



The
HOUSE
on the
CORNER
— TROVA —

TROVA -- A SHORT HISTORY

I was pleased when Eleanor and Mark asked me to write this history of this house and hope that it may interest those who visit. For us Trova holds memories of golden times (past summers are always better) and of great happiness.

Before they knew each other well, my parents had each visited Nefyn on holiday in the 1930s. They married during the Second World War after which my father established himself as a surgeon. Until the mid 1950s our main summer holidays were spent in small hotels, latterly in Salcombe. By chance a booking mistake in 1955 meant that we had to rearrange a week's holiday in September. Instead of a caravan on the Warren at Absersoch, we found ourselves at the Cecil Hotel in Morfa Nefyn.

My father was about to feel the impact of my boarding fees and was still raw from payment of the huge sum of £100 for three weeks full board in Salcombe. It happened that 3 Mount Pleasant near to the Cecil was on the market for £650 which he soon calculated would show a saving on Devon hotels over a few years. The deal to buy this slightly strange place -- which had originally been two cottages but was by then united -- was soon done. Minimal improvements were made and it was ready by March 1956



The picture here was taken in the summer of 1956, the first year of my parents' ownership of 3 Mount Pleasant. My grand-parents paid their first visit and were rewarded by a huge storm which blew out one of the sash windows in the middle of the night. My grandfather got up to find my father struggling to board up the opening. He expressed some doubt about the notion of second home ownership but became a regular visitor. Unhappily my grandmother did not as she died later in the same year.

We enjoyed our time at Mount Pleasant. It had two staircases which came in useful during chasing and hiding games. The rooms were oddly arranged and only joined by a glassed-in passage at the back. The loft was a boys' haven with a trap door (operated by rope pulley) and a roof light looking towards Carn Fadryn which allowed us to scan the area with a telescope

Comfort, warmth and freedom from damp were not features and despite many hours covering brown paint it remained gloomy.

The great change came from a meeting in the Bryncynan between my parents and John Parry whom they knew as the local coal merchant who is shown with his wife on the right. My parents were surprised when the licensee placed two drinks on the bar in front of them. On enquiring where they had come from, the licensee pointed to John.

John sidled over to my parents and asked if they had ever thought of building a house in the village. John speculated in land in a modest way. His home was Swn-y-Mor, on the sea side of Trova. At various times he had acquired land around his house from the Wynne-Finch estate at Cefnamwlch. Some parcels he then developed -- such as the two bungalows next to Trova along Lon Golf



The deal with John was soon done as the site was ideal. The land may once have had some fruit trees on it but had never formed an integral part of the Swn-y-Mor garden. It was not cultivated as the views below show. They must have been taken after the purchase in the winter of 1959. This shows the cottages opposite and shed on the left which are still the same. The Linksway Hotel to the right has sadly been replaced by flats thanks to the stupidity of the local planners.



My brother John, then aged 7, posed, somewhat reluctantly for the photo below taken looking in the opposite direction. On the left is an upturned clinker boat which is being readied for the season. Behind the boat is the Parry's Ty Bach, of which more later.



An architect, Mr Abbott, was engaged. It cannot be said that he produced a masterpiece but there were many constraints. Apart from cost, the planners were difficult. The site is wedge shaped and it was difficult to fit the house within the 'building lines' which were then sacred. My mother insisted that the living room should face South. The planners did not want bedrooms upstairs (they were annotated as 'Storage' on the drawings). She also refused to have a kitchen at the back because she wanted to watch people passing. Below she is sitting in the bow window in the living room whilst my father poses with John in the porch -- now part of the sunroom.



Dick Parry (John's brother) was the builder and worked pretty quickly. As I remember the house was completed within nine or ten months and was ready for the summer of 1960. Below (left) is a view of the site with the work well on. The corrugated structure tied down by guy lines is almost certainly a 1960s portaloos.

Dick's was the best reputation in the village. He had a corps of sound tradesmen which included Hughie Hughes (our next door but one neighbour at Mount Pleasant), the plasterer and tiler, Griffith Johnson-Jones (who later became a friend and is seen to the left with Dick) and others whose names I cannot recall.

The view on the next page shows the very recently completed house. My parents had wished to give Trova a light appearance. The planners would allow painted render but Trova was faced with one of their alternatives called Cream Spar. This was a layer of micaceous chips set in a cement matrix and my parents thought it to be brighter.





The yellow colour for the outside timber was chosen for the same reason and has always been used. The main interior colour for the doors was a shade of purple never now seen.

The trees in the garden were removed and most was put to grass.

My father persuaded his pathologist colleague Dr Jackson, seen on the left below, to bring a rotovator from Ashton-under-Lyne to prepare the ground. This must have been at the time the house was being finished. What became of the pictureseque wooden wheel barrow, I cannot say.

Once the house was complete the question of a name was discussed between Roland and Diana. They wished to have a Welsh name but knew no Welsh. My mother encountered John Parry one day and asked for him to tell her what 'House on the Corner' was in Welsh. John pushed his cap further back on his head, paused for thought and drew a biro and a cigarette packet from the pocket of his tweed farmer's jacket. He tore the back of the packet off and



wrote 'T R O V A'. This was carved on a timber plaque and ceremoniously put on the 3 bar gate which was at the entrance.

Unfortunately, John's Welsh may have been as bad as my mother's. For Trova is not a Welsh word nor even a corruption of the Welsh for 'House on the Corner'. It was some time before we discovered. Our Welsh friends were too well-mannered to question us, or perhaps they thought it had a meaning in some other language or was Northern English dialect. My parents told their English friends the supposed meaning and felt proud to be supporters of the Welsh language.

To this day the meaningless name remains as a reminder of John who, with his wife and daughter Eirlys remained our neighbours until Mrs Parry died and John moved to a bungalow on Lon Golf. He delighted my mother by cooking fresh lobsters for her, this being a task for which she was too squeamish. Eirlys married and moved first to Bala and then Cardiff. She became a folk singer and actress of some renown, being recently named by as an inspiration by Duffy.

At about the time Trova was completed, John offered my mother another house, Bwlch which is three doors nearer the beach. She could not resist the purchase although Mr and Mrs Williams were sitting tenants. This meant that we now had three houses and for tax reasons my parents formed the grandly-named Lleyn Property Company Limited. John Parry's last deal was to sell us the Secret Garden

When Trova was started I was 11 years old; it was about this time that my portrait which hangs in the smaller downstairs bedroom was painted – by George Wain, the art teacher at the Grammar School in Hyde where we then lived. I was away at school and did not see much of the work on the house. My brother John was still at home which explains why he appears on some of the photographs taken at that time whilst I do not.

But I can remember the excitement of our first holiday at Trova. It seemed marvellous to be close to the beach and to avoid the evening walk back to Mount Pleasant. John and I were entranced by our bedrooms under the roof. The place seemed light and cheerful after Mount Pleasant and did not have the same smell of damp.

The house had features which were novel and intrigued us. We treated the post of spiral staircase (designed to fit into a space too small for a conventional stair) as a fireman's pole. Meals were taken at 'the hatch', a transatlantic breakfast-bar arrangement which we had never seen other than in films.

On the next page is one such breakfast. My father took the photograph from the kitchen. The blue and white crockery and the table and chairs which are behind and to my left are still in use at Bwlch.

Fifty years the village was different. Most of the development of holiday houses on the various small estates had not taken place so that the place was more compact. Despite what must have been a smaller population, it supported far more shops, Mike Massarelli, whom you may meet, has counted 17. There were two grocers, Park Stores still exists (although in a different place), but there was also W.P. ("Percy") Jones at the far end of the village.

Percy was a tiny man, probably around 5 feet tall, very neat and precise with sparse



dark hair slicked back. He always wore a white overall coat and an apron. The shop was as tidy as Percy. A particular fascination was to watch Percy or Mrs Jones (a head taller than her husband) operating the fierce chrome slicer to cut bacon and hams. Percy could also be seen abroad in a small van delivering to favoured customers.

Mr Roberts, the butcher, and Mr Hughes, the fruit and vegetable merchant, were almost opposite one another. The Post Office was a traditional post office which did not sell food but was the source of buckets, spades, balls and fishing gear. The haberdashery at the end of Part Stores sold much the same merchandise as is still available. Motorists had the choice of two garages, each selling petrol – Claremont Garage and Red Garage (to which Park Stores moved in 2014).

At the top of the retail tree was Mr John Ogwen Jones, the Chemist. Having a professional qualification placed him above the mere tradesmen. His other distinction was that he drove a Humber Hawk saloon which was said once to have belonged to Cary Grant.

There was a bank attached like a Siamese twin to the back of the Post Office, opening on occasional days and for limited hours; another bank competitor on one day a week in the front room of a shop on the Nefyn road.

Entertainment was in short supply. Apart from the Ty Coch at Portdinlleyn, there was no pub within the village. The Ship at Edern and the Bryncynan served drink but little, if any, food. It was unusual in those years to see a Welsh woman in a pub although the English were more brazen. No public licensed establishment could open on Sundays, which gave the bar of the Golf Club a good trade on the Sabbath from those who were members.

The Sabbath was well observed. There were three Nonconformist Chapels as well as St Mary's Church. People walked to Chapel or Church for the morning service,

carried a Prayer Book and wore their Sunday best clothes. During the afternoon Sunday Schools were open for the children. The Sunday drinking law was the subject of referenda held each seven years on a local basis. Over the years the 'dry' area shrank until even Gwynnedd and Anglesey succumbed to the boozers. My mother resolutely voted 'No' to any change on the theory that it would prevent the more undesirable tourists taking the trouble to come on a day trips.

Whether through the force of religion or not, the village seemed even more honest and safe than it is now. Most did not lock their doors but left the key in the polished Yale lock at the front door.

For fun one had to travel. The Town Cinema in Nefyn showed somewhat dated films on primitive equipment in the (now demolished) public hall on an occasional basis. Pwhelli boasted two cinemas, as did Porthmadog. Even Criccieth had one. There were occasional public dances at the public hall in Nefyn -- needless to say without alcohol.

The general atmosphere was more sombre. Houses were less brightly painted and the predominant colour was the grey of stone, render of walls or slate. Dark greens, browns and black were commonly used for doors and windows.

At night there was no street lighting. A bollard at the Bryncynan junction was lit and Roland had to cycle up each evening to tend and light the oil lamp inside.

Everyone knew everyone else and their business. People depended on those who lived and worked close to them. My mother always said that the society was "classless" and, although I suspect she was over-romantic, she had detected a cohesion not to be found in a mill town like Hyde. Local opportunity for the young was limited and, perhaps partly for this reason, education was thought very important even though success would very probably mean leaving for work elsewhere.

English visitors had been coming for very many years and the pattern of holidaymaking seemed unchanging. The few caravans occupied corners of farms. Many summer guests rented houses from resident families who would move out into the Ty Bach ("small house"). This was a garage or shed which had just enough space for the houseowning family for a couple of months. Mr and Mrs Parry moved into their adapted garage (seen in the photographs above), Mrs Williams at Bwlch had a one room brick bothy heated to fearsome temperature by a Rayburn stove on which she also cooked for guests. Griffith and Megan Johnson-Jones had a wooden shack next to the kennels of their Shetland Sheepdogs.

A smaller proportion of visitors owned or leased their summer houses and some were of long-standing – the Lowcocks at Porthdinlleyn, the Buckleys at Bwythyn Bridin on Morfa Nefyn beach, the Midwinters at Dora, the Waldes in the houses on Morfa Nefyn beach not occupied by the Buckleys and the Arnold-Fosters at Sea Breezes.

For a favoured few there were three hotels. The Cecil is now a care home. The Linksway was on the opposite corner to Trova and Fron Oleu was a small guest house/hotel in a pretty Georgian house set in a lush garden. It has now become The

Cliffs and lost almost all its charm in the process.

The same families would return year after year and for the same weeks. Although there were a few visitors at Easter, there were virtually none around Whit. The busy period was from late July until the return to school in mid-September.

The length of our stays meant that our cats came as well. In the 1960's our cat was an beautiful and affectionate Abbyssinian called "Daffy". She was a good traveller and since she bred regularly for a few years, her kittens came too.



For the teenagers the regular return of the same group of friends provided a ready-made social framework. Our pleasures were simple. During the day the beach and the sea were the attraction. Many families had sailing dinghies and some owned larger boats moored at Portdinlleyn.

Below is the line-up one August day at Lifeboat Bay; there are two GP 14s, an Enterprise, a Firefly and a Heron (not ours, I think). Such an array would not be unusual.



Our Heron had been made in his dining room by Tom Needham, a neighbour in Hyde. It was superbly built and gave us much pleasure. My father taught us to sail, presumably having taught himself. I enjoyed sailing more than John and am helming below.



In 1965 we outgrew the Heron and my father found a glass-fibre bilge-keeled tub called Faoileag for sale in Oban. I soon appropriated this to entertain groups of friends. My father's time was increasingly taken up by golf and he showed no resentment at the takeover. In the picture below I am rigging her for the day.

There were a few speedboats for the waterskiers and some fishing launches. For those with no boat of their own, Dick Roberts and Alan 'Rhiwlas' ran a ferry service to Lifeboat Bay at a fair of 6 pence.

Over the years the balance has tilted from sail to power. In that era Nefyn Sailing Club had a fleet of up to 20 or so taking part in regular races; on a good day the bay was peppered with sails.

The Golf Club attracted some, particularly because the subscription for Junior Members was set at £0.55



For the teenagers there was no organised evening activity. Until we were 18 or old enough to be passed off as 18 (which tended to be around calendar age 16+), we congregated at the Bay Tree, run by Mrs Ginders. During the day this was a traditional Cafe serving coffee and cake to those of riper years. In the evening it was taken over by our younger crowd who consumed the minimum quantities of hot chocolate, ice cream sodas and soft drinks necessary to prevent Mrs Ginders from ejecting us as uneconomic. We were aided and abetted by the serving staff who tended to be girls of our own age and may have preferred us to the daytime crowd.

Once pub age was attained, we deserted the Bay Tree and, being mobile, were able to move around the pubs of the area. The favourite was the Bryncynan but we patronised the Ship and ranged as far as Lithfaen, Tudweiliog, Sarn and occasionally Abersoch. Visits to restaurants were heavily constrained by lack of choice and lack of money. My favourite was the St Tudwals in Abersoch, presided over by Mrs Hogg.

Our fixed holiday time was the first three weeks in August and a lone week (supposedly "Study Leave" for my father) in September. This pattern continued during my teenage years and after I went to Oxford in 1966 but the social group thinned as many did not enjoy the long summer vacation. By the time I started work in 1971 Chris and I were courting and she tempted me to regular foreign travel. With my parents, the only trip abroad had been to Spain in 1967 but the 70s brought cheap air travel. For a few years our time at Trova reduced as we explored the world, although we always enjoyed at least one long holiday in Wales and often weekended.

Having married in 1973, we were blessed by the arrival of Eleanor in 1977 and the addition of Isabel in 1981. This resulted in more time spent in the UK and we took up a regular pattern of Easter, Whit and August holidays. For some years we used Trova, squeezing into with my parents if we coincided.

This picture shows Eleanor (top left) and Isabel (bottom right) with friends in the garden of Trova in the mid 1980's.



The children devised a number of innovative activities of which the most original was probably the painting and selling of beach shells and stones to passers-by to raise money for the lifeboat. Here they have set out their stall outside 'Nant' further down Lon Bridin.



In 1983 my father retired so that he and my mother spent most of the summer at Trova. They made it somewhat more comfortable with the addition of a modest central heating system. In the late 80s my parents decided to give up their flat in Wilmslow and move to live full-time at Trova. This was a halcyon time. Their health was good and they had a wide circle of local friends. My father played golf -- "incessantly" as he once said and fished from 'Ynys Las', a classic clinker launch.

On the next page are two photos of one fishing trip involving our children, my father and me.

Although it may be difficult to make out, I have noticed that I have one of our Burmese cats on my lap in the second. Doubtless the smell of the mackerel was of interest to him. My father bought a home smoker and became adept at smoking the mackerel fillets, handing the discarded morsels to the cats.

Shortly after the arrival of Isabel we decided that our presence for more than a short time was uncomfortable for my parents so commenced renting houses in the neighbourhood for our August holiday. Latterly we enjoyed the bucolic delights of Portdinlleyn Farm. During this period Trova remained our base, not least because it provided beach parking and storage for the dinghy and boat equipment.

Other than in August we stayed for shorter periods at Trova, sometimes with my parents. Eleanor would stay with her grand-parents on her own at other times.

In 1989 Mrs Williams at Bwlch who was by now widowed decided to move to Bangor. After a little soul-searching, we decided to take it on. In 1990 it was converted and extended and has since provided us with many holidays.

1992 saw the 50th anniversary of my parents wedding; they celebrated a supremely happy marriage and their years of companionship with a lunch party at Plas Bodegroes.



My mother had always wished to live at Trova but her time was cut short by her death in 1993 at the age of 76. We were fearful that my father may have found it difficult to cope with cooking and other domestic minutiae. Typically, he taught himself to prepare a small range of meals, adapting the recipes to achieve maximum simplicity in many cases. He applied the same minimalist approach to his domestic routine and became self-sufficient with only a fortnightly cleaner. Only when disturbed by the building of the Linksway flats did he think of moving.

We were able to give him a winter break for a period around Christmas in Cheshire but it became increasingly difficult to prise him away from Morfa Nefyn other than for short holidays in Majorca or in the UK which continued into his 90s.

At the age of 89 he decided that he had become uncompetitive on the golf course and ceased to play. Although this left a gap in his life, he was uncomplaining. The time on the golf course was replaced by time in the Trova sun room, as can be seen immortalised in the Google Streetview picture taken in September 2006 where he can just be made out studying the morning's Daily Telegraph.



My father's long and fulfilled life came to an end on 18 August 2013 at the age of 96. Although he had become increasingly frail he was still driving, trading on the stockmarket and following sport enthusiastically. Above all he was also able to see out his days in the house which he and my mother had first occupied 53 years before.

Eleanor has inherited the house and she and Mark have worked hard to bring it up to date and to give it a fresh look. They and the other members of our family hope that their guests will enjoy it as much as we have over the last half century.

By a piece of serendipity, the first tenants to make a booking in the new era were members of the family who had been the last tenants during the time my parents let the house some 40 years previously.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eleanor'.

