MP on the beat with night cops

Simon Thomas samples Aber night-life on the streets during Grand Slam celebrations. Story: Dylan Davies

WITH celebrations running late into the night on Saturday, after Wales' historic Grand Slam victory, local MP Simon Thomas realised it was a night in the life of an Aber firefighter, which turned out quite frantic.
The MP, dressed in an illuminating police jacket, wanted to see what service the police came under on a big night and they did not come any bigger than Saturday just been.

At the end of the night, cells were crammed with people after a heavy night of carousing and unruly behaviour.

Some of the revellers had to double up in the town's nine cells, as a long day of drinking stretched the resources to the maximum, with not a single cell free throughout the night.

In all, nine arrests were made across Cardigan, for a cross section of offenders, most of whom were drink-related.

Police officers were busy at alarms, with fans drinking late into the night and Bargoed fans coming home after their team's 2-1 win over Aberystwyth earlier in the day.

Mr Thomas joined Inspector Ian Thomas on his foot patrol and saw first hand the role doorkeepers have to play in keeping police informed of the night's troubles, visiting late night venues.

Inspector Thomas said: "We have always had a good working relationship with the doorkeepers in Aber."

"They can provide valuable information to us on how many people are about and any troublemakers around the area.""The two walked the 'circuits' at one of the town's main flaskpots, at 11pm, when all the pubs close their doors and party-goers make their way to the last licence pubs and clubs.

"We have key times and points throughout town on a Saturday night.

"As around 11pm and 1am, we try and keep a high profile visibility in areas such as outside the Pier and the town clock.

"I also spoke of the big difference now we see in the town, with more people being made by the doorkeeper and at the door.

"It has run back the queues down by the station that the truth is that everyone won't have a taxi at home and there are not enough in enough cabs to place at that point in the night."

"With pubs being busier than usual, with fans staying out to celebrate the twp days, officers were keeping a keen eye on unlicensed events, with people drinking for longer than usual.

"The night was fairly good natured to begin but arguments flared as the night progressed.

"Inspector Thomas added: "Aberystwyth has become more and more popular with people coming in from miles around, there is always someone celebrating."

"It may be petitioned tonight, but every weekend is fairly similar.""

On the issue of licensing laws, Simon Thomas felt that new legislation would only set aside drinking hours by one hour, to which he said: "I don't see much point.

"After years of complaints by local residents over drinking hours keeping their awake in the early hours of the morning, they will be pleased to hear that the new social function on high on the police agenda and all-night drinking is not expected to come to Aberystwyth.

"I very much doubt there will be any applications for the 24-hour drinking in Aberystwyth, what will end up happening is some will apply for on-hour extensions and if they get in, the same will have to be applied to all pubs in town to have some parity."

Inspector Thomas said: "If you give to one, you have to give to all.

"We have a real drinking culture across the country, with standing up drinking pubs acting as a drinking facility."

"Any extension would lead to a backlash in our resolution of the police forces."

He added: "There is also the issue that longer licences will have novelty value when they first come into effect, but we are not in a cafe society."

With a ban on drinking in public places getting closer, both gave their support for the scheme.

"Banning drinking in public would reduce litter and give more control," said Inspector Thomas.

"Simon Thomas supported the scheme, but felt it was a little saccharine above drinking on the green on summer days.

Inspector Thomas responded: "The biggest power I have is my use of discretion."

"A couple of people sitting outside ding bars having a pint is a little different from five or five walking through town drinking a bottle of whisky."

"It helps to common sense and have a balance."

Simon Thomas added: "Aberystwyth, with two arrests being made by the doorkeeper after a skirmish for public order offences.

"After the night, Mr Thomas said: "It was an uneventful night and quite surprising to see how long people hung around town after the pub and clubs are closed.

"It was well worth it and good to see how officers deal with pressure and those sometimes from people."

Mr Thomas is hoping to see the other side of the spectrum later this year in Cefn}, seeing police in a community role.