

YMLAEN

GAEAF
2017
40c

Cylchlythyr
Cyngor Cymuned
Dyffryn Clydach



Newsletter of the
Dyffryn Clydach
Community Council

WINTER
2017
40p

Additional copies available from Abbey Gate Stores and Longford Stores or the Editor, Cllr Sarah Elias
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Er mwyn cynnwys eitemau o ddiddordeb lleol cysylltwch â'r Golygydd neu'ch Cynghorwr lleol

Nadolig Plawen

oddi wrth Cyngor Cymuned Dyffryn Clydach



Merry Christmas

Best Wishes from Dyffryn Clydach Community Council

Cllr. Martyn Peters: 140 The Highlands, Neath Abbey, SA10 6PE, 01792 813174.

Editor's Note

Well the year has flown by again and I for one am looking forward to the holiday season. We have had a busy time on the Community Council and would like to thank anybody who has helped out with local events such as litter picking, tree planting etc. We hope you enjoy this Festive edition of Ymlaen and I would like to thank the contributors for their hard work. We look forward to a productive year 2018 locally but before then let me wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year. I hope you all have too many mince pies and a few sherries, see you on the other side!



Sarah Elias

Forthcoming Events

We have a few festive events coming up in Longford Memorial Hall. Firstly though, we would like to thank people for attending the recent Halloween Party which was a great success and enjoyed by over 80 children. The party was organised by Lynda Lester and Jennifer Davies who would also like to thank all those who helped out on the day.

The next children's event will be the **children's Christmas party also in Longford Memorial Hall on 25th November at 3.30pm until 5.30pm**. I am sure there will plenty of festive attire on display; get your reindeer antlers and Santa hats ready!

We are holding our annual **Carol Concert on December 20th also in Longford Memorial Hall and starting at 7pm**. There will be rousing Christmas songs and hymns from The Salvation Army band and if you stick around there will be tea/coffee and mince pies. Additionally, there will be a party for the hall users on the first Saturday in January with a 2pm start.

A TRIBUTE TO

Janice Dudley

We are all sorry to hear of the untimely death of Councillor Janice Dudley, especially in her Mayoral year where she was doing an excellent job. We, on the Community Council offer our sincerest condolences to her family and friends.

Pets Corner

The chickens enjoying the sun are all 3 years old and belong to Karon Hopkins. Their names are Buzz, Strangely Brown and Albie. They are ex battery farm hens that were rescued by the British Hen Welfare Trust so they could enjoy a well-earned retirement. Prior to Karon giving them a home they had lived in cramped over-crowded conditions never having been outside and at 18 months were destined for slaughter as their egg laying had slowed down.



If you would like your pet to feature in future issues of Ymlaen then please e-mail or drop in a photo and some information about them, names ages etc.

Local Boys Achievements

Congratulations to two local boys, Jac Mills and Joshua Hickman for their excellent achievement of being chosen to play rugby union for Neath Schoolboys and being presented with ties for their efforts. Both boys also play for Bryncoch. We wish the boys continued success with rugby in the future.



Jac Mills



Joshua Hickman

SO MUCH HISTORY ON OUR DOORSTEP

Nearly a year ago a group of local people met in Longford Memorial Hall for an afternoon of 'show and tell'. People were encouraged to bring along any photos or items of local interest. Following a very well attended and lively afternoon the Dyffryn Clydach and Bryncoch Historical Society was formed - to help keep this interest alive and record this history and changes in this area.

Throughout the year the Society has arranged monthly meetings with local speakers who have amazed me with their knowledge and enthusiasm for the history of this area and the families who lived here. I have been lucky to attend talks about Neath Abbey and the Tudor mansion. Also the Rev Henry Hey Knight who played an important role in the excavation of the site.

I can now recognise the bridges built locally by the engineering genius Isambard Kingdom Brunel (shamefully I have driven under one nearly every day unaware of who had built it) following a wonderful talk on the subject.

There have also been talks on Madame Adelina Patti - the Queen of song, Peter Price and the Quaker dames, Joseph Tregellis Price - local Quaker ironmaster and philanthropist, and the Romans in Neath - which makes you wonder what history is buried just under our feet.

The Society and Working with Nature Project arranged two walks which included areas of local history and interest with Robert King. On both occasions the weather was not kind to us and we got very wet.

In September the Friends of Neath Abbey Iron Company and Cadw arranged a weekend of guided talks around both Neath Abbey and the Iron Works with historian Bill Zajac - explaining the influence the Ironworks had world wide! All from our doorstep.

In a short article I am only able to give a very brief overview of what has been going on in the area and must apologise to anyone I have missed out. If you want to know more please join in. There are monthly meetings of the Society, and a Facebook page which gives people the opportunity to be involved, add photos and join in discussions about the history and changes to this wonderful area.



Letter

To the Editor,

"Congratulations" to the Community Council on the excellent summer edition of Ymlaen. Packed with information and articles of local interest, it made absorbing reading.

In response to article on grass cutting, I welcome the work being done with Neath's Working with Nature project.

Regarding the Cwrt Herbert Pond, admittedly, at the first sight the cutting back of vegetation in the spring did appear somewhat drastic, but nature is a great healer and the plants soon regenerated to provide a much richer habitat for the wildlife there. With less dense vegetation, and less cutting at the banks of the pond, different plants are flourishing. Buttercups and rosebay willowherb add a splash of colour early in the year, and fluffy seedheads are welcomed by the many sparrows and finches. Soon the bulrushes will be adding to the variety of food available to the birds. The long legged grey heron is an early morning visitor to the pond and at the beginning of the year could be seen patiently looking for food, mainly fish and amphibians or even small mammals and birds. It has been a joy watching the moorhens nesting and then bringing up their chicks. I wonder how many of them will stay to rear their own families here next year.

I am told that a kingfisher has been spotted here and I have seen damselflies darting across the water, and large blue hoverflies.

The water quality in the pond seems to be much clearer despite the unnecessary copious amounts of bread thrown into by wellwishers who erroneously think that they are helping the wildlife. Indeed, they are just giving the birds junk food. Those same birds are much healthier foraging for their own natural foodstuffs.

I deplore the rubbish and litter which is chucked into the pond. I have recovered bottles, cans and plastic, baskets and shopping trolleys, bicycles, waste bins and numerous balls. This is spoiling the pond for all of us. Please let us try and maintain this error which, right in the middle of a busy urban setting, is an important haven for our nature wildlife.

Margaret Smith

September 2017

If you wish to send a letter to the Editor, please e-mail or post the letter to the addresses at the top of Ymlaen or hand to your local councillor.

In the last issue of Ymlaen we asked for suggestions for names for the piece of land between The Highlands and Longford.

We have received two so far, Highland Green and Cae Bach. If you would like to make a suggestion please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Me and Mee

A tale of something that happened when I was six

I still remember that day an uninvited stranger called at our home and my Mam and Dad let him in. I was just six years old. By the time he left our house, although I didn't know it then, my life would be changed forever.

To tell the story properly we need to go back a long time, to the 1950's, which is when I was born. So come with me awhile and let's go on a trip together, back to a time that many of my age remember with fondness. In a way, the fact it is the 1950's is academic, because this is essentially a story of childhood, of innocence and awakening. And all of you are welcome to share in my nostalgia.

Back to the Past, or 'the land of lost content' (A. E. Housman)

Like many people in those days we lived in a "prefab" house on one of the many new estates built after the Second World War. There were few luxuries in our lives. Even tins of Fray Bentos corned beef were highly prized.

But as a six year old I was largely spared the pressures that life heaped on my struggling young parents. For me these were halcyon days.

My playtimes were conkers, marbles and hide-and-seek, and lasted forever. We kids on the estate also played "kiss chase". It never lasted long enough.

Summers seemed longer and hotter than nowadays, and I swear the sky was more blue. The summer of 1959 in particular is regarded as one of the longest on record.

The night sky was different then too, the emptiness in it as black as the Devil's heart. Our Moon and the stars pierced the darkness like holes in a blackout blind. It is exactly the same sky now, of course, but with so much light pollution we are denied this awesome view of the Cosmos unless we seek it out in special places.

And back in those days Nature itself seemed busier, more urgent than now. Starlings jostled for space on telephone lines, and impossibly heavy bumble bees and gossamer-winged butterflies competed for prime spot on top of vibrant purple thistles. If someone sees a thistle nowadays they are reaching for a spray with which to kill it. And when did you last see even one starling?

Where, oh where have all the animals, birds, insects and plants gone?

On television we kids had Watch with Mother, a daily feast of children's shows like Andy Pandy, Bill and Ben, Rag Tag and Bobtail, and The Woodentops. All in glorious black and white. Not for us the blue "onesie" and deep red blanket of today's Iggle Piggle. Our TV was monochrome. It was our lives that were technicolour.

Six year olds still believe in Father Christmas (as should adults if they had any sense). What excitement in the house on Christmas Eve back then when a Christmas stocking was hung on the bedframe, knowing that in the morning you would actually have an apple, an orange and nuts placed into it by Santa. Plus maybe a Cadbury's Selection Box alongside. Christmas stockings nowadays still have an Orange and Apple, but now it is more likely to be a Terry's Chocolate Orange and an Apple iPhone. And the only nuts must be us parents who provide them!

A stranger calls and is invited in

Then one day a door-to-door sales rep called to our home and by the time he had left, my parents had made two significant, and for them very expensive purchases.

The first was a Family Bible. God only knows why they bought it because none of the family were religious in the slightest. But its quality was and still is something to behold. I believe that my father, who loved books, was overcome, hypnotised by its beauty as surely as if Aphrodite herself had walked into the room. Even its smell is still enchanting. That Bible was always cherished in our home. My parents are long gone now but it still sits on my bookshelves. And will do until I am no longer here to care for it, even though I am an atheist.

The second purchase turned out to be more life changing. It was a ten volume set of Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopedia. What a world it revealed to a young boy who had never travelled further than a few miles to Porthcawl and then only by bus on the miners' shutdown. Thousands of pages crammed full of facts, stories, science, literature, geography, history - even a bit of French! If you have never heard of these encyclopedias I guess you are a child of the 1960s or later.



Mee's books were Manna from Heaven for a six year old. Here I first read how Horatius kept the Bridge, how the Pied Piper rid Hamelin of its plague of rats, and here I learned the tragic fate of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War. I saw drawings of the Rings of Saturn and the Giant Red Spot of Jupiter and learned that the nine planets (then) orbited the Sun. And here I saw that most of the world was still coloured pink on the maps, part of the extensive British Commonwealth - which only a few years before had been the British Empire. A whole World and the infinite Universe and I, a boy living in a prefab on a backwater estate in a village in Wales, was able to hold it all in my hands.

continued on the next page

Me and Mee

Arthur Mee changed my life. His works set off something in me, a

- continued passion for books and the written word that remains unquelled to this day. My partner complains that you cannot move in the house for books. But for me a home where they did not exist would be as empty and soulless as a nursery without children.

Arthur Mee: a life less ordinary

It is only recently that I looked up Mee's biography. Briefly, Arthur Henry Mee, born in Stapleford, near Nottingham in 1875. His father was a railway fireman but also a staunch Baptist and a committed political activist with liberal values. Arthur was one of ten children. He left school at fourteen, to read copy to the proof-reader on the local paper. By the age of twenty he was the newspaper editor. He contributed many non-fiction articles to magazines and joined the staff of The Daily Mail in 1898. He was made literary editor five years later. He married in 1897 and in 1901 the Mees had their only child, a daughter. He was a writer, journalist and educator and best known for producing The Harmsworth Self-Educator, The Children's Encyclopedia, The Children's Newspaper, and The King's England. The final edition of his Children's Encyclopedia was published in 1964. It had first been produced in 1908, in instalments as a fortnightly magazine. Arthur Mee died in London in 1943.

Then, in May 1973, Mee's works made the news as far away as Jammu and Kashmir, a state in Northern India. Muslim clerics uncovered an illustration of the Archangel Gabriel dictating portions of the Koran to Muhammad, in Mee's work, The Book of Knowledge. This book had been stored in a local library for decades. The discovery caused riots which left four dead and over a hundred wounded. The clerics called for the head of the book's author, much to the bemusement of Indira Gandhi as Arthur Mee had been dead for forty years. The sale of the encyclopedia

was then banned by the Indian government, although it was already out of print by that time.

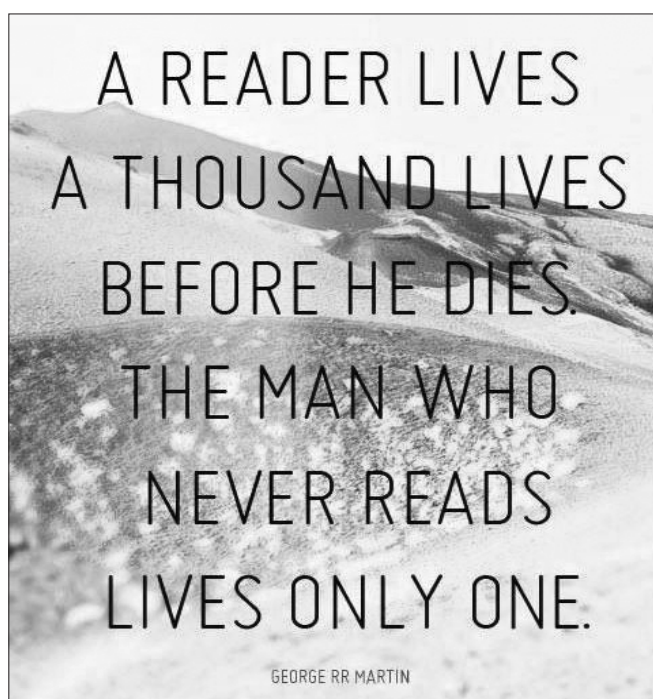
Here's to good friends lost

But in the countries that make up the West, I wonder how many of my contemporaries' lives have been enriched and changed by Mee's work? I would certainly love to have thanked him for the influence he had on my life. Is this not the yardstick by which all people should be judged, that difference we make in the lives of others?

As I have already said, I am an atheist, but in case I am wrong about the Hereafter (and it has been known), I would just like to say this:

If Arthur Mee is up there somewhere, walking with the Angels - Dad, buy him a pint for me, will you? And wish him a Merry Christmas!

Anon



Certificates received by residents for excellent gardens from Councillor Martyn Peters - Autumn 2017

Longford's Land Army Lil

Mrs Lillian Saunders (nee Brennan), happy to be called Lil, Lily or Lillian, was born in 1924 and spent her childhood in Pen-y-Dre. Nowadays she is a very sprightly, smart lady who brought her family up in Longford, however people may not know that she was called up to serve in The Land Army during World War Two in 1943. Lillian comments; 'I was called up when I was eighteen but they deferred me because I had a job at The United Welsh Office'. Lillian was offered the same choice as many women; she could either work in the munitions factory or join the Land Army. She chose the latter, training in Cardigan and eventually transferring to Swansea where she became a rat catcher; 'My friend was in the Land Army and she said that killing rats or pest control was the best job'. Although Lillian worked five and a half days a week rising early and walking long distances, she recalls her Land Army years fondly, in part due to the places she worked in. She was stationed on Gower, rat catching for the farms there in Rhosilli and Port Eynon, and working outdoors suited her; 'I was brown as a berry.' Lillian and working partner and friend Hilda, 'a pretty little blonde', also managed to bring home produce from the farms to their families; 'We picked up everything for our mothers, potatoes, chicken, everything, rabbits for my mother and father.' Lillian lodged with Hilda's family in St Thomas who treated her as one of their own and as Lillian comments 'was a good cook', same as her own mother. She says; 'They were a fabulous family, we had a whale of a time'. When the girls went on a trip to London to stay with Hilda's Aunt, they took her a surprise; 'We went to London once on the train and took two rabbits. We didn't have money so we took two rabbits.'

The generosity of some local farmers ensured that rationing didn't affect Lillian too badly and Hilda's mother even gave them money for fish and chips on Fridays which they weren't supposed to have! However some farmers were more generous than others, 'Some farmers down the Gower, posh people, never gave us anything; they wouldn't give you hot water for your Oxo. Poor farmers would invite you in the parlour and give you food from their farms.' The girls however, returned the favour, giving some of the food used to entice the rats to feed the farm animals. The only time that the girls got into trouble is when they put the rat poison in the wrong place and accidentally finished off a few of a farmer's chickens! 'We had to go before the bosses and had punishment. We had to build a wall in Port Eynon for a



week; I think it is still there'.

After work was when the fun began though and Lillian dated an American soldier named Johnny who she met at The Gwyn Hall Dance; 'He wrote to me when he went back to America, he wanted me to go, very good looking, he sent me a photograph of himself. He was stationed in Port-Eynon.' She also wrote to another US soldier called Eddie Dalton from Boston, she says 'I used to write to him regular, no phones then, everybody wrote, but after The Battle of The Bulge I never heard from him again'. Lillian wonders if he was one of the approximately eighty-one thousand US soldiers killed then. The girls went on lots of dates and made sure they looked their best even with new clothes being in short supply; 'Everybody borrowed everything, if you had a special date the girls would make sure that you had something nice to wear'. However the dates didn't always go well and the pair developed a strategy for exit if required; 'If you didn't like them you could run like hell, we had a meal with some foreign sailors and Hilda said let's go to the toilet and then we were gone!' Lillian and Hilda attended dances through their time in the Land Army, in Neath and at the American Red Cross on Mumbles Pier, amongst others. One such event was in Porthcawl; 'They sent trucks to pick you up outside of St

David's Church in Neath and take you to the dance and you didn't come out of the dance, very strict the Americans.' They looked after the girls; 'They dropped you back, you would have oranges and cigarettes and no alcohol but lots of dancing. They had their own bands, Glen Miller style, fabulous.'

Lillian tells of the scale of the soldiers here in World War Two, 'There were thousands of Americans in Porthcawl, every hotel, house and field full of Americans; they were there one day and

the next day empty.' The natives however didn't always welcome their US allies; 'There were lots of fights between the Welsh boys and the Americans, they used to gang up and fight the Yanks. Although Lil had a wonderful time in The Land Army she was not sorry to see the War end as she went back to her job; 'When the war ended all the Welsh boys came home and had parties and Harry Secombe was one of them, I didn't go out with him, I went out with his friend. We were on The Mumbles train one night and Harry Secombe was singing and they threatened to throw him off, he wasn't famous then!' Lillian sums up her experience in The Land Army for which she received a plaque in recognition, 'We worked hard all day and danced all night.' It is a pleasure to hear this still glamorous lady's fond recollections of a time which though historically turbulent still had its share fun and laughter and friendships.



Litter

The fight against littering and fly tipping in Dyffryn Clydach continues. Through the summer there have been four litter picks, arranged either by

Dyffryn Clydach Community Council or the Working with Nature project (as part of the sessions they are organising in the area). The litter picks have taken place in St Johns Church and Hill Road, The Cwm and surrounding areas, The Old Coachworks, The Dram road and frequently The Graig.

Littering continues to be a cause for concern in this beautiful area. Not only because of the amount of litter (over 40 bags have been collected in total) but also because of the potential for injury to children and dogs due to the amount of broken bottles left lying around.

There have also been several episodes of fly tipping in the area which have had to be cleared by the Council. Could I remind people that there is a free recycling site at Briton Ferry- so once you have loaded your items into your car please keep driving and dispose of your items there.



As this is a festive edition of Ymlaen, I thought I would enclose this beautiful picture of Glynfelin Lodge, Longford. To complement this scene I've taken the pleasant liberty of sharing this first verse from Dylan Thomas's poem A Child's Christmas in Wales.

One Christmas was so much like another, in those years around the sea-town corner now and out of all sound except the distant speaking of the voices I sometimes hear a moment before sleep, that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.

Message from the Chairman

It has been a busy period here in Dyffryn Clydach; We have good news, the Hope and Anchor pub is being turned into a commercial premises, with a Greggs takeaway shop and little café there in the very near future, I hope other commercial enterprises will come along at a later date. There are also road improvement schemes coming into being; on Monastery Road, Stratton Way and Penyard in Longford. We have a new bus service in Longford run by Select. At present it's a weekday service only, but a Saturday service will be running from the 9th of December. I hope it will be well used and well received.



There is also hope on the horizon of a future new building for The Abbey Primary School though this is in the very early stages and nothing definite has been decided. Other exciting news on the horizon is that a Council grant is being sought to better the small children's playground behind The Memorial Hall. With regard to the on-going Working with Nature Project, all is going well and many local people have joined in their events. We hope to reap the benefits in the future with our green areas around the community. I am happy to note that our area remains one of low crime and little antisocial behaviour, let's keep it that way. All that remains now is for me to wish all the residents of Dyffryn Clydach a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Cllr Martyn Peters



I was very happy to be presented with this unusual recipe for a Christmas loaf cake as it has no eggs, fats or sugar in the recipe. It is therefore ideal for those who have allergies or try to avoid those ingredients for health reasons. It is also suitable for vegans. As an avid baker myself, I will try this out as it makes a nice alternative to traditional Christmas cakes and I am assured by a very reliable source that it is delicious!

Christmas Cloister Cake

Serves 8-10

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 250g stoned dates, roughly chopped,
- 300ml water,
- 85g plain flour,
- 85g wholemeal flour,
- 3 teaspoons baking powder,
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice,
- 250g chopped apricots,
- 125g chopped glacier cherries,
- 125g sultanas,
- 50g ground almonds,
- 80ml cranberry or orange juice.

Method

Pre-heat oven to 170 degrees C, gas mark 3 or 325 degrees F.

Line a 900g loaf tin with baking parchment.

Fill a pan with the water and dates and bring to the boil then remove from heat set aside.

In a mixing bowl, sieve the flour, baking powder and mixed spice, add the wholemeal flour, mixed fruit, ground almonds and stir to combine.

Add the date mix and juice to the dry ingredients and mix well.

Spoon mixture into the prepared loaf tin.

Bake for 50-60 minutes, checking the cake is done by inserting a skewer until it is clean on removal.

Turn out and cool on a wire tray.

Enjoy!



Extra copies of Ymlaen will be available at Abbeygate Stores and Longford Stores. Thank you to Jagtar and to Jan for their support.

Remember to support your local shops and businesses.

Bydd copi'au ychwanegol Ymlaen ar gael yn Siop y Gât a Siop Rhydhir. Diolch i Jagtar a Jan am eu cymorth. Cofiwch gefnogi eich siopau a busnesau lleol.

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