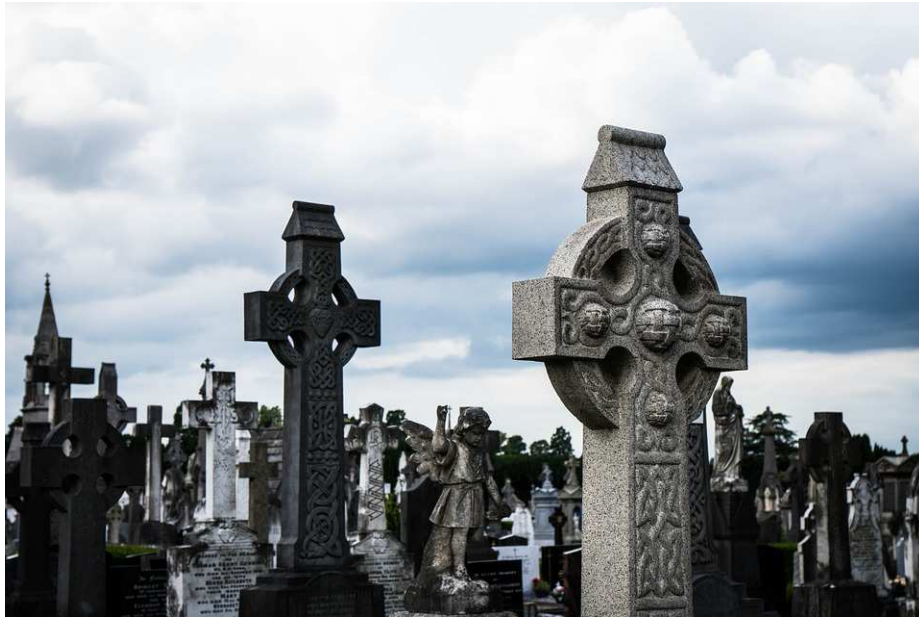


Griffith of Palleg in Ystradgynlais, Breconshire, Wales



PART 1 : Maespica & Glyncynwal Uchaf Palleg, Ystradgynlais, Breconshire, Wales (1743-2014)

**By James M. Burton, Published Online 6th Oct 2017 (Update: 17th Oct 2017)
with personal familial insight by Mr Adrian Griffiths of Portsmouth**

I was asked by a living descendant of the Glyncynwal Uchaf Griffiths of Ystradgynlais if I could help him to trace further back into his family tree. Always enjoying the difficulties of Welsh genealogy, and with most of the indexing work completed by dedicated genealogist Leonid Morgan, it was a worthwhile task, as they have another interesting role to play in the history of Palleg Manor, an addition to my main thesis on this site. Due to the Griffiths having that in-admirable but quaint penchant for naming the son after the father we have 6 generations of subsequent David Griffiths to wade through, so I give each an ascending number, suffixed by (1st ; 2nd ; 3rd etc).

Note the family was initially Griffith, without an 's', as opposed to Griffiths with an 's', which was used by older more prominent families in patronymic naming, ironically they were known as Griffiths with an s by the end of the 1800's. This method of naming could also be used to distinguish the children from the father. i.e. The father might be known as David Griffith without an s, but his children Griffiths with an s, denoting they are plurals of him if you will.

The origin of the name Griffith is of debatable and ancient Welsh and possibly Brythonic origin. Some have deciphered it to be from "*strong leader*" Grip-ud, or "*strong faith*" Gru-ffudd. Please consult the attached Griffith, Leyshon and Thomas family trees to help you navigate this story.

They originate in the Ystradgynlais area, linked to the Leyshon & Thomas line of Cilybebyll, Brynygroes and Gwernyorath who claim descent from the last abbot of Neath, Leyshon Thomas (*so far an unproven urban myth*). They were initially wholly Welsh speaking with their main occupations being farming and coal mining until the 1970s at least. They were respectable middle class grafters and active members of the independent chapel movement, which unfortunately means no juicy details of strange deaths or social scandal. However they were well connected and end up running a monopoly

on the corn winnowing, grinding and bread making on Palleg and in the administration of at least 3 local chapels by 1844.

The manor of Palleg on which they initially leased tenanted farms was run under ancient and strict leet courts and tithe rules dating back to the Norman period and before, which from 1747 was presided over by Lord's Morgan of Tredegar House, Newport. For further info on the history of the Palleg farms and the estate please see the main thesis on this website.

Please bear in mind genealogy is science in flux, and prone to subjective presumption, due to perhaps only 4 documents pertaining to a man who lived 200 years ago existing. A newly discovered newspaper clipping could blow all that guess work out of time and place. I have spent 10 years absorbing, cross checking and referencing families on Palleg, so I do have a deep insight into gathering correct original documentation, but I enjoy being corrected, since the void of missing historic written evidence is enormous.

To save myself the common task of transcribing every document from official sources, I might direct the reader to view them all neatly collected and readable on Ancestry.co.uk, under my user-name spooksprung, in the tree "Griffith, Maespica", for a sub, or free at a local library. If you are reading this in the future and that website is now defunct, I'm sure it may have been cached in a spaceship hard-drive somewhere.

Link: <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/community/directory/directory.aspx>

Griffith of Palleg PART 1

Griffith of Maespica & Glyncynwal Uchaf

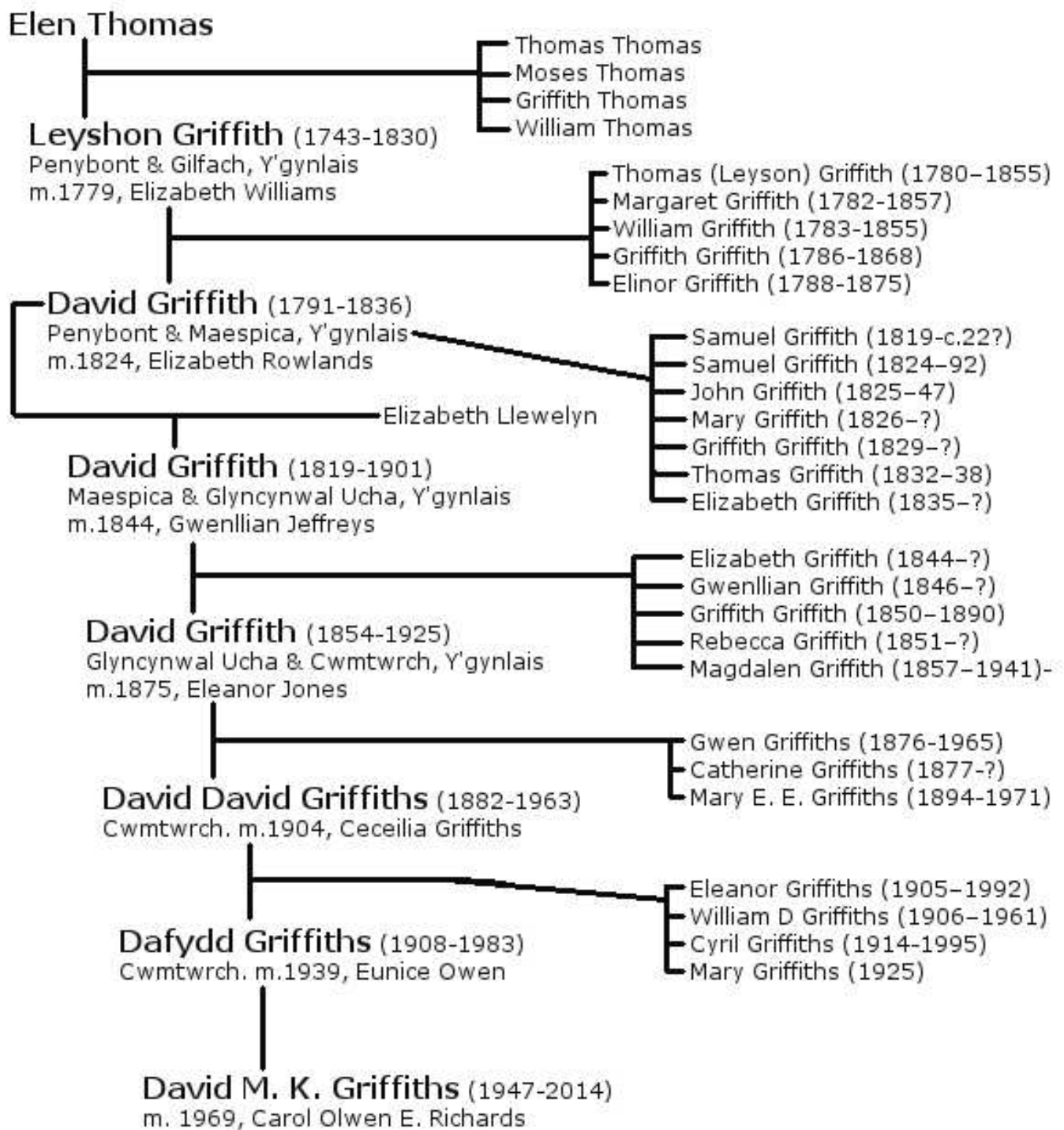
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Griffiths of Palleg Family Tree

Part 1 - Maespica & Glyncynwal

Compiled by James M. Burton Oct 2017 with Assistance of Adrian Griffiths
Based on BDM, Census, Y'gynlais Psh Reg, NLW Wills, Palleg Rents, Y'geinon Leases, 1840 Tithes

Leyshon Griffith (1743-1830)

Penybont & Gilfach, Palleg, Ystradgynlais

The furthest I am able to get back to with certainty in this line is for Leyshon, or more correctly Leyson, the progenitor of the Maespica, Glyncynwal, Bryngroes, Penybont, Gilfach and Penllwynteg Griffith lines, farms on the Palleg in Ystradgynlais. I will provide here a cascade of corresponding facts that will help point to his possible parentage without conjecture (*insight for further research that may uncover his origins is placed in the appendix*). Luckily, although he has a generic single barrelled Griffith surname, his Christian name Leyshon stands out as the only example of the period in the wider district that can be connected with him.

Working backwards up through the family tree through census, baptisms and marriage records we first trace him as the parent to 7 children born and baptised at St Cynogs in Ystradgynlais, with wife Elizabeth :

Thomas Griffith	1780 1 st Mar
Margaret Griffith	1782 21 st Sep
William Griffith	1783 7 th Sep
Griffith Griffith	1786 7 th May
Elinor Griffith	1788 2 nd Jan
David Griffith	1791 3 rd Mar
Evan Griffith	1795 19 th May

Transcript of baptisms, St Cynogs, Ystradgynlais

Therefore a license should exist within that church to sire children, and a marriage certificate is found for him on 15th May 1779 to an Elizabeth Williams. It states therein they are both of Ystradgynlais and he is a farm labourer. Witnesses are George William and Griffith William, curate Morgan Jones. I discuss who his wife and these witnesses might be later.

Banns of Marriage between Leyshon Griffith and Elizabeth William both of this parish were published on the 18th, 20th days of April and the 2nd day of May 1779 by me Morgan Jones curate.

No.161 the said Leyshon Griffith of this parish and County of Brecon, Labourer and Elizabeth William of the same parish and county, spinster.

Married in this church by Banns this fifteenth day of May in the year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Nine by me Morgan Jones, curate ibid.

**This marriage was solemnized between us Leyshon X Griffith by mark
Elizabeth X William by mark**

In the presence of George Williams, Griffith William

2. Transcript of marriage 1779, St Cynogs, Ystradgynlais

He is too early to be recorded in the census and tithe and although the records above do not give an occupation or location, we can find him in the Palleg Rent Accounts (*under the Landlords Morgans of Tredegar*) based at Penybont farm from at least 1798-1809 as a tenant farmer. Land Tax records of 1798, where Leyshon is listed under Sir Charles Morgan, which although not giving a farm name, can be confirmed

in the 1801 Land Tax in the Palleg rents, which lists him at Penybont. However a Mr Rees William Esq was paying the rent on the farm from 1788 up until 1804, therefore we assume this is where Leyshon was labouring (*as per his marriage cert*), co-running the farm and paying the tax, until Mr Rees died or retired, he then taking over the farm in 1805, note he was 62 by then. Notice also that Rees has the title "*Esquire*"; a gentleman above the position of farmer or yeoman in terms of wealth; suggesting Leyshon was his servant in more ways than just labouring, and where some of Leyshon's wealth may have come from. He might have helped manage Rees' other properties in the area for example (*his son David was overseer under Palleg estate manager Mr Vaughan*). I exercise caution when suggesting he might be his step-father (*further discussed below*).

Interesting side note, in that year of 1805 all the farmers and labourers on Palleg Estate were paid in ale totalling 10s/6d (*approx £40 2016*) for deepening the Twrch stream opposite Maespica farm, that was associated with the water mill nearby. This communal mill work was an ancient custom in the clause of their lease. Two mill stones were also dressed at £6.6 (*£475*).

Leyshon then either semi-retired in 1808, or maybe went on adventure, as the rent account in that year states "*Thomas Leyson, Penybont, late father Leyson Griffith*", which might suggest he had died. However a death herriot would have been payable if he did, and as there is no account of one, we conclude he continued to farm under his son, before taking the lease for Gilfach farm from 1820-27, then allowing his other son Evan to take over.

That former Thomas Leyson is alternately known as Thomas Griffith, difference evidenced in Palleg rent account and land tax for 1810. The Welsh were well known for having 3 names. One for the English records, one for the Welsh patronymic, and their local nickname, which might have been "*Twm o'r Bont*" for example. *Patronymic naming was in operation at the time where the son is given the Christian name of his father as a surname, e.g. Leyson son of Griffith (Leyson ap Griffith in Welsh), making it a task to find baptisms.*

Extracts from Palleg Rent Accounts and Land Tax							
Type	Date	No.	Place	Tenant	Landlord	Payments	Notes
Land Tax	1798	10743	Y'gynlais	Leyson Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	-/3/9	
Land Tax	1801	-	Penybont	Leyson Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	-/3/9	
Rents	1801	-	Penybont	Rees William Esq	Sir Charles Morgan	4/19/-	Same to 1803
Rents	1805	-	Tyr Penybont	Leyson Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	18/18/-	"Late R. Williams Esq"
Rents	1808	-	Tyr Penybont	Leyson Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	18/18/-	"Lease at will"
Rents	1809	-	Penybont	Thomas Leyson	Sir Charles Morgan	18/18/-	"Late father Leyson Griffith"
Rents	1810	-	Penybont	Thomas Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	18/18/-	
Land Tax	1810	-	Penybont	Thomas Leyson	Sir Charles Morgan	1/17/9	
Land Tax	1811	-	Penybont	Thomas Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	18/18/-	
Rents	1816	-	Gilfach Hoogi	Mr Edward Martin	Sir Charles Morgan	21/-/-	
Rents	1820	-	Gilfach Hoogi	Leyshon Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	21/-/-	Same to 1826
Rents	1831	-	Gilfach Hoogi	Evan Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan	25/-/-	

3. Transcript of Land Tax and rent Accounts for Palleg Estate 1798-1831

We calculate the birth of Leyshon from his burial, age 87, at St Cynogs in 1830, stating death was at Gilfach, suggesting a date of around 1743. Looking for a baptism in that parish yields only one possible option in a 20 year trace either side in the Parish registers, online, in Xerox copies, transcripts index by Leonid Morgan and Bishop's transcripts for Ystradgynlais, Cadoxtan, Cilybebyll, Llangiwig and all nearby parishes, titled:

Christening @ St Cynogs: "Leison son of Elen Thomas, 20th Jan 1745"

4. Transcript for baptism 1745, St Cynogs, Ystradgynlais

This clue can be followed up in the will of a Thomas Thomas, Y'gynlais in 1808:

BR/1808/80/W(i) **Will of Thomas Thomas. 22nd Sept 1808, Ystradgynlais.** brother William (1s) & his son Thomas (£2). brother Moses Thomas (£2). brother Griffith Thomas & (natural son) David Griffith (£1). **Leyshon Griffith brother in law (£2)**. Brother in law William John (1s). Executor Thomas Griffith (*presumed son of Leyshon above*). Witness; ...Williams. Proved 4 Oct 1808. Surrogate David Griffith. <http://hdl.handle.net/10107/594441>

5. Transcript of will, Thomas Thomas, Ystradgynlais 1808

Notice therein we have a Leyshon Griffith, brother-in-law to Thomas Thomas, which ties in with the baptism above, suggesting Elen Thomas is mother to all those mentioned. I am still currently attempting to trace all these Thomas' accurately, but difficult with such generic names, currently they are allied to the Thomas' of Cilybebyll who sublet farms to Leyshon's children in Llangiwg (*see below and appendix for further info*). Note Thomas family running Penybont up to 1788, before Rees William Esq and before Leyshon. To be sure this is our Leyshon we must note:

1. They did not use the term step brother in those days
2. Leyshon married a Williams, spinster, assuring no marriage to a Thomas
3. He therefore was not a brother by marriage, proven by point 1 & 2 above
4. No other local Leyshon Griffith exists in records for the time period
5. We have mention of other Griffiths, presumed sons to Leyshon
6. Ties in with only baptism found for a Leyshon to a mother Thomas
7. Thomas family of Cilybebyll rented farms to Leyshon's children
8. Thomas family of Palleg renting Penybont before Leyshon

On a speculative note, as soon as Leyshon received his £2 in Dec 1808, he quit his lease at Penybont age 65, where he only had an "at will" lease, meaning he could be given notice to quit at any time, as opposed to others who had 99 years lease with 3 lives. Also his child William married 31st Dec, moving into Gwern Yorath. These three matters may be related, as he isn't seen again farming until 1820, when he takes on a new lease at Gilfach aged 77, not unusual for a farmer.

Elizabeth Williams, wife of Leyshon Griffith

Regards the identity of Elizabeth, Leyshon's wife I am not sure. There are no obvious baptisms in the parish register. By process of elimination, regards circumstance and probability she could be:

- The base daughter of Samuel Williams d.1810 of Gwenryorath, next door to Brynygroes where William son of Leyshon rented/lived.
- The daughter of Mr Rees Williams Esq, tenant of Penybont 1788-04 before Leyshon took over

Samuel's father bought Gwernyorath in 1795/98, suggesting they had lots of spare cash. Rees was entitled an "esquire", also suggesting wealth. These two could afford to go outside the parish to marry and baptise especially if they had property elsewhere. Indeed I find no accurate records for either of these two gents. Notice the obvious here, both are Williams, both have wealth, both cannot be traced, both have a connection to Leyshon, the Thomas family, Cilybebyll and local Morgan gentry.

The obvious choice would be to state that he married the daughter of Rees, as he inherited the lease of Penybont from him.

However we CAN be certain that Samuel had a "natural born or reputed" daughter Elizabeth Williams, as he left all profits and sale of Gwernyorath to her under trust in his 1810 will, cousin George Williams (*a same named man is a witness to Leyshons marriage in 1779*) and brother Thomas Evan (alias Williams). Thomas inherited Gwernyorath, died in 1830, his will was witnessed by David Griffith, yeoman, which should be the son of Leyshon.

So this is the choice by default, as we see William Griffith, son to Leyshon baptised a child while living on that farm in 1821. Noted also Samuel in 1804 leased part of his land to build Capel Yorath, where Leyshon's great-grandson (*via William above*) was a minister while living at Bryngroes farm nearby. Also right next door to the chapel in two cottages, built on land bought from Gwern Yorath was living a family of Leysons (*so far no connection found with Leyshon Griffith*) evidenced in Thomas and Maud Leysons wills in 1818 and 1822, while living at Ynysgeinon in Cilybebyll, which was bought out by none other than the Thomas family of Cilybebyll, relatives to those mentioned in the 1808 will above.

We also have a speculative receipt from the Aberpergwm Estate Records in 1806: "*Particulars of payments to William Samuel by Rees Williams Esq for Forchorllwyn, p. Ystradgynlais*", a farm just north of Gwern Yorath where the ancient Morgan gent family lived, allied to Williams by marriage. A slew of other documents from that estate exist for this period dealing with land in Ystradgynlais owned by Rees, but I cannot prove it is the Rees Williams Esq of Palleg as they refer to same named and titled man, but from Aberpergwm.

That begs the question though why an "esquire" is based on a tenant farm on the Palleg, unless he is there to save on expenses or manage his Y'gynlais estate from there, assisted by Leyshon. Further boggling the mind is why Leyshon would be paying land tax for a wealthy landowner?! A clue may be found in the list of Palleg Leases for 1791, where Daniel Thomas and his brother John Thomas are down as the leaseholders for Penybont and Henglyn Ucha, but we know from the Palleg Rent Books that Rees William Esq is renting Penybont from 1788. If he was a gent, then I suppose he could rent it and afford to have farmers subletting the farm doing the dirty work for him, with a condition that they pay the land tax. Having a Thomas family there before Leyshon further strengthens the argument for Elen Thomas being his mother. Speculative is though, if Leyshon DID marry Rees's daughter, and not Samuels, then why did they not inherit the many properties and wealth he accumulated in the district? Makes it seem implausible.

However, such close family ties, connections and property links cannot be circumstantial or coincidences, it was all part of the dealings, deeds and doings of the gentleman farm-craft in the period. It wasn't just by the calling of God that the Griffiths were in the upper tier of running free farms and chapels; arranged marriages ensured there was legacy to them and their children, and woe betide anyone who broke with tradition and rebelled, punishments and excommunication were fierce and just. (*Further discussed in appendix*).

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CHILDREN OF Leyson Griffith (1743-1830)

- **Thomas (Leyson) Griffith** (1780-1855) took over Penybont farm from 1809-1821. Then moved to Dorwen c.1821-31. m.Gwenllian Bowen 1809. Issue: **David, Leyshon, William, Eilizabeth** (all Griffith)
- **Margaret Griffith** (1782-1857) m.1802 John Thomas a blacksmith, and moved to Llangiwig, seen at Troedrhiw Gwynion (*North of Rhyd Y Fro*) in 1841+51. Issue: **Margaret, Jenkin, Evan, John, Leyshon, David, John, Mary, Gwenllian** (all Thomas)
- **William Griffith** (1783-1855) m.1808 Mary Jones and gained the lease to Penybont in 1821 then Brynygroes farm and sired 15 children. His grandson was the local famed William Leyshon Griffith (aka Gwilym ap Lleyshon), local poet and minister. (*see PART TWO in this thesis for his descendants, coming soon*). Issue: **Thomas, William, Elizabeth, Margaret, Samuel, Elinor, Leyshon, Lewis, Mary, Griffith, Jennet, David, Evan, Rachel, David, Ann** (all Griffith)
- **Griffith Griffith** (1786-1868) m.Mary and moved to Ynysmeudwy farm in Llangiwig (*Rev Edward Thomas landowner*), later apparently running the Ynysmeudwy Arms pub, (*mentioned in brother David's will below*). Issue: **Mary, Elizabeth, David, Ann, Hannah** (all Griffith)
- **Elinor Griffith** (1788-1875) m.1808 William Evan Watkin and moved to Llangiwig at Gilfach Goch farm. Issue: **Evan, Thomas, Elizabeth, Magdalen, Lleision, Watkin, William, Margaret, William, Eleanor, Griffiths, Watkin** (all Watkin)
- **David Griffith** (1791-1836) (*see entry below*) *gained lease to Maespica*
- **Evan Griffith** (1794-1871) m.c.1820 Dinnah, inherited the lease of Gilfach from his father around 1827 and farmed there all his life, with a spell as a grocer, retiring at Gwys Cottages, (*mentioned in brother David's will below*). Issue: **Elizabeth, William, Evan, Evan, Thomas, Griffith, Margaret, Mary** (all Griffith)

Leyshon Griffith - Vital Statistics

Name: Leyshon Griffith (*aka Leyson Gruffydd*)
Residence: Penybont and Gilfach, Palleg, Ystradgynlais
Wife: Elizabeth Williams. **Mother:** Elen Thomas
Children: Thomas, Margaret, William, Griffith, Elinor, David, Evan

BAPTISM: 20th Jan 1745/6
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

MARRIAGE: 15th May 1779
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais
Elizabeth Williams

DEATH: 20th Jun 1830
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

DATE	RECORD	NAME	AGE	ADDRESS	WORK	NOTES
1743	Death	Leyshon	0	Y'gynlais	baby	Inferred from burial
1746	Baptism	Leison	3	Y'gynlais	baby	mother Elen Thomas
1779	Marriage	Leyshon	36	Y'gynlais	Farm Lab	Penybont link
1780	Child Bp	Leyshon	37	Y'gynlais	" "	Baps to 1794
1798	Land tax	Leyshon	58	Penybont	Farming	Co share Rees Wm Esq
1801	Land Tax	Leyshon	60	Penybont	Farming	" " " " "
1805	Rent	Leyson	62	Penybont	Farming	Lease to 1808
1808	Will	Leyshon	65	Y'gynlais	-	Thms Thms br-in-law
1820	Rent	Leyshon	77	Gilfach	Farming	Lease to 1827
1830	Burial	Leyshon	87	Gilfach	-	Buried St Cynogs

(1st) David Griffith

(1791-1836) Maespica, Palleg, Y'gynlais

(1st) David Griffith was baptised by his father Leyshon in 1791, firmly recorded in the parish register. After being brought up at Penybont he managed to gain the lease of Maespica farm on Palleg estate, from a Thomas Morgan who co-ran Pensingrug farm. He farmed here for a short while, after marriage in 1824 possibly between 1831-36, (*the estate rent accounts are the only ones missing for this period*) before dying aged 45, his wife Elizabeth Rowlands surviving him by 40 years as a farmer.

However short his life, his legacy was that the Griffiths tribe established a monopoly on the corn drying, winnowing, grinding and flour making for the Palleg estate (*his uncle Evan also had a shop in Cwmtwrch, where no doubt bread would have been sold*) that was bound by laws whereby all the farmers on the estate had to use this mill and no-one else's. Milling was a dangerous, but very rewarding occupation especially in those years of high corn prices and bread of the European conflict era. They also sublet many cottages on the farmland.

He sired 8 children, two out of wedlock. Their first child, (*out of wedlock with Elizabeth above 1819*) Samuel appears to have died young as another Samuel was baptised by them a few years later. The second, David was born out of wedlock with an Elizabeth Llewelyn, in the same year as Samuel, suggesting he was in two minds on his favourite fiancée. There is a conflict of research because most of his children have generic names that are common in the district, no least with his brother's family at Bryngroes, William, who had exact named children at almost the same time as each other. Before he was farming at Maespica he was moving between Ystradgynlais and the family home of his wife, Llaguicke (*Llangwig*) nearby, where they married in 1824. With his uncles and aunts firmly established there he was probably working for them or involved in chapel work. They do not appear to have baptised any of their later children in any of the local established churches, and no chapels records found as yet.

This might be explained in the following newspaper articles published in the Seren in 1905 describing the history of chapel independence in the area stating that around 1840 [sic] "*David and Elizabeth of Maespica were pillars of the establishment of Beulah chapel*". Also in the obituary of Dafydd Williams, 1902, a preacher from Llandyfaen, "*...established the chapel of Beulah with the assistance of David Griffith, Maespica, a kind and capable man, overseer under the Palleg estate agent Mr Vaughan. Dafydd received land from the Gough estate (at Ynyscedwyn), on which David Griffith helped build Beulah for £112*". Beulah was built in 1831, too early for him to be buried there, and too late for his children's baptisms to have been recorded. Two of the first deacons of Beulah were previously of that vocation in the mother chapel Cwmllynfell, and there are hints that his wife's brothers were deacons there also, John Rowland most notably.

He was buried therefore in Y'gynlais church in 1836, along later with his wife, and not the chapel. He does have a will extant, proving again the link to Leyshon above. He leaves to his two brothers Evan and Griffith all his goods and belongings to be distributed fairly, value under £50. To his wife, Elizabeth all the furniture, cattle and chattels. He leaves to his four sons Samuel, John, Griffith and Thomas the annuities from the cottages as part of Maespica as soon as Thomas reaches 18. Griffith, Llanguick his brother is executor. Significant is that he does not mention his son David, below. He probably had already settled the lease of the farm on him, as he was the eldest, it was not in the nature of the Welsh to turn away

illegitimate sons if they were good men.

Contrary to very many wills, he does not mention Christ, God or the church, which might suggest an irreligious man, but as an independent Christian he would have thought it quite pretentious to leave God his soul in a will about property, as he already knew he was "saved". A condition also was that his wife "*shall never marry or lead an immoral life, if so all effects will go to his children*". Could this have been the spur for her to be baptised in 1840 (*see her obituary below*) so that she vouchsafed this last commandment with witnesses?

Elizabeth Rowlands (1799-1881) Maespica, Palleg, Y'gynlais

(1st) David's wife was an interesting character in the district. Not only continuing to farm Maespica as a widow and matriarch of the family, but a staunch independent chapel goer, described in her obituary 1881 as the "*longest serving member of Beulah chapel in Cwmtwrch*" [*sic*]. There are hints that her family were long serving deacons at Cwmllynfell chapel, which might explain her close involvement in the establishment of Beulah. Of course, women couldn't take official positions of authority in those days.

I transcribe and translate the whole article here: Obituary published in *Seren Cymru* 14th October 1881, Page 6, col 4, bottom. Bear with me on translating old high Victorian Welsh, most of the obscure high fluted words they used, especially in writing are extinct and had local nuances to meaning. To get a such a praise worthy if now fawning and platitudinous obituary like this is not uncommon, but doesn't necessarily mean all her attributes were true to her, it was more an advert for the chapel and an "example" for young ladies to identify with and emulate. But it certainly distinguishes her as an upright dowager and matriarch of the Griffith family, and all round good person on the whole. As the article is penned with a *nom de plume*, it could even have been written by a family member, so ingrained are the personal details.

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3296077/3296083/28/maespica>

"Congl Y Mawrgofion (Corner of the dignitaries) Mrs Elizabeth Griffiths, Maespica, Cwmtwrch. The dear old sister above finished her career on earth in the house of her grandson Mr D.S. Griffiths, secretary of Beulah chapel, Cwmtwrch, son of Samuel. She reached the pinnacle of life's path on the 12th Sept 1881. She was baptised by Rev T. Williams, Cwmdwr in 1840. She was the oldest member of the church. With her loss we lost a dear mother of Israel. It is impossible to feel under the blow. She worked her way deep into our hearts. If she has died her good name lives like the flowers on her grave. Our affection follows her to another world, and we cling to her eternally. She was an irreproachable member from baptism to grave. The district feels and the church wails after her.

Although she had approached 83 years old, her departure was a loss to the church, as she was one of the most lively. She was fruitful and thriving in her latter years. She was blessed with a strong and healthy body, but a tent she had like all others, and now the tent has been rolled up. She was abundantly kind. Many poor benefited from her in their strife, and tens of newcomers received her peaceful warm welcome over the last 50 years. She was a faithful and a diligent attendant. She would meet constantly, even though circumstance may have prevented her. We saw

no-one enjoy the meetings more than she. Many times religious feasts were enjoyed that we would never forget by listening to her sage pleasant experience in the religious field. She touched the most tender fires of our emotions many times while disgorging her religious experiences. She was noted for her sincerity and resolve. There was honesty in the deepest parts of her heart.

She was very religious, but totally free of the unbearable false saintliness noted in many religions. She understood the rudiments of faith well, and drank frequently from the spirit of evangelism, so that her manner of life was an adornment to the faith of the saviour. Some parade their knowledge of faith, but when they seek it, they find the darkness of the abyss fills their minds, and know less about the spirit of faith than a child knows about the rules of reasoning. But not our old mam. She understood and lived faith but was also totally unpretentious and unassuming. There was the bravery of a giant and the innocence of a child alike in her. She was one of those who thrived and got better no matter what was done to her. We saw no-one as satisfied with the order of heaven than she. She was as prepared to die as live. These were the last words that she uttered, "*Well, if I get to live a little longer, very good, but if I have to leave, everything is good also*".

Her beloved husband was buried 45 years ago and lost some children to death also. Two live now, Mr Samuel Griffiths, Maespica and Mr Griffith Griffiths, Oliphant in America. She was buried on Thursday in Ystradgynlais graveyard. She had a respectable funeral. The service was led by the secretary and Rev C. Williams, Ystalyfera. Also there was Rev C. Williams, Ystalyfera, J.J. Walters (M), W.T. Davies (A) and Mr D Mathias (B), Cwmtwrch. Although she is dead she speaks yet. Her name is dear, her respect alive and her memory blessed. God shelter more of her like again. The heavens protect her relations.

Aria Glawdd (*pseudonym*) Cwmtwrch"

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CHILDREN OF (1st) David Griffith (1791-1836)

- **Samuel Griffith** (1819-c.22?) probably died in infancy.
- **David Griffith** (1819-1901) (*see next gen entry, married and gained the lease to Glyncynwal Uchaf farm*)
- **Samuel Griffith** (1824–92): had the good fortune to take over Palleg water mill, right next door to Maespica from 1867-93 after his brother Griffith (*below*) emigrated to Pennsylvania, when it would have been at the height of its production, with good corn prices after the European wars and Irish famine, while also running Maespica farm from 1881. Also elected member of the Board of Guardians for Pontardawe in 1877, 79 (*overseeing the poor laws, workhouses etc*). In the 1861 period he also made good money as a grocer in the Gurnos. He however had only three children, and thus died a rich man, his probate stating: "*Griffiths, Samuel of Maespica, Y'gynlais, died 12 Dec 1892, Prob Hereford 7 Apr, to David Griffith coal merchant, John Thomas Evans, farmer. Effects £1253 7s 11d*" (*approx £146,094 in 2016*). We believe the David therein was his son David Samuel who inherited the Maespica lease, also a minister in Beulah chapel and secretary to the tenants committee that presented a token of esteem to Lord Tredegar their landlord in 1903. His daughter Gwenllian appears to have been brought up with the his mother's Rowland family, as she is never seen with them in the census, she married a Thomas, as 4 grandchildren are living with Samuel in 1891, mostly born in Llandilo. 1st m. Gwenllian Phillips c.1847 Issue: **David Samuel, Margaret**. 2nd m. Mary c.1859 Issue: **Gwenllian** (all Griffith).
- **John Griffith** (1825–47): died age 22, he may have been victim to war, famine, disease or mine accident

- **Mary Griffith** (1826-?): due to generic name and confusion with others in the Leyshon line its not clear what happened to her, possibly married a Jones, nephew Arthur living at Glyncynwal in 1881.
- **Griffith Griffith** (1829-?): works with his brother Samuel above in the winnowing and grinding of corn at the mill, Maespica and Shingrug c.1844-68. I have assumed because of his brother's wealth that this was a reason he decided to emigrate to Scranton in Pennsylvania around 1869, as was common in the great Welsh exodus of the period, where the Welsh communities were well established. However he ends up working as a carpenter in a mine, quite a dangerous low paid job, so we wonder what conflict led him to surrender the prosperous mill and Maespica to his brother. He sires 12 children with Ann Lewis, who is described at the marriage as a minor, but that meant under 21 in those days, she was 18. We presume he died and was buried somewhere in Lackawanna, PA, but is described in newspapers as "*well known in the community*". With so many offspring they should have been easy to trace but only three are certain found married and working in low skill labour in the US ; Lyson a coal miner, died young of pneumonia ; Gwenllian married a Thomas Griffith, reported in news ; Hannah married a Daniel Morgan, coal mine engineer, reported in news. m.1850, Ann Lewis. Issue: **Mary, Caroline, Margaret, David, Elizabeth, Llewelyn, Gwenllian, Hannah, Richard J., John, Thomas, Lyshon.**
- **Thomas Griffith** (1832-38): died age 6
- **Elizabeth Griffith** (1835-?): as the youngest stayed at Maespica to serve her widowed mother, marrying c.1858 to Thomas Evans, coalminer, siring 5 children, they moved into the Glyncynwal Uchaf farm complex with her brother (2nd) David's family (below). Issue: **Jane, Bessie, Thomas, John** (all Evans)

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David Griffith - Vital Statistics

Name: David Griffith (*aka Dafydd Gruffydd*)

Residence: Penybont and Maespica, Palleg, Ystradgynlais

Wife: Elizabeth Rowland. **Mother:** Elizabeth Williams **Father:** Leyshon Griffith

Children: Samuel, David, Samuel, John, Mary, Griffith, Thomas, Elizabeth

BAPTISM: 3rd March 1791
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

MARRIAGE: 20th Sep 1824
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

DEATH: 26th May 1836
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

DATE	RECORD	NAME	AGE	ADDRESS	WORK	NOTES
1791	Baptism	David Griffith	-	Penybont	baby	
1819	Child Bap	David Griffith	28	Y'gynlais	Farm lab?	X2 illegit children
1824	Marriage	David Griffith	33	Llanguicke	farm lab?	Wife of Llanguicke
1824	Child Bap	David Griffith	33	Y'gynlais	farm lab?	To 1835
1831	Rent	David Griffith	40	Maespica	Farmer	Infered from records
1831	News	David Griffith	40	Maespica	Farmer	Helped build Beulah
1831	News	David Griffith	40	Maespica	Overseer	For Palleg under Vaughan
1836	Will	David Griffith	45	Maespica	Farmer	To wife and sons
1836	Burial	David Griffith	45	Maespica	-	St Cynogs
1837	Probate	David Griffith	-	Maespica	-	Brother Executor
1881	Obituary	David Griffith	-	Maespica	-	Wife's obituary

(2nd) David Griffith

(1819-01) Maespica, Glyncynwal Uchaf

(2nd) David Griffith is the reason I come to this family history. I was asked by a living descendant if I could trace his ascendants as they were obscure. In his marriage certificate to Gwenllian Jeffreys in 1844 it clearly states he was of the parish of Y'gynlais and living at Maespica and that his father was David Griffiths, farmer, as does the tithe schedule, same year. All census entries state he was born in Ystradgynlais. But no baptism is found for him. However if you consider that his supposed parents (*above*) were married 4 years after his birth in Llangwig 1824 and that they baptised another child out of wedlock in the same year as David (*Samuel 1819 Y'gynlais*) it might start to make sense.

There is an index entry for a base born child baptised of a David Griffith and an Elizabeth Llewelyn in Y'gynlais, and I am very sure this is him. This index entry however does NOT appear in the parish register, it is only featured in the Bishop's transcripts, that were sent to St David's. This suggests that David his father could not decide on his loyalties, and made a private baptism to hide this fact from his favourite fiancée, or from public "outrage". There is also of course a chance that all (1st) David's other children were baptised at a local Independent, or a Llanguick chapel and all documents from therein are likely lost, because there are no definite records for them either. A few of his great uncles children appear baptised in Pant-teg Alltwn Carmel (Independent), in Llangiwig.

It is quite clear though for me at least that if (2nd) David was living at Maespica with the other Griffiths at the time of his marriage, and says his father is David who rented that farm prior, then he was of that family, so assume he ran it from 1836-44 (*Palleg rent accounts missing for this period*). Why then did he not inherit the lease on Maespica farm after his marriage? Maybe because his step mother, a very strong lady objected to him as he was not of her blood, it is very significant that David is not mentioned as a living son in her 1881 obituary above, when he would have been a prominent farmer in the district. Neither is he mentioned in the will of his father in 1836 (*above*). Also telling is that he is not living on the farm in the 1841 census, he might be on business or living with an uncle perhaps in Llangiwig. Well, as an illegitimate son, if that proves to be so, it was sometimes hard if there was no father around to defend him.

However, he made up for all this lol by marrying the widow of William Williams who had gained the lease of Glyncynwal Uchaf farm from William Llewelyn, who was also a deacon at Beulah chapel, so well connected with his parents, another deacon William John Thomas also ran Palleg mill before the Griffiths. Notice here that William Llewelyn had a second wife, Elizabeth, who definitely had a daughter named Elizabeth Llewelyn, hence to my mind, the mother of (2nd) David. It is all open to debate. By this liaison though he gained the lapsed lease to Glyncynwal Uchaf via his wife Gwenllian Jeffreys. He sired 5 daughters and two sons there. He was a prominent member of Bethania Independent chapel in his latter days, and is buried quite close to it with his wife, indicating they were some of the founding members. Note his step-brother Samuel was a deacon at Beulah, and his supposed step-mother a long standing member, but did not attend there with them, does this indicate a family rift? or a religious one?! The former was Calvinist Methodist, the latter Baptist.

I find only one story that came to us from the newspapers concerning David in that a storm occurred one night in 1848 at Glyncynwal and one of

his mares bashed its own brains out in panic at a bolt of lightning and died instantly.

He died in 1901 at Glyncynwal, leaving £94 8s to one of his nephews or cousins named William Griffith, who took over the lease of Glyncynwal Uchaf after co-farming it from 1892. He was buried with his wife at Bethania Independent chapel near the farm. It has not been possible to trace his wife's origins further than her father, Griffith Jeffreys who rented Pensarn farm at the time of the tithe returns. Theory dictates that he should be related to the prominent Jeffrey family at Ystrad Fawr farm, whom can be traced as being directly descendant of Bleddyn ap Maenyrch, last prince of Brecknock, however no baptism or marriage has been found that matches even remotely in date to him in the surrounding area. We DO however have a DAVID Jeffreys staying with Griffith Griffith, his great uncle on Ynysmeudwy farm in Llanguicke in 1841.

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CHILDREN OF (2nd) David Griffith (1819-01)

- **Elizabeth Griffith** (1844-?): Last seen working as a servant age 16 for the family of Thomas Morgan, owner of a grocer and drapers shop in Cwmtwrch.
- **Gwenllian Griffith** (1846-?): m.1869, John Evans, an iron ore miner in Cwmtwrch in a cottage later known as Craigmaespica, close to the family home, she was a widow by 1901. Issue: **John, Elizabeth, David I., William, Griffith, Winefred** (all Evans)
- **Griffith Griffith** (1850-1890): died age 40. He was a 'rotten stone miner' which was a limestone, mixed with silica for polishing metals. Also was boarding in the Gwyn Arms before death. Hard labour combined with drinking and silica dust doesn't seem a good mix. Samuel Griffith b.1843 was the landlord of that pub, I cannot at this moment suggest what his relationship was to Griffith, but probably a cousin. Buried in Bethania chapel next to his parents, suggesting he was a religious man and not a drunkard.
- **Rebecca Griffith** (1851-?) m.1880, Thomas David Rees, coal miner, staying at the Glyncynwal farm complex to raise a family of 3. Widow by 1905, died in the Quarter Bach area of Carmarthen. Issue: **David Thomas, Griffith Thomas, John Thomas** (all Rees)
- **David David Griffith** (1854-1925) (*see next gen entry below*)
- **Magdalen Griffith** (1857-1941) m.1878, Morgan Dalloyd initially a coal miner, he became an insurance agent moving to Aberdare then Aberystwyth, raising a family of 7. An accomplished tenor soloist he was of some fame in the Eisteddfods, his son David Delloyd became the first professor of music at Aberystwyth university. *A thesis on the Dalloyd family can be seen on this website.* Issue: **Joseph, Haydn, David John, Edgar, Edith, Ernest** (all Dalloyd / Delloyd)

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(2nd) David Griffith - Vital Statistics

Name: David Griffith (*aka Dafydd Gruffydd*)

Residence: Maespica & Glyncynwal Ucha, Palleg, Ystradgynlais

Wife: Gwenllian Jeffreys. **Mother:** Elizabeth Llewelyn. **Father:** David Griffith

Children: Elizabeth, Gwenllian, Griffith, Rebecca, David David, Magdalen.

BAPTISM: 17th Oct 1819
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

MARRIAGE: 22nd June 1844
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

DEATH: 1st Feb 1901
Bethania, Cwmtwrch

DATE	RECORD	NAME	AGE	ADDRESS	WORK	NOTES
1819	Baptism	David Griffith	0	Maespica	baby	Base child
1844	Tithe Sch	David Griffith	25	Maespica	Farmer	
1844	Marriage	David Griffith	25	Maespica	Farmer	
1844	Child Bap	David Griffith	25	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1844	Rents	David Griffith	25	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	Inferred
1846	Child Bap	David Griffith	25	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1848	News	David Griffith	29	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	Mare killed
1851	Census	David Griffith	32	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1851	Rents	David Griffith	32	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	1851-92
1861	Census	David Griffith	42	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1871	Census	David Griffith	52	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1881	Census	David Griffith	62	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1891	Census	David Griffith	72	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1892	Rents	David Griffith	73	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	with Wm.Griffiths
1901	Death	David Griffith	82	Glyncynwal Ucha	Farmer	
1902	Probate	David Griffith -		Glyncynwal Ucha	-	to William Griffith

(3rd) David David Griffith

(1854-1925) Cwmtwrch

As the generations progress and the industrial revolution takes the flower of youth from the farms into the darkness of the underground, so it is with the (3rd) David who works his entire life as a coal miner while living at Cwmtwrch. Starting out by labouring he rises to the position of coal roadman, which entailed the keeping, repair and building of the underground railways. This was an important job in the mines as by this the uses of horses for the haulage of coal wagons out of the mines by rail was at their peak, but steam powered winding gear was also working alongside them later from 1870 or so. Sending wagons DOWN the mines would exploit the forces of gravity and break systems, which could be disastrous if there were failures.

There wasn't much career choice for a tenant farmer's son who only spoke Welsh, except the chapel in which he probably attended. He raised 4 children with wife Eleanor Jones at Clifton Hill (*Godre'r Tumble*) in Upper Cwmtwrch, which is a terrace of 2 houses on a slight rise with views of the woodlands on the bend in the road and river, which still stands, this was close to Glyncynwal. Most of the houses here were initially nothing more than independent self built labouring shacks with an allotment, developed over time into respectable Victorian stone houses as the money rolled in. Cwmtwrch at this time was a busy one way valley with a coal railway running through it, with a tinsplate works, and a few schools, with lots of chapels.

David was a very generous man in that he provided houses for all his children: Mary, who lived with them, was left Clifton Hill, while he purchased the house at Ivy Bush for Gwen and built School View for (4th) David David at the princely sum of £560 in 1906. We have no information on housing for Catherine who moved to Cross Hands, but it's unlikely that he would have excluded her.

His wife Eleanor was a colourful character who had her leg amputated because of a blood clot after Mary was born. The operation was performed under chloroform by Dr Lewis of Ystalyfera and his brother from Brynamman. From that point onwards she walked on home-made crutches made from broomsticks. She ran a sweet shop from the house in Clifton Hill and was thereafter called "*Mamgu Siop*". His grave appears to be in a chapel at Cwmtwrch.

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CHILDREN OF (3rd) David David Griffith (1854-1925)

- **Gwen Griffiths** (1876-1965) m.1894, David J. Moses, was a widow by 1911, living near the Ivy Bush in Cwmtwrch. A picture of her in her later years depicts a sober, wise lady, no doubt a chapel goer. Issue: **John, Ellenor, David Griffith, Ivor Hopkin, Bessie, Catherine, Gwennie, Samuel** (all Moses)
- **Catherine Griffiths** (1877-?): moved to Cross Hands
- **David David Griffiths** (1882-1963)(see next gen entry below)

Mary Elizabeth Ellen Griffiths (1894-1971): married David John Sims, a tinsplate furnace man from Llansamlet, later a deacon in Beulah chapel, they had 3 daughters, 1 son, inherited the house of her father at Clifton Hill. Both buried at Beulah. Issue: **Dilys, Elenor May, Elizabeth.**

(3rd) David David Griffiths - Vital Statistics

Name: David Griffith (*aka Dafydd Dafydd Gruffydd*)

Residence: Glyncynwal Ucha & Cwmtwrch, Palleg, Ystradgynlais

Wife: Eleanor Jones. **Mother:** Gwenllian Jeffreys. **Father:** David Griffith

Children: Gwen. Cathrine. David David. Mary Elizabeth Ellen.

BAPTISM: 1854
Y'gynlais

MARRIAGE: 30th Oct 1875
St Cynog's, Y'gynlais

DEATH: 1925
Y'gynlais

DATE	RECORD	AGE	NAME	ADDRESS	WORK
1854	Birth	0	David D. Griffith	Glyncynwal Uchaf	baby
1861	Census	7	David Griffith	Glyncynwal Uchaf	scholar
1871	Census	17	David Griffith	Glyncynwal Uchaf	-
1875	Marriage	21	David Griffith	Cwmtwrch?	Coalminer?
1881	Census	27	David D. Griffith	Cwmtwrch	Coalminer
1891	Census	37	David P. Griffith	Cwmtwrch	Coalminer
1901	Census	47	David Griffith	Clifton Hill	Collier
1911	Census	56	David Griffith	Clifton Hill	Roadman

(4th) David David Griffith

(1882-1963) Cwmtwrch

(4th) David, was brought up in industrial Cwmtwrch, a wholly Welsh speaking chapel goer, though he had a limited education at school where he was taught some English as a second language. He takes the expected vocation of coal miner like his father and stayed therein most of his working life, married to a Cecilia Griffiths, (*an unrelated branch of Griffiths from Godre'r Graig*) in 1904. They lived initially in the Mill House, Lower Cwmtwrch (*owned by Maespica Farm*), while their new house, School View, Upper Cwmtwrch was being built by his father for him. They had 5 children but Mary died as a baby very soon after the death of her mother, Cecilia in 1927.

He retired from the coal-mining industry early because of pneumoconiosis, a chronic condition causing shortness of breath and violent coughing fits. He was a devout chapel goer and a deacon at Bethania Chapel and a proud officer of the local branch of the 'Independent Order of Rechabites', a friendly society which was part of the Temperance Movement.

He was never physically strong after his enforced retirement and spent as much time as possible pursuing his hobby of fishing. He died in 1964, at School View (*Craig Glyncynwal*) leaving the house to his devoted daughter and carer Eleanor (*Nellie*) and £837 to his son (5th) David. He is the first of this line to have a photograph, taken in the 1950s.

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CHILDREN OF (4th) David David Griffith (1882-1963)

- **Eleanor Griffiths** (1905–1992): died a spinster age 87 having devoted her life to caring for her father who was widowed in 1927.
- **William David Griffiths** (1906–1961): m.1931, Catherine Daviss. Lived at 8, Gyrnosfa, Cwmtwrch. Buried in at Capel Yorath, Calvinist Methodist. Issue: **Sylwen Griffiths**
- **Dafydd Griffiths** (1908–1983) (*see next gen entry below*).
- **Cyril Griffiths** (1914-1995): married Hannah Muriel Rees of Cwmtwrch local to Y'gynlais. During his life he was a coal-miner (*from age 14*), a Railway Signal-Man (*after medical discharge from the coal mines*), until the railway line through Cwmtwrch was closed by Dr Beeching, then finally a semi-skilled operative at the Tic Toc Factory (*Smiths Clock and Watch Factory, Glanrhyd*). He was very committed to his local church (Mission Hall, Cwmtwrch) and served as Church Treasurer and Elder at various times. Both buried in the Gorof Cemetery, Y'gynlais.
- **Mary Griffiths** (1927) died in childbirth

(5th) David (Dafydd) Griffith

(1908-1983) Cwmtwrch

Married Eunice Owen from Garnant. We have his wedding photo with the wider Griffith family, all looking very respectable and sober. He began his working life at the Gwaith Tin (*Tin Works*), Lower Cwmtwrch then moved to the Brynhenllys Colliery in 1943. He is perhaps the earliest Griffiths to be given the advantage of further education when the mine foremen spotted his potential and sent him to night-school in Ammanford to be trained as an electrician which led him to becoming an underground electrician. Following a serious mine accident at Brynhenllys he was hospitalised for 18 months and then returned briefly to Brynhenllys until its closure. He spent a brief time with B.P Steelworks before being employed as Boiler Man at the Tic Toc watch factory. He was a very musical man and was organist at his local church (Mission Hall, Cwmtwrch) for many years. They are both buried at Gorof Cemetery.

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(6th) David Martyn Keith Griffiths

(1944-2014) Ystalyfera

Due to 100 year disclosure rules no documents are open to tell of this man's story, other than that he married a Carol Olwen Elizabeth Richards. They had 3 sons none of which were named David, but 1 of the grandsons is named David. He died suddenly at his home in Gurnos, Ystalyfera.

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Toponymy & History of Maespica & Glyncynwal farms

For a detailed analysis of the Palleg farms on histories and toponymy with maps, pictures and previous tenants and rents 1710-1915 please consult the Farm Index in my Palleg thesis on this website.

Maespica Toponymy

There is still fierce open debate regards the original and correct meaning of many Welsh place names, such as is with these two farms. Their origins may stretch back to the pre Roman period, so we have to proceed with caution and give a wide variety of meanings, referring to local dialects so as not to evoke pomposity.

Consists of two elements, Maes and Pica. There is no -y- in the name, which would denote OF THE, but only two descriptive elements, which in modern Welsh, maes : field and pica: sharp stones. Thus "Stony Field". It is located overlooking Cwmtwrch, the former Palleg mill and drying kilns of Penshingrug, could there be a connection to grinding of corn before the mill with stones? Or where stones were gathered from the river to make houses?

Pica has another meaning, pointed or sharp, (*Google goes further suggesting pyramid, but that's a little too far IMO*), but the farm is not exactly on a steep hill, so I thought it might refer to spear points, in conjunction with the

older meaning for maes: a battlefield, suggesting this was a defensive point against rebels coming up from Swansea, or even where stone spear points were sourced!

If we refer to Latin influence, *Pica pica* is a magpie, *Pi* (pioden plural) in Welsh. There is also a local term "*Pic ar y maen*" literally, cakes on the rocks, referring of course to Welsh cakes, simple farm food that could be cooked on mass outdoors on heated stones for the farm labourers tea break.

But there is also a religious connection to Maespica, in that Independent meetings were held here, and this might tie in with the etymological definition: *pie* or *pica*: rules referring to the moveable date of the Passover (*the rules of the pie*), Easter being the first Sunday after a full moon, suggesting this could be a place for observing the movement of such heavenly bodies.

However I suppose we must defer to down to earth etymology and topographical naming, with Maes explained as an "*open country or territory enclosed by fences for a specific purpose or product*", first quoted in 11thC, and *Pica* : "*spiked rock*", referring to the mass of rock on which Maespica sits. Thus "Open Land on a Rock", which is a disappointing, but expected result. It will be worth translating the field names from 1782 schedules to uncover more hidden meanings and uses, as *pica* might be a local term for some obscure farm resource.

Maespica History

We can definitely date a precursor of the farm to at least the 11th Century, as explained in my Palleg thesis, but of course there is no written record of its existence until 1710 in the diaries of John Morgan, rent agent. Thus we don't have mention of anything remarkable but farming occurring here in association with the drying and grinding of corn nearby, and the original mediaeval buildings torn down and rebuilt several times, indeed there seems nothing evidently very old on the farm currently, recently refurbished.

On a human level however it was an important meeting place as independent prayer meetings were held at Maespica after the Act of Toleration in 1660 (*who knows possibly also after the Reformation of 1540s*) documented at the time when Independence preachers began their meetings in the 1770s at Maespica, Gwernyorath and Bryngroes. This continued after the religious revival of 1904, widely reported with cynicism in the local papers, referring to swooning, talking in tongues, epileptic fits, visions of the divine. Some of these are reported by William D. Griffith of Cwmgiedd, obviously a cousin of this family, but I cannot place him with accuracy in the tree, he may have been a stooge for the Calvinist Methodists, who were against spiritualist type worship of the Baptists. Leyshon's sons and grandsons were also chapel deacons living here.

Maespica Baptist Meetings – Newspaper articles

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4162560/4162564/144/maespica>
Evening Express 17th April 1906 Page 4 col 4 top

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3378149/3378153/100/maespica>
Weekly Mail 21st April 1906 Page 4 col 4 top

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3628805/3628811/42/maespica>
Rhyl Journal 2nd June 1906 Page 6 col 3 bot

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3348152/3348155/73/maespica>
The Cambrian 27th April 1906 Page 3 col 8 bot

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4162610/4162613/50/maespica>
Evening Express 19th April 1906 Page 3 Col 2 mid bot

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3843962/3843970/118/maespica>
Baner ac Amserau Cymru 21st April 1906 Page 8 col 1 top (Welsh)

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3455345/3455352/34/maespica>
Y Cymro 3rd May 1906 Page 7 col 2 mid (Welsh)

Glyncynwal Toponymy (From my Palleg thesis)

The correct meaning for this farm is also lost to the mists of time. However if we break it down, we see two elements Glyn: small valley or glen ; Cynwal: a personal name ; thus Cynwal's Glen. This seems to denote the first occupant and builder of the farm. My examination of the name in ancient documents lead me to believe and speculate that it is a personal name given in honour of a Cynwal 'Wledig' ap Ffrwdwr b.400 of Wales and Dumnonia (Cornwall, then part of the Celtic sphere). Wledig means conqueror and owner of land, and Cynwal may come from cynwalch, a brave leader in battle. His son is said to have relations in Wales by his marriage to the daughter of Cunedda, king of Gwynedd whose son married Meleri daughter of Brychan Brycheiniog. Could he have lived, settled or fought here and helped Brychan overthrow the king of Powys, thereby forming Brecknock? At Glyn Cynwal farm rumours of hill forts are unsubstantiated.

His son, Amlwadd ap Cynwal b.430 who was apparently titled 'Emperor of the Britons' and grandson Cynwal ap Amlawdd b.470, whose nickname, 'canhwch', translates literally as white sow, the colour denoting high status or it could mean 100 sows (female pigs). Just to mention, 35 miles North near Llandovery there is an area known as Cwm Cynwal, where a preserved gold coin of popular Emperor Trajan (98-117AD) was found embedded in the walls of an early farmhouse.

There was also a William Cynwal (d.1587) an early Eisteddfod poet, of Ysbyty Ifan, in Denbighshire, but this is in North Wales, and seldom are places named after Welsh poets. Cynwal son of Caw appears in the list of soldiers summoned by King Arthur in the legends of the Mabinogion tract, Cylwch and Olwen.

A more plausible and local link comes from Saint Cynwal (also Cynwalan or Congual), a disciple of Saint Dubricius (St Dyfrig 465-550) supposed son of Catwg - founder of Tregatwg (Cadoxton) who is thought to have established Llan Cingualan (also Sancti Cinguali or Cella Cyngualan - Llancynwal) a monastery in the Gower, possibly in Ilston or Lower Rhosili until overcome with the yellow plague. A clergyman named Cynwal appears at this same time period as witness to several land grants to Llandaff, so possibly the same man. Monks were known for expanding their settlements, could he have done so in Palleg after the plague? Warriors often took holy orders after their bloody exploits, so as we are in the same time period he could even be one of the post-war Cynwals mentioned above. However all this hinges on the belief that the Black Book of Llandaff, Brut y Tywisogion & early chronicles are true copies in 12thC of that written down in the 6thC.

There is no other logical etymology for this this farm name, other than as a sparsely used patronymic name. Doubtless there may have been other Cynwals in the area as yet undiscovered. So here we have either a vale given a personal name from the early centuries, or in honour of them centuries later, or a local term whose meaning is now lost.

Newspaper Articles Relating to Griffith, Maespica

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3333461/3333468/44/maespica>

The Cambrian 9th November 1877 Page 7 col 4 bot

David Griffith, Maespica overseer guardians of poor

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3507884/3507887/68/maespica>

South Wales Daily News 14th April 1879 Page 3 col 7, mid

David Griffith, Maespica elected overseer guardians of poor

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3296077/3296083/28/maespica>

Seren Cymru 14th October 1881 Page 6 col 4 mid

Obituary of **Elizabeth Griffith (nee Rowlands)** Maespica (Welsh)

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3121047/3121050/29/maespica>

Tarian Y Gweithiwr 23rd October 1902 Page 3 col 3 mid. Obituary preacher

Dafydd Williams. **David Griffith**, Maespica helped build Beulah chapel (Welsh)

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3220502/3220508/17/maespica>

Seren Cymru 28th July 1905 Page 6. History of Beulah Chapel, Cwmtwrch,

mentions **David & Elizabeth Griffith**, Maespica (Welsh)

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3541881/3541886/76/maespica>

Y Drych 14th June 1894 Page 5 col 2 bot. Marriage of **Hannah Griffiths** to

Daniel Morgan (da. to **Griffith Griffith**) in Scranton (Welsh)

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3543573/3543576/46/maespica>

Y Drych 17th February 1898 Page 3 col 6 bot. Marriage of Elizabeth Rees,

granddaughter to **Griffith Griffith**, Scranton (Welsh)

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3544388/3544395/97/maespica>

Y Drych 16th November 1899 Page 7 col 1 top. Marriage of **Gwenllian**

Griffith (da. of **Griff. Griffith**) Scranton to Thomas Griffith (Welsh)

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4137955/4137959/106/maespica>

Evening Express 26th November 1903 Page 4 col 5 mid bot.

David Samuel Griffith Maespica, secretary of presentation committee

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3857704/3857705/5/maespica>

The Brecon County Times Neath Gazette 8th July 1915 Page 1 top

Advert for auction of Palleg farms inc Maespica **D.S. Griffith** tenant

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3858154/3858160/40/maespica>

The Brecon County Times 22nd June 1916 Page 6 col 1 top mid

Edgar Griffith (son of **David S. Griffith**) appeal against military service

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3979156/3979163/53/maespica>

Llais Llafur 3rd November 1917 Page 7 col 2 top. **George Griffith** Maespica

(son of **David Samuel Griffith**) officiating at Cwmtwrch mission hall

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3979944/3979945/6/maespica>

Llais Llafur 26th July 1919 Page 1 col 4 mid. **George Griffiths**, Maespica

(son of **David Samuel Griffith**) officiating at Bethania funeral

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3979890/3979894/23/maespica>

Llais Llafur 14th June 1919 Page 4 col 2 top. Gala at Beulah, Bethania

and Bethel mentions **David Samuel Griffith**, Maespica

Miscellaneous

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4099253/4099259/114/maespica>

The Cambria Daily Leader 21st May 1915 Page 6 col 6 bot
Craig Maespica cottages, unfit for human habitation

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3857415/3857417/7/maespica>

The Brecon County Times Neath Gazette 19th Nov 1914 Page 2 col 1 top
Electricity arrives in Cwmtwrch

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4257967/4257976/36/maespica>

Baner ac Amserau Cymru 22nd August 1860 Page 9 col 4 mid
suicide of Twm James, Maespica, possibly farm servant

Newspaper Articles Relating to Griffith, Glyncynwal Uchaf Farm

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4346759/4346762/17/glyncynwal>

The Welshman 15th December 1848 Page 3 col 3 mid
David Griffith, Glyncynwal Uchaf, loss of mare in storm

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3110618/3110624/98/glyncynwal>

Tarian Y Gweithiwr 11th Apr 1879 Page 6 col 3 mid. Epithalamium on marriage
of **Magdalen Griffith** & **Morgan Dalloyd** (Welsh). *Translated in Dalloyd thesis*

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3741363/3741369/173/glyncynwal>

South Wales Daily News 1st November 1898 Page 6 col 8 bot
Straying dog, Scotch black, **William Griffith**, Glyncynwal Ucha

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4096474/4096477/61/glyncynwal>

The Cambria Daily Leader 4th June 1914 Previous Issue Page 3 col 6 bot
1st and 2nd prize Palleg show yearling Welsh ram **W.Griffiths** & son.
3rd **D.G. Griffiths**, Glyncynwal Uchaf

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3977652/3977658/72/glyncynwal>

Llais Llafur 15th August 1914 Page 6 Col 2 top. Death of **William Griffith**, Isaf

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/3857704/3857705/5/glyncynwal>

The Brecon County Times Neath Gazette 8th July 1915 Page 1 col 2 top
Sale of Palleg farms inc Glyncynwal Uchaf by auction reps of late **William Griffith**

<http://newspapers.library.wales/view/4021401/4021403/9/glyncynwal>

Y Darian 9th January 1919 Previous Issue Page 2 col 3 bot
Eisteddfod poem entry re Glyncynwal

Notes for Further Research into Lleyshon, Leyson, Leison, Lleision, Lyson, Lison

There may be some repetition here from previous passages but it solves having to backtrack. For those seeking the vain-glory of connecting this Griffiths line of the Leyshons directly to the last abbot of Neath, Thomas Leyshon, it should be made abundantly clear and obvious to them that those of Palleg are of the GRIFFITHS tribe through and through. At some point they did pick up a Leyshon Christian name, in honour of a wife, uncle, cousin or grandfather lost to the mists of time, that like lucky prayer beads were passed down through the generations. The fact that they end up as tenant farmers should strengthen this theory, the direct line from Abbot Leyshon was a wealthy branch originating from the dissolution of the monasteries and a huge pension. They were in the upper echelons of divine Welsh, princes among men if you will. Muck spreaders sharing houses with cattle they were not.

Therefore until that day when some unreleased documented evidence comes to light that provides clear transparent truth on the matter and not some contrived theory lacking in perspicacity, I cannot within my current sphere of genealogical tools, books, web-databases and insight, personally link Leyshon Griffith born c.1743 with any distinct Leyshon line, and his exact origins will remain a mystery. He is just on the cusp of being recorded in an independent chapel baptism, but of a time where many church parish registers are missing for all time, especially in Brecknock. This myth was touted by William Griffith (1863-1925) Bryngroes who was an active in all things Welsh, a proud nationalist, poet, independence minister, bard of Eisteddfods, neo-druidism and promoter of the Welsh language. He even used the pen-name *Gwilym ap Leyshon* to make you sure of this. This led to the common practice of dreaming up tales of family trees which could be traced back to famous medieval Welsh princes the pinnacle being King Arthur himself.

However there is always some truth in a family yarn, so I scanned all the parish records for a link to the Ystradgynlais Griffith-Leyshons and I found there is an abundance, a concentration of Leysons originating in Cadoxtan-juxta-neath just south of Y'gynlais, with branches then stretching out slowly to Neath, Baglan, Cilybebyll, Y'gynlais, even Margam and Llantrythid. The fact that there is some tenuous connection to Y'gynlais property and chapel by those pioneer Griffith-Leyshons living in Cilybebyll and Llangiwig seems to suggest therefore they are a watered down cadet branch of the original Leyshon or Thomas families that spread their wings.

Possible father of Leyshon Griffiths

1. Griffith William of Glyncynwal Isaf. Reason: witness to his marriage 1779. Connection to Bryngroes and Gwern Yorath Williams family. David, son took Glyncynwal Uchaf next door. Illegitimate child with patronymic name to distinguish. Probable mother Elen Thomas baptised base son Leyson on 20 Jan 1746, Y'gynlais. This is further proved in the will of Thomas Thomas, Y'gynlais in 1808 who describes Leyshon Griffith as his brother-in-law, leaving him £2, also making nephew Thomas Griffith executor, which should be Leyshons son. The only one flaw in this theory here is that the title 'brother-in-law' assumes he married Thomas's sister, but we know Leyshon married a Williams. Step-brother would make more sense, but they DID NOT use this term in 1808.

2. William Leyson, Y'gynlais: came from Y'gynlais to Cwmllynfell independent chapel to receive communion in 1771. Had a family of 6 by 1766. No further info.

Leyshon of Ynysygeinon, Cilybebyll

Thomas Leyshon and Maudlin (nee John) are the best examples of that. While living and dying at Ynysygeinon farm in Cilybebyll (*opposite Ystalyfera*), they leave in their written wills dated 1818 and 1822 respectively, two cottages on land within Gwern Yorath farm in Y'gynlais to two of their sons Evan and Thomas, stating strenuously that they are NOT to be sold. Children John, Anne, Elizabeth, Jennet, Catherine, Gwenllian (all Leyshon) also mentioned. It's not clear from the 1813 OS map where they are, but the 1841 census shows Evan Leyshon (*canal boatman*) and his descendants living here simply known then as Cwmgiedd village, but we can tell they were right next door to Yorath chapel. That chapel was built 1804, so some connection here as the land for such was leased from Gwern Yorath by Samuel Williams, whose daughter so far is debated to have married Leyshon Griffith.

Leyshon Griffith's connection to Thomas Leyshon is unclear yet tenuously close, almost so close in date, circumstance and similarity of children's names to be called a cousin or brother, but eons apart in terms of proof from those precious yet elusive baptismal records. I suspect therefore that they may have been co-working within the Palleg farms in some profession and by this entry into the society ended up with Leyshon, marrying the daughter of the leaseholder of Gwernyorath, a further connection down the line allowing them to lease or even own Brynygroes.

Ynysygeinon Research

Ynysygeinon (*also Ynyseinon, Ynysgeinon, Ynys-y-geinon*) farm in turn is not so distant from Ystradgynlais, described in the wills above as a leasehold from Briton Ferry estates, in fact it was a small sub-estate in its own merit, with a large batch of leases & papers in the Swansea archives. By 1823 it was surrendered by Lord Bussy Mansell and sold to the Thomas family for £900, specifically Rev Edward Thomas of Baglan. By the 1840 tithe, a Hopkins family is tenanted there under landlady Mary Thomas, but surrounded on the nearby farms by Griffiths and Johns.

Ynysmeudwy ½ a mile away was taken by Griffith, Leyshon's son (*Landlord was the same Rev Edward Thomas above*). Elinor, Leyshon's daughter took Gilfach Goch farm also ¼ mile from Ynysygeinon. Margaret also took Troedrihiw Gwynion nearby. It may also be a coincidence but the (4th) David Griffith married into the Griffiths of Godre'r Graig farm, not ¼ mile from Ynysygeinon. All these facts are too close to be coincidence.

A William Leyshon also has a connection in that he travelled from Y'gynlais to Cwmllynfell Independent chapel (3 miles) to receive communion weekly from 1771, but no further insight can be given into who he was or what he did where. But there is a possibility of him being the father to Thomas above. We also have many baptisms and marriages of surnamed Leysons in Y'gynlais with no apparent connection to the Griffiths dating from 1731-1930, many of the earlier ones being strays from Cadoxtan and Cilybebyll. But for the life of me I cannot connect them together without proof, only circumstance.

Leyshon Griffith was evidently a yeoman, a step up from a cow and two goats type farmer, with good connections in the farming industry to have been able to rent a farm on the Palleg, where strict rules were enforced in the Leet Court. If his relatives were not there before him it is likely that he grafted onto it from

one of the neighbouring Manor Estates to the South West, especially if he did not own a farm. Llangiwig & Cilybebyll seems the most likely possibility since all his children moved there, and considering the family connections above.

Also as his descendants were closely involved with the establishment of chapels it might be found that his forebears were deacons or vicars even, considering the Leyshon link. No doubt further info might be found in another obituary or chapel history.

Ynysgeinon Toponymy

Literal translation: Einon's island. Einon was a local chieftan and lord of the Welsh in the Middle ages, and likely belonged to him. Titled Ynys as at one time the river Tawe would surround it on both sides. Ended up with Briton Ferry Estates, which was owned at one time by the Mansell of Margam, with the possibility of it previously being part of Neath Abbey estates, where of course Leyshon Thomas the abbot dwelt.

The following legend of Ynysgeinon comes from the First Bus Company no less: *"Ynysgeinon was not only an important railway location but also the only known location of a famous legend. Over a century ago, Dai, a local farmhand was out catching rabbits near the rock when he saw a little man speak a magical word and a heavy door open leading inside the rock. Dai came back later having remembered this word and the door opened revealing to him a 'faerie' world full of gold inside. The door closed, he was trapped but the faeries adopted him and he lived in peace for seven years, after which he returned to the farm with a sack of gold. He was persuaded to reveal the magic words for his master who decided go and see for himself; he went several times, each time returning with a sack of gold then one day never reappeared. Dai went looking for him and found his four quarters strung up behind the stone door. Frightened out of his wits, Dai never used the magic words again. It seems it's never wise to take the generosity of the 'faeries' for granted!"*

Gwern Yorath Research

We know there is a connection to this farm as William Griffith's child (*Leyshons son*) was born here in 1821. The Williams family were running the farm prior, who bought it from Ynyscedwyn estates in 1795/8. As Leyshon married an Elizabeth Williams, we can speculate she might be the daughter of Samuel who in his will of 1810 left her profits from the management or sale of Gwern Yorath. Mentioned therein is a cousin named George Williams, and a same named man appears in Leyshons marriage 1779 as a witness. However Leyshon is not mentioned in that will or the fact that Elizabeth is married. However Samuel's brother Thomas Evan (alias William) took Gwern Yorath, died in 1830 leaving all to wife Margaret, who renounced her executrix to her son Morgan Evan, witnessed by David Griffiths yeoman, that could only be same named man from Maespica, Leyshon's son.

We know that the land on which Capel Yorath sits was donated from Gwern Yorath, built 1804. There is a connection here to the Thomas family who leased Gwern Yorath prior to Williams and took over Ynysgeinon after the Leyshon family, who owned cottages next door to Yorath chapel, bought from Yorath farm. The chapels history also dictates that services were held on the farms of Gwernyorath, Bryngroes and Maespica prior to it being built. This proves to me how William son of Leyshon might have gained the lease of Bryngroes, and how his son Leyshon became a minster there and David, Maespica.

Gwern Yorath Timeline

- 1488** (History) Gwern Yorath built or acquired by Ynyscedwyn estates (Not sure where I go this info from, probably 3rd hand story from local history book)
- 1519** (Lease) Conveyance 1519, William ap Hopkyn Aubrey to Nest verch Oweyn: parcel of land: (a) Lying in breadth between Nedgyeth and land of Richard ap Richard ap Rees, and in length from the River Tawe to Gwern Jororth ap Oweyn (Gwern Yorath) (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 124).
- 1581** (Lease) Conveyance , John Hughe of Ystradgynlais to Henry Prise of Ystradgynlais, Tir Gwern Jervethe ap Owain (Gwern Yorath), lying in length from land of Jevan ap Egan to land of Jevan ap John David Goch, and in breadth from torrent ydgiedd to y Groesse Lwyd; in Ystradgynlais. (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 58).
- 1581** (Lease) Quitclaim, 1581, Property as in D/D Yc 58. (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 59).
- 1588/9** (Lease) Post-nuptial settlement, Henry Price of Ystradgynlais to Morgan Aubrey on marriage of Jevan ap Henrie, son, to Margaret verch Jevan ap Morgan ap Richard: (a) Tir Gwern Jervethe ap Owein, (Gwern Yorath) (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 60)
- 1641** (Crown) Writ of Ouster le Main, 1641, King Charles I, to Escheator of Brecon, to deliver to Morgan Aubrey: Tir y Pallegge; in Ystradgynlais (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 689)
- 1765** (Land Tax) Tenant or owner William Thomas. From diaries of John Morgan.
- 1780** (Book) Methodist meetings on Gwern Yorath, Bryngroes, Maespica (History John Williams)
- 1795** (Book) Gwern Yorath sold to Williams family for £787, conflict as lease dated 1798 below
- 1797** (Survey) Survey of Ynyscedwyn John Williams Valuation made for sale of lands to Swansea Canal Company, Gwern Jorath (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 1175)
- 1798** (Lease) (xiii) Lease, for £20, n.d., tenant: William Thomas; A messuage called Gwern Jorath; in Ystradgynlais; (Note: sold for £787); (Ynysced D/D Yc 687)
- 1806** (Book) Capel Yorath built (others say 1804) (History, John Williams)
- 1810** (Will) Samuel William, Gwern Yorath to daughter Elizabeth (NLW Wills online)
- 1813** (OS Map) Gwernyroth (Ordnance Survey, British Library)
- 1814** (Baptism) Gwenllian Morgan (f: William Evan) was born 15 June 1814 in Gwernyorath (Y'gynlais Parish Register)
- 1818** (Will) Thomas Leyshon Cottages on Gwern Yoarth land to Evan and Thomas Leyshon sons. (NLW Wills online)
- 1821** (Baptism) Lewis Griffith, baptised 18.11.21 son of William & Mary, born here (y'gynlais Parish Register)
- 1822** (Will) Maud Leyson widow of Thomas Leyshon, cottages on Gwern Yoarth land to same above in 1818 (NLW Wills online)
- 1830** (Will) Thomas Evan (Williams) (brother to Samuel) Gwern Yorath to Morgan Evan son (NLW Wills online)
- 1841** (Census) William Thomas (boat man). Evan Morgan miner (Morgan Evan perhaps?)
- 1844** (Tithe) Gwain Yorath. Thomas Thomas, tenant. Richard Morgan, Landowner
- 1851** (Census) Tenant, Elizabeth Jones pensioner (sister to Mary Jones perhaps?)
- 1871** (Census) Tenant, Enoch Morgan
- 1881** (Census) uninhabited

Brynygroes Research

Leyshon's son William lived at Brynygroes from c.1851, which as local history dictates was one of the farms where the independent chapel movement in this district began in the late 1700s, and it could be that Leyshon was baptised here. This would have been in strict apposition to the established church, even though their religion was tolerated, it was still persecuted, but all records now missing, but 1743 is WAY too early for a chapel baptism in Y'gynlais. Most independents baptised in the deep heart of Welsh society in the mother chapel of Cwmllynfell from 1760 and later Pantteg from 1822. Indeed in 1771 a William Leyson came to Cwmllynfell from Ystradgynlais to receive weekly communion here, but again we don't know who he is.

It is most likely that a branch of the Leyshons or Thomas' from Cilybebyll had a lease or ownership of Brynygroes, and that there was some connection by a cousin or marriage that allowed William to take the farm from around 1851. William had baptised one children while living at Gwern Yorath in 1821 and other in Bryngroes in 1824, suggesting he rented or laboured in the farms after marriage.

A plaque carved into one of the roof beams dated 1607 was found in the old Brynygroes farm and removed by the Leyshon-Griffiths before it burnt down c.1900 (*not sure on date*). It is still in possession by the same lineage, a direct descendant contacted me recently with a picture of it, last seen in 1911. The carving reads "*I.H.S. (Jesus Homien Salavator (Jesus saviour of men)), 1607, J.L.*" and to the left "*C M.W.*" (*Carved by*). I find no records of any Leyshons being here at that time, but that is understandable, there are none from this period! Only a few leases for Ynyscedwyn Manor. In 1607 there is a John Lewis mentioned in a lease, a possibility.

The farm was carved from damp alder woods (*gwern*) part of Gwern Yorath farm, initially called "*Tir Gwern Jevan Griffith ap Owen*" leased from the Aubreys of Ynyscedwyn to Hugh Walter, rector of Ystradgynlais, in 1562. An ancient stone cross, mentioned in that lease, called "*Maen y Groes*" stood here, where faithful Christians, when they couldn't reach the church over the river would meet and worship in the open. The farm is still named so in a 1612 Ynyscedwyn quitclaim, by the tenant Griffith ap Owen, suggesting to me that he was the first person or a direct descendant to have developed this land, and it named after him, and that he had built the farm in 1607 and carved the plaque. But of course his initials are not J.L., suggesting that he had been an old man by this time and helped that "J.L." build his farm on his land, PERHAPS, MAYBE, POSSIBLY, a Leyshon, but PROBABLY NOT.

It is worth noting that although the term I.H.S. was a popular symbol for Christians from the earliest times, when it was found marked in places outside of consecrated ground i.e. in secret or home chapels, it was often used as evidence for Roman Catholic recusancy or later Independent dissenters who refused to attend the Church of England, and were thus persecuted vigorously for it, many people burnt at the stake or tortured for their beliefs.

We know that Brynygroes was used as such place, with evidence of an earlier stone cross. Such an I.H.S. mark was found in the not so secret chapel of the Gunters in Abergavenny town centre, where John Arnold JP, MP of Llanvihangel Court rounded up hundreds of people and executed two priests, as late as 1700 (*see my Gelliwig thesis on this site for further info*). However evidence for such activity in Ystradgynlais is very sparse as most of the written history here is disseminated or destroyed.

The toponymy of Brynygroes is quite simple, meaning hill of the cross. As we can see in the time line below a stone cross once stood here, at least

in 1562, where locals would come to worship in the open, dating from mediaeval customs. The farm was initially called Tir Gwern Jevan Griffith ap Owen after the first occupier who carved his property from the damp alder woods (gwern) that stood there, that name stuck until the time of the Commonwealth c.1640 when crosses like this were torn down, there is documented evidence of troops camped in the area.

Brynygroes Timeline

- 1562** (Lease) D/D Yc 47 : Conveyance (Feoffment), 20 Sep 1562, (i) William Morgan Awbrey to (ii) Hugh Walter, rector of Ystradgynlais: Tir Gweyn Jevan Griffith ap Owen (BrynyGroes), from the tree called Derwen Pen y Sarn to the cross called Mayn y Grouse, and in breadth from Tire Jevan Bagh to Rethwayn; in Ystradgynlais
- 1562** (Lease) Quitclaim, 30 Sep 1562: Property as in D/D Yc 47 (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 48).
- 1605** (Lease) Conveyance (Feoffment), 4 November 1605, (i) Jevan Penrie of Y'gynlais gent., and wife Margaret verch Jevan, to (ii) Morgan Awbrey of Y'gnlais, gent.: (Property as in D/D Yc 47). Signature of Jevan Penrie (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 51).
- 1605** (Lease) Quitclaim, 6 November 1605, (parties as in D/D Yc 51): Property as in D/D Yc 47 (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 52).
- 1605** (Lease) Bond in 200 marks, 6 November 1605, (parties as in D/D Yc 51): Property as in D/D Yc 47. (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 53).
- 1612** (Lease) Quitclaim. 17th March 1612. Griffith ap Owen to Morgan Aubrey, Tir Gwern Evan Griffith ap Owen (Bryn Y Groes). Witness John Gethin? John Morgan & Rees ? (Ynyscedwyn D/D YC 54)
- 1626** (Lease) Conveyance. 21st August 1626. Morgan Aubrey to Richard Games & William Aubrey sold Tyr Penybont (alias Gwern Boulth), Tyr Gwern Evan ap Owen (Bryngroes), Tyr Pen y Parck and Ty y Cae Mawr in Palleg (Ynysc D/D Yc 105/6).
- 1626** (Lease) Conveyance, 31 Jan 1626/27, (i) Richard Games of Penderyn esq, and William Awbrey of Llangiwig, gent., to (ii) Morgan Awbrey, junior of Ynyscedwyn, gent ; Property as in D/D Yc 105), in lordship of Palleg; (Ynyscedwyn D/D Yc 107)
- 1641** (Crown) Writ of Ouster le Main, 1641, King Charles I, to Escheator of Brecon, to deliver to Morgan Aubrey: Tir y Pallegge; Y'gynlais (Brynygroes within) (Ynyscd D/D Yc 689)
- 1765** (Land Tax) Tenant or owner Lewis Richard (from dairy of John Morgan)
- 1780** (Book) Methodist meetings on Gwern Yorath, Bryngroes, Maespica (History John Williams)
- 1824** (Baptism) Mary da of William & Mary Griffith bap, living at Bryngroes (Y'gynlais Register)
- 1841** (Census) William Samuel, Ind. Jones Lewis, miner (Brinygros)
- 1851** (Census) William Griffith, farmer (Bryngroes)
- 1861** (Census) Leyshon Griffiths farmer (Bryngroes)
- 1901** (Census) William Griffith, Calvinistic Minister
- 1911** (Census) William Griffith, Minister of the gospel (MC)

BR/1808/80/W(i) **Will of Thomas Thomas, Y'gynlais. 22nd Sept 1808.** brother William (1s) & his son Thomas (£2). brother Moses Thomas (£2). brother Griffith Thomas & (natural son) David Griffith (£1). Leyshon Griffith brother in law (£2). Brother in law William John (1s). Executor Thomas Griffith (presumed son of Leyshon above). Witness; ...Williams. Proved 4 Oct 1808. Surrogate David Griffith.
<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/594441>

SD/1810/94/W **Will of Samuel Williams, Gwern Yorath, 1810.** To Richard Pendrill of Pentrych Lodge and George Williams of Glanrhyd, yeomen of Y'gynlais, executors, all messuages, land of Gwern Yorath for management or sale as trustees, the profits of which go to the upkeep of natural or reputed daughter Elizabeth Williams da of Margaret Lewis spinster. To cousins George Williams & William Williams £100. £100 to Edward son of Richard Pendrill. Interest of estate sale to brother Thomas Evan, alias Williams & Margaret his wife, after their decease to their 5 children at 21 or marriage. If profits not = to £800 brother to bear deficiency at 3 to 5. All effects to executors. 5th of.... 1810.
<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/1011538>

LL/1818/31: **Will of Thomas Leyson, Ynysygeinon, Cilybebyll, 26 June 1818.** To sons & daughters John 1s, Anne 1s, Elizabeth 1s, Jennet 1s, Catherine 1s, Gwenllian 1s, Mary 1s. Son Evan the south cottage in a the row sold by lease from Samuel William, part of Gwernjorwarth, Y'gynlais. Thomas the other cottage, after death of wife. Mary & Gwenllian to be given the 'slope house' at the rear of the above south cottage. To Maud, wife, lease of house from Britton Ferry estates, Ynysygyinor (Ynysygeinon) in Cilybebyll parish. All effects to wife, executor. Witness: Watkin Price, rector Cilybebyll. Pryse Rice, Thomas Rees. Died 18th July 1818. Proved 28 Aug 1818. Effects under £85
<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/691051>

LL/1822/30 **Will of Maudlin Leyson, Cilybebyll, widow, 7 June 1821.** John, Anne, Elizabeth, Jennet, Catherine, Gwenllian, Evan, Thomas (& trilby) 1s each. Thomas s of Thomas William £1 & dresser. Gwenllian John, da of John Thomas £3 when she is 7, chest and small chest to be kept at the slope house in Cwmgiedd till she is 18, and Mary da executrix, all goods. Thomas s. to give Mary da £3.3 or a cow on May 1822 or 3 months after decease. Thomas & Even NOT to sell or raise money on the Cwmgiedd cottages. Llewelyn Llewelyn is to keep the tenancy till lapsed, at 1d per year. Witness: John Thomas, Llewelyn Llewelyn. Died 31st May 1822. Proved 5 June 1822 under £22.
<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/443403>

BR/1830/67/W **Will of Thomas Evans, Gwernyoroth, Ystradgynlais, 19th March 1830.** To Margaret Evan, wife, executor, all lands, messuages, estate of Gwern Yorath, tenaments of Caer Odyn, Caegenol, Craig fach Waun Ycha, all monies. Witness Timothy Davies, Jenkin David, John Phillip. Wife renounced, all effect to Morgan Evan, miner, son, Witness David Griffith, yeoman, Y'gynlais 5th June 1830
<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/157475>

SD/1837/142 /W **Will of David Griffith 19th April 1836 Maespica, Y'gynlais, Farmer.** Two brothers Griffith and Evan all real and personal property in trust after decease, to distribute fairly. To Elizabeth wife all chattels, cattle, furniture. If she lead a carnal, immoral life or remarries all effects shall be given to the children lawfully begotten by her. To sons Samuel, John, Griffith and Thomas all annuity from the cottages on Maespica as soon as Thomas reaches 18. Griffith executor. Effects under £50. Witness Timothy Davies, Clerk. Evan Thomas, Smith. Elinor Evan. Died 25th May 1836. Proved 13th May 1837 by Griffith Griffith, Llanguicke
<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/272893>

Tithe Apportionments Ystradgynlais 1844

Farm	Tenant	Owner	
Brynygroes	Lewis Lewis	Richard Gough Esq	
Gilfach	Evan Griffiths	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	Son of Leyshon
Glyncynwal Ucha	William Llewelyn	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	g.f. David
Pensarn	Griffith Jeffreys	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	s.f. David
Maespica	David Griffiths	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	Son of Leyshon
Penshingrug	Griffith Griffiths	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	Son of Leyshon
Dorwen	Thomas Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	Son of Leyshon
Penybont	William Griffith	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	Son of Leyshon
Tredeg	William Griffiths	Sir Charles Morgan Esq	
Gwain Yorath	Thomas Thomas	Richard Morgan	
Gorllwyn Coch	Richard Griffiths	James Price	
Gwaun Carne	Lewis Thomas	William Williams Esq	
Pentre Cribarth	Thomas Thomas	William Powell	
Tir y Pant	Thomas Griffith	Howel Gwyn Esq	

g.f.: grandfather. s.f.: step father

Now online NLW : <https://places.library.wales/home>

Leyshon in Y'gynlais Registers

bp.1731 (D52) Y'gynlais bap **Leyshon Williams** of Watkins? son is **William Leyshon** 5/4/1778 m. **Jennet Lewis** (A122) Cadoxtan. child **Eliz Wm, Anne, Wm, Jennet Wm, Mary Wm, Wm Wm** (bp 1778) m x3 **Mary Charles, Jane, Marg** (D194, D220, D221)

1754 bp.**Leyshon Hopkin** (E77)

15th May 1755 Marriage of **Thomas Leyson** Y'gynlais and **Marie Jenkin** of Cilybebyll.
By license under Curate Morgan Evans Llanguicke

William Leyshon m.**Elizabeth** 1766 child **Thomas, Wm, Ann, Eliz, Gwenllian**

11th Nov 1769 Marriage of **Thomas Leyshon** and **Maudlin John** of Cilybebyll
Banns 15, 23, 29 Oct 1769 (A86) child in Cilybebyll below

12th May 1771 Cwmllynfell Independents Register, **William Leyson** of Ystradgynlais admitted to communion. p. 14 https://www.ancestry.co.uk/interactive/2972/40612_B0151207-00013

16th May 1772 **William Leyshon**, yeoman of Ystradgynlais and **Jennet Lewis** spinster of Cadoxtan banns 12, 19, 26 Apr 1772. Curate Morgan Jones. Wit; William William. Thomas Leyshon (A122)

18th April 1773 **Evan Evans**, labourer **Elizabeth Leyshon**, spinster both Ystradgynlais. Banns 13, 20, 27 Dec 1772 by Morgan Jones curate. Wit: Thomas Leyson. Richard Lewis. Wm Leyshon

16th, 23rd, 30th Dec 1787 Banns only **Hopkin Leyshon**, Y'gynlais & **Mary Jones**, Llangyndeyrn Morgan Jones curate. (B130) m.26.6.1779?

5th Jun 1802 **Daniel Williams** collier & **Gwenllian Leyshon** wit Eynon Wms, Thomas Jones. Stray from Cadoxtan. Child Mary, Wm, Mary, Lewis, Anne bp from 1802> (E174)

31st Jan 1806 **John Leyshon** m. **Jane William** wit David Jeffreys Wm Wm both Cilybebyll (C193) Child Rees, Anne, Thomas, Wm bp 1806>

Cilybebyll Baptisms

15/5/1785 Evan of Thomas Lision, Maud. 23/3/1784 Catherine of Thomas Lision, Maud.

23/6/1786 Jennet same of Thomas Lision, Maud 11/12/1791 Mary da of Thomas Lision by Maud.

TO DO LIST

Marriages: although we dont have a baptism it might be useful to look for a couple that married in the 1740 period that could possibly be parents of Leyshon. Also Thomas and Mauds origins.

Leases, rent accounts, leet court records, diaries: A check to be made of all those of date local to the adjoining parishes, specifically Leyshons children may be found in the farms of Llangiwig, and the previous tenants may have been relatives.

Wills: useful info has been found in those who were close to the family, previous tenants.

Chapel History, Registers, Vicar obituaries: scan all these for useful info

Pedigrees: many books contain those of Thomas Leyshon last abbot, we might be able to join the two trees up.

Court records: some legal cases may be found over land in NLW, Brit Lib, PRO, Powys, Glamorgan or Swansea archives. Even local libraries are worth a scan.

Local History Books, Journals, Newspapers: scan for information

NLW Wales: several documents up there pertaining to Griffiths not seen

British Lib: scan Hugh Thomas County herald Brit Lib. Harley MS., 2,289, f. 39 c.1698 for family trees (also Xerox in Cardiff Stacks possibly)

REFERENCE

Not an exhaustive list, just those relevant, please consult my Palleg thesis if you need specific references that you need to look up in person @ <http://www.spookspring.com/Palleg/palleg.html>
I only include facts in my thesis that have an official origin. Any guesswork or presumption I make is abundantly clear. It is a THESIS after all, an idea that can be looked into and changed by future research. I do not include original document photos because I have been batoned down for using them in the past, so have to use transcripts or notes from original documents.

GENERAL & GENEALOGICAL

Welsh Dictionary: <http://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>

Nat Lib of Wales: <https://www.llgc.org.uk/>

Swansea Archive: <http://www1.swansea.gov.uk/calmview/Advanced.aspx>

Nat Lib Welsh Newspapers: <http://newspapers.library.wales/home>

Nat Lib Journals: <https://journals.library.wales/>

Nat Lib Wills: <https://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=6838>

Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>

Find My Past: <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

Inflation Calculator:

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/default.aspx>

Relationships in old wills Karan Pittman 2005:

<https://www.genealogytoday.com/articles/reader.mv?ID=653>

Leonid Morgan Self published indexes of Ystradgynlais families 1513-1915 WGRO

LOCAL MAPS

Tithe Maps of Wales Online : <https://places.library.wales/home>

1813 OS Map showing Cilybebyll & East Y'gynlais (Titled Aberdare)

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/a/002osd000000022u00150000.html>

1813 OS Map showing West Y'gynlais (Titled Llandovery 2)

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/l/002osd000000021u00146000.html>

1813 OS Map showing West Y'gynlais (Titled Llandovery 3)

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/l/002osd000000003u00149000.html>

LOCAL HISTORY

Palleg Manor Thesis 1215-1915

<http://www.spookspring.com/Palleg/palleg.html>

Cwmgors A'r Waun: area between Swansea and Y'gynlais

<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cwmgors/Waun.html#top2>

Parish Registers Info:

<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/wal/Archives/NLWjournals/ParishRegs>

Legend of Ynysygeinon (First Bus Company) no author

https://www.firstgroup.com/uploads/node_images/WALK%20SV2%20%20PONTARDAWE%20YSTALYFERA%20CANAL%20%26%20HERITAGE%20TRAIL.pdf

Ystalyfera History

<http://www.ystalyfera-history.co.uk/>

History of Bethel, Glantwrch by John Dyfrig Owen. Y Diwygiwr Awst – 1905.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/2225443>

Hanes Cwmllynfell gan John Hughes, secretary Y Diwygiwr Mai - 1905.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/2225340>

'Cadoxton-juxta-Neath' by Keith Tucker pub Historical Projects

'Neath & District' Ed by Elis Jenkins self pub Neath 1974

'200th Anniversary of Capel Yoarth' by John Williams

Diaries of John Morgan – WGRO D/D Z 123/1 Notebook containing accounts, information concerning land in the parish of Ystradgynlais, medical and husbandry advice, legal document formulas, etc. John Morgan, Fforchrollwyn 1726-1768

Land, Property, Deeds

Land Registry

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/land-registry>

D82 - Ynys-y-geinon Estate Papers (Swansea Archives)

<http://www1.swansea.gov.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=D82&pos=1>

B/N WGRO Neath Borough Manor of Neath Ultra and Cilybebyll 1730-1830

Title: Aberpergwm Estate Records 2142.: Particulars of payments to William Samuel by Rees Williams for Forchollwyn, p. Ystradgynlais, co. Brec, Is Part Of: Aberpergwm Estate Records Related Titles: Aberpergwm Estate Records, Creation Date: 1806, Sept. 29. NLW

Other

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