

The Workhouse goes green

At a Trustees meeting in May Lois Bosworth invited Andy Lee to set out his concept of creating a wildlife garden at the Dolydd. Since then Andy's dynamism and his skill with grant applications has taken the project forward to an extent that promises exciting developments in the coming months and years. This is his account.

The recent "State of Nature" report by twenty-five leading conservation organisations in the UK has highlighted that familiar animals and fauna are disappearing faster than we think and that we are losing the battle to protect the UK's wildlife. As a supporter of conservation the Workhouse is stepping up its commitment to conservation through the launch of a Green Hub. Green Hubs are a local response to biodiversity loss and sustainability through promoting: wildlife habitation, wildflower meadows, green volunteering and getting people outdoors. We have already received a boost through successful lottery bids to launch the project, develop wildlife areas, a wildflower garden and a workshop programme for spring 2014.

"Today's conservation volunteers are out there - in large numbers - taking responsibility for their local green spaces. It's inspiring work, bringing enormous benefits to their local communities." Jonathan Porrit, Forum for the Future.



The stream at Y Dolydd

There's always going to be a need for local people and groups to look after the places where they live. The Green Hub will offer a workshop programme in Spring 2014 to encourage green volunteering and will include taster sessions so people can 'have a go' before committing to a full session. The expert led workshops will provide volunteers with the skills, tools, knowledge and training to become green volunteers to help transform the Workhouse and other green spaces including people's own gardens and backyards. As workshops are finalised they will be promoted via the Workhouse web site and local publications and will include: hedge laying, wildflower planting, foraging, upcycling, outdoor pizza oven build, creating butterfly and insect habitats, pond dipping and lots more.

If you would like to join a working group to help develop the Green Hub please contact Andy Lee on 01691 870275 or aalee0773@aol.com.

Project Progress

The Bunkhouse

Exciting news has come through in the last few days. Whilst we still have money left from the Pilgrim Trust grant to complete the structural work this cannot be used for services or fitting out, and shortage of funds for electrics and plumbing has caused repeated delays. At a meeting with Powys County Council's Regeneration Officer, convened to discuss the green hub proposals, it was suggested that funding for the bunkhouse might be available from a European budget. Andy Lee and Ian Jones put together a bid and this has led to a grant of £12,000, to be spent by next March.

The award is timely as a new plasterer has just been engaged to complete work in the board room and enable second fix to take place: when this is done and the space painted out the bunks can be moved in. A small kitchen area and common room is planned. During the summer the new staircase was completed by local joiner Andy Dunn: it will give access to the two holiday apartments. Andy has also made and fitted two elegantly panelled front doors. A further development has been the provision of new toilets and coin-operated showers, including disabled facilities, in the second (girls') courtyard with access both from outside and from the bunkhouse wing. Some of the finance came from the promoters of Playfestival who saw this as a better use of money than hiring portaloos. More work needs to be done here but the facilities are already usable.

The bunkhouse will enable more people to take part in activities at Y Dolydd, including those associated with the Green Hub as it develops, but will also bring more tourists to the area who can contribute to the local economy and enjoy the beauty and attractions of Mid-Wales. Interest has already been shown by cycling groups.

Two more internal toilets have been completed adjoining the Gallery: this job like so many others was carried out as a volunteer project by Stuart Gane, using recycled materials at virtually no cost.

History Centre

The last Newsletter outlined plans for repairs to the semi-derelict wing at the entrance to the first courtyard and its conversion into a reception area and History Centre, along with audio-visual and hard-copy interpretation. Since then four quotes have been received and we've had an encouraging meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund. A bid is in preparation for £31,000 to carry out the work and listed building consent has been applied for. Llanfyllin High School's Head of History, Bethan Tout, is working with us and advising on the education element: the Centre should be of particular interest to schools.

Residential units

It's very frustrating that two potential flats and our three-bedroom house remain empty when a relatively small investment could fit them out to house local families and bring useful income to the Trust. Recently we held a site meeting with our architect who will draw up a schedule to elicit further quotations and, we hope, offers from investors.

The Big One

Some years ago we, and our consultants Hyder, talked to the Heritage Lottery Fund about a Heritage Grant to enable thorough repairs to the shell of the building, especially the roofs. At the time the Trust had made little progress, the Olympics were in the offing and we were advised that our prospects were poor. So we decided to do what we could with our own resources and start getting the building back into use.

Recently the octagon roof over the Master's House has been leaking badly, and its height makes it difficult to patch. The roofs of the women's wings at the back are bad too, and the joinery must be suffering. Only Stuey's buckets are stopping the water from penetrating to the ground floor rooms and workshops. Meanwhile the progress made in other areas has given us credibility. It's time action was taken.



The Master's House. with the roof above the octagon

We raised the question at our meeting with HLF about the History Centre. The answer was that they would weigh the costs against the benefits: the higher the cost, the greater the benefit required. Repairing the octagon roof in particular will be expensive. Up to now we've not given enough consideration to the uses proposed for the first and second floors of the Master's House. The need for a lift and for an escape route from the top floor has deterred us from designating them as public spaces. We might have to think again.

Christmas Market.

Don't miss this, an annual event which attracts a good level of support and offers a wide range of quality items for sale. Jean Cape who's in charge reports that all available spaces are already fully booked. This year the event will run from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday 1 December: there will be festive fare and Christmas carols (live, we hope), a tree and suitable lighting and decorations to ensure a seasonal atmosphere. Admission is free. Tell your friends, come along and solve those present problems!

The year's events



Relaxing in the sun at Workhouse Party 2013

The appalling weather in the spring caused the cancellation or curtailment of several events. But the annual Workhouse Party is always our key fund-raiser, and happily the sun shone on the efforts of Ian Jones and his team. Our funds benefited by over £10,000 as a result. (See below for where it went.) Steampunk failed to take off, but Audio-Farm and Ian's Big Birthday made useful contributions and the recent Halloween event was successful too. Playfestival 2013 attracted a record attendance and was much enjoyed.

POWART 2013, the Powys Youth Arts Festival arranged by Arts Connection, was held at Y Dolydd on 1 August. A new and exciting venture was 'Last of the Summer Wine', a Food and Craft Fair in September, master-minded by Richard Dix. For a first attempt it was remarkably successful with an impressive range of stalls and netted us around £2,000; many families came but some adults may have been deterred by the entry charge. Private functions made a good contribution as did the Stadco works party and the High School's Sixth Form prom, though there were issues at an overnight event when music continued beyond the agreed time and one private party proved to be less private than its organisers promised: we were reminded of the need to ensure adequate security. The car boot sales organised by Lois brought in new visitors and in association with the book fairs made us over £1,000. Folk singer Nevis, jazz ensemble The Beltones and performance poet Childe Roland entertained visitors at this year's Open Doors.

Annual General Meeting

At the AGM on 9 September the Report of the Trustees and Accounts for the last financial year, independently examined by Whittingham Riddell, were presented and approved: WR were re-appointed as auditors. Jean Cape, Stuart Gane, Bryan Junor, Richard Dix and Ian Jones, who retired as Trustees by rotation, were returned. Jo Munton also retired. At the Trustees meeting following the AGM four people who had offered to serve were co-opted: Duncan Huxley, Paul Gane, Charlotte Watkin and Jess Evans: three are Llanfyllin residents.

Oriel Y Dolydd



The Gallery launch on 27 July: Bob on sax

The Workhouse Gallery, so well designed by Jason Doignie and equipped with funding from the Bodfach Trust, was under-utilised last year. Now resident artist and engraver Bob Guy has stepped forward to coordinate exhibitions and has re-launched it under the name Oriel Y Dolydd: The Meadows Gallery. The first exhibition, which ran from 27 July until 11 August, included acrylics by Jude Banks; mixed media by Jane Carrington; prints by Bob and by Brian Jones; large scale oils by Dale Marshall and Liz Neal and bronzes by Beatriz Cabrera Molleja, who also offered a sculpture workshop in the gallery on 28 August. There was a further exhibition to coincide with Open Doors in September and another on 12 October featuring striking geometrical compositions by Azzi along with a jazz concert: later that month the gallery housed a harp and poetry evening, 'Embrace the Hills', which took its name from one of Bob's fine wood engravings. We look forward to next year's programme.

Goodbye Roger

Roger Bowles joined the Trustees with his wife Shirley in early 2005. They made an immediate impact. Shirley was much involved with events and organised two very successful garden parties at Bryngwyn while Roger took charge of membership, played a leading part on the Employment Committee (when we had employees) and assumed responsibility for insurance. They also provided accommodation for the Dolydd History Group. Shirley eventually decided that one spouse on the Trustees was enough, but Roger soldiered on and has succeeded in progressively reducing our insurance costs through patient negotiation and shopping around. They are about to move away from Llanfyllin, but as a parting shot Roger has managed to achieve a further reduction of over £2,000 in our premium for 2014. We will miss them, and Roger's shrewd, measured contributions to our meetings.



The Programme for next year

Ian Jones has prepared a business plan for 2014 based on a provisional calendar of events. Many are already firmly booked, though clearly there will be some amendments as the year progresses. An outline up to September appears below.

25 Jan, 1 March, 29 March, 26 April. 31 May, 28 June, 26 July:	Monthly DJ nights with 'Workhouse Project'
31 December	New Year's Eve
11-12 April	50 th birthday party
2-3 May	Punk event
23-24 May	'My Birthday'

26 May	Dog Show
13-15 June	Steampunk
22 June	Mid-Summer
11-13 July	Workhouse Party
6-10 August	Playfestival
22-24 August	Drummers
29-31 August	Audio-Farm
5-7 September	'Dirty Weekend ' (not as bad as it sounds)
13-14 September	Food and Craft Fair
20-21 September	Open Doors

Units to let

The following workshop units, all with metered electrics, are currently available for rent (though there is already interest in two of them). Further information from Jean Cape on 01978 812723.

Unit 11: 30.55 square metres with a monthly rent of £107

Unit 12: 32.59 square metres at a monthly rent of £112

Unit 14: 32.18 square metres with a monthly rent of £110.

Where does all the money go?

A relative of one of the Trustees had to visit Shrewsbury Hospital recently and got into conversation while waiting. He happened to mention the Workhouse and was shocked by the lady's reaction. 'Those people are making a fortune, with all the events they're putting on', she said.

If only. Whatever the rewards of getting involved at the Dolydd, they're not financial. Up to 2009 we did employ a Project Manager and one or two other people: like a lot of charity employees they were part time and worked many more hours than they were paid for. Since then we've had joint caretakers who receive 'house for duty' but no other payment. Nobody else benefits at all. Trustees very rarely claim expenses: our admin costs in the last financial year were just £518 out of expenditure of £69,732.

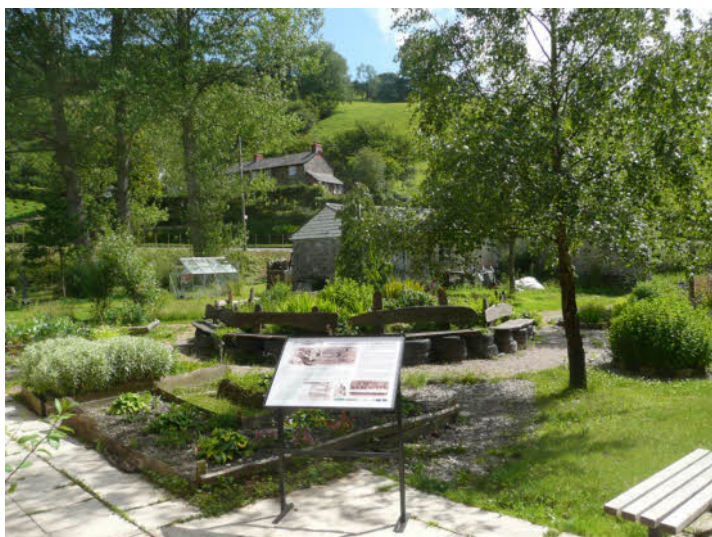
Where did the rest go? The Accounts show that during the last financial year we made mortgage payments totalling £20,300: we were very grateful to the Ecology Building Society for allowing these to be interest-only. Insurance cost us £9,292. We spent £35,626 on the building and site, but £26,608 of this was for the new road entrance and car park, financed by an addition to the mortgage. Water, electricity and telephone made up most of the rest.

On the income side, if we disregard the loan for the car park our biggest earner was events at £23,281, followed by rentals of £8,997 and subscriptions/donations of £4,462.

This year mortgage payments up to 30 November - our year end - will total £24,400 and include some repayment of capital (we're planning for £30,000 in 2014). Insurance costs have come down by £2,000 (and are set to fall again), while rental income should be over £10,000. But once again the main source of revenue has been events: after a disastrous start in the wettest spring for years our volunteers worked their socks off to organise or host additional activities in the summer months. The building society were patient and in the end we shall have met our targets.

Looking ahead, the Trust will need to raise at least £3,000 each month to meet basic expenses, mainly mortgage and insurance, before it can start to put money into the building. For some time to come events will have to play a major part, though we must be careful about their nature and frequency. We no longer promote gatherings on the scale of the old Workhouse Festival and would like to reduce our reliance on the sort of event which, if not well managed, risks causing annoyance to neighbours or damage to our facilities. This means growing our rental income, especially by providing more housing; finishing the bunkhouse and holiday apartments as well as broadening our range of activities: we're lucky to have a marvellous site with attractive spaces, four courtyards, a field and plenty of parking and we want to attract weddings, markets or exhibitions and to find responsible promoters who can take some of the load off our shoulders. We're still over-dependent on the summer months: a heating system would help!

A charity's Trustees have to ensure that the income it raises is used to further its charitable objects: in our case to preserve a historic building for Llanfyllin and for the nation, and to use it to provide community facilities, leisure, cultural and educational activities. And that's where the money goes!



The Peace Garden: built and maintained by volunteers