



Farmer Bernard Llewellyn with Castell Carreg Cennen in the background.

Picture: Adrian White

Family wanted to buy a farm –but ended up with a castle!

BUYING a property can be an arduous task.

The money, the hassle and the paperwork can all make you question whether it's worth going ahead. But sometimes, things can work out in your favour.

This is particularly true for one Welsh family who wanted to buy a simple farm and ended up owning one of the best and most well-loved castles in the country – by accident.

Gwllim Morris and his family were tenants on a farm on the outskirts of Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire in 1963.

They rented the land from Lord Cawdor and were perfectly happy with the arrangement until an opportunity arose to purchase the land.

Wanting to secure a prosperous future for their family, Gwllim and his wife Molly took the plunge and bought the farm. There seemed nothing particularly remarkable about it. It had land, cattle and other animals, and would provide a strong and stable home for the Morris family.

What was remarkable was what lay next door. For up the hill from Tir y Castell (Castle Farm) there is a castle – a 13th Century wonder that offers views which are scarcely believable until you reach the summit on which it sits.

And it was only after the deal had gone through to buy the farm that the Morris family realised they had bought Carreg Cennen Castle.

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"My wife, Margaret, lived here as a child with her parents, and in the early 1960s they were offered the chance to buy the farm, so they did," explains Bernard Llewellyn, who married Margaret Morris in the late 1970s and has lived on the farm ever since.

"It made total sense for the family to buy it – they had been renting it for years and were happy here. But there were no deeds associated with the castle, so a firm drew up the deeds for the farm and drew a red line that went around the castle. That meant the castle was included in the purchase.

"They quickly realised their mistake and contacted the family soon after to explain what had happened. They offered to buy the castle back. They said that, being a farmer of a certain age, my father-in-law was not in a position to look after a castle.

"He wasn't having any of it – he refused to sell it back."

Carreg Cennen Castle is often cited as one of the most endearing ancient attractions in Wales.

It is a scheduled monument, meaning that it is nationally important and protected from unauthorised change.

While it is run and managed by the Llewellyn family – which, as well as Bernard and Margaret, includes three children

and eight grandchildren aged between two and 11 – there is a "guardian agreement" in place with Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service.

This means Cadw, in exchange for a proportion of the visitor admittance fees, is responsible for any major maintenance, while the Llewellyns take care of day-to-day issues.

Over the years the family has put in place a number of different facets in order to appeal as much to holidaying families as to the curious historians. There's a cafe, gift shop and a converted outbuilding where lucky couples can tie the knot while looking up at the castle and down on vast swathes of Carmarthenshire countryside.

What makes it unique is not just its illustrious history, but its location. Five miles from the nearest town and 300ft above the river below, it's an awe-inspiring pile.

"It seems to be more popular every year," said Bernard. "We have weddings here, school trips – the farm is a part of it, the whole experience. We have tried to keep that traditional feel."

The farm itself is run in a sustainable way and still produces "high quality beef", but Bernard admits most of the family's income comes from the pockets of tourists who want to clamber to the top of his hill to stand where Owain Glyndwr once stood.