Double strike by arsonists at home and pub

The police and the Llangiitho couple whose luxury home was set alight by a drum of fuel left in a first-floor bedroom are discounting the theory that the fire was the deliberate work of Meilinon Glyndwr arsonists.

"I personally don't believe it was Welsh nationalists," said Rowland Parson, who moved into the area 12 years ago, said on Monday morning.

He and his wife Olga returned to their home - Derwen Fach alongside the B4342 road nearly a mile east of Llangiitho - on Friday afternoon after going away in their touring caravan for the night "to get us away from the telephone."

When they arrived back they discovered evidence of a break-in at the rear of their home and the act of opening the back-door was believed to have fanned the fire already smouldering in the bedroom.

Mr. Parson was born in Cardiff and brought up in Barry and a week before the fire he had appeared on BBC Wales's "Week In Week Out" programme which highlighted the decline in the Welsh language in Llangiitho and other rural areas of Wales.

The programme also revealed Mr. Parson was publishing his own Welsh language newspaper "Llangiitho Times." He said it came out fortnightly and the current edition was the thirteenth.

By Peter Roberts

"It deals with items of local interest and I run it more as a hobby than anything else. The last edition only made a few pence," added Mr. Parson.

Since moving to Llangiitho he had built up his own speculative house-building at Tregaron, but they were homes for retired local people, he pointed out.

"They were not intended to be holiday homes. They are not suitable for that as they are in the middle of a private estate. No one has a holiday home on an estate," he said.

Mr. Parson was annoyed at speculation in a daily newspaper that he and his wife were planning to move away from their home even though this was the second attack aimed against them.

Three months ago, just after he had been interviewed for the BBC programme, they received a death threat package containing embalming fluid. However, they decided to carry on living in Llangiitho.

"But my wife was interviewed during the weekend for a daily newspaper and the story must have appeared there," he said.

Search for blue pick-up

Police appealed on Sunday for help from the public to trace a blue pick-up truck spotted leaving the scene of the arson attack at a hotel near Newcastle Emlyn last week.

Chief Inspector Huw Jones, who is leading the inquiry into the fire which destroyed the Lamb Hotel, Ross, Llangiitho, and injured the manager, said the truck had a white, clip-on boot covering the rear of the vehicle.

"At the material time - about 1:00 on Sunday morning - this vehicle was seen being driven away from the scene and heading in the general direction of Carmarthen along the A44 road."

"Any person with information regarding this vehicle is asked to contact the incident room at Newcastle Emlyn police station on Newcastle Emlyn (0239) 731023 or any other police station," urged Chief Inspector Jones.

He has discounted the theory that the fire was started by Meilinon Glyndwr campaigners. "Our inquiries tend to show there is no connection and someone has claimed responsibility."

"Neither have we found anything to link this incident with an arson attack on a house in Llangiitho on Friday afternoon," he said.

Hotel manager 41-year-old Mr. Thomas Donald Meorley, who moved to the area with his wife and four-month-old twins last July, received extensive burns and lacerations in the fire and was taken to St. Lawrence Hospital, Carmarthen, for specialist treatment.

"He was notified of the incident while on holiday in Llandudno and he is expected to return as soon as possible," said Chief Inspector Jones.

The police are appealing to anyone who stopped to help tackle the fire in the early hours of Sunday morning and anyone with information about the blue pick-up.

"We are looking into statements that something was thrown into the hotel seconds before the fire began. There was no explosion, as such, but there are indications that the rapid spread of the fire was due to the presence of accelerants," the Chief Inspector added.

Fire tenders from Llandysul, Llandysul, Newcastle Emlyn, and Carmarthen attended the scene and a fire service investigation team was also called in.

"I don't want to put too much pressure on the investigation team," said Chief Inspector Jones.

"But the public's help is crucial if we are to find the cause of the fire and ensure that similar incidents do not happen again."

Police officers at the Parson's home at Llangiitho. The fire was started in the upstairs rooms.

Photo by Stephen Porter.