

# ADNABOD KNOWING ARDUDWY

Summer 2009



Two pupils from Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudraeth receiving their Council for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) award from Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas.

Photo: Nigel Hughes



## Achievements?

**Talks and lectures** - 37 (audience total numbers, 1038+)

**Workshops** - 13

**Conferences** - 2 (and one to follow)

**Guided walks** - 12 (and two to follow)

**Visits** - 14

**Supporting other establishments** and promoting Adnabod Ardudwy and the Society - 9

**Groups collecting field names** - 4

**Schools** - Visits to the Archives at Dolgellau 3; classroom work 3; field visits 5

**Broadcasting** - television and radio programmes - 8

**Articles** for journals - 9

**Rural Wales Award 2009 presentation**

**Adnabod Ardudwy website**

**Newsletter** - 2

## Ardudwy Project – a matter of pride and challenge for the future

AS THE KNOWING ARDUDWY project comes to an end the time is right for us to appreciate all that has been achieved and to see how the experience gained could have a permanent effect, not only in Ardudwy, but also throughout Meirionnydd, if we grasp the opportunity which this initiative has given us. This places a responsibility on the Merioneth Historical and Record Society, under whose auspices the project came about, to ensure that it makes the most of what has been achieved. One person, Dr

Rhian Parry, deserves praise for the original idea and for the vision and determination to ensure that the original objective was achieved in a manner for which the society must be grateful.

Instrumental to the success of the project was the manner in which the interest of people living in Ardudwy's communities was nurtured in their own heritage in various ways. The study of place names was the origin of Dr Parry's academic stimulus and those names became a matter of interest for many

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more. Names also led in turn to their historical connections and history and archaeology became intertwined into a rich cultural pattern.

And these features do not only belong to a long lost past because names, and those places in Arddudwy associated with them, are part of our present rich environment, which can be recognised by walking in the area. The CPRW award that was given to the project in the remarkable ceremony at Harlech was an acknowledgement of the way in which the project firmly tied together the historical interests with those of the environment.

The Adnabod Arddudwy project came about as a result of Heritage Lottery Funding. We cannot expect that support to continue, but enough has been achieved in Arddudwy to encourage us to extend these activities to other parts of Meirionnydd, and to support this in any way we can. It is the duty of the Historical Society to nurture such activities.

For we have a rich heritage in Penllyn and Edeirion, Tal-y-bont and Ystumanner and in these communities there are groups of men and women who are aware of what surrounds them and who have the instinct to seek out history and appreciate it. Family and home, mountain and path, church and chapel: each is a starting point for an adventure of discovery and appreciation. Let us nurture a new confidence and on the basis of the Arddudwy project go ahead to pioneer new ways of working and thus give the society added strength to ensure that she plays her part in enriching our present by drawing more and more on the valuable treasures of our past. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who have contributed so generously to the success of the Arddudwy initiative and this debt places upon us a duty to work anew.

**Professor J. Beverley Smith**  
President, Merioneth Historical and Record Society.

# CPRW Awards

A NOTABLE AWARD ceremony was held at Theatr Harlech on 29 April under the auspices of the Merioneth branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) to recognise the significance of the Adnabod Arddudwy project. Awards were made to Dr Rhian Parry, the project leader for her academic research into the significance of farm and field names in Arddudwy. The role of the Project Management Committee was also recognised- 'for their commitment to raising awareness of the rich archaeological, historical and cultural heritage of Arddudwy and for their innovative website making historical Arddudwy accessible world wide.' Awards were also given to the pupils of four primary schools, Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudreath; Ysgol Llanbedr; Ysgol Tanycastell, Harlech and Ysgol Dyffryn Arddudwy for their contribution to the success of the project.



Dr Rhian Parry receiving her CPRW award from Professor Gwyn Thomas.

The guests at the ceremony were Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas and Professor Gwyn Thomas. Sue Townsend, Chair CPRW Merioneth, said "The Knowing/Adnabod Arddudwy project plays a vitally important part in developing a 'Sense of Place' by raising our communities' awareness of the rich cultural and historical importance of our ancient field and farm names."



Members of Adnabod Arddudwy's Management Committee and representatives of Partners in the project at the CPRW award ceremony.



Sue Townsend (left) Chair CPRW Merioneth and other guests at the award ceremony.

Photos: Nigel Hughes

# Frontiers and Boundaries c. 1500-1850

A SMALL GROUP met at Plas Tanybwllch on 27 April to learn more about the Enclosure of Common Lands in Arduwy. The workshop was led by Dr Colin Thomas who has specialised in the economic geography of Merioneth. He elucidated this important and wide ranging topic and showed us how Enclosures changed the landscape of Arduwy, and indeed of most of Wales, between 1500 and 1850. The movement had a devastating effect on the rural population.

We learned about the early Enclosure, or possibly encroachment, of the monastic lands of Cymer Abbey following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the Tudor period and the affluent professional class of lawyers that grew with the inevitable disputes that followed. But in general the Enclosures at this period can be regarded as beneficial, since enclosed or fenced fields are vital for the successful breeding of cattle. The consequent growth of the livestock trade and the driving of cattle to the markets of England brought wealth to rural Wales. It was during this period that farms grew into large estates. A series of documents known as Crown Rentals have survived and they contain valuable information about Arduwy from 1623 onwards. In them one can find the names of the parishes and

the names of the owners of the allotments and their rents.

But Dr Thomas concentrated mainly on the period between 1760 and the Enclosure Act of 1845 when nearly 4,000 Enclosure Acts were passed regarding Wales and England. Much useful information can be gleaned from the relevant documents which have survived. He elaborated on the political and economic background of the period particularly the troublesome years of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe at the end of the 18th century and the marine blockade which forced Britain to produce more food. This was the period of the Industrial Revolution with its internal migration and the increasing demands upon the land to feed the growing population in the towns.

The aim of the Enclosures was to change and improve open pastureland into arable fields. Even the uplands were enclosed into allotments and the straight walls climbing directly up quite steep hills are a familiar feature of the Welsh landscape today. This created short term employment but in reality it was a waste of human effort since the climate and soil of these high pastures would never be conducive to growing crops.

If a whole village or parish was owned by a single landowner he would be able to enclose common land by a Private Act with minimal parliamentary procedure.



Dr Colin Thomas

Otherwise a group of landowners would get together and agree to transform the landscape and the structure of rural life. Although this was a longer process it was not difficult to pass such Acts because quite simply the upper classes ruled the country.

Very few individual small farmers benefited from the Enclosures; it was basically an excuse for rapacious landowners to accumulate vast estates. The labourer on the other hand lost his ancient rights to graze his animals, gather firewood or build his croft on common land. With the end of the Napoleonic Wars Britain began to import food from the New World and there was less demand for grain. Within 30 years the huge estates of North Wales were bankrupt and many were lacking in heirs. Their wealth declined.

Dr Thomas discussed the development of mapping and the importance of the detailed work carried out by surveyors, many of whom are anonymous. Their maps

can give us important information about our parishes, villages and field names. By comparing the detailed estate maps of 1790 with the Tithe maps of the same area in 1840 it can be clearly seen that there had been no improvement in the quality of the land over a period of 50 years.

We were lucky to have ideal weather for our afternoon field visit to the Corsygedol and Moelfre area to see the effects of Enclosure and to look at the remains of two small farms – Bryn y Bel and Gors Uchaf. Then we paid a brief visit to Ystumgwern to observe the way the land had been gradually reclaimed and improved. This land originally belonged to the Welsh Princes but Edward 1 dismantled the princes' hall and re-built it within the walls of Harlech Castle. It was interesting to note how the changes in land use were reflected in the fieldnames which are still in use today.

An important aspect of all the workshops that have been held under the auspices of the project, is to give us information about the sources that are available to us all in our County Archives and in The National Library of Wales. With the help of these documents we can research in more detail and gain a better understanding of the story of our own locality.

**Nan Griffiths**



Dr Colin Thomas addressing some members of the group near Ystumgwern



Evidence of enclosure on the slopes of Moelfre above Corsygedol

## Recording the ruins



Elfed Lewis

ELFED LEWIS WAS born in Talysarn and retired from a demanding and responsible post in Rossendale to Talybont, the home village of his wife Olwen. His main delight is walking his local parish footpaths and sketching ruined buildings. 'I enjoy working with a very fine pen so that I can replicate the detail of every stone and slate,' he explains. Elfed has also drafted a booklet which includes a number of guided, local walks which pass by the ruins he

has drawn. Here are a few examples of Elfed's meticulous work. Elfed's art work is extremely valuable as he recorded the state of these ruined buildings in 1996-97. Since then several have deteriorated further and others have been renovated and are substantially changed. 'My friend and bard, the late Ieuan Jones composed a poem in praise of Ardudwy. Its reference to our old ruined cottages inspired me to record them'.

"I enjoy working with a very fine pen so that I can replicate the detail of every stone and slate."



### Pant Corlan yr Wyn

Pant Corlan yr Wyn [literally: The hollow of the lamb fold]

This ruin stands on a slope of mountain land above Egryn and Hendre Eirian close to the ancient track way from Corsygedol to Bwlch y Rhiwgyr. 'The local tradition is

that a woman of high birth was murdered just below the nearby Bwlch y Rhiwgyr in the 14th century. A white rock known locally as Ladi Wen [the white lady] marks the approximate site of the murder and two nearby sheep folds are said to mark

the place where a baby was murdered at about the same time. It's said that Sion Dafydd Las (John Davies, c 1665-95) from Llanuwchllyn, the family bard at Nannau composed the tune Pant Corlan yr Wyn and renamed it to commemorate the event.'



## Capel Ty'n Drain

[literally: The chapel at Briar Cottage]

This chapel is located behind the cowshed at Tyddyn y Lliidiart. The oldest inhabitants in the area remember this chapel as a sacred site and Olwen remembers her mother's accounts of going there to an eisteddfod. 'The chimney leads to a pot and the fireplace was in the middle of the floor'. Unfortunately, the chapel members did not own the land and had to close the chapel because the rent was too high.

## The ruin at Llyn Dulun

A ruined building stands near the lake side. It was possibly a shelter for a shepherd at one time. In the lake is a small island known locally as Yr Allor Goch [The Red Altar]. It is said the weather here will change very quickly and turn to rain if water is cast on this rock', says Elfed.



## Finding field names on the website

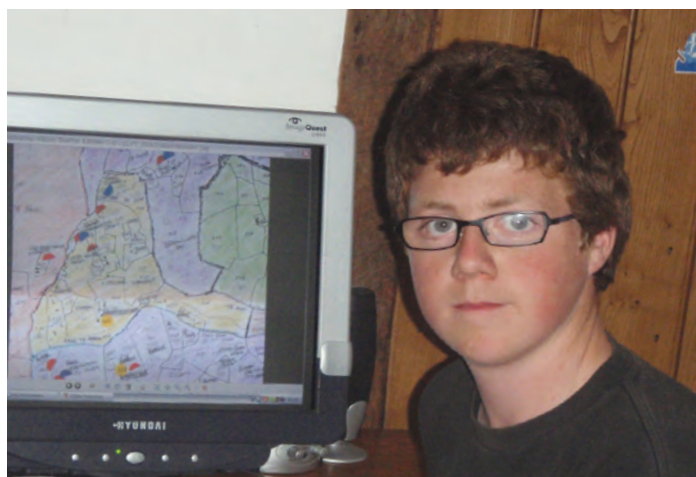
GORWEL HUGHES OF

Aberdeunant farm, Llandecwyn is a student at Coleg Llysfasi. 'I was surfing the web after 'Googling' 'field names' when I came across Adnabod Ardudwy. I was thrilled to see the 1840 Tithe maps of our parish, Llandecwyn and more so to see our farm with the names of all our fields.'

The family has lived here for some twenty years and although Gorwel's mother has family connections with another local farm, Tyn y ffrwd, there was no such connection with Aberdeunant. Consequently, the family were not aware of the field names. They are delighted with names such as 'Werglodd y nant (the meadow of the stream), 'Buarth bach' (small yard), Llain las (the

green quillet), 'Cae Tŷ Ucha' (The upper house field) and especially, 'Dalar Catherine Lloyd' (Catherine Lloyd's headland). Gorwel is keen to learn more about the land and hopes to search for the foundations of ancient cottages and yards which are not obvious today but can be seen on the Tithe maps.

Gorwel tells how the late Wil Williams, Caerwych had told them the names of two such cottages, Glan Hofer and Blaen y ddol. 'Had he not told us this, both names would have been lost.' The first was the home of Dorti, one who is remembered in the area through folk tales. Gorwel intends to find local tales about Aberdeunant and the area. 'I can see on the



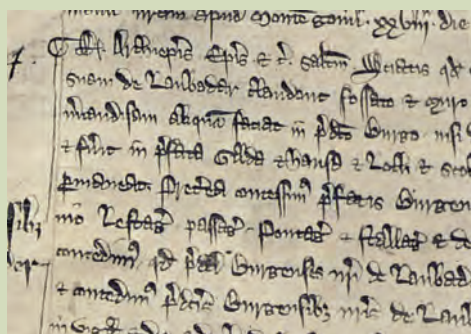
Gorwel Hughes

website that some fields have undergone change, some have been merged into a large field. There is also the faint outline of an old track, piles of stones and an increased number of trees. I am going to walk the land and compare what I see with the evidence of the Tithe maps and aerial photographs'. Here is a young man who delights in the history of his land and one who hopes to find work in his neighbourhood.

*[We hope to give Gorwel and others an opportunity to contribute information to the parish files on the Adnabod Ardudwy website. Then everyone can learn more about this very special parish. Keep your eyes on the website and should anyone be able to add stories about Dorti, let us know - Editor]*

## Reading Old Documents

A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL and popular workshop was held at Merioneth Archives on 4 March 2009 under the tutorship of Dr Susan Davies, Aberystwyth University.



An example of late 13thC handwriting as used in charters.

Dr Davies is a noted medieval historian and archivist and her subject was 'Reading Old Documents'. Everyone involved in community and family history know that unique information is often only to be found in old documents and in unfamiliar handwriting. Dr Davies gave detailed guidance on how to read various 'hands' ( Court, Secretary, Italic) used at various historical times and emphasised the importance of mastering the skill of interpreting abbreviations used in old documents.



Dr Susan Davies

Pupils of Ysgol  
Cefn Coch at  
Abergafran



## A Teacher's Experience

IT'S OVER TWO years since we started the Adnabod Ardudwy project here at Ysgol Cefn Coch. As part of our History curriculum, pupils in year 5 were studying local history and so we decided to concentrate our efforts in this class.

As a teacher who lives outside the area where I teach, the thought of starting on this work was quite scary, especially because of my lack of background knowledge about the history and geography of the area. Thanks to the humanities co-ordinator Mrs Marnel Edwards and visits from Rhian and Dilwyn from the Archives, I was able to set about the work with an interesting and relevant

context in which to work. Pupils would discover how people travelled across the Traeth Bach and the Traeth Mawr before the Briwet Bridge and the Cob were built.

After careful planning and selecting documents which I felt were appropriate to the children I decided that the only approach to take was to learn with the children and that we would network in the real sense of the word! The children and I shared wonderful experiences, mainly through enjoying the field work and the visits which brought to life the maps, old photographs and the research we undertook in the classroom. The visit we made to the home

of Mrs Nan Griffiths at Rhos, Minffordd was a very special occasion. We were warmly welcomed and heard stories and folk tales about armies and criminals crossing and drowning when crossing the dangerous sands. The opportunity to walk the paths marked on the maps brought the history alive to the children and they were able to sense how it might have been at different periods of history.

The childrens' enthusiasm indicated their enjoyment of the project as they collected evidence for themselves through stories from family members and photographs and through a fascinating visit to the archives.

**Esyllt Iorwerth**

### School pupils tell it as it was

FOLLOWING THEIR VISIT to Llanfihangel-y-traethau and to the ancient inn of Rhos in Minffordd, pupils of Cefn Coch Primary school wrote letters of thanks to Mrs Nan Griffiths. As a result of these visits and a walk to Abergafran, the starting point of the old path across the sands of the Traeth Bach to the parish church at Llanfihangel-y-traethau, the history of the area became more alive to pupils. Here are just some of their comments.

'Thank you very much for your warm welcome on Tuesday. We felt as if we were at home! Thanks for the biscuits. Your stories were very interesting. We all enjoyed ourselves very much. We would like to visit you again sometime. It was a pity that there was no time for the ghost stories. Some of us felt very strange sitting on the very same settle where Hwntw Mawr was chained! Our visit made the story very vivid.'

'The stories were very exciting and our group now has a better idea of how people crossed the Traeth Mawr and the Traeth Bach before the Briwet Bridge and the Cob were built. We are hard at work on the Adnabod Ardudwy project and have just been to the Archives at Dolgellau. We are enjoying finding out more about the history of our area.'



## Searching for the Well of Life

THE LATE IEUAN JONES, of Stabl Mail would be very pleased to know that loyal supporters of Adnabod Ardudwy had searched for and found the ancient well on the side of the Uwch Artro Bronze Age track in Cwm Moch. He recognised its importance to the shepherds of his childhood, to the drovers and the early traders of bronze artifacts from Ireland through Ardudwy. He did not know its name but remembered its cold sweet water clearly.

Although the name has been lost in the local memory, a casual reference to the well recorded in the papers of the local historian, Morris Davies (Moi Plas), Trawsfynydd gives its name as Ffynnon Bywyd [The Well of Life].

One fine day at the end of May, a guided walk was arranged for local residents from Nant Pascan, Llandecwyn to Cwm Moch. Several ruined buildings and stone features were recorded and good use was made of the Tithe maps and data provided by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

The track from Nant Pascan

crosses the stream described by Edward Lhwyd as starting under Moel Dinas and entering the sea as the river Glyn. A number of substantial slabs were used to create small bridges on its journey. They attest to the skill and artistry of local craftsmen.

A photograph of one such bridge is found on the home page of our website. After crossing this and starting up the track in Cwm Moch the well will be found on the left. Bob Tibbett spotted it and we investigated it carefully, despite its overgrown condition.

It's about a foot square and about as deep as one's elbow. Gradually, we found its level, stone surround and its bed of fine gravel. The task of clearing out the moss was shared because the water was unbearably cold. We left the well to clear itself.

It's not surprising that it was difficult to find. It is unobtrusive when moss is left uncontrolled and the well was neglected. Few of today's travellers take advantage of its invigorating and restorative waters.



Resting during the walk from Nant Pascan to Cwm Moch



Successfully locating the well!



Teresa Ross interviewing Mrs Gwen Richards (100 years old), Lleiniau, Harlech with Tom Mort operating the camera.

## Recording Spoken History

FOR SOME TIME the Harlech History Society has been involved in recording the reminiscences of some of the area's elderly people and, therefore, safeguarding invaluable local information from being lost forever. These interviews are recorded on film and in sound thus adding a valuable visual dimension

to the finished product. Ultimately it is hoped to edit and transcribe the recordings and also publish some of them.

Through this project a great deal of valuable local information has been safeguarded such as reminiscences about large concerts held in the castle, the

# Llandyrnog History Society

THE LLANDYRNOG HISTORY Society is active in the parishes of Llandyrnog and Llangwyfan, Denbighshire and has already published Memorial Inscriptions for both the parish churches. They have also published two volumes of Parish Registers relating to Llandyrnog and a volume of old photographs, *Trem yn ôl* (Looking backwards).

The society's next project will be to record field names in the area following a visit to the Society by Dr Rhian Parry who outlined the significance of the Adnabod Ardudwy initiative. In



the photograph members of the society can be seen researching

field names as recorded in Tithe Maps and Schedules, 1839-41.

## Tregwylan Group

A YEAR AGO a few of us walked along the depression named 'Nant' to the west of Llanfihangel-y-traethau church. With us was the archaeologist Andrew Davidson from the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. His view was that the channel was not man made, though some use might have been made of it by man. It remained a mystery.

At Andrew's suggestion, we sought the views of a geologist. Haf Meredydd, one of the supporters of the project suggested that we consult with Dr Dyfed Elis-Gruffydd. His research was in glacial geomorphology. His first reaction is that the channel is a natural land form, one which was created most probably by the the erosive action of a sub-terranean glacial river, one that flowed to the south during the last Ice Age. There is more, so keep an eye on the website in the autumn to find the outcome.

## Adnabod Ardudwy—the future?

ALTHOUGH FUNDING FOR the project comes to an end in September this year we hope that a lot of the work will continue. Individuals and groups are busy recording field names in Llanfrothen, Llanelltyd, Ffestiniog, Maentwrog and Nanmor and this is extremely important work. We will also continue to give illustrated talks on the importance of farm and field names and how we learn a great deal of history from them. Numerous invitations have arrived for 2010 from societies across Wales and beyond and we hope to contribute to radio and television programmes to promote interest in the subject and we will also share our experiences with this project with others

who seek funding to do similar work.

The Adnabod Ardudwy website will still continue and plans are afoot to make it more interactive. It will be updated and can be used to collect and share local knowledge, parish by parish. We know that a wealth of information, in the form of photographs, documents and oral evidence relating to ruined buildings, local characters and place names in Ardudwy still need to be located and recorded as the Talsarnau blacksmith's story illustrates.

For developments in the future please contact Rhian and Barry through the website and encourage others to do the same. The website belongs to us all, therefore, make good use of it!

various hiring fairs in the area as well as details of the everyday life of individuals in various occupations. Some of the interviews relate to events as far back as the First World War and depict a society that has long since vanished.

The work is being done entirely voluntarily by members of the Harlech History Society who use their own equipment and

resources since no financial support has been given to date. Our hope, however, is that we will secure financial support, from somewhere, so that the invaluable experiences of previous generations will be recorded and safeguarded for posterity.

**Tre Eddy  
Chairman, Harlech  
History Society**

Members of Harlech Historical Society on a guided walk in the area.



# The Account Book of a Talsarnau Blacksmith

THIS ACCOUNT BOOK was brought to a workshop for local people at the Tregwylan Hotel, Talsarnau earlier this year by Mrs Hefina Shah, Glyn Garth, Anglesey. Hefina says 'I'm really pleased that this book has survived and that my grandfather's accounts tell us something about this stage of his life and also gives a picture of the area.'

It is the account book of Griffith Roberts and is arranged by farm names and covers the period between 1894 and 1904. Griffith was born on 14 November 1859, the second of six children of Griffith and Elin Roberts, Tŷ Eiddew, Pwllheli. He is described as a blacksmith at Pwllheli in the Census of 1881. He seems to have moved to Talsarnau soon afterwards and by 1891 he is described as a 'master blacksmith'. He was evidently a religious and happy man. He and his wife Elen had eleven children and some of them also

became blacksmiths. Griffith died in 1939 and was buried in Soar cemetery.

Griffith maintained two smithies, one near the bottom of Eisingrug valley and the second, held by his son, John David, near Talsarnau station. The latter attracted many local people in the evenings at a time when few teetotalers wanted to frequent the Ship Aground Inn.

Griffith offered services to farmers and other residents in the neighbourhood in 1894. Some 59 farms are named, including Llechwedd Du Mawr and Erw Wen, in the parish of Llandanwg. His annual income for 1894 amounted to £184. 7s 5d, which was a substantial sum at the time. This account book is numbered 14 and it would be wonderful to track down earlier volumes.

The accounts are written in his neat hand, with entries reflecting the pure spoken local language. He mutates correctly,



Mrs Hefina Shah with her grandfather's account book

as he must have spoken, eg 2 Bedol (horseshoe) and 4 Pedol. The letter 'd' is sometimes given a final swirl to indicate 'dd' as in byda for bydda (churn) and pladur ryd for pladur rydd (loose scythe). He names the swch (ploughshare) and other current agricultural terms and lists which farms were to be charged, in this case, Fuches Wen.

This versatile blacksmith makes new implements and repairs others. He mends the cwlldwr (coultter) for 2s 6d and

makes a new saucepan handle at 8d for Cefngwyn farm. Although his work pattern follows the seasons, he is busy throughout the year. Making and fitting horse shoes is a regular task. One man's account (Edward Hughes) lists making and fitting a (cylch) wheel rim for a wheelbarrow for 2s 8d in April 1894 and again in May and making a new (pentan) wheelbarrow side for 6d. In July he repairs a wheelbarrow for 6s and repairs it again in August and September. If this is the same wheelbarrow then Edward Hughes must have been extremely busy!

There is insufficient room here to say more about this account book but a longer article is in preparation. Our thanks to Hefina for bringing the book to our attention and to her niece, Fiona, for supplying some family details. How about searching for the earlier books, ladies?

**Rhian Parry**



The Smithy and Woollen Mill near the bottom of Eisingrug c.1900



Griffith Roberts (1859-1939)

This newsletter has been published by the Adnabod Ardudwy Management Committee.

**Editor:** Rheinalt Llwyd.

**Photos:** Rhian Parry. (except where noted)

**Designer:** Elgan Griffiths.

Remember also the events organised by the Merioneth Historical and Record Society. If you have enjoyed this newsletter why not join the Historical Society? Contact the Secretary at Archifdy Meirionnydd, Ffordd y Bala, Dolgellau, Gwynedd LL40 2YF (01341 424682). Full details are also available on the Adnabod Ardudwy website