

William Evans 1881 - 1957

Recently, a new group has been formed in Colwyn Bay called the 'Colwyn Place Plan Stakeholder Workshop'. It has been created under the auspices of the Town Council to monitor and advise on the planning applications submitted to the local authority with special reference to those that will have an impact on our town. Its aim is 'to encourage greater community engagement in local planning and well-being issues and to involve local people and visitors in decision making'.



A hundred years ago no such workshop would have been necessary and indeed I doubt whether they would have known what 'well-being issues' actually were! The local architects and builders were, in the main, given free rein to design and build any structure they wished for. There was of course abundant land and the town was slowly emerging from a time when large tracts of land had been owned by a few individuals, such as the Hesketh family in Old Colwyn (hence Hesketh Road) the Erskine family in Colwyn Bay (hence Erskine Road) and the Horton family in Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, (hence Horton Drive), to a built environment with which we are

now more familiar. Two hundred years ago there were only 150 people living in Old Colwyn in 12 farms and 23 cottages.

This Journal has featured many builders and architects over the years; builders such as OE Gorst, Samuel Bond, the Ashworth brothers, the Wooller family, Richard and Price Williams and architects like Sydney Colwyn Foulkes, Leonard Moseley, Gwilym Parry Davies, Brian Lingard, John Douglas, Tom Griffiths and Ernest Burnett. One builder, David Evans, featured in the November 2009 edition of this Journal. He was the eldest of eleven children (7 boys and 4 girls) and built many substantial buildings in Old Colwyn, such as the Queens Hotel and Calfaria Chapel, in the 1920s. One of his younger brothers was William.

William did not go to college, but he was a bright young man and learnt the building trade from his father. He also, without training, designed his own buildings. The first building he designed was a house for himself and his new wife, Millicent. He named it Rayleigh and it is still there at the top end of Wynne Avenue, number 16, in Old Colwyn. It is a substantial well-constructed building as were all his subsequent houses and was eventually bought in the 1980s by Dr Uday Bisarya, who took over Dr Ian Lynch's practice, and who constructed a surgery at the rear of the house.

Not a man to waste a good plan, Mr Evans used exactly the same design he had used for Rayleigh to build two identical detached houses on Francis Avenue in Rhos-on-Sea. They are number 3 (Laureston) and number 5 (Pennis). All three houses have substantial sturdy ornate pillars to support the front elevation verandahs.

When his father died all his sons, including William, went their own ways and never

collaborated again. One of William's brothers, Evan, became the highly respected and admired Manager of the Midland Bank in Holywell.

These were the days, between the 1st and 2nd World Wars, when the cotton manufacturers from Lancashire and Yorkshire were looking for good spacious detached houses, preferably in Rhos-on-Sea. William Evans shrewdly saw the market and built accordingly. While his father and brothers built in Old Colwyn, he concentrated on Rhos-on-Sea. There was plenty of land and he began to fill it with large airy houses. He never built semi-detached houses because he said he saw the smaller builders going bust building them. At the time there was no thriving market for them.

An excellent example of his building technique and his designing prowess are the houses he built and designed on Kenelm Road, numbers 12, 10 and 8 Kingston. All the houses have four substantially sized bedrooms. Number 12 became the Manse for the incumbent minister at Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church and Kingston was bought in the late 1940s by Mr and Mrs Rowlands and is still owned by their family. The Rowland's daughter Anthea and her husband David live in the top half and their son Michael living on the ground floor. These three houses are as sturdy and well maintained today as they were when they were built nearly a hundred years ago. They all, as do all Mr Evans' houses, have good sized porches, good brick work and large rooms.

As with the design for his own home in Old Colwyn and the two identical houses he built on Francis Avenue, so he used the same plans for the house he built at 8 Kenelm Road, but as a mirror image, as the design for the house, just round the corner, on the corner of Kenelm Road and

Ebberston Road East. This is Awen, number 17. For some years it was the home of Alvin Langdon Coburn, the internationally renowned photographer. Amongst others he photographed were GK Chesterton, HG Wells, Bernard Shaw and Rodin. He was also a prominent local Mason and it was he who named the house 'Awen'. Awen is a Welsh word for inspiration and the inspiration of poets; the Druids believed that the word denoted 'flowing energy'. The name is still on the gate post. It is a good name for a house

Mrs Hill used to wear her own knitted berets which, you can imagine, made her look a little odd. Mr Evans however designed and built the house in the 1920s for a member of the Cayley family. (NB: March 2019 Journal).

Mr Evans' daughter, Audrey, could remember her father working at a desk in the dining room or with a large board resting on his lap on which was attached a sheet of paper on which he designed his houses. He must have needed a very large

daughter thought was 'as old as the hills' used sometimes to complain about the office and timber yard, "it's as busy as Piccadilly Circus here today".

Mr Evans insisted that the best of everything should be used in his buildings, the best timber, the best bathroom furniture and the best kitchens, because he knew only too well that the customers with whom he dealt would expect nothing less.

Sadly, on the 29th December 1925 his first wife, Millicent Mildred aged 40, died in child birth. By this time he had two young children, Norman and Lona. He took his distraught daughter with him to the monumental mason's yard to choose a suitable headstone for his wife's grave in the Old Colwyn cemetery on Llanelian Road. Lona saw a magnificent, enormous, white marble headstone topped with a full-sized replica of an angel holding flowers. Mr Evans agreed to let his daughter have her wish and there the stone stands to this day, the only stone in the cemetery topped by a somber looking angel.

A few years after Millicent died he met Alice Thomas to whom he was happily married for the following thirty years. Millicent's children were delighted when Alice, their step-mother, gave birth to a little girl, Audrey.

In 1946, Lona, married John Whitehead, who had also lost his mother, to cancer, at the age of six. They had two daughters, Wendy and Anne. Wendy wrote to me and said: "Despite the blow life dealt them in losing their mothers at such a very young age, Lona and John, (her father) were two of the most well grounded people I have ever come across. They were absolutely super, just got on with everything, never moaned, always up for a laugh and gave my sister (Anne) and I the most wonderful childhood". This was of course a lovely tribute to Lona's father, William, and to his two wives, Millicent Mildred and Alice Thomas. In 1955 the Whitehead family moved to Cape Town, South Africa. As travel opened up from the sixties onwards, many trips were made back to Colwyn Bay, with the Whitehead family staying at Rayleigh, William Evans' first house. Wendy writes:



William Evans house on Francis Avenue

designed and built by William Evans because he must have possessed flowing energy.

Perhaps the largest house he designed and built was Rhosendale, on what we now know as 'five ways' roundabout on the right-hand corner at the bottom of Ebberston Road West (number 2 Ebberston Road West). The main gate, leading onto an impressive driveway, used to be on the corner of Ebberston Road and Brompton Avenue and lead straight off where the roundabout was built in the 1950s. This gateway has now been blocked off. In the 1960s it was owned by a Mrs Hill who was prominent in the local Conservative Party and would open her garden every summer for a garden party to help raise funds for the Conservatives.

piece of paper for the Rhosendale house.

He built himself a small office and timber yard bang opposite Meredith & Kirkham Garage, Old Colwyn, where Aldi now stands. It was built on land purchased from the Old Colwyn Methodist Church and is now used by a car washing business. From here Mr Evans would send out sometimes a hundred employees to his various building sites. One of his workmen, an old Welsh man, Theo, who Mr Evans'



William Evans house on Brompton Avenue

“To this day I regard Rayleigh as a ‘root’, even though it is no longer in the family, as it has so many memories of us staying there.”

Audrey always maintained that the best house her father designed was Collieston at 53 Marine Drive, Rhos-on-Sea. (NB: Journal March 2019. The house became home to St Michael’s Nursing home but has now, sadly, been demolished. It was a 1930s Art Deco master-piece. As you entered the house you found yourself in a circular hall-way which had a circular balcony from which you could peer down into the open hallway. All the various rooms led off this circular design. It was built for a wealthy man, Mr Welch, who was very pleased with his purchase. The angular exterior walls were all painted white and the house was topped with a turret from which Mr Welch could watch the passing ships.

The other Art Deco, flat roofed, white painted, house he designed and built, was The Breakers, Number 57, (originally known as Elynor House), just along the road from Collieston on the corner of College Avenue, (NB: Picture on back cover in Journal October 2021). He designed it, when viewed from the corner of the road, to resemble the prow of a ship. It is two flats and is much admired for its distinctive architectural originality. Sadly, after its eighty five year existence no one wants it and so it has been pulled down and no doubt replaced by a nondescript block of unimaginative looking flats. (NB: Journals March 1994 (picture): September 1994 & March 1996). Collieston and The Breakers were much admired not only by their owners, but by the local population and the architectural press. Both buildings bristled with fine and exhilarating architectural delight.

Between Collieston and The Breakers on the opposite corner of College Avenue to The Breakers is a house more readily recognized as a ‘William Evans’ building. It is called Ballavale. There is his usual airy veranda to the right of the main door, large rooms sporting good sized windows, a good roof and substantial chimney stacks. These attributes are all readily visible on all Mr Evans’ houses. At the time he built them, in the 1930s, they were selling from £2,500 to £3,500 and he had no problem in selling them. Indeed, some of them were sold before he had built them.

Three other houses in the same William Evans style, all designed in the dining room at home, are on Brompton Avenue; numbers 38 (The Grove), 40 (Craig Garth)

and 42. They were not imagined as cramped dwellings, but as easy, airy, relaxing spaces. Numbers 40 and 42 both have exactly the same black and white plaster design below the angled roof and the first-floor bedroom.

Now and again Mr Evans would take on contract work. One such job, just before the 2nd World War began, was building the local housing estate and old people’s homes at Llandudno Junction which had been designed by Leonard Moseley. His daughter Audrey can remember she and her mother being driven by her father on a Saturday around the building site to make sure that no one was stealing the building materials, bricks, wood, cement. An occurrence that happened too often for Mr Evans’ liking. Many years later, by a serendipitous chance, Audrey’s husband, Gwilym Parry Davies, an architect, was commissioned to enhance these very buildings and bring them up to date.

In 1939 the Ministry of Food was established in Colwyn Bay. Five thousand Civil Servants arrived from the South of England and the Ministry took over the Penrhos School, Rydal School, Colwyn Bay Hotel, the Metropole Hotel, the Mount Stewart Hotel and many other buildings. As a last ‘hurrah’ to his working life William was given the job by the Ministry of making

returned from a holiday and insisted on mowing his lawns at Rayleigh. It was too much for him, he had a heart attack and died on 14th March. He was buried in the Old Colwyn Cemetery grave with his first wife Millicent, the pair of them watched over by the enormous white marble angel. Fourteen years later his second wife, Alice, died on 19th September 1971 and her body was also placed in the same grave watched over by the ever-vigilant angel.

Mr Evans’ daughter from his second marriage, Audrey, married Gwilym Parry Davies a highly respected local architect. Indeed, he and Mr Sydney Colwyn Foulkes’ son, Ralph, and future daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, were all at Architectural College together in Liverpool. Audrey remembers, with a smile, how her father had said to her, soon after her marriage, that it was no good her new husband telling him anything about building and design!

William Evans was instrumental in bringing to Rhos-on-Sea buildings of distinction, well designed, and professionally built; in these charming houses he was able to mix usefulness and profitability. His designs were aesthetically pleasing. He was a clever self-taught man who possessed the self-confidence to run with his ambitious nature and so to leave his mark on the



William Evans home ‘Rayleigh’

sure that all their buildings had effective ‘black out’ facilities so that not a chink of light could be detected in the dark. This was a very important job, for had Hitler bombed these buildings the whole and varied system of feeding the people of Great Britain would have been put at risk.

Mr Evans retired at the beginning of the 2nd World War after ‘blacking out’ the Ministry of Food buildings. In 1957 he

town which we see today, sixty-three years after his death.

The bulk of the material for this article was given to me aurally by Audrey Parry Davies, Mr Evans’ daughter. This was just a month before she die, aged 92, on 14th June 2022 . Thus it is that another kind and intelligent witness to another age has passed from our view with her colorful and interesting memories.

The Old Colwyn English Baptist Church



The foundation stones of this Old Colwyn Church were laid on 4th June 1905. The unusual aspect of the founders and the first congregation was that they were all English and the only language they spoke was English. Up until this time, 127 years ago, the area had been a Welsh community speaking only in their mother tongue.

One hundred years before the foundation stones were laid for the red brick Church on the corner of Princes Road and Abergele Road two servant girls, Benedicta Thomas and Ellen Jones, had taken the Rev Azariah Shadrach of Trefriw, who had come to preach at Capel Nant, Llanelian, on one side and explained to him that they both walked to Llanrwst once a month to take Communion as there was no place of worship in Old Colwyn. On hearing this the Reverend Shadrach persuaded Ellen Roberts, a widow of Bryn-y-Gwynt, on payment of one shilling, to allow him to stand beside her door and from there to pray and to preach. In fact Mrs Roberts allowed the service to be held inside the house and to continue there for the following eleven years.

In 1815 Mrs Roberts was probably relieved to witness the construction of Ebeneser Chapel and for it to be opened on Ascension Day of that year, which is where her Sunday crowd, including the two servant girls, moved to.

The congregation of the English Baptist Church were well in the vanguard of the exclusively English move into the church life of Old Colwyn. St Catherine's Church on Abergele Road had been built 68 years before the English Baptist Church was erected. St

Catherine's was built as a Chapel of Ease to Llandrillo-yn-Rhos Parish Church. The congregation at that time were in the main Welsh speaking. The Reverend Venables Williams, the Vicar at Llandrillo, had expected his domain to grow and that he would be in charge at St Catherine's as well as at Llandrillo. He was very put out when he was informed that that idea of his was an illusion!

In 1885 the English Baptists began meeting for Sunday services in the home of Mrs Esther Parry in Twan Terrace which today is number 5 Pen-y-Bryn. Six years later the services were moved to a Tin Chapel, made from corrugated iron, which was on the site of the old Meredith & Kirkham Garage's body building and paint shop on the main road just up the road from The Ship pub. The site cost £117.19s.6d. The Tin Chapel was bought from someone in Penmaenmawr in 1891 for £60 complete with chains! The Rev JB Brasted and then the Rev James Nankivell took the services and in 1906 they moved to the present site where the Rev ET Davies became the minister. In those days Old Colwyn was more of a Welsh speaking village and consequently it was a great struggle to keep the new English Baptist cause alive.

There are seven Foundation Stones on the Church wall facing Abergele Road. One has been wiped clean by the weather. The other six were laid by the Pastor of the Church, Rev ET Davies of The Oaklands, Ben Davies of Victoria House, Robert Evans (the builder) of Mohrcroft, the Rev J Raymond from Llandudno representing the Trustees of the Baptist Union, Robert Beck from Bangor and the Rev AJ Parry.

The church building is an impressive construction with its dinky spire designed by Mr Arthur Hewitt of Llandudno and built entirely of Ruabon Red Brick, as was Nant-y-Glyn Methodist Church and Colwyn Bay Presbyterian Church on the corner of Hawarden Road. The red brick was made from red clay mined around Wrexham, Ruabon and Gresford. (NB: Journal September 2001: A Coal By-Product and Colwyn Bay). The site was purchased for £459 and the church itself cost £2,500 to build. The contractors were Messrs Robert Evans & Sons of Old Colwyn, the brother of William Evans who features in an accompanying article in this Journal. (NB: Journal November 2009: The Bowling Green Sandpit and David Evans.) The expected congregation was small in number and they did not have much money, but none-the-less, nothing but the best would do for them. Gothic windows with figured glass and leaded lights were installed. Timber work of the highest quality in the window



Original Tin Church

frames and window-sills and doors was used. The ventilation system (still working) was installed by a firm from Bury, Lancashire and cost £25 and the leaded lights came from Lancaster and cost £31.10s.0d, while the pews and pulpit were bought from the Welsh Wesleyan Church in Greenfield Road Colwyn Bay; so there was a little bit of Welshness in the building. The Church secretary, Mr Jones of Myrtle Villa was a 'craftsman in timber' and so made sure that everything was of the highest quality. All this diligence and craftsmanship is still in evidence 117 years later. Twenty two years

after the church was opened it was obvious that the church was enjoying a healthy social life because a geyser was fixed to the wall of the small vestry for 'ease of making tea'.

In 1920 new electric lighting was installed in the Church and Mr Joseph Smith, an Oldham mill owner who was a regular worshiper in the Church was so impressed with the installation that he paid the account in full.

The Rev Davies retired in 1913 after what was described as 'a most remarkable Pastorate'. In March 1950 Mr WB Llewellyn, the Secretary of the Church and the Trustees, who lived at The Woodlands on Woodland Avenue, where Mr Llewellyn's original Art Deco house name plate is still displayed on the gate, invited an American

Baptist clergyman, the Reverend Arthur L Slaikou from Aberdeen, South Dakota to become the resident minister for four months. Mr Llewellyn's 24 year old daughter, Connie, can still remember the Rev.Slaikou and his wife coming to her parent's house for after-noon tea and seeing the Yankee Clergyman take a small cake which was topped with a cherry from the cake stand. He then cut it in two and gave his wife the half without the cherry on it reserving the other half and the cherry for himself.

At the moment, in 2022, we are seeing soaring fuel costs, but it seems that nothing changes, for in 1917 the English Baptist Church congregation were also worried about mounting fuel cost as was the English

Weslyan Church. To help defray these costs the Wesleyan Church Elders requested that during the winter months they be allowed to join the Baptist Sunday services. This reasonable request, with typical Christian charity on the Baptist's behalf, was rejected!

Thus it is that we owe gratitude to the men and women of the English Presbyterian movement in Old Colwyn for the distinguished, well built church on the corner of Princess Road and Abergele road. We pass it by without a second glance, but we should look more carefully because 116 years ago people in Old Colwyn had a vision and a purpose to create a building which would last well after they had passed from this earth.

The Old Comrades' Club

As you drive up Douglas Road, on the left, opposite the car park, is the imposing building that was opened in 1916 during the 1st World War and was known as The Old Comrades Club. The building was opened specifically for the use of the returning soldiers. This was an enlightened and Christian gesture by the Local Authority.

By the early 1950s former servicemen had more or less abandoned their Old Comrades Club and defected to the Royal British Legion building on Coed Pella Road in Colwyn Bay and the newly built premises in Conway.

The architect, Mr Sydney Colwyn Foulkes, was chosen by the local council to remodel and refurbish the interior of the premises and bring it up to the standards expected in the 1950s. When this work had been completed the council renamed the building as The Friendship Club and it thus, under Mr Bill Hollywood's management and inspiration, began a very successful time as a haunt for young people. Mr Hollywood was prominent in the Scout movement locally. These were the halcyon days before the dire and malign influence of social media and before the ubiquitous and often tawdry influence of television. One must remember that for the Queen's coronation in 1953 most people in Britain did not have a television. So it was that the Friendship Club was able to live up to its name and offer young people interesting and worthy pursuits to fill their leisure time.

In the 13th November 1952 edition of the North Wales Weekly News Friendship Club invited the local community to 'visit the town's Youth Centre'. The invitation informed the readers of the newspaper that the Club had 350 young people as members

and went on to remind its readers: 'You read in the press about youth at its worst. Why not spare an evening to see youth at its best? Youths are our country's future citizens.

Greenfield Road. That building has now been incorporated into those used by Ysgol Nant-y-Groes and the Friendship Club no longer exists.



The Old Comrades' Club

Come and see how we prepare them for such a great responsibility.'

It is interesting and enlightening to read in the same edition of the paper of 1952 an advertisement for the Bridge Inn at Llangernyw which informed the readers that the Pub had an 'Unlimited supplies of good clean rabbits' and warned the readers that 'shot or bruised rabbits not taken'.

After Bill Hollywood's death and during Mike Williams' reign as the Friendship Club's manager, the Club was moved lock stock and barrel to their new home at the end of

Now, in 2022, the building in Douglas Road is to be demolished for a new, would you believe it, car park, for the specific use of the Family Centre which is housed in the old Primary School, built in 1908, next door to the old Friendship Club building. The Family Centre is responsible for Education, Social Services and Youth Services. In truth, the 1916 building is now in a very sorry state; it looks dilapidated and forlorn and it probably needs to come tumbling down. It served its purpose and for over a hundred years was home to those who fought for our freedom and for the young people of the town who went on to lead happy and constructive lives.

Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church Closes



Rhos Methodist Church - Laying of the foundation stone

Exactly 100 years after the Foundation Stone was laid by Mrs Rudman, the wife of the Rev Arthur Rudman, the Superintendent Minister, the last service ever to be held in the Rhos-on-

holiday, and in the Rev Philip Barnett's time he purchased a coach to take the children all over the country, it was Skipton in 1980. The church was home to a thriving Sunday school; in 1958 there were 150 children who attended every Sunday. In the intervening 64 years young people have been seduced away to more garish pursuits and their parents have not seen the need for a religious day of rest.

The church building has served the Rhos-on-Sea community well for a hundred years and it is a shame that buildings which help to cement a community together are fast disappearing.

Sea Methodist Church, on the corner of Rhos Road and St Georges Road, was on 16th October. The entire site and all the buildings have been sold to a developer. This is a sad situation and a sign of the times in which we live. When I was young the Methodist cause in the area had a church in Conwy, in Craig-y-Don, in Rhos, in Colwyn Bay, in Nant-y-Glyn, and in Old Colwyn. Each church had its own dedicated minister. Today in 2022 St John's Methodist Church in Colwyn Bay is under the care of Rydal Penrhos School, Nant-y-Glyn Methodist Church has closed and now Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church has closed. The congregation of the Rhos Church hope to look for opportunities to meet for lunch or coffee in a way which identifies them as Methodists in Rhos.

The Rhos Church is a fine building which has been home to a dedicated congregation. The Methodist churches in the area are suffering the same fate at the Welsh churches and the Church in Wales churches. The world has changed and Sunday is no longer a 'day of rest' but is now a family holiday. When I was young the local pubs were closed on a Sunday, now they are open and packed. Now hundreds of churches all over the United Kingdom are closing their doors every year.

The first Minister in charge at Rhos-On-Sea from 1923 to 1929 was the Rev William Edwin Sangster. He looked after both the Conwy Church and the Rhos Church. While he was the incumbent minister his wife became pregnant. He told his congregation that if the child was a boy he would raise a blue flag outside the Manse and if it was a girl he would raise a pink flag. It turned out that his wife gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, so he raised the Union Jack! Years later in 1963, the boy twin, Paul, taught this writer at Westminster Teacher Training College.

There was a substantial Church Hall where concerts and plays were staged, rooms where teenagers could meet and where the

Playgroup met and where social gatherings of all sorts could be held. There used to be 'Neighbourhood lunches' and 'House Groups'. The church was home to a Junior Football Team which was coached for many years by Graham Nicholson. Every year in the summer-time the minister would lead a Sunday School



Rhos Methodist Church during Rev. Barnett's time 1987



Rhos Methodist Church

Sydney Colwyn Foulkes' Cinema Revealed

Ninety years ago Mr Sydney Frere, Will Catlin's top comedian and singer and a friend of Mr Colwyn Foulkes, asked Mr Foulkes to design a building for him in which he would show the new-fangled films which were becoming all the rage. He designed what became known as the Rhos Playhouse and what we boys in the 1950s called the Rhos Flea-Pit. (NB: Journal February 2014).

Mr Foulkes designed a distinguished looking front to the building and a long barn like extension behind the façade. The interior ceiling was ornate and was quite a wonder to

the folk of Rhos-on-Sea 90 years ago.

When television began eating into the profitability of cinemas, the owner at the time, George Lee, decided to retire. In due course the Co-op took on the lease and ran their business from the building for many years. When, a few years ago, the Co-op decided to build their own store on the site of the old Congregational Church rooms on the corner of Penryn Avenue and Colwyn Avenue, the old cinema building became vacant once again.

Thankfully, the prestigious carpet company, Linney Cooper, have now moved into Mr Colwyn Foulkes and Mr Sydney Frere's cinema and revitalized the building. The ceiling, which the Co-op had covered, has been revealed once again in all its original splendor and the front of the building has been cleaned to reveal its former glory.

The Civic Society must congratulate Linney Cooper for their restoration of a fine building. I am sure Mr Foulkes and Mr Frere would thoroughly approve.



Rhos Playhouse - Linney Cooper conversion



Graham Roberts representing the Civic Society at the opening ceremony

The GFS, the Mini Miss Cumbers and Rhos Methodist Church

The Girls Friends Society (The GFS) was a local organization set up in 1940, eighty two years ago, by Mrs E.J. Brookshaw of Dalegarth, Woodlands Avenue, Rhos-on-Sea, under the auspices of St George's Church, (NB: Journal February 2020) to place young ladies in houses and with families who needed domestic help. The 2nd World War was in full swing and the Ministry of Food had descended on Colwyn Bay and Rhos-on-Sea and taken over all the hotels and the two public schools. The Ministry officials found themselves in a world with a single faith, Christianity, a world in which the concept of a National Health Service had not been formulated, there was no 'Care in the Community', notions such as equality, individualism and human rights were unheard of, you paid to see the doctor and local relationships were based on community and family friendships. 'Networking' was for the future and very few people had a telephone in their homes. The Ministry 'guinea pigs', (so called because that was the amount the local land ladies received each week for looking after the Ministry civil servants), therefore thought nothing of young ladies, with impeccable manners, joining local families to help them survive the domestic drudgery of the war years. Mary went to help Mrs

Bower of 40 Rhos Road where, amongst her other duties, she took Mrs Bowers' young daughter, Margaret, (who until recently was still a regular attendee at Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church), out walking to Margaret's two favorite places, Llandrillo-yn-Rhos Parish Church-yard, to look at the white marble angles and to Bryn Euryrn Farm to look at the pigs in their styes which ran up the side of Craig View. Bryn Euryrn Farm has now been transformed into Hanover Court, a delightful and serene development of flats by the architect, Bryan Lingard (NB: Journal February 2007). Sarah went to help Mrs Hawkins at Redcot on Trillo Avenue, while friends, Jinny and Lizzie, helped out at other local homes. All these young ladies are still fondly remembered and they also, in their own way, made a contribution to the war effort.

There were two sisters, both of diminutive stature, Mary Joan Cumber and Florence Cumber who arrived in Colwyn Bay to work as book-keepers for the Ministry of Food in the Penrhos College building. They discovered that the only shop from which they could buy size 2 ladies shoes was from the David Roberts Shoe Shop on Gloddaeth Avenue, Llandudno. They were delighted with the service they received from shop

owner. Sadly the shop finally closed a year before the Covid tsunami struck our shores. While the Cumber ladies were looking for shoes Diana Lewis of Rhos-on-Sea decided that her contribution to the war effort would be working on the land as a 'Land Girl' in the Land Army. She went for an interview to Glan-y-Wern Farm in Mochdre. The farm was owned by Mr Levy, a Jewish gentleman from Manchester. Diana was surprised to discover that as the farm was owned by a Jewish man, in the main, it was a pig farm. She was interviewed by Mrs Levy who was the first lady she had ever seen who had painted nails. The combination of the stench from the pigs and sight of the red painted nails was too much for her and she decided instead to work on a farm in Bryn-y-Maen, where she met the farmer's son, David Roberts, whom she subsequently married.

The Miss Cumbers, Mrs Bower, Mrs Hawkins, Jinny and Lizzie and Diana and her future husband David were all faithful members of Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church. They would all, I am sure, be saddened to realize that the Church and its grounds have now been sold to a Manchester firm of developers.

50 Year Celebration

On the 6th July we celebrated our 50th Anniversary. It is good that the Society is still going strong after half a century. The Society was really formed when concerned local residents got together to protest at the routing of the A55 through the town. They were worried that the route would chop the town in half, which is what happened, and lead to a woeful effect on the future of the town which has also sadly come to pass.

The founding fathers of the Society, people like Geoffrey Edwards, John and Audrey Lee, Ron Rayner and Cec Owen were determined that the town should suffer the minimum of disruption while the work of

constructing the road was in progress. We owe them our gratitude for the effort they put in on our behalf.

The Anniversary was recognized by the present members joining an enjoyable historical ride on a 1960s run-about bus, which took them from the Cricket Club in Rhos-on-Sea and round the Great Orme in Llandudno. This was followed by a scrumptious tea back at the Cricket Club. The whole event was organized by Paul and Jane Boulton who had decorated the tables at the Cricket Club with balloons emblazoned with artwork showing the 50 Year motif. They had also placed on every

table an interesting list of famous people, headlines, entertainment and shopping costs that were prominent 50 years ago. Gwyneth Paltrow and Jude Law were born in 1972; Britain joined the European Common Market 50 years ago; Spaghetti Junction and New York's Twin Towers were built in 1972; The Godfather won an Oscar and Are You Being Served first appeared on television in 1972; and the average price of petrol was 36p a gallon, a pint of beer was 12.5p and a Ford Cortina car cost £1,022.

Thank you, Paul and Jane for your sterling effort to mark our 50th Anniversary.

Alvin Langdon Coburn



Alvin Langdon Coburn's grave

Once upon a time Mr Coburn lived in Awen, Ebberston Road East, (NB: Article in this edition: William Evans) where he died on 23rd November 1966 aged 84 years. He had been born in the United States of America. When he was only 24 years old George Bernard Shaw called him the most famous photographer in the world. He photographed HG Wells and most famously George Bernard Shaw himself posing nude as Rodin's 'The Thinker'. In 1908 he produced his photograph, which he called 'Spider-Webs' and was published in the photographic magazine, Camera Work. It is the most beautiful black and white picture of ships in a harbor with their rigging silhouetted in the calm water of the harbor. Alvin Langdon Coburn is generally accepted to be the internationally known forerunner of modern photography, a pioneer of early 20th century photography.

naturally deteriorated. A group of his admirers, from a Photographic Society on Anglesey, have got together, raised the funds, and restored the grave to its original pristine condition.

Ninety-five years ago Mr Coburn was made an Ovate of the Welsh Gorsedd y Beirdd (Society of Bards) and was also much involved in the Masonic life of North Wales, ideas which are suggested in the inscription on the side of his restored grave that he has, 'entered the larger life'.

Mr Coburn's wife died in October 1957 and she was buried in Llandrillo-yn-Rhos Parish Churchyard. When he subsequently died nine years later his body was laid to rest in the same grave as his wife. Since his death, in the intervening 56 years, the state of the grave and its headstone had

It is good that these memorials to well-regarded people are looked after. Inscribed on a magnificent Celtic cross in the old part of Llandrillo church yard cemetery are the words, 'The Founder of Rydal School', above the last resting place of George Osborn. The graves of our war heroes, the African children's graves in Old Colwyn Cemetery are all looked after. Also, in Llandrillo-yn-Rhos Parish Churchyard is the grave of Harold Godfrey Lowe RD., RNR., who was the 5th Officer of the Titanic, the day the ship sank and he was able to save some of the passengers. This grave also, because of its historical connection, should be kept in a good condition.



Harold Lowe and his wife's grave

Rhos-on-Sea Promenade



NB: Journal February 2005:
The Promenade.

On 23rd May this year the Promenade was shut for traffic and will remain so until June next year. There is great disruption anticipated especially for the residents of the 'Top Promenade' as two streams of extra traffic trundle along the road.

One tends to forget what a wonderful construction the promenade is and all the more so when you understand that the first part of the prom', from Penrhos Avenue to Marine Avenue was built in 1880. In those days the workers were not paid well and there were no cranes or heavy lorries to move the rubble around. It is a remarkable piece of engineering. The second 'bit' of the prom' was constructed

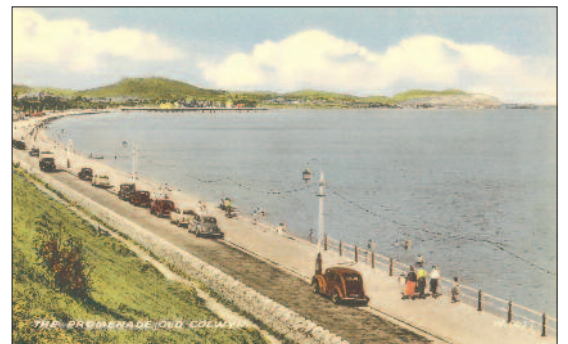
along-side the original Pier in 1900. It was built from the rubble extracted from the foundations of St.Paul's Church. In 1902 The Urban District Act enabled the rest of the Promenade to be built.

Tons of sand have been deposited onto the beach, by a Danish company, Boskalis. The company based in the Netherlands is a global dredging maritime company and has been operating for over a hundred years; it employs 10,000 people and has 600 vessels and operates in ninety countries. Boskalis is making our beach much more attractive to visitors and thus we trust helping local businesses. While the work is ongoing local traders may well suffer because visitors may be put off with the hassle of avoiding the work.

Many local residents have been astonished that the Promenade and the beach needed enhancing, but perhaps we should look to the future and expect that the work will add benefit to our locality. As a local trader said to me, "In a year's time this area will look magnificent". The elephant in the room however are the plans for the flow of traffic along the Promenade and the Top Promenade. Norman Tucker

described the Promenade as a "Dignified seafront curving with uninterrupted grace for over two-and-a-half miles". Let us hope that when the present work is finished that that description still holds true.

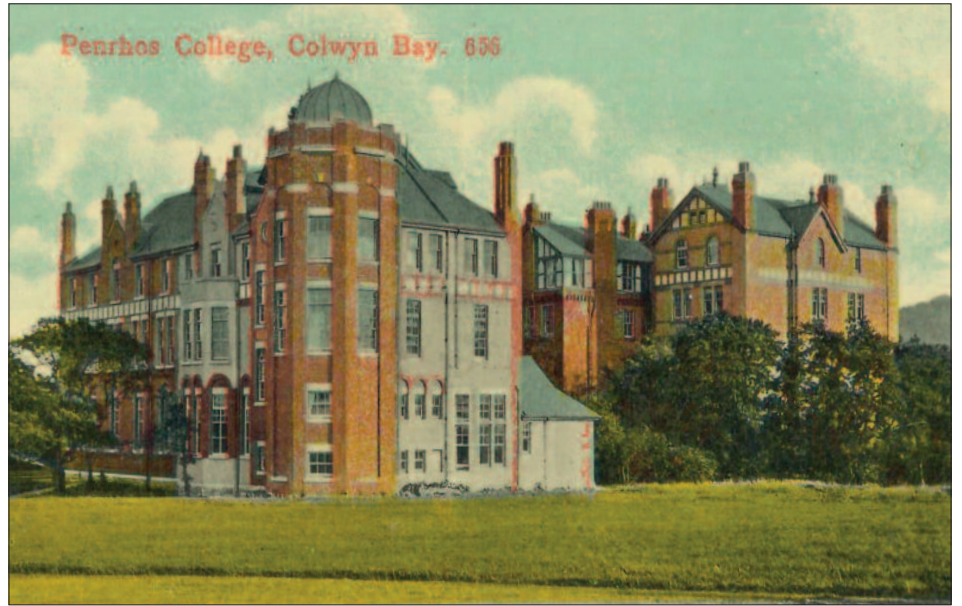
In the 2005 edition of this Journal the Editor wrote: "It (The Promenade) is a wonderful part of the infrastructure of our town; it needs no addition and no further adornment; it is just fine as it is." Perhaps, seventeen years later, we need new



shelters, 'The Coffee Pot' and 'The Cayley' Cafes need renewing and the Promenade needs resurfacing and the beach will look better covered with tons of new pristine sand; as long as it doesn't look like the front at Rhyll!

All our lives are touched by our surroundings

Jennifer Longford, who was born in 1930 and died on the 5th March 2012, was the illegitimate daughter of the Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George and his secretary and mistress, Frances Stevens. After Frances Stevens died in 1972, having eventually married the widower Lloyd George in 1943, Jennifer discovered a note written in 1929 by her mother to Lloyd George saying that she felt that she was pregnant and would send him a covert message if that proved to be the case. After Jennifer's birth her mother sent Lloyd George a telegram saying: "The parcel we were expecting has arrived." At the time Lloyd George was 66 years old and Jennifer was brought up to refer to him as Taid (Grandfather). He lavished affection upon her and her mother, and in order to hide her parentage, officially adopted her. She is



connected to Colwyn Bay by becoming a pupil at Penrhos College at the start of the 2nd World War. All the girls from the school, including Jennifer and a member of the Rhos-on-Sea Methodist Church congregation, Miss Constance Llewelyn, who eventually married the Rydal School teacher, Donald Crook, were evacuated to Chatsworth House; unfortunately Jennifer caught pneumonia and she was eventually moved to the supposedly more clement surroundings of Headington School in Oxford. Her father knew all about Penrhos College because on 15th September 1910, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had laid the foundation stone of Greenfield, a girl's boarding house on Llannerch Road East. In 1954 Jennifer began teaching at Tabora Girl's High School in Tanganyika, and married Michael Longford who was the secretary to the Governor, Lord Twining.

The year before Jennifer and Constance moved to the Duke of Devonshire's home, Alan Patrick Kift, a forty three year old Londoner, arrived in Colwyn Bay as a civil servant to work in the Ministry of Food. He was sent to the Queen's Hotel, Old Colwyn. There he met Eyllt Wen Williams a twenty seven year old Welsh lady from Rhos Farm, Capel Curig. He could not speak a word of Welsh but by the end of the war they were married, had a son, Vincent, and were living in a small apartment on Rhos-on-Sea Promenade. In 1945 Alan whisked his young bride and baby son back to London. The farming gene must have remained in the family because some years later Vincent ran a farm in Betws-y-Coed and Vincent's daughter became a gardener. Eyllt was a clever lady and was fortunate in that her father paid for her to attend the Pitman School in Menai Bridge, where she learnt to type, which allowed her to join the Ministry of Food where in consequence she met her future husband and set sail on her subsequent Life. The war and the Ministry of Food had piquant personal ramifications throwing people together from unusually different backgrounds, a fact which Alan, Eyllt, Jennifer and Constance never regretted.

Cabin Hill



Eddie Beardsall

Cabin Hill is a semi-detached house at 12 College Avenue. Built in the early 1930s it looks sturdy with an imposing balcony sporting an impressive red stone balustrade. The structure was built with Ruabon Red Brick. On the left-hand side of the structure was a later first floor edition which stood on iron stilts which I doubt would get planning permission today under the ever more strict stipulations. It has now inevitably been demolished.

In 1939 Cabin Hill was owned by Mrs Dodd. She had two daughters, Ida and Amy. Ida married Eddie Beardsall the founder of Beardsall's Jewellery shop on Penrhyn Avenue, which is still run by Eddie and Ida's grandson, Jonathan. Amy married Cliff Fairclough, the Rhos-on-Sea painter and decorator, one of whose tasks, once a year, was to paint the railings along the promenade.

Mrs Dodd was an exceptionally good cook and ran Cabin Hill as a small guest house. She had a loyal band of customers who would invariably stay with her each year and as often as not for the same weeks of every year. Henry Hall, the well-known band leader, who led the BBC Dance Orchestra and who during the war toured incessantly to entertain the troops, would arrive with his wife and his son, Michael, every year to stay at Cabin Hill. Mrs Dodd and her daughters were loyal members at the Rhos-on-Sea Congregational Church on the corner of Colwyn Avenue and Abbey Road and during the 2nd World War would feed returning troops, especially those returning from the beaches of Dunkirk, with Mrs Dodd's delicious grub.

During the War there were so many civil servants living in the area running the Ministry of Food, and the flotsam and jetsam of the

fighting men and women who came and went with ever increasing frequency, that there were not enough baths to keep all these people clean. Many establishments, and Cabin Hill was one such, therefore advertised, in the local cinemas, the fact that there was a bath on the premises, and on a strict rota, could be used for a small amount of cash. These people became known as 'The Bath House Boys'. Mrs Dodd had her regulars who would turn up once a week with a bar of soap and a towel.

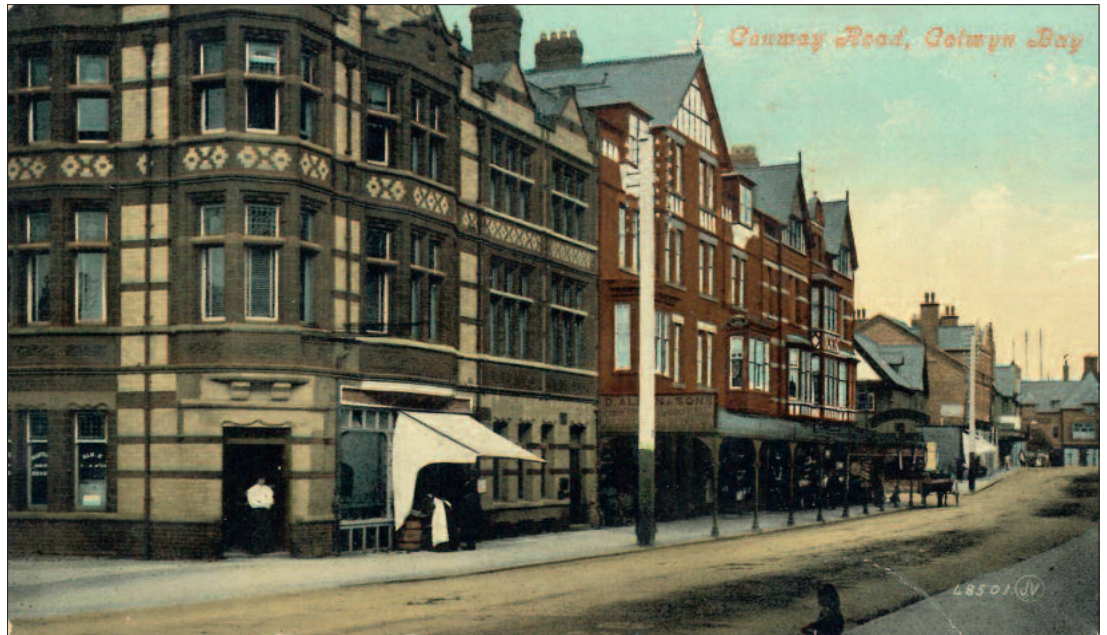


"WE ARE ON THE LEVEL"
"Cabin Hill Private Hotel"
COLLEGE AVENUE, RHOS-ON-SEA

An Odd Connection

As a concocted new language, Esperanto was first published in 1887, by people living in the Russian Empire and began to spread around Great Britain towards the end of the Victorian era. The names and addresses of all the first Esperanto speakers were registered in an early type of sophisticated telephone directory with a registration number for each person instead of a telephone number; it was known as 'Adresaro de Esperantistoj'.

Paul Soros, who died in June 2013, was a Hungarian-born engineer, entrepreneur and philanthropist. He was born in Budapest in 1926. His father, Tividar Schwartz, was a lawyer and was also a promoter and author of Esperanto, believing that the artificial language helped to bridge the differences between nations and cultures. Mr Schwartz's view of the need for Esperanto had been forged by his experience of the 1st World War, in which, as a Hungarian officer, he had been captured by the Russians and consigned to a Siberian camp in appalling conditions, unable to find a way home until 1926. In 1936, as the Nazi threat to the Jews became more ominous, Tividar changed the family surname to Soros, which means 'will soar' in Esperanto. But why did Miss E. Lloyd, the daughter of Edward Lloyd the chemist at Morfan,



Miss Lloyd lived opposite the white canopy

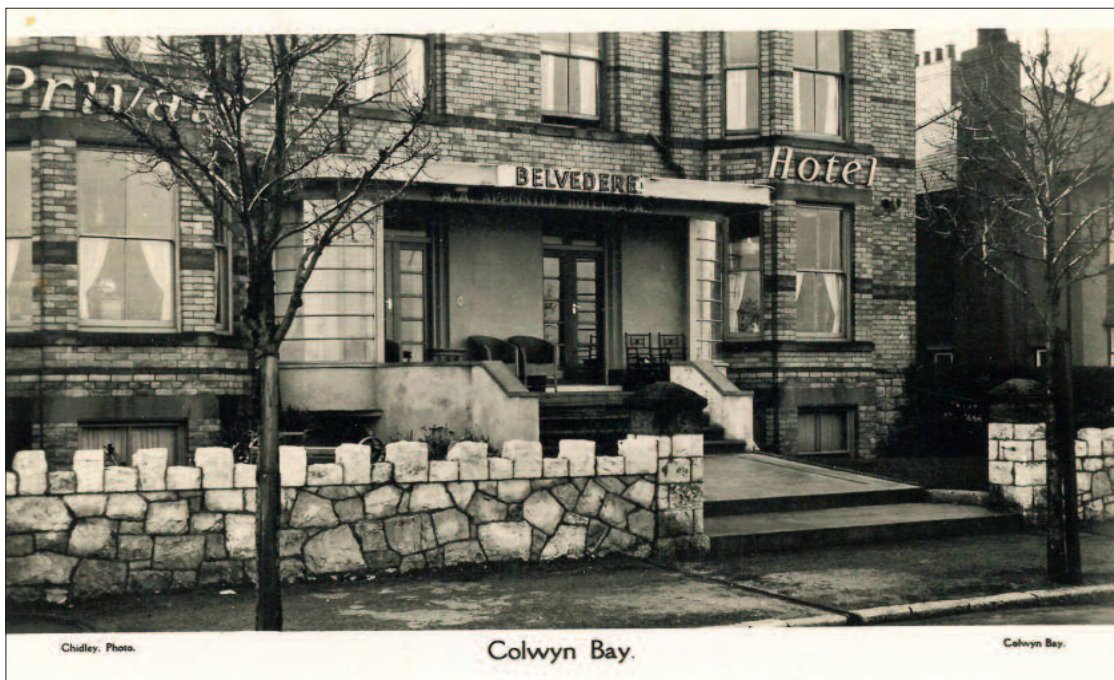
Conway Road in Colwyn Bay speak Esperanto in 1902, thirty four years before Tividar Schwartz in Budapest felt the need to adopt a new unique Esperanto surname? Miss Lloyd's registration number in the Adresaro de Esperantistoj was 7318 which appeared alongside her address in Colwyn Bay, with other people living in Moscow, Paris and Olomouc in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The building which housed Edward Lloyd's chemist shop, which he ran with the help of his daughter, still stands and used to be home to Johnsons the Cleaners, opposite the present site of Barclays Bank; it was also the premises from which Miss E A March ran

her milliner's business.

Two other young ladies from Colwyn Bay are registered in the Adresaro de Esperantistoj, Elizabeth Selbie, (number 13915) who lived in Glen Holme, Abergele Road, and Alice Ayles, (number 13943) who lived in a boarding house, Arvon House, on East Parade. All the buildings on East Parade were demolished to make way for the A55. These ladies, in an age before television, telephones, computers, record players and central heating, no doubt found the study of Esperanto interesting, intriguing, almost like being a members of a secret society; a hobby in which they could indulge themselves in their ample free time while believing that Esperanto was the language of the future.

The Colwyn Bay girls no doubt led happy, carefree lives, in which the study of Esperanto was a pleasurable pastime, for Tividar and his son Paul however, their experiences were anything but peaceful. In 1944 Paul was rounded up in Budapest by the Russians and marched towards Russia, but escaped and returned home to a ruined city. Thus it is that a little used, made-up language connects disparate peoples, with experiences unimaginable to each other, across the world from Hungary to Colwyn Bay.



The Belvedere Hotel, East Parade, Conway Road