

NEWSLETTER 53 – AUTUMN 2024

AGM

We had a successful AGM on 21st September. As usual Y Talbot very generously allowed us to use one of their conference rooms for the meeting and also laid on teas and coffees for attendees. Thanks to the hard work of Aidan and Soffia the meeting was also “virtual” allowing more members to attend via Zoom.



Our newly appointed Treasurer, Malcolm James, explained that EWH is in a very healthy financial position. He was followed by the two hostel managers Richard, Ty'n Cornel, and Colin, Dolgoch. As well as recapping on the how the hostels had performed during the past year they outlined a series of projects over the coming year and beyond including a new porch at Ty'n Cornel and new windows at Dolgoch as well as the long awaited electricity upgrade. Longer term projects including a possible re-roofing at Ty'n Cornel and a major revamp of the Dolgoch track were also mentioned. Our new membership secretary, Helen Boothman, gave a presentation on membership numbers followed by Andrew Phillips, our H&S advisor.

Following the presentations and the election of officials, the meeting considered two motions proposed by members. Helen Boothman proposed abolishing the membership cards. There was some discussion with most members accepting that there was little benefit in having a physical card but some wanting to retain it. In the end an amended motion was passed which agreed to end the automatic issuing of cards. Any member who wanted to receive a card could request one. It was also agreed to issue cards to all junior members.

Dominic Davidson proposed a motion to request hostel managers to cease using poison as a first line of defence against rodents. There was much discussion on this topic. There was general agreement that poison could lead to the death of raptors eating poisoned vermin. However, Richard reported that rats had, only this week, got into the Ty'n Cornel loft and caused damage and that all measured needed to be taken when vermin were inside the hostels. The alternative of spring traps was discussed but Richard pointed out that this would require wardens to check and rebait traps and dispose of any dead vermin. Several wardens at the meeting said they would not do this. The motion was rejected but the Trustees agreed to discuss the options at their next meeting.

Following the AGM attendees headed to Dolgoch for a buffet meal.



Dolgoch

One of our wardens, Bob Holder, received a translation of a section of a book published some years ago about the history of Soar y Mynydd, 'Cymdogaeth Soar-y-mynydd' by Evan Jones - 1979. The section below relates to Dolgoch and contains some very interesting information about the history of the farm,



“This farm also had a long history. The farm stands about a hundred yards from the Tywi river, almost opposite Nant-rwch - a farm that stands on a rise of land on the other side of a river. The road that goes from Tregaron to Abergwesyn (the old drovers' road) runs a quarter of a mile away, up the river. At one time the area covered by Dôl-goch farm was 2,581 acres. The Forestry Commission took most of them left around five hundred to keep stock on, acres which are still in the possession of Mrs Margaret Jones, Pant y-craf, Blancaron and her son Huw. This is a family that had a connection with Dôl-goch for close to a hundred years. The following ridges belonged to Ddol-goch farm - Esgergerwn, Cefn-isaf and Hirnant. On Esgair-y-hirnant there is a pool called 'Pwll y seven twenty'. There is a reference to the pool in another chapter in this volume. The earliest reference I saw to the tenure of Dôl-goch is that David Williams lived there in the early eighteenth century. He was the son of one John Williams of Llanddewibrefi. This David Williams was one of the gentry of Cardiganshire as he is constantly referred to as 'Gent'. He was High Sheriff in the year 1725. The history of this family will be found later in this chapter. It must have been the Trawscoed families who owned Dôl-goch at this time, for there is a story that the land owner gave more land to David Williams, namely y Giach, Cwmddwy, Hirnant and Nant-y-bont on lease, and for an annual rent of ten guineas, and a gift of another five guineas. (See Trawscoed Deeds, Volume I, page 145). The last occupants who were in Dôl-goch were Mr Huw Jones and his family. He had been brought up in Penwernhir, Pontrhydfendigaid. He was born back at the beginning of the previous century. He came to live in Dôl-goch in the year 1880. He was married three times and raised a large family. Huw Jones saw hard times when he started living in Dôl-goch. During the second winter there he lost hundreds of his sheep due to a severe drift. With the money he got for the skins of the dead sheep he paid half the rent for one year which was due. There is one fact worth noting about this man. He kept in touch with his birthplace while he was able. When he was healthy and fit walked to the chapel in Pontrhydfendigaid every Sunday, a journey of ten miles one way. It was his son John Jones and his family the last ones to live there. One special event in Dôl-goch is still remembered. In the year 1911 a fire took hold in the living room and the whole of it was burnt. However, they succeeded in removing some of the furniture from the house. I saw one of the pieces of furniture that was there that day, and the mark of the big fire could be seen on it. Although the river Tywi ran by fairly close to the house, it failed to be extinguished as there was no telephone nearby, and no fire brigade could reach the farm. The farm at that time belonged to the Trawscoed estate (Lisburne). The following year the house was rebuilt. The necessary goods, such as wood and new slates, were transported from Ystrad Fflur station. Farmers from the Pontrhydfendigaid district worked on it. A row of carts could be seen going to Dôl-goch over the mountain from Pantyfedwen, a journey of about eleven miles. It was a custom at that time for everyone who could 'throw a load' to help a neighbour who needed help in that way.”

We will try to get a copy of the book and see if there are also references to Ty'n Cornel.

Ty'n Cornel

After several years of discussion, replacement of the Ty'n Cornel porch is now imminent. A local builder has been instructed, and he hopes to start work at the end of October. There will be an initial "dirty" phase during which the heavy building work will be done, then a delay while the timber frame is built to fit. But the project should be faster than the construction of the original volunteer-built porch, which was half-built for well over a year. The builder will do several other repair jobs while his team is working at the hostel.

There's been plenty of maintenance activity at Ty'n Cornel over the summer and autumn: cleaning the gable ends, re-coating the shepherd's hut with UV-Protection Oil, cutting the hedges and grass, and much more. Several fire safety upgrades have been performed following the Fire Officer's inspection in August. In response to requests from several wardens, the keys that used to be kept in the drawer of the sideboard have now been transferred to a keysafe and colour-coded to aid recognition. Twenty fence-posts have been bought in preparation for repairs to the fences around the property.

There has also been activity on the land surrounding the hostel, in preparation for the planting of trees - currently scheduled for winter 2025-6. Contractors have sprayed the bracken - during the process, they found a leak in our water pipe which had been present since the bracken fires of 2020. Dafydd Edwards' Welsh Black cattle have been back on the hillsides keeping the grass under control, and we're likely to see them again next summer. We've had preliminary discussions about measures to protect our water supply during the planting process.

Waste collection

The new waste collection arrangements are now working at both hostels. At Ty'n Cornel the council collect on an agreed schedule. At Dolgoch, due to problems with road side collection, the council have agreed collect direct from the hostel on a "when and if" basis. Colin purchased two wheely bins and when these are full of the recyclable and non recyclable waste the council is contacted and collection arranged.

Events calendar

When	What	Further details
16th-17th November	Dolgoch work party	Colin huwscol@hotmail.co.uk
28th-30th March	New wardens training weekend	Frances, frances.adelaidecottage@gmail.com

Membership

If you are not yet a member why not join us? EWH will only survive and prosper if we have a continuing inflow of new people. Even if you are not able to help in an active way there are a number of jobs that can be done remotely including a grant applications officer and marketing roles. To become a member please email members@elenydd-hostels.co.uk

Colin Hughes (huwscol@hotmail.co.uk) (On behalf of the Trustees)