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DIRECTORY

ISSUE 105 MAY/JUNE 2026

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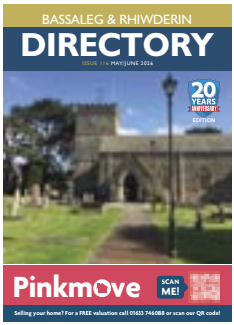
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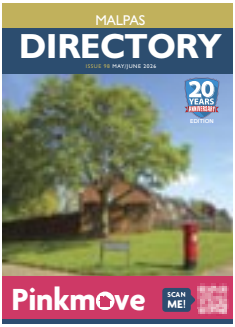
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SW DIRECTORIES

celebrates its 20th year anniversary







Over the past 20 years the Directories have continued to grow and flourish and I'm pleased to see them still making a significant contribution to both the business and community life in Rogerstone and other areas of Newport.

It's wonderful that so many people embrace and contribute to the success of the Directories, I've been fortunate to meet many interesting and inspirational people who have provided fascinating and entertaining articles for the magazine.

Hopefully, the Directories will continue to grow in the coming years, helping both local businesses and the community to thrive.

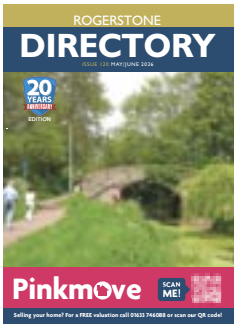
Wishing everyone a bright, happy and successful future.

Susan x

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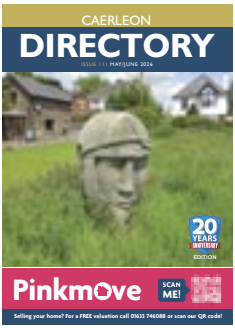
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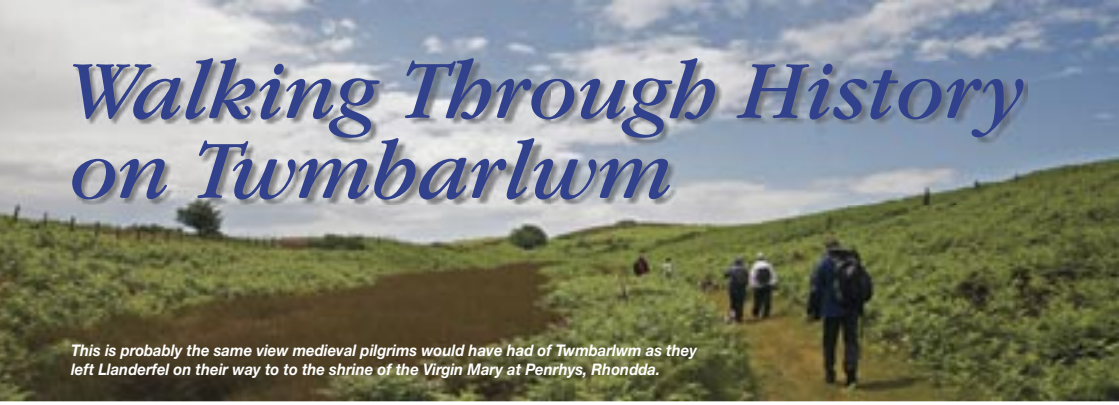








Walking Through History on Twmbarlwm



This is probably the same view medieval pilgrims would have had of Twmbarlwm as they left Llanderfel on their way to to the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Penrhys, Rhondda.

Summer is just around the corner and my mind is turning once more to getting back out onto our hillsides exploring the bounteous wildlife and nature, magnificent scenery and in our area we are very lucky to be surrounded by sites of historical interest.

This year I hope the society will be able to organise some walks and talks that will fulfill all three of those criteria and we appeal to anyone with suggestions for suitable walks – or better still to any experts who can help lead an interesting walk for us.

Over the years walks and talks have included the Lost Farmsteads of Mynydd Maen, the Legend of Pwll Tra, Iron Age Archaeology and one I particularly remember – the Chapel of Llanderfel. I focus on this one, not only because it's a fascinating story but also because in a couple of days time it's the Feast of St Derfel (5th April). I bet not many readers know this location, yet it's an easy walk across the ridgeway from Twmbarlwm's carpark.

The ruins of Llanderfel lie in a field above Henllys (on private land, so permission is neded to visit it) and the remains of an L-shaped building can clearly be seen - although much of the stone walls have disappeared or re-purposed over the years.

It was a site of pilgrimage in medieval times and lies on an ancient pilgrim route from Llantarnam Abbey to Penrhys in the Rhondda Valley (this is partly the reason we do our traditional Good Friday walk).

Derfel, born c. 466, was the son of Hywel, king of Brittany, according to legend, he fought for King Arthur at the Battle of Camlan.

Being one of only seven warriors who survived the battle, it is said the experience of the bloodshed turned him to religion and he became a hermit, founding two churches, one in Gwynedd, north Wales, the other here above Llantarnam. He later became Abbot of Ynys Enlli (Bardsey) where he died (c.560) and is buried.



The ruins of Llanderfel above Llantarnam with magnificent views over Cwmbran and beyond

There was a large wooden statue of him at Llandderfel (Gwynedd), depicting him as a warrior astride a horse, to which there was a legend attached that if it was set alight, it would *"…burn down a forest".*

Thus it came to pass, when in the 16th century the much lauded statue was removed by order of Thomas Cromwell after John Forest, a Catholic priest, refused to accept King Henry VIII as the supreme head of the Church of England.

This led to the macabre coincidence, intentional or otherwise, when the statue was used as firewood to burn to death the recalcitrant priest, John Forest, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

St. Derfel's story goes a lot deeper and like much of Welsh legend and history there are many more locations that claim dubious links to historical figures but here at OUR Llanderfel the pilgrim route and placename alone gives us sound credibility. So please watch our website for information on this walk I'm sure we will convince you of Derfel's historical significance.

Terry Evans, Chairman of Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society



Sculpture of St Derfel, by David Lloyd, at the Thornhill Community Centre, Cwmbran

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

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Gwerinwyr Gwent Diary

With the disappointment of only one booking in the second half of 2025, we were eagerly awaiting our fairly busy start to 2026. This began on Saturday 21st February when we travelled to the United Reformed Church in Hereford, to be part of a fundraising concert on behalf of Motor Neuron Disease. A member of the congregation had passed away from this dreadful disease and as he was Welsh, the organisers (members of GG and yes, they travel all the way to Bassaleg every week to practice), thought it would be a fitting memorial to hold a Welsh themed concert, with all donations going to MND.

The concert consisted of harpist Bronwen Wilkins, dance displays from GG, plus a trio of male singers from a railway choir and thus nicknamed The Three Tenders. We each gave two performances with a break in the middle for refreshments, including Bara Brith, Welsh cakes and Glamorgan sausages. The church was packed, making the evening a great success, raising over £1,200 for MND.

The following Saturday morning (28th), we made a return visit to Foxhunters Care Home in Llanfoist, Abergavenny to celebrate St David's Day with the residents. We performed a selection of dances, our musicians played some Welsh tunes, and Barbara





Griffiths put together a programme of Welsh culture to get the audience participating. From Abergavenny, we drove down to Tredegar House in Newport, where the National Trust (with funding from the Welsh government), had organised a series of events over the St David's Day weekend. As the weather was dry, we danced outside in the courtyard, but although sunny, it was pretty cold...especially for our poor musicians. We were back again on Sunday afternoon where this time we got to dance inside the house in the large entrance hall. That was well received, with a few visitors joining in with our final easy dance.

On Wednesday 4th March we were invited to Merthyr Tydfil College to present some sessions on Welsh culture to the students. Once again, we relied heavily on Barbara Griffiths to come up with the programme. It was a full and tiring day with two sessions



before lunch and one long one after. We displayed dances and got some students and lecturers to join in (after a bit of persuasion), while, in between these, Barbara ran through the language, symbols, unique things about Wales, famous people etc, also getting the audiences to join in by calling things out. It seemed to go down very well and certainly felt worthwhile.



Gwerinwyr Gwent is always seeking new members, and beginners or experienced dancers/musicians are very welcome. Practice night is Thursday 8-10pm at the Graig Community Hall (opposite the Ruperra PH). For more details visit our website www.gwerinwyrgwent.org.uk, or ring 01495 271953.



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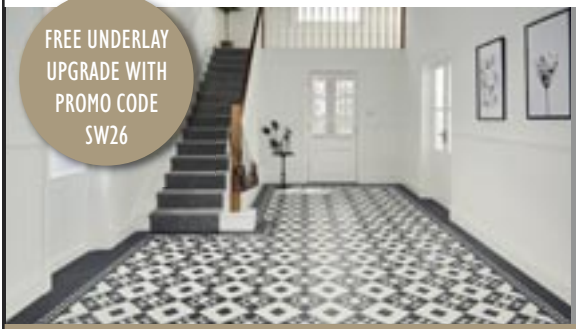
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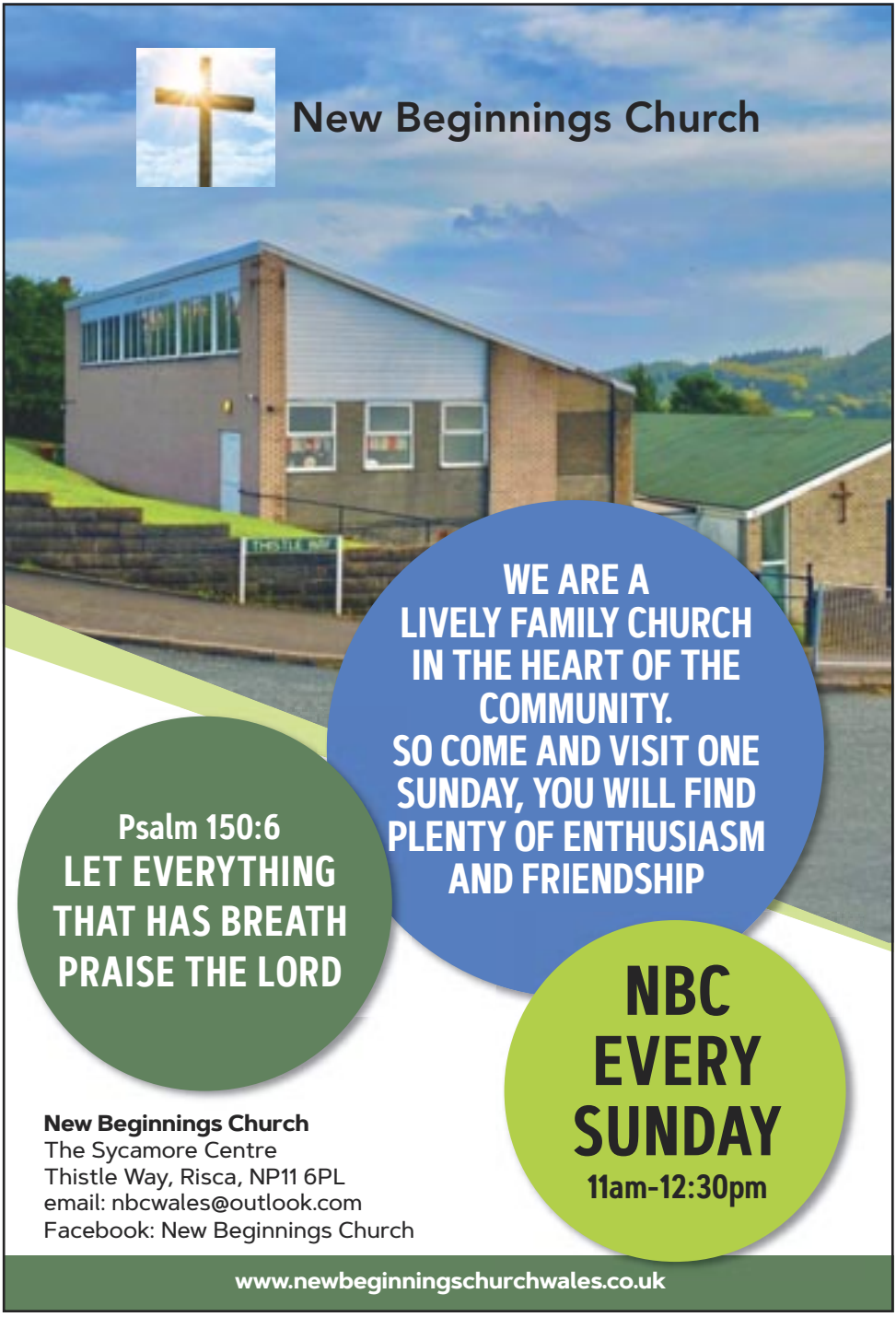
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Director Dave Viggers







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Dave has full oversight of the project, fully costing the materials and labour from the outset, giving you piece of mind that everything is taken care of.

Dave told SW Directories: "The design process is simple, it just starts with a conversation to discuss styles and individual tastes. Working with a set budget, we can then look at the best suited materials for the job, then it's on to measure to work out an exact cost.

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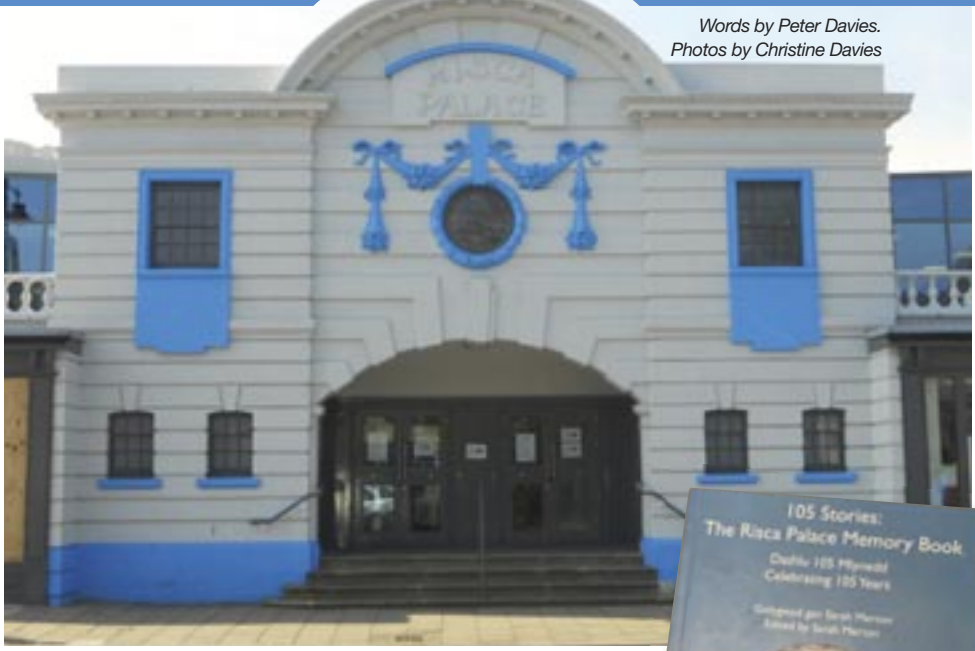
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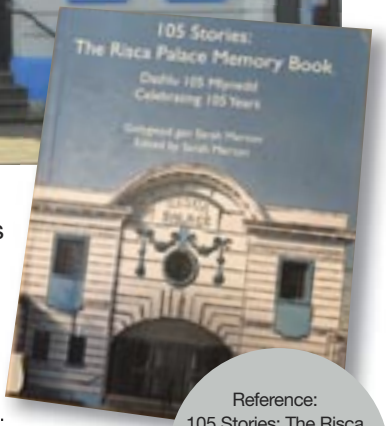
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THE RISCA PALACE

Words by Peter Davies.
Photos by Christine Davies





‘Fings Ain’t What They Used T’be.’ So sang Max Bygraves back in the day after they had turned his local palais into a bowling alley. But if you are a Risca resident and you are old enough, you will remember when they turned your local palais (or Palace Cinema) into a splendid new public library.

The South Wales Argus of 12th December, 1913 reported that the Risca New Palace, a ‘temple of recreation and education’, had shown its first film, The Black Diamond, to the accompaniment of Mr. J. Rosser on the pianoforte. The residents of Risca and beyond watched excitedly as an imposing blue and white fronted, state-of-the-art building had gradually appeared in their midst. Now 1000 of them were squeezing into that building, many of them on rough, backless benches, to experience for the first time the wonder of moving pictures in what was probably the earliest cinema to be built in Wales.

So began 50 years of regular picture-going in Risca, a pastime that enriched the lives and boosted the morale of thousands of local residents throughout two World Wars and well into the 1960s.

Reference:
105 Stories: The Risca Palace Memory Book, Edited by Sarah Merton (Caerphilly County Borough Council)

After a few years, an organ replaced the 'pianoforte' as the, by now, regular film fans watched the hilarious but silent and black and white antics of Charlie Chaplin. As the 1920s gave way to the 1930s and 1940s, they became even more hooked on 'the talkies', films like Rose Marie featuring Jeanette MacDonald, Anchors Aweigh starring Frank Sinatra, and epic stories like Scott of the Antarctic not to mention those tear-jerking Disney films, of course, such as Dumbo and Bambi. With television still beyond most people's reach, the Risca Palace was hugely popular in the 1950s screening sing-along films like Calamity Jane as well as blockbusters like The Robe, and The Ten Commandments which was three and a half hours long and which drew in even those staunch chapel-goers who would not normally have frequented cinemas.

In the late 1950s people flocked to see musicals like South Pacific, to see Charlton Heston as gladiator Ben Hur and to cry over The Nun's Story featuring Audrey Hepburn. As the Swinging Sixties loomed, Cliff Richard dominated the Risca Palace screen with Expresso Bongo, The Young Ones and then Summer Holiday, whereas, apparently, Elvis's gyrating hips in GI Blues proved too much for some straitlaced Risca residents! Inevitably people started to lose their love for the cinema as television sets filled their living-rooms and the once-avid popularity of the Risca Palace waned. In 1965, not long after it had screened Julie Andrews in The Sound of Music, it closed its doors as a cinema for the last time.

As the craze for a game called Bingo swept the country it was predictable that the Risca Palace Cinema should re-invent itself as the Bingo Palace and it went on to provide convivial, local and for the lucky few, lucrative entertainment in that capacity for many years. In the 1980s, when



7th October 1946



21st March 1961



9th December 2011

there no longer seemed to be a use for a building that was so much a part of Risca's history, it stood sadly neglected and overgrown for a number of years. Becoming a Grade II listed building in 1999 followed by public protests about its increasingly dilapidated state resulted, eventually, in action being taken to ensure that once again the Risca Palace would serve the community as one millennium ended and another began. A plaque on its walls tells us that the brand new library facilities were opened by the Caerphilly County Borough Council's Mayor and Leader on 9th December 2011.

'In 2018, to celebrate the Risca Palace building's 105th birthday, library staff embarked on a mission to record 105 memories, one for each year of its existence.' So read the introduction to a wonderful memory book that is now a lasting history of the Risca Palace and indeed of Risca itself. And such was the enthusiasm shown by patrons and staff to record their affection towards the place down the ages that 105 memories turned into 253!

The book is full of nostalgic, funny and poignant anecdotes from people of all ages in Risca and further afield. In its beautifully illustrated pages you can read about 'the show going on' at the crowded Palace as Hitler dropped his bombs perilously near it; about the Saturday morning Tuppeny Rush becoming the Thruppenny Rush as Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers rode again and again; about fires and floods, about fleas and rats; about popcorn, monkey nuts and Kiora drinks; about 'bunking in' through the toilet window; and about 'smooching in the back row of the one-and-nines' which, in some cases, led to long marriages. You can also read about the distinctive smell of the once smoky and musty Palace, the tip-up, velvet seats, the usherettes with their intrusive torches, the spotlighted ice-cream sellers during the interval, the Brooke Bond Chimps' Tea Parties not to mention the Pathé News.

You can also read in the book the many touching contributions from youngsters and adults alike, contributions that tell you how important the library, with all its amazing modern facilities and activities, has now become to the people of Risca and its surroundings.

What more can one say other than to hope that the Risca Palace will go on serving its community as a 'temple of recreation and education' over a further 113 years of its life – and for many more years after that.

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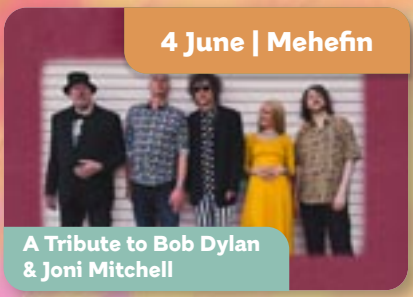
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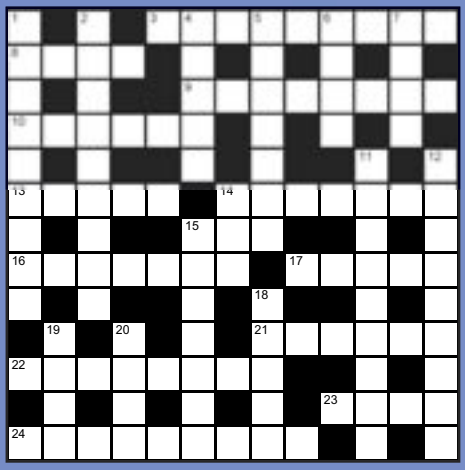
An Early Evening with Johnny Tudor

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PUZZLE PAGE

Crossword



Across

3 Pre-decimal coin worth two shillings and sixpence (4,5)
8 British county dissolved in 1996 (4)
9 Natives or inhabitants of Greece (8)
10 Breakfast food of untoasted dry cereals and fruits (6)
13 Country on the Iberian Peninsula (5)
14 Swiss cheese with small holes (7)
15 Nocturnal mammal (3)
16 London-based international news agency (7)
17 Same again (5)
21 Expensive white fur (6)
22 Line of longitude (8)
23 Bird symbolising peace (4)
24 Personification of icy or wintry weather (4,5)

Down

1 Telling fortunes by the lines on the hand (9)
2 French part of the Riviera (4,5)
4 Small plant-sucking insect (5)
5 Hazelnut (7)
6 Lively Scottish dance (4)
7 Tiny, common UK bird (4)
11 Aviator hired to fly experimental aeroplanes in designed manoeuvres (4,5)
12 Instrument for recording the number of steps taken (9)
14 Nitrogen, for example (3)
15 Metal container in which coal or charcoal is burned (7)
18 Roman goddess of love (5)
19 Salty Greek cheese (4)
20 Mammal having partially webbed feet; valued for its fur (4)

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

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River Afon Lwyd

Afon Lwyd is a 13-mile long river which flows from its source northwest of Blaenavon, through the Garn Lakes, pass the Big Pit, Llanfrechfa and Cwmbran Boating Lake, Ponthir before flowing into the River Usk just passed the bridge over part of the Twenty-Ten Golf Course.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the river powered forges and waterwheels supporting local industry, especially around Pontymoile and Ponthir.

The river was severely affected by pollution from industry, mine discharge and fly tipping, but during the 1980s efforts were made to improve water quality and improve fish stocks. To aid this, the Environment Agency Wales built a fish ladder at Pontymoile in 2010 enabling fish to ascend past the weir there.

Afon Lwyd Trail

The Afon Lwyd Trail is a shared-use 16-mile path running from Blaenavon Ironworks in the north via Pontypool to Cwmbran in the south. The path initially follows the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal followed by a section on the former Pontypool to Blaenavon railway. The trail incorporates two National Cycle Network routes: 49 and 492.



Big Pit


Boating Lake at Cwmbran


Lake overflow into the river

The village of Ponthir means ‘long bridge’ and it probably comes from the river crossing that was rebuilt around 1800. The river has always been an important part of this community's identity and purpose.

Historically, the river has also been known as the ‘Torfaen’ meaning 'breaker of stones', which gives some indication of the force of the river during surges. Although this name is no longer in use for the river, the name is used to the wider area, now known as Torfaen.

We have visited many of the local places at various times over the past few years but have never realised they were all along the same river!


Bridge over the River Usk by The Twenty Ten Course

Garn Lakes at Blaenavon



Puzzle Solutions

Crossword Solution

Across: 3 Half crown, 8 Avon, 9 Hellenes, 10 Muesli, 13 Spain, 14 Gruyère, 15 Bat, 16 Reuters, 17 Ditto, 21 Ermine, 22 Meridian, 23 Dove, 24 Jack Frost.

Down: 1 Palmistry, 2 Cote d'Azur, 4 Aphid, 5 Filbert, 6 Reel, 7 Wren, 11 Test pilot, 12 Pedometer, 14 Gas, 15 Brazier, 18 Venus, 19 Feta, 20 Mink.

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

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Swan RESCUE

Updates from Cold Knap Barry, and Cyfarthfa, Merthyr Tydfil

In our last article, composed at the end of January, we wrote about a swan rescued from Cold Knap with a peculiar malformation affecting its neck. As noted at the time, in care, he appeared to be flourishing, feeding well and attending well to feather care. Sadly, this improvement did not continue and over the space of a few days, Phoenix, as we had called him deteriorated at what became an alarming rate. With very great sadness we had to conclude, as we had never had to do in 40 years, the right thing to do was to have this poor beautiful long-suffering bird put to sleep, thus becoming another victim of Avian Influenza.

Two months ago, we reported that many entire families of cygnets had already dispersed leaving the way clear for the start of the new breeding season, the family on the lake at Cyfarthfa Castle at Merthyr was a clear exception with all seven cygnets still present and indeed, the adults appearing still to be very laid back. As we reported last time, one of the cygnets (a large male) was already seriously handicapped with a length of medium/heavy gauge fishing line around its upper right leg. It is no exaggeration to say that there was several attempts to catch this swan, and frequently in the most appalling weather conditions. Our victim became increasingly aware of what our game was. Early on, at long range with an extended swan hook, I caught him, only for him to rotate at the critical moment and escape. On the next occasion, with our ace man Mark in his kayak, we were forced to give up when it emerged that our one-legged swan was able to take off and fly the length of the lake not withstanding his disability. This attempt suggested the use of a powered craft was what was needed; this resulted in two massive exercises involving the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) who put in substantial resources twice over an extended number of hours, all to no avail, unable to launch a power boat safely at Cyfarthfa. A huge thank you is due to all who took part. During SARA's second visit, the adult cob became very active and all the cygnets had an enormous amount of flying practice, cutting a long story short, our swan ended up on the River Taff, right in the middle of Merthyr.



A sample of weed retrieved from Cyfarthfa during first SARA visit; two different 'hanks' of line each carrying a heavy weight and a hook



James approaching/stalking the swan below Avenue de Clichy

Enter James, an enthusiastic local envoy for wildlife welfare who called to say confidently he could catch the swan, which he did, absolutely brilliantly, stalking the bird with great stealth while carrying a large net on the end of a longish pole. The story continues with a very uncertain outcome resulting from the severe damage caused by the line cutting into the flesh resulting in damage to ligaments and tendons.



The damage, a result of which the swan still has no use of the leg

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

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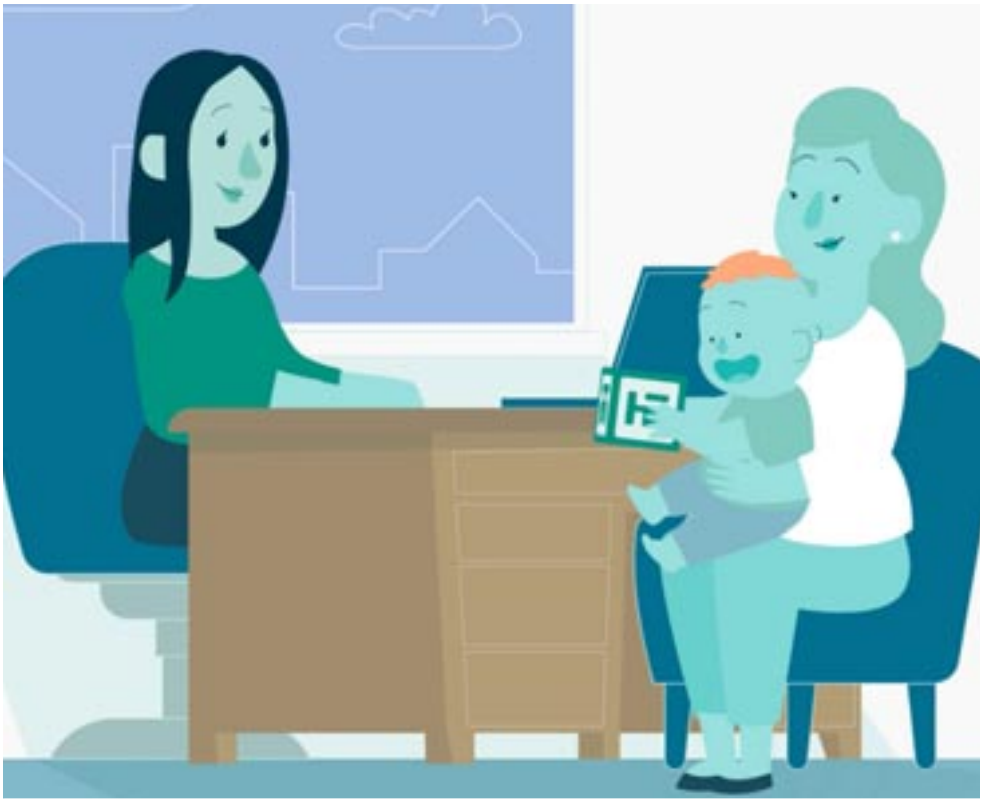
Hardy Plant Society

The HPS Monmouthshire group is 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. The meetings always take place at Little Mill village hall NP4 0HE on the second Saturday of each month from September to May with the doors open at 2pm and the talks begin at 2.30pm. The group organises garden visits in the summer, discussions, dinners, plant sales and more throughout the year. Before the speaker, there's time to talk to fellow members, enjoy refreshments and perhaps buy some plants.
On May 9th at the hall in Little Mill, we bring you "Grass Consciousness" a talk by Roger Lloyd. Grasses are everywhere in modern garden design. This talk will cover the advantages of using grasses, how they are incorporated in garden design, which grass in which location, their care and maintenance, companion planting and a list of favourites, which will be provided as a handout. Entry is £4 for members, non-members £6.



The new programme for 2026/27 will be available from the local HPS Monmouthshire group: hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk
For further information from the national Hardy Plant Society website: https://hardy-plant.org.uk





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The Louisiana Access Walk In Bath

The latest addition to Newport Bathroom Centre's already extensive catalogue of innovative products now includes Access walk-in baths - a British company based in the Black Country, who specialises in making bathing more than a possibility, they make it a pleasure, with elegant designs to suit any bathroom.

Newport Bathroom Centre Director, Dave Viggers, told us: "We understand you want to bathe with confidence, so the experience is relaxing and enjoyable. This is why every bath has been carefully designed to include multiple safety features without compromising looks. Combine this with outstanding design and affordability, you have a walk-in bathing solution that is unbeatable."

Here is what Carol Warren, who purchased a 'Louisiana' style walk-in bath from Newport Bathroom Centre had to say:

What made you decide to get rid of your old bath for a walk-in bath?
As we (my husband and I) got older, mobility became more of an issue, especially after falling and breaking my ankle. Getting in and out of a regular bath became a serious issue, due having to put one's entire weight on my weaker ankle.

How long did it take to fit?
Fitting took just under a week, which also included waiting for the electrician and replacing the floor covering. It would've probably been sooner, as the work was split over a weekend.

Finally, would you recommend an Access Walk-in Bath and why?
David and his team were really good with sound advice and were able to maintain use of the original bathroom, whilst the new one was being fitted.

Everything was left clean and tidy at the end of the working day.

Where suggestions were made in order to get a good looking bathroom there was no pressure to make the changes, but due to the experience of David and his team we ended up with something that was far better than we could have put together.

David also kept in touch throughout the whole experience and followed up with phone calls to make sure that there were no problems and we were satisfied with everything - Newport Bathroom Centre comes highly recommended in our eyes.

If you are interested in this Louisiana bath or any of the nine other options available, please get in touch with one of Newport Bathroom Centre's experts using the details below:

Call Dave today or email your enquiry for a FREE no obligation quote.

For more info about the walk-in baths on offer, please visit the official Newport Bathroom Centre website.

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