

MEMORIES OF OVERTON

Wrexham Road / Chester Street

Nos 1 to 3 Wrexham Road have the same gothic lancet casement windows as Dispensary Row on the opposite side of the road. During building work a blocked up door was uncovered between No 1 and No 2 so they might once have been joined.



No 1 was lived in by the Burgess's who in 1937 and 1940 were paying £5.17.0d a year rent to the Bryn y Pys estate, and then by Mrs Oaks (who was a Burgess) No 2 was lived in by Mrs Lightfoot who paid £5.12.0 a year rent

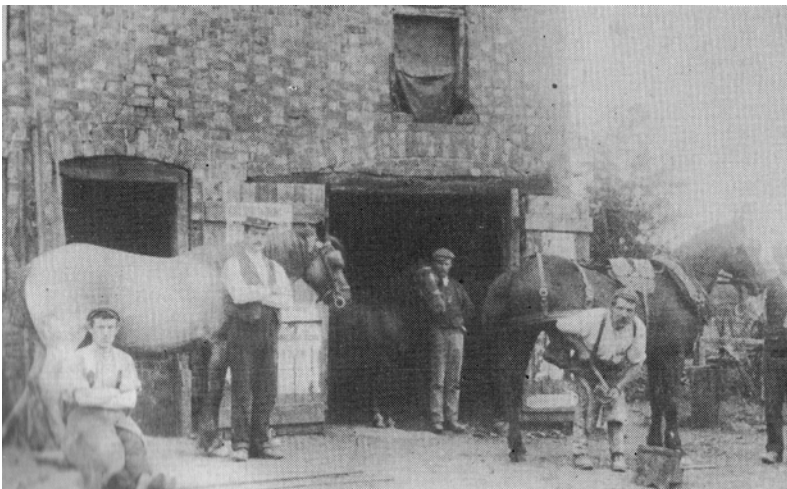
No 3 was the house of the blacksmith for the Bryn y Pys estate and next door, to the right was the Smithy.

The bellows, furnace and anvils were in the shop facing the road and the shoeing room was behind, horses being shod at the side of the smithy.

William Hughes (born 1801) was Blacksmith here from before 1851. His wife was Elizabeth – a “smith’s wife”.

He was succeeded by his son Charles born 1847, and by his sons John (1895 – 1976) and his brother Charlie, born 1890.

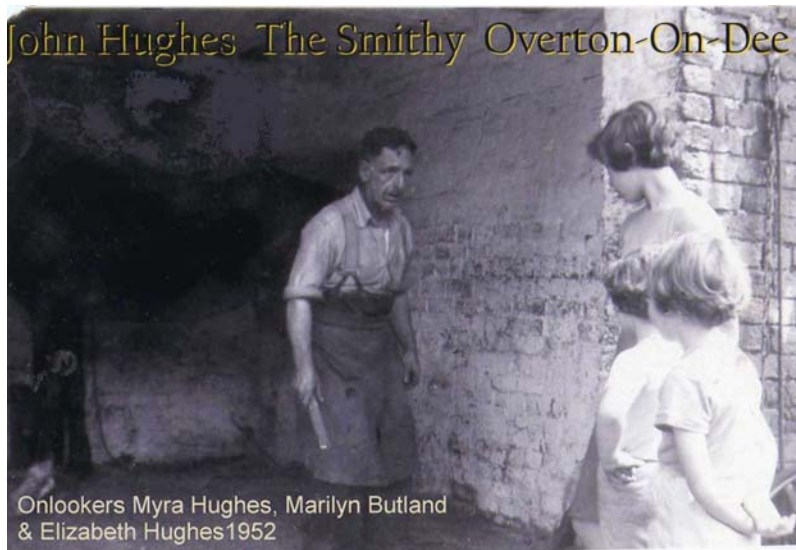
In 1848 William Hughes paid £12.6.0d rent a year for the Smithy to the estate, and in 1939 his grandsons Charlie and John paid £27 a year.



The picture is c1909 and shows Charles Hughes shoeing a horse, probably at a local farm. John Hughes is sitting down at the left.



This picture was taken in 1910 and shows the wedding of Margaret Hughes, sister of Charles & John to Bill Newman. Her father Charles is on the front row, brother John is behind the lady with the baby and Charlie (with moustache) behind the bride.



Onlookers Myra Hughes, Marilyn Butland & Elizabeth Hughes 1952

John Hughes shod the Overton's Grand National winner Poethlyn. (winner 1918 & 1919). He was also very proud that he shod the very valuable Nearco, "one of the greatest racehorses and most important sires of the 20th Century". The horse had been evacuated from Newmarket to Bryn-y-Pys for safety while the war was on.



The picture was taken in the Smithy, with John Hughes holding the horseshoe, Charles Hughes (nephew) and Mr Tom Crump (left).

The Smithy was remembered as always a grand place for a gossip for the men folk.

The Hughes family also rented a field which is now part of Maelor Court, and one which is now Parkside. In the Parkside field was large haystack. The gate way was where No 17 Maelor Court is now and the pump that was by the gate is still there.

John used to milk the 3 cows and ride his bike back to Wrexham Rd with a bucket of milk on each handlebar.

The milk was for the family but also went to Mrs Hilton Jones at the Hermitage (there was a small wooden gate behind Park View to the Hermitage) and to Mrs Roper (Mrs Woodhouse's mother) at Pen-y-glyn, both in Willow Street. John Hughes daughter, Olwen also remembers delivering milk to the Bollam family who lived at Pendyffryn and to Pritchards at the Alms Houses on Salop Rd.

Her sister, Myra, remembers her father telling her the Buffalo Bill came to the smithy, and that he had stayed at Pendas House.

William "Buffalo Bill" Cody brought his Wild West show to Wales in 1903-4. They put on the show in Ruabon on May 29th and on May 30th 1903 in Shrewsbury so this could be the time that he came to the village (Myra's father would have been 8 yrs old.)

Park View is the house to the right of the Smithy and was built in 1835 on land that was called "The Gardens". This could have been the gardens of the Hermitage in Willow Street. It was lived in by Johnny and Verdi Morris, who was organist and choir master at the Parish Church.

In the 1920s Mr Davison left the house in his will to his nephew in America who did not want to live there and who wrote to Major Peel asking who would like to buy it, Major Peel recommended Inspector Owen Jones who was about to retire (Nov 3rd 1925). He had been given money (£200) from a collection on his retirement, and a barometer.

Later when the house was too big for him he exchanged homes and sold Park View to his daughter in law Ellen and son John Hughes and he and his wife moved to the Laurels, Salop Road.

Peel House to the right, was built in 1905 as the Peel Memorial Hospital and was built by public subscription in memory of Edmund Peel who died in 1904. The hospital had 4 beds, and it is remembered as being very cold. Nurse Lloyd (from Yorkshire) was matron. She had two daughters; one helped her mother as a nurse and one as the housekeeper. Peel House remained in use as a hospital until 1926. In the 1930s it was rented to Capt D J Ross and was lived in by army officers during WWII.

For a short period after the war Mrs Peel and Sarah lived at Peel House before Mrs Peel married Lord Kenyon. Olwen and Myra Hughes remember Sarah coming to look at them through the hedge and sometimes asking them to go and play.

In 1949 the tenant was Mr C H Hobbs, his house keeper was Mrs Reynolds. He was a grand old gentleman. He invited the Hughes sisters next door to see the 1953 coronation on his tiny black and white television. Myra remembers that every time they played God Save the Queen everyone had to stand up. In 1960 Peel House became the village surgery with a gate from the side by Park View. Dr Matt Samson later moved the surgery to the old outbuildings of Gwydir House in Penyllan Street, (now the Maelor Vet practice).

On the far side of Willow Street are two semi-detached cottages, 8 & 9, Rosalyn Cottage and Yew Tree Cottage, both built in the early 19th century. In the 1930s & 40s Nurse Williams lived in Rosalyn Cottage.

To the right of them a new house has been built on what was the tennis court in the garden of Ashleigh.



*Cottages from Ashleigh
on the left to No 16*

The six early 19th century cottages from there to the drive way to the Brow are estate cottages and in the early 20th century were occupied by Bryn y Pys employees and their families.

The first, Ashleigh, which extends to the roadside, was occupied by the estate joiner in 1901, William Phillips. Later he moved to Ivy House with his daughter Nellie (see below).

Next door, Greenfield, was the home of gardener, James Bagshaw

Next door Groves Cottage, was lived in by Coachman, Albert Davies.

Next door Ivy House, was lived in by Coachman, Ernest Nixon.

Next door, No 15, was lived in by George Goderick, saddler & harness maker. In 1851 Joseph Lee had been the saddler there. Mr Goderick was also the enumerator for the centre of Overton village for the 1911 census. (Goderick Bank is the name of the wood behind the Wrexham Road cemetery)

At the end cottage No 16, lived Stud Groom John Dougherty

In the 1930s Greenfield was lived in by Nurse J Lloyd, who became a postwoman.

The last but one house, No 15, was lived in by Miss Nellie Phillips who ran Mrs Peel's antiques business next door in Ivy House.

Memory from Den Owen: *"I remember as a child very much wanting the tortoise shell which was on display in the window."*

The Brow To the right of the cottages is the drive to the Brow. The house was built in the early 19th century though perhaps incorporates an earlier building at the rear.

In 1848 it was described as "a beautiful villa residence" and was tenanted by Dr Henry Parker at £16.16s per annum 1824 to 1858.

Dr Parker had begun his medical practice in Shrewsbury with Dr Robert Darwin. He married the doctor's eldest daughter Marianne, and then set up practice in Overton, where they were to have 5 children and keep a full staff of servants. Marianne's youngest brother Charles Darwin was to spend much of his school and university holidays at the Brow with the family.

For more details see

<http://www.overton-on-dee.co.uk/documents/DarwinandOverton.pdf>



Henry and Marianne Parker are buried in St Mary's Churchyard on the north side of the church.

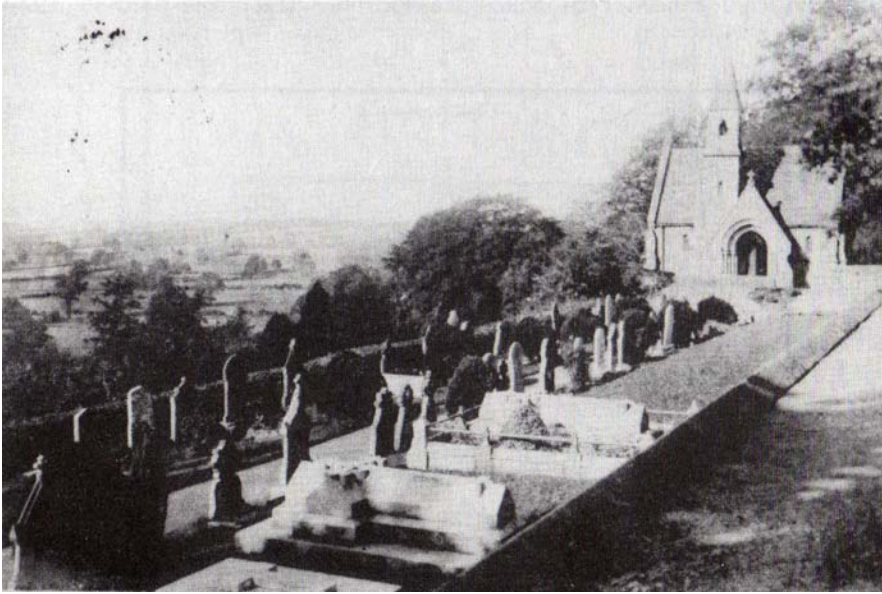
In 1901 the Brow was lived in by retired Infantry Officer Colonel William Cleland, (of the Queens Royal Lancers seeing action in 2nd Anglo Afghan War - Afghanistan) his wife, daughter, Cook, Parlourmaid, Housemaid, Kitchen maid, and Nurse.

In 1939 it was tenanted by Mrs. Harriet Sanday for £165 a year, during WWII it was used for ATS girls and in 1949 tenanted by Major M Fitzhugh for £150. The Fitzhugh family later purchased the house and have lived there ever since.

A new cemetery and "mortuary chapel" were consecrated on the 17th June 1872, a short distance along the road to Wrexham.

The Mortuary Chapel was built in memory of Anna Maria Peel who died in 1860, the first wife of Edmund Peel of Bryn y Pys.

The chapel was vandalised and burnt in the 1960s.



Although the cemetery was built by the Bryn y Pys estate it was given to the parishioners, many of whom are buried there. In the 1960s two houses were built next to the cemetery on land that had belonged to the Lodge.

Overton Lodge



Overton Lodge was lived in and possibly built for Mrs. Francisca Price. She was the mother of Francis Richard Price who owned the Bryn y Pys estate and

sold it to Edmund Ethelston (Peel) in about 1850. She was born in 1756, and was living there in 1841 at the age of 85 with her daughter Francisca who married George Kenyon of Cefn.

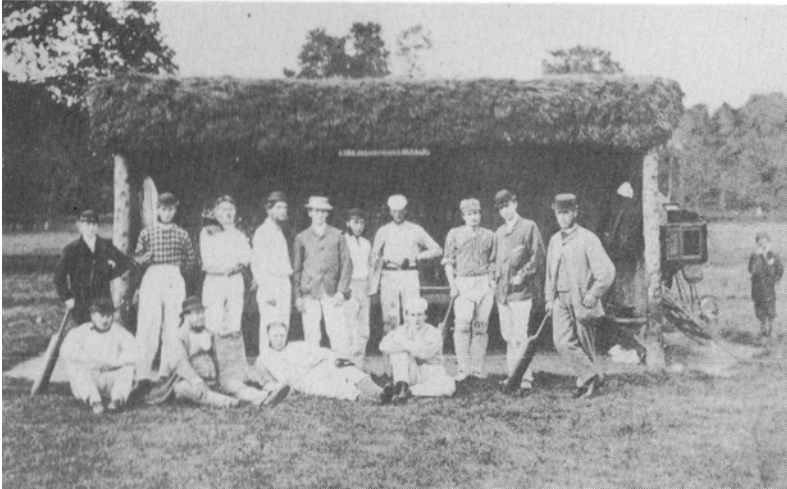
By 1848 Overton Lodge was leased to Misses Francisca Mary & Emma Dorothea Kenyon (Mrs. Price's granddaughters) "for their lives or until they shall marry; conditional on their residing there at the nominal rent of 2s 6d". Mary Kenyon lived there till her death in 1887.

From 1909 it was lived in by Mr Child, agent for the Bryn y Pys estate. In 1939 Overton Lodge was leased to Mr. A L P Tucker and in 1949 to Mrs. Tucker. Mrs. Higginson lived there in the 1950s.

The Bryn y Pys estate land on the opposite side of Wrexham Road has for many years been used for recreational purposes.

Playing Field

In 1939 and 1949 both the Cricket Club and Football Club were paying 1 shilling a year each rent for their pitches.



*The Overton Cricket Club
C 1870*



*The Overton Football Club
C 1920s
John Hughes
Back Row 2nd left
Sammy Lewis
Front Row 1st from left*

There is a memory about the small gate between the Avenue and the cricket pavilion. The story is that the Avenue was only to be used for the Bryn y Pys family and guests to walk to church on a Sunday. Servants had to use the longer footpath from Argoed Lane across Tricketts Field behind what is now Maelor Court.

But one old retainer had a wooden leg and found this difficult, so the gate was installed to give him a shorter way to Church.

The present Scout HQ was built in 1972 (before that the Scouts met in Village Hall and before that in Gwernheyloed stables)



The picture is the Scout Hut opening ceremony in 1972 with Col Fitzhugh and Mrs. Williams (husband Fred was the plumber and lived in High Street) On the left is Group Scout Leader Norman Roberts.

The Avenue is lined by a double row of oak and copper beech trees. It was created by Edmond Peel in the 1870s to extend the entrance to Bryn y Pys Hall from Argoed Lane to the village. At the Wrexham Road end he built the lodge and gates in 1875, which housed the foreman joiner on the Bryn y Pys estate. It was lived in by the Hilton Jones family in the 1930s before they moved to the Hermitage, but was so small that some of their children were boarded out at Ivy Cottage.

Memory from Mary Caspar of Overton Hall *“Overton’s water was mostly Liverpool water, i.e. Lake Vyrnwy. This is very soft water, wonderful for washing, but bland to drink. The Hilton Jones’ had well water when they lived at the Lodge, and Mary and I often went to one another’s houses to drink the water.”*

Where the Catholic Church now stands was a small wood known as The Plantation.

The Catholic Church was opened in 1958 by Rev John Petit Bishop of Menevia and dedicated to Our Lady and the Welsh Martyrs. The Church Hall at the rear was added in the 1980s.

Dispensary Row



Dispensary Row in the early 1900s

Dispensary Row is comprised of 8 cottages built in 1816 by the Bryn y Pys estate. The detailing is gothic with lancet and round topped arches to the windows and doors.

One story as to the name of the cottages is that they were so named because a succession of district nurses lived in one of the cottages.

Tenants in the 1930s and 40s included Mr. Barnett who had been a butler at Bryn Y Pys and his sister Ada who was a dress maker, Henry Edwards, Mr. T Evans, John Grant a gamekeeper, Charles Jones, Miss Peake who grew lilies of the Valley, and Edwin Wilson.

Memory of Betty Williams: *"As a child I saw a coracle going in through the front door of one of the cottages."* George Allen lived in Dispensary Row and he is listed on the census as a 'Fisherman'.