



February 2010

Workhouse 2010

Well they never said it would be easy. There are lots of reasons as to why the Victorian Workhouse at Llanfyllin had remained derelict and abandoned for the last 25 years. Built for a different era, a remnant of another time, this solid stone fortress of a building remains a challenge, with its listed status, as a home to roosts of rare bats and with planning issues to resolve; it is proving itself to be not exactly easy to develop.

2009 has been the first full year for the Workhouse Project in taking responsibility for the buildings and working with a small team of staff and volunteers to develop the Workhouse as a community hub for creativity and sustainability. A year in which we have made amazing progress; renovating sections of the buildings and grounds, holding events, courses and even filming a TV series but it has not been without huge setbacks and massive unforeseen complications.

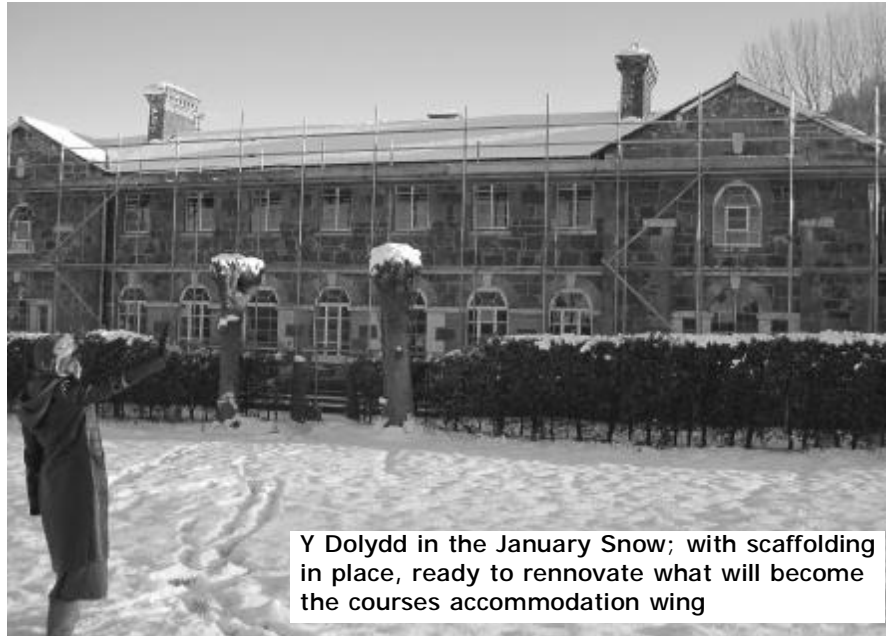
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The Story So far

The Workhouse Project came into being in early 2008 with a vision for turning the long derelict, historic buildings near Llanfyllin into a community owned facility, developed as a focal point for creative events for arts, local economy, environment and sustainability.

The community around the old Workhouse has a strong tradition of DIY culture, in what is a stunning and rural farming area. The Workhouse Project is all about creating new possibilities for work, employment and expression for ourselves and our community whilst exploring sustainable and innovative ways of doing it. To date we have.....

- * Hosted all sorts of community activities with organisations like Education Otherwise, MENCAP, Home Carers and more.
- * Opened an educational art gallery for local, established and new talent of all ages
- * Provided workshop space for several innovative local businesses and artisans: Pikea Coppice



Y Dolydd in the January Snow; with scaffolding in place, ready to renovate what will become the courses accommodation wing

Crafts, Chocolate Harlot Parour, Vagabondi Puppets, Sector39, KinoKulture, Masquerade Integrated Drama, Dyed in the Wool and more..

- * Run a series of ground breaking Permaculture Design and other courses
- * Hosted 'Interventions 2009': an international cultural exchange in September which included a week's residency by five distinguished artists from Denmark and five from Wales culminating in a memorable exhibition and light display.
- * Hosted numerous film, drama and music events, for both local and touring performers
- * Held our first ever Green Fayre of music, crafts and produce



Strongman Tim Davies from BBC TV's Changing Lives, arm wrestles at the Workhouse Green Fayre

- * Played host to the acclaimed 'Changing Lives - Going Green' BBC Wales TV series.

Public enjoying a relaxed atmosphere & local produce at the August Green Fayre



* We have even launched our own LETS currency the Dolydd and are planning for a conference on alternative economics in 2010.

Renovations to the buildings have progressed hugely thanks to a small but relentless team of volunteers who have achieved remarkable results with limited funds.

On the subject of limited funds the project has lurched from one financial challenge to the next over the year, and we are currently rewriting our business plan... however much has been learned in these first 18 months or so and we are working hard to put together a programme of events and happenings for 2010, building on the successes so far.

Short Courses at the Workhouse

Coming up for this year, and key to our new business plan we are launching a Workhouse courses programme. Building on the success of the yurt making, youth arts and permaculture design the Workhouse is developing a range of short courses in subjects from organic gardening to stone-carving. See details on back page.

Participants on a Yurt making course at the Workhouse, Sept 09



Festival 2010

2009 was a tough year in many respects and the festival suffered its first serious losses. The committee are taking the situation very seriously and are diverting all energies this year into honouring the good will of our supporters and settling the outstanding debts. As a result there will not be a Workhouse Festival 2010, instead there will be a special fundraising event in July the details of which will be released over the festival website in the coming weeks. This course of action should put the festival on track for a spectacular comeback in 2011.

The festival committee would like to express their sincerest thanks to everyone who has helped over the years in making the event what it is today.

A tale of Woe; Trustee John Hainsworth maps out the Project's testing year

2009 has been a challenging year for the Workhouse, as it has been for many organisations and individuals. We have had two setbacks: one affecting our finances; the other – which also has financial implications – our planning status. But challenges have to be faced: we are working hard to meet them. And we have good news to report too.

Money Worries

By the spring of 2009 the funds which had enabled us to employ a small team of nominally part time staff were running out. Some major grant applications, which could have provided support had failed; income from rents and other sources was growing, but not fast enough, and outgoings looked unsustainable. We looked to the Workhouse Festival for a temporary boost and making cutbacks in the run up seemed counter-productive - but Festival income was intended for mortgage payments and insurance, not general running costs.

The Festival was a marvellous occasion, enjoyed and praised by everyone and a great credit to the commitment of its organisers. The atmosphere was happy and relaxed; the standard of performance was high; the site looked superb and even the weather belied the awful forecasts. Our neighbours, some of whom were justifiably upset by the antics of a small minority in 2008, praised the improved security and supervision. But after three sold out years, ticket sales were suddenly down by over 1,500. Multiply that by £60 and imagine the effect. We had anticipated that, in hard times, Festival proceeds might be lower. We had not allowed for a drop from £40,000 to zero.

The Workhouse Festival is financially independent of the Building Preservation Trust, but the Workhouse's business plan depended heavily on Festival contributions. There was nothing to replenish the coffers and the Trustees decided they had no alternative to make all the staff redundant.

This continued support – much of it from people who had every reason to walk away – is profoundly encouraging. We can't deny that it's a tall order for volunteers to manage such a big and complex project. Activities have had to be scaled back (this Newsletter is later than we would have wished) and much of the cultural programme has had to be put on hold. Nevertheless, morale has remained high. The Ecology Building Society have been understanding and supportive, and a small team has been working on revising the business plan and looking for ways of balancing the books. But then a further complication arose....



Planning Blight

In February 2007, when the Workhouse Project was in its early stages, the Planning Officer told us that permission was the same as that for the former Challenge Adventure Centre; this was classed as a leisure industry with residential and our proposed activities were covered. Holiday lets were suggested as a further permitted use.

This summer we were told that our consent was now deemed to be for an educational institution only and did not cover the cultural and leisure activities we were promoting. Uses of the venue were restricted; people could not live permanently in the building and any short-stay accommodation could only be for people taking courses.

We have no quarrel with the Council's officers who have come to meet us several times, assured us of their support and suggested we should make a fresh planning application to ensure that all our desired uses are covered. This is in preparation, but Highways are likely to require a new road access, and this will be costly. Meanwhile we are asking the Council to be flexible and are collecting evidence that some of

our activities do constitute established use.

Our plans to raise revenue through events and through the bunkhouse have been thrown into question. We remain determined to realise our vision for the Workhouse and are consequently concentrating on developing educational activities as our main focus, whilst we seek further clarity from planning as for other activities

Wanted: new Trustees

The Workhouse is looking for some additional Trustees with qualifications or expertise in specific areas. The first is finance – Annie Horner, who has been acting as our Treasurer is away travelling the world. Our accountant, Graham Murphy, has very kindly agreed to act as our financial adviser for a limited period. But we

need one or more Trustees who can help to oversee our finances and cash flow and keep an eye on allocation of funds. We also need Trustees with a knowledge of historic buildings, construction and/or planning issues. Offers or

recommendations would be very welcome.

Permaculture Design Course

15th - 29th May 2010

2 Weeks residential course

Organised by www.Sector39.co.uk
at www.LlanfyllinWorkhouse.org

£475.00 inc food, camping,
field trips and practicals.
Some concessions available for
Workhouse members.

Open Doors – but why not more?

All over Europe this September historic buildings have been opening their doors to the public free of charge under the Heritage Open Days scheme. The Civic Trust Wales website shows that 44 properties have been open in Gwynedd and 27 in Denbigh and Flint. In the whole of Powys there were just four. One was our own Llanfyllin Workhouse.

The sun shone for our own Open Doors weekend on 19-20 September and attendance was encouragingly good. Visitors spent time studying the displays on the Workhouse project and the building's history, and admired Ron Kyte's fine photographs. They had the chance to see work by the Danish and Welsh artists involved in the Interventions project. They appreciated the guided tours and the live music provided in the new garden by 'Big Euph' on Saturday and John Browne on Sunday. They were intrigued and impressed by the purposeful activity in the former Women's Court where the yurt-making course was in full swing. They even enjoyed gruel and barley bread prepared by Deborah English to an authentic workhouse recipe. Will other Powys properties be inspired to follow suit next year?



KinoCafe Launch - Sat 13th February
My Winnipeg (12A) 7.30pm,
Tickets £5.00/ £4.00

A new cinema space at the Workhouse

KinoKulture is a new and independent venture being set up by former Workhouse employees Ruth and Ian, with support from Film Agency Wales.

Our aim is to create an intimate, friendly and educational space where a film screenings, talks, courses and associated events can take place.

The Kinokulture cinema will be fitted out with salvaged equipment from the Elite Cinema in the Yorkshire Dales. ' It was a fantastic opportunity to give it a new lease of life in our own community', said Ruth.

We aim to run a programme of activities from April including Wednesday night films, screenings for parents with babies, a Kinokids Club, monthly KinoCafe events where we show a more eclectic programme including short films and KinoLab our educational strand for schools to access. And of course we hope to link in wherever possible with other courses and events here at the Workhouse.

Whilst our space is being renovated we will be holding screenings in the Workhouse venue

Contact info@kinoKulture.org.uk
Tel: 0845 2500517

www.kinokulture.org.uk

Forthcoming Courses at Llanfyllin Workhouse
Organic Gardening (20 Weeks) 3 hours each
Thursday pm from March 5th (£190, 100% funding available) www.sector39.co.uk

Stone Carving – Dragon stone 19-21 March and 23-25 April £130 (3 days)
www.dragonstonecarving.wordpress.com

Coracle Building – 22-26th March
Cost £455 (5 days)
View Caroline's work at:
www.artsconnection.org.uk/artforms/artistpages/carolinelowe.htm

Stained Glass – Mirage Glass 27-31st March and 7-11th August £395 (5 days)
Tutors website: www.mirageglass.co.uk

Stone Carving – Dragon stone 10-13th May £185 (4days) www.dragonstonecarving.wordpress.com

Forest Gardening
10th April 2010
One day introduction course
With Steven Jones
at www.LlanfyllinWorkhouse.org
£20.00

Permaculture Design Course
15th - 29th May 2010
2 Weeks residential course
Organised by www.Sector39.co.uk
at www.LlanfyllinWorkhouse.org
£475.00 inc food, camping,

Blacksmithing & turning
Tool-making from scratch, an excellent practical weekend course. September 11-12 2 days, with www.gothicblacksmiths.co.uk/ £180.00/ £140.00

Build your own Wind Turbine
September 2010, 3 days, Fri eve to Sun pm with www.V3power.co.uk & www.Sector39.co.uk
£200.00/ £150.00 inc food

About the Workhouse Project

Llanfyllin Workhouse project is a registered charity committed to renovating the Dolydd buildings and surrounding land for the purposes of community, creativity and sustainability, both locally and globally.

Llanfyllin Workhouse Project

Registered Charity No 1091097 as the
Llanfyllin Dolydd Building Preservation Trust
www.llanfyllinworkhouse.org
01691 649 062
The Workhouse, Llanfyllin, SY22 5LD

