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LV&D History Group Facebook Page

### Evening talks January-April 2022

#### January - A history of Capel-y-ffin Youth Hostel



Andrea Ellaway and her mother Di Evans lived at the Youth Hostel from the 1960s. Andrea provided an illustrated history of Castle Farm. Lewises lived at Castle Farm from 1851 to 1947. They found a love letter addressed to Tom Lewis with a 1907 stamp and a reply. Thomas Gower had the farm from 1947 to 1952; six of his children went to Llanthony School. In 1953 it was bought by the Governors of Marlborough College who had come into some money from a milkman who had overcharged them for many years and wanted to make amends. Boys came from the school to work on the building and make furniture for it – including Julian Pettifer (a TV journalist) and Bruce Chatwin the traveller and novelist. The YHA bought it in 1956. Jack Evans became the Warden and in 1960 Di came. She and Jack had four children between 1963 and 1968; he died in 1971 leaving her to manage the hostel which she did until 1999. The YHA sold up in 2007.

#### February – Pen y Cae: a cottage on the Ffwyddog; past, present and future

Oliver Fairclough and Cath Larkins were billed to talk about the history of Pen y Cae and plans to bring it back into use but Cath had a nasty ski-ing accident so Oliver was on his own. He shared a powerpoint with clues to the history of the holding, including a possible sale in 1709, and showed a film 'Pen y Cae' made for the Black Mountains Land Use Partnership. In 1937 the holding was sold to the Forestry Commission. In the 1980s they rented it out to the Bristol school where Cath's father was the headmaster. Recently Cath has been involved in a project to open the cottage for young people once more. We saw a second film featuring Cath, the Maberleys, and Martin Jones, made in connection with a study for the provision of off-grid power to the cottage (contact Pip if you would like to see the films).



#### March - Voices from the past: the role of oral history in community studies using local examples

Robert Gant showed us how oral history can supplement documentary sources using three local examples: de-population and re-population in the Valley to the 1970s; a momentous thunderstorm on July 22nd 1907 with lightning strikes and hailstones the size of hen's eggs which caused huge damage between Tredunnow and Llwyn Celyn; and the failure of the 1901 census to identify the true number of domestic servants in the Crickhowell area. For the population study in 1978 Rob interviewed the 53 second home owners to establish why they had come to the Valley. He married June, the last Jasper to be born at Llwyn Celyn during the war, and interviewed his father-in-law John and June's uncle Ted about their memories of the storm on July 22nd. His final example was a Crickhowell gamekeeper who explained that some domestic servants didn't live in and some lived in tied cottages.

#### April - The history of the origin of the Llanthony Show

Douglas Wright and Andrea Ellaway prepared this history of the Show, but Andrea was unwell so Douglas described how the first Show emerged in 1962. Following a Welsh Home Service documentary (21st October 1960) suggesting the 'Lonely Valley' of Llanthony was 'dying', local farmers met at Broadley and decided to organise a Show. Wilf Davies agreed it could be held at Neuaddllwyd little appreciating that he would be hosting it for 32 years. All the Valley farmers supported the idea and contributed funds for equipment including some raised through a sheep auction. Douglas showed a number of early photos and a video of Wilf recalling motorbikes that jumped over people, visitors coming from as far away as Evesham, and that some of the horses that came to compete also appeared in the Horse of the Year Show.



## History walks May-July 2022

### May - The top of the Grwyne Fawr Valley

We used this walk to test our new leaflet starting at Blaen-y-cwm, once the home of local historian Isabel McGrachan, and walking up and down old reservoir-related railway tracks to the bottom of the dam. We saw remains of numerous stone structures below and on the slopes of the dam. We picnicked on the shore of the dam before carrying on to the top of the dam to view the main quarry and the water meter house which is now a bothy. While walking we used the leaflet to note where evidence of pre-historic inhabitants, Bronze Age cairns, a lime kiln, and a 'post-mediaeval rural settlement' has been identified by Coflein. We retraced our steps and back at Blaen-y-cwm explored the site of Tin Town the village occupied by reservoir workers between 1914 and 1928. *More in the new history walks leaflet.*



### June - Along the Old Routeways to Llanthony Priory led by Eddie Procter



Eddie Procter led us from the Abbey up the Showfield to cross the likely main routeway to Hatterall Ridge used by the monks to get to and from Longtown. The path is no longer used or known but as we walked up alongside it we were convinced by Eddie's evidence. We then climbed up to join the post-mediaeval parish road along the valley side before descending towards Maes-y-Beran and joining the lower-level mediaeval route from

the priory to the canon's home manor and agricultural lands at Cwmyoy. The threatened rain started to fall just before we got back to the Abbey for an evening drink.



### July - A walk through three Mediaeval Manors



On a sunny day seven of us set off from The Queen's following a route up to Upper Pentwyn through Bwlch Trewyn Manor. There we met seven people who had driven, and Ed Buck told us a bit about the history of 17C Upper Pentwyn which he bought in a derelict state in the 1990s. We picnicked on the way up to the trig point on Hatterall Ridge in Cwmyoy Manor, then some walked back to the Queen's via the Strawberry Wood reserve in Redcastle Manor. Historical highlights

included: views of 15/16<sup>th</sup> century vernacular houses, one in each Manor; the Castle, a large walled enclosure, probably used for stock; and Pentwyn Iron Age fort. *See the new history walks leaflet for more.*



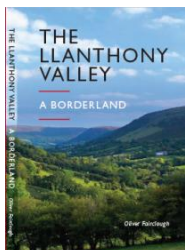
## Local history research and publications

### Research Day March 19<sup>th</sup>

In the morning Oliver Fairclough led an exploration of how to research local house and family histories and after lunch we considered where we are at with the Llanthony & Grwyne Fawr Valleys' Houses and Families project. If you were there or are interested in such research come to the follow-up Research Day on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

### Black Mountains History 2020 and 2021

You can get a copy (£1, 1 copy free to members) from Caroline Fairclough and download both editions from <http://llanthyhistory.genesis-ds.com/>. The 2022 edition will be available in December.



### 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 [oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk); local outlets including the Skirrid garage, or and smaller versions can be downloaded <http://llanthyhistory.genesis-ds.com/>. We have BBNP funds for 3 new printed leaflets, designed by Lisa Hellier. Thanks to members and friends who trialled the draft leaflets as part of our contribution to the project.

**History Group individual membership for 2022-23 costs £10. You can join at a meeting or by contacting Oliver Fairclough ([oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk)) or Pip Bevan ([philippabevan@outlook.com](mailto:philippabevan@outlook.com))**