*A unique talent - Martha Llwyd*

How many of you could mentally compose some four lines of verse without resort to pen or paper and then remember your creation to recite it next day. Not many, I am sure! Consider then a person who composed 200 line poems in that way and could keep them in memory for ever after. It all happened here in Llanpumsaint. That lady living at Glanyrafon (opposite the church entrance) was an extra ordinarily gifted poet who for over half a century composed poetry and countless hymns which became popular all over Wales. Born in 1761, she like 9 out of ten females in her age had never been taught to write, though she had learnt to read the Bible in Sunday school. Incidentally a mere four out of ten males could write their names around 1800, as church Marriage Registers confirm.

What happened to all her creations? A friend of hers Anne Jones wrote down much of her work in two large volumes, one of which was handed to a Llanelli printer for publication. He died, then his shed caught fire, and you’ve guessed it, all that creativity went up in smoke. Fortunately parts of the other book survived, to leave us with a dozen or so hymns and few elegies to some local notables of her day. Her elegy to Thomas Charles, Bala, a classic apparently, was sadly lost.

By the way, at Glanyrafon, she raised nine children on a blacksmith’s wage and was totally crippled for decades. She had to be carried to and from Bethel Methodist chapel, where she faithfully worshipped during her long 79 years of life. William Williams Pantycelyn, Wales’ most famous hymn writer, recognised her as a truly remarkable individual, and was a regular visitor at Glanyrafon. Why not pay homage to her grave, peacefully located under the giant yew tree in Llanpumsaint churchyard? The Community Council is to be congratulated for deciding to erect a plaque in her memory, and so are Rebecca and Iestyn Glanyrafon for allowing its suitable placement on their property. This memorial will complement the existing one to Llanpumsaint’s other famous daughter Jennie Eirian, brought up at Llandre, a mere hundred yards away, but separated in time by a century and more.

Her name? I almost forgot! Martha Llwyd (Lloyd in English), born 1765, died 1845, it’s on the gravestone anyway, and will soon be on the wall.

*Arwyn2011*