

## Prefab Amgueddfa Werin Cymru: Cartref Parhaol i Dŷ Dros-dro

Ar 26 Mawrth 1944, yn rhan o baratoadau'r llywodraeth ar gyfer ailadeiladu wedi'r rhyfel, cyhoeddodd Winston Churchill fanylion cynllun cartrefi dros-dro – y *Temporary Housing Programme* – i'r cyhoedd. Y nod oedd darparu hanner miliwn o dai dros dro, neu *prefabricated or emergency houses* fel y galwodd Churchill hwy. Amcenid y byddai i'r tai hyn oes o ryw ddeg i bymtheg mlynedd. Bwriedid hwy i gwrrdd ag anghenion y teuluoedd hynny a oedd bellach yn ddigartref o ganlyniad ar y naill law i fomio o'r awyr, ac ar y llall i'r gostyngiad yn y nifer o ddynion a fu'n gweithio yn y diwydiant adeiladu yn ystod y rhyfel. Y gobaith oedd, hefyd, y byddai'r broses o gynhyrchu'r tai yn cynnig cyfle i'r dynion a'r merched hynny oedd yn dychwelyd i fyd gwaith ar ôl bod yn y lluoedd arfog.

Ym mis Mai 1944, arddangoswyd prototeip y tu allan i Oriol y Tate yn Llundain. Adwaenid y prototeip hwn wrth yr enw y *Portal Bungalow*, ar ôl Arglwydd Portal, y Gweinidog Gweithiau. Arddangoswyd fersiwn ddiwygiedig yn Stryd Wood, Caerdydd gan yr Arglwydd Faer ar 18 Rhagfyr. Roedd y tai o'r patrwm hyn, a gynlluniwyd gan y Weinyddiaeth Weithiau, yn manteisio ar yr arbenigedd a'r datblygiadau o ran technoleg a gafwyd yn sgîl y rhyfel. Fe'u datblygwyd yn un cynllun safonol y dechreuwyd ei gynhyrchu yn fuan wedi'r cadoediad, a'u cynhyrchu ar bedair ffurf: y Tarran a'r Uni-Seco, a oedd yn addasiadau ar ffram bren a phaneli concrid y Portal; yr Arcon, gyda'i ffram ddu a'i baneli asbestos, a'r *prefab* Alwminiwm a gynhyrchwyd o ddeunyddiau a oedd dros ben wedi gwneud awyrennau. Rhoddwyd y tri chynntaf ar ddangos yn Oriol y Tate yn ystod hydref 1944, a rhoddwyd y prototeip Alwminiwm ar ddangos ar wahân, ym mis Mehefin 1945. Nod pob un o'r pedwar math o dŷ oedd cynnig y breswylfa orau bosib ar sail yr adnoddau lleiaf oedd ar gael – un y gellid ei masgynhyrchu a'i chodi yn gyflym.

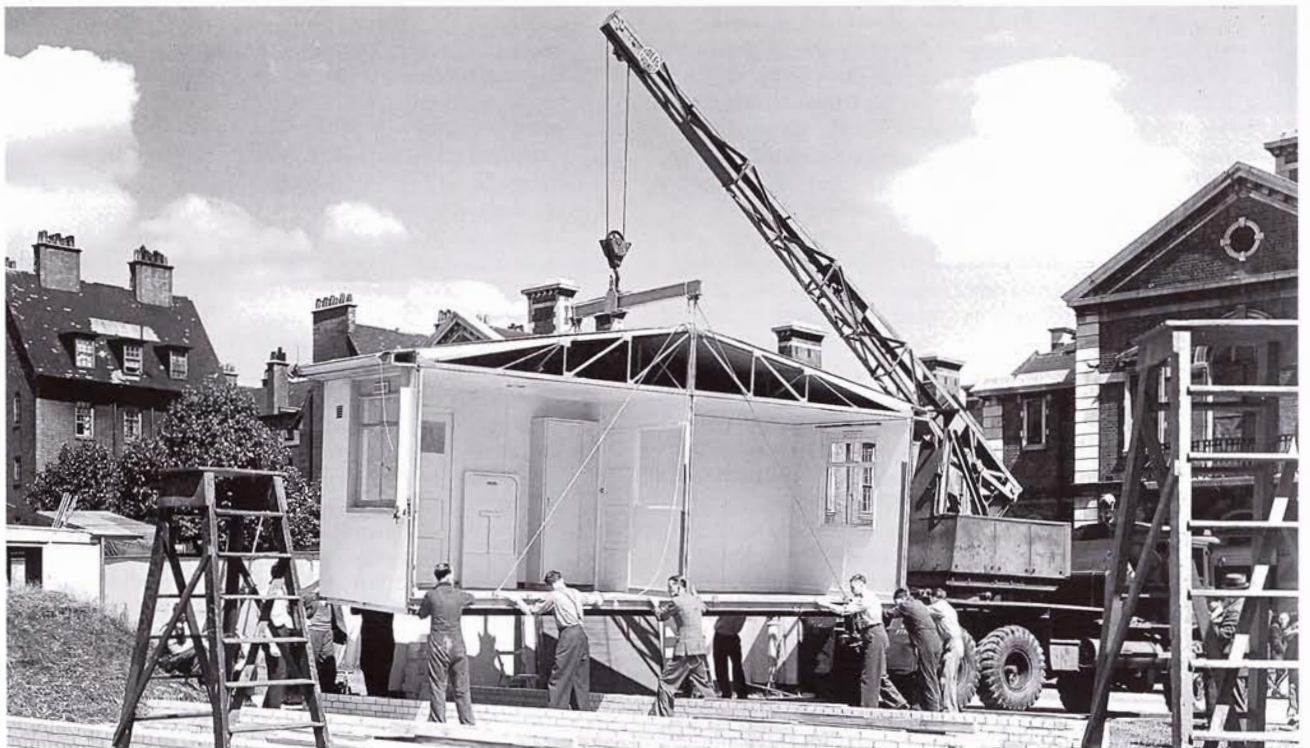
Esgorodd y prinder tai wedi'r rhyfel ar gryn bryder, a chymysg oedd yr ymateb cyntaf i'r *prefab* fel ateb i'r

## The Museum of Welsh Life Prefab: A Permanent Home for a Temporary House

On 26 March 1944, as part of the government's preparations for post-war reconstruction, Winston Churchill announced the Temporary Housing Programme to the public. The aim was to provide half a million 'prefabricated or emergency houses', as Churchill called them, with a projected life span of ten to fifteen years. They were to meet the needs of families left without homes as a combined result of aerial bombing and the decline in numbers of those working in the building industry during the war. It was also hoped that their production would generate employment for returning servicemen and women.

In May 1944, a prototype known as the 'Portal Bungalow' (named after Lord Portal, the Minister for Works), was exhibited outside the Tate Gallery in London. An improved version was opened for exhibition in Wood Street, Cardiff, by the Lord Mayor on 18 December. These prototypes had been designed by the Ministry of Works, taking advantage of the pool of expertise and advances in technology that had evolved during the war. They were developed into a standardised design that went into production shortly after the cessation of hostilities and were produced in four different forms: the Tarran and the Uni-Seco, which adapted the timber frame and concrete panels of the Portal, the steel framed Arcon with asbestos panels, and the Aluminium prefab made from surplus aircraft materials. The three former examples were exhibited in another exhibition at the Tate Gallery during the autumn of 1944, whilst the Aluminium prototype was exhibited separately in June 1945. The aim of all four types of prefab was to provide maximum shelter from the minimum available resources that could be mass-produced and quickly erected.

Anxiety generated by the post-war housing shortage was acute, and initial reactions to the prefab as an answer to the problem were mixed. Many thought the prefabs were a waste of money that could have been better spent on permanent housing. An article in the *Picture Post* in April



Prototeip o *prefab* alwminiwm yn cael ei osod, yn barod i'w arddangos, y tu allan i Oriol y Tate yn Llundain, 1945. Hawlfraint y Goron  
An aluminium prefab prototype being installed, ready for exhibition, outside the Tate Gallery in London, 1945. Crown copyright NMR

problem. Ym marn llawer roedd y tai parod hyn yn wastraff ar arian y gellid fod wedi ei wario'n gallach ar dai parhaol. Dengys erthygl yn y *Picture Post* ym mis Ebrill 1944 farn y cyhoedd yn eglur iawn: *Nid oes unrhyw sicrwydd y cwblheir y rhain o fewn y cyfnod a nodwyd, ac a bwrw eu bod yn cael eu cwblhau, cwrdd â rhan o'r galw yn unig y bydd y nifer o dai y paratoir y cynlluniau amodol iawn yma ar eu cyfer. Erys y brif broblem yn anghyffwrdd... Ar y gorau clytio, nid ailadeiladu, yw hwn.*

Yn wir, yr oedd sail i rai o'r ofnau hyn. Erbyn diwedd y project ym 1949 dim ond 156,623 o'r tai parod a godasid o'r

1944 made public opinion very clear: 'There is no guarantee that they will be completed in the time specified, and even if they are, the number of houses for which only the most provisional plans are being prepared will only meet a partial need and leaves the main problem untouched. This is at best, only patchwork, not reconstruction.'

In part, these fears were well-founded. By the end of the project in 1949 only 156,623 prefabs had been erected out of the proposed half a million. 7,600 of these were built in Wales, and as clusters of prefabs sprouted up all over the country, concerns were also voiced about their appearance.



Rhai o'r prefabs gwag yng Nghilgant Llandinam, yn disgwyl cael eu dymchwel.  
Some of the vacant prefabs at Llandinam Crescent, waiting to be demolished.

hanner miliwn arfaethedig. Codwyd 7,600 o'r rhain yng Nghymru, ac wrth i gystyrau o'r tai hyn ymddangos mewn gwahanol rannau o'r wlad, lleisiwyd pryder hefyd am yr olwg a oedd arnynt. Ofnai rhai y byddent yn dirywio'n slymiau. Teimlai eraill eu bod yn hyll ac yn ddi-gymeriad – nid dyma'r 'cartrefi i arwyr' a addawyd iddynt.

Serch hynny, buan y darbyllwyd pobl gan safon cynllun y tai, y byr dro a gymerai i'w codi, a'r llain o dir unigol, yn arbennig â hwythau yng nghanol argyfwng tai. Yn wir, crystal oedd y cynllun gwreiddiol nes bod llawer iawn o'r tai wedi para flynyddoedd lawer wedi'r oes a arfaethwyd iddynt. Daethant yn gartrefi hoff yr oedd pobl yn gofalu amdanynt ac yn eu parchu. Cyndyn iawn oedd y bobl a oedd wedi symud i'r tai parod fel cam dros-dro yn ystod y 1940au i ymadael â hwy! Dangosodd George Williams, cynghorydd a fu'n bresennol adeg agor y *Portal Bungalow* yn Stryd Wood yng Nghaerdydd ym 1944, gryn weledigaeth pan ddywedodd: *...mae'n edrych yn debyg bod yma fendith o'r nefoedd i filoedd o bobl yng Nghaerdydd. lle'r ydym yn dioddef rhag gorboblogi. Os yw'r adeiladwaith gystal â'r diwyg, ni fydd gennym lawer i gwyno yn ei gylch. Ni fydd yn syndod i mi glywed y bobl fydd yn derbyn y tai hyn yn dweud, 'Dydw i ddim am adael fy nghwt bach pren i er dy fwyn di'. (South Wales Echo, 18 Rhagfyr 1944.)*

Hanner can mlynedd yn ddiweddarach, roedd fframiau alwminiwm rhai o dai parod Caerdydd wedi crydu cryn dipyn. Ym 1998 cynigiwyd tŷ parod a glustnodwyd i'w dymchwel, o Gilgant Llandinam, Gabalfa, i Amgueddfa Werin Cymru (AWC) gan Gyngor Sir Caerdydd. *Prefab* alwminiwm o'r math a adwaenid fel Type B2 yw hwn. Ar un adeg dyma'r math mwyaf cyffredin o *prefab* a godwyd ym Mhrydain, ond bellach dymchwelwyd y rhan fwyaf ohonynt ac mae'n bosibl mai'r enghraifft a ailgodir yn AWC fydd yr unig un o'i bath i oroesi yng Nghymru, neu'n wir drwy wledydd Prydain. Mae'r tŷ parod o Gilgant Llandinam yn dilyn yr un cynllun

Some feared that they would become slums. Others saw them as ugly and characterless, hardly the promised houses fit for heroes.

However, their design quality, their fast construction time and individual plot soon won people over, especially in the midst of a housing-shortage crisis. In fact, so good was the design that a great many prefabs lasted well beyond their projected life span, and many are still lived in more than fifty years after they were built. They became valued homes that were well cared for and respected. People who moved into the prefabs as a temporary measure in the 1940s simply did not want to move out! In a remarkable display of foresight into the future of the Cardiff prefabs, George Williams, a councillor at the opening of the *Portal Bungalow* in Cardiff's Wood Street in 1944, stated: 'This seems to be a heaven-sent blessing for thousands of people in Cardiff where we have overcrowding. If the construction is as good as the finish, we shall not have much to grumble about. I shall not be surprised if people who get them say "I'm not going to leave my little wooden hut for you."' (*South Wales Echo*, 18 December 1944.)

Fifty years later, some of the Cardiff prefabs were showing advanced signs of corrosion to their aluminium frames, and in 1998, Cardiff County Council offered the Museum of Welsh Life (MWL) a prefab from Llandinam Crescent, Gabalfa, that was due for demolition. It is an aluminium prefab known as Type B2. Once the commonest type of prefab built in Britain, most have now been demolished and it is possible that the example to be re-erected at the MWL will be the only one left in the whole of Wales, if not Britain.

The prefab from Llandinam Crescent follows the same general layout as all the prefabs designed by the Ministry of Works, and is built of aluminium sheeting on an aluminium

cyffredinol â'r holl *prefabs* a gynlluniwyd gan y Weinyddiaeth Weithiau, ac fe'i gwnaed o haenau o alwminiwm ar ffram alwminiwm. Plastrwyd nenfydau'r ystafelloedd a'r waliau a gosodwyd planciau pren ar y lloriau. Darparwyd y B2 ar ffurf pedair cydran barod, a gludwyd i'r safleoedd adeiladu ar loriau, a'u dadlwytho gan graen bum-tunnell. Roedd pob cydran yn hollol barod, gan ei bod yn cynnwys yr holl wifrau trydan a'r pibau nwy, dŵr a charthffosiaeth, a'r cyfan oedd ar ôl i'w wneud cyn i'r trigolion symud i mewn oedd bolltio'r cyfan at ei gilydd, selio'r uniadau, a gosod y carpedi neu'r leino. Nodweddd fwyaf soffistigedig y tai hyn oedd craidd o wasanaethau canolog, a oedd yn cynnwys tân glo gyda boiler ôl a oedd yn cynhesu'r dŵr a'r cwpwrdd crasu, ac yn chwythu awyr gynnes trwy bibau i'r ystafelloedd gwely. Adeiladwyd unedau'r gegin a'r ystafell ymolchi gefn-gefn â'i gilydd i arbed lle. Fel y sylwodd un o denantiaid gwreiddiol y tai hyn: 'Dyn hirben iawn roddodd y *prefabs* yma at ei gilydd!'

Er mwyn datgymalu'r *prefab* a'i symud i AWC dim ond cyflawni'r broses uchod o chwith yr oedd gofyn ei wneud. Gwnaed y gwaith i gyd mewn bore. Y gwaith llafurus a hir yw trwsio'r rhannau hynny o'r ffram alwminiwm sydd wedi rhydu, cyn ailgodi'r *prefab* yn yr Amgueddfa. Rydym yn gobeithio y bydd y gwaith wedi'i orffen erbyn haf 2000.

Adeiladwyd y tai *prefab* yng Nghilgant Llandinam rhwng 1947 a 1948 ac fe'u defnyddiwyd yn gartrefi ar gyfer gweithwyr allweddol o ddinasoedd fel Bryste a Nottingham, y cynigiwyd swyddi a chyfleoedd yng Nghaerdydd iddynt er mwyn datblygu diwydiannau'r ddinas wedi'r rhyfel. Cyflogid llawer o'r rhain gan y bwrdd nwy neu'r gwasanaeth sifil. Cyplau newydd briodi oedd llawer ohonynt, a fu hyd hynny yn lletya mewn tai a rennid ag eraill. I'r rhain, y tai parod hyn oedd eu cartref cyntaf.

Penderfynodd yr Amgueddfa ddehongli'r *prefab* fel y buasai tua 1950. Er mai ym 1948 y'i hadeiladwyd, safle adeiladu ar gyrion Caerdydd, ac yng nghanol caeau fferm gyfagos, fyddai'r gilgant bryd hynny i bob pwrpas. Ni fyddai yno ardd, ffensys, palmant na lampiau stryd, a byddai teuluoedd eraill yn dal i symud i mewn. Bydd dewis y flwyddyn 1950 yn rhoi'r cyfle i ni ddehongli gardd a golygfa stryd mwy datblygiedig. Trwy ddefnyddio'r dystiolaeth lafar a gasglwyd eisioes gan y trigolion gwreiddiol gallwn hefyd amcanu at gyfleu'r ymdeimlad cryf o gymuned a ddatblygodd yn y gilgant. Gwelodd y flwyddyn 1950 hefyd ddechreuadau ymdeimlad newydd o optimistiaeth wedi'r rhyfel, ac adlewyrchwyd hynny gan gynlluniau newydd ym myd dodrefn, ffasiwn, a nwyddau i'r tŷ. Yn baradocsaid, yr oedd hefyd yn gyfnod a oedd yn drwm dan ddylanwad y rhyfel a'r blynyddoedd wedi'r rhyfel – a rhyw ysbryd o fyw'n gynnil a 'gwneud y tro' yn cyniwar drwyddo. Gellid felly ddisgrifio'r *prefab* yn AWC yn nhermau eicon o gyfnod o drawsnewid ac, fel y'i disgrifiwyd gan Gary Robbins yn *Prefabrications: Newport's Temporary Bungalows, the First Fifty Years*, yn 'fan lle y gellid edrych ymlaen at ddyfodol disglair wrth lyfu clwyfau'r gorffennol'.

Sioned Wyn Hughes, Curador Cynorthwyol  
(Adeiladau Hanesyddol a Masnach), Amgueddfa Werin Cymru

frame. The ceilings and walls are plastered and the floors are timber boarded. The B2s were pre-assembled in four sections, delivered to the building sites on lorries, and unloaded by a five-ton crane. Each section was fully fitted, including all the



Yr Uned Adeiladau Hanesyddol yn datgymalu'r *prefab* yng Nghilgant Llandinam ym mis Tachwedd 1998.  
*The Historical Buildings Unit dismantling the prefab at Llandinam Crescent in November 1998.*

electrical wiring, gas piping and plumbing, and just needed to be bolted together, the joints sealed, and the carpets or linos laid before the occupants could move in. The most advanced feature of the *prefabs* was a central service core, which included a coal fire with back boiler that heated the water and the airing cupboard, and circulated ducted warm air to the bedrooms. The bathroom and kitchen units were built back-to-back for economy of space. As one of the original tenants of the *prefabs* pointed out: 'Who ever put these *prefabs* together had a brain!'

To dismantle the *prefab* and move it to the MWL, the above process had merely to be reversed, and the work was carried out in a morning. The time-consuming work is that of repairing the corroded sections of aluminium framing before it is re-erected at the Museum. It is hoped that this work will have been finished by summer 2000.

The *prefabs* at Llandinam Crescent were built between 1947 and 1948 and were used to house key workers from cities such as Bristol and Nottingham, who were offered homes and opportunities in Cardiff to help develop its industries after the war. Many of these were employed by the gas board or as civil servants. Most were newly-weds who had previously only lodged in a shared house. For them, the *prefab* was their first experience of having their own home.

The Museum has decided to interpret the *prefab* as it would have appeared *circa* 1950. Even though it was built in 1948, the crescent, at that time, would have been like a building site on the outskirts of Cardiff, surrounded by the fields of a neighbouring farm. There would have been no garden, no fences, no pavements, or street-lamps, and families were still moving in. Choosing 1950 will provide an opportunity to interpret a more developed garden and streetscape, and, using oral evidence already gathered from the original inhabitants, the strong sense of community spirit that developed on the crescent. The year 1950 also saw the beginnings of a new optimism after the war, which was mirrored by new designs in furniture, fashion, and household goods. Paradoxically, it was also a time still deeply affected by the war and its aftermath of making do with what you had. The *prefab* at the MWL can therefore be portrayed as an icon of a period of transition, and, as described by Gary Robbins in *Prefabrications: Newport's Temporary Bungalows, the First Fifty Years*, as 'a place to look towards a bright future whilst tending the wounds of the past.'

Sioned Wyn Hughes, Assistant Curator  
(Historical Buildings and Commerce), Museum of Welsh Life