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DIRECTORY

ISSUE 104 MARCH/APRIL 2025



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Hopefully, the weather will warm up a little over the next couple of months and we'll all be able to take a walk in our beautiful countryside, along the canals, by the river and benefit from some spring sunshine.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter.

Susan x



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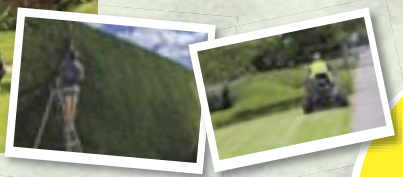
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Caerleon
Then & Now



Station Road on a winter's day in 1938 with Harry Sevenoaks on his round. From the churns, milk would be dispensed straight into the housewife's own jug using ½ or one pint ladles.
The photo below was taken in summer of 2020.



Extract taken from Norman Stevens's books of Caerleon. They can be purchased from Caerleon Post Office



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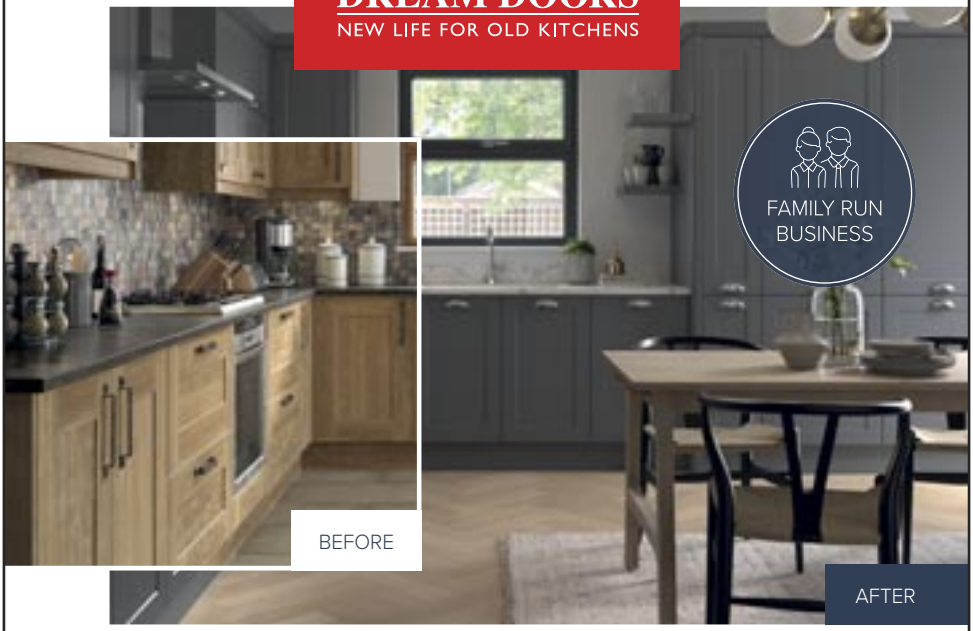
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Tredegar House Folk Festival

9th – 11th May 2025

The 34th Tredegar House Folk Festival will soon be here and this year the festival is again running a singer-songwriter competition (closing date end of January), where the winner gets a cash prize, a 3 hour recording session plus the chance to perform their song at the festival. Judging is by an independent panel of significant industry figures. Mair Thomas - the winner of the first competition, is now a regular on BBC radio and has twice appeared at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod. We are pleased to welcome her back to the festival this year.

As well as the big Friday concert (held in the concert marquee) featuring 4 top acts, there will be a free twmpath in the Dawnsio.Cymru marquee run by Menter Iaith Newport (a principality-wide organisation supporting and promoting the Welsh language). It will be conducted in Welsh, but that shouldn't stop anyone joining in with the dancing, as plenty of fun will be had.

Meanwhile in the Marcus Music marquee there will be the Friday Night Big Bash, a night of great tunes, many instruments and lots of joining in. Bring your instrument along or just come and listen, in what promises to be a special intimate atmosphere.

Moving on to Saturday and Sunday afternoons where both marquees showcase free dance displays featuring local and national sides, including India Dance Wales, Morris dancing, Middle Eastern, Welsh, Flamenco, Appalachian and more to be confirmed.







Saturday evening the concert has 4 acts kicking off with Avanc, a fantastic group of a dozen young Welsh musicians that really raises the roof. For dancers, there is the traditional Saturday ceilidh featuring Juice with caller Ned Clamp.

Sunday late afternoon brings the huge 5 act concert. There are too many acts appearing at the festival to name, so please keep checking the website www.tredegarhousefestival.org.uk and our Facebook page for details of all music and dance acts, including musical clips (website).

Workshops, singarounds, folk club sessions and dance displays all have free entry, plus on site there is a CAMRA bar, food outlets, children's entertainer and a farmers market.

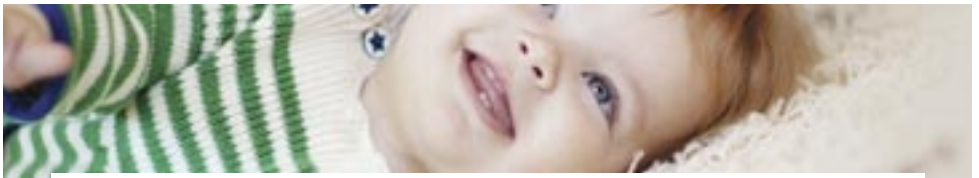
People buying weekend tickets or tickets to any of the 3 concerts or Saturday ceilidh, get the added bonus of free entry to Tredegar House.

Thanks must go to the Arts Council of Wales and Ty Cerdd for their continuing financial support, without which the festival could not have survived for so long.

Fingers crossed for good weather!



Photos courtesy from Andy Howells of Entertainment South Wales.



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Afon Col-huw



Afon Col-huw is a very short river in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is only one mile long, formed when two rivers, the Ogney Brook and the Hoddnant converge south of Llantwit Major.

The river meets the sea at Col-huw Point, where Llantwit Major beach is situated. At its mouth the river flows through the sand and stones of Llantwit beach, the mouth of the river was originally sandy, but dredging in the Bristol Channel and thus degradation of the Nash Bank, has resulted in less sand around the estuary.

Popular with families and surfers alike, Cwm Col-huw beach is packed with all the facilities you need for a family day out. There are toilets, a cafe and free parking. Dogs are allowed on the beach from the 1st November to the end of April.

As well as being full of great features typical of the Glamorgan Heritage Coast such as rock-pools, a sandy beach and rugged cliffs, Cwm Col-huw is also home to a number of rare and beautiful species, including the Small Blue Butterfly, Britain's smallest resident butterfly. Wildlife can also be spotted at the Cwm Col-huw Nature Reserve which runs along the cliff tops to the west and back towards the town.

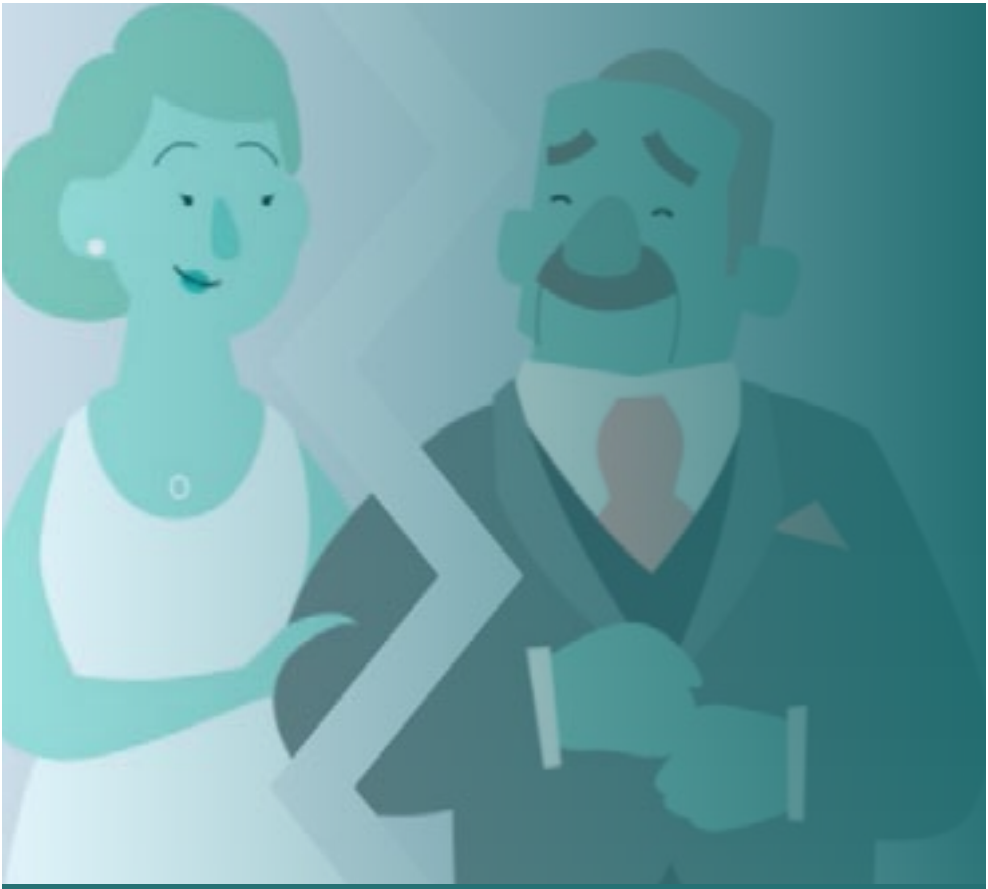












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ISA OPTIONS

Cash ISAs are simple, tax-free savings accounts, much like those you might find at a bank or building society. You generally have the choice between a variable or fixed interest rate and any interest you earn is free from taxation, allowing every penny to stay working for you.



Stocks & Shares ISAs involve investing your contributions in the stock market rather than keeping them as cash. Some ISAs allow you to decide where your investments go, while others are invested in managed funds on your behalf. The exemption from Income Tax, Dividend Tax and Capital Gains Tax is a key reason why ISAs are a go to option for investors looking to grow their wealth.

Lifetime ISA (LISAs) are a type of ISA where the government gives you a bonus of 25%. While you can save a total of £20,000 annually in any ISA account or combination of ISA products, you can only pay into one Lifetime ISA in a tax year. The maximum you can contribute is £4,000 (which will leave you free to invest £16,000 in any other ISA product that financial year). These are aimed at assisting young adults aged 18 to 39 in saving for their first home or retirement and contributions can continue up to age 50.

Innovative Finance ISAs enables you to allocate your tax-efficient ISA allowance towards peer-to-peer (P2P) lending. In this arrangement, your funds are loaned to individuals or businesses via a lending platform, and the interest paid by the borrower constitutes your return on investment. However, while higher interest rates are appealing, weighing the risks is essential, as returns aren't guaranteed and must be approached carefully.

Junior ISA (JISA) is another option for parents wishing to secure their children's financial future. However, it's important to note that contributions to a Junior ISA won't affect your personal ISA allowance. A Cash or Stocks & Shares ISA account, or both, can be opened for a child subject to the annual Junior ISA (JISA) allowance which is currently £9,000.

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Swan RESCUE

'...trouble at 't mill'

No! Not that mill!

Swan Rescue South Wales has had a long association with the two small lakes which we refer to as Mathern Mill which is, as far as we know; a well run fishery a short distance off the A48 at Pwllmeyric near Chepstow. In the early days we were accustomed to fairly frequent calls to attend to swans which had picked up lost or discarded fishing tackle. With the passing of time, this problem became much less frequent.

In situations where power lines cross a flight path there is always a risk of collision between a flying swan(s) and these lines. Usually, the result is a very serious injury or worse, a fatality. The use of 'flight diverters' fitted typically to 11kV power lines and so making them more visible to birds in flight has been shown to work well. **Photo 1** illustrates the fitting of such devices to power lines at Mathern. Appropriately qualified staff are able to do this without shutting off the power.

The severity of recent storms – one in particular, Darragh, had the effect of ripping the vital mobile suspended components off all but one of the diverters at Mathern rendering them effectively useless. The result was that, in quite quick succession, two juvenile swans perished to be followed by a very close call for two adults. The adult male (cob) managed to fly on and land safely. In front of the notice board shown on **Photo 2** is a patch of very wet ground, underlain by soft mud onto which the female (pen) fell. There was a fear impact with live conductors had resulted in scorching, but fortunately this turned out not to be true, but even so, it was clear the experience had shaken up the bird rather badly; unlike most swans, it is not usual to refuse food when it is offered! At the time of our visit, of some necessity a few hours later, she was still resting quietly on the bank on her own but moved slowly onto the water as we approached.



Photo 1. Flight diverters being attached to power line



Photo 2. Safe landind in this waterlogged grassy area

There is an extent to which the saying; 'Time is a great healer' is true. Having stayed around for about an hour, both birds were fairly close to each other and grazing and by the time of a follow-up visit a few days later, it would be impossible to tell anything untoward had happened. **(Photo 3)**.

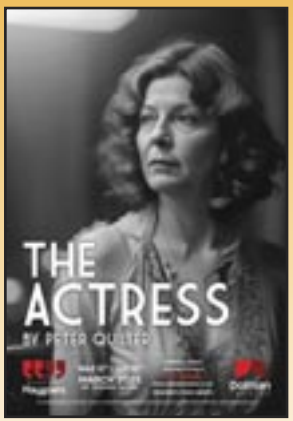
In the meantime contact was made with National Grid, which organisation has recently taken over Western Power Distribution who, for very many years have been very quick off the mark in supplying and fitting diverters on spans of power lines which have demonstrably been problematical in terms of bird strikes. Just as under the previous regime, National Grid have been very quick off the mark, especially given the recent combination of problems caused by the spate of storms we have had to endure recently. Great credit is due to them, as indeed to the staff involved in the previous organisation for the speed and effectiveness with which they have reacted whenever the need has arisen.

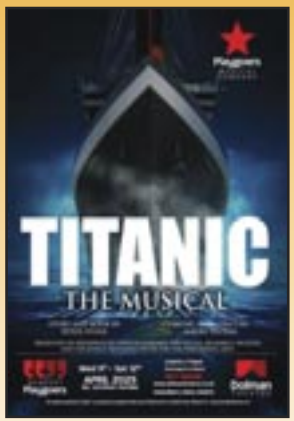


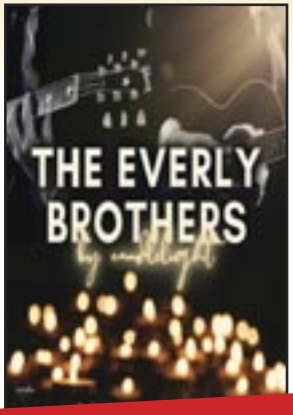
Photo 3. Starting to become re-acquainted after a bad experience

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

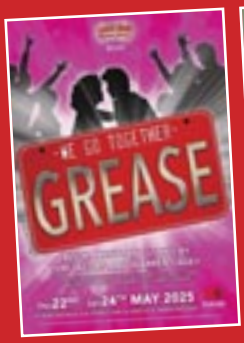
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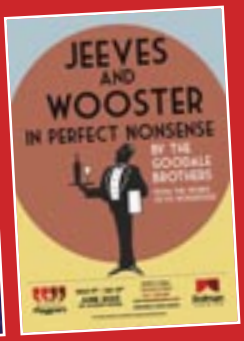












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Puzzles

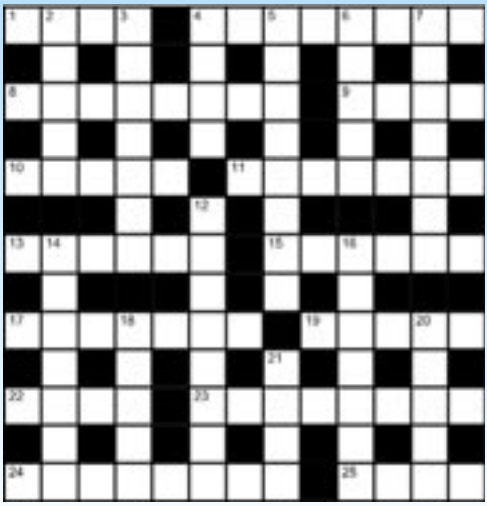
CROSSWORD

Across

1 Nymph who fell in love with Narcissus and faded away, leaving just her voice (4)
4 Humorous verse form of five lines (8)
8 Capital of Belgium (8)
9 Musical instrument associated with Wales (4)
10 Tree with rot-resistant wood (5)
11 Italian liqueur made with elderberries and flavoured with liquorice (7)
13 Art of growing miniature trees (6)
15 Remove by cutting out (6)
17 German cake traditionally eaten at Christmas (7)
19 Battleground of World Wars I and II (5)
22 Swiss patriot, William ___ (4)
23 Monument built to honour soldiers (8)
24 Menu having individual dishes listed with separate prices (1,2,5)
25 Actor ___ Guinness, who played Smiley in Smiley's People (4)

Down

2 Marine colonial polyp which masses in a variety of shapes, forming reefs (5)
3 Molluscs from which pearls are obtained (7)
4 Sediment in wine (4)
5 Sweet aromatic grape used for raisins and wine (8)
6 Amy Winehouse hit of 2007 (5)
7 Capital of Venezuela (7)
12 Short tube attached to the muzzle of a gun (8)
14 Porridge ingredient (7)
16 Country, capital Zagreb (7)
18 Bush with fragrant flowers (5)
20 Leaf which adorns the Canadian flag (5)
21 Poker stake (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 23

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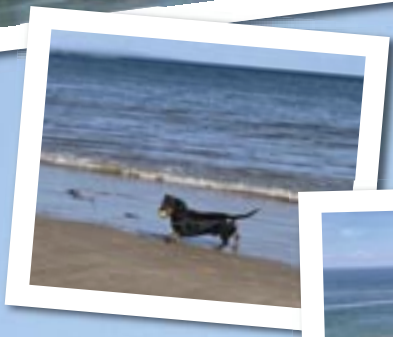
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Tenby in the Spring









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The three beaches are all dog-friendly until the end of April and there's no shortage of good restaurants, cafes and pubs.

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Puzzle Solutions

Crossword Solution

Across: 1 Echo, 4 Limerick, 8 Brussels, 9 Harp, 10 Alder, 11 Sambuca, 13 Bonsai, 15 Excise, 17 Stollen, 19 Somme, 22 Tell, 23 Cenotaph, 24 A la carte, 25 Alec.

Down: 2 Coral, 3 Oysters, 4 Lees, 5 Muscatel, 6 Rehab, 7 Caracas, 12 Silencer, 14 Oatmeal, 16 Croatia, 18 Lilac, 20 Maple, 21 Ante.

3	8	1	5	4	7	6	9	2
6	4	2	8	3	9	7	1	5
5	7	9	1	6	2	4	8	3
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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On our monthly litter-pick yesterday I was asked about our policy regarding removing memorials that people have deposited on the mountain to commemorate their loved ones.

My answer was simple – we use a bit of common sense and try to be a little sympathetic to people's reasons for placing mementoes of their loved ones around our precious landscape. If it's material that looks unsightly and has obviously been there a long time – or if it is stuff that is likely to harm the environment, wildlife and livestock – then we will collect and dispose of it.

To bury or fix any items or materials into the hill-fort itself is, in fact, illegal because of its scheduled monument status and we will therefore remove it immediately (you should check out Cadw's guidelines on this topic).

But why do people do this? As we navigate the delicate journey of grief, many seek to honour the memories of loved ones in meaningful ways. For those who cherish Twmbarlwm and the British countryside in general, the thought of marking a favourite spot with a memorial of some sort or scattering cremated ashes can be a deeply soothing and personal act.

However, it's vital to know both the legalities and ethical considerations surrounding this practice, particularly when those we honour are passionate about the environment and landscape in which you are marking their memory.

Practically every square inch of the UK is owned by someone and to scatter ashes on private land requires the landowner's permission. It's always worth researching local guidelines, as some areas may have specific regulations – check with relevant authorities to ensure compliance and avoid unnecessary distress during this sensitive time.



Helium filled balloons may create a memorable moment for those involved but they create environmental havoc to wildlife and livestock for many miles around.

Assuming you have complied with all legalities, it's understandable to want to mark the occasion with tangible tokens of remembrance, such as plastic flowers, plaques, or other non-biodegradable items. However, in eco-sensitive areas such as Twmbarlwm, these tokens can become environmental and unsightly hazards. Wildlife and livestock may swallow small objects, and plastics can linger in the landscape for many years.

Consider biodegradable alternatives that will lend a sense of continuity and harmony with the landscape. For example wildflower seeds could be scattered, to provide a living tribute that enhances the surrounding environment and bring joy for years to come. Similarly, wooden or stone markers can be a beautiful, environmentally respectful way to commemorate your loved one's life – again the landowners permission will be required.

If you must honour the memory of your loved one in such a public location please allow their passion for the environment and locality to guide your choices. In doing so, you not only pay homage to their life but also protect the very landscapes that they cherished.

In the same way that CTS considers what is acceptable on our precious mountain, use your common sense and think about the reaction of visitors to the site – visitors who are here to experience the splendour of the views and landscape and to not feel that they are disturbing a private mausoleum to dearly departed souls.

TERRY EVANS (Chairman CTS

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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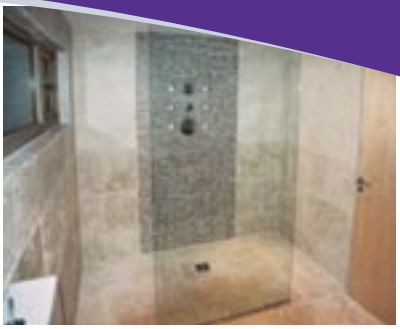
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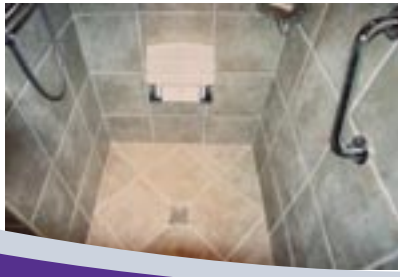
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Newport u3a

Newport u3a has over 40 active, leisure and cultural groups for the retired and next month will see the introduction of yet another - Whist.
The friendly group will meet three times a month and the experienced players will be glad to help any novices. Whist's combination of luck, strategy and surprise, exercises the brain in a sociable way. Concentration on the fall of the cards is a useful exercise for the memory and also helps Bridge players to develop their trick-taking skills.



u3a learn, laugh, live

Newport u3a meets at the Dolman Theatre Wednesday to Friday at 9.45-15.00 during term time. LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE is our motto so if you would like more of that in your retirement come and try us out for two weeks. For more details contact Angela Robins on 07983 130541, or visit www.newportu3asites.uk

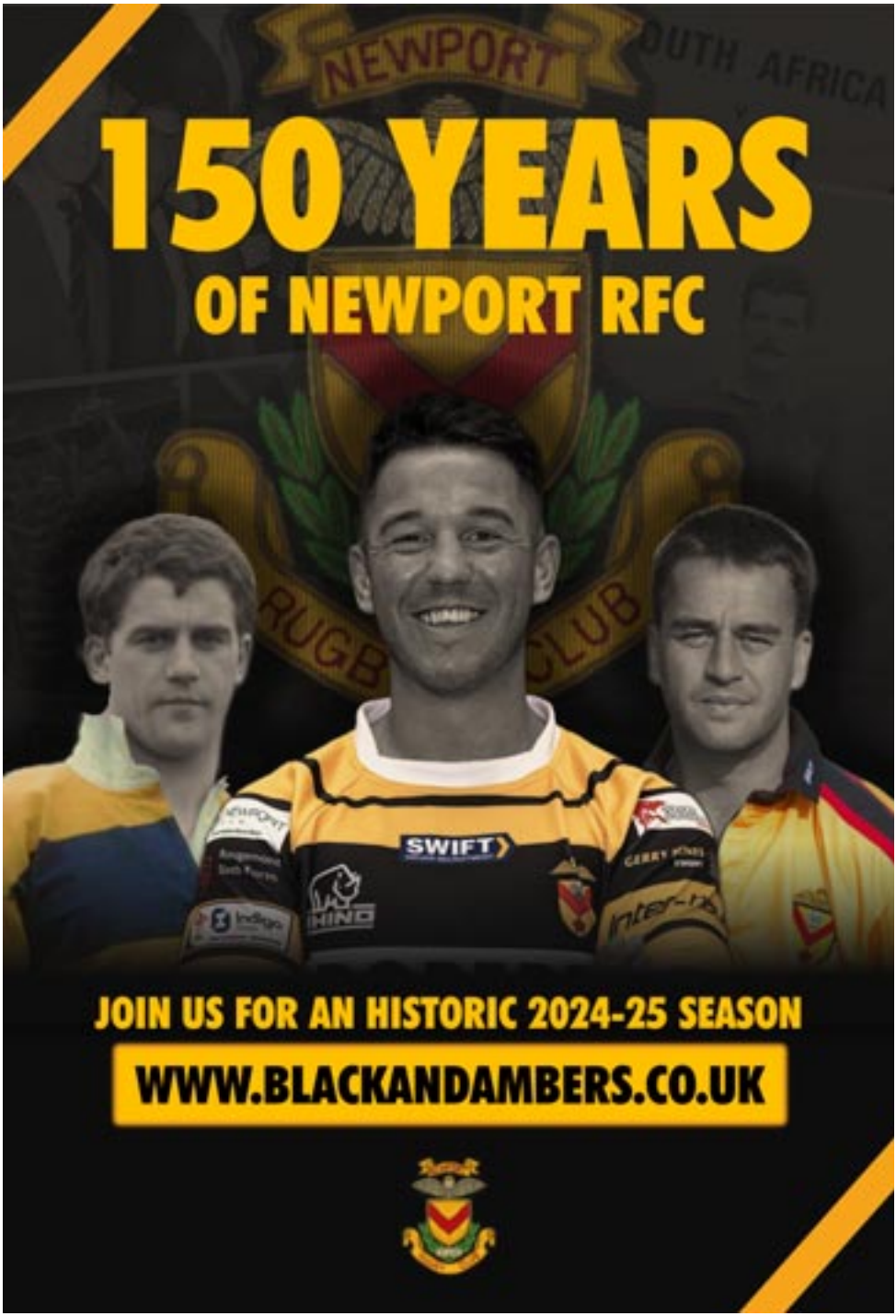
Hardy Plant Society, Monmouthshire

Our group meets every second Saturday of the month between September and May at 2.30pm in Little Mill Village Hall, Little Mill, Usk NP4 0HE. There is ample free parking. Refreshments are available and non-members will be made very welcome. During the summer months, we have many garden visits and other related activities.
Our regular programme of talks at Little Mill Village Hall continues on Saturday 8th March, Robin Pearce will talk on 'Ornamental Grasses'. Robin ran a wholesale and retail nursery for 20 years and has now retired to spend more



time in his garden. Ornamental grasses are a special interest, as are rare and unusual plants. Ferns too!
The Annual General Meeting of the Monmouthshire Branch of the Hardy Plant Society, held via Zoom, will be on 12th March. The wonderfully knowledgeable Derry Watkins of the renowned Special Plants nursery at Cold Ashton, near Bath will be with us on 12th April to talk about the 'Humble Umbel'. Not to be missed. Derry describes herself as a 'plant freak American with a gorgeous, thriving garden designed by her architect husband, Peter Clegg'.
Saturday 26th April Kelly Weare, a professional gardener based in Monmouthshire and a member of the HPS Monmouthshire branch, will be holding a Practical Workshop. More details to follow.

For further details of our local group and programme of events, see https://hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk/
For more about the national Hardy Plant Society, see https://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/
The HPS Monmouthshire Group is also an Affiliated Group of the RHS, see https://www.rhs.org.uk/, and of the online Tender Shoots Garden Club Network, see https://tendershoots.uk/


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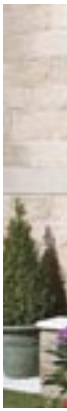
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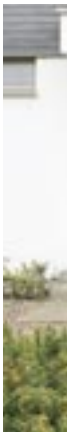






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A Very Naughty Boy

by Paul Minton

Do you like the movie, *Bonnie and Clyde*? Are you a fan of Clint Eastwood's *Escape from Alcatraz*? If the answer is yes, then let me introduce you to Francis Henry Simmonds, whose life contained elements of both films albeit with a Welsh twist.

Francis was likely born in Birmingham around 1886. He was described as a debonaire character, who could mix easily with the higher echelons of society but make no mistake, he had wanton criminality coursing through his veins. One early report of his apparent misdeeds came from Brecon Assizes in January 1907. At 20 years of age but looking younger, the 'very respectably dressed' defendant was given six weeks' hard labour for stealing two tame rabbits, one pair of leggings and a knife from Llanelly near Gilwern. He was also charged with taking £1 in Cardiff and was wanted over another theft in Hereford.

Whilst incarcerated in Gloucester Gaol in 1908, Simmonds plotted to liberate the other prisoners and escape, with some reports suggesting he got as far as locking the Governor in a cell. However, the scheme unravelled when one of the convicts gave 'the show away'. After his release from another stint, this time at Worcester Prison, the crook arranged 'to do a big job' in Cardiff. It was there, in March 1912, that he met a local beauty. The daughter of a wealthy businessman, she had had an excellent upbringing, having been educated at Dover and Wisbaden, Germany. At the time, she was married to a photographer but growing weary of matrimony, she eloped with Simmonds; they lived as husband and wife during the weeks that followed at various locations across Monmouthshire, including Newport.

It was his theft of a horse and cart that undid their happy cohabiting. Detective Inspector William



Detective Inspective William Tanner



Divisional Inspector Samuel Cox

Tanner and Inspector Samuel Cox tracked him down to a property in Stafford Street, St Julians later that spring. As they burst in, Simmonds drew a gun and shot at the officers. Tanner leapt towards his quarry and in the struggle, the revolver discharged once more, the bullet penetrating the loose part of the DI's raincoat. The woman defended her paramour by attempting to push hatpins into the necks of the policemen but eventually, the law triumphed and the two lovers were arrested. At Monmouthshire Assizes, Simmonds was sentenced to six years at Usk Prison and his partner to six months.

During his subsequent imprisonment, Simmonds studied his jailors' schedule carefully and deduced there would be minimal staffing on a particular Sunday. He hoped to incapacitate a guard by using a loosened table leg, retrieve his victim's keys to free his fellow convicts, and then murder the Governor. To share his intentions with his co-conspirators, he made an ink well from wax used in the manufacture of mailbags and wrote messages on pages torn from library books. These notes were exchanged during hymn singing in the prison chapel. However, one offender disapproved of the plan and revealed the plot to the authorities. As punishment, Simmonds received 15 lashes and was transferred to Dartmoor's Princetown Gaol.

After serving his time, Simmonds joined the army and was stationed for a while near Chepstow, where he was telephone operator. During his posting, he visited DI Tanner in Newport. When he had last seen the policeman, he had threatened revenge, but their reunion was ultimately cordial with Simmonds seeking forgiveness.

It would appear, however, that his life of crime was never fully abandoned. In 1923, he was killed by a firing squad in Egypt for an undisclosed yet presumably very serious offence. Simmonds is said to have walked to his execution without showing any emotion but it carried no weight with the newspapers of the day, which concluded that 'the world is well rid of such a man'.

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