



# Stafford Beer's Cwarel Isaf Cottage

History and now



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## Preface

Dear Cybernetician

This little booklet is an invitation. It is an invitation to you as someone who is interested in and maybe even devoted to cybernetics and the system sciences to pursue and intensify your work or study in this field in a really "cybernetic" place.

This place is called Cwarel Isaf. It is the name of a cottage located in West Wales.



Far away from the hectic and busy life of our days it is a place of quiet amidst the rolling green hills of the Welsh landscape. One of the leading cyberneticians and the father of Management Cybernetics, Stafford Beer, lived in Cwarel Isaf for almost 30 years. The cottage and its beautiful surroundings served him as a place of reflection and inspiration. At Cwarel Isaf, Stafford Beer wrote some of his greatest books, the genius of which is only now beginning to find its way into the awareness of a wider population.

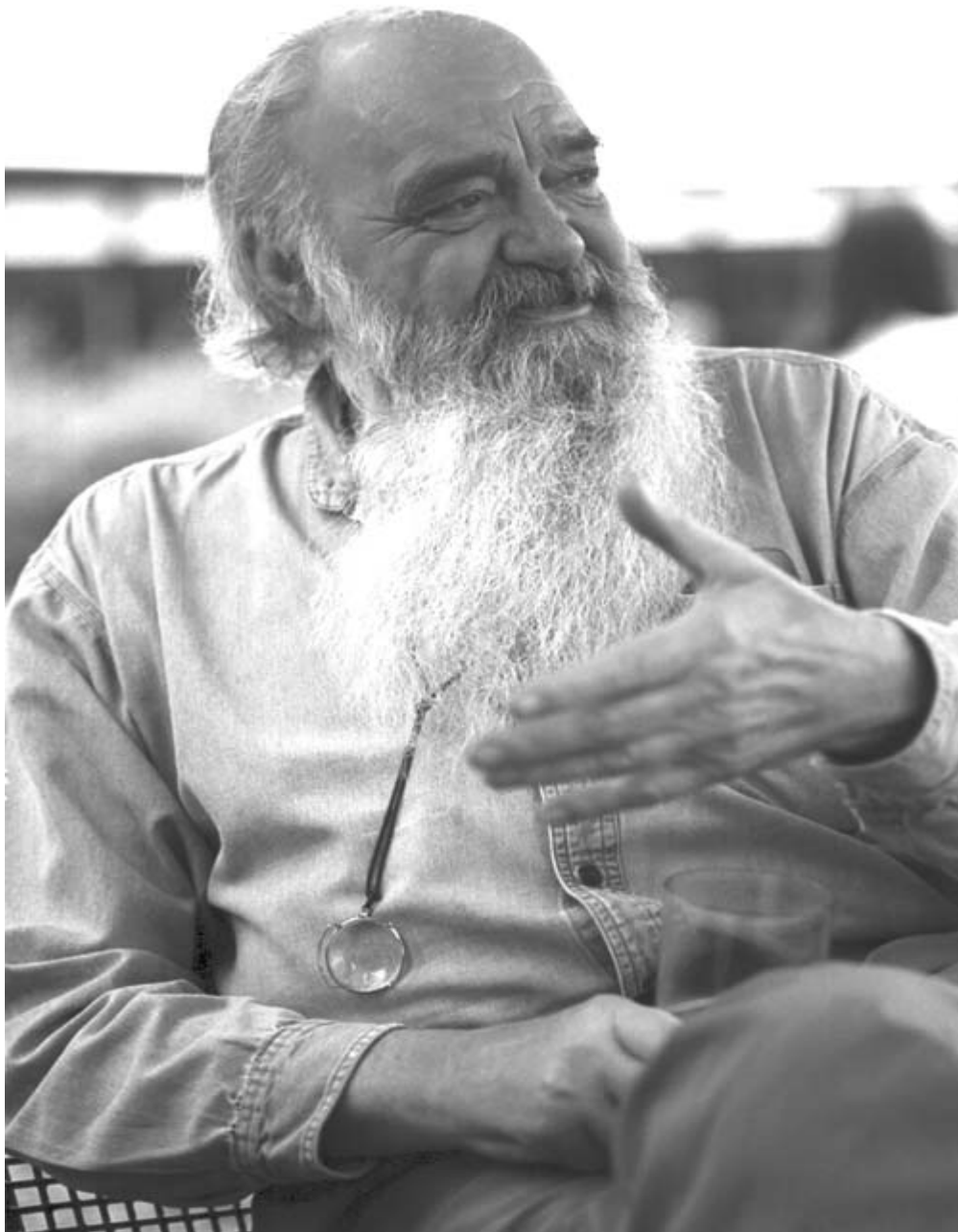
After Stafford Beer's death in 2002, the Cwarel Isaf Institute, which is dedicated to the preservation and continuation of his work and legacy, has taken on the mission of making the cottage available to students of cybernetics and the system sciences. Stafford Beer himself had always wished for his home to become a place for people who need time to think and contemplate.

The renovation of the cottage was concluded in August of 2005. Since then, the Cwarel Isaf Institute has been proud and delighted to be able to offer it as a work and study place to anyone who seeks to continue in the footsteps and the spirit of Stafford Beer and cybernetics.

The following pages are meant to give you an overview and an impression of the cottage and its history and of the mission and the purpose of the Cwarel Isaf Institute. They mean to offer you a first glimpse of the atmosphere that awaits you there. We sincerely hope that the cottage at Cwarel Isaf will meet with wide acceptance throughout the community of cyberneticians – be they professionals or friends – and that it will serve many a student of cybernetics as a place where they can further promote and develop the concepts and the kind of thinking connected to cybernetics and the system sciences.

The Cwarel Isaf Team

## In memoriam Stafford Beer



Stafford Beer  
1926 - 2002

# Cynghedd Saesneg am Geredigion

## I : GYTSAIN

Ceredigian cared again  
for you in soul, and for your new seal  
these years too late, and those your style uttered,  
spent in void.... Now you spin to invaders  
of your private space. Pray vote us peace  
who came, and come again,  
to this new home, to these nigh hamlets.

## II : SAIN

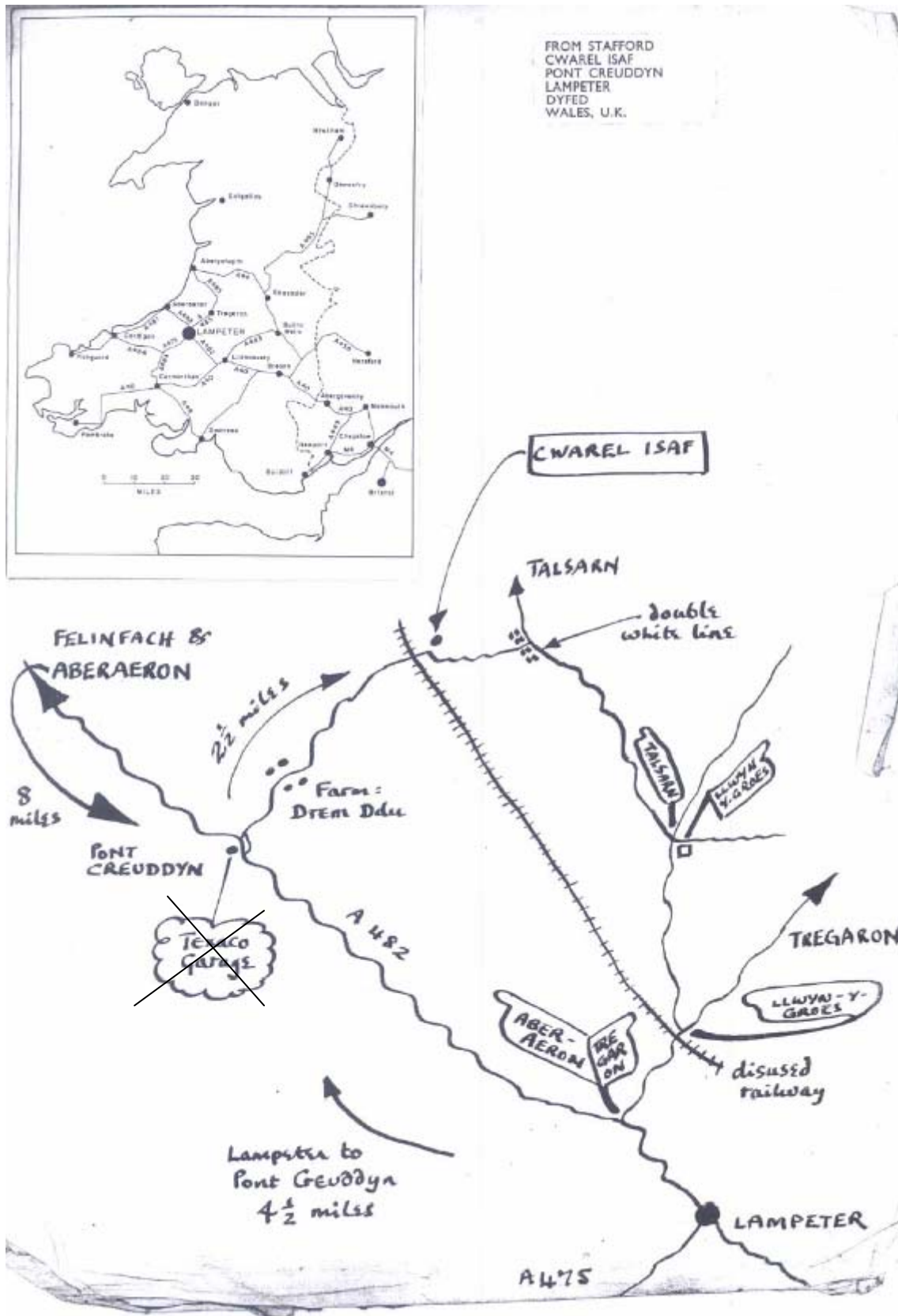
The solace-laden precious-maiden month  
shines down sun and thunder, thus  
to keep the patchwork, and to watch the morning  
light across the open fields : gloriously yields all  
yesterday's [part of previous line]  
deep hurt, grimed dirt, up to the distance  
of the Ceredigian hills, in merry making  
with a quiet sound. And all the ground is growing.

## III : LUSG

And you who have been hit in cities,  
still had a head to reel, and wounds for healing,  
entered the magic place : the streams were racing.  
But the blood's pulse is calm, its harmful  
tides subside. The moon riding  
a black sky lights heaven highly -  
compasses this fate, but only lately.



# 1. Cwarel Isaf - How to get there?



## 2. Stafford Beer and Cwarel Isaf

by Allenna Leonard

I don't think we can do much better than to use Stafford's own words from his autobiographical aside in the Preface to "I Said You Are Gods" delivered as the Second Annual Teilhard Lecture, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1980 and published in 1981 by the Teilhard Centre for the Future of Man.

After the coup that brought down the government of Salvador Allende in Chile on September 11, 1973...

*"The carnage and confusions of the following year were experienced as a personal tragedy. This time was spent in rethinking my own life once again: the changes on which I had embarked were not enough.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*The notion that I had been programmed 'to succeed' became dominant. At different times I had occupied three large houses, had a swimming pool, a variety of impressive cars.. I did not want any of these things; they were in my way. However, I was not wealthy – my politics had precluded equity investment. By arrangement with my family, I was going in future to live as I thought best; and I renounced material goods in their favour. The residual problem, which meant that I still could not make the change total, was the need to maintain both families.*

*The plan was to adopt a lifestyle consistent with the national weal. I acquired a stone cottage in the hills of Ceredigion. It is very small, and has no piped water, but it is robust. I made my own furniture, except for a spinning wheel, for I wanted to spin wool. For transport, I bought an ancient Land Rover, now twenty-nine years old. All this was done in time to spend my fiftieth year in this way."*

Stafford had happy memories of Wales, where University College London had moved to its wartime quarters in Aberystwyth. He loved the gentle beauty and colours of the Welsh hills and commemorated them in the poem Cynghanedd Saesneg am Geredigion, which followed, in English, three Welsh language poetic forms. After some searching, he



purchased a cottage called Cwarel Isaf, named such because it had been a slate quarry and moved there in 1975.

Cwarel Isaf, November 2004

Stafford was never able to find out when or for whom it had first been built but the cottage was marked on the first ordinance survey map of the area, compiled early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of its high ceilings and remote location, Stafford wondered if it might have been built originally as a Nonconformist chapel. In the recent past, it had been the home of a deaf elderly gentleman who had been killed by the train as he walked along the tracks toward the village of Felinfach. It was rented as a holiday cottage between then and when it was sold to Stafford.

From 1975 until 1985 when he bought the house in Toronto and divided his time between them, Cwarel Isaf was his only base. There he wrote **Heart of Enterprise, Brain of the Firm** and numerous papers and poems, painted pictures on an easel set up in the main room and spun wool. He desired to live in a basic way and tried, with the exception of his work-related expenses, to live within the amount of the old age pension. Heat was provided by a wood-burning fireplace, supplemented during cold weather with two small electric space heaters, and water was brought in from a stand-pipe to a pedal tank in the kitchen where he cooked his meals on a hotplate. Since he sought peace and quiet, there was no telephone connection for more than twenty years until it was agreed that he should have a means to reach the outside world in case of emergency. Ironically, the only time he was stranded, the electricity failed, and with it his up-to-date fax/telephone.

Stafford found the cottage, at the centre of a number of (magnetic) ley lines, a propitious place for his practice of meditation. The stars are bright on clear nights and it is usually very quiet except for birdcalls and the occasional vehicle going by on the road. One notable exception to this is the use of the allegedly unpopulated area for RAF training flights. One could be sitting quietly and be startled by the sound of aircraft buzzing overhead.

In later years, and as his health began to decline, piped water was installed by his supporters at Liverpool John Moores University and he installed a stove and washer/dryer. He replaced the old blue Land Rover, Chimo (which means I come in peace) with a slightly newer one, Chimo Bach, and a third, Chimo ap Chimo Bach. These he used to run errands and visit favourite pubs and restaurants and to connect to the rail lines at Carmarthen and Aberystwyth.

It was Stafford's wish that after his death the cottage would be used by others as a place to think, write, converse and consider the dynamic unity at the center of his science and his meditations.



### 3. The Cwarel Isaf Institute (CII)

by Constantin Malik



The Cwarel Isaf Institute was founded on the 14th of January of 2000 by Prof. Dr. Stafford Beer and Prof. Dr. Fredmund Malik. What preceded the foundation of the Institute was a long relationship and friendship between the two founding fathers in the spirit of cybernetics and its promotion for the good of society.

The professional careers that Stafford Beer and Fredmund Malik followed meant that they can draw on a rare blend of science, cybernetics and practical experience gained as managers and consultants and, in Fredmund Malik's case, as an entrepreneur as well. This unique combination was the increasingly firm bond that united them in the work they began to do together as partners in the mid-seventies.

In his doctoral thesis, which was published in 1975, Fredmund Malik was already building on the work of Stafford Beer. Then, in his post-doctoral thesis entitled "Strategie des Managements komplexer Systeme" [Strategy for the management of complex systems] (1st ed. 1978, 7th ed. 2002), Stafford Beer's management cybernetics occupied a position of central importance, prominence being accorded to the "Viable System Model".

At the Malik Management Zentrum St. Gallen and its subsidiaries, Stafford Beer's theory and his methods are being passed on to the customers of these organizations in the form of training and consultancy advice. Also, team synteegrations are being conducted.

To be able to make even better use of this unique background and framework for the benefit of the science and practice of management cybernetics, Stafford Beer and Fredmund Malik founded the Cwarel Isaf Institute to serve as a shared base.

It is characteristic of cyberneticists that they apply their findings to themselves: in this way Professors Beer and Malik made sure that they would acquire the information they needed on the functioning of their teaching in practice. What marks the careers of both of them is that they used feedback from practitioners and the practical world in their own thinking and actions. They were not satisfied to live in the ivory tower of science. And that was also the reason why they never confined themselves simply to teaching. Feedback from management practitioners is the only way of ensuring that management cybernetics will continue to develop in an effective, user-friendly way that is appropriate to management practice.



Throughout the whole of his career, Stafford Beer worked as a top manager, scientist, consultant and as a teacher of management. The same is true of Fredmund Malik, who as well as this also assumed responsibility for the corporate management of the Malik Management Zentrum St. Gallen.

The purpose of the Cwarel Isaf institute is to preserve the life's work of Stafford Beer, who passed away much too early in 2002, and make it available to society. Stafford Beer's thinking and the avenues he opened to solutions are of fundamental importance to management in complex systems. For the benefit of organizations now and in the future, the aim is for his work to be put into a form in which it is understandable and geared to practical application, and for it to be passed on both to those actually engaged in management and those who are studying it.



## 4. The refurbishment of the Cwarel Isaf cottage

by Sebastian Hetzler



A delegation of the Malik Management Zentrum St.Gallen met with Harry Beer in November 2004 in Wales to evaluate the further steps of process with Stafford Beer's last home and working place before he died in August 2002. Stafford left Cwarel Isaf in December 2001 when he was already ill. For three years, the cottage was exposed to the rather damp climate of Wales. Wind, rain and the water of the small runnel flowing down near the cottage caused harm to the old Welsh stonework. Like a sponge, the stonework became soaked with water.

Conserved by the white outside painting, the wall absorbed the water and pressed it inside the cottage. Especially the interior of the cottage was threatened by the water ruining the plastering and the paintings and inscriptions of Stafford Beer. It seemed to be clear that measures had to be taken immediately to preserve and protect this special place.

In January 2005, the board of directors of the Malik Management Zentrum St. Gallen decided to make a decisive investment to refurbish Stafford Beer's cottage and protect this important place from its slow but sure decay. Willy Pfister, member of the board of the Malik Management Zentrum St.Gallen, took over this momentous and ample assignment. With a clear vision and indefatigable creative power, he went to Wales in February 2005 to plan and initiate the necessary measures.

### Front view



Before



After

Especially, we want to express our gratitude to Gareth Jones, who was involved in the project as supervisor, supporter and coordinator on site. Gareth Jones is one of the few neighbors in the area. He owns a farm about 500m away from the cottage in Cwarel Isaf.

Due to severe damage, the truss had to be restored, the white outside painting that prevented the walls from breathing had to be removed and drainage had to be set up to dry out the walls and the roof. Inside, the electric wiring has been restored, the floor has been insulated and refurbished and the sanitary facilities have been renewed.

## View from outside into the living room



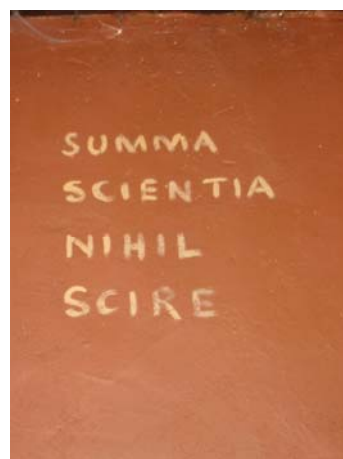
Before



After

On one hand, the interior was entirely redesigned by preserving the characteristics of the cottage and how Stafford lived there. He made some Welsh and English inscriptions in the walls. One of them is “summa scientia nihil scire”, which can be translated as “the highest science is to not know anything”. The inscriptions have been diligently cleaned and conserved in order to keep Stafford Beer’s energy alive inside the cottage.

## Inscriptions by Stafford Beer



### Conservation of Stafford's paintings in the cottage



Before



After

On the other hand, one was exerted to create an inviting and inspiring environment for those who want to work there. The living room has been restored, the fireplace was kept and the room was given a warm ambiance. As to the bedroom, it has been brightened up by adding some lighter colors to the walls and the ceiling. The room in the kitchen has been fully expatiated and now invites for cooking meals in the cottage.

### Working corner / today: kitchen



Before



After

## Sleeping room



Before



After

## Bathroom



Before



After



As well as that, the communication road and the lanes surrounding the cottage have been amended, and the dead wood and the wild plants have been removed to enlighten the nature and allow the garden to recuperate and to flourish. The old tool shed has been replaced by a wooden hut which invites the people to conduct meetings and discussions, but also just to sit outside and to enjoy the quiet and the peacefulness of this place. In summer, there is a possibility to use the garden shed in front of the cottage for a barbecue or a grill feast.

### Tool shed in the garden



Before



After

The pictures embedded in the chapter try to give the reader an impression about what has been achieved by Willy Pfister and his team within 5 months.

### Stafford landmark



Before



After

### Equipment:

- laptop, printer, internet access
- telephone, stereo
- fully equipped kitchen and dining area
- bedroom with double bed (2 people)
- bathroom, shower and toilet

## 5. House Rules at Cwarel Isaf

### HOUSE RULES AT CWAREL ISAF

CROESO!

WELCOME to this interesting and very beautiful place.

PLEASE ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING RULES.

1. All open fires, both inside and outside, must be extinguished before leaving the cottage.
2. In case of **FIRE**, the EXTINGUISHER is situated UNDER THE OFFICE WORKTOP, on the right-hand side. Please read the instructions carefully.
3. The house, furnishings, power and land are all at your disposal.
4. All maintenance, electricity and water costs are met by the Cwarel Isaf Foundation.
5. Please do not alter the house furnishings and contents; leave everything as you found it.
6. We would be grateful if you would clean the house on leaving. Cleaning materials are provided.
7. Please leave all dirty laundry in the linen basket. It will be dealt with by the House Manager. If you break or damage an item please report it to the House Manager.
8. The price per night is £30.00 for the cottage, not per person
9. Please pay the total amount due, and return the house key, to the House Manager before leaving.
10. Please sign the guest book, at your disposal on the office worktop, and feel free to comment on your stay.
11. In case of emergencies, or for further information, please call:

THE HOUSE MANAGER

Mr. Gareth Jones

07968319848 (mobile)

01570 470424 (home)

The phone and fax numbers of Cwarel Isaf are 01570 471111

MWYNHEWCH A DEWCH ETO!