



Making a Difference on Twmbarlwm

The unmistakable profile of the "Tump" on Twmbarlwm dominates the skyline of south-east Wales

WELCOME TO THE FIRST of what is to be a regular feature within these pages - a bi-monthly round up of the work of the *Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society* (CTS). And what better way to start what is hopefully going to be a long series than with a bit of a potted history. The Society is now over 2 years old, having grown out of the Save Twmbarlwm Campaign which started in April 2010. The campaign was a direct response to the sad decline of the landscape (of what is something of an iconic mountain) over many years as a result of erosion, public carelessness and the illegal intrusions by off road vehicles, especially motor bikes. Following the enthusiastic and passionate response of local people, the society was launched in October the same year. From the outset it was clear that the mountain with the distinctive "Tump" on the top, that dominates the South East Wales skyline holds an affinity with many people throughout the area. The founding society members demonstrated that they meant business by very quickly agreeing, and then actively pursuing, the following objectives:

- To protect and preserve the ancient monument on the summit of Twmbarlwm and its immediate environment
- To ensure that there is secure and robust fencing in place to prevent access by off road vehicles – especially scrambling motor bikes
- To ensure that fencing and stiles are properly maintained
- To seek to improve the quality of footpaths on the mountain and to work to ensure that pedestrian access is not the cause of further erosion
- To raise the public perception of the importance of Twmbarlwm in historical, environmental and community terms

Action... not just talk!

The premise that actions do indeed speak louder than words has always been at the heart of how CTS operates. From the outset the development of action plans and very importantly, the development of effective partnership working with the likes of Caerphilly and

Torfaen County Borough Councils, Heddlu Gwent Police, CADW and the area landowners Llanarth Estates, have enabled some very good progress to be made in the relatively short space of time that the society has existed. The last 18 months has seen some major improvements being carried out in the area by Caerphilly County Borough Council through the lobbying and support of CTS. The creation of a public car park on the south approach to Twmbarlwm; the installation of new fencing and restoration work on the steps of the "Tump"; and the installation of some all-important signage, which will serve to welcome and direct visitors, in addition to warning those who engage in illegal activity such as off-road activity and fly tipping, have been very welcome improvements to the area.

The society currently has in excess of 60 members. Membership, which costs only £10 per calendar year, is very good value for money when you

consider the opportunity that it provides to actually "make a difference" about something that you are interested in, or as is the case with many CTS members, that you feel very passionate about. In its drive to raise the profile of both Twmbarlwm and the society, a full programme of events has been delivered since its inception. These events have ranged from local (and not so local) walks; free entry to historical and environmental talks on the local landscape; practical events such as litter picks and the organised monitoring of illegal off road activity in the area; to the launch of a real ale called Twmbarlwm Brew, produced by Newman's Brewery of Caerphilly. The society also held a Royal Jubilee Beacon event in June of 2012, which was attended by over 250 people, and acted as the trigger for the lighting of other Beacons in the area. The production of a number of informative and professionally produced society newsletters is also indicative of a vibrant society.

During the first couple of years of its existence the society members met every month at Cross Keys Rugby Club. These meetings were usually attended by 20 or so of the more active members. Attending meetings is not everyone's cup of tea, and attendance has never been a prerequisite to joining the society. The society is very grateful for the rugby club's support in

*Dedicated to research,
restore and protect
Mynydd Twmbarlwm ~
Gwent's most iconic
landmark*

allowing the use of its facilities. The Society is always on the look out for people who have a love or interest in Twmbarlwm, and who support the society's aims, especially those who have experience, knowledge or skills that will assist in helping the cause!

Whilst CTS achieved much success during the first 18 months of their existence, members had no intention of resting on their laurels. The advent of 2012 witnessed a growing desire to move the society forward and to develop new objectives.

Becoming a Small Charity

The summer months saw the exploration of various avenues of funding for the society and projects that could be realistically undertaken. It became clear that becoming a charity would enable the society to access the many funding opportunities available. At the AGM in October, 2012, a new constitution was adopted and a team of Trustees was appointed. As a result, CTS is now a "Small Charity".

Also agreed at the AGM was a list of priorities and objectives for the society to achieve over the coming years. The ultimate aim is to have a landscape that we can all be proud of to hand on to future generations. It is hoped that the ability to secure regular funding will enable new projects to protect and maintain Twmbarlwm, especially the need for more academic research to be carried out at the site.

The previously mentioned groundwork improvements being undertaken by Caerphilly County Borough Council are nearing completion, and in the future it is hoped that CTS will be more actively involved in the management of the area, with its members being involved in voluntary hands on maintenance work.

A Spring Clean on Twmbarlwm

An excellent example of how members get involved in practical hands on work was well illustrated in a recent



The newly installed path on the Pegwryth-Bwlch approach to "The Tump" was as a result of CTS's campaigning.

society event. On a grey and cold March Sunday afternoon up on Twmbarlwm, the scene was brightened by the heartening sight of over twenty CTS members busily conducting a litter pick on the mountain and surrounding area. The clear-up was undertaken as part the wider Caerphilly Spring Clean event, supported by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

The Keep Wales Tidy campaign kindly supplied litter picking equipment and t-shirts. Over 25 bags of rubbish were collected on the day. 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 visitors, 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.

It is fair to say that these are exciting times for Twmbarlwm and CTS, with several exciting projects in the pipeline. We plan to have a stand at local fetes and carnivals throughout the summer, where you will be able to find out more about the Society, so look out for us, we're really a friendly bunch. But if you want to know more about CTS, please visit our website at www.twmbarlwm.co.uk where you can find out more information, download a membership form or even join or donate online.

We look forward to telling you more about the work and plans of the Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society in future editions. Until next time.

Terry Evans, Chairman, Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society



A few of the CTS volunteers who braved a cold March afternoon to clear two huge piles of rubbish and litter from Twmbarlwm.