



LLANTRISANT TOWN TRUST FREEMEN'S NEWSLETTER

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GUILDHALL OPENS FOLLOWING £1.4M RESTORATION PROJECT COMPLETION



Llantrisant's medieval Guildhall has re-opened to the public as a heritage and visitors' centre following a £1.4million transformation.

Funded primarily by the National Lottery Heritage Fund along with Cadw, the Welsh Government and other bodies, the Grade II Listed Building has been restored to its original glory to tell the remarkable story of this ancient hilltop town.

The opening weekend was a triumph and hundreds have since flocked to our "home" to find out more about the "citie set on an hill...."

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CLERK'S REPORT

Llantrisant Town Trust can look back on 2019 as one of the most successful and rewarding year in its history.

Following eight long years of extremely hard work and £1,4million raised, the Guildhall restoration was completed. The "Freemen's Home" has reopened as a heritage and visitors' centre and tells the remarkable story of our ancient tradition. As Freemen you should be very proud of your building and hope you will take the time to visit us on your next trip to Llantrisant. Throughout the year the Trust has continued to work tirelessly on behalf of the Freemen, their rights, lands and privileges.

As always our focus is very firmly on the Common and Y Graig and this year has been no exception. Large scale cutting back of bracken and overgrowth has benefited the lands and their grazing animals. It was also gratifying to see another 15 Freeman families continuing the proud tradition of their forefathers by enrolling a new generation of Freemen at the Court Leet Ceremony. Next year's applicants will enrol in the Guildhall once more.

We are the custodians of a unique tradition. May we continue to go from strength to strength!

Diolch o galon!

Dean Powell, Clerk

FREEMAN FOCUS

Common Management

Trustees continued to maintain and improve Llantrisant Common with a significant amount of cutting and management of overgrowth. During the year we were reintroduced to the Llantrisant & Beddau Defence Against Open Cast Mining, who were established in 1977 to fight the proposed development plans for the Common.

They have generously supported two projects to cut back overgrowth and bracken on the Common and we look forward to working with them again in the future.

NRW Consultation

A number of consultation meetings have taken place with Natural Resources Wales on a new three-year management plan to ensure the continuation of our Site of Special Scientific Interest title. We are currently exploring the opportunities of working even closer with NRW to ensure that the management of the Common is undertaken responsibly and for the benefit of the land and those animals that graze upon it.

Fence Replacements

RCT Council has replaced the damaged fence on the Heol y Sarn cattle grid and repaired the highway in that section. Fencing at Llwyn Crwn Isaf Farm has deteriorated significantly and we are trying to rectify this problem.

COURT LEET CEREMONY 2019

Llantrisant Court Leet 2019 was another memorable event which saw a significant number of applicants enrolled as Freemen.



Owing to the unavailability of the Guildhall, the Court Leet was held once more in the Parish Hall on Swan Street.

In total 15 new Freemen were entered onto the Roll. A number of applicants were enrolled in absentia.

The Court Leet Dinner was also another outstanding success with almost 130 in attendance.

This year's Guest Speaker was BBC broadcaster Garry Owen.

The next Court Leet takes place on Friday May 1 2020.

Y GRAIG HEALTHY HILLSIDE PROJECT

Trustees are working with Richard Wistow of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and backed his successful bid for financial support from the Healthy Hillside Project to eradicate any excess overgrowth on Y Graig.

This is being carried out in eight locations across RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly – some of the worst areas for grass fires in the UK.

They were successful in their bid to the Welsh Government and funding will be used to introduce large-scale fern cutting and the introduction of wider fire breaks on Y Graig which will allow increased grazing.

An agreement will be made between the Healthy Hillside Project and the Trust to identify what sections require maintenance.

A rolling programme of work will then take place on Y Graig for the next three years.

PEACEFUL PROTESTS TO KILL SPEED ON FREEMEN'S COMMON

Freemen and residents held a series of peaceful protests on the Common to educate motorists about the dangers of speeding.



There have been three animals injured on Llantrisant Common due to the volume – and often speed – of motorists using Heol y Sarn. One local resident was hit from her horse and suffered a fractured elbow. A series of four peaceful protests involving local residents, freemen and horse riders took place at key traffic times to educate motorists on the need to reduce their speed and use alternative routes whenever possible. The response from some motorists are best not repeated.

FREEMEN'S ROLL RESEARCH



Have you viewed the Freeman's Roll lately? A great deal of research work has been undertaken to update the list of 5,000 names which can be found online. We are trying to find more details and information about the Freeman

of the past. The online facility also includes images of many Freeman. If you can help us with information about your forefathers then email dean@llantrisant.net The Freeman's Roll can be viewed at www.llantrisant.net

FREEMAN FOCUS

Freeman's Database

Do you receive regular emails from Llantrisant Town Trust which bring you up to date with the latest news? Join our database of hundreds of Freeman by sending your email details to dean@llantrisant.net

Fly-Tipping

Unfortunately fly-tipping continues to be a problem, particularly at Castellau Road and discussions continue with Rhondda Cynon Taf Council over whether covert surveillance can take place on the areas most affected. We are particularly concerned with the amount of irresponsible dog owners who walk the Common and although they clear the faeces deposited by their animals they then discard the plastic bags on bushes, trees and the footpath. A new dog waste bin has been installed at the Cattle Grid on Heol y Sarn and we hope dog walkers will show more responsibility in this regard.

Cattle Grid Repair

RCT Council has replaced the damaged fence on the Heol y Sarn cattle grid and repaired the highway in that section. Fencing at Llwyn Crwn Isaf Farm has deteriorated significantly and we are trying to rectify this problem.

Valediction

We learned of the passing of Freeman Trevor Evans (2337), David Vernon Phillips (2190), Gwynne Ferris (2252) David Charles Grabham (No. 4233) and John Davies (2800). A memorial service was held at Llantrisant Parish to celebrate the life of Richard David (2599).

LLANTRISANT CELEBRATES GUILDHALL MEDIEVAL FAYRE

Llantrisant Guildhal Opening Weekend was celebrated with a Medieval Fayre which attracted hundreds of people to the Castle Green. The Medieval Combat Society, De Caversham Household, Cosmeston Archers and Falconry UK combined to make it a memorable event.



FREEMEN'S HOME TRANSFORMED

For the past eight years Llantrisant Town Trust, a charity of volunteers, has worked tirelessly to breathe new life into the old timbers of the 14th century building which stands in the shadow of its neighbouring ruined Norman castle



Hundreds of people flocked to the Guildhall on its opening weekend which also included a full-scale medieval fayre and knights in combat on the adjacent castle green to celebrate the exciting new community hub and activities base.

The restoration and transformation would not have been possible without £1million funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Richard Bellamy, Director for Wales of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "Thanks to National Lottery players, this beautiful building has been granted a new lease of life, enabling it to become an invaluable community building once again, fit for the 21st century. The historic Guildhall has an incredibly rich and fascinating history, and this vital transformation will enable it to prosper for many more years to come."

The Guildhall was the centre of power which governed an ancient borough for almost 700 years to execute the rights and privileges of the town's Charter presented in May 1346 by the Lord of Glamorgan.

Since then it has been in constant use by the Freeman of Llantrisant who ruled the borough for centuries. The Guildhall was used as Llantrisant's first national school, as a meeting place for the Baptist movement and enjoyed a long history as a court of law.

Rebuilt in 1773 it governed the adjoining market and fairs and boasted a cornmarket in the lower floor next to a set of cells that remained in constant use for prisoners until the 1870s.

During the past eight years it has undergone a massive restoration project has been restored to the very highest conservation standards. The large medieval chimney has been rebuilt to its original height, and the roof completed in new Welsh slate.

The main floor has been rebuilt, and extensive timber repairs carried out to the roof structure. New and refurbished windows and doors have been installed, and the exterior walls and porch have been completely repaired and renovated.

Present at the launch was Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas who helped secure additional funding through the Welsh Government for the completion of the building. *(Turn over)*

FROM THE HALL

Volunteer Team



Llantrisant Guildhall is blessed with a fantastic team of volunteers who devote their spare time to running the building.

More than 20 people have joined the team to date and offer whatever time they wish to the building.

If you would like to know more about volunteering then email us today

info@llantrisantguildhall.co.uk

New Website Launched

Since it was launched four years ago, www.llantrisant.net has continued to gain momentum with visitors from across the world. With the opening of the Guildhall came the decision to launch a new website specifically on the building itself. To find out more visit

www.llantrisantguildhall.co.uk

Children's Activities



The Guildhall has plenty of fun challenges, puzzles and even treasure hunts for the younger visitors.

Bring your family along to enjoy the fun!

FROM THE HALL

Opening Events

To celebrate the completion of the Guildhall a series of Opening Events took place to thank those who had made a contribution to the project. The five events



also included entertainment by Llantrisant Male Choir, Cor y Bryn and Llantrisant Ladies Choir. Some of the guests included BBC broadcaster Roy Noble and author Catrin Collier (above), Lord Dafydd Ellis Thomas, Sir Norman Lloyd Edwards, Tina Donnelly (High Sherriff of Glamorgan) and Mick Antoniwm AM.

Dr William Price

Our showcase cabinet featuring the costume and personal belongings of Dr William Price are delighting visitors. The original costume is kept



at the National Museum St Fagans but thanks to the generosity of designer Thom Botwood we've had a replica made. A replica fox-skin hat was made by The Milliners Guild.

He said: "This is undoubtedly my greatest before and after experience of the refurbishment of an historic building.

"When I first came here I was shocked, I remember the quality of the lath and plaster and not dare to walk across this very floor.

"You have achieved so much and this is down to the enthusiasm and devotion of those individuals who dedicated their time, without whom nothing would be possible.

"Cadw was delighted to be able to contribute to this achievement. May I congratulate you all in old Llantrisant for recognising your history and how important it is to put a new life into historic buildings

"The history of Wales is not about rebuilding redundant buildings. The celebration is when our historic buildings are used in the present and there is no better example than this Guildhall in Llantrisant. "



The Guildhall now has the opportunity to become central to the community of Llantrisant once again by boosting the local economy as it welcomes more visitors to the town and wider county borough.

It houses a plethora of unique treasures, including the solid silver Mace of 1633 which survived the Civil War and is older than the one in the House of Commons. A full-scale exhibition of the life of cremation pioneer Dr William Price sits alongside the life-size mannequin of a Llantrisant archer who fought at the Battle of Crecy in 1346.

A wide range of interactive displays are available alongside many unique artefacts including the 18th century longcase clock made in Llantrisant and a portrait of the Llantrisant-born Lord Mayor of London Sir David Evans which has been in storage in Cardiff Mansion House for decades.

The refurbished landmark will also host a wide variety of community events, including exhibitions, conferences, weddings, activities, guest speaking programmes, concerts, private parties and school visits.

Llantrisant Guildhall Restoration Project is being made possible due to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Cadw, Garfield Weston Foundation, Welsh Church Act Fund, Visit Wales, Llantrisant Community Council, Llantrisant Town Trust and public donations, and professional support has been given by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

Llantrisant Guildhall is open Thursday – Saturday from 10am to 4pm. For further details visit www.llantrisantguildhall.co.uk, telephone 01443 449111 or email info@llantrisantguildhall.co.uk

CREATING A UNIQUE WEDDING VENUE

Llantrisant Guildhall is being developed into a unique wedding venue.



The Guildhall Trust are working with wedding planner Zoe Binnen to develop the building's potential as a venue for happy couples to tie the knot. In an effort to ensure the building remains sustainable for the future, the Trust are working closely to offer a whole range of private hire packages including weddings, naming ceremonies, wakes, dinner parties and corporate events.

HALL ARCHIVE COLLECTION



The Guildhall is developing an extensive collection of local history and artefacts to celebrate Llantrisant's remarkable past.

Since opening a number of treasured items have been donated to the collection which is catalogued and preserved in line with museum-standard requirements. If you would like to donate any items email us at info@llantrisantguildhall.co.uk

FROM THE HALL

Memorial Cabinets



Trustees are grateful to the generosity of Freeman David Vernon Phillips who sponsored two showcase cabinets in the Guildhall.

Sadly David passed away before the Guildhall was completed.

Fortunately his family were more than willing to attend a special unveiling ceremony in his honour and it was a pleasure to welcome his sons Mark and Jonathan, his widow Glenys, sister Muriel and brother-in-law Clive.

David was a very kind and generous man whose name will certainly live on through the Guildhall.

Our Thanks To You!



Neighbours of the Guildhall have been very patient with us during the long years of restoration and reconstruction. However those residents who witnessed the greatest upheaval were Lesley and John Goldsworthy of Y Pwysty. We were delighted to welcome them to the Guildhall and thank them publicly for their patience and support over many years.

FREEMAN FOCUS

Trustee Term Of Office

Following five year's service, including a period as Clerk of the Town Trust, Prof Derrick Pounder has resigned from the Trust. We wish him well and thank him for his support during his time as a Trustee.

Remembrance Service

Trustees and Freemen supported the Remembrance Sunday Service in November and have decided to be involved on an annual basis by participating in the Parish Church Service and then joining the Service at the War Memorial on the Bull Ring.

Farewell Rev Viv!

We would like to congratulate Rev Viv Parkinson of Llantrisant on his retirement in October 2019. Viv has played a large role in the history of our community since he became vicar more than 20 years ago. He was also very supportive of the Freemen by attending the Court Leet Dinner and assisting with Beating the Bounds.

Freemen's Enrolment

Application forms for the 2020 Court Leet are now available online at www.llantrisant.net. They must be submitted by April 1st 2020 and applications are £100.00 each. Tickets for the Court Leet Dinner at Llantrisant RFC are also on sale priced £30 each. For details email dean@llantrisant.net

IN MEMORIAM: NOEL ISRAEL

Llantrisant Town Trust was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Freeman Noel Israel just days before his 92nd birthday.



Noel Granville Israel was born on December 14 1926 in Gabalfa, Cardiff as the sixth of seven children.

He left school at 14 to work in a butchers shop and three years later he joined the Army in the special signal corps and was stationed in Gratz, Austria. It was his role to translate morse code messages from the Germans and these skills would go on to serve him in his career in the police force which he joined after being demobbed.

He married Myra in 1947 and they had two sons, Richard and John. Noel worked his way up through the ranks serving as a Sergeant and Detective Sergeant in the CID. In 1966 he assembled a team and was stationed for two weeks at the Aberfan Disaster, helping with the rescue mission, a testament to his professionalism. In 1977 he was promoted to superintendant and during this time the family moved to Talbot Green. He retired in 1982 and spent many years researching the Israel family history as far back as 1752.

Noel became a Freeman in May 1965. He was proud of his heritage and served as the Clerk to Llantrisant Town Trust from 1991 to 2000.

Despite the passing of the years he remained a faithful and dedicated Freeman, rarely missing an event and looked forward to the Court Leet Ceremony and Dinner every year – even though his “wallet” was often mentioned by the chairman of the dinner.

“Close thine eyes and sleep secure, thy soul is safe, thy body sure.”

BIG PICNIC SUCCESS

The third annual Big Picnic took place on the Castle Green with all of the proceeds going towards the Guildhall Restoration Fund.



Another successful Big Picnic was held with hundreds of visitors enjoying the day. Once again the Castle Green was filled with stalls and there was plenty of entertainment for everyone to enjoy.

Male voice choirs, brass bands, soloists, jazz trios and folk bands all appeared on the main stage.

Plans are now in place to organise the 2020 event along with another medieval fayre later in the summer on the Castle Green.