



South Wales RIGS Group Site Record

RIGS Description

SECTION A

General	South Wales
Site Name: Llanwrtyd Wells Sulphur Well	File Number: AH_66
RIGS Number: 751	Surveyed by: AJ Humpage
Grid Reference: SN 87125 47000	Date of Visit: 1 September 2011
RIGS Category: Scientific, historical	Date Registered: Unknown
Earth Science Category: Spring	
Site Nature: Riverside	Documentation prepared by: AJH
Unitary Authority: Powys CC	Documentation last revised: 3 October 2011
OS 1:50,000 Sheet: 147	Photographic Record: See images attached to this report
OS 1:25,000 Explorer Sheet: 188	
BGS 1:50,000 : Sheet 196 (Builth Wells)	

RIGS Statement of Interest: This site forms part of a network of significant mineral springs in southern mid Wales in the former county of Brecknockshire. This site is perhaps the most famous and well-developed of the spa resorts.

Llanwrtyd Wells consists of a number of wells and springs all of which claimed medicinal properties. The main sources of medicinal mineral waters in the spa were the Dolecoed and Victoria springs. Another was found at Henfron in 1922, well after the Victorian heyday of the spa. The most famous of the local springs was Ffynon Drewllyd or the 'Stinking Well' at Dolecoed. This is close to the River Irfon, and it has the highest sulphur content of any natural source in Britain. The water here was never pumped but came out naturally at a rate of about 4,500 gallons a day. The source of the water was sealed in Victorian times in a massive round marble pedestal which was decorated with mosaic stones. This was to prevent the loss of the natural gases produced in the well which added to the goodness of the water. There was a thick glass top to the tank and visitors could see the gas bubbling through the water in an angled mirror placed above the well. The waters at Dolecoed were piped into baths within the adjacent hotel.

The Dolecoed Pump Room also offered water from the Chalybeate Spring which was water containing iron salts.

The spring at Llanwrtyd was 'discovered' in 1732, followed by that at Builth by 1740. However, it was from the middle of the 19th century that "taking the waters" became truly popular and a significant industry developed.

Geological setting/context:

Llanwrtyd Wells is within the Irfon valley, a tributary of the River Wye and is underlain by an area of outcropping Ordovician age mudstones, siltstones and tuffs of the Llanwrtyd Volcanic Formation.

The Sulphur Spring at Dol-y-coed was discovered by the Reverend Theophilus Evans of Llangammarch Wells in 1732. The pump room was built before 1853 and later remade as tearooms, probably in 1893 when the well was enclosed and spa facilities improved by Richard Campbell Davys. The well was closed circa 1960.

The sulphur water was fed through ebonite pipes under natural gravity to the baths at Dolecoed, where it was heated to the required temperature for medicinal purposes. It was claimed that "The thermal apparatus employed in the bathing establishment is so excellent that it is possible to obtain baths at any temperature that may be prescribed, without lessening in the smallest degree the therapeutic powers of the mineral water".

The Dolecoed Pump Room also offered water from the "Chalybeate Spring" which was water containing iron salts. This evidently gave the water a "greenish tint" but "the taste is somewhat pleasant" ! This water had no smell at all - which is more than could be said of the sulphur water !

The pump room is a single storey range orientated north to south, which is cement rendered on a plinth with a high hipped slate-covered roof with ridge cresting. It has very wide boarded eaves on ornamental brackets. The symmetrical east front has end doorways, which are slightly recessed under flat heads. There are boarded 4-panel doors and panelled reveals and four 6-pane wooden windows between with flat heads and stone sills. There are no openings to the gable ends. The rear has 2 windows under shallow segmental heads, both 2-light multi-pane casements. The interior is said to retain tie-beams and flying braces which support the trusses of the boarded roof.

The well itself was enclosed: it is shown as a square enclosure labelled 'mineral spring' on the Llanwrtyd tithe map of 1846. The well-house was designed by James Keith for Richard Campbell Davys in 1893 at a total cost of £20,000, and was extended after 1905. The well closed circa 1960 and the building suffered fire damage in the late 20th century. It is a single-storey T-plan building with cement rendered walls, quoins and a moulded plinth. The building formerly had a hipped slate roof with ridge cresting, and wide boarded eaves. There are moulded architraves with keystones to the wide window openings, which are now boarded over, but contained tripartite wooden windows. The south front has a doorway to the left with a pilastered and segmental headed frame, formerly with a 6-panel door, now boarded over. The west side of the front block has a central window opening. To the north-west are the footings of a former conservatory with a mosaic-type floor. The rendered drum of the well-head is exposed and has a domed head with octagonal vent. To its right is an internal boarded door. The east side of the front block has a pilastered doorway with flat head to the left, and a window to its right. There is a short range to the east,

beyond which is a single-storey addition. This has cement rendered walls under a slate roof, large quoins and a plinth. There is a half-glazed door to south front flanked by plain boarded window openings. The gable end has a blocked doorway to the left and a 2-light multi-pane casement window to the right, with one similar to the rear. The interior is said to be plain with vertically boarded walls, moulded cornices, plain ceilings and 6-panel doors. The drum of the well-head is said to be decorated with mosaic cladding and key-pattern bands. It originally had ornamental spouts.

Edmunds *et al* (1998), considered that with the exception of Llandrindod Wells, the saline waters of central Wales probably were of meteoric origin, although acknowledging that deep groundwater circulation giving rise to their mineral properties.

References:

CADW Listed Buildings Database

Edmunds, W.M., Robins, N.S. and Shand, P. (1998). The saline waters of Llandrindod and Builth, Central Wales. *Journal of the Geological Society of London*. 155, 627-637.

Jones, J.R. (1859) *Pryse's handbook to the Breconshire and Radnorshire mineral springs: with notes and excerpts illustrating the history, antiquities, and topography of many of the surrounding towns and villages*. Llanidloes: Pryse, 1859.

SECTION B

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS: Please score Accessibility and Safety Red Amber or Green			
Accessibility:		X	
Comment: Private Property.			
Safety:			X
Comment: Private hotel grounds			
Conservation status: The River Irfon channel is part of the River Wye (Tributaries) SSSI, and the pump house and well house are listed buildings. Otherwise there are no known designations of this location.			

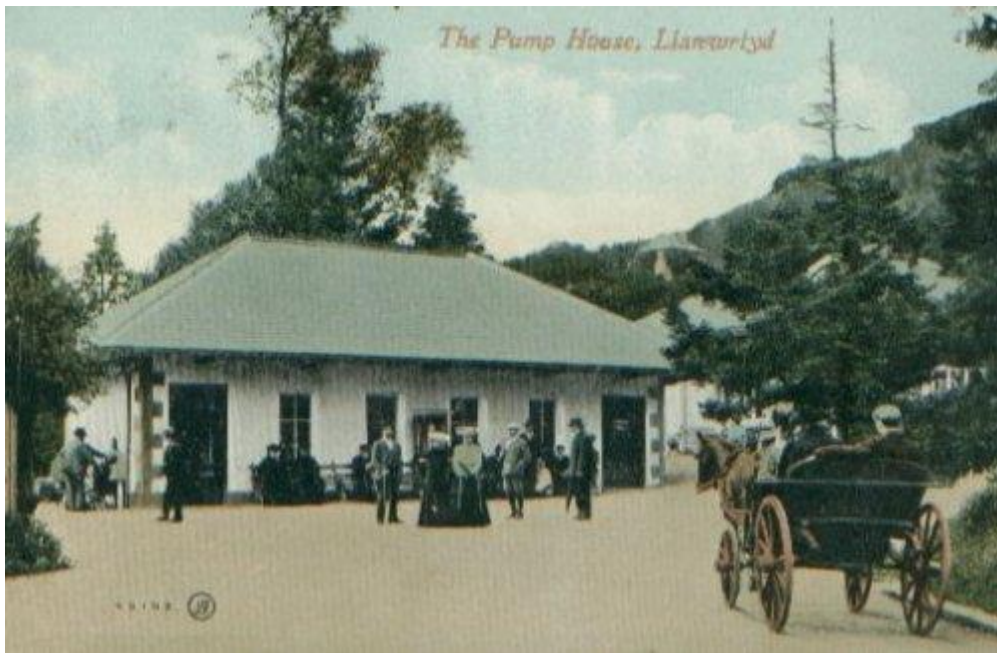
OWNERSHIP/PLANNING CONTROL: Owner/tenant: ??Dol-y-coed Country Hotel Planning Authority: Powys County Council Planning status/constraints/opportunities: There are no known planning constraints or opportunities.

CONDITION, USE & MANAGEMENT: Present use: Hotel grounds Site condition: The buildings at the Dolecoed site remain although the well house is fire damaged. Potential threats: Remains of well house may be demolished or redeveloped. Site Management:

SITE DEVELOPMENT: Potential use (general): Potential use (educational): Could be used to highlight the circulation and movement of groundwater.
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Other comments:

Photographic Record



View of Dolecoed (Dol-y-coed) Pump House, looking west



Inside the pump house



The source of the water was sealed in Victorian times in a massive round marble pedestal which was decorated with mosaic stones. This was to prevent the loss of the natural gases produced in the well which added to the goodness of the water. There was a thick glass top to the tank and visitors could see the gas bubbling through the water in an angled mirror placed above the well.