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Proprietors, people, transition and change on a Welsh estate: Gregynog Hall, Montgomeryshire, 1750-1900

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PROPRIETORS, PEOPLE, TRANSITION AND CHANGE ON A WELSH ESTATE: GREGYNOG HALL, MONTGOMERYSHIRE, 1750-1900.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Gregynog as an ancient landed estate in a Welsh border county, and evaluates its place in the social history of Wales from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

Today, Gregynog Hall is noted for its connection with philanthropists and art collectors Gwendoline (1882-1951) and Margaret (1884-1963) Davies, the Gregynog Press, and later as a University of Wales study centre. But until 1913 the mansion presided over a landed estate in the Welsh border county of Montgomery, with roots in the fifteenth century.

The distinctive character of the Gregynog estate (its evolution and inheritance; the genealogy, nature and politics of its landlords; its agents; its location in the former March of Wales; its relations with its tenantry and local communities and its response to economic, religious, political and social change) offers new perspectives on traditional perceptions of Welsh identity and society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in relation to the role of the landowning classes in the evolution of a new social order in late Victorian Wales. The transition of ownership in the 1790s from the homely squire, Arthur Blayney, last of a native Welsh dynasty, to Charles Hanbury-Tracy of Gloucestershire and Monmouth, a man looking for a theatre for his social and political ambitions, ensured that Gregynog's identity as an important Montgomeryshire estate survived the 'crisis of community' at the end of the eighteenth century. But its cultural identity as a Welsh estate had perforce to evolve as it faced the economic and political pressures of a new era.

Landed estates such as Gregynog were central to the building and sustaining of the social, cultural and economic infrastructure of a neighbourhood, and played a key part in shaping the landscape and built environment. How such estates dealt with matters such as recurring crises in the agricultural industry, enclosures, rent rises and arrears, opposition to the payment of tithes and the treatment of the rural poor, must be evaluated in relation to proprietors' needs to retain not only their social pre-eminence but the respect and loyalty of their tenants, labourers and all those who depended on the estate for a livelihood.

The Whig and Liberal allegiances of the nineteenth-century inheritors of the Gregynog estate enabled them to identify themselves with progressive movements in Montgomeryshire associated with the growth of nonconformity and campaigns for church disestablishment, the demand for wider access to education, political emancipation following the widening of the franchise, and the rise of Liberal party politics in the county, in all of which the Hanbury-Tracy family played a leading part. But these attitudes were to change after the 1880s when the traditional hierarchies of Wales appeared to be threatened by demands for land reform which landowners feared would destroy their rights and privileges as property owners. Nonetheless the family remained highly respected as good landlords, who also invested heavily in the Newtown textile industry.

Gregynog did not escape 'the decline of the great estates' of late Victorian Britain. Bankruptcy occurred in 1892, and the estate was sold to the receivers, to the great regret of the population as recorded in the local press. Nonetheless, the farms themselves survived; in the final sale of 1913, many were sold to their sitting tenants.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Hanbury-Tracy family played their part in the county's economic and political evolution, as their successors the Davies family of Llandinam were to do in the twentieth century; reinforcing the identity of Gregynog, in a county influenced by Welsh and English, liberal and conservative traditions, as a unifying but essentially patriarchal institution in the historically diverse culture of this Welsh border county.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards. I confirm that I am submitting this work with the agreement of my Supervisors.

Mary Elizabeth Oldham

Date: 13 November 2023

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I must pay tribute to the late Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes, who as Warden of Gregynog from 1963 to 1989 began the huge task of recording the many histories of Gregynog Hall, and building an unrivalled collection of works on Welsh history in both English and Welsh in the Gregynog Library. I must also pay tribute to the late 7th Lord Sudeley, who took a deep interest in my researches into the fortunes of his ancestors, which preoccupied him all his life. He and his wife Tatiana responded helpfully to my queries, and supplied copies of many family documents.

My thanks also to the staff of the National Library of Wales, Gloucestershire Archives at the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, Powys Archives, and Shropshire Archives for their help on my many visits. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the National Library of Wales for their efforts to open the Reading Rooms as the lockdown began to be lifted in 2020, enabling me to visit twice a week for the purpose of photographing the Gregynog estate ledgers. I must also thank the staff of my local library in Newtown, whose excellent Local Studies collection contains bound runs of nineteenth-century newspapers which have not yet been digitized for *Welsh Newspapers Online*.

As an Englishwoman living in Wales I am hugely fortunate to have a wonderful Welsh family, courtesy of my late sister Angela and her husband Derek, including eight Welsh great-nephews, all of whom are playing their part in this world of transition and change in twenty-first-century Wales. I thank them, my nieces and nephew, my two brothers William and James, and all their families, for their love and support.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Arch.Camb	Archaeologica Cambrensis
BBCS	Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies
DWB	Dictionary of Welsh Biography
Gregynog MSS	Gregynog Hall Unscheduled Manuscripts
MC	Montgomeryshire Collections
NLW	National Library of Wales
NLWJ	National Library of Wales Journal
TransCymm	Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion
WHR	Welsh History Review

A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The placename spellings used are those recorded in contemporary maps, estate ledgers and other documents until the mid-twentieth century, rather than more recent versions recommended by The Welsh Language Commissioner's Placenames Standardisation Panel. For example Aberhafesp, not Aberhafesb; Bettws, not Betws; Kerry, not Ceri, Llanllwchaiarn, not Llanllwchaearn. Spelling of farm, place and personal names vary considerably in contemporary estate records, and these have been rationalised for purposes of clarity. However, when alluding to settlements in the Marcher lordships the spelling used in the specific document has been used, e.g. Ceri, Cydewain.

In the nineteenth century the name Hanbury Tracy was spelt with or without a hyphen in a somewhat arbitrary manner, especially as many family members came to prefer to style themselves simply as Tracy. In order to minimise confusion between the eighteenth century Henry (Viscount) Tracy and his nineteenth-century descendants this thesis uses the form Hanbury-Tracy, i.e. with the hyphen.

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INTRODUCTION

> The Gregynog Estate now containing about 18,000 acres lies in the County of Montgomeryshire and stretches from Llyn Tarw (Bull's Lake) on the Tregynon Hills in the North West, to within a mile or less of Newtown, and from the top of Penstrowed Hills on the South West, to the River Rhiw on the North.[1]

Gregynog Hall in the old county of Montgomery is noted in contemporary Wales for its connection with art collectors Gwendoline and Margaret Davies, and the Gregynog Press. In the 1920s and 30s it also achieved prominence as a cultural centre and a forum for debate on educational, social and political issues. It was bequeathed to the University of Wales as an inter-collegiate conference centre in 1963, and has remained an institution at the heart of Welsh cultural and academic life.[2] Until the outbreak of the First World War, however, Gregynog Hall was more than a country mansion surrounded by a designed landscape garden; it was the headquarters of a landed estate dating back to the fifteenth century and earlier. It had expanded over the centuries until by the 1880s it extended to over 18,000 acres, and was the third largest in the county after the great estates of Powis Castle and Wynnstay.[3] 'Gregynog' then meant not only the mansion, its proprietors and their families, inheritors and descendants, but its farms and the families who farmed them, its plantations, pastures, warrens, brickyards and lime-kilns, its agents, gamekeepers, tradesmen and women, its countless labourers and servants. Its lands extended across the parish of Tregynon and several neighbouring parishes in eastern Montgomeryshire, at the heart of the former medieval Welsh lordship of Cedewain.[4] At the centre of the estate stood, and stands, the mansion, some six miles north of the old market town of Newtown, which received its charter from Edward I in 1279 after the successful conquest of Cedewain by the Marcher lord Roger Mortimer.[5]

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[1] William Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog,* (1888), NLW Facs 89, 1888-1892. Scott Owen was Gregynog agent 1879-1913.

[2] Glyn Tegai Hughes, Prys Morgan and J. Gareth Thomas, (eds) *Gregynog* (Cardiff, 1977). The management of Gregynog Hall passed to the Gregynog Trust in 2019.

[3] Brian L. James, 'The Great Landowners of Wales in 1873', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 14, (1965-6), pp.301-321.

[4] Cedewain, surrounded by rival Welsh and Marcher lordships. is described as 'hightly mysterious' by the historian David Stephenson, as 'the political geography of this region was still shifting in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries'. David Stephenson, 'The making of a Welsh Lordship: the mysterious case of Cedewain', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 108 (2020), pp.27-38, and 'Cedewain in the thirteenth century: from Maredudd ap Rhobert to the end of native rule', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 109 (2021), pp. 1-12.

[5] Maurice Richard, *A History of Newtown* (Welshpool, 1993), p.1.

The Gregynog Estate and its Proprietors 1750-1913

This thesis is a study of Gregynog as an example of a Welsh landed estate. It analyses its proprietors, tenants, employees and dependents, and the territory it occupied, over one hundred and fifty years of fundamental social, industrial, economic and political change. It examines the extent to which both proprietors and tenants responded to these changes, especially in the nineteenth century as old hierarchies were challenged by the dynamic forces of new money, new industry, new demands for citizenship and democracy, and new assertions of national identity among the population at large.

Hypothesis

This thesis contends that the distinctive character and history of the Gregynog estate offers new perspectives on Welsh identity and society in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in relation to the role of the landowning classes in the evolution of a new social order in late Victorian Wales. It will contend that the transition of ownership in the late 1790s from the homely squire, Arthur Blayney, last of an ancient native Welsh dynasty, to Charles Hanbury-Tracy of Gloucestershire and Monmouth, a man looking for a theatre for his social and political ambitions, ensured that Gregynog's status as an important Montgomeryshire estate survived the 'crisis of community' at the end of the eighteenth century; but that its identity as a Welsh estate had perforce to evolve in the face of the cultural, economic and political pressures of the times.[6]

It also addresses how the estate dealt with matters such as recurring crises in the agricultural industry, enclosures, rent rises and arrears, opposition to the payment of tithes and the treatment of the rural poor, all in relation to the proprietors' needs to retain not only their social status but the respect and loyalty of their tenants, labourers and all those who depended on the estate for a livelihood.

A consideration of the role of landed estates such as Gregynog in building and sustaining the social, cultural and economic infrastructure of a neighbourhood is at the heart of the analysis of this thesis, not forgetting the part they played in shaping the landscape and built environment with canals, roads, railways, schools, chapels, farmhouses and cottages. It argues that the proprietorship of Arthur Blayney in the second half of the eighteenth century created

[6] Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community, Montgomeryshire 1680-1815* (Cardiff, 1996), esp. Ch.5., 'Landownership', pp.96-125.

an image of benevolent patriarchy which reinforced enduring assumptions about the place of the gentry in society, helping sustain the estate's reputation under its new owners. It further argues that the Whig and Liberal political allegiances of the nineteenth-century inheritors of the Gregynog estate enabled them to identify themselves with progressive movements in Montgomeryshire associated with Anglican church disestablishment, the demand for wider access to education at every level, the political emancipation brought about by the widening of the franchise, and the dynamic success of Liberal party politics in the county. But these attitudes were to change after the 1880s when the structure of Welsh society appeared to be threatened by demands for land reform which landowners feared would destroy their rights and privileges as property owners.

The thesis reviews the place of the estate and its owners in a Wales in which a new middle class was emerging, comprising prosperous farmers, ministers, university lecturers and teachers; mainly men, but with a growing element of determined women. A Wales with a renewed pride in its cultural and linguistic heritage, determined to assert itself as a nation within the British state rather than simply as an adjunct of England. The extent to which this new patriotism took hold in the eastern reaches of Montgomeryshire will be addressed, given the county's roots in the former Marcher lordships of Wales, the strength of its economic and cultural links with Shropshire, and its dependence on English markets. It was an area where the Welsh language was in decline, but nonconformist religious loyalties remained strong. These ambiguities were not new in the nineteenth century, but had their roots in polities which grew out of the conflicts of post-Conquest Wales in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and especially after the 'Acts of Union' of 1536 and 1543.[7] As far as Montgomeryshire was concerned, however, the thesis contends that the Gregynog estate played its part in the creation of the distinctive social, cultural and political infrastructure of the county which endured into the twentieth century, even after the county's incorporation into the county of Powys in 1974.

The growth of an emancipated – and, increasingly, educated – Welsh middle class as the nineteenth century progressed, has led to the assumption among many historians that such change, alongside the increasingly onerous financial burden of maintaining an estate, was a

[7]Lloyd Bowen, *Early Modern Wales c.1536 – c.1689: Ambiguous Nationhood* (Cardiff, 2022); (J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales, From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, (London, 1911); (David Stephenson, *Medieval Powys, Kingdom, Principality and Lordships, 1132-1293* (Woodbridge, 2016).

key factor in bringing about the destruction of the estate system and the consequent undermining of the gentry class – but this can be challenged as an over-simplification.[8] Herbert M. Vaughan may have deplored the creation of county councils in 1888 as bringing local administration into the hands of popularly elected bodies so that even the Bench of county magistrates was occupied by such men as rural district chairmen, local mayors, and 'successful tradesmen and profiteers' but there were still estate owners and agents on many councils.[9] In Montgomeryshire, David Davies (1880-1944), the Liberal MP from 1906, was the grandson of the rail and coal entrepreneur David Davies of Llandinam (1818-1890) – a 'successful tradesman and profiteer' if ever there was one – but the family had built up a substantial landed estate by that time, and David Davies the younger was still adding to it in 1913. Also, many of the prosperous farmers who were elected were still the 'leading' tenants of gentry landowners, who had secured status through their involvement in estate activities such as agricultural shows, rent audit dinners, sporting meetings and coming-of-age celebrations, as well as leadership in their chapels. Many were becoming landowners themselves, as estate sales increased, and freeholds were secured.[10] Furthermore, the 'decline of the landed estate and the rise of freehold farming' in Wales and elsewhere did not necessarily lead to the disappearance of the roads, the canals, the build environment, even the landscape, and the many institutions which had been created through the agency of estates and estate owners for the previous centuries. Indeed, the thesis contends that although the eventual bankruptcy and ruin of the estate owners in the 1890s led to it being sold as a going concern for the first time in its existence, the huge expenditure on farm improvements, which was one of the factors in the bankruptcy, enabled the farms themselves to survive into the era of 'the rise of freehold farming' in Wales, and contributed to the agricultural infrastructure of the county of Montgomeryshire, and now Powys, which still survives.

The thesis further contends that the estate owners' support of commercial enterprises in Newtown in the late nineteenth century built on earlier developments which had characterised it as an urban, industrial centre and communications hub, rather than simply the local market

[8]John Davies, 'The End of the Great Estates and the Rise of Freehold Farming in Wales', *WHR* 7, 2 (1975), pp.186-212. See also Leslie Baker-Jones, *Princelings, Privilege and Power, The Tivyside Gentry in their Community*, (Llandysul, 1999), pp.135-6.

[9] Herbert M. Vaughan, *The South Wales Squires*, (1926, Reprint, Carmarthen, 1988), p.5; W.P. Griffith*, Power, Politics and County Government in Wales, Anglesey 1780-1914*, (Llangefni, 2006), p.405; Esther Moir, *The Justice of the Peace*, (London, 1969), p.155.

[10] Davies, 'The End of the Great Estates', p.192.

town, from the 1820s. The role played by landowners such as the Hanbury-Tracys and Sudeleys alongside entrepreneurs such as the mail-order pioneer Pryce Jones and the railway-and-coal magnate David Davies was key to the economic renewal of Newtown and its creation as the commercial centre of mid Wales from the 1860s – an example of the revolution in society and communities which was taking place across Wales at the time.[11]

Finally the thesis will address the extent to which the Gregynog estate and the county in which it is located are emblematic of Wales, in terms of history and culture. The borders of Montgomeryshire reach from Shropshire in the east to Cardiganshire in the west; Welsh is spoken in large areas to the west and north of the county; its road and railways run from east to west, with further roads bridging north and south Wales. This has affected perceptions of its identity as being neither part of north nor south Wales, but better characterised as a transitional zone where cultures and identities have overlapped, challenged and invigorated one another for centuries.

Historiography

Themes addressed in this thesis, relating to land management, agricultural change, estate succession, class, power and gentry culture, all have their own historiographic literature, to be considered at the appropriate point in the analysis. However, a central question underlying the thesis relates to how far the estate's history is a specifically Welsh history, or simply a history of a landed estate which might have occurred anywhere in the British Isles, subjected to the processes of change which affected every corner of the realm, for better or worse, with little part to play in the history of the Welsh nation. Many late-nineteenth and twentieth-century historians of Wales saw their purpose as being to recover a perceived national past, to imbue a renewed sense of Welsh identity and to create a 'nation-building' narrative, drawing its sources from culture, religion and most importantly, the Welsh language, in reaction to the perceived anglo-centric cultural assumptions of most British histories.[12] Martin Johnes has suggested that

[11] Maurice Richards, *A History of Newtown*, (Welshpool, 1993), pp.79-89; Lyn Williams, 'A Case Study of Newtown, Montgomeryshire', *MC, 64 (1976), pp. 57-120.*

[12] John Edward Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, (London, 1911). J.E. Lloyd is credited by many as having 'created Welsh history'; see Huw Pryce, *J.E. Lloyd and the Creation of Welsh History, Renewing a Nation's Past,* (Cardiff, 2011). Thomas Babington Macauley's *The History of England* (London, 1848) might be regarded as an example of histories pervaded with an anglo-centricity that conflated 'England' with all the nations of the United Kingdom, in response to which John Edward Lloyd's work represented the turning of the tide. A more inclusive approach can be seen in later twentieth century histories such as Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 1992) and Norman Davies, *The Isles* (London, 1999). The wider issue of 'English' versus 'British' history is usefully discussed in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips (eds),

> Welsh identity has often centred on tensions between labour and political/cultural nationalist traditions ... Welsh historiography has inevitably been entangled with the questions that have plagued the idea of Welsh identity ... [Historians'] histories, intentionally or otherwise, justified not just the existence of Wales, but the existence of a certain interpretations of Wales, notably those based on the industrial working class or a cultural and/or political nationalism that had the Welsh language at its heart ... is difficult to deny that Welsh history has to be understood within the political contexts in which it was produced and read.[13]

Russell Davies suggests that there have been three major historical schools in Welsh historiography: the Nonconformist tradition, the growth of the Labour movement, and, as emphasised by nationalist-inspired authors, the creation of a Welsh national character and the survival of the Welsh language.[14] In such contexts, landed estates such as Gregynog have been frenquently dismissed as irrelevant, and even inimical, to Wales's development after 1536. When Herbert M. Vaughan published *The South Wales Squires* in 1926, its reviewer in *The Welsh Outlook* wrote: 'We sympathise with Mr Vaughan in his admiration for the personal qualities of many of his squires.' But such personal qualities were beside the point:

> There have been benevolent despots, but despotism is nonetheless to be condemned on that account. The fact is that if the squires had their way there would be no Welsh nation now. There were tendencies at work which would have annihilated Wales within a generation or two. The squires fought against the political policy which was going to lead to the recognition of Wales as a nation; they held aloof from the form of Christianity which alone has appealed to the heart of Wales since the overthrow of the Roman church in our midst; they were content to allow the Welsh language to die, without an effort to save it; they cared nothing for the renaissance of Welsh culture which had come to full maturity by the close of the 19th century. These are serious charges. We bring them deliberately, and with a full sense of their gravity, against the Welsh squirearchy, and it will take something more than Mr. Vaughan's pictures of life in country mansions, where a pampered class are reaping what they have not sown, to answer them.[15]

Yet whatever the social, political and religious attitudes of their proprietors, such estates extended throughout Great Britain and Ireland, and all parts of Europe, and played a central part in the social, economic and political history of every place in which they were situated.[16]

History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain (London, 2004), and Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (eds), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*, (London, 1995). An important review of perspectives on Welsh historiography is Neil Evans and Huw Pryce, (eds), *Writing a Small Nation's Past, Wales in Comparative Perspective, 1850-1950* (London, 2013).

[13] Martin Johnes, 'For Class and Nation: Dominant Trends in the Historiography of Twentieth-Century Wales', *History Compass*, 8, 11 (2010), p.1257.

[14] Russell Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak, a Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1776-1871* (Cardiff, 2005), p.11.

[15] Herbert M. Vaughan, *The South Wales Squires*, (London, 1926, Carmarthen, 1988); *The Welsh Outlook*, 13, 8 (August 1926), pp.200-201. The review is unsigned but presumed to be the work of the editor, W. Watkin Davies.

[16] Jonathan Finch, Kristine Dyrmann and Mikael Frausing, (eds), *Estate Landscapes in Northern Europe*, (Aarhus, Denmark, 2019).

Furthermore, the blanket association of Welsh landowners with Conservative politics overlooks the role of Whigs such as Charles Hanbury-Tracy of Gregynog in the evolution of the Liberal party, whose electoral success in late nineteenth-century Wales was to change the face of politics not only in Montgomeryshire but across the nation.[17]

Historically, such attitudes, and arguments of 'anglicisation' have had a particular effect on perceptions of Welsh border territories, particularly in the eastern Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire Marches, which in the past were the theatre of countless border conflicts between Welsh princes and Marcher Lords, but which are often seen as less 'Welsh' than other parts of Wales. Much of Montgomeryshire was once part of the medieval lordship of Powys, whose leaders maintained pragmatic relations with neighbouring English lordships in order to keep at bay the forces of Gwynedd, led by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. The fervent Welsh patriot known as Owen Rhoscomyl (1863-1919) excoriated such relations, and 'the many alliances with the Normans by which the Princes of Powys did so much to ruin the land.'[18] Another historic assumption relates to the alleged role played by the men of Builth, in the ambush and killing of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, 'the last native Prince of Wales', in 1282. That this is still regarded as treason by many Welsh people assumes the existence of a thirteenth-century Wales united under Llywelyn's leadership, which recent historians, notably David Stephenson, have shown to be erroneous. Diplomacy, commerce and marriage as well as cattle raids were features of the times in the Welsh marcher territories, and many well-born Welshmen were not averse to seeking positions at the courts of Marcher lords or even that of the English king.[19]

As the centuries passed, and life and communities became more settled, it became no easier to characterise Wales as a united nation or polity, when commerce and communication links became essential to the economic survival of communities, especially in 'that nebulous marchland' as A.H. Dodd described 'the shires between England and Wales'.[20] Mid Wales farmers had to get their wool to market in Oswestry, Shrewsbury or Hereford, not Brecon or

[17] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1869-1922,* (3rd ed. Cardiff, 1980); Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Montgomeryshire's Liberal Century: Rendel to Hooson, 1880-1979', *WHR,* 16, 1 (June 1992), pp. 93-109; Bryn Ellis, 'The Parliamentary Representation of Montgomeryshire, 1728-1868', *MC*, 63 (1974), pp.74-95.
[18] Owen Rhoscomyl, *Flame-bearers of Welsh History*, (Merthyr Tydfil, 1905), p.150.
[19] R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales, 1282-1400*, (Oxford, 1978); David Stephenson, *Medieval Powys, Kingdom, Principality and Lordships, 1132-1293*, (Woodbridge, 2016); David Stephenson, *Medieval Wales, c.1050-1332, Centuries of Ambiguity*, (Cardiff, 2019*)* pp.117-8*; Patronage and Power in the Medieval Welsh March, One Family's Story*, (Cardiff, 2021).
[20] A.H. Dodd, *Studies in Stuart Wales*, (Cardiff, 1971), p.49.

Cardiff. When canals began to open in the eighteenth century the barges with their cargoes of lime came into Wales from England, not other parts of the Principality. As long ago as the early fifteenth century, blockading transport between England and Wales was utilized as a way of defeating the Glyn Dŵr rebellion, 'because it shows how the dependence of Welsh areas on the English market was increasing'.[21]

It was not only the eastern counties that were subject to these imperatives. Philip Jenkins points out that

> South Glamorgan was part of Bristol's 'metropolitan' area, which also included Monmouthshire and the English counties bordering the Bristol Channel, which was economically close to Ireland and the counties of the Severn valley. South Glamorgan belonged to this region, rather than to the Welsh shires with which it still shared a common language and culture … In this context is is often difficult to see Glamorgan as part of a 'Welsh' unity, especially when the counties of North and Mid Wales looked respectively to Chester and Shrewsbury as 'metropolis' and the Council of Wales was based at Ludlow … Glamorgan families didn't marry into North Wales families but S-W English families… this orientation seems to have been very ancient.[22]

Whatever the extent to which the border districts of Wales could be characterized as being part of a Welsh 'nation', the power structures that had been forming over the centuries, largely based on landownership and the growth of a gentry class, had, by the middle of the eighteenth century, become a constituent part of the social and political hierarchies of Britain, focused on the English monarchy with London as the seat of government.[23]

How these hierarchies became established in Wales has been discussed in modern works of Welsh history such as Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 1987), and John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 1990), as well as in the detailed regional studies which are important sources for the present research.[24]

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[21] Ben Bowen Thomas, *Braslun o Hanes Economaidd Cymru hyd 1914* (Cardiff, 1941), pp.58-9. With thanks to Dr. David Stephenson.

[22] Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class, The Glamorgan gentry 1640-1790*, (Cambridge, 1983), pp.10-11. See also Ralph A. Griffiths, 'Medieval Severnside: The Welsh Connection', in R.R. Davies et.al., (eds), *Welsh Society and Nationhood, Historical Essays presented to Glanmor Williams*, (Cardiff, 1984), pp.70-89.

[23] The extensive literature on this subject underpins a large part of the analysis of the first chapter of this thesis, including David Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, (London, 1998); David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, (London, 1990); G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1963); G.E.Mingay, *The Gentry, The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class*, (London, 1976); R. H. Tawney, 'The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640', *Economic History Review*, 11, 1 (1941), pp. 1-38; Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England* (London, 2018); F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1963).

[24] Philip Jenkins, *The making of a ruling class, The Glamorgan gentry 1640-1790*, (Cambridge, 1983); Leslie Baker-Jones, *Princelings, Privilege and Power, The Tivyside Gentry in their Community*, (Llandysul, 1999); Matthew

Landed estates and their proprietors have not always had a good press among Welsh historians; they were seen as too powerful, too oppressive, too Anglicised, and dismissive of Welsh national culture. Whether the *cultural* aspect was an issue in Welsh border counties, where Welsh/English interaction had been a fact of life since medieval times, is questionable, especially if 'Welsh culture' is defined in terms alluded to by Martin Johnes above, as being 'based on the industrial working class or a cultural and/or political nationalism that had the Welsh language at its heart'. On these criteria Gregynog, situated in the heart of a Welsh border county, whose proprietors, not to mention a good many of its tenants, had not spoken Welsh for a hundred years, could easily be dismissed as having lost its Welsh identity. But Gregynog has played a part in Welsh life for centuries and is continuing to do so; its identity derives from its contribution to the social, political and economic history, and continuing evolution, of the land of Wales. Historians such as Matthew Cragoe, Neil Evans and Huw Pryce, Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, Geraint H. Jenkins and Raymond Williams usefully widen the understanding of this sensitive and complex issue.[25]

The Historiography of Gregynog

Much has been written about the Gregynog estate and its owners over the years, from Philip Yorke (1743-1804) eulogising Arthur Blayney in *The Royal Tribes of Wales* in 1799 to Glyn Tegai Hughes and his fellow editors in *Gregynog*, a history published in 1977. Articles have been published in *Montgomeryshire Collections* since 1885, and a *History of the Gregynog Estate*, compiled between 1888 and 1892 by the estate's agent at the time, William Scott Owen, has survived in typescript in the National Library of Wales. These writings together constitute a specific historiography relating to the Gregynog estate and its owners over two centuries, which sets the context of the present study. However, what is lacking in the pre-1900 material are wider perspectives on the place of the estate in the society and economy of its locality, or

Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy, The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895*, (Oxford, 1996); David W. Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites, The Gentry of South-West Wales in the Eighteenth Century*, Cardiff, 1986, Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community, Montgomeryshire 1680-1815,* (Cardiff, 1996).

[25]Matthew Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886*, (Oxford, 2004); Neil Evans and Huw Pryce, (eds), *Writing a Small Nation's Past, Wales in Comparative Perspective, 1850-1950*, (Cardiff, 2013); Ralph Fevre and Andrew Thompson, (Eds), *Nation, Identity and Social Theory, Perspectives from Wales*, (Cardiff, 1999); Geraint H. Jenkins, (Ed.), *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1922*, (Cardiff, 2000); Raymond Williams, *Who Speaks for Wales? Nation, Culture, Identity*, (Cardiff, 2003).

in wider Welsh or British society, being heavily focused on genealogy, and imbued with deference towards the Gregynog proprietors. Later writing about Gregynog has focused on its twentieth century history, when it was no longer a landed estate but the home of two philanthropic sisters and their art collection. For example, in *Gregynog*, the 1977 work edited by Glyn Tegai Hughes, only four of the eleven essays address the estate's geography and pre-1914 history; the rest focus on the Davies era: the Davies Sisters' art collecting, their philanthropic and musical activities, the Gregynog gardens and the creation of the Gregynog Press, concluding with a chapter on the early years during which Gregynog became a University of Wales conference centre. Nonetheless, it was two of those chapters, notably 'The Blayney Period', by Prys Morgan, and 'The Estate and its Owners, 1795 to 1920', by David Howell, which stimulated this researcher's interest and desire to undertake a critical study of the origins and evolution of the estate, and how it dealt with the challenges of the social, political and economic developments of the mid-eighteenth to the late nineteenth century.[26]

In terms of the wider historiography of Wales and beyond, the Gregynog estate and its proprietors feature in a number of twentieth-century works – cited by David Howell, for example, in *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales*, and A. H. Dodd in *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales*. Kenneth O. Morgan is briefly dismissive about the Hanbury-Tracy family as politicians in *Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922.* John Habakkuk alludes to Charles Hanbury's name-changing when he married Henrietta Tracy in *Marriage, debt and the estates system, English Landownership 1650-1950* as an example of the creation of surrogate heirs.[27] However, it is perhaps inevitable, given the scattered nature of the archival material relating to the estate, as noted below, that the many dimensions of the history of Gregynog, as a very old and important borderland estate, have hitherto been overlooked by Welsh historians.

[26]Philip Yorke, *The Royal Tribes of Wales*, (1799, ed. Richard Williams, Liverpool 1887); Glyn Tegai Hughes, and others, (eds) *Gregynog* (Cardiff 1977); R. H. Blayney, 'On Tracing a Pedigree,', and 'A Catalogue of Blayney Wills', *MC* 57, 1961-2 pp. 42-48; W.Scott Owen, 'Arthur Blayney and his home, Gregynog Hall', *MC* 25, (1891); W. Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC*, 30 (1896); E. Rowley-Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', *MC*, 21, (1887), 273-302, and 22, (1888); George Sandford, 'The House of Gregynog, the Blayneys and the Hanbury Tracys, Lords Sudeley', *MC*, 23, (1885).

[27] David Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales*, (1978), esp.pp. 55-6 & 82-3; A.H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales*, (3rd ed., 1971), pp. 37, 67; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, (3rd ed., 1980), p.81; John Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt and the estates system, English Landownership 1650-1950,* (1994), p.209.

Methodology and structure

This thesis addresses the processes of transition and change in rural Wales in a dynamic era of Welsh and British history, dating from the middle of the eighteenth century to the dawn of the twentieth, therefore the analysis will be largely based on this chronology.

The thesis traces the background, genealogy and social status of the proprietors of the Gregynog estate, from the genial bachelor Arthur Blayney to the heavily financially incumbered 4th Lord Sudeley. With detailed analyses of surviving estate records, wills and marriage settlements, enclosure awards, tithe maps, census returns and contemporary newspaper reports, it examines how typical it was of Welsh landed estates of the period. It reviews the origins, growth and management of the Gregynog estate, assessing the contribution of each proprietor to the husbandry of the land and the prosperity of the tenantry in what were to prove to be uncertain times for the agricultural industry, in Wales and elsewhere. It considers the role of women in keeping succession to the estate alive, 'keeping it in the family', when there were no direct male heirs. It pays close attention to the role of the land agents who supported the proprietors during the period under examination. It assesses the reputation of the proprietors as landlords, and their social and political ambitions. It considers the social and cultural environment in which the estate operated, and its relations with its tenants, labourers and all those who relied on it for a livelihood.

Chapter One, *Ancestry, Reputation and Succession* discusses the ancestry, social status and reputation of the Blayney family, the original proprietors of the Gregynog estate, and the means by which succession to the estate was secured despite the failure of direct male heirs.
Chapter Two *The Gregynog Estate: Place, Character, Composition* reviews the location, origins and growth of the estate itself, until it came into the proprietorship of Arthur Blayney in the 1750s, and then discusses Blayney's management of the estate, his reputation as an agricultural improver, and his relations with his agents, tenants and the wider population.
Chapter Three *Nineteenth Century Gregynog: New Proprietors, New Priorities* addresses the implications of the estate's inheritance by the Hanbury-Tracy family in 1798, whose principal seat – as well as their social and political ambitions – lay elsewhere. It examines the new forces of change which were undermining the settled assumptions of the landowning gentry, and their impact on the Gregynog estate.

Chapter Four *Gregynog 1877-1895: The end of a great estate?* focuses on the estate from 1877, when Charles Hanbury-Tracy succeeded as the 4th Lord Sudeley, and attempted to restore this and his Gloucestershire estate after decades of under-investment. It examines the role of William Scott Owen, the agent appointed by Sudeley in 1879 and who remained the most secure element in the estate's life for nearly forty years.

Chapter Five *Gregynog and the Politics of nineteenth-century Montgomeryshire* reviews the political affiliations of the Hanbury-Tracy family and their impact on Montgomeryshire politics as Liberal members of Parliament, until the breach with the Gladstonian Liberals after 1888. It examines Lord Sudeley's career as an industrialist and his investment in the Newtown textile industry.

Chapter Six, *The Bankruptcy and after* investigates the processes which led to Lord Sudeley being declared bankrupt in 1893, and the estate being repossessed by the Economic Life Asssurance Company in 1895, sold to Sir James Joicey in 1898. It reviews the processes which led to the estate being broken up at a final sale in 1913, when many of the farms were bought by their sitting tenants. This chapter concludes by reviewing the evolution of the Gregynog estate in the changing world of Georgian and Victorian Wales, assessing its contribution, and that of its proprietors, to the social, economic and political life of Montgomeryshire at the end of the nineteenth century. When the Sudeleys lost the estate in 1895 it was indeed 'the end of a great estate', but its farms survived, and became exemplars of 'the rise of freehold farming' in Wales. Furthermore, the mansion itself evolved into a new kind of Welsh institution when it was bought by Gwendoline and Margaret Davies in 1920 – an initiative which offers potential for future research on changing cultural norms and new structures of power and influence in twentieth century Wales.

Sources

The substantial literature on the history of Gregynog discussed in the Historiography section provided the groundwork of this research. The primary sources for the present project are, however, surviving collections of estate and family records, and, especially after 1850, press reports in local and national newspapers.

A. Deposited records and archives

There are several collections of estate records pertaining to the Gregynog estate and its owners which constitute the primary sources of research data for this thesis. The present location of these collections in various county archive offices arises from the circumstances of the estate's history: for example its acquisition of property at Morville and Bridgnorth in Shropshire through a Shropshire-based family connection in the mid-eighteenth century has led to important archival material surviving in Shropshire Archives in Shrewsbury, where there is also important material relating to the Hanbury-Tracys' political activities in Bridgnorth in the 1830s. More significantly, the inheritance of Gregynog and its Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates by a family whose principal interests were connected with its estate at Toddington in Gloucestershire led to the respective estates' papers, some dating back centuries, being absorbed into the Sudeley family's archives at Toddington. However it seems that the Gregynog estate's surviving rent and cash ledgers must have been left at Gregynog, as they were donated by Gwendoline and Margaret Davies to Iorwerth C. Peate in the 1920s. In addition to the three principal collections, the county archives of Powys and Herefordshire also hold documents which it has been necessary to examine, such as copies of wills or property transactions; these are footnoted when required. Powys Archives also holds many of the important Inclosure maps of the lands surrounding the estate. Gregynog Hall itself holds a miscellaneous collection of documents such as sale catalogues, plans and maps, in addition to the photocopied material donated by the 7th Lord Sudeley as described below.

1. Sudeley MSS

This large collection of records relating to the Sudeley family's estates, mainly in Montgomeryshire and Shropshire, includes convenances, wills, marriage settlements and other legal documents, and personal diaries and correspondence of the Hanbury-Tracy family. The archive was donated to the National Register of Archives by the 7th Lord Sudeley as part of the very large archive of the Sudeley family of Toddington Manor in Gloucestershire. They were deposited in Gloucestershire Archives in 2007. Although some material is embargoed for the time being, the archive contains much essential information on wills, marriage settlements,

property inheritance and estate re-settlements relating to the Tracy, Weaver, Hanbury and Hanbury-Tracy families.[28]

2. Gregynog Estate Rentals

A collection of 65 ledgers in the National Library of Wales catalogued under the heading GREGYNOG ESTATE RENTALS: *Rentals and other estate office books of the Gregynog estate, Montgomeryshire, of Arthur Weaver, Arthur Blayney and Lord Sudeley, 1752-1893*. The ledgers were donated to the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans by the Misses Davies of Gregynog in the early 1920s; the record states that they were donated to the National Library by Iorwerth C. Peate of St. Fagans Museum in 1956.

These ledgers, largely maintained by the Gregynog agents, constitute the primary source of data relating to the running of the estate, not only to records of income from rental and timber sales, but of expenditure relating to every aspect of estate life, from taxes, duty and charitable giving to farm repairs, the purchase of lime, fodder and thatching straw (and eventually concrete in large amounts for farm buildings projects in the 1860s), rent day entertainments and donations to the local poor of an ox for roasting when a new heir was born, down to payments to mole and rat-catchers. Over the years the ledgers illustrate rent increases, rent arrears, and rent abatements in hard times. They offer perspectives on the priorities of the various estate owners from Arthur Blayney to the 4th Lord Sudeley. They illustrate very clearly the economic dependence on the estate of local craftsmen such as joiners, blacksmiths and wheelwrights, not to mention the numberous day labourers. There are a number of 'missing' volumes or 'gaps', and from 1873 a considerable lack of consistency in the maintenance of the ledgers.

Included in this archive is a Registry of Tenancy Agreements from 1774-79, years during which Arthur Blayney conducted a rent review on the estate farms.

[28] Many family diaries and other documents were either retained by the late 7th Lord Sudeley, or were otherwise classified as not accessible to researchers. Whether these conditions will change following Lord Sudeley's death in September 2022 is not known, as at June 2023.

The estate collections in the National Library of Wales directly pertaining to Gregynog are supplemented by countless records in other deposited archives, as cited at the relevant point in the thesis.

3. Records relating to the Morville and Bridgnorth estates of Arthur Weaver, Arthur Blayney and their heirs, held in Shropshire Archives. These do not constitute a discrete collection but are part of larger collections, e.g. relating to the Acton family, and the history of Bridgnorth.

B. Gregynog Unscheduled Manuscripts, cited as Gregynog MSS

These include copies of original documents and letters held at Gregynog Hall, many donated by the late 7th Lord Sudeley (1939-2022). These are maintained at Gregynog in a collection of unscheduled manuscripts, and are cited with permission granted by Lord Sudeley to the late warden of Gregynog, Dr. Glyn Tegai Hughes (1923-2017), in 1977, and to the present writer in 2019.

C. Public records and research resources

The National Archives
History of Parliament online
Hansard
Census returns
Enclosure Acts
Welsh Tithe maps
Dictionary of Welsh Biography online
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography online
Welsh Journals online
Welsh Newspapers online
Ancestry and Findmypast websites.

D. Articles in the *Montgomeryshire Collections*, the Journal of the Powysland Club, Vol 1 – 110 (1869-2022) and other local resources.

Articles in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* have been an essential source of information not only relating to the Gregynog estate and its proprietors, and other significant estates and families, but to the agricultural history of the county, its roads and transport networks, enclosures, its industrial and political history. Specific articles are footnoted in the text. Over one hundred and fifty years of scholarly research into the history of Montgomeryshire in this journal has supplemented the work of local history societies and initiatives such as place-name

projects, analyses of parish records and family history societies. Together these form the foundations of the county's historiography and have been essential resources for the current project. Powys County Library's fine Local Studies library in Newtown is an excellent repositary of such material, together with long runs of local newspapers which have not yet been digitized.

CHAPTER ONE

ANCESTRY, REPUTATION AND SUCCESSION

> When historians use the word 'interesting' to describe a house or family the word has two meanings. The Sudeley family or the Davies family who lived in more recent times at Gregynog are interesting in the sense of extraordinary. The Blayneys are interesting because of the other meaning ... interesting because they were utterly typical of their age and class. In the microcosm of Gregynog we see mirrored the greater world of gentry Wales.[29]

Introduction. The Eighteenth Century: Land, Stability, Wealth and Power.

This study of the 'interesting' house of Gregynog and its owners begins in 1750, a year in which the last of the 'utterly typical' Blayney family, Arthur (1716-1795), aged thirty four, was taking up the proprietorship not only of his family estate of Gregynog in the parish of Tregynon in the county of Montgomeryshire, but his mother's family estate in other parts of Montgomeryshire and at Morville and Bridgnorth in Shropshire. As his family's surviving heir he must have seemed at the time to be assuming his patrimony in acknowledgement of the social assumptions of the era, including his responsibility to pass it on unencumbered to his own heirs. But, whether by accident or design, this did not happen. Within fifty years the entire estate had passed into the ownership of a family which could claim only peripheral connections with the old Blayney dynasty. Nonetheless, these connections were to ensure that, at least for the time being, Gregynog did not, despite Arthur Blayney being 'the last of a time-honoured race' become one of the 'deserted palaces' of Montgomeryshire, and that until the end of the nineteenth century it would be handed down the generations in unbroken, if indirect, succession.[30] The extent to which the Blayneys were 'utterly typical of their age and class' is a question which this thesis will address, in terms of the assumptions, experiences and practices of landed families of the era in Wales and elsewhere.

The eighteenth century has been portrayed as the heyday of the landed gentry,[31] as epitomised by Gainsborough's painting of *Mr and Mrs Andrews* seated smugly under their oak tree with their fertile acres stretching into the distance behind them. The cornfields, meadows and woodlands belonged to them; the men and women who worked the land were dependent on them, as were the artisanal and professional classes who built their houses, managed their

[29] Prys Morgan, 'The Blayney Period', in Glyn Tegai Hughes, et.al. (eds), *Gregynog* (Cardiff, 1977), p.24.
[30] Melvyn Humpreys, *The Crisis of Community: Montgomeryshire 1680-1815* (Cardiff, 1996), p.104.
[31] G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1963), pp. 10-11; Francis Jones, 'The Old Families of Wales', in Donald Moore, ed., *Wales in the Eighteenth Century* (Swansea, 1976), pp. 36-37.

estates and their legal affairs, or baptized their children. The British landscape, and that of much of northern Europe, as it has survived today was shaped by such lordship and proprietorship. At the centre was the major landowner, with 'his [or her] large house and its offices, which served as a home of social distinction, a centre of hospitality, and an economic hub, as well as an arena for local government and jurisdiction ... [which] can be seen to create a distinct cultural landscape'.[32] G.E. Mingay has claimed that:

> Landed property was the foundation of eighteenth-century society ... Moreover, the wealth, power and social influence produced by ownership of land enabled the landowning classes to control all local government beyond the bounds of larger towns and to secure a dominating presence in Parliament itself. Above all, land was immovable and indestructible; and the very permanence of land gave stability to the society that was based upon it.[33]

The origins of this hegemony lay in 'the growth of feudal institutions in Western Europe ... between the 8th and the 13th centuries ... when the gradual evolution of feudal rights and obligations of lords and their vassals resulted in a complex hierarchy'.[34] Over the centuries this hierarchy had beome immutable not only in England, but in all the nations of Britain. Landed families – the squirearchy, gentry, aristocracy and nobility – were integral to the social structure of the country throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and they were the dominant players in politics, economics and law. This was certainly the case in Wales. Geraint H. Jenkins points out that:

> Welsh society attached considerable importance to rank, title and birth. The social hierarchy was based on widely accepted social conventions, durable and extensive family ties, and, most important of all, wealth and the possession of land ... The well-born and the rich governed Welsh society.[35]

Writing of the gentry of South West Wales in the eighteenth century, David W. Howell concluded that 'In these years the gentry throughout the kingdom reached the height of their power... Landowners were assured of political and social ascendancy as never before.'[36] Gwyn A. Williams put it more bluntly: 'In the eighteenth century those gentry had Wales sewn up.'[37]

[32]Jonathan Finch, Kristine Dyrmann and Mikael Frausing, (eds) *Estate Landscapes in northern Europe*, (Aarhus, 2019), p13
[33] Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, p.3.
[34] Ibid, p.18.
[35] Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 1987), p.92
[36] David W. Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites: the Gentry of South-West Wales in the Eighteenth Century* (Cardiff, 1986), p.212.
[37] Gwyn A. Williams, *The Search for Beulah Land*, (London, 1980), p.7.

Melvin Humphreys observes that this was certainly the case in eighteenth century Montgomeryshire: 'The county gentry of Montgomeryshire, like their brethren in other Welsh counties, enjoyed a pre-eminence that was based primarily on their ownership of a disproportionately large share of the county's land'.[38]

Nonetheless the whole complex of power, status and authority of landed families often existed on shaky foundations, and, although as Geraint H. Jenkins points out, 'the richest landowners lived in the grand manner', beneath the veneer of stability profound change had been gestating for some time. For example Philip Jenkins' study of Glamorgan shows how demographic and political change was to transform the nature of the Welsh gentry by the 1790s, and the thesis of Melvin Humphreys' study of eighteenth century Montgomeryshire is that the county underwent a 'Crisis of Community' during this period.[39] The problem for many estates had begun during the years of the Commonwealth, before the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660, when penalties, such as fines and sequestrations of property, had been imposed by the Protectorate on those who supported the Royalist cause.[40] Small landowners in particular were seriously damaged by fines levied during the civil wars. 'Few... were able to make good the ravages wrought by parliamentary sequestrators. ... many were forced to borrow money or mortgage their properties in order to keep their creditors happy'.[41] The Blayneys' neighbour Arthur Weaver of Bettws, already a landowner of substance in Shropshire, claimed to have lost as much as £3,000 from the despoliation by Commonwealth authorities of his estate around Bridgnorth, despite some expedient changing of sides during the conflict.[42] He and his estate survived, but others were less fortunate. Geraint H. Jenkins notes the case of Edward Lloyd of Llanforda near Oswestry in Shropshire: 'Losses incurred by his father during the age of sequestration forced Edward Lloyd of Llanforda to lease and sell land, raise mortgages and loans, and transfer debts.' [43] This was a practice which would become more acute in the eighteenth century, exacerbated by demographic change,[44] and would lead to the

[38] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.96.
[10] Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, pp.261-2; Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry, 1640-1790* (Cambridge, 1983), Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, p.6.
[40] Peter R. Roberts, 'The Decline of the Welsh Squires in the Eighteenth Century', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 13,2 (1963), p.158.
[41] Jenkins*, Foundations of Modern Wales*, p.93.
[42] William Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC*, 30, (1898), pp.127-128.
[43] Geraint H. Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, p.93.
[44] P. Jenkins, 'The demographic decline of the landed gentry in the eighteenth century: a south Wales study', *Welsh History Review,* 11,1 (1982), pp.31-49.

concentration of an ever larger proportion of the country's landed property in the hands of fewer and fewer owners.[45] It would also lead to the decline of many native Welsh landed dynasties, as their estates were bought by wealthier Englishmen, or their sons or daughters married into English or Scottish families, resulting in a social, political and cultural shift away from traditional Welsh hierarchies and values towards those of the expanding and increasingly influential English state.[46]

Late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century Montgomeryshire was a rural county of landed estates owned by families who constituted the social elite. In his PhD thesis of 1985 David Jenkins reviewed the leading families, suggesting that, apart from the earls of Powis, whose social and political dominance across Montgomeryshire and Shropshire placed them above all other county gentry in terms of status, there was still a hierarchical distinction between 'esquires' and 'gentlemen' largely based on the size of their rentals. During this period the pre-eminent squires included the Vaughans of Llwydiarth, whose estate yielded an annual rental of more than £2,300; the Pughs of Mathafarn, Llanwrin, with £2,500 a year. Others mentioned include the Lloyds of Berthlwyd, Llanidloes, the Herberts of Dolguog and Oakley Park, the Owens of Rhiwsaeson, and those neighbours of the Blayneys, the Weavers of Bettws. The Blayneys of Gregynog, with a rental of over £1,000 in the 1660s, were leading 'esquires' of the time. Gentry families included the Syers of Bronhafod, the Hodsons of Pwllan, and the Pryces of Gunley.[47] These families were the leading players in Montgomeryshire history for two centuries or more; they married each other's sons and daughters, they took turns to serve as sheriffs, they served together as magistrates, they mortgaged each other's lands. They suffered 'The Crisis of Community' of the late eighteenth century, and not all survived.[48]

[45] J. V. Beckett, 'The patterns of landownership in England and Wales, 1660-1880', *Economic History Review* 37, 1 (Feb 1984), pp.1-22; J.V. Beckett, The decline of the small landowner in England and Wales, 1660-1900, in F. M. L. Thompson, *Landowners, Capitalists and Entrepreneurs: Essays for Sir John Habakkuk* (Oxford, 1994), pp; P. R. Roberts, 'The decline of the Welsh squires in the eighteenth century', *National Library of Wales Journal* 13,2 (1963-64), pp. 157-173.

[46] Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, pp.276-283.

[47] David Jenkins, 'The population, society and economy of late Stuart Montgomeryshire c.1660-1720', (Unpublished PhD thesis, Aberystwyth, 1985). Jenkins has used the terms 'esquire' and 'gent' to denote hierarchy although the distinction may by this period have become arbitrary. Nonetheless it is to be noted that Arthur Weaver of Highgate is described as a 'gent' in all surviving records prior to his inheriting Morville Hall in Shropshire, after which he is designated 'esquire'.

[48]Humpheys, *Crisis of the Community,* pp.96-125.

In eighteenth century Montgomeryshire, old-established estates were sold when a succession of owners allowed debt, often accrued in the aftermath of the Civil War, to accumulate until they were forced into bankruptcy, as was the case with the Pryce family of Newtown Hall.[49] Or the succession might fail in the male line and pass, with the patrimony, through heiresses who had married into more substantial families. This was the case when the estates of the once socially and politically influential Vaughans of Llwydiarth came into the possession of the Williams Wynn family of Wynnstay in the early 1700s – an acquisition which was to enhance the Williams Wynn family's position in the power hierarchy of the county.[50] In 1778 Thomas Pennant observed that ownership of the Vaynor estate of the Price family 'by the marriage of the heiress, in the last century, to George Devereux Esq., was transferred to the Viscounts Hereford. But on the death of Price Devereux was by will alienated to persons foreign to the name and blood.'[51] Other once prominent but debt-encumbered Montgomeryshire estates such as Mathafarn and Rhiwsaeson passed to new owners – via females or distant relatives – and were sold on when the new owners could not afford or preferred not to take on the debt.[52] English incomers such as Sir Gervase Clifton of Nottinghamshire, who in 1766 married the heiress Frances Lloyd of Trelydan, Aberbechan and Pentre, heralded a movement towards estates passing to absentee landlords.[53] Characteristic of the era were the attempts made to confront such threats to ownership and succession by means of new approaches to estate settlement and inheritance which, paradoxically, often sowed the seeds of their own destruction[54], as will be discussed in the second section of this chapter.

The Gregynog estate and its owners were not immune to these hazards. By the middle of the eighteenth century, which is the starting point for this study, Gregynog had been inherited by Arthur Blayney, descendant of a family which had been associated with the estate since the

[49] J.D.K. Lloyd, (1959). PRYCE family, of Newtown Hall, Montgomeryshire. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. https://biography.wales/article/s-PRYC-NEW-1450 (accessed 13 October 23); David Pugh, 'The Briscoes of Newtown Hall', *The Newtonian,* 12, (2003), p.14.
[50] E.R. Morris, 'The Vaughans of Llwydiarth in Early Seventeenth-Century Politics in Montgomeryshire', *MC* 107 (2019), p.74.
[51] Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Wales* (1778), p.360. With thanks to Shaun Evans.
[52] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, pp.108-13.
[53] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.103.
[54] For the spiral of debt and bankruptcy which ruined the Pryces of Newtown Hall, who were neighbours and distant kin of the Blayneys of Gregynog, see Richard Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies*, (Newtown, 1894), pp 255-261.

fifteenth century.[55] But for a good hundred years before his advent, the estate had faced crises of succession, early deaths of heads of the family, political uncertainties and debt.[56] It cannot be said, therefore, that this period represented the apex of Gregynog's status and influence. However under Arthur Blayney's proprietorship and custodianship, between the 1750s and the 1790s Gregynog recovered its status as a one of the leading estates in the county, with one of the most progressive landlords, to the extent that it became revered, not least in the imagination of its later owners, as representing a 'golden age' of benevolent patriarchy, presided over by that genial old bachelor, Arthur Blayney, who, according to his obituary, was regarded as 'the father of Montgomeryshire'. [57] That he lived and died a bachelor, however, proved to be the last, and most insurmountable, hazard faced by the Blayney dynasty.

To examine the extent to which Gregynog, and its Blayney owners and their successors, the Tracys and Hanbury-Tracys, reflect or challenge historiographical assumptions about the gentry and their estates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – how 'utterly typical', in Prys Morgan's phrase, Gregynog really was – it is necessary to review the family's social status, reputation and power, their connection to other old-established landed families in Montgomeryshire and beyond, and the extent, nature and security of their patrimony. This will begin with an examination of the significance and character of Gregynog as an old-established Welsh landed estate, and the emergence of the Blayneys as an *uchelwyr* (Welsh gentry) family in the late-medieval and early-modern periods. It will review how the Blayneys' pride in their descent from native Welsh rulers, and their connection with other leading Welsh dynasties, underpinned their own assumptions about their status, as demonstrated in the visual and material culture they created in and around their house and estate. It will assess the degree to which such memorials reflected their 'gentlemanly' standards of conduct and the esteem in which they were held by all levels of society. It will investigate how this dynastic legacy was adopted and celebrated by those who were to become Arthur Blayney's heirs. Ultimately, it argues that the cultural patrimony created by the Blayneys was so strongly

[55] George Sandford, 'The House of Gregynog: The Blayneys and the Hanbury-Tracys, Lords Sudeley,' *MC*, 18, (1885), pp.229-244.
[56] GRO, Sudeley MSS D2153/289, D2153/294 23, D2153/343 and other documents record mortgages raised on the Gregynog estate from 1668 to 1691.
[57] Philip Yorke, *The Royal Tribes of Wales*, ed. Richard Williams, (Liverpool, 1887), pp.155-159; Sudeley MSS D2153/N/12: 'Arthur Blayney Esq. of Gregynog Hall in Montgomeryshire, An 18th Century Sketch' by Ada, Lady Sudeley, in *Notes on the Descent of the Barons Sudeley of Toddington*, privately published, 1923; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 65, (October, 1795), p. 881.

embedded that even following inheritance of the estate by other families, it survived and continued to act as a force for shaping the identity of the estate which can still be traced today.

The means by which the Blayneys and their successors sought to preserve this patrimony leads to questions of succession and inheritance, which are discussed in the second section of the chapter. This examines how the Gregynog estate was 'kept in the family', and into what sort of 'family' it evolved. It reviews the succession issues which hit this and other landed families across the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the legal mechanisms that were developed to avoid estate fragmentation and alienation. It assesses the conclusions drawn by historians of land ownership, succession and debt such as John Habbakuk, Eileen Spring and Lawrence Stone, regarding the impact of the estates system on the social structure of Britain, and considers the extent to which the fortunes of the Gregynog estate align with or challenge their conclusions.

The final section reviews the Gregynog experience of status and succession compared with that on other Welsh estates during the period under consideration. An indication is given of the changing context of landownership in an increasingly industrial world, the advent of aspiring landowners from the professional and industrial classes in the nineteenth century and the rise of new dynasties established by self-made businessmen such as the Montgomeryshire entrepreneurs David Davies of Llandinam and Pryce Pryce-Jones of Newtown.

Origins, Status, Reputation: Gregynog before 1750 and the origin of the Blayneys

The Blayney name is first recorded as Evan Blayney of Tregynon in a roll of burgesses of Welshpool in 1406, referring to one whose patronymic was Ieuan ap Gruffydd ap Llywelyn Fychan ap Llywelyn ap Einion ap Llywelyn ap Meilyr Gryg.[58] His family came from Llwyn Melyn, a farm in Tregynon parish still existing today but which dates back to the twelfth century, when it was associated with Meilyr Gryg.[59] Ieuan ap Gruffydd was known as Ieuan Blaenau, an epithet possibly deriving from the location of his farm in the *blaenau*, the uplands of the parish, between the headwaters of two local brooks which flow into the Severn, the Rhiw and the Bechan.[60] It has been suggested, notably by Prys Morgan, that Ieuan Blaenau anglicised his

[58] W.V. Lloyd, 'Early Charters of Welshpool', *MC*, 12 (1878), pp.309-14
[59] Prys Morgan, 'The Blayney Period', in Glyn Tegai Hughes et.al, (eds), *Gregynog*, (Cardiff, 1977), p26; Michael Powell Siddons, 'The Heraldic Carving at Gregynog', *MC* 88, (2000) p. 54.
[60] Prys Morgan, 'The Blayney Period', p. 25.

name to Evan Blayney to avoid being associated with Welsh supporters of Owain Glyndŵr.[61] During these years the village of Tregynon lay in Mortimer territory, part of the Marcher lordship of Cydewain which had been granted by Edward I to Roger Mortimer in 1277 following his defeat of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd at Dolforwyn Castle. The area had seen settlers brought in to towns such as Welshpool and Newtown ever since the Edwardian Conquest, living alongside, and soon marrying into, the native Welsh population.[62]

It was the youngest son of Evan Blayney, Gruffudd, who settled at Gregynog in the fifteenth century. His elder brothers, Hywel and Owen, had settled in nearby Manafon and Aberbechan respectively, but their descendants were among the first of the Blayneys to move eastwards into Shropshire, and a good deal of their lands were acquired by the Gregynog Blayneys over the next century. As S. P. Thomas writes:

> Gregynog was far from being the family's only seat, particularly before the mid-seventeenth century, and the Stingwern estate and others in Cedewain formed a substantial part of the original tribal land-holding which was gradually fragmented among the family and then, over a fairly short period, re-grouped in the Gregynog estate.[63]

The status of the family was high in local terms, as may be suggested by the fact that their ancestor Evan Blaenau had been a burgess of Welshpool. 'Like many of the Welsh native gentry during the so-called Wars of the Roses [the Blayneys] were Yorkists', wrote Prys Morgan in 1977, and by the mid-1400s a Blayney was an Esquire of the Body to Edward IV. The progress of Rhys ap Thomas's army through the lordship of Cedewain – perhaps even across Gregynog lands – towards a rendezvous with the future Henry VII at Welshpool, en route for his victory at the battle of Bosworth in 1485, perhaps gave the Yorkist Blayneys cause for alarm. But if they were ever out of favour, they were soon back at court; Griffith Blayney of Gregynog's son Evan Lloyd Blayney became a squire to Henry VII, steward of the lordships of Ceri, Cedewain, Arwystli and Cyfeiliog, and constable of Montgomery Castle.[64] A Blayney was a member of the Grand Jury for Montgomeryshire in the reign of Henry VIII.[65] By this time also the estate was becoming substantial. Despite the Welsh laws of partible inheritance known as

[61] ibid.
[62] R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282-1400* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 319-20; Charles Hopkinson and Martin Speight, *The Mortimers, Lords of the March*, (Almeley, 2002), pp.171-172.
[61] S.P. Thomas, 'Branches of the Blayney family in the XVI and XVII Centuries', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 64 (1976), pp. 7-38
[64] Prys Morgan,'The Blayney Period', pp.27-30; H.T. Evans, *Wales and the Wars of the Roses,* (1915, Repr. Stroud, 1998), p.132.
[65] Glyn Tegai Hughes, 'The Montgomeryshire Blayneys, the Poets and After', *MC* 95 (2007), pp. 55-69

cyfran, which were displaced by the Acts of Union in the 1530s and 40s, by the early sixteenth century Blayney lands extended over several thousand acres in the parishes of Tregynon and Llandinam, as indicated by the 1541 will of Thomas ap Ieuan[66] who had adopted the name of Lloyd. His son David Lloyd Blayney of Gregynog served as High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire in 1577 and 1585, David's son Lewis serving as Under-Sheriff. Another son, Edward, played a part in the 'colonisation' of Ireland and in 1620 was raised to the Irish Peerage as Baron Blayney of Monaghan. [67] The status of Gregynog Hall by this time is suggested by its being named on Christopher Saxton's map of Montgomeryshire in 1578, and again on John Speed's map of 1611 (Fig. 1).

Blayneys continued to play their part in county society as magistrates and sheriffs alongside the other great landowners of Montgomeryshire, their primary allegiance by Arthur Blayney's time being to the Herbert family of Chirbury and Powis. Lewis Blayney died in 1601, his ten-year-old son John becoming the heir.[68] In 1610 this John is recorded as having been admitted to the Inner Temple as a barrister.[69]

In 1632-3 John Blayney of Gregynog became chief steward of the lordships of Ceri, Cydewain, Halcetor and Montgomery on behalf of the (Catholic) Herbert family who had acquired Powis Castle in 1587.[70] This connection was to raise questions in the future as to the Blayneys' religious affiliations, but in the 1630s it served to endorse the Blayneys' status as a leading county family, and may have been one of the stimuli for John Blayney's commissioning of Gregynog's carved parlour depicting the family's coat of arms and those of its connections.

<u>The Blayneys and their memorials.</u>

The Blayneys were proud of their lineage, and like most Welsh landed families took care to celebrate it in monuments and memorials which recorded their pedigree and emphasised their honour, dignity, status and ancient roots. This built on an earlier tradition of patronage of the Welsh bardic order; the poets who came to Gregynog to sing the praises of the Blayneys made

[66] TNA, PROB11/45/67 Will of Thomas ap Jevan Lloyd, Llandinam.
67 E. Rowley-Morris, 'The Family of Blayney...of Montgomeryshire and Ireland', MC, 21, (1887), pp. 273-302.
68GRO D2153/Ad/5, Inquisition post mortem taken before Richard Price Escheator of Mtg., of Lewis Blayney, esq., dec'd., 17 Sept. 43 Eliz. [1601].
66 Recorded in the Archives of the Inner Temple, Blayney, John (innertemple.org.uk) accessed 23.6.23.
70 E. D. Jones, (1959), HERBERT family, (earls of POWIS). Dictionary of Welsh Biography. https://biography.wales/article/s-POWY-HER-1674 (accessed 13 October 2023).

regular reference to the patron's ancestry in their compositions.[71] A distinguished pedigree conveyed legitimacy, reinforcing patriarchal authority in the community. Although the importance attributed by old Welsh gentry families to pedigree rather than wealth was becoming a source of mockery by the eighteenth century, as Philip Jenkins points out, genealogical studies were still pursued and patronised by wealthy families until the 1720s, and indeed long after: ancestry remained of critical importance to the identities of such families.[72] This was the case at Gregynog: its significance as an old-established Welsh *plas* and estate is illustrated by a number of artefacts and memorials which have survived in Gregynog Hall itself and the local parish church of St. Cynon in Tregynon. These features are still to be seen by every visitor to the hall or the church today, and provide a gateway into the study of the Blayney family, their history and heritage as Welsh landed gentry. Furthermore, each one can be said to represent a specific stage in the evolution of the family and estate.

The Blayney Room

The earliest and most famous surviving memorial to the Blayney family is the carved parlour at Gregynog Hall, known today as the Blayney Room. The carvings depict the armorial shields of the family's distinguished ancestors and connections and was created at the behest of Arthur Blayney's great-great grandfather John in 1636.[73] As Glyn Tegai Hughes points out, any mid-Wales family of note wanted it to be clearly understood that they belonged to the native princely order dating back to the era before the fourteenth century, when the old kingdom of Powys passed by marriage to Anglo-Norman feudal barons. The Blayneys' claim to this heritage is manifested in the carved parlour.[74] The family coat of arms, above the fireplace (Fig. 2), is flanked on the surrounding walls by shields depicting the arms of individuals and families from whom they claimed descent, or to whom they were connected by marriage or patronage. Michael Siddons, former Wales Herald Extraordinary, examined the shields and 'attempted to explain their presence there', to identify the dynasties families they represented and their

71 Enid Roberts, Cerddi Gregynog Poems, (Newtown, 1979).

[72] Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, pp. 201-202; Michael Siddons, *Welsh Pedigree Rolls*, (Aberystwyth, 1996); Shaun Evans, 'Inventing the Bosworth Tradition: Richard ap Hywel, The 'King's Hole' and the Mostyn Family Image in the Nineteenth Century', *WHR*, 29, 2 (2018), pp.218-253.

[73] The carvings are believed to be the work of itinerant Flemish wood carvers, or perhaps by survivors of the Newtown School of Woodcarving whose work survives in a number of rood-screens from the pre-Reformation period along the Welsh border. This is the origin favoured by H. Avray Tipping, who describes it as 'the very best provincial work of its day', in 'The Carved Parlour of Gregynog', *Country Life*, 22 Nov. 1919, pp. 668-9.

[74] Glyn Tegai Hughes, The Montgomeryshire Blayneys, the Poets and After, *Montgomeryshire Collections* 95 (2007), p.55

connection with the Blayneys.[75] The quarterings of the main coat of arms show those attributed to Brochwel Ysgithrog, Einion Sais and Cynwrig ap Rhiwallon. Brochwel was claimed to be a king of Powys in the sixth century, and many Montgomeryshire families, not only the Blayneys, claimed descent from him.[76] From Brochwel and Einion Sais the Blayney line descends through the generations until the early fifteenth century, from which date the family tree can be more clearly established. This includes connections by marriage to distinguished Welsh families such as the Herberts of Montgomery and the Vaughans of Tyle Glas, Breconshire, whose heraldic shields feature on the walls of the carved parlour alongside those of mythical figures such as Caradog Fraichfras.[77] Siddons suggests that the source of the genealogical information upon which the heraldic shields were based lies in a manuscript written about 1620 to 1640, now in the National Library of Wales.[78] This manuscript records a large number of poems addressed to a connection of the Blayneys, Lewis Gwyn ap Jenkin of Breconshire. Its date accords with John Blayney's creation of the carved parlour in 1636. By this time the status of the Blayneys had been reinforced by marriage into other prominent families such as the Pryces of Newtown Hall and the Lloyds of Berthllwyd; Blayneys had served as High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire and Justices of the Peace, and had achieved military repute in the colonisation of Ireland.[79] John Blayney could look back on two hundred years of direct male succession of an expanding estate. But change was imminent: John Blayney had no surviving sons; only a daughter.

The year '1636' carved above the four doors of the Blayney Room presumably denotes the completion of the work. The date '21st June', carved in two small shields on either side of the present day windows, is believed to celebrate the wedding of John Blayney's daughter, Joyous or Joyce, to his Irish nephew, Arthur Blayney, second son of the first Lord Blayney, who had married a daughter of Bishop Loftus of Dublin. This assumption is supported by the inclusion of a shield depicting the Loftus arms in the carved parlour. This occasion seems to be the first in this family in which marriage of a daughter was utilised to keep the family name and estate

[75] Michael Siddons, The Heraldic Carving at Gregynog", *MC*, 88 (2000), 53-62.
[76] J. E. Lloyd, (1959). BROCHWEL YSGYTHROG, more correctly 'Ysgithrog,' i.e. 'of the tusks' (fl. 550), prince. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. https://biography.wales/article/s-BROC-YSG-0502 (accessed 13 October 2023).
[77] Siddons, 'Heraldic Carving'. See p. 62 of this article for the early pedigree of the Blayney family.
[78] NLW, Peniarth MS 114.
[79] For an outline of the fortunes of the Irish Blayneys see E. Rowley Morris, 'The Family of Blayney, notes relating to the Blayney Family of Montgomeryshire and Ireland…' *MC*, 21 (1887), 273-290.

intact. The creation of the carved parlour might therefore have served as a celebration of this dynastic marriage as well as reinforcing the status of the Blayneys as associates of the Herberts of Powis Castle. Indeed, pride in this pedigree was to survive the breach in succession that took place in 1795; when Gregynog Hall was rebuilt in the 1850s, the carved parlour was carefully re-created, indicating acknowledgement of, identification with, and even adoption of the pedigree, on the part of subsequent generations of owners, despite their diminishing lineal connection with the direct Blayney line. Thus the family's ancestry and history is physically built into the fabric of Gregynog, an assertive confirmation of its owners' status and prestige – a confirmation that seems to have been more important to Arthur Blayney's inheritors than to the last of the Gregynog Blayneys himself, as they sought to incorporate his pedigree into their own.[80]

Blayney memorials in Tregynon parish church

Tregynon's parish church of St. Cynon contains numerous memorials to the Blayneys, their successors, and others associated with Gregynog and its proprietors. About eighty years after the creation of the carved parlour, another John Blayney (born June 1683)[81], great-grandson of the earlier John, ordered a memorial tablet to his ancestors to be erected in the church (Fig. 3):

Here lyeth the Body of David Lloyd BLAYNEY Esq of Gregynogg (son to Thomas Blayney by Margt sister to Edward Herbert of Montgomery Esqr.) Interred AD 1595. Also Elizh (ye Wife of David Lloyd Blayney Esqr, daughr of Lewis Jones of Bishop's Castle) interred Ano 1590, who left issue, Lewis, Sr Edw Blayney (afterwards Ld BLAYNEY in ye Kingdom of Ireland); & Lucy ye wife, daughr of Morris OWEN of Rhewsanson Esqr. Also ye body of Lewis BLAYNEY interr Ano 1600. Also Elizh ye wife of John PRYCE of Newtown Esq., daughr to Rhees BLAYNEY of Aberbechan Esq, Ano 1603. Also Bridget ye wife of Lewis Blayney, daughr to John Pryce of Newtown Esq, Ano 1603. Also ye Body of John BLAYNEY Esqr., (who faithfully served & suffer'd for ye Royall Martyr, he was son of Lewis Blayney Esq.) Ano 1665. Also Eliz., wife of John Blayney (sole daughr of Jenkin LLOYD of Berthlloyd Esqr., by his wife Joyce Herbert sister to Edward Ld Herbert of Cherbury Ano 1662. Also Sir Arthur BLAYNEY Kt Bannert (son of Ld Blayney of Castle Blayney in Ireland who served ye Royall Martyr KC ye first in ye post of College of Horse) Ano 1659. Also Dame Joyous BLAYNEY, sole daughr & heir of John Blayney & widow of Sir Arthur Blayney, Ano 1661. Also Capt. Andrew BLAYNEY, 2nd son of Lewis Blayney, 1678. Also Henry BLAYNEY Esqr son of Sir Arthur Blayney, 1691 Also Mary BLYNEY (widow of Henry Blayney Esqr & daughr to ye Reverd Dr SIDNEY, D.D. by his wife Eliz. daughr to Richd BLUNDEN Esqr of Bishops Castle) which said Mary left

[80] A pedigree roll commissioned in about 1850 by Thomas Charles Hanbury-Tracy, heir to the first Baron Sudeley of Toddington, includes the pedigrees of numerous family connections including that of the Blayneys. This roll was owned by late 7th Lord Sudeley and reproduced on the Burke's Peerage website, see http://www.burkespeerage.com/SudeleyPedigree.php downloaded 14th January 2022.

[81] Montgomeryshire Records, *Parish of Tregynon*, *Register of Baptisms, Marriages & Burials 1664-1753* (Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society, 2012), p.3. Hereafter *Parish Records of Tregynon*.

Issue 1 son and 7 daughr, Ano 1707. Also Annamaria ye daughr of John Blayney Esqr by Ann his wife Ano Dom 1709.[82]

In 1707, this John Blayney married Ann Weaver of Morville. The creation of this monument to the Blayney family in Tregynon church at about this time suggests that, like the apparent coincidence of the marriage of Joyous and Arthur Blayney in 1636 with the date of completion of the carved parlour in Gregynog Hall, the marriage may have been regarded as an appropriate occasion on which to reassert the Blayneys' status as the pre-eminent family in the neighbourhood.

There may have been an additional reason: in 1707 it may have seemed to John Blayney that the great days of the family's status and influence were behind them. No members of the family held court appointments as they had done in the late-fifteenth century; no family member had achieved a peerage since Edward Blayney's Irish barony in 1620, or a knighthood since the John's grandfather Arthur Blayney's in 1648. The position of High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire had been held by several generations of Blayneys from the 1570s until 1644, but was not held again until 1715, when John himself was appointed. The elder John Blayney, father-in-law of Sir Arthur Blayney, had unsuccessfully contested the Montgomery Boroughs parliamentary seat in 1660 and had been appointed a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the county the year afterwards, but, according to the Blayney monument, died in 1665.[83] Henry Blayney (d.1691)[84], father of the younger John, had been ejected from the bench of magistrates in 1680[85], for religious or political reasons – and Henry had died when John was only eight years old. The monument, therefore, can be seen as an attempt to reassert the Blayneys' pride in their ancestry and pedigree by proclaiming their old-established roots, both in the locality and the wider territory of the Welsh borders. It also served to remind the world of the family's loyal service to the Crown in Ireland and in the Civil War, and its connection through marriage with significant families such as the Herberts of Montgomery and Chirbury, the Pryces of Newtown Hall, Owens of Rhiwsaeson and the Lloyds of Berthllwyd.

[82] In his article 'The Family of Blayney' in *MC* 32, (1888), pp 105-6, E. Rowley Morris challenges the accuracy of some of the genealogy recorded on this monument. For example, the mother of David Lloyd Blayney was not Margaret Herbert, but Gwenllian Herle. John Blayney's hand-written pedigree (see footnote 55 below) has the correct name, so the discrepancy is a mystery.

[83] In fact his burial is recorded in the Tregynon parish records as having taken place on the 7th September 1667. *Parish Records of Tregynon*, p. 56.

[84] *Parish Records of Tregynon*, p. 59.

[85] A.H, Dodd, *Studies in Stuart Wales*, (Cardiff, 1971), pp82-3.

A Blayney pedigree of 1707

A survival from the same period is a document written by the younger John Blayney, dated 1707, the year he married Anne Weaver of Morville.[86] It records the pedigree of his family from 'Brochwell Sgythrog', and all the generations which followed, including all the detail inscribed on the monument, down to himself at generation twenty: 'John Blayney Esqr now living ... and his wife Anne, daughter of Arthur Weaver of Morvil in ye county of Sallop'. Thus it can be inferred that John Blayney was planning the creation of the monument at the time of his marriage. His mother, Henry's wife Mary, who died in 1707 and was buried in Tregynon on the 28th of September, is included in the memorial, suggesting that she died after her son's marriage that year. The text of the memorial occupies only two thirds of the oval face of the monument, suggesting the deliberate intention of recording future generations, but the only addition is that of John and Ann's infant daughter Annamaria, who died in 1709.[87] None of their later children are recorded, nor is their only surviving son, Arthur, born in 1716, who was to be given his own monument. Presumably John and Ann hoped that Arthur would marry and create a new generation to be recorded below their's. But it was not to be, and the lower third of the monument remains blank.

The early incidence of David Lloyd Blayney's marriage to a Bishop's Castle family, just over the Shropshire border, indicates that the Blayneys did not confine their connections to Welsh families, and this is reflected in the late seventeenth century by Henry Blayney's marriage to Mary Seddon, whose father was a 'Doctor Seddon, alias Sidney, of Herefordshire,' and whose mother was the daughter of Humphrey Blunden of Worthen. Indeed a number of Henry and Mary Blayney's daughters married into Shropshire families, and others married Irish connections. [88] This might be seen as an example of a growing anglicisation of the Welsh gentry classes, as described by Geraint H. Jenkins and others.[89] But the tendency also reflects the complex social, cultural and economic history of the Welsh/English border counties whose major towns, Oswestry, Shrewsbury, and Ludlow, were all situated in English counties but whose roots lay in old Marcher lordships – whose territories, until their 'shiring' by Henry VIII

[86] GRO D2153/Q/6.
[87] Parish Records of Tregynon, p.65.
[88] E.Rowley Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', *MC*, 21, (1887), pp. 291-302.
[89] e.g. Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales*, (Cardiff, 1987), pp. 264-5.

in the Act of Union of 1536, extended over large areas of what is now Mid Wales and Shropshire.[90]

In 1707 John Blayney (1683-1720) was twenty-four years old. He was only eight years old when his father died in 1691. His father's will has not been traced, so it is not known what arrangements were made for his education and care during his minority, but presumably he had grown up at Gregynog in the care of his mother and elder sisters, inheriting the patrimony when he came of age in 1704. That year he was appointed to the Commission of the Peace.[91] His father Henry Blayney had served as a magistrate, but had been dismissed from the Bench in the Privy Council's 'purge' of 1680.[92] A. H. Dodd accounts for this by suggesting that 'the Irish Blayneys were more Protestant than the parent stock in Montgomeryshire, which was too closely connected to Powis Castle not to fall under suspicion of being tarred with the same brush', that is of having Catholic sympathies.[93] This might also imply that his son John would inherit the same loyalty, making him a Tory (alongside other 'crypto-Jacobeans' as Melvin Humphreys describes John Pugh of Mathafarn) rather than a Whig, especially given the Blayney family's known allegiance to the Catholic and Tory Herberts of Powis Castle.[94] However, the reason given by Melvin Humphreys for the John Blayney's dismissal from the Bench in 1715, in a 'Tory purge' is that he was 'one of the county's leading Whigs'.[95] This seems inexplicable, given John's father's dismissal for the opposite reason in 1680, but it may be that the young John Blayney felt closer to the Montgomery and Chirbury Herberts, who were Whigs, rather than the Tory and Catholic Powis Castle Herberts. During the eighteenth century the Montgomery Boroughs parliamentary seat was held largely by Whigs, whereas the county seat, very much under the patronage of Wynnstay, was Tory, until it was taken for the Whigs by William Mostyn Owen in 1774.

'A period of mark-time.'

The years from 1650 to 1750 at Gregynog have been described by Prys Morgan as a period of 'mark-time rather than progress' – years in which, unlike the previous century and a half, little

[90] A. H. Dodd, 'Borderers and Highlanders', *History*, New Series, 41, 141/143, (Feb-Oct, 1956), pp. 53-4.
[91] TNA/C234/88
[92] A H Dodd, 'Tuning the Welsh Bench, 1680', *NLWJ*, 6, 3, (Summer 1950), pp. 249-259.
[93] A. H. Dodd, *Studies in Stuart Wales* (Cardiff, 1971), pp. 82-3.
[94] Dating from the earlier John Blayney's role as chief steward of the Powis lordship of Ceri, Cydewain, Halcetor and Montgomery, see p.23 above.
[95]Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, pp.193-4.

expansion took place, and the priorities were to pay off mortgages raised to provide marriage portions for a large family of daughters, and, not least, to keep the estate going during the minority of eldest sons following the early deaths of their fathers.[96] As we have seen, John Blayney was eight when his father Henry died. John Blayney himself died in 1720, when his one surviving son was only four years old. But by 1750 the surviving heir, Arthur Blayney, was thirty four years old; he had taken over the running of the Gregynog estate from his ageing mother, and he knew himself to be the residual legatee of his Weaver relations' Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates. The estate in this period was, despite encumbrances, a subtantial one, with holdings in the local parishes of Aberhafesp, Betws Cedewain, Llandysil, Llanllwchaiarn, Llanwyddelan, Llanwnog, Newtown and Tregynon[97] as well as the slightly more distant parishes of Berriew and Kerry.

'The prestige and consequence of his estate and name'.

> Arthur Blayney of Gregynog Esquire was descended from Brochwel Ysgithrog a Prince of Powys in the seventh century, but he valued himself on his pedigree no otherwise, than by taking care that his conduct should not disgrace it. [98]

Philip Yorke's encomium of Arthur Blayney, quoted above, has created an enduring image of someone who understood that a true gentleman's lineage amounted to nothing if his actions and attitudes did not reflect noble ideals (Fig. 4). By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was not enough to be born a gentleman with a long pedigree, especially in Wales where there were many impoverished families with ancestral links to the early native rulers who claimed gentry status on this basis and were frequently mocked by society as a result.[99] 'If an English dramatist or pamphleteer wanted to raise a good-humoured laugh, he only had to conjure up a Welsh "shentleman", poor as a church mouse, but ready to rattle off his pedigree to the ninth generation,' comments A. H. Dodd.[100] No; to be regarded as a gentleman you had to behave like one and, crucially, possess the material wealth to live like one. Your manners,

[96] Prys Morgan, 'The Blayney Period', p.36.
[97] Further research is needed among the surviving estate ledgers to establish the relative extent of the Blayney and Weaver holdings in Montgomeryshire and Shropshire at this time, and it is difficult to make comparisons without further examination of the nature of the properties held by each estate, especially as acreage is rarely recorded. The total rental Gregynog in the 1760s, as recorded in the earliest surviving ledgers, appears to be about £2,500 a year, and the Weaver estates in Shropshire about £2,300, and in Montgomeryshire about £1,500. The nature of the various estates will be considered in the second chapter of this thesis.
[98] Philip Yorke, *The Royal Tribes of Wales*, p.155.
[99] Peter Lord, *Words with Pictures: Welsh images and images of Wales in the popular press, 1640-1860* (Llandysul, 1995).
[100] A.H. Dodd, *Studies in Stuart Wales*, (Cardiff, 1971), p. 1

conduct, lifestyle, appearance and material surroundings had to reflect your status, never mind your ancestry.[101] In their studies of English landed society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries neither G.E. Mingay nor F.M.L. Thompson[102] mention ancestry as a component of gentry status, although historically, it was crucial to any claim to gentility in Wales, deriving from the perceived qualities of the *uchelwyr*, whose standing in local life, as J. Gwynfor Jones points out, 'required that they be vested with the inheritable qualities of illustrious forbears'.[103] The early eminence of your family may have been derived from military prowess – and in Wales, your lineage, and lordship – but as civil society advanced you were expected to demonstrate more than an ability to defend your patrimony or that of your king. You had to maintain good relations with your peers (and your superiors) and show respect to your social inferiors, on whose labour and services you depended for your income and for the maintenance of your estates. Keith Thomas discusses the means by which the social elite sought to distinguish itself by adopting an ethic of 'civility, and, later, politeness as a way of modifying the more assertive notions of honour, military prowess and superiority of lineage'.[104]

The gentry, as Leslie Baker-Jones has noted in relation to the gentry of South-West Wales, were the natural leaders of the community, with all life revolving around the big house, but were expected to exercise this leadership with wisdom and benevolence. In return, their inferiors were expected to reciprocate with deference and respect.[105] Philip Jenkins notes how the Glamorgan gentry maintained relations with their tenantry and the local community by participating in their celebrations and amusements, as well as accepting their moral obligations. Paternalism

> depended on the common acceptance by lord and tenant of a code of economic morality, which placed less emphasis on profit than on good social relations and the maintenance of hereditary clientage.[106]

[101] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700*, (Basingstoke, 1994).
[102] G.E.Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1963); F.M.L.Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1963).
[103] J. Gwynfor Jones, *Concepts of Order and Gentility in Wales 1540-1640*, (Llandysul, 1992), p. 55.
[104] Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England* (Newhaven and London, 2018), p.31.
[105] Leslie Baker-Jones, *Princelings, Privilege and Power, The Tivyside Gentry in their Community*, (Llandysul, 1999), pp.16-18.
[106] Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, pp.206-7

When, in the eighteenth century, radical new social and economic writings and ideas, largely emanating from the writers of the French Enlightenment, led to challenge of the leisured gentleman and the idle unproductive rich, it became important to assert traditional values.

> As each man had his station and particular responsibilities in the social order, it was essential to re-assert status through philanthropic activities towards the poor, the sick and the lower orders. Attacks against wealth, luxury, patronage and corruption were answered by a quickened sense of their public and social obligations on the part of the gentry.[107]

Matthew Cragoe, writing of Carmarthenshire as its landowners faced the social and economic changes of the nineteenth century, points out that the 'hereditary community' of a landed estate had traditionally been governed by a series of complex rights and duties involving both landowners and tenants, which lay at the heart of the 'moral economy of the landed estate', and formed the basis for a strongly personal identity of interests.[108] This 'moral economy' was still based on a paternalist structure, with the landowning gentry at the head, but it was becoming ever more important not to be perceived by the rest of society as an oppressive class of the arrogant idle rich.

The reputation of the Blayney family of Gregynog as being imbued with truly gentlemanly qualities, as well as being substantial landowners, is asserted from an early period. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the ancient lineage, prowess in battle, opulence of hospitality and open-handed treatment of all comers were qualities for which generations of Blayneys were praised and mourned in *canu mawl* and *marwnadau* (praise poems and elegies) by bards such as Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal, Lewis Glyn Cothi, Owain Gwynedd and Lewys Dwnn.[109] If these praise poems can be described as stereotypical flattery by bards who wanted to be invited back to Gregynog, they also suggest the qualities *expected* of the native Welsh gentry or *uchelwyr*; they embody a model of *uchelwriaeth* (Welsh gentility) for the attainment and retention of authority, status and honour which underpinned the Blayney family's assumptions about themselves. '*Ni cheir ei well, ni chur wan, Ni chau ddôr, ni chudd arian'*, wrote Huw Pennal, of Gruffudd Blayney of Gregynog in the fifteenth century: 'he never illtreats the weak,

[107] Baker-Jones, *Princelings, Privilege and Power*, p17-18
[108] Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy, The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895*, (Oxford, 1996), p.4
[109] Glyn Tegai Hughes, 'The Montgomeryshire Blayneys, the Poets and After', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 95 (2007), 55-69; Enid Roberts, *Chwe Cherdd*, Six Poems (Newtown, 1979).

never shuts his door, never hides his money'. [110] The last poem sung in praise of the Blayneys appears to have been composed by Lewys Dwnn on the occasion of the birth in 1610 of John Blayney's son Lewys (who died before his father, leaving his sister Joyous as heiress),[111] but the qualities and values attributed to the Blayney family in these works, like the heraldry displayed in Gregynog's carved parlour, survived as an endorsement of the family's *uchelwyr* status into the eighteenth-century era of the last Arthur Blayney, and were readily adopted by his successors.

Illustrious appointments and allegiances were also important, not only to demonstrate status but to demonstrate that a family was conscious of the responsibilities attendant upon that status. As has been shown, the Blayneys had served at court, served as high sheriffs, magistrates and deputy lord lieutenants, married into distinguished local families, had achieved baronial status in Ireland and had been knighted for service to Charles II during the Civil Wars of the mid-seventeenth century. John Blayney's 1707 memorial to David Lloyd Blayney and his descendants records these achievements, but the wording on the memorial tablet erected in Tregynon church alongside it, dedicated to John's son Arthur (d.1795), is very different in tone. It is set in a much grander marble structure created by the sculptor John Bacon (Fig. 5).[112] In this memorial, which was erected by Arthur Blayney's heir, Henry, 8th Viscount Tracy, the focus on pedigree is replaced by a long eulogy of the humane qualities of the old bachelor, who 'devoted his Time and Fortune and his Talents to the Good of Mankind' [by] 'promoting works of great Public Utility' [and by] 'relieving most bountifully the Poor and Distressed'. By the end of the eighteenth century the gentry were becoming increasingly aware that, like it or not, they had to justify their pedigree, their status and the privileges arising from these, in terms of their contribution to the well-being of society. As Leslie Baker-Jones has concluded, 'attacks against wealth, luxury, patronage and corruption were answered by a quickened sense of their public and social obligations on the part of the gentry.'[113] Thus there is nothing about Arthur Blayney's ancient lineage in this memorial. Instead it pays tribute to his generosity, unpretentious nature, personal qualities and the affection in which he was held by his neighbours and dependants, despite his apparent reluctance to be regarded as a leading

[110] Enid Roberts*, Chwe Cherdd*, p. 30.
[111] Ibid, p. 35.
[112] William Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC*, 30, (1896), p.29.
[113] Baker-Jones, *Princelings, Privilege and Power,* p.18.

light of Montgomeryshire society. Blayney is celebrated for his benevolence, his contribution to public works, his charity and concern for dependents.

How far these qualities were reflected in Arthur Blayney's actual behaviour will be examined more closely. Whatever the truth, the memorial, situated as it is in Tregynon Parish Church, served not only to pay tribute to an affectionately remembered squire but, alongside the memorial to his ancestors in the same church, to remind the parishioners that the Blayneys were the patriarchs of the community and Gregynog was the principal estate, which in the eighteenth century represented the primary theatre for the enactment of the family's status, honour and authority. As Philip Jenkins points out, antiquity and continuity were both highly prized assets for a family, particularly one which was newly determined to establish itself in a county élite. Jenkins was writing of Glamorgan, but his observations are pertinent to the present study.[114] Arthur Blayney's heir was Henry, Viscount Tracy, who succeeded to all his estates in Montgomeryshire and Shropshire, and clearly wished to claim continuity with the old dynasty. The memorial to Blayney concludes with these words:

> This monument, an humble Tribute to his exemplary Virtues, is most gratefully placed in this Church (itself an Object of his pious munificence) by Henry Lord Viscount Tracy, his Friend and Executor.[115]

By publishing his name on the memorial he was declaring not only his inheritance, and stewardship, of these estates but an acknowledgement of, and a commitment to the values attributed to their former Blayney proprietor.

In addition to the two monuments described above, Tregynon Church contains a plaque celebrating the life of Thomas Colley, who 'for thirty-five years was Agent to the Gregynog family', and a later memorial to Lady Joicey, wife of the owner of Gregynog between 1895 and 1913, who presented the church's reredos.[116] The prominence of these memorials, together with the many graves of Gregynog owners, residents, agents, servants and tenants in the churchyard, is further evidence of the role of the estate at the heart of the life, culture and

[114] Philip Jenkins, 'The Creation of an Ancient Gentry: Glamorgan 1760-1840', *WHR*, 12,1 (1984), pp. 29-49.
[115] See Fig. 5.
[116] Tregynon Memorial Inscriptions, transcribed by Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society (1999)

economy of the neighbourhood, even if the owners of the estate were not personally present in the church; the centre of 'a distinct cultural landscape', in Jonathan Finch's term[117].

It is ironic to reflect that half a century later, Arthur Blayney's indirect heirs to the Gregynog estate, the Hanbury-Tracys, later the barons Sudeley, for all their admiration of his humble character, created a monument to the first Lord Sudeley, which required their parish church of St Leonard, in Toddington, Gloucestershire, to be rebuilt to accommodate it (fig 7).[118] The inscription on this tomb is an unequivocal statement of status:

> In Memory of Charles Hanbury-Tracy 1st Baron Sudeley of Toddington in the County of Gloucester and of Gregynog in the County of Montgomery Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire. Born Decr 28th 1777 Married Decr 29th 1798 Died Feby 19th 1858. Also in Memory of Henrietta Susanna his Wife Daughter and Heiress of Henry 8th and last Viscount Tracy Born Novr 30th 1771 Died June 5th 1839.

Charles Hanbury-Tracy's eminence as celebrated on this tomb was facilitated by his marriage to Henry Tracy's heiress Henrietta, which brought him not only the Gregynog estates in Montgomeryshire and Shropshire but the Tracys' Toddington estate in Gloucestershire. This inheritance helped underwrite both his social rise and his political career as a reforming Whig, and led to his being raised to the peerage as the first Baron Sudeley in 1838. The creation of this enormous monument in Toddington church is a clear indication that Toddington was now the principal family seat and the primary public demonstration of its heritage, status and honour. Gregynog might get a mention on Charles Hanbury-Tracy's tomb but, despite its large rental, it had become of secondary importance, 'Our estate in Wales', even though it was possession of Gregynog upon which his appointment as Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire was founded. [119] He never held the appointment in Gloucestershire, where there were many dukes who would have taken precedence.[120]

'The Character of Mr Blayney'[121]

When Arthur Blayney took possession of his patrimony in 1750 he was fully aware that his ancestry could be traced back to the early native Welsh princes, but if we can trust Philip

[85] Jonathan Finch, Kristine Dyrmann and Mikael Frausing, (eds) *Estate Landscapes in northern Europe*, (Aarhus, 2019),p.14

[118] The Sudeley tomb was designed by John Graham Lough; the architect of the rebuilt church was G.E.Street.

[119] GRO D2153/N/12 Anon., *Notes on the descent of the Barons Sudeley of Toddington*, (Privately published, 1923), p. 27.

[120] GRO GAL/C3/29940G3 Lords Lieutenant of Gloucestershire'

[121] *Royal Tribes*, pp. 155-159

Yorke's comment about him valuing his pedigree 'no otherwise, than by taking care that his conduct should not disgrace it,' he did not make a great show of dynastic pride or, if surviving descriptions of Gregynog Hall in the late eighteenth century can be believed, splendour of display or opulence of consumption (apart, perhaps, from the pipe of port referred to below). Unlike the Vaughans of Nannau, for example, or the Williams Wynns of Wynnstay, he was not a collector of art.[122] He did commission one portrait of himself, by William Beechey (1753-1839), which has only survived in engraved copies, and provides the only existing image of Arthur Blayney.[123] He did not rebuild his house on a grand scale, as his ancestors had done in the early seventeenth century or as his heirs were to do in the nineteenth, although he did commission a design for a landscape garden from William Emes in 1773 (Fig. 9).[124] He certainly did not live opulently: William Scott Owen refers to an inventory of the hall made in 1795 which records that the carved parlour had no carpet, but a painted floor-cloth; 'the drawing-room furniture was scant, and there were no ornaments'.[125] In his 'Directions for my Funeral',[126] a note he made some months before his death in 1795, Blayney gave specific instructions that his coffin should be plain and simple 'with no fantastical decorations'; that his funeral should take place early in the morning, and that he should be buried in the north side of Tregynon church – which indeed he was: his grave can be seen there today. If at any time he had cared more about the Blayney name he would presumably have attempted to perpetuate it by marriage, in the hope of fathering a male heir, or failing that to pass the inheritance to his Irish Blayney cousins, or a nephew who was a godson, or at least to require the man he made his heir, Henry Tracy, to change his name to Blayney. Such name changes were not uncommon in the eighteenth century, as families sought to 'perpetuate through surrogate heirs the impression of direct descent in the male line'.[127] Name changes were soon to feature in the Gregynog succession, but not to perpetuate the Blayney name.

Despite hints of Catholic sympathies on the part of earlier Blayneys, Arthur Blayney was a firm adherent to the established church of England, and did not tolerate nonconformists. Some

[122] Philip Nanney Williams, *Nannau, A Rich Tapestry of Welsh History*, (Dolgellau, 2016); Jones, E. G., Jones, E. D., and Roberts, B. F., (2001). family, of Wynnstay Ruabon. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. https://biography.wales/article/s2-WYNN-WYN-1600. (Accessed 16 July 2023).
[123] Prys Morgan, 'The Blayney Period', p.40. See also Fig. 4.
[124] A copy of Emes' design is kept in the Gregynog Hall archive.
[125] William Scott Owen, 'Arthur Blayney and his home, Gregynog Hall', *MC*, 26, (1892), p.111.
[126] Arthur Blayney, 'Directions for my Funeral', 1795, quoted in Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p.158, (reprinted Newtown, 1980).
[127] Laurence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, (Oxford, 1984) p.105.

time in the 1760s the Tregynon-born Methodist preacher Thomas Olivers returned to his home village to preach. In his autobiography he records that:

> I preached once, and had most of the village to hear me. But when Mr. B-n-y, who owned most of the parish, heard of it, he told my uncle, who with my grand-father had lived in that house nearly a hundred years, that if he encouraged me to preach in the village, he would turn him out immediately. [128]

Indeed, the 'father of Montgomeryshire' could be autocratic when he needed to be, as the long dispute with the Acton family of Shropshire (a dispute he had inherited from his Weaver forbears) over tithes and commons at Morville, suggests.[129] Neither was he reluctant to give notice to a tenant who did not honour the conditions of his lease, as Mr Gwalchmai of Tynyshettin was to discover.[130] Arthur Blayney may have paid 'a fatherly attention to his Tenants and Dependents', but he did not hesitate to assert his authority when he needed or wanted to. However, Arthur Blayney's attitudes, at least towards nonconformists, presumably softened with time, because in 1777 he appointed as his agent the young Thomas Colley, a dedicated Methodist.

As has been shown, much of what we know of the 'character of Mr Blayney' is derived from his friend Philip Yorke of Erddig's eulogy in *The Royal Tribes of Wales*, but many of the traits he records have been confirmed, notably by Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain) who described him as 'a character intended to be mentioned with distinguished praise' when it came to estate improvements.[131] His generosity to the poor is evident on every page of his personal account book which includes regular donations to passing paupers, the commissioning of shirts and boots for local children, and paying for them to be inoculated against smallpox.[132] In 1783 he is listed as one of the Governors and Guardians of the Foundling Hospital created by Thomas Coram in London in 1739 as a refuge for abandoned children.[133] He spent comparatively little money on himself; Philip Yorke tells us that he wore the same style of suit for forty years.[134] However his hospitality is suggested by the regular purchase of a pipe of port, paid for by a

[128] Glyn Tegai Hughes, *Thomas Olivers of Tregynon: the life of an early Methodist Preacher, written by himself*, (Newtown, 1979).
[129] SRO 6000/9599; TNA C12/1603/1, 1765-88.
[130] NLW, Davies (Gregynog) Deeds 40 and 41.
[131] Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain) *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales* (London , 1813) p.83.
[132] GRO D2153 AB16
[133] 'A List of the Governors and Guardians of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children', (London, 1783) https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0.
[134] Philip Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p.157

draft on Child's Bank, one of the few non-cash transactions noted in his personal accounts. A pipe being a barrel containing one hundred and five gallons, it is to be presumed he did not drink it all himself! Perhaps he held musical soirées: his personal cash book for 1783 records that he bought a violin 'and stick', and there are a number of references to the purchase of harp strings, payment to a 'harper', and regular tuning of the harpsichord.[135] He may not have been fashionably dressed, but he kept up with the news – his account book records regular payments for newspapers and journals, although titles are not specified.[136] Stories of his hospitality are confirmed by Thomas Pennant's account, in his *Tour of North Wales* in 1776, of staying with Mr Blayney at Gregynog and being taken by him to see all the local sights. 'The best shower of a countryside I ever had the good fortune of meeting,' wrote Pennant, as he went on his way.[137]

'He read much, and had a good collection of books,' notes Philip Yorke of Blayney. Little is known about Arthur Blayney's library although he is listed as a subscriber to Thomas Phillips' *The History and Antiquities of Shropshire* in 1779, and he seems to have inherited a library of books from a clergyman cousin, Blayney Baldwin. This collection consisted mostly of classical, historical and religious works, the latter having a strong anti-Catholic flavour.[138] However, one book, now in the National Library of Wales, does feature Arthur Blayney's signature on its title page: it is *The Works of Anacreon* translated by John Addison 'with the original Greek plac'd opposite to the translation' and published in 1735. Some of the poems have a distinctly racy note, celebrating the joys of wine and women, and the horrors of growing old.[139]
'In temperament he was constitutionally warm,' continues Philip Yorke... 'His resentments, generally well founded, were consequently strong...'[140] His aversion to nonconformists, and the examples of his asserting his authority quoted above are certainly examples of this. Nevertheless by the end of his life Arthur Blayney seems to have been very much revered in the county, his qualities being eulogised at some length in his Obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October 1795 (Fig. 6), in which he is described as 'The Father of

[135] These instruments could not have been for the use of his sisters: the three who survived to adulthood had all died by 1780.
[136] GRO, D2153 Ab16
[137] Thomas Pennant, *Tours in Wales, Vol III, Tour in North Wales, July 1776*, ed. John Rhys, (Caernarvon, 1883), p. 186
[138] NLW donation no 3563 Add Ms G03C
[139] NLW QA 159
[140] Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p. 157

Montgomeryshire, the common friend of the poor and distressed'.[141] How the qualities attributed to him were made manifest in his role and responsibilities as an estate owner and a significant member of the Montgomeryshire gentry class will be addressed in the second chapter of this thesis. What we are left with, in reviewing the Blayney family's view of the prestige and consequence of their estate and name, is that the last of the line seemed to have greater respect for the substance than for the style of his position: a gentleman, and a patriarch who was fully conscious of his status as the preeminent local landowner, but a genial one.

Gregynog in eighteenth century Montgomeryshire

It was not until Arthur Blayney came into his inheritance in the 1750s that Gregynog began to recover its place as a significant Montgomeryshire estate, and this significance seems related primarily to estate management and agricultural improvement rather than social and political ambition. The leading families in the county were the Herberts of Powis Castle and the Williams Wynns of Wynnstay, the latter family's main seat being in Denbighshire but who owned a vast acreage in north-west Montgomeryshire, which by the end of the nineteenth century was by far the largest in the county.[142]

The Herberts and Williams Wynns were the principal occupants or sponsors of the county seat in Parliament, the political prominence of the once significant Vaughan family of Llwydiarth having ended in 1718 with the death of Edward Vaughan, the last male heir, which was to lead to its acquisition by marriage by the family of Wynnstay.[143] The Montgomery Boroughs seat was held by Whig connections of the Herberts from the 1740s to the end of the century. According to Philip Yorke, Arthur Blayney was 'of no party, but that of honest men', and 'pertinaciously ... declined the honour of representing his native county, though often invited to it by the unbiassed suffrages of his countrymen'.[144] But he was active on behalf of other candidates in such a way 'that his support gave a decided superiority over the highest rank and influence'. [145] Nonetheless his principal loyalty was to the Powis family, so this support would

[141] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 65, (October 1795), p. 881.
[142] In 1873 the Wynnstay estate comprised 87,919 acres in Montgomeryshire, with a rental of £43,274. See Brian Ll. James, 'The Great Landowners of Wales in 1873', *NLWJ*, 14, 3 (July 1966), pp. 301-320.
[143] E.R. Morris, 'The Vaughans of Llwydiarth in Early-Seventeenth-Century Politics in Montgomeryshire', *MC*, 107, (2019), p74;
[144] Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p. 155.
[145] Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p. 156.

doubtless have been in the Whig interest. In the 1774 election he responded to a letter canvassing his support for the Wynnstay candidate by expressing his enduring loyalty to the Powis family, whose candidate was William Mostyn Owen and who successfully won the County seat from the Wynnstay family, retaining it until succeeded by another Whig, Francis Lloyd of Domgae, in 1795. 'I can never think of separating the little interest I have from my vote,' he wrote.[146] Melvin Humphreys has interpreted this comment to imply that Arthur Blayney expected his enfranchised tenants and dependents to follow his lead, as was the expectation of many landowners at the time, but it also suggests Blayney's personal allegiances.[147] Presumably he and Francis Lloyd were acquainted, as after Blayney's death in 1795 Lloyd took up residence at Gregynog, and lived there until his own death in 1799. A note in the Gregynog ledgers for 31st December that year records: 'Rec'd of the representatives of the late Francis Lloyd Esq. deceased, a year's rental of Gregynog house and furniture … amounting to £169-9-8', a sum discounted by £149-15-0 for the value of hay left at Gregynog, leaving a balance of £19-14-8.[148]

Yorke also points out that Blayney 'from an unaccountable diffidence' could never be persuaded to become a magistrate, which is indeed surprising given his importance as a Montgomeryshire landowner.[149] He certainly took an interest in other public affairs of the county, as will be discussed. He did serve twice as Sheriff for the county, in 1764 and 1776, following in the footsteps of his father John who had served 1714. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries substantial numbers of Montgomeryshire Sheriffs were drawn from Shropshire-based families, such as Sir Edward Leighton of Wattlesborough Castle (1552, 1592), the Kynastons of Hordley, near Whittington (1623, 1641), Thomas Severne of Wallop Hall (1696), John Felton of Oswestry (1702,) and Henry Biggs of Alberbury (1704).[150] It is noticeable, however, that nearly all such outsiders came from land in or near former Marcher territory on the eastern borders of Montgomeryshire, and many owned property in the county. Other members of the Kynaston family who served include, for example, John Kynaston, of Plas Kynaston, Rhiwabon in Denbighshire (1665), and Humphrey Kinaston of Bryngwyn, Llanfechain

[146] NLW Peniarth 418D
[147] Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, p. 208; Peter D. G. Thomas, *Politics in Eighteenth-century Wales*, (Cardiff, 1998), p4.
[148] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 35, 1797-1810 Receipts and payments for Viscount Tracy from 1795.
[149] Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p. 156.
[150] Thomas Nicholas, *Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and County Families of Wales*, 2, (London,1872), pp. 811-818.

(1692).[151] Given the historical geography of the area, these men would have hardly been regarded as 'outsiders' by their Montgomeryshire peers.

However, by the eighteenth century most Sheriffs were drawn from Montgomeryshire families, such as the Owens of Rhiwsaeson, the Myttons of Garth, the Humphreys of Llwyn, Pryce Davies of Maesmawr, the Pryces of Newtown Hall, the Lloyds of Berthllwyd – all names and houses as rooted in Montgomeryshire history as that of the Blayneys and Gregynog, and often linked to them by marriage. By the 1770s new names start to appear, notably Thomas Proctor of Aberhafesp (1776)[152] and, significantly, the Hon. Henry Tracy of Llwyn-y-Brain (1782).[153]

The Weaver connection

The Blayney family's connection with the Weaver family of Bettws, also of Morville Hall and Bridgnorth in Shropshire, was brought about in 1707 by John Blayney's marriage to Ann Weaver, which eventually was to help restore the fortunes of the Gregynog estate. John and Ann had many daughters, and only one son who survived into maturity and old age. Arthur Blayney was born in 1716, and was followed by a fifth sister, Frances, in 1719. A year later, in 1720, their father John died leaving their mother a widow, and four-year-old Arthur heir to Gregynog.[154] (See also Appendix I, 2, Genealogy of the Weaver family.)

John Blayney left his estates in the hands of trustees, including his brother-in-law Edward Weaver of Morville.[155] Arthur Blayney lived at Gregynog with his mother, his sisters and his unmarried aunts, with regular visits to Morville Hall, his mother's family home. Doubtless his Weaver uncles played a large part in his upbringing, overseeing his education and his admission to the Inner Temple of the Law Courts on 15th November 1735, at the age of nineteen.[156] His closeness to his Weaver cousins is indicated by the evidence of a series of

[151] J.D.K. Lloyd, 'The Sheriffs of Montgomeryshire', *MC*, 60, 1968, pp. 138-148.
[152] The Proctors were an English family with mercantile and army connections who appear to have acquired Aberhafesp Hall by inheritance from cousins in the 1750s. Rachael Jones, 'Angels and Profligates: Woosnams, Proctors and the Aberhafesp Estate', *MC,* 106 (2018), 67-84; Will of Abigail Waring of Aberhafesp Hall made 4th October 1749, proved 17th December 1753, *MC* 26 (1892), p.175.
[153] The Hon. Henry Tracy came from an old Gloucestershire family. He married Arthur Blayney's cousin, Susanna Weaver, in 1767. He became Blayney's heir and inherited both the Gregynog and Morville estates.
[154] Montgomeryshire Records, *Parish of Tregynon, Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials* 1664-1753, (Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society, 2012)
[155] GRO D/2153/Am/2
[156] http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk (accessed 8 May 2020)

Weaver wills of the period.[157] These record bequests to both him and his sisters, and his nomination as the Weavers' residual legatee, which led eventually, following the death of his mother's brother Edward Weaver in 1762, to his inheriting their Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates. By 1780 the Montgomeryshire properties had been fully incorporated into the Gregynog estate, with the running of the Shropshire estates delegated to trusted agents such as John Guest and his son Edward.[158] When Arthur's cousin Susanna Weaver married the Hon. Henry Tracy in 1767, the couple made their home at Morville Hall, as tenants of Arthur Blayney. According to agent John Guest's records of income and expenditure for 'Mr Blayney's Shropshire Estate' Susanna took up residence in 1765 – she was paying arrears of rent dating back to this period.[159] By 1782, when he became High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire, Tracy was also associated with Llwyn-y-Brain, a property in Llanwnog parish on the edge of the Gregynog estate, which he had inherited with other Montgomeryshire properties through his Weaver wife.

Arthur Blayney's inheritance of Morville must have left him feeling that Gregynog's precarious years were behind it, and that the future was set fair. The inheritance of the Weaver properties not only in Shropshire and in Betws Cedewain, the neighbouring parish to Tregynon, but in Berriew, Forden and other parishes of eastern Montgomeryshire, had created an estate which in 1795, the year of his death, William Scott Owen calculated to be worth nearly £9,000 a year.[160] Blayney's reputation as an improving landlord with the welfare of his tenants at heart and a paternal concern for the community as a whole was well established. It was a patrimony any gentleman might be proud of. Why then, did Arthur Blayney remain a bachelor, in an era in which the first ambition of landed families was to hand the patrimony down, unencumbered, to the next generation? Why also, it must be asked, was this such a common occurrence among landowning families in the eighteenth century? These are questions which can not be isolated from the other succession issues affecting the inheritance of the Gregynog estate, which will be addressed in the second part of this chapter.

[157] GRO D2153/Am 5, Am 6, Am 7

[158] This is most clearly indicated in NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 2 1752-94, Chief rents due from Arthur Blayney to Lord Powis. Until 1779 separate chief rent returns were made by the Gregynog agent (by this time Thomas Colley) for the former Weaver and Blayney estates in Montgomeryshire. The returns were combined after 1779 at the request of the Powis agent. The Shropshire estates continued to be administered separately. See Gregynog MSS, *Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts 1763-1772, 1773, 1774-1784.*

[159] Gregynog MSS*, Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts 1763-1772.*

[160] William Scott Owen, *Parochial History of Tregynon*, *MC* 30 (1896), p.116. Scott Owen was the Gregynog estate agent from 1879 to 1913.

The Weaver Inheritance: Bridgnorth and Morville.

In the 1750s the finances of the Gregynog estate were strengthened by Arthur Blayney's inheritance of the Weaver estates in Montgomeryshire and Shropshire. The enhanced Gregynog estate became one of a number of cross-border estates with land in both Welsh and English counties, not least Powis and Wynnstay.[161] The Pryces of Gunley's estate straddled the Montgomeryshire-Shropshire border between Forden and Chirbury.[162] The Blayneys' neighbour, Arthur Weaver of Bettws, seems to have begun to expand eastwards into Shropshire from the 1630s, acquiring property in the Bridgnorth area before marrying Jane Smyth of Morville.[163] It is clear that the English-Welsh border was no barrier to estate building by landowners across this old Marcher territory, especially in the rich lands of the Severn valley.

Arthur Blayney inherited the Morville Hall estate through his mother, Ann Weaver, who died in 1751 having survived all her brothers. Morville Hall in Shropshire was originally a Priory associated with Shrewsbury Abbey, established in 1138. It was dissolved in 1540 before being granted granted to John Dudley, 1st earl of Northumberland, in 1545.[164] Dudley sold it to the Smyth family, from whom it descended by the marriage, in the 1640s, of a daughter, Jane Smyth, to Arthur Weaver of Bettws, Montgomeryshire, a parish adjacent to Tregynon. Weaver's family originated in Bettws, and held land there, also in Tregynon, Berriew and Kerry. In Bettws the Weaver family was associated with the fine sixteenth century timber-framed house known as Highgate – the name of Arthur Weaver of Bettws appears in the 1690s land tax returns.[165] By the time of his marriage to Jane Smyth he had already acquired considerable property in the nearby town of Bridgnorth and its surrounding parishes, in addition to lands in Bettws and Tregynon. The estate surrounding Morville Hall itself was not extensive, being surrounded by property belonging to the Acton family of the manor of Acton Scott, Shropshire.

[161] In the eighteenth century the Powis estates extended into Shropshire and as far away as Northamptonshire and Ireland. See NLW, Powis Castle Estate Records. The Wynnstay estate owned land in Shropshire, see NLW Wynnstay Estates L119.

[162] NLW, Gunley papers. The Pryces also owned several farms in the parish of Tregynon which were later bought by Arthur Blayney, see NLW Gunley 33, Gunley Rental.

[163] See e.g. in conveyances in the Sudeley Manuscripts, GRO D2153/F/15.

[164] M. J. Angold, G. C. Baugh, Marjorie M Chibnall, D. C. Cox, D. T. W. Price, Margaret Tomlinson and B. S. Trinder, 'Houses of Benedictine monks: Priory of Morville', in A. T. Gaydon and R. B. Pugh (eds), *A History of the County of Shropshire: Volume 2*, (London, 1973), pp. 29-30.

[165] Quoted by Melvin Humphreys in David Jenkins, ed., *The Historical Atlas of Montgomeryshire*, (Welshpool, 1999), p.61

Nevertheless the total Weaver holdings became substantial; indeed by the time Arthur Blayney inherited it, the whole Weaver estate in Montgomeryshire alone was larger in acreage and rental than that of Gregynog. An indication of this is derived from a return of Chief Rents to the earl of Powis made in 1780 by the Gregynog agent Thomas Colley, who noted that of the estate's 126 holdings on which chief rents were due, 75 were former Weaver-owned.[166]

The extended Blayney family and the Weavers were long-standing neighbours. The first Arthur Weaver 'of Bettws, and Morville, Salop', served as Sheriff of Montgomeryshire in 1667. Thomas Blayney of Coedyperthi, Tregynon, a relative of the Gregynog Blayneys, served as his under-sheriff.[167] After Morville Hall became Weaver's principal residence, Highgate was let to Morris Blayney, who became the agent for Weaver's Montgomeryshire estates.[168] Other Blayneys were also Weaver tenants.[169] The Gregynog Blayneys, being by the end of the seventeenth century the most substantial branch of the family, were on more of an equal footing with the Weavers in terms of status and their position in the local social hierarchy. This background points to cordial relations between the two families which were to deepen over the next century.

The Tracys of Toddington

The Blayneys' estates in Tregynon and Bettws and the Weaver estates in Shropshire may have been fifty miles apart and in the eighteenth century connected by the poorest of roads, but their geographical location in the old lordships of the March of Wales suggests a legacy of cultural and family connections at all levels of society which pre-dates the creation of the county of Montgomeryshire in 1536-1543. Less explicable is the connection of the Tracy family of Gloucestershire with Montgomeryshire and Shropshire which seems to be rooted in the marriage of the Hon. Henry Tracy to Arthur Blayney's cousin Susannah Weaver in 1767. At the time, Henry Tracy was a third son, with little prospect of inheriting the Tracy Viscountcy or the family estate at Toddington, Gloucestershire. He became sufficiently established in Montgomeryshire to serve as Sheriff in 1782, residing at Llwyn y Brain, Aberhafesp, just a few miles from Gregynog, although he and Susannah had made Morville Hall their principal

[166] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 2, 1752-1794 Chief rents due from Arthur Blayney to Lord Powis.
[167] NLW Powis Castle Estate Records/11751
[168] NLW Great Sessions Fines no 639 (1658) & 655 (1688) quoted in S.P.Thomas, 'Branches of the Blayney family in the XVI & XVII Centuries', *MC* 64 (1976), p.24.
[169] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 1, 1752-79 Chief rents due from Arthur Weaver to Lord Powis.

home.[170] But his two elder brothers pre-deceased him, and he became the 8th (and last) Viscount Tracy in 1793. He and Susannah had only one daughter, Henrietta Susannah, who became his heiress, and at his death in 1797 inherited the Gregynog, Morville and Toddington estates.

Toddington, Gloucestershire

The inheritance of Toddington would ultimately change the nature of the Gregynog estate. It would become 'our Welsh estate' to the inheriting family, whose principal seat was Toddington Manor in Gloucestershire, not Gregynog or Morville Hall, even though it was not the largest.[171] Toddington had been associated with the Tracy family since medieval times. The Tracys, a cadet line of the Sudeleys of Sudeley castle in Gloucestershire, claimed descent from Charlemagne and Henry I. The Tracys survived the Wars of the Roses, becoming a significant family in the Tudor era, retaining Toddington, a manor in the vicinity of Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, as their seat, but with links to the nearby manor of Stanway (a former monastic property) and Hales Abbey.[172] They were courtiers, knights of the shire, sheriffs and magistrates; younger sons became academics, soldiers and clergymen. In 1643 Sir John Tracy, former Gloucestershire MP, was made Baron Tracy of Rathcoole in the County of Dublin, a title in the Peerage of Ireland. The 7th Viscount, John, was Warden of All Souls, Oxford; he inherited the title on the death of his elder brother Thomas Charles Tracy, 6th Viscount, in 1792, but only suvived his brother by a year, dying in 1793, leaving Henry Tracy as the 8th and last Viscount, a title he was only to hold for only four years.

In 1797 Henrietta Tracy was a substantial heiress, inheritrix of a large and unencumbered estate in three, perhaps four counties (Arthur Blayney had inherited some Herefordshire property from his cousin Blayney Baldwin).[173] A year later, in December 1798, she was married to her second cousin Charles Hanbury, younger son of an old Monmouthshire family whose

[170] Gregynog MSS, Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts 1763-1772; NLW, Peniarth 418D.
[171] It has not hitherto been possible to establish the size of the Toddington Estate in 1795; the present Lord Sudeley has stated that 'At the end of the eighteenth century, through no effort of their own, the Tracys more than trebled their land' (via Viscount Tracy's inheritance of Arthur Blayney's estates) but he does not give any statistics. Lord Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', *Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 88, (1969), p.153. In William Scott Owen's History of the Gregynog Estate (NLW, typescript copy in Gregynog archives) he records the Gloucestershire rental of 1816 as just over £3,000 per annum, and the combined Montgomeryshire and Shropshire rental as about £7,000 (excluding tithes).
[172] Lord Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', *Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 88, (1969), pp.127-172.
[173] Shropshire Record Office X3614/8/1: Probate of will of Blayney Baldwyn... (11 Aug 1742)

estate drew much of its income from the ironworks and tinplate works established in the sixteenth century, but who brought little of this patrimony to the marriage. [174] This marriage, and the new direction in which it took the Gregynog estate, was the outcome of succession issues at Gregynog which dated back to the seventeenth century.

Succession, Inheritance and the Role of Woman.[175]

The first part of this chapter examined the nature of the Blayney family's status and reputation, and its connection to other long-established landed families in Montgomeryshire and beyond. It examined the significance and reputation of Gregynog as an old-established Welsh landed estate, as celebrated in surviving family memorials. These memorials suggest an unbroken line of succession and stability over several centuries, and in fact the Gregynog estate did not change ownership by sale until the end of the nineteenth century. But a closer look at the circumstances of each phase of succession tells a somewhat more complex story, as does the experience of other Montgomeryshire estates in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[176] If the first priority of the landowner was to 'keep the estate in the family', this often required a broader interpretation of what constituted a family than would be understood in twenty-first century Britain.

Preserving the Patrimony

John Habakkuk has asserted that any family with substantial property had to make arrangements to secure two ends: provision for individual members of the family, and the transmission of the property from one generation to another.[177] When a landed estate was the foundation of a family's honour and status the second end was likely to take priority. 'Substantial landowners spared no pains in fostering and preserving their patrimonies,' notes Geraint H. Jenkins.[178] We have seen from the heraldry preserved and displayed at Gregynog, together with other examples, such as the nineteenth century painting of *The Escape of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond,from Mostyn Hall,* which hangs at the home of the Mostyn family in Flintshire, that part of the mindset of such families involved taking pride in the past. This

[174] Richard Hanbury Tenison, *The Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, (Monmouth, 1995), p18
[175] A version of this section of Chapter One was published as 'Serving the Succession and Preserving the Patrimony: the Women of Gregynog to 1800 and beyond', *MC* 110, (2022), pp. 59-78.
[176] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, pp. 96-125.
[177] John Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt and the estates system, English Landownership 1650-1950,* (Oxford, 1994), p.1
[178] Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales, Wales 1642-1780*, p. 94.

perspective ensured that ancestry, heritage and tradition were always featured in the present. The living representatives of the family, especially its head or patriarch, viewed their roles as lifetime custodians of a patrimony. But this emphasis on lineage and inheritance also involved looking forward into the future in the hope of achieving continuity and permanence.[179]

'For the landed elite,' of England,' write Laurence and Jeanne Stone,

> the tenure and preservation of a country seat was of paramount importance, since it represented the outward and visible symbol of family continuity. The prime objectives of a wealthy English landed squire was somehow to preserve his family inheritance intact and to pass it on to the next generation according to the principle of primogeniture in tail male.[180]

It was when primogeniture in tail male broke down that the problems began. A patriarch might engender only daughters, or no heirs at all. His heir might care nothing for future generations; he might be disinclined to marry, or prefer to waste his patrimony on high living; or, if he did marry, do so against his family's wishes and interest. Inheritance practice among landed families evolved to make provision for such contingencies, by the creation of entails and, from the seventeenth century on, the development of the strict settlement.

Strict Settlement

'The motor power of the strict settlement,' writes Habakkuk, 'was dynastic ambition: the desire to keep the family estate intact in the hands of the family for as long as possible or, in the language of the time, to preserve the patrimony "in the name and blood of the settlor for as long as it pleaseth Almighty God", in short to establish a dynasty.' He continutes: 'The prime purpose of the great majority of landowners was to order the future destiny of their estates: to prevent their alienation and, if possible, keep them in the male line'.[181]

Under strict settlement an heir would only inherit as tenant for life, with no, or strictly limited power to sell, which guarded against a profligate son selling up to pay his gambling debts, and it could specify who was to inherit, should there be no direct heir. This made it possible to bypass daughters who might otherwise be heirs. Under English common law a female could inherit an estate should she have no brothers.[182] Elaine Spring contends that strict settlement

[179] Shaun Evans, 'Inventing the Bosworth tradition: Richard ap Hywel the 'King's Hole' and the Mostyn family image in the nineteenth century', *WHR*, 29/2 (2018), pp. 218-253.
[180] Laurence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite: England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 69-70
[181] Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estate system*, p. 51
[182] Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, (London, 1993), pp.26-7

was developed 'first and foremost at limiting the interest of the heiress-at-law ... In short, limiting in advance the claims of the heiress-at-law and sending the estate as little reduced as possible to the collateral male.'[183] She goes further, contending that all major developments in property law were a reaction to the need to make sure a female would not inherit, thus establishing 'a family constitution, the character of which is summed up in three words: patrilineal, primogenitive, and patriarchal'.[184]

The Heiress

This did not mean that heiresses never inherited, nor that they were not valued – if they were wealthy enough – by other landowners. As the research of Briony McDonagh has demonstrated, in some cases heiresses, especially if they did not marry, managed their lands as landowners just as their brothers might have done.[185] Wealthy heiresses might prefer not to marry, given the legal doctrine of couverture by which, 'Uniquely in Europe, according to English common law a woman surrendered ownership of almost all of her 'movable' possessions to her husband upon marriage', and, perhaps more significantly, her individual legal identity.[186] Nonetheless, it appears that most wealthy women did marry, with the result that in the eighteenth century the number of large estates that passed into the hands of other landowners via marriage to an heiress led to an overall diminution of the number of landed estates in Wales and elsewhere, especially, as suggested by G. E. Mingay, the advantage lay with wealthier landowners who could attract the wealthiest heiresses.[187] In eighteenth-century Wales, Philip Jenkins and Peter Roberts draw attention to the impact of heiress marriage on the landed families of Glamorgan and Merioneth respectively.[188]

Impediments to direct succession

There was nothing inevitable, then, about the continuation of a long-established family into the next generation via a direct male heir, no matter how forceful the sense of dynastic

[183] Eileen Spring, *Law, Land and Family, Inheritance in England 1300 to 1800*, (Chapel Hill, 1993), p. 18.
[184] Spring, *Law, Land and Family*, pp. 27, 144.
[185] Briony McDonaugh, *Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape, 1700-1830*, (London, 2018), Ch. 3.
[186] Amy Louise Erickson, 'Possession—and the other one-tenth of the law: assessing women's ownership and economic roles in early modern England', *Women's History Review*, 16, 3, (2007), p. 369.
[187] G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1963), pp. 76-78. Both the Wynnstay and Powis estates in North Wales acquired extensive estates by marriage. See Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estate System*, pp. 183, 187.
[188] J.P. Jenkins, 'The Demographic Decline of the Landed Gentry in the Eighteenth Century: A South Wales Study', *WHR*, 11, 1 (1982), pp.31-49, Peter R. Roberts, 'The Decline of the Welsh Squires in the Eighteenth Century,' *NLWJ*, 13, 2 (1963), pp. 157-173. See also Linda Colley, *Britons* (2nd ed, London, 2003), pp.156-7.

strength and stability. Landowners could plan and settle as much as they wished, but could not insure themselves against the arbitrary circumstances of life or, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in particular, demographic change – indeed, 'demographic catastrophe', in Philip Jenkins' phrase – characterised by a significant failure of male heirs among the landed classes.[189] A landowner might not only fail to generate heirs, but rather generate many daughters who would need keeping, and providing with dowries if they were to marry – yet he could be constrained by settlements from selling land to raise the cash. He might have to borrow, or mortgage his estate, thus leading to the accumulation of debt. The growth of the mortgage market from the late seventeenth century facilitated this by making it possible to borrow on good security at low interest rates.[190] Furthermore, he might die without settling before his heir, if there were one, came of age or married, leading to the possibility of his issue disposing of the estate as they wished. John Habakkuk, David Howell, Philip Jenkins and Peter Roberts have described in detail how such demographic and economic disasters affected landownership in South Wales and Merioneth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their tendency to bring about what Habakkuk describes as 'large agglomerations' of land as failing estates were acquired by more successful ones, or a wealthy heiress was snapped up by an eldest son who had survived.[191] Montgomeryshire fared no better; Melvin Humphreys calculates that in the eighteenth century seventy-three estates in the county experienced a failure of the direct line of inheritance, most of them passing through women to new owners.[192]

Gregynog was not the only Montgomeryshire estate to encounter arbitrary circumstances which upset any hopes the families might have had of uninterrupted succession in tail male. There were times when daughters, not sons, were key to the succession. Another factor was the early death of fathers while their sons were still minors, and the consequent role of trustees.[193] The need to provide dowries for daughters led to the burden of mortgages and the danger of debt; and when there were sons who did survive to maturity, they might choose not

[189] Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, p.xxi.
[190] Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estate System*, p. 17.
[191] H.J. Habakkuk, 'Marriage and the Ownership of Land', R.R. Davies, et al, eds., *Welsh Society and Nationhood, Historical Essays presented to Glanmor Williams*, (Cardiff, 1984), pp.178-198; David Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, pp.16-24; Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, pp. 38-40; J.P. Jenkins, 'The Demographic Decline of the Landed Gentry', pp. 31-49; P.R.Roberts, 'The Decline of the Welsh Squires', pp. 157-173.
[192] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.100.
[193] Trustees and guardians feature in many of the wills and settlements pertaining to the history of this and many other families of the period, but little academic discussion of the roles of such persons has hitherto been located.

to marry, as did Arthur Blayney. His failure, or choice, not to marry, together with his ability, by virtue of his having inherited his estates in fee simple, to dispose of his estate by will, caused a major disruption to the succession. This disruption was to open a significant opportunity of enrichment for the younger son of another landed family, who otherwise had little in the way of patrimony, but who could claim a connection with the Gregynog family through a wide kinship network which was re-imagined and re-asserted by the adoption of name changes and the creation of complex pedigrees. All these elements were to play their part in the survival of this and other landed estates in Wales as much as in the rest of Britain, and serve to illustrate the tactics resorted to in order to keep the succession alive – however fragile, or even artificial, the links of the dynastic chain.[194]

'It is necessary to stress,' says David Howells, writing of eighteenth century South-West Wales, 'that marriage at this time was the vital means of extending landowners' estates or rescuing their faltering finances.'[195] If a landowner had no heir, this meant that he had to do his best both with and by his daughter, if he had one. So women were central to such a landowner's survival strategy, unless, as Elaine Spring suggests, he had created a settlement which disinherited her in favour of a collateral male – a practice which she contends evolved precisely to avoid female inheritance.[196] However, this was not the case at Gregynog.

The Women of Gregynog

In 1795, as we have seen, Arthur Blayney died, leaving everything he owned to Henry, 8th Viscount Tracy, husband of his late cousin Susanna Weaver. Tracy had no blood connection with Blayney whatsoever. His only daughter, Henrietta, became his heiress when he died in 1797. Arthur Blayney shared, with Henrietta, Weaver blood through his mother – a half share in his case, and a half share in Henrietta's; thus the matriarchal line was predominant in the succession at this point. Henrietta was the only heiress in Gregynog's history to inherit the estate outright, but she was not the only woman to play a part in its survival and transmission down the generations, both directly and indirectly. However, none of them apart from Henrietta are named as heiresses in any will, although Joyous Blayney, who married her Irish

[194] Lawrence Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, (Oxford, 1984), pp. 126-135
[195] Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, pp. 14-25.
[196] Spring, *Law, Land and Family*, pp. 17-18.

cousin Arthur Blayney of Monaghan in 1636, is recorded as being 'sole daughter and heir' of John Blayney in the Blayney memorial in Tregynon church.

Gregynog was not exempt from other issues which affected the succession of landed estates, such as the need to raise mortgages for marriage portions, or the failure of the heir to marry, or eventually the need to establish title through name changes. But from about 1630 to 1799, when Henrietta Tracy married Charles Hanbury, the women of Gregynog held the key to its survival.

Before the seventeenth century there had been no failure of male succession in the Blayney family; indeed the incidence of many younger sons had led to the formation of many cadet branches, initially based in Tregynon and neighbouring parishes, but migrating eastwards as their patrimonies were acquired by the dominant branch of Blayneys at Gregynog. The replacement of the Welsh law of partible inheritance by the English system of primogeniture following the Acts of Union in 1536 and 1543 had afforded an opportunity for the Blayneys of Gregynog to enlarge their estate, a policy which was pursued by David Lloyd Blayney and his successors.[197]

David Lloyd Blayney's grandson John, son of his eldest son Lewis, became his father's heir at the age of ten when Lewis died in 1601. He was left in the guardianship of his mother, Bridget, who according to the Blayney memorial in Tregynon church, lived until 1630.[198] In 1615 John Blayney married Elizabeth, daughter of Jenkin Lloyd of Berthlwyd, near Llanidloes. They had one son, Lewis, who died in infancy, and a daughter, Joyous. The Irish branch of the Blayneys had been established when a younger son of David Lloyd Blayney, Edward, had pursued a military career, playing a part in the 'colonisation' of Ireland in the early 1600s which led to his being created Baron Blayney of Monaghan in 1620.[199] This Edward had married a daughter of Bishop Loftus of Dublin; it was their younger son, Arthur, who married Joyous Blayney of Gregynog in 1636.

[197] S.P. Thomas, 'Wanderings of a Royal Tribe: A genealogical sidelight on the Welsh migration into Shropshire during the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries.' *MC* 56, (1960), pp. 114-123. Deeds surviving in the Sudeley MSS in Gloucestershire Archives attest to the Gregynog Blayneys' acquisition of properties from their kin from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, e.g. GRO Sudeley MSS D2153/7/4,5; Ad/2; 2/19; 4/8.
[198] GRO Sudeley MSS (790) Inquisition post-mortem Lewis Blayney dec. 17 Sept.,1601.
[199] E. Rowley Morris, 'The Family of Blayney, Part I,' *MC*, 21, (1887), p.177.

Joyous Blayney

This marriage can be seen as an early example of a landowner's concern to maintain the family name – John Blayney's creation of the carved parlour at Gregynog shows that he was proud of his heritage and name and wanted them to continue. That he could invite a Blayney cousin to marry his daughter solved the problem of his lack of a surviving male heir, whatever Joyous herself thought about the matter. It is not known what property or money Arthur brought to the marriage – no marriage settlement relating to Joyce and Arthur Blayney has been traced. Perhaps his name was sufficient. The Blayneys had built Castle Blayney in county Monaghan in Ireland but they were subjected to some terrible revenges at the hands of the Irish at this time, which Arthur was fortunate to evade.[200] His marriage to Joyous ensured the survival of the Blayney family name, despite being passed down through the female line.

Joyous Blayney's husband Arthur never came into possession of the Gregynog estate in right of his wife, as he might have done had her parents pre-deceased him. Her father John outlived them both, as did her mother Elizabeth. Arthur Blayney fought on the Royalist side in the Civil War, for which he was knighted. He and Joyous had four sons, John, Edward, Henry and Arthur. Sir Arthur died in 1659, his wife in 1661. Of the boys, it seems that John died young, but the others survived to adulthood, and married. (See Appendix I, 1, Genealogy of the Blayney family.)

Joyous and Arthur's second son Edward married but had died without issue by 1671, leaving his younger brother Henry to take over as heir and executor of his father's will after probate had been granted in 1671.[201] By this time it seems that Henry had already married Mary Seddon, daughter of Dr Lawrence Sidney or Seddon of Worthen, Shropshire.[202] Despite his father's estate having been valued at £1,000 per annum in a list compiled in 1660 'of those deemed fit to be members of the proposed Order of the Knights of the Royal Oak',[203] it seems the estate was in need of money. In 1670 Gregynog was mortgaged to Humphrey Blunden of

[200] Ibid., pp273-289.
[201] NLW SA/1671/2B
[202] E. Rowley Morris notes: 'Lawrence Sidney graduated at Dublin under the assumed name of Seddon, and was presented to the rectory of Worthen, co. of Salop, Anno 1632.' Morris, 'The Family of Blayney,' p. 295.
[203] William Scott Owen, Parochial History of Tregynon, *MC*, 30, (1896), p.104.

Worthen, who was Mary Seddon's uncle on her mother's side.[204] Further mortgages were taken out in 1674, then in 1691 Henry Blayney mortgaged the Gregynog estate for £1,250 to raise marriage portions for his daughters.[205] But that same year, 1691, Henry died, leaving John, his eight-year-old heir, in the care of his mothers and sisters.

Providing for daughters

Henry Blayney's marriage to Mary Seddon illustrates the need to raise money by mortgaging the estate, in this case for marriage portions. It seems that the possibility of selling land to pay debts and provide marriage portions, or to pay for your wife's jointure (if there was one) was never considered, so it would appear that the inheritance of the Gregynog estate reflected a concern to maintain the patrimony, despite Henry's early death precluding the creation of a settlement when his son came of age. The frequent need to raise money on the Gregynog estate suggests that the income was not sufficient to meet expenditure in the second half of the seventeenth century. But in 1660, as we have seen, John Blayney's estate was recorded as being worth £1,000 per annum, which Prys Morgan suggests made him 'one of the most substantial gentlemen in the county.'[206] Why then, in 1664 were he and his grandson Edward mortgaging Gregynog to Edward's father-in-law John Skrymsher of Staffordshire?[207] Was this related to a settlement at the marriage of Edward to Elizabeth Skrymsher? No records have been traced shedding any light on this matter.

Discussing the increasing use of mortgages to provide for family members in the seventeenth century Christopher Clay notes:

> the increasing availability of term mortgages from the middle decades of the seventeenth century onwards tended to lighten the immediate burden upon the the finances of landed families by throwing a large part of it onto future generations, for if the encumbrances thus created were not somehow paid off, interest upon them would remain payable forever. In practice, it does not seem to have been very common for them to have been discharged or even much reduced out of current income, although the opportunity to do this did occur in a significant minority of families when the estate was inherited by an heir well under age and was administered on his behalf by trustees or guardians for a long period.[208]

[204] Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', p. 295. Humphrey Blunden's will of 1680, quoted here, let Henry Blayney off a debt of four hundred pounds, and left fifty pounds each to Henry and Mary's daughters (John had not yet been born).
[205] Indentures relating to Henry Blayney's mortgages are preserved in the Sudeley papers in Gloucestershire Archives, GRO D2153/Ad/15, D2153 6/13, D2153/Ad/16.
[206] Prys Morgan, 'The Blayney Period', p. 36; GRO D2153/Ad/18. 1662 Valuation of the Gregynog Estate.
[207] GRO D2153/L/19.
[208] Christopher Clay, 'Property Settlements, Financial Provision for the Family, and Sale of Land by the Greater Landowners 1660-1790', *Journal of British Studies*, 21, 1, (Autumn, 1981), p.30.

This was not an opportunity taken by the trustees appointed by Henry Blayney, whoever they were; they seemed quite happy to continue paying the interest, as a number of mortgages were not paid off until the middle of the eighteenth century. So, unlike Mathafarn and Rhiwsaeson in Montgomeryshire and many small gentry estates in eighteenth-century Wales – and indeed in England, as J.V. Beckett points out – Gregynog was not bought up by a larger neighbour such as Powis or Wynnstay, but remained in Blayney hands.[209]

John Blayney, the new heir of Gregynog, came of age in 1704. He was the only son of Henry (d.1691) and Mary (d.1707) Blayney. In 1707 John Blayney married Ann Weaver of Morville Hall in Shropshire. She was to become heiress of the Weaver estates in Shropshire and Montgomeryshire, or rather, the conduit via which that estate would be conveyed to her son and become part of the patrimony of the Blayney family. In October 1707 John Blayney granted a lease of the Gregynog estates to Arthur Weaver, possibly in lieu of a marriage portion, or as part of transactions relating to the marriage. The document gives a useful indication of the extent of the estate at this period; 'messuages and lands', tithes and advowsons in the parishes of Tregynon, Bettws, Berriew and Aberhafesp, as well as Gregynog Hall and its demesne lands in Tregynon.[210]

Ann Weaver

Early in the seventeenth century the first of several Arthur Weavers in this history had married Jane Smyth, the heiress of Morville Hall, which lies between Much Wenlock and Bridgnorth in Shropshire. The Weavers came from Bettws, the neighbouring parish to Tregynon, where they owned land, and were old-established neighbours of the Blayneys. (Appendix I, 2, Genealogy of the Weaver family to 1800.) The estate archives record many links between the two families and their estates; for example in the 1660s the substantial Bettws farm Highgate was the home of one Maurice Blayney, who was 'probably the agent for the Weavers'.[211]

[209] Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, pp.109-114; Roberts, 'The Decline of the Welsh Squires', *NLWJ,* 13, 2, (1963), pp.157-173; Beckett, J.V. 'The Decline of the Small Landowner in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England: Some Regional Considerations', *The Agricultural History Review*, 30, 2, (1982), pp. 97-111.
[210] GRO D2153/Al/11, 6 Anne 1707 Lease for 6 months,, indented, Blayney-Weaver.
[211] R.H. Blayney, A Catalogue of some Blayney Wills., *MC*, 62, (1962-3), pp. 46-48.

Ann Weaver of Morville, who married John Blayney of Gregynog in 1707, has been described as 'heiress' to Morville but her name does not appear in any family will of the period.[212] Her father, the second Arthur Weaver (d.1709), left his estate to his son John,[213] who in turn left it to his son, the 3rd Arthur Weaver, Ann's nephew.[214] This Arthur left the estate to his uncle Edward Weaver for life, then to his cousin Arthur Blayney, whom he nominated as his executor and residuary legatee.[215] Unlike her brothers and her sister Mary, Ann Weaver does not feature in her father's will, presumably because she had already been provided for at her marriage.

John and Ann Blayney had many children, both male and female, but their two eldest boys, Edward and John, died as infants. The eventual heir, Arthur, was born in 1716. John Blayney died in 1720, when his son Arthur was only four years old. Once again the children had only their mother and their unmarried aunts to care for them. But John Blayney's will of 1718 made provision for trustees, who were charged to raise £1,000 on the estate to provide portions for the younger children, in addition to £2,000 to be raised on the settled estate, without giving priority to sons over daughters.[216] He willed the estate to his eldest son Arthur, or in default to his second son John *or in default* to his daughters. Presumably the trustees named in John Blayney's will, Edmund Humphreys and Edward Weaver, continued to act as Arthur 's trustees after John Blayney died in 1720, until Arthur came of age in 1737.

The terms of this will suggest that John Blayney was not one of the landowners discussed by Eileen Spring, who, she contends, deliberately created settlements which would side-line daughters in favour of collateral males.[217] In fact both the Blayneys and the Weavers appear to have behaved equitably towards their female offspring, which accords with Amy Louise Erickson's opinion that the research presented in her study 'clearly indicates that in early modern England daughters inherited from their parents in a remarkably equitable basis with their bothers'.[218] In Arthur Weaver's will of 1747, which was proved after his death in 1759, he left £2,000 each to his Blayney cousins Joyous, Diana and Frances, and £1,000 to his Weaver

[212] W. Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC* 30, (1896), p.110.
[213] GRO D2153/Af/1 Will of Arthur Weaver, d.1707.
[214] GRO D2153/Am/5 Will of John Weaver, d.1746.
[215] GRO D2153/Am/6 Will of Arthur Weaver, d.1747.
[216] GRO D/2153/Am/2 Will of John Blayney, 1718.
[217] Spring, *Law, Land and Family*, pp. 17 – 18.
[218] Erickson, *Women and Property*, p.19

cousin Susannah.[219] Both his father John Weaver and his brother Thomas had also left smaller legacies to the Blayney girls. The Shropshire estate ledgers record regular payments to the Blayney daughters of the interest on the legacies.[220]

According to his father John's will, once Arthur Blayney achieved his majority he would be obliged to leave the estate to his direct heirs, if he had any, but if he did not, his siblings would inherit. Priority was given to the second son, John, but then to the daughters, if they survived Arthur (as none of them in fact did). Possible male issue of collateral branches of the Blayneys, in Wales, England or Ireland were not considered. As Arthur did not beget any heirs, and all his brothers and sisters pre-deceased him, he was able to take full possession of the Gregynog estates with no strict settlement or entail to circumscribe his decisions about its future.

Ann Blayney's brother John Weaver had one son, another Arthur Weaver, who inherited Morville on the death of his father in 1746. In his will of 1747 this Arthur Weaver (d.1759) left his estate to his uncle Edward Weaver, and afterwards to Ann's son Arthur Blayney, nominating Blayney as his Executor and Residuary legatee.[221] After inheriting in 1759, Edward Weaver died in 1762, leaving Arthur Blayney in possession of the Morville estate. Blayney and his cousin Susannah were the only surviving issue of this generation following their cousin Arthur Weaver's death. Six of Ann Weaver's eight siblings seem neither to have married nor produced offspring. Her youngest brother, Andrew, married and produced two daughters, Beatrice, who died young, and Susanna.[222]

It seems that the two families, the Blayneys and the Weavers, had become close over the years, perhaps closer than might have occurred if Ann Weaver's husband John Blayney had not died in 1720; losing her husband doubtless brought her closer to her brothers. Arthur and his sisters may well have grown up alongside their Weaver cousins, including his cousin Susanna, who was to leave him £1,000 in her will of 1768.[223] Both families seem to have placed complete trust in Arthur Blayney; he seems to have been regarded as the heir of both families

[219] GRO D2153 Am/6
[220] Gregynog Hall MSS 'Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts, 1763-72' , deposited at the NLW February 2023.
[221] TNA/PROB/11/846/473
[222] Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', Pt II, pp.90, 91. The family name of Andrew Weaver's wife, Susanna, is not stated.
[223] GRO D2153/1/2 Will of Susanna Tracy of Morvile, 1768.

from an early stage. As the century progressed he came to be cited as his mother's trustee, and the residual legatee, in a number of his Weaver uncles' wills,[224] which ensured that he inherited the Morville estate on the death of his uncle Edward in 1762. It is clear from later Chief Rent returns to Powis Castle that the Weaver's Montgomeryshire estate was at this time larger in terms of acreage and rents than the Gregynog estate.[225] Blayney's unmarried sisters also received a number of substantial legacies from their Weaver cousines, including Susannah, who was by the time of her death married to the Hon. Henry Tracy.

The bachelor heir and his sisters

The male succession seemed secure with Arthur's inheritance. However, Arthur Blayney did not marry. This was not uncommon in eighteenth-century Montgomeryshire: Melvin Humphreys points out that bachelorhood and celibacy characterised the landed gentry of that county during these years, with a quarter of the gentry remaining unmarried.[226] Other historians have drawn attention to this phenomenon, which appears inexplicable in an era in which dynastic succession was regarded as so important.[227] 'Why,' asks J.P. Jenkins, 'was there apparent hostility to marriage, to the extent that some avoided it altogether, while others postponed it until perilously late?' He concedes that the question is difficult to answer, in the light of the pressure on the head of the estate to generate heirs, not only from the family but from the social milieu of which it was a part, and 'the common ideology of class, family and community'.[228]

As far as Arthur Blayney was concerned the reason he chose not to marry was not because he aspired to the high life of a wealthy London bachelor which brought about the ruin of many landed families in the eighteenth century. Neither was it because he was homosexual, if Philip Yorke's comment in *The Royal Tribes of Wales* that he 'was very pleasing to, and pleased by, the ladies…' is to be taken at face value.[229] When speculating about why landowners chose not to marry, the Stones point out that homosexuality might be a factor, although 'the more

[224] E.g. GRO D2153 Am/7 Will of Thomas Weaver
[225] NLW Gregynog Estate Records 2, 1752-94, Chief rents due from Arthur Blayney to Lord Powis.
[226] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.100.
[227] P.Jenkins, *The making of a ruling class*, pp.39-40, G. H. Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, pp.94-5., Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.100.
[228] J.P.Jenkins, 'The Demographic Decline of the Landed Gentry in the Eighteenth Century', *WHR,* 11, 1, (1982), p.39.
[229] Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p.157.

relaxed moral atmosphere of the eighteenth century' in which there might have been more tolerance for such a proclivity, may have been less evident in rural Montgomeryshire.[230] Whatever the case, Blayney certainly did not seem to care much about *the common ideology of class, family and community* or about establishing a *patrilineal, primogenitive, and patriarchal* dynasty.[231] He seemed content to run the two estates economically and successfully, becoming noted for his progressive agricultural practices as well as his unpretentious lifestyle. Furthermore, by 1762 he was in full possession of his estates, and there was no bar to his leaving them by will to whomever he pleased.

Arthur had grown up at Gregynog with his mother and his sisters. Nothing is known of his earlier education, but in 1735, when he was nineteen, he was admitted to the Inner Temple Inn at the Inns of Court 'not with any professional view,' according to Philip Yorke, 'but merely to guard himself, and those who consulted him, from chicane and injustice'.[232] It is unknown how soon he took over the running of Gregynog; the earliest date in which his name appears on a legal document preserved in the Sudeley archives is 1740.[233] But the earliest surviving estate ledger with his name on it, recording chief rent payments to the lordship of Powis, is dated 1752, the year after his mother's death.[234]

Neither of Blayney's surviving sisters, Diana and Frances, married; they set up home for themselves, in Shrewsbury and Oswestry respectively. Diana in particular seems to have been comfortably established; she left legacies amounting to over £4,000 in her will.[235] As has been seen, their father had provided them with portions, which had been supplemented by legacies from their Weaver uncles and cousins, who seem to have taken the Blayney children under their wing following John's death in 1720. This does not detract from the picture left to posterity, of Gregynog as a house of women from the 1670s to 1751, when Ann Blayney died. The two fathers of these generations, Henry and John, were the only males in eighty years, apart from John's two sons who died in infancy, to feature in the genealogy of this period (see Appendix I, Table 1), aside from Weaver cousins and the husbands of John Blayney's sisters,

[230] Laurence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite, England 1540-1880*, (Oxford, 1894), p. 89.
[231] Jenkins, 'Demographic Decline; Spring, *Law, Land and Family*, passim.
[232] Yorke, Royal Tribes, p.155; Calendar of Inner Temple Records 1505-1845, http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk (accessed 8 May 2020).
[233] GRO D2153/5/20 Deed to lead uses of a recovery, 24 July 1740.
[234] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 2 1752-94 Chief rents due from Arthur Blayney to Lord Powis.
[235] TNA/PROB 11/1069/270 /1780 Will of Diana Blayney.

none of whom lived at Gregynog after their marriage. So from 1691, when her husband Henry died, to 1704 when her son John came of age, Mary Blayney was head of the household. She died in 1707, the year her son married Ann Weaver, who also became head of the household when John died in 1720 at the age of thirty-seven.

The part played by the women of Gregynog in the estate's history related not only to their being heiresses or the conduits of inheritance; they were also mothers, wives, aunts, sisters, daughters and cousins, household managers and patronesses, married and unmarried. Given that there are three incidences in the Blayney line alone of fathers who died before their sons came of age, or even reached adolescence, the role of their mothers, Bridget mother of the first John, Mary mother of the second John, and Ann mother of Arthur, deserves to be accorded some attention. Amy Louise Erickson's analysis of the situation of widows focuses on the degree of agency they were left with after the death of their husbands, in terms of whether they were named as executrices, or how much of the property they had originally brought to the marriage they were able to keep, how generous a provision for their maintenance they had been left.[236] But it does not address their role as mothers to fatherless sons and daughters. Amanda Vickery writes in detail about the travail of women's lives in Georgian England but she too fails to touch on this particular aspect.[237]

Briony McDonagh describes the involvement of elite women in the day to day running of estates, whether these were their own inheritance or their husband's, the degree of autonomy and financial independence from their husband; and the extent to which they may or may not have relied on agents.[238] But as no records have survived for the period between 1690 and 1727, when two generations of Blayney wives headed the family alone following the early deaths of their husbands, we can only surmise the part these women played. The expectations on the gentlewoman of the period were that they should manage their household while at the same time maintaining a reputation for mildness, obedience and deference to male opinion and assumptions. Discussing the contemporary view of the ideal wife being submissive, yet a

[236] Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, (London, 1993); also Terence Dooley, Maeve O'Riordan & Christopher Ridgeway, (eds),*Women and the Country House in Ireland and Britain*, (Dublin, 2018).
[237] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter, Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (Newhaven, 1998).
[238] Briony McDonagh, *Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape, 1700-1830*, (London, 2018), Ch. 3, Managing the Estate.

good manager of domestic matters, Philip Jenkins points out that despite these conflicting expectations, if she were a widow or dowager, or mother to the infant heir of an estates, a woman could have considerable social and financial independence; he also points out that about one in ten gentry families were undergoing a minority at any given time, so the situation of Mary and Ann at Gregynog may not have been unusual.[239]

But nothing, says Jenkins, could change some unpleasant features of a woman's life, and without effective contraception wives might be pregnant for much of their child-bearing life, so long as their husbands lived.[240] This was certainly true of the women of Gregynog. Mary Blayney gave birth to eight children in roughly ten to twelve years (as far as can be calculated given that baptism records for the period have been lost) before Henry died in 1691, and her daughter-in-law Ann Blayney gave birth to nine children between 1708 and 1719, of whom five were lost. Ann died in 1751, leaving three daughters and a son' Joyous, Diana, Frances and Arthur. Joyous died in 1759 and may never have left Gregynog, but Diana and Frances moved away to live as independent spinsters.

Amy Louise Erickson writes that women who never married (so-called 'spinsters') have received even less attention than other women in English history, and what has been written is largely dismissive. The unmarried woman was a burden on her family, and a failure, because she had not caught a man to keep her.[241] A famous example of such a 'burden' is that taken on by Edward Knight of Godersham Park when he provided his sisters Jane Austen and Cassandra Austen and their mother with a cottage at Chawton in Hampshire, and no doubt there were many such cases.[242] However, the Blayney sisters had been well enough endowed to ensure that they did not become a burden on their brother. Whether they chose not to marry, or failed to find a congenial husband, is not known. It is also interesting to note that they set up independent establishments, rather than set up home together or with unmarried friends in a 'spinster cluster', as less well-endowed single women sometimes did.[243] Little is known of the lives led by Frances and Diana. The long list of beneficiaries of Diana's will suggests that she

[239] Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan gentry 1640-1790*, (Cambridge, 1983), p. 256.
[240] Jenkins, *Making of a Ruling Class*, p. 258.
[241] Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 84.
[242] Claire Tomalin*, Jane Austen: A Life*, (rev.ed., London, 2000), p.209.
[243] Olwen Hufton, 'Women without Men: Widows and Spinsters in England and France in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Family History*, 9, 4, (Winter, 1984), p. 362.

was fond of her Blayney aunts and had a comfortable social circle in Shrewsbury, possibly oriented towards the church, which, as Hufton points out, would have provided access to a respectable social circle for a middle-class spinster.[244] In addition, Diana seems, like her brother, to have been philanthropically inclined; in her will she left £100 to Salop Infirmary.[245]

After Diana and Frances moved away Arthur Blayney was left alone at Gregynog with his domestic servants, his agents and bailiffs, but he lived a sociable life which, though spartan according to Scott Owen, was not without culture, books, music, or concern for his poorer neighbours.[246] He did not seem to be close to his married aunts or their children, apart from agreeing to be godfather to a nephew. His aunt Bridget married John Thomas Esq of Aston on the Montgomeryshire-Shropshire borders; they had four children, only one of whom, Juliana, survived to marry and have children of her own. The youngest aunt, Ann, married a Thomas More of Bishop's Castle, just over the border in Shropshire. The Mores had six children, who were Arthur's first cousins. The youngest of these first cousins, Diana, married a Thomas Bates of Aydon, Northumberland. It appears that Arthur Blayney became godfather to Diana and Thomas Bates' second son, Thomas. If Arthur had been looking for a relative to become his heir he could have chosen this Thomas, who was his nephew. But he did not. He could also have chosen one of his Irish Blayney cousins, but again he chose not to do this. He seemed to have made up his mind early on that as he had come by such a substantial estate from the Weaver family, one which had helped restore the financial stability of the Gregynog estate, it should be returned to them, or to their heirs.

Susanna Weaver: First cousin

In 1767 Arthur Blayney's first cousin, Susanna Weaver (d.1783), married the Honourable Henry Leigh Tracy, younger brother of the 7th Viscount Tracy (1732-1798), of the ancient Tracy family of Toddington Manor in Gloucestershire. (See Appendix I, 3, Genealogy of the Tracy family of Toddington.) Tracy was educated at Abingdon School; during the Seven Years' War in the 1750s and early 1760s he had served as an army officer.[247] It is unclear how he ended up in Montgomeryshire as an old friend of Arthur Blayney's. But close they were – according to

[244] Hufton, 'Women without Men', p.368.
[245] TNA/PRO PROB 11_1069_270 1780, Will of Diana Blayney.
[246] W. Scott Owen, 'Arthur Blayney and his home, Gregynog Hall', *MC*, 26, (1892), pp.110-111.
[247] Burke's Peerage, https://www.burkespeerage.com/SudeleyPedigree.php, (accessed 1 September 2020).

Burke's *Peerage* Arthur was a witness at Henry's wedding to Susannah Weaver.[248] What Henry Tracy, a younger son, brought to the marriage, is not known, but Susanna had inherited a number of substantial properties from her father, including the very fine Elizabethan house and farm, Penarth, which is situated just outside Newtown.

It soon became clear that Arthur intended both his Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates to revert to the Weavers via his cousin Susannah and her husband Henry Tracy. This might seem hardly surprising, given the long-standing family connection, but the Blayney side of the family, who might be regarded as the 'heirs at law', and certainly saw themselves as such, were offended. Sometime in the 1770s or 80s the Irish Blayney cousins had paid a state visit to Gregynog with a blatancy that achieved nothing except to confirm Arthur in his intentions: as William Scott Owen put it, 'They came in great pomp, and thus upset the modest and homely ideas of Mr A. Blayney; and we may also suppose that this visit was perhaps intended with a view to the future of his large estates'.[249]

Other family members with an interest in the future of the Gregynog estate included Arthur Blayney's aunts. But in his will of 1788 he made no provision for them, or their heirs. Instead, his whole estate was devised to Henry Tracy, husband of his cousin Susanna, who had died in 1783. Apart from some generous legacies to servants, the property seems to have been unencumbered by debt or mortgage.[250]

The Blayney cousins, especially Diana Bates (d.1823), mother of Arthur's godson, Thomas, suspected conspiracy. Later in the nineteenth century, the son of this Thomas Bates wrote a long memo on his connection with the Blayney family to E. Rowley Morris who was to publish substantial articles on the history of the Blayneys in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* of the 1890s. Thomas Bates wrote: 'When Joyous Moore (his aunt, Diana Bates's sister) went to Gregynog to take leave of her cousin Arthur the inmates immediately sent for a Mrs Brown the wife of the Clergyman of the place, and who was in the interest of the Tracys and never left

[248]Burke's Peerage, https://www.burkespeerage.com/SudeleyPedigree.php. However, Blayney's name does not appear in the record of the Tracy's wedding, which took place in Bath 'by special licence' on 12th December 1767.
[249] William Scott Owen, Parochial History of Tregynon, *MC* 30, 1896, p.111.
[250] TNA PROB 11 1266 Will of Arthur Blayney.

Arthur alone with his cousin.'[251] Bates continued: 'The Tracys must have had great doubts about (Arthur's) capacity for making a will as the most formal means were taken in his execution, & the witnesses all prepared beforehand to swear to his capacity, which they did, when his will was proved in Chancery.' There are other unsubstantiated allegations as to Blayney's mental capacity, not to mention stories of a mentally deficient brother who was kept in an asylum.[252] There are also letters emanating from family members, who would have been 'heirs at law', expressing indignation at the terms of Arthur's will. Joyous More wrote: 'It is very extraordinary that Mr Blayney should be so unkind to his father's nieces not to leave them anything out of his immense property; they never did anything to disoblige. My sister Bates's son was his godson … when he was two years old we took him from Salop to meet Mr Blayney; he seemed much pleased with him …'.[253]

It must be asked whether there had been any sort of estrangement between Arthur and his sisters and his female cousins. None of them lived at Gregynog for many years after their mother died. His younger sister Frances had died in 1774 and his elder sister Diana, who seemed to have kept in touch with some of her cousins, died in 1780, so any family links these two ladies may have striven to maintain during their lifetime would have been rather distant thereafter, despite Mrs Bates's attempts to remind Arthur of the existence of his godson.

Henry Tracy was not unaware of the insinuations of the aggrieved relatives, although there is no evidence that they ever hardened into a legal suit against him. When Blayney died on the 1st of October 1795 Tracy took care to ensure that the will was proved in Chancery.[254] As a result the will was upheld, and he inherited both the Gregynog and Morville estates, which he added to the properties he had inherited from his late wife. Furthermore, since his elder brothers Thomas and John, 6th and 7th Viscounts, had died in 1792 and 1793 respectively, he was now the 8th Viscount Tracy, and had inherited the family's Gloucestershire estates at

[251] There was only a curate at Tregynon at the time; however the Rector of nearby Newtown from 1775-1794 was a Rev. William Brown. He was also prebend of Meifod and Vicar of Berriew. See E.R. Morris, *Montgomeryshire Records*, (Powysland Club, 1911).
[252] Powys Archives, M/EP/44/Z/BE/2, E.R.Morris notebook with transcribed letters to him from Thomas Bates (1875). No records of any sort have yet been found to substantiate this claim.
[253] E.R. Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', *MC* 22 (1888), p.100.
[254] Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', pp. 96-7. No records relating to any dispute over the will have been located; it was proven (TNA PROB 11 1266) on 30th October 1795.

Toddington. However he did not enjoy this inheritance for long, and when he died in 1797 the Tracy Viscountcy died with him.

Henry Tracy's commissioning of John Bacon to create the memorial to Arthur Blayney in Tregynon church, with his name recorded as its donor, and as Blayney's 'friend and executor' suggests that he was anxious to pay tribute to his friend and to demonstrate to the community his connection to the estate as it heir. What the community thought about the new heir to Gregynog at this stage is not known, although any change in inheritance or ownership could be unsettling for tenants and the wider community. There is a possibility that it remained controversial in the memories of some people. In 1850 Thomas Charles Hanbury-Tracy (Henrietta Tracy's son, later the 2nd Lord Sudeley) commissioned one A. Dick to carry out research into the pedigrees of the various families in his ancestry, which led to the creation of a twenty-six feet long pedigree roll.[255] On visiting the church in Bettws Cedewain while researching the Weavers, Mr Dick encountered the Vicar, a Reverend Butler, and he reported to Hanbury-Tracy that the Vicar claimed that 'you were not Blayneys at all but that the right heir was Lord Blayney in Ireland &c & hinting that he w'd proceed on his claim ... & much more of the same.'[256]

In the end, it seems that Arthur Blayney devised his estates as he did was because he had real affection and respect for his mother Ann and his cousin Susannah and their Weaver family, and felt the debt he owed them was heavier than the debt he owed his Blayney relations. Perhaps he also felt that by making Susannah's husband his heir he was ensuring that the estate would remain intact, although as he grew old he would have been aware that Henry and Susanna had no male heir. Susanna had died in 1783, leaving only a seven-year-old daughter, Henrietta, and Henry had not remarried. In the year of his wife's death Henry Tracy had made a will making Henrietta his sole heir, under trusteeship until she came of age, and this will had not been superseded.[257]

[255]Burke's Peerage, https://www.burkespeerage.com/SudeleyPedigree.php The original roll was in the possession of the late 7th Lord Sudeley in 2020 – personal correspondence.
[256] NLW FACS 94 Thos C. Hanbury Tracy – A. Dick
[257] TNA/PROB 11/1293 Will of Henry Tracy.Tracy succeeded his brother John as 8th Viscount Tracy in 1793.

Henrietta Tracy

Henry Tracy inherited Gregynog after Arthur Blayney's death in October 1795, but died in 1797, by which time Henrietta was twenty-one. She inherited the estate in her own right, the first of all the women featuring in the Gregynog genealogy to do so. In 1798, she married Charles Hanbury, younger son of an old-established Monmouthshire family of tinplate manufacturers.[258] (See Appendix I, 4, Genealogy of the Hanbury Family of Pontypool Park, Mon.) Details of the marriage settlement, noted with the dates 28th and 29th December in the margins, are recited in an abstract of title document relating to the sale of 669 acres of Gregynog estate property in Forden, in 1879.[259] 'Miss Tracy was seized in fee simple (i.e. in absolute possession) of the said manors, messuages, farms, tenements etc… free from incumbrances'. The title documents describe how these estates had been settled at the time of the settlement and the marriage in December 1798, noting the appointment of trustees and the provisions to be made for future issue of the marriage. So she was not in absolute possession for very long: according to the marriage settlement the estate was to be left 'to the use of the said Charles Hanbury Tracy and his assigns for his life…'[260]

A surrogate male heir

Charles Hanbury was a younger son, possessing no landed estate of his own apart from his share in some copyhold tenures of land on which some of the family's ironworks were built.[261] Miss Tracy was a wealthy heiress in her own right, and what is more she was a relative.[262] In articles written by their descendant, the late 7th Lord Sudeley, he has no compunction in referring to them as 'close cousins'.[263] Hanbury's succession to the Montgomeryshire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire estates could therefore be said, at a stretch, to be keeping them in the family. Charles Hanbury fitted the situation described by John Habakkuk, who cites him as an example:

[258] Richard Hanbury Tenison, *The Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, (Monmouth, 1995).
[259] NLW Harrison Box 9 Parcel 1, Deed of 1878 reciting the Hanbury Tracy marriage settlement December 1798.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Richard Hanbury Tenison, The 1st Lord Sudeley as an Amateur Architect, in *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, (London, 1987), p.222. Charles Hanbury surrendered the copyholds to his elder brother in exchange for £15,000 when he was eighteen.
[262] Burke's Peerage, Sudeley. Henry Tracy's sister Jane had married Charles Hanbury's grandfather, so Charles was Henry's nephew, and Henrietta's first cousin once removed. Henry's elder brother, the 6th Viscount Tracy, had also been Charles's godfather
[263] Lord Sudeley, 'Gregynog before the year 1900', *MC*, 62, 2 (1971, issued June 1973), p.174; Lord Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', *Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 88 (1969), p.155.

> Some of the second sons who married landed heiresses came from families of similar standing, sometimes seated in the neighbourhood and linked by friendship. This was the basis ... for the marriage in 1798 of Charles, second son of John Hanbury of Pontypool Park, to the heiress of the eighth Viscount Tracy with extensive estates in Gloucestershire and Wales...

He continues:

> In all these instances the younger sons came from great landed families, and their fundamental qualification was their suitability as surrogates for the non-existent direct male heir. The heiress and her family played an active role in the choice.[264]

Given the family connection, it seems likely that the Tracys would have regarded Charles Hanbury as a very suitable surrogate heir, although as a very wealthy heiress Henrietta might have attracted the interest of much richer men. It was a very good connection for Charles Hanbury, a young man with political ambitions and a desire to create a new identity for himself after a difficult childhood which had seen him and elder brother Capel lose their father at an early age. Also, the Hanbury boys had had to grow up quickly to circumvent what they regarded as their step-father's draining of their estates, which entailed a law suit lasting many years.[265]

Two weeks before Charles Hanbury married Henrietta Tracy he changed his name, by Royal Licence, to Hanbury-Tracy (Fig.13).[266] There is no evidence to suggest that this was a legal requirement of his marrying Henrietta. Henrietta too might have favoured this means by which her own family name would not be lost. Lawrence and Jeanne Stone point out that this was a particular issue in England (which in this context also meant Wales) where it is customary for a woman to change her name to that of her husband on marriage. 'To avoid indirect inheritance causing the family name to die out, heroic measures of name-changing were adopted as a mode of concealment, so as to perpetuate through surrogate heirs the impression of direct descent in the male line', an expedient which in this case allowed the re-creation of dynastic connection between the two families.[267]

As recited in *Montgomeryshire Worthies* in 1894, Charles 'assumed by license the name and arms of Tracy, being the maiden name of his grandmother Jane, daughter of the fifth Viscount

[264] Habakkuk, Marriage, *Debt and the Estates System*, p. 209
[265] Tenison, *Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, p.196
[266] GRO D2153/P/3, Grant to Charles Hanbury, the Name and Arms of Tracy, 1799.
[267] Lawrence and Jeanne Stone, *An Open Elite: England 1540-1880*, (Oxford, 1984), p105, 141.

Tracy, as well as that of his future wife.' Very happy to become a 'surrogate male heir', in Habakkuk's phrase, he re-created himself as a Tracy, with roundabout connections to the Blayneys through Henrietta's mother's cousin Arthur. And although it seems that as far as Charles Hanbury-Tracy and his descendants were concerned, the core dynasty, so to speak, was Tracy, not Blayney, they did not wish their Blayney connection to be forgotten, especially in Montgomeryshire.

Changing the family name was a not unusual procedure when acquiring an estate through connection with a female. For example, Sir Watkins Williams adopted the additional surname of Wynn when he inherited the Wynnstay estate through his mother in 1740.[268] Names might also be changed speculatively, to re-connect with distant kin who might be looking for an heir. Charles Hanbury's elder brother Capel did just that, changing his name to Leigh to reinforce a connection with the Leighs of Stoneleigh Abbey in the hope of inheriting that estate.[269] Another attempt to keep the link with the Leighs alive was made by the Hanbury-Tracys in 1806 when their first born son and heir Thomas Charles was given the name of Leigh in lieu of Hanbury-Tracy. 'The reason for this was the prospect of our inheriting the Leigh property of Stoneleigh in Warwickshire as next-of-kin'.[270] This did not happen – Chandos Leigh got Stoneleigh. Thomas Charles remained a Leigh until 1839, when he changed his name back to Hanbury-Tracy. By this time, his father had been elevated to the peerage as the first Baron Sudeley of Toddington.

Conclusion

Assessing the Blayney experience of estate succession in relation to the many analyses by historians of settlement practices among English and Welsh landed proprietors from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries is not easy. Many of the theories advanced by the

[268] Jones, E. G. Jones, E. D.Jones, and B.F. Roberts, (2001). WYNN family, of Wynnstay, Ruabon. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. https://biography.wales/article/s2-WYNN-WYN-1600 (accessed 13 October 2023).
[269] Richard Hanbury-Tenison, *The Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, pp198-9: 'On 30th May 1797 Charles Hanbury's elder brother Capel assumed by Royal Licence the name and arms of Leigh, in right of his descent (through his Tracy grandmother Jane) from Thomas, 1st Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh. This step had been strongly advised by the lawyers in the light of the 5th and last Lord Leigh (of the first creation) having bequeathed his estates to his next of kin bearing the name and arms of Leigh, subject always to the life interest of his sister. When the sister, who was insane, eventually died many years later and the Hanbury claim was heard, it was defeated by that of the Leighs of Adlestrop who, although further in blood than the Hanburys, were unlike them, Leighs in the male line.'
[270] Lord Sudeley, *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, (London, 1987), p. 17-18.

Stones, Clay, Habakkuk, Spring, Bonfield and others cannot easily be tested in relation to the Gregynog estates, for lack of documentary evidence. But some conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, although John Habakkuk says that 'Among the majority of landed families the strict settlement became the basis for determining the provision to be made for members of the family and for governing the succession to the estate',[271] Lloyd Bonfield points out that, 'for the strict settlement to operate in this fashion pre-supposes the existence of a demographic factor which has yet to be determined: that is, do fathers during the period actually survive to the marriage of their eldest sons?'[272] On two occasions, at Gregynog, they did not. Any intention of pursuing policy of strict succession at Gregynog on the part of its owners was continually disrupted by the failure of fathers to beget male heirs, or if they succeeded, to survive until their son came of age.

Similar problems afflicted the Weaver family, which resulted in Ann Weaver becoming the means by which their estate passed out of their family. Christopher Clay drew attention to 'the role that was played by luck in deciding who did and who did not inherit property'. He pointed out that 'in the eighteenth century untimely deaths were only too frequent, and inheritances were often lost in this way'. Furthermore, 'Women who were not heiresses at the time when they married might nevertheless, as the result of an unexpected death or two, be the means whereby their husbands or their descendants acquired huge possessions.'[273] Ann Weaver was such a woman. Elaine Spring's claim that the whole idea of settlement was to stop women inheriting in order to maintain the partriarchy also runs up against the problem of demography: that very often there were no men – not even cousins – to keep the line alive.[274] Nonetheless a concern to keep the reins of both the Blayney and Weaver estates in male hands can be discerned: the Weaver estates were willed to Arthur Blayney, not his mother Ann, when her male Weaver relations died; and Arthur Blayney left his estates to Henry Tracy, widower of his cousin Susanna. The only female who inherited outright, and named as his heiress in her father's will, was Henrietta Tracy.

[271] John Habakkuk, *Marriage, debt and the estates system*, p.26.
[272] Lloyd Bonfield, 'Marriage Settlements and the "Rise of Great Estates": The Demographic Aspect', *Economic History Review,* New Series, 32, 4, (Nov., 1979), pp. 483-493.
[273] Christopher Clay, Marriage, 'Inheritance and the Rise of Large Estates in England 1660-1815', *Economic History Review,* New Series, 21, 3, (Dec 1968), pp. 503-518.
[274] Spring, Law, Land and Family, p18.

So women were important when you needed them to be: Joyce Blayney, Mary Blayney, Ann Weaver, and Susanna Weaver all played their part in the Gregynog succession, as did Henrietta Tracy. The connection between the Tracys and the Hanburys was established by Henry Tracy's sister Jane's marriage in 1743 to Capel Hanbury, grandfather of Charles and his elder brother Capel. Henry and Jane's grandmother, and Charles Hanbury's maternal great-great grandmother, was Elizabeth Leigh, who created a maternal line to the Leighs of Stoneleigh which was no doubt why Henry's name was Henry *Leigh* Tracy, and which the Hanburys certainly regarded as worth changing a name for.[275]

But with Henrietta Tracy's marriage to Charles Hanbury we move to a more conventional situation as shown by examining their marriage settlement which has survived – it had to be recited in full as part of a later legal process launched to authorise the sale of a property. The settlement created a strict entail on the estates, with Charles only a tenant for life of the estate 'in right of his wife', the whole to be left to his and Henrietta's eldest son in tail male, with provision for wives, widows and younger children.[276] This settlement saw the re-affirmation of the principle of direct male succession to the Gregynog estates. Such patriarchal dominion over landed property was still regarded as the basis of well-ordered society – by the landed classes themselves, at least.[277] But by the end of the nineteenth century it was clear that such arrangements were becoming unsustainable for many families, not least the Hanbury-Tracys.

The 1850 pedigree roll commissioned by Charles and Henrietta's eldest son Thomas Charles Hanbury-Tracy illustrates a characteristic of gentry families – their adoption of the genealogy of *all* their ancestors, to assert their ancient heritage to themselves and to the world. Mr Dick was sent out to research not only the Tracys but the Blayneys, the Weavers, and the Hanburys, not forgetting the Pennant lineage of Thomas Charles's wife.

A review of the survival of all the estates over the previous two centuries leads to the conclusion that these families regarded themselves as part of an extended kinship network across at least two counties which had developed out of mutual dependence and the need to respond to the unexpected, such as the failure of male heirs, when it came to the future of the

[275]Richard Hanbury-Tenison ,*The Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, (Monmouth, 1995), pp198-9. See also Burke's *Peerage,* Sudeley.
[276] NLW HARRISON Box 9, Parcel 1, Deed of 1878 reciting the Hanbury Tracy marriage settlement December 1798.
[277] Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estates System*, pp. 74-5

patrimony. Philip Jenkins notes this tendency: 'Another recurring theme in the history of the gentry,' he writes, 'was the overwhelming importance of the idea of family, which added to the sense of community and stability already created by the possession of an ancient house and estate.' Speaking of the popularity of genealogical studies on the part of the wealthier landed classes he points out that 'it was not difficult to discover exactly how any given individual belonged to this ancient continuum, which showed ones relationship over many centuries to a particular area or house ...' He adds, 'Very distant relationships were often remembered and taken into account when assistance was to be claimed, or patronage distributed.'[278]

The importance of kinship networks to the Blayney and Weaver families can be inferred from Joyous Blayney's marriage to her cousin; Blayneys and Weavers being tenants in each other's properties; Mary Seddon's maternal uncle underwriting a mortgage on Gregynog about the time of her marriage to Henry Blayney; Edward Weaver being a trustee of John Blayney's will; Arthur Blayney's closeness to his Weaver cousins, and indeed his very inheritance of the Weaver estates. On his friend Henry Tracy's side the Tracys and Hanburys were connected by marriage, as described above, and Tracy's elder brother John was Charles Hanbury's godfather. Hanbury family tradition asserts that Charles married 'his close cousin' Henrietta Tracy.[279] This repaired the dynastic chain of succession of both the Gregynog and Toddington estates, as celebrated in the 1850 pedigree roll created by Mr Dick for the Hanbury Tracy's son, but it was the earlier web of kinship networks, and the women that connected them, that had enabled the succession to survive.

On his marriage to Henrietta Tracy Charles Hanbury became tenant-for-life of estates in Montgomeryshire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire. The succession to those estates was to evolve on very different lines from that of the previous two centuries, as Charles had no difficulty in generating male heirs, and certainly seemed determined to create 'a patrilineal, primogenitive, and patriarchal' dynasty, despite his allegedly progressive Whig politics.[280] His marriage restored his fortunes; he and his brother Capel had seen their Monmouthshire estates and industries drained, as they believed, by their stepfather, and as a younger son Charles brought little to the marriage to Henrietta Tracy beyond his energy and brains.

[278] Jenkins, *Making of a Ruling Class*, pp. 201-203.
[279] Richard Hanbury Tenison, 'The 1st Lord Sudeley as an Amateur Architect', in *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, (London, 1987), p.224.
[280] The Sudeleys' political careers will be examined in a later chapter.

The marriage led to the consolidation of three estates into one. But it also enabled the Gregynog estate to survive as an entity. Despite the passing of the last of the Blayney dynasty, Melvin Humphreys' assertion that Arthur Blayney 'as the last of a time-honoured race' represented a 'ghostly occupant of those deserted palaces of the Welsh countryside in the late eighteenth century' does not reflect the actual situation at Gregynog.[281] If the Hanbury-Tracys had decided to sell their Welsh estate, that would have been a different matter. But Charles Hanbury-Tracy clearly understood the benefit of retaining the proprietorship of a Welsh estate and the boost it gave to his status and authority in the wider social and political world of the era. He soon began to make his mark in the county, serving as Sheriff of Montgomeryshire for 1804-5, and especially after he was raised to the peerage as Baron Sudeley of Toddington in 1839. This elevation made him an aristocrat, elevating him and his heirs to the social and political elite of nineteenth century Britain, and bringing him social and political prominence in Montgomeryshire alongside the Clives of Powis and the Williams Wynns of Wynnstay. He was Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire from 1848-1858, and his son, the 2nd Lord Sudeley, succeeded him to this position from 1858 to 1863.[282]

The Hanbury-Tracy inheritance of Gregynog maintained a continuity in the management of the estate largely thanks to Thomas Colley, Arthur Blayney's trusted agent who continued to serve the new owners until his death in 1812. The Hanbury Tracys appear to have become accepted by the tenants as their new landlords, the Blayneys and Weavers having died out. The nature and management of the Gregynog estate as it passed from the Blayney era to that of the Hanbury-Tracys will be the theme of further chapters of this thesis.

Although Toddington Manor in Gloucestershire became the principal seat, Gregynog was not neglected, and not left, even after Thomas Colley's death, totally in the unsupervised hands of agents. The estate doubled in size in the early nineteenth century, and in the 1840s Charles's second son Henry Hanbury-Tracy and his family made their home there. Henry acted as his father's agent for the Gregynog estate until 1879 when William Scott Owen was appointed to the position by the 4th Lord Sudeley. Enormous expenditure was laid out on estate improvements – Gregynog Hall as we know it today in all its neo-Tudor glory is evidence of

[281] Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, p. 104
[282] Burke's *Peerage*, Sudeley.

that, as are the concrete cottages and farmhouses in the surrounding parish. This expenditure, and the debts that accumulated as a result, were the principal, but not the only cause of the estate's demise in the 1890s - not the failure of the direct line.

3. Old Gentry, New Gentry

> During the centuries when Britain was under the political and economic dominance of landed magnates, antiquity and continuity were highly prized assets for a family. Both aristocracy and gentry cultivated a sense of history with the aid of their country houses, their long series of family portraits and tombs. Of course, this often lacked total authenticity. New families were always entering the landed community and inventing their own local traditions; while some older dynasties were always fading away. Every age sees both a 'decline of the gentry' and a 'rise of the new gentry'; but generally, landed society preserved its continuity. [283]

Nineteenth century Montgomeryshire was to see both the 'decline of the gentry' and the 'rise of the new gentry'. Names such as Humphreys Owen of Glansevern, George Evors of Newtown Hall, William Proctor of Aberhafesp and William Pugh of Brynllywarch began to feature in lists of sheriffs and justices of the peace alongside those of Hanbury-Tracy and Sudeley, fostering economic and industrial developments, creating political affiliations and finding their places in the county elite. In the 1830s, at about the same time that the Rev. George Evors was transforming Newtown into the 'Leeds of Wales', a sawyer and farmer's son from the hills above nearby Llandinam, David Davies, was showing the entrepreneurial flair which was to lead to the creation of the Cambrian Railways and, ultimately the creation of a vast coal empire based in the Rhondda Valley in South Wales. He became a not only a millionaire, a philanthropist, and a politician but a landowner. By the early 1850s the Newtown flannel industry was in decline, but a young draper in Newtown, Pryce Jones, saw the possibilities created by the new railway system to expand his business by supplying goods by post. Pryce Jones is accounted the originator of mail order in Britain; by the 1890s he was supplying fine flannel goods to the crowned heads of Europe, and had achieved a fortune, a knighthood and a political career.[284]

The energies of the Victorian age were to force the traditional landed classes such as the Hanbury-Tracys to seek ways of continuing to assert their values, status and power, not to

[283] Philip Jenkins, 'The Creation of an Ancient Gentry, Glamorgan 1760-1740', *WHR*, 12, 1, (1984), p. 29.
[284] Maurice Richard, *A History of Newtown*, The Powysland Club (Welshpool, 1993), pp. 79-83.; David Jenkins, (ed), *The Historical Atlas of Montgomeryshire*, ed. David Jenkins, (Welshpool, 1999); Herbert Williams, *Davies the Ocean*, (Cardiff, 1991).

mention their property, in the face of competition from new forces of industry, education, social change and, particularly in Wales, religion. How the Gregynog estate and its owners fared in this new age, and the part they played in its creation, will be examined in further chapters of this thesis, but it would seem that as far as the patriarchy was concerned, direct male succession was assured, at least for the time being. Under the marriage settlement of Henrietta Tracy and Charles Hanbury, Hanbury became tenant-for-life of the estates brought to him by his wife, an entail which would be passed to their heirs. This was a settlement designed to keep the estate intact and, in Habbakuk's phrase, 'to establish a dynasty'.[285] How sustainable such a settlement would prove to be in the coming century remained to be seen.

[285] Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estate system*, passim.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GREGYNOG ESTATE: PLACE, CHARACTER, COMPOSITION.

Introduction: Land, Landscape, Property and Society

Land is more than property; it existed before property, and before territorial boundaries. Land is geography, geology, ecology; rock, soil, water, climate. The land is the prime source of shelter, and its fruits the principal source of subsistence for communities and populations. The control of land, and its 'ownership', might over the centuries have fallen into fewer and fewer hands, creating socio-economic hierarchies which were taken for granted in most countries of the western world by the end of the eighteenth century, but the primary function of land does not change. Ever since, in Dorothy Sylvester's phrase 'The nomad became a transhumant [and] the transhumant became a transpastoralist',[286] land has been exploited to produce food, building materials and fuel, its essential nature transformed by human agency through agriculture, quarrying, forestry and mining. As Denis Cosgrove points out, '… the impact of human agency in altering the physical environment serves to remind us that landscape is a social product, the consequence of a collective human transformation of nature.'[287]

In Britain, the 'collective transformation of nature' by human agency has taken place over thousands of years, from pre-historic to modern times, leaving traces in the landscape of burial mounds, Roman roads, motte and bailey castles, vast areas of cleared forests, open field systems, drained fens and enclosed wastes, all of which offer insights into the societies that created them.[288] After the Norman Conquest of England, as G.E. Mingay has pointed out, Saxon feudalism was replaced by a 'more thoroughgoing form of feudalism' in which a knight's military responsibility to the Crown was strictly bound to the tenure of land, the basic tenurial unit of which was the manor.[289] 'The conquest further entailed the legal principle that all land must have a lord, who granted it upon terms of suit and service.' The people who worked the

[286] Dorothy Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland: A Study in Historical Geography*, (London, 1969), p.45.
[287]Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, (London, 1984), pp 1-3,14-15.
[288] W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, (London, 1955); Susanna Wade Martins, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes, Rural Britain, 1720 to 1870*, (Macclesfield, 2004); Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, *Property and Landscape, A Social History of Landownership and the English Countryside*, (London, 1987).
[289] Williamson and Bellamy, *Property and Landscape*, p.32.

lord's soil were therefore 'thrust into a deeper dependence on the more powerful'.[290] Or as Raymond Williams puts it,

> From inside and out there was this remorseless moving-in of the armed gangs, with their titles of importance, their kingships and their baronies, to feed from other men's harvests. And the armed gangs became social and natural orders, blessed by their gods and churches, with at the bottom of the pyramid, the working cultivator, the human and natural man…[291]

In medieval Wales, however, T. Jones Pierce points out that manorial institutions took root only in 'certain Normanized parts of the March which were situated in the coastal lowlands and eastward-facing valleys of the south,' and comprised 'only a fraction of the total land surface of the country.'[292] Rather than manors, the principal subdivisions of a Welsh kingdom or lordship were the *cantref*, the *cwmwd* and the *trefi*; and the social structure was based on the *cenedl* and the *teulu*, 'the *cenedl* being an agnatic descent group of wider relationship than the *teulu,* the family as an extended household group.'[293] Medieval Welsh land law was based on the principle of partible succession or *cyfran*, by which land was held by the kin group. 'According to the native tradition,' writes Thomas Glyn Watkin, 'the family land was vested in the head of the family unit, the oldest surviving male ancestor, the *penteulu*, [on whose] death the land passed to the deceased's sons, who succeeded to it jointly.' As this principle was applied down the generations, holdings became ever smaller as family lands were divided between descendants.[294]

But the comprehensive imposition of the English legal system after the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1543, which replaced partible inheritance with primogenture, that is to say inheritance by the eldest son, ensured that the idea that 'all land must have a lord' was becoming rooted in the consciousness of Welsh landowners, and in fact had been slowly gaining ground since the Edwardian conquest of the late thirteenth century, as native Welsh gentry (*uchelwyr*) sought to avert the morcellation of property brought about by *cyfran*, and to increase their estates along Anglo-Norman lines.[295] Futhermore, as Glanmor Williams points, the upheavals of the Glyndŵr rebellion in the early years of the fifteenth century had accelerated the disintegration of both

[290] G.E. Mingay, *The Gentry: The rise and fall of a ruling class*, (London, 1976), p.19.
[291] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, (London, 1973, repr. 2016), p.54.
[292] T. Jones Pierce, 'Landlords in Wales: the nobility and gentry', H. P. R. Finberg, (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 4, (Cambridge, 1967), p.357.
[293] Thomas Glyn Watkins, *The Legal History of Wales*, (Cardiff, 2007), p.51
[294] Ibid, pp. 57-59.
[295] John Gwynfor Jones, *The Welsh Gentry, 1536-1640, Images of Status, Honour and Authority*, (Cardiff, 1998), pp.4-7.

manorial and native economic institutions. 'As they broke up, the land market became much more fluid and offered greater openings for the acquisition of land and income.'[296] Land became, in short, a commodity, part of the process by which the western world was evolving from feudalist to capitalist systems.[297]

The presumption of land as property, especially when aggregated into estates extending across large areas of a particular neighbourhood, owned by a social elite and cultivated by a peasant class, conditioned social and cultural attitudes for future centuries not only in Britain but across northern Europe, and is at the centre of the understanding of the evolution of such estates as lived-in landscapes, and their place in the economic structure and social hierarchy of the country.[298] A central theme of this thesis is the conceptualisation of the Gregynog estate as such a landscape: a social and cultural construct with a discrete local identity rooted in its medieval origins, at the centre of a network of relationships and activities involving not only landowner, agent, tenant farmer, artisan, cottager and other dependants on the estate itself but the suppliers of goods and services, and later the managers and workers of the wool spinning and weaving factories in the nearby town.

By the eighteenth century the expectations placed on land – and the 'landscape' – by the communities it supported, and more particularly the hierarchies who owned it, had become ever more exacting, and often conflicting. Ownership of land was increasingly desirable because it conveyed status and power, and it generated income to sustain the markers of that status. Income was generated by cultivation of the land, increasingly through mineral extraction from land, and by rents charged upon tenants of the land, so it was in the interests of landowners to ensure that the land was well farmed and productive. Furthermore, demand for the produce of land was increasing, potentially generating more income, as the country's population increased, and the shift from an agrarian to an industrially-based economy led to the growth of urban communities.[299]

[296] Glanmor Williams, *Recovery, Reorientation and Reformation: Wales c.1415-1642,* (Oxford, 1987), p.80.
[297] Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, (London, 1984), pp.2-3; Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 55.
[298] Jonathan Finch, Kristine Dyrmann and Michael Frausing, (eds), *Estate Landscapes in northern Europe*, (Aarhus, 2019).
[299] G.E. Mingay, (ed), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 6, 1750-1850, (Cambridge, 1989); Joan Thirsk, (ed.), V *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, 7, 1, 2, 1850-1914, (Cambridge, 2000); Harold Carter, *The Towns of Wales*, (Cardiff, 1965), pp. 69-75; David W. Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales*, (London, 1977), pp.1-2.

The husbandry, indeed the entire economy, of a landed estate required people: not only those employed directly in the country house and on the estate but the farmers, farm labourers, traders and craftspeople who populated the neighbourhood in which a landed estate was situated. The landowner needed these people just as much as they needed the landowner, and this mutually-dependent relationship carried expectations and responsibilities on both sides, which underpinned what Matthew Cragoe has described as the 'moral economy' of a landed estate. 'An estate,' he wrote,

> was not simply a forum in which money was exchanged for land; rather, it was an hereditary community of landowners and tenants, governed by a series of complicated rights and duties involving both partners, and having its own traditions of letting, celebration and political identity.[300]

These 'rights and duties' revolved around customary expectations of leadership, authority, paternalism and welfare on the one hand, and service, deference and loyalty on the other, all of which enabled the various communities of a neighbourhood to respect one another – but to accept their place in the hierarchy. The extent to which such social harmony was achieved would largely depend on how far the landowner was perceived to be committed to his responsibilities.[301]

For the landowner to meet these responsibilities in addition to maintaining the style of living he believed appropriate to his position he needed to employ intermediaries, in the form of land agents, steward or bailiffs, to manage the day-to-day running of the estate, and to liaise with the tenantry and indeed with the neighbourhood as a whole while he (for the landowner was generally a man) was carrying out his leadership role in the neighbourhood or pursuing his social, economic or political ambitions, whether in the county or at national level. As a result, in F.M.L. Thompson's words, 'through its managerial structure ownership of estates was translated into a way of life, and the landed interest exerted its most direct influence on the economy of the country as a whole'. [302]

[300] Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy, The Moral Economy of the Landed Estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895,* (Oxford, 1996), p.4
[301] F.M.L. Thompson, 'Landowners and the Rural Community', in G.E. Mingay, ed., *The Victorian Countryside*, 2, (London, 1981), pp.458-9.
[302] F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1963), pp.151-2.

This way of life had become deeply engrained, but it was not immutable; by the end of the nineteenth century 'the economy of the country as a whole' had changed completely, as had the communities it supported, not least the rural communities. Landlords were leaving the land and their leadership role in the face of social, political and economic change. John Davies writes of the acceleration in Welsh estate sales from 1890 to the 1920s, and the opportunity this afforded to tenants to purchase their holdings, leading to 'the end of the great estates and the rise of freehold farming', suggesting that this, following on from such factors as the extension of the franchise and the creation of county councils in the late-nineteenth century, helped bring about the social and political emancipation of the farmers – the *gwerin* – of Wales.[303] Even in the eighteenth century landed estates such as Gregynog were facing these processes of change, regardless of the geography and ecology of the land itself. Debt, the failure of native landowning dynasties, the opportunistic acquisition of estates by 'new money', not to mention changes in agricultural practice and land use, the latter exemplified by the enclosure movement, were all challenging the landed classes in the eighteenth century. Melvin Humphreys described this process at work in Montgomeryshire: 'In pursuing the story of change in Montgomeryshire society during the eighteenth century,' he wrote, 'I have come to think in terms of a crisis of community.'[304] But the greatest crises were yet to come.

Part One of this chapter describes the origin and growth of the Gregynog estate. Part Two examines the estate's ownership and management during Arthur Blayney's proprietorship until his death in 1795. It assesses the extent to which changing perceptions of landscape in the late eighteenth century affected the regard in which it was held by its owners, and fed into conceptions of 'improvement', in terms of aesthetics as well as more productive agriculture and better land use.[305] It will characterize the Gregynog estate at the end of the eighteenth century as a self-sustaining entity at the heart of a neighbourhood extending across four local parishes, with roots reaching back, like those of its Blayney proprietors, more than three hundred years. Part Three describes the role of the agents who worked alongside Arthur

[303] John Davies, 'The End of the Great Estates and the Rise of Freehold Farming in Wales', *WHR*, 7, 2 (December 1974), pp. 186-212.
[304] Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community, Montgomeryshire 1680-1815* (Cardiff, 1996), pp.6, 109-125.
[305] Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867*, (2nd ed., London, 1980, pp.30-37; S. Daniels and S. Seymour, 'Landscape design and the idea of improvement' in R. A. Dodgshon and R. A. Butlin (eds.), *An Historical Geography of England and Wales* (London, 1990), pp. 487–520; J. Finch and K. Giles (eds.), *Estate Landscapes: Design, Improvement and Power in the Post-Medieval Landscape* (Woodbridge, 2007); Richard W. Hoyle, ed., *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain*, (Reading, 2011); C. Watkins and B. Cowell, *Uvedale Price (1747-1829): Decoding the Picturesque* (Woodbridge, 2012).

Blayney administering his estates in Montgomeryshire and Gloucestershire. The fortunes of the estate in the nineteenth century under new, non-resident – but not uninvolved - owners, in an era of accelerating rates of economic, technological, social and political change, will be addressed in later chapters of this thesis.

The Origins and Growth of the Gregynog Estate

Location and Geography

The land of which the Gregynog estate came to be comprised is located in what is described as the 'Middle Borderland' of Wales. 'Of all the Welsh border counties,' wrote Harold Carter and J. Gareth Thomas,

> this middle area epitomises the physical and human characteristics of a border region in geographical terms. The uplands of Central Wales extend long fingers of land to the east, such as the Long Mountain and the Kerry Hills, while also in this same region tongues of riverine lowland reach westwards far into Wales, as in the Upper Severn, or Vale of Powys, near which Gregynog lies. This is also a region in which after many centuries of conflict two peoples and two languages have reached a situation in which although each strives to maintain its identity, both also integrate into a region which is essentially transitional in character.[306]

This description of the geographical location of Gregynog also expresses its cultural identity in terms of integration and assimilation along an ancient frontier. 'This is true Border country,' wrote the historical geographer Dorothy Sylvester in 1955,

> a land of historic routeways and historic movements of shifting boundaries and mingled cultures. The interpenetration of Welsh and English is evident in many facets of its life and landscape in language and race, in folklore and folk customs, and not least in place- and field-names and the complex pattern of the rural landscape.[307]

In 1794 the agricultural commentator George Kay's description of the valleys and mountains of Montgomeryshire, drew particular attention to its woodlands and 'many old plantations of oak', whose felling for fuel he deplored. He noted that the mountains were not 'so high and conical as those in several other counties' but that there were many large tracts 'capable of being ploughed', and indeed there was a significant incidence of arable fields on the high altitude farms of the Gregynog estate at this time. The soil in the valleys was a mixture of loam and gravel, but 'a stubborn, tenacious clay' on the higher arable ground, necessitating the regular application of lime as fertilizer. The importing of lime to apply to the acid soils of the

[306] Harold Carter and J. Gareth Thomas, 'Gregynog – the Regional Setting', in Glyn Tegai Hughes et.al., (eds), *Gregynog*, (Cardiff, 1977), pp 1-10.
[307] Dorothy Sylvester, 'The Rural Landscape of Eastern Montgomeryshire', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 56, (1955-6), pp. 3-26. See also Dorothy Sylvester, *The Rural Landscape of the Welsh Borderland*, (London, 1969).

highland was a major item of farm and estate expenditure, as will be seen. The climate, Kay noted, 'was reckoned moderate' in the valleys, but bleak and exposed in the hills. [308]
At its widest extent in the 1800s the Gregynog estate encompassed all the geographical elements of the border region, from rich riverside meadows where early traces of former open field systems might occasionally be discerned,[309] to woodlands, arable fields and pasture and meadowland falling eastwards towards the low-lying country through which the river Severn meanders towards Shropshire, to remote moorland sheep-walks rising westwards towards the Mid Wales uplands. Its altitude ranges from 400 to 1,100 feet, or 122 to 336 metres above sea level. One of the estate's most westerly holdings, Borfa Hafod, lies at 1,100 feet; other old-established farms lie at between 600 and 800 feet. Small streams, including the rivulets Hafesp, Bechan and Rhiw, flow down the hills eastwards on their way to join the Severn, creating heavily wooded valleys. Gregynog Hall itself, at an altitude of 400 feet above sea level, sits in one of those valleys. Its demesne lands, together with large proportion of its landholdings, were situated in the parish of Tregynon, in what was once the Marcher lordship of Cedewain, giving the estate historical roots in the fifteenth century and before.[310]

The geography of the Gregynog estate on the eastern ranges of the central Welsh massif inevitably ensured that the estate community looked south to Newtown and eastwards to Welshpool and the English border towns of Oswestry and Shrewsbury for its markets. Furthermore, the early history of conflict between native Welsh rulers, and later between Welsh and Anglo-Norman power blocs, had by the end of the thirteenth century brought much of the eastern territories of Wales into Anglo-Norman hands, including the lordship of Cedewain in which the Gregynog estate was to become established.[311] This marcher location and eastward-leaning tendency was to have a profound effect not only on the area's economy but its culture: its social and linguistic characteristics, its spiritual and political loyalties.

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[308] George Kay, 'A General View of Montgomeryshire,' in *General View of the Agriculture of North Wales, with observations on the means of its improvement,* (Edinburgh, 1794), pp.7-8. See also Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, Vol 2, (London, 1849), pp. 396-405.
[309] Richard Avent and Richard Kelly, 'Historic Landscapes in Wales, 56, The Caersws Basin', Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust http://www.cpat.org.uk. (accessed 20 September 2021).
[310] Ordnance Survey 1st Series, 1:25,000, *Montgomeryshire*, *Sheets SO 08, 09, 18 & 19,* pub. 1951, compiled from sheets last fuly revised 1900-01, including part revisions 1938-48). Until the end of the nineteenth century most of the land mapped on these four sheets was part of the Gregynog estate.
[311] R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282-1400*, (Oxford, 1978); David Stephenson, *Medieval Powys, Kingdom, Principalities and Lordships, 1132-1293*, (Woodbridge, 2016).

However, to the end of the eighteenth century at least, the relationship between the geography and economy of the area to some extent acted as a check on this eastward drift. Though the neighbourhood cannot be viewed as totally self-contained – as indicated by the very need for markets – most people were confined by the nature of their livelihood (and if that failed, their need for parish relief) to their immediate locality, with viable transport networks barely in existence.[312] Both George Kay and Walter Davies reported on the dire condition of Montgomeryshire's roads in the 1790s, even after turnpike roads had begun to be constructed.[313] The arrival of the Montgomeryshire Canal in 1797, alongside the further development of turnpike roads, began to open up the country; as did the growth of a factory-based flannel-weaving industry in nearby Newtown in the 1820s and 1830s, which drew former hand-loom weavers from their cottages and farmsteads into town.[314] But it was not until opening of the Cambrian Railway in the 1850s that the social and economic revolution brought about by the faster movement of people and goods reached Montgomeryshire.

The Gregynog Estate and the early Blayneys

The first chapter of this thesis described the lineage of the Blayney family, historic owners of the Gregynog estate, as descending from one Ieuan ap Blaenau, or Evan Blayney. He is associated with Llwyn Melyn, a farm which still exists on the western edge of the parish of Tregynon, and which became part of the Gregynog estate when Ieuan's son Gruffudd Blayney became established at Gregynog itself in the 1450s. The earliest surviving record giving any detailed account of the extent of the family's holdings is the will of Gruffudd's descendant Thomas ap Jenkin Lloyd, dated and proved in 1561.[315] It reveals that by this time the estate extended not only into neighbouring parishes but into the lordship of Arwystli which lay on the western border of Cedewain. Under the English inheritance law of primogeniture, which replaced the Welsh law of *cyfran* in 1536, Thomas's estate would have passed in its entirety to his eldest son David, but the passing into law of the Statute of Wills in 1540 allowed freehold land to be freely devised by will.[316] This enabled Thomas to make provision for his younger

[312] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, pp. 87-95.
[313] Kay, 'A General View of Montgomeryshire', pp. 10-11; Walter Davies, *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales,* (1810), pp.379-80.
[314]J.Geraint Jenkins, *The Welsh Woollen Industry*, (Cardiff, 1969), pp.135-151
[315] TNA/PROB11/45/67 Will of Thomas ap Jevan Lloyd (Blayney) of Gregynog.
[316] Watkin, *Legal History of Wales*, p.137.

sons as well as his heir, to whom he had already enfeoffed his share of the patrimony in a deed of 1551-2, possibly to avoid feudal dues.[317]

Thomas ap Jenkin Lloyd stated that he wished to be buried in Llandinam churchyard; he bequeathed to his son David (who was to resume the surname of Blayney):

> my mansion house called Gregynocke and all lands there with twenty tenements and 5000 acres of arable land, 100 acres of meadow, 300 acres of woodland and 1000 of pasture, and all and singular commons freedom thereto belonging in parish of Tregynon of enfeoffment made sealed and delivered 1 July 4 Edward VI. (1551) Also to my son David all my lands in Llanvithellan [Llanwyddelan] and Beryse [Berriew] in the said County.
>
> To Richard ap Thomas 100 acres in parish of Aberhavesp partly in his possession partly in the Possession of Randal Bromhall. To John ap Thomas and Edward ap Thomas, my younger sons, lands at Llandinam. My eldest son Dd to pay £40 to Anne vch Thomas my daughter also to Elizabeth and Ellyn, her sisters. My wife Margaret Herbert – lands in Newto[w]n and Arwystli. To Edward my wild beasts at Arwystli – kine and calves.[318]

This suggests an estate of well over six thousand acres, principally arable land but with substantial areas of woodland and pasture, extending across the neighbouring parishes of Tregynon, Llanwyddelan, Aberhafesp, Berriew and Llandinam. The mention of the 1551 deed of feoffment in Thomas's will suggests that he had relinquished Gregynog – already a 'mansion house' by this point – to his son, and taken up residence at Maesmawr, near Caersws, a property he had inherited from his grandmother, one of the Lloyds of Mathafarn.[319] The great proportion of arable land suggests that many of the 'tenements' would have been farms situated in the fertile vale of the Severn as it meandered in its north-eastern course towards the English border.

Surviving records suggest that Thomas's son David continued his father's policy of estate expansion in the mid-sixteenth century, notably by acquiring Celynog Grange, a former grange farm of the Abbey of Ystrad Fflur, Stata Florida. Celynog Grange lies in the western uplands of Tregynon and Aberhafesp parishes, on marshy peat moorland set with lakes, at an altitude reaching 1,194 feet or 364 metres at its highest point.[320] In 1521 the grange had been leased by Richard, Abbot of Ystrad Fflur to a Blayney cousin, Gruffudd ap Hywel, 'for a period of 99 years', but was appropriated by the Crown after the Dissolution.[321] In 1574-7 it was bought by

[317] Lord Sudeley, 'Gregynog before the Year 1900', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, lxii (1971), pp.167-8
[318] TNA/PRO/ PROB11/45/67
[319] Prys Morgan, 'The Blayney Period', in Hughes, et.al, eds, *Gregynog*, p.30
[320] OS 6" map Sheet SO 09, 1951
[321] The Lease is preserved in the Sudeley papers in Gloucestershire Archives, GRO D2153.Ad/4(b), (1521).

David Lloyd Blayney[322] and remained part of the Gregynog estate until the final estate sale in 1913.[323] It became the site of Gregynog's reservoir, Gwgia, which is still owned by the Gregynog Trust.

Some records indicate that the Gregynog Blayneys were often 'aggressively', in Prys Morgan's phrase, building up family lands in the area, often acquiring property from other branches of the family which were beginning to move eastwards into England.[324] John Blayney, David Lloyd Blayney's grandson, bought 'messuages and lands' in Tregynon from his kinsman Owen Blayney of Ystymgwern in the 1620s, for example, and it is likely that Llwyn Melyn, the ancient farm which was the ancestral home of the Blayneys, was acquired this way too, as the Gregynog Blayneys were not the senior line of Blayneys at this point.[325] An early acquisition was Cwmcignant, a farm on the parish border of Tregynon and Bettws, which was acquired by Thomas ap Jenkin Lloyd in 1545.[326] Arthur Blayney, son-in-law of John Blayney, bought Tynyshettin in Tregynon in 1637.[327] Both farms remained part of the Gregynog estate until 1913. In 1639 John Blayney also extended his estate in Tregynon parish by leasing from the Herberts of Powis Castle the 'Forest of Tregynon', an area of moorland commons adjacent to the Celynog grange lands in the west of the parish, at a rent of 40s per annum.[328]

The next surviving record of the extent of the Gregynog estate, dated 29th January 1662, is entitled *A particular of ye yearly value of ye real estate of Jno. Blayney in Possession & Reversion*.[329] This document lists 'tenements and lands', in the possession of John Blayney, including the demesne of Gregynog. It cites the townships in which the properties are located, the names of the tenants, and the rent they pay, but it names only the farms Llwyn Melyn, Llwynmadoc and Rees Lloyd, and the Rectories of Berriew and Bettws, the tithes of which seem to have formed a considerable part of John Blayney's income at this time. The 'totall of ye Estate' amounted to £693 10s 8d 'in possession', and £950 8s 4d 'in reversion'. This put the

[322] The sale deed is preserved in the Sudeley papers in Gloucestershire Archives, GRO D2153/Ad/2, (1574/5)
[323] NLW, Particulars of the Greg-y-nog Estate, Newtown, Millar, Son & Co., 1913; Gregynog MSS.
[324] S.P. Thomas, 'Wanderings of a Royal Tribe: A genealogical sidelight on the Welsh migration into Shropshire during the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries,' *MC* 56 (1959-60), pp. 144-153; R.H. Blayney, 'On Tracing a Pedigree,', and 'A Catalogue of Blayney Wills', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 57, (1961-2), pp. 42-48.
[325] GRO D2153/4/8, Bargain and sale, Owen Blayney to John Blayney, 1626 (Tŷ Morice, Tregynon); D2153/2/19, Bargain and Sale, Owen Blayney to John Blayney, 1628 (Lluast, Tregynon).
[326] NLW, British Records Association Collection 1955 BRA Parcel 878 No 62; see also documents 8, 66, 76.
[327] GRO D2153/4/13, Quitclaim, Thomas ap Owen to Arthur Blayney, 1637 (Ty yn y shettinge, Tregynon).
[328] GRO D2153/Ad/10 Lease, Sir Percy Herbert to John Blayney, 1639,
[329] GRO D2153/Ad18 Valuation of Gregynog Estate 1662

Gregynog estate into what might be described as the second tier of landed wealth in Montgomeryshire at this period, below that of such families as the Herberts of Powis Castle, the Devereaux of Vaynor Park, the Vaughans of Llwydiarth and the Pryces of Newtown Hall, all of whose rentals exceeded £2,000 per annum.[330] Gregynog, however, was certainly the dominant landed power in the parish of Tregynon at the time.[331]

The first surviving ledger of rents for Gregynog's Montgomeryshire estates relates to the years 1772-3, some years after John Blayney's great-grandson Arthur inherited the Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates of his Weaver cousins.[332] The Montgomeryshire holdings, now incorporated into a single estate, are listed by parish, itemising their names and that of their tenants, and the rental. The holdings were concentrated in the parishes of Tregynon, Aberhafesp and Betws Cedwain, with a scattering of properties in six outlying parishes, ranging from larger farms in the valleys, to smallholdings rising west towards the sheepwalks of the former Celynog grange lands, to small village tenements. Few rental records prior to 1800 note the acreage or nature of the land belonging to each holding, merely the name of the tenant and the half-yearly rent. However the tithe maps of the early 1840s record that the hill farm Borfa Hafod held fifty nine acres; Gregynog's 'ancestral' farm Llwynmelyn held 126 acres; and Brithdir, in the fertile location of the Bechan valley, held two hundred and thirty acres.[333]

In 1772-3 Arthur Blayney undertook a rent review, accompanied in some cases by renewed rental agreements, which resulted in the rents of forty-nine farms being increased from Lady Day in 1774 or 1775, including many former Weaver properties in Betws Cedewain, the neighbouring parish to Tregynon.[334] The increases applied mainly to the larger farms, not to smallholdings or village tenements. In 1775 the total rent roll after the increases amounted to £1,116 per half year, or £2,232 per annum. The average annual return from the former-Weaver Shropshire estates at that time was about £1,473 including income from tithes and timber

[330] Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.40.
[331] William Scott Owen's 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC*, 30 (1896), pp.1-168, mentions the families of Syars and Pryce as other owners of property in the parish. The Pryces of Gunley, an estate based in Forden near the Shropshire border, held a number of farms in Tregynon which were later acquired by the Gregynog estate (NLW Gunley, Batches 3 & 33).
[332] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 3, Estate Rents 1757-1777. Prior to 1772, rental payments were simply recorded as they were received, with the name of the tenant noted, but not always the name of the holding.
[328] NLW Tithe Maps Tregynon [*Plan of the Parish of Tregynon in the County of Montgomery*, 1840].
[334] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 3, Estate Rents 1757-1777; 55, 1774-79 Register of Tenancy Agreements; Gregynog MSS, Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts, 1763-72.

sales as well as rents, as recorded in 'Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts', for 1763-72.[335] By the 1770s, then, a rent roll of two estates totalling nearly £4,000 made Arthur Blayney one of the most substantial landowners in Montgomeryshire, more than comparable with the Myttons of Garth, Pryces of Newtown Hall or Lloyds of Bodfach.[336]

Over the next hundred years the estate was to expand across the locality as more farms were acquired Blayney himself and even more by his successor, the ambitious Charles Hanbury-Tracy: acquisitions which moved some way towards rationalising the estate into a single domain extending across most of Tregynon and its contiguous parishes. For example Tynybryn farm, which borders the Gregynog demesne grounds and was to become regarded as Gregynog's home farm, did not become part of the Gregynog estate until Blayney bought it from Richard Pryce of Gunley for 1,000 guineas in 1783.[337] A further example of such consolidation is Red House Farm, formerly known as Tŷ Coch, a substantial farm on the parish border between Tregynon and Llanllwchaiarn, again belonging to Richard Pryce of Gunley, which was acquired by Charles Hanbury-Tracy in 1814 in exchange for lands in the parish of Forden, near Welshpool.[338] However, at Michaelmas 1803 a number of properties in parishes further afield, namely Newtown, Penstrowed, Llandinam, Forden, and Trelustan, appeared in the Gregynog ledger, after Montgomeryshire properties inherited by Hanbury-Tracy, in right of his wife from his father-in-law Henry Tracy, were added to the Gregynog rental.[339] The acquisition of these properties, including the substantial holding Penarth with its fine Tudor house just outside Newtown, were a significant enhancement of Charles Hanbury-Tracy's territorial ambitions and were still part of the estate in 1872. The Forden and Penstrowed properties were not sold until Lord Joicey sold most of the outlying farms to Montgomeryshire County Council in 1910. Penarth, the most valuable farm on the estate with a rental of £170

[335] Gregynog MSS, Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts, 1763-72. This ledger held in the Gregynog archives until deposited in the National Library in February 2023.
[336] Melvin Humphreys, *Garth, Estate, Architecture and Family*, (Welshpool, 2020); Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, pp. 122, 134; Malcolm Pinhorn, 'Vaynor, Berriew, Montgomeryshire', *MC* 65, (1977), pp.32-42.
[337] NLW Gunley 33 Gunley Rental 1722 [-1800]
[338] NLW Gunley 14 Deed of Exchange - 6 May 1814. The deed recited 'that the said Chas H Tracy and Richard Pryce had agreed with a view to a mutual convenience in contiguity and otherwise of their respective other estates adjoining and lying near to the heredits thereinafter allotted in exchange and to make an exchange with each other of the same several hereditaments'. Red House Farm remained as part of the Gregynog estate until the 1913 sale, when it was bought back by the Pryces of Gunley. Their descendants owned it until 2023 when it was sold.
[339] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 5, 1790-1804, f.211, f.223. These properties were willed by Arthur Weaver to his son Anthony, father of Susanna, in 1709, and settled on her at her marriage to Henry Tracy in 1767. GRO D2153/824, D2153/As/6, 7, 9, 10.

per annum in 1803, was not sold until 1913 when its rental was £334 per annum for 364 acres – still the largest farm with the highest rental on the estate.[340]

The Tithe returns of the early 1840s record that Charles Hanbury-Tracy, now Lord Sudeley, was the proprietor of over 11,000 acres in Tregynon and neighbouring parishes (excluding common rights).[341] By 1893 the estate comprised over 18,000 acres, and was the third largest in Montgomeryshire after Powis and Wynnstay.[342] It was more than twice the size of Arthur Blayney's estate as he had bequeathed it in 1795. But it was under Blayney's proprietorship that the estate had become noted for its progressive management, cultivation and husbandry practices, and what Matthew Cragoe terms its 'moral economy' in terms of its contribution to the good of the neighbourhood in which it was located.[343] The extent to which this reputation was deserved will be addressed below. How Gregynog fared as a secondary, but not unimportant, estate under the proprietorship of new, largely non-resident owners in the course of the nineteenth century will be discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

Arthur Blayney's Gregynog: 1750 to 1795

> By his unremitting exertions and most liberal assistance he has given a new face to the surrounding country. His tenantry will have great cause to lament his death: for he has not raised the rent of his farms for more than forty years. The great Road, the Canal, the Church will be lasting monuments of his perseverance and public spirit.[344]
>
> The improvements of Arthur Blayney Esq., of Gregynog, whose death this country has great cause to lament, must be noticed. A stranger must have very little curiosity, if he could travel through his estate without enquiring "Who is the Proprietor?" The lands are in superior tillage, the farm-houses and offices were uncommonly neat and commodious; the fences, quick and flourishing; the occupiers happy, and generally, in good circumstances. The expense of improvement was no object to him, when convinced of its utility. In several articles of buildings, fences, drains, roads, plantations, ponds, pumps and other conveniences for the accommodation of his tenants, he expended no less than a sum of 20,000l, in the last seventeen years of his life; and that, without raising as much as one pound in his rental.[345]

[340] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 20, 1862-72; Gregynog Hall Archive, William Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book 1888-1913*, and *Gregynog Estate Sale Catalogue* October 1913. Penarth was the home of Susanna Weaver's father Andrew, willed to him by his father, and it is possible that she grew up there.

[341] NLW, Tithe Maps: Tregynon [*Plan of the Parish of Tregynon in the County of Montgomery*, 1840], available online at https://places.library.wales/viewer/4623743#?cv=&h=A32&xywh (accessed 23 May 2023).

[342] Gregynog Hall Archive, *Gregynog Estate Sale catalogue 1893*; Brian Ll. James, The 'Great Landowners' of Wales in 1873, *NLWJ*, 14. 3, (1966), p.319.

[343] Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy*, pp. 3-4.

[344] Arthur Blayney, Obituary, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 65, 3, (October 1795), p.881.

[345] Walter Davies, *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales*, p.286.

> His tenants, from their relation, he considered as friends, and not only allowed them ample profit from his estates, but encouraged and assisted them in every rational attempt to improvement...[346]
> After a most pleasing ride, return to Cregynnog with my good host, the best shower of a countryside I ever had the good fortune of meeting.[347]

Arthur Blayney's reputation as a benevolent, forward-looking 'improving' landowner, as expressed in the above extracts from various sources, is at the centre of Gregynog's importance in the history of Welsh landownership and agriculture, the implication being that he was a man ahead of his time, particularly in Wales, in matters relating to innovations in land cultivation and husbandry.[348] This section examines the the nature of the Gregynog estate's landholdings and tenantry, its labourers and craftsmen, and all who depended on it for a livelihood or relief from distress and hunger. It investigates its management under the proprietorship of Arthur Blayney until his death in 1795. It assesses the extent to which changing perceptions of landscape in the late eighteenth century affected the regard in which it was held by its owners, and fed into conceptions of 'improvement', in terms of aesthetics and a reflection of social status as well as more productive agriculture and better land use.

Improving the Land

The second half of the eighteenth century was not the earliest era in which landowners were instigating projects to improve agricultural practice on their estates.[349] 'Improvement', in terms of developing more profitable husbandry, which would result in heavier crops and therefore better financial returns to the landowner, had been a preoccupation since Tudor times; in fact some published treatises on 'surveyinge and improvementes' date from 1523.[350] Such improvement was to be effected by the enclosure of the open fields which once characterized so much of the English and parts of the Welsh pastoral landscape, and by the introduction of new grasses and crops and improved stock-breeding. Appropriation or ecroachment upon 'Commons', and 'wastes' and other unproductive marginal lands in order to bring them into

[346] Philip Yorke, *Royal Tribes of Wales*, p.156.
[347] Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Wales*, Vol III (1773, Ed. John Rhys, 1883), p.186.
[348] Blayney and his estate are cited in a number of modern texts, notably A. H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales*, (Cardiff, 1971), pp. 37, 67.
[349] W.G.Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, (London, 1955); G.E.Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1963); Susanna Wade Martins*, Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes, Rural Britain, 1720-1870,* (Macclesfield, 2004); Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, *Property and Landscape, a Social History of Land Ownership and the English Countryside*, (London, 1987)
[350] J. Fitzherbert, *Boke of surveyinge and improvementes*, (London, 1523); J Fitzherbert, *The boke of husbandry*, (London, 1533), quoted in Paul Warde, 'The Idea of Improvement, c.1520-1700,' in Richard W. Hoyle, (ed.) *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain*, (London, 2011), p.130.

cultivation by means of enclosure and drainage was becoming widespread, as was, where geologically possible, the exploitation of mineral resources beneath the land. This process continued during the period of the Commonwealth when, as Paul Warde suggests, an almost Calvinistic ethos underlay the idea of toil as the means by which 'the fertility hidden by God in the soil could be unlocked', and led to the publication of works such as Walter Blith's *The English Improver* of 1649.[351] Despite what Susanna Wade Martins describes as a period of stagnation in agricultural prices from 1670 to 1750, she states that farmers worked hard to maintain incomes by improving outcomes, but it was not until the 1720s that ideas about improvement as a social and patriotic duty became more widespread. 'Cultivation of land as described by Virgil in the *Georgics* came to be seen as a symbol of civilisation. He advocated a patriotic combination of beauty and utility, pleasure and profit: land and commerce with a strict, but benevolent social hierarchy.'[352]

Treatises on changing land use and the need to 'improve' land to render it more productive tend to draw their evidence from English estates, often situated in areas such as East Anglia or the East Midlands where the terrain is very different from most of that in Wales and where such practices as open field arable farming were more common.[353] Melvin Humphreys notes that open arable fields survived in the Montgomeryshire border parishes of Llandysilio and Llandrinio in the eighteenth century, and some upland parishes such as Trefeglwys had common *rhos* meadows divided into strips or quillets for moorland hay, but their incidence was small in relation to the extensive commons of upland rough pasture.[354]

As Susanna Wade Martins points out, 'the pace of change in Wales and Scotland was somewhat different to that in England'. She mentions infertile soil, distance from markets and poor communications as handicaps to development, although she cites new farming methods being encouraged in the north-east Wales estates of Erddig, Chirk and Wynnstay.[355] Geraint H. Jenkins points out that in eighteenth century Wales farming 'was still essentially a manual art'

[351] Warde, 'The Idea of Improvement', p.139.
[352] Wade Martins, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes*, pp. 1-8.
[353] For example, five of the ten papers in Richard W. Hoyle, (ed.) *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain*, (2011) feature estates in East Anglia. See also Briony A.K. McDonagh, 'Women, Enclosure and Estate Improvement in Eighteenth-Century Northamptonshire', *Rural History* 20, 2, (2009) pp. 143–162.
[354] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, pp.10-11
[355] Wade Martins, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes*, p.49.

using the most basic hand tools; oxen drew wooden ploughs, seed was sown broadcast. But he goes on

> Even so, recent scholarship has revealed that, from the 1680s onwards, the livelier spirits within the farming community were becoming more responsive to new techniques in husbandry. A significant number of forward-looking landlords and farmers on the principal estates of Wales, including Erddig, Lleweni, Mostyn, Nannau, Picton and Margam, were cultivating legumes and improved grasses ... in order to improve the quality of their livestock and raise yields.[356]

However he goes on to point out that these new developments were not extensive; only in the more fertile lowland areas were agricultural improvements a practical proposition.[357] Nonetheless George Kay, in his *General View of the Agriculture of Montgomeryshire* in 1795, considered that as this county's mountains were not so 'high and conical' as elsewhere in Wales, they were 'capable of immense improvement, were they divided, enclosed, drained, and a proper arrangment of plantations to take place.[358] Walter Davies describes the actual farming and estate management practices of Welsh landowners and tenants in much greater detail than Kay, and praises the efforts of Montgomeryshire proprietors such as the Lloyds of Bodfach, Myttons of Garth, and Arthur Blayney of Gregynog, to improve the husbandry on their estates.[359] Nonetheless he does not hesitate to draw attention to 'Obstacles to Improvement', referring to such factors as 'bleakness of exposure' on high unenclosed ground, 'stony soil' for which improvement was uneconomic, 'want of travellable roads, great distance from lime, and deficiencies in the quantity of other manures', non-residence of proprietors, and 'too firm an adherence to superstitious customs'. But 'the obstacle of obstacles' was 'want of capital in the farmers'; 'remove that, and others will be easier removed.'[360] Walter Davies would have been disappointed to learn that want of capital, by almost all but the largest farmers, was to be an obstacle to good farm management for most of the nineteenth century, as noted by David Howell.[361]

Land and 'Landscape'

Implicit in Thomas Pennant's description of Arthur Blayney of Gregynog as 'the best shower of a countryside I ever had the good fortune of meeting'[362] following his stay at Gregynog while

[356] Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales*, 1642-1780, p.114.
[357] Ibid., p.115.
[358] George Kay, *A General View of the Agriculture of Montgomeryshire* (1795), pp. 7-8.
[359] Walter Davies, *General View*, pp. 241-2.
[360] Ibid, pp. 458-460.
[361] David Howell, *Land and People*, pp. 12 – 13.
[362] Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Wales*, III, p. 186.

on his *Tour of Wales* in the 1770s, is the suggestion that Blayney also took pride in the physical beauties of his lands as well as their 'superior tillage'. Improved productivity aside, from the eighteenth century there was a growing desire among the landowning classes to improve the landscape which surrounded their country houses, and to open out the prospect over their lands which might be observed from the mansion, a process which 'led farmland to be converted into a landscape of display'.[363]This was a tendency reinforced by the new fascination for landscape painting: paintings of landscape recreated as landscape as something to be looked at, as a 'view'.[364] By creating a fine prospect from his house, across parkland newly landscaped, perhaps by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, 'a rural landscape emptied of rural labour and labourers', and with unsightly features such as dilapidated cottages moved out of sight behind stands of trees, or demolished altogether, the landowner not only showed off his status and power but his aesthetic sensibilities.[365] At the same time he asserted his 'domination and control over tracts of nature running to the horizon'.[366] The cultural ideas underlying such desires were linked to an idealised idea of 'pastoral' as expressed in the works of Virgil and the poetry of Spenser and Sidney, but later challenged by Crabbe and Pope. 'It is not easy to forget,' writes Raymond Williams, 'that Sidney's *Arcadia,* which gives a continuing title to English neo-pastoral, was written in a park which had been made by enclosing a whole village and evicting the tenants.'[367]

Aside from assertions of aesthetic and cultural superiority, Tom Williamson points out that 'Landcapes, like houses, were important instruments in the political game. They could be used to proclaim the wealth and power, and thus by implication the continuing political success, of great landowners.'[368] 'Landowners began to see themselves as part of a national élite, set apart and unified by their adoption of an exclusive and cultured lifestyle identified by common standards in taste and fashion.' As a result, 'the gentry and aristocracy became increasingly divorced from smaller farmers, prosperous tenants and small freeholders ... at the same time

[363] Williamson and Bellamy, *Property and Landscape*, p.130.
[364] Donald Moore, 'The Discovery of the Welsh Landscape', in Donald Moore, ed., *Wales in the Eighteenth Century*, (Swansea, 1976), pp.127-151; Cosgrave, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, p.212.
[365] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, (1973, Repr.2016), pp.175-182.
[366] Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landsape*, p. 215.
[367] Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp.31-37.
[368] Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, (Baltimore, 1995), p.16.

links between the aristocracy and gentry were becoming ever stronger and more intimate,' and thus by implication more exclusive.[369]

This view of landscape as something static, even sterile, was challenged by the eighteenth-century writer on picturesque aesthetics, Uvedale Price (1747-1829). In applying picturesque principles to the development of Foxley, his Herefordshire estate, he maintained his commitment to agriculture and to farming his estate along progressive lines, advocated 'variety, and humanity' in landscape, and attacked the 'Capability' Brown style for its eroding of localism, 'reducing landscapes to a general plan, erasing humble hamlets, hedges and copses, isolating ambitious owners in vast empty parks, leaving a 'vacancy of solitary grandeur and power.'[370] In contrast, as Daniels and Watkins point out, 'the very soil of his estate, his native clay, is a central theme in a discourse of improvement which emphasises the virtues of local knowledge and power'.[371]

In terms of landscape aesthetics as well as landscape improvement the Welsh figure of the late eighteenth century who exemplifies the idealistic improving landlord is Thomas Johnes of Hafod, who was appalled by the state of the Cardiganshire estate he inherited in 1780, but who fell in love with the dramatic, but sour and neglected, landscape. He began to dream of creating there

> a fantasy home in accordance with the picturesque ideal. Prosperity would replace poverty, trees would flourish on the naked hills and the land in this remote place would once again support a vigorous and contented population. [372]

Johnes's desire was nothing to do with creating 'vacancy of solitary grandeur and power' which swept the working population out of sight. On a far vaster scale than Uvedale Price at Foxley he set out to improve the lot of his tenants, and to bring prosperity as well as culture and beauty to the uplands of Cardiganshire; he spent both his life and fortune in attempts to achieve that ideal.[373] But, as Richard Moore-Colyer points out, Johnes provides a 'somewhat extreme example of the combination of lofty motives and admirable intentions with a want of

[369] Williamson and Bellamy, *Property and Landscape*, pp.131-2.
[370] Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins, 'Picturesque Landscaping and Estate Management: Uvedale Price at Foxley', *Rural History* 2, 2, (1991), pp. 141-169.
[371] Ibid, p.141.
[372] Richard Moore-Colyer, (ed.), *A Land of Pure Delight, Selections from the Letters of Thomas Johnes of Hafod 1748-1816* , (Llandysul, 1992), p.3.
[373] Richard Moore-Colyer, 'The Hafod Estate under Thomas Johnes and Henry Pelham, Fourth Duke of Newcastle', *WHR*, 8, 4, (1977), pp.257-284.

common sense' in trying to introduce farming methods more suited to rich lowland farms than acid moorland peat.[374] Such very large-scale projects seem to have been relatively rare in Wales. For example David W. Howell states that 'the only landscape in South Wales designed by Capability Brown were those at Newton (Dinefwr), which he visited in August 1775'.[375] Howell does mention 'the improved' grounds at Lawrenny and the 'fine groves' surrounding Stackpole Court in Pembrokeshire – somewhat of an understatement in the latter case, given the substantial transformation of the landscape surrounding the mansion instigated by Sir John Campbell II when he succeeded to the estate in 1777.[376] He might also have mentioned Piercefield in Monmouthshire, whose dramatic surroundings in the Wye Valley were enhanced by grounds laid out 'in the style of Capability Brown'.[377] The fashion for creating landscaped parks around the mansion was certainly catching on by the end of the century. In 1786 the landscape painter Thomas Jones of Pencerrig had visited Hafod; when he inherited the family estate in 1787, in addition to absorbing himself in the improvement of the estate he set out to enhance the grounds surrounding the mansion.[378] By the 1790s and the 1810s the landscape architect Humphrey Repton was at work in Wales, designing grounds at Rhug in Denbighshire in in 1793, Plas Newydd in Anglesey in 1789, and Stanage Park in Radnorshire in 1803.[379] Such initiatives closer to the neighbourhood of Gregynog – at The Garth at Guilsfield for example, or Glansevern of Vaynor Park at Berriew – apart from the work of William Emes at Powis Castle and Erddig, seem to have begun later, such as the long after Arthur Blayney's death.[380]

It seems unlikely that the unpretentious Arthur Blayney was the sort of landowner who went in for embellishing the natural beauties of the surrounding Welsh landscape to create a more acceptably 'picturesque' scene. No surviving accounts of Blayney's character suggest that social ambition was one of his concerns. Prints of Gregynog Hall which have survived from this period depict a relatively modest establishment [Fig 7], and reminscences recorded by agent William

[374] R.J. Moore-Colyer, 'Landowners, Farmers and Language in the Nineteenth Century', in Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, (Cardiff, 2000), pp.110-111.
[375] Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, p. 97.
[376] Bettina Harden, *The Most Glorious Prospect, Garden Visiting in Wales 1639-1900,* (Llangennech, 2017), pp. 149-50.
[377] Elisabeth Whittle, *The Historic Gardens of Wales*, (HMSO, Cadw, 1992), pp.54-5.
[378] Richard Veasey, *Thomas Jones, Pencerrig, Artist – Traveller – Country Squire*, (Talybont, 2017), pp.152-3,171-2.
[379] Whittle, *Historic Gardens of Wales*, pp. 61-2.
[380] CADW, Powys, Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales, Part 1: Parks and Gardens, (Cardiff, 1999), pp. 68-70, 82-86, 254-259.

Scott Owen a century later recall a very plain and functional interior.[381] This contrasts with the what Russell Davies describes as occurring from 1776: 'a remarkable flurry of building of large houses' by the great landowners of Wales, such as Margam Castle, Cyfarthfa Castle and Hawarden Castle.[382] Nonetheless Blayney must have taken some aesthetic interest in his grounds: in 1774 he commissioned William Emes to draw up a design for the Gregynog demesne lands [Fig. 9). Emes was a landscape gardener in the Capability Brown tradition who had designed gardens for Powis Castle and for Blayney's friend Philip Yorke's seat at Erddig. Also, Blayney was very familiar with Morville Hall, the home of his Weaver cousins, which he had inherited through his mother and which by 1770 was the home of his cousin Susanna Weaver and her new husband the Hon. Henry Tracy. Arthur's cousin, Morville's third Arthur Weaver (d.1759), had inherited the hall in 1747 and

> wasted no time in commissioning substantial alterations and improvements' to the hall itself and also re-creating the outlook from the front door, building a ha-ha 'to achieve the seamless transition from garden to park that was an essential prerequisite of the landscape style...Perhaps this too was when the old village was swept away, to improve the view from the house. [383]

It was this Arthur Weaver who commissioned the painting of the house which can be seen at Morville Hall, which now belongs to the National Trust (Fig. 10). The painting depicts the grand frontage of the hall and its great lawn, dotted with fashionably dressed figures, among whom it is tempting to spot Arthur Blayney on one of his regular visits to his cousins.

Perhaps it was these 'improvements' which inspired Arthur Blayney's commissioning of Emes at Gregynog, or perhaps he was encouraged to do it by his new cousin by marriage, Henry Tracy.[384] The vestiges of Emes's design, of long lakes, stands of oak and woodland walks, can still be traced in the surroundings of Gregynog today. How far they had followed the existing contours and features of the landscape is difficult to discern; there is little in the estate ledgers for this period to suggest expenditure on the increased employment of labour or investment in materials, plants or trees which extensive re-design or earth-moving might have entailed. Neither have any records of payment to Emes for the plan itself been found. In 1782 a

[381] W. Scott-Owen, 'Arthur Blayney and his home, Gregynog Hall', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, Vol XXIV, 1892, p.111.
[382] Russell Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, *A Social History of Wales and the Welsh, 1776-1871,* (Cardiff, 2005), p.97.
[383] Katherine Swift, *The Morville Hours*, (London, 2008), pp.168-170.
[384] There is little documentary evidence for Arthur Blayney trying to live up to his aristocratic new cousin by refurbishing his house or increasing his domestic staff. He did not employ a butler until July 1785. GRO D2153 AB16.

payment of £30 17s 7d was made to one John Hay for 'making the two pools at upper Gregynog' but this was eight years after Emes's design, and it can only be a matter of conjecture that the 'two pools' were among those featured on the plan.[385] The employment of William Keith, a gardener who arrived at Gregynog from London in 1773 and remained in post for twenty years as the highest-paid employee after the agent and bailiff, does suggest that Arthur Blayney was at least determined to keep up appearances; it was no longer simply a matter of paying local women Bridget Beavan and Mary Davies sixpence a day to do the weeding.[386] However, the estate cash books show little evidence of expenditure on garden plants or shrubs during this period. There is only one reference to 'the carriage of shrubs from Salop to [Welsh]Pool' in March 1774, which suggests shrubs being sent from Morville for the Gregynog garden.[387] The kitchen garden drawn on the Emes plan appears to have been created, and seems to have been a major responsibility of William Keith: there are occasional records of the purchase of celery and asparagus plants as well as garden seeds and equipment, and on the 'Cash Received' page for June 1784 the following item is recorded: 'Received of the Gardener for potatoes sold to the workmen £5 2s'.[388] There is a pragmatic feel to all this, which accords with Arthur Blayney's unpretentious attitude towards his estate as praised by Philip Yorke, who wrote: 'his place, not happy in situation, was neither elegant nor ornamented, but comfortable.'[389] (The print illustrated in Fig. 11 depicts the mansion in about 1790.) Nonetheless, the fact remains that even today neither farmhouse, cottage nor barn interrupts the prospect across the grounds and parklands surrounding Gregynog Hall. Whether this came about by intention or default in Arthur Blayney's time is not clear, but the enhancements of his successors in the nineteenth century ensured that a 'seamless transition from garden to park'[390] was maintained, and given an increased sense of privacy and seclusion by the extensive planting of shrubs and trees, and the creation of new woodland walks and grand carriage drives.

[385] NLW, Gregynog estate 33,Rcpts and Payments 1778-1788, f.48
[386] NLW, Gregynog estate 32, Rcpts and Payments 1772-1776, f.15; GRO D2153 AB16, Arthur Blayney's personal cash book, 1783-1795; Gregynog estate 31, Rcpts and Payments 1768-71 f.73 et al.
[387] NLW Gregynog estate 32, Rcpts and Payments 1772-1776, f.24.
[388] NLW Gregynog Estate 33, Rcpts and Payments 1778-1788, f.47, 62, 63, 68. 69, 70, 71. Potatoes were becoming an important source of food for the poor by this time.
[389] Yorke, *Royal Tribes*, op.cit., p.157
[390] Swift, *The Morville Hours*, op.cit., p.269.

Arthur Blayney as an Improver

When in 1794 Mary Darwall published *Poems on Several Occasions,* which included an ode in praise of his estate entitled *On Walking in the Woods at Gregynog*, Arthur Blayney bought two copies of the book.[391] Nonetheless, it seems that for Blayney the land, rather than the landscape, was his primary interest. In Walter Davies's encomium quoted at the beginning of this section, he cites Blayney as having spent over £20,000 on improvements to his estate between 1778 and his death in 1795. This assertion can be tested from a number of perspectives: the conditions laid down in the rental agreements with his tenants; the frequency of rent increases; the level of expenditure on farm repairs; expenditure on the land itself – fertilizing it, draining it, hedging and fencing it, cultivating it according to the latest principles; and investment in local infrastructure such as roads and canals. The evidence for this expenditure is recorded in the Gregynog estate cash books for the period 1763 to the year of Arthur Blayney's death in 1795, supported by separate rent ledgers for the period. The survival of another seven decades of cash books allow a comparison of Arthur Blayney's and his agents' estate management with that of later proprietors.[392]

Rental Agreements and tenant security

> His tenantry will have great cause to lament his death: for he has not raised the rent of his farms for more than forty years.[393]

Arthur Blayney had inherited the Montgomeryshire properties of his Weaver cousins in 1762, but it was not until 1773 that he created a combined rent book covering both the Weaver and Gregynog estate properties, listed in order of parish.[394] That year Arthur Blayney undertook a rent review, accompanied in some cases by renewed rental agreements, which resulted in the rents of forty-nine farms being increased from Lady Day in 1774 or 1775, including many former Weaver properties in Betws Cedewain, the neighbouring parish to Tregynon.[395]

[391] Mary Darwall, *Poems on Several Occasions,* (1794). The opening lines, 'Ye sweetly varied scenes, that rise/With pow'r to charm the gloomiest soul', and lines such as 'Hail! ye majestic wilds! sweet Cambria, hail!'will give the tone of the whole. Blayney noted his payment of 2 guineas for his 2 copies in his personal account book on 18 Jan 1795 (GRO D2153 AB16).
[392] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 1752-1893.
[393] Obituary, *Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1795.
[394] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 3, 1757-1777.
[395] Ibid.

A very decayed ledger has survived, recording forty-eight rental agreements between Arthur Blayney and his tenants, dated between 1773 and 1779, some more legible than others.[396] They consist of annual agreeements: the farm or tenement to be held 'for a year, and so from year to year so long as both parties shall like', rather than leases for a specified period of time. The sample transcribed in Appendix II, Table 1 is typical of the agreements Arthur Blayney made with his tenants, there being very little variation between them except that some of the properties carried turbury rights. All the tenants were expected to keep the buildings in good repair, to 'use the farm in a good course of husbandry', to keep a dung heap and to mend gaps in the hedges. What they must not do was to cut down any trees: all timber on the estate remained the property of the landlord, except for what the tenant needed to keep his fires burning or his hedges mended. Indeed activities relating to timber management constituted a good deal of estate work, under Blayney's proprietorship and that of his successors.
Melvin Humphreys notes that annual rental agreements rather than leases granted for longer periods of time and renewable for generations were becoming increasingly the norm in eighteenth-century Montgomeryshire, a tendency which was deplored by George Kay, who argued that 'these tenancies at will account in a great measure for the very backward state of husbandry in those districts, as no prudent man will risk his property in the improvement of another's'. Walter Davies also pointed out that

> The advantages of these contracts are, apparently, all on the landlord's side, excepting a supposition that the several obligations upon the tenant to fulfil the respective covenants for the management of his farm be productive of mutual benefit. The landlord specifies the penalty to be paid by the tenant for the breach of every article of contract.[397]

Arthur Blayney's tenancy agreements do not specify penalties, nor do his clauses relating to the tenant's obligation to keep his buildings in good repair prevent considerable expenditure on such repairs being carried out by the estate itself. Neither do many of his tenants seem to have felt insecure in their tenure, as the number of farms remaining in the same family for years, even generations, attests. Cwmcignant, one of the oldest farms on the estate, appears in the surviving rent books as early as 1752, tenanted by the Cleaton family who were still there in the 1840s; the Sturkeys of Highgate, Bettws, first appear in the rental in 1773 and remained until 1858;[398] the Robertses of Llwynmelyn are recorded in the Chief Rent returns of 1767[399]

[396] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 53
[397] Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, p. 130; George Kay, *Hints for the Improvement of North Wales*, p.17. Walter Davies, *General View*, pp.102-3.
[398] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 3, 1757-77 and 20, 1862-72.
[399] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 2, f.2.

and were still there in 1872.[400] Even where tenancies were of shorter duration, this often indicated a move from a smaller farm on the estate to a larger one; the same family names recur down the decades in the Gregynog rentals: Turner, Stephens, Gittins, Andrew, Oliver, and countless Davieses, Williamses, and Owens.

The estate had a number of female tenants, although where a woman was sole tenant her tenement was generally a small one with a low rent. In Berriew, Cath Lewis held the small tenement of Lluest; she saw her rent increase from £2.10s to £2.15s per half year in 1775, but she was still paying the same rent in 1792. In 1773 Widow Jones of Pentre saw no increase in her 15s rental for her Pentre tenement. In Aberhafesp, Elizabeth Jones was the tenant of Bryn y groes paying a rent of £12.10s per half year in 1782.[401] In the case of larger farms, there are instances of the tenancies being maintained by mothers and widows after the demise of a parent or husband, until a son could take over. In Bettws, Jane Swain was the tenant of the substantial farm of Brynrorin whose rental was £22.10 per half year in 1782, having taken over from Richard Swain, who was the tenant in 1773, possibly her father or husband.[402] By 1792 the tenant of Brynrorin was Edward Turner, but an Edward Swain was the tenant of Glanbechan, another substantial Bettws farm, as indicated by the half-yearly rental of £22.10s.[403] Vaughan Pryce and his mother Ann Pryce were joint tenants of Pencoed in the parish of Berriew in 1773, but he presumably died that year as the rent book records Ann Pryce and David Pryce as tenants in 1774. Elizabeth Ashley, widow of John Ashley, held a tenement in Bettws with a rental of £1 per half year in 1773.[404]

How true, then, is the assertion in Arthur Blayney's obituary, quoted at the head of this paragraph, that he 'had not raised the rent of his farms for forty years'? Prior to Arthur Blayney's rent review in 1773 the records are rather scrappy.[405] A few pages record payments made in 1752, but the then agent, John Guest (who was agent for the Shropshire estate and visited Gregynog only periodically), tended to record the name of the tenant without always noting the name of his farm. By 1773 Arthur Blayney had presumably instructed him to lay out

[400] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 20, f.259.
[401] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 3,4,5, 1757-1804
[402] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 4, 1778-78
[403] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 5, 1790-1804
[404] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 4, 1778-79
[405] Some Tregynon farms do not appear in the rent ledgers before 1773, but are recorded in the Chief Rent returns for 1752. NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals,2, Chief Rents 1752-1795.

the rent book more clearly. Nonetheless it is possible to identify a few properties, for example Bryncoch, Bettws, where the half-yearly rent in 1752 was £20.16s, in 1800 was £29.10s; Highgate, Bettws, (£43.15s in 1759, £48.5s in 1800); and Hafodtalog, Tregynon (£12 in 1759, £21 in 1800). Appendix II, Table 2 shows a representative sample of farm rents from 1759 to 1800, from which it can be seen that although most rents did in fact increase between 1759 and 1795, the year Arthur Blayney died, increases were relatively minor, certainly in the twenty-one years between 1774 and 1795, and in the case of some of the smaller properties, were not raised at all in that period. They may also have been affected by tenants taking on additional acreage.

The farms and their improvement.

Gregynog estate lands ranged from riverside meadows, arable fields, pasture, and woodlands to moorland sheepwalks, at altitudes from 400 to 1100 feet, or 122 to 336 metres above sea level. Nearly every farm, whatever its situation, grew some arable crops, if only for animal feed or domestic use, although meadows, pastures and sheepwalks predominated, utilized for the raising of cattle, horses and sheep. Melvin Humphreys points out the importance of 'lean cattle' to the economy of Montgomeryshire.[406] This was the period in which the cattle drovers were operating, leading large herds from the pastures of Wales to the markets of England, and it has been suggested that one of the oldest of the Gregynog estate farms, Cwmcignant, which stands on the side of a road from Tregynon to Bettws, was once a drovers' resting station.[407]

However prosperous the farms were in terms of their cattle sales, a study of the estate cash books for the 1770s to the 1790s suggests that their buildings were in need of improvement. As quoted above, Walter Davies claims that 'In several articles of buildings, fences, drains, roads, plantations, ponds, pumps and other conveniences for the accommodation of his tenants, [Arthur Blayney] expended no less than a sum of £20,000, in the last seventeen years of his life; and that, without raising as much as one pound in his rental.' This is borne out by a study of the estate cash books, which record regular expenditure on thatching, building repairs and carpentry, hedging and fencing, and drainage. In the 1770s this was relatively modest; in

[406] Humphreys, *Crisis in the Community*, p.12-14.

[407] Anecdote told the writer by Carol Vickers, who grew up on Tŷdŷ, or Black House, a nearby estate farm. In *Welsh Cattle Drovers* (Cardiff, 1976) Richard Moore Colyer includes a map (map 6, page 143) which suggests that a road from Machynlleth via Llanllugan and Llanwyddelan may have passed through the parishes of Tregynon and Bettws en route to Forden.

1770, the then agent John Guest recorded a total estate income from rents and timber sales (which amounted to just under £30) of £1,302, of which £700 was remitted to 'master', and a balance of £308 'in Jo. Guest's hand', suggesting a total expenditure on the estate of just under £300 for that year.[408] By 1794, both income and expenditure had increased substantially: agent Thomas Colley recorded an income of over £4,535, and an expenditure of over £3,800, of which a large proportion was on carpentry and other building work on the estate farms as well as general repairs to hedges and fences, and the felling and sawing of timber.[409]

That Arthur Blayney was concerned for the state of his farmhouses and buildings is shown by the amount spent at the Kerry farm, Cefn y Coed, in 1782-3. Bills for lime, coal, straw, labourers, 'boards', flags, lodging for bricklayers, and 'sundries' appear in the cash book for those years, amounting to over £300.[410] The tenant in that year was Joseph Davies, who was paying £26 per half year in rent. Davies appears in the 1774 rent book paying £20 per half year, which was increased to £26 the following year. He was still there, paying the same rent, in 1789, which refutes any inference which might be drawn about Arthur Blayney spending money on that farm to raise its rent or replace its tenant.[411] Other farms which appear in the ledgers include Argoed, in Tregynon, and Brynrorin, in Bettws; in Decemer 1778 and March 1779, William Bullock was paid for 'digging up, ferrying and casting up clay for 30,000 bricks' for each property, his two payments amounting to £1.13s.[412] In February 1786 work began on 'the new house at Glanrhyd', in Aberhafesp, and continued into 1788.[413] Regular expenditure on equipment, supplies and repairs for Rhydlydan Mill in Aberhafesp, acquired in 1790, indicates the importance of the mill to the estate's economy.[414]

The estate ledgers also record the substantial regular expenditure on field drainage, especially on upland farms such as Argoed, Cwmbarn and Llwynmelyn, but also those on lower-lying ground like Pencoed and the Wain.[415] The principal fertilizer applied to improve the acid soil of the land, apart from animal dung, was the neutralizing substance of lime, which was bought in

[408] NLW Gregynog Estate 30, Rcpts and payments, 1763-72
[409] NLW Gregynog Estate 34. Rcpts and payments. 1789-96
[410] NLW Gregynog Estate 33, Rcpts and payments,1778-88, folios 40-51
[411] NLW Gregynog Estate 3, Estate Rentals 1757-77, and 4, 1778-1789, f.109.
[412] NLW Gregynog Estate 33, Rcpts and Payments, 1778-88, f. 5, 8.
[413] Ibid, f.96.
[414] NLW Gregynog Estate 5, Estate Rentals 1790-1804.
[415] NLW Gregynog Estate 32, Rcpts and Payments, 1772-76, f.4, 23, 32.

large quantities nearly every year, its earliest appearance in the surviving estate ledgers being recorded as a payment of 12s 6d to John Higgins for '5 loads of lime to Garth' on 13th March 1764.[416] No record has been traced of any facility for lime-burning on the estate at this period; but by Michaelmas 1800 the Montgomeryshire Canal had been built as far as Garthmyl, a few miles east of Newtown, and a listing appears in the Gregynog estate rentals for 'Wharf and Lime Kilns, Berriew', let to one Edward Baugh for £15 per half year.[417]

The extent to which Arthur Blayney may have experimented in new crops, so far as this can be calculated from the cash books, is however limited to the occasional recording of purchases of ryegrass and clover seed. The first purchase of turnips is recorded in December 1781, for 'a strike of turneps' (costing 1s 6d).[418] This was possibly to try out turnips as a feed rather than to begin planting them as a crop. It was not until 1787 that one shilling was spent on a pound of turnip seed, and no further mention of turnips has been located in the cash books until the first of May, 1795, only five months before Arthur Blayney died, when a payment of £30 was made to George Chune for providing 'hurdles from Dinnant in Manafon', the neighbouring parish to Tregynon, bought for the purpose of 'encouraging the tenants in the cultivation of turnips'.[419]

Timber and forestry

Amid all the activity and expenditure on carpentry, drainage, rebuilding and lime, the commonest entries in the Gregynog estate cash ledgers of the Blayney period relate to timber and trees. The felling, sawing, cutting cordwood and coppicing of trees on many of the estate farms, and later the extensive selling of it, underlines the importance of timber as a crop on the Gregynog estate, a pattern repeated across eighteenth-century Montgomeryshire. Landowners in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were fully aware of the value of their woodands.[420] Walter Davies noted that 'the late Arthur Blayney Esq. was particularly careful in the preservation of, and in promoting the growith of his timber'.[421] Clauses in Arthur Blayney's

[416] NLW Gregynog Estate 30, Rcpts and Payments, 1762-72.
[417] NLW Gregynog Estate 6, Estate Rentals, 1796-1808, f.62; S.R. Hughes, 'The Industrial Archaeology of the Montgomeryshire Canal', *MC,* 69, (1981), pp. 95-114.
[418] NLW Gregynog Estate 33, Rcpts and Payments 1778-88, f.115
[419] NLW Gregynog Estate 34, Rcpts and Payments 1789-96, f.178
[420] S.Daniels and S. Seymour, 'Landscape Design and the Idea of Improvements 1730-1900', in R.A. Dodgshon and R.A. Butler, *An Historical Geography of England and Wales*, (1990), p.491; Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, pp. 145-6; D.W.L. Rowlands, 'Forestry', in David Jenkins, ed., *The Historical Atlas of Montgomeryshire* (1999), p. 113; H.A. Hyde, *Welsh Timber Trees*, (4th ed., Cardiff 1977); William Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests*, (Cardiff, 1982).
[421] Walter Davies, *General View*, p.241

tenancy agreements forbade tenants from cutting down or in any way capitalising on the trees on their farms.[422] Nonetheless, according to the cash books very little timber was sold off the estate during Arthur Blayney's lifetime, so the timber that resulted from all the felling, sawing and cording that went on was presumably used for the carpentry and rebuilding that was being undertaken at that time. It was not until the early 1800s, by which time the Hanbury-Tracys had taken possession of the estate, that serious exploitation of its timber resources began.

Handloom weaving

'Nearly every farmhouse had its weaving establishment,' wrote William Scott Owen, writing of the neighbourhood of Gregynog in 1898, 'and half the rents were in many cases made from weaving alone and the making of flannel.'[423] Historians of the Welsh woollen industry describe how hand-loom weaving evolved from a cottage to a factory industry in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries, an era which saw Newtown, the nearest town to the Gregynog estate, become a notable centre for Welsh flannel-weaving.[424] This was an industry in which future Gregynog proprietors would become involved, as will be seen.

In the eighteenth century, however, the spinning of wool and the weaving of 'webs' was an integral part of farm and cottage economy in all parts of Montgomeryshire,[425] and some evidence of this on the Gregynog estate is indicated by a record in the cash book for the fourth of October 1781 when Thomas Colley paid 'Mr Baker's bill for Cards for John Hulins with sundry articles for the Loom and Spinning machine, £4-0-8d. On the tenth of January 1784 Colley 'gave John Hulins towards buying a loom by order, 10s 6d' – the wording suggesting that he was instructed to do this by Arthur Blayney. On the twentieth of September 1785 Colley paid sixteen shillings towards '2 pairs of large Wool Cards to work with ye Spinning Jenny' – presumably John Hulins' 'spinning machine'. John Hulins is not recorded as a tenant of any of the Gregynog properties in the 1780s; perhaps here we have the first inkling of a new industry being tried out in one of the local villages – spinning jennies having only been invented in the 1770s.[426] 'The old woollen industry has completely died out,' wrote Scott Owen in 1898. 'Machinery has completely knocked this industry on the head.'[427]

[422] NLW Gregynog Estate 53, Register of Tenancy Agreements 1774-79.
[423] William Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC*, 30, (1898), p.21.
[424] J. Geraint Jenkins, *The Welsh Woollen Industry*, (Cardiff, 1969).
[425] Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, pp.152-4.
[426] NLW Gregynog Estate 33, Rcpts and Payments, 1778-88, ff. 36, 69,90.
[427] Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', p.16.

Transport networks

Roads

By 1770, Geraint Jenkins writes that a 'well-integrated and reasonably efficient network had been established in Wales' largely as a result of the enactment of a series of Turnpike Acts from 1750. 'The turnpiking of major roads undoubtedly accelerated expansion in agricultural and industrial marketing and stimulated the swifter movement of inland and coastal traffic.'[428] In Montgomeryshire, as Melvin Humphreys points out, such a view was somewhat over-optimistic:

> Good carriage roads were limited to a small network in the Severn vale. Their early turnpiking in 1769 gave Montgomeryshire more turnpike roads than any other county in north Wales, but it did not necessarily lead to an improvement in their quality, for they were used by an increasing volume of traffic. The remainder of the county, beyond the network of comparatively good turnpike roads, was dependant on tracks and pathways.[429]

In 1794 George Kay wrote that 'The roads in Montgomeryshire, both public and parochial, are in the most wretched state of any in North Wales, or perhaps in Britain.'[430] Writing of Tregynon from the perspective of the 1890s, William Scott Owen observed that:

> Fifty years ago, there was hardly a farmer in the parish who possessed a light cart with wheels – it is said there were only two carriages in the county in 1775. Nearly all the people rode or walked to market, the women mounted on "the back of the pony", with a riding skirt thrown over the walking dress, to be discarded on arrival at the town.[431]

Pack-horses, and indeed riding horses in general, were essential on every estate, and the carriage of goods and services by this means incurred regular expense. The Gregynog estate ledgers record frequent payments for the delivery or collection of goods to Newtown, or 'Pool' (Welshpool), or 'Salop' (Shropshire). In the estate cash books for 1778-1788 these errands are generally recorded as being undertaken by one Sarah Brees, or Mary Davies, presumably on horse-back.[432] However payments to John Pugh, wheelwright, occur on a regular basis from 1778 to 1795, suggesting wheeled vehicles of some description in use on the estate.[433]

[428] Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales*, *Wales 1642-1780*, (Cardiff, 1987), p.297.
[429] Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.28
[430] George Kay, *A General View of the Agriculture of North Wales*, (Edinburgh, 1794), Montgomeryshire, p.10.
[431] Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', pp.19-20.
[432] NLW Gregynog Estate 33, Rcpts and Payments, 1778-88, e.g. f.2, 64,69.
[433] Ibid, f.1, and 34, f.189.

At the end of his life, tribute was paid to Arthur Blayney for his role in improving local roads,[434] to which expenditure recorded in the estate cash books bears witness. He was also a trustee of the Turnpike Trusts which were established following a series of Turnpike Acts from the 1760s on, to create better roads between Shrewsbury and local small towns including Welshpool and Newtown.[435]

On May 23rd 1795, the Gregynog agent Thomas Colley recorded that he paid Revd. Llewelin Davies £37.10s 'in part of the 150£ you agreed to tow[ar]ds making a Turnpike Road from Abbermule thro' Kerry, &c. (see £75 entered on the same account the 24th Oct. 1794.)'.[436] This is one of the many references to expenditure on road building which occur in the estate cash books, principally the development in the 1780s of the turnpike leading from Tregynon through Bettws and Berriew to Montgomery, which is perhaps the 'Great Road' referred to in Arthur Blayney's obituary of October 1795.[437] In December 1785 Blayney authorized two payments of £46 and £103 respectively '(by order), as appears in a book kept for that purpose'.[438] Expenditure on new roads on or in the vicinity of the estate itself, however, begins to appear a little earlier, from 1781, so we hear of 'the new road near Vachwen'; the new road below Cefngwifed'; 'the new road through Brynycul ground', and so on.[439]

Despite such initiatives on the part of Blayney, and indeed most of the gentry families of Montgomeryshire,[440] by 1800 the county's roads were still regarded as being in a parlous state. In 1798 the first coach service from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth via Welshpool, Newtown and Llanidloes, had been established, but this did not mean that it had well-surfaced roads to travel along.[441] In 1813 Walter Davies is still citing 'Want of travellable roads' as one of the obstacles to improvement in north Wales, limiting the economic development as well as the social and geographical horizons of the population.[442]

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[434] See footnotes 1 & 2 above.
[435] R.T. Pritchard, 'Montgomeryshire Turnpike Trusts'. *MC* 57, (1961-2), p2 ; A. Howell, 'The Roads, Bridges, Canals and Railways of Montgomeryshire', *MC* 8, (1875), pp.313-334; MC 9, (1876), pp.177-192.
[436] NLW Gregynog Estate 34, Rcpts and Payments, 1789-96, f.178.
[437] *Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1795.
[438] NLW Gregynog Estate 33, Rcpts and Payments, 1778-88, f.94
[439] ibid, f.32., f.37., f.43
[440] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.144
[441] A.H.Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales*, (Cardiff, 1971), p. 98. The coach service was followed by a Wagon service from Aberystwyth to Shrewsbury via Newtown in 1810, and a Royal Mail service from Ludlow to Aberystwyth via Newtown, also in 1810, as reported in *The Shropshire Journal* for 14th March and 19th May that year.
[442] Walter Davies*, General View*, p.460

The Montgomeryshire Canal

Like most landowners of the time Arthur Blayney was aware of the growing importance of canals in the transport infrastructure of the country. In October 1792 he attended a meeting chaired by William Mostyn Owen of Bryngwyn to consider extending the Llanymynech branch of the Ellesmere Canal into Montgomeryshire. J.R. Ward reports that 'the county's landowners played a major role in raising the initial capital by subscribing £100 each for the 711 shares'; Arthur Blayney of Gregynog held 30, Humphreys Owen of Garthmyl, Devereux Mytton of Garth and John Winder of Vaynor held 20 each.[443] By 1794, as Arthur Blayney's health declined, the management of his interest in the canal fell on to the shoulders of Thomas Colley, who saw to the regular payments for Blayney's shares. In January 1795 Colley attended a meeting in London, held to promote the Canal, and was appointed to the canal Committee.[444] The shares held by Blayney in the Montgomeryshire Canal Company were among the assets inherited by Arthur Blayney's heirs following his death in October 1795.

'Improvement' and the farmers.

What did the farmers themselves think about 'improvement'? They must often have felt suspicious of initiatives imposed on them from above, even by a landlord as trusted as Arthur Blayney, and even as they valued the improved estate roads. Thomas Johnes of Hafod found his Cardiganshire tenants 'conservative in the extreme and deeply suspicious of any innovation' despite efforts to educate them by publishing a manual of agriculture in Welsh.[445] Arthur Young doubted that farmers could actually read the books on agricultural improvement even if they could access them,[446] and this is borne out to some extent by the number of Arthur Blayney's tenants in the 1770s who signed their Gregynog tenancy agreements with their mark rather than a signature – of the 48 agreements on record, 20 tenants signed but 28 made their mark. Richard Jones of the substantial farm Cwmdockin could sign his name for example, as could Humphrey Williams of Hafodtalog, but John Tudor of Aberclawdd could not, neither could John Roberts of Llwynmelyn, nor Thomas Williams of Penyllan.[447] This need not

[443] J.R. Ward, *The Finance of Canal Building in Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1974), pp114-15. This author cites Charles Hadfield, *Canals of the West Midlands*, 1966, 190, as his source, citing 'Case of the Montgomeryshire Canal Co., 1797, 193.

[444] NLW Gregynog Estate 34, Rcpts and Payments, 1789-96, f.171.

[445] Richard More-Colyer, 'The Hafod Estate under Thomas Johnes and Henry Pelham, fourth duke of Newcastle'. *WHR*, 8, 4, (1977), pp.257-284.

[446] Quoted in Susanna Wade Martin, *Farmers, Landlords and Landscapes, Rural Britain, 1720 to 1870*, (Macclesfield, 2004), p.6

[447] NLW Gregynog estate Records 33, 1778-88, ff. 36, 69,90.

reflect on their efficiency as farmers, of course, or their willingness to adopt their landlord's recommended practices, especially as there was so much interaction between farm tenant, agent and landlord in the continual expenditure on improvements, rebuilding, fencing, drainage and fertilizing that they would have surely been aware of paying their rents to an owner who 'considered them as friends' and was doing his best to encourage them 'in every rational attempt to improvement', to quote Walter Davies.[448] Yet one of Davies's 'obstacles to improvement' to the agriculture of north Wales was 'too firm an adherence to superstitious customs'.[449] In those years, as David Howell points out, farmers' priorities turned on feeding their families and paying the rent, rather than producing a marketable surplus of goods.[450] Even writing of a century later, Howell notes the prevalence of 'small, largely self-sufficient family-holdings', situated on mountain and moorland terrain, where subsistence and paying the rent were still the priority, but he points out that such self-sufficiency to some extent helped the Welsh farmer to weather the ups and downs of harvests and grain prices which were to have a dire effect in wheat-growing districts of the country in the nineteenth century.[451] There was also, it is suggested, an inhibition from working to increase agricultural yields as this might result in the landlord increasing the rent.[452] During the Napoleonic Wars in the early years of the nineteenth century, as on many other estates the Gregynog farm tenants saw their rents increase substantially, following a re-valuation carried out by the new owner in 1810.[453] Arrears mounted hugely as a result (see Appendix II, Table 4). Although agriculture was supposed to boom in the years of the Napoleonic Wars, the hazards of bad harvests and market fluctuations always threatened to undermine farm incomes, and it was decades before arrears began to fall.

For the farmers, it can be argued that efficiency was not necessarily a priority. As Richard Moore-Colyer points out:

> Farming gave the Welshman a stake in the soil and, provided he could pay the rent and support his household at an appropriate level from the produce of the land, the pursuit of

[448] Walter Davies, *General View*, p.460, fn 2.
[449]Walter Davies, ibid.
[450] Howell, *Land and People*, p.3.
[451] Ibid.,p.148.
[452] Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.152; Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocrary*, (Oxford, 1996), p.34.
[453] Scott Owen, op.cit., f.106

> high levels of profit was not his only consideration. To him, religious observance, bonds of kinship and standing in the community were of paramount significance...[454]

There was status attached to being a farmer, especially if the farm had been held by one family for generations.[455] In any neighbourhood, farming families held the middle social ground between the gentry who were their landlords, and the farm labourers, servants, craftsmen and tradespeople who relied upon them for a livelihood. They were bound together by mutual obligations, helping each other at harvest-time, marrying into each others' families, playing their part in church, chapel and community life. It should be noted however that social boundaries between farming families and their labourers and servants were generally observed; the marriage of farmers' children to farm labourers' children, for example, was frowned upon.[456] Among the churchwardens and overseers of Tregynon church between 1742 and 1815, listed by William Scott Owen in his 'Parochial history of Tregynon', can be found many tenants of Gregynog farms, from Thomas Cleaton of Cwmcignant (1750 and 1781), to John Tudor of Aberclawdd (1765 and 1783).[457] Such appointments were not drawn only from the 'biggest' tenants in terms of their farms' rents: in the early 1790s Francis Stephens (overseer in 1761) rented Tynyshettin for £22.10s per half year; Andrew Andrews (churchwarden, 1790 – the same year as Arthur Blayney himself) rented Vachwen for £10.10 per half year; John Rowlands rented Cochsidan (overseer, 1776) for £3.3s per half year.[458]

Some of the more substantial tenants were landowners in their own right. On the Gregynog estate the foremost example of this, and one of the few tenants to be recorded as 'Mr' in the rent books, was Thomas Sturkey of Highgate, the substantial farm inherited by Blayney from his Weaver cousins. In 1896 William Scott Owen recorded that the Sturkeys owned property in Tregynon and Bettws, and 'It was at Highgate that Mr Thomas Sturkey kept Mr Arthur Blayney's hounds'. Thomas Sturkey's descendants were doctors and professional men who remained in the area into the nineteenth century.[459]

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[454] R.J. Moore-Colyer, 'Landowners, Farmers and Language in the Nineteenth Century', in Geraint H. Jenkins, (ed.), *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801-1911*, (Cardiff, 2000), pp.108-9
[455] Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy*, pp.33-38.
[456] Howell, *Land and People*, pp.93-4.
[457] Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', pp.52-3. Non-conformist allegiance seems to have been rare in Tregynon in this period. On page 146 of the same article Scott-Owen records a tradition that when Hywel Harris attempted to preach in Tregynon in the 1740s he was sent away in a shower of stones. It was Arthur Blayney's agent Thomas Colley, an ardent Methodist, who built Tregynon's first chapel, but not until 1797, two years after the loyal churchman Arthur Blayney had died.
[458] NLW Gregynog Rentals 5, Estate Rents 1790-1804.
[459] Scott-Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', pp. 139-40.

Richard Moore-Colyer goes on to say that farmers' intense sense of belonging to the land, a pride in self-reliance, localism of tradition and nuance of language, and a belief that the old ways were the best, provided cohesion to the fabric of local society.[460] That such sentiments survived into the twentieth century is suggested by Alwyn D. Rees's study of the farming community of Llanfihangel in Montgomeryshire in the 1940s.[461]

The farmers will come into clearer focus in the nineteenth century as they begin to move towards religious and political emancipation, and also as their doings and opinions come to be recorded more readily in the newspapers. However the extent to which they all became progressive agriculturalists, or whether an innate conservatism underlay a loyalty to the practices of their fathers, or they simply decided to keep their heads down and carry on as best they could never mind what their landords wanted, must be considered in relation to other challenges which were to face not only them but society as a whole. What changed much less was their role, for better or for worse, at the heart of the rural community.

<u>The Estate and the people: tradesmen and women, craftsmen and labourers</u>

The people who made their living providing labour, goods and services to the Gregynog estate, and whose names appear regularly in the lists of 'Disbursements' recorded by the agent in the Gregynog Estate ledgers, bear witness to key role of the estate in the economy of the entire neighbourhood, extending to the nearby town of Newtown, and including women as well as men. In the years of John Guest's stewardship, from 1768-71, we read of Mary Morgan and her 'boy', Jane Williams and Bridget Beavan working in the paddocks and gardens, 'drawing docks' or making faggots (that is, collecting bundles of wood for fuel) or doing the laundry – the standard daily rate for women at this time being sixpence. Local businesswomen include a Miss Trevor who was paid for supplying hardware, and a Mrs Williams for supplying candles. From the late 1770s, in records kept by Thomas Colley, we see Mary Davies, Ann Pugh and Sarah Brees being hired to carry items to 'Pool' or 'Salop' – presumably they carried out these errands on foot or horseback. Eleanor Hudson supplied tar cord, a Mrs Kennedy was paid 4s.4d for chickens, lemons and 'earthenware', and Margaret Stanley supplied soap.[462]

[460] R.J. Moore-Colyer, 'Landowners, farmers and language,' p. 109.
[461] Alwyn D. Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside*, (Csrdiff, 1975), pp. 29-31.
[462] NLW, Gregynog Estate 31,32,33, Receipts and payments 1763-1796

The same names recur throughout the years of Arthur Blayney's tenure: John Williams the thatcher, William Williams the wheelwright, Thomas Thomas the mason, Robert Owen the saddler, William Bullock the brickmaker, John Pugh the ironmonger; Jack Gethin supplied slates; Lewis Owen appears frequently, taking the dun horse to be shod in Newtown, supplying groceries including black pepper, attending Turnpike Trust meetings on behalf of, and sometimes with, Arthur Blayney. Andrew Whitticase, Edward Davies, Richard Owen, Edward Humphreys and Bill Williams, among others, were day labourers. One of the estate's foremost suppliers of wheat and grain was William Sturkey of Highgate, later succeeded by his son Thomas, who also had the care of Arthur Blayney's hounds (over-indulgent care, if Philip Yorke's claim that they were 'too fat for speed' is true).[463] It is not clear whether the grain sold by the Sturkeys was grown on Highgate farm or whether they were the agents for the purchase, although the farm held over 120 acres of arable land at the time of the tithe apportionments in 1840, presumably used for the cultivation of grain.[464]

A modest number of house servants were employed by Arthur Blayney himself. In his account for 1786 this included a housekeeper, a cook, and three maids. Outside staff he paid himself, rather than delegating the task to his agent, included the gardener, a bailiff and under-bailiff, and two other male staff whose roles are not specified. Apart from the gardener William Keith, and the housekeeper Mrs Low, they were all local people, Morrises, Davieses, Joneses. By 1790 Blayney was employing a butler and under-butler, and Mrs Low had been replaced by Mrs Hansford; there are four maids, the bailiffs and a groom. This had changed little by 1795, the last year of his life, when the wages bill for his domestic staff totalled £165 18s.[465]

That all these people played their part in the building of a community is indicated by the number of surnames that, despite two centuries of out- and in-migration, are still common to the locality – Bebb, Breese, Corfield, Davies, Gethin, Hamer, Jones, Morris, Owen, Turner, Whitticase, not to mention Blayney. They play their part in this history because they are named, and they are paid for their work and the services they provide. Many of them, especially the farm labourers, are poor, but they are not yet destitute.

[463] Philip Yorke, *The Royal Tribes of Wales*, p.157.
[464] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, op.cit.
[465] GRO, D2153 AB16, Arthur Blayney's personal account book.

The Estate and the poor

As Geraint H. Jenkins points out, in the eighteenth century the condition of the labouring classes was in many cases poor:

> the fortunes of paupers, squatters and vagrants at the foot of the social scale were even worse. The pressure of rising population, land hunger, and soaring prices, especially after 1760, swelled their numbers and worsened their plight. All over the country growing numbers of poor people were claiming relief in the form of rent, pensions, food, and clothes, thereby imposing an intolerable burden on the meagre financial resources of parishes.[466]

The theme of poverty permeates most accounts of eighteenth-century Welsh history, including that of Montgomeryshire,[467] but it often seems only marginal to the history of the Gregynog estate, despite the regular charitable donations that appear in the estate cash books and the frequent sixpences or shillings given by Arthur Blayney to 'a poor person' or 'a pauper', as recorded in his personal account book.[468] He had a reputation for generosity to the poor among contemporaries such as Philip Yorke, and subsequently Walter Davies, but this generosity needs to be examined, not only in comparison with what labourers might expect to earn on Blayney's estate but what was deemed to be an appropriate level of subsistence for poor people and their families in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

In the 1760s male labourers on the Gregynog estate were paid between tenpence and one shilling a day, while women were paid sixpence a day for jobs like weeding or washing. In 1764 Blayney's Morville-based agent John Guest was paid £30 per annum for managing the Shropshire estates with an additional £10 a month for the small Herefordshire estate – the equivalent of £2.10s per month, or roughly 10s per week, although as a farmer and holder of a number of official posts in Bridgnorth, including Bailiff and 'Bridgemaster', this was not his only income.[469] He reimbursed himself a total of £6.2s for four journeys between Morville and Gregynog. To give some perspective, that same year, payments to Thomas Haslewood, the Bridgnorth lawyer who was pursuing the Weaver/Blayney dispute with the Actons at the time, amounted to £141.10s.[470]

[466] Geraint H. Jenkins, *Foundations,* p.278,

[467] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, pp, 50-59, Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, pp, 278-9, David Jones, *Before Rebecca, Popular Protests in Wales, 1793-1835*, (London, 1973), pp.4-5; David W.Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales,* (Cardiff, 2000).

[468] GRO D2153 AB16 (ACC3420) 7/122/4 Arthur Blayney's personal account book

[469] Shropshire Archives Ref XBB/D/1/2/1/127, Bridgemaster and Treasurer's Accounts, 1739-1747.

[470] NLW Gregynog estate records 30, Receipts and payments for Arthur Blayney 1763-71 p21 (folios not numbered).

Arthur Blayney's personal account ledger for 1784 records total donations 'to poor persons' of £14.5s.2d, while his regular subscriptions amounted to £20.2s.2d, a total of £34.7s 4d. In 1790 he gave a total of £11 to 25 persons in donations ranging from 6d to two guineas, and his regular charitable donations, to the poor of Tregynon and Bettws, the Infirmary, the St.Asaph clergy widow charity, and so on, amounted to 12 guineas.[471] That same year, Thomas Colley's Gregynog estate cash books record a total of £14.9s.9d in charitable disbursement on items such as hats or shoes 'for the poor', plus Poor Levy payments totalling £12.14s.6d, amounting to a total of £27.4s.3d for the year.[472] In 1795, in the last year of Blayney's life, over a period of eight months he gave away 15 guineas to 'poor persons' and his regular donations had extended beyond Tregynon and Bettws to the adjacent parishes of Aberhafesp, Llanwnog, Llandysul, Llanllwchaiarn and Berriew, amounting to twenty-five guineas. He also paid for four, then two more children, to be innoculated against smallpox, which cost a total of fifteen shillings.[473]

How generous was all this? To give a poor woman 2s.6d, when the day rate for women doing the washing or weeding the garden was 6d, or to pay five shillings for 'shoes for a poor boy' might appear to be fairly open-handed. Both the estate cash books and Blayney's personal accounts also record frequent payments to unnamed persons for '12½ doz moles', '4 doz. mice', '2 kites' or '2 ravens' which suggest that anyone bringing a sackful of dead vermin to his door might expect to be remunerated. But then we see that on 4 November 1784 Blayney recorded a payment of £82.1s for a pipe of Port and a hogshead of Sherry.[474] However, this seems to have been his sole extravagance, and it can be inferred that Blayney did not wish poor people to be reduced to a level of destitution which forced them to apply for parish relief.

The poor and the parish

The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that poor people did not starve to death in the hedge lay with the local parish. As Geraint H. Jenkins points out, the pressure of rising population, land hunger, and soaring prices, especially after 1760, swelled the numbers of poor people, and imposed an ever-increasing burden on the financial resources of the parish:

[471] GRO D2153 AB16 (ACC3420) 7/122/4
[472] NLW Gregynog Estate 34, Receipts and Payments, 1789-96
[473] Arthur Blayney's personal account book.
[474] Ibid.

> Faced with an appalling prospect of large-scale pauperism, local authorities enforced Poor Law statutes vigorously, increased levies, and addressed themselves to the problem of settlement and removal. Churchwardens and overseers of the poor swiftly discovered that private almsgiving and charitable donations by rich individuals were insufficient to deal with the problem. [...] Parish authorities... were increasingly compelled after 1750 to levy poor rates in a systematic fashion. The rate, which was assessed and raised by local poor-law officers and imposed upon householders and landowners, brought in funds which enabled local authorities to cushion the defenceless poor from the myriad blows which rained down upon them.[475]

'In most Montgomeryshire parishes from the 1780s,' writes Melvin Humphreys:

> the labouring poor were confronted ... by a sinister trend by which their inadequate wages were routinely subsidized from the poor rates. As the very subsistence of a growing number of labouring families fell within the remit of the parish vestry, the clutches of pauperism, with its stigma and humiliating dependency, penetrated further into the fabric of Welsh society... In Montgomeryshire, the vestries' participation in the subsidizing of wages was now also general, with the result that poor law bureaucracy was enlarged as a pinching benefits system.[476]

The Tregynon Parish Vestry comprised the Churchwardens and 'Overseers', a large proportion of whom from 1742 until 1780 were farmers who, as described above, were tenants of the Gregynog estate: Oliver of Brithdir, for example, Roberts of Llwynmelyn, or Davies of Tynybryn. The parochial records for Tregynon have not yet been located, unlike those of other Montgomeryshire parishes such as Kerry or Trefeglwys, which are in the National Library, so it is not possible to examine how 'pinching' this particular parish vestry was towards local paupers. However, the Gregynog agent Thomas Colley seemed to hold a somewhat cynical view of the farmers, suggesting in a letter to Walter Davies in 1802, that they colluded to keep the poor rates low:

> I am of the opinion, that less impositions are practiced by Paupers in small than in large districts, but whether the really necessitous are better provided for in the lesser than the greater, I have some doubt – for if the district be wholly in the management of Farmers & those but few – it is likely that a combination of Interest will induce them to act together, as we see it does persons in Merchantile matters – sorry I am to say, I see too much inclination in this (comparatively) small parish thereto – whereas in large districts it is more likely there happens to reside one or more persons of a different description, whether in point of property or disposition that will plead for the poor - & if the stream goes against him so that he cannot prevail on their behalf in the Vestry – he has a resource, by accompanying the distressed, & representing their case to the Magistrate.[477]

He was equally sceptical about Houses of Industry (one of which had opened in the nearby parish of Forden in 1792). In the same letter he writes:

> With respect to the Houses of Industry, I once tho't favourably of that at Shrewsbury – but for some years past I have changed my opinion, both in point of expence, & the Morals of the poor

[475] Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, pp. 278-9, 338.
[476] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, pp.93-4
[477] NLW MS 1804E ii f.157

> youth brought up there – as well as the un-natural state of the Old and Infirm are confined to, among strangers who cannot be supposed capable of much sympathy – Besides experience teaches us, that the Children bro't up in such places, when grown up are fit only for a Manufactory – & in time of War such as we recently have experienced, when Trade is dead, or even dull – these poor creatures are turned out of their accustomed warm places of Labor & then they are not fit for outdoor employments, except indeed the Men, become Soldiers (such as they are) and the females having been in the habit of drinking like the Men – being now deprived of the usual means of procuring liquor, too often, have recourse to prostitution.[478]

Often, a poor family's only option was to seek out better opportunities in the wider world that was now emerging as the industrial revolution got under way. As Melvin Humphreys observes when analysing such population data for Montgomeryshire as has survived, 'The greatest immediate threat [to population numbers] ... was migration and emigration, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that one or two persons per 1,000 were annually lured from Montgomeryshire to the farms, manufactories and colonies of England.'[479] How better off they might have found themselves in London, Bristol or Liverpool is debatable, as histories of the conditions of the new *urban* poor of the period have indicated.[480] Walter Davies, having bluntly stated that

> A great part of the counties of Anglesey , Caernarvon , Meirionydd , and Montgomery , is disgraced with a species of cottages , which are truly the habitations of wretchedness. One smoky hearth , for it should not be styled a kitchen ; and one damp litter-cell, for it cannot be called a bed - room , are frequently all the space allotted to a labourer, his wife, and four or five children. The consequences are obvious ; filth , disease , and , frequently, premature death;

He goes on to report that Arthur Blayney did his best to improve the condition of the local poor and to prevent them needing to leave the parish for better opportunities elsewhere:

> The late Arthur Blayney, Esq., of Gregynog in Montgomeryshire, a character intended to be mentioned with distinguished praise ... finding that industrious labourers were scarce, because they were yearly migrating into towns, and other places more attractive than the country which denied them even the farming of an acre of land, resolved to render them more attached to his neighbourhood by building for them, not only convenient but elegant houses and offices, and annexing land to each sufficient for the keeping of a cow, some two, and some even more, at very easy rents. He thereby succeeded in his wishes; had a set of constant labourers firmly riveted to the service of their patron, .and devoted to the common cause of their king and country.[481]

[478] Ibid.
[479] Humphreys*, Crisis of the Community*, pp70-71
[480] See for example M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* (1964), quoted in Ian Mortimer*, A Time Traveller's Guide to Regency England* (London, 2020), pp.235-237.
[481] Walter Davies, *General View*, 1813, pp.83-4.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which Davies's claim can be supported in the estate rent books. At Lady Day 1794 some fifteen properties with half-yearly rents between fifteen shillings and one pound fifteen shillings are recorded; the majority range from £10 to £40 per half year, with Thomas Sturkey of the large farm of Highgate paying £48/5/-, so it is likely that the cheaper holdings are very small.[482] Whatever the truth of the matter, and despite Thomas Colley's scepticism towards the farmers who, he suggested, largely ran the parish vestry, it appears that the Gregynog estate's proprietor was not blind to the needs of his poor neighbours or the responsiblities of *nobless oblige*. Nonetheless, although the Gregynog estate and its proprietor can be seen to be showing concern for the needs of the poor people of the neighbourhood, this concern did not extend to questioning the very existence of the poor or their position at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Arthur Blayney was a paternalist traditionalist with a kind heart; he was not a believer in the need for social change. In his conclusion to *The Crisis of Community* Melvin Humphreys comments that 'Blayney, the Father of Montgomeryshire', was an eccentric squire, and beyond the walls of his small domain … many labouring families swelled the lists of recipients of poor relief.'[483]

The Gregynog Agents

> Sacred to the Memory of Thomas Colley of Cefngwifed Esq., in this Parish who for thirty-five years was Agent to the Gregynog family. And in that situation by his employers and numerous tenantry was equally esteemed. By private worth he secured individual regard, and by public merit attracted general respect. Firmly attached to the sacred oracles his faith rested on the rock of ages Jesus Christ and produced those good works which adorn the Christian character. He died April 23rd 1812 in the 56th year of his age.
>
> Memorial to Thomas Colley in Tregynon Parish Church.

The man who must have known most about the Gregynog estate and the neighbourhood in which it was situated was Thomas Colley, who became Arthur Blayney's agent in 1777 and retained that post until his death in 1812, overseeing the estate's transition from Blayney's ownership to that of the Hanbury-Tracys. He, like William Scott Owen a century later, became deeply involved in the local community and was far more than Arthur Blayney's steward and rent collector.

[482] NLW Gregynog Rentals 5, Estate Rents 1790-1804
[483] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.258.

The role and reputation of the land agent

All substantial landowners employed an agent to manage his property on his behalf and to be the point of contact or intermediary between him and his tenants. The agent was the stable centre of estate life, usually living on the estate or in the neighbourhood, whereas the landowner might be only intermittently resident. His primary role was to maintain the viability and profitablity of the estate on behalf of the landowner. This involved far more than rent-collecting and the scrupulous maintenance of accounts, simply carrying out the landowner's instructions as to the management of the estate, or, in the case of landlords seeking election to Parliament, ensuring that the local freeholders voted as they were bid. The agent had to know the tenants, how they farmed, and how to encourage them to farm better; when to allow arrears of rent to accrue because the markets were poor, and when to pursue payment on threat of distraint. He had to be sufficiently respected by his employer to be able to advise on the wisdom, or otherwise, of a particular course of action. He had to be aware of potential causes of discontent among the tenants. He had to know all the other local landowners, and their agents, who might be in dispute with his landlord. This role gave the land agent substantial local power and status, not to mention influence over the landowners themselves. Thomas Colley's status and reputation as agent of the Gregynog estate from 1777 to 1812 is affirmed by his being designated 'Esquire' in his memorial in Tregynon church quoted above.[484]

Scrupulous honesty was essential. The agent had to manage a great deal of money, and on the whole, especially in the eighteenth century, it was cash – in the records under examination there is little mention of banks, and less of cheques until the nineteenth century (although Arthur Blayney did pay for his port 'by a draft on Child's bank'). Arthur Blayney handed over £105 to the Gregynog agent Thomas Colley 'for his use' (in paying estate costs) on a regular basis, according to his personal cash book.[485] This sum is duly noted on the 'cash received' pages of Colley's accounts, as are the sums paid over to Arthur Blayney and the end of the half year.[486] During Colley's predecessor John Guest's tenure as agent for Blayney's Shropshire

[484] Richard J. Colyer, 'The Land Agent in nineteenth-century Wales', *WHR* 8, 1977 pp 401-23; Edward Hughes, 'The 18th Century Land Agent', in H. A. Cronne, T. W. Moody & D. B. Quinn, *Essays in British and Irish History in honour of James Eadie Todd*, (London, 1949), p.185; G. E. Mingay, 'The Eighteenth Century Land Steward' in E. L. Jones and G. E. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Society in the Industrial Revolution* (1967); Lowri Ann Rees, Ciarán Reilly and Annie Tindley, (eds.), *The Land Agent 1720-1920*, (Edinburgh 2018); Eric Richards, 'The Land Agent', in G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, Vol 2, (London, 1981), pp.439-456.

[485] GRO, Sudeley papers D2153 AB16 (ACC3420) 7/122/4, Account Book of Arthur Blayney 1783-1895.

[486] NLW Gregynog estate 33, Receipts and Payments 1778-88, f.18,22

estates, at every Lady Day or Michaelmas accounting period estate expenditure was deducted from income, and the balance 'conveyed to Mr Blayney by me John Guest'.[487] This seems to imply a fifty mile cross-country ride with a large sum of money in Mr Guest's saddlebags.

Despite the agent's key role in the running of a landed estate, or because of it, the reputation of the land agent over the past two or three hundred years has not always been favourable. As Richard J. Colyer points out, the agent 'symbolised the immense political and economic power of the land-owning interest.. By the very nature of his job as collector of rents, guardian of husbandry clauses in leases, supervisors of labour and political representative of his master, the agent... could hardly have avoided being unpopular with a large number of people.'[488] He was seen as acting on behalf of the (potentially absentee) landlord to extract the maximum income from his tenantry without understanding of or compassion for difficult circumstances: a man to be feared. In Wales attitudes towards agents could be complicated by the fact that agents rarely spoke Welsh.[489] However, in his account of the Welsh land agent, Colyer points out that the view of agents as oppresive exploiters was an over-generalization: at the end of the nineteenth century the Welsh land commissioners 'ultimately concluded that few landowners were guilty of employing the unscrupulous agent, nor can the land agents of Wales be described as harsh, unscrupulous, arbitrary and cruel'.[490] This too may be an over-generalization but it can be applied, on the whole, to the Gregynog agents.

Thomas Colley and his predecessors

Thomas Colley's reputation as the trusted agent of the Gregynog estate accords neither with the stereotype of the unscrupulous agent, nor the professionally-trained attorney, accountant, surveyor or ex-army officer with whom the post became increasingly associated with in the nineteenth century.[491] Born in Wellington, Shropshire, he was recommended to Arthur Blayney as a likely young man at the age of twenty-one, having since the age of fifteen been 'the superintendant of a large ironworks'.[492] This was in 1777, Blayney having hitherto relied on the old-established agent of the Morville estate, John Guest, and Guest's son Edward, to manage

[487] Gregynog Hall Ledger Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts 1763 – 1771 (donated to the NLW Feb 2023).
[488] Richard J. Colyer, 'The Land Agent in nineteenth-century Wales', pp 401-23
[489] David W. Howell, *Land and People*, p.45; Colyer, op.cit, p.405
[490] Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire, Report, 1897, p. 260, quoted in Colyer, ibid.
[491] Richards, 'The Land Agent', pp.442-3
[492] Scott-Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', pp. 140-3,147-9.

both Morville and Gregynog. Blayney had 'inherited' John Guest as agent of the Shropshire estates from his Weaver cousins. Guest was a prominent citizen of Bridgnorth: a burgess, a bailiff, and property owner in his own right. In 1740-42 his name appears in old Bridgnorth documents relating to the maintenance of the bridge over the river Severn, citing him as a Bridgemaster.[493] He seems to have acted as agent for the Weavers both in Shropshire and Montgomeryshire since the 1750s or earlier, and took over the agency of Arthur Blayney's Gregynog estates in about 1763, in later years delegating much of the work to his son Edward.[494]

An examination of John Guest's account ledgers for this period show that his responsibilities amounted to far more than simply collecting rents and recording sales of timber and expenditure on property repairs. From the early 1760s his surviving ledgers for both for Morville and Gregynog record annuity payments to Weaver dependents, and regular payments to Arthur Blayney's sisters arising from legacies left to them by their uncle Edward Weaver and their cousin Arthur Weaver. They also record substantial payments to Bridgnorth lawyer Thomas Haslewood in respect of a long-standing dispute over boundaries, rights of way and ownership of tithes between Morville and the neighbouring Acton estate, a dispute which Arthur Blayney was happy to pursue after his inheritance of Morville.[495]

John Guest appears to have become attached to Gregynog; in his will of 1773 he left his 'good and great benefactor Arthur Blayney thirty guineas as an acknowledgement of my gratitude towards him and one hundred pounds to make good any losses that have or may happen by any neglect of mine or my sons in not collecting rents and small tythes from the poor tenants', and five pounds each to the poor of Bettws and Tregynon.[496] He died in 1777. His place as Gregynog agent was taken for a time by one Samuel Magee, about whom nothing is known, except that he witnessed most of the new rental agreements made between Arthur Blayney and his tenants from 1773 to 1777.[497]

[493] Shropshire Archives Ref XBB/D/1/2/1/127
[494] NLW Gregynog Estate 31, Receipts and payments 1763-71.
[495] NLW Gregynog Estate 31, Receipts and payments 1763-71; Gregynog MSS, *Mr Blayney's Shropshire Accounts*, 3 vols., 1763-1784; [Donated to the NLW February 2023]; Shropshire Archives, Document Series 6000/9600; TNA, C12/1603/1 1765-88 *Gregynog Blayney v. Acton*. This last reference kindly provided by Dr. Melvin Humphreys.
[496] TNA,PCC Prob11/Prob11; Piece 1069 Will of John Guest.
[497] NLW Gregynog Estate 58 Rental Agreements. See Appendix I.

Thomas Colley's accounts

What is immediately noticeable in the surviving Greygnog cash books from Thomas Colley's appointment as agent in 1777 is the neat and legible manner in which the accounts are written.[498] Although still aged only twenty-one when he took up the post, he clearly had a well-organised mind. Over the next thirty-five years his meticulous accounts of rents, income and expenditure offer deep insights into the running of the estate and the people who were employed by it, provided services to it or drew a livelihood from it, all drawn into a network of relationships which extended across the parishes from Aberhafesp to Berriew and Kerry, lying roughly within an eight-mile radius of Newtown, the local market town.

The rental ledgers not only record rents received and arrears carried forward, but changes of tenancy, purchase of new property, exchange of pieces of land between tenants, all carefully noted in the margins or alongside each Lady Day or Michaelmas 'abstract'. The 'receipts and payments' ledgers record total rental income, sales of bark and timber, and interest on loans and mortgages granted by Arthur Blayney,[499] then every penny of estate expenditure, from chief rent payments to the Earl of Powis and the stamps for their receipts to the regular bills from all the tradespeople who supplied the estate with its needs. In these ledgers Thomas Soley the tax collector, William Beavan the brickmaker, John Pugh the wheelwright, Sarah Davies the carrier, Mrs Hansord the Gregynog housekeeper and Edward Bevan the mole-catcher (paid 11s 3d for catching 7 ½ dozen moles in October 1790), become familiar names over the years.[500] Major events such as the death of Arthur Blayney on 1st Octber 1795 and the advent of a new landlord are reflected in entries such as that on 21st of that month: 'Bt 2 paper Books to copy Inventory of Goods and Linen at Gregynog, 2s 2d', followed on the 31st of that month by: 'John Rogers' bill for a large stone to cover the grave, £2.5s', and 'Omitted the 5th Paid to 6 Tenants that attended Mr Blayney's Funeral 2gs each, £12.12s, and to the Parish Clerk by order, £2 2s.'[501] Colley's predecessors John and Edward Guest recorded payments to labourers at rates varying from sixpence to one shilling per day in 1770, but Colley's records of payments to estate labourers were kept in separate labour books which have not survived,

[498] See especially NLW Gregynog Estate 4, 5 & 5, Rentals 1778-1808, and 33, 34, 35, 36, Rcpts and Payments, 1778-1809.
[499] On April 9 1790 Colley records a payment of £115 by Devereaux Mytton, Esq., being interest on 'the two mortgages the 10th October 1789'. NLW Gregynog Estate 34, Rcpts & Payments 1789-96, f.29.
[500] NLW Gregynog Estate 34, Receipts & Payments 1789-96, f.50
[501] Ibid., f.191, 192.

although the total payments made to them each month are recorded, making calculations as to the number of personnel and the daily rates of pay at this period difficult.[502]

Such details support Carol Beardmore's assertion that that land agents' records are an important but under-researched resource for the study not merely of the landed estate but of the rural community as a whole. 'They contain a myriad of detail about working and social lives at a time when tenant farmers and the labouring poor rarely kept records or diaries. Subsequently the extent of the land agent's power and authority has been under-stated and misunderstood.' Beardmore further writes that:

> Social control has always been exerted by those who have spiritual, military, political, legal, educational and financial influence … It is therefore hardly surprising that the land agent acting on behalf of the landowner took a far greater interest in those living within the confines of a given estate than has been generally assumed. Consequently the agent's role was far wider and more diverse then just the collection of rents. Essentially he formed a pivotal and essential figure who bridged the gulf between landowner, tenant farmer and labouring poor.[503]

This insight suggests that the position of the land agent in a community characterised by large landed estates, on which the area's economy depended, allowed his influence to reach far beyond the responsibilities of estate management, to the wider life of the neighbourhood as a whole. A respected agent would certainly have been regarded as a 'community leader' in the modern sense of being a representative and spokesperson for the estate community. Thomas Colley seems to have been an outstanding example of an agent as a community leader. He was a deeply religious man, having been converted to Methodism in 1783. Possibly keeping a low profile at first, in the light of Arthur Blayney's alleged antipathy to Methodism as recorded by Thomas Olivers, he attended Tregynon parish church and established a Sunday School there, 'one of the earliest in the Principality' according to a later tribute.[504] His obituaries note that he sometimes missed services as 'he did not understand the Welsh language in which [they are] generally conducted in that part of the country.'[505] In 1798, just over two years after Blayney's death, Colley bought a piece of land in Tregynon and built a chapel on it 'at his own expense, in order that the precious gospel might regularly be preached. This chapel was opened by two

[502] NLW Gregynog Estate 31, Receipts & Payments 1763-71, not paginated.
[503] Carol A. Beardmore 'The Rural Estate through the eyes of the land agent: a community in microcosm c1812-1844'. *Family & Community History*, 19, 1, (April 2016), pp.17-33.
[504] Glyn Tegain Hughes, *Thomas Olivers of Tregynon: the life of an early Methodist Preacher, written by himself*, (Newtown, 1979); *The Treasury,* Vol XXI No. 249 - September 1884, p.15.
[505] 'Memoir of the late Thomas Colley Esq,' *Evangelical Magazine* November 1813, pp.405-409, downloaded from www.babelhathitrust.org 10 August 2021.

Calvinistic Methodist ministers, who preached in Welsh, and two Independent ministers, who preached in English.'[506] This suggests that the Welsh language was still spoken in the parish, and remained at the heart of many parishioners' cultural and religious identity, even if dealings with the Gregynog landlords had to be conducted in English.

However significant it might be that it was only after the death of Arthur Blayney that Colley built the Tregynon chapel, and however deferential he might be to his new employer, Lord Viscount Tracy, Colley's status in the neighbourhood was high. Walter Davies cites him along with 'Mr Probert' of Powis and 'Mr Wyatt' of Penrhyn as examples of good managers of the estates of 'gentlemen of greater property'.[507] He was agent to Henry Proctor of Aberhafesp as well as the owners of Gregynog; according to his centenary memorial in *The Evangelical Magazine* for November 1913, this

> possession of the confidence of the two principal landowners enabled him by the exchange of farms from one estate to the other to consolidate and unify them, and thus by one bold stroke to get rid of that intermixture of land which in some parishes still exists, and leads to great trouble.[508]

This memoir also alludes to Colley's work in rebuilding the recently acquired Rhydlydan Mill and a number of farmhouses in Tregynon and Bettws, and continues:

> A DISTINGUISHING MARK of the work of Mr Colley was the group of Scotch firs he caused to be planted near every farmhouse, and generally upon the west side. Then again he planted the knolls on the estate from Borfahavod on the west to Penygaer on the east. The former became a distinguished landmark or guide to travellers between Llanidloes and Llanfair Caereinion.[509]

Some of those clumps of Scotch firs are still prominent today, and in the twentieth century became a design motif for press devices of the Gregynog Press. (Fig. 12) Colley also maintained the estate's interest in the Montgomeryshire Canal, and from 1805 became one of the Inclosure Commissioners for, among others, the manor of Kedewen [Cedewain] in which the Gregynog estate was situated, Hopton and Overgorther.[510] The last twelve years of his life must have been stressful, having to carry on the work of making enclosure maps and

[506] 'The Late Mr Thomas Colley of Cefngwifed: Centenary of his death', NLW Calvinistic Methodist Archive *Evangelical Magazine* November 13, 1912,
[507] Walter Davies, *General View*, pp.76-77.
[508] *Evangelical Magazine*, op.cit.
[509] Ibid.
[510] Powys Archives, M/Q/RA/1/R Act 1795 - 96, 36 G.III 'An Act for Dividing and Inclosing the Commonable Lands and Waste Grounds, within the Manors of Kedewen, Hopton and Overgorther, in the County of Montgomery'.

apportionments alongside meeting the demands of his new landlords regarding not only the Gregynog estates but those in Shropshire and Gloucestershire.

A number of Colley's letters to Walter Davies, who was living a few miles away at Meifod at the time, have survived in the Crosswood papers and offer insights into his preoccupations in the decade following Arthur Blayney's death. In a letter dated 15th January 1798 he seems to be responding to queries from Davies who was working on his *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales* at the time: the value of the wool clip from various breeds of sheep, for example, or the dimensions and quantity of trees 'on Miss Tracy's estate'. He asks if Mr Davies would consider making a catalogue of Miss Tracy's library at Gregynog, a commission it seems Davies accepted, as a payment of £20 for the task was made to him in August 1798.[511] In a further letter of 6th March 1802, as we have seen, he expresses his reservations about the new Houses of Industry, and the reluctance of the farmers to meet their obligations to the Poor Rate, but concludes on a family note:

> As you are become a family Man I can tell you that my mind has been for some days, & still is, somewhat anxious on acct of my Dame, who we hourly expect to be confined – however, thro' mercy, she is in good spirits, & having hitherto been brought thro' similar seasons of sorrow, we are induced to hope she will be so again.
>
> She desires to write in kind respects to you & Mrs Davies, with
>
> Dr. Sir, Your Sincere Hble Servt
>
> Tho Colley Cefngwifed 6th March 1802.[512]

Conclusion: Gregynog in 1795

By the time Arthur Blayney died in October 1795 the Gregynog estate was in good heart, and solvent. Rent arrears at Michaelmas 1796 amounted to only £42.1s.[513] We are left with a picture of an organic, virtually self-sufficient community, insulated against and with only limited perspectives on the outside world despite Blayney himself being a reader, a subcriber to newspapers, a supporter of national charities such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, and a governor of the Foundling Hospital at Coram Fields in London.[514] The reputation of the estate and its proprietor must have stood in stark contrast with that of another important local estate just as old as Gregynog, and with whose owners, the Pryce

[511] NLW Gregynog Estate 35, Receipts and Payments 1797-1809, f.49. In 1797 'Miss Tracy' had inherited the Gregynog estate following the death of her father Henry, 8th Viscount Tracy.
[512] NLW MS 1804E ii f.156,157.
[513] NLW Gregynog estate 6, Rentals 1796-1808.
[514] *A list of the Governors and Guardians of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of exposed and deserted young children* (London, 1783), p10.

baronets, the Blayneys had once been connected by marriage, that of Newtown Hall. The eccentricities of succeeding baronets had resulted in their extensive family estates being dissipated, mortgaged or squandered away, resulting in the sixth baronet dying in the King's Bench prison in 1776, and the seventh and last dying in destitution in 1791.[515]

It might be inferred from the above that the Gregynog estate and the neighbourhood in which it was situated was little affected by the stirring currents of what Prys Morgan has described as Wales's 'eighteenth century renaissance' – the spiritual revolutions fostered by the likes of Howell Harris and Thomas Charles of Bala, and the growth of nonconformity; the burgeoning of interest in the history, language, culture and landscape of Wales; the growth of a Welsh printing industry; the establishment of societies such as the London-based Honorable Society of Cymmrodorion.[516] No evidence has been traced that Arthur Blayney spoke Welsh, or acquired any Welsh books for his library. None of the charity schools established by the SPCK in Montgomeryshire between 1699 and 1740, or the Welsh Circulating Schools created by the Rev. Griffith Jones, were situated within reach of the children of Tregynon.[517] There were no non-conformist chapels in Tregynon, either Welsh or English, until after the death of Arthur Blayney. But the signs are there, not only in the northern and western districts of Montgomeryshire as suggested by Melvin Humphreys.[518] Ysgafell, the home of the Baptist Henry Williams (d.1684), lies on the edge of Gregynog estate territory, in the parish of Llanllwchaiarn just over the border from Aberhafesp, and was linked with the Baptist chapel of Rhyd-y-felin, whose present building dates from 1791.[519] Aberhafesp, where a substantial part of the land was under the proprietorship of the Gregynog estate, was described by an incoming Rector in 1745 as a 'bastion of Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Independents, besides an anomalous sort of people under the name of Methodists'.[520] The contiguous parish of Llanwnog was the site of Gwynfynydd, a meeting house for Dissenters licenced in 1776.[521]

[515] Richard Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies* (Newtown, 1894), pp. 252-261.
[516] Prys Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, (Llandybie, 1981).
[517] J.A. Davies, *Education in a Welsh Rural County 1870-1973*, (Cardiff, 1973), pp.4-5.
[518] Melvin Humphreys, 'Learning and Belief' in *The Crisis of Community*, pp156-186.
[519] The chapel, which was not the first to be established on the site, celebrated its bicentenary in 1991; the writer was present at the celebration.
[520] NLW, SA/QA/3, quoted in Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, p. 181.
[521] Elwyn Evans, 'Some documents relating to Non-conformity in Montgomeryshire', *MC*, 51, (1950), pp.135-137.

Arthur Blayney's known aversion to Methodists may have kept most nonconformist meeting places to the boundaries of his estate lands, though as has been seen, his appointment of, and great confidence in, the Methodist Thomas Colley may have softened his attitudes. Certainly, in 1791, he supported Colley in his establishment of Sunday Schools in both Tregynon and Bettws – in the parish church. The survival of the Welsh language in the area is suggested by the fact that when, after Blayney's death, Thomas Colley sponsored the building of a chapel in Tregynon, he had to make provision for services in both English and Welsh.[522]

A link with the wider world of Welsh language culture and scholarship is suggested by the knowledge of the Gregynog estate demonstrated by the Rev. Walter Davies, 'the most prominent', says Melvin Humphreys, of a distinguished Montgomeryshire circle of linguists, antiquarians and scholars' which included the Rev. John Jenkins, 'Ifor Ceri' who became vicar of Kerry (where the Gregynog estate held land) in 1807. Davies made 'a lasting contribution to the dissemination of the rich bardic heritage of Wales', in addition to, of course, his researches into the Agriculture of North Wales (1810) and South Wales (1814) undertaken at the behest of the Board of Agriculture. Davies became Rector of Meifod in 1795, the year of Arthur Blayney's death, but later moved to Llanwyddelan, and then Manafon, both neighbouring parishes of Tregynon.[523] His contact with other Welsh literary figures such as Owen Jones, 'Owain Myfyr' and Morgan John Rhys suggests that he was well aware of the 'ripples of discussion in Wales' caused by the French Revolution.[524] Robert Richards notes that in 1789 he wrote a prize eisteddfod essay entitled 'The Rights of Man', and followed one on 'Liberty' at St. Asaph the following year. [525] Melvin Humphreys tells us that copies of Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* were circulating among some Dissenting groups in Montgomeryshire at the time, but whether Walter Davies ever saw them can only be conjectured.[526] In the meantime, the seeds of a different order of radicalism had taken root with the birth of the social reformer Robert Owen, 'the greatest social reformer and thinker that Wales has ever produced', in Newtown in 1771, the impact of which would be for the next generation of Gregynog proprietors to face.[527]

[522] NLW Calvinistic Methodist Archive 1912 'The Late Mr Thomas Colley of Cefngwifed', *Evangelical Magazine*.
[523] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.166; Robert Richards, 'The Rev. Walter Davies, M.A., (Gwallter Mechain) 1762-1949', *MC* 51 (1949-50), pp.86-88.
[524] Prys Morgan, *Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, p.141-2
[525] Robert Richards, op.cit, p.86.
[526] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.258.
[527] Russell Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak*, p.13.

The heirs to Gregynog, the Hanbury-Tracys, were far more worldly than Arthur Blayney, and very English in terms of their culture and lifestyle, despite the Hanburys' Monmouthshire connections and their seat at Pontypool Park. Their relations with the community were to become more distant and socially structured than might have been the case in the Blayney years, as the principal seat of the family was not Gregynog but Toddington Manor in Gloucestershire. This did not mean, however, that the Hanbury-Tracys looked down on their unpretentious benefactor, or were unconcerned with the estate and its future management. Indeed, the reference in Arthur Blayney's obituary to his being 'the father of Montgomeryshire', who according to the memorial in Tregynon church erected by his heir Henry Viscount Tracy 'devoted his Time and Fortune and his Talents to the Good of Mankind', along with Philip Yorke's long eulogy in *The Royal Tribes of Wales*, and later nostalgic accounts by Ada, wife of the 4th Lord Sudeley, and the agent of that era William Scott-Owen, all suggest that Arthur Blayney of Gregynog came to be regarded by his successors as presiding over a 'golden age' of benevolence and plenty, the embodiment of gentry values they believed themselves to share – a reputation which became as much part of the patrimony they had inherited, as the land itself.[528] It was a legacy which validated their legitimacy and consolidated their status in new territory and a new era. But this new era was one in which 'organic, virtually self-sufficient' communities such as that epitomised by Arthur Blayney's Gregynog were already beginning to fragment under the pressures of poverty, population growth, unrest, emigration, and religious and social change that Melvin Humphreys summarized as Montgomeryshire's 'crisis of community': 'The old order in Welsh society was passing away, while the distress of the era foretold a bewildering future.'[529]

[528] Philip Yorke, *Royal Tribes*, pp. 155-159; GRO 18 2153 N936 'Arthur Blayney Esq., of Gregynog Hall, Montgomeryshire, An eighteenth century sketch by Ada, Lady Sudeley' in *Notes on the Hanbury descent* (1923), pp.70 – 77; William Scott Owen, 'Arthur Blayney and his Time'*, MC,* 30, 1896, pp.110-116.
[529] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, pp. 254-263.

CHAPTER THREE

NINETEENTH CENTURY GREGYNOG: NEW PROPRIETORS, NEW PRIORITIES

Introduction

When Arthur Blayney died in October 1795, the characterisation of the Gregynog estate as the birthright of an old Welsh family, deeply rooted in the neighbourhood and run on paternalistic lines by a resident owner, died with him. However much Blayney's heir, Henry, Viscount Tracy, hoped that his creation of the memorial to Blayney in Tregynon church would cement an acknowledgement of his and his descendants' close connection with Gregynog in the public mind, the fact remained that for the next forty-five years the estate was managed largely by agents. The priorities of the new owner, Charles Hanbury-Tracy, later 1st baron Sudeley, (see Fig. 13) lay elsewhere, being focused on the Gloucestershire estate of the Tracys which he had also inherited through his wife, Viscount Tracy's daughter.

This chapter considers the nature and implications of absentee landownership. It will contend that, except in regard to efficient management, expansion and income-generating capacity – on which he kept a close eye – Charles Hanbury-Tracy was less interested in the husbandry of his Welsh and English estates, than the status and potential for social and political advancement with which they endowed him; all of which he achieved when he was elevated to the peerage as the first Baron Sudeley in 1838. In these early years of the nineteenth century the ownership of land, as much land as possible, was still the fundamental need of aspirants to aristocratic status, and it helped, too, if your family were old-established landowners like the Tracys and the Hanburys, rather than those newly enriched by banking or trade or industry. As F.M.L. Thompson points out, although after 1832 the number of peerages granted to newly rich businessmen was on the rise, it was still fewer than those granted to members of well-established landed families.[530] But the bankers, industrialists, merchants and others of the 'new rich' such as tea and coffee trader David Pugh, who bought the Newtown Hall estate in 1786, and later 'created the Llanerch Hudol estate' in Montgomeryshire; not to mention 'nabobs' such as Robert Clive 'of India', and Walter Wilkins of Maesllwch in Radnorshire, were wealthy on a scale hitherto only enjoyed by the most powerful landowners, and their

[530] F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1963), p.63

economic, social and political influence was increasing.[531] At the same time, however, political life was changing; the times were right for a man such as Charles Hanbury-Tracy, from a 'well-established family', and with Quakers and Whigs in his ancestry, to set out his stall as a progressive, reform-supporting Whig. But position and wealth were still crucial; Hanbury-Tracy had the pedigree, the land, and the income, and he certainly had the ambition, which achieved some fruition when he was raised to the peerage in 1838.

Despite the part Gregynog and the county of Montgomery was to play in Charles Hanbury-Tracy's ambitions, he and his family resided there only very occasionally, and for most of his life (he died in 1858) the estate was managed by agents: the loyal and efficent Thomas Colley to begin with, then his successors John Dyer and John Baker. It was not until the early 1840s that Henry Hanbury-Tracy, second son of Charles Hanbury-Tracy, took up residence with his family at Gregynog, and from 1850 assumed the role of agent for the estate. More than that, Henry Hanbury-Tracy established a family presence in the county, which was to be reinforced when his nephew Charles Hanbury-Tracy was elected MP for Montgomeryshire Boroughs in 1863. Despite being the secondary estate to Toddington in Gloucestershire, Gregynog was socially and politically important to the Hanbury-Tracys, and the family was to play a significant part in nineteenth-century Montgomeryshire, not only as the respected proprietors of a large landed estate but as elite establishment figures and parliamentary representatives. But the recreation of Toddington Manor by the first Charles Hanbury-Tracy as a vast neo-Gothic mansion, along with the fluctuations of the agricultural economy during and in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, was to drain the Gregynog estate of resources in the early decades of the nineteenth century, leading to many of the farms becoming seriously run-down. The 4th Lord Sudeley, who inherited the estate in 1877, realised this. The nature of his inheritance and

[531] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, pp.122-3; Philip Jenkins, 'The Creation of an 'Ancient Gentry, Glamorgan 1760-1840', *WHR*, 12, 1 (1984), pp. 29-49; Laurence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawther Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, (London, 1984), pp. 16-29; Eileen Spring and David Spring, 'The English landed elite, 1540–1879: a review', *Albion*, 17, 2 (summer, 1985), 149–66; Lowri Ann Rees, 'Aspire, persevere and indulge not: new wealth and gentry society in Wales c.1760-1840', *Rural History* (2023), pp.1-16; D.L. Prior, 'Clive, Edward, 1st earl of Powis (1754 - 1839)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doiorg.bangor.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5696 (downloaded 26th May 2023); H. Leslie, rev. Roger T. Stearn, 'Winton, Sir Francis Walter de 1835–1901', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* https://doi-org.bangor.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32806 (downloaded 26th May 2023).

his attempts to maintain both his Gregynog and Toddington estates will be addressed in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

This chapter begins by examining the background, character and ambitions of the new proprietor, Charles Hanbury-Tracy, and how these conditioned both his role in Montgomeryshire society and his management of the estate in the early decades of the century. The impact on the Gregynog estate of his plans for the expensive rebuilding of Toddington Manor will be assessed, the focus being on rent increases, the expansion of the estate, the exploitation of its timber resources, and its role in the the enclosure of common lands and wastes in the lordship of Cedewain, where most of the estate's Montgomeryshire holdings were located. The fortunes of the farmers, the estate tenants and the wider community will also be considered, as they contended with the new proprietors, the peaks and troughs of farm prices during the Napoloeonic Wars and their aftermath, and the new agricultural, industrial and socio-economic forces of the nineteenth century.

Secondly, the public roles of the Gregynog estate's owners: their investment in the Montgomeryshire canal, their contribution to the development of the county's road system and later the railway, their support for schools, hospitals and other social institutions, will be examined in the light of challenges to traditional assumptions about the responsibilities of the landed gentry to society. This was a century in which many other individuals, by no means all from the landed gentry, from William Pugh of Brynllywarch, road and canal entrepreneur and builder of the Newtown Flannel Exchange, to Thomas Penson, Montgomeryshire County Surveyor from 1817 to 1859 (and architect of the Flannel Exchange) to David Davies of Llandinam, coal magnate, to Pryce Jones, mail-order pioneer of Newtown, were to feature as agents of change and development in the county.[532] Changes in national life were also filtering into rural communities as industry began to become more important than agriculture in the economy of the nation, the population increased and a succession of Reform Acts widened the franchise. Any analysis of a single landed property such as the Hanbury-Tracys' Gregynog

[532] Dodd, A. H., 'PUGH, WILLIAM (1783 - 1842), of Bryn-llywarch, Montgomeryshire, Radical landlord and entrepreneur, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (1959), https://biography.wales/article/s-PUGH-WIL-1783 (accessed 15 July 2023); C.R. Anthony, 'Penson's Progress: the work of a 19th-century county surveyor', MC 83, (1995), pp.115–175; Herbert Williams, *Davies the Ocean*, *Railway King and Coal Tycoon*, (Cardiff, 1991); M. Richards, 'PRYCE-JONES, Sir PRYCE (PRYCE JONES until 1887; 1834-1920), pioneer of mail order business.' (2001), *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, https://biography.wales/article/s3-PRYC-PRY-1834 (accessed 15 July 2023).

during these years will necessarily take place in the context of these widening perspectives.[533] The part played by the family, as Liberal-leaning Whigs, in the politics of the county, will be addressed in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

Charles Hanbury-Tracy, 1st Lord Sudeley

Charles Hanbury, later 1st baron Sudeley (1777-1858), was descended from a Worcestershire family with roots in the twelfth century, but who later became established in Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire, where by the 1570s they were developing the production of iron at Pontypool and Torfaen.[534] A family tradition of political involvement began in 1701 when Charles Hanbury's great-grandfather John Hanbury (1665-1734) was elected MP for Gloucester, serving until 1708, and Monmouthshire, serving from 1720 to 1734. His son Capel (1707-1765), followed in his footsteps, as MP for Leomister from 1741-1747, and Monmouthshire from 1747 to 1765.[535] Capel Hanbury's friendship with the evangelist Hywel Harris, whom he had met in 1739, together with his ancestors' Quaker connections, may have influenced what were to become the family's politically progressive leanings, which it is alleged included a sympathetic attitude towards Non-Conformity. It was in 1743 that a dynastically important connection was made when Capel married Jane Tracy, daughter of Thomas Charles, 5th Viscount Tracy of Rathcoole. The Tracys lived at Toddington Manor in Gloucestershire 'where they had held land in unbroken male descent since before the Conquest'.[536]

When on 29th December 1798, the day after his twenty-first birthday, Charles Hanbury married Henrietta Tracy, he resurrected the Tracy line of succession, which had died out with his father-in-law, the 8th and last viscount, by reinventing himself as a Tracy. A few weeks before the marriage he changed his name by Royal Licence to Hanbury-Tracy (Fig 11).[537] As he and Henrietta were cousins (through a shared descent from Jane Tracy) he cannot quite be described as 'fictive kin', in Laurence Stone's phrase, designed to keep an illusion of direct succession alive, but was certainly happy to become a 'surrogate male heir', in Habakkuk's

[533] Melvin Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.135
[534] See Audrey Locke, *The Hanbury Family*, (London, 1916); Richard Hanbury-Tenison, *The Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, (Monmouth, 1995).
[535] Peter D. G. Thomas, HANBURY, Capel, (1707-65), of Pontypool, Mon. https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/research/members/members-1715-1754, (accessed 18 August 2022)
[536] Hanbury-Tenison, *The Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, p.108.
[537] GRO, D2153 P3

phrase.[538] He did very well by the marriage: Henrietta had not only inherited her father's Gloucestershire estate (which had descended to him, with the Tracy Viscountcy, following the deaths of his two elder brothers) but the Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates Tracy had inherited through his wife Susanna Weaver, and the Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates that had been left to him by his wife's cousin Arthur Blayney. In 1800 the combined rentals of the Montgomeryshire and Shropshire properies brought in a total of around £6,000 per annum, with an additional £500 per annum from tithes of Tregynon, Berriew and Bettws.[539]

Hanbury-Tracy brought little in the way of financial assets to the marriage apart from a legacy of £10,000 from his late eldest brother, and some copyhold tenures, neither of which could be paid or realised at the time, on account of the financial situation on the Hanbury estate, brought about by the alleged profligacy of Capel and Charles's mother and stepfather.[540] So Henrietta's estates enabled him to establish himself as a substantial landed proprietor alongside his surviving elder brother Capel, and gave him a secure base for the unleashing of his talents and ambitions which were to lead to his election to Parliament as MP in the Whig interest for Tewkesbury, Worcestershire, just a few miles over the county border from Toddington, from 1807 to 1812 and from 1831 to 1837, followed by his elevation to the peerage as the 1st baron Sudeley in 1838. Within two years of his marriage this process began with his appointment as High Sheriff of Gloucestershire in 1800-01.

The proprietorship of Gregynog brought him not only a substantial income but an assured status in the hierarchies of authority and class in Montgomeryshire, possibly even more than in Gloucestershire. Hanbury-Tracy's appointment as a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Montgomery Volunteer Legion in 1803, barely four years after his marriage to Henrietta Tracy and his coming into possession of the Gregynog estate, then as High Sheriff in 1805, emphasizes the immediacy with which, although a newcomer, he was now regarded as one of the premier landowners in county. This has much to suggest about the standing of Gregynog Hall and its

[538] Stone, *An Open Elite: England 1540-1880*, p105, 141; Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt and the Estates System*, p. 209

[539] Calculated from total rentals of the estates as recorded in the rent books for 1800 in NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 6, Estate Rents 1796-1808; 65, Shropshire Estate Accounts 1803-18. The rents of Viscount Tracy's estate (about £2,000 per year) were added to the Gregynog estate ledgers in 1804. This was before the steep rent increases of the subsequent twenty years were imposed.

[540] Richard Hanbury-Tenison, 'The 1st Lord Sudeley as an Amateur Architect,' *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington* (London, 1987), p.222.

Blayney heritage which, as Shaun Evans suggests, could be 'advantageously absorbed into the identity of the new owners', since, as a fixed entity in the landscape, it provided continuity, preserving the cultural capital of its ancestral patrimony for its inheritors.[541] This cultural capital must have been substantial given that, according to Philip Yorke, Arthur Blayney, the previous proprietor, 'pertinaciously declined the honour of representing his native county, though often invited to it by the unbiased suffrages of his countrymen', and, curiously, refused to serve as a magistrate 'though few were better qualified'.[542] This suggests that Blayney was content to *perform* his gentry status according to the paternalistic principles it embodied, but did not seek to *display* it in worldly terms; whereas Charles Hanbury-Tracy set out to do both, in order to assert his position in the county elite, as did the ambitious families in Glamorgan desribed by Philip Jenkins.[543]

However, Charles Hanbury-Tracy's genuine connection with the Tracys, and his own family's long history as Monmouthshire landowners as well as tin-plate manufacturers, means that he cannot be characterized as an example of a newly rich industrialist buying himself into an 'open' landed elite by his acquisition of the Gregynog estate.[544] But the assumption of proprietorship by a man with only the remotest connections with a neighbourhood is a striking example of the arbitrary nature of such a change of proprietorship, as far as those whose families and livings were rooted in that neighbourhood were concerned. They had no choice whom they paid their rents to. However, in the case of Gregynog they may have been reassured by the attempts of Arthur Blayney's heirs to claim, if not lineal descent, then a family connection, with him and his ancestors, which implied a sense of ancestral responsibility towards the estate's dependents. In Henry Tracy's memorial to Arthur Blayney in Tregynon church, placed after he had inherited Blayney's estates, he named himself as Blayney's 'friend and executor'. The family connection was through Tracy's wife, Blayney's cousin Susanna, which seemed sufficient to keep it alive for Charles Hanbury when he married Tracy's daughter Henrietta, adding her surname to his own when he changed his name to Charles Hanbury-Tracy. Philip Jenkins alludes to this tendency of the gentry to adopt double-barrelled names in order to perpetuate the name of an heiress wife; the Tracy name being an ancient and

[541] Shaun Evans, 'An antient seat of a gentleman of Wales': the place of the *plas* in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales*1778-83',
[542] Yorke, *Royal Tribes*, p,156.
[543] Philip Jenkins, 'The Creation of an 'Ancient Gentry': Glamorgan, 1760-1840', *WHR*, 1, (1984), pp. 29-49.
[544] Stone, *An Open Elite,* pp. 189-90.

aristocratic one was for Charles Hanbury an additional marker of status.[545] Nonetheless, landlord-tenant relations on the Gregynog estate would never be as close as they had been in Arthur Blayney's time, but for the next fifty years would be mediated through agents. It was fortunate for all parties in this early period that the agent was the well-established and respected Thomas Colley, who no doubt remained a familiar and reassuring figure to the tenantry and the community at large.

Hanbury-Tracy was not the only new proprietor to arrive in Montgomeryshire during these years, many of whom were, unlike the Hanbury-Tracys, what Melvin Humphreys described as 'gentry of relatively recent prominence who often possessed a professional background', who held progressive, even radical ideals, who comprised the 'Montgomeryshire reform alliance of the 1830s' and who were to become political allies of the Gregynog family: men such as William Owen of Glansevern, William Pugh of Brynllywarch and the Rev. George Evors, a distant connection of the Pryce family who took on the legacy of the Newtown Hall estate and who has gone down in history as the man who re-created Newtown as 'the Leeds of Wales'.[546] Geraint H. Jenkins suggests that the growth of urban and industrial communities in the late eighteenth century, together with the growing economic importance of some market towns, were important factors in bringing such 'middling sorts' of people, together with professionals such as lawyers and doctors, to social and political prominence alongside newly rich industrialists and nabobs. Furthermore, says Philip Jenkins, 'the development of industrial and colonial wealth … set a new premium on professional and commercial expertise'.[547]

A Montgomeryshire landowner

Charles Hanbury-Tracy was not a squire in the mould of Arthur Blayney, the 'Father of Montgomeryshire', who 'considered his tenants as friends', did not keep a carriage and tried to put local people into the way of work and good housing.[548] Aside from the status attached to the ownership of a historic Welsh estate Hanbury-Tracy does not seem to have been interested in agriculture and husbandry for its own sake, but rather the income it generated from rents

[545] Jenkins, 'The Creation of an 'Ancient Gentry', p.46; Stone, *An Open Elite*, pp.135-7.
[546] Humprheys, *Crisis of Community*, pp.200-201; Maurice Richards, *A History of Newtown*, (Welshpool, 1993), pp.26, 51.
[547] Geraint Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, pp.286-7; Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, pp.35-37.
[548] Yorke, *Royal Tribes*, pp. 155-159.

and timber sales for the furtherance of his social ambitions, the primary focus of which lay elsewhere, at his newly inherited estate at Toddington in Gloucestershire, and ultimately at Westminster. Perhaps Hanbury-Tracy had grown up in a more complex world than Blayney: more political, more challenged by social and economic change, perhaps more disturbed by the squandering of the Hanbury patrimony, and the neglect of Charles and his siblings, by their mother and her second husband.[549] Also, he was a younger son with little personal fortune, so was perhaps more in need of proving himself than the old squire who knew exactly who he was, where he came from and what he was master of.[550]

These pressures did not lead to Hanbury-Tracy becoming the kind of absentee landlord who regarded the estate solely as a source of income; he was well aware of the part it played in the economic and political structure of a county among whose elite he now wished to assert himself.[551] He began to plan what was to prove the vastly expensive rebuilding of Toddington Manor, and he put up the Gregynog farm rents, and sold the Gregynog oaks to pay for it; but he retained the Gregynog estate's shares in the Montgomeryshire Canal, and was active as one of its trustees.[552] He continued the estate's contributions to the maintenance of the turnpikes, and does not appear to have interfered with Thomas Colley's day-to-day management,[553] or the payment of all chief rents, taxes, and charitable contributions. Under the provisions of the 1796 Enclosure Act for Cedewain,[554] when the enclosure awards were published in the years 1807 to 1815 he was one of the principal allottees of wastes and commons in the parishes of Aberhafesp, Betws and Tregynon, where most of the estate lands lay, and he also began to buy more land to expand the estate. F.M.L. Thompson suggests that many landowners saw their estates as units of consumption, that is, generators of income to support their lifestyle, rather

[549] Hanbury-Tenison, *The Hanburys of Monmouthshire*, p.196.
[550] Philip Jenkins, 'The Creation of an Ancient Gentry': Glamorgan 1760-1840,' WHR, 12, 1 (1984), pp. 29-49.
[551] Although a supporter of Parliamentary reform, he assured Charles Williams-Wynn, the MP for Montgomeryshire, that he would not 'embarrass' him by standing against him in the 1831 General Election, suggesting that in these early years he was anxious to maintain good relations with the one of the county's most important families. Both he and his descendants were to become active Whig, later Liberal politicians in Montgomeryshire, as will be shown. David R. Fisher, HANBURY-TRACY, Charles, https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/research/members/members/hanbury-tracy-charles-1778-1858 (accessed 23 March 2022).
[552] See his correspondence with William Pugh of Brynllywarch, GRO D2153 N15, N16, Montgomeryshire Canal 1833.
[553] In 1810 Thomas Colley paid for the printing of a notice to Tenants 'respecting a Prescribed course of Tillage' which suggests that he was still adhering to Arthur Blayney's principles concerning crop rotation. It is not known whether this notice was printed in Welsh as well as English. NLW Gregynog Rentals 37 1810-23, f. 20.
[554] Act 1795 - 96, 36 G.III An Act for Dividing and Inclosing the Commonable Lands and Waste Grounds, within the Manors of Kedewen, Hopton and Overgorther, in the County of Montgomery.

than units of management, requiring supervision, accounting and forward planning.[555] Charles Hanbury-Tracy was not one of these; he was very interested in the estate's income, but kept a careful eye on its management.

Furthermore, despite Gregynog having become 'our estate in Wales', secondary to Toddington, it came to be held in affection by the Hanbury-Tracys and their descendants. In the early years of the nineteenth century, certainly before the rebuilding of Toddington began in 1820, the family frequently wintered at Gregynog, often between Henrietta Hanbury-Tracy's confinements. For example, Thomas Colley records in the 'Abstract' of estate expenditure for 1801-2 that 'the family in part arrived about 4th August 1801 and finally left there the 12th January 1802'. 'Family expenses' amounted to £1243-4-2½ spent on fuel, food and fodder.[556] 'The family' by now consisted of Charles and his wife Henrietta, their infant daughter Henrietta born in 1800, and baby Thomas Charles, the heir, born in February 1801. Thomas Colley's cash book for that month records expenditure on 'an ox to roast at Gregynog' and a similar ox, with ale, for the poor of Newtown, 'on account of the birth of Master Tracy'.[557] In October 1801 Colley records £3 3s being paid 'cf your order' to 'the Ringers at Pool for Ringing on the occasion of Master Tracy's birth on Feb 7th.[558] From the first, it was clear that the family were adopting traditional modes of status-signalling to assert their presence as a leading family in Montgomeryshire, not only to their tenantry but to society at large.[559] By the time of their next visit in August 1801 Henrietta was already pregnant with her second son, Henry, born in April 1802. There were similar visits in the following years. Thomas Colley's payment in February 1803 to 'Thomas Blayney, harper, £10 10s' for 'his own attending at Gregynog on the 4th inst', suggests that the family were in residence that winter.[560]

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[555] F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century, (London, 1963), pp.152-4.

[556] NLW Gregynog Rentals 35 Cash Book 1797-1809 f. 118.

[557] ibid., f. 76.

[558] ibid., f. 92.

[559] Shaun Evans, 'Coming of age: Landowners and tenants in nineteenth-century Carmarthenshire', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* 57 (2021), 76-89; David Cressy, *Bonfires & Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Cheltenham, 1989); R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850 (*Cambridge, 1973).

[560] NLW Gregynog Rentals 35 Cash Book 1797-1809, folio 140. Thomas Blayney, harpist, was born in the local parish of Llanllwchaiarn in 1785, son of Arthur and Letitia Blayney. He may have been a connection of the Blayneys of Gregynog, but has never been claimed as such. See R. D. Griffiths, Thomas Blayney, harpist, BLAYNEY, THOMAS (1785 -?), harpist | Dictionary of Welsh Biography, (accessed 15 June 2023).

The cash books also record significant expenditure on redecorating the Hall, new furniture and fireplaces and so on, at this time. For example, Colley's 'Abstract' for the year 30th June 1802 – 30th June 1803 records an expenditure of £1,559 11s 1d on *Repairs and General Expences* on the Estate, mainly in connection with redecorating the mansion and laying out new garden paths.[561] Also recorded on this page is an expenditure of £1,418 12s 4½d on 'Family Expences … including every article connected with the House and Family (except General Repairs)'. As noted above, these were the years in which Charles Hanbury-Tracy was taking office as a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Montgomery Volunteer Legion, and serving as High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire, so it seems likely that considerable improvements to the mansion were required to bring it up to a standard appropriate to his new position in the county, *and* the necessary standards of hospitality accompanying such positions.[562] Not all of these improvements were merely cosmetic: in February 1802 Edward Bevan, Mason, was paid £1.13s for 'killing Rats and Repairing Drains at Gregynog'.[563]

It is easy to overlook the physical difficulties of travelling to a remote house like Gregynog in those years, despite the alleged improvement of turnpike roads. In *Lives of the Engineers*, (1861) Samuel Smiles wrote:

> As an illustration of the state of the roads in South Wales... we may state that, in 1803, when the late Lord Sudeley took home his bride from the neighbourhood of Welshpool to his residence only thirteen miles distant, the carriage in which the newly married pair rode stuck in a quagmire, and the occupants, having extricated themselves from their perilous situation, performed the rest of the journey on foot.[564]

As the century progressed, family visits to Gregynog seem to have fallen off somewhat (although presumably the roads improved), as Hanbury-Tracy became more preoccupied with his political career and the rebuilding of Toddington Manor as a huge neo-Gothic mansion (Fig. 14). Hanbury-Tracy was an amateur architect with an enthusiasm for Gothic architecture; in addition to the Toddington project he advised on the rebuilding of the Arkwright family's Hampton Court in Herefordshire, although only a few of his ideas were adopted.[565] His self-

[561] NLW Gregynog Rentals 35 Cash Book 1797-1809, f. 154.

[562] Lt. Col. Peter Crocker, 'The Montgomeryshire Yeomanry 1803-1920', Chronicl Powys: *Journal of the Powys Family History Society,* 60, December 2003, pp.17-24.

[563] NLW Gregynog Rentals 35 Cash Book 1797-1809, f. 106.

[564] Samuel Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers*, (1861), p.435.

[565] Richard Hanbury-Tenison, 'The 1st Lord Sudeley as an Amateur Architect', in *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, pp.222-241; M.J. McCarthy, 'The Work of Hanbury Tracy, Lord Sudeley, at Hampton Court', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club*, 38 (1964), pp.71-75; Catherine Beale, *Champagne and Shambles, The Arkwrights*

perception as an architect was no doubt a factor which led to his chairing the Parliamentary Commission established to select an architect to rebuild the Houses of Parliament after the Great Fire of 1834 – which also played its part in his elevation to the Peerage as the 1st Baron Sudeley in 1838.[566] The successful architect was Charles Barry; the resemblance between the new Toddington Manor and the new Houses of Parliament buildings is striking. Both were much admired at the time.[567] But the rebuilding of Toddington was a hugely expensive project which was to eventually undermine the viability of the family estates (Fig.14).

Hanbury-Tracy's wife Henrietta's engagement diaries for 1808, 1811 and 1818 have survived, from which can be inferred a busy London social life of dinners, balls, and concerts as her children grew to maturity and Charles pursued his political career. There was continual travel between London and his Tewkesbury constituency on her husband's part, while she too was frequently on the move, both with and without her husband and children. In 1818 she undertook an extensive tour which took her from Toddington to her husband's family home Pontypool Park, and later that year to North Wales where she spent a week at Gregynog, from where she visited Llangollen to have lunch with the 'Ladies of Llangollen', Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby.[568]

Funding a lifestyle: Remittances from Gregynog to Toddington

Notwithstanding the expenditure on improvements at Gregynog Hall, from 1799 on, substantial sums of money were being remitted from the Gregynog estate receipts to the new proprietor himself or to his bank. By 1809 a total of over £31,000 had been remitted. For example in 1809, according to Thomas Colley's 'Abstract' for that year, against total estate receipts of £12,519 15s 5½d, £12,394 14s 11d was paid out, of which £8,500 was remitted to the bank. Other expenditure included £387.9s11d laid out on the purchase of land. Property tax payments for that year totalled £642, and 'Stated Outgoings' on charitable commitments, insurance, land and parochial taxes relating to Tithes totalled just under £300. 'General

and the Country House in Crisis, (Stroud, 2006), pp.4-5. John Britton, *Graphic Illustrations with Historical and Descriptive Accounts of Toddington, Gloucestershire, the Seat of Lord Sudeley* (1840).

[566] Caroline Shenton, The Fire of 1834, http://historyofparliamentonline.org/periods/modern/fire (accessed 24 July 2023).

[567] See, e.g. John Britton, *Graphic Illustrations with Historical and Descriptive Accounts of Toddington, Gloucestershire, the Seat of Lord Sudeley* (London, 1840).

[568] Mrs Winkless, 'Five Tracy Diaries of the 18th and 19th Centuries', *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddingon* (London, 1987), pp.209-218. Henrietta Tracy's diaries are recorded in the Gloucestershire Archives catalogue at GRO D2153 but annotated 'retained by depositor'.

Expenses of the Estate' amounted to just over £500, and costs relating to the maintenance of 'Woods, Coppices and Plantations' amounting to £304. A balance of £165 was carried forward to the next account.[569] £500 on estate mainenance seems a negligible sum compared with the figures for 1794, the year before Arthur Blayney's death, when Colley recorded an estate income of over £4,535, and an expenditure of over £3,800, of which a large proportion was on carpentry and other building work on the estate farms as well as general repairs to hedges and fences, and the felling and sawing of timber.[570] From 1810 to 1823 over £98,000 was remitted.[571] The estate's 'receipts and payments' ledgers for 1824-1831 are not extant, but from 1833 to 1871 the ledgers record between £7,000 and £8,000 per annum being remitted from Gregynog to the Hanbury-Tracy/Sudeley account at Childs' Bank.[572]

Much of this income was derived from increased rents, as will be discussed, but at the same time the oak and other hardwood timber on the Gregynog estate was being sold in huge quantities, at a time when demand was high for the raw materials of industry, as well as shipbuilding during and after the Napoleonic Wars, which led to England and Wales becoming 'the least-wooded countries in the world'.[573] William Scott Owen records that the first major sale in 1809 raised £15,300, and the second in 1820 raised £19,465. Subsequent sales from 1820 to 1823 raised £18,150. There is a gap in the records after that, until in March and April 1841, when the then agent John Baker records a sale to a Mr Brandreth raising £8,050.[574] This total of over £60,000 is in addition to timber sales totalling about £15,000 recorded in the estate cash books between 1799 and 1812.[575] It is generally assumed that this income from the Gregynog estate helped finance the building of Toddington Manor, but a significant proportion would have been needed for the maintenance of Charles Hanbury-Tracy's family, not least the payment of his wife's jointure of £1,000 a year, as specified in their marriage settlement of 1798, and provision for their children.[576]

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[569]NLW Gregynog Rentals 35 Cash Book 1797-1809, ff.350, 351

[570] NLW Gregynog Estate 34. Rcpts and payments. 1789-96

[571] Calculated from NLW Gregynog Rentals 35 and 36, Cash books 1797-1823.

[572] NLW Gregynog Estate 40-45 Rcpts and payments, 1832-73

[573] Hugh Prince, 'Victorian Rural Landscapes', in G.E. Mingay, ed., *The Victorian Countryside*, I (London, 1981), p.25; William Linnard, *Welsh Woods and Forests*, (Cardiff, 1982).

[574] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 41, Receipts and payments 1841-42; William Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog,* 1888, pp.108-110. The proceeds of the major sales are not recorded in the Gregynog estate cash books for the period, apart from the payment by Mr Brandreth noted above.

[575] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 35, 37, Receipts and Payments 1797-1823.

[576] The original of this marriage settlement has not been located, but it is quoted in NLW Harrison Box 9, *Abstract of the Title of the Trustees of the Will of the Right Honble Thomas Charles Baron Sudeley (i.e. 2nd Baron) dec'd to hereditaments in the County of Montgomery.* I am grateful to Dr Melvin Humphreys for directing me to this source.

What the estate cash books for this period also reveal is the amount of traffic of goods, animals, foodstuffs and people between Gregynog, Toddington and the Shropshire properties at Bridgnorth and around Morville Hall (which was not disposed of until 1814), despite the considerable distances between them. Craftsmen employed at Gregynog were deployed at Toddington for weeks at a time in some cases, another indication of Toddington's primary importance to Charles Hanbury-Tracy, and his employment of Gregynog estate resources to service it.[577]

Enlarging the Gregynog Estate

Between 1806 and 1814 Hanbury-Tracy sold much of the unentailed Shropshire property he had inherited from his wife for a total of £64,644, including Morville Hall which fetched £18,750, although he retained other property and tithes in and around Bridgnorth.[578] This enabled him to extend his estates in both Gloucestershire and Montgomeryshire. At Gregynog this also entailed rationalizing the estate's widening boundaries by exchanging properties with other local landowners. For example in 1814, the substantial farm Tŷ Coch (renamed Red House some time after 1872, according to the estate rent books), situated on the outskirts of the estate on parish borders of Betws Cedewain and Llanllwchaiarn, was obtained from Richard Pryce of Gunley, near Forden, Welshpool, in exchange for former Tracy properties in the area.[579] Similar exchanges of land took place with the neighbouring estate of the Proctors of Aberhafesp between about 1809 and 1812,[580] and of land lying on either side of the river Severn in the parishes of Llandinam and Llanwnog, in 1841.[581] Over the next twenty years further land was acquired, including four small tenements in the neighbouring upland parish of Llanwyddelan with a total half year's rental of £13-9-4d in 1857, and in 1863 a further eighteen properties in the same parish, bought from the former Gregynog agent John Baker, bringing an additional £180.[582] A manuscript note in the Sudeley papers in Gloucestershire Archives dated about 1816 records that Hanbury-Tracy sold property in Shropshire, including Morville Hall, for

[577] e.g. NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 35, Receipts and Payments, 1797-1809, f.163.
578 GRO /2153/Af5 Sales and Purchases 1807-1815.
579 NLW Gunley 14, Deed of exchange, 6th May 1814; NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 20, Estate Rents 1862-1872. After this date the rentals are recorded less systematically. The Pryces of Gunley bought Red House back in 1913, and their descendants still owned it in 2021.
580 NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 35 Cash book 1797-1809, f. 347; 37 Cash Book 1812, ff.58-9
581 GRO/D2153/Ai/7
582 NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 18, Estate Rents 1854-61, f.63; 20, Estate Rents 1862-72, f.42.

nearly £65,000, and bought tithes and property in Montgomeryshire and Gloucestershire for nearly £92,000 – of which only £12,300 related to purchases in Montgomeryshire.[583] Charles Hanbury-Tracy's expansionist ambitions in Gloucestershire were to cost him far more than those in Wales.

Enclosing the Commons and Wastes

An Act for Dividing and Inclosing the Commonable Lands and Waste Grounds, within the Manors of Kedewen, Hopton and Overgorther, in the County of Montgomery of 1795 was one of a series of parliamentary acts which instigated new attempts to enclose waste and common lands in the county, on the grounds that

> the said lands and grounds in their present state are incapable of any considerable improvement, and it would be of great advantage to the several persons interested therein, and of public utility, if the same were divided and enclosed, and specific allotments thereof made to the several persons entitled thereto.[584]

This exercise was to preoccupy the landlord and agents of the Gregynog estate for the next twenty years. Writing of the period of the Napoleonic Wars, David Thomas notes that 'Parliamentary enclosure was not only the method most widely used [to enclose commons and to extinguish common rights] but also that in which officially appointed commissioners of enclosure were responsible for drawing up formal awards and maps.'[585] The preamble to the 'Kedewen', or Cedewain Act states that the Earl of Powis is Lord of the manor, and lists 'Lord Viscount Tracy' among other local gentry as persons 'entitled to Right of Common, and other Rights and Interests, in or upon the sd comm ls & w grounds'.[586] As M.C. Davies points out, the rights of 'poor cottages' to compensation are acknowledged, 'so far as that they are directed to have leases granted to them by the lord of their enclosures, without reference to the value of the erections the cottagers may have put up at their own expence'.[587] This was legislation aimed at rationalizing land and property rights for the benefit of landowners, particularly in Wales, where, as R. J. Moore-Colyer suggests, the property of the soils on much of the 'waste', their high acidity, and poor drainage profiles, was such that the motive to enclose them was far

[583] GRO/2153/Af5: Lord Sudeley Sales in Shropshire and purchases in Montgomeryshire and Gloucestershire.
[584] Act 1795 - 96, 36 George III; Powys Archives M/Q/RA/1/R. Note the spelling: Kedewen for Cedewain.
[585] David Thomas, *Agriculture in Wales during the Napoleonic Wars*, (Cardiff, 1963), p.30.
[586] The maps and schedules for the 1795 Act for 'Kedewen' were not published until 1807 and 1815, by which time Lord Viscount Tracy's estates had passed to his son-in-law Charles Hanbury-Tracy. They are preserved in Powys County Council Archives.
[587] Act 1795 - 96, 36 George III, *op.cit.;* M.C. Jones, 'The Enclosure of Common Lands in Montgomeryshire', *MC*, 12 (1879), pp. 267-88.

more likely to have been a socio-political than an agricultural one, that is, to extend the local influence of the landowner rather than improve productivity.[588] Melvin Humphreys suggests that

> what was often at stake was a massive reorganization of the tenurial systems, involving the abolition of ancient use-rights of a participatory ownership, together with the final stages in the installation of a capitalist, private landownership system.[589]

The officially appointed Commissioners of Enclosure were frequently connected with major estates; this was the case in Cedewain, where Thomas Colley, agent to the Gregynog estate, was a Commissioner until his death in 1812, when he was replaced as Commissioner by his successor as Gregynog agent, John Dyer. The estate held land in several of the parishes in the Cedewain lordship, notably Aberhafesp, Tregynon, Bettws, Llanllwchaiarn, and Newtown. By 1805 it also held land in the neighbouring lordship of Arwystli, in the parishes of Penstrowed, Llandinam and Llanwnog.

The coming of the Enclosure Act in 1795 was presumably the trigger in 1798, for the then proprietor of Gregynog, Viscount Tracy's daughter Henrietta, prior to her forthcoming marriage, to seek legal affirmation of the estate's ownership of the freehold of an unenclosed area of upland in the parish of Tregynon known as – or at least so spelt at the time – Galynog. These comprised the old monastic grange lands of Celynog, which had been acquired by the Blayneys in the sixteenth century.[590] On 31 July of that year Thomas Colley paid John Lloyd Jones, an Attorney, £18 11s 4d for 'business done touching the uninclosed land known as Galynog as to whether it is Freehold or part of the Wastes in Cedewain Lordship (proved to be Miss Tracy's freehold)'.[591] A year later, on 31 December 1799, Colley records that he 'Paid Witnesses and their Expences to and at Montgomery in order to establish a Claim made of a Freehold-right to the Galynog &c in Tregynon Parish before the Commissioners of Inclosure (in July '97 and not before entered)' a sum of £1 4s 4d'.[592] That Colley himself was one of those commissioners presumably helped this claim to be proven. This suggests that it was regarded as necessary not to allow the lord of the Manor, the earl of Powis, to assume manorial rights

[588] R.J.Moore-Colyer, 'Field Sports, Conservation and the Countryside in Georgian and Victorian Wales', *WHR*, 1993, 16 (3), p312.
[589] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.141
[590] It is spelt as Celynog on all modern maps.
[591] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 35 Cash book 1797-1809, f.48.
[592] Ibid, f.47 (new folio sequence dating from January 1799, a month after Charles Hanbury Tracy had assumed the proprietorship of the Gregynog estate).

over all unenclosed lands in the parish, as was the case in the neighbouring parish of Manafon, where there were few substantial estate owners apart from the earl himself.[593]

Allotments

The enclosure maps and schedules for the parish of Bettws were published in 1807, and those for Aberhafesp and Tregynon in 1815. Many years passed before the 1795 Enclosure Act for Cedewain could be effected, since before awards could be made the Enclosure Commissioners had to make detailed surveys and maps of the lordship's commons and wastes, note possible encroachments, review the claims to such lands submitted by every interested landowner – the claim to Galynog noted above being such a case – draw up schedules of new allotments and annotate the maps to illustrate them.[594] The resulting maps reveal the large number of 'commons', as well as 'wastes', surviving even in lower-lying areas in the three parishes, although it was in Aberhafesp, with its high moorland westerly reaches, where most of the larger commons were located, largely utilised as sheep-walks.[595] Allotments of commons were subject to conditions relating to the rights of turbery, grazing and the creation of roads; many such rights were retained by the earls of Powis as lords of the manor, as in the neighbouring parish of Manafon. Other allotments of commons were made not only to Charles Hanbury-Tracy but to other local landowners, the principal ones being the Proctors of Aberhafesp, but including many smaller freeholders. The enclosure map for Tregynon clearly shows that the old Celynog Grange lands were designated as being the property of Charles Hanbury-Tracy; they lie adjacent to Mynydd Llyn Mawr common in the adjacent parish of Aberhafesp. Hanbury-Tracy secured a number of allotments on this and other commons in the parish such as the Glanrhyd, Gwynfynydd, Squilfa and Fachwen commons; in Bettws parish he secured part of Bettws Hill common, and, in Tregynon, Gorondu common, which is today a large pasture lying near the Galloping Drive entrance to Gregynog Hall. Nearly all the allotments to Charles Hanbury-Tracy lay alongside property he already owned. He was also granted allotments in parishes further afield, such as Forden and Trelystan, where he also held property. In 1817, he was granted

[593] David Hall, 'Enclosure in Manafon, another perspective', *MC* 106 (2018), pp. 101-116.

[594] J. Gareth Thomas, 'The distribution of the commons in part of Arwystli at the time of enclosure', *MC*, 54, (1955-6), p.28, gives a useful indication of the process of survey and allocation. See also David Thomas, *Agriculture in Wales during the Napoleonic Wars*, (Cardiff, 1963), Ch.8.

[595] Powys Archives, Montgomeryshire Enclosure Awards, Quarter Sessions Records, M/Q/RA/1/R 1815 Parish Tregynon, Townships Aberhaley, Llanfechan and Pwllan, Map (1) and schedule; M/Q/RA/39/F 1807 Parish Bettws, Townships Dolforwyn, Garthgellin, Ucheldre and Llaneithion. map and schedule; M/Q/RA/18/R 1815 Parish Aberhafesp, map and schedule. The details of ownership included on these beautifully drawn maps makes them useful as early estate maps for estates such as Gregynog whose own estate maps have been lost.

allotments near his properties in the parishes of Llanwnog, Penstrowed and Llandinam in the lordship of Arwystli, where Sir Watkin Williams Wynn was Lord of the Manor.[596] By this time John Dyer had succeeded Thomas Colley (who died in 1812) as Enclosure Commissioner for Cedewain as well as the agent for the Gregynog estate, and he was a commissioner for the Arwystli enclosures too.

Enclosure Expences

The cost of hedging and fencing enclosures was high, and time-consuming. From 1801 until 1804 the total expenditure amounted to less than one hundred pounds, but it increased significantly thereafter: in 1806 the total was £327-2-1½. After 1807 'Inclosure Expenses' were listed as a specific heading in the estate cash books. Between 1807 and 1812 nearly £1,700 was spent on enclosing allotments and wastes, of which £644 was for labour costs.[597] Expenditure on enclosures petered out after 1815 but on 31st December 1818 John Dyer reported to Charles Hanbury-Tracy that he 'Paid Messres Tilsley, Jones & Blayney Bankers your Rate made by the Commissioners in the Kedewen, Hopton and Overgorther Inclosure: £879-10-2.[598]

This adds up to a total of over £3,000 over the fifteen years for which expenditure can be calculated. The extent to which this outlay was ever recouped in terms of rental income is difficult to establish. 'Allotments' under the Enclosure Act were generally added to rentals attached to specific farms, and as far can be tracked through the Award documents those granted to Charles Hanbury-Tracy were generally quite small plots of land. For example, in 1804 tenants awarded allotted lands in the parishes of Newtown, Kerry, Berriew and Bettws appear in the estate rent books for the first time, at rents between ten shillings and one pound ten shillings per half year.[599] More expensive allotments were granted to Glomen and Llwyncoch farms in Bettws (£11 and £13 per half year respectively), but Brynycul's allotment in the same parish was only £3.5s per half year, and Brynrorin's was just £1. At Michaelmas 1807 Thomas Colley appended a list of sixteen allotments to his 'Abstract' for that half year, with rentals of between £1 and £16-10-0 per half year, adding up to £100-2-6.[600] These additional obligations, alongside the steep increases in rent which were applied to most Gregynog estate

[596] NLW Gregynog estate Rentals, Cash book 39, 1811-1818, f.208.
[597] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, Cash books 35-37 1797-1823.
[598] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, Cash book 39, 1811-1838, f.203.
[599] NLW, Gregynog Estate Rentals 7, Estate Rents 1804-1815, ff.2,3.
[600] Ibid, f.76.

properties between 1800 and 1840, must have placed an additional burden on tenants, whatever size their holdings, and were no doubt a factor in the substantial arrears which accrued in the period, as will be discussed. An entry in agent John Dyer's 'Abstract' of income for 1838 records receipts of £881 as 'Rents of Allotted lands in the Parishes of Llanwnog, Penstrowed and Llandinam' (in the lordship of Arwystli) but this is the only year in which rents for allotted lands are recorded separately from overall estate rents, suggesting that this was a cumulative figure.[601]

A study of the surviving enclosure maps and schedules endorses the assertion that the whole purpose of enclosure was to rationalize estate boundaries and bring about the creation of a 'capitalist, private landownership system', in Melvin Humphreys' words, with the additional benefit, as the proprietors saw it, of stamping the name of Gregynog on a substantial proportion of the landscape of eastern Montgomeryshire. The Cedewain enclosures also resulted in the re-creation of the landscape of the Gregynog estate into the patchwork of rolling fields, woodlands and upland grazing that survives today. Raymond Williams described the process of enclosure, with its 'many miles of new fences and walls, the new paper rights,' as a 'declaration of where the power now lay'.[602] E.P. Thompson described it as a 'plain enough case of class robbery' which dispossessed the cottager and squatter and did away with traditional rights of common. [603] Indeed, in *Before Rebecca*, David Jones points out that some smaller farmers also feared that the allotments they received might not compensate them for the previous right of pasture on the common they had enjoyed, and other limitations on rights such as access to water, grazing and turbary rights. But the resistance to enclosures David Jones describes as having broken out between 1800 and 1830 seems to have taken place mainly in Carmarthenshire and Caernarfonshire; Montgomeryshire is not mentioned,[604] although Melvin Humphreys records that in Arwystli, the neighbouring Montgomeryshire lordship to Cedewain, where the Wynns of Wynnstay were lords of the manor and where the Gregynog estate also held land, the enclosures of 1816-1828 'accounted in part for the turbulence of the area in the 1830s'.[605]

[601] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 40, Receipts and Payments 1832-38, f.31
[602] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, (London, 1973, repr.2017), p.153.
[603] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London, 1963), p. 237
[604] David J.V. Jones, *Before Rebecca, Popular Protests in Wales 1793-1835* (London, 1973), pp.35-50.
[605] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.143.

Neither the Gregynog estate rent books nor the cash books note any transactions relating to removal of unauthorised dwellings built on encroachments on former waste or common land, nor the eviction of squatters from *tai un nos* ('one-night houses'). It may be that the tenants of new allotments were former 'squatters' on encroachments, although no entry in the rent books can be found which might illustrate such a case. Neither can evidence be found to suggest that old-established grazing and other rights of access to the commons were restricted. However, in his estate ledger for 1809, under the heading 'Miscellaneous', Thomas Colley has recorded that he paid Evan Davies, Hewer, 'cf your order in November last', £2-2-0 'towards enabling him to erect a small dwelling for himself, & for supporting a large and sickly family.'[606] Was this 'compensation to poor cottagers' as was required by the Act? E.P. Thompson concedes that in many cases enclosure commissioners acted conscientiously, but points out that what was at issue was 'a re-definition of the nature of agrarian property itself' which imposed capitalist property definitions on the community, over-riding traditional customs and rights.[607] Such a redefinition was entirely congenial to Charles Hanbury-Tracy, serving not only to consolidate the boundaries of his Montgomeryshire estate (although maintaining clear title to the various detached properties in Kerry, Forden and Trelystan) but to reinforce his position as a leading landowner of the county.

Hard times and unrest in early-nineteenth century Montgomeryshire

The impact of a new proprietor on the Gregynog estate after 1798 cannot be assessed in isolation from the upheavals of the era in which he took possession. Melvin Humphreys sees Montgomeryshire's 'crisis of community' at the turn of the nineteenth century in terms of increased pauperisation of the labouring population, bad harvests leading to high grain prices, distress, popular uprisings and protest, and emigration.[608] Such tendencies were increasing across England and Wales, driven not only by hunger, weather, the Naploeonic Wars and their aftermath, but by mechanisation and industrialisation, and the spread of radical political ideas inspired by the French Revolution.[609] Contemporary writers such as Edmund Burke feared, and

[606]NLW, Gregynog Estate Rentals, 35, Receipt and Payments, 1797-1808, f.347.
[607] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (1963), p. 238.
[608] Humphreys, *Crisis of Community*, pp.252-253.
[609] David J.V. Jones, *Before Rebecca: Popular Protests in Wales 1793-1835* (London, 1973).

deplored such challenges from the 'swinish multitude',[610] and governments trembled at the threats to the social order and the peace of the realm.[611]

David Howell and Philip Jenkins have written of the impact of these upheavals in the counties of South Wales where industrialization had been bringing in new money, new values, new wealthy elites of power and class, and a developing metropolitan, London-directed culture for nearly a century.[612] This 'revolution' was late to filter into Montgomeryshire, where what potential for mineral extraction lying under the soil in the northern and western reaches of the county was hardly worth the investment, and where the move of the flannel-weaving industry from farmhouse and cottage to factory was only beginning in 1800. This did not mean that nothing was happening in the county, or that it was quite as cut off from the world as it had once been. The road system was expanding; mail and stage coach services linking Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth via Newtown and Machynlleth had begun in 1799.[613] The Montgomeryshire Canal had reached Garthmyl, just south of Berriew, by 1797, although it was not to reach its ultimate destination, Newtown, until 1821. Among the investors in the canal, who included the proprietors of Gregynog, there were many who believed in its potential as part of a nation-wide communications network, but in its early years its primary function became largely to serve agriculture, by importing lime, the essential fertilizer of the county's acid soil, by narrow boat from the quarries of Llanymynech. Also, while Britain was still at war with France, the narrow boats were the vehicle by which Montgomeryshire oaks were exported for the building of warships. It was only later that flannel goods produced in the factories of Newtown were exported by canal, and coal to fuel the steam-driven power mills was imported – but the coming of the railways to Mid Wales in the 1850s would eventually put paid to the canal as an industrial carrier.[614]

[610] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, (Dover ed., 2006, based on 1790 7th ed), p.79
[611] The classic account of the turbulent years from 1790 to 1840 is E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London, 1963); also *Customs in Common* (London, 1991). See also Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (2nd ed. London, 2000), esp. chapters 2,3 and 4.
[612] David W. Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites: The Gentry of South-West Wales in the Eighteenth Century*, (Cardiff, 1986); Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry, 1640-1790*, (Cambridge, 1983).
[613] Elwyn V. Jones, *A Chronological History of Newtown, 1265-1980*, (Newtown, 2002), p.5.
[614] John Horsley Denton, *A Towpath Guide to the Montgomeryshire Canal and the Llanymynech Branch of the Ellesmere Canal*, (Birmingham, 1984), p.68.

The estate and the farms 1800-1850: Good times, bad times.

Unpredictable, often severe, weather; good and bad harvests; high and low prices for corn and livestock: none of these were new to the farmers of Montgomeryshire in 1800. Bad harvests meant that prices rocketed, raising the price of bread for the people and winter feed for livestock on hill farms where grain or roots could not be grown. Melvin Humphreys has described the severe effect on harvests and prices of a series of cold and wet winters in the late eighteenth century, but goes on to note that the years of the Napoleonic Wars, from 1793 to 1815, 'witnessed a boom in British farming that had no parallel during the previous century'.[615] This boom, as David Thomas makes clear, arose from more than the circumstances of the war.[616] Population growth in the late eighteenth century combined with the drift of people into newly industrialized parts of the nation had already increased demand for food, and had stimulated the adoption new crops and more efficient husbandry in the more fertile districts of England and Wales. The large number of men mobilised for the wars in France needed feeding, but this mobilisation also depleted the number of workers left to work the land. The price of wheat had been gradually rising in the late eighteenth century; now it increased dramatically, exacerbated by the succession of poor harvests in the 1790s which led to severe shortages.[617] David Thomas points out that the results of wartime inflation stimulated agriculture and led to more land, not necessarily suitable land, being 'put under the plough', and speeded up the enclosure of open fields and wastes.[618] However David Howell points out that corn prices were of little concern to the Welsh livestock farmer at this time, who on the whole had little suitable land that could be profitably ploughed. Beef prices rose, although not as steeply as grain prices,[619] although the extent to which this tendency brought prosperity to the livestock farmers of the Gregynog estate was presumably undermined by the outlay they must have had to make on winter feed for their livestock.

The end of the Napoleonic Wars brought economic depression to Britain with a drastic fall in the price of wheat which, according to David Howell, affected grain farmers more than Welsh livestock farmers; where it hit them was in the drop in post-war stock and dairy produce prices. 'Cattle and sheep prices in Britain rose considerably in 1813 and 1814 but during 1815 a

[615] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, p.67-8.
[616] David Thomas, *Agriculture in Wales during the Napoleonic Wars*, (Cardiff, 1963).
[617] Ibid., p.4.
[618] Ibid., p.7
[619] Ibid., pp.47-8. Thomas notes the scarcity of information about the movement of beef prices.

marked fall set in owing to the long summer drought which forced farmers to sell their stock in large quantities'. Howell quotes a farmer from Garthmyl, not far from Gregynog, who wrote: 'I have Horses and Cattle upon my hands which it is quite ruin to sell at the present times.'[620] In his report to the Board of Agriculture in 1816, possibly written from Manafon, neighbouring parish to Tregynon, where he was now Rector, the Rev. Walter Davies wrote that

> The circumstances noting the distress of the farmers are very evident, for at the present price of grain and stock they can scarcely find money enough to pay tithes, rates and taxes. The most striking feature of distress of tenants is the unparalleled frequency of sales by auction of livestock and properties of farmers, under execution for rents, debts, &c., insomuch that sheriffs' officers are the only class of men who in these days are fully employed and make their fortunes.[621]

The impact of these years on the farms and farmers of the Gregynog estate is clearly reflected in the estate rent books for the period. David Howell points out: 'In common with other estates in Britain, the Gregynog rental showed a marked increase during the Napoleonic period in response to the high prices of those years, and perhaps reflecting "how cheaply his (Mr. Blayney's) farms were let" hitherto.'[622] The estate ledgers also reflect how difficult the farmers found it to meet these increases.

Rent increases, rent arrears

From about 1802 Charles Hanbury-Tracy set about reviewing the Gregynog rentals; the subsequent increases are sampled in Appendix II, Table 3: for example in 1800 the half-yearly rent for Bryncoch, Bettws, was £29-10-0; by 1820 it was £72-10-0. Highgate, probably the estate's most important farm, saw its rent increase from £48-5-0 in 1800 to £72 in 1820. Even smaller farms saw their rents more than double: the half-yearly rent for Cwmcignant in Tregynon was £8 in 1800; by 1820 it was £22. Appendix II, Table 2 samples rentals from 1759; the low level of rent increases applied by Arthur Blayney in comparison with those of his successor are clearly shown. The new rent increases, although undoubtedly a rationalization of Arthur Blayney's 'cheap' rents, were also part of a nationwide tendency from the 1790s to the 1830s, as landlords responded to the rise and fall of farm prices in the years of the Napoleonic

[620] David Howell, *Land and People*, p.5.
[621] Quoted in *Bye-gones*, 5, (1880-81), p. 138
[622] David Howell, 'The Estate and its Owners 1795-1920', in Glyn Tegai Hughes et.al, (eds), *Gregynog*, (Cardiff, 1977), pp. 43-44. The reference is to William Scott-Owen, 'Arthur Blayney and his home, Gregynog Hall', *MC*, 25, (1891), p.106. Scott Owen's opinion may have been derived from the claim in Arthur Blayney's obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October 1795 that he was loved by his tenants as 'he had not raised the rents for forty years'.

Wars and their aftermath.[623] Arrears of rent rose accordingly, as shown in Appendix II, Table 4, and did not decline until the eighteen-fifties, suggesting that the farmers were not in a position to raise production sufficiently to meet the increases. In the Blayney period, of a total half-yearly rental of between £1,000 and £1,400, arrears varied from about £80 to £200 or £300. They rose to £456 at Michaelmas 1789, but dropped to £42 at Michaelmas 1796, the year after Arthur Blayney died. Half-yearly rents continued to total about £1,400 until 1804, when income and expenditure on Henry Tracy's local estates were incorporated into the Gregynog estate ledgers, resulting in a half-yearly total of rents due of £2,583. Arrears amounted to a few hundreds until Michaelmas 1814 by which time the half-yearly rent due was £5,075, a portion of which related to newly aquired properties, but arrears amounted to £1,320. In the following ten years arrears rose significantly, by Michaelmas 1823 amounting to over £13,000 on a total rental due of £5,217. In the following years arrears fell slowly, but even in the 1850s over two thousand pounds was being carried forward as owing from half year to half year.[624]

Did these hard times force farmers to quit? From 1807 the Gregynog rentals record occasional insolvencies among the tenantry, carefully noted in the agents' 'Abstracts' at the end of each half year, usually after Lady Day. It was the small tenants who fell first: at Lady Day 1807 £26 owed by John Botton was written off; at Lady Day 1810, a total of £12 was written off, comprising debts of a few pounds each from five people. Among the insovent recorded in Michaelmas 1813 was Mary Evans, 'now a pauper', who could not find the £6 she needed to clear the arrears on Lletytwlch, her Bettws smallholding.[625] By the 1820s, however, more substantial farmers were getting into trouble. In 1825 George Hudson of Glascoed, Aberhafesp, was declared insolvent, owing a total of £ 423-8-1½, together with John Kinsey of Henffryn Farm, Llanwnog, who owed £275-15-9, and thereafter their names disappear from the rentals. The estate wrote off over £717 that year, its remaining arrears of over £8,000 being carried over to the next period.[626]

[623] Thompson, *English Landed Society*, pp. 218-9, Howell, *Land and People*, pp. 9-10,
[624] NLW, Gregynog Estate Rent Books, 1790-1848.
[625]NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 7, Estate Rents 1804-1815, f.65; 8, Estate Rents 1808-1820, ff.42, 114.
[626]NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 10 Estate Rents 1824-26, f.206

Failures amounting to a few hundred pounds are recorded over the next few years, rising in the 1830s to between £400 and £600.[627] But given the huge arrears accrued by the estate in this period discussed above, the number of tenants who lost their holdings altogether was relatively small, Hanbury-Tracy presumably not wishing to see half his farms fall vacant. For example, in 1832 the total rents received by the agent John Dyer amounted to just over £10,000, but at Michaelmas that year over £11,000 in arrears was carried forward.[628]

Rents were not the only estate income. Receipts from tithes, interest, timber, bark, and occasional cattle sales, together with a balance brought forward from the previous year, brought the total receipts in 1832 to £13,233, as recorded in the Receipts and Payments Abstract for that year. Estate expenditure amounted to £12,175, of which £8,700 was remitted to Hanbury-Tracy's account at Child's Bank.[629] It might be inferred from this that the maintenance of 'state', in terms of proprietor's status in the world and the splendour of his lifestyle, was as important to Charles Hanbury-Tracy as maintenance of his estates, whatever the economic circumstances of his tenantry and however much they owed him. But his reputation as a fair landlord was an important component of his status in the county; he was not one of the new buyers of land, possibly from the world of business, who expected high returns on their investiment and cared little for the welfare of their tenants.[630] Aside from the insolvencies noted above, there are no records of his having evicted anyone. Indeed, David Howell suggests that in this first half of the nineteenth century evictions from estate holdings were rare throughout Wales.. It was in the later years, following the widening of the franchise, and before the Ballot Act of 1872, that it was claimed that farmers could be threatened with eviction if they cast their vote against their landlord's wishes – although in reality, apart from some specific cases occurring in the 1850s and 1860s, which will be discussed in a later chapter, political evictions on Welsh estates were rare.[631]

An examination of the fortunes of the estate, its farms and its tenants during this period entails a close examination of both the Rent books and the Receipts and Payments ledgers, in order to review its income from rents and other sources alongside expenditure under a wide range of

[627]NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 11 Estate Rents 1824-35, ff.246,304; 12 Estate Rents 1836-48, ff.27,81,97.
[628]NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 11, Estate Rent 1824-35, ff.231, 246.
[629]NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 40, Receipts and payments 1832-38, ff.7,8,30
[630] Howell, *Land and People*, p.56.
[631] Ibid., p.64.

headings, from Land Taxes and charities to farm repairs and road maintenance. Expenditure on farm maintenance was recorded under 'General Expences', although the 'Abstracts' indicate that such expenditure was nearly always substantially less than that recorded as 'Remittances' relating either to maintenance of the Gregynog household, or the regular direct payments to Sudeley's account at Child's Bank.

Agent John Dyer kept annual abstracts until his last return in 1838. This was presumably completed by a clerk as Dyer died in November that year. No accounts for 1839 have survived. The Receipts and Payments account kept by Dyer's successor John Baker covered 1840 to 1842 in a very untidy notebook which clearly exasperated the recently ennobled Lord Sudeley. Following Baker's appointment as Gregynog agent Sudeley began to scrutinize the estate ledgers and found much to dissatisfy him, as he noted in a Memo book of 1841 in which he recorded his correspondence with Baker, and Baker's responses.[632] The result was that a new *Receipts and Payments* ledger was begun in 1844, in which the accounts were kept on a half-yearly basis. From June 1844 Baker was obliged to itemize, under 'General Expences', repairs carried out on individual farms, listed according to parish. In the account for June-December 1844 seventy-five farms were listed, and expenditure varied from over £65 on repairs at the Little Mill, Kerry, to 3s 6d for carpentry and masonry at Tynycoed in Berriew. The total expenditure for that period was £1,452, an average of under £20 per property, but that same year £4082 was remitted to Lord Sudeley's account at Child's Bank.[633]

An inference of continued hard times can be drawn from Baker's record of rent decreases on a number of farms in his Rental Abstract for Michaelmas 1842,[634] and the note in the Receipts and Payments ledger for December 1844 that he 'Allowed your Lordship's Montgomeryshire Tenants £10 pr Cent at the time of receiving the Half Year's Rent due Lady Day 1844 on the sum of £4461 as per that Rental … £446-2-0', with an additional smaller abatement amounting to £43-8-0 that same year.[635] One of Lord Sudeley's son Henry Hanbury-Tracy's first acts on taking on the management of Gregynog in 1850 was the granting of an abatement of fifteen

[632] Gregynog MSS, Memo book of the first Lord Sudeley, 1841. This is a photocopy of the original in the possession of the late 7th Lord Sudeley.
[633] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 42, Receipts and Payments 1844-48, to f.77-78, (as calculated; Baker did not paginate this ledger.)
[634] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 12, Estate Rents 1836-48, f. 221
[635] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 42, f.72

per cent on the rents for Michaelmas that year 'on account of low farm prices'.[636] The huge burden of rent arrears, which not all tenants could ride out, as we see from the insolvencies recorded in the rent books, must have put the farmers under terrible strain during these years. But as David Howell points out, Welsh farmers were used to hard times.

Howell and other historians have described the self-sufficient but mutually interdependent culture of Welsh farming communities in the nineteenth century: their social relations with each other, with their employees and dependents, with their landlords, with the wider world of church or chapel and with the local market town.[637] Farmers were essential to the social fabric and stability of the countryside, and the willingness of landlords such as Charles Hanbury-Tracy, 1st baron Sudeley, to tolerate a heavy burden of rent arrears for so many years until the 1840s and beyond indicates that they recognized this. Indeed, by the end of the century, in the more emancipated years following the extension of the franchise and the creation of Montgomeryshire County Council, it was clear that the farmers, especially the more substantial ones who were eventually able to secure the freeholds of their holdings, were becoming more important to, and had more agency in the social fabric and stability of the countryside than the landlords themselves.[638]

Farm Labourers and Servants

As discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, the Gregynog estate ledgers for the 1760s record that male labourers on the Gregynog estate were paid between tenpence and one shilling a day, while women were paid sixpence a day for jobs like weeding or washing.[639] By 1800 there is little in the Gregynog estate ledgers to give any idea of how the estate's farm labourers and servants, male or female, fared during the early years of the new century. We do not know how many there were or how much they were paid, or whether the wages earned from such employment was a person's sole income or supplemented elements of a 'cottage economy' such as the cultivation of a small piece of land, or knitting or land-loom weaving, although the later Gregynog agent William Scott Owen claimed that every farmhouse had a loom, and in

[636] *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 22nd November 1850
[637] Howell, *Land and People*, esp. pp.148-151; David Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in South-West Wales at the turn of the Twentieth Century*, (Cardiff, 1971), pp.39-71; Alwyn D. Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside*, (Cardiff, 1975), pp. 91-108; R. Alun Roberts, *Welsh Homespun*, (Newtown, 1930).
[638] John Davies, 'The End of the Great Estates', pp.186-212.
[639] NLW Gregynog estate records 30, Receipts and payments for Arthur Blayney 1763-71 f.21 (not numbered).

some cases half the rent was raised from knitting and weaving.[640] From Thomas Colley's time as agent onwards, monthly entries in the cash books under the heading of 'Labour', record simply the month's total 'by book', suggesting that separate labour books were kept, but the earliest such ledgers to survive for the Gregynog estate begin in January 1866, and continue to 1890.[641] A trawl through the earlier ledgers suggests that expenditure on labour in agent Thomas Colley's years, that is between 1788 and 1812, varied from roughly £28 to £45 per month, but with no further detail.[642] By 1832 accounts were being kept annually: £380-6-3 was the total payment to labourers that year; in 1838 it was £348-18-2 ½. In 1844 the amount was lower, totalling £245-11-0 ½. It was not until 1852, by which time Henry Hanbury-Tracy's rebuilding of Gregynog Hall had begun, that labour costs rose again, amounting to £405-1-1½.[643]

According to the first extant Labour Book, for 1866, in January of that year £56-11-6 was paid to labourers on the Gregynog estate, recorded in sixty-five payments although not to sixty-five people, as the same names appear repeatedly according to the task carried out. The number of days worked, and the total paid, is noted, the most common being twelve days for a total payment of £1, suggests ten shillings for a six-day working week, although others were paid between four and eight shillings a week. Work ranged from carting to cutting chaff to road-mending, and creating new drives and plantations in the grounds of Gregynog Hall. Payments to keepers now appear, and payments of sixpence a night for 'watching' are recorded, suggesting an increased anxiety about poachers. The only woman listed is one Ann Evans, an invalid, who received ten shillings for two weeks, presumably as a subsistence payment.[644] By 1889 the daily rate had increased, varying from one shilling and sixpence to three shillings, with a senior gardener receiving five shillings a day.[645] How these wages compared with those of agricultural labourers employed on the estate farms is impossible to calculate. As David Howell points out, farm workers might be resident on the farm with board and lodging, or, especially if married, living in cottages rented on the farm or in the local village, and remuneration would vary accordingly.[646]

[640] William Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC* 30, (1898), p.21.
[641] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 55, 56, 57, Payments to Labourers 1866-1890.
[642] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 33-37, Receipts and payments 1778-1818.
[643] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 40, 42.
[644] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 55, Payments to Lord Sudeley's Labourers, 1866-73.
[645] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 56, 57, Estate Labour Books, 1882-1890.
[646] David Howells, *Land and People,* pp.94-95.

The 1841 census return for Llanfechan, Pwllan and Aberhafesp, the three township that consititute the parish of Tregynon, record twenty-five households in 'the village' (not identified individually, unlike the local farms), twelve of whose head of household is recorded as an being agricultural labourer, all married and with one or more children.[647] Other 'village' families are those of tradesmen such as William Tilsley the mason, the wheelwright and the blacksmith, and shopkeepers such as the butcher. It is in the households of these tradesmen that female servants are also recorded. Female servants, as well as agricultural labourers, are listed below family members in the returns for the district's farms, with ages ranging from as young as twelve to as old as sixty, but their incidence is not large, suggesting that family farms were largely staffed by family members.

As the industrialization of the Newtown flannel-weaving industry began to develop in the early 1800s it has often been suggested that the town's substantial increase in population, from 990 in 1801 to 4,550 in 1831, was the result of migration of agricultural workers into the town in search of better wages.[648] The parishes of Bettws, Aberhafesp, Llanllwchaiarn and Tregynon, where most Gregynog estate farms were situated, are among the parishes that encircle Newtown, which would have been familiar to most of the population from market days and hiring fairs. Indeed, as Walter Davies pointed out, it was fear of such migration which prompted Arthur Blayney to build cottages with land attached for 'industrious labourers' who might therefore be discouraged from migrating to the towns.[649] It may be that this policy contributed to there seeming to have been no significant drop in the population of these parishes during these years. William Scott Owen recorded the population of Tregynon in 1801 as 609, peaking at 740 in 1831, remaining at around 700 for the next fifty years, and only falling to 586 in 1891, by which time emigration from the village was increasing.[650]

The extent to which this suggests that agricultural labourers in the parish, whether employed on Gregynog estate farms or elsewhere, were content with their lot, is difficult to assess. As we have seen, the farmers had a hard time of it in the years after the Napoleonic Wars, but could survive by subsisting on the produce of their land and relying on their landlord not to evict

[647] 1841 Census, Montgomery district [check how to cite census…]
[648] J. Geraint Jenkins, *The Welsh Woollen Industry*, (Cardiff, 1969), p.143
[649] Walter Davies, *General View,* 1813, pp.83-4. See also Chapter Two above.
[650] William Scott Owen 'Parochial History of Tregynon', p.18.

them when they got behind with the rent. The landless labouring classes, on the other hand, had to buy their bread, the price of which fluctuated according to how good or bad the harvest was in any particular year. They and their families existed perpetually on the brink of starvation, and the shame of having to resort to parish relief, or the fate of being consigned to a House of Industry.[651] However, the extent to which hunger and distress led to popular protest and rioting among the labouring population in this Welsh border country appears to be limited. In January 1796 it was reported that a crowd of 400 people gathered at Carno, seized a load of grain from a market cart and shared it out between themselves.[652] Carno is only a few miles west of Gregynog estate lands across the peat moorlands of Mynydd Clogau, so it is not outside the bounds of possibility that hungry labourers from Tregynon or Aberhafesp were among the crowd that day. Similar turbulence occurred in Machynlleth, in western Montgomeryshire, in 1800, but there is no other evidence of such uprisings in the eastern districts of the county in those years. It was not until the 1830s that protest and rioting became issues for the local forces of law and order here, born not only of agitation ahead of the 1832 Reform Act, which was setting the entire nation aflame, but of terrible working conditions in the flannel mills of Newtown and Llanidloes, coupled with the rise of the Chartist movement, which had particular resonance in Newtown, the birthplace of Robert Owen.[653] All this was an urban, rather than a rural phenomenon; if migrants from Tregynon, Bettws, Aberhafesp or other parishes in which Gregynog estate lands were located, became absorbed into local urban populations, the Gregynog estate appears, so far as can be inferred from the estate records, to have been unaffected.

Charles Hanbury-Tracy's agents: Colley, Dyer, Baker.

While Charles Hanbury-Tracy was busy with his political career at Westminster and the ambitious re-building of Toddington Manor, not to mention his efforts to launch the political careers of his two eldest sons, the Montgomeryshire and Shropshire estates were managed by his agents, beginning with the respected and experienced Thomas Colley, whose thirty-five-year service to the estate began under Arthur Blayney in 1777, and lasted until his death in

[651] In 1792 the Pool-Montgomery Union, supported by a group of border parishes, set about building a House of Industry at Forden near Welshpool, designed to accommodate 500 paupers. See Humphreys, *op.cit*., pp.92-3.
[652] David Jones, *Before Rebecca* (London, 1973), p.22. For a detailed discussion of food riots and other incidences of popular protest in Wales and England see Sharon Howard, ''Riotous Communities': Crowds, politics and society in Wales, c.1700-1840', *WHR* (2001) pp. 656-686; Carl Griffin, *Protest, politics and work in rural England* (Basingstoke, 2014).
[653] Humphreys, *The Crisis of Community*, p.253; Maurice Richards, *A History of Newtown*, pp.64-71.

1812. The extent to which the management of the estate was delegated to him following the death of Arthur Blayney in 1795, then Viscount Tracy in 1797, and during the early years of its inheritance by Henrietta and Charles Hanbury-Tracy, suggests that his trustworthiness and ability helped maintain the stability of the estate during the transition to its new owners. As noted in the previous chapter, he was commended by Walter Davies alongside other influential and long-serving agents such 'Mr Probert of Powis and Mr Wyatt of Penrhyn'.[654]

As has been noted, when John Dyer took over from Thomas Colley as the Hanbury-Tracys' agent he also took over his role as Enclosure Commissioner. Dyer's name also occurs on a number of surviving documents in the National Library of Wales, in relation to the bankruptcy of local industrialists William Tilsley and Wythen Jones in the 1830s, suggesting that he was a local attorney of some standing.[655] Like Colley, he served as agent for both the Gregynog estate and the Shropshire holdings that remained in the Hanbury-Tracys' possession after the sale of Morville Hall, until his death in November 1838. John Baker was appointed in his place. Although Baker maintained the rent books in the established form, a number of the surviving ledgers for these years duplicate each other or cover overlapping periods, which make tracking the fortunes of the estate's holdings complex.[656] Furthermore, no *Receipts and Payments* ledger for 1838 has survived, and the one begun by Baker in 1840 is barely comprehensible. It was at this point that Charles Hanbury-Tracy, now 1st baron Sudeley, began to scrutinize John Baker's accounts and found much to irk him about the way the records were kept, as recorded in his Memo book of 1841.[657] Thereafter the situation improved somewhat – or, at any rate, the estate ledgers are more legible – but it can be suggested that Sudeley's impatience with Baker was one of his motives for establishing his second son, Henry Hanbury-Tracy, and his new wife Rosamund, at Gregynog, which would henceforth be their home. By 1849 it is the Hon. Henry Hanbury-Tracy whose name appears at the top of the page in the estate ledgers, not John Baker. Little else is known of John Baker's time as Lord Sudeley's agent, aside from his involvement in an attempt, presumably on behalf of Lord Sudeley, to obtain a franchise for a Shropshire mill ahead of the 1839 Bridgnorth election which was to mark the beginning and

[654] Walter Davies, *General View*, pp.76-77.
[655] NLW Cefnbryntalch Estate 304, 308; NLW BRA 1955 Deposit (Parcel 878)./ 70.
[656] For example: NLW Gregynog Rental Ledger no 14 covers 1838-44, no 15 covers 1841-62, no 16 1844-4, no 17 1844-54, and no 18 1848-55. These ledgers cover the period in which John Baker was the Gregynog agent.
[657] Gregynog MSS, *Memo book of the first Lord Sudeley*, 1841 (photocopy of original in possession of the late 7th Lord Sudeley).

end of Henry Hanbury-Tracy's political career.[658] Surviving documents indicate that he negotiated an exchange of land between the Gregynog estate and the Winders of Vaynor Park in 1842, and between Lord Sudeley and Mrs Owen of Glansevern 1847, but later deeds in the Glansevern papers record his purchase of lands in Llanwyddelan, the parish immediately north-west of Tregynon, from the earl of Powis, describing him as 'of Wolverhamption'.[659] It seems that Mr Baker was building up a small estate of properties in Llanwyddelan, as eighteen of such properties appear in the Gregynog rental for Michaelmas 1863, endorsed 'purchased from Mr John Baker'.[660]

Henry Hanbury-Tracy and the rebuilding of Gregynog Hall

Another reason for establishing Henry at Gregynog was perhaps to give him a role in the family following the failure of his political career – a career which lasted only a few months, from July 1837 to February 1838.[661] Lord Sudeley's attempts to launch both his elder sons on political careers alongside his own had come to nothing by this time, but election expenses had been a drain on estate income[662] which was already under pressure from the continuing expenditure on the rebuilding and furnishing of Toddington Manor, the maintainance of his London address at Dover Street, the education of his children and the payment of his wife's jointure of £1,000 a year.[663] As has been noted above, remittances from the Gregynog rental to Lord Sudeley's account at Childs' Bank during these years amounted to far more than was being spent on farm maintenance and repairs, and Sudeley's preoccupations with Toddington, his parliamentary career and his family, especially after his wife died in 1839, may have ensured that for some time he had paid less attention to the estate than he should have done, until alerted by what appeared to be inconsistencies in John Baker's accounts. The correspondence with Baker noted by Sudeley in his Memo of 1841 suggests that Baker did in the end comply with Sudeley's instructions as to the keeping of estate records, as surviving volumes indicate.

[658] *North Wales Chronicle*, 29th October 1839
[659] NLW, Glanservern MSS, 6333, 7890-1; Vaynor Park Records 1112; Powis Castle Estate Records D33/89/97
[660] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 20, Estate Rents 1862-72, f.42
[661] G.C. Baugh, (ed.), *A History of Shropshire*, *Victoria County History of Shropshire*, Vol III, (1979), pp.330-331. The political activities of the Hanbury-Tracy family are discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.
[662] John Dyer's Gregynog cash book for December 1837 (Ledger 40, f. 174) records a total of £5238-1-8d against the heading 'Bridgnorth Election' which took place in July that year.
[663] NLW Harrison Box 9, Quoted in 'Abstract of the Title of the Trustees of the Will of the Right Honble Thomas Charles Baron Sudeley [2nd Baron] dec'd to hereditaments in the County of Montgomery.'

The timing seemed right, however, for Sudeley to make over Gregynog, the secondary seat, to his second son, especially in the light of Henry's marriage to Rosamund Shirley, daughter of Viscount Tamworth, in May 1841. Henry would not only be able to take his new wife to his own establishment, but would be able to supervise the management of the estate more closely, and with the authority of a family member. He seems to have met the tenants for the first time at the November 1850 rent days in Newtown, Tregynon and Caersws, when he ordered a fifteen per cent abatement of their rents, commenting that 'as the day for expecting any protection of the farming interest was past, every encouragement they wished should be had to enable them to meet the reduction now prevailing in agricultural produce'.[664]

Despite regular improvements to the mansion which had taken place ever since the Hanbury-Tracys first inherited, in more recent years it had not been occupied on a regular basis, and had allegedly become run down, damp and rat-infested.[665] The young Hanbury-Tracys expressed reluctance to make a home there, but Henry's father Lord Sudeley was anxious to retain Gregynog as the family's Welsh seat, and to see it reflect the enhanced status of the Hanbury-Tracy family in Montgomeryshire after he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of the County in 1848 following the death of the earl of Powis. So he agreed to the mansion being substantially renovated, and his son and daughter-in-law moved in. Sudeley appointed Henry as a deputy Lord Lieutenant in 1852.

Since 1844, John Baker's cash book had recorded expenditure on painting, carpentry, glazing and other improvements to the Gregynog mansion, but these clearly had not satisfied Henry and Rosamond.[666] In 1849 a much more substantial renovation began, amounting to a virtual re-building of the mansion. From January that year the Gregynog cash books include a separate column for expenditure on 'Gregynog Repairs and Alterations', the total expenditure in the first six months being £2219-4-1¼.[667] Between 1849 and 1851 a total of £11,000 was expended as the hall was rebuilt from the ground up, with additional wings and a third floor added. Only

[664] Shrewsbury Chronicle, 22nd November 1850.
[665] Robin Hanbury-Tenison, 'The 1st Lord Sudeley as an amateur architect', *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, (London, 1987), p.230.
[666] A Gregynog estate ledger for 1840-42, recording a similar level of expenditure for these years, was found among the effects of the late Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes, Warden at the University of Wales, Gregynog, from 1963 to 1989. This has now been donated to the National Library of Wales but not yet catalogued. With thanks to Maredudd ap Huw of the NLW for drawing my attention to this ledger, and for facilitating access.
[667] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 43, Receipts and Payments 1848-1852, ff.63-72.

the carved parlour depicting the coats of arms of the family's Blayney forbears was preserved and re-installed in the new house, although William Scott Owen noted that 'a good deal had to be added to it to fit it into the new room'.[668] The work of re-creating the carved parlour was carried out by John Jones of Newtown and his son Edwin, who had been responsible for the removal of the medieval rood screen in the town's old parish church of St. Mary's and its reconstruction in the new church of St. David's. By 1861 this family was living in Cheltenham, the inference being that their craftsmanship had impressed the Sudeleys, who engaged them to work at Toddington – another instance of the regular traffic of goods and people between Gregynog and Toddington.[669]

Improvements and additions to the house and grounds continued over the next few years: in the spring of 1859, for example, labourers were employed in forming 'pleasure grounds, terraces and walks about the house', and 'cutting out foundations for new stable building', payment 'as per book' being recorded as £247.[670] More detail is recorded in the earliest surviving labour book, begun in 1866, which records, for example, that in January that year sixteen men were employed for several weeks on 'New drives' around the demesne.[671]

What involvement the 'amateur architect' Lord Sudeley had in the re-building of Gregynog Hall is not known. No depictions of the new hall before the addition of the pseudo-Elizabethan decoration for which the mansion is famous have survived, neither have any architectural plans for the new building, apart from some designs for windows and decoratively moulded ceilings, dated 1852.[672] However a comparison between the terrain depicted in Moses Griffith's eighteenth-century watercolour of the hall (Fig. 8) and the situation of the present building suggests one major difference, in that the front elevation, which originally seems to have faced north, now faced south. The surroundings of the mansion became more important, with the creation of terraces, 'pleasure grounds' and a new stable block, completed in 1862.

New carriage drives were created, although William Scott Owen, who was appointed Agent in 1879, later noted that it seemed to take some time to create approaches to the Hall that were

[668] William Scott-Owen, *History of the Gregynog Estate*, 1888, p.55.
[669] Newtown local historian Maurice Richards, writing in the *Newtown Crier* of 4 Nov 1978.
[670] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 44, Receipts and Payments 1852-1862, f.217.
[671] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 55 Payments to Lord Sudeley's labourers, 1866-73
[672] Gregynog Hall MSS.

not affected by dampness or other problems. The drive in front of the house to be seen today, approached by the concrete bridge over the sunken lawn, was created in about 1880. In 1850, Scott Owen records, certain highways that crossed the Gregynog demesne in the vicinity of the mansion were 'stopped by order of Quarter Sessions'. He goes on to note that new roads were made, following a wider route around the demesne 'to compensate the inhabitants for these diversions'. The effect of these changes was presumably intended to divert public traffic away from the grounds surrounding the mansion, rendering the demesne a more private space. The new roads linked to other new roads created by the Gregynog proprietors, connecting the village of Tregynon with neighbouring villages of Bettws, New Mills and Aberhafesp, with Newtown and with the principal turnpike roads of the area.[673] Some Turnpike Acts were still in force in Montgomeryshire, and in 1860 a separate Act of Parliament was passed 'to turnpike the road from the Oswestry and Newtown Railway near Cilgwran over the river Severn to Tregynon in the area controlled by the Montgomeryshire First District, and called The Cilgwran, Betws and Tregynon Turnpike Trust'. The new Lord Sudeley gave land towards the widening of this road, which led – still leads – to one of the main drives to Gregynog, and cost him about £3,000.[674] All these developments might have helped reinforce the exclusive privacy of the mansion and its grounds, but they also had the effect of creating a local infrastructure of roads, which is little changed a century and a half later.

Adding up the columns in the cash books headed 'Gregynog alterations' and 'Gregynog House and Establishment between 1848 and 1860 gives a total expenditure of approximately £15,600 – a relatively modest sum when compared with the first Lord Sudeley's outlay of over £150,000 on the rebuilding of Toddington Manor in the 1820s.[675] In the cash book 'Abstract' for the first six months of 1852 it is possible to review expenditure on 'Gregynog Alterations' as a proportion of the outgoings on the rest of the estate. The largest outlay was still the £3,000 remitted to the landlord's account; next came General Estate Expenses at £1,086, spend on farm repairs, drainage and 'general bills'. Gregynog Alterations at £336 was less than Stated Outgoings (£366 on Poor, Road and Church Rates, Charities and Annuities, Land and Property Taxes) and Rent and Tithe Allowances (£389). At this time the important farm Llwyn y Brain

[673] William Scott Owen, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', pp.20-21.
[674] Ibid; R.T. Pritchard, 'Montgomeryshire Turnpike Trusts', *MC* 57, (1961-2), p. 6.
[675] Richard Hanbury-Tenison, 'The 1st Lord Sudeley as an Amateur Archictect', *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, p.226.

seems to have been unlet, hence the expenditure of over £600 to maintain it. That the Sudeleys' social obligations to the community were being met is indicated by entries in the 'Miscellaneous' column for that spring for a donation of £100 being, 'Your Lordship's subscription to the purchase of Newtown Market Hall' and another of £40, 'Your Lordship's subscription to Bettws New School House'.[676] But the total expenditure for 1852 exceeded the estate's income, so that at the end of the year Henry Hanbury-Tracy was £89 in debt.

The details of expenditure in the estate cash books suggest that Gregynog Hall was built with brick made at brickyards on the estate, with timber hewn on the estate, with slates, cement and lime brought in by canal, and with the labour of many scores of local tradesmen and labourers. But what the new Gregynog Hall looked like before the later addition of its black and white rendering in the 1870s is not known; neither is what that afficionado of the Gothic, the 1st Lord Sudeley, thought about it, as he died, aged eighty, in 1858. The only surviving late-nineteenth-century image of the Hall is an anonymous, somewhat naïve, oil painting depicting the mansion before the later addition of a billiard room which created the now familiar façade of the Hall (Fig. 19).

Lord Sudeley was succeeded by his son Thomas Charles, the elder brother of Henry, who also 'inherited' the Lord Lieutenancy of Montgomeryshire. The 2nd Lord Sudeley lived for only five years after his father, dying at the age of sixty-two in 1863. He had made little impact on the running of the Gregynog estate, being more preoccupied with the grounds, carriage drives and six hundred acres of parkland surrounding Toddington Manor, the cost of which depleted what were by now the family's diminishing fortunes.[677] At Gregynog during these years work continued on the building of a new stable block and the improvement of local roads and bridges. Land was given for the building of chapels in Caersws, Tregynon and Newtown, and in Bwlchyffridd at the western end of Gregynog demesne a site was given for the building of a school house.[678]

Although the management of the estate remained in Henry Hanbury-Tracy's hands, apart from his signatures in the rent and cash books it is not clear how much time he and his family

[676] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 44 Receipts and Payments 1852-1862, f.28., and ff.31-32.
[677] The Lord Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 88, (1869), p.162.
[678] William Scott Owen, *The History of Gregynog, 1888*, (1888-1892), p.114.

actually spent at Gregynog. They appear in the census in 1851 and 1871, but not 1861; presumably when that census was taken they were in residence at their London address in Eccleston Square, Belgravia. In 1858 Henry and Rosa suffered the loss of their thirteen-year-old son Arthur, and Rosa herself died in 1864,[679] so these were difficult years for Henry and his surviving daughters. Nonetheless, from the late 1860s Henry was a prominent member of the Newtown and Llanidloes Union, chaired the committee of the Montgomeryshire Infirmary in Newtown, and attended the Montgomeryshire Quarter Sessions. He and his daughters appear regularly in local press reports of balls, concerts, and other fund-raising events, and with his nephew, Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy, MP for Montgomery Boroughs from 1863, he was active in Liberal politics in the county.

After the departure of John Baker at the end of 1849 some estate management duties appear to have been delegated to one Richard Tilsley, who had been the tenant of Little Brithdir since 1850. In January 1866 Tilsley was paid £45, being a half-year's salary (duties not specified) plus £1.5s 'for attendance at rent days &c'. Subsequent payments are irregular, but in press reports he appears as being present at Gregynog Rent Audits, and in other capacities related to the estate, his address being given not as Little Brithdir but Whitegates, the Gregynog estate office.[680] In 1869 Tilsley is also recorded as a founder member of the Montgomeryshire Liberal Registration Society.[681] Tilsley may have been the son of William Tilsley, the mill-owner of Milford Hall, Newtown.

Thomas Charles, 2nd Lord Sudeley, died in 1863, and was succeeded by his twenty-six-year-old son, Sudeley Charles George Hanbury-Tracy, who was a captain in the Grenadier Guards. 'Undeterred by his father's extravagance and misfortune,' wrote the 7th Lord Sudeley in 1969, 'the 3rd Lord Sudeley set up a zoo at Toddington', with Arab horses, buffaloes, zebras and other exotic animals.'[682] He also commissioned George E. Street, Gothic-revival architect of the Royal Courts of Justice, to rebuild the church at Toddington, large enough to accommodate the tomb of his grandfather, the 1st Lord Sudeley, who had left £5000 for such a monument in his

[679] Rosamund Hanbury-Tracy died at the family's London home but her body was brought to Gregynog for burial in Tregynon churchyard. Montgomeryshire Records, *Parish of Tregynon, Burial Records 1813-1872,* (Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society 2011).The burial records state that she was buried on the 10th April.
[680] Gregynog Estate Rentals 45, f.178; *Newtown & Welshpool Express*, e.g., 12 Jan 1869, 18 Oct 1870, 23 Jan 1872.
[681] *Newtown & Welshpool Express*, 12 Jan 1869.
[682] Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', p.163

will.[683] The £44,000 cost of building this church, added to the inability of the third Lord to understand his financial limitations, was to burden both the Toddington and Gregynog estate with debts which were to ruin them. Said to have suffered from poor health, the 3rd Lord Sudeley had little impact on life at Gregynog for the next fourteen years, until his death in 1877, despite having succeeded his father as Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire.[684] But Henry Hanbury-Tracy and his family were not be isolated from the wider family in their Gregynog outpost, far as they were from the grandeur of Toddington. A few months after February 1863, when Sudeley Charles George Hanbury-Tracy succeeded his father as 3rd Lord Sudeley, at a by-election in August his younger brother, Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy, was elected Liberal MP for the Montgomery Boroughs seat. Charles Douglas took up residence in the area and became deeply involved in local affairs, and, after 1877 when he succeeded his brother as the 4th Lord Sudeley, in the future of the Gregynog estate.

'No mean appendages to the acres of the wealthy': the concrete buildings of Gregynog.

The outstanding feature of the late-nineteenth-century Gregynog estate is the clutch of farmhouses and cottages built entirely from concrete, and in an architectural style which owes more to what might be described as sub-Gothic-Revival than the vernacular timber-framed buildings of the Welsh border. We have no way of identifying the 'convenient and elegant housing' that, according to Walter Davies, Arthur Blayney built for his tenants in the 1790s, but the concrete farmhouses and cottages in and around the former estate, and Tregynon village school and school-house are unmistakable (Fig.17).[685]

From the beginning of the nineteenth century it was becoming acknowledged that the living accommodation of the rural poor was inadequate and often squalid. From about 1800 substantial estates such as Penrhyn and Vaenol in Caernafonshire and Nannau in Merioneth began building workers' cottages, even entire villages, in the case of Llandegai, built on the outskirts of Bangor by the Pennants of Penrhyn in the 1840s. Nearer to Gregynog, in the 1850s,

[683] Ibid., p.164
[684] His unsuccessful canditature for the Montgomeryshire Parliamentary seat in 1862 is discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.
[685] Walter Davies, *General View*, p.83.

both the Powis and Vaynor estates began building cottages on their lands in Berriew and on the outskirts of Welshpool.[686]

The idea of 'model farms' and 'model houses for the labouring classes' received some exposure at the Great Exhibition of 1851, with the support of the Prince Regent, who with architect Henry Roberts had designed a pair of model cottages for the exhibition.[687] The Great Exhibition had also featured a prize-winning cement for concrete construction, and the architect Gareth Lumley Jones suggests that this, together with the use of concrete in the construction of Osborne House in the Isle of Wight, demonstrated the potential of the material to Charles and Henry Hanbury-Tracy.[688] However a major influence on the Hanbury-Tracys was Francis Charles Hastings, 9th duke of Bedford (1819-1891), who was a family friend and became a close friend of the fourth Lord Sudeley. Bedford was an advocate for improved dwellings for agricultural workers, writing to the Royal Agricultural Society on the subject in 1850, and building a model farm at Woburn in 1876.

It is not altogether clear who was responsible for the rebuilding project at Gregynog, expenditure on which first appears in the Gregynog cash books from late 1867, for items such as 'carriage of cement' and 'sacks of cement', then in June 1868 'a ballast crusher'.[689] The cash books always record payments as being on behalf of 'your Lordship' but at that time the 3rd Baron, seems to have been more preoccupied with his private zoo at Toddington than with the creation of model houses for estate tenants and workers. In Shropshire Archives there is a sale catalogue listing his Bridgnorth properties which he put on the market in 1865, but whether the proceeds of the sale went towards the private zoo or the model farms experiment at Gregynog is not known.[690] The 1st Lord Sudeley, amateur architect of the neo-Gothic

[686] Judith Alfrey, 'Rural Building in Nineteenth-Century North Wales, The Role of the Great Estates', *ArchCamb.*, 146, (1998), 2001, pp.199-216.
[687] S.M. Gaskell, *Model Housing from the Great Exhibition to the Festival of Britain*, (London, 1986), Michael Havinden, 'The Model Village', G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, Vol II, (London, 1981), p.420; Susanna Wade Martins, *The English Model Farm, Building the Agricultural Ideal, 1700-1914*, (Macclesfield, 2002); Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, *Property and Landscape, a Social History of Landownership and the English Countryside*, (London, 1987), pp. 157-175.
[688] Gareth Lumley Jones, The Concrete Cottages of Gregynog, an Experiment in Mass Concrete Construction by the Hon. Charles and Henry Hanbury-Tracy, 1868-1880, MA Thesis, Birmingham School of Architecture, 2003, p.21. Gareth Lumley Jones's thesis has been an invaluable aid to the composition of this section and guide to the historiography of both the model farm and cottage movement and the history and technology of concrete as a building material.
[689] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 45, Receipts and Payments 1862-1873, ff.245, 260.
[690] Shropshire Archives, XSC/1/8, 8 Feb 1865.

Toddington Manor, had died in 1858, when Gregynog Hall itself was still being rebuilt, although he would have been acquainted with the 9th duke of Bedford and his views, and would have certainly viewed Prince Albert's model cottages at the Great Exhibition in 1851. He may have encouraged his son Henry to consider the possibilities for the Gregynog estate before his death in 1858. Henry's elder brother the 2nd Lord Sudeley did not live long enough after his accession to make much impact at Gregynog, but his connection with the Pennant family through his wife may have raised the family's awareness of the cottage-building projects on the Penrhyn estate.[691]

It seems likely that the initiative was Henry Hanbury-Tracy's. He lived at Gregynog, acted as its agent, and probably knew more about the estate, and the state of its buildings, than his father, his brother or his eldest nephew had ever done. He had superintended the rebuilding of Gregynog Hall and was well-known and respected in the neighbourhood. He may have been stimulated into action by the arrival of his second nephew Charles Hanbury-Tracy as MP for Montgomery Boroughs in 1863, but although the concrete experiment is often attributed to the 4th Lord Sudeley, as Charles eventually became, in those early years he was too busy with his career as a Member of Parliament and his investments in the Newtown textile industry to be deeply involved at Gregynog. It was not until he succeeded his brother as the fourth Lord Sudeley in 1877 that he took over from his uncle at Gregynog, by which time the farmhouses had been built and the money had been spent.

As Gareth Lumley Jones points out, there is no reference to the actual architect or designer of the Hall or any of the farmhouses, cottages or school. Lumley Jones suggests that the fourth Lord Sudeley's agent, William Scott Owen (1852-1921), who owned a collection of architectural pattern books, may have been involved; he had been trained at Toddington so would have been familiar with Gothic architecture and the principles that underlay it. But the rebuilding project began in 1867, when Scott Owen would only have been fifteen years old. He did not become the 4th Lord Sudeley's agent at Gregynog until 1879.[692] It would appear more likely that the designs were evolved, and the buildings constructed by Henry Hanbury-Tracy, possibly in consultation with his nephew Charles, now based in the neighbourhood in his role as an MP. This assumption is endorsed by a correspondent to the local paper in 1870, praising the

[691] See footnote 150 above.
[692] Gareth Lumley Jones, The Concrete Cottages of Gregynog, p.10

building of the farmhouse Fir House 'in the style of a lofty mansion, built entirely of concrete', with its concrete staircase finished with 'a moulded handrail built into a cavity within the concrete' – the same feature is to be found at Gregynog Hall itself.[693] A further newspaper report of 1873 refers favourably to 'the concrete cottages at Tregynon, [built] by the Hon. H. Hanbury Tracy'.[694]

Given the Gothic principles that underlay the re-creation of Toddington Manor, where Henry Hanbury-Tracy had grown up, it seems likely that Henry assumed that the Gothic style was most suited to the farmhouses and cottages that were planned. Furthermore he too would presumably have had access to architectural pattern books, and works such as J.C. Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture* of 1853, and Bannister Fletcher's *Model Housing for the Industrial Classes*, published in 1871. An illustration of one of Loudon's villas in Lumley Jones's thesis shows features distinctly similar to some of those in the Gregynog cottages. [See Fig 15.]

As regards the mansion itself, Henry Hanbury-Tracy seems to have been dissatisfied with its appearance after its rebuild in the 1850s, as he commissioned W. Eden Nesfield to redesign it. The submitted design, which is dated 1877, has many similarities to the mansion Plasdinam, in the nearby village of Llandinam, which was designed by Nesfield, built in 1873, and is somewhat 'Arts & Crafts' in style.[695] Nesfield's design was not used. By 1877 Hanbury-Tracy and his family were no longer resident at Gregynog; his nephew, Charles Douglas Hanbury-Tracy, became the 4th Lord Sudeley that year, and took over the proprietorship of the hall and estate. Possibly the new peer baulked at the expense of a Nesfield project, or perhaps he preferred to finish the hall with the pseudo-Elizabethan timbering, rendered in concrete, for which the Hall is now known, as a nod to the local vernacular, and a demonstration of his identification with the culture of the county. Concrete was also used in the creation of the fountains and bridges in the grounds surrounding the mansion.[696]

[693] *The Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 28 June 1870.
[694] *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard*. 16 May 1873.
[695] Copies of the Nesfield design are on display at Gregynog Hall.
[696] CADW, Gregynog Hall II*, Ref 17256, 06/09/1996, amended 31/01/1997

The new school, cottages and farmhouses, all built of concrete, received eulogistic praise by Thomas Nicholas. 'Mr Tracy,' he wrote,

> whose care and judgement are visible, not only in the planning and ornamentation of the mansion, but generally of the estate, has set to the landowners of Wales an example in cottage-building, which it is to be hoped will be extensively followed … A snug and handsome cottage [brings] matters of "taste and refinement" within the province and reach of the poor, and no mean appendages [sic] to the acres of the wealthy. [697]

One of the most important of the new concrete structures built by the Hanbury-Tracys in Tregynon was the village school. The foundation stone for Tregynon National School was laid in August 1871 by Henry Hanbury-Tracy's daughter Henrietta. It was opened the following year by Henry himself. A school house in similar Gothic style was built on a site adjacent to the school.[698] The Education Act of 1870 provided for a national system of elementary education but clauses of the Act relating to whether or not religious teaching, on denominational lines, should be part of the curriculum, were highly contentious to many nonconformists. Tregynon was a 'National School', constituted to teach the religious principles of the Church of England (as it then was). In many parts of Wales there were attempts on the part of nonconformists to create independent school boards, vigorously opposed by parish and diocesan authorities. However, it appears that many Montgomeryshire communities were happy to reach a compromise on the matter, which was the case in Tregynon.[699] William Scott Owen's *History of Gregynog* contains transcriptions of the acceptance of a trust deed signed by 'the leading Churchmen and Dissenters of the Parish of Tregynon' agreeing to the establishment of a school 'upon these trusts', i.e. as a Church school. The signatories include names such as Andrew, Corfield, Francis, Roberts, and Whitticase – all Gregynog estate tenants, but of differing religious allegiance. [700]

On 16 April 1875, the *Cambrian News* reported the presentation of an illuminated address to the Hon. H. Hanbury-Tracy from the children of Tregynon school, 'of which he is chief manager, on the occasion of his leaving the neighbourhood'. Hanbury-Tracy's long speech of thanks

[697] Thomas Nicholas, *Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and County Families of Wales*, Vol II,(London, 1872), pp. 805-6
[698] Gareth Lumley Jones, The Concrete Cottages of Gregynog, pp 41.42.
[699] J.A. Davies, *Education in a Welsh Rural County 1870-1973*, (Cardiff, 1973), pp. 28-34. Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, (3rd ed., Cardiff, 1980), pp.44-46.
[700] William Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog,* 1888, pp.144-146.

alluded to his and his family's deep affection for the neighbourhood and its people, his sorrow at the prospect of leaving them all, and his belief in the importance of education.

> Whatever hand he might have had in planting the tree of knowledge in that parish, right glad was he to find that it had taken such deep root. For he would freely acknowledge to them that if he were ambitious of having his name handed down to posterity as one who had done good to the State, there was no cause with which he would sooner have his name associated with than that of public education.[701]

The long press report of this occasion, together with many others records of school treats and outings sponsored by the Hanbury-Tracys and Sudeleys, is a clear indication of the affection and respect felt for him and his family among the people of Tregynon. In 1875 Henry Hanbury-Tracy was seventy-three years old. He and his daughters were to return to Gregynog regularly, but after 1877, when his nephew Charles succeeded as the fourth Lord Sudeley, it was no longer his seat but Charles's. Henry lived to the age of eighty-seven, dying in London in April 1889. He is buried in Tregynon churchyard with his wife.[702]

[701] *Cambrian News & Merionethshire Standard*, 16 April 1875.
[702] Funeral report in *Byegones*, 17 April 17, 1889.

CHAPTER FOUR

GREGYNOG 1877-1895: THE END OF A GREAT ESTATE?

Introduction

According to *1873 Return of owners of land,* the Gregynog estate was at that time, with over 17,000 acres of land in cultivation, and an estimated annual rental of £13,539, the third largest in Montgomeryshire after the Powis and Wynnstay estates, and its owners, the Sudeley family, among the most influential in the county.[703] Nonetheless, by the 1890s it was failing, and in 1894 it was put up for sale as a going concern for the first time in its existence.[704] This chapter addresses the extent to which the Sudeleys' Gregynog was, like many other landed estates in Montgomeryshire and elsewhere, simply victim to 'the end of the great estates', undermined by economic and cultural processes it could no longer control; or whether other factors might have been the primary cause, such as the extravagance of the 1st Lord Sudeley, and negligence of the 2nd and 3rd barons who left Gregynog in a state which the commitment and good intentions of the 4th Lord Sudeley, and his rash schemes, could not ameliorate. Despite this failure, the Hanbury-Tracys, the barons Sudeley, never lost the respect, even the affection, of their former tenants – many of whom within ten years would be on the road to acquiring the freehold to their farms – or the people who derived a livelihood from serving the estate or working in the institutions its owners had created. Indeed, the estate may have failed, but the farms survived. Many of them are farmed to this day.

An encumbered inheritance

In 1877 the new Lord Sudeley inherited what at first sight appeared to be a wealthy and substantial estate totalling nearly 24,000 acres in Gloucestershire and Montgomeryshire, together with a few remaining properties inherited from his Weaver and Tracy ancestors in Shropshire.[705] Together these properties were said to be worth over £23,000 per annum, 'which implied a capital value of £583,500'.[706] There was also a London town house at 7 Buckingham Gate, near St. James's Park in Westminster, and valuable collections of paintings

[703] *England and Wales. Return of owners of Land, 1873*. H.C. (1874) LXXII, (C. 1097) quoted in Brian Ll.James, 'The 'Great' Landowners of Wales in 1873', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 14, 3, (1965-6), pp. 301-320.
[704] In the first Gregynog Estate Sale catalogue of 1894 (Gregynog Hall archive) the total acreage is given as 18,075.
[705] The financial assets and liabilities inherited by the fourth Lord Sudeley in 1877 have been analysed in detail by S.D. Chapman in his article 'Sudeley in the City' in *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington* (1987), pp.253-267.
[706] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.255.

and Swiss stained glass (acquired for Toddington by the 2nd Lord Sudeley), not to mention expectations of a substantial fortune to be inherited by Sudeley's wife Ada Tollemache. In the 4th Lord Sudeley's *Historical Survey and Apologia* of 1893 he records that in 1877 the Toddington estate was valued, with timber, at about £300,000 with a gross rental of £9,000, and the Gregynog estate was valued with timber, at about £400,000 with a gross rental of £13,000.[707] S. D. Chapman calculates, however, that the net rentals after the deduction of expenses on both estates amounted to only about £7,000 per annum, which was augmented by Sudeley's private income of £3,000, making a total of £10,000. But this came nowhere near to covering his costs, or his family obligations. Chapman calculates that jointures and family charges of £4,500 per annum, repayment of Sudeley's late brother's debts, insurance and interest of £7,000 per annum, and establishment expenses at Toddington and Gregynog of between £7,000 and £8,000 per annum, totalling between £18,000 and £19,000 per annum, meant that Sudeley was 'living above his means to the tune of £8,000 to £10,000 a year'.[708]

Sudeley's late brother's debts were the biggest problem. The 3rd baron had undertaken the rebuilding of Toddington's Parish Church of St. Leonard in order to accommodate the enormous tomb, designed by John Graham Lough, of the 1st Lord Sudeley and his wife Henrietta (Fig. 7). The first baron had left £5,000 in his will for the building of the tomb, but the rebuilding of the church had not been provided for. The fourth Lord Sudeley was appalled to discover that

> the money spent on building the Church had been borrowed from the Bank and that when the Architect's fees were paid I had to find no less than £43,000. This together with other debts left by my brother amounted to nearly £100,000. The question arose as to … whether I ought to repudiate the debt or whether I should take it on my own shoulders. To have declined to pay would have necessitated selling off all the furniture &c in the houses and brought general discredit all round. I therefore in consideration decided to borrow the money from Insurance Offices and bear the burden of this debt '.[709]

'Incredibly,' says Chapman, 'Sudeley not only continued to live at this level, but to invest large sums of money on his estates.'[710] As Chapman points out, the late 1870s was a bad time to inherit an encumbered landed estate. In the middle years of the century agricultural productivity had risen in response to increasing demand from a growing population, import

[707] 4th Baron Sudeley, *Historical Survey and Apologia, 1893*, Carbon copy typescript deposited at Gregynog by the late 7th Lord Sudeley. Hereafter, Sudeley, *Historical Survey*.
[708] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.256.
[709] Sudeley, *Historical Survey*.
[710] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.256.

tariffs (at least before the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846) and improved farming techniques. But from the 1870s, cheap grain, meat and wool poured into free trade Britain, serviced by fast and efficient railways, refridgerated steamships, and the new technique of canning. Agricultural prices fell steeply, to be shortly followed by farm rents.[711] As David Cannadine points out, during these years 'The landowners of Britain were exposed to the full and icy blast of the global economy'.[712]

Furthermore, Sudeley found that both the Toddington and Gregynog estate farms had become run-down. At Toddington, funds and manpower had been concentrated on the rebuilding of the church. At Gregynog, despite having been the responsibility of his uncle Henry, 'for many years the buildings and farmhouses at Gregynog had been patched up and though considerable expense had been annually incurred, it had been done in a very irregular and unsatisfactory manner … it thus became absolutely necessary to lay out a very large sum of money in order to prevent the farms being thrown up'.[713]

Despite the huge burden of anxiety his inheritance brought with it, during the years following 1877 the new Lord Sudeley was as active as ever in supporting the Liberal cause in Montgomeryshire, and maintaining a high profile in national affairs. Nonetheless, the estates were never far from his mind. In 1879 he appointed William Scott Owen to the post of agent of the Gregynog estate, with a brief to turn it round and, if possible, make it pay once more.

Missing years

It is not clear who had been left in charge of the estate after Henry Hanbury-Tracy and his family left Gregynog Hall in 1875. In the collection of Gregynog estate ledgers in the National Library of Wales there are no rent or tithe receipt books after Michaelmas 1872, indeed no records of rental receipts at all until 1883 when Scott Owen began to record 'Rents received and paid to bankers'. Neither are there any 'Receipts and Remittances' ledgers after 1873, until Scott Owen began to keep his records of estate repairs in 1884.[714] However, on the front page of the *Montgomeryshire Express* for 30 September 1879 an advertisement appeared, placed by one Alfred Ikin, 'Who was … for the last seven years Agent of the Gregynog Estates of the Right

[711] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.253.
[712] David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, (New Harmony, 1992), p.90.
[713] Sudeley, *Historical Survey*.
[714] NLW, Gregynog Estate Rentals, 1752-1890.

Hon. Lord Sudeley', offering his services as 'Land Agent, Architect, Surveyor and Valuer, Accountant and Auditor'.[715] It can be inferred from this account of himself that Alfred Ikin had been employed by (the 3rd) Lord Sudeley since 1872, but his name does not appear in any of the surviving estate ledgers. In fact, the only sources of information about his career as Gregynog agent are the local newspapers, such as a report of a concert at Tregynon, when the chair was 'ably filled by Mr Alfred Ikin, agent to Lord Sudeley'.[716] He took the chair at the local Bwlchyffridd Eisteddfod, his daughters (who appear to have been quite musical, often taking part in local concerts) presenting the prizes. He is reported as having attended meetings of the Montgomeryshire Agricultural Society, and represented Lord Sudeley at the Annual Meeting of the Caersws Agricultural Society in 1874. He handled some tricky negotiations with the Newtown Local Board over the matter of Lord Sudeley's presentation of a chapel site in December that year, and received on Lord Sudeley's behalf a delegation of Tregynon farmers who wished to see the railway extended from Abermule to Tregynon in 1875.[717] He attended the 'Great Liberal Demonstration' in Newtown in 1876. He held several positions on local committees, including being Vice-Chairman of Newtown Highways board, whose Chairman was Major Crewe-Read of Plasdinam. One of his last appearances in the press as agent to Lord Sudeley was at the Rent Audit dinner in April 1878, when he took the chair and proposed a toast to Lord and Lady Sudeley – now, of course, the newly succeeded 4th Lord Sudeley and his wife.[718] Mr Ikin was still living at Cefngwifed, the Gregynog agent's house, in February 1879, when he led an evangelical service at Bettws church, and chaired the latest 'Gregynog Band Entertainment' in Tregynon schoolroom, on which occasion, in the *Montgomeryshire Express* report, he is given the designation 'Mus Doc'. These concerts continued throughout the summer of that year.[719] He was still at Cefngwifed when his name appeared with that of F.S.A. Hanbury-Tracy MP at the Presentation of the Welsh Football Association Challenge Cup to Newtown White Star Club in July that year,[720] but by September, when his advertisement appeared in the paper, he appears to have moved to Newtown, where he resided for some years, continuing to serve on local committees and taking part in choral concerts and other musical events. The lost estate records for these years makes it difficult to evaluate Ikin as

[715] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 30 September 1879.
[716] *Cambrian News* 8 August 1873.
[717] *Cambrian News*, 9, 18 January, 30 October, 11 December 1874, 12 February 1875.
[718] *Cambrian News*, 22nd December 1876, 4 May 1877, 5 April 1878.
[719] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 4 February 1879, 11 February 1879.
[720] *Wrexham Guardian*, 6 July 1879.

Gregynog agent, although he was apparently well regarded in the community. What became of those records, and whether Ikin was responsible for their loss, remains a mystery. The next time the Gregynog agent features in a press report, in October 1879, William Scott Owen was in post.[721]

William Scott Owen

> When the 4th Lord Sudeley inherited Gregynog he took my father with him to manage his new estate ... When he left to return to Toddington he turned to my father and said, 'Well! Here you are Scot – "Lord of all you survey!" But don't forget to send me some money![722]

William Scott Owen was born in Colchester, Essex, in 1853, the son of a clergyman of upper-class background with ancestors connected with the Dukes of Somerset.[723] From the age of fourteen he attended Marlborough College. It was the Marlborough connection that brought him into contact with Charles Hanbury-Tracy, later the 4th Lord Sudeley, who had also been educated there (although hardly at the same time – born in 1840, Sudeley was thirteen years older than Scott Owen). Scott Owen's daughter records that when Sudeley took on her father he first 'had him trained at Toddington', before putting him in charge of the Gregynog estate in 1879.[724]

For the next forty years, William Scott Owen was the most stable element in the management hierarchy of the Gregynog estate, and the notes, articles, histories and estate ledgers he left behind are the most important sources for understanding this period of the estate's history.[725] As Rachael Jones points out, Scott Owen is an excellent example of an agent who illustrates Carol Beardmore's contention that the estate steward and agent records are an important source for the study of rural communities.[726] He immersed himself totally in the estate and its community, and resided at Cefngwifed, the traditional home of Gregynog agents, for the rest of his life. He became an important and greatly respected personality in Montgomeryshire and

[721] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 21 October, 1879.
[722] Gregynog Hall MSS, Lady Marjorie Marshall-Cornwall (daughter of William Scott Owen) to Glyn Tegai Hughes, 15 May 1969.
[723] The early details of Scott Owen's life are drawn, with thanks, from Rachael Jones, 'William Scott Owen, 1853–1920: an English-born land agent in mid Wales', *Family & Community History*, 21, 2, (July 2018), pp. 82-95
[724] Marshall-Cornwall, *ibid*.
[725] William Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog* 1888; Gregynog Hall MSS, Williams Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book 1888-1913*, Facsim.
[726] Rachael Jones, 'William Scott Owen', p.82; Carol A. Beardmore, 'The Rural Estate through the Eyes of the Land Agent: A Community in Microcosm c.1812 – 1844', *Family & Community History*, 19, 1, (April 2016), p.18.

beyond, serving as a County Councillor and later as a Director of the University College of Wales, Bangor. It is still possible to hear anecdotes about 'Mr Scott Owen', remembered by local farmers whose grandparents were once tenants of the estate.[727] His grave occupies a prominent position in Tregynon churchyard.

Scott Owen took up the reins at Gregynog in 1879 after a period of what was clearly poor management, perhaps attributable to Henry Hanbury-Tracy's increasing age and frequent absence from Gregynog, the 3rd Lord Sudeley's lack of interest, and perhaps, also, the lack of executive authority delegated to the interim agent Alfred Ikin. Scott Owen's first task was to address the problem, as summarised by his employer Lord Sudeley, that 'for many years the buildings and farmhouses at Gregynog had been patched up and though considerable expense had been annually incurred, it had been done in a very irregular and unsatisfactory manner.'[728]

Reinvesting in the estate.

Why had the farms become so run-down? Chapter Three of this thesis reviewed the fortunes of the Gregynog estate in the early years of its inheritance by the Hanbury-Tracy family, when, despite mounting arrears of rent, a large proportion of what monies were received every half year went to funding the rebuilding of Toddington Manor, the maintenance of the newly-ennobled family's life-style, and, from 1849, the rebuilding of Gregynog Hall, and the expenditure on estate roads. Not that the poor state of the farms was necessarily attributable only to neglect by the Gregynog estate proprietors: both David Howell and Matthew Cragoe emphasise the reluctance of tenants across Wales to invest in and improve their farms themselves, because they feared, above all, that if they did the landlord would raise their rents, and if they moved to another tenancy they would not be compensated for that investment – one of the reasons for the later campaigns for a Welsh Land Act, the passing of the Agricultural Holdings Acts of 1875 and 1883, and the establishment of a Commission to enquire into Welsh Land Tenure in 1893.[729]

[727] Conversations in 2021 with Mrs Jean Jones, of Tyn-y-bryn Farm. Her grandfather David Gethin was offered the tenancy of the farm by Scott Owen in about 1912. He later bought the farm.
[728] Sudeley, *Historical Survey*.
[729] Howell, *Land and People*, pp.46-52; Cragoe, *Anglican Aristocracy*, pp 44-48; D. Lleufer Thomas, *The Welsh Land Commission, A Digest of its Report* (1896).

Neither William Scott Owen nor Lord Sudeley himself are recorded as having blamed the farmers themselves for the run-down nature of their holdings. Years of 'patching up' had been inadequate, said Lord Sudeley in his *Historical Survey*: 'it thus became absolutely necessary to lay out a very large sum of money in order to prevent the farms being thrown up'. But to lay out this large sum of money Lord Sudeley first had to borrow it, which he proceeded to do, obtaining a mortgage on the estate, and borrowing money under the terms of the Settled Land Act of 1882 and Land Improvement Loans Act of 1883.

William Scott Owen's *History of Gregynog* of 1888 includes details of the 'very large sum of money' that was laid out on the estate farms from 1878 to 1888.[730] As shown by the summary in Appendix II, Table 5**,** Sudeley's total expenditure over these ten years amounted to over £92,000. This was in addition to the £80,000 he invested in the planting of half a million fruit bushes and trees at Toddington, and the building of a factory to make jam from the fruit.[731] Such expenditure was also in addition to money he put into the Newtown flannel mills, and other industrial enterprises, as will be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.[732] But the servicing of the debts he had inherited from his brother, together with his household and family maintenance costs, ate up the annual rental receipts, so that Sudeley's income was inadequate to meet the cost of these investments – unlike the much larger and wealthier Wynnstay estate, where, according to the report of the Welsh Land Commission, nearly £300,000 was spent on estate repairs and improvements between 1862 and 1893, an annual expenditure of about twenty per-cent of the gross rental.[733] At this time the entailed nature of Sudeley's inheritance[734] proscribed the selling of farms to raise the necessary capital, so after a survey undertaken by a Mr Keary under the conditions of the Land Improvement Act, which confirmed the deplorable condition of both the Gloucestershire and Montgomeryshire estates, Sudeley raised a mortgage of about £200,000, roughly one third of the estates' capital value.[735] 'I took the best advice possible under the circumstances,' wrote Sudeley in 1893, 'and the work

[730] William Scott Owen*, History of Gregynog,* 1888*,* pp. 130-140.
[731] 'Lord Sudeley's Fruit Farm' *Bygones* Vol 6, (1882-3), pp209-210. In the *Review of Reviews*, (London, June 1899, an article entitled 'The Peerage in Trade' lists Lord Sudeley as a Jam Maker. Among other peers 'in trade', Lord Londonderrry is listed as a Coal dealer and the Marquis of Bute as a Wine Grower.
[732] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.256
[733] *The Welsh Land Commission, A Digest of its Report*, (1896), p.202.
[734] NLW Harrison Box 9, Parcel 1, Deed of 1878 reciting the Hanbury Tracy marriage settlement December 1798, quoted in chapter 1, part 2 of this thesis. As discussed in Chapter Three above Lord Sudeley's brother, the third baron, had already disposed of the non-entailed Bridgnorth property. See Shropshire Archives, XSC/1/8, 8 Feb 1865.
[735] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.256.

was carried out entirely by the Land Improvement Co with the inspection of the Land Commissioners.'[736] At Gregynog, the work was superintended by William Scott Owen, who kept conscientious records of expenditure and payments to workers in ledgers now preserved in the National Library of Wales.[737] His *History of Gregynog 1888* includes retrospective lists of work carried out on each farm, whether on draining, new buildings or repairs, from which the summaries included in Table VI are derived.[738]

Scott Owen's Commonplace Book 1888-1913

From 1888 to 1913 Scott Owen kept a Commonplace Book in which he jotted down notes, comments and memoranda relating to life on the Gregynog estate, with occasional remarks about events in the wider world.[739] It offers a glimpse into the life of the estate in its last years in the ownership of the Sudeleys, and the subsequent years of its ownership by Sir James, later Lord, Joicey. Owen notes the comings and goings of 'the family', including lavish wedding and coming-of-age celebrations; he comments on the weather and who got elected to Parliament, whether the price of beef was up or down, and how much of an abatement was granted at the latest rent audit. A major preoccupation from page one of the Commonplace Book, however, was Game.

Gregynog as a sporting estate

Lord Sudeley's political and business activities may have kept him away from both Toddington and Gregynog for much of the time but he and his family continued to participate in the sporting calendar, particularly game shooting, the most prestigious elite sport of the Victorian upper classes, and the occasional coursing meeting.[740] One of Scott Owen's duties as agent was to oversee the gamekeepers and the men who maintained the game coverts, and to organise the shoots; three flimsy volumes of the game books he kept between 1877 and 1883 record what was shot, when, where, occasionally by whom, and how the game was disposed of.[741] For example, in 1880, from 27 to 30 October a party consisting of Lord Sudeley and friends,

[736] Sudeley, *Historical Survey*. N.B. Sudeley is not referring here to the Welsh Land Commission of 1894.
[737] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, Ledgers 47-57, .
[738] Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog* 1888, pp.134-140.
[739] Gregynog Hall MSS, Williams Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book 1888-1913*, Facsim.
[740] R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Field sports, conservation and the countryside in Georgian and Victorian Wales', *WHR*, 16, 3 (June 1993), pp. 308-325; Alistair J. Durie, 'Game shooting: An Elite Sport, c. 1870-1980', *Sport in History*, Vol. 28, 3 (2008), pp. 431-449.
[741] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, Ledgers 61, 62, 63.

including his fellow Liberal Major Otley Crewe-Read of Plasdinam, shot covers in Aberbechan, Garden Wood, Cwmcignant and Brynrorin farms, with a total bag of 180 partridge, 456 cock pheasant, 2 partridge, 8 wildfowl, 71 hares and 78 rabbits. October 28th 'Very wet day', noted Scott Owen, and the 29th was 'Stormy'. In addition to Tracy family members recipients of the game included Newtown Infirmary (four pheasant) local clergymen, estate tenants and villagers, and Mr Pryce the Tregynon policeman. On other occasions pheasants were presented to local stationmasters, including the stationmaster of the Van Railway, the poet John 'Ceiriog' Hughes. Larger quantities of game were sold to dealers. The game on the Gregynog estate consisted principally of pheasant, partridge, hares, and countless rabbits, but not grouse. So in March 1891, in order to participate in the opening of the sporting calendar on the 'Glorious Twelfth' of August, the first day of the grouse season, Lord Sudeley took a five-year lease of Eyrnant Moor, a grouse moor above Lake Vyrnwy.[742]

That game rights were jealously protected by landowners is suggested by a note in William Scott Owen's *History of Gregynog,* recording the agreement reached between Lord Sudeley and Sir Watkin Williams Wynn relating to rights over land in the lordship of Arwystli which lay adjacent to the lordship of Cedewain. This land belonged to Lord Sudeley but its sporting rights were claimed by Sir Watkin 'on the assumption that the Inclosure Award gave him such a right as Lord of the Manor'. During his long residence at Gregynog, Sudeley's uncle, Henry Hanbury-Tracy, had disagreed with this, leading to the occasional confrontation between rival keepers. Lord Sudeley sought the opinion of a Mr Elton, QC, whose opinion was that Sir Watkin had no such right; however, in the interest of good neighbourliness Lord Sudeley agreed to pay Sir Watkin the 'nomimal' price of £100 for the sporting rights. The residual issue of mineral rights relating to the same land would be 'dealt with when such an occasion should arise'.[743] This does not seem to have occurred, although Lord Sudeley did not neglect investigating the possibilities of mineral rights relating to his former Shropshire properties.

[742] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book* 25 March 1891. The first grouse shoot appears to have been something of a disappointment, according to Scott Owen. On 12 August he noted 'Eyrnant Moor – Mr Charles, Mr E Buckley, Mr Algy (Tracy) shot but only got 14 brace 1st day, & 7 ½ on 13th. Weather bad and grouse generally very bad. Lord Sudeley & W.S. Owen went on 14th but 15th proved wet & no shooting – on 16th drove one part & only got 5 brace from 11 to 2 o'clock.'

[743] Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog 1888,* pp.121-125.

Lord Sudeley's need to increase estate revenues in the 1880s had led to Gregynog being let as a sporting estate to a Major P.S. Phillips of Crumlin Hall near Newport from 1st September 1883 to 1st June 1888, the rent being £500 for two years, then £250 for two years, and £200 for one year. This had proved something of a headache for Scott Owen: 'Owing to Mr Phillips being disliked, much poaching went on,' he noted in his Commonplace Book, and 'The letting of the shooting was disliked by the tenants – who took no care of the game.'[744] This dislike had been exacerbated in 1884 when Major Phillips brought a prosecution against three local men under the Night Poaching Act of 1823. The case was tried at the Spring Assizes in Caernarfon where the accused were defended by the Newtown solicitor Martin Woosnam, and were found not guilty by the jury, who, it was suggested by the *Montgomeryshire Express*, probably supported the (alleged) poachers.[745] A number of other cases came before Newtown Petty Sessions in 1893, brought by various keepers and 'watchers' employed by Lord Sudeley. Once again Martin Woosnam appeared for the defence in each case, this time unsuccessfully in two of the cases, which ended with the defendants being fined sums ranging from ten to thirty shillings 'with costs'. The third case was adjourned to check the validity of the defendant's claim to have a permit to shoot.[746] A much more serious case occurred in December 1906, by which time the Gregynog estate was owned by Lord Joicey. On that occasion the charge was not only poaching but shooting with attempt to murder.[747]

Game laws grievances

Poaching is probably the oldest and most endemic crime of the countryside.[748] The Game Laws, including such legislation as the Night Poaching Act of 1823 and the Poaching Prevention Act of 1862,[749] often reinforced by conditions in rental agreements, were regarded as being designed to retain landlords' possession of all the wildlife on their land, and to criminalise the very killing of a rabbit to feed a hungry family. That spokesperson for the rural poor, Joseph

[744] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f.1.
[745] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 29th April 1884. See also Rachael Jones, The Gregynog Estate, Montgomeryshire, 1880-1920, unpublised MA thesis, University of Leicester, 2007, pp. 34-35.
[746] *Montgomery County Times*, 16th December 1893, 'Poachers in Court – Sudeley gamekeepers named'; Rachael Jones, 'Three Legal Cases from the History of the Gregynog Estate', *Welsh Legal History Society*, 10, (2010), pp.121-133.
[747] *Cardiff Times,* 3rd February 1906.
[748] Rose Staveley-Wadham*, A Poacher's Progress – Attitudes to Poaching in Rural Britain*, British Newspaper Archive, Headlines from History blog, June 12, 2019, accessed 13th January 2023; Harvey Osborne and Michael Winstanley, 'Rural and Urban Poaching in Victorian England', *Rural History*, 17, 2, (2006), p.187-212.
[749] Night Poaching Act, 1828, c.69 9 Geo. IV, http:/www.legislation.gov.uk; Poaching Prevention Act, 1862, 114 25 and 26 Vict, http://www.legislation.gov.uk (all accessed 13 January 2023).

Arch, railed against the Game Laws as discriminatory and unjust. Wildlife could not be private property: 'We labourers do not believe hares and rabbits belong to any individual, not any more than thrushes or blackbirds do.'[750] The passing of the Ground Game Act in 1880,[751] which allowed the occupants of land, as well as the owners, to kill ground game, that is, hares and rabbits, rather than winged game such as pheasant and partridge, set out to ameliorate this situation but had not satisfied those who wished to see all the game laws swept away. One of those was the Newtown solicitor Martin Woosnam: at a meeting in 1885 of the newly formed Tregynon Liberal Club, he railed at the law which put a man shooting a rabbit for his sick child in danger of prosecution.[752] The issue was raised constantly at the hearings of the Welsh Land Commissioners in the early 1890s, as recorded in the *Report* of 1896. The principal complaint on the part of tenant farmers was that game preservation and the exercise of sporting rights damaged crops and fences (the depredations of pheasants on field crops was particularly resented), that (often foreign) gamekeepers were bullies, that sporting tenants were selfish and careless, with no understanding of agriculture or the countryside, and that the punishment for alleged game offences was unduly harsh. The opposing argument, expressed by estate owners and agents, was that crop damage was exaggerated; when it happened, compensation was usually offered, and that the loss of game preservation would undermine a section of the rural economy which brought employment.[753] Opinion on this subject was to remain divided, and might be regarded as a symptom of a breach which since the 1850s had been growing between rural communities in Wales and increasingly urbanised, often Anglicised estate owners, and which the occasional distribution of rabbits to the locals could not ameliorate.

Managing the Gregynog estate

The problems of poaching, and of keeping the game safe for sport in the face of tenants' grievances about spoiled crops and broken fences, were only part of the many issues attendant on the management of an estate of 18,000 acres on which large sums of money were being spent to improve its farms, while overseeing the work of a hierarchy of estate staff and

[750] Quoted in F.M.L. Thompson, 'Landowners and the Rural Community', *The Victorian Countryside*, II, (1981) p.460.
[751] Ground Game Act, 1880, c.47 (Regnal 43 and 44 Vict), http:/www.legislation.gov.uk; (13.1.2023)
[752] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 24 February 1885.
[753] D.Lleufer Thomas, *The Welsh Land Commission, A Digest of its Report*, (London, 1896), p.188. See also Allan Fletcher, 'Game Laws in the late nineteenth century: a case study from Clwyd', *Local historian* (London. 1968), 1996, Vol.26 (3), p.142-154. Poaching in the more general context of rural crime is discussed by Rachael Jones in *Crime, Courts & Community in Mid-Victorian Wales: Montgomeryshire, People and Places,* (Cardiff, 2018).

labourers, and keeping the rents fair in an era of fluctuating farm prices. In his *History of Gregynog* Scott Owen records the estate workforce in 1880: Labourers, road men, shepherds, horse men, foresters, building staff 'Under Mr Wm Corfield', waggoners, fencers, thatchers and gardeners, woodmen, drainers and brick-makers. Pay rates varied between two and four shillings a day. A noticeable feature is the length of time in which some of the men had been associated with the estate: John Davies, labourer, 35 years, for example; John Buxton, 'With horses', 48 years; David Jones, mason, 45 years.[754] One farm bailiff, Richard Gittins (on 2s.10d per day) is listed, but no gamekeepers. However, in Scott Owen's returns to Lord Sudeley 1884-1888, an unnamed gamekeeper is recorded as being paid £14.12s per month.[755] This was presumably Charles Day, the gamekeeper who was roused by poachers in the 1884 case alluded to above.

Investing in the estate woodlands

As has been noted in farm tenancy agreements dating from Arthur Blayney's time, rights over woodland and trees on all the estate farms was retained by the landlord; tenants were forbidden from felling timber except for what they needed for fuel and the mending of hedges. The costs of forestry and timber-management, planting, felling, and the income from selling it, are recorded in all of the surviving Gregynog estate cash books. Under the 4th Lord Sudeley, this potential source of income was to prove just as important as it had been in the 1820s. Scott Owen's Commonplace Book contains copious references to the maintenance of plantations on farms all over the estate: for example, he records that in March 1888 the wood at Brynycul farm was planted up 'with larch, Scotch, spruce – few silvers, Donglasii & Stone pine', and larch trees were felled at Aberbechan Hall. Later notes record planting at Upper Garth, Tynyshettin and Cwmcignant farms. Rachael Jones points out that the planting of larch would have been regarded as a useful medium-term investment as larch grows to maturity in forty years, and cites it as evidence of Lord Sudeley's long-term commitment to the estate.[756]

Orchards at Toddington

At the same time as he was committing large sums of borrowed money on the Gregynog estate farms, Sudeley was also investing heavily in the Toddington estate by planting large orchards

[754] Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog*, pp. 148-151.
[755] NLW *Gregynog Estate Rentals*, Ledger 47, Scott Owen to Lord Sudeley, 1884-1888, pp. 5, 6.
[756] Rachael Jones, The Gregynog Estate, Montgomeryshire, 1880-1920, unpublished MA thesis (University of Leicester, 2007), p.41.

with half a million soft fruit bushes, apple trees and Kentish cobnuts. He installed over two acres of heated glass, and built a railway to carry coals there. In 1882 *Bygones* quoted a story from the Dursley Gazette reporting that 'Lord Sudeley was building a jam factory … 'All preserving to be done by steam' & the plant to be let to a jam manufacturer, Mr Thomas W. Beech, of Ealing-road Gardens, Old Brentford – who will buy all the fruit.'[757] But by the time the orchards were in full bearing, it was too late for Lord Sudeley to reap the benefit.

Other Sources of Income

Lord Sudeley appeared to believe that his enormous expenditure on estate improvements at Gregynog and Toddington would eventually generate a return substantial enough to cover the cost of the loans which underwrote them and to ensure the estate's survival. Nonetheless he did look about him for other sources of income. Through his connection with Stuart Rendel, elected MP for Montgomeryshire in 1880, Sudeley became a Director of Sir William Armstrong & Co., an arms manufacturer in Tyneside. This brought in an annual salary of £5,000, but when the company went public in 1882 he invested £20,000, presumably assuming that there would soon be profitable returns on his shares. A few years later he lost another £60,000 when another of Sir William Armstrong's companies, the Projectile Company, failed. However good his intentions as a conscientious landlord, Lord Sudeley was no businessman, as was to become evident. [758]

Other Possibilities

There is evidence in Scott Owen's *History* of attempts to develop other sources of estate revenue, notably by investigating the extent to which mineral rights lying under the ground of former Weaver and Tracy properties in the vicinity of Wyke and Shifnal in Shropshire, might have been reserved when these properties were sold, and thus might still be in the ownership of Lord Sudeley. According to Scott Owen, the last property to be sold was Kemberton Farm, near Shifnal, under parts of whose land 'coal is supposed to lie, and the minerals were not included in that sale'.[759] The opinion of a number of surveyors and lawyers was sought, their reports carefully transcribed by Scott Owen (in one of which is a reference to 'Mr Ikin' – the former Gregynog agent – representing the estate at one meeting in 1887). The consensus was

[757] Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 88, 1969, p.165; *Bygones* Vol 6 1882-3 pp 209-10.
[758] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', pp.256-257.
[759] Scott Owen, *History of Gregynog*, 1888, p.163.

that although seams of coal and ironstone might well lie beneath the ground, the costs and complexities of exploiting them would outweigh any potential return.[760] This must have disappointed Lord Sudeley, whose Montgomeryshire neighbour David Davies's Ocean Coal Company was already making the huge fortune from the coal seams of the Rhondda Valley that led to the building of Barry Dock in 1889.[761]

The Crisis in Agriculture

The most significant characteristic of Victorian Britain is its social transformation from a rural to an urban population, with the result that 'as a major element in the country's life [the countryside] declined both economically and socially'.[762] Mingay and many others have described the elements of this transformation, and its impact on British agriculture: by the 1880s farming was in severe crisis, exacerbated, in addition to new social and economic conditions, by competition from cheap imports and by very bad weather conditions.[763] Mingay's two volume *The Victorian Countryside* focuses primarily on England, but includes separate essays on Wales, Scotland and Ireland. David Howell's essay on the situation in Wales points out that the problems facing the mixed livestock and dairy farmers of Wales differed from those of the cereal-producing areas of the south-east, which were more vulnerable to fluctuating grain prices and competition from imported wheat. 'The pressure of poverty, over-population and rising demand for holdings remorselessly ground down the peasantry of the highland zone', but 'the Welsh situation … was additionally affected by the separate socio-cultural factors of the Principality', and what were claimed to be 'a lack of feeling between landlords and tenants in Wales', exacerbated for political reasons by Non-conformist radicals. John Davies makes the same point from a slightly different perspective: 'In England, farmers felt, on the whole, an identity of interest with their landlords which was largely absent in Wales. The larger Welsh farmers were not members of the lower ranks of gentry society; rather they were the leaders of a different kind of society.'[764] That such antipathies seem to

[760] *Ibid*., pp. 163-176.
[761] Herbert Williams, *Davies the Ocean, Railway King and Coal Tycoon*, (Cardiff, 1991).
[762] G. E. Mingay, 'Introduction: Rural England in the Industrial Age', In G. E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, Vol 1, London, (1981), p.3.
[763] F.M.L. Thompson, 'Free Trade and the Land', in G. E. Mingay (ed)*, The Victorian Countryside*, (London, 1981), pp. 103-117; W.A. Armstrong, 'The Flight from the Land', in G. E. Mingay (ed)*, The Victorian Countryside*, (London, 1981), pp. 118-135; David Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, (London, 2017), p.379; Ewen Green, No Longer the Farmer's Friend: The Conservative Party and Agricultural Protection, 1880-1914', in J.R. Wordie, (ed.), *Agriculture and Politics in England, 1815-1939*, (London, 2000), pp.149-172.
[764] David W. Howell, 'The Regions and Their Issues: Wales', Mingay, *Victorian Countryside*, op.cit., pp.71- 80. John Davies, 'The End of the Great Estates and the Rise of Freehold Farming in Wales', *WHR*, 7, 2 (Dec 1974), p.210.

have been less of a problem on the Gregynog estate is suggested by the consistently favourable comment about the Hanbury-Tracys and Sudeleys as landlords in the press from the 1850s onwards.[765] Press reports of Rent Audits also reported favourably on rent abatements granted when livestock prices were low, duly recorded by Scott Owen, as extracted in Appendix II, Table 6.

It is clear that rent abatements were on the whole linked to the market prices of cattle, sheep and horses. 1889 and 1890 seem to have been better years, as Scott Owen notes in his Commonplace Book that store cattle and horses were selling well, but prices fell again in 1891 and 1892, abatements being awarded accordingly. This seems to have ensured that most tenants were able to retain their holdings, although in April 1888 Scott Owen notes a 'distraint' on the rent, 'by his own desire' of Evan Owen of Middle Garth. Other tenants died; in March 1890 'Old Mr Breeze of Melin-y-Gloch died of Influenza and old Davies of Glascoch killed from falling out of his cart, breaking his neck.' In June 1891 he records influenza 'very virulent' and that six tenants died of it: 'Mrs Richards, Brynhafod, Mrs Richards Cwmgronw, David Jones & his daughter Goetre, John Gethin of Lower House and one other'. Only three changes of tenancy are recorded: in November 1888 Cwm Farm was let to Edward Whitticase of Henfaes; in March 1889 Cefngwestydd farm was relet to John Francis 'at old Rent', and in April 1891 Argoed Farm was let to the sons of the late Edward Lewis – Whitticase, Francis and Lewis being names which had occurred in Gregynog estate rentals for a hundred years or more.[766]

In the 1870s, 80s and 90s Britain suffered a series of severe winters, wet springs and dry summers which had a drastic impact on agriculture, especially in the grain-growing areas of the midlands and south-east.[767] Scott Owen's History of Gregynog includes a 'Table of rainfall in Montgomeryshire' between 1870 and 1887 'Taken by Mr Pugh at Dolfor', which records an average rainfall of 43.13 inches over eighteen years, ranging from 67.73 inches in 1872 to 30.19 inches in 1887. He seems not to have kept such records himself, although he notes examples of extreme weather in his Commonplace Book, such as snow lying on the ground for

[765] E.g. *Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 8 October, 1872, 'Tregynon: Opening of the New School'; *Cambrian News*, 30 April 1880, 'Caersws Rent Audit'; *Montgomeryshire Express*,15 April 1890, 'Lord Sudeley's Montgomeryshire Rent Audits'.
[766] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, passim.
[767] T. P. Burt, P. D. Jones, & N. J. K. Howden, 'An analysis of rainfall across the British Isles in the 1870s', *International journal of climatology*, 35, 10, (2015) pp. 2934-2947.

22 days in February 1888, and two months' drought in the spring of 1889. At the end of 1890 he noted:

> The year of 1890 has been a curious one, for while England was deluged with rain, Wales was dry and cold. August was a wet month but Sept was glorious & fine. Cold weather set in at the end of November and lasted without a break to the end of the year and on thro' January 1891. One of the longest, if not the longest frost on record since 1813. The thermometer is said to have fallen below zero [Fahrenheit] in some places.

Despite this, he continues:

> Farmers have been fairly prosperous, sheep, cattle and horses selling well, and the harvest was good – wheat especially so. Turnips also were good, and taken all around the crops were above average. Corn continues to bring a poor price.[768]

Historians have written of the wet weather of the late nineteenth century as disastrous for British agriculture[769] but Scott Owen's remarks appear to emphasise the stoicism with which most Welsh farmers, at least, carried on as best they could.

Welsh Land Reform

While preoccupied with the day-to-day running of the Gregynog estate Owen was not unaware of changing attitudes on the part of some farm tenants towards their landlords, as manifested in the campaign for Welsh land reform and what became known as the Tithe Wars.[770] To some extent the Sudeleys' active Liberal politics and support for Disestablishment, not to mention their relaxed attitude to rent arrears, and regular rent abatements, seems to have insulated them from the anti-landlord unrest engendered by nonconformist hostility to the payment of tithes – a long-standing issue – and mounting grievances relating to farm tenancies, rentals, insecurity of tenure and lack of compensation for unrealised improvements, exacerbated by the general downturn in the agricultural economy from the 1870s. All of which made the 'Welsh land question' a political issue that landlords could not ignore, especially in the face of polemic from chapel pulpits, the nonconformist press and pamphlets such as T.J. Hughes (Adfyfr)'s *Landlordism in Wales* in which he castigated the landlord system which lay 'its heavy

[768] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, passim.
[769] Hubert H. Lamb, *Climate, History and the Modern World* (London, 1995), p.254; Jonathan Brown, *Agriculture in England: A Survey of Farming*, (Manchester, 1987), pp. 1-6, quoted in Alexandra Harris, *Weatherland: Writers and Artists under English Skies*, (London, 2015), p.320.
[770] David Howell, *Land and People,* pp. 83-90; Kenneth O Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp. 84-90; D. Lleufer Thomas, *The Welsh Land Commission: A Digest of its Report* (London, 1896), pp.91-104; Siôn Jones, Hanes y Degwm yng Nghymruyn ystod y Bewardedd Ganrif ar Bymtheg, gyda sylw arbennig i "Ryfel y Degwm", unpublished PhD thesis, Bangor University (2017).

paralysing land at every turn in the highways and byways of Welsh life … It dwarfs and blights everywhere our national growth'.[771]

David Howell points out that such emotional propaganda dwelling on the evils of Welsh landlordism was sectarian and political in its aims, whipped up by radical Liberals who attempted to draw parallels with situation in Ireland; anti-landlord feeling was more prevalent in North Wales, where the Welsh language press was more influential, and in other Welsh-speaking areas, but less so in the border counties.[772] Nonetheless, William Scott Owen's comment, when Lord Sudeley was elected as an Alderman of the new Montgomeryshire County Council in 1889, that 'every means was adopted by Dissenters and Radicals to depreciate Lord Sudeley's Candidature', suggests that the county was not without its radicals – whose opinions of Lord Sudeley's brother Frederick as a Liberal MP will be discussed in chapter five of this thesis.[773] Despite this, the conclusion reached by Howell and other historians is that incidences of ruthless behaviour by landlords throughout Wales in this period were relatively rare. However, the matter of compensation for agricultural improvements was regarded as in need of addressing, resulting in the Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875, whose effect was weakened by opt-out clauses, and the stronger Act of 1883.[774]

Objections on the part of nonconformist farmers to the payment of tithes to the Anglican Church, to which they owed no allegiance, had fuelled anti-landlord sentiment since the time of the Rebecca Riots.[775] Indeed objections to the payment of tithes and church rates extended, for a variety of reasons, across England and Wales; this resulted in the establishment of the Liberation Society in 1844 whose goal was the disestablishment of the Church of England, a goal which in Wales was taken up fervently, not only by nonconformists but by Liberals of Whig heritage who saw themselves as reformers such as the Hanbury-Tracys of Gregynog.[776] As David Howell points out, opposition to the payment of tithes grew with the greater politicisation of the community in the second half of the nineteenth century, culminating in the

[771] T.J. Hughes (Adfyfr)'s *Landlordism in Wales* (1887), p.4.
[772] Howell, *Land and People,* p.87
[773] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, December 1888.
[774] Howell, *ibid*; Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp.55-57.This was not an issue confined to Wales alone: see Ewen Green, 'No Longer the Farmer's Friend? The Conservative Party and Agricultural Protection, 1880-1914', in J.R. Wordie, ed., *Agriculture and Politics in England, 1815-1939* (London, 2000), pp.150-158.
[775] David Williams, *The Rebecca Riots,* (Cardiff, 1986), p.128.
[776] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.17.

establishment of the Anti-Tithe League in 1886.[777] In the 1880s reports head-lined 'Tithe Agitation in Wales' and even 'Tithe War in Wales' began to appear in the Welsh press.[778] By 1888 the issue was hotting up, with more reports of Tithe Distraint sales being held, including in Montgomeryshire, in the parishes of Cemmais, and Manafon, the adjacent parish to Tregynon.[779] Lord Sudeley held the tithes of Tregynon, Bettws and some adjacent parishes but no distraint sales by the Gregynog estate have been traced, and no evidence has been found to support Scott Owen's sour report in December 1888 that 'the Llanfair Radicals' had opposed Lord Sudeley's canditure for the first election to Montgomeryshire County Council

> in revenge for his Lordship having become an Unionist, put forward R. Watkins Andrew … who had been turned out of his farm for non payment of Tithe, & called the Tithe Martyr. Every means was adopted by Dissenters and Radicals to depreciate Lord Sudeley's Candidature.[780]

These controversies were the impetus behind the establishment in 1893 of a Royal Commission to inquire into Welsh Land Tenure. Evidence-gathering took place at hearings in every county in Wales, all them extensively reported in the Welsh press.[781] In his review of 1894 Scott Owen wrote in his Commonplace Book:

> The Welsh Land Commission sat in Wales this year, and held 5 meetings at Newtown. No evidence was tendered from the Estate and no evidence was given against us – and much was said in our favour.[782]

<u>Landlord and tenant relations at Gregynog</u>

As a Liberal politician, landlord and businessman who knew Montgomeryshire well by now, Charles Hanbury-Tracy would have been aware of the grievances relating to tithes and the tenure of land. When his brother died in 1877 and he inherited the Sudeley estates in Gloucestershire and Montgomeryshire he had been deeply concerned to act with integrity as a landlord who respected his tenants and treated them fairly. The reputation of his uncle, Henry Hanbury-Tracy, who had been the respected figurehead at Gregynog for so many years, allied with his own reputation as a local member of parliament, served to prepare the ground for the

[777] Howell, *Land and People*, p.84.
[778] *North Wales Express*, 29 January 1886, *South Wales Daily News*, 28 August 1886.
[779] *Montgomeryshire Express,* 13 November 1888 'Tithe Distraint Sales at Cemmais,'; and ibid., 4 December, 1888, 'Tithe Distraint Sales at Manafon'.
[780] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 29, Tithe Rentals 1859-72; Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f.
[781] E.g. *Montgomeryshire Express*, 30 May 1893.
[782] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f.18; Shaun Evans, 'The battle of the Welsh nation against landlordism': The Response of the North Wales Property Defence Association to the Welsh Land Question, c. 1886–1896', in S. Evans, T. McCarthy, T. and A. Tindley, (eds.). *Land Reform in the British and Irish Isles since 1800.* (Edinburgh, 2022) p. 259-284.

good landlord-tenant relations on the Gregynog estate which were so regularly commented upon in the local press throughout his proprietorship. Lord Sudeley might not have spent so much time at Gregynog as he did at Toddington or in London, but he never lost touch with the life of the estate or indeed of the county, and he and his family did everything that was expected of leading members of the gentry, from donating generously to local charities and giving land for the building of chapels to hosting school treats and fund-raising bazaars in the Hall grounds, and running soup kitchens. He was a JP, and President of Newtown Football Club.[783] In August 1890, at a bazaar in Newtown in aid of Bettws Church, Sudeley laid on one of 'Edison's Phonographs', and exhibited it afterwards 'in the Victoria Hall which was crammed – over 1000 people came to hear it', noted Scott Owen, making this perhaps the neighbourhood's first experience of recorded sound.[784] More importantly, Sudeley was regarded as a landlord who had the interests of his tenants at heart, and responded positively to their needs.

Allotments

From the mid 1880s the provision of allotments for agricultural labourers, many of whom, since the Third Reform Act of 1884, now had the vote, had become an important element of Liberal policy throughout England and Wales. The Allotments Extension Act of 1882 being regarded as inadequate, a number of organisations were established to campaign for better provision, including the Allotments Extension Association (1883), which was influential in Liberal circles, and the Tory peer Lord Onslow's Land and Glebe Owners Association for the Voluntary Extension of the Allotments System.[785] In 1885 Lord Sudeley had responded positively to a petition presented to him by local estate workers requesting 'small allotments of ground for working'.[786] Reporting on the wider availability of allotments in January the following hear the *Aberstwyth Observer* noted that

> On Lord Sudeley's Gregynog estate the proportion of small farms is fully maintained. There are 76 small holdings under 45 acres, and of those 50 range from two to 11 acres. So far as Lord Sudeley is concerned, he says that he would be extremely pleased to see no exception to the rule that every labourer has an allotment;

and in April that year the same paper reported that

[783] *Park's Penny Almanac* 1886, pp. 87, 157.
[784] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, 18 August 1890.
[785] Paul Readman, *Land and Nation in England, Patriotism, National Identity and the Politics of Land, 1880-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2008), pp.17-18.
[786] *Aberystwith Observer*, 17 October 1885.

> Lord Sudeley has granted each of the labourers a small holding, and operations were commenced on the plots of land on Monday and Tuesday morning. The greatest interest is taken in the new movement throughout the district.[787]

In April 1890 Lord Sudeley further demonstrated his concern for the estate by undertaking to send, at his expense, ten young women from the estate to the Sylfaen Dairy in Welshpool to learn the latest techniques in butter-making, a move that was applauded by the tenants at the Rent Audit dinner that year.[788]

The Agent, the estate and the neighbourhood.

By 1888 William Scott Owen had been the Gregynog agent for nine years. He must have worked hard to get to know the district as his *History of Gregynog* was begun in 1888. His clear affection for and identification with the old estate is manifest in his article 'Arthur Blayney andhis home, Gregynog Hall', published in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* in 1892, and his long and detailed 'Parochial History of Tregynon' which appeared in the same journal in 1898.[789] His close relationship with Lord Sudeley is demonstrated by an entry made in his Commonplace Book on 23 October 23, 1888, just a few weeks after Sudeley's very public breach with Stuart Rendel and the Gladstonian Liberals:

> After almost 6 years' absence, Lord & Lady Sudeley with Miss Eva Tracy, returned to Gregynog where they were received with the greatest joy amongst their own people, who showed on this occasion how deeply & truly they are loved & respected by all. It was a genuine and hearty welcome home after a long absence – Hardly a single tenant was absent, and all joined heartily in the Reception, which was most gratifying as so many did not agree with his Lordship's political move.[790]

'His Lordship's political move', which had led to his split with the Gladstonian Liberals of Montgomeryshire, will be examined in the next chapter of this thesis.

Scott Owen's loyalty to Lord Sudeley was absolute. At no point in his *Commonplace Book* or his *History of Gregynog* does he make any allusion to the profligacy of Sudeley and his family which was to bring both the Montgomeryshire and Gloucestershire estates to bankruptcy within a few years. If any man set out to uphold what Cragoe describes as the 'moral economy' of a landed estate, it was William Scott Owen.[791]

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[787] *Aberystwith Observer*, 30 Jan, 17 April 1886.
[788] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 15 April 1890.
[789] *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 25, (1892), pp. 105-114, and 30 (1898), pp.1-168.
[790] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, passim.
[791] Mathew Cragoe, *An Anglican Aristocracy*, p.251.

The Family and the People: The County celebrates

Writing of gentry society in eighteenth-century South-West Wales David W. Howell notes that 'family celebrations were made into public festivals as a means of emphasising the patriarchal rôle of the family in its own neighbourhood'.[792] That this rôle was accepted as being part of a reciprocal relationship by the Gregynog estate tenants, not to mention the employees of the Severn Tweed Mills in Newtown, is suggested by the excitement expressed at the announcement in May 1889 of the forthcoming wedding of Lord Sudeley's daughter Eva to Henry Anstruther, MP. The announcement was made just a month after the death on 6th April of Eva's eighty-seven year-old great-uncle, Henry Hanbury-Tracy, who had been buried in great state in Tregynon churchyard the following week, with five carriages of family and principal mourners. The bearers were all tenants of the Gregynog estate, 'and the coffin was born out of the church to the strains of the Dead March from Handel's *Saul* being played upon the harmonium'.[793]

In July the estate tenants held a meeting at the Bear's Head Hotel in Newtown to discuss 'what steps should be taken to celebrate the marriage' of Eva Hanbury-Tracy, which was planned to take place in Tregynon church in August. A committee was appointed, with Mr John Pryce of Highgate, the principal estate farm, elected as chair. However they decided to celebrate the marriage, he said, he hoped it would be something worthy of Miss Hanbury-Tracy and her family, and worthy also of the Gregynog tenants. A collection for a suitable wedding gift would be made among the tenants and estate residents, and a committee would be appointed to organise decorative arches and floral displays for the public tea and celebration Lord Sudeley planned on the day, and another to plan the entertainments, sports and pony races. The following day, at the same venue, a meeting of townspeople took place, which ended with the opening of a subscription for a wedding gift from the people of Newtown, supported even by Sudeley's political rival Captain Pryce-Jones, in acknowledgment of 'the great good' Lord Sudeley had done for the town.[794] The marriage did not, after all, take place at Tregynon church, to the great disappointment of all, according to the *Montgomeryshire Express*; the

[792] David W. Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites, the Gentry of South-West Wales in the Eighteenth Century*, (Cardiff, 1986), p.184.
[793] *Byegones*, 17 April 1889.
[794] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 30 July, 1889.

wedding had to be postponed, as Miss Tracy was indisposed.[795] It took place in London, on 24th August. 'In consequence of the recent indisposition of the bride the ceremony was strictly private'.[796]

The estate was not to be deprived of its celebration, however, and Lord Sudeley was not deprived of the opportunity to put on a good show in the face of his recent political mis-steps.[797] The catering was lavish: Scott Owen's entry in his Commonplace Book for 28th September is headed 'Wedding Rejoicings'.

> Tickets for tea were issued to nearly 2000 people & Dinner for tenants provided at the Temperance Inn for over 100. A large tent 150ft long & 60ft wide erected on the Gregynog meadow, decorated with flags, mottos and garlands. Tea tables for 800 laid in the Tent & covered with Pot flowers – looking very well indeed. Triumphal arches erected on the Bridge and Entrance to Field and the Gardens & Grounds bedecked with Flags.[798]

There were speeches from both the bride and her father, with Lord Sudeley not missing the opportunity to hint at political issues by hoping that the 'union of a Welsh lassie with a Scotch laddie' would cement the union between those countries at least. The speeches were followed by long queues to view the wedding presents, music from Newtown Prize Band and a contingent of the Royal Welsh Harpists, a Punch and Judy show, sports and pony races which went on until dark. The report of the Celebrations in the *Montgomeryshire Express* extended over four columns, with every guest, and every wedding gift listed.[799] 'Every thing passed off well – weather favouring us and every body seemed thoroughly well pleased,' wrote Scott Owen, concluding wryly, 'The whole thing was most difficult to carry out owing to the fear of offending some thro' not being asked to go in first etc etc.'[800] Two months later, Mr and Mrs Anstruther having returned from their honeymoon, the *Montgomeryshire Express* published a letter from the bride addressed to the Treasurer of the tenants' committee thanking the committee for their 'lovely present' and asking that the remaining balance of the collection which had been made – a matter of two guineas – be handed to the Infirmary at Newtown.[801]

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[795] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 13 August 1889.
[796] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 27 August 1889.
[797] To be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.
[798] *Commonplace Book*, 28 September 1889. Tregynon's Dragon Inn had metamorphosed into the Temperance Hotel in 1885, as recorded in the Gregynog Estate *Ledger Rents Received and Paid to Bankers* 1883-1885. Mary Phillips, landlady of the Dragon Inn, continued as landlady of the Temperance.
[799] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 1 October 1889.
[800] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book,* ibid.
[801] Montgomeryshire Express, 26 November 1889.

Two years later another major celebration was planned following the coming-of-age of Lord Sudeley's son and heir, Wilfred Charles Hanbury-Tracy, on 19th April 1891. This was probably a more important occasion by far than the wedding of a daughter; the twenty-first birthday of the heir being 'an occasion of symbolic importance in the history of landed families'.[802] Scott Owen records that church bells were rung in celebration in all the local parishes, from Aberhafesp to Berriew. The main event was announced in the *Montgomeryshire Express* on 4th August: 'Rejoicings at Gregynog Hall on the occasion of the Coming-of-Age of the Hon. W. Charles Hanbury-Tracy' would take place on 8th of August. Once again there would be decorated arches, processions, a lavish dinner, speeches and presentations, music, entertainment and sports. Scott Owen recorded that over 4,000 people attended; over 2,500 were served with tea in a tent 120 feet long, and five hundred of the 'local gentry and tradespeople of Newtown' were entertained to a banquet in the hall itself.[803] Once again, the *Montgomeryshire Express* reported all the details the following week, including the menu for the banquet, the caterer being 'Mr Evan Bebb, The Restaurant, Newtown, 'whose discharge of the duty was, as usual, all that could be desired'. Speeches by principal tenants and by Lord Sudeley himself were followed by a response from a somewhat overwhelmed Wilfred Charles, who had undergone a similar celebration at Toddington only the previous week, where the celebrations had been even more lavish, with a firework display, and a wheelbarrow of sixpences tipped up for the tenants and estate workers to help themselves.[804] At Gregynog, every pause in Wilfred Charles's speech, reported the *Montgomeryshire Express*, was greeted with 'cheers' and 'laughter'. Later in the afternoon, the report continued, 'Lady Sudeley held an At Home'. A list of guests followed, the first to be mentioned being Mr and Miss Davies, Plas Dinam. This was Edward Davies, son of David Davies the rail and coal entrepreneur of Llandinam, who had died in July the previous year. Edward Davies's first wife died in 1888, leaving him with three children, David, Gwendoline and Margaret, who were to make their own mark on Gregynog's history forty years later. It is likely that the 'Miss Davies' who attended Lady Sudeley's At Home with her father was his elder daughter, Gwendoline, then

[802] Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, p.184; Shaun Evans, ''Coming of Age': Landowners and tenants in nineteenth-century Carmarthenshire'. *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary.* 57, (2021), pp. 76-89.
[803] Commonplace Book, 8 August 1891.
[804] Lord Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', *Transactions of the Briston and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 88, (1969), p.166.

only nine years old.[805] 'All people cleared off by 9 o'clock', noted Scott Owen, doubtless with relief.

In honour of Wilfred Charles's coming-of age the tenants had been granted a ten per cent abatement on their rents at both the spring and autumn Rent Audits of 1891. The same abatement was awarded in the spring of 1892, but by September that year Scott Owen's Commonplace Book notes only that 'Lord Sudeley went to see all his tenants at their farms'. Then, on the first of August 1893 (after copious coverage that year over whether or not Fred Hanbury-Tracy should be persuaded to stand for election to the Montgomery Borough seat once more) an ominous headline appeared in the *Montgomeryshire Express*: 'Lord Sudeley's Affairs'. 'The rumour which reached Newtown on Tuesday to the effect that Lord Sudeley was in financial difficulties caused universal consternation and general regret', especially among the many Gregynog estate workers who were in town that market day.[806] It was the first of many such stories, the tone of which clearly demonstrates the importance of the Gregynog estate in the locality at the end of the nineteenth century and the respect accorded to its proprietors.

[805] *Montgomeryshire Express and Radnor Times*, 11 August 1891.
[806] *Montgomeryshire Express and Radnor Times*, 1 August 1893.

CHAPTER FIVE

GREGYNOG AND THE POLITICS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY MONTGOMERYSHIRE

> The Hanbury-Tracys: a family 'conspicuous for its uniform devotedness to the cause of Liberalism'.[807]

Introduction

It is a truism that Welsh politics in the early nineteenth century were controlled by the landowning classes, largely in their own interests, irrespective of whether their political allegiances were Whig or Tory.[808] Indeed, Welsh political life, in terms of the governance of the country, hardly seemed to exist, except in so far as it provided a means by which the landed classes could retain their social and economic pre-eminence in their various constituencies. Even after the passing of the First Reform Act in 1832, and the subsequent election, the situation seemed to change very little, to the dissatisfaction of both those who had campaigned for it and those who opposed it. 'In the end,' comments Kenneth O. Morgan, 'the Whigs in 1832 conducted an exercise in limitations.'[809] In Wales, 'an overwhelming number of landowners [were] still returned, together with a sprinkling of wealthy industrialists.'[810] The fact that these MPs represented Welsh constituencies did not seem to put Welsh affairs on the Parliamentary agenda; Kenneth O. Morgan quotes Henry Richard MP as complaining in 1869 that 'no question relating to Wales had occupied the attention of Parliament in the memory of man'.[811] In his Letter XIII, published in *Letters and Essays on Wales* in 1884, Henry Richard wrote of the gentry: 'The great majority of this class are Tories of the purest water', adding, however, that 'There are a few gentry houses who have always championed the Liberal cause as a sort of family heirloom.'[812] In the context of British politics, wrote Matthew Cragoe, 'Wales itself only came into being during the mid-Victorian period. In the first half of the nineteenth century no political significance attached itself to the thirteen counties that comprise modern

[807] George Sandford, 'The House of Gregynog, The Blayneys and the Hanbury-Tracys, Lords Sudeley', *MC* 18, 1885, p.229.
[808] Russell Davies, *Hope and Heartbreak, A Social History of Wales and the Welsh 1776-1871*, (Cardiff, 2005), pp.100-102; Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.4; Peter D.G. Thomas, *Politics in Eighteenth-century Wales*, (Cardiff, 1998), p.1.
[809] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Ages of Reform, Dawns and Downfalls of the British Left*, (London, 2011), Ch.1, 'The Great Reform Act of 1832', pp.3-20.
[810] Arnold E. James and John E. Thomas, *Union to Reform, A History of the Parliamentary Representation of Wales 1536-1832,* (Llandysul, 1986), p.298.
[811] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.2
[812] Henry Richard, *Letters and Essays on Wales*, (London, 1884), p.105.

Wales. For all legislative purposes, they remained part of a greater England.'[813] The impact of the 1832 Reform Act changed little in this regard. It took the Second Reform Act of 1867, the Ballot Act of 1872 and the Third Reform Act of 1884, together with the rise of radical nonconformist Liberalism and a campaigning Welsh language press which provided a platform for the grievances, demands and aspirations of the newly enfranchised, to put Wales well and truly on the political agenda.

Until the Hanbury-Tracys arrived in Montgomeryshire, the political traditions of the county had been almost uniformly Tory. It had been represented from 1660 until 1774 largely by connections of the Wynn family of Wynnstay, followed by a few Whig years at the end of the eighteenth century which ended with the early death in 1799 of Frances Lloyd of Domgae, who died while a tenant of Gregynog Hall.[814] In the second half of the eighteenth century the Montgomery Borough seat, which at that time represented only Montgomery, was held by Whigs connected to the Herberts of Powis. After 1800 the county seat was held by the Wynns of Wynnstay once more until ousted by the Liberal Stuart Rendel in 1880. In the early-nineteenth century, Tories also held other Welsh counties, including Caernarfon, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Merioneth, Pembroke, and Radnor, with a scattering of Whig/Liberal holdings in borough seats in Glamorgan, Anglesey and the counties of north-east Wales.[815] The Whig allegiances of the Hanbury-Tracy family, which metamorphosed into support for the Liberal cause, can certainly be described as 'a sort of family heirloom' inherited from his ancestors the Hanburys of Monmouth who were prominent in the politics of that county in the eighteenth century.[816] This chapter will address how the support of the Hanbury-Tracys, later barons Sudeley, for the Liberal cause contributed to the social, civic and political evolution of nineteenth-century Montgomeryshire.

[813] Matthew Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886*, (Oxford, 2004), p.2.
[814] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 6, Estate Rents 1790-1804, ff. 134, 141. Francis Lloyd Esq paid £57 in rent for Gregynog Hall to Michaelmas 1798, but the payment for Lady Day 1799 was paid by Representatives of Francis Lloyd.
[815] James and Thomas, *Union to Reform,* xix.
[816] Peter D. G. Thomas, 'Politics and Power, 1702-90', in Madeleine Gray and Prys Morgan, (eds), *Gwent County History, Volume 3, The Making of Monmouthshire, 1536-1780*, ed., (Cardiff, 2009), pp.124-145.

Charles Hanbury-Tracy, 1st Lord Sudeley: Whig MP and Reformer

Charles Hanbury-Tracy (1777-1858), who inherited the Gregynog estate on his marriage to Henrietta Hanbury-Tracy in 1798, regarded himself as an avowed advocate for Reform. He first served in Parliament as MP for Tewkesbury from 1807 to 1812, when he

> voted with the Whigs on all the major issues of the 1807 Parliament, but it was with the advanced wing of the opposition … that he aligned himself. … He did not seek re-election in 1812, but reappeared in the House as Member for Tewkesbury on a vacancy in 1832, after contesting the borough unsuccessfully at the 1831 general election.[817]

In December 1830 he signed the requisition for a Montgomeryshire County meeting to petition for parliamentary reform.[818] In 1831, while campaigning for election to the Tewkesbury seat, at a meeting at Gloucester Shire he declared:

> From the earliest period of my political experience, I have been an advocate for such a measure, and I have borne the character of a reformer in times when that term was any thing but a passport to society but now the conviction of its necessity has become almost universal you are now all reformers-all, all, honourable men.[819]

His address, yet subsequent failure to support the reform candidate in Montgomeryshire, sparked an indignant letter to *The Times* by one who signed himself LLANFAIR. 'Mr Tracy is possessed of one of the largest estates in Montgomeryshire, with a mansion, in right of his wife, and although he does not reside there, his influence is very great…'[820] According to *The History of Parliament Online*, at the general election of 1831 the reason for this apparent failure of principle was that

> a sense of personal loyalty prevented him from opposing the veteran Member, Charles Williams Wynn, despite the latter's vote against the Grey ministry's bill. He assured Williams Wynn of his continued good wishes, but said he was powerless to prevent the local reformers from moving against him and intended simply to keep away.[821]

Nonetheless as MP for Tewkesbury, in 1832 Hanbury-Tracy voted for the Reform Act. He must have been aware of the burgeoning support for reform in Montgomeryshire, on the part of local gentry who were becoming strongly opposed to the Wynnstay control of the county: men like William Pugh of Brynllywarch (with whom he was well acquainted through their joint

[817] David R. Fisher, HANBURY-TRACY, Charles (1778-1858), of Toddington, Glos and Gregynog, Mont. https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/hanbury-tracy-charles-1778-1858 (Accessed 4 October 2021).
[818] Ibid.
[819] Reported in the *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 21 May 1831.
[820] *The Times*, 19th October, 1831. Downloaded from *The Times* Archive online, 21.8.2022.
[821] David R. Fisher, HANBURY-TRACY, Charles, (https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/members/1820-1832/Hanbury Tracy, Charles, (1778-1858) (Accessed 21.8.2022).

interest in the Montgomeryshire Canal), William Owen of Glansevern, son of William Mostyn-Owen who had served as Whig MP for Montgomeryshire from 1774 to 1795, Dr Edward Johnes, a connection of the Owens of Glansevern who had a medical practice in Welshpool, and the Rev. George Arthur Evors of Newtown Hall.[822] At the first post-Reform election in December 1832 Hanbury-Tracy showed his colours, presumably deciding that he no longer needed to placate the Wynn family. He 'participated fully in the Montgomeryshire Boroughs contest… and … was instrumental in securing the return of Sir John Edwards, a progressive liberal, over the Tory candidate'. The defeated candidate was David Pugh of Llanerchydol; however the seat was recaptured by the Conservative Hugh Cholmondeley in 1841.[823] From 1836 to 1838 Hanbury-Tracy was a member of the Reform Club in London, as was his brother, Capel Hanbury Leigh, who had inherited the family's Pontypool tinplate works in 1795, and who retained his family's Whig loyalties.[824]

As MP for Tewksbury, Charles Hanbury-Tracy was a 'uniform supporter of the Governments of Earl Grey and Viscount Melbourne' until he was raised to the peerage as the 1st baron Sudeley in 1838.[825] This was the same year as the great Chartist rally in Newtown, at which 2,000 people were addressed by Henry Heatherington, to the alarm of the county authorities. A detachment of the county militia was established in Newtown in 1839 and remained there for some years.[826] The upheavals of these years, emanating from the newly industrialised textile towns of Llanidloes and Newtown, described by Gwyn A. Williams as 'the first revolt against capitalism in Wales',[827] do not seem to have preoccupied the new Lord Sudeley; no evidence of statements by him either in support or condemnation of the Chartists has been located either in the proceedings of the House of Lords (where his recorded contributions to debate relate almost exclusively to matters arising from the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament) or anywhere else.[828] In fact, from an electoral point of view, given the still-limited franchise, it

[822] Bryn Ellis, 'The Parliamentary Representation of Montgomeryshire, 1728-1868', *MC*, 63 (1974), p.77.
[823] David Howell, 'The Estate and its Owners 1795-1920', G.T. Hughes et.al. *Gregynog*, (eds), (Cardiff, 1977), p.50.
[824] The brothers' membership of the Reform Club confirmed by email to the present writer by Simon Blundell, Librarian of the Reform Club, 5 January 2022.
[825] Sandford, 'The House of Gregynog', p. 241.
[826] Richards, *A History of Newtown*, p.66
[827] Gwyn A. Williams, 'Locating a Welsh Working Class: the Frontier Years', in David Smith, ed., *A People and a Proletariat*, (London, 1980), p.18. See also Edward Parry, 'The Bloodless Wars of Montgomeryshire': Law and Disorder, 1837-1841', *MC* 97, (2009), pp. 123-64, in which he maintains that 'by comparison with what happened in other parts of Britain, including south Wales, the events of 1837-39 in Montgomeryshire were of minor importance'.
[828] https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/people/mr-charles-hanbury-tracy/index.html Mr Charles Hanbury-Tracy (Hansard) (parliament.uk). The only publication by 1st Lord Sudeley to have been located is a booklet

appears that reaction to the turbulence of the period among the voting public favoured the Tories. According to Bryn Ellis, 'some Newtown voters, many of previous liberal standing, signed a requisition calling upon Lord Clive to present himself as a candidate' for the county seat in 1841 election.[829] Lord Clive, as Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire, had been heavily involved in the response of the authorities to the activities of the county's Chartists, which at the time were feared to be much more revolutionary than they actually turned out to be.[830] Clive refused to stand for election in 1841, but the county seat remained in safe Conservative hands until 1880. The Montgomery Boroughs seat was also held by the Conservatives, until at a by-election in 1863 the first Lord Sudeley's grandson, Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy, took the seat for the Liberals, and saw it retained in Liberal hands until 1885.

Creating a political dynasty

Charles Douglas Hanbury-Tracy was the only descendant of Charles Hanbury-Tracy, 1st Lord Sudeley, to have what his grandfather might have regarded as a successful political career. The attempts by Sudeley to launch his sons, Thomas Leigh Hanbury-Tracy (1801-1863) and Henry Hanbury-Tracy (1802-1889), into politics had come to little. In 1831 Thomas Leigh, after a campaign largely stage-managed by his father, and during which his performance at the hustings was reported as being no more than lack-lustre, was elected MP for Wallingford, amid rumours and counter-rumours of bribery and disenfranchisement.[831] According to his entry in the *History of Parliament Online* Leigh 'shared his father's advanced Whig politics' but 'revealed no hidden talents in the House', and was 'reliable lobby fodder'. He retired at the dissolution of the Commons in 1832.[832] In December that year he stood for election to Bridgnorth, no doubt once again at his father's urging, but withdrew before the poll was taken.[833]

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entitled), *Our Currency, on the Bank Charter Act of 1844 and Subsequent Panic of 1847,* (Cheltenham, 1857) in which he discusses the economic significance of the Gold Standard in currency.

[829] Ellis, 'Parliamentary Representation of Montgomeryshire', p.89.

[830] Parry, 'The Bloodless Wars of Montgomeryshire', pp. 123-164.

[831] E. Anthony Smith, 'Bribery and Disenfranchisement: Wallingford Elections, 1820-1832', *English Historical Review*, 75, 297, (1960), p.618-630.

[832] David R. Fisher, LEIGH, 'Thomas Charles, (1801-1863), MP for Wallingford 1831-2', *History of Parliament online*, 1820-1832, LEIGH, Thomas Charles (1801-1863) https://Historyof parliamentonline (accessed 21 August 2022). See the first chapter of this thesis for the background to Thomas Leigh's temporary adoption of the surname Leigh. He reverted to the name Hanbury-Tracy in 1839.

[833] Margaret Escott, 'Bridgnorth Borough, 1820-1832', https://historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/constituencies/bridgnorth/ (accessed 21 August 2022); *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, 13 June-26 December 1832.

Thomas's younger brother, Henry, fared little better. In 1837 Henry Hanbury-Tracy, second son of the 1st Lord Sudeley, was returned by only four votes as Liberal MP for Bridgnorth. The campaign had been highly contentious – with allegations of corruption being made against both candidates for the seat – and expensive: the Gregynog cash book records expenditure by Hanbury-Tracy of over £5,000 on the Bridgnorth election.[834] But the result was disputed; a petition was launched against his election which led to Hanbury-Tracy resigning his seat the following February by taking the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, the procedural device which allows members of Parliament to resign from the House of Commons. There was a by-election on 20th February at which a Conservative was returned.[835]

The Hanbury-Tracys and the Liberal movement in Montgomeryshire

Despite this non-starter of a political career, Henry Hanbury-Tracy, once established at Gregynog, became a firm supporter of the Liberal party as it was evolving in Montgomeryshire, and played his part in maintaining the family's active involvement in the civic life of the county, as a magistrate and deputy Lord Lieutenant. The Gregynog family, led by the Lords Sudeley, became known as the principal Liberal challengers to the Williams Wynns in the county. The family's first attempts upon Montgomeryshire seats took place in 1861, at a by-election following the death of David Pugh, the MP for Montgomery Boroughs. Prior to 1832 this seat represented the sole borough of Montgomery, but since then it had 'been obliged to share its right of representation with five other towns': Llanfyllin, Llanidloes, Welshpool, Newtown and Machynlleth.[836] The huge increase in population which resulted, an almost fourteen-fold increase in the population to 15,275, together with the widely differing character of these towns and their people, even with the very limited franchise prior to 1867, transformed the seat from 'a pocket borough of the earls of Powis' to a much more contestable proposition – even though the qualified electorate only totalled 723.[837] In 1861 Charles George Hanbury-Tracy (1832-1877), eldest son of the 2nd Lord Sudeley, came forward as the Liberal candidate,

[834] Gregynog Estate Records 40, f.174, records the expenditure of £5,238.1s.8d against the heading 'Bridgnorth Election'.
[835] *History of Parliament online*, Bridgnorth; Baugh, G.C. *A history of Shropshire (Victoria County History)*, Vol 3, (Oxford, 1979), pp. 330-6.
[836] Matthew Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886*, (Oxford, 2004), p.21;
[837] Peter. D. G. Thomas, Montgomery Boroughs, https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/borough seats/1754-1790/Constituencies/Montgomery (accessed 23..9.22); Arnold J. James and John E. Thomas, *Wales at Westminster, A History of the Parliamentary Representation of Wales 1800-1979* (Llandysul, 1981), p.47. Statistics relating to the size of electorates in this and subsequent elections are taken from this source.

but, as his father had done at Bridgnorth in 1832, withdrew before the election. The Conservative candidate, David Pugh's son-in-law Captain S.W. Johnson, was returned unopposed.[838] A year later Charles George had another, apparently more hopeful, opportunity at a by-election in July 1862 brought about by the sudden death of the county member for Montgomeryshire, Herbert Watkin Williams Wynn. The reputation of the Wynns of Wynnstay had suffered some recent blows following a series of evictions of tenants on their Glan-llyn estate in Merionethshire for voting against their Wynn landlord.[839] Nonetheless, despite a hotly-contested election, with accusations of violence and intimidation on both sides, Charles Watkin Williams Wynn took the seat by 1,269 to 959, a comfortable majority of 310 votes.[840] The Tory-leaning *North Wales Chronicle* viewed the result with satisfaction: the tone of its reports both before and after the election was vehemently supportive of the Wynn candidate, with many sneers at what it perceived as the central plank of the Liberal candidate, 'the total abolition of Church Rates'. The re-election of Charles Watkin Williams Wynn had saved the county from 'rabid and illiterate fanatics' who sought to destroy the established church.[841]

Nonetheless, as Bryn Ellis points out, the support received by Hanbury-Tracy in this election by the nonconformists was notable. 'Tracy was committed, as a member of the Liberation Society, to the abolition of Church rates, and this would have adhered their support. Many of the placards used by his supporters were also in Welsh.'[842] This is one of the few glimpses we have of Charles George Hanbury-Tracy; after the election of 1862 he took no further active part in Montgomeryshire politics. He was only twenty-five years old in 1862; it might be inferred from his membership of the Liberation Society and support for the abolition of church rates, that his principles were idealistic and that he responded to the needs of Welsh nonconformity. However, this position was not to be tested in future elections: in February 1863 his father died and he became the 3rd Lord Sudeley, also succeeding to the Lord Lieutenancy of Montgomeryshire. Once he had risen to the peerage he seems to have played little part in public life, largely on account of feeble health, according to Richard Williams, who also recorded 'his well-stored and cultured mind, and … frank kindliness of manner'.[843] His

[838] James and Thomas, *Wales at Westminster,* p.62.
[839] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.20; Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, *Explorations and Explanations, Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales*, (Llandysul, 1981), pp.128-132.
[840] James and Thomas, *Wales at Westminster*, p.63.
[841] *North Wales Chronicle*, 12, 19 July 1862.
[842] Ellis, 'Parliamentary Representation of Montgomeryshire', p.93.
[843] Richard Williams, *Montgomeryshire Worthies*, (2nd ed., Newtown, 1894), p.302.

preoccupations at Toddington, his private zoo with its horses and buffaloes, and the rebuilding of Toddington church, also presumably took up much of his time.[844] He died unmarried – and deeply in debt, as it transpired – at Toddington in 1877, aged forty. His younger brother, Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy, who had by this time served as MP for Montgomery Boroughs since 1863, became the 4th Lord Sudeley.

Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy (1840-1922), Liberal MP for Montgomery Boroughs.

Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy was the second son of Thomas Leigh (who from 1839 reverted to his family name Thomas Hanbury-Tracy, and succeeded his father as 2nd Baron Sudeley in 1858) and his wife Emma Dougas-Pennant of Penrhyn in Caernarfonshire. Charles Douglas (his second forename clearly chosen for his mother's family), was therefore a cousin of George Douglas-Pennant (1836-1907), who twice served as Conservative MP for Caernarfonshire, before succeeding as 2nd Baron Penrhyn in 1886.[845]

Charles Douglas Hanbury-Tracy was born in 1840 and educated 'for a naval career', entering the Royal Navy in 1854. According to Burke's Peerage he served in the Baltic during the Crimean War, ending as Gunnery-Lieutenant of The Shannon in the Mediterranean in 1862-3.[846] He left the Navy in 1863, and was elected as Liberal MP for Montgomery Boroughs that year, at a by-election occasioned by the death of the sitting member, S.W. Johnston, when he defeated the Conservative candidate, C.V. Pugh, by 342 votes to 257.[847]

As an MP Charles Hanbury-Tracy retained a lifelong interest in naval and gunnery matters, as revealed by his numerous questions on the subjects in both houses of Parliament over the coming decades.[848] During these years he also studied law, and was called to the Bar of the Inner Temple in January, 1866.[849] In his 'Historical Summary', dated July 14th 1893, he records that he 'married in 1868 and until the year 1877 when my Brother died, lived quietly in

[844] Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', p.163.
[845] Thomas Richards, PENNANT (and DOUGLAS-PENNANT, family, of Penrhyn, Llandygâi, Caernarfonshire. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. https://biography.wales/article/s-PENN-ANT-1734. (accessed 19 October 2023). For the 2nd Baron Penrhyn and the North Wales slate industry see R. Merfyn Jones, *The North Wales Quarrymen 1874-1922*, (Cardiff, 1982).
[846] Burke's *Peerage*, Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy, 4th Lord Sudeley.
[847] James and Thomas, *Wales at Westminster,* p.62
[848] Hansard 1802-2005, Hon. Charles Hanbury-Tracy https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/people/hon-charles-hanbury-tracy/index.html (accessed 4 October 2021).
[849] *The Times,* 3rd April 1887, Obituary, Sudeley Charles George Hanbury-Tracy, 3rd Lord Sudeley.

Eccleston Square and was interested in the Welsh Woollen Manufacturing Co. of which I was Chairman. The Election expenses from time to time were defrayed by my brother. During the Recess we took small country houses at different places in Montgomeryshire and in 1875 and 1876 passed the recess at Gregynog.'[850]

By the time of Charles Hanbury-Tracy's election in August 1863 the radical Liberal movement in Wales was well under way, fuelled by the patriotic outrage that had greeted the publication in 1847 of the Report of the three Education Commissioners, known as the 'Blue Books', which accused the Welsh people of illiteracy and ignorance and 'which was clothed with a mass condemnation of the literature, language and religion of the people'.[851] This slight had the effect of galvanising, and politicising, patriotic feeling among the Welsh, particularly the nonconformist population. 'After 1847', says Prys Morgan, '… the nonconformists took it for granted that the Anglicans were the enemy of Welshness, and more and more tended to identify themselves with Wales, making nonconformity stand for Welshness itself.'[852] The resulting radicalism was to change the nature of Liberal politics, which had been evolving from the vaguely 'progressive' Whigs, as embodied by gentry and aristocratic families such as the Hanbury-Tracys of Gregynog, the Vaughans of Crosswood in Cardiganshire, the Marquis of Anglesey in Anglesey and the Mostyns of Flintshire,[853] to a movement with a much more radical and patriotic (although not yet politically nationalistic or separatist) agenda, with disestablishment of the Anglican church at its heart, spearheaded by personalities such as the Rev. Henry Richard, later MP for Merthyr,[854] and propagandized by Thomas Gee of Denbigh's newspaper *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*.

The degree to which the twenty-three-year-old Charles Hanbury-Tracy subscribed to a more radical Liberal agenda – or indeed had any conception of specifically Welsh issues – when first

[850] Gregynog MSS.: *Historical Summary and Apologia, July 14th 1893*, carbon copy signed by 4th Lord Sudeley, deposited at Gregynog by the late 7th Lord Sudeley (d. September 2022). Hereafter *Historical Summary 1893*. The 'small country houses' included Dolerw in Newtown, later home of the mail-order pioneer Pryce-Jones, and nearby Dolforwyn Hall, Abermule, now a hotel. In the first volume of *Montgomeryshire Collections*, published in 1868, Charles Hanbury-Tracy is listed as a member, giving his address as Gregynog.

[851] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.16. See also Prys Morgan, 'From Long Knives to Blue Books', in R.R. Davies, et.al., (eds.), *Welsh Society and Nationhood, Historical Essays presented to Glanmor Williams*, (Cardiff, 1984), pp.199- 215; Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books, Wales and Colonial Prejudice*, (Cardiff, 2012).

[852] Morgan, 'From Long Knives to Blue Books', p. 210.

[853] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity*, p.31

[854] Henry Richard, 'Letters on the Social and Political Condition of the Principality of Wales', collected in *Letter and Essays on Wales*, (London, 1884).

elected, is difficult to assess, although like his elder brother he was a member of the Liberation Society, support for which, K.O. Morgan points out, was burgeoning throughout Wales at the time.[855] When campaigning for Montgomery Boroughs seat in the summer of 1863 Hanbury-Tracy appears to have espoused moderate policies, not dissimilar to those of the Conservative candidate, Charles Vaughan Pugh, the only material difference being Hanbury-Tracy's support for the abolition of church rates.[856] A scornful leading article in the *Oswestry Advertizer* in September 1863, quoted in *Bygones* in 1875, suggested that the election addresses of the two candidates for Montgomery Boroughs, Charles Hanbury-Tracy for the Liberals and Charles Vaughan Pugh for the Conservatives, were so similar that one could have been lost without making any difference to the electorate's knowledge of the candidates, or to the result. However, in an article congratulating Charles Hanbury-Tracy 'and the nonconformist electors of these boroughs' on his election, the *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser* alluded favourably to his support for the principles of the Liberation Society regarding the abolition of church rates, and reported him as stating:

> I cannot but come to the conclusion that it would be far better for the church itself, more consonant with the good maxim of doing to others as we would be done by, and more in accordance with the principles of civil and religious liberty, on which I take my stand, that the question should be settled in the only way it admits of being settled, namely, by unconditional abolition.[857]

Hanbury-Tracy won the seat by 439 votes to Pugh's 330. He was the first Liberal to take the Montgomeryshire Boroughs seat. The election seems to have recorded little in the way of controversy, but a press report alleging one unpleasant aftermath had implications for future politics:

> NOTICE TO QUIT. At the eleventh hour for giving notice, several of the Powis Castle tenants received notice, and these the unlucky mortals who had thought proper not to vote for Mr Charles Vaughan Pugh, of Llanerchydol, the nominee of the Castle, but had rather chosen to exercise the un-English right of private judgment![858]

An indignant correspondent wrote: 'All the Powis Castle tenants in Welshpool who voted for

[855] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.17.
[856] Ellis, *Parliamentary Representation of Montgomeryshire*, p.93.
[857] *Bygones,* 1 February 1865; *The Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, 12th September 1863. In his election address of 1865, Hanbury-Tracy re-iterated his support for the abolition of church rates, for 'any judicious and well-considered measure of Reform, which shall have for its object the apportionment of the Franchise with greater fairness than at present among all classes of people' and the establishment of boards of arbitration to settle differences between employers and their workpeople. *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 14th July 1865.
[858] *Wrexham and Denbighshire Advertiser*, 10th October 1863.

Mr Tracy have had notice to quit: Mr Charles Morris, his house and shop; Mr Parker, Mr Wall, Mr Hickman, and others, their land.'[859]

Charles Hanbury-Tracy's support for the abolition of church rates, and his avowal of the principles of civil and religious liberty, were key factors in his election in 1863. He held the seat at the General Election of 1865 at which all but three of the Welsh borough seats were taken by 'avowed Whigs or Liberals', with 'nonconformists such as David Davies of Llandinam' taking an active part in contests.[860] Hanbury-Tracy's popularity was no doubt enhanced by his connection with the Gregynog estate whose landlords, the Lords Sudeley, and the resident family member, Charles's uncle Henry Hanbury-Tracy, were well respected in the county. Henry was a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire, a magistrate, and chairman of the Montgomery Infirmary in Newtown; he and his family were regular attendees at concerts, balls and every kind of soirée in the county; they hosted childrens' garden parties and supported the building of Tregynon's first school. Henry's father, brother and nephew, first, second and third Lords Sudeley, gave land for chapel building, improved local roads and supported many other charitable projects. As landlords, they gave rent abatements in lean years, and allowed arrears to accrue without threatening evictions.

Charles Hanbury-Tracy and the Newtown textile industry

Charles Hanbury-Tracy, MP, was a man who had inherited a good deal of his grandfather's energy, and he soon began to make his mark on the neighbourhood. His family had been associated with the county for long enough for them to be aware of the importance of the flannel weaving industry in Newtown, which had brought industrial success – and unrest – to the town in the 1820s and 30s. By the middle of the century the industry was in decline in Mid-Wales, in the face of competition from Lancashire and Yorkshire where the mills were more intensively mechanized and the markets, both home and overseas, more accessible. The stirrings of a revival began with the opening of the Llanidloes and Newtown Railway in 1859, when a young Newtown draper, Pryce Jones (1834-1920, later Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones), saw the possibilities of supplying goods by mail order, distributed by train. He began, as Maurice Richards records in his *History of Newtown*, by sending samples, lists, and later catalogues, to

[859] *Ibid*.
[860] Arnold J. James and John E. Thomas, *Wales at Westminster … 1800-1979*, (Llandysul, 1981), p.205; Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.21.

local gentry, inviting orders to be supplied by post. The world's first mail-order company, Pryce Jones Ltd., was soon supplying a world-wide customer base with Welsh flannel, in its heyday sending goods out on trains arrayed the company's livery, winning medals at exhibitions all over the world, and claiming Queen Victoria and other crowned heads of Europe among its clients.[861]

Local mill owners and merchants were only too anxious to co-operate in supplying the needs of this burgeoning company, but the Newtown mills were in sore need of investment in new machinery. This was an opportunity for the new MP for Montgomery Boroughs, the Hon. Charles Hanbury-Tracy, to show his commitment to the area. In 1864 the Cambrian Steam Mills, which were the earliest mills in Newtown to invest in steam power to drive flannel looms and spinning mules, were sold following the bankruptcy of the owner, Samuel Owen, putting a large number of local people out of work. In order to save the factory a joint stock company, the Cambrian Flannel Company, was formed, with Charles Hanbury-Tracy as Chairman. The company was formed with a capital of £50,000, with a number of local people buying shares. It took possession of the Cambrian Mills in Newtown, and the Glanclywedog Mills in Llanidloes.[862] Charles Hanbury-Tracy remained Chairman of the Cambrian Flannel Company and its successors, the Welsh Woollen Manufacturing Company, and the Severn Tweed Mills, until the eighteen-eighties, and continued to pour money into the companies after his elevation to the peerage in 1877. Despite fluctuating fortunes, the Cambrian Mills in Newtown became one of the leading employers in Newtown, at its peak employing over six hundred people. Thus, it played its part, alongside the Pryce Jones mail-order business, in the town's prosperity during the eighteen seventies and eighties, evidence of which can still be seen in the neat brick Victorian villas that charactarize much of the built environment of the town.

A different, somewhat unexpected aspect of Charles Hanbury-Tracy's personality emerges when reading reports in the local newspapers of 'The Wizard of the West'. An unidentified press cutting press cutting, forwarded by the late 7th Lord Sudeley for inclusion in the Gregynog Hall archives, refers to

[861] Richards, *History of Newtown*, pp.79-80. See also Elwyn V. Jones, *Chronological History of Newtown 1265-1980 … and essay on Pryce Jones, Pioneer of Mail Order and Parcel Post,* (Newtown, 2002), and Geraint Jenkins, *The Welsh Woollen Industry*, (Cardiff, 1969).
[862] David Pugh, 'The Cambrian Mills', *The Newtonian*, 54 (2013), p.21-30.

> a curious but interesting episode in Mr C. Hanbury Tracy's Parliamentary life' in March 1867. In order to raise funds towards building an Infirmary in Newtown [the nearest hospital at the time being in Shrewsbury, over thirty miles away], he took lessons from a professional conjuror, disguised himself with a false beard and an exotic costume complete with 'high black cock-hat' as 'The Wizard of the West', and put on an 'Amateur Legerdemain Entertainment' at the Public Rooms in Newtown at which he entertained the audience for two hours with a series of magic tricks, raising £50 for the Infirmary fund.[863]

He seems to have enjoyed this venture, as he took part in fund-raising performances in other parts of the country, from Devonshire to Crieff in Scotland.[864]

These events took place before his accession as the 4th Lord Sudeley in 1877, so it might be inferred that in 1867 such frivolity was perfectly acceptable in a younger son who was still only twenty-seven years old. But there was nothing frivolous, however over-ambitious, in Charles Hanbury-Tracy's determination to demonstrate his commitment to the neighbourhood he now represented, not only as MP for the Montgomery Boroughs seat but as the heir to the Gregynog estates and a member of one of the leading families of the county.

The late 1860s were the years that saw the beginning of the concrete cottages experiment at Gregynog, and it seems likely that Hanbury-Tracy took a great interest in this venture, alongside his uncle Henry, who with his late wife Rosamund (d.1864) and daughters Rosa and Henrietta (a son, Arthur, had died in 1856 aged thirteen) had represented 'the family' at Gregynog for over twenty years. In the first issue of the *Montgomeryshire Collections*, which appeared in 1868, Charles is listed as a member of the Powysland Club, the newly formed county history society (his elder brother the 3rd Lord Sudeley was a Vice-President, the earl of Powis being President), and his address given as Gregynog.[865]

Despite this concern with the affairs of his constituents, at Westminster Hanbury-Tracy rarely appears to have had anything to say about his constituency and its problems. According to *Hansard* his frequent questions, speeches and observations related to his interest in naval and military matters, on which at this point his national reputation was based. According to his obituary in *The Times*, 'He was mainly instrumental, after several years' advocacy, in getting the separate class of navigating officers, called masters, abolished. The assistance which he

[863] Gregynog Hall MSS, unidentified press cutting.
[864] Ibid.
[865] *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 1, (1868).

rendered in the passing of two special naval retirement schemes won him the thanks of many naval captains and commanders'.[866] Regarding Montgomeryshire, in 1870 he did put a question to the Secretary to the Treasury on behalf of Trefeglwys farmers who he felt were being unfairly taxed for making their workhorses available for 'gratuitously carting materials for building and repairing churches, chapels, and schools'.[867] In 1871, alongside Osborne Morgan MP (Liberal, Denbighshire), Charles J. Watkin Williams MP (Liberal, Denbigh Borough), Henry Richard MP (Liberal, Merthyr) and others, he took part in the debate on a Resolution relating to the appointment of Welsh-speaking judges to Welsh courts, following the recent appointment of a non-Welsh-speaking judge to the Mid-Wales County Court Circuit, which covered the county of Merioneth and adjacent districts where the *lingua franca* was Welsh and where English was little understood.[868] By this time, however, the political climate was changing, especially for traditionally Whiggish Liberals like Hanbury-Tracy: specifically *Welsh* affairs were suddenly rising much higher up the political agenda. In 1867 Hanbury-Tracy had enjoyed himself playing the 'Wizard of the West', but 1867 was also the year in which the Second Reform Bill was being debated in Parliament – an issue upon which the hopes and aspirations of the people were now focused, especially in Wales with its growing vision of itself as a nation.[869]

The Second Reform Act of 1867 and the General Election of 1868.

> The 1867 Reform Act was one of the most remarkable pieces of legislation of the Victorian period. It doubled the electorate in England and Wales and propelled the British electoral system into the age of mass politics : the age of the caucus, the Primrose League, and the Midlothian campaign.[870]

The Second Reform Act of 1867, and General Election which followed in 1868, changed Welsh politics forever. Its repercussions were felt in Montgomeryshire just as deeply as in the other counties of the principality. Charles Hanbury-Tracy found himself in a political era quite

[866] *The Times*, 11 December, 1922.
[867] *Hansard*, House of Commons debate, 24 May 1870 vol 201 cc1273-4, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/1870/may/24/LICENCE ON FARM HORSES. (accessed 26 September 2022). The tax was acknowledged not to be applicable in such cases.
[868] Welsh County Court Judges, resolution, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/sittings/1872/mar/08. (Accessed 26 September 2022.)
[869] See Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales*; Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales, The Observers and the Observed*, (Cardiff, 1992); Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*; Ryland Wallace, *Organise! Organise! Organise! A Study of Reform Agitations in Wales, 1840-1886,* (Cardiff, 1991).
[870] Robert Saunders, 'The Politics of Reform and the Making of the Second Reform Act, 1848-1867', *The Historical Journal,* 50, 3, (2007), pp. 571-5.

different from that of his grandfather, alongside Liberals with ideas about politics which implicitly challenged the patriarchal assumptions of the landed gentry, even those of Whig heritage who were now reinventing themselves as Liberals. As a Liberal MP, Hanbury-Tracy was not opposed to Reform, but when 1866 Reform Bill was debated in parliament he supported amendments which appeared to be designed to limit its effects: firstly when Lord Grosvenor moved that it was "inexpedient" to settle the franchise in isolation from the distribution of Parliamentary seats; and secondly when Lord Dunkellin moved that the borough franchise should be based on rating value rather than on gross estimated rental. This amendment was carried by eleven votes, leading to the failure of bill and the resignation of the Liberal government.[871] These amendments had not gone down well with the Liberals of Montgomeryshire, who had jumped to the conclusion that by supporting them Hanbury-Tracy had demonstrated that he was against all reform. He realised his error, and made sure that his letter to J. Pryce Drew, Chairman of the local Liberal Committee, dated 5th May 1866, in which he explained his actions, was published in the *Newtown and Welshpool Express*. His support for Lord Grosvenor's amendment, Hanbury-Tracy wrote, 'appears to have created the erroneous impression that I am in favour of piecemeal reform', but was given because of his reservations about the reform bill as it was then being proposed by the Government. He was happy with the new bill now being debated:

> Such being the altered state of the question, and believing as I do, that the question of Reform could never be better settled than now, it only remains for me to say, that I intend giving my cordial and hearty support to the measure in its altered shape, reserving to myself the right of helping to make such alterations in committee, as are likely to render it permanent and satisfactory to the country at large.[872]

Despite the publication of this letter he declined to attend meetings in Newtown and Welshpool to defend his conduct. On 5th July he wrote to Mrs Ann Warburton Owen of Glansevern:

> With respect to your desire that I should attend a meeting at Newtown & Pool to explain my late votes I cannot help thinking with all deference to your opinion it would be better not to do so for the present, but rather to postpone such a statement for a few months to allow time for quiet reflection and the quieting down of those feelings which are naturally much excited among the more extreme Politicians.[873]

[871] Saunders, 'The Politics of Reform', p.584.
[872] *Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 9th May 1866.
[873] NLW Glansevern MSS, 7258, Letter of Charles Hanbury-Tracy to Mrs A.W. Owen, 5 July 1866.

As a result of the 1867 Reform Act the electorate of England and Wales roughly doubled, from one to two million men. It granted the vote to all borough householders; it also reduced the property threshold in the counties, thus enfranchising many agricultural workers and tenants with small amounts of land.The Montgomeryshire Borough electorate increased from 965 to 2,559, and the county electorate increased from 3,339 to 4,810.[874] In Wales this had the effect of giving the vote to many more men who worshipped in dissenting chapels rather than in Anglican parish churches, to the alarm of Conservative landowners who feared the influence of radical Liberal preachers on a newly-enfranchised social class of farmers and shopkeepers who hitherto had had no political power.[875]

In order to understand this fear, it is necessary to examine the results of the Religious Census of 1851. The returns for Montgomeryshire show that chapels outnumbered churches by over four to one across the whole county. In the western district of Machynlleth there were ten Anglican churches with a total weekly attendance of 1.090 people, but fifty-six chapels of varying denominations, with a total attendance of 6,438. In Newtown district, which included the town of Llanidloes, the parishes of Llangurig and Trefeglwys and all the parishes surrounding the Gregynog estate including Betws Cedewain and Manafon, there were seventeen churches and sixty-two chapels, with an estimated total weekly attendance of 2,100 and 8,000 respectively, out of a total population of 25,107. Even making allowances for ambitious estimates of attendance, such figures point to a huge shift in the social structure of Victorian Wales, and a concomitant shift in religious, social and political attitudes in the population.[876]

Interestingly, in the Gregynog home parish of Tregynon there were only two Calvinistic Methodist chapels alongside the parish church of St.Cynon (one of which had been established by the former Gregynog agent, Thomas Colley, in 1797) and their total reported weekly attendance was a roughly equal spit between Anglicans and nonconformists: 129 at St.Cynon's, and a total of 109 at the two chapels – with a slight advantage to the church, which may have

[874] The Second Great Reform Act 1867, https://parliament.uk/collections-reform-acts (accessed 1 June 2023); James and Thomas, *Wales at Westminster*, pp.64-73.
[875] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales,* Ch. 6, 'The Problem of Preacher Influence', pp. 173-205.
[876] These figures are calculated from the returns as transcribed in Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, ed., *The Religious Census of 1851: A Calendar of the Returns Relating to Wales*, Volume II, North Wales, (Cardiff, 1981), pp. 3-87.

had something to do with the very old-established relationship between the church, the Gregynog estate and its tenantry; throughout the nineteenth century, for instance, Gregynog estate tenants were serving as churchwardens.[877] At the same time, however, Owen Brown of the Gregynog estate farm Argoed was a trustee of one Tregynon's Calvinistic Methodist chapels, and Richard Tilsley, tenant of Little Brithdir and sometime agent to Henry Hanbury-Tracy, was Deacon of the other.[878] Furthermore William Scott Owen records the presentation of a number of sites for chapel-building, in Caersws, Tregynon and Newtown in the 1870s and 1880s. It would seem that the Liberal proprietors of Gregynog did not fear wider emancipation as much as the Conservative proprietors of Powis and Wynnstay, despite Charles Hanbury-Tracy's slight misstep over the apparently limiting amendments he had supported in 1866. Past affirmation of his belief in the principles of civic and religious liberty, support for the abolition of church rates, and granting of land for local chapel-building, not to mention his heavy investment in the local textile industry, ensured his popularity overrode any reservations his more radical Liberal colleagues may have harboured.[879] In May 1868, on the occasion of his marriage to Miss Ada Tollemache, a niece of Lord Dysart, celebrations on an enormous scale took place, not only in Newtown but in towns and villages all over the county. A committee was formed to raise funds for the celebrations, and according to local papers:

> The town was gaily decorated with flags and banners, salutes were fired, and bells rang. The day was rendered agreeable to the humbler class of the community by a succession of rural sports and a liberal distribution of food to the poor. The festive proceedings were brought to a close by a banquet in the evening in the Town-hall.[880]

Similar festivities were also held in Welshpool, Berriew, Llanidloes, Caersws and Llanfyllin. Whether or not the munificence that attended the wedding celebrations was a contributory factor in boosting his popularity among the newly enfranchised, at the General Election of November 1868 Charles Hanbury-Tracy was re-elected unopposed as MP for Montgomery Boroughs. There was no change in county representation, Charles Williams-Wynn retaining his seat as a Conservative. He was one of only ten Conservative victories that year, the Liberals having won twenty-three of the thirty-three Welsh seats, the greatest triumph being the taking

[877] William Scott Owen, 'A Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC*, 30, (1898), pp.52-54.
[878] I.G. Jones, *The Religious Census of 1851,* pp35-36.
[879] On page 114 of his *History of Gregynog* (1888) Scott Owen lists 'Sites given', including Chapel and School at Caersws, Chapel at Tregynon, and in the 1770s a number of sites in Newtown, including that of the present Crescent Christian Centre.
[880] *Brecon County Times*, *Neath Gazette and General Advertiser*, 18 May 1868; *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 15 May 1868. See also *The Aberystwyth Observer* 18 May 1868 for a much longer, somewhat satirical account of the celebrations, written by the paper's Oswestry correspondent.

of the Merthyr Tydfil seat by the Rev. Henry Richard. In Wales, says Kenneth O. Morgan, 'the election has always been regarded as a national awakening', and he quotes David Lloyd George remembering, forty years later: 'it woke the spirit of the mountains, the genius of freedom that fought the might of the Normans … The political power of landlordism in Wales was shattered as effectively as the power of the Druids'.[881] Morgan points out that this was not such a revolution it might appear, as many of the newly elected Liberals were from the Whig tradition; many being landowners, such as Thomas Love Jones-Parry, who took the Caernarfonshire seat from G.S. Douglas-Pennant, having aristocratic connections, or remaining communicant with the Church of England. It was what happened in the aftermath of the 1868 election that was to radicalise the new electorate. [882]

The Hanbury-Tracys took up residence at Dolerw, a Newtown town house which in later years became the home of his political rival, the mail-order pioneer Pryce Jones. Hanbury-Tracy continued to be active in local affairs, notably as Chairman of the Cambrian Flannel company, which by 1869 was not doing too well, with workers on a four-day week. At its Annual Meeting on 7th September the directors reported a 'depression in the trade caused by mild winters, the import of cheap wool from the Colonies, and a general downturn of trade in the aftermath of a financial crisis in 1865'.[883] Hanbury-Tracy's intervention in local issues was not always well received: in October 1869 he became embroiled in a controversy over the appointment of a clerk to the Newtown and Llanidloes Union which led to some very acrimonious correspondence in the local paper,[884] and November that year a well-meaning but tactless intervention into a local matter concerning 'Miss Syars' clock' put him into the bad books of Newtown Local Board and led to his publishing a somewhat placatory letter in which nonetheless he claimed the support of the ratepayers (as opposed to the Local Board) for his actions.[885]

Montgomeryshire Liberal Registration Society

A more significant event had taken place in January 1869. In its issue of 12 January the *Newtown and Welshpool Express* reported that 'The Liberals of the County have established a

[881] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 22.
[882] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp. 23, 25.
[883] *Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 7 September 1869.
[884] E.g., *Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 26 October 1869.
[885] Ibid., 23 November 1869.

Liberal Registration Society'.[886] To build on the Liberal successes in the 1868 election, especially that of the Rev. Henry Richard in Merthyr Tydfil,[887] it was clearly time to put the county's Liberal party activities on a more organised basis, in particular, ensuring that in the aftermath of the 1867 reforms voter registration was being systematically undertaken – a matter which, according to Henry Hanbury-Tracy's remarks at the first annual meeting of the Society in March 1870, had not been properly addressed in the provisions of the 1867 Act.[888] At the initial meeting Captain Offley Malcome Crewe-Read, R.N., of Plasdinam, presided, but having been appointed High Sheriff of the County for 1870, he stood down in March 1870 in favour of the Hon. Henry Hanbury-Tracy of Gregynog, who was to play an active role in the society for the remainder of his years at the Hall. The membership of the Registration Society gives a clear indication of the widening social profile of liberally-minded and politically active people in the county by this time, ranging from former Whig gentry such as the Hanbury-Tracys, the Crewe-Reads and Arthur Humphreys Owen of Glanservern, to rising businessmen such as the rail and coal entrepreneur David Davies of Llandinam (who would be elected MP for Cardiganshire Boroughs in 1874), to solicitors, accountants and tradesmen such as drapers and tanners, a schoolmaster and three clergymen. A member from Tregynon was one Richard Tilsley, a tenant of the Gregynog estate who also acted as Henry Hanbury-Tracy's agent.[889] It was not until 1876 that the Conservatives of Newtown met to consider forming a local Conservative Association.[890]

Electoral intimidation and political evictions

The hot issue of the 1868 election across Britain had been Gladstone's proposal to disestablish the Church in Ireland, and this had brought out the dissenting vote, greatly enhanced by the widened franchise, in support. But 'in the context of the relationship between land and politics in nineteenth-century Wales, the 1868 election', as Matthew Cragoe points out, 'stands out as the key set-piece in the battle between landowners and radicals.'[891] In Wales, the greatest victory had been that of the Rev. Henry Richard, who had been elected Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil by a large majority, and who went to Westminster determined to do something about

[886] Ibid., 12 January 1869.
[887] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics,* pp. 24-25.
[888] *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard,* 12 March 1870
[889] *The Newtown & Welshpool Express, 12 January, 1870*
[890] *The Newtown & Welshpool Express,* 27 November 1886
[891] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales*, p.162

what he regarded as the ignorance of the English political classes 'as to the state of the Principality of Wales'.[892] It was Henry Richard who raised the subject of electoral intimidation in Wales in the House of Commons in July 1869 after claims began to be circulated that tenants in several Welsh counties had been evicted for casting their votes against the interests of their Conservative landlords.[893] This was not a new issue: a notorious case in 1859 was that of the eviction of several tenants of the Rhiwlas estate in Merioneth for voting against the wishes of their landlord, who supported the canditature of W.W.E Wynne of Peniarth, the sitting member for Merioneth, who had been elected unoppposed in 1852 but who in 1859 faced a contest with one David Williams. Tenants of Sir William Watkin Wynne's Glan-llyn estate who took a similar stand to those of Rhiwlas, faced similar penalties.This case caused unease in Montgomeryshire where a large part of the Williams Wynnes' Wynnstay estate was located.[894] Memories of the Powis evictions of 1863 no doubt also rankled.[895] Following the election of 1868 a large number of alleged cases of political evictions emanated from aggrieved farmers in Caernarfonshire, Carmarthenshire, and Cardiganshire who had been evicted 'for having voted Liberal and having thus challenged the structure of local authority'. Henry Richard's was not a lone voice: his House of Commons speech was supported by his fellow Liberal, Osborne Morgan, MP for Denbighshire, and other English and Welsh Liberals.[896] The events in Wales, as Kenneth O. Morgan points out, played their part in the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the conduct of elections, and later in the successful attainment of a secret ballot.[897] More immediately, they led to the organisation of a conference in Aberystwyth in November 1869 arranged with the object of devising a compensation scheme for evicted tenants. Henry Richard was the chief speaker, with other prominent Liberals such as Thomas Gee of Denbigh and industrialist and landowner Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn, MP for Swansea.[898]

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[892] Richard, *Letters*, p.1.
[893] Henry Richard, Elections, Wales, Resolution, HC Deb 06 July 1869 vol 197 cc1294-329 https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1869/jul/06/elections-wales-resolution (accessed 12 June 2023); Richard, Letters and Essays, pp. 113-124; Matthew Cragoe, 'The Anatomy of an Eviction Campaign: the General Election of 1868 in Wales and its aftermath', *Rural History*, 9, 2, (1998), pp.177-193.
[894] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp. 21-21; Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, 'Merioneth Politics in Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Explorations and Explanations, Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales*, (Llandysul, 1981), pp. 126-28; Matthew Cragoe, 'The Anatomy of an Eviction Campaign: The General Election of 1868 in Wales and its Aftermath, *Rural History*, 9, 2, (1998), pp.177-193.
[895] See footnote 47.
[896] Hansard, HC Debate 06 July 1869 vol 197 cc1294-329; *Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 13 July 1869.
[897] Morgan, op.cit., pp.25-26.
[898] Reported in detail in *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard*, 20 November 1869.

'The main platform speakers represented the radical face of Welsh Liberalism,' says Matthew Cragoe, but he suggests that the political evictions issue was too hot a potato for the Whig element of the Liberals. 'The most striking aspect of the meeting was the absence of all the principality's more Whiggish representatives, three of whom excused themselves by letter.'[899] One of those letter-writers was Charles Hanbury-Tracy. The *Cambrian News* reported: 'In a letter from Mr Tracy, the hon. gentleman, who regretted that previous engagements prevented him from being present, said that the ballot was the only remedy. Mr Tracy intimated that he should be glad to contribute to the assistance of any tenants who could be clearly shown to have been evicted for political purposes, but he confessed that he saw great difficulties in administration'.[900] It seems that Tracy's instincts as a landed proprietor were beginning to inhibit his instincts as a Liberal politician.

The Ballot Act was passed in 1872. In November that year Charles Hanbury-Tracy addressed the electors of Montgomery Boroughs at a public meeting in what the convenor of the meeting had described as his 'stronghold', Newtown, speaking on the 'Leading Topics of the Day'. To repeated cheers, he averred that 'We shall find the Ballot an inestimable boon' against the 'tyranny of intimidation'. He also alluded to recent achievements of Gladstone's Liberal government relating to the Irish Church and Land Acts, and measures passed in education, the abolition of the purchase of commissions in the Army, the Sanitary Act and Licensing Act which, he said, had reduced drunkenness in the larger towns by twenty per cent. But when it came to the 'looming question' of Disestablishment, he was of the opinion that there should be no Welsh Disestablishment without English. In the Chairman's Vote of Thanks he declared that Mr Tracy was 'the right man in the right place', and his resolution was carried with loud cheers.[901] For now, Tracy was quite radical enough for the electors of Montgomery Boroughs.

<u>The Cambrian Mills and the Welsh Woollen Manufacturing Company</u>

For the next few years Charles Hanbury-Tracy concerned himself with constituency matters such as the fluctuating fortunes of the Cambrian Mills. In August 1870 at the Cambrian's annual meeting, according to the *Newtown and Welshpool Express* another poor year's business was reported, 'not helped by the outbreak of war on the continent'. This was the

[899] Cragoe*, Culture, Politics*, pp. 165-66.
[900] *Cambrian News*, 20 November 1869.
[901] The whole occasion reported verbatim in *The Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 26 November, 1872.

Franco-Prussian War, reported extensively in this paper.[902] In October that year the Mill was closed while stock in hand was 'sensibly diminished … they hoped temporarily.[903] The following January, Hanbury-Tracy ordered the managers of the Cambrian Flannel company to make gifts of three yards of flannel to female employees, and two and a half hundredweight of coal to male employees, to help them through the winter. And in March that year an optimistic press report appeared suggesing that the Cambrian Mills would soon be resuming full operations.[904]

By 1873 'orders began to flow in again' Hanbury-Tracy and his partners formed a larger company, the Welsh Woollen Manufacturing Company Limited, with £150,000 capital, bought the Cambrian Mill for £40,000 and enlarged it. The changes were successful; in January 1874 Tracy was able to declare an interim dividend of 6% and was optimistically extending the mills and attempting to diversify the company's products. 'By September 1874 the company had "so many orders on their hand for fancy and other shawls that they cannot possibly have time for stopping to connect their additional premises to the old". In addition, they were short of forty weavers.'[905] As part of the expansion, Jacquard looms, new to Newtown operatives, had been installed at the Cambrian Mill, and a team of Scottish weavers brought in to town to instruct the locals in their use. In 1875 Hanbury-Tracy borrowed money from his wife's uncle Lord Dysart to build a terrace of cottages along what is now known as Canal Road in Newtown, to house these incomers. Relations between Newtonians and these 'strangers', who appeared to be receiving favourable treatment regarding their new homes, were not friendly at first,[906] but by 1876 production was improving, and by 1879 the mills were employing as many as 500 workers.

By 1877, however, Charles Douglas Hanbury-Tracy had more to think about than the Newtown textile industry. On the 28th April that year his brother, the 3rd Lord Sudeley, died at Toddington aged forty, leaving no heirs. Charles became 4th Lord Sudeley. His accession, and elevation to the House of Lords, led to a by-election for the Montgomery Boroughs seat, which was won by his younger brother, the Hon. Frederick S.A. Hanbury-Tracy, the 'frivlous Whig', as Kenneth O.

[902] *The Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 23 August 1870.
[903] Ibid., 11 October 1870.
[904] Ibid., 10 January 1871., 28 March 1871.
[905] Richards, *A History of Newtown*, p. 87.
[906] *The Newtown and Welshpool Express*, 12 February 1875.

Morgan describes him.[907] At the previous two elections Charles had been elected unopposed, but in 1877 Fred Hanbury-Tracy was opposed by the Conservative Charles Vane-Tempest of the Londonderry family, one of whose seats was Plas Machynlleth. Vane-Tempest polled a respectable 1,118 votes to Hanbury-Tracy's 1,447, suggesting that in future it would be unwise to take Liberal ownership of the seat for granted. A more significant result for Montgomeryshire, perhaps, was the active involvment of the English Liberal industrialist Stuart Rendel, a business acquaintance of the new Lord Sudeley, in the 1877 campaign.

Charles Douglas Richard Hanbury-Tracy, Fourth Lord Sudeley

Despite the huge burden of anxiety accompanying his inheritance, during the years following 1877 the new Lord Sudeley was as active as ever in supporting the Liberal cause in Montgomeryshire, leading to the election of Stuart Rendel to the county seat in 1880. He supported non-sectarian elementary education, and when the Aberdare Committee, established by Gladstone to enquire into the condition of Intermediate and Higher Education in Wales, met in Welshpool in November 1880, Sudeley was a signatory to a resolution requesting the Government's assistance for the new college at Aberystwyth. Those present at the Welshpool meeting constituted the Liberal aristocracy of the time, as J. A. Davies records:

> Among those present were the Rt. Hon. Lord Sudeley, The Hon. F.S. Hanbury-Tracy, M.P., Stuart Rendel, M.P., David Davies M.P., A. C. Humphreys-Owen, Major Crewe-Read, and C. R. Jones, the convenor. [908]

Sudeley was also maintaining a high profile in national affairs. He had taken up his seat in the House of Lords and was taking part in debates on subjects ranging from the Matrimonial Clauses Amendment Bill, the Reporting of the proceedings of the House of Lords, the constitution of the Heavy Metals Committee, merchant shipping and the opening hours of the National Gallery.[909] By the 1880s he was a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society, a Vice-President of the Society of Arts, chaired the British Commission at the Electrical Exhibition of 1884 in Vienna, and in 1885 was elected Fellow of the Royal Society.[910] For five years he represented the Board of Trade under Mr. Joseph Cbamberlain, and also the Office of Works under Mr. Shaw Lefevre (Lord Eversley). From 1880 to 1885 he was Lord-in-Waiting to Queen

[907] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.81.
[908] J.A. Davies, *Education in a Welsh Rural County 1870-1973* (Cardiff, 1973), pp.48,58.
[909] Proceedings of the House of Lords, 1878-1887. https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/people/hon-charles-hanbury-tracy/index/html (accessed 3 April 2023).
[910] Sudeley, 'Toddington and the Tracys', p.164.

Victoria, and in 1886 was appointed Captain of the Gentlemen-at-Arms.[911] Nonetheless, his estates, on which by this time he was spending large amounts of borrowed money, were never far from his mind; neither were the Newtown flannel mills.

Decline of the Newtown flannel industry

Throughout the late 1870s and 1880s Lord Sudeley maintained his involvement with the Newtown flannel industry. By 1879 the Welsh Woollen Manufacturing company employed 500 people at the Cambrian Mills, and was enjoying a successful season which in August that year was celebrated by a company Picnic and Sports Day 'on lands kindly lent by Mr Pryce Jones, Dolerw'.[912] Reporting on the occasion the *Montgomeryshire Express* said,

> Whilst we are disposed to give praise wherever it is legitimately due – and there are several who are justly entitled to it – yet to Lord Sudeley it is especially due, for it is no longer secret that had it not been for his self-denying efforts, the Company, of which he is chairman, would not have been in existence … To his lordship a deep debt of gratitude is undoubtedly due, which we fear is not likely ever to be paid.[913]

The good seasons were not to last, and in 1882 the Welsh Woollen Manufacturing company went into liquidation. In 1883, instead of cutting his losses Sudeley, fully aware of the impact of closure on the working population of Newtown, created the Severn Tweed Company to run the Cambrian, appointing as chairman his younger brother Frederick Hanbury-Tracy, MP for Montgomery Boroughs. Operations resumed at the mill, more workers were taken on, and trade was buoyant enough in 1886 for the company to provide a dinner and entertainment for its employees.[914] But this success was not to last, trade began to fall off again, and in 1892 the company went into voluntary liquidation, leaving the Sudeley family with a loss of £100,000.[915] Later attempts to revive the mills had little success, with another bankruptcy in 1905, following which a large number of workers left the town for the mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire. A devastating fire destroyed the Cambrian Mills in 1912, and they were never rebuilt.[916]

Inserted in agent William Scott Owen's Commonplace Book is a press cutting from the *Oswestry Advertiser*, dated 3 January 1893, purporting to be an interview with a former

[911] *The Times*, Dec 11 1922.
[912] *Montgomereryshire Express*, 19 August 1879.
[913] Ibid.
[914] *Ibid*., 22 January 1886
[915] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.255.
[916] Maurice Richards, *An Outline of the Newtown Woollen Industry*, (Newtown, 1971); David Pugh, 'The Cambrian Mills'*, The Newtonian*, 54, (Autumn 2013).

shareholder of the Severn Tweed Mills and discussing the reasons for its failure, which he attributed to poor management, and the 'right sort of wool' not being bought. 'My impression is that the bulk of the debts of the company were defrayed by Lord Sudeley.'[917] In the meantime, it seemed, Pryce Jones's mail-order company was prospering mightily.[918] The writer of a letter to the *Oswestry Advertiser* in December 1893 was anxious that the Sudeleys should not be forgotten:

> During the recent election campaign petition the public were led to believe that Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones keeps Newtown going. Now as I have visited Newtown for upwards of twenty years, I should like to state that as far as my observation and knowledge of Newtown goes, I think that the people of Newtown are considerably indebted to the Tracy family, who have in the Cambrian Mills alone expended some £60,000, and have had comparatively little return and given employment to hundreds of persons.[919]

Stuart Rendel and the General Election of 1880

Sudeley's preoccupation with the run-down nature of his estates and the fortunes of the Newtown flannel mills did not lead to his opting out of the Liberal campaigns of late 1870s Montgomeryshire. Stuart Rendel's election as the first Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire in 1880, wresting the seat from the Conservative Williams-Wynns after a century, was a triumph for the Liberal party. A friend and supporter of Gladstone, he became one of the most substantial Liberal politicians in Wales. 'It was he,' says Kenneth O.Morgan, 'who was primarily the creator of a distinct Welsh Party in the Commons' … [and] was to do more than any other man to make Wales a force in political life.'[920]

Stuart Rendel was a wealthy industrialist who travelled the world on behalf of the Sir William Armstrong & Co. company, which manufactured battle cruisers and guns on Tyneside. His first encounter with Montgomeryshire politics was in 1877 when he was invited to speak in support of F.S. Hanbury-Tracy's canditure for the Montgomery Boroughs seat ahead of the by-election brought about by his brother Charles's accession as the fourth Baron Sudeley. Rendel so impressed local Liberals that he was invited to stand as a Liberal candidate for the County seat at the next general election, which was likely to be a challenge, as the seat was still regarded as the hereditary possession of the Williams Wynn family, (renowned as 'Princes in Wales'). Rendel accepted the invitation, and began to campaign with enthusiasm on behalf of the

[917] *Oswestry Advertiser*, 3 January 1893
[918] After Pryce Jones was knighted in 1887 he styled himself Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones.
[919] Ibid, 25 December 1892
[920] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.40.

Montgomeryshire Liberals.[921] During these years his was on excellent terms with Lord Sudeley; before taking up residence with his family at Plas Dinam in Llandinam they had stayed at Gregynog as a guest of the Sudeleys.[922] Rendel put Sudeley in the way of a number of directorships, including of the Sir William Armstrong Company, which led him to invest £20,000 in the company when it went public in 1882.[923]

The election campaigns of 1879 and 1880 were heavily reported in the local press, alongside other events conspicuously supported by Montgomeryshire Liberals such as the Newtown White Star Football Club Grand Presentation Dinner on 27th June, and the Newtown Congregational Church Bazaar, which ran for three days and was opened by Lord Sudeley on 27th August, with Hanbury-Tracy, Rendel and Humphreys-Owen family members attending on subsequent days. On 29th September, Lord Sudeley chaired a 'Great Liberal Demonstration' in Newtown's Market Hall, which was reported in detail in the *Montgomeryshire Express* the following week.[924] A Liberal meeting in Welshpool in November, attended by Rendel, Sudeley, his younger brother F.S. Hanbury-Tracy MP, and David Davies, MP, was even reported in *The Times*.[925] Over the following months Stuart Rendel and Hanbury-Tracy travelled all over Montgomeryshire to election meetings, all reported in full in the Liberal-supporting press. A *Montgomeryshire Express* editorial in March 1880 asked 'Is the Ballot Safe?' and assured its readers that it was.[926] The *Cambrian News* for 2 April 1880 published a long report on the forthcoming General Election, alongside a report of Stuart Rendel speaking at Llanfair Caereinion, full of rhetoric about the 'wretched, wasteful Tory government'. The same paper also noted that 'the Hon. H.H. Tracy, who was received with cheers, congratulated the electors of Montgomeryshire on the selection of his friend, Mr Stuart Rendel, as the Liberal candidate.[927] Henry Hanbury-Tracy, now aged seventy-eight, had returned to Montgomeryshire to campaign for Rendel, and it seems that the people were very pleased to see him again.

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[921] For Stuart Rendel's political career in Montgomeryshire see Nelmes, Graham V. 'Stuart Rendel and Welsh Liberal Political Organization in the late-nineteenth century', *WHR*, 9, 4 (1979), pp.468-484;
K.O. Morgan, 'Montgomeryshire's Liberal Century: Rendel to Hooson, 1880-1979', *WHR*, 16, 1, June 1992, pp.93-109; J. Graham Jones, 'The Political Baptism of Stuart Rendel', *MC*, 87 (1999), p. 147-160.
[922] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 26 August 1879; e.g. NLW Rendel MS 156, Sudeley to Rendel, 22 Sept 1878
[923] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', op.cit., pp.256-7
[924] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 1 July, 2 September, 30 September, 7 October, 1879.
[925] *The Times*, 15 November 1879.
[926] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 30 March 1880.
[927] *Cambrian News and Merioneth Standard*, 2 April 1889.

The return of a Liberal government led by William Gladstone following the General Election of 1880 saw a particular triumph in Wales where all but four of the thirty-three Welsh seats were won by Liberal candidates. In Montgomeryshire, Stuart Rendel won the county seat by 4,044 votes from Watkin Williams-Wynn with 3,489 votes, despite Wynn's huge election expenditure of £13,053,[928] and Lord Sudeley's brother F.S. Hanbury-Tracy retained the Borough seat. The Welsh Liberal press was triumphant: 'Mr. RENDEL'S majority is a substantial one, and seals the doom of Toryism in the county for many a long year to come', gloated the *Cambrian News*. Under the headline 'Mr Rendel's Victory' The *Montgomeryshire Express* reported that 'The reception of the news at Newtown was accompanied by one of the most enthusiastic midnight demonstrations that it is possible for the mind to imagine, given that the population of the town is only about seven thousand'.[929]

In June that year Lord Sudeley chaired a meeting at the Crystal Palace to 'celebrate the success of the Liberal cause in Wales during the late General Election'. *The Times* reported on the occasion in detail. Most of the Welsh MPs attended, and Henry Richard, MP for Merthyr Tydfil, gave a speech in Welsh. 'Wales was Liberal to the backbone', pronounced Lord Sudeley, continuing:

> The late Government had plunged the country into difficulties with foreign countries and financial embarrassments. Scotland had beaten England in its Liberalism, and Liberal Wales had beaten England and Scotland together. To Wales belonged what Mr.Gladstone had termed the primacy of honour. Mr. Gladstone had always shown a warm feeling for Wales, where he had his home, and had done great things for its prosperity.[930]

Regrettably, it was not to be too long before matters arose in which Sudeley and Mr Gladstone, not to mention Stuart Rendel, were unable to see eye-to-eye.

<u>The Sudeleys: Not Liberal enough?</u>

Lord Sudeley's politics grew out of the Whig instincts and traditions of his ancestors, both Hanbury and Tracy, which evolved from the Revolution Settlement of 1688, and the Act of Settlement in 1701, establishing the supremacy of Parliament over the Crown as the primary organ of government. But Whigs believed that land and lineage were still the essential

[928] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity* p. 137.
[929] *Cambrian News*, op.cit., 16 April 1880; *Montgomeryshire Express*, 13 April 1880.
[930] *The Times*, 10 June, 1880.

foundations of government – government in the interest of the people, perhaps, as Matthew Cragoe suggests, but not necessarily by the people.[931] Whiggery, as Donald Southgate put it, always bore the stamp of aristocracy, despite Charles James Fox 'bequeathing to nineteenth century Whiggery the watchwords 'Peace, Economy and Reform'.[932] So the Sudeleys could style themselves as political reformers without compromising their view of themselves as aristocrats, could speak in favour of disestablisment and widening of the franchise, manage their estates and tenantry with respect, support local industry and carry out their civic responsibilities with integrity, without in any way undermining their elite status. For the 4th Lord Sudeley, the transition to calling himself Liberal did not at first seem to undermine these principles, and he had achieved a significant personal popularity by 1880.

The changes in constituency boundaries in 1832 which transformed the Montgomery Borough seat into the Montgomery *Boroughs* seat had resulted over the years in increased Liberal influencein the area, as represented at first by the old Whig family of Hanbury-Tracy, in the county's market towns, later influencing the political climate in the county itself which led to Stuart Rendel's capture of the Montgomeryshire seat in 1880. But by the eighteen-eighties a split in political aspiration was developing between the eastern and western wings of the constituency, that is between the boroughs of Montgomery and Welshpool, and those of Llanidloes, Llanfyllin, and Machynlleth, with Newtown poised uneasily between them. In religious and linguistic terms this was nothing new: the culture of the western boroughs had always been more nonconformist and Welsh-speaking than the eastern boroughs. Now, with the emergence of a more assertive and articulate *Welsh* national consciousness as expressed in the rise of the Cymru Fydd[933] and Young Wales movements, this divide began to threaten the unity of the Liberal party in Montgomeryshire and undermine the political reputation of the Sudeley family. At the same time, the Conservative party was raising its profile, particularly in Newtown where regular Conservative meetings were held, with Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones, the mail-order pioneer who had brought as much employment to the town as the Sudeleys, a leading light.[934]

[931] Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity*, p.31.
[932] Donald Southgate, *The Passing of the Whigs, 1832-1886*, (London, 1962), xv.
[933] A Newtown branch of *Cymru Fydd* would be established in 1888, its inaugural meeting taking place in Newtown's Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church. See *Montgomeryshire Express,* 6 March 1888.
[934] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 17 & 24 November 1885.

The political landscape of Montgomeryshire and indeed the whole of Wales was further modified in 1884 with the passing of the Third Reform Act which established a uniform male franchise throughout the country. As Kenneth O. Morgan says, it 'turned Wales into a political democracy, enfranchising not only the rural vote on a basis of household suffrage, but also thousands of male working-class voters, miners, tinplaters, and steelworkers, in the industrial valleys.'[935] Despite this, the greatest increase in the registered electors of the Montgomery Boroughs constituency had taken place after the 1868 Reform Act: in 1865 there were 965; in 1868 there were 2,559, and in 1880 there were 3,120. In comparison, in 1868 there were 4,810 registered electors in the county constituency; in 1880 when Stuart Rendel took the seat for the Liberals, there were 5,291, which rose to 8,870 in 1885 after the Third Reform Act, and remained at around the eight thousand mark until after the First World War.[936] This suggests a greater increase in enfranchisement among the rural workers of the county than in the boroughs. The number of borough electors who were registered to vote in 1880, when Hanbury-Tracy was returned, was 3,120; in 1885, when he was defeated by the Conservative Pryce Jones, there were 2,999 registered electors. Working-class voters of Newtown, a good many of whom were now employed at Pryce Jones's Royal Welsh Warehouse in the town, may have helped Pryce Jones to secure his victory over F. S. Hanbury-Tracy by eighty-three votes at the 1885 election, but this was not the whole story.

Blinded by the house of Gregynog

According to the *Cambrian News and Merioneth Standard* for 19 March 1886 'Mr Hanbury Tracy himself referred to over-confidence as one cause of the Liberal defeat', but went on to comment that 'he was blinded by the house of Gregynog and the Sudeley peerage' and 'threw the seat away by his diffidence and indifference', but no-one likes to tell him so because 'he is such a nice fellow'. Niceness was no longer enough, neither was the belief that everything depended on the voters of Newtown who would vote for a Tracy out of gratitude:

> A good deal has been done commercially by Lord SUDELEY for Newtown and Llanidloes, but what the electors want more particularly is thoroughly efficient Liberal representation, and sooner of later all personal, family and commercial considerations are lost sight of in order to secure the kind of representative required.[937]

[935] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p.64.
[936] James and Thomas, *Wales at Westminster*, pp.76-78.
[937] *Cambrian News and Merioneth Standard*, 19 March 1886.

Despite, or perhaps because of, such very critical reporting, Hanbury-Tracy took back the Montgomery Boroughs seat from Pryce-Jones at the 1886 General Election. However, the political reputation of the Sudeleys was about to be shaken by an issue that reached far beyond the borders of Montgomeryshire.

Mr Gladstone and the Irish Home Rule Bill

In the years following his election as MP for Montgomeryshire, Stuart Rendel established his reputation as a reforming Liberal and a close colleague of Gladstone and John Morley, who had been elected Liberal MP for Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1883. Montgomeryshire Liberals, especially those from the western districts of the county, anticipated progressive times ahead. At this time, Welsh radicals were taking a great interest in the politics of Ireland. Sixty-one Irish Home Rule MPs had been returned to Parliament in 1880, led by Charles Stuart Parnell, and were working vigorously to keep Irish affairs at the top of the political agenda alongside increasingly violent resistance to British rule – and British landownership – in Ireland itself. Land Acts passed in 1870 and 1881 intended to give greater security to Irish tenants informed and influenced Welsh land reform campaigners who began to demand similar acts for Wales.[938]

Then in 1886, Gladstone announced his intention of introducing a Bill to grant Home Rule to Ireland.[939] The Home Rule bill was to split the Liberal party across the kingdom, creating a breach between the traditional Whig element of which Lord Sudeley and his brother F.S. Hanbury-Tracy were exemplars, and Radicals, or supporters of Gladstone such as Morley, and Rendel. Henceforth there were two sorts of Liberal: Liberal Unionists, who believed with Joseph Chamberlain that Gladstone's obsession with Home Rule was undermining the case for Welsh Disestablishment, and Gladstonian Liberals.[940] Sudeley was unequivocally a Unionist. He made his feelings clear in a letter, published in the *The Times* on 8th October 1888, ahead of a series of Liberal meetings and demonstrations to take place in Newtown on the 8th October, where John Morley was to be the principal speaker. It had been reported that Sudeley had

[938] Irish Land Act, 1870, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/irish-land-act-1870; Irish Land Act, 1881, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/irish-land-act-1881, (accessed 17 May 2023).
[939] Government of Ireland Bill 1886, 'First Home Rule Bill', https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1886-04-09
[940] Morgan, *Wales in British Politics'*, p.79

invited Morley to Gregynog as his guest for the occasion,[941] but in this letter he stated that 'Mr. Stuart Rendel, MP, would be the entertainer of Mr Morley,' and furthermore

> … I cannot allow it for one moment to be implied that I sympathise in the slightest degree with the views respecting Ireland entertained by that section of the Liberal Party to which they belong. For this reason I declined, when asked to do so, to preside or take any part in the proceedings of the meeting. Like many others who have for several years served under Mr Gladstone, I deeply deplore the line he has thought right to follow since the last general election, when the verdict of the nation was given against his proposed Irish legislation, and in favour of the restoration of law and order to Ireland before the consideration of any further remedial measures.[942]

The fallout from this letter was bruising to Sudeley. Morley wrote immediately to Rendel informing him that it was now impossible for him to accept Sudeley's invitation to stay at Gregynog for the Newtown event.[943] The original invitation, and now its refutation, received wide press coverage.[944] It was widely mocked in Liberal newspapers. 'It is of no serious public importance,' commented the *South Wales Daily News*, 'whom Lord Sudeley may entertain at Gregynog. But his letter runs counter to a feeling proudly held in English political circles, that a difference of politics need not interfere with the amenities of social life.' The letter, 'had better not have been written'.[945] It had a mean-spirited tone, especially published as it was alongside long and enthusiastic reports of the Demonstration itself. 'Mr John Morley must have been more than gratified by the reception which awaited him yesterday on his arrival at Newtown', reported the *South Wales Daily News* on 9 October. 'In the outburst of enthusiasm which greeted the Liberal statesman he had only a sample of what all brave champions of civil and religious liberty may expect in Wales.'[946] Lord Sudeley would have done better to uphold his invitation, and been proud to host a statesman of the stature of John Morley, the report continues: 'True, he is not a Unionist, and probably Lord Sudeley is stupid enough to imagine that Unionism is the exclusive repository of all that is good and great in man.'[947]

Sudeley and his brother F.S. Hanbury-Tracy, the 'frivolous Whig' as K.O. Morgan dismisses him, never really mended their fences with Rendel, or with the local Liberal agent Arthur

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[941] *The Times*, 3 October 1888
[942] *The Times,* 8 October 1888.
[943] Rendel MSS, Morley to Rendel, 5 October 1888.
[944] In *The Times*, 3 October, 9 October 1888, picked up and reported by the *Cambrian News*, *South Wales Echo*, the *Cardiff Times*, the *Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald*, and others.
[945] *South Wales Daily News*, 9 October 1888
[946] *Ibid.*
[947] *Ibid.*

Humphreys-Owen (who was to succeed Rendel as MP for Montgomeryshire), or the more radical liberals of Llanidloes, Llanfyllin and Machynlleth. Tracy had also been irritating the Montgomeryshire Liberals for some years, claiming that he could not afford to remain in Parliament, threatening to resign, then agreeing to continue.[948] His defeat by Pryce Jones in 1885 had been overturned the following year, and he held the seat until 1892 when he was once again defeated by Pryce Jones, now Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones. After this, debate among Montgomeryshire Liberals as to whether or not Tracy should be selected as the Borough candidate once more then began to fill the press, kept aflame by many self-serving letters from the man himself.[949] Like his elder brother, Tracy had aligned himself with the Unionists, and this was no longer to the taste of many Montgomeryshire Liberals. In May 1893 the *Cambrian News* made its feelings about the continued influence of the Sudeley family on Montgomeryshire politics clear:

> The obscure tuft-hunters who hang about Gregynog, and who spend their lives in making Liberal political crutches for first one member of the Sudeley family and then another may rest assured that their game is played out.
>
> If the Montgomery Boroughs are to be in the gift of a family we would as soon see it in the gift of the Wynns as the Tracys. With the Wynns in possession Liberals would at least be unmuzzled. While Mr HANBURY TRACY was the Member and was nominally, at any rate, a Liberal, the Radicals who objected to the Liberal party wire pullers could, with some show of reason, be accused of wishing to divide the camp if they objected to the timid tactics of Llanfyllin and Garthmyl. These tactics have twice resulted in handing the seat over to the Tories, and we say that it is high time to change the system that, brings about this result.[950]

With the Gladstonian Liberal, Rendel, now member for the county, Montgomeryshire's radical Liberals were voicing demands for a borough member who would reflect growing nationalist sentiments and who would fight for Welsh land reform on the Irish model. Machynlleth voters, reported the *Montgomeryshire Express*, were disappointed in Tracy. 'It is highly important that a candidate be selected as soon as possible, and he should be a man if not of Welsh extraction of decided Welsh sympathies, as for instance Mr Stuart Rendel, MP. The seat was biased towards Newtown, whereas Machynlleth would prefer a candidate more like Mr Lloyd George or Mr Ellis, 'a Welshman full of political ardour'.'[951] The Liberals of Llanfyllin were even more unequivocal. To them, Mr Tracy was a backslider; the candidate selected should be an 'out-

[948] The Rendel and Glanservern papers in the National Library of Wales contain many letters between Rendel and A.C. Humphreys-Owen expressing their exasperation with F.S. Hanbury-Tracy between 1886 and 1983. See e.g. NLW Rendel MS. 14, Letter 482, A.C. Humphreys-Owen to Rendel, 24 April 1889, and Glansevern MS. 529, Rendel to Humphreys-Owen, 22 April 1891.
[949] *Montgomershire Express*, 6 June, 13 June 1893
[950] *Cambrian News*, 12 May 1893.
[951] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 13 June 1893.

and-out, red-hot Radical … who is in entire sympathy with the Welsh National party … We are all extreme here, and that is the candidate to suit us'.[952] The candidate eventually selected was Owen Phillips, who at the 1895 General Election lost to (now Sir Pryce) Pryce-Jones by eighty-four votes. Subsequent elections, prior to the abolition of Borough seats in 1918, swung between Liberals and Conservatives by small margins, although the County seat remained in Liberal hands until 1979. Stuart Rendel remained MP for Montgomeryshire until his elevation to the House of Lords in 1894; his colleague Arthur Humphreys-Owen succeeded him until his death in 1905, to be followed by David Davies of Llandinam – both of whom were landowners. Rendel retained his interest in and commitment to Wales, working hard to establish a Welsh national Liberal association, but he also played a part in the creation of a new national institution when he gave the site for the creation of the National Library of Wales in 1905.[953]

Lord Sudeley, Alderman.

The other great political event of 1888, apart from Stuart Rendel's election as MP for Montgomeryshire, was the passing of Act to create County Councils, which provided for democratically elected governing bodies in the counties, a move memorably deplored by Herbert M. Vaughan as breaking the power of the old Welsh gentry and bringing 'ambitious members from a different social stratum' into the governance of the county.[954] Nonetheless, Lord Sudeley, standing as a Liberal Unionist, was elected to represent Tregynon in the new Montgomeryshire County Council – by only five votes, having been opposed by Liberal farmer N. Watkins of The Moat, Caersws. Sudeley's agent William Scott Owen, standing as Conservative for Aberhafesp, was defeated by Liberal farmer David Hamer of Castellydail, Newtown, by three votes. The Liberals won a majority of the seats, but there was a strong Conservative presence, especially in Welshpool, and the margin of votes was often small. A significant number of farmers were elected.[955] The greatly respected Arthur Humphreys-Owen of Glansevern was elected unopposed for Berriew, and subsequently elected as the first Chairman of the Council.[956] In the first elections for aldermen Lord Sudeley was defeated,[957]

[952] Ibid.
[953] Morgan, K.O. 'Montgomeryshire's Liberal Century: Rendel to Hooson, 1880-1979', *WHR*, 16, 1, (June 1992), pp. 93-109; Graham V. Nelmes, 'Stuart Rendel and Welsh Liberal Political Organization in the late-nineteenth century', *WHR*, 9, 4 (1979), pp.486-484.
[954] Herbert M. Vaughan, *The South Wales Squires* (1926, Golden Grove Editions, 1988), pp.4-5.
[955] *Aberystwyth Observer*, 26 January 1889.
[956] *South Wales Daily News*, 2 February 1889.
[957] His election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in March 1888 may have ameliorated his disappointment at this rejection. See *Athenaeum* 3153, 31 March 1888.

but he was successful in 1892. But 1892 was the year in which his economic fortunes began on their irreversible downturn. His election as an alderman might well have been a reflection of a long-standing loyalty to the Sudeleys as Montgomeryshire landowners, but whose political influence in the county had, since 1886, been dwindling.

Landowner and Unionist

After the rejection of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill in 1886, 'The majority of great Whigs,' wrote David Cannadine,

> such as the Dukes of Devonshire, Bedford, Marlborough and Westminster, who had become increasingly concerned since 1880 about where the Liberal Party was going, now deserted Gladstone, and although a minority stayed loyal, the landed establishment and the House of Lords would henceforth be overwhelmingly Conservative and Unionist.[958]

Lord Sudeley was among those former Whigs who now distanced themselves from radical Gladstonian Liberalism. In the House of Lords his interventions continued to relate mainly to naval matters, and the need for better recording of Parliamentary proceedings.[959] He did not step back entirely from county politics, continuing to serve as a county councillor, and maintain a presence in local institutions such as the County Infirmary. But his public role now turned primarily on his position as the proprietor of the third largest landed estate in Montgomeryshire,[960] praised by his tenants at every Rent Audit, and taking a defensive stance on the part of Welsh landlords in relation to campaigners for Welsh land reform, especially after the appointment of the Welsh Land Commission in 1893. On this issue his stance certainly accorded with that of his cousin, Lord Penrhyn. Sudeley's position is revealed in his letter of 4 November 1892 to George H.M.Owen, Secretary of Lord Penrhyn's North Wales Property Defence Association which had been set up to defend Welsh landowners in 1886. Sudeley appears to have completed a questionnaire about the Gregynog estate:

> I now beg to hand you the return you asked me to fill up.
> You will notice on reading it that it adds another to the many good and splendid cases you have on the side of the landowners.
> It is of course open to question how far so large an outlay on this Estate amounting since 1852 to nearly £190,000, has been wisely made as a pure matter of business but at any rate it is another proof amongst many similar instances, if anything further is wanted, to shew what has been done in Wales in extending and improving the condition of the farmers.

[958] Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, p.409.
[959] Charles Hanbury-Tracy https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/people/hon-charles-hanbury-tracy/index.html (downloaded 4.10.21).
[960] Brian Ll. James 'The Great Landowners of Wales in 1873', *National Library of Wales Journal* 14, 3, (1966) pp. 305-320.

> You will notice the large number of families who have been resident on the Estate for generations …[961]

He went on to remind Owen that his maternal uncle, the late Lord Penrhyn, had always claimed that Welsh land was undervalued. He suggested bringing in some English agents to carry out reviews on a selection of Welsh farms to compare their value with similar English ones.

On 21 September that year, a letter from Lord Sudeley had been published in *The Times*, challenging Mr Gladstone's claim that 'in England rents had been reduced by 24 per cent' (on account of poor prices resulting from agricultural depression) 'whereas in Wales they have only been reduced by 7 per cent.' He went on to argue that comparisons were misleading, as there were far more very small farms in Wales than there were in England, and anyway in many cases temporary reductions amounted to 10, 15 and 20 per cent. He could have adduced the Gregynog estate as evidence, as in October 1892 a 20 per cent abatement had been given on the Michaelmas rental.[962] Gladstone's polite response to this letter, and Sudeley's equally polite response, both agreeing that the question needed proper investigation, seem to have ruffled Stuart Rendel, who was at odds with other Liberals over the necessity for a Welsh Land Commission. In the event the Commission was appointed in May 1893. Over the next two years hearings were held all over Wales, giving landowners, agents, tenant farmers and freeholders the chance to express their opinions. All the old issues about rents, evictions and electoral pressure were aired. 'The Tenant Farmers,' noted Scott Owen on 19 September, 'have also formed a Defence Assn to collect evidence for the Land Commission.' In a retrospective note in 1894 he recorded, no doubt with relief: 'The Welsh Land Commission sat in Wales this year, and held 5 meetings at Newtown. No evidence was tendered from the Estate and no evidence was given against us – and much was said in our favour.'[963]

Scott Owen made no further notes in his Commonplace book for a year. Then in another apparently retrospective note headed '1895' he recorded that 'The Gregynog Estate passed

[961] Lord Sudeley to George H.M. Owen, 4 November 1892. Carbon copy of original in possession of the late 7th Lord Sudeley, supplied by him to the Gregynog archive. See also Shaun Evans, 'The battle of the Welsh nation against landlordism': The Response of the North Wales Property Defence Association to the Welsh Land Question, c. 1886–1896', in S. Evans, T. McCarthy, and A. Tindley, (eds.)., *Land Reform in the British and Irish Isles since 1800.* (Edinburgh, 2022), pp. 259-284.
[962] *The Times*, 21 September 1892.
[963] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, 19 September 1892, also 1894.

out of the hands of Lord Sudeley in September 1895, the foreclosure order having been signed then. The Estates pass into the hands of the "Economic Life Assurance Co", who held a mortgage on the Estate for over £200,000.'[964] The 4th Lord Sudeley's career as a landlord, as well as a politician, was now ended.

Conclusion: The Sudeleys and Liberal Montgomeryshire.

K.O. Morgan's discussion of 'Montgomershire's Liberal Century' makes no mention of the Hanbury-Tracys or Sudeleys. Their role in the Liberal politics of nineteenth century Montgomeryshire has been somewhat overlooked in modern historiography, apart from Morgan's somewhat disparaging comments about frivolous Whigs, alluded to above.

> Montgomeryshire between 1880 and the 1970s was central to Liberal Wales – its rise, its overwhelming hegemonic ascendancy down to the first world war, its slow decline thereafter, though with still a powerful legacy remaining in institutions such as the University of Wales, the BBC or the world of the quangoes. Its story is colourful, even dramatic. The essence and variety of Montgomeryshire Liberalism are best captured, perhaps, in the five remarkable politicians who provided its parliamentary representatives in this period-Stuart Rendel (1880-94), Arthur Humphreys-Owen (1894-1905), David Davies (1906-29), Clement Davies (1929-62) and Emlyn Hooson (1962-79).[965]

It is certainly true that the Hanbury-Tracys were overshadowed by the far more substantial figure of Stuart Rendel, who according to Graham V. Nelmes

> was to revolutionize Welsh politics in this period by attempting to get such measures as disestablishment, education, land reform and devolution established as part of the Liberal Party programme, debated in Parliament and passed into legislation.[966]

But it was Charles Hanbury-Tracy's winning of the Montgomery Boroughs seat in 1863 that turned the tide of county politics towards the Liberals, along with his Gregynog family's solid support for the movement in the ensuing decades; and it was F.S. Hanbury-Tracy's campaign in the 1877 by-election that followed Charles's elevation as the fourth baron Sudeley, that brought Stuart Rendel into Montgomeryshire. As major landowners with progressive politics, and as investors in local industry, the Hanbury-Tracys had earned their place in the civic and economic development of the county and the creation of its century-long tradition of Liberal politics. But like many landowners, when their land – their patrimony, the underlying substance of their honour and status – was threatened, the progressive politics were set aside.

[964] Ibid., 1895.
[965] Morgan, 'Montgomeryshire's Liberal Century', p.93.
[966] Nelmes, 'Stuart Rendel and Welsh Liberal Political Organization', p.468.

CHAPTER SIX

LORD SUDELEY'S AFFAIRS: THE BANKRUPTCY AND AFTER

'We went out like a flash of lightning, without premonition of disaster.'[967]

The Crash

Merlin, 7th Lord Sudeley remembers his Aunt Ida telling him of the day in August 1893 when her mother, Lady Sudeley, told her that her that her husband was ruined, and 'our homes would have to be sold'. It was an unbelievable shock, as there had been no sign of the gathering cloud. 'My mother,' said Aunt Ida, 'had recently inherited a large fortune from her uncle as well as her father, so we lived in a very extravagant, luxurious way.'[968]

If, since his accession in 1877, the 4th Lord Sudeley had been spending money like water on both the estates he inherited, Gregynog and Toddington, it had been on the assumption that the investment would eventually pay off in terms of increased returns from rentals and sales of produce. As described in Chapter Four of this thesis, between 1878 and 1888 over £92,000 was spent on renovating and improving the Gregynog estate farms, and this was in addition to the £80,000 he invested in the Toddington orchards and the jam-making factory. During these years he had also invested over £60,000 in the Newtown flannel mills, with little return for his money other than the gratitude of the people he had kept in employment and the reinforcement of his status in the county as an honourable proprietor.[969]

None of this expenditure had been financed through estate rentals, returns from which were hit by agricultural depression and the need to make abatements at the half-yearly rent audits, and furthermore were eaten up by Sudeley's family commitments and by the servicing of the debt he had inherited from his brother, not to mention the day to day expenses of the estate itself and the staff it employed. Arrears of expenditure at Gregynog alone, recorded by agent William Scott Owen, mounted steadily during the years, until in April 1893 he recorded that the estate account was £10,970 overdrawn.[970]

[967] Merlin, 7th Lord Sudeley, *The Sudeley's, Lords of Toddington*, (Manorial Society of Great Britain, 1977), p.3
[968] *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, passim.
[969] *Oswestry Advertiser*, 25 December 1892.
[970] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals, 48, Scott Owen to Lord Sudeley 1889-93, f.128

When accounting for the failure of his estates in his 'Historical Summary' of 14 July 1893 Lord Sudeley claimed that he was in error from the start in that he took on responsibility for his brother's debts, and that on coming into the property 'every expense ought to have been shut off and both Estates ought to have been let'. He was aware of how run-down both estates had become, being

> very strongly of the mistaken opinion that the Improvements once made would very rapidly increase the rental, and I was aware that a large fortune might be left at any moment to Lady Sudeley. Instead therefore of taking stronger steps to close the whole expenditure, I turned my attention to see what steps could be taken to increase my income by means of Industrial pursuits and I joined Sir W.Armstrong's Co[mpan]y'.[971]

What he neglects to add in his 'historical survey' is that the payment of his brother's debts and the subsequent outlay on estate improvements were largely funded by mortgages on both the Gloucestershire and Montgomeryshire estates, by government loans made available under the Settled Land Act of 1882 and the Land Improvement Loans Act of 1883, by loans from his wife's family, and subsequently from his wife herself.

It was through his connection with Stuart Rendel MP that Sudeley had become a director of the arms manufacturer Sir William Armstrong and Company, for which he received an annual fee of £5,000. When it went public in 1882 he invested £20,000 in the enterprise. He also was appointed to the boards of two related companies, the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company and the Projectile Company, the latter of which was eventually to involve Sudeley in a loss of £60,000. At the same time he was continuing to invest large sums to keep the Severn Tweed Mills in Newtown going, his financial credit underpinned at that time by loans from his wife. Indeed all these 'industrial pursuits' involved the input of large amounts of borrowed money. S.D. Chapman describes in detail the increasing complexities of Sudeley's financial obligations and the increasingly reckless commitments he undertook to meet them, which were to entangle him in what was at that time the dangerously unstable world of city finance.[972]

Although it is clear that the situation at Gregynog was rendered more precarious by Lord Sudeley's extravagant improvements, it was by no means the only landed estate to be struggling by the 1890s. F.M.L. Thompson suggests that from the 1880s many old-established

[971] Lord Sudeley, *Historical Survey*, 14 July 1893.
[972] S.D. Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City. The financial problems of the Fourth Lord Sudeley', *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington*, (Manorial Society of Great Britain, 1987), pp. 253-267.

landowners, especially those who did not draw income from urban ground rents or mineral royalties, were disposing of unencumbered portions of land, not only to fund their lifestyles but to pay off inherited or accumulated debts.[973] In 'The end of the great estates and the rise of freehold farming in Wales', John Davies points out that although the greatest disaster that could overcome and aristocratic family was to be divorced from its land, land sales did happen, should there be no heir to an entailed estate, for example, or to dispose of 'inconveniently placed' land. But from 1900 on, the 'great estates' of Wales, Wynnstay, Powis, Tredegar, Beaufort, Glanusk, Rhug and others, were selling land at an accelerating rate. Such sales were symptomatic of the decline in estate revenues as rents failed to keep pace with increasing costs, especially for aristocrats with an expensive standard of living to maintain. Land, as Davies points out, had always produced a poor return on capital investment compared with other forms of investment, but had invested its owners with 'political power and unique social prestige' which made its possession worthwhile.[974] In addition, there was still, among many of the older-established proprietors, loyalty to the patrimony and a reluctance to forego good relations with their tenants by raising rents to market values, as exemplified by Lord Sudeley's indignant letter to *The Times* in 1892, repudiating Gladstone's charge that Welsh rents had been reduced by less than English rents.[975] Why Lord Sudeley did not resort to selling off portions of Gregynog estate land in the late 1890s when his debts were mounting, may be attributed not only to this loyalty but to the approaching coming-of-age of his eldest son, William Charles Frederick Hanbury-Tracy, in April 1891, when the Sudeley estates, still entailed and encumbered with family charges and jointures, would be subject to resettlement. Carbon copies of the resulting, highly complex, resettlement documents, dated 1st August 1981 are deposited in the Sudeley papers in Glouceshire archives, attached to a letter to William Charles from his advisor, Sir Thomas Paine, advising him to be sure he really understood what the resettlement involved, especially in connection with the disentailing of part of the estate, and the raising of heavy mortgages to meet current obligations. He was warmly advised to consult any family member 'who might be well acquainted with matters of business' before committing himself.[976] But commit himself he did; S.D. Chapman notes that both the 7th Lord

[973] Thompson, *English Landed Society,* pp. 303 – 307.
[974] John Davies, 'The End of the Great Estates and the Rise of Freehold Farming in Wales', *WHR*, 7, (1974), p.195.
[975] *The Times*, 21 September 1892.
[976] GRO 2153/R4

Sudeley and Richard Hanbury-Tenison believed that the 4th Lord Sudeley tricked his son into breaking the entail.[977]

Landowners in the City

In addition to selling unencumbered land, F.M.L. Thompson also notes that 'from the 1880s onward there was a general movement by landowners to spread their assets through investment in stock exchange securities'. He cites the Duke of Portland investing in South African goldmines, and Burmese, Indian and South American Railways.[978] This fashion for investment in stocks and shares reached fever point in the late 1880s as fortunes appeared to be made in Argentinian infrastructure projects. The risks of such ventures were analysed by Charles Jones in two papers which make clear the opportunities for wildly ambitious forecasting and sharp practice on the part of speculators and over-confident merchant bankers which led to the insolvency of Barings Bank in 1890.[979]

One of the banks whose initially huge profits in Argentinian investments were lost in the fallout of the Barings crisis was Cristobel de Murrieta and Co., but their reputation was still such that they were able to negotiate substantial loans to refloat the business. A possible merger with another investment company, the South American & Mexican Co., seemed to be mutually benefical. 'The negotiator of this scheme was a respected nobleman with City interests, the fourth Lord Sudeley.'[980] Sudeley became a director of Murrietas in April 1891, gambling on the company's early return to profitability. In order to effect the merger with the South American & Mexican Co., he also became a director of that company. So when it ran into difficulties, pushing Muriettas into voluntary liquidation, in July 1893 the Bank of England sued in the High Court for the recovery of its half a million loan, and won, leaving Sudeley, 'no doubt the most respectable director', says Chapman, exceedingly embarrassed. Sudeley's situation had not been helped by his loss of £10,000 or more in a spurious investment in Wichita, Kansas,

[977] Chapmen, 'Sudeley in the City', p,266, footnote 43.
[978] Thompson, *English Landed Society,* pp.307-8. See also David Spring, 'Land and Politics in Edwardian England', *Agricultural History*, 58, 1, (Jan., 1984), pp. 17-42.
[979] Charles A. Jones, 'European Bankers and Argentina, 1880-1890', *Business Imperialism Papers*, No. 3, , 1979, pp.1-16; Charles A. Jones, 'The British Investor and Press Coverage of Argentinian Affairs, 1870-1890', *British Imperialism Papers* No. 2, University of Cambridge, Centre of Latin American Studies, n.d., pp.1-18. With thanks to the Centre for supplying a copy of these papers, and to Dr. Jones for his further advice on this subject.
[980] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City,' p.259.

instigated back in 1889 by one Jabez Balfour, who was eventually, in 1895, indicted for fraud.[981]

Neither the Bank of England nor other bankers wished to push Lord Sudeley into bankruptcy. This was made inevitable by the actions of his local bankers, the Welshpool, Evesham and Bridgnorth branches of Lloyds's Bank, where Sudeley's debts had amounted to over £28,000. On 20th November 1893 the Bank filed a bankruptcy petition.[982]

'Universal consternation and general regret.'

The first hint to the tenants of the Gregynog estate and the people of the neighbourhood that all was not well with the Sudeley family emerged in a report in the *Montgomeryshire Express* for 1 August 1893. 'The rumours which reached Newtown on Tuesday that Lord Sudeley was in financial difficulties, caused universal consternation and general regret'. It reported the *Daily News* as having stated that Lord Sudeley had called a meeting of his creditors, and that claims on the estate amounted to about £800,000. 'The property is estimated to bring in £25,000 a year, and other income £18,000 a year, but most of the real estate is believed to be pledged to bankers.' There followed a long description of the troubles of the Murriettas and the South American & Mexican Co., ending with the comment, 'The announcement has called forth expressions of unfeigned regret from hundreds of persons who have never spoken to his Lordship.'[983]

On the 12th September an advertisement appeared in the *Montgomeryshire Express* announcing that the whole of the live and dead farming stock' at Gregynog would be sold on 29th September, including '200 CROSS-BRED SHROPSHIRE SHEEP, 8 WELL-BRED COBS & COLTS, 16 SMART HILL PONIES, About 15 TONS of PRIME HAY (to go off; AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS & TOOLS, and other Miscellaneous Effects. [984]

On the 30th September 1893 the *County Times* published a full list of Sudeley's creditors, which not only recorded the £216,640 he owed his wife, Lady Sudeley and large debts to mortgage companies and banks, but smaller ones to named individuals, including his agent, William Scott

[981] *Evening Express*, 16 May 1895.
[982] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', p.261.
[983] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 1st August 1893.
[984] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 12th September 1893.

Owen (£212), and Mrs Scott Owen (£400).[985] Thus Sudeley's affairs were now out in the public domain, to his undying shame. Local projects he had undertaken to support, including the restoration of Tregynon parish church, had to be funded from elsewhere.[986]

Nonetheless his tenants remained loyal. At the Tregynon rent audit dinner that October, chaired by agent William Scott Owen, the Vice-Chairman, Thomas Phillips of Cefnllydan farm, 'in a feeling speech, proposed the health of Lord Sudeley and referred to his many acts of kindness to them, and his good qualities as a landlord, and expressed his deep sympathy with his lordship and family under the present circumstances.'[987] Similar sentiments were expressed at the Newtown and Caersws rent audits, in all of which a 20% abatement of rent had been granted.

The bankruptcy petition filed by Lloyds' Bank against Lord Sudeley on 20 November 1893 seems not to have been reported in the local press. However, on 31 January 1894 *The Western Mail* noted briefly that

> At London Bankruptcy Court yesterday Mr Registrar Hope opened an enquiry into the promotion operations and failure of the South American and Mexican Corporations (Limited). This was a company formed in June 1890 with a nominal capital of three millions. The lists of witnesses contained 25 names including that of Lord Sudeley and four of the De Marietta family. The total Liabilities are £967,466, and the deficiency to creditors £185,316.[988]

Why Bankruptcy? asks Chapman, when Sudeley's total assets in 1893 were 'evidently much in excess of his debts'. He points out that there are no extant accounts or bankruptcy records to demonstrate precisely how the Sudeley inheritance was lost. The problem, though, was liquidity. Losses on the Welsh mill, the Kansas estates and the Armstrong companies all came at the same time so that he was unable to withstand the Murrieta crisis. Chapman continues:

> The correspondence of Lloyds Bank local managers at Welshpool reflects traditional deference to the local governing family and willingness to maintain the various accounts, but in the financial gloom of the early 1890s, Lloyds' directors seem to have panicked. Given a little time, Sudeley could have paid his creditors, if only by selling his pictures and glass. Granted the rising

[985] *County Times*, 30th September 1893. It seems that it was not unprecedented for landlords to owe money to their agents. In the late eighteenth century the financially embarrassed Sir Watkin William Wynn was helped out twice by his agents. See Emyr Williams, 'The Wynns of Wynnstay and their Llwydiarth Inheritance, Part 1', *MC*, 108, (2020), pp.107-110. With thanks to Dr. Williams for drawing this comparison to my attention.
[986] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 29th August 1893. The restoration of the church would now be funded by soliciting subscriptions. Sudeley's agent William Scott Owen, on whom the completion of the restoration now depended, contributed £20.
[987] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 17th October 1893.
[988] *Western Mail*, 31st January 1894.

> rental and excellent prospects of his fruit farming enterprise, there was every prospect of him enjoying profit and status as a major landowner in the vanguard of agricultural innovation.[989]

Many fulsome tributes were paid to Lord Sudeley at the re-opening of the restored Tregynon Church in March 1894.[990] At the April 1894 rent audit dinners, at which a 20% abatement of rent was again granted, further tributes were paid to him: 'A better landlord no-one could wish for', said John Pryce of Highgate, proposing Sudeley's health at the Newtown audit, his toast being applauded with cheers. At the Tregynon audit dinner, 'the vice- chairman next proposed the health of their landlord Lord Sudeley, expressing the feeling of all present when he said they would be glad to see him again at Gregynog (cheers.) This was drunk with musical honours, and cheers were also given for Lady Sudeley and the rest of the family'. At the Caersws audit Thomas Francis of Tymawr 'proposed the health of their landlord Lord Sudeley … in a speech of great feeling and said that the tenantry thought no less of Lord Sudeley owing to the adverse circumstances which had befallem him than they did of old and that all would be glad to see him at Gregynog as their landlord yet. They had none of them received anything but kindness from Lord Sudeley or any of his family. No better landlord was needed (cheers.)'.[991]

'A Tower of Strength in Mongtomeryshire'

On the 24 April the *County Times* reported:

> Lord Sudeley's misfortunes mean the Montgomeryshire misfortunes. No official receiver will give the time to the tenant which the Hanbury-Tracys – Lord Sudeley's family – have given from one generation to another. Born fifty years ago and five, he has always been a tower of strength in Montgomeryshire, in which he owns some twenty thousand acres, and the rook shooting at Gregyneg, his place by Newtown, would delight the heart of old Mr. Wardle. At Toddington, in Gloucestershire, he has tried to follow the example of his once leader, and to grow the potentiality of wealth, in the form of fruit which may be made into jam. He is a Unionist, and the father-in-law of the Liberal Unionist whip, and he and Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones, M.P., have the well wishes of every rational man in their efforts to turn that Sleepy Hollow which lies between the Bryn Bank and the Vastre in what is now known as the Leeds of Wales, Newtown, Mont."[992]

[989] Chapman, 'Sudeley in the City', pp. 263-4.
[990] *County Times*, 10 March 1894; *Western Mail*, 16 March 1894.
[991] *County Times*, 21 April 1894.
[992] *County Times*, 29 April 1894. That the writer could still refer to Newtown as 'The Leeds of Wales' sixty or more years after this sobriquet was first bestowed on the town suggests that its identity as an urban, industrial centre was now too well-established for it to revert to being the remote small town which only came alive on market day, as it had been before the coming of the flannel mills.

This story sums up the mixed fortunes and the reputation of the Sudeleys as landlords, and politicians, in a year when the other story filling columns of the local press was the controversy over their Liberal credentials, in the light of Lord Sudeley's breach with Gladstone, and whether his brother F.S. Hanbury-Tracy should be re-selected as the Liberal candidate for Montgomeryshire Boroughs seat at the next election, having lost the seat to the Conservative Pryce-Jones in 1892.[993] Lord Sudeley never lost the respect of his tenants. At the Welshpool hearings of the Welsh Land Commission in September 1894 a witness stated that 'he held a farm of 300 acres from Lord Sudeley, at a rental of £420. He had nothing to complain of against Lord Sudeley, but rather everything to say in his favour.'[994]

After leaving Gregynog: Lord Sudeley's later years

Lord Sudeley was never to visit Gregynog again, despite being elected as an Alderman of Montgomeryshire Councty Council in 1895, and continuing to be re-elected for some years Chairman of the Montgomeryshire Infirmary Board. After 1894 he rarely appeared in the House of Lords: Hansard records only three interventions by him in that time.[995]

In May 1895 Sudeley appeared at Bow Street Magistrates' Court as a witness at the trial for fraud of Jabez Balfour, in connection with the spurious land project in Wychica, Kansas.[996] In July 1895 he was again in court defending himself against charges of obtaining loans by 'fraudulent statements and the concealment of material facts on the part of Lord Sudeley', a charge he denied. Eventually a settlement with the plaintiffs was reached and the charges against Sudeley withdrawn.[997]

In March 1894 the *South Wales Daily News* had reported that Lord Sudeley intended to leave England for Australia, 'where he will spend some time'.[998] It seems that this tour, and a subsequent visit to Canada and the United States in 1896, re-vitalised Sudeley, and he began to see what he might do to restore his fortunes. Once again, however, he fell for plausible investments that proved spurious. By 1900 he was once again declared bankrupt.

[993] See Chapter 5, footnotes 117-120
[994] *North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser*, 15t September 1894.
[995] https://hansard.parliament.uk Hon. Charles Hanbury-Tracy (Hansard) (parliament.uk) (accessed 25 March 2023).
[996] *Evening Express*, 16 May 1895.
[997] *County Times,* 27 July 1895
[998] *South Wales Daily News*, 2 March 1894

By 1895 the Sudeleys had relinquished Gregynog and Toddington, and were living with strict economy at Ormley Lodge, Ham Common, Surrey, to the massive chagrin of Lady Sudeley. The late 7th Lord Sudeley (1939-2022) maintained that the bankruptcy destroyed his great-grandfather's marriage; thereafter they appear to have led separate lives.[999] 'After all I know I have suffered,' Lady Sudeley wrote to Stuart (now Lord) Rendel in 1902, 'every feeling for him on my part is dead except pity.' But she was aware of how her husband regretted his loss of friendship with Rendel. 'I know that it would add to his happiness not to be entirely estranged from you therefore I have written to you- it seemed to me I ought to do so - Forgive me if it pains you.'[1000] It seems that Rendel wrote to Sudeley, presumably in conciliatory terms, as the Rendel papers in the National Library contain a letter from Lord Sudeley to Rendel, thanking him for 'his charming letter and regretting their estrangement'.[1001]

For the last twenty years of his life Sudeley lived quietly at Ormeley Lodge, where, according to his obituary in *The Times*, he and Lady Sudeley celebrated their golden wedding in 1918. 'But he constantly attended debates in the House of Lords, and in 1910 took up the question of the better educational use of museums and picture galleries.' He died, aged 82, in December 1922.[1002]

Gregynog after the bankruptcy

Lord Sudeley's first attempt to sell the Gregynog estate 'by private contract' was planned for 1894, agented by the London firm of Debenham, Tewson, Farmer and Bridgewater. It offered 'The Residential Estate of Gregynog, having a total acreage of 18,075 acres, 2R and 32P, and producing about £13,400, including the estimated value of the mansion and lands in hand.'[1003] There were no takers. In Scott Owen's Commonplace Book there is just one entry for 1895:

> The Gregynog Estate passed out of the hands of Lord Sudeley in September 1895, the foreclosure order having been signed then. The Estates pass into the hands of the "Economic Life Assurance Co", who held a mortgage on the Estate for over £200,000.
> There was estimated to be £50,000 of timber on the Estate and the Hall was worth about £10,000 – so that the mortgage on the farmlands represented about £140,000.[1004]

The running of the estate at this time continued in the hands of William Scott Owen, who Lord Sudeley had made 'lord of all he surveyed', when he took him on as the Gregynog agent in

[999] Personal conversation between the writer and the late 7th Lord Sudeley at Gregynog in August 2020.
[1000] NLW Lord Rendel Papers. 1959 and 1967 Deposits. Letters to Stuart Rendel, Letter 163 from Ada, Lady Sudeley.
[1001] NLW Lord Rendel Papers ibid., Letter 164.
[1002] *The Times*, 11 December 1922.
[1003] Gregynog MSS., *Particulars of the Gregynog Estate, 1894*.
[1004] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f.68.

1879, with the injunction to 'send me some money!'[1005] Like his predecessor Thomas Colley, Scott Owen presided over the estate during a long period of transition from one proprietor to another, in what were even more turbulent times for the agricultural industry than the Napoleonic Wars of the Colley years. Despite increasing financial instability he continued to encourage the farm tenants to improve and innovate on their holdings; the importance of doing so in these difficult times for farmers was a regular theme of his addresses to the Rent Audit and annual show dinners.[1006] In 1893 Lord Sudeley had inaugurated the Gregynog Estate Show, which started out as a horse show to encourage tenants to breed better horses. This was organised by Scott Owen and a committee of tenants, which evolved into the Gregynog Estate Improvement Society, an institution which survived, along with the annual shows, until 1914. Scott Owen continued to arrange for Gregynog to host the training courses in dairy husbandry run by the Dairy School at Sylfaen under the auspices of the University College at Bangor (Fig. 18).[1007] He arranged for staff from the agricultural college in Bangor to give a series of lectures at the Public Rooms in Newtown on topics such as the treatment of foot rot among sheep, grassland management, and how to improve the use of fertilizers. This last topic became the subject of a series of experiments at The Glyn farm in Bettws, conducted by staff from the Agriculturat College at Bangor, in which a range of manures were tested over a range of crops and growing conditions.[1008]

The difficult later years of the Sudeley proprietorship of Gregynog had not prevented Scott Owen playing a prominent role in public affairs. He was a Chairman of the Parish Council. He was largely responsible for the restoration of Tregynon church, leading a fund-raising project when it became clear that Lord Sudeley could not honour his promise of paying for the work. The church was reopened in March 1894.[1009] A Conservative, he served as a County Councillor, sat on the local Board of Guardians, and chaired the board of the Montgomeryshire Infirmary. He was a governor of Tregynon and Bettws schools. He was appointed to the Board of University College of North Wales, Bangor in 1897. But his primary role as the Gregynog agent helped keep the reputation of the estate as a highly-regarded local institution intact; all in all,

[1005] Gregynog MSS, Lady Marjorie Marshall-Cornwall (daughter of William Scott Owen) to Glyn Tegai Hughes, 15 May 1969.
[1006] E.g. *Montgomeryshire Express* 18 October 1892; *County Times*, 5 September 1896.
[1007] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 6 June 1893
[1008] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 19 April 1992
[1009] *County Times*, 26 August 1893, & 10 March 1894.

he was far more important to the Gregynog estate and its neighbourhood than any new owner was ever likely to be.

Sir James Joicey

On the 4th of June 1898 Scott Owen made the following note in his Commonplace Book:

> Sir James Joicey became the owner of the Gregynog Estate today, having given £250,000 for it as it stands, timber, stock and plant and the ½ year's rent due at Lady Day 1898.[1010]

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* James Joicey was born in the county of Durham in 1846, the younger son of one of four brothers who had invested in a colliery enterprise which became James Joicey & Co., in 1929. He entered the family business aged seventeen in 1863, and a partner in 1867. In 1881 he succeeded his uncle as head of the firm, which became a private limited company in 1888. The *ODNB* goes on to describe the expansion of this company over the next twenty years, and Joicey's acquisition of directorships in railways, the telegraph and shipping, and three newspapers, the *Newcastle Daily Leader*, the *Evening Leader*, and *Northern Weekly.* Joicey was elected Liberal member of parliament for Chester-le-Street in 1885, created a baronet in 1893, and raised to the peerage as Baron Joicey of Chester-le-Street in 1906. [1011] The Durham Mining Museum website has a substantial entry about the Joiceys, describing their company as one of the most important in the North of England.[1012] Newcastle University and Northumberland Archives also hold collections of documents relating to James Joicey & Co.[1013] In none of these records is there any mention of Sir James Joicey as the proprietor of Gregynog. Why, then, did he buy it? The present (4th) Lord Joicey suggests that his great-grandfather's

> acquisition of Gregynog may well have been a combination of factors that were at play in his mind: firstly, he was then 52 years old and was making a success not only of his business but also of his political career. His second wife was, if one believes what has been passed down, quite ambitious for him. Secondly, the prospect of acquiring an estate was no doubt attractive. This was the era of 'new money' and the creation of what we now regard as classic 'new build' Victorian parkland houses. To a successful industrialist, it was a 'must have'. Thirdly, because he was perhaps close to Sudeley and knew what was going through the latter's mind, he could appreciate that he had the opportunity to acquire an asset that was effectively in the hands of the receivers, i.e. at an attractive price.[1014]

[1010] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f. 70.
[1011] R. A. S. Redmayne, Joicey, James, 1st Baron Joicey, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34215, (accessed 2 April 2023).
[1012] Durham Mining Museum, https://www.dmm.org.uk (accessed 02/04/23).
[1013] Newcastle University Special Collections and Archives, *The Joicey Coal Mining Archive*.
[1014] James, 4th Lord Joicey, email to the present writer in the capacity of Gregynog Librarian, 2 February 2016, quoted with his permission April 2023.

The estate rent and cash books for Joicey's years as proprietor of Gregynog have not survived; the principle sources of information for the period are Scott Owen's *Commonplace Book*, documents in Powys Archives relating to Joicey's sale in 1910 of farms to Montgomeryshire County Council, and reports in the Welsh press, mainly concerning rent audits and the annual Gregynog Show. Joicey attended the 1898 show in person; his health was proposed by the oldest estate tenant, Mr R. Lloyd of Cwmdockin:

> They could not, he said, allow the occasion of Sir James' first visit to Gregynog to meet his tenantry, to pass without bidding him a hearty welcome (applause.) That large and important estate had been for generations in the hands of a family deeply respected and loved by all (hear, hear), and from whom they and their forefathers had received at all times the greatest consideration and kindness (applause). However much they might deplore the loss which had led to the severance of the old connection they could not but congratulate themselves in having fallen into the hands of a landlord of whom they had heard nothing but good (applause).'[1015]

In reply, Joicey said that 'he had no doubt that in time he would make the personal acquaintance of all his tenants, and trusted that the same good feeling which had prevailed between them and Lord Sudeley would continue'.[1016] It can be inferred from press reports that Joicey was well received in the county as well as on the Gregynog estate itself: only a year after his arrival he was elected a vice-chair of Montgomeryshire Central Liberal Association.[1017] In September 1899 he was elected as a Magistrate to the Montgomeryshire bench.[1018] And although his primary business interests still lay in the coal mines of North-East England, when he had a 'coaster' built to carry coal to London and the South-East, he named it S.S. Gregynog.[1019]

As MP for Chester-le-Street, Joicey presumably spent a good deal of time in London, but he soon instigated several major projects on the Gregynog estate which still survive. The mansion, as depicted in the anonymous oil painting of the 1890s (Fig. 19), presumably needed serious re-furbishement as, in 1899, according to Scott Owen's Commonplace Book, Joicey spent nearly £3,500 on repairing and painting the exterior of Gregynog Hall, installing electric light, extra bathrooms and other domestic services. Later, a turbine to generate electricity was installed. Another £1,000 was spent on upgrading the hall's drains. Glasshouses for grapes and

[1015] *County Times*, 10 September 1898
[1016] *South Wales Echo*, 10 September 1898
[1017] *Cambrian News* 11 August 1899
[1018] *County Times*, 16th September 1899
[1019] David Jenkins, 'The S.S. Gregynog', *MC* 76, 1988, pp.129-30.

peaches were commissioned for the walled garden. A new lodge 'on the Bettws approach', and a gardener's cottage, were also begun in 1899. In 1901 work began on the creation of a reservoir at Gwgia, a steep mile and a half west of the demesne, to supply water to the estate. In 1903 a billiard room was added to the eastern wing of the hall, with new lavatories.[1020] The billiard room and lodges built at this period, which have clear Arts & Crafts style elements, are believed to have been designed by the architect Halsey Ricardo, although possibly Scott Owen had a hand in their completion.[1021] At the same time it appears that Joicey was adding to the estate: from 1899 Scott Owen records the acquisition of several farms, including, in 1900, the substantial Bettws Hall estate, for which he paid £12,500.[1022]

Estate improvement activities in this period continued under the auspices of Scott Owen, but it had become clear that Joicey's principal interest was horses. In 1902 he bought a well-bred 'hacking' stallion and a pony stallion to enable the tenants to improve their breeding of cobs and ponies. In 1906 he bought two young Shire stallions, again for the use of the tenants, who would pay for their keep.[1023] In June that year, Scott Owen notes: 'Motor cars arrived' – possibly the first ever seen at Gregynog.[1024]

Whatever Sir James Joicey might have said, on first taking possession of Gregynog, in admiration of its countryside, farms, tenantry and horses, it seems as though his heart remained in North-East England. In 1907, eighteen months after his elevation to the Peerage as Lord Joicey of Chester-le-Street, he bought the Ford Castle Estate in Northumberland, which was destined to become the Joicey ancestral home.[1025] However, in 1908 he was still spending money on Gregynog Hall, installing an electric lift. By 1910 all the drains at Gregynog Hall had been completely renewed.[1026] But by then there had been another occurrence which may have soured Joicey's feelings about Wales. In 1909 Lloyd George introduced his 'People's Budget' 'With its radical plans to redistribute the burden of tax and finance social provisions, such as

[1020] Scott Owen, Commonplace Book, 1903.
[1021] Robert Scourfield and Richard Haslam, *The Buildings of Wales, Powys*, (Revised edition, 2013) p.260. The date of Halsey's contribution, given as 1895 in the text, is incorrect. An undated design for a cottage by Halsey Ricardo is held in the Gregynog archives.
[1022] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f.72.
[1023] Ibid, f.73, 80.
[1024] Ibid, f.80.
[1025] For the history of Ford Castle, see The Ford and Etal Estates, Berwick-upon-Tweed, https://Ford and Etal (ford-and-etal.co.uk)
[1026] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f.84.

old age pensions, the Budget was swiftly rejected by the landed majority in the House of Lords, sparking the first constitutional crisis of the twentieth century.'[1027] Lord Joicey was one of the peers vehemently opposed to this budget; he resigned as President of the Montgomeryshire Borough Liberal Association because, as the *County Times* reported: 'he is unable to accept the financial policy of the Government. In my judgment, he adds, the Budget violates many principles which I have always considered necessary to sound finance, and is a complete surrender to the Socialists'.[1028] On the whole, Montgomeryshire Liberals seem to have been unmoved by Joicey's resignation. In an address a few days later, Arthur Humphreys-Owen of Glansevern, son of the late Montgomeryshire MP, said that 'He did not hold with Lord Joicey that, the raising of a few more millions a year from the enormous accumulated wealth of the country was in any way a step towards socialism…', his remarks being greeted with 'laughter and applause.'[1029]

In 1910 Joicey concluded the sale of a substantial number of Gregynog estate farms to Montgomeryshire County Council, as part of a policy to provide smallholdings at reasonable rents for young people wishing to make a start as farmers – a policy established to stem the decline of the rural population. Larger farms such as Llwyn-y-Brain, at nearly 500 acres one of the largest farms on the estate, would be broken up into smaller units.[1030] The County Council set up a Property Department to manage the resulting portfolio of smallholdings, some of which are retained to this day by Powys County Council, of which Montgomeryshire became a part in 1974.

Whatever Joiceys plans were by 1910, they were thrown into disarray by a severe personal tragedy. On the 4th July 1911 Lady Joicey died in London, after an operation for acute peritonitis. Lady Joicey had become a popular figure in the neighbourhood, involving herself with Tregynon school, encouraging the children to plant daffodils, presenting prizes and hosting garden parties. Her interest in girls' education led her in 1908 to present two scholarships to girls from the Gregynog estate and from Newtown.[1031] Barely a week before

[1027] Ian Packer, 1909 People's Budget, https://liberalhistory.org.uk > 1909, (accessed 15 May 2023).
[1028] *Cambrian News* 22 October 1909.
[1029] Ibid.
[1030] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, ff. 85; *Montgomeryshire Express* 6 Sept 1910. The conveyance documents for the entire transaction are preserved in Powys Archives, MC/CSM/SP2
[1031] *Montgomeryshire Express*, 26 August 1908

her death, Scott Owen noted that to commemmorate the coronation of King George V 'At Tregynon Lady Joicey entertained all the Schoolchildren, provided tea, Coronation mugs, Punch & Judy & Fireworks & Band.'[1032]

The 1913 Estate Sale

By the end of 1912 Joicey was attempting to put the Gregynog Estate on the market. An initial sale to a Mr Hossack fell through; the estate was then offered to the Montgomeryshire MP David Davies of Plas Dinam, Llandinam, but terms could not be agreed. Then on the 4th of September 1913 Scott Owen noted:

> Contract signed and deposit paid for the Sale of the whole Estate to Messrs E.A. Bond & Hamilton Edwards, completion to take place and possession to be given on Dec 24 1913. The purchasers intend to sell the whole Estate in one block if they can get a buyer, failing which it will be offered in Lots & Farms by Auction at Newtown.[1033]

Messrs Bond failed to find a buyer. The 'magnificent Freehold, Residential, Agricultural Domain known as Gregynog' was therefore put up for auction by Messrs Millar, Son & Co., at a four day sale held at The Bear Hotel, Newtown, on 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st October 1913.[1034] The detailed catalogue entries for every property on the estate provide the best – indeed the only – comprehensive survey of the acreage, nature and rental of the estate to have survived. Fig. 20 illustrates Gregynog Hall as it appeared in the catalogue.

The sale was comprehensively reported in the local press. It seems that David Davies had made an offer of £160,000 for the whole estate but this had been declined. Sales were slow on the first and second days, as some lots had been withdrawn while they were being negotiated for by their sitting tenants. An exception was the important farm Penarth, which had come to the Gregynog estate from the Weaver and Tracy families a century ago; it was sold to Mr O. Whitley Owen, Fronfraith, for £6,600. Other properties had been sold privately before the sale. On the third day the Gregynog mansion itself and its demesne lands failed to find a buyer. Many more farms were sold on the fourth day, principally to their sitting tenants, including the ancient farm of Llwynmelyn. Several smallholdings were sold to the County Council. The Dairy, a small farm in Tregynon, was sold to the tenant, a Mrs James, for £750. The *County Times*

[1032] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, ff.88.
[1033] Scott Owen, *Commonplace Book*, f.93.
[1034] Gregynog Estate 1913 Sale Catalogue, Gregynog archive.

reported that Mrs James had walked 9 miles each way to The Bear to negotiate for her farm, and refused to accept a lift home in a motor car. 'Her independent spirit was much admired.'[1035] Red House, formerly Tŷ Coch, in the neighbouring parish of Llanllwchaiarn, which had been acquired by the 1st Lord Sudeley in an exchange with the former owners, the Pryces of Gunley, in 1812, was bought back by the Pryces, in whose possession it remained until 2022.[1036]

At the end of the fourth day a large number of lots, amounting to nearly 7,500 acres, in addition to the Gregynog mansion, remained unsold. The following March they were bought by David Davies, who set up The Gregynog Estates Company Limited to manage them.[1037]

Back in the 1860s, when David Davies's grandfather, 'Davies the Ocean', was building his rail and coal fortune, he had begun to buy land, in the vacinity of Llandinam at first, where he built the substantial mansion of Broneirion in Llandinam as a family home, then in more distant parishes until, according to Herbert Williams, 'he became one of the biggest landowners in Montgomeryshire'. And so, continues Williams, 'the gentrifying of the Davies family began'.[1038] David Davies's son Edward had continued to expand the estate, and how his son, another David, was following suit. This might appear to be a case of new money, old aspirations, but the cultural and religious background of the family was a long way from the traditional Anglican squirearchy. Rather it was characterised by a strongly philanthropic ethic based on a foundation of Calvinistic Methodism from which the family never deviated.[1039] Their Liberal politics evolved from their nonconformity, although by the end of the nineteenth century they tended towards Liberal-Unionism rather than Glanstonian Liberalism in their allegiance. Indeed it has been suggested that when the young David Davies was asked to run for Parliament in

[1035] *The County Times*, 1 November 1913.
[1036] Ibid. In early 2023 Red House farm was sold 'for over £1million'; see The County Times, 24 February 2023.
[1037] NLW David, 1st Baron Davies, papers, Series F2 Gregynog Estates Ltd., 1914-1934.
[1038] Herbert Williams, *Davies the Ocean, Railway King and Coal Tycoon,* (Cardiff, 1991), p.80.
[1039] For the philanthropy of the Davies family see, Herbert Williams, *Davies the Ocean*, passim; T. Ellis, *T.J., A Life of Thomas Jones CH,* (Cardiff, 1992); K. O. Morgan, David, '1st Baron Davies', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004); Eirene White, *The Ladies of Gregynog*, (Cardiff, 2011). The Davies family supported the creation of both the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff (1907) and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth (1907). They were deeply involved with the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, supporting the creation of the first Gregynog Chair of Music (1918) and the Woodrow Wilsom Chair of International Politics (1919) – the first in the world.

1906 he was undecided as to whether to stand as a Liberal or a Conservative. His political views, according to J. Graham Jones, reflected 'great eccentricity'.[1040]

The Great War and after: new money, new people, new ideals.

David Davies's two younger sisters, Gwendoline and Margaret, had each been bequeathed equal shares in the Davies 'empire' by their father Edward. This enabled them to be financially independent of their brother, and to pursue philanthropic ideals of their own which grew out of their love of music and the arts, and which led to the eventual donation, to the National Museum of Wales and the National Library of Wales, of their collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, their Corots and their Turners, and their works on paper by Durer and Rembrandt, Whistler and Augustus John. Their experience at the front with the French Red Cross in the First World War, inspired them with the desire to help the people of Wales rebuild their lives in the aftermath of the conflict, through the experience of art and music.[1041] When their brother failed to sell the mansion of Gregynog at the end of the war, they decided to take it on themselves to create the headquarters of their venture. The transaction was completed on the 31st July 1920. A new Gregynog came into being, with its music room, its conferences, its festivals, its gardens, its Gregynog choir, its printing press. No longer a landed estate, although retaining a strong sense of connection with the farms and villages of the neighbourhood, and with a very strong sense of *nobless oblige* on the part of Gwendoline and Margaret Davies. There are no memorials to them in Tregynon church; they drove to the Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Llandinam built by their grandfather every Sunday. But people in the village still talk of their generosity: the sponsorship of grammar school places, the quiet purchase of shoes for the children of poor families, the assistance with a ticket to a new life in Australia; in their way, they were as 'old gentry' as Arthur Blayney himself.

[1040] J. Graham Jones, 'David Davies MP, Llandinam, the 'People's Budget' and the General Elections of 1910', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 107, (2019), p.177.
[1041] *Things of Beauty: What two sisters did for Wales*, National Museum of Wales, (Cardiff, 2007).

Conclusion: Two hundred years of survival.

> The Hanbury-Tracys are zealous and prominent in the service of the Church and State, and, while they derive their time-honoured lineage from the dynasties of ancient Britain through Prince Brochwel Ysgythrog, and the Saxon monarchs, they resemble the majestic oaks in their own domain, in retaining memorials of bygone centuries, yet holding out promise of vigour and stability for ages yet to come.[1042]

So wrote the Rev. George Sandford in 1885, when the Hanbury-Tracys were at the height of their influence in Montgomeryshire society, and Gregynog was the third largest estate in the county. It summarises the reputation of the estate and its proprietors as a stabilising influence in the late Victorian era, when new polities, new insitutions, new opportunities and new challenges were evolving for the people of Wales. But within ten years the family was bankrupt and the Gregynog estate was up for sale for the first time in its history. Less than twenty years later its mansion, farms, plantations and cottages were put on the market to be sold as individual lots. The outbreak of a devastating European war in 1914 compounded the fate of this and many other landed estates in Britain; it seemed that landownership would never be the same again. Estates were broken up, mansions sold, aristocratic proprietors left without heirs.[1043]

But a hundred years earlier, the same sense of catastrophe had been destablising society, especially landed society. So many old-established estates in late eighteenth-century Wales were collapsing or losing their close relationship with their lands, undermined by failures of succession, or female inheritance which might see an estate pass to a daughter's husband, or bankruptcy, or piecemeal sale to absentee landlords.[1044] At the same time Britain was at war with revolutionary France, food prices were rocketing, and starving poor people were rioting as never before.[1045] It is hardly surprising that in his 'Conclusion' to *The Crisis of Community*, Melvin Humphreys reminds us that by the end of the eighteenth century the Welsh community was 'fragmented, unstable and riven by discontent … looking into the very eye of anarchy and social chaos … The old order in Welsh society was passing away, while the distress of the era

[1042] George Sandford, 'The House of Gregynog: The Blayneys and the Hanbury-Tracys, Lords Sudeley', *MC* 17, (1885), p.244.
[1043] Thompson, *English Landed Society*, pp. 327-345.
[1044] J.P. Jenkins, 'The Demographic Decline of the Landed Gentry in the Eighteenth Century, a South Wales study', *WHR* 11, 1 (June, 1982), pp.31-49; Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, pp.96-100; Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, pp.212-215.
[1045] David J.V. Jones, *Before Rebecca, Popular Protests in Wales, 1793-1835*. (London, 1973), pp. 1-34.

foretold a bewildering future'.[1046] He refers to the often desperate plight of the poor, especially labourers and women who 'had already lost their place in the cottage economy. For men, the future seemed to lie increasingly as waged proletarians. Walter Davies decried the absence throughout north Wales of cottages affording a subsistence acreage.[1047]

But it seems that things were different on the Gregynog estate. Humphreys goes on to describe Walter Davies's admiration of Arthur Blayney for making cottages with land available for the poor 'at easy rents', which would help prevent creating generations of paupers, but adds,

> 'Blayney' the 'Father of Montgomeryshire', was an eccentric squire, and beyond the walls of his small domain (where he could congratulate himself that his inferiors were 'firmly riveted to the service of their patron and devoted to the common cause of the king and country') many labouring families swelled the lists of recipients of poor relief.'[1048]

It is easy to idealise Arthur Blayney, 'the common friend of the poor and distressed', as his obituary has it. 'In the microcosm of Gregynog,' wrote Prys Morgan of Arthur Blayney's Gregynog, 'we see mirrored the greater world of gentry Wales'.[1049] This view suggests a continuity of secure, patriarchal benevolence on the part of succeeding generations of the the ancient Welsh dynasty of Blayney. But by the end of the eighteenth century the Gregynog estate was just as vulnerable to the 'crisis of the community' as other Welsh estates, especially as Arthur, the last of the Blayneys, died a bachelor in 1795. In order to survive, new owners with new energy were needed, to face the changes, demands and opportunities of a new century. A hundred years later, the process needed to be repeated once again.

This thesis set out to examine Gregynog as an example of a Welsh landed estate, its proprietors, tenants, employees and dependents, the neighbourhood and territory it occupied, over one hundred and fifty years of profound social, industrial, economic and political change. It examines the roots of the Blayney family and their ancient Welsh pedigree, the growth of their estate at Gregynog and their status and reputation as leading Welsh gentry from the fourteenth century, and not least, the means by which the estate became a patrimony to be

[1046] Humphreys, *Crisis of the Community*, pp.252.
[1047] Ibid, pp.257-258.
[1048] Ibid.; Walter Davies, *General View*, pp. 83-4
[1049] Hughes, et. al, (eds.), *Gregynog*, p.25.

passed down to sons and heirs in traditional primogeniture, until Arthur, the last Blayney, died unmarried in 1795.

The thesis contrasts what might be described as two Gregynogs: the Gregynog of Arthur Blayney the benevolent Welsh squire, confident in his roots but careless of his patrimony, and the Gregynog of the socially and politically ambitious Hanbury-Tracys, determined to make their mark in a world in which, alongside all the other social and industrial upheavals that were keeping the kingdom in ferment, a new Wales was being born. It also examines the place of Gregynog as an ancient estate in a Welsh border county whose cultural heritage can be seen as having been subject to Anglicising influences ever since the Edwardian conquest of the late thirteenth century, as English landowners expanded westwards, and communities were drawn eastwards by geography, economics and communications.

Arthur Blayney's Gregynog

In Arthur Blayney's Gregynog, in the heart of old Montgomeryshire, life had seemed to continue with few reverberations from the outside world since the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. During the years of Arthur Blayney's proprietorship the Seven Years War, the capture of Quebec and the American War of Independence came and went; as did the the Gordon Riots, the Impeachment of Warren Hastings and the publication of Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man*. Arthur Blayney did not set out to conquer fashionable London, or even Cheltenham or Bath. He was not seduced by the prospect of enlarging his fortune by marriage to an heiress, or investment in extractive industries or the lucrative slave trade. His response to the scientific and technological developments of the period seems basically instrumental – adopting such innovations in husbandry and communications, supporting public institutions such as infirmaries and paying for local children to be vaccinated against smallpox, as would most benefit his estates and tenantry. On the other hand, despite being the last of an ancient Welsh dynasty he appears to have played no part in what has been described as the 'Welsh Enlightenment' which saw the revival (or invention) of Welsh cultural traditions.[1050] He is perceived by history as the genial patriarch of a happy, harmonious countryside, who put his profits back into his lands and generally did his best by his tenants and neighbourhood, truly earning his obituary's description of him as 'the father of Montgomeryshire'. That this image

[1050] Prys Morgan, *The Eighteenth Century Renaissance*, (Llandybie, 1981); Jenkins, *Foundations of Modern Wales*, pp. 386-426; Williams, *When was Wales?*, pp.162-3.

was upheld by his successors the Hanbury-Tracys, and indeed survives as an element of Gregynog's contemporary mythology, reinforces Raymond Williams's suggestion that the illusion of a former 'golden age' is at the centre of many peoples' sense of identity.[1051] This idea of a 'golden age' is at the heart of H.M. Vaughan's *The South Wales Squires*, published in 1926, but the contemporary response to his book, if the *Welsh Outlook* review of that year is typical, suggests such nostalgia was out of place in post-war Wales.

> We sympathise with Mr Vaughan in his admiration for the personal qualities of many of his squires … There have been benevolent despotsm but despotism is none the less to be condemned on that account. The fact is that if these squires had their way there would be no Welsh nation now.[1052]

But to typify the Hanbury-Tracys of Gregynog as reactionary squires or even benevolent depots would lead to a misleading analysis not only of their role in the evolution of the estate community in nineteenth-century Montgomeryshire but its politics as well. The ideals of *noblesse oblige,* which were regarded as embodying the true qualities of a gentleman and with which, as all memorials, records and tributes to him suggest, the last Blayney of Gregynog was endowed, were also subscribed to by the Hanbury-Tracys. Their social elevation to the Peerage as the barons Sudeley inflated their sense of aristocratic pride as 'majestic oaks in their own domain', but the 4th Lord Sudeley's *noblesse oblige*, and his sense of responsibility towards those who depended on him for a livelihood, was what led him to mortgage, borrow, and mortgage his patrimony again and again in the late nineteenth century, eventually to his family's ruin.

<u>Heritage, succession and patrimony.</u>

The Welsh roots of the ancient Blayney family at Gregynog underpinned its status in Welsh society thoughout the years of the Marcher Lordships and after the creation of the county of Montgomery. As described in the first chapter of this thesis, from the sixteenth century the family set out to celebrate their gentry status by creating monuments such as the carved parlour in Gregynog Hall and the memorials in the local parish church. They understood the importance to gentry status of building a landed estate and passing it on to one's heirs, in an era which saw the development of inheritance practices such as strict succession and entails,

[1051] Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp. 49-63.
[1052] As expressed in *The Welsh Outlook*, 13, 8, (August 1926), pp. 200-201. The review is unsigned but presumed to be the work of the editor, W. Watkin Davies.

designed to keep the estate intact in the hands of an eldest son, or nearest male relative if there was no direct heir, or if there were only female descendants. With only one occasion on which the Blayney name survived by the appropriation of a Blayney cousin to be the husband of a sole daughter, male succession was maintained on the Gregynog estate until 1795 when the last Blayney, Arthur, died unmarried. The early death of Blayney's father, before the customary settlement on his coming of age could be made, left him in full possession of his estates, able to leave them to whomever he chose, unencumbered by settlements or entails. Furthermore, in outright rebuttal of the obsession of the times about maintaining the dynasty, and leaving estates solely to male heirs however indirectly, he did not pass on the estate to a male cousin, or even a female cousin, although he might have done had Susanna Tracy, née Weaver, not died before her husband, Henry, Viscount Tracy, who Blayney had made his heir. Tracy duly inherited Gregynog when Arthur died in 1795, but died himself only two years later, leaving everything to his only daughter. This was not the first time in which women had played their part, directly or indirectly, in the survival of the estate; Joyous Blayney, Ann Weaver and Susanna Tracy all played their part, as has been shown. But there were limitations to this agency, in an age when women were rarely in total command of their own lives. So when Henrietta Tracy became the direct heiress, through her father Henry Tracy, to Arthur Blayney's Gregynog, it became not simply a safe harbour for its tenantry and the poor of the neighbourhood, but a plum to be seized.

The Land, and the Age of Improvement

Chapter two describes the location and geography of the farms and their proximity to the English border and English markets, showing how the estate grew in acreage as the Gregynog Blayneys acquired former monastic lands, and bought up property from branches of the Blayneys that were moving eastwards into Shropshire and Herefordshire, thus reinforcing the Blayneys' reputation as significant Montgomeryshire landowners.

The eighteenth century was becoming not only the 'gentry century' but the 'Age of Improvement'. Landed families sought to show off their status to each other and to the world by building magnificent houses and creating grounds which sought to emulate an idealised 'picturesque' landscape to be viewed from their grand porticos. But 'improvement' also implied more efficient farming, improvement of soil fertility and better crops, which would not only increase the landlord's rents but the tenants' prosperity. As far as Walter Davies was concerned, Arthur Blayney was the ideal of the improving landlord:

> his lands were under superior tillage; the farmhouses and offices were uncommonly neat and commodious; the fences, quick and flourishing; the occupiers happy, and generally , in good circumstances. The expense of an improvement was no object to bim, when convinced of its utility. In the several articles of buildings, fences, drains, roads, plantations, ponds, pumps, and other conveniences for the accommodation of his tenants, he expended no less a sum than 20,0001. in the last seventeen years of his life; and that, with out raising as much as one pound in his rental.[1053]

The man responsible for managing the Gregynog estate through the transition of ownership from Blayney to Hanbury-Tracy was Thomas Colley, who in 1777 had been taken on as agent by Arthur Blayney and who remained at Gregynog until his death in 1812. Responsible for the estate throughout the transition period to its new owners he became one of the most respected agents in the county. He was a regular correspondent with the Rev. Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain), who had taken up the living of Tregynon's neighbouring parish of Llanwyddelan in 1803, moving to Manafon, which also borders Tregyon, in 1807. It seems highly likely that when carrying out research for his *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales* Walter Davies obtained a good deal of his information about Arthur Blayney and Gregyog from Thomas Colley. Colley is also remembered for his fervent Methodism (a denominiation once deplored by Arthur Blayney), his establishment of a Sunday School in Tregynon church, and his building of Tregynon's first Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, as remembered in his 1912 Centenary Memorial in the *Evangelical Magazine*.[1054] This early suggestion of the advent of nonconformity among the tenantry of Gregynog and the villagers of Tregynon is a hint of the accommodation for new religious loyalties which the estate would find itself making in the nineteenth century, as nonconformists began to assert themselves in politics and public life.

Charles Hanbury-Tracy's Gregynog

The marriage in 1798 of Henrietta Tracy to Charles Hanbury of the Monmouthshire tinplate dynasty of Pontypool Park, could have turned the Gregynog story into another example of a Welsh estate passing by marriage to an Anglicised family who never stepped foot on a single acre of the place but just took its rentals, and had little interest in its Welsh heritage.

[1053] Walter Davies, *General view of the Agriculture of North Wales*, pp.286-7.
[1054] NLW Calvinistic Methodist Archive 1912 Published in *The Evangelical Magazine,* November 1913.

But Charles Hanbury (Fig. 15) was a man who needed to recreate himself, economically, socially and politically As a younger son there was no future for him in the Hanbury family's Monmouthshire iron and tin foundries, responsibility for which was shouldered by his elder brother Capel. His marriage to Henrietta Tracy in 1798 made him tenant for life of estates in Montgomeryshire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire. This marriage brought him virtually instant social recognition as High Sheriff of Gloucestershire in 1800, but it was Montgomeryshire which provided him with the best prospects – as well as the best foundation of landed property and income – on which to build his ambitions. By 1803 Hanbury – by now Hanbury-Tracy – was a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Montgomeryshire Volunteer Legion, and in 1804 he was appointed High Sheriff of Montgomeryshire. Nonethless, he and his wife regarded Toddington Manor as their primary home, and it was from there that launced his successful campaign for to win the parliamentary seat of nearby Tewkesbury, where he served in the Whig interest from 1807 to 1812, and from 1832 to 1837. In 1938, in Queen Victoria's Coronation Honours, he was raised to the peerage as Baron Sudeley of Toddington.

Chapter Three of this thesis describes how the energy and ambition of Charles Hanbury-Tracy, 1st baron Sudeley, gave the Gregynog estate a new lease of life, despite the early 1800s being difficult years for agriculture which saw rents increase – and rent arrears soar. Perhaps full of hubris at becoming tenant-for-life of his wife's extensive estates, he indulged his passion for Gothic architecture by spending extravagantly on the rebuilding of Toddington Manor as a neo-Gothic palace, and expanding the Montgomeryshire and Gloucestershire estates, all paid for by the sale of the unentailed Shropshire property, and by income from rents and sales of timber from the Gregynog estate.

He might have become just another absentee landlord as far as Gregynog was concerned, had he not been anxious to build his status as a significant Welsh landowner, gratefully regarded by the tenantry for his toleration of their arrears of rent. A connection with the influential Pennant family of Penrhyn Castle in Caernarfonshire was made when his eldest son married Emma Douglas Pennant in 1931. An additional factor was the settling of his second son, Henry Hanbury-Tracy, at Gregynog, as resident family member and agent, where he came to be regarded as a benevolent local patriarch in his own right, a prominent member of local societies and institutions such as the County Infirmary, and the instigator of the much-praised concrete cottages experiment.

By the 1880s the Gregynog estate was one of the largest units of landownership in the county, and the proprietors the among the most respected. In 1848, following the death of the earl of Powis, Lord Sudeley was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire, a position he held until his death in 1858, when he was succeeded by his son. Thomas Leigh's years as the second Lord Sudeley were few; he died in 1863, to be succeeded by his son, Sudeley Charles George. Henry Hanbury-Tracy contined to be resident at Gregynog, but the finances of that estate were still being drained by the always heavy costs of retaining the mansion and establishment of Toddington, and the profligate spending of the third Lord Sudeley on his private zoo.

Chapter Four of this thesis describes how, with the best of intentions, when Charles Douglas Hanbury Tracy inherited the barony – and a huge burden of debt – from his elder brother in 1877, he set out to attempt to turn around the family fortunes, by borrowing money to reinvest in both the Gregynog and Toddington estates, a process which transformed many of the farmhouses and farm buildings of Gregynog, and set up a potential profitable fruit-growing business at Toddington, but led to the ruin of both estates.

Landownership, status and politics

The Whiggish Liberalism of the first Lord Sudeley and his heirs, their avowed support for Parliamentary reform, their support of the Liberation society (and consequent lack of hostility towards nonconformity, despite remaining Anglicans themselves) all helped them establish a political role for themselves in Montgomeryshire in opposition to the long-standing hegemony of the Tory proprietors of the Powis and Wynnstay estates, which together controlled the county seat, with only occasional Whig inroads into the Montgomery Boroughs seat.

Chapter Five examines the first Lord Sudeley's political career and his attempts to launch his sons into politics, which only came to fruition five years after his death, when in 1863 his grandson Charles Douglas Hanbury-Tracy was elected Liberal MP for the Montgomery Boroughs seat. The times were right in Wales for the evolution of Whigs such as the Hanbury-Tracys into Liberals, with their support for political reform and church disestablishment, and the family became prominent figures in the Liberal movement in Montgomeryshire, in a political climate enlivened by the widening of the franchise, a newly vigorous Welsh, including Welsh language, press, and the radical political activism of Nonconformist ministers. They were instrumental in introducing the Scottish industrialist Stuart Rendel to the county, which resulted in his accepting nomination as the Liberal candidate for the County seat at the

General Election of 1880. He took the seat, from the Conservatives and went on to establish himself as Wales's leading Gladstonian Liberal.

Charles Hanbury-Tracy became deeply involved in the civic life of the county, both as an MP and as the fourth Lord Sudeley, even as he was leading a public life of considerable prominence, as a Fellow of the Royal Society, as a spokeman on naval matters in the House of Lords, and as an agricultural innovator on his Gloucestershire estates. He supported the campaigns for non-sectarian secondary and higher education in Wales.[1055] He played a key role in the revival of the flannel-weaving industry in the local market town of Newtown, his continual re-investment, with yet more borrowed money, keeping it alive through good and bad times for twenty years. This sincere commitment sustained his reputation in the locality even when he became estranged from his Liberal colleagues in 1888, as exemplified by several articles published in the Montgomeryshire Collections during these years, describing in reassuring tones the Gregynog estate and its proprietors ('majestic oaks'), the Hall itself, and the parish in which it is located.[1056] His eventual bankruptcy came as a profound shock not only to his family, tenants and dependants but to the whole of Montgomeryshire, and probably most of all to himself. The shame of it all led to his spending the rest of his life in obscurity. This was indeed 'the end of a great estate'. It was also nearly the end of the dynasty. Lord Sudeley's son and heir, whose coming-of-age in 1891 had been celebrated so lavishly both at Toddington and Gregynog, married twice without engendering any heirs, and the peerage has been passed down via cousins ever since.[1057]

<u>The end of the estate, and after</u>

Except that it was not quite the end of the Gregynog estate. For the first time in its existence, in 1898 it was sold to Sir James Joicey, Liberal MP for Chester-le-Street, who retained it until 1913. During those years the estate was under the committed management of the agent, William Scott Owen, who had been appointed by Lord Sudeley in 1878 and had become by far the most stable element of Gregynog life as far as the tenants were concerned, for all their toasts to Lord Sudeley at rent audit dinners. Like his predecessor Thomas Colley a century

[1055] J.A. Davies, *Education in a Welsh Rural County 1870-1973*, (Cardiff, 1973), pp.48, 58, 67.
[1056] William Scott Owen, 'Arthur Blayney and his home, Gregynog Hall', *MC* 25, (1891), pp.105-14; idem, 'Parochial History of Tregynon', *MC* 30 (1896), pp.1-168; E. Rowley-Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', *MC* 21, (1888), pp.71-110; George Sandford, 'The House of Gregynog, the Blayneys and the Hanbury-Tracys, Lords Sudeley', *MC* 18, (1885), pp.229-244.
[1057] Burke's *Peerage*.

before, he held the reins of the estate in his hands through the transition ownership from one proprietor to the next; like Colley he made a significant contribution to the wider life of the community, organizing agricultural lectures and demonstrations in local towns, serving as a Conservative County Councillor and a member of the Board of Bangor University. His absorption in the history of the estate and the parish of Tregynon inspired him to write a *History of Gregynog*, which survives as a manuscript in Gloucestershire Archives, and a 'Parochial History of Tregynon', published in the *Montgomeryshire Collections*. Neither Scott Owen nor Colley conform to the negative stereotype of land agents which is an element of so much social history of Britain; on a day to day basis they were more important to the estate tenants and employees than the proprietors, and their status in the community reflected the respect in which they were held.

The Gregynog Estate and Montgomeryshire

Even before the resurgence of Welsh national feeling in the mid-nineteenth century, the Gregynog estate's association with a long line of native Welsh gentry families was an essesntial element of its identity, as exemplified by artefacts such as the carved parlour in Gregynog Hall, the Blayney memorials in Tregynon church, and the lengths undertaken to include the Blayneys in the Tracy pedigrees of the 1840s. But its location in the former March of Wales, with its manorial obligations to the lordship of Powis, and the roles played by Blayneys at the English court in the fifteenth century is an indicator of how readily many of the native Welsh elite accommodated themselves within the Anglo-Norman regime, a process that intensified over subsequent centuries as the institutions of national government, and the power structures that upheld them, became based in the English capital city, London. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Welsh gentry, in Glanmor Williams's words, were losing

> their former sense of being a subordinate, underprivileged people forced to defend themselves and their mountains under severe pressure from an oppressive neighbour … Their loyalty had become increasingly identified with an idealized English monarchy dispensing authority and benefits, with its national erastian church and its institutions of government and law entrusting power to the ruling gentry.[1058]

For the gentry of the March of Wales, having been subject to Anglo-Norman influence and overlordship far longer than the gentry of the Principality, this process brought few crises of identity. Many sustained their pride in their Welshness while playing their part in 'English'

[1058] Glanmor Williams, *Recovery, Reorientaion and Reformation, Wales c.1415-1642*, (Oxford, 1987), p.461.

national life, for example the Salesbury family of Rhug and Bachymbyd, and the Mostyns of Flintshire.[1059] For the rest of the Marcher population, the lesser gentry, the people of the small towns, the villages, the farms, especially in mid Wales, traditional cultures and language were perhaps more subject to dilution, from the effects of English in-migration and settlement, the pull of English markets, intermarriage between Welsh and English families – all playing their part in the cultural fluidity of the borderlands then as now; lands with an ambiguous identity in terms of their 'Welshness', which constitute a transitional zone between the mountains of Wales and the lowlands – and markets – of England. 'The mountains,' said O.M. Edwards in 1901,

> explain its [Wales's] love of isolation and its love of independence; they explain its internal divisions, they have determined, throughout its history, what the direction and method of its progress were to be.[1060]

Montgomeryshire is easily regarded as the exemplary Anglicised border county; little Welsh is spoken in its towns, even on market days; its more east lying villages are almost entirely Anglophone, and have been so for two hundred years. Even in Tregynon, the village where Gregynog Hall is located, the Welsh language has been in decline since Thomas Colley arranged for services in both English and Welsh in his new chapel.

But it would be a mistake to regard Montgomeryshire simply as a border county in Wales, 'border' being a term with misleadingly defensive conotations. To begin with, although it meets Shropshire in the east, its western borders, beyond the Cambrian mountains at Eisteddfa Gurig and Machynlleth place it at the heart of 'Welsh Wales'. All the crossing points of Mid Wales pass through Montgomeryshire, linking east to west: the trunk roads, the A44, the A470, the A483; the railway which runs through Welshpool and Newtown, in a wide circle via Machynlleth to Aberystwyth; the old Montgomeryshire canal and the River Severn itself meandering down to Shrewsbury, 'the eastern gateway', in A. H. Dodd's term.[1061] These routes are the trade routes of course, in and out of Wales, and those trade routes have always brought people in and out, as well as goods and services.

[1059] Sadie Jarrett, 'Of great Kindred and Alliance; the Status and Identity of the Salesburys of Rhug and Bachymbid, c.1475-c.1660, (Unpublished PhD thesis, Bangor, 2020); Shaun Evans, 'To Contynue my bloud and name…' Reproducing the Mostyn dynasty c.1540-1692. (Unpublished PhD thesis, Aberystwyth, 2013).

[1060] Quoted in Neil Evans, 'When men and mountains meet,': Historians' Explanations of the history of Wales, 1890-1970,' WHR, 22, 2, (Dec. 2004) p.224.

[1061] Dodd, 'Borderers and Highlanders', passim.

Montgomeryshire can also be seen as another frontier, that is, between North and South Wales. It is the principal county of what constitutes 'Mid Wales', which is neither North, nor South Wales. This became a problem for Stuart Rendel in the late-nineteenth century when he and his Liberal colleagues were trying to create a Welsh National Liberal organization. The North Wales Liberals and the South Wales Liberals could not be induced to co-operate in the creation of a national organisation, and neither group had any interest in Mid Wales and Montgomeryshire despite Stuart Rendel, its MP, being by far the most effective Welsh Liberal MP in Parliament.[1062] Even today, to travel by train from Mid Wales to either North Wales or South Wales requires a journey via England. This has affected perceptions of the county's identity as being neither part of North nor South Wales, somewhat endorsed by its being described as a transitional zone in geographic terms by Dorothy Sylvester and others.[1063] However it can be better characterised as a transitional zone where cultures and identities have overlapped, challenged and invigorated one another for centuries.

The Gregynog estate was a characteristic institution of the transitional zone of Wales – linguistically, culturally, politically, and in its relations with its land and the people who farmed it. Its fundamental Welshness is evident in the names of its farms: Argoed, Brithdir, Caecappan, Cochsidan, Dolymelinau, Gwaentrebeddau, Henfaes Melin-y-glog Llwyn Melyn, Pwllan, Ty yn y Banadl, to name but a few. Some farm names indeed had been changed by 1913: Ty Newydd had become Newhouse by 1856; Tŷdu and Tŷcoch were still so named in the last legible rental of 1872 but appear as Black House and Red House in the 1913 estate sale catalogue.[1064] These farm names easy to translate; it would have been difficult to find an English equivalent for Gwaentrebeddau, for example, which would have been recognised in the locality. Furthermore, a study of the routines, customs and recreations of the farming community would reveal much in common, even today, with those observed in the 1940s by Alwyn D. Rees in Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa, a very Welsh village some eight miles north of Gregynog.[1065] In the nineteenth century the estate became one of the social and cultural building blocks of Montgomeryshire, based on the foundation of Arthur Blayney's reputation for benevolence and public spiritedness, and Victorian nostalgia for a 'lost age', and sustained by the subsequent proprietors' Liberal politics which put them in accord with the progressive, democratic mood

[1062] Graham Nelmes, 'Stuart Rendel and Welsh Liberal Political Organization in the late-nineteenth century', *WHR*, 9, 4 (1979), pp.468-484.
[1063] See Chapter Two, footnotes 21, 22.
[1064] NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 12, Estate Rentals 1836-48; 20, Estate Rentals 1862-72.
[1065] Alwyn D. Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside, A Social Study of Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa*, (Cardiff, 1950, 1975).

of nineteenth-century Wales. The Liberal proprietors played their part in the creation of a new Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century – until in the face of agitation for land reform they began to fear for their rights as landowners. But it was well-intentioned but poor financial management, not land reform, that brought about the failure of the Sudeleys as landowners. The farms, expenditure on which was one of the factors which brought about the bankruptcy, survived; most of them are farmed to this day.

The idea of transition is exemplified by advent of the Davies family, newly rich industrial entrepreneurs, philanthropic Calvinistic Methodists, to Montgomeryshire life, and ultimately to Gregynog, when in 1914 much of the estate was acquired by David Davies MP, and in 1920 the mansion, Gregynog Hall itself, was bought by his sisters for their arts and crafts venture.

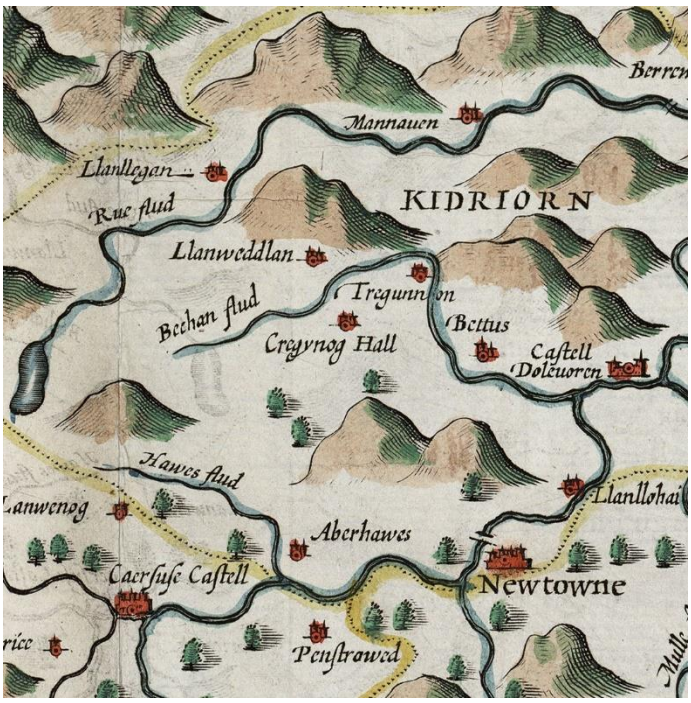
The significance of Gregynog in the twentieth century, both during the lives of the Davies sisters and under the management of their successors the University of Wales, has yet to be addressed by historians. Its story reaches far beyond the old farms and villages, and is subject to cultural, political, educational and economic influences which Arthur Blayney never knew but which the Hanbury-Tracys played their part in creating.

This study examines the fortunes of the Gregynog estate from the middle of the eighteenth to the early twentieth century. It alludes only in outline to the early history of the estate and its proprietors, and the role played by members of the Blayney family in the colonisation of Ireland in the early 1600s, both subjects worthy of significant future research. The present study however opens the door to a number of possibilities, beginning with the impact of the cultural changes and expectations of the twentieth century on Gregynog as a Welsh institution whose foundations were still to some extent patriarchal albeit with a new emphasis on the arts, music and philanthropy. The twentieth century transition from tenanted to freehold farms formerly held by the Gregynog estate is an area also meriting investigation, especially as a sense of itentity with that estate is still strong on farms which used to belong to it, a century after its fragmentation. The story of Gregynog and its proprietors – from the earliest Blayneys to the University of Wales – is at the heart of the wider history of Montgomeryshire, and will be an integral part of a proposed initiative on the part of the Powysand Club to create a County History. But are also fundamental questions to be addressed, not simply about the past, but

about the future: the role – and sustainability – of historic houses such as Gregynog in twentieth and twenty-first century Wales.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 John Speed map of Montgomeryshire 1611 showing Gregynog Hall



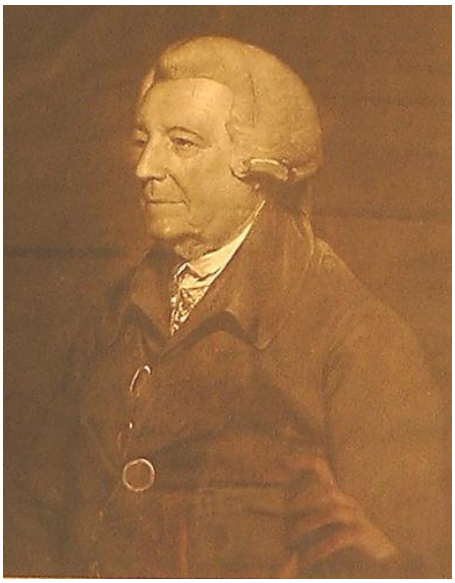
Speed map detail.

By permission of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / The National Library of Wales

Fig. 2 The Blayney Coat of Arms

Fig. 3 Monument to David Lloyd Blayney and his descendants
in the parish church of St. Cynon, Tregynon.

Fig. 4 Arthur Blayney



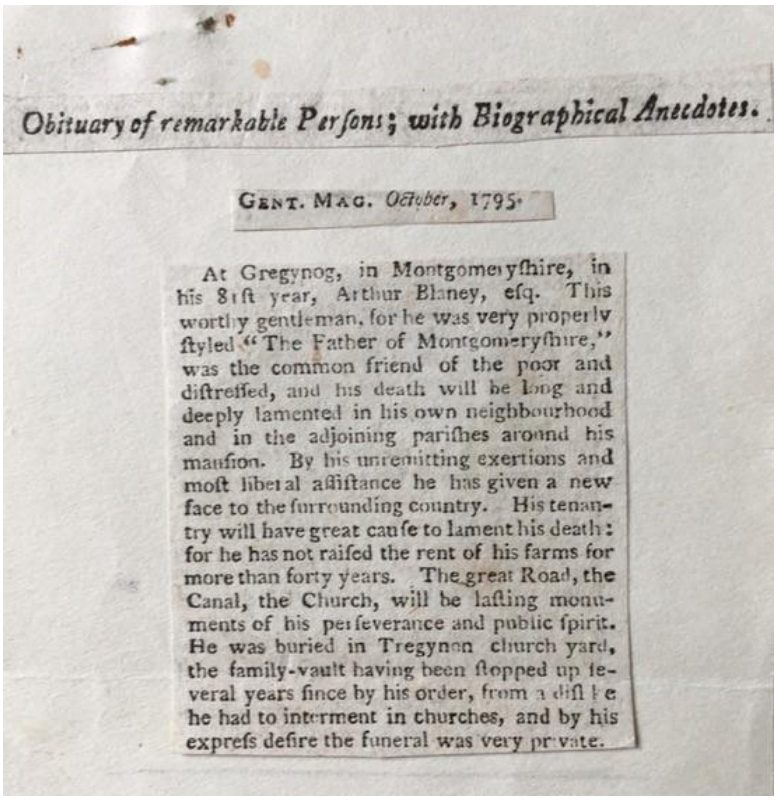
Engraving from a lost portrait by
Sir William Beechey

Fig. 5 Monument to Arthur Blayney in Tregynon Parish Church.

"Sacred to the memory of
Arthur Blayney Esq.,
who during a long life passed at Gregynog, devoted his
Time and Fortune and his Talents to the Good of Mankind, and this
neighbourhood in particular; by spiritedly and generously promoting works
of great Public Utility, by the constant Exercise of liberal Hospitality, by a fatherly
attention to his Tenants and Dependents, by patiently and skilfully reconciling
Differences, by largely encouraging Industry and Merit and by relieving
most bountifully the Poor and Distressed.
He died Oct. 1 1795, aged 90. By his express Desire his remains were
interred in the North part of this Church Yard.
This monument, an humble Tribute to his exemplay Virtues, is most gratefully
placed in this Church (itself an Object of his pious munificence)
by Henry Lord Viscount Tracy, his Friend and Executor."

CARVED BY JOHN BACON, R.A.

Fig. 6 Arthur Blayney's obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1795.



Obituary of remarkable Perſons; with Biographical Anecdotes.

GENT. MAG. October, 1795.

At Gregynog, in Montgomeryſhire, in his 81ſt year, Arthur Blaney, eſq. This worthy gentleman, for he was very properly ſtyled "The Father of Montgomeryſhire," was the common friend of the poor and diſtreſſed, and his death will be long and deeply lamented in his own neighbourhood and in the adjoining pariſhes around his manſion. By his unremitting exertions and moſt liberal aſſiſtance he has given a new face to the ſurrounding country. His tenantry will have great cauſe to lament his death: for he has not raiſed the rent of his farms for more than forty years. The great Road, the Canal, the Church, will be laſting monuments of his perſeverance and public ſpirit. He was buried in Tregynon church yard, the family-vault having been ſtopped up ſeveral years ſince by his order, from a diſlike he had to interment in churches, and by his expreſs deſire the funeral was very private.

Fig. 7 Tomb of the First Lord and Lady Sudeley in Toddington Church, Gloucestershire
Designed by John Graham Lough.

Fig. 8 Gregynog Hall in the 1780s, watercolour, Moses Griffiths ©NLW.

Fig. 9 ‘A Plan for the Demesne Lands of Gregynog’ by William Emes, 1774.

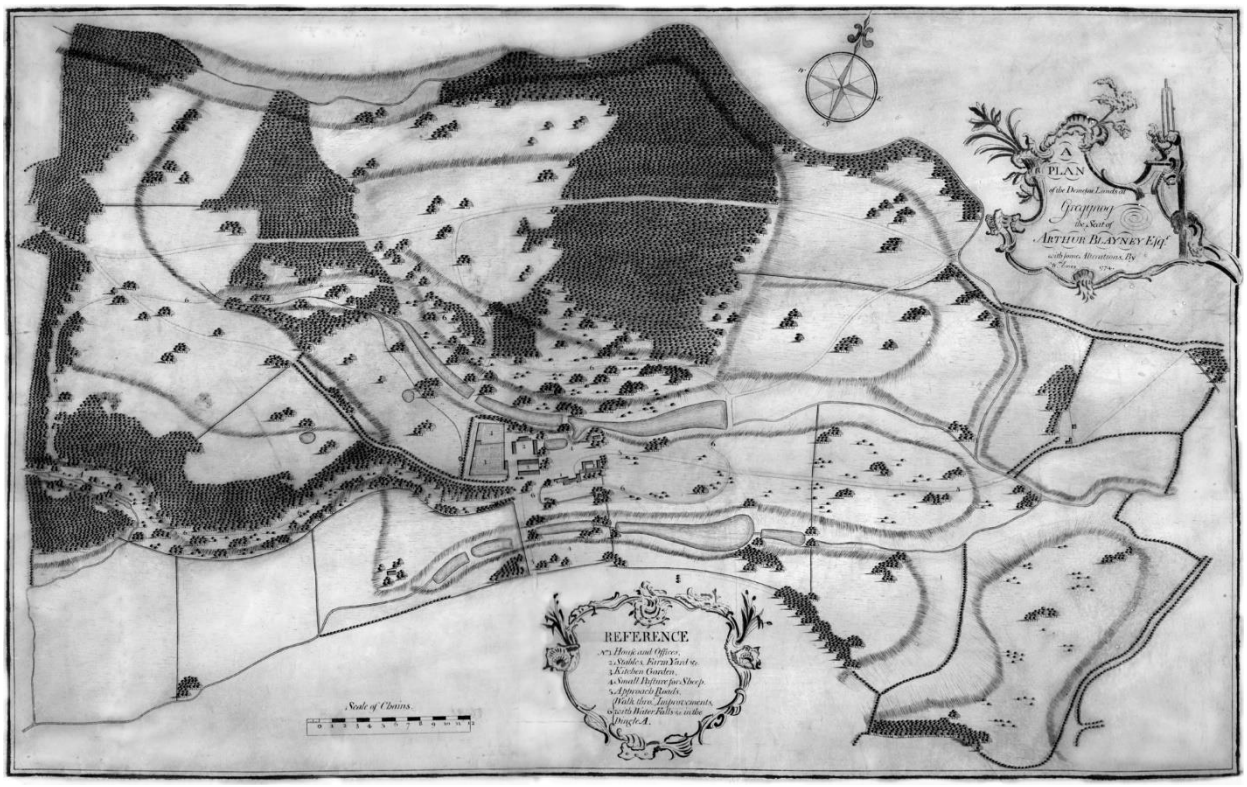


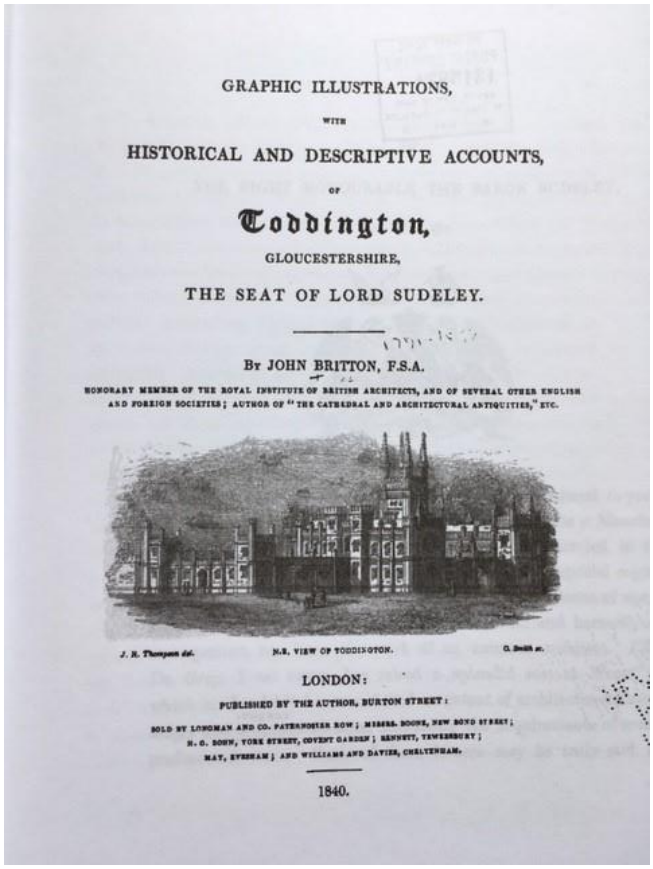
Fig. 10 Morville Hall, near Bridgnorth, Shropshire by John Inigo Richards, c.1740-50. ©National Trust.

Fig. 11 Gregynog Hall in 1795

Fig. 12 Thomas Colley's hilltop Scotch Firs reimagined as a Gregynog Press device © 1925.

Fig. 13 Royal Licence grant, Charles Hanbury-Tracy Dec. 1798. GRO, D2153 P3

Fig. 14 Toddington Manor, Gloucestershire, in 1840


GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS,

WITH

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNTS,

OF

Toddington,

GLOUCESTERSHIRE,

THE SEAT OF LORD SUDELEY.

By JOHN BRITTON, F.S.A.

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS, AND OF SEVERAL OTHER ENGLISH AND FOREIGN SOCIETIES; AUTHOR OF "THE CATHEDRAL AND ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUITIES," ETC.

J. R. Thompson del. N.E. VIEW OF TODDINGTON. G. Smith sc.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR, BURTON STREET:

SOLD BY LONGMAN AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW; MESSRS. ROOKE, NEW BOND STREET; H. G. BOHN, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN; BENNETT, TEWKESBURY; MAY, EVESHAM; AND WILLIAMS AND DAVIES, CHELTENHAM.

1840.

Fig. 15 Charles Hanbury-Tracy, 1st baron Sudeley

Fig. 16 4th Lord Sudeley and the Hon. H. Hanbury Tracy as Vice-Presidents of the Montgomeryshire Liberal Association 1886

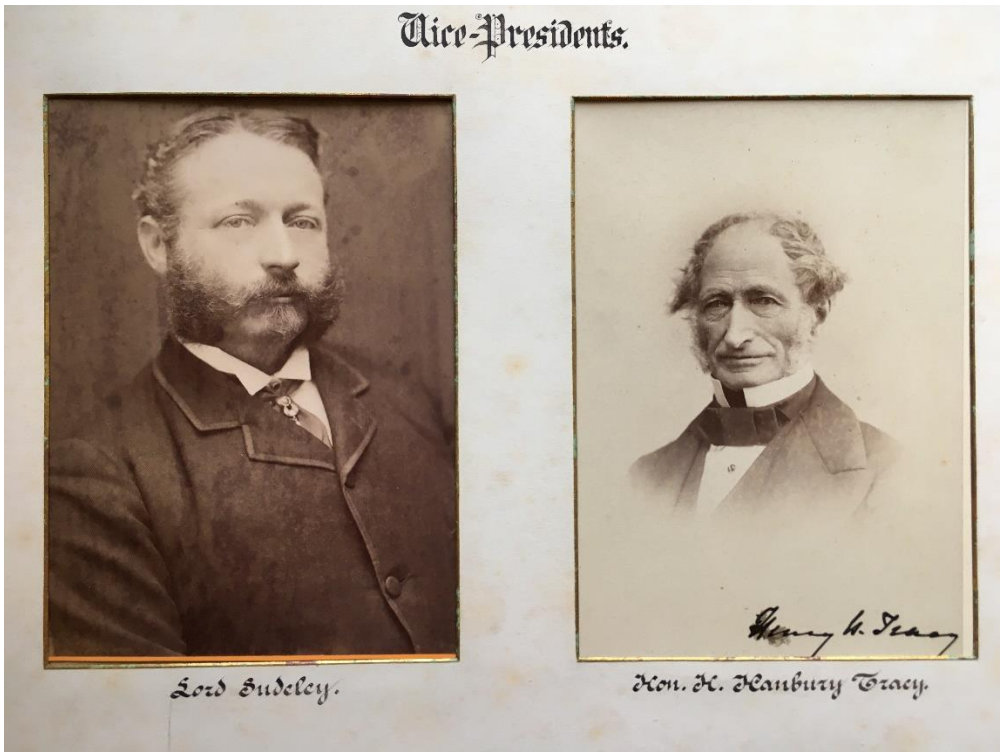
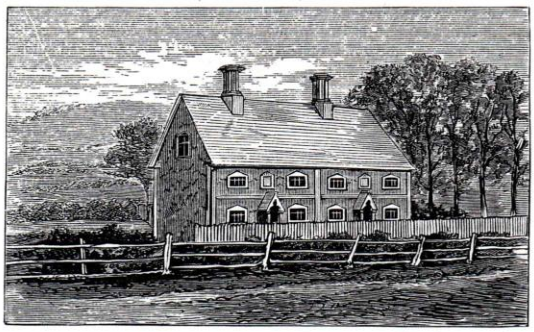


Fig. 17 The Concrete Cottages and Farmhouses of Gregynog 1868-1877



Cottages on the Gregynog Estate, built of Concrete.

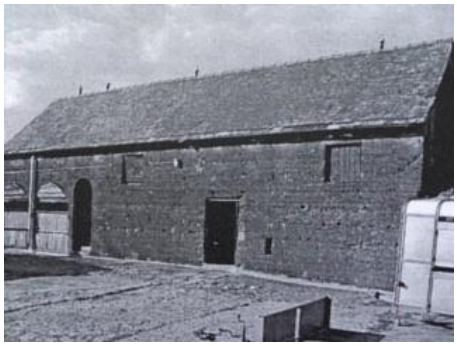
Thomas Nicholas, *Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and County Families of Wales*, Vol II,(London, 1872), pp.805-6

Nos 1 & 2, Concrete Cottages, Tregynon

School House, Tregynon

Bryn-y-Cul Farmhouse, Tregynon

Waentrebeddau Farmhouse, Tregynon



Barn at Dolmilenau Model Farm

From J.C. Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, 1853.

Lower images by permission of Gareth Lumley Jones, *The Concrete Cottages of Gregynog, an Experiment in Mass Concrete Construction by the Hon. Charles and Henry Hanbury-Tracy, 1868-1880*, MA Thesis, Birmingham School of Architecture, 2003.

Fig. 18 Training in butter-making at Gregynog between 1890 and 1905
Photograph courtesy of Gareth Lumley Jones.

Fig. 19 Gregynog in the 1890s. (Oil painting, Anon. Gregynog Hall collection.)

Fig. 20 The Mansion as depicted in the October 1913 Estate Sale catalogue.

FOUR DAYS' SALE. EARLY POSSESSION.

NEWTOWN, Montgomery,

Situate near Newtown Station, served by the Great Western and London & North Western and Cambrian Railway Systems, by which London, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Birmingham and all the large Commercial Centres of the County are brought into easy touch of the Estate.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AUCTION SALES OF THE SEASON.

190 LOTS.

Illustrated Particulars, Plans and Conditions of Sale

OF THE MAGNIFICENT

FREEHOLD, RESIDENTIAL, AGRICULTURAL & SPORTING DOMAIN

KNOWN AS

Gregynog

COMPRISING THE

Black and White Elizabethan Mansion

Standing in Beautiful Park and Gardens,

With all the appendages of a Noble Country Seat, including complete Electric Light installation and Heating Apparatus. FAMOUS SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING.

A Gentleman's Residence "Cefngwifed" with Stabling

ABOUT

235 Farms & Small Holdings with excellent and in many cases superior Houses and Homesteads,

Accommodation Lands, Temperance Hotel, Two Post Offices, Cottages & Gardens, Wheelwrights' Shops

Comprising nearly the whole of

EIGHT PARISHES AND VILLAGES.

Noted for Fertile Meadow, Pasture and Arable Lands,

The whole extending to nearly

16,000 Acres

AND

TWENTY-FIVE SQUARE MILES,

With a Rental Roll of approximately

Per **£12,000** Ann.

Messrs. MILLAR, SON & Co.

Have received Instructions to Sell the above, in 190 Lots,

AT THE TOWN HALL, NEWTOWN, MONTGOMERY,

On the 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st OCTOBER, 1913

At TWO o'Clock each day.

Illustrated Particulars, Plans and Conditions of Sale of Messrs. CAMERON, KEMM AND CO., Solicitors, Gresham House, 34, Old Broad Street, London, E.C.; of Messrs. HIGGINS, MARSHALL & POOLE, Auctioneers, Newtown and Welshpool; HAROLD E. MOORE, Esq., F.S.I., 6, Bedford Row, London, W.C.; at the "Bear" Hotel, Newtown; and of the Auctioneers,

46, PALL MALL, LONDON, S.W.

APPENDIX I Genealogies

1. THE GENEALOGY OF THE BLAYNEY FAMILY from 1595[1066]

David Lloyd Blayney of Gregynog = Elizabeth daughter of Lewis Jones of Bishop's Castle (d.1595)

/_____

Lewis Blayney (d.1601)= Bridget Pryce Thomas Blayney **Edward Blayney**, later 1st Baron Blayney = Bridget Pryce of Newtown Hall of Monaghan = Ann Loftus,

/_____ d. Bishop of Dublin

John Blayney (1591-1665) Andrew (d.1678) Richard Robert d. **/**

= Elizabeth Lloyd of Berthllwyd MP for Monaghan, d.1641 **/**

/ **/**

Joyous Blayney (d.1661) = **Arthur** Blayney, 2nd son 1st Baron Blayney, of Shien

/ Castle, Ireland, later Sir Arthur Blayney (d.1659)

_____**/**_____

John Edward (d.c.1671) **Henry Blayney** (d. 1691) Arthur

o.s.p = Lady Elizabeth Skirminsher = Mary Seddon of Worthen, Salop = 1Mary Forbes

(ob.s.p.) **/** (d.1707) = 2Jane Smothergill

/ Had issue: 3s & ds.

_____**/**_____

Mary Margaret Elizabeth Jane Joyous Bridget **John Blayney** (1683-1720) **Ann** =Blayney

= Mr Gambel = Lumley = Mr Baldwin = John Thomas **= Ann Weaver** = Thomas Owen

Williams of Salop /had issue **/** (d.1751) More

inc. Juliana* m **/** /had issue 4d* inc Joyous

Rev.Sir Thomas Edwards **/** and Diana who m.George Bates

_____**/**_____

Anna Maria Edward Arabella Joyous John Diana **Arthur** John Frances

(1708-9) (1710-15) (1712) (1713-59) (Aug-Nov1714) (1715-80) (1716-95) (1718-?) (1719-1774)

*These first cousins of Arthur Blayney were close to his sister Diana and were beneficiaries of her will. He made no bequest to them or any of their issue.

2. GENEALOGY OF THE WEAVER FAMILY TO 1800

Arthur Weaver of Betws, Montgomeryshire, and Bridgnorth, Shropshire (ob. 1688)

= Jane Smyth of Morville Hall, Shropshire (ob. 1687)

/

Arthur Weaver (2) = Mary Thomas ob. 1713 Mary Jane

ob.1710 ob.1709 = W.Aldenham = A. Brown

_____**/**_____

John Arthur **Edward** Thomas Elizabeth **Ann ob 1751** Mary Frances **Anthony** = Susanna ob 1754 ob 1746 ob 1764 ob 1762 ob 1761 **= John BLAYNEY** **/**

/ **/** **/**

Arthur Weaver (3) **Arthur Blayney** **Susanna Weaver** = **Henry Tracy**

ob.1759 (1716-95) (d.1783) **/** (d.1797)

/

Henrietta = Charles Hanbury

(1776 - 1839) (1778-1858)

[1066] S.P. Thomas, 'Genealogy of the Blayney family of Montgomeryshire and Castle Blayney, Ireland', typescript presented to the Gregynog library by the author 14.8.1980; Rev. George Sandford, 'The House of Gregynog', *Montgomeryshire Collections* XVIII (1885), E.R. Morris, 'The Family of Blayney', op.cit, XXI (1887), XXII (1888) . Dates have been verified in parish records where available.

3. GENEALOGY OF THE TRACY FAMILY OF TODDINGTON

In 1643 Sir John Tracy, of Toddington, former Gloucestershire MP,
was made Baron Tracy of Rathcoole in the County of Dublin, a title in the Peerage of Ireland.
He was succeeded by:

Robert Tracy, **2**nd Viscount Tracy (c. 1692–1662)

John Tracy, **3**rd Viscount Tracy (1617–1687)

William Tracy, **4**th Viscount Tracy (1657–1712)

Thomas Charles Tracy, **5**th Viscount Tracy (1690–1756) = 1. Elizabeth Keyt; 2. Frances Pakington
/

William	Thomas Charles John	**Henry Leigh**	**Jane Tracy = Capel Hanbury**	
6th Viscount Tracy	**7th** Viscount Tracy	**8th Viscount Tracy**	(1707-87)	(1707-65)
(1719-95)	(1722-93)	(1732-97)		
		= Susanna Weaver (d.1783)		
		/		
		Henrietta (1776-1839)		

(Source: Burke's Peerage)

4. GENEALOGY OF THE HANBURY FAMILY OF PONTYPOOL PARK, MON

John Hanbury II (1664-1734) = Bridget Ayscough (d.1741)
/
Capel Hanbury (1797-1765) = Jane Tracy (1797-87)
/
John Hanbury (1744-1784) = Jane Rachel Lewis = Thomas Stoughton
_____/_____

John Capel Hanbury	Capel Hanbury	**Charles Hanbury = Henrietta Tracy**	
(1775-95)	(1776-1861)	(1778-1858)	(1776- 1839)

(Source: Burke's Peerage)

APPENDIX II

Table 1 Sample Rent Agreement 1773

THE GREGYNOG ESTATE Sample rental agreement.

Agreement between Arthur Blayney Esq. and Edward Evans for the tenement called Penybrin and the lands thereunto belonging together with other lands lately added, out of Nantyrader viz., Cosslane Piece, Cae Redmore, Cae Graig, Erw Fellin, Cae Glais, and Marbutts in the parishes of Bettws and Tregynon, to hold for a year, and so from year to year so long as both parties shall like

The said Edward Evans to Enter on the fifth day of April 1774 and to pay at the usual times of payment Forty pounds a year Rent clear of all Taxes and Deductions whatever

To keep and deliver up the Buildings at the End of his Term in good Repairas to the Glasing and Thatch and other cover

To use the farm in a good course of Husbandry and lay down the stubble with the Second Crop of Lent Grain with grass seeds

To consume all the profits on his premises for the increasing of the Dunghill and raising Manure, and not to see or suffer to be carried off, any Fodder, Hay, Straw or Compost & Not to Lop or Crop any Timber Trees or take any Boot without Assignment, Except reasonable Fire Boot and Hedge Boot

That he shall fill up the Gaps around his corn and grain with Quick

That he shall not remove any Poles, loose Boards, Slabs or Trouse from over the Tallants, but leave them as he found them

In Witness whereof both parties hereunto set their Hands this 21st October 1773

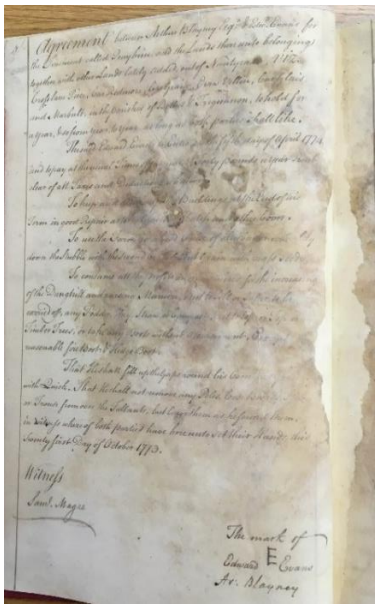
Witness

Saml. Magee

The Mark of
Edward **E** Evans
Ar. Blayney

NB Of the 48 legible leases in the book only 20 of the tenants could sign their name – 28 signed with their mark.

Transcribed from NLW Gregynog Estate Records Ledger 53



APPENDIX II

Table 2: Sample Gregynog Rentals 1775-1800

Arthur Blayney reviewed the estate rents between 1773 and 1775. The table show the increase in rentals that were applied at that period, if any, and the rent as recorded in 1800.

PARISH	TENANT IN 1873	PROPERTY	RENT PER ½ YEAR 1773 £	1775/6 £	1800 £
Aberhafesp	Richard Jones	Glanrhyd	23.10	29.00	29.0.0
	Lewis Jenkin	Penlanlike	1.5.0	1.5.0	1.5.0
Kerry	Joseph Davies	Cefn Coed	20.0.0	26.0.0	28.5s
Llandyssil	John Jones	Balbo	23.0.0.	28.0.0	28.0.0
	John Jones Sen.	Pentre	20.0.0	21.0.0	21.0.0
Berriew	Thomas Blayney	Wern	2.2.6	2.2.6	2.2.6
Bettws	Jeremiah Phillips	Bryncoch	24.0.0	28.0.0	29.10.0
	Francis Jones	Cwmdockin	27.0.0	30.10.0	30.10.0
	Thomas Sturkey	Highgate	45.0.0	45.0.0	48.5.0
Tregynon	John Gravenor	Fraithwen	8.10.0	10.10.0	10.0.0
	Thomas Roberts	Llwynmelyn	11.14.0	15.0.0.	19.10s
	Thomas Cleaton	Cwmcignant	7.0.0.	9.0.0	8.0.0
	William Gittins	Tynyshettin	15.0.0.	22.10.0	22.10s
	Humphrey Williams	Hafodtalog	14.0.0	14.0.0	21.00
	Morris Humphrey	Rhospant	2.10.0	3.0.0	3.0.0

Source: NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals 3 Estate Rents 1757-1777; 6 Estate Rents 1796-1808.

APPENDIX II

Table 3: Sample Estate Rentals 1800-1913

PARISH	PROPERTY	RENT PER HALF YEAR 1800 £	1808 £	1820 £	1836 £	1848 £	1861 £	1870 £	1913 SALE CAT £
Aberhafesp	Hill Fm	22.10.0	27.10.0	50.0.0	50.0.0	49.5.0	57.15.0	50.0.0	Sold by 1900
	Glanrhyd	31.1.0	55.0.0	100.00	100.0.0	100.0.0	91.5.0	94.1.0	188.19.10
		(From 1820 with Brynygroes, then marginal land sales.)							
Newtown	Bear Inn	15.15.0	22.10.0	42.0.0	42.0.0	50.0.0	50.0.0	50.0.0	Sold by 1900
	Penarth	Estate of Henry Vct. Tracy			110.10.0	150.0.0	200.00	200.0.0	334.10.0
Llanllwchaiarn	Tyn y Cwm	8.0.0	11.0.0	16.10.0	16.10.0	16.10.0	17.5.0	18.10.0	19.7.6
Bettws	Bryncoch	29.1.0	38.0.0	72.10.0	72.10.0	60.0.0)	80.0.0	80.0.0	139.13.6
	'Part of Bryncoch'					11.17.6)			
	Highgate	48.5.0	72.0.0	125.0.0	125.0.0	125.0.0	150.0.0	154.15.0	230.15.8
	Glomen	8.10.0	21.0.0	28.10.0	28.10.0	30.0.0	31.10.0	32.10.0	63.15.0
Tregynon	Llwynmelyn	19.10.0	23.10.0	53.15.0	52.15.0	53.15.0	60.15.0	61.0.0	83.11.6
	Cwmcignant	8.0.0	12.0.0	22.0.0	22.0.0	22.0.0	39.0.0	39.0.0	50.11.4
	Tynyshettin	22.10.0	29.0.0	45.0.0	45.0.0	45.0.0	71.0.0	71.0.0	145.0.0
	Fir House 27.10.0	35.0.0	66.0.0	66.0.0	66.0.0	not listed 1861		83.0.0	112.8.6
	Fraithwen	10.0.0	15.0.0	25.0.0	25.0.0	25.0.0	52.0.0.	52.0.0	108.1.0

Source: NLW Gregynog Estate Rentals. Nb. Rentals recorded by parish and property until 1872. Subsequent ledgers for the years 1883 to 1893 are entitled 'Rents Received and paid to Bankers', and list only tenants and sums received without reference to the property.

APPENDIX II

Table 4: Gregynog Estate Rents and Arrears 1778 – 1870

In the Blayney period, of a total half-yearly rental of between £1,000 and £1,400, arrears varied from about £80 to two or three hundred pounds, to £456 at Michaelmas 1789, but dropped to £42 at Michaelmas 1796, the year after Arthur Blayney died. Half-yearly rents continued to total about £1,400 until 1804, when income and expenditure on Henry Tracy's Montgomeryshire estates were incorporated into the Gregynog estate ledgers, resulting in a half-yearly total of rents due of just over £2,500. Arrears amounted to a few hundreds until Michaelmas 1814 by which time the half-yearly rent due was £4,800, a portion of which related to newly aquired properties. In the following ten years both rents and arrears rose significantly: at Lady Day 1824 arrears amounted to over £13,000 on a total rental due of £5,217. In the following years arrears fell slowly, but even in the 1850s they amounted to over two thousand every half year.

BLAYNEY PERIOD (Records not clear before 1778)

Total properties	**Rent Due**	**Rent Due (Inc arrears b/f)**	**Received**	**Arrears c/f**
Lady Day 1778		1175-13-6		73-15-0
Lady Day 1780		1186-15-6		82-2-6
MIchmas 1780				286-1-8
Lady Day 1789				
Michmas 1789		1317-5-8		456-2-0
Total properties in 1790: 115				
Lady Day 1790	1332-15-8	1789-7-8	1455-1-6	334-6-2
Michmas 1790	1349-13-2	1683-19-4	1258-9-0	425-10-4
Lady Day 1791	1352-18-2	1778-8-6	1673-1-0	165-7-6
Michmas 1791	1354-5-0	1519-12-6	1287-13-6	231-19-0
Lady Day 1792	1354-5-0	1586-4-0	1402-14-0	183-10-0
Michmas 1792	1361-15-0	1547-5-0	1282-16-6	264-8-6
Lady Day 1793	1363-15-0	1628-3-6	1443-4-6	184-19-0
Michmas 1793	1363-15-0	1548-14-0	1291-8-6	257-5-6
Lady Day 1794	1363-17-0	1621-2-6	1425-1-0	196-1-6
Michmas 1794	1363-17-0	1559-18-6	1257-1-6	302-17-0
Lady Day 1795	1363-17-0	1666-14-0	1506-0-0	160-14-0
Michmas 1795	1366-16-6	1527-10-6	1312-19-6	214-11-0
Lady Day 1796	1366-16-6	1584-7-6	1418-6-0	163-1-6

Arrears increased in the late 1780s and 1790s but then dropped to very little from 1796 – the year after Arthur Blayney died and Gregynog was inherited by Henry Tracy.

From 1796 on a number of rent books overlap in the years they cover, and there are minor discrepancies, and missing years. Totals vary slightly every year as tenancies are changed, land increased or reduced, etc., with 'Retrospects' giving the details.

TRACY PERIOD

Total properties 1796: 116	**Rent Due**	**Total Due £ (Inc arrears b/f)**	**Received**	**Arrears c/f**
Michmas 1796	1415-11-6	1428-15-6	1386-14-6	42- 1- 0
Lady Day 1797	1415-11-6	1457-12-6	1391- 3- 6	66- 9- 0
Michmas 1797	1426-11-6	1493-0-6	1461-12-6	31- 8- 0

	Rent Due	Total Due £ (Inc arrears b/f)	Received	Arrears c/f
Lady Day 1798	1426-11-6	1457-19-6	1383-13-0	74- 6- 6
Michmas 1798	1437-6-6	1511-13-0	1306-7-0	205-6-0
Lady Day 1799	1453-16-6	1659-2-6	1588-2-0	71-0-6
Michmas 1799	1465-6-6	1534-17-0	1464-13-0	72-14-0
Lady Day 1800	1465-6-6	1538-0-6	1467-6-0	70-14-6
Michmas 1800	1488-6-6	1559-1-0	1479-6-0	79-15-0
Lady Day1801	1488-6-6	1568-1-6	1531-10-0	36-11-6
Michmas 1801	1501-10-0	1527-9-0	1428-3-0	99- 6- 0
Lady Day 1802	1501-10-0	1600-16-0	1577-11-6	23- 4- 6
Michmas 1802	1501-19-0	1525-3-6	1435-1-0	90-2-6
Lady Day 1803	1500-14-0	1591-11-6	1518-3-0	73-8-6
Michmas 1803	1550-4-6	1623-13-0	1482-2-6	141-10-6

In 1804 Henry Tracy's local estates, inherited by his daughter Henrietta and her husband Charles Hanbury-Tracy, were incorporated into the Gregynog estate rent books. Thomas Colley made a note on the half-year Abstract explaining the difference in receipts.[1067]

Total properties 1804: 154

Lady Day 1804	2574-17-9	2855- 1- 0	2641-4-6	243-16-6
Michmas 1804	2583-7-9	3193-2-3	2858-12	334-10-3
Lady Day 1805	2950-11-3	3285-16-6	3097-2-6	188-14-0
Michmas 1805	2980-6-3	3171-0-3	2934-6-9	236-13-6
Lady Day 1806	2980-6-3	3218-19-9	2990-19-3	228-0-6
Michmas 1806	3016-13-9	3242-14-3	2993-18-6	250-15-9
Lady Day 1807	3016-13-9	3267-9-6	3133-10-6	133-19-0
Michmas 1807	3126-16-9	3234-15-9	2927-12-6	307-3-3
Lady Day1808	3126-16-9	3434-0-0	3336-5-6	97-14-6
Michmas 1808	3571-13-9	3669-8-3	3358-14-6	310-13-9
Lady Day 1809 [page missing]				
Michmas 1809	3583-13-9	3662-5-3	3411-10-0	250-15-3
Lady Day 1810	3584-13-9	3838-9-0	3663-1-6	175-7-5
Increases to apply from Michaelmas 1810: £1253-5-6[1068]				
Michmas 1810	4836-19-3	5000-6-9	4680-9-0	319-17-9
Lady Day 1811	4836-19-3	5156-17-0	5078-2-6	78-14-6
Michmas 1811	4985-15-3	5064-9-9	4808-13-6	257-16-3

[1067] NLW Gregynog Estate Ledgers 6, Rents 1796-1808, f.125.

[1068] NLW Gregynog Estate Ledgers 8, Rents 1808-1820, f.53

Total properties 1812: 168	**Actual Rent Due £**	**Total Due £ Inc arrears b/f**	**Received**	**Arrears c/f**
Lady Day 1812	5004-4-3	5262-0-6	5130-0-6	124-0-0
Michmas 1812	5057-14-9	5181-14-9	4782-11-0	309-3-9
Lady Day 1813	5067-12-9	5373-16-6	5170-4-0	206-12-6
Michmas 1813	5074-15-9	5281-8-3	4919-8-0	362-0-3
Lady Day 1814	5075-16-9	5393-17-0	5059-5-0	334-13-0
Michmas 1814	5075-16-9	5410-18-9	4089-12-0	1320-16-9
Lady Day 1815	5075-16-9	6396-13-6	4436-1-6	1960-12-0
Michmas 1815	5076-6-9	7036-18-9	3569-8-0	3497-10-9
Lady Day 1816	5076-6-9	8573-17-6	3975-14-3	4598-3-3
Michmas 1816	5078-16-9	9677-0-0	3910-13-9	5766-6-3
Lady Day 1817	5078-16-9	10845-3-0	5210-10-8	5634-12-4
Michmas 1817	5078-16-9	10684-9-1	3819-13-3	6864-15-10
Lady Day 1818	5078-16-9	11993-12-7	6301-8-9	5632-3-10
Michmas 1818	5061-4-3	10693-8-1	4228-7-8	6465-0-4
Lady Day 1819	5061-4-3	11526-4-7	5513-9-11	6012-4-8
Michmas 1819	5061-5-3	11027-19-10	4094-10-4	6933-9-6
Lady Day 1820	5061-5-3	11994-14-9	4752-15-10	7241-18-11
Michmas 1820	5057-15-2	12246-4-2	4238-15-6	8007-8-8
Lady Day 1823	5216-4-9	18052-7-0	6025-0-6	12027-6-6
Michmas 1823	5217-18-9	17244-10-3	3620-13-0	13623-17-3
Lady Day 1824	5217-18-9	18841-16-0	6654-14-4½	12188-5-4½
Michmas 1824	5217-18-9	17406-4-7½	4828-16-6	12577-3.10½
Lady Day 1825	5217-18-9	17995-2-7½	8942-8-6½	8852-14-1
Michmas 1825	5205-3-9	13340-6-5½	4500-4-0½	8840-2-5
Lady Day 1830	5264-4-9	12764-16-8	4735-7-5	8029-9-3
Michmas 1830	5196-2-3	13174-15-0	3367-13-6	9807-1-6
Lady Day 1831	5196-2-3	15003-3-9	5153-11-0	9849-12-9
Michmas 1831	5199-19-9	15049-12-6	3727-10-6	11322-11-0
Lady Day 1832	5260-19-9	16411-17-6	6310-11-10¼	10101.5.7¾
Michmas 1832	5318-9-9	14927-0-10	3758-3-11	11168-6-11
Lady Day 1834	5313-19-9	17236-6-2	6186-0-1	11055-6-1
Michmas 1834	5316-9-9	16024-4-2	4051-14-6	11972-9-8
Lady Day 1836	5331-9-9	16760-9-11½	6016-14-10	10743- 15-1½
Michmas 1836	5352-19-9	16005-17-10½	5959-16-0	10046-1-10½

	Actual Rent Due £	Total Due £ Inc arrears b/f	Received	Arrears c/f
Lady Day 1837	5352-9-9	14810-0-8½	6105-13-10	8704-6-10½
Michmas 1837	5423-19-9	14127-6-7½	6514-18-2	7612-8-5½
Lady Day 1838 Illegible				
Michmas 1838	5500-16-3	12084-11-7	5172-8-5½	6912-3-1½
Lady Day 1839	5500-16-3	12001-16-1	7287-11-8½	4714-4-4½
Michmas 1839	5671-18-3	9837-15-5	5303-2-0	4534-13-5
Lady Day 1840	5671-3-3	9990-16-8	5722-18-6	4267-18-2
Michmas 1840	5643-13-3	9911-11-5	5081-12-0	4829-19-5
Lady Day 1850	5549-16-3	2797-1-1	5751-6-11½	2475-3-2½
Michmas 1850	5553-16-3	2675-3-2½	5969-15-4	2259-16-7½
Lady Day 1860	5929-12-8	7466-13-5	5982-15-10½	1782-17-6½
Michmas 1860	5972-14-9	7753-12-3½	5515-2-9½	2598-9-6
Lady Day 1870	6638-4-3	8553-4-6	6769-0-3	1422-4-3
Michmas 1870	6648-19-3	8071-3-6	6449-10-1	1621-13-5

APPENDIX II

Table 5 Expenditure on the Gregynog Estate 1878-1888

Abstracted from Scott Owen, History of the Gregynog Estate, 1888-1892, pp.130-140.[1069]

	PROPERTIES	ACREAGE	EXPENDITURE
DRAINING 1887-1888	82	1583-3-36	£ 13,616-0-11
NEW BUILDINGS AND PERMANENT IMPROVEMENTS under the terms of the Lands Improvement Co. Act (Exclusive of Draining) 1878-1888	86		£ 28,835-15-3
IMPROVEMENTS TO FARMS &c ON THE GREGYNOG ESTATE under the terms of the Settled Land Act 1882 (Exclusive of Draining)	63		£ 3,880-14-7
	TOTAL		£ 46,332-10-9
AMOUNTS EXPENDED IN REPAIRS to Farm and other Buildings, Fencing, Gates and Improving Farms, *other* than that expended under the terms of the Lands Improvement Act or the Settled Land Act, 1882. From April 1877 to December 1888	185 plus repairs, labour costs etc at Gregynog Hall		£ 45,959-16-4
	TOTAL		£ 92,292- 7- 1
p. 141 GREGYNOG ESTATE Planting done 1882-1888		150-1-6	£ 1423-2-7

p.142 Number and Sizes of Different Farms on the Estate 1889

Cottages with Gardens Only	34 (not included in Farms)
Holdings under 3 acres	7
" above 3 acres and under 20 acres	60
" above 20 acres and under 50 acres	18
" above 50 acres and under 100 acres	30
" above 100 acres and under 150 acres	22
" above 150 acres and under 200 acres	14
" above 200 acres and under 300 acres	15
" above 300 acres to 500 acres and avove	14
Total	214

[1069] Typescript held at Gregynog.

APPENDIX II

Table 6: Rent abatements on the Gregynog Estate 1888-1892

Extracted from William Scott Owen's *Commonplace Book*

1888 April Rent days on 4th, 5th, 6th; owing to very low price of Stock and Corn 20% was returned.

1888 Oct Rent Days – Cattle up in price – 10% returned.

1889 April 3,4,5 Rent Days. Charlie Tracy [son and heir of Lord Sudeley] came to the dinner at Tregynon and made his first speech to the tenants. 5% returned.

1889 Sept 24 Newtown Sept Fair – store cattle sold remarkably well – strong cattle not quite so well. Sheep up 5 to 7s a head. Good demand. Horses and ponies sold well.

1889 Oct 10 Rent days at Tregynon 8th Newtown 9th Caersws 10th Tenants paid up very well & no grumbling although no return was made, this is the first time for several years that no percentage has been given back – store cattle sell well but much higher in proportion to Fatstock The same applies to sheep. Took £5470.

1889 Dec The year: The seasons have been prosperous all stock have risen. [In] March 1888 2 yr old cattle [were sold] at £4 to 6, in 1889 £9 to 11. Sheep up to £5 to 8 per head. Crops & roots good. Horses sold well.

1890 April 9, 10, 11. Rent days. The tenants paid well.

1890 Oct 8, 9, 10 Rent days. Tenants paid well.

1891 Feb: Fair: stock down £1 to 30/- per head.

1891 March Fair: Stock down to £2 per head – fodder scarce.

1891 April Rent days: 10% given back partly on a/c of price of stock & partly on a/c of Mr Charles Tracy's Coming of Age.

1891 Oct 7 Rent days, 10% given back.

1892 April 5th, 6th, 7th (rent days) 10% given back. Tenants paid up well.

1892 Sept Sept Lord Sudeley went to see all his tenants at their farms.
Sheep down in price 25 to 35% Cattle down in price 30%

1892 Oct 20 Rent days: 20% given back.

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Gregynog Estate Sales catalogue 1913,
Glanservern sale cat LOCATE WHEN NEXT AT GREGYNOG!!
Toddington sale cat.
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