

YMLAEN

HAF
2021
40c

Cylchlythyr
Cyngor Cymuned
Dyffryn Clydach



Newsletter of the
Dyffryn Clydach
Community Council

SUMMER
2021
40p

Additional copies available from the Editor, Cllr Sarah Elias

Copiâu ychwanegol ar gael wrth y Golygydd, Cyng. Sarah Elias

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To include local interest items please contact the Editor or your local Councillor

Er mwyn cynnwys eitemau o ddiddordeb lleol cysylltwch â'r Golygydd neu'ch Cynghorwr lleol



Photo of Neath Abbey Ironworks by Bob Pickett

Editor's Note • Golygyddol

Welcome to the latest edition of Ymlaen. It has been a while coming along due to problems associated with the Covid 19 pandemic. Times have been difficult for all of us and we are thinking of those who have suffered losses during the last year. In spite of the struggles we have all faced, the community of Dyffryn Clydach has pulled together and been strong in the face of adversity. This is represented within by the VE day spread which celebrates history, community and a strong spirit of fun.

We also acknowledge the other event that has affected local people, the floods in Skewen. Again the community has been very generous with their time and with aid to the flood victims and organisations such as The Salvation Army and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council have been a superb support.

With the thought of better times on the horizon in the summer and the hope of being able to get out and about more, there are some beautiful photographs from renowned photographer Bob Pickett of the locality. I have also included photos from talented local photographer Robert Boucher who is a particular fan of Drummau Mountain and takes regular shots up there. Bob Pickett also very kindly took the cover photo of the Ironworks. Many thanks to him for his contribution, past and present to Ymlaen.

We also look forward to the expansion of the wildflowers project this year with our Community Council taking part Buglife Cymru's B-lines project which aims to create joined up landscapes for bees and other pollinators to be able to travel and feed throughout the area. Aside from aiding these insects which are extremely important to our eco-system, beautiful wildflowers improve the look of the area and have a positive effect on the well-being of residents. There is also a very interesting look at a prominent historical feature local to us, the Ironworks.

We do sadly have to highlight some of the issues we have been facing with litter, fly tipping, late night parties in the woodlands and fields etc. However, bearing this in mind, I am optimistic there will be better days to come and I hope you can have a cuppa and enjoy this issue which celebrates our local landscape and community.

Sarah Elias (Editor)



Croeso i rifyn diweddaraf Ymlaen. Mae wedi cymryd amser i ymddangos achos y problemau sy'n gysylltiedig â phandemig Covid-19. Mae hi wedi bod yn gyfnod caled i ni i gyd ac rydyn ni'n meddwl am y rhai sydd wedi cael colledion yn ystod y flwyddyn a aeth heibio. Er gwaetha'r anawsterau rydyn ni i gyd wedi'u hwynebu, mae cymuned Dyffryn Clydach wedi dod at ei gilydd ac wedi bod yn gryf wrth wynebu adfyd. Mae hyn wedi'i gynrychioli yn y tudalennau am ddiwrnod VE sy'n dathlu hanes, cymuned ac ysbryd cryf o gael hwyl.

Hefyd rydyn ni'n cydnabod y digwyddiad arall sydd wedi effeithio ar bobl leol, y llifogydd yn Sgiwen. Eto, mae trigolion y gymuned wedi bod yn hael iawn â'u hamser a'u help i'r rhai a ddioddefodd oherwydd y llifogydd ac mae sefydliadau fel Byddin yr Iachawdwriaeth a Chyngor Bwrdeistref Castell-nedd Port Talbot wedi bod yn gymorth rhagorol.

Gan feddwl am adegau gwell ar y gorwel yn yr haf a'r gobaith y gallwn fynd allan yn amlach, mae ychydig o ffotograffau hardd o waith y ffotograffydd adnabyddus Bob Pickett o'r ardal hon. Hefyd dwi wedi cynnwys ffotograffau gan Robert Boucher, y ffotograffydd lleol talentog sydd wrth ei fodd â Mynydd Drumau ac yn tynnu lluniau yno'n rheolaidd. Yn garedig iawn, Bob Pickett dynnodd lun y Gwaith Haearn ar y clawr. Diolch yn fawr iddo am ei gyfraniad, ddoe a heddiw, i Ymlaen.

Hefyd rydym yn edrych ymlaen at ehangu'r prosiect blodau gwyllt eleni gyda'n Cyngor Cymuned yn cymryd rhan ym mhrosiect 'B-lines' Buglife Cymru. Nod y prosiect yw creu tirweddau wedi'u cysylltu fel bod gwenyn a pheillwyr eraill yn gallu teithio a bwydo drwy'r ardal. Heblaw am helpu'r pryfed hyn sy'n hynod bwysig i'n hecosystem, mae blodau gwyllt yn gwella sut mae'r ardal yn edrych ac yn cael effaith gadarnhaol ar lesiant trigolion. Hefyd mae cipolwg diddorol iawn ar nodwedd hanesyddol amlwg sy'n lleol i ni, sef y Gwaith Haearn.

Gwaetha'r modd, mae'n rhaid inni dynnu sylw at rai o'r materion rydyn ni wedi bod yn eu hwynebu gyda sbwriel, tipio anghyfreithlon, partion yn hwyr y nos yn y coetir a'r caeau ac ati. Ond, gan gadw hyn mewn cof, rwy'n ffyddiog bod dyddiau gwell i ddod a dwi'n gobeithio y gallwch gael ddisgled a mwynhau'r rhifyn hwn sy'n dathlu ein tirwedd a'n cymuned leol.

Sarah Elias (Golygydd)

Introducing a New Community Councillor

Hi, my name is Joseph Rayner and I would just like to introduce myself as a newly enlisted member of Dyffryn Clydach Community Council.

I have been living within the community for ten years now, previously a resident of Skewen. Through my time here I have become acquainted with many good folk and consider this ward as one of the friendliest I have lived in.

My aim as a Councillor is to primarily enhance the immediate surroundings and encourage others to partake in their environment as well.

I am a family man, married with four grown up children and five grandchildren.

I hope that with the help of other Community Councillors along with Councillor Martyn Peters I will be able to serve the community with impartiality and respect.



Busy B-Lines

The National Lottery Heritage Fund is supporting a Buglife Cymru project in conjunction with Neath Port Talbot Council called B-lines. The project's function is to help reverse the decline in our pollinating insects by planting wildflowers and creating suitable habitat. The following organisations are part of the B-lines project; The Woodland Trust, The Bumblebee Conservation Trust, several Housing Associations, Swansea University, as well as the aforementioned Buglife Cymru, who undertook the Blue Ground Beetle project here in Dyffryn Clydach. As a pioneering Community Council, with our previous widespread planting of wildflowers and work with the the Working with Nature group we are on board with this project.

From the 1930s onwards the UK as a whole has lost 97% of its natural grasslands due to urbanisation and agricultural practices. This leaves pollinator's habitats spread out in fewer places. Therefore the wildflowers are an important part of our landscape enabling the insects to go on the move when required in order to seek food, nest and also overwinter. The more joined up habitat, (hopefully 40 hectares of it), we establish the easier it is for insects to move around. B-lines hopes to link habitats across Neath Port Talbot with wildflowers. They will do this by accessing help from communities and schools.

The wildflowers are dual purpose in that as well as aiding pollinating insects they create beautiful meadows which benefit our communities and have an impact on resident's well-being. We have already had an excellent response to our previous wildflower areas and are hoping to increase



their spread this year in line with the project, as well as establishing other areas of nature such as the trees planted at the top of Rhyd Hir. We also aim to reduce the number of times the grass is cut in certain parts of Dyffryn Clydach throughout the summer which aids wildlife by letting the natural flowers come through and also giving pollinators safe habitat. Neath Port Talbot itself is home to one of the rarest bees in Britain, the Shrill Carder bee or 'Bombus sylvarum, (pictured above).

We are grateful as ever to a number of volunteers who help with these endeavours and also Councillor Martyn Peters who is working alongside our new Community Councillor Joe Rayner, a landscape gardener, who is going to be busy this year digging, tidying, and planting around Dyffryn Clydach. We hope you all enjoy the result of everybody's hard work!

Eyes down for charity?

We are calling for any local charities who would like to hire Longford Memorial Hall for an evening of fund raising bingo to get in touch please. The cost would be £19 for the evening with doors opening at around 6pm with the bingo commencing at 7pm and continuing until 9pm. It's a fantastic and fun way to raise funds, if you are interested please contact Mrs Jen Davies for further information and bookings on 07902 633799.

How Corona Virus changed gardening forever

During the spring of 2020 a revolution occurred. Not by means of force or even radical viewpoints. This was not a protest or indeed any form of anarchy, but rather a true shift in activities for millions of people across the UK. More locally the feeling was just as strong. The pandemic had begun to have side effects. Fears of supermarkets running out of foodstuffs was undoubtedly the main concern. With time on our hands the response was somewhat predictable, we decided to

grow our own.

Where can I buy compost? What food can I grow on my windowsill? What leaves can I use as toilet paper? Where can I buy seeds from?



Where many of us were in a panic and desperately checking our

supplies of pasta, toilet roll and painkillers, many others were emerging as a whole new breed of potential gardeners. This had become a revolution in horticulture. I remember being bombarded with questions from my neighbours along with other residents in Neath Abbey and Longford, so many people with garden envy, eager to get their hands dirty and keen to learn the secrets of growing your own. I of course, was delighted to oblige and was more than happy to share what knowledge I had.

During the first wave of the pandemic gardening was listed as the second most popular lockdown activity, according to a survey by Global-Data, after watching TV, ahead of cooking, reading and exercising. And quite ironically, many of those who were frequently glued to the gogglebox opted to watch You Tube clips on how to best sow lettuce seeds and dead head their Petunias rather than indulge in the usual box sets.

This new passion for plants was perhaps due to being stuck at home or even escapism from the fears of what an unknown virus was capable of. Either way, being at home had fostered a need to connect to something green.

In addition to this, the physical and mental health benefits of gardening are numerous, whether people are simply filling their time or establishing a work-life balance. However, across all age groups it is innate connection with nature. Growing plants, especially for the young generation is a beginning of a lifelong journey in understanding the connection of plants to nature and the important link to the wider eco-systems.

Here in Dyffryn Clydach certain enhancements of our green spaces have been carried out and hopefully will be improved upon year on year. This has already brought much pleasure to all age groups, especially children who will benefit from a pleasant environment whether subliminal or not.

Let us continue in the years to come, out of lockdown and be proud of our environment and the nature within it.

Joseph Rayner

Blue Ground Beetle Project

As many of you will know, the Skewen and Bryncoch areas of Neath Port Talbot are home to a very special resident – the Blue Ground Beetle (*Carabus intricatus*). Being Britain's largest ground beetle (measuring up to 3.5 cm long) and with its distinct violet-blue colour on a roughly sculptured body, it is a spectacular beast. Prior to its chance discovery in a garden in Skewen, this rare and globally threatened species was known from just a handful of ancient oak and beech woodlands in Cornwall and Devon. Its discovery in Skewen was therefore significant, being the very first time it had been recorded in Wales.

Owing to its reliance on fragile ancient woodland habitats that have been largely cleared or converted to commercial forestry, and an absence of wings which limits its dispersal capabilities, the conservation of the Blue Ground Beetle in Neath Port Talbot was seen as imperative. This led to funding from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to search for the Blue Ground Beetle in the nearby ancient woodland of Coed Maesmelin – owned and managed by Coed Cadw (The Woodland Trust), it is one of the last remaining ancient semi-natural woodlands on the Drummau Mountain. In January 2015, the beetle was discovered within Coed Maesmelin and subsequent surveys revealed further individuals within Coed Maesmelin.

In light of the clear importance of Coed Maesmelin to this rare beetle, and with ongoing concerns regarding the habitat condition for the beetle at Coed Maesmelin, Buglife Cymru developed the 'Blue Ground Beetle Project' in 2018, in partnership with Coed Cadw. Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project commenced in October 2018 and ended in March 2020. The project was developed with the key aim being to "conserve the natural heritage of the Blue Ground Beetle and the long-term protection of its ancient woodland habitat in Coed Maesmelin". Through the project, further surveys were conducted in the hope of finding additional populations. With



the help of local volunteers, surveys were conducted across 10 woodlands in the Neath Valley in 2019, with 41 adults and 2 larvae seen in total. Excitingly, the beetles were found at 4 'new' locations, albeit all of these were within half a mile of Coed Maesmelin, confirming the beetle as a Skewen/Bryncoch speciality. Daytime searches were also conducted with volunteers in January and February 2020, discovering as many as 20 individuals over-wintering in dead wood and dry stone walls around Skewen. The project also delivered training to relevant stakeholders, and targeted habitat management work at Coed Maesmelin and other woodlands to control bramble scrub and create more favourable habitat conditions for the Blue Ground Beetle; it is hoped that this work will allow the population of this extremely rare beetle to increase.

Despite the Blue Ground Beetle Project having now come to an end, we are still keen to learn more about this very special beetle in Neath Port Talbot. If you see the Blue Ground Beetle in your garden or elsewhere, we would love to know about it! If you are able to take a photograph of any beetles you suspect are the Blue Ground Beetle, please email them to us at wales@buglife.org.uk. If you encounter dead individuals, we would also appreciate it if you could retain these specimens for us, perhaps by placing them into a sealed plastic container – dead specimens can be useful for genetic studies. Like many other ground beetles, the Blue Ground Beetle is a spring breeder and is mainly active from late-March to early-July, where it is a nocturnal predator of slugs on trees. Please be vigilant for these beetles in the spring – they have a tendency to enter gardens!

There is still much to learn about the Blue Ground Beetle in Neath Port Talbot and we hope to continue our research into this fascinating beetle in the near future. The deceased specimen used for these excellent macro photos was kindly donated by a member of the public and is in such good condition it will be sent to Cardiff Museum to be housed in their natural collection.

(Photos and article by Liam Olds of Buglife Cymru)

Soap Box Alert!!

by Councillor Karon Hopkins

We live in a beautiful area, never more appreciated than during the pandemic. We are so lucky to be able to open our doors and go for a lovely walk through the woods, along the canal and rivers passing some amazing historical areas. Why then do people feel it's OK to mess it up with no thought for others or local wildlife? Which gets me onto some of my pet hates.

LITTERING-this is not just a problem along the roads when inconsiderate motorists and passengers throw their rubbish out of their car windows as they drive along, but also in the fields and woods as evidence of the many parties taking place. People are happy, it seems, to haul heavy boxes and bottles of drink into the woods and then leave it there for others to clean up after them. Is it so much to ask that it be bagged up and taken home with you? Remember you maybe partying on someone's private property please show some respect.

The community owes a big thank you to the dedication and persistence of the volunteers who will daily pick up the mess left by others. Whether that be in the Highlands Park, around the Memorial field or up into the surrounding woods and fields.

FLY TIPPING- I don't understand why people think it's OK to pack up their rubbish into their cars/vans and then dump it in the countryside. Locally we have the waste/recycling centre at Briton Ferry which has remained open throughout the

pandemic (with restrictions in place which mean you have to pre book a slot). There have been several successful prosecutions in this area for fly tipping and the fines can be pretty steep.

Please remember if you ask someone to remove your rubbish it is your responsibility to ensure the people are registered to do so and you should be given a Transfer Note from them.

DOG FOULING-this is another issue for me (and yes, I have a dog). I pick up after her and bin it in one of the many dog waste bins in the area, a litter bin, or if need be, I take it home to my bin. People seem to be split into those who pick up and bin their dogs' waste, those who bag it and leave it anyway on the floor or thrown into the hedges, or those who just leave it. We received correspondence from a concerned member of the public recently about the increase in dog waste in the Hill Road/Croft area, due in part to the increase in walkers locally through the lockdown. It is important to reiterate that dog waste can be disposed of in any public bin not just the red dog bins and it is better to use any bin than leave the mess or hang it up. If you do not pass a bin you can dispose of it in your own bin.

It is an offence not to clean up after your dog. Dog fouling is unsightly, a nuisance and carries a health hazard (especially for young children) of Toxocariasis. Full or damaged bins can be reported to the Council.

If people witness incidents of littering, fly tipping or dog fouling these can be reported to environment@npt.gov.uk or 01639 686868.

Thank you for taking the time to read this- let's help to keep our area beautiful. Thank you.

Then and Now

After our experience of the Coronavirus pandemic it's instructive to learn what our forebears suffered a century ago. The country had just been through the First World War with the loss of menfolk leaving many widows and fatherless children. Just as this worldwide conflict was ending in 1918 the so-called Spanish Flu struck, an influenza virus that killed more people than had died in the war. This is an edited account by a man named Charles Gunthorpe Reynolds born in 1910 describing his growing up in Bryncoch, then a small, rural community whose main employer was the Main Colliery Company. This record of his schooldays from 1914 to 1924 provides a sobering insight into life at that time to compare with our recent experiences:-

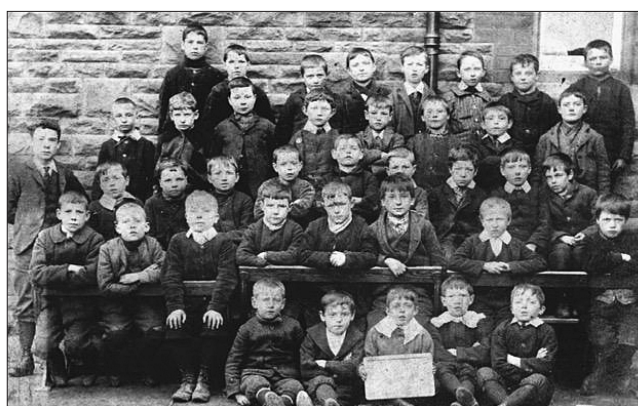
'The first half of my 9 years at Tyn yr Heol [now called Blaenhonddan] School were spent during the First World War when children suffered many privations. Food was desperately in short supply and what little was available was of a very poor quality. Our basic food was boiled swedes and potatoes. Swedes were plentiful but potatoes were very scarce as most of them went to France for the British Army. The bread was practically inedible being brownish/black in colour and thoroughly unpalatable. Only two ounces of butter was available for which you had to go to Neath and queue up at the Maypole [a popular grocery chain store of the time]. Often, after queuing for an hour, by the time you reached the shop door a notice would go up 'Sold Out!' To make the bread somewhat more palatable we had 'Tickler's Jam' which we believed was made from plum and apple with sawdust added to make it appear like raspberry seeds. Sugar was almost unobtainable and the only sweetener available was saccharin tablets - awful stuff! Our diet consisted of porridge oats which had been boiled for many hours with sufficient prepared to last the whole week. The porridge would be left on the kitchen range hobs and portions eaten every day, usually for breakfast. Salt or treacle would be added - it was mostly salt or a little milk as treacle was very scarce. Very little milk was drunk in my young days although it was only 2 pence a pint. Tuberculosis was rampant and milk - untreated in those days - was considered to be the main cause of the disease. Cooked dinner was a once a week meal on Sundays. For the rest of the week the fare would be very meagre indeed - toasted bread or fried bread with margarine looking like axle grease and tasting awful. A popular Welsh dish which went by the name of 'Siencyn' [or Sop] was frequently on the menu consisting of cut pieces of bread in a basin with hot water, some sugar plus a spoonful of condensed milk. Any kind of nourishing food at this time was almost unavailable. There was the 'Black Market' for those who could afford to pay for extra goods but, since most families were on the poverty line, we literally starved. Calling at the house of one of my school mates I saw his family of 6 children sat around a bare table. All the meal consisted of was bread covered with 'Ally Sloper's Sauce', a flagon of which could be bought cheaply for a few pence. We boys at Tyn yr Heol School were a hungry lot and if one boy brought an apple to school to be eaten at playtime we would all crowd around him shouting 'Stump!'. This meant that, after the boy had devoured the apple down to the stump, the boy who'd shouted 'stump' first would have it passed to him and it was eaten with relish until only the seeds remained.

Children's ailments were very common, especially in winter time. Whooping cough mostly affected the younger girls. The boys would suffer from ringworm, boils and carbuncles while the common head cold was almost a perpetual ailment in winter. A continuous sniffing would be heard in school classrooms, much to the annoyance of the

teachers. Handkerchiefs to blow our noses were almost unknown and the general practice was to wipe your nose in the sleeves of our jersey, which was the usual garment worn by boys. The nearest doctor lived in Skewen but, apart from serious accidents or ailments, his services were rarely called upon. The villagers would doctor themselves by means of all sorts of salves, herbs, etc., mostly gathered in the fields or hedgerows, used either raw or boiled into concoctions or brews. In 1918-1919 a new plague arrived, the 'Spanish Flu'. The fever would strike suddenly and many adults and children were affected. There were many deaths in the village and it wasn't uncommon for two persons from a household to be buried on the same day.

**Jeff Griffiths of The Dyffryn Clydach
and Bryncoch Historical Society**

This is a group of schoolboys of around this time but not of the Bryncoch school in this account.



Eton Mess Recipe

Ingredients List

- 2 large egg whites
- 120g caster sugar
- 500g strawberries
- 450 ml double cream
- 1 tablespoon icing sugar



Instructions

For the meringues...

Heat oven to 120 degrees/100degrees fan/Gas mark 1

Line large baking tray with baking paper

In a clean bowl whisk the egg whites using an electric whisk until they make stiff peaks

Add caster sugar in 3 stages, whisking each time until the peaks are once again stiff.

Spoon dollops of the mixture onto baking parchment on a tray and cook on the bottom shelf of the oven for an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes or until the meringues are solid and come off the paper easily.

For the rest of the Eton Mess...

Blitz approximately one third of the strawberries in a food processor to make a strawberry sauce.

Then whisk the double cream and icing sugar until it holds its shape.

Roughly crush around three quarters of the meringues and mix with cream and the chopped strawberries, stir then swirl in the strawberry sauce through the mixture and decant into individual glasses or bowls. Then top with the remaining meringues and enjoy!!

75th Anniversary V.E. Day Celebrations May 8th 2020

After the misery of the pandemic lockdown, many residents in our community really engaged with this very special 75th anniversary. The weather was wonderfully sunny and householders set up tables and chairs in their front gardens. Their gardens were decked out with bunting in red, white and blue and the tables groaned with party food and drink. Just like the 1940's there were foodstuffs that were on ration from local shops. Who would have thought that we'd ever be in that position again.

Music from the 40's and the present day filled the air, some streets played bingo and arranged raffles and later in the evening some were dancing in the street. After so long in lock down people relished the socially distanced company of their neighbours like never before. Those who could not leave their homes celebrated with the television coverage of events.

Of course, it was tinged with sadness at the recollection of the awful effects of WWII and the tragic price paid by many. Our community paid their respects by celebrating their personal freedom.



The very first VE Day celebration



*75th Anniversary of VE Day 2020.
Marchelle Crooke Heol Heddwch as a land girl.*



Jessica Protheroe



Christine Lee Jones entertains. She broadcasted many free concerts during the lockdown bringing comfort to many. James Reeson really gets into the part in uniform.



*Distanced drinking with our neighbours...
Benedict Close VE day...*

Rachael Jones comments on a positive effect of the pandemic lockdown.

'We're like a neighbourhood hub here when the sun is out... neighbours stop and sit on the wall, or stand across the road or up the top of our garden and have a chat.... it's lovely... and we've been able to help out one or two of our older neighbours.. especially those with no family near... brought us all closer together.'



*Teddy Churchill on The Drive!
Well done Hannah Gange and family.*



Jim and Ann's house, Longford Road



Dan Y Graig Rd.



The Drive



The Unknown Soldier



Winston the Bear paid a visit to The Drive



Dan Y Graig Road



Sam Maiden did much of the organizing together with other residents of Tregelles Road.



The youngest generation decorate the pavements in their own unique way!



Karaoke in full swing



What a glorious Day it was. Maybe soon there will be another opportunity to get together in the spirit of the community?

Many thanks to all the photograph contributors to this article. By Councillor Alyson Thomas.

Cyfeillion Cwmni Haearn Mynachlog Nedd: Friends of Neath Abbey Iron Company

Dial H for Heritage: Neath Abbey's history explained

Dyffryn Clydach is extremely fortunate in having a wealth of heritage located within its boundaries. It is "a place that changed our world", "*Ile a newidiodd ein byd*".

The rushing waters of the river Clydach powered industry for centuries. The Norman baron, Richard de Granville, granted the 'Clydach mill' to Neath Abbey around 1130. That watermill, or a successor, probably gave Cwmfelin its name. By the 13th century, much of the abbey's wealth came from wool. This led to the abbey becoming 'the fairest in Wales' (John Leland), and one of its wealthiest monasteries. It is unique in that there has been a religious house, a Reformation mansion, and an early Industrial Revolution copperworks on its site. In 1235, the abbey sent cargoes to England and the Continent in its own ship, called *Hulc*. Coal was mined on the abbey's estate before the suppression of the monastery in 1539.

In 1694, a lease for a copper battery mill on the Ironworks site stated that an iron-smelting furnace had earlier stood here. Charcoal made from the plentiful local timber would have fuelled it. Neath Abbey Ironworks was built by the Cornish Fox family in 1792 to supply their Perran Wharf Foundry and the open market. The Blast Furnaces, built as a pair with unusual vertical offsets, are amongst the largest masonry furnaces constructed – as seen on the site today. Pipes from a Boulton and Watt blowing engine located between the two furnaces carried air into the furnaces through the tuyere (side) arches. They were in use until the late 1840s, and the site has three Scheduled Monuments.

The Industrial Revolution demanded power, and in 1800 most came from waterwheels and windmills — only 2,000 steam engines existed at this time. The works were soon making steam engines to power the Industrial Revolution. Echoes of past manufacturing resound there; beam engines, locomotives, town gas plants, and marine engines were made to power the Industrial Revolution worldwide. In 1829, the Ironworks began building steam locomotives; some were world firsts in design and over 65 were made.

Marine engines were made by 1822. Iron-hulled paddle and screw steamers followed, made in the Cheadle Works near the abbey. It launched the world's first 1,000-ton iron sailing ship in 1853. In 1795-6, William Murdoch, Boulton & Watt's chief engineer, worked on gas retorts there and lit the works' counting house, the first place lit by gas in Wales. The Ironworks later made gas plants.

The engineering plans are registered on the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, its international importance is that the Ironworks was a driving force behind the Industrial Revolution by providing steam power for many major works in Wales and Great Britain, and exporting Welsh technology globally.

Its associative value is immense with links to James Watt, William Murdoch, Richard Trevithick, the Stephensons, Alfred Russel Wallace and many others. JT Price, one of the ironmasters, founded the Peace Society in 1816 in London, becoming its first president. The Prices were famous early abolitionists, and they built the local school. The Ironworks trained many famous engineers such as Sir Benjamin Baker, designer of the Forth Bridge, and David Thomas, father of the American iron industry.

The Ironworks and its Dyffryn Clydach workers were world leaders in the nineteenth century, and its importance

is shown in this brief history. Post-industrialisation, the valley has evolved into a place of great natural beauty and peace with a wealth of flora and fauna.

The Friends have always felt that our shared heritage has not had the proper recognition that we felt it deserved, whether locally, nationally, or internationally, and it has not been explained fully.

We applied for a grant to the National Lottery heritage Fund under their 15-Minute Heritage scheme, a Cadw initiative to encourage us all to explore the heritage and natural history on our doorsteps. Our project was titled: *Dial H for Heritage: Neath Abbey's history explained*. We were supported by Cllr Mike Harvey, Cllr Martyn Peters, Dyffryn Clydach Community Council, Bryncoch Environment Group and Dyffryn Clydach and Bryncoch Historical Society.

In November 2020, the Friends found that we had been fortunate enough to win this grant. Our schedule of work, however, was immediately dealt a blow by the lockdown that was imposed by the Welsh Government. This meant that work couldn't start until the end of February when restrictions started to ease.



The kiosk before work started.



Part of the work team

We had recently bought a disused BT telephone kiosk which cost £1 in Heol Penderyn, Longford and planned to convert into a heritage/information centre. Thanks to the National

continued on the next page

Friends of Neath Abbey Iron Company – continued

Lottery players, we had funding for this. It involved painting, replacing glass, repairs and cabinet work inside. Here, local people could, via a large accessible display book and works of art, discover the area's heritage, natural history and local trails. All literature produced by the Friends would be bilingual, and there will be an illustrative map of the area in poster and leaflet form. QR codes will provide links to further information on line @ Casgliad y Werin Cymru/People's Collection Wales. There will be a notice board for community information.

Pupils from Dwr y Felin Comprehensive school have been challenged to produce artwork relating to Neath Abbey, and this will be displayed in the kiosk as well.

The Ironworks will have interpretive panels to explain the history and function of the structures and buildings. It will show the Ironworks when working full blast in the 1860s. QR codes here will link to further digital information. We have purchased notice boards for community engagement



tasks about the heritage and environment of the site.

The project is coming to an end, and we have enjoyed researching and discovering more about the site. We will be opening the heritage centre soon, so keep your eyes open for this event.

The Friends meet every Sunday afternoon at 1pm, and we are always looking for volunteers.

For more information: Email: wernddu@gmail.com
Facebook: /FriendsofNeathAbbeyIronCompany
Twitter: @PeterIronworks



Neath Abbey Ironworks Blast Furnace One and Two.

The following is an article kindly written for us by South Wales police for resident's information, I hope you find it helpful.

What is Anti-Social Behaviour?

Any behaviour that has caused or was likely to cause, **Harassment, Alarm or Distress** to one or more persons, not of the same household.

Anti-social behaviour comes in many different forms ranging from low-level nuisance to serious harassment. It can damage people's quality of life and interfere with their ability to use and enjoy their home or community.

Everyone has the right to live in an environment free from anti-social behaviour.

Examples may include: *(the list is not an exclusive one)*

- Drunk or rowdy groups
- Harassment or intimidation
- Street drinking
- Vandalism & or graffiti/litter
- Throwing missiles
- Drug related nuisance
- Noise nuisance
- Racial or Homophobic behaviour
- Aggressive or threatening behaviour
- Vehicle related nuisance
- Prostitution/sexual acts

We take all complaints of anti-social behaviour seriously. We seek to take action whenever we can, providing it is justified.

What is NOT classed as anti-social behaviour?

Examples of behaviour which would not be considered as anti-social are:

- Children playing
- Personal lifestyle differences
- One off' issues unless they are of a particularly serious nature
- Normal living noises such as opening and closing doors and flushing toilets
- Indiscriminate parking such as parking on the pavement and vehicle obstruction

This list doesn't cover all situations but gives an idea of where we would not take action but where we can offer advice and guidance.

We will always explain if we cannot intervene in a case, sometimes we will direct you to other agencies/departments that will be able to help with the problem.

What action can the Safer Neath Port Talbot Partnership take against individuals who are responsible for persistent anti-social behaviour in my neighbourhood?

Depending on whether the individual is a juvenile or adult and the nature and persistence of their anti-social behaviour, Safer Neath Port Talbot Partnership can:

- Serve Warning Letters on the individual
- Work with support services in engaging with the individual to try to resolve issues which may be the underlying cause of their behaviour
- Establish Acceptable behaviour Contracts (ABC) with the individual

Or in extreme and / or persistent cases we can

- Work with private landlords
- Seek other remedies including eviction orders by working with Registered Private Landlords
- Make application for a court order
- Or use any other appropriate legislation

'What you can do'

- Sort things out early

Many neighbour problems can be sorted out simply by talking to each other. Sometimes people genuinely don't know they are creating a nuisance. If a concern doesn't involve serious threats or violence, it may be best for you to discuss it with your neighbour in the first instance, before taking it further.

We would advise that you only do this if you feel confident in resolving the problem amicably. Remember, your safety is paramount and we would not suggest that you approach anyone who is known to be **violent or aggressive**.

It may be possible for us to offer mediation

The partnership can only take actions over problems brought to its attention. It is important for you to report incidents via 101 (see below for more details). We screen all calls for

continued on the next page

ANTI-SOCIAL REPORT – continued

anti-social behaviour and in this way we can progress cases further.

We rely on evidence that you and our partnership agencies can supply which will enable us to progress cases further.

How do you report a problem?

Contact the Police via 101 to report incidents that do not require emergency response.

In the event of an emergency dial 999

Reports of anti-social behaviour should be made by telephoning 101, which is the single non emergency number to the police.

if you would like advice or guidance on any aspect of anti-social behaviour you can speak directly to one of the team in the **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Unit** by telephoning 01639 889709 during office hours or you can leave a message and you will be contacted during office hours. You can email asb@npt.gov.uk

What response can you expect?

All reports of anti-social behaviour via 101 are prioritised according to need and are later screened by the ASB Unit.

This information is then held on a confidential database for the purpose of monitoring and reducing anti-social behaviour.

We work in partnership with the police and other agencies, but we will **NOT** give out your personal details to any party outside of the Safer Neath Port Talbot Partnership without your consent.

If you make direct contact with the ASB Unit via e-mail you will receive an acknowledgement within 5 working days, but usually within 24 hours.

PLEASE NOTE we will **NOT** give out your personal details to any member of the general public.

Community Trigger

The Community Trigger allows victims of persistent anti-social behaviour, who have previously reported incidents to one or more agencies, to request a review of their case where they feel the actions taken have not been adequate.

Activating the Community Trigger will bring relevant agencies together to share information, review the actions that have been taken and try to reach a solution that will hopefully prevent similar incidents from happening again. For the purposes of the Community Trigger, anti-social behaviour is defined as 'behaviour causing harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household'.

Who can use the Community Trigger?

- Victims of anti-social behaviour
- Someone representing a victim such as a carer, councillor or family member. Consent must be gained from the victim prior to the application.
- Communities or businesses

If you have not previously reported the anti-social behaviour:

If you have been a victim of anti-social behaviour but have not reported the incidents to anyone, you will not be eligible to activate the trigger.

**"Working Together to make our Communities
a Safer Place in which to Live and work"**

Please call us on 01639 889709 if you have any questions
Help us to help you!

If you go down to the woods today...

The advent of lockdown has increased the number of people using our woodlands and fields as spaces to camp out and party. Of course this has been a tough time therefore we have sympathy with teenagers and young adults who have endured a lengthy lockdown, but would ask if they could clear up their litter when they have used our green spaces and woodlands. The issue seems to be getting worse and is a concern with the summer months ahead of us.

In April 2021 police were called in the early hours due to vandalism occurring in The Highlands area to vehicles and also Council and other property. This was the culmination of a busy night of partying in the two farmer's fields off the Dram Road. Approximately 40 to 50 people attended a meet up and partied into the early hours leaving a mess behind them with cans, bottles, food and drug containers strewn around. Aside from the damage to the environment, problems this causes for wildlife and the mess, they disturbed local residents when making their way home afterwards. A few revellers vandalised public fencing in The Highlands which has now been replaced as the damage was so



great. This cost taxpayers around one thousand pounds and has degraded an area that volunteers and Councillors have worked hard on to improve the locality.

In May 2021, police were called again to disperse a gathering of 60 young people in the woodland near the phone mast in Longford / The Highlands who were celebrating an eighteenth birthday and had gathered from areas such as Tonna and Aberavon. The police attended the scene via multiple entry points causing the revellers to flee the scene. Upon observing fires that had been started in the area using materials deliberately brought to the scene such as decking, the police had to act quickly and call the fire brigade who dispatched an engine to the scene.

One young partygoer was incapacitated to such a degree that an ambulance was called and his parents were summoned to the scene. You can see from the photographs the devastation left behind. Much effort is made by locals to clean up after these events and this is much appreciated. It is important that we maintain momentum and report any similar incidents to the police immediately.

We are aware that this is a problem throughout South Wales. We just ask people to use common sense and please pick up their litter if they are using our beautiful woodlands and fields for socialising. If any residents see anybody vandalising anything please call the police and report it. It should be noted that we have also endured vandalism of the Memorial Hall in Longford and some of the flowerbeds there were nearly destroyed again during the Easter holidays.

Chairperson's Address • Cyfarchiad y Cadeirydd

Hello Dyffryn Clydach, here is the long-awaited addition of Ymlaen. Unfortunately, Covid halted any planned editions last year as it halted many things for us all. And it was at such a dreadful time – a year like no other – that the community came together to help and look out for each other. People helped those friends and neighbours who had to self-isolate or were alone and vulnerable- whether by a quick phone call, socially restricted visit, or shopping done. I would also want to take a moment to remember those families who have been directly affected by the virus and hope each day gets easier for you.

Hopefully, 2021 will be a more optimistic year with restrictions easing and places starting to reopen. As soon as we can events and activities will restart at Longford Memorial Hall once more, although whether there will be ongoing restrictions for using the Hall it is too early for me to say.

My thoughts are with our friends and neighbours in Dynevor Road and Goshen Park who have had to endure the dreadful flooding to their homes, some of whom will not be able to return home for some months yet. NPT Council put regular updates on their website- www.npt.gov.uk/skewen.

On a happier note, it was wonderful to meet Mrs Louisa Davies on her 100th birthday- a lady well known in the area for (in her own words) 'being into everything' fund raising for the hospitals, improvements to the Memorial Hall and a regular member of local activities and groups.

At long last the work has started on the building of the new school, so that the two Abbey Primary schools can move from the split sites on New Road to be together on the same site in Longford. It has been amazing to watch the changes from a muddy field to an area with structures in place.

I would like to thank my fellow Community Councillors and Randall Shopland for their help and support through this time- meetings held via Zoom have been a sharp learning curve for us all. Finally, I would like to say I have enjoyed my time as Chair of the Community Council but welcome the new Chairperson, Councillor Alyson Thomas and wish her a successful year ahead. Alyson will be contributing the address for the next Ymlaen at Christmas time all being well with the pandemic.

Take care everyone and keep safe.

Cllr. Karon Hopkins



Helô, Dyffryn Clydach, o'r diwedd, dyma rifyn o Ymlaen. Yn anffodus, rhoddodd Covid stop ar unrhyw rifynnau'r llynedd fel y rhoddodd stop ar lawer o bethau i bob un ohonon ni. Ac ar gyfnod mor ofnadwy – blwyddyn wahanol i bob un arall – daeth y gymuned at ei gilydd i helpu ac i ofalu am ein gilydd. Buodd pobl yn helpu'r ffrindiau a'r cymdogion hynny a oedd yn gorfod hunanynysu neu a oedd ar eu pennau eu hunain ac yn fregus – drwy alwad ffôn sydyn, drwy ymweliad wedi'i gyfyngu'n gymdeithasol, neu drwy siopa drostyn nhw. Hefyd hoffwn oedi am eiliad i gofio'r teuluoedd hynny yr effeithiodd y feirws yn uniongyrchol arnyn nhw. Gobeithio bod pob diwrnod yn dod yn haws ichi.

Gobeithio bydd 2021 yn flwyddyn fwy optimistaidd gyda'r cyfyngiadau'n llacio a mannau'n dechrau ailagor. Cyn gynted ag y gallwn, bydd digwyddiadau a gweithgareddau'n aildechrau yn Neuadd Goffa Longford unwaith eto, er ei bod hi'n rhy gynnar imi ddweud a fydd cyfyngiadau o hyd ar ddefnyddio'r Neuadd.

Rwy'n meddwl am ein ffrindiau a'n cymdogion yn Ffordd Dinefwr a Pharc Goshen sydd wedi gorfod dioddef llifogydd ofnadwy yn eu cartrefi. Fydd rhai ohonyn nhw ddim yn gallu dychwelyd adref am rai wythnosau eto. Mae Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot yn rhoi'r newyddion diweddaraf yn rheolaidd ar ei wefan – <https://www.npt.gov.uk/skewen?lang=cy-gb> yn Gymraeg a www.npt.gov.uk/skewen yn Saesneg.

Ar nodyn hapusach, hyfryd oedd cwrdd â Mrs Louisa Davies ar ei phen-blwydd yn 100 oed – menyw adnabyddus yn yr ardal am (yn ei geiriau ei hun) 'ymwneud â phopeth', codi arian i'r ysbytai, gwelliannau i'r Neuadd Goffa ac aelod ffyddlon o weithgareddau a grwpiau lleol.

O'r diwedd, mae'r gwaith wedi dechrau ar adeiladu'r ysgol newydd, fel bod dwy Ysgol Gynradd yr Abaty yn gallu symud o'r safleoedd rhanedig ar New Road i fod gyda'i gilydd ar yr un safle yn Longford. Rhyfeddol fu gwyllo'r newidiadau o gae mwdlyd i ardal â strwythurau yn eu lle.

Hoffwn ddiolch i'm Cyd-Gynghorwyr Cymunedol a Randall Shopland am eu help a'u cefnogaeth drwy gydol y cyfnod hwn – mae cyfarfodydd ar Zoom wedi bod yn addysg fawr i ni i gyd. I gloi, hoffwn ddweud fy mod wedi mwynhau fy nghyfnod yn Gadeirydd y Cyngor Cymunedol ond rwy'n croesawu'r Cadeirydd newydd, y Cynghorydd Alyson Thomas ac yn dymuno blwyddyn lwyddiannus iddi. Alyson fydd yn cyfrannu'r anerchiad i rifyn nesaf Ymlaen adeg y Nadolig, a bod popeth yn iawn gyda'r pandemig.

Cymerwch ofal, bawb, a chadwch yn ddiogel.

Y Cyngh. Karon Hopkins

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

Remember to support your local shops and businesses.

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

Hot Shots

One side effect of lockdown has been a renewed appreciation for nature and a desire to venture locally to explore our surroundings. Our green spaces, woodland and mountainous areas in Dyffryn Clydach have seen a huge increase in visitor numbers on foot and on bikes as well as in cars. In general visitors have been here to appreciate the area though there has been an increase in litter and also fly tipping.

Two local photographers who appreciated our area both before lockdown and during it are Bob Pickett and Robert John Boucher.

Bob is a very well-known renowned local photographer and frequent contributor to 'The Best of Neath' Facebook site as well as being included in the popular 'Best of Neath' Calendar. He also set up the phenomenally popular site on Facebook 'PIX :Photo sharing for everyone, beginners

or seasoned snappers.' This group has members from across the globe and the idea behind it, is as the group title suggests, that anybody from anywhere can submit a photo. This means there are phone snaps taken by children through to professionally edited shots. The subject matter is huge as is its membership. I was lucky to bump into Bob and of course his lovely dog Ruby on the Dram Rd and he is often to be found locally taking pictures. Here are some local and other examples of Bob's work, we hope you enjoy them.



Robert John Boucher is also a prominent local photographer who is a particular fan of Drummau Mountain. He has taken many shots up there in all seasons and often posts online about walking up the steps of doom up there as he calls them (aptly named too!). He is also a valued member of the 'Best of Neath' site and a frequent contributor to the aforementioned 'Pix' site. He has also been featured several times in the 'Best of Neath's' calendar. He is often out and about as part of his



Warmest congratulations to Mrs Louisa Davies, who celebrated her 100th birthday in May. Dyffryn Clydach Community Council thank Mrs Davies for all her work within the community and hope she enjoyed her celebrations as she reached this milestone.

job and takes unusual shots sometimes in unlikely locations utilising angles and composition that sets him apart from other photographers. He has started taking his son out with him teaching him some of his skills, he seems to be taking after his father! Here are some examples of Robert's work, we hope you enjoy them.



The two shots above by Robert were both taken up Drummau Mountain.