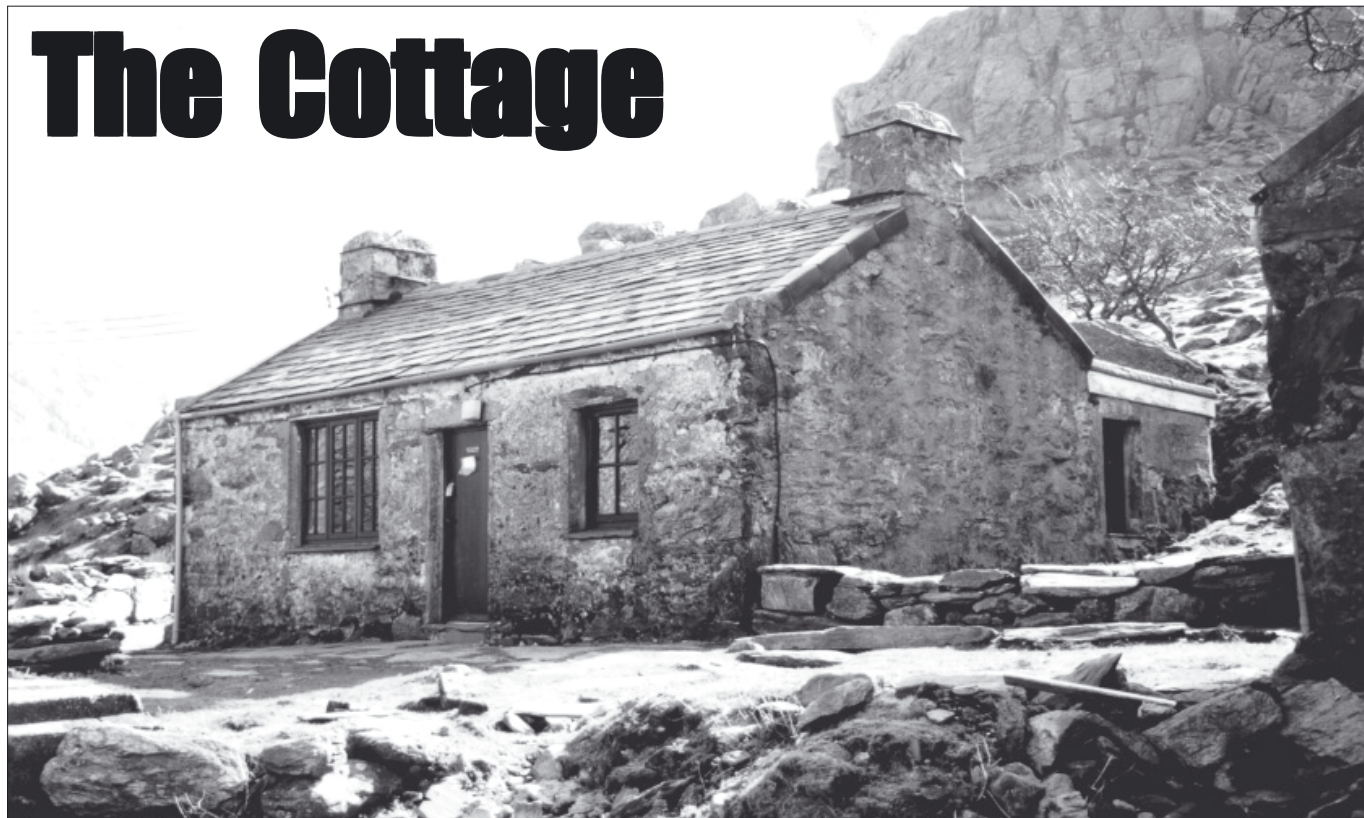


# The Cottage



## Cwm Glas Mawr

**By Ian Wall with many thanks on behalf of The Climbers' Club to J H Emlyn-Jones**

Once the initial work on identifying a suitable property to develop as the 'third' CC hut had been carried out, in 1932, and the committee had moved that work should commence, their attention turned to other matters. The various delays and historical facts attached to Ynys will be discovered in the next edition of the Newsletter. Suffice to say here that the project did not move forward as planned, the war came along and the Northern Committee moved on the 'Cottage' that ultimately turned into the 'third' CC hut in June 1947.

During the 1940s Cwm Glas Cottage, as it was known, was owned by the Vaynol Estate and used as a small hill dwelling for estate workers. The Climbers' Club leased the Cottage from the estate in 1947. 'Among other things that are fairly certain to happen, and being billed for the beginning of June, is the completion of the

Northern Committee's labours at Cwm Glas Cottage and its opening for the use of members. This acquisition, though now ancient history was made (thanks largely to the promptitude of Geoffrey Bartrum) during the Editor's time-lag last year, and was not therefore reported in the 1947 *Journal*'. See CCJ 1948 Editor's Notes.

*John Menlove Edwards.*



*The Frontispiece from the 1948 CCJ.*





It should be noted that in 1932 the Club acquired the lease for Ynys Ettws and this was viewed as a far more important and prestigious project than 'the Cottage' and consequently got more journal coverage. However, there were problems obtaining permission to work on Ynys and many stalwarts of the Club were otherwise preoccupied overseas during the intervening five or six unhappy years.

Towards the end of October 1948, Menlove Edwards went to North Wales ostensibly to look for work but ended up residing at the Cottage. In the poor October weather and in a cottage that, in those days, with tiled floor and bare walls was a cold and damp place he found an atmosphere that was not one of the happiest. A group of Sandhurst cadets arrived a few days after Menlove and found him slumped in the back bedroom in a coma. He was suffering from a drug overdose, another attempt at suicide, foiled this time by his own strong constitution and the help of Roy Beard and Peter Hodgkinson who took him to hospital in Bangor.

The years passed and once again Menlove went to stay at Cwm Glas, this time he teamed up with Ken Pearson who was also in residence. A climb was suggested and the two set off towards Clogwyn y Grochan. On reaching the foot of the cliff Menlove realised that he had left his rubbers at the hut so he suggested that Ken should take the lead. At the top of the pitch Pearson took the rope in and Menlove followed, when the pitch was almost completed Pearson noticed a bulge in the rope wrapped in insulating tape. On making the enquiry as to what the bulge was Menlove asked if Pearson could recall the accident that befell him and Noyce whilst climbing on Scafell? The question was quickly followed by the explanation that the rope had sustained serious damage to a couple of strands (hawser laid) and that he had spliced them up and then secured the splice with the insulating tape. See *Samson – The Life and Writings of Menlove Edwards* by Geoff Sutton and Wilf Noyce also *Menlove – The Life of John Menlove Edwards* by Jim Perrin.

'Cwm Glas Mawr has been open for over a year' was all that was reported in the 1949 CCJ. Menlove's life was a maze of wanderings and in his later life these were in and out of sanity. On February 2nd 1958 he finally found the path that was right for him by swallowing potassium cyanide.



MORAINES AND ROCHE MOUTONNÉE AT THE MOUTH OF CWM-GLAS

REPRODUCED FROM  
THE OLD GLACIERS OF SWITZERLAND AND NORTH WALES,  
BY  
A. C. RAMSAY, F.R.S.  
1860

The Club continued to use Cwm Glas Mawr up to the early 70s when the estate management decided to sell the property by auction. One of the many who attended the event was J H Emlyn-Jones, a CC member and President in 1966-69 who today resides in Leighton Buzzard. The bidding went on with little interest and then at the point of near completion Emlyn put in his bid almost as the hammer fell for the third time and for a figured estimated to be around £250 the Club owned the freehold of another property, its third and the second in North Wales.

Many visitors in the early days, when the fashion for Ogwen was dying must have moved from Helyg to the Cottage and watched the struggles unfold on the Three Cliffs, as Menlove must have done. But for Dave Gregory, his eyes were

on something else. One evening from the terrace he watched a young team struggle on *Brant Direct*, the yellow sun was dipping fast as the leader sprayed gear over the cracks and ribs as he moved towards the V-chimney and then struggled on rightwards towards the tree. The second set off in the last rays of the sun but before long it was dark and the second, back on the ground. At least eight pieces of gear were counted but by 6am the next morning the pitch was clean. See 'The Cottage' CC *Centenary Journal*.

Even in those early days Cwm Glas was popular with youth groups and cadet groups. One of its greatest assets is its comparative remoteness compared to any other CC hut. You can't drive to it, there is no immediate link to the network of roads that criss-cross the other main climbing areas south of the border and on a winter's night with the fire burning away and the rain and wind lashing at the door and windows the darkness is not disturbed by the yellow prying fingers of those travellers seeking the fleshpots and hostelryes of Nant Peris or Llanberis.

#### Custodians

1948 — 1951	B McKenna
1951 — 1954	A A J Moulam
1954 — 1965	D Thomas
1965 — 1973	G D Roberts
1973 — 1976	J R Lees
1976 — 1978	R E Prager
1978 — 1989	P M Newman
1989 — 2000	D Price
2000 —	P Sivyer

In the next edition of the Newsletter Ian Wall will write about the history of our fourth hut, Ynys Ettws. In the meantime he speculates about the origins of the name of this hut.

Whilst in the mid-30s, when the committee was convinced that Ynys would soon be on line, much debate was centred on the name Ynys Ettws. What did it mean? Was there an alternative? Should the Club use it?

Rudolf Cyriax wrote (CCJ 1941) that ‘Ynys’ means ‘island’. The meaning of Ettws is obscure, as it does not appear in Spurrell’s standard dictionary neither does the alternative spelling of Hettws.’ Lister then approached Sir John E Lloyd a Welsh historian and archaeologist believing that the answer could be found in Welsh literature or records. Sir John Lloyd’s imagination was stirred and on the 5th May 1947 he replied: “After some search, I think I have solved your immediate problem.”

Ynys Hettws did not appear on the old one-inch map and Lloyd comparing the old and the new identified Blaen y Nant (Head of the Glen) as the site on which Ynys was built. Ynys Hettws was really an alias for the well-known Cromlech (boulders), as we know it today and not a prehistoric relic. Black’s *Picturesque Guide to North Wales* (Edinburgh, 1886 p.106) mentions that an old woman named Hetty used to shelter in the depression underneath the stones. Hence it became known as Ynys Hettws or Hetty’s Island although more commonly as the Cromlech. Although this could be a product of a vivid imagination it does make it clear that the local pronunciation was Ynys Hettws. Lister, as a result of Lloyd’s investigations, felt that this explanation did not fully satisfy his own curiosity and consequently he continued his search through the early English works on tours and guides to North Wales. Resulting from this research Lister turned back the pages of history to 1781 and ‘The Journey to Snowdon’, in the second volume of his *Tours in Wales* Thomas Pennant writes about the Pass of Llanberis.

‘Near the end of Nant Peris, pass beneath Gylder Vawr, and observe the strata of a columnar form, high above. At times vast fragments of this tremendous rock tumble down, the ruins are scattered about the base, and exhibit awful specimens of the frequent lapses. One is styled the Cromlech, for having accidentally fallen on other stones, it remains lifted from the earth, with a hollow beneath, resembling one of those Druid antiquities. The hollow is said to once have been occupied by an old woman but now serves as a sheep pen’.



Other references to the ‘old woman’ include the Rev W Bingley 1798 who describes the cave as ‘a considerable cavity where a poor woman for many years resided during the summer season, in order to tend and milk her sheep and cows’.

A Birmingham historian, William Hutton 1799, writes ‘This large stone, lying hollow, imagination has converted it into a cromlech, then, the residence of an old woman, or rather, an old witch, and at last into that of a sheep pen’.

This story is embellished by William Williams of Llandegai in *Observations on the Snowdon Mountain* 1802. He writes ‘At a small distance above the church of Llanberis there is a huge stone called Y Cromlech, resting upon other smaller ones, so as to leave a pretty spacious room underneath, insomuch that some years ago a poor old woman made her habitation under it, and lived there for a long time rent-free’.

George Nicholson also added to the tale in *The Cambrian Traveller’s Guide* 1808 as do many of the authors of topographical descriptions that were written between 1800 and 1900. Many write and include the old woman by name Hetty and the place — Ynys Hettws.

Ynys often appears in the Caernarvonshire place names, not always to be associated with a place surrounded by water. Often the association is for a place of shelter in a wild area, a pasture of good ground amongst a rocky wilderness. The unfamiliar word Hetty is translated to the more acceptable Hettws and when in regular use in daily conversation this would become Ynys Ettws.

The Club adopted the spelling Ynys Ettws, that is, the form used by the Vaynol Estate from whom the original lease was obtained. The Vaynol records show this use dating back to 1832 but in the Llanberis Parish Registers the name first appeared in 1801 in the form of Ynys Hetws. Edward Pugh of Ruthin used this spelling in his work *Cambria Depicta, a tour through North Wales* 1813 to identify the spot at which our Club hut stands. This is of particular interest as it refers specifically to the building now known as Ynys Ettws.



'The amazing projecting rocks on the right (travelling from Capel Curig) which seem to support the sides of Glydar mountain, are wonderfully grand, and finely broken; with deep fissures running sometimes perpendicular, sometimes horizontal, and so often varying in their outline, that the artist is arrested by fresh subjects every fifty yards.

Some of these great rocks project frightfully, and from the loose manner in which they are supported and propped up, the passenger goes by with dread, and great uncertainty of remaining safe in their beds, till he is out of danger. I stayed awhile to gaze on what appeared to me, to be awfully grand; but which perhaps may lose much of its interest if viewed in fine weather.

The place I mean is called Ynys Ettws; it is a small cwm just above a mount of considerable height. The sullen gloom that overspread the cavity, with a noisy cascade above, and the sweeping clouds that skimmed the sides of the precipices, rendered the place, in idea, like the Devil's council-chamber. While I was looking at it I saw a woman standing at the door of a solitary cottage, at the foot of the mount; the river being impassable, I was under the necessity of requesting she would come near; and, on my signal, she approached me with her arms akimbo.

Her appearance was very singular, and not until I gained better information, could I be persuaded that she was not a man in female habit. Her voice was strong and deep-toned and her shape masculine to a degree; the shoulders being broad like those of the male, while the glutei muscles contracted so, as scarcely to enable her to keep on her petticoats. She seemed to cultivate a beard with some care, which had already grown bushy enough through age. Her name is Cady (Catherine) Thomas. She lives by herself in this dreary spot, and holds a small farm of a few acres, which she manages without the assistance of any other person; her stock consists of two or three cows, a few sheep, and two little ponies; the latter used for ploughing, herself performing the office of both ploughman and driver'.

In 1883 Pennant's *Tour of Wales*, edited by Prof. J Rhys a mention of the Cromlech is exactly as in the previous edition but with a further expansion about the 'old woman'.

'Cynric Rwth was a sort of a she-Polythemus, who delighted in feeding on babies' flesh; she is called Cynrig Bwt at Llanberis, and her abode under the huge stone called Y Cromlech, near the way to the Llanberis Pass'.

This lady is associated with the early days of Ynys Ettws by a remarkable group of authors.

Maps form another source of information to support the research.

The 1838 map identifies Blaen y Nant as the area

around the point where the Afon Genog from Cwm Glas joins the main stream of the Pass. The map also shows the Cromlech and higher up Pont y Gromlech, however the name Ynys Hettws does not appear. This map formed the basis of many maps but in particular was used in the illustrating of *The Old Glaciers of Switzerland and North Wales* by Sir AC Ramsey FRS.

The first 6-inch map was surveyed in 1887-88 and shows the farmhouse, Blaen y Nant and the smaller cottage higher up the Pass as Ynys Hettws, which at that time was derelict. In the coloured edition of the 1910 map the name Blaen y Nant was dropped and the name Ynys Hettws used twice. The 1947 map uses Ynys Hettws to include the area between Beudy-mawr and Pont y Gromlech.

The early travellers who recorded their adventures refer to the summer use of the Cromlech cavity but to no other habitation between Llanberis and Capel Curig. It was not until Pugh's writing in 1813 is there a mention of a building on the site we now own. It now appears that Hetty haunted the Cromlech prior to 1780 and the Ynys Ettws we own was built around 1800. Between 1780 and 1800 the legend of Hetty flourished and it seems reasonable that the cottage was built to provide reasonable living accommodation for Hetty's successors.

The Rev J H Williams, Rector of Llanberis 1948, scrutinised the Parish Records from 1726 onwards and found that the name first appeared in the records in 1801 in the form Ynys Hetws, the two inhabitants being Cath Thomas and Cath Ellis. Subsequently the form was given as Ynys Ettws. In the case of the word 'ynys' (Latin 'insula') designates a track of ground skirted by a brook and swampy ground, geographically rocks making it a veritable 'insula' among the crags surrounding the spot. 'Ettws' on the other hand is not so easily derived, but bears resemblance to 'bettws' – one meaning – sloping woodland. In 1948 there was sufficient wooded vegetation around the spot to indicate the cottage would have been surrounded by a wooded grove. Thus 'Ynys Ettws' would appear to be described as 'the rock-bound wooded grove.'

'However, returning to the original ponderings ' Why should the Club accept the present name to commemorate at best a nondescript old woman? No! Let it be known as the RW Lloyd hut, thus the full name and address would be The RW Lloyd Hut, Blaen y Nant, Nant Peris, Caernarvon'. CCJ 1948

I must, however, leave the last word to our own Vice President, Pip Hopkinson, who whilst carrying out his own research in a volume of Antonio Carlucci's *Introduction to Italian Cooking* came across a recipe for an almond and anise biscuit called... Yes, that's right 'Annis Ettus.'