

# NORTH WEST WALES DENDROCHRONOLOGY PROJECT

## DATING OLD WELSH HOUSES – LLŶN

### LLAWR-Y-DREF

Llangian, Llŷn, Gwynedd

NGR SH 2890 2874

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#### House History Summary

Llawr-y-Dref is believed to be a 16<sup>th</sup> century gentry farmhouse with mural spiral stairs and ornate roof trusses, which according to Richard Suggett are one of the best examples of the Snowdonia style trusses.

It is possible Llawr-y-Dref as a tenanted farm came into the ownership of the Faenol estate (or Vaynol as referred to in some earlier documents) through the marriage of Margaret Jones of Castellmarch to Sir William Williams Bart in 1640. It is not known who built Llawr-y-Dref as all Faenol records were destroyed by Arthur Owen in 1697. (Katie Lench, *The Origins of the Faenol Estate* 2010, p87) It has also been difficult to record the history of Llawr-y-Dref prior to 1777 as there are two farms of the same name in Llangian both having been part of the Faenol estate.

In 1907 the farm was purchased at auction, or privately at a later date by Evan Griffiths of Llanfihangelbachellaeth. Llawr-y-Dref was farmed by the Griffiths family until 1944 when it was tenanted out. The farm is now owned by Dr Griffith Tudor Owen, great nephew of Evan Griffiths.

**RCAHM Vol.111 West Caerns. 1964**, Llangian p 61, monument 1614.

A two-storeyed house probably of the 16<sup>th</sup> C. It is built of rubble and roofed with small slates; the S. gable and both chimneys have been rebuilt, but the roof and plain-chamfered eaves course appear to be original. Some of the internal arrangements have been altered and the original stone stair has been removed. Nothing is known of the early history of this house; the name has been transferred to a 19<sup>th</sup> C house nearby.

The present doorway, 3ft. 3ins. wide and set off-centre, has a depressed pointed arch. It is certainly an early opening, probably original, but the stones used are generally smaller than those in the blocked W. doorway. The windows on this E. front have all been altered, but that on the ground floor to N. of the door occupies an original opening. The two most southerly date from the rebuilding of the S. gable in the 19<sup>th</sup> C. During the course of this work much of the original fenestration in the W. wall was destroyed, but two small plain windows remain, only 1ft. 6ins. square. The W. doorway 2ft. 7ins. wide, is opposite the present entrance; it has been blocked, leaving only a small window.

The lower part of the N. gable has been masked by the addition of a small 19<sup>th</sup> C. kitchen, but the upper part of the wall contains traces of a small window which once lit the stairs. The quoins are large and well built; the copings and the rough kneelers appear to be original.

The inner jambs of the E. doorway are widely splayed and retain one of the old door crooks in the S. jamb; the head is lintelled.

The interior has been altered, and all the present rooms are modern, but part of the original moulded post-and-panel screen remains in situ S. of the entrance passage. It contains two doorways with shaped heads, one to the W. and the other, blocked, near the centre. The principal room on the ground floor has its original ceiling-beams, with a well formed cavetto and double ovolo mould of Elizabethan type; the joists have a simplified version of the same mould. All lack stops. The

fireplace-beam is similar, with plain stops. Traces remain W. of the fireplace of a stone stair, which was removed to give access to the added kitchen. The roof is ceiled and the woodwork could not be examined closely. The S. truss is modern, but the design of the other three suggests that they may be earlier than the building, perhaps from a medieval house on or near this site. All the roof woodwork is of excellent workmanship. The first or N. truss has only a plain cambered or even cranked collar. The second has a very slightly cambered collar with two cusped struts forming a central octofoil flanked by sexfoils. The third has the same arrangement of struts but has well-formed arched braces beneath the collar. It was impossible to reach the trusses to determine whether wind-braces had been used, but none now exist

Condition: fair.

## HOUSE HISTORY

*House: probably late 16<sup>th</sup> century gentry's farmhouse, with mural spiral stair and ornate roof trusses.*

*The gentry family who built the house is as yet unknown. Its members may have married into the Castellmarch family, thus leaving Llawr-y-Dref as a tenanted farm adequately maintained but no longer subject to modernization or rebuilding as might be the case with a family home.*

*Llawr-y-Dref just may have been inherited by Faenol through other circumstances.*

*The roof trusses not suitable for dating by dendrochronology – too fast grown and no bark edges.*

1640 **Margaret Jones, co-heiress of Castellmarch** married **Sir William Williams, Bart. of Faenol**, but she died in 1647 having borne Sir Griffith Williams, Bart. (JE Griffith, Pedigrees, p 190)

Their altar tomb can still be seen in the private (Faenol) chapel at Llanbeblig church, Caernarfon. (Katie Lench, The Origins of the Faenol Estate, 2010, p 60)

1645 Jane Jones, co-heiress of Castellmarch married (first husband) Thomas Williams, of Dinas, HSC 1646, brother of Sir William Williams of Faenol, but they were childless. (JE Griffith, Pedigrees, p 191)

### ***Probable owners of Llawr-y-Dref as part of the Faenol estate:***

- i) 1640s- 1658 Sir William Williams, Bart. of Faenol,
- ii) 1658-1669 Sir Griffith Williams Bart. of Faenol, .
- iii) 1669 -1696 Sir William Williams Bart. of Faenol,
- iv) Estate was left to Sir Bouchier Wrey, & then to his son, Sir Bouchier Wrey.
- v) But in 1698 the King granted the estate to John Gore.  
(Katie Lench, The Origins of the Faenol Estate, 2010, pages 60, 72, 78, 83.)
- vi) 1699 John Gore granted it to John Smith of Tedworth. John Smith devised the estate to his son
- vii) Thomas Smith who died without heirs, leaving his brother
- viii) John Smith heir at law, and he left it to
- ix) His eldest son William Smith in 1720.
- x) 1764 William Smith died, having no children, left the estate to his nephew,
- xi) Thomas Assheton who took the name Assheton Smith, & was Lord Lieut Caernarfonshire & MPC in 1774.
- xii) His son Thomas Assheton Smith II died in 1828.
- xiii) 1776-1858: His son, Thomas Assheton Smith III, (owner 1828-1858).
- xiv) 1859 His widow devised the estate to her relative George William Duff (1848-1904) who assumed the name Assheton Smith in 1859, he was succeeded
- xv) in 1904 by his brother Charles Garden Duff who was created a Baronet in 1911.  
(JE Griffiths, Pedigrees, p187)

NOTE: The Llangian Church Records for Births, Deaths and Marriages (at GAS) from 1679 to 1767 have been checked, working backwards from 1767 to 1732, and they have references to Llawr-y-Dref , but as there are two farms of the same name there is no way of knowing to which farm they refer.

c1764 – 1770s: owner Thomas Assheton Smith I

*c 1750 birth of John Griffiths, son of Mary Griffiths, later known tenant at Llawr-y-Dref.*

*c 1758 birth of Henry/Harri Griffiths, son of Mary Griffiths, later known tenant at Llawr-y-Dref.*

(I have been unable to find any records of Mary Griffith's husband in the parish records)

**First evidence that Llawr y Dref was part of the Vaenol estate.**

Owner: Thomas Assheton Smith Esq of Faenol, Bangor

1777 Tenant: Mary Griffiths. The whole farm was 101 acres 3 roods, 36 perches.

(GAS, Faenol ms 4056, with map & field names)

1782 -1785 Tenant: Mary Griffiths. Land tax of 16s 0d.

1788-1789 Tenant: Mary Griffiths. Land tax of 10s 4d.

1793-1795 Tenant; Mary Griffiths. Land tax of 16s 0d.

1797-1818 Tenancy held jointly by John & Henry Griffiths for the rent of £33 per ½ year.

(GAS, Faenol ms 3751: 1799 rent book)

Land tax for these years was 16s 0d.

(GAS. Land Tax Quarter Sessions XQA / L7 )

Around 1800: Mary Griffiths was Lessee and occupier with her sons who managed for her jointly. The whole farm is now 103 acres, 3 roods & 36 perches. (*a gain of 2 acres since 1777.*) “The buildings consist of a good dwelling house, barn, stable, and a range of houses, 2 cow houses, cart hovel, a cow house at a distance and a new house built by lessee for her son. Land not well managed, but capable of great improvement”. (R.O. Roberts, Farming in Caernarfonshire Around 1800. 1973, pp 37/38, 1973 Llangian Parish: Llawr-y-Dref)

*Unknown: death of Mary Griffiths Llawr-y-Dref, 1795 onwards.*

1826 August 27: death of John Griffiths of Llawr-y-Dref, aged 76 yrs. (Llangian Memorial Inscriptions GFHS, Aelwyd.) *He was probably the elder son of Mary Griffiths, tenant in 1777 above)*

1828: death of Thomas Assheton Smith II.

1841 Census Llawr-y-Dref:	No record of Parish
Henry Griffiths aged 80, Tenant farmer	All born in Caernarfonshire
John Griffiths 40 yrs. (son?),	
Elizabeth Griffiths 39 yrs. (daughter?)	
Ann Griffiths 35 yrs. (daughter?)	
Judith Jones 12yrs (servant?)	
Ellinor Hughes 20yrs. (servant?)	
Griffith Roberts 45yrs. agricultural labourer	
John Morris 17yrs. agricultural labourer	

1834. In Memory of Ellin Jones Wife of John Jones, Joiner and daughter of Henry and Elizabeth Griffiths Llawr-y-Dref who died September 1834 Aged 40 years. Also Elizabeth Wife of John

Thomas, and sister to the above Ellin who died November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1876 aged 79 years old. (Llangian Memorial Inscriptions GFHS Aelwyd) There appears to be no record of Elizabeth Griffiths wife of Henry Griffiths in the Llangian Parish Records.

1844 December 12: death of Harri Griffiths, Llawr-y-Dref aged 86 yrs. (Llangian Memorial Inscriptions GFHS Aelwyd)

<u>1851 Census Llawr-y-Dref</u>			<u>103 acres farm</u>	<u>County Born</u>	<u>Parish</u>
John Parry	head	52yrs.	Farmer	Caernarfonshire	Llangian
Ellen Parry	wife	42yrs.			Anglesey
Ann Parry	sister	46yrs.	Farmer Unmarried	Caernarfonshire	Llanengan
Elizabeth Parry	sister	54yrs.	Breakers Wife	Caernarfonshire	Llangian
James Parry	brother	60 yrs.	sailor	Caernarfonshire	Llanengan
Judith Jones	niece	24yrs.	married	Caernarfonshire	Llangian
Owen Jones	her husband	21yrs.		Caernarfonshire	Llangian
Ellin Jones	their baby	1 month,		Caernarfonshire	Llangian
Griffith Griffiths	cousin	62yrs.	farm labourer	Caernarfonshire	Rhiw
Griffith Griffiths	his son	16yrs.	farm labourer	Caernarfonshire	Llangian
Margaret E. Williams		26yrs.	house servant	Caernarfonshire	Llanengan

(Llangian burials records for 1851 onwards no record of Elizabeth Parry.)

1858 Death of Thomas Assheton Smith III

<u>1861 Census Llawr-y-Dref</u>			<u>County Born</u>	<u>Parish</u>	
John Parry	head	61yrs.	farmer	Caerns.	Llangian
Ellin Parry	wife	54yrs.		Caerns.	Anglesey
James Parry	brother	70yrs.	trinity pensioner	Caerns.	Llanengan
Ann Parry	sister	57yrs.		Caerns.	Llanengan
Griffith Roberts	cousin	72yrs.	gardener	Caerns.	Rhiw
Henry Griffiths	nephew	26yrs.	agriculturere labourer	Caerns.	Llangian
Ann Griffiths	niece	27yrs.	Henry's wife	Caerns.	Llangian
John Griffiths	their son	3yrs.		Caerns.	Llangian
Henry Griffiths	their son	1yr.		Caerns.	Llangian
Ann Roberts	serv	21yrs.	domestic servant	Caerns	Llangian
Margaret Jones	serv	10yrs.	domestic servant	Caerns.	Llangian
Griffith Roberts	serv	18yrs.	carter	Caerns.	Llangian
William Morris	serv	15yrs.	carter	Caerns.	Llangian

1865 Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> Death of Ellen Parry, wife of John Parry Llawr-y-Dref Llangian Age 57. (Parish Records Llangian 1813-1869. XPE20/8)

<u>1871 Census Llawr-y-Dref</u>			<u>Born</u>	<u>Parish</u>	
John Parry	Head	72yrs.	farmer of 100 acres.		
Ann Parry	sister	66yrs.	Sister unmarried	Caerns.	Llangian
Elizabeth Jones	serv	17yrs.	general servant	Caerns	Llangian
Jane Williams	serv	20yrs.	general servant	Caerns	Llangian
Griffith Jones	serv	52yrs.	Farm servant	Caerns	Llangian
Evan Jones	serv	22yrs.	Farm servant	Caerns	Llangian
John Parry	serv	13yrs.	Farm servant	Caerns	Llangian

1881 Census Llawr-y-Dref			No record in the 1881 Census of where born or Parish
John Parry	head	82yrs.	farmer
Ann Parry	sister	78yrs.	
Elizabeth Jones		28yrs.	domestic servant
Ann Griffiths		17yrs.	domestic servant
Ann Rowlands		30yrs.	domestic servant
John Thomas		76yrs.	Farm labourer
William Rowlands		64yrs.	Farm labourer
Henry Griffiths		21yrs.	Farm labourer

November 1882, May 1883, John and his sister Ann Parry farmed Llawr-y-Dref jointly.  
(GAS.Faenol Rental Records 3918 p64, Rent paid £49.)

November 1884, John Parry was represented by his sister Ann. Rent paid £6, in arrears of £11.  
May 1885 rent was £20, rent paid £31 paid in full plus £11 arrears. (GAS Faenol Rental Records 3920 p67 ).

*Possible death of John Parry May 1885-November 1885.*

November 1885 and May 1886 the tenant is Henry Griffiths. The November rent owed and received was £49. May 1886, rent was £46 15s. rent received £42 1s 6p. Henry was given 10% allowance.  
(GAS. Faenol Rental Records 3921 p67.)

November 1886 and May 1887, Henry Griffiths was again given an allowance of 10%. (GAS. Faenol Rental Records 3922 p67)

*Was the 10% allowance given because the farm was run down and neglected by old John Parry prior to Henry Griffiths becoming the tenant?*

1891 Census Llawr-y-Dref			Born	Parish
Henry Griffiths	Head	56yr_ farmer	Caerns.	Llangian
Ann Griffiths	wife	57yr	Caerns.	Llangian
Henry Griffiths	son	31yr.	Caerns	Llangian
John P.Griffiths	son	15yr.	Caerns	Llangian
Watkin Griffiths	son	8yr.	Caerns	Llangian
Ellen Griffiths	dau	27yr.	Caerns	Llangian
John Roberts	serv	14yr. servant	Caerns	Llangian
William Roberts	serv	19yr. servant	Caerns	Llangian

*By age, name and 30 years time span since the 1861 census it seems very likely that they are the Griffiths mentioned as nephew, wife and son in that census.*

### 1901 Census No entry for Llawr-y-Dref for this year.

1907 Pwllheli Town Hall Faenol Estate Auction

Lot 80 -108 acres farm Llawr-y-Dref Llangian, part of the Faenol Estate.

Occupied by Henry Griffiths and J.P. Griffiths as yearly tenants.

*Probably the same Henry and J.P. Griffiths of the 1891 census.*

The farm was **purchased** at auction (or privately later) from the Faenol Estate by **Evan Griffiths** (1870-1910). Born at Beudy Mawr, Llanfihangelbachellaeth he farmed with his mother Margaret and and sisters Elizabeth (1867-1950) and Cathrine (1878-1916). Evan Griffiths died in 1910.

Being a close family, the farm was inherited by Evan's siblings.

1910? Owen (1864-1948) and Jane Griffiths (1873-1944), Evans brother and sister, who at the time farmed Bodsela Llanfihangelbachellaeth which was then let to a tenant, took over the farming of

Llawr-y-Dref. Exactly when this occurred is not known as Owen Griffiths owned and farmed a number of farms.

**1911** No Census available.

**1916** on the death of Cathrine Griffiths her inheritance went to her daughter Margaret Griffiths (later Owen on her marriage to Griffith Gwilym Owen LDS 1906-2005)

**1944** Death of Jane Griffiths. Owen went to live with his surviving sister Elizabeth Griffiths and his niece Margaret Griffith Owen (1914-2002),

**1944** Llawr-y-Dref let to a tenant William Owen (no relation to Margaret Owen).

**1948** Death of Owen Griffiths.

**1948** Ownership of Llawr-y-Dref passed to surviving sister Margaret Griffiths and his niece Margaret Griffiths Owen.

**1950** Death of Elizabeth Griffiths.

**1950** Margaret Griffiths Owen became sole owner of Llawr-y-Dref.

**1963** William Owen gave up the tenancy because of ill health.

**1963** Llawr-y-Dref was partly held for 1 year.

**1964** Llawr-y-Dref held entirely by John Jones until he died in the late 1990s. His family did not want to carry on with the farm because of pressure of work elsewhere.

Since then various farmers have held Llawr-y-Dref on summer grazing and sheep wintering lets.

**2002** Death of Margaret Griffiths Owens.

**2002** Sons Dr Griffith Tudor Owen and William Jones Owen, MS. FRCS Consultant and Clinical Director of surgery, Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals London (1945-2003) became owners of Llawr-y-Dref

**2003** Death of William Jones Owen

**2003** Dr Griffith Tudor Owen, great nephew of Owen Griffiths, became the present and sole owner of Llawr-y-Dref.

All the deceased family members are interred at Llanengan Church.

(The above information plus the map and field names of the land sale was given to me by the present owner Dr G.T. Owen of Penychain on 19/1/10 and further information about ownership of the farm in 10/2/12).

Researched by Eryl Lobley.

Llŷn Gwynedd

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