



YHA (England and Wales)
Youth Hostel Profile

compiled by the Association's volunteer archivist, John Martin, 2020-01-01

Llanilar Youth Hostel 1936 to 1938

Cwrt-y-Cadno, Llanilar, Cardiganshire

Historic County: Cardiganshire

YHA Region:
Birmingham and Mid-Wales

GR: SN 621749

Cwrt-y-Cadno is a stone farmhouse dating from 1840. It lies on a lane 200 yards south of the village from the main Aberystwyth to Tregaron road. In late Victorian times the house was extended to the west side. For a time it was the home of a doctor.

In the February and May 1936 editions of YHA's *Rucksack Magazine*, YHA South Wales Group expressed a wish to extend into uncharted territory northwards towards Mid-Wales and west to Pembrokeshire, yet it was the Mid-Wales sub-group of the Birmingham Region, based in Aberystwyth, that actually developed the area. The hostel at Llanilar was first reported to the sub-group on 15th May 1936, *an extremely good site*, and swiftly opened in August; Pembrokeshire would have to wait longer. The house was inhabited by Mrs Lewis, who was to be the warden, and a rent of £10 for the rest of the year and payment of 3d in the overnight shilling (25%) to her was suggested. The Committee agreed to buy at a nominal charge of 1/- each, 48 single beds, five tables and five armchairs from LCC Hospital, Hampstead, to fit the place out. It was very much a hostelling outpost at the time, the nearest neighbours being Birmingham and Mid-Wales' Taliesin and Ponterwyd hostels north and east of Aberystwyth respectively.

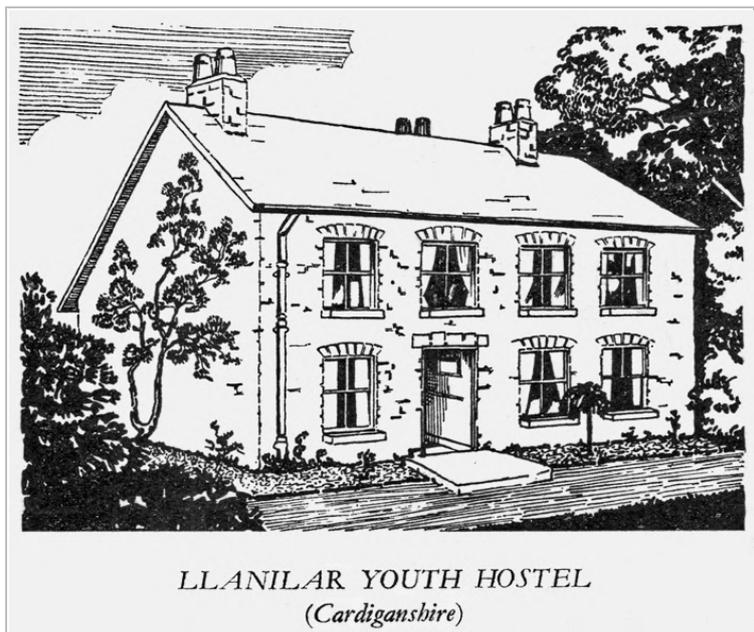


A view south from the main road in Llanilar, with Cwrt-y-Cadno farmhouse in the middle distance. The two chimneys indicate the original double fronted house, the entrance and central window of which are hidden by a tall tree. The Victorian extension is to the right of that. The fields in front are now covered in housing. The lady in the photograph is smartly dressed, though the rucksack suggests a hosteller rather than warden Mrs D Lewis. The triangle sign is of interest, as it is the earliest known example of the enamelled, presumably green, sign, adorned with the strange seriffed letter 'A'. These were widespread through the war years, though not otherwise known before then. The evidence of the corrosion that blighted these tin adornments is already there in a relatively new example; 1950s improved versions were cast (from a photograph album, author's collection)

The hostel had a modest start. It was too late for an entry in the 1936 annual handbook, and the lack of mention in the Mid-Summer *Rucksack* and belated article on Mid-Wales hostelling in the Autumn issue (with a sketch of the hostel) would have done little to boost the initial numbers. Only 63 hostel overnights were recorded in August and September of that year before the new statistical year began.

Once established, Llanilar performed modestly by the standards of the time, with over 750 nights stayed in both 1937 and 1938. There were beds for 16 men and 8 women in 1937, and the same total, 24, in 1938, though the proportions are not recorded. In the tradition of the time, male hostellers may have used the extensive barn outbuilding to the rear of the house.

The hostel kitchen was almost certainly at the back of the house, under the downswept rear roof that is a common feature of Welsh farmhouses. Meals were provided, though a helpful note in the handbook indicated that a knife, fork and spoon had to be taken. River bathing was nearby and sea bathing three miles away. In the 1938 handbook, hostelling between October and Easter was available (possibly for the first time), if booked in advance. Though there is no indication of whether the hostel was rented or purchased through its short life, it was very likely to have been an adopted hostel, that is, one offered to YHA on a financial footing by the owner and warden, and not owned or staffed by the Association.



This sketch of Llanilar hostel appeared in the Autumn 1936 edition of YHA Rucksack Magazine, rather too late to boost numbers in that first year. The drawing is inaccurate in its proportions, as the five windows to the left should have been drawn much more narrowly spaced and the two on the right further apart (YHA Archive)

The reason for the closure of the hostel after the 1938 season is not recorded; if it were an adopted hostel a variety of reasons, financial or personal, may have sprung from the owner or warden. YHA is unlikely to have sparked the closure unless there were pressing reasons to do so.

LLANILAR. B. 130
 Mrs. D. Lewis, "Cwrt-y-Cadno," Llanilar, Cards.
Position and Map. 6 m. SE of Aberystwyth. 200 yds S of Llanilar Village up lane between Llanilar—Aberystwyth and Llanilar—Lampeter Main Rds. O.S. 68. Bart. 16.
Station. Llanilar. **Bus.** Aberystwyth—Tregaron 200 yds.
Next Hostels. Taliesin 14 m. Ponterwyd (by Main Rd. 17 m., by Hill Track 13 m.).
Other Details. M. 16. W. 8. Store & P.O : Village. E.C.D : Wed. S.B.H. Camping. J. Advance booking essential Oct.-Easter. I.P.

Llanilar hostel's entry in the 1938 National YHA Handbook

Overnights – inclusive periods each year as follows
 1936-1938: previous Oct to Sept

...	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
...	63	772	764	...