

THE PEBI KILNS



Pebi Kiln

Seemingly, in old age, the past comes back to us too easily. Jim Cadbury-Brown the architect, who's masterpiece was the 1962 Royal College of Art, was once reminded by Clough Williams-Ellis of Portmeirion fame (NB March Journal 2001) when admiring a magnificent avenue of limes on his estate; "Start young" he said, "and see what happens. Sheer magic". A magical spot is to be found in a Llysfaen wood, young men were here once upon a time.

One hundred years ago the Coed Coch Estate used to quarry the limestone from the Llysfaen escarpment which over-looks Betws-yn-Rhos and Dolwen, fire it in kilns and then use the lime to spread over the adjoining fields and the evidence of this activity is still there to-day.

The remnants of two kilns lie on the Pebi land in Llysfaen. Pebi probably derives its name from either being near the ovens (or kilns), because Pebi could be derived from the word Popti which means oven, or from the fact that on this piece of land the army used to base themselves years and years ago and they would have lived in tents; pebi

(Pebell) means tent and this could have been tented (Pebyll) land.

Woods now encircle the stone kilns which lie in what would have originally been a small quarry. The limestone, in large chunks, was used to construct the kilns, just below the cliff. The stone must have been heavy and the workmen must possibly have used horses to pull in into place and some sort of crude crane to hoist them on top of one another. They were wonderful builders for not only have the kilns stood the test of time but they are also almost perfectly cylindrical and wonderfully functional. Although made of limestone themselves, when the firing took place

in the kiln, the limestone wall of the kiln was not affected because the workers clad the inside with clay which contained and absorbed the heat. The bowl of the kiln would have been fitted with wood, moss and bramble and then topped with a raft of wood on which would have been balanced the limestone; as the heat below intensified so the lime was extracted from the stone, falling into the pit below.

As the kilns were built on the side of the hill the Coed Coch labourers were able to construct two tracks; one above the kilns so they could easily put the burning material and the stone in and on the kiln and a track at the base of the kiln so that they could drive a cart up to the hole or channel from which they would draw out the lime.

Today the scene is tranquil and quiet, all that can be heard are the grazing sheep and the contented birds. In the late 1800s this spot at Pebi would have been a hive of activity, quarrying stone, hauling it across to the kilns, men scurrying about making fires, collecting wood, heaving away the lime. The woods would have rung to the sound of a raucous cacophony of working men, little realising that the evidence of their passing would be with us still, covered in ivy, in Llysfaen. Sheer Magic.



Pebi Kiln

BOLESŁAW PALCZYKIEWICZ The Builder

Boleslaw Palczykiewicz was the worst mechanic the Germans ever had. Evidently all the military vehicles he serviced broke down! He was born at Zawadow in the Stryj district of the West Ukraine on the 29th September, 1924, the child of Wladyslaw and Aniela (nee Jacek). In those days the Ukraine was part of Poland, but after the Germans invaded in 1939 and conscripted the teenage Bolselaw, the region had a checkered career, becoming part of the U.S.S.R. and then an independent country. Boleslaw managed to escape from the German army and he joined the British Army, enlisting in the 2nd Polish Corps in Italy on 21st November, 1945. He served in the Corp. H.Q. Eventually he was honourably discharged on 20th November, 1947 and received the War Medal. Somehow he made his way to Great Britain and fetched up in Penmaenmawr. The rest of his family, all of them, were killed by the Germans.

After the war was over he began to carry out small building jobs and worked mainly in Bangor, cycling there and back each day from Penmaenmawr. He then moved to Penrhyn Bay and lived in a caravan in someones back garden. After he met his wife, Olga Mary, they moved into a house on Llanrwst Road, Upper Colwyn Bay.

Olga worked in Melias Ltd delicatessen shop at 9 Abergele Road, opposite Woolworths (now Owen's Hi Fi). Boris would pop round from his workshop at all times of the day until one day she said 'yes'. Another employee at Melias was Sarah Price, the mother of the future local solicitor.

Mr. Palczykiewicz was a hard worker and insisted that his work was of a high standard; after a few years he had 40 men working for him and he had a workshop behind Waterworth's shop in Ivy Street, Colwyn Bay, in which he installed his sister-in-law, Eileen Grogan as secretary. The workshop was a busy place and was also bang opposite the town mortuary; He was a devout Catholic and attended St. Joseph's Church with great diligence; he also did a lot of building and repair work on the Church. As was the custom of those days he used a lot of Brylcreem on his hair and one day when he was helping at Mass in Church, lighting the alter candles, he got too close to the taper and set light to his hair, the Brylcreem acting as a good substitute for paraffin.

Boleslaw became known to one 'an all as Boris, he was a clever man who could speak seven languages. Sometimes the police would ask him to act as an interpreter for them when they went to the Polish settlement camp in Llysfaen. In the early sixties and seventies he spent a lot of time in

the Victoria Club (The Vic) opposite the Queens Hotel in Old Colwyn where he and his friends would play pontoon even wagering their car log books.

One winters day in about 1962, when he had the contract to paint Colwyn Bay Pier, he sent a gang of men to get on with the work. Five of them were sat on a plank of wood which was dangling over the side of the pier. These five, John Evans, Stan Maco, Russell Moris, Bill White and one other were working hard, unaware that the cold frost had got in the cracks in the wooden plank; all of a sudden it snapped and three of them went hurtling into the sea. All five survived, clinging desperately to the wood and doggy paddling back to the promenade. John Evans was the only swimmer amongst them and Bill White reported afterwards that he just grabbed John's coat and was pulled along to the shore. No boat could get to them because they also were iced up and stuck to the sea shore. When eventually the lot of them got to Colwyn Bay Hospital, all that they could hear was the clattering of cups and saucers as they shivered their way back to life.

On another occasion his men were working on the outside of Rhydwen, Jones & Davies, the furniture shop in Station Road. Two men were standing on a plank of wood which was balanced on two trestles; they were about six feet off the ground. One of them, Russell Davies, fell off and fortunately landed on his feet, then the other man fell off and landed straight in a pot of paint which proceeded to fly all over Mr. Davies. In 1976 Mr. Palczykiewicz's son started work for his father. They received the contract to refurbish and update the cells in Bethesda Police Station. His son was instructed to fill in all the cracks and fissures on the walls of the cells. The son, also known as Boris, remembers, 30 years later, how his father's workmen locked him in the cell and would not let him out until he had finished the work.

All this gives you a flavour of a different age, when work was conducted in a less regulated manner and health and safety were concepts which were not adhered to with quite the same seriousness as we attach to them today.

In the winter, when the conditions were no good for decorating, the men would be up on the roofs of houses replacing and mending the slates; Boris would throw a dust sheet over the roof to stop his men from sliding off! He would buy old paint and half used cans of paint, pour it all in an old iron drum and build a fire beneath the drum to soften up the contents, then he would say, "there you are lads, off you go and use

that". On tall buildings he would use three 25 foot length ladders lashed together with rope to make a bendy wobbling ladder of 75 feet. All his men were hard workers, Harry Lang the brickie, Robin Filer the decorator; they worked long hours, in difficult conditions, in awful circumstances, as did most men working in the building trade in those days.

On another occasion, one of his men was working on the asbestos covered roof of a local government building. He jumped up but when he landed he fell straight through the roof landing on the top of the filing cabinet in the office below, leaving him with his head only above the roof, the asbestos surrounding his neck.

Mr. Palczykiewicz was one of those indispensable men who could turn his hand to any type of building or decorating work. He and his men did not necessarily build any distinguished lasting memorial of a building, but they did help to maintain the fabric of Colwyn Bay, they enhanced the appearance of our buildings. They helped people to improve their houses, converting lofts into bedrooms, adding bathrooms or building extensions. Home improvements are a social good, which ought to be encouraged by the Government, not punished by higher taxes as they are at the moment and Mr. Palczykiewicz was doing this good work way before our homes were banded for taxation purposes; the good old days.

When he was 49 years old in 1973, he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. He continued to work, but from that moment on he found it more and more difficult to carry on making the business successful. His wife, Olga Mary died on 26th July, 1976 when their three children were teenagers; he died on 17th March, 1987. Their bodies are buried together in Bron-y-Nant Cemetery, his, a long long way from his boyhood home of Zawadow to which he never returned.

Boris and his men were good builders and decorators and as we remember them we can see that there is nothing shameful in finding comfort in echoes of the past. If as the poet said, architecture is frozen music, why not classical music? Why always Modernism's heavy metal? But there is a dichotomy in the present world as the pace of change whirls along at an every increasing pace. Eighteen years after his death, his life teaches us vividly, that the only constant we have in our lives, is change. We, today, must follow Boleslaw's example and embrace change. We ought to heed the advice echoed in the musical 'Salad Days' and remember not to look back.

ANGORFA

The triangle of land bordered by Abergele, Kings and Llysfaen Roads in Old Colwyn used to contain the one home, Angorfa, (The Anchorage). This house is now the Lyndale Hotel, (in 1937 it was the Sunshine Cafe run by Miss D. Wood) with the North Wales 4 x 4 Garage Centre at the apex where Abergele and Llysfaen Roads go their own separate ways. In the 1930s the garage was the Edgar P. Jackson Garage and more recently was called the Blue Bird Garage owned and run by Stan Dewhurst. In the 1930s there used to be a sign post at this point where the roads diverge, which read '40¹/₄ miles to Chester and 40¹/₄ miles to Wrexham.' There was also a solid stone horse trough here which was eventually moved to Rhos-on-Sea opposite the Aberhod, where it remains to this day.



Angorfa / Lyndale Hotel

In the 1920s at the top of Angorfa's garden, alongside Kings Road the owners of The Queens Hotel (now the Queens Nursing Home) built a large garage to house the guest's cars. The original owners of the Hotel had not anticipated the future popularity of this new fangled invention!

The Queen's Garage has now gone, to be replaced by four detached houses joined together by their garages, while on the corner of Kings Road and Llysfaen Road there is now a large ugly Manweb electrical power station. Behind the Lyndale Hotel, alongside Llysfaen Road, stands the original Angorfa horse stable. It is now a bit broken down and ivy runs up the wall but the hay loft is still intact and the wooden horse trough from which the horses snuffled their food still clings to the interior wall. The Broadbent family, who lived in Angorfa, had made their money in an iron foundry in Stayley Bridge. In the early 1920s they employed two maids, Amelia and Elizabeth Hughes, the aunt and mother of a present member of this Society. These two ladies had brothers, one of whom was always known as Jollah and owned the Fish and Chip Shop on Abergele Road; now closed Oldhams Supper Bar was known locally as Ray's delicatessen!.

There was an advertisement for Oldhams in the programme printed for the Celebrity Concert held at the Supreme Cinema, Old Colwyn on Cefn Road (now Summerfield's store) on Sunday, November 28th, 1948, which stated, "The finest of Fish Chips: Makers of the original 'Colwyn Potato Crisp". Jollah was



Angorfa Stables, Llysfaen Road

an excellent footballer and one of the best crown green bowlers in North Wales. He was a founder member of the Old Colwyn Bowling Club. Another brother, Gwilym, in July 1916 had fought as an officer at Memetz Wood with the 38th Royal Welch Fusiliers Division (known as Lloyd George's Welsh Army), where all his men had been killed around him. There had been vicious hand to hand fighting and innumerable acts of courage and over 4000 Welsh deaths and casualties in this heroic action.

All these memories and houses and electrical stations and hotel are the product of the Angorfa home and its garden. The Broadbent family lived in isolated splendour looking out across the fields to the sea and the boats lay in Anchorage. A different world.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Number 15 Whitehall Road, Rhos-on-Sea was built in 1906. It is surrounded by a Ruabon Red brick wall, (NB Journal September 2001) and is a good, well maintained, substantial property. It is called CANBERRA and was christened thus when it was built. The original name plate, with white lettering chiselled into black marble, is still on the wall beside the front door. Canberra is the Australian or Aboriginal word for 'welcome'; hence its use as the name of the Australian capital city and as the name used by the original friendly owners of Number 15 Whitehall Road.

Number 5, St. Paul's Close, Colwyn Bay, until recently the home of Ian Curry Hughes, who was born in the Eagles Farm,

Mochdre, is called KYRTONIA. Mr. Hughes' middle name was given to him by his father because it was Dr. Curry who delivered him into the world in Nant-y-Glyn Maternity Home and the house is so called because the original owner fought at the battle at Kyrtonia during the Gallipoli War. (NB Journal September, 1994: History in a Name).

Number 38, Yerburch Avenue, Colwyn Bay is named Alverton. In the 1930s and 1940s there were two hotels in Colwyn Bay, the St. Enochs and next door, The Alverton. They were on Marine Road across from the Colwyn Bay Hotel, (now the Princess Court). Eventually the proprietor of The St. Enochs bought The Alverton building and

amalgamated the two hotels as one which they called the St. Enochs and Alverton. The owners of the hotel from 1950 to 1990 were George and Pat Owen and they christened the whole hotel simply St. Enochs Hotel. When, sixteen years ago, they retired and moved to a house in Yerburch Avenue, they, in remembrance of their happy and successful working relationship called their new home 'Alverton'. "We can't call it St. Enochs", said Mrs. Owen. And now in 2005 there is talk of demolishing the St. Enochs building along with the Marine Hotel and then all that will remain of this hotel's history will be the name above the door of 38 Yerburch Avenue.

RHOS COUNTY AND SLATERS GARAGE

Herbert Salisbury was born on 2nd January, 1907. He lived as a boy in Old Colwyn and went to Abergele County School. When he was 16 years old (in 1923) he left home and went to work for Rolls Royce.

In 1939 he joined the Officers Reserve and became a member of the Indian army for the next 6 years. Eventually he became a Lieutenant Colonel in charge of 2000 men. The day he left the army in Manderlay in Burma, his unit was inspected; the final paragraph of this report read, "This officer is above average" Mr. Salisbury still has the report and when he returned home to Old Colwyn in 1947 he showed the Officer's

Report to his father and his father broke down in tears at the thought and at the honour that a son of his brought up in humble circumstances should have risen to such a grade in life that he would deserve such plaudits.

Mr. Salisbury's mother (Sarah Salisbury, nee Davies) had two sisters, Edith and Alice. Cordellia who lived in Albert Road, Old Colwyn. Cordellia married Donald Slater before World War I.

Before the 1st World War, Donald Slater had been the chauffeur to Frederic Payne at Beech Holme, Pwllcrochan Avenue, Colwyn Bay. Mr. F. W. Payne was a Methodist Clergyman. He had been instrumental in starting Epworth College for boys in Rhyl. He then felt there should be corresponding school for girls in Colwyn Bay and he started, with the help of Miss Wemm as headmistress, Penrhos College for Girls, in Gilbertville on the Colwyn Bay Promenade. At the time 1883 he lived in a house on the corner of Lansdowne Road and Pwllcrochan Avenue which he had named Rydal Mount. At the turn of the century he thought

of founding a boys school in Colwyn Bay and persuaded Mr. George Osborn to come from Bath to be the Headmaster of this new school. He told Mr. Osborn that he could buy his home off him which he did, and called the school after the existing name of the house. Mr. Payne moved from this corner house up the road to Beech Holme where he lived with his wife and children. It was here that Donald Slater (Herbert Salisbury's uncle) was the chauffeur. He was good at his work, helpful and intelligent.

Donald Slater was called up to serve as a soldier in the 1st World War; he survived and returned to Beech Holme to see if his chauffeuring job was still available. Mr. Payne said, "You deserve more than to be in service for the rest of your life, you are capable of far more and after what you have been through in the War, you deserve more; here is £500 go and start your own business with it."

So Mr. Slater started in a small way with the County Garage, Rhos-on-Sea. He then sold that and began a new business, using his own name, in Abergele. Slater's Garage.

Donald Slater's niece, Mrs. Florence Watson, is still alive and lives at Bryn Golau, Rhyd-y-Foel with her daughter Mrs. June Tindale. Mr. Slater's nephew, Herbert Salisbury, died on 30th April this year about a month after giving me all the above information.



The site of Mr. Slater's 1st garage, Rhos County

N.B. FEBRUARY 2005 JOURNAL - Herr Fitz Aucher and Garages

As additional information on the articles in the last issue it is of interest to note that Watsons Garage in the 1930s had a contract to supply Herr Aucher with petrol and to carry out the repairs on his work vehicles. Unfortunately the garage was left with a hefty unpaid bill when Herr Aucher ran out

of money. Dilys Thomas, the well respected Old Colwyn Historian, was working for Watsons Garage at this time and was earning the enormous sum of Seven shillings and six pence (37.5p) per week after having served a one month probationary period at Two shillings and six pence (12.5p) per

week! She left school when she was 16 years old because Mr. Watson, while she was still a school girl, had called at her home when she was out; he spoke to her father explaining that he had a job for her and her father told Mr. Watson that she would start the next day.

RECYCLOPAEDIA

It all started several years ago when I visited my Daughter living near Bath. There was a booklet on a table "Recyclopaedia" by Horsham Civic Society listing items of domestic waste that could and should be recycled and where to dispose them. On my return I suggested to our committee that it would be a project well worth copying. It agreed and we printed a list of

items that could be recycled and where to dispose of them. The Booklet was printed at the expense of the Society and delivered to most households in Colwyn Bay. It has had several revisions and has been taken over by the Conwy County Council (in the last revision they omitted to acknowledge its parentage by the Civic Society! this regrettable omission must be remembered

by our Committee when next we assist the Council.)

Incidentally, Horsham is a delightful Village well worth visiting and especially "Horsham Court" which is a marvellous privately owned Country House open to the Public, and has been featured by BBC TV.

John Lee