

CONWY VALLEY CIVIC SOCIETY

JANUARY 2015 NEWSLETTER

Conwy Valley Awards 2015

Members will be aware that 2015 is an Awards year. We have been late on this occasion in sending out our earnest requests for you to send in your nominations of suitable projects so I hope that, despite the usual multitude of things to be done at this time of year, you will remember to keep your eyes peeled as you are out and about in our lovely valleys to note anything new (which means completed between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2014) which you think has improved the visual appearance and/or environmental quality of the area.

Projects over the years since 1989 have included restorations and conversions of old buildings, construction or rebuilding of dry stone walls, sensitively designed new residential, agricultural and industrial buildings, road improvements, educational projects, development of local businesses and renewable energy installations.

If you know of any such projects within the valleys of the Conwy and its tributaries, (but not including Conwy Town) please send brief details to me at Cymryd, Baclaw Lane, Conwy LL32 8UA as soon as possible and by **9th February** at the latest. Our sub-committee will inspect the projects to confirm that they are **prima facie** eligible, and they will then be assessed by our team of independent Assessors. Who will decide which if any of the nominated schemes are worthy of Awards.

Assuming that the Assessors recommend one or more of the projects for an Award (in 2007 they were unable to make any recommendations), the Awards Ceremony will be held at Plas Maenan Hotel on Friday evening 22nd May, when all members are encouraged to attend; we shall especially welcome those who have nominated successful projects.

Over to you !

Dilys Glynne
Awards Scheme Co-Ordinator

CHAIRMANS REPORT

St Grwst's Church, Llanrwst (Church Reordering)

I recently attended a presentation of plans for the church reordering of St Grwst's. To-day "church reordering" is the term used to describe secular uses in underused places of worship whilst still retaining their primary use. The original church on the site was built in 1170, this was destroyed in 1468 during the Wars of the Roses, the church we see to-day was built in 1470 and is Grade 1 listed. It is dedicated to St. Grwst, a Celtic Saint who founded a church in Llanrwst in the 6th century. Inside the church the rood screen, a partition separating the chancel from the main body of the church, is a rare surviving example with the most intricate carving. The Gwydir Chapel was added in 1633-4 by

Richard Wynn of Gwydir, in the chapel is an empty 13th cent stone coffin said to be that of Llewelyn the Great.

As has become all too familiar in this day and age to maintain the status quo is not a financial option. Therefore to ensure the future of the church it must extend its use in the community. The current plans show the removal of the Victorian pews and replacement with suitable chairs and an area on the left as you enter the church would provide space for a kitchen and toilets. Plans for these changes are available to see in the church. Obtaining funding for this project is underway.

Planning updates.

Applications can be viewed at www.conwy.gov.uk/planning

Gorse Hill Caravan Park (ref 0/41345)

The first planning application for an additional 16 static caravans plus a new Sewage Treatment Plant was refused as was an amended application for 14 static caravans, there is now a further amended application in for 10 additional sites plus the Treatment Plant. Comments on this proposal must be made to the planning office by January 23rd 2015.

Conwy Falls Hydro Scheme

As yet no planning application seems to have been made. I have been unable to contact the relevant company representative for further information.

Former Billington's Garage site, Llanrwst Rd. Conwy

Application has been approved for 220 seat restaurant, though the site is still for sale.

Tal-y-Cafn Public House

Although redevelopment has been slower than expected they are hoping to open later this year. This will probably be near the anticipated July opening of Surf Snowdonia at Dolgarrog.

Tal-y-Cafn Bridge

While I was crossing the bridge recently I realised that this would probably become very busy when Surf Snowdonia opens. Tay-y-Cafn has long been the crossing point between the east and west banks of the Conwy river. Cattle once swam across at low tide on their way to market. From medieval times to the Victorian Age a ferry transported people and livestock. The first bridge was built in 1897, the construction was steel spans resting on piers of stone and concrete. The bridge we see to-day was built in 1977 using steel spans of a modular design patented by Archibald Milne Hamilton in 1935. He was a civil engineer who had built bridges using army surplus ones for roads but found many parts were incompatible. His design created a set of standard components which could be fitted together in different ways to suit local circumstances. The 1897 masonry was retained for the 1977 bridge.

Programme Notes

Our 2014/15 Programme kicked off with a talk by Paul Kay , the Welsh Officer at the Marine Conservation Society. He explained that the UK Charity works to secure the future of our living seas and threatened marine wildlife before it's lost forever. The society works to establish "Marine Protected Areas" where wildlife can recover and flourish. In the last decade beach litter has doubled and this is dangerous to sea life including seabirds and dolphins. The Society arranges organised beach cleaning events. Paul Kay is also an author and underwater photographer, he showed us wonderful pictures of some of the 500 different marine life species to be found off our N Wales coast. On behalf of the CVCS I wrote supporting the MCS in their application for funding.

October arrived with a talk by Mrs Goodey on the WW1 battlefields and cemeteries in France. Twenty million soldiers from 30 countries were involved in WW1, about 9.5 million were killed of whom nearly 1 million were British and Empire soldiers. We learnt that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission looks after these cemeteries which cover over 1,750 acres, half of which is cultivated. There is a continuous need for maintenance due to pollution, vandalism and age some now being over 100 years old. The horticultural department maintains the cemeteries, each headstone is planted with a mixture of floribunda roses and herbaceous perennials. Low growing plants are chosen for the areas immediately in front of the gravestones ensuring that inscriptions are not obscured and preventing soil splashing back during rain. The talk was a very poignant reminder of part of our history.

The North Wales Wildlife Trust was the subject for November in a talk by Chris Wynne who is responsible for the management and protection of the Trusts nature reserves in North West Wales. We learnt that he looks after 17 nature reserves and is particularly concerned with wetlands, grasslands and heathlands. The size of reserve varies from several acres to less than one, the aim is to improve them to provide better habitats for preservation of the mammals, birds, amphibians, plants and fungi which inhabit them.

The Trust relies on our support both financial and on volunteers, see the nearest reserve to you at: www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk

The Societies programme continues on January 21st when Vicky MacDonald talks to us of “The Men who crossed the River Conwy”, I hope to see many of you at the Trefriw Memorial Hall for that meeting, meanwhile I wish you all a Happy New Year.

Nick Bevan