

# LLANTRISANT TOWN TRUST

[Registered as a Charity]



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## FREEMAN'S NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2008

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### GENERAL MEETING 2008

The 2008 General Meeting of Freemen of Llantrisant will be held at Llantrisant Guildhall, 7.30 pm, Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October, for Freemen to be acquainted with and debate the works of the Trust over the past year and to offer suggestions to improve its effectiveness. The five year term of office of Freemen's Trustee Brian Groves expires at the meeting therefore an election must take place. The named Trustee may allow his name to be resubmitted for consideration. Any Freeman may stand for election as a Trustee, it will be necessary for him to be proposed and seconded by Freemen present at the meeting and he will be required to attend personally or provide a signed declaration to the Clerk or a current Trustee, directly or via his proposer, that he is willing to stand.

### TRUST CLERKSHIP

It has not yet been possible to attract a Clerk to take up the mantle vacated by the relinquishing of the post at the end of 2007 by Trustee Howard Thomas. Day to day business is being carried on for the time being with a mix of Trustees teamwork and goodwill, Trustee Thomas continuing to provide a generous contribution, but it is obvious there is no substitute for a Clerk's guiding influence. A plea is therefore made for this appealing and fulfilling role, which is open to any interested party, not necessarily a Freeman, to be filled. As previously, initial interest can be registered with Trustee John Berry, 14, Greenmeadow Court, Llantrisant, CF72 8JH, again it is envisaged that an informal meeting will be arranged with Trustees to discuss the position in greater depth.

### VALEDICTIONS

The Trust has learned with deep regret and great sadness of the passing on in the last 12 months of Freeman Evan Lewis RUSSELL, Pontyclûn, Roll No. 2300; Winston David (Dick) GROOTHER, Talbot Green, Roll No. 2065 and Gwyn REES, Llantrisant, Roll No. 2285. Dick was a larger than life personality very well known by most in the locality. Gwyn was, of course, a former Trustee who served to last autumn's General Meeting completing 45 years of unbroken service as a Trustee. Fortunately Gwyn was able to make an appearance at the Guildhall's 2008 Court Leet ceremony but his ill-health prevented his attending the subsequent Dinner. The Trust's certificate, a modest but sincere expression of appreciation to Trustees when they come to the end of their term of service, was thus able to be presented personally to Gwyn at a "mini-ceremony" during the Court Leet. In view of Gwyn's exceptional commitment, in his early days he spearheaded fund-raising for the Trust as finances at the time were in a dire state to such an extent that he with other Trustees gave personal guarantees so that such things as crucial repairs to the Guildhall roof could be undertaken and day-to-day running of the Trust made possible (the fund-raising in the 60s and 70s with the Freeman's "Bindles" Dinner/Dance became the highlight of the social calendar), the Trustees intended to arrange for a portrait photograph of Gwyn to be taken for display in the Guildhall so his rightful place could be taken with the "great and the good" of the Freeman. This was put to Gwyn and in the usual determined way of himself and his dear wife Mary the family kindly arranged for the photograph to be taken and has very generously donated it to the Trust. The caption on the photograph reads "*Gwyn Rees – Freeman of Llantrisant Common – Trustee 1962-2007*".

It is felt Gwyn's achievement will be unequalled in Freeman and Trust terms.

### NEW FREEMEN, LONG-TERM

Of the 790 or so newsletters mailed to Freeman last year about 50 responded to this important topic, most by returning the completed reply slip and some by letter and e-mail. The majority view was for the grandson – grandfather additional link which also has an historic precedence in terms of the old "common-law" marriage. The proposed special meeting for 2008 did not proceed as it was felt a worthwhile attendance could not be foreseen, soundings at the Court Leet dinner provoked no response or discussion. It is suggested another attempt be made to air the subject before Freeman and to this end it will be included in the business of the next 17<sup>th</sup> October Freeman's General Meeting.

### 2008 COURT LEET & DINNER

13 new Freeman were enrolled at the Guildhall's 2008 Court Leet and the occasion together with the dinner following at the Llantrisant Leisure Centre was another enjoyable and successful event slightly marred by the difficulties of the M4 motorway and other forms of transport where a significant number of new and established Freeman were delayed or prevented from participating. The feeling of diners was sought regarding making future arrangements for a Saturday instead of the traditional Friday evening so permitting Freeman living farther afield more flexibility in their travel but there was no hint that the change should be accommodated although there was a consensus that the event should revert to earlier in the month to avoid the bank holiday weekend. One of those prevented from attending was the newly enrolled Freeman who was to speak on behalf of his compatriots but in the event we were grateful to our guest, Dr. Kim Howells, MP, for stepping into the breach with a very pertinent oration. Mr. Mel Thomas, principal speaker and back by popular demand, entertained with his usual high standard of wit, comedy and culture. A presentation, fitted in with the passing around of the Loving Cup and the

depletion of its port wine content, of the Trust's certificate was made to Gareth Jones in recognition of his 2002-07 term as Trustee.

#### LLANTRISANT COMMON Management

The Countryside Council of Wales has an obligation to produce a Site Management Statement for the Llantrisant Common & Pastures SSSI. A consultation concerning this document, which lists and illustrates the "special" wildlife and plants and indicates preferred future characteristics and associated management, has been undertaken with the Trust and other landowners throughout the first part of this year and amendments to safeguard Freeman's birthrights have been included.

CCW is anxious to encourage more scheduled grazing for the maintenance and enhancement of the Common's SSSI status. The Trust's concern of traffic calming on the Common roads is being taken up by CCW with the traffic authority with the aim of preventing accidents to animals traversing the roads; it is felt such means of increasing animal safety will be a big factor in encouraging more grazing.

At present the management budget is generous in comparison with the number of animals being grazed on a regular basis and it is felt this requires review – too high a financial resource is being continually allocated to an ever decreasing number of graziers. It is anticipated the situation can be discussed at the forthcoming Freeman's General Meeting, specific invitations are to be sent to all active graziers - management expenses be kept within reason by means of grazier help in management tasks (e.g. bracken, fern, thistle cutting, etc, etc.) rather than graziers being faced with paying higher fees. It is hoped a solution will be forthcoming to achieve increased grazing in line with the objectives for the SSSI status.

Peripheral development at all boundaries of the Common is a concern, effecting things as traffic intensity, drainage-pollutants and loss of habitat, thus a procedure is being

incorporated for regular monitoring of the Borough Council planning applications giving an early warning of detrimental proposals.

#### GRAIG COMMON

Grazing by two horses continued until late spring, interpretive material explaining the history, ecology and maintenance of the Graig, prepared by the Countryside Section of RCT Borough Council, was made available in the form of leaflets for handing out with illustrated site notices at each pedestrian entrance. The Countryside Section, Butterfly Conservation and the Trust undertook clearance of portions of bracken and installation of a drinking trough in an attempt to encourage more grazing, mixed cattle and horses is especially desired to gain more habitat for the rare brown fritillary butterfly. Unfortunately, mid-summer bracken beating by Conservation Volunteers to build on the earlier preparation could not be arranged.

#### LLANTRISANT CASTLE UPDATE

The first phase of work was completed to plan and now the Borough Council is well into investigating committed funding to permit the structure's consolidation and associated aims to proceed.

#### GUILDHALL

It is apparent that maintenance will require to be undertaken to major features of the Guildhall in the short to medium term. Consideration is being given to reinstating the structure to as close as possible its original character but incorporating up-to-date materials and features, external funding will be essential and in order to attract the necessary degree of such finance it is apparent that the building will need to be more multi-functional and be suitable for educational and other wide-ranging uses. Investigations are at an early stage and undoubtedly this will be a major commitment to be confronted by the Trust.

### BEATING of the BOUNDS – Marker Stones

The Community Council's community project "Installation of Boundary Stones Project" is being contributed to by the Trust. It is intended to place another six stones, subject to bureaucratic restraints, at locations on or near the historic boundary as walked during the 7-yearly Beating of the Bounds ceremony to supplement the original existing boundary stones, known as "bouncing stones". It is hoped to complete the placement in time for the next ceremony in June 2010. However, proposed industrial development at Talyfedw could jeopardise the original "bouncing" stone at this location thus the Trust is investigating safeguarding it in one form or another.

### MODEL HOUSE ARTEFACTS

Due to closure, for commercial reasons, of the History of Llantrisant exhibition at the Model House the Trust was offered appropriate items to be retained for safekeeping until such time they could be redisplayed at a future date, items so held at the Guildhall comprise artefacts from previous Castle archaeological digs, photographs and computer historical displays. Articles associated with Dr. Price, namely a sofa and the witness box from Pontypridd Court, were moved to the Old Victorian School building.

### LLANTRISANT WAR MEMORIAL

The Trust is giving input to a committee led by the local borough councillor investigating the setting up of a war memorial in respect of the persons of the locality who gave the supreme sacrifice.

### Civic Trust, "OPEN DOORS" Programme

A Sub-committee of Trustees is examining participation in 2009 in the programme whereby the Guildhall, together with other noteworthy and historic buildings in the county borough, are open to the public for a limited period.

Furthermore the Guildhall has merited a last minute inclusion in the County Borough Council's "Blue Plaque" Project, the plaque will be placed on the exterior of the building, in compliance with listed building requirements, with text in Welsh and English indicating key information as to its historic and noteworthy status

### The BILLY WYNT

Vandalism is an ongoing scourge, repair to portions of the stone structure by a local mason was promoted by the Trust but earlier this summer the ironwork gate with its metal frame was wrenched away completely from the masonry – the gateway is now to be left open.

### HISTORICAL RECORDS

Four out of six volumes of records "County Borough of Cardiff", Copy No. 291 of 400, each endorsed "*Presented to **Llantrisant** by the Corporation of Cardiff on the understanding that this Volume is kept safely for reference by the Inhabitants of **Llantrisant** in a Library secured to their free use forever – signed J. L. Wheatley, Town Clerk, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1904*" were kindly given to The Trust by Freeman Clive S. Thomas, Roll No. 2475. Fortunately Freeman Noel Israel, the Trust's Historian, was able to borrow originals of the two missing volumes and these have been copied electronically ensuring no damage. An ongoing project is for the two volumes to be printed and bound, to resemble as closely as practicable the original four, so the complete set will be available for reference as originally intended.

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