

Discover the Five Villages

*Carmel · Gorsedd · Lloc*

*Pantasaph · Whitford*



# Welcome to the Five Villages

The five villages of Whitford parish; Carmel, Gorsedd, Lloc, Pantasaph, and Whitford have a fascinating history.

The standing stones and numerous barrows, where Bronze Age peoples buried their dead, indicate that the area was settled in Prehistoric times.

For centuries it was disputed territory on the border of Wales and England, changing ownership several times. Since early times, important transport routes have passed through the parish, from prehistoric tracks, Roman roads, drovers' routes and coaching roads to the modern A55 expressway that cuts through the parish. Successive waves of newcomers swelled the local population. Some were war-like, others were more interested in trade, finding work or spiritual comfort. Some just passed through, others settled and became part of the local communities.

Wealthy local landowners have had a considerable influence on the villages. The Mostyn family and the Pennant family at Downing were great benefactors to Whitford. Viscount Feilding, who later became the Earl of Denbigh, built Pantasaph church and friary.

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Industry developed in late 18th and early 19th centuries, particularly lead mining in the limestone areas, with smelting on the coast. Following the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution, new mines opened and there was a rapid increase in output. Sandstone and limestone were also quarried locally. The population rose and communities developed as a result of the industrial growth. Carmel, Gorsedd, Pantasaph and Lloc developed to house miners and quarrymen. Churches, chapels and schools were built to serve the increased population.



Numerous village churches and chapels remain, ranging from the simple but cherished Lloc chapel to the grander Pantasaph church and friary.

The rolling landscape has always been farmed. It varies from the open sheep-grazed common to the east to the more fertile agricultural land to the west. The higher ground offers wide views out to sea, or across to the Clwydian Range and the Denbigh moors.

These village communities each have their own character, shaped by their history and the surrounding landscape. They have changed considerably throughout the centuries but continue to thrive.

This booklet has been produced by the local community to celebrate the rich cultural and natural heritage of the area. Many thanks to all who have provided photographs or shared their memories and knowledge and to Ysgol Bro Carmel and Ysgol y Llan, Whitford.

The booklet can also be downloaded from [www.cadwynclwyd.co.uk](http://www.cadwynclwyd.co.uk) or [www.flintshire.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/tourism)



# Through the ages

**2000BC**  
Bronze Age tribes farmed locally. Numerous barrows remain, where they buried their dead.



**Circa 600s**  
First church may have been built in Whitford, dedicated to St Beuno.



**50-60**  
A Roman road ran through Carmel and Gorsedd. Romans mined and smelted lead locally.



**Circa 600s**  
Whitford Dyke built. Remnants of this earth bank that ran from near Holywell to Trelawnyd can still be seen today.



**Circa 1000**  
Maen Achwyfan cross, reputedly the tallest wheelcross in Britain, was built near Whitford.



**1086**  
Whitford and Calcot mentioned in Domesday Book.

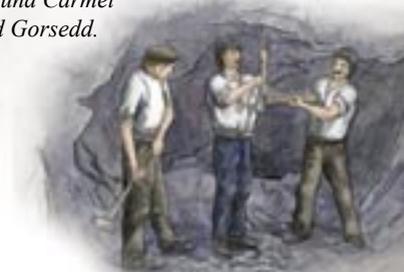


**1768**  
First races held at Holywell Racecourse, near Gorsedd.

**1757**  
Turnpike Acts passed to improve Flintshire's roads. Ten toll-gates built locally.



**1773**  
Holywell Level Company began mining the Great Holloway Vein around Carmel and Gorsedd.



**1814**  
Carmel Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Chapel built.



**1849**  
Work began building Pantasaph church, and later, the Franciscan Friary and stations of the cross.



**1852**  
Work began building Gorsedd church.

**1848**  
Holywell Lime Company built a mineral line serving White Quarry and Grange Cavern.



**1951**  
Carmel School opened.



**1886/87**  
Locals rebelled against paying tithes. Soldiers brought to Pentreffynnon, Whitford, to help bailiffs collect tithes.

# Border country

The Five Villages have had a turbulent past due to their location on the border of Wales and England, their proximity to the coast and the potential mineral wealth below ground.

Roman Legions would have marched through the area, as it was under control of the 20th Legion, based in Chester, and was en route to the large Roman settlement at Caernarfon. However, the Romans were probably more interested in trading than fighting, exploiting the local lead and other minerals.

Whitford Dyke is another reminder of the borderland history. This tall bank, with a ditch on both sides, runs from Gorsedd to Trelawnyd. It was probably some form of boundary marker but its origins are uncertain. Some think it was dug in the 7th century for the Saxon rulers of Mercia, and was related to Offa's and Wat's Dykes that run to the east. Others think it may be an earlier Bronze Age structure.

Later, the Princes of Gwynedd and the Earls of Chester fought over the area. By the late 11th century, it was under Norman control, part of the lordship of Tegeingl that was annexed to Cheshire. In the 13th century it was disputed territory once more, with fierce

fighting between the Welsh, led by the brothers, Llywelyn and Dafydd ap Gruffydd, and English under Henry III and his son Edward. In 1257, Llywelyn regained Tegeingl but, when Edward became king, he was determined to have full control of Wales and, in 1277, quickly defeated Llywelyn's men. In 1282, Dafydd rebelled again but was also crushed. Edward built the mighty stone castles at Rhuddlan and Flint to show his strength and the five villages area would have been under English control.

During Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion of 1400, many local men, including an ancestor of Lord Mostyn, are likely to have been involved in his attacks of Flint and Rhuddlan castles.

In the 17th century there was further unrest during the Civil War. Flintshire gentry, freeholders and clergy pledged support for King Charles, including the Mostyns. Colonel Roger Mostyn was one of the first of the local gentry to take up arms, quickly raising an army of agricultural labourers and miners. Following the eventual defeat of the Royalists, Lord Mostyn and his neighbour, Robert Pennant, were fined for 'taking up arms for the King'.



# Wealth and grandeur

Several wealthy landowners owned much of the land in the area, most notably the Mostyns, the Pennants, the Dukes of Westminster and the Earls of Denbigh. They had great influence in the area, building churches, running mines, funding schools and supporting village events. Whitford has particularly close links with the Mostyn and Pennant families.



The local gentry were passionate about horseracing and formed a society called the Holywell Hunt in 1767. They built Holywell Racecourse at Gorsedd on land owned largely by the Earl of Denbigh and Lord

Mostyn, holding annual autumn races. As the races grew in popularity, a starting tower and grandstand were erected and purpose-built stables were added later. It's

hard to imagine this peaceful area as it must have looked during race week, with bookmakers, sideshows and spectators lining the course! One filly, the Queen of Trumps, trained by Lord Mostyn, won the Holywell Champagne Stakes in

1834 and went on to win the prestigious St Leger and The Oaks! The last recorded races were held in 1842, the year before autumn racing began in Chester, a probable factor in its demise.



*John Roberts rescues the Pennant family crest from Downing*

*"As a child I used to live at Penrallt on the edge of the Mostyn Estate. Lord Mostyn used to regularly ride by on his horse and would often give me a threepenny bit."*

Sue Hughes

The land in the Gwibnant Valley was known as 'Pennant land'. It was here, in 1627, that John Pennant built his grand residence, Downing Hall. In 1922, fire damaged the house badly and it was demolished in 1953. The stables and hunt kennels still remain and have been converted to houses. A former lodge house stands at the edge of the village; the land behind, once parkland, is still dotted with old trees.

Allegedly, there was sometimes rivalry between the two families. Both were great benefactors to Whitford church, funding the rebuilding of the west tower in 1873. The church has two different entrances. Reputedly, one was used by the Mostyns, the other by the Pennants.

*'The gate opposite the school was always known as the Mostyn Gate. When Lord and Lady Mostyn attended services, they always entered through the door on that side of the church and sat in the left aisle.'*

Ronald Plummer (secretary of Whitford PCC 1998-2004)



*The main gate, Whitford Church*

## Thomas Pennant (1726 – 1798)



This eminent writer and antiquarian wrote extensively about zoology but is best known as a pioneer of travel writing. His 'Tour in Wales' popularised North Wales, setting a trend for wealthy young Englishmen to tour the Welsh mountains. He travelled on horseback accompanied by Welsh-speaking Reverend John Lloyd of Caerwys, and his

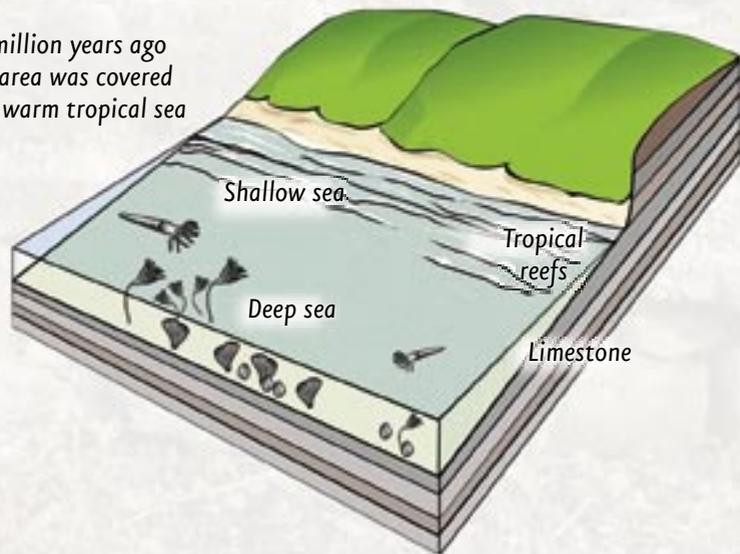
manservant and artist, Moses Griffith, who sketched en route. His exact and detailed descriptions still make his writings of great interest today.

# Under your feet

The underlying bedrock has shaped the landscape and land use of the Five Villages. Over many millions of years, layers of different rocks have built up. Limestone, from the bodies of marine life, was deposited when this part of Wales lay near the equator, beneath a warm tropical sea. As sea levels dropped, river deltas developed, depositing muds and sands that formed the Holywell Shales and the finer grained Gwespwr sandstone. Later, swamps and huge forests grew on the deltas, which eventually formed the valuable coal deposits nearer the coast.

Over time the rock layers were folded, fractured and faulted by earth movements forming the rolling countryside and valleys we see today. Most of the area is limestone, which held rich veins of lead, silver and zinc. This attracted enterprising industrialists to the area who opened numerous mines and quarries to extract building stone and limestone to make lime. Whitford lies on sandstone, which was also quarried. Its mellow ochre colouring gives a distinctive character to some buildings in that area, contrasting with the grey limestone that was widely used in the other villages.

350million years ago  
this area was covered  
by a warm tropical sea

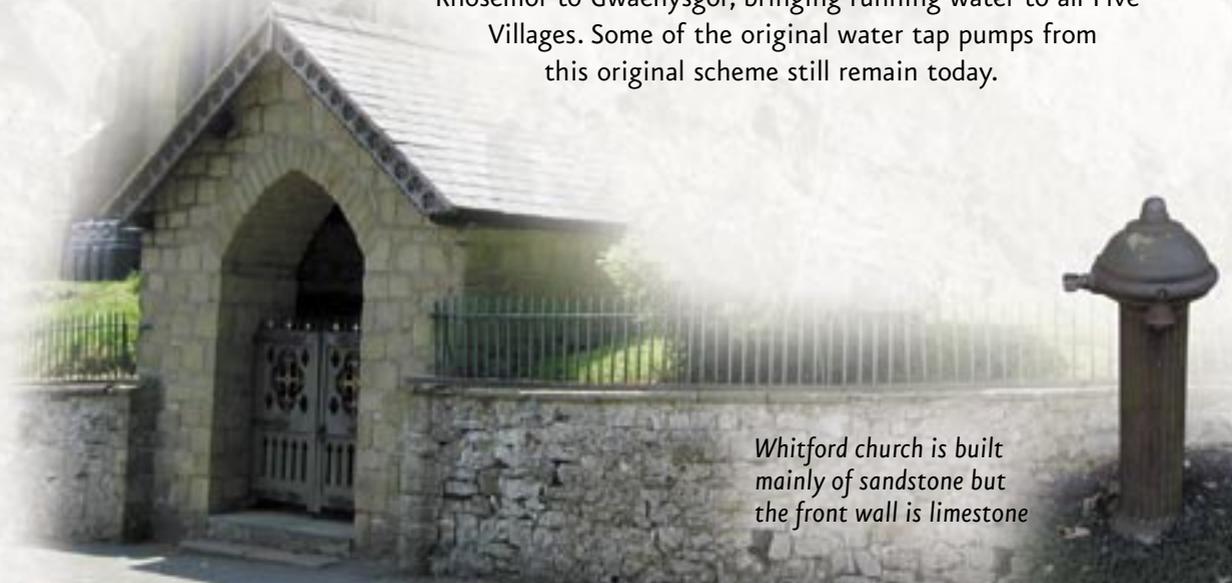


Several accounts of the mine workings refer to the underground streams and cave systems. Water flows through fine cracks in the limestone, creating underground rivers and pools. This leaves the surface dry and without streams for much of the year.

The underground streams emerge where the limestone meets the sandstones. Springs and wells are often situated where the two rock types meet on the surface, such as at Saithffynnon at Whitford – which means seven wells. They were the main source of water for the villages, collected manually until water lift pumps were installed above some of the wells in the late 1800s. In the 1930s Holywell Rural District Council laid a water pipeline from Rhosemor to Gwaenysgor, bringing running water to all Five Villages. Some of the original water tap pumps from this original scheme still remain today.

*"I have also heard on good authority of another large stream of water running through a great subterraneous cavern in working Portaway Mine in Pantasa, but its discharge has never yet been discovered."*

Thomas Pennant, The History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell



Whitford church is built mainly of sandstone but the front wall is limestone



# Mines and quarries

The Romans were probably the first to mine lead, when the area was under the jurisdiction of the 20th Legion, based in Chester. They sunk shafts around Carmel to extract the ore and a Roman lead ingot, weighing 150lb, was uncovered when the foundations for Carmel School were excavated in 1949.

From the mid 18th century, larger scale industry began to develop, following the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution. The Great Holloway Vein, which was particularly rich, runs under Gorsedd, Carmel and Lloc. In 1773, the Holywell Level Company, owned by Sir Piers Mostyn in partnership with Thomas Pennant, began to mine this vein on a large scale. The mine manager, Thomas Edwards, lived at Saithaelwyd, Carmel.



At first the company lost money but, when shafts were deepened and tunnels lengthened, it became very profitable. In 1818 it brought in about £130,00 each year (almost £5 million in today's prices), partly due to the relatively high proportion of silver and calamine in the ore. (Calamine was valuable as it was used in the manufacture of copper and brass.) By the late 1880s the Great Holloway Mine employed 82 miners underground and 50 surface workers.

Quarrying of the local stone, particularly limestone, was also important and there were numerous quarries in the Grange area by the early 1800s. The stone from Pen y Gelli Quarry at Lloc was used for many local buildings and stone walls, including the churches at Gorsedd and Brynford and Lloc. High quality white limestone was quarried at Pantasaph White Quarries and was used to build the nearby church, friary, convent and school.



Lime was an equally important product of quarrying, produced by burning crushed limestone in limekilns. This was used for building mortar or as fertiliser to sweeten acidic soils. Aberdo limestone was quarried underground, at what is now known as Grange Caverns. It was particularly valuable as the lime from this stone set under water, making it ideal for building docks, harbours and bridges.

Around 1848, the Holywell Lime Company built a tramway so that stone could be transported more easily down the hill to Greenfield Dock. From there it was shipped further afield to meet the growing demand for building materials in the expanding towns and cities. Branch lines ran to all the quarries including an underground link to Aberdo Quarry. Local stone and lime was used in the building of Runcorn Bridge, Belfast Docks, the Weaver Navigation and Liverpool and Birkenhead Docks.



*The limekiln in Gorsedd*

During the 20th century, all the mines and quarries closed. Some had been worked out, others failed due to changes in the markets and competition from cheaper imported materials.

During the Second World War Grange Quarries were used to store bombs, including the famous 'bouncing bombs' designed by Dr Barnes Wallis. Its military connections continued in the 1980s when Grange Cavern was opened as a military museum, exhibiting tanks and other military equipment.



# Turnpikes and transport

Important east-west routes have crossed the parish since the earliest times.

The Roman road between Chester and Caernarfon passed through Carmel and Gorsedd joining what is now the road to St Asaph by the Travellers Inn. The straight stretch of the A5026 between Pant y Wacco and the A55 is still marked on maps as 'Roman Road'.

The Lloc to Rhuddlan Road became known as Ffordd Ffrainc (French Road) as it was used by Normans travelling between Rhuddlan and Chester.

From 1765, the first mail coaches came through the area, when the route of the Chester to Holyhead post road was changed to go via Holywell and then south through Gorsedd to St Asaph.

These east-west routes continue to be important and have been regularly improved to cope with increased traffic. The famous engineer Thomas Telford built the original A55 in the 1830s. Since the 1970s, it has been extensively upgraded to become the major A55 trunk road it is today.

In addition to the major roads, the villages are connected by a network of small lanes. Many of these were important routes in years gone by, used to transport lead ore to the coast, and coal inland from the coastal collieries. Initially packhorses were used and later horse and cart or steam wagons.



*Downing gate, Whitford*

These early roads were little more than tracks that became rutted and impassable in bad weather. As industry developed in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the number of heavily laden wheeled vehicles increased and the roads deteriorated further. Turnpike Trusts were set up to improve and maintain important roads, charging users tolls to pay for the maintenance. The Mostyn District Trust was responsible for the Five Villages area and used stone from several local quarries to improve the road foundations. To raise funds they built ten toll-gates at major road junctions. Some of the toll-houses that stood beside the gates still remain.

The north-south road linking Mostyn to Afonwen was particularly busy. Two of the toll-houses on this route, at Saithfynnon, near Whitford and Bryn y Gaseg, Pantasaph are now private houses.



*Saithfynnon toll-house, near Whitford*

The villages are now much more peaceful, as local industries have closed and the main roads have bypassed by the villages.



*Bryn y Gaseg gate, Pantasaph*

# Working the land

The thin limestone soils are not very fertile and, in areas where the lead ore was washed, the vegetation is stunted further. Some of the land around Whitford is more fertile and grows lush grass and good crops.

Mr Pennant's mill at Downing

Much of the land around the mining villages was split into smallholdings. Each had a few fields where families grew a variety of crops and kept a few hens, a couple of sows and perhaps a cow. The men worked in the mines and quarries while the smallholding supplemented their meagre wages.

Until the early 20th century, most of the farms were tenanted, owned by the large landowners, the Mostyns, Pennants and Dukes of Westminster. Thomas Pennant was particularly interested in agriculture, and wrote extensively about local farming practices.

*"The soil is generally poor loam, very thin in places and limestone with large tracts of rock. Some is suitable for cultivation which yield corn, such as barley and oats, in a kindly manner."*

*"The sheep are numerous and have coarse wool. They are a nuisance in the winter when they come onto cultivated land. Mutton is sent to market in the summer."*

*"Most of our farmers fatten cattle and sell them to butchers for Holywell, Chester and Liverpool."*

Thomas Pennant, A History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell



## Tithe Wars

In the late 18th century, local farmers were involved in the 'Tithe Wars'. Each farmer had to pay a tithe, one tenth of their harvest, to the church. These tithe crops were stored in tithe barns, such as the one remaining at Plas Uchaf Farm, Whitford. Later, farmers had to pay in cash rather than crops but the price was based on average crop prices so, in years of poor harvests, they were hit hard. They had to pay even if they did not go to church and, as many farmers were chapel-goers, this increased their anger about the tithes.

In autumn 1886, the tithe payers of Whitford sent letters requesting an abatement in tithe payments but this was refused. Court orders were issued against farmers who had not paid and bailiffs were sent to the farms to auction the produce. At Pentreffynnon Farm, a crowd assembled to meet the bailiffs and eighty policemen were drafted to keep the peace. The sale took place but proceeds were very low as local people were unwilling to bid. Unrest continued and soldiers from 13th Hussars were brought in to keep order.

The 1891 Tithe Act reduced the unfairness of the tithes by making landlords responsible for the tithe payments rather than tenants and they were fully abolished by 1936.



# Pilgrims and prayer

The Five Villages boast a wonderful array of religious remains and places of worship, some dating from early times. The Bronze Age standing stones at Gorsedd and the numerous burial mounds, were sites of spiritual importance thousands of years ago.

The area is also associated with the early Christian saints, St Beuno and his niece St Winefride. St Beuno is reputed to have founded the first church in Whitford in the 7th century. Numerous pilgrims will have passed through the villages over the centuries on pilgrimage to nearby St Winefride's Well or en route to other

holy sites such as Bardsey, or St Winefride's original burial place at Gwytherin.

The Celtic cross at Maen Achwyfan, near Whitford is reputedly the tallest wheelcross in Britain and is thought to be over 1000 years old. It may commemorate a person or an event and was probably a site of worship.

The Basingwerk Abbey at Holywell, whose Cistercian monks wore white habits, was very influential in the area during the Middle Ages, owning land and farms including Grange Farm above Holway, Mertyn and Tre' Abbot.

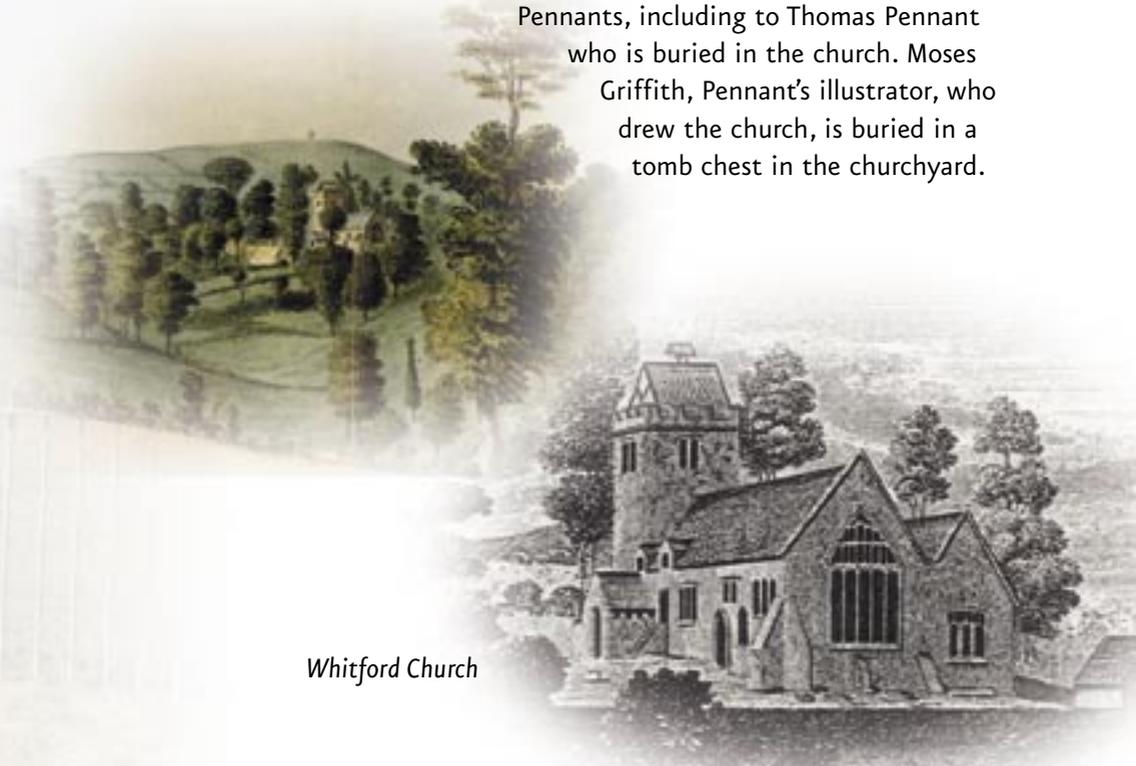
Edward I gave money and land at Gelli, enabling the abbot to build a chapel and substantial

*Gelli Chapel*

farm there. The building still remains today and is part of a working farm.

Whitford parish church is by far the oldest of the local churches and chapels. The first stone church was Norman and is recorded in the Domesday book. It was badly damaged during Edward I's campaigns against the Welsh and so the earliest parts of the existing church date from the 15th and 16th centuries. It has a double nave and is unusual because the floor follows the natural slope from west to east. The building has been altered and added to many times, most notably in 1842, when Ambrose Poynter rebuilt the west tower and later restored the whole church. It has many fine monuments to the nearby landowners, Mostyns and Pennants, including to Thomas Pennant who is buried in the church. Moses Griffith, Pennant's illustrator, who drew the church, is buried in a tomb chest in the churchyard.

*Whitford Church*



# Church and chapel

For centuries Whitford was the only church within the parish but, as the other villages developed with the growth of mining and quarrying in 18th and 19th century, more places of worship were needed.

Not everyone wanted to worship at the parish church. From the late 18th century visiting preachers drew large crowds to hear their inspiring sermons. This simpler Non-conformist worship appealed to many local people, particularly farmers and miners. Carmel became an important centre during the early days of Methodism, led by William Davies of Golch. In 1814, the first chapel was built at Carmel above the present village hall, near the grassy bank where it is thought some of those early sermons took place. The chapel drew huge congregations of up to 400 for renowned preachers, with many happy to stand.

Support for Non-conformism grew rapidly and, by 1851, it was estimated that, in Wales, 80% of those who worshipped on a Sunday went to chapel. Four more chapels were built locally: Seion Chapel, near Carmel and three at Lloc, Sion

Welsh Wesleyan  
Chapel, Pen-y-Gelli  
Baptist Chapel,  
and Penllwyn

Welsh Methodist Chapel. In 1901, the original Carmel Chapel was replaced by a much larger building on the opposite side of the road. This still thrives today along with Sion Chapel at Lloc.

Carmel chapel

*"We still hold our annual Plygain\* service in Sion Chapel at 6am on Christmas morning. It's been going for 200 years now and is still packed every year."*

Glenys Jones, Lloc  
\* a traditional, informal Welsh carol service

## A great controversy

There was also demand for another Anglican church in the Gorsedd and Pantasaph area as the communities grew. Much of the land was owned by the Pennant family and the heiress, Louisa Pennant, married Lord Feilding, who later became Earl of Denbigh. They decided to build a church at Pantasaph to celebrate their wedding. In 1849, the Bishop of St Asaph laid the foundation stone and building began. However, the following year the Feildings converted to Catholicism and decided their new church was to be for Catholic worship. This caused an outcry and litigation ensued! The courts found in favour of the Feildings as the building had not been completed when they changed their minds. To redress the balance there was a public subscription to raise funds to build another Anglican church. The response was so great that sufficient funds were raised to build two churches, Gorsedd and nearby Brynford! They were designed by T H Wyatt who had been the original architect for Pantasaph.

Pantasaph church was completed by the famous Catholic architect Pugin and consecrated in 1852. Pugin went on to design the Friary and Stations of the Cross. A Pilgrims' House and Guesthouse were added to accommodate the pilgrims who flocked there, followed by the St Clare's Convent and Orphanage, St Aloysius' High School and a day school for village children. The convent, orphanage and schools shut many years ago and have been converted into housing but the church and friary continue to attract Catholic worshippers to this day.



# School days



There have been numerous schools in the Five Villages. The first was held in the small room above the southern lychgate of Whitford Church, from 1624. Local landowners later endowed a charity school in the village for the education of poor children; among them Pierce Jones, a wealthy farmer who contributed in 1771, Mary Bradshaw who contributed in 1745, and the Pennants and Mostyns who contributed in the 19th century. The school burned down in 1926 and a new one was built on land donated by Lord Mostyn in 1928.



In 1821, the Pennants funded a small school at Pantasaph for poor local children. However, following the conversion of Louisa Pennant, it became a Catholic school, leaving a gap in provision for Anglican children. In 1852, this was resolved when a small school was built at Gorsedd at the same time as the church. Ten years later a Non-conformist school was built in Carmel on land adjacent to the first chapel.

*"There were just two classes taught in one big room, separated by a partition. I was in the top class with children aged between 9 and 14."*

Helena Williams, pupil at Carmel British School in the 1930s



From 1881, residential Catholic schooling was also available at Pantasaph with paying pupils at St Alloysius Boarding School and orphans at St Clare's Orphanage. The orphans were treated

St Clare's Orphanage

very differently from the paying pupils and were expected to do domestic work. After the convent and boarding school had closed, the village school opened to all denominations but was closed in 1983 due to the costs of upgrading the old building.

In 1951, a much larger school was built at Carmel that could accommodate pupils from all the outlying villages. Gorsedd School closed and most of its pupils transferred to Carmel. The old school at Carmel was later used as a village hall and the one at Gorsedd as a church hall. Numbers at Whitford School also fell but the local community successfully fought to keep it open. Ysgol y Llan, Whitford, and Ysgol Bro Carmel continue to thrive and play a leading role in community life. Pupils past and present at both schools talk fondly of their experiences.



*"I remember walking with the whole school from the old to the new school on the first day it opened. We were all really excited!"*

Hazel Daniels

*"I like Carmel School because there is lots of room to play."*

Jack Garbutt, pupil Ysgol Bro Carmel, July 2010

*"The teachers look after you when you are ill or upset and everyone cares."*

Rachel Maxwell, pupil Ysgol Bro Carmel, July 2010

*"I like school because it is friendly and we do lots of fun projects."*

Sophie Davies, pupil Ysgol y Llan July 2010



# Daily life

Each village was far more self-sufficient than they are today with shops and delivery services so locals could obtain almost anything they needed without leaving the village.

The Ridgeway Stores was a general grocery that sold almost everything and would order anything that wasn't in stock. It even took over the Post Office when the old one shut. Pantasaph too had its own Post Office and general stores until the 1960s and Lloc had a grocery shop. Gorsedd had a little shop that sold sweets and a few provisions, in a cottage called Hillcrest. At Whitford, the Post Office and general stores were housed in several different premises over the years. The final Post Office beside the Huntsman closed in 1983.

*"I used to boil my own bacon and strip the big wheels of cheese, cutting it into wedges with cheese wire."*

Iris Edwards who ran the Ridgeway Stores, Carmel

For many, the pubs were the hub of village life. The Druid Inn at Gorsedd is the oldest, possibly dating from the 12th century. It stands at the junction of two formerly important roads and would have been a stopping point for travellers. (It is currently closed but locals hope it will reopen soon.)



The Druid Inn

Many other pubs and simple alehouses opened during the 1800s to serve the growing numbers of miners and quarrymen, with at least 10 establishments serving ale by the end of the century.

*Many remember the large copper kettle that hung outside the Singing Kettle Restaurant!*



Whitford once had three pubs, the Cross Keys, the Britannia and the Huntsman Inn, which was the last to close in 2008. The Huntsman dated from 1602 and was originally called The Mostyn Arms, reflecting their local importance.

The Rock Inn at Lloc, named from its association with mining and quarrying is the only one of the original pubs in that village that is still thriving (Tel : 01352 71004). The Glan Llyn Public House closed before 1920s but a new pub and restaurant, Misty Waters has opened near Lloc (Tel: 01352 720409).

The Halfway House at Golch, Carmel was reputedly exactly halfway between Holywell and Whitford on the original A55, now the A5026. (Tel: 01352 710289)

The pub at Pantasaph was originally called the Laburnum Inn, serving local quarrymen, miners and farm labourers. Its name was changed to, 'The Feilding Arms Hotel', in 1893, and extended to include accommodation. It is now a private house.



The former Laburnum Inn

At one time, the local gentry were also fond of a tippie, indulging in 'terming' whereby they would have a barrel of ale brewed at a favourite alehouse and then stay there until it was drunk!

*"They never went to bed, even should the term last a week; they either slept in chairs or on the floor, then awoke and resumed their jollity."*

Thomas Pennant, The History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell.

# Community spirit

Local people have often worked together campaigning and fundraising for community facilities. An annual garden fete was held at Saithaelwyd Hall, Carmel, to raise funds for a village hall. When the old school became available funds were used to refurbish it. More recently, the community raised money for a play area and equipment for new housing.

Another ambitious fund-raising project was undertaken by the Whitford community. In 1976, the Glebe field, owned by the church was under threat of development. Whitford Glebe Field Association was established and successfully raised funds to purchase the field for community use. The main fund-raiser was the popular annual summer fair, including a Tug o war, stalls and sideshows. Each year locals vied to devise novel events, ranging from hamster racing to cowpat throwing!

National and local events have been celebrated with great enthusiasm over the years, ranging from bonfires and street parties to commemorate the end of World War II, Coronation and Jubilee parties to more local celebrations such as the opening of the playing fields, new school or village hall. Older residents fondly remember village celebrations for VE day and the coronation.

Pantasaph Friary remains an integral part of community life and holds an annual Fete for the village. Father Francis, the singing friar, was always a great attraction.

As the communities grew many local clubs and groups formed, with



something for all ages and interests, from sports and keep fit to craft groups, musical groups and Morris dancing. Youngsters flocked to join the Brownies, Guides, Cubs and Scouts. There is still an enthusiastic cub pack in Carmel today with a waiting list for prospective members.



*"I really enjoy Carmel cubs. We quite often go into the woods to play games and we also go up to the quarry to do tracking and play hide and seek."*

George Evans



*Carmel football team, 1950s*

Carmel Women's Institute, formed in 1945 and still thriving today, met not only for social events but also to benefit the community.

A great variety of sport has flourished in the villages. Carmel

Football Club thrived in the 1950s, playing at Golch and competing in the Dyserth League and football remains popular at both schools.

More recently, a bowling green and clubhouse were built on part of the school field. Carmel Bowling Club was formed in 1997 and continues to flourish.

Gorsedd Cricket Club was formed in 1948, but disbanded in 1954. A new club, Carmel and District Cricket Club formed in 1965, playing on the former football club site, despite its sloping pitch! In 1991 the club played its first match on its new ground at Pen y Gelli, Lloc. The club continues to be popular today with both adult and children's teams, drawing players from all the villages.



*Carmel Bowling Club*

# A place for wildlife

The Five Villages remain rural in character, with mature woodland, grazed fields with thick hedgerows, flower-strewn roadside verges and open common around Gorsedd to the east.

The views out to sea are breathtaking, with the Lake District and the Isle of Man visible on a clear day.

The variety of habitats provide homes and food for many birds and animals. There are many active badger setts and, in spring, the woodlands resound with birdsong as birds compete to find a mate.

Nature has taken over in the numerous disused quarries. The old quarry at Pen y Gelli, Lloc, was developed as a Nature Reserve by the local community in the 1980s. It is a delightful place to walk and watch the abundant birdlife. Wildflowers thrive on the thin limestone soils, including rock rose, salad burnet and several orchids. These attract numerous butterflies, bees and other insects. In summer, the White Quarries at Pantasaph, untouched since quarrying ended in 1912, are also carpeted in flowers, including the rare bee orchid.

The boggy grassland of Racecourse Mire, Gorsedd, is part of Halkyn



Mountain Special Area of Conservation. Orchids and other unusual plants thrive in the poor soils and the rare great crested newts breed in the pools.

Sir Roger Mostyn created Llyn Helyg in the 17th century for fishing and shooting. The lake continues to attract wildfowl today. Several smaller ponds and wetland around Whitford village are also valuable wildlife habitats.

Rabbits, mice, voles and grey squirrels abound and, in the fields, hares are sometimes seen. These provide plentiful food for foxes, stoats and birds of prey. Buzzards are frequently seen circling overhead and smaller kestrels hovering above a roadside verge. Sparrowhawks may be spotted flying fast and low in pursuit of small birds.



Ragged robin thrives in boggy areas



Taith Pennant  
Pennant Walk

## Exploring the Five Villages

A good network of footpaths, bridleways and quiet lanes are perfect for walkers. Waymarked walks, devised by the Pennant Society, enable easy exploration. All five walks can be downloaded from [www.cymdeithasthomaspennant.com](http://www.cymdeithasthomaspennant.com). For further information about the Society and the walks, if you do not have access to the internet, telephone Paul Brighton on 01352 712588 or Ryan Jenner on 01352 561013.

Walk 5 (Rural Walk no 11 on map) is centred on Whitford and leads along old sunken lanes and fields, then through woodland to Garreg Tower. Some think this tower, known as the Pharos, was of Roman origin but it is more likely to have been a 17th century watchtower to warn of pirate raids. Beyond the woodland there are breathtaking views out to sea. The walk then passes Maen Achwyfan and skirts more woodland, passing Pentrefynnon, site of the Tithe disturbances, and the old tithe



Garreg Tower

*"I often walk up to the woods with my Mum and dog and go onto Pantasaph. We go to the friary and usually do the Stations of the Cross."*

Ellie Forsyth

*"All around where I live in Gorsedd are fields and wildlife."*

Hannah Pearson

barn, before meandering back to Whitford, crossing what would once have been the grounds of Downing Hall.

Walk 2 from Holywell explores Carmel, Pantasaph and the White Quarries, passing through peaceful countryside with fascinating reminders of its industrial past.

Local schoolchildren enjoy exploring their local countryside and appreciate the landscape and wildlife around them.

*"You can sometimes see ducks and swans at the pond down the road from Whitford School."*

Eleri Prosser

*"I really like Whitford because it's very rural and untouched."*

Cameron Gemmill

*"I like Carmel village because the view is phenomenal."*

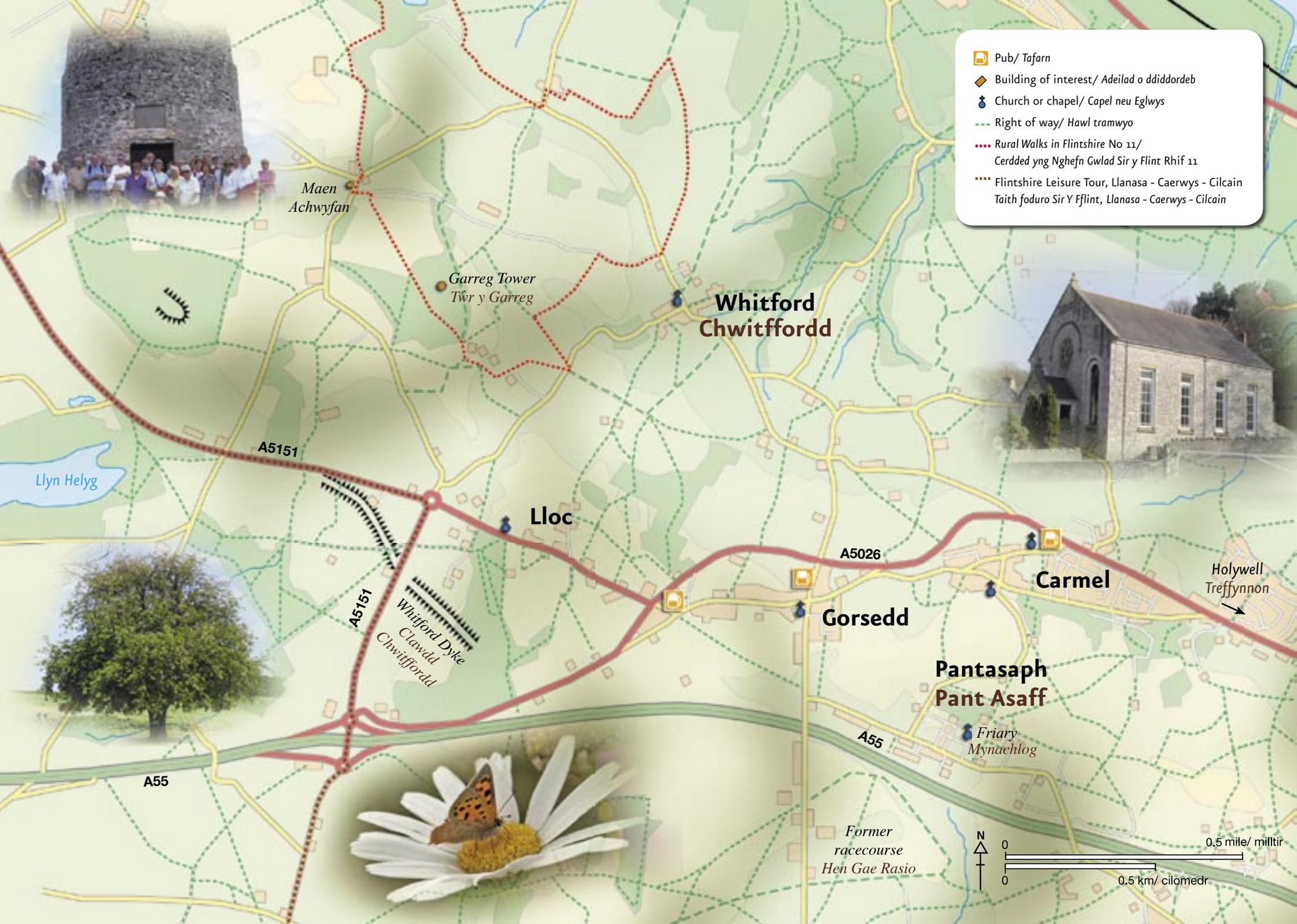
Tabitha Moss

*"There are loads of nice walks around Carmel. The woods and White Quarries are great for everything- biking, orienteering and walking."*

Jack Lancelott



-  Pub/ Tafarn
-  Building of interest/ Adeilad o ddiddordeb
-  Church or chapel/ Capel neu Eglwys
-  Right of way/ Hawl tramwyo
-  Rural Walks in Flintshire No 11/  
Cerdded yng Nghefn Gwlad Sir y Flint Rhif 11
-  Flintshire Leisure Tour, Llanasa - Caerwys - Cilcain  
Taith foduro Sir Y Fflint, Llanasa - Caerwys - Cilcain



Maen Achwyfan

Garreg Tower  
Tŵr y Garreg

Whitford  
Chwitffordd

Lloc

Gorsedd

Carmel

Pantasaph  
Pant Asaff

Friary  
Mynachlog

Holywell  
Treffynnon

Former  
racecourse  
Hen Gae Rasio

