



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

*Ymroddedig i ymchwilio, adfer a gwarchod  
Mynydd Twmbarlwm - tirnod mwyaf eiconig Gwent*

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## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2013-14**

*Presented to the AGM 3rd November 2014*

### **NEW TRUSTEES**

At last year's AGM we were already aware of the Tidy Twmp award and that was about the only thing on our minds at the time – so it was with that in mind we needed to persuade some expertise onto our group of Trustees.

Thus Dave Parry and Howard Vicary became Trustees for their expertise in land management and construction - and although Norman Liversuch didn't want to be a Trustee we invited him to Trustees' meetings for his expertise in dealings with councils and the government.

Rob Southall came back as a Trustee and Dave Standing came on board to help with archaeological projects.

At the first meeting of the new Trustees Terry was voted in as Chairman for the second year, but unfortunately nobody could take on the role of Secretary or Treasurer – so it was decided those roles would be shared by Terry, Sue and Maggie who remained membership secretary.

And thus we started the year with a strong team to bring the Tidy Twmp project to fruition.

### **TIDY TWMP**

Before last year's AGM the society had been awarded funding through the Welsh Government's Tidy Towns initiative to the tune of £24,00 which was further topped up to £29,000 by Caerphilly County Borough Council. Previous secretary Carl Close and Roger Stevenson had started the ball rolling on the project but it was up to the new Trustees to see it through. The Welsh Government money had to be used by the end of March 2014

Most people here were involved with what we went on to achieve so for the sake of the report I will just list the chronology of events:

**November 2013** we were still at the paperwork stage – finalising the plans of what we wanted to achieve – getting permissions from CCBC and Llanover Estates – getting prices for the work involved.

**December 2013** – saw the real start of the work – the appointed contractors led by Howard Vicary and Dave Parry installed the two kissing gates on the southern slopes of the Twmp and the two lines of fencing across the slope and down to the car park were also installed.

**January 2014** – and the contractors finished the fencing on the east side of the Twmp and installed the new stock gate. It was at the end of January we had our first monthly Volunteer

workday when a small army of helpers hauled wood out of the forestry to install in between the fences.

Also during January the council came along and tarmacked the car park – which was a job they'd been charged to complete the previous year – it was nothing to do with the Tidy Twmp project.

**February 2014** – Work was held up due to some atrocious weather conditions but as soon as it cleared the contractors went back in to install the floating paths leading from the stock gate.

Another Volunteer workday had a team of helpers cutting down trees on the common and dragging them to the fences.

**March 2014** - The contractors completed the planting of some 4,000 whips in between the fences. The design of a stone cairn had been finalised and yet the local stone mason was unable to complete it before the deadline of the end of March so he sub-contracted it to a mason from north Wales who came and spent three absolutely freezing days to complete it.

To mark the completion of the project we invited some local dignitaries to plant a few trees – Chris Evans MP, Jocelyn Davies AM and Gwyn Price AM – all came along to help us mark the occasion.

Thus the major part of the project was finished – we had organised the erection of over a kilometre of fences, planted nearly 4,000 trees and laid 20 metres of stone pathway and many members got their hands dirty by helping with the tasks.

The total project had cost £24,000 and the final returns were presented to the Welsh Government before the deadline of the 30th March. They were so impressed with the work that it was paid within a week with no queries – sadly the money did not stay in our account for very long as it was paid back out to CCBC immediately who had acted as our bankers for the duration of the project.

The Welcome signs on the cairn and the ladder sign were unfinished at that stage – but they have since been completed and installed.

Part of the agreement of the funding was an extra £5,000 from CCBC which is earmarked for the provision of interpretation boards to be installed at the car park – these are still in progress and will hopefully be completed over the winter months - there was no time constraint on the use of this money.

## **THE SOCIETY AFTER TIDY TWMP**

April 18th, Good Friday, we had the usual “Hot Cross Bun Walk” which again was another success. It's impossible to estimate the exact number of people who turned up for this event – but it is most certainly in the hundreds – our distribution of Hot X Buns which this year were donated by Tesco's made us about £50.

Rob Southall arranged a few talks for us as follows:

- Maddy Gray – Cistercian Grange Farms – over 30 attended and the night netted us over £70 (includes new and renewed memberships)
- Toby Jones – The Newport Medieval Ship - over 30 attended and the night netted us over £30 (our proceeds from raffle run by Charles Ferris on behalf of the NMS project).

- Rob Southall led a walk to Pwll Tra, or the “Pool of Avarice” – poorly attended, but those who did come were impressed by the pool and enjoyed the day.
- Peter Brown of The University of South Wales gave an interesting talk on local customs and traditions

To continue the success of the Tidy Tump project (indeed it was a requisite of the award) we decided the last Sunday of every month should be a volunteer workday. A dozen people turned up for the first one at the end of April – but each one since have only seen a handful of people – the same group each time.

Work completed on those days have included:

- a litter pick on each occasion;
- keeping the culvert near the gate clear (on the first occasion this was seriously flooded and a torrent of water washed down Mountain Road)
- clearing fly-tipping – there’s been two quite large occurrences;
- painting the gate to the ORPA
- bracken bashing – keeping the bracken low around the newly planted trees;
- tea and biscuits – have been supplied on each occasion and many passers by have benefitted from this too

It has been noted that the siting of the stock gate installed on the eastern side of the tump has proved to be inconvenient due to cattle congregating there and seriously churning up the pathway – a decision has been made to move it 50 yards towards the forestry side – and to place more hardcore or another floating path around the stile to improve the ground in that area.

## **THE COMMON and THE ORPA**

In April it was revealed that the land on which we work had changed ownership to Pontypool Park Estates (run by Jack Hanbury Tenyson). Jack has been a member of CTS since its inception and he is very supportive of our work – he came to the tree planting ceremony organised for the local MPs and he has since prepared a document giving us permission to work on the land belonging to them.

The track leading from the car park towards the ridgeway and leading back to Henllys is designated an ORPA (Other Route for Public Access) and lies within the land now owned by Pontypool Parks. So Jack Tenison is playing an active part in defining the ORPA and is working with the Commoners and CTS to restrict unlawful access onto the ridgeway.

PC Simon James also had meetings with Torfaen CBC to define and waymark the route with the aim to close it to traffic – it appears that will not be possible but at least Torfaen were persuaded to install the signage on the ORPA to help the policing of the common.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership has remained fairly constant – at around 40 paid up members – but the Facebook group continues to grow and is presently 230. We are currently having a recruitment drive to

remind people to pay their annual subscription and to convert more Facebook members to fully paid up.

## **FINANCE**

Opening balance was £599.79

Closing balance is £6,137.48

Membership and monies raised through events is similar to last year – but, of course, the bank account has been a bit more active this year due to the grant money – and we also received a generous donation from Cwmbran Community Council of £500.

Please note that the final balance still includes £5,000 which is earmarked for interpretation signs to be sited at the car park and closer to the Tump itself – these items are still in preparation.

## **SUMMING UP**

Since the Tidy Twmp project was finished it seems to me that most of the membership think that our work is complete. Maybe it is up to a point – but the Twmp still needs our diligence to protect it from those with no respect for our environment. We must continue our litter picks, fence watch and landscape repair.

There are still areas of our original mission statement we have not yet addressed. We have yet to progress research into the archaeology of the area - which was possibly the prime reason for improving and protecting the area in the first place.

There's other areas of interest such as the flora and fauna, where we have already started discussions with Gwent Wildlife Trust in the hope to engage them in making a study of the area to give us a better knowledge of what we need to do to improve the ecology and bio-diversity Twmbarlwm.

I must also mention the major problem facing Twmbarlwm over the next few years and that is the closure of the Forest Drive. CTS has already proclaimed it's support for Rob's "Friends of the Forest Drive" campaign and we need to ensure that we are part of any discussions and decisions made by NRW and CCBC – because whatever happens on the Cwmcarn side will impact on the Risca and Cwmbran side.

So you see there is still a great deal of work to be done - I believe the society will go on, must go on. If we want the future of Twmbarlwm that we originally set out to create, we need to engage with the wider community but we really need more support from all our members.

Thank you

TERRY EVANS  
Chairman