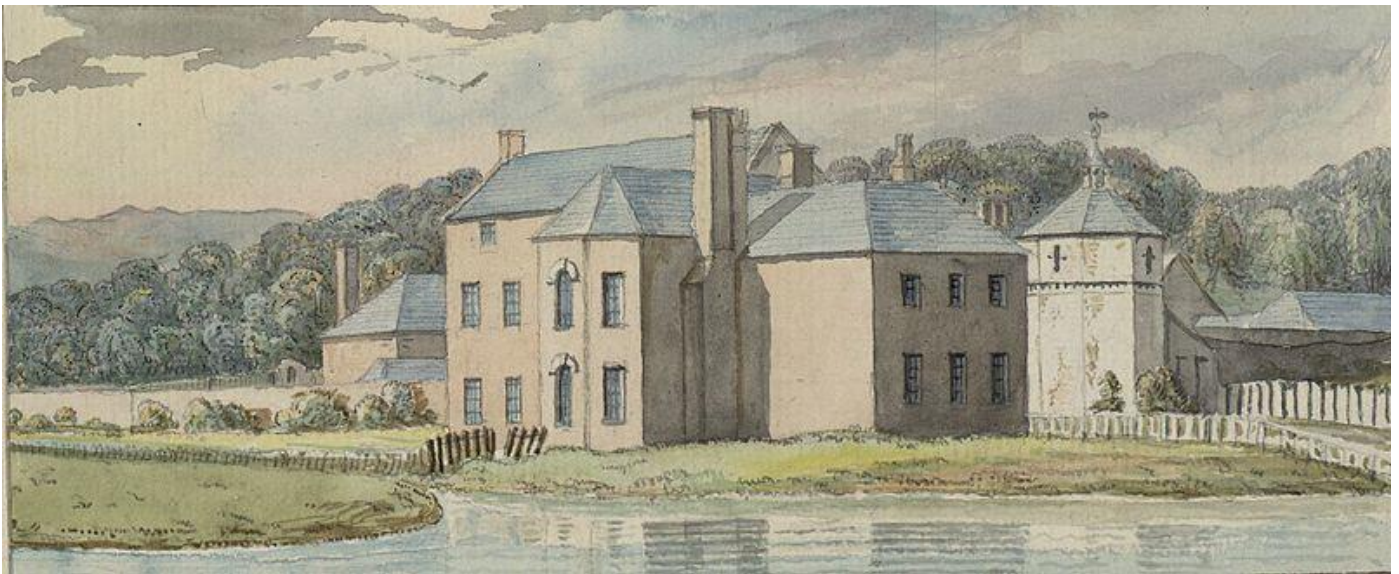




REPORT ON THE HISTORY OF **MAES MYNAN**



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INTRODUCTION

a) Context:

The vale is narrow, fertile, diversified with groves, and watered by the crystal Wheeler. The part about Maes mynan is singularly fine, consisting of detached hills, cloathed with timber; a charming extent of meadows; and the lofty mountain Moel y Parc, skirted with trees, contrasting itself to the softer part of the scenery. This place is at present the property of Sir Roger Mostyn, purchased by one of his family from the Massies, a name which represented the county of Flint as early as the first queen Mary. This place has been called Llys Maes Mynan, or the palace of Maes Mynan, where Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, last prince of Wales, resided in a house, whose foundations, till within these few years, were to be seen in an adjacent meadow.

Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Wales* (1781), p. 24

In Thomas Pennant's (1726-98) late-18th century writings on Wales, Maes Mynan is highlighted as an important site on account of its landscape setting, ownership history and archaeological remains. However, since Pennant's entry in his *Tour in Wales* virtually nothing has been written about the site. As Bob Silvester, (previously of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust) has noted, Maes Mynan 'is one of the great archaeological and historical unknowns' of north east Wales (Silvester, *Llys and Maerdref*, p. 35).

None of the architectural structures or landscapes associated with the site are formally listed, nor does it feature in the Clwyd volume of Cadw's *Register of Landscapes, Parks, and Gardens of special historic interest in Wales* (1995). Maes Mynan only appeared in the National Monuments Record (<https://coflein.gov.uk/>) in 2006 (Garden – NPRN 266324) and 2009 (House – NPRN 409371); and was only recorded in the Historic Environment Record (<https://www.archwilio.org.uk/her/>) in 2011 (PRNs 120454, 132483, 142438).

The site's historical development and heritage significance is severely under-researched.

b) Place:

Maes Mynan is located near the community of Afonwen, in the vale of the Afon Chwiler (River Wheeler) where it runs through the Clwydian hills. In the medieval period it formed part of the *cantref* of Tegeingl and 14th century references place it in the newly-created county of Flint; though from the late-13th century it was also closely associated with the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd, or Ruthin, a link which led to its later incorporation into the county of Denbigh from the mid-16th century until local government reorganisation in the 1970s.

The hall was situated within the parish of Bodfari, though the historic settlement of Caerwys to the north east and Moel y Parc to the south are key to its landscape setting; as is its position on the A541, the contemporary manifestation of a long-established and prominent transport route between Mold and Denbigh, including a former railway line (opened 1869, closed completely in 1983). Maes Mynan now falls within the administrative boundary of Flintshire.

For much of its recent history Maes Mynan hall operated as a private care home, which closed in 2013 leaving the site abandoned. The hall has recently been purchased, with plans to refurbish the building as an 'escape room' (see <https://www.leaderlive.co.uk/news/17542276.flintshire-disused-care-home-near-mold-could-get-new-lease-of-life-as-escape-room/> and <https://www.leaderlive.co.uk/news/17755799.disused-maes-mynan-hall-afonwen-transformed-themed-escape-rooms/>). The former home farm now provides the base for J.D. Owen Transport, a freight and haulage company; whereas the parts of the former estate are quarried for sand. The site is close to the border of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.

c) Purpose:

This report is inspired by a new holiday park development set in a 90 acre site closely associated with the landscape of Maes Mynan. 'Maes Mynan Park' which is scheduled to open in September 2019, is the vision of Louise and Peter Barlow of Acorn Leisure (<https://maesmynanpark.com/>). Their ambition for the

development is the creation of a distinctive, high-quality and authentic visitor experience grounded in the location of the site in north east Wales: encompassing the park's immediate outstanding landscape and countryside setting and its cultural heritage significance, but also by promoting the wider offer of the locality and surrounding region.

Ascertaining the cultural significance of the place is fundamental to this vision. The information on the history of the site contained within this report is designed to inform and inspire how the Maes Mynan Park experience is marketed, designed and presented, as an attractive destination for visitors, as an authentic showcase of the area's history, culture and landscape, and as a hub for energising and connecting the local visitor economy.

Various suggestions for how this historical information can be utilised and repurposed are outlined in the conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

This report is primarily based on the documentary evidence relating to the history of the site. Unlike many other landed estates, there is not a dedicated estate archive for Maes Mynan. Instead, records relating to its history are scattered across multiple collections and repositories.

This report has been developed following a survey of various archives, publications and online resources which are the most likely to feature records and information pertaining to his history of Maes Mynan. It is not comprehensive and should instead be treated as a foundation for future research.

a) Online resources:

The following online finding aids, catalogues and resources have been searched in the development of this report:

- <http://archives.denbighshire.gov.uk/>
- <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/>
- <https://archives.library.wales/>
- <https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/>
- <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/>
- <http://calmview.bangor.ac.uk/Calmview/>
- <http://calmview.flintshire.gov.uk/CalmView/>
- <https://coflein.gov.uk/>
- <https://discover.library.wales/>
- <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>
- <https://journals.library.wales/>
- <https://maldwyn.llgc.org.uk/>
- <https://newspapers.library.wales/>
- <https://places.library.wales/>

b) Collections of note:

- Records of the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd in The National Archives (TNA SC 2)
- Mostyn archives at Bangor University Archives and Special Collections and Flintshire Record Office
- Maesmynan Manor (G. R. Brigstocke) Deeds and Documents in the National Library of Wales (15 documents, 1663-1826)

c) Published works:

An indicative list of the published works consulted can be found in the select bibliography included at the end of this report.

d) Place-names and spelling:

It should be noted that, even up to the present day, there is variation in how the name of the place is presented, with 'Maes Mynan' and 'Maesmynan' both accepted as legitimate spellings. Until recently 'Maesmynnan' or 'Maes Mynnan' were also commonly used, including with the *llys* prefix. Historically, there was no fixed spelling. In the Dyffryn Clwyd Court Rolls alone, the following versions of the name appeared (with numerous other abbreviated forms):

Maesmynan, Maesmanan, Malesmanan, Malsmanan, Masmanan, Maysemanan, Maysman, Maysmanan, Maysmanaunt, Maysmen, Maysmenan, Meyesmanan, Meysman, Meysmanan and Meysmenan (Barrell, *Court Roll Database*, p.133).

Other later forms include: Moismenan, Maismenan, Maismenaunt, Maismanan, and Maysmenan.

e) Further research opportunities:

- A full analysis of the Dyffryn Clwyd Court Rolls in The National Archives has the potential to reveal a great deal about the de Grey family's management of the Maes Mynan lands during the late-medieval period.
- A more rounded picture of the estate's history could also be achieved through archaeological fieldwork exercises involving exploration of the contemporary landscape and its built structures.
- The history of Maes Mynan and its connection to Caerwys will be of great interest to the Caerwys Historical Society; their membership will undoubtedly be a source of considerable additional information and corrections.
- This report is not satisfactory for the 20th century history of Maes Mynan; a gap which could potentially be remedied through a comprehensive community engagement programme to encourage the sharing of memories and memorabilia relating to the site.

f) Reproduction of images:

None of the images included in this research report should be reproduced for commercial use without the permission of the copyright holder.

Acknowledgements:

Sincere thanks to Louise Barlow of Acorn Leisure and Richard Jones of Flintshire County Council for providing the impetus and rationale for this report.

Many thanks to Bob Silvester for providing access to a digital copy of Badeslade's map of the Maes Mynan demesne for use in the research. I am also grateful to Elen Wyn Simpson at Bangor University Archives and Special Collections (BUASC) and to the staff of the National Library of Wales for their assistance in identifying relevant material in their collections. The National Library's *Welsh Newspapers Online* was an essential resource for the latter part of this report.

THE HISTORY OF MAES MYNAN

SUMMARY

In Welsh tradition Maes Mynan is held to be a *llys* of the princes of Gwynedd. Although there are no sources which explicitly confirm this association, a body of circumstantial evidence strongly supports the conclusion. In particular, it can be asserted with some certainty that the lands belonged to Gwenllïan de Lacy, a daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth.

Following Edward I's conquest of Gwynedd, Maes Mynan was granted to the de Grey family of Ruthin, who managed the lands as an important manorial centre as part of their marcher lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd or Ruthin, a link which had significant implications for the nature of the later Denbighshire-Flintshire border. Evidence from the 14th and 15th centuries shows that Maes Mynan was a significant agricultural site, complete with a deer park on Moel y Parc and mill.

The de Grey family sold Maes Mynan to the Crown in the early-16th century, after which it passed through the Salusburys and Masseys through lease and purchase respectively. By the mid-17th century the estate had been acquired by the powerful Mostyn family – with John Mostyn rebuilding the hall and taking up residence until his death in 1675. It afterwards remained as part of the Mostyn estate until 1864, occasionally used as a residence by a younger son but usually let out to tenants. During this period the Mostyns succeeded in acquiring and consolidating a huge tract of land surrounding Maes Mynan and the town of Caerwys.

From the 18th century the landscape surrounding Maes Mynan was esteemed for its scenic beauty, wildlife, agricultural productivity and sporting potential. Features such as Nant Mihangel and Moel y Parc received particular attention. It was also linked to a number of adjacent transport links.

From the 1860s the estate – which gradually reduced in size – went through a number of sales, the residency of the Pickstone and Davey families being particularly noteworthy. During this period the estate emerged as an important centre for testing agricultural improvements and implements, and as a centre of horticulture.

In summary, Maes Mynan provides an outstanding focus for exploring the history of the region and broader trends in the history of Wales and Britain.

1.

THE MEDIEVAL LLYS: LEGEND AND LEGACY**a) Association with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd**

Thomas Pennant's description of Maes Mynan, quoted above, included the line that: 'This place has been called Llys Maes Mynan, or the palace of Maes Mynan, where Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, last prince of Wales, resided in a house, whose foundations, till within these few years, were to be seen in an adjacent meadow.'

This account was elaborated on by Richard Fenton in his early-19th century description of Maes Mynan (J. Fisher (ed.), *Tours in Wales (1804-1813) by Richard Fenton* (London, 1917), p. 141):

It seems Maes Mynnan was occasionally the residence of the last Llewelyn, and his Palace, if Palace it might be called, was said to have stood under the hill exactly opposite to the present house, just on the margin of the little stream.

This association with Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (c.1223-82), the Prince of Wales whose death in 1282 signified a major milestone in Edward I's conquest of Gwynedd, was first established by Sir John Wynn (1553-1627) of Gwydir in his early-17th century family *History*. In a section commenting on the relationship between Dafydd ap Llywelyn (c.1212-46), Prince of Gwynedd 1240-46, and his nephew Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Wynn wrote that: 'Llewelyn ap Griffith ... then had his court at Maesmynan in Flintshire' (Wynn, *History*, p.24).

This 17th century note is the earliest direct reference to Maes Mynan being a *llys* (court) of the princes of Gwynedd; no references to such an association have been identified in contemporary 12th or 13th century records.

The historical context to Sir John Wynn's reference to Llywelyn ap Gruffudd holding his court at Maes Mynan is complex. By the early-1240s Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the future Prince, had certainly established himself as a ruler in part of Dyffryn Clwyd ('his first territorial lordship') – a territory which may have extended into parts of adjacent Tegeingl and to a court site at Maes Mynan. The nominal ruler of this part of Wales in the early 1240s, however, was Dafydd ap Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, half-brother of Llywelyn's father (Stephenson, *Gwynedd*, pp. 229-32; Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, pp. 40-41). Sir John Wynn noted that Llywelyn, at this time, held his lands in the region 'against his uncle David'.

b) Llys Maes Mynan

As J. Beverley Smith has stated, 'in the commotes of the two *cantrefi* of Dyffryn Clwyd and Tegeingl, the prince's courts and the demesnes which sustained them remain elusive' (Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*, p. 226). Despite the lack of documentary evidence, Rees Davies was content to conclude that the *llys* complex at Maes Mynan, was 'almost certainly native in origin', established during the time of the Welsh princes (Davies, *Lordship*, p.380).

The itinerant Welsh princes established many *llysoedd* across their domains, technically though perhaps not in practice, one in each commote (or *cwmwd*). These court sites, which varied considerably in status and prominence, were key centres of the prince's authority, though especially in the Perfeddwald (including the *cantrefi* of Tegeingl and Dyffryn Clwyd), it proved difficult to establish long-term stability given the territorial inroads frequently made into north Wales by the Normans (Charles-Edwards, Owen and Russell (eds.), *The Welsh King*).

A *llys* was always intrinsically associated with a *maerdref*. The model stipulated by Welsh law-texts, coupled with later evidence, suggests a relationship between the princely court or *llys* of Maes Mynan (i.e. Llys Maes Mynan) and its demesne land (*tir bwrdd*), served by the neighbouring bond settlement (*maerdref*) of Aberchwiler (or Aberwheeler) and its bond land (*tir cyfrif*). In addition to Aberchwiler, nearby Blorant also appears to have had some role in the arrangement.

In later centuries, especially during the residence of John Mostyn in the 17th century, the *llys* designation was re-adopted, hence Edward Lhuyd's (1660-1709) notation of 'Lhŷs mynnan al's Lhys maes mynnan' in his 1699 *Parochialia* (Lhuyd, *Parochialia* I, pp. 68-69).

The nearby place-name 'Coed Hendre Faenol', noted just to the south of Maes Mynan on early OS Maps, is also indicative of a seigniorial or manorial centre (*maenol* = 'manor').

c) Gwenllian de Lacy / Gwenllian ferch Llywelyn ab Iorwerth

14th century records (dated 1324 and 1379) relating to the Grey family's lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd or Ruthin (see Section 2) make reference to the fact that the lordship was held by them 'together with lands which belonged to Wentthlian de Lacy in Englefeld and Deffrencloyd (i.e. Tegeingl and Dyffryn Clwyd)' (Rees, *Ancient Petitions*, pp.180, 182; *CCR*, 1323-27, p. 385; *Rot. Parl.* III, p. 70).

The Inquisitions Post Mortem of both Reginald de Grey (c.1308) and Roger de Grey (c.1353) are clearer, listing the lands they held in north Wales as Ruthin Castle, the whole *cantref* of Dyffryn Clwyd 'and three towns in the cantred of Englefield viz: Penbedeu, Maismanan and Blorent, which were of Lady Wentthlian de Lacy' (TNA, IPMs). The three manors or townships listed above are Penbedw, Maes Mynan and Blorant; the latter was to remain intricately tied to Maes Mynan.

'Wentthlian' was Gwenllian de Lacy. Her life is not particularly well documented, but she appears to be integral to the history of Maes Mynan and to its connection with the Princes of Gwynedd. According to J.E. Lloyd, she was a daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (Llywelyn *Fawr*, 1173-1240), Prince of Gwynedd, by Tangwystl (Lloyd, 'Gwenllian' pp.292-98; p.335). She married William de Lacy (d.1233), son of the elder Hugh de Lacy (d.1186) in c.1222-23 as part of a political alliance between the two families. The de Lacys were a prominent Anglo-Norman office-holding and military family, with significant landholdings in the southern March of Wales, and following the conquest of Ireland, the lordship of Meath (Veach, *The Lacy Family*).

The most plausible suggestion for how Gwenllian came to hold these lands, including Maes Mynan, is that they were granted to her by her father, on the occasion of her marriage in c.1222-23. This implies an earlier association between Maes Mynan and Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, opening up the possibility of Maes Mynan having a longer heritage as a *llys* complex.

In May 1241, Gwenllian, by then a widow, brought an action at the *curia regis* in Westminster for the recovery of four vill or manors in the *cantref* of Dyffryn Clwyd, namely: Aberchwiler, Penbedw, 'Estradmelened' (Ystrad?) and 'Trewowr' (?), which had been seized by her half-brother Dafydd ap Llywelyn (*CRR*, XVI, no. 1596; Pryce, *Acts*, nos. 251, 285). It is possible that Maes Mynan was excluded from this list because it was in Tegeingl rather than Dyffryn Clwyd; or because it was at that time not held by Dafydd, but by Gwenllian's nephew, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd (as stated by Sir John Wynn of Gwydir).

Following Gwenllian's death in c.1281 her lands reverted to the English Crown who granted them to Reginald de Grey, the newly-appointed Chief Justice of Chester, initially for eight years (*CPR*, 1272-1281, p. 464). This grant was disputed by Dafydd ap Gruffudd (c.1238-83), Llywelyn ap Gruffudd's brother and longtime political rival, who petitioned that the 'three vill' or townships held in dower by Gwenllian de Lacy should have reverted to him on her death: 'After Lady Gwenllian de Lacy died, the King unjustly seized from him, contrary to the terms of the charter, those townships which she held for life in those cantrefs' (Pryce, *Acts*, no. 454; *Peckham's Register*, II, pp. 445-46). Dafydd had been granted the lordships of Dyffryn Clwyd and Rhufoniog by Edward I (when Earl of Chester) in 1263 in recompence for paying homage: 'to hold until he shall have obtained all his inheritance'. The grant had been reaffirmed in 1277 after Edward had become king (*CPR*, 1272-81, pp.231-32).

Dafydd's petition failed, adding to his increasing sense of injustice at the hands of Edward I, which caused him to revolt. His brother Llywelyn ap Gruffydd had been killed in 1282; his own death the following year brought an end to the rule of the princes of Gwynedd and confirmed Edward I's conquest.

From this point Maes Mynan was held by the de Grey family of Ruthin, together with their marcher lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd, until the 16th century.

d) Earlier associations and archaeological evidence

Since the publication of Sir John Wynn of Gwydir's *History* and Pennant's *Tours* associations between Llys Maes Mynan and the princes of Gwynedd have been regularly evoked through legends and invented traditions.

One of the clearest manifestations of this association is the identification of the late-13th or early-14th century carved stone effigy at Caerwys Church (Colin A. Gresham, *Medieval Stone Carving in North Wales* (Cardiff, 1968), pp. 171-73):

Traditionally it is claimed as commemorating the wife of Dafydd ap Gruffydd, brother of Llywelyn, last prince of Wales, on the grounds that he was supposed to have lived at Maesmynan. The wife of Dafydd ap Gruffydd was Elizabeth Ferres.

The figure lies with the head on a square cushion with tassels at the corners, framed by a cinquefoiled arch without decoration. The hands are together on the breast in the attitude of prayer. The hair is covered by a wimple of which all details have gone; the dress is pleated from the breast down and confined at the waist by a belt. There is indication that there may have been long sleeves hanging from the elbows. There is little by which this crude monument can be dated.



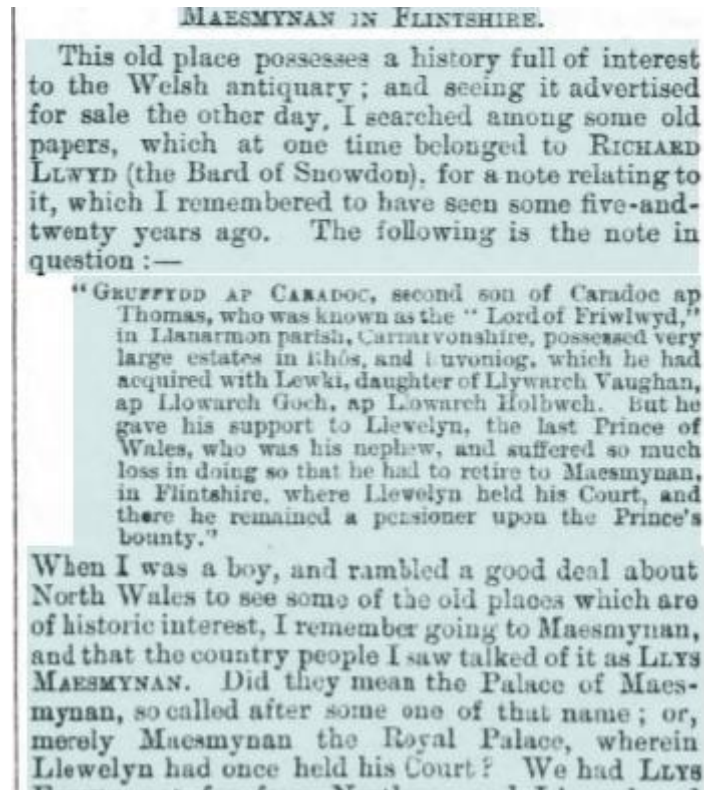
(*Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 5th Series, 8, 29 (1891), p. 69)

Though it is impossible to confirm any attribution, it seems more likely that lady represented – if at all associated with the house of Gwynedd – is Gwenllïan de Lacy.

Another link which is often made is between Llys Maes Mynan and the *Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, the rulebook which was created to guide the two seminal eisteddfodau held at Caerwys in 1523 and 1567. Gruffudd ap Cynan was King of Gwynedd from 1081 until his death in 1137. The *Statute*, in seeking to enshrine the 16th century eisteddfodau with legitimacy, put forward the argument that Gruffudd ap Cynan had held a similar gathering of bardic practitioners during his reign; Maes Mynan being the obvious site of congregation. Addressing a vocal and instrumental concert at Caerwys in 1897, the Flintshire MP J. Herbert Lewis MP 'alluded

to concerts being held at Maesmyndan so far back as 700 years ago' (*Flintshire Observer*, 18 November 1897, p. 5). There is no evidence to support this link.

One of the more interesting examples of an invented tradition associated with Maes Mynan is included in the newspaper clipping below (*Flintshire Observer*, 13 August 1885, p.8):



These associations with the house of Gwynedd gathered apace following the discovery of archaeological remains within the area (Davies, *Prehistoric Remains Flintshire*, pp. 431-33):

According to Angharad Llwyd: In the year 1782 while some men were cutting a road across the Birchen Wood [Coed Bedw? in the park] behind Llys Maes Mynnan, near Caerwys, the usual residence of [Prince] Llewelyn [in time of peace], they discovered a casket containing part of the Regalia [part of which had been given up to Edward I]. The casket was made of brass gilded and beautifully wrought, but fell in pieces [crumbled into dust] when taken out of the ground where it was buried 3 ft. deep near a large stone. It contained 7 armlets of twisted or wreathed gold fastened by hooks in the manner of a torques; a large piece of solid gold, heart-shaped with a ring adhering to it; four torques ... a large chain composed of beads about the size of pigeons eggs with a ring between each [to connect it together]. The treasure altogether weighed twelve pounds, seven in all, received from Mr. Richard Richardson, then a silversmith in Chester, from £30 to £40 apiece. Ten years afterwards the wife of one of the men discovered in the drawer in which the treasure had been deposited, a brooch consisting of a large discoloured pearl ... Thomas Jones, one of the workmen, is now 1829 living, and when showing the spot in which the casket was found, related the above facts to the author.

Ellis Davies concluded that the articles described by Angharad Llwyd belonged to the Bronze Age rather than forming part of the regalia of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd.

The mound at Maes Mynan, described as ‘standing on rising ground in a narrow strip of wood between fields called Cae-bricks to the s. and Cae Mari Williams (or Cae Coch) to the n.’ was excavated in 1896 (Davies, *Prehistoric Remains Denbighshire*, pp. 49-50). In the past it has been claimed that this was the site of a motte connected with an earlier castle at Maes Mynan, but there is nothing to substantiate the claim. A Bronze Age burial was excavated prior to the commencement of quarrying works in 1970 (Sandiford, Maesmyndan).

The location of the 'giant's grave' referenced by Edward Lhuyd is unknown (*Parochialia* I (1909) p. 68-69):

Rhiw vath o Gromlch ne gist vawn wrth vaes mynnan lle kladhwyd mynan gawr | 'There is a sort of a tomb or stone chest by Maes Mynnan where Mynan a giant was buried'

This is the only reference to 'Mynan the giant'.

One 19th century newspaper report refers to 'Llywelyn's Cave' in Maes Mynan wood. This appears to be the same cave in which a bronze spearhead was found by a Mr. T. P. Edwards (Davies, *Prehistoric Remains Denbighshire*, pp. 49-50).

Antiquarians have also occasionally associated Maes Mynan with the mystery of a supposed Roman fortress at 'Varis'.

There is little to substantiate any of these traditions, though the number of assertions is indicative of the strength of legacy of Maes Mynan's connection to the house of Gwynedd.

2.

THE MANOR OF MAES MYNAN AND THE GREY LORDS OF RUTHIN **(1281-1508)**

a) The Grey family and the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd

'The castle of Ruthyn and the cantred of Deffrencloyt and the lands late of Wentheliana de Lascy in that cantred and of the lands late of the said Wentheliana in the cantred of Englefeld' were granted by Edward I to Reginald de Grey (c.1204-1308) of Winton on 23 October 1282 (*CChR*, 1257-1300, p. 262; *CWR*, p.243) having previously received a grant of the lands for eight years on his appointment as Justice of Chester in November 1281, paying a yearly rent of £32 0s. 3½d. 'for the lands late of Wentheliana' (*CPR*, 1272-1281, p. 464).

If Maes Mynan had operated as a *llys* of the princes of Gwynedd, its transfer to the de Greys would have represented a significant statement of conquest and the new regime.

Reginald de Grey had played a significant role in Edward I's conquest of Gwynedd and the grant of the *cantref* of Dyffryn Clwyd or Ruthin, together with the lands which had belonged to Gwenllïan de Lacy (including Maes Mynan) were made in reward for this service. The grant established the de Greys as one of the major landholding dynasties in the Welsh Marches. His heirs continued to hold the marcher lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd, together with the manor of Maes Mynan, until the 16th century, when Richard Grey, 3rd Earl of Kent (1478–1523) granted it to Henry VII in 1507/08.

The de Greys left a significant legacy at Ruthin, completing the construction of the castle, establishing a chartered borough and a collegiate church (St. Peter's Church).

The Grey lords of Ruthin who owned Maes Mynan were:

- Reginald de Grey, 1st Baron Grey of Wilton (c.1240-1308)
- John Grey, 2nd Baron Grey of Wilton (d.1323)
- Roger Grey, 1st Baron Grey de Ruthin (c.1298-1353)
- Reginald Grey, 2nd Baron Grey de Ruthin (1319-1388)
- Reginald Grey, 3rd Baron Grey de Ruthin (1362-1440)
- Edmund Grey, 4th Baron Grey de Ruthin, 1st Earl of Kent (1416-1490)
- George Grey, 5th Baron Grey de Ruthin, 2nd Earl of Kent (d.1503)
- Richard Grey, 6th Baron Grey de Ruthin, 3rd Earl of Kent (1478-1523)

b) The manor of Maes Mynan

Although not always resident in their Welsh lordship, the experience of the de Grey's authority in Dyffryn Clwyd was often personal, direct and palpable. There is a suggestion from the lordship's court rolls that the de Greys, in addition to their primary seigniorial powerbase at Ruthin Castle, were occasionally resident at Llys Maes Mynan in the 14th century, though it was more often leased out to tenants (Davies, *Lordship*, p.59; TNA SC 2/216/13, m.16; SC 2/217/8, m.25; SC 2/220/1, m.17v).

Prior to its acquisition by the de Greys, Maes Mynan, together with the other de Grey manors of Blorant and Penbedw, appear to have been located in the *cantref* of Tegeingl; though following Edward I's conquest of Gwynedd there is some uncertainty as to whether they were incorporated into the new county of Flint.

In the 1350s, Edward the Black Prince (1330-76), in his role as Earl of Chester, ordered his escheator of Chester and Flint to 'seize unto the Prince's land' a number of manors including 'Moismenan, in the county of Flint' (*Register of Edward the Black Prince*, Part III, 1351-65, p. 101). In response to this seizure, Reginald de Grey successfully petitioned for a return of the lands by 'shewing that he and his ancestors held of the king, by the services of three knights' fees the cantred of Deffrencloyd together with the other lands which belonged to

Gwenllian de Lacy in the cantred of Ingelfeld' (*Register BP*, Part III, 1351-65, p. 169; see also pp. 117, 182, 191, 196, 221).

The de Greys sought to perpetuate the distinctive manorial status of Maes Mynan together with other specially designated areas such as Ruthin, Llysfas, Bathafarn, Maes Mynan and possibly Aberchwiler and Penbedw (Davies, *Lordship*, p. 108). However, in a practical managerial sense they appear to have gradually incorporated Maes Mynan into their lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd, managing it *as part of* the commote of Dogfeiliog and diluting its historic connection with Tegeingl and the newly-created county of Flint. This appropriation seems to account for the protruding nature of the Denbighshire-Flintshire border created in the 16th century, with Maes Mynan retaining its Denbighshire links along with the other Dyffryn Clwyd territories.

The Dyffryn Clwyd court rolls suggest that under the de Greys, the manor of Maes Mynan operated as a significant agricultural enterprise. When it was leased in 1372, it had sufficient arable land to produce sixteen quarters of wheat and thirty quarters of oats annually; it also had a park, meadowland and pasture, a hall, chamber, kitchen, granary, grange, ox-house, dairy, dovecote and orchard and a group of customary tenants (Davies, *Lordship* pp. 108, 117-18; TNA SC 2/219/8, m.11). It is impossible to determine the extent to which this infrastructure was in place prior to the 14th century.

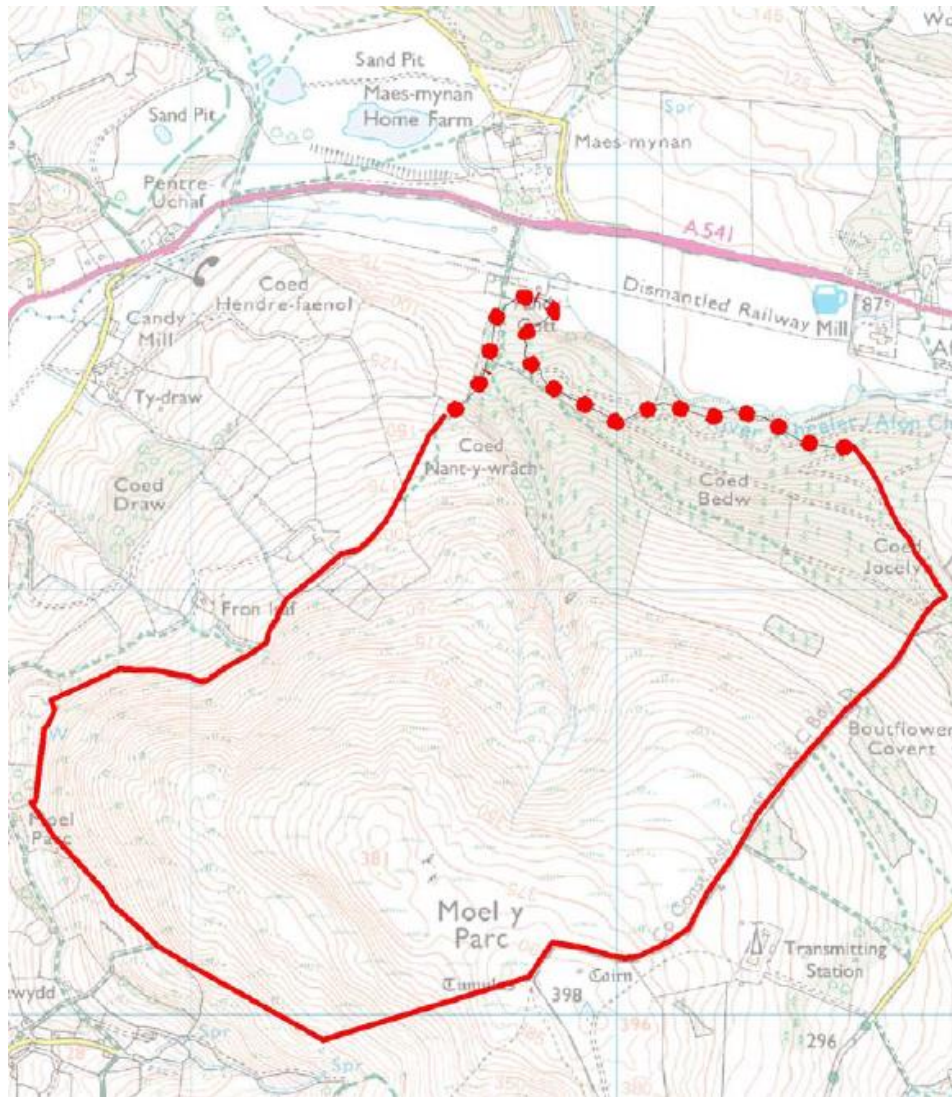
In the 1372 lease, Reginald Grey reserved the profit of sheep and wool to himself. Indeed, Maes Mynan seems to have played an important role in the local woolen cloth industry. In 1334 a fulling mill (*pandy*) was constructed at Maesmynan, which was leased out to a series of tenants (Jack, 'Fulling-Mills', p. 113):

Year	Tenant	Rent (p/a)
1342	Ieuan ap Baghdewst	£2 6s. 8d.
1349	Bleddyn ab Iorwerth	
1355	Iorwerth ap Cynfrig & Einion ab Ieuan	£1 6s. 8d.
1356-7	<i>As above</i>	£1 8s. 4d.
1357-8	William son of Elias	£1 10s.
1358-60	<i>As above</i> & Einion ab Ieuan	
1365	Iorwerth ap Hopkyn	£1 16s. 8d.
1465	Pellyn Countre	£1 13s. 4d.
1483-4	<i>As above</i>	£1 6s. 8d.
1509-11	John son on Pellyn	

c) Deer park

Bob Silvester has also concluded that 'a medieval [deer] park here ... seems highly likely' (Silvester & Hankinson, *Parks Scheduling*, pp. 67-68). Indeed there is a reference in the court rolls to the 'killing of a buck of the lord's park near the fulling mill of Maesmynan' (Barrell, *Court Roll Database*, p.162; TNA SC 2/12/245). Richard Fenton wrote in the earl-19th century that Llywelyn ap Gruffydd 'had a large enclosure behind [Maes Mynan] occupying a great tract of the hills for his venison, call to this day Moel y Park, and traces of the fence that inclosed it may be seen somewhere under this hill' (Fisher (ed.), *Tours in Wales (1804-1813) by Richard Fenton* (London, 1917), p. 141). However, the origins of this park are uncertain and it is impossible to ascertain if it was established by the Princes of Gwynedd or if it was the creation of the de Greys. Likewise, it is unclear as to how long it remained operational.

Using Thomas Badeslade's estate map of 1742 (see Section 5) as a guide, Silvester has roughly plotted the boundaries of the deer park, stretching up from Nant y Wrach to Moel y Parc, which appears to take its name from the enclosure (Silvester & Hankinson, *Parks Scheduling*, pp. 67-68).



In the 1730s the Mostyn owners of Maes Mynan had a dispute with the Myddleton family about enclosures on Moel y Parc (NLW Chirk Castle Estate E5467). Witnesses came forward to assert that:

- He has known that part of Moel y Parc within ye wall or ditch bank now encompassing the same from a child.
- That the same was called 'Park Maesmynn' & was always esteemed the right of the owners of Llys Maesmynan, who constantly gathered all waifes & strays there.
- Moel y Parc was formerly enclosed and that the remains of an old wall & a ditch now to be seen there.

d) Tenants

A rental of the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd made in 1324, shortly after the inheritance of Roger de Grey lists Heil' ap Dd (Heilyn ap Dafydd) as a tenant at Maesm', holding one messuage and 17½ acres there and in 'Hendreuailor' for 9s 1d. The later fieldname 'Tyddyn Heilyn' potentially has its origins with this tenant. The 1324 rental gives a full list of tenants at Blorent, Maesm' and Aberquill', including a mention of Mad' Duy de Maesm' (Madoc Du of Maes Mynan) holding one messuage and 29 2/3 acres for 14s. 9½d. (Jack, 'Records' II, p.29; TNA Wales 15/8).

A later rental made during Edmund Grey's lordship in 1465 names 'the heirs of Houell ap Aleyn' paying 30s. 'for the rent of the manor of Maysmenan', plus 13s. 4d. for 'the mill of Maysmenan', 4s. for lands in 'Aberquiller' and 8s. 5d. for lands in Corfedwen. The rental also includes a number of 'Bondmen of Aberquiler', 'Recent English

Tenure' and 'English of Aberquiler'. At least some of these rents were paid and received at 'Maysmenan' (Richards, 'Records', p. 30; TNA SC 12/23/42)

It was a dispute with Reginald de Grey that provided a spark for the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr; the de Grey lordship of Ruthin was a prime initial target for Glyndŵr's supporters and the capture of Reginald in 1402 represented one of the principal achievements of the campaign. Little is known of Maes Mynan's involvement during the revolt – as a de Grey property it may well have been targeted. However, when the manor, park and demesne of Maes Mynan were leased in September 1407, a clause was added giving a rebate on the rent, if the lessee could not occupy the manor 'on account of war and rebellion' i.e. Glyndŵr's revolt (Davies, *Glyndŵr*, p. 127; TNA, SC 2/221/5 m.10).

e) Sale

After holding Maes Mynan since the 1280s, it was sold to Henry VII by Richard Grey, Earl of Kent in 1507/8 as part of a package of measures to clear his debts. The indenture states that Grey 'hath bargained and sold to the king his lordships and manors of Ruthyn and Dyffryncluyd and all his manors, lands and tenements in Ruthyn Dyffryncluyd and the Marches of Wallis' (*Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, V, A13485; CCR, 1500-09, nos. 765, 797, 955, 956). This appears to have included the manor of Maes Mynan.

In the early 16th century the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd was later held by the Duke of Richmond and Earl of Warwick, which presumably included Maes Mynan.

3.

MAES MYNAN AS A GENTRY PLAS IN THE 16TH CENTURY

As suggested in Section 2 above, Maes Mynan was occasionally, and perhaps by the 15th century usually, let out by the de Greys to tenants. These tenants are likely to have been families of some status within the locality; residing at Maes Mynan, farming its lands and making use of its appurtenances (e.g. the deer park, dovecote, orchard and at times the fulling-mill) would have vested the tenants with a degree of standing, honour and position within local society.

The sale of Maes Mynan to Henry VII in 1507/8 perpetuated opportunities for Wales' emerging gentry or *uchelwyr* families to take advantage of the site's assets.

a) The Salusbury family

The Salusbury family, of English origin, probably initially arrived in Denbigh as part of Edward I's strategy for consolidating his conquest of Gwynedd. By the beginning of the 16th century they had established what was to quickly become a major powerbase at Lleweni. Despite their English origins and name, by the 16th century they had become quintessential Welsh *uchelwyr* through residence, marriage and cultural patronage. Over the next two centuries they represented a major force in the social, political and cultural life of north Wales, especially in the county of Denbigh.

A number of younger sons succeeded in establishing cadet branches of the family, with their own estates and political influence, at places such as Rhug and Bachymbyd, Llanrhaeadr, Plas Isa (Llanrwst) and Bachygraig. One such younger son, Thomas Salusbury, the son of Sir Thomas Salusbury (d.1505) of Lleweni, appears to have initially set himself up at Maes Mynan. It is this 'Th. Salysbury' who was the likely recipient of a lease of the manor of Maes Mynan from Henry VIII in March 1518.

L&P Henry VIII, 1515-18, no. 4032

To Th. Salysbury. Lease, for 21 years, of the manor of Maisemenan, in the lordship of Defrencloyd, alias Ruthyn, Wales, at an annual rent of 60s., and 26s. 8d. increase (March 1518)

In February 1523 he added to this a lease of the old fulling-mill (described in Section 2 above) which had previously been in the tenure of John ap Pellyn:

L&P Henry VIII, 1519-23, no. 2862

Th. Salisbury. Lease of a fulling mill in Maysmaynen, late in tenure of John ap Pellyn, in the lordship of Deffrencloid, with Ruthyn town, and watercourses thereto belonging; for 21 years; rent 10s., and 16s. 8d. of increase. (February 1523)

And in February 1537 he leased the manor and mill again, for a further 21 years:

L&P Henry VIII, Jan-May 1537, no. 539 (22)

Th. Salisbury. Lease of the manor of Maisemenan, with its demesne lands, &c., and the water mill built next the said manor, in the lordship of Defrencloid *alias* Rythyn, in Wales; with reservations; for 21 years; rent 4l. 6s. 8d. and 40d. of increase: On surrender of patent, 26 March 9 Hen. VIII., of a similar lease. (February 1537)

There were numerous individuals named 'Thomas Salusbury' operating in north east Wales during the early-16th century. Ascertaining the identity of the man who leased Maes Mynan is assisted by the existence of a Welsh-language praise poem (*cywydd*) by the poet Lewys ab Edward 'i Domas Salbri o Faesmynan' (McDonald, 'Lewys ab Edward', no. 31). Lewys ab Edward hailed from Bodfari and graduated at the Caerwys eisteddfod of 1567. He was part of the last prolific generation of professional praise-poets in Wales.

Thomas Salusbury is known to have founded the successful Leadbrook or Flint branch of the Salusbury family, possibly through his marriage to Margaret Hookes, and it is Flint rather than Maes Mynan to which his descendants are most closely connected. A Thomas Salusbury (probably the eldest son of Thomas Salusbury of Maes Mynan) was elected MP for Flint Boroughs at the 1545 election.

b) Robert Massey (d.1558)

In 1544 the manor and park of Maes Mynan was purchased from the Crown by Robert Massey (d.1558):

L&P Henry VIII, August-December 1544 (18)

The manor and park of Maysemenan in the Commote of Dogvilyn co. Denbigh, late in the tenure of Thomas Salusbury, deceased, and now of John ap Gruffydd; and a fulling mill in Maysemenan in the tenure of John ap Pellyn, which belonged to the late earl of Kent, was purchased by Robert Massey from the Crown for 117l. 18s. 4d.

(December 1544)

He appears to have been a younger son of Robert Massey of Coddington in Cheshire. He was likely educated in Cambridge and by the mid-1530s had become closely associated with the bishop and diplomat Stephen Gardiner (1483-1555), who he accompanied on embassies abroad. His career followed the highs and lows of his master's career, sharing in Gardiner's recovery of power on the accession of Mary I. He remained in Gardiner's service until the Lord Chancellor's death in 1555.

Massey had family connections with north east Wales; and it was probably his sister Jane's marriage to Thomas Salusbury of Leadbrook (son of Thomas Salusbury of Maes Mynan) that encouraged him to purchase the manor.

It was as Gardiner's servant that Massey sat in the Commons, first as MP for Flint Boroughs in 1547 (succeeding his brother-in-law) and Nov. 1554, and for Flintshire in Oct. 1553 and 1553. He was also appointed Sheriff of Denbighshire in 1553-54 and Flintshire in 1555-56. Massey also had lands in Flint and interests in Meliden (*History of Parliament Online*: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/massey-robert-151011-58>).

In the mid-1550s he took John Griffiths (probably of Caerwys Hall) to court over the crown lease of the manor of 'Maysemenan' which appears to have been awarded to Gruffydd sometime between Thomas Salusbury's death and its purchase by Massey in 1544 (TNA, C 1/1369/37-39). Praise-poems by Lewys ab Edward and Gruffudd Hiraethog to 'Siôn ap Pirs ap Gruffudd o Gaerwys' mention '*faenol Maes Mynan*' ('the manor of Maes Mynan') (McDonald, 'Lewis ab Edward', no. 15).

Robert died on 9 Oct. 1558, leaving as his heiress a daughter aged two (TNA, IPM C 142/120/53). In 1560 Grace, his widow, obtained the wardship of their two children – Jane and Catherine – with an annuity of £4 towards their maintenance: their inheritance was then valued at £7 5s.8d (*CPR, 1558-60*, pp. 333-34).

It was probably Robert Massey's status, as an MP and officeholder, coupled with the heritage of Maes Mynan, which led to its inclusion (as 'Maysmynan') on the earliest maps of Flintshire and Denbighshire:



(Saxon map of Flintshire and Denbighshire, 1579)



(Speed map of Denbighshire, 1610)

c) Jane and Catherine Massey

Following Robert Massey's death in 1558 the ownership history of Maes Mynan becomes complicated. According to the testimony of 85-year-old John Jones in 1740, Massey's estate at Maes Mynan was split into two parts between Jane and Catherine Massey around this time: Maes Mynan *Uchaf* being acquired by the Williams family and Maes Mynan *Isaf* being acquired by the Parry family (NLW, Maesmynan Manor (G. R. Brigstocke) Deeds and Documents, 7):

Note that Williams was the heir & descendant of Katherine, one of ye daughters & coheirs of Robert Massey of Maesmenan & Parry was heir & descendant of Jane who was also one of ye daughters & coheris of the said Robert Massey.

Says that he has heard that there was a much greater estate originally belonging to ye Masseys; that the same was partitioned or divided between his said 2 daughters; that one part viz: Maesmynan Issa was

allotted to Williams & Maesmynan Ucha, Blorants &c. to the Parrys. That Plas Issa, Hendre, Barkty, Ty yn y Pentre, Tu Ymlan y Bryn & Tu'r Clochidr were part of the share of Maesmynan Issa viz: Williams ...

This narrative is substantively supported by 'A list of all the deeds & writings relating to Maesmynan' found in the evidence room at Mostyn Hall in 1736, most of which have not survived or are missing (NLW, Maesmynan Manor (G. R. Brigstocke) Deeds and Documents):

No. 1) 36 Henry VIII (1544/5) – Copy of grant of manor of Masemenan in commote of Dogvilin with the Park &c. to Robert Massey

No. 7) 1558 – Award 1) John Griffith & Henry Salusbury and 2) Grace Massey wife of Robert Massey, deceased – title to manor of Maesmynan to daughters of Grace [?]

No. 5) May 1572 – Partition of equal division of the manors, parks & lands whereof Robert Massey dyed seized in Dogvilyn, Maesmynan 7c. Deliver the same to Thos. Parry & Jane his wife & Thos. Williams & Katherine his wife (daughters & heirs of Robert Massey)

Williams:

No. 2) Dec. 1639 – Settlement of Maesmynan by William Williams on his son Thomas Williams

No. 13) Oct. 1649 – Demise from Thos. Williams to Pierce Williams of Maesmynan with lands in Maesmynan, Blorant & Aberchwiler for 21 years

No. 4) Aug. 1653 – Peter Williams of Whitford; Thomas Williams of Maesmynan & Elinor his wife; Benjamin Williams their son and heir (agreement with John Mostyn of Gloddaeth): 'provided that if Benjamin Williams or his heirs should at any time execute to the said John Mostyn sufficient assurances of ye lands &c. in Maesmyn & Aberchwiler which he had purchased of Thos. Williams, Elinor & Benjamin'

No. 35) Sep. 1653 – Articles for the sale of Maesmynan by Thomas Williams & Peter Williams to John Mostyn

No. 27) Sep. 1653 – Note of deeds relating to Maesmynan lands delivered by Thomas Williams to Sir Roger Mostyn

No. 6) Oct. 1671 – Sale of Gyrn Bach & Gyrn Bach Ucha in Hendregaerwys from Benjamin Williams to Sir Roger Mostyn

Parry:

No. 18) Sep. 1598 – Bond from William Parry to Jane Massey for quiet enjoyment of all messuages in Aberchwiler & Blorant for life

No. 16) April 1599 – Demise from Jane Massey to John ap Harry ap Meredith of Cae Coch Pella, Y Byrdir & Y Gadlas nesa ir velin in Maesmyn for her life

No. 20) Nov. 1603 – Bond from Edward Parry to Roger Mostyn

No. 3) Dec. 1603 – Demise from Edward Parry, son of Thomas ap Harry Vaughan to Thos. Edwards & William Jones of all Maesmynan, Blorant & Aberchwiler (the estate of Robert Massey) for 1,000 years

No. 19) Dec. 1604 – Bond from William Parry to Edward Parry

No. 11) Feb. 1605 – Indenture to Jane Massey – lands in Maesmynan, Blorants & Aberchwiler, 'ye estates of Robert Massey, Henry Vaughan ap Robert & Thomas ap Henry Vaughan'

No. 31) Nov. 1605 – Agreement between Sir Roger Mostyn & Edward Parry about Maesmynan estate

These references to various records (which have been rearranged chronologically) show how the Mostyn family gradually acquired the majority of the Maes Mynan estate which had been split following the death of Robert Massey in 1558. Other records provide further detail.

Jane Massey married a man named Thomas ap Harry Vaughan, son of Harry Vaughan ap Robert and Katherine Conway. Thomas appears to have inherited or built a sizeable estate in Flintshire – in the parishes of Llanasa, Ysceifiog and Cilcain (NLW, Plymouth Estate 778) – and on his marriage to Jane became possessed of her half of the Maes Mynan estate. In 1592 he was called ‘Thomas ap Harry Vaughan of Picton, gent.’ (BUASC, Mostyn 2346-47).

He appears to have died around this time as a title deed dated the same year refers to (NLW, Lleweni, 229):

The land of the heirs of Thomas ap Harry Vaughan ... in length between the land late of the said Thomas ap Harry Vaughan at both ends, and Kay yr Scwborrie (51/2 acres) lying in length and breadth between the lands late of the said Thomas ap Harry Vaughan on all sides.

According to a legal deposition, ‘after the death of the saide Thomas ap Harry Vaughan the saide Jane Massie helde and occupied the premisses in the countye of Denbigh ever sithence and soe still doeth’ (NLW, Peniarth estate L20). It appears that their eldest son, William Parry, inherited lands in Flintshire on the death of his father, but his mother had a life interest in Maes Mynan, which he would inherit on her death. At the time of this lawsuit in 1607 ‘Jane Massie ... nowe dweleth in Maysmynan’. The case in Chancery strongly suggests that Sir John Salusbury of Lleweni was attempting to acquire at least some of the lands through a ‘pretended title’.

It is not at all clear how Sir Roger Mostyn (c.1568-1642) of Mostyn came to acquire Jane Massey’s portion of the Maes Mynan estate (Cheshire Archives, CR72/25/2, which is a bond dated 1602 for conveyance of premises in Maes Mynan and Aberwheeler could be relevant). Two of the records mentioned above (nos. 20 and 31) date his interest in the lands as early as 1603 and 1605 with Jane’s younger son Edward Parry seemingly agreeing to the transfer. Edward Parry of Maes Mynan had obtained the messuages and lands in the townships of Maes Mynan, Blorant and Aberchwilar, which had belonged to his parents, from his elder brother William Parry of Maes Mynan in c.1603 (NLW, Downing Estate 93).

The legal depositions of 1607 make sketchy references to Sir Roger Mostyn’s interest in Jane Massey’s (the Parry) portion of the Maes Mynan estate. Around this time he issued a lease, jointly with Jane Massey ‘of Aberchwiler’ of two closes of land called Blorant Fawr and Blorant Fechan which strongly suggests that he had title to the land (NLW, Peniarth DF98). In March 1608 he wrote to his father-in-law Sir John Wynn of Gwydir about the completion of business relating to land in Maes Mynan (NLW MS. 9053E/479). Significantly, in June 1608 Jane Massey was still living at Maes Mynan; a quitclaim dated to this time refers to ‘one messuage and tenement with all the lands therunto belonging with theapptenances scytuate, leinge & beinge in the severall townshippes of Maesmynan, Blorant and Aberchwiler in the countie of Denbigh wherein Jane Massie, widowe, nowe dwelleth, occupieth and enioye’ (NLW, Peniarth DF100). This perhaps suggests that Jane Massey retained a lifetime interest in the estate, with Sir Roger Mostyn set to obtain full possession on her death. Nevertheless, the Parry family remained associated with Maes Mynan into the 1620s (for Henry Parry of Maes Mynan see NLW, Peniarth estate DF157, DF 172).

At the beginning of the 17th century (1605-07) Sir Roger Mostyn – who had not yet inherited the Mostyn estate – was acquiring other lands in Bodfari which had previously belonged to the Billings family (BUASC, Mostyn 1971-80).

Sir Roger Mostyn’s relationship with Sir John Wynn of Gwydir is also interesting in relation to the Wynn’s reference to Maes Mynan being the *llys* of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd. Did Sir John obtain this information from his son-in-law after he had acquired the estate; or did it form part of Sir Roger’s rationale for purchasing the estate? In either case, it suggests that Sir Roger Mostyn was aware of Maes Mynan’s connection with the princes of Gwynedd. A title deed of 1606 refers to the place as ‘Llys maes Mynan’ (NLW, Edward Owen Papers 29).

A rental of the lordship of Ruthin produced in the early 1630s gives 'the mannor of Maesmynan, in tenura Rogeri Mostyn militis et Katherine Massey, heretofore sould et est annualis valor £80' (Jack, 'Records' III, pp. 12, 15; TNA Wales 15/25 ff. 18-23).

Catherine Massey's portion of the Maes Mynan estate is less well documented. She married Thomas Williams (d.1598); their son William Williams of Maes Mynan is mentioned in a deed of 1612 (BUASC, Mostyn 1476); and he seems to have settled the estate on his son, another Thomas Williams (see BUASC, Mostyn 1478), who in turn had a son called Benjamin Williams. Thomas Williams, his wife Elinor and son Benjamin appear to have sold much of Catherine Massey's part of the Maes Mynan estate to John Mostyn (d.1675) in 1653, thus reuniting the lands previously held by Robert Massey (see BUASC, Mostyn 2851 for context).

4.

THE MOSTYNS AND MAES MYNAN (c.1608-1864)**a) John Mostyn (d.1675)**

In his last will and testament Sir Roger Mostyn (c.1568-1642) refers to lands which he had acquired in the lordship of Dyffryn Clwyd, almost certainly lands associated with Maes Mynan; devising them to his second son John Mostyn (d.1675), (FRO D/M/3737).

John Mostyn was a younger son, closely associated with his mother's family, the Wynns of Gwydir, who obtained for him a place in the household of John Williams, one of the most successful Welshmen in the early-17th century. John Mostyn joined the household of Williams when he was Dean of Westminster, shortly before he was appointed Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and Bishop of Lincoln in 1621. In 1622 Mostyn was appointed as a clerk in the Court of Wards; and he remained closely tied to Williams even after his dismissal from the keepership in 1625. In 1624 John Mostyn was returned as Member of Parliament for Anglesey; and again for Flintshire in April 1640, November 1640 and 1644. He came back to Wales in 1642, where his father, Sir Roger Mostyn's, recent death, coupled with the decease of his elder brother the previous year, made him the senior surviving member of the family. He probably joined his young nephew, Roger Mostyn (c.1623-90) of Mostyn who was extremely active during the course of the Civil War, including at Chester and Flint Castle (*History of Parliament Online*: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/mostyn-john-1603-1675>).



(Portrait of John Mostyn, dated 1643)
©Mostyn Estates Ltd.



(John Mostyn's memorial in Bodfari Church)

b) John Mostyn's 'Booke of Accounts' (BUASC, Mostyn 5489)

In 1637 John Mostyn commissioned a survey of his lands at 'Maes Menan', which at that point totaled 82 acres:

- The house, gardens, yards & backsides
- The clousure called y Blorant Mawr

- Blorant uwch ben y fron	5
- Blorant wrth y ffrith	4
- Blorant y twll	6
- Blorant vechan	7
- A bushie side of a hill called bron fadock	6
- Another bushie hille called y Gyrn fawr	1
- 3 parcells inclosed out of the sayd Gyrn	5
- 2 closures called kaye koch ucha	5
- Koedkae y Gyrn	3
- Y Akr goch & llwyn'r Akre goch	2
- Y Kae Koch nessa'r Tuy	4
- Y Kae Koch krwn [trwn?]	3
- Y Kae Koch Issa &	4
- Y tir newydd	
- Y byrdir	2
- Y kadleisie	2
- Gweirglodd hendre vaylor	5
- Hendre vaylor devided in 2 parcells & a cottage upon the lesser parcell	5

This survey provides one of the earliest lists of fieldnames associated with Maes Mynan, many of which can be traced in later estate documents within the Mostyn archives.

By 1644, in addition to his lands at Maes Mynan, John Mostyn also possessed lands and tenaments in Anglesey, Tremeirchion, Prestatyn, Denbigh, Clocaenog. At this point his 82 acres at Maes Mynan were 'in lease for certen yeares' for which he was receiving £30 in rent. He had also purchased some lands from John Hughes in the vicinity.

John Mostyn acquired Catherine Massey's portion of the Maes Mynan lands through her Williams descendants in 1653. Around this time he also acquired a seat in Bodfari parish church – an important signifier of status within the local community – from Thomas Williams, which strongly suggests that Mostyn was spending time at Maes Mynan (BUASC, Mostyn 1981). In 1668 he acquired another seat in the church; the 'seat and burying place appurtenant to the ancient messuage called Maesmynan' which had previously belonged to the Williams family of Maes Mynan (BUASC, Mostyn 1981, 1983). Numerous documents dated 1659 are the earliest which refer to 'John Mostyn of Maesmynan', denoting the place as his primary residence (NLW, Peniarth estate DF236-237). In 1667 John Mostyn was referred to as being of 'Llys-maes-mynan', which suggests a deliberate attempt at reintroducing the *llys* heritage of the site (NLW, Bodewryd Deeds 164).

During this period John Mostyn also rebuilt Maes Mynan. A note in his account book lists the names of the kinsmen and neighbours who voluntarily assisted him in the rebuilding of 'Maisemmynan' Hall:

- My nephew Colonell Mostyn freely bestowed upon me all the slacke I had occation to use in the building and ten thousand of lathes
- The whole parish of Whitford gave me carrage for one day excepting David Lloyd of Downinge.
- Robert Hughes of Caire Berllan gave me a tree of nine yards large and fourteene inches square
- My nephew Thomas Mostyn of Kilken gave me two trees
- My cosen Thomas Mostyn of Sokin gave me two trees
- Roger Parry of Mertyn gave me a tree for a summer

The list is undated but the building work probably took place in the 1650s or early 1660s. An inventory of the house made in 1662 suggests a significant residence, with a parlour, kitchen, best chamber, pied chamber, study, old kitchen, withering room, dairy house, malt house, stable, servants chamber, maid's chamber and store loft. The house was supplied with a collection of silver plate, furnishings and linen; and numerous livestock:

- 11 Oxen
- 9 Cowes

- 1 Bull
- 4 young beast of 2 yeares old
- 6 yearlings
- 2 working horses
- 1 coult
- 3 mares
- 2 geldings
- And 1 other young mare
- 80 weathers
- 60 yeawes
- 30 lambs
- 1 bore
- 3 sowes
- 2 hoggs
- 4 shockes

Throughout the 1660s John Mostyn continued to develop his position in the locality. In September 1662 he made a purchase of lands associated with 'Tuthyn Heylin' in Aberchwiler from Richard Parry of Coed Marchen, including lands called (BUASC, Mostyn 1481):

- Koit Kay (yr) Coed
- Koit Kay Erwn [or Crwn]
- Koit Kay (yr) Pant
- Yr Ackair
- Koit Kay Bychan
- Y Kay Gwynn
- Kay yr Odyn

A survey of these lands taken in the same year and included in Mostyn's account book gives the following acreage:

Tythyn Heilin		
- Koed Kae'r Coed		2
- Koed Kae Krwn		1
- Koed Kae'r pant		2
- Yr Accar		1
- Kae Bychan		1
- Kae Gwyn		1
- Kae'r Odyn		2
10 Acres		

A draft indenture made by 'John Mostyn of Llis-Maesmunnon in the county of Denbigh' refers to his 'mannor farme or tenement called Maes Mynnan als Llis Maes Mynnan and all that farme or tenement called Tythyn Heylin and all that farme or tenement called Talwrne [Talwern?] in Aberwchlar' (BUASC, Mostyn 4143).

The Welsh poet Morys Parry composed a *cywydd* to John Mostyn of Maes Mynan (Mostyn MS. 96, no. 34).

He was buried at Bodfari church on 31st December 1675; his Latin memorial, which he erected prior to his death, is one of the grandest in the church. His last will and testament is TNA, PROB 11/350).

c) Maes Mynan and the Mostyns after 1675

During John Mostyn's lifetime Maes Mynan had probably operated as a significant cultural and political site in post-Restoration north east Wales; it was the primary residence of a learned gentleman, belonging to one of the region's major families, who had experienced a vibrant career in the household of John Williams and during the Civil War.

Following Mostyn's death in 1675 Maes Mynan became absorbed into the inheritance of the principal Mostyn lineage; it became part of the vast Mostyn territories scattered across north Wales, and remained part of the Mostyn estate until 1864.

During this 200 year period the property was usually leased to a series of tenants, principally of gentleman-farmer status. The earliest reference to such tenants is from the Bodfari parish registers which notes that Robert Owen(s) of Maes Mynan married Martha in 1709.

However, for a period in the 18th century Maes Mynan once again became a Mostyn family residence. In 1719 Sir Roger Mostyn, 3rd Bart. issued a lease to his younger brother, Thomas Mostyn (c.1674-1737) of the capital messuage and lands of Maes Mynan (then in the holding of Philip Jones, tenant), together with nearby lands in Gyrn, Croeswien, Bohemia and Moel y Park, for 99 years or until the death of Thomas Mostyn, for £89, 2s. per year (NLW, Maesmynan Manor (G. R. Brigstocke) Deeds and Documents).

Thomas Mostyn already had his own estate in the vicinity of Dyserth, Cwm and Meliden, following his marriage to his cousin Margaret, heiress of William Mostyn of Rhyd and Pentre Cwm. However, the lease from his brother was evidently to enable him to take up residence at Maes Mynan. In 1725 he referred to himself as 'Thomas Mostyn formerly of Rhŷd in the county of fflint and now of Llys Maesmynnan in the county of Denbigh' (BUASC, Mostn 228) and by 1729 he was leasing out Rhyd (BUASC, Mostyn 2341).

After Thomas Mostyn's death in 1737 Maes Mynan once again returned to the main Mostyn estate. In 1739/40 his nephew Sir Thomas Mostyn, 4th Bart. leased nearby property, including a mill and kiln, from Sir Robert Salusbury Cotton of Lleweni (d.1809) for 99 years, further expanding the family's territorial influence in the area:

A messuage and tenement with three parcels of land, called Cooper's Tenement in Aberchwiler and Blorant; lying between Gwaen y Gwlanod and Groeswhyan on the one side, and part of Maesmynan demesne on the other; a parcel of land in Aberchwiler called Vron y Sheat adjoining part of the Maesmynan demesne; and a coppice in Aberchwiler called Y Coed bach also adjoining part of Maesmynan demesne (BUASC, Mostyn 1508).

A water corn mill called Velyn ucha, with drying kiln, and closes called Y ddau Cae tan y coed, Cae pen y Coed, y Tair Rhwd, y Werglodd, and yr Accar y felin whereon a kiln now stands; all in the hamlets or townships of Aberwhiler and Blorant in the parish of Bodvary, co. Denbigh (BUASC, Mostyn 1509).

The next prominent tenant at Maes Mynan was a man named William Lloyd. In a record of 1787 he was described as the eldest son and heir of John Lloyd of Caerwys, possibly, though by no means certainly, the John Lloyd (1733-1793) who was Rector of Caerwys, antiquarian and assistant to Thomas Pennant and father of Angharad Llwyd (see NLW, Coed Coch estate 2544). William Lloyd was an active Flintshire gentleman with interests across much of the county; in at least one document he is referred to as an 'attorney' (FRO, D/MT/629). There are over a dozen references to 'William Lloyd of Maes Mynan' dating between 1757 and 1776 (see NLW Deeds 1850-1852; NLW, Bathafarn 203, 206; NLW, Caerhun 66; NLW, Bodrhyddan 31; NLW, Newman, Paynter & Co. 118; NLW, Peniarth estate T3; FRO, D/BC/330; FRO, D/DM/299/3; FRO, D/GY/4; FRO, D/MT/830; FRO, D/NH/287; FRO, D/PO/57, 154).

The famous English writer Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-84) visited, or stayed with Lloyd during his journey into north Wales in 1774, calling 'Maesmynnan ... a good old house [with] a large walled garden' (*A diary of a journey into North Wales in the year 1774* (London, 1816), p. 84).

An undated document in the Mostyn estate archive (BUASC Mostyn 6033) consists of two valuations of Maes Mynan house, gardens and acres, one by Mr. Lloyd and another by a Mr. Sleight. At this point Maes Mynan consisted of:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| - Tavarh Cieolien [?] | Barley & Clover |
| - Four Blorants | Wheat & Grass |
| - Cae Mary Williams | Wheat |
| - Cae Coch | Grass |

- Cae Brik	Grass
- Cae Tan yr Arth	Grass
- Cae Clomendy	Grass
- Caer Pandy	2 nd years clover
- Frith Issa	Clover
- Frith Ucha	Clover
- Nant y []	Oates & clover
- Hendre Vaynol	Barley & clover
- Cae'r Ochr	Oates & clover
- Tythin Heilin	Barley & clover
- Park y Cwning Issa	Barley & clover
- Park y Cwning Ucha	Barley & clover
- Maes	Wheat
- Werglodd y Velyn	-
- Trollen Vawr	-
- Grosford	-

Totaling 514 acres, 31 perches.

Mr. Sleight's valuation was higher than that of Mr. Lloyd; and this appears to have had the consequence of William Lloyd losing the tenancy to the Sleights. The estate rent books show Miss Lloyd as the tenant until 1782, paying a rent of £153, 5s. a year; and from 1783 Mr. Joshua Sleight, who initially paid £265, soon raising to £300 a year (BUASC Mostyn 5590-5603).

In the 1843 tithe map the tenant is named as Edward Owen, who was one of the last Mostyn tenants at Maes Mynan. In February 1847 Edward Owen announced that he would be retiring from farming and held a major three-day sale of stock, farming implements and household furniture (*Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 6 February 1847, p.2). On the death of Rev. Canon R. Trevor Owen of St. Asaph in 1916 it was reported that 'his grandfather and ancestors had resided at Maes Mynan Hall' (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 28 October 1916, p. 5).

5.

THOMAS BADESLADE'S 1742 MAP AND THE LANDSCAPE SETTING**a) Thomas Badeslade's map of 1742**

In the 1730s the Mostyns were involved in a dispute with the Myddletons of Chirk, Lords of Ruthin, regarding Maes Mynan lands, including certain enclosures on Moel y Parc (NLW, Chirk Castle Estate E5467). On this occasion numerous longstanding tenants came forward to give evidence about the Mostyn family's rights to the land, claiming that they have 'never known the lords of Ruthin to exercise any acts of ownership there'. These depositions provide useful evidence about the enclosure of the former deer park (see Section 2). It also notes the fact that John Mostyn had constructed and stocked a warren there.

The legal challenge also encouraged the Mostyns, in 1737, to gather up all of the evidence relating to their title to Maes Mynan (outlined in NLW, Maesmynan Manor (G. R. Brigstocke) Deeds and Documents).

This challenge may have also provided part of the impetus for the first estate map of Maes Mynan which was commissioned in 1742 (FRO, D/M/5247):

A MAP OF MAES MYNON DEMESNE
A SEAT BELONGING TO SIR THOMAS MOSTYN BART.
IN BODFARRY PARISH IN DENBIGH-SHIRE
ALSO OF SEVERAL TENEMENTS WITHIN THE SD PARISH
AND A MAP OF THE
MARKET TOWN OF CAERWYS
AND SEVERAL TENEMENTS IN THAT TOWN AND PARISH
AND OTHER IN THE PARISH OF DYMERCION IN FLINTSHIRE
ALL NEARLY ADJOINING TO EACH OTHER
PART OF THE ESTATE OF SIR THOMAS MOSTYN BARONET
(THOS. BADESLADE, 1742)

This map shows that the Mostyns had succeeded in acquiring and consolidating a largely contiguous block of land in and around Maes Mynan. It also shows a clear link between the hall at Maes Mynan and the town of Caerwys.

The map shows Maes Mynan as a substantial complex, the house adjoined to a number of outbuildings and formally laid out gardens. This complex is surrounded by fields including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cae tan y clawdd - Cae Brix - Cae coch issa - Acre y felin - Coed Coch and Pen y Coed - Cae Coch Ucha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cae'r Clomendy - Cae glan yr afon - Cae Gwyn - Pen y Cae Gwyn - Fron Sheat Ucha and Issa - Park y Cwning Ucha and Issa - Tyddyn heilin - Coetcae'r Coed - Yr Acre - Coet cae'r yr oden - Pen goch - Cae uwch pen yr eithin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coed Crwh - Coed Bychan - Gwerglodd y Gyrn - Blorant fechan - Blorant y twll - Blorant y Pentre - Blorant y Nant - Coed Mawr, including Nant Michael, St. Michael's well and leading up to Nant y Drysni
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groesffordd - Gwerglodd John Griffith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Y Cae Haidd - Y Cae Hir - Bryn Eithin 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bohemia & Gweglodd Bohemia & Gwern Bohemia - Trolen fawr & fach - Tir gwair - Park y keffyl - Y gweglodd ty draw afon - Yr Erw las - Bryn Rhyd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Y Cryn Coed Park - Gweglodd fawr - Hendre faynol issa and ucha - Y ffrith newyd - Y tri Rhwd - Caua'r Ochre - Pwll Bydyr Mills - (All leading to Moel y Park and Ffrith y Park, demarked with a boundary ditch)
--	--

The map shows the Flintshire-Denbighshire border running through Maes Mynan lands.

b) The boundaries of the lordship of Ruthin / Dyffryn Clwyd

The Flintshire-Denbighshire border for the most part followed the boundaries of the lordship of Ruthin, or Dyffryn Clywd. A perambulation or survey dated 1737, which was again probably connected to the Myddleton family's assertion of their rights within the lordship, gives an extraordinary depth of detail on local landscape features and place-names (J. Fiseer, 'The Lordship of Ruthin', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 14 (1914), 421-40 (p. 437). The section for Maes Mynan reads as follows:

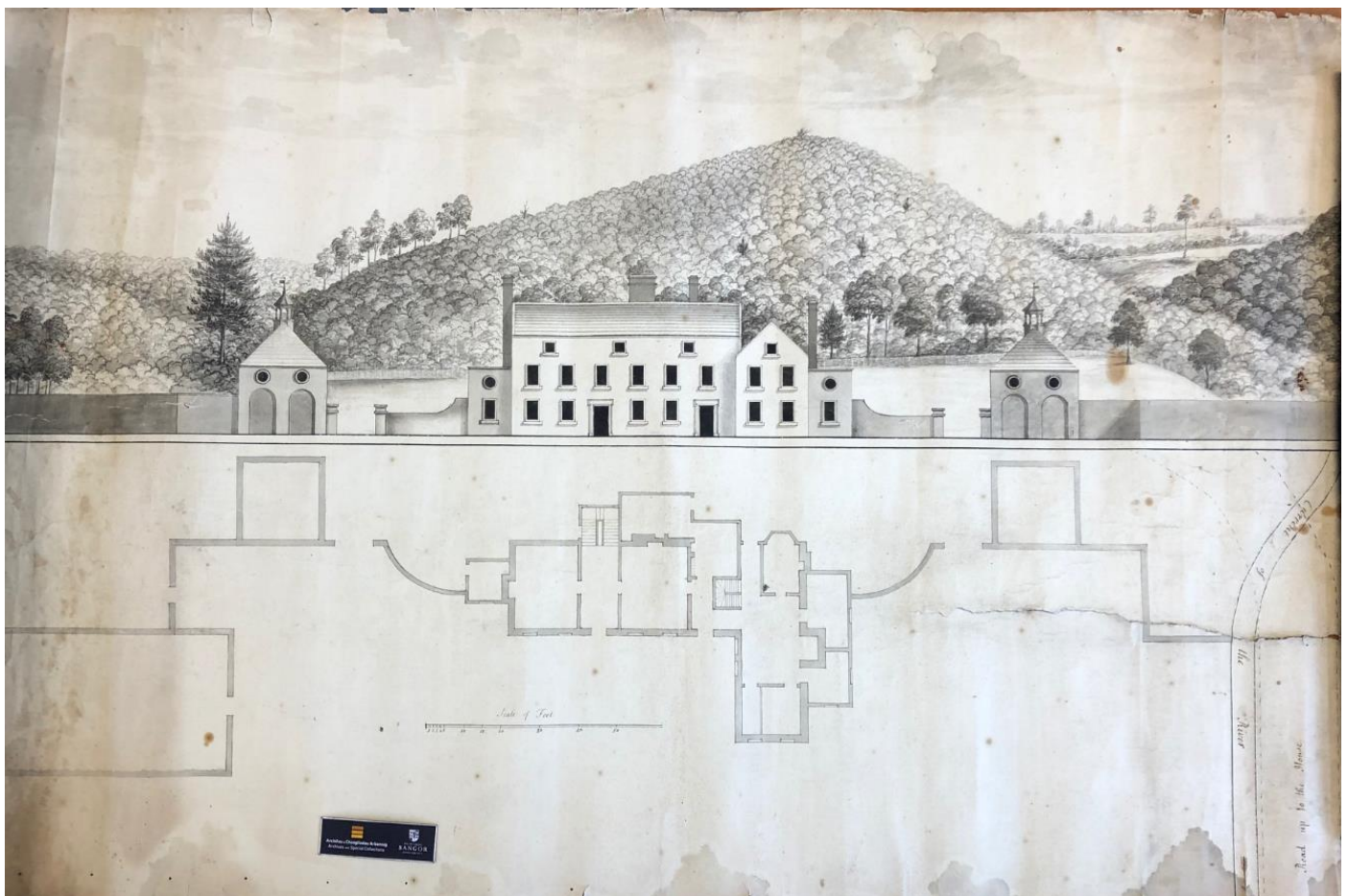
...then it returns to the river Chweeler and up the said river and then turns on the right hand by a hedge and leaves out in fflintshire a parcel called Gwern y Pandu and then returns to Chweeler and from thence goes up along the said river Chweeler to Melin Ucha or Melin y pwll Budur and then it turns on the left hand from the said river at a small rivulet as falls into it Called Hirddig and then goes along the said rivulet up and along a bottom or a dingle called Glyn (deviding there between the said township of Aberchwiler in the said Lordship and the other part of the parish of Potfarry wich lyeth in fflintshire) and up the said rivulet along the bottom called Glyn as farr as a field on the right hand of Glyn called Cae Tan y Ty and Pen Ucha tenement belonging to Mr Williams of Penbedw and then it leaves the said Glyn and rivulet and turns on the right hand along the ditch between the said Cae Tan y Ty and the parcells there called Cae Glas Isaa and Cae Glas Ucha & up by a house belonging to the said Mr. Williams in the holding of one John Williams or tenant and so up to the Mountain or Common called Rhos Goch and then runs up part of the said Common to certain marks or heaps of earth being three hills made or sett up there called Yr Orseddau and dividing there between the said township of Aberchwiler in the said lordship and the parish of Caerwys in the count of ffint and from one hill to another to the last hill and from the last hill called Yr Orsedd directly to a place called Tavarn y Gisiolen and so on along the road near an ash tree called Croes y Wian and from thence down on the right hand side to a dingle and down along an old wall or ditch through nant y Drysni and along the sayd nant by the rock on the left side of the nant or the side next to Caerwys quite down a great precipe to the well called Ffynnon Mihangel and from thence along the brook or rivulet running out of the said well down the said nant or dingle called Nant Mihangel till it comes under the hill above Maesmynan called Pen y Gyrn and belonging to Mr Mostyn and from thence up to the tip top of the said hill and from thence by a holy tree or two and to a hedge and along the said hedge above some parcels of land called Y Fron Sych or Fron Sheat belonging to Sir Robert Cotton Bart. and along the said hedge quite to a great stone lyeing on the side of the road leading to Caerwys Town takeing in all Maesmynan demesne and from that stone along the road down to Croesfordd and crossing the highway or road leading from Denbigh to Chester and quite down by John Griffith's late house to the River Chweeler and up with the said river to Maes y Coed and from thence along the road leading to the mountain and up along a small rivulet called Aber y Mynydd up to the mountaine and from thence up along a ditch called Clawdd Moel y Park and up along an old ditch and by severall mark stones quite to the top of the foel called Moel y Park and to a heap of stones there and from thence down to Bwlch Coed y Mynydd and to the top of the said Bwlch and from thence all along the tip top or ridge of the said mountain to Pen y Cloddie and from thence along the top of the said mountain to Bryn Carregog and along the uppermost top to the side of the hill called Moel Arthur ...

The dispute between the Myddletons and the Mostyns over Moel y Parc seems to have continued for some time. In 1826 Harriet Myddleton, 'Lady of the said Manor' issued the following notice to Mr. William Hughes, Gamekeeper to Sir Thomas Mostyn (NLW, Maesmynan Manor (G. R. Brigstocke) Deeds and Documents), p.9):

I hereby give you notice not to enter or come unto or upon any part of the hills or lands within the manor or lordship of Ruthin, otherwise Dyffryn Clwyd, in the county of Denbigh, for the purpose of shooting or sporting; or on any other presence whatsoever, as in case of your doing so I shall proceed against you as a willful trespasser.

c) Remodeling Maes Mynan Hall

At some point in the late-18th or early-19th century the Mostyns commissioned plans for a remodelled house at Maes Mynan. These plans show a core with substantial projecting wing, with symmetrical curved walls, gate posts and square tower blocks (stables, coach houses, dovecotes?) either side. The road to the house and the river is shown on the right hand side. However, most significantly, the plans show the landscape setting, including a huge wooded mound behind the house (Pen y Gyrn) and a number of well-established trees.



(BUASC, Mostyn 8591 - Plan of Maes Mynan Hall, not dated)

d) The picturesque setting

Thomas Pennant wrote in exceptionally complimentary terms about the landscape surrounding Maes Mynan in his *Tour in Wales* (1781), p. 24:

The vale is narrow, fertile, diversified with groves, and watered by the crystal Wheeler. The part about Maes mynan is singularly fine, consisting of detached hills, clothed with timber; a charming extent of meadows; and the lofty mountain Moel y Parc, skirted with trees, contrasting itself to the softer part of the scenery.

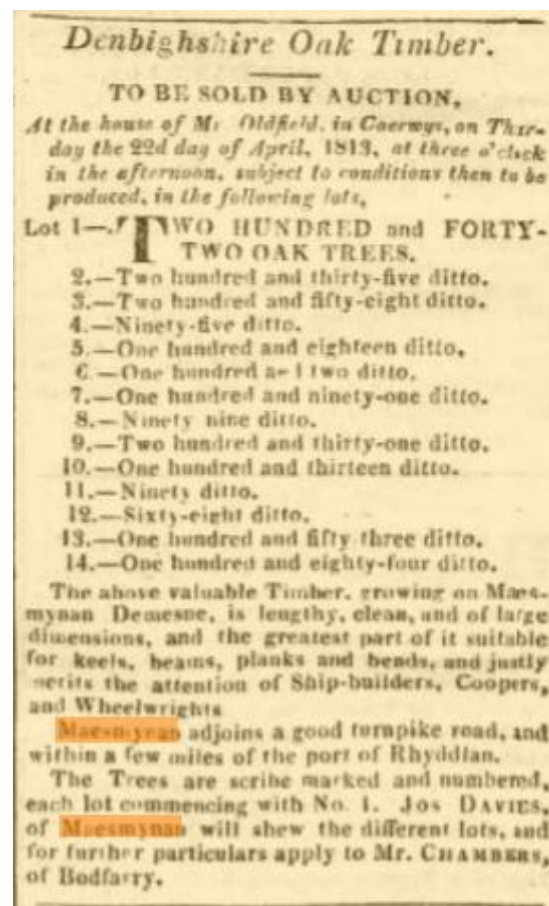
This description aligns with 18th century aesthetic tastes which came to be dominated by the picturesque. Over the course of the 19th century aspects of Maes Mynan's landscape setting gathered an increasing number of plaudits. William Cathrall in *The History of North Wales* commented that its 'situation is singularly beautiful' (Vol. II (1828), p. 229). Joseph Hemingway's, *Panorama of the beauties, curiosities, and antiquities of North Wales* (1839), p. 112 included the following:

A most beautiful dingle, known by the name of Maesmynan Wort [presumably Nant Mihangel], well worth a ramble to the admirer of nature and the botanist. Near this place where the brook, which runs through this dingle by Maesmynan House, empties itself into the Wheeler.

Such laudatory descriptions continued across the century, including an assertion that Maes Mynan was the 'Arcadia of Wales' – a utopia; an idyllic, poetic vision of unspoiled natural splendour in perfect harmony with pastoralism.

e) Forestry

Towards the late-18th century Afonwen emerged as a major industrial centre. There is little to suggest how the Maes Mynan estate plugged into this activity, though the fieldname Cae Bricks perhaps suggests a brickmaking centre, using local sand. Agriculture was the primary industry on the estate. It was also used as a site for hunting and shooting by the Mostyns. However, a newspaper advertisement of 1813 also gives an indication of commercial woodland management. 242 oak trees from the Maes Mynan demesne were to be auctioned, with the timber suitable for keels, beams, planks etc.



(North Wales Gazette, 25 March 1813, p.2)

f) Transport routes

Familiarity with the landscape surrounding Maes Mynan was greatly assisted by the fact it was situated alongside a major transport route connecting Mold and Denbigh.

'Masmunna Hall' features on John Owen and Emanuel Bowen's c.1720s road map of Chester to Holyhead:



An entry in Daniel Paterson's, *A new and accurate description of all the direct and principal cross roads in Great Britain* (1822) marks Maes Mynan as a stop on the route between Holywell and the Tal-y-Cafn ferry on the River Conwy.

HOLYWELL TO TALY CAFFN FERRY, BY CAERWYS AND DENBIGH.			
<p>PONT RYFFYTH. Llewenny Hall, Col. Hughes.</p> <p>DENBIGH, though not large, is a well built town, pleasantly situated on a rocky eminence in the beautiful vale of Clwyd; in appearance it assimilates in a trifling degree with Stirling and Edinburgh, and has a very imposing aspect from a distance, with the ruinous castle crowning its summit; while the town itself commands many delightful prospects over the surrounding country. The church, situated about a mile from the town, contains nothing worthy of notice, and is seldom used by the inhabitants, who most generally attend divine worship at the chapel of St. Hilary. Denbigh contains a good town-hall, besides one or two charitable institutions: it sends one member to parliament in conjunction with Holt and Ruthin, and has a good market on Wednesday.</p>	From T. C. Fe.	From * HOLYWELL, Flintshire, to CAERWYS	From Holywell
	31 $\frac{3}{4}$	Maesmynnan	5
	26 $\frac{3}{4}$	Pont Ryffyth	6 $\frac{1}{4}$
	25 $\frac{1}{4}$	Cross the river Clwyd	8 $\frac{3}{4}$
	23	* DENBIGH, Denbigh.	12
	19 $\frac{3}{4}$	To St. Asaph 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ m.	
		to Mold 12 m.	
		to Ruthin 8 m.	
	19 $\frac{1}{4}$	Henllan Street, upper end of	12 $\frac{1}{2}$
	16 $\frac{3}{4}$	Forward to Aberconway 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ m.	
	15	to Groes	15
	12	Llydiarthwr Cyfrwian	16 $\frac{3}{4}$
	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	Llansannan	19 $\frac{3}{4}$
	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	Llangerniew	24 $\frac{1}{4}$
		Topy Nedd	29
		Taly Caffn Ferry	31 $\frac{3}{4}$
		* From Taly Caffn Ferry to Aberconway, across the river Conway, 4 m.	
<p>HOLYWELL is the most important place in Flintshire, and is rendered the great mart of this part of the kingdom by the numerous manufactories and lead-mines in its vicinity, and also by its easy communication with the sea. The town is pleasantly situated on the slope of a mountain, and has considerable pretensions to beauty: the church, standing in a low situation, is a modern structure, with a square tower at the west end. Here are places of worship belonging to the Roman Catholics and dissenters; and at the foot of a hill, below the town, is an impetuous spring called St. Winifred's Well. The lead-mines in this neighbourhood are extensive; they are worked with considerable advantage, and are highly deserving the attention of the curious. Market on Friday.</p>			
<p>MAESMYNNAN, Sir Thomas Mostyn, Bart.</p>			
<p>PONT RYFFYTH. Pont Ryffyth Hall, Sir Edward Price Lloyd, Bart.</p>			

The Mold-Denbigh Railway opened in 1869, following a similar route.

g) The tithe map

'The 1843 Tithe Map of the township of Aberwhiler in the parish of Bodfarry in the County of Denbigh' (<https://places.library.wales/>) provides a useful picture of the Maes Mynan estate in the mid-19th century.

At this point the owner was listed as Edward Mostyn Lloyd-Mostyn and the tenant as Edward Owen.

The entry includes many of the fieldnames included in Badeslade's 1742 map and earlier title deeds:

Field no.	Field name	Land use	Extent (a. r. p.)
484	Gweirglodd pwll budr	Pasture	36 2 33
491	Ffridd	Pasture	31 1 7
492	Ffridd	Pasture	18 1 33
493	Ffridd	Arable & Pasture	54 0 15
499	Caer Ucha	Arable	8 2 4
569	Caer Groesfford	Arable	18 3 2
511	[Caer Grosefford]	Pasture	0 3 35
513	Caer Groesfford	Pasture	17 1 24
514	Tyddin Helin	Arable	17 1 19
515	Park	Pasture	11 0 28
516	Fron Sheat	Arable	7 0 10
517	Maes Mynan	Arable	20 1 30
518	Gweirglodd y Pandy	Pasture	18 1 20
519	Cae Pen y Pandy	Meadow	10 0 12
521	Weirglodd y Pandy	Arable	18 1 35
522	[Weirglodd y Pandy]	Meadow	5 1 8
523	Pond	Pool	1 0 18
524	Buildings & yards	Homestead	2 1 18
526	Caer Colomendy	Pasture	6 3 29
527	Cae Bricks	Meadow	19 0 26
529	Cae Coch	Arable	10 0 8
530	Cae Mary Williams	Arable	19 2 20
562	Weirglodd y gern	Arable	6 3 0
606	Guifalon [Gisfalon?]	Pasture	18 0 26
607	Blornant Twll	Pasture	32 1 16
608	Blornant Fawr	Arable	18 1 16
609	Blornant Ddu bach	Pasture	31 3 7



6.

RECENT HISTORY (1864-PRESENT)**a) The Mostyn estate sale and purchase by Hugh Jones (1864-71)**

The Mostyn family put the Maes Mynan estate up for sale at Rhyl Town Hall on 16th August 1864, as part of 2,600 acres of land in the parishes of Bodfari, Caerwys and Ysceifiog. This included much of the town of Caerwys and the Caerwys Hall estate, which had at some point been acquired from the Earl of Plymouth (*Flintshire Observer*, 26 August 1864, p. 4).





(BUASC Mostyn 8695: Extracts from the sale catalogue of lands in Caerwys, Ysceifiog and Bodfari, 1864)

There was significant interest in the estates on account of their 'picturesque beauty and the political influence connected with the borough of Caerwys'. Both estates (Maes Mynan and Caerwys Hall) were offered in one lot, including the timber, and were eventually sold to Hugh Jones for £85,000. Jones was a native of Clynog in Caernarfonshire who had moved to England and through commercial ventures acquired a vast fortune. He was the quintessential 'self-made man'. In the previous year he had served as Sheriff of London. The report of his purchase suggests that he was particularly drawn to the opportunities associated with the construction of the Mold and Denbigh Railway.

Little is known of Hugh Jones' time at Maes Mynan. He considered contesting the Flint Boroughs seat (held by Sir John Hanmer) at the 1868 election as a Conservative (*Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, 11 July 1868, p. 4). Of significance to Caerwys, it was he who built the new police station and magistrates' room in 1869 (*Flintshire Observer*, 8 January 1869, p. 4).

Hugh Jones appears to have died in c.1871 and towards the end of the year the estate was back up for sale, establishing the pattern for the late-19th century as Maes Mynan passed through a succession of owners.

b) 'The Arcadia of Wales'

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT. FLINTSHIRE AND DENBIGHSHIRE. The Maesmynan Estate, a highly important Freehold Residential Domain, situate in the parishes of Caerwys, Bodfari, Llandyrnog, and Ysceifiog, on the borders of the counties of Flint and Denbigh, with the two Manors of Maesmynan and Caerwys, and numerous Dwelling houses and small occupations, forming nearly the entire ancient borough town of Caerwys. There is a station of the Mold and Denbigh Railway on the estate, in connection with the North-Western, Chester, and Holyhead Line, and the journey thence to London, Manchester or Liverpool, may be performed in six, three and two hours respectively. The property comprises altogether an area of about 3,500 acres, of which about 300 acres are mountain land, nearly 600 are in woodland and plantations, and the rest, with the exception of the park, is excellent and highly productive agricultural land. The mansion, Bryngwyn Hall, is well placed in the centre of about 234 acres of park land, and contains handsome and well-arranged suites of rooms. The stables and out-buildings are substantially built, ample and commodious, and with carpenter's shop, smith's forge, &c.; include every convenience for the house and for a pleasure farm. In Maesmynan Wood there is the finest cover shooting in North Wales, and excellent partridge and general shooting, as well as capital trout fishing on the Estate. The possession of this domain ensures to the owner considerable social and political influence. The opening of the Mold and Denbigh Line has added immensely to the value of the property, which, with its mountain and pastoral scenery, and numerous charming and commanding building sites, is brought within two or three hours of Liverpool and Manchester.

***The Tenby Observer*, 12 October, 1871, p. 8**

The advertisements provide good descriptions of the estate at this time and make particular reference to the opening of the Mold-Denbigh railway line 'which has added immensely to the value of the property', the sporting potential of the lands and the 'mountain and pastoral scenery'. It was commented that 'the possession of this domain ensures to the owner considerable social and political influence'.

SALE BY
Messrs. **HARDS, VAUGHAN & LEIFCHILD.**

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT.

FLINTSHIRE & DENBIGHSHIRE.

THE MAESMYNAN ESTATE,

**A HIGHLY IMPORTANT
FREEHOLD RESIDENTIAL DOMAIN,**

Situate in the parishes of Caerwys, Bodfari, Llandrynog, and Yaceflog, on the borders of the Counties of Flint and Denbigh, with the two Mansions of Maesmynan and Caerwys, and numerous Dwelling Houses and small occupations forming nearly the entire ancient

BOROUGH TOWN OF CAERWYS.

There is a Station of the Mold and Denbigh Railway on the estate, in connection with the North-Western, Chester, and Holyhead Line, and the journey thence to London, Manchester, or Liverpool may be performed in 6, 3, and 2 hours respectively. The property comprises altogether an area of about 3,500 acres, of which about 300 acres are mountain land, nearly 600 acres are in woodland and plantations, and the rest, with the exception of the Park, is excellent and highly productive agricultural land. The Mansion,

"BRYNGWYN HALL,"

is well placed in the centre of about 234 acres of park land, and contains handsome and well arranged suites of rooms. The stables and out-buildings are substantially built, ample and commodious, and with carpenter's shop, smiths' forge, etc., include every convenience for the house and for a pleasure farm. In

MAESMYNAN WOOD

there is the finest cover shooting in North Wales, and excellent partridge and general shooting, as well as capital trout fishing on the estate. The possession of this Domain ensures to the owner considerable social and political influence. The opening of the

MOLD AND DENBIGH LINE

in 1869, has added immensely to the value of the property, which, with its mountain and pastoral scenery, and numerous charming and commanding building sites, is brought within 2 or 3 hours' of Liverpool and Manchester.

MESSRS. HARDS, VAUGHAN & LEIFCHILD (late Leifchild & Cheffins) have received instructions from the representatives of the late Hugh Jones, Esq. to offer for Public Competition in one or several lots, of which due notice will be given, the above important **RESIDENTIAL, SPORTING, and INVESTMENT PROPERTY.**

Particulars and cards to view may be obtained on application to Messrs. Barnard & Harris, 1, Gresham Buildings, Pasinghall Street, City; and to Messrs. Hards, Vaughan & Leifchild, 62, Moorgate Street, London, E.C., and Greenwich, S.E.

An action in the Court of Chancery appears to have blocked this initial auction, though by the following year it was being advertised for sale at auction at the Grosvenor Hotel, Chester, on the 15th and 16th and July 1872:

The highly important and exceedingly desirable freehold domain, known as the Maesmynan Estate, embracing an area of about 3,468 acres of arable, pasture, and woodlands, situate in the parishes of Caerwys, Bodfari, Llandyrnog, Ysceifiog, Tremeirchion and Cwm, on the borders of the counties of Flint and Denbigh, with the manors of Maesmynan and Caerwys ...

Maesmynan Hall Estate, comprising about 900 acres of excellent agricultural woodland, with its ancient and picturesque residence, well known as Maesmynan hall, admirably situate within a few minutes' walk of the Caerwys Station on the Mold and Denbigh Railway and requiring only a small outlay to adapt it to modern requirements. This portion of the estate comprises also the magnificent Maesmynan Wood, one of the features of the county ...

The London Gazette, 12 July 1872, p. 3170

Some of the property was not sold at this auction, including 'the Maesmynan Hall Estate, with 856 acres of Arable, Pasture and Woodland, including the far-famed Maesmynan Wood, and a few plots of accommodation land, four town plots, and six small farms' (*Flintshire Observer*, 23 August 1872, p.4; *Cardiff Times*, 24 August 1872, p. 8). These lots were offered for purchase by private contract, but evidently failed to sell. Maes Mynan was re-auctioned in July 1873 as:

An exceedingly valuable and important freehold residential estate, known as the Maesmynan hall estate, comprising about 900 acres of excellent arable, pasture and wood land, with right to 300 acres of sheep walk on the Moel-y-Park Mountain, with its ancient and picturesque residence, well known as Maesmynan Hall, admirably situate within a few minutes' walk of the Caerwys Station, on the Mold and Denbigh Railway, commanding lovely views of the surrounding country, and requiring only a small outlay to adapt it to modern requirements. This portion of the estate comprises also the magnificent Maesmynan Wood, one of the features of the county. There is good shooting on the estate, and trout fishing in the river Wheeler.

The Law Journal, 7 June 1873, p. 348

In the build up to this sale the outstanding picturesque qualities of Maes Mynan were reported on in local newspapers, with one commentator referring to the place in grand terms as 'The Acadia of Wales':

THE ARCADIA OF WALES. It is not sufficiently known to the rich merchants of London, Liverpool, and Manchester, that the Maesmynan property, comprising the wonderful valley which may well be called the Acadia of Wales, if not of England, is this month to be sold by public auction at Rhyl. The south entrance to this magnificent forest is within ten minutes' walk of Caerwys station, on the Mold and Denbigh Railway. It was in this wood that Llywelyn, the last sovereign prince of Wales, delighted to roam some six centuries ago. The geologist, the botanist, and the field naturalist will find here objects well worthy of their attention. St. Michael's Well and Llywelyn's Cave are to be found in it. The disciples of Isaac Walton, and the worshippers of Diana, the goddess of hunting, can scarcely get such another place in the British Isles and its kaleidoscopic views could not be described by the pen of a Macaulay or a Dickens.

Llangollen Advertiser, 6 June, 1873, p.3

A report of the sale confirms that it was purchased by Mr. Pickstone of Birkenhead.

c) The Pickstones of Maes Mynan (1873-85)

SALE OF THE MAESMYNAN ESTATE. On Thursday, Mr. Evan Vaughan (of the firm of Messrs. Hards and Vaughan, London), disposed, by public competition, at the Town hall, Rhyl, of the Maesmynan estate, near Caerwys, Flintshire, and other portions remaining unsold of the estates of the late Mr. Hugh Jones, Wood-street, London. There was a very large attendance at the sale, and the competition for most of the lots, eighteen in all, was very spirited. The Maesmynan estate, of 900 acres, with its old mansion and the

romantic maesmynan wood, was started at £10,000, which soon advanced to £20,000. From that point the competition lay chiefly between Mr. John Evans, Maesycoed, Caerwys, and Mr. Pickstone, of Birkenhead, who ultimately secured it for £22,000. The timber on the estate is to be taken at a valuation, and it is estimated to be worth from £5,000 to £7,000. The other lots were rapidly disposed of to different persons, the principal purchasers being Mr. J. Evans, Maesycoed, Mr. Gold Edwards, Denbigh, Mr. W. Williams, Caerwys, and Mr. Enoch Lewis, Mostyn Quay.

Llangollen Advertiser, 4 July 1873, p. 3

William Pickstone very quickly moved to establish himself as the local squire and his family were regularly praised for their benevolence. The *Flintshire Observer* reported on 14 August 1874 that he was 'a gentleman who has but lately come to reside amongst use; but has already begun to take a great interest in the education and general welfare of the inhabitants' (p.4). One facet of this liberal approach to landownership was the opening up of Maes Mynan hall and estate to local school children, groups and societies at both Christmas and in the summertime. It also seems that it was during his residence that the Maes Mynan Cricket Ground and Club was established, with the first references to the club appearing in 1882 (*North Wales Express*, 30 June, 1882, p. 7; *Denbighshire Free Press*, 25 August 1883, p. 6).

CAERWYS. CHURCH SUNDAY SCHOOL. On Wednesday, the 3rd a treat was given to the juveniles of this Sunday School, by Mr and Mrs Pickstone, of Maesmynan. The children were all invited to the hall, where tea and a Christmas tree, loaded with beautiful presents were provided for them. The unfavourable weather prevented many little ones from coming, but about one hundred braved the rain and snow and went to the hall, where the good things provided for them, and what they saw, speedily made them forget all that was outside. The fine rooms were thrown open for the juveniles to walk through and view the many splendid works of art collected, the sight of which alone was well worth the walk down. The tea tables were covered with a variety of toothsome edibles, to the great delight of the guests. After tea had been thoroughly enjoyed the children sang some pretty songs. The Christmas tree was then stripped of its pretty fruit by Mr Pickstone, and as each gift was handed to its fortunate receiver, hearts beat high for joy, and each face was covered with smiles, while grateful thanks were given to Mrs Pickstone for her kindness in providing the presents. Every child was presented with a couple of oranges on leaving the bouse, and all went to their homes rejoicing. Many friends were also invited to be present, among wham were the Rev. W. Hughes, the rector, Miss Hughes, Mr Robert Lewis. Mr and Mrs Pickstone find their chief pleasure in promoting the happiness of others, and are indefatigable in doing good, and certainly on that Wednesday night they succeeded in niking many very happy.

North Wales Chronicle, 13 January 1877, p.6

PICNIC AT MAESMYNAN. Through the considerate kindness of William Pickstone. Esq., of Maesmynan, a grand picnic was given on Whit-Monday at Maesmynan to the church choirs and Sunday school teachers of the parishes of Caerwys, Ysceifiog, Nannerch, Bodfary, and Tre-meirchion. The treat had been anxiously looked forward to, and, the weather favoring the gathering, the treat was thoroughly enjoyed. Between two and three hundred persons assembled, and partook of an abundantly provided tea and its usual concomitants ... The spot selected for the picnic was The Wells, a favorite part of the beautiful Maesmynan wood, the party occupying the gorge between two immense rocks. After tea the choirs, conducted by the Rev. D. Williams, curate of Ysceifiog, sang several anthems and selected pieces, and the music had a particularly pleasing effect as it swelled through the air around the rustic spot where the choirs were assembled. Gomerydd, who is always a favorite with his audiences, sang some verses he had composed for the occasion to the honor of Mr and Mrs Pickstone for their usual kindness and present treat. Mr Edward Davies (Flint), and a youth from Ysceifiog also contributed to the harmony of the proceedings. Addresses were delivered by the Rev. Mr Browne, Rev. Mr Hughes, and Dr. Pierce, and as the mantle of night was gently enveloping the happy scene, the company took their departure after thanking Mr and Mrs Pickstone for the very pleasant afternoon's enjoyment they had provided.

Flintshire Observer, 25 May 1877, p.4

REJOICINGS AT MAESMYNAN, BODFARI.—On Monday. William Pickstone, Esq. of Maesmynan Bodfari, who is well known for his generosity and hospitality, entertained the Church Choir and Sunday School Teachers of Bodfari as well as those of the four adjoining Parishes of Caerwys, Ysceifiog, Nannerch, and Tremeirchion, to a sumptuous tea. The beautiful spot where at the invited guests met, lies close to the far-famed St. Michael's Well, which gushes out of a very ancient rock in volumes as cold as ice, and rolls along in a meandering stream through the wood-surrounded glen that interlips between the Well and the Hall. The fact that the invited guests embraced the Choirs and Teachers of no less than five Parishes of itself implies that the company formed no small number; but large as the social gathering was, still larger and more extensive was the preparation made through the generosity and hospitality of the worthy Host and Hostess - there being far more tea and currant cake provided than was needed. When all the company had been well satisfied, numerous songs were sweetly sung and, to the great delight of all present, the famous St. Michael's Well with its crystal fountain of aqua viva, the stupendous pre-adamite rock with its famous stalactites, the wood-surrounded glen and the magnificent concave above the well, all combined, responded with a resonant echo. Several speeches were delivered on this occasion. The Rev. T. B. H. Browne, Rector of Bodfari, in eulogistical terms, proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Pickstone for his munificence and beneficence upon this as well as upon all other occasions. This was seconded by the Rev. W. Hughes, Rector of Caerwys, who said that he was happy to endorse all that had been said in honour of Mr. Pickstone, whose generosity and hospitality are of renown.

Wrexham Guardian, 2 June 1877, p.6

MAESMYNAN, CAERWYS. Mr W. Pickstone, the proprietor of this estate, invited the whole of the residents in the township of Aberwhelecr to meet him on Monday, at his residence, Maesmynan, to partake of a good substantial knife and fork tea. The invitation was very generally responded to, and all who accepted it found themselves in a good place.

Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser, 27 April 1878, p. 7

The same report commented on the significant improvements made by William Pickstone to the hall and estate:

Mr Pickstone, since his residence here, has much improved the house and buildings, but especially the fields. In the latter old broad hedges have disappeared, and modern fences and good roads have taken their places.

This included closing the old turnpike road (previously the main route between Maes Mynan and the town of Caerwys) which ran up from Groesffordd, called Ffordd Mehemia (*Flintshire Observer*, 30 July 1885, p. 5). In the 1880s he also put in pipes to carry water to his estate cottages (*Rhyl Advertiser*, 27 December 1884, p. 3). The Maes Mynan estate at this time was a significant local employer. When in January 1884 the Pickstone's invited all of his workmen to a dinner at the hall, about 70 sat down at the tables to eat and sing (*Flintshire Observer*, 17 Jan 1884, p. 8). Most of these workmen were employed in agricultural roles and William Pickstone took a great interest in farming practices in north Wales. His purchase of the estate coincided with a major agricultural depression and significant calls in Wales for land reform. He appears to have been a Liberal, was associated with the Anti-Tithe League and in favour of Disestablishment of the Church. As a landlord he felt a responsibility to assist his tenant farmers. This included a leading role in the formation of the Vale of Clwyd Stud Company in 1884:

VALE OF CLWYD STUD COMPANY. On Wednesday, a well-attended meeting was held at the Bull Hotel, Denbigh, under the presidency of Mr. W. Pickstone (Maesmynan), when it was resolved to form a society, to be called the Vale of Clwyd Stud Company. It was further resolved that a first-class entire horse should be purchased, such as one as would be useful for farmers and others requiring first-rate horses for heavy work. The following experienced and well-known horse keepers were selected to attend the great horse show at Islington and purchase the horse: Messrs. David Jones, T. J. Edwards, T. Kellett and William Edwards (Ruthin). We doubt not that this movement will meet with the hearty approval and co-operation of agriculturists and others in the neighbourhood.

Denbighshire Free Press, 28 February 1884, p. 8

William Pickstone's own farming buildings at Maes Mynan were also thrown open to other landowners and farmers as an exemplar to be replicated for improved agricultural productivity. In September 1879, for example, a group of visitors were admitted to 'admire the spacious cattle-sheds, with their arched glass roofs and vine pots crowning the pillars, and the ingenious arrangement for watering the vines with a perforated pipe running round the building' (*Cambrian News*, 19 September 1879, p. 7). The most significant innovation on the estate was the introduction of a silo for storing fodder (*Flintshire Observer*, 9 August 1883, p. 8; *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, 1 February 1884, p. 7). It was reported in August 1883 that William Pickstone was the first in Wales to introduce this method, and in February 1884 he opened up the system for viewing:

CAERWYS. OPENING OF MR PICKSTONE'S SILO. The silo of Mr William Pickstone, Maesmynan, Caerwys, was opened on Saturday, in the presence of a number of gentlemen who had been invited to witness the success, or otherwise, of the experiment ... While the top was being removed from the silo, Mr Pickstone briefly stated how the fodder had been laid down. The material itself was thistles, prickly comfrey, hedge bottoms, and, in fact, the apparently most useless material on his farm. This was carried during the prevalence of very wet weather, and after having been placed in the silo, which is an old gasometer, admirably adapted to the purpose, were weighted for a time till it sunk, when the silo was again refilled, and after the addition of a moderate quantity of salt it was sealed with wood on the clean straw, which composed the top layer, and upon the wood a thickness of earth was placed, and finally concrete which effectually rendered the pit air tight. Of course, some interest was felt when the silo was broken-into. The straw below the wood and immediately over the fodder was wet and rotten, and the smell from it was decidedly unpleasant, and the fodder itself for some inches was damp, and had precisely the smell of old grains. At a greater depth there seemed some improvement, but the sourness of the material was too pronounced to be satisfactory, and it was predicted that exposure to the air would remove its unpleasant odour, and give it that fragrant smell of tobacco which is characteristic of successfully preserved ensilage. The time which it was predicted would be occupied by the open air in the purification of the food was twelve hours, but after keeping a sample forty-eight hours there was no improvement in it, and it smelt at times like a tanyard and at others like refuse from a brewery, and certainly did not then appear to be material animals would care to feed upon. We can only hope, however, that greater success attended the material fairly beneath the surface. After samples of the food had been handed round, Mr J. Jenkins, Ruthin, moved a vote of thanks to Mr Pickstone, and Major Mainwaring, in seconding it, complimented Mr Pickstone on the pluck he had displayed in resorting to the experiment, which was unique in the county. Mr Pickstone, in responding, felt satisfied that the experiment boded success both from the appearance and the smell of the food below the surface. He thought the tenant farmers should provide themselves with silos with the aid of their landlords. As a rule, tenant farmers were not rich enough to spend any money in the construction of such places, and therefore if silos were to be built it was the landlords who should make them, and this could be done under the five per cent arrangement of the Agricultural Holdings Act, repayable in twenty-five years. He spoke strongly in favour of the convenience of silos and the superiority of ensilage, which had been found to effect a marked improvement in the quality of butter from cows fed upon it. Beyond this, as a convenient stored food, it would do away with the necessity for the cultivation of turnips. After a few words from Mr Bowdage, who was favourable to the system, the party adjourned to luncheon, which had been provided by the host.

North Wales Chronicle, 2 Feb. 1884, p.8

Pickstone was also very interested in horticulture and developed productive gardens at Maes Mynan, partly as a model to be copied by tenants and cottagers. This included a crop of mushrooms, potatoes grown under a glass roof and quantities of hothouse and bedding plants grown from cuttings which he sold at auction at Rhyl and other places for good profit (*Flintshire Observer*, 31 May 1883, p.5). In 1883 and 1884 he held sales of plants at Maes Mynan which were very well attended, again providing people from the locality and from further afield with an opportunity to inspect the 'extensive and beautiful grounds; the splendid flowers and plants which abound on these extensive and charming grounds' (*Flintshire Observer*, 7 June 1883, p.8; 29 May 1884, p. 5).

In January 1885 a prominent north wales newspaper included a full write-up of the Pickstone's house at Maes Mynan (*The North Wales Chronicle*, 24 January 1885, p. 6):

- Sufficiently exceptional in character to deserve a detailed notice, as it is not only a house, but a large farm, a horticultural nursery and a place which combines the ornamental with the useful, and is, in fact, a local zoo without the animals, if we are to except the horses, cows and sheep.
- The house is within easy access of Caerwys Station, and it cannot be said that it is in a particularly sheltered position when the wind is north, or north-east, but as those are exceptional quarters it may generally be considered a residence combining a maximum of advantages.
- On approaching it the visitor feels some difficulty in defining it, and fails to know how to describe it till he has become more intimately acquainted with it. The house is large, but by no means handsome, and two somewhat tall chimneys at the back, of the order known as stacks, add nothing to its beauty.
- The greenhouses and conservatories are the great feature in connection with the establishment, as they are by far the largest and best appointed in the district.
- A remarkable feature in the place is the great deal which has been produced in an aesthetic direction out of nearly nothing. This is evidenced on passing through the entrance, where four earthenware sewage pipes, which have been covered with slag from the engine-room, and present a very rustic appearance and seem to have a greater affinity for moss and natural decorations that come naturally, than would be expected.
- In front of the house there is a large concreted bason, which serves to receive the water projected by the fountain. This is supplied with water from an adjacent mountain, and the fact may be here referred to that Mr. Pickstone has had water conveyed to his establishment from the mountain at a considerable expenses, but its convenience is, of course, very considerable for the watering of his numerous plants, the supply of the baths and the fountain, and the washing of turnips for cattle, but it may be questioned whether it is an economical supply if there is a reasonable one from ordinary sources. The large bath which is on the left of the house is of concrete, and large enough for a swim to a person desiring it.
- The billiard room adjoins and, like the bath room, is under glass, and full of floral beauties, but neither of the apartments have yet a furnished appearance in consequence of the recent alterations which have been carried out in the edifice.
- The next greenhouse entered is rich in camelias just coming into bloom, and the quantity of flowers in a week or two will be enormous. The next house, which is full of plants, some of them scarce, possesses some geraniums that show the fertility the soil they are grown in and the care which has been bestowed upon them. In an adjoining apartment an imitation of the dropping well at Knaresborough was projected some time ago, but it is not yet complete, and in this same room there was observed a scuttle of bulbs of the new order of daffodils called 'Sir Watkin' which was stated to be worth £300 as it stood.
- Mr. Pickstone is well-known as a florist, and large consignments from Maesmynan find a ready sale in the large city markets, and not long ago the agent from a New York house purchased a large quantity of bulbs to go abroad.
- The cowshed is one of the most remarkable institutions at the rear of the house. The roof is composed of young trees of the larch species and the roof is groined with wood supports, and presents a very similar appearance to the crypts of several cathedrals where they are sufficiently large to come into comparison, for it must be remembered the place is large enough to hold eighty cows, and the space over this is devoted to the cultivation of flowers.

- The large conservatory is a beautiful sight and the ensemble, with its palms and tropical ferns, is very beautiful, and, it must be admitted surprising in a district where flower cultivation is not carried on to anything like the extent it is in other parts of the country. Mr. Pickstone goes in for it. In this room there are tomatoes ready to be eaten, and a very large variety of plants evidently selected with discrimination for the purpose of producing an agreeable contrast. The forcing room is farther on upon the second storey, and here there is a bewildering variety of hue and beauty of tint. The next room is a long corridor, not more than two yards wide, but of enormous length, and here the primulas reigned supreme in all their beauty, nasturtions were in flower on the wall, and orange trees were rich in produce, which, though small, was fragrant and deep in colour and eyeable, if not eatable.
- Passing down a beautiful staircase on to the floor, the rockery is reached, which is a marvel of rustic beauty. The warty looking stone which is used, was found on the estate, and is unsurpassed for the purpose for which it is used. It has a very diversified surface, free from silica, and the ferns and mosses take to it with remarkable avidity, as though they were almost able to live on it, not merely as a habitation, but to derive sustenance from it.
- The ferns and mosses in this house were being abited with warm water, and their green butts were exquisite. This is really the most interesting part of the place, and the eye feels incapable of duly assimilating its beauties, and thus it is ever fresh, and like a beautiful landscape, not only never palls, but is presented with fresh beauties under every change of sunlight, or even absence of sunlight.
- To convey by description any ideas of the Arcadian beauties of this one apartment would be impossible, and having once seen it, it must remain in the mind as one of its pictures worth cherishing.
- This is the last room under glass, but the farm is highly interesting, in consequence of the scientific way in which it is managed, but it must be admitted that some of the arrangements are more consonant with the resources of a gentleman farmer than what comes within the realms of practicability.
- For the sale of flowers, the nurseries are undoubtedly handicapped by their distance from the large centres of population, and if they were near enough to Liverpool to allow of the produce being conveyed to market, and exposed for sale by an agent of the grower, the profit would necessarily be larger than can be secured by the present arrangement under which the railways absorbs a proportion and the town florist by far too large a proportion.

Extraordinarily, just one month after this glowing report of Mr. Pickstone's activities at Maes Mynan, the contents of the house and farm were put up for sale:

CAERWYS. SALE AT MAESMYNAN HALL. One of the most important public sales which have taken place in Flintshire for some years commences on Monday next, and will be continued on the two following days, at Maesmynan Hall, near Caerwys, the seat of William Pickstone, Esq.

On the first day, the implements, machinery, 15 agricultural and carriage horses, carriages, harness, and farm produce will be offered for sale.

On Tuesday, the elegant and costly household furniture (principally manufactured by Messrs. Gillow for the Lord Hopetoun), will come under the hammer, together with the unique oil paintings, water-color drawings, engravings, bronzes, statuary, old Crown Derby, old Worcester, Oriental and Dresden China

On Wednesday, the remainder of the furniture, together with the effects in the saddle and gun rooms and other offices, will be disposed of.

Situated as Maesmynan is, close to the Caerwys station, it is within easy reach of large centres of population, and also of the inhabitants of Flintshire and the Vale of Cwyd. The attendance at this important sale, which has been entrusted to Mr. John Pritchard, auctioneer, of Bangor, will be undoubtedly very large.

Flintshire Observer, 12 Feb 1885, p. 5

It is completely unclear what instigated this sale, which brought an end to the Pickstone's lively and useful residence at Maes Mynan. By July 1885, the estate was put up for sale, William Pickstone having moved to live at Holinghurst Radcliffe near Manchester.

Sales.

Sale by Mr. John Pritchard.

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**THE MAESMYNAN HALL ESTATE,**  
**FLINTSHIRE, NORTH WALES.**

**An Enjoyable, Sporting, and Freehold**  
**Residential ESTATE, of about**  
**1,200 Acres**

**MR. JOHN PRITCHARD,**  
**WILL**  
**SELL BY PUBLIC AUCTION,**  
Unless in the meantime an acceptable offer be made),  
**ON THE PREMISES, at 3 p.m.,**  
**On THURSDAY, JULY 30th, 1885,**  
**AN EXCEEDINGLY VALUABLE AND IMPOR-**  
**TANT**

**FREEHOLD ESTATE,**  
**KNOWN AS**  
**"The Maesmynan Hall Estate,"**  
**On the borders of Flintshire and Denbighshire.**

**THE** old fashioned brick built MANSION is substantially erected and commodious, surrounded by young and thriving Shrubbery, with extensive and well laid out Gardens adjoining, and containing vast and magnificent Hot-houses and Conservatories, comprising over 20,000 feet of Glass, heated throughout; also substantial, extensive, and costly Farm Buildings, laid on with water throughout, with a never-failing and fully available water-power working all the machinery. The Estate is about 1,200 acres in extent, lying in a ring fence, is finely timbered, and comprises some of the richest and most fertile Grazing and Arable Land in the Principality. Caerwys, a first class Station on the London and North Western Railway Company, adjoins the property, from which London, Manchester, and Liverpool are but a few hours journey respectively. The Estate itself affords excellent Shooting and Fishing; the neighbourhood is most delightful, and possesses great attractions to lovers of Field Sports, three packs of Hounds (Fox, Otter, and Harriers) regularly hunting the district.

Plans and particulars are in course of preparation, and may shortly be obtained of Messrs. ALLEN, PRESTON, and HALLIVANT, 65, Princess Street, Manchester; of the Vendor's Solicitors, Messrs. LOUIS and Co., Manor House, Rutlin; or of the Auctioneer, Boddyfryd, Bangor, N.W.

(*Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, 8 July 1885, p.1)

#### d) Sales the fire and Mr. Bickerton (1885-90)

The estate failed to sell in 1885 and was re-advertised for sale in 1888 (copies of the sale particulars and conditions of sale are available at NLW, Llwyn estate A.9).

During this period there was concern that the estate would pass to someone not connected to the area, who would not care for its cultural heritage:

And now alas! It is on its way probably to some cotton lord, or other, who will care nothing about Llywelyn our last Prince ... nor the reason why this one seat of his was called Llys Maesmynan.

*Flintshire Observer*, 13 August 1885, p.8

In the sale catalogues Maes Mynan was described as an 'old-fashioned brick-built mansion', adjoined to upwards of 1,200 acres of land in the parishes of Caerwys, Bodfari and Ysceifiog:

The house is situated in the beautiful valley of the Chwiler, at the foot of the far-famed Maesmynan wood, which is one of the features of the country, is surrounded by gardens and pleasure grounds tastefully laid out, with conservatories, hot houses and thriving shrubberies.

The farm buildings are substantial and very extensive, and are supplied with a never-failing and fully available water power.

The estate commands very fine views of the surrounding country, is entirely in a ring fence, is richly timbered and comprises some of the most fertile grazing and arable land in the district, and extends to upwards of 900 acres, together with the right to 300 acres of sheepwalk on Moel y Parc mountain.

The property affords excellent shooting and fishing, and possesses great attracting to lovers of field sport. Fox hounds and horses, as well as otter hounds ...

### **Lot 1**

- Maesmynan Hall, Buildings, Garden & Ground
- Cae Bricks
- Weirglodd Budr
- Weirglodd y Pandy
- Weirglodd-y-Groesffordd
- Bryn Pwll Gwyn
- Groesffordd Cottage & Garden
- Cae Groesffordd
- Tyddyn Heiling
- Cae Cuning
- Fron Sheat
- Cae Gyrne / Part of Fron Sheat
- Maesmynan
- Plantation & Pasture
- Young Plantation
- Pond
- Cae Colmendy
- Plantation in Cae Bricks
- Cae Mary Williams (Plantation in)
- Weirglodd-y-Gyrn (Plantation in)
- Plantation (Coed Maesmynan)
- Plantation, part cleared
- Weirglodd-y-Gyrn
- Blorant & rough in
- Coed Maesmyan & part added
- Blorant, part
- Coed Maesmynan, part added
- Blorant, part
- Coed Maesmynan, part cleared
- Land, formerly garden
- Coed Mawr
- Plantation above mill
- Part of Weirglodd Groesffordd
- Weirglodd-y-Groesffordd
- Weirglodd-y-Pandy
- Plantation and rough
- Cae Pen-y-Pandy



- Hendre Faenol
- Plantation & rough in
- Nant y Wrach, part
- Ffrith Bella &c.
- Hendre Faenol, part
- Hendre Faenol, plantation
- Cae Pen y Pandy Park
- Wood & rough in
- Ffrith Bedw Caer Ochar
- Ffrith Delyn
- Moel y Parc sheepwalk & pasture

After the 1885 sale had failed, its 1888 successor likewise failed to secure the sale of the estate in one lot, with only small purchases (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 6 October 1888, p.6). After this the property was mortgaged to a Mr. Dugdale and managed by Mr. Bell, the land agent to the Bodrhyddan estate (*Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 25 October 1889, p. 7). The hall was 'in charge of a caretaker'.

The property suffered a severe blow in 1889 as a consequence of severe fire, which was reported in detail in most north Wales newspapers:

#### CAERWYS

**TREMENDOUS FIRE AT MAESMYNAN HALL.** About half-past four on Monday afternoon, the Denbigh Fire Bell sounded the alarm, and a crowd of townspeople quickly gathered to the Town Hall, and learnt that Sergeant Jarvis had just received a telegram from Caerwys, stating that there was a fire at Maesmynan and asking for the Brigade. Even whilst the news was being obtained by the crowd a couple of horses were being run out from the Bull Hotel stabling, quickly followed by Capt Lloyd. With surprising rapidity, which really did them credit, twelve out of the fourteen members of the Brigade were on the spot, and the appliances and engine being got ready with the utmost dexterity, off they went (under command of Capt Lloyd, Lieutenants I Ellis Williams and B Holgate being also present) amid much excitement, and in the presence of a great number of spectators. They pushed on at great speed (after stopping at the bottom of the town to put the reins in better order) until they reached Bodfari, but by this time the heavy load - something like a couple of tons - had begun to tell on only two horses, and it was necessary to slacken speed, but after a little breathing, off they went again and arrived in a very short space of time.

When the Brigade started, they were in ignorance (as was everyone else at Denbigh) of the nature of the fire, but on nearing Bodfari the flames could be seen most vividly, and they realised that they had some stiff work before them. Their arrival was greeted with evident satisfaction. Already a crowd of persons had arrived from Caerwys, Bodfari, and the district, and some good work was being done in cutting off connections between portions on fire and buildings not yet touched. As most of our readers know, the buildings, out houses, &c., are of tremendous size, whilst the glass houses for forcing purposes, conservatories, &c., really cover acres of land, being laid out by the late owner, Mr Pickstone, regardless of expense and on an immense scale. These buildings, converge one on the other, and are intermixed so as to form one vast block and surround the large stockyard. In the stockyard were some seven large stacks, the produce of the land for this year, and some of these were built close up to the granary, which contained some 500 hobbets of oats. Some of the stacks were under an iron shed, and close to these the fire seems to have started in a small stack of straw under a shed. How it began nobody knows, but it was discovered on fire about 4 o'clock, and the alarm given. It quickly spread to the large shed of hay and then to the buildings and glass houses, the latter being composed of wood and glass soon became a ready prey to the devouring element.

The Hall is, we understand, at present un-tenanted and in charge of a caretaker, the estate being under the control of Mr William Bell, of Bodrhyddan, as trustee. This gentleman was at once summoned and soon arrived on the spot, once summoned and soon arrived on the spot bringing with him the Bodrhyddan hand fire engine, a similar useful appliance being quickly sent from Major Buddicom of

Penbedw. On the Denbigh Brigade's arrival they at once took charge of the operations. It was seen that the straw stack and hay stacks under the shed, were doomed, and practical firemanship at once suggested saving the buildings, and preventing as much as possible the spread of the flames. There was a splendid supply of water, and by means of apertures in the walls two sets of hose were easily run through from the engine into the yard at convenient points, without the trouble of using long lengths to run all round the buildings. The water being so abundant, and workmen ready and willing, two sets of hose were at once put into play, and kept at it pouring out a large volume of water. The two small hand engines were brought into use at points where they could be of service. Attention was concentrated on saving the buildings; and the connections were at once cut off, and water used to overcome the heat or combat the flames. In this work the brigade were successful both the granary and its valuable contents being saved, also the best stabling and other useful buildings in close proximity. In the glass houses, the flames raged furiously, and the work here was both difficult and dangerous. The wood caught readily and blazed away steadily, every now and again the glass burst and scattered in all directions, making the most curious and at times really musical sounds, although its flying about was dangerous and in dealing with this part of the work, the firemen got some nasty cuts. There was great destruction of property here, though portions were saved. Some of the stacks were well cut off from the burning ones, and by dint of much care and perseverance several of them were saved. It took the brigade some three or four hours to so master the flames, as to prevent the further spread of the fire and they had to toil on unremittingly throughout the night to subdue the flames to such a condition that it was safe to leave the contents of the hay shed and other matter to smoulder itself away. As the night, dark, dismal, and wet proceeded, the men and brigade toiled on and passed a most miserable night, many of them being several times drenched to the skin, and their clothes dried on them by the fire and heat, and it was not until about half-past eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, after over 15 hours consecutive work, that the Denbigh Brigade could withdraw and return home leaving some men in charge of the Penbedw engine to watch the contents of the hay shed, which would smoulder on for days. The brigade reached home about 9.30, having done the work in a manner highly creditable to them.

Fortunately the fire was so checked as to prevent any damage whatever to the Mansion. The fire was by far the largest that has been seen in the district for many years even during this season of 'big fires' this stands out as by far the largest.

Considerable excitement prevailed throughout the neighbourhood, a large numbers of people visited the place from all parts. As we have stated, the origin of the fire is at present quite unknown. The damage has been very great, indeed it has been roughly estimated at some £3,000 and we understand that much of the loss is likely to fall on the owners, as the premises and contents are only partially insured,

***Denbighshire Free Press, 26 October 1889, p. 8***

THE FIRE AT A WELSH MANSION The fire which broke out at Maesmynan Hall, Caerwys, North Wales, late on Monday night, was of a very serious character. Maesmynan Hall, recently occupied by Mr William, Pickstone, is celebrated for its conservatories, containing 32,000 feet of glass, and costing over £6,000. These conservatories are erected over a large shed which contained a corn-mill and a large quantity of threshed grain. Adjacent is a similar shed, used as a cowhouse and granary, while outside was the stackyard, containing the produce of one of the largest farms in the district. The fire broke out in the yard. The shed then caught fire, and immediately the handsome conservatories were enveloped in flames. Three fire brigades were soon on the spot from Denbigh and the district, but could only save the granary. The large conservatories collapsed with a fearful crash, the glass and lead melting in streams. The damage to the conservatories alone is estimated at over £3,000. In addition to that an enormous quantity of produce has been consumed. The fire raged all through Monday night, and was only finally got under on Tuesday.

***South Wales Echo, 23 Oct 1889, p. 4***

Shortly after the fire Mr. William Henry Bickerton (d.1907) was appointed agent of the estate and took up residence at Maes Mynan. According to his obituary 'during his stay here he made himself very popular, and took a lively interest in everything which conduced to the welfare of the parish' (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 21

September 1907, p. 2). He was elected a member of the first Caerwys Parish Council, and was also a church warden.

He was also integral to the reestablishment of the Maes Mynan Cricket Club in 1890, which he also served as Captain: 'Through Mr. Bickerton's kindness in giving the club the preference of any ground on the estate, they are now in a position to arrange matches with the neighbouring clubs at earliest possible dates' (*Flintshire Observer*, 12 June 1890, p.8). The club played on a regular basis through the early-1890s (*Flintshire Observer*, 16 Oct 1890, p. 8; 21 May 1891, p.8; 3 March 1892, p. 5; 7 July 1892, p. 5; 18 May 1893, p.5).

Mr. Bickerton also resumed some of the duties and responsibilities previously carried out by the Pickstones; providing a Christmas tree for Caerwys Sunday School, for example (*Flintshire Observer*, 15 January 1891, p. 8). He also seemingly permitted visitors to the area to enjoy the renowned scenery of the estate:

CAERWYS VISITORS. This ancient town has drawn into it a goodly number of visitors this summer, and each fine day strangers may be seen rambling along the country lanes, or climbing the adjacent hills, or strolling through the picturesque Maesmynan Woods. Occasionally, busy artists are observed transferring to canvas the beautiful rural scenery so abundant in the neighbourhood. Undoubtedly, the chief attraction of this little town to those who are able for a brief season to escape from the madding crowd of our great cities, is the extreme healthiness of the place, and the quiet rest they can there obtain after the turmoil of the city.

***Flintshire Observer*, 24 July 1890, p. 5**

William Henry Bickerton departed Caerwys in 1896, after the successful sale of Maes Mynan, to take up the position of estate agent in Oxfordshire. He was presented with a case of table silver and an illuminated address by the parishioners of Caerwys:

MR. W. H. BICKERTON, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS LEAVING CAERWYS. Dear Sir, We cannot allow the occasion of your departure to pass without showing you in some tangible form the high esteem in which you are held. During your seven years' stay among us, which, alas, have been too short, you have endeared yourself to all classes, and we would specially mention your uniform kindness, and that of your dear wife, to the poor of the parish. Your earnestness and zeal in everything you undertook on behalf of the public, have invariably won general respect and appreciation, and we would particularly record your invaluable services as a Parish Councillor. We sincerely regret your departure from among us, but at the same time cordially wish yourself and Mrs Bickerton a prolonged and happy life in your new sphere. As small tokens of our love and regard for you, we beg your acceptance of this address and the accompanying case of silver.

***Denbighshire Free Press*, 11 July 1896, p. 3**

#### **e) Mr. W. Williams's ownership of Maes Mynan**

The Maes Mynan estate was again put up for public sale at the Bull Hotel, Denbigh on 10 July 1895. At this point the property had been reduced to just under 900 acres:

REPORT BY THE LAND OFFICE.

**LOT 1.—MAESMYNAN HALL and HOME FARM** (part of). Upon this lot stands that substantially, old-fashioned, brick-built mansion of picturesque and quaint appearance, known as Maesmynan Hall. This residence lies in the beautiful valley of the Chwiler, near to Caerwys Railway Station, within easy distance by rail of the leading English Towns. This lot comprises the far-famed Maesmynan Wood, one of the attractive features of this lovely part of the country. The stabling is good. The home-farm buildings are well built and extensive, and there are large and productive kitchen gardens, orchard, large conservatory, &c. The land is rich, well fenced and watered. As a whole, this property forms a convenient residential and sporting estate. It lies in a ring fence, is well timbered, has superior land, and also the right of grazing 500 sheep on Moelyparc Mountain. The Flint and Denbigh Hounds hunt the district. The shooting, which is excellent, could be easily improved, and there are good fishing rivers and lakes in the vicinity. There are public and private schools, golf club, &c., within easy reach. Arrangements can be A. R. P. made for early possession .. .. 550 2 24

LOTS 2, 3, 4, and 5 are in the

(*Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, 21 June 1895, p. 4)

The purchaser of the estate was Mr. W. Williams J.P. of Glasfryn, Caerwys – a timber merchant. The *Denbighshire Free Press* 'heartily congratulated the new owner and also the neighborhood on the purchase. His many friends will be heartily glad to hear of it' (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 17 August 1895, p. 5). He did not reside at the hall; it was instead tenanted to a Mr. C. Wright, though Williams made improvements to the estate during his ownership:

THE NEW LAKE. Mr Willams, Glasfryn, the owner of Maesmynan Hall, has during the last two years made very great improvements on the estate. The latest enterprise is the making of a spacious lake in Maesmynan wood. It covers a large area, and receives its supply of water from St Michael's Well and the stream. It is most tastefully arranged and some very beautiful shrubs have been planted on its banks. Mr Williams proposes to stock it with fish, mainly trout, and when the shrubs and plants have had sufficient time to develop it will prove one of the most delightful spots in the neighbourhood.

*Denbighshire Free Press*, 22 July 1899, p. 5

The estate also prospered as a fine spot for shooting and sport:

CAERWYS. Sport Extraordinary. Last week a very remarkable feat was accomplished by four gentlemen who were out on a shooting expedition at Moel Park, on the Maesmynan state, the property of Mr W Williams, J.P., Glasfryn. They bagged ten woodcocks in a comparatively small area in the rabbit warren in one day. We fancy this beats any record we have of woodcock killing among the Welsh mountains.

*Denbighshire Free Press*, 10 December 1898, p. 7

However, by 1900 the estate was again back on the market (*North Wales Times*, 14 April 1900, p.5).

## f) The Davey family of Maesmynan





(RCAHMW, Peter Davis Digitised Postcards Collection C853326, c.1905)

By the end of summer 1901 the Davey family had taken up residence at Maes Mynan. W.J. Davey (d.1908) was a native of Truro, Cornwall. He made his fortune as a ship owner, ship and insurance broker and merchant in Liverpool (he was partner in Messrs. Elder, Dempster & Co and director of various ventures including the British and African Steam Navigation Co.; Elder's Navigation Collieries; African Oil Mills; Elder Dempster Shipping Ltd., and Imperial Direct West India Mail Service. He was a Wesleyan and a Tory (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 26 September 1908, p.5; *Cardiff Times*, 19 December 1908, p.10).

In his obituary it was commented that he 'took great delight in horticulture, particularly in orchids and the good breeds of horses and sheep; and since his residence at Maesmynan he has rendered great service to agriculturalists and others desiring improvement in breed of stock'. This element was continued by his son and heir, Harold Davey. In this sense, the Davey family's residence at Maes Mynan was reminiscent of William Pickstone's.

W.J. Davey regularly showed his horses at agricultural events across north Wales, having particular success with his hack and cob (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 13 June 1908, p. 8; 27 July 1907, p. 5). His son, Harold. Was especially innovative in his trials of new agricultural implements and practices. In October 1915 he explored new methods for the removal of bracken from his lands (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 9 October 1915, p. 8); and in 1918 he purchased a state-of-the-art steam-ploughing kit made by Messers Fowler of Leeds (*Denbighshire Free Press*, 29 June 1918, p.4). In 1916 he was granted a patent relating to a machine for thinning turnips and similar crops (*North Wales Chronicle*, 8 September 1916, p. 3) and in 1921 the successful Flintshire firm of Corbett, Williams & Son (Rhuddlan) who excelled in the manufacture of agricultural implements, were permitted to trial their new turnip-thinner on the Maes Mynan estate – it was the 'centre of attraction' at the Smithfield Show the following year and in much demand thereafter (*The Implement & Machinery Review*, 1 April 1921).

As with the Pickstones, the Davey's quickly integrated themselves into the life of the community:

GENEROUS GIFT. Mrs Davey, of Maesmyan Hall, with her usual generosity, has presented every workman on the estate with a handsome and comfortable wicker easy chair wherein the recipients can rest their weary limbs on their hearths after their day's toil.

***Flintshire Observer, December 1910, p. 8***

Maes Mynan also reemerged as a prominent centre for shooting and hunting:

MAESMYNAN SHOOTING. These famous covers were shot over last week by Mr Harold Davey and party, excellent sport being obtained. In the olden time, when Maesmynan covers were held by the Mostyn family the event was quite a red-letter day, the fine wood, with its lovely walks, noble rocks, and famous St. Michael's Well and Cave, being considered rich sport. A fox was seen during the day.

***Denbighshire Free Press, 14 March 1903, p.8***

The Flintshire and Denbighshire Hounds regularly met at Maes Mynan (*Flintshire Observer*, 14 December 1893, p. 5, 3 January 1913; *Denbighshire Free Press* 28 February 1891, p. 4, 30 December 1905, p. 4, 14 March 1908, p.5; *West Coast Pioneer*, 14 March 1907, p. 70).

Harold William Davey was High Sheriff of Flintshire for 1916/17 and JP by 1914.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **CONTEMPORARY HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

The history of Maes Mynan outlined in this report provides considerable scope to Acorn Leisure for crafting a distinctive and attractive visitor experience for Maes Mynan Park grounded in the cultural heritage of the site and its links to other locations in the area and across north Wales.

Maes Mynan has long been recognised as a special place, on account of its associations with the Princes of Gwynedd and its outstanding landscape setting. Many of the historical depictions and descriptions of the place featured in this report could be directly reused as core marketing material. Thomas Pennant's description is particularly evocative. Serious consideration should also be given to possibility of branding Maes Mynan Park 'the Arcadia of Wales'. This unique designation, derived from 19<sup>th</sup> century descriptions, could be particularly attractive. The history of Maes Mynan and Caerwys as a place to visit for relaxation, leisure and scenic beauty (especially following the creation of the Mold-Denbigh railway) is another element which should be exploited going forward.

There are many aspects of the site's history which could be incorporated into the Maes Mynan Park brand and experience. The objective should be to make use of the site's history and heritage in ways that are easily accessible and comprehensible, and contribute towards an enhanced experience of place. The ambition should be to present the richness of site-specific, local, regional and Welsh cultural heritage to an interested, educated and engaged visitor. The communication of this heritage need not always be pronounced; information overload and text-heavy approaches should be avoided and more subtle methods should also be explored, whilst catering for the needs of visitors who want more detail.

At a basic level a history section could be added to the Park's website, a booklet or leaflet summarising the site's heritage could be placed in each lodge and heritage information boards could be erected on or near the site. More creative methods could include the naming of the lodges and other buildings within the park, tailored heritage walks or cycle routes, the selection of materials used to decorate the lodges and reception, and guides of 'things to do and see' within the region linked to Maes Mynan's history.

The most distinctive element of Maes Mynan's history is its connection to the princes of Gwynedd and its status as a *llys*. This could be promoted on site by naming each of the lodges a *llys*; or alternatively naming the reception *Y Llys*. The designation should also be used to connect into and encourage visits to other heritage sites across north Wales associated with the princes of Wales (see <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/best-history/castles-princes-wales>). This period in Welsh history merits deeper understanding by visitors and residents alike.

There are also other opportunities to utilise the heritage of place as part of the Park's brand. Some of the place-names, or personal names associated with the site could be used to name the lodges e.g.:

#### **Personal names:**

- Llys Gwenllian (Gwenllian de Lacy, daughter of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, who held Maes Mynan in the late-13<sup>th</sup> century, providing the clearest connection to the Princes of Gwynedd)
- Llys Jane Massey (One of the daughters of Robert Massey, who fought to maintain her rights to her Maes Mynan inheritance)
- Llys Mostyn (To recognise the Mostyn family's long ownership of the estate)
- Llys Lewys ab Edward (The poet from Bodfari who sang a praise poem to Thomas Salusbury of Maes Mynan; this would also provide a connection to the Caerwys eisteddfodau)
- Llys Pickstone (Owners of the estate in the 19<sup>th</sup> century)
- Llys Edward Owen (The last Mostyn tenant at Maes Mynan)

#### **Place-names:**

- Llys Mihangel (To reference Ffynnon and Nant Mihangel in Coed Maes Mynan)
- Llys Blorant (To reference a nearby fieldname)



- Llys Moel y Parc (To reference the former deer park)
- Llys Mary Williams (To reference a nearby fieldname)
- Llys Heilyn (To reference a nearby fieldname)
- Llys Cae Bricks (To reference the fieldname in which the Park is located)

There is a currently a significant movement to preserve historic place-names in Wales and any attempt to recognise earlier fieldnames would be welcomed. In line with the site's heritage, particularly the Caerwys eisteddfodau, opportunities should also be explored on site for communicating the significance of the Welsh language; including user-friendly opportunities for visitors to engage with and learn about the language.

The heritage could also be used as the source of a logo for the Park (e.g. a deer).

The agricultural and horticultural heritage of the site also provides a grounding for a strong message about the provision of 'high-quality, locally-sourced Welsh produce and products'.

On site, opportunities should also be created for maximising the enjoyment of the place. Could footpaths be (re)established on site and within the vicinity of the Park, especially within Coed Maes Mynan towards Ffynnon Mihangel? Are there opportunities for recreating the ethos of the picnics and visits that were so popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, by setting up designated areas in Coed Maes Mynan, or special scenic spots for art, photography, reading etc.? Routes (for walking and cycling etc.) should also be established for creating easy access to Caerwys and its pubs, shops and other facilities. A strong narrative of connection should be created to encourage visits to Caerwys. Likewise, visitors should be encouraged to explore the Clwydian Range via Moel y Parc, through dialogue with the AONB. Moel y Parc is intrinsically associated with the history of Maes Mynan and provides the primary view from the Park, so should form part of the visitor experience. A more innovative addition to this strand could involve the creation of a package of walks from the site, based on historical documents, such as the 1737 perambulation / survey of the boundary of the lordship of Ruthin, which is rich in local features but also connects Maes Mynan to other places in the region.

In terms of broader regional connectivity, Maes Mynan's history provides direct links with a number of other towns, villages and heritage sites across Flintshire, Denbighshire and wider north Wales. The most obvious association – sites linked to the Princes of Wales – is referenced above. Other possibilities include:

- Ruthin: The de Grey family's ownership of Maes Mynan establishes a clear connection with the town of Ruthin, especially Ruthin Castle and St. Peter's Church
- Bodfari: Maes Mynan was part of the parish of Bodfari; the other obvious link is with John Mostyn's memorial in the Church. In addition to the pubs in Caerwys, The Dinorben Arms is a high-quality venue which could be promoted
- Sites linked to the Mostyn family: e.g. Mostyn Hall, Flint Castle (John Mostyn of Maes Mynan and the Civil War), St. Winefride's Well in Holywell, Llandudno

All of the above suggestions could be enhanced through active community engagement. There can also be an innovative role for Park Maes Mynan to play in promoting the history of the locality to local residents, who have a stake in how *their* area is marketed to and used by visitors. Building engagement and trust with local individuals, businesses and organisations will be an essential part in the process of creating a Maes Mynan Park visitor experience that is grounded in the locality and beneficial to local community and the economy.

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