

Pen y Clawdd House (Cottage)



The front elevation of Pen y Clawdd House in 2023.

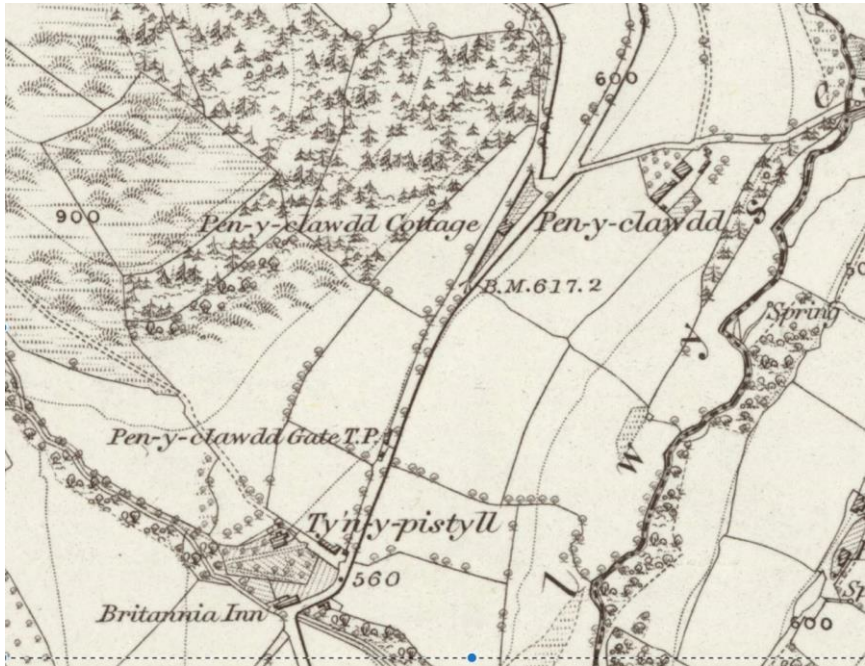
It is believed that Pen y Clawdd Cottage was built in the early 1800s, although records do not show the date of construction. In the early days, the cottage had strong connections with Pen y Clawdd Farm, but in more recent times it has operated as a standalone residential property. The 'cottage' has seen many changes over the past 70 years, including structural remodelling, having a new look following the removal of render and at some point adopting the title of 'house' rather than 'cottage'.



The house name plate in 2023.

The property as it stands today is constructed from stone and has many original features, including an inglenook, Victorian fireplaces, window shutters and a bread oven. It is believed that the house was extended over the years, with many of the interior walls on the main level being of solid construction, suggesting they originally formed an exterior boundary. Once inside the property from road level, there are a few steps up to what was once the domain of servants, this room sits under

the main house and still retains a bread oven and an original stone fireplace. The property is built into the hillside and is flanked by the Horseshoe Pass at the rear, the Old Horseshoe Pass at the front, and elevated gardens either side.

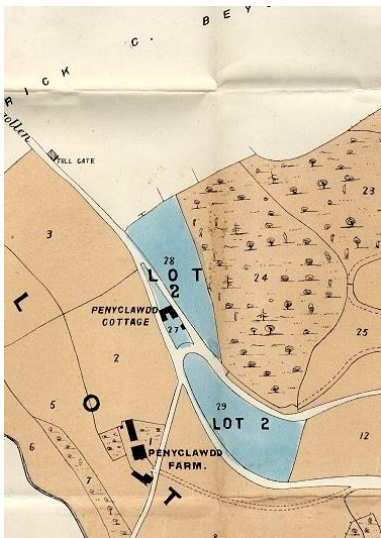


Extract from Ordnance Survey Map published 1880 showing the location of Pen y Clawdd Cottage.

Mention of the house first appears in records in 1809 when, in an advertisement in the Chester Courant in February 1809, the trustees of the Llangollen District stated 'we have come to a determination to improve a part of the Llangollen Road leading towards Ruthin to avoid Bwlch-rhiw-felin, by turning of the said road, to the left at Edward Foulk's house, and carrying up to Trenant (Oernant) Slate Quarries.' Coming up from Llangollen the old pass ran past the right (or front) of Pen y Clawdd Cottage and this press advertisement described the proposed route of the new road (the main Horseshoe Pass road today) going to the left (or behind) the Cottage.

The piece in the news also informed the reader that this was Edward Foulks' house. Edward was a member of the Foulks (sometimes Foulkes) family, who had married into the Penyclawdd Farm Estate in the early 18th century. Since that time the Foulks' had owned and farmed at Penyclawdd and the Cottage was part of the estate, providing a home for different members of the family.

The 1841 Census listed the residents of the Cottage as Peter and Elizabeth Foulkes and their six children, with nearby Pen y Clawdd Farm being the long-term home of other members of the Foulkes family who were listed as farmers. The property was not named specifically in the 1851 Census, with there being a single entry for 'Pen y Clawdd', with Peter and Elizabeth and their family shown as residents, with Peter's occupation listed as a farmer. The 1861 Census showed Peter and his family still in residence at Pen y Clawdd Cottage, but this time they were a family of shopkeepers. Peter Foulkes died in April 1869, with his will showing effects totalling under £100. By 1871 Elizabeth Foulkes was listed as a widow, who resided with her widowed daughter Sarah Hetherington, and Jane Evans a 19-year-old general servant.



The death of Peter, followed four years later by Elizabeth in 1873, triggered the sale of the estate and in September 1874 it was put up for auction, with Pen y Clawdd Cottage forming Lot 2. The property was shown as having a garden and two parcels of land, having a total area of just over 3 acres. Sarah had evidently moved out as the auction details describe the house as 'late in the occupation of Mrs Hetherington'.

| LOT 2 | | | | |
|---|------------------|---|---|----|
| "PENYCLAWDD COTTAGE," and GARDENS with two pieces or parcels of Land, containing 3a. 2n. 34r., or thereabouts, late in the occupation of Mrs. Hetherington. | | | | |
| 27 | House and Garden | 0 | 1 | 11 |
| 28 | Cae Gwerche | 1 | 2 | 35 |
| 29 | Cae forty | 1 | 2 | 38 |
| | | 3 | 2 | 34 |

*The plan of lots from the auction document of 1874 and the details for Lot 2 showing the Cottage as 'late in the occupation of Mrs Hetherington'.
Courtesy Llangollen Museum.*

The entire estate was purchased by Frederick C. Beyer of Llantysilio Hall, whose existing property bordered the Pen y Clawdd estate on the northern side. From that time onwards the Cottage would become totally separate from Pen y Clawdd Farm. In 1881 Pen y Clawdd Cottage did not appear on the Census and in 1891 the property was reported as uninhabited. However, at the turn of the 20th century slate quarry worker John Jones moved in with his wife Elizabeth and their three daughters, Alice (22), Margaretta (19) and Frances (10). Also living with them was John's three year old nephew Percy. Ten years later the Joneses had moved on and Pen y Clawdd Cottage was occupied by Llewelyn Roberts, a schoolmaster at the Council School.

However, John Jones and his family had evidently moved away to try their hand at farming as, by 1921, they were back at Pen y Clawdd Cottage, with John being described as a retired farmer. Daughters Margeretta and Frances would remain at the Cottage right up until the 1960s, and some of the older residents today (2023) still remember the two sisters, as well as their cousin Percy, living there. When the one sister died the other moved to Llanfair DC to live and the house became empty.

Previous occupants of the Cottage, and other local residents, have memories of the property. It has been suggested that in the early days the lower level of the cottage included a stable, in what is now the workshop. This is supported by the fact that numerous horseshoes have been found in the gardens. It has also been suggested that at one point the lower level of the cottage was a shop, and this could certainly have been the case given that in 1861 Peter and Elizabeth Foulkes were listed in the Census as shopkeepers.



These two photographs show the very different façade of the building between the 1950s (left) and the present day (right) layout. It is also interesting to see the change to the land directly behind the cottage, which is now heavily wooded, compared to the earlier photograph.

Records show that, in the mid-1960s, Arthur Henry Bennett retired to Pen y Clawdd Cottage with his wife Pat. Prior to that the cottage had fallen into disrepair and local residents have told stories about how they played as children in the derelict building. Arthur and Pat bought the house from the Llantysilio Estate and employed local builders D. Davies and Sons, from Abbey Road, to totally gut and re-furbish the building. The renovations included changing the façade and layout of the property, with the front section of the upper floor being removed and a new roofline created.

Arthur Bennett was born around 1900 and had five children. A biographical record from the Royal College of Surgeons shows that Arthur had a distinguished career as a general surgeon, and when hospitals were reorganised under the NHS in 1948, he became a surgical



Dr Arthur Bennett.

consultant for the North and Mid Cheshire Hospitals Group. He had articles published in the Lancet and British Medical Journal in 1946-7. Sadly in 1969, Arthur passed away aged 69, and was survived by his wife and their five children. His funeral service was held in Llangollen Parish Church, and probate records show that he left a sum of £520.

Following his death Pat Bennett moved down to Hampshire and Pen y Clawdd Cottage became home for a while to Sally Piggott and then to Thatcher Thomas. Thatcher would have described himself as a fine woodworker.

An anecdote from the late 70s or early 80s concerned him and the owner of the Britannia, a Mr Cyril Ashton. Cyril wanted a couple of wedges to hold open the front door of the Britannia on warm days and evenings. He asked Thatcher Thomas if he could get him some wedges and was thinking in terms of offcuts which may have cost him a pint. Thatcher Thomas had other ideas and provided bespoke machined and varnished wedges in a box with an invoice attached.

During this period the house underwent more refurbishment, though possibly mainly internal. During some recent decorating work some walls were stripped down to the plaster, revealing that somebody had signed in the plaster and dated it 1981.



The initials signed in the plaster in 1981.

New owners (David and Janet) purchased the cottage in June 1995, once again as a retirement property. These owners dedicated time to further renovate the property, with a major change being to remove all of the render from the building, giving it a new lease of life with a stone façade, with some sections of pebbledash. If you look closely at the property now, one of the three chimneys is still rendered, providing a reminder of what the cottage looked like in earlier years. It is believed that it was during the late 1990s, or early 2000s that the property adopted the name 'Pen y Clawdd House' and although the new name is now widely used, it does occasionally cause confusion when people look for the cottage, not realising that the 'cottage' and 'house' are the same property. The property was purchased in 2013 by the current owners, who have continued with a programme of sympathetic renovations and further landscaping of the gardens.

By Joanne Bradshaw.