

## Llansannan

The Parish of Llansannan is the largest of the four parishes included in this Cynefin project, and comprises two main villages, Llansannan and Groes, in addition it has a number of smaller hamlets, eg. Bylchau, Bryn Rhydyrarian, Tanyfron and Clwt. It also used to have a number of smaller communities with the chapel as their focal point of interaction, Penycefn, Rhiw and Nantwnen to name only three.

Moving on in time, Llansannan as a rural village was dependent on, and served the farming community, it was certainly self sufficient, in that it catered for all the farmers and housewives needs and mostly their wants. There were a number of shops, a leather worker, a butcher or two, a couple of builders and joiners for making furniture and carts. It had a Post Office and three taverns. For their spiritual needs it has a church and three nonconformist chapels, with numerous cultural activities throughout the winter months.

The medieval church is dedicated to Saint Sannan the founder of the Church here in the seventh Century. Originally an Irish Saint and bishop, a friend of Saint David, *the patron saint of Wales*, and a companion of Saint Winifred's father, and is said to have lived in religious seclusion, and buried at Gwytherin. The present church was built in the thirteenth century, and partly re-built in 1778. In 1879 the church was extensively restored at a cost of £1000.

It has three Nonconformist chapels in the village, with the first being built in 1811 by the Methodist, the Baptist built in 1828 and the Independents in 1831. There were also chapels, spread out in different hamlets within the parish, with the one at Tanyfron being the first to be built in 1772. As Nonconformism strengthened, during the 19 century, the local population became more and more involved and culturally active.

In olden days, Llansannan would have been quite inaccessible, due to the network of narrow roads and steep hills, hardly wide enough for a horse and cart. However, due to two new roads being built, one from Denbigh to the A5 at Pentrefoelas, built 1824-27 and the other from Bylchau to Llanfair TH in 1925-27, the area became far more accessible, not only for local people to gain access to the market towns, but also for incomers and the tourist.

The parish has the Hiraethog Moors running parallel to its southern boundary, which, a century ago was famous for its grouse shooting. It was here that Lord Devonport built his prominent shooting lodge in 1896, on a small hillock behind the Sportsman's Arms. The first building being a timber frame lodge, purchased from Norway that was dismantled and transported by train, ship and steam traction to its final resting place. The strong gales and sweeping rain meant it had to be replaced in a few years with a solid stone building and anchored down to the bedrock. It was vacated in the 1955, and the ravages of the weather soon demolished the building, leaving an eerie outline on the skyline, especially at night, with many people referring to it as the haunted house on the moors.

As in many rural communities, Llansannan also has raised a number of notable individuals who have become famous in their various lifelong calling. Five of which are commemorated by William Goscombe John, in his famous statue of the little girl and her garland of flowers, that was unveiled in the village on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, 1899. It was Mr. T E Ellis, the Liberal MP for Merioneth Shire who persuaded Lord Devonport to fund the memorial to these eminent local men, the five being :-

**Tudur Aled** 1465 – 1525 was a renowned late medieval Welsh poet.

**William Salesbury** 1520 - 1584, a leading Welsh scholar of the Renaissance and the principal translator of the 1567 Welsh New Testament.

**Henry Rees** 1797 - 1869, the most famous minister among the Calvinistic Methodists.

**Gwilym Hiraethog**, born William Rees, 1802 - 1883) minister, writer, editor, and political leader. Henry and William Rees were brothers and are honoured by two chapels bearing their names in the village.

**Iorwerth Glan Aled**, born Edward Roberts, 1819 - 1867) Baptist minister and poet.

It is also worth noting that other individuals have also been raised here, becoming famous in business and in the Law Courts of London, to name only two categories.

Less than half a mile from the village used to be the ancestral home of the Wynne Yorke family, namely the Dyffryn Aled estate which encompassed 4,356 acres. A large 25 Bedroom mansion, over looking the lush fertile meadows below. Due to the demise of the family at the turn of 1900, the property was purchased by Countess Dundonald, of Gwrych Castle, Abergele. All the farm holdings were sold to the sitting tenant's and the estate house was let to Cheadle Royal Hospital of Manchester. After a number of years, it was again vacated and was commissioned by the army as a prison for up to 100 German Naval Officers captured during the First World War. Many are the stories of attempted escapes and the tunnelling that was discovered just before the escape was carried out. Another almost successful escape involved three prisoners who planned to make a rendezvous with a German submarine off the Great Orme at Llandudno. On the first night they failed to find their way down the treacherous rocks down to the beach, on the second night, they were on a small beach on one side of the Orme, while the submarine was on another side of a rock outcrop. On the third and final night of the arrangements, a severe storm broke out and the boat couldn't get anyway near the Orme, so all plans had to be abandoned. The three escapees were once again caught roaming around Llandudno,. One being caught having his hair cut, due to his strong German accent.

The village has certainly changed over the last century and a half. Weekly services are still held in the church, and in two of the nonconformist chapels. The Red Lion being a lively tavern with a few dozen people meeting on a weekly and bi-weekly basis to learn Welsh as their second language. The old Reading Room is now a Snooker room on the ground floor and the management are pursuing with a planning application to convert the first floor into a two bedroomed flat. The village shop is a life saver for the elderly so is the part time Post Office. The ownership of the village public toilets, which were closed by the County Council, has been transferred to Menter Bro Aled Cyf, a recently established community Company with charitable status, who carried out the necessary repairs and is now open every day of the year.

The Community Centre, housing the Bro Aled school, the village hall and community rooms, is the centre for the cultural life of the area, with so many community led events throughout the 12 months. The community side of the centre is run by a warden and a local committee, who ensures good use of the building and contributes to the Council for its upkeep. The list of events would be far too long to include in this brief introduction, but one could mention the annual Eisteddfod, The Young Farmers and the Urdd meet here weekly, Indoor bowls every Monday evening and the local Male Voice choir practicing every Thursday evening, in addition a number of other different societies meet on a monthly basis, and so the list continues.

Over the last fifty years, the traditional Welsh character of the village is changing, the number of incomers is increasing, year by year, some are joining in our community activities and are to be commended for attending weekly language courses,, held at the Red Lion, on a voluntary basis, others wish not to interact in village activities, which is a pity really, as we believe there is so much more to country life, than living in the towns.