

Bryn Iolyn

Following a chance remark by John Watson Jones on the translation of 'Iolyn' (nincompoop) I became intrigued. With 99.9% input from Samantha we spent several sessions at the archives researching some of the history of this property. John had also mentioned that a shaft had been sunk in the small hill adjacent to Bryn Iolyn. Prospectors were looking for lead. I conjecture that the name derives from someone saying they were fools to be thinking they could find the mineral, or if they did find it, perhaps the effects of lead poisoning made those working there to become befuddled. Whatever the reason this is some of the story.

On the Tithe Map Bryn Iolyn is numbered Plot 196. At the time it is called Tyddyn Iolyn House. The owner is one George Thomas Smith, Esq., and the occupier (we presume tenant) is John Rowlands.

In the St. Gwynin's Parish Records a Richard Owen of Bryn Iolyn died 24th October 1842 aged 89.

At the 1851 census John Rowlands is 49 (b1802), a farmer of 30 acres and employing 1 man. Also residing at Bryn Iolyn at that time are John Rowlands' wife, Margaret (b1814) and therefore 37 in 1851. John and Margaret Rowlands were born in the Parish of Dwygyfylchi. Their son, William (b1840) is described as a scholar, as was their daughter, Grace (b 1845), although only 6 at the time. Their second son, John was born in 1847 and their second daughter, Margaret was born in 1849. The gentleman described as an Agricultural Labourer was a William Jones (b1831); their House Servant was Ann Jones aged 19 (b1832).

In 1861 John Rowlands is now farming 41 acres. Children William, Grace and John are mentioned, but not their daughter Margaret. Had she died, or moved away to become a servant? However, there is now another daughter, Esther, born in 1851, and another son, Robert, born in 1855, and yet another daughter, Elizabeth, born in 1860. There is also a lodger ? Robert (described on the census form as married). He was born in 1833 and is therefore 28.

We move on to the census of 1871. John Rowlands is now 71. He is still living at Bryn Iolyn with his wife, Margaret and children - William, Grace, Esther, Robert and Elizabeth. There is now a servant called John Roberts who is aged 19 (b1851).

In 1971 there is also a Bond Agreement between John Rowlands and Joseph Hughes, a weaver of Bethesda who, it would appear, lent John Rowlands £100 to buy two fields belonging to himself (Joseph Hughes) The fields were Fridd Sqwar and Fridd Llidiarth in Dwygyfylchi. (Exact location not know at present). The £100 was to be paid back in £20 a year for 5 years with £3 interest.

We now became intrigued by Joseph Hughes. He lived (and presumably wove) at 4 Ogwen Terrace, Bethesda. The building now looks rather sad with plastic replacement windows and pebble-dashed walls. However, there is still a shop (book shop) at street level.

In Slaters Directory of 1849 there is a William Hughes, weaver - relative?

In Slaters Trade Director of 1858/1859 a Joseph Hughes, Bethesda, is listed under China, glass, etc. dealers and a Shopkeeper and Dealer in Groceries and Sundries.

The North Wales Chronicle report a Llanllechid Vestry Meeting of 23rd February 1861. In the report Joseph Hughes is appointed overseer to superintend 'upper part of parish with Mr. Elias Jones of Victoria'.

In 1864, reported in the North Wales Chronicle, there is a charge against a trustee of a Building Society : David Hughes v Joseph Hughes. David Hughes said he had met Joseph Hughes in Bangor and told him he wanted to mortgage some houses in Anglesey. David Hughes wanted £150. Joseph Hughes' fee would be £2 which David Hughes subsequently sent to Joseph Hughes in a Postal Order. Joseph Hughes went, with an Elias Davies to Llanfaelog to inspect the properties. We presume that because the pair did not think they were worth the loan they called the £2 milage. The Judge told David Hughes he didn't have a claim and found for Joseph Hughes.

Also in the Slaters Trade Directory of 1868 (Bangor section which includes Bethesda) there is no mention of a weaver, but listed under China, glass, etc. Dealers and also under Shopkeeper and Dealer in Groceries and Sundries is Hughes, Joseph, Bethesda.

In 1871 Worrall's Directory Joseph Hughes is not mentioned under China, glass etc. Dealers, nor under Shopkeeper and Dealer in Groceries and Sundries. There is however a Joseph Hughes at Halfway House Pub, Bethesda - same man?

Back to the census. In 1881 John Rowlands is not 80 but still describing himself as a farmer. He, his wife Margaret and children Grace and Elizabeth have moved to Bod Hyfryd. (This property is on Graiglwyd Road and is still named Bod Hyfryd).

22nd July 1881 in John Watson Jones' documents - Pentyffryn land auction sale Bryn Iolyn is mentioned.

John Rowlands died aged 85 in 1886. He was buried on 16th October 1886. A J. A. Howell was the Vicar.

There is a photograph in the archives taken outside Bryn Iolyn of an elderly lady seated, with a woman standing beside her. Could they be Margaret Rowlands and her daughter Grace, possibly taken in 1886 after the death of John Rowlands.

In the same year, living in Bryn Iolyn are David Hughes, farmer, born Llanbedr in 1831; therefore aged 50, his wife Margaret and a niece Mary aged 13 (b1868) described as a Domestic Servant.

In 1891 David Hughes is still farming Bryn Iolyn with his wife. Hugh Roberts their nephew (some confusion as to whether he is 10 or 20) is the Agricultural Labourer. A niece, Margaret Roberts, aged 12 a scholar and a General Domestic Service Martha Williams aged

18. David Hughes died in 1891 and there is a record of his burial in St. Gwynin's on 18th April 1891.

Margaret Roberts (first husband David Hughes (d1891) died in 1895.

In 1901, Griffith Roberts, aged 27, a farmer and stone mason is living in Bryn Iolyn. Also his wife Mary Ellen Roberts, aged 23 (b Llanbedr) and their son John Arthur Roberts, aged 2 (b in Caerhun). So we suppose they became the tenants after David Hughes died. It would seem that Griffith Roberts and Mary Ellen were married in Liverpool in July 1891.

Griffith Roberts is the son of Owen and Ellin Roberts of Hafod y Garrig, Llanbedr y Cennin and he is the nephew of John Roberts. After John Roberts' death he asks to be the tenant of Bryn Iolyn in a letter dated 18th May 1899. At the time he was living at Waen y Groes, Tal y Cafn. On 6th December 1900 he signs an agreement with Frederick Walker, Solicitor, and Archibald Stirling (both of London). Rent £26 a year.

So in 1911 living in Bryn Iolyn were Griffith Roberts (b1874 in Llanbedr), his wife Mary Ellen (b1878), son John Arthur Roberts (b1899), Maggie Roberts, daughter (b in Penmaenmawr 1903, Emlyn(?) Roberts daughter (b1911 in Penmaenmawr). Their General Domestic Servant was Annie Williams, aged 16 and born in Llangelynin.

17th May 1919 there was an Agreement between John Rowley Horton of High Lands, Spencers Wood, Berkshire and Mary Ellen Roberts, widow of Griffith Roberts, to lease a 3-acre field between Tyddyn Bach (on Graiglwyd Road) and Moel Llys (Plot 439) and Cae Bryn Iolyn, 5.422 acres (Plot 395). The rent was to be £23 10s paid half yearly. The Agreement was signed by Mary Ellen Roberts and her son John Arthur Roberts.

John Arthur Roberts married Lily Catherine Williams on 30th August 1923. He was then living at Bryn Iolyn.

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