

Open Saturday and Sunday afternoons



www.clydachheritagecentre.com

Newsletter No. 1 February 2013

Letter from the Chairman

The Centre opened on a regular basis in October 2011 and since then it has welcomed almost 3000 visitors. I would like to thank the volunteers for their dedication in giving their time to the Centre; without their help it would not have been such a success.

I would also like to thank all the Committee members for their work both behind the scenes and at front of house.

During the year the Centre has hosted several events. Over 80 cyclists set off from the Centre on the 10th Anniversary '43 to the Sea' fun bike ride organised by Cwmtawe Cycle Group in June.

During the Olympics Paul Williams from Pontardawe Road was kind enough to loan us the Olympic Torch with which he had run one of the stages in the build up to the Olympics. Visitors came from far and wide to have their photographs taken with the Torch and we welcomed over 700 people over the three weekends.

St Josephs Primary School uses the Centre as an Educational Resource; and the Clydach Rainbows visited in October which was a great success! The Centre now boasts a website and Facebook page (why not like us it helps raise our profile?).

A group of volunteers attended a free 2 day World Host course at the Community Centre organised by Valleys Regional Park.

The training was designed to help the volunteers understand visitors' needs and how to promote the local community, in our case the Heritage Centre and its role as both as a source of local heritage information and wider tourism information.

As the VRP website says 'this is aimed at making You a beacon of knowledge and provide a warm welcome with helpful, accurate and friendly advice'.

I am pleased to say that everyone passed!

I look forward to another successful year with many more developments at the Centre.

Susan Evans (Chairman)

New trees in Coedgwilym



Children from St Joseph's planting trees in Coedgwilym

In November children from St Joseph's and Clydach Primary Schools planted over 400 trees in Coedgwilym Park. These saplings were provided by the Woodland Trust following a successful grant application by the Friends of Clydach Heritage Centre. The new trees in their protective tubes can be seen all around the park; there is also a Jubilee oak tree which has a special place, why not visit the park and see if you can find it?

The Woodland Trust aim to plant 6 million trees to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and Clydach is making its own small contribution.



Clydach Primary School ready for action

A postcard from Clydach

This is a card from our Worldhost trainers, Gareth Kiddie and Ruth Taylor-Davies, telling us what they thought of Clydach and the Heritage Centre

‘The Mond’, as it is affectionately known locally, is Europe’s largest nickel refinery and its main chimney stack dominates the village of Clydach, which lies just north of Swansea. It’s likely that a good number of potential visitors to Clydach are put off by the ‘industrial look’ of the place, but a good few more will have sailed on by anyway as the signage and lack of visitor information available locally is very limited! Surely there’s nothing much to see or do in a small village with a big chimney? Well how pleased we were to have been proved wrong!

For starters there’s the Heritage Centre set within the delightful Coed Gwilym Park and directly alongside the Swansea Canal. What a gem of a place...lots of really interesting information about the history of Clydach together with some fabulous heritage interpretation. We really liked the ‘Brick Chimney’ - a chimney breast created out of bricks from some of the 400 or so brickworks that once operated in the Valleys, but our favourites were the life-sized figures of local heroes & heroines created as part of the Sustrans Connect2 Portrait Bench.



Lilian Smith, local midwife, in the Portrait Bench
© Gareth Kiddie

We undertook our usual ‘straw poll’ of places of interest and the results were as follows:

- 1st Clydach Heritage Centre, Coed Gwilym Park
- Joint 2nd Waterfall at Forge Fach; St. Mary’s Church Clydach
- Joint 4th Pontardawe Arts Centre; Clydach – Pontardawe (National Cycle Network – Route 43)
- Joint 6th Views from Coed Gwilym Park; Dynamic Rock (climbing wall in village); Manor Park (Hotel); Cwm Clydach (RSPB Reserve); H.R.Jones (shop in village); St.John’s Churchyard.

All but one of the participants (John from the Riverside Centre in Pontardawe joined us – well done John!) Were from the Clydach Heritage Centre. The workshop went really well and there was plenty of ‘local’ passion despite there only being one true Clydachite in the room (those others that had lived in the village over 30 years were deemed to be near to qualifying on residency grounds though).



Ambassadors in Waiting © Gareth Kiddie

It was great to work with such a tight-knit enthusiastic bunch of people all dedicated to making a success of the Centre and to putting Clydach on the valleys tourism trail. We were told that you can see the Mond’s chimney stack from the Meridian Tower (Wales’ new tallest building on the waterfront in Swansea). Next time you are up there having sampled the delights of the city, clock the direction and make a bee line for Clydach. There’ll be better signposting in the near future we’re sure and when you get there you can expect a super Welsh welcome from local Ambassadors who are very, very proud of the community in which they live.’



The Friends of Clydach Heritage Centre celebrate £6500 of Heritage Lottery Fund grant

In November The Friends of Clydach Heritage Centre was one of the first groups in the UK to receive a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) All Our Stories grant. This exciting project, “Memories of Old Clydach” based in the Heritage Centre, Coed Gwilym Park and led by the Friends of Clydach Heritage Centre has been given £6,500 to digitise the memories of the community of Clydach. Local people will tell of their memories of schooldays, work - whether it was down the mines or in factories or farms - and also life in Clydach during the 2nd World war. These will be saved to DVDs/CDs which will be available for visitors to the Centre and also as school packs for pupils in the local Schools.

All Our Stories is a brand new small grant programme, launched in 2012 in support of BBC Two’s *The Great British Story*. It has been designed as an opportunity for everyone to get involved in their heritage. With HLF funding and support, community groups will carry out activities that help people explore, share and celebrate their local heritage.

The popular series presented by historian Michael Wood and supported by a programme of BBC Learning activities and events got thousands of us asking questions about our history and inspired us to look at our history in a different way, through the eyes of ordinary people.

The programme and HLF All Our Stories has proved a real hit and now “Memories of Old Clydach”, is one of hundreds of successful projects around the UK to receive a grant. The Friends of Clydach Heritage Centre will hold open days where the community will be invited to bring along old photos and their memories. Volunteers will be on hand to copy the photos and record the memories. The Friends are working closely with Swansea University and will have a History Masters Graduate volunteer to help with research.

TV presenter and historian Michael Wood, said: “We British love our history, and no wonder: few nations in the world, if any, have such riches on their doorstep, and so much of it accessible to all of us. It is really tremendous that the people of Clydach have been inspired to get involved to tell their own story and to dig deeper into their own past. It’s brilliant that so many people are being given the chance to get involved through the All Our Stories grants. Having travelled the length and breadth of the British Isles this last year filming *The Great British Story*, I am certain that fascinating and moving stories will be uncovered which will not only bring to life the excitement of local history, but will illuminate and enrich every community’s connection with the national narrative.”

Commenting on the award, Gwyn Evans (Secretary of FCHC) said “We’re delighted to have been awarded this grant and we can’t wait to get started. We’ll be holding a few training days for volunteers to learn how to use the equipment, then advertising our “drop in” days for the community to bring photographs and memories. Clydach is a lovely place, steeped in history and we know there’s so much more ‘out there’ to be discovered. We are really excited about getting the community involved and sharing their heritage and history with others.”

Jennifer Stewart, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund Wales, said: “Clearly the success of All Our Stories has reinforced the fact that we are indeed a nation of story tellers and that we want to explore and dig deeper into our past and discover more about what really matters to us. This is exactly what the grant will do for the Friends of Clydach Heritage Centre as they embark on a real journey of discovery.”

STOP PRESS see back page for details of the Open Days

Subscriptions

Each year we have to pay for insurances and licences to allow us to run the Centre; these basic running costs are met from subscriptions and sales of goods in the Heritage Centre.

If you haven't renewed this year please help us by completing the form below and returning it, with your payment, to:

Secretary, 69 Vardre Road, Clydach, SA6 5LU or drop it in at the Centre one weekend.

Thank you

I would like to become a Friend of Clydach Heritage Centre.

I enclose my subscription for the year

Name:

Address:

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Post Code:

Tel:

Email:

Age (if under 18):

Membership Fee: £3/year

I would like to make a donation of £.....
making a total of £

giftaid it

If you pay income tax or capital gains tax we can claim 25p for every pound you give to us - at no extra cost to you.

If you are happy for us to claim Gift Aid on your contribution from 6th April this year please tick here.

Signed:

Date:/...../.....

Local Grants

Both Clydach Community Council and Vale have been very generous in providing us with grants to benefit and improve the Centre.

The Community Council funded the production of stickers (below) to be given out to children visiting the Centre to remind them of their visit.



Vale has donated funds to allow us to purchase display material, advertising flags and literature for use in the Centre.

We are very grateful for this generous assistance to the work of the Centre.

Memories of Old Clydach

What do you remember of World War 2 or the 1950s in Clydach?

Open days at the Heritage Centre on
Wednesday 6th March (11am - 3pm)

Sunday 10th March (11am - 3pm)

Bring along your photographs and memories and tell us all about them.

With your permission we will copy the photographs or any other items you bring along and return the originals.

If you would like to be involved but can't make either date ring the Secretary on 01792 842109 and we'll arrange one.