Welcome to the 2014 Christmas Newsletter. Another year passes, how much better this Summer has been than recent years. This year has been relatively quiet for Rhossili Community Council with fewer planning applications in the community for the committee to consider.

Although the demise and withdrawal of the Atlantic Array proposal has been relegated to recent history, the Rhossili Working Group (RWG) remains active and is vigilant over the proposed Tidal Lagoon in Swansea Bay. Carl Johnson, who heads this small group, plays an active leading role on keeping an eye on developments and changes whilst the proposal passes through the Planning Inspectorate stages. His summary can be found below.

Your council has seen a few changes to its committee this last year. Sadly, Christine Cann passed away and the council, with a heavy heart, accepted Dai’s wish to resign; we wish to thank Dai for his contributions he has made in office these last years.

In the interim between councillor’s elections, in its December meeting, RCC committee co-opted new councillor Tom Higgs and offer our warmest welcome to him. He has contributed a Farming Perspective in this Newsletter.
Jo Scott has been employed as RCC’s new Clerk replacing Caroline Johnson who resigned at the end of last year but has offered her support and advice to Jo whilst adjusting to her new role.

Steve Walmsley stood down from Chair at RCC’s AGM and myself, Steve Campbell-Kelly, took the Chair whilst SteveW is the new Finance Officer: effectively we switched roles! I, and the committee, and I am are sure the community as a whole, wish to convey our thanks to Steve for his commitment and dedication as Chair to the council this last five years. Ian Button has taken the role of Vice-Chair.

Selina Taylor has completed RCC’s new website. Please make a note of the new web address: www.rhossilicc.org.uk. Our thanks go to Selina for promptly producing this for us.

Noticeboards deteriorate over time, especially in Rhossili! All three were replaced about five years ago but in an effort to save on replacing again these will be fully refurbished with a new easy-to-pin-to backing; Pitton board has already been done.

Due to cutbacks in the Ambulance Service it is proving difficult to arrange defibrillator certificate revalidation. I am hopeful to have this resolved shortly which will enable refresher courses for those previously trained. I am also hoping to arrange a course for those who wish to be trained. The Ambulance Service holds the access codes to defibrillator cabinets but this code is known to all councillors and Rhossili Coastguard Rescue team who will let you know it in case of an emergency. Despite a number of requests the code cannot be made openly public or the case be left unlocked as these units are too costly to replace if they were to disappear.

An article is compiled regarding the location of the Blue Plaque commemorating 100 years since the birth of and place of birth, of Edgar Evans. There is John Beynon’s Poem, “Who Knows”, and additional commentaries from Jo Scott and Gordon Howe: make your own mind up!

Rhossili Community Council meets monthly on the second Tuesday at 7.15pm in Rhossili Village Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend, and to raise matters of interest in the community. Contact details of all the councillors can be found on the RCC website: www.rhossilicc.org.uk. Please feel free to contact any councillor if you think there are issues (either beneficial or challenging) that you feel the council should be aware of and/or consider.

If you are new to emailing and are not on the village circular, please notify the Clerk of your email address, or if you do not have one, please read the notice board from time to time for notices.

Finally, many thanks to all the contributors to this Newsletter and we hope that you find it interesting and informative. Once again this year we have included a section to send seasonal good wishes at the end of this newsletter. I and the Council Members would like to take this opportunity to wish you a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year and to also remember absent friends.

Steven Campbell-Kelly
Chair, Rhossili Community Council
rhossilicc@gmail.com
www.rhossilicc.org.uk

**RHOSILLI VILLAGE HALL AND BUNKHOUSE**

The success of the Bunkhouse has enabled the Trustees to carry out further improvements to the Hall and Bunkhouse. Major work carried out this year has included better access to the stage, refurbishment of the stage lights, a new window between the Office and the Hall (constructed to allow the sound system to be monitored during performances); refurbishment of the Hall boiler; renovation of the back store; improvements to the showers and the purchase of replacement Hall chairs.

We have also fitted gates to the Car Park to define the car parking area and stop visitors to the Hall blocking the lane (an important route for our neighbours and coastguard vehicles). The main gate will not generally be shut except when the Hall or Bunkhouse is fully occupied.
The trading company that was set up to operate the Bunkhouse on behalf of the Trustees is now fully operational. Several parcels of land that the Village Hall occupies have been amalgamated into one to allow easier transfer in the future (as Trustees change). The company will work in synchronisation with the Hall Trustees, and all profits will be donated to the Village Hall. Over the last few years, the success of the Bunkhouse has allowed us to build up a ‘cash reserve’ so we now have funds available for routine maintenance and any emergency repairs. This year we intend to paint the outside of the Hall.

We are always looking for new ideas on how the Village Hall can be used by the community at large. If you have any suggestions about the facilities we offer we would like to hear from you. Please feel free to approach the trustees with any suggestions and they will be considered and acted on wherever possible. Examples of groups that use the hall include: Keep Fit, Pilates, Whist, Youth Club, Llandewi & Knelston WI.

As Chair, I would like to thank the Trustees, past and present, for their help and continued commitment to making the Village Hall a success. I would particularly like to thank Mary Beynon, Judith Harry and Jenny Venables who all stood down as Trustees this year and to record our appreciation for all their efforts during their time as trustees. All were long standing supporters of the Village Hall, who have worked selflessly to make the Village Hall and Bunkhouse both successful and sustainable.

I would also like to thank our support staff Jo Higgins, the ‘meeters & greeters’ and cleaning team.

The current Trustees are: Pauline Bevan, Gill Evans, John Furneaux, Jeff Higgins, Vicky James, Marion Potts, Rob Symberlist, Sarah & Steve Walmsley.

Thanks to you all for your support throughout 2014 and we look forward to seeing you at the Hall in the coming year.

Steve Walmsley

**Steve Walmsley, Chair of Trustees**

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**VILLAGE HALL SOCIAL EVENTS**

This being the year of Dylan Thomas’ birth we decided to put on our own reading of Under Milk Wood. We rehearsed from mid Jan every Sunday evening until mid March which was good fun in itself.

On the night the hall was packed. Cawl and Welsh cakes were served to great acclaim and then…the performance!!

I think everyone REALLY enjoyed the evening. Those involved in the performance itself excelled, and I am sure that Dylan would have been delighted.

Following on with the Dylan theme, on the May Bank Holiday Monday the Lighthouse Theatre Company gave a great performance of ‘Reminiscences of Childhood’ and more recently, ‘Night Out’ led a brilliant local star studded evening of ‘Old Time Music Hall’. Both occasions were well attended and much enjoyed.

Quiz nights arranged by our maestro, Roger Button, have again been very well attended. The competitive spirit and general atmosphere always ensure a successful evening.

Charity events included Pauline Bevan’s Strawberry Tea in aid of Air Ambulance, a Water Colour Painting afternoon which supported Water Aid and a Flower arranging demonstration by our own celebrity Daphne Furneaux which enabled us to donate towards the Ebola crisis appeal.

Thank you for your support without which we would be redundant!

The Social Committee would welcome new ideas and new members!

Please contact either Vicki James eatmorecake@hotmail.com or Gill Evans revevgm@gmail.com

Gill Evans

Rhossili Village Hall Social Committee
YOUTH CLUB

Rhossili Youth Club has now been running for over 15 years and this has been another fun packed year. In the hall we have cooked and eaten some delicious foods, made some lovely crafts from jewellery to bath bombs. We have had film nights, quizzes, an Easter egg hunt, celebrated Halloween, pumpkin carving, games, sports and lots more. The fantastic summer meant that we spent many nights, walking, going to the beaches and playing games, beach art and BBQ’s.

There was a sleepover in Borfa where we were treated to ‘I am a celebrity get me out of here’ and we ate bush tucker food, handled snakes, spiders and bugs and taught survival skills. The young people took part in the summer programme and went surfing, coasteering, rock hopping and other outdoor activities. We have been to other youth clubs and become part of Evolve the new name for the youth service. They went ice skating, had a disco and food at the purple Badger with the other youth clubs to mark the end of the Rural Youth Service.

We have been involved in organising the ‘Big Conversation’ where they have been in discussions firstly in our club and then with other young people (from all over Swansea), youth workers, local city councillors, etc. They discussed topics such as cuts in the youth service and the bus service. One of our young people even wrote directly to Jack Straw (off her own back) and caused a chain of responses from the Government all the way back down to our young person.

We were very fortunate to have had the rural youth service bus picking up the young people from Upper Killay and the local villages. We then had four youth workers who enjoyed working with them all and watched them develop over the years from exuberant eleven year olds into mature and well rounded sixteen/seventeen year olds. Unfortunately, due to the end of the rural funding we have lost the bus and a youth worker. Josh has also left to work full time in Townhill youth club. Charlotte and I are continuing and would like to welcome old and new young people to join us in the New Year.

Jo & Charlotte Higgins
Tel: 01792 390712

A FIND AT MEWSLADE

On 12th August this year there was a very high tide, so with nothing better to do I walked down Mewslade Valley with my youngest son and his wife, to watch. There, wedged in the narrow cleft at the entrance to the beach, was a large fluorescent pink and blue mooring buoy. Over the years, like many other people, I have made a collection of these and other flotsam washed onto our shores, and decorated the fences in our garden with them. When we got it home, we noticed that there was some writing on it, words and numbers and a name – Grant Cunningham. We easily made out the words “French Lily” and underneath that the letters spelling out YAR-BAR.

In 1991, my wife, Jo, spent three months in North America on a Winston Churchill Fellowship, researching various aspects of their education systems, and she immediately recognised the numbers as an area code for Canada, where she spent some of the time. Later that evening, she tried ringing the number, but although it rang out, there was no reply. The next step was to turn to the Internet or, to be more precise, to “Google” it. French Lily and Grant Cunningham were immediately put together, and the ‘phone number matched as well, together with a story in the local newspaper, NovaNews. Grant Cunningham is a Lobsterman, and achieved local fame when he fished out an unusual lobster, coloured half orange and half yellow.

Our visiting grandchildren were keen to know all about the buoy, and when French Lily broke free and the buoy was lost. They made up all sorts of possible scenarios about wild storms, so we decided to try and make contact again. Jo sent an email to the NovaNews, telling them what we had found, and they took up the story. We were immediately contacted by Grant’s son, who told us that his father was away for the summer in his cabin, with no phone or means of being contacted. We sent a photograph of the buoy,
which we now know is called a “Balloon” in Canada, and they published it with the story.

Grant Cunningham lives in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, hence the name YAR-BAR on the balloon. The Canadian Yarmouth is right on the Eastern end of the Bay of Fundy, and as many people know, that has the highest tidal range in the world; the Bristol Channel, where Mewslade lies almost on the Western end, has the second-highest range. What a coincidence! The Gulf Stream, which becomes the North Atlantic Drift once it leaves the shore, travels at speeds up to 5 knots and carried the buoy some 3,000 miles to Mewslade, probably assisted by South–Westerly winds. So, how long did this epic voyage last? We finally managed to contact the man himself to ask him what happened. He has recently retired after forty years of lobster-fishing, and he can’t remember the exact date the buoy went missing. His nearest guess was the beginning of last winter, late October or early November. If so, that means that “French Lily’s buoy (balloon) was drifting across the Atlantic Ocean for nine or ten months. It arrived, still fully inflated, in perfect condition, complete with reflector strips stuck all around so that it would show up at night with lights on it. It survived storms, icebergs and passing ships; it passed Newfoundland, Iceland and Ireland before it finally reached the shore at Mewslade.

Peter Scott
‘Bellendaine’

VILLAGE SECURITY

In general like last year we have seen no increase in crime in the area especially as last summer saw a rise in visitor numbers to Gower. We continued throughout the summer months our joint patrols with National Trust, NRW and the City and County of Swansea Ranger at a time when resources from all parties were stretched. This partnership working saw further reductions in minor crime and anti social behaviour. Furthermore we have arranged regular visits to the village by the mobile police station and will continue to do so next year.

Although the chances of being a victim of crime in Rhossili is low I would ask for continued vigilance where any suspicious activity is reported and common sense crime prevention steps taken such as ensuring that the doors to your homes, vehicles and outbuildings are locked and any valuable items kept secure out of sight of the opportunist criminal.

I would like to thank you all for your support in keeping Gower safe.

All calls to the police should be made in case of a non emergency 101 and 999 in emergencies.

Pc Phil Davies
Reynoldston Police Station
Mobile 07805301600

WI UPDATE

Llandewi with Knelston have once again enjoyed a very full and enjoyable year.

Our events have included such things as monthly lunches, walks and our ever popular August garden party.

Further afield we have attended a celebration of Welsh/Italian life, a city walk around Bath, a walking holiday in Church Stretton and many other federation and local walks and treasure trails.

We went to Spring & Autumn Council meetings and enjoyed excellent and well known speakers.
Some of our other events included a Health awareness day, a day trip to Denman College, an Archery day, a first aid course and all this plus our normal monthly speakers.

We also joined in the journey of the W.I. Centenary baton when we were accompanied by our wonderful Rhossili Cliff Rescue Team.

Our year culminates in our usual carol service in Llandewi Church followed by a Christmas dinner at the Oxwich Bay Hotel.

New members are always welcome and information may be obtained from:
- Chris Williams 01792 390282
- Marian Potts 01792 390473

A very merry Christmas and a happy new year to everyone.

Llandewi with Knelston WI

EDGAR EVANS MEMORIAL

Blue Plaque Installed at Middleton Hall Cottage,

Gordon Howe writes:

“John Beynon, our local vernacular poet, once wrote a ditty about the dilemma faced by the Community Council some 30 years ago when I was Clerk. The location of our (Rhossili’s) famous son’s birthplace was in dispute and a plaque in his memory (designed and in natural slate) was never commissioned. The money collected for the plaque was dispersed. We even had the Cambridge Polar Institute involved.

Anyway, a pleasant enough occasion in the sun shine and mud with a tractor delayed without complaint.”

John Beynon’s poem is reproduced below regarding the controversy in the village surrounding Edgar Evans’ birth place:

**WHO KNOWS**

Edgar Evans’ birthplace was quite precious to his soul,
A native of this Parish who perished at the Pole,
The Council tried by census form to find his birthplace
But the actual cottage was difficult to trace.

He once had lived at Pitton, where he went to school,
And bottled many tadpoles on the way in Watch Pool,
His wife had lived in Pilton in a cottage on her own,
But a cottage next to Fernhill is what we called his home.

So a plaque’s to be erected on the house by the heath,
And added in small writing in brackets underneath,
“This may be Edgar’s birthplace, or house of abode,
But if it’s not it’s the pink house down the road”.

*Extract from “Gower Poems, From Bard to Verse” by John Beynon.*
Gordon Howe further writes:

“The reference to the pink house down the road is in fact what all of the fuss was about. ‘Jofrey’ Jones was adamant that Edgar was born in Middleton Hall Cottage and put the brakes on the whole procedure. Jofrey took the law into his own hands and put up a brass plaque that will always be remembered for its spelling of Antartic (sic).”

Since this time research has moved on and Jo Scott writes:

“My understanding of this is that the local "mid-wife" lived in Middleton Hall Cottage, and Edgar’s mother went to the house to give birth, so strictly speaking, it’s probable that he was indeed born in that house. However, immediately after his birth, mother with baby walked back to family home at Furland Top (now Fernhill Top Cottage). The 1881 census shows the family (minus father, who presumably was away at sea) living in a cottage in Higher Pitton, with Edgar aged 5. His birthday was 7th March 1876 and he was baptised in Rhossili Church on 30th April 1876, so the conclusion is drawn that he lived in Middleton at the time! The school Log Book shows that the whole family moved to Swansea from an entry of 31st March 1882.

The other connection with Rhossili is that Edgar, when home on leave, was also the local bouncer at The Ship, when it was a public house, and married his cousin, Lois, who was a barmaid there. Their wedding breakfast was held in the Tea Room, which has since been converted to Picnic cottage, where Sally and Gwyn Thomas live with their family.”

The top half of the Plaque reads:

City and County of Swansea

Petty Officer 1st Class

Edgar Evans RN

1876 – 1912

Who died on Captain Robert Falcon Scott’s expedition to the South Pole was born here and lived nearby 1876-1883

(The lower half is a transcript of the above in Welsh)
within the Coastguard which prohibits us from being volunteer Coastguards as well.

Our annual “Silly Willy” award takes place in the Worm’s Head Hotel on Sunday 7th December; we have a record number of entries this year, and I am afraid to say I am one of the front runners! Thank you to the Shorts for looking after us.

This is the last update I write as a member of the Rhossili team, as after 42 years’ service on May 7th 2015 I will have to stand down, so it just leaves me to say thank you for the support the team continues to get from the village. The long proud history of Rhossili Coastguard will continue, and we look forward to seeing the new members next year!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from us all.

Steve Jones
HM Coastguard
December 2014

Post Script – Steve’s fears were realised and he is now the proud owner of the prestigious “Silly Willy” award!

Chair

NATIONAL COASTWATCH INSTITUTE
- WORM’S HEAD STATION

This has been a year of unusual visits, including one that resulted eventually in the bomb squad arriving. We knew that something like it had happened during the War because the incident was written up in our Visitors’ Book but it was still a bit unnerving to have a member of the public turn up this July with a shell head in his arms asking, “What do we do with this?”

Our other most unusual visit this year was a van with a grand piano on board which the chaps proceeded to set up on the cliffs above the Ledges for a photo-shoot.

Apparently a concert pianist fancies the idea of playing in the wild surroundings and the National Trust are hoping for a recital next year!

It was a long hot summer and visitor numbers soared. There were the usual incidents involving surveillance, medical emergencies of varying degrees of gravity and, more seriously, a fatal cliff fall, an attempted suicide and a death. Of course there was the continuing problem of people marooned – in spite of notices and advice - on the Worm. But I am glad to say that such incidents prevented, by the use of our monster megaphone mainly, are over three times as many as the ones where Horton ILB or Rescue 169 have had to be called out.

Two events must be recorded. The first was our break-in. It was badly timed: we were anticipating our annual inspection. Having left the Lookout spotless and expectant for the following day, there was a telephone call at 4 in the morning saying that we had been broken into and generally trashed. This was followed by a desperate scramble to return things to a suitable state for opening at all. It was done with minutes to spare and we passed.

The other thing was of course the refurbishment of the Lookout. The National Trust, partly funded by the Gower Society, has furnished us with a fine new slate roof and triple-glazed windows. For the
six weeks when we were turfed out we had alternative accommodation in a small blue cabin called the Groundhog (manufactured on an impressive site up the Neath valley). Somehow it seemed to attract even more visitors than usual and we had a pleasant if energetic exile.

We are now back home and things are quietening down but we never know what is going to happen next: it was only luck that the recent alarm of a Land Rover rolled over on the cliffs didn’t turn into the tragedy it could have become.

We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

Audrey Frank
Station Manager,

National Coastwatch Institution Worms Head

RECYCLING BAGS AVAILABLE

Don’t forget that you can collect new supplies of recycling bags from Pitton Cross Caravan Park if you run short. You can collect pink, green and food bags from the shop daily between 10am and 4pm. This service is in addition to the kerbside replenishment service already provided by Swansea Council.

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE: SCULPTURE CULTURE

I moved to Rhossili in May 1982 with my husband Terry Ryall (to our old wreck of a farmhouse!) from my home town of Llanelli.

We had met in Wimbledon School of Art and were both sculptors but it wasn’t until 1988 that I decided to leave my teaching job and set up a sculpture workshop with a fellow-teacher, Gary Ley, a geographer who knew nothing about sculpture and had never been an conspicuously practical man - an obvious choice as a partner in a sculpture business! He is still my business partner and my accomplished technician who casts and finishes all my resin sculpture.

I had learned the rudiments of mould-making in art school and we both did a more advanced mould-making course and various business courses - so we clearly knew everything we needed to (!) We spent a couple of years making beautiful objects that we knew would sell like hot cakes in garden centres. We were wrong. We clearly hadn’t paid enough attention on our business courses to the sections about the importance (and difficulties) of marketing.

But I was a kept woman (Terry still had a proper job) and Gary did some lecturing for few years while continuing to work with me - and we limped on. When things became a little (very little) better and we were just starting to make a (very hard) living, I decided that, having the workshops set up, I could spare a little corner, and a few hours here and there, to indulge myself in a bit of ‘my own’ work. I thought I had left it too late to make or sell ‘real’ sculpture. Everyone I knew who had ever ‘made it’ as a sculptor had done it straight from their degree show. It had been ten years since mine.

“Over the Rainbow”
It is a matter of some astonishment to me, even now, that my more personal work was immediately more successful than any of the work (that we thought of as more commercial) that we had laboured over for so long! I showed one small piece at a trade show, because it could mind its own business in a corner - and it was just about the only thing anyone noticed. A gallery owner asked me to show it at her gallery. And she sold it, so I approached other galleries and made more, bigger pieces until we didn’t even have the time to make any of the garden-centre work. Even then, making what I wanted to make felt like an indulgence and we were sure that we really needed to make more of the sort of pieces that would be ‘popular’ (i.e. - would make us a living) so we tried to second-guess which pieces would sell and we made those in larger editions. But we weren’t even good at that! All the pieces we thought no-one else would ever like were actually the ones that we couldn’t cast quickly enough (but it took years to gain the confidence to ditch such considerations!)

Gradually, I became more experimental with the type of pieces I made and the materials I used to make the originals. I now use clay, plaster, wax, paper, fabric, cardboard, resin, stone and wood. I make much use of wood found on the beach for casting into bronze.

We still make stone-resin sculpture, and all our own moulds, but now the bronzes (cast in Pembrokeshire) pay for themselves and my sculpture sells equally well in resin and bronze. I show it at the Chelsea Flower Show every year and in galleries all over the UK. I have pieces in public places including All Saints Church in Fulham, the Royal Free Hospital in London, the new Marie Curie Hospice in Solihull and a two-metre bronze crucifix (cast from Rhossili driftwood) in Brecon Cathedral.

And I am proud (and amazed) to say that my work is bought by prestigious collectors all over the world - including Rhossili!

Helen Sinclair
December 2013

FARMING PERSPECTIVE:

GREAT PITTON FARM

Great Pitton Farm is a mixed farm on which we grow arable crops, including wheat, barley, oats, triticale and fodder beet. On grassland we graze cattle and sheep, which we sell for breeding and meat.

2014 started of extremely wet after a long, damp but mild winter, which resulted in an early Spring for us. As a consequence, cattle were turned out to grass in early March.

At the same time, the land dried up in time to start Spring drilling of barley and oats, in very good conditions.

Lambling went well and we were pleased with the plentiful number of twins, and a good quantity of triplets amongst the flock – our Welsh ewes are great mothers, as they are three or four year olds, who have previously lambed.
In May, for the first time in nearly 20 years, we had horses back on the farm. Jess’ (my fiancé) cob Harry and thoroughbred Connie travelled down from Shropshire to spend the Summer being ridden on the beach, and strip grazing the long, luscious grass before being returned in late August.

The Summer proved to be one of the best we have had for many years in Gower. Plenty of early grass growth produced large, good quality crops of silage for the cattle’s Winter feed. The fine weather also resulted in a good cereal harvest, with little interruption from the rain.

The dry Summer rolled on into an even drier Autumn, which meant the grass growth slowed, and the livestock started to graze the pastures bare. We therefore bought the cattle to be fattened (being being produced for meat) into the shed in late September, and so had the opportunity to weigh them, worm them and prepare them for their Winter inside. We were extremely happy with the Summer’s weight gain, which we hope to maintain throughout the Winter months by feeding them a mixed ration of silage, straw fodder beet, and cereals.

We purposely delayed Autumn drilling until late October, to prevent the crops becoming too advanced too soon, and to stop aphids infecting the crops with virus.

We have now finished harvesting our 2014 fodder beet crop, thanks to the dry spell at the end of November.

The Winter months consist of continuing to feed monitor, and look after the indoor and outdoor livestock. We also take the opportunity in the quieter months to maintain and repair the machinery, in preparation for the new season ahead.

We look forward to the Christmas festivities, but also remember that our animals still need to be fed and checked before we can enjoy the turkey and presents with a warming drink!!

Tom Higgs
1 December 2014

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**ATLANTIC ARRAY: POSTSCRIPT**

On 28th November 2013, Rheinhessen Westphalia Energy (RWE) pulled the plug on the Atlantic Array Wind Farm, citing seabed difficulties and unfavourable investment conditions.

Those with a cynical frame of mind thought instead of a withdrawn tourism survey, undersized turbines in the photomontages, reliance on a secret research report, and legal action by the European Commission to create a conservation area in the Bristol Channel. It didn’t seem to make sense that the largest energy company in Europe should pull out of a four billion pound project when the returns were estimated at 1.1 billion pounds per year in subsidy alone.

A perspective finally emerged a few months later when a report circulated on the web of RWE’s corporate strategy symposium the previous autumn.

In this important meeting, RWE presented a change of policy direction. They no longer wanted to build the biggest and grandest offshore wind farms by themselves, but rather saw themselves as providing the know-how and expertise to others – a change of direction from making the ironmongery to providing the intellectual ingenuity.

They seem to have followed this through, pulling out of all the large offshore UK projects they were developing by themselves, but keeping going with others where they were bound in consortium. They continued with onshore wind farms such as Mynydd y Gwair.

There seem to be elements of truth in the reasons they gave for pulling out of the Atlantic Array. The company probably knew the seabed pretty well, although they couldn’t have foreseen the mini earthquake that happened in the middle of the Channel last summer. What seems to be true though is that, at the depth of the middle of the Bristol Channel, the offshore wind industry were working at the limits of their technological capability. Also, at long last, sense started to prevail in the corridors of power and the huge subsidies once available were at last being questioned – so maybe the investment outlook was no longer favourable.
For the record, the strike price for conventionally generated electricity is about 50-55 pence per ‘unit’. Nuclear is 95 pence. Offshore wind is 155 pence. And the Lagoon is asking for 165 pence.

Will there be another application? It is possible, though Crown Estate who own the seabed have stated that they do not envisage such a development, and on 1st December 2013 removed the Bristol Channel Atlantic Array site from their map of 2008 potential offshore developments. Also, the second OESEA (Offshore Energy) report in 2009 suggested that all future offshore wind farms ought to be sited outside the 12 mile offshore limit. But the Bristol Channel is tempting ……

Others are still fighting - at Navitus Bay, 10km off the Dorset Jurassic Coast near Swanage, the same issues are being sorely tested……

Carl Johnson
Rhossili Working Group
6 December 2014

Rhossili Working Group was formed to challenge the threats to the Gower coastline and seascapes posed by the proposed development of the Atlantic Array Wind Farm. Research into some of the issues gave insights into several environmental concerns, some of which we were able to use to advantage in successfully challenging the wind farm development. Our wider aim therefore has been to promote conservation status for the Outer Bristol Channel, as being the best way to secure long-term protection for the coasts of Gower, Lundy and North Devon.

The concept of the Swansea Tidal Lagoon is unimpeachable: energy production is clean, reliable, consistent, predictable, with a life span of 120 years. In principle, it is probably one of the best forms of green energy, so necessary for the future of our planet. The proposal rates as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and is assessed by Examiners appointed by The Planning Inspectorate.

RWG’s position is that we are generally supportive of the project, but, as a matter of course, we would expect all concerns about potential impact to be thoroughly assessed, and environmental safeguards put in place where necessary..

The Lagoon has been sold to the public with much razzamatazz, and with great emphasis being placed on features which might be seen as ancillary to the primary purpose of energy production. These include recreational activities – promenade, cycling, sailing, etc – and ancillary industries such as shellfish farming. The Lagoon has been portrayed as an iconic additional feature in Swansea Bay whose promotion could offset any negative impact on tourism from changes to this historic and scenic Bay.

The Lagoon sits in Swansea Bay which is part of the Outer Bristol Channel. The environmental concerns which had been identified during the Atlantic Array application had not been resolved, and remained as live issues, albeit the processes of constructing the Lagoon would probably have a lesser potential impact.

Getting involved in the planning process is like peeling the layers of skin off an onion. As each layer is successively removed, so more and more issues are revealed. And what becomes apparent is that, far from being a perfect solution, building the Lagoon would create adverse effects: deciding the outcome of this planning application is balancing the potential benefits against the losses.

Some of the concerns seem to have been allayed: the heavy metal contaminants – mercury, lead, nickel, arsenic - in the sediments to be used in filling the geotubes, are probably bound to the sand (silicates) and probably won’t be released into the waters of the Bay; the potential extra flooding risk to the seafront at Norton can be circumvented by making the sea defences higher; the loss of sand transportation to Kenfig burrows can be rectified by artificial deposition of sand.

Some effects will have to be tolerated: because of reduced water circulation in the reduced Western part of the Bay, it is likely that the area between Blackpill and Oystermouth will become saltmarsh; the sands at Blackpill will probably turn to mud –
the present SSSI for Sanderling will be lost, but
the inspector, now the Chair
of the Examiners, suggested that this might be
acceptable because other bird species would use
the mud habitat.

What has become apparent during the whole
course of the Examination is that on many issues
the research and preparation of the developer has
been insufficient. Many times, new
documentation has had to be prepared at a late
stage, whereas the national infrastructure
planning rules state that all information has to be
available for comment before the application
begins.

In November, Natural Resources Wales were still
asking for documentation on the prospective
water quality in the Bay after construction of the
Lagoon; it was not previously available because
baseline assessments of sediment in the sea-
water had not been carried out. In the Scheldt
Estuary in Holland, a storm surge barrier was built
30 years ago, and the estuary there has still not
reached a state of equilibrium: at a hearing here it
was suggested that the Lagoon developers had
prepared modelling on expected changes to the
physical features of the Bay which looked forward
only two years, which would be a hugely
inadequate assessment.

One of RWG’s concerns was the potential effect
on the breeding and nursery habitat of the
harbour porpoise. Research has shown that
Scarweather Sands off Porthcawl and Swansea
Bay in general is the location of a local breeding
population. The sensitive echo-location hearing of
the porpoise can be quickly and mortally damaged
by the noise of pile-driving during construction.
RWG has asked that pile driving be restricted to
times outside the main breeding and nursery
season. Although the porpoise is a protected
European species, and the developers had been
alerted to existing European legal action to
protect them, no baseline study of porpoise
activity in Swansea Bay had been carried out. A
belated Habitats Assessment was hurriedly
produced in August this year, but had many flaws.
So the general picture has been one where the
idea is good, but the work to underpin the
application has not been as thorough as it might
have been.

At the very last submission deadline, a revised
Draft Development Consent Order was presented.
Belatedly, it seems that, legally, the ancillary
aspects of development are devolved to Wales
and not part of NSIP considerations. The main
thrust of this is to strip away many of the ancillary
features which were glitzily presented to the
public at launch to offset any concerns of the loss
of amenities of the present Bay. There will be only
one pontoon on the Lagoon and this will be for
maintenance purposes only: there will be no ferry
service from the river wharf to the Lagoon. The
shuttle bus service from the ‘MacDonald’s’
Entrance to the docks may be withdrawn. The
visitor buildings are being reduced in size. Also, it
seems the reduced electricity tariff to local
customers will not be introduced for 30 years; and
the decommissioning fund, if anything goes
wrong, will not begin for 45 years. It seems that
the development will be examined only as a
“Generating Station”, so that ancillary features
are stripped out of the formal consents. Swansea
has been left to argue that these ameliorative
features should now be included as informal
obligations of the DCO to be taken up later under
local planning application.

It will probably get the go-ahead, but much of the
sheen has been lost recently.

One last lesson. The Examiners do not have over-
arching knowledge and ability. Issues and
concerns about any NSIP development are raised
only as individuals identify them and call them
out. It is a very hit-and-miss process, and needs
every one of us to get engaged to ensure that all
aspects of any proposed development are
thoroughly examined.

Carl Johnson
Rhossili Working Group
8 December 2014

Should anyone wish for further information on the
Group’s activities and interests or wishes to know
more about the environmental status of the Outer
Bristol Channel please contact Carl or email
rhossilicc@gmail.com
LOST PETS

I just wanted to let you know about a new website to deal with lost pets in Gower. It has been something which I have been meaning to do for quite a long time, having met a number of visitors whose dog has run off and they don’t know what to do or how to spread the word. But similarly, locals can also find themselves separated from their furry companions and need to get the message out there.

It’s a very simple site and FREE to use. It gives a place where anyone can post a notice about a pet that is missing or a pet which has been found.

Please remember web address: www.gowerlostdogs.org.uk or Google “Gower lost dogs”.

Selina

GOWER LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

It is a very exciting time for the Gower Landscape Partnership as the first year’s projects are coming to completion. The project staff have been working tirelessly to deliver the HLF and RDP funded projects that bring new and rediscovered benefits to Gower’s landscapes and communities.

In the coming weeks we will be launching a brand new website for Gower, which will show visitors and residents alike all the wonderful things to see and do on the peninsula, with links to activities, blogs and interesting facts and articles. If you like to get out and about why not explore using our walking trails App? It has 15 trails to discover; it not only shows the routes but has pop-ups with details and information about the features that you can see on your walk and even some you can’t see anymore. The app will be available to download in the New Year.

Our landscape projects are also well under way; we have sown hay meadow seed on six acres of land in South Gower, fingers crossed that these will flourish into glorious hay meadows next year.

We have also planted two acres of arable crop that was allowed to “go over” to become food for birds and small mammals. In the coming weeks we will begin work on repairing the grade II listed wall that surrounds The Vile medieval open field system. This will be restored in the tradition style found on Gower that has a characteristic overhang.

Next year we will be looking forward to carrying out a wide-scale survey of Gower’s Hedgerows; implementing the Grazing Hub project by replacing old stock fencing; as well as getting out and about leading activities and attending events.

For more details on the Gower Landscape Partnership or any of our projects please get in touch, GowerLandscapePartnership@swansea.gov.uk or 01792 390275.

Rebecca O’Dowd
Gower Landscape Partnership Project Officer

NATIONAL TRUST

The coast and beach at Rhossili were subjected to a particularly rough series of storms in December and January. The heavy onshore waves, the high tides and a biblical level of rain all resulted in destabilising the raised terrace and the steps which have had the honour of carrying hundreds of thousands of people to the beach. The steps slow descent down the slope and into the sea was well documented as was the following laborious process of finding money to replace them. However Chris Dale and the CCS rights of way team did a fantastic job and managed to get the new path in place before the main start of the tourist season.

And it wasn’t just the path that was affected. The mediaeval buried village at one time also looked in serious danger of erosion. The work on this has been less dramatic and headline grabbing but work has been going on behind the scenes to get the site re-surveyed to discover the proper extent of the village (currently only a small section is
protected with an archaeology designation). Soil samples and a Geophysical survey will be undertaken in 2015 and would help us understand if any excavations are needed (if deemed necessary as a result of further coastal erosion).

The National Trust volunteers also had an extra work load as a result of the storms, huge amounts of litter were washed on shore and filled many trailer loads and skips but by Easter weekend the litter was gone and Rhossili was awarded the title of best UK beach and third best in Europe!

Away from the beach we have continued with our conservation work along the cliffs. The cliffs from Rhossili to Mewslade are particularly rich in scarce and rare plants and are designated as a National Nature Reserve and Special Area of Conservation. Our winter work is part of a rolling 5 year work plan the ultimate aim is to safeguard the rare plants but also to ensure other factors such as invasive non-native plants (for instance cotoneaster) and erosion are tackled as soon as possible.

The Vile has had a quiet year with little change. The two fields we keep in hand were ploughed and sown (paid for by the Gower Landscape Project with HLF money) as part of the ongoing plan to create habitat for ground nesting birds, an over winter seed source for birds such as chaffinch, linnet, starlings and winter visitors such as the snow bunting. The fields are sown in spring and the crop is left to go to seed. The crop is not taken in but left standing and is ploughed back into the soil next spring before the process is repeated. This “sacrificial crop” is also beneficial for the now rare arable wildflowers (or arable weeds as they were once known) to thrive.

The Coastwatch Lookout building has had a much needed facelift this summer. The work has been partially funded by the Gower Society and followed a work programme set by the National trust Curator for buildings to try to restore the building to an appearance not dissimilar to when it was first built. The work included removing the corrugated roofing sheets and re-slaing the roof, removing plastic fascias and replacing with wood or simply re-pointing the stone and not replacing the fascias at all. Plastic gutters and down pipes were replaced with painted metal and windows were replaced for original looking replicas but with modern thermal qualities to try to keep the Coastwatch volunteers warm on the windiest winter watch!

To celebrate the Dylan Thomas anniversary we held two live performances of the play “extraordinary little cough” which were well received and have given us a taste for more unusual events in the future!

2015 is set to be a bumper year for National Trust coastal properties. 2015 is the 50th anniversary of our fundraising campaign ‘Neptune’ and Rhossili will be the location for some of the celebrations. Look out for our Facebook updates and events flyers early next year for details.

Alan Kearsley-Evans
National Trust Property Manager

COMMONS AND COMMONERS

Rhossili Commoners are one of 15 groups that form Gower Commoners Association. The Commoners not only look after the animals that graze the 17,000 plus acres of common land on Gower, they also engage in the management of the commons.

This management includes cutting scrub, managing the bracken (rolling, cutting, composting and bailing), cutting vision splays and firebreaks. They also maintain fences and off highway cattle grids which help keep the animals on the common, not on the highway or other people’s property.

The animals through grazing help to keep down vegetation and scrub and without their help the commons would rapidly become overgrown with a huge loss of habitat for wildlife and loss of access to the public.

Rhossili Common Land extends to Rhossili Downs, Rhossili Cliffs, Pitton Cross and Pilton Green. This land is owned by the National Trust and there are rarely any issues of concern.

Rhossili Commons Chair: Nicky Rees, with Stephen Fisher and Alan Kersley-Evans as executive members.
Should any resident wish to find out more of the Commoners work, information can be found at www.gowercommons.org.uk or contact the National Trust on 01792 390636.

Nicky Rees

EPISTLE FROM PITTON CHAPEL

As we look back over the year for us at Pitton Chapel, part of the Swansea and Gower Circuit of the Methodist Church, we begin by sharing some sad news. Our good friend, colleague and 'retired' minister, the Reverend Alf Austin, died peacefully with his family at his bedside on Monday 24th November. Alf was Minister of Pitton and Horton for some years, and was fondly remembered for his sensitive pastoral care, his sense of humour, his broad knowledge of the origins of favourite hymns, and his grasp of the Welsh language. A funeral service to give thanks for his life will take place at Murton Methodist Church on Wednesday 10th December.

We also shared with the village the devastating loss of our dear friend Christine Cann, soul-mate to Dai and the love of his life. In a service held at the Chapel we remembered with warmth and affection her gentle manner, her beautiful personality, her creativity and her steadfast work as a Treasurer and fundraiser for Cancer Research. We continue to remember Dai and all those who have been bereaved in the village in our thoughts and our prayers.

At our ecumenical monthly Thursday group we uphold the village in prayer. We meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month, 12 pm - 2pm in the Village Hall, Middleton where we share discussion and prayer and then wonderful home-made soups! Please do let me or Reverend Gill Evans knows of any specific prayer requests, and do feel free to come and join us. The next meeting - not following the 2nd Thursday pattern - will be on January 22nd! (The date is changed as the Walker family are 'expecting' a new arrival to the family earlier in the month!)

The Aldridge Group from the West Midlands delighted us once again with their annual visit. In the stunning summer weather they enjoyed their Camp at Pitton Cross. It was a fabulous week of high energy games, beach trips, bible exploration and passionate praise - as well as space and time apart just to 'be'. Many of the young people went home renewed in their faith and others made a first time commitment to follow Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

In the midst of that glorious summer we also celebrated the wedding of Chrissie Butt to David Parker. When I was told that the guests would be arriving by 'bus' I just assumed that a local contract hire vehicle would be turning up. To my delight and joy it was an old London RT Routemaster-style bus! A 'Number 22' for Piccadilly Circus emblazoned in a dark red livery which perfectly complemented the whites and creams of the Bride.

Red will no doubt feature in our seasonal decorations as we prepare for Christmas. One of the highlights for all the Churches in Swansea will no doubt be 'Silent Night at the Liberty' a carol service with the Ospreys and the 'Swans' and special guests at the Liberty Stadium taking place on 4th December, to commemorate the 100th anniversary this year of the Christmas Truce. The guns fell silent on Christmas Day 1914 and opposing troops sung carols, shared photographs and gifts and played football together.

Our own Carol Services will take place with the Church at St Mary's, Rhossili, on Thursday 18th December at 7 pm, and in Horton Chapel on Sunday 21st at 6:30 pm. We will celebrate on Christmas Day with a service at Pitton Chapel at 10:30 am.

We hope to see you soon, and take this opportunity to pray for God's blessing upon you and those whom you love this Christmas time, and may you have a blessed and peaceful new year.

With love and prayers,

Rev. Andy Walker
Tel: 01792 232 867
RHOSILI CHURCH

A quiet year for the Church but with three joyous weddings. Attendance is still low, but as part of our Christian witness the Church remains open every day from approximately 9am to 5pm, and this arrangement is popular with visitors whose numbers continue to increase.

The Gower Deanery comprises seventeen Churches, and at the start of the year it was supported by eight priests. In March 2015, our Rev Canon Joe Griffin retires, and this will bring the number of priests to four. In the rearrangement of the Deanery to a Ministry Area, it is unlikely that the retiring priests will be replaced, and as one can imagine, the pattern of worship may well have to change considerably.

We wish Canon Joe and Leslie our very best wishes for a long, healthy and happy retirement - we hope that we will still occasionally see them.

Christmas services this year include the Church and Chapel joint Carol Service - this year at St Mary's - on Thursday December 18th at 7pm. The traditional midnight Christmas Eucharist will be in St Mary's at 11:30pm on December 24th, preceded by carols from 11pm. ALL ARE WELCOME!

Peter Venables

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A note of thanks to Jim Harford of Print Partnership, who provides a great printing service to so many people on Gower. His company always demonstrates professionalism and quick turnaround – meaning that this newsletter will find its way to our doorsteps before Christmas.

RCC
Season’s Greetings

Dave & Barbara Powell: “Wishing all our friends, neighbours & members of Rhossili Oil Consortium a very merry Christmas & happy New Year.”

Marion Potts: “Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd dda. Oddi wrth, Marion, Fernhill Top.”

Vicki and Nigel James: “Wishing all our Rhossili friends and neighbours a WONDERFUL Christmas!”

Gaynor and Trevor Morris: “Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year to everyone.”

Audrey Frank: “Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all my friends. (A donation will be made to NCI in lieu of cards)”

June Thomas: June wishes all residents of Rhossili, “a very Happy Christmas & a prosperous New Year. A donation will be given to Charity.”

Jo and Peter Scott: “We share the joy of Christmas with everyone in the village, and wish our friends and neighbours a Happy New Year. Xx”

Mark, Mary, Dyfrig and Huw: “Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda! With our best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy 2015 from Mark, Mary, Dyfrig and Huw (Pitton Cottage) xxx”

Carl and Caroline Johnson: “Seasonal greetings to all our friends in Rhossili. We wish you joy, peace and fun this Christmas, and the best of times for the year ahead.”
Steven, Lesley and family at Rhossili Gallery wish to send our, “Season’s Greetings to all in Rhossili Community. Wishing you all Good Health, a Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous New Year. (A donation will be made to the Welsh Air Ambulance)”

Helen and Terry Sinclair: We would like to wish all our friends and neighbours in Rhossili a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy year in 2015. From Helen and Terry, Rhossili Farmhouse”.

Dai Cann: Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everybody in the Community and many thanks for all your help and support during this terrible time for me. Dai Cann.

Jo, Charlotte and Josh Higgins: To all the young people that have attended Rhossili Youth Club since 1999 a very Happy Christmas and exciting 2015. Wishing you all the very best for your futures.

Higgins Family: Wishing all our lovely friends, neighbours and pets a healthy, happy Christmas and New Year. With love from Jo, Jeff, Gerry, Charlotte, Josh, Ben, Zak and Willow, Lola and Poppy xxx

Ian, Tracey and family, Eira and Roger Button,: wish friends and acquaintances old and new a Happy Christmas and every best wishes for 2015. We are again foregoing the exchange of Christmas cards locally and extending greetings through this newsletter, we will make a donation to “Crisis at Christmas” a charity that supports and helps homeless people. www.crisis.org.uk Happy Christmas to you all.

Sarah and Steve Walmsley: “To all our friends in Rhossili, wishing you all a Happy Christmas and an enjoyable and fulfilling New Year”