

**P-04-607 Call for the Welsh Government to Purchase Garth Celyn –
Additional information submitted by third party**

William Powell and Members of the Welsh Assembly Government Petitions
Committee

PETITIONS COMMITTEE MEETING.

'Welsh Assembly Government to Purchase Garth Celyn'.

As someone who has been interested and personally involved in the Garth Celyn project, I should like to respond to the letter from Ken Skates as I feel that the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism has been somewhat misled by his advisers in this matter.

Apart from the occasional fleetingly brief courtesy visits, to my knowledge, no-one from CADW, the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT), Snowdonia National Park has been to Garth Celyn since 1994. At this time there was a very public fallout between two archaeologists in GAT and Professor David Austin; an event that led to egos being badly bruised and sadly had ongoing repercussions for the site. I ask you to please bear that fact in mind.

The name of the promontory is Garth Celyn. A name that goes back centuries. It has not a 'modern name' ; it has not been changed.

This is the 'medieval Garth Celyn' to which Ken Skates refers. This is the only arth Celyn'.

In November 1282, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the Prince of Wales, dated the last letters that he wrote before he was killed on 11th December, from his home 'GARTH KELYN'. Those letters are preserved in a Register in Lambeth Palace Archives.

In 1993/4 Professor Austin, Head of Archaeology at Lampeter, examined the standing structures on Garth Celyn, together with the documentary evidence and concluded that the the site was ancient and that the turret and sections of the walls could be dated to c.1200 and earlier. The elaborately carved sandstone found on the site was 12th century and certainly came from a 'High Status ' structure. Other scholars agreed / agree with his conclusions.

To avoid any doubt on the matter of the location and the antiquity of the name Garth Kelyn / Celyn, in 1998 Professor J. E. Caerwyn Williams, of the Board of Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth, together with Dr Gweneth Lilly, published 'Tystiolaeth Garth Celyn' (The Garth Celyn Evidence) in the academic journal.

Professor Caerwyn Williams was convinced 'beyond any reasonable doubt' that the promontory of Garth Celyn was the site of the Welsh royal home (not simply 'one of the llysoedd's). He supported the earlier findings of Professor T. Jones Pierce, Professor Ogwen Williams, Dr Colin Gresham and Professor David Austin.

<http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk/.../l.../llgc-id:1161938/get650>

The Paper 'Tystiolaeth Garth Celyn' together with other documentary evidence was submitted to CADW by Professor Caerwyn Williams in 1999. He wrote to Dr Gweneth Lilly some months later to say that he had not had a response.

Gwynfor Evans sent a further copy of the Paper to CADW and added his comment that Garth Celyn was and is a site of the 'greatest National Importance and should be acknowledged and respected as such'. He added that Garth Celyn 'held the Soul of the Nation.'

In 2005, BBC sent in a team of independent experts. Medieval scholar Dr Nick Barrett went to the National Archives in London and Aberystwyth, and the archives in Caernarfon and Bangor and found additional prime source documentary evidence that reinforced the earlier findings. The evidence linked the house, known as Pen y Bryn since the 18th century, and the promontory of Garth Celyn with the medieval Welsh royal home.

Building expert Dr Jonathan Foyle examined the structures and the carved sandstone, dating them again to 12th and 13th century.

Dr Foyle described the size of the thirteenth century complex, and said that it was in not only the main royal home of the Princes of Gwynedd, including the first Prince of Wales, but also the centre of government of its day.

A brief summary of the expert findings were broadcast by BBC in 2006 in a half hour programme 'History Mysteries'. The programme brought additional articles in

the National Press and tremendous public interest. Unfortunately, one of the individuals still nursing a bruised ego, made negative comments.

For your information and to clarify a point, about this time an individual calling himself 'Civis Romanus', among other aliases, began pouring scorn on Garth Celyn in the social media and Wikipedia. Dr Elizabeth Peterson, a scholar based at the University of Helsinki, visited Garth Celyn on several occasions. Dr Peterson followed the attempts by 'Civis Romanus' to deliberately and maliciously undermine and belittle the credibility of Garth Celyn using Wikipedia. Dr Peterson published a Paper on the subject in 2013.

In 2013 the historian Paul Martin Remfry, having carried out extensive documentary research, published his current research findings 'A brief Report on Pen y Bryn and Aber, Gwynedd' (112 pages). A summary of that Report was also uploaded to Academia in 2014. A copy of the Report was forwarded to CADW.

To my knowledge none of the findings of Austin, Caerwyn Williams, Evans, Davies Barrett, Foyle or Remfry have been challenged by any historian.

To my knowledge there is no documentary evidence that links the structure uncovered in the valley near the mill with the 13th century royal home and its associated buildings. That is a debate that should without doubt go under strict public scrutiny.

Historian and broadcaster Huw Edwards in the BBC production 'The Story of Wales' described Garth Celyn as "in all probability one of the most significant sites in the history of Wales". Many would agree with that.

Ken Skates makes light of the fact that Kathryn Pritchard Gibson, the present owner, has willingly and freely allowed public access to the property since 1988. This cannot in any way be compared to the 'Open Doors' or other Initiative. The list of visitors over the years is endless. Schools from all parts of Wales come regularly, students studying 'Siwan' for A level, members of Yr Urdd, history societies, drama groups, poets, artists and musicians. The list goes on and on. There has been tremendous interest from overseas from readers of the historical novels of Edith Pargeter, Barbara Erskine and Sharon Kay Penman and students studying British history in American universities. One article in the Telegraph by Byron Rogers, reprinted in Cambria, brought in over 8300 letters alone.

As a Nation we have a rare opportunity. An opportunity that should not be missed. It is true that the house is protected by its Grade II * Listing and part of the promontory is Scheduled as being of National Importance by the Ancient Monuments Board. But the place as Gwynfor Evans said is a place of Memory to the people of Wales and further afield who care about such things. It is ideally and uniquely situated to be a living, thriving Memorial to the Welsh Prince of Wales and his predecessors. Those of us who have been involved in some way as volunteers in this project to date ask that it be purchased by the Welsh Assembly Government and placed in the hands of independent Trustees and a Management Committee.

The promontory Garth Celyn could become a visible Memorial Garden overlooking the A55 Gateway coastal highway and the Menai Strait– a place for performances and events, or quiet contemplation. The house and / or cottage could, if that was the decision of the Trustees, be restored and let to visitors for part of the year (using the role model of Landmark Trust) to produce an income; the buildings could then be used for Exhibitions, meetings and lectures for the remaining part of the year. Because of its position the property is suited for that purpose which would be of the greatest public benefit. It could be self sustaining. It would bring in Cultural and Tourism benefits that would have a wide and lasting effect for all parts of Wales.

We ask that the Committee acts on this matter without delay.

Yours sincerely

Howard R.J. Kimberley

PETITIONS COMMITTEE MEETING. TUESDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2015

PETITION. 'WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT TO PURCHASE GARTH CELYN, AND PUT IT INTO THE HANDS OF AN INDEPENDENT TRUST'

Please will you let the Committee have details of this BBC clip' THE STORY OF WALES' Huw Edwards for the meeting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXREEQtvL2c>

Howard. R.J. Kimberley