



**Cymdeithas Treftadaeth Dyffryn  
Conwy  
Conwy Valley Civic Society**

**CYLCHLYTHYR/ NEWSLETTER**

**MAI/MAY 2007**

**STOP PRESS**

**S**ADLY we have had to cancel this year's Award Ceremony at the Eagles Hotel in Llanrwst on May 18th. In the article below Liz Bilbo explains the reasons behind this decision. Your Committee regret this but it is clearly the right thing to do. So please take note.

There will be **NO** meeting on Friday, 18th May, 2007.

**Our CVCS Award Scheme**

**T**HIS year it is possible that a new precedent has been set – that of not making an award.

The usual appeal for nominations was sent out at Christmas, in the form of a colourful bilingual leaflet, detailing examples of previous Award winners. In the ensuing weeks a number of nominations were received, ranging from conversions of redundant agricultural buildings to sections of stone wall, a memorial garden, two new car parks, a Y.F.C. hall and an area of forest regeneration.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March, the Assessors gathered for a packed day of site visits. This year's panel was made up of Diane Williams, Architect, an experienced Assessor, who was joined by Judith Alfrey, Inspector of Historic Buildings for Cadw, and Bryn Hughes, Senior Building Surveyor with the National Trust and a Llanrwst local – to all of whom we are most grateful for giving up their Saturday and lending their expertise and powers of scrutiny.

The sun beat down as we made a clockwise circumnavigation of the Conwy valley and tributaries, starting in Nebo, and taking in Dolwyddelan, Capel Curig, Betws y Coed, Ty'n y Groes, Henryd and Conwy.

Whilst each of the schemes nominated certainly made a contribution to the community in commercial terms, by adding to much needed parking facilities, or in terms of saving a redundant building from possible loss, none of the schemes was deemed by the Assessors to reach the exacting standard we now expect to see in Award-winning schemes. Whilst disappointing, we all agreed that this was the correct conclusion to reach and hope very much that this will encourage projects being carried out now to look carefully at building quality, the correct choice of materials and attention to local vernacular detail.

Some of the most glaring inadequacies in this year's crop of nominations involved the introduction of alien materials to the Conwy Valley, undoubtedly an environment where slate sits comfortably but pink paviers and gravel do not. Also, the scale of development needs close attention; in a landscape of small cottage gardens and stone-walled fields, suburban planting schemes and sweeping tracts of lawn and gravel drives do not fit.

In conclusion, there are positives to be drawn from this year's experience. The amazingly high standards achieved in 2004/5 have undoubtedly raised the benchmark for nominations. However, the intention of the Award Scheme is to encourage a high standard of projects, whether involving the built heritage or the natural environment, in order to preserve and enhance the special qualities of the Conwy Valley for future generations to enjoy.

As ever, the Committee would wish to thank the Cemlyn-Jones Trust for their continued support for the Award Scheme.

Liz Bilbo

## **GILFACH GARDEN**

**O**NE event that has **not** been cancelled is the opening of the garden at Gilfach, Rowen, by kind permission of Isoline and James Greenhalgh. The hottest April since records began threatened to play havoc with the tulips but even if one or two are a little full-blown there are many other flowers and shrubs vying for attention—to say nothing of the stunning view up the Conwy Valley and a delicious tea.

**Sunday 6th May from 2.00 till 5.30 pm**  
**Admission £2.00**

## **A Visit to Pensychnant - March Meeting**

**T**HE meeting on March 21st took the unusual step of going to the lecturer, rather than the lecturer coming to us. Julian Thompson, Warden of Pensychnant Nature Reserve, welcomed us to his place of work, and his home, for a talk on the history of Pensychnant.

The estate was bought in the 1870s by the Stott family of Oldham and a Victorian extension was built on to an existing 17th century farmhouse to form a holiday home for the family. The Stotts were also responsible for the erection of the impressive stone walls along the Sychnant Pass road and the planting of the pines which still line the road.

The last member of the family living in the house set up a trust to preserve the estate for the benefit of the wildlife in the area and also to make it accessible to the local community, and it is in that form that it exists now. Parts of the estate are farmed but there are also tracts of woodland, open moor and a small lake, all of which make up an area of great importance for several rare species, including moths endemic to the area and also the protected great crested newts.

Holding the meeting in the house itself added a very interesting dimension and the meeting closed with a chat over tea and bara brith.

Ann Peacock

## Counting Heads - Llandudno as a Village - April Meeting

**A**T the April 18th meeting Mr Geraint Griffith, a WEA lecturer for many years, quite deliberately chose to talk about Llandudno **before** 1851. This might seem surprising since, after the first official census was held in that year, records were to get increasingly accurate and much better kept. But it is the history of Llandudno before that date that always fascinated Geraint Griffiths, going back, as it does, to the iron age. He illustrated his lecture with photos taken over the last fifty years—raising excited comments such as “I had a car like that!” and “That’s a Ford Cortina!”—and with postcards and prints of the earlier period when depictions of the Great Orme owed much to artistic and romantic inclinations and much less to verisimilitude.

I found particularly interesting the comments about Abergele, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno and how they got their ‘shapes’. Abergele, largely agricultural with little building land available 150 years ago, has remained essentially a small market town. Colwyn Bay has been shaped by the position of the railway and the areas where land was gradually freed up for development. Llandudno, on the other hand, was designed in a co-ordinated way from the beginning, largely due to the influence of Lord Mostyn.

By 1769 the area at the foot of the Great Orme consisted of 12 or so houses and huts and the tiny chapel of St Tudno but twenty five years later the Napoleonic Wars had caused a greater need for copper and 318 people were living in the village in 63 houses, still clinging to the base of the Orme, with one or two farms scraping a living on the poor, marshy soil. At that time most of the men described themselves as miners although they supplemented their incomes by farming and fishing. Oysters were such a lucrative ‘cash crop’ that the tower of Abergele church was whitewashed as a landmark for the oyster beds.

In 1805 a visitor described the area as “one of the dark places of the earth and very far from everywhere’. That didn’t prevent Dr Pritchard advocating sea bathing to his Liverpool patients 15 years later but there was nowhere for them to stay had they followed his advice and even in the 1830s a visitor could write about ‘a trackless waste of boggy sandy dunes.’

Then everything changed. An Act of Parliament allowed the enclosure of over 800 acres—mainly on North Shore—and Lord Mostyn ensured that the railway being built along the coast entered Llandudno at the back, leaving the actual sea shore for uninterrupted development. The town was one of the earliest to be laid out on a grid plan and land—sold at auction—was only leasehold. The Mostyn Estate kept the freehold. High-handed? Perhaps. But the fact remains that Llandudno is one of the few places where sea, promenade and town are not split apart by the railway. St George’s, the first hotel, is right on the promenade, as are the other gracious, still elegant hotels along the front to this day.

Finally, a little snippet of information which I relished. On the night of the 1851 Census the Dean of Christchurch, Oxford, Dr Liddell, was staying in the St Tudno Hotel, with his family, various nurses and governesses, and his daughter, Alice, of Wonderland fame.

Anne Ffowcs Williams

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

WE gave the date of this event in the Society Programme but not the venue which had still to be confirmed. So please note in your diaries:-

**Wednesday 6th June, 2007 at 7.30 pm**  
**Rowen Village Hall**

The AGM gives all members a chance to have their say. If there is something you would like to discuss it would be helpful if you could let Dilys Glynne know about it beforehand. On the other hand you are welcome to bring the matter up in Any Other Business. Your comments and suggestions are always appreciated by the Committee. After the business part of the evening and refreshments the Speaker will be Alan Pritchard, National Park Warden for the Cwm Idwal area.

If you wish to nominate someone for office holder and/or committee membership please use the attached form. And **please** bring the copy of the Agenda with you to the meeting.

## **FUTURE DATES - SUMMER EVENTS**

**9th August** - Evening boat trip up the Conwy - by popular demand. The cost will be £16.00 per head to cover the cost of chartering the boat and the buffet supper, but this will not include drinks (wine, soft drinks, coffee, hot chocolate etc.) which will be available on board as required. Other organizations, including Rowen Gardening Club, will be invited to join us on the trip. **Remember the tide won't wait for latecomers!** Booking form on next page.

**1st September** - A walk above Trefriw to be lead by Idris Hughes. More details to follow but mark your diary now.

THURSDAY 9TH AUGUST, departing Conwy Quay at 6.45 pm

Please reserve ..... places on the above excursion for me and my guest(s). I enclose a remittance of £16.00 per person, payable to Conwy Valley Civic Society, total £.....

Name.....Tel.No.....  
Organization.....Address.....  
.....

Return this form, with your cheque, payable to Conwy Valley Civic Society, to Dilys Glynne at Cymryd, Baclaw Lane, Conwy, LL32 8UA as soon as possible and not later than **Wednesday 1st August**. Bookings will be made in order of receipt.

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CONWY VALLEY CIVIC SOCIETY – CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH DYFFRYN CONWY

Nominations for Office Holder and/or Committee Membership

I nominate.....of.....  
.....

Post Code.....Tel:.....\*

He/She has agreed to serve if elected. *\*(Please state Office or Committee member)*

I nominate.....of.....  
.....

Post Code.....Tel:.....\*

He/She has agreed to serve if elected. *\*(Please state Office or Committee member)*

Please return this form to the Secretary, Dilys Glynne at Cymryd, Baclaw Lane, Conwy, LL32 8UA. Not later than **Wednesday 23rd May, 2007**