



YHA (England and Wales)

Youth Hostel Profile

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

Trefin Youth Hostel 1968 to 2006

1 Ffordd-yr-Afon, Trefin, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA62 5AU

Historic County: Pembrokeshire

YHA Regions: South Wales, Wales

GR: SM 840324

Note: the sometime warden's address of 11 Ffordd-yr-Afon was quoted in certain YHA literature



The former Trevine British School operated from 1871 to about 1966. When it closed YHA South Wales Region was keen to expand its network along the Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire coast, and was quick to seize the opportunity here with a lease of the school. Preparations were quickly enacted and the hostel opened on 1st April 1968. It was given the anglicised name of Trevine up to 1975, the Welsh Trefin usually being adopted after that time.

The 1968 annual report for the Region enthused:

Another step forward was the opening of a new hostel at Trevine in Pembrokeshire. Working parties were ably supported by the warden, Mr Lawrence and local members of the Urdd Gobaith Cymru. The Association has thus been provided with another fine small hostel which is well in keeping with the new standards of accommodation forecast in the Development Plan.



A 1977 photograph of the school-cloakroom hostel entrance by John Watts, and (top) YHA button badge (author's collection)

The layout was at first simple, as exemplified in other South and Mid-Wales former village school hostels such as at Ystumtuen and Newtown, and later Pentlepoir: two high-ceilinged dormitories, with the usual common room, kitchen and office. The high roofline and large windows meant of course that heating bills would be high. The hostel's entrance was a porch door facing the centre of the village. The toilet block was in the field to the rear.



The playground side of the hostel in the early days, with the characteristically tall schoolroom and hall windows (YHA Archive)

While the hostel was still quite new, an internal South Wales Region hostel report of 30th May 1972 described it as small but entirely homely:

A pleasant 'chummy' simple hostel. The wardens live across the street. There is a small but simple store kept.

A year later, on 2nd August 1973, a much more detailed description was filed. It showed that South Wales Region's simple hostels were improving in comfort and provision, especially those that were newly opened:

Presently Simple Grade – Recommended Simple Grade. Approximately 2,100 bednights. Trevine is another old school in the centre of the village which the Region has converted cheaply into a good Simple hostel.

There are two dormitories housing a dozen beds each and simple washing facilities (bowls on a bench) for members. A footbath would be useful, but space in the dorms is at a premium. The shortage of hooks noticed by the previous inspector has been remedied. There is some overcrowding in the dormitories. I measured 23sq ft per bed in the women's dorm and only 20sq ft in the men's. Beds, mattresses and blankets, especially in the women's dorm, are mostly new and modern. A couple of safaris would be useful for emergencies.

The members' kitchen, common room and dining room are in the old school hall. Personally, I find this layout with all facilities immediately apparent to the members an advantage. When the members' kitchen and common room are separate, the flow of traffic to and from the cooking facilities is uneven and liable to produce bottlenecks. When members can see that all the cooking rings are already engaged, they remain seated until the kitchen space empties a little. Bryn Poeth Uchaf has a similar layout and during our stay there at Easter, I noticed the advantage of it.

Hot water is laid on to taps in each dormitory and thankfully in the members' kitchen. An ascot type heater is used and this is locked away from members. A neat touch is the formica covered high bench separating members' kitchen from common room. This serves as a preparation bench for meals and on the opposite side lined with high stools, as an eating table. Double sinks and double draining boards give plenty of washing space. A hand towel is provided. The common room part of the hall has a few easy chairs and sufficient other suitable furniture. Curtains need replacing. The fire is a very ancient pattern convector (the warden tells me thirty years old) and needs to be replaced. This is particularly so not only because the room has a very high ceiling and must take a lot of warming up in early spring and autumn, but because the warden uses this room and fire to air bedding during the winter, there being no other place to store bedding when the hostel is closed.

Outside are the WCs (two for each sex and a urinal for the men). None of the WCs have inside locks and this should be seen to as soon as possible. There is also a drying room in the yard. The warden tells me that there is an electric fan heater which is plugged in when needed to dry clothes.

There is no cycle shed, the old one being taken back by the chapel authorities who own the building. This must be replaced. The warden does not keep a store. There is a grocer's shop next door and this serves the members

In 1980 the capacity was enlarged from 24 to 32 beds, though the peak of 2,743 overnights in 1976 was never to be quite repeated. Where the extra eight beds were placed is not on record. Mrs Wilcox took on the wardening from Mr Lawrence in 1970, and she remained at the helm until Mrs Christine Reynolds took over (1984-92). Simon Pinner was in charge in 1993-95 and Sheryl Stott in 1996 to about 2003, after which the hostel was run from St David's for two or three years.



Dutch hosteller Marjan Roskes stayed at Trefin in the summer of 1992. Her valuable images, kindly donated to the YHA Archive, show perfectly the original layout and décor of the hostel just before the major refurbishment of that winter. There is a world of difference between the simple level of comforts provided at a hostel dating from 1969 and what came to be acceptable in the 1990s (though the internal plumbing, formica tops and contemporary furniture of these images were themselves a great advance on what could be expected in South Wales' small hostels in the 1950s).

1: A small shop operated close to the porch entrance of Trefin hostel; 2: the somewhat stark, high roofed members' kitchen, in what was soon to become the Village Hall section of the building. The door leads to the old school cloakroom, against the road – no doubt the old school coathooks came in handy; 3: at the rear of the original kitchen was this dining-cum-common room area – the door led to a corridor and the men's dormitory, then the women's; 4: the women's dormitory, with regulation beds and bedding that were to give way to more up-to-date types in the ensuing decade. Also about to be upgraded is the Belfast-type sink for ablutions. The tall and potentially heat-sapping windows will be noted. This dormitory became the new self-catering kitchen and lounge of 1993, while the men's in the centre of the building was converted to the new entrance and stairwell.

Over the winter of 1992-93 Trefin hostel received major refurbishment, emanating from a partnership with the local community, Gwelliant Trefin (the local improvement initiative), Llanrhian Community Council, and the Elders of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. There was significant funding from the Welsh Office and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, not least with a Government windfall to mitigate the effects of defence cuts in the area. The original single-storey configuration was converted to a cosier two-storey, and capacity reduced to 26.

For the first time the hostel was fully carpeted and electrically heated throughout. A new community village hall now occupied what had been originally the YHA kitchen and common-cum-dining room at the front of the old school, while the self-catering and lounge area now occupied the rear of the ground floor, where the men's and women's dormitories had been (the women's is thought to have been at the rear). The main entrance was relocated to the centre of the school-yard side of the building, from where a new staircase rose to six all-new bedrooms, each provided with a

wash basin and limited to 4-6 beds. Window layouts also changed considerably. The hostel was officially reopened on 28th June 1993 by the Secretary of State for Wales, and for a period saw numbers climbing again to over 2,500 annually.

From 1998 usage was more fitful, with good years interspersed with disappointing, and of course a dip in 2001 with the foot and mouth epidemic. It was partly as a consequence of that disastrous year that YHA instigated its wide-ranging closure programme of 2005-06, and Trefin hostel was not spared. It closed on 31st October 2006, the leasehold being terminated and returned to the landlord in that month.

All was not lost, however, for walkers of the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. After closure the YHA hostel was taken over, refurbished and remodelled by Christopher Clements and Sue Whitmore, as the Old School Hostel (Hostel yr Hen Ysgol) and Bed and Breakfast, by Easter 2007. This involved a programme of individualising each room, some reconfiguration, and expansion into rooms attached to the neighbouring chapel (Chapel House, the managers' home and office), with a new guests' flat at the roadside end, and a bike store at the far end.



New life was breathed into YHA's hostel in 2007 as the independent hostel Yr Hen Ysgol Hostel and B&B. The August 2015 shot shows well the 1992-93 conversion to two-floor accommodation and the resited entrance (author's photograph)

<i>Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows</i>									
<i>1968-1991: previous Oct to Sept; 1992: Oct 1991 to Feb 1993; 1993-2006: Mar to following Feb</i>									
<i>*: 17 month period – the hostel was closed for reconstruction for part of this time</i>									
1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
...	983	1278
1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
1491	1731	2120	1965	2173	2554	2743	2513	2223	2293
1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
2006	1877	1404	1432	1438	1541	1608	1927	1698	1726
1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
1749	1415	1225*	2276	2569	2602	2167	2081	1850	2030
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
1793	1462	2068	2413	2119	1659	1613

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