Local Distinctiveness Toolkit

NORTH CARMARTHENSHIRE
We hope you will find this Toolkit useful and full of good things

EXPERTS AND STORYTELLERS
Those of us who live and work in Carmarthenshire are familiar with many of its appealing characteristics and are happy to enthuse about our favourite places, the activities we love, the landscapes and natural habitats that stand out for us as stars of the show. Readers who use this toolkit will already have information and back stories galore, all of which have the capacity to inspire and enthrall visitors. The message to all you experts out there is: ‘Keep the stories flowing!’

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS on how to spend the precious days of a holiday, where to eat, where to explore or picnic, how to find some hidden gems: all of this local knowledge is invaluable. What their hosts know and share with their guests can dramatically enhance a visitor’s experience, and can do so without creating harm to the environment or the special places in focus. Enthusiasm is not costly; it does not involve intrusive signage; it does not lead to fast food outlets at every corner. Stories and local interpretations are powerful players, and mercifully the only stage they need is the receptive mind of the visitor. Hosts who invest in knowing their area and sharing that knowledge are generally very careful to also safeguard the qualities that make it special – that must be sustainable tourism at its best.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION
This document is a pdf which can be printed as a booklet for handy reference, or used on line when some enquiry requires a spot of checking. You are invited to cut and paste any text which you would find useful in your own brochures or websites. Words in red are hyperlinks taking you to relevant websites for more information at a click.

PAGES TO KEEP, PAGES TO SHARE
20 pages of the toolkit are for you as tourism operators while 4 items at the back of the toolkit, DIG DEEPER: LOVE CARMARTHENSIRE, can be printed as ‘handouts’ to share with visitors, possibly to have at a reception facility or to equip people if they are on their way out to an area where the topic is relevant.

LET PICTURES TELL YOUR STORY
The majority of the images included in the toolkits have been sourced from Visit Wales and Discover Carmarthenshire image collections. You might like to use those images in your own publications or sites. Carmarthenshire Tourist Association is keen to help you to access an image at the size and resolution you need, as well as confirm the credit line required. Just contact our staff at: info@visitcarmarthenshire.co.uk

AS UPBEAT AS CHARLES WILLIAMS ...
You might like to match the enthusiasm of the editor of WalesView magazine: “If you’re coming to Carmarthenshire on holiday, then congratulations. You have great taste.”

Main cover image: Llanybydder horse fair, photo by Alan Jones.
North Carmarthenshire is a landscape which continues to be defined mainly by agriculture, dotted as it is with close-knit communities of farming families who’ve worked this land for hundreds of years. Here, the Welsh language is part of everyday life: in the marketplace, the local shop and the village inn; in the patter of the auctioneer at the monthly Llanybydder horse fair, and the dealings over a farm gate. Even visitors who know no Welsh at all will soon gather that animals continue to be important topics of conversation. It could be the price of lambs, or the showing of Welsh Cobs, or tips on breeding Welsh Black cattle for prime Welsh beef.

But change and diversification are key words in rural life in the twenty-first century, and farming communities have learned to make room for leisure pursuits. Walkers are welcome, as are mountain bikers, many of whom know the best-kept secrets of Brechfa Forest (but never all of them). Horseriding is popular in these parts – at Pumsaint, holiday makers can even bring their own! Anglers love this area, the river Cothi being exceptionally good for both salmon and sewin.

This area does guard some of its secrets, however. It holds within its bedrock five sleeping saints and remnants of gold the Romans failed to find. Dr John Harris of Cwrt-y-cadno, wizard or charlatan, had a book of spells which was never found ...

But other treasures are more easily shared. Mynydd Llanybydder and Mynydd Llanllwni are wild, open spaces where the natural world can be enjoyed. Plantlife, small creatures, birds, wild mountain ponies and grazing sheep can all be enjoyed by the observant visitor. The river Teifi in its wilder antics and in its more leisurely meanderings is another beauty to be enjoyed.

There is controversy, too, and this is not a new phenomenon, as the section on Rhydcymerau reminds us. How should we look after this land of ours? The answer is not always simple. But hopefully there will be no doubt in a visitor’s mind after a visit to this area that their hosts, and the communities who offer them a warm welcome, care about the future and how to look after our inheritance.

You may wish to start with a checklist for your immediate vicinity, but being knowledgeable about places that warrant an excursion will be invaluable if you want to keep visitors in the area.

CONTENTS

4 Llanybydder
6 Cwmann
8 Farmers and Cwrt-y-cadno
10 Llanllwni
12 Pumsaint and Dolaucothi
14 Brechfa and Abergorlech
16 Rhydcymerau
17 Carmarthenshire Unmissables
18 Fairs and Festivals
19 The Welsh Language

Handouts to print for visitors:
Carmarthenshire on the Menu
What the Drovers Saw
The River Cothi
Welsh Quilts and Blankets
Llanybydder, a market town on the banks of the river Teifi, straddles two rural counties where agriculture is the prime industry: Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. Both counties are renowned for their horse and pony stud farms, and it is little wonder that the horse fairs, for which Llanybydder is famous, draws huge crowds.

On the last Thursday of each month, horse owners, dealers, breeders and their horses of all sizes and breeds roll in to Llanybydder for the sales. It is a spectacle to behold with horses being trotted and prepared along the roads and led to the undercover holding pens and sales ring. It is reminiscent of a bygone era, when regular animal markets would have been held across this region. The town fills with cattle lorries and horse boxes, there are stalls and stands, there’s talk of machinery and mineral supplements, there are carts and tractors, saddles and stirrups ...

There is plenty for visitors to enjoy, regardless of their knowledge of horses. The star attractions are always the Welsh Cobs, whose pedigree can often be deduced from their glamorous names. Some of the leading Cob stud farms will crop up time and again, with reference being made to bloodlines of some of the all-time greats: Nebo Black Magic; Llanarth Flying Comet; Derwen Rosina.

The biggest horse fairs are those held in September and October.

ANEURIN JONES

Aneurin M. Jones was born a farmer’s son in the rural community of Cwm Wysg on the border of Carmarthenshire and the old county of Brecon. He has been painting all his life, taught Art at Ysgol y Preseli until his retirement in 1986, and is the subject of two beautifully illustrated books. An exhibition of his original works, a wide range of prints and the books themselves can be seen at Awen Teifi in Cardigan. Aneurin has an enduring love of Welsh cobs, sheepdogs and the country characters who come together at events such as auctions and agricultural shows. A busy horse fair would not be an ideal place for setting up an easel, but for rough sketches and inspiration it’s ideal.
Every Monday at 10.00 am, the auctioneers at Llanybydder get busy selling sheep. Some breeds such as Balwen Welsh Mountain and Llanwennog attract buyers from far afield.

The auctioneers, Evans Bros, started the business back in 1895 and it is still owned by the same family. Though they have expanded into sales of property, land and antiques, sales of farm animals are still their core activity. In Spring, visitors may particularly enjoy seeing the ewe-and-lamb couples being presented.

Local Champions

The farming family at Blaen Blodau, New Inn, are well known for their success with a very attractive black-faced breed which was first bred on the Epynt mountains: the Beulah Speckled Face Sheep. As its name suggests, the breed has a distinctively patterned black and white face, which is free from wool. Beulah sheep have been bred on Blaen Blodau farm by three generations of the Jones family, spanning fifty years, and have won numerous awards both at the Royal Welsh Show and in local shows where there is a special class for Beulah sheep – shows such as Llansadwrn, Llandeilo, Lampeter, Cwrt-y-Cadno and Llansawel. In the Royal Welsh Show of 2010, the Blaen Blodau trio of Beulah sheep were judged to be overall champions, beating 43 other breeds.

(continued)

If these people didn’t exist, I don’t think my art would be available either because I’m not interested in the towns and villages. It’s always the country character in a hill environment that really excites me,” he says. “I find it almost worrying now that most of these people seem to be disappearing – there’s a different way of life today, the younger generation have a different physical appearance because of the work they do. Many of them now live in the city but they buy my paintings because they remind them of their older relatives.”
Cwmann

The village of Cwmann is closely aligned to its bigger sister, the town of Lampeter, on the other side of the Teifi. When visitors come to Lampeter, possibly for the Food Festival or the Agricultural Show in July, the Pantyfedwen Eisteddfod in August or, indeed, to visit the Welsh Quilt Centre at the Town Hall, they may well stop for refreshments at Cwmann.

- Visitors who travel by bus will notice that they’re following an ancient route, because what is the name of the bus stop at Cwmann? Drovers Road. Coaches (but not those with air-conditioning and microphones) also came this way.

- All along the route to Llandovery are taverns where drovers and their stock stopped to rest: Cwmanne Tavern, Tafarn Jem, the Ram Inn, all a reminder of rural life as it used to be. Hundreds of cattle at a time would have passed through Cwmann on their way to Llandovery and on to the big meat markets in England, walking for up to ten hours a day. With them were the drovers’ helpers, the dogs, blacksmiths to shoe lame animals on route, and, directing it all, the drover himself.

- Tafarn Jem was named after a lady named Jemimah who opened a hostelry here called the Mountain Cottage Inn, but by dint of her character it was soon widely known as Ty Jem or Tafarn Jem. She was a mere 5ft tall and treated everyone alike, great or good, lowly or humble, foreigner or friend. She was especially generous to walkers, apparently. Jemimah was born in the early 1820s and ran this wayside pub until her demise many years later. The original inn was actually the small cottage that has been incorporated into the present building, which houses all the information and photos.

- Drovers were key figures in rural Wales before the railways offered a new method of transporting animals, and they were entrusted with precious stock. They also carried large sums of money from the markets and it was not therefore surprising that they were the founders of the first banks in rural Wales. It was far more practical to be carrying ‘notes of promise’ than bags of gold sovereigns.

HOW MEADOWS USED TO LOOK

Alongside the A482 some two miles south of the (former) Ram Inn, there’s a nature reserve consisting of a single, sloping meadow. Cae Blaen-dyffryn is rich in wild plants, including devil’s-bit scabious (above), knapweed and some uncommon species: butterfly-orchid, lesser butterfly-orchid and moonwort. The reserve is lightly grazed by a mixture of cattle and donkeys during the summer and autumn, to keep grasses in check and allow other plant to flourish.
The CwmAnn Male Voice Choir was founded during the winter of 1963-64 following a request for participants in a local talent evening. Originally, most of the members came from the CwmAnn area, and they met regularly in the vestry of Bethel Chapel. However, they soon received requests to join from singers further afield and the choir not only grew but needed to adopt an appropriate name: the logical choice was CwmAnn and District Male Voice Choir. They also soon outgrew the small vestry at Bethel and had to move rehearsals to a local school hall.

These days the choir performs regularly across the region, supporting local charities wherever possible. The venues range from chapels and churches, such as Llanfair Clydogau near Lampeter, to theatres and sport centres. Over the years they have also travelled further afield for performances in Bristol, Birmingham and the Royal Albert Hall in London, a famous venue for choral concerts.

One recent performance which choir members enjoyed immensely was at the Lampeter World Sacred Music Festival in 2013, dedicated to spiritual music from all the faiths and sacred traditions of the world. They also love performing on the outdoor stage at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, where they attract a large and appreciative audience.

The choir now rehearses at Brondeifi Chapel Vestry, Lampeter every Wednesday between 8 and 9.30pm. Visitors are welcome to attend rehearsals with prior arrangement through either the chair or the choir secretary. Further details, including concert schedules and contact details for the choir, can be found on the choir’s website.

OAK AND ASH

Visitors who’d like a wander in the wood, perhaps at blackberry time, will enjoy Coed Allt Belli Coch just outside CwmAnn. There are several public footpaths through the woodland which is managed by the Woodland Trust. On the western side they’ll see mainly ash trees, while to the east there’s a good deal of coppiced oak. If collecting leaves and naming the species is a favourite family activity, there will also be leaves from elder, holly, hawthorn and downy birch to be found. The woodland adjoins a residential area, so it is a bit of an unexpected find – just off the A485, not far from the main junction with the A482.

A SPOT OF ANGLING

Just south-east of CwmAnn, at Harford, anglers can enjoy Springwater Lakes. There’s plenty here to challenge experienced anglers as well as those just starting out. Set in 20 acres of beautiful countryside and overlooked by the Cambrian Mountains, this is a complex consisting of five lakes – as well as a caravan and camping site. All the lakes have easy access for the disabled angler and there is a tackle and bait shop on site for anyone who wishes to try something new but needs the kit! For fly fishing, there’s a lake stocked with trout. For mixed coarse fishing, there’s a choice of three lakes. And for the very brave, there’s a specimen lake, stocked with specimen carp.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Harford family, wealthy landowners and Quakers, were great philanthropists and did much for the town of Lampeter. Among the ideas for improvement which they implemented was a fountain in Harford square in 1862, which brought a clean water supply for the townspeople. It was also the Harford family who rebuilt Falcondale Mansion in the Italianate style, an influence which can still be appreciated in the character of the hotel today.
Cwrt-y-cadno and Ffarmers

This pretty area consists of scattered farms rather than a large village settlement, and many of the buildings were constructed to a pattern for the Dolaucothi estate in the 1850s, adding to a patchwork effect which has a definite symmetry.

**DR JOHN HARRIES, CWRT-Y-CADNO**

Dr John Harries is remembered in Wales, and renowned worldwide, as Wales’s most famous ‘cunning man’. He was born in Cwrt-y-cadno in 1785 and received a good education, qualifying as a surgeon before returning to Wales. It is not actually known where he studied medicine, but it is believed that he later became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons at Edinburgh where he gave lectures to the students and had a wonderful power over them. The course of treatment would include what he would term the water treatment, the herbs treatment, and the bleeding treatment.’

**SPELLS AND FORTUNES**

Most of the remedies used by Harries and subsequently by his son, Henry, were already well-known in the locality, particularly the use of herbal medicine, charms and ‘shock’ therapy. Sometimes they operated through laying on of hands and prayer. Harries was a learned man who knew Latin and used it to good effect; often there were spells and visions appearing out of flames. Undoubtedly, people were in awe of him. His collection of books, including Latin and Greek works and an edition of *An Anatomy of Melancholy*, was donated by his descendants to the National Library of Wales. It included a manuscript: *John Harries of Cwrt-y-Cadno, His Holograph Book of Incantations, Astronomical Signs and Calculating Bills*. His son, Henry, placed an advertisement in a magazine for astrological prediction, claiming that advice could be given on: ‘honours, riches, journeys and voyages, success therein, and what places best to travel to’. It sounds rather like life-coaching!

The writer who tackled the issue of the Pantcoy sorcerer in the 1840 issue of Welsh magazine *Yr Haul* (The Sun) could not have known of John Harries’s demise. The writer lets rip: ‘Because men insist on being foolish, they are left to consult Dr. Harries, Cwrtycadno, and go to expense on account of his lies and deceit ... he should be arrested and set on a tread mill for a few months, as happens to his fellow deceivers in England.’

Dr Harries’s ‘surgery’ at Pantcoy farm proved popular, but not so much for its conventional medical practices. It is recorded in *History of Caio* by F S Price that ‘The sick and sorrowful came... from all parts of Wales, and ... he was eminently successful in his cures. Lunatics were brought to him from parts of Pembrokeshire and Radnorshire, and he had a wonderful power over them. The course of treatment would include what he would term the water treatment, the herbs treatment, and the bleeding treatment.’

Dr John Harris died on 11 May 1839 aged fifty-four. The circumstances surrounding his death were as unusual as the circumstances surrounding much of his life. He had long before had a premonition that he would die by accident on 11 May. To avoid this happening, he stayed in bed all that day, but during the night he was woken by the shouts of local people warning him that his house was on fire. In his haste to douse the flames with water, he slipped from a ladder and was killed. He was buried at Caeo churchyard in his father’s grave.

The writer who tackled the issue of the Pantcoy sorcerer in the 1840 issue of Welsh magazine *Yr Haul* (The Sun) could not have known of John Harries’s demise. The writer lets rip: ‘Because men insist on being foolish, they are left to consult Dr. Harries, Cwrtycadno, and go to expense on account of his lies and deceit ... he should be arrested and set on a tread mill for a few months, as happens to his fellow deceivers in England.’
The village of Ffarmers straddles the old Roman Road, Sarn Helen, which stretched from Aberconwy in north Wales all the way to Moridunum, Carmarthen, with an important stopping-place at nearby Dolaucothi. Subsequently this was also an important route for the drovers driving cattle from Ceredigion to the markets of England.

The village takes its name from the Farmers’ Arms that was located on the village square, where farmers from the Cambrian Mountains to the north quenched their thirsts for generations, but it closed several years ago. However, the Drovers’ Arms is thriving, and is still an important meeting place for local people, as is the hall, Neuadd Fama, where concerts are held, and Bro Fama Park, with its children’s play area.

Horse riding is popular in the area:
Cwrt-y-Cadno stud farm is well-known and Caeiago Horse Riding Centre in Ffarmers provides trekking holidays for individual riders and parties. There is also a well-supported local hunt.

LOCAL STAR

The village community of Ffarmers must be immensely proud of Shân Cothi, daughter of the blacksmith, Dai Morgan, and his wife Joan. Their daughter has become a much-loved name, face and voice, both in Wales and internationally. As a singer, she has performed with other great voices such as Bryn Terfel, Rhys Meirion and Hayley Westenra, performed on the West End stage and presented live radio and television shows. One of her most famous roles was as Carlotta in the West End production of Phantom of the Opera. On television, she played the part of the conductress (and seductress) Davina in an immensely popular drama series about a Welsh male voice choir, Con Passionate. She has also hosted her own television shows which combine performance and chat, with plenty of banter and dance as well. She is a natural as a presenter from live events such as the National Eisteddfod and has fronted several flagship programmes for S4C, such as Sipsiwn, featuring the gypsy tradition in Wales.

But life has not been easy for soprano Shân Cothi in recent years. Her husband, Justin Smith, died of pancreatic cancer aged 42 in 2007. Since then, Shân has established a charity in his name and has tirelessly raised money for cancer research. It is a passion she combines with a love of horsemanship which stems from her rural childhood and her close contact with animals. It has been natural for her to take to the saddle once again, on a horse the public absolutely adores: Caio.

‘I bought Caio after Justin passed away and he saved me and brought such joy to my life again. He loves the camera and is such a special horse, always high-spirited and full of character.’

The fundraising for AmserJustintime began in 2007 with an epic horse ride from north to south Wales and since then the ideas keep flowing. In 2013, Shân rode in the St Patrick Day Derby at the Cheltenham Festival. She also organized a fun ride at Ogmore which was immensely popular – and which The Welsh Rider featured on the front page of their magazine.

And the greatest physical challenge of all? A trek up Kilimanjaro, all 5,891 metres of it. Is there nothing this spirited woman will not do?
Llanllwni

Llanllwni must be one of the longest villages in west Wales, with a choice of places to stop for refreshments. Alternatively, visitors may just want to stock up with supplies for a picnic out on Llanllwni mountain, where they can share the right to roam with grazing sheep and ponies, look out for soaring red kites and sparrow hawks, and maybe listen out for the cuckoo and the rare skylark. Maps showing archaeological and historical sites are available online, as are all kinds of activity sheets for children. Quizzes and hunts can turn a walk on the mountain or the forest into an adventure.

DINE LIKE THE DROVERS

These days, you'll be treated to a far more exciting meal than the drovers ever had, but your stop may well be at the very place where drovers settled their cattle for the night before continuing on a journey eastwards to huge cattle markets in Hereford, the Midlands or even Smithfield in London. ‘Talardd’ inn in Llanllwni is first mentioned in 1626. It was on a very old drover’s route, as field-names nearby testify. Both the requirements of the cattle and their final destinations crop up: Cae nos (field for the night) Cae Henffordd (Hereford Field) Cae Llwydlo (Ludlow Field).

Today, Tafarn y Talardd offers a very Welsh experience which comes not only from the atmosphere in the building itself, the traditional Welsh furniture, the open fires, but from the food on the menu. Take their Raclette, for instance, a meal at which everyone has an individual grill pan. The original Swiss idea is given a Welsh twist when Cenarth ‘Lancych’ cheese (left) is melted in the grill and poured over new potatoes. The accompanying platter of cold meats includes Carmarthen Ham, as you would expect! And what might the dessert be? Delicious Mario’s ice-cream drizzled with Merlin’s Liqueur (made in Cross Hands and Penderyn, respectively).

NORWOOD GARDENS

• Tucked away on the sunny south side of the Teifi Valley, Norwood is an idyllic three-acre piece of paradise where visitors can take a stroll, enjoy a snack in the tea rooms and admire the beauty of an intimate Carmarthenshire garden.

• You get seven gardens for the price of one here. Seven individually themed gardens are set along the central path, with a number of intriguing sculptures along the way. The whole area is generously planted with trees.

• There are plenty of places to stop, sit down and relax. Every seat has a unique view, sometimes intimate, sometimes expansive. The whole feel of this place is calm, relaxed and personal.

• Visitors who are around at the end of the summer can catch the Beekeepers’ Honey Fete held at Norwood Gardens in early September. There’s an observation hive, birds of prey, musicians, stalls and a re-enactors group specialising in the middle ages. Fun for all ages.

• If visitors just want a cuppa overlooking the gardens but are short of time, the tea rooms are actually outside the garden’s entrance – so no admission to be paid unless they have time for a tour.
THE PILGRIMS’ WALK

Walkers love to get close to the Teifi. The river and its valley dominate this landscape and once you’re down by the riverside the area feels very secluded. At Maesycrugiau the Teifi cuts through quite a narrow section that is almost a gorge.

The Pilgrims’ Walk starts at Pontllwni bridge and takes you alongside the river on a path cut into the side of a wooded hill. The river rushes over rocks and falls below you, while abundant treecover means that all kinds of birds can be spotted, even the turquoise flash of a kingfisher on occasion. The walk is beautiful at all times of year, with the changing riverscape and abundant wildlife adding interest.

The Old Railway Inn, also on the hill, was once the stationmaster’s house. The Manchester and Milford Railway (M&M) opened from Pencader to Aberystwyth in 1867, and the Maesycrugiau stop was crucial for businesses in the village as well as for passengers heading for the local towns of Lampeter and Llandysul. Passenger services ended in 1965 – the Beeching cuts.

Fishing rights to this stretch of the river Teifi are owned by Llandysul Angling Association, starting at the second meadow downstream of the bridge. It is known as Church Farm and County Gate Fisheries and is particularly noted for salmon, with some excellent sea trout fishing too.

Llandysul Angling Association welcomes visitors. Day tickets, week tickets and season tickets are all available, as well as discounted membership rates for full-time students. The Junior section is particularly active, welcoming holiday visitors to west wales as well as locals. Free fly fishing lessons on the River Teifi and fly tying tuition during the close season are also available to juniors. Visitors can buy their permits at the Porth Hotel, Llandysul where the local guide book can also be purchased.

THE TEIFI MEANDERS

Further downstream in the next village, the Teifi takes on a completely different character. At Llanfihangel-ar-Arth, the valley floor widens and the river makes grand loops. Unfortunately there are no public footpaths right by the riverside but the view from the road is good and a walk over the bridge is recommended.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Llanllwni church is open to visit most days of the week, but if you do find it locked there are directions on the church door to a nearby house where the keys are kept.
- No one knows how ancient a site this is, but the altar stone dates from the 6th century.
- The present church is dedicated to St. Luke, but only since the 19th century. Before that it was dedicated to Llonio. Apparently he was a saint of Bangor Illtyd and later lived on Bardsey Island.
- Services are held in the church every Sunday either in Welsh or in English or bilingual. The Vicar publishes a weekly newsletter with full details of all services, and a copy is always on display in the village shop.
Dolaucothi and Pumsaint

Carreg Pumsaint, the Pumsaint Stone, is at the centre of a legend that offers a meaning to the name of the village. The story goes that five saints were passing this way on their pilgrimage and the devil (or a sorcerer, in a tamer version) conjured up a violent storm to terrify them. They clung to the stone, one to each of its four sides and one on the top, showing such fortitude that the imprints from their clinging can still be seen today. The stone is at the entrance to the goldmine. The more reasonable explanation for the marking is that the stone was used as an anvil, with great pestles used to crush the rock for its gold ore.

BUILDINGS TO VISUALISE

The picturesque quality of the landscape in these parts is the result of the planting by the Dolaucothi Estate owned by the Johnes family from the sixteenth century onward. One of the driveways to the grand house that stood here then was flanked by four lines of ancient oaks — the “very noble oaks” that George Borrow, author of Wild Wales published in 1862, remarked upon when he saw the house and claimed that “he had never seen a more pleasing locality”. During the Second World War the house was requisitioned by the Ministry of Supply. Sadly, it then fell into disrepair and by the time the National Trust acquired it in the 1950s, most of it had already been demolished.

WALKS ON THE ESTATE

Visitors are free to walk and picnic in the woodland and parkland; the walled garden and ha-ha are still here, even though the grand house has gone. Wildlife includes badgers, squirrels, the Red Kite and other birds of prey, and in the river Cothi you may well spot salmon and trout — even otters. Birds who love this oak woodland include Great Spotted Woodpeckers (above), Redstarts and Pied Flycatchers.

THE GOLDMINE

Perhaps gold was mined here even in the Bronze Age, but the Romans began in earnest in the first century AD. The difficulties involved were enormous — for every gram of gold you are likely to come across, thousands of tons of material have to be moved one way or another. Recommend strongly to visitors that they book a guided tour of the goldmine in order to hear the stories and understand what was achieved here. They can actually listen to an audio guide even before setting out: the National Trust has one on line.
TRAGEDY AT DOLAUCOTHI

In 1876, Dolaucothi made headline news when the last of the family of the male line, Judge John Johnes, was murdered by his butler of seventeen years service. Irishman Henry Tremble was enraged that his master had refused his application for the tenancy of the Dolaucothi Arms, a local public house, which Judge Johnes had apparently promised to him. He killed him with his master’s own shotgun. Tremble then proceeded to the village where he was set on murdering the publican who had usurped him, but he had set off for Carmarthen that day. Tremble returned to his own cottage and shot himself.

That this was a determined, coldblooded course of action was confirmed by a letter written by Tremble a few days beforehand. It was addressed to the vicar at Caio and asked that he arrange Tremble’s financial affairs to ensure that his children were provided for. He referred to money held in the bank at Carmarthen and enclosed a key to a box in which he said he would leave as much money as he could. Clearly envisaging the discovery of his own body, he also detailed how much cash would be found in his pocket.

A HAPPIER STORY

The once rare red kite is now a common sight in the area. The visitor centre in the old coach house at Pumsaint houses information about this magnificent bird and the oak woodland which has traditionally supported it.

Inspired by what they learn here, visitors may well want to visit The Red Kite Feeding Station in Llanddeusant. The project undertaken there and at other feeding stations in Wales is helping to maintain their numbers and allowing nature lovers an opportunity to observe these beautiful creatures at close quarters. Visitors can watch from a specially constructed hide as the birds soar, swoop and dive. Feeding time is at 2 p.m. in the winter months and 3 p.m. during the summer, but visitors should plan to arrive in plenty of time as the gates are closed before feeding begins.

The survival of the red kite here is a real triumph, due to a determined effort by various individuals over a period of more than a century. On the edge of extinction in the British Isles, and already lost from Scotland, Ireland and England, its further decline was finally halted in Wales where these native birds now thrive. It is a success story which is continuing, with red kites from Wales being taken across the Irish Sea to repopulate the hills of County Down and County Wicklow which have not been home to this impressive bird of prey for more than 200 years.

DID YOU KNOW?
The Dolaucothi Arms is now owned by the National Trust. Visitors can rest assured that they can enjoy a reviving beer without being troubled by irate butlers.
Brechfa & Abergorlech

From before records began in the 6th century the communities in the 15 villages which encircle Glyn Cothi Forest were managing it to provide employment, building materials, products and grazing. At various times the forest has been the refuge of Welsh Princes fighting the Norman Invasion, a Royal Hunting Forest, and for two centuries was the ‘Texas’ of Wales, producing large quantities of oil for lamps as well as being a major supplier of timber for the trenches during World War One.

Today’s forest is very different. During the Depression of the 1930s the UK government purchased land which had been part of the original Glyn Cothi Forest and set to work on conifer plantations and construction of forest roads. Today, there are some 5000 hectares to explore.

AN ARBORETUM

There’s a garden in the forest! Brechfa Forest Plots (1957–1961) was a local initiative by Forestry Commission staff to raise and plant a variety of trees, mainly coniferous, to access their suitability for future planting. Many of the trees have matured and constitute a remarkable arboretum with trees from all over the world – giant redwoods from California; eucalyptus from Australia; nothofagus from South America; firs from all the continents and a variety of European species like sessile oak, walnut and spruces. All the common woodland birds can be found here, as well as less common ones such as crossbill and goshawk. The Forest Garden Walk does require stamina, however. It starts from Abergorlech picnic site (you do the Gorlech walk to start) and takes 3 hours. A detailed leaflet can be downloaded from DiscoverCarmarthenshire website but local traders would find it useful to have copies to hand to give to walkers.

PUSHCRAIRs & WHEELCHAIRs WELCOME

For those who prefer a short, easy walk, the Gwarallt Walk trail is designed to be suitable for use by all. There’s a gentle climb through beech woodlands to reach an open area planted with native trees such as oak, rowan and birch. Here fantastic views of the Marlais and Cothi Valley open up with its mix of open pastureland and woods. It’s just quarter of a mile – ideal for little ones.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Brechfa is a prime destination for mountain bikers, with several quite famous trails to keep the mountain biking fraternity talking and competing, as well as a mountain biking centre.

DID YOU KNOW?

- It was following the final subjugation of Wales by Edward I in 1283, that Glyn Cothi became a Royal Forest administered under the harsh Forest Law as a source of timber, a private hunting reserve and source of hawks for falconry.
- The king’s foresters had to account to the King’s Justiciar at Carmarthen Castle.
- Forest Law involved severe punishment for offences against both ‘venison’ and ‘vert’. The ‘vert’ included trees, coppices, the underwood and feeding ground of the game. Venison covered all the forest animals – in medieval Glyn Cothi these included red deer, fallow deer and roe deer, wild boars, wolf, fox, hare and marten.
POET OF THESE PARTS

Lewis Glyn Cothi was one of the most important professional bards of Wales. It is believed he was born in the forest of Glyn Cothi and took its name as part of his respect for the area. Most of his surviving poems are praise songs to the gentry of Carmarthenshire, south Cardiganshire, and Radnorshire, some 230 of them having been preserved. None of these can be dated much later than 1487, which has led scholars to conclude that he died before 1490.

His most moving poem is an elegy for his five-year-old son, Marwnad Siôn y Glyn, a tender portrait which shows that neither childhood playfulness nor a father’s grief was any less poignant five hundred years ago.

Afal pêr ac aderyn
A garai'r gwas, a gro gwyn;
Bwa o flaen y ddraenen,
Cleddau digon brau o bren

A sweet apple and a bird
The little fellow loved,
and little white stones;
A bow made from a thorn sapling,
A sword from brittle wood.

ABERGORLECH

‘Aber’ means the point where two rivers join, and Gorlech is the river which joins the Cothi nearby. The village is pretty as a picture (a Best Kept Village winner at one time) and the picnic site is in a lovely wooded location where the rivers meet, complete with a children’s play area.

FOUND SCULPTURES

Strangely shaped stones are found in the river, and examples of these ‘Gorlech Stones’ are displayed in the front gardens of cottages in the villages. They are nodules of iron-rich mudstone which have dried out and cracked. The cracks have later become filled with Calcite, a hard mineral which has resisted erosion while the softer mudstone has partly worn away, creating the strange shapes once thought to be fossil animals.

WALKING

Walkers can take off in several directions from the village. If they have two hours to spare, the Gorlech Walk is a rewarding, if strenuous, hike. But for families who want an easy walk which will bring them up close to wildlife, the Riverside walk is just a mile long. It starts from the picnic site, has no steps and only a gentle gradient. What could be better than spotting a kingfisher, or maybe even an otter? The Gorlech river is pretty and unspoilt.

A MEAL BY THE RIVER

The Black Lion Inn, Abergorlech received Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence 2013, and little wonder. Their Beer Garden is on the bank of the River Cothi, which is a great place to sit and enjoy the scenery and wildlife. It has also been voted the 7th best Beer Garden in Britain by the Times online! Could it have anything to do with the sort of meal noted below?

Steak and Ale Pie: slow-cooked Welsh beef cooked in Rhymney ale, topped with homemade shortcrust pastry.

That’s the kind of incentive walkers and cyclists need!

Afal pêr ac aderyn
A garai'r gwas, a gro gwyn;
Bwa o flaen y ddraenen,
Cleddau digon brau o bren

A sweet apple and a bird
The little fellow loved,
and little white stones;
A bow made from a thorn sapling,
A sword from brittle wood.
Rhydcymerau

Visitors who are interested in social and environmental issues – and who possibly belong to organisations or lobbying groups at home – will not just switch off completely when they’re on holiday. The causes which present themselves in the area they are exploring may mean a great deal to them, and they may wish to know more. For ambassadors who spend time with visitors, it can be very useful to know not only the politics of the moment but the back-stories too.

AN ANGRY POEM

Walking in Brechfa Forest, one might feel a million miles from politics of any kind. Yet there are environmentalists today who fear for the future of the land in the long term, the effects of conifers, the acidity of rivers and lakes. And there were people nearly a century ago when the forest was first planted who believed that farming land and communities were being sacrificed without good cause. The poet David James Jones, known by the bardic name of Gwenallt, wrote an angry poem in protest at the forestation of north Carmarthenshire, where his father was born and his uncle farmed. From his poem ‘Rhydcymerau’, a lament, these are some key lines translated:

My Uncle Dafydd farmed Tir-bach,
A country poet, a local rhymester ...
And now there is nothing there but trees,
Their insolent roots sucking at the ancient earth –

Conifers where once was community,
Forest in place of farms

When the Forestry Commission was set up in 1919 this area was one of the first in Wales to be planted. Gwenallt said they were planting trees ‘for the third world war’. He had been a conscientious objector in World War One and had no sympathy for the ‘war effort’.

WIND FARMS

Most visitors who come to the area today will be aware of the debate surrounding the erection of windfarms, which affected Llanlwni Mountain nearby. Many will applaud the efforts of protestors while others will believe wind power to be one way of halting the advance of nuclear power. It all makes for interesting discussion – over breakfast, at the pub ...

RURAL LIFE IMMORTALISED

Visitors may feel they are in a peaceful, remote part of the world when they come to the little village of Rhydcymerau and walk up onto the surrounding hills. Yet it is very different from the rural idyll which was captured by Welsh writer D J Williams in his books, Hen Dy Fferm (The Old Farmhouse) and Yn Chwech ar Hugain Oed (At Twenty-six years Old) mid way through the twentieth century. It was the century which changed the landscape and a way of life which had remained unchanged for generations. What would DJ have thought of the Wales Rally GB roaring past?

D J Williams was born in Rhydcymerau and showed a lifelong love for the neighbourhood and for Wales, displaying an unwavering loyalty towards both. He was a short story writer of renown, his work showing a thorough understanding of a close-knit community where common values prevailed. A committed pacifist, D J Williams took part, with Saunders Lewis and Lewis Valentine, in the symbolic burning of a bombing school at Penyberth in north-west Wales in 1936. As a result he spent nine months in Wormwood Scrubs prison.

He died in 1970 at Rhydcymerau and was buried in the cemetery of Rhydcymerau chapel.
As soon as you begin to choose highlights, there’s so much scope to offend. But as well as your own particular favourites, be sure to know about events at these great attractions.

**NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN OF WALES, LLANARTHNE**

The Great Glasshouse and the central gardens area are full of beautiful plants all year round. Less well known are Waun Las National Nature Reserve and the magical wooded valley of Pont Felin Gât – perfect for roaming, picnics and birdwatching. A ‘return free within 7 days’ policy operates from Easter right through the summer, because it really is impossible to see absolutely everything in a day. Motor powered and manual wheelchairs are available. Visitors to the Botanic Garden on Fridays can take advantage of the free guided tours of the Great Glasshouse.

**PENMBREY COUNTRY PARK AND CEFN SIDAN BEACH**

Cefn Sidan, an 8-mile long beach, is a wonderful stretch of golden sand, with safe bathing. Pembrey Country Park has activities for all the family: a dry ski slope; the longest toboggan ride in Wales; golf; cycle tracks; nature trails. Near the beach there’s a parent and baby room. Vehicles are charged admission but walkers enter for free.

**LAUGHRANE**

As well as enjoying The Boathouse, visitors can visit the writing shed or walk the Birthday Walk, based on the poet’s fine ‘Poem on His Birthday’. Dylan’s haunts include Browns Hotel, recently refurbished, and there are plenty of other eating and drinking opportunities in the town. The castle overlooking the estuary is splendid. The Laugharne Weekend every April and other festivities attract visitors from near and far.

**CASTLE WOODS AND DINEFWR PARK, LLANDEILO**

Visitors can walk up to Dinefwr Castle through the woodland nature reserve called Castle Woods, free of charge. Entrance to Dinefwr Castle is also free. In the broadleaved woodlands, oak, ash, beech and sycamore are the commonest trees, and other wildlife such as lichens and ferns abound. Birds such as nuthatches, woodpeckers and treecreepers are common. In winter, woodcock use the woodlands. Wild fallow deer roam through the wooded ridges and in the parkland there are white park cattle. The National Trust owns Newton House and the beautiful parkland in which it stands, which was designed in part by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown. There is an admission charge for the house and a parking fee if you come by car.

**NATIONAL WOOL MUSEUM, DRE-FACH FELINDRE**

Set in the village of Dre-fach Felindre in the beautiful Teifi valley, which was once the centre of the thriving woollen industry in Wales. Shirts and shawls, blankets and bedcovers, woollen stockings and socks were all made here, and sold not only in Wales but to the rest of the world. Machines in the building that was the former Cambrian Mill are still working! Visitors can watch a demonstration and experienced staff are happy to answer questions. After tracing the process from fleece to fabric, visitors are usually keen on the café …
Fairs and Festivals

It's great to have somewhere to go where there's a party atmosphere, a sense of occasion, celebration and fun. Fairs and festivals are just what people need to confirm that they really are on holiday. Some extra festivals will no doubt come and go, but the following seem to be annual events which are evolving into traditions. Discover Carmarthenshire keeps the listings page up-to-date so it's worth checking it often.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>The Laugharne Weekend – musicians, poets, writers, all mingling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Geopark Festival – talks, walks and explorations in the Black Mountain area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Carmarthen Riverside Festival – coracles and other craft on the Tywi, Welsh Game Fair, Carmarthen – falconry, wildfowling, stunts and entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Llandeilo Fawr Festival of Music and Jazz Festival – recitals by acclaimed classical performers, and all that jazz ... National Archaeology Day celebrations, Carmarthen Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Merlin Festival, Carmarthen – fancy dress, storytelling and circus tricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Sheep Festival, Llandovery – expert shearing, vintage machinery, with castle as centre stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Llandeilo Christmas Festival of Senses – shops and societies getting very Christmassy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agricultural Shows can be a delight for city dwellers, so information about which ones visitors might aim for would be good to keep. There’s plenty of choice, from Cothi Bridge Show (above) and St Clears YFC Show held in May (the latter at Carmarthen showground) to Llandyfaelog Show in September. July shows include Bancffosfelen, Cwmdu and Trap, while August is show time for Llangadog, Cynwyl Elfed and Llanddarog.

The United Counties Showground at Nantyci is home to all kinds of fairs and special events throughout the year, so it is worth keeping an eye on the website to know when the Antiques and Fleamarket or the Caravan and Motorhomes Show come round on the rota. Good to know also which Sundays are reserved for the straightforward – but very popular – carboot sales.

Events which can capture the imagination are held at various venues throughout the year so keep their programmes for reference and check their websites: The National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Lyric Theatre, Carmarthen, Aberglasney House and Garden, Newton House and Dinefwr Park, National Wool Museum, Dre-fach Felindre.

And of course, there’s always a Day at the Races to consider. Ffos-las Racecourse (left) host events several times a month: afternoon racing; evening racing; family fun days. Their fixtures list is always up-to-date on line.
Carmarthenshire is one of Wales’s Welsh-language strongholds. Visitors will encounter the language on signs, in place-names, and in the communities and places they visit.

The 2011 Census revealed that over 78,000 people in Carmarthenshire speak Welsh. So visitors will have no trouble hearing the language.

Give your visitors confidence – once they know the sounds all the consonants make, they’ll be fine! Welsh is consistent, and every consonant you come to is pronounced. There are no silent letters. So ‘Have a go’, say something in Welsh!

**Have a go!**

- **Welsh place-names are easy to understand when you know how.** They are descriptive, and echo a past when topography and landscape features were vitally important in navigation across land.

**BRYN** – hill (brynne)

**AFON** – river (ahw-on)

**FAN** – beacon / peak (van)

**MYNYDD** – mountain (mun-eeth)

**CAER** – fort (kyre)

**CASTELL** – castle (cas-tell)

**GARDD** – garden (garth – but ‘th’ as in ‘the’)

**Tŷ** – house (tee)

**MAWR** – large (mah-oor)

**BACH** – small (as in J. S. Bach)

**ABER** – mouth or confluence (abber)

**PONT** – bridge (pont)

**SHWMAE** – How are you – this is a local colloquial way of saying it (shoo ma-ee)

**BORÉ DA** – Good morning (boreh dah)

**PRYNHAWN DA** – Good afternoon (pron ha-oon dah)

**NOS DA** – Goodnight (nohs dah)

**DIOLCH** – Thank you (dee olch)

**HWYL** – Bye (Hoo-eel)

Welsh is spoken today in Patagonia, South America. The Welsh emigrated in large numbers in the nineteenth century and established a community in Chubut. The Welsh-Argentine community is still flourishing and has many of Wales’s passions: rugby, the eisteddfod, music.

Perhaps you should warn guests that ‘the little house’, tŷ bach, is our polite way of referring to the toilet. Don’t want them heading to the wrong place ...
Carmarthenshire on the Menu

While you sip your aperitif and consider the menu, look out for the use of local food – gifts from the land itself, the work of growers and farmers and talented cooks. There is no shortage of good food in this rural county, and when the distance from field to fork is a short one, you can taste the difference. When it was reared or grown or created just a few miles away, you need feel no guilt at all about carbon footprints. And once you’ve sampled the produce, you may well want to shop for some of your favourite ingredients at local shops and markets.

A MENU
You may not get this exact combination in the restaurants, but these are specialities borrowed from the real menus at eateries in this corner of Carmarthenshire. Visit and taste for yourself...

Duck Parfait, using free-range duck from Twin Rivers Farm, Ammanford (as served at the Belle Vue Inn, Llanllwni)

Pen y Gorof sausages, made in Rhandir-mwyn (as served at the Royal Oak, Rhandir-mwyn)

Organic Fferm Tyllwyd Welsh Black Fillet of Beef – from Nantgaredig (as served at Ty Mawr Country Hotel, Brechfa)

Goetre Faggots, made in Llanllwni (as served at The Talardd Inn, Llanllwni)

Bara brith, made by Cegin Pantygwin, Cellan, near Lampeter (as enjoyed by the authors of this leaflet)

For a local ale to fuel a hearty appetite, what about Red Squirrel Ale made by Jacobi Brewery at Caeo? (Relax! It’s not made from squirrels. See the story right.)

Jacobi Brewery

Having left behind a career in insurance, in 2000 Justin Jacobi bought a pub in Caeo and began to turn his hand to brewing, setting free his passion for beer. This small microbrewery now turns out a seasonal range of beers including Beekeeper’s Delight, Jacobi Light, Jacobi Original, Jacobi Dark and, winner of the National Trust Fine Food award, Red Squirrel. This ale, quite apart from tasting good, promotes the red squirrel conservation programme in the nearby Brechfa forest. Visitors will find his beers in local shops and delis, food markets and, of course, in pubs.

Llansawel Market

Visitors interested in local food might wish to pop along to Llansawel Market, held on the third Saturday of each month between 10am and 1pm. Regular stallholders include cake makers, Cegin Pantygwin, organic beef and egg producers Fferm Tyllwyd, bread and home-made pizzas by Izzy’s Bread, and vegetables and preserves made by Rhyd-y-Gwin Farm.
For hundreds of years, the only way to move cattle – or sheep – from the uplands of Wales to the big towns and cities that were eager to buy the meat, was to drive them. Until the railways came within reach of rural Wales, drovers were key figures in the economy and social structure. With their helpers, their horses and their dogs, they were imposing figures, orchestrating logistics on an impressive scale. They were the men who made the selling of animals possible for farmers, and they had to be trustworthy. The best ones were widely respected, while the rogues, like cowboy builders today, caused misery and ruin.

Llandovery was a key meeting-place for drovers from several directions – from western Ceredigion, through Llanllwni, and from the Cambrian mountains, travelling down through Cwmann and Caer, Cily-cwm and into Llandovery. And further south, the route from Pembrokeshire followed the Tywi valley through Ffair-fach, Llandeilo and Llangadog. 30,000 animals passed through Llandovery every year on their way to faraway markets.

What the Drovers Saw

- The routes they took across the mountains were direct and often inhospitable. Once the Turnpike Trust system was introduced, they would take rougher routes in order to avoid the toll gates, to save paying a significant fee. They were canny fellows, living a hard life, often having to sleep outside with the livestock.

- It was drover David Jones who first set up the Black Ox Bank in 1799 in the fine King’s Head building on the main street in Llandovery. So drovers could make ‘promises’ rather than hand over gold sovereigns, he printed his own bank notes. Of course, the name of his bank would have been a winning choice – it was essential to win the favour of the drovers and their money.

- What did they see on their long journeys? The hind quarters of the animals they herded, certainly; the next inn and resting fields they were aiming for that night; the shadows in the woodland that might just be outlaws, ready to attack and steal stock. They would also have seen the outlines of hills, magnificent vistas and rolling countryside.

DID YOU KNOW?
The well trained dogs that assisted the drovers were sometimes sent home alone once the drive was over, while their masters continued with the financial transactions and enjoyed some well-earned leisure in the city. The dogs, their homing instincts well developed, followed the same route back and often ‘lodged’ in the same inns that the drovers had stayed at on the outward leg. The drovers would have already paid for the dogs’ food in a job-lot arrangement.

ON HORSEBACK
At Five Saints Riding Centre in Pumsaint, you can explore some of the roads the drovers took, but without the discomfort of sleeping rough and without the worry of robbers with designs on your sovereigns. It will be a peaceful break, with guidance, tuition and lovely horses to boot. One special package they offer to holidaying groups is the chance to have a weekend farmhouse party, which involves exclusive use of the farmhouse and riding facilities for groups of 6–12 people. The centre is very flexible: ‘If you’re visiting the area and would like to do some horse riding give us a call, we can take you out for a 1 hour ride, 2 hour ride, half day & full day pub or picnic rides. We also do a half-hour lead rein ride for small children.’
The River Cothi

The upper reaches of the river Cothi form a steep gorge from which the Romans, way back in the 1st century AD, built an aqueduct to take running water to the gold mines at Dolaucothi. The remains of this leat and others used at the mines to extract the gold are still visible at many spots along the Cothi and tributaries. There are lovely walks, starting from the Dolaucothi Estate, where there is parking, a picnic site and, of course, the goldmine to visit. Waterfalls and woodland are a winning combination.

**FISHING**

The River Cothi is the largest tributary of the River Tywi and is noted for its trout and sea trout (sewin) as well as its solitude and beautiful scenery. There is reverential talk about this major tributary to the Tywi being as good as its parent river. The first sewin may be caught in May on a spate river with worm or spinner proving productive. Clearing water is required for fly fishing after dark and the lower stretches of the Cothi, in a broader valley surrounded by farmland, are easier for this style of fishing.

WHAT FISHERMEN TALK ABOUT

If you check the conversations on a fishing or angling forum on line, you’ll find that all manner of fish have been caught on the Cothi. There is sometimes a proliferation of ‘brownies’, which are brown trout, apparently a slower growing fish and more relaxed than the rainbow trout! The clean, white flesh is delicious, straight from the frying pan. Huge pike have also been caught – no advice given about how to tackle those.

To help with planning a fishing trip, both local and visiting anglers can access a high-quality HD web cam installed by Natural Resources Wales on the Cothi river in 2013, just upstream of the Tywi/Cothi confluence at Nantgaredig. The live images update every 10 seconds to allow a quick and easy assessment of river conditions and level, and an all-important weather forecast is provided as well. Perhaps anglers will even catch more fish as a result! A fishery such as Abercothi Estate Fishery has advice, rules and timetables to be followed and much can be learned on line before booking a fishing trip. Spinning is permitted (but not worming or shrimping), but only at high or coloured water. There is a Ghillie to advise you if this is so. It is even possible to book a personal ghillie.

**RAFT-BUILDING**

It’s amazing what people get up to in the name of ‘work’! What sounds a lot more fun than a ‘Heads of Department Meeting’ or an ‘Annual Review Meeting’? We’ll tell you: raft-building on the river Cothi. Hawk Adventures is a Carmarthenshire company offering adventure courses to businesses and other groups where team-building is the aim. The river Cothi just below the Dolaucothi goldmines is an ideal stretch of water for learning some white-water techniques, building a craft and getting very wet when the team dynamics are not quite what they should be. This stretch of the riverside is owned by the National Trust and permission has been granted for this highly enjoyable bonding.

Images: The Black Lion; LiTn/shutterstock.com; Hawk Adventures
The making of quilts was another skill passed on from generation to generation in rural Wales. Mercifully, the quilts which gave warmth through the winters were in many cases meticulously stored and a huge respect was shown for these precious possessions.

To see beautiful examples of contemporary blankets and a huge range of quilts, you will need to cross to the northern banks of the Teifi – a foray into neighbouring Ceredigion.

JEN JONES WELSH QUILT CENTRE, LAMPTETER

Jen Jones has been buying, selling and collecting Welsh quilts for more than thirty years. Over that time, she has acquired a deep knowledge and understanding of the art and craft of Welsh quilt-making.

The fascination was first triggered by the quilts her family had in their home in Massachusetts but it was not until she arrived in Wales in 1971 that this obsession came into its own.

For many years she operated from her cottage outside Llanybydder, where she still has a shop, but in 2009 came the opportunity to take on an extremely fine building in Lampeter, namely the Town Hall. After painstaking renovation it became the Welsh Quilt Centre – a gallery and shop with a handy café next door. With such a wealth of content, it is unrealistic to make any visit to the Quilt Centre a short one, so allow for a fuel stop! Every year a major exhibition attracts audiences from all over the world. In 2012, quilts made by the Amish people featured in the summer exhibition, while the 2013 saw vibrant contemporary work from the Kaffe Fasset studio. The 2014 exhibition, Gwely Cynnar / Early to Bed, features rarely-seen examples of early Welsh quilts.

There is no doubt that Jen Jones is passionate about sharing knowledge and skills. Quilt-related courses are offered during the year and Jen herself is often the subject of magazine articles and media interest. Her enthusiasm and expertise certainly help to keep the craft of quilting alive and well in Wales.

ROCK MILL, CAPEL DEWI

Rock Mill in Capel Dewi was built by the great grandfather of the present owner, Donald Morgan, next to the river Clettwr, a tributary of the Teifi. It still has a waterwheel powering its machinery, a cast iron overshot wheel measuring 12 feet in diameter. It was made in a Cardigan foundry and installed in 1890 when the mill was built. The waterwheel has a direct drive to carding and spinning machinery, while a generator driven from the line shaft is used to power two weaving looms. It is most unusual to come across Dobcross looms still at work, producing blankets, throws and tapestry bedcovers. The mill building is open to visitors during the summer months so the traditional methods of spinning and weaving can be observed. The shop, however, is open all year round, with many products being sold directly to the public at bargain prices.
Visitors to Wales love to discover what it is to be Welsh, and what makes each region of Wales so distinctive and special. They will appreciate hosts who are willing to share the inside stories and show a true Sense of Place.

This pack was created as part of Carmarthenshire Tourist Association’s Rural Tourism Clusters Project to provide tourism businesses within the North Carmarthenshire cluster with guidance on the distinctive features of this region.

- **The Tourism Department** of Carmarthenshire County Council welcomes enquiries from anyone running a business in the tourism sector and invites traders to use text and images that they have already created.

- **Visit Wales** is also an important resource, their image bank being called Wales on View.

- **Contact Carmarthenshire Tourist Association** about accessing any of the images in this pack which you would like to use in your business. Most of them will be available to tourism businesses. On line, make use of Tywi Valley Trails. Trails can be printed to give to visitors.

The Rural Tourism Clusters Project is part of RDP Sir Gar’s Innovative Hubs Project and has received funding through the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

Words: Mairwen Jones, Mentora a Mwy   Design: Rebecca Ingleby Davies, mopublications