CAERLEON

DIRECTORY

ISSUE 109 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026



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Welcome to our January/February edition!

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And the big news? We're going all in on social media. Expect community updates, local events, small-business spotlights and plenty of extra content over on Instagram and Facebook. Follow along, say hello – and you might even feature!

Thank you for supporting local and being such an important part of our community.

Here's to a bright, busy and brilliant year ahead.

Susan x



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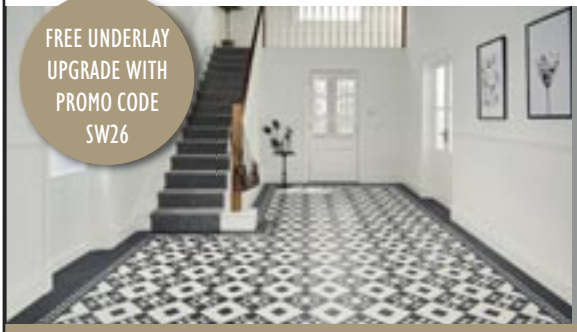
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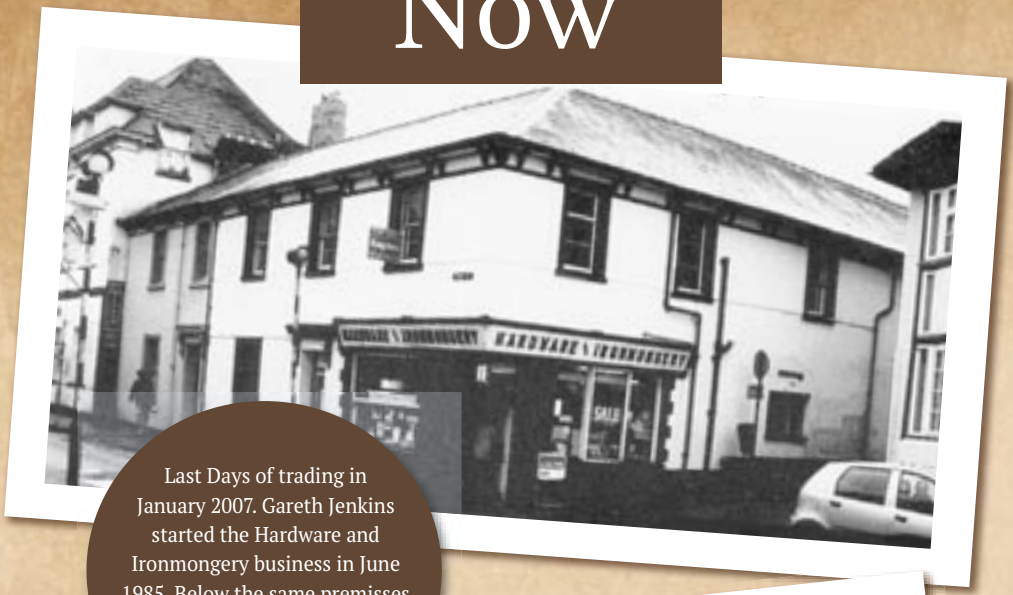
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Caerleon Then & Now



Last Days of trading in January 2007. Gareth Jenkins started the Hardware and Ironmongery business in June 1985. Below the same premisses taken in February 2022, which is now Burlesque Hair Company.



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



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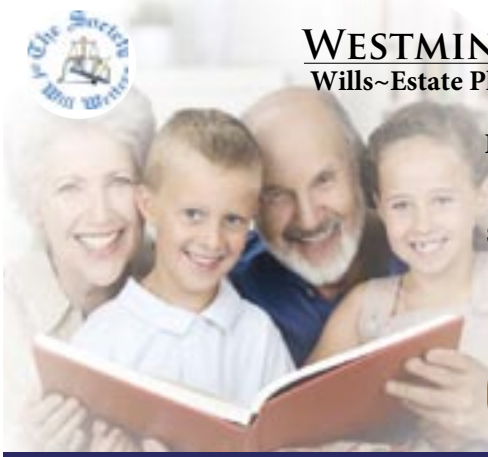
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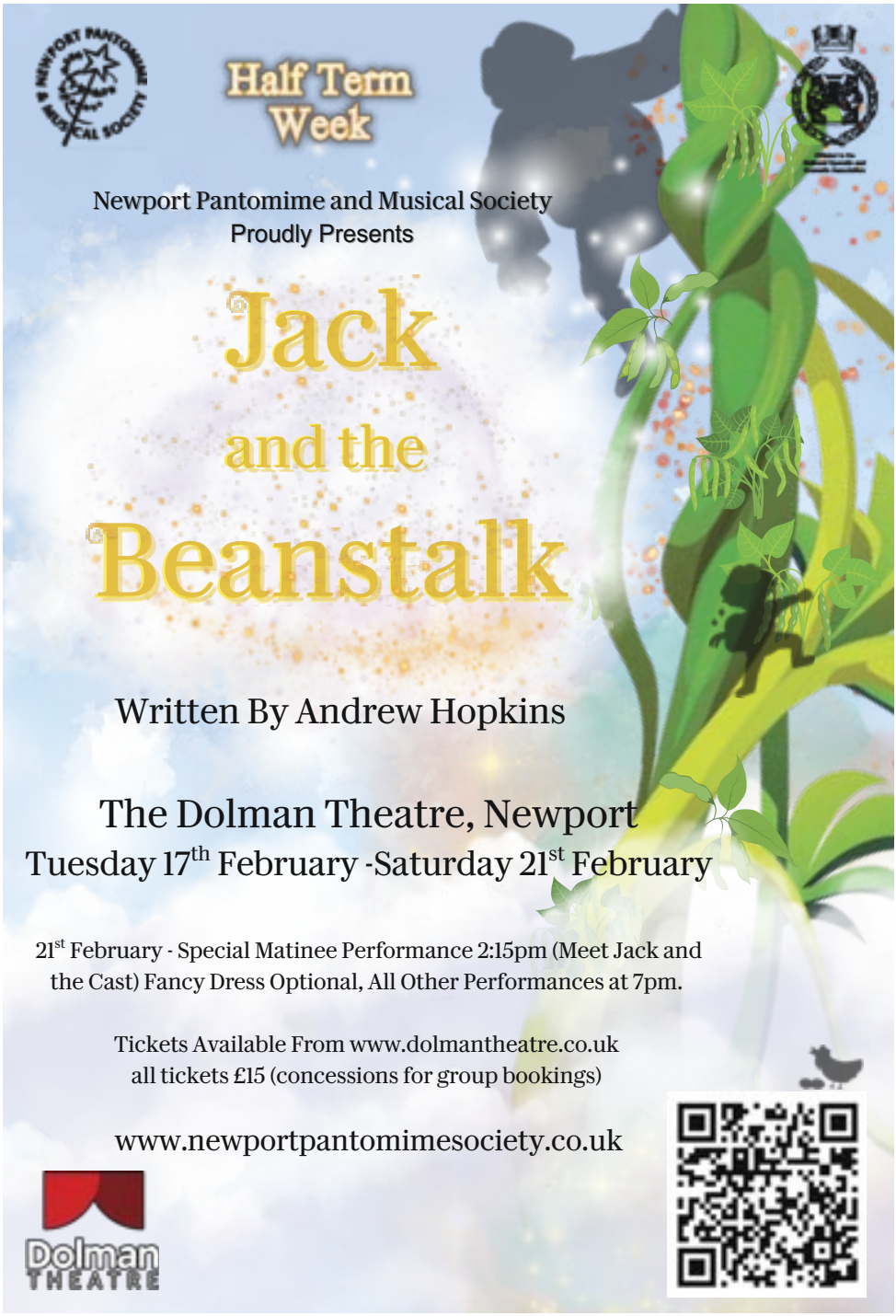
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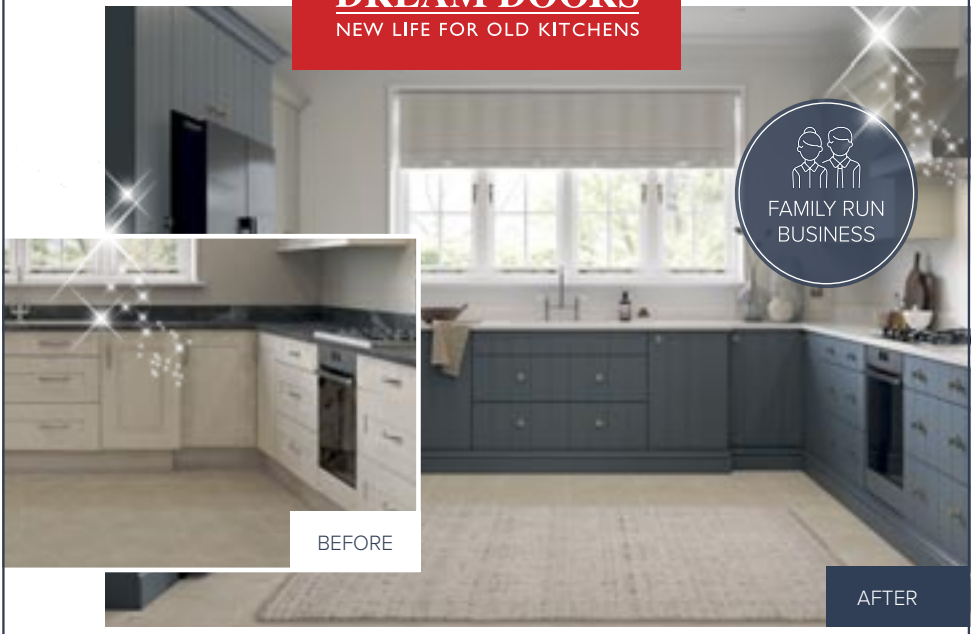
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Zooport

by Paul Minton

I was reading about the various nicknames of towns and cities in Britain recently and came across amusing entries like “Chips and Ham” for Chippenham, “Snozzle” for St Austell, and “Hove, Actually” for Hove (something for the romcom fans!) However, there was one name that left me scratching my head: Newport was listed as being “Zooport”. It’s a moniker that I’d never come across before and it seemed such a strange choice of label when there is no zoo.

After a little digging, the internet, in all its wisdom, proclaimed that “Zooport” had been coined by a group of local skaters inspired by a New York skateboarding company called Zoo York. Not being a member of the skating fraternity and having been refused entry to the young and hip generation, “Zooport” had obviously passed me by. But that wasn’t the only area in which my knowledge was deficient because my googling had revealed something else: Newport did once have a zoo.

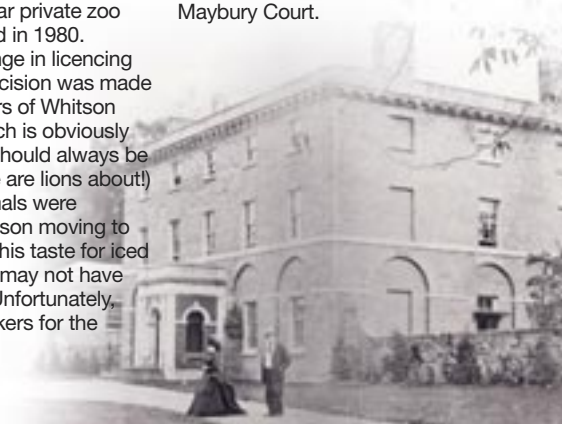
Completed in the late 18th Century and located between Llanwern and Goldcliff, Whitson House was originally constructed for William Phillips MP (1752-1836). By the early 1900s, the building was known as Whitson Court, a title that has endured ever since. Some thirty years later in 1933, the property and its 18 acres of land were purchased by local man, Garroway Smith and during the Second World War, his home provided sanctuary for several Jewish refugees, who had fled the Nazis. Ironically, German Prisoners of War from nearby Nash Prison Camp later constructed many of the paths in the grounds of the Court.

Following the death of Garroway Smith in the late 1950s, the house was bequeathed to his niece, Olive Maybury. At the time, the gardens were frequently used for Sunday school picnics and fetes so when she rescued two





Himalayan bear cubs from a Newport pet shop, Olive thought the animals might prove to be an interesting addition for the children. From there, her menagerie grew and grew. She soon assembled a collection that comprised European sun bears, lions (including one called Jason, who liked ice cream), monkeys, flamingos, and macaws, along with an aquarium and a reptile house. By the 1960s, the site had become a popular private zoo but that all ended in 1980. Following a change in licencing regulations, a decision was made to close the doors of Whitson Zoo forever (which is obviously something that should always be done when there are lions about!) Most of the animals were rehomed with Jason moving to Longleat, where his taste for iced desserts may or may not have been indulged. Unfortunately, there were no takers for the Himalayan bears, which were euthanised and bought by a Dolgellau taxidermist. As for Olive Maybury, she continued to live at the house until her death in 1997 at the age of 98. The building remained unoccupied for another decade, whereupon it was purchased for renovation. Many of the essentials for contemporary living were installed like a garage for six cars and an indoor swimming pool. It was this modernised property that featured as the main location in the recent Welsh thriller series, The Guest starring Eve Myles as Fran. The grounds of the fictional house in the show may have had its peacocks but they could scarcely compete with the eclectic mix of animals that once resided there. That’s not the only departure from the past, however. The house had to be rebranded for the purpose of television and so the programme makers decided on a name that honoured its esteemed former owner. In the show, Fran’s mansion is called what else but Maybury Court.





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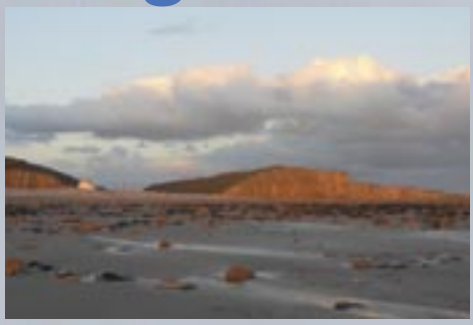
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Cwm Colhugh





The pretty village of Llantwit Major is located in the Vale of Glamorgan. The town can be accessed from the north by the B4268 from the M4 or by the B4270 from Cowbridge.

A short drive or gentle stroll takes you to Llantwit Major's beach, Cwm Colhugh, where there's a café, great rock pools and easy access to the Vale of Glamorgan Heritage Coast that has 14 miles of unspoilt coastline and breathtaking scenery.

Whether you're looking for an easily accessible beach with family friendly facilities, somewhere for a short amble, challenging walk, activities to stimulate the children or just wish to escape the crowds to a remote location, Llantwit Major has it all.

The tidal range here is the second highest in the world, the wooded valleys and spectacular wildlife makes this coastline truly unique. The sunsets over the sea are spectacular in Winter especially with some Fish & Chips!!!



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Fundraising Calendar of Events 2026













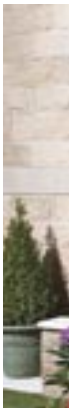
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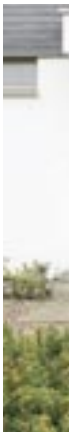






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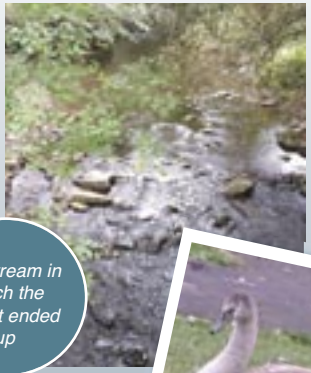
The Hazards of Bird Flu… and Cygnet Dispersal

It seems like a good idea to set this article in context. It is late November; the dispersal of the 2025 cohort of cygnets has barely started, although the first recorded departure from the canal at Old Cwmbran occurred on 13th October. In the meantime, our activities, as rescuers along with many others across at least England and Wales have been brought, more or less to a grinding halt by a very rapidly worsening outbreak of Avian Influenza (H5N1 variant). Birds affected by this disease seldom survive; already, there have been significant numbers of deaths locally in Barry, Cardiff and Swansea. It would probably be appropriate to return to this subject next time, when hopefully the news will be somewhat better.

Parc Taf Bargoed is a delightful area some little way to the southeast of Merthyr, easily approached by driving north through Nelson and Trelewis. Swans have bred here for a number of years – the cob, originally from Cyfarthfa Castle is partially disabled, having suffered a wing injury when very young, and is unable to sustain flight but can still give 'teenage' cygnets a run for their money at this time of year! Clare who runs the Snack Ranch in the Parc keeps a constant and very caring eye on developments as the cygnets mature, and indeed following one unsuccessful maiden flight was instrumental in rescuing the bird in question and returning it to the lake. Earlier in the year she had been instrumental in getting help for a very young cygnet which had been totally immobilised as a result of some unspecified incident. We took this casualty to our friend Maria at Amroth who worked a miracle to the point at which its recovery and recuperation, many weeks later was completed at The Swan Sanctuary. Finally, she is not averse to assisting, as was so necessary with the very difficult removal of a bundle of discarded fishing tackle from the leg of another of the cygnets.



The cables into which the bird flew.



The stream in which the cygnet ended up



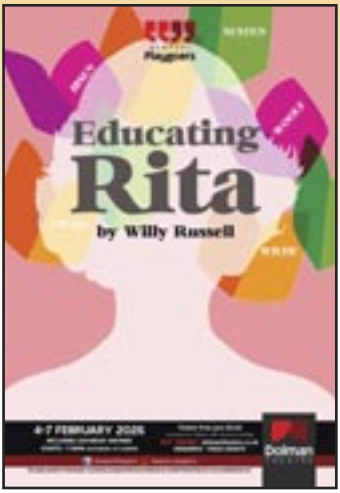
The survivor before release

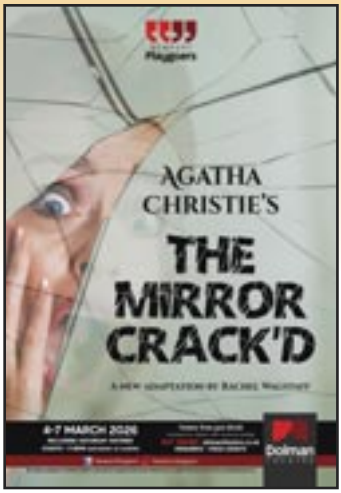
Thank you so much to all those prepared to pitch in and help us. It is possible it was the same bird, a few days later, to which we were called at Bedlinog, a couple of miles further up the same valley, where it was 'felled' as it collided with overhead power cables and ended up in the stream below. (See photos). Unlike many which suffer this type of mishap, there was no injury, and it was a few days before the 'locals' decided correctly that this bird ought to be moved. The bird was caught and, given the circumstances was taken into care for a few days, before being released at The Knap, as, we must suppose long before there was any thought that H5N1 would, within a matter of weeks, leave its calling card. On the return journey, a happy coincidence was to hear as an encore to a performance on Radio 3 of Saint-Saens' 1st Cello Concerto a beautiful rendition of The Swan from The Carnival of the Animals.

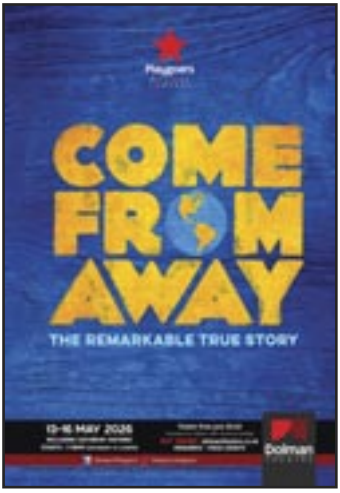
By way of a follow-up, a further visit was paid to Parc Taf Bargoed in the days following the rescue to assess what was going on amongst the remainder of the family, as can be assessed from our other picture; all was calm and peaceful, and, as we bring this brief piece to a close, it's a relief to be able to report that all continues to be well, at least at this sheltered and peaceful location.

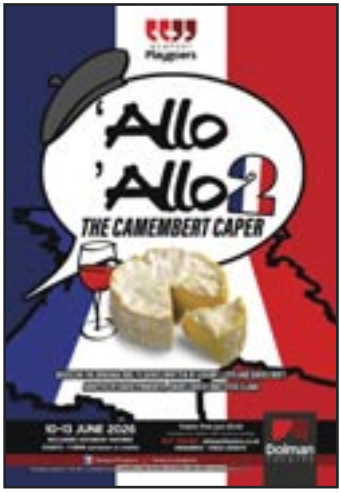
Story & photos by Peter. For swan problems please contact Peter on 07802 472788.

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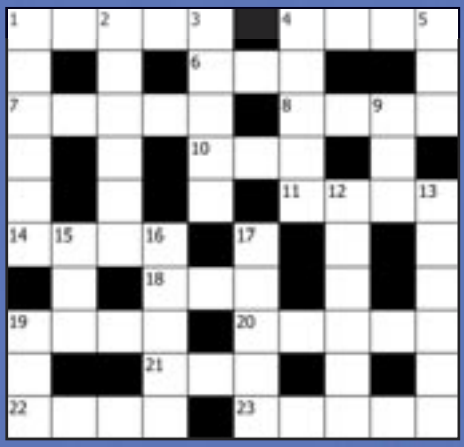
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New Year Puzzles

Crossword



Across

1. Seat (5)
4. In addition to (4)
6. As well as (3)
7. Romantic partner (5)
8. Bird of peace (4)
10. First woman (3)
11. Telephoned (4)
14. Appointment (4)
18. Large seed (3)
19. Worry (4)
20. Desired, wished for (5)
21. Devon river (3)
22. For always (4)
23. Having ascended (5)

Down

1. Named (6)
2. Business promotion (6)
3. Scarcer (5)
4. Poisonous snake (5)
5. Single number (3)
9. Commercial vehicle (3)
12. Takes as ones own (6)
13. Place for fruit & veg (6)
15. Atmosphere (3)
16. Go into (5)
17. Surgical spirit (5)
19. Enemy (3)

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

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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Back to Normal On Twmbarlwm



Regular readers of this column will recall that last month's theme concerned one of the many folk tales on and around Twmbarlwm – the Pwca, who was quite a mischievous creature and, judging by the state of the mountain, they could still be active in the area. So for this month's article I thought "…no more fairy tales let's get back to reality".

I'm sorry to say, littering, fly-tipping, vandalism, illegal off-roading and anti-social behaviour are the features of modern reality that I am addressing once again.

On a recent visit I found the car park strewn with beer cans, fast food packaging, all sorts of household and garden waste and the detritus of what youngsters do to get a high nowadays.

The heavy metal corral gate was vandalised and hanging off its hinges – this gate was installed at great expense to ensure the safety of grazing livestock and prevent them straying beyond the mountainside.

Further up the hill the double fence that we, the Society, installed ourselves was cut through and trampled to the ground – and on the forestry side of the Twmp the fence was similarly vandalised for the umpteenth time this year.

I didn't visit the summit on this occasion but I have reports from other users saying that there has been a great deal of damage done to the ground surface, stone paths and the knee fence around the hill-fort.

On the plus side, the large fly-tips that were there a couple of weeks ago had gone – collected by Caerphilly County Borough Council at our request.

Doing something about all those problems is probably the main *raison d'être* of the Twmbarlwm Society. We want to ensure the area remains an attractive and safe place to visit, not only for locals, but also for those who travel from afar to experience our wonderful landscape.

So you see the amount of work required to keep Twmbarlwm in just a reasonable state of repair is immense and when you consider our other achievements I think we have done a reasonable job since our inception some 15 years ago.

The Twmbarlwm Society isn't just about keeping the mountain tidy – we have instigated archaeological digs, built fences and paths, worked closely with Cadw in managing the hill-fort and added our collective voice to proposed developments such as the current project to erect wind turbines on the Mynydd Maen ridgeway.

If we are to continue to maintain this local landmark in good order for the community and our children's children, we could really do with more support from the younger generation. Find us on Facebook or visit our website (**www.twmbarlwm.co.uk**) for more info – because there's many battles still to fight.

Terry Evans, Chairman of Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society







Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society meet at the car park below Twmbarlwm's summit (What3Words location = ***ironic.sweetened.people***) for a litter pick and volunteer workday on the first 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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9	2	5	6	8	1	3	7	4
3	1	7	9	5	4	6	2	8
4	6	8	3	7	2	1	9	5
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Sgwd Gwladys

Sgwd Y Bedol

River Nedd Fechan

The Nedd Fechan is a river almost wholly within the county of Powys, Wales. It rises on the eastern slopes of Fan Gyhirych in the Fforest Fawr section of the Brecon Beacons National Park and flows south for seven miles to join with the Afon Mellte at Pontneddfechan, their combined waters continuing as the River Neath (Afon Nedd) to the sea near Swansea.

The start of the Elidir Trail is in the centre of Pontneddfechan. It is an easy walk alongside the river, following the tracks of horse-drawn trams that were once used to move silica (a raw material used to make bricks and tiles) from nearby mines. You'll eventually cross a wooden bridge and you will have the choice to go left towards the impressive Sgwd Gwladus Waterfalls or right towards Pont Melin Fach, which is slightly more uphill and can get very muddy.

There are lots of little waterfalls along this part of the trail, the first big waterfall you will see is Sgwd Y Bedol, meaning Horseshoe Falls. The next waterfall is Sgwd Ddwli Isaf, which means Lower Gushing Falls and the final large waterfall is Sgwd Ddwli Uchaf, which means Upper Gushing Falls.

During the off-season, there is car park at Pont Melin Fach with several picnic benches. However, access to the carpark is via a very narrow single-track lane and to prevent serious issues this carpark closes during peak season.

We have walked from both car parks and it's takes about 1 ½ hour from each to reach the main waterfalls and back.


Sgwd Ddwli Uchaf


Car Park at Pont Melin Fach



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Xmas choir



Members of Newport u3a's Choir prepared for their busiest season of the year, learning Christmas songs since July! The Choir has grown in stature and numbers (now over 70) which enables us to sing in four-part harmony, the traditional format for choral singing. We sang two sets at St Woolos Cathedral's Christmas Bazaar which was greatly appreciated by the browsing congregation - many of whom decided to sit down and appreciate the show. Our programme included non-Christmas songs from our repertoire, some lovely lesser known carols and also some light-hearted singalong seasonal songs. Stephen Berry, Carol Brown and Julie Davies shared the conducting and accompaniment on the piano. We also performed at Newport u3a's Annual Christmas Concert, at Ystrad Mynach Hospital's ward that cares for patients with mental health issues and at Newport County AFC's Carol Service at St John's Church. The Choir also performs at residential homes and is available to perform at public, social and charitable events.

u3a learn, laugh, live

Newport u3a runs 40 more active, social and cultural groups for the retired at the Dolman Theatre Wednesday to Friday during term time at 9.45-15.00. If you would like more harmony in your retirement visit u3asites.org.uk or phone Angela Robins on 07983 130541

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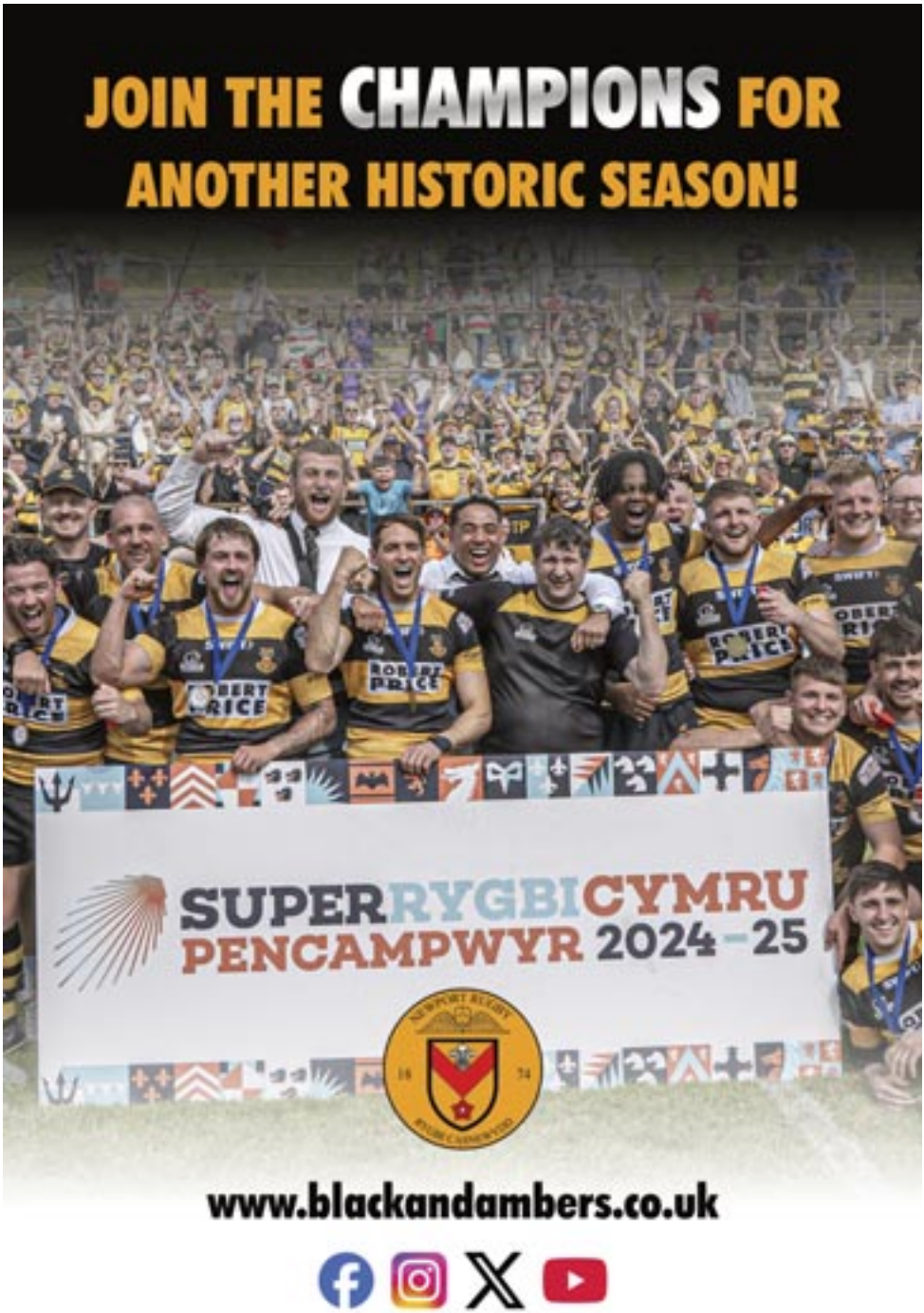
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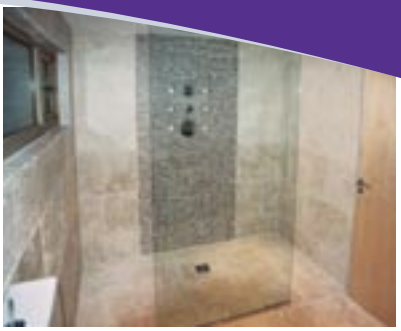



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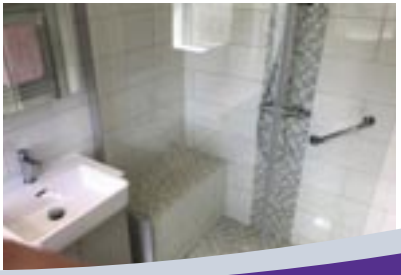


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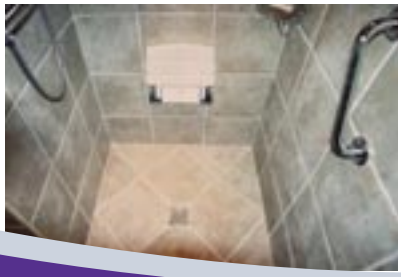
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Part 4

Changes in Rogerstone

since 1974 when it officially became part of Wales

Green Spaces and Sustainability
Rogerstone has embraced environmental sustainability through the implementation of eco-friendly practices. The educational Glade Project and the 'wildflower areas are excellent examples of this, as are the existing and proposed community orchards.

Community Events
Rogerstone has hosted a variety of community events throughout the years, celebrating its cultural heritage and fostering a sense of unity. Unfortunately, the large carnivals were no longer possible but were replaced by smaller village festivals.

Public Houses
As in the rest of the UK Rogerstone has over the last 50 years seen the closure of many public houses. Among these are The Rogerstone Hotel/Jolly Roger, the Three Salmons and The Old Globe. All of which have been Italian or Indian restaurants. Currently the two forementioned are respectively Italian (Dolce Vita) and Indian (The 3 Mughals) while The Old Globe is now a house. More recently The Oak Stave closed and has been replaced by houses. Thankfully, The Rising Sun and the Tredegar Arms remain. Also, lost was The Redwood club run by Lynn and Phil Gibbs (well-known local group artist and minibus driver), The Bush Inn and The Myrtle Grove which were victims of road changes.

Derek Picken



Rogerstone carnival in the late 1970s



Community Gardens



Rogerstone Festival 2006



The Bush Inn



Myrtle Grove



The Old Globe



The Oak Stave

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New year, new goals

Is it time to get your finances in shape?

As the calendar turns to a new year, many of us start thinking about resolutions. We vow to eat healthier, get fitter, learn something new or finally start that project we've been putting off. Yet one of the most important areas of our lives is often overlooked – our finances.

For many people, sorting out their money feels complicated, time-consuming or even a little intimidating. It's easier to push it into the background and promise to 'deal with it later'. The problem is that later quickly turns into next year… and then the year after that.

The truth is, getting your finances in order doesn't have to be overwhelming. In fact, a few simple steps can make a significant difference to your confidence and long-term security.

Start by asking yourself some basic questions. Do you know exactly what is coming in and going out each month? Are your savings and investments working as hard as they could be? Are you taking full advantage of tax allowances and pension contributions? Do you have a clear idea of what you want your future to look like, whether that's paying off your mortgage, supporting family members, or enjoying a comfortable retirement?

A new year is also the perfect time to start thinking about the end of the tax year in April. Many valuable allowances are lost each year simply because people leave it too late. Making use of your ISA allowance, increasing pension contributions, or undertaking wider tax-efficient planning before the deadline can significantly improve your long-term position. With the right advice, small decisions made now can lead to meaningful benefits in the future.



At Kymin Financial Planners, we help individuals and families gain clarity and confidence in their financial future. For over 30 years, we've supported local clients with pensions, investments, inheritance tax planning and long-term financial strategies. Our approach is personal, considered and built entirely around what matters most to you.

If improving your financial wellbeing is on your list of resolutions for this year, perhaps now is the time to take that first step. We are offering a no-obligation New Year Financial Review, giving you the opportunity to sit down with an experienced adviser, review where you are today, and explore where you would like to be in the future.

A simple conversation now could make all the difference to where you are this time next year.

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After all, the best resolution isn't just the one you make in January – it's the one you stick to.

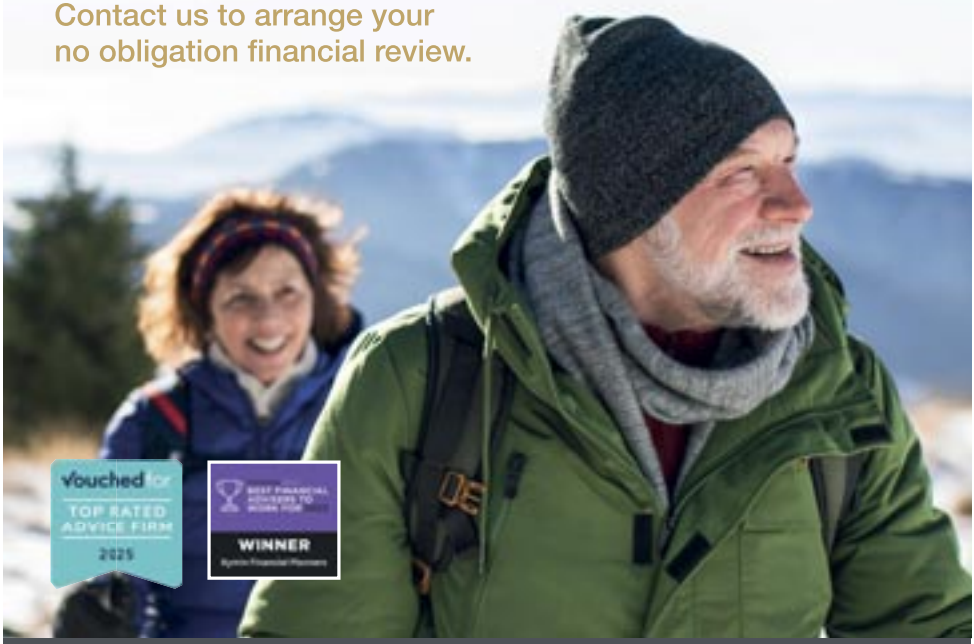
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