

Open Saturday and Sunday afternoons



www.ClydachHeritageCentre.com

Newsletter No. 2 October 2014

Letter from the Chairman Rebecca Visits

Welcome to our second newsletter. We have been pretty well occupied with our Heritage Lottery Fund project 'Memories of Old Clydach' over the last eighteen months but we have also been involved with other interesting projects as you will see as you read through the next pages.

The HLF project was very interesting and we have met many fascinating people. There is more about this inside the newsletter. There was a long standing display of our work in Clydach Library and we had a stand at the Village Fete in August.

The storms of February 2014 uprooted two of the fine Scots Pines which stood in front of the Centre and we had to close for almost a month as these, and another fir tree which threatened to fall onto the Centre, were made safe. Swansea Council has repaired the damage and the area is now fully usable as you can see from the picture below.

Since we opened in Oct 2011 we have welcomed over 7000 people through our doors.

Of course we couldn't do any of this without hard working committee members and volunteers who have contributed to the success of the Centre in the last two years. Thank you all very much.

Susan Evans (Chairman)



The paved area in front of the Centre, repaired after the storm damage of February 2014.

During November 2013 we displayed a National Waterfront Museum exhibition entitled Strikes and Riots. One of the themes of this exhibition was the Rebecca Riots.

The Morgan family of Cwmcilau Farm near Felindre were key actors in the Rebecca riots near Swansea and among their descendants are Rhodri Morgan (Former First Minister of the Welsh Assembly Government) and his brother Prys (Emeritus professor of History at Swansea University).



Prys Morgan talking about the Rebecca Riots
© South Wales Evening Post

Rhodri Morgan kindly agreed to open the exhibition and Prys gave an interesting talk on the family's involvement in the riots, reminding us that it is only in the last fifty or so years that the family has recognised its link to this period in Welsh history.

Children from Clydach Primary School asked many questions of the Morgan brothers but the only one which stumped them was 'what did it feel like to dress in women's clothes?'. Rhodri explained that these events had happened over 150 years ago and, despite appearances, they were not old enough to have been part of them!

Community Tourism Conference Visit

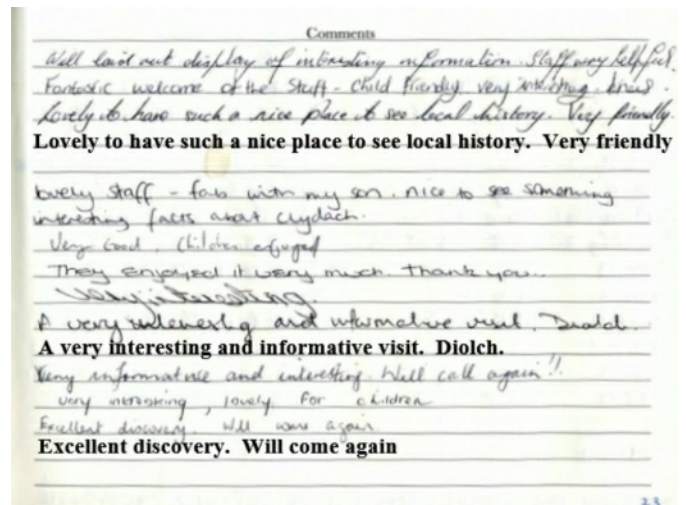
The Valleys Regional Park provided some of the funding for the Heritage Centre and also provided ambassador training for many of the volunteers. We are only one of many such organisations to have benefitted from the VRP initiatives and in April 2013 we were all invited to a Community Tourism conference at Margam Park.

As part of the conference study tours visited the various local venues. We think those who visited Clydach Heritage Centre were impressed with what they saw, judging by the comments in the Visitors' Book.

Bats, Moths, Butterflies and Dragonflies

The banks of the Swansea Canal are rich in wildlife and Rhiannon Bevan of the South West Wales Wildlife Trust came to the Centre on a number of occasions to show us where these creatures could be found.

On a balmy spring evening we listened to bats flying both high and low along the canal and on a sunny morning we found butterflies and dragonflies. Did you know that dragonflies are carnivorous and the beautiful flying creature only lives for a matter of days or weeks? Their earlier life stages are as ugly creatures living in the mud for up to six years. During one of these walks we came across a Beautiful Demoiselle *Calopteryx Virgo*, a damselfly, the first recorded sighting along the canal.



Visitor book comments

Delegates with our local heroes



Riders wait in the sun for the off

Cwmtawe Cycle Group

This is a group of local cyclists who aim to promote cycling for pleasure in the valley.

For the last two years they have based their popular 43-2-Sea fun bike ride at the Centre. Up to 100 riders assemble for music and hot dogs before setting off along the National Cycle Route 43 to Swansea and the Sea. NCN 43 runs alongside the Swansea canal adjacent to the Centre and provides a traffic free route between Swansea and Coelbren. Funds raised during the day are donated to Ty Hafan.

Memories of Old Clydach - What do you remember of World War II and the 1950s?

It's February 2013 and we are standing in the Centre surrounded by boxes and lots of shiny goodies; voice recorders, a laptop, a scanner, a camera, a CD player, headphones and marvellous wireless receivers. What were we going to do with them?

At the end of 2012 we had been told we'd been successful in our grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project entitled Memories of Old Clydach - What do you remember of World War II and the 1950s? We received £6500 and this equipment, bought with the grant, was going to help us deliver this project.

Of course we couldn't do it alone. Swansea University had set up the Connected Communities project to tell local stories and we were one of six groups working on separate ideas but assisted by academics and staff from the Modern History Department. For our part we had the services of a postgraduate student, Alex Grove, who researched the history of Coedgwilym Park, our coronation park which celebrated its diamond Jubilee in 2013. Alex's work is to be published in the 2014 edition of the Gower Society's journal *Gower*.

We all needed to learn new skills e.g. how do you interview someone, how do you scan objects, how do you make a film? Kate Spiller our chief support officer at the university organised many courses and lectures where we picked up some pointers and then we set out on our venture.

At Forge Fach we met Alf Knight. Alf had been a plumber and he loaned us his 1939 diary. On 1st September he noted that that he'd fixed a lavatory pan in a local house and that 'Hitler started on Poland'; on Sunday 3rd September war was declared and Alf received his call up papers, the following day he was on the train to Aldershot and his army life had started, age 18. Alf was a really interesting character and easy to interview. Unfortunately he died in November 2013 and so never got to see his interviews published. His story demonstrates how fragile are our links to the past and how fortunate we were to have met him and recorded his story.

Sue Evans interviews Alf Knight



Brian Bellingham's father was the last manager of Player's Tinsplate Works and he put us in touch with Islwyn Hopkins. Islwyn had been a cost clerk at Player's in its latter years and told us how he had taken a group of Japanese engineers around the works in the mid-1950s. The older workmen had refused to cooperate warning Islwyn that his job would be at risk once the Japanese had worked out the tinsplate process. How right they were.

We met people who had lived in Clydach all their lives and others who had arrived as a result of war, the evacuees who had stayed, learned Welsh and become part of the community. A local boy left school at 14 and started work in the mine (Nixon's) almost the next day; he was able to provide a commentary for some cine film of the colliery workings. Another lady told us of her holiday 'on the continent' in the early 1950s.



Sue Evans presents a disc pack to Clydach Primary School
© Blackplanet photography

Eventually we had to call a stop to interviewing and collecting information. Now it was time to learn how to edit interviews and make films and commission our graphic designer. This was quite a learning curve but we eventually produced our disc package of a DVD, an audio CD and a data CD. These have now been distributed to local schools to provide a local view for their curriculum subjects. Copies have been given to all our contributors and also deposited with various archives. West Glamorgan Archives, in the Civic Centre in Swansea, has documents which are over 800 years old, let's hope that Clydach children of the next generations will find our work useful and informative.

On 1st May we celebrated completion of the project with almost 100 guests ranging from school children to contributors of much more mature years. Professor Huw Bowen of Swansea University opened the event and received the first copy of the disc package.

Subscriptions



Each year we have to pay for insurance and licences to allow us to run the Centre. These basic running costs are met from subscriptions and the sale of goods at the Heritage Centre.

The membership year runs from 1st October to 30th September.

If you haven't renewed this year please help us by doing so. You can fill in the form below and return it, with your membership fee, to:

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

Alternatively, visit the website and use the Paypal facility. **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:/...../.....



Pontardawe Chamber of Trade & Commerce and Pontardawe Arts Centre

Invite you to their
2014 Autumn Fest
Friday 31st October

Craft & Food Stalls 10.00am-2.00pm
Jolly Tots (Craft & fun) 12.00pm – 2.00pm
Children's Disco 2.00-4.00pm
£1 entry plus Fancy Dress Competition.

2014 Winter Fest
Friday 5th December

5.30pm – 6pm 'Santa comes to Town'
A Torchlight procession to welcome Santa
5.30 – 7.30 Main stage Anthony Argyle introduces ' Music from the Panto'
6pm -8pm Santa's Grotto

Saturday 6th December
11am – 3pm Entertainment
11am -3pm Craft stalls
11am -3pm Santa's Grotto
7.30 Village Quire



Newsletter printed with financial support from
Clydach Community Council