

Trwyn yr Wylfa

The date 1790 can be seen on the plaque above the front door of Trwyn yr Wylfa. The date probably tells us the time of its construction but more significantly it reveals when the old farm house was abandoned for a new build.

The original house was situated to the north side of Conwy Old Road possible being one or at least on the site of the present outbuildings next to the modern hay barn. The change of location came about because of the construction of the new toll road between Llanrwst and Bangor which opened in 1772.

Previously the road or track through the parish began on the shore west of Penmaen Bach, climbed up the present Glanrafon road to the parish church of St. Gwynan. The road branched here, first to the left up the Old Mill road towards the Sychnant or straight on for a short distance until it divided once again. Westwards it went along Ysgubor Wen road back to the shore but the track that concerns us turned left and climbed Treforis road towards Trwyn yr Wylfa outcrop. On reaching the rock it turned sharply right, down towards Tyddyn Du farm at its base before continuing to the old Trwyn yr Wylfa around the bend. From here it continued south westwards up the steep fields to join Graig Lwyd road which led to Lon Fain (Mountain Lane) and up to the uplands behind Penmaen Mawr. Old tracks joined farm to farm – a kind of string of pearls with beads spaced unevenly.

But why did the new road result in the farmhouse changing site? It was more than just the old road being abandoned. The 1772 road was revolutionary. For the first time wheeled vehicles were able to travel on firm surfaces in the parish of Dwygyfylchi. Previously, coaches or waggons struggled along the sand when the tide was out. Only pack animals and horse drawn sledges could use the tracks here. Such transport was the only safe mode of transport on the steep roads to and from the uplands.

The new road brought coaches carrying wealthy passengers. Only the well off could afford to travel by coach. Capelulo, the village at the foot of the Sychnant Pass, developed as a resting place for both man and beast. Three inns served the travellers and others would have benefitted. We do know that at 'Bryn Pinc', a cottage in the grounds of Trwyn yr Wylfa – the ruins can be seen today – the female occupier baked bread. When ready she hung a sign, believed to be in the shape of a loaf, on the roadside and found customers amongst the passing coach passengers – a kind of early drive-in bakery!

Landowners, tenants and farmers would have felt it socially upgrading, economically beneficial and more convenient to build improved houses along improved roads. Another local example is Glyn Perkin, near Capelulo, which was moved from its high elevation to the new road about the same time.

The 'new house' looks remarkably like a non-conformist chapel. It is said that three gentlemen passing the house one day remarked upon this. One of them informed the others that as a matter of fact it had never been a place of worship; another said the builder must have found plans of a chapel and worked from them; but the third added that the solution was found in the fact that the architect was a 'blaenor' – a decon.

Interestingly the old house was a time where services or meetings were held by the early Methodists in the parish while the new house could well have been at time before they built their chapel at Penycae in 1818. The leading light was William Jones who lived in both houses – he died in 1795. His descendents were to become squired of the Brynmor estate in Dwygyfylchi. William Jones died in

1795 his will revealing that he was quite well off. It is believed, however, that his son Elias built the new house even though he was a tenant on Newborough land.

Close to the farmhouse was situated a gorse mill powered by a waterwheel. The stone and earth bank over which ran the water trough leading to the mill wheel can be seen today. The field about the mill was called 'Clwt y Felin Eithin' where gorse was grown. Bruised gorse was a valuable fodder for farm animals especially horses in the past.

On the other side of the road are three buildings with a north-south orientation – the traditional and most sensible plan on windy coastal sites. One of these is probably the original Trwyn yr Wylfa but which one is uncertain. All three today are pens, barns and storage sheds. Below these old buildings a well worn path, once lined with oaks, leads down to the shire – well it did at one time before the road of 1825 and railway of 1847. This track served as a valuable link to the sea, northwards and to the mountain pastures and turbaries upwards and southwards.

Until very recently, with the construction of the expressway, there are few changes in the field patterns shown on the 1847 Tithe Map and that which is seen today. However, an estate map found amongst the Newborough Estate papers, dating between 1826 and 1840, displays a totally different picture. Whereas the 1847 map has only ten fields surrounding Trwyn yr Wylfa the older plan gives us twenty one. A great deal of reorganisation took place in that fifteen to twenty year period. The earlier plan reveals remnants of the medieval division of land. Fields at that time were in the form of ridges and furrows – there must have been dozens of separate strips of land individually owned or tenanted. The map suggests that they were set on an east to west axis i.e. parallel to the coast and taking advantage of the natural terracing which is visible today.

From the 15th and 16th centuries these hedges separated fields or strips were brought together to create what we identify as 'fields' today – large, rectangular and enclosed by stone walls or hedges. Isolated oak trees in the middle of the 'new' fields suggest boundaries made in the interim period between the medieval and modern.

Above the road which divided the farm in 1772 there was some amalgamation of fields to the west at Cae Pwll Budr and a new enclosure on the upper and very steep slope of Moel Lus. On this scree covered conifers were grown later in the century hence the name 'coed Trwyn yr Wylfa'.

In 1847 farmer David Hughes was renting 86 acres from the Newborough Estate with an additional 117 of upland pasture rented from other landowners. Much of the fields in the lower slopes were given over to arable farming but what was grown is uncertain. We can only surmise that in the early part of the nineteenth century cereals were the main crop while later in the century potatoes and other root crops became more popular. After 1870 British farmers found it difficult to compete with cheaper grain imports from North America.

Reference has already been made to William Jones who farmed here up to 1795. On his death the tenancy was taken over by his son Elias who also held land in the lower Conwy valley at Caerhun at Gorswen. He in turn passed the tenancy over to his daughter Mary and her husband John Pugh of Clynnog Fawr. They had met when both were travelling to a Methodist meeting or 'sessiwn' in llanrwst. Unfortunately John Pugh died young at the age of thirty three in 1825 leaving his wife and three young daughters. The farm was a successful enterprise. William had died a rich man and John was able to leave £900 in his will to be shared amongst his daughters Jane, Mary and Anne. The equivalent today to £75,870 which is a considerable sum for one who had been farming for such a short period as a tenant. Protected by the Corn Laws this was a good period for British farmers.

In 1827 Mary Pugh remarried. Her new husband was David (Dafydd) Hughes of Amlwch who again seems to have run the farm successfully. They had three children. There is no evidence that they took an active role in the farm after David's death in about 1870 and with Mary's death the farm is run by bailiffs with a reduced number of labourers employed. In 1851 David Hughes, his two sons from a previous marriage and eight labourers managed the farm; by 1871 his widow Mary employed a housekeeper and only four labourers and a boy. Farming in Britain was about to go into recession with changes in practice and product.

In the 1920/30 the Newborough estate planned a massive building project in the fields to the west of the farm. The project involved the construction of over seventy large houses overlooking the road and railway with new access to the beach. Nothing came of it and the land was sold piecemeal to the Urban District Council. Two football fields and the cemetery are now where once crops grew on Erw, Erw Pella, Cae Sling and Cae Tan y Sling. To the east three large estates were on Cae'r Groesffordd, Cae'r Gamdda and Cae'r Maes y Llan, all built by the Urban District Council who purchased the land in the 1930s.

In the past thirty years the farm has gradually become a sheep farm with some beef cattle kept. In that time no field has been ploughed.