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

Susan x



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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.

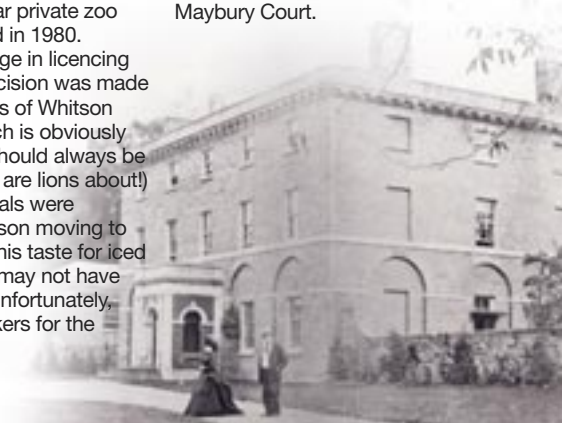
Completed in the late 18th Century and located between Llanwern and Goldcliff, Whitson House was originally constructed for William Phillips MP (1752-1836). By the early 1900s, the building was known as Whitson Court, a title that has endured ever since. Some thirty years later in 1933, the property 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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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'êtr*e 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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THE ORIGINS OF ROGERSTONE LIBRARY

The next time you're travelling along Tregwilym Road in Rogerstone, the road that stretches between St John's Church and the entrance to Jubilee Park, take time to stop about half-way down and take a look at Rogerstone Library.

Because it is above street level and back from the road it is easy to miss but from the opposite side of Tregwilym Road you will have a splendid view of this imposing, 120 year-old, Grade II listed building. It was built 'in a prime site... overlooking the broad Ebbw valley' and, to quote the experts, in 'an Edwardian free Classical style of squared purple sandstone with a slate roof and a lantern dome'.

What makes Rogerstone Library special is that it came into existence because of the generosity of one man, namely Andrew Carnegie and is one of 35 free libraries that Carnegie funded throughout Wales at the beginning of the twentieth century. Andrew Carnegie was an iron and steel entrepreneur, a billionaire described as the richest man in the world in his lifetime and as the world's first modern philanthropist. A patriotic Scotsman from a poor family in Dunfermline, he relocated to America and as an avid reader 'this first great patron of public libraries in Britain and America' dreamed of providing free libraries for all in every town and village. Carnegie worked assiduously with local communities to ensure that the buildings he funded had security of tenure over time and would have





sufficient books either donated or paid for from the 'penny rate' that local authorities could levy. His largesse enabled 660 free libraries to be set up in the UK at a cost of 15 million dollars. His friendship with people like David Lloyd George and with Gladstone, who lived in Wales, and his contacts in the world of Welsh iron and steel ensured that his philanthropy reached many areas of Wales particularly those, like Rogerstone, which were heavily industrialised.

On 29th September 1903 Rogerstone Parish Council resolved to thank Andrew Carnegie for his promise of £1400 for a new library building and so it was that only just over two years later the Rogerstone Library, free for all to use, was opened. It was fitting, perhaps, that the Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire, Lord Tredegar, officially opened the library for, as a philanthropist in his own right, he had provided the 'prime site' and at Carnegie's request had also gifted the freehold of the land. There were some behind-the-scenes negotiations before the deal was struck in that the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire button-holed Carnegie about the matter at a meeting of the Iron and Steel Institute of Great Britain, both men being prominent members of the institute.

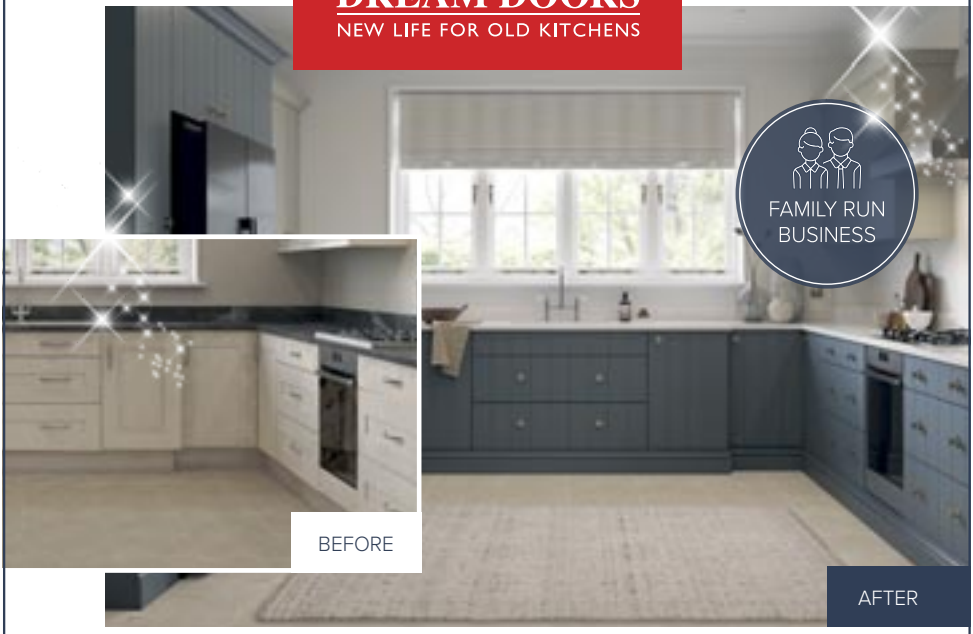
Andrew Carnegie has generally remained an unsung hero in Welsh history despite his philanthropic work in The Principality. However, there is no doubt that his love of books translated into the provision of free libraries for all has had a profound and lasting effect on communities all around Wales. Rogerstone should certainly be proud that its library is a thriving legacy of this great benefactor's vision.

Reference: Free and Public, Andrew Carnegie and the Libraries of Wales by Ralph A. Griffiths, University of Wales Press.
Peter Davies (photos c/o Christine Davies).

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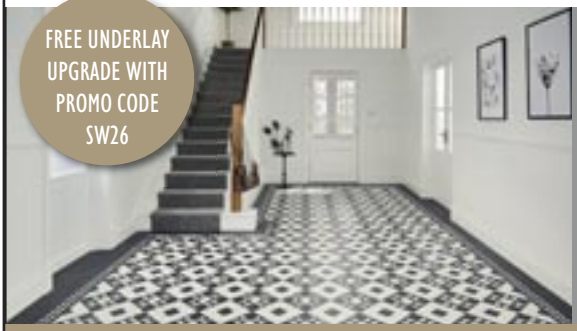
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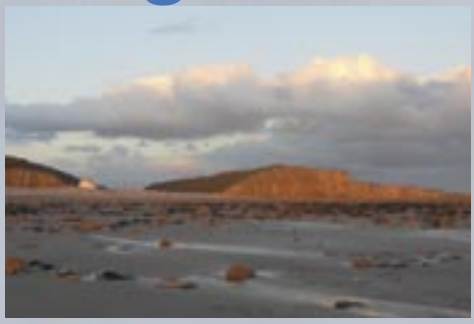
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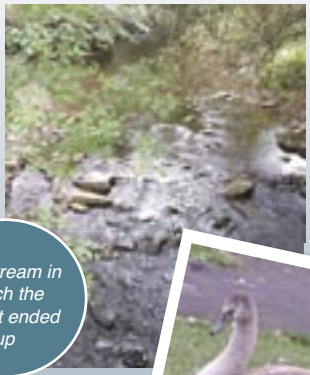
The Hazards of Bird Flu… and Cygnet Dispersal

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.

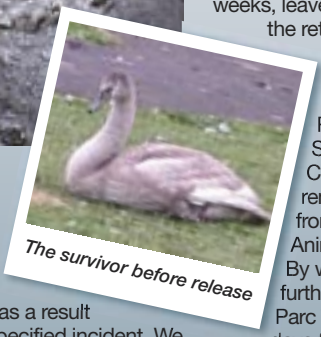
Parc Taf Bargoed is a delightful area some little way to the southeast of Merthyr, easily approached by driving north through Nelson and Trelewis. Swans have bred here for a number of years – the cob, originally from Cyfarthfa Castle is partially disabled, having suffered a wing injury when very young, 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

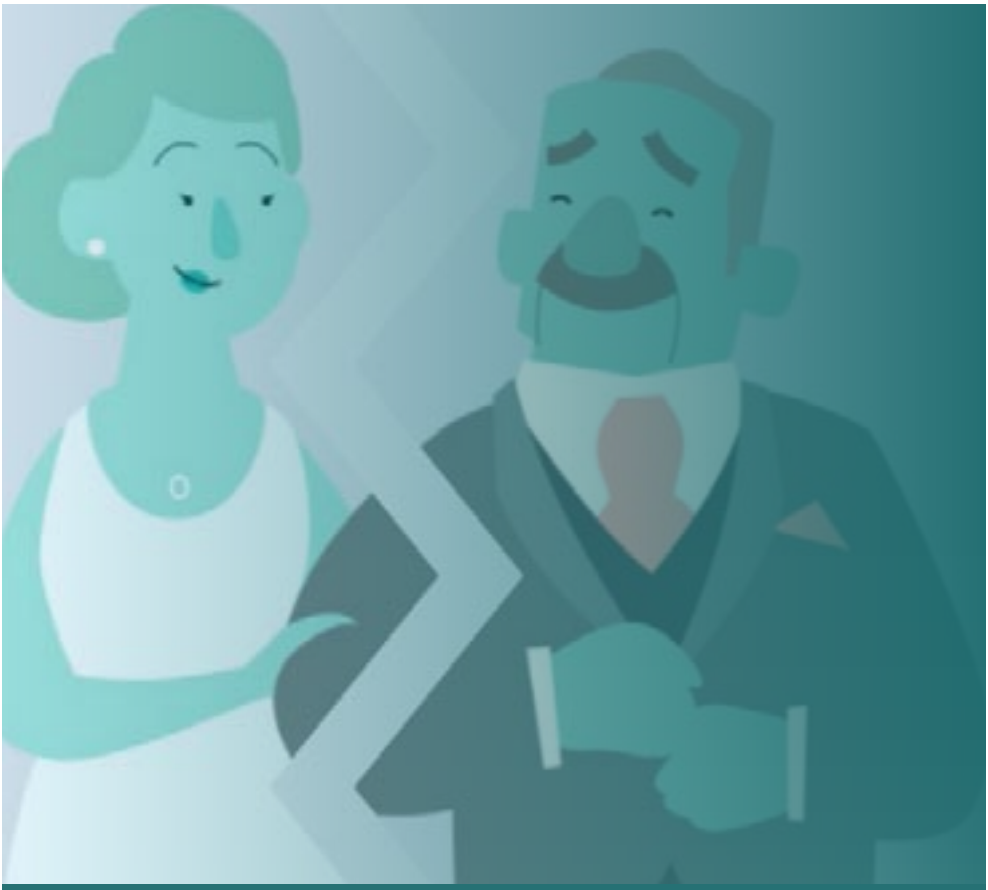


The survivor before release

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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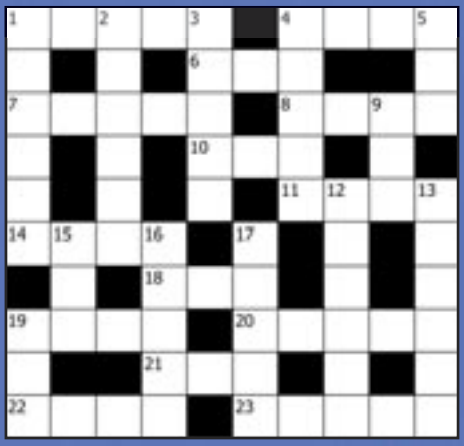
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New Year Puzzles

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)

Sudoku

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

The object of sudoku is to insert the missing numbers in the boxes to satisfy just one condition: each row, column and 3x3 box must contain the digits 1 through to 9 exactly once. This can be done by applying logic – you do not have to guess.

Solutions on page 21

St David's Hospice Care

Fundraising Calendar of Events 2026











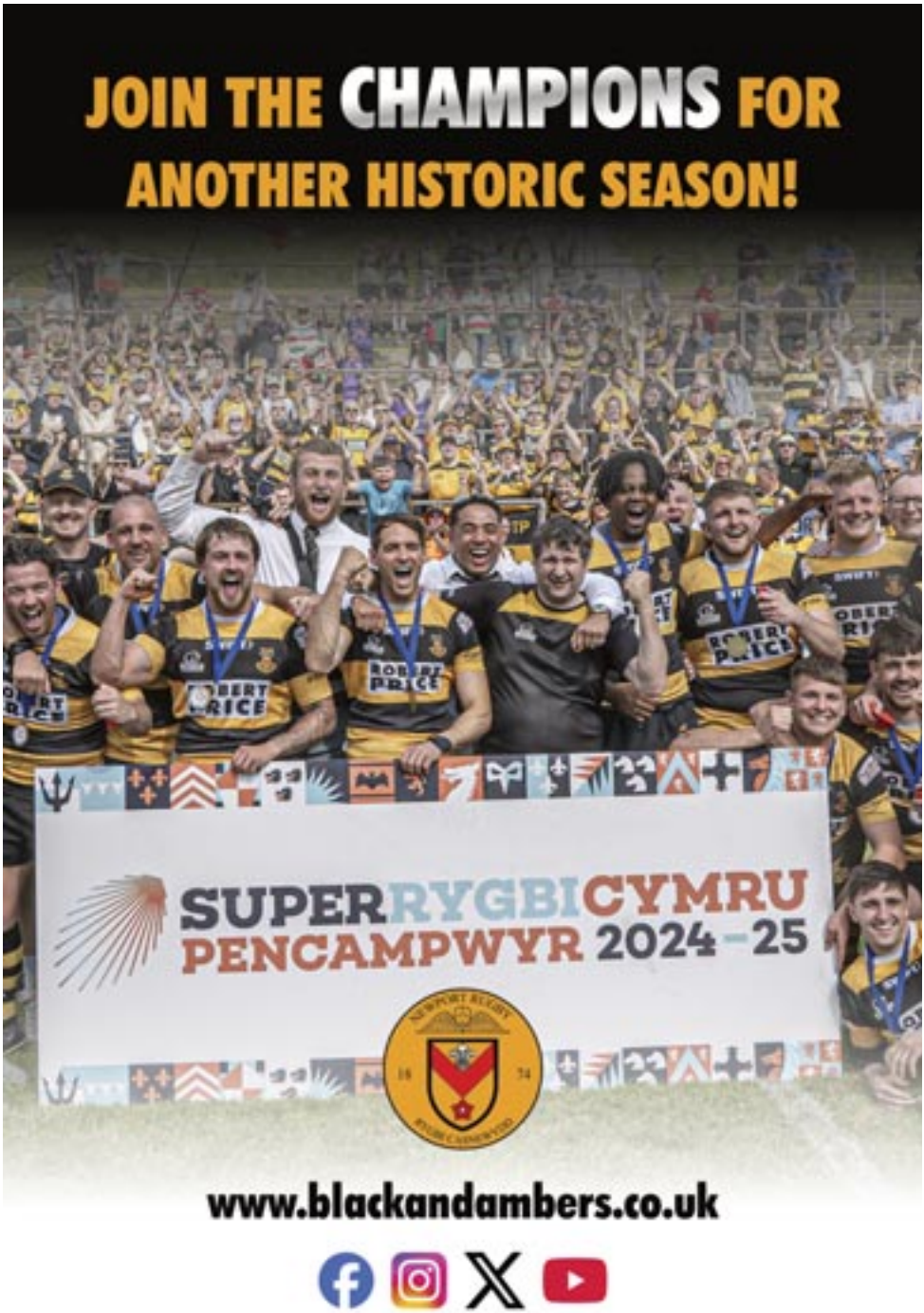


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Sgwd Gwladys

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.

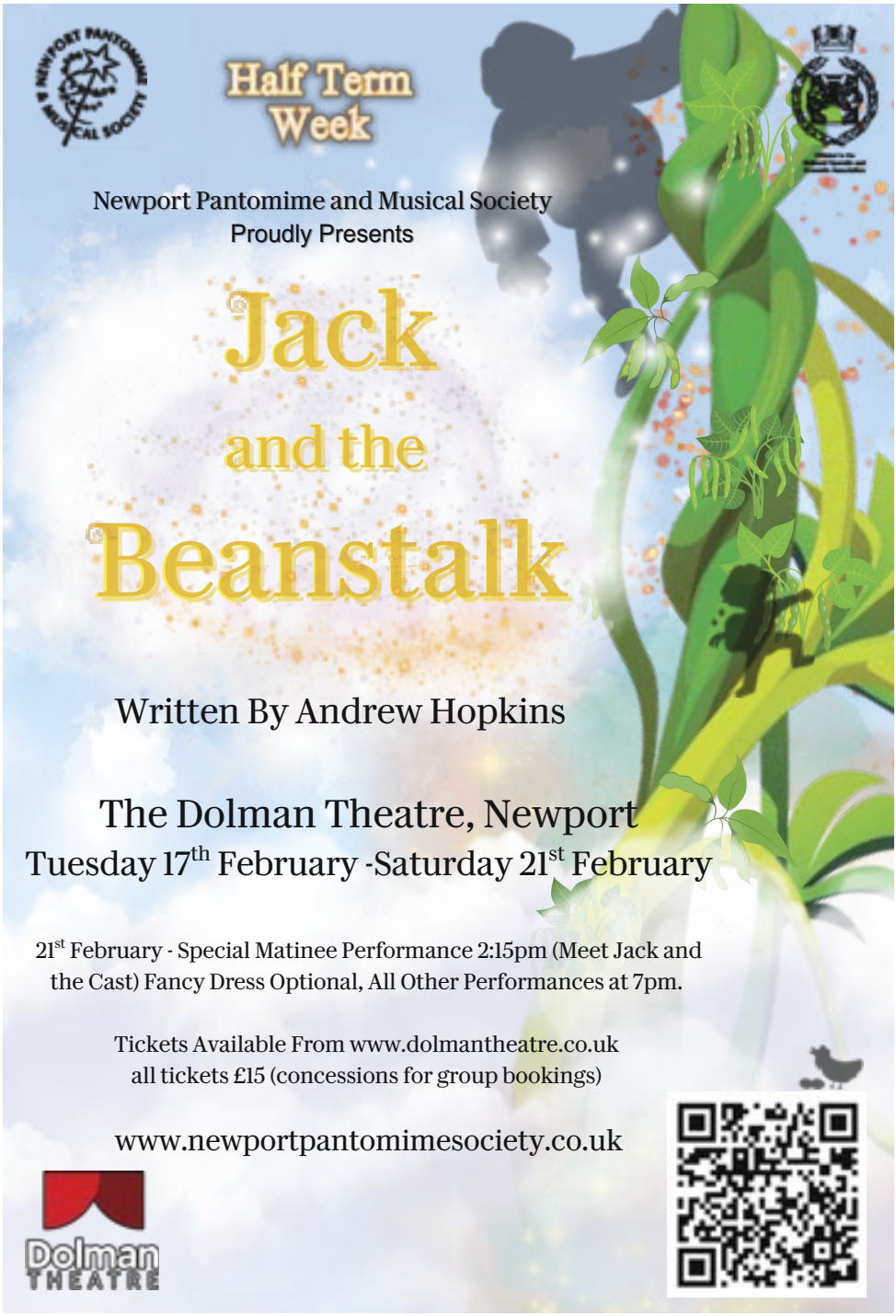
There are lots of little waterfalls along this part of the trail, the first big waterfall you will see is Sgwd Y Bedol, meaning Horseshoe Falls. The next waterfall is Sgwd Ddwli Isaf, which means Lower Gushing Falls and the final large waterfall is Sgwd Ddwli Uchaf, which means Upper Gushing Falls.

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


Half Term Week
Newport Pantomime and Musical Society
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Written By Andrew Hopkins
The Dolman Theatre, Newport
Tuesday 17th February -Saturday 21st February
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www.newportpantomimesociety.co.uk
Dolman THEATRE

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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Belle Vue
Park & Tea Room



What's On at Belle Vue Park and Tea Room

Thank you one and all for another successful year in Belle Vue during 2025. We are looking ahead to a vibrant 2026 full of markets, events and activities.

Here what is anticipated during the year:







February 18th **Princess Teas** - 2.15pm – 3.45pm
February 21st **Wedding Fayre** 11.00am – 3.00pm

Main and Mid-Month Markets: 11.00am – 4.00pm
March 1st St David's Day Market, our first of the year.
With our wonderful artisan makers, bakers and generally brilliant creators.
March 8th Mid-Month Market with Belle Vue's own stall offering fresh meat, vegetables and Homemade specials.

April 5th and 19th	May 3rd and 17th
June 7th and 21st	July 5th and 19th
August 2nd and 16th	September 6th and 20th
October 4th and 18th.	November 1st and 15th

Street Food Friday is back this year!

We tried Sundays and they didn't work as well so here we are again with 4 dates for your diary:

May 8th 6.00pm – 9.00pm **Featuring Jamila Music - Jam Sullivan**
June 26th 6.00pm – 9.00pm **Band to be announced**
July 24th 6.00pm – 9.00pm **Band to be announced**
August 21st 6.00pm – 9.00pm with **360 Degrees**

Bandstand Brass and choir

We shall open our bandstand to local ensembles. We have enquiries already and look forward to finalising details with you during the year. If you have a music idea for our bandstand this year, please get in touch. All weekends where we have no other bookings are available if you would like to contact Jan on 07737 630657. Perfect for children's parties or other occasions. Please do book. There is no charge but we need to know if someone is wishing to use the area. It is within our lease with Newport County Council.



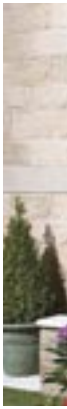
Happy New Year!

Look out for more information on our notice boards and Facebook/Instagram @Bellevuetearooms and on our website www.bellevuetearoom.uk. Alternatively text or phone Jan on 07737 630657.



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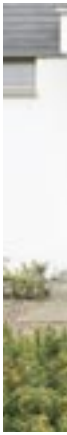
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Part 4

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.

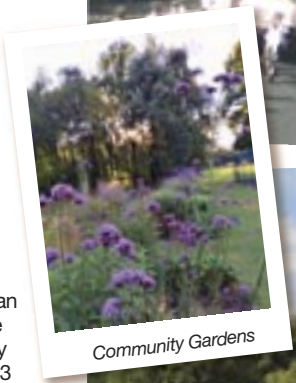
Community Events
Rogerstone has hosted a variety of community events throughout the years, celebrating its cultural heritage and fostering a sense of unity. Unfortunately, the large carnivals were no longer possible but were replaced by smaller village festivals.

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

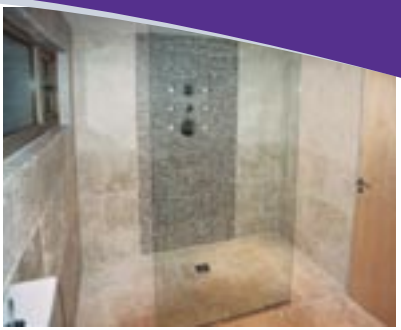

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Newport Bathroom Centre

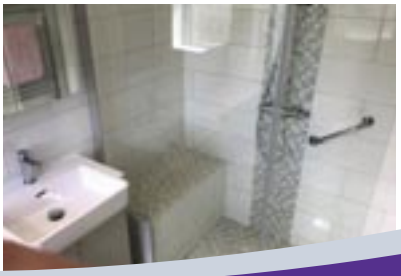


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