

## 2 The establishment of the borough

When, in 1282, Gwynedd was conquered by the English Crown, Edward 1<sup>st</sup> laid claim to all the territories of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, her last prince. Among these were the *cantref* of Rhosyr and the township of Rhosfair, which stood where Newborough is today. The behaviour of the officers of the English Crown continually stirred up political unrest in Anglesey and a rebellion under Madog ap Llywelyn broke out in 1295. Following this, in order to keep Anglesey under control, Edward 1<sup>st</sup> created the free borough of Beaumaris and subsequently, Newborough received similar privileges.

On the creation of the new borough and the castle of Beaumaris in 1295, the ancient township of Llanfaes lost its privileges. The majority of the former burgesses, who were Welsh, were moved to the *maenor* of Rhosfair, though some few of them secured lands elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Rhosfair received its Royal Charter on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1303 at Durham, in the reign of Edward 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>2</sup> At the request of the burgesses the town was renamed Newborough<sup>3</sup> when the Charter was confirmed at Kennington in 1305.<sup>4</sup> It was further confirmed on several later occasions; at Fulmere on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1324,<sup>5</sup> at Westminster on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1330<sup>6</sup> and again on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1379,<sup>7</sup> at Kennington on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1401,<sup>8</sup> at Westminster on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1424<sup>9</sup> and again on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1524.<sup>10</sup>

Newborough received the same privileges as those granted at Rhuddlan in 1284, but its burgesses were not given full details of that Charter until they requested them in 1305 and this was one reason why the Charter was confirmed in that year.

The borough of Newborough did not reach the extent of the former princes' *maenor*. It possessed 90.5 acres with 378 square yards of the *maenor* for its support. Apart from the King's highways comprising four acres, all the remaining lands of the

old *maenor* were given to the former burgesses of Llanfaes in compensation for the lands they had lost there.<sup>11</sup>

Rhosfair *maenor* included more than 600 acres of ploughland - 10 *carucates* each of about 60 acres; also a garden, grazing pasture and three small hay meadows. When the borough was first established, quite a large part of these lands was unoccupied. After the borough's land had been allocated, territory worth £4 per annum remained lying waste. There were, amongst the burgesses' plots, a few scattered small-holdings belonging to Welsh serfs; the people of the new township very soon sought to take them over.

In 1305 they petitioned Edward of Caernarfon to move the smallholders from their midst, in order that the borough should be enclosed within definite boundaries. They also asked that they might hold the *maenor* land of Rhosfair at the same rate as the former tenants,<sup>12</sup> along with some two acres of pasture interspersed between their plots.<sup>13</sup> They were granted the pasture land at once. It is not clear how much the *maenor* land was given to them for, but it is said that the burgesses customarily held it at £7 per annum.<sup>14</sup>

Some one-third of the *maenor* lands suffered devastation in a storm during the Feast of St. Nicholas on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1331,<sup>15</sup> 186 acres being so totally laid waste by sea and sand incursion as to be afterwards worthless for agricultural purposes.

Where did this sand come from? Tradition says from the bars and sand-banks of Caernarfon Bay which formerly formed part of the parishes of Llandwrog, Clynnog and Llanddwyn. At the height of the storm, as the tide was ebbing, the shore sands dried in the strong wind and were blown onto the land beyond high water mark,<sup>16</sup> there being no impeding cliffs or rocky outcrops. Encroaching further and further, the sand smothered fertile tracts, rendering them worthless for husbandry. The consequent loss to the burgesses amounted to £ 4-1s-6d [£4-8p].

A large part of Newborough parish was also overwhelmed by drifting sand. It is noticeable that quillets and gardens in Newborough today, particularly in the south-west, are considerably higher than the road-level. When clearing sand from the garden of Coedana house in Church St. some fifty years ago, the mouth of a well was discovered many inches below the surface.

It is natural to suppose that many families, having been driven from their Llanddwyn holdings into Newborough by the great devastation wrought by the sand, were thrown on the mercy of the undamaged portion of the parish, having to seek

1 *Transactions of the Cymmrodorion Society* (1902-3), p.44, n.1; *Rec. C'von* pp.217, 218-9

2 *Patent Rolls*, 17 Ed. II. p.407

3 *Rec. Cvon*. p.220

4 When short of money, the king would demand to inspect the country's charters and, having looked them over, would 'reaffirm' them in return for a sum of money from the burgesses. The death of the King was a great excuse for this and it was customary to obtain confirmation of privileges from the succeeding king, for a *consideration*, so as to safeguard the rights of the borough. When Newborough's charter was confirmed in 1330, it appears that the fees amounted to 20 shillings [£1-00p].

5 *Patent Rolls*, 17 Ed. II. p.407

6 *ibid.* 4 Ed. III. p.27

7 *ibid.* 2 Rich. II part ii p.351

8 *ibid.* 2 Hen. IV p.1

9 *ibid.* 4 Hen. VI p.316.

10 *ibid.* 15 Hen. VIII p.1

11 *Exchequer King's Remembrancer Accounts* (before 1302) 1227/4.

12 *Rec. Cvon*. pp.223-434.

13 *ibid.* p.218

14 *Inquisitiones post mortem*, 6 Ed. III, No. 70

15 *Ministers' Accounts* 1152/4, *temp.* 1409. The same thing occurred all along the southern coast of Anglesey - through Aberffraw as far as Rhosneigr.

16 Sand dunes begin because of some unevenness or obstruction in the path of the blown sand. The dunes are steeper on the side facing the wind than on the leeward side. The surface sand is rolled a little way further up to the crest of the steep face by the wind whence it tumbles down the leeward side.

refuge in the town, which became over-crowded. There were no jobs available, however, so the refugees had to settle in other parishes. Small wonder, then, that the inhabitants petitioned the authorities in 1524<sup>17</sup> to be released from burdensome borough ‘privileges’.<sup>18</sup>

In an attempt to arrest the advancing sand, marram [sedge] grass was planted along the coast where the sand had covered the land and in 1561 the government of Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> ordered the Mayor and Officers of Newborough to punish anyone who cut, uprooted or carried away the marram grass, so valuable were its deep roots in stabilising the sand as they penetrated the ground.<sup>19</sup>

After the destruction began in 1331 the *maenor* lands were valued for taxation by the burgesses at £4 altogether. The borough did not succeed in annexing the whole *maenor*, the remaining parts coming to be known as *Hendref Rossir* [Old Rhosyr township]. There were *maerdref* men in Rhosfair in 1353 holding lands worth £6-16s-5½d [£ 6-83p] per annum.<sup>20</sup> However, the burgesses did secure ample land to enable them to delineate the boundaries of the borough clearly. These boundaries were traced very precisely by the famous antiquarian Henry Rowlands in his notes *Antiquitates Parochiales in Archaeologia Cambrensis*.<sup>21</sup>

There is very little evidence as to the architectural layout of this borough.<sup>22</sup> A surveyor must have marked out the site of each house and burgage plot and to begin with, there was more land than there were burgesses to fill it! The royal highroad lead to the marketplace of the borough or ‘The Cross’, as it is called today. On both sides of the road were the burgages, with strips of green sward between hem.. In Latin, they were usually called *placeae* (‘placements’) and their rental values varied. Every burgess was required to live within the borough.

Most North Wales burgage houses were of wooden construction. In 1305 the burgesses of Newborough and Beaumaris sought permission to obtain timber from the great forests of Snowdonia,<sup>23</sup> but in vain. There may have been more stone in Newborough houses or maybe the burgesses covertly obtained timber from the royal forests outside the borough. The houses were built by local craftsmen, from local materials, and no two houses were alike. This was a time of variety, when the work of each craftsman exhibited his individual characteristics.

The English King decreed that the annual charge on each burgess was to be 12 pence, half to be paid at the Feast of St. Michael and the rest at Easter; this was typical of most of the Welsh boroughs. However, the houses of Newborough varied

17 See [original] p.15

18 There was great damage some 40 years ago [i.e. circa 1909 *Ed.*] with the destruction of Abermenai spit, and this threatened to block the southern mouth of the Menai Strait. If so much damage could occur in only a short time in our own era, how much more [could we expect] in six centuries ?

19 *Record of Caernarvon* p.298

20 *ibid* p.83

21 *Mona Mediaeva* series 1846 vol. 1 part i. p.311; see also present work original p.33

22 Lewis Morris’s plan of Newborough 1737-8 gives some idea of the layout of the borough; see Fig.7

23 *Record of Caernarvon* p.223

in size a good deal, and consequently in rental value. These rents comprised the greater part of the land revenue from the borough. Of course, there were quilllets of land in the borough not belonging to burgage houses. The burgesses rented some of these and the rest remained in the hands of the Crown.

In 1352, by command of Edward III, a Survey or *Extent* of Gwynedd was made with the aim of obtaining information about differing rents due, together with services and tolls formerly demanded by the Welsh Princes, in order to commute them into money payments to the royal treasury. This information was obtained on oath from sets of twelve jurors, their names being listed at the beginning of the record for each commote. Full details are in the *Record of Caernarvon* where the tenants’ names and their annual rents are given, half at Easter and half at St. Michael’s Feast.

It can be seen from the following list that more than one burgess held lands previously under the control of several other people. In 1348 the Black Death broke out in England and Wales and during 1349-50 it is estimated that one in four of all persons in the country died, and this probably meant that there was more land than tenants, with the result that some wealthy burgesses acquired several properties. This may have been one reason for undertaking the 1352 *Extent*.

<i>Tenant</i>	<i>Type of land</i>	<i>Previous Tenant</i>	<i>Ardreth</i>	
			<i>s.</i>	<i>c.</i>
Griffith ap Iorwerth Foel	<i>placea</i> <sup>24</sup>	Adda Wan	3	
“	all lands	Einion Goch Physygwr	6	4½
“	<i>placea</i>	Madog ap Ithel	3	
“	“	Madog Vedik	1	
“	“	William Physygwr	4	
“	“	Philip Amlok	6	
“	“	Philip ap Jack	6	
“	“	Grono Dew	4	
“	“	Ieuan ap Gladus	4	
William ap Madog Grythor	“	Madog Grythor	9	
“	?	Iocyn Ddu	3	
“	?	David y Barcer	19	
“	orchard	Philip ap Iago	6	
“	<i>placea</i>	Ednyfed ap Eneas	5½	
“	“	Cynric ap Bleddyn	6	
“	“	Philip ap Robin	6	
“	fee-farm <sup>25</sup>	Madog ap David	6	
Madog ap William	?	Ieuan Fychan	6	
“	?	Grono an Ieuan	22	

24 *placea* could be a plot or a building or both..

25 *fee-farm* was inheritance generation to generation at annual rental.

“	?	Thomas ap Philip	5	“	<i>placea</i>	Gladus ferch William ap David	2
“	?	Morris ap David	3	“	<i>placea</i>	Thomas Ddu	1
“	?	Gruffydd Fychan	1½	Tudur y Teiliwr	4 <i>plac.</i>	William ap Daniel	2 3
“	?	Harri y Person	3	“	?	Philip ap Madog	2
“	?	Einion an Ieuan	3	“	?	David ap Howel	3
“	?	Grono Fychan	2 9½	Gruffydd ap Cynric	garden	Morus	3
“	?	David ap Ieuan	4½	“	?	Morus	6
Grono ap William	?	Ieuan Felyn	6	“	?	Cynric ap Ieuan	12
“	?	Philip ap David	3	“	?	Ieuan Tada	2 7
“	?	William ap Ithel	3	“	?	Einion ap Jack	19
“	?	Grono ap Ieuan	8	“	?	Einion ap Ieuan	12
“	?	Grono an Iok (Iocyn neu Jack)	5	“	?	Einion ap Jack	5
“	?	Ieuan ap Ieuan	5	Madog ap Grono Ddu	?	Alice Fychan (? Fechan)	3
“	?	Cynric Bach	¾	“	?	Philip ap David	4
/12/ Grono ap William	?	Wrach Eneol	3	“	garden	Ieuan Felyn	2
“	?	Madog ap Iorwerth Foel	8	“	2 <i>plac.</i>	Ieuan ap William	6
“	?	David Gethin	6	Ieuan ap David Goch	2 <i>plac.</i>	David Goch ei dad	12
“	?	David y Tôwr	6	Gruffydd ap Madog	?	Hona ap Ithel	11
Ieuan ap William	?	William ap Wilcin	2 0	“	?	Tegwared ap Meg	1¾
“	?	Grono ap Iocyn	6	Ieuan ap Iorwerth Lloyd	8 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	4 0
“	?	Gladus ferch Madog	6	Madog ap David	4 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	4 6
“	?	David ap Ieuan	4 0	Cadwaladr Segur	<i>placea</i>	Howel ap Gruffydd	9½
“	?	Ieuan ap Iorwerth	3	“	?	David Lloyd	6
“	?	Gwasmihangel	6	Wm ap Madog ap Iorwerth	<i>placea</i>	ei dad	6
“	?	Madog Wyddel	19	Ieuan y Masnachwr	3 <i>plac.</i>	Alan de Maxfeld	15
“	?	Hemryn	6	Ieuan ap Einion ap Dobynd	2 <i>plac.</i>		
“	?	Magister William	3		garden	ei dad	17
“	<i>placea</i>	Reginald Trentham	3	“	<i>placea</i>	William ap Iorwerth	4½
“	?	Ieuan ap Madog	3	/13/ Ieuan Goch ap John	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	4
“	?	Cynric ap Hona	3	Ieuan ap Jockis	<i>placea</i>	ei dad	3½
“	?	Cynric ap Bleddyn	6	Ieuan ap Ieuan ap Cynric	<i>placea.</i>	ei dad	2 6
“	?	David Fychan	2	Iorwerth ap Grono	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	6
David ap William	?	Simon Fychan	2 0	“	<i>placea.</i>	Ieuan ap David	3
“	?	Gwilym ap Philip	6	“	<i>placea.</i>	Gruffydd ap David ap Howel	3
“	?	Ieuan Grythor.	9	Simon ap Philip	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	10
“	?	Richard Goch	3	“	2 <i>plac.</i>	Cynric Grach	6
“	garden	Wilmark	9	Einion ap Philip	garden	ei dad	8
“	?	Philip ap Jack	3	“	<i>placea.</i>	Gwenhonwy ferch David.	3
“	?	Ririt Birgyn	2½	“	<i>placea.</i>	Philip ap Iago	6
“	?	Ieuan ap Philip	18	David ap Tegwared	<i>placea.</i>	ei dad	4
“	?	Thomas ap Philip	6	Ieuan ap Tegwared	<i>placea.</i>	Tegwared ap Ieuan	4½
“	<i>placea</i>	Yr athro Ririt	2	Hona ap Ieuan Felyn	<i>placea.</i>	ei dad	6
David Lloyd	3 <i>plac.</i>	David Lloyd ap David	17	Ieuan Lloyd	garden	Philip ap Gruffydd	3

Ellen ferch Madog ap Heilyn	<i>placea.</i>	ei thad	3½
Cynric ap Hona	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	5
“	?	Magister William y Physygywr	3
“	?	Ieuan ap William	3
“	?	Ieuan ap David	2
Iorwerth ap Philip	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	10
Grono ap Tudur	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	11½
Ieuan ap Pirs	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	4
“	?	David Feddyg	3
“	?	Grono ap Harri	6
Madog ap David	?	Grono ap Einion	6
“	<i>placea.</i>	Ieuan ap David ap Simon	3
David ap Philcus	2 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	4¼
“	<i>placea.</i>	Robert o Paris	6
“	?	Ithel ap Madog	1½
Grf.ap Ior.ap Gwasmihangel	3 <i>plac.</i>	ei dad	19
“	?	Madog ap Heilin	1½
Gwenllian ferch Hona	?	Gwenllian ferch Madog	3
Morfudd ferch Einion	2 <i>plac.</i>	Einion Chwith	6
David Fawr	3 <i>plac.</i>	Ieuan Grum [=Gryf]	9
Iorverth Ddu ap Ithel	<i>placea.</i>	ei dad	6
Mer.ap Llyw.ap Eden[yfed]	garden	ei dad	18
David ap Richard ap Ieuan	garden	ei dad	6
Corfforaeth y dref	?	David Gaplan <sup>26</sup>	3
David ap Rhys	garden	ei dad	15
Grono ap Ieuan	garden	ei dad	6
Grono ap Howel	garden	Gruffydd ap Iorverth	4
Corfforaeth y dref	garden	Tudur Foel	12
David ap Cynric	<i>placea.</i>	ei dad	6
Gwenllian ferch Tudur	2 <i>plac.</i>	Ieuan ap David ap Einion. 2	4
Philip ap Madog	?	ei dad	2½
Gladus <sup>27</sup> wr. Howel ap Gruff.	2 <i>plac.</i>	Gruff.ap Ior. a Ieuan Topau &c.	8
<b>/14/</b> Iorverth ap Gruff. ap Hona	2 <i>plac.</i>		
	3 crofts <sup>28</sup>	ei dad	14
Hona ap Ieuan Felyn	2 <i>plac.</i>	2 crofts ei dad	3 2½
Gwen f. Ior ap. Grf ap. Dav	2 <i>plac.</i>	3 crofts ei thad	3 1
David ap Philip	3 crofts	Thomas Fychan	3 2

26 The priest lived here.

27 Compare *Cerrig Gladus* in *Gwninger Fawr*.

28 The distinction between gardens and *crofts* (by which is intended ‘small enclosures’) is unclear. But the latter is used to indicate agriculture.

“	croft	ei dad	17
Gruffydd Fychan	2 <i>plac.</i>	croft ei dad	2 8
Corfforaeth y dref	<i>plac.</i>	?	3
Madog ap Grono .	croft	ei dad	6
			113s. 8c.

The burgesses of Newborough were under no obligation to render [military] service to the English Crown for their lands, any more than other North Wales burgesses, but merely to pay rent on them. On one occasion some of the burgesses were conscripted into leading the Welsh companies sent to support Edward III in his Scottish wars. But they straightaway informed him that they were, as with other burgesses, in no way liable for such service, and further, that their only obligation was to keep the peace in their area<sup>29</sup> when he was abroad.

The main privileges of the burgesses were:-

- (a) the right of election of mayor and bailiffs, the right to arrest stray felons,<sup>30</sup> to enjoy the rights of *sok*<sup>31</sup> and *sak*,<sup>32</sup> *toll*<sup>33</sup> and *team*<sup>34</sup> and *infangenthf*<sup>35</sup> and the free proceeds of rabbit warrens and woodland<sup>36</sup>
- (b) to forbid any Jew from the town
- (c) the chattels of a burgess dying intestate were not to be forfeit to the Crown.
- (d) the right to levy *gild merchant*<sup>37</sup> with *hanse*<sup>38</sup> &c. and to hold markets and local fairs
- (e) freedom from *tolnetum*,<sup>39</sup> *lastage*,<sup>40</sup> *passage*,<sup>41</sup> *murage*,<sup>42</sup> *pontage*,<sup>43</sup> *stallage*,<sup>44</sup> *leve*,<sup>45</sup> *danegeld*<sup>46</sup> and *gaywite*<sup>47</sup>

29 That is, within one day’s return journey of Newborough.

30 To keep in secure custody each felon coming under their jurisdiction. Fourpence had to be paid to the bailiffs whenever a prisoner was released.

31 The right of all inhabitants of the borough to appear in the borough’s court when litigating or when their presence was required.

32 The right to receive proper notification of any accusation made against any of them.

33 The right to levy tolls on all goods bought and sold in the local markets.

34 The right to hold courts in the township at which non-burgesses could receive justice.

35 The right to execute thieves who came within the boundaries of the borough.

36 This last applied to all warrens and woods on borough land. Hunting and the building of houses were forbidden on them. In this way, those dwelling outside the borough limits were kept separate from the burgesses.

37 Company of merchants in the borough controlling everything to do with its markets

38 Important payment made by every burgess on admission to the company of borough merchants

39 Freedom to buy and sell goods free of duty in all fairs and markets in Wales and elsewhere

40 Freedom to carry goods and such free of duty through and over all royal ports and bridges

41 Freedom to carry goods and purchases anywhere duty free

42 Freedom from having to contribute to the maintenance of any borough walls during a trading visit

43 Freedom from all toll when crossing the town’s bridges

44 Exemption from payment of tolls incurred in other boroughs, by using their roads [This note of Owen’s seems incorrect; *stallage* is payment for the right to erect market stalls or tents *Ed.*]

45 They need not, while in the market or fair, make any payment to the officers who patrolled the town to safeguard their rights.

(f) they were to be tried only by their fellow-burgesses in their own district.

In the first years of the borough its officers were under the authority of the King's Deputy in North Wales and the bailiffs were no more than servants of the Crown. Gradually, however, the administration passed into the hands of the burgesses. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the bailiffs gave a very careful account of the boundaries and holdings of the borough, but with the passage of time the borough came to hold their lands in 'farm'<sup>48</sup> for an annual rent. The entire borough composed its 'farm' into a single sum for a number of years, including the mill[s] and the harbour. Frequently the local King's Deputy altered the sum due a little. This arrangement continued in Newborough until the end of the Middle Ages, around 1500.

A feature of any borough was its court of independent jurisdiction, but unfortunately we know almost nothing about how Newborough courts operated. The Mayor was elected by the burgesses from among their number at the Feast of St. Michael each year. A coroner also sat here from the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. After confirmation of its privileges in 1524, Newborough continued to elect a Mayor until 1811

How was the Borough governed ?. The court records do not appear to be available, except for a few to do with fairs and markets, but it seems certain that Newborough, like other boroughs, held four or five different courts:-

(1) *View of Frankpledge* or *tourn*. This was the principal governing body of the borough, which met twice yearly, usually in March or April and again in September. The town's Mayor was nominally in charge of this court but the two bailiffs<sup>49</sup> usually conducted the work of the court, with the principal burgesses serving as jurors when necessary. This was the court where those who were accused of assault and/or affray, theft, or using false weights or giving false measure appeared; here also matters pertaining to borough privilege or property were dealt with. The whole borough had to attend, or face punishment if absent without good reason.

(2) The *Town Court* where complaints concerning trespass and debt were heard. This court convened every three weeks with the two bailiffs presiding.

(3) The *Market Court* and (4) the *Fairs Court*. The day after each market or fair, or within a day or two afterwards, complaints were heard concerning contracts, debts, trespass, payment of tolls and other matters to do with market or fair. The *Fairs Court* and the *Piepowder Court* afforded the opportunity of settling complaints

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46 Tax on the county to maintain an army against the Danes [Owen omits the principal meaning viz. *Danegeld* was money payment to the Danes, to appease them. *Ed.*]

47 They were exempt from contributing to any war chest.

48 The letting of borough revenue collection with its associated potential profit, to a person selected by that borough, who collected it in return for a fixed sum.

49 The bailiffs were appointed by the burgesses from among their number every year at the Feast of St. Michael

concerning merchants who had far to travel after the fair. These pleas were settled swiftly lest any should be detained over-long in the town.

Until the Act of Union of England and Wales in 1535, markets were held in Newborough every Tuesday and fairs on the Feasts of St. Martin (11<sup>th</sup> November) and Sts. Peter and Paul (29<sup>th</sup> June).<sup>50</sup> This borough was the central market for all the inhabitants of the Commote of Menai. During 1304 the total of the market tolls was £2-9s-3d [£9-47p] and the tolls of the annual fairs averaged £2. The borough profited from the excellence of the oxen it sold,<sup>51</sup> for it was virtually supreme among Welsh fairs as far as numbers and variety of breed of beast were concerned. By 1460, however, the total tolls from markets and fairs was only 14/8d [74p]. It would appear that freedom from paying tolls was partly a Welsh custom, brought up to date and confirmed as a privilege under Henry VII.

A poem in praise of Rhosyr by Dafydd ap Gwilym in the 14<sup>th</sup> century:-<sup>52</sup>

### TO RHOSYR IN ANGLESEY

Hail to thee, long lovely dawn,  
Newborough town, home of true hope,  
And its fair [and] lovely temple, its green towers,  
And its wine and its folk and its men,  
And its beer and its mead and its loving,  
And its bountiful men and free provision.  
Rhosyr is a cosy corner,  
It's a field for men to play;  
A country home, preventing leaving:  
That town there is heaven's [own] cousin!  
A rich host of the true [and] bounteous,  
A homely place, Môn's burial-place for mead!  
It is, of all towns, heaven's contender,  
It is, to me, mead-cell and castle,  
The pathways of our fame, a royal place,  
A great host from all places praise it.  
A place where it's not vain to sing,  
Place of true men,<sup>53</sup> where wealth is for the having,  
An easy place for poets, a place of lavish tables;  
[And] by my troth, a place for me!  
Best tower of praise, of free [and] lively circuit,<sup>54</sup>

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50 *Archaeologia Cambrensis* vol.1 p.307

51 *ibid.*

52 Owen quotes from *Barddoniaeth Dafydd ab Gwilym* o grynhoed Owen Jones a William Owen, Llundain 1789, pp. 275-6. This translation is by Prof. Gwyn Thomas *Dafydd ap Gwilym: his poems* U.W.P. Cardiff 2001

53 lit. 'true man'; Prof. Gwyn Thomas notes that 'faithful girl' is also a possible meaning

Best town, 'neath heaven, is it for talent;  
 it is a faultless, open pantry,  
 A hearth, a poets' fire-ring;<sup>55</sup>  
 A payment to support Five Ages,<sup>56</sup>  
 Their courtesy to me and wisdom are long lasting.  
 Renowned orchard for [all] drinks,  
 Rebirth-cauldron<sup>57</sup> of all bounteous kings.  
 The honour of all city-commoners [indeed],  
 Headland of fresh, sparkling drink[s] of mead.

Here, Dafydd ap Gwilym saw his beloved Morfudd for the first time, at the feast of the patron saint St. Peter on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1360. She was the daughter of Madog Lawgam, of the Anglesey gentry. If they indeed lived in the Newborough area 'amid mountain gorse', the most likely place would have been *Bryniau* or nearby *Bryn Madog*.

This period of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was Newborough's most prosperous time, when the Crown received, almost without fail, annual revenue varying between £30 and £36. As late as 1410 there were lands worth £1-10s-0d [£1-50p] lying waste in the Crown's hands, and some remained thus during the reign of Henry V, when the total revenue varied between £20 and £27-2s-0d [£20-10p]. This latter sum was still typical in 1468. In 1543, for some unknown reason, receipts suddenly fell to £11-3-4d [£11-17p] and remained at this level during the remaining Tudor years up to 1603.<sup>58</sup> It appears that reduction in market and court receipts may have been a cause.

We now give a sketch of the English Crown's personal connections with the borough. On October 21<sup>st</sup> 1284, Edward 1<sup>st</sup> proclaimed his intention to bestow on his wife Eleanor the *maenor* of Rhosfair for herself, along with the commote of Menai, a *carucate* of land in Llanfaes and the *maenors* of Dolbenmaen and 'Penhathan' in Arfon, on condition that they were never alienated from the English Crown.<sup>59</sup>

When his son Edward II came to the throne in 1307, [the new King] made similar provision for his wife Isabella, on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1309 at Westminster.<sup>60</sup> It appears that arrangements had been made, under the aegis of Pope Boniface VIII, between her father Phillip of France and Edward 1<sup>st</sup>, for a dowry of £4000 to be given to Princess Isabella 'at the church door' on their wedding day. This dowry included the *maenor*

54 i.e. 'bardic circuit', visits by the bards to their patrons' various houses

55 A twig, whose tip was set alight, then whirled around to amuse children by the patterns created in the darkness by persistence of vision.

56 The 'Five Ages' formerly described the time from the Creation until the coming of Christ.

57 The cauldron of renewal. Dead placed in it were reborn, but unable to speak. See the Second Branch of the Mabinogi.

58 "At the latter end of king Henry VIII's reign (c.1547) Newborough consisted of 93 houses, 13 gardens, 1 orchard, 12 crofts, and 60 small pieces of ground, called *erwau*, enclosed for the use of the houses." Sebright Papers, *History of Mona*, by Angharad Llwyd, p.317.

59 *Chancery Rolls*, 1277 - 1326, p.290.

60 *Pat. Rolls*, 2 Ed. 1, part 1, p.101.

of Rhosfair and the commote of Menai.<sup>61</sup> But before the year's end, on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1318, the Duchy of Cornwall was substituted for the aforesaid Anglesey and Arfon lands,<sup>62</sup> which, the very next day, were bestowed upon [Edward II's] son and daughter, John and Eleanor.<sup>63</sup>

Some two years later, on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1320, he conveyed these same lands once again to Princess Isabella, she to use the income from them to defray the expenses of [or support] his son and daughter. The three officials entrusted with related matters of inheritance were Richard Damory,<sup>64</sup> Robert de Manley and Nicholas de Hugate.<sup>65</sup> In 1330, Edward Haclut was appointed to this office.<sup>66</sup>

Princess Isabella gave all these lands and revenues (including Rhosfair) to her son Edward III in 1345, in return for a yearly sum of £3000.<sup>67</sup> The Black Prince, son of Edward III, granted the burgesses of Newborough and their heirs, the right to appoint one of their number annually as Mayor, on the Feast of St. Michael, on condition that he be English and undertake an oath of loyalty to the Prince and Corporation. After his appointment [the Mayor] had to undertake a similar oath to the King's Chamberlain at Caernarfon.<sup>68</sup>

In 1395, during the reign of Richard II (1377-99), William Kilmington was chosen as Receiver (*porthawr*) of Newborough's revenues.<sup>69</sup> Two years later he had to report that he had received none.<sup>70</sup> In 1399 the *porthawr* was paid 25 marks or £16-13s-4d [£16-67p] annually by the Treasury, together with £33-13s-4d [£33-67p] from Henry IV, in lieu of Newborough's revenues, since these belonged to the Principality of Wales.<sup>71</sup> Apparently the Royal officials and Auditors found that no *maenor* called Rhosfair existed in the county, merely a township of that name.<sup>72</sup>

Henry VI installed Hugh de Orell as *porthawr* at £10 per annum;<sup>73</sup> but shortly afterwards, Gilbert Orell was appointed as his father's co-official, the two to receive the £10 jointly "out of rents, issues and profits of the manor town or portership (*portarii*) of Rosfaire, Anglesey".<sup>74</sup> Thomas Yonge or his Deputy held office in 1437, with a salary and the usual fringe benefits.<sup>75</sup> In 1544, Thomas Moyle was appointed

61 *ibid.* 11 Ed. 11, p.116.

62 *ibid.* 12 Ed. 11, p.223.

63 *ibid.* 12 Ed. 11, p.222.

64 *ibid.* 13 Ed. 11, p.453

65 *Fine Rolls*, 12 Ed. 11, p.389.

66 *ibid.* 4 Ed. III, p.201.

67 *Pat. Rolls*, 19 Ed. III, part i, pp.447-8.

68 *Black Prince's Register*, part i, 1346-8, p. 155

69 *Pat. Rolls*, 19 Ric. II, p.615.

70 *ibid.* 20 Ric. II p.85

71 *Pat. Rolls*. 1 Hen. IV, p.186.

72 *ibid.* Hen. VI, part i, p.402

73 "The office of the Steward of the Townes of Newborough and Rosfair his yerelie fee was ten pounce. 10, ." Llanstephan MS. 192, fo.90

74 *Pat. Rolls*, Hen. VI. p.561

75 *ibid.* 1436-41, p.69

Steward of the town of “Rosure alias Newburghe” in the room of David Holland, deceased, and he was paid £6-13s-4d [£6-67p].<sup>76</sup>

Six years after this, Edward VI [is recorded as having] pardoned John ap Robert Lloyd and his son Edward for the murder of Richard ap Howell some little time before, near Treferwydd in the commote of Menai, and restored their lands and gardens to them.<sup>77</sup>

In 1557 the land where Rhosfair Mill, ruined for many years, had stood, was leased for 21 years to Rhydderch ap Dafydd “gentleman usher of the King’s chamber” for an annual rent of 6/8d [34p].<sup>78</sup>

[There is reference] around the year 1602 to the Steward, whose costs amounted to £1.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Letters & Papers, Foreign & Domestic*, Hen. VII, vol. xix, part I, p.287.

<sup>77</sup> *Pat. Rolls*, Ed. VI, 1549-51, p.328.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* Philip & Mary, 1557-8, p.25. See also [original *Ed.*] p.28.

<sup>79</sup> The Steward of Rosfaire, whose yerelie fee ys twentie shillings. 20s.@Llanstephan MS. 192, fo. 102. (c.44 Eliz.)