



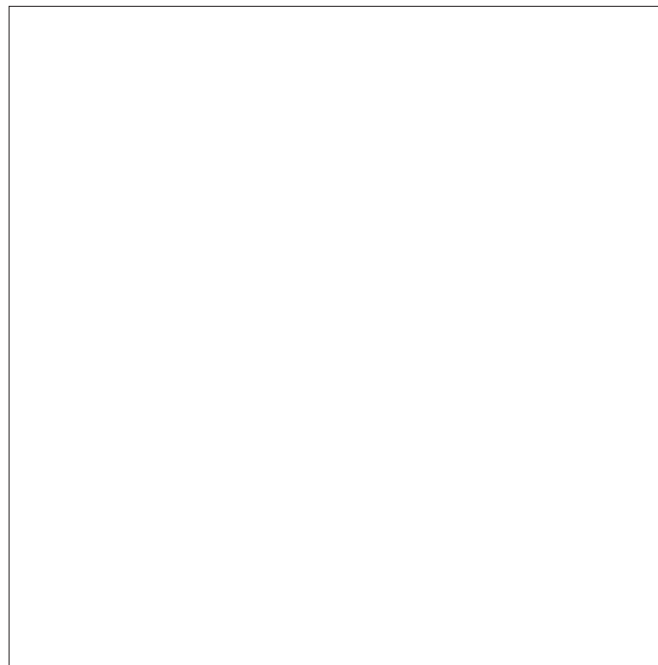
Happy 90th Birthday

Congratulations to Mrs Edna Wells of The Highlands on celebrating her 90th birthday recently. Mrs Wells is well known throughout and beyond our community as the former caretaker of Mynachlog Nedd Junior School. She is also well known as an active member of both St. John's Church and Neath Abbey Senior Citizens.

Born in 1914, one of her earliest recollections is of the troops returning home at the end of the First World War. Another is of the trams carrying coal along the Dram Road and incline towards Neath Abbey Wharf.

Her first employment on leaving school at the age of fourteen was as housemaid at Darran Farm. She then worked with her mother who was caretaker at Mynachlog Nedd School – known then as Skewen Lower School – eventually succeeding her as caretaker. Mrs Wells retired in 1979 having been employed at the school for a period spanning sixty-one years.

We extend to Mrs Wells our congratulations and wish her the very best of health for the future.

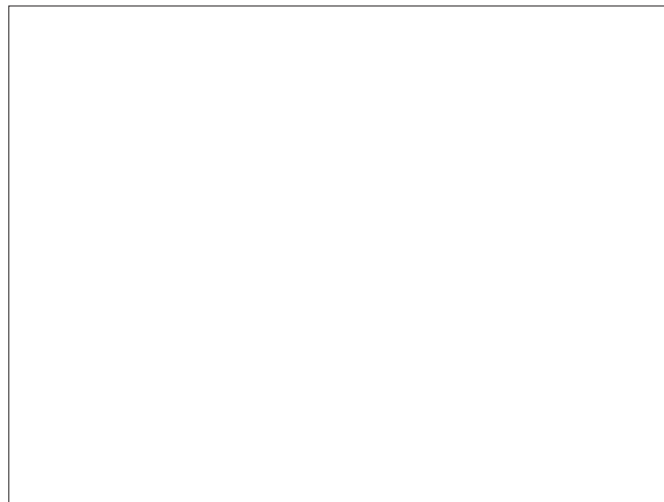


Mrs Wells is presented with a bouquet by Cllr. Martyn Peters. Mrs Wells' nephew, Mr Lance Curtis is also present.

NATURE NOTES

Fortunate in having a variety of habitats from the tidal river to the top of Drymmau Mountain, Dyffryn Clydach is an ideal place to observe nature.

At this time of year flowers such as the primrose, bluebell, lesser celandine and wood anemone will be emerging in our hedgerows and woodlands in order to get on with the business of flowering and setting seed before good light is denied them by vigorous growing grasses and the thickening tree canopy above.



Now is the time, too, to pay particular attention to the birds around us. During the winter you will no doubt will have seen jackdaws, robins, blackbirds, house sparrows and other common residents, but did you see a buzzard, peregrine falcon, sparrow hawk, heron, kingfisher, dipper or black cap? They were all seen here during the winter months.

From now on look out for a kite soaring above on a calm day, and keep your eyes and ears open for the arrival of our first summer visitors. House martins usually arrive during the second week in April: will they be earlier or later this year?

The resident pair of mute swans on the Tennant Canal is nesting again this year, with the cob already patrolling his "patch" with the tenacity of a naval destroyer. It would be wise to give him a wide berth.

Here follows a cautionary note for those of us who put out food for birds. Rodent officers are reporting an increase in the number of rats setting up home near such a ready source of nutrition. Please do not stop feeding the birds. But only put out as much food as the birds can clear in a day; put the food in small trays so that these can be brought indoors at night; sweep up any food that has been spilled on to the ground near the feeding area, and keep an eye out for unwanted visitors.

The Cwrt Herbert Cross and Grave Slab

Our community calendar for 2004 carries an illustration of what is popularly known as the "monk's grave" at Cwrt Herbert. The sketch shows the "grave" as it appeared before the demolition of the mansion and the subsequent construction of the housing estate. At that time, it comprised two separate components: a standing stone with a cross incised on its front and reverse, and an effigy of an ecclesiastical figure – a grave slab - lying at its foot.

The standing or "pillar" stone, which remains in its original position, is 2.13m high, 48cm wide and 22cm thick, and could pre-date the monastery by at least a thousand years. It could at one time have marked the grave of a Roman soldier, for there are many instances of the Romans burying their dead at the side of a road, and the road from Neath to Loughor probably passed this point. On its northern side, the

stone has an incised roman cross which according to experts dates from the seventh or eighth century, with the slightly better-executed cross on its southern side having been cut a century or so later.

At the foot of the stone once lay an effigy which many believe to be that of Adam of Carmarthen, Abbot of Neath, A.D. 1209. In his

The original cross (N side) dating from the 7th or 8th century.

hand he holds a model of a church that could, according to de Gray Birch, refer to the re-building of the abbey church that took place during his time as abbot.

After visiting the site in the 1850's, M. & Mrs.S.C.Hall wrote in their book entitled, "The Book of South Wales, The Wye, and the Coast":

"It is a curious relic, which all visitors to the place would desire to see it removed from its present rest to the interior of the ruin; we believe it would be so removed, if a hint of the propriety of

Standing stone with later cross (9th century)

the act were conveyed to Lord Dynevor. He who has done so much for the preservation of the venerable remains, would, we are assured, gladly attend to any suggestion for increasing their interest."

Whether a "hint" was ever made to Lord Dynevor, or whether the "hint" fell on deaf ears, we shall never know. What we do know, however, is that the effigy was only removed to the safety of the abbey when the building of the Cwrt Herbert estate commenced.

But how did the effigy get to Cwrt Herbert in the first place? D. Rhys Phillips in "The History of the Vale of Neath" states that he has "good authority for the following story":

"In the second or third quarter of the last century, one of the foremen at the Neath Abbey Iron Works had made himself unpopular with the high-spirited young apprentices over whom he held control. To avenge his severity, this group carried the Adam effigy from the spot where it then lay and leaned it against the door of the foreman's house within the yard, so that when he opened the door in the morning the effigy fell towards him, frightening him out of his wits, and broke into three pieces on the floor. The effigy is in three pieces where it now lies in Cwrt Herbert field."

The grave slab in safe keeping at the Abbey.

Does this account stand up to scrutiny? Given the size of the effigy, this prank, had it taken place, could have had dire consequences for both foreman and apprentices. Again, how far was the foreman's house from the field at Cwrt Herbert, and how did the effigy finally end up in the field?

Rhys Phillips' account puts the date of the effigy's arrival at Cwrt Herbert somewhere between 1825 and 1875, but evidence is available to show that it lay there well before that time, for a certain John Carter visited the area between 1764 and 1817 gathering material for his collection of "Sketches relating to the Antiquities of this Kingdom; taken from the real objects". One of his drawings is entitled, "A Statue laying (sic) in a field near the ruins of Neath Abbey". This drawing suggests the effigy was already broken at the time it was sketched.

KEEP DYFFRYN CLYDACH TIDY

Dyffryn Clydach, as many will testify, is a nice place in which to live. Thankfully, as a community, we rarely, if ever, experience the problems regularly featured in our newspapers and on our television screens. Generally, we are a community that cares for our environment and respects other people's property. We are also very fortunate in having two groups of volunteers working within the community to help maintain its attractiveness. Part of the role of both groups is to work with Keep Wales Tidy in an effort to keep our community as litter-free as possible. One group has responsibility for Cwm Clydach and the river, whereas the other operates in the remainder of the community.

Picking litter is not the most attractive of tasks but members of both organisations do derive satisfaction from knowing that they are giving of their time and effort in order to keep unsightliness and health risks to a minimum in Dyffryn Clydach.

What is intolerable, however, is to see rubbish, in large quantities, being deliberately discarded about the community when we have the facilities of a first class waste collection service at our disposal, operated by the County Borough Council.

Unfortunately, we have one area in our

community that falls far short of expected standards, as anyone who has walked the footpath between Old Road and Neath Abbey Business Park recently will confirm. It is the area surrounding Leyshon Court / Cwrt Lleision and Ffordd y Mynach. The miscellany of items thrown over the footpath, and especially the railway boundary fence defies belief: mattresses, carpets, wrecked bicycles, fridges, car components, black sacks containing empty cans and discarded food - to list but a few. The place is rapidly becoming a paradise for vermin.

Much, if not all, of this rubbish could only have come from properties within the area previously mentioned. More than likely it is only a minority of residents who are guilty of these offences, and we are determined to bring them to book for their anti-social behaviour. One name has already been passed on to the authorities.

There is a welcome for all who come to live in Dyffryn Clydach, but we do expect incomers to abide by the same standards of behaviour that are observed by the remainder of our community's inhabitants.

Please dispose of your rubbish in the proper way. If you have large items to get rid of, why not telephone the Council on **01639 764555** for assistance? They will be pleased to help you.

Play Areas

Following a history of vandalism and nuisance at the children's playgrounds at Lôn Glynfelin and The Highlands, your Plaid Cymru community councillors decided that the most sensible course of action would be to concentrate play equipment at the geographical centre of the community - Longford Memorial Hall. Our promise to the children of the area has now been realized with over fifty thousand pounds having been spent in creating a playground for toddlers at the rear of the Hall, and in renewing the equipment intended for older children at the playground above it.

To the rear of the Hall stands a toddlers' play area that only under-fives accompanied by an adult are allowed to use. The area above the Hall has a range of new equipment suitable for older children. It is hoped to erect additional items at both sites when money becomes available.

RECIPE ♦ RECIPE ♦ RECIPE

Those of us who regularly attended the Longford and District Gardening Society shows at the Memorial Hall will never forget the mouth-watering entries that graced the tables in the Domestic section. Fortunately, we have enlisted the help of some of the regular prize-winners to help us re-create their winning entries. Here is Mrs Marlene Smith's recipe for Welsh Cakes, or Pice ar y Maen as they are called in Welsh.

WELSH CAKES

1 lb plain flour	½ tspn mixed spice
4 oz margarine	1 tspn baking powder
4 oz lard	1 egg
4 oz currants	2 tbsps milk
6 oz sugar	pinch of salt

Method

Sift the flour, baking powder and salt together. Rub in the fat and add the other dry ingredients. Beat the egg lightly and add enough milk to make a firm paste. Roll out on a floured board to a thickness of ¼ inch and cut into rounds. Cook for about 3 minutes on each side until golden-brown. Cool and sprinkle with sugar. Serve alone or with butter.

POLLING DAY

On June 10th polling will take place for the European Parliament, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Dyffryn Clydach Community Council. If you live in the Longford or Highlands and Penschanel areas and intend visiting a polling station to cast your vote, the venues remain the same as they were at the last election. If, however, you voted at Neath Abbey Infants School, there is a change. In the interests of access and road safety the polling station has been moved to Traherne Court, Cwrt Herbert.

If you are a postal voter, and you fail to post your ballot paper in time, you will be allowed to take it to the polling station where you would normally have voted and hand it in there. However, ballot papers will not be issued at polling stations to electors who have registered for a postal vote.

PLAID CANDIDATES

The following candidates have been selected to represent Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales at the June elections:

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council:

Martyn Peters

Dyffryn Clydach Community Council:

John Bryant, Jennifer Davies, Janice Dudley,

Gwyn Edwards, Robert Edwards, Brian Hall,

Martyn Peters, Graham Phillips, Margaret Smith,

David Thomas, Harry Thomas, Hugh Thomas, Lyn Thomas.

**PLAID CYMRU WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY,
IN THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY**

Get Gardening

This is the time of year when new growth and, hopefully, spring sun encourage us outside in the garden. Here are a few seasonal reminders for the end of March and early April.

Lawn Care

Scatter worm casts and remove any debris. Start light mowing, raising the blades for the first few cuts.

Vegetables

If you are growing potatoes, chit them by standing them on end (with most eyes uppermost) in a cool light place to start sprouting. Depending on the variety they can be planted out soon.

Onion sets, too, can be planted out shortly, depending on the variety.

Some seeds prefer cooler conditions and broad beans, carrots, parsnips and spinach can be sown immediately.

Radish and some varieties of lettuce can also be sown. If in doubt, check the seed packet for sowing instructions. It is far more satisfying, and considerably cheaper, to have home grown produce.

Flowers

Sow seed under glass for summer flowering annuals.

For gardening supplies – anything from flower pots and canes to a range of compost, fertilisers and pest control – remember to visit the Longford Gardening Club. This is to be found in the garage compound off Heol Penlan and is open every Sunday between 10.30am and 12.30pm.

Margaret Smith

TREES R'US

Trees provide a necessary place in our Community, yet, sadly, to some people they are not an amenity to be valued but a nuisance.

However, last year in our community a small band of enthusiasts formed the Dyffryn Clydach Environment Group to safeguard the trees in our streets, gardens and open spaces. Firstly to identify the trees holding Tree Preservation Orders to ensure they were adequately protected. Secondly that the street trees were not being slowly destroyed by the careless strimming of grass verges: those showing signs of decay were noted. Replacement trees were obtained from the Council and planted with the aid of the Princes Trust, in Longford Road and Cwrt Herbert.

In addition our other plans are to undertake hedgerow surveys and regular litter-picks in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy.

Litter and flytipping cause a major problem in this area as well as blight. Quite recently the group took part in litter-picks around the Tesco Car Park. It was astonishing what people discard so readily. A little thought – TAKE YOUR LITTER HOME, PLEASE!

The Council have now organised recycling facilities for the collection of Paper, Garden Waste and Glass from every household on a weekly basis, so why not use it to keep our environment clean!

During the coming months there will be a full programme of activities, why not join us and learn about trees and the wildlife, as well as of the footpaths in your community.

Sheila Manning

The editorial team of **YMLAEN** are prepared to consider publishing items from individuals or organisations within the Community. Please contact your councillors or branch members for more information.