

# TENBY CIVIC SOCIETY

Registered with the Civic Trust for Wales

**President:**

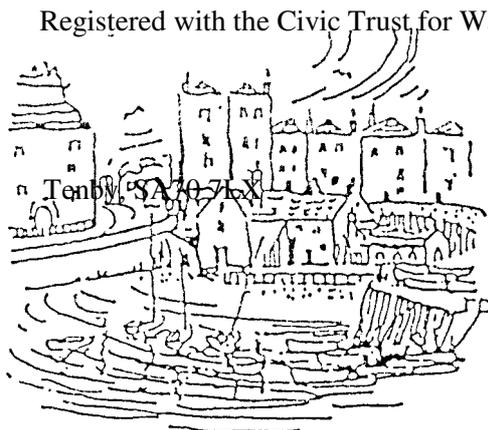
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## Newsletter

November 2015

This is the first Society newsletter for some time. The Chairman must apologise and promises to do better in future. The reasons for the long delay are two-fold. Firstly, our Chairman for a highly-successful twelve years, Harry Gardiner, stood down at the Annual General Meeting in March. We are fortunate that he has kindly agreed to continue as Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee where his expertise is invaluable. He also takes a very active interest in the maintenance of Allen's View. More on these topics below. The new Chair, David Tudor Thomas, has taken some time to get up to speed with the varied activities of the Society.

The second reason is that much has happened since the AGM. These activities fall into two categories. The first is on-going commitments:

Your Society each week comments on *planning matters*, something like thirty applications so far this year, most non-contentious, some needing critical and some favourable comment. Among those of note were the proposals for turning the Old Rectory into flats which were generally well thought out. We are also glad to see the Festival of Britain column has finally been restored to its rightful place by the new builders of the South Beach development. The Society was also invited to comment on the proposed development in Penally opposite Holloway Farm. We opposed the poorly designed plan but the PCC planners passed it despite much local opposition.

Our other continuing concern is with the *Allen's View* land which we own and must maintain for the benefit of the public. Please see the article below as we urgently need your help.

There have also been a number of one-off activities so far this year. The following summary in rough date order gives some idea of what your Committee has been involved in:

- Arising from the AGM Douglas Fraser drafted and sent an agreed copy of a letter to the two planning authorities, the National Park and PCC on the necessity to recognise *the needs of Tenby residents in approving or rejecting planning applications*. We received some interesting replies on a complex and difficult question.
- In the light of likely forthcoming local government boundary changes it was felt that the Society should take into account *the views of residents in surrounding areas* as well as Tenby town. To that end we held an exploratory public meeting in July to get the views of Penally residents on whether they would like to be involved in a possible extended Society. The result was very positive and as a result two Penally residents have attended and reported back on subsequent Society committee meetings as guests. The Society Committee now needs to consider whether further meetings should be held in New Hedges, St. Florence and even Saundersfoot. We have not yet invited the views of present members on this idea. Your views on a possible expanded society would be much appreciated, sent by Email or letter to the Chairman.
- In April the Chairman attended the Welsh Council for Voluntary Associations' conference on *asset transfer*, that is, giving local communities control of council assets. This has proved timely as the future of the Library and Community Learning facilities at Greenhill, Tenby was discussed at two public consultation meetings in June and September. There is a lurking danger that the county council, pressed by budget constraints from central government, may consider disposing of the site. As those of you who read the Tenby Observer are aware the Chairman drafted a lengthy report on how the Greenhill site might be better utilised. This was sent to Tenby Town Council, the Pembrokeshire County Council officers involved and the four local county councillors, and the Chamber of Trade and Tenby Development Trust. Reaction has been generally cautious but positive.
- Louise Curnin, one of your Committee members attended a meeting of the *S.E. Pembs. Community Health network* held as a result of concerns expressed at the loss of out-patients facilities at the Cottage Hospital, the problems at the Tenby doctors' practice and the loss of an opticians outlet in Tenby. She reported that while the attitude was sympathetic, Tenby Health Centre is simply struggling to recruit more permanent G.P.'s. This is a national problem as the number available has fallen. Locally it means that the three resident G.P.'s along with the team of Practice Nurses, Health Care Assistants and other supporting staff are doing their best to provide the service that Tenby residents deserve. It is also desirable that female G.P.'s are recruited. The provision of an NHS Dentist in Tenby looks unlikely in the foreseeable future."

- The society also became involved in *licensing* matters. We have consistently been cautious over allowing more outlets for alcohol in Tenby but this took practical expression in the application for an extended licence for wedding parties at Ocean Commotion, to be called the Holy Grail (!) Our letter to Tenby Town Council in support of their objections was helpful in having the application rejected. We now monitor licensing applications in Penally as well as in Tenby itself.
- As those members who attended the AGM know Tenby Civic Society made three further *Civic Society Awards* for the best contributions to the Tenby townscape during 2013 and 2014. Please see the article below for more information. The Civic Society is now seeking nominations for this year. The improvements, which can be of any kind provided that they make a lasting contribution to the townscape of Tenby, can be notified to the Society via the Town Council offices in the De Valence Pavillion.
- Our Secretary, Howard Rawson Humphries brought the sad state of *Scotsborough House* to the Chairman's attention. Not only was the building in a very poor state of repair and the warning signs around removed but more seriously, it appeared that cut stone was being robbed from the site. This was brought to the attention of the police and a letter sent to Polly Groom, Cadw, advising her of the situation and expressing our concern.
- The Chairman and Secretary also attended the Carmarthen meeting of the West Wales Civic Societies held by *Civic Trust Cymru*. It appears that Tenby Civic Society is in a better position than some thanks to our supportive members. Many complained of falling numbers and the Pembroke Dock society has been wound up. Our activities and fees are broadly in line with other societies. One project brought up was the success of the "characterisation" study in Abergavenny, that is looking at the streetscape of towns. Civic Trust Cymru is in a process of reorganisation, losing two long-standing officers, changing its name from Civic Trust for Wales and having Prince Charles accept the position of patron.
- In cooperation with the Historical Association a number of Civic Society members attended the two *summer events* organised, firstly a boat tour around Milford Haven, which gave a rare opportunity to see the Haven from the seaward side and a visit to Wiston Castle archaeological sites accompanied by the resident archaeologist, again a rare privilege.

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### *Civic Society Award Scheme*

Your society is always ready to criticise things that threaten to spoil Tenby as a special place to live and work, and unfortunately there have been too many of these over the years. About three years ago we decided also to look for things to praise and the Civic Society Awards scheme was born.

Since then we have made five awards to the owners of properties which have been restored, rebuilt or renovated in a way which has improved the appearance of Tenby.

The original scheme was designed to recognise significant improvements to the townscape but good work has also been done in the restoration of historic properties where the external appearance is little altered. Your committee has decided, therefore, that the scheme should be extended to recognise any especially noteworthy improvements to the historic properties of Tenby as well as to its townscape.

*Awards have been made to Roland and Michelle Grigg in respect of the major restoration of Norton House,*



*and to Jaqui and Richard Wingfield for the restoration of Weston Lodge in Harding Street*

If you have nominations in either category, please give them to any member of the committee. We are looking for improvements that have largely been completed in the last twelve months and it would be helpful, but not necessary, if you could tell us what makes these special and who should be recognised. Nominations received by the end of 2015 will be considered by an independent panel in the New Year, to enable the awards to be made at the next Annual General Meeting.

## *Civic Society Blue Plaques Scheme*



One of the Society's aims is to provide blue and heritage plaques on notable persons and their connections to buildings in Tenby and on historical sites. Recently we have provided blue plaques in memory of Roald Dahl (1916-1990) and Dylan Thomas (1914-1953).

Roald was a British novelist, short story writer especially known for children's stories, a poet,

screenwriter and fighter pilot. He was born in Llandaff, Cardiff. The plaque was placed on The Cabin in the original Assembly Rooms (1809-10) above the Caldey Island stores. Dahl spent many of his early Easter childhood holidays in this place.

In August we unveiled a plaque to Dylan Thomas, Wales's own brilliant poet where he read the final version of 'Under Milk Wood' in the former Salad Bowl Cafe on October 2nd, 1953 on The Croft. We were joined by members of the local Arts Club who originally invited Dylan to read the play that night. The plaque is now situated on a pillar in front of the old Salad Bowl café site.

Many thanks go to our very own John Beynon in fulfilling this project. Thanks must also go Harry Carpenter whose many letters and Emails and five years of dogged persistence finally saw John's idea made reality.

We were also able to assist in returning one of the "Tenby 2000" plaques on the old Mortuary to its rightful place from where it had been found in the harbor.

Can I remind members that we have on sale a Walk the Heritage Plaques Trail leaflet in Tenby for 50 pence written by Neill Westerman and layouts plus illustrations by Harry Gardiner, obtainable from Albie.

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## *Tenby Heritage Day*

As part of a Welsh Assembly programme to promote the high street, Tenby's Chamber of Trade and Tourism has signed up to an annual event, Heritage Day. This year it took place on Wednesday 23rd September and involved the Arts Festival, Museum and Historical Society as well as the Civic Society, in a programme of visits, talks and exhibitions.

The Civic Society contribution, run by Harry Gardiner in conjunction with the Town Council, was an opportunity to see parts of the town walls not normally open to visitors. These included the interior of the walls where the Mayor's Parlour is located and the battlements over the de Valance Pavilion. Over 30 people turned up for each of two visits and some had to be turned away on safety grounds.

Overall the day was judged to be a great success in making locals and visitors even more aware of Tenby's rich heritage. It will be repeated in 2016 in the last week of September.

## *Allen's View*



**If you value Allen's View and would like to help the Civic Society in its efforts to keep it open to visitors and residents alike, please make a donation or volunteer to help with the work of maintenance.**

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Allen's View is one of the glories of Tenby. On the top of the coast path between Tenby and Saundersfoot it provides superb views of a great part of the coastline and a shady resting place for walkers. The land was left to the Friends of Tenby (which became the Civic Society) by Mrs Jessie Allen and the not inconsiderable cost of maintaining it has been covered to date by other gifts and bequests received over time, plus a lot of volunteer effort from members of the committee.



Unfortunately funds are running low and even the total annual membership subscription of the Society does not cover the essential costs of keeping the property decent, accessible and safe. After much head (and beard) scratching we have decided, therefore, to put together a costed project to attend to all of the little jobs that need doing and thus bring Allen's View to a high standard where the maintenance costs for the next five years will be affordable. This project will cost £10,000, half for goods and services to be bought in and half for costed volunteer effort.

We shall approach public and private donors for sponsorship to cover the £5,000 we need to find but are also appealing to members. If you value Allen's View and would like to help the Civic Society in its efforts to keep it open to visitors and residents alike, please make a donation or volunteer to help with the work of maintenance.



After all the heavy information above, something lighter is needed. The Chairman is working up a booklet on an unusual feature of Tenby. Below is a condensed version of the first draft.



*The Hanging Toilets of Tenby*

If you were a prosperous Victorian householder in Tenby it was important to show how modern you were. The go-ahead and dynamic town council were now supplying those new-fangled drains and piped water. You wanted to take advantage of this latest invention. Unfortunately you had two problems in doing so, one small, one more difficult to solve.

Before, using hot water in jugs for your baths was not only inconvenient but was also wearing out servants as they trudged up and down the stairs with heavy loads of hot water. Now you could install a bath by converting one of the small bedrooms and get the evicted servants to double up in the attic. Problem solved.

The second problem was more difficult to crack. You wanted one of those new water closets. No more cold visits to the outside privy for you. But where were you going to put it? Tenby house sites were very cramped. There was no room in the garden and usually there was solid rock underneath. So no way to install sewers. In any case you wanted it near the bedrooms.

Then came the answer, the half-landing between the first and second floors only had a big window in the wall. Why not put a toilet there? All you had to do was build a wooden box, put your shiny new toilet in it and put some nice big pillars to support it outside the house. (Your only problem then was calm the fears of the ladies as, in effect, they stepped over a cliff to use the loo. )

A special feature of Tenby was born. A magnificent example of this type of hanging loo overlooks the beach between Castle Sands and the Paragon for all to see, as if to say "Look what I can afford"..

As fittings became cheaper, later in the century, flush W.C.'s in boxes hung outside the back wall moved downmarket and became more common in Tenby. But they also were more discreet as the Victorians became more prudish. Now they were hidden away and carefully covered in slates to make them less conspicuous.

Once there were dozens. Now you have to hunt to find the survivors. The Chairman and our vice-president Trevor Hallett, have counted fifteen. There may be more. See if you can spot them. It certainly adds a novel twist to a walk around Tenby.



Finally a plea from our Hon Treasurer:

The Society has had another busy year in 2015 and it is only with your support that we are able to carry out our business for the sake of Tenby. All good things come to an end and Albie reminds us that Annual Membership renewals are due in January. Therefore, please return the Membership Renewal form when ready. Thank you.

## ***MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL***

Please take/post completed form to

Albie Smosarski, Cofion Books, Bridge Street, Tenby, Pembs. SA70 7BU

Name/s.....

Address.....

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Telephone no.....,,

E-mail address.....

Donation.....£.....

Individual.....£7.....

Family.....£10.....

Corporate.....£30.....

Life.....£100 .....

Please make cheques payable to 'Tenby Civic Society.'

it would help to communicate with members more quickly and more often if we could send information via Email. Could members either add their Email address (If any) above or notify the Chairman (By Email).