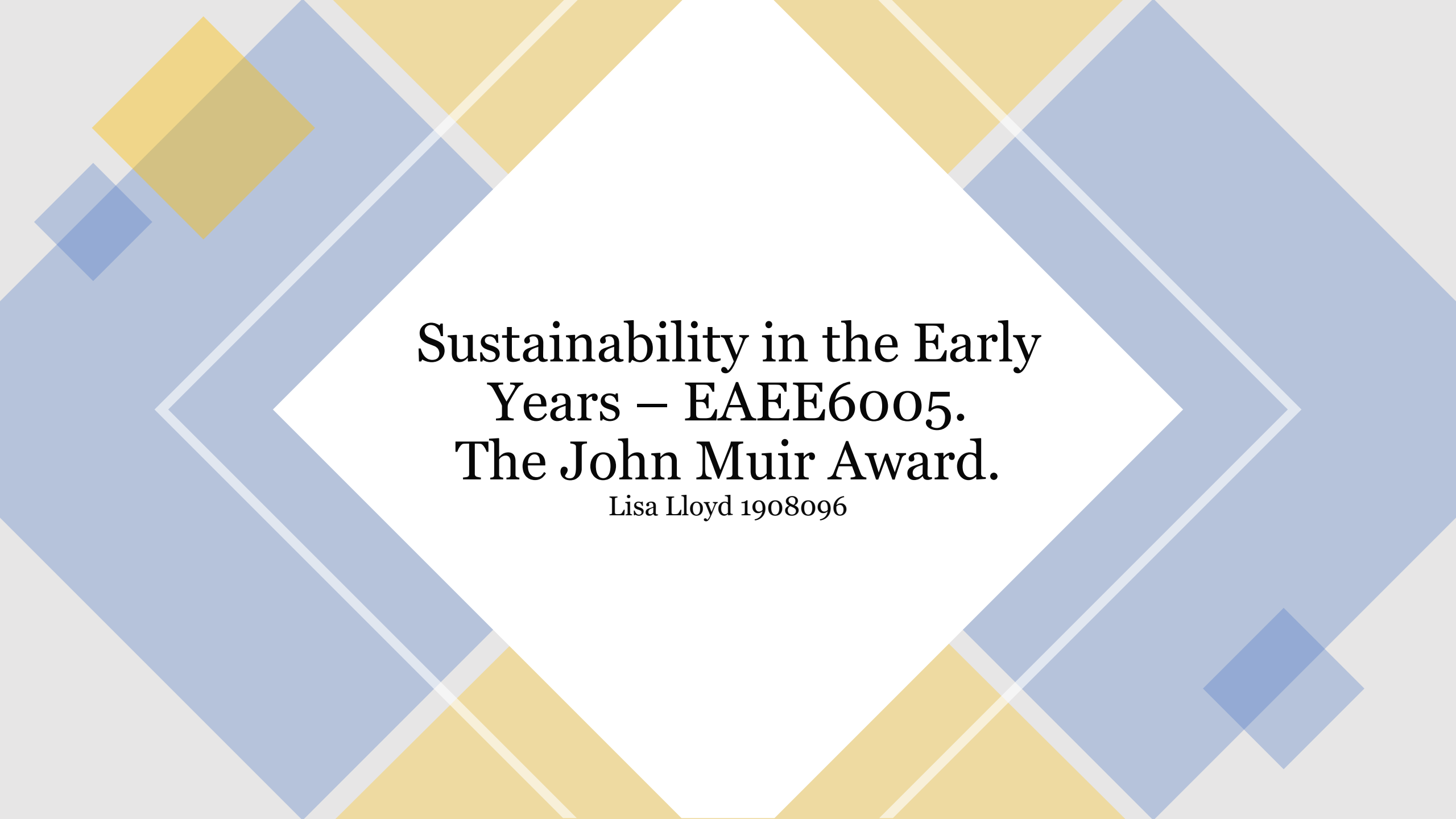




Sustainability in the Early Years – EAE6005. The John Muir Award.

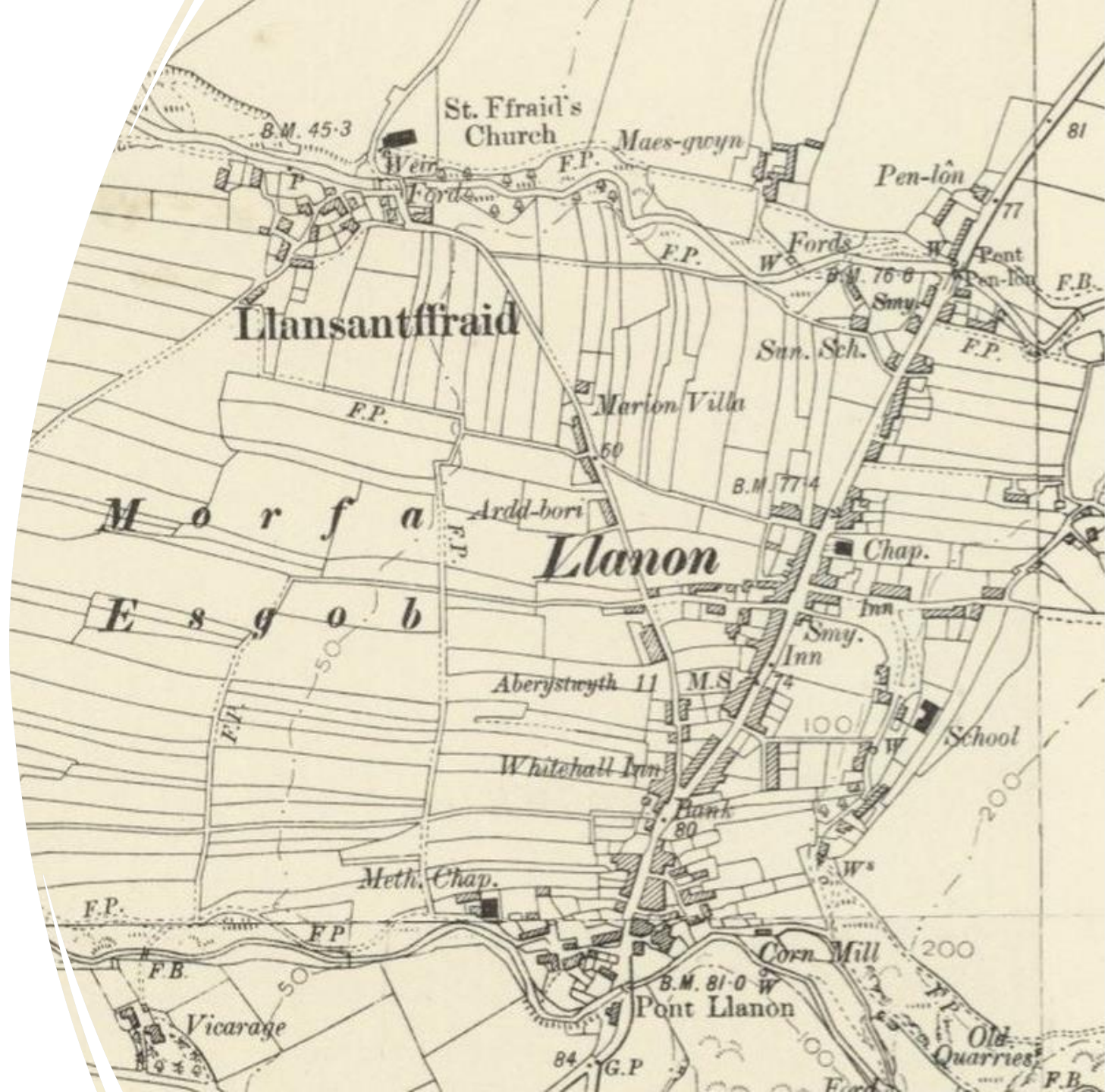
Lisa Lloyd 1908096

Ten Years ago my husband and I bought our family home.

It had been a homestead to several families over the centuries, finally ending its working life as a dairy farm.

The property gave us as a family a chance to realise our dreams of living in an old stone farmhouse and enjoying the land, it has been an interesting and at times stressful journey.

Penlôn was build in the 19th Century and appears on this map of 1888, although the property is much older as there are census returns for 1841 that show a William Jones who along with his wife Hannah lived at Penlôn with their six children and one servant.

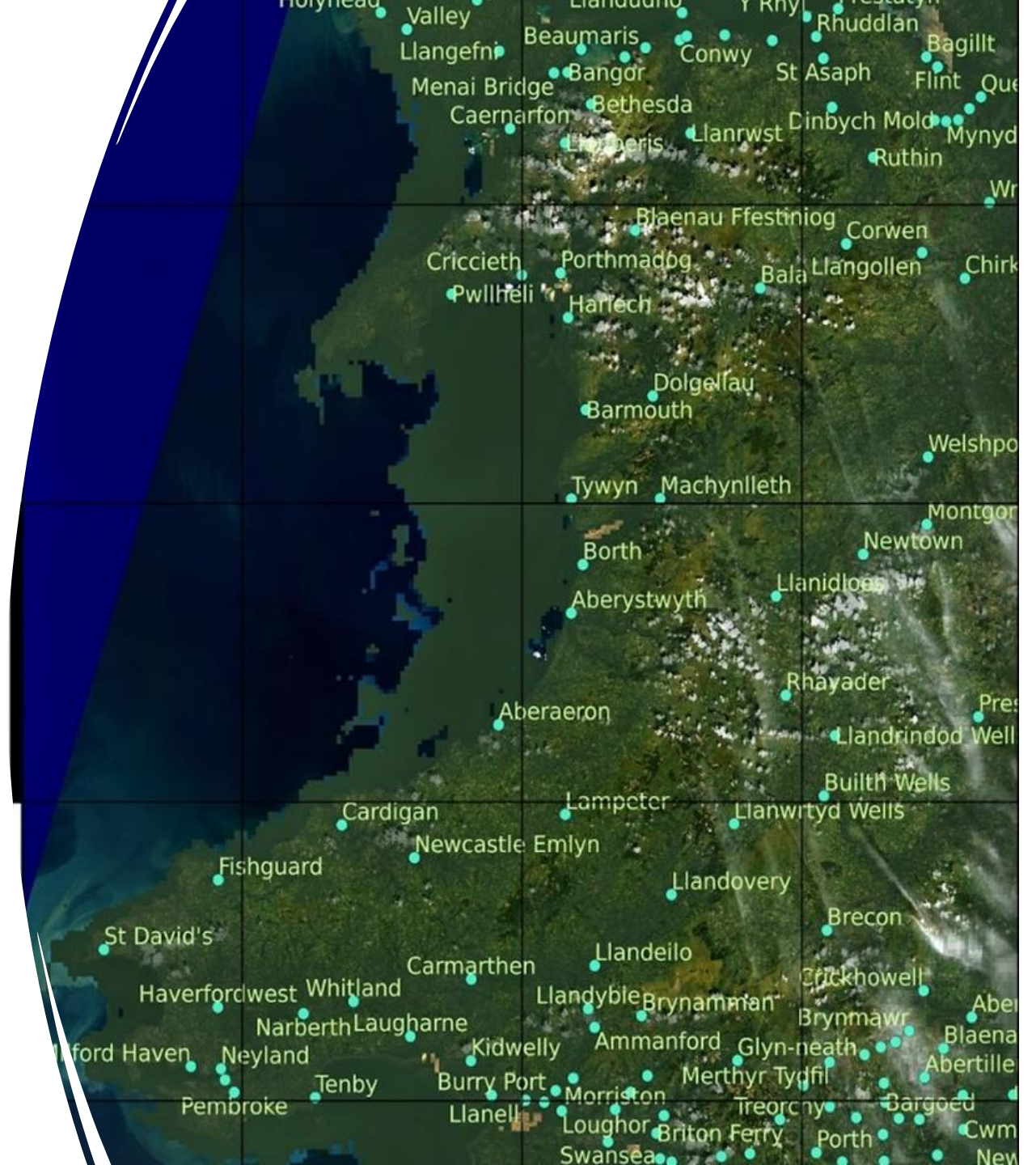




Penlôn is situated in the village of Llanon which is on the West Wales coast and adjacent to the Coastal Path. The village has some historical significance, it has an example of a 16th Century stone house, the first house in Ceredigion to have a Chimney and an 18th Century Welsh Cottage which is now a museum and also boast several although now in ruins, lime kilns. These unusual buildings known as Craiglas Kilns were used to burn lime which was imported by boat to the beaches at Llanon and nearby Llanrhystud from North and South Wales. The lime was then transported by horse and cart to the local farms which used it on their lands. Seaweed was also another natural fertilizer found in abundance on the beach and used in gardens and on farmland. Several families still use this traditional method in their gardens.

I am lucky to live in such a beautiful place. I wake up to hearing the birds singing and the waves crashing on the beach and the sunset over Cardigan Bay is the last thing I see at night. It is a magical place to live, not only for the diverse and abundant flora and fauna but also for the history and folklore. One of the most recognised legends connected to my 'milltir sgwar' is that of Cantre'r Gwaelod. The first reference to Cantre'r Gwaelod was made in the 13th Century in the Black Book of Carmarthen (Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin). The legend tells the story of a large tract of lowlands that now lie under the sea of Cardigan Bay. The land was extremely fertile and included sixteen cities which were ruled by Gwyddno Garanhir and defended from the sea by an embankment and sluice gates. The gates were opened at low tide to allow for the water to drain and closed again before high tide to avoid flooding. The daily opening and closing of these gates was an important part of life and the responsibility was given to Seithenyn. One evening during a banquet to celebrate Gwyddno's daughter Mererid's birthday, Seithenyn got extremely drunk and forgot to close the gates. The sea rushed in and drowned both the lands and the people. For centuries many have claimed to hear the ringing bells of the lost lands beneath the sea.

In recent years, storms have unearthed ancient tree stumps. These can be seen today at Borth where a stone causeway can also be seen disappearing into the sea. Many claim that this is proof of Cantre'r Gwaelod.



Clychau Cantre'r Gwaelod

O dan y môr a'i donnau
awel,

Mae llawer dinas dlôs,

Fu'n gwrando ar y clychau
dawel

Yn canu gyda'r nos;

Trwy ofer esgulustod

Y gwylwr ar y twr,

Aeth clychau Cantre'r Gwaelod
Gwaelod

Ô'r golwg dan y dwr.

Pan fyddo'r môr yn berwi,
mebyd,

A'r corwynt ar y don,

A'r wylan wen yn methu

A disgyn ar ei bron;

Pan dyr y don ar dywod,
tywod

A tharan yn ei stwr,

Mae clychau Cantre'r Gwaelod
Gwaelod

Yn ddistaw dan y dwr.

Ond pan fo'r môr heb

A'r don heb ewyn gwyn,

A'r dydd yn marw yn

Ar ysgwydd bell y bryn,

Mae nodau pêr yn dyfod,

A gwn yn eithaf siwr

Fod clychau Cantre'r

I'w clywed dan y dwr.

O! cenwch, gylch fy

Ar waelod llaith y lli;

Daw oriau bore bywyd

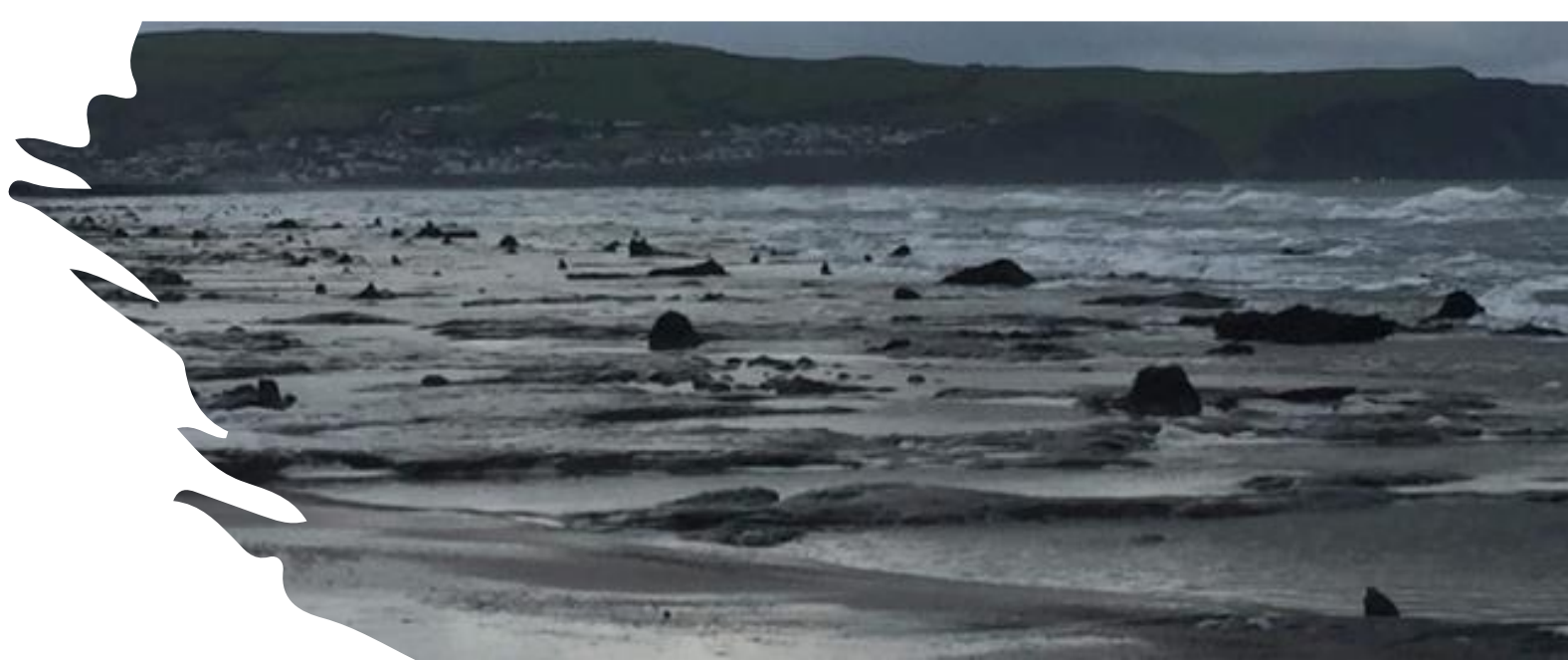
Yn swn y gân i mí;

Hyd fedd i mí gofia'r

Ar lawer nos ddi-stwr,

A chlychau Cantre'r

Yn canu dan y dwr.



Penlôn had previously been a dairy farm, seventy acres of the farm were sold separately and the remaining eight came with the farmhouse, outbuildings and yards. When we began renovating, we discovered that the previous owners had farmed in an unsympathetic way. We found several pits on the land where plastics and pesticide bottles had been buried. We decided that the land needed to rest and that we would organically maintain it. Watching the return of the wildlife that due to the continued spreading of slurry had lost their habitat and the regrowth of native plants has been wonderful. We now have a multitude of birds such as Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, Collared Doves and Goldfinches to name a few. We have Red Kites and Buzzards that fly over our field hunting daily for the field mice that live there. Listening to and answering their calls is a privilege! We also are visited occasionally by a Sparrow Hawk, he likes to feed on the Collared Doves that nest in our barns. Although we do not have a set on our land, badger tracks have been found in the earth on the perimeter of the field.



These are some of the birds that visit our garden and field, Sparrow Hawk, Nuthatch, Goldfinch, Buzzard, Kite and Woodpecker. The Birds of Prey nest in the trees near the stream and the garden birds are fed in our back garden, we feed them home made fat balls and seeds.





The hedgerows have returned to their natural state. Although stinging nettles seem to be taking over this year we have Poppies which self seed around the garden and field, Wild Roses, Elderflower, Honeysuckle and Brambles growing amongst the Blackthorn. These provide shelter and the pollen provides food for insects that have returned. We collect the Blackberries in September to make jam and to freeze for the winter and at the end of May and the beginning of June we collect the Elderflowers to make Champagne! This we drink when we are able to sit in the garden on a fine summers evening listening to the Blackbirds singing and watching the sun set. The recipe I use for the champagne is available at

<https://www.greatbritishchefs.com/recipes/elderflower-champagne-recipe>



A year after moving in I bought some chickens to provide us with eggs. Nothing beats the taste of organic, free range eggs!! Over the last nine years I have developed a passion for keeping pure and rare breed chickens. Their egg production is less per year than the commercially raised hens but they lay for longer, approximately 250 eggs per year for between 6 and 8 years. I keep Wyandottes, Orpingtons and Brahmas.



In the future I would like to introduce some bee hives to produce our own honey. We aim to plant some bee friendly plants such as Lavender, Rosemary and Ox-Eye Daisies in the hedgerows and in the garden. This would not only feed our bees but also provide a food source for the other insects and encourage pollination which in turn will help sustain the wild bee population.

The Covid Pandemic has made me appreciate how lucky I am to be able to engage with nature right on my doorstep. I live near the sea and I work in another country village which has its own historical and ecological story to tell.

