

Support for group battling to save St Quentin's castle

CAMPAIGNERS FIGHTING to save the historic St Quentin's Castle hope the end of their battle may be in sight. In 1983 the Welsh Office promised to compulsorily purchase the 14th-century ruined castle at Llanblethian, in the county of Glamorgan — but since then nothing has happened.

Now Vale MP John Smith has written to the Welsh Office demanding speedy action to save the castle.

Yesterday he visited the site and met residents, councillors and members of the local history society.

Howbridge and Llanblethian town councillor Mr Eveleigh, one of the campaigners, said, "What we want is for the castle to be put on the stage where it has deteriorated so much that

By **JENNY SNEESBY**

there will be no option but to knock it down."

St Quentin's was built for Gilbert de Clare at the beginning of the 14th century, but he died at the age of 23 at the battle of Bannockburn before it was completed.

Evidence shows that in the 1370s the castle was lived in, but by 1477 it had been turned into a prison.

"It is in a beautiful position overlooking the river and it could be a tourist attraction if it were restored properly," said Mr Eveleigh.

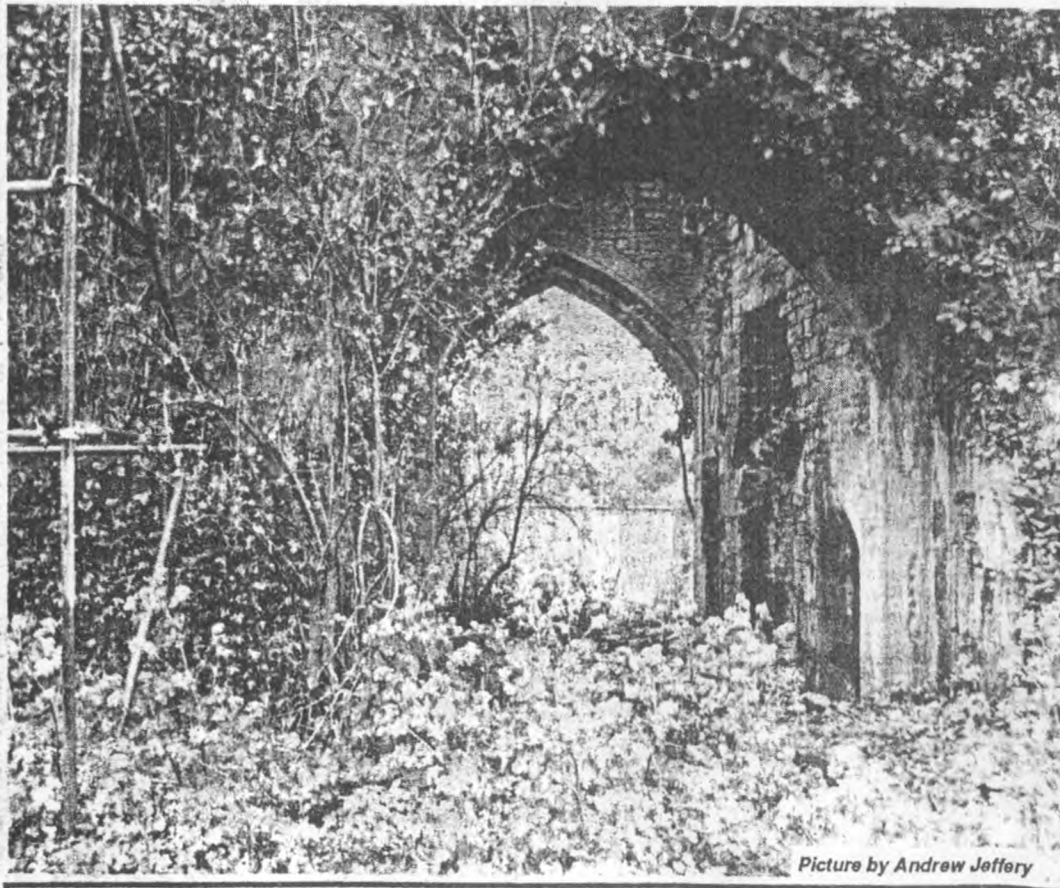
It is understood that CADW has had discussions with the owner over purchase of the land and has plans for the clearance and consolidation of the castle and grounds.



SHOWING THE WAY . . . MP John Smith (left) joins (left to right) local historical society's Mrs Gwynneth Keay, councillor Mrs Jane Hydon and Dr Paul Thomas of the Council for Protection of Rural Wales at the castle.

GEM. 23rd MARCH 1990

FIGHT FOR CASTLE CONTINUES



Picture by Andrew Jeffery

In the latest effort to save a fourteenth century castle from decay, Vale MP John Smith has now joined a long-standing campaign by local residents demanding action.

By Sarah Hoss

Cowbridge Town Council and the local history society appealed to Mr Smith to join the fight to save St. Quentin's Castle, Cowbridge in an attempt to revive a so far unsuccessful campaign which dates back to the 1960's.

Mr. Smith told The GEM that he has written to the Undersecretary of State for Wales, requesting urgent action.

According to local councillor Victor Eveleigh, local people have been fighting to have St. Quentin's Castle renovated and preserved as an ancient monument, but their demands have still not been met.

Despite action by the Welsh Office instructing that the castle be acquired by compulsory purchase order, it still

remains in the hands of a private owner.

The issue finally came to a head in January 1988 when CADW - the Welsh monument preservation group met local residents who agreed to a programme of remedial work, including the provision of a car park.

Money was allocated for the work, but, according to Coun. Eveleigh, nothing happened.

A year later, CADW claimed that the owner, Michael Boland had presented a scheme of his own, to repair the castle.

Coun Eveleigh told The GEM: "We are very confident that Mr Smith will be able to help us in our fight to protect this monument which overlooks the river in Cowbridge.

"It is situated in a beautiful area and local people regret the decay of this ancient castle."

A spokesperson for CADW told The GEM that they recently met the

owner and are now awaiting plans from his agent.

"CADW is keen to collaborate with private owners in order to conserve the built heritage of Wales," he stated.

Quarry appeal

A Welsh Office local inquiry will be held to decide whether unauthorised development has taken place on land known as Sefton Quarry, Penmark.

Vale Borough Council had served an enforcement notice against Mr D P Wilkins on grounds that he had carried out unauthorised operations on the land.

These included the depositing of various refuse and waste materials for the purpose of raising the level of the land.

According to the council, uncontrolled tipping would cause

undesirable intrusion into the countryside and harm visual amenities.

In addition, the trail likely to be generated would be a source of noise and disturbance to nearby residents.

An Inspector will hold the inquiry to hear Mr Wilkin's appeal on May 9 at 10am at the Civic Offices, Vale Borough Council in Holton Road, Barry.

A location plan of the land in question could be inspected during office hours at the department of planning services in the Council Offices.

GEM 6/4/90

CASTLE HASSLE



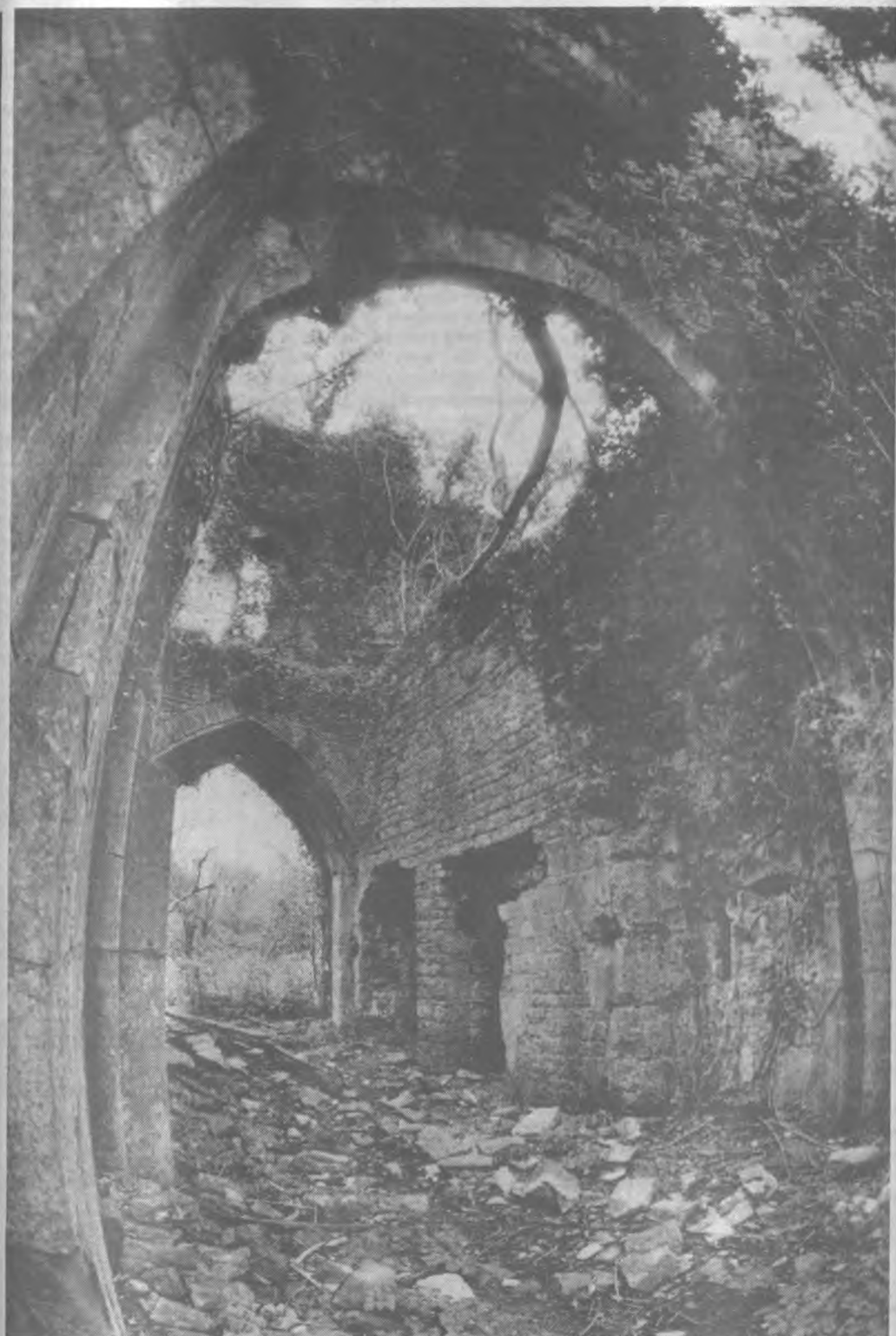
IN response to an appeal for help from Cowbridge Town Council, Vale of Glamorgan MP John Smith is to press Welsh Office Minister Wyn Roberts to hold an

urgent meeting with representatives of the council and other interested parties to discuss the long standing issue of St Quentin's Castle.

Mr Smith said "I will be appealing to the Welsh Office Minister to hold urgent discussions with a view to taking action to carry out remedial works to the castle."

As reported in The GEM local people have been fighting to have St Quentin's Castle renovated and preserved by CADW as an ancient monument.

GAZETTE



St Quentin's Castle at Llanblethian, Cowbridge, in the Vale of Glamorgan, which is ruinous and in need of restoration.

St Quentin's was built in the early fourteenth century for Gilbert de Clare, who died before it was finished, at the Battle of Bannockburn (1314), writes *Susanna Gross*. There is evidence that the castle was lived in during the 1370s, but by 1477 it

had been turned into a prison. Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, a government-funded organisation responsible for conservation of such monuments, plans to collaborate with its owners in the restoration of the site.

For further information, contact: Cadw, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff CF2 1UW, telephone 0222 465511. *Photograph: Christopher Jones*

Howe backs castle fight

TOP Tory Sir Geoffrey Howe has lent his support to a bid to have urgent work carried out on the 12th Century St Quentin's Castle at Llanblethian, near Cowbridge.

Vale MP Mr John Smith called on the leader of the House of Commons to find time to review legislation relating to the protection of historic monuments and the country's heritage.

* Pleased

Mr Smith said: "As Sir Geoffrey Howe and the Speaker of the House of Commons both have family connections with the Cowbridge area, I hope they will do what they can to get the necessary urgent work carried out on this historic monument before it is too late."

Mr Smith added that he was "extremely pleased" with the reply from Sir Geoffrey, who said he was sufficiently conscious of the value and importance of Llanblethian Castle and that he would draw the local MP's points to the attention of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Minister in attempt to lift a siege

THE BATTLE TO save Llanblethian's historic St Quentin's Castle has erupted into a political war of words. Welsh Office Minister Wyn Roberts has angrily denied Commons charges that bureaucratic red tape has allowed the 14th century castle to crumble.

By Bill Doult

ment inaction and incompetence in Wales."

'Inertia Prize'

For he says he has discovered that in November, 1983, the Minister, in a letter to the Vale of Glamorgan previous Tory MP, the late Sir Raymond Gower, promised to help.

But in a recent letter to Mr Smith the Minister revealed that the Welsh Office was "still in discussions" with the owner.

"Six and a half years we've been waiting and still nothing ... I reckon the Minister deserves the

Nobel Prize for Inertia," declared the Vale MP.

Not so, says Mr Roberts, though. And he insists that Mr Smith knows that as well.

Fiercely denying he had been lax in trying to save the castle, the Minister claimed he, too, was disappointed that restoration work had not begun.

Indicated

But he claimed the difficulties surrounding the situation had been explained in a letter to the Vale MP.

For a start, he maintained, compulsory acquisition of private property by the state was not an issue to be approached lightly.

The government had given undertakings that compulsory purchase powers would only be used where there was no alternative.

In the case of St Quentin's Castle, the Minister said the owners had indicated they wanted to restore the castle and had sought statutory consent to do so.

Pension rights ruling backed

A SOUTH WALES CAMPAIGNER for equal pension rights has welcomed a new European Community court ruling.

A Brief History of St Quentin's

Battles have been fought at St. Quentin's Castle since the early 12th Century.

St. Quentin's Castle boasts several very special features. The original early 12th Century keep was the second largest in Glamorgan.

The existing gatehouse, with its two vaulted guardrooms still intact, is unusual in that it was built to be defended both front and rear and thus also served as a keep.

Gilbert de Clare III, second only in importance to King Edward II, built the Castle in 1307-1314 before dying at the battle of

Bannockburn.

It was owned by Hugh Despenser the Younger who schemed his way to be more powerful than the King.

His successor Edward Despenser, Lord of Glamorgan, died there from his wounds suffered at the battle of Crecy fighting alongside the Black Prince.

James Tyrell (who organised the murder of the Princes in the Tower) governed the Castle.

It is said that Owain Glyndwr attacked it

and then Oliver Cromwell personally supervised its partial demolition.

The Castle has played an important role in both local and national history.

The Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments states that excavation is certain to reveal more valuable parts of the construction.

Further information:

Cowbridge History Society.

Katherine Jones, Hilary Thomas or George Haynes, on:

Tel: 0446 772415, 775119, 772720

ST QUENTIN'S OWNER MAY BE CHARGED WITH PERJURY

The Director of Public Prosecutions may be asked to take action against St Quentin's Castle owner, Michael Boland.

This follows prosecutions by Mid Glamorgan County Council.

Judge Wesley QC said that he would consider passing his observations on the case to the DPP with a view to Michael Boland being charged for perjury and conspiracy to pervert

the course of justice.

Giving his views on the case, the judge said he was not satisfied with the evidence given by Mr Boland and his main witnesses.

The case concerns alleged obstruction of a highway in Tondur Road, Bridgend.

The judge withheld sentencing until the outcome is known of an appeal by Mr Boland to the High Court in a separate case.

'Gem' 25/5/90

St Quentin's Castle goes to Westminster



St. Quentin's Castle was built by Gilbert St. Claire in the fourteenth century and was the summer residence of the Lord of Glamorgan, who died there in 1375. Local residents fear for the future of the castle after years of inaction by the authorities.

CONTROVERSY surrounding the future of St Quentin's Castle, Cowbridge, reached the House of Commons last week. Vale MP John Smith asked the Welsh minister why he has failed to acquire the ancient monument under a Compulsory Purchase Order, agreed upon over six years ago by the Welsh Office minister Mr Wyn Roberts.

The early day motion was sponsored by 12 MP's, angry at the lack of action to save the 16th century castle from decay.

According to local councillor Victor Eveleigh, local people have been fighting to have St Quentin's Castle renovated and preserved as an an-

cient monument, but their demands have still not been met.

Despite action by the Welsh Office instructing that the castle be acquired by compulsory purchase order, it still remains in the hands of a private owner.

The issue finally came to a head in January 1988 when CADW - the Welsh monument preservation group met local residents who agreed to a programme of remedial work.

Money was allocated for the work, but according to Coun. Eveleigh, nothing happened.

Complaining at the lack of action, Mr Smith said "I reckon the minister deserves the Nobel Prize for Inertia."

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COMMONS LEAD BACKS ST. QUENTIN

EXCLUSIVE BY SARAH HOSS

RESIDENTS campaigning for the preservation of St Quentin's Castle in Cowbridge have recruited the powerful support of Sir Geoffrey Howe leader of the House of Commons.

The GEM contacted Sir Geoffrey when it was revealed that he

has family connections with Cowbridge. Sir Geoffrey told The GEM:

"I know that there is understandable concern in the Cowbridge area that more needs to be done to conserve St Quentin's Castle.

"It is a fine monument and one that we are all keen to protect.

Government, in the shape of Cadw, has a role to play and is currently working with the owners of the Castle to establish a programme of conservation.

"Of course," Sir Geoffrey continued, "the possibility of compulsory acquisition exists for monuments were other routes to fail but this must be seen as a last resort as Parliament made clear when the law was passed.

"I know that Sir Wyn Roberts, as the Minister responsible for Heritage matters at the Welsh Office, is keeping closely in touch with developments.

"I am sure he will do all he can to ensure the preservation of this important monument."

The plight of this twelfth century castle has been causing concern amongst Cowbridge residents for over 30 years.

Cllr. V. Eveleigh, who has been campaigning for the preservation of the castle since the early 1960s said:

"It is nice to know that following this, the result of many people's efforts in preserving our heritage, after 30 years of neglect, something is now being done to preserve St Quentin's Castle.

"I am sure that many people in this area will be pleased that this action is being taken as a result of the interest shown across a wide political spectrum and will be grateful to The GEM for supporting



Offering support: Sir Geoffrey Howe

the Town Council and the Cowbridge History Society in their campaign.

Mr Smith told The GEM: "I have taken this issue to the leader of The House in an attempt to obtain long-awaited Welsh Office action to prevent future deterioration of

this historic monument."

Vale MP John Smith first drew Sir Geoffrey's attention to this issue last month after he discovered that Sir Geoffrey's Great Great Great Grandfather was a farmer in Cowbridge.



St. Quentin's Castle: Action at last?



RESTORATION CAMPAIGN: MP John Smith (left) and Mr Vic Eveleigh, of the Cowbridge and District Historical Society, inspect St Quentin's Castle.

Cadw step in to stop castle falling down

THOUSANDS OF pounds worth of emergency repairs will be carried out by the Welsh Office to one of Wales's privately-owned ancient monuments to stop it falling down.

In an unprecedented move, officials from Cadw — Welsh Historic Monuments — have been given the go-ahead to force their way into the property to do the work if the owner, a Penarth businessman, fails to co-operate.

The plan was unveiled last night just as the latest shots were being fired in the House of Commons in the 30-year battle to save the 14th-century St Quentin's Castle, at Llanblethian, near Cowbridge.

Campaigners fighting to save the building are angry that despite a Welsh Office promise in 1983 to com-

By DAVID VICKERMAN,
Environment Correspondent

pulsorily purchase the ruin, so restoration work could be carried out, nothing has been done until now.

Last night Vale of Glamorgan Labour MP Mr John Smith said, "St Quentin's Castle in Llanblethian — an early 14th-century monument with its unique gatehouse — has been under threat for at least 26 years."

COMPLETED

Minister of State Sir Wyn Roberts said in the Commons last night that Welsh Office was satisfied the owner had had every opportunity to carry out urgent works, as the owner had not done so it had stepped in to preserve the integrity of the monument.

The castle is owned by Mr Michael Boland, of Hickman Road, Penarth. He could not be contacted last night for comment.

St Quentin's was built for Gilbert de Clare at the beginning of the 14th century, but he died at the age of 23 at the Battle of Bannockburn, before the castle was completed.

Local campaigners want the building, which overlooks the river, turned into a tourist attraction.

Last night a spokesman for Cadw said the necessary notice had been served on the owner and emergency work was expected to begin on December 17.

He said the work would be limited to shoring up dangerous walls and other emergency jobs to prevent the castle falling down.

Cadw will pay for the work.

HAPPY HOUR

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5.30-7.00

THE GEM

for Glamorgan

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December 7, 1990

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LA
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ON PAGE 25

CADW TAKE ACTION

AFTER 26 YEARS of tireless campaigning by local residents, councillors and history societies, CADW - Welsh Historic Monuments - are finally going to carry out emergency repairs to St. Quentin's Castle, starting on December 17.

This unprecedented decision to act was taken as Vale MP John Smith attacked the Welsh Office in a Commons debate over their "failure to protect one of Wales' most precious ancient monuments."

The 14th century castle, owned by Pe-

By Helen Lavender

narth property developer Michael Bolland, was the subject of a preservation order from the Secretary of State for Wales in 1978.

In 1983, the Welsh Office declared it was going to compulsorily purchase

the site and granted CADW statutory powers to enter the property to commence restoration.

CADW failed to act, preferring to consider Mr Bolland's personal restoration plans none of which came to fruition.

John Smith tabled an Early Day Motion to draw attention to the inaction of the Welsh Office. Mr Smith told the Commons:

"It would appear that the landowner is continuing to make a fool out of the Welsh Office Minister and in the meantime the onset of yet another winter may seriously affect the structure, both from

high winds and water penetration."

Mr Smith called on the Welsh Office to acquire the site immediately, but a spokesperson for CADW said that they would only consider a Compulsory Purchase Order as a drastic last step to secure the future of the monument.

Cowbridge Town Councillor Victor Eveleigh, who spearheaded the campaign to save St Quentin's, feels such action is long overdue.

"Compulsory purchase is the only solution - we have to worry about the future of the castle.

"I would not want future generations to have to go through a 30 year battle as we have had to."





Dec 5th
1990
Western
Mail

**Castle that
refuses
to die**
PAGE 5

SOUTH WALES ECHO - 5/12/90

Castle owners' repairs warning

URGENT repairs to a privately-owned South Wales castle will be paid for by the Government in a unique move, it was announced in the Commons late last night.

Welsh minister of state Sir Wyn Roberts said during a short debate that work to remove tree growth and treat masonry would be carried out on 14th century St Quentin's Castle, near Cowbridge.

It is the first time the Welsh Office has used statutory powers to restore a listed building in private ownership.

Sir Wyn hinted that a compulsory purchase order may be made on the castle if it is allowed to deteriorate further.

Cadw, the Welsh historic monuments organisation, will carry out the work.

Sir Wyn told the House the Welsh Office made the decision to intervene only after owners had been "afforded every opportunity" to carry out repairs.

He added: "I do not rule out the use of compulsory purchase orders if that proves to be the only way to safeguard the monument."

Labour's John Smith (Vale of Glamorgan), who opened the debate, said: "We do have to act very quickly. The state of the castle is now quite worrying."

He added: "You can hardly see it, even though it's a three storey monument, because of the overgrowth."



CADW review castle

Welsh historic monuments - CADW - are currently reviewing St Quentin's castle to find out how the ancient ruin can be preserved.

A spokesman for CADW told *The GEM*: "The latest development is that the owner's agents are discussing with CADW what needs to be done now."

The castle, in Llanblethian, had fallen into disrepair for many years and local residents, councillors and Vale MP John Smith called on CADW to put a compulsory purchase order on it.

This week the Vale Borough council has 'fully endorsed' the work carried out by CADW last December which prevented St Quentin's castle from falling down.

CADW had to carry out emergency repairs to save the castle from imminent collapse. Tree growth and ivy was removed from the gatehouse and masonry was treated to prevent further damage.

CADW had to use its reserve powers to enter the ruin without the owner's consent. The castle is pictured before the vital work was done.

Castle repairs backed

PROPOSED improvement work to save St Quentins Castle near Cowbridge from collapse has been supported by Vale of Glamorgan councillors.

The Welsh Office's ancient monuments group, CADW, plan to use their powers to carry out work to the castle in Llanblethian, including removing trees and ivy at upper levels and the treatment of masonry to prevent its collapse.

In a report to councillors, Mr John Maitland Evans, the Vale's director of planning and environmental services, said the castle was an Ancient Monument and concern had been expressed by many interested groups about its deteriorating condition.

He went on: "I am of the opinion that the current action should be welcomed as a positive step towards the preservation of this important Ancient Monument."

5/3/91
S W ECHO

Cadw captures castle

By DAVID VICKERMAN
Environment Correspondent

A 30-YEAR BATTLE to capture an historic Welsh castle for the nation is over.

For the first time in Britain, a Government heritage agency is preparing to compulsorily purchase a listed building to ensure its preservation.

The ruined 14th century St Quintin's Castle, overlooking the river at Llanblethian in the Vale of Glamorgan, has been the subject of a lengthy campaign by historians, conservationists and local council officials to save it from total decay.

Today the Welsh Office will serve notice that it intends to compulsorily purchase the castle, near Cowbridge, and take it under the care of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Delighted

The news that the building is to be saved was welcomed last night by local campaigners.

The Mayor of Cowbridge and Llanblethian, Victor Eveleigh, said, "We are delighted; it has been a 30-year struggle."

A draft compulsory purchase order is published in the *Western Mail* today paving the way for the Welsh Office to acquire St Quintin's Castle from the present owner, farmer Michael Boland, of Bridgend. He now has 21 days to object before the castle is purchased, at a price determined by the district valuer, and looked after by the Welsh Historic Monuments agency, Cadw.



VICTORIOUS: Vic Eveleigh, Mayor of Cowbridge with Llanblethian, and his predecessor, Jane Hydon, at the castle

21/10/92
Western Mail

Locals unite to save St Quentin's

THE LAST BATTLE

The unprecedented step taken by the Welsh Office of using a Compulsory Purchase Order is the latest tactic in the battle to save St Quentin's Castle.

By Stephen Johnson

If successful it will be the first time that a CPO will have been used to save an Ancient Monument.

The Castle owners, Gatehouse Investments Ltd, have objected to the CPO and as a result a Public Enquiry will be held in Cowbridge Town Hall starting on St David's Day, March 1.

St Quentin's has played an important role in both local and

national history, and the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments have told The GEM that excavation of the castle would be certain to reveal more valuable parts of the construction.

History Society committee member George Haynes told the GEM:

"St. Quentin's is by far Cowbridge's most important historical monument, and as well as a local landmark the castle is a national landmark which has been involved with many famous people".

Cowbridge History Society has been leading the campaign to save St Quentin's for the past thirty four years and will be pre-

senting evidence to the public inquiry as an interested third party.

After two years of low key pressure, the Society are calling on the people of Cowbridge to turn out in force at the inquiry to help save the historical landmark.

George Haynes who has been involved with the Cowbridge History Society for the past five years told the GEM:

"It is important that

the people of Cowbridge turn out at the public inquiry because the inspector will weigh part of his recommendation on the level of public support for the CPO".

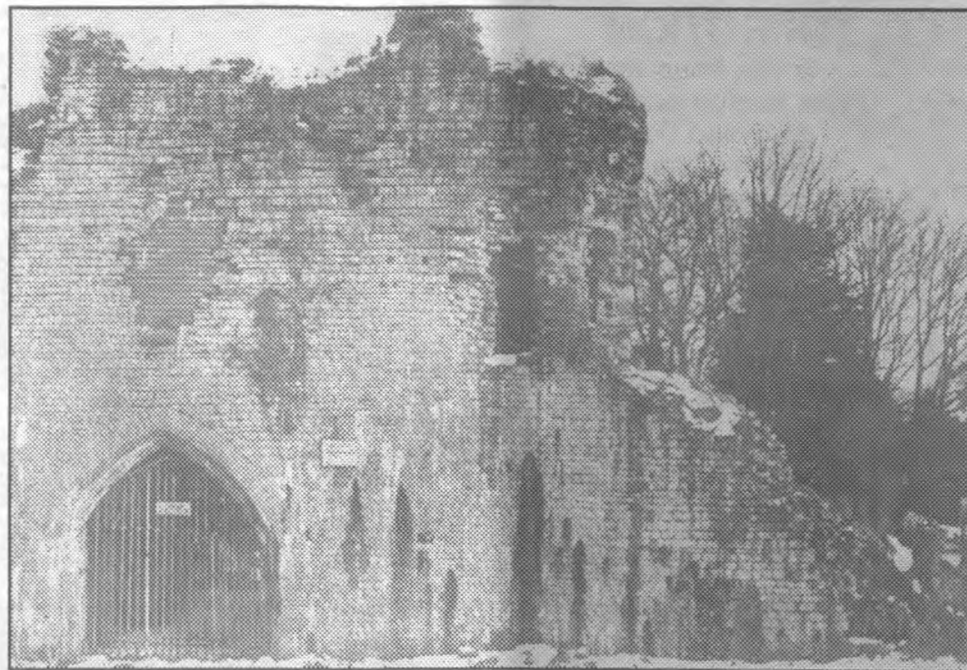
People wishing to support the CPO but



cannot make it to the public inquiry the History Society have launched a petition which has to be completed by February 26.

For those of you who wish to sign, copies of the petition have been placed in the following Cowbridge shops.

Ballantynes, Bulmers Antiques, J. Brown and Son, Chamberlains, Cowbridge Book Shop, Cowbridge Surgery, Fine and Evans, Oxfam and Watts and Morgan.



GATE HOUSE: But can St Quentin's withstand the forces of the free market?

ST QUENTIN'S OWNER MAY BE CHARGED WITH PERJURY

The Director of Public Prosecutions may be asked to take action against St Quentin's Castle owner, Michael Boland.

This follows prosecutions by Mid Glamorgan County Council.

Judge Wesley QC said that he would consider passing his observations on the case to the DPP with a view to Michael Boland being charged for perjury and

the course of justice.

Giving his views on the case, the judge said he was not satisfied with the evidence given by Mr Boland and his main witnesses.

The case concerns alleged obstruction of a highway in Tondur Road, Bridgend.

The judge withheld sentencing until the outcome is known of an appeal by Mr Boland to the High Court in a separate

ST HILARY CHIMNEY FIRE

Cowbridge Fire Brigade were called out on Tuesday evening to tackle a chimney fire at East Dawn Farm, St. Hilary.

Battling against driving wind and rain they had to form a bridge out of three ladders to enable them to

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Battles have been fought at St. Quentin's Castle since the early 12th Century.

St. Quentin's Castle boasts several very special features. The original early 12th Century keep was the second largest in Glamorgan.

The existing gatehouse, with its two

Bannockburn.

It was owned by Hugh Despenser the Younger who schemed his way to be more powerful than the King.

His successor Edward Despenser, Lord of Glamorgan.

and then Oliver Cromwell personally supervised its partial demolition.

The Castle has played an important role in both local and national history.

The Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments states that excavation is certain to reveal more valuable

CAMPAIGNERS who have been fighting to save an ancient Welsh castle for 30 years are scenting victory. Next week, a public inquiry will decide the future of St Quentin's Castle, near Cowbridge. The Echo investigates.

CRUMBLING: St Quentin's Castle, Llanblethian, near Cowbridge, which may be compulsorily purchased to save it from further decay

Kings of the castle?

THE battle to save a crumbling ancient castle is reaching its climax — after a war of words lasting more than 30 years.

St Quentin's Castle, near Cowbridge, could soon become the first ancient monument in Wales to be compulsorily purchased by the Secretary of State.

A public inquiry will decide next week whether the ruin should be taken away from Michael Bowland, who has owned it since 1965.

Cadw — the Welsh Office ancient monuments department — says the remains of the 12th century castle are falling down.

And local people want to see the ruin preserved — before it turns to rubble.

Both believe taking St Quentin's into state ownership is the only way to save it. For 20 years the elusive Mr Bowland has declined to reveal his plans for the castle.

Today, he could not be contacted for comment. Mr Bowland's formal opposition to compulsory purchase says he believes there are other ways of saving St Quentin's — without saying what they are.

But Cowbridge and Llanblethian councillor

By Chris Bishop

Vic Eveleigh said today: "He has had plenty of time to do something about the castle already."

"If he is allowed to hold onto the castle any longer, it will fall into further disrepair."

The Cowbridge & District Local History Society has been at the forefront of the campaign to save St Quentin's for more than two decades.

History society member George Haynes told the Echo: "It is by far the most important historical landmark in the whole of the area."

"It is extremely important to local history, Welsh history and national history, by virtue of the people who have lived there and been associated with the castle."

"A lot of people think our heritage is one of the most important things we have."



OUT OF BOUNDS: The sorry remains of the historic castle

FACTFILE

IN the 12th century, St Quentin's had the second largest keep in Wales. It was built on the site of an earlier Norman fortification. Gilbert de Clare III, second only in importance to King Edward II, built the "modern" castle between 1307 and 1314, before he was killed in the battle of Bannockburn. It boasted a grange, oxen-shed and outbuildings — all of which have long since disappeared.

St Quentin's owners included Hugh Despenser the Younger, who schemed his way to be more powerful than the King. His successor, Edward Despenser, Earl of Glamorgan, died in the castle from wounds he suffered fighting alongside the Black Prince at the battle of Crecy.

James Tyrell, who organised the murder of the princes in the tower, governed St Quentin's. Owain Glyndwr attacked it, and Cromwell tried to knock it down.

By the 19th century, it had become a cow shed. It finally fell derelict in the 1940s. On St David's Day, the future of St Quentin's will be decided for good.

COWBRIDGE

Campaigners trying to save St Quentin's castle for future generations reacted angrily when they were snubbed by officials from CADW - the organisation whose aim it is to preserve ancient monuments.

By Stephen Johnson

At an impromptu public meeting held in Cowbridge Town Hall one Cowbridge resident described the heritage department as being "only fit to operate in Ceausescu's Romania".

Over a hundred people turned up at the Town Hall to lobby the proposed Public Inquiry into St Quentin's.

But the Inquiry had been cancelled at the eleventh hour when the owner of St Quentin's, Mr. Michael Boland, agreed to put the castle into Guardianship.

A spokesperson for the local History Society told The GEM:

"It is regrettable that CADW, having sent four members of its staff to stand at the Town Hall entrance to tell people that the hearing was cancelled, and despite being invited three times to do so, did not see the need for the simple courtesy of coming up into the Town Hall to explain to the hundred or so people assembled there what exactly had been accomplished.

"We have read the statement put out by

CADW, but, because the statement explains very little, we will be asking Mr. John Carr, Chief executive of CADW what exactly is meant by Guardianship.

"We particularly want to know how much more time will elapse before work begins to save the castle's fabric.

"Also, what are the legal arrangements which still need sorting out.

"There was a further fall of masonry on Monday; we hope that this is not a bad omen".

There were calls from the floor of the meeting to increase the pressure on Cadw through the local MP Walter Sweeney.

Mr Sweeney responded to the news of the guardianship scheme by telling The GEM:

"The effect of this will be that CADW will be able to take over the management of the castle and ensure its survival.

"I am naturally delighted that the campaign to save the castle has at last proved successful".



Over a hundred people turned up at the Town Hall for the Public Inquiry which never was. In all over a thousand residents of Cowbridge expressed the need for a CPO to be issued to save St Quentin's

Mr. Vic Eveleigh has been actively involved in the campaign to save St Quentin's Castle for many of years and this is his reaction to the events on St David's Day.

On Monday, January 28, the Town Clerk telephoned me to say that a meeting with Cadw, to finalise arrangements for the Public Enquiry, had been delayed and I should be at the Town Hall at 2.30pm.

The Town Clerk, Cllr. Roberts and I waited until 4.00pm. When we telephoned Cadw to find out what was happening we were then told that the Public Enquiry had been cancelled. This was confirmed by Fax, timed 16:37pm.

Subsequently, I learned that people from Cadw would be present at the Town Hall on Tuesday morning with a printed hand-out to explain the situation.

Four people turned up and duly handed out leaflets and quite a few

attempt to attend.

Nevertheless, many people had taken the trouble to turn up in need of information about the proposed Guardianship and its effect on the future of the Castle.

About 100 people made their way into the hall and held an informal meeting, at which I attempted to explain what was going on, as far as I could explain.

I told them that Mr Morris of Cadw was asked, at least 4 times if he would come upstairs to explain the situation.

He categorically refused to enter the hall and said that the leaflet explained the position and he could add nothing to what was printed.

Any further information would appear to be obtained by writing to

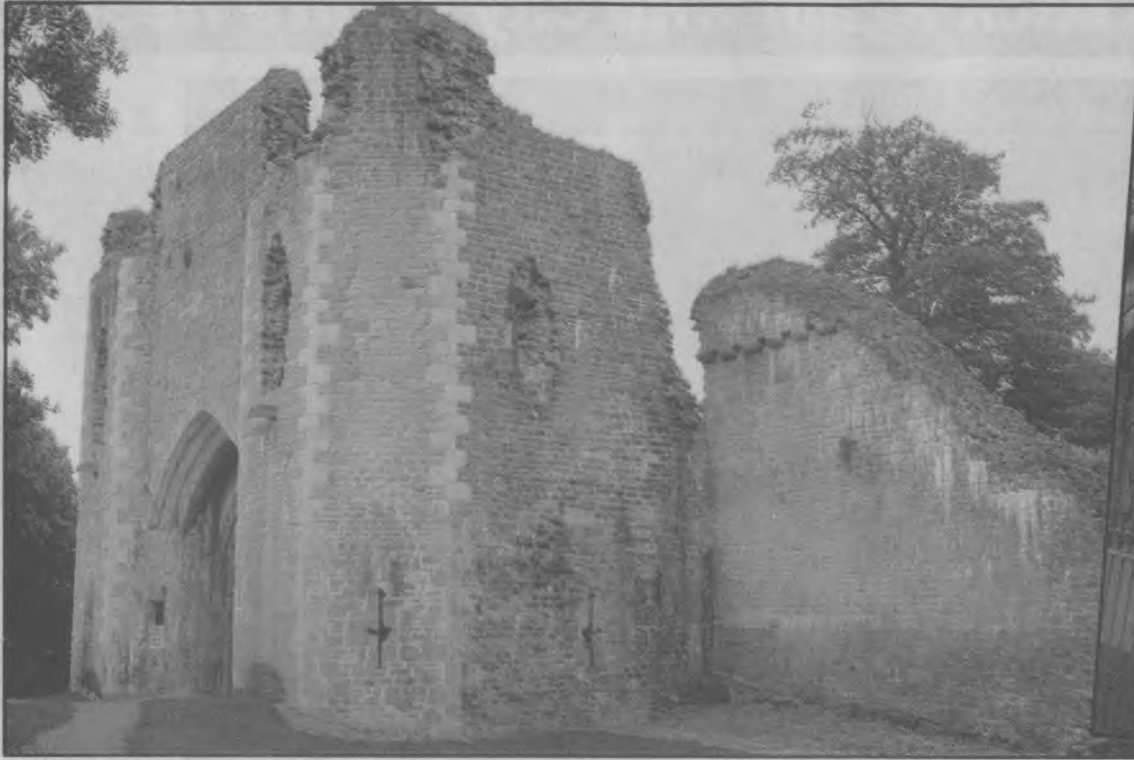
The spontaneous reaction from the people

who had turned up for a Public Enquiry was that we had been treated with extreme discourtesy, especially in a total refusal to speak to us or explain what was meant by Guardianship.

My personal feeling is that if Cadw felt that they had achieved something in having the Castle put into guardianship they will have been only too eager to tell us about it.

This would have given the situation a positive aspect.

As it is, because Cadw refused to take part we have a "here we go again" reaction, especially in view of the long history of previously frustrated



► **OPEN TO VISITORS** *St Quentin's Castle and right, Madeline and Michael Boland exploring the castle.*
PICTURES: Paul Rose

VARIED HISTORY OF MONUMENT

THE land around St Quentin's Castle has been the home of a castle since the 12th Century.

However, historians are not sure what form the original structure would have taken. It is thought that a timber ringwork was established, with a defensive bank and ditch.

The castle as it stands today was started by Gilbert III de Clare, and it is mentioned in reports of the 1314 battle of Bannockburn. It then passed into the hands of Hugh Despenser the younger, and in 1320 was set on fire as part of

the baron's uprising.

The castle was kept as an administration centre for the next hundred years or more, although in 1477 there is reference to it being used to hold prisoners. By the mid-1500s it was officially being used as a prison, although after that period no further records are kept of the castle as jailhouse.

St Quentin's Castle was used in the 19th Century as domestic accommodation, although by the end of the century it had become little more than a cattle shed.

Castle opens to the public

11/7/2000

THE spectacular St Quentin's Castle in Llanblethian has been reopened to the public after years of dereliction.

The castle, which has been standing since the 14th Century, was handed over to the care of Cadw in 1994 by the present owners Michael and Madeline Boland.

Since then, many repairs have been made to the structure of the ancient building, including adding additional support and repointing. The work cost Cadw £370,000 over five years.

The castle had been allowed to fall into disrepair since the 16th Century, and was opened to the public for

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the first time yesterday as part of a grand ceremony.

Visitors to the site, which offers spectacular views across the Vale, will be able to walk around the remains and even visit the upper floors. Information points around the castle offer details of its history.

Assembly Environment Secretary Sue Essex was at Llanblethian to officially open the village's newest tourist attraction. In her speech she expressed her gratitude to the local community.

She said: "It's magnificent. All the work has revealed something that has been

there since the 14th Century.

"Local people will be able to look around now and I'm sure people will come as part of a tour."

The Mayor of Cowbridge, Coun Geoff Cox, agreed. He said: "It's an asset to the town and demonstrates the skills of the Cadw staff. We are extremely pleased with the work they've done."

Michael Boland said he was happy with the work that had been carried out and added: "It was kept closed for people's own safety. I'm very pleased for the people of Cowbridge."

■ The castle will be open to the public daily from 10am to 4pm.

Call 029 2082 6186, for more details.



COME one, come all... to a castle in the Vale of Glamorgan that has reopened its doors for the first time in several hundred years.

St Quentin's Castle in Llanblethian, near Cowbridge, has been restored for the new millennium and is open daily for free.

■ For full story see page 9.

Morris steps in to help preserve castle

THE Secretary of State for Wales, Mr. John Morris, has stepped in to help save the crumbling St. Quintin's Castle, at Llanblethian, from further deterioration.

An interim preservation order has been placed on the early 14th Century building which Mr. Michael Boland, of Hickman Road, Penarth, has owned since 1965. The notice means that nothing can be done to the castle for 21 months without permission.

Advisable

The castle is noteworthy for its gatehouse, but the Welsh Office say that its keep and walls have eroded and become overgrown.

For 15 years, a statement said, the Ancient Monuments Branch had been in negotiation with the previous owner, his executors and with the present owner about the castle's upkeep and the possibility of taking it into the Secretary of State's guardianship. But these negotiations have come to nothing.

A Welsh Office spokesman said: "The risk of further rapid deterioration is such and the value of the monument is such that it is thought advisable

that this interim order should be made.

"This will give time to consider what should be done either to negotiate an agreement with the owner for its repair and maintenance or to place a permanent preservation notice on it under which the Secretary of State will take the whole of the castle into his guardianship and pay compensation to the owner."

The notice of the order refers to the "danger of damage from neglect" that threatens the monument which is "of national importance."

Mr. Boland would make no comment, but the people who live near the castle have welcomed the notice.

Mrs. Vera Rees, of Four Hedges, Llanblethian, said she had lived there for 11 years and that the shape of

the ruin had changed noticeably. "We would definitely like to see it preserved properly," she said.

Mrs. Hilarie Gilbertson, of Castle Cottage, said: "Future generations would feel very had done by if the castle was allowed to crumble away. It is going to cost a lot to put it right, but it is well worth preserving."

"It is not only an interesting ruin but it is

set in a magnificent position overlooking the River Thaw, and in the valley below the bowmen of old used to practice."

"The trouble has been that over the years people have filched stones from the castle and, in fact, I think my own home was partially built with its material. But, as it is now, it's certainly very dangerous and stones could fall off it at any minute."

