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ISSUE 96 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

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Welcome!

As 2024 draws to an end we would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the continued success of the Directory this year.

Thank you to all the distributors who, no matter how bad the weather is, deliver the Directories for us. Thank you to the residents and organisations for sending us articles. Finally, a very special thank you to the advertisers for their continued support, without the financial support from the them, there would be no Directory.

If you are interested in advertising your business in the Directory, please contact us to find out about the extremely competitive advertising rates. You will always deal with us directly, like many of the businesses that advertise in this magazine, we are a small, independent family business and fully appreciate how much your business means to you, especially in these uncertain times.

Wishing you a happy festive period.

Susan x

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Twmbarlwm's Place in History

Our first evening talk of the season was recently presented by CPAT and Cadw – the team we worked with on the Archaeological Investigations on Twmbarlwm from 2018 - 2022.

The talk started with the statement that there is no written mention of the earthworks and Twmbarlwm until the post medieval period when the hill began to appear in property deeds and the first cartographers and antiquarians first explored the historic county of Monmouthshire.

This prompted me to look back at our earlier research into Twmbarlwm, using the excellent Bibliography supplied to us by Will Davies (which can be seen on our website) – and thus I spent a few hours surfing the web for old books and documents and struggling to read those ancient texts with their strange letter forms, like 'f' instead of 's', and archaic language.

The first book I studied was from 1587 in which Thomas Churchyard mentions Twmbarlwm in his poem *'The Worthines of Wales'* he alludes to the earthworks on its summit – having just described the hill fort on Lodge Hill above Caerleon he states:

> *'Not farre from this, much like unto the same, Tombarlown stands, a mountaine of some fame',*
>
> A margin note adds *'A wonderful high mountaine with the like manner of defence'.*

The poem isn't clear to me whether he actually visited the mountain but it shows it was as impressive a monument then as now.

The first published description, I came across, of the monument itself is in *Archdeacon Coxe's Historical Tour in Monmouthshire* (1801). Coxe's detailed descriptions are enhanced by the engravings (by Colt-Hoare) which show the mound with the small cairn on the lip of its ditch, the pond and the breaches or gaps on the west and south-west arc of its defences.

Coxe assumed the mound to be the burial place of a fallen Silurian chieftain saying:

> *"…Twyn Barlwm … may contain the ashes of some valiant chief among the Silures, who fell in defending his country against the Romans."*

Of course he had no evidence of this but he was also informed by a local Mr Owen:

> *"… according to the present race of bards, it was once a celebrated place for holding the Eisteddfod or bardic meetings."*



William Saxton's 1557 map shows 'Tumberlow Hill' as a mole-hill-like lump.

Coxe's description of the hill fort is quite detailed and a modern reader will still recognise the location. The account of his trip to the summit on horseback was surprisingly delayed three times by inclement weather, yet he paints an idyllic rural picture of the mountain and waxes lyrical about the views over the valleys and township below:

> *"The beautiful valleys of the Ebwy and Sorwy appear in the hollows between the mountains, deeply shaded with trees and watered by torrents which faintly glimmer through the intervening foliage."*

I also turned to studying some ancient maps to find that *'Tumberlow Hill'* appears as a mole-hill-like lump on William Saxton's map of 1577, and again in John Speed's map of 1610. This corruption of presumably unfamiliar Welsh was followed numerous times and occasionally varied by subsequent cartographers, including *'Pentwynbarhen Hill'* (Morden 1695), and *'Tumberton Hill'* (Badeslade and Toms, 1742). John Cary's map in 1787 appears to be the first to indicate the enclosure rather than simply a schematic conical hill.

It's not until you see the Tithe map for Risca of 1843 you find written evidence of ownership. 'Mynydd Twyn Barlwyn', in plot 191, was owned by a John Jones Esq. and occupied by one Mary George. It is drawn in more detail with the enclosure as an unbroken raised area and the motte still at its eastern end.

It can be fascinating exploring the history of our local mountain and landscape and I would encourage anyone to delve into the archives (use the Bibliography and Archaeological reports on our website as a starting point) to discover more information or come along to one of our talks.

TERRY EVANS
Chair 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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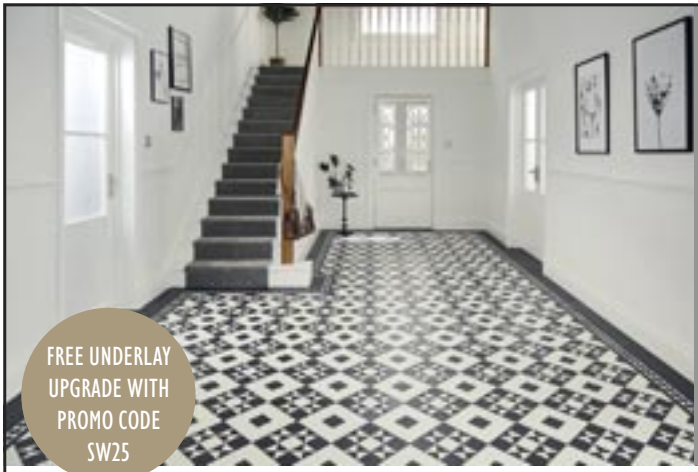
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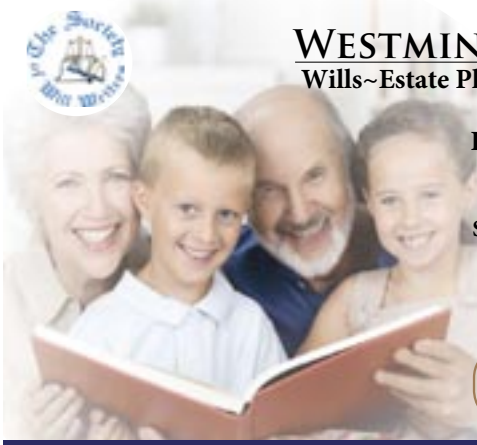
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Gwerinwyr Gwent Diary

We have had such a quiet summer there has been very little to write about, so let's go back to early May and the 33rd Tredegar House Folk Festival. GG was due to dance two spots, one in the main dance marquee and the other in the farmers market. The weather was lovely, and we completed our first spot in the marquee although it was very hot in there and we were all a bit breathless by the end. Unfortunately, one of our dancers was badly affected by the heat and had to spend some time in the St John Ambulance vehicle to cool down and recover, so we cancelled our second spot. I think most people in the farmers market were more interested in browsing the stalls than watching us anyway.

The festival had a new layout this year with all venues sited around the car park at Tredegar House as the National Trust was expecting work to be carried out on some buildings and couldn't guarantee the date. It made for a compact 'village feel' which many attendees preferred.

Our next outing was at the end of the month at Chippenham Folk Festival, an event we have supported many times. Another lovely day and we gave two performances, one in the main street and





one outside the Rose and Crown, both alongside other groups. We weren't the only Welsh side in attendance as Tipyn O Bopeth from West Wales also took part. There were good crowds to watch the dancing, and the Grand Parade through the town with all the Morris, Appalachian, Clog, Step and Welsh groups provided a colourful spectacle for them.

Finally on the 6th August we were at the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd for the midday spot in Ty Gwerin. Amazingly we were again lucky with the weather and had the sunniest, warmest and, most importantly, driest day of the whole week. Some dance groups take their costumes and change into them for their performance, but we like to wear ours for the whole day. This meant a lot of stopping while walking around the maes as people do love to take photos especially of the ladies in their tall hats. Some of the group were even photographed by the BBC and appeared on the Eisteddfod highlights programme.

Our performance went well although once again it was very warm for dancing inside the yurt.

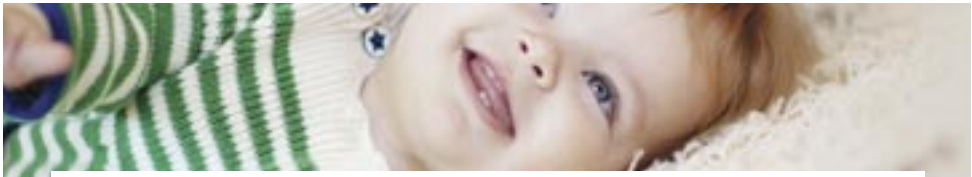


With the Eisteddfod being held in Ynysangharad Park it was so nice to be able to wander through Pontypridd town centre for our lunch (more photo stops), before our second spot in the tiny space of the Bwthyn.



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).

For more details visit our website www.gwerinwyrgwent.org.uk, ring 01495 271953



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Risca
MUSEUM

The gob fire

I think this certificate had been donated in the early days of the organisation and was displayed in our first Museum based in the old Pontymister Secondary School.
Arthur Fisher was from Wattsville and it was donated by his son, also Arthur Fisher, and, for many years, we believed that this was in recognition of a unique action by one man. Over time, further certificates were donated so that now we have 13 on display in our mining room and are aware that there are others in existence.





All the certificates are identical apart from the person's name. Top left and right are the two miners institutes, the 1911 one on Crosskeys corner (since demolished) and the Museum building. Bottom right and left are the two pits, Risca Colliery and the Blackvein Colliery, owned by the same company and connected underground. The wording is very grandiose referring to the man's bravery and consideration for their fellow workers.
This is during WW1; all ships, as well as all trains, are powered by steam coal. Risca produced large quantities of especially good steam coal; in 1913 the colliery employed 2247 men, a particularly large and important operation.
When I was growing up, the gob was something to be filled by gob-stoppers but, in collieries, it referred to a worked-out area that could be filled with 'rubbish'. This saved transporting the unwanted material to the surface and having to dispose of it above ground. On the negative side, on rare occasions, this rubbish was subject to spontaneous combustion and this is what happened on Friday 12th July 1916.
Smoke was detected in Lee's heading in the Old Blackvein part of the workings, management were informed and all workmen were withdrawn from the pit. Union officials together with three men from the affected area and Mr Ivor Llewellyn (Managing Director) descended and became aware of obnoxious fumes. The following day, this group, accompanied by others, including a Mines Inspector, proceeded to the affected area and were convinced that a gob fire existed. Exploration continued and on Sunday, the actual fire was discovered; the brigade from the Crumlin Mines Rescue Station were underground all Sunday including the night.
The miners held a meeting and, understandably, decided not to return to work. Another meeting was held a week later after the management put up a notice that full work would be resumed at once. As there had been no consultation and the fire was still

burning, the men refused to return, very understandable in a mining area with a history of explosions and great loss of life. The General Secretary of the Miners Federation was requested to ask the Home Secretary to receive a deputation to explain the full facts. The Home Office had obviously become involved because of the loss of vital coal supplies but had only heard the management's side of the story. A meeting took place at the Home Office in London on Wednesday 24th July with three checkweighers representing the workmen of the colliery and three officials of the South Wales Miners Federation led by the acting President, James Winstone J.P. The Home Office delegation of three was headed by the Under-Secretary William Brace M.P.

A few days later there was a further meeting at the Home Office, this time including representatives of the



Old Blackvein Colliery

management of the colliery and proposals were made for solving the issue. We do not know what exactly these were but the workmen would not return until the fire was extinguished. However, given that Mr Brace was born in Risca, grew up next door to James Winstone and they had both worked in this colliery, we suspect that the colliers received a fair hearing.

The fire was finally put out on 9th August, this was achieved by isolating the fire, 'bricking-up' the gob and starving the fire of oxygen. Following this all the men returned to work. However, it appears that newspaper reports of this happy conclusion emphasised the involvement of management personnel and named them, the phrase 'and some men' being added almost as an afterthought. I believe this angered the men and resulted in the Union commissioning the certificates and presenting them to the men who, almost certainly, actually put out the fire.

An interesting piece of additional information came with the donation, a few years ago, of a facsimile copy of the certificate of Frank Gollege. This was given by his grandson who visited from Southampton. In conversation, he mentioned that his grandfather wasn't a collier but a stonemason and it appears that, during the depression, or possibly the General Strike, he moved to Southampton where there was work available on big dock improvements. Now, who better to oversee the 'bricking-up' of the gob than a stonemason.

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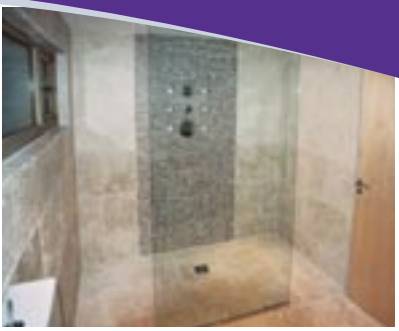
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Monmouthshire Hardy Plant Society

The HPS Monmouthshire group is for people who love plants and gardening and enjoy sharing their enthusiasm with other like-minded people. Non-members are very welcome to come along to our meetings. They're an excellent opportunity to meet people with similar interests and to chat, enjoy refreshments and buy some plants. You can join us as a member too!

The meetings take place at Little Mill Village Hall NP4 0HE off the A472 Usk to Pontypool Road on the second Saturday of the month at 2.30pm and from September to May. Entry is £4 to Members and £6 to non-members. For more information, contact monmouthshirehps@gmail.com or look at www.hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk. The group is registered with the National Hardy Plant Society and is also an Affiliated Society of the Royal Horticultural Society.



Saturday 9th November brings Frank Sengpiel to the hall at Little Mill at 2.30pm to talk on 'Succulents'. Professor Sengpiel, a professor of Neuroscience and Head of the Neuroscience Division at Cardiff University describes himself as a cactophile, a wildlife enthusiast and a Borussia Dortmund fan, an intriguing cocktail of interests. We need to hear more! £4 members, £6 non-members.

Saturday 14th December at 2.30pm at Little Mill Hall we will be hosting a festive event featuring Liz Knight on foraging and making cocktails and wild drinks. Still in the planning, more details to follow - please see www.hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk. All welcome



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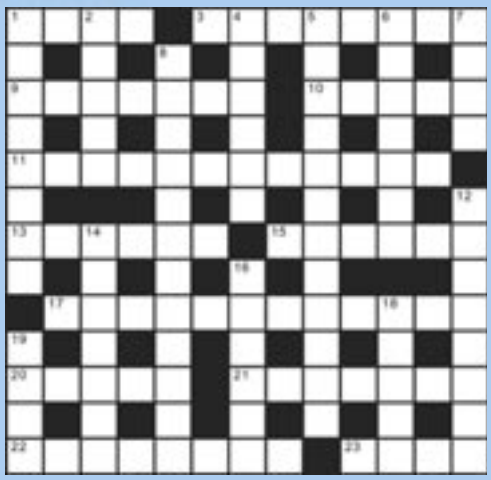
CROSSWORD

Across

1 Cattle (4)
3 Came about (8)
9 Organise (7)
10 Passenger coaches (5)
11 Garden pests (12)
13 Once a year (6)
15 Expose (6)
17 Formation of society (12)
20 Fastening together (5)
21 Equalise (7)
22 Troubling (8)
23 Upper limbs (4)

Across

1 Very dark grey colour (8)
2 Not the best (5)
4 Deferred payment (6)
5 Incredible (12)
6 Set aside (7)
7 Hurry (4)
8 More and more (12)
12 Wool covers (8)
14 Louder (7)
16 Type of ape (6)
18 Internal (5)
19 Casserole (4)



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

SUDOKU

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 21



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Fundraising Calendar of Events 2024













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Monnow Bridge at Monmouth

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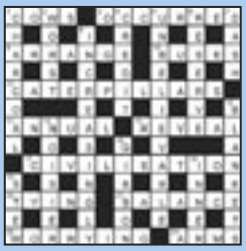
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9	6	5	7	8	4	3	2	1
8	3	4	6	2	1	5	7	9
2	1	7	9	5	3	8	6	4
1	5	6	4	9	8	2	3	7
7	2	8	3	1	5	9	4	6
4	9	3	2	7	6	1	5	8

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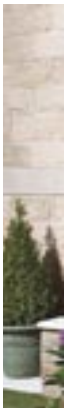
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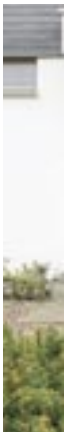
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