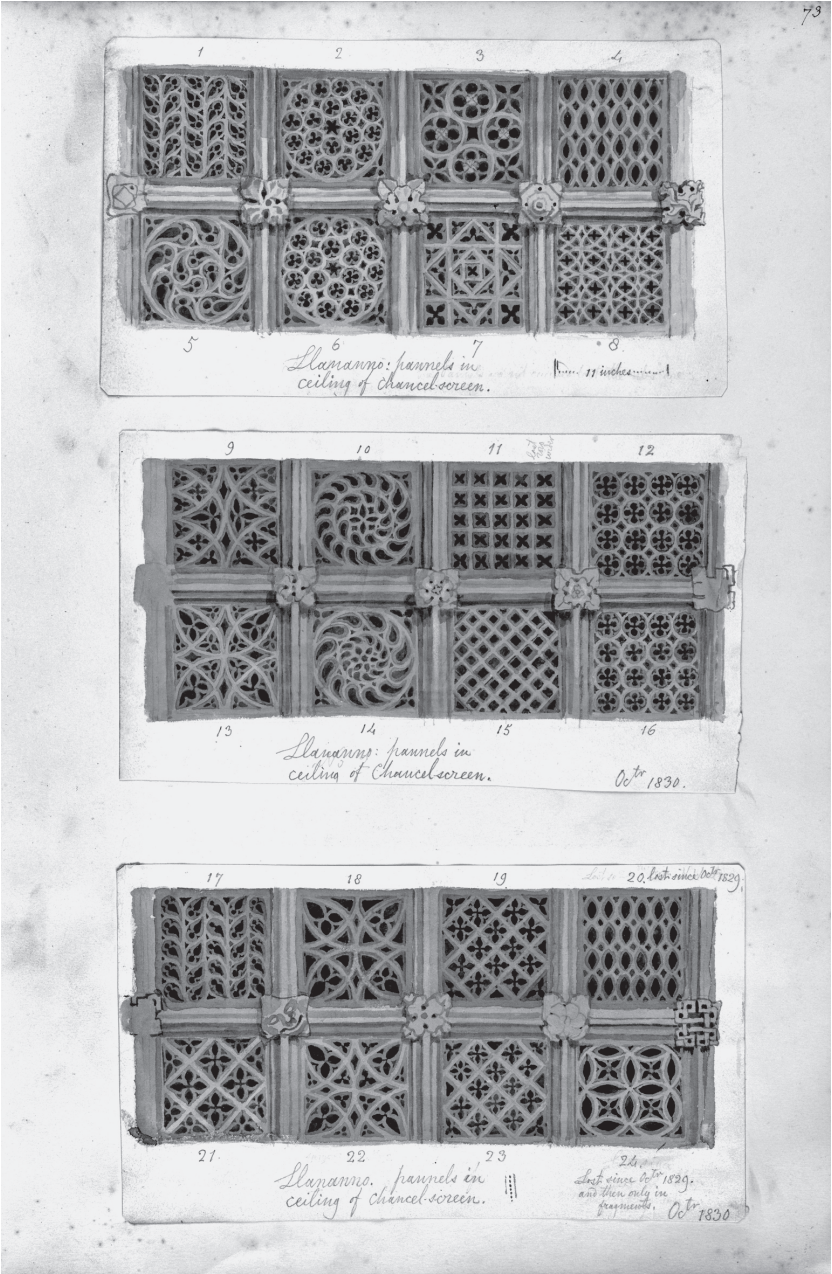


Fig. 4a. Parker's 1828 detail illustrations of the western soffit panels.

appear) carries two undulating carved trails. Once again, these are clearly identifiable in Parker's detail drawings, but not in his main painting. The lower (and narrower) of the carved trails depicts the pomegranate, the upper one the vine. The trails are set between half-round mouldings, and are fringed beneath by a delicate length of drop-cresting. The main expanse of the loft parapet to the west features 25 canopied niches. These are defined by a series of pinnaced buttresses and are topped by crocketed and cusped ogee heads. The niches were devoid of figures when Parker made his drawings. The uppermost beam of the loft – the rood-beam or top-beam – features a wide water-plant trail. The western face of this beam juts out over the parapet below and is tilted down at an angle (once again perhaps to allow those in the nave below to enjoy the artistry before them).¹⁹

Access to the rood-loft at Llananno was via a mural stairwell. Although this feature does not appear in any of Parker's images, it is mentioned in Walker's 1874 article on the old church, in which the architect notes, 'there are traces in the north wall of what has at one time been a stairway to the rood-loft'.²⁰

More than four decades after Parker's visit, Walker made his drawing of the screen and loft at Llananno (Fig. 2). Walker's drawing is both more detailed and less sketchy than Parker's painting, and it is immediately apparent that the content of the two images differs significantly. Firstly, box pews can be seen in the Walker image, but not in the Parker one. These pews were certainly there when Parker made his painting, and we know from both the Meredith and the Walker floor plans that the easternmost of these pews was set against the western face of the rood-screen up to,



Figs. 4b–4d. Parker’s 1828 detail illustrations of the western soffit panels.

or just above, middle rail height. In other words, it would have been impossible for Parker to have seen the screen as he depicts it. He would have had to extrapolate the appearance of the lower portion of the screen from the appearance of its eastern face. This is exactly what appears to have happened in the case of the middle rail. Parker shows its western face as simply chamfered (making the assumption that it matched the eastern face), when in reality it has a flat channel cut into it, which would not have been visible at the time of Parker's visit.

Moving up, Walker clearly shows five open bays to either side of the central doorway. Where Parker's fifth bays are narrow, filled or 'blind', and divided from the wall by timber uprights apparently no wider than the mullions of the screen,²¹ Walker's fifth bays are approximately as wide as the other bays and divided from the wall by thick posts. A further major discrepancy arises when the loft parapet is compared in the two images: both show 25 niches, but whereas plain boarding exists at either end of the parapet as depicted by Walker, no boarding can be seen at either end of the parapet as depicted by Parker.

In terms of the construction and composition of the screenwork prior to the rebuild, the available evidence strongly indicates that Walker's drawing is the more accurate of the two.²² We know from Walker's floor plan that, internally, the new church is only slightly wider than the old church; yet if Parker's painting is to be trusted then the screen and loft as erected in the rebuilt church would have had to be lengthened, not by the c.10 inches they were lengthened by, but by nearer to two feet. Whilst it must be acknowledged that the bays of the screen do not (and did not) precisely match one another in terms of width, the jarring narrowness of the fifth bays as depicted by Parker would represent a virtually unprecedented anomaly in screen-building; a craft that invariably sought to divide the spaces between the door- and wall-posts into a series of bays of equal, or near-equal, width. On the question of the number of bays, Walker's 1874 account appears to confirm that there were indeed five bays to either side of the central doorway.²³

Many of the other differences between Walker's drawing and Parker's painting relate to the relative condition of the carved decoration. Thus, in Walker's image, a length of carved trail is missing from the southern half of the head-beam; at least 10 panels are missing from the southern half of the loft soffit (to be replaced by what appears to be curved, vertical planking); most of the drop-cresting is missing from the underside of the bressumer; most of the niche-work is missing from the western parapet; and there have been losses to the carved trail belonging to the rood-beam and to the top-cresting upon this beam (assuming this latter was ever a

feature here). Parker shows us no such losses. Indeed, but for the lack of colour and carved or painted figures to occupy the niches, the screen and loft appear complete and undamaged.

Whilst it seems inevitable that 40 years of misuse would have resulted in the marked deterioration of Llananno's screen and loft, are we really to believe that at the time of Parker's visits the fittings were in the near-pristine condition suggested in his main painting? The evidence of John Meredith, who surveyed the church not long after Parker's visits – and even of Parker himself – would suggest that the answer to this is 'no'.

In 1834, £30 was granted for a programme of repairs and improvements to Llananno. This included the replacement of pews, the insertion of a new east window, the re-flagging of the nave aisle, the addition of new woodwork (e.g. to the altar framing), and much repainting. Although the screenwork is not mentioned by Meredith, it is clear that the church's fixtures and fittings were generally in poor condition; and it seems unlikely that the screen and loft would have proven exceptional in this regard. Indeed, given how screenwork was commonly treated in the nineteenth century, it is probable that these were among the least well maintained of Llananno's fixtures and fittings. A drawing by Parker casts further doubt on the condition of the screenwork at the time. Although his main painting shows no loss or damage to the soffit panels, one of his detail drawings shows two partial fragments of one of these panels, suggesting that the screenwork was not in the unspoiled condition indicated in his main painting.

If we accept that Parker's main painting of the screenwork at Llananno is not wholly accurate, how do we account for this? There are several points to make here. The first is that even a cursory examination of Parker's work reveals him to be an extremely gifted and skilful draughtsman. Comparing his drawings, and particularly his detail drawings, with the corresponding screenwork (where this survives) confirms him to be overwhelmingly accurate and reliable. However, there is ample evidence (besides that highlighted above) to suggest that some of his depictions, in particular his images of complete examples of church screenwork, may have been idealised to a greater or lesser extent.²⁴

Parker was visiting churches at a time when medieval screenwork was not generally valued. Much of it had suffered badly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and now stood rickety and unloved in the path of the wave of church restorations that was sweeping the land. This is what makes Parker valuable: the fact that he was working at a time when much of this material was so imperilled. What seems to have happened on more than one occasion is that Parker made his visits, produced a series of detail studies of the screenwork in question, and then produced, in 2-dimensional

form, a version of the complete composition restored to speculative glory.²⁵ It is even possible that these main images were produced, or at least completed, *ex situ*. How else are we to account for the fact that Parker has so completely misrepresented the east window at Llananno, depicting a three-light window with a pair of mullions where there was actually a narrower two-light or lancet window in the east wall at the time of his visit?

Accepting the probable inaccuracies of the Parker painting, the joint testimony offered by this image and the Walker drawing highlights a number of characteristics that are not easily accounted for – characteristics that cast doubt over the original composition of screen and loft. For the rood-screen, although the treatment of the fifth bays by the two artists clearly differs, the fact that Parker shows these bays as filled while Walker shows them, if not filled, at least devoid of tracery heads, is surely noteworthy. Could it be, for example, that at the time of Parker's visit the fifth bays were indeed filled or 'blind' and that this boarding had been removed by the time of Walker's visit, leaving the two bays open and still devoid of tracery? Certainly, the 'blind' fifth bays depicted by Parker cannot easily be dismissed as idealisation on the part of the artist; especially when we find that these bays are missing their tracery heads in the Walker drawing.

It should be said, first of all, that some utilitarian purpose, and not mere fancy on the part of the screen-builder, would have lain behind the decision to construct, or at least alter, the rood-screen in this way. 'Blind' bays are sometimes found in rood-screens that stand either before (i.e. to the west of) chancel arches in divided churches, or the entrances to narrower chancels; there being no need in either case for open bays, as the opening would be blocked in either case by the masonry of the chancel wall. The restored screens at Middleton in Shropshire and Llangwm Uchaf in Monmouthshire, both of which carry rood-lofts above, are examples of the type. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the old church at Llananno had a chancel that was narrower than its nave, let alone had a chancel arch. The old church was almost certainly built in one go as an undivided rectangular chamber whose width remained constant from east to west (as depicted in the Meredith and Walker plan views).

If the fifth bays at Llananno were once 'blind', one possible explanation is that this was done to afford a degree of privacy to parishioners seated on benches set against the north and south chancel walls on the east side of the rood-screen. If this was the case it is at least consistent with changes in the practice of worship witnessed during the sixteenth century; for the relationship between the nave and chancel, and the use of both spaces, was beginning to alter significantly during this period. With worship becoming more democratic and the liturgy partially demystified, parishioners began

to gain access to the chancel (especially for the purpose of receiving Communion) and the clergy began to spend more time in the nave. Wooden altar tables replaced earlier stone altars (the abolition of the latter was ordered in 1550) and these were moved from against the east wall of the sanctuary and placed in the middle of the chancel for the purposes of Communion (the celebrants thus being able to kneel at all four sides). Seating for the new arrivals also began to appear in the chancel during the sixteenth century.

It is possible that seating for this purpose was placed in the chancel at Llananno, and that the rood-screen was originally designed, or was altered at some later date, to take account of this. Meredith's 1834 plan view shows a bench almost completely lining the chancel and backing against the southern portion of the screen (labelled 'benches for free sittings for 24 persons').²⁶ Backing against the northern portion of the screen is a separate bench, labelled 'Incumbent's pew'. Walker's 1876 plan view also shows a bench, this one running in an L-shape around the south and east walls of the chancel (Fig. 1b). Equivalent features possibly designed for the privacy of those sitting on the eastern side of a rood-screen can be found elsewhere, for example at Little Malvern in Worcestershire. Here, the middle rail is stepped, rising higher where it runs in front of the choir stalls that back against the north and south walls of the chancel.

The depiction by both artists of the northern and southern ends of the rood-loft also demands further explanation; for the two incomplete panels at the northern end of the soffit together with the plain boarding at either end of the loft parapet in the Walker drawing (both absent from the Parker painting) can give rise to speculation that the loft may have been lengthened prior to the nineteenth-century rebuild. Regarding the incomplete panels of the soffit, whilst it is undeniably the case that screen-builders usually sought to divide the soffit into evenly-spaced bays, this was not always the case. Thus, just as there are evenly-spaced bays on the loft soffit at St Margarets in Herefordshire, we also find incomplete soffit panels similar to those at Llananno at Partrishow in Breconshire; and soffit panels varying greatly in width at Manorbier in Pembrokeshire.

There may also be an innocent explanation for the plain boarding to either end of the western parapet as depicted by Walker. The deterioration of the fittings (which is so evident in the drawing) may have included the loss of one or two niches at either end of the parapet, perhaps due to water damage from the nave walls (something which may also partly account for the replacement woodwork later spliced into the ends of some of the principal beams). As with the soffit below, plain boarding may have been used to affect repairs. Whilst the 25 niches currently arrayed across the loft

parapet feel correct somehow (in that, for example, they yield 12 niches for the 12 Apostles along the southern half of the parapet) the identities of the original figures remain unknown, as does the number of niches originally arrayed across the loft parapet.

If the screenwork at Llananno had ever been lengthened, we might expect to discern evidence in the Walker drawing of the rood-screen or the principal beams of the rood-loft having been lengthened; yet no such evidence exists. In fact there is no evidence whatsoever, either physical or documentary, to suggest the screenwork at Llananno was ever lengthened prior to the rebuild. Furthermore, there is no evidence that it ever stood in another (narrower) church, and no reason to suppose that it ever did. During the nineteenth century in particular a pervasive school of thought asserted that several Welsh screens and lofts were too rich for their current parochial settings and must originally have occupied a grander monastic setting and been removed to their current home following the Dissolution. Thus, claims were made by Parker and others that the screenwork at Llananno and Newtown once belonged at the Cistercian abbey at Cwm-hir in Radnorshire.²⁷ In reality, however, we now know that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries even the humblest churches were blessed with screens and lofts of dazzling artistry, and so the presence in such a church of such a fitting, far from being anomalous, is in fact entirely consistent.

*

When examining the rood-screen and rood-loft as they stand in the new church at Llananno (Plate 2), one initial question to ask is: did the furnishings remain intact during the rebuild? (as Walker stipulates) or were they, in reality, dismantled prior to their re-erection in the new church? Crossley and Ridgway are convinced of the latter. Their entry for Llananno begins: 'The church constructed as a simple rectangle has been rebuilt entirely in the usual Welsh manner, the screen taken down and stacked and later rebuilt in the new church'.²⁸ Although no source is given for this account, the available evidence strongly supports this view.

In practical terms, it would have been hugely challenging to keep the edifice of screen and loft from collapsing (or at least shifting damagingly) during the dismantling of the walls. The obstruction presented by the propped-up furnishings on what was already a cramped building site, allied to the risk of damage to the medieval woodwork from both the building work and the weather, are factors further militating against the plan to retain them intact and *in situ*. There is also the question of what is to be gained

by such a plan, when to dismantle and rebuild the screenwork is arguably an easier (and possibly a cheaper) option.

Although the scheme outlined by Walker in his extant specifications was probably ultimately achievable, the screenwork as it now appears exhibits a construction and redeployment of components that strongly indicates a comprehensive rebuild. As part of this programme, restoration work was carried out to the furnishings, which ranged from unobtrusive repair through to the bold and speculative reinstatement of missing components. The majority of the new woodwork visible today dates from the time of this work. However, subsequent repairs (most notably carried out in the middle of the twentieth century in response to rot and beetle infestation)²⁹ have seen some further replacement of original material.

While many of the changes to Llananno's screenwork are conspicuous, others remain less easy to discern. In the nineteenth century (in contrast to the present day)³⁰ it was common practice to conceal what was new work when restoring earlier woodwork. This could be done in several ways. The most popular technique was to strip an old screen of any vestiges of its original colour scheme, carry out the repairs then either varnish the whole with a heavy 'pitch' varnish, or paint it with an oak-coloured paint (making it difficult to distinguish old timber from new). Although Meredith makes no mention of the screenwork at Llananno in his annotated floor plans of 1834 and 1837, there are numerous references to the painting of other woodwork with oak-coloured paint in his specifications (e.g. '3. Altar frame ... new, of beech, painted oak colour' and '10. Pulpit, old one, carved, & now painted oak colour.')³¹ Although little by way of such varnish or paint survives on the screen and loft at Llananno now, it is certainly true to say that a degree of seamlessness was the intention of the restorers.

The most significant alterations to Llananno's screenwork were those made necessary by the slightly increased width of the nave in the new church. Walker's plan view of the old church, drawn at a scale of one eighth-of-an-inch to one foot, gives the width of the nave (and thus the length of the screen and loft) as almost exactly 20 feet. The width of the present nave is 20 feet 10 inches. Assuming Walker's plans are accurate then the nave of the new church is 10 inches wider than that of the old church.

Fundamental to the lengthening of the screenwork as a whole was the lengthening of the principal beams whose role it was to keep the edifice upright and in place: the sill and head-beam of the rood-screen, the bressumer and rood-beam on the west side of the rood-loft, and their counterparts on the east side. The extension of the beams was achieved by bolting new lengths of timber (carved to match the existing mouldings) to the ends of the principal beams (Fig. 5a). These lengthened beams, as well as being

at least partially embedded in the fabric of the nave walls, are also held in place by metal straps bolted onto the backs of the beams and themselves set into the wall fabric (Fig. 5b). It is likely, given the parlous condition of the old church prior to restoration, and the strong possibility of water ingress into the wall fabric, that the embedded portions of the beams may have been water-damaged or partially rotten. This may explain why such apparently disproportionately long pieces of new timber were added to the main beams.

When it came to lengthening the rood-screen, Walker's solution was to set slender uprights against the nave walls, and then to fill the resultant gaps between these and the reworked wall-posts with new boarding. New tracery heads (a slightly mechanical version of the original tracery heads filling bays one and three on the north side of the screen) were inserted into the narrower fifth bays. Although the tracery heads and the inner mouldings here are new, the mullions, the relevant section of middle rail and the corresponding bays in the wainscot below are all original.

Aside from the material additions needed to lengthen the rood-screen, repairs were also carried out to the existing fabric. This work entailed the replacement of at least four panels and four muntins in the wainscot; and the replacement of the mouldings over the tracery heads and the half-rounds that frame the carved trail on the head-beam. New timber was added to the southern length of sill and to replace the lower half of the original wall-post at the screen's southern end. The middle rail has had a handful of discreet chocks of replacement timber inserted (Figs. 6a and 6b).

The door-head's drop-cresting is also new, and a small repair has been carried out to the tracery head in the first bay on the north side of the screen. The carved trail now found on the eastern face of the head-beam (a water-plant trail) was once attached to its western face (Fig. 3). Meanwhile, the trail now occupying the western face once occupied its eastern face (this trail echoes that occupying the lower of the two beams on the eastern side of the rood-loft). Both lengths of carved trail found on the head-beam have been renewed: to the west, the southernmost five feet of trail is new work; while to the east, a nine-and-a-half foot length of trail – again, at the southernmost end of the screen – is new. The rest of the screen is substantially medieval, including most of the sill, all of the middle rail, the door- and wall-posts, all of the mullions and the eight remaining tracery heads.

The changes witnessed by the rood-loft were more comprehensive and dramatic than those witnessed by the rood-screen below. The work included an apparent alteration to the pitch of the loft coving, and the addition of 25 carved figures to the loft front. The loft coving itself was also heavily re-worked. To the west, two completely new panels were added as



Fig. 5a. Replacement/lengthening timber added to the eastern top-beam.



Fig. 5b. Metal strap fastening new timber to the rood-beam and itself embedded into the nave wall (note also the bracing strap).

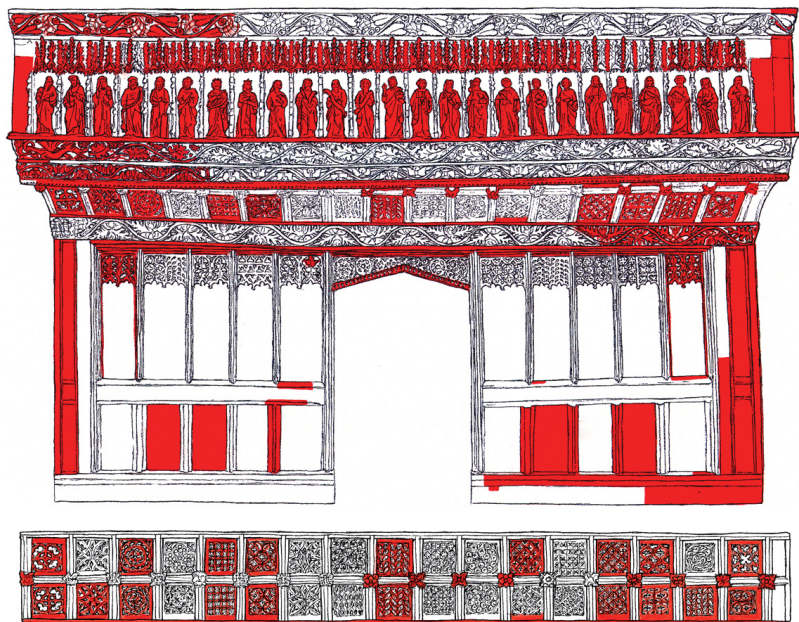


Fig. 6a. Drawing showing in red which parts of the current screen and loft are definitely post-medieval: western face.

part of the lengthening (bringing the total up to 34) and at least ten others had to be reinstated or restored. While Parker shows us 32 panels, Walker shows us just 22 panels, with at least ten panels at the southern end of the loft coving missing. In place of these panels (which had either been removed to another place or lost altogether by this point) there appears to be boarding made up of curved planks.

The design of individual soffit panels cannot be gauged with certainty from Parker's main painting. However, his detail drawings show the panels clearly; and the veracity of these images at least is confirmed by the fact that the first 22 panels (running north to south) precisely match those depicted in Walker's drawing, in both their design and their ordering. It is clear when comparing the western loft soffit as depicted by Parker and Walker with its composition today, not only that several of the original panels are now missing and some of those in place are of a new design, but also that a significant re-ordering was carried out at the time of the rebuild. This practice, which is repeated elsewhere on the rood-loft, was probably designed to give an even overall appearance to the composition,

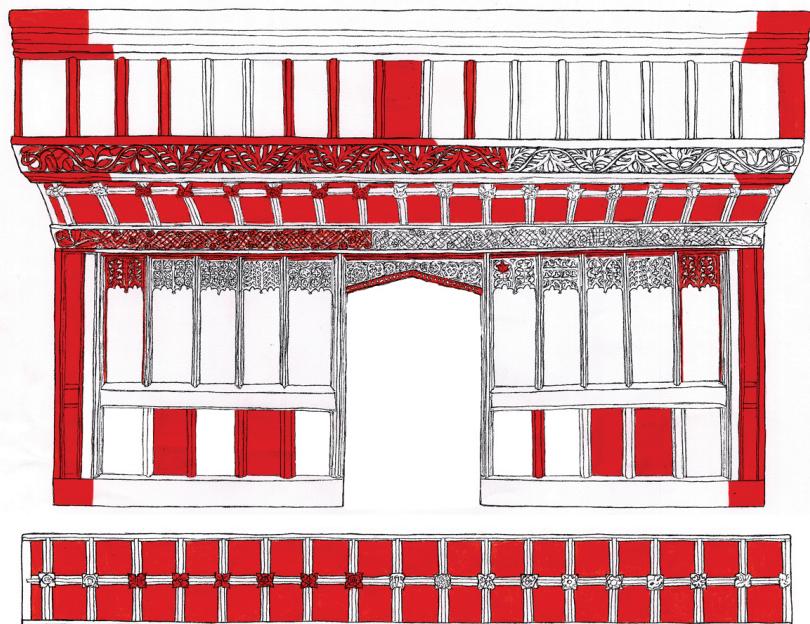


Fig. 6b. Eastern face.

by dispersing new work throughout the existing old work.³² Of the 34 soffit panels on the western side, 19 are new and 15 original.

Was Walker (or were later restorers) aware of Parker's detail drawings of Llananno? And if so, was use made of the drawings to inform the recreation of missing panels? There are several things to say here. Firstly, although we know Walker was generally aware of Parker's drawings (see below) there is no firm evidence that he made use of his drawings of Llananno. If he had referred to Parker's detail drawings of the soffit panels we might expect to find the design of the replacement panels largely according with what Parker records. In reality, however, there is no apparent precedent for eight of the current designs. Two further designs can be found in Parker's drawings and not among the existing original panels. However, the like-for-like replacement of panels at the time of the restoration or later could account for their presence. The two further designs found among the new panels merely replicate two found among the existing original panels. Gauging the antiquity of the ribs and bosses is difficult. However, it is possible that the majority of the ribs are new, and it is certain that about half of the bosses are new.

The soffit to the east is plain-boarded (and may have been when Parker visited, for he made no drawings of this part of the loft, possibly because it lacked the carved interest of the western soffit). The eastern soffit also comprises 34 panels, and probably also had two panels inserted during the rebuild. Again, dating the components is difficult. However, all of the panels are new, the majority of the ribs are probably new, and at least six of the bosses are new.³³

If the viewpoint taken for either Parker's main painting or Walker's main drawing is replicated (and if both can be relied upon as not being composites of more than one viewpoint) then it seems likely that the angle of the loft coving post-rebuild (at least on the western side) is shallower than that of the coving pre-rebuild.³⁴ If the pitch of the loft coving was indeed steeper in the old church, this means the bressumer was then higher in relation to the head-beam of the rood-screen below. If true, this lends weight to the theory that the rood-loft (if not the screen below) was reconstructed, rather than being left intact and *in situ*, during the rebuilding of the church.

The rood-loft's western parapet is framed by the rood-beam above and the bressumer below. The fringe of drop-cresting along the underside of the bressumer is virtually all new work. However, at the northern end of the bressumer, a tiny, fragmentary piece of original cresting survives (just enough to provide Walker with a precedent for the new work). Both carved trails on the bressumer contain new work at their northern ends: a little less than five feet of the upper vine trail (and including the wyvern here) is new; as is just over five feet of the lower pomegranate trail. The half-rounds above, below and between the trails are also probably new.

The western parapet also features the boldest of the Victorian interventions to these furnishings. In 1880, not long after the completion of the rebuilding of the church, the 25 canopied niches were filled with figures carved by Gerald Boulton of Cheltenham. The set comprises 12 patriarchs, kings and prophets across the northern half of the parapet, Christ in the centre, and the 12 Apostles across the southern half (Fig. 7).³⁵ Although carved figures seem the most likely candidates for the loft front (given, for example, the depth of the niche-work canopies), it is not certain that carved figures were originally deployed here. It is just possible that the niches contained painted figures, as at Newtown. The planking also lacks the peg holes found, for example, at Llanfilo in Breconshire; though this may simply be because all of the backing woodwork at Llananno was replaced by Walker during the rebuild. If the western parapet did indeed once feature carved figures, then of course we cannot know how these would have looked. However, the new figures capture the spirit of late-medieval Gothic wood-carving, and are quite at home on the loft front.



Fig. 7. Boulton's carved figures along the western parapet (north side).

Whether or not we are to believe that the complete set of niche-work canopies and dividing buttresses was indeed present on the loft front in 1828 (as Parker's drawing makes claim) it is certain that by the 1870s this part of the western parapet was in a much denuded state. Walker's 1874 drawing, although appearing to show all of the dividing buttresses, shows only fragments of the canopies above. Despite this, in his article on Llananno published in 1874, Walker notes, 'there is nevertheless sufficient left to indicate the exceeding richness the whole must have presented, when the niches were filled with figures'.³⁶

When the loft was re-erected, a handful of the original crocketed pinnacles were re-used (e.g. over the fourth figure from the northern end, and the fourth, fifth and sixth figures from the southern end). These survivors also provided a template for the new canopies. It is less clear whether any of the current buttresses between the figures are original. It is possible that none of them are. Again, it may be that surviving originals were used to inform the design of replacements. The crocketed pinnacles at Llananno are of a type similar to those found on the loft parapet at Llanrwst in Denbighshire; and a similar setting-out of the canopies (two-sided with a pinnacle in front) can be seen on the partial loft front at Nerquis in Flintshire.

Over the canopies, set against the downward-tilting western face of the rood-beam, is another extremely fine water-plant trail (quite unlike that on

the head-beam below). This is original but for a six-foot length at its northern end (in Walker's drawing it is missing short lengths over the doorway and at its northern end). The massive rood-beam, which is more than one-foot square in cross-section, is also original. Midway along its upper face is a rectangular mortise hole measuring three and three-quarters of an inch by one and a quarter inch, which once housed the foot of the Rood. There are no holes to either side, suggesting that in this case the Rood was not accompanied by the figures of Mary and John. However, seven inches to the west of the first hole is a round hole, one inch in diameter, which presumably held a candle or lamp to light or honour the Rood. The top-cresting depicted in Parker's drawing (assuming this ever existed) is now entirely missing and has not been replaced.³⁷

The eastern parapet of the rood-loft is plainer than the western,³⁸ but again features much new work. Only the northernmost eight feet of the leaf trail on the lower beam is old work – the rest is new. Of the muntins above, only nine are perhaps old, and it is uncertain whether these are in their original positions. The rest of the muntins are new, and it is possible that all of the panels between are also new. The top-beam is substantially medieval, but with new pieces added at either end (Fig. 5a).

The rood-loft as re-erected was not intended to be accessible, or usable as the raised platform it once formed. Consequently, no stairwell up to the loft was incorporated into the new church and no flooring now spans the gap between the bressumer and its counterpart to the east.³⁹ Any inspection of the interior of the current loft emphasises this sense of a furnishing now stripped of utility. Devoid of any flooring, the head-beam of the rood-screen together with the two lower beams and the soffit panels of the rood-loft are all exposed to view. Visible here are the metal straps used to fasten the extension pieces to the original beams (and which are themselves embedded into the nave walls), together with three further metal straps that tie the rood-beam to its counterpart to the east and provide the loft with additional strength and stability.

*

By the time of Parker's visits to Llananno in the first half of the nineteenth century the furnishings had already undergone several hugely significant alterations; changes that Walker's reconstruction of the second half of that century did nothing to reverse. Two elements in particular, both missing by the nineteenth century, remain conspicuous by their absence. The first of these, the Rood, has already been discussed. The second and most dramatic in terms of overall appearance is colour.

The importance of the role played by colour on screenwork (and on other furnishings and surfaces within medieval churches) can hardly be overstated. Virtually every part of the screen and loft would have been ornamented with a palette consisting mainly of reds, greens and gold (the latter in the form of gilding), together with some blue. The significance of these colours may ultimately have derived from their use in heraldry. The colours were typically used in their strongest and purest forms, with reds and greens alternating across the rood-screen, blue applied to the underside of the rood-loft, and gilding applied to the carved trails.

This rich if apparently limited medieval palette of reds, greens, blues and gold can be discerned on screenwork throughout England and Wales; yet perhaps nowhere more tantalisingly than on the screenwork at nearby Newtown, which is closely related to that of Llananno. Here, we find blood red as a background colour against which the gilded and coloured trails and soffit panels have been set; ribbons of red and gold twisting along half-rounds in a 'barber's pole' pattern; gold, reds and greens on the tracery heads; and profuse gilding, especially on the leaves of the carved trails (Figs. 8a and 8b). The apparent limitations of the palette have been mitigated through the avoidance of large areas of a single colour and the ingenious alternation of colours across the composition. The late-medieval appearance of Llananno's rood-screen and rood-loft, assuming they too were thus decorated, would have been equally rich; and the onlooker would have been less aware of the 'wooden-ness' that strikes the viewer now, and entranced instead by colour and surface detail.

Although Parker's drawings of the screenwork at Llananno reveal nothing by way of colour, it is quite possible that at least vestiges of the original pigment survived into the early nineteenth century. This, Crossley and Ridgway found, has been 'carefully pickled off'⁴⁰ (as was usual practice for the period) as part of the renewal of the furnishings.

One other element that does not survive at Llananno is a screen-tympanum. However, whilst we can be sure that colour and the Rood once played a part in the composition at Llananno, we have no evidence for the existence of a tympanum here. The feature is found in several other small, single-chamber churches in the region, most notably Betws Newydd⁴¹ in Monmouthshire (Fig. 9) and Llanelieu in Breconshire. In both of these cases, however, the rood-loft extends only to the west of the screen; meaning that the tympanum is a continuation upwards both of the rood-screen below and then the eastern loft parapet above. At Llananno, the loft extends both to the west and the east of the rood-screen, meaning that a tympanum would split the loft in half (east-west) if it was on the same plain as the screen; or form an extension of the eastern loft parapet, and



Fig. 8a. Tracery head from Newtown with possible traces of original (if refreshed?) colour.



Fig. 8b. Portion of loft soffit from Newtown with carved trails.



Fig. 9. Rood-screen, rood-loft and tympanum at Betws Newydd, Monmouthshire.

thus not be on the same plain as the screen below. Neither of the last two arrangements now survives in a Welsh through-church, and the balance of evidence seems to indicate that a tympanum did not form a part of the original composition at Llananno.

PROVENANCE

Llananno's rood-screen and rood-loft possess certain constructional and decorative characteristics that are either unique to, or at least typical of, Wales. At a basic level, in their size and proportions both fittings can be said to be characteristically Welsh, and that these are qualities that proceed directly from the size and proportions of the characteristically Welsh church in which they stand. Hence, just as the church of St Anno is neither wide nor lofty (having neither side aisles nor a clerestorey) so its rood-screen and rood-loft are of correspondingly modest dimensions.

In broad compositional terms, the screenwork at Llananno is markedly rectilinear, comprising right angles and straight lines rather than curves or arches. The visual emphasis here is on the horizontal rather than the vertical. These characteristics proceed in large part from the undisguised nature of the post-and-beam construction that underlies both screen and loft. Although all church screenwork essentially relies on a framework of

posts and beams, nowhere is this method of construction more frankly acknowledged than in Wales, and nowhere is such a virtue made of it.

Unpacking the composition further, the subdivision of the rood-screen into a series of narrow, square-headed bays is also archetypal for Wales; as is the sturdy middle rail extending unbroken between the wall- and door-posts. Moving up, the underside, or soffit, of the rood-loft takes the form of horizontal coving. Extending from the head-beam, this typically describes an angle of roughly 45 degrees (although it appears to have been flattened at Llananno, as discussed above). This characteristic, of a soffit in the form of horizontal coving, is shared by all the surviving indigenous Welsh rood-lofts (although is a feature that is not unique to Wales; it being found on a number of screens across the border in England).

In terms of decoration, the screenwork at Llananno displays several uniquely Welsh characteristics. The treatment of the tracery heads and loft coving (described in detail below) is peculiar to Wales. Although carved trails are assuredly a feature of English screens (of the West Country for example) the restless invention of the carving found at Llananno and elsewhere is a quality unique to Wales. Furthermore, one of the plant types that appears at Llananno, the 'water-plant', is not found over the border; while the pomegranate, which is frequently found upon Welsh church screenwork, is only very rarely encountered in England. The wyverns which terminate the carved trails at Llananno are also unique to Welsh screenwork.⁴²

In their book *English Church Woodwork*, Crossley and another writer-architect, FE Howard, identify three broad, geographically distinct traditions of screen-building in Britain, demarcated 'by means of lines drawn from Dorset to Cumberland, and from London to the Tyne'.⁴³ These they term the 'Western School' (comprising the South-West and Wales), the 'Midland School' and the 'Eastern School'. The Western school is, in the pair's phrase, 'leavened by the Celts'.⁴⁴

Whilst this characterisation is undeniably crude, on no other church woodwork in Britain are specific traits deriving from Celtic art more clearly discernible than on the screens and lofts of Wales; and nowhere on these fittings more obviously than in their carved trails. These trails have precedents in the forms of the so-called 'running-dog' pattern found in much early Celtic art, the 'running scroll' pattern of later Celtic art, and the interlacing and knot-work found on metalwork, stone crosses and manuscripts of the period c.400–1200 AD. The typical format for a carved trail – of a ribbon whose undulations form compartments each of which contains a stylised plant form – echoes precisely that seen, for example, on a first-century gilt-bronze mount from Elmswell in Yorkshire (Figs. 10a and

10b).⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the delight in knotty pattern-making exhibited by the water-plant trail on the eastern face of the head-beam at Llananno has precedents, for example, in the stone crosses at Nevern and Carew in Pembrokeshire. Dragons, meanwhile, are found throughout Celtic and Germanic Dark Ages art, most numerous on swords and scabbards of the fourth-century BC onwards.⁴⁶



Fig. 10a. Vine trail from the bressumer at Llananno.



Fig. 10b. Celtic mount from Elmswell in Yorkshire.

The Welsh characteristics found at Llananno are thrown into sharpest relief when the screenwork here is compared with a typical English counterpart: in this case the rood-screen and loft-vaulting at Dilwyn in Herefordshire (Fig. 11). The first impression at Dilwyn is of an altogether bigger, taller rood-screen, entirely proportionate with the bigger, taller church in which it stands. Few churches of this scale exist in Wales, and consequently almost no rood-screens of this scale are to be found here. The presence of a chancel arch at Dilwyn is also typical of an English church (outside of the West Country), as is the containment of the rood-screen within that archway.

In broad compositional terms (and in contrast to Llananno) the screenwork at Dilwyn has an attenuated feel, with a vertical, rather than horizontal, emphasis; the posts and mullions above middle rail height seem-

ing to stretch up to the loft-vaulting overhead. The composition of screen and loft-vaulting is also noticeably less rectilinear than that of Llananno; for in place of the ten narrow, square-headed bays at Llananno, there are five wide, arched bays at Dilwyn, each subdivided by pairs of mullions. Furthermore, where Llananno's middle rail runs unbroken between door- and wall-posts, Dilwyn's middle rail is broken by intermediate posts which extend from the sill up to the head-beam above (a characteristic that is archetypal for screenwork originating in England).



Fig. 11. English rood-screen and loft vaulting at Dilwyn in Herefordshire.

Moving up, the underside of the now-missing rood-loft does not feature horizontal coving, but rather fan-vaulting, which blooms from caps surmounting the bouttel shafts fronting each of the posts. Although fan-vaulting can be found on screenwork in a handful of Welsh churches (e.g. at Gresford and Llanrwst in Denbighshire) these are imports (or at least hybrids) and form the exceptions to the established rule.

While surface decoration was clearly fundamental to the visual experience envisaged by the screen-builders at Llananno, the architectural coherence of the composition as a whole appears to have been the priority of their counterparts at Dilwyn. Certainly, carved decoration has only a minor role to play at Dilwyn, and the screenwork here engages more fully with a distinct architectural context than is the case at Llananno.⁴⁷ At

Dilwyn, for instance, the broad, subdivided bays with their Perpendicular tracery heads clearly echo the east window. This more overt architectural character is typical for England, where screen-builders were surrounded by, and could thus draw upon, a more highly-evolved language of church architecture.

THE 'NEWTOWN' OR 'MONTGOMERYSHIRE' SCHOOL

A comprehensive analysis of the church screenwork of Wales was carried out in the middle of the twentieth century by Fred H Crossley and Maurice H Ridgway.⁴⁸ The survey, which concentrated on design, provenance and influence, yielded a series of articles that was published in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (the journal of the Cambrian Archaeological Society) between 1943 and 1962. Together, these articles comprise an invaluable record, enriched as they are by the two authors' profound understanding of medieval carpentry. Arguably the most exciting discovery made by the pair was that significant numbers of closely-related screens survive in Wales.

This is significant because, on the whole, the same cannot be said of England. Instead, for screenwork of the 'Midland School' (the indigenous screen-building tradition of England as identified by Crossley and Ridgway) it is rare to find more than one or two screens made by the same hand. Rather, the general pattern is of local one-offs, made perhaps by a village carpenter or carpenters whose expertise was general as opposed to specialist.

The situation in Wales (and the South-West) differs significantly; for here distinctive groups of closely-related rood-screens survive, strongly indicating the presence here of a number of regional workshops in the late-medieval period. In all, Crossley and Ridgway identify 13 distinct Welsh screen types, 12 of which are indigenous to Wales (Fig. 12).⁴⁹ Distribution patterns led the pair to conclude that the workshops responsible for the production of the screens and lofts fell into one of two categories.

The first includes the small, local workshops, producing limited numbers of screens, whose distribution was restricted to a small geographical area (and often the immediate locale). The second comprises the larger, regional workshop centres, responsible for the production of greater numbers of screens (and other church woodwork, such as choir stalls) and whose products were distributed over a far wider geographical area. The so-called 'Montgomeryshire' or 'Newtown' (*Type I*) workshop identified by Crossley and Ridgway is the prime example of a large regional centre, and was the source of the screenwork at Llananno.⁵⁰ Named after the pre-



Fig. 12. Crossley and Ridgway's 1962 distribution map of Welsh screen types.

sumed location of the workshop⁵¹ the type is both the best-represented of the Welsh screen types, with ten examples found by Crossley and Ridgway; and the most geographically dispersed, with examples scattered from Llananno in Radnorshire in the south, up to Daresbury in Cheshire some 90 miles to the north.⁵²

The defining feature of the type is its carved decoration, which is both uncommonly rich and of the highest quality. Uniquely, the tracery heads vary fundamentally from bay to bay,⁵³ and the decorative treatment of the heads is carried up (albeit in 'blind' form) to the underside, or soffit, of the rood-loft above. In this way the tracery heads together form a sort of deep drop-cresting or frieze to the rood-loft above; as opposed to being enrichment primarily for the benefit of the rood-screen. The carved trails are generally broad, deeply modelled and highly perforated, and are often virtuosic in both their inventiveness and execution.

Of the ten 'Newtown' examples identified by Crossley and Ridgway, substantially complete rood-screens with lofts survive at Llanwnnog in Montgomeryshire and at Llananno; significant portions of medieval screenwork can be found at Newtown in Montgomeryshire and at Daresbury in Cheshire; fragments remain at Llanbadarn Fynydd and Llandegley in Radnorshire; and there is evidence to suggest that related screenwork may have occupied the churches at Llanidloes and Betws Cedewain in Montgomeryshire, Downton-on-the-Rock in Herefordshire and Runcorn in Cheshire. Of these, only Llanwnnog presents us with a survival comparable with that found at Llananno. Despite suffering neglect and punitive restoration, the screenwork here is immediately recognisable as a relative of that found at Llananno (Figs. 13a and 13b).

The rood-screen at Llanwnnog has five bays to either side of a central doorway, of two bays; and thus mirrors, in its basic composition, the screen at Llananno. Only the five tracery heads in the northern half of the rood-screen, together with the door-head tracery, survive. The heads are of three different designs (two designs being repeated) and are of the same free-patterned type found at Llananno. Indeed, one of the designs, which consists of two rows of four encircled quatrefoils, is common to both screens. The western loft soffit at Llanwnnog has two rows of carved panels which are closely related to the tracery heads below. The panels are set against the solid boarding of the loft soffit, rather than being 'unbacked' as they are now at Llananno.

Although the eastern loft parapet at Llanwnnog appears substantially original (and may hint at how the eastern parapet at Llananno once appeared) the western parapet, including the rood-beam, has been stripped bare and now contains later openwork panelling. In the nineteenth century,

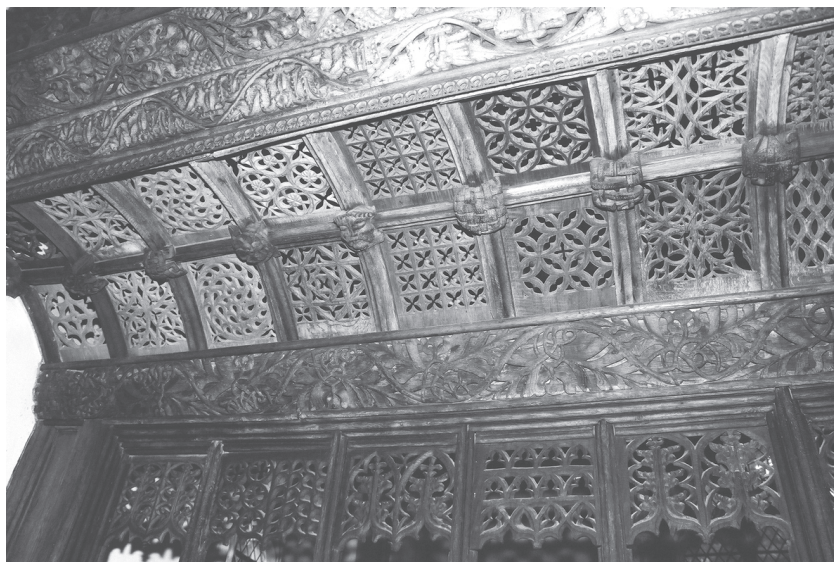


Fig. 13a. Underside of the rood-loft at Llananno.



Fig. 13b. Underside of the rood-loft at Llanwnnog in Montgomeryshire.

according to Crossley and Ridgway, 'its delicate niche-work was swept away as if it had been so much dirt and cobwebs'.⁵⁴

The original richness of the western parapet at Llanwnnog (and the once closer link between this loft front and the one at Llananno) is hinted at in a number of nineteenth-century accounts. Referring specifically to the rood-loft, Parker notes that, 'The side next to the body of the church is very highly wrought'.⁵⁵ Glynn goes further, stating, 'The loft has panelling alternately plain and sculptured, the west side is the richest'.⁵⁶ Sadly stripped of most of its carved decoration, the rood-loft at Llanwnnog now has a functional appearance that was never the intention of its makers.

Walker's 1871 drawing of the rood-screen and rood-loft at Llanwnnog shows a pair of posts supporting the bressumer (cf. Burghill and St Margarets in Herefordshire, and Bugeildy in Radnorshire) with two further posts supporting the equivalent beam to the east. These have since been removed. Walker's drawing also shows elongated tracery heads set between both pairs of posts, but does not show the tracery currently found in the door-head of the rood-screen.

The screenwork in St David's church, Newtown, like that found at Llananno, once stood in an earlier church: St Mary's, whose ruins still stand beside the river Severn to the north. The old church was abandoned midway through the nineteenth century due to flooding, and its screen and loft removed and placed in storage. A new church was completed to the designs of Thomas Penson in 1847, and the surviving parts of the screen and loft were later variously re-erected within to form a small parclose chapel at the east end of the north aisle, and to line the walls of the sanctuary. This work was done with no particular regard to the original disposition of the parts, leaving a once-great fitting robbed of its proper form, meaning and context. However, a significant quantity of late-medieval woodwork survives here, greatly enriched by a startling amount of what appears to be its original – though probably later refreshed – colour (Figs. 8a and 8b).⁵⁷

Once again we are indebted to John Parker for an account of the screenwork prior to its dismantling. He visited Newtown on several occasions, and made copious notes and drawings. During one of these visits he describes finding,

... in itself a world of Gothic art, a magazine of original and exquisite patterns, all of which, when it was entire, were disposed in such a way as to satisfy the taste and feast the eye of the spectator, with the highest luxuries of workmanship and colouring.⁵⁸

At one time, the screen and loft at Newtown were evidently more mag-

nificent even than Llananno's; for not only were these arguably the most highly wrought and finely carved of the products from the Newtown workshop centre, they were also the most substantial, stretching for 42 feet across both the nave and side aisle of the old church.

The screenwork at Newtown features the same free-patterned tracery heads as those found at Llananno and Llanwnnog; while the underside of the rood-loft once boasted a dazzlingly varied double row of carved panels, again closely related to those found at Llananno and Llanwnnog, only this time numbering more than 80. Moving upwards again, the loft's western parapet was evidently decorated with niche-work and canopies (Parker found several fragments); although it appears the figures occupying the niches were painted rather than carved. No niche-work survives in the new church. However, a great many of the tracery heads and soffit panels do, as well as several carved trails and a superb wyvern.

Once again, over and above the immediately apparent parallels between the carved work at Newtown, Llananno and Llanwnnog, there is replication of specific designs across the three. For example, a panel featuring four encircled quatrefoils, attached to the wall on the south side of the sanctuary at Newtown, perfectly mirrors that found on the western loft soffit at Llananno. Meanwhile, a tracery head featuring two rows of cusped, flattened circles, in the north aisle screen at Newtown, is almost identical to that found on the north side of the screen at Llanwnnog; indeed, it seems certain that the two tracery heads were carved by the same hand. Certain of the carved trails are also unmistakably linked (for example, the water-plant trails found on the north side of the sanctuary at Newtown and the rood-beam at Llananno).

The situation at Newtown, with soffit panels from the rood-loft arrayed around the sanctuary of a Victorian replacement church, is repeated at All Saints in Daresbury, Cheshire (Fig. 13c). Here, the rood-loft remained *in situ* until about 1870, at which point the church was almost entirely rebuilt. Fortunately, 34 panels from the loft soffit were retained, and now line the chancel and clad the western face of a low Victorian chancel screen.

The Daresbury panelling bears all the hallmarks of 'Newtown' work: rectangular frames containing a variety of designs composed of a mixture of Decorated and Perpendicular Gothic motifs, cusped forms and stylised flower forms; with intersection bosses carved as stylised plant forms. If anything, the panels are most closely related to those found at Newtown itself. Indeed, one of the designs at Daresbury, featuring eight mouchettes encircling four mouchettes, is also found on the loft soffit in the north parclose chapel at Newtown.

The other surviving examples of 'Newtown' or 'Montgomeryshire' work

identified by Crossley and Ridgway comprise fragmentary remains only, and inevitably the case for their firm inclusion in the output of the 'Newtown' workshop as identified above is perhaps less compelling than might have been the case had more survived.

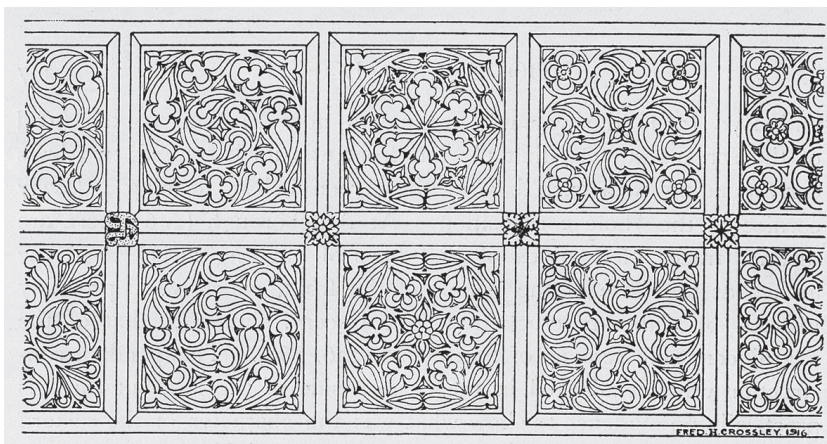


Fig. 13c. Crossley's 1916 drawing of the surviving soffit panels from Daresbury in Cheshire.

The two other Radnorshire churches, Llanbadarn Fynydd and Llandegley, were both the subject of swingeing Victorian restorations.⁵⁹ Llanbadarn Fynydd retains a well-moulded bressumer, upon whose western face have been planted four fragments of carved trail of three different designs: a vine, a water-plant (without flowers) and a four-petalled flower. Parker visited the church in 1829 and found and drew these and other fragments, including a single tracery head, which had been incorporated into a west gallery. It seems that Crossley and Ridgway's assertion that the screenwork here came from the 'Newtown' centre is based largely on the design of this extant tracery head, rather than the design of the carved trails (or indeed the cross-section of the bressumer).⁶⁰

The much-restored rood-screen at Llandegley is placed within *Type IX* by Crossley and Ridgway: a Radnorshire type which also includes the screenwork at Aberedw, Diserth, Michaelchurch (the parts over the altar), Betws Clyro, Cregrina and once at Pilleth. However, the pair make a case that a water-plant trail currently nailed around the top of a seventeenth-century altar table is related in its design to those found at Llananno and Newtown, and probably originates from the 'Newtown' centre (and possibly once belonged in another church). Whilst the water-plant trails on the

rood-beam at Llananno and on the walling of the sanctuary at Newtown possess greater finesse, it must be acknowledged that the treatment of the leaves in each case (with two leaves per compartment, each one punched along its spine and serrated), together with the handling of the flowers, is markedly similar (Figs. 14a and 14b).

Crossley and Ridgway list four other churches as having contained screenwork from the 'Newtown' or 'Montgomeryshire' centre, citing only written descriptions in the absence of surviving woodwork as evidence in the case of two. Of the four, Downton and Runcorn are stronger candidates for inclusion in the group than Betws Cedewain and Llanidloes. In the case of Betws Cedewain, the pair quote Fenton: 'Mr Davies told me that the rood-loft in Betws church about four miles from Newtown, was finer than that of Newtown'.⁶¹ Although geographical proximity allied to apparent richness lend credibility to a 'Newtown' link in this case, Fenton's account is inconclusive, his description essentially hearsay.

Scant written accounts allied to geographical proximity perhaps also account for the inclusion of Llanidloes. The screen here is described as 'exquisitely carved'⁶² and as having 'exquisite tracery',⁶³ yet the absence of material evidence, or of more detailed documentary evidence, means its inclusion in the output of the 'Newtown' centre also essentially represents conjecture on the parts of Crossley and Ridgway.

The church of St Giles at Downton-on-the-Rock in Herefordshire once contained a rood-screen, rood-loft and parclose screens, with a boarded tympanum and a celure above.⁶⁴ A photograph of 1886 shows tantalising remnants, including the skeletal loft coving and the substantially complete parclose screens (Fig. 15). By 1926 the church was in ruins and only the bressumer and tympanum survived as reminders of the old screenwork. The remains of the loft coving discernible in the 1886 photograph make a Welsh origin for this screenwork a strong possibility; while the subdividing of the loft soffit into two rows of square panels by means of vertical ribs intersected by a single horizontal rib, the intersections marked by bosses, is certainly consistent with the likes of Llananno and Llanwnnog. The pity is that in 1886 almost none of the carved work survived here that might have proven conclusively that this screenwork was linked to other 'Newtown' work.

The church of St Bartholomew in Runcorn also contained a fine rood-screen and rood-loft, characterised in the early nineteenth century as, 'a handsome carved screen over which is a rood-loft';⁶⁵ and, just four years prior to the rebuilding of the church in 1849, as, 'a fine wood screen with tracery and niches, and bands of vine leaves and flowers'.⁶⁶ The second description in particular would seem to indicate Welsh (or at least Western



Fig. 14a. Water-plant trail on the rood-beam at Llananno.



Fig. 14b. Water-plant trail now fixed to the altar table at Llandegley.



Fig. 15. 1886 photograph showing the screenwork in Downton-on-the-Rock.

School) work. During the rebuilding of the church, it appears that 20 tracery heads, unusually from the wainscot of the screen (according to Crossley and Ridgway), were retained and subsequently set into modern choir stalls. The tracery heads are of nine different designs and, although not markedly similar to those found at Llananno, Llanwnnog and Newtown, are with confidence attributed by the pair to the 'Newtown' centre.

CONCLUSION

The rood-screen and rood-loft at Llananno rank among the finest and most important examples of medieval church screenwork to survive in Britain, let alone Wales. Only the screenwork at Llanegryn in Merionethshire can rival Llananno's in terms of how much survives allied to both quality and variety of carved decoration. The screen and loft at Newtown were evidently richer and more spectacular, but are now jumbled and incoherent. The screen and loft at Partrishow in Breconshire are complete, and yet the carving here, though undeniably fine, lacks the wealth and inventiveness of that found at Llananno. The same might be said of St

Margarets in Herefordshire and Llanfilo in Breconshire; or, further afield, about Flamborough in Yorkshire and Attleborough in Norfolk.

The survival of close relations means that Llananno's rood-screen and rood-loft can be placed not only within the broad context of Welsh medieval screenwork, but the specific context of an apparently thriving local workshop centre. No records survive of this presumed workshop, yet the volume and quality of the surviving work would seem to indicate a sizeable venture which employed carpenters and woodcarvers who specialised in such commissions. Given the loss from Wales of perhaps 90 percent of medieval church screenwork it is certain that prior to the Reformation a great many more products from this workshop centre would have existed.

The comprehensive nature of the work carried out to the rood-screen and rood-loft at Llananno in the second half of the nineteenth century, far from damaging it, not only secured its future but reinvested the composition with some of its lost meaning. The screenwork was carefully re-erected in a near-identical context in a new church; it was repaired, and carved figures imaginatively and appropriately arrayed along the gallery front.

It must be acknowledged that Walker's intervention at Llananno was not an isolated case; and whilst 'movement' might be too strong a word, it should be recognised that what took place at Llananno fits into a wider pattern of the saving of Welsh medieval screenwork by a handful of enlightened architects in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. As well as working at Llananno, Walker restored the screen and loft at Llanwnnog in Montgomeryshire in 1873. The architect JP Seddon restored the screenwork at Llangwm Uchaf in Monmouthshire in 1876–8. Another architect, WD Caröe, restored the screenwork at Partrishow in 1908–9 and at Llanfilo in 1913, both in Breconshire.⁶⁷

Despite the success of Walker's restoration of the screen and loft at Llananno, it is important to acknowledge not only what endures here but also what can no longer be seen. For whilst there survives here one of very few medieval rood-screens still to be surmounted by its rood-loft, the furnishings are missing several key features – the most visually arresting of which is their original colour.

The loss of original colour from rood-screens and rood-lofts (to say nothing of other surfaces within the medieval church) places a great burden on the imagination of the visitor. Although colour has occasionally been re-applied elsewhere (for example, to the nave half of the screen at Usk in Monmouthshire) this was not done at Llananno. Instead, the onlooker must imagine away the uniform 'wooden-ness' of the fittings, and see instead the encrusted surfaces bright with colour and gilding; the carving and figures brought to life by candlelight. This is no easy task for the

onlooker, but one that is infinitely preferable to standing in the hollow cas-
ket of a church stripped bare of such riches, trying to imagine them back
at all.

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NOTES

1. The survival of a disproportionate number of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century rood-screens should not be taken to indicate that it was only during these centuries that the usage of rood-screens became universal. Rood-screens were particularly subject to updating or replacement (e.g. as a result of new patronage, inter-parish rivalry and shifts in fashion); and they were certainly taken down so that entirely new partitions, incorporating both rood-screen and rood-loft (the latter being a later development) could be erected.
2. The twelve rood-lofts to survive *in situ* in Wales: Derwen and Llanrwst in Denbighshire; Llangwm Uchaf and Betws Newydd in Monmouthshire; Partrishow and Llanfilo in Breconshire; Llananno in Radnorshire; Llanwnnog and Montgomery in Montgomeryshire; Llanegryn in Merionethshire; Llanengan in Caernarfonshire, and Llanelilian on Anglesey. Cases can be made e.g. for the less complete examples at Llanelieu in Breconshire and Llangewview in Monmouthshire. Elsewhere – for example at Mamhilad in Monmouthshire – the rood-loft is substantially complete, but has been moved to the west end of the nave where it now forms a west gallery.
3. These comprise the head and foot of a Christ figure from South Cerney in Gloucestershire, dating from the twelfth century (now in the British Museum); a mutilated Christ figure from Kemeys Inferior in Monmouthshire, from the thirteenth century (now in the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff); the mutilated torso of a Christ figure from Mochdre in Montgomeryshire, from the fourteenth century (retaining some original pigment and accompanied by the separate figure of Mary – now both in the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff); and a mutilated Christ figure from Cartmel Fell in Cumbria, from the fifteenth century.
4. The precise completion date is disputed, with dates cited ranging between 1876 and 1880. Cut into the stonework over the south door is 'REBUILT. ANNO .

DOMINI . 1877'. This probably represents the completion date of the building itself, with work to the fixtures and fittings taking place subsequently and still in progress in 1880, when the figures were added to the loft front. According to the Royal Commission Survey of 1910–1911, the church of St Anno was one of twenty-eight (out of fifty-two) Radnorshire churches to be rebuilt – the majority in the nineteenth century.

5. ICBS 01676 folios 17ff.

6. Jonathan Williams, MS, 1818.

7. Sir Stephen Glynne, *Welsh Churches*, (1851).

8. Written over David Walker's plan of the old church. NLW, St David's Diocese, SD/F/232 plans and specifications. A Meredith plan of 1834 mentions pewing 'for 75 persons' (ICBS 01676 folios 17ff).

9. Stephen Glynne writes of, 'the west end of the nave partitioned off for a school', giving one possible use for these latter benches, *Welsh Churches* (1851).

10. David Walker, 'Some account of the rood screens and timber work of "Powys-Land", no. 3, rood screen, Llananno church, Radnor', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 7 (1874).

11. The letter is dated 24 July 1876. NLW, SD/F/232, St David's Diocese, plans and specifications. A letter from Aaron Moseley of Llananno to the rector of Whitton gives the final cost of the rebuild as 'about £1400 exclusive of haulage', and also states that 'The whole of the cost was borne by Mrs Stephens'.

12. Fred H Crossley and Maurice H Ridgway, 'Screens, lofts, and stalls situated in Wales and Monmouthshire, part six, section 1x, Radnorshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 100 (1949).

13. Walker was working at Llanwnnog in 1873 (two years after his paper on Llanwnnog was published in the *Montgomeryshire Collections*), and it may be that he was beginning to gain a reputation by this time as at least a knowledgeable restorer of churches containing medieval woodwork.

14. David Walker, 'Some account of the rood screens and timber work of "Powys-Land", no. 1, rood screen in Newtown Church', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 3 (1870); 'no. 2, rood screen, Llanwnnog church', *Mont. Coll.*, 4 (1871); 'Rood screen, Llananno church, Radnor'.

15. Walker, 'Rood screen, Llananno church, Radnor'.

16. NLW, SD/F/232, St David's Diocese, plans and specifications.

17. NLW, Drawing Volume 330 (folio), ff. 69–75. The Revd John Parker (1798–1860) was rector of Llanmerewig in Montgomeryshire.

18. Crossley and Ridgway, 'Radnorshire'.

19. This treatment of a top- or rood-beam can also be found at Middleton in Shropshire (though this may represent a later alteration made at the time of the Victorian restoration of the church).

20. Walker, 'Rood screen, Llananno church, Radnor'.
21. Note also that these uprights do not extend below the middle rail: further evidence perhaps of how the presence of pews against the western face of the rood-screen may have hampered Parker in his depiction of this part of the screen.
22. It must be acknowledged, however, that minor inaccuracies can also be identified in the Walker image. For example, both the Walker and earlier Meredith floor plans clearly show the pulpit and reader's desk on the north side of the nave, both accessible through the box pews towards the front of the nave; yet neither of these features, nor the corresponding access, is shown in the Walker drawing.
23. Walker writes, 'the naves of Llanwnnog and Llananno are spanned with screens possessing the same number of panels'. Llanwnnog's screen has five bays to either side of its central doorway. Walker, 'Rood screen, Llananno church, Radnor'.
24. Crossley and Ridgway are being rather sweeping, perhaps, when they claim, 'There is no mistaking the fidelity of Parker's drawings and anything he drew was as he saw it'. Crossley and Ridgway 'Radnorshire', p. 231.
25. His main image of the screenwork at Bugeildy in Radnorshire, showing the apparently complete, undamaged and painted rood-screen and loft coving, is another probable example.
26. ICBS 01676 folios 17ff. The 1837 Meredith plan view, showing the church after a programme of repairs and alterations had been carried out, no longer shows a bench against the north wall of the chancel.
27. In Parker's manuscript notes of 1829.
28. Crossley and Ridgway, 'Radnorshire'.
29. The relevant accounts were not available at the time of writing.
30. In restoration terms the current vogue is to frankly acknowledge later interventions, for example by differentiating new timber from old so that the repair is immediately evident (typically by leaving the new timber untreated).
31. ICBS 01676 folios 17ff.
32. However, later replacement work (i.e. in the twentieth century) must also partly account for the 'scattering' of new work amongst old.
33. Several of the early bosses feature faces, and one of these (featuring two faces together sharing one eye) appears to be a depiction of the Roman god Janus. Appropriately, the boss is located over the entrance to the chancel, for Janus is the god of doorways and of beginnings and endings.
34. Interestingly, the western loft coving as depicted in Walker's longitudinal view (Fig. 1b) is also steeper than at present (describing an angle of about 45 degrees).
35. The figures represent, running left to right (or north to south): Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Aaron, Moses, Joshua(?), David, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jesus, Peter, Andrew, Matthew, John, Thomas, Bartholomew(?), James the Great(?), Philip(?), Jude(?), James the Less, Simon the Zealot and Paul. In the absence of original documents relating to the commission for the figures some doubt

hangs over the identities of several of the figures belonging to the southern half of the parapet.

36. Walker, 'Rood screen, Llananno church, Radnor'.

37. Although we cannot be sure that any top-cresting occupied the rood-beam at the time of Parker's visits (and no top-cresting is shown in Walker's 1874 drawing) it is almost certain that such cresting would have existed at Llananno at one time (even if not necessarily of the design shown by Parker).

38. Although eastern parapets are typically plainer than western parapets, the elaborate openwork carving of the eastern parapet at Llanegryn in Merionethshire forms a striking exception.

39. The innermost top corners of the bressumer and its counterpart to the east have been cut away to give a rectangular channel into which the boards – which ran east-west – would presumably have been set.

40. Crossley and Ridgway, 'Radnorshire', p. 215.

41. Sawn-off screen-tympana can be seen at Aylton and Michaelchurch, both over the border in Herefordshire.

42. Three plant forms appear on the screenwork at Llananno: the vine, the pomegranate and the so-called water-plant. At each end of the vine trail on the bressumer is a wyvern. The vine is a consistently recurring motif in Christian art and architecture, and by far the most commonly used plant form in carved trails. Vines and grapes symbolise the Eucharistic wine (the blood of Christ) and in early Christian art Christ himself: *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit* (John 16: 5). The pomegranate is a symbol of the Resurrection; a usage that may derive from Greek mythology (Persephone was able to return periodically from the underworld after eating a pomegranate seed). For church screenwork the pomegranate has additional significance. It was the badge of Katherine of Aragon, whose ill-fated marriage to Prince Arthur in 1501 is commemorated on a number of screens and lofts in Wales (including at Aberconwy, erected by Arthur's friend Sir Richard Pole). The water-plant or water-flower is commonly found on Welsh screenwork, particularly from the Newtown centre. Its symbolism is obscure (beyond that of the obvious water-as-life metaphor found for example in Revelation 21:6: *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*). If the water-plant can be identified as a water lily then its connotations may include purity (after the water nymphs of Greek mythology which give to the plant its genus: *Nymphaea*) and the Resurrection (from its ancient symbolism of rebirth, from the way it closes up at night to reopen again each morning). Dragons, specifically wyverns, often terminate carved trails on screens and lofts. In Christian art the dragon symbolises evil generally and Satan specifically. Psalm 91:13 reads: *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet*. The identification of the dragon with Satan is made explicit in Revelation 12:9: *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan*. The wyvern found in Wales has distinctive characteristics: 'so doth the Wiuerne partake of a Fowle in the Wings

and Legs ... and doth Resemble a Serpent in the Taile' (*Heraldry*, Guillim, III. xxvi., 1610). The tail in the form of a serpent not only recalls Satan's form in Eden, but also the amphibiaena: the two-headed serpent of the ancients able to move in either direction (thus symbolising inconstancy).

43. FE Howard and FH Crossley, *English Church Woodwork*, (London, Batsford, 1917).

44. Howard and Crossley, *English Church Woodwork*.

45. It should be acknowledged that, despite its widespread appropriation in Celtic art, the undulating ribbon motif ultimately derives from continental Germanic art, and was not strictly a Celtic invention.

46. Besides specific Celtic motifs it is also possible to discern in the carved decoration on Welsh screens and lofts a broader spirit and language of Celtic art: an art which is virile and alive; 'an art in which naturalism in the classical sense is largely absent, and in which pattern predominates ... an art which delights in curvilinear forms, in intertwining lines, in ornament which is often ambiguous'. Lloyd and Jennifer Laing, *The Art of the Celts*, (London, Thames and Hudson, 1992).

47. This degree of integration with its architectural context is not mirrored at Llananno, and was a factor in Walker's favour when he decided to re-erect the furnishings in a new church.

48. As well as writing widely on churches and instigating the *Archaeologia Cambrensis* articles, Crossley was also an architect and carpenter.

49. The thirteenth type includes screenwork of English origin found in Welsh churches. Given that Wales has lost as much as 90% of its medieval church screenwork, it seems likely not only that each of the types identified would have been far better represented at one time, but that other types besides those identified may have existed also.

50. Crossley and Ridgway were not the first to recognise a common source for some of these screens. In his article on Llanwnnog, for example, Walker writes that, 'By comparing the details of Llanwnnog screen with those of the screen from Newtown old church, it will at once be observed what a strong resemblance they bear to each other', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 4 (1871), p. 183. Furthermore, an earlier fallacy (alluded to by Walker) held that the screenwork in all three churches once belonged in Abbey Cwm-hir, which suggests that a general awareness of the relationship between the screenwork predates that given voice by Walker.

51. There is almost no contemporary source material relating either to these presumed workshops or to the circumstances of the individual commissions. The theory that numbers of screens emanated from a single workshop source is thus necessarily based solely upon the eloquent and powerful testimony of the products themselves.

52. It is also the only one of Crossley and Ridgway's designations that has found its way into general usage in texts on churches and their fittings (e.g. the *Buildings of Wales*).

53. It is true that some variation from bay to bay can sometimes be discerned on English screenwork, for example in the design of the flower cusps below the tracery heads. However, the level of deviation from bay to bay in 'Newtown' work, with tracery heads of wholly different designs set next to one another, is unique to this workshop source.
54. Fred H Crossley and Maurice H Ridgway, 'Screens, lofts and stalls situated in Wales and Monmouthshire, part five, section VII, Montgomeryshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (1947).
55. John Parker, MS, 1830 (also includes several drawings).
56. Sir Stephen Glynne, *Welsh Churches*, 1851.
57. David Walker, writing in 1870, mentions, 'The enriched and interlaced cornices have traces of colour – vermilion and gold – with which it was at one time decorated'. Walker, 'Rood screen in Newtown Church'.
58. John Parker, MS, 1829.
59. Llanbadarn Fynydd in 1894; Llandegley in 1876 – both carried out by SW Williams.
60. The pair write, 'The details suggest Montgomeryshire work but not of necessity from the Newtown centre', Crossley and Ridgway, 'Radnorshire', p. 236.
61. Fenton, *Tours of Wales*, (1810).
62. In *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 6 (1875).
63. Thomas, 'Montgomery Screens', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, (1903).
64. This arrangement, of a small parclose chapel formed by a pair of screens set at right angles to each other against the western face of the rood-screen, can be seen at Shelsley Walsh in Worcestershire, and almost certainly existed at Gwernesney in Monmouthshire. Downton's celure, meanwhile, is reminiscent of those found at Mobberley in Cheshire and at Hennock in Devon.
65. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire*, 1st edn., vol. 1, (1817).
66. Sir Stephen Glynne, *Churches of Cheshire*, Chetham Society, vol. 32 (ed. Atkinson), c.1845.
67. Many of those writing on medieval screenwork during this period were also architects. Besides those mentioned, the architect Augustus Welby Pugin wrote *A Treatise on Chancel Screen and Rood Lofts* (published 1851). Pugin's final book, it passionately sets out the case for the retention of screens in churches. Another architect, Frederick Bligh Bond, co-wrote the two-volume *Rood-screens and Rood-lofts* with Dom Bede Camm in 1909.

THE BLEDDFA CENTRE FOR THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

James Roose-Evans

WHY ON EARTH WOULD ANYONE want to start a Centre in a tiny hamlet in the least populated county in Great Britain and, in the 1970s, with no traffic lights? It is a good question!

It was in 1970 that I purchased the Old Rectory at Bleddfa for my parents and whenever my work, running the Hampstead Theatre, would permit, I would come down to stay. Bleddfa had fewer than 100 inhabitants and most of those lived in scattered farms and cottages, with only a handful of houses in Bleddfa itself including the Hundred House Inn, the village school, and a tiny post office cum stores. Next to the Old Rectory was St Mary Magdalene's, the village church, first built in the thirteenth century. Whenever I was in residence I would attend the Sunday Eucharist, bringing the total number of the congregation up to four. Because at that time I had, albeit as a layman, a weekly article on meditation in *The Church Times*, the then rector, the Reverend John Tipping, who lived in Llangynllo, used to call on me regularly for tea and chat. And so it was that, in 1973, he came to tell me that Bleddfa church was on a provisional list for closure. What could be done to prevent this?

Having in 1959 founded the Hampstead Theatre in London on a shoestring and for seven years, without any grants, lurching from one financial crisis to another, I was not eager to launch into trying to save a small church in a tiny hamlet in the least populated county in Britain! For a year I reflected and meditated on the matter and then I sent for the rector. I realised that if I did nothing, no one else would. Launching the Hampstead Theatre was an act of faith and I realised that whatever was done for Bleddfa church would be likewise. I suggested to the rector that if one waited until a redundancy order was slapped on the church it would be too late to protest. If one wanted to save the church one had to act now. Since the church was still in use for worship, albeit with only one service a week, and the very occasional wedding or funeral, I suggested that, while continuing to be used as a place of worship, it be developed as a Centre for Sacred Art, offering a programme of exhibitions of sacred art, seminars, retreats, concerts and workshops. John Tipping responded warmly to this; the matter was put to the tiny PCC, and passed. In this way the Bleddfa Village Church Restoration Society was formed. I then wrote to George Pace, the leading church architect. He generously donated his services, drawing up a

scheme for re-ordering the church that it could be used in a variety of ways. This was then submitted to the diocese for what is called a faculty, giving permission for the work to go ahead, and so an appeal was launched with the following manifesto:

A First Stage

What follows is the first stage in the renewed life of one Welsh village church, St Mary Magdalene's, Bleddfa, Radnorshire (now Powys).

The earliest record of a church here is 1281, and of the present building the nave dates from the early part of the thirteenth century. The church receives mention in the *Shell Guide Book to Wales*, and it is at the end of this valley that, in 1402, Owain Glyn Dwr led his soldiers to fight against Mortimer.

Our plans for Bleddfa aim not only at creating a more intimate atmosphere for worship, but at creating a flexible space that can be used for the performance of choral music, chamber concerts, exhibitions of art and crafts, as well as a centre for drama in education.

It is also part of our plan to use the building as a centre for meditation and prayer. The village inn, The Hundred House, provides an excellent restaurant and accommodation is available at the inn and at neighbouring farms and cottages.

If our plans are carried through successfully, we hope that others will be encouraged to follow our example, not merely to preserve an ancient building but to explore the creative potential of our Welsh churches and chapels for a variety of purposes. In England churches are being declared redundant at the rate of two a week, or over one hundred a year. In Radnorshire there are many churches like Bleddfa that are threatened with being declared redundant, closed and eventually razed to the ground. We believe that it is our task to try and preserve some of these buildings for those who come after us.

James Roose-Evans, MA Oxon.

George Pace, FRIBA

The Revd John Tipping

Roger Capps of Capps and Capps in Hay-on-Wye, a firm that specialised in restoring old buildings, was invited to come and inspect the building. He discovered not only that one major beam needed to be replaced, and two new sets of trusses, but that the entire main roof needed replacing:

the wooden pegs which held the existing slate tiles in place had all rotted, so that the tiles were held together simply by inertia! The roof had to be stripped, re-battened, re-felted, and new tiles installed, each with a steel pin. In addition the building needed to be re-wired, the Victorian pews removed – these were found to be standing on bare earth, and the floor flagstoned.

In the autumn of 1974 an appeal was launched, and I organised a concert in the church, to announce the scheme, saying that although we were but a few, we had only to reach out our hands and others would come to join ours in an ever-growing circle of friendship. It was in this way that the Bleddfa Centre for Caring and the Arts (later to be re-named A Centre for the Creative Spirit) was born, based on my belief that the arts should nurture and enrich people's lives. The word 'caring' has come to be associated with Social Services, which is why the title was eventually changed but I had in mind what a wise woman once replied, when asked 'What is Truth?' She pondered for a long time and then said, 'It's another word for "Understanding". It's putting yourself in the place of another person and showing that you *care*.'

In 1978 we were registered as a charity, under the name of *The Bleddfa Trust*, with the aim of 'providing a centre for those seeking through prayer, through the arts, and through encounter with others, a deepening of spiritual understanding.' It was in this year that the Trust received its first grant from the Welsh Churches Act.

I was convinced that we had to rethink the meaning of the word 'community' in connection with rural areas. It should be apparent that in many areas of the country the old unity of a village or a hamlet is already a thing of the past. The increasing closure of village schools and sub-post offices, the dwindling congregations of churches and chapels – the incumbent often having to minister to some eight or ten churches – plus the drift of younger people to towns and urbanised areas where there is a greater chance of employment, and the gradual disappearance of the small farmer, have had the effect of debilitating many rural areas. It may be that future governments will arrest and divert this movement but at present there is little sign of this. If a village, especially the smaller ones, is to survive in the twenty-first century it will have to redefine the meaning of the word 'community', and each will be forced to find its own solution in pragmatic fashion.

There is a Buddhist saying: 'Look at the ground on which your own feet stand' while another Zen saying is, 'A journey of a thousand miles begins on your own doorstep.' They are sayings that have deeply influenced me. I realised that, reluctant though I was, if I did nothing then in time the church would be declared redundant.

The first three years saw a programme of workshops on the environment, day retreats, events for children, exhibitions of art by such outstanding artists as Thetis Blacker and Peter Eugene Ball. Surprisingly a local farmer who had never bought a work of art before purchased two of Thetis' remarkable batik banners, a major sequence of which hangs in Winchester Cathedral. It was Thetis Blacker who brought other artists to Bleddfa such as the poet Kathleen Raine, and Peter Burman, Secretary for the Council for the Care of Churches. From the exhibition of sculpture by Peter Eugene Ball in Bleddfa church a magnificent almost life-size crucifix was purchased for Birmingham Cathedral where it now hangs. There were concerts of music by Leon Goossens, the York Winds of Toronto, the Claydon Ensemble and others, all giving their services free.

I wrote many letters, one to the Marquess of Anglesey who asked me to lunch to meet Ivor Bulmer-Thomas who had founded Friends of Friendless Churches, and I was invited to join the Council of this organisation. Shortly after this, in 1979, when Capps and Capps had submitted its estimate for the work to be done, Lord Anglesey, as Chairman of the Historic Buildings Committee for Wales, secured us a major grant of half the amount needed. Ironically one local woman insisted that I hand this back as, she said, there was no way I could raise the other half, while her husband referred to me as a passing meteor! Neither had investigated my track record for raising money at Hampstead. I wrote hundreds more letters and the money came in, while we continued to raise a modest income from various activities in the church. But there was opposition also from certain local inhabitants. One chapel woman tackled me in the churchyard one day, saying,

'It's evil what you are doing!'

I replied that other churches held concerts of music, and put on exhibitions. I then added,

'And the Dean of Westminster Abbey has sent a donation.'

At which she snapped, 'He doesn't know what is going on!'

And because we also had workshops on meditation another inhabitant spread the rumour that we were smoking pot in the church! Interestingly most of the opposition came from those who never came anywhere near the church!

What changed this situation came about one Christmas Eve. Each Christmas Day the tiny congregation at the church was increased to seven. I suggested to the rector that if he were to hold a simple service of carols and readings on Christmas Eve he would find the church packed for, I argued, this is very much a threshold time, when people feel lonely, children having grown up and left home, or partners having died. He resisted this,

and I persisted until he said, 'Oh, all right then! Providing you organise it and all I have to do is give a blessing!'

The rector arrived to find the church packed and instead of the usual rows facing the altar, all the chairs had been placed in a circle, four rows deep, around a manger filled with straw. The raftered roof was softly illuminated but otherwise there was darkness: a warm hushed atmosphere as everyone sat pondering the words, 'The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light.' Then, at a given signal, from outside, on the village green, the children, wrapped and muffled against the cold, could be heard raucously singing a Gloria, as they advanced up the path with a boisterous ringing of handbells, gourds, tambourines and drums. Inside, everyone waited while in the porch there was a hushed consultation and whispers of 'Go on, Robert!'

Robert Gittoes gave three loud bangs on the door of the church.

'Who is it?' I called out.

'It is the Christ Child!' he answered.

To which I replied, 'Let the Christ Child enter!'

The doors opened and the children appeared, two-by-two, carrying tall candles, farm lanterns, baskets of mince pies, and finally a brother and sister bearing a life-size figure of a naked new-born male child which they placed in the manger. Candles were distributed and lit and then, very softly, all joined in singing 'Away in a manger'. The faces of young and old, church and chapel, believers and non-believers, friends and visitors, were reflected in the light from the flickering candles. Melodeon, cello, and flute made music as carols were sung, a poem read, followed by a short meditation and prayers, then more carols. The mince-pies were blessed and then people began to move quietly about, eating mince-pies and drinking coffee, something unheard of in church then, talking, and not wanting to leave, content to be there in the candlelight, in the warmth and security of that ancient house of prayer. It was as though on this dark winter's eve they had finally come to a safe place.

And since that first Christmas Eve the service has continued over more than thirty five years, the building packed, although I am no longer involved.

My home, the Old Rectory, was also regularly used for workshops led by John Hencher, as well as for a counselling service, a grant from the Ernest Cook Trust having enabled us to set up a service called The Listening Post, which trained about a dozen counsellors.

In 1987 I secured a grant of £5000 from the Ernest Cook Trust which enabled us to appoint Irene Vickers as our administrator for that year when, over a period of six months, from May to October, we organised The Festi-

val of the Tree, with some thirty-one events, including workshops, concerts, films, meditation days, and guided walks. The Trust, in association with the Forestry Commission and Coed Cymru, launched new forest trails in the area around Bleddfa, and also undertook to restock the oak wood above the village. All this achieved by voluntary help with the exception of our one paid official, Irene Vickers.

It was at this time that the Catholic writer and theologian, Margaret Hebblethwaite, who had led workshops at Bleddfa, wrote:

Bleddfa has meant a great deal to me, because it is spiritual, creative and imaginative all at the same time. It is rare to find good, creative art work, homeliness, and God going hand in hand. So I tend to find it makes space in which I can feel safe and stimulated at the same time. I do not know anywhere else that has quite such a combination, because other spirituality centres tend to be institutions, and Bleddfa is more personal than that.

I was also correspondent for the village school which about this time was threatened with closure because of falling numbers. Although I led a campaign to save it, which gave it an extra year of life, it was, nonetheless, doomed. With its closure the tiny village went dead. No longer did mothers assemble to collect their children at the end of the day, call in at the village shop, so that it became important to try and preserve it as a public building. In addition, the Bleddfa Trust needed to have its own premises, and no longer to be dependent upon the whims of a PCC! I sat down and wrote several hundred more letters, saying I wanted to secure the school for the Bleddfa Centre, as our official premises. I raised £15,000 and then went with the estate agent to the auction. There was only one other bidder, a mother and her daughter, who clearly wanted to convert the school into a bungalow. As the bidding climbed, I closed my eyes and began to pray. Suddenly the other bidder stopped just short of the amount I had raised: with the result that the Bleddfa Trust acquired the old school. This meant, of course, that more money had to be raised to convert it into a gallery, with offices, and a tea room and so yet more letters had to be written!

To the first exhibition in the as yet unconverted building came Brandon and Flavia Cadbury who lived at Pant-y-dŵr. Brandon was one of the Cadbury Family, and apart from his father's Trust, he and his wife had their own charity, the Oakdale Trust. I was subsequently invited to supper and handed a cheque for £2000 towards the conversion of the school. Later on Brandon Cadbury was to become our much valued secretary, to whom the Trust will always be indebted. I also applied to the Prince of Wales

Trust for Wales and obtained a grant to have a garden designed and created alongside the school cottage, which would provide a space in summer for those coming to exhibitions or other events in which to congregate. It was from the raised pergola at one end of this garden that, for a number of years, such dignitaries as Kathleen Raine, Richard Livesey (now Lord Livesey) our MP, and others opened seasons, or individual exhibitions.

After its conversion the old school was formally opened as the official centre of the Bleddfa Centre for Caring and the Arts by Lady Anglesey, then Chair of the Welsh Arts Council, and whose husband had secured us the first grant for the church.

We continued to have Festivals, lasting several months, such as The Festival of the Family, of the Garden, of the Mother; while under the direction of John Cupper the Old School Gallery began to attract a wide audience, especially to major exhibitions such as that of The Brotherhood of Ruralists, Robin Tanner, The Shakers, etc.

As my home came to be used more frequently for workshops rather than the church it became evident that we really needed more space. Indeed there were times I felt it was no longer my home! I recall one occasion, arriving from London on a Friday night with my partner, when at breakfast the next morning the house was invaded by a group of women, who having arrived for a day's workshop with John Hencher, ignored us totally as we were having breakfast, and went straight to the cupboards to take down coffee and tea. We left and spent the day out, returning only in the evening when they had all gone!

It was at this point that two dilapidated barns and some land adjoining the old school and the church came on the market and I remembered how, some years before, when Sir George Trevelyan, the founder of the Wrekin Trust, came, twice, to lead a day and on the second occasion we went for a walk in the hills above the village. Pointing down towards the Old Rectory, the church, the school, and the dilapidated barns, he said, 'One day all that will be one whole.'

The estate agents gave me two weeks in which to raise £60,000!

I wrote three key letters, one to Cynthia Charlesworth a close friend, asking if she might give us £30,000. I had no reply, so I wrote her a second letter, and when I still had no reply I telephoned her. 'I am just writing you a cheque for ...' she said, and here she spelled out the numbers, '3-0-0-0.'

'No, Cynthia!' I replied, 'You have missed out a nought! It should be 30,000!'

'Oh, yes!' she replied, and a few days later her cheque arrived. The rest of the money arrived in time, including a gift of £6000 from Marie Mathias who had only seen me speak on television, and so, eventually the Trust

acquired the extra land and barns. But then came the bigger challenge: the need to convert the tumble down barns into a proper working space. Dennis Vickers, a local architect, generously drew up a scheme which united the two barns creating a chapel, a reception area and kitchen space, shower and toilets, and a large hall, with an adjoining annexe for storage, built around a courtyard with a fountain. To one side was an orchard which was converted into an area suitable for outdoor activities, while the field below, which linked the Old School Gallery with the Barn Centre, provided ample parking space. But how to raise the very large sums needed to carry through this imaginative conversion!

It was at this juncture that two things happened. Another friend of mine, Wendy Hall, (who eventually was to leave half her estate to the Bleddfa Trust and half to the Purcell School of Music) generously contributed some £60,000 (Cynthia Charlesworth also contributed) and then Dr Miriam Stoppard, wife of Tom Stoppard, who had joined our Board of Trustees, used her influence to get us a grant of £38,513 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

In the reception area is a pine cupboard on top of which stands a piece of sculpture by Peter Eugene Ball, entitled *The Holy Man*. In one hand he holds a candelabra in which a lit candle usually stands. On the wall above, painted in large letters by John Hencher, are some words by the Jungian analyst and author Anthony Stevens: 'Each of us carries a single lamp for humanity.' These words remind us of those of the Buddha to his disciples: 'Be ye lanterns unto yourselves', and those of Jesus, 'You are the light of the world.' The chapel, which is used for meditation, is named after Cynthia Charlesworth, while the large hall is called *The Hall Barn*, in memory of Wendy Hall, whose ashes are interred in the orchard.

The Trust has owed much over the years to the support of local people, in particular, Jean Thomas who ran the little post office, and who for some twenty-five years was the glue that held the work of the Trust together, while her husband Albert is still responsible for general maintenance and uses the large field below the Barn Centre to graze his sheep! Jean Thomas until her death in 2007, was not only treasurer and in charge of all bookings for workshops, but ordered stock for the Trust's shop as well as being on duty at the Old School five days a week. John Cupper, who was in charge of the Old School Gallery, built up a loyal following of people who came from far and wide. A key part of the attraction, and part of the ethos of Bleddfa, was the welcome, that essential feeling of caring, with which people were greeted on arrival, so that they were made to feel, not just customers but friends of Bleddfa. An outstanding feature of the exhibitions was John Cupper's visual skill in adapting the space in different ways, find-

ing a different style for each exhibition, often enhanced by the calligraphic contributions of John Hencher.

The early years were sustained by the mainly unpaid commitment of a considerable number of people but slowly, as an organisation expands, it has to be more professional, offer wages, and above all be able to pay its way. Through various mistakes, experiments, vicissitudes, the character of the Centre has emerged more clearly. It was founded on my belief that all art should nourish and nurture people. Unlike most galleries which are primarily commercial enterprises, we wanted to care for those who came and, through the shop window of the gallery, discover what was going on up at the Barn Centre, where the relationship of the creative and the spiritual was being explored in a variety of ways. At its best art, no less than religion, is about the need to search for the reality behind everyday life when, as Wordsworth expresses it, 'our souls have sight of that immortal sea which brought us hither.'

And it is because many are put off by the word 'art' which can suggest the 'highbrow', something for those with a specialist education, I prefer to focus on the word 'creativity', for that is something innate in each one of us. It is by the exercise of our imaginations that we are able to put ourselves in other people's shoes – as Ian McEwan has observed, 'Imagining what it is to be like someone else is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of humanity and the beginning of morality.'

And so for me the task of the Bleddfa Centre is to enable people to exercise their own creativity, to live life richly. Up in the Barn Centre at Bleddfa are painted some words, painted by John Hencher, by the Spanish poet Lorca which sum up what The Centre for the Creative Spirit stands for:

The poem, the song, the picture,
Is only water
Drawn from the well of the people
And it should be given back to them in a cup of beauty
So that they may drink
And in drinking
Understand themselves

True creativity is closely linked with the inner, spiritual life of each of us. It is, as our patron Rowan Williams, the Archbishop, has observed, 'by encouraging creative expression in everyone that we help them to become fully human.'

The work of the Bleddfa Centre is perhaps best summed up by something said by Jeanette Winterson in a radio interview with Bel Mooney:

My work in this world is to open people up to the joy and the strength that is in life and in themselves. And to get people out of this littleness, this feeling of being boxed in, this feeling of being out of control. One of the reasons I am passionate about art is because it is so large and because it opens cathedrals in the mind where you can go and be and you can pray and you are not small. We have to be able to put meaning back into the lives of ordinary people.

We have to be able to put meaning back, and to realise that every aspect of life, from washing dishes, preparing a meal, digging in the garden or allotment, collecting a child from school, or helping a neighbour, is an opportunity for being creative: for the making of something with love. For life itself is the ultimate art.

Like Topsy the work of the Bleddfa Centre has grown. For its first thirty years I was its overall Director, acting in an honorary capacity, not even charging for expenses, while continuing to work as a freelance director and author. In all I raised just over three-quarters of a million pounds for the Bleddfa Trust and still marvel how this happened. I would often lie awake worrying about expenses, staff salaries, and other bills, longing to hand over the stresses and cares of such an organisation! People probably thought I had private means but for a greater part of this time I was struggling. On one occasion I had so little work, and was so broke, that I applied for Social Security. However, on declaring that I had just received a modest cheque for £65 for royalties on my children's books I was disqualified! The whole exercise has been very much one of faith, supported by the belief and trust and generosity of so many hundreds of people.

In 2000, to mark the Millennium, I raised £30,000 to commission from the Irish sculptor Ken Thompson a statue of Tobias and the Angel, which stands at one end of the Barn Centre, greeting people as they arrive. It was unveiled by Dr Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Wales. At the same time The Bleddfa Annual Lecture was launched, the inaugural lecture being given by Neil McGregor, Director of the British Museum, and his successors have included Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Master of the Queen's Music, and the environmentalist Jonathon Porritt, CBE.

Eventually, with great relief, I stepped down first as Director, then as Chairman. I also chose not to be on the selection board when the appointment of a new Director was called for. Today, as a life Trustee, I have only to attend two meetings a year!

The Trust owes much to the bequest of Wendy Hall which enabled it to have a modest portfolio, but it still exists on a narrow budget and the

coming years will see it having to make a number of economies, and a need to depend, as at the start, on much more voluntary help. Over the years, amid all the vicissitudes and difficulties it has become a place of pilgrimage for many. As The Most Reverend Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and our chief patron, has said, 'Bleddfa is a place where people, ideas and imaginings meet at depth, in a way that is very rare. I think it represents all that is most hopeful for our anxious and fragmented culture.' Similarly Neil McGregor, Director of the British Museum, who gave the Inaugural Bleddfa Annual Lecture, has said, 'The Bleddfa Centre is a place where the big questions of life are asked.'

Apart from its own programme, the Bleddfa Trust provides a home for a number of other organisations such as the Guild of Pastoral Psychology which meets regularly, as does the Bluesy Wolf Music School for young people run by Petra Beresford-Webb, the Egg Tempera Classes led by Jane Knott, the Bleddfa Meditation Group, as well as a regular painting group by the University of Aberystwyth and the popular poetry workshops led by Peter J Conradi and Daphne Turner.

A STUBBORN LANDSCAPE

Paul Binding

Tom Bullough, *The Claude Glass*, (Sort of Books, 2007), 201pp., £6.99.

... O this was Radnorshire proper – poor, poor ground, so thin and stony that several of the fields bordering onto the common land had been all but abandoned, the hedges having unravelled themselves into individual trees and the bracken having spilt through the holes into the wiry, sheep-trimmed grass. In the surrounding hills, there were people who saw omens in the approaching clouds, who refused to cut the hay around standing stones, who insisted that the wood of any tree struck by lightning would never burn, and that the hills were thick with the ghosts of the unfortunate souls who had drowned up in the mawn pools – the old peat cuttings, whose banks floated treacherously on the deep, brown water.

IT WAS TO THIS STUBBORN LANDSCAPE, in the early seventies, that a young university-educated couple, Adam and Tara felt drawn, children of their time in that they sought a closeness to Nature, a restoration of the atavistic, denied them by the conventional society in which they had been reared. In Radnorshire then they decided to settle, and when we meet them at the opening of the Eighties, they have made a success of a farm, Penllan, have sustained a way of living true to their initial ideals, and have two small sons: seven-year-old Robin, one of the novel's two main consciousnesses, and Martin, aged four. Life at Penllan, its vicissitudes, tensions and satisfactions, and its relationship to another farm, Werndunvan, on the other side of the mountain evocatively called Cold Winter, stand at the centre of the second novel of Tom Bullough (born 1975), who himself grew up on a Radnorshire farm, near Gladestry. *The Claude Glass* is, in my view, a masterpiece, poetic in conception and execution alike, concerned with profound existential and cultural issues, and perfect in both formal design and verbal articulation, and a book that repays careful rereading.

A story-teller by at least the time he was his character Robin's age – indeed Robin's imaginings which he both shares with and imposes on other children are not the least delightful feature of the novel – Tom Bullough began his literary career after university, with pieces describing his experiences in Zimbabwe; these appeared in the Welsh Marches periodical, *Broad Sheep*. They led to his being contacted by a literary agency, and to his

beginning on two full-length projects: a travelogue which he later largely abandoned, and a work of fiction which eventually metamorphosed into his first published novel *A* (Sort Of Books, 2002). Told in twenty-six chapters, each headed by a letter of the Roman alphabet, this justifies its intriguing title in two principal ways: first by the letter being the initial of the main protagonist's first name, Angus. Angus, victim of unreciprocated love, and escapee from a group of harassed drugs-taking friends in increasing trouble, finds emotional and imaginative self-realisation in his creator's own Welsh border-country, to which, by the time he came to write the final version, Tom had now himself returned – to a cottage near Hay-on-Wye:

Things were closing in on him, that was how it felt. The weather, the autumn, the loneliness; but beyond all those the crippling, swollen brilliance in his head – the burning – that had arrived with Belle, and now spelled her absence. After three or so months alone in a Welsh cottage, Angus had hoped it might have died back down, even slightly; but the truth was that the burning was growing. It was huger than ever: orange towards the centre, cherry red at its edges.... That was why Angus had decided to write. It was the only channel he could think of. In itself, the burning was dazzling, uncomfortable. But if he could only control it, direct it, expose it to some kind of understanding; perhaps then he might still re-emerge.

Angus's need to write leads him to re-create the last days of a group of Kamikaze pilots refusing to acknowledge the enforced surrender of Japan, indeed defying it in mind and action. Thus 'A' stands also for 'A' bomb, the unleashing of which on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has proved perhaps *the* determining factor of the world we have inhabited ever since, and constituted in itself – as the poet David Gascoigne once remarked – a major event in human consciousness. To challenge one's already administered fate out of a faith whose erroneousness has already been appallingly demonstrated has a metaphoric significance for young holed-up Angus, and reveals a pre-occupation of Bullough's own that informs *The Claude Glass*. Imagination is often at war with reason, and while this can lead to danger and suffering, there are times too when it offers the more righteous road to take.

In the later novel an off-stage representative of reason is Robin's maternal grandfather, Tara's father, of whom the boy and his little brother are deeply fond. 'He is never unreasonable, just as he is never understanding!' his daughter complains. Had the older man had his way there would have been no Radnorshire life for the family at all, none of the poetry-writing and the many forays into a world of sweetness and light that Tara makes

(despite her admiration for her husband's labours and their fruits, she remains 'the only vegan sheep-farmer in the known world'), and Robin and Martin would be curbed of some of the wilder high spirits which do not always serve themselves or others at all well, but which are nevertheless indissoluble from their being. When things get too difficult, this reasonable grandfather can help out with hard cash! Who can not admit its welcome-ness? Yet how much poorer – in the more important sense of the word – would Robin and his family's life have been if they had pursued the course of pure reason.

Adam himself – who, in his deepest being, is in fact no complete foe to his father-in-law's creed but indeed subscribes to many of its tenets, and whose farming is anything but romantic, anything but a mere expression of Seventies' Green Wave – has had his heart developed by the life he has elected to lead:

Adam loved to talk about sheep. He would tell the boys how all of them had different characters, just like humans had, and how some of them were clever and some of them were stupid, and some were greedy, and others adventurous, or uptight, or solitary, and if you didn't believe him, then you should just sit there for a few years and watch them yourself. He'd tell them how everyone in the country would have been surrounded by sheep once upon a time, and how Christians would have seen the whole idea of being a flock quite differently to the way that most people saw it today. Or he'd tell them about the pee-wits tumbling endlessly over their nests in the bog and the bottom fields, about owls and curlews, badgers and pine martens.

And there is always Meredith, that special sheep allowed a life of her own, who hobnobs with her own kind and other creatures too, free of the round born of necessity farming.

But the problems inherent in existence do not cease because a man like Adam can find such joy in his work with animals. In one sense indeed this very joy *begets* problems, because deep feelings and obligations are aroused, and so the difficulties inherent in coping with existence are compounded. Lambing, for instance, however caringly practised, inevitably involves suffering, with excruciating pains, needless deaths. There is a most moving description of a ewe giving birth to a freak, to a perfectly formed pair of lamb's legs with no other bodily parts attached. Unless we can accept such things as inextricable from being, the novel suggests, we limit ourselves severely.

Penllan and the lot of the high-spirited, much loved and cared-for Robin

are contrasted with the household on the other side of Cold Winter, Wern-dunvan, an old farm where Philip, his wife Dora and a son of Robin's own age, Andrew, live in four ill-kept, dirty rooms, the rest of the large place, including an annexe built in the late eighteenth-century, consisting of dusty, unvisited storerooms for ignored clutter. The farm has been in Philip's family for generations, yet though he feels an obstinate possessiveness, the man, at once surly and truculent, neither loves his inheritance nor works it thoughtfully. Mismanagement has made him indigent; all that ever quickens him is the acquisition of such machines as a new Mercedes tractor and a bull-dozer. He treats his sad, bored wife so addicted to medication (tranquillisers, presumably), his boy, Andrew and his farm-animals with an indifference shot through with contempt in which lies coiled to spring a strong vein of resentful sadism. Andrew, the second main consciousness of the novel, is regularly dressed in his father's trimmed filthy cast-offs, and goes around unkempt and generally unminded. For affection and companionship he relies on the farm's dogs, in particular two bitches Meg and Di, who are really the only carers he has. Small wonder then that when Andrew perforce goes to school – the very school in the village which Robin and Martin attend – the bemused boy thinks of them throughout the heavy, incomprehensible hours:

There was rarely a time at school when Andrew couldn't smell Wern-dunvan: the dogs, the bales, the kitchen where his mother clung to the front of the Rayburn. At different times he smelt different things, so one day he might smell Di at his desk beneath the room-wide windows, the mustiness of the bald, scratchy patches on her skin. But then he would smell Meg, and he would think about times when they had been curled up together in the hay, when she had kept him from the cold, licked the dirt from his face, whined to keep him company.

These are not relationships which the rest of the world will comprehend, nor which his sullen, bloody-minded father will respect. And his failure to do so spurs forward the trajectory of Andrew's sorry, half-feral journey in life. But then Philip's cruel treatment of his son's beloved Di is only to be expected from a man who has only found pleasure in his boy when he heard him saying (in emulation of himself) 'Fuck off!' to perceived interlopers.

In the one of the great lumber-rooms upstairs Andrew comes across the eponymous Claude Glass, for Wern-dunvan has known better days, better owners, when it belonged to the Hutchinsons, the in-laws of the poet Wordsworth who stayed there, Sara Hutchinson having been the adored 'Asra' of his friend Coleridge's wonderful poems. A Claude Glass is a rect-

angular mirror of darkened glass, convex so that at its centre it heightens whoever is looking at it but sets him/her in a limited, framed view – so that a picture is formed consonant with the admired landscapes of one of the Romantics' favourite painters, Claude Lorrain. It was in the late eighteenth- / early nineteenth-century that the object was most popular, during the heyday, in other words, of the house itself. For Andrew the odd little mirror comes to have a totemic fascination, one that is shared by Robin when the two boys associate together (they cannot be said precisely to become friends, and therein lies one of the principal sources of sorrow in this heart-felt work). Yet the object – whose powers are rendered by the author with a poet's attention – brings distress and grief as well as intimations of joy. Indeed it is with these last conditions that we readers of the novel are left. Can it be that wilful distortion of Nature, even for the highest of aesthetic ends, will always in the end destroy, rather than complement?

But Tom Bullough's novel is no allegory, no fable, so one must beware of being too reductive in any reading of it. There is no doubt that the newcomers to Radnorshire – harder-working, more humane – do better, and come off better. Who could not prefer Adam, despite an eruption or two on his part of professional-class arrogance, and the kindly, dreamy Tara to callous Philip and Dora, nor read their effect on the land itself as infinitely the more benevolent? What also is the significance of the great age of Wern-dunvan, of its extensive decades-long neglect? Is it that people, practices, communities grow tired and stale more often than not, and need the injection of new blood, fresh enthusiasms, recently awakened love? Philip (his noxious manner and body), Dora (her pill-popping), Andrew (his deficiency in conventional intelligence) are decadents in the most literal sense, with no capacity for disseminating joy.

Yet it isn't as simple as that. Robin's family are surely a little too used to privileges for all their tested ability to withstand hard times when they come. They expect nice things in life rather as a matter of course, a point that isn't lost on their neighbours, above all on Philip who comes obsessively to hate them. Robin, likeable and sympathetic though he is, is a mite too used to having his own way, and, what's more, of thinking too well of himself for wanting it. The tragedy of the fate of the Claude Glass is to a real measure of his making – and to what degree he will ever realise this Bullough cannot tell us because of his time-scale, but leaves us to ponder. And isn't there a major respect in which the poor casualty, Andrew, possibly without a full quota of wits, has led an intenser, more selfless life than Robin, who has never felt such sheer love as that Andrew has entertained for his dogs? And anyway it was he who first lit upon the mysterious, ambiguous, transforming glass.

Tom would be the first to discuss these issues interestingly, leading one on to further appreciation of his rich and intimately worked book. He is a lively, sophisticated person, even though he clearly feels most at home in wild country, the wilder the more congenial perhaps, and now lives with his wife Charlie and their son, Edwyn, born 9 October 2009, on a mountainside near Brecon. He has travelled a great deal in Russia and in Africa (African music being a passion with him), and is widely read; Alan Garner was an early influence on him and a writer he still admires, Russell Hoban and Nikolai Gogol other loves. At the moment he is engaged on a novel which will have at its centre the partially deaf nineteenth-century Russian scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857–1935), pioneer of astronautics, inspirer of later Soviet rocket engineers, and disciple of philosopher Nikolai Fedorov, who pinned all hopes for humanity on the colonisation of space. Once more, Tom says, nature and our mastery (or otherwise) of her will be at the centre of his work. We have much to look forward to.

A TOLERABLE LIFE

Richard Shannon

RWD Fenn, in association with Sir Andrew Duff Gordon, Bart., *The Life and Times of Sir George Cornwall Lewis, Bart.* (Logaston Press, 2005), x + 374pp., £14.95.

MR FENN STARTS OFF HIS ACCOUNT of Radnorshire's grandest political son tellingly with a drily acid rebuke to the late Roy Jenkins, author of a much overrated biography of Gladstone, for dismissing 'the somewhat forgotten Sir George Cornwall Lewis' as one who 'did not cut much ice' as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Jenkins's condescension masks the fact that Lewis was appointed to the Exchequer by Lord Palmerston in 1855 after Gladstone, having made a mess by starving the Crimean War of funding, then deserted the government and scuttled out of office and its problems. Lewis made a good fist at dealing with those problems, a fact ever insisted on by that connoisseur of Victorian budgets, Walter Bagehot, and a fact made only the more evident by Gladstone's absurdly vindictive assault on Lewis's budget in 1857. Back in office after the Derby–Disraeli interlude of 1858–59, Palmerston wanted to resume with Lewis at the Exchequer, but both he and Lewis agreed that the public interest would better be served by conceding to Gladstone's insistence that for him it had to be the Exchequer or nothing.

Notwithstanding Lewis's forbearance in that kind of way, Mr Fenn points out that it was by no means the intention of Lewis's contemporaries that he should be forgotten. He was accorded generous obituary notices and a full entry in *The Dictionary of National Biography*. A memorial bust stands in Westminster Abbey, a handsome more than life-size statue adorns the forecourt of the Shire Hall in Hereford, where he was Liberal MP 1847–52. An impressive Gothick-style monument inaugurated at New Radnor by Lord Palmerston marked Lewis's having succeeded his father, Sir Thomas Frankland Lewis, Bart., as Liberal MP for Radnor Boroughs, 1855–63. His splendid parish church at Old Radnor displays ample tablets of fine dignity honouring both father and son, not overlooking the son's record in high office as having been Secretary of State for both the Home and the War Departments as well as his earlier stint at the Treasury. Nor, for that matter, was Lewis's forbearance in 1859 over the Exchequer by any means the end of the story as between Lewis and Gladstone. Lewis was never reluctant to engage against Gladstone in the various cabinet conflicts over such matters as paper duties repeal or defence spending. While

Gladstone eventually won his case over the paper duties, Lewis could rejoice to his colleague Lord Clarendon about Gladstone's backing down on defence: they had taken 'the measure of his foot'. Above all, it was Lewis who led resistance to Gladstone's determined and wrong-headed pushing for recognition of the Confederacy in the American Civil War. In this affair Lewis won a signal victory over his rival. He was widely seen thereupon, in the words of his memoirist in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, as being thus 'liberated' from 'the tutelage of both Palmerston and Russell'. By the beginning of 1863 Lewis in that respect could be seen to be in a position of distinct advantage.

On the face of it, then, an impressive story of political and public achievement. Nor was there any want in Lewis's case of the conventional establishment ambiances and attributes. He passed through Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, with high honours and an exceptional intellectual reputation, and in other circumstances might have led a distinguished academic career. But his actual circumstances were those of the heir to Harpton Court, one of Radnorshire's few grand houses, and the son of a father who was honoured with a baronetcy for eminent public services both locally and nationally, and who expected his son to follow suit. Follow suit the son duly did. Early investigations into the distressed Irish in the northern industrial towns led 'by a deft touch of nepotism', as Mr Fenn puts it, to a place succeeding his father on the Poor Law Commission. Both these tours of duty provided testing exercises in the arts and ups and downs of public policy and controversy. Like the father, the son had cause to deplore the ruthless habits of the Commission's famed secretary, Edwin Chadwick. Unlike the father, the son got caught out in public scandal. Mr Fenn judges Lewis's part in the notorious Andover Union affair, where the Commission proved negligent in a matter of gross mismanagement, to be the blackest spot on Lewis's reputation. Nonetheless, this apprenticeship led in turn to a parliamentary seat and appointments promptly by Lord John Russell to the secretaryship of the Indian Board of Control in 1847, as Under-secretary at the Home Office in 1848 and Financial Secretary to the Treasury in 1850.

Lewis was born into the purple of the high Victorian cousinhood. He became brother-in-law to Lord Clarendon, oft-times Foreign Secretary, and stepfather-in-law to Sir William Vernon Harcourt, later Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Rosebery's successor as leader of the Liberal Party in 1896. He was a great favourite with the Queen and Prince Albert, who found what Disraeli described as his coolly sceptical 'Baylesque' turn of mind highly congenial. Victoria wrote to Lewis's widow, Lady Theresa (herself a considerable intellectual figure): 'we de-

lighted in his society; we admired his great honesty and fearless straightforwardness'. Lewis was a poor speaker both on hustings and platform as well as in the Commons. A detached attitude of 'world-weariness' combined with an ironic sense of humour meant that he would never be a swayer of crowds. He was hopeless at public relations. There were candid observers who remarked on his 'slouching gait, the uneasy manner, the hesitating speech'. Mr Fenn draws attention to the fact that Lewis never won a contested election. Lewis's strengths as a public man, on the other hand, were accurately set out by his memoirist in the *DNB*: 'As a sober-minded, practical politician, of high principle, untiring industry, and great administrative ability, he secured the confidence of the moderate men of all parties.' Probably the best contemporary summing-up is that of the cousinhood's foremost diarist and gossip, Charles Greville: 'cold-blooded as a fish, totally devoid of sensibility or nervousness, of an imperturbable temper, calm and resolute, laborious and indefatigable, and exceedingly popular in the House of Commons, from his genial good-humour and civility, and the credit given him for honour, sincerity, plain-dealing and good intentions'.

How then to explain Lord Jenkins's invidious 'somewhat forgotten'? Mr Fenn offers two kinds of explanation. The first, and most obvious, was Lewis's premature death. He died suddenly, to general public shock, in April 1863, in his fifty-seventh year. Of his collegiate contemporaries, Clarendon was in his sixty-third year and had seven more years to live. Charles Wood, Lord Halifax, was six years senior to Lewis, and lived twenty-two years beyond Lewis's span. George Grey was seven years Lewis's senior, and lived nineteen years beyond his term. Palmerston was in his seventy-ninth year, and had two more years to live. Russell was in his seventy-first year and had four more years until lengthy retirement. Gladstone was in his fifty-third year, and had thirty-one more years yet to live in active politics. Mr Fenn's second kind of explanation is that Lewis never sufficiently had his heart committed wholly to the public and political sphere. He always thought of himself primarily as a man of letters. The friendships he cared for most were with the literary and intellectual rather than the public and political elite: Charles Austin, Macaulay, Milman, Hallam, Grote, Nassau Senior. There were links between these worlds: Austin's literary daughter married Lewis's cousin Sir Alexander Duff Gordon, Bart., appointed private secretary by Lewis in 1855. Command of most languages made Lewis familiar with the international scholarly scene. He was an acclaimed classical scholar. He disputed on equal terms with Niebuhr. Lewis was an inveterate scribbler. He was at his happiest writing books, articles, reviews, adversaria, squibs, critiques, dialogues, essays, enquiries, histories, remarks, treatises, any manner of work in print. Mr Fenn

lists fifty items in his bibliographical index, including twenty-three books. He became the heart and soul of *Notes and Queries*. He would, indeed, have made an excellent editor, like Mr Fenn himself, of the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*. Gladstone too, of course, scribbled endlessly. But his scribbles all had to do, one way or another, with God's purposes in this world, and His particular intentions in relation to the part to be played by His instrument, Gladstone. Nothing could have been more alien or repellent to Lewis's 'Baylesque' mentality. As it was, defeat in the general election of 1852 led Lewis to accept without qualms editorship of the *Edinburgh Review*, among the grandest of the grand monthly Victorian organs of opinion, in the Whig-Liberal interest. Only Lord Palmerston's offer of the Exchequer in succession to Gladstone in 1855 was reason adequate enough to warrant giving up so agreeable a post of intellectual eminence.

Mr Fenn treats all this with admirable expertise, at ease, much like Lewis himself, amid all the ink. He leaves us with the distinct impression that Lewis was decidedly a reluctant minister of state, dutiful and competent, but lacking the ultimate hard and sharp edge of ambition and will to power. He was, perforce, not strictly Palmerston's first choice. Edward Cardwell at the Board of Trade had been so closely involved with Gladstone's epochal 1853 budget that Palmerston was bound to approach him in 1855. But Cardwell's loyally declining to replace his old Peelite comrade was entirely predictable. Lewis's reluctance was overborne mainly by the Villiers influence: his wife, Lady Theresa, and his brothers-in-law, Lord Clarendon and Charles Pelham Villiers, the great free-trade advocate. Gladstone himself was at that stage encouraging. Lewis, after all, had been but a few years earlier the Treasury's Financial Secretary, the third in the hierarchy after the First Lord and the Chancellor. He had the qualifications. He was the obvious choice. Palmerston knew him to be 'methodical and clear-headed, with great power of learning anything he wishes to know'.

Lord Jenkins's supercilious patronising raises questions, however, beyond matters of ink and dutiful reluctance. The real test of Lewis's posthumous reputation rests on the question of Palmerston's efforts to stifle Gladstone's ambition to become eventual leader of the Liberal party. This issue became acute when in 1861 Lord John Russell left the Commons and went to the Lords as Earl Russell. It was well and generally understood that Russell would succeed Palmerston as Liberal leader and Prime Minister. But who would succeed Palmerston as Leader of the House of Commons? With Russell in the Lords, Palmerston's successor as Leader in the Commons would thus take unto himself a prescriptive right to succeed Russell as Liberal party leader, and thus prospective Prime Minister. Palmerston

and his friends were appalled at the prospect of Gladstone's so doing. But how to prevent him? How to head him off?

Mr Fenn here, I suspect reluctant to leave the arena of comfortable ink, avoids direct confrontation with the question. He indicates that while DA Smith's entry on Lewis in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published in 2004, came too late to be of service in the present text, he implies that he has no quarrel with Smith's opinion that Lewis's giving way to Gladstone over the Exchequer in 1859 'suggests that he should not have had the will to contest Gladstone's claim to lead the party once Palmerston and Russell had gone'. Smith judges 'speculation' that Lewis might have led the party as 'wide of the mark'. But here, I think, Smith himself hits wide of the mark by several years. Russell's departure from the Commons in 1861 is what inevitably set the speculation going. It would have been a matter not for Lewis alone to have managed, but a matter of Palmerston and his clique being powerfully at Lewis's back. Mr Fenn, however, does provide indirect treatment in the form of quoting from a *Times* leader on Lewis's demise:

He was regarded on all sides as a safe and discreet practical guide, as a man who knew better than any other how to conciliate theory with practice, and to play the part of the Statesman without forgetting the principles of the philosopher. These qualities made him above all men the probable nucleus of some future coalition; the person qualified beyond all others to draw together discordant parties and interests, and to unite them in the pursuit of public good, at whatever sacrifice of personal prejudice or predilection.

The Times's editor Delane had indeed been a key figure in Palmerston's strategic plan to head Gladstone off.

By 1862 Lewis stood alone as the candidate of the anti-Gladstone forces. Sidney Herbert's retirement from ill-health in 1861 had removed the only other plausible contender. Lewis's eligibility as a candidate would have stemmed from his worsting Gladstone over the recognition of the Confederacy issue, the confidence he engendered among the moderate men of all parties and what Greville identified as his exceeding popularity in the House of Commons. In such respects Gladstone would have been (as later events confirmed) decidedly divisive and wanting in popularity. Gladstone's great strength would always be his popularity 'out of doors'; which was precisely why he was so feared. Lewis stood out pre-eminently as the best qualified and most characteristic embodiment of that unstrenuous Bagehotian political epoch between the fall of Peel and the rise of

Gladstone, an epoch of relaxed and loosely defined party lines, of record numbers of uncontested constituencies, of collusive front benches, of anti-Gladstone pacts between Lord Palmerston, the Conservative leader Lord Derby and the Queen. The talk of the time was that Palmerston would arrange at some advantageous opportunity – probably after a further successful general election – his translation to the Lords, from whence he would manage Lewis's leadership of the Commons. The general assumption obtained that it would be far too dangerous to leave it to Russell to arrange. Russell and Gladstone were observed increasingly to be in tandem over the looming big issues: a second Reform Act and Irish Church disestablishment.

Thus the shock of Lewis's sudden, unexpected death in 1863. Palmerston, bereft of any plausible alternative Commoner, could but confide to his stepson Shaftesbury: 'Gladstone will soon have it all his own way; and, whenever he gets my place, we shall have strange doings.'

Is it worth while, even so indirectly as Mr Fenn does it, raising these questions? The story of how poor, diminutive, sequestered Radnorshire might have in certain not entirely remote contingencies furnished forth to the nation a Commons Leader in succession to Palmerston and even a Prime Minister in succession to Russell is not without its wistfully fugitive charms. Lord Hartington's being fitted into Lewis's former Radnor Boroughs seat in 1869 as a refugee from defeat in Lancashire was not an authentically comparable instance. One benefit from raising these questions certainly is that in so doing attention is drawn to the fact that Gladstone was never as secure in any of his leadership roles before 1880 as he later seemed to have become. Even when after Palmerston's death in 1865 Prime Minister Russell offered him the leadership of the Commons, Gladstone was aware that general sentiment would have preferred George Grey, as a kind of stiffer and less popular substitute version of Lewis. The utter mess Gladstone made of the Reform issue in 1866 provided instructive lessons in how not to lead government in the Commons. The even bigger mess he made in 1867 provided equally instructive lessons in how not to lead opposition in the Commons. Still, our concern here is rather with the fortunes of Lewis than with those of Gladstone. Yet it remains of the essence in doing justice to Lewis that his – so to speak – crucial negative capability is duly taken fairly into account.

What else? Mr Fenn surely does full justice to Lewis as a capital Radnorshire figure. Disraeli described him as being 'rather above middle height', with a 'remarkable countenance, massy features, antique but not classical'. From the start Mr Fenn makes clear that though of unimpeachably Anglo-Welsh stock, Lewis never admitted any hint of Welshness in his be-

ing. Both as private scholar and public man he consistently deprecated all manifestations of Welsh language and cultural revival. He enlarged in 1849 to the Cambrian Literary Institute (himself well-found in Sanskrit, Provençal and Anglo-Saxon), 'upon the evils arising in Wales from the use of the Welsh language'. As a progressive thinker, he wanted the Welsh to learn the language essential for access to the professions: only dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries at that time thought otherwise.

Both as resident in the county and MP for its boroughs and as one constantly involved in getting to and from London (where he kept Kent House in Knightsbridge), Lewis attended carefully to matters of communication by road and rail. Mr Fenn delights in tracing his carriage journeys and the inns where he rested away from Harpton overnight. Then, with the coming of the railway revolution, Mr Fenn delights even more in tracing his travels by rail: 'a great railway traveller, a serious rival to Kilvert in this respect'. At one time Lewis even nursed hopes of a private station at Harpton Court, as the new line began to extend its way from Kington in Herefordshire through to New Radnor and beyond to Rhaeadr.

Both those places were among Lewis's Radnor Boroughs. The others in 1855 were Presteign (always thus in this text), Knighton, Knucklas, and Cefn-llys. Mr Fenn neglects no occasion of Lewis's presence in these townships as canvasser of votes, grateful acknowledger of continued confidence, encourager of improvements, speaker on questions of the hour. He did service to Presteign in helping to save John Beddoes school from dereliction. As a grandee of the county he did his duties as landlord and as cog in the hierarchy beneath the Lord-Lieutenant. As a dedicated enemy of High Church 'Puseyism', he took a somewhat guarded interest in Radnorshire's ecclesiastical affairs. (There were no family livings in his gift.) He was well-known to if somewhat critical of Connop Thirlwall, who created an important precedent by teaching himself to speak Welsh on preferment as Bishop of St David's. Lewis's brother the Revd Gilbert Frankland turned down the poorly endowed Deanery of Hereford to become snugly installed as a residentiary Canon of Worcester. Lewis sympathised characteristically with the *Essays and Reviews* critics of Christian orthodoxy. His own investigations into the reliability of the Old Testament made him also sympathetic to the notoriously heretical Bishop Colenso of Natal. Although an omnivorous philosopher, natural or metaphysical, and a frequent visitor to London zoo in Regent's Park, Lewis seems not to have admitted Darwin to his repertoire of intellectual concerns.

Back in Radnorshire he received his county peers and was received in return. He presided affably at cattle shows and agricultural societies without being much interested in either. He was too mediocre a rider to engage in

horsey pursuits. His 'oft-quoted' quip that 'life would be tolerable were it not for its amusements' is held to explain much about his rather detached mannerisms. His marriage in 1844 to Lady Theresa née Villiers, three years older than he, niece to the third Earl of Clarendon, sister to the fourth, and widow of Thomas Lister, Russell's brother-in-law, was entirely happy. She was a woman both attractive and learned, an elegant hostess of winning charm and, along with her brothers, a great asset to Lewis's career. There were no Lewis children, but her son and two daughters by Lister found in Lewis an amenable stepfather. In all such matters Mr Fenn does not stint information. Radnorians have good reason to be grateful for his erudition and application.

HOUSES AND HISTORY

RWD Fenn

Richard Suggett, *Houses & History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire 1400–1800* (Aberystwyth, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales 2005), vi + 344pp. with 284 figures, £30.00.

THIS IS LOCAL HISTORY, de luxe style, as one would expect from a publication from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, ‘the government organisation’, as the dust cover tells us, responsible for surveying, recording, publishing and maintaining a database of ancient, historical and maritime sites and structures and landscapes in Wales’. In recent years the Royal Commission has been projecting a less austere image and has become through its web site and customer services welcomingly user friendly. It is the same with Mr Suggett’s study of and history in Radnorshire. It is friendly, but not over familiar, and doesn’t dumb down the scholarship.

It is the result of a prodigious amount of labour and in a period of six years, from 1989 to 1995, some 1000 farmsteads were visited and one is tempted to go to the index straight away to see if one’s own house or those of one’s friends and neighbours get a mention. For several years I was vicar of Glasgwm, Rhiwlen, and Cregrina and so it was a bit of a disappointment, but no surprise, that Glasgwm Vicarage, more famous for being mentioned by Kilvert than for its architecture, most of which was the work of Benjamin Wislade, gets no mention, nor does the seventeenth-century Yat which is more surprising. On the other hand, away from the village this large, scattered parish does better. The development of Upper Llaeneon from its medieval origins is described and illustrated in some detail, and Llwyn-Pinch, and nineteenth-century barns at Tyn-y-coed and Wern-Dantsey all have surviving crucks, and perhaps Pen-y-bont, a now demolished two unit cottage which also had a cruck-truss, will merit a place in the Society’s field section survey of Radnorshire’s lost cottages.

In the parish of Cregrina, Craig yr Onen, the farm of Philip Davies, one of the churchwardens, good farm house teas in the Edwardian farm house diverted my attention from the nearby platformed house and byre range of c.1700 in which reused cruck blades appear in a roof truss. Likewise at Upper Llatho, the farm of Roger Davies, Philip’s son, I never noticed what Richard Suggett describes as a truncated platformed former longhouse which has retained the remains of two former cruck-trusses.

My performance was no better at Rhiwlen where one of the wardens, Mrs Joyce Davies, lived at Cwmfillo, another neat late nineteenth-century farmstead. I now know, thanks once again to Richard Suggett about the three cruck trusses which survive in a nearby building defining the hall and inner room of a peasant hall house, which is illustrated diagrammatically in *Houses & History in the March of Wales. Radnorshire 1400–1800*.

But it was at Cwmlerllan, also in Rhiwlen parish, that I missed most:

This site illustrates a further type of house-and-byre combination. The stone-built house and cowhouse range developed from a cruck-framed timber walled peasant hall-house, and the crucks defining the single-bayed hall have survived. At Cwmlerllan the upper end-bay (inner room) was reconstructed as a hall/kitchen with the end chimney set against a bank. The single-bayed hall became a parlour with closely-spaced joists and a fine window, and with a service-room alongside that provided direct access to the downhouse. Reconstruction, judging from the surviving ovolo-moulded detail, seems to have taken place in the mid-seventeenth century. The planning of the house reflects the concern, characteristic of the period, to provide a parlour at the entry and is an early example of a house with a central entry and all end chimney. The linear form of the range is also characteristic.

Reading about these post-medieval survivals one is struck by how much the superficial appearance of the county was changed in the second half of the nineteenth century by new stone and brick farm houses, a development which was paralleled by the numerous church restorations undertaken by SW Williams and others.

Besides the immense amount of field work undertaken by Mr Suggett and his colleagues, he was also in the course of his research no stranger to the National Library of Wales and other repositories of manuscripts and the printed word. This enabled him to illustrate the bond between land and family in tenement names:

Elizabethan litigation has preserved some of the earlier (pre Acts of Union) names for tenements. Characteristically their principal element was a personal name which expressed an inheritance genealogy rather than a topographical name. A late-medieval tenement was described as the land that belonged to a particular person .

Thus, Tir Howell y Fron in Cregrina seems to have become Tir Thomas ap Howell Fron after descent to his son. It is interesting that by 1556 Cado-

gan ap Meredith lived there and is styled as gentleman. What, one wonders, was the accepted sixteenth-century definition of a Radnorshire gentleman

In the second half of the sixteenth century, after the Acts of Union, farms were increasingly known by topographical rather than by family names as the bond between land and family had been severed. This process is illustrated, for example, in the parish of Glasgwm where by 1558 Tir Howell David ap Howell ap Rees was also known, from its hillside location, as Ty-yn-y-bryn.

The book dispels several myths or at least requires their reinterpretation. The smallness of Radnorshire has perhaps been over emphasized. In Wales both Flintshire and Anglesey are smaller, and in England Bedfordshire in the Home Counties and the address of Luton airport, centre of the package holiday, is of similar size. Likewise despite the oft-quoted rhyme about 'Radnorshire, poor Radnorshire', it seems not always to have been so:

The upland pastoral economy had been very profitable in the late-medieval period, producing a surplus that was invested in substantial dwellings.

These buildings appear to have survived because the pastoral economy subsequently became less profitable. Post-medieval building history in the uplands tended to be a process of 'make do and mend'. Early dwellings have survived because they were adapted and remodelled rather than demolished and rebuilt and 'make do and mend' became part of the Radnorshire ethic wherein carefulness became a synonym for meanness and at funerals it was praise indeed to speak of the deceased as 'a careful man'. For many years Newchurch provided an example of this philosophy in practice, the inadequacies of the north west corner of the nave wall being repaired by corrugated iron, then an ubiquitous building material in the county.

Radnorshire, Mr Suggett reminds us, is a county of long periods of low temperature, heavy rainfall, and lack of sunshine. Such a climate as this rendered much of the county unsuitable for the growth of cereals, but one wonders, too, whether this has also helped to shape the character and disposition of county's inhabitants, just as sunny squares helped the development of philosophy in Ancient Greece. One thinks of the Prydderch poems of RS Thomas:

Iago Prydderch, forgive me my naming you.
You are so far in your small fields
From the world's eye, sharpening your blade
On a cloud's edge.

Or of his thoughts on the country clergy:

working in old rectories
By the sun's light, by candlelight.

What effect has isolation and loneliness, as well as climate, had on the Radnorshire psyche? Mr Suggett is at his most fascinating when exploring the relationship between poets and carpenters. RS Thomas in his poem on the little church on the banks of the Ithon at Llananno with its famous medieval timber screen hints at this relationship whilst adding to it a religious dimension:

There are few services
Now; the screen has nothing
To hide. Face to face
With no intermediary
Between me and God, and only the water's
Quiet insistence on a time
older than man.

Timber, Mr Suggett reminds us, was regarded as the best building material and there was great respect for the carpenter's craft, the Welsh bards calling themselves 'carpenters of praise' or 'carpenters of song', and claiming for themselves such tools and technical terms of the craftsman in wood: the axe, plumb-line, and square.

An unknown mid-Tudor carpenter proudly carved the tools of his craft on the jetty-bracket of a very remarkable timber-framed porch at Old Impton in Radnorshire. This complex house in some ways marks the high-point of Welsh carpentry and was built from timber felled in 1542, the year of the second Act of Union. The embellished upper jetty-bracket is not easily seen from the ground and may have been carved as much from a sense of pride in the carpenter's craft as for the owner's delight. The carving illustrated the range of tools employed when building a timber house from felling a tree to finishing and framing the timber.

Welsh rood-screens, like those at Llananno and Old Radnor, are seen as the supreme expression of the artistry of the carpenter, and the late Glamorgan Williams, doyen of modern Welsh historians, suggested that the interlaced designs employed by the carpenters when carving Welsh rood-beams

had affinities with the work of the poets: 'A taste for intricacy delighted the eye as well as the ear'.

The law of gavelkind, legitimised, as it were, by the laws of Hywel Dda, though it was formally annulled by the 1536 Act of Union which with effect from Pentecost that year, made primogeniture the legal form of inheritance, was still being cited by the freeholders of Upper Elfael in 1618. Primogeniture meant, of course, that land now descended to a single male heir. Consequently in Radnorshire, as elsewhere in Wales, estates formerly divided among heirs male as co-heirs were claimed by an eldest son as the single heir and the Court of Great Sessions was kept busy:

The poverty of some parts of Wales was attributed by Tudor modernizers to the process of continual subdivision of tenements through gavelkind. In the lordship of Upper Elfael it was alleged by the tenants that there had been about 130 ancient tenements, believed to amount to roughly 10,000 acres of enclosed ground, and this can be corroborated from early inquisitions. Through gavelkind, however, the number of tenements had increased threefold to about 400 in the early seventeenth century.

In illustration Mr Suggett cites the example of an aged freeholder, born about 1520, who explained how through partibility tenements were divided and then subdivided into numerous parcels: 'sometimes in three or four descents small tenements became divided into many parts, to the great impoverishment of the said tenants.' The effect, however, of this fragmentation of holdings upon the county's building history has yet to be assessed, but in what better hands could the that task be than those of Mr Suggett?

This book makes plain the importance of dendrology and dendrochronology for our understanding of Radnorshire history 1400–1800. Its contribution can, in fact, take us back far further and as is mentioned elsewhere in this volume of the *Transactions*, an oak beam in Hergest Court in *Herefordia in Wallia*, has been dendrochronologically dated to 1267. It would seem that dendrology and the historian would make an admirable subject for a Radnorshire Society lecture.

Quibbles? Yes, a few. Mr Suggett can at times be a trifle aggravating as when he whets the reader's appetite and then tells them they must wait for the real nourishment. Thus he tells us of the existence of a cruck framed house in Radnorshire of 1555. It would have done no harm to have given its identity, but instead he tells us we must wait until we read chapter five on peasant halls. Mention is made of how forestry management was undertaken in the post medieval period for the sake of sustainability. Fashionable

talk nowadays, and it is a little ironical that in some respects *Houses & History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire 1400–1800* has not done much for sustainability. Its production is unjustifiably extravagant and one wonders at the cost of how many trees. It is not a coffee table book, though it looks like one, and Haslam's Pevsner-style *The Buildings of Wales: Powys* still has its place: I can carry it around with me conveniently, I can read it in bed comfortably, the matt paper won't reflect the reading lamp, and it's easier on the trees. Mr Suggett's volume weighs in at 650 grammes as opposed to Haslam's compact 450. All the same, though it does in these respects prick my conscience, this book is incredibly good value, and Mr Suggett has every reason to sleep at night a very proud man to whom readers of these *Transactions* will long be very grateful.

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