Welcome to the 2017 Christmas Newsletter, which hopefully you will receive before the community seasonal events commence!

2017 Community Council Elections
In May this year, all seven serving Rhossili Community Community (RCC) councillors were reelected unopposed. They are:

Chair: Steven Campbell-Kelly
Deputy Chair: Ian Button
Treasurer: Stephen Walmsley
Committee Members: Jeff Higgins, Tom Higgs, Nicola Rees, Sally Thomas

Contact details of councillors can be found on the RCC website.

Lightening Strike
At the end of May this year much of the western end of Rhossili community suffered the consequences of storm damage to the services infrastructure. Apparently, a powerful lightning bolt struck a Middleton telegraph pole and power substation with extensive damage, not just to power and phone infrastructure but also personal electrical equipment affecting over 100 customers.

Restoration work carried out by BT, Western Power and Spectrum internet took over two weeks to restore, which included some 400 metres of overhead phone flying wires, new phone inlet wall plates and in some cases modems. There were reports of numerous cases of some domestic phone boxes exploding sending debris across the room as well as damaged electrical appliances where modern power circuit anti-surge and breaker trip facilities were not in place. Thankfully, this sort of incident is rare for the community and no one was injured as a consequence.

The Autumn hurricane season in the Caribbean produced some very powerful storms two of which managed to make their way to the UK and wreak havoc here too. The Community faired well but as the photo below shows the seas were very high.

Sustainable Community
In the 2016 newsletter, I expressed concerns of a continuing trend in loosing good local housing stock to the second home and holiday home market. A number of properties have exchanged this last 12 months and I am pleased to report that some of these are for permanent residents and I know of one residency where the owners have chosen to change from second home to residing here permanently – an excellent decision!

However, I wish to reiterate the need for residents, new and old, to please give serious thought to becoming an important part of Rhossili community life as a member of one of its many active groups. Please don’t wait to be asked, please volunteer and if unsure who to ask you can always speak with a member of the Village Hall or Community Council Committees.

Memorial Proposal
This next few months will see the need to progress the new memorial proposal mentioned in the last newsletter. A few people came forward with suggestions, ideas and support with one person passing information that, by 1916, some 20 or so members from Rhossili community had signed up for service in WWI.
The proposal is to move from a sole dedication that just ‘remembers’ to one that also acknowledges all others who not only went off to represent King and Country but also to those who gave a local contribution to the war effort, which in Gower was very much food production: a memorial which is as much to celebrate peace as it is to commemoration.

In addition to the initial proposal of a stone on Rhossili Green (possibly the area outside the church graveyard), an alternative consideration was given to the installation of a stained glass window in St Mary’s Church. Although a design for a window was conceived, it was felt that after discussions with members of the community the original idea would be more appropriate, so the remote ‘plan B’ is shelved.

Costs for ‘plan A’ also has the financial attraction of being considerably less. A provisional offer for the ‘loan’ of a stone by the National Trust from Rhossili Downs has been received. The next process will be to secure permission from the land owner for the siting of the stone as well as its moving and setting logistics. It is currently proposed to set an appropriately inscribed plaque close by the stone, similar to the one for the Millenium Stone, also on The Green.

Whilst I have two remote offers of support and one local I would welcome more local support; please contact the Clerk Jo or myself.

Planning Applications

There have been a number of planning applications made for our community this last year but few are of major significance that your council felt worthy of comment.

Unfortunately, one significant pre-application consultation with villagers was, for what ever reason, not advertised. Only two or three people became aware of the planned meeting, finding out at the last minute, but attended the presentation given by the architect and the new owner of Harepits, who has proposals for the complete redevelopment of the site. He and his architect were a little disappointed having travelled from London especially to give this presentation. This was an opportunity missed where a developer was keen to show the community of proposals in such a significant location.

Other developments include the welcome completion of Rhossili Carpark by the National Trust.

For further information on current and past applications, including and comments made by Rhossili Community Council, visit: https://property.swansea.gov.uk/online-applications/ and search for ‘Rhossili’ and this should return all planning applications for the community.

Defibrillators and Codes

‘This has not been forgotten about! Your council continues to look at the introduction of extra defibrillators in the village at more frequent intervals throughout the whole community – the more easily accessible the greater the chance of saving life when required. Grant funding is being looked at but it is likely to require a minimum of match-funding. A number of businesses have offered to accommodate and cover the cost of maintenance once installed.’ This is what I wrote last year and this still is the case. Adrian from Reynoldston Fire Service visited the community council this Autumn and presented the current situation with CARIAD who maintains the Village Hall defibrillator (the National Trust has alternative arrangements for the maintenance of the National Trust shop defibrillator). We await forms for grant application.

As a reminder: if you need to access either the defibrillator situated outside the National Trust shop or the front entrance to the Village Hall, the access code is the same for both, this is C159X. Be sure to depress the buttons firmly to unlock and remember to follow the instructions carefully the unit gives to use. Don’t be afraid to use – better to have tried….you know the rest. Eventually, the storage wall box will be accessible free of lock.

End of Month Gathering

This Newsletter only serves to give an annual, flavour of village updates and events. Should you wish to be more in the social ‘loop’ of current and forthcoming affairs then why not join the ‘End of Month’ gathering at the Worm’s Head where all are welcome. Dai Cann does an admirable job of...
ensuring monthly reminders are sent to all and our thanks goes to him for this, thus ensuring friendly gossip keeps circulating! If you are not on the reminder list either contact Dai or RCC clerk Jo.

**Clubs and Groups**

There are many other groups that meet throughout the year which are not mentioned within the Newsletter, which may be of interest, such as, The Book Club, Keep Fit, Whist, Yoga, plus many more. If you want to join or find out more information or start a new group yourself, why not contact Jo Higgins (RVH) on 391509 for more information and contact details.

The three timber Notice boards in the community will eventually be replaced. The proposals are to replace with durable maintenance free units the ones sited at Rhossili Bus Stop and Rhossili Village Hall. Rhossili CC does not intend to replace the timber notice board once it reaches its end of life. Comments regarding the non replacement of the Pitton noticeboard will be welcome.

I would like to thank all contributors who have taken the time to make this a bumper issue this year. **Contributions for the next Newsletter will be most welcome; where possible, please send by end of October 2018.**

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.

Rhossili Community Council meets monthly on the second Tuesday at 7.15pm in Rhossili Village Hall or the ante-room behind. 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](http://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, or you can contact the Clerk, Jo Scott, direct.

If you are new to emailing and are not on the village circular, please notify the Clerk (at rhossilicc@gmail.com) of your email address, or if

you do not have one, please read the notice board from time to time for notices.

*Steven Campbell-Kelly*

*Chair, Rhossili Community Council and Newsletter Editor*

[rhossilicc@gmail.com](mailto:rhossilicc@gmail.com)  
[www.rhossilicc.org.uk](http://www.rhossilicc.org.uk)

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**RHOSILLI VILLAGE HALL AND BUNKHOUSE - 2017**

[www.rhossili.org.uk](http://www.rhossili.org.uk)  
[www.rhossilibunkhouse.com](http://www.rhossilibunkhouse.com)

This year, the Trustees have been able to carry out further improvements to the Hall and Bunkhouse. These were only minor improvements which included the re-painting of the downstairs toilets and showers. The Trustees continue to oversee the maintenance of the fabric and contents of the building and numerous maintenance projects were undertaken during the year including plumbing, door and windows repairs and replacement of some carpet tiles.

The Village Hall was supported this year by donations from Rhossili Bunkhouse which totalled £22,608. This has built the amount available for improvements to the Village Hall and its facilities and make the Village Hall sustainable and financially stable.

I would like to thank our support staff the Hall Manager (Jo Higgins), the ‘meeters & greeters’ and cleaning team, for their dedication to making the Hall and Bunkhouse a friendly, welcoming and enjoyable place to stay. I would also like to thank the Trustees, past and present, for their help and continued commitment to making the Village Hall a success.

The current Trustees are: Gill Evans, John Furneaux, Jo & Jeff Higgins, Vicky James, Marion Potts, Sarah & Steve Walmsley. They would like to express their gratitude to Rob Symberlist and Tracy Button who stood down as Trustees this year. Rob has given many years of service to the Hall and played a major part of the planning, fund raising,
building and running of the Bunkhouse. We would like to record our appreciation of all his efforts in helping to make the Village Hall a sustainable concern. We would also like to thank Tracy Button for her time as a Trustee and her continuing support of the Village Hall as part of the Social Committee.

As usual, we are always looking for new ideas on how the Village Hall can be used by our community. 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. The Social sub-committee continues to put on a varied and enjoyable series of events throughout the year. These have all been good fun and well attended. Examples of groups that have used the hall this year include: Keep Fit, Christian Fellowship, Llandewi & Knelston WI and Yoga.

Thanks to you all for your support throughout 2017 and we would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We look forward to seeing you at the Hall in the coming year.

Jeff Higgins
Co Secretary of RBH Ltd & Trustee of RVH

VILLAGE HALL SOCIAL EVENTS

Social Committee

Christmas Greetings from the Village Hall Social Committee

Nadolig Llawen!

The Village Hall Social Committee has had another busy year arranging events at the hall. Our esteemed leader is Vicki James and our current membership also consists of Alison Thoroughgood, Gill Evans, Jo Hall, Jo Higgins, Lynda Shaw, Marian Potts, Mary Provis and Tracey Button. We are also very grateful to the other village residents who willingly help us in the catering department when asked.

We try to arrange events which will appeal to a cross-section of audiences and would be grateful for any fresh ideas. We would also welcome any new members who would like to come forward and, whilst things can seem hectic for the committee at times, a closely guarded secret is that our meetings are also, usually, great fun! It is truly a ‘social’ committee!

Our opening event this year was a Quiz by Roger Button in January. Roger’s quiz nights are always brilliantly prepared and well attended. February saw the hall full and everyone present enjoyed ‘A Blast from the Past’ – a nostalgic, funny, frantically paced gallop through songs which signified each year from the last seven decades, performed by the dancing company, ‘Spilt Milk’. Vicky is brilliant at co-ordinating with The Art Council of Wales’ Night Out Scheme to ensure that, from time to time, we can buy into such professional acts. In March we had a successful St David’s Day celebration with cawl, Welshcakes and entertainment provided by a local choir, Lleisiau Lliw and our own John Beynon. A Table Top sale was organized for April and we had an enjoyable Twmpath in May, orchestrated by an excellent local ceilidh band. Tracey put on a Bingo Night in June to raise money for Parkinsons’ UK and in July we had a lovely tea party in the hall to celebrate the 70th birthdays of three members of our community (Marian, Barbara and Eira).
Two planned events for August and September respectively had to be cancelled. Adverse weather and the fact that several of our residents were away put paid to the well-laid plans for a Treasure Hunt and the Annual BBQ this year. However, the Harvest Supper in October soon made up for this. Good food was enjoyed by all and we asked John Beynon to come back to entertain us; this time ably accompanied by Lynda Shaw.

As I write, things seem to be busier than ever! During this November we have just enjoyed a talk on the Birds of Costa Rica by Eddie Hunter, closely followed by a Murder Mystery Evening (arranged by Lynda Shaw). The ‘Bring your own Plate’ request worked brilliantly – and what a surprise to find that Marian could do such a thing! Choir practices have just started (12/11/17) – on Sunday nights at 6pm for children and 6.30 – 8.00 for adults. These will be in preparation for our homely ‘Carols Around the Tree night on the 9th of December. Please join the choir – the ability to sing isn’t essential!

We are already planning our January events – there will be a ‘Poems, Pies, Puddings and Pints’ night on the 19th. The name may evolve further – but you get the gist! Tracey is also busy organising a charity quiz for the 27th of January. Thank you for supporting our events and we look forward to seeing you during the remainder of 2017 as well as in 2018.

Mary Provis

on behalf of the Village Hall Social Committee

There is the monthly walking group, followed by a lunch at a named venue for all comers. Our WI choir, now with 15 + members has reached dizzy heights and in addition to singing at various venues it will join all the Glamorgan WI choirs to sing at the Brangwyn Hall on the 4th December, followed by singing at the annual carol service at Llandewi Church. Members have also taken part in Federation events, sporting activities and attended fashion shows. A trip to Cardiff castle in August, with a conducted tour of the palace area was both very informative and enjoyable!

Our numbers have grown during the year and we now have well over 40 members which is great.

The monthly meetings vary from having a speaker to a craft evening, to line dancing (on one occasion)! The programme is carefully planned to cover a whole range of issues, concerns and enjoyment.

New members are always welcome. Just give Chris Williams, our President, a ring on 01792 390282

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all !

Gillian Evans

Merry Christmas /Nadolig Llawen to all. Llandewi with Knelston WI

PITTON CHAPEL

December 2017.

As I write our Christmas greeting to you this year, we are in the midst of bringing together some really lovely Christmas projects. Our interactive, live re-telling of the account of the birth of Jesus, ‘The Stable Trail’ comes to Reynoldston Village on Saturday 9th December. Trails leave from the Village Hall every 10 mins (approximately) from 10 am to 1 pm and from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm. Some of our young people have been busy rehearsing for a wonderful Jazz inspired Carol Service. A ten piece youth orchestra will play

While every reasonable step has been taken to ensure the veracity of the articles, Rhossili Community Council does not take responsibility for any omissions or errors. December 2017
popular pieces for us to sing along to, and some less well known yet beautifully inspiring work. This truly festive treat, which we are calling 'Pure Joy', takes place at Murton Methodist Church on Saturday 23rd December, at 5:00 pm or 7:30 pm. I sincerely hope that you will be able to come along. Admission is free - and we will be taking a collection for 'Action for Children' and a local Methodist-based Homeless Drop-in project, 'Oguf Addullum'.

Closer to home, I am very much looking forward to joining our friends in Rhossili and around, as we share in our joint Carol Service, this year at Pitton Chapel, on Thursday 14th December, at 6:45 pm. A few days later the community around Horton village come together for our Carol Service on Sunday 17th December at 6pm. It is my privilege to be leading our Christmas Day Celebration for Everyone, young and old, at 11 am on Christmas Morning.

We have had some changes in Chapel personnel this year. I am indebted to Carolyn Jenkins who has served us so faithfully and diligently over many years as Chapel Steward. I am also grateful for all the work that Patrick Jenkins has put in as our Property Steward. Working alongside Carolyn and others, notably Brian and Richard Ace, Patrick coordinated that sensitive and beautiful refurbishment of the chapel, which has allowed the original interior stone work to be so lovingly restored; a project topped off by the stunning modern stained glass window design by Swansea artist Mary Hayman. Please pop in and see it sometime if you haven't already!

In Carolyn's stead, I am delighted that Selina Taylor is now our Chapel Steward, and any enquiries concerning the Chapel may be directed to Selina who can be contacted on 01792 390339 or info@selinataylor.com

Our Christmas services are a truly wonderful celebration of community and love and light and life. In these somewhat gloomy times, may the light of Jesus Christ, the light of the world, be a "light that shines in the darkness". Please join us at any time you are able to. We assure you of a warm and friendly welcome!

However you are spending yours, may I most sincerely wish you and your families a most joyous and blessed Christmas; and a peaceful, graceful new year.

Much love and prayers,

Rev. Andy Walker,
Pitton Methodist Chapel

Christmas 2016:

- **The Stable Trail. Revnoldston Village.** Saturday 9th December. 10am to 1 pm. 2:30 - 4:30 pm.
- **Pitton Rhossili Carol Service.** Thursday 14th December. Pitton Chapel. 6:45 pm.
- **Horton Carol Service.** Thursday 14th December. Horton Chapel. 6pm.
- 'Pure Joy Jazz Inspired Carol Services.** Murton Chapel. Sunday 23rd Dec. 5pm & 7:30 pm.
- **Christmas Day Celebration.** Pitton Chapel. 11 am.
In a break with tradition, there will be no Midnight Mass at St Mary’s this year. Rather, we invite you and your household to an “everyone’s welcome” family service on Sunday morning at 10.30am on 24th December Christmas Eve. It will be a time to put down those last minute rush jobs, ditch the shopping, quit the wrapping, and instead bring your visitors, friends and family to church to celebrate the essence of Christmas. We hope to see you there. Before that, we once again join with the Methodists, this year at Pitton Chapel, for our annual combined carol service on Thursday 14 December at 6.45pm. Do come along for a good sing!

We sadly said goodbye to Revd Carol Davies after just 2 years, when she resigned from overwork. The responsibility for our six churches is much bigger than a part-time priest can manage. Revd Canon Peter Brooks will cover Rhossili during the interregnum, in addition to his duties as Ministry Leader and Area Dean.

Worshipper numbers continue to decline in line with village occupancy: just a handful of ‘old faithfuls’ attending regularly and carrying out church duties, happily augmented by the occasional new inhabitant and by summer holiday-makers. New and returning attendees are always very welcome and we look forward to greeting you on Sundays. Combined services, when our six congregations come together on the 2nd Sunday of each month, are held at one of the churches in rotation.

St Mary’s opens almost every day for anyone seeking a moment’s peace in a hurried world. The visitor book shows that each year hundreds of folk from all over the world come into this ancient church to take in its atmosphere and tranquility. To meet demand, Roger Button’s successful Visitor Guide was updated and reprinted this year, and the Edgar Evans window, installed last year, is providing new interest for the curious.

We are grateful for the continued generosity of regular and visitor donations that secure the survival of St Mary’s for worship, for the village, for the community and for tourists. A quinquennial structural inspection in May highlighted the need to keep financial reserves to meet the costs of preserving the church which is Grade 2* Listed. The lightning strike that devastated our village in spring caused mayhem with the church electrics, and we ended up with a major overhaul of the whole circuit and heating systems.

On a lighter note, the baptism of Isabel Higgs in April, along with Elvira Hinton’s 95th birthday, and a couple of wedding celebrations, were joyous occasions, though the church was also the venue for several funerals too. A Gower Festival lunchtime concert brought the world renowned Wihan Quartet, from Prague, to a packed local audience at St Mary’s – a delightful summer’s day. In July we unexpectedly welcomed Right Reverend Cameron Venables, Bishop in South Queensland Australia, when he flew in for his brother’s marriage in Swansea and to see parents Peter and Jenny. He preached with great presence and charisma at our humble church and was instantly befriended by us all.

Don’t forget the family Eucharist service on Christmas Eve at 10.30am, why not pop it in your diary now – ALL are welcome. Have a wonderful Christmas.

Peter Venables and Caroline Johnson
Service dates for your Diary

Christmas 2017:

Church Services around South West Gower this Christmas 2017:

- **Sunday** 10 December 10am, St Cattwg’s Port Eynon – Holy Eucharist, United Benefice Service
- **Tuesday** 12 December 6pm, St David’s Llandewi – Carol Service with Knelston WI
- **Thursday** 14 December 6.45pm, Pitton Methodist Chapel – Ecumenical Carol Service with Rhossili Church
- **Friday** 15 December 6pm, St Illtyd’s Oxwich – Carols and Songs with children’s entertainment
- **Sunday** 17 December 10.30am, St Mary’s Rhossili – Morning Worship
- **Sunday** 17 December 3pm, St Cattwg’s Port Eynon – Carol Service
- **Monday** 18 December 7pm, Reynoldston Lower Green – Carols with the Salvation Army Band
- **Saturday** 23 December 4pm, St Andrew’s Penrice – Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve, **Sunday** 24 December:

- 10.30am St Mary’s Rhossili – Holy Eucharist, Family Christmas Service
- 4.00pm St George’s Reynoldston – Readings and Carols
- 5.00pm St Illtyd’s Oxwich – Nine Lessons and Carols
- 6.30pm St Cattwg’s Port Eynon – Holy Eucharist
- **NOTE:** There is no Midnight Mass at St Mary’s Rhossili this year.

Christmas Day, **Monday** 25 December

- 9.30am St David’s Llandewi – Holy Eucharist
- 10.00am St Andrew’s Penrice – Holy Eucharist
- **Sunday** 31 December 10am, St Illtyd’s Oxwich – Holy Eucharist, United Benefice Service

- **NOTE:** No service in St Mary’s Rhossili on 31 December.

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**RHOSILI PEOPLE:**

**A Caring Community**

When Ray and I came to live in Rhossili, eleven years ago, we already knew what a lovely place it was. The people were friendly and always had time to stop and pass the time of day but, during this last eighteen months, you have shown your true capacity for care and compassion.

Ray loved living here (who wouldn’t?). He loved the people and felt he belonged. He enjoyed the weekly visit to The Countryman on quiz night, his trip to The Worm’s Head with “the boys” once a week and the monthly attendance at the Wednesday Club.

Sadly he became ill and was no longer able to do these things but this is where you as friends and neighbours came in. You frequently asked after him and latterly so many of you have given me support in ways I could never have imagined. You know who you are and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I also want to thank everyone for their loving support and gifts of flowers, cake and wonderful cards. It has meant a great deal to me.

Rhossili and neighbouring villages do what it says on the tin. . . . you are a caring community.

*Linda Bartlett*

**OUR YOUNG FOLK IN RHOSILI**

**Isabel and Freddie Thomas**

**Cakes for Ty Hafan**

On Sunday, 15th October 2017, Isabel, Freddie and I, with the support of Gwyn, my mum & dad and my sister Cathryn held our third Cake Sale and
Coffee Afternoon, raising much needed funds for Ty Hafan.

For those that don’t know, Ty Hafan offers comfort, care and support to life-limited children, young people and their families. Ty Hafan provides a safe haven for them all so that they can make the most of the precious time they have left together.

Isabel and Freddie planned and prepared for the event and thought of additional ways to raise extra pennies on the day, such as “Guess the Teddy Bear’s name” and “How many Sweets in the Jar?”

The total raised on the day was £721.21 and we would like to say a great big “THANK YOU” to all our friends, family and neighbours for yet again supporting our event. We really appreciate all the delicious cakes you baked for us and for coming to spend your time with us at our Coffee, Cake and Tea Afternoon—it was great fun!

Gwyn and I feel incredibly proud of Isabel’s and Freddie’s achievements because unbelievably, they have raised almost £2,500 over the last three years for children’s charities, for Ty Hafan and Children in Need and they are already planning their next event!!

Thank you once again to everyone for your continued support—it is much appreciated.

Sally Thomas

Daniel Fisher

Daniel was awarded Entrepreneur Award 2017 at Knelston School:

“Your education should help you use and develop your talent and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people”
Daniel is fully aware of a sustainable future and protecting the environment we live in. Daniel was awarded Entrepreneur of the Year award for recycling broken electrical appliances and equipment no longer of use to Knelston Primary School.

Daniel collects all non-ferous metals: aluminium and aluminium alloys, copper, brass, lead, electrical cable, car batteries, chrome taps.

If anyone would like to support Daniel in developing his passion please contact Steve or Nicola, who will arrange collection, on 390525.

Tom Fisher

Many of you will have heard that Tom represented Wales in the under16 Welsh Sea Fishing Tournament for the second consecutive year at the Home Internationals in Pwllheli this Summer and came home with Gold.

Congratulations must go to Tom who has successfully qualified to represent Wales for a third year in July 2018, which is to be held in Scotland.

Tom is passionate about his fishing and both Nicola and Stephen are very proud of Tom who has proven his consistent skills in this sport.

(newsclippiing prior to this year’s event):

Once again Tom’s school recognised this achievement with a certificate.
Tom is once again seeking sponsorship contributions for next year’s 2018 Internationals. Any would be donors please contact Tom on 390525.

Once again, congratulations Tom, you will soon have your own TV fishing programme! – Ed

Alison Rees

Alison achieved a 1st class Honours Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in 3D Design & Craft this year. Alison has now returned to Brighton to study her Masters in Sustainable Design, 2017/2018.

During her three years at Brighton Alison has worked with many local community based projects in Brighton. An example is the Junk Food Project where food waste (Best Before) is collected from supermarkets, taken to a local church where volunteers prepare a meal for the homeless and low income families. This is also open to anyone who wishes to pop in for a hot meal and a little company in return for a voluntary donation.

Alison was also awarded the Gower Show Bursary 2017 to help towards the cost of her studies, which this year is towards her Masters, Future Sustainable Farming.

We can all contribute to a fair, conscious circular system of produce and sustain the future of small scale farming for generations to come.

Alison has a Facebook page where her work can be followed: AlisonReesDesigns...

"Farm to fork. Working with Waste. We waste approximately 50% of food produced! This could be enough to feed the malnourished at least 3 times over!"

This is food for thought for us all!

I am sure we all wish Alison our best wishes for her future path in Sustainable Environment Design.

It is always good to hear of the work that the village youngsters are achieving. If you have children who have achievements, done charity work or other triumphs to share with us, send to your community council committee for inclusion in 2018 Newsletter - Ed

UTTERINGS AND GLEANINGS FROM RHOSILLI COMMUNITY

The Green Flash

On 25 October 2016 a vivid green flash sunset could be seen from Rhossili. It is a phenomenon in which the rim of the sun glows green for a second or two before it disappears, and it is a very rare sight in Wales.

The key property of the atmosphere that causes the sun to turn green is its slight electrical conductance, which slows the light from its speed through the vacuum of space and causes it to be refracted downwards into the increasing density of the atmosphere closer to the earth’s surface with the result that the time at which the sun
disappears from view is actually several minutes after a straight line to the sun has passed over the horizon. Since green light is refracted further than lower frequency red light it can still be seen after the red light has passed from view; blue light is refracted still further than green light but is rarely intense enough to be visible.

The prerequisite for a visible green flash is a clear, dry, sky. As light passes through the atmosphere, molecular interactions cause some of the light to change direction sharply in a process called ‘Rayleigh Scattering’, with blue light changing direction at a greater angle than green light which in turn is scattered further than red light, with the result that the sky is blue and the setting sun red. Haze and dust in the atmosphere increase the scattering causing sunsets that are a deeper red, and with hazy skies being the norm in Rhossili it is rare for there to be a sufficient intensity of green light in the setting sun for a visible flash.

A green flash is commonly seen over the Pacific from the southern California desert where the air is dry and regular onshore breezes keep the dust inland, and from ships far from shore in areas of low atmospheric moisture. There are also other factors that can influence a green flash such as atmospheric temperature which alters the path of refraction (in the tropics a cool air mass over a warm sea can cause light to refract upwards so that the flash can only be seen from altitude), and when conditions are perfect a blue or even violet flash can be seen but such phenomena are extremely rare worldwide.

Here in Wales the occasion to head out at sunset to look for a green flash is when light east winds blowing from the continent bring low humidity and push the haze westwards, and the sun is a pale orange instead of a deep red as it heads for the horizon. During the very last few moments as the last part of the rim of the sun is just visible over the sea it may turn green for a second or two before it disappears.

Gareth Harris
Brook Cottage

(My apologies Gareth for missing this from the 2016 Newsletter – Ed)

Ten Years at NCI

(Have the tune “Home on the Range” in your head as you read!)

The words are based on statistics accumulated over the last 10 years from incidents where Jo and I were involved when on watch.

Chorus:

Home, home’s far away
They come from the States and Japan.
If they run out of luck, they’re going to get stuck,
‘Cos time and tide wait for no man.

96 people rescued by life-boat or helicopter. Two lads were on the top of the Outer Head when the Causeway flooded, forty minutes early. When they rounded the Inner Head by the lifebelt and saw the expanse of water in front of them they dialled 999, to be told that help was on its way. We had already alerted Swansea Coastguard, who in turn called out Rhossili Cliff Rescue Team. The lads started to try crossing, and RCRT used an overhead rocket to dissuade them and they went back to the Inner Head. The sound of the Maroon going off brought hundreds of people down to the Lookout from the village so there was quite an audience. When Horton IRB arrived some ten minutes later, they were obviously embarrassed and took some persuading to get into the life-jackets. However, common sense prevailed and they were landed safely at Kitchen Corner

Verse 1:

There’s a feeling of dread, if you’re on Outer Head,
But the Causeway’s closing, you see;
And you may be quite miffed that you then need a lift
From the crew of the Horton LB.

79 medical problems, 112 assistance with minor problems. On watch when a woman was bitten by a seal when her dog went too close.

Verse 2:

She came with a hound, who made a large sound
At a seal on a rock by the sea.
She got a big fright when she found that seals bite
And her day ended in A and E.
Loud hailer used 249 times to prevent stranding. Three lads were seen walking across the Causeway, with their backs to the incoming tide, headed towards The Shipway and Crabart. We used the loudhailer and they turned around, meeting us at the top of the path. They looked out and couldn’t believe how quickly the Causeway had covered, and were very grateful for the warning, although one of them admitted, somewhat shame-faced, that he should have known better as he lived on the Bay of Fundy, where there is the highest tidal range in the World.

Verse 3:

There’s many a day when they go the wrong way,  
And the Causeway is closing, for sure.  
So, we give them a shout and say, “Turn About”,  
‘Cos prevention is better than cure!

Chorus:

Home, home’s far away,  
They come from the States and Japan.  
If they run out of luck, they’re going to get stuck,  
‘Cos time and tide wait for no man!

Lament for Rhossili from my heart

In Rhossili, I found on earth my heaven  
When I came in nineteen eighty-seven  
For I’m a country girl at heart.

I came here to a new job, you know  
A new life, all those years ago  
And I loved it because I’m a country girl at heart.

Soon came the snows  
And in rented abode we nearly froze,  
But I didn’t mind for I’m a country girl at heart.

Accompanied by young son and dog  
We set out on a long hard slog,  
I bought a house, for I’m a country girl at heart.

The mortgage was steep  
But the love was deep  
For Rhossili, for I’m a country girl at heart.

At Fall I found the sea, beach and sand,  
And also that summer a toy-boy husband.  
(Don’t tell; he thinks he found me.)  
And I loved it because I’m a country girl at heart.

My sadness, a teen-age daughter left behind  
Who thought in her young misguided mind  
Her father had her future at heart.

As interest rates rose (to fifteen per-cent),  
The mortgage got steeper  
But the love for Rhossili grew deeper and deeper,  
For the fields, the cliffs and the Down.  
For I’m a country girl at heart.

The village was ‘working’, farmers always around,  
Young voices of children an all year sound.  
I loved it all, for I’m a country girl at heart.

The National Trust was here too.  
I didn’t know then how influence grew.  
So I loved it all for I’m a country girl at heart.

The years passed: the seascapes and sky,  
Changing moods all pleased my eye,  
For I’m a country girl at heart.

The son grew up, learned to care for large animals  
Nurtured by friends at Ship Farm,  
And he loved it for he’s a country boy at heart.

The daughter she visited more and more  
And loved in Rhossili all she saw,  
For she’s a country girl at heart.

I took a deep breath when I was fifty-three  
As, with three young children she came to live with me,  
But we loved it because we’re country people at heart.

Now they have all moved to distance afar,  
Quiet is the house, they must visit by car  
But I love it for I’m a country girl at heart.

My babies now are not tidy and neat,  
Each has a hairy coat and four dirty feet,  
And they love it because we’re country people at heart.

Gradually as years passed, friends I found in eighty-seven  
Moved to find elsewhere their heaven,  
But I loved Rhossili for I’m a country girl at heart.

Village young people went far away  
To find houses and work not here today.  
Although they’re country people at heart.

Now new friends came  
With love the same,  
For we’re all country people at heart.
But sadly, silently I shed more than a tear
For houses empty most of the year,
For I’m a country girl at heart.

I must not despair,
For with urban-dwellers I know I should share,
For we’re all country people at heart.

The National Trust with pockets deep
Bought fields that others could not keep;
But without a soul can it be a country person at heart?

So like a lord of old,
The National Trust with land to it sold
Could reign over every heart.

A village without a heart is not a village at all.
Please keep us from that awful call
For we’re all country people at heart.

Olive Hopker

Not a Twinkle, Not Afar
(Node to ET)

Twinkle twinkle little star
Now I know just what you are;
Not a distant celestial body
No, the answer much more shoddy.

Alas, a staring bright blue light
Penetrating thru the night;
Not a twinkle, not afar,
No, a closer man-made scar.

We’re told Rhossili must conform
To what elsewhere is car-park norm.
Please find for us a good solution
To combat this, our light pollution.

Olive Hopker

RHOSILI AWARDS:
Swansea Bay Tourism Awards 2017

Tourism Swansea Bay is an independent membership trade organisation that supports & represents tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses from across Swansea Bay - they continue to work in partnership with organisations and governing bodies to ensure the private sector views are heard. As a former chairman it gives me great pleasure to see the awards ceremony go ahead for 2017. Tourism is a competitive business and needs always to meet and exceed customer expectations. With over 900 nominations this year's event was a demonstration of excellence of tourism in the area, and getting shortlisted an achievement in itself. Sustainable tourism is vital to maintaining many of the services we take for granted; - local buses, village shops, pubs and petrol outlets; a thriving industry will benefit the economy of the area to everyone's advantage.

Entry to the awards event is open to any tourism related business in the area. Businesses being nominated by customers recommendation.

Rhossili did rather well at the Awards evening and dinner held at the Brangwyn Hall on November 9th with the following businesses and organisation gaining recognition:

‘Bramwood’ self-catering in Pitton winner for best self-catering accommodation, Suzanne Morrison also won as best ‘Tourism Ambassador’, for her work in promoting accessibility for disabled people in the wider accommodation and service sector,

Scamper Holidays at Pitton Cross, was Highly Commended (H.C.) in the Glamping Agencies category,

The Bay Bistro H.C in the Best Bistro category

Pitton Cross Caravan Park H.C. in Best campsite category

Gower Tours, Steve Lancey and Simon Morris t/a., H.C. in Best new business category,

John Furneaux collected Best Festival / Event award for the Gower Agricultural Society Gower Show 100 years,

The National Trust volunteer team at Rhossili were Highly Commended for Tourism Ambassador team and winners in Best renewed business category for their work in the car park at Rhossili.

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In a separate awards ceremony at the Portland Hotel in Cardiff on November 12th, Pitton Cross Caravan Park was nominated for the Welsh Hospitality Awards and came away with Winner of Best Campsite in Wales Award. They also retain their AA Gold Pennant grade for the third year running and being one of only a handful in the UK. 

Roger Button

FARMING INSIGHT:

Great Pitton Farm

Great Pitton Farm is a mixed farm, with roughly half as grass and the rest in arable production growing crops, which are mainly cereals.

Wheat, barley and oats make up the main crop rotation. The crops are rotated from field to field each year as part of good farming practice to prevent a build-up of weeds, pests and diseases. Some of the crops are planted in the autumn and these are called winter cereals. They germinate and tiller before the weather gets cold, and the winter closes in. Therefore, as soon as spring arrives, and the weather warms up, the plant will grow quickly, and the crop is able to make use of the spring and early summer which is the crucial time to build yield.

We also grow spring barley, spring oats, fodder beet and maize. These are drilled as soon as the soil conditions allow in the spring. Unfortunately, April 2017 was very dry which resulted in poor and uneven germination in some fields. The benefit of Spring cropping is that it will stagger the workload and also allow for another crop such as stubble turnips to be grown, which are valuable food for the livestock throughout the winter.

Soil health is an important topic in agriculture at the moment. Traditionally fields were ploughed before planting to produce a clean bed of soil for the seed. With the aid of chemical weed control, we can use different methods of cultivating the soil in suitable situations, to try to improve the soil structure whilst reducing the time and fuel used to establish crops. There is a very real threat of the chemical which we use, Glyphosate, being withdrawn which would mean that arable farming would take a large step backwards in terms of efficiency.

Our relatively warm, damp, Gower climate, creates perfect conditions for plant disease and each crop suffers differently. Therefore, the sprayer is used every few weeks with complex fungicides, during the growing season from April to June, to ensure that the crop remains as green as possible for as long as possible to capture maximum sunlight to turn into yield.

Harvest 2017 started earlier than normal and finished later. August was yet again a very disappointing month in terms of weather. As each crop ripens it must be harvested as dry as possible. Waiting for a crop to reach the optimum moisture
for storage of 15% is not easy with unsettled conditions. At Great Pitton Farm, we have a grain dryer which allows us to dry the grain after being harvested and is vital to get the harvest done. Once the grain is in store it must be cooled as quickly as possible with large fans to ensure it remains in good condition for marketing.

Gower is not the most ideal place to be growing arable crops due to the climate and small field sizes. However, with the majority of farms producing livestock, there is a high demand for us to produce arable crops such as straw for bedding and grain and fodder beet for feeding.

Happy Christmas from everyone at Great Pitton Farm and who knows what 2018 will have to throw at us!

Tom Higgs

RHOSILLI OIL CONSORTIUM
UPDATE 2017

The Rhossili Oil Consortium (ROC) was founded by Barbara Powell about 7 or 8 years ago. It exists to secure the best possible price for its members who are largely Rhossili villagers. We have about 50 members who place orders for home heating oil through the consortium. The order cycle runs every 2 months. Not everyone joins in every time – in fact, some order just occasionally, which is fine. Some order directly sometimes and through the consortium at other times, which is also fine. By ordering together we are able to get a discount, and usually the orders are delivered together too, which is more economical for the oil companies. Although we combine for discount, members’ orders are dealt with separately by the supplier: each member has their own account and pays their own invoices.

Earlier this year Barbara fell ill and has struggled to get back to full health, so she asked me to cover for her and then to take over the administration of the consortium permanently. Members agreed, surprisingly! Following Barbara’s successful process, every 2 months I ask members for their order quantities, then I call a list of suppliers, and accept the best price. I send a spreadsheet with the orders to the chosen supplier, and inform members about delivery details and the price. I’ve learnt a lot about 4 wheelers, 6 wheelers and baby tankers, who needs which and what the likely hiccups will be. If the process goes well it isn’t arduous; however the most recent experience in November didn’t go so well, and took a lot of time to resolve. Hopefully I won’t have to fall into that pit again!

Several ‘newbies’ have joined the consortium this year, particularly those moving into the village. Anyone can join in, so if you haven’t yet considered it, please ask me for details. Unless the market is particularly volatile, we will always save on the price of an individual order by buying in bulk, but we also save by negotiating between suppliers to bring the price down. In November there was a six pence difference between the highest and lowest discounted price, so on 500 litres it meant an extra saving of £30.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Barbara for all her work over the years to ensure the continued success of the consortium; I know we are all very grateful to her. On behalf of all consortium members, we wish Barbara and Dave a very happy Christmas and the very best of health in the year ahead.

Caroline Johnson
email: rhossiliroc@gmail.com
26/11/2017

GOWER LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

We are heading toward the end of our four-year Gower Landscape Partnership (GLP) programme and once again I’m pleased to be able to update you on our work in the Rhossili area. The Gower Landscape Partnership was set up for partners to work together on a programme conserving and celebrating the unique landscape, heritage and

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communities of Gower and at the same time sharing it with a wider audience. The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded GLP £1.3 million in 2013, with other funders and partners including Swansea Council, Natural Resources Wales, the National Trust and the Gower Society.

Work and activities are continuing right up until the programme end in March 2018. The wall restoration in Mewslade is going incredibly well and we are lucky to have such skilled craftsmen working on this project. The photographs show the scale of work, but I recommend that you take a look for yourself. This work has only been possible with additional grant aid support from the Gower Society, and it is a great example of what the GLP partners can do by pooling resources and working together.

Our programme of training events has been in great demand for spaces. Training is being delivered by a range of providers and covers taster sessions and accredited training on traditional skills and crafts and the wildlife of Gower. As I write this, there is a two-day course in drystone walling happening on the Vile. The demand for these events has been heartening and I think that the Partnership should see how we might provide more of these after the programme closes.

If you want to find out more about GLP and the other projects we are supporting across Gower, please follow us on Facebook – ThisisGower – and look at our website:

http://www.thisisgower.co.uk/

Chris Lindley
Gower AONB Team Leader
City & County of Swansea

NATIONAL TRUST

The Vile: providing for nature in a cultural landscape

It only takes one glance out along the Rhossili peninsula and you’ll notice something different about this landscape; strips of small fields stretching out to the sea. The last remnants of an
ancient style of farming, today, only found in a handful of places around the UK.

These field boundaries are the remains of the traditional medieval practice of strip field farming, a complex agricultural landscape divided into strips and farmed by the community to grow vegetables in conjunction with the adjacent common land for their livestock. The boundaries varied between low earth ‘landshares’ (or baulks), drystone walls, stone-faced earth banks and hedgerows.

The Vile from the air showing some of the boundary and meadow restoration work.
Credit: Gordon Howe, Gower Society

Open fields and strip farming date back around a thousand years in the UK and at one stage these complex farming landscapes would have been a common site. The origins of the Vile at Rhossili are not clear – our first written record is from the mid-18th century however the landscape almost certainly pre-dates this by many hundreds of years. Map records from 1780 to 1948 show that the shape of the landscape and the characteristic field shapes in the Vile remained largely unchanged. However as with agriculture across the whole of the UK the years following the end of the Second World War mark a significant turning point as a push for greater self-sufficiency in the UK forces a need for bigger faster machinery and more efficient farming. In addition to the improved machinery the land is increasingly supplemented with chemical inputs and the need for old fashioned crop rotations rapidly becomes a thing of the past. The 1978 OS map shows the damage done and in the 40 years from 1948 to 1988 when NT started to acquire these fragments of the past it is calculated that over 5550 meters of boundaries were lost.

Historical map of The Vile at Rhossili in 1780

The UK’s wildlife has also suffered a similarly depressing decline since the late 1940’s. Traditional hay meadows have become a thing of the past - replaced by more productive silage fields. Arable fields once upon a time were alive with a multitude of delicate annual wildflowers, bees, butterflies, field mice, harvest mice, brown hares and a chorus of farmyard birds, however a modern arable field is far more efficient than its pre-war equivalent and produces greater and greater quantities of grain but has little or no value for the wildlife which once relied on it. Most significantly of all as far as the Vile is concerned though is the decline in the field boundary. These boundaries are like the veins and arteries that keep wildlife flowing through our fields. Like a network of wildlife highways the boundaries allowed birds to nest in the hedges, insects to nest in the long grass, mammals can travel undetected by birds of prey and the natural protection a flourishing hedge provides from the wind (ever present in Rhossili) creates meadows each with their own min microclimate of varying humidities. Once boundaries are removed the wind can quickly change the character of a landscape and with nowhere to shelter poor fliers such as some of our butterflies rapidly find the landscape no longer to their liking.

So far so depressing, however…

The National Trust started to acquire fields in the Vile in 1988, primarily to protect this important cultural landscape from disappearing from the UK
for ever. The number of fields we own has gradually increased since then and today we care for around three quarters of the land on the Vile (around 40 hectares). Our aim when we set out on this purchasing campaign was purely preservation of what was still remaining, however it has been increasingly obvious that our land was no longer delivering for nature and in 2012 we started to plan an ambitious project where we would not only restore this culturally important landscape to its former glory but also ensure that our fields were at their very best as a wildlife friendly farm.

Reversing the momentum of an increasingly agriculturally improved way of life and finding a way to fund our (by now expensive) plan took some time and it wasn’t until 2017 with the newly acquired car park in Rhossili to fund our work that we finally had all of our ducks lined up and it was time to make a start.

In actual fact we had already started to make tentative attempts at High Nature Value Farming in our arable fields in 2016. The Vile was tenanted in 5 separate blocks all with varying end dates. We decided to overcome the problematic staggered end dates by growing spring sown crops with wide uncultivated margins to encourage arable wildflowers and wait until all tenancies came to an end before starting the work proper.

With the help of the NT archaeologist for Wales we started to draw out the lines of the now absent banks in the fields. We did this using LIDAR maps, we carried out geo-phys surveys, marked the land with GPS and then referred to a set of good old fashioned paper maps—just to be sure!

Two of the fields on the northern boundary of the peninsula sit directly adjacent to an Iron Age hill fort. Given the importance of cultural heritage to this project, we couldn’t let this process continue without seeing what we could learn about the social history of the wider landscape and farming on the Vile and so as part of our restoration work we held a series of events where volunteers were trained in ‘field walking’ looking for traces of previous existences still lying in the soil (primarily flints). We were not disappointed! Worked flints of all shapes and sizes were uncovered. Coins, buttons, lead musket shot, WWI bullets, horses bridles, ploughs, pottery and nails were all found and, perhaps the most emotive find being a silver love token. We’ll continue this archaeological investigation by taking pollen cores to understand which crops were grown and learn more about the historic natural environment.

In early 2017 we carried out a series of soil analysis tests in the fields we intended to work to see what effect the years of agricultural improvement had done to the land. Phosphate in particular has a severely handicapping tendency of persisting in soil for many years after it has been added, and fields high with phosphate make very bad fields for wildlife. As expected, our fields were showing signs of being a little too ‘rich’, however one sure fire way of reducing soil fertility is by carefully removing the top soil before re-seeding with a more desirable grass/wildflower mix.

In July the surplus topsoil we generated was scraped from the fields and became the material we used to create our new field boundaries. In total we have re-instated 1935 metres of boundary and in the process have changed 6 large fields back into 17 small fields. The land was ploughed, cultivated, re-sown, harrowed and rolled in August and in November we put up double fences on our new wildlife corridors to ensure the returning wildlife can travel along them undisturbed by grazing animals. Our new-old hay meadows are almost complete!

Our arable fields have also been busy in 2017. Our experimental crop mix of buckwheat, vetch and linseed has been a massive success with wildlife. Huge flocks of farmland bird such as linnet have...
enjoyed their free meal this summer as have the swallows and house martins as they constantly swoop over the sun-baked (occasionally!) crops to devour the multitude of insects that live in the fields. In the spring the dawn and dusk were celebrated by grasshopper warblers with their mechanical and relentless rattling call. Butterflies such as dark green fritillaries have been seen this summer as have the fantastic and otherworldly great green bush cricket which looks like it has been flown in direct from a tropical rainforest!

The Vile’s importance as a historical landscape has been safeguarded and improved on and we will continue to re-instate the missing boundaries from our land for years to come and its cultural identity as small scale farming has been maintained. The Vile is not a museum or ancient artefact but a living and breathing landscape, capable of financially supporting itself in an increasingly uncertain marketplace and we will keep working towards striking the correct balance between productivity and wildlife in the years to come.

The remainder of 2017 will be spent introducing permissive paths through our newly restored landscape, continuing to fence and protect our fantastic new set of old boundaries, plant hedgerow trees, lay hedges, hang new gates and prepare the way for more of the same in 2018!

Alan Kearsley-Evans,
Countryside Manager for Gower & Ceredigion

RHOSILLI COASTGUARD

Rhossili Coastguard 2017 Update

The year of 2017 has yet again been another relatively quiet one for the Rhossili Coastguard Team with us carrying out around 60 call outs to date. This is pretty much the same as 2016 however significantly down on years gone by which is good I must add.

Throughout the year there have been a few changes in the team most notably with Darren Powell standing down as station officer after 8 long years as he will tell you! The team would like to thank Darren for his commitment and dedication during this time as he gave a lot to make sure everything was done by the book should we say... Thankfully for us as a team Darren has stayed on as a member and I bet Lynne and Mickey are thankful too as it gives them a break from him!! As it stands I am now station officer with Zak Higgins as my side kick in the role of deputy station officer.

During 2017 we have had 2 new recruits in Mark Button and Serge John. Unfortunately, Serge’s time on the team was very short lived due to a change circumstances and moving to Swansea; however, Mark, I am sure, will be with us for many years to come. Mark has fitted in great and is very enthusiastic to get involved with all aspects of what we do. We are also hoping that a further 2 new recruits will be joining in the new year - Connor Furneaux and Ieaun Jones.

We will unfortunately be losing a team member this December in the name of Steve Campbell-Kelly. Steve has been a fantastic team member for the past 10 years and has now decided the time is right to stand down. I believe during his time Steve has responded to the sum of 500 call outs which is remarkable. Steve has always been ever present during his time especially at training where he is very particular, which isn’t a criticism just a compliment to ensure everything is done correctly. One of Steve’s strengths on the team was with ‘search exercises’ so we will need someone to now fill this role!

Steve will always be remembered as the founder member of the ‘Silly Willy’ of Rhossili award. Feel free to ask him why and I will add this is all a bit of fun!

Darren won this award in 2017 and I must say he has now received this award 2 years running. Front runners for the award this year are limited to date, however this can all change very quickly.

Once again many thanks to all for your continued support and the team wish everyone a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

Wishing you all a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year,
A Taste of being a member of Rhossili Coastguard CRT

After ten years I have decided to stand down from voluntary service with Rhossili Coastguard. The experience and training gained from this exclusive ‘membership’ is not readily available elsewhere; where else can you get to overcome your ‘fears’, see the most wonderful views and scenery, often from the most peculiar and obscure locations, and get a super adrenaline rush each time your pager is triggered!

When I started with the Rhossili Coastguard Cliff Rescue Team (its full title), new cliff rescue gear was issued to the Service and all four newbie team members learnt with this equipment from the outset. With main descending line AND a backup safety line there was no excuse for me not to become a ‘cliffman’. Previously, I would never go near a cliff edge and was not fond of heights either but with regular cliff training all cliffmen soon realised the importance of this new safe system equipment.

The team’s first recovery using this new apparatus was a month later with the recovery of a stranded three-member family with dog at Paviland; the recovery of the daughter on ropes was to be my only one. However, there have been many rope rescues since by other team members during the following years, but it is now more common for Rescue 187 (formerly Rescue 169) to winch directly where possible.

You may have read in previous newsletters about the team’s exploits, which I am pleased to have been part of on so many occasions. These will be attending to such callouts as, ordnance (UXB’s), royal fish (dolphins, harbour porpoise), missing children (in reality, many a time it was the parents who had lost sight of their child!), cut-offs from Worm’s Head and Burry Holms (with support from the RNLI), stranded vessels, cliff rescues, medical evacuations (in its many guises), missing persons and on some unfortunate occasions, ‘recovery’. If you want a good summary of my first search for a missing young lady on Rhossili Downs in hurricane force conditions, this is best told by Roger Button! These are only a few incident categories and it always amazes me that a new unexpected rescue turns up every year – this year a car off the road and into the marsh at Penclawdd and remarkably all survived and escaped before the vehicle burst into flames.

Before I sign off, I’ll tell you a story, which to this day I am still convinced was contrived. You will have read above where Steve Lancey, RCG Station Officer, refers to the “Silly Willie” award for which I, apparently, was responsible for its inception. I received a page for ordnance found on Rhossili Beach – there’s never any ordnance on Rhossili Beach - but hay-ho, off I trot but only Steve Jones and myself turn out. Now on any other occasion given the time of day I would have expected more of the team to turn up but no just we two.

So, we park up just below the Old Rectory; Steve stays with the vehicle and sends me off to find the ordnance at highwater. I eventually find this green looking item resembling a hand-grenade. Now having only ever seen pics of these before and, knowing that plastic anti-personnel mines exist, I could not be sure about a plastic cased hand-grenade (if I had thought about it where’s the shrapnel!). So, maintaining a safe distance I radioed Steve and he came down to confirm. Now what sane person would come up to the object, kick it and say its just a toy grenade! I’ll leave the reader to decide if I was set up or not, suffice to say that the object was to become sprayed gold and mounted on a hardwood base and inaugurally presented to me at the following Rhossili Coastguard Christmas gathering … and so another chapter of Rhossili folklore is created.

In all, teamwork membership, cooperation and support from all the team is paramount and I can thoroughly recommend being part of this great team – the social life at the Worm’s Head pub can be rewarding too! So, if you are new to the village, someone who has thought about joining or want to experience spontaneous help and support for this important Rescue Service, contact Steve Lancey or Zak Higgins or failing that, seek out one of the team in the pub after a shout for more information on joining.
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Steven Campbell-Kelly

NATIONAL COASTWATCH INSTITUTE

Worm’s Head Station 2017
NCI Annual Report

This year Worms Head Station has had 48 Watchkeepers, including 7 new people who qualified last spring; since then we have had four resignations but there are 8 people undergoing training as I write, with three more interested in joining, and a transfer from Prawle Point in Devon – we continue to go from strength to strength.

During the year we had all sorts of problems with the equipment at the Lookout, starting with the wind generator, which had to go back to the manufacturers for repair; next, the fire gave up the ghost, but fortunately, the National Trust allowed us to replace it with a gas-fuelled hot air heater and that is working very well at the moment; finally, the electric storm in late May put paid to the telephone, and more importantly, the emergency phone on the outside wall. Fortunately, once BT Openreach realised the serious nature of the damage it was fixed relatively quickly.

In March we were asked to fly a special “Red Lobster” flag instead of our Welsh Dragon for a week over St. David’s Day, on behalf of Skin Care Cymru to raise awareness of the dangers of sunburn – it worked in a few cases as some visitors did ask why! We also participated in an event organised in the City of Swansea where a new NCI Flag was flown on the mast outside The Guildhall, advertising our work as a charity.

Our main event this year was our Tenth Anniversary, which we celebrated over the Easter week-end. We had loads of visitors and thank goodness, the weather behaved itself. We enjoyed visits from our partners in the Search and Rescue community and a demonstration by Rhossili’s own Cliff Rescue Team. Fly-bys were appreciated from the Coastguard Helicopter and the Ambulance, and a drive-by from RNLI Horton IRB out at sea and a good time was had by all, with lots of cakes and refreshments, courtesy of our own members.

To be a part of the Search and Rescue organisations we have to satisfy the standards required to give us Declare Facility Status. Until this year we have always had prior warning of the date and time, but NCI has changed policy and there is now no warning. Fortunately, our Assessor this year was cognisant of our 10 year celebrations, so didn’t arrive in the middle of them but he came three days later, and I’m glad to say we passed. We have had 8 incidents so far this year, and the fact that there have been relatively few is perhaps testament to the commitment of our members. I think that’s it, thank you everybody for all your help and support over the last year and on behalf of NCI Worms Head I wish you all “A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Andy Bowen
Station Manager,
National Coastwatch Institution Worms Head
RHOSSILI WORKING GROUP
Update: Christmas 2017
Rhossili Working Group

For the benefit of new readers, the Group formed in 2011 to focus opposition to the proposed Atlantic Array Wind Farm, a gigantic wind farm to be sited between Gower and Lundy covering 200sq km with 240 turbines reaching 220 metres height (Rhossili Down is 193 metres high). In late 2013, RWE withdrew its plans. However, along the way, it became apparent that Swansea Bay and the coast of Gower are the location of high densities of harbour porpoise: this is a protected European species, but at the time there were no conservation areas for the species in UK waters. This led to formal complaints by WWF and Porthcawl Environment Trust to the European Commission and subsequent EC legal infringement proceedings against the UK Government.

The statutory nature conservation bodies, including Natural Resources Wales, came together under the umbrella of JNCC to hold a public consultation in 2016 on proposed sites of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for the harbour porpoise. In relation to our local area, the proposed site was termed the Bristol Channel Approaches. In spite of the name, the proposed conservation area is not in the Bristol Channel, but rather the large Celtic Sea area from Pembrokeshire to Lands End in Cornwall; harbour porpoise, as their name implies, are indeed present in the coastal margins of both Pembrokeshire and Cornwall, but there have been virtually no sightings in most of the designated sea area in the last twenty years. Conversely, Swansea Bay and the Gower coast is identified by many esteemed marine scientists to have amongst the highest densities of porpoise, including young, in all Welsh waters, yet this area was excluded from the proposals. RWG, last year, was able to bring into the public domain a major research study, Pierpoint 2008a, showing Scarweather Sands, Porthcawl, to be a nursery area for porpoise - the authorities reluctantly accepted this new evidence but said it was not possible to re-run their algorithms on porpoise presence.

Thus it was that at the time of writing a year ago, working with Leigh Day Chambers in London, we were in process of preparing a Judicial Review on the recommendations submitted by JNCC to Government. Included in our evidence were chains of internal JNCC emails which showed that the project managers themselves had misgivings about the lack of evidence supporting the selection the Bristol Channel Approaches as a SAC, and that the main statistician who was peer reviewing the selection document, JNCC Report 544, was so unhappy with the process that he no longer wished to be associated with the project.

Sadly, in February 2017, our barrister concluded that we would have to show that JNCC’s judgement in promoting the Bristol Channel Approaches was irrational, normally an impossible hurdle in a scientific context (‘expert’ vs ‘expert’), and so we had to withdraw from the challenge.

Nevertheless, we pressed our complaint with the Infringement Unit of the European Commission, and they duly submitted the case to the European Court of Justice, just days before a guillotine on further UK business being submitted to the Court. The latest news a month ago is that the case is still being considered – with Brexit in the offing, no-one is holding out much hope.

So our work in this aspect is more or less done. The UK Government’s proposals for conservation areas for porpoise, including the Bristol Channel Approaches, have been submitted to Europe and are awaiting acceptance or rejection. No-one has told the porpoise, so they continue to thrive on the coasts of Gower and avoid the deeps of the protected Celtic Sea. History is written by the winners: in Report 544, a 25% algorithmic possibility of porpoise presence has become a certainty (changed in a single email!); and although based on questionable input and demonstrably flawed scientific process, the results of Report 544 are promulgated as scientific fact. (The chains of emails are publicly available, and worth reading for an insight into our supposed open democratic system: a salutary lesson showing how the establishment achieves its desired outcomes.)

Carl Johnson
Rhossili Working Group, 28 November 2017

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It is important to be observant and ensure property is locked and secured and out of sight.

I would also ask residents to report incidents to the police which are suspicious and out of the ordinary. Although I can understand a reluctance to make such reports there have been incidents in other parts of Gower which were witnessed by the public but not reported at the time. That delay has meant the difference between culprits being caught committing crime and getting away. If a report is made and an investigation turns out to be innocent, then that will not be a problem as far as the local police are concerned.

A reminder of the numbers to ring non-emergency calls should be made to 101 in all emergencies, calls where you think the police should be attending straight away, 999.

Finally, I would like to wish you all on behalf of PCSOs Andrew Brown and Joelle Borthwick and I a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Regards

PC Phil Davies
Reynoldston Police Station
Mobile 07805301600

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 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. Now also available are Kitchen Waste Bins and Garden Green Bags.

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 – ensuring that this newsletter will find its way to our doorsteps.

RCC

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Season’s Greetings

Dave & Barbara Powell: “Our thanks to all of you who sent so many messages during the Summer & to Caroline who has taken over the oil ordering from me. Wishing all our friends & neighbours a Merry Christmas & a Happy, healthy 2018”

Vicky James: “Wishing everyone in Rhossili a splendid Christmas and good health, peace, love and happiness in 2018. A big thanks to all my lovely friends too! Vicki James”

June Thomas: “June sends greetings to all her neighbours & friends in Rhossili and Wishes them all a Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year”

Jo and Peter Scott: “Love, Joy and Peace are the ingredients for a wonderful Christmas. We hope you find them all in this festive season and wish everyone and their families a very Merry Christmas. Nadolig Llawen ac Blwyddyn Newydd Dda”

Mark, Mary, Dyfrig and Huw: “Mark, Mary and family (Pitton Cottage) wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Nadolig Llawen a phob bendith yn 2018.”

Carl and Caroline Johnson: “We wish all our Rhossili friends and neighbours a most enjoyable Christmas and we look forward to a peaceful and happy New Year”

Steven, Lesley and the Campbell-Kelly family send, “Season’s Greetings to all in Rhossili Community. Wishing you all Good Health, a Merry Christmas and a Happy & Prosperous New Year.”

Dai Cann: “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all friends and neighbours. Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chi gyd. With love from Dai Cann”

Sarah and Steve Walmsley: “To all our friends in Rhossili, wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a prosperous and enjoyable 2018!”

Selina Taylor: “Wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and all the very best for the New Year. Selina”

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Gill Evans: “My dear friends, This could well be my last Christmas Greeting to you all in this way as I may well be moving home during 2018 which will be a very sad time for me. Thank you for your friendship over the years. I have loved being part of the Rhossili Community. A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL! With love, Gill Evans, Riverside. Middleton”

Tony and Helen Griffith: “Send warm Christmas greetings to all our former neighbours and to our friends in Rhossili. We miss the place, we miss the people and are looking forward to visits before too long.

Gaynor and Trevor Morris: “Send all good wishes to their friends and neighbours for a Happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy New Year. “

Ken and Trude Knowland: “With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to our friends and neighbours from Trude and Ken, Swn y Mor “

Olive Beynon: “I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I thank everyone who has been so kind to me during a somewhat frustrating year. Special thanks to all the people who collect my daily paper from Scurlage. ”

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