

# Y Cambria The Cambria

Elgan Philip Davies



Yn 1788 fe lesiodd Bwrdeisiaid Aberystwyth ddarn o dir ar lan y môr 'rhwng y castell a'r Tollty' i Syr Uvdale Price o Foxley, Swydd Hampshire i adeiladu tŷ. Y tŷ hwnnw, a gynlluniwyd gan John Nash, ac a gwblhawyd erbyn 1795, oedd Castle House a estynnwyd yn ddiweddarach i fod yn gartref y brifysgol gyntaf yng Nghymru.

Hyd 1762 roedd harbwr Aberystwyth yn 'gilfach' i Aberdyfi ac ni allai llongau hwylio o Aberystwyth heb ganiatâd Tollty'r ardal yn Aberdyfi. Wrth i Aberystwyth dyfu, deisebodd gwŷr busnes a pherchnogion mwyngloddiau'r ardal i symud y Tollty i Aberystwyth. Buont yn llwyddiannus, ac yn 1773 ail-leolwyd y Tollty i adeilad newydd ar safle lle mae Heol y Wig a'r Rhodfa Newydd yn cyfarfod heddiw. Golygai hyn ei bod yn haws i longau hwylio o Aberystwyth gan brysuero datblygiad y dref fel canolfan bwysig i adeiladu llongau, psgygot, mewnforio nwyddau a thwristiaeth.

Arhosodd y Tollty ar y cornel hwnnw hyd ganol yr 1840au pan symudwyd ef yn agosach i'r harbwr, i Stryd y Ro, a gafodd ei hailenwi yn Stryd y Tollty. Cadwyd enw Stryd y Ro drwy ei drosglwyddo i Stryd y Traeth. Daeth adeilad yr hen Dollty yn gartref i Dr Richard Gilbertson a'i deulu, a hefyd yn feddygfa iddo ef a pharhaodd felly hyd yr 1890au pan ymddeolodd y meddyg a symud i Maes Lowri i fyw.

Yn Nhachwedd 1894 ymddangosodd nodyn tair llinell yn y *Cambrian News* yn dweud, 'Mae'r estyniad i'r tŷ a fu tan yn ddiweddar yn eiddo i Dr Gilbertson ar y Rhodfa, y bwriedir ei agor y tymor nesaf fel gwesty, wedi ei ddechrau.'

Parhaodd twf Aberystwyth fel cyrchfan wyliau drwy gydol y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg gan ddenu entrepreneuriaid o bell i fuddsoddi yn y dref. Yn 1893 daeth partneriaeth John Bourne a Thomas Grant i Aberystwyth, a gyda chymorth gwŷr busnes lleol cyflwynwyd cynlluniau i wella cyfleusterau'r Pier, datblygu Rheilffordd a Gerddi Craig-glais ac adeiladu 'gwesty o'r radd flaenaf dan reolaeth dda.'

Castle House tua 1840 gyda rhan o forglawdd o'i flaen

Castle House circa 1840 with a section of sea wall in front



Llun cynnar o'r Tollty, y filas. a'r Coleg

Early photo of Customs House, the villas and the College



In 1788 the Burgesses of Aberystwyth leased a strip of common land on the sea front, 'between the castle and the Customs House', to Sir Uvdale Price of Foxley, Hampshire, to build a house. The house, designed by John Nash and completed by 1795, was Castle House which was later extended to become the home of the first university in Wales.

Up until 1762 Aberystwyth harbour was a 'creek' under Aberdyfi and ships were not allowed to sail out of Aberystwyth without the permission of the area Customs House at Aberdyfi. As Aberystwyth grew, businessmen and mine owners in the area petitioned to move the Customs House to Aberystwyth. They were successful, and the Customs House was relocated to a new building, completed in 1773, on the corner of where today Pier Street and the New Promenade meet. This made it easier for ships to sail from Aberystwyth and allowed the town to develop as an important centre for shipbuilding, fishing, importing goods and tourism.



Ysgyfyrdd o 1869 sy'n edrych tuag at y Tollty

An engraving from 1869 looking towards Customs House

The Customs House remained on the site until the mid 1840s when it was moved nearer to the harbour, to Sea View Place, which was subsequently renamed Custom House Street. Sea View Place was retained as a street name by renaming Beach Street. The old Customs House building on Pier Street then became the home of Dr Richard Gilbertson and his family, and also his surgery, and it remained so until around 1890 when he retired and moved to Laura Place.

In November 1894 a three line announcement appeared in *The Cambrian News* saying that 'The extension of the house lately occupied by Dr Gilbertson on the Terrace and intended to be opened next season as an hotel has been commenced'.

Aberystwyth's rise as a holiday destination continued throughout the nineteenth century with entrepreneurs from far afield investing in the town. In 1893 the partnership of John Bourne and Thomas Grant arrived in Aberystwyth and with the help of local businessmen drew up plans to improve the facilities on the Pier, develop the Constitution Hill Cliff Railway and Gardens and build a 'first-class and well managed hotel'.

Y gwesty hwnnw oedd Gwesty'r Cambria a gynlluniwyd gan George Croydon Marks, a gynlluniodd hefyd Bafliwn y Pier oedd yn ychwanegiad i'r Pier gwreiddiol a agorwyd ar ddydd Gwener y Groglith 1865. Cwblhawyd y Pafliwn - ynghyd â nifer o adnewyddiadau eraill - o fewn naw mis ac roedd yn barod i gynnal derbyniad ar gyfer Tywysog a Thywysoges Cymru a ymwelodd â'r dref ar 26 Mehefin 1896 i gyflwyno siartr i Brifysgol Cymru.

Dyma hefyd pryd yr agorodd y Dywysoges Alexandra Neuadd Alexandra a, fel y cyhoeddodd y *Cambrian News* yr wythnos flaenorol, 'Deallwn bydd Tywysoges Cymru, trwy ddyfais electronig mewn llestr inc arian, yn agor Rheilffordd Craig-glais a'r Pafliwn drwy gynnu'r cerrynt.' Deillia'r enw 'Y Pier Brenhinol' o'r ymweliad hwn.

Cyn i Westy'r Cambria gael ei gwblhau, trosglwyddwyd holl gynlluniau Bourne a Grant i Gwmni Gwella Aberystwyth a grëwyd ym mis Mai 1895. Agorwyd y gwesty ar 31 Gorffennaf 1896 a derbyniodd ganmoliaeth uchel am wychder safon y llety gydag 'addurniadau a dodrefn wedi eu darparu gan Messrs Waring o Lundain, addurnwyr a gwneuthurwyr clustogwaith i'w Mawrhydi y Frenhines' a'r cyfan dan reolaeth rheolwr profiadol, 'Monsieur E.M. Thierry, a oedd tan yn ddiweddar yn rheolwr dros dro ar Westy Cecil, Llundain.'

Gan fod perchnogion Gwesty'r Cambria hefyd yn berchen ar y Pier, un nodwedd ddiddorol i'r rhai a arhosai yn y gwesty oedd ei bod yn bosibl iddynt gael bath o ddŵr y môr yn syth o'r tap gyda'r dŵr yn cael ei bwmpio â thrydan yn uniongyrchol o'r môr o ben pella'r Pier. Ymfalchiai'r gwesty hefyd yn ei olau trydan.

Ond er gwaetha'r atyniadau arloesol hyn ni ffynnodd y gwesty, a deng mlynedd yn ddiweddarach roedd yr adeilad ar werth. Yn rhifyn 26 Ionawr 1906 cyhoeddodd y *Cambrian News* fod 'newyddion ar led yn Aberystwyth ddoe fod Gwesty'r Cambria, ar Rodfa'r Môr, a Chae'r Ficerdy, wedi eu gwerthu i Mr John Francis, arwerthwr o Gaerfyrddin; ond yn fwy na bod yr eiddo wedi ei werthu, ac yn ôl pob tebyg na fyddai trwydded y gwesty yn cael ei hadnewyddu fis Hydref nesaf, ni chafwyd mwy o wybodaeth.'

Hysbysebion o'r 1890au

# ABERYSTWYTH

HAS BEEN CALLED

## The Biarritz of Wales.

It affords all the ADVANTAGES OF FOREIGN TRAVEL without its expense and inconvenience.

THE INTERESTING LANGUAGE OF THE ANCIENT BRITONS IS STILL SPOKEN IN TOWN AND COUNTRY, and every inch of soil is as full of POETIC TRADITION AND HISTORIC ASSOCIATION as that of Scotland or Ireland, while the surrounding country has

UNRIVALLED NATURAL ATTRACTIONS.

Aberystwyth affords a THOROUGH CHANGE AND PICK-UP after the fatigues of Society and the worries of Business, and is a wonderful builder up of the Constitutions of Weakly Children as well as a

POWERFUL RESTORATIVE OF CONVALESCENTS AND INVALIDS.

An Eminent Authority on Climate declares that there is more Ozone at Aberystwyth than on any other part of the British Coasts. The Town faces the Atlantic, and has no land between it and America. ABERYSTWYTH is an

## Excellent Winter Resort.

Snow is seldom seen and never remains long on the ground; the Temperature is equable and genial; and Registered Sunshine higher than that of Torquay or Bournemouth without relaxing effects.

THE TOWN AUTHORITIES HAVE SPENT OVER £10,000 in making the Sanitary Arrangements Perfect, with successful results. A MAGNIFICENT SUPPLY OF DRINKING WATER

has been obtained at a cost of £20,000 from Plynlimon Mountain. The Aberystwyth Improvement Company has spent over £100,000 in the provision of the means of

## ENTERTAINMENTS.

Aberystwyth is an Unrivalled Centre for Drives and Day Excursions.

Quite HALF-A-MILLION of MONEY has been spent during the past five years in Private and Public Buildings.

Aberystwyth is the Home of the UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF WALES, to which is attached the Royal Alexandra Hall for Lady Students, and is in other respects an IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL CENTRE.

Tourist Tickets are issued to Aberystwyth from all the Principal Stations in the Kingdom, and during the Summer Return Tickets are issued from London at One Guinea.

The hotel was the Hotel Cambria, designed by George Croydon Marks, who also designed the Pier Pavilion which was an addition to the original Pier that had opened on Good Friday 1865. The construction of the Pavilion – and a number of renovations – was completed in nine months and was ready by 26 June 1896 when it was used for a reception for the Prince and Princess of Wales who were visiting Aberystwyth to grant its charter to the University of Wales.

Adverts from 1890's

ABERYSTWYTH



**HOTEL CAMBRIA**  
ABERYSTWYTH.

This Magnificent Hotel faces the Sea, and commands Magnificent Views of the Coast.

**LUXURIOUSLY FURNISHED. PERFECT SANITATION.**  
*Hot and Cold Sea Baths in the Bath Rooms.*

**ELECTRIC LIGHT IN EVERY ROOM. BILLIARD & SMOKING ROOMS.**

HYDRAULIC PASSENGER LIFT. **MODERATE TERMS.**

For Tariff, Address – THE MANAGER.

Princess Alexandra also opened Alexandra Hall and, as *The Cambrian News* had announced the previous week, 'We understand that the Princess of Wales, by an electric arrangement in a silver inkstand, will open the Cliff Railway and the Pavilion by simply turning on a current.' The title, 'Royal Pier' derives from this visit.

Before the Hotel Cambria was completed, the Bourne and Grant projects were taken over by the Aberystwyth Improvement Company which had been formed in May 1895. The Hotel Cambria opened on 31 July 1896 to high praise regarding its 'palatial accommodation' with 'decorations and furnishing [having] been carried out by Messrs Waring of London, the decorators and upholsterers to Her Majesty the Queen' and under an experienced manager, 'Monsieur E.M. Thierry, the late acting manager of the Hotel Cecil, London'.

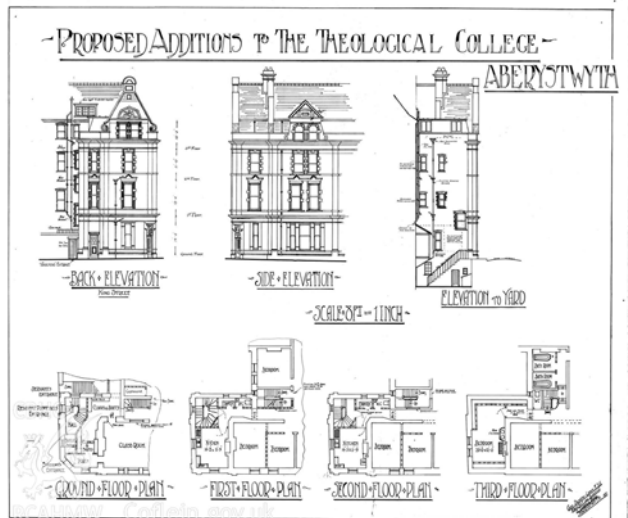
As the owners of the hotel were also the owners of the Pier, one interesting feature was that visitors staying at the Cambria could have a bath of sea water at the turn of a tap, with the water electrically pumped straight from the sea at the end of the Pier. The hotel also boasted electric lights.

However, despite these innovations and unique selling points, the hotel did not prosper and ten years later the building was put up for sale. In its 26 January 1906 issue, *The Cambrian News* announced that 'news was circulated at Aberystwyth yesterday that the Hotel Cambria, on the Marine Terrace, and the Vicarage Field, had been sold to Mr John Francis, auctioneer, Carmarthen; but beyond the fact that the property had been sold and that the licence of the hotel would not probably be renewed next October no information could be obtained.'

Ac yn absenoldeb gwybodaeth bendant pwy oedd y prynwr, roedd y sion yn rhemp, yn enwedig gan ei bod yn wybyddus fod y Brifysgol yn chwilio am le i ehangu o'r Hen Goleg: 'Gan fod Gwesty'r Cambria bron yn ffinio â Choleg Prifysgol Cymru, tybiwyd fod yr adeilad wedi ei gael gan y Coleg. Ond deallir, fodd bynnag, nad yw hyn yn gywir.'

Ond ym mis Mawrth adroddodd yr *Aberystwyth Observer*, 'Y bore yma galwodd cynrychiolydd o'r *Observer* ar Mr John Francis, Caerfyrddin, yng Ngwesty'r Cambria, ac yn ystod eu sgwrs dywedodd Mr Francis mai ef heddiw yw perchennog y gwesty a chae'r Ficerdy, a'i fod yn gwneud ei drefniadau fel perchennog, ond yfory bydd yn eiddo i Mr David Davies, Plas Dinam.'

Gan fod David Davies a'i deulu yn noddwyr haul o'r Coleg, ychwanegodd yr adroddiad hwn at y dyfalu bod Gwesty'r Cambria wedi ei brynu ar gyfer y Brifysgol. Ond, gan fod David Davies a'i deulu eisoes wedi rhoi arian i adeiladu Labordai Cemegol Edward Davies, er coffadwriaeth i'w dad, ac i gynorthwyo'r Coleg gyda'i angen am fwy o lety, roedd gan deulu Llandinam gynlluniau eraill ar gyfer y Cambria. Yn Ebrill 1906 cyhoeddwyd bod yr adeilad wedi ei neilltuo ar gyfer 'coleg i'r Methodistiaid Calfnaid...yn lle Coleg Trefeca, ger Talgarth.'



Cynlluniau ar gyfer y Coleg  
Diwinyddol Unedig

Plans for The United  
Theological College

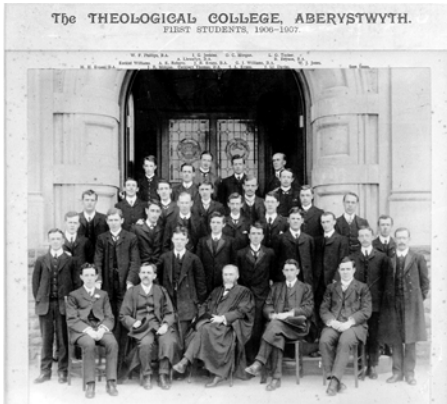
Yn ystod y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf fe leolwyd Ysbyty'r Groes Goch yn y Cambria. Ni chodwyd rhent am yr adeilad, a chynigiodd gwŷr meddygol Aberystwyth yn unfrydol, eu gwasanaethau am ddim, tra bod pobl leol yn cefnogi'r ysbyty trwy gyflenwi llawer o'r bwyd. Cyrhaeddodd y milwyr clwyfedig cyntaf ym mis Mehefin 1916 ac adroddodd y *Cambrian News* eu bod yn cael amser da yn Aberystwyth 'ond dim gwell nag y mae'r cymrodyr dewr yn ei haeddu.' Caeodd yr ysbyty yn y diwedd ar 3 Chwefror 1919 ar ôl noson o ddawnsio.

Wedi'r rhyfel, bu'r Cambria yn gartref i'r Coleg Diwinyddol tan iddo gau ym mis Mai 2003, ac yna cafodd yr adeilad ei droi'n ganolfan fusnes. Ond yn awr, cant ac un deg saith o flynyddoedd ar ôl i gynifer dybio fod yr adeilad yn eiddo i Goleg Prifysgol Cymru, a gyda diolch i arian o'r Gronfa Ffyniant Bro, y mae yn eiddo i Brifysgol Aberystwyth ac yn rhan o brosiect 'Bywyd Newydd i'r Hen Goleg'.

And in the absence of solid information as to the identity of the buyer, rumours abounded, especially as the University was known to be looking for room to expand from the Old College: 'As the Hotel Cambria almost adjoins the University College of Wales it was conjectured that the property had been acquired for the College. It is understood, however, that that is not the fact.'

But in March the *Aberystwyth Observer* could report, 'This morning a representative of the Observer called upon Mr John Francis, Carmarthen, at the Hotel Cambria, and in the course of a conversation Mr Francis said that today he is the owner of the hotel and the Vicarage field, and is making arrangements accordingly, but tomorrow the property will belong to Mr David Davies, Plas Dinam.'

Llun o'r myfyrwyr cyntaf    Photo of the first students



As David Davies and his family were generous benefactors of the College, this further fuelled speculation that it had been bought for the University. But as David Davies and his family had already donated money to build the Edward Davies Chemical Laboratories in honour of his father, and to help alleviate the accommodation problem, the family had other plans for the Cambria, and in April 1906 it was announced that the building was intended 'as a college for the Calvinistic Methodists... as a replacement for Trefecca College near Talgarth.'



Llun o staff a chleifion yr ysbyty tu allan i'r Cambria yn ystod y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf

Photo of hospital staff and patients outside the Cambria in the First World War

During the First World War a Red Cross Hospital was based in the Cambria. No rent was charged for the building and the medical men of Aberystwyth unanimously offered their services for free, while local people supported the hospital by supplying much of the food. The first wounded soldiers arrived in June 1916 and *The Cambrian News* reported that they were having a good time in Aberystwyth 'but no better than the brave fellows deserve.' The hospital finally closed its doors on 3 February 1919 after an evening of dancing.

After the war the Cambria remained the Theological College until May 2003 when it closed, and the building became a business centre. Now, however, one hundred and seventeen years after it was first rumoured, the building *is* the property of Aberystwyth University, thanks to money from the Levelling Up Fund, and is part of the 'New Life for Old College' project.

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For further information on the history of

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