CAERLEON

DIRECTORY

ISSUE 114 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2026



WINTER SOLSTICE

THE LONGEST NIGHT,
THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT

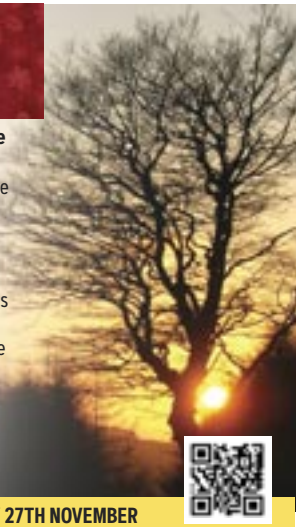
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As 2026 draws to an end we would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who has contributed to the continued success of the Directory this year.
Thank you to all the distributors who, no matter how bad the weather is, deliver the Directories for us. Thank you to the residents and organisations for sending us articles. Finally, a very special thank you to the advertisers for their continued support, without the financial support from them, there would be no Directory.

If you are interested in advertising your business in the Directory, please contact us to find out about the extremely competitive advertising rates. You will always deal with us directly, like many of the businesses that advertise in this magazine, we are a small, independent family business and fully appreciate how much your business means to you.

We wish you all a very happy, peaceful and enjoyable Christmas.

Susan x

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Caerleon Then & Now



The village postman and an inquisitive dog pose for the cameraman outside Richardson, the family Butchers in about 1910.



Gareth Jenkins started the Hardware and Ironmongery business in June 1985. Photo was taken on one of the last days of trading in January 2007.



The Hiding Place was opened on 23rd October 2007. But it only managed to stay open for two years.



The Burlesque Hair Company, which moved down the High Street around 2015. The photo was taken in February 2022.

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



PRESERVING FAMILY WEALTH

Most couples hope that their estate will pass to their loved ones eventually. But for many this will not happen unless careful arrangements have been made to protect their assets from being taken towards the end of their life to pay care home fees.

To help protect a couple's estate, the solution may be a Will incorporating a Trust. A testamentary Trust can only be executed whilst both partners remain alive. On the death of one partner, their Will specifies that their share of the estate is placed in Trust and names the ultimate beneficiary of this share, normally their children and grandchildren. But under the terms of the Trust the surviving partner has the unequivocal right to remain living in the property and to enjoy the other assets, for the rest of their life.

On the death of the other partner the Trust comes to an end and the estate passes to the beneficiaries. As the surviving partner does not own the deceased's share of the estate it is fully protected for the beneficiaries, so if the surviving partner requires care, or even remarries, this share of the beneficiary's inheritance is protected.



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.

If the surviving partner wants to move, they can still sell the property and the proceeds be used to purchase a new property; the terms of the Trust remain over the new property.

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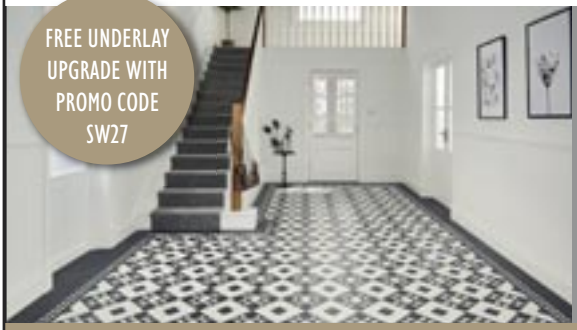


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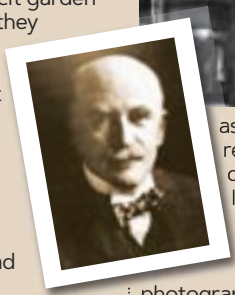
Where the Wildings Are

by Paul Minton

Graffiti was scrawled everywhere and a makeshift punchbag wrapped in brown packaging tape hung from a ceiling. A ramp had been fashioned from wall panels by some skateboard-loving trespassers, who might also have left the tent behind on the first floor.

These were the sights that greeted a Guardian journalist, who reported on his visit to a defunct Newport business premises in Spring 2026. Only a few years before, the site had been raided by Gwent Police, who discovered over 3000 cannabis plants worth more than £2 million. The criminals had installed lighting, pumps, and ventilation hoses throughout their illicit garden centre. In addition, they left behind a considerable amount of compost that was given to local allotments, where it could be put to a less nefarious use.





I am, of course, talking about the sad decline of Wildings Department Store in the city centre, which, after nearly 150 years of trading, closed its doors to customers (but evidently not to drug dealers and squatters) in 2019. However, it wasn't always this way.

Wildings took its name from its original proprietor, Alfred Wilding, who was born in Wistantow, Shropshire in 1853, a small village between Craven Arms and Church Stretton. He moved to Newport in 1874, whereupon he opened his business 'A. Wilding - Hatter, Hosier & Glover' at 154 Commercial Street, an address that is now occupied by Boots. Alfred's brother, Richard, joined as a Director and remained so until his death in 1932.

Interestingly, Richard's youngest daughter, Dorothy, was a renowned photographer, becoming famous for her images of the Royal Family and celebrities, such as Noël Coward, Vivien Leigh, and George Bernard Shaw. Indeed, her picture of Elizabeth II adorned postage stamps issued during the first 15 years of her reign.

Wilding's initial premises had living quarters above the shop and it was here that his eldest son, Frederick, was born in 1878. Four years later, Alfred moved his store to a larger property at the bottom of Stow Hill under the name 'Alfred Wilding, The Bon Marché'. The shop became the first business in Newport to have electric lighting (courtesy of the Great Western Electric Light Company) and offered an extensive range of goods, such as ties, shirts, umbrellas, bags, and perfumes. In 1883, it unveiled its 'Hair Dressing and Shampooing Saloons accessible to ALL CLASSES of the People.' On the second floor of the building, the public could also take hot and cold baths for sixpence.

In 1897, the store moved again to 172-173 Commercial Street. Refusing to rest on his laurels, Alfred opened other shops but by 1911, he had possibly overstretched himself and offered shares in his business to raise funds, thereby forming a limited company. Despite living in the elegant Rock Villa opposite Penarth pier, Alfred sought further investment the following year, too. New shareholders were added, including Albert Pease, a wholesale clothier's manager from Leeds. When Alfred retired in 1922, the baton was passed to Mr Pease, whose grandson was still serving as Wildings Chairman by the time of its 125th anniversary.

Alfred remained a Director of the company until he passed away in 1924, whereupon he was succeeded by his son, Frederick. It was he who oversaw the final relocation to the aptly named Wyledene House at 165 Commercial Street in 1931: an address that was to become the site of its ultimate demise (as well as the aforementioned cannabis farm). Frederick served as Chairman until his own death in 1967. His framed photograph was still on a filing cabinet during the Guardian reporter's visit almost 60 years later. And beside it, a disposable lighter and a plastic bottle holding a dubious golden fluid that probably wasn't Lucozade. How times have changed!

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Review from Catherie D

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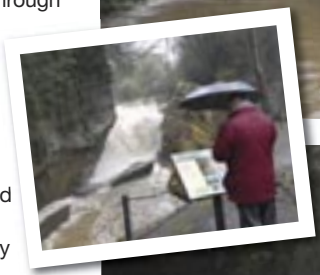
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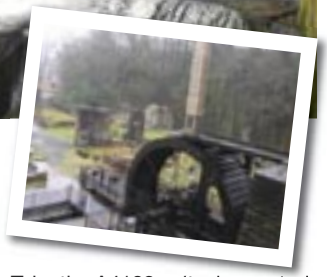
River Dulais

The River Dulais rises on the southern flank of Mynydd y Drum, near Onllwyn. From its source, it gathers numerous small streams flowing down from the mountain before heading south-west past Seven Sisters and carving its way through the Dulais Valley. The river then passes through Crynant and continues through open countryside before tumbling over the spectacular Aberdulais Falls, where it eventually joins the River Neath at Aberdulais.









The Dulais is a flash-flood river, meaning its water level can rise and fall very quickly in response to rainfall across its catchment. In wet weather, when the river is in full flood, its power is harnessed to drive a 400-year-old electricity-generating waterwheel.

There are two walks to enjoy from the car park. The Aberdulais Falls Circular Walk, around 3 miles long, passes through Craig Gwladys Country Park before following the Tennant Canal and looping back to the falls. The Aberdulais Heritage Trail, approximately 2 miles, follows the Neath Canal towpath from Tonna to the Aberdulais Basin, passing the impressive Tennant Canal Aqueduct along the way.

The falls are managed by the National Trust, which has a tearoom serving light refreshments, as well as toilets and a small shop. Lifts provide access to all levels, including the upper waterfall viewpoints. The site is open on a limited number of days each week, so it is worth checking the National Trust website for the latest opening days and times before setting out.

Getting there by car: Leave the M4 at Junction 43 and follow the A465 towards Merthyr Tydfil. Take the A4109 exit, signposted Seven Sisters/Blaendulais. Aberdulais is approximately 200 yards ahead on the left. Free parking is available directly opposite the site entrance on the A4109.

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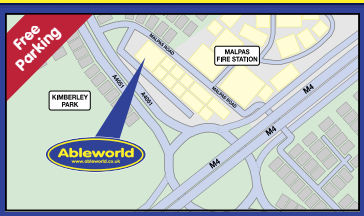
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Newport Bathroom Centre

TOTALLY TROPICAL

Brighten up your bathroom with an image of your choice

David Brunnock and his family recently moved from Rogerstone to Allt-yr-Yn and were looking to renovate their new home - one room at a time!
NBC Director, Dave Viggers, designed Mr Brunnock's bathroom and we were invited back to see the finished result.

We asked David a few questions about his experience - here's what he had to say:

How was the design process - what was involved from start to finish?
It was very simple. First Dave came to our







home to measure up and then we booked a Saturday morning appointment to go through the designs and options and ended up being there for a few hours.

Dave was so attentive and listened to everything we said we wanted but also made some fantastic suggestions for the space we had. Dave was really thorough showing us examples of different products in the showroom which really helped us visualise what it was we actually wanted. From colours of the units, thickness of the countertop, to space saving ideas and door handles. It was fantastic to have everything under one roof!

Why did you decide to feature a SplashBax panel within your shower?

We had never heard of SplashBax before our appointment but as soon as Dave showed us the samples in store, we knew that was what we needed! As my wife Amy prefers showers to baths, it was her decision and there ended up being a few on the shortlist before finally 'Tropical Rainforest' was chosen. This particular design was so vibrant – the beautiful birds, pretty flowers and stunning colours were perfect.

Finally, would you recommend NBC and why?

We'd 100% recommend NBC and already have in fact! Dave was lovely to deal with from day one and we wouldn't hesitate in going back to him in the future if we needed anything else.

We really felt we were in safe hands, Dave was very knowledgeable and made us feel at ease that we were going to get a high quality beautiful looking bathroom – which is exactly what we got!

Ready to transform your home into something wonderful, then contact us today.

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

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Gwerinwyr Gwent Diary

August Bank Holiday Monday found us in a very familiar place - The Graig Community Hall in Bassaleg (our weekly practice venue). We had been invited by organiser Hayley to appear at a fundraising fete in aid of Cerebral Palsy Cymru. It was a lovely day and lots of people turned up to enjoy the food and entertainment, which included the Nearly Wild Show, which gave children and adults a chance to get up close to, and in some cases, hold, lots of animals including snakes, spiders, rats etc. There were plenty of stalls, and live music from Post Modern Shoebox, the Panteg House Jazz and Blues Orchestra, with GG on last demonstrating some dances and getting the audience to join in. A good time was had by all and the fantastic sum of £1,800 was raised.



2026 is a special year for us, as it is the 50th anniversary of the group's formation. We marked the occasion on Sunday 6th September when we hired a narrowboat on the Monmouthshire and Brecon canal from Dragonfly cruises in Brecon. Another lovely day thank goodness, and we had a leisurely cruise with buffet lunch along the canal across the aqueduct and through a lock, with a short commentary about the history of the canal. A very pleasant afternoon, which almost all of our members and partners were able to enjoy. We may also treat ourselves to a celebratory meal later in the year.

Then onto what may well be our final booking of the year - on 23rd September we paid a visit to the ladies of Malpas WI. This was our first to them, which is a bit of a surprise as they are probably the closest WI to our base at The Graig. Not helped by the resurfacing work on Malpas Road, we did manage to get to Malpas Court Mansion House and back safely. Quite a few of our members are not locals, coming from as far afield as Hereford, Bridgend, and Penarth, so we were a little nervous that they could spend ages driving around Malpas in the dark – but it all went quite smoothly in the end. The WI ladies were a jolly lot so we really enjoyed our time with them, and, judging by their comments, they did too.





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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Christmas Puzzles

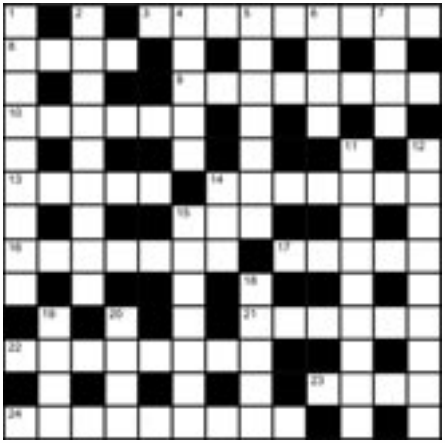
Crossword

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)



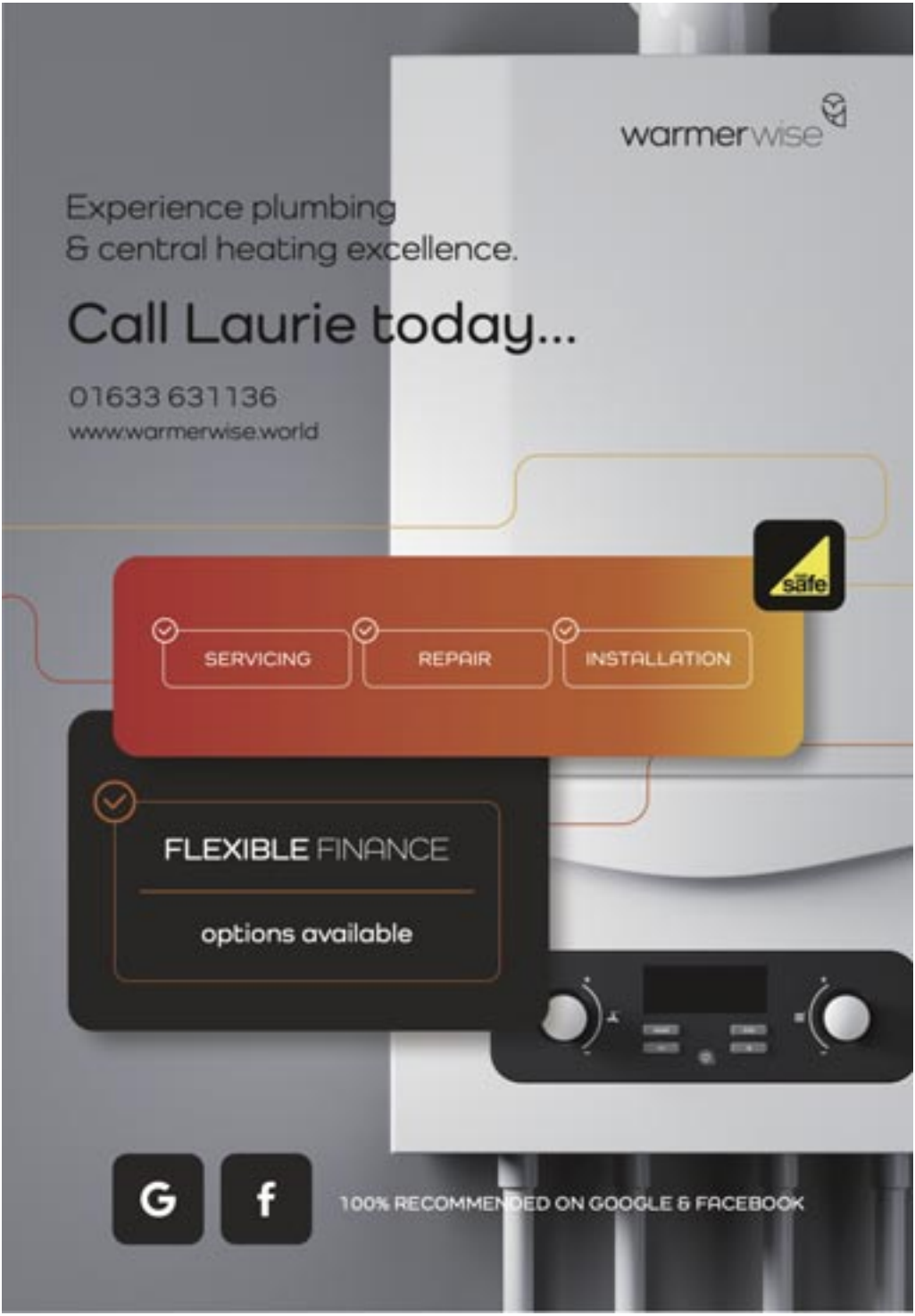
11 Aviator hired to fly experimental aeroplanes in designed manoeuvres (4,5)
12 Instrument for recording the number of steps taken (9)
14 Nitrogen, for example (3)
15 Metal container in which coal or charcoal is burned (7)
18 Roman goddess of love (5)
19 Salty Greek cheese (4)
20 Mammal having partially webbed feet; valued for its fur (4)

Sudoku

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.

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

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CTS … Yma o hyd…on Twmbarlwm



The stone cairn on Twmbarlwm shown below was a great collaboration of minds - from a scribbled concept by Howard Vicary, made into working drawings by Terry Evans and given life by the real craftsman, stone mason Ken Young.

Just got back in from our monthly litter pick on Twmbarlwm, and prompted by a couple of conversations there, I thought I'd use this article for an unashamed plug for CTS and a recruitment drive! As the Welsh football anthem says, "Yma o Hyd…" – we're "…still here!"

So, who are we, and what have we ever done for the mountain?

Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society was founded in 2010 by concerned citizens from Risca, Cwmbran, Newport and all the villages in Twmbarlwm's shadow. After decades of neglect, the mountain and surrounding landscape were in a sorry state, with severe erosion caused by illegal off-roaders on bikes, quads and cars.

Our original aim was ***"to research, restore and protect Gwent's most iconic landmark"***, and I'd like to think we've remained true to those founding principles.

Regular readers and former members may remember some of our earlier campaigns. But, if I'm to persuade a few new recruits to join us, let me share some of our achievements.

In our early days, we lobbied the council to tackle the serious problem of scramblers and 4x4s damaging the landscape. We soon persuaded them to build a new car park and repair damage to the Tump itself. Gwent Police also provided invaluable support, with specialist officers patrolling the area.

A grant from the Welsh Government then enabled us to install nearly a mile of double fencing, plant 4,000 trees, fit four kissing gates and lay a 15-metre stone path. An impressive stone cairn was erected at the car park to carry a "Welcome to Twmbarlwm" sign, and eventually we secured funding for a 100-metre dry-stone wall on the eastern side of the Twmp.

Much of this physical work was undertaken by the Commoners, supported by a team of volunteers from our own ranks.

Since then, we've organised archaeological digs, surveyed flora and fauna, and acted as extra eyes and ears to report suspicious or damaging activities. Our regular litter picks also help us keep watch over the area and care for the landscape.

It's important to understand that CTS owns no part of the mountain and has no formal power over it. We're a community group whose members are passionate about our iconic mountain, hill fort and landscape. We work alongside Cadw, the Commoners' Association, the landowners, local councils, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and Gwent Police to help safeguard Twmbarlwm.

We keep an eye on the area and report concerns to the relevant organisations. We also suggest projects and events to improve or promote the mountain, and seek funding for work that falls outside those organisations' budgets.

Now, here's where you could help! Many of our volunteers are, how shall I put it kindly, "getting on a bit". We'd love some younger, fitter recruits to join us, particularly to help with the more physical projects ahead. Stone wall and fence repairs are needed, and another tree-planting exercise is planned.

Official membership costs just £10 a year, yet our paid-up membership remains fairly low. Meanwhile, more than 1,400 people follow us on Facebook – clear evidence of the affection and respect Twmbarlwm inspires.

So, if you're one of those who appreciates the mountain, why not take the next step? It would be wonderful to see more of our Facebook followers swap their keyboards for a pair of work gloves and put some physical energy into helping us care for this special place.

Terry Evans, Chairman of Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society



Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society meet at the car park below Twmbarlwm's summit at 10:30 (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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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.

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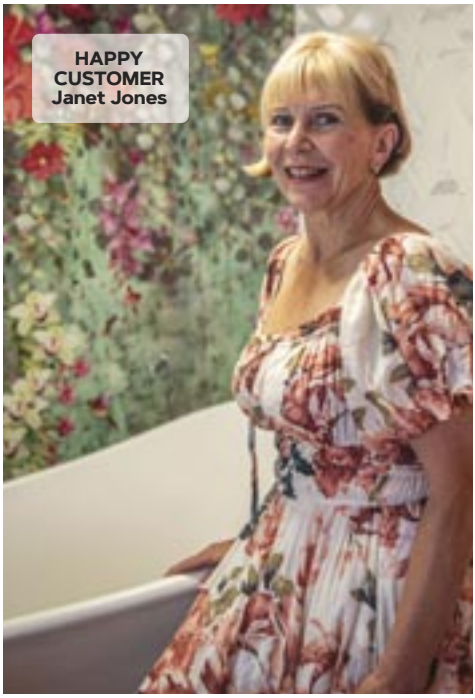
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Newport Bathroom Centre

A SPLASH OF COLOUR

When a Pontypool lady needed help Newport Bathroom Centre came to the rescue





Longtime customer Janet Jones visited Newport Bathroom Centre recently, looking for a distinct bath to go in her new home. Whilst browsing our Newport showroom, our small SplashBax sample display, which was on Director Dave Viggers' desk, caught the attentive eye of Janet, where she fell in love with the many floral designs and patterns. For her bathroom, Janet chose an ex-display Imperial roll-top freestanding bath with complimentary Tavistock taps, as well as two SplashBax panels as the backdrop for her lavish new bath.

We didn't fit Janet's bathroom, and she was unfortunately let down by a few handymen who promised to finish off the final touches in her wonderful new home. When Dave heard about what had happened, he sent his son Josh along to finish the job, fitting Janet's towel rail and hanging a vintage mirror. We love Janet's personal style and got the chance to photograph her beloved bath against the backdrop of her favourite design.

Janet said: "I've shopped at Newport Bathroom Centre for many years, purchasing a variety of things for many of my homes.

"I knew I was in safe hands when I went to see Dave, as he's always listens to

what I want and know exactly the type of thing I'm looking for!

"I love colour, so seeing the flower pattern on display in the showroom, I knew I had to have it on the wall in my bathroom.

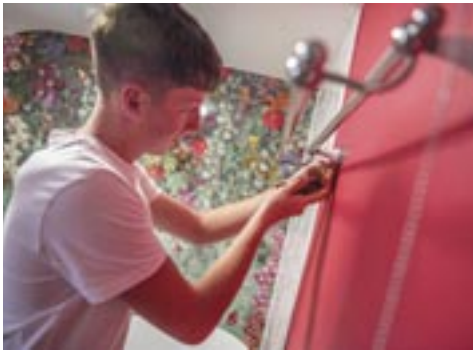
"The bath is my absolute favourite, it's so big! I joke that I could swim in it!

"My bathroom is currently my favourite room of the house, as I can spend hours relaxing in here.

"I'd like to say a special thank you to Dave's son Josh, who came to the rescue to add the finishing touches."

Director Dave Viggers has more than 30 years experience in the installation of kitchens and bathrooms, using his extensive knowledge of working at a drawing office to formalise your ideas into real working plans. As Dave overseas the entire project, he's able to bridge the gap between design concepts and the physical realisation of your new living space.

With his trusted long-serving team of accredited fitters and tradesmen, 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. So, if you're looking to transform your bathroom this winter, why not pay us a visit? Like Janet, you'll be pleasantly surprised of what we have on offer.







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

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THE WINTER SOLSTICE

Welcoming the Return of the Light

Every year, around 21 December, the Northern Hemisphere experiences the Winter Solstice – the shortest day and the longest night of the year. Although it marks the point when daylight is at its briefest, it also signals an important turning point, as each day that follows gradually becomes a little longer, bringing the promise of spring.

The word 'solstice' comes from the Latin words sol (sun) and sistere (to stand still), reflecting the way the sun appears to pause in its journey across the sky before beginning its slow return. For thousands of years, this moment has been celebrated by people around the world. Long before Christmas was observed, ancient communities recognised the importance of the Winter Solstice. For farming societies, the return of longer days meant that winter would eventually give way to new growth and another farming season. It became a time of hope, renewal and celebration during the darkest part of the year.

Many ancient monuments were built to mark the event. Perhaps the most famous is Stonehenge, where the stones are carefully aligned with the rising and setting sun at both the summer and winter solstices. Each December, thousands of people gather there to watch the sunrise and celebrate this remarkable connection between nature and our ancestors.

In Britain, many traditional midwinter customs have their roots in solstice celebrations. Lighting candles, gathering around a fire and decorating homes with evergreen plants all reflected the triumph of light and life over the darkness of winter. Over the centuries, these customs became woven into Christmas traditions, many of which continue today.

Although we now understand the science behind the changing seasons, the Winter Solstice still holds a special fascination. It reminds us that even in the darkest days of winter, brighter days lie ahead. For many people, it is a quiet opportunity to pause, reflect and appreciate the ever-changing rhythms of the natural world.

Whether watching the sunrise, enjoying a winter walk or simply noticing the gradual return of the light, the Winter Solstice remains one of nature's most remarkable annual events.

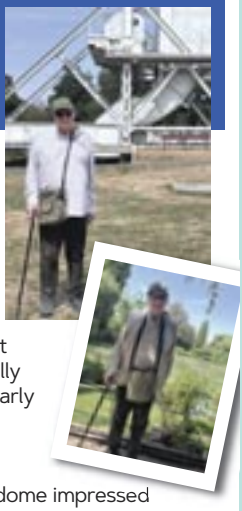


Did you know

The word 'solstice' comes from Latin and means "sun stands still," describing the sun's apparent position before it begins its return northwards.


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u3a MEMBER BROADENS HIS HORIZONS



Septuagenarian, Malcolm Keal, had never travelled abroad in his life. As a member of Newport u3a for 16 years he has been on most of our holidays and day trips but always declined the annual trips overseas.

In the true mutual support ethos of the u3a, Jackie Kerr, Convenor of our Holidays and Events Group, Julie Kennedy, our then Chairperson, and fellow member Chris Day helped Malcolm apply for his passport and gave him advice on getting travel insurance which made it possible for him to join us recently on a tour of Normandy.

He enjoyed visiting all the famous sites such as Honfleur, Monet's Garden and the WWII memorials and museums of the Normandy beaches, but it was the least known Basilique Sainte Terese at Lisieux that he found really memorable. Built in the early 20th century, the Romanesque-Byzantine-Style building with an imposing 95 meter high dome impressed with its grandeur and three naves adorned with colourful mosaics.

Newport u3a runs 40 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

The HPS Monmouthshire Group is for people who love plants and gardening. The meetings provide an excellent opportunity to meet people with similar interests. Non-members are very welcome - guest entry is £6. Garden-related talks take place at Little Mill Hall NP4 0HJ on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 2.00pm between September and May. The talks, usually illustrated, are followed by Q&A, a raffle and refreshments are also served.

Derry Watkins, well known to the Society, will be with us on 14th November together with many of her plants for sale. Derry, a very successful



plantswoman, businesswoman and author, has run her specialist nursery, Special Plants near Bath, for almost 30 years. Her talk's entitled 'Pushing the Boundaries' when she will discuss why it is worth experimenting with borderline hardy plants and how to increase the likelihood of them surviving (www.specialplants.net).

Saturday 16th December is a must for your diary. Dave Robinson of Botanical Plantasy will be speaking on 'The Tropic of Newport' at the hall at 2.00pm. Dave Robinson might not be a familiar name but after this meeting, it will be. Behind the walls of a Newport semi lies a magical world of enormous tropical plants, a paradise created by Dave, his partner and their son. He will tell the tale of how, in just 10 years, a simple lawn has been transformed into a beautifully curated collection of exotic plants. It's stunning. They've also found media fame, lots of it. A meeting not to be missed.

For more info, visit the Hardy Plant Society website: https://hardy-plant.org.uk

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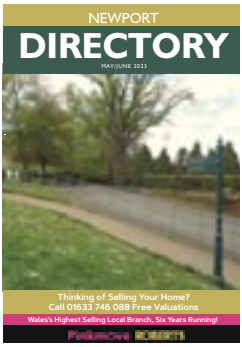
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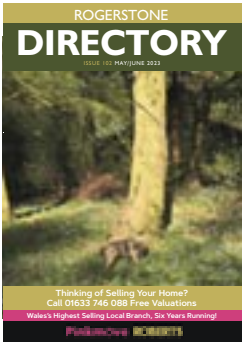
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RESCUE

An Update, and a hot Sweaty Afternoon's Walk

Our last story involved an entire family, two adults and seven cygnets, trapped, as we thought at the time for three weeks in the almost dried up canal between Two Locks and Ty Coch.

It took us three days to return them to Broadweir on 6th August where in due course, the water level returned to near normal. On the 14th, for reasons we'll never fathom, the whole family was back in the empty canal from where we had rescued them. Totally baffling! And there's more; three days later George and six cygnets made their way back to Broadweir on foot, no sign of cygnets flying yet. The seventh cygnet which by now had a debilitating leg injury had to be rescued and taken into care, while Gracie, the female rejoined the rest of the family back on Broadweir on the 18th, again, we assume on foot, but by a different route!

On top of this Cwmbran saga, August, high/low lights were 15 angling tackle related problems, an appalling fatal shooting of a magnificent cob incident at The Hendre, leaving the pen to complete the raising of their family and the rehabilitation of a stranded juvenile cormorant at Channel View in Cardiff.

Finally, into September, with a miscellany of issues, one of which involved a two year old swan trapped in an entirely enclosed reed bed which is best described as part of the headwaters of the stream which flows into the lake which is the centrepiece of the beauty spot Taf Bargoed Community Parc.



Hello! What are you doing there

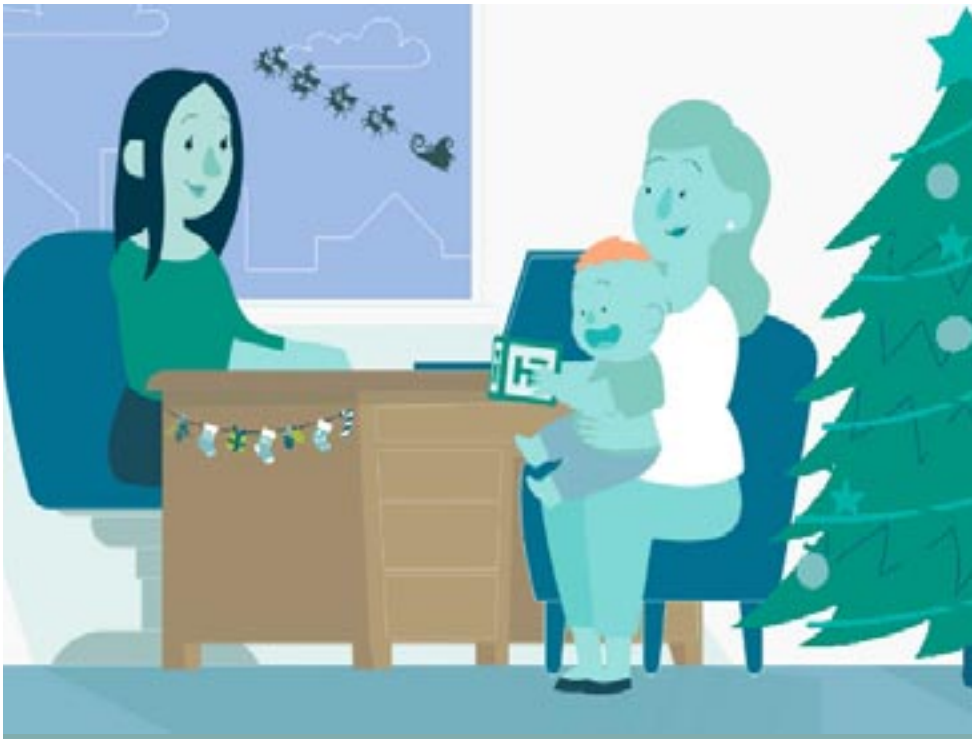


Without help, there's no way home

Swans have bred here for a number of years. The cob which was almost flightless due to a wing injury sustained early in its life, possibly in the lake at Cyfarthfa Castle sadly died earlier this year, leaving the pen and two young swans, one of which was the cause of our visit there on the 25th. Elliot is the local contact; we met at the car park the furthest distance it is possible to travel up the east side of the lake, knowing we had a good half mile walk up stream in the hope the swan would still be where it had last been reported.

Not long after we set off on our reconnoitre, what turned out to be the sibling of the swan we sought appeared from the vegetation on the left below which flowed the stream from which it had come...but why? We passed and continued on our way. Eventually, and it was hot and sweaty, we reached the enclosure in which the swan had last been seen. There was no sign of it, but we searched around to the east and then the west, confirming a rescue was necessary. Back to the car for a sectional ladder, swan hooks, a wrap and some mixed corn (for the swan, not us). The rest was very straight forward, and so we trudged away back down the track to release the swan back into the lake just where, as it turned out by then, his sibling and the adult female were busy preening. To coin a phrase, neither batted an eyelid, as we released our swan, who appeared to have only two objectives, which were completely normal, to get away from us as quickly as possible and to have a long drink of water.

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



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A Christmas Gift That Could Last a Lifetime

Christmas is traditionally a time for giving. But while the latest toys, gadgets and clothes may bring excitement on Christmas morning, some gifts have the potential to make a difference for years to come.

Many parents and grandparents are thinking about how they can help younger generations at some of life's biggest milestones. With the cost of further education, getting onto the property ladder and establishing financial independence all presenting challenges, a little forward planning today could provide valuable support tomorrow.

Thinking Beyond the Christmas List

Children and grandchildren rarely need encouragement to produce a Christmas list! But alongside the presents under the tree, you might consider contributing towards their longer-term future.

One option could be contributing to a Junior Individual Savings Account (JISA), which provides a tax-efficient way to save or invest for a child. Alternatively, it is possible to contribute towards a pension for a child or grandchild, giving their money many years in which to grow.

You don't necessarily need to invest a large amount at once. Regular contributions over several years can build into something meaningful.

Helping With Life's Bigger Milestones

Financial gifts aren't just for young children. Many families find themselves helping adult children or grandchildren with major expenses, perhaps contributing towards university costs, a first-home deposit or providing financial assistance at another important stage of life.

For those fortunate enough to have accumulated wealth, this raises an interesting question, could some of that money make a greater difference to your family today rather than waiting until it is eventually inherited?

There can be enormous satisfaction in seeing children and grandchildren benefit from your support during your lifetime. However, giving money away should always be considered alongside your own financial circumstances and future needs.

Before making substantial gifts, it is important to understand how much you can comfortably afford to give away.

Good financial planning can help you consider your future income and expenditure, existing investments



and pensions, possible care needs and the financial legacy you would ultimately like to leave. Gifting can also form part of wider estate and inheritance tax planning. The rules surrounding gifts and inheritance tax can be complex, and tax treatment will depend upon individual circumstances.

Perhaps the Best Gift Starts with a Conversation

Christmas brings different generations of a family together, making it a good opportunity to start conversations about money, future plans and what you would like your wealth ultimately to achieve.

Whether you are putting something aside for a young grandchild, helping an adult child onto the property ladder or thinking more broadly about passing wealth between generations, starting the conversation early can make a difference.

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