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ISSUE 93 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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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.

www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

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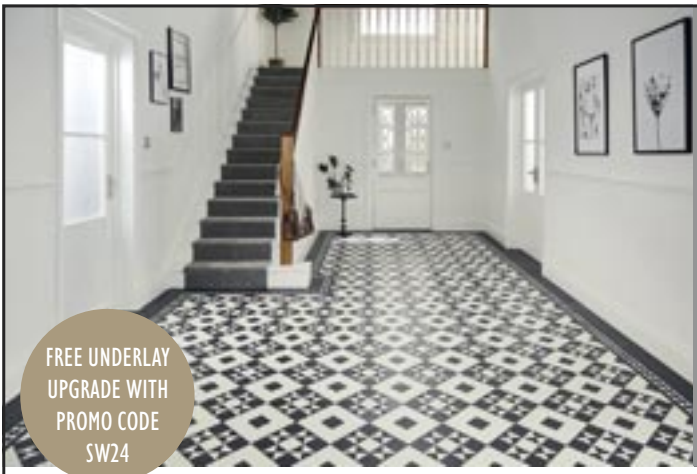
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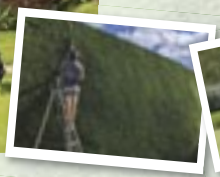
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people to make decisions on your behalf and can make things much easier for other people in your life than the alternatives.

What would happen if I don't create a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA)?

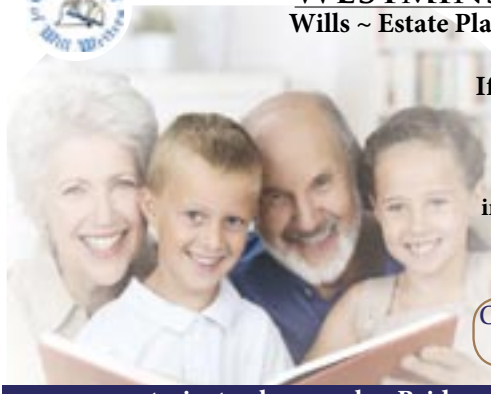
- You will no longer be able to decide who makes decisions for you and looks after your affairs (you can only make your LPA while you still have mental capacity).
- People you don't know will end up making crucial decisions for you instead – such as where you live, whether to accept medical treatment to keep you alive, what you eat and wear, and about your property and your finances.
- 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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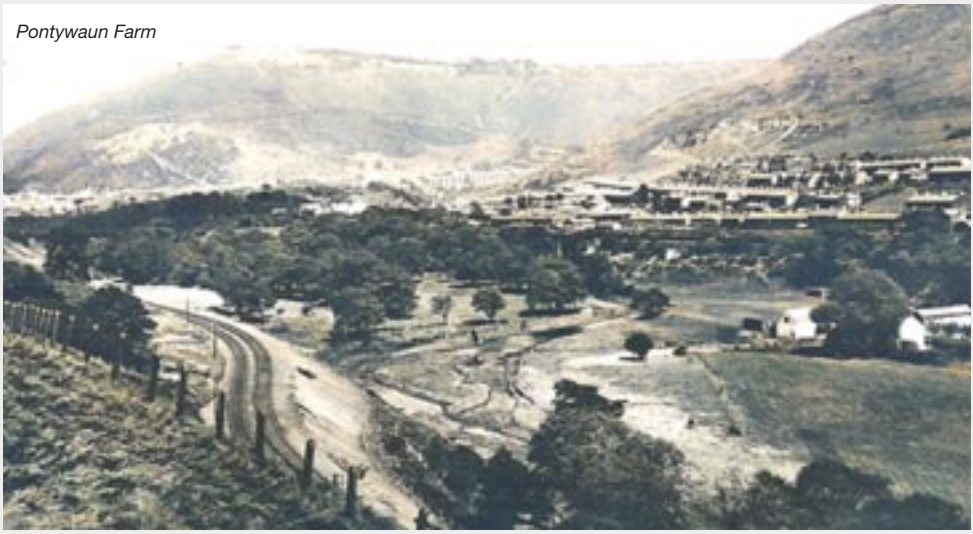
Risca MUSEUM

LOST FARMS OF RISCA

Part 1 (North)

Before the 19th Century Risca was a very small, rural parish with a cluster of cottages near sole public house and parish church with many small farms scattered throughout the district. With the construction of the canal and tramroads (later converted to railways), by the middle of the 19th century it had become an increasingly industrial area. Growing from a population of only 240 in 1801 to 2744 in 1861 and over 10,000 by the end of the century. But what happened to the farms?

Pontywaun Farm



Pontywaun Farm and Old Cwmcarn Farm

The land was part of the Abercarn Estate and is first mentioned in 1798 when the estate had been purchased by Samuel Glover. By 1824 it was owned by Benjamin Hall, later Lord Llanover and occupied by a succession of small tenant farmers. At the start of the 20th century it was occupied by the Davies family who ran a dairy business. In the 1920s it was transferred to the Worthington family, who had butchers shops in Cwmcarn village. The buildings were eventually demolished in the 1980s soon after the construction of the by-pass road.

There is a suggestion that Pontywaun Farm was built as a new development because of the construction of the canal which separated it from Old Cwmcarn Farm on the hillside above. Old Cwmcarn farm is recorded in the first half of the 19th century when the freehold was owned by the Evans family. Later it had a succession of names, usually alluding to the family who lived there, e.g. Jones's Farm (1871), Shipton's Farm (1891) and Silverthorn's Farm (1901). In 1911, it is The Farm, Pontywaun (Francis's Farm), and, from the 1930s to the 1970s Edward's Farm (Pontywaun farm), 4 Twyn Carn Road. The buildings can still be recalled by older residents of Pontywaun, situated on the site of the complex on corner of Silver Street and Twyncarn Road.



Pandy Farm



Risca Farm

Pandy Farm

This land was part of the Tredegar Estate and first recorded in the 1760s as a Tucking Mill. These were more often referred to as Fulling Mills and were concerned with cleaning wool and making it ready for weaving; in Wales they were more commonly called Pandys. In the early 1800s it is called Tir y Pandy (Pandy Land) and, by the middle of the century, Pandy Farm. This may indicate that it had stopped milling and had become a small farm although the occupiers, on and after the 1851 census, are listed as Labourer, Coalminer, Coalminer, Widow and Coalminer.

If any farming was going on, it must have been on a part-time basis. In 1901, the occupier was George H Hoare, a pump mechanic in the colliery; by 1911 the head of the household was George's widow Margaret with her son, Harry, a haulier and some lodgers. Margaret died in 1920, the farm was demolished soon after with the 'Boys Club' (now Crosskeys Youth Club) built on the site in 1923. Crosskeys Rugby Club moved to the field next to the farm around 1900 which suggests that no farming was being done by then and, when the Boys Club was built it incorporated new changing rooms for the team.

Risca Farm

This was a much more significant farm; when the Tredegar Estate leased the land to Roland Phillip David in 1722, it consisted of over 130 acres. Via Phillip Rowland and Rowland Phillips it passed through several generations of the same family until around 1800. In 1796, the Tredegar Estate granted a lease to Edmund Jones of a large parcel of land on the other side of the river to develop and expand the existing coal mining activity. This resulted in several years of dispute with Phillips as Jones tried to get his coal to the canal until Rowland Phillips was encouraged to relocate to another farm by the Tredegar Estate. Eventually the colliery company took over the farm and its land, from which time the farm was occupied by colliery owners or managers.

Although the small farmhouse was extended, it was not considered grand enough and so, a more impressive building was constructed next door. This house came to be known as Waunfawr House. Into the 20th century, both houses became private family homes which Risca Farm (now known as Risca House) still is, whilst Waunfawr House was demolished in the 1960s.

Thanks to Rob Southall for permission to draw on his research.

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/

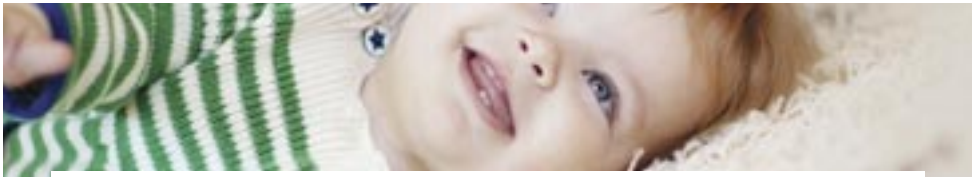
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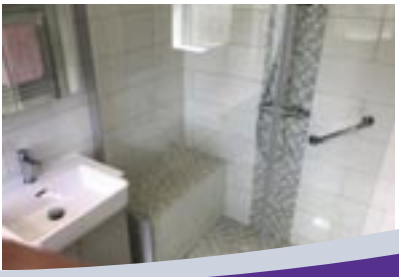
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Swan
RESCUE

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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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).



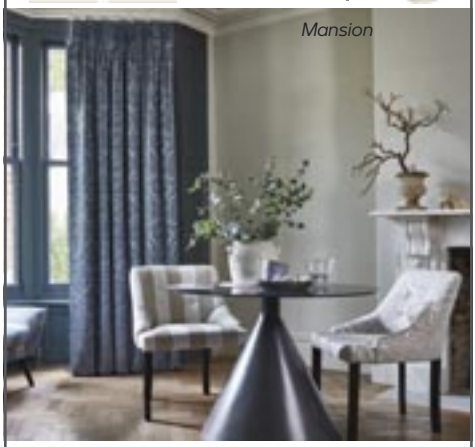
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River Severn



The River Severn is Britain's longest river from source to tidal waters about 180 miles (290 km) long, with the Severn estuary adding some 40 miles (64 km) to its total length. The Severn rises on the northeastern slopes of Plynlimon in the Cambrian Mountains, at an altitude of 2,001 feet (610 m) and then follows a semicircular course basically southward. The estuary widens gradually between South Wales and Somerset and eventually becomes the Bristol Channel.

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.





St David's Hospice Care

Fundraising Calendar of Events 2024













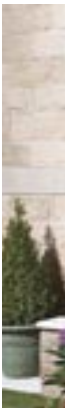
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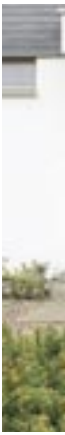






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Burry Port

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.”

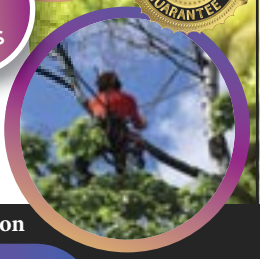


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The Newport Parkinson's Support Group is here to help and support people living with Parkinson's in the Newport area.

We have two regular monthly meetings.

MAINDEE CAFE

A drop-in Parkinson's Cafe in Maindee Library, Chepstow Road, Newport NP19 8BY.

The 2nd Friday of each month

2.15pm - 4.15pm.

£2.00 per person for refreshments.

The cafes are very informal and have been very successful for several years.

Call Ruth on 07966 754366 for more information.

SUPPORT MEETING

Maesglas Community Centre, Bideford Road, Newport NP20 3XT

The 1st turning after Cardiff Road Lidl Store.

The last Monday of each month

2.30pm - 4.30pm

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.

L J SYMONDS

ROOFING, BUILDING & MAINTENANCE

ROOFING

- Natural slate
- Heritage Work
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- Tiling
- Pitched roofs
- Flat roofs
- Chimney repairs take down and rebuild
- Lead work
- Velux windows
- UPVC roofline (fascia's)

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