

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

CONSERVATION AREA	Rhossili
Date of Notification:-	1976
National Grid Reference:-	SS 4163088070
O.S. 1:10,000 Sheet No.:-	SS 48 NW
Conservation Area No.:-	CA:016

Notes:-

The village is undoubtedly the most dramatically sited in Gower, if not in Britain. Situated on the most westerly point of the Peninsula, it sits on top of 250 feet high cliffs at the southerly end of the 5 mile sweep of Rhossili Bay, and is tightly clustered around the Church of St, Mary the virgin and the village green, which was once the site of the village cross.

The village grew as a farming community beside the windswept but fertile land on the cliff tops – the “Veil” system of medieval enclosures (Fields divided up by dry stone walling) can still be seen from the upper regions of Rhossili Hill.

The population of about 110 lived in 50 houses in 1563 and had risen to 208 in 1811; it is now about 300.

It is believed that the village was rebuilt many centuries ago (like some other south Gower settlements) at a higher altitude to escape wind-blown sand. It is known that an old church sited below the present one was “overcome by sand”.

The village certainly housed wreckers and smugglers in the 17th and 18th Centuries, but is probably better known as the birthplace of Evans, who perished on Scott’s last expedition in the South Pole in 1912.

The oldest buildings in the village are the church and the farm, although the church considerably predates everything else. Most of the present structures are Victorian and date from the latter part of the 19th Century, when the population was greater than it is now. The old Coastguard Cottage is in the middle of the small terrace opposite the hotel.

Stone is the predominant material, although many of the cottages have been rendered to keep the weather out.

The Church, founded by St Fili in the 6th Century was changed to the Church of St Mary when the present structure was erected in the 13th Century. It belonged in ancient times, to the quasi-religious order of the Knight Hospitallers.

The plan is the simple, consisting of a nave and chancel, with a tower at the western end which was long used as a landmark by seamen. The Church is entered through a 12th Century Norman doorway which came from another site. A 13th Century

window can be seen in the west wall, and a glazed leper window exists in the chancel. This is believed to have been used for hearing confessions.

The Church was restored in 1846, after it had fallen into some decay. A memorial to Evans was inserted inside the building after Evans' death in 1912.

Primarily residential, Rhossili has its own shops, a post office and a pub. Recreational pressures are increasing with each summer season, and the Worms Head Hotel, recently destroyed by fire, will shortly be rebuilt. The growth of popularity of hand gliding has led to a new clubhouse in the village, and intensification of use of footpaths up the southern end of Rhossili Hill. Cafés and a tourist shop cater for the influx of summer visitors, and the car park at the northern end of the Worms Head Promontory has recently been extended.