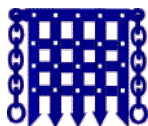


THE GOWER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2011

Registered Charity number 258372

www.gowersociety.org.uk



National Recognition!

The Bowland award has been given annually since 1999 by the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty for 'the best project, best practice or outstanding contribution to the well-being of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

This year we submitted a nomination, in the form of a short account of the work of the Society over the years. Five 'projects' were shortlisted and each member of the Association was allowed one vote. Before the national conference, when the award was to be presented, we were told that there was 'one clear winner', but not told who that winner was; we were surprised and delighted to find that the winner was us!

Presenting the award to Cllr Hague, who accepted it on our behalf, Peter Stevens, Chairman of the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, described the Gower Society as 'a very worthy winner of the Bowland Award. It is very fitting that this year's recipient is a group of local volunteers who are offering local solutions to national issues. I congratulate them on their achievements.'

The Evening Post described the award as an 'Oscar', since it was voted for by our peers in the AONB family. The trophy, a bronze hen harrier in full flight, is, however, much more handsome than the Oscar!

Gower goes live

One of the Welsh journals that have been digitised by the National Library of Wales is *Gower*. Back numbers of our journal can now be accessed on the Library's web-site, so you can check out early editions or research particular topics from what is virtually an encyclopaedia of Gower. Go to the National Library of Wales web-site, enter 'Welsh journals' and go to 'Browse titles Available'. Or put in the direct link: <http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk/browse/listissues/llgc-id:1272866>

Gower Society lunch

Our last Newsletter gave advance notice of this – it is arranged for Sunday 27th November (12.30 for 1pm). We

hope many members can join us at The Avalon Suite of the King Arthur Hotel, Reynoldston – please feel free to bring friends who are not (as yet) members. We are returning to this disabled-friendly venue with easy access in the centre of peninsular Gower, where we have enjoyed such pleasant meals the last two occasions. Accompanying this Newsletter is a booking form – the closing date is **Friday 21st October**. With numbers limited to around 120, book NOW while you remember! We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible for a memorable lunch in delightful surroundings, at a most reasonable all-in cost of £21, including three courses and tea/coffee and mints: all you will need to pay for is what you wish to drink. Gower Society books and cards will be available - and an opportunity to view the Bowland Award!

Gower Show 2011

As usual a team from the Society had been planning its displays in our large marquee for many months before Sunday 7th August in Penrice Park. Under the co-ordination of Lynne Lock, 'staff' and visitors alike commented that they thought it was 'the best yet'. It also impressed the judge who gave us the prize for the best non-trade stand at the Show.

New displays caused much comment and discussion - especially the huge four-panel display covering the best of the AONB and its corollary – what we think is not so good. With an enlarged and updated footpath section display, hand-out leaflets disappeared faster than melting snow. The display of past Gower Society Design Award winners was read in depth by the majority of visitors, and the sample award plaque was thought to be an award worth coveting. The sales team did good trade and many admired and bought our new cards. Their prominent display attracted many comments and the Society is greatly indebted to the descendants of Edward and Iris Martin for so generously allowing us to reproduce some of their striking designs. We were delighted that Edward and Iris's son and daughter and her husband accepted our invitation to be our guests for the day, and also to join us at the Show President's lunch. They brought with them and showed us additional designs done by their parents – which they also plan to send to us to use. Cllr John Hague (Cabinet member for the Environment – City & County of Swansea) was also a lunch guest of the Society.

Many local visitors sought information on the candidate site situation - they were given hand-outs, could look at our information sheet and peruse the total list of 553 sites. The Bowland Award was

proudly displayed and much admired. We shall not want to hand it back at the end of our year of tenure!

We very much enjoyed meeting so many members and also visitors to Gower. Such was the demand by children to take part in the youth activities that supplies started to run 'dry' early in the afternoon. The short but very heavy downpours persisted for much of the day, and led many to decide not to attend – a pity as those of us who were there had a most interesting time. The Show organisers are to be congratulated on maintaining its high standard - despite the elements conspiring against them. May we take this opportunity to welcome to the Society the many members who joined in our marquee.

New Lifeboat Station for Mumbles Pier

Those of you who live locally will have seen that application no. 2010/1646 has been approved for the construction of the new RNLI Lifeboat Station. This necessitates new supporting steel piles and slipway, removal of the existing landing platform, plus new fishing platforms and refurbishment/modification of the existing pier structure. Before any work can commence, a comprehensive Environmental Management Plan and Construction Method Statement have to be submitted and agreed by the local authority. This is needed to ensure protection of the marine environment. Most important will be a mandatory mitigation scheme to safeguard the existing kittiwake nesting colony. Permission given has insisted that light pollution is to be avoided, both during construction and afterwards.

Mumbles Headland

We were dismayed to learn that the outline planning application for Mumbles Headland was approved by the Local Planning Authority, despite opposition from local people, ourselves, The Open Spaces Society and the Countryside Council for Wales. The arguments against this proposal were reasoned and reasonable, emphasising environmental impacts, the insufficiency of the road system and the detrimental effects on the AONB and on common land. The main argument was on the visual impact of the proposal. Swansea has three iconic views: Worm's Head, Three Cliffs and Mumbles Head. In our view, the design and drawings submitted with the application show a development that would seriously compromise the view of the headland, not just from near to, but from all around the bay.

No-one is arguing that there should be no development on this site. The unattractive buildings already there need to be replaced with something better, but the height, scale and massing of the proposed development are unacceptable in such a prominent location. So far only outline planning permission has been granted and the real test will come

when detailed plans are submitted. The fight has only just started.

For sale: two volumes of *History of West Gower*

J. D. Davies' *A History of West Gower in the County of Glamorgan* was published in four volumes between 1877 and 1894. It has long been a collectors' item with volumes sold for as much as £150 each. We are informed that volumes 2, 3 and 4 have been published in the British Library Historical Editions, and are available on Amazon.

The Society has been given two volumes - part one (1877) and part two (1879) which is entitled *Historical Notices of The Parishes of Llanmadoc and Cheriton in the Rural Deanery of West Gower*. Both are in good condition, board-bound with tooled leather spines and corners. Swansea bookseller, Jeff Towns of Dylan's Bookshop, assesses their value in the region of £150 each. Anyone wishing to buy either or both of these volumes should contact the Secretary (details at end of this Newsletter) with their offer. All proceeds will go to the Gower Society.

Captain Scott/P.O. Evans Centenary

Besides being the year when London stages the Olympic Games, 2012 is the centenary of the *Titanic* disaster, and of when five members of Captain Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition (which sailed from Cardiff) reached the South Pole on 18th January 1912. Local interest is that one of those men was P.O. Edgar Evans from Rhossili, the subject of articles in *Gower* volumes 7, 44 and 45, as well as of our 2008 colour publication *Edgar Evans of Gower*, and of the Archives' book *Swansea's Antarctic Explorer*. Some local events next **February** to mark the centenary are:

- Sat 11th at 2pm: a 4-mile 'Edgar Evans walk' from Rhossili church
- Tues 14th at 1pm: lecture on P.O. Evans at Swansea Museum
- Fri 17th at noon: Civic Memorial Service at St Mary's, Swansea on the centenary of Evans' death
- Sat 18th at 11am: book launch at Swansea Museum of *Captain Scott's Invaluable Assistant: Edgar Evans* by Dr Isobel Williams, 192 pages, published by the History Press at £12.99.

The author, who is from Aberdare, has written a biography of another member of the ill-fated Polar group (*With Scott in the Antarctic: Edward Wilson*, 2008), and brings the fruit of that research and her medical knowledge to bear on Edgar Evans. Swansea Museum will display an exhibition on the 1910 Antarctic Expedition, and already has the bust of P.O.

Evans upstairs in the Cabinet of Curiosities (lift access is available).

Glass Bridge for Castle Opening

A spectacular 30-foot-high glass bridge was installed at Oystermouth Castle as the historic attraction was re-opened in July.

The glass viewing platform gives access to a part of the castle called Alina's Chapel for the first time in hundreds of years. The chapel was added to the castle in the 14th century and marks the attraction's highest architectural point. It also includes a tracery window with views over Swansea Bay.

Swansea Council is behind the conservation of Oystermouth Castle for future generations to enjoy, thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Welsh Assembly Government through Cadw and the European Regional Development Fund.

The Friends of Oystermouth Castle are also actively supporting the delivery of this project. The first phase of the conservation scheme at Oystermouth Castle also includes upgraded visitor facilities, an educational space and access improvements. Other conservation works will then continue at the attraction.

Cllr Chris Holley, Swansea Council Leader, said: 'The glass viewing platform looks fantastic and it is wonderful news that Alina's Chapel is available for the public to see for the first time in hundreds of years. Oystermouth Castle is one of our finest historic gems and this conservation scheme means many future generations will be able to make the most of what is a fantastic attraction.'

The castle currently welcomes about 5,000 visitors a year but the target is to attract many more by 2014. A Castle Community Officer has been appointed to engage with community groups and deliver a wide range of community activities. For more information go onto the website

www.swansea.gov.uk/oystermouthcastle

The 2011 Gower Society AGM

The AGM this year, held in Sketty Parish Centre, was well attended. As usual, our President, Edwina Hart, cantered through business with her usual efficiency in record time.

This year was the final one when Prof. John Beardmore presented the Accounts before his retirement as Treasurer. The Accounts and Balance Sheet for 2010 were approved by the meeting and Prof. Beardmore was warmly thanked for his thoroughness and efficiency in handling the Society's financial resources. Jeremy Bowen was appointed to succeed him. The committee was pleased to report that Prof. Beardmore would remain as a committee member and would share his expertise as a continuing member of the Finance Sub-Committee.

The meeting also approved constitutional changes which would allow for Life Members to be aged less than 60 years

of age. A further change increased the fee for Life Membership (aged 60 and over) slightly. There was a unanimous decision not to increase other annual membership fees for 2011.

The meeting saw the launch of the Society's cards, a set of which was presented to our President by Liz Roblin who had done much to organise their printing. The cards have been enthusiastically welcomed – with no words inside, they are suitable for all occasions.

For the next year the winter series of Saturday talks will be arranged by Don Strawbridge, a hard-working past committee member, and thanks were given to Gary Gregor for arranging these for several years: he and Jane continue to edit our bi-annual Newsletter.

The Officers (apart from the new Treasurer) were re-elected en bloc and we are delighted to welcome to the committee Guto ap Gwent, the son of the Society's founder Dr Gwent Jones. After retiring as a solicitor, Guto thought it was time that he put back something into Gower. He is a most welcome addition to the committee, and has already been interviewed in Welsh on behalf of the Society on TV, concerning the Mumbles headland planning application.

Our President for 2011-12 will be Edwina Hart, who made Society history in being unanimously re-elected for a 4th year. Despite her very busy Ministerial political life, she has always made time to help the committee, especially in organising meetings for us at the Welsh Government with relevant bodies.

Edwina has relinquished her remit for Health but remains in the cabinet as the Welsh Government's Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science.

Following the business and the Design Awards (see below), the evening ended convivially with nibbles and wine or fruit juice, an opportunity for conversation and to view a display of some past design award winners.

Gower Design Awards

Gordon Howe gave an illustrated account of the Awards for 2010, featuring those who were to receive awards, and those who had missed out. This was enlightening, as both good and bad features were described. Martin Howells received an award for what the judges described as 'a very tasteful barn conversion' to Betty's Meadow in Slade. Kate Jenkins received her award for the high quality of work transforming two properties at Gower Cottage, Reynoldson. Gower builders Bryan Ace and his son were complimented on their superb workmanship. The owners of Fairyhill Hotel, Paul Green and Andrew Hetherington, received their award for the

maintenance of the property and retaining the ambience of this 18th century house.

Gordon Howe, chairman of the judging panel, said that these three designs stood out from the many buildings they had looked at. 'The standard of design and building in Gower', commented Gordon 'has improved tremendously over the last ten years'.

'Walking With Flowers' DVD

Following a very successful Saturday evening talk entitled 'Walking With Flowers', the society has produced a delightful DVD of the same name, featuring wild flowers seen on various Gower walks throughout the seasons. With stunning photography by Alan Bailey and an informative commentary by Mary Lewis and Joan Darbyshire, this DVD is a welcome addition to our publications, and will be appreciated by those with an interest in the flora of Gower, or who simply love beautiful photographs. The disc costs £5 and would make a delightful gift for 'exiles' or for those unable to get out and enjoy our glorious countryside as much as they would like.

Any old wells?

Bryan Taylor (author of *Watermills of the Lordship of Gower*) is gradually discovering, exploring and sometimes even stumbling into the sites of old **wells** in west Gower. It is a long job, and he would be most grateful for a little help. The wells are fast disappearing, invariably covered by lush overgrowth, and some have even dried up. Soon they may be forgotten, which is a shame as many have interesting stories associated with them. If anyone has a story, myth or legend concerning any of these old wells, please share this knowledge with Bryan so that he may in a small way help to preserve their memory. You can write to Bryan Taylor at 17 Brandy Cove Road, Bishopston, Swansea, SA3 3HB.

Email addresses

In the Spring Newsletter, we asked anyone who wished to receive email communications to send us their email addresses. There was also a facility for this on the questionnaire. However, such was the script sent that some were not readily identifiable. By now, you should all have received a test email. If not, please send in your email address to: gsmail@gowersociety.org.uk so that you can be added to the list. In order to identify each email address and link it to an actual member, could you also please send in your home address or your member code from your address label. This will ensure that we retain this email group as one made up ONLY of current Society members. The Society will not divulge this list of email addresses to anyone outside the Society, nor will any members be able to track any other member.

It is hoped that the email facility will be used to alert members to any important developments or news affecting Gower; it may be that your help will be sought with particularly contentious issues.

Help Needed!

In replying to our questionnaire, several members wrote in to offer occasional help to the Society for which we are grateful. This time we have a specific request for a person:

1. with some *knowledge of accountancy*: this is NOT to do our accounts, but to offer occasional advice to our officers.
2. to advise about Health and Safety matters regarding our insurance policies.

If YOU can help with *either* of these, please contact our Chairman or Secretary on [01792-371665](tel:01792-371665). Thank you!

Question: What do the Gowerton-born psychoanalyst Dr Ernest Jones and the late Amy Winehouse have in common?
(Answer below)

Mynydd y Gwair

Our Spring Newsletter happily reported that the Assembly's Planning Inspector had turned down RWE npower renewables' application for wind turbines on Mynydd y Gwair. Since then, however, the company has gone to the High Court, claiming that the Inspector's decision was unjustified on the evidence. Mr Justice Beatson ruled that the original reasoning concerning the impact of the proposal on an important habitat of peat bog was 'deficient', since it did not follow logically from the evidence.

At the time of writing, it is not known whether the Welsh Government and Swansea will appeal, or whether there will have to be a new inquiry.

Rural Development in the County

Over the last three years, the EU-funded Rural Development Partnership in Swansea has been establishing itself. It started modestly with a grant of £350,000 and Business Plan 1, with five projects covering walking and cycling promotion, youth services and linking local food and crafts producers to new markets. In 2009, potential schemes were invited for Business Plan 2 and 69 ideas were put forward. Most of these were endorsed and submitted to the Welsh Assembly under 'umbrella' schemes. The five projects are:

- Encouragement of Tourism Activities
- Improvement of Basic Services

- Village and Small Town Renewal and Enhancement
- Conservation and upgrading of Rural Heritage
- Rural Swansea Action

With a budget of £4.7 million, this is a far bigger and far more ambitious programme than the original, deliberately-cautious programme. It includes small-scale, local initiatives such as a Walking Information Centre in Mount Pisgah chapel at Parkmill, and village enhancements by Ilston Community Council, to projects covering the whole eligible area, such as youth service provision, improvements to the bus network and support for community buildings. All these should have a significant impact on rural Swansea over the next two or three years.

For full details go to the Rural Development Partnership section of the Swansea City and County website.

Questionnaire

A heartfelt thank-you is due to all of you who took the time to answer and return the Society's recent questionnaire. With over 200 responses, this represented a healthy cross-section of our membership. The committee has never been complacent that it gets everything right all the time. It does try to do its best for Gower, but that effort can only be as good as the time available and the talents and interests of those volunteers willing to help. Some responses seemed to believe that the volunteers had access to a 36-hour-day clock!

The following is an attempt to summarise and answer some of the varied points raised. The majority of respondents were long-established Society members, with approximately half living in Swansea and peninsular Gower.

Your committee is currently working on the website's design. I must set at rest those fears that the Society will only be communicating by email in future. There will be a place for email to those who wish it, but the Society fully intends **to continue to post** out the Newsletters, Programme, etc. to its members.

The committee was heartened to read typical comments such as:

- *We are fortunate to have a Gower Society*
- *You do a fantastic job*
- *You are a well-established and respected Society*
- *Your publications are wonderful*
- *Thank you for all you do*

As a Society we were urged to be vigilant, but there was criticism of the local authority. Some felt that it did not support the Society and that it should be more pro-active in looking after the environment. Many members believed that the Society should and could do more in terms of planning issues. When your committee responds to any planning application, it does try to present a detailed and argued response based on local knowledge of relevant planning legislation. It is, however, the Officers of the local authority

and/or the elected Councillors who actually make the decision. We have been told that some Councillors find the Society's detailed reasoning helpful. On planning issues, individual letters and your Community Councils should be the ideal first line of response. We have found that Community Councils do not always respond to vital planning applications.

Your views on talks, their subject matter, the venue, etc. have been analysed. Although we know we cannot please everyone, for the time being we shall continue to hold these in Sketty Parish Centre on a Saturday evening. It is far from easy to find a good venue, with parking and suitable facilities. Sketty Parish Centre seems popular with many, but not all of you. Although some preferred a weekday evening, this raises its own problem of timing and a suitable venue with a regular evening free.

We welcome Don Strawbridge who has volunteered to take over the organisation of talks - for one year only - so ably done for many years by Gary Gregor. Could YOU offer to organise this from September 2012 onwards? Do you know someone you can recommend to give a talk to the Society? Some members seemed unaware that committee members do go out and about giving talks to a wide range of clubs and groups. We have never totalled up the number of these per year, but it must run into several dozen.

We have long been aware that it would be beneficial to attract and retain active younger members. This does seem to be a perennial and widespread topic of concern amongst other local societies. We shall still try.... The Gower Society Youth Action section (G.S.Y.A.) which meets on Saturdays has been enthusiastically successful. Thanks to the leadership of Dawn Thomas, this now has an almost full complement of primary school-age members.

Your views on walks, their length, location, etc. brought no consensus of opinion, but your views will be taken into consideration by the walks' team. Why not volunteer to lead a walk in your favourite 'patch'? See more information on 'Walking' in this Newsletter.

Your admiration for the Newsletter and its content will no doubt please the contributors and the editors - but why don't you submit an article or your views? The same applies to the much-respected annual journal *Gower*. There seemed to be a cry for more social history-type articles, so those of you out there of 'more advanced years' - put your pen to paper and let us have your reminiscences of Gower of the past. Such memories are soon lost if they are not committed to paper.

Publicising the activities of the Society is not as easy as it might appear. We do try to get articles published in the local press. Even when we write the text and

submit them with pictures, usually nothing gets into print. We shall continue to try to do so to let the public know what we do. Our local press should be championing and celebrating more of what is done by volunteers throughout the region. It has been found necessary to stop publicity in the press and elsewhere of our walks programme, as sometimes incomplete published details led to problems for our volunteer walk leaders, and even in a few cases of excessive numbers turning up for a walk. However, we still welcome non-members of the Society to come and try a walk or two - maybe they would then wish to join our ranks. We would like to thank those of you who volunteered to offer help to the committee – this is so much appreciated. To those of you who said they had ‘no expertise’, I am afraid that I do not believe this! All that is needed is a willingness to devote some time - there are our walks leaders, those who put out tables and chairs at talks, the mailing ‘stuffers’, etc. We can always do with able-bodied helpers for the Gower Show; lack of these curtails our appearances at other shows. Currently, our oral history project needs a co-ordinator. This project sets out to record the memories of those more senior residents of the area before they are lost for posterity. Could you help with this?

Past editions of the Journal

In the last edition of the Newsletter, we asked if any members had surplus copies or shelf space they wanted to free up by letting us have old editions to pass on to members on our waiting list. I would like to thank those who responded so generously, and who made some members very happy indeed - a few members managed to complete their sets. This plea for past editions is still pertinent. Peter Hutchison (01792 233223) looks after the waiting list; the Secretary also has some spare past numbers available but has NO copies of the following editions: 1, 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17.

So if you care to part with any volumes please get in touch.

Ruth Ridge

Gower 62

This year's volume of *Gower* will be launched at our Publications Night on Saturday 19th November at Sketty Parish Centre. As of late August it has just gone to the printers, and the list of likely contents promises that this volume will be a worthy addition to this important record of Gower in all its variety. The emphasis this year is on the peninsula rather than the wider area of the Lordship, and two of the articles deal in depth with some of the industries which were once very active here - lead mining and limestone quarrying. A fascinating description of Gower's largest parish emphasises the variety of its landscape and people and covers several centuries of its history, whilst more recent times are dealt with by some personal reminiscences of life in wartime and also in the 1930s, as well as in a sad story relating to the talented musician

Morfydd Owen. The valuable series on the Victorian restorations of the Gower churches continues with an account of the work at St Mary's, Rhossili, and an important natural history article records the sea shore life on and around Mumbles Pier - just as renovation work is about to start there. These, and others, are the good things to look forward to in this year's volume which, as usual, will be well-illustrated in colour. Members receive a copy without charge, but why not buy some extras for friends and relations too? See details elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Gower Society Cards

Those of you who attended the AGM in March will have seen the launch of the Society's charity cards. There are now 13 cards carrying Gower images. These designs were produced by Edward and Iris Martin in their Dunvant studio and feature woodcuts or scraper board of local views. Most are beautifully detailed black and white images and were featured prominently in *Gower Journals* in their first two decades. Four of the 13 which we have reproduced have been delicately tinted, as were their originals: the Granary at Penrice, St. Mary's Church in Pennard, Gower Shells and Southend, Mumbles.

In reproducing these unique representations of Gower, we are indebted to the family for freely giving us their permission to use their parents' original work. We are delighted that you will be able to see and buy these cards which clearly show the artists' attention to detail and love of the area.

An image of each card has been included in this Newsletter so that you can appreciate their unique style. Each card comes with its own silver envelope and is priced at £1 - postage will cost 36p for up to 2 cards; for three or more cards, please add 58p. They are available from our Publication Sales Officer, Mrs Hildegard Roberts (address at end of Newsletter), or buy them at our Saturday talks and save postage.

Thanks especially to Liz Roblin for her efforts to ensure the publication of these cards, and to Graham Smith (*All About The Image*, Killay – The Sunday Times landscape photographer of the year 2008), who helped with their production by Calibre Creative.

Updates on Progress

1. **Aerial surveys of Gower** – since 2006 the Society has been flying an aerial survey over peninsular Gower twice a year. Our first one for 2011 was flown in early March, and we intend to follow this flight up with another later in the year. It is surprising what one can spot from the air – why is it that people carry out acts of environmental vandalism on Gower without lawful permission? All photographs are

analysed and annotated and a full report is prepared. This is a very worthwhile, but very time-consuming, exercise. A full copy of all photographs and a report is presented to John Lock, Local Authority Planning Policy Manager. Several members of the committee subsequently meet with him and Ian Davies, Enforcement Team Leader for the authority. It is fair to state that these regular meetings, where there is a fair exchange of views, has led to a growing mutual respect of both the legal hoops which the authority has to 'jump' through, and also the stance of the Society. All too often we feel that where we perceive unlawful acts to be taking place, action is coming after too long a delay.

But you can all do your part here. Notify the local authority if you suspect something is being done without permission; tell your local Community Councillor, and let us know what action you have taken so that we can also chase up action.

To contact the Enforcement Team Leader (Ian Davies), ring 01792 635720 or email him at ian.davies@swansea.gov.uk. To contact the Planning Department ring 01792 635701.

2. Signage in the AONB – as you drive around Gower, you must have noticed many of the advertising signs dotted around. Some of these are tasteful and moderately sized; some are tatty, over-sized, glaring on the eye and certainly not sympathetic to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It might surprise you to know that there is actually in existence a document *Advertisement Policy in Gower* - a Code of Practice for tourist-related signage in the AONB. Furthermore in 1952 the AONB area was designated an Area of Special Control of Advertisements (ASCA) – four years before it became an AONB! Scant attention and reference to this seems to have been taken. The Society has been trying for some years to ensure that signage is in sympathy with its environment; some enforcement action has resulted. Now we are pleased to hear that an updated policy document on this matter is in the process of being drafted. Those of you travelling around the area can all help; if you think signage is unsympathetic, then the local authority can be contacted: if on the highway/highway verge/highway furniture, then contact Fran Williams (frances.williams@swansea.gov.uk); if it is on private land, contact Ian Davies (ian.davies@swansea.gov.uk).

3. A Design Guide for Gower (this draft is available to look at or download from the website www.swansea.gov.uk). The Society has been lobbying hard for such a guide since 1991, as it was believed that this would help those submitting planning applications in the area. The local authority sought views on this draft proposal; the Gower Society was not consulted but has sent in its comments, the majority of them favourable to the proposed draft.

4. Gower AONB Partnership and Annual Forum – this has now replaced what was the Gower Forum. Chaired by

Cllr. John Hague, it is made up of representatives of the Council, national agencies, local communities, landowners, farmers, etc. We are delighted to have one of our committee members elected to it – Gordon Howe, who also represented the Society on the previous Gower Forum. Although the Partnership group is responsible for most of the policies/strategies affecting the AONB, the Annual Forum aims to be an opportunity for everyone to have their say and to learn what is happening in the AONB. When we know the date of its next meeting, we shall let you know. The Society hopes very much that this Forum will be able to get more done than the last one, which seemed to be more of a 'talking shop' than a pro-active team – which this AONB does so need (and deserve).

5. The All-Wales Coast Path – this project, funded by the Welsh Assembly and the European Union and overseen by Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), is progressing well in its aim to have an official path around the Welsh coast. One section of the Gower route, between Llanmadoc and Port Eynon, was opened by Welsh Assembly Environment Minister Jane Davidson in September 2010. Your Chairman and Secretary attended this ceremony. The Countryside Access Team hopes to have all the 38-mile route between Mumbles and Crofty in place by the time of the official opening of the Gower Coast Path, scheduled for May 2012.

6. Gower AONB Management Plan – the present Plan has now served its five-year course (in 2011) and it is time to develop the next one. A draft one is in preparation by the local authority who will be seeking consultation soon - on what it intends to do to 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty' of our AONB. Here is your chance to voice your opinion, either to the Society, who will respond to the draft in detail, or as an individual. Make sure that this opportunity is not lost.

7. Conservation work - should you fancy getting out into the open air and doing some practical work on the ground, there are quite a few avenues open to you. This could involve ragwort pulling, footpath clearance/construction, scrub removal, litter picking, etc. - below are some contact telephone numbers.

Lynne Lock 01792 645748 co-ordinates work for the Society, mostly on footpaths.

Claire Hannington (National Trust Warden) 01792 390636 co-ordinates their Saturday volunteers group.

The AONB Ranger (Huw Lloyd) works with several groups and can be contacted on 01792 635742 or 07917 200209.

8. **Oxwich Nature Reserve** – those of you who previously visited the bird hide overlooking the wetland area on this reserve will know that for many years this was unavailable – it had fallen into a sorry state of repair. The CCW has now erected a large new hide to replace it, and with some vegetation clearance this should attract plenty of birds to be viewed at close range.

9. **More walking information** – Some of you may already be aware that aside from our own publication *Gower Walks* and our three leaflets covering *The Gower Way*, there is other information available. The Society has tried to link its own walk programme into schedules run by Gower Explorer bus, but too often that has not been possible.

Should you wish to have information about the Gower Explorer and linked walks, go to www.baytrans.org.uk. To check on bus timetables, go to www.travelinecymru.info.

The local authority has produced a pack of walks, none of them over two miles long, entitled *Your short walks in Swansea and Gower* which are designed to get you out and active. These are on laminated cards with route description and map.

It has also published two Gower Coast Walks: *Llanrhidian to Cheriton* and *Oxwich Point*. There are also two most welcome leaflets of walks in the region of upland Gower: *Cwmcerdinen walk* (6km circular) and *Cwm Clydach* (14.4km circular), financed by the Rural Development Partnership.

There is also a handy guide to using public rights of way and access land. Copies of all of these were available at the Gower Show in the Society's marquee. If copies remain, they will be brought to Saturday talks. Failing that, they should be obtainable from the Civic Centre or the tourist offices at Swansea, Mumbles or Killay.

Last year the leaflet *Walking and Cycling in Rural Swansea* was published by City & County of Swansea, giving details of six cycle routes and 16 walks of varying distance, stating exactly where you could get fuller route descriptions, etc. (if unable to obtain this, contact 01792 468321).

The National Trust has recently published leaflets detailing nine 'Walking by bus' routes in the peninsula, which can be bought as one pack for £4.50, or individually. They can be obtained from their shop at Rhossili.

Reynoldston Ramblers – a very active group – has brought out its own spiral-bound book *Gower Rambles*, illustrated and with maps (see review for further details).

With this wealth of detail on walking in the area, you have no excuse not to put on your boots....

Lighting Guide for Gower

This guide is now operational, having been approved by Council. It is to be hoped that this will see a minimising of current light pollution in the area. Sadly, this guide cannot

have an effect on those businesses in Gower whose light pollution is already excessive. We understand the need for some low-level lighting where there could be health and safety issues, but we cannot condone far-reaching high-level lighting, especially where low-level lighting could be as effective. We can only hope that the current offenders see their way to making a change to minimise their harmful effect. The local authority is further to be congratulated in its efforts recently to install more efficient down-lighting in its street lamps.

The Conversion of Rural Buildings

The Society has read and commented in detail on the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance. It has suggested several small changes be implemented, but overall was very impressed with the breadth and quality of this new guide. The local authority is to be congratulated on this addition to planning guidance.

Local History Book Fair

Once again, this will be held in Swansea Museum from 10a.m. on Saturday 29th October. The Gower Society 'team' will be there, so come to see and speak to us. Bring your list of wanted old Gower Journals and we may be able to fill a gap in your collection, or any spare copies you might wish to donate.

Answer: Dr Ernest Jones of Gowerton and the singer Amy Winehouse were both cremated at Golders Green crematorium in London. Dr Jones's ashes were then placed in Cheriton churchyard in the grave of his daughter Gwenith and his second wife Katherine (Jokl). His first wife Morfydd Owen was buried in Oystermouth cemetery – see article in Gower 62.

Candidate Sites

As you may have gathered from the last two Newsletters, these are sites for development or for protection that developers, landowners and the public have suggested be included in the Local Development Plan (to supersede the current Unitary Development Plan).

The deluge of last-minute site applications meant that the local authority took several months to put the data on its website, so the response deadline has been extended. These sites could be for recreational use (a mere handful), but there are hundreds for business, housing, etc. Have you checked - are there any near you? It is a simple process to respond briefly now, as these are NOT yet full-blown planning applications – but they soon could be. Time is desperately short, as

responses must reach the Civic Centre by **30th September** or they will not be considered.

The Society received and responded to many phone calls from local people who had suddenly discovered proposals for development in their neighbourhood. All applications have been checked and the Society has written regarding a considerable percentage of the submitted proposals. The website is www.swansea.gov.uk/ldpcandidatesites or you can contact the Planning Department at the Civic Centre (01792 635701 - ask for information on candidate sites).

AONB Extension

We regret to state that this aspiration of including upland Gower in the AONB is no nearer fruition. With the change of Welsh Assembly government in May, now is the time to reopen the campaign. Your Chairman, Secretary and Chair of our Planning Sub-committee journeyed again to the Welsh Assembly on Monday 18th July for a meeting with John Griffiths, the new Minister for the Environment and Sustainability, organised for us by our President Edwina Hart. The Minister listened to the history of our campaign which we have pursued since 2005; it was evident that there will be no early outcome. However, with the possible merger of the Environment Agency, CCW and the Forestry Commission is likely to come a new Environment Bill for Wales. The Minister's team of officials is considering future changes in legislation regarding caravans and caravan sites in Wales; further meetings at the Welsh Assembly are envisaged.

Running in Gower – Saturday 12th Nov.

Those living in the west part of peninsular Gower should be aware that the annual Gower marathon takes place on Saturday 12th November. Judging by last year, about 150 runners will set off at 9a.m. from Hillend on the 26-mile route via Llanmadoc, Cefn Bryn, Pitton and Rhossili, and most will take over five hours. At 10.30a.m. another 250 start on the 13-mile half-marathon route, taking nearly 2½ hours, while at midday a further 180 run the 10k from Hillend via Llanmadoc and Llangennith, taking about 1¼ hours. *À chacun son goût.*

Book Reviews

***Gower Rambles* edited by John Rock**

'Reynoldston Ramblers' is a relative newcomer to walking groups in Gower. Not wishing to waste the time and effort involved in designing and reconnoitring new walks, they had the happy idea of writing out the directions, adding commentary, maps and photographs, and putting them together in a book. A brief summary of Gower's geology and history gives a context for visitors.

The result is a very attractive and practical book of 24 walks - 23 in the peninsula and one in the Lliw area. The book is

spirally bound, which makes it easy to use; the maps are Ordnance Survey, with routes very clearly marked, using 'Tracklog Digital Mapping', though the user needs to be aware that the scale varies from larger than 1:50,000 to less than 1:25,000. The instructions are clear and accurate (if the ones I have walked are typical), and what few inaccuracies there are in the remaining text do not detract from a well-produced and worthwhile addition to Gower walking.

Buy one for £6 from Reynoldston Post Office, or ring John Rock on 01792 391316 (email

johnandjudith@reynoldston.com). If ordering from the editor, add £1.20 for p&p. This is very much a community effort - all profits go to charity.

***Llanmadoc and Cheriton – Two North Gower Churches and their Parishes* by F.C. Cowley**

This new edition of a book originally published in 1993 is most welcome. The updated edition carries more photographs and an interesting Bucknell drawing for the Leigh family's Woodchester Mansion (Bucknell was also the architect of the 1870s' Llanmadoc School, and the old Swansea Grammar School). This work of scholarship by Fred Cowley has benefited from updated typeface and has none of the original advertisements. All profits from this book will go to the two churches. Sally Lyne and Neil Wilson, who worked alongside Fred Cowley on this new edition, are to be congratulated; the Gower Society is delighted to support its publication.

Copies cost £5 and are being sold at Llanmadoc Community Shop – why not travel out for a visit, and a coffee and cake as well? By post, it will cost £6 (including £1 for p.p.) – send a cheque payable to Llanmadoc and Cheriton PCC, to Mrs Sally Lyne, *The Old Rectory, Llanmadoc, Swansea SA3 1DE.*

***Personal Reminiscences of Gower* by Anthony James**

A couple of years ago we reviewed *Forest Diary: Childhood in the Penllergare Valley*, an evocative and poignant account of growing up in the valley. This new book by Gower Society member Anthony James is rightly described as 'a perfect complement' to its predecessor.

The story starts with Anthony, aged 16, stranded alone with his dog on Worm's Head. Over the next chapters and years he visits many familiar parts of Gower, meets some of its characters, falls in and out of love, marries, moves away from Gower and finally returns.

A simple enough story, but the author imbues his narrative with a depth of feeling, a sensitivity and sense of significance which carries it way beyond the facts of the story. As in his earlier *Diary*, the

descriptive language is a pure delight. Start it and you won't want to put it down until the very last page.

Published by Green Arrow Publishing at £6.99, it is available from the author Anthony@brendaj.gotadsl.co.uk (tel. 07974 847265). You can meet Anthony at the Local History Book Fair at the Museum on 29th October - and get a signed copy!

Hunting the Worm from Pennard Castle

(A Sestina)*

In vivid dreams, my caparisoned mare
prances, nostrils flaring, scenting the chase.
We leave the postern gate and cross the links
where men will swing their clubs, not in battle,
centuries after our keep is fragments;
where haunting vassal souls speak in whispers.

My squire confirms a sighting and whispers,
around first light, that faithful men, and mare,
are keen to hunt. He speaks of charred fragments,
uprooted saplings. The cwm's woodland chase
has been scorched, as though a mighty battle
has raged. We don mail, securing the links.

It is clear the forest damage has links
with the creature we seek. There are whispers
that others, Kittle folk, have seen battle
but none returned except a distressed mare,
which lackeys tried to sooth after a chase
by the shore; its harness blackened fragments.

My men hold fast, until the sun fragments
behind smoke drifting down the pill. Firm links
established now, we urge our mounts to chase
across water, sand, silt, scrub. Faint whispers
reach our ears from far out west. My brave mare
surges forward to engage in battle.

The clifftops are parched; black. My men battle
through dark, sulphurous clouds, scattered fragments
of pigs, cows, sheep consumed by fire. A mare,
loose, whinnies pain. Undeniable links
beckon toward land's end. The sea whispers,
then steams, as the evil worm cedes the chase.

The worm drowns; a fitting end to our chase.
We, with no recourse to sword or battle,
rejoice that the scourge is dead. The whispers
circulate; our tale of valour fragments
as centuries pass and dubious links
tell of Pennard's Lord and his fearless mare.

The faithful mare and the story's fragments
lie scattered on links where men do battle.

Ghostly whispers relate the dragon chase.

Linda Dobbs - May 2011

(*a Sestina is a highly structured [poem](#) of 6 six-line [stanzas](#) followed by a [tercet](#), to total 39 lines. The lines of each of the six-line stanzas end with the same set of six words, but in a different order each time.)

A new website...

You may care to look at a new website edited by Southgate-based Ian Ambrose www.governews.co.uk focusing on communicating local news and events.

Gower Society Who's Who

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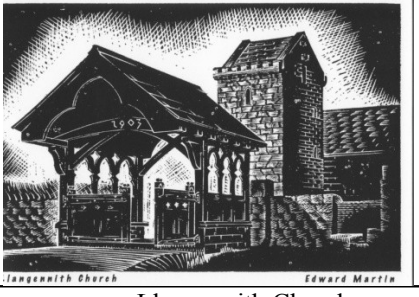
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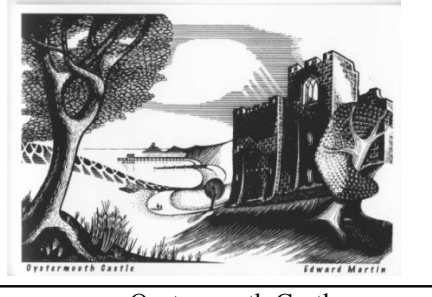
A Gower Bidding Wedding Edward Martin



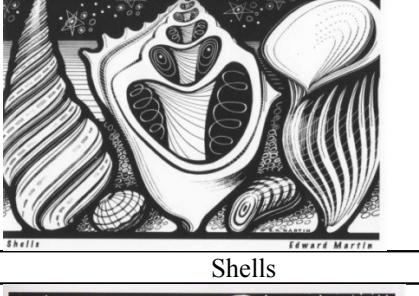
Gower Shells Edward Martin



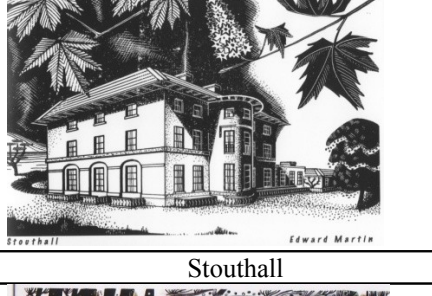
Llangennith Church Edward Martin



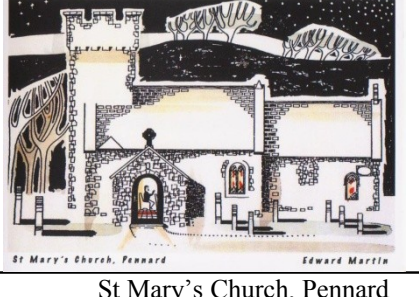
Oystermouth Castle Edward Martin



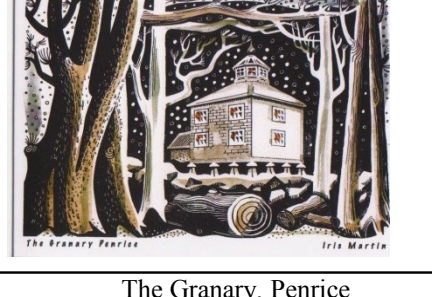
Shells Edward Martin



Stouthall Edward Martin



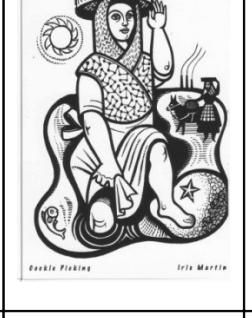
St Mary's Church, Pennard Edward Martin



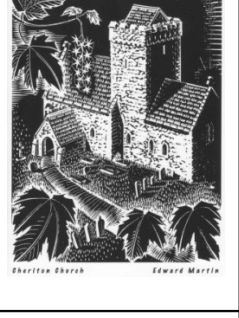
The Granary, Penrice Iris Martin



Cockle Gathering Iris Martin



Cockle Picking Iris Martin



Cheriton Church Edward Martin



Southend, Mumbles Iris Martin



Swansea Castle - Christmas Edward Martin

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