Chair Report 2022

Cath Lloyd-Williams

It has been a challenging and exciting year at Cletwr, with some big changes, and lots of new faces. It has not always been easy and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow board members for their unending support and the enormous amount of time and energy that they volunteer for Cletwr.

We said goodbye to some long standing Cletwr people this year and so I would like to again say a massive thanks to Karen Evans who left her role as business manager, having been an integral and dedicated part of the business from the start. We would like to take this opportunity again to wish her well and thank her for her hard work over the years in helping to create the Cletwr we know today.

James Hobbs also left us as assistant manager this summer and we would again like to thank him and wish him all the best in his new role.

Richard and Liz Spencer left us this year after years of volunteering both in the shop and gardening group and we owe them both a massive debt of gratitude. I would especially like to thank Richard for his dedicated work as a Board member and especially for his support this year. He was an invaluable member of the board and will be greatly missed. Thank you both.

Jen the Garage also retired from volunteering this year and will be very missed. The Jen at Work sign will be an eternal reminder of her dedication. Thank you Jen.

All of you will always be part of Cletwr and have been an important part of making it what it is today.

The business has evolved and grown since our early days in the old building and so it was important that as a board we revisited the original staffing structure this year, to ensure that we were still meeting the business needs. Following consultation with staff, and feedback from staff and volunteers, it was decided to implement a new structure. We replaced the old structure of assistant manager, and kitchen manager, with a shop manager, kitchen manager, and a café coordinator (reporting to the kitchen manager).

We couldn't have got through this challenging year without our awesome staff and volunteers and I would like to thank all of you, new and old, across the business, for the wonderful contribution that you make. In particular I would like to thank Lauren and Aaron who stepped up to become kitchen manager and shop manager respectively. Hanna has also joined us as café coordinator.

I hope that most of you have had a chance to get to know our new business manager Chloe Birds over last few months. Chloe joined us at the start of the busy summer season and we are very fortunate that she brings with her not only retail experience but also experience in the voluntary sector, and most importantly an understanding of the importance of Cletwr to our community, and a commitment to our ethos.

There have been lots of exciting events and projects at Cletwr this year, and we were pleased to be able to hold the open evening to allow members, volunteers and staff to give feedback to the board. Rachel will be giving us a brief overview of this years events and Helen will be talking about the progress made following the feedback from our open evening.

I would like to congratulate and thank the team that created the Rosy Marsh Moth textile, celebrating a very rare moth that is found on Cors Fochno. As well as the moth, the textile displays some of the many important and fascinating aspects of nature and the landscape in this part of North Ceredigion, and is a wonderful addition to the building.

In the words of Shelagh who was instrumental in putting the project together:

The project started in 2020 thanks to funding from the Ashley Family Foundation, but the pandemic and lockdown changed the original plans. Missing the usual friendly meetings and chat that takes place at the Cletwr café, an enthusiastic group formed and, communicating and working via Zoom, the textile project got underway. For some, the project reduced isolation during Covid: "forging connections via video meetings and working through the project step by step gave some structure and a focus to the week", which for certain members helped with the stress of being a carer or enduring life-changing illness.

Elin Vaughan Crowley, an artist with a lot of experience of leading community arts projects, helped the group to discover and illustrate the things that are valued in and around the villages of Tre Taliesin and Tre'r Ddôl. Elin took the individual drawings and lino prints made by members of the group and created a wonderful design with the rare Rosy Marsh Moth at its centre.

Work started on the big canvas, bringing the design to life with a variety of skills, including stitch embroidery, crochet, appliqué and needle felting. The project developed as more people got involved and was finally completed in August 2022.

The Rosy Marsh Moth textile is a demonstration of the enthusiasm of the creative community in the Llangynfelyn area and of the role of Cletwr in bringing people together.

I would also like to pay tribute to the amazing work of the gardening group and the beautiful displays that they have created. I would like to congratulate them for a successful pollinator festival and also for winning the status of being 'Bee Friendly'. I highly recommend following their Facebook page 'Paradwys i Beillwyr/A Paradise for Pollinators' for useful tips on how to improve your garden for pollinators.

Looking to the future we have to face up to the fact that as a business Cletwr is currently facing very uncertain times. With rising energy costs, and a cost of living crisis that is severely impacting customers spending power, it is crucial that we as a board work with the business manager closely in order to proactively and consistently review our working practices. Our priority as a board is to ensure that Cletwr keeps running for our community, and we would like to reiterate our commitment to this, and to you.

We are very fortunate in our staff and volunteers in all parts of the business, and their enthusiasm and drive and adaptability, makes me excited for the future and what can be achieved.

Cletwr is special, it is not just a building, we are a community, and I am so grateful to all of you who are part of it. Thank you.