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ISSUE 92 MAY/JUNE 2025



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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 our article about the River Ogmore) and Welsh beaches (see our article about Cold Knap).

Susan x

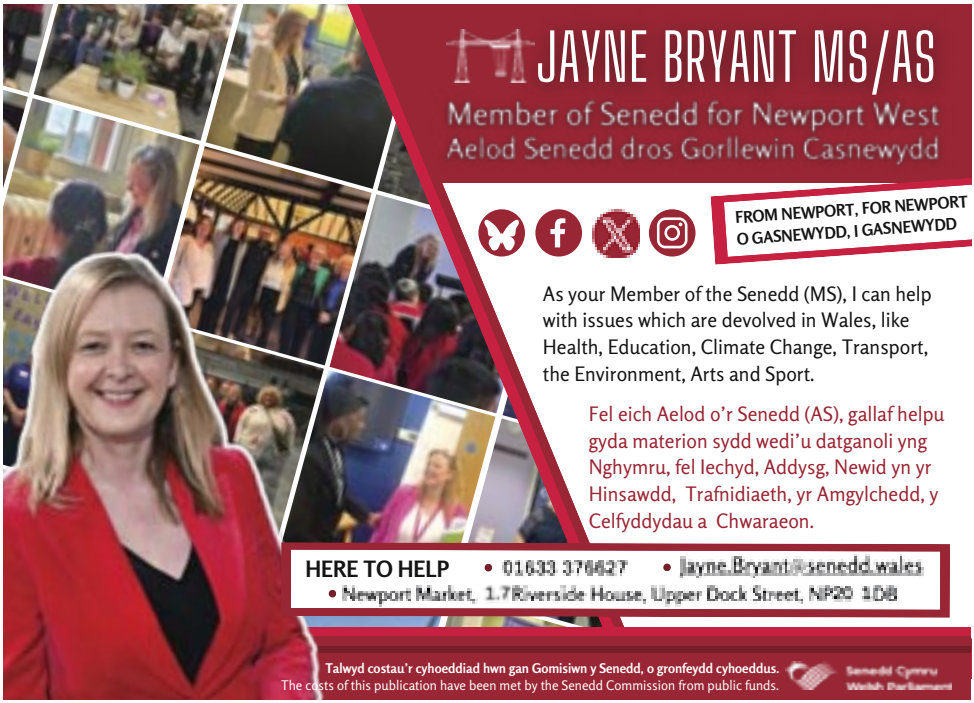


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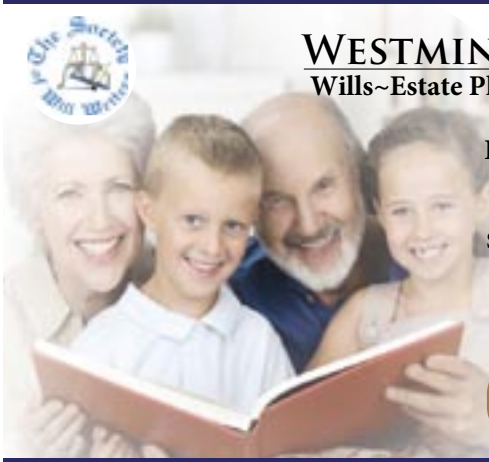
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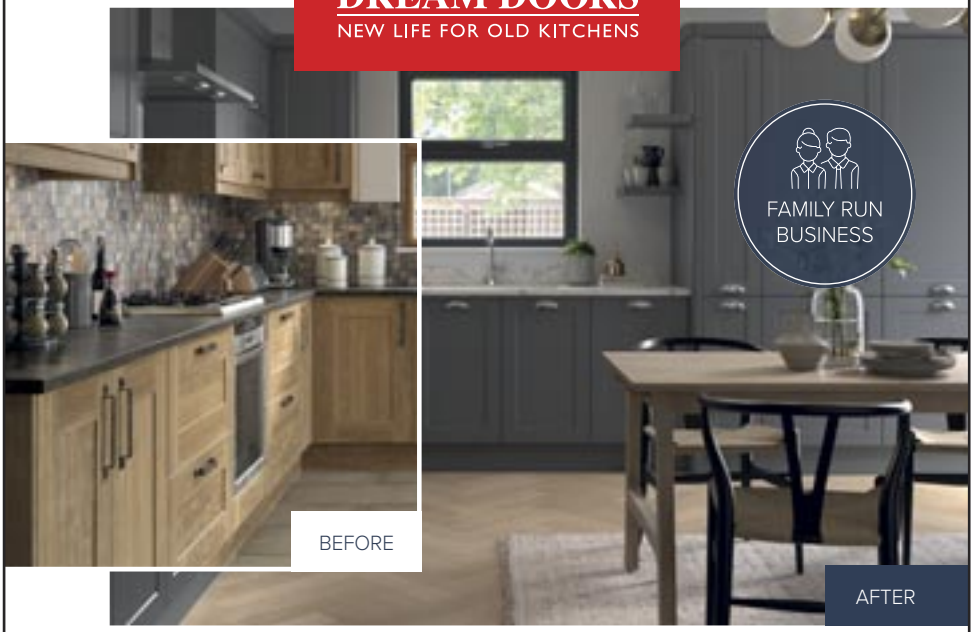




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The Greatest Showmen

by Paul Minton

I was reminiscing about childhood memories recently and recalled an experience that has always stayed with me. A circus was in town and my parents had taken me into the Big Top to watch the acts. In a sign of the times, I remember a parade of elephants and after they had left the arena, I had placed my hand on a wall that encircled the circus ring only to find it sopping wet. Both the puddle and my hand smelled strongly of jumbo urine. For this reason, Dumbo has always been an uncomfortable watch.

Spectacles like circuses were once massive attractions and over the years, Newport has had its fair share of memorable shows and remarkable showmen. Of particular note was Charles Blondin, who achieved fame in 1859 by crossing the Niagara Falls on a tightrope spanning 1,100 feet. In 1871, he performed in front of some 20,000 spectators at the mildly less impressive Newport Marshes, where a rope, at a height of 50 feet, had been attached between two posts 300 feet apart. Each pole was topped by a platform with an awning to allow costume changes. On one fine but slightly breezy September afternoon, Blondin crossed the wire carrying an enormous balancing pole whilst marching in time to music played by a band below. After an initial crossing with pretend slips to thrill the audience, he repeated the feat with his head enclosed by a sack and then amazed the crowd by lying down for a rest. He rode a specially adapted bicycle for one pass and on another, he carried a stove to the middle of the rope, where he cooked omelettes for appreciative onlookers. Blondin continued to perform in Newport over subsequent days and during one crossing, he is even said to have conveyed the Mayor on his back.


Charles Blondin


Buffalo Bill Cody

On 16 July 1903, Buffalo Bill rode into town, albeit via four trains that carried hundreds of men and horses. Colonel William Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill, was a former scout, pony express rider, and buffalo hunter, who had morphed into a world-renowned entertainer. His Wild West Show was held in Shaftesbury Park and had various set pieces including an attack on a wagon train, Native American war dances, a crack shot demonstration given by Bill on horseback, and a lunge at spectators by mounted, sword-wielding Cossacks. Curiously, a former Barnum & Bailey wooden-bodied railway coach (yes, that Barnum!) bearing the words, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, was later used as a foreman's office at Newport Docks.

Buffalo Bill was not the only Cody to visit Newport. In 1900, Samuel Cody was sued by a Mr Perman following a regrettable episode at the town's Lyceum Theatre. Sam Cody often claimed to be related to Bill but in fact, he had changed his surname from Cowdery in order to cash in on the other man's reputation. On the day of the incident, Perman had been asked to check the lighting of the venue during a production of The Klondyke Bullet, which featured an exhibition of shooting by Sam Cody. Whilst shots were fired from the stage at wooden blocks thrown into the air, a stray bullet struck the forearm of the unfortunate Perman, who had ascended to a perch to carry out his inspection. The defence argued that Mr Perman should not have put himself in a place of danger when the gun was being discharged. Nevertheless, the judge in the case rejected this argument and awarded £35 plus costs against the defendant.

Samuel Cody's antics, however, proved not to be his enduring legacy: in 1908, he became the first person to pilot a powered aeroplane in Great Britain.


Samuel Cody

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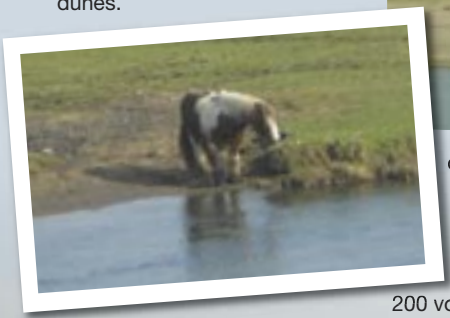


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River Ogmore

The River Ogmore runs from north to south from the Ogmore Vale and Gilfach Goch, past Bridgend and Ogmore. The River Ogmore rises at Craig Ogwr (527 m) in the Ogmore Valley as the Ogwr Fawr before it links with the Ogwr Fach at Blackmill. The River Llynfi, the River Garw and finally the River Ewenny in its estuary are all tributaries of the Ogmore which flows into the sea between Ogmore-by-Sea and the Merthyr Mawr sand-dunes.



Until the 1970s raw sewage was discharged directly to the estuary. The construction of the sewage treatment plant in 1974 provided full treatment to the 30:20 standard. In recent years UV treatment has been added to substantially reduce the bacterial and viral load of the treated effluent. However, in periods of heavy rain, emergency outfalls pour into the river, releasing some sewage.





On 29th August 2023, 200 volunteers gathered at the banks of the Ogmore River to help remove 2,000 tyres from the riverbed. This project was coordinated by a local dog walker with the support of 50 different partners/agencies /companies/local individuals. During the clean, 32 trolleys were removed from the river with nearly a tonne of waste plastic and metals.

We have walked along both sides of the river, we parked at Newton Beach and then walked to Merthyr Mawr Beach. On the other side we parked at the Ogmore by Sea car park then walked upriver to the Stepping Stones by Ogmore Castle. Both walks are a round trip of just over one hour.



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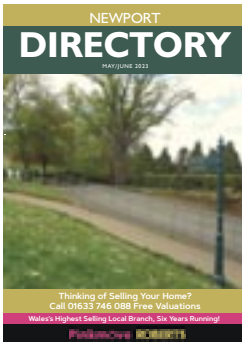
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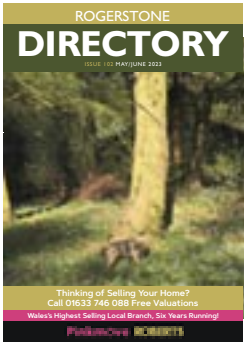
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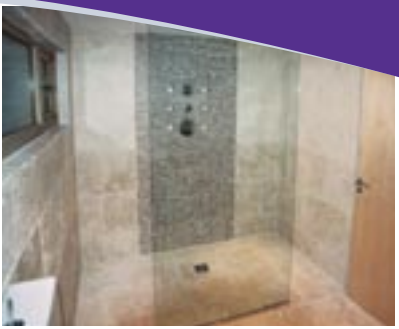
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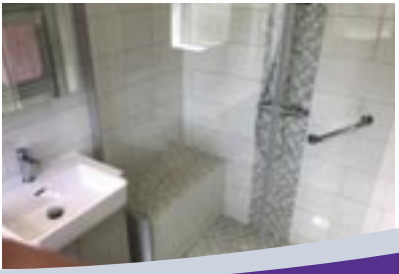


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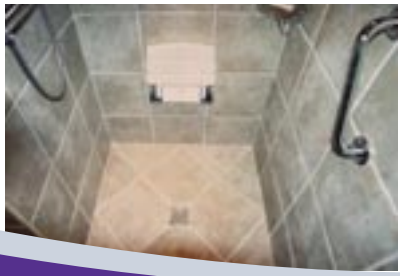
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Puzzles

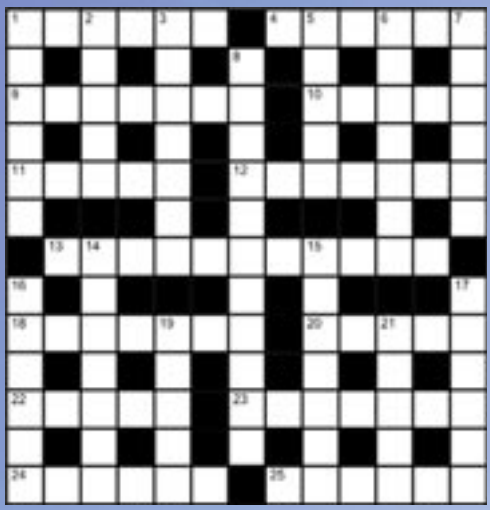
CROSSWORD

Across

1 Plant stalks used as roofing material (6)
4 Government tax on imports or exports (6)
9 Coastal area between La Spezia in Italy and Cannes in France (7)
10 Man in chess or draughts (5)
11 Well-grounded in logic or truth (5)
12 Stretchy fabric (7)
13 Substance that stimulates love or desire (11)
18 Female ruler of many countries (7)
20 Often the last movement of a sonata (5)
22 King of Judea who ordered the death of many children (5)
23 Country, capital Quito (7)
24 Beads used in prayer (6)
25 Fish-eating bird (6)
25 Actor ___ Guinness, who played Smiley's People (4)

Down

1 Flourish, prosper (6)
2 Block of iron or steel on which hot metals are shaped (5)
3 Popular British cheese (7)
5 First letter of the Greek alphabet (5)
6 Disposition to remain inactive (7)
7 Picture painted on a plaster wall (6)
8 Trader who sells sewing and dressmaking materials (11)
14 Egyptian paper reed (7)
15 Johann ___, Austrian composer of waltzes (1804-1849) (7)
16 Rope or light chain used to restrain an animal (6)
17 Scottish clan leader and outlaw (1671-1734), the subject of a novel by Sir Walter Scott (3,3)
19 Duck valued for its soft down (5)
21 Point directly opposite the zenith (5)



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

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

St David's Hospice Care

Fundraising Calendar of Events 2025

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Twmbarlwm Therapy



Not only do you get magnificent views like this, but walking will also raise your spirits and improve your general health. Photo taken from What3Words location – wanted.staple.tried

Spring came as a welcome surprise this year – dry, sunny and relatively warm and gave us no excuse not to get back out for a nice walk up our favourite mountain.

As I write this we are coming up to our famous Good Friday Hot-Cross-Bun walk up Twmbarlwm and for the first time in an awful long time I won't be joining them – which is making me a little bit fed up and gives me the reason for this article.

These articles have featured the subject of walking many times, and for good reason – Twmbarlwm and the surrounding countryside holds a wide selection of walks to suit your physical or mental fitness.

If you need a bit of tranquillity there's some lovely quiet spots where you can sit and admire the beauty of the surrounding nature such as alongside 'Pwll Tra' – a secluded pool in the middle of the forestry on the eastern edge of the ridgeway.

Just taking in the scenery as you walk is a positive therapy in itself and the walk from Car Park 2 of Cwmcarn Forest Drive along the ridgeway to the Twmp gives wide panoramas over the Severn Estuary to the south or towards the Brecon Beacons in the north.

My walks usually start from the car park on the Risca side of the mountain but if you prefer a more challenging walk you could climb up Twmbarlwm from Cwmcarn via Pegwn-y-Bwlch (Car Park 7 of the Drive) – that will get your lungs working and build muscles in your legs you never knew you had.

For me, Twmbarlwm is the one place I like to go when I'm suffering some malady like a bad cold or even worse, man-flu. I can cough and splutter all I want without spreading my germs and, often, the cold, driving wind and rain keeps my head clear until I get home.



Pegwn-y-Bwlch – What3Words location – character.awesome.rider

Whenever I feel a bit down or need to work through some personal conundrum, Twmbarlwm is the one place I can find the solitude to give myself a good talking to. The place has a spiritual aura about it that no other local mountain has, it has a mystery about it that permeates into one's inner self and sets the imagination soaring.



Pwll Tra (Pool of Avarice) What3Words location – bravo.admire.sooner

'Mental health' is a phrase that's bandied about a lot nowadays and I guess that's the main message I want to address. Walking is the easiest activity you can do to beat the stresses of everyday life – you just need a good pair of shoes and some decent countryside to wander through – that is what Twmbarlwm has to offer in abundance.

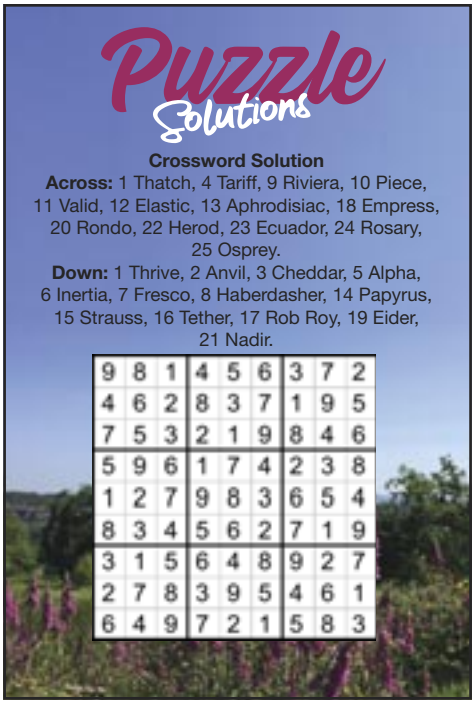
It's never been easier to get out for a walk, you don't have to be able to read a map there's plenty of apps on your smartphone that will help you. And there are plenty of groups, such as Islwyn Ramblers, who would welcome new comers – so get out there, get fit and enjoy it.

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



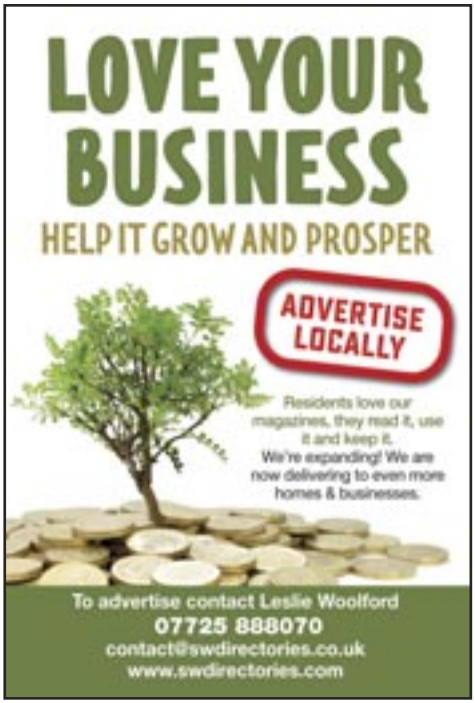


Crossword Solution

Across: 1 Thatch, 4 Tariff, 9 Riviera, 10 Piece, 11 Valid, 12 Elastic, 13 Aphrodisiac, 18 Empress, 20 Rondo, 22 Herod, 23 Ecuador, 24 Rosary, 25 Osprey.

Down: 1 Thrive, 2 Anvil, 3 Cheddar, 5 Alpha, 6 Inertia, 7 Fresco, 8 Haberdasher, 14 Papyrus, 15 Strauss, 16 Tether, 17 Rob Roy, 19 Eider, 21 Nadir.

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



Swan
RESCUE

March

A Most Peculiar Month

March still has almost a week to run and as far as 2025 goes, we have answered about the same number of calls as to this point last year, but so far there has been a need to take the car out on only twelve days. There have been three particularly challenging cases of fishing tackle ensnarement; a Black Headed Gull at Tredegar Park tethered to a tree and reachable from the water only by means of a hugely extended hook, a swan at Caerphilly with a hook in its neck which required four visits before, finally, a successful rescue could be executed and worst of all, a Canada Goose, first encountered at Ponthir, was tracked to Cwmbran Boating Lake, and then to Five Locks. Here, and after a total of about five hours, and with the extremely skilful use of a large carp net by a very committed new volunteer to our work (Tim), the goose was captured; just as well, because the problem was the presence of a dozen or more wraps of monofilament fight around its neck. Without our intervention, there is little doubt this bird would have had a lingering death by starvation…
To justify the title of this article, there is clearly a need to change course! None of these calls resulted in a need to disturb the car from its slumbers but provide a flavour of the extent of the misconceptions as to what Swan Rescue South Wales is about.
1**6.03. c. 1600 hrs**. Call from 'E'



from Newport reporting a Tawny Owl trapped in her chimney. Even although I'm not sure how this would work, the only suggestion I could make was to find a sympathetic chimney cleaner. In the event one was found but not before the gas boiler installed in the fireplace had been isolated and removed from the fireplace. The owl entered the room soon after this, but when approached by a human with a blanket he rapidly retreated back into the chimney. The chimney cleaner provided the means by which this problem was overcome. The bird was none the worse for his experience and was released locally flying off as if nothing had happened.
23.03. c.1700 hrs. Elderly male caller had 'come by' a cat and wanted Swan Rescue to adopt it. On the spur of the moment such questions are such as to floor one, apart from ruling it out of the question. As a parting shot, it was suggested he try Cats Protection.
24.03. c.1100 hrs. Business woman from Newport had taken delivery of a replacement second hand car. On opening the boot, a mouse fled from it leaving behind a number of minute baby mice. It seems she had been sustaining herself by munching on a chocolate biscuit bar. Unable to offer much help with this one, but suspect Socelex might have been contacted.
And so back to the matter of swans. It seems and actually is many months since the 2024 cohort of cygnets started to leave their parent's territory. One of the last to go, but which did actually have to be rescued from the mounting pressure from its very handsome parents – the subject of our one photograph this time - was from Llantarnam. As with the majority of the others, the 'clearing station' was The Knap at Barry. And so, the whole process has already started all over again.

Story & Photos: Peter & Ellen. Photo: Roz. SRSW.25.03.2025.
For swan problems please contact Peter on 07802 472788.

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BEACHES IN WALES

Cold Knap beach





Cold Knap beach is a long stretch of steeply shelving pebbles, although at low tide some sand is revealed. The beach is located around a mile from the main resort beach at Barry. As a result, it is always quieter, although it still gets busy in the summer.

Facilities are good here and the area includes a lake shaped like a Welsh harp with ducks and swans. It is a favourite place for model boat enthusiasts on weekends

There was previously an outdoor swimming pool, but this has now been closed and filled in and the area turned into a tourist trail and the Richard Taylor Memorial Skatepark. While you're there visit one of the lovely coffee shops and eateries nearby.




Have you been let down in your treatment?
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Newport u3a

Gwyn Havard, Vice Chairman of Newport u3a and also convenor of its Table Tennis Group, is a keen Chess Player and recently he competed in the South Wales Winter Major Chess Congress at Bridgend. 49 players competed and Gwyn was the only one who won all 5 of his games over three days, thus securing 1st place for which he received £160 in prize money and a medal.

Depending upon sufficient numbers, Gwyn is hoping to introduce a Chess Group to Newport u3a's Timetable which already has over 40 active, social and cultural groups.



u3a learn, laugh, live

Newport u3a meets at the Dolman Theatre Wednesday to Friday at 8.45-15.00 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

The HPS Monmouthshire Group is for people who love plants and gardening.

The meetings provide an excellent opportunity to meet people with similar interests. Non-members are very welcome. Garden-related talks take place at Little Mill Hall on the second Saturday of the month at 2.30pm between September and May, the months of June to September being filled with garden visits and various trips. Refreshments are served at meetings from 2pm, a good time to catch up with fellow members before the meetings begin. The talks, usually illustrated, are followed by Q&A and a raffle. Guest entry: £6



Coming up on 10th May at the Hall in Little Mill at 2.30pm, Val Bourne's topic will be Bomb-Proof Roses.

Val, the well-known garden writer, organic gardener and lecturer who gardens on the wind-swept Cotswolds, will talk on super-healthy roses which are able to cope with the worst of conditions, black spot included. Val is an excellent speaker and not to be missed.

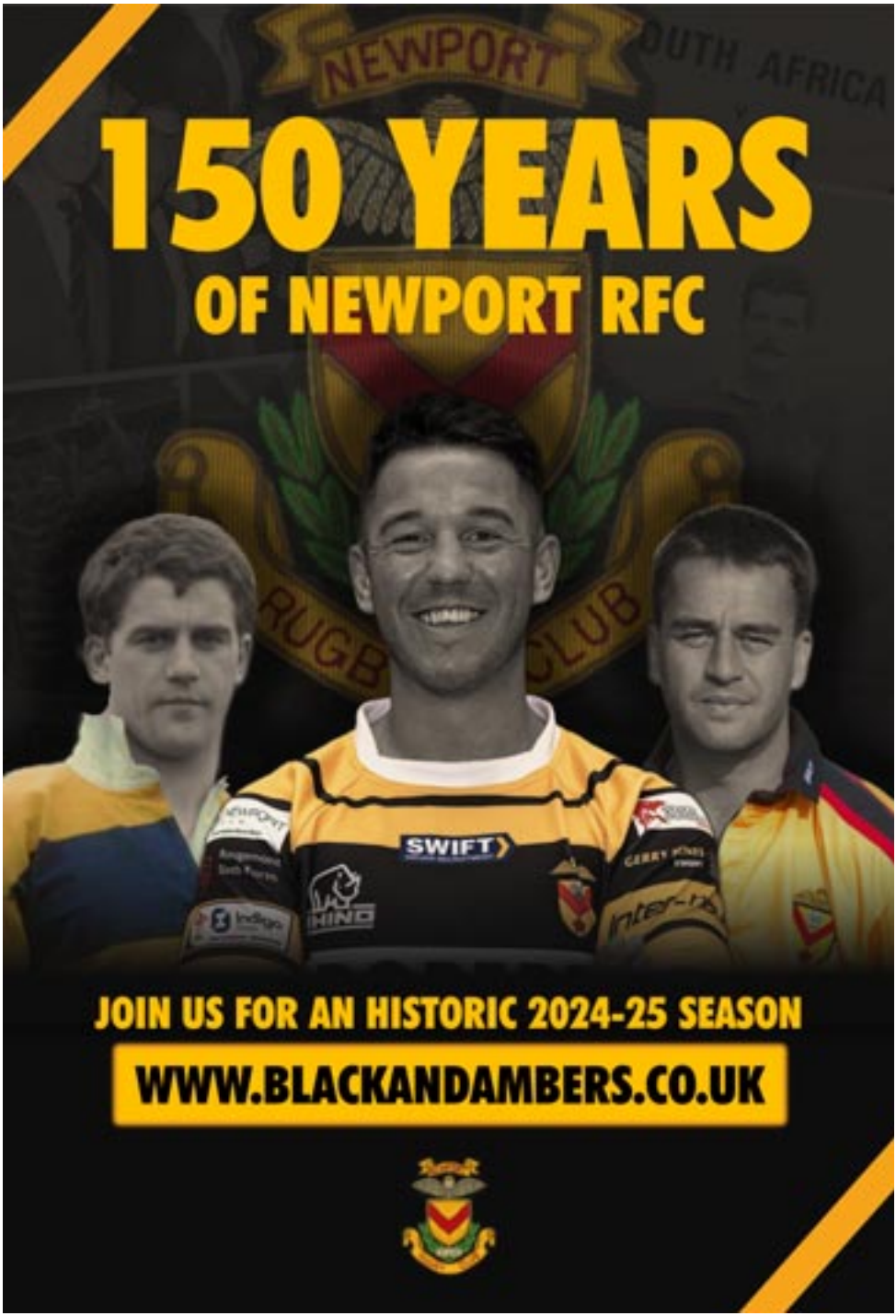
The annual Usk Open Gardens festival is being held on the weekend of 28-29th June 2025, from 10am to 5pm each day.

If you'd like to see the open gardens, entrance is £10 per adult, free entry for children under 15, free car park at Memorial Hall.

The National Garden Scheme (NGS) Open Garden season is here.

If you like the idea of a private group visit, see https://ngs.org.uk/gwent-by-arrangement/for more information.

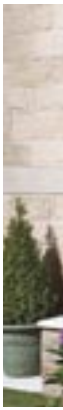
The HPS Monmouthshire Group also organises discussions, dinners & plant sales throughout the year, and a series of garden visits during the summer. For more information on all aspects of the HPS Monmouthshire branch's activities, please visit https://hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk


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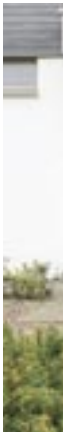


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