

P - 03 - 263 List Stradey Park

Petition wording

We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Minister for Heritage to grant listed status to Stradey Park, in order to protect the heritage of this world famous rugby ground and cultural icon for the people of Wales.

Supporting information:

The petition to list Stradey Park was inspired by calls that *“something should be done”* to protect the heritage at this world famous location. It is significant that these calls have continued after the Scarlets have moved across Llanelli to their new stadium. Stradey Park is clearly more than just a place where rugby was watched - it is part of local culture and national heritage.

A cultural icon can be defined as anything that is readily recognised, and generally represents an object or concept with great cultural significance to a wide cultural group. It may come to be regarded as having a special status as particularly representative of a particular group of people or a period in history.

Stradey Park is synonymous with the support of a Welsh community for its rugby club in the 20th century – it is undoubtedly a cultural icon.

Stradey Park has gained worldwide fame, not only for the exploits of the players who took to the famous turf, but also for the fervent support supplied by those who crammed into the stands and terraces surrounding it during the matches, and at half-time and full-time onto the pitch itself.

That support became world renown as typically Welsh, an image strengthened by songs celebrating famous victories at Stradey, such as the Max Boyce song “9-3” about the support of the community at Stradey for the 1972 victory over the All Blacks – the last by any club side in the world. “All roads led to Stradey Park”, “The day the pubs ran dry” and “I was there” all conjure up images of Stradey Park on that day and Llanelli captain Delme Thomas being carried off the pitch by fellow players, surrounded by thousands of supporters.

Stradey Park invokes images of Welsh working men completing a shift in the tinsplate works, docks or mines before playing a match in front of thousands of fellow workers of Tinopolis. The famous “sosbans” that were placed on the Stradey posts were a direct reference to Llanelli’s main export – Tinsplate - and in particular the “Stamping” Works located less than a mile from Stradey Park where saucepans were made and exported worldwide.

Stradey Park has always been known as the “most Welsh” of Welsh grounds, not least for its Welsh language scoreboard and Welsh language singing on the terraces. “Sosban Fach” is known throughout the world after it was

adopted and sung by supporters due to the “sosbans” on posts. A gymanfa ganu was held in 1972, before the All Blacks game.

Typical of a rugby ground being at the heart of a Welsh community, Stradey Park has seen many non-rugby events including hosting several other sports and annual Guy Fawkes night fireworks displays.

On 15th November 2007 the funeral of Ray Gravell was held on the Stradey Park pitch. This unique event in Welsh history – described by some in the press as “a Welsh state funeral” - was attended by 6000 mourners including leading figures in Welsh political, sporting and cultural life, with many thousands of people lining the streets outside. Images of the coffin standing on the pitch, flanked by the Eisteddfod sword bearer and the assembled tribute makers were broadcast live on S4C.

There is no doubt that Stradey Park is of great cultural and historical significance to Wales. It was a modern day battle field and particularly representative of the Welsh passion for rugby in the 20th century. The petition has achieved in excess of 3500 signatures made more significant because this was a heritage petition not a rugby petition. The petition was collected on shop counters throughout Carmarthenshire and even without much publicity it has attracted signatures because people believe that the Stradey Park pitch should be saved to mark the location and its heritage.

Although the petition is named “List Stradey Park”, and there are many that would like to see the whole stadium saved, it is generally accepted that listing Stradey Park would mean listing the Stradey Park pitch and retaining it as open space within any development. This modern day battlefield is what makes it unique because of the events that have taken place on it, obviously rugby successes and the momentous Ray Gravell “state funeral”, but also the famous Stradey Park half-time and full-time pitch invasions where families would play where their heroes had just played.

To list a sports pitch would probably require a new listing category or an amendment to an existing category. As tourism becomes ever more important in Wales, key locations of modern Welsh heritage such as Stradey Park need to be protected, so the need for the National Assembly to direct Cadw to create or adapt a listing category for sports pitches is evident.

Once a location like Stradey Park is lost under a development it becomes almost worthless. Perhaps a few tourists may be attracted to read an interpretive panel or blue plaque near the site, but the benefit to the local economy would be negligible. Places like Stradey Park need to be preserved to allow them to be marketed as tourist locations of modern Welsh heritage for the 21st century. Tourists want to be able to take to the pitch, not just read about it.

As well as the 3500+ signatures and a Facebook group of over 520 members, several local organisations including Llanelli Town Council and Llanelli Rural Council support the aims of the petition to protect the Stradey Park pitch. However none of these groups has the power to deliver that protection.

The petition has received international support, as well as support from other parts of Wales and the UK showing clearly that Stradey Park is of national importance. Locally, the petition has also received the support of former Llanelli, Wales and Lions greats such as Delme Thomas and Phil Bennett.

A website supporting the petition can be found at www.stradeyparkpetition.co.uk. Further information to support a listing, from the kind provision in 1879 of land within its boundary walls by the Stradey Estate, through to the closure of the ground in October 2008, can be supplied.

Petition Raised by: Mr V Jones

Petition first considered by Committee: November 2009

Number of signatures: 4383