

The Fall of the House of Shors

**Traces of a Lost Farmstead in the
Parish of Bedwas**



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Introduction

Ty Shors was an early Tredegar Estate farmstead located at grid reference ST 16570 91086 (ST165910) in the parish of Bedwas near Caerphilly in south Wales. The farmstead consisted of only a single farm building, originally a small dry stone rubble built house, possibly roofed with a thatch, containing living accommodation for the farmer and his family. This may have been enlarged later with the construction of an attached animal house appended on to the north-western gable end of the house. The farm, as mapped by Robert Snell in 'A survey of the Tredegar Estate' (1760), consisted of approximately 44 acres of land in 13 enclosed fields. The location of the farm building illustrated on the 1885 OS map (see Fig 1) is close to a track which zig-zags its way up a steeply rising hillside on the western slopes of Cwm y Bwch rising towards Mynydd Y Grug Common. Visitors today will find the remains of the front wall of the farmhouse, now built into a dry stone wall, situated on a natural shelf or hollow about three quarters of the way up the hillside. The Name Ty Shors, or more properly Ty Siors, may be translated from the original anglicised Welsh as 'George House.'

Figure 1 below shows that in 1885 Ty Shors closest neighbours were Wytherw, another Tredegar Estate farm, a few hundred yards to the south-east, Ty Gwyn, a freehold farm, to the north-west and, to the south-west, the imposing gentry house and freehold farmstead of Ty-isaf (formerly Ty-isha) which was once home to Dr Joseph Davies (1793-1873), a wealthy physician and accomplished huntsman known as 'the baron of Bedwas,' who kept a famous pack of Welsh Harrier hounds.



Figure 1 The position of Ty Shors, circled, as shown on the 1885 OS Map (Monmouthshire XXVII (includes: Bedwas; Mynyddislywn.) Surveyed: 1875 Published: 1885 Source: NLS

The 1760 Estate Map

In 1760 the Tredegar Estate employed Robert Snell to produce 'A survey of the Tredegar Estate : in the parishes of St. Brides, Peterstone, Coedkernew, Marshfield, St Mellons, Llanfihangel Vedw, Machen, Bedwas, Mynyddislwyn, Bedwellty, Eglwysilan, Gelligaer and Llantarnam.' Ty Shors is featured in this detailed graphic survey in association with Pen-y-rhiw farm as both were tenanted by John Jenkins. Evidence of the Estate map suggests that John Jenkins was a wealthy yeoman farmer who also held the freehold to Ty-isha and Ty Gwyn farms which, at this time, were still farmed as a single unit. Unfortunately no documentary evidence has yet come to light about John Jenkins or his tenancy agreement with the Tredegar Estate.

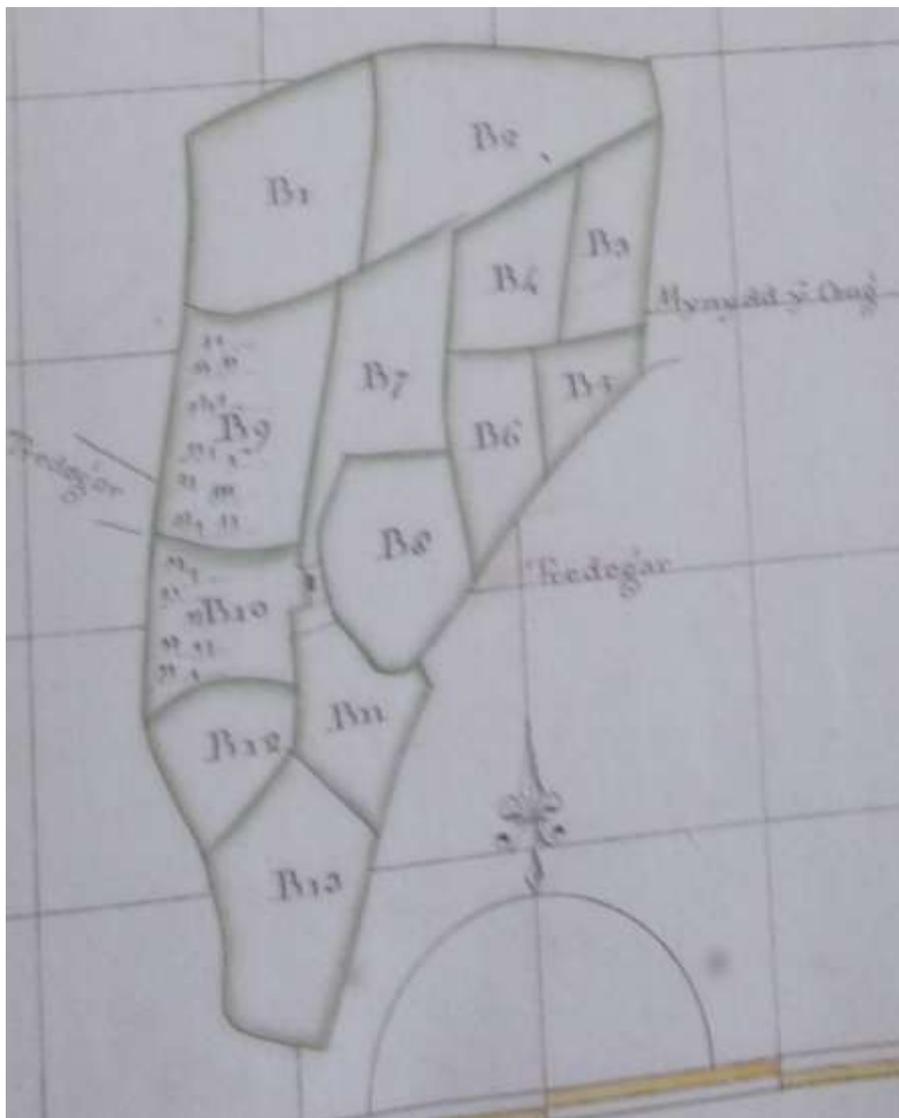


Figure 2 Ty Shors as featured in Robert Snell's 1760 survey of the Tredegar Estate (NLW)

The 1760 map represents the 13 enclosed fields with the homestead clearly marked as a dark rectangle, between B10 and B8, indicating that it was intact and probably occupied at this time. Field B8, which is located

upslope from the homestead, is named as ‘Ca Uchlwr Ty,’ i.e. field above the house, clearly indicating that Ty Shors was a house and not a barn. In addition given the location of the farms upper fields next to the extensive pasture of Mynydd y Grug Common the tenancy of Ty Shors would have come with prized grazing rights to the common. It is very likely that, at this time, the house would have been occupied by a shepherd or cowherd, and his wife and children, in the employ of Jenkins. At Michaelmas 1763 Jenkin John paid £12 10’ to the Tredegar Estate, presumably for Ty Shors, and the rent book further details that he will pay £25 for whole year in 1764.

Number	Name 1760	1774	Acreage
B1	Ca’r Tyler	Ca’r Tiler	5, 1, 24
B2	Ca’r Lan	Ca’r Lan	6, 0, 0
B3			2, 3, 0
B4			2, 1, 0
B5			1, 2, 0
B6			2, 2, 0
B7	Graig Fawr	Graig Fawr	3, 2, 0
B8	Ca Uchlwr Ty	Ca Uchlwr Ty	3, 0, 3
B9	Graig y Scibor	Graig y Scubor	4, 3, 10
B10	Graig Fach	Graig Fach	3, 2, 0
B11	Ca r Barra	Ca r Barra	2, 1, 10
B12	Ca Crm Bach	Ca Crin Bach	2, 0, 8?
B13	Ca Mawr	Ca Mawr	4, 1, 0
TOTAL 1760			44, 0, 5
TOTAL 1773			44, 0, 2

Figure 3 a comparison of field names and acreages from the 1760 and 1774 estate maps (NLW)



Figure 4 Ty Shors farmhouse as represented on the 1773 map. Two chimneys are clearly indicated

Figure 5 represents Ty Shors as being of 44 acres and 2 perches, slightly less than in 1760 but this may be simply due to a counting anomaly. What is particularly interesting though is that the map is colour coded to show land use with green denoting meadow, yellow representing arable and 'blew' sic (blue) now faded to grey indicating pasture or heath. As there is no obvious yellow we can assume that Ty Shors was an upland farm consisting of pasture, heathland and meadow.

An extensive search for both John Jenkins and Jenkin Jenkin has been carried of the National Library of Wales's catalogue but only one Jenkin John has been located and this particular person farmed in Van hamlet, which although in the Parish of Bedwas, was across the River Rhymney in Glamorganshire. In his will dated 1773 Jenkin John bequeathed his son Rees John his tenement in Rudry, Eglwysilan and Llanishen held by lease from 'Lord Plimouth' sic (the Earl of Plymouth who resided at St Fagan's Castle). His daughter Marg (or Mary) was left all the household goods and furniture but presumably this was in Van and not at either Pen-y-rhiw or Ty Shiors.



Figure 6 Welsh country cottage (circa 1900) from the Davies family collection. This cottage may have been located at Bedwas or Lower Machen however it does not represent Ty Shors which was already a ruin by this time. This cottage may have shared certain common features with the cottage at Ty Shors, (Linda Davies)

Into the Nineteenth Century

Edward Davies took possession of Ty Isaf in 1786 and it is possible that he, like his predecessor Jenkin John, may also have tenanted Ty Shors land for a few years. Edward Davies was a wealthy yeoman farmer and he would certainly have had the means and possibly the will to do this given that the tenancy of Ty Shors would have provided him with commoners rights to Mynydd y Grug. Edward had been born, the son of David Davies of Gelli Groes farm in the adjacent Mynyddislwyn parish on 10th Feb 1756. He died at Ty-isaf (Ty-isha) Bedwas on 29 November 1826. Edward had married Margaret Phillips of the Chapel Mynyddislwyn 10 November 1786 and the couple had at least four sons William Lewis Davies born 1787, later of Pontypandy, Joseph born 1793, later of Ty-isaf, John born 1795, later of Glyn Rhymney, Isaac born 1804, later of Ty Gwyn, and a daughter Rachel born 1790. While there is strong evidence from the land tax surveys that Edward Davies owned and occupied Ty Isaf and Ty Gwyn there is no evidence of him renting land from the Tredegar Estate in the 1798-1801 rent book of the overseer William Williams. Neither is there any evidence that he directly rented any land from the Estate in the land tax surveys dating from the first decades of the nineteenth century. This lack of evidence suggests that the Ty Shors was either tenanted independently or that it was combined in a joint tenancy with Pen-y-rhiw farm. This latter option seems the most likely as it had been combined with the adjacent farm under the tenancy of Jenkin John during the 1770s. The land tax surveys for the Upper Bedwas Hamlet taken between 1804 and 1829 indicate that a person, or persons, by the name of William Lewis was tenanting two Tredegar Estate properties. These are unnamed and valued at eleven shillings and one pound four shillings respectively. It could be that there were actually two William Lewises one who held Pen-y-rhiw and Ty Shors which may have been valued jointly at 11 shillings and the other William Lewis who tenanted The larger and more valuable Pant y Ffawydden, or Penlan, farm valued at £1 4 shillings. Tredegar Estate documents record that William Lewis is leasing Pen-y-Rhiw in 1837 but he must have passed away soon after, possibly in 1839 or 1840, as by the 1841 census his widow Ann Lewis, aged 75, is named as the farmer residing at Pen-y-Rhiw along with her three servants: Ann and Sarah Rowlands, aged 15 and 9 respectively and William Roberts, aged 11. Given Ann's age and the age and inexperience of her servants it seems unlikely that Ann was actually farming all of the 110 acres of Pen-y-rhiw. Tredegar Estate records state that Ty Shors was leased by William Morris in 1837 and this may indicate that this was the year that Pen-y-rhiw and Ty Shors were split into two separate holdings. William Morris first appears on Bedwas Upper land tax records in 1814 tenanting Cranwg & Duffryn Isha on the banks of the River Rhymney – this was a Tredegar Estate property valued at 18 shillings, He continues to appear on all the records up to the final one in 1829. Taking on the tenancy of Ty Shors would have provided Morris with access to grazing on Mynydd y Grug common. William Morgan was followed at Duffryn Isha by Morgan Edward around 1840 but it seems that Edward did not take the tenancy of Ty Shors so that opportunity fell to the Davies family of Ty isaf and Ty Gwyn.

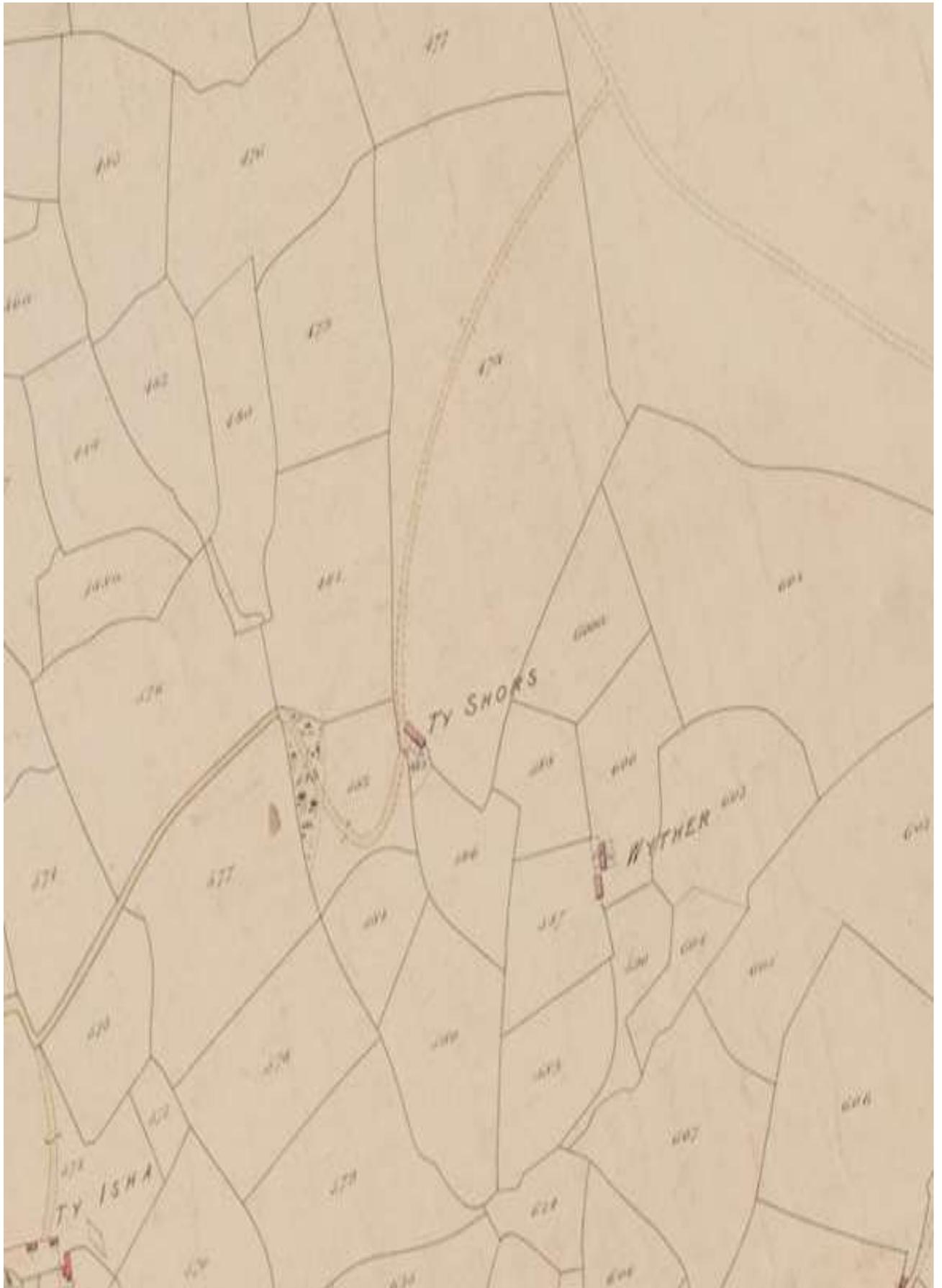


Figure 6 Ty Shors on the 1841 tithe map for the Parish of Bedwas (NLW)

The Parish of Bedwas Tithe survey of 1840 and the 1841 Census

William Morris's tenancy was a brief one as within three years the fields at Ty Shors would be split between Isaac Davies of Ty Gwyn and his older brother Joseph Davies Esq of Ty- isaf. This split is clearly indicated on the Bedwas apportionment, completed on 11 June 1840, with Isaac holding 41 acres and his brother 10 acres –see the table below. Joseph further holds an additional 12 acres of meadow adjacent to Ty-isha lands but not a part of Ty Shors on the 18th century estate maps.

Number On 1760 map	Number On tithe map	Name on tithe apportionment Ty Shors fields tenanted by Isaac Davies of Ty Gwyn Farm and land use	Acreage on tithe apportionment
B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B 7, B8,	478	Graig - pasture	24, 3, 12
B1	479	Cae Tiler - arable	6, 0, 32
B9 Graig'r Scibor	481	Graig Fawr - arable	6, 2, 7
	583	Brake	0, 3, 17
	585	Homestead & c	0, 0, 30
B10	582	Graig Fach - arable	2, 8, 39
		TOTAL	41, 2, 17
		Ty Shors fields tenanted by Joseph Davies of Ty-isaf Farm and land use	
B13	580	Cae Mawr - meadow	5, 2, 14
B12 (Ca Crm Bach)	581	Cae Bach - pasture	2, 1, 12
B11	586	Cae barre - arable	3, 0, 1
		Total	10, 3, 27
Marked as Tredegar lands but unnumbered		Tredegar fields not a part of Ty Shors 18th century maps tenanted by Joseph Davies of Ty-isaf Farm and land use	
	575	Cae Gwyn Isha meadow	4, 0, 10
	576	Cae Gwyn Ucha meadow	4, 1, 29
	577	Waun Genol meadow	4, 1, 12
		Total	12, 3, 11

In 1841 Isaac was a 36 years old farmer residing at Ty Gwyn along with his wife Jane (36), their children Edward (11), Phillip (7), Rachel (9) Margaret (4), and Sarah (2). In addition there were 3 servants resident with the family at Ty Gwyn. Isaac was an energetic yeoman farmer who farmed all the fields at Ty Shors, both his own and his brothers, along with his own farm Ty Gwyn, his brother's 50 acre holding between Ty'r Ywen and the Pandy Mawr near to Bedwas village, and also the 66 acres of Ty-isaf, which is called Ty Isha on the tithe apportionment. The rationale for the latter point is that, at this time, Joseph, Isaac's brother, was engaged in medical practice elsewhere in the south Wales valleys and does not appear on the Bedwas

census of 1841. Instead Ty-isaf house is occupied by an agricultural labourer named Richard Davies, aged 17, and 3 servants. Joseph had retired from medical practice by 1851 to reside at Ty-isaf, although by then he was 58 years old and married with a young wife and a daughter. Rather than being a farmer he would have been content to live the life of a respected magistrate and country squire pursuing his passion for hunting on horseback with his Welsh harrier hounds in tow.

There are no residents at Ty Shors during the period of the 1841 census, and the farm is not even mentioned as being unoccupied, although the building is represented as intact on the tithe map, so it may have already been redeployed by the Davies brothers as an agricultural building. Based on the representation on the tithe map, and later OS maps, it appears that the building has been extended with the construction of an attached animal house appended on to the north-western gable end of the house. It could well be that the building was converted around this time for solely agricultural use as the Davies family had no requirement for another house so close to their own two substantial farmhouses and several outhouses that could have provided temporary accommodation for seasonal labourers. It may be reasonable to assume that the two units were an animal house and a barn, although excavation would be necessary to confirm this.

It is likely that there were no further permanent residents at Ty Shors after the Davies family took on the tenancy. Isaac Davies died aged 55 in August 1859 and subsequently the farm was worked by Jane, his widow, and their four sons Edward, Phillip, Rees and William. Sadly Edward would die at Ty Gwyn aged just 47 in January 1878 so it would be Phillip who after his mother's passing aged 83 in 1888 became the main driving force within the family. Joseph Davies of Ty-isaf died aged 80 on 31st May 1873 and by 1881 Phillip, who never married, is resident at Ty-isaf with only an 18 year old servant girl for company. With the passing of their mother Rees, the remaining son also a bachelor, along with his eldest sister Margaret, also unmarried, would continue to reside at Ty Gwyn. Rees died in 1900 and left his estate over twelve thousand pounds to his brother Phillip. In turn Phillip died on 17th February 1911 and his Estate valued at over forty six thousand pounds was left to his nephews William Rowland Davies of Ty'n y Wern Farm Bedwas, and Phillip Rees Davies of Panteg Farm Lower Machen, and to his niece Ann Davies spinster. At the 1911 census Ann was resident at Ty-isha and her youngest sister Rachel, also unmarried, at Ty Gwyn. All were the offspring of Isaac's daughter Rachel who had married Samuel Davies of Ty'n y Wern farm at Bedwas Church in 1856 thus uniting the two prominent but hitherto unrelated Davies families of Bedwas.

By the time of the 1922 electoral register both Ty-isaf and Ty Gwyn, and also the tenancy of Ty Shors, had come into the possession of Phillip Rees Davies of Panteg Farm Lower Machen. Phillip never lived at either farm preferring to let both to tenants: Rees and Lily Edwards at Ty-isaf and James William and Elsie Nottingham at Ty Gwyn. The 1923 register indicates a change of residency at Ty-isaf with Thomas Price taking on the tenancy and the position of farm bailiff. Phillip Rees Davies of Panteg Farm sadly died on

18th March 1927 and in his will he left Panteg, Ty Gwyn and Ty-isaf to his sons Phillip Edward and William Frederick Davies of Panteg and his cousin Dr Noel Nathaniel Wade of Risca. Less than a year later Phillip's eldest son Phillip Edward Davies took the decision to leave Panteg in the hands of his younger siblings and returned to Bedwas to farm Ty-isaf and Ty Gwyn with the assistance of his brothers William and John who still resided at Panteg Farm. This seems to have been motivated by his marriage to Barbara Lewis in the first quarter of 1928.



Figure 7 Phillip Edward Davies of Ty-isaf (1897-1970). He returned to Ty-isha in 1928 and would purchase Ty Shors from the Tredegar Estate in 1943 (Davies family collection)

The Nottinghams had vacated Ty Gwyn sometime in 1927 which meant that when Phillip Edward moved to Bedwas the Price family could be relocated to Ty Gwyn. This appears to have occurred by late 1928 with the electoral register listing Thomas and Mary Price plus Walter Hugh and Olive May Davies, at Ty Gwyn. At the eve of world war two a census register was completed and the entries of Ty-isaf and Ty Gwyn are as follows:

Ty Isaf
Phillip E Davies (42) born 2.9.97 farmer own account, Barbara A Davies (42) born 7.10.97, unpaid domestic duties. Godfrey E Morgan (22) born 31. 1. 18 farm waggoner

Ty Gwyn

John T Price born 3.3.95 Farm bailiff, Catherine Price b 25.12.85 unpaid domestic duties, Mary G Price (Sargeant) 3.6.23 school, Eric J Price (18.2.37) under school age

Documents in the possession of the Davies family appear to indicate that Phillip Edward Davies was able to purchase Ty Shors and the two Tredegar owned fields between Ty Gwyn and Ty-isaf, Cae Gwyn and Waun Genol, via auction from the Tredegar Estate in 1943. Phillip would remain at Ty-isaf for the rest of his life before passing away in the last quarter of 1970. His wife Barbara Alice Davies continued to live at Ty-isaf until her own death on the 2 August 1979. Following probate in August 1980 the terms of Phillip Edward Davies will came to the fruition with the ownership of Ty Gwyn and Ty-isaf passing to Phillip's nephew Togarmah John Davies of Newport. John, the son of Phillip's younger brother Togarmah John Davies d. 1946, was a civil engineer by profession who reluctantly gave up his career to take on the agricultural responsibilities associated with farming not only Ty-isaf and Ty Gwyn but also Ty Shors and the Wyther which had been fully incorporated into Ty-isaf farm following their purchase from the Tredegar Estate. Sadly John Davies passed away in 2011 and the farm is now managed by his widow Linda. Linda says she knows little about Ty Shors or when the ruins there were last lived in. However significantly she says that the Davies family always were always aware of the ruins and called it by the name 'Ty Shors' and that it had been a part of Ty Gwyn and Ty-isaf farms for as long as anyone in the family could remember.

The Last Days of Ty Shors

What then for the ruins of the farmhouse? It is assumed that the farm complex, of house and cow house/barn were still complete in the mid nineteenth century. They appear intact on the tithe map as represented **below** in Fig. 7, however by the first 6 inch ordnance survey map of Bedwas, see Fig. 8, Ty Shors which was surveyed in 1875 the building is represented only in outline indicating it is roofless and probably already in ruins. However the 1915 map shows the outline of the roofless building but now an internal wall has been created and a gate installed, and it seems likely that these features indicate that the remains of Ty Shors have been redeployed by the Davies family, or their labourers, as sheep pens. This would make considerable sense as the ruins are situated beside the track from Ty-isaf up onto Mynydd y Grug common. Other stone ruins beside those of the ruined house may indicate that another rough building, possibly a shepherd's shed or store house, was created around this time. No other building is ever featured on maps of Ty Shors so it is assumed that this shed was a temporary structure probably roofed with zinc sheeting and eventually left to fall down when its original use had ended. The same fate came soon enough for the old farmhouse itself as by 1939 when the Monmouthshire XXVII.10 25 inch OS map was revised the old building is absent from the map and the remains of Ty Shors are not considered worthy

of inclusion even in outline. The fall of the house of Shors is almost complete, or is it? Luckily a portion of the front of the old house was incorporated into a dry stone wall. Its door and windows were blocked up with stone rubble but they are plain to see for anyone with a care to look and wonder why a field wall would ever have had reason to include a doorway and at least two ground floor windows.



Figure 7 Ty Shors farmstead on the 1841 tithe map (NLW)

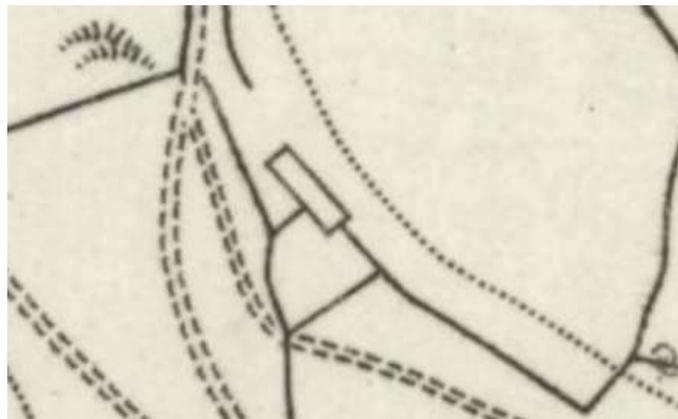


Figure 8 Monmouthshire XXVII 6inch OS map. Surveyed in 1875 and published in 1885 (NLS)



Figure 9 Ty Shors on the Monmouthshire XXVII.10 25 inch OS map. Revised in 1915 and published in 1920 (NLS)

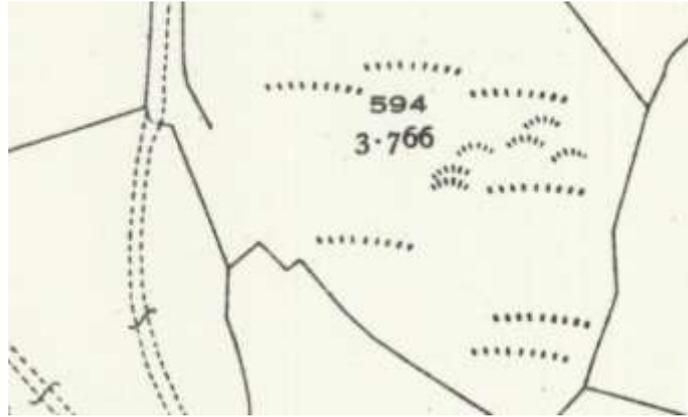


Figure 9 Ty Shors on the Monmouthshire XXVII.10 25 inch OS map Revised in 1939 and published in 1946 (NLS)

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Appendix: Photographs of Ty Shors farmstead



Figure 1 Remains of the stone shepherd's shed (RJS)



Figure 2 the blocked up door way and windows from inside (RJS)



Figure 3 fallen south-easterly gable wall. Possible location of fireplace and chimney (RJS)



Figure 4 Remains of the farm building from the North West looking over the remains of the cow house forwards the living accommodation. (RJS)



Figure 5 the front of the house showing rubble filled window and doorway (RJS)



Figure 6 The front of Ty Shors showing fine dry stone construction and rubble filled window space. (RJS)



Figure 7 Remains of south-east gable wall. (RJS)