

Llantysilio Hall



Llantysilio Hall today

The history of Llantysilio Hall began before the original Hall was even built, with a property known as Dol Rhyd y Bont (The Meadow at the Ford of the Bridge). This first appeared in the records in 1628, in the will of Richard Mathew of Vala Crucis, in which he left the property to his goddaughter Elizabeth, wife of David ap John Lloyd.

Hereof the house of Dieran And the said interest by them and after the said disposed to be distributed, namely by
upon Christmas even to the poor of the said parish whom they befit and convenient Item I doe give & bequeath
unto Elizabeth the daughter of Maudie my daughter now wife of David ap John Lloyd and my last
daughter all my messuage lands and Tenement called Dol Rhyd y Bont situate being and being in the
County of Merioneth in the parish of Llantysilio in the County of Denbigh afore said and all
the rents, workings and lands pertaining the same in as large and ample manner as if the same had
passed from one David Smith Esq. to David and to hold all and singular the said messuage
lands and tenements and all other the premises with appurtenances unto the said Elizabeth and to her
heirs for ever Item my will is that David ap John my servant Esq. my wife and husband.

A section of the will of Richard Mathew, leaving Dol Rhyd y Bont to Elizabeth, wife of David ap John Lloyd.

Courtesy the National Archives

In the name of God Amen the seventh (?) day of August in the yeare of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twenty eight I Richard Mathew of Vala Crucis in the County of Denbigh and the diocese of St Asaph gent being sick in body yet whole in minde and of good and perfect memory God be praised I do make my last will and testament in manner and form following.

First I commend my soul into the hands of my only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

..... I do give and bequeath unto Elizabeth the daughter of Maude by Richard now wife of David ap John Lloyd and my crist daughter (goddaughter) all my messuage lands and tenement called Dol Rhyd y Bont situate lying and being in the Townshipp of Maesyrychen in the Parish of Llantisilio in the Countie of Denbigh aforesaid.

Later in the will he leaves an amount of money to “Elizabeth Lloyd my daughter in law”, but whether it is the same Elizabeth Lloyd is unclear.

Why Dol Rhyd y Bont is important is because, nearly 70 years later, Edward Lhuyd mentioned the house, in his Answers to Parochial Queries, as being the home of Thomas Cupper. It was Thomas Cupper who, in 1723, went on to build the first Llantysilio Hall.

The Houses of Note.

1. Blaen Iâl Mr Andrew Thelwal.
2. Rhyd Onnen isa Mr J. Lloyd.
- [Page 30] 3. Dôl rhyd y Bont Mr Tho: Cupper.

The mention of Dol Rhyd y Bont in Edward Lhuyd's Answers to Parochial Queries in 1696.

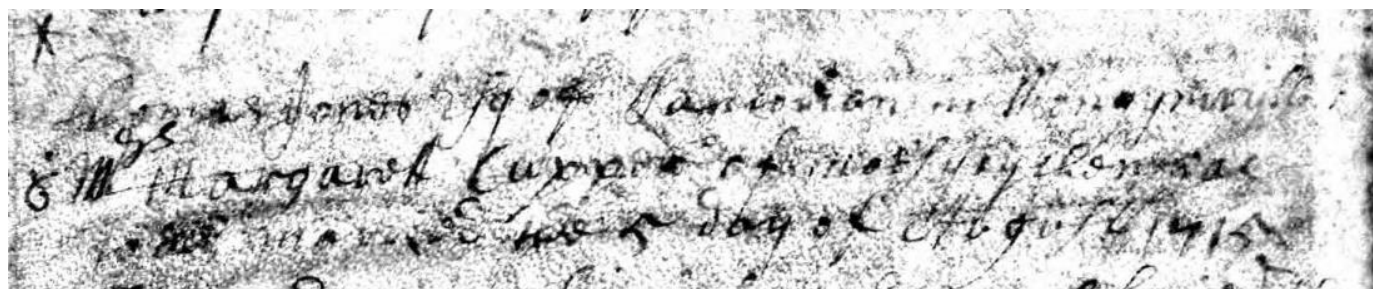
Benjamin Cupper of Llantysilio had been librarian to Sir Thomas Myddelton of Chirk Castle since at least 1667. His son Thomas Cupper became one of the Castle agents. Thomas Pennant stated, from seeing a pedigree of the family at the Hall in the 1770s that “the former possessors of Llandysilio were the Cupers or Cuppers of the North, who has settlements in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Shropshire”.



The first Llantysilio Hall

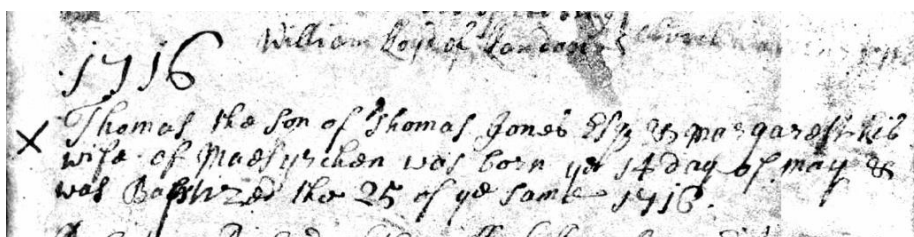
What we do not yet know is where Dol Rhyd y Bont was in relation to the site of Llantysilio Hall. Was it on the same site and replaced by the original Llantysilio Hall in 1723. Or was it, as the name may imply, in a meadow closer to the River Dee, by an early crossing point over the River? Some of Thomas Cupper's letters seem to imply that he exchanged other land (Dol Rhyd y bont?) for the Llantysilio site, and built the house.

The new Hall was a gift from Thomas Cupper to his daughter Margaret and his son in law Thomas Jones. Thomas Jones Esq., of Llanillothian, and Margaret had married eight years previously in August 1715. Thomas was the grandson of Evan Jones (1663) of Llanloddian (Llanlothian) Hall, Llanfair Caereinion, Montgomeryshire, his grandmother being Eleanor (Ellen) Vaughan.



Thomas and Margaret's marriage record.

The following year saw the birth of Thomas and Margaret's eldest child, also named Thomas, continuing the line of three Thomas Joneses that would live at Llantysilio Hall. In 1740 he married Mary Lloyd at Llangynhafal and, having had three daughters, Mary, Elizabeth and Margaret (of whom both Elizabeth and Margaret died before their third birthday), in 1755 they had a son, again called Thomas. During this time, in 1743, the first Thomas Jones passed away, followed by his wife Margaret in 1752.



The baptism record of the second Thomas Jones.

In 1761, the second Thomas Jones died, aged just 44. His wife Mary lived for another 26 years, passing away in 1787 at the age of 63.



Underneath are deposited the remains of THOMAS JONES Esquire of the Hall in this village who died the 6th day of May 1761 aged 44.



Underneath are deposited the remains of MARY the wife of THOMAS JONES Esq she died the 25th day of July 1787 aged 63.

Their son, the third Thomas Jones, was left to continue the family line at Llantysilio Hall.

BURIALS in the Parish of <i>Llantysilio</i> in the County of <i>Denbigh</i> in the Year <i>1820</i>				
Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
<i>Thomas Jones Esq</i> No. 81.	<i>Llantysilio Hall</i>	<i>1820</i> <i>Dec: 12th</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>Edward Beane,</i> <i>Minister</i>
<i>Jane Hughes</i> No. 82.	<i>Llandynan</i>	<i>August 24th</i> <i>1821</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>Edward Beane</i> <i>Minister</i>

The burial record for the last Thomas Jones.

This last Thomas Jones of Llantysilio Hall died in 1820 leaving no will and no children. The Hall, a 'large brick building' passed to a Major Harrison who had proved his case to inherit and spent the next seven years fighting challenges to his claim.

In the Oswestry Herald for January 16th, 1821, appeared the following account:- 'Died lately, at Denbigh, Thomas Jones, Esq., of Llantysilio Hall, in the Vale of Llangollen, a man, though

of retired habits, possessing the most enlightened and accomplished mind; his character was eccentric, and from a long and tedious complaint of an erysipilaceous nature he was prevented from moving in that sphere of life, and mixing with the society for which his fortune and acquirement well qualified him. No testamentary documents of the deceased having yet been found, and his having left no near relatives, it is feared that the above beautiful mansion and the rest of his property will become the subject of a Chancery suit, though it is generally believed that he had executed such a document.'

In the same paper an advertisement was inserted offering a reward for the will:-

WILL LOST.

To Solicitors and Others.

FIVE HUNDRED GUINEAS REWARD.

WHEREAS Thomas Jones, late of Llantysilio Hall, in the Vale of Llangollen, in the County of Denbigh, Esq., hath lately departed this life,- Notice is hereby given that any person or persons who will produce a Will, or any other Legal Testamentary Document, executed by the above-named deceased within Twelve Years prior to the date of this Advertisement, shall receive the above Reward upon delivery of the same either to Messrs. Clarke, Richards, and Metcalf, Solicitors, 168, Chancery-lane, London or to Mr. Richard Jones, Solicitor, Oswestry, Salop.

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N.B.—Any person or persons, attaching witnesses or others, who can give any information which may lead to the discovery of the above or any such documents, executed by the deceased at any time, will be handsomely rewarded."

In 1822 the housekeeper of the vicar of Oswestry dreamt that the will of Thomas Jones had been buried with him. Because of this dream a party of seven or eight people broke into the tomb and opened the coffin. Those digging included an attorney, a blacksmith a mason and a plumber. AND horror of horrors – two women were also present. It would seem that the will was not found.

MIDNIGHT RAID ON A GRAVE.

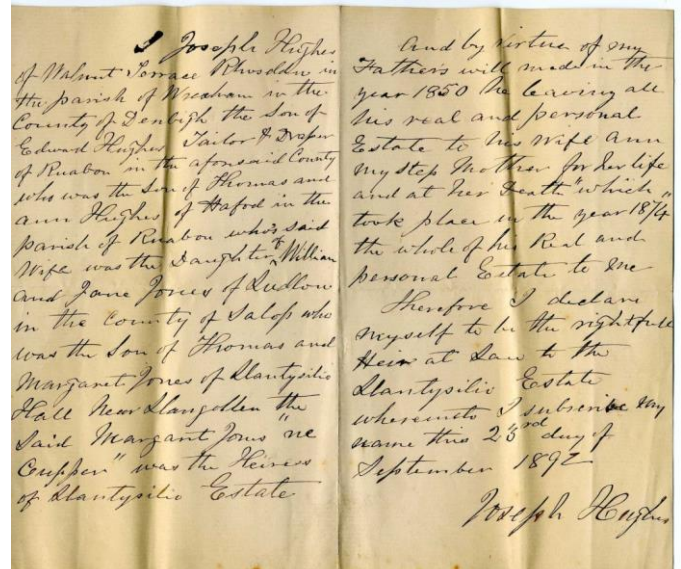
THREE SEEKERS OF THE PRITCHARD WILL TRACED.

The Llangollen police have discovered three of the men who made a night raid on the tomb of the late Thomas Jones, owner of Llantysilio Hall, with the object of recovering the will relating to the Pritchard estate, estimated at three million pounds. The will is believed to be interred with the body.

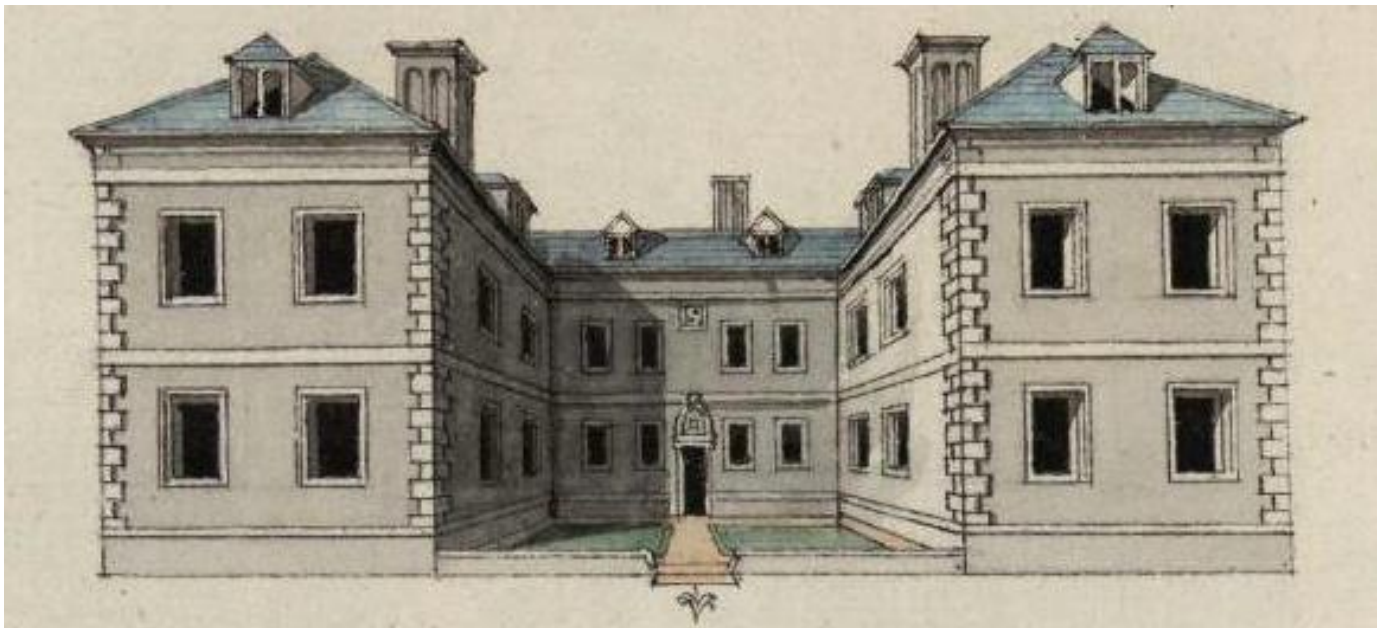
It would not be the last time that Thomas Jones' grave was opened in order to try and find his will. In 1915 another group of plunderers were about to open the grave when they were intercepted by the police. They, along with others before and after, claimed to be descended in a direct line from Anthony Pritchard, who, according to their statements, was in possession of Llantysilio Hall prior to the property coming into the hands of Thomas Jones. Anthony Pritchard was also credited with owning properties in Llansilin, Abergele, Liverpool and Calcutta, valued altogether at over 4 million pounds.

Whether an Anthony Pritchard ever did own property in any of those other places we do not know, but we are certain that he never owned Llantysilio Hall, because, as we have seen, it was built by Thomas Jones' great grandfather and handed directly down through the family line.

However, right up until today, descendants from other lines of Thomas Jones' family are still doing research trying to prove their right to the inheritance of Llantysilio Hall.



A claim to the estate by Joseph Hughes in 1892.



The original Llantysilio Hall, as drawn by Moses Griffiths in 1773.

So, the Reverend Robert John Harrison came into the ownership of Llantysilio Hall, although, in the tithe records of 1841, it was listed as being owned by him and Henry Hickman. Harrison and Hickman also owned Llanillothian Hall, the home of the first Thomas Jones, and so it is likely that was the connection that brought them into the ownership of Llantysilio.

Llantysilio Hall was rented out to a number of different tenant farmers. In 1842, it was sold to Alexander Reid, an industrialist, with interests in the Brymbo ironworks, lead mining at Minera and the slate quarries at the Horseshoe Pass, as well as the slate works at nearby Pentrefelin.

Alexander Reid died in February 1866 and, in 1867, Llantysilio Hall was purchased by Charles Frederick Beyer, the Manchester industrialist, who was originally from Saxony. In partnership with locomotive engineer Richard Peacock he designed and built locomotives during the golden age of rail travel. He then went on to become one of the founders of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers as well as becoming a governor of Owens College, Manchester, and of the Manchester Grammar School.

Charles Beyer didn't live in the old Hall, but rented the estate out as a farm. In around 1872, inspired by the building of Palé Hall by his friend Henry Robertson, he built a new hall at Llantysilio in a similar style, in which he did intend to live. In 1875 he demolished the old Hall. Sadly, he had moved into his new mansion just a few months before he passed away in June 1876. Having no children of his own he bequeathed the Llantysilio Estate to his godson Henry Beyer Robertson.



Poutney Smith's design for the new Llantysilio Hall.

The new Hall, like Palé, was designed by the renowned architect Samuel Poutney Smith. A normal assumption would be that the men who worked on building the new Hall would have come from the surrounding area. However, this was not the case, with most of the workers coming in each day by train. Many started early in the morning from Manchester, with others joining at stations along the way. They all alighted at Berwyn Station and then walked up the lane to the Hall for a hard day of labour, and then did the return trip at the end of the day.

Sir Henry Beyer Robertson (1862-1948) was the son of the railway engineer Henry Robertson, owner of the Pale estate in Llandderfel, Merionethshire. He assisted his father in various business enterprises and was involved in many new developments at Brymbo steelworks. During the First World War he ensured maximum production of iron and steel for munitions. Pale was turned into a military hospital and a hydro-electric plant was established there in 1918. Henry Beyer Robertson was a director of several companies, including the Great Western Railway Company, and a member of the River Dee Fisheries Board. In 1890 he was granted a knighthood. Inheriting the new Llantysilio Hall from his godfather, Henry rented it out, first to Lady Bowen (“a very noble family”) in 1877 and then in 1881 to John Aird, Esq. (of the firm of Messrs. Lucas and Co., the great contractors), 14, Hyde Park Terrace, London, who, “together with his family and a very numerous staff of domestics, arrived there on Thursday, July 14th”. John Aird and his family lived at the Hall until 1885, after which it seems to have been unoccupied by tenants for a period. However, it would appear that, in 1888 or 1889, the Hall was let to J.A. Keates of Bishop’s Nympton, Devon.

Joseph Andrew Keates was the head of the firm of Messrs. Newton, Keates and Co., of Greenfield, St. Helens, and Liverpool, who manufactured copper and brass wire products at a site in Greenfield Valley, Flintshire. He and his wife Elizabeth had two sons, Edmund and William, and two daughters, Florence Mary and Elizabeth. It was to be a fortuitous tenancy for Sir Henry, as recorded by head gardener Thomas Ruddy.

“Thursday the 20th November 1890. This is the wedding day of Sir Henry Beyer Robertson, my employer, to Miss Keates (Florence Mary) of Llantysilio Hall, Llangollen. Sir Henry got acquainted with the family in the Spring of last year. The young ladies (there are two sisters) were with him when coracle fishing, and also when otter hunting. Sir Henry was only publicly engaged to her before he left for Windsor to be knighted on the 30th of last June.

I walked along the canal side to Llantysilio church. We witnessed the friends of the bride and bridegroom enter the church and as I had a ticket for the church, I went in to see the marriage ceremony. The service commenced with the hymn, “Thine for ever, God of love” the bride wished to have this hymn. The service was conducted by the Rev. Herbert A. Keates B.A. brother of the bride”.



It is not clear whether Henry and Florence lived at Llantysilio Hall at all, but their main residence remained at Palè Hall. Certainly, by the start of the 20th century, Llantysilio was being let out again, and by 1901 had become the residence of John Thomas and his extended family. Although born in Llandrinio, John had lived and worked in Calcutta, as evidenced on the family gravestone in Llantysilio churchyard.

In loving memory of JOHN THOMAS formerly of Calcutta who died at Llantysilio Hall Feb 1, 1903. Also his sister FANNY THOMAS who died Llantysilio Hall Dec 31, 1904. In loving memory of SUSAN ELIZABETH THOMAS who died at Llantysilio Hall May 5, 1916.



Llantysilio Hall around 1900.

John and his brother George worked for a tea merchant business, J. Thomas & Sons, in Calcutta. The business had been set up by Robert Thomas (it is not known whether he was a relative) at the end of the 18th century, and remains in operation today – the oldest tea auctioneers in the world.

A memorial plaque in Llantysilio Church (below) is dedicated to Captain George Oliver Thomas who was killed in action in France on 26th September 1915 aged 31 years. The plaque was given by his aunts, Mary and Susan Thomas of Llantysilio Hall.

George Oliver Thomas was born in Calcutta, 1885, the second son of George Edmunds Thomas, who was a merchant with J. Thomas & Sons, Tea Merchants, of Calcutta, and Marion Adelaide Thomas (nee Ross). His grandfather Thomas Thomas of Llandrinio, Montgomeryshire had been a farmer of 300 acres. After his grandfather's death George's uncles John and William, and aunts Mary, Susan Elizabeth and Fanny leased Llantysilio Hall from Sir Henry Beyer Robertson, who had moved to Palé on the death of his father. George and his elder brother Thomas Edmund often stayed in Llantysilio with their aunts when they were home from India, and George was well known for his polo and cricket in North Wales.



The memorial plaque in Llantysilio Church.

Whilst Thomas became a merchant in Calcutta like his father, George joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers. In 1911 George was stationed in Roberts barrack, Quetta Balochistan, India, (now Pakistan) with the 2nd Battalion, while Thomas was with the aunts in Llantysilio. In September 1913 Thomas Married Jean Robertson, daughter of Sir Henry Beyer Robertson at Llandderfel. At the outbreak of war George and his regiment were still in India, they were brought back and deployed at Flanders, where, with the exception of two short periods of leave in Llangollen, he served his time until killed in action 26th September 1915, aged 31. He was buried in grave K 21, Cambrin Churchyard extension, Pas de Calais, France.

CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Number of Schedule, 35
(To be filled up by the Enumerator after collection.)

Before writing on this Schedule please read the Examples and the Instructions given on the other side of the paper, as well as the headings of the Columns. The entries should be written in Ink.

The contents of the Schedule will be treated as confidential. Strict care will be taken that no information is disclosed with regard to individual persons. The returns are not to be used for proof of age, as in connection with Old Age Pensions, or for any other purpose than the preparation of Statistical Tables.

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP to Head of Family	AGE (last birthday) and SEX	PARTICULARS as to MARRIAGE		PROFESSION or OCCUPATION of Persons aged ten years and upwards		BIRTHPLACE of every Person	NATIONALITY of every Person born in a Foreign Country	INFIRMITY	LANGUAGE SPOKEN
			For Infants under one year state the age in months as "under one month," "one month," etc.	State, for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule, the number of— Write "Single," "Married," "Widowed," or "Divorced." Children born alive to present Marriage. (If no children born alive write "None" in Column 7.)	Personal Occupation.	Industry or Service with which worker is connected.				
Mary Thomas	Head	70	Single		(See Column 11) 270	Private means	Calcutta	British		English
Susan E Thomas	Sister	69	do			do	do	do		do
Thos E Thomas	Nephew 28	do	do			do	Calcutta	do		do
Allice Concher	Servant	42	do		010	Cook	Sarswadi Hill	do		do
Agnes Baller	do	43	do			Lady's maid	Worcester	do		do
Parake Jones	do	32	do			Laundry maid	Wolverhampton	do		do
Alice Roberts	do	32	do			Housemaid	Market Drayton	do		do
Florence Davies	do	22	do			Kitchen maid	Winton Park, Denbigh	do		do
Annie E Griffiths	do	20	do			Servant	West/Top, Flintshire	do		do
Annie E Griffiths	do	22	do			Housemaid	Buckwell, Shropshire	do		do
Albert Carter	do	24	do			Footman	Bristol	do		do

(To be filled up by the Enumerator.)

I certify that—
 (1) All the ages on this Schedule are entered in the proper age column.
 (2) I have entered the names and families in Column 2 and 3 separately, and have compared their sum with the total number of persons.
 (3) After adding the necessary corrections I have completed all items on this Schedule which appeared to be defective, and I have corrected such as appeared to be erroneous.

Initials of Enumerator: *2 9 11*

(To be filled up by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling.)

Write below the Number of Rooms in this Dwelling (Kitchens, Parlours, or Apartments). Count the kitchen as a room but do not count cellars, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor wardrobe, office, shop.

32 Rooms

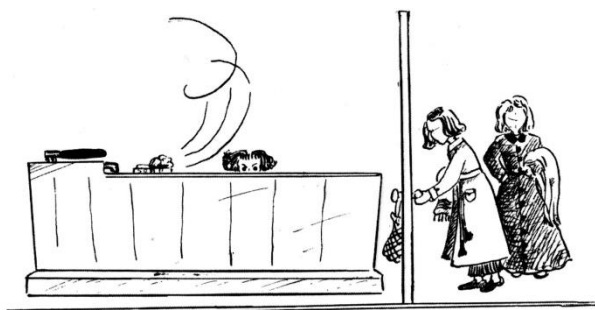
I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature: *Mary Thomas*
 Postal Address: *Llantysilio Hall, Llangollen*

The 1911 census for Llantysilio Hall.

Llantysilio Hall continued to be rented out. Henry Robertson's son, Duncan Robertson married Joyce Williams Wynn in 1929 and they had three Daughters: Sheila Ann, Jean Margaret and Bridget Jennifer, and were living in The Court, on Erddig Road in Wrexham.

The residence of the Lawley family in 1939, the Second World War, and the period immediately after, saw a different use for Llantysilio Hall. In 1940, the summer term at Wentworth College, Bournemouth finished a few days early, because of the increased frequency of air raids. Continued air raids, coupled with the news that the school may be commandeered for use as an emergency hospital, caused the Governors to decide on evacuation – just two weeks before the school was due to re-assemble. Llantysilio Hall was about to fall vacant and Sir Henry Robertson, a near neighbour and friend of Dr. J.D. Jones (the first Chairman of the Governors of Wentworth College – by then retired), offered it to the school for the duration of the War. The plan to move the school was organised at such speed that the previous tenant was moving out on the day that the headmistress, Miss Dorothy Bourne, and the advance party arrived.



*The Atlantic – drawn by G. Bundy, form Va.
Courtesy Terry Carlyle and Wentworth
College.*

Ex pupils' recollections of Wentworth College include going to school on the double decker bus (those not boarding), playing lacrosse on the left of the track beside the Church - the 2 lovely large Wellingtonias in the middle of the pitch were no bother and the 2 huge baths, called the Atlantic and the Pacific. They bathed once a week and queued to get in.

After the War, the students and teachers of Wentworth College returned to Bournemouth. However, Llantysilio Hall had not yet finished its life as an educational

establishment. For a few years it would form the home for the juniors from Moreton Hall School, as well as a dance school. Moreton Hall's founder, Ellen Lloyd-Williams, first opened her small family boarding school at Lloren House, Oswestry in 1913. During the Second World War, the junior school was relocated to Henlle Hall in St. Martin's, under the headship of Grace, but towards the end of the War Henlle became too small to house the juniors. In 1945 Llantysilio Hall became vacant again, following the departure of Wentworth College, and Moreton Hall juniors moved in. In early 1947 The Irene Hammond School of Dancing advertised a 'residential school combining education & dancing' for junior students in collaboration with Moreton Hall School. The headmistress was advertised as Miss Grace Lloyd-Williams and the school was based at Llantysilio Hall, alongside Moreton Hall's junior school.



Advert from The Dancing Times, 1947.

In 1950, Duncan Robertson's work with the coalfield ceased, as did the lease on the family home. The Court was old, delightful, and cracking up with the extraction of coal from the seams underneath (as happened with nearby Erddig Hall). Bridget de Clifford (nee Robertson) remembers the move back to Llantysilio.

"Llantysilio Hall came free, and although my mother hated the house, the valley was super. She mourned for the old Jacobean one. So that was my home through school, U.C.N.W. Bangor, and a job, until I married in 1959. As the only one left who was there in 1950, I have scraped up a few oddities.

Joyce had the burden of that house, she greatly mourned the old one being destroyed, even if it was unhygienic, in fact, we all cheerfully hated the Hall, but adored the valley. Duncan had his "gun room" (a room now known as a man shed) for him and his dogs - it was central for his work and interests.

Our early water supply emerged from those slate tanks in the field above the house, and what a complication they were! I assume we went onto the mains when it came up the valley. Talking of slate tanks, the ones hidden in the shrubbery on the bank below the Hall, where the gate onto the gravel is, we left full of champagne bottles from 3 daughters' weddings in 1953, 1956 and 1959. Empty of course.

When the drinking water got a bit 'iffy', Pa and I would ascend to the water tanks and fish out disintegrating black birds and feathers. He was a clever bowler at Eton and I took a pic of Under 14s Vale of Clwyd vs. The Rest in 1952.

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.



Vale of Clwyd Under 14s vs. The Rest cricket match at Llantysilio Hall in 1952.

1953. Marriage solemnized at <u>The Parish Church</u> in the Parish of <u>Llangollen</u> in the County of <u>Denbigh</u>							
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.
114	September 5 th 1953.	Henry Saxon Tate	22	Bachelor	Engineer	Knossington in the County of Leicestershire	Sir Henry Tate
		Sheila Ann Robertson	23	Spinster	—	Llantysilio Hall Llangollen	Duncan Robertson

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church in Wales by Rev. Roberton. Herbert Tate or after Banns, by me, David St. George

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Henry Saxon Tate in the Presence of us, Henry Tate. D. Robertson

The marriage of Sheila Robertson and Henry Tate in 1953.

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 became part of the Tate sugar empire, although Llantysilio Hall was sold away from the estate in 2007.