

Welcome...

I am delighted to welcome you to the third issue of Twmbarlwm News - the first of 2012. It has been an extremely busy and eventful few months for the society since our last Newsletter in Autumn 2011.

First of all I am very pleased to have been elected the society's new chairman and I hope that with the enthusiastic support of the membership, we will develop the society into an organisation with a powerful voice and positive aims for the protection of our beloved mountain, Twmbarlwm.

Our former chairman and founder, Rob Southall, brought us a great way down the road of progress, in just two years, with his boundless enthusiasm and dedication. But, don't worry, we have not lost him - Rob is now acting as society secretary which means he is probably working harder than ever before to make the society stronger for its future work.

We have started down the route of making the society into a Company Limited by Guarantee which will pave the way for us to achieve charitable status - this will, in turn, give the society a higher profile and enable us to raise money for the future management of the area.

The main project with which we kicked off the year was Tump Watch (see the detailed story inside) when, for two months, volunteers spent their weekends up Twmbarlwm recording visitors and reporting illegal activities.

Also at this time, committee members met up with the leaders of Caerphilly and Torfaen Borough Councils and Heddli Gwent Police - we were able to present the meeting with interim figures from our Tump Watch survey. At the meeting it was suggested that the councils should jointly fund an operation for

2012 sees some major changes



PC Tump (Simon James) plays a major role in helping Twmbarlwm become a no-go area for anti-social behaviour

the police force to patrol the area more effectively to alleviate the problems of off-road vehicles and fly-tipping.

PC Simon James was duly appointed to the position under the mentorship of PC Rob Maddox of the Forgotten Landscapes Project in Blaenavon. So far he has had a great effect in reducing anti-social behaviour in the area - to such an extent that, at the time of writing, his temporary posting has been further extended.

PC James was in position just in time for our first major event of the year which was the Hot-Cross-Bun Walk. This was the second year we asked people to help us revive the local tradition of walking up "The Tump" on Good Friday and again we were blessed with good weather and had a great turn out. The Tesco Extra store at Risca donated a huge box of hot-cross-buns which we gave to all-comers in return for a donation - we raised over £75. Thank you Tesco.

Another major occurrence has been the start of the work by CCBC to construct a car-park on the common and effect repair works to the tump itself. This has been met with various responses, not all favourable, but in general the society believes that the work is a positive move for the future well-being of the mountain - again this is discussed in detail inside.

We continued our programme of talks and events - these included Geoff Morris from the National Museum of Wales giving us an insight into the history of Welsh Longhouses; and Professor Raymond Howell entertained us with a discussion on the Silures and iron age settlements of south Wales.

Hopefully this introduction and the further content of this newsletter shows how active the society has been in the past few months - but I feel we could be doing so much more. We need more people to get involved and we need current members to contribute more - not necessarily in monetary terms but in offering their time and technical expertise.

There were hundreds of people up the tump on Good Friday and at the Jubilee Beacon Event - I personally speak to dozens of visitors there most weekends, and to a man they express their fondness for the area, the beauty of the scenery, the significance of the history and their regret for the apparent neglect and abuse of much of the area.

So I know there are many like minded people out there who should search their conscience and come and join us in doing more for our environment and Gwent's iconic mountain.

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

www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

Work starts amidst controversy

In our last Newsletter we announced that the proposed work on Twmbarlwm by CCBC was about to start – it has been discussed at length in various CTS public meetings, and yet when the work commenced in April the voices of dissent were heard immediately...

FROM THE SOCIETY'S earliest contacts with Caerphilly Borough Council we sought action from them to help us improve the landscape of Twmbarlwm and make it more attractive to visitors.

We found that CCBC were already in talks with Torfaen Borough council and the idea of a formal car park had been mooted. The partnership had applied for a grant from The Valleys Regional Park which was approved and plans were subsequently drawn up.

The Car Park

When the idea of the car-park was first discussed at CTS committee meetings, there were a few dissenters (myself included) but eventually, consensus agreed on the theory that a more formal car parking area would attract visitors who were NOT intent on abusing the area and thus dissuade those who go to the area with anti-social behaviour in mind.

The mindset of the abusers seems to be **"It looks like a dump - so we'll treat it like a dump!"**

We've got to try and break that cycle of abuse, so it was decided that the society would support the project.

The original plans presented by the council showed the car park lower down the common and when CTS members met on-site with the councils, the land owners, local farmers and CADW to discuss the plans it was decided, for various reasons, to move it to where you now find it.

One of the main reasons for its current position is to give the best views possible, of both the tump itself and over the Bristol Channel, for those less able to get out of their cars.

During the construction work there were many discussions online about the lack of an archaeological watch. CADW had declared the site was outside the boundary of the scheduled ancient monument and therefore a watching brief was not necessary - some might say a poor excuse, I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions. There was, however, a natural history watch to ensure the safety for the snake and lizard population.

Tumulus Repairs

The repair work to the tumulus itself was self evident – society members had done their own survey some months before council plans were drawn up and our suggested repairs generally matched those of the council's plans. When we had the on-site meeting with CADW, apart from some archaeological and technical specifications that CADW advised, the council's plans were accepted.

The stone paths you now see on the approach from Pegwyn Y Bwlch are there to prevent further erosion by excessive footfall and are built without damaging the original surface below.

The new fence and steps around the tumulus are constructed with locally sourced green oak which should last for many years to come.

The holes in the side of the tumulus were repaired and filled in according to directions from CADW in such a way so as to retain the integrity of any underlying archaeology.

Altogether it has been an exercise filled with anxiety and controversy, but whatever you think about what's been done, the area is starting to look like someone cares. In any project like this, involving several agencies, there's always going to be compromises but as far as I'm concerned I believe the work carried out so far is a good start.

This gives us something to build on and I want to encourage those moaners and groaners online and in letters to the press to join us, voice their opinions and together we can make Twmbarlwm and Mynydd Maen into the landscape we want for our future generations.

Terry Evans



Above: The car park during construction.

Right: Finished?

Below: The new floating path and repaired steps on the west side of the tump.



The Society Gets a Lordly Patron



Pictured on the top of the Tump are, left to right, Terry Evans (Chair), Lord Don Touhig, Sam Southall, Rob Southall, Grace Lloyd and Chris Evans MP.

Lord Touhig, MP for Islwyn for 15 years before entering the house of Lords, has always shown a great interest in the work of the Society. So when he was approached to become our Patron he was only too happy to agree.

Current Islwyn MP, Chris Evans, also offered his support and accepted the position honorary president of the Society

So when we invited Lord Touhig and Chris to come and visit the mountain they were keen to hike to the top to take in the views and witness the damage created by off-roaders.

Whilst at the top they presented the society with a donation of £75.

Tump Watch

... a success story

THE LAST FEW months of 2011 witnessed a marked increase in the incidence of illegal off-road activity occurring upon Twmbarlwm, and the nearby Mynydd Henllys and Mynydd Maen.

Twmbarlwm and its many visitors have had to suffer high levels of anti-social behaviour for many years. But, after an alarming level of off-road misbehaviour over the Christmas period Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society (CTS) members were prompted to declare that enough was enough!

One of the key aims of the society is – ***“to protect and preserve the ancient monument on the summit of Twmbarlwm (the “Tump”), and its immediate environment”*** – therefore the continual nuisance and physical damage being inflicted upon the ancient landscape resulted in members declaring their unanimous opinion that a concerted effort was now required to ensure that the problem was tackled effectively – once and for all!

Everyone has their own horror stories of what is happening, or what has happened upon Twmbarlwm, particularly in respect of illegal off-roading and fly tipping. However, members were keen to ensure that they did not base their case for action upon emotional anecdotal information. It was recognised that an accurate and up to date picture was needed regarding what was actually happening in the area now. It was against this backdrop that Tump Watch was born.

At a CTS Meeting in early January 2012, members agreed to start the ball rolling by carrying out a monitoring exercise on Twmbarlwm. The aim of the exercise was to evidence the levels of both anti-social behaviour and the legitimate recreational use of the area by members of the public. It proved to be the starting point for a wider action plan agreed by the society to ensure that the necessary action to tackle the problems being experienced upon Twmbarlwm and the surrounding areas involved all of the relevant authorities.

Putting the Plan into Action

The Twmbarlwm area was subsequently monitored by volunteers from amongst the CTS membership on every weekend over a seven week period in January and February. Members were on site between 10am and 4pm on each day of the exercise. The results of each day's monitoring were captured in activity reports and collated for sharing with the police. Incidents that were considered serious enough to warrant reporting to the Police at the time were reported via the “101 – Single Non-Emergency Number” for them to take any action that they deemed necessary. A total of 19 such calls were made during Tump Watch.

Whilst some weekends were busier than others in terms of the incidence of anti-social behaviour, offences were witnessed on every single day of Tump Watch. This was well illustrated by the total number of vehicles used for off-road purposes recorded during the seven weekends of monitoring. They included 92 motor cycles; 19 4x4 motor vehicles; and 14 quad bikes – and remember, this was during the worst winter months.

As already emphasised the exercise was not solely focused upon monitoring and reporting the level of anti-social behaviour. Of equal importance was the opportunity to gauge the level of recreational use of the area by general visitors, such as walkers and mountain bikers, and whenever possible to engage with such users to raise awareness of both the plight of the area, and the existence and work of CTS. Whilst there was a natural tendency to want to focus upon the abuse being inflicted upon the area, the need to gauge the level of legitimate recreational usage was also important to assist in the future development and maintenance of Twmbarlwm.



Just a few of the photos taken by CTS volunteers during Tump Watch



During the course of Tump Watch in excess of 600 legitimate recreational users visited the area. Walkers (including dog walkers) were by far the prominent group amongst this figure, which also included a significant number of cyclists, horse riders and legitimate car users. The volume of visitors recorded during the exercise fully justifies the recent commitment made by Caerphilly County Borough Council to provide a car park on the southern side of Twmbarlwm, and to carry out repair work upon the Tump.

Wherever possible, Tump Watch volunteers engaged with the visitors to the area and found that everyone that was spoken to was fully behind the monitoring exercise and the need for effective action to be taken to tackle anti-social behaviour in the area. Many expressed annoyance and frustration at the noise and damage being caused by the “significant minority”. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, many did not appreciate that such illegal off-roading was unlawful. An unsolicited comment from one walker spoke volumes for the need for action. He said, “I didn’t realise that scrambling was allowed up here!” That says it all!

The Results

So what exactly did 7 weeks of Tump Watch actually achieve?

- It showed that anti-social behaviour (which includes damage caused to the landscape, litter, fly tipping, noise pollution and causing alarm to other visitors) involving illegal off-road motor vehicles on Twmbarlwm and the adjoining areas of common land is both commonplace and widespread every single weekend.
- It enabled the numerous “legitimate” visitors to the area to be alerted to the plight of Twmbarlwm and to learn of the existence of the Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society. Public support for concerted action to be taken by the police and the local authorities to prevent the anti-social behaviour in the area was unanimous amongst the numerous visitors that were spoken to.
- It provided the stimulus for the further development of the existing positive working relationships with Heddli Gwent Police, and the Caerphilly and Torfaen County Borough Councils, and other interested parties. The holding of a Partnership Public Meeting at Cross Keys Rugby Club on 22 February and the introduction of a dedicated Landscape Crime Officer to police the area as part of a pilot scheme are evidence of this development of effective working relationships.

These are all very positive outcomes for Tump Watch, making it a resounding success. The exercise has provided a very clear picture as to what is actually happening on Twmbarlwm on a week by week basis. It clearly is a very busy place which needs constant monitoring and effective management if it is to be preserved for all to enjoy. This is something that the Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society is determined to pursue in partnership with others.



The appointment of PC Simon James and the signs he has put up round the area are a direct result of project “Tump Watch”



All around the Twmbarlwm area the Forestry Commission has had a significant impact on the landscape over the last eighty years and many farmsteads that eked out a living have long disappeared to be replaced by conifer plantations. On the Rhyswg, Mynydd Maen, Mynydd Medart and Twmbarlwm, farms with evocative names such as Gunnock (Cnwc), The Trwyn, Gnoll, Hafod Fach, Darren and Cwmbyr Uchaf and Isaf have left little on the historical record for us to remember them. CTS secretary Rob Southall, currently researching these 'Lost Farmsteads' has uncovered many poignant stories of the people who once lived in these often inaccessible and lonely places and this is the abridged story of just one of those.

Hafod Owen: a Lost Farmstead in the Gwyddon valley

THE NANT GWYDDON valley which reaches the Ebbw River at Abercarn is the less accessible and little known sister valley to the Nant Carn valley situated just a mile to the south. In the nineteen seventies and eighties this valley was opened to tourism, walks were way marked and a picnic site was constructed. However, the limited access by road to the upper valley, coupled with the development of the forest drive in neighbouring Cwmcarn, meant that the Gwyddon developments were neglected and finally abandoned. The valley was then closed to public traffic and returned to its main function as a Forestry Commission plantation. Visitors to the Gwyddon today will often find themselves alone in this beautiful valley of pine trees.

The Hanbury family of Iron masters of Pontypool built a furnace in the upper valley in 1580 and from then on the broad leaf woodland on the steep valley sides was utilised extensively by charcoal burners; however the Gwyddon has always been the more remote, sparsely populated and agriculturally marginal of the two valleys. Evidence from historical documents suggests that there were only two farms in the Gwyddon and these were located high above the valley floor on nooks, or platforms, cut into the hillside. In this first article Hafod Owen, the less well known of these two locations, will be discussed.



David Jenkins – great, great grandfather of CTS member Alun Booth – succeeded his father William in farming at Hafod Owen in the middle 19th century.

Location

If you were to visit Hafod Owen today you might be excused for thinking that anyone could ever live in such a place. Situated high above the Gwyddon valley at grid reference ST24662 96874, it is hard to imagine a more inaccessible location for a house in south-east Wales. However, for around three hundred years there was a working farm at this location which provided a living for more than a few generations of hardy Welsh hill farmers. In the nineteenth century Hafod Owen consisted of a farm house and outbuildings. Due to restricted space it was unlikely to have been a Welsh long house; rather it may possibly have been a 17th or 18th century cottage or bwthyn. The buildings occupied a narrow shelf, on a steep hillside towards the top of Graig Hafod Owen on the eastern side of the valley.

The 1839 tithe map seems to indicate two parallel buildings with their eastern/right side gable end built into the hillside and another smaller building located between these. On the 1879 Ordnance Survey map it appears that a further larger building was added. The farm was situated just off the old track way out of the Gwyddon valley up to Mynydd Maen Common.

On nineteenth century maps, the buildings are surrounded by extensive 'in-fields', where livestock would be brought to pasture at certain times of the year.

Early occupation

Robert Weeks' excellent academic paper 'The View Across the Valley' provides extensive discussion on the early occupancy of Hafod Owen. He provides documentary evidence from 1631 showing the creation of the field system at Hafod Owen at a time when new farm buildings were being built across Mynydd Maen.

Also: In 1653 two women, Gwenllian John and Jane John Morgan proved upon oath that their grandfather, Morgan Thomas, and their father, John Morgan Thomas, held, a tenement and parcel of land called Havod Owen, its bounds are described thus:

"From a brook called Gwithon, upwards to a brook called Nant Havod Owen, up to the spring thereof, and from that spring as straight as may be, to another spring of a brook called Nant Ci, and along the said brook called Gwithon again, and a great



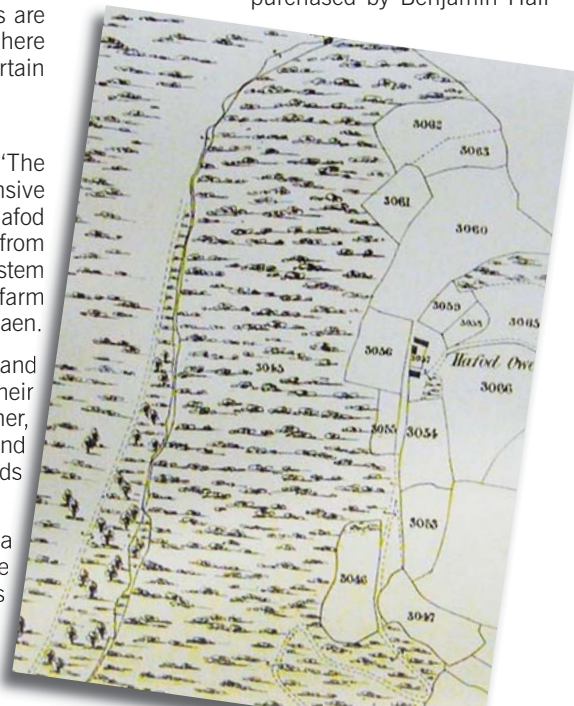
CTS Member Alun Booth had an emotional visit back to the remains of Hafod Owen where his ancestors farmed in the nineteenth century

part thereof is and were enclosed by the said Morgan Thomas."

Robert Weeks' evidence suggests Hafod Owen to be a squatter encroachment of the early seventeenth Century. However, it would be fair to assume that there was a shepherd's dwelling and possibly some outbuildings at the location, which would have been occupied only in summer months (hafod means, summer dwelling). This may have originated in late mediaeval times when transhumance was practised by the Cistercian monks of Llantarnam Abbey. It was they who maintained two granges, Cilonydd and Rhyswg, on Mynydd Maen.

Nineteenth century occupation

Hafod Owen was certainly a tenanted working farm throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The farm, and surrounding land, was the property of the Manor of Abercarn. In the late eighteenth century this was owned by the industrialist Samuel Glover. In 1808 it was purchased by Benjamin Hall



(1778-1817) of Hensol Castle on behalf of Richard Crawshay of Cyfarthfa, Merthyr Tydfil. A few years after this date the ownership was transferred to Hall who was by this time married to Charlotte Crawshay and a business partner of the Crawshays. The Abercarn Estate was subsequently incorporated into the Llanover Estate following the marriage of Benjamin Hall the younger (1803-1867) to August Waddington of Ty Uchaf Llanover. It may be assumed the Llanover Estate still own the land, although it is now leased by the Forestry Commission and occupied by conifer plantations.

The first mention of Hafod Owen in the nineteenth century comes from Land Tax Assessments of the 1820s: *Avod Owen Tenant: Lewis Williams (Owner: Benjamin Hall Esq)*

Censuses taken between 1841 and 1911 record two related families living at the farm: Jenkins and Davies. In 1841 and 1851 the census lists William Jenkins as the farmer of 40 acres, his wife Mary, and their children Sarah, David, and Cicelia plus William Morris, a single live-in agricultural labourer. There is no census data available for 1861 but the 1871 and 1881 census lists John Davies as the tenant farmer, his wife Sarah, who was the daughter William Jenkins the previous occupant, and their children Mary-Ann Lewis, John, William, and Leah. John's father Francis (aged 74) also lived with them in 1871.

By 1891 the Davies family had re-located to Trwyn Farm on the opposite side of the Gwyddon valley although John Davies continued to be listed as working both farms. The Davies family left the Trwyn and moved to Crumlin farm in 1916. However, there is a reference to a Lewis Davies at Hafod Owen in the Kelly's directory of 1923 – this is likely to be John Davies senior's son Lewis. John Davies is also listed as farming at the Trwyn. However by this time it is likely to be John Davies the younger who lived at Crumlin farm.

Forestry Commission Tied Cottages

By the mid 1920s the Forestry Commission had taken possession of Hafod Owen. Due to the lack of documentary evidence it must be assumed that they cleared the site of previous buildings before constructing several new buildings for the use their forestry workers. Only one of these, the combined pig sty and stable, remains in situ. At least four families, the Walkers, the Boobyers, the Reeds and the James lived at the location between 1927 and 1943.

Eva Reed, who is now 92 and lives at Cwmbach near Aberdare, resided there with her family from 1928 to 1942. Her dad Tom Boobyer worked for the Forestry Commission planting conifers and cutting ferns in the Nant Carn valley around Twmbarlwm. She remembers that he would walk over the mountain to work each morning, leaving home at 6am and not arriving back home till 6.30pm. For this long day's labour he earned 35 shillings (£1.75) a week.

During this period there were two attached bungalows constructed by the Forestry Commission in the mid 1920s. In addition to these a bake house and toilet were located at one end (near the forestry track) and a stable and pig sty at the other end, adjacent to the path over to the spring. There was a large water tank on the far side of the bake house, which was



Forestry workers in the Gwyddon Valley - Tom Boobyer is 4th from the left

used for washing but never for drinking. Drinking water came from the spring. Eva and her sister Eunice used to take cans down to the spring to carry water back to the bungalow.

Eva describes the bungalows as looking like a hospital from a distance: there were five windows on the front of each and the doors were all on the same side. Her bungalow had three

country wines from rhubarb, parsley and elderberry. People from Abercarn used to come up for a drink before rolling back down to the village sometimes the worse for wear.

After the Boobyers had lived at Hafod Owen for a little while, Eva's mother became desperately ill with TB. She was confined to bed for 6 months. The doctor advised that she should drink a quart of milk a day. Eva and her sister would walk over to Gadylynydd farm to collect the milk. This was probably Cilonydd, which was at that time kept by a Mrs Williams. They walked down to the end of the valley over the brook and then up the hill side to Ysgubor Wen to get there.

During the late 1920s and early 30s Eva would walk to school with Horace Hammett and Mary Lewis. Horace lived at Brook Bungalow near where the picnic site was later located and Mary lived up at the Trwyn farm, which by this time had been converted into three tied cottages by the Forestry Commission.

When the Boobyers moved to Hafod Owen in 1928 the Walker family were already in residence in the larger bungalow. They were a gypsy family and Mrs Walker would walk down to Abercarn in a straw hat with her basket to sell pegs. Her husband, like all the men, worked on the forestry. The Walkers had three children. Bert, her son, Irene, and a younger daughter called Lottie. Eva describes Mrs Walker as being very much attached to her youngest daughter Lottie, whom she would not let out of her sight, even to go to school. Eventually the Walkers moved to Llanybydder in west Wales. After the Walkers left around 1935, the Reeds moved in. Eva eventually married Les Reed and they had a very long and happy married life at Cwmbach. The James family came after the Reeds moved to Lydney in the Forest of Dean. This would have been about 1940. A bad fox attack on a freshly bought brood of hens was the straw that broke the camel's back on their life up there. And Mr and Mrs Boobyer finally left Hafod Owen to return to Cwmbach in January 1943.

At the moment it is not known whether the buildings were occupied after the Boobyers left. There is still a great deal of research to be done on Hafod Owen so this chapter remains firmly open for revisions. If any reader knows anything about the later years at Hafod Owen would they please email me at rob@twmbarlwm.co.uk.

Rob Southall



On the doorstep of Hafod Owen are Mrs James on the left and Mrs Boobyer who lived there until 1943

bedrooms, a large lounge and a kitchen which contained a salting stone for salting the pork from the pig. Apparently this stone took up so much space in the small kitchen it was also the general work surface. To heat the bungalow they burned wood on the solitary fire. Later they had coal delivered which was dropped off near Ysgubor Wen on the other side of the valley. Eva's sister and dad would go over with the horse and cart to collect it. The coal was kept in the bake house. On a Saturday the family would go down to Abercarn shops, where they would stock up with bags of Spillers flour with which to make bread.

The family had two fields. One was up on the flat above the bungalows and one going down the mountain. They kept a pig, a horse and chickens. Each bungalow also had a garden where they grew cabbages, carrots and turnips. Mrs Boobyer also used to make excellent

William Brace

John Venn brings us another historical insight into another worthy son of Risca...

IN THE LATE 1860s when William Brace was only a few years old, his father deserted the family, leaving William's mother with six sons aged from a few months to 17 years old.

William was born in a cottage just below the canal in the Darren area and was baptised in Risca Parish Church on 26th November 1865. By 1871 the family had moved across the valley to the Copper Works area (also known as the Chemical Works).

William attended Risca Board School and the day after his 14th birthday followed his elder brothers to the colliery. After the Risca Colliery explosion in July 1880, the family moved to Abercarn and the sons worked in Celynen Colliery and, after its reopening, Abercarn Colliery (Prince of Wales).

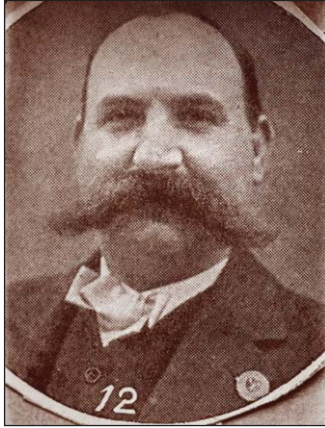
Following the lead of one of his older brothers, William became involved in Trade Union activity and he also joined the Baptist church in Abercarn becoming acquainted with Rachel Russell the eldest daughter of a prominent local Baptist family and they were married on 4th May 1887. Almost 12 months later they had a baby daughter, Violet, but just a few months later tragedy struck. Whilst attempting to blow out an oil lamp late one night, the flame flared and Rachel's clothing was set alight and she died the following morning from her injuries.

The Russell family looked after the baby; William went into lodgings and threw himself into his Union work. In 1890 he 'cut his last coal' and took up the post of South Wales Agent for the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. Cashing his monthly payment at the local post office he got to know the postmaster's daughter, Ellen (Nellie) Humphries and in 1891 they married at Charles Street Baptist Church, Newport.

In October 1898 following a, disastrous five month strike, the various disparate miners'

unions in South Wales finally came together to form the South Wales Miners Federation with William as its first Vice President.

At the start of the 20th century, he lost the nomination to stand for election at Merthyr to Keir Hardie but was elected to the national committee of the Miners Federation of Great Britain and was a member of a Royal Commission into coal supplies. Then, in 1903, he was adopted as candidate for South Glamorgan constituency beating the sitting Conservative at the subsequent 1906 General Election.



William Brace, a man of whom Risca should be very proud.

He held the South Glam seat at two 1910 elections and in 1912 he became the 2nd President of the South Wales Miners' Federation. When the National Government was formed during the First World War William was one of only three Labour Party MPs to be appointed. In 1916 he became a member of the Privy Council and so the Right Honourable William Brace.

At the end of the First World War Lloyd George called a snap election under new constituencies; South Glam had disappeared but William was adopted for the new seat of Abertillery and was returned unopposed.

At the end of 1920 William caused consternation by resigning his parliamentary seat and his Presidency of the FED to take a Government Civil Service post as Chief Labour Adviser to the Department of Mines. However, he continued his lay preaching in the local Baptist churches, became a local JP and acted as a consultant to various Government Departments.

In 1936, William and Nellie moved to Newport, possibly due to Nellie's health as she died the following year. He continued to live in the house being looked after by a housekeeper but was still active being guest of honour at the Pontyvaun Grammar School annual prize giving.

With the election of a Labour Government and the subsequent Nationalisation of the Coal Mines, two of William's lifelong aims, having been achieved he died, at home, on 12th October 1947.

Risca Quiz



- Where do Risca RFC play home games?
A) Pandy Park. B) Baths Field.
C) Stores Field.
- Which pub is known as 'The Mill' by the locals?
A) Masons Arms. B) Rolling Mill.
C) Fox & Hounds.
- What was the original name of Hill Street?
A) Foundry Row. B) Steep Street.
C) Jones' Cottages.
- What Risca landmark was built about 1805 & demolished in 1902?
A) Risca Manor. B) The old church.
C) Long Bridge.
- What did the Southwood Jones company manufacture in Risca?
A) Iron machinery. B) Bricks.
C) Metal Print Type.
- What is the name of the park opposite the Post Office?
A) Risca Field. B) Waunfawr Park.
C) Tredegar Grounds.
- What is the dedication of the Parish Church?
A) St Mary. B) St Margaret.
C) St Michael.
- What moved from the side of the canal to the side of the main road in 1894?
A) Police Station. B) Grammar School.
C) Moriah Chapel.
- What was the name of the original house at Oxford House?
A) Ty Mawr. B) Grove House.
C) Station House.
- Who is the MP for the Islwyn constituency?
A) Mike Davies. B) Chris Evans.
C) Alun Williams.

Answers on page 7

The Jubilee Beacon

On Monday 4th June the society mounted an event to light a beacon on the summit of Twmbarlwm to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee - one of thousands around the UK. At 419m above sea level the Twmbarlwm Beacon could be seen for miles around. It was lit by our youngest member, Sam Southall, at precisely 10.20pm and it acted as the trigger for the organisers of the Ridgeway, Newport, beacon to light theirs.

We estimated that up to 200 people attended and our stewards, made up of the 1st Abercarn Scout troop and member volunteers had to be on their mettle to safely guide visitors up and down the mountain in the pitch dark. We'd like to acknowledge the help of PC Simon James, farmer Howard Vickery and MRS Communications (who loaned us radios) which all contributed greatly in the safe organisation of this memorable occasion.

Pwll Tra: In Search of the Pool of Avarice

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED the local folk tale of the Pool of Avarice around twelve years ago in the book 'The Pleasant Land of Gwent' by the much loved Newport author Fred Hando. Hando's story relates that there was once a great house at the site of the pool and one stormy day the inhabitants were visited by a poor relative who was in need of food and sustenance. However, the lady of the house turned him away with nothing but curses. As he retreated away from the house he was aware of a sudden violent movement of the mountain as the hillside opened up, crashed down and buried the house. Since that time the local shepherds claim that strange cries are heard to come from the reedy waters of the pool on stormy nights. These are thought to be the cries of the lost ones buried below, doomed forever by their avarice.

I found the tale intriguing and wanted to find out the actual location of the pool. Fred Hando claimed that to reach the pool you should walk northwards from 'Twyn Barllwm' along the green path until it is possible to see a small reservoir on the eastern slope below the path. You then turn left downwards past a farm to a hollow where a deep pool is found in winter. From Fred Hando's description this sounds like Henllys, and Alan Roderick in his book 'The Folklore of Gwent' seems to confirm this. Further research and chats with local residents seemed to point to Pwll Tra, a reedy pool situated in a hollow high on the western slopes of Mynydd Henllys not far from the head of the

Nant Carn Valley. Local author Ralph Collins, who has undertaken extensive research on the valley, confirms this. He also confirmed that there was a cataclysmic landslide in the valley many years ago.

While researching last year for my 'Lost Farmsteads of the Nant Carn Valley' walk I decided to include the pool en-route and did a little research of my own on the internet. To my delight I came across the poem featured alongside. On our 'Lost Farmsteads' walk last July I recited the poem at Pwll Tra much to the amusement of the assembled members of CTS and Islwyn Ramblers. Recently I contacted Arwyn Evans the author of the poem who resides in Crumlin. He told me that the Welsh word 'Tra' could be a shortened form of 'Trachwant' which translates as 'Avarice' or 'greed'. I am therefore happy to conclude that we have located the actual 'Pool of Avarice'

If you want to visit the pool I would recommend parking at car park two on the forest drive and taking the short walk along the cycle track towards the head of the valley. Take the first left turning you come to. It is a lonely place with a forlorn and eerie atmosphere. I would imagine that to visit the location as the dark clouds are rolling in late on a summer evening would send shivers down even the strongest willed person's spine. Not for the faint hearted! The poem featured has been published previously. It is a Haibun, which is a style of Japanese poem combining prose and haiku poetry.

Rob Southall



The photograph of the Society's walk to the Pwll Tra was taken by Phil Jenkins – more may be found on his website at <http://www.industrialgwent.co.uk>

Haibun: Pwll Tra'

On the slopes of Mynydd Maen there is a hollow with a quiet pool. A sullen place in gathering storm. So it is, as I sit in grass listening for the cries of those trapped far beneath. Damned by their greed.

Mew of the buzzard
through whispering leaves
the wavelets ripple.

I bring to mind the story of this place, this 'Pool of Avarice': Long ago a wealthy house stood here. There were poor relations living on the far side of the hill. One day, as times grew harder, the poor man in desperation crossed the ridge. I see him crawling down towards the house. Knocking on the door. Waiting. The clouds grow black above the hill. He knocks again. The door is opened. Slow.

Rich fowl, bacon, fats and herbs
The warmth of bread, of
conversation.

A tall and haughty dame stands in the entrance. Her gimlet stare shows that she knows me - why I'm here.

Just bread. A crust or two from last week's loaf,

I hear my pleading tones, truly my wife and children starve.

The tall one laughs. Come see, she calls within, what's dragged itself from out the sin where it belongs. They come. They curse me with my just deserts. Spit on my head. Withdraw into their world.

The tall one, last to go, gives me some words direct: Naught do I have to spare the likes of thee. Be off before I loose the dogs!

I start back up the hill looking for solace in the gathering storm. A searing light. The bark of thunder pounds the earth. The rock begins to shake. In fear I fall and turn. Below, the bowels of the hill burst wide. Swallow the farmhouse whole with those inside to leave a bare, dry hollow place.

Slowly I slide. Come to a gentle rest in grass.

The birch trees hang
dark skies drop rain
the limp pool rings my silence

Arwyn Evans

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please remember that annual subscriptions became due in January 2012. Renew your membership and pay your subs as soon as possible and encourage others to join in our campaign to SAVE TWMBARLWM.

Risca Quiz Answers

1. C, 2. A, 3. A, 4. C, 5. B, 6. C, 7. A, 8. C, 9. B, 10. B

A Vision of Home!



Twmbarlwm is, and always has been my “vision of home”. I see it every time that I look out of my kitchen window or walk out of the front door. I also used to have a fantastic view of it whenever I relaxed in the back garden of my previous home. And my spirits always rise whenever I see Twmbarlwm in the distance as I make my way across the Second Severn Crossing... even though I know that the payment of an exorbitant toll fee is looming ahead!

As a Newportonian, the sight of Twmbarlwm in the distance has always been a welcoming and reassuring presence throughout my life. The “vision of home” phrase that I use to describe my relationship with the mountain was first coined by a nonagenarian ex-next door neighbour of mine. He would often relate the story that the picture of Twmbarlwm was one that he always kept in his thoughts during his army service throughout the Second World War. He would speak passionately about this vision of home being one of a small number of things that kept his spirits up during his dark days away at war.

I had my first glimpse of what was to also become my “vision of home”, as a young boy

of about 8 or 9 years of age. I grew up in the Bettws area of Newport, and it was back in the mid 1960s that I first recall seeing Twmbarlwm from one of the many vantage points that existed around the estate. Of course, those were the days when children could play outdoors unsupervised and in relative safety for hours on end. My featured photograph was taken recently from one of those vantage points... on Monnow Way, at its junction with Crouch Close.

Even as a young boy I was drawn by the aura of this magnificent looking hill with the “pimple” on the top in the far distance. I think that the “pimple” tag was very much a Bettws thing, as I later learned much later that Risca people, who are lucky enough to have Twmbarlwm right on their doorsteps, called the very distinctive hill top, the “Tump”.

A few years were to pass before I would actually visit Twmbarlwm. I can't remember exactly how old I was but I must have been at least 12 years of age before I was allowed to venture up there. I did so with a gang of friends. I still remember the day quite vividly. It was a Good Friday, an occasion that for whatever

reason has always been a particularly popular day on which to visit Twmbarlwm. The whole area, and the Tump in particular, seemed to be full to overflowing on what I recall was a very warm spring day. The extra special atmosphere created on that first visit by what I remember was such a very wide range of people, left a significant and lasting impression on my young mind. We got home quite late, feeling absolutely starving and shattered. What was a big adventure for us at the time left me feeling inspired about the mountain and the great outdoors generally.

That first visit marked the start of what was to become a lifelong love of Twmbarlwm, during

which time I have climbed up to the Tump on at least a few occasions every year. With much more leisure time available to me over the last few years I have been able to become a far more frequent visitor, making the 8 mile round trip trek from my home at least every couple of weeks. It is always an exhilarating and liberating experience, and at the risk of sounding a touch masochistic, I still relish the serious cardio vascular effort involved in striding the four miles or so up Mountain Road to the top of the Twmp, and then revelling in the sheer joy that standing at the top of the mountain brings... a real heightening of the senses! Whilst on a clear day the 360 degree views are absolutely fabulous, even a miserable day offers a rewarding experience, bringing its usual sense of isolation, detachment and sanctity.

The story of my relationship with Twmbarlwm is very much a personal one. Of course it is special to me... it is a landscape that I love! But it is no more special than anyone else's Twmbarlwm story... of which there must be many more just waiting to be told?

Carl Close



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

www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

E V E N T S

Committee Meetings are held on the first Monday of every month – 6.45 for 7pm at Crosskeys RFC.

If you 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 our Programme of Events tends to slow down due to obvious reasons – but we hope present a full diary of events in the autumn and winter. Dates have not been finalised as yet but proposed talks include:

The Geology of Twmbarlwm and Mynydd Maen

**The Romans in South East Wales
Flora and Fauna of Twmbarlwm
History of Cwmcaru Colliery.**

Check the website regularly for more information on events – and if you have any ideas for an event please contact Rob Southall via the website: twmbarlwm.co.uk

Public Rights of Way

Ever wonder what some of those terms and dotted lines mean on Ordnance Survey maps? Here's a quick reference of some you may encounter on maps of Twmbarlwm.

FOOTPATH

A footpath over which the right of way is on foot only.

BRIDLEWAY

A bridleway, over which the right of way is on foot and riding on or accompanied by a beast of burden. (In 1968 this was changed to allow cyclists too, but cyclists should give way to walkers and horseriders).

BOAT

A byway open to all traffic (BOAT) is a special category of way recorded on definitive maps. It is a carriageway and thus a right of way for vehicular traffic, but one used mainly for purposes for which footpaths and bridleways are used i.e. by walkers and horseriders

RESTRICTED BYWAY

A restricted byway over which the right of way is on foot, on horseback or leading a horse and a right of way in or on vehicles other than mechanically propelled vehicles, thereby giving the right of way to cyclists and drivers of horsedrawn carriages.

ORPA

Other Routes with Public Access – Some ORPAs will be public and some will be private but an OS map does not show the rights attached to it. The unitary authority that has adopted a marked ORPA will verify its public rights.

GREEN LANE

Note: Green Lane is a term with **no legal meaning**. It is a physical description of an unsurfaced track, normally hedged and often, but not always, of some antiquity. It may be a footpath, bridleway or carriageway or may carry no public rights of way. If not on a definitive map then the public has no right to use it.