



Ray had fancied a cottage called Awelon in Ceinws, my nain Rowlands had put him up to it, so on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1990, we went to look inside the cottage. It was in a dreadful state but it didn't put us off, so on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1990, Ray put a preliminary offer of £29,500 for it.

There were three other people wanting to buy it and Ray was worried because he didn't want the same thing to happen that had happened with the Pandy. He'd set his heart on this cottage because it reminded him of his childhood home in Hanwell, Oxon. So I phoned the owner, Colin, who I knew and asked if I could buy the cottage, he said yes. He phoned and wrote to the solicitors to confirm This. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March we exchanged contract on Awelon.



Ray had started stripping the old cement off in this photo of Awelon.



Ray and Julia changed the name Awelon to Yr Efail because it was once a smithy and a reminder to people of it's history. Yr Efail 2014.





Our first viewing inside Awelon.



Kitchen



Out house



Joe's workshop which is now Patrick's bedroom.



Front room which is now our dining room.



Coal house which is now my kitchen.



Bathroom which is now a landing.



Living room which is now our living room.



A bedroom and is now our bedroom.



The living room, before and after.



The dining room, before and after.



The kitchen, before and after.



The bedroom, before and after.



The spare bedroom, before and after.



This bedroom was divided into two, the bathroom and Ray's office.



Yr Efail as it is now in 2015





Me and my mam inspecting the garden when we had bought Yr Efail. You can see the fir trees at the back, they were huge!



The trees are now gone, they are stacked ready to burn.



This is the same view in 2015, we now have a lovely hedge and all the box hedging were grown from cuttings by me.

On march the 6<sup>th</sup> 1993, Ray felled the last of the three large fir trees growing along the boundary of the garden. They were forty feet tall and about fifteen inches in diameter at the bottom.

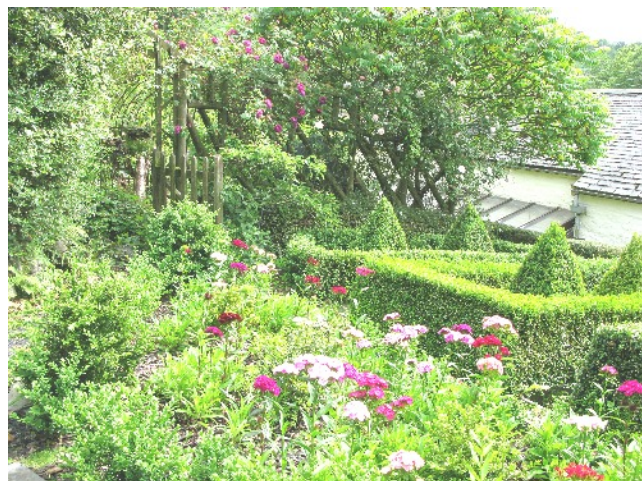
They were planted sometime around the early 1950's to hide the Council houses we think. I was very nervous because Ray was taking huge risks and could have fallen.

Chris Andrews, my dad Ken and I helped to carry the branches etc. Ray, Patrick and Chris had a huge bonfire in the field after dark to burn all the rubbish from the trees. Quite a few people living in the Council estate had wanted those trees down because they didn't have a view. The garden looked quite a lot larger when they came down because the branches covered half of the garden. It was a job well done , well over due!





This is what it looked like when we first moved here and it was very hard work to make it into a garden but well worth it.



The rose and box garden, my favourite and it looks lovely from the bathroom window.



Me sitting amongst the herbaceous flowers. It was set up for one of Ray's stereoscope photos.



My herb garden.



This is my thinking bench and I've painted this poem on it written by Dorothy Frances Gurney.

I've been lucky enough to own a garden and it's my favourite place on earth. I am naturally drawn to it when I'm in need of peace and thinking time. My garden was made for wild life and there is such peace that comes from being surrounded by nature.

When I moved to Yr Efail, I couldn't wait to make a garden here. It was just like a field and I remember thinking, where on earth will I start ! I didn't make any plans, it just evolved as I went along and when I look at it now, it's so hard to believe, that with Ray's help I've made such a beautiful garden. It's full of memories, sad and happy ones.

I've built walls, steps, dug ponds, moved shrubs, sometimes in the rain, and some days, Ray would have to call me in as I'd been out gardening all day but I loved it. Now I'm in my 60's, I do struggle with the work but I still enjoy it and I dread the day when I can't do gardening any more.

The spring is almost here and I'm going to take plenty of photos this year ( 2016 ) because my next book is going to be " Julia's Garden " and I'll be able to explain in detail how it evolved and about the wild life that live in it.



I have three ponds, this is the largest.



The Manitou , lorry and vans ready to start work. There was great excitement in the air !!



The old slates definitely were ready to be replaced.



Hard at work.



The slates being unloaded from the Manitou.



Ray busy laying the fibreglass in the attic.



The finished roof and doesn't it look marvellous. Ray shouldn't have to go up there again to fix any fallen slates.



Left:- Glyn, Simon, Martin and Mal leaving us after a job well done.

The roof of our cottage had been deteriorating for some years, so the time had come to find a good builder. Ray chose Glyn and Martin Pryce of Aberangell and a deal was struck for May 2011. The scaffolding soon went up, they demolished the two chimneys, stripped the slates and stacked them neatly onto the scaffolding. They were then removed from the scaffolding into the Manitou hydraulic loader and taken away.

By the time they'd started to felt and batten the back of the roof, the weather changed, with sudden heavy showers and strong winds. It was a struggle to hold the weatherproof fabric down and nail it on but they managed it in the end.

When the weather settled, they rebuilt the chimneys and fitted fascia boards etc on. It was then time for the new slates to go up, the Manitou really saved time as it would have taken most of the day to carry them up a ladder. Once sorted for thickness, the slates were stacked on the battens ready for nailing on and it looked lovely when finished.

On Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, they all left and strangely enough, Ray and I missed them.

They too were given a DVD and CD each to remind them of their time at Yr Efail.



The new windows made by Brian.

Ray undercoating the newly designed bedroom windows.



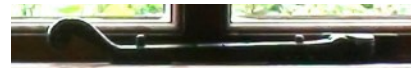
One of the old sash windows, they were in a bad way but had lasted very well for 100 years



Dismantling the old living room window ready for the new.



Me undercoating a downstairs window, these opened at the top only and they were our preferred option.



We bought hand finished wrought iron handles and window stays in black for the new windows.



The cottage needed new windows but it took us a while to decide whether they'd be plastic or wood. I've never liked the plastic ones, even though they don't need to be painted but they do have lots of other faults, so in the end we decided on wood.

My brother Brian was a carpenter and Ray asked him if he would like to make new windows for our Cottage. Ray and I undercoated and glossed each one of them before Brian fitted all of them in and Ray also helped to fit them too. I must say, they looked smart when they were all in and I was very proud to say that Brian had made them for us. Ray and I also worked very hard.



A new upstairs window.



A newly fitted downstairs window, I think it looks great, so in keeping with our cottage. Plastic ones would have been hideous.



Left:- Brian busy fitting one of the doors



Right :- Ray busy dismantling the "Smithy" door at 5-30am. before Brian came to fit it at 7am.



Ray and Brian chatting about carpentry tools. Ray could have made these doors himself because he's brilliant with wood but his arthritis was quite bad. I think we chose the right man to do this job though and it was nice for Ray to have someone do most of the work for him.



The new front door.



The new "Smithy" door with the new black wrought iron door furniture.



Our old front door with the painted glass panels which were done by me. I've saved the glass for somewhere else.



Ray finishing off around the door.



Me and Ray busy painting the cottage, not bad to think we were in our sixties.



The re-cycled doors which looks a little like a coffin but is very handy.

Brian also made the four doors for our cottage and we wanted ones similar to the old ones. Ray and I undercoated and painted each one ready for Brian to fit. We had also bought hand finished wrought iron door furniture, hinges, bolts and knobs for them.

The front door was the first to go in and the last one was the old "Smithy" door which Ray had made himself in 1992. We were both up at 5am to dismantle this door and window etc before Brian came down at 7am to fit it. This old door is now my office door and the other three were re-cycled by Ray to make a large coal bunker and to store my re-cycling tubs in the back yard.

The doors looked great, in fact the cottage looked nicer than ever, especially after Ray had finished off cementing around all the doors and windows and it was March 2012 when we actually finished. Only one thing left to do, PAINT THE COTTAGE, which is what Ray and I did later on.



It was so exciting, the first few blocks were laid and I helped Ray to point them.



The frame work being built, carpentry is Ray's favourite DIY task..



Ray fitting the glass, I think that was the most nail biting time of the whole project.



Ray laying the slate tiles.



The finished garden room looking great in my garden.



The new chairs had arrived from Norway, so Ray had to try one out.



The view from inside looking down the garden.



There is so much light to draw and paint inside and it is so peaceful.

My dad had left each one of his children a small amount of money in his will and I knew exactly what I wanted to use mine for. It could have been used to pay a bill but I had looked after dad for so many years, some very sad. I wanted something that would give me so much pleasure every day. I'd always wanted a garden room but the money wouldn't stretch to that, so Ray said that he would build me one.

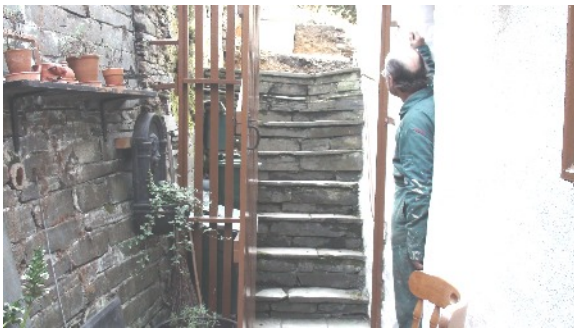
We designed it together and started building on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2012. The weather was so cold and wet but it never stopped Ray and I. I'm not in any of the photos but I did help a lot, I was his labourer, carrying and pointing, he even commented on how tidy it was.

Half way through, Ray said that he would like to build a bungalow from a plan in his dad's old World War1 book. I think by the end of the project he'd changed his mind as his back was very painful. It was finished on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 and was a fitting memorial to my dad. It is my favourite place in the garden and is well used.

I was very proud of Ray and it was one of the nicest things he'd done for me.

THANKS RAY & DAD xx





There were ten steps and we took four away.

Right:- We placed the stones from the steps on Ray's veg garden and then re-used them as steps around the garden.



Ray busy loosening the soil ready for us to shovel into buckets.



I also worked hard on this project, it nearly killed me !



We must have walked miles distributing the soil around the garden.



It's coming along and is ready for the rendering.



Ray's favourite job, the woodwork.



Time to relax and doesn't he deserve it !

Two months after building the garden room, we both decided to build a greenhouse for Ray. We started on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2013, the weather was horrid, hail and snow. The first task was to remove four large steps and they were later re-used to make steps around the garden paths.

Ray and I removed tons of soil and carried it in buckets to spread around the garden. We'd work from 10 -5 every day with a pick and shovel, believe me that was very hard work. Ray mixed 4 tons of wet concrete using a shovel and bucket. I don't know where we both found the strength to do it in our 60's.

After the frame work was finished, Sharon took Ray to fetch the glass from Red Kite, near Newtown as our little car was too small.

We were struggling to finish it in time to start the new season in the garden. Luckily the spring was late and the ground wasn't warm enough for planting until early May.

It was worth the hard work, Ray loved his new greenhouse and I love going in it to look at the sky at night.



Finished at last with tomatoes inside and his potatoes growing in his veg garden.