

# Secret historic hamlet uncovered

BY DEREK REES

ANYONE asking for directions to the Pembroke-shire hamlet of Mae Mynydd or 'The Road to New York' could expect few people to know the way.

Hidden away on private land between Treleddydd Fawr and the coast near St Davids, Mae-y-Mynydd is a secret hamlet last occupied over 100 years ago. And 'The Road to New York' is a narrow walled cart track which virtually serves as its main street.

The hamlet might well have been the setting for the mythical Scottish village of Brigadoon in the Lerner and Loewe musical, although no one has claimed that it has ever come back to life.

But for local man Glyn Griffiths, who lives in a listed 16th century cottage at Treleddydd Fawr, it is very much a living community. Through his research over

30 years, he feels he knows its occupants and the terrible hardships they endured there four or five centuries ago.

Mr Griffiths led me back through time along ancient cart tracks under craggy Carn y Ffald to the hamlet, snug in a hollow among walled fields.

Armed with 18th century maps he showed me the straggle of ruined cottages once occupied by poor country folk who worked for a pittance on local farms. Their poverty contrasted strongly with the opulence of the life led by the Bishops and clergy in the cathedral, a couple of miles away.

Quakers, who suffered persecution for their beliefs, settled in Mae-y-Mynydd in the 17th century and gave it the name Pennsylvania, which still appears on the old maps.

"The villagers seemed to accept the Quakers amicably, because I have found no

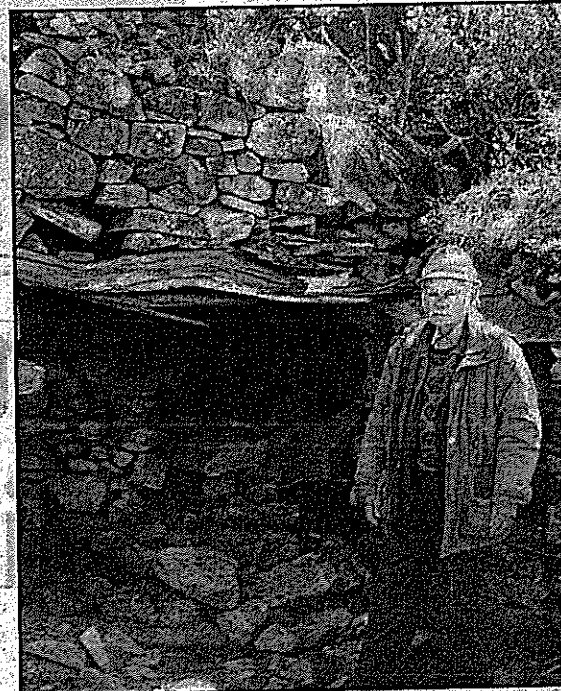
record of any violence or animosity between them," he said. "I love showing people around Mae-y-Mynydd and telling them of its history."

"The menfolk worked for cruel landlords and eked out a living with their gardens and their fishing at The Gessil, where the rings to which they tied up their boats are still present."

Mr Griffiths accepts that the villagers were treated badly, but he does not subscribe to the legend that Mae-y-Mynydd was deserted after its well was deliberately poisoned by a landowner.

"The landlords had such power they only had to tell them to go without resorting to such methods," he said.

□ The ruined village stands on private land owned by Mrs Iris James of Llaethyr Farm, St Davids, and permission must be sought from her to visit the site.



A tree covers the ruin of one of the buildings at Mae Mynydd, which Glyn Griffiths has researched

PICTURE: Western Telegraph (WTD)