

Bryn Goleu



Bryn Goleu in 2023.

Bryn Goleu was built sometime between 1841 and 1851 for the Foulkes family, who lived on the Penyclawdd estate. There was no mention of it in the 1841 Census or any appearance on a map of that period.

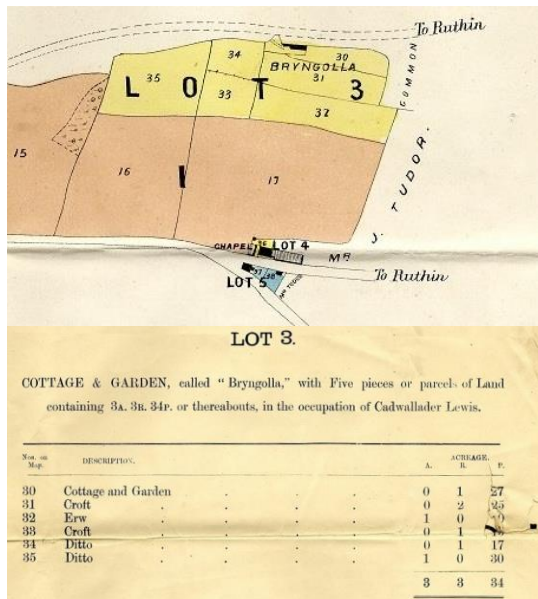
However by the time of the 1851 Census John and Mary Davies, both twenty nine years old, were living with a female relation and lodger Evan Evans at Bryn Goleu. Both men in the household were labourers. John had been born in Merionethshire and his wife in Llandrillo.

By the 1861 Census Cadwaladr and Margaret Lewis were living at the cottage with five children and the Davies family had moved to Bwlch Uchaf (now known as Tŷ Uchaf). Mr Lewis was a



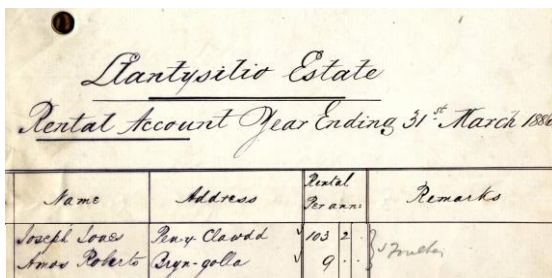
On the tithe map of 1841 the location of Bryn Goleu (marked in blue) was part of No. 31, which was Common Land. Courtesy The National Library of Wales.

rockman probably at one of the local slate quarries. In 1871 they were still at Bryn Goleu and his job was described as quarryman.



Bryn Goleu was Lot 3 in the 1874 sale of the Penyclawdd Estate.

and his family had moved to Garth y Pistyll, where he became a farmer of 10 acres. The family were there for twenty years and then his son would go on to farm at Pentredŵr farm. The new occupants of Bryn Goleu were Amos and Francis Roberts and their three children, Elizabeth, Sarah and John. He again was a slate quarryman and they paid an annual rent of £9 to the Llantysilio estate in 1886. Amos was the son of rockman



Extract of the Llantysilio Estate rent book for March 1886.

John Roberts and his wife Sarah and had been born in Cae'r Hafod in 1850. His wife Francis was from the other Bryn Goleu in the Eglwyseg valley. They had had two children whilst previously living in Plas Du and then, sometime after 1875, moved to Bryn Goleu, Horseshoe Pass.

By 1891 Bryn Goleu was home to another slate quarryman 35 year old Thomas Edwards and his wife and their five children. Their rent charges in the late 19th century were sadly not recorded in the Llantysilio Estate rent book, but they were paying a Land Tax of 1s 8d for just over 3 acres of land. Thomas Edwards and his family, which had grown to 7 children, were still at Bryn Goleu on the 1901 Census.

In 1911 the Edwards family had moved to Tŷ Isaf farm in Llandynan and widow Margaret Williams was living at Bryn Goleu with her daughter Elizabeth Ellen and two grandchildren. Margaret and her husband David had previously farmed at Bryniau with their five children but it is unclear if David died before or after they retired to Bryn Goleu.

Following on from Margaret Williams were John and Jenny (Jane) Roberts, who on the 1921 Census had moved to Bryn Goleu with their 2 month old son Howell. John worked in the Moel y Faen quarry as a quarryman. They remained at Bryn Goleu throughout the inter war period and, at the start of World War II the couple were still in residence. However, the tenancy changed during the war years and Robert Jones moved in with his wife Annie (formerly Evans, nee Roberts) and her two children Glenys and Cyril. The couple had two more children whilst at Bryn Goleu, Eirwen, born in 1945, and Gareth, born in 1947. The following is Eirwen's description of what life was like living at the cottage in those days.

'Whitewashed cottage, four windows, a door in the middle, two up two down. Tied to it four outhouses - one a workshop to keep motor-bikes, one a house for the chickens, a coal house and on the end a house for the pig - although no pig lived there during our time there, if ever! That was the skeleton of the house. Gradually, an extension was built, a small kitchen with a room behind as a washroom/utility - dolly tub and mangle - and later, a bathroom. Some distance from the house, the 'ty bach' (toilet) and further along a shed that my eldest brother, Cyril, used to renovate his vintage motor-bikes - a lifetime passion. Although the amenities were pretty basic, the biggest problem was that there was no water in the house. In fact, we had to walk down a field to a well and carry the water to the house in buckets. That was a family chore each Sunday night, to have a supply of water for my mother's washday on Monday, and many other days as well. Not an exciting job and one which rose tempers on wintry days when you slipped and spilled half of the water and you had to go back and re-fill again! Some relief came when my brother bought an engine capable of pumping the water up to the house. Ah! the joy of turning the tap! A pity the joy could not have been extended to 'pulling the chain' for it remained a bucket and spade job till we moved. To tell the truth, it was a farce to talk of a 'bathroom' for there was no water in the taps until we went to the well and started up the engine! The owners of the house were the Robertson family of Llantysilio Hall and we paid rent to them on a very important date in the calendar.

I don't know how many acres of land there were with the house, but there were more than twenty sheep grazing, hay to harvest, chickens and a dog to keep. An evening to look forward to was when a friend from Tŷ Canol, Eglwyseg, came to 'talk sums' about buying and selling, for we knew that there would be a 'knife and fork supper' after the bartering, before bed. It was important to get the best outcome as it was a substantial contribution to the family's income.'

Eirwen left in 1968 but her stepbrother Cyril was still there in 1969 when unfortunately he died at home at the young age of 41 - his mother surviving him. It is difficult to believe that back in 1901 a family of nine probably lived in the same space that Eirwen remembers.

Up until this time the house still belonged to the Llantysilio estate, but in 1972, according to the deeds, Mr Duncan Robertson, son of the late Sir Henry Beyer Robertson, sold the property to Mr David and Anne Tremlett (née Pughe). Anne was local - her father Robert Jones Pughe ran the Central Stores on Castle St Llangollen. His daughter Julia has informed me that her cousin Robert Ross carried out work on Bryn Goleu, as well as working on other properties in Pentredwŷr.



*The collection tank for the spring water
below Bryn Goleu.*

The deeds mention the right to water from the well/spring in the field below Bryn Goleu for use by the occupants of the house. At this time the property was probably sold with land only to the right (northern) side of the property while the estate retained the previous parcels of land which were with the property back in 1874.

Unfortunately I do not know how long the Tremletts stayed but they divorced and the daughter, who obviously loved the cottage, was unable to afford to buy it at the time. A Mr Bebbington owned it sometime between 1989 and 2001. He divorced his wife and moved to Cheshire.

I moved into Bryn Goleu with my partner Roger on a snowy 2nd February in 2001. There was no central heating as the previous owner had stripped it out but there was a wood burner in the lounge and a Rayburn in the kitchen cum living room. In the current kitchen which was a snooker room there were a couple of night storage heaters. The cottage was advertised as 2/3 bedrooms.



The main house and the north side extension.

At some time in the 60s/ 70s two extensions had been added of cavity wall breeze block. The one to the north side was two storeys high, which contained a kitchen pantry downstairs plus one bedroom upstairs and a small additional single pitched roof story extension which was counted as part of the kitchen when we moved in. On the other side of the cottage there was another extension single story with a vaulted ceiling.

Roger, and I as the jobbers mate, set about first making the house weather proof. We changed the rooms around downstairs so that the kitchen pantry has become a music room with the small add on extension as a utility room. The high ceiling snooker room has become a kitchen diner. The separate toilet and shower were knocked into one so a bath could be incorporated.

The chimney had to be demolished and rebuilt from roof height. All of the windows were replaced with double glazed wooden frame cottage style ones, as they were more in keeping with the age of the house than the 1960's versions. Oil central heating was put in by Roger – the Rayburn had to go as it was dangerous and leaking Carbon monoxide fumes. A new multi fuel burner with chimney liner was installed. In 2006 we had a borehole put in as the spring had run dry one summer. The water was collected in a tank and then flowed into a tin sheet covered pond area. It was then pumped up to a holding tank located above the cottage and fed into the cottage by gravity, so it was a low pressure system.

The previous owner used to turn on the pump from the house and play music on a radio to remind him to turn the pump off so as not to cause the holding tank to overflow. We got around this by installing a float switch in the water tank which automatically switches off the pump when the holding tank reaches a certain level.

A new porch made of oak was added by Roger to the front. It helps to keep the cottage warmer and looks better than the bland flat front that it was. Walls were built to keep driveway from falling down, as previously it had been gravel on a slope with nothing to hold the bank up on the south side.



The new oak porch.

Inside all of the walls were stripped of Artex covering downstairs and replastered and decorated. All of the beams were stripped back to lighter wood and recently we painted them white to introduce as much light into the cottage. New pitch pine plank floors, made from old beams rescued from a hall in Rosset, were put in the lounge, study and music room. They helped to improve insulation as previously the floors downstairs were carpet on concrete. A new kitchen floor was put in using Ruabon tiles - luckily before the company closed down! All internal doors were replaced with ones hand made by Roger of ash and the 1970s style open tread staircase was replaced with an oak one more in keeping with cottage's age.



The changes to the downstairs living area.

False ceilings were added downstairs to accommodate downlights and insulation put in. A new kitchen was fitted in the old snooker room and a new bathroom was made from the toilet and shower room knocked through. Deep window sills were made by Roger for all of the rooms to preserve the deep ones of the original cottage.

Outside the bracken was killed off by me switching with hazel seven times and mainly shrub, trees, small orchard wild garden were put in. Roger added a new workshop for his woodworking and metalworking which replaced a mouldy outbuilding of breeze block. We put in a proper lawn in front of the cottage, as well as hedges to help support the local wildlife.

The cottage is now very warm in winter and nice and cool in the summer. All in all it is our home and we hope to stay here until we are carried out!

By Alison and Roger Cater.