14. Language and the Land

Llysfasi, 1 November 2023

Dei Tomos and Elinor Gwynn in conversation, chaired by Carwyn Graves

Carwyn Graves: Welcome to the session this afternoon, as the day draws towards an end. We are looking at culture, language and the land, and the connections between them. People might come in late, I know other sessions have run over. I am very happy to introduce to you Dei Thomas and Elinor Gwynn, the Prifardd [Eisteddfod poet] Elinor Gwynn. I think they both come without much of a need for introduction but in case any of you aren't familiar…

Dei Thomas is a distinguished broadcaster whose voice is often heard on the radio, especially his weekly programme where he looks at Welsh culture in its entirety including elements of farming and the countryside.

And without going into too much of what is going to be said, Elinor comes to us not only as a Prifardd and someone with a long career in agriculture, the countryside and so on, but also in recent years has completed a Doctorate looking into the sorts of questions we are going into in this session.

No more from me. There will be slides in the background. They won't always tie up exactly with what is being said but they refer to it, illustrating, setting the scene. So, may I introduce Elinor and Dei.

Dei Tomos: Thank you Carwyn. Can everyone hear? Thank you for the invitation to come here and to discuss the relationship between language and then land and with someone so well qualified – the Prifardd Elinor Gwynn, winner of the Crown at the National Eisteddfod in Abergavenny in 2016 for a series of poems entitled Llwybrau [Paths] and there we are, straight out in the countryside and walking the land. But this isn't the only prize Elinor has won at a National Eisteddfod. She won a prize this year for an article on any aspect of nature suitable to be published in the magazine Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd, the magazine of the naturalists. This is an article looking at a small area in Dulas Bay on the Môn coast (Anglesey), the Scurvy Garden. If you go to Dulas or search on an Ordnance Survey map for the Scurvy Garden you won't find it, but it was shown on a map by Lewis Morris in the beginning of the 18th century. And it is interesting, isn't it, scurvy. One of the worst things a sailor could get was scurvy and there was a plant which could at least aid in its prevention a long time before the realisation that lemon or lime juice and so on made a difference. This ensured that people, sailors travelling far didn't suffer from the disease.

The last thing I read by Elinor was last week. This was a poem about one of the cottages at St Fagans, Llain Fadyn, one of the cottages carried stone by stone from Rhostryfan - about five minutes from your home, Elinor? - to St Fagans (which is 75 years old this year) and Elinor has written a poem about Llain Fadyn, a little cottage owned by a smallholder who was also a quarryman.

Elinor has had a long career with the land and *cynefin* [one's familiar habitat]. I remember filming her in Pembrokeshire nearly 40 years ago when she was working for the National Trust. Back then language and culture didn't mean that much to that organisation. Thankfully

in the last 40 years things have changed and a lot of that is because of people like Elinor who have cracked the hard nut of people understanding there is more to *cynefin* and to the landscape, the shape of the land, than just a view. There is so much more and we will discuss this in the next little while.

And to enable working people including yourselves to understand that language is integral, is part of rural life and is connected to land and to *cynefin*. As Carwyn has referred to already Elinor has just finished a doctorate. She's not yet able to be called a Doctor, but she's done the work and will soon be able to use the title. Her work - The Eco-linguistic Exploration of the Land and Seascape of Wales – that is a bit of a mouthful and a bit scary as a title but some of the things she has been doing, has discovered and has been working on are extremely interesting. Some of her work will become obvious, I am sure, within this conversation.

I would like to read a bit of two poems to you to start, just to show there is a long tradition to what we are trying to outline this afternoon.

"Cawsom wlad i'w chadw,
darn o dir yn dyst
ein bod wedi mynnu byw.

Cawsom genedl o genhedlaeth
I genhedlaeth, ac anadlu
ein hanes ni ein hunain

A chawsom iaith, er na cheisiem hi
oherwydd ei hias oedd yn y pridd eisoes
a'i grym anniddig ar y mynyddoedd."

[A rough translation – We had a country to keep, a piece of land testifying that we insisted on living. We had a nation from generation to generation breathing our history. And we had a language, but we didn't need to look for it because its essence was always in the soil and its restless power in the mountains.]

That says everything, doesn't it? You know, this binds us, connects us together - as people, as speakers of the language. This was within the last decades of the 20th century by Gerallt Lloyd Owen, who was also a Prifardd. At the beginning of the last century, T H Parry-Williams, a distinguished poet, wrote six lines. I showed those lines to someone recently. Wow, can you say so much in six lines? Yes, you can. Listen.

"Ni byddaf yn siŵr pwy ydwyf yn iawn
Mewn iseldiroedd bras a di-fawn.

Mae cochni fy ngwaed ers canrifoedd hir
Yn gwybod fod rhagor rhwng tir a thir.

Ond gwn pwy wyf, os caf innau fryn
A mawndir a phabwyr a chraig a llyn."

[Rough translation – “I’m not sure who I am in the fertile, peat-free lowlands. My red blood for hundreds of years knows there is difference between land and land. But I know who I am if I can have a hill and peatland and reeds and rocks and lakes.”]

It is excellent, isn’t it? Only six lines. TH Parry-Williams and the title of the poem is Cynefin. This is our lives. Our lives are within our Cynefin, aren’t they? Maybe not everyone knows that cynefin is more than where sheep graze [know as hefting in English, for sheep].

Anyway, you haven’t come here to listen to me but to Elinor. Where do we start? Names are the first things which connect us to land, aren’t they? Names of places, names people have given to part of their own cynefin.

Elinor: That is true. Before going down that route I’ll say a little about the research. Why do the research in the first place? Well, we in this room are all familiar with the idea what we do on the land shapes our relationship with the environment and land, whether it is growing, preparing food, husbanding animals, etc. Everything that’s being discussed during these two days. Also, these activities are the foundations of the value we put on things, whether that is healthy food or feeling healthier physically or a feeling of community and identity, aren’t they? Action and practice are central to them all. In the setting I used to work in there was a tendency to look at the cultural value of the environment in connection with things like going for a walk or birdwatching. Open air activities, that was the cultural value of the natural environment, even though culture goes through everything because culture is a mix of activities, habits, traditions and beliefs. Yes, that is what culture is in its essence.

I have always felt that there are a multitude of different ways to cultivate a relationship with the world around one and to benefit from that relationship. Even with so much talk about open air activities I thought well, people develop relationships through, I don’t know, all sorts like artistic work, but I had a desire to explore language. How using the language weaves into the environment. What did people do in their ordinary, everyday lives which weaves together language with their environment and why is that important to them? To try to demonstrate what those activities were in a field which doesn’t have enough attention and try to state the value which people put on their activities to feed that back into the environmental field.

So what I have been doing for four years is talking with people about what they do in their everyday lives and why it is important to them, and doing some of my own work because I love language and environmental activities, and then weaving my experiences and my feelings with what I hear from other people. I had wonderful discussions and testimonies, great stories from people which were very moving about the importance of the tie between language and the environment.

Dei: Do you also feel that language had been missing from this culture relating to the countryside, to cynefin in fact and the open air and environment?

Elinor: No, I think what I felt was that in the world I’d been working in they weren’t quite sure what to do with language. Language is around us everywhere, it is everywhere but it is nowhere either, is it? It is...in regards to Welsh especially, in public bodies like the ones I’ve

been working in, it is more to do with conforming to certain standards, especially in marketing and communications. I wanted to bring it into the actual activities. Language as practised, so to speak, to put it central, so that people would realise that it is an activity to do with the land and environment in the same way as husbanding the land, growing food, rearing animals, or going for a walk and bird watching.

Dei: And it is indisputable, isn't it, that when you go for a walk, watch birds and do any activity in the countryside especially connected with the land, then language – this patch of land, the language which belongs to the land here - is important, or it should be important.

Elinor: It should, it should. Possibly we should simply start with the delight people have in words, before going to local placenames. So, there were many people who spoke of how much they enjoyed collecting vocabulary connected with the land, the environment, the landscape, browsing through dictionaries, searching for words, the different dialects, different words, aspects of land management, or animals, plants and so on. One spoke of the practice of writing the words, forgotten or more unfamiliar words. He wrote them out on his kitchen wall in the hope that seeing them often he would start using them again. There was quite a bit of sadness expressed that we have lost such a wealth of vocabulary.

Dei: This happens, probably, because of changes in technology, doesn't it? That is, 60, 70 years ago horses were common on the land then they vanished, didn't they? Then came the Fergie, the little tractor. That vanished and so on and so on. So there are words over the decades, over the centuries, which get lost, aren't there?

Elinor: That is true. There is a picture in the set of slides here of a cowshed and the different names for the different parts of the cowshed. It is a very old-fashioned cowshed so as farming changed, we lost lots of that vocabulary. There are other words, possibly...it is difficult to know why they vanished. For example, a word I got from someone was *rhidys*. I don't know, is anyone in the audience familiar with the word *rhidys*? Well, it is a little spot on a slope where the water maybe is sweeter, possibly warmer, springing from the ground, where there is a little more green growth available for the sheep earlier in the year. So it was valuable, wasn't it? It was valuable to the farmers to know a feature like that. Perhaps nowadays in English we'd call it a flush. But we had a word for it in Welsh, rhidys and there was no reason to lose that word.

Another one someone shared was *carleg*. That is a lovely word, isn't it? Carleg, there is a taste...lots of people talk about the sound and taste of these words. Carleg, shared with me by someone from the Ardudwy area, Harlech, refers to the mounds of stones in field corners where farmers would be clearing stones in the past and just putting them in a heap in the corner and someone said, oh, you can hear the sound of the stones being thrown onto the heap and settling down...a lovely sound.

Dei: And if you are familiar with the Ardudwy valley, to the west of the Rhinogau, there are fields with stone banks or hedges. Innumerable. There are more square yards of stone banks or stone walls there we have anywhere else in Wales and there are stones left over. There are only so many stones one needs to build a high wall and so carleg would have become a very obvious word, wouldn't it? And an extremely useful one

Elinor: but going through something like this book here, *Cydymaith Byd Amaeth*, [Companion to Farming], one comes across such riches. Like these other words for fodder for animals – *ebran, gogor, esborth* - unfamiliar words, aren't they? And building walls and putting stones up like this, what would you say, Dei, for that? [refers to slide]

Dei: Ceiliog a iâr [Cockerel and hen].

Elinir: '*Gosod cerrig ar eu cant*' [Setting stones on edge] I would say for this. *Ar eu cyllell* [on their knife] is another saying. And then *bangori,* a word for plaiting, weaving on the top of dead hedges/banks, *berdio* (putting thorns on top)…

Dei: This goes back even further, doesn't it? That is, the word *bangor* means a sort of defence surrounding a village or town or similar. But also, *bangori* means you are using hazel wood and twigs with mud to make a wall within a house. You've got...think, for example, on the borders, where you have black-and-white houses and there are very many of them. Mostly nowadays, the only ones left are the grand ones which cost a fortune to buy now, but it was common in cottages too to use this sort of building technique. So, you have a wooden frame and the wood is painted black or blackens naturally with age, but between the frame or wooden frames, were the *bangor*, the hazel plastered with mud and so on. It is a wonderful word, isn't it? For building a part of a building or for creating a sort of fence around the building. It is a word which has long gone. No-one uses the technology and because of that they don't use the term, do they?

Elinor: No. New to me were the words *berd* and *berdyn* for the use of twigs of thorn, hazel and so on to put in a gap in a hedge. *Berdi*o was the verb. So, as the practice of just fencing has become more common this vocabulary gets lost. Also the variety in the dialects is lovely to find...so, for a farmyard there is *buarth, beuli, cowt, rhewl, heol, ffald, clôs, cwrt, iard*. And maybe in the media these days there is a tendency...we maybe don't use enough of our different dialects and everything becomes more similar, as someone said, a blandscape.

Dei: The argument here with people, who aren't radio or TV presenters themselves but who control presenting, that we need to make sure everyone understands everything. If they don't understand they aren't going to listen to you. Well, true enough, you have to make sure as a presenter that you are understandable but as you say there is nothing wrong with a certain amount of variety in your vocabulary. For example, I remember the word *hil-laddiad* [genocide] being spoken for the first time. It is a common word in our era now, isn't it? That is what they say is happening in Gaza at the moment. That is the Palestinian interpretation, genocide. I heard it being used for the first time in Nigeria when Idi Amin was persecuting people in the north of that country. Genocide, I had no idea what it was. But it was reasonable for me to look it up in a [Welsh] dictionary and see 'genocide, killing people of a particular nation'. Well, naturally after that you heard genocide daily, without thinking. It is easy, I think, for us to lose hold of words and think yes, we must be as simple and understandable as possible but we need to have respect for our audience as well, don't we? And our listeners. People like to look things up and will think and question why use that word? What exactly is the meaning of that word? In the complete sentence it's likely the word is very obvious, isn't it? It doesn't mean avoiding words.

Elinor: No. Another interesting point someone made very definitely, very strongly, was how important local words are to creating a community network within an area. And to help us to understand that there are differences, for example, within areas of Gwynedd which look similar. One could look at Dyffryn Clwyd here and think there is a spatial character to the landscape but beyond the superficial similarities of the character of the whole valley, the language helps us to reveal the different communities which exist. One example I had from someone was the word *llac* from the Penrhyndeudraeth area. He said when he was a child only the fishermen had the right to use the word *llac* in their vocabulary. It was specifically to do with the practice of harpooning, using a harpoon or trident as a fork, fishing in the estuary, looking in the pools and spearing the fish. But he said that he was conscious that the word belonged to the one community in the area. He didn't have the right, as a young boy, to use it as part of his vocabulary but as he grew up and started being involved with the people in the fishing community it became part of his vocabulary too, and how proud he felt that he had the right and so it was part of his identity, it deepened his identity and feeling for his area. So, there things are very interesting, aren't they? The words and their role in defining areas and painting, defining our local areas and people and communities who live in them as well.

Dei: And maybe we don't quite realise how many words we have lost. We have a substantial awareness by now, and concern about changing names of places, losing the names of houses and so on. Happy Donkey Hill is now the name of – what? I can't remember the original name now – Pen y Bryn – and there has been a serious loss, not that the Welsh people have ever been perfect. You've got Manchester House and Liverpool House and so on, but when you have names, original old names and the substantial knowledge that is a part of that and it is lost, people are enraged.

Maybe not enough about field names. If you go back to the tithe maps of 1840 and so on there are riches, and the maps of the estates too, and there are names which continue for generation after generation on farms. But we also need to be more conscious of other names, I think, names which are used daily in a different time and these are getting lost.

Elinor: Yes. Before we move on to place names I'd just like to speak about a little book. I was describing the pleasure people feel about collecting these words and searching for them. We have a very interesting glossary published this year – *Geirfa'r Fflyd* – glossaries about all sorts of things, a lot of them to do with the countryside and land and rivers and so on. And also domestic things too. It was compiled by John Jones who was from a little place called Gellilyfdy in Flintshire and he created this list when he was in gaol in Ludlow in 1632. That was when he started it. Well, there are riches here. One can understand the delight people have in poring over these glossaries.

But to go on to local names – this was of great interest to a number of people during the research. A delight in researching, collecting, trying to decipher and sharing as well. I'll just share a short quote from an author from Ireland called Manchán Magan, from his book 'Thirty-two Words for Field'.

This is what he says [in English], "Place names are the most obvious, the most direct and visceral way in which language is connected to landscape. Whether viewed as periscopes, portals or as thresholds they essentially represent openings into wormholes of insights into

all aspects of history, land use, ecology and mythology that comprise the landscape of an area." And, then, that they offer "tantalising hints and encoded reflections of our culture, psyche and past practices that are becoming gradually less decipherable every year."

But he acknowledges as an author that it can be difficult to assess what has been lost if we don't understand the names any more. And he says, Does it matter if the people of Rhyl don't know that Y Gerten Ddu was the name of the sand dunes? Does it matter if the people of Narberth don't know the connection between where they live and the Mabinogion? But what was obvious from the research work is that people do worry about place names. They are very, very important to them. In a number of ways. Once again, the sound, the taste of the name and as the song says, history, the history which is within them too and a number of people say they are more than labels on places.

In a way of course they *are* labels. You don't have to know the meaning of Aberystwyth to know where Aberystwyth is, how to get there and what sort of place it is, but if you know the meaning it will give another layer of meaning to you, won't it? And that is what people are proud of and are interested in too. And of course it includes ecological clues...in several slides...I have included slides which show the changes in the woods in Meirionydd in the area of Ardudwy over a period. So, in the Bronze Age to the end of the 19th century we can see that we lost woodland habitat over the centuries but the ancient presence of the woodland is still kept in names like the elements in this slide, giving us clues maybe. This could be important for the big discussion about planting trees and where to plant trees and where to not plant trees. We could possibly use this glossary here, these place names, to help us to make sensible decisions about where to do things and where to not do things.

There is another example in the element of the word *gurli* in the Talgarth, Bangor area. *Gurli* from *gorlif* [flood]. There is a project in Nottingham University to do with floods and flooding, that is using local place names as a guide to where, or where not, to build houses or whatever. Cae'r Gurli [The Flooding Field]) is here, on the right of this picture [see slide]. So, you could look at things like maps, the distribution of alder habitat, in place names and see how they follow river valleys, see the distribution of beech habitat in south east Wales. So, things like this are really interesting and give us historical and ecological information as well.

Dei: It has been an enormous amount of work but obviously a pleasure for you to search it out. What about records? People aren't going to read your dissertation. Well, there will be people reading the dissertation but not so many people with an interest in research. But it is surprising how many people have an interest in recording these things, isn't it? Recording things themselves, annotating perhaps, copybook type of thing. How much encouragement do you give to this?

Elinor: Certainly, it is very important, isn't it? There is a lot we can do as individuals as far as knowing the land surrounding us, the land we control; getting to know our square mile and finding ways of sharing that as well. One of the people I spoke with was a schoolteacher and he said he used local placenames in his classes to tell local stories which then opened out into bigger stories - historical, political, whatever. He says he is a big believer in starting history on our doorstep like this, and he said there are a lot of people coming to live in the area and not knowing anything about it. So the local place names offer a window into the

history of the area, and a good way to tell the story. So there are things we can do as individuals.

And we can also do things as organisations and movements. One of these colourful slides here shows a multitude of names I collected in the area of Dinas Dinlle, Niwbwrch, not far from Caernarfon. Lle Llecynnau, including a Welsh nature reserve. Niwbwrch National Nature Reserve – but how many of the names are on the signs around the reserve and footpaths, in leaflets etc? Very, very few. So I think there is a place for these organisations to bring them to the surface and share them. I've done events like "Language in the Landscape" for people in different organisations just to have this conversation and that in itself has been valuable, between people working in different organiations, just to stimulate the discussion and create understanding. And as I said earlier maybe there is a place for the media as well to think of the sort of language they are encouraging us to use. How to put the colour back into language, the language we speak, the language we write and the language we use.

Dei: A substantial part of your poetry for which you won the Crown is your descriptive...you have a wonderful ability to describe. One of your poems where you are walking along a path, where the path has obvously sunk into the ground, eroded by people walking. And then you reach a slope of scree. That is splendid. I don't remember the words exactly, but it's quite a feat, especially in Welsh. I think we are behind in Welsh with describing the countryside, describing elements in the landscape, what we see while walking and so on.

I was hoping to come across the mountain today but unfortunately the road was closed in Cerrigydrudion but the colours this time of year...people talk about the colours of the trees, don't they? "Oh, it is glorious in the autumn because of the trees". What is the tree which gives us that amazing colour? Look at some of the moorlands here. Anyway, I went down from Ben-y-Gwryd to Capel Curig and there was a touch of sun on Moel Siabod, which moved down the moor. Totally useless land from a farming point of view - yes, you could graze a few sheep for some of the year – but the spectacle, because of the light, was just unworldly. And if you were to describe that, people would say you were exaggerating. The same as when you see these colours nowadays when people have been playing too much with their computers and the effect is unnatural. But the colours at times *are* unnatural, and to be able to describe this is an acheivement, as you have done in your poetry for example.

Elonor: Thank you very much. I enjoy playing with words. You were mentioning the colours just now. One of the things I get a great delight in is finding old Welsh words for different colours. We just use red, blue, green, yellow these days, don't we? But we have a host of different words for different types of red, different types of brown, etc. Blue, grey.

Dei: You don't live far from the home of Kate Roberts, the author, and she talks about looking down, contemplating an area which is on one of these maps, at the beach by the Menai estuary, over the Menai from Caernarfon. She descibes the colour of the beach as '*croen ebol melyn'* [the skin of a yellow foal]. Well, there you are. That's imagination. There is a description with some truth but there is also imagination and that creates...if you pause for a second...oh, yes, a yellow foal, yes! It isn't yellow, not even a type of yellow, but you can imagine it.

Elinor: Mentioning this slide here [the last one]. We were talking of the ecological clues earlier and this is a creation, playing...it is important to play with language and words and have fun as well, I think. And appreciate and protect at the same time. But I am looking down across this area, Dinas Dinlle, and reading Thomas Pennant “Tours in Wales” and he talks about coming from Clynnog and looking down and seeing “The Great Marsh” as he describes it in his book, It isn’t a great marsh any more but I had this idea, what if we look at the old names, the notable places on the farms and so on and see if it is possible to recreate Thomas Pennant’s ‘great marsh’ using names and ecological sensitivity.

And so that is what I did. I collected the old names which had some sort of ecological allusion and used them to paint the map in brown or yellow, like the foal, more watery or more boggy. I think this is likely to be reasonably close to what the marsh was like in 1773, when he explored it. And what is interesting now, with rising sea levels, is that it could go back to looking quite similar to this within 50 years. It just shows the knowledge which is held in our vocabulary, and in old place names - and the importance of having fun.

Dei: It is worth mentioning, I think, your successful article at the National Eisteddfod, the prize there, right at the end of the *Cyfansoddiadau*. By the way, it is easy not get that far through the book, maybe you don’t want to read about how the learners did, or all the composers, but right, right at the end there is a lovely description of ‘Yr ardd sgyrfi’ [the scurvy garden] in Dulas on Ynys Môn. I don’t know if you are familiar with Dulas but if you go from Pentraeth to Amlwch, you go down a pretty hollow here to City Dulas, you can’t miss it, and over here to the right if you are going to Amlwch there is this big bay, Dulas bay, dry twice a day and a lake...it is a big bay twice a day but right, right in the corner on the map you come to this. Lewis Morris mapped a large part of the Welsh coastline and put this garden on it. How big is it? An acre or two?

Elinor: Oh, yes, a couple of acres, maybe.

Dei: But it just reflects what was happening in that time, doesn’t it? The importance of this one little plant.

Elinor: Some of you may not be familiar with scurvy grass, which in Welsh is Y Llwylys. Fishermen and sailors would collect scurvy grass and pickle it to take on their boats because it contained Vitamin C and this would protect them against scurvy - until they realised that lemons and oranges did a better job. By now there isn’t any scurvy grass growing there. The whole land has changed, the course of the river has moved and so on. Yes, a good little historical story showing how people used things around them for specific purposes in the past.

Carwyn: Can I ask you to bring it to a close, so we can have questions and observations?

Dei: Right. And if you read the history of Franklin, before the days of Shackleton maybe and Scott, the people who reached Antartica, they all suffered from scurvy, teeth falling out and so on, truly wretched but how important this plant was to some people in a different era. So the words bring the history to life, in fact, for us. I think we’ve addressed most things. Have you...?

Elinor: There is one thing as far as looking at the future goes. There is a new farming scheme coming out soon. One of the things I'd like to see on it would be the protecting and noting of names, not just of fields but features such as *carleg* or *dap y frigfain* or *silff* for cliff or whatever. These should all be recorded as a requirement for payment from the public purse because they are treasures for all of us, they are public treasures. I have responded to the consultation, and I think the language commissioner has too...I am not sure if it has found its way into the scheme in the end but it would be wonderful to see some prestige given to these important cultural elements. The same dignity we put on footpaths or archaeological or farming sites, our farmland and the countryside.

Dei: Thank you very much. Before I ask if anyone has any questions, we were referring to history and names, changing names and so on and I have a poem I cam across. I remember reading it when John Griffith Jones, who has left us now [unclear]. It talks about part of Pen Llŷn.

"Dyw foel gron dim ond ploryn ar wyneb meddal Llyn
Ond o'r copa crwn yn y tyfiad gwyrdd
Fe welwn ni Yr Aifft, India a New York
[unclear] ddim ond cofnod teithio sgweier balch
A'i stad yn ymestyn fel bysedd dan sgert i odre'r Garn.
Heddiw dim ond Merton View, Green Meadows a Daisy Dell sydd yno.
Diflannod hanes fel diflannod iaith ac mae'r gwynt yn oer ar Gopa Foel

I'm sorry that you haven't had a chance to see it.

[Rough translation – The round bare hilltop is just a pimple on Llŷn's soft face but from this round top in the green growth we see Yr Aifft (Egypt), India and New York, only remembering the proud squire's travels, and his estate stretching like a finger under a skirt to the base of the Garn. Today it's just Merton View, Green Meadows and Daisy Dell. History vanished like the language vanished and the wind is cold on Copa Foel (the bare hilltop).]

Why are Egypt and New York and so on there? They are on Ordnance Survey maps, these place names, because ship's captains or local squires went and brought the names back with them. Why do the levels in a quarry have names like California, Australia, Abyssinia and so on? It is likely that when that level of the quarry was opened something happened in Australia, or maybe they found gold in California, or there was a war in Abyssinia in the middle of the 30s. There are so many riches attached to these names and words.

Right then, who wants to ask a question? Yes?

Questioner: I have quite an interest, you talk about the work here you have done with language in the landscape, there is a plan here and it...the North Wales Wildlife Trust has recently bought land in the Clynnog Fawr area, called Bryn Ifan, and we have work we'd like to do with the community, such as field names, there is a wealth of knowledge with the older people and the history of the area. They've gone now but I am sure people remember stories which have passed down in the families and we'd like to collect that somehow. How do you advise doing that?

Elinor: Well, what we did down in Pembrokeshire, we had a trial, working in partnership with the local Menter Iaith, National Trust and the National Park and holding a two-day workshop, both indoors and outdoors and for non Welsh speakers for them to be able to appreciate and perhaps even to encourage them to search further, to try learning a bit of Welsh. Of course this is to do with any language, this just happened to be Welsh in the Landscape but there are also names like Good Hope down in Pembrokeshire, and Yr Aifft and so on.

It was about researching names in the landscape, the fields and the features and talking to people. For example, an expert from St Fagans came and spoke on mills in the landscape, and the language and vocabulary connected with them, and then a farmer from the Preseli hills talked about his language, to do with the landscape and driving the sheep down to spend the winter in south Pembrokeshire.

And then there was a game we created for the people on the course. We had one activity which was very lively, everyone enjoyed it, everyone was a bit nervous coming on the course but then enjoyed after having a taste and feeling they were able to interpret the landscape better for visitors. As far as collecting stories went, this was a bit of a different activity because someone talked about going out to record stories before they were lost, recording dialects and so on. But I think quite a bit of that is happening.

I've seen several through the Heritage Lottery Fund, going out and recording and giving them to the Casgliad y Werin [online project] but this is a big body of material and what is nice is seeing something happening with it, isn't it? That they live locally. For example, things like small dramas such as Mewn Cymeriad [In Character] are excellent, aren't they? Bringing stories to life. Going to schools and acting a character, using some knowledge from oral histories, or I know of one colleague who did what he called 'twrio' [digging, burrowing] sessions as he called it. People came somewhere with their artefacts. They were scanned and then there was a chance to speak to an expert about the artefacts and learn some history. It is possible to create a variety of community activities like that around language, vocabulary, practices, artefacts and stories. A program, I would think, rather than one thing.

Dei: Someone else?

Questioner: I'd just like to say it is extremely interesting with the meanings of the words and there is so much relationship, isn't there, between history and the past and just about my farm rather than...there are four fields and one is [unclear], one is Cae Dim Byd [Nothing Field), one is Rhyd Felin [Mill Ford] and one is Cae Gwag [Empty field]. This in itself gives a picture of the type of land, profound, isn't it? It is extremely difficult to grow crops. The meaning of the words on field names can come and go, however, within four generations.

Dei: Out of interest, have you looked at the tithe map?

Questioner: No.

Dei: It is worth you looking at these. The title maps are on-line and they date back to 1840. Going back four generations is good, isn't it? But this is one of the problems nowadays, that people frequently can't go back very far or there is a generation in the middle and they

haven’t any interest, that sort of thing, and things get lost. I like Cae Dim Byd. That says everything, doesn’t it?

Elinor: One of my favourite farm names at [unclear] Môn is Gwag y Noe. Oh, that is so sad, isn’t it? Maybe to some ‘wag’ [gwag, empty] is just ‘empty’ but *noe*...

Dei: What is Noe?

Elinor: Does someone know?

Dei: Very good, yes.

Elinor: A large bowl. I’ve got Nain Corwen’s *noe* at home. So, empty, empty bowl and it is so sad. What is interesting about lots of Welsh names is that so many of names relate to things around the house. And parts of the body. More than in English, really. So there is *dresel, silf, cadair, noe,* all sorts of items here...

Dei: Our farms, especially maybe farms where there are animals, were much, much more self-sufficient than farms producing crops, especially if they grow feed for cattle, say in Shropshire and so on, for rich areas in England. Everything happened on the farm, didn’t it? You mentioned a gorse mill, for example. How many people today know of those mills? That there are mills to grind gorse so the cattle can eat it? That is part of our heritage, isn’t it? I know of one in St Fagans. That was something extremely popular. They were essential on farms. Gorse is a nuisance today for most people, sadly. Thank you for the wonderful observation. Someone else?

Questioner: Gorse is lovely. It flowers throughout the year, doesn’t it?

Dei: They say, you can kiss any time of the year as long as there is gorse flowering and gorse flowers...

Elinor: That is because there are two types.

Questioner: And it is a lovely colour. Always has a happy feeling, doesn’t it? And by the way, there is a house on the outskirts of the village of Rhydymain in Meirioneth, *Carleg* [mound of stones, see above] is the name.

Elinor: There we are, there we are. Lovely.

Dei: It has come to the other side of the mountain, then, hasn’t it? From Ardudwy.

Elinor: I put a picture here of two pages of agricultural words, the whole variety of vocabulary for different types of rocks and it goes on for more pages too. Yes, it’d be lovely to resurrect a bit of colour there.

Dei: someone else?

Questioner: I was thinking, referring to *map y degwm*, that means tithe maps?

Dei: Yes, sorry, tithe maps, yes.

Elinor: Lleoedd.Cymru is the website. [https://lleoedd.llyfrgell.cymru].

Questioner: I've been looking at that website. I live on a farm near here called Plas Towerbridge. There isn't a tower, there isn't a bridge. The name comes from the original family who built the house, who were called Turbridge, and Turbridge got changed to Plas Towerbridge, when the Turbridges had long gone. Now, because a Welsh family has lived there for over 150 years it has become Plas Pont-y-Tŵr and I find that interesting. You have been talking about Welsh words vanishing but here the original name was English and it has taken 450 years but now the name has turned back into Welsh. There is something lovely in that. Somewhere I looked at a tithe map. Thanks for that. I'd never heard the word 'degwm' before. Look at the names of the fields and the names were Cae Derw [Oak Field], Cae'r Derwen [Field of the oak]...there were three or four fields and they were all based on the word for oaks or oak. By now we have got totally different Welsh names on the same fields, names which I think are more interesting. So I like the way language develops or evolves and another point I'd like to make is, I work quite a bit in the conservation field and there are frequently new terms turning up in English. Often I have difficulty finding the Welsh word for English terms, like 'permaculture' or 'regenerative agriculture' and I'd like to know, is there an authority which creates new Welsh terms? Like 'meicrodon' for microwave. Who decides these new terms? Permaculture can be 'paramaethu' or 'permadiwylliant'. There are different terms.

Dei: there isn't an authority as such, no. The power of use, as far as I know, means that one becomes more popular than the other. But also there is a need to look back, just in case you've got a time in the past when there was a similar word too. I think sometimes there is inventing of words where there is no need because a word existed for something not dissimilar in the past.

Elinor: Like in this case, Geirfâu'r Fflyd, it goes back to the 17th century. The terms are not in the Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru on-line, it doesn't go back that far, and so it is really worth looking at these old dictionaries to see if there is a word which will do in our modern world. Sometimes there are projects which aim at standardising in particular fields. Bangor University is doing quite a lot. And there is a group standardising names of plants and animals at the moment. They are at the mosses and moths at the moment. But yes, the point about changing place names, the change is part of the story, isn't it? We don't want to lose that either. I think if someone...this idea I have that one has to note features, the names of field features as part of government farming schemes, then I think it would need to be updated every five years, every time someone gets another contract, so that we have these names and understand what has changed, why they've changed and so on. History.

Dei: It is just as important - I don't think I am contradicting myself by saying this - but it is just as important to remember Turbridge as well as whatever we have today. It is part of history. It is just as historical and goes back just as far, and things change, don't they? Thankfully there are Welsh people now in Turbridge compared to who was there in the old days.

Questioner: There are many names which have been lost to do with the wool industry too. We are in Blaenbonllen. I think that [unclear] has something to do with wool. So many names have been lost.

Dei: [unclear] lack of work in Dyffryn Ogwen protecting names, fields and so on and many of them go back to the time of the woollen industry and woollen mills and such things. People are suddenly realising what this is, and that there was a mill there and making the connection. The industry has gone but there is a wealth of names within memory.

Carwyn here is leaning hard on me to say that our time has ended. Can I thank you as an audience very much for coming, and thank you especially to Elinor for her contribution this past hour. Thank you very much.