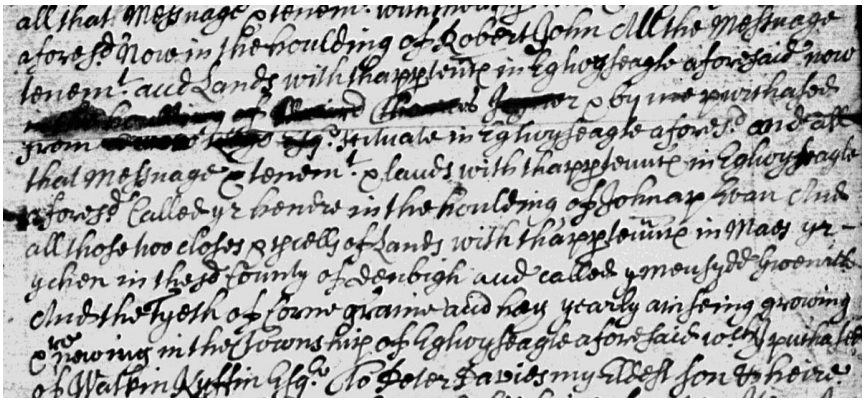
Hendre

An aerial view of Hendre in 2017, with the ruined barn that was previously part of the property when it was used as a farm.

A survey by an historical architect in 2004 concluded, from the beams supporting the first floor in what is now the centre section, that the building at Hendre looked to date to the early 19th century. However, we know from rental records that there was a house here at least a century before that and so the architect suggested that possibly the centre gabled section, with the hearth, had been the original cottage, with the southern part added as a barn for animals with a crog loft above. Then possibly, at some time in the early 19th century, the floor in the original section was replaced.

We know from the 1839 tithe map that, by that date, the southern part had already been added, forming the lower part of the inverted L shape on the map. The lean-to kitchen on the northern end of the house was added in the early 1900s and a small conservatory in the mid 20th century.

The tithe map (above) showing the L shape of the house (the lower building) and a photo from the 1970s (left) showing the lean-to kitchen on the left and the conservatory front right. Courtesy The National Library of Wales.



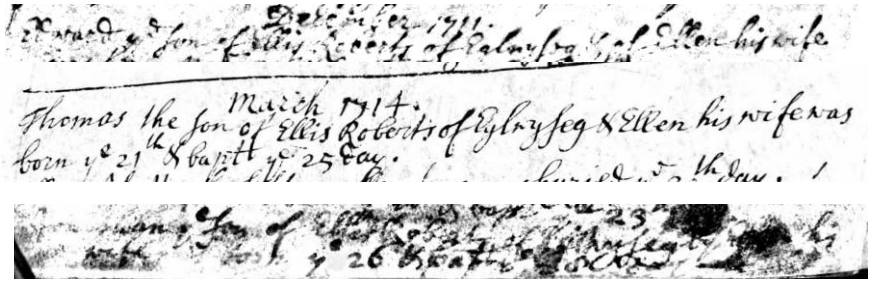
Edward Davies' will, leaving Hendre to his son Peter Davies.
Sourced from the National Library of Wales web pages.

Hendre is first named in written records in the will of Edward Davies of Eglwyseagle in 1692, when he bequeathed Hendre and other properties to Peter Davies, his son. At the time of his will Hendre is recorded as being 'in the houlding of' John ap Evan. Sadly, we can discover nothing more about John ap Evan, the first person that we know lived at the house.

Thomas Pennant related a fascinating story, in his Tours in Wales, concerning Edward Davies. 'I visited a house noted for being the residence of one Edward Davies, a low partizan and plunderer on the side of the usurper during the civil wars. He was best known in his own country by the title of Cneifiwr Glas, or the Blue Fleecer, from his rapacity, and the color of his cloaths; and was considered as a fit instrument of the tyranny of the times. In 1654, he was appointed, by the commissioners for sequestration, steward of the court-leet within the manor of Valle Crucis, being recommended to the office by Colonel George Twisleton. The Cneifiwr seems to have not been over-true to his own party, when his interest stood in the way. He was accustomed to take even the royalists under his protection, on receiving a proper reward. He once concealed Sir Evan Llwyd of Bododris, at the time that a considerable sum was ordered for his apprehension. He lodged him in a cellar below the parlour; then summoning his people, ordered them, in a seeming rage, to sally out in quest of Sir Evan, stamping his foot, and declaring that if the knight was above ground, he would have him.

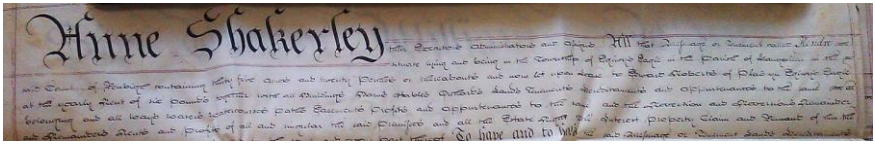
Going up the valley Pennant noted that the house was 'up a steep ascent to the left' and about 'midway to the great road'. Unfortunately he did not mention the name of the house he visited. The most likely candidates, from their location, would be Fron Llwyd, Cae'r Hafod or Pant Glas.

Like his father Edward, Peter Davies of Eglwysegle held a position of trust at Chirk Castle, being responsible in 1668 for the collection of rents in Llangollen amongst other places. Peter Davies died in 1704 at the age of 77, leaving his wife Elizabeth and their son Peter. With his death it appears that Hendre passed into the ownership of the Wynnstay Estate as, from 1719, Ellis Roberts was paying £6.0.0 rent for Hendre to Sir Watkin Williams Wynn. Ellis and his wife Ellen had been living in Eglwyseg, most likely at Hendre, since at least 1710. Between then and 1721 they had six children, Margaret, Edward, Thomas, Jane, John and Mary, although the eldest daughter Margaret sadly died at just one month old.



The baptisms of Ellis and Ellen Roberts' three sons - Edward in December 1711, Thomas in March 1714 and John in February 1718.

Ellis Roberts and his family continued to rent Hendre until at least 1748, with the rent staying constant for the whole time. It would be another thirty years (1778) until Hendre was named again in the Wynnstay papers, in a mortgage from Sir Watkin Williams Wynn to Peter Shakerley, Dame Frances Williams Wynn and Ann Shakerley.



The 1778 document, detailing how Hendre was let upon lease to Edward Roberts of Plas yn Eglwyseg.
Courtesy North East Wales Archives, DD/WY/458.

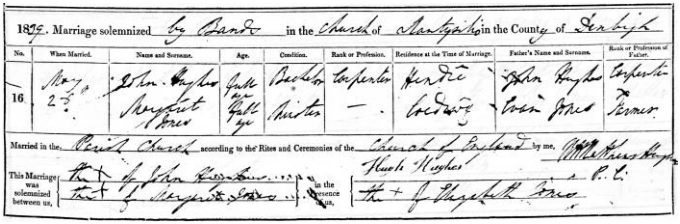
In the document it is recorded that Hendre was let upon lease to Edward Roberts of Plas yn Eglwyseg for a yearly rent of £6.0.0 per year. Whether this Edward Roberts was related to Ellis Roberts (son or grandson) is not certain, but it does seem possible.

1778 also saw the start of the surviving Land Tax records for Eglwyseg. In those records a John Roberts is shown as paying £0.12.0 (12 shillings) for Hendre, as well as £0.4.0 for another property, whilst Edward Roberts was paying £4.16.0 for Plas yn Eglwyseg.

Edward Roberts and his wife Mary had had six children between 1755 and 1765, Edward in 1755, John in 1756, Hannah in 1758, Thomas in 1760, Petter in 1763 and Mary in 1765. Petter's baptism record shows Edward and Mary living at Eglwyseg Hall and so it is likely that they had been there since at least Edward's birth in 1755. It also seems likely that the John Roberts shown at Hendre in the Land Tax records was Edward and Mary's 22 year old son John, fortunate enough to have his father paying his rent.

From the baptism records of his children we learn that John Roberts was a 'rockman' (working in the quarries) and that he and his wife Mary had two sons, John and Charles, whilst they were living at Hendre. John appears to have died in 1791, but Mary continued to live at Hendre, although at first the Land Tax was paid by her brother in law Edward.

Robertses lived at Hendre until after 1807, when Robert Roberts and his wife Mary, of Hendre Eglwiseg, had their daughter Catherine baptised at Llantysilio Church. However, by 1839 carpenter John Hughes was living there, his son, also John, marrying Margaret Jones of Coedrwg in May of that year.



1839. Marriage solemnized by Banns in the Church of Llantysilio in the County of Denbigh

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
16.	May 23	John Hughes Margaret Jones	Full age Full age	Bachelor Spinster	Carpenter —	Hendre Coedrwg	John Hughes Evan Jones	Carpenter Farmer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by me, Thos Rees Hughes
Thomas Hughes R.C.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, the + of John Hughes and the + of Margaret Jones, in the presence of us.

The marriage of John and Margaret in 1839.

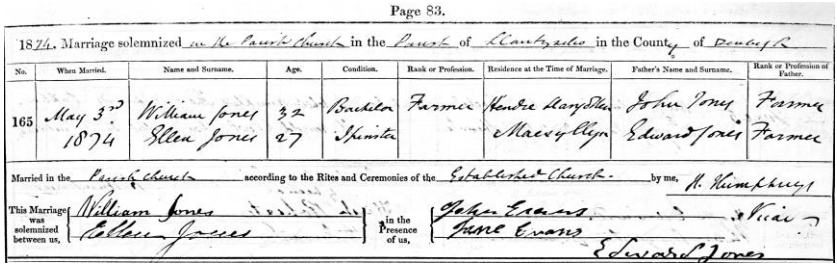
The following ten years saw further changes in the occupancy of Hendre, with labourer Evan Jones and his family moving in in 1841, followed by Thomas Pugh in 1844 and then hostler John Humphreys by 1851. A hostler was a person who looked after horses, but whether John did that in the barn adjacent to Hendre, looked after horses on nearby farms or worked with horses at one of the coaching inns in Llangollen we do not know. He lived at Hendre with his wife Margaret and their three sons, George, Jeremiah and Samuel.

The Humphreys would remain at Hendre for twenty years, but unfortunately John died in 1865. He was buried in St John's churchyard, Llangollen, where Margaret would join him twenty three years later.

John and Margaret Humphreys' gravestone in St John's Churchyard, Llangollen.

With the death of his father, Samuel took over as head of the household at Hendre, living there in 1871 with his wife Anne, their two young sons John and Hiram, with his mother Margaret continuing to live with them.

Samuel had been a general labourer, but found work as a gasman in Brymbo and so moved his family there in the early 1870s. William Jones, son of John and Margaret Jones of Bwlch Mawr farm in Pentredŵr, moved in to farm at Hendre. In 1874 he married Ellen Jones, from Maes y Llyn farm, at Llantysilio Church, and they went on to have five children whilst at Hendre – Edward, Margaret, Thomas, Henry and Emily Ellen.



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1874. Marriage solemnized in the Parish Church in the Parish of Llantysilio in the County of Denbigh

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
165	May 3rd 1874	William Jones Ellen Jones	32 27	Bachelor Spinster	Farmer	Hendre Llantysilio Maes y Llyn	John Jones Edward Jones	Farmer Farmer

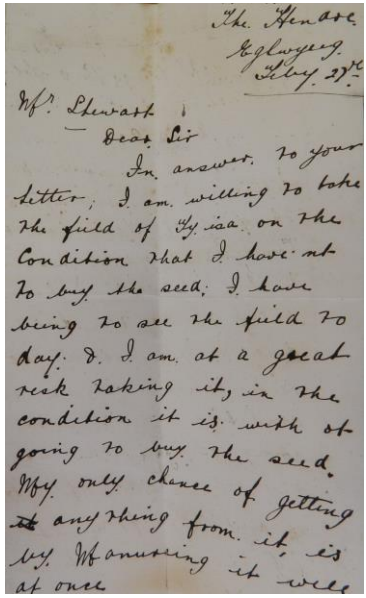
Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church. by me, R. Humphreys

This Marriage was solemnized between us, William Jones, Ellen Jones. in the Presence of us, Peter Evans, Jane Evans, Edward Jones. Vicar

William and Ellen's marriage in 1874.

Sadly, in 1889, just four years after his youngest daughter Emily was born, William died. Ellen carried on farming at Hendre for a couple more years, but finally had to move out.

Hendre was now vacant, but John Griffiths of Plas Du, Pentredŵr, wanted to rent the farm. John was a slatemaker at the quarries in Pentredŵr, and had previously lived with his wife Ann at No. 3 Pentre Uchaf. He evidently wanted to try his hand at farming. Edward Davies of Dergoed recommended to Sir Watkin Williams Wynn that he let the farm to John Griffiths, and even offered himself as a guarantor. A rent of £30 per year was agreed and John Griffiths duly took on the lease of Hendre in 1892. The Wynnstay Estate wanted John to also lease the field of Tŷ Isaf, lying next to those of Hendre. However, the field had been neglected and John Griffith was unsure whether it would be viable. Shortly after moving in he wrote to the Estate saying that he was willing to take on the field as long as he could manure it immediately and not have to buy the seed.



The Hendre
Ryllwyeng.
Feby. 27th

Mr. Stewart
Dear Sir
In answer to your letter, I am willing to take the field of Ty isa on the Condition that I have not to buy the seed. I have been to see the field to day. & I am at a great risk taking it, in the condition it is with of going to buy the seed. My only chance of getting any thing from it, is by manuring it well at once

John Griffith's letter to the Wynnstay Estate. Courtesy North East Wales Archives, DD/WY/462.

John and Ann stayed at Hendre for twenty years, although in 1906 John decided to go back into quarrying, being appointed manager of the Cambrian Slate Quarry in Glynceiriog. They were just in the process of arranging a new lease for Hendre and Tŷ Isaf in 1911 when they decided that farming was not for them. They moved back to Pentre Uchaf and John went back to work as a foreman for William Hawkes at the Moel y Faen slate quarry. The lease for Hendre and Tŷ Isaf was given instead to Richard Evans at £34 per year.

Richard Evans had been born in 1861 at Fron Newydd in Pentredŵr, and by the age of 20 had become a slate quarryman like his father, Jonah. In 1891 he was head of the household at Fron Newydd, living there with his wife Ann and children William (9), Elizabeth A (7), John Richard (6), Price (4), Maria (2) and Muriel (3mo). By 1901 they had had another five children, Jonah, Thomas, Ellen (Nellie), Fred and Emlyn, but then moved up the road to Bryn yr Odyn, where a further two children, Lora and David were born.

Richard and Ann's eldest son William, who had also been a quarryman, had taken the plunge and taken up farming at Tan y Fron Farm a few years before. Richard now followed in his son's footsteps and took on the challenge of the 25 acre Hendre Farm. In 1921 he and his wife Ann were still there, along with Jonah (28), Thomas (26), Fred (22) and Sally (16 = Lora Sarah), four of the thirteen children that they had raised.

Richard and Ann Evans when they lived at Fron Newydd.
Thomas is between them and Jonah is standing behind Ann.

Jonah and Fred were both quarry workers at the Moel y Faen Quarry, but Thomas worked at Gresford Colliery. Jonah had a lucky escape in April 1920, when his clothing caught in a revolving spindle in some quarry machinery. Fortunately all he received was bruising.

Ann and Richard's grave in Llantysilio churchyard.

Sadly, Richard and Ann's farming life at Hendre was not to last. Ann died in 1922 and Richard four years later in 1926. They were buried together in Llantysilio Church graveyard.

Whether any of the remaining four children had left Hendre by the time of their father's death or whether they continued to rent it for a while and then left later is unclear, but certainly by 1939 Hendre was vacant and possibly remained so throughout the period of the Second World War. Following the War the Wynnstay Estate faced a heavy burden of death duties. Forced to sell land and property to meet the costs, both Hendre and Tan y Fron farm were put up for sale, with first refusal given to the existing tenants. In April 1947 Richard Lemuel Evans, who had taken over from his father William at Tan y Fron Farm, purchased both farms from the estate for £1,450.

Richard did not, however, plan to have two farmhouses. He simply wanted to purchase Hendre in order to secure the land that went with it, and a year later Hendre Cottage was put up for sale again with just the land immediately around it. It was bought by a Richard Taylor Lowe for £150, but he evidently wanted it just as an investment as less than two years later it went back onto the market.

This time it was bought by four friends from Liverpool, who had met each other through working as nurses. Ethel Pinnington Griffiths, Dorothy Ellwood Kay, Edna Morris and Molly May Furbur bought Hendre for £230, planning to move there on their retirement. In the end, only Ethel, Dorothy and Edna finally came to live at Hendre.

The three women were well loved members of the community, being actively involved in the Pentredŵr Women's Institute and frequently organising events in the garden at Hendre. Possibly being used to greater home comforts in Liverpool they converted a rubble filled space upstairs at the back of the house into a bathroom (previously it had been a tin bath in the lean to kitchen) and installed a cesspit at the bottom of the garden. They were also forward looking, being the first in the valley to get a colour television.

Hendre in the 1960s, showing the lean-to kitchen at the side.

The four friends had an unusual ownership arrangement, whereby, if any of them died, their portion would not be sold but pass equally to the remaining friends. Ethel died in 1967, Dorothy in 1977 and Molly in 1983, leaving Edna the sole owner of the cottage. When she passed away in 1986 at the age of 78, under the terms of her will, Hendre was left to her nephew Norman Morris and his wife Patricia. They enjoyed using Hendre as their summer home for ten years, going back to their house in Dorset during the winter.They made a few additions, with Norman's pride and joy being the small pond and fountain that he installed in the garden. In 1997 however, with issues of damp in the house, not being on mains water or sewage and with constantly having to haul large bottles of gas around to the back of the house for heating, they decided to sell Hendre and spend the whole year in Devon.

Hendre was bought by a young married couple, David Crane and Christine Thomas, who were moving up from Oxfordshire. Christine was originally from Mold in Flintshire and David had been to college in Bangor and, having decided to both become self employed, they wanted to move to North Wales. Owning a narrowboat, they were ideally looking for a house on a canal. However, having looked at places up and down the North Wales border, when they saw the view from Hendre they could not resist, and bought it for the asking price of £72,000.

The new extension on Hendre.

They set out to make a range of improvements, including waterproofing the back wall and installing a damp proof course. Most significantly they replaced the lean-to kitchen and the attached conservatory with a two story extension, significantly increasing the size of the house.

Three years after moving in David and Christine faced a challenge during the floods of November 2000. Waking early one morning they noticed water leaking from under the washing machine in the shower room at the back of the new extension. Within minutes the whole ground floor was under six inches of water, flowing straight out of the saturated hillside, through the back wall and then on through the house. Needing a pump, and with all roads out blocked by flooding, Norman's pride and joy came to the rescue. Having been disconnected when the extension was built, David and Christine were able to salvage the pump from Norman's fountain and use it to help clear water from the house.

Just two months later saw a happier event with the arrival of their son Ieuan in January 2001.

David, Christine and Ieuan immersed themselves in the life of the local community, joining local groups and becoming involved with the Pentredŵr Community Association. David founded the Llangollen Museum which, in 2004, re-located to its current (2023) location in the Old Library building in the town centre.

In 2012 Christine became ill and they were looking to relocate away from Hendre to somewhere more central. However, in August of that year Christine sadly died and so David decided to stay at Hendre. Two years later he and Ieuan were joined by David's new partner Pam Taylor. Looking to make life a little easier as they grew older, in 2020 Hendre was converted to electric central heating instead of bottled gas. In mind of the increasing number of days that the spring had dried up over the past few years, David and Pam also installed a pipe across the valley to connect to mains water as well.

As of the date of writing (2023), David (having been at there for 25 years) and Pam continue to enjoy life at Hendre, although Ieuan has moved out of the family home and gone to live near Denbigh.

By David Crane