



## Workhouse History Centre: on the way!

Llanfyllin Dolydd Building Preservation Trust has won an 'Our Heritage' grant of £39,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The grant is for the Llanfyllin Workhouse History Centre and Community Project. The Trust first applied a year ago: it was turned down, but the bid was praised and we were advised to include more community activities. This time, against very stiff competition, the application has succeeded.

The project fulfils HLF's most important criterion: helping people to learn about heritage. Y Dolydd, Llanfyllin Workhouse is a fine building, but its real significance lies in the stories it has to tell. Not stories of the rich and powerful, but of ordinary men, women and children who fell on hard times. And the issue they raise - how society should provide for its poorest members - is highly relevant today.

Already increasing numbers of visitors are coming to Y Dolydd, attracted by events, the new bunkhouse or media coverage. They see much to admire, but apart from a few panels around the site they find little information about what the Workhouse meant for the people who lived there, or in its shadow. In the first courtyard they may be shocked to see one wing roofless and derelict.

In a year's time visitors will be admitted to a new reception area near the entrance in the room which has changed least over the years. Its early paint scheme, floor of clay tiles, open fireplace, original windows and raised ceiling will be carefully restored. As well as a reception desk it will house a bilingual display on the building and the Victorian Poor Law, based on research carried out by our volunteers who will create the materials. They will be trained by heritage consultant John Marjoram, who wrote our Audience Development Plan back in 2006.

Next door will be a viewing room where people can watch a twenty-minute film, in Welsh or English, starring local actors and aimed at a family audience. The Workhouse Master will give them a tour of the building and let them meet some of the historical characters - adults and children - who lived there. Larger groups or school parties will be able to see it in the Gallery or Venue. Oral history recordings will be available too. And in the space currently roofless will be an office and study room, open by appointment, with digital resources for anyone with an interest in local or social history. Some will be free on line through People's Collection Wales.

This project is not just about a building but about people, then and now. One aspect that reflects this is the element of oral history. Local people remember Y Dolydd in its different roles. Their memories are worth preserving. As part of the project volunteers will be trained in oral history techniques, among them members of Llanfyllin's GABA Youth Group with their Area Youth Leader, Dux. New equipment will be provided. Everyone involved will be learning.

The project will culminate in a large-scale adaptation of 'Oliver' to be staged at the Workhouse, indoors and out, by Llanfyllin High School's Lonely Tree Theatre Company in September 2016. This will involve students at every stage, starting by creating a script which transfers the action to Mid-Wales and actively involves the audience. Whether as cast, musicians, designers, stage crew or spectators, community members of all ages will be engaged in a learning experience. And it's going to be a lot of fun.

### Getting down to work

Work began promptly on 18 April when six members of the Dolydd History Group cleared the spaces of lumber so that renovation could begin. Our architect Richard Payne has taken on the job of Project Manager. Listed building consent had already been granted and three written quotations obtained from contractors. These persuaded us that we could do the job more economically ourselves bringing in local craftsmen or volunteers where appropriate.

The first task - already begun - is to lift the old clay tiles and re-lay them on a modern, insulated foundation. The ugly wall of rendered blocks facing the courtyard will be replaced by stonework and a matching window. Adjoining brickwork will be repaired to form the wall of the new study room and office. The roof will be re-instated and the ceiling put back using traditional lath and plaster. Electricians will be installed, and work can begin on fitting out, painting and putting interpretation in place. The Centre will open for Easter 2016.

### Are you a bilingual actor?

Vital for bringing the Workhouse to life will be the film, in Welsh and English versions. A script has been drafted, and production is in hand. The next stage is casting. All the actors bar one elderly man, who doesn't speak, will have to be able to perform in Welsh as well as English. We need a mature man to be William Jones, the Master; another to be Thomas Menlove, a Guardian; a mother with a young daughter and a little boy and a lively teenage girl. Acting experience would be helpful. Offers or suggestions are very welcome.

The new History Centre will bring more people to Llanfyllin and to the Workhouse and enhance their experience. But it will also be there for local people, helping to make us more aware of our heritage and its significance in the history of Wales. This will be a real community project with the emphasis on people of all ages acquiring knowledge and skills to produce a lasting legacy.



*Dolydd History Group volunteers clearing out the space for the new Centre. Left to right: Darren Mayor, Anne Lynch, Graham Kyle, Martin Davies, Sandra Harvey, David Burton*

## What's happening this summer?

Following last summer's concerns over noise we knew that pressure was being put on the county council's officers to impose stringent limits on our music events, indoors as well as out. This was a matter of vital concern. We recognise our responsibilities towards our neighbours and the importance of retaining local support. But music events have contributed two thirds of the Workhouse's income. We want to diversify, but our volunteers are stretched. Draconian restrictions now would threaten the Trust's survival and endanger everything we've worked for over the last ten years. We're up to date with mortgage payments but are eating into our reserves.

The Trustees have retained Acoustics and Noise Ltd of Newport, a firm with much relevant experience, to produce a noise management plan and present it to the Council on our behalf. They have visited Y Dolydd and provided a preliminary report and we've since sent them further information. They will attend an event on site and take measurements before giving their final advice. Some noise reduction measures may well involve significant expense which we'll have to meet. Whatever happens, future events will be less frequent as well as quieter, which means lower income.

Meanwhile Mark Burnett, whose Workhouse Project organised some very useful fund-raisers for us last year, has had to move his activities elsewhere. We've been obliged to turn down several bookings including Playfestival, which has been an important feature of the summer for several years: sadly they have been unable to find another site. Illness has added to our problems, forcing some delay in formulating a new, reduced programme, but Ian and our Events Team is now working hard at preparations for the Workhouse Party on 10-12 July. This is the big event of the year, attracting a lot of local support as well as visitors from further afield, and its success is critical to our finances. Steampunk have been loyal (and very orderly) supporters and are booked for 19 August. We have dates free for weddings, smaller gigs and parties.

On the arts side Dale Marshall, who is based at Y Dolydd and whose intricately textured paintings are enjoying a growing international reputation, has applied on our behalf for funding to stage a Mid-Wales Urban Contemporary Arts Festival over August Bank Holiday. This will be a gathering of artists from all over Britain who will produce work on large panels during the event. Dale plans to work with Stephen Hayles, a director of Upfest Bristol which is the largest urban arts festival in Europe (though ours would be on a smaller scale). Further details will be released if the bid succeeds. And Jo Munton of Vagabondi Puppets is planning a participatory arts conference. This year's Open Doors, in association with Cadw, is scheduled for the weekend of 26-27 September.

## The May weekend



On Saturday 2nd May a number of our tenants at Y Dolydd put on an Open Day, when members of the public were invited to watch them at work. They could see Georgette Marshall with her textiles, Jo Heard with her leatherwork, Dale Marshall in his studio, and Martin Rich working on his railway layout, whilst Jane Lane offered free song writing classes. The initiative was very welcome though footfall was disappointing: it might be better to combine more events on one day. All good experience.

On Bank Holiday Monday there was a good turnout for Lois Bosworth's Companion Dog Show. The weather smiled, the car park was full and Debbie and her kitchen crew did a roaring trade. The event looked and felt really attractive, with lots of activity, colourful stalls, plenty of families and live music from Sonya Smith and Cathy Beech. There was a good mix of pedigree and novelty classes as well as an agility course. Dogs and children were everywhere. Best in Show was Petal, a pug owned by John Dover from Welshpool. The Dolydd site is perfect for this sort of indoor/outdoor event: we'd welcome more of them.

## Raising the bar



Last autumn it was evident that our catering kitchen needed improvement. Debbie and her supporters tackled the job with great energy, redecorating, carrying out a deep clean, acquiring new equipment and serving counter and bringing records up to date. A sink was installed in the bar storeroom and a new hot water supply laid on to the nearest toilets.

When the council's environmental health officer came in to inspect the kitchen passed with flying colours but the bar furnishings, old, and battered, brought our score down to 3. We resolved to replace them. Then it was pointed out that the walls were crumbling, shedding dust and bits of mortar which made it impossible to keep the place clean, whilst the electrics had never been completed. Ian organised a weekend working party to rip out the fittings and clean off the walls, and work began on thorough re-pointing and application of lime plaster. Much of it has been carried out to a high standard by Stuart Gane, who also tackled the job of building a new bar. This is now in place, topped by a plank of oak from Powis Castle, and just needs the finish to be applied. Stuey and Bryan Junor completed the wiring and extended the fire alarm. The bar is one of our biggest fund raisers, and it's vital that it functions well. The photo shows the state it had reached on 4<sup>th</sup> May, with temporary furniture.

## The Bunkhouse goes on line



Photo: Kevin Hockley

The Trustees are pleased to announce the appointment of Tree Marshall as Facilities Operator to run and market the Bunkhouse. Tree had already done much to help us as a volunteer over the last twelve months, including a great deal of work with others on improving the bunkhouse and treating the floor. The appointment will enable us to make the most of an excellent facility, which was finally completed last month with the installation of services to the kitchen/common room. The following account now appears on the website:

'The newly refurbished and well equipped bunkhouse at Y Dolydd Llanfyllin Workhouse offers a unique holiday experience. Stay in one of the last remaining Victorian Workhouses still open to the public. Available all year round for individuals, families or groups, Y Dolydd is the perfect base for your holiday and is also available for exclusive hire for your private party or function. Phone 07534354082 today to book your stay.'

The bunkhouse offers 26 bunks in three bright and airy rooms in the front range, available at £15 per bunk per night including clean linen and duvets/pillows; a self-catering kitchen with electric hob, fridge, freezer, kettle, microwave and toaster; fully accessible unisex toilets and hot showers; a fire pit with outdoor seating and cob oven; extensive gardens and grounds to explore and enjoy; a professional kitchen and catering service and a fully licensed bar and venue with PA and lighting, also available for private parties and functions.

# Green Light for the Green Hub!

This summer a great programme of green activities is planned at Y Dolydd, thanks to an exciting new development.

Last year the Llanfyllin Workhouse Green Hub gained momentum with some exciting courses and activities. Sadly Andy Lee, whose brainchild it was, became seriously ill in the autumn and spent three months in hospital. He's making a recovery now, but has had to withdraw from the project. We send him our best wishes and thanks for all his efforts.



This year activities have continued with the Forest School – see Kelly's article below – and with two well attended day courses in traditional hedge laying: participants have gained valuable skills and the Dolydd a neatly laid hedge along the car park. Native trees have

been bought which Leila has planted along the boundary fence.

Before we can produce a proper plan to develop the Dolydd site for the benefit of both wildlife and our own activities, we need an ecological survey to establish what flora and fauna we have and what can be done to improve their habitat and encourage greater variety. Tree Marshall took the initiative and put in an application to Environment Wales for a Pre-Project Grant to fund the survey. The result was £6,000 of funding.

The success of Tree's bid was largely due to the extent to which it included a high level of community engagement: not just payments to a consultant. Volunteers will be involved alongside the experts at every stage – see the poster reproduced here – and the activities are designed to be fun. We appointed Mark Duffell of Arvensis Ecology from a number of applicants because, in addition to his knowledge and experience as a county wildlife recorder, he showed real enthusiasm for a community-based approach. Now the Workhouse will acquire a plan and ultimately a better managed site: wildlife will benefit and people will gain skills and enjoyment. Get in touch with Tree if you think this could apply to you.

## Making a Difference

One of Andy's initiatives for the Green Hub was to commission a project from local artist and photographer Francine Isaacs featuring local 'Green Champions' whose work on behalf of the environment was making a difference, and also documenting Green Hub activities. The resulting exhibition opened in Oriol Y Dolydd on 27 March and ran for three weeks. More than 50 people attended the opening.



## What is Forest School?



Every Friday during the last Spring Term passers-by could see groups of children busily occupied out of doors on the Dolydd site. They were from Llanfyllin Primary School, taking part in Forest School sessions organised by the Workhouse through its Green Hub initiative. Kelly Moorhouse, who leads the Forest School, explains its purpose.

## Llanfyllin Workhouse Green Hub Nature and Biodiversity Events



Summer 2015

Presented in partnership with



### Come and help with an Ecological Survey of the site.

Find out about the plants here, help to carry out the survey and look out for other wildlife as well.

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June  
Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August  
10am – 4pm



### Summer Holiday Family 'Wildlife Explorer' activities

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July  
Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August  
Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> August  
10.30am-12.30pm or 1.30-3.30pm

### Wildlife evenings

Find out about the wildlife around the site and how to record your observations here and elsewhere. How can they be put to good use?  
Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 7pm and Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 7pm

### Join us for a Bioblitz!

Come and help us find as much wildlife as we can.

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July (evening) and Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July (all day)

Join experts to find bats, small mammals, insects, plants and birds. More details to be confirmed.

### Introduction to Wildflower Identification

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June 10am – 4pm

### Introduction to Insect Identification

Date to be confirmed



To book your place or to find out more email: [accommodation@the-workhouse.com](mailto:accommodation@the-workhouse.com) or Phone: 07534 354082 and join us at Facebook: Llanfyllin Workhouse Green Hub

Children attending any of these events must be accompanied by an adult

It is quite difficult to sum up exactly what Forest School is. In truth it is many things: an educational approach to outdoor play and learning, and a place where we can learn to take care of ourselves, others and the environment. It is an approach that is child centred, focusing on development of self-awareness, self-esteem, motivation, empathy, communication, independence and positive mental attitudes. It also provides opportunities to problem-solve and learn how to handle risk appropriately, i.e. using sharp tools, climbing trees - something that is very important in early development. It is not just for the young but the young at heart as well; adults have enjoyed being a part of Forest School just as much as the children. And you don't have to be able-bodied to join in as some sites cater for all abilities. We go out into the woods in all weathers (except high winds) so all the seasons are observed.

The kind of things we do in Forest School are shelter building, fire safety and matchless fire lighting, safe tool use, woodland arts and crafts, tree and plant identification, teamwork challenges, games and imaginative/investigative play.



What I love about Forest School is that anyone can join in. I have met people from all walks of life and all ages: mostly they are keen to get out into the woods and get dirty but every so often I meet someone who grudgingly attends, and boy, does everyone know it! It is *these* people that really fascinate me, they come because some scheme has been organised with them in mind and they stomp around saying they

would rather be home playing on their consoles. And it is these same people in whom, after a week or two, you see the biggest differences. First it might just be interest in lighting a fire without matches, then they might see someone having a go at some coppicing, and before you know it, they are the first to arrive and get the camp fire started and the last to leave checking in the tools.

Forest School is less about skill acquisition and more about the person and their emotional development. It has a place in our schools and in our work place as well as a space to play. It focuses on play, emotional development and environmental awareness, sustainability, looking at the journey rather than the outcomes. From this they learn to assess risk and take on challenges and responsibility in a safe space. Elements of literacy and numeracy are integrated into our activities but the child leads the way and there is no set curriculum - just opportunities that we can provide.

This year we were lucky enough to get funding through Llanfyllin Workhouse's Green Hub from the Big Lottery Fund, People's Postcode Lottery and Powys Community Regeneration and Development Fund to run Forest School with the kids in Llanfyllin Primary School: thanks to them for the pictures.

## "Mr Prichard's Huge Bill... A Great Abuse"

Graham Kyle joined the Dolydd History Group in 2013. A retired surgeon, his particular interest has been in the Medical Officers of the Llanfyllin Poor Law Union and his research has led to a dissertation he is currently writing. Looking through the Llanfyllin records held in the National Archives, which the group had previously catalogued, Graham came across the case of Mr Prichard's Bill.

The original bill, bound into one of the massive volumes at Kew, runs to 11 pages with an average of 45 items a page, and the total amounts to around £5,000 in today's money. Remarkably, it relates to the treatment of a single pauper. Graham tells the story...

Thomas Prichard was Medical Officer to two Districts of the Llanfyllin Union, being paid £50 a year for each, and earned another £20 a year as Medical Officer to the Workhouse. (£1 then is worth £100 today). The salary doesn't seem a lot, but even less so when it is remembered that it was to include the cost of all medicines given to patients.

In 1844 David Davis, a pauper originally from Oswestry, found work in Llanfechain, a village in the Llanfyllin Union. He became unwell, hence unable to work, and so had to enter the Llanfyllin Workhouse where he was treated by Mr Prichard. As he was originally from Oswestry, an order to remove him back to his original parish was granted by the Justices. (This was normal practice, as the 'Parish of Settlement', usually where someone was born, was responsible for paying for their own poor.) However, because of his illness this Order was suspended and he remained under Mr Prichard's care at the workhouse for 18 months. Then, sadly, Davis died. There is no information about what was wrong with him.

Mr Prichard took the view that, as Mr Davis was under suspended order of removal, any treatment afforded to him would be paid as extra above his normal salary. He kept a careful record of all treatments and medicines; every box of pills, every blister or cupping (these procedures were supposed to cure by taking fluid out the body) and every 'visit'. Visits were charged at 'two shillings'.. £20 in today's money. He eventually sent his bill to the Llanfechain parish Overseer. Payment was refused, and Mr Prichard issued legal proceedings to enforce it.

This bill was subsequently sent by the Llanfyllin Guardians to the Oswestry Incorporation, who were required to pay for the pauper's upkeep as he was originally from their parish. Not surprisingly a lot of ill feeling was generated. A letter of 9 September 1847 from the Oswestry Incorporation says;

"On enquiry as to the nature of such expenses it was explained that £14. 5s.0d was for the maintenance of the pauper and that the very large sum of £50.9s.6d was the amount of the Bill of the Medical Officer of the Llanfyllin Union who attended the pauper in the Workhouse (at times of course when he went to look after other patients in the House). The parish of Oswestry refuses to pay these costs on account of what they consider the very outrageous charge of the Medical Man's Bill, offering at the same time to pay the extent of the maintenance which was considered reasonable..."

The Poor Law Board's view is at annotated on the back of the letter. "...It would seem that the order is enforceable against Oswestry.... Enquiries should be made into the subject as it appears to be a great abuse."

Martin Davies has now found David's death certificate which records him as having died at the Workhouse in August 1846 of 'disease of the hip joint'. Graham is continuing to follow up the story which sees Prichard resigning, seemingly for unrelated reasons, and then being re-appointed for a couple of years. The dispute over the bill rumbled on and the final outcome remains unclear, though Oswestry may well have been obliged to pay up. David Davis seems to have been an early instance of the cross-border treatment issues that bedevil the Welsh NHS today!

**Advance Notice:** Graham is giving a talk to Llanfyllin Civic Society on 'The Medical Men of Victorian Llanfyllin' on Monday, 7 September.

And The Civic Society are visiting Y Dolydd on Monday 6 July at 7.30 to hear about the History Centre and Community project, and about the environmental survey.

## Boots and books start again

After last year's unsuccessful experiment with Saturdays, Sunday morning car boot sales and book fairs at Y Dolydd have begun again. Attendance seems to be dependent on the weather, but we got off to a reasonable start on 19 April. Sales this year continue on 17 and 31 May; 14 and 28 June; 26 July; 9 and 23 August; 6 and 20 September. Do come along to buy or sell: details from Lois at [lois@kennelclips.com](mailto:lois@kennelclips.com) or 07753 940855.

## And the Latest on the Workhouse Party...

Tickets for the Party are now on sale. Just go to <http://the-workhouse.org/tickets/> Adult tickets for the weekend cost £38 for adults, £21 for youths and only £1 for children, with separate charges for camping and vehicles.

Bands booked by the time we went to press are listed on the right, and we're glad to welcome a good number from Wales and the border. There will be plenty of acoustic acts, a good range of DJ's, workshops, activities and demos and as usual a kids' area with family-oriented activities. Our approach to sourcing products and to recycling reflects our green values. And the Party is run by volunteers, with all profits going to the Llanfyllin Dolydd Building Preservation Trust.



## THE WORKHOUSE PARTY

10 11 12 JULY 2015

THE BANDS.....

### THE GARDEN STAGE

Dark Patrick, Taesi, Shifty Chicken Shed,  
Dirty Flowers, Beatnic, Guy Turner, Loafers,  
Verettis, Pobl Y Bryn, Aziz, Pulse, Luna Marada,  
Glowpeople, Mwstard, Shiny Darkness, Spaceheads,  
Bones, Chris Thorn, Brenig, Gary Hall, Improetry,  
LHD, and many more on the acoustic stage. Chris  
Greve, Eleanor Nelly now announced



The Pilgrim Trust

