

# 'APPALLING' CLAIM

## Open challenge: who cares about Cowbridge?

24 April 1983

In an open letter to councillors and residents in the Vale, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust has said it is "appalled" to learn of the intention to go ahead with a leisure centre at Bear Field, Cowbridge. Director Mr. G. Dowdell says that a vast amount of archaeological evidence would be lost for ever.

He says that unless the Trust is given time to investigate the site it would "undoubtedly constitute a major archaeological tragedy unprecedented in recent times, and one which would hang over the Principality for many years to come.

Mr. Dowdell adds that trial excavation and survey have established that Bear Field is "one of the richest archaeological sites in South Wales".

In 1980 the Trust published a detailed survey on the importance of the town's archaeology and drew particular attention to the "sensitivity" of Bear Field.

Following the preparation of the Cowbridge District (Draft) Plan, the Trust says it wrote to the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council requesting that the final plan should include policies to safeguard the archaeological heritage of the town.

In March last year the Trust expressed concern over proposals to develop Bear Field for recreational purposes. Mr. Dowdell says they asked for a *minimum* of 12 months prior to develop-

ment to investigate the site.

At the Council's request, the Trust provided a map showing the "areas of crucial archaeological importance, including Bear Field".

Mr. Dowdell argues that seven points in the final District Plan supported the need for care over Cowbridge's archaeological treasures.

One of these specifically undertook to refer planning proposals to the Trust for their observation.

The open letter goes on that it "seemed reasonable to infer" that the Council would consult the Trust prior to the provision of playing fields at Bear Field.

It adds: "The Trust was appalled to receive a copy of a planning application for the construction of a leisure centre at Bear Field itself."

The Trust says it wrote to the Council expressing "great concern at this major threat to the largest surviving undisturbed area of Roman settlement.

The Trust has since been informed that work will start in September, despite having pointed out that it would need a minimum of 12 months for an adequate

Please turn to Page 10

### Views

#### I certainly care about Cowbridge

I see in the GEM a heading "Who cares about Cowbridge?"

I do for one, having lived here for 40 years, and my father was the Borough Agent until he died 23 years ago. So I care!

It upsets me to think that the field which I look out upon from my sitting room or kitchen window each day is to become another sports field.

I enjoy the Athletic Club as it is just far enough from me, but I am involved in the Historical Society and also have an interest in the Museum.

So I want very much to see that Bear Field is excavated and if there are any interesting Roman Remains they should be kept for us, and the future people.

Cowbridge should be made a tourist attraction and keeping any Roman or Medieval discoveries would bring the people who are interested in such things here.

I was a little involved in helping with some of the work done on the David John Site.

So do please consider all of us who want to keep Cowbridge's past, even if it is only a little bit, a small wall, just to prove the "Romans were Here".

VIVENNE WHYTE  
Flat 3,  
Somerset House,  
Eagle Lane,  
COWBRIDGE.

#### Who cares where the heron feeds?

Sir, Some weeks ago a correspondent wrote expressing her dismay after visiting Bowmans Well and seeing the condition it was left in after the latest Verlands development.

She may be interested to know that a lot of the builders rubbish has been cleared, and the approach graded and kerbs have been laid, but it would be naive to think all this has been done for the benefit of the footpath users.

This is just the initial preparation for the development of the remaining area of this once pretty field.

We know that a petition organised by a few caring residents a couple of years ago was successful in halting the development, but this was only a postponement of the inevitable as an appeal has been launched by the builders against this ruling and I fear, this time they will succeed.

I suppose, as is usual in these circumstances a few changes will be made, a revision or two to the

drawings, a few more square metres of turf to appease the conservationists.

Apart from a very few people, who really cares? Some sympathetic noises will be made, but after all, its only about an acre of marshy field with some dubious historical connections.

Who, in their right mind would want to get up early to watch for the heron that still sometimes feeds on these misty mornings.

As for the remaining wild flowers and sedges, there is a very good library in Cowbridge, with books containing pictures of more exotic flora.

Tell me, why should young children want to look for tadpoles and frogs and slow worms, and play in the rushes and grasses, when there are good clean concrete roads and asphalted play parks?

So to your correspondent I would say, dear lady, stay away and keep your fond memories of this delightful area, or come soon and see it once more before it is lost finally among the mass of housing that will lie unrelieved from the St. Athans road at Eastgate to the A48 in the West.

All that will remain of your beloved Bowmans Well will lie under a manhole cover in someone's back garden.

A.J. Biggs,  
Wolfe Close,  
Cowbridge.

## 'Historic well ruined'

One Sunday recently I decided to take a walk and my steps led me to the Verlands, to have a look at Bowmans Well, and what a pitiful sight confronted me—some more of Cowbridge's history spoilt as a result of buildings.

The old well has served men who have lived here for centuries and no doubt St. Quentin's Castle and the houses around there, up until pumped water was brought in.

There were also beautiful water cress beds there, now it has all been destroyed by the developers who have taken away the nice stones which formed the basin and put in a concrete monstrosity, to say nothing of the paint tins and an old chair which has been thrown in.

It is now just another stream.

I hope this will be taken note of by those who are responsible and that they will restore it.

History is being destroyed by the march of progress especially here in Cowbridge.

It is not the only well that has disappeared, the Silver Well near Bear Lane was another one.

**Vivienne Hythe,  
Member of the Cowbridge  
History Society.**

## Pledge can historic well

Dear Sir, I was very interested to read the letter from Vivienne Hyther about the historic Bowman's Well in Cowbridge. She no doubt expresses the worries of many people living in Cowbridge and the fact that when yet another development emerges, then history is rapidly destroyed, together with the natural habitat of flora and fauna.

I myself walked the area recently and was equally appalled at the destruction in and around Bowmans's Well.

Members of the History Society, and indeed all concerned, will be interested to know that I immediately contacted the appropriate members of our Planning and Conservation department for the Vale who are doing their utmost to ensure that the situation is rectified.

I sincerely hope they succeed, but if no improvement is seen within a short period of time, then you can be sure I shall not let the matter rest.

**Councillor Doris A. Thomas,  
Wolffe Close,  
Cowbridge.**

## Plea for chimney pots

Once again I climb into the saddle of my hobby horse and ride out in defence of the disappearance of Cowbridge's history.

No, this time my target is not planners and developers, but the taking down of the Victorian chimney pots on top of the Edmundes Arms.

It is a pity they could not have been put-back as they were originally.

No doubt they had to be taken down during repairs but with these gone its another small nail in the coffin of Cowbridge's history.

May I congratulate Mr David John on his delightful restoration of the Veriteys Court.

It has enhanced Cowbridge and when the old Barn has been restored it will be even more delightful with its pretty garden and little shops.

Next is the door to "Robert Bakers."

I hope that black paint will be cleaned off in due course, and once again we can see what was a pretty Georgian Porch.

As for building in Cowbridge, we have reached saturation point. Is it not time to call a halt. Llanblethian too, is getting an urban sprawl, not a country market town anymore.

**Vivienne Whythe,  
Member Local History  
Society,  
Somerset House,  
Eagle Lane,  
Cowbridge.**

## 'Builders wreak havoc'

Sir, Returning to the subject of Bowman's Well—will we be forever doing so?

I presume that now the developers have tarmacked the footpath and planted one tree amidst some earth, surmounting the pile of rubble, they now consider the area 'tidied up'.

Beyond the earth and tree and the rubble constantly tumbling into the stream the Well is as disgraceful as it ever was and sickening to see.

What does it take to make developers repair the damage they create and indeed, stop some of them raging havoc wherever they have authority to build?

A petition is being lodged with the Vale of Glamorgan Planning Department to protest against the further building of 20 bungalows on the green and between the Verlands and Bowmans Well Estates.

Individual letters of protest should be sent to the Director of Planning Services, V.G.B.C., Holton Road, Barry, immediately, with reference to Plan No. 83/0227.

Your support is desperately needed now.

**Councillor Doris A. Thomas,  
Wolffe Close,  
Cowbridge.**

## 'Token' £360 for digs

Asked for a grant of £25,000, by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, Mid Glamorgan's planning committee is recommending a 'token grant' of £360. In the year ending March 1984 the Trust had an income of £503,115.

But expenditure totalled £519,181, giving a deficit of £16,066.

The committee was told that the majority of the Trust's work is in Gwent.

An application for £6,000 has been made to South Glamorgan County Council and West Glamorgan are in the process of approving a grant of £9,215.

## Gateway settled at £7,500

Cowbridge Athletic Club has refused the Vale Council's offer of £5,000 for an access to the proposed leisure centre in Bearfield.

The Club has reduced their asking price to £7,500 plus the Council re-aligning the club's gates.

The Leisure Services chairman and vice chairman authorised acceptance of their counter offer, plus payment of the club's legal expenses.

# HOUSING SHOCK

## Future of Cowbridge 'back in melting pot'

The whole future of development in Cowbridge has been thrown back in the melting pot.

The inspector who conducted a public inquiry into the Cowbridge Local Plan has come down in favour of housing on a bitterly opposed site at Aberthin.

He also says he sees no reason why the green area between the town hall car park and the by-pass should not be given over to housing.

The Vale Council are now caught in a cleft stick.

If they stick to their original plan, they are obliged to "give a clear explanation of their reasons for doing so".

If they adopt the inspector's recommendations they will be obliged to give people

a chance to object—and the result could be the forcing of another public inquiry.

The inspector's report can be inspected at libraries and council offices in Cowbridge and Barry, or can be bought from the Barry Council HQ for £1.

The inspector comes out in favour of the smaller size housing backed by the borough council and Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council.

### Storm

But his other ideas are likely to cause a storm of protest.

● He comes out in favour of developing the highly controversial Court Close site at Aberthin.

He suggests reducing the planned 9-acre estate off the St. Athan Road by three acres, and compensating by also building houses behind the town hall.

He says of the St. Athan Road site: "No dwellings will affect the skyline of Primrose Hill or Stalling Down".

The inspector, Mr. J.F.A. Lees, accepted the pleas of Cowbridge History Society to include Llanblethian Hill, with its iron age fort, in the area to be protected for its landscape value.

He also considers the Verlands proposed extension site should be similarly protected for the period of the plan—up to 1991.

And he rejects the case by the Housebuilders Federation that the basic policy of the borough council—not to permit any residential development other than sites already allocated, or infilling—was "too restrictive".

Leisure Centre shock—  
See Page 23

## Watts & Morgan



**NASH MANOR GARDENS, COWBRIDGE.** An individually designed and most interesting detached family residence in a secluded location within easy reach of all amenities. The amount of accommodation offered is undeniably surprising and can only be appreciated by personal inspection. This comprises:- Reception Hall, Cloaks/Shower Room, Drawing Room, Dining Room, Family Room, Study, Kitchen/Breakfast Room, Utility Area, Main Bedroom and Dressing Room, 3 further double bedrooms and Bathroom. Full central heating. Double garage. Mature gardens extending to approximately 1/3 acre. Freehold. £89,000

**TY GWYN, BROADWAY, LLANBLETHIAN** (First advertisement). An extremely well presented detached house in a most convenient location within walking distance of the town centre. Easily managed accommodation comprises Porch, Hall, Through Lounge, Separate Dining Room, Fitted Kitchen, 3 Bedrooms, Bathroom/w.c. Gas fired central heating and most windows double glazed. Easily managed gardens - the property is on a corner plot. Freehold. £58,750.

**VILLAGE FARM, BONVILSTON** (First advertisement). A modern detached house of pleasing georgian style set in semi-rural surroundings conveniently located for all amenities. The property has full central heating and double glazing. Accommodation comprises:- Entrance Hall, Cloakroom/w.c. with shower, Lounge, Dining Room, Study, fitted Kitchen/Breakfast Room, Utility Room, Master Bedroom with en suite Bathroom, 3 further Bedrooms and family Bathroom. Double garage. Gardens to front, side and rear totalling approximately 1/5th acre. Freehold.

**VILLAGE OF CORNTOWN, Vale of Glamorgan** (First advertisement). A particularly attractive detached traditional bungalow set in an imposing elevated position with delightful views. Full central heating and double glazing. Porch, Reception Hall, Drawing Room, Study, Dining Room, Fitted Kitchen, Principal Bedroom with en suite Bathroom, 2 further Bedrooms and Bathroom. Utility Room, Double garage. Delightful gardens of approximately 1 acre. Freehold. £88,000.



**CAE REX, LLANBLETHIAN.** A deceptively spacious and well-appointed detached dormer bungalow in a quiet residential location and with excellent views to the rear. Full gas central heating. Entrance Hall, Lounge, Dining Room, Kitchen, Shower Room, Bathroom and 3 Bedrooms on the ground floor, plus 2 Bedrooms and Shower Room on 1st floor. Garage. Pleasant garden enjoying privacy. Freehold. £69,950

81 HIGH STREET, COWBRIDGE ☎ 3495 (4)

## Timely blow to plan for centre

The inspector's firm recommendation that the siting of the leisure centre could be moved back to near the comprehensive school comes in the same week as the Vale Council prepare to make

a start on building the centre. This has now been scheduled to begin early next month. But the inspector's view is actually in line with the policy document which was put before him!

# 'Move leisure centre back next to the school'

Another controversial suggestion by the inspector who conducted the public inquiry in the Cowbridge Local Plan is that the Vale Council were wrong to move the planned leisure centre to the Bear Field.

He says: "There has been no objection to its siting near the comprehensive school, and no clear indication was given at the public inquiry as to why they changed their plans.

"I see advantages in siting indoor sports facilities close to the existing and proposed outdoor sports activities, but I also see advantages in siting it near the school.

"Pupils could participate in the use of the facilities and its closeness to the school would encourage dual use of the facilities of the school.

Although the Vale Council has now passed planning permission for the leisure centre at Bear Field, the inspector recommends that the original siting near the school, still listed in the Local Plan, should stand.

The inspector also comes out strongly in favour of smaller units on all new estates.

He recommends changing the wording of policy to "a presumption in favour of each housing site containing a proportion of housing for small households".

But, while he says he shares the concern of the council over providing homes which younger people can afford, he came out against them filling the two sites allocated for development at Aberthin Lane, Aberthin, and St. Athan Road, Cowbridge.

He argues: "Such a development adjacent to open hillsides would do nothing but harm the attractive character of the two settlements."

He adds that the aim of the Plan to provide a wide choice of housing is right.

He says that extension of the St. Athan Road site—or extensions at Brookfield Park, Slade Farm, or the Verlands—are "not required" during the period of

the Plan.

He also suggests that the grazing land to the east of the Geraints Way estate should not be preserved "because the most prominent feature in this area is the dense mass of housing on the slope leading up to the Llantwit Major road."

1984

**WOODWISE  
WESTGATE  
Cowbridge  
4958/3299**

Dining & Kitchenware  
Toys ● Games ● Puzzles  
Wooden Boxes ● Jewellery  
Fencing ● Gates ● Sheds.

# "Daggers drawn" over leisure

## centre

Fearing delays over the leisure centre have brought Cowbridge councillors to the "daggers drawn" stage with the Vale council.

The Mayor of Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council, Coun. John Jones, even feels that there has been a breakdown in communications between the two councils.

He has suggested that a monthly meeting is needed between himself, the Deputy Mayor and chairmen of committees on one side, and Vale councillors on the other.

If the proposal is rejected by

the Borough Council, he feels that will have established that his worries on this score have been proved.

He said: "There seems to be something happening at County level about the leisure centre, but things are falling apart at district level."

The Vale council has scrapped many of the planned facilities, after discovering that the estimated cost of £875,000 had shot up to £1,263,000.

What has incensed Cowbridge representatives, however, is a

suggestion at a Vale meeting that what Cowbridge needs is more of a community hall than the sports and leisure facilities sought for years.

Coun. David Busher has pointed out that Bovis can produce a purpose built leisure centre for £650,000, and the Town Council thought it had been agreed that the Sports Council for Wales would draw the attention of the Vale authority to this.

Town councillors now fear that the further delays will end with the centre never being built.

people of Cowbridge had pushed to the back of the net for a leisure centre for pressed at a recent meeting with Llanblethian Town

Coun. Alun Rees made the remark after hearing a report from the Mayor, Coun. David Busher, in which he said that South Glamorgan County Council want to spread the amount of money spent in building the centre over three financial years.

But the anger expressed by various members of the council at the meeting abated somewhat when they realised that the proposals did not mean that the centre would not be completed until the end of 1985, but that a small proportion of the money needed would have to come out of the financial year beginning in April.

The Mayor reported to council members that a meeting had been held between representatives of the Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council, South Glamorgan County Council and himself, the Town Clerk and Coun. Matthews in August.

He told members that the final problems concerning the leisure centre appeared to have been resolved that very afternoon, apart from one condition.

He said that South Glamorgan had wanted there to be indefinite free use of the Leisure Centre but the Vale council had raised objections.

However it had been agreed that the matter be reviewed in three years time.

"With that obstacle apparently overcome the Vale of Glamorgan seen quite happy and are making..."

## £270,000 cut-back

### Leisure centre plans drastically slashed

Many of the facilities planned for Cowbridge's new leisure centre, to be built on Bear Field, have been axed because of soaring costs.

Told that the cost had risen from the estimated £875,000 to £1,263,000, Vale councillors have decided on a drastic cut-back.

The leisure services committee has decided that a number of items have to be drastically pruned, or axed altogether, because they do. This will bring the total cost down by £270,000, back to £893,000.

not have the money.

But they resisted suggestions that a community hall would be sufficient.

Axed are:

1. The lesser hall and stage area—saving ££80,000;
2. The rifle range—£52,000;
3. Portable stage, sliding partition and retractable seating—£50,000;
4. All finishings, furniture and fittings to the first floor, including the lift, kitchen and bar equipment and sliding partition—£61,000;

Cut back are:

1. Reduced size equipment store and plant room—£42,000;
2. Reduced area for changing room and cafeteria—£15,000;
3. Less road and car parking work—£6,000.

Coun. John Cotter, chairman of the finance committee said the original scheme had been too grandiose.

But he said it had always been the intention to provide a leisure centre and not just a "meeting place".

The plans now go before a special sub committee and the finance committee—and a start date has still to be agreed in the row over the site's archaeological value.

# Cowbridge leisure centre allocated cash for start

Work is to start at long last on the leisure centre for Cowbridge in Bear Field—provided there is no further delay over getting the land.

The Vale Leisure Services Committee is to spend the bulk of next year's budget of just over £1-million on a leisure centre for Penarth—but most of the remainder has been allocated for Cowbridge.

Coun John Cotter, chairman of the Vale's Finance and Policy Committee, said that the people of Cowbridge had been promised a leisure centre since 1976.

"The scheme would have proceeded between 1980 and 1983, if we had had the opportunity to build on the land we thought was going to be available," he said. "At long last, we are now within sight of getting the land."

Chief financial officer Mr David Foster said that the council's capital resources were under severe pressure and it was unlikely that any uncommitted schemes would be able to proceed in 1984/85.

But he suggested that the committee put forward a small number of schemes which could be considered for priority, in case the position over the Cowbridge centre changed.

Coun Cotter said: "If, through unforeseen circumstances, there is a delay at Cowbridge, it would be prudent for us to have one or two schemes in our bottom drawer which we can proceed with."

Among the schemes which council officers and committee members recommended for priority were new changing rooms at St Athan (£33,000).

Coun Williams said that the land on which the community centre would be built had belonged to the

people of the area since 18 when it was given to them a charitable trust.

In 1976, the communist councils in Welsh St Donat and Pendoylan asked for centre to be built on the land after they were told by the Vale to state what facilities they needed in the area, said.

"It's difficult to explain the local people how the scheme is being continually pushed back," added Coun Williams.

"In 1984, we are no further ahead than when the approach was made by the authority in 1976.

"I would like to see the day come when we have a programme which we stick to. Schemes that were never dreamt of back in 1976 are now jumping ahead. Surely some degree of priority should be given to a scheme that has been in the programme for this length of time."

But the committee decided against including Welsh St Donat's on the priority list.

Coun Cotter said that since 1976, the council has run up against restrictions on their capital expenditure but, even so, they had made a commitment to provide leisure facilities in the four major population centres of the Vale.