



Can you tell us anything about this photo?

## What we did August - December 2021

### Two Castles Study Day – August 18<sup>th</sup>

In August we organised a 'Two Castle Study Day' magnificently led by Dr John R Kenyon, Honorary Research Fellow at the National Museum of Wales, and a leading authority on Welsh castles. The sun shone and 27 people came along. After touring White Castle in the morning we drove to Grosmont for a picnic before visiting the Castle and the Church of St Nicholas.

The Normans advanced into Eastern Gwent in the 1070s, and built the White, Grosmont and Skenfrith castles. Originally made of earth and timber these three castles guarded the route from Hereford.



In 1135, during a Welsh uprising, King Stephen brought the castles under Crown control, creating the 'Three Castles' lordship. This same uprising forced the 40 Augustinian canons at Llanthony Priory to retreat to Hereford, and then Gloucester. With funds from Hugh de Lacy's Irish endowments,



awarded after his participation in Henry II's invasion of Ireland, Priory re-building began in 1180 and was completed in the 1230s. The 1180s also saw the first stone construction at the three castles, with the building of a stone curtain wall and keep at White Castle. The rest of the castle was built as a military garrison and munitions depot in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. From 1201 to 1232 the King's minister Hubert de Burgh was Lord of the Three Castles. He built the great stone hall at Grosmont, which was later the residence of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Dukes of Lancaster. They re-modelled the buildings around the inner ward to suit a noble household.



We were introduced to the cruciform parish church of St Nicholas by History Group member and Church Warden Russell James. Built of red sandstone rubble with ashlar dressings in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century its exceptional size reflects the importance of mediaeval Grosmont. Extensive work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to a striking contrast between the re-constructed chancel and transepts which



are cut off from the nave by a glazed screen, and the stripped walls and roughly paved floor in the unrestored nave.

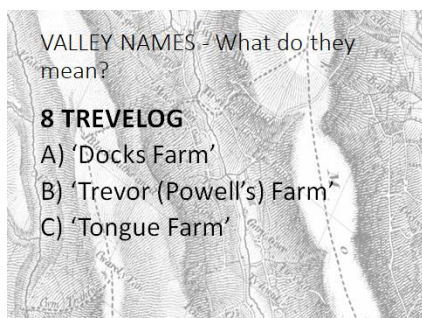
### Evening meetings September – November

Our 2021-22 programme began almost as normal, though the September AGM and talk by Father Richard were held at Llwyn Celyn as the Hall was closed for the very welcome improvements. At our Members' Evening in October we took stock of the Group's progress since its formation in 2015, while people told us how they were connected to Llanthony and shared current local history interests. In November Eddie Procter used some of his Ph.D. research to show the important communication networks surrounding Llanthony Priory, Tintern Abbey, and Llantarnam Abbey.



We managed to hold our Christmas Party just before Omicron struck. We watched the 1990s documentary *Down from the Black Hill*, featuring Trevor Powell, George Haines, other local farmers and a younger Douglas, and faced four powerpoint puzzlers. These required identification of:

(1) the locations of words visible in the local landscape



VALLEY NAMES - What do they mean?

#### 8 TREVELOG

- A) 'Docks Farm'
- B) 'Trevor (Powell's) Farm'
- C) 'Tongue Farm'

(2) local hilltops

(3) the correct translations of local Welsh house names;

and (4) answers to some questions about artists, houses, and local families. Douglas awarded chocolate prizes as he saw fit and we ended with a Christmas finger-food feast washed down with mulled wine.



What is the name of this house?

Who painted it?

Who lives there now?

### Upcoming History Group meetings

#### Talks in Cwmyoy Hall at 7 pm (Covid-19 willing)

January 19	Di and Andrea Evans	<i>A history of Capel-y-ffin Youth Hostel</i>
February 16	Cath Larkin and Oliver Fairclough	<i>Penycae: a cottage on the Ffwyddog; past, present and future</i>
March 16	Rob Gant	<i>Voices from the past: the role of oral history in community studies using local examples</i>
April 20	Douglas Wright and Andrea Evans	<i>The history of the Llanthony Show</i>

#### Future plans

Research and Memories Day	Probably a Saturday in March
History walks	May, June and July - details in due course

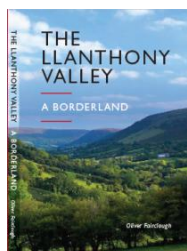
## Local history research and publications

### Research Day

We plan to hold a Research Day to share research and memories; details to follow.

### Black Mountains History 2021

Caroline Fairclough produced the second edition of our annual magazine in December: it costs £1 though is free for members. It includes short pieces on two notable residents of the Carney, selections from Isabel McGrachan's notebook, the Baptist community of Olchon and Capel-y-ffin, Partrishow in the 1941 Farm Survey, and photos of sheep sales at Court Farm and our Two Castles tour. You can get a copy from Caroline and download both editions from <http://llanthonyhistory.genesis-ds.com/>.



### The Llanthony Valley: a Borderland by Oliver Fairclough

The history group book costs £10. Contact [oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk); 01873 890540

### History Walks Leaflets

Four printed leaflets (£1 each) are available from the Skirrid garage or [pbevan@mokoro.co.uk](mailto:pbevan@mokoro.co.uk) and smaller versions, plus three new walks, can be downloaded from <http://llanthonyhistory.genesis-ds.com/>. We have applied to the BBNP for funding to help us produce three more printed leaflets.

**History Group individual membership for 2021-22 costs £10. You can join at a meeting or by contacting Oliver Fairclough or Pip Bevan (contact details above)**