

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN DYFFRYN CLYDACH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Dear Resident of Dyffryn Clydach

Twenty years have passed since I was last Chairman of Dyffryn Clydach Community Council. It was then that the Council started producing a Community Review in order to make known its activities to residents. I have always believed in the importance of communication and I am pleased to see from the contents of this first issue of the new Ymlaen that it has become a two-way process in that several organisations from within the community have contributed details of their activities so that we can all become aware of what is going on in Dyffryn Clydach. Long may this last.

At the end of November, the Council is embarking on a programme to decorate and repair the Memorial Hall as a short term measure until it becomes financially viable to begin the second phase

of major improvements. As you know, the roof, foyer and toilets have already been replaced and it is hoped that it will not be too long before work on replacing the kitchen, committee room and walls of the main hall, along with improving access for wheelchairs at the rear of the building, can commence.

As you will see in this issue, the Community Council is organising a number of events for the Festive Season. Please give them your support, if you are able.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

Sincerely

Lyn Thomas

## IRONWORKS ARCHWAY REVEALED

For the past few years, officers of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council have been monitoring the condition of the wall between the iron works' No.2 Blast Furnace and the pavement adjacent to it on Longford Road. An inspection last December revealed that the wall was in imminent danger of collapsing and the area adjoining it was immediately fenced off.

Re-building the wall, however, was not as straightforward a task as it would seem. Funding to undertake the work had to be obtained, and, as the furnace is a listed building, a proposal on how the

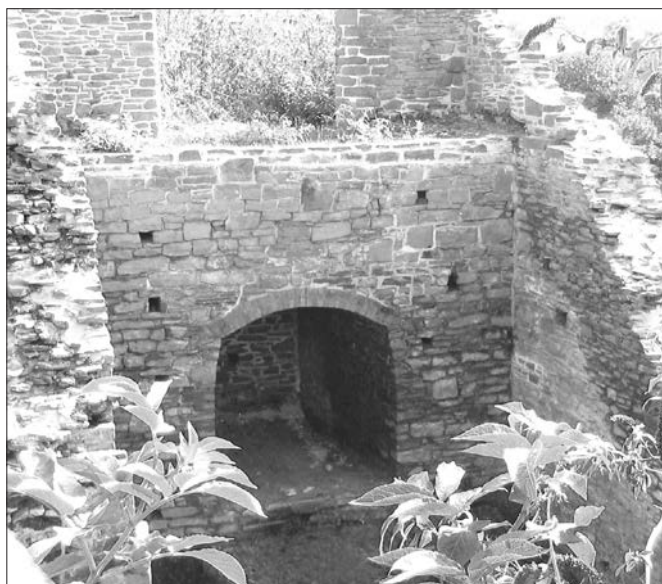
work should be carried out had to be submitted to Cadw for approval. Cadw, meaning, "to keep" in Welsh, is the agency of the National Assembly with responsibility for protecting and conserving the historic environment of Wales.

The proposal submitted did meet with Cadw's approval and the work of demolishing the wall commenced. In no time it was realised that a considerable volume of rubble lay behind the bulging wall, which would have to be moved for health and safety reasons. Cadw agreed to this but stipulated that an archaeologist would have to be present during the operation. This stipulation, although essential, delayed progress and added considerably to the cost of the work.

Upon removing the "fill", workmen came across a large archway and tunnel hidden beneath it. As yet, nobody has come forward with an explanation of the purpose the structure served in the iron making process. If you have any idea, please let us know.

Following this discovery, it was jointly agreed by Cadw and NPTCBC that it would be a pity to hide such an architecturally attractive piece of our heritage behind a stone wall so it was agreed to point the stonework of the furnace to make it safe and replace the demolished wall with sturdy iron railings.

A big "Thank You" to the parties involved for making this important part of our area's heritage available for all to enjoy.

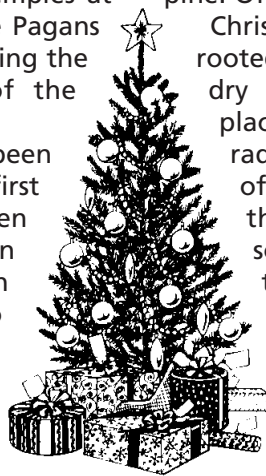


# Care for fresh Christmas Trees

For thousands of years the evergreen fir tree has been used to celebrate winter festivals. Christians use it as a sign of everlasting life with God. The Romans used fir trees to decorate their temples at the feast of Saturnalia and before this the Pagans used branches to decorate their homes during the winter solstice as it reminded them of the forthcoming spring.

For over a thousand years fir trees have been used in Germany as Christmas trees. The first Christmas tree came to England in 1841, when Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's German husband) had a Christmas tree set up in Windsor Castle. Charles Dickens helped to popularise Christmas and the Christmas tree in the middle of the century. In Victorian times, the tree would have been decorated with candles to represent stars. Because of the danger of fire, in 1895 Ralph Morris, an American telephonist, invented the electric Christmas lights similar to the ones we use today. One of the most famous Christmas trees is erected every year in Trafalgar Square in London. It is given by Norway in recognition for the help the UK gave Norway in the Second World War.

The cheapest tree on the market is the Norway



spruce. Unfortunately, this tree is most liable to needle loss. The blue spruce is better at retaining needles but for 'needlefast' species choose fir or pine. Of these, the Nordman fir is the most reliable.

Christmas trees can be bought as cut trees or rooted. Because Christmas trees hate the warm dry atmosphere of our homes, try to avoid placing your tree near the heat of a fire or radiator. To prolong the life of a cut tree saw off the bottom couple of inches of trunk so that it might drink freely. Put the tree somewhere cool and sheltered until it is time to bring it in for decoration. Either re-trim the base or put it straight into a water-retaining stand. Remember to check the water daily and do not let it dry out. Any rooted trees will need to be kept moist. For planting in the garden after Christmas the container grown trees survive best.

You can leave them to grow another year in the pot before transplanting to a larger one or planting out. Make sure you acclimatise the tree first and don't just plant it out straight away.

Remember, after Christmas you can take your Christmas trees to collection points where they will be chipped and recycled.

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## LONGFORD SHORT MAT BOWLS CLUB

Short Mat bowls is a brilliant indoor sport and is spreading on a worldwide basis. It is a scaled down version of the indoor bowling that is seen on television, except that it is played on portable lightweight bowling carpets which are rolled out in seconds and are easily rolled back up after use. The game is played like other forms of the sport, with full sized bowls being used to bowl up and down the carpet. Short Mat bowls is a completely mixed sport in which men and women compete equally together.

The Longford Short Mat Bowls Club is affiliated to the Glamorgan and Wales Bowling Associations. During the year it competes in the West Glamorgan League, playing matches against clubs such as Pontlliw and Tonmawr.

Members meet in Dyffryn Clydach Memorial Hall on a Wednesday evening (from 7.00pm) either to play home matches or to practise ready for away matches. Some members have played in the County matches and two members have played for Wales. Members also make use of a Monday morning (from 10.00am) to enjoy a game of bowls as the hall is open to anyone who would like to have an opportunity to try the game. There is a warm invitation to come along. All equipment is available and plenty of help will be given to those who would like to HAVE A GO! Bowls is an easy game to play and enjoy.

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## Longford Parent and Toddler Group

Longford Parent and Toddler Group is a group meeting in Longford Memorial Hall for a couple of hours twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, from 9.15am during term time only.

Babies, toddlers and young children up to school age learn to play and socialise together. Parents, grannies and carers also enjoy meeting others over a friendly cup of tea.

New members are welcome. If you are interested contact Susan Lewis on 01792 817433.

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## *Autumn term in Mynachlog Nedd*

November is a busy month for pupils in the junior school, starting with a book fair, then "maths week" during which a high profile is given to maths. People are invited to do work with the children, and parents are invited in to maths lessons. Pupils from years 3 and 4 visit Llancaiach Fawr as part of their work on the Stuarts, and year 5 pupils attend a residential course at Margam.

The Christmas Fayre will be held at 2pm on Friday 26th November, and the Christmas concert in St John's Church is on Thursday 9th December at 6.30pm.

# DYFFRYN CLYDACH VOLUNTEERS RIVERCARE

This well known local group was formed in 1988 to carry out practical conservation work. It helps with the management and maintenance of nature reserves and other sites of scientific importance.

Group Secretary, Des Fowler writes, "We manage woodlands and hedgerow, build bridges, steps, stiles and hides. We have also created a number of ponds, but our main work has been footpath creation and maintenance. The work we do depends on the time of year. Activities include hedge laying, coppicing, tree planting and drystone walling. We have also worked closely with the Keep Wales Tidy and Keep Britain Tidy Campaigns for the last ten years, with litter picks and major clean-ups of litter blackspots in the Clydach Valley. The volunteers are currently working on a series of projects to create a network of footpaths between Coed Bach and the old blast furnaces at Neath Abbey. There is a core of six individuals who meet weekly to undertake the practical construction works, and also oversee matters of planning and design. They are supplemented by our Tuesday Group which consists of between six to fifteen in number from Ysgol Hendre School, Bryncoch."

The Group has now become a Rivercare Group, adopting the River Clydach, making remarkable improvements to the River Clydach. Having worked on the footpath network for the past 16 years, access on a large section of the river is no longer a problem. A number of well used picnic sites have been created. Short term aims include improving wildlife habitats, and Chairman, Steve Absalom, has been on

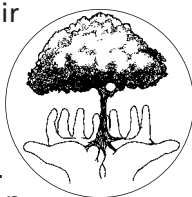
an otter training day set up by Keep Wales Tidy, with partner organisations, specifically for rivercare groups. The aim of these events is to provide tailored training to enable groups to carry out their voluntary work with skills and confidence. The morning session was a classroom introduction to otters and otter habitat, and in the afternoon there was an opportunity to put that information into practice in field visits. Dyffryn Clydach Rivercare Group is shortly to construct a log pile otter holt in the Clydach Valley where otter spraint has been found. An otter survey is also planned. Baseline survey work is well under way, with map making and data plotting to identify specific work like removal of knotweed and balsam. For further details and work date sheet, contact Steve Absalom on 01792 813465.



Dyffryn Clydach Volunteers cutting Japanese Knotweed

## Dyffryn Clydach Environmental Group

The group has now begun their autumn programme meeting for maintenance work in Coed Bach. The main task is to clear the rhododendron which has been growing vigorously there.



Rhododendron ponticum is a non-native species, which, like the Japanese knotweed the Himalayan balsam, is an invasive plant that can threaten the native species and wildlife of the countryside. The sycamores can also take over from the broadleaved native trees like the oak, ash and holly. By thinning out these invasive plants to increase the light on the woodland floor the native species such as bluebell and wood anemone will be encouraged to grow.

Meetings are held in Longford Memorial Hall at 2pm on the third Friday of each month. Everyone is welcome to come along and learn about the interesting countryside around here.

The new countryside code has now been published and is available free of charge from council offices and public libraries. This recommended booklet emphasises the need for the protection of our dwindling countryside and recycling of our waste materials.

## RECIPE ♦ RECIPE ♦ RECIPE

As so many people have asked for it, here is Chairman Lyn Thomas's family recipe for

### BARA BRITH

Ingredients:

- 1 lb/ 450g mixed fruit
- 6 tablespoons of sugar
- ½ pint/290ml of cold tea
- 1 lb/450g of self-raising flour
- 1 tablespoon of marmalade
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon of mixed spice
- Honey to glaze

Method:

Soak the mixed fruit overnight in ½ pint/290ml of cold tea with 6 tablespoons of sugar.

Next day stir in the flour, spice, marmalade and finally the well-beaten egg.

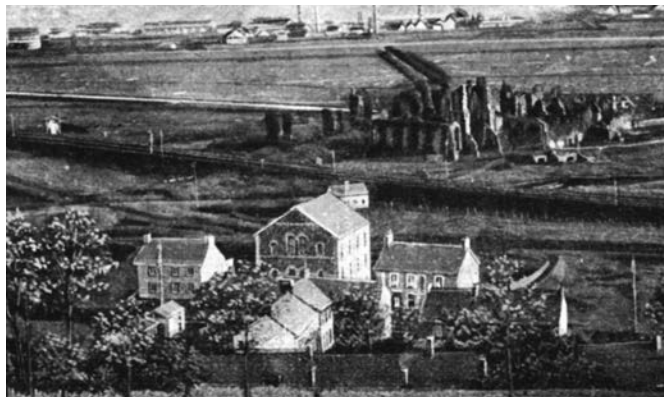
Line a 2 lb loaf tin with greased paper (grease the tin well). Put the mixture in and cook for 1¾ hours in a moderate oven 325° F, Gas mark 3. Turn out onto wire rack and glaze with warm honey.

If you are not on a fat-free diet, try spreading some salted Welsh butter on a slice.



# EBENEZER CHAPEL

The demolition of Ebenezer marks the end of a long association between our area and the Wesleyan Methodist movement. Although the chapel had long ceased to function as a meeting place for the denomination, its very presence served as a reminder to the older generation of its importance in the history of Dyffryn Clydach.



John Wesley first visited Neath in 1758, where his preaching gained his movement many followers. In 1788, after several further visits, one of the first Wesleyan chapels in Wales was built in the town and Wesley was present at its opening. Many walked from Neath Abbey and Skewen regularly, as often as three times on a Sunday, to the services at Neath which were held in both English and Welsh but, because of the success of the cause and the pressure on the use of the building, it was decided by mutual agreement that the Welsh services should be held elsewhere. These were held for many years in Neath, but as the premises there were far from satisfactory, it was decided to build a new chapel at Neath Abbey.

Methodism had been active in the Neath Abbey area from as early as 1811 where a successful Sunday School had been established in the house of William Owen, a collier, who lived, it is believed, in the remains of the gatehouse that stands next to the Infants school. Services were also held in the house of Eynon Deer at Penyard, which happened to be the house nearest to the blast furnace of the iron works prompting the claim that the devoted Wesleyans of the time had no fear of the "fiery furnace".

Although it had been agreed to build the new chapel at Neath Abbey, there remained a problem. Land was at a premium in this highly industrialised area and nowhere could a suitable site be found on which to build it. By a stroke of good fortune a certain Hugh Lloyd had recently taken up residence at Glyn Leiros farm. Lloyd hailed from Llandeilo where he still owned land, and as a landowner he had the right to vote there at Parliamentary elections - the vote was denied to the majority of the population at that time. An election was about to take place, with Lord Dynevor, the owner of Neath Abbey and the land surrounding it, as one of the candidates. So, in exchange for the guarantee of his vote in Carmarthenshire, Lloyd persuaded Lord Dynevor to lease a parcel of land at Neath Abbey for the purpose of building a chapel - the first place of worship to have been built in the neighbourhood

since the closing of the monastery some three hundred years earlier.

Contemporary accounts show that the land was acquired in 1831, the lease signed in 1832, and the chapel opened in 1835. It appears, however, that well before the land was secured, the architects of the venture were confident that the building of the chapel would go ahead for the account book of Watkin Morgan, the Circuit Steward, who along with Edward Edwards was responsible for the construction work, shows that he purchased quantities of Quebec yellow pine, Quebec deal, red pine, memel deal and "Heart" laths to the value of £35 15s 6d from Grove and Company, The Strand, Swansea between October 1830 and July 1831. The completed chapel measured 35½ feet by 27½ feet. It was furnished with twenty benches or pews, which provided seating for a hundred people. All seats were taken by the day following the opening and these were paid for a quarter in advance.

According to "Yr Eurgrawn" (a publication of the Welsh Wesleyans) of August 1835:

"The cost of building came to two hundred pounds, and through subscriptions and donations at its opening over a hundred pounds was collected, which shows the great generosity of the friends of the Wesleyans and inhabitants of the area. A hundred pounds remained outstanding, which was met by ten people who loaned the amount interest free; it is hoped to repay them from the monies accrued from the seats over the coming years. There was never, it appears, greater need for a chapel than in the above area; for our preachers had been preaching at Neath in an old miserable and inconvenient room, for well over twenty years, with the cause languishing because of the place in which worship took place being so unsatisfactory."

One cannot tell whether this achievement in clearing the debt so quickly was due to the generosity of the people or the comparative wealth of the inhabitants of the area.

In 1840, Watkin Morgan on behalf of the Swansea Circuit - of which, Neath Abbey was a part, wrote to ask the Conference to "abandon the 6d. per member Tax because of poverty in the principality and that it should be replaced by a published collection".

Following the Revival of 1858/9, "Yr Eurgrawn" of August 1859 relates that because the chapel had become too small to hold the congregation on Sabbath evenings, and too small to accommodate the Sunday School, a decision had been reached to build a gallery. The congregation went about raising the money with the same fervour as before and soon had collected sufficient not only to build the gallery but to repair and improve the chapel both inside and out, making it a building worthy of being called, "House of God."

Towards the end of the 1870s, increasing numbers of worshippers prompted the need to build a new, larger chapel. Mr. Richard Owen was chosen as architect, and it was he who drew up the plans and supervised the construction work free of charge. The foundation stones were laid on the 23rd of October

1879, but due to unforeseen difficulties, work was not completed for another year and a half. The new chapel was ready by the 16th of January 1881. It was six times larger than its predecessor, cost £1200 to build and its official opening lasted a fortnight.

A catastrophe was narrowly avoided on the first day of opening. A snowstorm had raged early that morning and gale force winds had driven the snow between the slates and on to the ceiling of the new building. Because it was so cold, it was decided to light the lamps to heat the building for the afternoon service. When the congregation started arriving for the service, they were greeted with the sight of water dripping from the ceiling on to the seats and floor below. Equipped with ropes and buckets, the young men of the chapel climbed into the loft and removed the remaining snow. This prompt action enabled the



service to eventually proceed.

The twentieth century saw Ebenezer become one of the leaders in the field of choral singing in the area. In addition to the usual masterpieces, other works were performed and such was the choir's popularity that the Gwyn Hall would always be full to capacity for their performances.

During the Great War, no fewer than fifty members joined the action. Almost half of their number were injured, and David Charles, Edwin Evans, Robert Jones, David J. Jones, David Thomas Lewis, John Lang, Josiah Phillips, Richard John Pile and Frank Spittle made the ultimate sacrifice – either on the field of battle or as a result of what they suffered during the war.

It is reassuring to know, now that Ebenezer has been reduced to rubble, that what will arise in its place will not be the usual bingo hall or supermarket but another place of worship which, hopefully, will ensure continuity in religious worship in this corner of the community for generations to come.

#### References:

Roberts, G. Bedford. Hanes Wesleaeth Gymraeg ym Mynachlog Nedd  
Clement, James. Ymneilldueth Sciwen a Mynachlog Nedd

Ar dudalen hon ceir peth hanes am gapel Ebenezer. Tua dechrau'r deunawfed ganrif bu Ymneillduwyr yr ardal yn brysur yn sefydlu canghennau o wahanol enwadau drwy'r fro, a chrefydd byddai'r testun gan amlaf yn y cartref, ar y stryd ac yn y gwaith. Ac nid cytuno byddai'r brodorion bob amser wrth drafod pynciau diwinyddol. Cawn enghraifft o hyn gan D. Rhys Phillips yn ei lyfr swmpus ar hanes y Cwm lle mae'n adrodd hanes ffræe rhwng dau o grefftwyr y gwaith haearn yn ystod eu hawr ginio. 'Roedd John Walters yn Undodwr selog, a chredir mae'r Crynwr Joseph Pollard (tad William Pollard - yr arlunydd enwog a dynnodd darluniau mor gywrain ar borslen Abertawe) oedd y llall. Bu'r dadlau tanllyd rhyngddynt yn ddigon i ysbrydoli Pollard i lunio'r pennill canlynol:

Tydi yw'r Sosin pengam,  
Llygad-gam cas ei wedd;  
Shon Wallter fydd dy enw  
Tra'r ochor hyn i'r bedd.

Pan groesi'r ochor arall,  
Ti dynnu wyneb trist;  
Yn wrthrych gwawd y diafol  
Am wadu duwdod Crist.

## Thank you... Diolch yn fawr...



Chairman of Council Lyn Thomas and former Councillors Norman Thomas and Emrys Walters at a recent presentation evening to mark their long-standing service to the community of Dyffryn Clydach.

## A BUSY TIME FOR THE MOTHERS' UNION

The Mothers' Union celebrated the anniversary of the International Year of the Family by arranging a poetry competition for children, the theme of which was "My Family." Many excellent entries were received and were on display in St David's Church during fair week, following which they went forward to be judged at a Family Day in St Fagans. Members have had a busy autumn programme and next year sees them going to Ipswich for their General Meeting, and a pilgrimage to the Llyn Peninsular has been planned.

A relief fund provides emergency financial help to communities which have been affected by disaster.

The network of M.U. workers across the world offers help quickly and food supplies and medicines can be bought quickly locally and distributed to those worst affected, with women and children often being the most vulnerable. Fundraising for overseas has seen emergency financial help sent to Burundi where refugees have received grants to pay for essentials, to Tanzania where people have been affected by drought and to the Congo to help people rebuild their lives shattered by ethnic conflict. Help was also sent to Vanuatu after a massive cyclone hit the island when money was sent to purchase emergency supplies of clothing, food and basic medical supplies.

## Editorial Comment

The intention to relaunch Ymlaen was announced before the local elections earlier this year, and here, at last, after months of planning, is the new edition – your community paper, produced by your community council. Dyffryn Clydach is a pleasant place in which to live, and we are proud of our community. It is appropriate that we have a paper representing all aspects of Dyffryn Clydach, and this is reflected in the various articles on our heritage and environment, and on the activities of social and charity groups.

We are confident that Ymlaen will become an essential public link, giving everybody in the

community a channel of communication. It will be published on a bi-annual basis. To include anything for publication, if you have articles of general interest - details of a local organisation and its activities, something unusual which has happened recently or something which is planned for the future, then we should like to hear from you.

The Editor: Mrs Margaret Smith, 49 Hill Road, Neath Abbey, Neath. SA10 7NP

The editorial team of **YMLAEN** is prepared to consider publishing items from individuals or organisations within the Community. Please contact your councillors or branch members for more information.

## What is NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH?

A Neighbourhood Watch scheme has been operating in our community for over ten years, and, in the opinion of the activists, is one of the biggest and most successful crime prevention initiatives ever. Behind it lies a simple idea, and a central value shared by millions of people around the country. That idea is:

Getting together with your neighbours **CAN CUT LOCAL CRIME.**

Everyone knows that the police are there to fight crime, but they need help to do an effective job. Neighbourhood Watch is all about an active partnership with the police.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes can:

- Cut crime and the opportunities for crime.
- Help and reassure those who live in fear of crime.
- Encourage neighbourliness and closer communities.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes can be large, covering, for example, most of the households on an estate or they might involve just half a dozen houses. It depends on the area and what people living there want.

The Dyffryn Clydach scheme encompasses the entire electoral ward plus the Brookfield estate – although there is currently no representation from Brookfield at the monthly meetings of the group. So called “Street Leaders” meet on a regular basis. In our case, the meeting is held on the second Monday of each month (except a Bank Holiday) at 7.00pm in the Longford Memorial Hall Committee Room.

The question is often asked:  
“What can Neighbourhood Watch schemes do?”

Answer: “A lot!”

They can target local crime problems and take action to prevent them. Most crime is opportunist, committed on the spur of the moment, or when a car or a house is left unlocked. Traditional Neighbourhood Watch activity has focused on the immediate vicinity of homes, with members looking out for anything suspicious, or helping their neighbours as necessary. However, more and more schemes are broadening their range of work.

Targeting local problems such as vandalism or anti-social behaviour is within the scope of a well organised scheme, having, as it will, a “fast-track” access to the various agencies who are equipped to cope with such problems.

They can get the best advice regarding crime prevention devices and their installation, often arranging for the work to be carried out at no cost to vulnerable residents. It is worthy of mention that many residents in our area have benefited from the work done by the Unitary Authority “Care and Repair” scheme, all arranged by the Neighbourhood Watch group.

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are not police-run and are not “political”, but to be truly effective against crime, they need to work in close cooperation with both the police and the local authority.

A Neighbourhood Watch is simply a group of residents of like mind who are prepared to preach **VIGILANCE** and **CONCERN** among neighbours.



# Get Gardening

Margaret Smith

Although there is little to do in the garden in the way of mowing the lawn and hedge trimming, the autumn and winter months are when I am at my busiest in the garden. Time spent outside now will really pay dividends later on.

It is important to clear and remove fallen leaves and all dead debris. Rake it up and either compost or destroy it. Left on the ground, it will only harbour slugs and snails and the ever present woodlice and also encourage growth of mould and mildew which are all detrimental to new growth in the spring.

Here are a few seasonal reminders for November and December.

## Lawn care

Remove fallen leaves. If the weather is mild and the grass continues to grow, it may be necessary to lightly mow, but do make sure that you have raised the blades. When putting the mower away for the winter, ensure that it is clean and dry, and put a drop of oil on the blades and all moving parts.

## Vegetables

Clear the ground and rough dig. Just turn the soil so that any annual weeds will be under the surface – they will return goodness to the soil, and save you hours of backbreaking weeding as well! Never break

it down finely as the rain water will not drain freely from it and the surface will become heavy and unmanageable. The winter frosts will break it up anyway, again saving you much time and effort.

Plant fruit bushes and, if you haven't done it already, plant out garlic cloves. Prune established apple and pear trees and fruit bushes.

## Flowers

Now the ground is cooler plant out tulips for a spring display.

Clean flower beds by removing and composting annuals, and cut back and divide herbaceous perennials. Apply mulch to provide extra protection for more tender plants. Ensure roses have been pruned and shrubs have been tied in to prevent the plants from having a weakened root system caused by rocking in the wind.

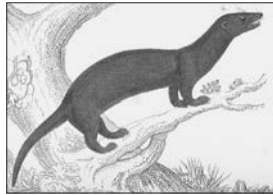
For gardening supplies and up to 50% reduction on Dobies seed catalogue orders remember to visit Longford Gardening Club. This is to be found in the garage compound off Heol Penlan and is open on Sundays between 10.30 am and 12.30pm. (It will be closed for the winter period, from 22 November until 13 February.)

## Nature notes

In July workmen constructing a new pipeline for Welsh Water near the abbey were startled when from out of one of the pipes they were manoeuvring into position sprang a young mink holding an eel in its jaws. It quickly shot off into a nearby reedbed. This was just one of a number of sightings of mink in the vicinity of the canal and the River Clydach in recent years. The mink, or American mink to give it its proper title, is a relative of the weasel, stoat, polecat and otter, and was introduced into Britain in 1929 to be bred in special farms for its fur. In North America it is still both hunted and farmed for its much prized fur, of which over sixty skins, or pelts, are needed to make one fur coat. These pelts come in a range of colours which bear names such as Lavender Hope, Cameo, Winter Blue, Dawn, Sapphire and Orchid.

A few mink would probably have escaped after their introduction, but when the wearing of fur coats became less fashionable after the Second World War to cut their losses many mink farmers just opened the cages and allowed their mink to escape into the countryside. The first evidence of mink breeding in the wild in the UK came from Devon in 1956. Now, some fifty years later, it is present in almost every watercourse in the country.

Adult male mink range in length from 48 to over 60 centimetres and can weigh up to 2 kilograms. Females are smaller. They make their nests among tree roots near the waterside or in old rabbit burrows. Breeding only once a year, up to six kits are



born in early May. Mink can live up to eight years, but rarely survive beyond the second. Fierce predators, they can swim and climb with ease and will travel several kilometres in search of food which consists of a range of small mammals, birds, fish and insects.

For a long time it was thought that mink had no predators in Britain, but post mortems on otters found dead at the roadside revealed mink bones in their stomachs. Otter numbers have made a steady recovery in recent years, whereas mink numbers, on the other hand, have declined dramatically with the number of mink present in Wales having fallen by 91%.

## ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH, DYFFRYN

Here are the details of the special Advent and Christmas services:

**Sunday 28 November 3.00pm**

Candlelight Advent Carol Service

**Tuesday 14 December 7.00pm**

Skewen Chorale Christmas Concert

**Sunday 19 December 11.00am**

Christingle Service and Nativity Play

**Sunday 19 December 3.00pm**

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

**Friday 24 December 11.30pm**

Midnight Mass and Blessing of the Crib

**Christmas Day 10.00am**

Holy Eucharist

## NEATH ABBEY WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

On 25th March Neath Abbey Women's Institute was formed and members have been celebrating its Golden Anniversary. They have enjoyed various events such as an anniversary lunch, a trip to Malvern Three Counties Show and a grand weekend in London, going to two shows and taking a flight on the London Eye.

Over the years they have assisted in projects within the local community and supported various charities. In 1997 the W.I. celebrated their centenary at Stoney Creek, Canada, where the organisation was founded and several members enjoyed a memorable visit.

Over many months they have knitted hundreds of garments for various relief organisations and their latest project involves gathering all kinds of stationery, such as writing paper, pencils, crayons, etc, for schools badly hit by recent conflicts in Eastern Europe. This will enable the children there to continue a basic education.

Monthly meetings, currently held in the Dunstan Memorial Hall, Bethlehem Road, Skewen, are on the last Thursday of each month at 7.00pm and there is a varied programme of demonstrations and speakers. Open to all ladies, regardless of age, new members would be warmly welcomed. Evening meetings finish with "a nice cup of tea!"

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### Neath Port Talbot Ramblers

Neath Port Talbot Ramblers are part of the Ramblers Association which covers the whole of the country to promote walking and quiet enjoyment of the countryside.

The group was formed in 1998 and has grown steadily in numbers which now stand at nearly eighty. Walks are undertaken every weekend throughout the year, mainly on Sundays with a varied programme of walks throughout the area from Gower to the Brecon Beacons. Weekends away are also organised. This year members travelled to North Wales, staying at Betws y Coed. They completed two excellent walks, one of which was to the summit of Snowdon.

The programme of walks can be found at local libraries and health centres and also on the internet. If anyone is interested in walking activities they can contact the Secretary on 01656 733021 evenings after 6.30pm.

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### What's on at Christmas

The following events have been booked in the Memorial Hall over the Christmas period:

**Friday 26 November, 5.00pm – Christmas Fayre**

**Wednesday 8 December, 6.30pm – Community Carol Evening**

**Saturday 11 December, 2.00pm – Children's Party**

**Saturday 8 January, 2.00pm – over 50's Tea**

## From your County Borough Councillor

Dear Resident,

I wish Ymlaen well in its aim to keep everybody in the community updated on what has happened, of what is going on, and what is about to happen in Dyffryn Clydach.

The better we are informed, the more chance we have of developing a strong community spirit.

As many of you who have contacted me in the past are aware, I have been using two telephone locations. This has now been reduced to one which will make matters far simpler. It is 813174. Do not hesitate to contact me if you think I can assist you in any way.

Now that the dark nights have arrived, it is important to ensure that all street lights are working correctly. Please contact me immediately you spot one that is out of order so that I can arrange its repair as soon as possible.

If you did not see the announcement I made in the local column of the press recently regarding nuisance and unwanted telephone calls along and junk mail, I repeat it below for your information.

You do not have to put up with people telephoning you, usually when you're sitting down to a meal or about to watch a favourite television programme, offering you car insurance, double glazing or the like. Thanks to Neath Port Talbot Community Safety Partnership who have brought the means of dealing with this annoyance to the public's attention, you can get rid of this problem quite easily. Either write to The Telephone Preference Service, DMA House, 70 Margaret Street, London W1W 8SS, or telephone them on 0845 070 0707 stating that you do not wish to receive such calls and that you do not want your telephone number to remain on the National database.

Likewise with junk mail, if you want to reduce the amount of personally addressed junk mail coming through your door, just inform the Mail Preference Service (at the same address), telephone number 0207 291 3310. It will probably take a month from the time you telephone for your request to come into effect.

Finally, with the festive season approaching, may I wish everybody the Compliments of the Season, and I look forward to working with you and for you in the coming year.

Martyn Peters

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### WATERWORKS

The two large cranes near the A465 trunk road which have been reaching to the sky over the past few months are involved in a major Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water scheme to improve the sewage system in the Neath Abbey area. The improvements, it is hoped, will solve the problems of the residents of New Road who have experienced flooding to their properties over the past few years. A statement from Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water states, "Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water is continuing its scheme in the Neath Abbey area to improve the wastewater network. The second phase of the scheme is now being planned which incorporates additional work to upgrade the local pumping station and associated rising main in the Old Road terminating at the Cross Keys Pub. The scheme is to be completed by April 2005. Work to ease sewage flooding in the area has been finished, and will be commissioned when the other elements of the scheme have been finished."