



Cymdeithas Treftadaeth Dyffryn Conwy

Conwy Valley Civic Society

Mis Tachwedd/November

Editorial

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness it may be but it is also the time of year when fallen leaves obscure small rocks and large stones, particularly on narrow country lanes, which can be lethal to car tyres. So forgive me if you come across me driving in the middle of the road and be patient. I will pull over and I can reverse. Have you noticed that the ash trees have lost their leaves though the oaks are still well covered? But was it the oak or the ash that came out first this spring? No matter - I hope you too are enjoying the wonderful autumn colours.

Anne Ffowes Williams

Idris's Walk

MEMBERS may recall that last year's walk (on a wet day) attracted only two participants. This year the weather was good, and nine

walkers (plus three dogs) assembled at Plas Engan, Trefriw, first to view Idris's new water garden and then to explore Geirionydd and Crafnant. The first stop, on the way to Llyn Geirionydd, was the old mine works, an elegant building now ruined, and with a chequered history that included false claims for the mines in order to attract investors. From there we climbed to the monument at the east end of the lake, and walked along the south shore to the picnic site at the west end. There were some disparaging remarks on the power-boats, although we were entertained by a skier who all too frequently fell off her board! After lunch at the picnic site, the party divided, three people returning directly to Plas Engan and the rest making the traverse to Llyn Crafnant. There were no power boats here, but one of the party (Idris's friend and neighbour) pointed out an

island just below the surface, which at times of low water caused fishermen's boats to run aground. After leaving the lake we turned south-east to climb past a quarry and rejoin the path to the mine works and Plas Engan, where those in need were revived with tea by Idris.

Everyone (dogs included) enjoyed this pleasant, picturesque and not too strenuous expedition, and we were grateful to Idris for arranging and leading it.

James Greenhalgh

Roman Roads

OUR lecturer at our September meeting was David Hopewell of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust who described the typical Roman road so vividly and illustrated his talk with such effective slides that I ended the evening feeling quite confident that I could recognise a Roman road when I next see one! The truth is I will recognise it if it has been excavated!

The first thing I learnt was that everything I've ever

known about Roman roads is wrong.

They were always built in a straight line. No! Only if the terrain allowed. The roads were paved. No! Paved roads are medieval and nothing like as good for horses.

So how do you know it's Roman? Because they are always 5 metres wide, slightly raised in the middle for drainage, with ditches along both sides and there will be evidence of a quarry pit in the area. The roads are made of stones and covered with well beaten gravel. No paving slabs.

Some things make life easy for the archaeologist. Each centre would be linked by forts, for example, there are eight forts around Caernarfon, and these were built 22 kms apart because that was the distance a man could march in a day. But not all these roads are Roman. The most studied road is between Segotium and Canovium but this is most likely pre-Roman. Turnpikes provide further complications since they were frequently built on top of

Roman roads, and more recently oil and gas pipelines have obscured the picture still further.

David Hopewell used the roads as a spring board to give a fascinating picture of Roman life in Britain; a talk that was very much appreciated by his audience as the questions afterwards proved.

ADRON

October Meeting

SADLY Paul Kay could not deliver his lecture on The North Wales Landscape in Rowen Memorial Hall on Tuesday, 16th October. At the very last minute - Mr Kay didn't phone until the Tuesday morning - Kath Barrar, ever resourceful, arranged an alternative evening. Videos which the Cooks borrowed from the Camera Club, were shown by Peter Barrar. And while we're on the subject of missing speakers, if any members have an interesting talk up their sleeves, which they

could deliver in an emergency, please tell Kath. She'll be delighted.

November Meeting

MORE roads. And why not? We all spend considerable amounts of time sitting on them. Eryl Rothwell Hughes will talk about Coaching Days, Telford and the road to Holyhead. This promises to be interesting in itself and will also give us plenty of information to keep us amused as we sit in traffic jams in the future.

Wed 14th November Maenan Abbey - 7.30pm

Llanrwst Bridge

Several members of the Committee were concerned about the poor quality of the repair after a van had taken away a chunk of the Llanrwst Bridge in September. In view of its history and its architectural importance I was asked to write to the relevant authorities to voice our concerns. Before I could do so, however, a lorry managed

to destroy not only the repair but a larger section as well. An interesting article in the NW Weekly revealed it is the fault of SatNav, which gives drivers alternative routes without warning them of problems such as narrow spaces, low bridges or tight corners. I am now composing another letter!

Affordable Housing

THE Joseph Rowntree Trust have just started a five month study into the problem of affordable housing in Wales.

“The study will look at property prices, affordability and availability of social housing outside the major towns and cities, and will provide an accurate picture of the current situation in Wales.”

Which sounds great but it will be interesting to see how much notice is taken of the findings by councils, planners and developers.

Young people (late 20s and early 30s) that I have talked to who were born and brought

up in the Valley and would like to stay here, aren't interested in so-called “social housing”. All they want is the possibility of buying a small property in the area for a mortgage, which is a bit less than eight times their annual salary!

Invasive Species Help!

DURING the short business meeting before the lecture Nick Hamer reported on a need for volunteers to help the fight against invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam. For those of us with stiffening joints and ageing sinews the spirit may be willing but the knees and hips protest. However, if you are lithe and lissom and could spare an hour or so occasionally please phone Nick Hamer on 01492 640843 for more information.

December Meeting

See separate sheet for booking form

