



YHA (England and Wales)

Youth Hostel Profile

compiled by the Association's volunteer archivist, John Martin, 2020-01-01

## Newport (Pembrokeshire) Youth Hostels

with a note on Brynberian temporary hostel

### Brynberian (Llwynhirion School) temporary Youth Hostel 1949 only

Llwynhirion School, Eglwysrw, Crymmych, Pembrokeshire

Historic County: Pembrokeshire

YHA Region: South Wales

GR: SN 100360

YHA South Wales Region had been trying to develop South West Wales from their foothold at Pentre Cwrt near Newcastle Emlyn since 1939, but with little luck. In 1948 there were high hopes (soon dashed because of the need to house a farm worker) of a small hostel at Llangwm on the Cleddau south-west of Haverfordwest, and in 1949 a new prospect at Rosebush fell through at the last minute. The temporary Brynberian was to alleviate the loss of Rosebush hostel. Llwyndafydd hostel, near New Quay, also came and went in the blink of an eye in 1949. These regular losses reflected the precarious state of housing provision and unsettled work forces, especially agricultural, in the immediate post-war years; similar frustrations in hostel planning were experienced elsewhere in Wales (as with Forest Lodge hostel) and were widespread in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland during this period.

Brynberian summer seasonal hostel operated for five weeks from 30th July to 3rd September 1949 only. It used the isolated rural school at Llwynhirion, built 1878, that served the small community of Brynberian, five miles south-east of Newport, and was opened with the assistance of Pembrokeshire County Council.

The South Wales Hosteller of September 1949 wrote of its passing:

Our first Pembrokeshire hostel has opened and closed. Only 106 members visited the temporary hostel in the little village school on the slopes of Preseli Mountain, but there is not one of those who does not intend to return to the far west of Wales in future years. Thanks are due to the Pembrokeshire Education Committee for allowing us to use the school, to National Office for making a grant for us to buy the needed equipment, and last but not least, to Neville Siggs (who will be remembered as leader of the little band who worked at Ystradfellte a year ago) for the able manner in which he wardened the hostel.

The following year the Regional Council had more permanent success with the opening of long-term prospects at Poppit Sands and St David's in Pembrokeshire and Port Eynon on Gower.

When it finally closed to education the school building was adapted to house Brynberian Village Hall.



*Brynberian temporary summer youth hostel was here at Llwynhirion School. In the absence of any authentic YHA photograph, these August 2015 shots of the building, now refurbished to provide a Village Hall, must suffice (author's photographs)*

## Newport (Maen Llwyd) Youth Hostel 1972 to 1976

Maen Llwyd, Cilgwyn Road, Newport, Dyfed SA42 0QG

Historic County: Pembrokeshire

YHA Region: South Wales

GR: SN 066382

Positional note: the Grid Reference is for the hostel, *Maen Llwyd*. The warden's home was at *Fountain Hall*, GR: SN 067382, a hundred yards south-east.

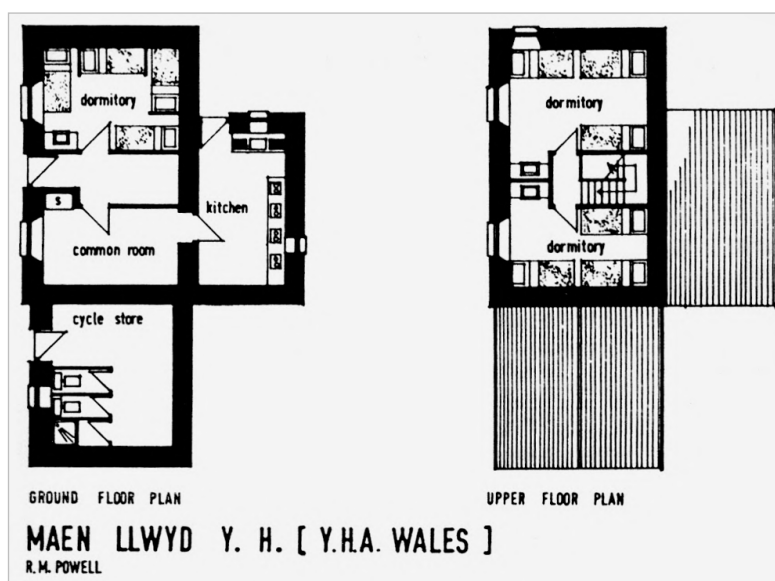


A rare photograph of the first youth hostel at Newport (Trefdraeth), Pembrokeshire. It was taken from a colour slide by George Miller of Lincoln during a family hostelling holiday in 1975. The house stands at right angles to the Cilgwyn Road (author's collection)

The small accommodation hostel on the Cilgwyn Road was a mile out of Newport (Trefdraeth). It opened on 25th March 1972. The warden throughout was Mrs Phoebe Lewis (though a memo at the outset named a Mrs MV Pocyk). Speaking more recently, Mr Lewis recalled:

We lived at Maen Llwyd before it was a hostel. A YHA worker from the Haverforwest area worked with someone who had connections with Maen Llwyd. Mrs Lewis was asked to warden.

The hostel had escaped the attention of the 1972 handbook, but first appeared in the supplement. In consequence, a limited 849 bednights were recorded in the first of its five seasons.



This floor plan of Maen Llwyd by RH Powell shows 3 small dorms, a common room, a kitchen and a bike shed / toilets. The office and a little shop were at Fountain Hall. Both Maen Llwyd and Fountain Hall are now much adapted private dwellings (YHA Archive)

Maen Llwyd hostel was visited by a regional inspector barely two months into its existence, on 30th May 1972. He was pleased to report:

Newport is a new and welcome addition. There is still a certain amount of adaptation work to do. The warden lives about 100 yards away.

The following August another inspector gave a fuller description:

Presently Simple – Recommended Simple. Approximately 1,200 bednights. Newport is a small old-fashioned country cottage in very good condition despite its age and rustic condition. It has the basic essentials for a Simple hostel plus running water and electricity and therefore has WCs and the necessary power to provide all the other basic comforts.

There is a good deal of close wood panelling on the walls and ceiling. The rooms tend to be dark. Painting in a bright gloss is the only way of livening up the bedrooms. The floors, except for the Members' Kitchen floor, which is concrete, are good. These floors need revarnishing.

Bad overcrowding is obvious. I measured: Dorm 2 – 16sq ft per bedspace; Dorm 3 – 21sq ft per bedspace, and all dormitories have in addition a hand basin. There are two WCs but there should be a spare. No electric shaver points. No sanitowel dispenser. This should be supplied as the warden lives off the premises. There is no hot water in the members' kitchen. An electric hot water heater is the answer. Alternatively, it should be fairly easy to put a large Sadia in the attic and run hot water to both the Members' Kitchen and the hand basins in each dorm.

Newport is a good basic Simple hostel, easy to improve if the bednight figures justify it in the future



The author remembers Maen Llwyd as a very pleasant little hostel, run by a friendly and charming warden, and regretted very much its passing without any comment or fanfare in YHA literature. As so often with accommodation hostels, it was a victim of changed personal circumstance.

## Newport (Trefdraeth village school) Youth Hostel 1995 to present

Lower St Mary's Street, Newport, Pembrokeshire SA42 OTS

Historic County: Pembrokeshire

YHA Region: Wales

GR: SN 058392

The Winter 1995-96 edition of *YHA News* heralded the opening of a new hostel on the Pembrokeshire Coast Path:

Newport's old Victorian school had outlived its day and was replaced by a new one on another site. The old building started a process of decay aided by the ravages of weather and vandalism. At this point, enter one local man with a vision, Peter Harwood. That vision centred on the conversion of the former village school into a variety of uses. YHA was approached back in 1993 by the Carnigli Rural Initiative concerning the possibility of a youth hostel being part of the package, along with a number of small business units. The Pembrokeshire Coastal Path runs through the village and this was an obvious gap in hostel provision, spurring YHA on. Following adoption of the proposals by Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council there followed a successful application to the Welsh Office for funding.

The project architect was Jim Allen. The traditional high vaulted classroom with its long windows was visually retained, but inside a mezzanine floor was fitted (as at Trefin a couple of years before), making for a light and airy room downstairs and upstairs a lounge that is full of character. Several 2- and 4-bedded rooms fit into the roof space. The project cost for the whole complex was £332,000. YHA's investment was limited to provision of fittings and furniture.

The leased hostel opened in time for the summer season on 1st July 1995. An official ceremony followed on 15th November. The name of the hostel has taken some time to forge; at first it was Newport (Pembs), then Trefdraeth. Newport may not be enough of a name to save embarrassment: there are several anecdotes of unprepared hostellers getting off the train at Newport (Gwent), over 100 miles to the east.

The hostel is arranged with the kitchen and dining room to the right of the entrance and small office on the ground floor, with three bedrooms, toilets and showers to the left. A local resident, Gill Billing, was appointed as first warden, but for several years Trefdraeth has been run by volunteer wardens, assisted by the manager of Poppit Sands youth hostel. The volunteers use Room 1, a 4-bed room, as their base, while Rooms 2 and 3 have 6 beds.



A central staircase, newly constructed for the hostel, rises to the first floor, where four further rooms (two 2-bedded and two 4-bedded), toilets and showers are located to the left and a cleverly designed lounge to the right. Thus 28 beds are provided, minus the four used by the volunteers.



Newport (Trefdraeth), a cheerful addition to the Pembrokeshire Coast Path hostels.

- 1: the central entrance. The high-silled tall school windows (so designed to prevent wayward scholars from gazing outwards, but to allow in plenty of uplifting light) have been cleverly adapted to accept the mezzanine floor (author's photograph, May 2007);  
 2: the hostel is one wing of a larger building. Until about 2014 the other part housed Eco Centre Wales, one of the initiatives mentioned in the YHA News Bulletin on page 3, but its funding was subsequently withdrawn (YHA publicity photograph)



The attractive mezzanine floor lounge of Trefdraeth Hostel (YHA publicity photograph)

<b>Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows</b> <b>1972-1976: previous Oct to Sept; 1995-present: Mar to following Feb</b> §: Brynberian temporary Hostel; ¶: Newport (Maen Llwyd) Hostel; Δ: Newport (St Mary's St School) Hostel; +: notional figure included for exclusive hire and/or camping									
1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	106§
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
...	...	849¶	1493¶	1865¶	2127¶	2036¶	...	...	...
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
...	...	...	...	...	1330Δ	1996Δ	2543Δ	2481Δ	2512Δ
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
2394Δ	2181Δ	2702Δ	2638Δ	3258Δ	2620Δ	2835Δ	2172Δ	1806Δ	2220Δ
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
2149Δ	2724+Δ	2805+Δ	2464+Δ	2310+Δ	2498+Δ	2732+Δ	2446+Δ	2806+Δ	2466+Δ

