

# **DAN-Y-WARREN, LLANDYFRIOG, CEREDIGION - AN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL APPRAISAL**



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## Introduction

Dan-y-warren lies immediately south of the A475, just west of Llandyfriog, Ceredigion. The house and its outbuilding are built above the bank of the Teifi, their gable ends abutting the main road. The buildings are not listed.

With new heritage legislation in the form of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and its attendant policy documents and annexes, there is a greater appreciation of Wales' built heritage in a broader context than statutory protection. This is underpinned by Cadw's '*Conservation Principles*' (2011), which define the values of heritage as evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. These values define Wales' rich heritage as a vehicle for regeneration and for fostering local character and distinctiveness.

In terms of local policy, of relevance is Policy DM19: Historic and Cultural Landscape of the Ceredigion Local Development Plan. This states that development affecting landscapes or buildings which are of historical or cultural importance and make an important contribution to the character and interest of the local area, will be permitted where the distinctive appearance, architectural integrity or their settings will not be significantly adversely affected. Where possible development should enhance these qualities and special character.

This report concludes that the house and its site are of national significance in the context of legislation and guidance which has been enacted since the relevant planning condition requiring demolition was made in 2003. The demolition of Dan-y-warren would be contrary to Policy DM19, detrimental to the understanding of Welsh history as well as resulting in the loss of a well-preserved group and local landmark in a beautiful setting, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. To destroy such a heritage asset would, in short, be an act of vandalism.

## Historic context

The name translates into English as '*under the warren*' and probably indicates the presence of an artificial rabbit warren in the vicinity, one of many introduced during the Norman period. No traces were found during an evaluation by Dyfed Archaeological Trust in 2013, the remains evidently long removed.

As is to be expected, the foundation date of Dan-y-warren is unknown, but it formed part of the local Cilgwyn estate, the seat of the Lloyds and their descendants from the late medieval period. The house was for generations the home of the Cilgwyn estate bailiff owing to its position on the Teifi. The present house is of mid-C19 appearance, but the large *simne-fawr* within suggests an earlier core, perhaps C17 - as does the 'downslope' site. The house is shown on the Llandyfriog Tithe Map of 1844, along with a (lost) building to the south-west.

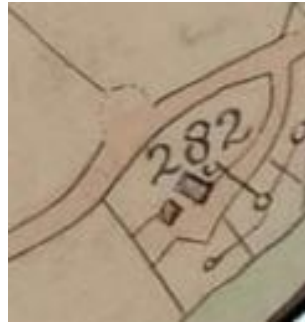


Figure 1 - Extract from 1844 Tithe Map showing Dan-y-warren

Dan-y-warren Dingle was the scene of a strange incident in 1814, later recorded as the last duel in Wales. Thomas Heslop, a West Indian gentleman and resident of Carmarthen was shooting partridge with a local solicitor, John Beynon. That evening, in the Salutation Inn, Adpar, Heslop became agitated about the quality of the shoot and the affectations of the barmaid, and was thrown out. The following day, the unrepentant Heslop challenged Beynon to a duel which took place on 10th September 1814. Heslop's gun did not fire and he was fatally wounded by Beynon, being buried two days later at Llandyfriog Church. In 1815, Beynon, now solicitor to the county of Cardigan, was tried for murder. With the influence of several county figures, the charge was reduced to manslaughter (Beynon fined 1 shilling) and the whole matter kept from the press.

Heslop's tomb - inscribed '*Alas poor Heslop*' survives to the west of Llandyfriog Church, the eroding stone accompanied by a modern one in 2016. The event is well-recorded in Welsh history and is the subject of a book by Ken Jones (*Alas poor Heslop - the story of the last fatal duel in Wales*, 2007) and an interpretation panel at the church.



Figure 2 - grave of Thomas Heslop, Llandyfriog

The site of the duel was either within the present curtilage of Dan-y-warren, or in the field on the north side of the main road. Wherever the exact spot was, the name of Dan-y-warren is inextricably linked to the event.

The house was tenanted by the Lewis family and their descendants from the later C18, reverting back to direct estate control in the 1950s, after the death of Jack Danwarren. The Cilgwyn estate then took the property in hand as a fishing lodge for guests, the most prominent being Prince Charles who fished from here in the late 1960s. In 2000, the property was put on the market - for the first time ever - and sold to the present owner, who has strong family connections with the longstanding tenants.

### **Architectural context.**

The house is mid-C19 in character, its rendered facade of two storeys and three bays offset to the right, away from the thicker chimney wall of the former kitchen inglenook (simne-fawr). Most unusually, the original sash windows of Late Georgian pattern survive (with most of the original glass, including a bulls-eye pane). The hornless windows have fine glazing bars, simply chamfered in profile. The deep eaves have decorative brackets, giving an estate quality to an otherwise typical house of local type. Modest lean-tos have been added to the south, and the rear elevation has been re-windowed. The pitched roof is clad in North Wales slate, the main alteration being a large roof-light to the front. The gable chimney stacks have been rebuilt in red brick.

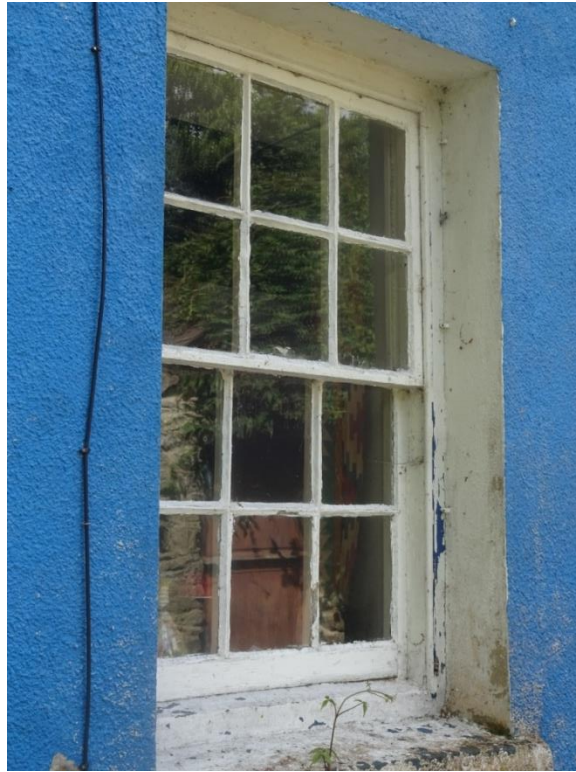


Figure 3 - mid-C19 sash window, Dan-y-warren

Opposite the house, also with its gable to the road, is an unusual outbuilding, postdating the 1844 Tithe Map, but shown on the 1887 Ordnance Survey. The building is cut into the slope, providing a pigs-cot at basement level, the pen enclosed with upright stone slabs (now temporarily covered in sheeting as a log-store) At first floor level, entered from the west, was the stable.



Figure 4 - Stable/pigs-cot, Dan-y-warren



Figure 5 - Stone slabs to pen



Figure 6 - extract from Ordnance Survey Map of 1887 (copyright OS)

The 'downhill' siting of the house is typical of earlier dwellings, and there is evidence within that Dan-y-warren has earlier origins, perhaps C17.

The plan-form is the traditional two-unit one of kitchen and parlour accessed off a centralised passage, the last with a winding stair against the rear wall. The partitions of the hall have been removed, but the stair with its simple stick balusters, chamfered handrail and square newels with 'bun' finials remains, framed by partitions of wide beaded planks. The stair is lighted by a window mid-level, a feature generally reserved for houses of higher status at this date. The former kitchen retains a large simne-fawr with massive oak bressumer (rear wall with inserted windows) The former parlour now forms the kitchen end, retaining its fireplace opening.



Figure 7 - Simne-fawr at Dan-y-warren

The ceilings have plain thin joists, with wide boards over. The historic plan-form is retained at first floor level, accessed from a small landing with an angled stair balustrade. The original coved lath and plaster ceilings remain.



Figure 8 - Detail of stair, Dan-y-warren

The simne-fawr looks rather earlier than the mid-C19, and the deep recess alongside is almost certainly the site of the original stair to loft bedrooms, the space becoming a small dairy area in the C19 remodelling, when the small casement window was provided.

In summary, the evidence suggests that a lofted house of C17-18 date was remodelled and raised to a fully-storeyed house in the mid-C19 as part of improvements for the Cilgwyn estate. The scale and proportions are typically 'west Wales Georgian', but the little touches - the bracketed soffits, stair window and neat outbuilding of 'estate' quality.

## Heritage Values

Ceredigion does not have a list of historic assets of local interest and has no policy in place for such (in common with many other local authorities in Wales). In this context, the best form of evaluation is through the specific Heritage Values which underpin Welsh heritage legislation and guidance. These are:-

- **Evidential.** The age and evolution of the house is apparent from close inspection and map evidence, as shown above. The C19 improvements are typical of the area; far less typical is the state of preservation - the vast majority of comparable examples have been heavily modernised.
- **Historical.** Dan-y-warren is central to the last recorded duel in Wales, an event important in terms of national history, and one 'celebrated' locally in the form of oral tradition, Heslop's grave, interpretation and literature (the last correcting some colourful oral variants of the story!)
- **Aesthetic.** The house and outbuilding form a picturesque group within a lovely riverside setting. The buildings remain well-preserved and are a good example of estate improvement.
- **Communal.** The association of Dan-y-warren with the duel is inextricable, figuring strongly in local, regional - and increasingly - national history.

## Conclusion

The loss of Dan-y-warren would be a loss to Welsh history, removing the original homestead where the duel took place over two centuries ago.

There is no doubt that Dan-y-warren is an historic asset at least of local importance. As such, it would normally figure on a local authority list, accompanied by suitable policy. That Ceredigion has no such list or policy cannot be a reason to sanction its loss - given the change in heritage legislation and policy since the production of the Local Development Plan - and the more holistic appreciation of the heritage of Wales.

Of relevance here is the *Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act* of 2015. This requires public bodies to consider the long-term impact of their decisions within the context of seven well-being goals. One of these is to protect a Wales of vibrant culture and language and a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language. To sanction the loss of Dan-y-warren would be contrary to the spirit and detail of the Act.

Dan-y-warren should therefore be retained as an annex to the new dwelling of Suo Gan. Consideration should be made of spot-listing the house on the proviso that the roof-light is taken out. This would make Dan-y-warren a worthy candidate for consideration as a building of special architectural and historic interest as set out in *TAN 24 - The Historic Environment* 2017.

## **Bibliography**

*Alas Poor Heslop: the Story of the Last Fatal Duel in Wales.* K. Jones, 2007

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