

ROGERSTONE

DIRECTORY



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SW DIRECTORIES

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Leslie Woolford

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Hopefully, the weather will be kind to us over the next couple of months and we'll all be able to take a walk in our beautiful countryside and benefit from some summer sunshine.

Best wishes

Susan



Advertising enquiries:

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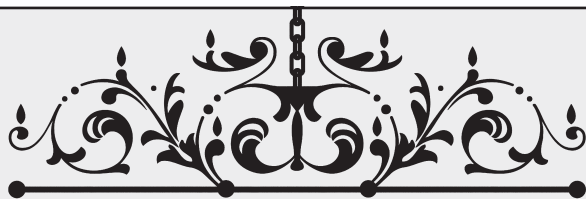
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A Tribute to The Alcan Singers

An appreciation of 40 years of community service

In 1978 a group of three, **Malcolm Pritchard, Mervin Jones and Ray Norris** were having a little sing song of their own. As a result they thought 'Why don't we start our own choir'. Thus the seeds were sown and people were asked if they were interested. There was a tremendous response and the seeds 'ripened' with the formation of **The Alcan Singers**. Special thanks go to **Malcolm Pritchard, Sheelagh Young (pianist), Derek Terry and Terry Browning (treasurer)** who were key members of the group.

Having now got enough interest the Alcan Singers were formed. However at first things were not easy! The choir realised they badly needed a piano. A piano which was available was found and provided by the Alcan Club Committee but was located in the Tydu area of Rogerstone. In the absence of any transport the piano was pushed down the main road to the Alcan Club. There was a pause in front of the Alcan main Office block where some 'tinkling of the ivories' took place together with a few renditions for the office workers. Having the piano in place the Singers realised that they needed someone to play it! To the rescue came Ray Norris who was the first pianist for the Singers followed by Bill Davies in later years and then Sheelagh Young who had previously been conductor. Some of the



The Alcan Singers in the early days



The singers at Wednesday night practice

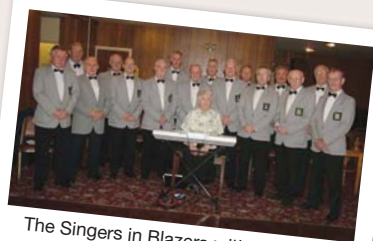
members who acted as 'comperes' over the years were Peter Faulkner, Andre Claridge and Jimmy Williams.

It is impossible to name all of the many members who were members of the group over the forty years but some of the earlier members were Les Reed, Edward Lee, Brian Jones, John Maybury, Cecil Wilcox and many more, while some of the newer members were Des Andrews, Mike Powell, Robert Bassett and Keith Lee. Over a period of exactly 40 years the singers performed at well over 1000 events which included concerts, visits to old people's homes, weddings, hospitals and funerals.

The singers provided a fantastic voluntary service

to Rogerstone and the surrounding communities. Sadly however, due to dwindling numbers, all too common these days in sports organisations and other bodies, the Singers had to stop functioning in 2018 after 40 years of voluntary service to the community. There were many others involved with the Singers who are not named but are equally appreciated. Finally, a special word for Malcolm Pritchard who is the only person who started from day one and was present to the end. Malcolm had many roles from one of the founders, singer and conductor when needed. Thank you Alcan Singers for 40 magnificent years of voluntary community service!

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The Singers in Blazers with Sheelagh Young.

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Be Aware When You Visit Historic Twmbarlwm

AFTER THE LONG WINTER most people are desperate for some sunshine and outdoor activity. So pack a picnic and get the family out into our beautiful countryside – and if you want somewhere local and **FREE**, there's nowhere better than the historic mountain of Twmbarlwm.

Note that I said 'historic' – it's amazing how many people don't realise its historical significance. So this year CTS has arranged to erect signs to remind people that the hillfort at the summit of Twmbarlwm is, in fact, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). As the signs say, Twmbarlwm is considered to be of National Importance and is protected by the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979* and updated by the *Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016*.

But what exactly is "Scheduling"?

"Scheduling" is the UK's oldest form of heritage protection. It began in 1913, although its roots go as far back as 1882 when through the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, a 'Schedule' of mainly prehistoric monuments deserving of state protection was first compiled. Twmbarlwm was added to the list in 1939.

In Wales, "Scheduling" is the responsibility of Cadw (the Welsh word for 'keep') an Executive Agency within the Welsh Government.

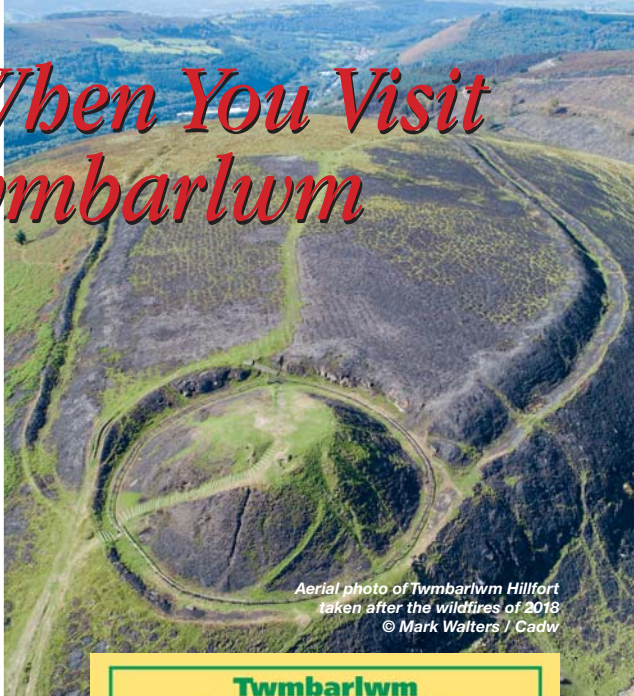
The term "Ancient Monument" is applied to a wide variety of archaeological sites. From ancient burial sites and standing stones to the far more prominent and well known medieval castles and abbeys.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are industrial remains which continued in use into the twentieth century. Indeed the eastern edge of the Mynydd Maen ridge way at Penyrheol and Cwm Llicy is also classified as a SAM because of its rich industrial heritage.

The aim of scheduling is to ensure the long-term preservation of a site. Any proposal to carry out works at a SAM which might have the effect of damaging it must be approved by Cadw. Even if the works are beneficial to the monument, Scheduled Monument Consent must be applied for – a thorough process that CTS has been involved with several times.

The full extent of SAM designation cannot be explained in such a short article and I would advise you to visit the Cadw website (www.cadw.gov.wales) for more details.

For the casual visitor to the site you should remember the basic rules such as: Take all litter home with you; Do not light fires or barbecues; Do not damage undergrowth or structures; Do not dig into the ground surface.



Aerial photo of Twmbarlwm Hillfort
taken after the wildfires of 2018
© Mark Walters / Cadw






Twmbarlwm
Mound and Bailey Castle (MM044)

This site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is protected as being of National Importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

DO NOT: Leave Litter, Light Fires, Damage Undergrowth or Dig Into the Surface of the Landscape – Offenders will be prosecuted

NO MOTORIZED VEHICLES
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PLEASE KEEP TO THE PATHWAYS

The ground surface of this area is very fragile after the wildfires of 2018 – please respect this area while it recovers naturally.

Motorised vehicles are forbidden and the riding of horses and bicycles is not allowed.

Also, metal detectorists should note that it is an offence to use a metal detector on a SAM without prior consent from Cadw and the landowner.

However, a general rule of thumb might be – if you wouldn't do it at Cardiff Castle, Stonehenge or Tintern Abbey, then don't do it to Twmbarlwm.

Finally, please remember that at the moment the ground surface on Twmbarlwm is still extremely fragile after last year's wildfires, **so please respect the landscape and give the area time to recover naturally.**

Terry C. Evans, Chairman CTS

CTS meet at the car park below Twmbarlwm's summit for a litter pick and volunteer workday on the last Sunday of every month to which everyone is invited, it's not all hard work and it's a great opportunity to find your way around up there. We organise walks and other events up the mountain and at Crosskeys RFC throughout the year so watch our website and Facebook page for details.
www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

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Hidden in Plain View

In a secluded corner of John Frost Square is a cultural gem which thousands pass every day, many without even realizing that it exists. It is of course Newport Museum and Art Gallery. Even those that know of it tend to assume that it is of very little significance, but in fact it houses a collection of national and international importance.

The Museum:

Founded in 1888, one of the oldest in Wales. Its collection brings the history of Newport and the surrounding area vividly to life:-

The pre Roman era featuring the tools and other remains of hunter gatherers who roamed the shores of the Severn Estuary thousands of years ago, and the almost complete skeleton of an aurochs, an extinct breed of giant cattle.

The Roman Collection is one of

the best in Wales featuring finds from both Caerleon and Caerwent, including the oldest Christian relic ever found in Wales.

The Medieval period includes artefacts from the Newport ship and finds from local castles, priories etc.

The Chartist Uprising - a fantastic array of items from and relating to the Rising, including John Frost's pistols.

The Art Gallery:

A truly diverse collection, highlights of which include paintings by Sir Stanley Spencer, Dame Laura Knight and L. S. Lowry together with works by important Welsh artists Kyffin Williams and Stanley Lewis. There are even some unattributed sketches that may be by Turner.

The decorative art collection includes a sculpture by Sir Jacob Epstein, studio ceramics by Lucy

Rice and Ewen Henderson and the Iris Fox collection of porcelain and Wemyss ware.

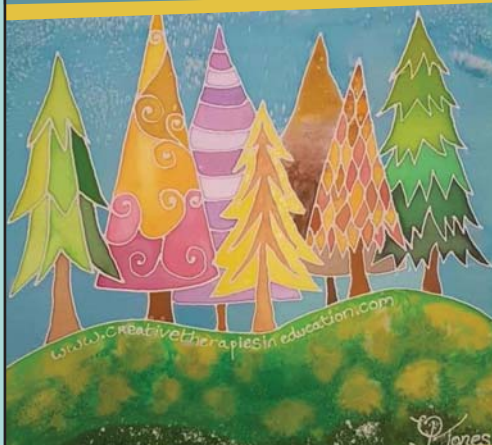
Activities:

Both the Museum and Gallery organize a regular programme of temporary exhibitions, and during school holidays drop-in family craft sessions take place. At any time family trails and activities can be collected from the information desk.

In the autumn and winter there are monthly lectures on historic and cultural topics, organised by the Friends of Newport Museum and Art Gallery (FONMAG). They take place at 7 pm in the Art Gallery on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from September to April inclusive. Admission is free for FONMAG members, £2.00 for non-members.

www.newport.gov.uk/museum
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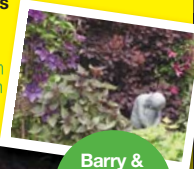
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A New Slant on Territorial Disputes – Warring Cygnets

Even after almost 40 years of involvement with swans, we continue to be surprised by some of the things which happen. On 7th March it was reported from the Pond at Brynmawr (overlooked by Asda), that the 5 cygnets were under pressure from the adults. At this time of year, with the start of the new breeding season just round the corner this is normal; the adult male in particular is serving notice on the young birds that it is time to leave. Failure to do so is potentially fatal.

The following day, on arrival at Brynmawr, all was peaceful, except that, by this time, there were only four cygnets. Over the years we have had significant involvement at the nearby Machine Pond so we decided it was worth checking to see what if anything was going on there. Good job we did, as we were met with an extraordinary situation. Clearly, this is the territory of another swan family into which, it appears the missing 'Asda' cygnet had strayed, but there was only one adult present, assumed, based on our observations from some distance, to be a female. The intruder had been chased up onto the far bank by one, quickly followed by another of the resident cygnets. The intensity of the chase increased as all three birds re-entered the water, and were fast coming our way. Very soon, we lost sight of them as they beached on the near shore somewhere far below us at the bottom of a very steep bank. Clearly it was time to intervene. Equipped with just a swan hook



Machine Pond intruder released at The Knap

and a swan wrap, the descent of the bank was a hazardous business, it being both steep and slippery in places, combined with the fear of a turned ankle or worse. Approaching the bottom, there was no obvious sign of swans, apart from the adult and two cygnets on the water, but the immediate view was restricted by a number of gorse bushes near the water's edge. And then, one's eye was caught by sizeable smudges of grey and white under one of those bushes. The feeling of something approaching panic was all too apparent as it was not at all clear it would be possible to intervene effectively, especially as the terrain was pretty challenging. Somehow we managed to move to the far side of the bush to discover one cygnet on top of the other and gripping its neck in its beak. They separated on my appearance, the assailant escaping onto the water, and the victim secured by the swan hook. Phew!!! What a relief! Despite the ferocity of what had happened, the cygnet we had



Machine Pond, Brynmawr. Residents retiring having 'seen off' intruding cygnet

caught seemed unhurt, and from long experience, we do know they are very resilient, with what seem like almost immediate powers of recovery. We have no doubt therefore we did the right thing in taking him for release at The Knap in Barry. Almost immediately, he was surrounded at close quarters by a bevy of mainly juveniles, but a couple of adults as well; all very friendly, so this combined with the witnessing of a cygnet on cygnet attack was a totally new experience for us. You can never tell what's going to happen next!

Story by Peter, photographs by Ellen. For swan and all other wildlife problems please contact Peter & Ellen on 01633 895241 or 07802 472788

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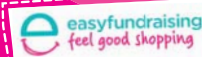
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THE FINAL FATE OF H.M.S. NEWPORT

(Part 1)

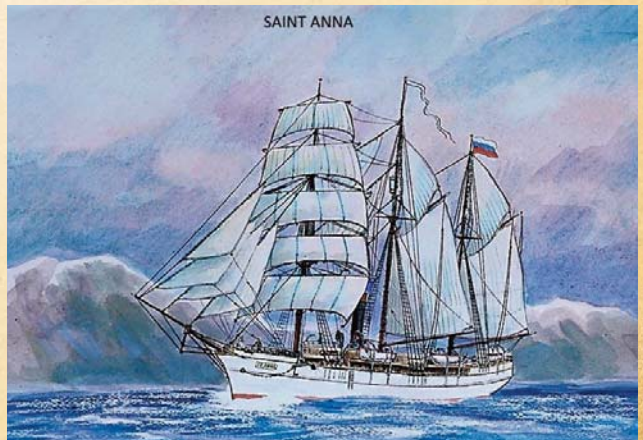
Readers who have previously read my article in the Nares series, *Bygones 9* (Part 4), may recollect that I ended that edition by discussing the final fate of *HMS Newport*, the first ship to transit the Suez Canal under the command of George Strong Nares. It occurred to me that I might enlarge on how this ship, now re-named and in Russian hands, was finally tragically lost in the arctic regions.

In 1912 an officer of the Imperial Russian Navy commanded an expedition to explore and search for a north-east passage leading from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. This would have been the equivalent of the British search for a north-west passage, but in the opposite direction.

The officer commanding the expedition was Georgy Lvovich Brusilov, who purchased the 43 year old former gunboat, which in British hands had been named *HMS Newport*. This vessel when discharged from the British Navy had passed through the hands of several owners and had been re-named *Pandora II* and then

Blencathra. Brusilov chose to change the ship's name yet again to *Svyataya Anna* (Saint Anna in

professional sailors and some St. Petersburg adventurers. He also chose an experienced Polar navigator, 32-year old Valerian Albanov, for his second in command. These two men had been previous classmates but came from totally different backgrounds. Unable to find a Doctor to serve, he



Georgy Lvovich Brusilov

English). The 145 foot long shallow draught ship was schooner, rigged with three masts, sails and equipped with an auxiliary two cylinder steam engine driving a screw propeller. Brusilov had previous Arctic experience having served on Russian icebreakers in the Chukchi Sea and East Siberian Sea.

Brusilov put together a crew of some two dozen members consisting of seal hunters, a few

he persuaded a 22 year old female nurse, Yermima Zhdanko, to join the crew and provide medical assistance.

After time spent, refitting the ship and loading supplies, Brusilov departed from St. Petersburg in August 1912, just before the start of the Polar winter, not the best time of year to attempt the north-east passage. In early October the vessel was encountering ice floes in the Kara Sea and by the 28th became locked in the ice off the west coast



of the Siberian Yamal Peninsular. Brusilov had anticipated this and the ship carried enough canned fish and meat supplies to last until 1915, if needed.

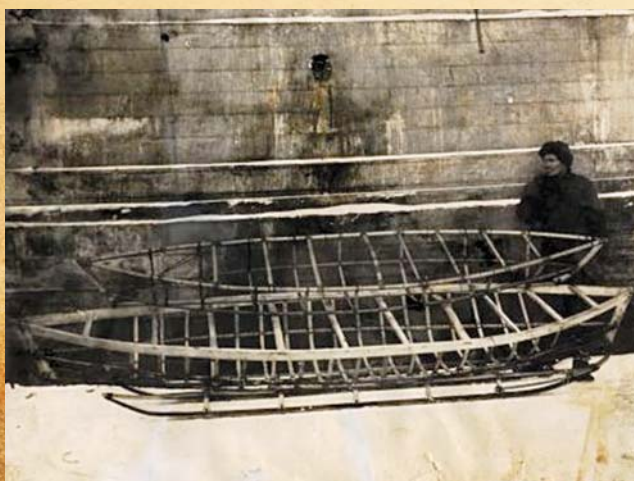
The Svyataya Anna remained locked in the ice through 1913 without the expected release and drifted north-north west held in the pack, towards the Atlantic rather than the Pacific. Eventually she reached north of 83 degrees latitude and leaving the shore far behind. Things had begun to get out of hand by 1914, the crew still had ample canned food and supplemented this by shooting seals

and bears to sustain them. But, they had long consumed all fruit and vegetables, which left them in a scurvy ridden condition. Many of the crew were bedridden due to their weakened condition. Fuel for heating had long run out and they attempted to keep warm by burning seal blubber and oil, but soon internal bulkheads of the ship's interior became encased in ice. Internal temperatures were only just over freezing, necessitating that all crew continually remained fully clothed, huddling over the meagre flames created by lamps. These appalling conditions

eventually resulted in a non-violent mutiny of the crew in which Brusilov relieved navigator Albanov of his post. Relationships between Brusilov and Albanov had become very tense leading to frequent disputes. Albanov then decided to attempt to reach Siberia on foot, which he believed to be a few hundred miles to the south, to search for assistance. He requested Brusilov to permit him to make the attempt and some 13 mariners volunteered to accompany him. He took with him a copy of the ship's log book and letters from members of the remaining crew; also any food supplies that could be spared, a shot gun and a few rifles for protection from bears and walrus. Seven kayaks and seven sledges were constructed from any timbers that could be spared, the kayaks were utilised from non-structural timbers stripped from the ship's interior. These timbers were covered by sailcloth taken from spare sails and treated with a finishing coat of paint to make them watertight. Each kayak was designed to carry two men as well as their sledge and supplies. All the clothing and boots to be worn by the party was repaired and put into good order.

This forlorn party set off, dragging behind them their homemade sledges carrying the kayaks to be used when crossing open water. This motley party proceeded on snow shoes and by skiing, but in the inhospitable climate and uneven icy conditions members of the party were rapidly whittled down. Three members of the party gave up and returned to the ship within the first few days, defeated by the harsh conditions.

(To be continued)



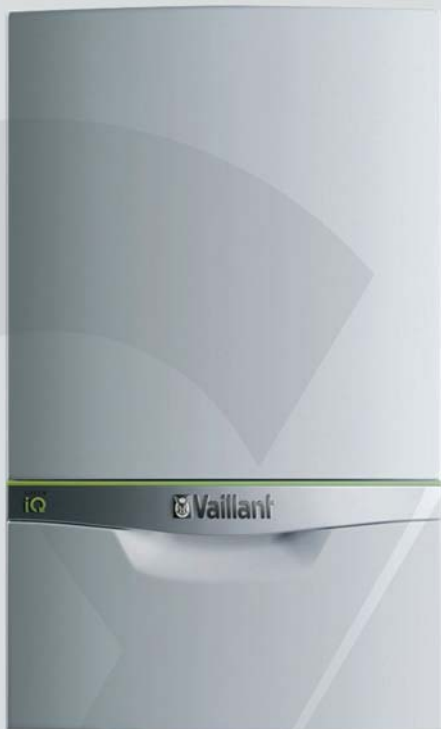
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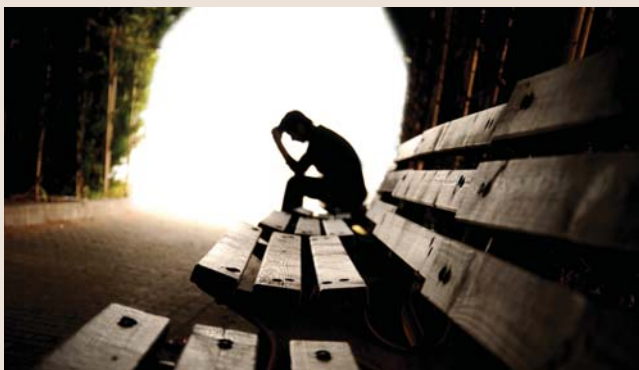
By Paul Minton

In my regular articles for the Directories, I always endeavour to recount a story with a local flavour, preferably one laced with jokes and quirky asides. I will not do so on this occasion as I have a simple plea to make. But first, I want to tell you about one of my dearest friends.

I met Rick at university: we lived in the same halls of residence, me on the top floor and he on the ground. I can't even recall how I got to know him but Rick was at ease talking to everyone. As he got older, his waistline might have expanded and his hair might have abandoned its coppery flame of youth but his sense of fun and infectious enthusiasm remained undiminished. He was loved and respected by all, including my parents who, I am sure, would have liked to have adopted him!

After graduating, Rick moved around with work but he was regular visitor to our home in Newport, often dropping in on his way down to the West Country where his family lived or en route to Cardiff if he had meetings there. He drove a red Chrysler for many years, which he christened "Scarlet O'Cara" and he would frequently bring along some of his delicious homemade bara brith: another reason why I always looked forward to seeing him.

Rick worked for various environmental organisations and was also a volunteer for different charities, often making long drives across Europe to Romania in order to deliver donated supplies. Each



Christmas Day would be spent, in part, at a homeless shelter that provided hot dinners for those in need. He was also a magistrate and on one occasion, I had the pleasure of watching him in action. Once the court was in session, this gentle giant, who would more likely than not, greet you with a big bear hug, became a formidable presence.

Defendants and solicitors quivered as Rick unleashed withering reprimands but as soon as we were outside together, he reverted to his normal, placid demeanour, much like the Hulk shrinking back into Bruce Banner.

As if to counterbalance his enviable accomplishments, Rick lost his mum when he was still in his twenties and more recently, his father suffered a stroke and lived in a nursing home. Having no siblings, Rick sold his own property and moved back to the family house to be closer to his dad. When I saw him last, he mentioned finding it difficult dealing with his dad's condition but he quickly steered us into more light-hearted waters. It was a

momentary glimpse beneath his happy-go-lucky exterior but the thing about Rick was that he was a very private person, never wanting to burden anyone with his own problems.

His dad died earlier this spring and tragically, Rick took his own life the same week. He was 48 years old. It is particularly tragic that Rick had given so much support to those with mental health issues but when he needed it most, we - his friends - were oblivious. So I have an appeal to make. No matter how bad things get, whether there is a personal tragedy, a relationship breakdown, financial worries, or concerns about exams, it is crucial to talk to someone before doing something that cannot be undone. Similarly, if you are aware of somebody who might be at risk, don't wait to be asked for help. It is better to offer and be rebuffed than to delay and discover it's too late to intervene. There was never a more beloved, cheerful, and outgoing character as Rick and if it can happen to him, then given the right circumstances, we are all at risk.

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Carnivale

Every year our W.I. chooses a charity to support, and this year our charity is Mind, an organisation that offers information and support to those living with, or those caring for, someone who suffers with mental health problems. There can be few of us whose lives have not been touched in some way by mental health issues; perhaps ourselves, family or friends. It is, of course an unseen disease until it manifests itself in some form of bizarre behaviour or language or acute depression. Drugs can of course stabilise conditions but sadly people who suffer from these illnesses often forget medication if there is no one on hand to prompt or remind them.

With these thoughts uppermost in our minds, our programme secretaries decided that a social evening would be a great way of raising funds for such a worthy cause. In February, thanks largely to their efforts Rogerstone Roses held an Italian themed evening 'Carnivale.'

The menu was lasagne with salad and lemon tart as dessert. The tables were beautifully decorated in the colours of the Italian flag, small flags decorated a green and white table decoration which held a tall white candle. The hall looked truly magnificent. To encourage our members to think all things Italian there was a quiz on every table including famous faces, types of pasta and Beatles song titles in



Italian.

The evening was an enormous success, the food was excellent, the quiz a little taxing but enjoyable, I obviously have to look more closely at the pasta section when I next go shopping, and of course the chance to talk to friends and acquaintances is always a treat as meetings are often busy. Members had been exceptionally generous and provided numerous prizes for the raffle, this combined with the profits from the supper allowed us to make an incredible amount in excess of £500 for our charity. So, what an evening, not only did we make a very credible donation for Mind but all members had a truly splendid evening.

Over the next weeks we have some great evenings planned, Lorna Pearson, AKA the Chuckle Lady, is returning to entertain us with a programme called appropriately 'Easter Chuckles.' The chaplain from Usk prison the Rev. David Womersley is on the programme as is The Black Mountain Falconry and a talk on digital photography.

If you think you might be interested in any of these topics do come along, we meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month, members arrive from 7pm onwards for a coffee or tea and a chat and the meeting starts at 7.30pm.

Liz James



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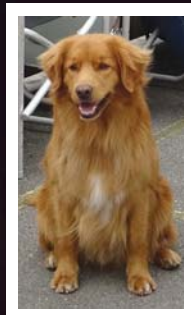
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Missing Dog

Archie

Archie is a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, a smaller version of a golden retriever except ginger and a white flash on his chest. Archie went missing 10th March from Sirhowy Country Park, where he was swept down river. He has been seen several times since in Crosskeys and latterly 26th and 27th March in Cwmcarn by the park and the mountain.



Please phone 01495 271181, 07738 001950 or through www.facebook.com/heatherjohnstone.buckingham if you have any information.

Thank you for looking for him, your help is appreciated.

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2	3				5	1	6	7
		7	6		1			
6					3	5	4	9
		3						6
				8				1
7					9	3		
8		9				4	1	
	1				2			8
		2				6	7	5

The object of sudoku is to insert the missing numbers in the boxes to satisfy just one condition: each row, column and 3x3 box must contain the digits 1 through to 9 exactly once. This can be done by applying logic – you do not have to guess.

Solution on page 54

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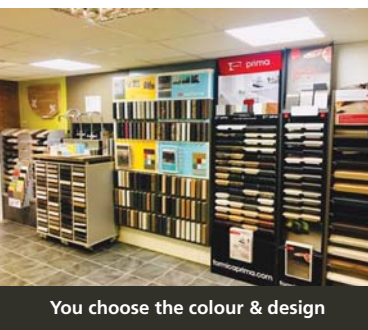
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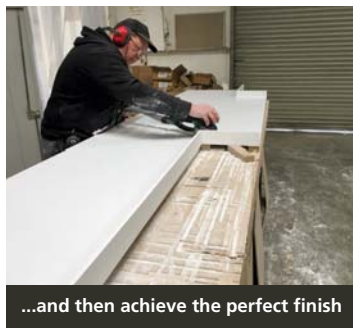
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Gwerinwyr Gwent Diary

On Wednesday 6th March we had our first booking of 2019 (nothing on St David's day this year which is most unusual). This took place at Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed (Newport's first Welsh medium secondary school), and came about as a result of an email from L'Ecole d'Education Internationale de Laval, near Montreal in Canada to the Welsh Folk Dance Society. A group of 62 students (16-17 years old) and five teachers was visiting the UK, including a two day visit to Wales, and they were keen to watch and take part in some Welsh dancing.

Under the auspices of Gwyl Plant Gwent (the children's dance festival involving schools established by GG members in 1981), the visit to Ysgol Gwent Is Coed was arranged. With the help of the head teacher and pupils of the school, a programme was put together by Barbara Griffiths to give the Canadians a 'flavour of Wales'. This started with pupils giving their visitors a tour of the school, followed by refreshments and a short power point presentation about the landscape and famous places of Wales. Then they were treated to a demonstration of clog dancing by Mr James (maths teacher), a pupil harp quartet and a Welsh language solo. GG gave a display of some traditional Welsh folk dances, and finally a mini



twmpath with GG demonstrating the dances and the Canadian and Gwent Is Coed students joining in enthusiastically. We didn't have to encourage them onto the floor, the 14-17 year olds were up on their feet, eager to join in and determined to enjoy themselves and it certainly looked as though they did! They were returning to Canada on the following Saturday and we hope they left the UK with happy memories of their time in Wales.

Our next booking was Monday 25th March at Lodge Farm Church in Caerleon where, dare I say it, the age group was at the other end of the spectrum! This was a reprise of an evening put together by Barbara Griffiths telling the story of Gwerinwyr Gwent and Welsh



folk dancing, made up of dance displays interspersed with the audience guessing what was inside a series of boxes by answering clues read out by GG dancers. At the end there was time for just one easy ceilidh dance for those who wanted to join in. March was a busy month, as on 31st March we paid our annual visit to Llanover for the NGS open garden day. It is always a lovely event and raises such a lot of money for charity. The weather was dry although very cold, but that didn't stop people flooding in. We were again joined by the Lloyd family, so had a super band of musicians (they were frozen), and a lot of people watched and enjoyed our performances. We had some very nice feedback. Gwerinwyr Gwent is always seeking new members, and beginners or experienced dancers/musicians are very welcome. Practice night is Thursday 8pm-10pm at the Graig Community Hall Bassaleg, opposite the Ruperra pub.



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Craig Goch is seen by many as the most attractive of the dams, with an elegantly curved retaining wall and a series of arches. It has a domed valve

tower and the structure is typical of the 'Birmingham Baroque' style of much of the waterworks scheme. When we visited the dam in February 2014 the water was cascading over the top and down the spillways. Well worth and trip and only 1 ½ hours from Newport.

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4	6	5	3	8	7	2	9	1
7	2	8	1	6	9	3	5	4
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Local Place Names



In his introduction to his book on place names in Wales, Ifor Williams quotes the north Wales academic John Morris Jones as having said that “only the foolhardy try to explain place names!” That being so, Wales must be full of the foolhardy as the interpretation and translation of place names in Wales seems to be a national pastime. As a result, there sometimes seems to be as many variations on the meaning of some towns and villages in Wales as there are of inhabitants. This often leads to some quite heated debate as proponents of one interpretation argue their case against those suggesting a different derivation.

The situation in Wales has been complicated by several factors. Firstly, there are the various Welsh dialects. As with all languages, dialects vary from region to region where that language is spoken; this may be because a different word exists in different regions for describing the same thing or just a difference in pronunciation or spelling. In Wales we have the added complication of Anglicisation. In

the 19th Century, large numbers of English speakers moved into Wales, especially south-east Wales, to work in the iron works and coal mines. They were unable to spell or pronounce Welsh words correctly and so we see a change in the spelling to English orthography. Other times, the incoming English speakers resulted in a significant growth in the population of an area and a completely new (English) name

was given to an existing Welsh community, hence resulting in both a Welsh and English version of a place name. The picture is further complicated by the mapping of Wales which took place during the 19th Century. This was largely undertaken by monoglot English speakers with the remit seeming to have been to record place names as best as possible using English orthography. This has resulted in some quite bizarre outcomes such as the 6th Century Welsh saint Illtud becoming a Twit (Llanilltud becoming Llantwit)! In 2018, at the behest of Oxford House Industrial History Society, Cymdeithas Enwau Lleoedd Cymru / Welsh Place Name Society (CELIC) undertook to provide an interpretation of some of the place names in the Risca area.

RISCA MUSEUM

In the past, there has been quite some head-scratching concerning the names of local areas. One such example is Ochrywth, where some have tried to interpret the meaning by resorting to a dictionary and come up with the meaning of 'the eighth side' and wondering what happened to the other seven! This, of course, is a misspelling of the Welsh word 'chwith' (left) or 'chwyth' (blast of air) based on the South Wales dialect 'with' or 'wyth' (both pronounced 'weeth'). As with the Latin, the Welsh for 'left' can also mean something sinister or wrong which lends the first interpretation of 'Ochrywth' as 'the wrong side' and the second as 'the windy side'. Having completed their work on a sample of place names local

to the Risca area, CELIC commissioned a set of five interpretation boards which were displayed on the CELIC stand at the Eisteddfod in Cardiff in August 2018. During the week of the Eisteddfod, these boards attracted considerable attention from visitors to the CELIC stand along with some interesting conversations around these and other local place names. Following the success of this display at the National Eisteddfod, Risca Museum were presented with a set of boards which are now on display in the Museum. The research into the derivation of the place names was undertaken by a renowned expert in the field, Richard Morgan. So, has his research into local names been accepted

by everyone and has the heat been taken out of the arguments? Of course not! And of course, we would not expect this to be so. However, what we have is what may be considered to be an expert view of the meanings of local place names which still remain open to (reasoned) debate. We also have a set of interpretation boards which local residents can refer to and can be used as the basis of future research. With our work with local schools, we also have something which can help local children understand something of their culture and heritage. Perhaps the final word should be left to John Morris Jones because after all, it is only the foolhardy who try to understand the meaning of place names in Wales!



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