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ISSUE 97 MARCH/APRIL 2026



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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 local beautiful countryside, beaches, canal & river walks – read our articles about the River Caerfanell in the Breacon Beacons and Saundersfoot & Coppet Hall Beach.

Susan x

Wishing you all a Happy Easter.

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Natasha **Asghar**

on May 7th

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natasha4newport@outlook.com

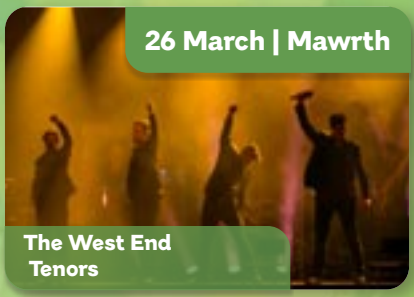
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This last point can be of particular interest to couples who have come together but have children from different partners. A Trust can help each person in the relationship ensure that their children inherit their share of the estate.

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Tin Legs and Ham

by Paul Minton

I have always been enthralled with escape stories and suspect this may be connected with my fear of being accidentally locked inside a public convenience. I hold the longstanding belief that the strategies used in *The Great Escape, Escape from Alcatraz,* and, to a lesser extent, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*, might provide some useful hints as to how to dig oneself out of the Gents, armed with only a steely determination and a small spoon.

The Second World War seemed to present a multitude of opportunities for prison breakouts. One particular attempt involved a Newport man known by his fellow captives as 'Ham'. Ham was born in 1914 at Blaen-y-Pant House, which is located just off Malpas Road and is currently a care home. His father was a wealthy coal mining engineer, who purchased the first Bentley motorcar. Ham joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers in 1940 as a Second Lieutenant and in May of that year, his platoon was ordered to capture Robecq, a French village to the west of Lille. During their mission, the men were forced to wade through the Bassée Canal but upon entering an empty cottage to dry off, an enemy tank arrived and they found themselves surrounded. Ham and his unit had no option but to surrender.

After a yearlong stint at Laufen prisoner-of-war camp in Bavaria, Ham was transported to Warburg in the heart of Germany. The new camp comprised hundreds of huts, each containing several rooms of eight men. For most of the 3000 prisoners, the prospect of escape was never far from their thoughts and whilst few schemes were successful, Ham and his cohorts decided to give it a go. A trap door was cut into the floorboards beneath a bed in one corner of their hut. The men would descend through the floor and crawl 30 feet to a vertical shaft dug near the far side of the building. A tunnel extended horizontally from the shaft, some eight feet under the surface. As digging progressed, the men worked in shifts using shovels from the hut's coke burning stove and scrap metal that was fashioned into picks. The excavated earth was later scattered around the grounds or dumped into the hut's roof space. Any wood needed for the tunnel was taken from the beds so that eventually, each man was sleeping on just four slats. A makeshift bellows was used to pump fresh air down a pipeline constructed from butter tins. The 300 foot tunnel took six months to complete but as the men waited for a dark night to make good their escape, the Germans discovered the pipeline. The game was up!

To prevent it from being reused, the guards poured sewage down the shaft before sealing it shut. Ham found the whole exercise dispiriting and abandoned any plans to try again. Instead, he focussed his efforts on assisting other would-be escapees. One such occasion involved Douglas Bader, the famous amputee pilot, who was a campmate for a time. Ham was engaged in the sanctioned theft of Bader's tin legs, whose simulated fury was intended to distract the guards during another escape bid.

Ham moved between various POW camps during his captivity until he was finally liberated by the Allies in 1945. After the war, Ham returned to his fledgling career as an actor, which was potentially the source of his nickname. Although he was used to playing supporting characters, he gained global recognition when he accepted a role in what was to become a film franchise phenomenon.

Renowned for his portrayal of Q in seventeen James Bond films, Ham is, of course, better known by his real name, Desmond Llewelyn. Despite his fame, however, he was a man who never forgot his roots, donning a Newport RFC tie in *The Living Daylights* and a Malpas Cricket Club tie in *Octopussy.*



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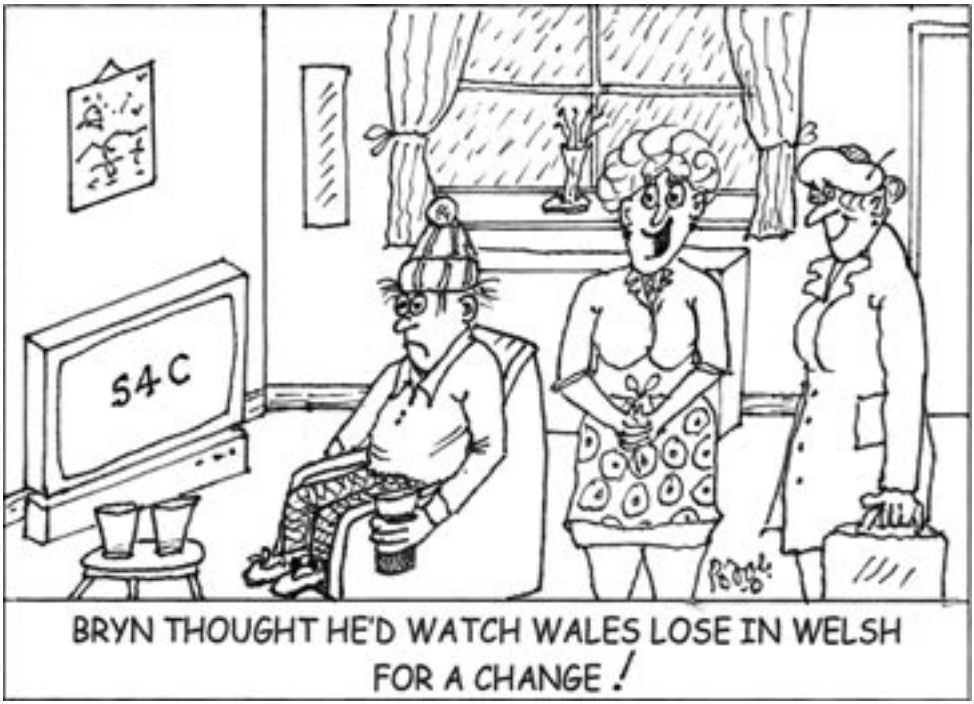
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Part 5

Changes in Rogerstone

since 1974 when it officially became part of Wales

Churches and Chapels
Sadly, because of low support St Annes Church was closed as a church but has been taken over for community groups continued use, Scouts, Guides, Cubs, Brownies etc. Also St. Johns Church Hall has been condemned, and residential accommodation is likely to replace it. Fortunately, Trinity Chapel, St. Basil & St Gwladys churches are still providing invaluable services to the community. The Pentecostal Chapel on Tregwilym Road also had a new build. Lastly and not least is Bethesda Chapel Rogerstone, the oldest church in Rogerstone which has in this period been rebuilt and continues to provide so much for the community.



Trinity Methodist Church



The old Bethesda Chapel

The old Pentecostal Church



Conclusion
The changes and developments in Rogerstone, Newport, South Wales since 1974 have transformed the village into a thriving, modern community now unrecognisable to people who have moved from the area and re visited.

Derek Picken



St. Basil & St Gwladys Church



St. Johns Church



The former St. Annes Church

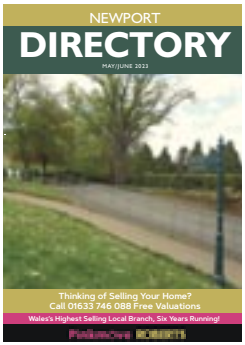


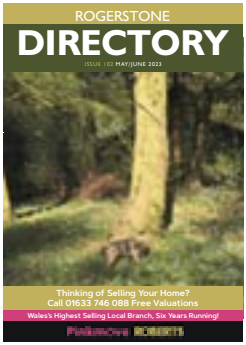
The New Bethesda Baptist Church

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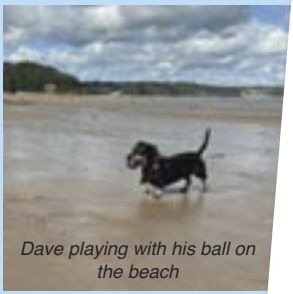
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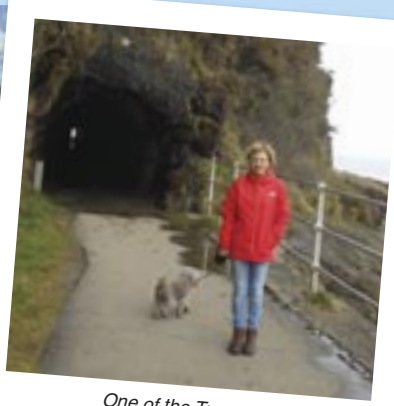
Saundersfoot & Coppet Hall Beach

Both beaches are connected by the old tramway which runs along the top of the beach. This section of the route follows the coastline from Saundersfoot to Wisemans Bridge, it is now a four mile part of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path. Walkers using the trail pass through three tunnels on the former line.

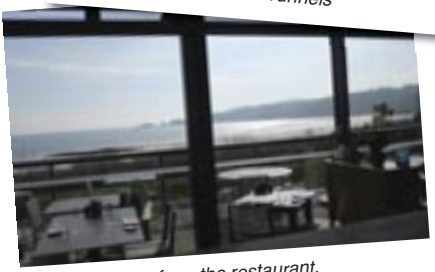
The small harbour was built in 1829 for the export of anthracite coal from the many mines in the area, although coal was exported from the beach for centuries before this.
The beach at the western end is situated in front of the village of Saundersfoot, its gently sloping sands make for safe swimming and all amenities are provided by the shops and cafes along the beachfront.
Coppet Hall Beach is at the eastern end of the beach, which has plenty of sand even at high tide. A wide flat area of sand is exposed at low tide, which is ideal for beach games, also there are lots of rockpools. The Lan y Mor restaurant is situated at this end of the beach and it has great views across Carmarthen Bay. There is also The Kiosk selling ice creams and hot drinks. Good Trails is a water sports and activity centre, where there are paddleboards, bikes and kayaking for hire and tuition is available. There is also a large privately run car park next to the beach.



Dave playing with his ball on the beach



One of the Tunnels



View from the restaurant.

Western end of the beach



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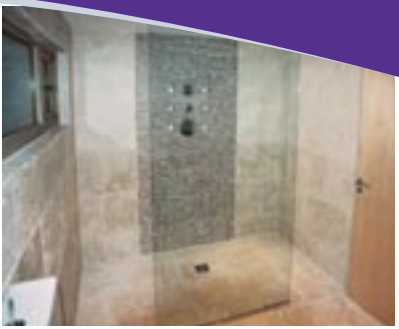


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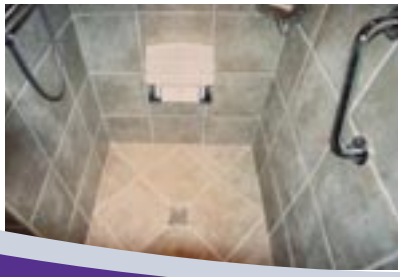
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River Caerfanell



The River Caerfanell rises in the central section of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It rises as Blaen Caerfanell on the plateau of Gwaun Cerrig Llwydion and drops steeply down south-eastwards into the head of Glyn Collwn before turning east then north-east into Talybont Reservoir. It emerges from the hydro turbine beneath the dam just above the village of Aber and continues northwards to its confluence with the River Usk at the hamlet of Llansantffraed.

The river is shadowed for much of its length by the Beacons Way and by the eastern loop of the Taff Trail. We started our walk from the Blaen-y-Glyn Isaf car park (CF48 2UT) between the Pontsticill and Talybont Reservoirs, where it drops over a series of falls, which are a very popular natural attraction during both summer and winter months. The circular walk, including numerous photos stops took about two hours.

If I don't have have a Will, everything just goes to my spouse, right?



Depending on your circumstances this is not guaranteed and ultimately, the decision as to where your assets go will fall to the State. If you are one of the 49% of people in the UK who does not have a Will, make an appointment with our specialist team make sure your estate goes exactly where you want it to.

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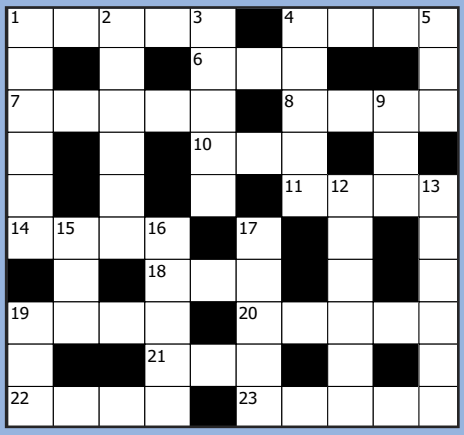
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PUZZLE PAGE

Crossword



Across

1. Plenty (5)
4. First man (4)
6. Cut the grass (3)
7. Steam room (5)
8. As well as (4)
10. Writing fluid (3)
11. Great story or film (4)
14. Ooze or leak (4)
18. Boy's name (3)
19. Large room (4)
20. Turn, rotate (5)
21. Be in debt (3)
22. Ditch around castle (4)
23. Of Rome (5)

Down

1. Estimate value of (6)
2. Dive into (6)
3. Computer message (5)
4. Not asleep (5)
5. Cow noise (3)
9. Snow shoe (3)
12. Small stage or lectern (6)
13. Cardboard container (6)
15. Long time (3)
16. Plane flyer (5)
17. Go into (5)
19. Bacon (3)

Sudoku

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

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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Destination Twmbarlwm



As I write this article, a named storm (Chandra, I believe) is hammering at my window inviting me to dare to go out to walk the dog in my waterproofs and wellies. The poor mutt is still drying out from this morning's drenching and he doesn't look keen to go again – so I must admit I'm grateful for this bit of work to keep me indoors nice and dry.

Yes, it's been a very damp winter, so I'm looking forward to getting back out to walk the lanes and countryside that we are lucky enough to have around us in this corner of SE Wales – and as far as I'm concerned the only destination to aim for is Twmbarlwm.

Wherever you live within the circulation of this publication you will find an interesting route, through green countryside, to get you up to Twmbarlwm – and if, like me, you are not capable of walking very far, there's a few places you can drive to within a manageable distance of the summit. And, believe me, once you get to the top you will not be disappointed.

One such route is via the Cwmcarn Forest Drive which only opens on weekends during the winter but from Easter it is open everyday. My favourite is to park at car park 2, *(Twmbarlwm View)* and from there it's a short steep climb onto the Mynydd Henllys ridgeway and with the hill-fort as your target in the distance, it's a relatively flat 1.5 mile walk to Twmbarlwm's scheduled monument – the views on a fine day are breathtaking.



Another route to the top whilst on the Forest Drive is from car park 7 *(Pegwn-y-Bwlch)*, but beware, this gives you a lung-bursting steep climb of half a mile to the top.

The other car accessible route is where we gather each month for our litter picks. Follow Mountain Road, from behind Risca Comprehensive School – note it's a single track country lane which needs to be driven along with care – soon after you pass over a cattle grid you come to a small car park from where you can take several different routes to the top.

If it's a longer, circular hike you prefer, there are innumerable routes you could take to enjoy the quiet beauty of our countryside. Such as following a stretch of the Mon-Brec canal, with its array of wildlife, before you ascend through the country lanes to the top.

You will find some interesting routes described on our website with map references and detailed directions and advice on how to prepare for your adventure.

However you decide to go please adhere to the countryside code including:–

- Take litter home - leave no trace of your visit.
- Keep dogs under control and in sight. Dog poo – bag it and bin it.
- Plan your adventure – know what to expect and what you are capable of.
- Respect everyone, protect the environment and above all – enjoy the outdoors

Also be sure to dress appropriately for the conditions, with decent footwear, waterproofs or even sun protection – and be aware of how suddenly weather can change from the valley floor to the high heathland.

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.

www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

THE Twmbarlwm HOT CROSS BUN WALK

Good Friday
3rd April 2026



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One of the great traditions we have in Risca and surrounding area is the annual pilgrimage to the top of Twmbarlwm.

Again this year CTS will organise group walks and offer free Hot-Cross-Buns to those who come along with us.

Even if you don't want to take part in our group walks we still want to encourage you to keep this tradition alive. Get up there with family and friends and why not bring a picnic with you to enjoy while you take in the breathtaking views at the top.

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



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Peter
Newport

Cryptic Crosswords' Group

Members of Newport u3a's 'How To Solve Cryptic Crosswords' group attend our fun sessions twice a month to learn how to unlock those fiendish clues whilst improving memory, vocabulary and general knowledge.

We solve a couple of crosswords at each session and it's a good feeling when we solve a difficult clue and experience a 'Eureka!' moment and can have a chuckle at the crossword setter's ingenuity and deviousness.



Members have progressed so well that we have compiled our own crossword which has been published in the national 'u3a Matters' magazine.Well Done to them all from their proud convenor, "she who cooked algae around noon!" (Answer - Angela)

Newport u3a runs 40 more active, social and cultural groups for the retired at the Dolman Theatre Wednesday to Friday at 9.45-15.00 during term time. For more information visit newport.u3asite.uk or phone Angela Robins on 07983 130541.

Hardy Plant Society Monmouthshire

Hardy Plant Society Monmouthshire Is a group for people who love plants and gardening and enjoy sharing their enthusiasm with other like-minded people.

Non-members are very welcome to come along. Entry is £4 for members, non-members £6. Our meetings provide an excellent opportunity to meet people with similar interests in a friendly atmosphere and before the speaker, there's time to talk to fellow members, enjoy refreshments and perhaps buy some plants. The meetings always take place at Little Mill village hall NP4 0HE with the doors open at 2pm and the talks at 2.30pm. The group organises garden visits in the summer, discussions, dinners, plant sales and more throughout the year.



Saturday 14th March at Little Mill

To listen to bulb expert Rob Evans of Pheasant Acre Plants in the Vale of Glamorgan talk on 'Summer Bulbs'. Rob, a former Malvern Master Grower, winner of 10 consecutive Chelsea Medals and a specialist not only in dahlias and gladioli but in much else besides, will cover all aspects of bulb growing.

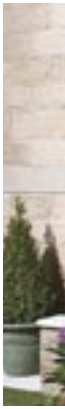
Saturday 9th May at the hall at Little Mill

Roger Lloyd will share his passion for grasses. They are everywhere in modern garden design. Whether it's the New American Movement, New Perennial Movement, Prairie or Naturalistic planting, grasses usually feature heavily. This wide-ranging talk will cover the advantages of using them, how to incorporate them, which grass for which location and much, much more. A comprehensive list will be provided. Don't miss this one.

Further information from the national Hardy Plant website: https://hardy-plant.org.uk And from the local, Monmouthshire group: hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk


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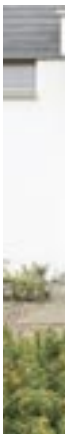






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More About Cygnet Dispersal… and Avian Influenza

In a week from now, it will be February and from our present standpoint, the start of the breeding season feels as if it is just around the corner, even although the weather continues cold and very wet.

Before the new breeding season can really start, all of the 2025 cygnets need to have left the 'family home'; one way or another, the cob (adult male) will see to that. As we write, the progress made by the families we know could hardly be more varied. Four of the canal family (Bettws Lane) flew together on or around Christmas Eve, while the fifth cygnet had to be rescued from pressure from the cob on 3rd. January. By contrast the entire family of seven cygnets at Cyfarthfa, Merthyr Tydfil is still present, although pressure is beginning to mount. This is especially true in respect of one of them which, as can be seen from the photograph is trailing a length of very heavy gauge line from high on its right leg, a bird which needs to be caught and may subsequently need to be kept in care for a while.

Which leads nicely into a further reference to Avian Influenza (AI) H5N1 variant. For obvious reasons i.e. the possibility of transmitting this virus to other pre-existing patients in wildlife hospitals or sanctuaries is a risk which cannot be countenanced; this risk is far too high. For this dilemma, there is one workable solution which involves the use of a quarantine system. The aspect of this with which we have needed to come to terms is the fact the facility in question has only limited capacity, and each 'patient' needs to come through a ten day stay to confirm it is not a carrier of the virus before a new patient can be admitted to this process.



The relevance of this to us at this time is the beautiful swan in our other photograph. Our attention was drawn to the presence of this swan at The Knap, Barry during early January. It exhibits a most extraordinary distortion of the neck; something, the like of which neither of us had ever seen before. At this time, it is probably true to say the worst of the AI attack had passed through the area resulting in double digit fatalities, but our stance continued to be that we had no means of 'processing' any such casualty safely. As to a possible cause, a flying mishap had to be viewed as a possibility, especially bearing the number of days during which we had experienced high to very high winds. As the days passed, it became increasingly apparent that, in all probability the bird was having difficulty feeding and a major contributory factor in this was bullying by other swans. There is plenty of evidence of this on the back of the neck just visible in our photograph.

So now he is our responsibility for the next few days which is a privilege; he appears very content; is feeding very well and attending well to his feather care. As a footnote, we understand there is a phenomenon called 'AI Neck' and there is a possibility this is an example of it. It would not be surprising if Phoenix (the name he has been given) had contracted AI and survived. Whatever the cause, it is probable he will spend the rest of his days in a free, friendly bur protected environment.

Story: Peter & Roz. Photos: Roz & Martin (Merthyr).For swan problems please contact Peter on 07802 472788

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