

Welcome...

I am delighted to welcome you to the fourth issue of Twmbarlwm News. Much has moved forward with the Society since the last one which most regular members will be aware of – but hopefully this Newsletter includes enough variety to keep you interested.

The biggest news, of course, is that Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society is now officially a Small Charity. Most people will be aware of the status of “Registered Charity” but after much research and discussion we decided to opt for the “Small Charity” status as we do not generate the income necessary to warrant registration. This is explained in more detail on page two.

We sought charitable status to give the Society more credibility but, more importantly, so that we will be able to apply for a wider variety of funding opportunities. Many funding sources require the applicants to have charitable status – for instance The Tidy Towns Community Fund, which we worked on with Caerphilly County Borough Council. When the application is successful the Society will play a major role in the future of our beloved mountain.

Further evidence of CTS influencing decision making on and around Twmbarlwm came when we were one of the few organisations invited by the Scoping Study Commission to give our views on the current problems on this upland landscape and our aspirations for its future. We were the first group to be consulted, which shows that acting as a cohesive group to lobby the authorities, can eventually be much more effective than individual campaigns. The report is due out later this summer and we'll see then how closely they were listening.

So far this year the Society has had a few opportunities for volunteers to come out and help with litter-picking or landscape repair. Those who turn out always comment on having a good day out and go home with the warm glow of having done something constructive in the landscape and community. We have a laugh and joke as the work progresses and scoff grub

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You'll find more information and photos on our website - so please visit it regularly to keep up to date.



This is just the start of our "Alamo" fence building project - the volunteers who helped create this had a good laugh on the day and went away with the satisfaction of doing a worthwhile job, well.

from our 'field kitchen', so come on, why don't more of you give it a go?

The first two years of the Society's life saw a great deal of support from members because they could see something tangible happening. We persuaded Heddlu Gwent Police to appoint a specialist police officer to the area to reduce the amount of illegal off-roaders. We lobbied the council to install a car-park and repair the Tump and the fencing and paths around it - and had a few other small victories on the way.

I believe that sustaining the momentum we created in those first couple of years is vital for the future of the mountain and our heritage. Due to the efforts of the members we have made great strides in making the area a pleasant place to be but we must continue to resist the hooligan element who could still seem determined to ruin our landscape.

The Trustees are still committed to the cause and work tirelessly in the background – we have kept the pressure on the authorities and they continue to listen to us. For instance, our police officer who was originally appointed for just six months is now a permanent fixture in the area with the title 'Wildlife Crimes Officer'.

We have many friends online some of whom seem to think they must be paid-up members to come and help out, but not so, we'll welcome anybody who can spare the time. There are also members who have not renewed their subs – that doesn't preclude them from helping out either. We would like to encourage members and

friends, old and new, to get proactive, we need volunteers to move our projects forward – it can be fun, honest! You won't be pressurised into paying up to join – but I'd like to think there were some out there willing to join and, who knows, eventually agree to become Trustees.

Just before putting this Newsletter to bed the first part of the best volunteer project we have held was completed. The "Alamo" fence at the top of the southern slope of Twmbarlwm was erected by nearly 20 volunteers, including a local farmer who supplied the materials, machinery and know-how. It was a great day, hard work, but fun and the satisfaction of doing a worthwhile job.

In an effort to bring the people of Gwent up-to-date news of the society and achievements we have a page or two of information in each bi-monthly edition of South Wales Directories available free around the locality. We also intend to have a stand at local fetes and fayres, so look out for us and come and have a chat. Our website is being updated and will be available very soon - if you register there with your email address we will email you regular dispatches. Or if you would like to receive future copies of this Newsletter by post please write to us, at the address on page 2.

Why Become a Charity?

Leading up to our AGM last October there had been major changes in personnel on the management committee and there had been much discussion about the Society becoming a charity in order to give us a more robust status to help with our aims and objectives for the future. It was not a decision to be taken lightly and all options were carefully researched and presented to all members.

MEMBERS WERE INVITED to consider a new constitution which would establish CTS as a small charity and represent the rule book for the way in which we will operate in future.

Background

The draft constitution was based on the Charity Commission's model constitution and contains provisions relating to the purposes of the charity, membership, the AGM and trustees' meetings and money.

Why do we need a constitution?

It would be possible to continue as a lobby group with the existing informal arrangements. However, adopting a constitution would have a number of advantages:

- It provides a clear structure and rule book
- It will give the organisation greater credibility
- It will make CTS eligible for certain grants
- There may be tax benefits (by applying to HMRC for tax relief)

Implications

The most obvious impact would be the end of the monthly meetings of members and the establishment of a management committee of trustees who would be responsible for the day to day administration of CTS. However, it would be the intention to continue to involve the membership in the work of CTS and to consult them about major decisions.

Objects

To be a charity an organisation must have purposes which reflect what the organisation intends to do and which are exclusively charitable and for the public benefit.

What is the new constitution?

The content of the constitution is a bit formal to reproduce here and it's available online if you wish to see it but the salient points are:

THE PURPOSES OF THE CHARITY ARE:-

- (1) To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in relation to the ancient monument of Twmbarlwm and its environs.

- (2) To advance the preservation of the ancient monument of Twmbarlwm and its environs for the benefit of the public

- (3) To advance the education of the public in relation to the ancient monument of Twmbarlwm and its environs

TRUSTEES: The charity shall be managed by a committee of trustees who are appointed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the charity.

CARRYING OUT THE PURPOSES: In order to carry out the charitable purposes, the trustees have the power to:

- (1) raise funds, receive grants and donations
- (2) apply funds to carry out the work of the charity
- (3) co-operate with and support other charities with similar purposes
- (4) do anything which is lawful and necessary to achieve the purposes

MEMBERSHIP: People who support the work of the charity and are aged 18 or over, can apply to the trustees to become a member.

CTS is now a Small Charity

At the AGM in October the finalised constitution was accepted by majority decision of the membership and a group of six Trustees elected - these are: Terry Evans (*Chair*), Carl Close (*Secretary*), Martyn Bonds (*Treasurer*), Roger Stevenson, Andrew George and Sue Evans.

The Trustees then met on 16th October 2013 to formally sign the constitution thus declaring Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society to be a Small Charity as defined by the Charities Commission.

The Trustees first job was to draft a list of objectives from short-term to long-term and have since implemented a structured work matrix to achieve those aims. Trustees meet on the first Monday of every month to discuss progress - and they have decided to call a meeting of all members every 3 months to report on progress and to canvas opinions and the wishes of the membership.

Give us your money! WHY?

LIKE MOST COMMUNITY societies the cost of running CTS is mostly borne by the volunteers running it - time is given freely as is the cost of travelling to and from meetings on behalf of the society. The cost of stationery, photocopying and printing information for Society events is done for the cost of a packet of paper and maybe an ink cartridge or two.

Then there's essential costs like Public Liability Insurance for society events and membership to other organisations. We also need to continually promote the society and its cause through the newsletter and leaflets and attending local fetes and fayres.

When it comes to the greater aims of the

Society - repairs to the landscape, rebuilding fencing, installing signage and such like, - anything we can't persuade the authorities to pay for out of their over-stretched budgets - we must depend on the generosity of other supporters or we need to apply for funding.

Over the past few months the Trustees have put in three applications for grant funding to various sources.

So this is why your subscriptions are so important to the success of the society - go to the website now, you can re-new, join or just donate. If you don't like to do it online then write to: **CTS, Weedon House, The Darren, Risca, Gwent NP11 6HA**

What's a Scoping Study?



Will it be the road map to a brighter future?

LAST AUTUMN CAERPHILLY County Borough Council in partnership with Torfaen County Borough Council appointed consultants to prepare a Scoping Study for the Twmbarlwm and Mynydd Maen upland area between Cwmbran and the lower Ebbw valley.

The study is a professional report to give the Councils guidelines for the future sustainable management and enhancement of the area. Changing agricultural and recreational practices can have a marked impact on land-use and landscape quality. Therefore the study was to focus on opportunities for improved management of the upland landscape including access and informal recreation, biodiversity, education, crime and community engagement, particularly volunteering.

The brief to the consultants stated that in order to identify the opportunities for sustainable management, the active involvement of community, interest groups and statutory bodies within the development of the management plans would be essential.

And so it was in February this year that the Consultants met with CTS members giving us the opportunity to voice our opinions, concerns and ultimate aims for the area.

The Consultants later held a day of workshops attended by representatives of many local groups. Delegates walked the Mynydd Maen ridge to Twmbarlwm and held 'think-tank' style sessions to give the consultants a wide spectrum of opinion on which to formulate their report.

The report will embrace all aspects close to our hearts including the historical significance of Twmbarlwm, its recreational use, the importance of the landscape, its bio-diversity and the management of anti social issues such as illegal off-roading and fly tipping.

The combined authorities have undertaken a range of projects in recent years yet recognise that considerably more could be achieved and anticipate that this Scoping Study will go some way in providing them answers.

The report is due for publication this summer and at the time of going to press we can only speculate on the implications it will have for Twmbarlwm - but during the consultation period, those who attended came back with a feeling of optimism for the future.



Fourteen Locks to the Tump and other events

THE FOURTEEN LOCKS Canal Centre have their own busy schedule of events and so we were pleased to participate in a joint event with them in November. The aim was to walk from the Fourteen Locks Centre in Rogerstone to the top of the Tump with a talk from them at the start and a talk from us at the summit.

The weather forecast for the day was not promising and we came close to cancelling it - even the start of the day was foreboding. But as soon as we set out, the Twmbarlwm sun gods came out.

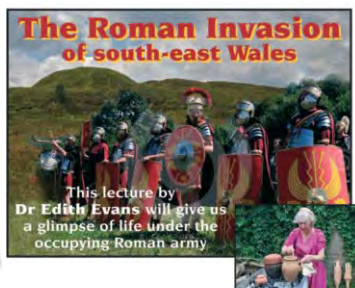
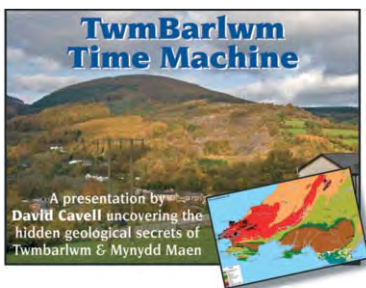
In the end 20 walkers turned up – it was good to see that CTS members weren't outnumbered – on leg count that is – with my dogs, we had the same number as the Fourteen Locks group.

The route cut through Newport golf course and avoided a couple of steep ascents that a few "newbies" were grateful for. There were four people who hadn't been to Twmbarlwm before, so it was great to hear their first time reaction to how impressed they were with the mountain. It was fabulous to have such clear views – particularly at the top from where we could see both Severn Bridges in one direction and the snow covered peaks of the Brecon Beacons in another.

Our visit coincided with the patrol of the Landscape Crimes Officer or "PC Tump" as we call him – and it was great when PCSO Jason Davies accompanied us on the way back down to the Darren. Particularly that he was able to help out a young lad who had got separated from his father on their walk up the Tump.

A talk about the canal and The Fourteen Locks Society at the start – and a talk from one of our members at the summit, added to the interest of the walk. This is a format that hopefully we will be able to extend to other societies and groups in the area for future combined ventures.

If you are part of a local society or group and think we could get together for a similar event please get in touch with us via email: twmbarlwmsociety@gmail.com



LAST AUTUMN we continued a programme of informative talks at Crosskeys RFC.

DAVID CAVELL gave an illustrated talk on the geology of Twmbarlwm and Mynydd Maen. He is a final year undergraduate geology student at the University of Leicester and former Coleg Gwent Crosskeys Campus student. He gave us a glimpse of the south Wales of 300 million years ago, before showing how the rich resources laid down at this time helped to bring industry to the area in more recent times.

DR EDITH EVANS, the Heritage and Outreach Manager of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT), presented an entertaining talk which gave an insight into what life was like under the Roman occupation of south Wales in the first century AD.

We are preparing our diary for further talks this coming autumn and winter, so if you have any ideas or know of someone who could give an entertaining talk please contact us via email at: twmbarlwmsociety@gmail.com

Facebook, Volunteers and Litter



OUR GROUP PAGE on Facebook has been gathering an impressive amount of followers and earlier in the year many were clamouring to get some action on the litter that was accumulating at various points on Twmbarlwm. So the society took the bull by the horns and decided to arrange a specific Litterpick event.

We called upon our Facebook friends and the Society's membership for volunteers to help us out with the event which we timed to coincide with CCBC's Spring Clean Event. The Keep Wales Tidy campaign supplied us with equipment so we were all set for a big turn out on the day.

Unfortunately the day turned out to be very cold, wet and miserable but our members are a stalwart lot – here's the story of the day...

Between 12 noon and 4 o'clock on a grey and cold March Sunday afternoon up on Twmbarlwm, the scene was brightened by the heartening sight of over 20 members of the Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society (CTS) busily conducting a litter pick on this most iconic of local mountains.

During the event over 25 bags of rubbish were collected.

In addition, a large amount of rubbish being the remnants of old fly tipped material was also cleared from the area, including car wheels, tyres, building materials, household waste and scrap metal.

The litter pick turned into a real community event, with a number of visitors to the area spontaneously joining in and collecting what litter they could during their time in the area. These unexpected volunteers included local residents, members of a Cardiff based Walking Club, and even a visitor from as far away as Derby! The welcome involvement of these unexpected volunteers contributed to a great atmosphere on the day.

Terry Evans, the Chair of the Society said, "I was pleased that the event went so well! It was a really satisfying way to spend a few hours. We succeeded in clearing our beautiful mountain of both recent and much older rubbish, and we got some exercise and fresh air at the same time."

He added, "We even removed a lot of broken glass which is so dangerous for dogs and the animals that graze the mountain. It was a real spring clean. It's just such a pity that people feel the need to drop their rubbish up there in the first place."

We were very grateful to the Keep Wales Tidy Group for supplying us with bags and all the equipment for the work and they also gave us a few t-shirts which we awarded to the volunteers who gathered the most rubbish.

A special thanks goes out to Landscape Crime Officer PC Simon James whose presence at the event, during which he dealt with several incidents of off-road activity, was greatly appreciated – and to CTS member Michael West who earned himself a t-shirt for the great efforts he put in leading up to the actual event.

CTS will continue to do their bit in the area and organise more litter-picks in the future and we are pleased to be supporting the wider Caerphilly Spring Clean event.

Although we had a good turn out on the day CTS are continually looking for more members to help us achieve our aims – to research, restore and protect Mynydd Twmbarlwm. You can get more information and join online at www.twmbarlwm.co.uk



Some of the CTS volunteers proudly display their t-shirts and mounds of rubbish

Local author CHRIS BARBER was greatly influenced by Fred Hando who was a close family friend and was fortunate to have accompanied this popular Gwent author on many of his journeys around the county.

Fred Hando was an artist historian with a personal mission to explore and record the history, legends, architecture and scenery of a land that he loved passionately. He wrote with a distinctive style which, although regarded by some as old fashioned, was entertaining and vividly descriptive. He was often criticised by other historians for taking local assumptions or legends and writing them as history, but his work was always very readable and his enthusiasm for his subjects was infectious.

In his long association with the South Wales Argus Fred wrote over 790 articles and many of them were repeated in the seven books published by the Newport firm W.H. Johns. He produced the series entitled 'Monmouthshire Sketchbook' with very few breaks for 17 years.

For further information about Fred Hando read Chris Barber's Book 'Hando's Gwent' which is available from Blorence Books (01873 856114) at £12 plus £2 postage.

Hando's Gwent: a son of Gwent with a life-long love of Twmbarlwm

FRED HANDO first wrote about Twyn Barlwm in his first book Rambles in Gwent (1924) and he commented:

"To many a son of Gwent, exiled in distant lands, home thoughts conjure up a vision of a skyline, long and nobly undulating, with a strange tump towards the left, upheld by a bare mountain shoulder. The vision appears usually in sunset colours, with the hill pale mauve against a primrose sky. Sailors have seen it, whilst fighting for life in the 'Roaring Forties'; miners out at 'the back of beyond,' puffing at their evening pipes, have found the vision floating among their smoke-pictures; Tommies, entrenched before the Vimy Ridge, have watched while the 'Pimple' changed magically into the 'Tump,' while Souchez became Risca, La Targette dissolved into Pontnewydd and Arras seemed a dream-figment of Pontypool. This mountain vision sets the Monmouthshire man apart; it is his birthright, his symbol of home.

Whatever theory may be held regarding the tump, there is no doubt that it marked the extremity of a British elliptical camp, some two hundred yards long and eighty wide. The water supply for the camp was the spring which bubbled out at the eastern base of the tump."

Fred was a friend of the writer Arthur Machen another son of Gwent who was born in Caerleon on March 3, 1862 and he was also much inspired by the sight of Twyn Barlwm for he commented in his autobiography Far off Things (1922):

"Anything which I have accomplished in literature is due to the fact that when my eyes

opened in earliest childhood they had before them a vision of an enchanted land. As soon as I saw anything I saw Twyn Barlwm, that mystic tumulus, the memorial of peoples that dwelt in that region before the Celts left the Land of Summer."

In The Pleasant Land of Gwent (1944) Fred described Twyn Barlwm as follows:

"Twyn Barlwm is the southern climax of a ridge - Mynydd Maen - which stretches from Pontypool to Risca. The great tumulus at the summit, 1,374 feet high, may present problems to the archaeologist, but as boys we were taught that it contains the bones of a prehistoric British chieftain. The modern student laughs at our gullibility and teaches his children that the Normans built the great mound in order to give them control over the Western Valley!"

Fred was an enthusiastic walker and during his life would have made numerous visits to the summit of Twyn Barlwm. He would have walked all the possible approaches and the following description is just one example:

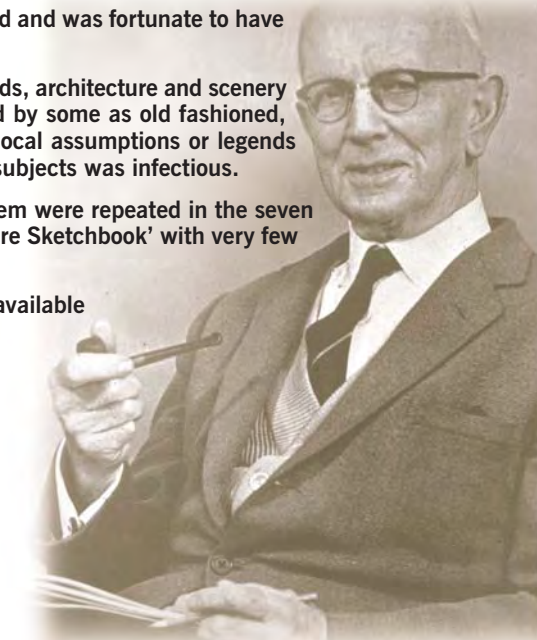
"We chose the approach from Cwmcarn. The road led straight up the Carn valley, and where it forked, we turned right. This led alongside the brook and railroad to a colliery working, where we crossed the brook by a miniature bridge. Taking the climb up the green road in easy stages, we were none the less glad to reach the ridge and to see Newport countryside in magnificent panorama to the south."

Just like so many of us today he was fascinated by the large mound which Newport people have long referred to as "The Pimple". In his book Monmouthshire Sketchbook (1954) he wrote:

"How many Newport boys of twelve years or less have climbed Twyn Barlwm? Such an ascent bestowed merit in the old days, but I believe that the 1,374 feet climb is not essential now to the membership of any gang.

Part of the fascination of the mountain is the big Tump, surrounded by an elliptical trench of a prehistoric camp. The climb to the trench is easy, but the final scramble 'up the Tump' tests the wind of most adults.

Take your one-inch map of South Monmouthshire and prick pins into the centres of the Gaer, Twyn Barlwm and Lodge Camp encampments. The Gaer and Lodge Camps



stand three miles apart, and each of them is five miles from Twyn Barlwm. Our forefathers laid down tracks from camp to camp which are still in use today."

"Let us now rest on the summit and contemplate. Sons and daughters of Gwent, can you imagine our ancestors at Risca being cowed by a battalion of cloud-cuckoos a mile away? And such a mile!

Normans forsooth! Look at the view. You gaze to the south over Uskmouth, the Severn and Somerset. Return, and pick out the sapphire jewel which is Pant-yr-eos. Can you make out the Holms and the Monkstone, and Penarth Head?

See how many of the heights of Glamorgan and Gwent, swimming in a golden sea of light, are known to you. Rest your eyes now among the silver mists of the Carn Valley.

Then explore the great hills of Brecknockshire and Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, to come to rest again on our own Wentwood and the Vale of Usk. And can you arrange for your shadow to fall on Christchurch tower?

When you have taken your fill of views, slip down the tump and walk along the green ridgeway northwards."

Fred was often accused of presenting legends to his readers as historical facts, yet it was important that these old stories were recorded, however fanciful, for they make interesting reading.

In The Pleasant Land of Gwent he describes how:

"The shepherds of Twyn Barlwm are never weary of describing the 'Mountain Organ'. It seems that under certain weather conditions sweet chords of organ music, sounding as if from a great distance, float over the southern slope. Perchance the wind passing over the holes in the mound through which the springs flow causes the air within to vibrate. Whatever the explanation of the music, the shepherds speak of it with hushed voices."

I know of two separate people who when walking near the summit of Twyn Barlwm heard strange sounds, that one of them described as sounding like bagpipe music. A possible explanation is that when the wind blows from a certain direction it passes through openings in the lower bands of limestone and then up



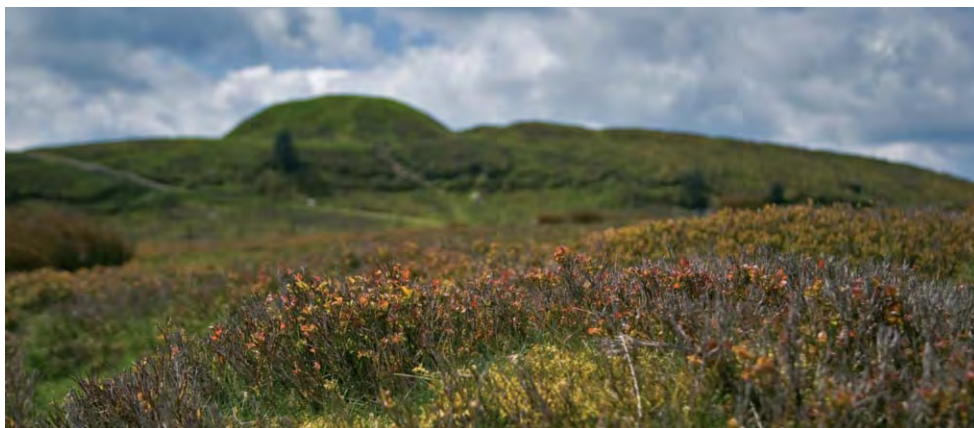
Arthur Machen, like his friend Fred Hando, was also inspired by the sight of Twyn Barlwm

though narrow shafts that act like organ pipes to emit these uncanny sounds.

Surprisingly Fred failed to mention the tradition that anyone who disturbs the mound, perhaps with the intent of looking for treasure, will be attacked by a swarm of bees. I had an interesting experience in 1984 when I was involved in setting up a Gwent County Council scheme in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission to renovate the mound. This involved repairing the erosion, returfing the sides, raising the height of the mound to its previous level, constructing a flight of steps to the top, and erecting a fence around the base to keep out motorcycle scramblers.

On Monday 4th June, 1984, Terry Wilmot, the team supervisor came into the office at County Hall, Cwmbran and told me that he and his team had been attacked by bees when digging into the mound to install the flight of steps. I then told him of the legend that anyone who disturbed the mound would be attacked by a swarm of bees. He had not heard of this before and was quite perplexed by the idea. Later that day he wrote the following report on the day's activities:

"At about 1.00pm, while myself and my men were working on Twyn Barlwm, constructing the



The outline of Twmbarlwm – as familiar to Fred Hando as it is to us nowadays

great numbers in Monmouthshire and that the Welsh people call them twyn or tumps. Examples that he describes include: Twyn Panteg (Mound of the Beautiful Vale) which stands in the parish of Lower Machen, at an altitude of 656 feet; Twyn Cae Hugh in Bedwas parish on the north side of the Sirhowy Valley and Twyn Tudor just south of Mynyddislwyn Church at an altitude of 1,019 feet.

Fred Hando would also have been influenced by William Coxe whose book 'Historical Tours in Monmouthshire' was published in 1801 and he was the first writer to describe Twyn Barlwm and its mysterious mound in detail. From what he says it seems that he was fairly convinced that it was the burial place of an important Silurian chieftain.

"Twyn Barlwm, being situated on the highest point of the chain which bounds the rich valleys watered by the Usk,

commands one of the most singular and glorious prospects which I have yet enjoyed in Monmouthshire; and which cannot be reduced to a specific and adequate description.

"The summit is a flat surface of an oval shape, and on the highest part is crowned with a circular tumulus, or artificial mound of earth and stones, 18 yards in height, and surrounded with a deep fosse. Some call it a beacon, some a stronghold, and others a place of sepulchre. I am inclined to believe that it was originally one of those places of sepulchre called cairns which, in the early ages of the world, were in common use among all nations, and particularly among the Britons, who were accustomed to bury their most famous leaders on the highest eminences, either as a conspicuous memorial, or to strike terror into their enemies. In subsequent times it may have been employed as a beacon, or even as a temporary fastness in case of a sudden invasion, though from its size and condition it could not be used as a permanent place of defence. It might contain the ashes of some valiant chief among the Silures, who fell in defending his country against the Romans."

William Coxe also made the interesting comment that Cwmcarn (Valley of the cairn) "the name of a dingle on the further side - may have been derived from this tumulus."

I have always thought that it is certainly possible that the mound, like many others of similar situation and character may have initially been constructed as a monumental tomb and later converted by the Normans into a motte to support a watch tower.

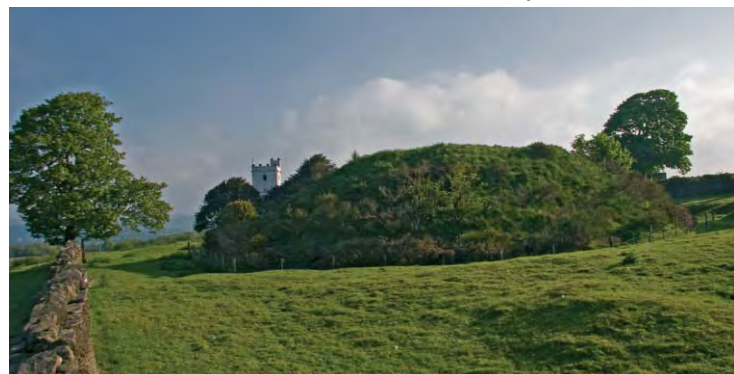
I did hear a story some years ago that during a strike period a group of miners from the Risca area dug a tunnel into the Twyn Barlwm mound hoping to find something of interest, but what they found or even if there is any truth in the story I have no idea. Perhaps some one living in the Risca has more information about this matter.

Fred always referred to the hill as Twyn rather than Twm which is of course an Anglicised version of the word. He also used the double ll spelling of Barllwm rather than Barlwm.

Yes, Twyn Barlwm is certainly very special for it is the most visible iron age hillfort in Gwent as it can be seen from the M4. It has long been a landmark for which people living in the west of Gwent have the greatest regard and when they have been away from their homeland for a long period it can be a very welcome sight on their return.

I shall leave the final words to Fred Hando:

"Stark and forbidding on a March morning: green and inviting in June; an upland paradise of blazing glory, its bracken flesh-pink beneath an October sun; or white in its winter cloak, Twyn Barllwm is always impressive. Its lure at sunset, however is compelling."



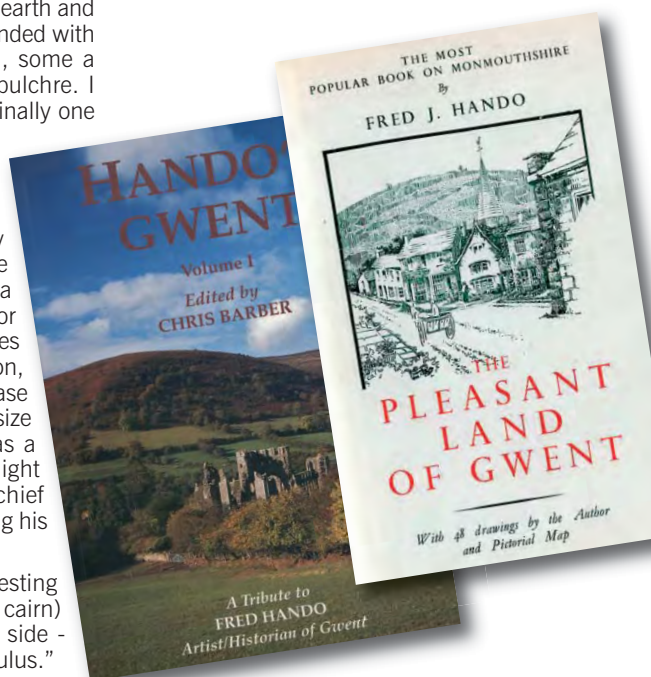
Twyn Tudor, another large mound near Mynyddislwyn church only three miles from Twyn Barlwm, also attracted Hando's interest.

steps, a long swarm of bees forced us to stop work for about twenty minutes. Where they came from I don't know. All I know is that they were about thirty feet from us at the south end of the mound and it was just like a long black cloud. After about twenty minutes they went away and we then continued working. At about 1.45pm I went down to the van and as I got to the driving door I found that the side of the van was half covered with a swarm of bees."

Twyn Tudor, another large mound near Mynyddislwyn Church in Gwent, is supposed to be the hiding place of a chest of treasure. Long ago, someone tried to dig for it but was stopped by a terrible thunderstorm that terrified him so much that he abandoned his search and never returned. There is also a local tradition that the bodies of Roman soldiers lie deep within the mound, it is said that they were surprised and slaughtered by a host of Silures and their bodies laid to rest within the mound.

Fred observed that of the scores of tumuli in Monmouthshire several were used by the Normans as the sites of churches. The best example is Llantilio Crossenny, where the church tower stands on a mound within an entire' encampment.

A source of inspiration to him would have been W.N. John's Historical Traditions and Facts relating to Monmouthshire (published in 1897). This writer speaks of the tumuli which exist in



What is the Twmp on Twmbarlwm?

DAVID JANDRELL is a local writer, historian and geologist. He has published several humorous books, which explains why when he attempted to write a history of Twmbarlwm he got taken by a flight of fancy. Here's his very own theory on the origins of the Twmp...

CARTIMANDUA LIVED on Mynydd Medart with her husband Vercingetarix and her two sons Vercassivelaunix and Bernard.

Cartimandua was a proud Iron-Age lady who hunted for food, prepared the food, cooked it, served it up to her family, washed up, cleaned the roundhouse, washed her family's clothes and nagged Vercingetarix, Vercassivelaunix and Bernard.

Vercingetarix, Vercassivelaunix and Bernard involved themselves in the more macho activities such as throwing stones and ... well, mainly just throwing stones.



One day, Cartimandua was down by the Ebbw River doing the laundry and a very refined lady walked by.

She greeted the lady and they began chatting. The lady told Cartimandua that she was called Arianwen and she was the ruler of Mynydd Medart..

"What does that mean?", asked Cartimandua as she slapped one of Vercingetarix's socks on a flat stone in the river.

"I rule the mountain."

"What, you are in charge of me, like?"

"No no, I'm not ruler of the people, animals, plants, anything like that. Just the mountain itself."

"So basically you don't do anything then."

"I don't do anything per se, but it's a high profile, high status title that I get for doing nothing."

"I really fancy that. How did you get into it?"

"Well I did some research and found out that Mynydd Medart didn't have a ruler so I claimed the title for myself."

"So if I can find a mountain that doesn't have a ruler I can do the same."

"Well yes, but don't take on anything too big to start. Why not rule a smaller mountain to start off, a sort of practice mountain if you like and when you are confident, go for a big 'un."

"Any small mountains around?"

"Why not build one here?"

"Could I?"

"As ruler of this mountain I hereby give you permission to build a practice mountain by here to start you off."

And so, when Vercingetarix, Vercassivelaunix and Bernard got home from a hard day's stone throwing, Cartimandua gave them the task of building her practice mountain, she told them it would be called a twmp.

As an incentive she told Vercingetarix, Vercassivelaunix and Bernard that they would not get vole (their favourite meal) until the twmp was built.

So Vercingetarix, Vercassivelaunix and Bernard set about the task. They didn't have shovels so they used the tools of the day – cupped hands.

Three years later, the job was done - the twmp was finished. Cartimandua loved it more than words could describe. In fact there weren't any words in the Iron-Age vocabulary that could adequately express how she felt about it.

She ruled the twmp for three weeks and realised that 'twmp ruling' was really very easy. She

decided to take the plunge and go straight in for a big 'un. But where?

She looked across the valley and spotted Twm Barlwm. "I wonder if Twm Barlwm has a ruler", she thought - and without further ado strode across the valley towards Twm Barlwm.

When she arrived at Twm Barlwm she met a man who was throwing stones.

"Good morning, I am Cartimandua and I live over Mynydd Medart."

The man, put down his stones and replied;

"I am Dubnovellanus and I live here."

"Tell me Dubnovellanus, does Twm Barlwm have a ruler?"

"Aye me."

"Only I was looking for a mountain to rule. I'll have a look around and see if there are any others available without rulers then?"



"Why?"

"Because I want to rule a mountain."

"You can have this 'un if you like. I'm thinking of giving it up. Find it difficult to fit everything in. Know what I mean?"

"When are you giving up?"

"As soon as you want to start, but first, what experience do you have?"

"Well I built and ruled that twmp over by there – can you see it? It's on Mynydd Medart, down in the dip a bit!"

"Hmmm, that's a lovely twmp. I always fancied a twmp. Fancy building me one?"

"Well I could do."

"Tell you what, build a twmp on the top of Twm Barlwm, it's a bit bare as you can see and you can take over once it's done. Fancy it?"

"I'll get my boys onto it rightaway!"

"Er .. just one thing Cartimandua I'm not having any earth taken from Twm Barlwm to build it. You're going to have to provide all the stuff yourself."

"I'll just move the original twmp from Mynydd Medart and fetch it over here."

"Sounds good."

"I'll get onto it. Bye."

So Cartimandua spoke to Vercingetarix, Vercassivelaunix and Bernard and put it to them. They agreed after a lot of huffing and puffing and the threat of no vole until the twmp was moved.

What's Your Theory?

Has David's silly tale inspired you? Have you got a pet theory on the origins of Twmbarlwm - real, fantasy or humorous. Then write it down and we'll publish the best stories in the next Newsletter and put them online too.

Get your kids to help as well – I bet their imagination can come up with some great ideas about who built the Twmp, and why. If you can illustrate your story too, so much the better.

If we get enough entries we'll put them all together in one publication to sell and raise funds for the Society.

Submit entries to: twmbarlwmociety@gmail.com

WORD ANSWERS:
ACROSS: 2. Lark; 7. Hillfort; 11. Erosion; 12. Ridge; 14. Torc; 17. Sile; 19. Silures; 20. Romans;
DOWN: 1. Bailly; 3. Cuckoo; 4. Motte; 5. Bran; 6. Wood; 8. Trespas; 9. Trg; 10. Gorse; 13. Wm; 15. ORPA; 16. Cairn; 17. Sheep; 18. Twmp.

A Young Perspective

They toiled away day and night. They painstakingly removed earth from the twmp and using only their cupped hands, walked across the valley, up to the top of Twm Barlwm where they 'tipped their load' and went back to Mynydd Medart for the next.

Twelve years later, the new twmp was finished and Cartimandua and Dubnovellanus were there to witness the deposition of the last handful of muck and to perform the 'handing over' ceremony.

When complete, Cartimandua stood back and admired her very own mountain and twmp. She looked very happy and Vercingetarix asked her what she thought of it.

Cartimandua looked again at the new twmp, glanced across the valley to where the twmp was, looked at the new twmp again. She rubbed her chin and with a furrowed brow said;

"Well, it's very nice but I think I preferred it when it was over there."

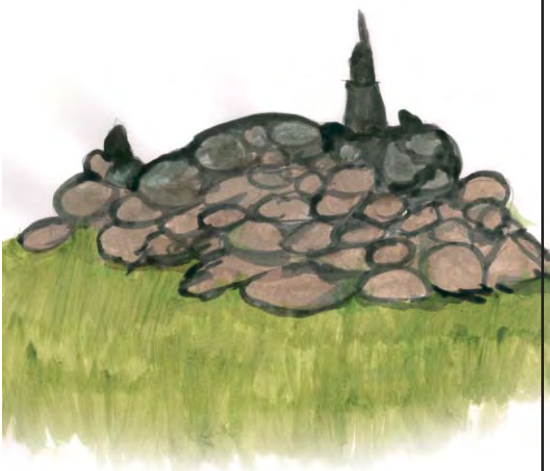
Strangely enough that was the last anyone ever heard or saw Cartimandua - she simply disappeared. But oddly the pile of stones seemed a little bigger - about the size and shape of a person bigger.

Dubnovellanus, Vercingetarix, Vercassivelaunus and Bernard became great friends and spent the rest of their days throwing stones into the valley from the top of Twm Barlwm.

In fact, they threw so many stones into the valley that in years to come they were used to build Cwmcarn, Pontywaun, Crossskeys and Risca.

But the friends never again touched the pile of stones from the top of the mountain. When asked why, they would try to change the subject, look very guilty and simply say "Because Cartimandua would have liked it that way!"

by David Jandrell



ONE OF THE GREAT MYSTERIES in life is how infants come to understand the world. Presumably, before they know any words, they make sense of things as animals do. Annoyingly, by the time they know enough words to explain how they managed without them they have forgotten what went before!

I am fortunate in having a grandson who was only ever spoken to using adult language. By the age of three he could express his thoughts and often did so. When he was almost six years old, and I had been asked to keep him occupied for a day, I thought to take him up Twmbarlwm. It proved to be as interesting to me as it was bewildering to him.

We set off from Cardiff, and had our clearest view of the tump as I drove up Forge Lane. 'That's where we are going,' I said indicating the pimple directly ahead. It stayed in view until we entered the Scenic Drive at Cwmcarn, and was lost from sight until I had parked at the top and we had walked up to the ridgeway.

The awesome view from the ridge causes most people to declare their amazement. Suddenly, paper maps spring into reality. Alex was stunned to silence until we turned along the rutted track to the tump. 'It's really big,' he exclaimed, his voice quavering as if he had just had the shock of his life. Clearly he had just discovered perspective.

My own first memory of an encounter with the vanishing point was in art classes at school.

Drawing buildings and telegraph poles along an imaginary street appealed to my nature, as I could use a ruler instead of my unsteady hand to make the perfectly straight road shrink to a pinpoint, and the windows with it. It all seemed so simple then, but real roads are rarely straight, which is why perspective is not obvious and why we need to be taught about it.

Alex soon grew accustomed to the vast expanse of the landscape, and strode on far in front as we made our way back from the tump. I caught up with him at the car and continued driving around the circuit.

Coming to the viewpoint overlooking Pontywaun I stopped so we could look out from that aspect. Almost vertically below, cars were passing along the main road. Once again Alex's senses received a jolt. 'They're like toy cars!' he said, as if utterly confused.

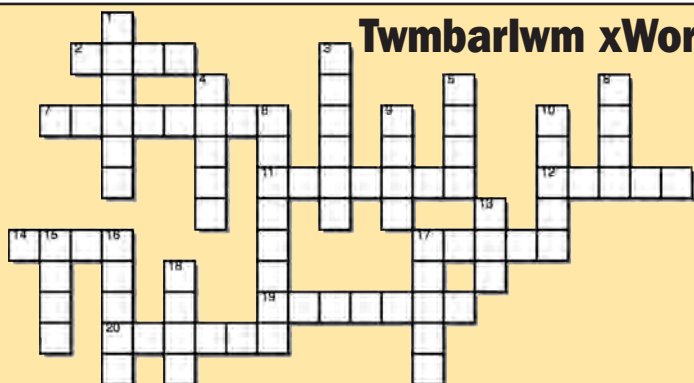
The whole experience caused me to recall my puzzlement when told in a Physics class that rays of light from the sun are essentially parallel. It was counter-intuitive because, as everyone knows, when the setting sun shines through gaps in the clouds the shafts of light spread out. It is all due to the railway-line effect, I try to convince myself; like rail-tracks the rays are parallel, but like the railways in my drawings the higher the shafts of light are from the ground, the closer together they become. Strange to say, I am not entirely convinced.

by Cedric Mumford



The radiating rays of sunlight is another lesson in perspective

Twmbarlwm xWord



ACROSS

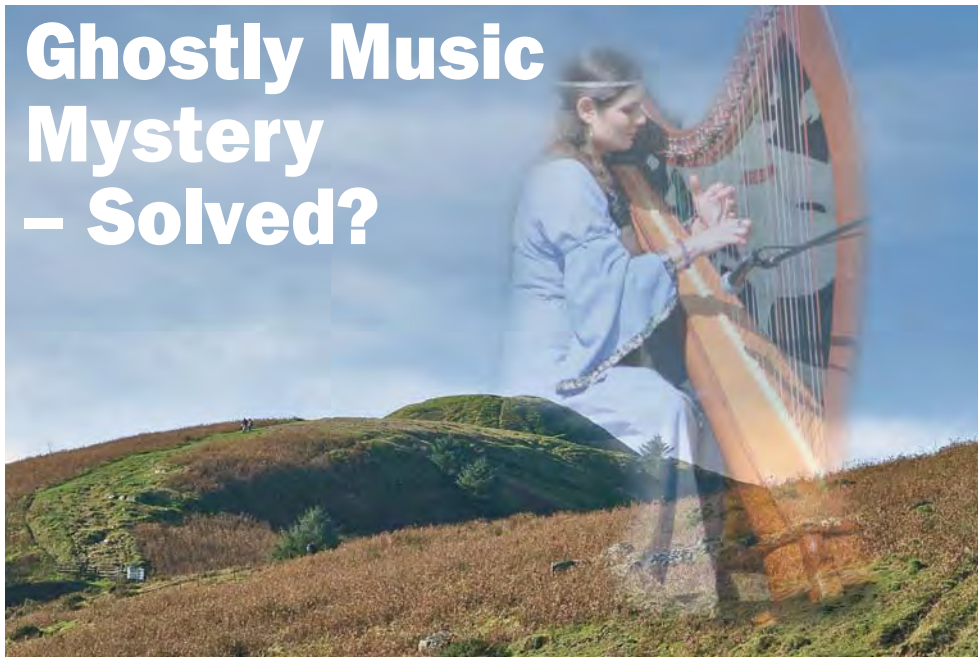
- 2. High flying musical bird
- 7. Iron age stronghold
- 11. Wearing down of landscape
- 12. Level line of mountain tops
- 14. Amulet
- 17. Point to climb fence
- 19. Ancient tribe of this area
- 20. Inhabitants of Isca

DOWN

- 1. and... see 4 down
- 3. Native of Risca

- 4. and 1 down – Type of ancient fort
- 5. King buried under Tump
- 6. Blue paint
- 8. Walk illegally
- 9. What point marks the summit
- 10. Yellow flowering shrub
- 13. Popular local berry
- 15. Byway classification
- 16. Mound of stones
- 17. Woolly animals
- 18. Nickname of the mountain

Ghostly Music Mystery – Solved?



In much of Celtic and Welsh mythology there are legends of mysterious harp or pipe music enchanting heroic characters to the afterlife or who knows where. Many Welsh hills have such legends attached to them and Twmbarlwm is no exception. Even in the early 20th Century there was a local story of strange ethereal music luring a young girl away from her friends - never to be seen again.

Talk to locals now and you'll soon find someone with a tale to tell of ghost-like music on the Tump and along the ridgeway and many have their theories to what causes this phenomenon. But DAVID JANDRELL thinks his mother may have come across the real answer in a conversation with her friend Mrs. Winifred Humphries which went something like this...

"One fine day in the mid 50s I took my children up to Twmbarlwm. Unfortunately I have forgotten the exact date but it was the year that our local Territorials were presented with their new colours at Ebbw Vale. The Queen was supposed to come down and present the colours but in the end, she was unable to come so the Duke of Edinburgh did the presentation in her place.

My children, Edward and Delyth, had been ill - as had two of their best friends - so I decided to take them all out for a bit of exercise and fresh air. This particular Sunday morning started off being dense fog. We set off to go to Rock Cottage and we went up ultimately over to Twmbarlwm.

By the time we got to Twmbarlwm we'd risen above the fog and the sun was shining beautifully. The fog cleared away and the children thoroughly enjoyed themselves. While they were running about, I sat down just below the earthworks and I was facing Medart mountain, Risca on my left and Cwmcarn pit down in the hollow to my right.

As I sat there I suddenly became aware that I could hear words of military command - "Quick march! Slope arms! About turn! etc.", I could hear a band playing, I could hear sounds of people marching and I could hear the order being given to halt. I thought, 'Well, somebody is practising drill in Cwmcarn pit grounds'. The Cwmcarn pit was in operation at the time.

I left my picnic gear and went round to have a look and I didn't have to go many yards before I could see that Cwmcarn pit was deserted - there was nothing there, nobody there at all. Neither was there anybody down in the valley immediately below. I went back and I listened and I heard the complete drill going on so I called the children, got them to sit down quiet and they listened and confirmed that they heard the same as me. Children being children they soon went back to their playing though.

It was then that I remembered the planned visit of the Queen and realised that I was listening to drill being performed in what was then the yard of the Crescent Toy Factory - almost 2 miles from where I was sitting - and I heard every word and every move they made. When they marched away I heard the order being given. I heard the gates being shut and then it faded away as they went out of range.

I can only assume that the Nant Carn valley was acting as a funnel for the sound. The strange sounds that have been heard especially at night on Twmbarlwm, I think, are echoes from Cilfynydd mountain and Cwmcarn.

Again a few weeks later, chatting to a neighbour they said that they'd heard an organ playing at the same place I had been. Further investigation showed that at that same time someone was playing the organ in Cwmcarn church and being a warm day, they had the door open.

Personally, I think the atmospheric conditions have to be just right to experience the phenomenon but for me that settles the question of the haunting music of Twmbarlwm. As regards anybody's disappearance you'll have to come up with your own theories - it could still be those underworld fairies up to no good".

The Natural Health Service!

Just to reinforce the positive impact of exercise in the natural environment upon health and well-being, here are some of the major reasons to get outside and walk on a regular basis:

1. It makes you feel good
2. It reduces stress
3. It helps you sleep better
4. It reduces the risk of: heart disease; strokes; high blood pressure; diabetes; arthritis; osteoporosis; certain cancers; and can help with their management and recovery
5. It enables you to meet others and to feel part of the community
6. It allows you to see your local area and discover new places
7. It's kind to the environment
8. It can be done by almost everyone
9. No special equipment is required
10. It's FREE, saving money on bus fares and petrol

And, in 2012 the Chief Medical Officer in England estimated that walking at least 6 miles a week can reduce premature death by as much as 30% - so why aren't more of us walking? Especially, up and down Twmbarlwm!

When you are out and about please remember...

The Countryside Code

1. Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs.
2. Leave gates and property as you find them.
3. Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
4. Keep dogs under close control.
5. Consider other people.



Follow the Countryside Code wherever you go. You will get the best out of the countryside and help to maintain it now and for the future.

For more information go to www.countrysidecodewales.org.uk

EVENTS

The Trustees meet on the first Monday of every month and they report to the membership at open meetings every three months.

Open meetings are scheduled for the following dates - but please check the website to confirm

8th July – Crosskeys RFC, 7pm

7th October – Crosskeys RFC, 7pm

Want to get involved in the projects, issues and running of the Society? You are most welcome to come along to our meetings. We are always looking for more active members - especially those with some skills or expertise which will be useful to the cause of the Society

During the summer months we will be organising walks litterpicks and some physical volunteer work on the mountain - visit the website for details.

We will also have a stall at many local events, fetes and carnivals to showcase the aims of our society so please look out for us - or better still come and help us for a few hours, we could really do with your support.

The following course comes highly recommended by one of our members who has completed it

Our Mother's Land: Skills for Exploring History, Heritage and Culture

The course presented by history tutor, Paul Thomas will start in September on Mondays at Oxford House. It will provide an introduction to Welsh history and associated heritage. It is designed to provide learners with the necessary skills to successfully conduct a small scale historical/heritage research project of their own. Students will be introduced to a range of sources and research techniques which will allow them to practise and develop interpretive and presentational skills.

Email paul.thomas1@southwales.ac.uk for details



Help us research, restore and protect Gwent's most iconic landmark - join us today - visit the website for more information

www.twmbarlwm.co.uk