



A SHORT HISTORY OF Y TALBOT

There has been a settlement at Tregaron since at least Norman times and a licence to hold a weekly fair was granted in 1292. St Caron's church tower dates from the 14th Century, but the site is far earlier, and probably dates to a pre-Christian period. It's clear that from the early medieval period Tregaron served as an important market town serving both the rich agricultural land of the Teifi valley to the west and the mountain pastures to the east.

Animal husbandry has long been an important part of the local economy and Tregaron served as a major droving centre for cattle, sheep and geese gathering here before setting out on the journey eastwards to Abergwesyn and thence to the Midlands and Smithfield Market in London. The needs of such a fluctuating population were supplied by an abundance of inns, blacksmiths and cobblers.

The exact age of Y Talbot is uncertain but it has probably served as an inn since at least the 1600s. In the 1850s a new hotel was built adjacent to the original tavern pub anticipating the advent of the railway line, opened in 1866. The railway put paid to the cattle droving but provided a quicker route to market for lamb, beef, horses and later on fresh milk.

When George Borrow arrived in Tregaron on his "Wild Wales" tour in the late 1850's, he was reminded of 'an Andalusian village overhung by its sierra' as he approached Tregaron on foot from Pontrhydygroes.

"Where is the inn?" said I to my companion.

"Yonder it be," said he, pointing to a large house at the further end of the market-place.

"Very good inn that - Talbot Arms - where they are always glad to see English gentlemen."

Well, George Borrow stayed the night and remarked in his book that "I received very good entertainment at the Talbot, had an excellent supper and a comfortable bed". Hopefully he would receive a similar welcome today!



As well as providing comfort to travellers Y Talbot has also been at the heart of the local community and the primary meeting place for its many clubs and societies as well as the venue for christenings, weddings and wakes, a tradition that still flourishes today. Ironically a congregation of (teetotal) Wesleyan Methodists worshipped in the Long Room above the coach house from 1802 until 1840 when their chapel was built. The Beehive Society, founded in 1827, its purpose to “support one another in times of sickness and ill health” also met here. The Talbot was also the location for the Quarter and Petty Sessions until 1877, when the Town hall was opened.

In front of the hotel, and with his back towards it, stands a statue of Henry Richard, 1812 - 1888. The son of Ebenezer Richard, the local minister and a leading figure in Calvinistic Methodism in Ceredigion, he trained for the ministry in London and became secretary of the Peace Society in 1848, which today is known as the United Nations. The statue, designed by Albert Toft, was erected by public subscription, and unveiled in 1893. The Bicentenary of his birth was recently celebrated in Tregaron and London.

As Tregaron’s principal inn and lodging place Y Talbot has not been short of colourful tales and characters. In 1848 Batty’s Menagerie came to town and left again with one less elephant. In 2011 the Archaeology Department at the University of Wales Trinity St David, led a dig to look for the grave in Y Talbot’s garden and inspired several local art and education projects. The “Swagman” Joseph Jenkins was a regular habitué both prior to emigrating to Australia and after his return. President Jimmy Carter enjoyed our hospitality in 1996 and again in 1999, combining fishing with visiting the many small chapels in the area which reminded him of the modest chapels of his birthplace.

In 2012 Y Talbot remains at the heart of this thriving market town and community and looks forward to many more centuries of serving locals and travellers alike, providing what George Borrow aptly described as “good entertainment, a good bed and a good supper.”