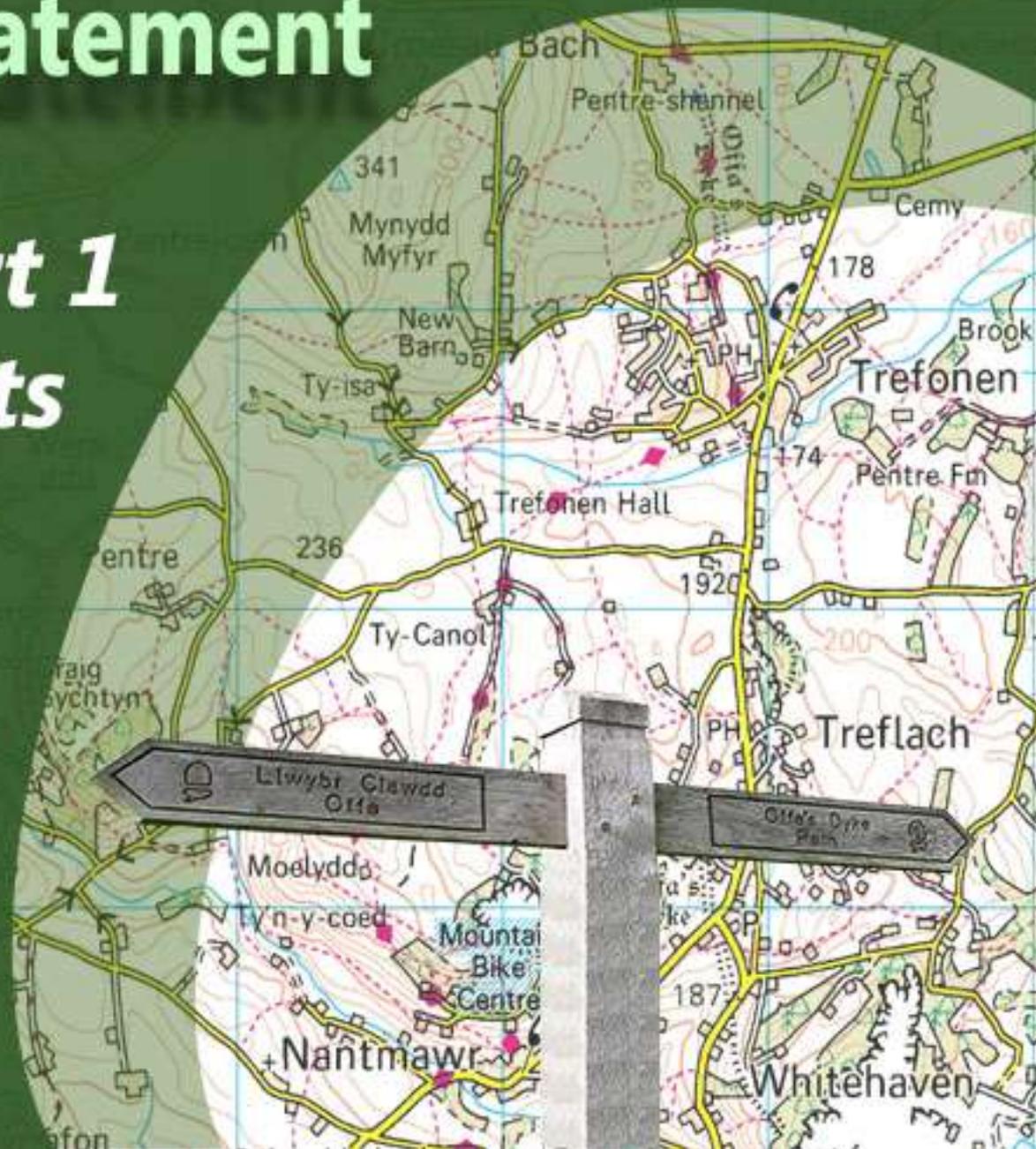


# Trefonen, Treflach & Nantmawr Village Design Statement

## *Foreword and Part 1 The Starting Points*

Updated 2016



# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

Building our community and heritage

Community led planning

October 2006 - updated 2016

Foreword and Part 1

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

## Table of Contents

Foreword .....	2
Why have we produced a Design Statement?.....	2
The three settlements .....	2
Going Forward .....	3
1 Part 1 Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr: The starting points .....	4
1.1 The landscape & the past.....	4
1.2 The importance of what lies below.....	6
1.3 The rural context .....	8
1.4 English or Welsh? - the importance of Offa's Dyke.....	8
1.5 Some key dates:.....	10

## Table of Figures

Fig: 1 Map of the three settlements.....	4
Fig: 2 Trefonen Brook Valley.....	5
Fig: 3 View across the Shropshire Plain from Trefonen .....	5
Fig: 4 From Mynydd Myfyr .....	5
Fig: 5 Trefonen Brook before and after heavy rain.....	6
Fig: 6 View of Nantmawr.....	6
Fig: 7 Ty Tegwch.....	7
Fig: 8 Nantmawr Quarry.....	7
Fig: 9 A typical rural scene.....	8
Fig: 10 Map of the Dyke through the three settlements.....	9

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

## Foreword:

### Why have we produced a Design Statement?

Foreword 2016: This Village Design Statement (VDS) was originally produced in 2005/6. Therefore, there were references in it that are now superseded. Also the communities are not set in aspic so there will have been changes which affect the information in the Statement. It was also necessary to make it available in digital format. All this has been considered as part of this updating process and, after community consultation and taking full note of the Oswestry Rural Parish Council 2014 Survey, the document has been revised. One of the key drivers to this update has been the changes in both local and national legislation which affect how the communities are to be developed in the years to come. Not least of these are the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup>, the Shropshire Council Core Strategy and their Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev).

*“The Localism Act 2011 emphasised the importance of community led planning, in the form of Neighbourhood Plans, Parish and Town Plans and Village Design Statements. A significant number of Shropshire’s communities have either recently completed or are in the process of preparing a community led plan for their area. The draft policies in this document acknowledge the key role played by such plans by cross referring to, and where appropriate requiring proposals to take account of the local requirements set out in these plans.”*

*Shropshire Council SAMDev – 2014 Para 2.6<sup>2</sup>*

What follows is the attempt of many people to look at how our community has evolved, what is special about it, what is characteristic of our natural and built environment, and what matters to people here.

The Statement looks forward, makes proposals for the future and lists policies which should underpin future planning and development. The aim is that future development should preserve our local identity, promote high quality and ensure the continuance and growth of a vibrant, caring and self-sufficient community.

### The three settlements

It was agreed that this Statement would cover the three settlements of Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr. While each has some specific characteristics, within the Oswestry Rural Parish they constitute a unit and share many activities and interests. The settlements have a total population of some 1,200 people, with Trefonen, much the largest, being the focal point for local services – the shop, Post Office, hairdressers’, primary school, village hall, playing field and church.

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<sup>1</sup> Download [NPPF](#)

<sup>2</sup> See [SAMDev Core Documents](#)

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

## Going Forward

The 2006 Statement and its 75 recommendations were considered and adopted as policy by Oswestry Rural Parish Council on 25 August 2006. On 30<sup>th</sup> October 2007 Oswestry Borough Council formally recognised the Statement and adopted many of the recommendations, amended and clarified in consultation with them, as material planning considerations. The Policies, now updated, appear as Part 4 of the 2016 Statement and we seek formal confirmation from Shropshire Council and Oswestry Rural Parish Council of their continued recognition and adoption of the new policies.

We have sought to contribute to key policies, particularly:

*Ensuring all development protects, restores, conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment, and is appropriate in scale, density, pattern and design taking into account the local context and character, and those features which contribute to local character...*

*Shropshire Core Strategy S6 Sustainable Design and Development Principles<sup>3</sup>*

and:

*For a development proposal to be considered acceptable it is required to:*

*1. Achieve local aspirations for design, wherever possible, both in terms of visual appearance and how a place functions, as set out in Community Led Plans, Town or Village Design Statements...*

*2. Contribute to and respect locally distinctive or valued character and existing amenity value by:*

*i. Responding appropriately to the form and layout of existing development and the way it functions, including mixture of uses, streetscape, building heights and lines, scale, density, plot sizes and local patterns of movement; and*

*ii. Reflecting locally characteristic architectural design and details, such as building materials, form, colour and texture of detailing, taking account of their scale and proportion; and*

*iii. Respecting, enhancing or restoring the historic context, such as the significance and character of any heritage assets*

*Shropshire Council SAMDev MD2 Sustainable Design<sup>4</sup>*

There was and continues to be a very strong commitment to bringing this Statement to fruition and maintaining it. Its implementation is in the hands of both the local authorities and also the people who live in Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr.

December 2015

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<sup>3</sup> See [Core Strategy Document](#) page 69

<sup>4</sup> See link to [Shropshire Council Website Document](#) page 17

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

## 1 Part 1 Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr: The starting points

*"The Council for British Archaeology strongly supports the principles of local community influence over local heritage and planning. The VDS for Trefonen, Treflach, and Nantmawr neatly represents the cherished community heritage that lies at the heart of communities all over the country. The village landscape is unique in terms of history and nature. This is most visceral and perceptible from the perspective of those who live there today. The VDS allows for this value to be recognised and planned for with utmost sensitivity to the built and natural environment and the sustainability of its local social scene."*

*Rob Lennox, Local Heritage Coordinator, CBA*

### 1.1 The landscape & the past

The settlements of Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr (Fig: 1) developed in the north-western corner of Shropshire, between three to five miles from the market town of Oswestry. They are situated in the area designated as the Oswestry Uplands<sup>5</sup> (Countryside Agency – Joint Character Areas) and all of the countryside immediately surrounding them was designated as an Area of Special Landscape Character in the Local Development Plan of Oswestry Borough Council<sup>6</sup>. They nestle between the Shropshire Plain and the Welsh Hills. It is considered a prime example of a dramatic landscape marking the transition from lowland to upland. The highest point is a hill above Trefonen at 341 metres, and the lowest point is at 135 metres in Nantmawr. The difference causes the roads and lanes to be steep and twisting, but it also contributes to the many spectacular views in and out of the settlements.



Fig: 1 Map of the three settlements

<sup>5</sup> See [Natural England – Oswestry Uplands](#)

<sup>6</sup> See <http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/saved-planning-policies/oswestry/>

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

**Trefonen** lies close under the eastern slope of a ridge running roughly north-south to the west of Oswestry to the spectacular viewpoint of the Moelydd, which looks over the Tanat Valley. The nearby summit of Mynydd Myfyr (height 341 metres; 1,118 feet) is just over a mile from the village centre. From both the Moelydd and Mynydd Myfyr (Fig: 4) there are clear views across Trefonen.

To the west, a little over half the village is sited on the hillside, whereas the remainder, to the east of the main road, is bounded by open and flatter farmland with views stretching into the distance over north Shropshire. However, a major topographical feature of the village is the field-lined valley to the south along which runs a stream, referred to as the Trefonen Brook. (Fig: 2) The valley cut by the Trefonen Brook between the village and Treflach is of significant landscape value, and views along the line of the brook in both directions are outstanding. Parts of the village, particularly along the north side of the Brook lie on the rather dark Cefn-y-Fedw sandstone which outcrops in Martins Fields and a number of other places in the valley. This quite steep slope forms a definitive natural boundary to the village. The Brook runs all the year round: it is not a seasonal “bourn”.



Fig: 3 View across the Shropshire Plain from Trefonen



Fig: 2 Trefonen Brook Valley



Fig: 4 From Mynydd Myfyr

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

The Environment Agency has designated the Trefonen Brook and parts of the adjacent fields as liable to flooding and there has been significant flash-flooding<sup>7</sup> at times (Fig: 5 Trefonen Brook before and after heavy rain). An area of mixed woodland, Bwyltai Wood, of natural and wildlife importance, lies on the southern slope of the valley very near to the village.

**Treflach** is of a different physical character from Trefonen. It nestles in the folds in the landscape and the village is almost hidden by trees. It has many exposed limestone ridges and evidence of former quarrying activities. Apart from a few outlying houses and farms, the main settlement is along the road running from Oswestry towards the Tanat Valley. It lies to the east of, and is sheltered by, the prominent hill known as the Moelydd. The Trefonen Brook Valley forms a distinct division between the settlements of Treflach and Trefonen.

Nantmawr is built along the steeply sloping road running down towards the Tanat Valley and many of the dwellings have the advantage of wide views across the valley towards Llanyblodwel and Blodwel Rocks. Most properties lie on the steep hillside rising to the Moelydd

The valley itself is of glacial origin and cuts through old rock formations until it narrows in the east near Porth-y-waen and southwards towards Llanymynech.

## 1.2 The importance of what lies below

The settlements developed on the southern limit of the North Wales coalfield, which lies on top of carboniferous limestone and Cefn-y-Fedw sandstone. This explains why from the early eighteenth century the population expanded so dramatically to exploit the small scale coal mines and limestone quarries.

Trefonen became the largest village with its houses clustered under the hill and its

<sup>7</sup> See [Trefonen Flood Risk Map](#)



Fig: 5 Trefonen Brook before and after heavy rain



Fig: 6 View of Nantmawr

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

inhabitants working the coal mines, local pottery and brickworks, limestone quarries and the small lead workings. Treflach and Nantmawr's population grew more slowly. Nevertheless, the number of people involved in these activities was considerable. The quarries constitute significant landmark features in Treflach and Nantmawr (Fig: 8 Nantmawr Quarry) and their future use, particularly in Nantmawr, remains a major concern.

Although coal mining was mainly centred on Morda and Gronwen, there were two mines in Trefonen, the last of which shut down in 1891. Industrial activity to the north and east of Trefonen was serviced by an artificial water course, locally known as the Gutter, a two kilometre long clay and stone structure, evidence of which still remains. (See Discovering Shropshire's History Report<sup>8</sup>) At its peak in the middle of the nineteenth century it is recorded that more than 300 people were employed in over twenty pits. Traces of the mining activity can be found in a number of places, in particular to the east of the playing field off School Lane. Although there is no recent indication, it is possible that the areas around the old pits may be subject to subsidence. Little evidence remains of Howell's brickworks, situated on the field opposite the former Rectory in Trefonen, other than ornamental tombstones in Trefonen Churchyard and an impressive house near Treflach, Ty Tegwch,(Fig: 7 Ty Tegwch) on the Old Drovers' Path.

*'I consider the landscape in and around the border village of Trefonen as a perfect example of a fossilised 18th and 19th century industrial landscape, revealing the archaeological remnants of the now long-gone brick-making and coal industries that flourished around the village up until the early 20th century. This significant landscape is flanked on its western side by the internationally-significant Offa's Dyke. In essence, the history and archaeology reveals a complex landscape that is unique to North Shropshire.'*

*Professor George Nash MIFA<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> For more information click [here](#)

<sup>9</sup> Archaeologist & specialist in Prehistoric and Contemporary Art, Senior Researcher, Instituto Terra e Memória, Mação, Portugal, Adjunct Professor, IPT, Portugal and Visiting Fellow within the Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Bristol, England. [Biography](#)



Fig: 7 Ty Tegwch



Fig: 8 Nantmawr Quarry

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

## 1.3 The rural context

After this period of mining and quarrying, the area returned to its rural roots and agriculture as its main economic activity. Farms and small holdings dominated the countryside and sheep and cattle rearing flourished.

But two settlements of the three have declined. As has been the case in many parts of the countryside in England, some communities have changed significantly. At one time Treflach had a Methodist Chapel at the cross roads, a village hall known as the Coffee or Cocoa Rooms, two public houses, a petrol pump and a shop. The chapel and one of the public houses have been converted into domestic residences. The former public house, the Gibraltar Inn, is now considered a Welsh long house and has a significant history. The village hall was demolished and is now a tiny village green, not suitable for ball games. Very few of the quarry workers' cottages have survived. The petrol pump is no longer there and the shop and post office closed in 2006. In Nantmawr, the public house, the school, chapel, post office and shop have all gone. Such trends have been evident in many small English villages in recent decades.

## 1.4 English or Welsh? - the importance of Offa's Dyke

Over the centuries Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr fluctuated between England and Wales, the names Nantmawr and Cefn Blodwel being examples of Welsh presence. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, probably between AD 757 and 796, Offa's Dyke was built, during the reign of Offa, King of Mercia. At this time, it is more than likely that this area of the Welsh Marches was a sub-kingdom, probably administered by one of Offa's family. The Dyke formed the boundary between Mercia and Wales. The earthwork, which ran north-south, comprised a large turf and stone bank, with an accompanying ditch along the western side.



Fig: 9 A typical rural scene

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

Distinct traces of the original Dyke are clearly visible (Fig: 10)<sup>10</sup>, and can be found adjacent to Chapel Lane and the Barley Mow pub in Trefonen, with a number of more substantial lengths in the middle of Treflach, adjacent to Blodwel Bank and north of Nantmawr. The Dyke, with its accompanying ditch, is in a particularly good condition north of Trefonen to Pentreshannel. Scheduled Monuments are considered to be assets 'of the highest significance'. The Dyke is now a scheduled monument throughout the three settlements. For Scheduling details click [here](#).

*Offa's Dyke is the largest, most impressive, and most complete purpose built early medieval monument in Western Europe. It is the largest civil engineering project ever undertaken by an Anglo-Saxon state, and the most impressive Anglo-Saxon monument to now survive in the UK.*

## *Historic England*

In any case of development in the future, it is most important that one of Britain's most significant ancient monuments, of international importance, should be preserved. The much-used modern long distance footpath – Offa's Dyke Path – runs right through the centre of Trefonen and is an important feature of the village from the tourism, and consequently economic, point of view.

Trefonen is shown on maps published in the early 1800s as a hamlet with the Welsh name of Carneddau. Trefonen, roughly translated as *the place or hamlet of the ash*, appears to be a later name, but although it is allegedly Welsh, it seems more likely that it has its roots in the Brithonnica language which preceded Welsh. Treflach used to be called Treflach Wood and this is reflected in the names around: Quarry Wood, Middle Forest, Lower Forest, Forest Cottages, Pleasant Grove, Dummy Wood.

For more details of local heritage see [www.oswestry-borderland-heritage.co.uk](http://www.oswestry-borderland-heritage.co.uk) and for more on Trefonen's heritage, click [here](#).

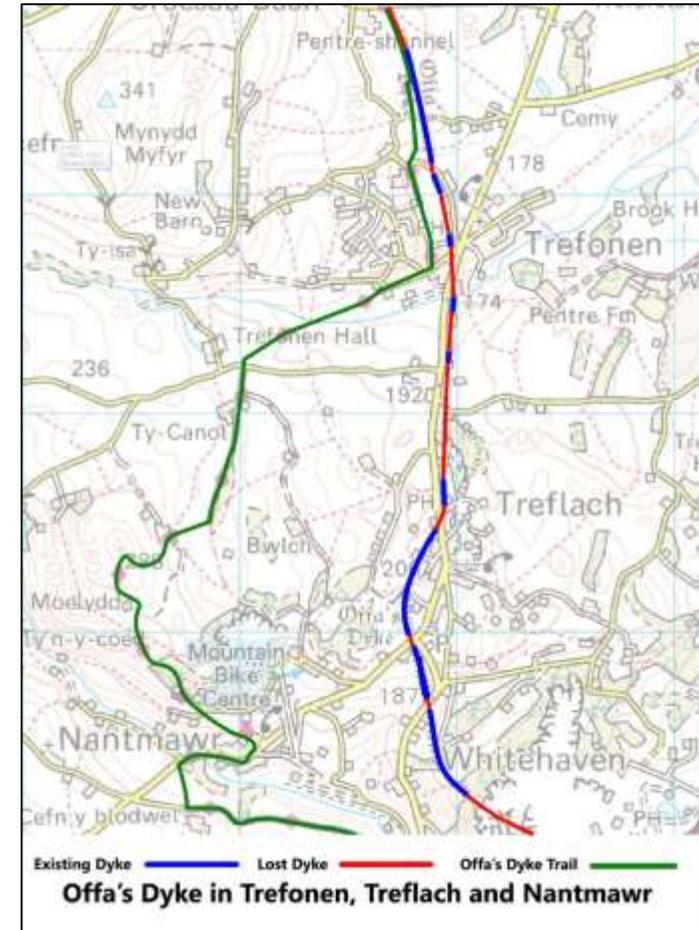


Fig: 10 Map of the Dyke through the three settlements

<sup>10</sup> To download a larger scale copy of the map click [here](#)

# Foreword & Part 1 – The Starting Points

## 1.5 Some key dates:

### Prehistoric and Roman Activity:

*Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity has been recorded. In Treflach two standing stones were recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, although they had been removed by the 1970s, and there is also a barrow, probably a burial site. Lithics have been found within the vicinity of Trefonen. (A hoard of Roman coins, dating to the late first century A.D. was found in Wern Lane, Treflach Wood, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century).*

### Anglo-Saxon & Medieval

*757 – 796 The construction of Offa's Dyke, a mixture of natural barriers and an earthwork.*

*1070- Following the Norman Conquest this area was controlled by the Baron of Oswestry, Alan Fitz Flaad, and his family held the area through the medieval period.*

*1538 Unification between Wales and England. The parish of Trefonen was annexed to Shropshire.*

### Early post-medieval to the present day

*Woodland was cleared. There was piecemeal quarrying of limestone for use in agriculture and in the iron industry and lead and copper were mined.*

*1650 The farm which eventually became the Gibraltar Inn in Treflach was built. It was first licensed in 1705. The name is said to refer to the Rock of Gibraltar, taken over by the British in 1705, or because the pub was built on solid rock. It closed in 1990.*

*1720 The Malthouse (and Efel Inn?) in Trefonen were built and linked by a tunnel. Unusually the ale was brewed over coal rather than wood.*

*1760 The foundations of the Barley Mow in Trefonen were built by Abraham Pryse of Oswestry.*

*1792 Trefarclawdd Colliery opened but closed around 1833 due to flooding.*

*1795 The Calvinistic Methodist Chapel was built in Little London Lane, Trefonen.*

*1821 All Saints' Church was built in Trefonen, in the diocese of St Asaph. The Earl of Powis donated two acres of land. Initially all services were in Welsh.*

*1825 A school room was built on land next to Trefonen church, with a house for the master.*

*1832 Carneddau Independent Chapel was built.*

*1833 Treflach Chapel (primitive Methodist) opened. It closed in 1976.*

*1842 The Parish of Trefonen was formed on 27<sup>th</sup> August, comprising Trefonen, Treflach and Trefarclawdd.*

*1855 A parsonage was built on the glebe land next to Trefonen church.*

*1860 The Old Trefonen Pit mined until 1886*

*1866 The inclined plane opened, allowing the railway to reach Nantmawr quarry*

*1867 The Trefonen school was enlarged, at a cost of £220, and by 1876 there were nearly 170 pupils.*

*1870s Mr. Dumville Lees, benefactor, paid for the organ, helped to set up the band, and funded the building of a Mission Room in Treflach.*

*1875 A Temperance Society was formed. By 1877 there were over 80 members. The mine owners let it be known 'no teetotallers would be employed'. The drum and fife band and a successful football team were started. During the winter months there was a night school.*

*1881 Two new coal pit shafts sunk to form the New Trefonen.*

*1905 A fire at the Trefonen school meant that the Band Box had to be used as a school room for about 18 months.*

*1991 Trefonen Village Hall opened.*