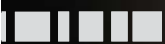


# plas llanelly house

discover your **past**

**Genealogy** Heritage  
Centre Wales



people. place. identity



[www.llanelly-house.org.uk](http://www.llanelly-house.org.uk)

# Welcome to **Llanelly** House



## The story so far...

**Llanelly House** rose to National significance in 2003, as a grand finalist on the BBC Restoration programme hosted by **Griff Rhys Jones** and championed by **Laurence Llewellyn Bowen**.

William Wilkins CBE, and former Llanelli town clerk, J C Williams brought this National treasure to the public's consciousness. They stoically struggled on for a further 6 years to get the project off the ground. The Council realised that a building of such importance needed to be entrusted to a specialist heritage team, dedicated to regenerating buildings of national importance.

The Carmarthenshire Heritage Regeneration Trust took on the task and in October 2009 gained the necessary funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Welsh European Funding Office to begin the monumental task of breathing life back into this Welsh gem, which was so close to being lost.



**Carmarthenshire**  
Heritage Regeneration Trust



# Laurence is in the house!

"...I think the most compelling reason why **Llanelly House** should be **restored** and saved is that if you don't, I will buy it, I will paint it purple, I will cover the roof in pink fur fabric, and I will sell it to Kylie for £65 billion." *(Laurence Llewellyn Bowen, BBC Restoration).*



Laurence Llewellyn Bowen and Project Director Craig Hatto filming in the House.

Thankfully the House has not been subjected to such a kitsch fate but we are very pleased that Laurence has returned to once again champion Llanelly House and is currently filming a BBC Wales fly-on-the-wall documentary, charting progress as it undergoes its long anticipated transformation.



## Hidden histories

*To give an insight into the skilled, dedicated and meticulous effort that is required to conserve and regenerate the House to a standard that befits its Grade 1 listed status, we have compiled a selection of key trades that are working in unison to achieve the buildings true potential.*

*The first team on the scene are the archaeologists, who perform the Watching Brief, which is to carefully collect material and record the works as the Principal Contractor progresses systematically through the building. Works are halted when finds are unearthed and the archaeologists move in to perform their magic.*

*Craig Hatto comments: "We are always pushing the boundaries, in our quest to find compelling and exciting stories that will captivate the public's imagination." The archaeologist's work is based on sound evidence and to an extent conjecture. These will be revealed in a series of Windows to the Past, which will give the visitor views into a hidden World that would otherwise be covered up during the restoration process. We have unearthed some truly surprising finds that has sparked lively debates ranging from whether the Great Flood of 1608 affected the House to a possible secret bolt hole dating from the Civil War 1642 - 1651... or is it merely an under-floor scullery?*

Left image: Margrave's Letter Book hidden behind a Georgian panel (1871)

Below image: Cellar excavation



## Archaeology & excavation

Eminent archaeologists, Professor Warwick Rodwell (OBE) and Richard Scott Jones (MA, MIFA), both of Time Team fame, have undertaken the Archaeological investigations at Llanelly House. Our work at the House has focused on the investigation and recording of the existing standing fabric and the partial excavation of the ground floor during groundwork for development proposals.

We have unearthed a series of confused foundations that indicates

a series of builds and demolitions dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, where evidence of monastic buildings once stood prior to the dissolution of the monestries 1536 - 1541 by Henry VIII, which goes some way to explain why the House was built so close to St Ellis church.



Tel: 01570 493312  
[www.hrs-wales.co.uk](http://www.hrs-wales.co.uk)



Above image: Fireplace mantle - Carved stone roundel dating 16th century



Above image: Pipe Bowl dating from the Civil War period



## House's history

*"Llanelli House is the **heartbeat of Llanelli**. The House reflects the triumphs and tribulations of this Welsh town." Project Director Craig Hatto explains:*

"The House was originally owned by landed gentry; the Lewis family, the Vaughn's and later the Stepney dynasty, who embraced the industrial revolution and sparked prosperity in the area with the emergence of coal mining, shipping, the iron foundry, a brewing, pottery production and later the emergence of tinsplate and the steel industry.

The House bore witness to the town's meteoric rise, which was mainly due to the colourful Georgian characters of Sir Thomas Stepney and later the Chambers family. Sadly Llanelli went through a period of sustained economic decline during the 1970s, with the collapse of coalmining and the drastic scaling down of the steel industry, which decimated the community.

The townsfolk's confidence may have been knocked down but certainly not out, which is borne out by the amazing transformation that is currently happening within the town centre. After all, a former resident of The House, Arthur Graham Chambers, created the Queensbury rules for boxing, which reflects the true fighting spirit that courses through Llanelli's blood.

The House is a barometer of the times, reflected in its current metamorphic state. Both the House and more importantly the town are undergoing a momentous transformation, with a £60 million investment into Llanelli's town centre regeneration. The House and the Town centre's lifeblood will flow with Llanelli House shining as a beacon to the spirit of the towns people, place and identity, putting Llanelli firmly back on the map as a destination of National significance and pride."

Right image: Mrs Harvard's Painting - 1854







Right image:  
A conserved urn

Below image:  
A dismantled urn



## The House urns our respect

**The architects story** - *Finials are the ultimate in Georgian architectural ornamentation.*

Austin-Smith:Lord are both new-build and conservation architects and are thrilled to be restoring this rich gem at the heart of Llanelli's heritage. Sophie Teague Davies, Conservation Architect states:

***"the more we uncover, the more we see how important and lavish the House was in its heyday."***

Through the restoration process, we have uncovered many treasures, and faced many challenges, including rotten roof timbers, collapsing and missing chimneys, fragile staircases and bowing timber paneling. Once we have conserved each and every piece individually, the effect will be exquisite.

The urns and finials create the House's iconic silhouette, currently being restored in the stonemason's workshops, are one part of the jigsaw. As seen in the photos they have withstood the onslaught of weather for over two centuries. They are painstakingly being taken apart, removing old cement and collapsing masonry, and pieced back together using original Bath stone. This delicate conservation will breathe life back into the House, sufficient for it to see another two centuries.

**Austin-Smith:Lord**

## Structuring change

Opus' Cardiff based Building Heritage & Conservation Team has been engaged by CHRT to provide conservation, structural and civil engineering services for this important project.

Most recent work has included substantial repairs and refurbishment of the roof, floors and staircases, structural alterations for provision of a passenger lift, rebuilding the external façade to original details, and provision of surface water.

Opus' input extends back to March 2000 when initial condition surveys were undertaken, which lead to emergency repair work and strengthening of the main floor beams to accommodate the intended use of the House.



Tel: 02920 535 504  
[www.opusinternational.co.uk](http://www.opusinternational.co.uk)

## Quantifying our heritage

Chartered Quantity Surveyors, Historic Building Consultants and CDM Co-ordinators.

Parry and Dawkin are pleased to be associated with CHRT on the Conservation and Restoration of Llanelli House. We have provided cost advice and cost monitoring during the feasibility stage, the cost planning stages, the tender procurement process and the construction stage of this project together with the role of CDM Co-ordinator.



Parry and Dawkin  
Chartered  
Surveyors

Tel: 01792 460 432

## Breathing life back into the house

***"Like a longstanding affair the refurbishment and resurrection of Llanelli House has the ability to enchant and beguile me but also to keep me awake at night..."***

(Laurence Llewellyn Bowen - 2012)



*The monumental effort expended during the building development phase, cannot be underestimated, when undertaking such a complex conservation and restoration project. The building yields new twists and unexpected turns, which the team absorbs and translates into a conservation management plan. The House was initially perceived as a Georgian townhouse but over time revealed that it dates back to the Jacobean and Tudor period with a substantial re-build during the Queen Ann and Georgian era, which was completed in 1714. Later Regency, Victorian and Edwardian additions were incorporated. The conservation architect, together with careful consultation from CADW and the planners, synthesise and translate these finds into a cohesive architectural essay that is an honest reflection of the House's evolution.*

## Weaver's of the buildings fabric

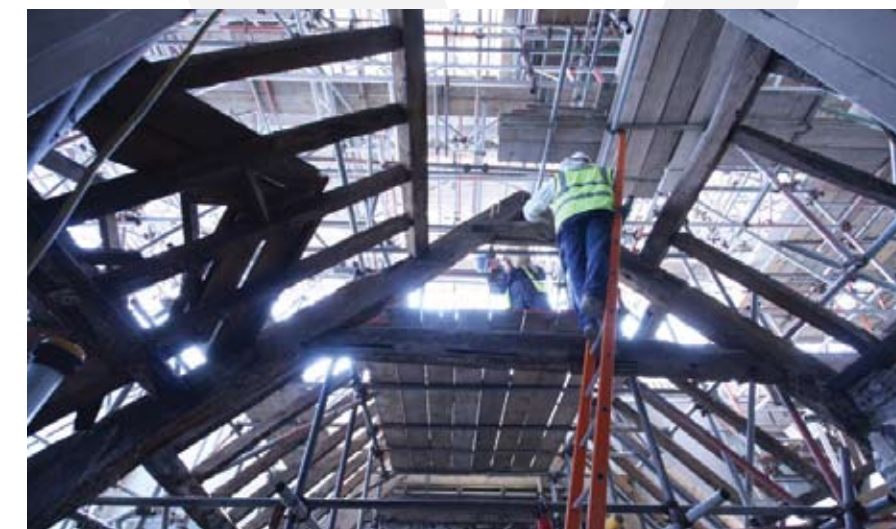
### The principal contractor's story

John Weaver Contractor's specialist conservation division, have been appointed as the Principal Contractor to deliver the refurbishment and renovation of Llanelli House in its entirety.

Our in-house team of highly skilled managers and tradesmen are undertaking the traditional construction techniques of carpentry, lime plastering, stonemasonry and joinery while maintaining the stringent modern day requirements of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century construction project. Through our bespoke joinery manufacturing facility at our headquarters in Swansea our joiners are using today's technologies to renovate

and replicate the traditional joinery features particular to Llanelli House.

The company has extended employment opportunities to local youngsters in their first steps to careers in the construction industry. Through 'engagement traineeships' in partnership with Coleg Sir Gâr and Carmarthenshire County Council we have enabled trainee carpenters and plasterers to gain an invaluable insight into a working conservation environment and gaining a set of traditional building skills that will stand them in good stead to pass onto future generations.



Above image:  
Roof restoration



Left image: A craftsman  
applying lime plaster to  
traditional lath

**jw John Weaver**  
CONSTRUCTION

Tel: 01792 464 004  
[www.johnweaver.co.uk](http://www.johnweaver.co.uk)



# The House's heart beats once more

*...It's an extraordinary achievement to have saved such an important historical urban icon from its doom but there's no room for strewing laurels on a chaise longue and having a lie down. To make Llanelly House live again, to make it relevant and to make worthy of Llanelly's love is going to be a momentous task."*

(Laurence Llewellyn Bowen)

Laurence is indeed correct, the backbone of a project such as this is the general public. The community needs to be on board and more importantly take ownership of the future form and function of the building. To achieve this, our community engagement team, work with the townsfolk to raise awareness and glean their thoughts and ideas. Volunteers from a wide range of skill sets and backgrounds have been dedicating their time to shaping and forging a truly inspired solution.

Craig Hatto comments: "We could have converted the House into a profitable series of chic boutique retail units but with careful and considered consultation, the community recognised the argument to develop a much needed cultural quarter to enhance and compliment the forthcoming theatre for the performing arts, Y Ffwrnes and the newly completed library."



## So what is the House going to be?

All restored buildings need a lifeblood to survive, a form that will be instantly recognised by the general public and a function that the community will utilise.

The original campaign was fronted by Laurence Llewellyn Bowen and Griff Rhys Jones, both of whom had been on the well known genealogy programme Who Do You Think You Are? The answer was staring us right in the face. The concept is to create a heritage centre with genealogy at its core. The current working title is: **Genealogy Heritage Centre Wales.**

We intend to create a unique complimentary visitor attraction, which will tap into the popular theme of genealogy. Utilising a variety of exciting and innovative interactive and traditional techniques.

Visitors will expect to come face-to-face with the heroes of

the House and how they built the community and spawned some inspirational and sometimes famous characters, both past and present that had significant effect on the World at large. From Trafalgar to the man who mapped the moon; U2 guitarist, the Edge to the great post impressionist artist James Dickinson Innes whose works hang in the Tate Modern. The House will be a tribute to Llanelli's rich heritage, the people, the place and your identity.

**Craig Hatto concludes:**

**"The ultimate aim of the Trust is to preserve this National treasure and create a sustainable and relevant offer that can be enjoyed, utilised and admired by the community and Nation for generations to come."**

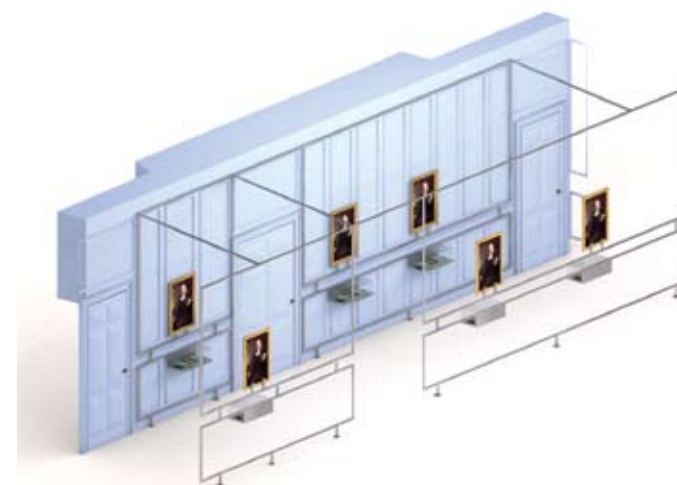
## Enigmatic interpretation

Our design team, headed by Creative Director Alan Surman and lead interpretation designer Tom Prendergast and senior graphic designer, Chris Heaton, intend to develop the ideas that the client has masterminded. Our work cuts across all aspects of the final visitor offer from Content development, 3D interpretation, object management, film production, graphics and interactives to name but a few.

Visitors will experience a wide range of innovative exhibits and

installtions throughout their journey; from tasting the genealogy of food and drink in our sumptuous delicatessen and tearoom; entering the time capsule to encountering the chill of Mira Turner's ghostly presence.

**enigma**  
creative solutions



Above image: The Armorial Dinner Service

Left image: The Great Gallery

## Kate Wilkins Lighting story

Llanelly House was built as a home, which is the key element we're enhancing with the restoration work. The function, design and proportions of each room are taken into careful consideration for its lighting approach. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century all rooms would have been candlelit, so much darker than today's houses. Most corridors would not have been lit at all and people would have moved from room to room with handheld wicks.

**katewilkins**  
lighting designers ltd

Tel: 02079 932 339  
[www.katewilkins.com](http://www.katewilkins.com)

## Atlas AV

Atlas AV has installed a comprehensive time-lapse solution into Llanelly House. On Average we take a photograph of the restoration process every 30 seconds over 18 months!

The footage acts as great feedback to sponsors of the projects and will also feature prominently in the internal interpretation.

To see exclusive footage visit: [www.youtube.com/llanellyhouse](http://www.youtube.com/llanellyhouse)

**AtlasAV**

Tel: 01792 701177  
[www.atlasav.com](http://www.atlasav.com)

**The Story Continues...**



# plas Ilanelly house

## Genealogy Heritage Centre Wales

- A Memorable visitor attraction
- Meet inspirational characters – past and present
- Unique genealogy experience and research facility
- 'Chambers' - café & delicatessen
- Regular community exhibitions and events
- Unique retail environment

people. place. identity



[www.ilanelly-house.org.uk](http://www.ilanelly-house.org.uk)



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