

## Tŷ'n y Pistyll Villa and Cottages



Tŷ'n y Pistyll Villa in 2022.

Tŷ'n y Pistyll (House by the Waterfall) has the appearance of a Georgian House and, according to the Cadw listed buildings directory, was 'built in the late C18 or early C19, allegedly for a quarry owner'. However, the house that stands today appears to be a later building, although the history of Tŷ'n y Pistyll goes back into at least the mid 18th century.

Tŷ'n y Pistyll first appears in the records in 1767 when, in his will, Humphrey Jones bequeathed all of his estate of 'Tŷ yn y Pistill' to his nephew John Jones, who was a carpenter in Llangollen, for 'him and his lawful heirs to hold forever'. Humphrey died three years later and so the house, along with the outbuildings and a number of cottages passed to John. The main house was not the one that is there today, but one that stood lower than the present building, closer to the road.

In the Name of God Amen: I, Humphrey Jones of Tŷ yn y Pistill in the parish of -  
Llanfyllid in the County of Denbigh and Bishopric of St Asaph yeoman and now  
in Body but of perfect Mind and memory do give to the Almighty God therefor  
calling to Mind the Mortality of My Body and knowing that it is appointed for all men  
once to Die do Make and Ordain this My last will and testament in the following  
Manner and form: I Give Devise and Bequeath unto My Nephew the son of  
Llangollen in the County of Denbigh aforesaid Carpenter all My Royal Estate situate  
Lying and Being in the parish of Llanfyllid aforesaid for him the said John Jones to  
have and to hold and his Lawful Heirs for ever: Now the said sum of twenty pounds

Humphrey Jones' will of 1767.

Courtesy of North East Wales Archives, D/BC/5550.



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This Ordnance Survey map from 1819 (left) shows the location of the original house. Transposed onto the more detailed and larger scale Ordnance Survey map of 1874 (below), the position of the original house (marked in red) relative to the later building can be seen.

John Jones, in turn, left Tŷ'n y Pistyll to his nephew John Roberts, also a carpenter who lived in Llangollen. John Roberts was married twice, to Ann Finch in 1798 and then to Jane Jones in 1809, and had six children. He had two daughters with Ann his first wife - Anne Maria Roberts (b. 1798) and Susanah Roberts (b. 1801), and two sons and two daughters to his second wife Jane - John Roberts (b. 1811), Morris Roberts (b. 1813), Jane Roberts (b. 1818) and Mary Ann Roberts (b. 1821).



Anne Maria (usually recorded just as Maria) met Robert Crow, a broker from Norfolk who lived and worked in London. They were married in 1820 and lived in Hanover Square. They had a daughter, Susannah in 1824, followed by a son, Robert, in 1826.

In his will of 1834, John Roberts bequeathed the Tŷ'n y Pistyll estate to be shared equally between all of his surviving children, this being a condition of John Jones' original will. So when John Roberts died in 1836, the estate was divided between Morris Roberts, Ann Maria Crow, Susanah Roberts (Jones), Jane Roberts, Mary Ann Roberts and John Roberts.

A year later, Robert and Ann Maria Crow bought out her siblings, using money from his father John Crow. So although John Crow technically owned all of the property, he held it in trust for Robert. That is why, in the tithe of October 1841 John Crow was listed as owning and occupying the 25 acres of Tŷ'n y Pistyll, paying a tithe of £2 17s 4d, even though he never actually lived there. In fact, slate merchant Edward Roberts was living in Tŷ'n y Pistyll house, whilst Robert and Maria Crow occupied and ran the Britannia Inn. Living in the five cottages were Elizabeth Roberts and her two sons, labourer Roger Thomas and his family, farmer Thomas Wall, labourer Ellis Roberts and his wife, and slate maker John Roberts and family. Rent from the house and the cottages would have provided welcome extra income for the Crows.

It was a short reign as lord and lady of the manor for Robert and Maria. In 1847, with the agreement of her siblings, Robert and Maria sold Tŷ'n y Pistyll to Alexander Reid of Llantysilio Hall, along with Mr Charles Kennings and Mr James Beattie. The three men were members of a benefit building society called the West End and Western Mutual Association or Building Society which, with agreement from the other members of the society, raised the £2000 purchase price. Robert and Maria Crow moved down to Chelsea, where, in the 1851 Census, Robert was described as being 'Out of Business'. Robert died in 1856 and Maria moved back up to Mill Street Square in Llangollen, where she lived until she died in 1881.

In 1851 Tŷ'n y Pistyll Hall was rented out to 54 year old Charles Buchanan, manager of the nearby slate quarry, who lived there with his wife Lydia. The cottages were rented out mainly to quarrymen and their families, although one was lived in by blacksmith David Davis. Roger Thomas was still at Tŷ'n y Pistyll No. 3, with his wife Margaret (who was 30 years his junior) and their two children, but was by then an 82 year old pauper.

In 1859 Alexander Reid sold Tŷ'n y Pistyll to John Whitehurst of Shrewsbury for the sum of £1300. Included in the sale document was a description of the property, comparing it to an earlier document of 1852. This referred to Tŷ'n y Pistyll as a 'New House and Garden', and so suggests very strongly that the main house that stands today was built during this seven year period. The two cottages adjoining the Britannia Inn had new tenants, whereas the same tenants had remained in the three separate cottages, although at Tŷ'n y Pistyll No. 3 Roger Thomas had died, leaving his widow Margaret and their two children.

By the time of the 1861 Census, however, Margaret and her children had also left No. 3, to be replaced by slatemaker Hugh Ellis and his family.

*The drawing came in in Dec 4. 1852 before sale*

*All the 3 here & premises, what was then better known by the modern description following that is to say New House and Garden two roads 2 1/2 perches (see survey p. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100) and 1 road & 2 perches or by what other name or names the same were then called known or denominated as being in the parish of the foot of Llantysilio in the City of Shrewsbury. All which said houses or premises and their premises were then or then late in the name of Richard Gould.*

*And also that three houses or premises known by the name of the said lands called 'The Cottages' with the stable (lastly a cottage) out offices & appurtenances belonging all which said land and premises or other houses & houses contain by about 30 perches and were then or then late in the name of John Jones as licensed that*

*And also those 3 Cottages & gardens lying to the north of the said lands containing by about 14 perches of the said premises or premises then of John Jones as licensed that*

*And also all those 3 Cottages & gardens lying adjoining the said lands containing 14 perches or thereabouts & the late in the name of Roger Thomas & others but then of John Jones, except John Jones & Margaret Thomas as tenants that all which said houses & premises are now partly delineated on the map drawn on the back of these presents & colored pink &*

The sale of 1859. Courtesy of North East Wales Archives, D/BC/5449.

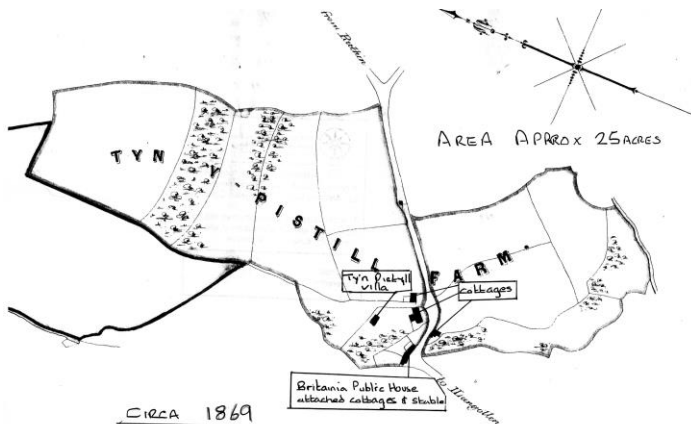


*A photograph of the second Tŷ'n y Pistyll, taken in the early 1900s.*

By 1861 the new 'Tŷ'n y Pistyll Hall' was once again being rented out as a farm, worked by thirty one year old James Lightfoot and his wife Mary. James was originally from Liverpool, but Mary was a bit further away from home, having been born in Australia. The five cottages continued to be occupied by quarrymen and labourers and their families.

At an auction, held at the Hand Hotel on 19th July 1867, Charles Frederick Beyer, who had succeeded Alexander Reid as the owner of Llantysilio Hall, purchased for £1600 'the messuage or dwelling house called or known by the name of Tŷ'n y Pistyll, in the occupation of John Forsyth', although the sale was not completed until late in 1868. And so Tŷ'n y Pistyll moved back into the ownership of the Llantysilio Estate.

At the time, the Britannia Inn, included in the sale, was in the occupation of John Jones, and the five cottages and gardens were described as being in the occupation of Edward Jones and others. However, from 1871 onwards, only three of the cottages were ever mentioned in the Census (only two after 1891), and so it seems possible that the two cottages adjoining the Britannia had become incorporated into the inn.



*A plan of Tŷ'n y Pistyll Farm from around 1869, showing the three separate cottages.*



*The Jones' family gravestone in Llantysilio churchyard.*

As there was no reference to Tŷ'n y Pistyll Villa or Hall in the 1871 or 1881 Censuses it was possibly unoccupied or the occupants were absent when the Censuses were taken.

Living in one of the cottages in the 1870s were John and Jane Jones, with their son John and daughters Jane and Catherine. Two older sons, Robert and Hugh, were not included on the 1871 Census. John was a quarryman, most likely at the Moel y Faen or Clogau quarry. The couple had two further children, Mary Ellen in 1874 and David William in 1877. A gravestone in Llantysilio churchyard records the sad death of daughter Jane in 1878 at just 14 years old. To compound her mother Jane's grief, just a year later, her husband John also died. He was also relatively young, being only 48 years old. Jane

stayed with their six children at Tŷ'n y Pistyll Cottage for a few more years before the family moved into Llangollen. Jane is also commemorated on the gravestone, as are their youngest son and daughter, David and Catherine.

By 1891 Tŷ'n y Pistyll Villa was once again being used as a farm, with Frances Lewis, his wife Emily and their four children moving into the Villa. It was a change of occupation for Frances, who had previously been a quarryman living in the centre of Llangollen, but had now decided to try his hand at being a farmer. It was not to last. Ten years later the family were still at Tŷ'n y Pistyll, but Frances was again back to working as a quarryman.

Frances and his family did not remain at Tŷ'n y Pistyll Villa but moved down to Tan y Bedw in Berwyn. Thirty year old Thomas Ellis and his cousin Jenny Hughes, both originally from Llanwddyn, moved in, and once again Tŷ'n y Pistyll was operating as a farm. Thomas Ellis had been born in Llanwddyn in 1881, but the family had to leave their home immediately after as the village was demolished in preparation for the building of



*This watch was given to Thomas Ellis when he moved to Gobowen.*

a dam and the flooding of the valley, to form the reservoir today known as Lake Vyrnwy. Thomas had lived with his family in Llanfyllin until moving to Llantysilio, where he became the preacher at St Mary's Church in Eglwyseg. The move to Tŷ'n y Pistyll was undoubtedly easier as Thomas had relations living at Plas yn Eglwyseg. However, in 1911, Thomas Ellis gave up his post as preacher at St Mary's and moved to Gobowen.

By 1921, fifty eight year old wheelwright Joseph Evans had taken up residence at Tŷ'n y Pistyll Villa with his daughter Harriet (26) and son Stanley (15). Joseph and his family had previously lived just down the road at Pandy. He and his wife Mary Jane (née Pugh) had been there for more than twenty years, and had two daughters, Mary Elizabeth in August 1889, followed by Harriet Jane, in August 1893. They had also adopted two further children, Mary Eleanor (Nellie) Roberts and Stanley Evans. Nellie was a few months older than Mary and Joseph's first daughter Mary Elizabeth. She was the daughter of Eleanor Elizabeth Roberts and had been born in February 1889. Her baptism in March shows her mother living at Pandy. She had initially been adopted by Mary Jane's parents, Richard and Harriet Pugh, but they were both in their sixties when they adopted her and maybe thought that their daughter and her new husband would be able to give Mary Eleanor a more secure future.

Stanley was twelve years younger than Harriet, Joseph and Mary's second daughter. The reason for the large age gap became clear when it was discovered that Stanley was, in fact, the son of their adopted daughter Mary Eleanor Roberts, born in 1905 when she was just 15 years old. The story in the family is that Mary Eleanor was in service (maybe at the nearby Abbey Grange Hotel) when she became pregnant, and that she had possibly been raped.

Joseph most likely moved to Tŷ'n y Pistyll following the death of his wife Mary in 1918. Both of the birth daughters married and moved away, but Stanley became a wheelwright and continued to live with the family at Tŷ'n y Pistyll. He had grown up believing that Nellie was his older sister and did not discover until later in life that she was, in fact, his mother.

**EVANS** Joseph Blaney of Tyn-y-Pistyll Pentredwr near Llangollen **Denbighshire** died 15 February 1937 Probate **Chester** 23 April to Mary Elizabeth Carter (wife of George Carter) and Stanley Evans wheelwright. Effects £211 17s. 8d.

*Record of Joseph Blaney Evans' probate.  
England & Wales, National Probate Calendar  
(Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1995.*



*Mary Eleanor (Nellie)  
Roberts/Evans at  
Tŷ'n y Pistyll.*

Nellie outlived her son by four years, passing away in 1973, and was buried with Stanley. Megan lived to the ripe old age of 97 before joining her husband and mother in law.

From 1891 onwards only two of the cottages at Tŷ'n y Pistyll were occupied. In that year No. 1 was lived in by quarryman John Jones, with his wife Elizabeth and their two year old daughter Deborah. In No. 2 were Morris and Sarah Roberts and their son Edward, who was 11 years old. Morris Roberts was a coal miner. Morris Roberts (now a quarryman) and his family were still there in 1901, but No. 1 had become the home of 48 year old dressmaker Mary Griffiths.

Ten years later both Morris, now a butcher and a widow, and Mary were still in their respective cottages. Both were now called Britannia Cottages, although on one sheet Morris' house was still referred to as Tŷ'n y Pistyll Cottage. In 1921 both cottages were back to being called Tŷ'n y Pistyll and Morris Roberts and Mary Griffiths continued to be neighbours there. Mary, now 71 years old, did not have any occupation listed, and Morris, who was 76, was by then a part time general labourer.

Joseph died in 1937, leaving effects worth £211 to his daughter Mary Elizabeth and to Stanley. Although not in Joseph's will, Mary Eleanor evidently did not abandon Stanley, her birth son, as they were both still living together at Tŷ'n y Pistyll in 1939.

Stanley married Megan Lloyd in 1945 and they had four children – John, Kenneth, Mary and Janet.



*The Evans family gravestone  
in Llantysilio Cemetery.*

Moving on to 1939 and 67 year old Eleanor Roberts was living alone at Britannia Cottage. Another cottage, Wayside Cottage, was recorded in the electoral roll, lived in by slate splitter Edward Thomas and his family.



*This photograph shows what we think was Wayside Cottage, peeking out from under the trees on the opposite side of the road from the Britannia Inn.*

*This later picture shows Wayside Cottage in ruins on the very right hand side of the photograph.*

*A summerhouse was built on the site of one of the other cottages (above the right hand end of the Britannia).*



Right up until the present day (2023) Tŷn y Pistyll has remained part of the Estate, although Llantysilio Hall was sold away from the estate in 2007. Back in 1867 Charles Frederick Beyer, the distinguished railway engineer, had purchased Llantysilio Hall and the accompanying estate, including Tŷn y Pistyll. Beyer never married and on his death the Hall and Estate were bequeathed to his godson Sir Henry Beyer Robertson.

Henry's son, Duncan Robertson married Joyce Williams Wynn in 1929 and they had three Daughters: Sheila Ann, Jean Margaret and Bridget Jennifer. On the death of Duncan Robertson the Llantysilio Estate was divided between his surviving daughters Sheila, Jean and Bridget. On 5th September 1953 Henry Saxon Tate, son of Sir Henry Tate (4th Baronet), married Sheila Ann Robertson (Duncan and Joyce's eldest daughter) at St Collen's Church in Llangollen. They had four sons: Edward (who became the 6th Baronet), Duncan Saxon, John William and Paul Henry.

Although Sheila and Henry divorced in 1975, on her death in 1987, the portion of the Llantysilio Estate left to her by her father Duncan Robertson was divided amongst her sons Edward, Duncan, John and Paul. And so some of the properties that had been in the Llantysilio Estate, including Tŷn y Pistyll, became part of the Tate sugar empire. Today (2023) Tŷn y Pistyll remains owned by the Tate family and is rented out to long term tenants.

*By Steve Jones*