

## **Leslie at home**

Leslie Robert Potts came to Llangollen in the mid 1950s to run the Dobie's Seeds Mail Order Office. He left a job in a shipping office in Liverpool and making the move to Llangollen, aged 24 years.

When Leslie first moved here he lived with his sister at Tan-y-Bwlch. After this he rented a farmhouse, Oernant Isa just outside Pentredŵr. The farm belonged to Mrs Gollan of Prentredŵr. The farm was used for sheep farming (John Pickett).

The village, once a collection of farms, smallholding and about 12 quarrymen's cottages, to-day only the farm and 3 cottages remain though many footings remain (on the top bend of the Horse Shoe Pass). The village was there before the Horse Shoe Pass was built; the nearest shop was at Pentredŵr.

At the top of the Pass was the Westminster Quarry. Many walked from Pentredwr, Rhewl. Llantysilio etc to walk every day for work. Others stayed in the barracks (approx 600 men) on site Monday to Friday.

One of the tales told to Les was that every Friday the owner of the quarry lunched at the White Hart pub in Pentredŵr before going in his trap with his driver up the Bwlch (the old pass) with the wages to the quarry. The men posted a boy on the mountain above the village as look out.

Unfortunately on day, the choice of venue for lunch was the Britannia Inn. The trap and driver carried on for lunch at the White Hart, and when he had finished he put a stick with jacket and hat around and went up the Bwlch meanwhile the Boss walked up the footpath to Oernant and over the top to the quarry and found the men sat around, playing cards etc. The boy dashed in too late and some men lost their jobs.

After a couple of years Leslie his wife Joan and their son Allan moved into Tŷ Isa at Oernant. This had been a holiday cottage for years. It had been two cottages knocked into one. The left hand one also had a stable at the back in the past. Leslie assumed he provided a horse to work on the tramway, bringing the slate down to the top of the incline above the Britannia Inn. The other worked in the quarry as did most of the men in the village. The quarry above the village, records have never been found of who owned it or worked there. John Hawkes owned it in the last century but never worked it, if you look in the bottom you will see the remains of a building, he was told it was used as a shot tower in the First World War.

Leslie modernised the cottage, levelling the two floors – there was a 14 inch difference between the two. The slate waste was removed until he saw he was well below the walls. After a sleepless night not sure whether he would still be in bed by the morning, he and his wife mixed and laid seven tons of concrete by hand the following day and hoped they were safe. He removed all the old horse and lime plaster and set about getting the walls, doorways and windows straight but he just

followed the curves as they were in some places six inches out, doors and window were square. The walls were plastered with a waterproof additive, much to the irritation of the plasterer, as his pink finish wouldn't stick.

The house was cold even with stoves in both cottages on 24 hours. Water was collected from the stream, and if left overnight a few feet away, it would freeze. Lighting was by oil lamps to start, but a diesel engine with a dynamo soon gave plenty of lights around the place and charged batteries and enough power for a TV. The Lister engine was fitted with two 2foot flywheels. To start it by hand could be hard and needed cranking and care. His uncle's friend was appalled at his wiring and set about fixing it, after many hours the man asked Leslie to start the engine, fixing one wire to a terminal he attempted to do the same to the other, there was a large flash leaving him with just the insulation in his hand, fortunately Leslie's father worked in power stations and the cable he was using was 50 amp. Leslie was left to rewire it all again after taking them back to Liverpool. One time his uncle was incensed that a woman could start the engine so he tried, it lifted him off the ground 2 foot in the air. Many things happened at Ty Isa over the 5 years they were there but the crashes on the corner above them put the end to their stay.

### **The Tÿ Isaf Ghost**

On a moonlight night they would hear steps crossing the slate slabs outside and would watch as the original front door of the right cottage opened. Later on they built a porch over both doorways, but still it was only the original door that opened. They had a very large black dog scared of no man, but this Alsatian would back away and hide under the stair well at the back of the cottage, a quivering wreck. One night, in frustration, Leslie took his dog and a big torch down the path. Nothing was to be seen, but the dog had run indoors and was hiding, shivering in the stair way.