

Post Office Terrace in the 1960s and 1970s

All of the properties in Post Office Terrace were rented and the ownership of the houses was, I believe, as follows:-

No. 1 Mr and Mrs Twardowski, who kept the grocery shop.

No. 2 Llantysilio Estate.

Nos. 3 and 4 Mr Edward Parry Roberts (who was my great uncle).

The remainder of the houses were owned by Mrs Jones-Davies, who resided at Talygarth at the bottom of Chapel St. in Llangollen. I have a memory of once going to her house with my father to pay the rent.

In the late 1960s (possibly 1970) the properties were purchased by Wrexham Rural District Council, and it was quite strange to have a weekly visit from a "rent man". The houses had no mains water, which was instead collected from a standpipe opposite the Terrace. There were, in fact, two – one at each end of the Terrace. Difficulties always arose in very hard winters when the taps would freeze solid, so it was a wise precaution to always have a good supply indoors. Waste water was emptied into a drain opposite the Terrace. Toilets were situated in the gardens and were of the non-flush variety.

I recall mains electricity arriving in approximately 1963/64, and a tv in our house came sometime in early 1964. My first memory is of watching the 1964 FA Cup final. The reception/picture was very poor by modern standards, and Pentredwr could only receive one channel – BBC1.

In the early 1960s there was a plan to redevelop the village of Pentredwr. Firstly homes were to be built on the land in the centre of the village owned by the Pickett family. Post office Terrace would then have been demolished. Part of the plan would have been to bring mains water to the valley and cease using the natural water supply. In addition, the Council bought the property known as the White Hart, and planned to locate a sewage plant on the extensive garden, adjacent to the planned development. There was even an exhibition which showed the proposed development put on in the Methodist Chapel vestry. The detail even went down to having a model of a Bryn Melyn bus on the board that detailed the locations of the development. Sadly the plan did not come to pass, as Wrexham Council had a change of policy and decided to build around 500 homes on a piece of land between Acrefair and Ruabon, which became known as Plas Madoc.

A footnote to this story is that, in spite of the development not proceeding, Post Office Terrace was still demolished in 1974. Mains water did eventually come to the village, but not until 1978.

Remember around 1971 our family was one of the few left in the Terrace. A van pulled up outside and two men got out. They had been sent by Wrexham Council to turn off the gas – a difficult task as Post Office Terrace had never had any gas!

In the photos of the Post Office there is sometimes a board leaning against the wall outside the door. This was used to pin up the different programmes of things that were on at the Dorothy in Llangollen. In exchange we were promised free tickets to shows, although very few of those actually materialised.

I remember the fire at the White Hart. It was the morning of the 16th November 1974. The White Hart was lived in by Keith and Marilyn Naylor, although only Marilyn was at home at that time. She was American and had one of the new-fangled electric blankets and had left it on in the bed in the morning. Something had malfunctioned with the blanket and it set the bed and the whole house on fire. The fire brigade struggled to put out the fire and the White Hart was gutted. Trevor Hughes (Rhys' dad) had a go at the local councillor, pointing out that some of the building may have been saved if the fire brigade had had a mains water supply to use, instead of having to pump water up from the stream. There was a fire in the 30s as well, but, of course, I don't remember that.

Post Office Terrace – My Memories

Colin Edwards

I was born in mid-1957 and so my earliest memories of Pantredwr, and specifically Post Office Terrace, date from the early 1960s. Pentredwr in the early 1960s was fairly typical of rural communities of the time and was almost self-sufficient. It had a grocery shop (which delivered), a Post Office, a school, two places of worship and a daily milk delivery provided from Pentredwr Farm by Mr Trevor Hughes and family. There was also a bus service to and from Llangollen which ran on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, with additions in the summer months when camp sites and caravan parks were occupied. My earliest memories are also of a late Saturday bus which left Llangollen after the “last house” in the Dorothy Cinema. I was, of course, not on that bus but recall it passing my bedroom window.

With regard specifically to Post Office Terrace I have memories of each of the houses and of the people who lived in them. I have limited this recollection to those that I actually remember being in each house, unless information was available to me from before my time.

Starting at Number One (Cross Keys as it had been known) my first memories were the Patrick family living there. I recall Mr Patrick being the school caretaker at the time and Mr and Mrs Patrick had three children, Marie, Dorcen and Stephen. They were approximately ten years older than me. They moved in the early 1960s and were followed by Frank and Lyn Jones, who had four children during their time there. They were, in fact, the last to leave the terrace in 1973, prior to the demolition in January 1974.

Next door was Rose Cottage, lived in by Mr and Mrs John Bond. Mr Bond died in 1964 and, as his wife May had problems with arthritis she went into a care home following his death. Mr Bond had worked in the slate quarries during his working life. Both Numbers 1 and 2 were, from my memory, the best built of the properties in the Terrace and this was reinforced to me as, when the demolition was taking place, they looked to have sounder construction, particularly in the case of the timber used. They were also set back from the road and had small front gardens, and so, out of the whole terrace, they would have been the two houses that could possibly have been renovated rather than demolished.

Next to Rose Cottage was No. 3, lived in by Mr and Mrs John Frances Davies and their daughter Dorothy. Mr Davies had worked in the slate quarries and was a First World War veteran, having served in Italy. His daughter Dorothy, or Doll as she was affectionately known, was the school cook in Pentredwr. She married Mr John Davies, but sadly died in her mid-forties. Having also lost his wife in the early 60s, Mr John Frances Davies moved to the Abbey Grange, where he died in the early 1970s. The property remained empty after he left.

No. 4, or Paris House, was lived in by my maternal grandmother Sarah Parry-Roberts after she moved from the Post Office. Prior to that No. 4 had been lived in by my paternal grandmother Emily Edwards, who died in 1958. Sarah died in January 1968 and the property then remained empty. A peculiarity with Paris House was that it had neither a front or back garden.

The only person that I can remember living in No. 5 was Malcolm Russell, who was a biology teacher in Dinas Bran school. I am unsure how long he lived there but I recall he kept bees and that the honey tasted of mountain heather. He must also have been a travelled man for the time as he gave a talk and a slide show in the Methodist Chapel vestry on Zambia.

Next door, in No. 6, lived Miss Eva Taylor, and she lived there until leaving for Acrefair in 1972. It had been the Taylor family home where she had lived with her parents and siblings, Lily, Wallace and Leslie. After Miss Taylor's departure the property remained empty.

The property next door to No. 6 was probably the largest property in the Terrace and was called Tremarfoel. I remember it being lived in by Mr and Mrs Hywel Thomas and their lodger Ned Williams. Their two sons Raymond and Glyn had left home, for work and to get married, earlier. Mrs Thomas died in 1961 and Ned, their lodger, moved to Ty Capel in the early 1960s. Both men worked for the Forestry

Commission. Hywel lived at Tremarfoel until 1971, when he also moved to Ty Capel. My impression as a young lad growing up was that Tremarfoel had once been two properties, as there was an entry between it and No. 9 to a back door.

No. 9 in my time was lived in by Mrs Jones and her son Glyn, who worked at Monsanto Chemicals. He left home when he got married in the mid-1960s and Mrs Jones left No. 9, I think, in about 1969 to live in Acrefair. As with all of the other houses at that time, there was no tenant after Mrs Jones and the property remained empty.

The property next to No. 9 was the Post Office, where I grew up with my parents Charles and Elsa. My mother had been born here in February 1920. The premises had also been a store/grocery shop earlier in the twentieth century. Before the Second World War mail was brought to Pentredwr and the Post Office acted as a hub to deliver it out to surrounding areas. Delivery was on horseback and some of the locations covered would make it difficult to deliver to today, even using a four wheel drive or quad bike. The Post Office had been kept before my mother's time by my grandmother and, before her, my great grandfather. Prior to the siting of a public telephone box in the village the phone for public use was situated within the Post Office. We moved from the terrace in 1972 and the Post Office was relocated to the grocery shop, which had closed in September 1970. My mother continued to keep the Post Office until ill health forced her retirement in early 1976, when the Post Office also ceased trading.

Adjacent to the Post Office the property was lived in by the Edwards family. Mr Edwards worked in Llangollen for the seed company and Mrs Edwards became the cook in Pentredwr School after the sad death of Doll Davies. They had two children: Alan, who was two school years older than me and Peter who was three school years younger. They moved to live in Llangollen in 1967 and the property was left empty.

Next door the house was lived in by a Mrs Jenny Hughes, a native of Liverpool who had come to Pentredwr during the Second World War as a nanny to the Gollan children, Pat, Joan and Donald. I remember as a small boy that Miss Hughes was affectionately referred to as Aunty Jen both by the Gollan and Pickett families. She died in 1971 and afterwards the property remained empty.

My only memories of the penultimate house in the row are that it was lived in by the Davies family when I was a young boy. The son Stephen was the same age as me and was in the same school year at Dinas Bran. The family moved to Llangollen in the early 60s and the property was left empty after their move.

The final house in the row would now be classed as a second home, and was rented by Mrs Ingle and her daughter and son in law Cliff. I remember her as a small elderly spirited lady from Liverpool. Her daughter and son in law used to bring her for weekends and summer holidays. I am not entirely sure when they stopped renting the property but it may have coincided with the compulsory purchase of the Terrace by Wrexham Rural District Council in the late 1960s. After that the house remained empty.