

Practice as Research PhD by  
Louise Ann Wilson

Supporting Material  
*The Gathering / Yr Helfa*

12-14 September 2014  
Hafod y Llan Farm, Snowdonia, Wales

Created, Directed and Designed by Louise Ann Wilson

## Supporting Material – *The Gathering / Yr Helfa*

The supporting material for *The Gathering / Yr Helfa* (*The Gathering*) is designed to give the viewer a visual and textual insight into the primary research process and the walking-performance. It incorporates:

*The Gathering* – Credits

*The Gathering* – Overview

*The Gathering* – Design: photos, storyboard and costume design drawings and route maps by Louise Ann Wilson.

Primary/Site (Landscape) and Secondary/Subject (Animal Reproductive Cycles) Research

Gallery – The Performance

with: extracts of the ‘Landscape Poems’ and the ‘12-month poem cycle’

written by Gillian Clarke for *The Gathering*. Copyright Gillian Clarke;

Extracts from additional texts written by Louise Ann Wilson.

Production photographs by Lizzie Coombes (Copyright LAW Co)

and Joe Fildes/NTW (Copyright NTW).

Participant Responses.

Unless otherwise stated all, texts, drawings and photographs are by Louise Ann Wilson.

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See also: [www.louiseannwilson.com/productions/thegathering](http://www.louiseannwilson.com/productions/thegathering)

## *The Gathering – Credits*

Created, Directed and Designed by Louise Ann Wilson.

Written by Gillian Clarke with additional text by Louise Ann Wilson.

Choreography by Nigel Stewart.

Music Consultation by John Hardy Music.

Sound & Film Design by Louise Ann Wilson.

Film Editing by Janan Yakula.

Performed by Actors Ffion Dafis, Emyr Gibson, Gwyn Vaughan Jones, Gwion Aled Williams and Meilir Rhys Williams; Aerial Artist Kate Lawrence; the Deiniolen Silver Band; and the children of Bedgellert School.

Shepherding by Bryn Griffiths, Roger Hughes, Elgan Jones, Trefor Jones, Arwyn Owen, Tudur Parry, Andrew Roberts, Arthurs Williams and their dogs.

Production Team: Production Manager Jacob Gough, Project Manager Fiona Curtis; Costume Supervisor Angharad Matthews; Assistant Designer Dorrie Scott; Design Assistants: Ruby Spencer-Pugh, Phoebe Tonkin, David Honeybone, Stefan Gwyn; Sound Collaboration by Tic Ashfield.

Produced by National Theatre Wales (NTW) with Migrations and the Louise Ann Wilson Company Limited (LAW Co).

Supported by the team at Hafod y Llan farm, the National Trust and Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA), Lancaster University.



Lower Amphitheatre – Clogwyn Tramway Incline over Hafod Y Llan Uchaf

## *The Gathering – Overview*

*The Gathering / Yr Helfa* was a site-specific walking-performance revealing the day-to-day and seasonal workings of Hafod y Llan, a sheep farm located on the foot-hills of Snowdon. The performance took 200 participants on a circular journey that traced a six-kilometre route through the landscape and into the farm. As they walked they experienced installations, performance, film, poetry, music and sound as well as farming activities.

The performance evolved over a four-year period through a process of observing the farm at work and responding to the life and reproductive cycles of the ewes, the flock, the farm and the landscape. Gillian Clarke, the National Poet for Wales, wrote a twelve-month sequence of poems for the performance, Nigel Stewart evolved bespoke choreography and John Hardy, and his team, worked as music consultants sourcing regional folk tunes to which extracts of some of the poems were sung.

*The Gathering / Yr Helfa* was supported by the team at Hafod y Llan farm and the National Trust and was performed by a company that included the shepherds, their dogs, two hundred sheep, a company of five professional performers (see names below), aerial artist Kate Lawrence, the Deiniolen Silver Band, and children from Bedgellert Primary School.



*The Gathering*, the solitary figure of The Woman  
Upper Amphitheatre – Cwm Llan Slate Quarry.

## *The Gathering – Gallery*

Colgwyn Melyn – Triangle Field: 200 participants gather for the walking-performance



## Parc Hafod y Llan – Two Bridges



Check that teeth sit squarely:  
At birth – milk teeth – Dannedd sugno  
12 months – 2 teeth – Dau Ddant  
24 months – 4 teeth – Pedwar dant  
36 months – 6 teeth – “Full Mouth” – Ceg llawn  
Older – “Broken Mouth” – “Last Teeth”

View Over to Hafod Y Llan Farm buildings – gates and views marked with slate signs





Watkin Chalet, Tramway Incline: Castell and Clogwn, Lambing Field

Lower Amphitheatre – Clogwyn Tramway Incline



Hafod Y Uchaf – The Woman I (derelict house)

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white sleeveless dress, is sitting on a large, fluffy pile of white wool. She is looking upwards and to the right with her arms outstretched. The background shows a mountainous landscape with green trees and a cloudy sky.

The womb's warm room  
where the lamb grows in its cradle.

In the blood-lit cave  
life becomes lamb,  
limbs budding in the warm dark,

multiplying and dividing cells  
ova, zygote, embryo, foetus,  
developing muscle, bone,

a force unstoppable  
as the river  
in the mountain's womb.





Gwtr Goch - Mountain Gate

Copper Works – Middle Amphitheatre – Plascwmllan



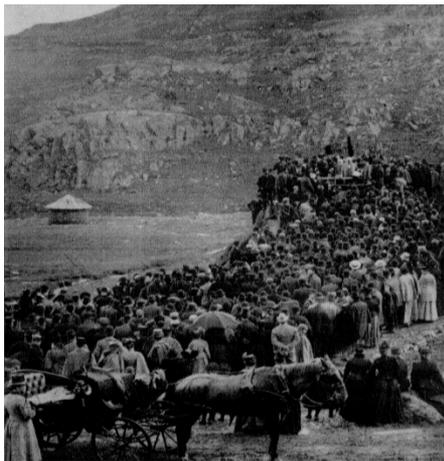
## Cwm Llan – Slate Tramway & Watkin Path at Plas Cwm Llan



*The mountain has secrets,  
tunnels into the seep and drip of the dark,  
into the stone womb, under roots of trees,  
past wheels, pulleys, chains, trucks locked  
in their pollens of rust.*

*Deep as the Ordovician, old workings,  
mine-shafts, mullock heaps, piles of slag,  
abandoned two centuries back, river-stones  
stained blue with copper, copper-iron's gold,  
sulphates from the mountain's heart.*

Plas Cwm Llan – Archive photos placed into the landscape



## Upper Amphitheatre - Cwm Llan



- "saf yna" – stand
- "Tyrd yma" – come here
- "cerriffwrdd" – come by – clockwise
- "de" – away – anti-clockwise

Upper Amphitheatre – Cwm Llan Slate Quarry – The Woman II (solitary figure )





Cwm Llan Slate Quarry – End of Tramway



## Upper Amphitheatre – Cwm Llan

### Old Ram

There are bones on the mountain,  
a ram's quiet disintegration,  
a weft of grass in the warp of his ribs,  
ligaments unpicked by the slow rain.

Gutted by foxes, crows,  
dismantled by birds for spring nests,  
he spilled himself, his fluids  
filled the mountain stream.

His eye is the Snowdon lily,  
death gapes in his quarried face,  
spiders home in the cavern of his skull.  
crows cry down the cwm of his horns.

Not long since he could have come  
over Crib Goch like a young moon,  
the cast flower of his seed  
whitening Eryri,

like an old farm gone to earth,  
slipped stone by stone, lost  
to the power of time to undo a wall,  
unpick a roof slate by slate,  
in *hafod* and *hendre*, '*scubor* and *beudy*.



# Upper Amphitheatre and back to Lower Amphitheatre



Lower Amphitheatre – Nant Gwynant



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white, sleeveless, knee-length dress, stands barefoot on a large grey rock in a stream. She has her right arm raised and her left arm extended downwards. The stream flows over dark, jagged rocks, with a waterfall visible on the left. Several large, round, white cheese wheels are scattered on the rocks and grassy banks. The background is a steep, rocky cliffside with some sparse vegetation.

Afon y Llan – The Woman III (waterfalls)

Is this birth, or death?

How can I lick this corpse to life,  
love's chemistry raging  
in my blood, her brain?

I will try, obsessed.  
I drink it, smells it.  
It is mine, this death in birth.

I thirst for my lamb, still-born, still warm,  
licks him clean with a growl of love.

Lower Amphitheatre towards Hafod Y Llan Farm



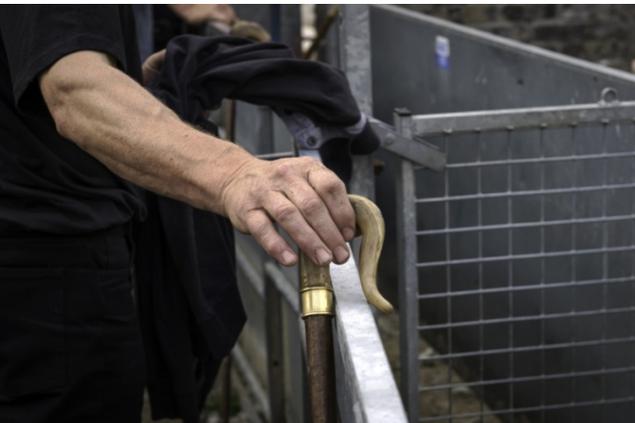


Lower Amphitheatre to Hafod Y Llan Farm gate

Hafod y Llan Farm – Yard 1



## Hafod y Llan Farm – Yard 2



Born – Dannedd oen/Dannedd sugno – lambs teeth/milk teeth  
12 months – 2 teeth – Dau ddant  
24 months – 4 teeth – Pedwar dant  
48 months – 6 teeth – Ceg llawn – “full mouth” (yellow dot)  
Older – Bylchu – “broken mouth” – “teeth last”



The one thousand five hundred and fifty Welsh Mountain ewes of Hafod y Llan ae made up of four flocks:

600 here at Cwmllan,  
280 at Bwlch,  
320 at Gelli Iago and Cnicht,  
350 at Pistyll.

Le Ty Hafod Y Llan – Old Farm House – The Woman IV (Empty House)



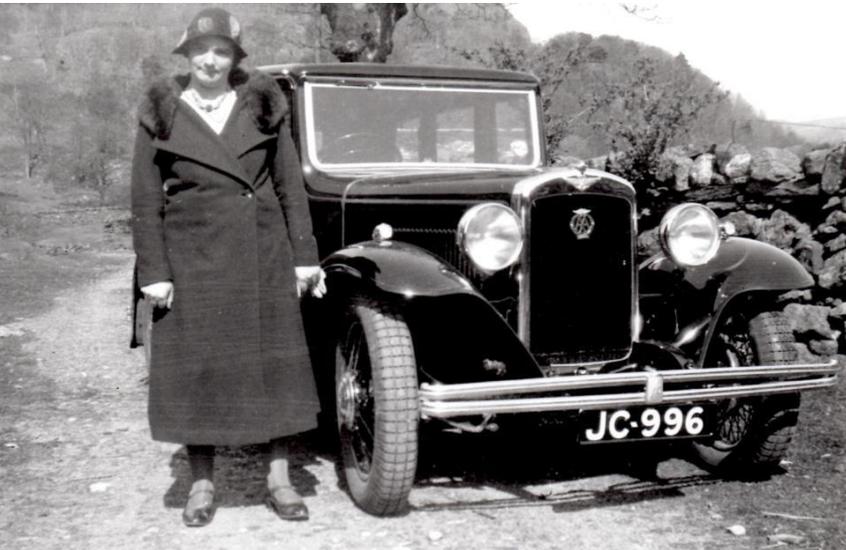
*The womb clenches like a heart  
against the void as they wait,  
weighted, for a journey.*

*Branded barren. Empty.  
Hollow on the holy hill,  
without foetus, without future.*

*She must leave the mountain,  
the end of her line,  
the last cord cut.*

New Farm House – children from Bedgellert Primary School holding photographs from the farm archive





New Farm House – photographs from the farm archive and the Williams family collection

New Farm House  
child from Bedgellert Primary School  
holding photographs from the farm archive and taken on that spot in the 1960s





photograph of The William's family from their collection

## Hafod y Llan Farm: Yard 1

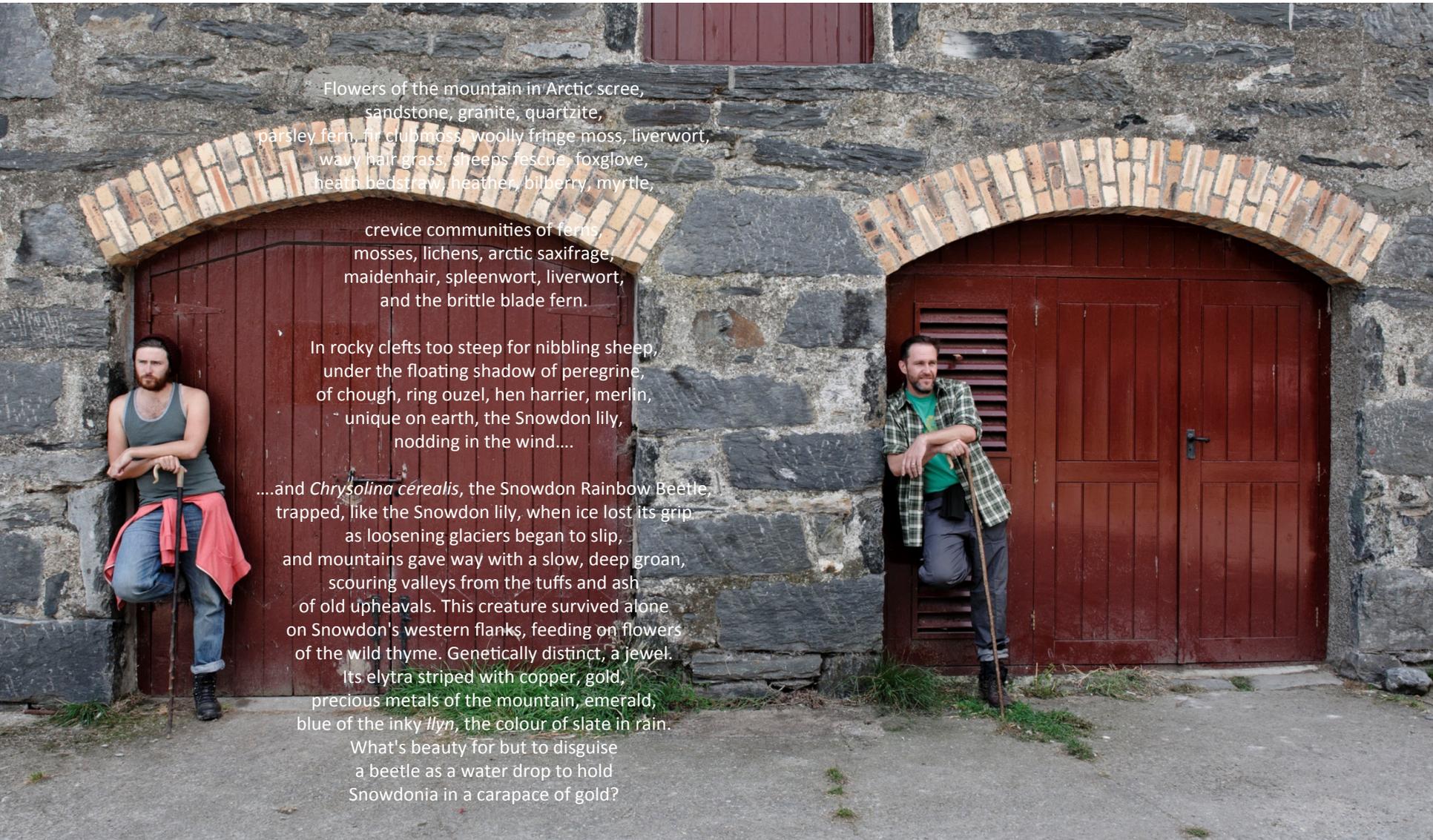
Flowers of the mountain in Arctic scree,  
sandstone, granite, quartzite,  
parsley fern, fir clubmoss, woolly fringe moss, liverwort,  
wavy hair grass, sheeps fescue, foxglove,  
heath bedstraw, heather, bilberry, myrtle,

crevice communities of ferns,  
mosses, lichens, arctic saxifrage,  
maidenhair, spleenwort, liverwort,  
and the brittle blade fern.

In rocky clefts too steep for nibbling sheep,  
under the floating shadow of peregrine,  
of chough, ring ouzel, hen harrier, merlin,  
unique on earth, the Snowdon lily,  
nodding in the wind....

....and *Chrysolina cérealis*, the Snowdon Rainbow Beetle,  
trapped, like the Snowdon lily, when ice lost its grip,  
as loosening glaciers began to slip,  
and mountains gave way with a slow, deep groan,  
scouring valleys from the tuffs and ash  
of old upheavals. This creature survived alone  
on Snowdon's western flanks, feeding on flowers  
of the wild thyme. Genetically distinct, a jewel.  
Its elytra striped with copper, gold,  
precious metals of the mountain, emerald,  
blue of the inky *Ilyn*, the colour of slate in rain.

What's beauty for but to disguise  
a beetle as a water drop to hold  
Snowdonia in a carapace of gold?





• 200 "broken mouthed" "draft" ewes that would struggle in upland conditions are sold at Dolgellau Market to lowland farms where they continue to breed; when they can't, they are slaughtered for meat.



Hafod y Llan Farm – Yard 1: 200 hundred sheep and 200 farm objects

Hafod y Llan Farm – Hydro Room  
Triptych of 'Scanning Films'





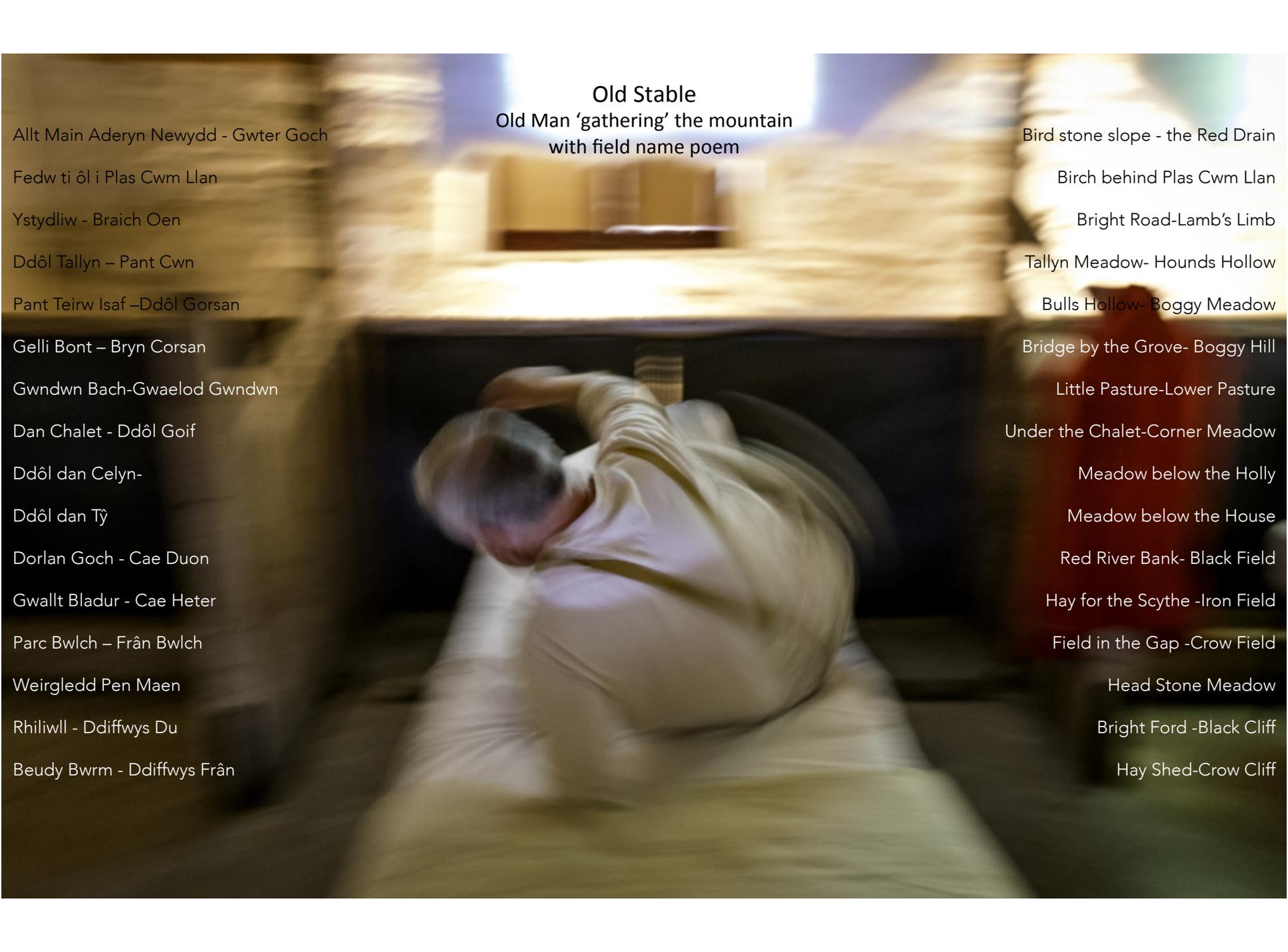
Client: Dafydd Pritchard - 07789 521390

Group	Marks		Singles	Twins	Triplets	Quads	Earlys	%
	No Ewes	Empty						
Group 1	25							
Group 2	88	3	20	2				
Group 3	86	6	64	21				
Group 4			64	16				96
TOTAL								120

Give ewes a **boost** at scanning with 24.7 Sheep boluses



Hafod y Llan Farm – Hydro Room  
Triptych of 'Scanning Films'



Old Stable  
Old Man 'gathering' the mountain  
with field name poem

Allt Main Aderyn Newydd - Gwter Goch

Fedw ti ôl i Plas Cwm Llan

Ystydlw - Braich Oen

Ddôl Tallyn – Pant Cwn

Pant Teirw Isaf –Ddôl Gorsan

Gelli Bont – Bryn Corsan

Gwndwn Bach-Gwaelod Gwndwn

Dan Chalet - Ddôl Goif

Ddôl dan Celyn-

Ddôl dan Tŷ

Dorlan Goch - Cae Duon

Gwallt Bladur - Cae Heter

Parc Bwlch – Frân Bwlch

Weirgledd Pen Maen

Rhiliwll - Ddiffwys Du

Beudy Bwrw - Ddiffwys Frân

Bird stone slope - the Red Drain

Birch behind Plas Cwm Llan

Bright Road-Lamb's Limb

Tallyn Meadow- Hounds Hollow

Bulls Hollow- Boggy Meadow

Bridge by the Grove- Boggy Hill

Little Pasture-Lower Pasture

Under the Chalet-Corner Meadow

Meadow below the Holly

Meadow below the House

Red River Bank- Black Field

Hay for the Scythe -Iron Field

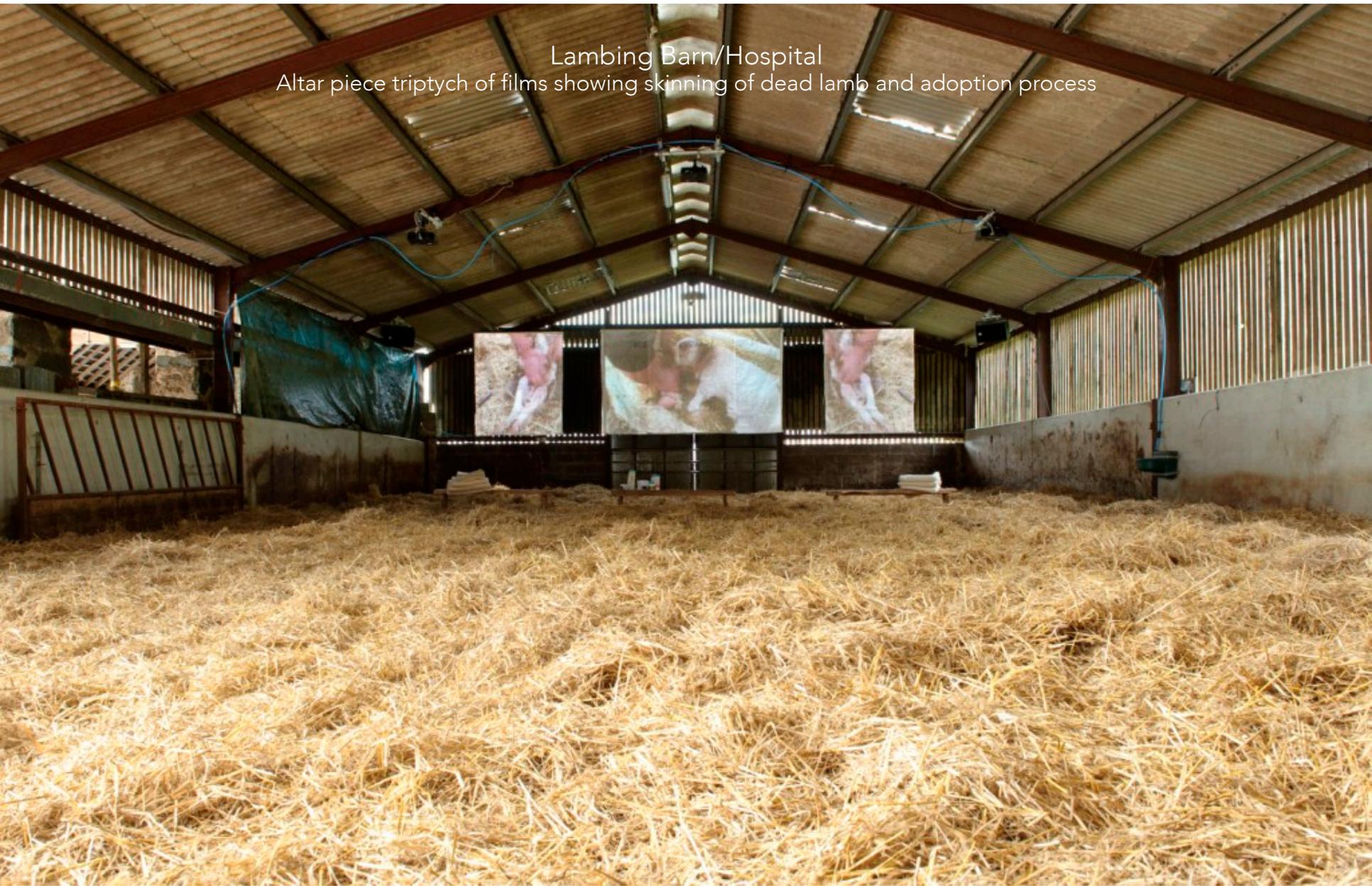
Field in the Gap -Crow Field

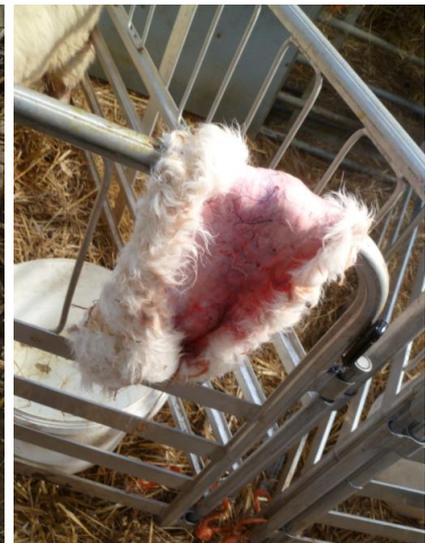
Head Stone Meadow

Bright Ford -Black Cliff

Hay Shed-Crow Cliff

Lambing Barn/Hospital  
Altar piece triptych of films showing skinning of dead lamb and adoption process





skinning of and adoption process

Lambing Barn/Hospital  
skinning and adopting





Yard 3  
Empty trucks ghosted with sounds of 200 sheep being sold at Dolgellau Market



Lambing Field Gate  
'The Boy' holding a photo of Prys Williams,  
the family member on whom his 'character' was based



## Lambing Field Gate

The walking-performance ends in the place where  
a photo of The William's family was taken at harvest time 1941



## Hafod y Llan farm – Lambing Field

The Deiniolen Brass band, scatter across the field, play 'sheep' notes that gather into a tune.



Colgwyn Melyn – Triangle Field: 200 participants return to the place they gathered for the walking-performance

## The Gathering – Participant Responses

*I want to to sincerely thank and congratulate everyone involved in making Saturday one of the most lovely, amazing, emotive days of my life.*

*It was a wonderful experience and I've spent 48 hours trying to find the right words of appreciation. I can't, I keep welling up as all the amazing images come to mind and my vocabulary doesn't match them.*

*So my sincere but inadequate thanks will have to do. Thank you.*

*As it crosses my mind, various little scenes are connecting up and making a bigger and bigger picture. I absolutely love it, great value too, been round the route 4 times in my head. Felt that the whole area was laid out like it was long ago so that you could come along now and put on this piece of work. Inch perfect. Praise for the set designer. The music, the band, the school kids, connections with the past, connections with the future, all on a working farm... Thanks.*

*...an extraordinarily beautiful and moving show.*

*Wonderful event.*

*Amazing.*

*Stunning.*

*Challenging.*

*What a great experience it was to be part of The Gathering. The creative team, cast and production crew had put together a truly unique experience that to my layman's view was promenade theatre at its best. As well as being educational, I certainly learned a lot about sheep farming, it was an all-round provocative, immersive and sensory experience; the powerful and passionate acting performances; the shepherds working the dogs and the dogs working the sheep; the melancholy music from the band reverberating around the mountains; the many visual installations on the way up and down; the red scar on the tramway; the surrogate sheep video; the sheep shearing; I could go on....and of course the weather was perfect.*

## *The Gathering – Participant Responses cont.*

*As a farm girl myself, I thought The Gathering by NTW was amazing today. Our ordinary lives being shown as a piece of art. Very special indeed.*

*I thoroughly enjoyed the whole day and left to go back to my world with very positive and lasting impressions.*

*I really want to say is how amazed I was at the performance, it was absolutely brilliant and an unforgettable experience. The red carpet, the wool in the old farmstead, the bed in the middle of mining barracks, and the impressive nature of what must be the best natural amphitheatre at such a grand scale (in the context of the brass band in a circle when we started our descent). [...] Congratulations. It was a wonderful event that was enjoyed by so many. The weather was a huge contributory factor, and I am thankful for that as it made the experience so much richer.*

*Where to start... ? I knew it would be good. I was looking forward to it for ages. I thought I knew what to expect. Thank you for blowing all of that apart - along with my preconceptions. The Gathering continues to invade my everyday with constant flashbacks to our time on that mountain ... I think it will be doing that for a long while. Such depth of thought on so many levels must surely take time to comprehend? The walk alone was worth the ticket fee, the opportunity to be in that place, surrounded by others also searching/looking/feeling was so very emotional in many many ways. [...] I just wanted to congratulate and applaud all involved in the entire experience. The efforts must have been extreme at times but they produced a piece so rich and rewarding I hope they are all as pleased as I was entranced.*

*Things come into my head all of the time ... the barn. The triptych. The straw. Was it the lamb of God we were witnessing in that footage? (Whatever that is... ?). Not sure. Thanks for giving so much.*

*I cannot thank National Theatre Wales enough for my day on the mountain. And for many months of recollection.*

# Primary/Site (Landscape) and Secondary/Subject (Animal Reproductive Cycles) Research

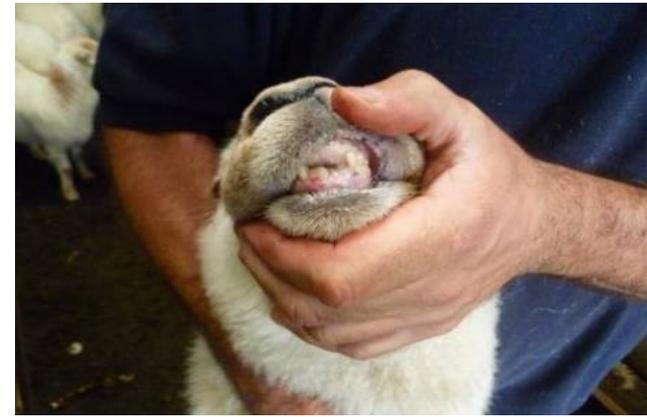
Research & Development Photos and Text by Louise Ann Wilson



When John McGrath asked me to develop a performance work for National Theatre Wales, I was creating *Fissure*, a three-day long walking-performance in the Yorkshire Dales, and had become fascinated with sheep farming and its processes. Since my work is driven by a desire to explore key life events, I became particularly interested in ways in which sheep farming could explore issues of fertility and infertility, motherhood and non-motherhood. This is what I set out to do when creating *The Gathering / Yr Helfa*.

The production evolved from a three-year long period of studying the life and reproductive cycles of the ewes at Hafod y Llan, 'a true' Snowdonian upland sheep farm.

It was an immense privilege to work with National Theatre Wales, Arwyn Owen the National Trust Farm Manager at Hafod y Llan, the shepherds, Bleddyn Williams, the Deiniolen Band, and many other individuals and groups. My aim was that the experience of *The Gathering Yr Helfa* would give participants a deep sense of the uniqueness of the place, its people, the animals and the landscape in which it was created and performed, and in so doing revealed something that they did not know before hand.



## Annual Cycle of the Ewes

'The Boys' text by Louise Ann Wilson developed with Arwyn Owen of Hafod y Llan Farm

### Medi. September

In September all sheep are gathered off the mountain.

"Gather everything off the hill!"

200 Cwmllan "broken mouthed" "draft" ewes that would struggle in upland conditions are sold at Dolgellau Market to lowland farms where they continue to breed; when they can't, they are slaughtered for meat.

### Mis-Hydef. October.

Wean the lambs.

Split them into groups.

Spray the winter "pitch mark": red, orange, green.

Winter 400 ewe lambs in Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Bryncir.

### Tachwedd. November.

Sheep are seasonal breeders.

Ewes ovulate with fading light.

On 1st November: Ewes "have" rams.

Ewes "take" rams, Rams "serve" ewes.

Rams "run" with ewes, Rams "tup" ewes

### Rhagfyr. December

Gestation takes 5 months:

Day 1 to 3: Fertilization.

Day 10 to 16: Blastocyst elongates from sphere to tubular form.

Day 20 to 24: Embryo implants in uterine wall.

Day 35-100: Wool follicles form.

Day 100: 70% of fetal growth has occurred.

Day 152: Birth.

### Ionawr. January

"Kempy" coarse fleeces protect ewes from driving rain.

100 inches of rain in the valley.

150 inches of rain on the summits.

### **Chwefror. February**

In the second week in February ewes are scanned and marked:

No mark: single.

Blue mark: twins.

Separate mark: triplets.

Black mark: empty.

### **Mawrth. March**

Shepherding.

### **Ebrill. April**

This year 680 lambs were born to 640 Hafod y Llan ewes.

80 twins and 600 singles.

If a lamb is still-born, taken by a fox or dies, the ewe is given a surrogate.

15 Cwmllan lambs were thus adopted.

### **Mai. May**

Ewes and lambs are sent to the mountain.

Before they are "turned up" all lambs are marked with ear cuts to show they belong to the farm and a particular flock.

The ewes of Cwmllan have:

Right ear – cut the front and cut a split – Torri blaen a holhti.

Left ear – V-notch at the tip of the ear – Cnwyad.

### **Mehefin. June**

Cynefin: the inter-generational memory of a place passed from mother to lamb.

They are "taught" the boundaries. The sheep "know" their place.

### **Gorffnaf. July.**

1,000 sheep sheared in a day.

Wool used for carpets not jumpers.

"It is torture next to the skin!"

### **Awst. August**

Quiet Time.

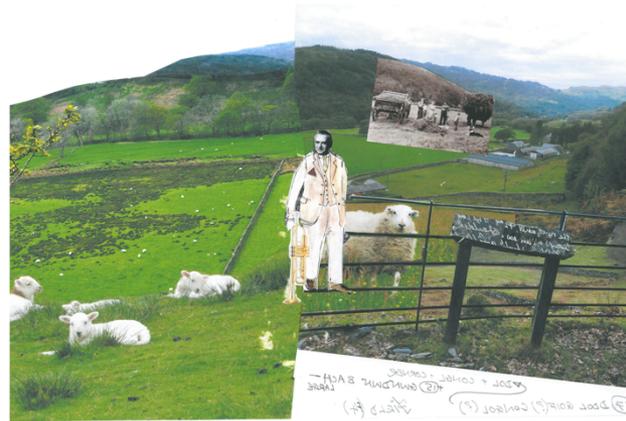


# The Gathering – Design

## Production Design – Storyboards, Maps and Costumes



Storyboard: Colgwyn Melyn – Triangle Field (Start and End)



Storyboard: Lambing Field – Soloi trumpeter and brass band

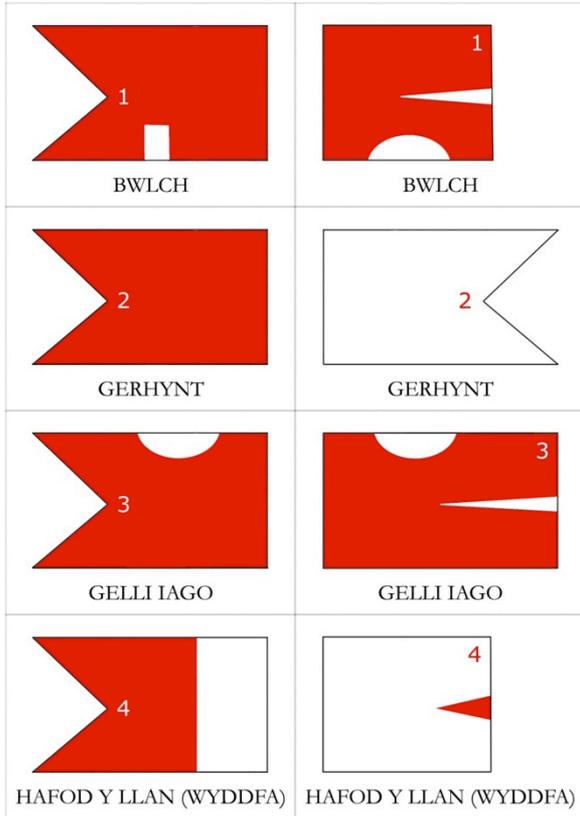


Storyboard: Castell – Tramway Walker

# Flag Designs based on historic Hafod Y Llan ear markings

Right ear – Torri blaen a holhti – cut the front and cut a split

Left ear – Cnwyad – v notch at the tip of the ear



BWLCH

GELLI IAGO

GELLI IAGO

GERHYNT

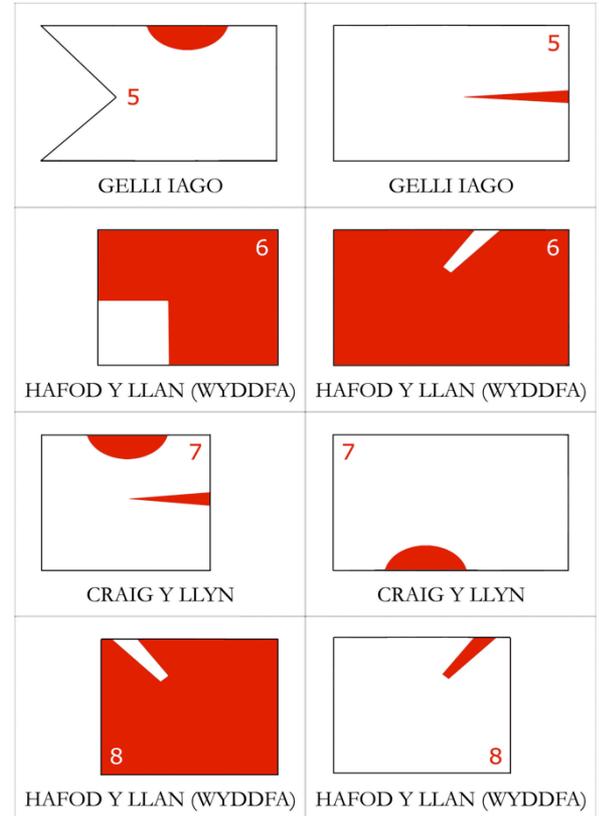
CRAIG Y LLYN

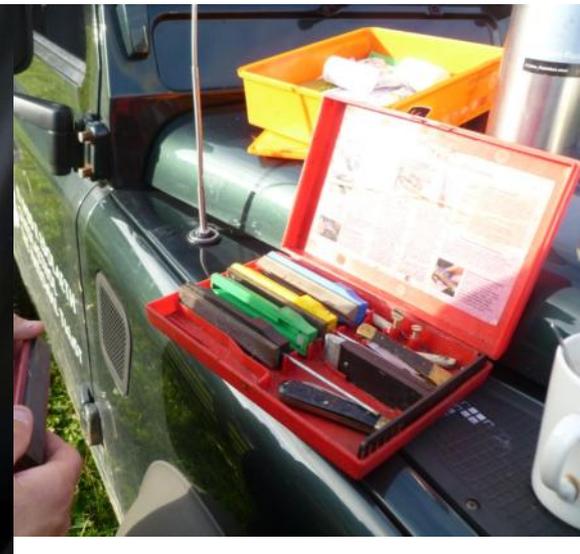
HAFOD Y LLAN (WYDDFA)

HAFOD Y LLAN (WYDDFA)

HAFOD Y LLAN (WYDDFA)

HAFOD Y LLAN (WYDDFA)





ear markings book and knives

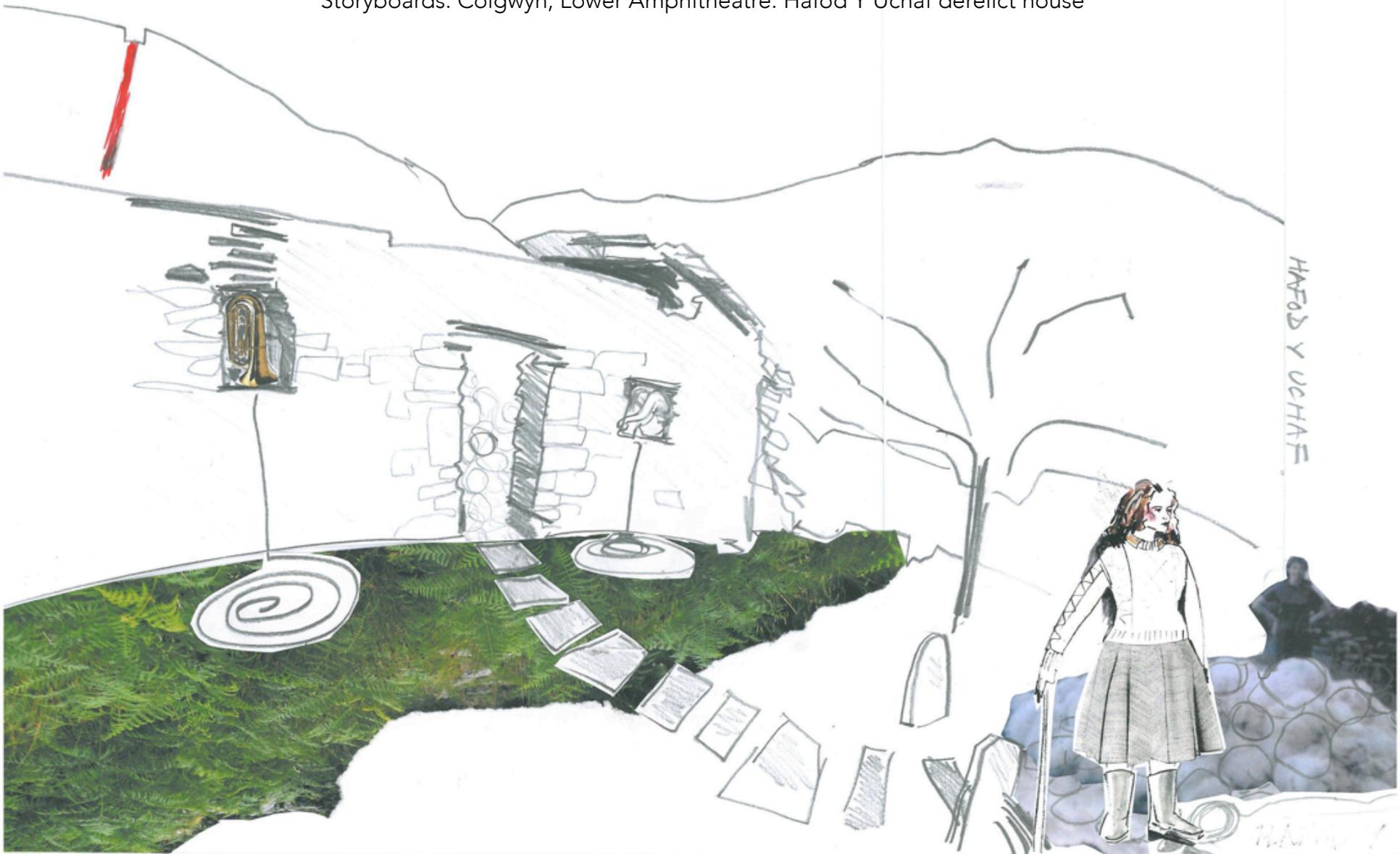


Storyboards: Colgwyn, Lower Amphitheatre: Rocky Area to Waterfalls



A1: LOWER AMPITHEATRE ~ CLOGWYN.

Storyboards: Colgwyn, Lower Amphitheatre: Hafod Y Uchaf derelict house

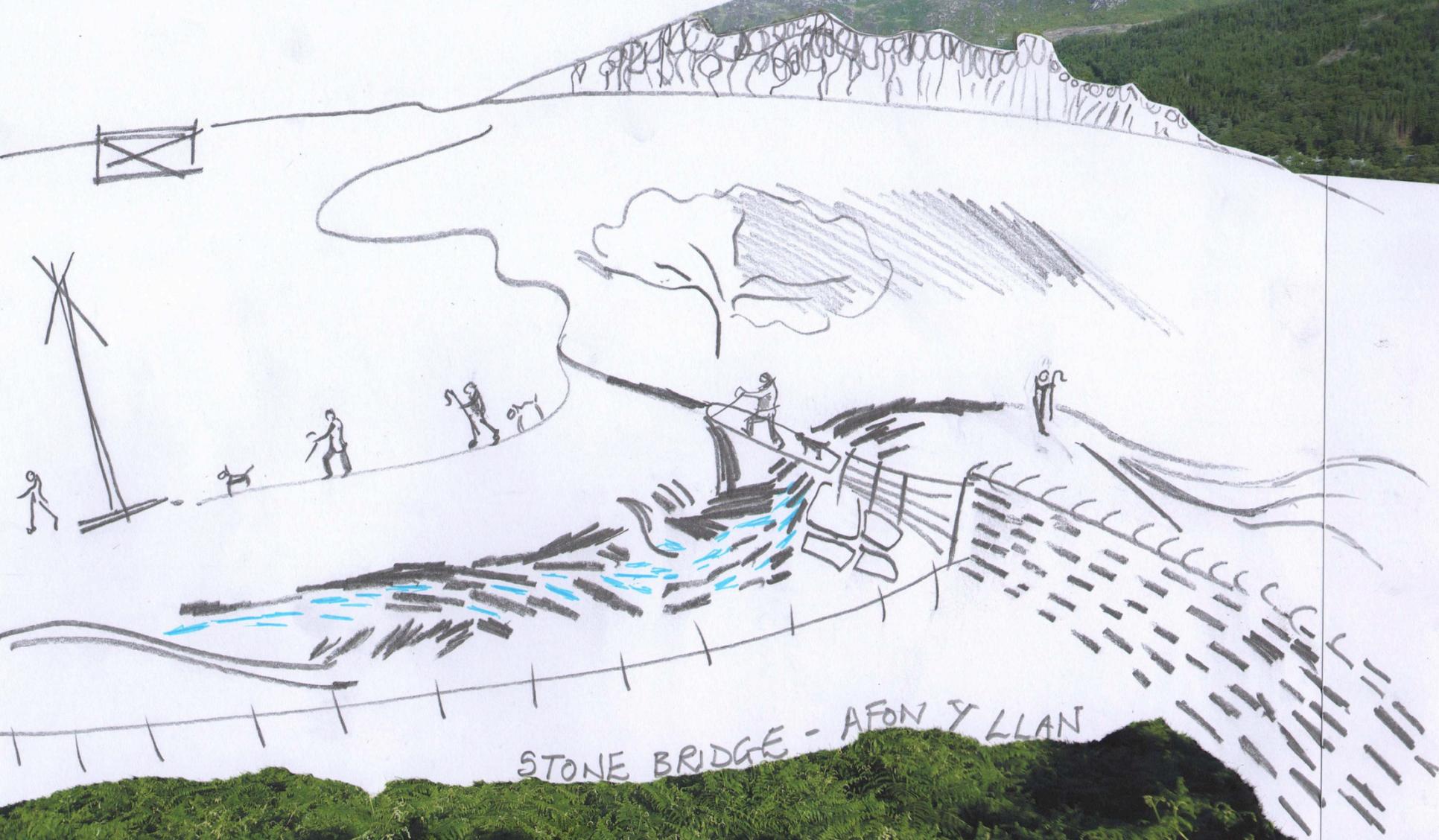


Storyboards: Colgwyn, Lower Amphitheatre: Rocky Area to Waterfalls



ROCKY AREA - WATERFALLS

Storyboard: Lower Amphitheatre – Afon y Llan



STONE BRIDGE - AFON Y LLAN

Storyboard: Middle Amphitheatre – Path Divide: Trumpeter and Tramway walker



Storyboard: Middle Amphitheatre – Gladstone Rock: Deiniolen Brass Band



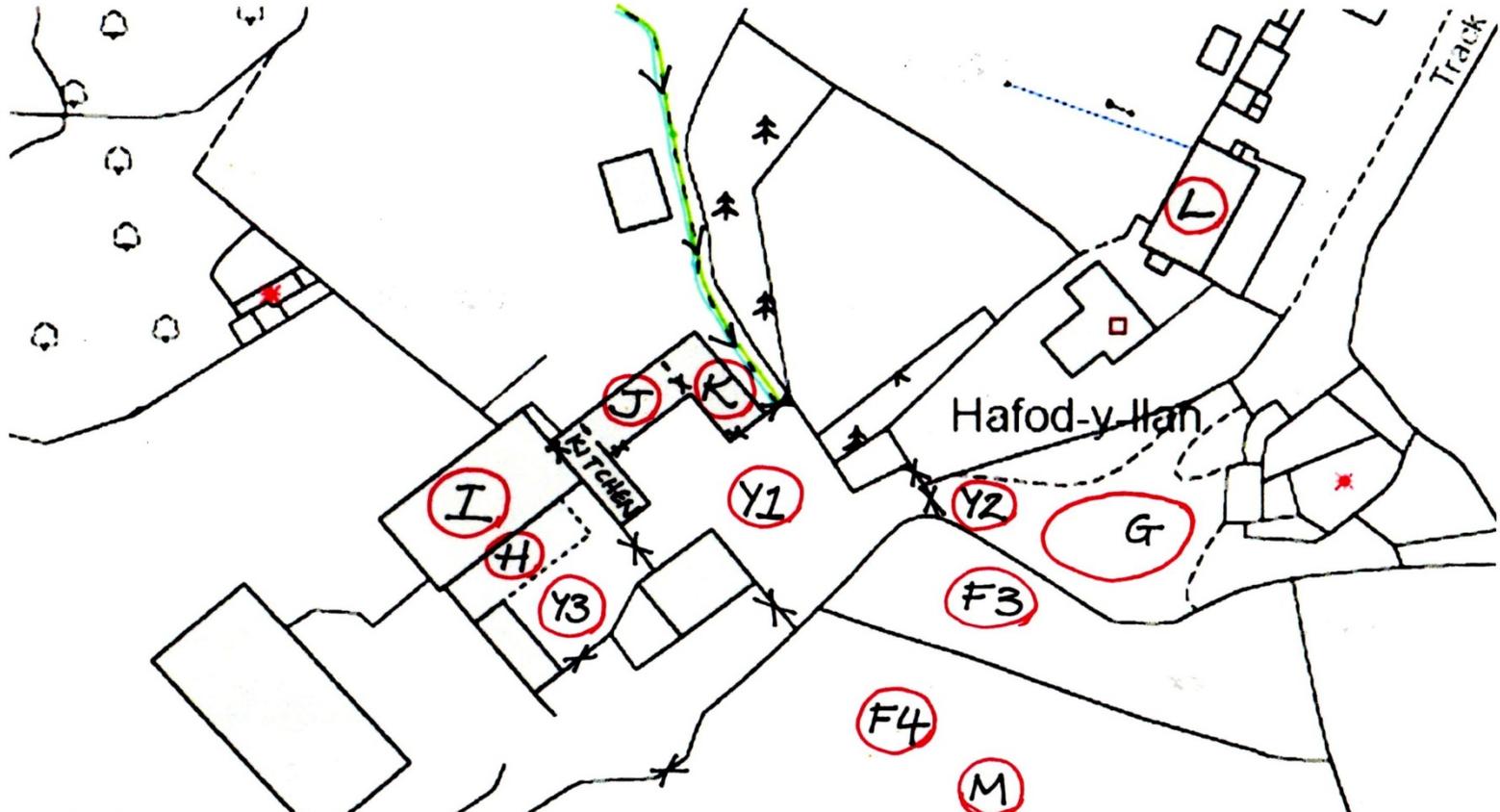
A2: MIDDLE AMPHITHEATRE

GLADSTONE ROCK

# The Farm – Map

## The Gathering / Yr Helfa – Locations on Farm

Drawn By: Louise Ann Wilson 26 July 2014



### BUILDINGS

G: TEMPORARY GATHERING PEN IN YARD (Y2)  
H: SHEERING SHED + WOOL STORE  
I: LAMBING BARN  
[KITCHEN]  
J: OLD STABLE  
K: HYDRO-ROOM  
L: OLD FARM HOUSE  
M: LAMBING FIELD (F4)

### FIELDS

F3: SORTING RELATED  
F4: LAMBING FIELD - BAND & FINAL GATHERING

### YARDS

Y1: TRAILERS & DOGS IN LANDROVER  
Y2: TEMPORARY SORTING PEN  
Y3: SHEERING SHED AREA



Storyboard: Le Ty Hafod Y Llan – Old Farm House

Storyboard: Hafod y Llan Farm – Hydro Room:  
Triptych of 'Scanning Films.'



K: HYDRO-ROOM

## Scanning for Pregnancy



*Chwefror*. February

In the second week in February ewes are scanned and marked:

No mark: single.

Blue mark: twins.

Separate mark: triplets.

Black mark: empty.



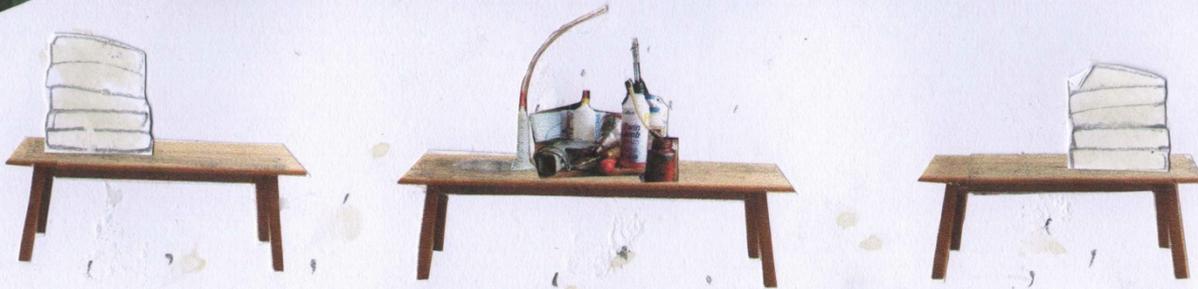


Story board: Hafod y Llan – Gateway into Farm

Storyboard: Old Stable – Old Man 'gathering' the mountain on his death bed:  
Triptych of sheep, water and mountain films projected onto sheep skins



Storyboard: Lambing Barn/Hospital – skinning and adopting  
Altar piece triptych of films showing skinning of dead lamb and adoption process



I: LAMBINGS BARN.

# Costume Designs

## Two Shepherds and The Woman



Shepherd II

*Lucy Gibson*



The Woman

*Alon D. Fi*



Shepherd I

*Gordon Alad Williams*

# Costume Designs

The Boy, The Woman, The Old Man



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