

WSF BN article

### **Western Sunfolk's 90th Anniversary**

Western Sunfolk (WSF) is situated in beautiful Welsh countryside in Trellech, near Monmouth. Planning is underway for a Grand 90th Anniversary Celebration weekend, with the main event on Saturday 28th June 2025 featuring a hog roast, live band and much more and there will be events throughout the season.

In celebration we look back at the Club's interesting history.

There was a limited amount of information about the early club, formed in 1935, until 10 years ago. David, a current member of 50 years' standing, received an email from a James Bradbeer in Melbourne, Australia who was clearing out his grandfather's belongings. (The family had emigrated to Australia in the late 1940s). He had discovered not only a whole series of photographs of the early club, including a couple in colour, but also pages from his grandmother, Olive's diary including letters and details of her visits to the Club from the mid 1930s.

They all provide fascinating insight into early naturism in the late 1930s leading up to WW2. In those days it was difficult to visit WSF which was some 25 miles from Bristol. The Bradbeers usually cycled or took a motor bike which would have involved the Aust Ferry across the river Severn.

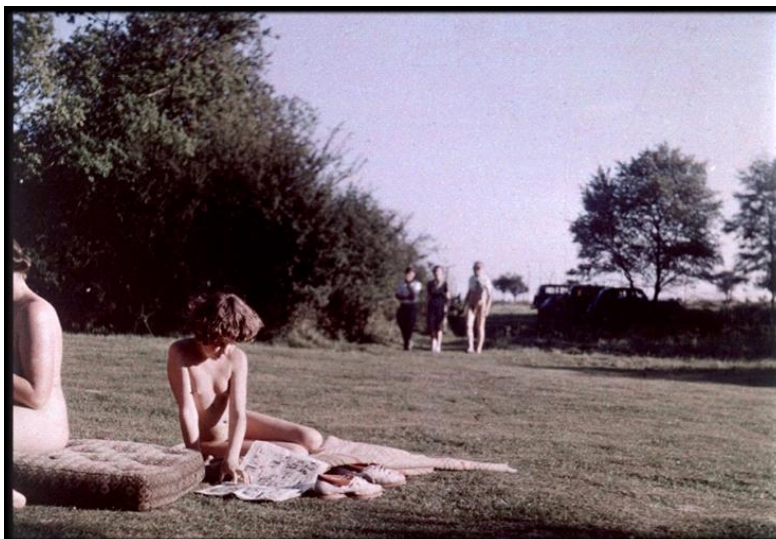
Olive Bradbeer lived at Water lane, Bristol and writes on the 7th May 1939:-

***"Lysbeth took Dad and Garth to camp yesterday afternoon because of the annual general meeting today. I am expecting them home soon now because Dad has an A.R.P. meeting at 8.30"*** (Panorama photo of the same AGM)



What it was like to be a naturist is best captured in this letter from Mollie Chapman (a friend of Garth Bradbeer) written the 28<sup>th</sup> April 1940 during the Phoney War period of WW2:-

*“...I went to the Western Sun Folk camp in South Wales with Garth & Olive & Graham & Lysbeth. .... It was what we should now call a nudist (don't like the word) camp – & was in a most heavenly spot. When it isn't raining Wales really is beautiful; so fresh & green: the contrast of fresh green hill slopes & wooded valleys – waterfalls, tinkling streams & lovely soft water. There was a village near & Olive stayed at the local pub overnight & one of the men brought her up in the morning”*



*“The camp was approached by walking up a field path through two fields – then going through what appeared to be a hedge-gate but proved to be through a thicket. Then through a copse of trees to quite a large clearing in the centre, with about a dozen tents dotted around. There were also some forms – made from local timber.*



***Lysbeth & I had been lent sleeping bags & shared a tent.***



***Most of the members were professional people & I believe there were a couple of water engineers who had supervised the excavation of a small swimming pool at the far end of the clearing.***





*As the soil was red it was suggested that we all had a dip which coloured us somewhat pink, made us look more 'sunburnt' & not so 'lily-white'.*

*This we did & then lay out in the sun which was all very relaxing... People were all very pleasant & friendly.*

*Everybody who joined had to be vouched for by a member, & there were 'scouts' with binoculars positioned in the trees to keep a watch or look-out for any strangers.*

*Garth took some photographs.*

*(All the photos are circa 1937 to 40 and taken by Garth Bradbeer. Construction date of the pool - May 1936)*



*The idea was that when nobody wears anything you get so used to it you don't notice that they're not wearing clothes. I agree with that but think that I wasn't there long enough to get to that stage & couldn't help noticing what a very good figure Garth had. But I also thought that some of the men with 'paunches' would have looked better wearing shorts. Similarly, some of the women,*



***who were beginning to sag would have looked better wearing a short Greek tunic. It was pleasant at night when two fires were lit & people cooked food in frying pans over them. Then folk sat & chatted & someone might strike up a song – but not too loudly because the children would have gone to bed.***

***The children of course looked adorable & completely unselfconscious.”***

When WSF member David joined the club over 50 years ago, there were still 2 or 3 of the original founder members. Amazingly, in the early days, people cycled or caught the bus to the Club, which, being situated on top of a Welsh mountain about a mile from the small village of Trellech, made it no easy task; particularly if one was setting out from Cardiff or Cheltenham about 30 miles away. The facilities were also equally primitive, comprising just a field, a rudimentary miniten court and a dammed stream which provided a very muddy watering hole of which everyone was very proud. No electricity, no water, no sewage.

Activities were suspended during WW2 and it became an ack-ack site. It was not suitable for reuse after the war so an alternative site was found a mile to the east which the Club owns today.



Over time, attitudes have changed. Mollie's comments re "togas" and "shorts" seem unkind today

and are no longer acceptable as we all embrace body positivity. Once, only married couples were allowed to be members, whereas nowadays the Club has single members, male and female. We also have all the home comforts that a modern-day naturist expects, including the luxury of an enclosed heated swimming pool which is typically at 30 degrees. Muddy watering holes are just not allowed by the environmental health officer who carries out regular inspections!

For more information about the Club or to book a visitor pitch, (early booking advisable for our Grand 90th Anniversary Celebration weekend) please visit our website and look out for updates with all the events and news for 2025.

WSF email: [enquiries@westernsunfolk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@westernsunfolk.org.uk)