A photograph of a dirt path leading through a forest. The path is made of dirt and small rocks, winding through a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees. The sky is blue with some clouds. The text "A stroll through The History of Troserch Wood" is overlaid on the top half of the image.

**A stroll through
The History of Troserch Wood**

Troserch Woodlands Society



A Walk through Troserch Wood giving a brief account of ruins, reminiscences and other aspects of historical interest.

Troserch Woodlands Society.

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book



Introduction.

"Trosersch Wood must be one of a mere handful of woods in Wales with superb scenery, productive conifers, mixed deciduous trees and a gliding stream with trout pools and otter habitats. . . The forest includes seventeen acres of semi-natural broadleaves, mainly oak, silver birch, hazel and sycamore, all interacting in a delightful species-rich habitat.

The Afon Morlais meanders through the valley bottom and is scarcely disturbed by human intrusion. There are many small pools offering challenging fly-fishing and the gentle gradient would allow dam construction for ponds."



Bilberry, an ancient woodland indicator.



The River Morlais.

Such was the Wood described when it was offered for sale by the Forestry Commission in 1991.

"Scarcely disturbed by human intrusion" it may be, as being slightly off the beaten track it lies quietly and peacefully in its rural landscape, side-stepped and almost forgotten in a busy world. Yet along its pathways and amongst the stands of conifers, lies evidence that the Wood may have previously played a more important part in the local community than it does today.

Ivy-covered ruins are visible on both sides of the valley and everywhere the hillsides are scarred with man's frantic search for an elusive fortune in coal. In autumn as the undergrowth subsides, wagon trails appear that cross and re-cross the river numerous times on their journey to who knows where? and there is a millrace which to all intents and purposes appears to start its journey two metres above the level of the river.

This short account, treated as a walk from one end of the wood to the other, is an endeavour to explain these features and recount the various industries and livelihoods that the wood has supported. Also to list a few reminiscences from people who have known and enjoyed the wood in years gone by.



The account is by no means a *fait accompli*, as there is so much of the history that we do not know. Hopefully it may be a starting point, which may encourage those who know something of interest to get in touch with us and help paint a clearer picture. Also to encourage those who may have memories, stories or photographs of Troserch Wood, to feel they would like to share them. This would then allow us to achieve our aim of publishing a more comprehensive account of the wood's history in the near future.

Troserch Woodlands Society.

Acknowledgements.

We would like to thank the following people for their contributions :

Alwyn Charles

Brian Davies

Esmor Evans

Wyn Gravell

Colin Jones

Malcolm Taylor

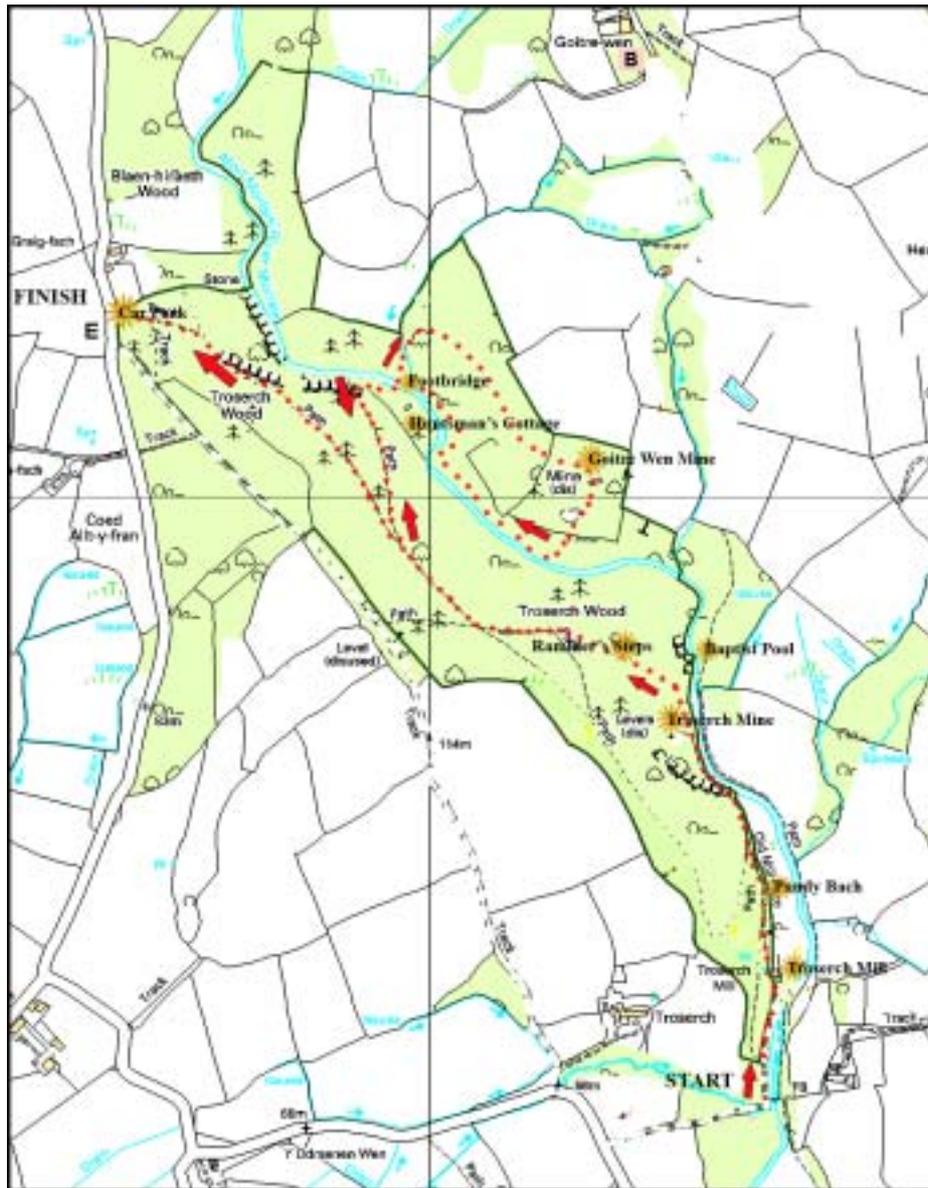
Tony Williams

Arno Wolff

We would also like to thank **The National Grid Natural Gas Pipeline Company** for their generous support. This support has allowed us to prepare and publish this account, and will also allow us to erect directional signs and information boards within the woodland over the coming months. Our thanks also to the members of **Llanelli Ramblers** for their help in clearing and maintaining the footpaths through the wood; and last, but by no means least, we would like to thank **The Forestry Commission Wales - CydCoed** for the grant which allowed us to purchase Troserch Woodlands for the community and open yet another episode in its history.



Our Route.



Beginning our walk.

We begin our walk at the footbridge across the Morlais at the south end of the wood; however, if you have the time you could start near the electricity sub-station by the Allt roundabout, where you would be rewarded with a delightful walk alongside the river to reach the footbridge.

In November 2006 the old green footbridge was taken down by Carmarthenshire County Council and replaced with the new bridge we have today. Does anybody know when the green bridge was put up? Also, in the late 1980s there was a calendar published with photos of "Old Llangennech" including the picture below, dated 1898. Would anyone know whether this was an early picture of the same bridge? It looks as if it might be.

Leaving the bridge we head upriver on the Llangennech side of the Morlais.



The new footbridge.



The new footbridge.

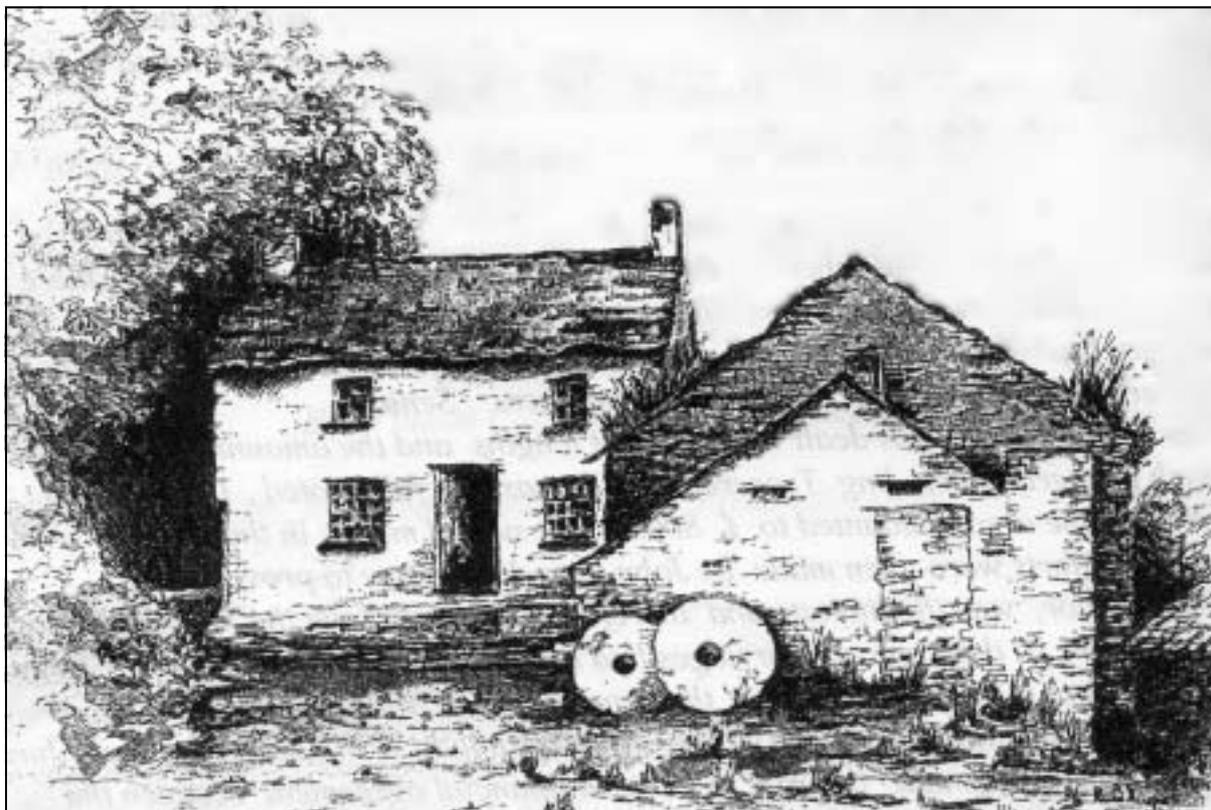


The old green tubular footbridge.



Bridge over the Morlais, 1898 .

Trosersch Mill.



A walk of 100 metres or so from the footbridge brings you to the ruins of Trosersch Mill. It is not known exactly when the mill was built, however, it was not recorded on a Stepney Estate Map of 1767 nor on the Land Tax assessment of 1801. The local parish rate listing of 1806 still doesn't show the Mill but shows William Hopkin, of the adjacent Trosersch Farm, as the tenant of the immediate area. William Hopkin was the managing agent of the Stepney Estate, which included the wood. An estate map of the late 1810s however, does show the existence of the mill, whilst the will of William Hopkin dated 1827 lists a William Thomas of Trosersch Mill as one of the witnesses.

We can therefore assume that the Mill was built sometime between 1806 and the late 1810s.

We could also speculate that the Mill was built because the the Napoleonic Wars had artificially increased the price of corn at this time, making it a more attractive crop to grow, and the corn laws were introduced in 1815 to protect the farmers and growers by keeping that price high. When the Corn Laws were eventually repealed in 1846 and the price of corn dropped, the enterprise would be less viable, and this may be reflected in the fact that when John Rees signed a lease for the Mill on 29 September 1852, it was mentioned that the house and machinery were *in need of substantial repair*.

Troserch Mill.

John Rees and his descendants were to occupy Troserch Mill for nearly 100 years, well into the 1940s. His son J.B. Rees became well known in Wales by his Bardic name of *Morleisfab*, or son of the Morlais. He was a founder of the Llanelli *Cymmrodorion Society* and the 1895 National Eisteddfod of Wales was greeted by an “*englyn*” from him. In 1910 he won the Crown at the National Eisteddfod held in Bethesda, North Wales, and went on to win prizes at four more National Eisteddfodau, held in Caernarfon, Colwyn Bay, Llangollen and Swansea, and also at an Eisteddfod held in London.

The last family to occupy the mill were the Taylors who left in the mid 1960s.



Troserch Mill before the roof collapsed in January 1997.



Troserch Mill today.

Life at Troserch Mill.



I was three years old when we moved to the old mill we called Felin Troserch in 1957. It all started in the spring of '57. My Mum caught a Rees & Williams bus to Llanelli to do some shopping and started a conversation with a Mrs. Frances who happened to own the old Mill. On finding that my Mum was raising 8 children at the time Mrs. Frances suggested she have a look at the old Mill which she was selling.

The coal mine was still being worked at that time and the small trucks, or lorries as you call them over there, would pass by the house regularly, and we would often have visits from members of the forestry commission when they came through to do their maintenance on the Troserch Wood, and as with Welsh hospitality a hot cup of tea and a snack was always on offer. We all had a great time and we soon stocked our place with all kinds of animals; cats, dogs, chickens, geese, goats and for a while some horses.

We had no electricity until 1965 so we relied on coal fires and old oil lamps for light. We had apples, pears, plums, blackcurrants, gooseberries and grew some veggies and trout from the river. We had Nature's Pantry right there around our house. Our neighbours were always very generous and kind especially the late Mr. & Mrs. Thomas of Tyr Eglwys farm and Islwyn Troserch, who allowed the electricity to run through his land for free, and the people of Llangennech were always friendly and helped our family out a lot. Their hospitality and kindness over the years really made a big difference, the village was just like one big extended happy family.

We had some bad winters when the river was frozen for a couple of months and snow two or three meters deep in some places. The one I remember most was winter of 63/64 we made sleds and used them on the hill from Troserch road down to the river. On the river between the bridge and the mill is a very large rock ledge that apparently was used to Baptize people in days long gone, and I can remember Islwyn Troserch herding his sheep down to the river to wash before shearing. I have been asked many times what I miss most about Wales, I answer the friendly people, rain, Christmas, fish and chips, and the green green grass of home. I think that sums it up pretty well.

Malcolm Taylor

Y Felin Troserch.

The trough you notice as you approach the mill house was intended to catch water filtered through and dripping from the rocks. I have drunk many cupfuls (cup provided by the inhabitants) of crystal clear and very cold water from 'ffynnon y felin' when passing for a walk in the wood or to bathe in the river. It was very refreshing after walking from the village on a hot summer's day.

Esmor Evans.



Pandy Bach.

Leaving Troserch Mill, the more adventurous can walk along what is left of the old millrace or leet, which is usually dry although fairly overgrown. After about 50 metres you will come to the ruins of an old pandy or fulling mill. You can also get to the pandy by walking along the main path from Troserch Mill for the same distance, but then you will have to clamber down a fairly steep bank.

A pandy, or fulling-mill, used running water to drive heavy hammers that thickened the cloth after weaving. Fulling was a repetitive process using firstly human urine, then Fuller's earth and finally soap, before being well rinsed by the constant supply of water. The mill worker would buy human urine from the local farms and cottages by the bucket. Nice work if you can get it!



Each spring the mill-race (or mill-leet) between Troserch Mill and Pandy Bach lights up with an excellent display of daffodils.

Pandy Bach.



Looking down the mill-race.



The mill-race goes from right to left at the top of the wall.



Pandy Bach.

This old mill used the same millrace as Troserch Mill, although started using it a few centuries earlier. In his account of *Cloth manufacture in the medieval lordship of Kidwelly*, Ian Jack states that a lease for the pandy was first applied for in 1441, and there is also evidence that it was used as a furze mill before this in 1390. A rent roll of 1697 calls it Pandy-bach and shows it rented to a Thomas Morris Tucker, and on the estate map of 1767 it is shown as *Tucker's Mill*. (*A society of Tuckers was established in Carmarthen on 26 May 1576, to represent the interests of cloth-workers, fullers and shearmen.*)

With the decline in the Welsh cloth industry, by the 1830s, if not a long time before, it had become a furze mill again. Furze, also known as gorse, was an important crop in the area as both the adjoining farms had their own mills to chaff the furze for use as fodder. A species of furze known as French Furze was favoured in Carmarthenshire, as it was more suitable for fodder than natural furze, and did not give a disagreeable taste to butter. It was estimated that one acre of two year old furze would supply as much fodder as four acres of hay.

By the census records of 1841 the furze mill had been replaced by a pair of cottages known appropriately as Pandy Cottages. Later in the 1861 census they are known as Troserch Wood Cottages after which they disappear from the records.



Carrying on from Pandy-bach we can follow the course of the millrace until it seemingly reaches its starting point at the Morlais River. Yet at this point it is about two metres above the river-level and there would be no chance of water flowing down it. However, when older woodland maps are consulted, the mill-race is shown disappearing under the pathway to re-appear some way beyond, on the other side of the path, before continuing some hundred metres further on to join the river. Once located on a map, the physical remains of the millrace can easily be identified along its course, whereupon, owing to the nature of the locality, the technical problems of bringing water to the mill-wheel can be appreciated.

There is a point on the river about opposite to the entrance to the mine workings. My father-in-law, the late Aneurin Rees, referred to this as 'gored y felin'. 'Cored' (the 'c' has been mutated to 'g') means 'weir'. There was presumably a weir to raise the water level near the point where it entered the ditch, thus enabling the flowing water to turn the waterwheel when the sluice at the mill end was opened.

Esmor Evans.

Troserch Colliery.

The millrace having crossed under our path, is now on our left-hand side. Walking on you can notice a blocked-up entrance to an old coal mine. There used to be three of these entrances clearly visible at this point, but falling rocks and falling trees over the last few years have obscured the other two. In the mid 1930s Troserch Colliery was opened around here by Glanville and Yorwerth Rees, both grandsons of John Rees of Troserch Mill. The venture, however, was restricted by quotas and was given up after about twelve months. Troserch Colliery was re-opened and extended in 1953 by B.D. and J. Griffiths and worked the Cille No. 2 seam. A lease was signed between them and the Stepney Estate to allow them to dig for coal for 7 years and 11 months from 1 May 1952. The colliery was finally abandoned in 1959. In all, a total of eight entrances are shown on the British Coal Abandonment Plan (SW 540) held at Llanelli Public Library. Evidence of these entrances can be seen further along as the road begins to head uphill.



Memories of Troserch Colliery.

School holidays Summer 1958 - Working with my father in a private mine.

I was just fourteen when I began to work with my father at the mine in Troserch Wood. I can remember having to pass a tiny cottage before I got there. It was known as the Mill and situated about three hundred yards away from the mine. A family known as the Taylor family lived there at the time. Mair was the eldest of the two girls. Pat her sister was in my class at school. They had two younger brothers. Sometimes, I would be lucky enough to have a lift in the lorry as it headed towards the mine. I can remember the road being very narrow and bendy, the lorry just about managing to get past the cottage.

The day shift involved pushing the coal drams up a slight gradient to the coal face where my father would be working. The mine was worked into the ground and ran in for about two hundred yards. It was known as a level pit. There was no machinery or electricity, it was all shovel and picking work, together with explosives. We would put a carbon lamp on the dram. It gave us very little light, but there was just enough to see the bottom of the wheels of the dram. We used the "spraging method". This consisted of a piece of wood about eighteen inches long, which we used to sprag the dram, to prevent it from rolling back down, when it reached the working surface.

My father would drill the coal face with a large drill called a Nelson, which had a big plate on one end, which he positioned against his shoulder. The actual length of the drill was about four feet. All this was done by hand. I could see my father at work, stripped to the waist, his body black with coal dust and shining with sweat. After the drilling, he would use dynamite. It had a long fuse, which he would light with a match and run out to the surface, until the explosive went off. We would wait for about fifteen minutes, for the smoke to clear. We then took a dram in with us and my father and I would fill it. Once full I would take it down the slight gradient, spraging as I went along.

Colin the surface worker would help. It was tipped into a grid and then through a chute. The small haulage company, Evans Brothers, would reverse their lorries to the bottom of the chute and then shovel about ten ton onto the lorry. This was all done by hand two or three times a day. When my father had cleared all the loose coal, he would pick at the face with a small pick known as a "mandrel". The depth of the coal, was only about one foot and six inches deep and about five foot of "bottom", in other words rock. All this had to be removed so that you could lay a road or rails for the drams. My father had to drill the rock or "bottom".

Memories of Troserch Colliery.



The same routine as loosening the coal with explosives was used again at this stage. Wait for the smoke to clear and then in again, so that the posts and flats could be put up, to hold the roof, to prevent it from falling in on us. Most of the rock bottom after the explosion would be packed to the side, like a dry stone wall. It was called "packing". Any surplus would go out to the surface and tipped to the side. The experience of all this and all the memories of hard work and happy times will always remain with me. I received five shillings for my labour and enjoyed it.

During the hot summer months we would walk to work, about two miles there and two miles back. I would take a soap and a towel with me each day, so that I could bathe in the river on the way back home. I can remember on one occasion, being watched by some girls as I soaped my body and plunged myself into the water. They looked to be about eleven or twelve years old. Some years later, I met a girl who told me, that she was one of these girls, who stood watching on the banks of the river. That girl is my wonderful wife of thirty-seven years this month, November 27th 2006. Troserch Wood is very much part of my life. I have worked in the heart of it. I have fished the river that runs along it. I have hunted game there. I have cut the hazel and made unusual walking sticks, as I am a member of the SWSMC. It is there that my wife and I have enjoyed beautiful walks throughout the seasons and hopefully always will.

Tony Williams.

Y Pwll Bediddio or Baptism Pool.

Just along the path we arrive at the *Ramblers' Steps*. These were erected by Llanelli Ramblers in 1999 and head up what was the slag heap for the colliery entrance at the top of them. We shall shortly head up these steps but before we do it is worth going on a few metres alongside the river where, after a bit of a clamber, we arrive at a large pool beneath a rock outcrop. This pool is known as *Y Pwll Bediddio* or the *Baptism Pool*. Llangennech has always had a strong Baptist tradition. The first Llangennech nonconformist services were held in 1657 at Llwyn ifan, the home of John Franklin. Following the persecution of the ensuing years, the meetings were held at various secret locations.



The Ramblers' Steps.

An article in the South Wales Evening Post in December 1983 mentions that during the reign of Queen Anne, secret meetings of Baptists were held at Goitre-wen Farm, alongside the wood, and those attending hid beforehand in a cave below the farm. This would have been near Graig Fach Cottage, which could be the reason why in a later lease of the cottage, it was stipulated that it should not be used as a place of worship.



The Ramblers' Steps.

There is no connection between Y Pwll Bediddio and Salem Baptist Church, which has its own baptismal well built under the pulpit floor. The old Baptist chapel was on the Allt, and it is recorded that some members were baptised in the river Morlais by the Rev. John Rees, who lived in Troserch Mill and was stated in various censuses to be a stonemason, a miller and a Baptist minister. He was minister of Carmel, Pontlliw, for many years, to where he used to ride from Troserch Mill, as well as to other churches, on his horse Ringer.

Esmor Evans.

Y Pwll Bediddio or Baptism Pool.



The pool on a turbulent day.

The last Baptism at the pool took place on a summer evening in 1984, when Rev. Sion Alun the Minister of Bethesda Baptist chapel, ably assisted by Mr. Wyn Gravel, the local chemist, baptised up to ten people before a large congregation.

Trosersch Wood was near to our first residence in Llangennech at Trosersch Road, in the late 1950s. With our young family we often walked along the river Morlais, whether this was trespassing or not, I have yet to establish. For many years we were well supplied with blackberries, our children enjoyed these excursions into the woods. Later in the mid 1980's during the time the Reverend Sion Alun was the Minister of Bethesda Chapel, there was a strong youth movement in the village. As a result of this awakening many sought to affirm their Christian faith by the scriptural obedience of water Baptism.

Many of the young people were baptised in the icy waters of the river. Subsequently other groups conducted Baptismal services at this location. It was quite an impressive sight, well over a hundred villagers made the trek along the river, they took up positions on either side of the river to witness this first Baptismal service for almost a century. This resulted in a search for a suitable venue to conduct a Baptismal service. With the able assistance of the late Hubert Edward, a deacon of Bethesda, he kindly located what the villagers called (Pwll Bedyddio) the Baptismal pool. This was used by the early Baptists of Llangennech, well over a century ago.

Wyn Gravel.

John Davies, practical collier.

Leaving the Baptist Pool behind, we head up the Ramblers' Steps, where you can see more of the adits of Troserch Colliery. Going further up the hill you will notice the hillside scarred with the numerous attempts that were made to locate that elusive seam of coal. These slants into the hillside can be found throughout the wood, and it would seem from the the following article that they were successful; but, apart from the small scale enterprise of B.D. and J. Griffiths , Troserch Wood was never to repay the hopes, the aspirations or the hard work of the colliers.

Coal Discovered.

Successful prospecting at Llangenench.

Mr. John Davies, a practical collier from Llwynhendy, who has been prospecting on Troserch Hill for the past three years, has had his labours rewarded by the discovery of 12 of the 15 seams of steam-coal of good quality that are believed to outcrop in the woods, about one and a half miles from Llangennech station. Many different kinds of excellent fire-clay have also been found by him and the report says that better bricks could be made here than at far-famed Ruabon. This spot is very rich too in splendid building stone, for as many as five Quarries have recently located here. These discoveries go to show that between Llangennech and Llanon lies a vast virgin field of mineral wealth which only wants capital to turn to good account. The chief seams that are known to crop in Troserch Woods, which by the way are owned by Sir Arthur Stepney, are the Trevanna, Wernddu, Penlan and Hughes veins.

Llanelly & County Guardian, 23 rd. July 1908.

Travelling further uphill you will arrive at a crossroads, where by turning right you can enjoy a gradual downward slope to the next junction.

This crossroads was a favourite place for so-called *joy-riders* to set fire to their stolen cars, having driven them into the woods.

Thankfully it is a problem that has lessened of late, but we will still have to erect barriers to stop cars ending up like this within the woods.

Walking down the road to the right will bring you to another junction, where you should turn right down towards the river.



Huntsman's Cottage.

From the advantage of the slope you can look down onto the ruins of Huntsman's Cottage. We would like to know more about the history of the cottage. It's name suggests an association with fox-hunting or shooting. Sporting rights were an important part of gentry life during the 18th and 19th centuries and indeed the whole area may have been kept for this purpose around this time. In 1787, Sir John Stepney wrote to his estate manager William Hopkin, who lived at Trosersch Farm alongside the wood, asking him to send woodcock to his friend the Earl of Cholmondely at his Picadilly address. Woodcock still return to the woods each winter

In 1842, William Chambers Snr. also leased the sporting rights of his entire estate (*including the wood*) to his son William Chambers Jr. when the Stepney family were using the courts to have the estate returned to them . The agreement listed the game available for shooting . . . *Hares, Rabbits, Conies, Pheasants, Partridges, Wild Swan, Wildfowl, Waterfowl, Quails, Landrails, Woodcock, Snipe, and all other birds.*

It has also been suggested that William Chambers Jr. used the cottage for secret liaisons with lady friends. An interesting cottage, it would be nice to find out more.



The ruins of Huntsman's Cottage.

Across the river.

Alongside Huntsman's Cottage there is a footbridge. A bridge was first constructed here in 1997 , when certain parts of the wood were being harvested. At the same time a permissive path was created through various parts of the wood, including the large section on the other side of the river. The first bridge however, although being fairly robust, was destroyed during a storm at the end of 1999. The river level rose so high that the bridge was totally submerged, and moved physically downstream a few metres until trees stopped it.

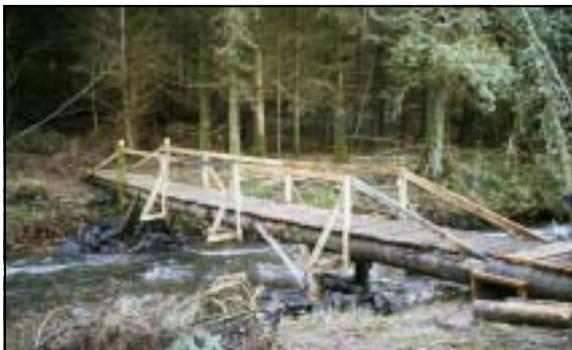
The new bridge was constructed in 2001 by Carmarthenshire County Council with support from the **National Assembly for Wales Rural Grants Scheme**. The fact that this bridge was built on someone else's land, and the fact that the paths to and from it were only permissive, was an important issue when we were seeking grants to purchase the wood in 2006. Crossing over the footbridge we leave the river and head uphill along a path into the tall stands of conifers.



The new footbridge.



The new footbridge.



The old footbridge, the large trunks were Moved downstream during a storm in 1999.



Alongside are the foundations of another new-bridge, built to remove timber from the woods

Goitre-wen Colliery.

Following the permissive path through the woods from the footbridge will bring you to the ruins of Goitre-wen Colliery. According to records held at the Public Record Office , a company was set up on 30 March 1874 called the **Goitre Wen Llangennech Merthyr Steam Coal Company Ltd.** (see details overleaf) to develop the colliery although it is believed that work had started some years earlier. Unfortunately, as was the case with other mining ventures within the wood, it was unsuccessful.

It is believed that structural faults in the coal seam made it impossible to bring coal to the surface although the pit went down hundreds of feet. Rumours that gun powder was being dried in the engine room are probably heresy. Again we would welcome information from anyone who might know more.

Before leaving, have a look just above the colliery ruins where a large oblong pit was dug as a reservoir to feed the steam engine.



Goitre-wen Colliery.

117- had
82380 Ch. 27964/11
See memo
20-1/20

REGISTERED
30 MAR 1874
No 3159

THE COMPANIES ACTS, 1862 & 1867.

Memorandum of Association
OF THE
GOITRE WEN LLANGENNECH *Merthyr*
SMOKELESS STEAM COAL
COMPANY, LIMITED.

Capital 250

Merthyr
1st. The name of the Company is - The Goitre Wen Llangennech Steam Coal Company, Limited.
2nd. The Registered Office of this Company shall be in England.
3rd. The objects for which the Company is established are—
(1.) The acquiring by purchase or otherwise of the collieries, mines, works, lands, rights, easements, privileges, advantages, property, and effects mentioned and comprised in a certain agreement dated the 6th February, 1874, made between Messrs Messrs. Barra of the one part, and James Harrison of the other part.
(2.) The acquiring by purchase, lease, licence, or otherwise of any other lands, mines, works, property or mining rights, easements, plans, locustives, rolling stock, waggons, or other real or personal property appertaining to mining in South Wales.
(3.) The working, raising, winning, and getting of coal, iron, minerals and mineral deposits, and otherwise develop-

Llanidloes
4/2/74

59

REGISTERED
WALSLEY
MAR 20

Goitre-wen Colliery.

3

We, the several persons whose names and addresses are subscribed, are desirous of being bound into a Company in pursuance of the Statute in that behalf made, and we respectively agree to take the number of shares in the capital of the Company set opposite our respective names.

Name, Address, and Description of Residence.	Number of Shares taken by each Subscriber.
Henry Parry, 21 Chapel Street, London W.1	One Share
Nathaniel Thomas, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
John Parry, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
John Parry, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
Robert Parry, 21 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
John Parry, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
John Parry, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
John Parry, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
John Parry, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share
John Parry, 11 St. John Street, London W.1	One Share

Witness my hand and seal this 1st day of May 1814.

John Parry

Woodland clearances.

Leaving Goitre-wen Colliery we head down towards the river through a corridor of dark satanic pines. This side of the river is the most densely planted with conifers and will shortly be clear-felled and replanted, as part of our long term plans to return Troserch Woods back into a deciduous woodland, more amenable to both our native wildlife and the community.

This is not the first time that the woods will have been clear-felled. In 1794 , the Board of Trade reporting on the state of Agriculture, comments on the havoc caused to woodland in parts of Carmarthenshire due to the coal industry. In 1815 they reported that 460,000 trees needed to be planted by John Vancouver on his Llangennech Estate in 1804, having purchased the estate from Sir John Stepney. In the 1840s William Chambers Jr. managed Troserch as a conifer plantation with areas of nursery ground to supply seedlings for this and his other woods around Llanelli. In 1916, the lease of an area of the wood by Lady Catherine Howard, describes it as being *recently felled*, no doubt as part of the war effort. In the early 1930s local residents still remember the sounds of breaking timber as the whole wood was cleared by the Emmanuel Brothers from Pont Henry. For nearly two years, with saws and heavy horses, the brothers slowly made their way up the Morlais valley. No attempt was made at replanting and for the next thirty years the area was left as scrubland.



Not really dark, satanic pines but rows of Douglas fir, planted in 1962.

The Forestry Commission.

In January 1955 the Forestry Commission purchased the area of woodland on the west bank of the Morlais from the Stepney Estate for the sum of £500; and later, in September 1961, they purchased the area on the opposite bank, where we are now standing, from Ken and Gordon Havard for the sum of £350. Bringing these two areas together has given us the Troserch Wood that we know today.

Liz Green, as a young girl living at Graig Fach, remembers her father more or less single-handedly, clearing the wood once again to allow the conifers to be planted. The west bank was planted with douglas fir, hybrid larch and norway spruce in 1960, and the east bank was planted with douglas fir in 1962.

Offered for sale in 1996 for the sum of £75,000 the woods were eventually sold to an English consortium for £47,500 and the areas of hybrid larch on the west bank were felled and replanted with douglas fir and sitka spruce.



Felling the Larch trees in 1997.

The Forestry Commission.

Forestry & Agricultural Surveyors, Valuers

John Clegg & Co.

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Telephone: (0494) 784711
Fax: (0494) 771434



By Order of the Forestry Commission

THE LLANNON WOODLANDS
Between Tumble and Pontardulais, Dyfed

Swansea 9 miles M4, junction 49, 1 mile

IN ALL 347.18 ACRES

FREEHOLD FOR SALE IN 10 LOTS

LOT 1	FFOREST WOOD	54.12 ACRES
LOT 2	ALLT FAWR	17.64 ACRES
LOT 3	GOITRE WEN	16.69 ACRES
LOT 4	TROSERCH WOOD	84.09 ACRES
LOT 5	CILDEWI WOOD	14.51 ACRES
LOT 6	PENCWMAWR	23.06 ACRES
LOT 7	BRYN WICKET	20.34 ACRES
LOT 8	TYNTON WOOD	10.91 ACRES
LOT 9	TY ISHA	37.68 ACRES
LOT 10	GORS FARM WOOD	68.14 ACRES

a division of
William H. Brown

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Chartered: John Clegg & Co., Chartered Surveyors, 17 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 2UL, Tel: 011 229 8900

A copy of the original sale brochure of 1996.



In 2008, some areas of the woodland will be felled again. Hopefully this time there will be a difference, as it will be done to improve the wood rather than to make a profit. The douglas fir is a majestic tree and in the right setting can enhance any woodland, and any felling that takes place will have to be sympathetic to this. They are after all a part of the wood's heritage.

Yet Troserch Wood was once an ancient woodland, remnants of which still remain. To encourage the return of native tree species; of bluebells and bilberry, of birds and butterflies, otters, dormice and polecats, is an exiting prospect. So why not join us?

It has often been said that an oak tree takes 200 years to grow to maturity, spends 200 years as a grown tree and then takes 200 years to die. It is our intention that many of the oak trees that will be planted to replace the stands of conifers will have this opportunity.



Heading Back.



Downhill through the conifers will bring you once again to the Morlais river, where we turn right and head back along the river bank towards the footbridge. Many of the imposing cliffs we see on the opposite bank are man-made and testify to the quarrying enterprises mentioned in the previous *Llanelly & Guardian* article of 1908. No doubt the expansion of Llangennech at the turn of the century encouraged these enterprises.

Crossing back over the footbridge we head uphill to the junction where this time we turn right, and follow the path to the carpark near Graig Fach cottage. Along the way there is a drop-off on the right hand side that has always been known as *Lover's leap*, and there used to be a sign post pointing to it. Would anyone have any further information on this.

The carpark is set in a quarry which even in 1842 was described as an *old quarry*. It is the end of our historical stroll and we hope you have enjoyed it. There are picnic tables on top of a small incline on the left, and should you wish to return by a different route, you could pass these tables, turn left and follow the byeway that leads back to Llangennech. This old road gives you some excellent views of the Loughor Estuary before arriving at the tarmac road alongside Troserch Farm. This route also has some historical landmarks which will have to wait until another time.

Conclusion.

The history of Troserch Wood has not been a dramatic one, or even an exceptional one, but its interest lies in the fact that its history has been typical of managed woodland over the last few centuries. Historical records show that its trees have been used to produce charcoal for iron manufacture, oak bark for the tanning industry, fuel for the kilns of Llanelly Pottery, pit props for the local coal mines; as well no doubt, as the building timber needed for a growing village. Troserch Wood has also shown the general trends of managed woodland – the decline of the late 19th century, the Forestry Commission purchases of the 1960s, the syndicate purchases of the 1990s and now the grant-aided community purchases of the 21st century.

Also, because it has remained as woodland, and has not been cleared for development, it has protected the physical evidence of its mills, its mines and cottages, as a testimony of a bygone age. A heritage which, along with its wildlife, scenery and other attractions, can now be enjoyed by everyone.



Autumn in Troserch Wood.

It is our intention to write a fuller historical account with references, maps etc in the near future. If you feel you can help in any way with information, stories or photographs, or if you would like to support us by becoming a member of Troserch Woodland Society, then please get in touch.

Membership currently costs £ 5.00 per person (or £20.00 for larger families and groups), and runs from April each year.

**For membership please contact Richard Stephens
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**Also check out our website at:
www.troserchwoods.co.uk**