

NEWSLETTER 55 – SPRING 2025

New Wardens

We had a very successful training weekend for new wardens in early March. As usual, the new wardens arrived at the hostels on Friday evening where we had a shared meal and got to know each other. On the Saturday morning those who were staying at Ty'n Cornel travelled over to Dolgoch. The morning sessions covered paperwork and administration while also showing the new wardens the practical requirements of wardening at Dolgoch. In the afternoon sessions, safeguarding, environmental issues and the local area were dealt with. Another enjoyable shared evening meal was followed by a talk about ancient and vintage trees in the area by Doug Lloyd from West Wales Wildlife Trust. On Sunday the process was reversed with those staying at Dolgoch travelling over to Ty'n Cornel to learn about the specific aspects of wardening there. All in all it was a very enjoyable weekend. Jim Stott, our warden co-ordinator, was able to fill a number of vacant wardening weeks with the new trainees. Our next warden training weekend will be next March/April. If anyone is interested in becoming a warden and spending a free week at one of our lovely hostels you can contact Frances at, frances.adelaidecottage@gmail.com



Ty'n Cornel



The storms in early December created many problems at the hostel, and Bill, Janet, and Richard had a difficult week restoring order. Our journey to the hostel was blocked by fallen trees, and the closer we approached, the worse the problems became. We were without electrical power for five days, and the phone was only restored after Aidan replaced some broken components after Christmas. The heavy rain had caused a ditch to overflow onto the track, and the eroded channels were getting deeper every day. We dug out the worst sections of ditch by hand to stop the overflowing, and we tipped barrowloads of stone into the deepest ruts so that vehicles could get through – the hostel was closed to customers, but builders and electricians arrived and worked bravely throughout the week. After several phone calls from windy hilltops, we arranged for a contractor to do some proper repairs to the track and ditch at the end of the week. That section of the track is now better than it has been for years, and that ditch won't overflow for several years. National Grid paid the hostel £525 in compensation for the prolonged power loss.



We didn't capture the situation very well in photographs – we were too busy dealing with the problems. But there were pleasant surprises as well as challenges - when electrical power was eventually restored to the area, we were surprised to find that the new telecommunications mast near Bryn Carregog is now working. The mast has brought mobile phone signal much closer to the hostel, though the hostel and its grounds are still in a shadow.

It was a relief to visit the hostel again in February in gentler weather. Janet, Richard, and Steve Fox re-decorated the kitchen and the newly-plastered wall in the common room. The new porch is a big improvement with its double glazing and slate floor. There has been a leak in the flashing joint where the porch roof meets the hostel wall, but the builder now understands the problem and will fix it in the next week or two. The new timbers have had several coats of external preservative, but there is still some internal decoration to do.



Several electrical upgrades have been performed inside the hostel. There's a new consumer unit, several additional power sockets, and some extra emergency lights as instructed by the County Fire Officer. One of the security lights at the front of the hostel has been repaired.

2024 was quite a successful year for hostel overnights. We achieved 849 overnights during the year, even though the hostel was effectively closed for several weeks to allow the new porch to be built. We didn't match the 941 achieved in 2023 – our best year for a long time - although the slight reduction in whole-hostel bookings (18 nights compared to 21) accounts for half of the difference. Taking into account the closures for building work, it doesn't look like a systematic decline in demand.

The New Year has brought encouraging new bookings. At 11th March, we have 225 overnights including forward bookings, matching our position at this date in previous years. The shepherd's hut is doing particularly well – we already have 21 nights booked, compared with 36 during the whole of 2024.

It's interesting to look back at events at Ty'n Cornel ten years ago. In summer 2015, the mountain spring that provides the hostel's water was encapsulated professionally, and that work immediately transformed the reliability and purity of the water supply. In autumn 2015, photovoltaic panels were installed on the shed roof, and those panels have now generated almost 22,000 kW.hours of green electricity. Their performance has matched the predictions of the suppliers, and we have recouped the costs through feed-in tariffs, exports, and savings in expensive grid electricity. Here's to the next 10 years at Ty'n Cornel.



Dolgoch

Our overnights for the current year 2004/25 will be significantly lower than our record high of last year. With only a few weeks remaining, it looks like we will be under 1,600 overnights compared with over 2,000 in the previous year. Given that Ty'n Cornel also saw a drop in the calendar year it could be that general factors such as the awful summer weather put people off. It certainly cannot have been our prices as a recent Independent Hostels Guide survey showed that EWH prices are amongst the very lowest!

Just before Christmas we had new double glazed windows installed at Dolgoch. These replaced the old single pane windows. Several of the old windows would not open, most of the frames were badly rotted and all were daily coated in thick condensation on the inside. The trustees decided that any replacements should be in line with the character of the building and be made of timber. The new windows were installed in one day by a team of contractors. The effect is very pleasing and it would be hard to tell the difference between the new and old windows at a distance. Inside, the effect is very pleasing. The dripping condensation appears to be a think of the past and a number of people have said that the hostel feels much warmer. This may be as much due to the absence of drafts as to the effect of the double glazing but nevertheless we are very pleased with the results. A surprise, occurring during the period of fitting the windows, was that EE customers are now



able to receive a mobile phone signal at the hostel.

At the same time that we had the new windows installed we also had a visit from an electrical contractor who is interested in upgrading the electricity supply at Dolgoch. The contractor's previous quote involved installing PV panels in the paddock. This ground mounted option had the advantage of allowing the panels to face south down the valley. However, the costs of the associated ground work added significantly to the overall cost of the project. He therefore visited in December to look at the viability of a roof mounted option. This will require more PV panels due to the East West orientation of the roof but the overall project cost has reduced considerably. The trustees have therefore decided to accept this quote for the external configuration and we are refining the details of the internal configuration.

Just before the work party in early March there was a significant grass fire on the hillside opposite Dolgoch which borders the Northern edge of the Devil's staircase road. Fire engines attended to ensure that the fire did not spread into the forestry which fortunately it did not. Judging from our experience of the major grass fire in 2023 the extensive charred grassland will soon recover.



The Spring work party, held over the weekend of 9th-10th March, was quite a contrast to the one held in November. Then we had over 20 attendees and there was a worry that there would not be enough beds for everyone! This time we had only 6 attendees on both days so we had to focus on the most important tasks. We did manage to fill one of the log stores. This was quite an achievement and we should easily have enough logs to see us well into the Autumn. Inside the hostel, our usual deep cleaning had been helped enormously by the previous wardens. Many thanks to Richard and Dee, Lyn and Owen, Mary, Roger, Andrew.

Other Matters

Ebike charging. Tregaron Town Council have installed an ebike charging point and bike tools outside the Welsh Gold Centre opposite the Talbot. The bike charger is basically a 13A socket, so you just open it up and plug in free of charge.

Storm damage. The storms in December have caused a lot of local damage. The road from Beulah to Abergwesyn was closed for several weeks while the fallen trees were cleared. At Soar y Mynydd several of the trees in the graveyard came down, narrowly missing the building itself. Luckily the hostel buildings themselves were spared any major damage.

AGM. Please note that the AGM will be earlier this year, on Saturday 28th June. We will hold the AGM meeting in Y Talbot and afterwards have refreshments at Ty'n Cornel. If anyone intends to come to the meeting and would like to stay at one of the hostels they should get in touch with Gill or Janet.

Marketing help. Although we have been very successful in filling posts that become vacant, we have struggled to get anyone with marketing experience to help in this important role. If anyone thinks they can help please get in touch.

Financial examiner. Alan Southgate, one of our longest standing members, has fulfilled the role of financial examiner for many years. This role involves checking the accounts before they are presented at the AGM and then to the Charity Commission. Prior to the last AGM Alan said that he would like to “retire” from this important role. We therefore now need to find a replacement. If anyone has a financial background and feels that they could help us please get in touch. Alan would be pleased to talk anyone through the requirements of the job..

Events calendar

When	What	Further details
Saturday 28th June	AGM	barglam@yahoo.co.uk

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)