

World Heritage Site status for The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales – 2021

Gwynedd Council has now successfully secured The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The landscape demonstrates the spectacular story of evolution from a sparsely populated upland agricultural society to one dominated by the slate industry; with towns, quarries and transport links carving their way through the Snowdonia massif down to the iconic ports.

The Slate Landscape is the UK's 33rd UNESCO World Heritage Site, joining the likes of the Grand Canyon, the Vatican City, the Great Wall of China and Machu Picchu on the prestigious global list.

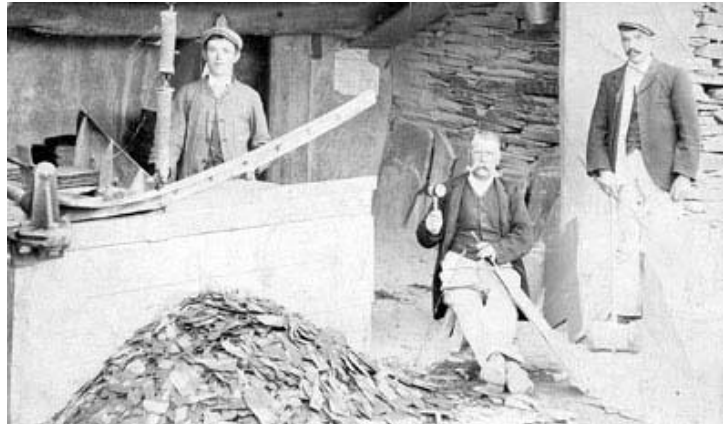
For more information, visit the official website

www.llechi.cymru

Welsh Slate Carvings

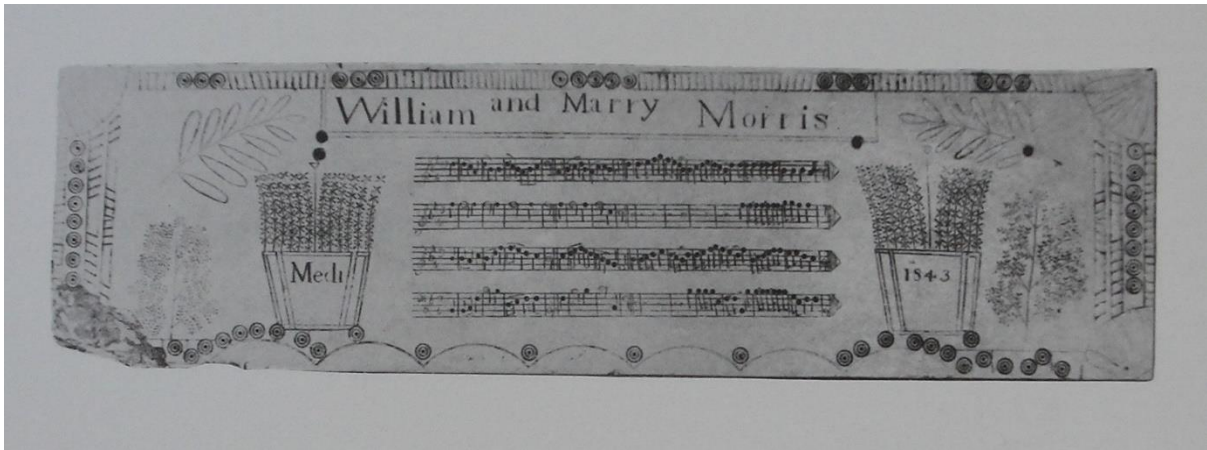
At one time, Penrhyn Quarry in the Ogwen Valley was the main producer of slate throughout the world. As a wealthy member of Parliament for Liverpool, quarry owner Richard Pennant had a good knowledge of the market requirements for slate. Between 1782 and 1808 when he died, annual quarry production increased from 1,000 tons to 20,000 tons.

The life of a quarryman was hard and dangerous, but rather than becoming ground down by his work, the majority took pride in their skills. There is no record of any formal training given to enable them to design and arrange patterns on slate, but clearly, purpose-made tools were devised and each carver developed their own personal technique.



These are some examples of a unique folk art practised by the quarrymen of the Ogwen Valley in Gwynedd.

CARVED SLATES



Musical score carved in slate - Tregarth

These intricate carvings, some of geometric and concentric patterns and others depicting everyday objects, musical scores, flowers, birds and plants, were created by some particularly skilled quarry workers in North Wales.

CARVED SLATES



Fireplace Slate – Dyffryn Ogwen 1823

Some of the best examples of this folk art date from around 1823 to 1845. Most were discovered in the Dyffryn Ogwen area, though a few examples have been discovered in Corris and Ffestiniog. Recent archeological investigations of the Dyffryn Nantlle region also revealed similar works.

Whilst most of the carved slates were used as fire surrounds, long thin slates were used to put under dressers and smaller carved decorative objects such as slate fans and miniature furniture were also created for the home.



Each gives a glimpse of what life was like in the period and what the quarrymen valued and enjoyed. Some of the slates can still be found in homes in the area, whilst others have been used in gardens and fields or simply thrown away.

This amazing astronomical chart was based on the work of a man from Pentir - John William Thomas who was a self-taught mathematician.

Some of his illustrations were spotted by the Greenwich Royal Observatory and he went to work for them, but still kept in touch with a friend in Tregarth.

She asked her brothers to carve out some of his astrological drawings onto slate, a copy of which now forms part of the carved slate collection at Storiell.

CARVED SLATES

The first carved slate was given to the Storiell Museum collection in 1943, and this was from the home of the musician John Parry who composed the song 'Cyfeillgarwch' ('Friendship'). It was carved by him for his fireplace in 1838. Gwenno Caffell, the secretary of Llandygai and Llanllechid Archeological Society was familiar with the slate, and when she came across another, she decided to search for more. Unfortunately, many of these examples have been destroyed as houses changed hands.

Bibliography

Caffell G. 1983, *LLechi Cerfiedig Dyffryn Ogwen*
Parry, WJ. 1897, *Chwareli a Chwarelwyr*
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