

AT THE end of the 17th century the village of Treguff was one of eight villages in the parish of Llanccarfan in the Vale of Glamorgan, and had 16 houses and 58 people. Today it is difficult to identify the place as a hamlet.

What remains though, is the manor farmhouse of Treguff, standing near the Nant Tre-gof which runs into the river Thaw.

Driving up the entrance lane, the rear of the house is strikingly uncompromising, massive and ancient. There is no doubt that this house has been there for a long time and fully intends to be there for many years to come.

The whitewashed wall and the barking dogs suggest the farmhouse character but the front of the house gives a softer and more genteel picture, emphasised by the lawn and spreading chestnut tree with celandines, bluebells, crocuses and tulips growing in season underneath.

The house is said to be late 16th century, although some think it earlier for this was originally the home farm of the adjacent Treguff Place, reputedly taking over as the manor from Treguff Place in 1524. The original manor was gradually demolished, the last stone being used about 1880.

Whatever the truth, the estate is even older. Possibly belonging to the monastery at Llanccarfan, there is no doubt that after the Norman Conquest, Robert Fitzhamon granted the land to the Abbey of St Peter, Gloucester, which retained it after the Dissolution when the Abbey became Gloucester Cathedral. After the Disestablishment of the Church of Wales, Treguff went to the University of Wales, specifically Aberystwyth, who still own it.

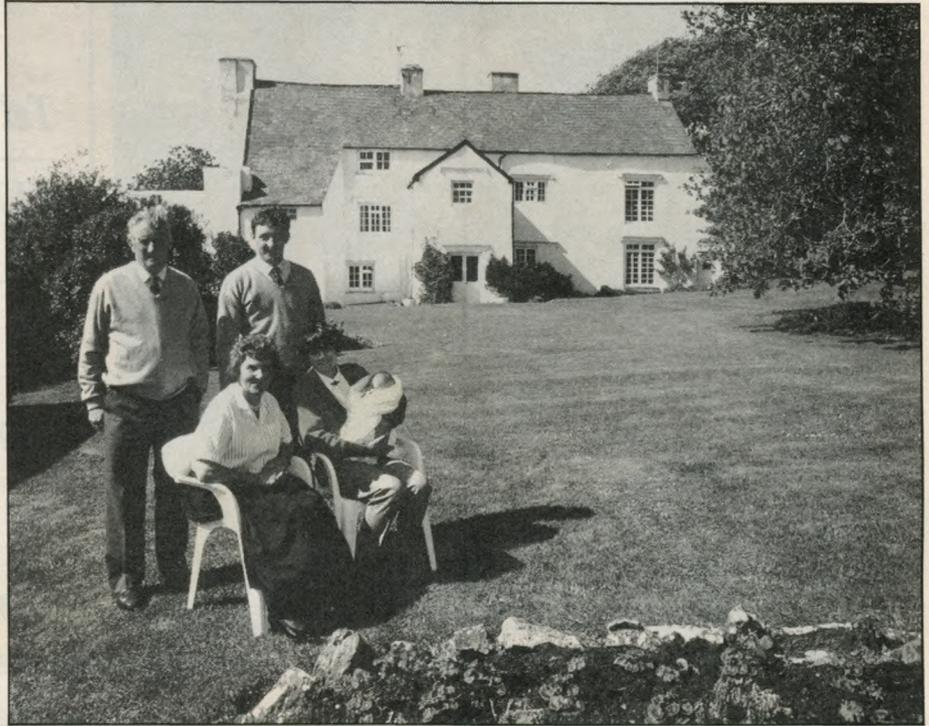
During that time the estate has been leased to tenants, who have farmed it. In the early 16th century, the Bassetts of Beaupre held it, some of the younger members living there, like William Bassett in 1522. A hundred years later the Edwards family, who were from Bassetts through the female line, married back into the Bassetts.

Around 1800 the Loughers were associated with Treguff. Now in Glamorgan the Loughers are verily as the tribes of Israel, which is not surprising for a splendid family tree I have in front of me — compiled by Major Edwin Lougher and going back to 1467 — indicates that to have 10 children was not unusual in the family.

Richard Lougher was the first to adopt the surname in the 15th century, from the ancient borough of Lougher on the Glamorgan — Carmarthenshire border. He took a lease of Sker, which was a grange of Neath Abbey, where the present Sker House now stands forlornly on the edge of the sea.

Richard's son Watkin married Gwennlian Turbevill, thus bringing the Tythegston estate near Porthcawl, among others, into the Lougher family. Tythegston became the residence of the main line of the Loughers, and remained so for 150 years, when it passed through another Turbevill to the Knights, who still own it.

THE LOUGHERS FAMILY TREE



In between, the Loughers were Sheriffs several times in the 17th century, an honour not repeated until Sir Lewis Lougher of Dany-y-Bryn, Radyr, now a Cheshire Home, in 1931. It is thought that Loughers all over the world are descended from the first Richard.

From 1810 to 1849 Treguff was tenanted by the Bradley family. Christopher Bradley was the proprietor of a stage-coach firm in the early 19th century. He at first kept the Bear Inn in Cowbridge, where he was regarded as being rather bear-like himself, but after 1804 he was at the Angel Inn in Cardiff, some way along from the present Angel Hotel. Some of Bradley's descendants now live in Yorkshire.

In 1849 the Loughers came back to Treguff, though a different branch from the previous one. William Lougher married his cousin. Their grandson Thomas, through their seventh son Evan, also married a Lougher, Dorothy Kate. So the family tree of the present occupier of Treguff is rather convoluted.

William Lougher has lived at Treguff all his life, and now runs the 500-acre farm with its 1,500 breeding ewes and 200 cattle. His wife Thelma was originally a Lucas from Downs Farm, St Hilary, so she is no stranger to farming in the Vale. Their son Hywel, with his wife and daughter, live in another house on the farm so there is at least another generation of Loughers at Treguff.

Farming is not, of course, like it used to be. There are no armies of workers

to help — and needing to be fed regularly throughout the day. The traditional kitchen of Treguff, though, is still the warm centre of the house with its bench seats and Welsh cakes cooking on the bakestone.

Mr Lougher remembers sitting on his grandmother's knee — and she was born in 1840. She visited Treguff as a girl and saw her future husband working on the farm, little knowing that she would one day be the mistress there. She had plenty of choice out of 11 brothers. I cannot help visualising this as a Hardy novel.

Horses are important to the Loughers. William's father bred them, and both Mr and Mrs Lougher are involved in hunting. In the last two years Mrs Lougher has also discovered a talent for painting and there is evidence of this all over the house.

A lot of furniture went to the National Folk Museum at St Fagans, but there is much of interest in the building itself: an original fireplace, an almost monastic stone arched door leading to the stone roofed staircase, an ox-blood floor, one of two in Wales.

There is a partially blocked rear staircase too, with a curious little door leading to the huge attics. One bedroom has two desirable little rooms off it, reached via a few steps. Another has original Tudor plasterwork, with a raised fleur-de-lis, rose and ER monogram. A nine-foot thick wall hides a priest-hole. Treguff is a fascinating house to explore. □