Leaves us alone, says hippies

By Maurice Rotheroe

Local hostility towards hippies' camping on Llandrindod Common has increased since dozens of extra van-loads of campers descended on the site and staged an impromptu woodland rock festival with live music.

It was estimated that some 40 vehicles as well as tents were camped on the common and in a nearby wood, making a hilly gathering of more than 100 men, women and children.

Police were called when residents on two sides of the camp complained of noise from amplifiers.

"Our house was throbbing with the vibrations," said Mr. Jack Bingham, owner of the nearby Watolygon Riding Centre. "They have no electricity but they were using a petrol engine to drive a generator and had drums, guitars and keyboards echoing through the amplifiers."

Mr. Keith Edwards, owner of the adjoining Moordale Caravan Park, said: "People come here for a quiet holiday and this sort of thing just puts people off."

He said he had written to the Council and to the Welsh Secretary, Mr. Peter Walker seeking his intervention to end unauthorized camping on the common.

"At the end of last year's camping season, several owners of caravans stood on our park expressing deep concern about the hippy commune on the common," said Mr. Edwards. "We managed to reassure some of them that action was being taken, but one has decided to move off. Unless action in taken more may follow."

The tourism industry is grading caravans parks and this site takes into consideration the surrounding area. Although we have moved out several improvements, we are unlikely to be up-graded further until the common is returned to its intended state and kept in a tidy manner.

A local farmer, Mr. Kenneth Hicks of Penlidian, said several farmers had had problems with dogs, owned by hippies, worrying sheep.

"The farm looks as unlikely because of the mess they leave behind and they are continually blocking the narrow lane so that the milk tanker has difficulty getting through," he said.

"They lout on the road and won't move and when cars show down or stop they kick them and give the driver a mouthful of abuse."

"Several people have had their cars damaged by hippy vans and have lost their claims because there is no way of getting details from them."

"Their vehicles are uninsured and they have no tax or insurance."

"We feel the police don't support us by taking those vehicles off the road. What angers local people is that they have to pay rates and road tax and insurance but these people don't pay anything."

He said adults and children were afraid to walk along the lane alone and children had to be met from the school bus on the main road.

"The people camping at the site are quite enough, but the lot that were here over the weekend were troublemakers," said Mr. Hicks.

Inspector Ken Lewis, in charge of the Llanwrtyd Wells police station, commented this week: "Sherlock Holmes does take place and it is a cause for concern. The farmers have my sympathy and we impound dogs caught worrying sheep and report their owners. But we have to operate within the law. People living on the common have the same rights as anybody else."

Referring to allegations of uninsured and uninsured vehicles being allowed on the road, Insp. Lewis said: "It is simple enough to criticize us. I would be quite prepared to see the people who are making these allegations and look into particular cases."

"It is certainly not true to say that in general vehicles owned by people living on the common are breaking the law. On many occasions we have checked their drivers and they produce driving licences, MOT certificates and road fund licences and are displaying tax discs."

"If they don't then we report them."

Insp. Lewis said recent radio reports of hippies causing disturbances in Llanwrtyd Wells town centre and lying drunk on the pavements were not true.

"They are quite entitled to sit on the estates," he said. "Once they start congregating and causing an obstruction, then we move them on as we would any group."

Another woman with a baby in her arms said: "One woman in town had checked to see my baby would be healthy if it wasn't so dirty."

"My baby has not had a day of illness in his life."