



# Boots, Books and Open Doors

The new car park is set to make a big difference to this year's events at Y Dolydd. Whilst it lacks its final surface (till we can find the funds to provide it) it's infinitely better than the field. The first result has been the fortnightly series of car boot sales and book fairs which are beginning to take off.

We first attempted boot sales five years ago but they were bogged down within a month. This time we can offer really good facilities with extra space for indoor stalls in the gallery or venue, toilets and a café that will sell you coffee and cakes or a bacon butty. The sales are scheduled every other Sunday (not Saturdays as first intended) to alternate with those at Llangedwyn, starting at 10.00, and there will always be a Book Fair at the same time. This year's dates are: 12 and 26 May; 9 and 23 June; 7 and 21 July and 1 and 15 September (no sales in August).

People have often asked us when the Workhouse was open to view, and the answer was always 'When there's an event' or 'In September for Open Doors'. Now we can advertise regular openings: our permanent exhibition on the history of the Workhouse and the Trust's activities will be on view and people can walk round the public spaces, read the interpretation boards and relax in the courtyards or garden with a refreshing drink. The project's profile is being raised and we're attracting many more visitors and hearing appreciative comments on the attractive environment and the improvements we've made. This is already bringing us us new members and supporters.

The boot sales are being organised by Lois Bosworth, who will be happy to book you a space at £5 a car (£10 indoors) or provide information on 07753 940845. If you have good quality books you would like to donate please contact John Hainsworth on 01691 860549, or just bring them along. We already have an extensive stock of both fiction and non-fiction including the latest arrival, a big collection of fantasy books, and every sale helps to swell the funds.



## Can we help you?

Whilst the above is really good news, the ferocious weather in what we thought was spring has caused the fund raising season to get off to a slow start. Whilst we're proud of having met our interest repayment targets in 2011 and 2012, we're already behind in 2013 and are having to work very hard to make up the lost ground. There are still plenty of unbooked dates when we could accommodate private functions, weddings, shows, fairs or rallies: the Venue, Gallery, Café-Bar and varied outdoor spaces are available for hire and could provide an attractive and different setting for that party this summer, with bunkhouse accommodation if required. Do get in touch or put the word around.

Two or three excellent workshops have recently become free and are available at a reasonable rent. We're pleased to have helped a number of start-ups and successful businesses, and with increased footfall on the site the opportunities for direct sales to the public are growing. Jean Cape would be pleased to hear from prospective tenants and show them round.

## Annual General Meeting

The Trust's AGM will be held at Y Dolydd on Monday 17 June at 7.30. Members should find a notice attached to this Newsletter. Please come along, find out about our activities and finances and contribute your ideas!

## Y Dogydd?

An excellent example of the sort of event we can accommodate at Y Dolydd, especially when the weather is kind, was the Companion Dog Show on 6th May. Around 200 people turned up including many families, and there were some 150 entries in the fourteen classes which included Best Trick, Waggiest Tail and Rabitting Rascals and Poachers' Pets as well as more traditional categories. Best in Show was a magnificent Newfoundland called Busby, only ten months old, owned by Dave Burrows. The dog racing provided frantic excitement but overall the atmosphere was wonderfully relaxed with groups of people sitting on the grass in the warm sunshine, enjoying a quiet drink, looking round the building, visiting the model railway or being photographed with their dog. Our thanks go to our volunteer helpers; to the sponsors Kennel Clips, Llanfyllin Building Supplies, Station Garage Llanfyllin and Llanfyllin Spar, to Nigel Merchant for donating proceeds from his photographs and to Lois Bosworth for the brilliant organisation. Lois ensured that all the profit of £149 went to the Trust, and at least as much again was raised through the bar and café. Nigel's photo shows Johanna with her lurchers Acorn, Mouse and Rocky, proud winners of the Poachers class.



## What's On?

The biggest event of the year, in terms of turnout and of fund-raising, is the annual Workhouse Party, a more intimate successor to the old Workhouse Festival. This year it's on between 12 and 14 July. Ian Jones, its indefatigable organiser, calls it: 'A family friendly weekend, with an outdoor live music stage, and an amazing sound system and DJ setup in the Venue. A lounge area with tasty food from around the world and a lovely big bar and chill out area with cabaret and other entertainment, including Rob Chapman, magician and mystery entertainer. A happy weekend, aimed at people who want to relax and have a good time with friends and good music.'

We aim to keep the cost the same as last year at just £28 for 28 hours of music, with Youth tickets at £16. Camping is available on site for a small fee of £5 per person, for the whole weekend, and £5 per car for parking on our new hard standing Car Park. This will go towards preparing and clearing the field after the event, and of course lots of toilets.

Bands booked so far include String the Marionette, Cherrie Fosphate, Soul Preachers, StayAwake, Bleedin Noses, Hel Dinky, Defy All Reason, Tacsí Criw, Too Loud for the Legion, Shifty Chicken Shed, Blindsyde, Here After Dark, The Deadly, The Nuclear Weasels, The Quirks, Mountain of Love, Thin Vision, Fight The Bear... This year there will be a number of workshops, including a Blacksmith, Foraging, Healing, Fabric and Knitting with more to be announced over the coming weeks and a "Kids" Area, clear of the arenas, but close enough for you to keep an eye on them. More information on [www.workhouse2013.co.uk](http://www.workhouse2013.co.uk).

Another event that is fast becoming a tradition is Play Festival, whose organisers write: 'We're back at the incredible Workhouse from 14-18 August for another round of amazing shows, mind-boggling workshops, beautiful music, smiley faces and all round silliness.' For more details visit [www.play-festival.co.uk](http://www.play-festival.co.uk).

A Steampunk event is planned on 2-3 August: details will be available on our website [www.llanfyllinworkhouse.org](http://www.llanfyllinworkhouse.org).

## A new History Centre

As you enter the first courtyard at Y Dolydd you pass a green door on the left. It's normally padlocked, but it gives access to a short, single-storey wing attached to the entrance block containing the least altered interior in the whole building: a square room with a clay tiled floor, an open fireplace, walls distempered in two shades of institutional brown, a high lath and plaster ceiling and a mysterious tall, round arch leading nowhere in particular. The room's original purpose is unknown though it may have been a day room for vagrants before their own wing, since demolished, was built in the 1880's. The space next to it is now a void, concealed behind a crude, rendered wall of breeze blocks with a great hole in the roof above: there's no access except by scaling a ladder and the adjoining wall is in a poor state from frost and water damage. It's our biggest eyesore and crying out for attention.

The Trust's architect, Richard Payne, has drawn up plans to create a new reception area and History Centre in this strategically located space. Properly restored the first room will give visitors a real impression of the Workhouse a hundred years or more ago and hinged display panels on one wall, professionally designed, will accommodate a new exhibition to tell its story. The concrete wall will be rebuilt in brick and stone, with a matching window; the roof will be repaired and the void will become a study room and office, heated and insulated and accessed through a new internal doorway: it will house the resource materials which we're building up. Listed building consent will be needed, and the County's Conservation Officer has made a site visit and given helpful advice.



Interest in social history is growing: we have three history societies booked in for this summer and a local primary school is undertaking a project. We can't afford to restore larger spaces for display, but audio-visual resources can help to recreate the workhouse experience. Through Arts Connection we've circulated a brief to create a short film offering a virtual tour. We'll then seek grant funding, perhaps through the Heritage Lottery Fund's Sharing Heritage Programme, to combine the physical and digital aspects of the History Centre: educational materials for use with schools could be included too.

## Bunkhouse Blues

This month was to have seen the opening of the first stage of our permanent bunkhouse in the renovated entrance block with its new, watertight roof. Progress has indeed been made in the last few weeks, with two new doors fitted and significant investment of 'sweat equity' in plastering walls and ceilings and installing first fix electrics. But the cold weather meant that plaster couldn't be applied when intended, whilst electricians and plumbers have many calls on their time. In the end all the beds had to be carried back and re-erected in the old temporary space to accommodate bookings for May, while its tenant moved upstairs. We can still offer overnights in reasonable comfort, but it will be another month or two before the improved facilities are up and running.

## What's in a name?

What should we call our building? Locally it's always referred to as Y (or The) Dolydd but this seems relatively recent. In earlier times people commonly spoke of 'The (or Yr) Union'. 'Y Dolydd' is a translation, more or less, of 'The Meadows': we've not yet established when this name was officially introduced but in the records of Llanfyllin's cemetery it appears in the burial records of inmates in 1920, when it succeeds 'Union Workhouse'. 'Y Dolydd' doesn't appear until 1949, after which it's used exclusively: it was probably well established by that time.

In recent years the Trust has tended to use 'Llanfyllin Workhouse', and this makes more sense to people from outside the immediate area: it identifies the building clearly and has become a well known brand in the world of festivals and gatherings. But many of our local supporters and members still prefer Y Dolydd. Our new membership leaflet is headed 'Y Dolydd Llanfyllin Workhouse' and this seems a reasonable compromise when we're designing posters and so on. Comments as always would be welcome.

## From the Archives

The Dolydd History Group is continuing to catalogue the Guardians' Minutes and is progressing towards Volume 10: when we get there the results should appear on Powys Archives' website. Meanwhile members are continuing to sift through the fascinating material that emerged from the National Archives at Kew. Not all of this relates to the Workhouse itself: the responsibilities of the Llanfyllin Poor Law Union extended far beyond its walls. Our Archivist Martin Davies has come across a remarkable case: this is his account.

Sometimes the workhouse archives begin an intriguing story but fall silent before the outcome is known. Such a case occurred in 1844 when the Rector of Llangadfan, Reverend G Howell, wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners in London, concerning one of his parishioners ....

*"Gentlemen, A small farmer of the parish of the name of Rees Davis, having become rather reduced in circumstances of late; has been [prevalled] by some emigrants from this neighbourhood to follow them to America for the purpose of bettering his condition.*

*With this [in] view about 7 weeks ago he sold by auction all his little effects; but owing to the [hardness] of the times, the sale did not realise as much as might have been expected; and all his creditors pouring in their demands at once, have reduced the remainder of the proceeds of the sale to a sum not more than half sufficient to pay the passage of his family (14 persons) to America.*

*"The distress the poor man is in from the [apprehension] of the failure of his project is very great, and the consequences of a failure would be a serious thing for the parish, as he himself is 64 years of age, and in [impaired]health, and 6 of his children are under 12 years of age."*

Now, reaching the point of being unable to support himself and his family, Davis applied to the parish vestry for financial help. Howell continues: *"The Vestry unanimously offered their sympathy with the poor man in his distressing predicament and on account of his helpless family, [they] requested me to apply to you for information as to whether you would sanction the allowance of £10 or £20 to the poor man in aid of the small fund now in his possession which will soon be entirely exhausted."*

Whilst such action was not strictly covered by the poor law legislation, the Commissioners often took a pragmatic approach, realizing, in this case, that unless the emigration took place, this large family was likely to become chargeable to the parish for an indefinite period. They replied some 6 days later and stated "... if the Commissioners can sanction the proposed expenditure from the poor rates of the parish they will most readily do so but to enable them to decide whether they can confirm any resolution which may be passed by a parochial meeting, they require to be informed to what part of America the parties desire to emigrate".

Nothing further is recorded as being heard from the Commissioners. Did they approve the grant from the parish poor rate? Who were this family? Where did they live? For this we must look elsewhere.



*The home Rees Davis left in 1844, as it is today*

Examination of the 1841 census reveals Rees Davies (60), Farmer, together with his wife, Gwyn [Gwen] (40), and children Evan (15), Ann (15), David (12), John (11), Elizabeth (10), Mary (8), Sina [Sinah] (6), Richard (5), Catherine (3) and Sarah (1), living at a property called Llyfryniog, in the township of Cyffin. The modern 1:25000 Ordnance Survey map marks Llyfryniog, about 1 mile north-east of Llangadfan.

But did they finally get to America?

The SS Atlantic sailed from Liverpool and arrived in New York on 1 June 1844. Amongst the passengers were: Ries [Rees] Davies (64), Ries [Rees] (21), Gevan [Gwen or Gwenan] (44), Ann (18), Geran [Evan] (16), David (15), John (13), Elizabeth (11), Mary (9), Susan [Sinah] (7), Richard (6), Catherine (4), and Sarah (2). It seems that one son, Rees, who was elsewhere at the time of the census in 1841, joined the family to emigrate.

As the family made it to America it can be assumed that the Commissioners exercised their discretion and sanctioned the top-up payment for the passages. It would be great to learn how their fortunes developed. Some searches of the United States census records have not yielded results. Perhaps someone reading this will recognize the names of their ancestors and provide the answers – who knows?

## Dear Members and Non-Members...

### A Plea from Workhouse Trustee Jean Cape.

As you receive this newsletter you are signed up to Y Dolydd either as a Member or a supporter, so we would like to take this opportunity to give you an update on the work and financial situation Y Dolydd presently faces. We also thank you for your continued support, which is greatly appreciated.

We all know that times are hard financially and as a Country we remain in a financial depression. However Y Dolydd has continued to thrive, gain support and just about keep its head above water. The last year has seen the car park bring more people to see what we are about ; car boot sales are accumulating a constant following; events have been supportive and diverse. Work on the building continues though slowly and is greatly reliant on volunteer labour for which we are eternally grateful.

So where are we now and how can you help?

Presently we are struggling to maintain our mortgage commitment, following a harsh winter where events were impossible to hold and our income stream almost dried up. We have a number of tenanted workshops from which we use the income to meet our insurance commitment, but meeting our mortgage commitment has been hard. Although we can see our way to meet this through the summer months there are a number of projects which would make this so much easier and this is where you can help.



*Alex Thornton and Leila Price at work in the Peace Garden*



*Dave Burrows with Busby, Best in Show! at Y Dolydd*

Membership is only £1 a month. For example, if we had 1000 members that would be £1000 a month towards the mortgage and costing the individual so little. You can make a donation alongside the membership and many people choose to do this.

We want to develop holiday flats and for this we require funds. Ian has a project called "Workhouse Holidays" into which individuals can invest any amount they choose, and this investment can be in labour. Over approximately seven years the income stream from the holidays will partially go towards repaying the investments and partly to Y Dolydd. Once all the investors have been paid the total income will come directly to Y Dolydd with an independent income stream. This project alone could make such a difference.

Another investment opportunity could be in the form of the residential wing. We have planning permission to develop the roadside wing back to residential and this would provide two two-bedroom flats, a single person living unit and a three-bedroom house, all at affordable rents. Not only would the income from this boost Y Dolydd: it would support four families in the local community. This project could be maintained under the same potential as Workhouse Holidays thereby providing an investment opportunity.

Over to you! How can you help us to provide even more opportunities within the local community?