

# NEWSLETTER 52 – SUMMER 2024

## New wardens

We had a successful training weekend for prospective wardens over the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> April. The weekend started on Friday with trainees getting to know each other over a communal meal either at Dolgoch or Ty'n Cornel. On Saturday everyone gathered at Dolgoch where we covered the general aspects of wardening, safeguarding and environmental. We then covered the specific aspects of wardening at Dolgoch. Most then stayed on for a communal meal at Dolgoch. On Sunday morning participants travelled over to

Ty'n Cornel where the specific aspects of wardening there were covered. The feedback from trainees was very positive and quite a few have signed up for wardening slots later in the year.



We expect to hold our next training weekend in April 2025. We already have a number of people interested in attending. If anyone would like to find out more details please contact Frances Passey [frances.adelaidecottage@gmail.com](mailto:frances.adelaidecottage@gmail.com)

## Warden's meeting

We had a Zoom meeting for EWH wardens on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. The aim of the meeting was to update wardens on recent changes affecting their roles and for wardens to give feedback on their experiences.

Our new safeguarding officer, Kevin Merrison reminded wardens of some of the key differences between England and Wales legislation. Smacking children is illegal in Wales and visitors from England may not be aware of this. He also said that the outdoors was increasingly being seen to be good for mental well-being, so we might find people using our hostels who had little experience of the outdoors and we needed to bear this in mind. Kevin reported that he was always contactable to assist wardens who had any concerns about safeguarding issues. Bill Hine reminded wardens of the range of concessions available to low income groups and that offering such concessions were an important part of our charitable status.

In the feedback session, the workload for wardens was discussed. The general view was that although there is a lot of work, particularly at Dolgoch, it was manageable. A recording of the meeting has been made available to wardens who were unable to attend.

## Dolgoch

**Overnights.** The first two months of the new financial year, April and May, have got off to a mixed start. April overnights were well down on previous years while May had a record number of over 300 overnights. Looking ahead, our bookings for the rest of the year to March 2025, look about average compared with previous years. Last year was boosted by the large booking in October by the army for the Cambrian Patrol exercise. This will not be repeated this year so we would expect bookings to be under last year's record total of over 2,000.

**Wildlife.** As well as the welcome sight of young foals galloping near to the river, the barn owls appear to have returned to nesting in the compartment in the roof of the barn. They have yet to be seen but their distinctive screech can be heard when they are hunting at night and various shuffling and “snoring” sounds are heard during the day. The swallows and house martins have also returned. Less welcome has been the sighting of rats around the bird feeder. We are very reluctant to use poison and have purchased some more traditional spring traps.



**Electricity upgrade.** Things are finally starting to take shape regarding our long planned project to upgrade the electricity supply at Dolgoch. Discussions have taken place with a preferred supplier and a site meeting has been arranged in early July. The aim is to develop a formal quote for consideration by the Trustees.

**H&S issues.** We completed the annual exercise to chlorinate the hostel’s water supply in April. In May the water supply was tested by Ceredigion County Council and we await the results. We plan to have our processes audited by an external company with expertise in the water treatment industry. This external auditing is a useful exercise to ensure that our processes meet current guidelines. In June Dolgoch was inspected by a Fire Officer to assess our fire prevention and fire safety measures. The inspection went well and the fire officer found that our fire safety procedures were adequate. He did make a small number of recommendations for improvement which we will seek to implement over the coming months.

**Fond memories.** We received this nice message from Belgium from someone who visited Dolgoch almost 50 years ago

. *Good afternoon*

*My name is Gunther Delannoye from the Belgium region south of Antwerp. I hope not to disturb you with this mail.*

*I just found your website from the Dolgoch Hostel and it was nice to remember the time I was there with a friend during our trip in Wales at the end of the 70's. It must have been in August 78 or 79. And I will never forget our passage there. It was such a nice experience to stay there. When we arrived one hour before opening we just had to wait until the Youth-hostel father arrived to open the hostel. I still remember his little note near the door with the announcement of the warden, “The Youth-hostel opens at 17:00 hour. If I am not there you can find the key ... and you can enter. I will later be there to register you. .... If I am not there, the sleeping time is 23:00 hours. I will see you tomorrow morning. When I am not there, please subscribe to the register and close the door when you leave at least at 09:30. Good luck” I remember that note as it was yesterday. And so we did, we and other travellers took the key at 17:00 and entered the hostel. A few hours later the warden arrived and we had a fantastic evening with him and some other guests in the room on the open fire. And now if i see the pictures of the hostel, nothing seems to have changed since i have been there. It was superfine to stay there. Unfortunately I never have returned there, even i often have thinking about coming back again through this unbelievably beautiful and friendly place.*

*Greeting Gunther*

# Ty'n Cornel

## Overnights

Overnights are healthy. At 29 June, we have 550 overnights so far for 2024, including forward bookings. Most of those 550 overnights are behind us rather than ahead of us, so we've still got plenty of free nights and free weekends to fill, and the bookings are coming in. Our two hostels seem to have different patterns of bookings: Dolgoch has lots of bookings many months in advance, but at Ty'n Cornel many bookings are received within a week or two of the stay. A couple in the shepherd's hut only booked on their day of arrival at about 3 pm, and many of our Cambrian Way walkers only book a day or two ahead. We have increased the selection of food available in the hostel shop, as it is much appreciated by Cambrian Way walkers, and we are advertising it more prominently on the website. There are often grateful comments from visitors afterwards on reviews or by email –

One of our best experiences whilst walking the Cambrian way

A lovely welcome, a warm lounge with log fire and a mug of coffee placed into my hand. What more could a weary traveller want?!

Superb location on Cambrian Way. Helpful and friendly volunteer warden

## Maintenance

The white gable ends of the hostel have been pressure washed to remove lichen, and they look much better. The underground phone cables that were installed as part of the recent electrical upgrade will soon be connected. Otherwise, most of the work has been routine jobs that we've done many times before: cleaning the water system and replacing ultraviolet lamps and other components, maintaining the spring, getting the chimney swept and the stove repaired, cutting the grass, and many other tasks.

The new waste disposal arrangements have been in place at Ty'n Cornel for over a month now, and the system has worked well. Wardens are encouraged to minimise the amount of waste that we have to pay disposal charges for. However, it has been recently discovered that plastic has been burnt in the wood burning stove. This not only resulted in a messy residue that was difficult to remove but is highly polluting. We certainly do not want this to happen again!



The Council took water samples recently, and the County Fire Officer will visit in August. We're gradually making progress towards the new porch – the builder has given an informal quotation and we're hoping to be able to finalise matters soon so that the porch can be built in autumn.

*Richard working on the Ty'n Cornel spring.*

Ty'n Cornel has now generated more than 20,000 units of solar electricity! Our ten-year feed-in tariff agreement has about 15 months left to run. When it expires, we'll be able to negotiate a new agreement: there will be no "generation tariff" (we're currently paid about 12p for each unit we generate), but the "export tariff" should be much better than the 4p per unit that we're currently paid for surplus electricity. The solar panels should continue to provide useful income, as well as reducing the amount of expensive grid electricity that we buy.

## Waste collection

Both hostels have now (reluctantly) implemented the new trade waste collection arrangements introduced by the Welsh Government. We are using Ceredigion CC to deal with the waste although, because of our remote location, they will not pick up from the hostels. Wardens have to take the rubbish to designated pick up points. In the case of Dolgoch this is around 6 miles distant from the hostel at the turn off for Llyn Berwyn. The Ty'n Cornel collection point is at a lay by near to Bryn Carregog. We pay for the service by purchasing special bags from the Council. The bags for non recyclable general rubbish cost £12 and bags for recyclables cost £5. We have yet to assess the full cost of the service but it may require us to increase charges to visitors.



## Visitor Levy

The Welsh Government is planning to give local authorities the ability to charge a visitor levy on overnight stays. The levy will be paid by visitors and invested by local authorities in local tourism.

If passed, each local authority will need to decide if it wants to introduce a levy. The proposal has been put out for consultation but it looks increasingly likely that the levy will be introduced. The Welsh Government estimate the earliest a visitor levy could be in place in any part of Wales is 2027. We would be required to charge visitors to the hostels and pass on the levy to the Council.

## AGM

Our AGM will be held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September. The meeting will be at Y Talbot followed by a buffet style lunch at Dolgoch. We hope to run the event via Zoom for those who are unable to attend in person. There will be a limited number of beds available at both hostels for the weekend so book early if you intend to come! For Dolgoch contact Gill and Ty'n Cornel Janet.

## 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](mailto:members@elenydd-hostels.co.uk)

Colin Hughes ([huwscol@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:huwscol@hotmail.co.uk)) (On behalf of the Trustees)