

LLYSTYN

May 2008



LLYSTYN

Llystyn is near Brechfa - a few miles from Carmarthen. A narrow winding lane leads up the hillside. You turn a corner and suddenly you see the farmhouse - just a field away. Near the house a wood where blue-bells grow and above - a field slopes up towards the hill top.

Our link with Llystyn goes back at least three centuries. Six generations of our family were farmers here.



In May 2008 two cousins came to Llystyn - one from Derbyshire and the other all the way from Colorado. They were both descendants of Daniel and Sarah Davies.

In the 1840s Daniel, Sarah and all their children joined the Mormon Church in Brechfa. Then in 1849 this family left Llystyn and all but one began the long hard journey to Salt Lake City. Just one son stayed in Wales.

I am John Davies from Derbyshire. I descend from John - the eldest son. He was the one who stayed in Wales. My cousin from Colorado is Lee Ann Wheeler. She descends from Margaret, who was the eldest daughter.

A SURPRISE

It all began one morning in April 2008. I had a big surprise - a letter from America. It was a message from Dr. Ronald Dennis. Very soon he would be coming to the U.K. again bringing another party of visitors from Utah - people who wanted to visit their ancestral homes.

'I have good news for you?' Dr Dennis wrote. This year, for the first time, my party includes one of your American cousins. Her name is Lee Ann Wheeler and she like you, is descended from Daniel and Sarah Davies, of Llystyn Farm. Here is a chance for you to meet.'

He enclosed a copy of the itinerary for the twelve days of their visit. I noticed that on Friday 16th May they would be stopping at the Ivy Bush Hotel in Carmarthen. What could be a better place to meet than that! There was short and so I rang Dr Dennis straight away. On that Friday afternoon, he told me, a guide had been arranged to take Lee Ann and her mother Eleanor to Llystyn Farm. Cliff Carnell, the present owner, would be there to show them round.

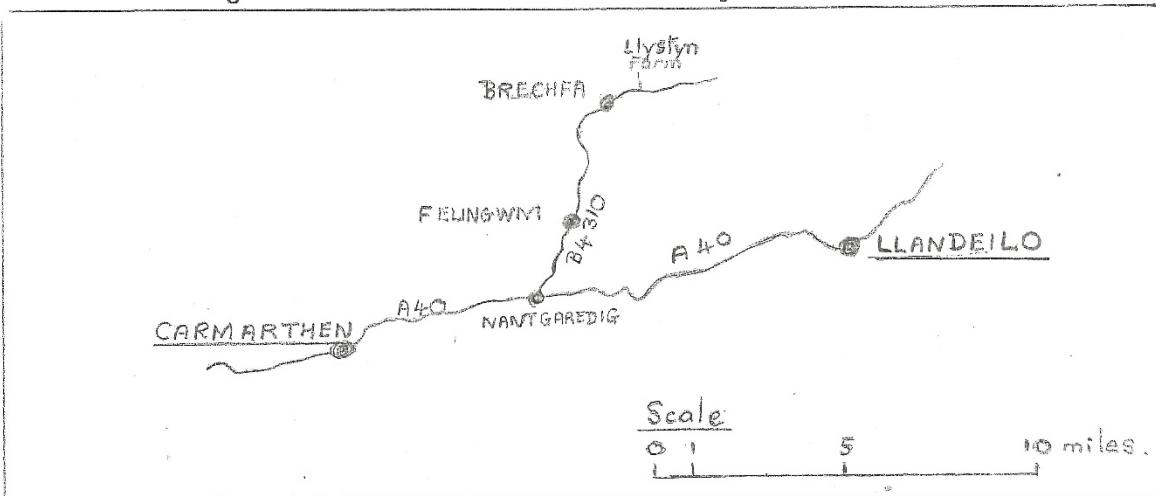
'There is room in that car for you,' Dr Dennis said. Just come to the Ivy Bush Hotel before 2pm on the 16th.



TO BRECHFA

3.

I reached the Ivy Bush Hotel before 2pm and there I met my cousin Lee Ann and her mother - Eleanor. It was a great occasion! Heidi Gilbert, our guide and driver, was also there ready to take us to Brechfa.



We turned left at Nantgaredig and then we travelled six miles up the narrow road to Brechfa. There had been some rain in the morning and the countryside was incredibly green.

We stopped at Brechfa to look at the church. In the graveyard we saw my great grandmother's grave. Jane Davies - the wife of John Ira. She was the reason he had stayed in Wales in 1849.

Less than a mile beyond the village we found the lane that leads up to Llystyn Farm.

This was the sign which pointed the way:



A WINDING LANE

The lane curved up the hill between thick hedges. A line of grass grew along its centre. Suddenly we had a glimpse of the farmhouse - just a field away. We would soon be there.



The final curve took us into the farmyard. Cliff Carnell was there talking to a delivery driver. 'It won't be long' he said.



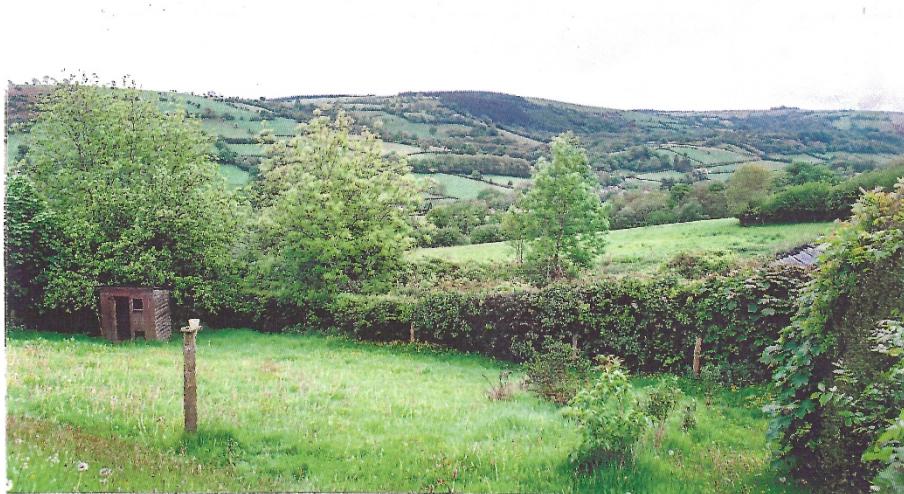
5.

THE FARM HOUSE

And so we had a few minutes to spare.
There was so much to see!
I walked around the farm house to take
this photograph.



And then I just turned round to enjoy this
view over the Cothi Valley. So many shades
of green!



6.

OUR WALK BEGINS

Cliff joined us a few minutes later. He welcomed us and invited us for a walk around the farm.

We went up past the farmhouse - along the pathway you can see in the first photograph.

It was a good moment to take a group photo. Lee Ann is second from the left - standing with her mother Eleanor. Then Cliff Carnell and, on the right, Heidi Gilbert who brought us here.



CAE WAR TY

We went up through the gate you can see in the first photo and into the large green meadow beyond. In Welsh this is called 'Cae war ty' which means 'the field above the house'. It slopes up towards the top of Llystyn Hill.

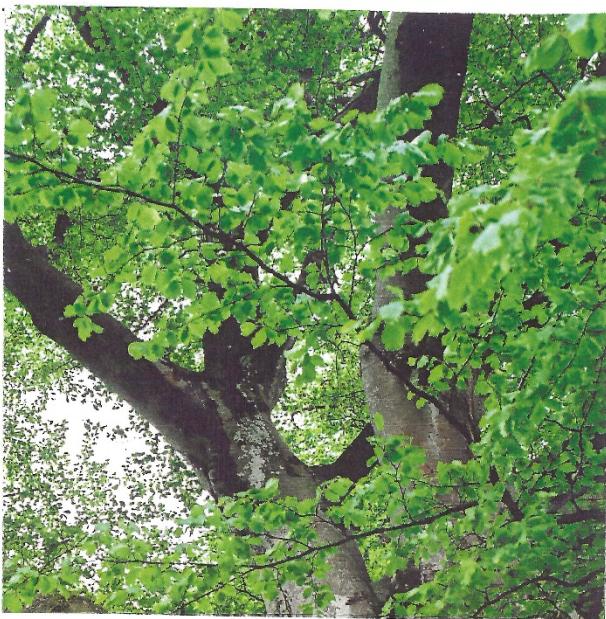
Half way up this field - I turned round to take the second photo - looking back towards the farmhouse. You can see one of the farm buildings down below half-hidden in the trees.

At the top of Cae war ty we climbed over a gate. We had reached the top of the hill.



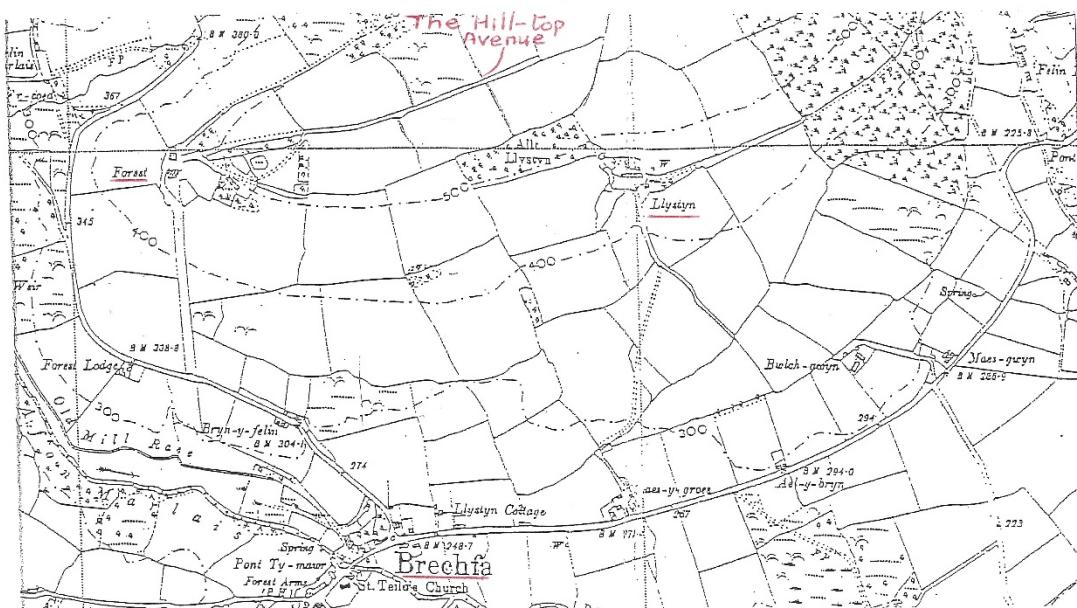
A HILL-TOP MYSTERY

Turning left we saw along the hill-top, two mysterious lines of huge trees. These lines are broken now and there are many missing sections — but enough trees are left to show how impressive they must once have been.



This surely must have been a splendid hill-top avenue. But who made this avenue and why?

On this map, you can see that the avenue began at 'Forest' - an important house at the Brechfa end of the hill. At one time all the land at the top of the hill belonged to 'Forest' and so it seems, this avenue was probably made not by the farmers of Llystyn but by the family who lived at 'Forest'.



But why did they want to have a hill-top avenue?

Perhaps it was a landscaping feature made just to provide a long impressive hill-top view from their house.

Or could there have been an important reason for having a green road going that way?

Cliff suggested a possible reason. The Parish Church for Llanfihangel Rhos-y-corn is in that direction. So, perhaps the family who lived in 'Forest' made this hill-top avenue to provide themselves with a splendid way for getting to church on Sundays.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

There are more Llystyn fields on the other side of the hill. We looked down the slope but there was no time to walk any further. So I took this photo and then we turned round and began to make our way back to the farmhouse.



BACK TO THE FARMHOUSE

11.

But we returned by a different route. We walked down one field, and then along the front of Afllt Llystyn - the hillside wood to the left of the farmhouse. We could see blue bells growing among the trees.



Soon the farmhouse came into view. We had nearly completed our circular walk. Here is Lee Ann walking down the slope towards the house.



THE FARM HOUSE

12.

Cliff invited us into the farm house. We entered through the back door - coming into this room. A huge uncovered beam supported the ceiling.



From there we went forward into a much larger room. A big fireplace and another fine beam. The stone walls were impressive - The stones were so varied in shape, size and colour.



And then to the side ; there was a smaller very comfortable room with a floor-to-ceiling bookcase and another magnificent stone wall.



Cliff told us that this house dates back at least to 1738. It is believed that Evan David was the farmer then and that he was the great grandfather of Daniel Dares.

A DAY TO REMEMBER

I had come from Derbyshire - but my cousin Lee Ann and her mother Eleanor had come all the way from Utah and from Colorado. They had travelled more than six thousand miles to visit their ancestral home.

It was great to meet them!



We were invited into the farmhouse - a lovely house with beautiful stone walls and some impressive beams. It was our family's home for many generations.

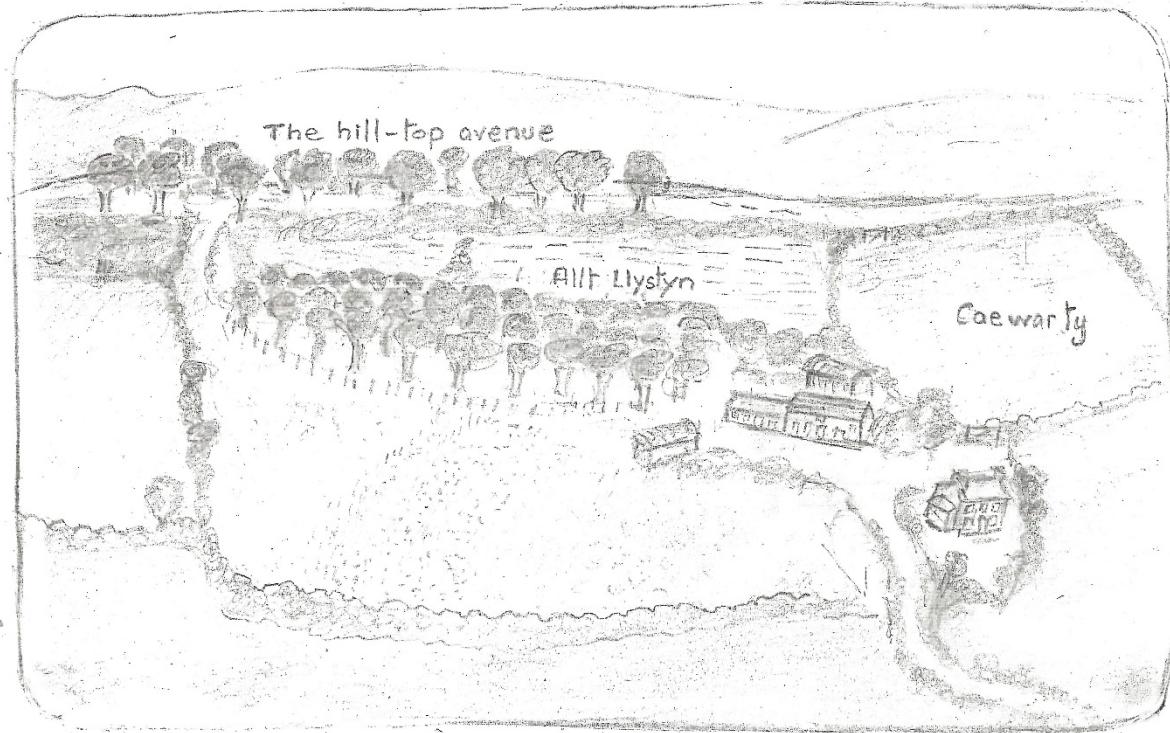


Cliff made us very welcome. While we walked he told us of his farming aims. He is a member of the Soil Association and is dedicated to producing healthy organic food and to wild life conservation.

We wish him well.



Cliff took us for a walk through some of Llystyn's many fields. On the hill top we found the intriguing remains of a splendid tree-lined avenue and on our way back to the farmhouse we saw bluebells growing among the trees of Allt Llystyn. It was a walk which reached far into our family's past.



What a day it had been!

But now LeeAnn and Eleanor needed to return to the Ivy Bush Hotel in Carmarthen - and I had a train to catch - the last train back to Derbyshire.

It was time to go.

LEAVING LLYSTYN

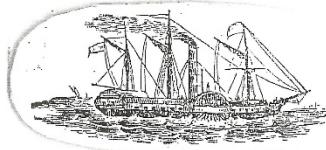
16.

It was time for us to leave and we reluctantly began our journey back to Carmarthen. As we travelled down the lane I thought of that day in 1849 when Daniel, Sarah and their family were leaving Llystyn - never to return.

I can imagine their overloaded waggon rattling down this lane towards the road. Daniel perhaps was leading the horse while the others walked behind. Somewhere down the lane he would, I think, have stopped the waggon for one last look at Llystyn. This farm was their birthplace and every field was like a life-long friend. There was a need to say good-bye.

When they reached the road they probably turned right towards the village. All the Brothwaite families going may have arranged to meet there in the morning. Then they could travel on together.

They were heading first for Swansea, some fifty miles away. They needed to get there no later than the 13th of February. On the 14th a steamboat, called 'The Troubadour' was coming from Bristol to pick them up. She would then take them around the coast of Wales to Liverpool.



From Liverpool they would go by sailing ship to New Orleans. From New Orleans - by river boat along the Mississippi and Missouri - and then by wagon train a thousand miles across the plains to Salt Lake City.

As we travelled down the lane in 2008 we thought of Daniel and his family and of that day when they left Llystyn in 1849.



One last look at Llystyn - February 1849