

Pentredŵr School



Pentredŵr School – now the Community Centre – in 2023.

The Beginning

Before the new school at Pentredŵr was built in 1909, the children were taught at the Eglwyseg and the Llantysilio National Schools. A minute of the Denbighshire Education Committee dated September 27 1907 records 'it was decided to consider erecting what is termed single area schools under section 8 of the Education Act of 1902'. The Government was issuing special grants for the building of these new schools to have an accommodation capacity for 70 children. Five months later it was recorded that the contract for the Llantysilio new school at Pentredŵr had been signed. The cost of the contract was £1285, the amount of the Government grant being £1070. The contract was awarded to Davies Brothers builders on Abbey Road.

On July 31st 1908 the Denbighshire Education Committee interviewed three candidates for the headship of the new school, David Evans Eglwyseg (the head teacher at Eglwyseg), Llewelyn Roberts Cefn and Thomas O. Roberts Trefynant Ruabon. Mr Llewelyn Roberts was appointed Head Master at a salary of £100 per annum.



The official opening of Pentredŵr School in 1909.

The school was officially opened on 7th January 1909 with speeches given by various local dignitaries. It was opened for instruction on 11th January 1909, when 39 pupils were admitted. The Eglwyseg school was not closed until the following October. (From John Iwerth Roberts 'Pentredŵr School 1909 to 1959'). Eglwyseg School was closed on 4th October 1909 and 7 children were admitted to the new school – 'Their arithmetic is in a very poor condition' according to Llewelyn Roberts.

The following account is based on Excerpts from Pentredŵr School Log Book 1909 – 1945. For the first 10 years we hear the voice of Llewelyn Roberts, headmaster January 1909 to December 1919. The Infants Mistress appointed was Miss A. Roberts, but on that first day only the headmaster was present. The next day, 12th Jan, help arrives. Miss M.E. Davies, Emergency Teacher, takes up duties until Miss Roberts is free. It is noted in the log that 'lack of cupboards causes great inconvenience'.

On 29th January 1909, less than 3 weeks after opening, the school received its first inspection visit. The inspector wrote:

'We visited the school and found everything in order. There was a full attendance and the children followed their lesson with bright intelligence and master and scholars appear to appreciate each other thoroughly. The infants were taught in a cheerful manner by Miss Davies the emergency teacher. We were much pleased by the appearance of the school'

On that same day the Master's desk and cupboard placed in position – before or after the inspection I wonder? On Feb 8th Miss Annie Roberts the appointed Infants Mistress takes up her duties.

The concerns of the school log focussed on attendance, staffing, holidays and the weather. Of course Llewelyn Roberts was the sole author, apart from the weekly register checks by the school managers and the yearly inspection report, so the account may be slightly one sided.

On 30th August 1909 the school reopened for the new school year with 42 children present out of 45. The other 3 were ill, 2 having the Scarlet Fever while the third was suffering from 'some slight unimportant ailment'. The next day two children Nellie and Emlyn Evans were sent home as their younger sister who does not attend school was suffering from sore throat which might be the earliest sign of Scarlet Fever. On the 2nd September 1909 a half-day holiday was given as the Wesleyans were having their Annual Tea, but by 3rd September attendance is low caused by the prevalence of Scarlet Fever.

Outbreaks of Scarlet Fever were, sadly, regular occurrences in the log. Infectious diseases caused suffering amongst the children of the community all too regularly. For example: in February 1910, 7 or 8 children were suffering from Influenza and by April there was an epidemic of measles and Dr Drinkwater ordered closure for 1 month. In winter 1911 there was an outbreak of Mumps. In Spring 1913 an epidemic of Influenza serious enough for the school to be closed for most of March.

Weather

The school also regularly had to close due to bad weather in the winter.

17th Jan 1912 'A heavy fall of snow happened and as it was snowing heavily at 9 o'clock only 20 children attended school this morning. Children were sent home at 11.30 as it was still snowing.

Further snow fell that night and the following morning til it was 15 or 16 ins in depth and where it had drifted it was much deeper rendering roads impassable. The few that came were sent home immediately and the school was closed until Monday. It was the heaviest fall that has been seen for 15 years so the old inhabitants say – making it somewhat like an old fashioned winter. A thaw set in on Saturday but a hard frost on Sunday night made the roads very slippy. 43 of the children were in school today.'

5th Feb 1912 'More snow fell last night. Only 29 attended school in the morning. They were dismissed at 3.30 in the afternoon.'

9th Feb 1912 'Snow still remains in the round and in consequence 7 children from Tai Newyddion have not presented themselves once this week'.

Dec 1913 'Attendance poor. We had a violent snowstorm yesterday several of the children were soaked and shaken when going from school the previous day. It was one of the worst snow storms remembered in the district.'

5th Jan 1914 'Distant children prevented from attending by snow.'

10th Mar 1916 'The wind has veered to the north again and it is intensely cold. 7 or 8 of the children are ill with influenza and colds. Snow is up to the hedges in some parts of the vicinity.'

Holidays

The school year generally started at the end of August and finished at the end of July. There was a 4 week summer holiday and short breaks for Christmas, Easter and Whitsun. In addition, a half day holiday was given for every month of good attendance. In the early years Denbighshire Council gave a day's holiday for all schools for St David's day.

A day or a half day holiday was also given each year for the following:

- the Wesleyan Annual Tea
- the Calvinist Methodist Annual Tea
- Harvest Thanksgiving Services
- the Wesleyan Cymanfa Y Golion
- the Calvinist Cymanfa Ganu

Holidays were given for other events too, for example:

28th Jan 1910 'School closed all day for Election of Member for Denbighshire West Division to parliament.'

10th March 1911 'School closed in the afternoon on account of the opening of the new Chapel at Pentrebwlch.'

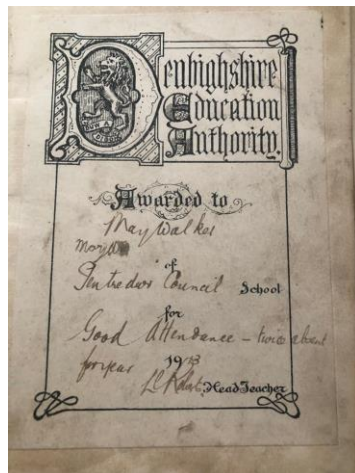
16th June 1911 'School closed for the Coronation Week.'

12th July 1911 'School closed in commemoration of the investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarvon Castle.'

Staff

At first there was just the headmaster and one assistant teacher but by 20th Sep 1910 Miss Lizzie Evans, Cefn, commenced duties - but at a reduced rate of salary as not having any teaching experience. Salary £35 pa. By 20th March 1911 Miss Lizzie Evans had left for Acrefair to serve as a Student Teacher and Miss Pollee Thomas, Brymbo, had commenced.

So now Miss Roberts was in charge of infants and Miss Thomas Standard ii. The headmaster takes Standard iii, iv and v for some time at any rate to see how things work. On May 24th 1912, Miss Roberts finished. She was presented with:-



An award (a book) given to May Walker for good attendance in 1913.

'A brooch (gold) to secure which, every child in school had subscribed thus showing how deeply she has won their affections as well as the value the parents placed on her service. She sails for Canada on Friday all wished her a pleasant voyage out and happiness and success in her new land.' Miss Mary E. Evans commenced duties this morning'

There was quite a frequent turnover of assistant teachers usually as they moved through the process of becoming qualified teachers. However, Miss Pollee Thomas left because 'She thought of going home being required to assist her mother as her sister Miss Lottie Thomas (the winner of Soprano Wrexham National Eisteddfod) is going for a course of education'.

The First World War 1914 -1919 and its effects

28th July 1914 - World War One began.

During the First World War because of a shortage of teachers the staff turnover intensified. Denbighshire County Council, even with their team of excellent (mainly) women teachers found it difficult to cover every school in the county. Sometimes there was only Llewelyn Roberts helped by some of the older children.

On 13th September 1915 Robert Watcyn Pugh, Clay, Cefn, who was a pupil at the Llangollen County School commenced work as a student teacher. Robert Watkin Pugh attended the Llangollen County School on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and taught at Pentredŵr School the rest of the week. The days chosen by Mr Olley (head of the County School) suited to his subjects. There was the occasional mistake!

'For today Robert Watcyn Pugh who attends the Llangollen County School Mondays Thursday and Friday mornings (by then his timetable had changed) is kept in school, in consequence no teacher appears to be in charge of the infants!'

On 11th Sep 1916 Robert Watcyn Pugh was notified that he had been successful in the Senior Certificate Exam of the Central Welsh Board at Llangollen. Less than 6 months later on 1st March 1917 he left to join the army, commencing as a soldier that day.

Shortage of labour on the farms affected school holidays too. In 1916 the school closed from 9th until 19th June. Some of the parents who were farmers had arranged work for the children gathering the stones in the fields and leading the sheep on the mountain. Many farmers preferred a week then, rather than an extra week in the summer, as the children were of more use to them at that time.

9th July 1917 'Attendance is very low this week as the children were at home working on the hay harvest. As a result, the school closed till Aug 13th. In September too, very few children attended, owing to farmers being busy carrying their corn and the children were required to assist.'

The Influenza epidemic towards the end of the war had a very heavy impact on the school and the village. On 25th July 1918, Llewelyn Roberts noted that attendance was very low and that 'many of the children are ill with influenza and this gastric or Spanish Influenza I suppose'. The school was closed for part of July and August due both to influenza and measles.

At the end of October 1919 all the schools in the Llangollen District were closed until 11th November under the orders of the Medical Officer of Health on account of the Influenza Epidemic. On 8th November the headmaster noted 'School should have reopened Monday but postponed until the 25th' (A scribbled note at bottom of page against 11th November, in different pen, noted – Armistice signed today). On 25th November the school reopened, attendance was low and 'Miss Morris was absent all week being under the influenza.'

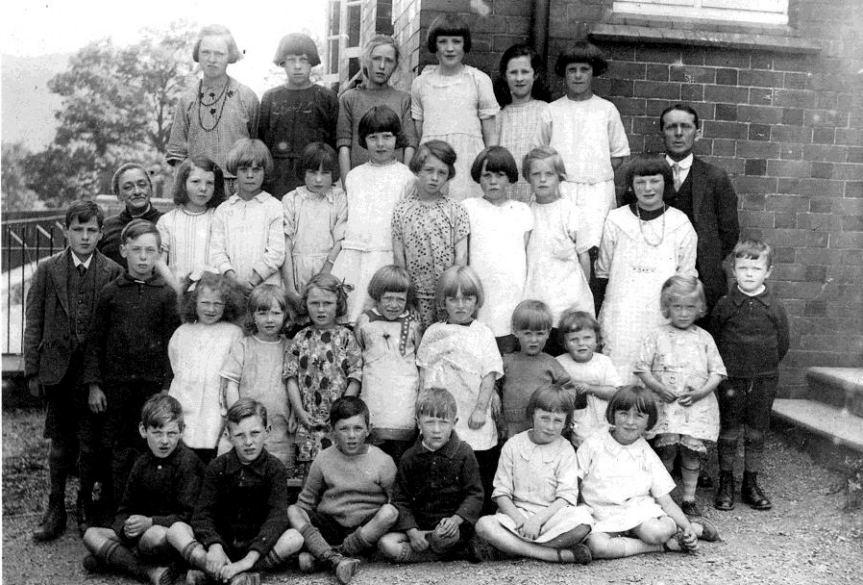
19th December 1919 'School closed for Christmas. Each child was presented with oranges, apples and mince pies. The headmaster was presented with a set of military hair brushes subscribe by the pupils and acknowledged same with gratitude. Llewellyn Roberts Headmaster since 1909 left today.'

1920 – 1939 Headmaster S.M. Jones

5th January 1920 'School reopened and S.M. Jones began as Headmaster. Miss Eleanor A. Lewis the pupil teacher attended the school all day 22nd Jan - there being no Art Class at the County School in the morning. Her friend, Robert Watcyn Pugh, visited the school that afternoon, he has just been demobilised after nearly 3 years of military service. He had been allotted a post on the staff of the Cyffylliog CI School.'

25th Jan 1925 'Miss Eleanor A Lewis, a former student teacher at this school and who completed her training at Bangor Normal College last June, has today been offered a post as Certificated Teacher under the Cannock (Staffs) Education Authority.'

There was a regular flow of women teachers through the school during the 20s and 30s. They were all necessarily single because of the marriage bar and stayed for relatively short periods of time. They often started as unqualified teachers and then gained their qualifications and were either moved around by Denbighshire County Council or out of the area entirely or got married and were then barred from working as teachers. They included: Miss Myfanwy Burgess, Miss Olwen Roberts, Miss M.J. Williams, Miss A.M. Davies, Miss Ruby Morris, Miss J. Muriel Richards, Miss Norah Powell, Miss Muriel Smith, Miss Eluned Phillips, Miss Nancy Mitchell, Miss Enid Roberts, Miss M. Griffiths, Miss Olwen Charles.



Pentredŵr School in the mid 1920s.

Back row: Cissie Hughes, Tŷ Ucha; Beatrice Evans, Hendre; Marie Kenrick, Rock House; Nancy Evans, Tanyfron; Priscilla Edwards, Brookside; Headmaster S.M. Jones.

2nd row: Miss Williams, infant teacher; Eluned Williams, Pentredŵr Farm; May Lewis, Abbey Terrace; Mair Roberts, Post Office; Olwen Williams, Pentredŵr Farm; Lilian Williams, Bonc; Elza Roberts, Post Office; Hilda Williams, North End; Mary Wyn Roberts, Dergoed.

3rd row: Morris Lloyd, Maesylylyn; Wallace Taylor, 6 Post Office Terrace; Nancy Roberts, Bryn yr Odyn, Ceridwen Williams, Pentredŵr Farm; Eleanor Thomas, Oernant; Dorothy Williams, 3 Post Office Terrace; Betty Roberts, School House; Leslie Taylor, 6 Post Office Terrace; May Williams, North End; Blodwen Roberts, Bryn Goleu; Bryn Roberts, Dergoed.

Sitting: Eddie Evans, Tanyfron; Maldwyn Williams, North End; Berwyn Jones, 2 Brookside; Olwen May Williams, Britannia Inn; Lily Taylor, 6 Post Office Terrace;

Physical Exercise

One of the innovations in the 1920s and 1930s included the new 'Syllabus of Physical Exercises' that S.M. Jones received on Apr 19th 1920. He announced the next week:

'On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in each week the Physical Exercises will be taken by the girl's infants together from 11 to 11.15. The infant's teacher will have charge.'

In June 1921, the school was visited by Miss Kelly, Organiser of Physical Education for Denbighshire and in 22nd September she visited again and took a demonstration class, but S.M. Jones wrote:-

‘Several of the children complained they couldn’t understand her instructions.’

From September 1922, a new Organiser of Physical Instruction, Miss E.A. John visited the school. She took demonstration lessons and arranged training for the teachers. For example, in Feb 1926 ‘As the infant Teacher will be attending a course for Physical Training on Tuesday afternoons from now until Easter, the sewing will be taken on Monday.’

The ‘Physical Instructionists’ were still visiting the school in 1938 but by then it was Miss Howie and Mr Boon.

Scholarships

Scholarships continued to be won to the County School.

In 1922 Dorothy Lewis was awarded an entrance scholarship to the Llangollen County School, being 13th on the list of candidates.

‘This is a very considerable achievement since she was only put in Standard V on 1st April last’.

In 1924 John Adrian Lewis was bracketed 1st and awarded an open scholarship of £7.

In 1928 Nancy Evans was awarded a bursary of £5 at the Llangollen County School.

20th September 1929. May Lewis left for Llangollen County School.

In September 1930 Eluned Williams and Acie Jones were going to Llangollen County School.

In 1933 Scholarship Examination results were received and Gwilym Kenrick was 10th on the list.

7th July 1944. Two evacuee children passed the examination for admission to the Llangollen County School.

The Piano

25th Nov 1927. ‘A piano, 70% of the cost of which was supplied by the Local Education Authority, was delivered.’

13th Jan 1928. ‘The school piano was tuned today by Mr Gresham of Wrexham. The tone improved immediately’.

12th Mar 1928. ‘The school did not meet on Friday; the first school concert being held in the evening. The concert was a great success in every respect 163 people paid for admission and I hope a substantial sum will be realised.’

The net proceeds of the concert worked out at £10 6s 6d. After paying £5 10s 3d for the Piano, that left £4 16s 3d which was devoted to the extension of the school library.

The Old Toilets

During the late 20s and early 30s, S.M. Jones had a series of run ins with the new caretaker over the toilets.

14th May 1928. 'I found this morning that the closet pails had not been emptied, and brought the matter to the notice of the caretake'.

15th May 1928. 'The pails not having been emptied I invited the chairman and the correspondent to examine same. The caretaker declares, however, that he emptied the pails last Friday!!'

17th July 1928. 'I have had occasion to complain to the Managers about the state of the seat in one of the girls' offices.'

19th July 1928. 'Having reported the negligence of the caretaker, the Director of Education sent a letter. The caretaker came to school this morning using the most abusive language. This however will not deter me from performing my duty in the matter of cleanliness.'

The problem seems to have cropped up again in the 1930s:-

25th Apr 1933. 'I have, this day complained to the caretaker about the condition of the seats in the girls' lavatories.'

5th Mar 1937. 'The boys have been unable to use their lavatory offices all week. The walls and seats of each have been covered with deep snow. I reported the matter to the caretaker, who retorted that he is not supposed to clear away snow without extra pay. The school correspondent has been informed of the state of affairs.'

By about 1950 inside toilets and a kitchen were added. From then on the old toilets had a very different life, officially as a store and unofficially as a pupil hideout or den.

Pupils from the 60s and 70s remember happy times breaking into the old toilets and requisitioning them as a kind of den. Catherine Brown tells the story really well. The children were curious about what was in the old toilets as they were padlocked. They organised a collective shoulder charge of the door. Each child charging the door in turn



until the padlock broke. After this happened three times the school authorities realised it was an inside job by the 10 year olds!

Raising Money for Good Causes

27th Sep 1934. 'A collection amounting to £2 0 1 was sent today in aid of the Gresford Relief Fund.'

4th Nov 1938. 'The school premises will be used this evening for whist and dancing, the proceeds of which will be devoted to help the funds of St Mary's Church, Eglwyseg.'

S.M. Jones' Retirement

S.M. Jones had a period of ill health at the end of 1938 when he had gall stones. Mr J.W. Jones took temporary charge of the school while he was away.

S.M. Jones came back and stayed until September 1939, when he retired:-

'I, S.M. Jones retired from the Headmastership of this school on 29th September having spent 19¾ happy years in the locality.'

After he retired John Morgan Charles of Rhos, took up temporary charge of the school.

The 2nd World War

30th Aug 1939. 'Two evacuated children from Ardwick, Manchester were admitted today.'

25th Sep 1939. 'Two evacuees from St Francis Xavier R.C. School, Liverpool, admitted today. They removed from Ruabon on Saturday last. Upon examination by Nurse Glover they were found to be in an unclean condition, and will be separated as much as possible from the other children.'

19th Jan 1940. 'This week the school has been very cold and the taps and wash basins have been frozen.'

7th March 1940. 'At long last the coal has been delivered. It had been ordered since Jan 18th.'

22nd July 1940. 'Today I admitted two more private evacuees Robert Johnson and John and James Pickett. Both are from Herts and are staying at The Bungalow, Pentredŵr.'

22nd Apr 1941. 'Three children admitted, two being evacuees from Bootle.'

25th Apr 1942. 'As the WI have a meeting at 4pm the school will close at 3pm.'

June 9th 1942. 'One child still has scabies and was sent home for another week or two.'

24th Oct 1942. 'Yesterday afternoon a Harvest Festival Service was held at school. A collection amounting to 16/4 was taken, and sent to the Prisoners of War Red Cross Fund.'

21st May 1943. 'The total amount contributed to the 'Wings for Victory' Weekly effort was £15 4s which exceeded the target by 4s.'

16th May 1944. 'All the children witnessed a cinematograph show (mobile van) this morning from 10.20 to 11.00. The film was shown in the village this afternoon. This pm the senior children were allowed to attend a film show at the Dorothy Cinema, Llangollen, in connection with Salute the Soldiers Week.'

John Iorwerth Roberts 1945 to 1964

9th Jan 1945. 'J. Iorwerth Roberts is temporarily in charge of the school.'

19th Oct 1945. 'Last night Mrs Annie Roberts, Rose Cottage, Pentredŵr, was appointed cook for the school canteen in place of Mrs Street who is returning to live in Liverpool.'

23rd Jan 1946. 'Due to the bad weather and thick snow not many children could come to school, their attendance was not registered. 11 currently out of 26.'

8th Jul 1946. 'Peter Owen Jones, Oernant (the only one to take Eisteddfod exam) won a scholarship to Llangollen Grammar school.

23rd Dec 1946. Gift of tea for the school children at the Dorothy Cafe, Llangollen, by Mr and Mrs J.E. Williams, Britannia Hotel.

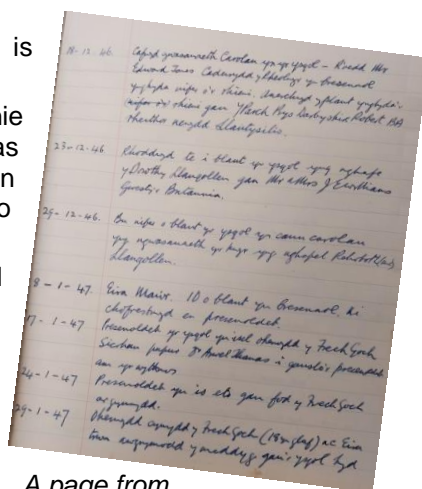
24th Feb 1947. Opening the school with four currently. Water was carried from the well of Y Wern as the school's pipe had been frozen for a month.

Golden Jubilee 1909-1959

The jubilee of the opening of the school was celebrated on Saturday, 12th September. A large number of old pupils from as far afield as Mostyn, Llansilin, Wrexham, Bwlchgwn, Bryneglws and Cefn sat a meal attractively prepared by the WI. A social evening of songs and reminiscences followed. During the fifty years from 1909 to 1959, 424 children were taught at the school. Up until 1944 there were 219 Welsh speaking and 95 English speaking students. Up to 1952, of the children enrolled, 90 remained in the parish after leaving school, and 269 left.

Mr Arthur Ellis 1964-1973

Colin Edwards remembers that Mr Roberts was replaced in September 1964 by Mr Arthur Ellis who was an excellent teacher and also a good singer (tenor I think) and also played the piano. Colin says he was not musical, and could not sing a note, and was politely asked to stand at the back and mime with one or two other non-musical pupils so as not to spoil the singing. Mr Ellis was very good at instilling into the pupils the famed 3 Rs and also came out some lunchtimes for a kick around in the yard with the boys, which they enjoyed very much.



A page from the log of John Iorwerth Roberts. North East Wales Archives. DD/DM/927.



1967.

Headmaster Mr. Arthur Ellis explains a point to his class – the junior department.

Infants' teacher Mrs E. Morris with her pupils.

Back row: Yvonne Roberts, Hugh Bird-Jones, Alison Bond, George Bird-Jones. Front row: Caroline Hughes, Christine Mills, Mandy Pickett, Malcolm Drakeley, Anne Jones, Peter Edwards.



Tom Clayton 1973 to 1981 – the last years

When Tom Clayton arrived as headteacher in 1973 there were 30 pupils at Pentredŵr School, but by 1980 this had shrunk to 16 and, with rumours that the school was about to be closed due to Government cuts, some parents decided to switch their children to primary schools in Llangollen. At the end there were just five pupils at the school.



Tom Clayton and Llinos Phillips with the last five pupils at Pentredŵr School. Amy Davies, ??????, Marvin Glabber, Trevor Davies (Amy's brother - children of Arthur and Eileen Davies who now – 2023 - live in the White Hart), Rhiannon Francis.

Closure and rebirth

In July 1981 Pentredŵr School closed officially. A final reunion was held when more than 300 former pupils and teachers, three generations, including some of the first pupils who attended. The past pupils remembered particularly the old stove which heated the classroom in the early days. Pupils would huddle round on bleak winter days to eat their packed lunches. Welsh was the first language at the school and English speaking children learned to speak Welsh. In later years English became the main language. At that final reunion, presentations were made to Mr Tom Clayton the head teacher; Mrs Llinos Phillips, the infants' teacher; Mrs May Edwards, the caretaker and Miss Joan Gollan, the cook.



The final school reunion.

Not wanting to lose the school building, the local community decided to form a committee, and use it as their own Village Hall. Clwyd County Council was most encouraging, and supported the idea. In December 1981 Pentredŵr and District Community Centre was opened.



In 2008 Pentredŵr and District Community Association raised the funding to purchase a 999 year lease of the Old School from Denbighshire County Council, in order to ensure that it could

continue to be an asset for future generations. Today (2023) the building, renamed Hŵb Pentredŵr, goes from strength to strength and continues to serve the local community and beyond.

By Heather Aspinwall