

Bryntysilio



Bryntysilio today.

Bryntysilio was originally a much smaller house, named Braich y Gwynt. Braich y Gwynt first appeared in the records in the 1841 census, which was done on the 14th June. That showed the house being lived in by 60 year old tanner Robert Evans and his family, his wife Catherine, who was 15 years his junior, and his four children, Robert, Sarah, Thomas and Emma.

Braichygynt	Robert Evans	60	L. Tanner	7
	Catherine do	45		7
	Robert do	15		7
	Sarah do	10		7
	Thomas do	7		7
	Emma do	1		7

The 1841 census for Braich y Gwynt.

On the tithe map it appears as number 67, and in the tithe apportionment, completed in October 1841, but not approved and released until 1846, we can see that, at that time, Braich y Gwynt was owned and occupied by Edward Hughes.



The tithe map and apportionment for Braich y Gwynt.



Although the tithe survey was done in 1841, the final released version, 5 years later, must have included changes that had happened in the interim period, as Robert Evans had only died in June 1844. Catherine and the children moved to live nearby at Coed Hyrddyn. So, possibly Edward Hughes had been renting out the property to Robert Evans and then, when Robert died, decided to live there himself.

Robert Evans' gravestone in Llantysilio churchyard reads:- In memory of Robert Evans late of Braich y Gwynt who departed this life the 2nd day of June 1844 aged 60.

Possibly Robert and his family had moved out before his death, as in February 1844, the house, now called Bryntysilio, was advertised to be let in the Chester Chronicle. It was advertised as having:- an entrance hall, dining room, drawing room, library, four bedrooms, dressing room, two kitchens, butler's pantry, excellent cellars, water-close, and other conveniences, together with a coach house, saddle-room and stable, piggery, &c. Curiously, it was described as having been late in the occupation of the Rev. Mathew Hughes.

On the 1851 census, Bryntysilio was being lived in by Captain Hyde John Clarke, aged 73, along with his son Henry (34), daughter Fanny (22) and sister in law Sarah Joyce (62).

72	Bryntysilio	Hyde John Clarke	Head	Wife	73	Capt. R. Navy - Half Pay	Jamaica
		Henry	Son	34		Pres. R. Navy Half Pay	Lancashire, Warrington
		Fanny	Daughter	22			Shropshire, Shrewsbury
		Sarah Joyce	Sister-in-law	62			Shropshire, Whitechurch
		Mary Ann Kinner	Servant	21		House Servant	Shropshire, Warrington
		Lane Davis	Servant	21			North Wales

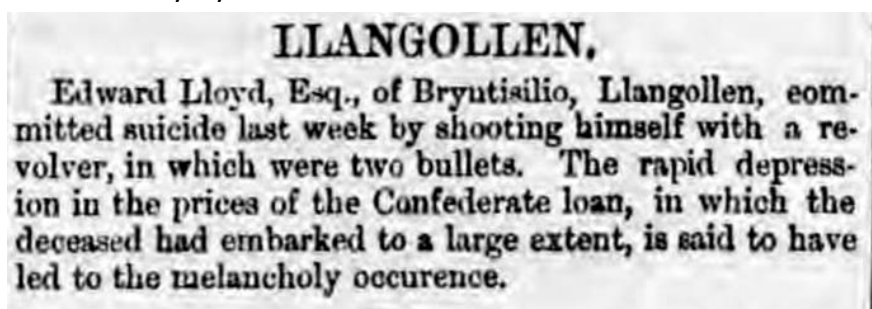
The 1851 census.



Captain Hyde John Clarke.

Hyde John Clarke had retired from the Royal Navy in 1840 and was living on half pay. His son, Henry, was also in the Royal Navy as a Lieutenant, and was also living at Bryntysilio on half pay. Possibly Henry was ill, because, in 1855, he died. Henry was buried in Llantysilio churchyard. His brother John is commemorated on the neighbouring gravestone, but their father Hyde John, who died in 1857, is buried in Oswestry, where the family also had a home. Another brother, Hyde, died in Jamaica in 1858.

At some point, possibly after the death of Henry in 1855, the property was acquired by Richard Ellerton. He and his wife were reported as living there in 1856. They later moved to Vivod, but leased out Bryntysilio.



A newspaper article recording Edward Lloyd's suicide.

One tenant, an Edward Lloyd, lost a large amount invested in the Confederate States during the US Civil War, and committed suicide in August 1863.

After this, Sir Theodore Martin, commissioned by Queen Victoria to write a biography of Prince Albert, and his wife Helena Faucit, a Shakesperian actress, started spending their summers in Bryntysilio in the 1860s, and by 1865 were able to buy the house.

Although registered at their main home in Onslow Square, London, Theodore and Helena considered Bryntysilio to be their Welsh summer residence. Having enlarged the house considerably in the Italian villa style, they still referred to the original part of the house as Braich y Gwynt. Sir Theodore Martin had written "The Life of the Prince Consort", and became a favourite of Queen Victoria. So much so that on 26th August 1889 during a visit to Llangollen, Queen Victoria took tea at Bryntysilio. Helena Faucit was a renown Shakespearean actress, and among her circle of friends was Robert Browning, who visited them in 1886 and 1887. Helena Faucit died on 31st October 1898, and her husband erected as fine marble monument in Llantysilio church. Sir Theodore died in 1909. His nephew inherited the property which because he was in Australia stood empty for some time, before a small fire in July 1910.



Helena Faucit's memorial in Llantysilio Church.



Bryntysilio at the end of the 19th century (left) and in 1909 (below).





What appears to be a group of workers at Bryntysilio in 1914.

The property went on the market in September 1910, but was withdrawn when the bidding stopped at £5,250. In 1916 a Mr George Harrison, who previously had owned Plas Newydd, was in residence. Having just redecorated the outside of the house, in July 1919 there was a serious fire. It appeared that the fire had originated from a spark from a chimney igniting some birds' nests which were built under the roof. Considerable damage was caused both to the house and indoor property by both the fire and the water used to extinguish the blaze. Fortunately it was covered by insurance.

George Harrison remained there until WWII, when Bryntysilio was occupied by the military, using it as an anti-aircraft floodlight battery. The house was afterwards restored, but much reduced in size by Mr Sydney Aston, who at the time claimed to be the largest furniture retailer in the country and was operating out of Liverpool. In 1968 he left for the Isle of Man, and sold it to Walsall Education Authority as an outdoor education centre. In 2011 Walsall Council cancelled their connection with the Bryntysilio Trustees, and Wide Horizons, a charity, took their place.



An advertisement for Aston's furniture.