

# Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Tyddewi a Phebidiog St Davids and Dewisland Historical Society

## Volunteering with the National Trust

Ian Hextall

**The story began** with watching Billy Connolly's "World Tour of Scotland" series and he used a phrase about himself that appealed - "Windswept and interesting" then roll forward to 1999 - and our first holiday in Pembrokeshire, in Rhodiad, and one glorious afternoon found ourselves standing at St David's Head thinking "This is where I can be windswept and interesting and tell people about the National Trust" ... only to discover that instead of properties like Chartwell or Dinefwr North Pembrokeshire comprises 50 miles of coastline, 28 separate land holdings, 6700 acres of land, much of it conservation grazing land with a fence on one side and a cliff edge on the other, 14 SSSIs, 206 archaeological features (including half the 53 Iron Age promontory forts around the coast) ... ALL of it 'windswept and interesting' but seldom a Ranger or Volunteer in sight - they are in the undergrowth ! My first Thursday volunteer day was on a typical May day on the backside of the Gribbin - putting in an electric fence in a gale and driving rain. (One volunteer had a saying "You know it's time to call it a day when your knickers are wet through" ... external causes or course!)

I got the job of watering the back wall of Treleddydd Fawr with a hosepipe while the other volunteers were applying layers of lime wash with brushes - it seems to have worked, the lovely cottage has roughly 90% occupancy - Oh! And the most memorable thing was seeing my wife whitewashing the internal walls of the outside toilet, there are photos...



Over the last 5 years North Pembrokeshire volunteers have;

Helped uncover the 7 'newer' Iron Age Hut Platforms on the Gribbin

Planted 5000 Blackthorn and Hawthorne on the new hedge-banking at Southwood

Created numerous firebreaks in the gorse on and around St David's Head

Repointed the Elephants Grave at Little Haven

Uncovered the Promontory fort at Castell Heinief and the Furze Mill at Lower Treginnis farm

Tackled Himalayan Balsam at Ceibwr & ragwort on the Deer Park (to name just 2)

Painted one of the beacons marking the entrance to Porth Gain



**EXTRA DUTIES:** The thing about the National Trust is that once they have you they find other jobs for you to do, in addition to the above I also go by the grand title of Digital and Social Media Volunteer (editing web sites and posting things on Facebook) and some of you will have suffered from my guided tours of Southwood Farm - celebrating the delights of the evidence of real people who lived and worked in the house and around the farm. Volunteers are regularly roped in to help

out with events at Southwood - particularly the "50 Things to Do Before You Are 11 ¾", which includes 'Wild Art' and Snail-Racing ... helping engage younger children with their environment away from i-pads and phones!



**STATISTICS:** I would like to leave you with some statistics about National Trust Volunteers and some quotes from them - last year there were 61,000 of us. We gave just under 5 million hours of our time which have - some accountant in head office has calculated - a notional value of £43 million.

**QUOTES:** They (Head Office) conducted a survey last year and collected some quotes from volunteers - we had the expected "I work with a really good crowd here and we have a laugh" - "it gives you a sense of community" and "you feel you've done something that makes a difference and is appreciated" but my favourite one was from an Outdoor Volunteer at Knole in Kent "It's a bit like working, but without all the hassle" - AND THAT IS THE POINT, IT'S FUN

Thank you and Happy Christmas