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ISSUE 104 MAY/JUNE 2024



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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 enjoy our beautiful Welsh riversides (see article about the River Severn) and rugged Welsh beaches (see article about Burry Port).

Susan x

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people to make decisions on your behalf and can make things much easier for other people in your life than the alternatives.

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- Your spouse, children or friends will have to go to court to make decisions on your behalf – which will be a lot more expensive and time-consuming than making an LPA now.

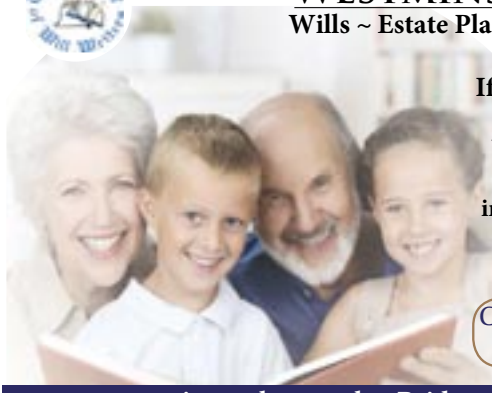
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It's Fun to Get Involved with a Group like The Twmbarlwm Society

The Hot-Cross-Bun Walk 2023

On the morning of Good Friday I was all tucked up nicely in bed and the weather forecast was not good for the day ahead. But with a moan and a groan I dragged myself out to go collect a load of Hot-Cross-Buns because that's what we had promised to do.

My wife was to butter and jam the buns and we were to take them up Twmbarlwm to give out to what we hoped would be crowds of people on the annual pilgrimage walking up there – because that's what we, the Twmbarlwm Society, had promised to do.

Okay it was an effort to get started but, long story short, by the end of the day I and a small band of helpers had a fabulous day meeting up with all sorts of people, encouraging them up the steep slopes, chatting about when they did this as kids, swapping stories and simply enjoying the great outdoors and admiring the views.



The start of the Hot-Cross-Bun Walk 2024 at the Stoney Bridge, Pontymister

It was a great day and well worth the effort we had all put into it – we were weather beaten and worn out when we got home, but with that warm smug feeling of a job well done – and that basically is what getting involved in a local society is all about.

The point of my story is that I speak to many people who help run various groups – from Environmental to Historical Groups or Scout Troops and Kiddies' Football Clubs to Church Restoration or Community Societies – and they all talk about the difficulty they have in persuading people to get involved. The good work of these organisations is often mentioned on these pages and social media.

Unfortunately their threads are often followed by the comments *"… why doesn't somebody do something about it?"* or *"… why didn't so-and-so group stop it happening?",* written by people who always expect somebody else to act.

Many groups start with great intentions amid a flurry of public interest and plenty of people turn out to support the cause initially. But once the group is established too many slink away, never to be involved again.

Some groups start because of some local controversy, but even when that issue seems resolved the group often needs to stay together to ensure the problem doesn't recur or a new topic becomes a concern.

The Twmbarlwm Society is a typical example of that and over the years we have become a society whose influence is respected – and I know we have a few battles on the horizon we will need to be involved in.

We are a non-political group and use our collective voice to influence how the landscape and environment of the area is managed and used for the benefit of the surrounding community.

Judging by the numbers who join us at our events there is no lack of interest in what we stand for – and I hear similar reports from other groups – but when it comes to attending meetings, organising events or helping with admin, then volunteers are thin on the ground.

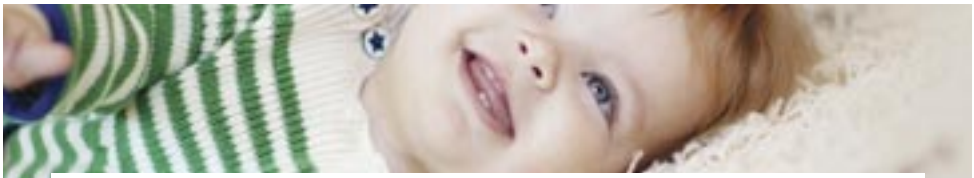
These organisations I'm talking about are largely run by older folk yet we are all desperate to get some younger blood involved.

So come on, all you community spirited people, get involved, use your skills to help a cause that interests you. You will meet interesting people, improve things for the community and most of all, have some fun and feel good about it.

TERRY EVANS
Chairman Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society

Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society 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 throughout the year so watch our website and Facebook page for details.

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Gwerinwyr Gwent Diary

In early March 2019 a group of French Canadian students from Laval near Montreal was visiting the UK, working from an appeal put out by the Welsh Folk Dance Society, a visit to Newport's Welsh Medium School was arranged by GG member Barbara Griffiths. The event was called 'A Flavour of Wales' and GG was involved by giving some dance displays and demonstrating easy dances they could join in with.



This time Barbara was contacted directly by the Canadian agent, Michel Paquet, but as she was very busy and the last visit involved a huge amount of work, she advised him to contact WFDS to see if another of their member groups would like to arrange it. Not a single group replied, so Barbara felt obliged to take it on, but put together a much scaled down programme. There would be no school involvement this time, and as the group of 50, 14-16 year olds plus five teachers was coming from Heathrow via London, Stonehenge and Bath, just a couple of hours at our practice venue (the Graig Community Hall in Bassaleg) was squeezed in before they moved on to their hotel in Cardiff for a four night stay.

Barbara gave them short talks about Wales in between our dance displays and taught a few useful words of Welsh. They had a drink with Welsh cakes as refreshment before joining in with a couple of easy dances. They took to it enthusiastically, and these days it is refreshing to see boys as well as girls dancing together without self-consciousness or embarrassment. They would have liked to do more but the evening was cut short by the restrictions on their coach driver's hours.

Surprisingly this year we had no bookings around St David's Day, so the next event was our annual visit to Llanover – on Sunday 24th March. The opening of the gardens as part of the National Garden Scheme for charity had been in doubt two weeks before because of all the rain we have had (parking is in one of the fields), but fortunately it went ahead and the afternoon was lovely. There were over 450 visitors which raised a huge amount for NGS charities, plus the local church benefitted from the sale of refreshments. The gardens as always looked lovely with all the daffodils and magnolias out in bloom.

Our next outing will be Saturday 11th May at the Tredegar House Folk Festival. There are free dance displays in two marquees between 1-5pm both Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Gwerinwyr Gwent is always seeking new members, and beginners or experienced dancers/musicians are very welcome. Practice night (numbers permitting) is Thursday 8-10pm at the Graig Community Hall (opposite the Ruperra PH).



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Planning to achieve your retirement goals sooner

But, for many different reasons, planning for retirement is a commonly overlooked aspect of personal financial planning and this can often lead to anxiety as your retirement age approaches. We have provided five ways to boost your pension savings and help you achieve your retirement goals sooner.

REVIEW YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Sometimes the simplest solutions are the most effective. If you want to boost your retirement savings, the simplest solution is to increase your contributions. You may think you cannot afford to, but even a slight increase can make a big difference. For those lucky enough to receive a pay rise in line with inflation every year, increasing your pension contributions by just 1% could add thousands to your eventual pension pot. The reason why a relatively small increase in pension contributions can result in such a large increase in the value of your pension pot is because of the power of compounding. The earlier you invest your money, the more you benefit from the effects of compounding. Adding more money to your pension pot by increasing your contributions just makes the compounding effect even better.

REVIEW YOUR STRATEGY

A missed opportunity for many pension holders is failing to choose how their pension is invested. Some people leave this decision in the hands of their workplace or pension provider. Many pension providers will give you several options for investment strategies. If you are in the default option, you could achieve higher returns with a different strategy (though this will usually mean taking on more investment risk). Note that this may not be appropriate in all circumstances, particularly if you are close to retirement.

KNOW YOUR ALLOWANCES

When you save in a pension for your retirement, the government adds tax relief on top of the money you contribute, helping you to grow your savings faster. However, there is a limit to the amount of contributions you can claim tax relief on each year, which is called your 'annual allowance'. It is currently £60,000 (tax year 2024/25), but in some cases may be lower. If you want to contribute more than your annual allowance into your pension in one tax year (for example, if you have received a windfall and want to put it aside for the future), it is worth knowing that you can use any unused allowance from up to three previous years. So, if you have £10,000 of unused allowance in each of the past three years, that is another £30,000 you can claim tax relief on this year. The tax relief on this amount would be at least £7,500, depending on your tax band.



TRACE LOST PENSIONS

Usually, starting a job with a new employer means starting a new pension, when that happens, some people may overlook the pension they had with their last employer. As a result, many people have pensions with previous employers that they have lost track of – and rediscovering them can give a huge boost to your retirement savings. Look through any documentation you still have from your past employers to see if you can find your pension or policy number. If you cannot, you can contact the provider anyway and they should be able to find your pension by using other details. If you are not sure who the provider is, start by asking your previous employer.

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Burry Port

People in Burry Port made a living from farming and fishing before the industrial revolution brought the railways and collieries to the area. With the closure of all the mines at Cwm Mawr in 1917 the railways up the valley were lifted. Pembrey and Burry Port railway station remains with regular services east via Swansea and Cardiff to London and west into Pembrokeshire.

Carmarthen Bay Power Station was built on the north shore of the Burry Estuary. Work started on its construction in April 1947 and power was first generated on 28th June 1953. At this time the plant employed around 500 people and during its 31 years of operation the three stacks became a local landmark. The power station ceased generating in 1984 and was demolished in the early 1990s.

Today the harbour consists of an impressive marina catering for small leisure craft. It is the third largest town in Carmarthenshire. Burry Port and Pembrey lies on the Millennium Coastal Path and is very popular with ramblers, offering over 25 miles of walkways, bridleways, and cyclists with the National Cycle Network.

When we visited last year, we enjoyed a delicious coffee and cake at the quaint Harbour Light Tearooms.



Harbour Light Tearooms

“Today the harbour consists of an impressive marina catering for small leisure craft. It is the third largest town in Carmarthenshire.”



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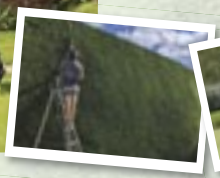
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Swan
RESCUE

Finale to 2023 Swan Breeding Season at Llantarnam Ponds

Those who are familiar with the swan family which inhabits the ponds at Llantarnam will be all too aware of how long it has taken to bring the 2023 breeding and rearing season to a close, so allowing the 2024 episode to start – and it really has been a struggle. As I'm sure we have noted previously, adult swans are very intolerant of the continuing presence of the juvenile swans from the previous year as winter transforms into spring, and so the degree of hostility displayed, particularly by the cob starts to ramp up. And so it did at Llantarnam, if a little later than might have been expected in mid-February. Again, as has been noted previously, catching swans off the Fountain Pond is particularly difficult, the more so this year because the continuing wet weather has made it particularly treacherous underfoot.



Mark our 'Swanherd' at Llantarnam

All this said, on 20th. February, we got off to a good start because the young birds were still coming to food, fairly unhindered by the adults; even coming out onto the bank. That was the undoing of what was to be our first success on the first of what turned out to be a total of six visits. Two days later, our luck held again as the birds came for food, but this time a swan hook was required to catch the second one on the water. Roz, (forgive me – our local swan minder) continued to visit every day, 9th March I joined her in what turned out to be a completely fruitless visit. However, the following day, she reported one of the remaining juveniles had been injured while attempting to avoid the cob's attacks which clearly were intensifying. The injuries involved significant strains to a leg and a wing, the consequence of which was that, whereas the first two were released immediately at The Knap, this one had to go into care at the Swan Sanctuary at Shepperton.



The last Llantarnam juvenile caught at last

On the day before the final denouement, the adults were on the Fountain Pond – not surprisingly because this is where the nest site is, and the two remaining juveniles were on the adjacent Kingfisher Pond. Even although we tried, these two birds were now so wary, there was not a chance of catching either of them. Fortunately, Mark, of whom we cannot speak highly enough was available the following day to help us, along with his trusty kayak.

When we arrived on the final afternoon, the adults had joined the juveniles on Kingfisher Pond and had driven them both up onto the main road! There we managed to catch one of them and caged it. I chased the other as best I could, but it took off and landed back on the Fountain Pond. Pressure from Mark eventually resulted in the cygnet returning to Kingfisher Pond, where more pressure both from Mark and the two adult swans resulted in the young swan returning to dry land. I pursued it up the road, left into a cul-de-sac and finally caught it at the top of a steep slippery bank...What a relief! Just time to draw breath before securing it in the car alongside his sibling, leaving once again to release them both at The Knap in Barry.

Story by Peter & Ellen, photos from Roz.
For swan problems please contact Peter & Ellen on 07802 472788.

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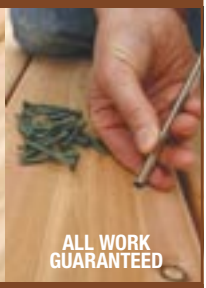
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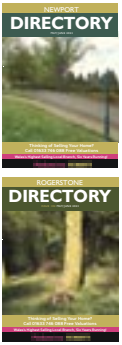
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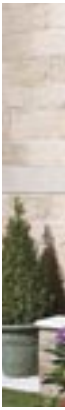
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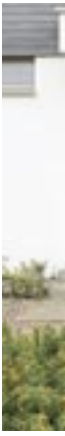
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Newport u3a

Katherine Hawkins, the Age Friendly Policy Officer at Newport City council, recently made a visit to Newport u3a that is situated at the Dolman Theatre.



Having seen how our organisation provides an inclusive and friendly environment offering over 40 active, social and cultural groups for the retired, she agreed it would be beneficial for our u3a to be involved and our members Julie Kennedy and Jackie Kerr volunteered to represent us.

Katherine observed our Choir rehearsing and talked to our Theatre Group regarding what Age Friendly meant to them. Sitting in our Cafe area, she also chatted with members as they completed her survey relating to their knowledge and ideas for making Newport an Age Friendly City.

u3a learn, laugh, live

If you would like to belong to an Age-Friendly organisation, come and try us out for two weeks. Newport u3a meets Wednesdays to Fridays at 9.45-15.00 during term times. Contact Angela Robins on 07983 130541 or www.u3asites.org.uk/newportsewales

Hardy Plant Society

The HPS Monmouthshire group is for people who love plants and gardening and enjoy sharing their enthusiasm.

Non-members are very welcome to come along. It's an excellent opportunity to meet people with similar interests, to chat, enjoy refreshments and buy some plants. We'd love to see you. Talks take place at Little Mill Hall on the second Saturday of the month at 2.30pm. Refreshments are available and the talks last about 40 minutes. Sometimes, the group hosts Zoom talks or organises garden visits, discussions, dinners & plant sales. To keep in touch visit https://hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk

On Saturday 11th May at the Hall in Little Mill at 2.30pm, Roger Lloyd will give an illustrated talk entitled 'Hydrangeas – A Gentle Obsession'. Roger's talk will be an all-you-need-to-know, encyclopaedic account of growing hydrangeas. Our fantastic Plant Sale is also on the 11th May at the Hall. We are hoping to have as many plants as possible for sale at all our talks in the Hall.

The National Garden Scheme (NGS) Open Garden season is approaching and you can browse and plan your visits with the help of https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/

The NGS has introduced a 'Gardens in Gwent for Private Group Visits'. If you like the idea of a private group visit see https://ngs.org.uk/gwent-by-arrangement/ for more information.



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Belle Vue
Park & Tea Room



What's On in May & June

May

Sunday 5th 11.00am-4.00pm
Our monthly market sets off a busy month with its artisan arrangement of wonderful food, craft, gifts and homeware.

Saturday 11th 1.00pm – 3.00pm
Dave Williams Band will present Blues in the Park from our lovely bandstand to entertain and delight.

Friday 17th Street Food Friday 6.30pm – 9.30pm
Come along to our regular summer evenings of food, drink and music. Music is provided by the Blue Evolution Band and their full electric show. Music is accompanied by the Fairy Glen bar and street food vendors. You are very welcome to bring your own food and drink and just enjoy the evening with us. However, you must take away your own used cans, bottles and food trays home to recycle or dispose of.

Sunday 19th 1.00pm and 3.00pm
A new sound for us this year, the Brass Monkeys will play on the bandstand. Come along and listen whilst enjoying delicious cakes and savouries from the tearoom.

Saturday 25th May 10.00am – 4.00pm
Family Fun Day hosted by Belle Vue in partnership with Greentop Markets. Music supplied by the Dave Williams Band.

June

Sunday 2nd – 11.00am – 4.00pm
Our lovely market returns with 40 plus stalls to tempt you. As always, we have the presence of Serennu to give information on their Sparkle appeal and to encourage customers to the market to donate small change.

Sunday 16th 1.00pm and 3.00pm
V B Samba will join us on the bandstand to provide a wonderful drumming spectacular.

Friday 21st June 6.30pm – 9.30pm
Music by the Dave Williams Band. You will be guaranteed a lovely evening with talented artists alongside our regular lovely street food vendors and drinks provided by Fairy Glen bar and a wonderful selection of delicious food vendors.

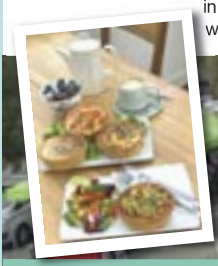
Sunday 23rd 1.00pm – 3.00pm
Newport Male Voice Choir will be singing on our lovely bandstand.

Sunday 30th
Come along to our all things bone china and crockery event. We have beautiful china to sell or swap. We have interactive activities and on top of this between 1.00pm – 3.00pm Cwmbran Brass Band will play on our lovely bandstand. Try a delicious cream tea on your own china.





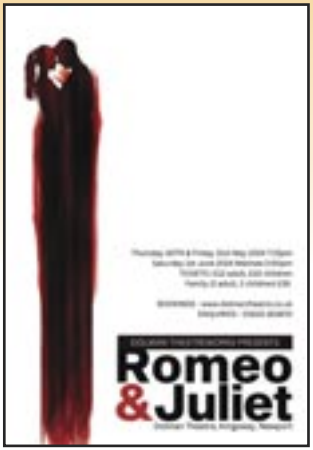


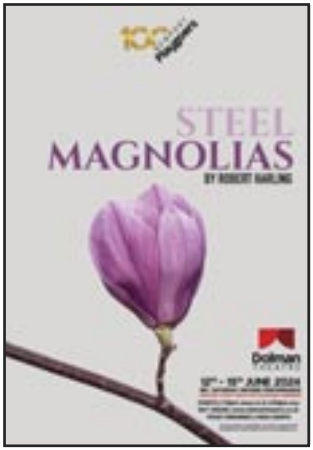


Look out for more information on our notice boards and Facebook/Instagram @Bellevuetearooms and on our website www.bellevuetearoom.uk. Alternatively text or phone Jan on 07737 630657.

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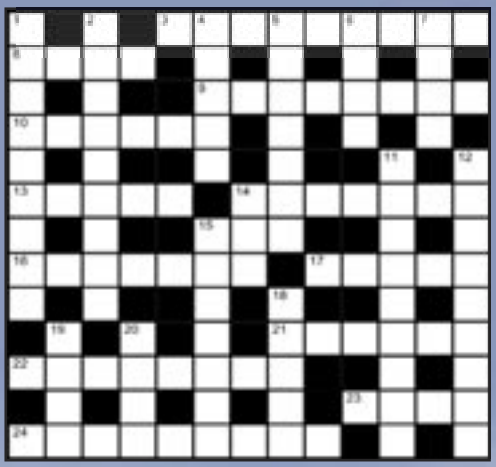
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Puzzles

CROSSWORD



Across

3 Pre-decimal coin worth two shillings and sixpence (4,5)
8 British county dissolved in 1996 (4)
9 Natives or inhabitants of Greece (8)
10 Breakfast food of untoasted dry cereals and fruits (6)
13 Country on the Iberian Peninsula (5)
14 Swiss cheese with small holes (7)
15 Nocturnal mammal (3)
16 London-based international news agency (7)
17 Same again (5)
21 Expensive white fur (6)
22 Line of longitude (8)
23 Bird symbolising peace (4)
24 Personification of icy or wintry weather (4,5)

Down

1 Telling fortunes by the lines on the hand (9) 2 French part of the Riviera (4,5)
4 Small plant-sucking insect (5)
5 Hazelnut (7)
6 Lively Scottish dance (4)
7 Tiny, common UK bird (4)
11 Aviator hired to fly experimental aeroplanes in designed manoeuvres (4,5)
12 Instrument for recording the number of steps taken (9)
14 Nitrogen, for example (3)
15 Metal container in which coal or charcoal is burned (7)
18 Roman goddess of love (5)
19 Salty Greek cheese (4)
20 Mammal having partially webbed feet; valued for its fur (4)

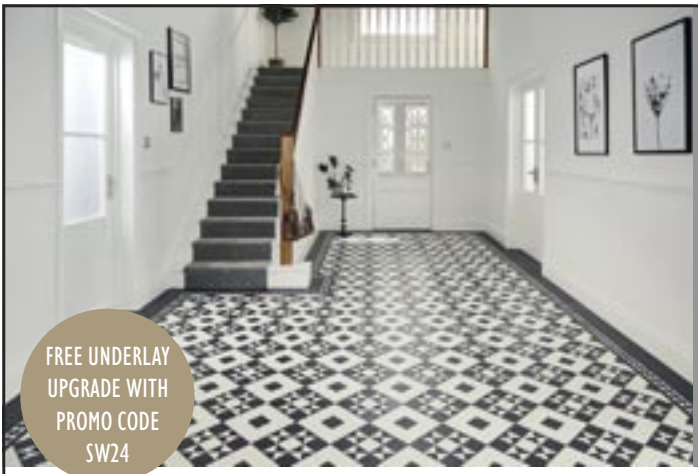
SUDOKU

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

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.

Solutions on page 35





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Since the destruction of the railway bridge between Sharpness and Lydney in the late 1960s rail traffic has been serviced by the Severn Tunnel, 15 miles (24 km) further downstream.

The Severn Bridge, an impressive suspension bridge was opened in 1966 by Queen Elizabeth II. For thirty years, the bridge carried the M4 motorway. It was granted Grade I listed status in 1999. It replaced the 137 year-old Aust Ferry.

An increase in traffic led to the construction of the Second Severn Crossing (renamed the Prince of Wales Bridge in 2018), which opened in 1996 and now carries the M4 motorway.

On a cold October day we walked over the old Severn Bridge, starting from the Wye Valley Link Road, A466 just off Junction 2 of the M48. We only managed to get to the middle of the main span but we enjoyed watching the Severn Rescue boat practicing their manoeuvres. The walk was well worth the effort.





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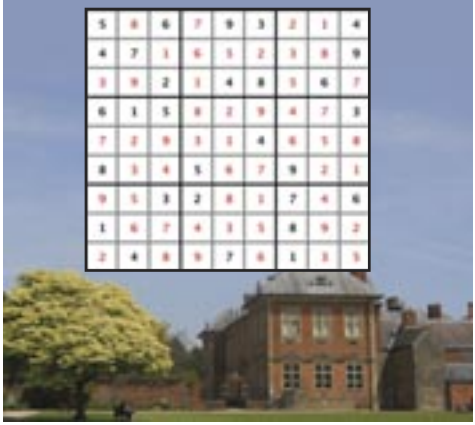




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Puzzle Solutions

Across: 3 Half crown, 8 Avon, 9 Hellenes, 10 Muesli, 13 Spain, 14 Gruyère, 15 Bat, 16 Reuters, 17 Ditto, 21 Ermine, 22 Meridian, 23 Dove, 24 Jack Frost.
Down: 1 Palmistry, 2 Cote d'Azur, 4 Aphid, 5 Filbert, 6 Reel, 7 Wren, 11 Test pilot, 12 Pedometer, 14 Gas, 15 Brazier, 18 Venus, 19 Feta, 20 Mink.



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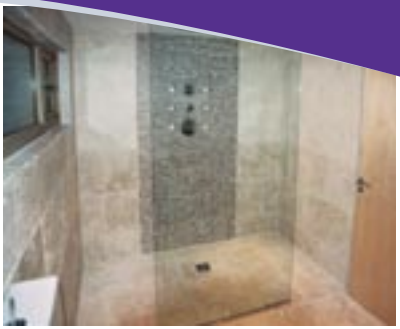
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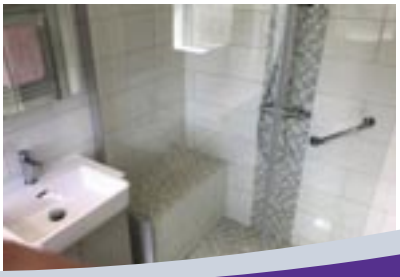
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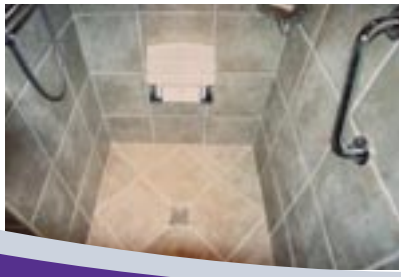
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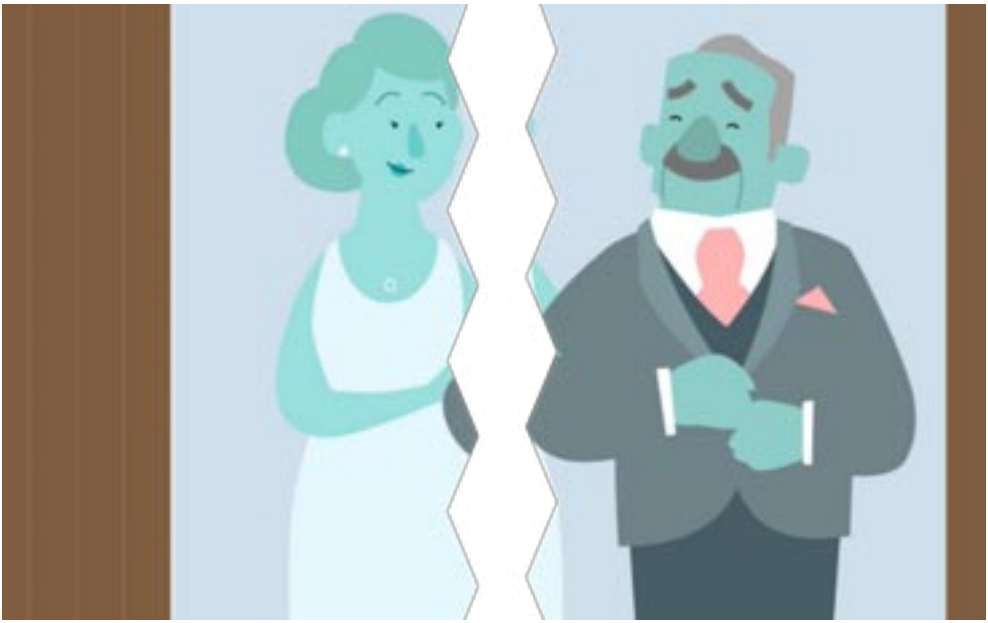
We have two regular monthly meetings.

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The last Monday of each month
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The support meetings usually have a speaker or demonstration, not always about PD.
Call Julie on 07446 630229 for more information.

Both meetings give the chance to socialise and talk to others about the PD experience and maybe get some tips. Don't be shy or nervous about joining us. It helps to speak to others who are on the same journey as you with this frustrating condition. We'd love to see you.





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