



Fortunately, Cwm Farm cider house and its fittings have survived although the ravages of time and weather have taken a toll. By the end of the 20th century the south gable wall of the cider house had started to collapse. The current owner had made bold attempts with repairs and props to stop the roof collapsing too.

But what the cider house needed, and to preserve its contents, was a complete rebuild of this gable wall.

A newly formed local charity and

The cider house photographed in early 2003

Building Preservation Trust, the Village Alive Trust, is currently undertaking to rebuild the south gable wall, replace the rotten roof timbers and repair the access steps and platform. Architects Morgan and Horowskyj of Abergavenny wrote the specification, and local builders J Sobek and Son and their skilled stonemason are undertaking the works, re-using the original stone and mortared with a traditional lime.

The Cider House, Cwm farmhouse (also Grade II Listed) and the adjacent 18th century stone barn, form a U-shaped group around the farmyard. Cwm Farm is managed to promote traditional farming practices and land conservation, supported by the Welsh Office Tir Gofal scheme. Under this scheme, hedges are being laid and traditional gates and stiles are being installed. The surrounding land comprises species rich, semi-improved pasture and cider fruit orchards containing ancient pear trees still producing fruit for a local perry maker.



The Village Alive Trust - A Company limited by guarantee registered in Wales. Registration no. 5148543 Charity Commission no. 1107216. Registered office: Yew Tree Farm, Llangattock Lingoed, Monmouthshire NP7 8NS. The Village Alive project has been part financed and supported by the Welsh Assembly Government and managed by the Welsh Development Agency and the adventa Local Action Group through the Article 33 Rural Development Programme for Wales. Also supported by the Manifold Trust, The Alan Evans Memorial Trust, The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales, Grosmont CC and local people.

www.villagealivetrust.org.uk

Contractor: J.Sobik and Son, Bryn-y-Gwenin, Abergavenny
Architect: Morgan & Horowskyj, Architects, Abergavenny
Lime supplied by: Calch Ty-Mawr Lime - The Welsh Centre for Traditional and Ecological Building

References: Cidermaking, Michael B. Quinion, Shire Publications 1982. ISBN 0 85263 614 8
Monmouthshire Houses Volume III, Sir Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan,
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Personal notes from Frank Oldfield. Further information from Harvey Marks
Survey of Cwm Farm cider house, Eric Evans 2003
This leaflet produced by the Village Alive Trust, September 2005

Cwm Farm Cider House

Llangattock Lingoed, Monmouthshire



A restoration project by the [Village Alive Trust](http://www.villagealivetrust.org.uk)



At Cwm Farm, Llangattock Lingoed, is the exceptionally rare, purpose built Cider House dating from 1754. It survives largely unaltered, with its fittings in place, and is a fine example of our farming and cultural heritage. The building and its fittings are Grade II Listed, of national importance. The building is a two-storey construct of Old Red Sandstone rubble-filled walls with a pitched roof currently of corrugated metal sheets. The stone paved and cobbled ground floor room contains the original and rare 18th century cider fittings, which survive in-situ. These include the cider mill with drive shaft, the circular stone trough and the stone mill wheel. Also surviving is the cider press with its large spiral-turned wooden screw and stone trough. The building also retains the stone-formed 'chute' and in the ground floor room is the original baking-oven and fire-heated 'copper'.



The 1754 date stone above the main door

Above the ground floor doorway is a date stone inscribed "MYI 1754 WW". This is a reference to William Watkins (to whom there is a memorial in the parish church, Saint Cadoc's) who lived at Cwm Farm and presumably built the cider house.

The upper-floor, or Tallet loft, is where the fruit was stored and allowed to mellow before being dropped down the stone chute ready for milling. The original heavy oak roof trusses remain, slightly wood-wormy, with unusual bearing-pads built into the wall. The upper-floor windows retain the original timber 'diamond' section mullions and would probably have been unglazed to allow air movement through the stored fruit. The overhanging roof, not typical of houses and other farm buildings in Monmouthshire, would have prevented rain entering through these unglazed windows. The upper-floor is accessed through a door from the outside via a short flight of stone steps built over a dog kennel.

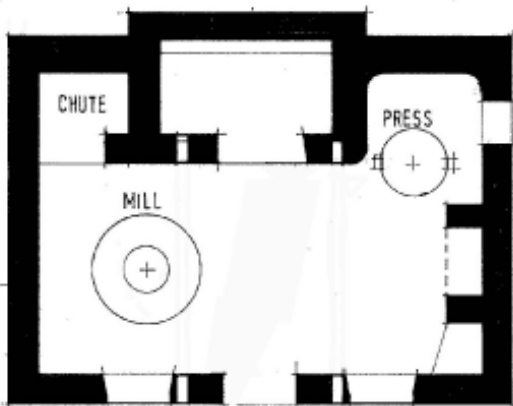


A horse-powered mill as used at Cwm Farm

Cider-making in south-east Wales was almost as prolific as in Herefordshire and the West Country during the 18th century and almost every farm would have had orchards. From the fruit they would produce cider in the autumn to be drunk by the farm labour force the following year, especially during the busy times of hay-making and harvest. Normally every labourer was given a daily allowance of cider, accepted as part of the weekly wage.

At Cwm Farm the fruit was crushed in the circular mill by a horse-powered vertical grindstone. The grindstone is probably made from a red sandstone conglomerate found in the Wye valley. A hundredweight (50 kg) of fruit would be laid on the central pier and the horse harnessed up. Water added during the milling helped prevent the part-crushed pulp becoming too sticky and unmanageable. The pulp would be deep brown in colour from oxidation and highly aromatic.

Left, the ground floor plan of Cwm Farm cider house showing the arrangement of chute, mill, press, and casket store to the rear of the building



Once the pulp had been milled it was then transferred to the press. The pulp was contained in circular cloths, or *hairs*, laid in rings on the circular press bed. This press has a large wooden screw set into a massive headblock of oak, (cast iron screws were introduced in about 1780). The screw would be turned, very slowly at first, with a large lever through the hole in the wooden nut, gradually descending and pressing the pulp filled cloths. The juice flowed out and was caught in the trough below, then poured into large wooden caskets. These were stored in the semi-sunken room at the back of the cider-house and allowed to ferment. During warm weather the initial fermentation would usually take about two weeks. In winter it could take much longer, sometimes well over two months. A second fermentation, in caskets sealed with lime, would then take another three months before the cider was ready to drink.



The cider press and its large wooden turning-screw

One very important quality of good farm cider was its acidity. This helped it to keep, and also meant that no disease-carrying germs could thrive in it. So it was, in general, always safe to drink, a useful characteristic in days when water supplies were often polluted.

The decline in rural cider-making came in the late 19th century with the introduction of modern processes for fermentation, factory cider-making and improved railway networks. Between 1870 and 1900 no fewer than twelve factories opened around Hereford. Payments of drink in lieu of part-wages had become illegal and many farmers tended to prefer to turn their fruit into a cash crop instead of, in effect, giving it away to their farm workers.

Consequently, many farmers stopped producing their own cider and nearly all rural cider houses have had their mills and presses removed and have been converted to other uses.



The interior of Cwm Farm cider house showing the cider-press (left) and the baking oven. A fire-heated 'copper' lies to the right of the baking oven.