

Nantglyn

Nantglyn was built around a crossroad on the main route from The Vale of Clwyd over the Hiraethog Moors and beyond. This road was important in the days before a new road was built by John Sinclair, a surveyor who worked under Thomas Telford. Once completed Nantglyn declined in importance. However in its heyday Nantglyn was an important overnight resting place for pilgrims on their way to Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli). As a result of this a vibrant community would have had to exist to cater for the pilgrim's needs.

At this time Nantglyn was associated with Saint Mordeyrn. The son of Edern ap Cynydda he was a local man and is said to have brought Christianity to the area. Early maps show his association with the village through locations such as the "site of Saint Mordeyrn Church" a few hundred yards to the East of the village, "Pont Rhyd y Saint" (Bridge over the Saint's Ford) and Betty's Lane, translated from "Lon yr Abbaty" (Abbots Lane) highlight the importance Christianity held in the parish. There was also a well named after him, where according to tradition St Mordeyrn would baptise all newcomers into Christianity. Interestingly though the present church is dedicated to St Iago not St Mordeyrn.

Unfortunately the tithe map for the parish is one of the crudest in Wales. It is a very basic map with only the boundaries of the individual holdings roughly shown, there are no houses like you can see on other maps. This is because the Assistant Tithe Commissioner Aneurin Owen was a substantial landowner in Nantglyn. Landowners were responsible for paying for the maps to be drawn up even though it was a government Act and the church were largely the benefactors of the tithes paid. As the assistant tithe commissioner for north Wales Owen knew what the bare minimum he had to do to get the map passed and therefore keep the costs down. However the associated apportionment document does highlight the fact that Nantglyn was a largely agricultural community with a good mix of arable and pasture land.

Census records show us that the community included a variety of local tradesmen as well as farmers. These included two blacksmiths, two cobblers, two cart makers, two joiners, a sawyer, tailor, needle worker, hat seller, butcher, shepherd, an estate keeper and a bread baker. The first mention of a postman appears in the 1871 census and in the 1881 census a policeman and train driver are listed. Also mentioned were a dozen stonemasons and stone cutters, with many working in the two main slate\slab quarries located on the edge of the Hiraethog Moors.

The enclosure of common lands in this area happen later than in many other places. Permission to 'enclose' occurred around 1854. The haphazard shapes of many fields suggest that small parcels of land were being cultivated before the enclosure act. The Waen is a little hamlet situated about a half mile to the west Of Nantglyn. It was built, so we are told, because it was adjacent to common land. A number of the oldest dwelling started life as one roomed cottages, being enlarged as the years went by. This one street hamlet developed to have a large Methodist chapel, a shop, a corn mill and fulling mill, and possibly a tavern (The Cross Keys).

Nantglyn itself had three houses that acted as shops over different periods. These included Ty'n Llan, Cae Llwyd and the Post Office which included storage sheds for animal feed, which would be distributed with horse and cart to the different farms. At the lower end of the village on the other side of the river Lliwen stands a short terrace of three dwellings Minafon, Liverpool House and Glandwr. During part of the 19th century Glandwr acted as the village library, which was established with the profit from an Eisteddfod held in 1853 and then Glandwr became a Police Station until early part of the 20th century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the middle dwelling Liverpool House was home to William Roberts, who was a local glazier and the school headmaster.

At one point there were three taverns within the village, The Red Lion, Victoria Inn at Pen Llan and the Black, which was located in Glasmor Farm. Taverns located within farmhouses and houses was common at this time, with alcohol being served in the front parlour. Nantglyn was also home to three corn mills and a fulling mill. Wool from the fulling mill would have been used by the weaver recorded in the 1851 Census for the area.

Until recently there were three nonconformist chapels, one by the Independents at the top end of the village "Capel Salem", a much larger Methodist chapel built in nearby hamlet of the Waen and a third being a branch of the latter built a short distance away at the hamlet of Soar. The first local leader of Methodism in Nantglyn was John Davies, Glythau Uchaf. From an early age he felt compelled to serve as a preacher and as a result faced many dissenting voices, even from his own father, but particularly by his father's landlord, Colonel Middleton. He also faced much criticism from the local parish priest, the Rev Rice Pughe an infamous prosecutor of non-conformism but especially

of Calvinistic Methodism. From 1765, having gained his elementary schooling at Griffydd Jones travelling schools, he started preaching and gained recognition as one of the leaders of Methodism in North Wales and beyond. According to local tradition, the first meeting place by the Methodist was held in a house called Glyn Hyfryd in the Waen before the Methodist chapel was built in 1811.

Prior to 1859, when the church school was built, education was haphazard. Twm o'r Nant records that he attended Griffydd Jones' peripatetic school that had started there in 1746. It is probable that two of Nantglyn's most eminent individuals attended the school, they were Robert Davies the bard and John Davies, the Methodist minister. Between 1746 and 1759 the school was held in the church, and again between 1772 until 1777, with the average attendance ranging between thirty six to seventy one pupils.

Praises for the Griffydd Jones School came from William Samuel, father of David Samwell the famous surgeon on board the Captain Cook's Discovery and his voyage to the South Pole. He wrote to the Parish priest in January 1747 stating "John Jarmon has been careful and diligent in instructing poor children in the Welsh Language.... His continuance is heartily desired by all the neighbourhood". The emphasis on learning to read the Bible in Welsh greatly increased the popularity for these schools, which was in complete contrast to the Victorian emphasis to belittle the Welsh language in the general schools of the day. Unfortunately the school had to be abandoned due to lack of financial support and in 1902 the church school became a National Board School.