

YR EFAIL.

Yr Efail is one of the oldest houses in Esgairgeiliog, certainly seventeenth century, possibly older. The left hand end was the original, very small cottage. Later, an outbuilding, possibly a cowshed was added and after that, a low, single story blacksmiths forge was tacked on to the end.

At some time, we think in the nineteenth century, the cowshed was converted to human living quarters. The wall between it and the smithy was taken out and rebuilt entirely, with the addition of two chimney flues and fireplaces, one upstairs and one downstairs. After 150 years, that wall is still freestanding with no foundations whatsoever and nothing tying it to it's neighbouring walls, front and back. The smithy, also, has been extended a couple of times, only upwards. The last time, at about the beginning of the twentieth century, was when the whole length of the building was raised to a single roof level, giving eight foot high ceilings throughout the upper floor, a common standard at that time.

In the picture, left, taken about 1928, the smithy chimney is still in evidence and believed to be still in use, although not as a forge. It was



Yr Efail, 1928. Picture by D S George.

taken down when further alterations were made after the second world war. The large potato patch to the right of the house was a common sight in most gardens then, as were the hens in the back garden, (clearer in the original picture). The trees behind the house were cut down in the war and taken to a sawmill in Pennal. The lorry drivers name was Emlyn, Surname not known.

In the 1840's, Evan and Ann Davies lived here with their 5 year old son, Evan. Mr Davies was a blacksmith and he employed 2 apprentices, Evan



Yr Efail, 1990.

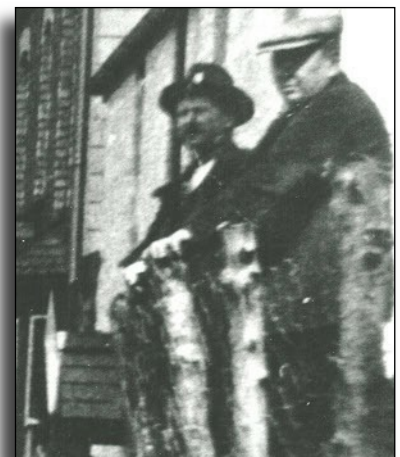
Picture by Ray Gunn.

Jones and Peter Peters. As there were Peters living in Blaenglesyrch at that time, it is quite possible that Peter was from there. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Evan Rowlands was born here. Although Evan died in the early 1990's, his widow, Mion still lives in Corris at the time of writing.



Yr Efail, 1998.

Picture by Ray Gunn..

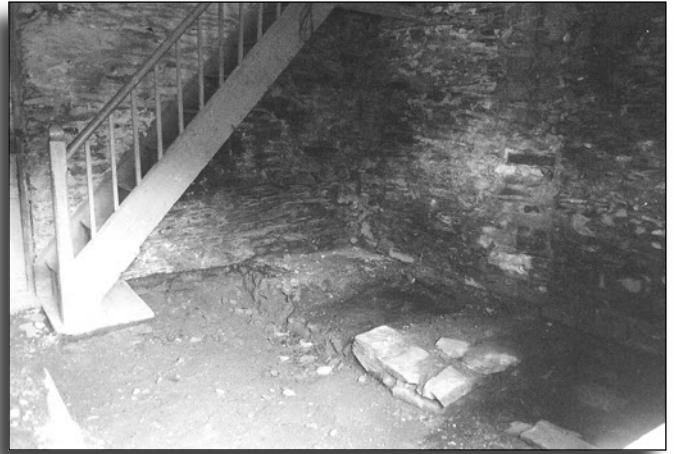


Picture by D S George.

Between the wars, Mr and Mrs Jarvis and their family came to live in Yr Efail, or Awelon as it was then known. Mr Jarvis traveled to Corris every day where he ran a bakery. He is pictured above, on the left in the front garden with his friend Mr Lloyd, right. In 1940, when the Jarvis's moved to Corris, Joseph Jones and his wife got married and moved into Awelon. Joe, as he was known, worked as a carpenter on the railway and used his skills to good effect, doing a lot of repairs and improvements to the house.

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In 1990, Ray and Julia Gunn bought the property, moving from their home in 2 Era Terrace, Esgairgeiliog. They changed the name from Awelon to Yr Efail as a reminder to people of its history. During renovations to the old forge, Ray discovered the foundations and even the ash pit of the forge under the floor, see picture, right. The ashes and cinders of the last fire were still in the ash pit and amongst them were several artifacts that the blacksmith had thrown under the fire in the last days of its use as a forge. They included a horse shoe, a couple of gate latches and some large hand made nails, see picture below. The original floor of the forge had been



Remains of the old forge, Yr Efail, 1990. Picture by Ray Gunn.



Found in the old forge, Yr Efail, 1990. Picture by Ray Gunn.

Ray and Julia undertook all the renovations and building work at Yr Efail entirely by themselves. Because of a serious dry rot problem, this involved digging up all of the floors downstairs and some of the floors upstairs. Stripping all the plaster off the walls and replacing all the old wooden lintels over all the doors and windows with new concrete lintels. When everything remaining had been thoroughly injected and sprayed to the surveyors satisfaction, it was time to start rebuilding again. If the house had been left another year it would have been almost beyond repair. After relaying the floors

of simple bare beaten earth, undulating unevenly where the most wear had occurred. The coal had been stored in the corner to the left of the fire place under the bellows. The pulleys from which the bellows hung are still there today, under the ceiling.

Julia's grandmother, Margaret Rowlands, who lived most of her life in the village from the 1920's to the 1990's, said the forge used to be a meeting place for the men of the village, where they would play cards, discuss the events of the day and even the odd tooth would be pulled out. All by the warmth of the fire.



Inside Yr Efail, 1990.

Picture by Ray Gunn.



Traffic passing Yr Efail, 2000.

Picture by Ray Gunn.

and the slate slabs, came the plastering, the plumbing, the wiring and some carpentry. Every door frame and door had to be made to measure, because no two openings were the same height or width.

As soon as the inside was habitable, the outside rendering needed stripping off and the walls re pointing and the chimneys repairing. We considered it all well worth while however, as the house has now been saved for a few more generations to enjoy. Once the house was finished we turned our attention to the garden and can now enjoy the fruits of our labours for a few years, hopefully.

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Ray Gunn working on Yr Efail 1995.

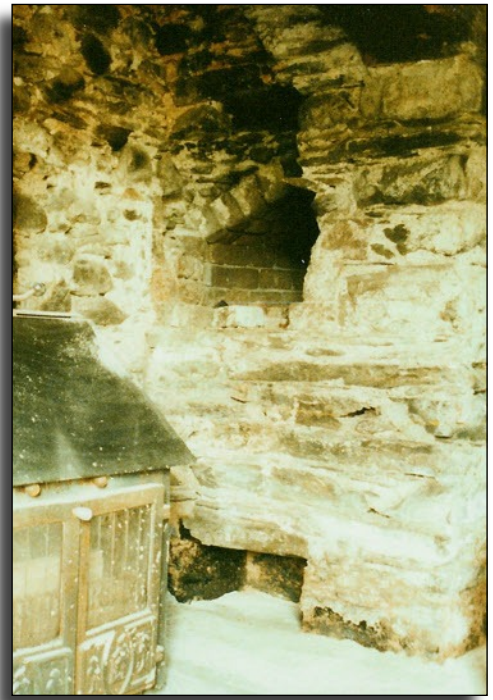
Picture by Julia Gunn.

Ray Gunn, re pointing the end of the old forge at Yr Efail. The lines of the previous roof levels can be clearly seen, along with the original chimney rising up through the middle.



The inglenook fireplace, Yr Efail 1998.

Picture by Ray Gunn.



The oven and ashpit 1990. Picture by Ray Gunn.

Above left, the inglenook fireplace in Yr Efail. The picture on the right shows the old bread oven and its ash pit underneath, now closed up. When in use, a fire would be lit in the oven. When hot enough, the embers were raked out and thrown into the pit beneath. The food to be cooked was then put in the oven and the door closed, the heat from the bricks would be enough to cook the food. While digging out the old floor, we found several old cooked small bones in the bottom of the ash pit, with a few ashes.

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Yr Efail, 2002.

Picture by Julia Gunn.

Above, Yr Efail as it looked in 2002. The front porch is, sadly, one of the very few examples left of Joe Jones's craftsmanship in the house. After fifty years, that too is now beginning to deteriorate with the effects of the weather. The ornate fence that ran along the front had to go some years ago, as it was beyond repair.

The authors, pictured right, are very happy now in Esgairgeiliog, where Julia's family have lived since at least the seventeenth century. Ray, pictured below, has been a postman in Machynlleth for nearly twenty years and Julia, below right, has worked at the local Co-Op. For eleven years. Both their children and all their grandchildren also live in the village.



Julia & Ray Gunn, 2000.

Picture, authors collection.



Postman, Ray Gunn, with grandson, Curtis Gunn.

Picture by Julia Gunn.



Julia Gunn, right, with Co-Op colleagues, right to left, Dianne Eccles, Gail Galloway and Andrew Wilson..

Picture by Ray Gunn.

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Margaret Rowlands, Pregnant with Kenneth, in 1928, overlooked by Mr Jarvis and Mr Lloyd.

Picture by D S George.

Young Margaret Rowlands was on her way back from taking her husband Tom his lunch at Rhiwgreiddyn quarry, where he worked, when the photographer, Donald George asked her to stop for a minute while he took a photograph. He later gave her a copy, which she kept for nearly seventy years, until she died.



Sharon Jones, pregnant with Cameron Jones.

Picture by Ray Gunn.

Exactly seventy years later, Margaret Rowlands' great grand daughter, Sharon Jones, was photographed in the same spot, while pregnant with her son Cameron Jones. Sharon also lives in the village.