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ISSUE 90 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025



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It's always good to try new things and aspire to improve our lives, whether it's losing the extra pounds we put on over the festive season, attempting to become fitter, volunteering or helping a local charity, starting a new hobby or even starting a business. Trying something new and having different experiences often makes us feel focused and happier in life.

Wishing you all a 2025 filled with kindness, compassion, respect and gentleness.

Susan x



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The New Year, a new start, what's your focus for 2025?

There's something exciting about the start of a New Year. Your chance to let go of the old and embrace the new. What does your new look like? More time for you? Becoming slightly selfish and finally starting a course you've always wanted to do? More time dedicated to reading? More time for walking, spending time with friends? Whatever you choose, make it more meaningful. Notice I mention more and not less in my options for goal setting. Why start your New Year with a negative?

This year try and think about a goal which is powerful, ambitious and creative and centre that goal around you. 90% of our goals we plan are all around taking away from our lives and decreasing the value we place on ourselves. Why is it always stop chocolate, stop alcohol, stop carbohydrates, the list goes on? Whilst I appreciate there is significant research to suggest that some of the actions will be beneficial, there is just as much research to suggest that living a life that is balanced, with 80% of our choices for health and 20% for the soul, is not only great for our body and mind, but for all of our inter-connected relationships we hold dear. This year for 2025, when you think about what you really want for a brighter, happier 2025, maybe put yourself first? Think about adding value, not taking it away. Add fun and excitement to your plans, after all life is short and its time that we started living.

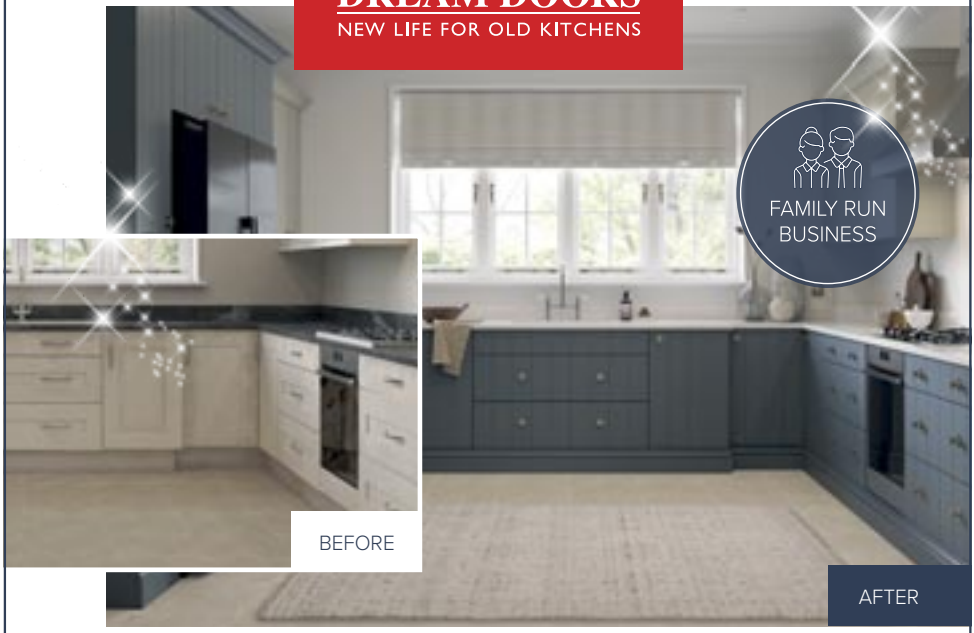
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If you have trouble setting those goals, don't be afraid to get in touch, I'm always here to help, good luck. Karla 07791 217306

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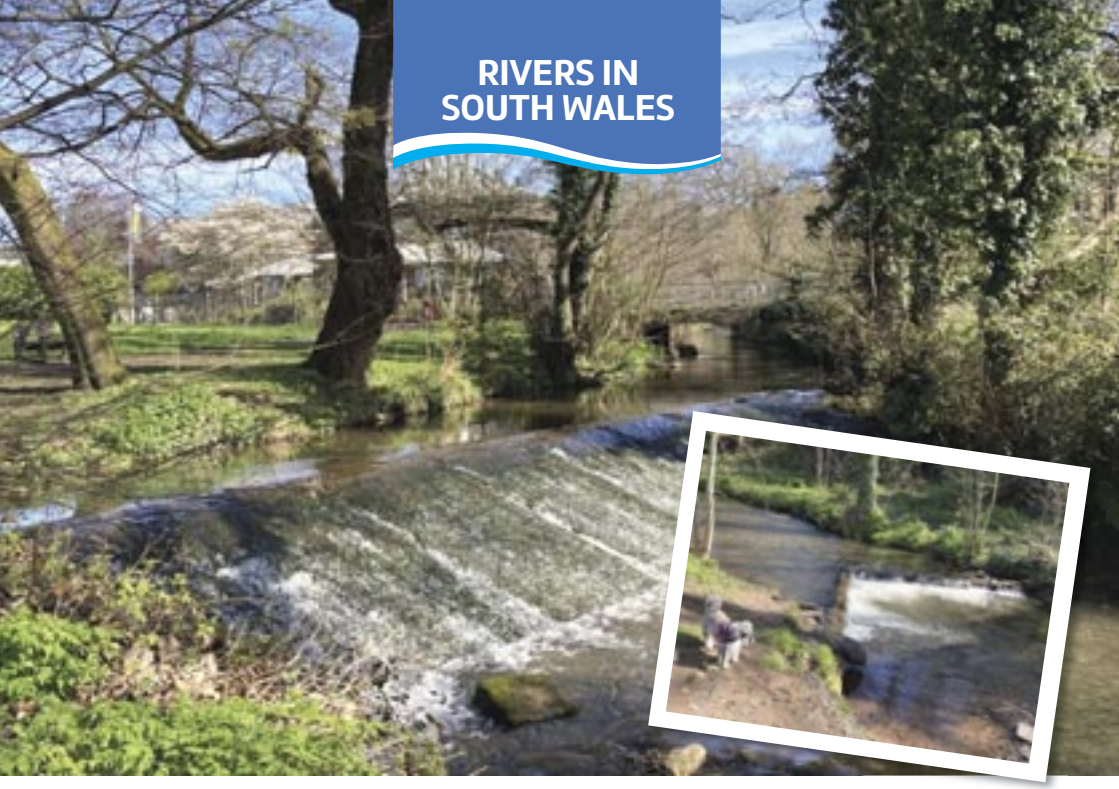
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RIVERS IN SOUTH WALES



The River Gavenny

The River Gavenny is a short river in Monmouthshire. It rises 1 mile (1.6 km) southwest of the village of Llanvihangel Crucorney from springs near Penyclawdd Court, supplemented by springs in Blaen-Gavenny Wood and tributary streams there and within the Woodland Trust-owned Great Triley Wood. It flows south for about 4 miles (6.4 km) to its confluence with the River Usk towards the eastern end of Castle Meadows at Abergavenny.

The river is crossed by road bridges north of Mardy at Triley Mill and at St Teilo's Church and also, to the east of Mardy by those carrying Nantgavenny Lane, Hereford Road (B4521) and Tredilion Road. The Nantgavenny Lane crossing carries both route 42 of the National Cycle Network and the Beacons Way over the river. The lowermost crossings are at Lower Monk Street (B4233), Monmouth Road (A40) and Mill Street bridges east of Abergavenny town centre. Next to the river there is a stone circle at Swan Meadows, it may look prehistoric but dates from 1912. It was erected for Gorsedd of Bards ceremonies relating to the National Eisteddfod held at Bailey Park in August 1913. In 2001 the Gorsedd stones were moved to Swan Meadows from their original position at the Grove, Monmouth Road. Also, in the bus station next to the river is a Bikers meeting place. The Oasis Snack Bar has been a haunt for years. It welcomes hundreds of Bikers at weekends.



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Swan
RESCUE

The Grand Tour

Gloucester, The Knap, Tredegar Park and Amroth

Long gone are the days when we could look forward to a pause in calls to rescue a swan in distress. Autumn rescues are dominated by juveniles getting into difficulties as they attempt to leave their parent's territory. This call was received from a member of staff at Tredegar Park (National Trust) as we crossed the Severn Bridge on route to de-tackle an adult swan in Gloucester Docks, from which, for obvious reasons, there was no turning back.

The problem to which our attention was being drawn is a fairly common occurrence – a juvenile swan was stuck behind the railings at the southern end of the lake, trying and obviously failing to return to the water. 'Well, isn't there anyone else who can help?' Shock, horror...No! But the area will be visited as soon as possible… the following morning.

It is important to note the day had already been seriously compromised as a result of a call at 0840 hrs from The Knap at Barry made by a very committed staff member from the Vale of Glamorgan Council who had noticed an ailing swan with what turned out to be an ear infection, and which we had collected and bedded down at HQ.

So, all that was Friday. As promised, early on Saturday morning, with the intention of hospitalising the previous day's casualty at a sanctuary at Amroth, and so loading the swan into the car a visit was paid to Jamaica Walk, i.e. on the landward side of the railings at the end of Tredegar Park Lake. A thorough search was carried out; the only sign of a juvenile swan was a small number of feathers scattered across the



Cygnet with damaged tail rescued from bramble thicket in background

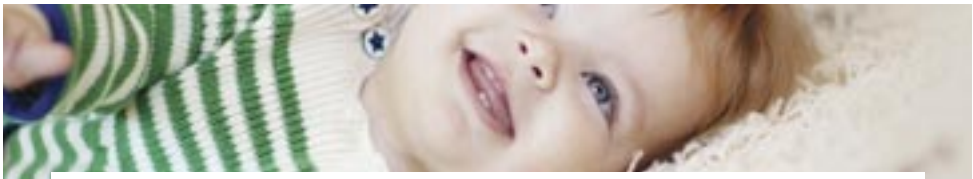
dingle which abuts the outfall from the lake. That was searched thoroughly, but nothing further was found. Neither here nor more widely. There seemed little option but to conclude the swan had managed to find another way out. Time therefore to set off for Amroth with the poorly bird from The Knap.

A comfort stop was needed which was provided by calling at Cardiff West Services. In that brief interval two calls were received in quick succession from participants in the Tredegar Park Park Run; they had spotted the missing swan hard up against the railings, and deeply 'submerged' in brambles and other vegetation. There was even a question as to whether or not the swan was still alive. Immediate call for a high-speed return to Tredegar Park where one of the callers, Emma, to whom we shall for ever be grateful, was waiting to help.

Over the years, we have learnt to carry not only tools to deal with embedded fishhooks but also a selection of pruning implements; these were absolutely essential for getting the swan out of his predicament. All things considered he wasn't in bad shape except for a significant wound to his tail. The earlier discovery of feathers now made sense; the swan had been attacked by a dog, which, quite clearly had not been under control.

And so, now with two ailing swans on board, we set off, at the second attempt to provide treatment for both casualties. Mercifully, the injury to the swan which is the main character in this story was not as bad as it might so easily have been. He was considered fit for release and was given a new home when he was released onto The Fendrod Lake on the outskirts of Swansea almost three weeks to the day following his failed attempt to leave Tredegar Park.

Story: Peter & Ellen. Photo: Emma. For swan problems please contact Peter on 07802 472788.



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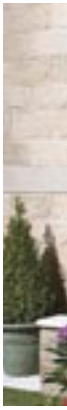
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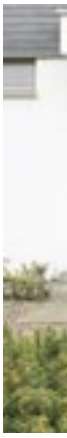






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Newport u3a



Newport u3a's member Hilary Lester is the organiser of the Newport Fundraising Group for Guide Dogs for the Blind. One of her projects is collecting foreign and British obsolete money from our members to raise money to train more puppies that will help give someone with sight loss the freedom to live the life they choose. We regularly see Hilary and her gorgeous dog Portia at our meetings and more recently another member Lesley Gore has acquired her companion named May.

Committee member and Convenor of the Table Tennis Group, Gwyn Havard, kindly offered to help increase the value of the donations. Periodically he does a valuation on the donations which Hilary accepts and then he sells the coins on eBay. To date they have raised over £300.

u3a learn, laugh, live

Newport u3a runs 40 active, social and cultural groups for the retired at the Dolman Theatre Wednesday to Friday at 9.45-15.00 during term time. If you would like a more rewarding retirement vwww.newport.u3asite.uk or phone Angela Robins on 07983 130541

Hardy Plant Society Monmouthshire



Our meetings are held on the second Saturday of the month at Little Mill village hall NP4 0HJ at 2.30pm, between September and May. Visitors are very welcome - entrance is usually £6.00.

The full Group programme can be found on our website. We are registered with the national Hardy Plant Society but also affiliated with both the RHS and the Tender Shoots Garden Club Network which organises gardening talks and events throughout the year via Zoom for its members. Full contact details below. We hope you enjoy our talks and that you will spread the word about our programme to those of your friends and family who love plants and gardening. During the summer months we organise garden-related visits and events and throughout the year gardening discussions for members, plant sales and members' social events and offer a discount card for plant purchases at four local garden centres.

Please do join us!

For further details of our local group and programme of events, see https://hpsmonmouthshire.com

For more about the national Hardy Plant Society, see https://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/

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Puzzles

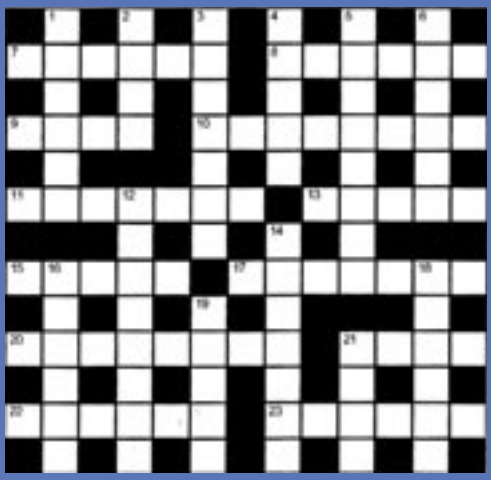
CROSSWORD

Across

7 Road with houses each side (6)
8 Attorney
9 At liberty (4)
10 Fight (8)
11 Promised (7)
13 Be in accord (5)
15 Spectre (5)
17 Most delicate (7)
20 Entering a country by force (8)
21 Assist (4)
22 Dreaded (6)
23 Skilled (6)

Down

1 Depots (6)
2 Existed (4)
3 Piled (7)
4 Dull (5)
5 After sunset (8)
6 Save (6)
12 First floor (8)
14 Protective spectacles (7)
16 Chased relentlessly (6)
18 Wages (6)
19 Take care of (5)
21 Joints above the thighs (4)



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

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 23



*Local author Dale Bradford discusses his new novel, **The Time-Travelling Estate Agent**, in which Cwmbran - and its iconic Boating Lake - plays a pivotal role...*

Have you ever regretted something you didn't do, rather than something you did do? Eric Meek has. He believes the direction of his whole life changed in July 1976, following an incident at Cwmbran Boating Lake.

Fast forward to 2019 and Eric is now the proprietor of estate agency Barrington Meek, with a showroom in Cwmbran Town Centre, when he discovers a property which boasts a truly unique garage conversion. Instead of the more customary home office or gym, it contains a hole in space-time that has been developed into a traversable portal.

A by-product of the homeowner's attempts to emulate the work of pioneering electrical engineer Nikola Tesla, the portal allows movement between 2019 and July 1976.

Presented with a chance to right the wrongs of the past, Eric's adventures in time find him caught up in a decades-old missing persons case while he attempts to improve the lives of those close to him, including his long-dead father.

"The Time-Travelling Estate Agent is the story of a first love, a second chance, and a third-age redemption," says author Dale Bradford, who grew up in Cwmbran. "I've always been fascinated by the concept of time travel, even though the greatest scientific minds maintain that it's impossible. Fifty years ago, my iPhone was impossible though, and the story grew from the idea of me meeting my teenage self, and the people I knew back then, and demonstrating my iPhone's capabilities to them."

Will readers learn anything about the property business from reading the novel?

"They might," says Bradford, "I did when researching it, but the book is pure escapism and offers a few hours respite from the depressing global news cycle. Its title suggests it's sci-fi, and there are indeed elements of it, but it also blends a mismatched romance with a murder mystery, while offering gentle nods in the direction of Groundhog Day and 50 First Dates."

The Time-Travelling Estate Agent is available now on Amazon.co.uk in ebook (£1.99), paperback (£12.99), and hardback (£16.99) and it is free to read on Kindle Unlimited. The first four chapters can also be read online instantly via Amazon's Read Sample facility. Go on, treat yourself...



Twmbarlwm - The Challenges of 2024 and Beyond



The beauty of the landscape as we all prefer to see

Gosh — where did that year go? It's already time for me to look back on the achievements and failures of 2024 – a job that requires me to delve into my library of photographs to act as an aide-memoire.

As in so many previous years my photos show that we've had another challenging year on the mountain and yet it is still a beautiful landscape with exquisite views. I'd rather not dwell on the negativity shown by some of the photos, but use the examples as a rallying call to ask visitors to be vigilant, report incidents you find on your wanderings and support the Society in any way you can. *(Visit our website to see 2024 in photos).*



Damage to signage costs us in time and money

In my collection there are far too many photos of litter and fly-tipping – a practice that is unsightly and a serious environmental hazard but it is a nationwide problem that the Society tackles as best we can with KWT and our monthly litter picks.

Many photos illustrate the damage done to the landscape by selfish off-road vehicle users – another widespread problem that we try to control with help from the police and local authorities.

There are photos of general vandalism such as the cutting of fences, fire-starting or defacing signs – this is called anti-social behaviour because the perpetrators simply don't realise the harm they are doing to the pockets and good honest work done by the community to benefit everyone now and into the future.



The Cwmcarn Forest Drive's future is at stake

The Twmbarlwm Society attempts to address these problems, and more, with support of the Commoners, Cadw, the Land Owners and local Authorities and we anticipate many more challenges in the future.

For instance there are plans afoot to erect over 20 wind turbines on Mynydd Maen which will surely be a blot on our precious landscape; and The Cwmcarn Forest Drive is rumoured to be further developed in the hands of private investors – a potential major worry if not handled sympathetically.

Both these projects will have a profound impact on Twmbarlwm and its iron-age hill fort and we intend to make sure the people's voices are heard in the process. With such a wide remit of responsibilities we could really do with more willing volunteers and expertise to take the Twmbarlwm Society forward.

TERRY EVANS (Chairman CTS



We repair breaks in fences where we can



Setting off on the Hot-Cross-Bun walk



Huge thanks to the litter picking team



Close all gates - cattle don't belong here

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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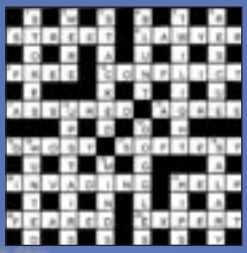
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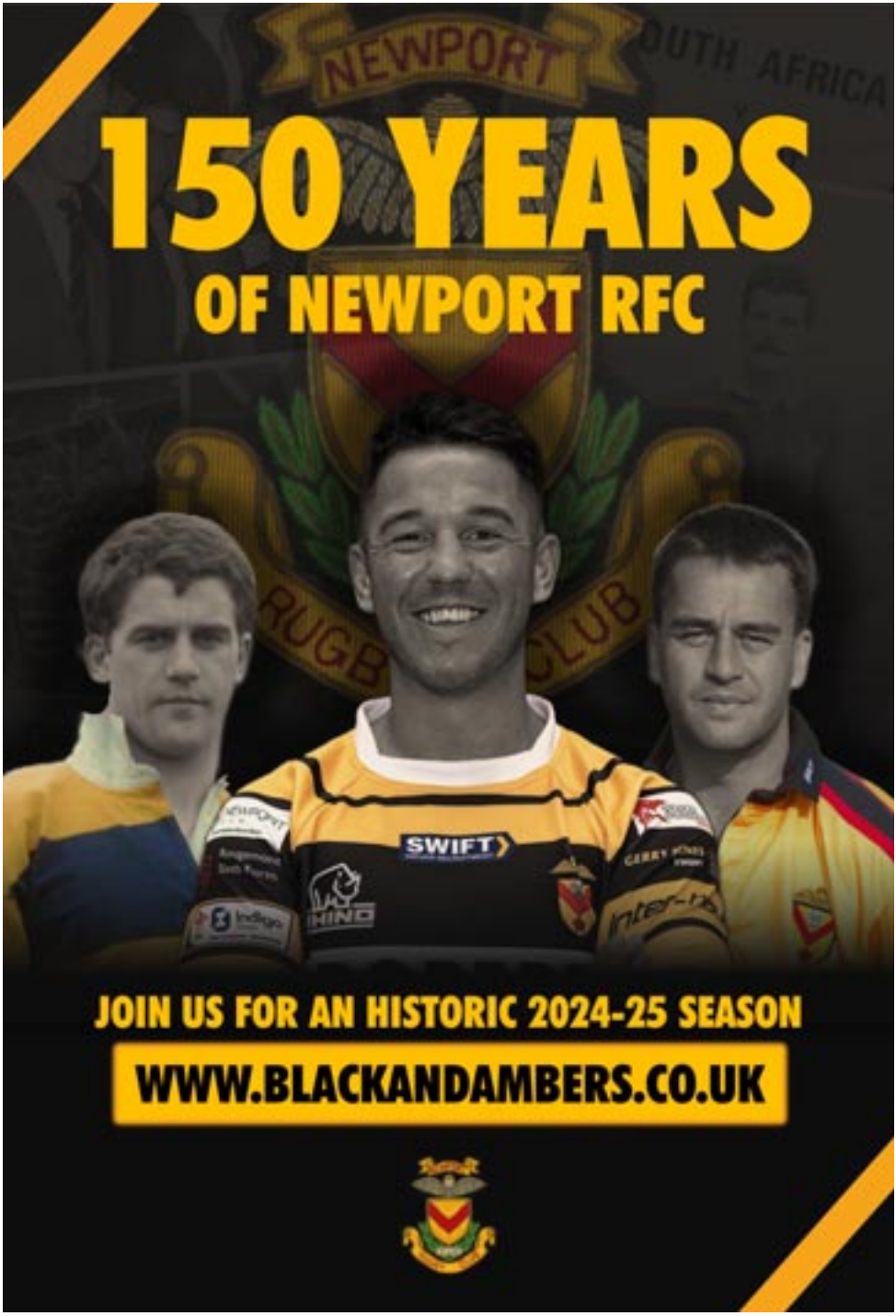
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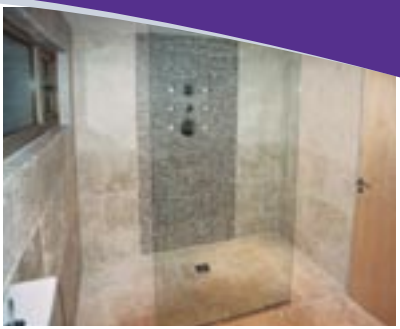
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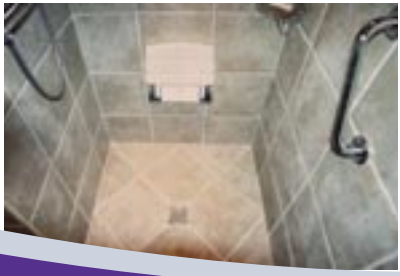
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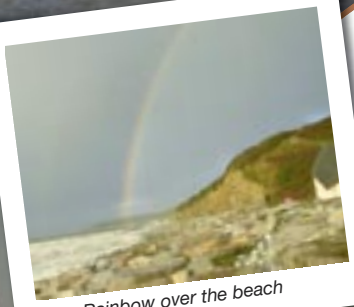
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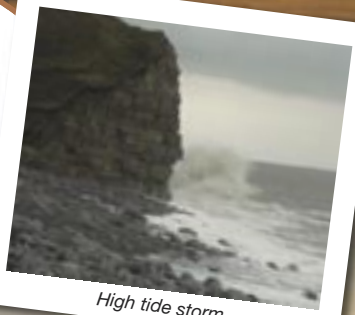
Winter scenes from Cwm Colhuw beach

Sunset



Rainbow over the beach

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High tide storm

Sunrise

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