



# A new Opening at the Dolydd!

For years a major constraint on organising events and activities at Y Dolydd has been the absence of a proper car park. Visitors have had to tramp through long grass and mud, and sometimes give their cars a push when it was time to leave. Understandably, not all of them returned.

Now new opportunities have opened up. On 8 July Llanfyllin's Mayor, Darren Mayor, seen here with our Chairman Wynne Morris, cut the tape to open the car park and the new access from the A490. Sight lines have been improved, and the approach to the building has been greatly enhanced. There is hard standing for around 60 cars. The final surface, a heavy duty plastic grid, will be laid when funds permit.



As a condition of granting planning consent, the council had required us to construct the new road access within three months. Our own priority would have been the car park, and the Trustees realised that the total cost would be much lower if we could combine the two operations. Grants towards car parking are very hard to find, and we put the case to our bankers, the Ecology Building Society, who have been so supportive over several years. The EBS recognised the revenue-earning potential of the new facility and agreed to advance the necessary funds. Thus we have been able to provide the car park much sooner than expected.



The project was managed by our Trustee Ian Jones, who spent many hours on the site, and on the phone. The contractor was a local firm, ERoads, chosen after three quotes had been obtained, and they did a good job for us. The stone was supplied by Lewis Brothers, Green Hall, from their nearby quarry at a generously discounted price for which we are very grateful: they also provided the transport. Proper gates and fencing were included and volunteers installed them to keep down the cost.

The lack of a proper heating system still restricts what we can do in the winter, but there should be many more opportunities for events in the building and on the site. We just need more people who can promote and market our facilities and attract bookings. See below!

## **WANTED: Trustees, Promoters, Publicists, Electricians, Enthusiasts...**

Llanfyllin Dolydd Building Preservation Trust has room for several new Trustees. The constitution allows for up to twenty, and the number currently stands at fourteen. Not all of these are able to be actively involved, though we welcome their support and advice. The main qualification is enthusiasm, though people with specialist skills are very welcome too. At present Trustees meet every 4-6 weeks, with smaller Management Committee meetings in between.

We also need volunteers who can help to advertise the excellent facilities, indoor and outdoor, at Y Dolydd and attract or arrange a much wider range of bookings, functions and events for different age groups and audiences. They can be Trustees or just helpers. We'd like artists to make more use of the Gallery and musicians or drama groups to use the Venue or courtyards (paying us a modest facility fee). We want to hold more educational courses, weddings, fashion shows, craft or antiques fairs, rallies, car boot sales. Y Dolydd is a community facility, and we would like everyone to benefit from it.

Finally we'd be glad to hear from people with trade and craft skills, or just practical experience, who can help to renovate and open up new areas of the building for use.

## Come and join them!...

A working party was organised over the weekend of 20-21 October, concentrating on the bunkhouse. We were lucky to have some skilled workers as well as a support team who supplied food, drink and unskilled labour.

Work on the permanent bunkhouse, in the entrance block, had been held up due to a shortage of skilled tradesmen, especially electricians to carry out the first fix before ceilings and joinery went in. Part of our Pilgrim Trust grant had remained unspent because provision of services was not allowable as permitted expenditure. Substantial progress was made over the weekend: the wiring went in, and plasterboarding in the Board Room was almost completed. The old render was stripped from the walls in the smaller rooms and stores and rubbish were moved out. We have measured up for the new staircase and exterior doors, to be installed shortly. And new timber entrance gates were fitted, providing better security. The temporary bunkhouse came in useful as accommodation for some of the volunteers,



*Photo: Kenny Bannister.*

who stayed over the weekend and were entertained on the Friday night by BBBlackdog. Everybody said they'd greatly enjoyed the weekend, and would be happy to return.

With greater numbers even more could be achieved next time. If you'd like to take part in the next working weekend or have any spare tools or materials we could use, please contact [info@llanfyllinworkhouse.com](mailto:info@llanfyllinworkhouse.com).

## Open Doors

Y Dolydd was open again this year under the Open Doors scheme on 29-30 September. Art works were on view including an impressive tapestry by Liz Neal; there was an updated history display and guided tours, and home-made refreshments were served. Music was provided by Nevis and by our long-time supporters The Beltones (photographed); one of their members, Bob Guy, is well known for his beautiful wood engravings and has very kindly allowed us to use one of his designs for the new membership leaflet, seen on the right. Each visitor received one.



Numbers, at just over 100, were a little down on last year, but we collected several subscriptions and received some generous comments and donations as well as offers of help. We did our best with marketing and appreciated the support of Civic Trust Wales, but envied nearby Denbighshire who issued a 76-page booklet publicising 43 Open Doors sites and numerous walks and exhibitions. Powys, eat your heart out! Next year more regular openings are planned - see 'Coming Events'.



## Enhancing our environment

It's good to be receiving so many compliments about the appearance of Y Dolydd and its grounds. The grass is kept cut, window frames are being painted and the garden carefully tended.

Much of the credit should go to our volunteer extraordinary, Stuart Gane. He spends many hours on the premises, undertaking a multiplicity of tasks. His latest major project has been the construction of a tree house - in fact, more of a tree village - at the eastern end of the site. Stuey has also been cleaning out the stream and ditches, and has moved the footbridge that used to connect our field with a farmer's land and was being used by trespassers.

Alex and Ash Thornton have made very attractive wooden signposts which are helping to guide visitors round the site. Leila Price has also done a great deal around the grounds and especially in the garden, which attracts many appreciative comments. Along with the new entrance, all this has greatly improved the approach to Llanfyllin.



*Rahm Davies playing in the new tree house..  
Photo: Leila Price*



## Memories of Ryan Davies

Ryan Davies, who died in 1977 at the early age of 40, is remembered with great affection as one of Wales's finest entertainers. Both as one of the duo Ryan and Ronnie and later on his own he wrote and performed in both Welsh and English, achieving national fame on the stage and on television. Ryan was born in Glanamau in Carmarthenshire and came to Llanfyllin at the age of ten when his father, William Thomas Davies, and his mother Nans, were appointed Master and Matron of Y Dolydd.

W.T. Davies had worked in several local authority institutions and children's homes. A keen angler and naturalist and a talented musician, he became the organist at Moriah Chapel, and accompanied and later conducted Llanfyllin Mixed Choir. Ryan sang in the children's choir and was soon performing at the Powys Eisteddfod, reciting, singing solo and also to the harp, when he was accompanied by the great Nansi Richards. He became a harpist too. But he also kept his family and wider audiences entertained with his wit and inventiveness.

Ryan had happy memories of his days at Llanfyllin High School, where he played the piano at assembly, sang tenor in a performance of Haydn's 'The Seasons' to Elizabeth Vaughan's soprano and excelled on the stage. He was less keen on examinations, though this didn't stop him from becoming a teacher later on. A good sportsman, he played cricket for Montgomeryshire, and was Llanfyllin's goalkeeper for a while. But most of all people remember his magnetism and the warmth of his character.

Ryan's biographer, Rhydderch Jones, to whom we're indebted for most of the facts set out here, describes how he made friends with the inmates at Y Dolydd including a one-eyed tramp called Bobby Burns who made ships for him out of silver paper. He writes: 'It is not beyond contention to think that living under the same roof as the elderly inhabitants of the Dolydd gave Ryan an early mature understanding of character. They certainly provided him with an audience: Ryan and his father used to perform for the pleasure of those old folks.'

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In a previous Newsletter Rita Harrison described her early, innocent romance with Ryan when her family became inmates at Y Dolydd. When he was fourteen Ryan became friends with a girl of the same age: Irene Williams from Llanrhaeadr. He later proposed to her on the platform at Oswestry Station, and she accepted. We're very grateful to Mrs Irene Ryan-Davies, who now lives in Ryan's original home town of Glanamau, for permission to use the accompanying photographs.

Staff at Y Dolydd at a Christmas party. The Master and Matron are on the left: Mr and Mrs Lewis, Porter and Sister, at the back. The book cited above is 'Ryan A Biography', by Rhydderch Jones, published by Y Lolfa.

## News in Brief

At the AGM on 11 June we said goodbye to four long standing Trustees: Simon Baynes, Mick Cape, Peter Lewis and Leila Price. All of them have done a great deal for the Trust in different ways, and we are extremely grateful. They will continue to give us their support. Lois Bosworth became a Trustee, and Jo Munton has since been co-opted.

Currently we have 16 workshops or studios let to local enterprises, providing them with vital space and ourselves with around £12,000 a year in income. More are planned, and enquiries from potential tenants are welcome.

The Workhouse Party, our biggest fund raiser of the year, took place on 13-15 July. Around 350 people attended and enjoyed an impressive range of bands and DJ's. Over £2,000 was raised for Trust funds.

PlayFestival 2012 was held between 15 and 19 August, a well-attended family event offering 'another round of amazing shows, mind-boggling workshops, beautiful music, smiley faces and all round silliness'.

An account of Y Dolydd, featuring interviews with Leila Price and John Hainsworth, was a major item in the programme 'My Life in the Workhouse', broadcast on Telesgop by BBC Radio Wales in September.

A Pamper Day with health and wellbeing in mind took place at Y Dolydd on 7 October and provided the public with an opportunity to sample a range of healing therapies.

Members of the Dolydd History Group recently met the Powys County Archivist to discuss cataloguing the Minutes of the Llanfyllin Guardians which we have already digitised. Work should begin soon: helpers welcome.



Ryan, with his harp, and Irene at Y Dolydd. Behind them are Mr and Mrs Davies and Dan, a friend from Bangor College.



Staff at Y Dolydd at a Christmas party. The Master and Matron are on the left: Mr and Mrs Lewis, Porter and Sister, at the back.

## Y Dolydd Meets SteamPunk

August Bank Holiday weekend was billed as a SteamPunk Festival but unfortunately the promoters cancelled with only a few days to go. As a few of us sat around trying to figure out how to salvage what would have been a big earner, we picked up a message from BBBlackdog asking if anyone had a venue to save the weekend. Well after a few emails and phone calls we, of course, agreed to be hosts. BBBlackdog ( see photo) managed to get 5 acts to perform for nothing and we continued to set up the event at a scaled down level.



Thursday saw the start of arrivals with a couple who had been on route from Germany and did not know about the cancellation, this was soon followed by a young couple who had hitch hiked all the way from Norway and a performer was already on route from America. About 100 people still turned up and had a great party. A small group of Dolydd members including, Ian, Debs, Stue, John, Mick and Jean worked round the clock to provide a brilliant weekend. The German couple enjoyed it so much they asked us to invite them to the next cancelled festival.

So what is SteamPunk and who are BBBlackdog? At first sight you would be mistaken from thinking this is Punk music and it does have a punkish beat but is an eclectic mix of rock, blues and jazz all pulled together in an upbeat. But what is more amazing is the attire of its followers. It was described to me as Goth meets colour but it is even more than that. With women in Basques and bustles, with the men in braided jackets, military style trousers or tails all decked with top hats, goggles and lots of jewelry it fitted in well with the feel of Y Dolydd.

BBBlackdog became firm friends of Y Dolydd and not only saved the day for the bank holiday event but returned in October to perform on the Friday evening kicking off a volunteer weekend. They are the fabulous Dale Rowles (vocals and guitar), Axel Boldt (drums) and Mike Bower (base Guitar). Based in Derbyshire they are very involved in their local community and part of a number of projects to salvage buildings and land and create performance space for the community. So our project is just up their street. If you would like to hear more just follow this link and listen to and view the amazing mix of music and work that took place over the weekend of 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> October. Filmed and edited by: Susan and Ken, it's at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MUhvpqgCAK&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MUhvpqgCAK&feature=youtu.be)

## Why isn't this a home?



The shortage of affordable housing in rural areas is well known. But for years this 3-bedroom house at Y Dolydd, and a potential studio apartment next door have stood empty. The roof and structure are sound, and quotes have now been obtained showing that for around £25,000 each they could be converted into attractive dwellings. Families could have a roof over their heads, and the Trust would have the income from the rents.

At present we lack the capital to undertake the project. It is frustrating to see such a valuable resource neglected. The same applies to the two holiday flats, now partially completed and with planning consent. At present there are many people with funds vested in accounts which bring them very little interest. We hope we might be able to get together with some of them and find a solution.

## Coming Events (A selection)

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|----------------------------|--------------|---|
| Sunday 2 December          | 10.00 - 4.00 | Christmas Market. Stalls include jewellery, wooden items, paintings and prints, cards, ceramics, knits, puzzles.... Also mulled wine, mince pies, hot food and drinks, Christmas fun! Come along and solve your present problems.                       |
| Tuesday 31 December        |              | Dolydd New Year Party. Theme: The End of the World! See website for details.  |
| Saturday 19 or 26 January  |              | Winter Warmer. See website for details and confirmation.  |
| Saturday 16 February       |              | Valentine's Evening   |
| Saturday 16 March          |              | BOOK FAIR : a generous offer of books enables us to launch what we plan to make a regular event, to coincide with a monthly opening of Y Dolydd - provisionally on the third Saturday of the month. More gifts of saleable books would be very welcome. |
| Weekend 30 March - 1 April |              | Easter event  |
| Monday 6 May               |              | Dog show, with other attractions  |
| Weekend 6 - 7 July         |              | The Workhouse Party   |
- Fortnightly car boot sales are planned in addition.