

History and recollections of living in Nazareth Post Office
(following on from the article by Richard Jones)

At the outbreak of war Alwyn Morris was teaching in Liverpool. With school children being evacuated from the cities, he returned to North Wales to 11, Rhos Dulyrn, Nebo. He took over the Post Office in Nazareth in 1942. It must have been agreed at that time that Ann Jones could see out her days in the house, because she lived there with my parents for several years. I am told that there was a huge bonfire in the field next to the Post Office (opposite H□n Siop where Mary Hughes lived), at the end of the war.

Nazareth had no electricity. My brother can remember at least two portable gas or paraffin lanterns being lit in the shop and then hooked onto poles to act as street lamps, one at Goleufryn (Bryn Golau) and the other at Groeslon Parc. There was electricity in the Post Office though, because my father had wired the house himself so that he could use a generator. Unfortunately, I don't think it was a great success for I can only remember going to bed with a candle and there were paraffin lamps in most rooms. The only heating was a coal fire or a paraffin stove, so a hot water bottle was essential. I had a woollen blanket on my bed which I still have some 66 years later and which we still use in our touring caravan – real quality! MANWEB, the electricity board, finally connected us to the National Grid in 1952 when I was 7 years old. I can remember coming home that evening and entering every room to switch the lights on, but then forgetting to switch them off!

In 1942 the only running water was outside the back door. My father built a glass-roofed conservatory on the back of the house and that is where all the food preparation/washing up was done. There was no double glazing and it was bitterly cold in the winter! Around this time, one of the bedrooms was converted into a bathroom (previously there had been an outside toilet).

As described by Richard Jones in the preceding article, I can remember paraffin being sold from the back of the shop, but the tank was later moved outside. The post office counter was situated as described. I can still remember the telephone number – Penygroes 242 (originally 42 I am told). In my time, a post office van used to deliver the post to outlying farms. Once or twice I was taken along for the ride. There was no passenger seat and the postman made it clear that he wasn't insured for any passengers. This would never happen today.

Outside was a double-decker warehouse. The ground floor was the garage and the upper floor was used to store flour, the sacks hoisted by means of a pulley system through a trap door. Later on, this upper floor became my father's workshop. He also used it as a vantage point from where he took a daybreak aim at the jacks that were nesting in the chimney pots. I was forewarned of what was about to happen so that the blast of the gun would not alarm me.

He built a greenhouse in the garden and grew tomatoes. On a Thursday it was half day closing and he went to Caernarfon for County Council meetings. At the end of school there was no one at home (my mother was headteacher at Cwmystradllyn and Golan schools and didn't arrive home until approx 4.30), so I was left some milk and bread in the greenhouse to keep me going and I could pick a fresh tomato. My love of tomatoes has stayed with me and a tomato sandwich is still my favourite snack!

In the early days, my father had a pony (Polly) and trap and used it as a means of transport between our house and a smallholding that he rented in Pant Glas (Tan Ffordd). Once, on a return journey from Aberdesach, Polly took fright and began galloping along the narrow lanes - a hair-raising experience for my brother, who remembers the incident vividly.

We always had cats and dogs. One cat, Twm, used to greet us off the bus at Graianfryn (Beudy Mawr) after ten at night and walk back home with us along the wall. He used to dart across the field for the last 100 metres to be first at the back door.

I can remember two dogs, Gwyn who was a menace because he chased any cycle or motor cycle that came past, and Pete, a Golden Retriever who came to us from Ty Gwyn Uchaf. He was a bit of a wanderer and often searched me out at school in Llanllyfni. If my father couldn't pick him, up he would be kept secure until the end of the school day and I used to take him home with me on the bus.

Aunty Maggie from Tan Drwfwl came down to the shop each day in a pony and trap, bringing the milk churns for collection by the Chwilog Dairy. The pony was Phoebe (Ffebi) and I used to feed her sugar lumps. I am reliably informed that she was also partial to cigarette ends!!

I remember well the Eisteddfodau held in the chapel. In fact, there were annual eisteddfodau in almost every village at that time. I don't think that there was a resident minister but I do remember a visiting preacher, Mr T E Nicholas, who travelled from Aberystwyth once a year by public transport, and stayed with us at the Post Office. I remember that he sported a goatee, always wore sandals and a bow tie and was a heavy smoker, as were many men in those days, but always used a cigarette holder. He became a dentist and my brother informs me that he used to extract his own teeth! (If you 'google' him you will find it a really interesting read). His bardic name was 'Niclas y Glais' after his time as a minister in Glais near Swansea from 1904 -1914. He was a socialist, a pacifist, a champion of the disadvantaged, a journalist and a poet. At the beginning of the second world war, he and his son were imprisoned without trial and without any accusations being made against them, on the orders of the Chief Constable of Ceredigion. They were released after four months. He wrote poems whilst in jail and smuggled them out on toilet paper. When I looked him up, I immediately recognised him from his photograph, but I was totally unaware that he was such a remarkable person. He was one of the founder members of the British Communist Party and delivered the service at Kier Hardy's funeral in 1915. He died in Aberystwyth in 1971 at the age of 91.

There was a weekly Band of Hope in the chapel during the winter. In my time it was run by Emllyn Phillip Jones from Nebo. He and his wife and daughter (Ceri?) used to walk down in all weathers. I can only remember one of the activities – each week there was a drawing competition with a prize for the winner. I used to take it very seriously and spent a lot of time on my entry.

My days in Nazareth were care free. I had a bike, I used to play in my father's field (Cae B□g) where I camped in summer and where I made a 'den' by digging out a hollow and putting a bedstead on it and covering the bedstead with turf which served as a roof. My father used to grow vegetables and fruit in the field and had two beehives. We had the equipment to extract the honey and this we did in the kitchen at home. Each summer two boys from Burton on Trent (the Sneddons) used to come to stay with their grand parents at Hafod Unos and we used to play cricket, football and hide and seek in the hay barns.

My parents sold the house in 1956. They moved to Llanllyfni where they had opened another grocer's shop. (At that time there were 5 shops in Llanllyfni – our shop, Shop Dilys, Stanley House, Glan Aber and the Post Office). The Nazareth Post Office was taken over by Mrs Thomas (wife of Harry Thomas) at Glanaber. Harry Thomas died in 1957, but Mrs Thomas kept the Post Office until approximately 1961. It then returned to its original 'home.'

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