

DYFFRYN YMLAEN

GAEAF/ HAF
2025
40c

Cylchlythyr
Cyngor Cymuned
Dyffryn Clydach



Newsletter of the
Dyffryn Clydach
Community Council

SPRING/SUMMER
2025
40p

Additional copies available from the Editor, Chantele Cross-Jones
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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





EDITOR'S NOTE • GOLYGYDDOL

Hello everyone and welcome to the Spring/Summer 2025 edition of Dyffryn Ymlaen!

It's so lovely to finally feel the warmth returning, to see the flowers blooming, and to enjoy longer, lighter evenings across

Dyffryn Clydach. Our parks and river walks have already been buzzing with life, and it's wonderful to see so many families, dog walkers, and friends making the most of the outdoors.

This issue is packed with community stories and achievements, from the launch of an exciting new football club to the inspiring success of our local children in a number of school STEM competitions. We also shine a spotlight on a talented local tour guide, share an exciting update from Buglife Cymru, and, as always, take a nostalgic look back at village life in "The Street on Which I Grew Up." There's so much happening in our wonderful community, and we're thrilled to be able to share it with you.

As a special addition to this seasons edition, I was lucky enough to have access to the entire back catalogue of Ymlaen, including the very first issue of Ymlaen that was published back in 1974. It was inspiring to take a look back through history (a lot before my time) and see how our community has grown, evolved and changed through the years. As a nod to the history of the magazine I have included a poem, entitled 'Our Old School' that was printed in the very first edition. The author is only given as R.J.K. who I assume was a resident in 1974, but I would love to give credit if anyone knows who this may have been.

Since our last issue, we have continued to work on updating our community website, to make it even easier for you to find information about the council, local groups, and upcoming events. Our Clerk, Andrea, remains based at the community hall and is available during office hours to help with any hall bookings or general queries.

As always, our focus is on bringing the community together — whether that's through events, like the super successful Easter egg hunt, classes, or simply helping to spread the word about all the wonderful things happening locally. If you run a local group, are hosting an event, or have something you'd like to share in our next issue, please do get in touch — we love hearing from you!

On a personal note, it's been fantastic getting to meet so many more of you since joining the council last year. I've been able to attend Christmas Events, Easter Events, fund-raising opportunities and it's always a pleasure to chat and hear your ideas, whether at an event or when walking my dogs locally.

Here's to a joyful, sunny summer in Dyffryn Clydach!

Best wishes,

Chantele

Chair of the Communications Committee

Helo bawb a chroeso i rifyn Gwanwyn/Haf 2025 o Dyffryn Ymlaen!

Mae hi mor hyfryd teimlo'r gwres yn dychwelyd o'r diwedd, gweld y blodau'n blaguro, a mwynhau nosweithiau hirach, goleuach ar draws Dyffryn Clydach. Mae ein parciau a'r llwybrau ar lan yr afon eisoes wedi dod yn fyw gan fyd natur, ac mae'n hyfryd gweld cynifer o deuluoedd, pobl â chŵn, a ffrindiau'n gwneud yn fawr o'r awyr agored.

Mae'r rhifyn hwn yn llawn dop o straeon a llwyddiannau cymunedol, o lansio clwb pêl-droed newydd cyffrous i lwyddiant ysbrydoledig ein plant lleol mewn sawl cystadleuaeth STEM i ysgolion. Rydyn ni hefyd yn rhoi sylw i dywysydd taith dawnus lleol, yn rhannu diweddariad cyffrous gan Buglife Cymru, ac, yn ôl ein harfer, yn dwyn cip yn ôl ar fywyd pentrefol yn "Y Stryd Ble Ces Fy Magu". Mae cymaint yn digwydd yn ein cymuned fendigedig, ac rydyn ni mor falch o allu'i rannu gyda chi.

Fel ychwanegiad arbennig i rifyn y tymor hwn, roeddwn i'n ddigon ffodus i gael mynediad i holl rifynnau blaenorol Ymlaen, gan gynnwys y rhifyn cyntaf oll o Ymlaen a gyhoeddwyd yn ôl yn 1974. Roedd yn brofiad dyrchafol cael edrych yn ôl drwy hanes (ymhell cyn fy amser i) a gweld sut y tyfodd ein cymuned, ac esblygu a newid dros y blynyddoedd. I gydnabod hanes y cylchgrawn, rwyf wedi cynnwys darn o farddoniaeth o'r enw 'Ein Hen Ysgol'; a argraffwyd yn y rhifyn cyntaf. Yr unig awgrym o enw'r bardd yw'r llythrennau R.J.K. oedd, rhaid tybio, yn breswlydd yma yn 1974, ond byddai'n bleser gallu cydnabod yn iawn os gŵyr unrhyw un pwy allai R. J. K fod.

Ers ein rhifyn diwethaf, rydyn ni wedi parhau i weithio ar ddiweddarau ein gwefan gymunedol, i'w gwneud hi hyd yn oed yn haws i chi ddod o hyd i wybodaeth am y cyngor, grwpiau lleol, a digwyddiadau sydd ar y gweill. Mae ein Clerc, Andrea, yn parhau i fod wedi'i lleoli yn y neuadd gymunedol ac mae hi ar gael yn ystod oriau swyddfa i helpu gydag archebu'r neuadd neu ymholiadau cyffredinol.

Fel arfer, mae ein ffocws ar ddod â'r gymuned at ei gilydd – boed hynny drwy ddigwyddiadau, fel yr helpa wyau Pasg hynod lwyddiannus, dosbarthiadau, neu helpu i roi'r gair ar led am y pethau gwyh sy'n digwydd yn lleol. Os ydych chi'n arwain grŵp lleol, yn cynnal digwyddiad, neu os oes gennych ryw beth yr hoffech i ni ei rannu yn ein rhifyn nesaf, cysylltwch, da chi – rydyn ni'n dwlu clywed oddi wrthyh!

Ar nodyn personol, bu'n hyfryd dod i gyfarfod â chynifer yn fwy ohonoch ers i mi ymuno â'r cyngor y llynedd. Cefais fynychu digwyddiadau Nadolig, Pasg, cyfleoedd codi arian, ac mae wastad yn bleser sgwrsio a chlywed eich syniadau, boed hynny mewn digwyddiad neu wrth i mi fynd â'r cŵn am dro yn lleol.

Dyma ddymuno haf llawen a heulog yn Nyffryn Clydach!

Dymuniadau gorau,

Chantele

Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Cyfathrebu

Pets Corner

Archibald 'Archie' Morgan

Hi, I'm Archie Morgan, a Jack Russell x Miniature Schnauzer who was born in Swansea in 2008. I came to live in Neath Abbey with my sister Lily with the Morgan family. I am now 16 years old and still as handsome as ever. For many years I was companion to my hooman mum Sylvia, who sadly passed away in 2016. My sister Lily passed away in February 2023; she was my best friend, although always took advantage of me; she always made me chew her bone until it was soft enough for her to eat. I miss them both so much.



Now I live at home with my brother Tewdwr and sister-in-law Debra who take care of me very well; they always make sure I look my best and am kept fit and healthy (well I am 112 in dog years you know!). My favourite food is McDonalds fries but am known to be partial to a squirrel if I can catch them.

In my free time, I really enjoy going for walks down the Tenant Canal where I bump into my arch nemesis, the local heron.....we definitely have a hate/hate relationship and I love laying in front of a warm fire.

Happy 21st Birthday Felix

Felix the cat (names after the cat on the Felix food pouches) was rescued from a home that was mistreating her by the RSPCA in 2007 when she was 3 years old. She was taken to the Llys Nini Rescue Center, where she stayed until Nicola saw her and adopted her. Felix was extremely nervous of everyone, and terrified of plastic bags (possibly due to a memory from the past during her time of abuse). In 2009, Nicola and Felix moved back into the family home in Taillwyd



Road where she has lived ever since, despite Nicola getting married in 2022 and moving across to Longford Road. With the fear of Felix attempting to make her way back to Taillwyd Road from 'across the Cwm' it was decided that she should stay with her 'grandparents'.

This summer, Felix celebrates her 21st birthday, and despite not being as enthusiastic to leave her house and garden, and no longer being the prolific 'mouser' that she was, she loves to sit in the front window and watch the day go by, or follow her 'grandad' wherever he goes whether in or out.

An amazing elder lady!

OUR OLD SCHOOL

by R.J.K

(Goodbye Rhydhir)

It's nearly midnight now!
The day's toil is over,
A happy carefree day it's been,
And it has lasted all through our early life.

We tried exams, entered competitions,
Made fun behind a teacher's back,
Whistled at the girls and ran amok,
And now it has nearly gone.

The clock in the hall is full and endless,
Punishing us for wasted hours.
It is too late now to regret,
The follies of our know all youth.

Hush!

There is only a minute left...
Stand and think of the nearing past,
Listen hard and you'll hear the old forms in the
classrooms crying,
The headmaster's study where we used to wait and fret,
and wish we were coming out, looks sad and lost.

The wind is gripping the loose window panes making
them rattle and shout,
And throughout the night they've been calling out:
"They're over now...the old school-days are gone."

Midnight.

The clock chimes loud and regretful,
Echoing through the school,
So solemn now we stand with hands clasped tight
behind our backs,
Feeling empty and lost.

DYFFRYN CLYDACH COMMUNITY COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 NOTICE OF VACANCY IN THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 116 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure, 2011 that a vacancy for the above mentioned council will be filled by way of co-option. For further information regarding the above vacancy and the process of selecting an individual for co-option please contact:

The Clerk to Council
Dyffryn Clydach Memorial Hall
The Drive, Neath Abbey, SA10 7HD
E-MAIL – clerk@dyffrynclydachcc.gov.wales

The deadline for the submission of applications/letters of interest for the above mentioned vacancy is: **03/06/2025**

A Season of Successful Events at the Community Hall

Over the past six months, the Halls Committee has been proud to host a variety of events that have brought our community together and created some truly memorable moments.

The festive season was particularly special, with a series of Christmas events that were incredibly well supported. The much-loved Christmas Tractor Parade was a highlight once again, bringing out local families and excited children to watch Santa ride through the streets in style. It was wonderful to see so many smiling faces and the community coming together to celebrate.



In the spring, our Easter Egg Hunt proved just as popular, with over 60 children taking part. It was fantastic to see families enjoying the event, with plenty of laughter, excitement, and, of course, lots of chocolate!

We also hosted a charity bingo night, which was a huge success. Thanks to the amazing turnout and generosity of those who attended, we were able to raise important funds in support of Ty Olwen and Maggie's cancer charities. We are thrilled to announce that our next bingo fundraiser will be held in aid of Lucia Rees, a local child currently undergoing vital overseas cancer treatment. We hope the community will once again come together to show their support for such a worthy cause.



Thank you to everyone who has attended, supported, and helped make these events so successful. To stay up to date with all our upcoming events and activities, be sure to follow the Dyffryn Clydach Community Council Facebook page.

The Street - 'On Which I Grew Up On'

This feature has become a regular in the Ymlaen Magazine over the past few years, and feedback has shown that these memory flashbacks resonate with lots of residents who have lived in the community for many years. Today's memory comes from Barbara Roberts.

Growing Up in Taillwyd

Although I was born in London during the war, it wasn't long before I was brought back to Taillwyd as a toddler. My parents' marriage hadn't worked out — my mother, a nurse, and my London-born father went their separate ways — so I returned to the family home, one of twelve cousins growing up together. My mother was one of seven girls raised in what was then Number 6, Jordan's Terrace, before the cottages were renamed Taillwyd Road. Other rows nearby included Heol Draw, White Row, Rosser Row, and Orchard Place — all clustered above the railway bridge. Beyond the bridge was the steep "Coffee's Hill", named after the Coffee family who once lived at its foot.

Life seemed to divide naturally around the railway bridge: children below it went to Abbey School, while we walked uphill to Bryncoch School (now Blaenhonddan). Yet every child, regardless of school, was expected to attend Sunday School at Moriah Chapel — sadly no longer standing. There, prayers were said in Welsh; the keen ones raced to be first, eager to say the short prayer "Duw cariad yw" ("God is love"). Hymn singing was beautiful, especially when Lance, with his lovely tenor voice, led the way. Some children appeared at Sunday School only in time for the Whitson Tea, but no one minded, as it was such a grand day of food, fun, and games in the field behind the chapel.

Our daily walk to Bryncoch School felt long for little legs, but we never noticed, travelling in noisy groups. I loved school. We learned so much simply by walking: the names of wildflowers, birds, trees — and everywhere, millions of bluebells. In spring, we went up Gilfach Mountain with enamel dishes to gather wimberries for the school cooks to bake into tarts. Afterns were wonderful, except on liver days, when our kind-hearted teacher would collect the abandoned liver in a paper bag to feed her dog!

Springtime also brought the frogs. As we rounded Dyffryn Pond, they'd cross the lane to spawn. My friend Mavis loves to remind me how I screamed and ran from them! On rainy mornings, Mavis' father would sometimes take us to school in his motorbike and sidecar. Mavis and our friend Beryl stayed dry inside the side car, whilst I had to sit behind her father holding on tight and getting wet. I still bear a grudge and remind Mavis when I see her all these years later.

Community life in Taillwyd was lively. Nearly every home had children, and arguments between neighbours were part of the daily drama. Beside our terrace was a huge communal ash-tip from all the coal fires. In winter, we'd slide down it on shovels, especially after snow — until our mothers grew tired of changing our sodden clothes.

Village life was harsh at times. Mr Branch kept a pig; when it was time for slaughter, Mr Payne the "pig-sticker" would come, and although my mother tried to shield me, I still heard the awful squeals. We celebrated happier events too — if a bride was leaving for her wedding, her father would throw pennies for us to scramble after.

Bonfire Night was dangerous fun, with boys hurling jumping jacks at the girls and playing devil-up-the-drainpipe. Traffic was rare, so we played in the road without worry, scattering only if Mr Vickery's taxi appeared. The real regular traffic came from the milkman, coalman, oil man, baker's van (driven by a moustached man nicknamed "Flying Officer Kite"), and paperboys. There was no bus service, and few had cars.

We roamed everywhere — the riverbanks, woods, fields — building dens and avoiding cows. Once a horse chased me and my twin cousins while we pushed doll prams across a field. I also once stumbled into an anthill and had to be dumped into a tin bath for a public wash!

Privacy was almost non-existent; older neighbours were quick to scold naughty children, particularly for raiding apple trees. We bought toffee apples from Mrs Dan Jones for a penny, and Bertha's tiny shop at the end of the row sold pop and sweets. Milk came fresh from Brookfield Farm, ladled straight into our jugs by a tiny old lady who spoke to me in Welsh, calling me "cariad".

Life was simple and primitive: chamber pots under the beds, outside taps for water, tin baths by the fire, and outdoor toilets at the garden's end. I still remember the geese hissing if they got into our garden.

The river played a central role in our lives. Children loved the island easily reached from our garden, and the magnificent waterfall nearby, with the deep Pwll Ddu pool — once used by colliers coming home from the pits.

My Uncle Ellis often picked mushrooms or watercress after his night shifts. There was once even a little stream, now gone with the Brookfield Estate. I learned to avoid peeking into his buckets outside the door — they sometimes contained slithering eels!

Our main shopping was at the Co-op on the Main Road, and we kept in touch with cousins by flashing torches from bedroom windows across White Row and Taillwyd Road.

Our entertainment was the "wireless," always on with news, comedies, musicals, and sports. Saturdays were sacred when my Grampa checked his football pools.

When the Queen's Coronation came in 1953, my mother spent her holiday savings on a tiny 9-inch TV. Friends and neighbours packed into our home to watch. There were street teas and fancy dress — my mother dressed as a minstrel with a top hat and violin!

Even the changes from the war reached us: Italian and Polish lodgers arrived, and even a German POW, Max, married a local girl.

Growing up in Taillwyd was full of laughter, mischief, and community spirit — memories that shaped a lifetime.

Ysgol Gymraeg Tregeles

Llongyfarchiadau i Gwilym. Daeth yn 2il yng nghystadlwyaeth canu Cerdd Dant ac felly yn mynd trwyddo i'r Eisteddfod ym Margam.



Congratulations to Gwilym on coming 2nd in the Cerdd Dant competition, he will now be going on to represent Ysgol Tregeles at the Eisteddfod in Margam.



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Have you ever considered Welsh Education for your child?




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For more information and to have a look around please call 01792 966655 or email swyddfa@yggtregeles.npt.school













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Bryncoch Church in Wales Primary School Celebrates STEM Success

Bryncoch Church in Wales Primary School, a primary school located in Bryncoch, Neath, has emerged victorious in two prestigious national STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) competitions during the Spring Term of 2025.

The school's children, some of whom live in Longford and Neath Abbey, competed against comprehensive schools across the UK in the First Lego League competition, titled "Submerged," and the F1 in Schools Primary class competition. Despite the formidable level of competition, Bryncoch Church in Wales Primary School demonstrated exceptional skills, winning the "Best Robot Design" award in the First Lego League and four trophies in the F1 in Schools challenge, the most of any school in South Wales.

"Introducing STEM at the primary level sparks curiosity, builds confidence, and lays the foundation for future innovators," said Marc Sinnett, Headteacher of Bryncoch Church in Wales Primary School. "Programmes like FIRST LEGO League and F1 in Schools transform classrooms into launchpads—where creativity meets technology, and students discover the power of teamwork, problem-solving, and real-world engineering."

The First Lego League competition, open to children aged 9 to 16, required the school's children to tackle a coding game-style challenge with a self-designed robot. They also had to complete an innovation project and produce a presentation outlining their solutions to a global problem.

In the F1 in Schools challenge, the children had just five weeks to plan, deliver, and compete with their cars and teams. Despite the tight timeline, the school's children emerged victorious, missing out on the National Final by a narrow margin.

One of the most significant compliments the school received was not about their STEM achievements, but rather their use of the Welsh language. The judges were impressed by the children's extensive use of Welsh in their work and presentations, leading them to believe the school was a bilingual institution.



"Due to the successes in these competitions, the rest of the school have got a STEM bug, and some of our younger children will be starting with their coding journey with an early exposure to some Lego coding in the 'Explore' challenge from Lego Education," Mr Sinnett added. "Some of the children that competed in the First Lego League will be starting a STEM Ambassador club, to pass on their knowledge and experience to some of our younger children."

Bryncoch Church in Wales Primary School is committed to nurturing the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers. With the support of parents and the local community, the school aims to build on its STEM success and compete again in both challenges, with the goal of reaching the national finals.

BUILDING A CLUB FOR THE FUTURE: LONGFORD FOOTBALL CLUB REBORN

We caught up with Joe Kendall the founder of the newly revived Longford Football Club, who shared his passion for football, community spirit, and big plans for the future.



Hi Joe! Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your background in football?

I've been football mad since I was a kid! After moving to Swansea, I played senior football for Clydach Sports before gradually moving into management there, spending nine years with the club. Later, I joined Cilfrew Rovers, helping them grow from just 17 players to three senior sides, 83 players, and two junior teams. Last October, I stepped away to pursue an exciting new opportunity: rebuilding Longford FC.

What inspired you to start Longford Football Club?

It's all about building something we can call ours — creating a club from scratch, planting roots within the community, and restoring a historic name to the Neath league.

What's the story behind the team?

Longford Football Club has a proud history in the Neath League, but sadly suffered from poor leadership over the years. Our aim is to bring it back stronger than ever, becoming a permanent fixture once again.

What age group is the team aimed at?

Right now, we're focusing on senior men's football, open to anyone over 16 regardless of ability or experience. In time, we hope to launch a ladies team and establish a junior and minis setup.

Which leagues will Longford FC compete in?

We'll be starting in Division 3 of the Neath Football League, and also competing in the West Wales Cup and the FAW Amateur Trophy. We're ambitious and confident about moving up through the divisions.

What have been the biggest challenges so far?

Finding a home ground in Longford itself has been tough. We've been allocated a pitch at Cwrt Herbert

playing fields for now, but long term, we're determined to secure our own ground in the heart of Longford. Somewhere for the community to come together and support a local side

How has the community responded?

The support has been brilliant! Social media engagement has been fantastic, with lots of people keen to help and get involved.

Are there any sponsors supporting the club?

Yes, we're lucky to have amazing sponsors: Dyfed Telecom (home kit sponsor), Tangled Mindz (mental health clothing brand), McCaptures (football photography), a Bill Plant Driving School franchisee (away kit sponsor), Serge's Barbers, and Horizon Windows.

What are the club's biggest needs right now?

The biggest challenge so far is and will continue to be finding a suitable site for our home ground within Longford itself.

What's your vision for the next five years?

Within five years, we aim to be playing in the highest division of the Neath League, push toward the West Wales Premier League, and have a thriving junior, minis, and ladies section — plus, of course, secure a permanent home ground.

How do you plan to involve the wider community?

Community is at the heart of everything we do. Beyond football, we hope to run toddler classes, host fun days, and even organise community litter-picking events to give back.

How can local people support the club?

You can find us on Facebook and Instagram by searching Longford Football Club. Give us a follow, share our posts, or check out our club shop with VX3 — 10% of merchandise sales go back to the club. We're always looking for local sponsors too!

Are there any events coming up?

Yes! We're running toddler football classes every Thursday at the Memorial Hall (6–6.30pm for ages 2–5) and hosting a fundraising darts night at The Highlander in Neath — full details are on our socials.

Finally, what message would you like to share with the community?

We're here to stay. We to build a club the community can be proud of, offering opportunities for players of all ages. If anyone knows of land that could help us secure a permanent pitch and facilities, please get in touch. Let's build something special together!

For more information or to get involved, contact 07876 798987 or message Longford Football Club on Facebook or Instagram.

Rare Beetle Confirmed & Committee Works Update

On 27th March, we received notice from Buglife Cymru that they would be carrying out a search for the very rare Blue Ground Beetle in our ward. This beetle is extremely rare in the British Isles, with populations previously found only in the southwest of England and, until now, officially confirmed at just one woodland site in Wales—Coed Maesmelin, which is also located here in Dyffryn Clydach.

Buglife Cymru has now confirmed the discovery of three male Blue Ground Beetles in the Community Council's woodland at Coed y Graig. They plan to conduct further searches in this area, as well as in other local woodlands.

We have also been notified that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) intends to assess the woodlands around Drummau, including Coed y Graig, for potential designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the presence of this rare insect within our community. This move has been welcomed by the Community Council and Dyffryn's Neath Port Talbot (NPT) Councillors. NRW will carry out its own surveys before any designation is confirmed.

In January, the Community Council adopted the 2025–28 Biodiversity Plan, proposed by the Open Spaces Committee. As part of this plan, the committee will work over the coming years to improve and enhance local biodiversity, while encouraging greater engagement with residents. Planned activities include projects on selected

grass verges, the creation of a memorial meadow to honour service personnel from Dyffryn Clydach, and the planting of native Welsh fruit trees, among other initiatives.

To encourage community involvement, we are also aiming to reintroduce the popular garden competitions that previously took place in the area. We also plan to organise talks in collaboration with NPT's Biodiversity Team, providing residents with practical advice on how to support nature within our community.

We are currently working to establish a litter-picking hub at Dyffryn Clydach Memorial Hall. This hub would support both larger organised community clean-ups and individual

efforts by providing access to necessary supplies. Although we had hoped the hub would already be in place, unfortunately Keep Wales Tidy did not have the resources to support another hub in the Neath area at this time.

Finally, we'll be planting bulbs around Dyffryn Clydach this autumn. We'll post updates on Facebook with dates and locations, and we warmly invite residents to join us—just as many have in previous years.

If you would like to get involved in any of our upcoming projects, please get in touch with the Community Council or follow us on Facebook for updates.

James Henton
Chair of Open Spaces



Notice to Dog Walkers **Dyffryn Clydach Memorial Park**

We have a beautiful, well maintained childrens play park situated at The Drive, however it has come to our attention that there are dog walkers who are allowing their dogs into the park. There are many fields and woodlands in the area where they can be walked freely, and we really want to keep this a clean and safe place for our young people and ask that your canine friends are kept out at all times.

Please do not be offended if you are asked to leave the park with your dog.

Dyffryn Clydach Memorial Hall – For Hire

Are you looking for a venue to hire for a party, a community group, training?

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We have a seated capacity of 70 and standing of 100, kitchen and disabled facilities.

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For further details contact the Clerk via DyffrynClydach@outlook.com

Meet Gareth Bates: Local Tour Guide and Founder of Tours of Wales

My name is Gareth Bates. I was brought up in the Longford and Skewen area and still live on Longford Road today. I attended Dwr-Y-Felin Comprehensive School before moving on to Neath College. I then studied at Liverpool University, later qualifying as a history teacher through Swansea University.

I worked in various schools across England and Wales before starting a new role as a teacher at Parc Prison in 2006. While working there, I began learning Welsh as both a hobby and a tool for professional development. Later, I also took up French. I enjoyed my role, but in 2018, I decided to take a leap and start my own company, which I named *Tours of Wales*.

Travel has always been a passion of mine. Whenever I visit a new country, I often take day trips to get a deeper understanding of its culture and history. It got me thinking about what was available back home. I realised there was a gap in the market for these kinds of tours in Wales — and with my background in history and languages, I felt I could provide a service that was both educational and enjoyable.

2019 proved to be a fantastic start, although 2020, of course, brought many challenges. I waited it out, and from 2022 onwards, numbers began to rise again. I now operate mainly out of Cardiff, where most tourists are based, offering day trips to places like Tenby, Tintern Abbey, Caerphilly Castle, and more locally to Neath Abbey and Melincourt Waterfalls. Along the way, I share insights into the history, culture, and language of Wales.

The majority of my customers come from overseas, with over 50% travelling from the USA. Many visitors feel nervous about driving on the left-hand side and navigating our narrow country roads, which makes guided tours a

popular option. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Wales remains less well known internationally than its neighbours, but those who visit are captivated by our stunning landscapes, rich history, welcoming people — and, occasionally, less-than-perfect weather!

While Wales as a whole has so much to offer, I feel the Neath area is often unfairly overlooked. It's telling that the Welsh *Lonely Planet* guide once had nothing to say about Neath at all. Many tourists stick to a few well-known spots, but this area has an incredible history and beautiful surrounding countryside. I always try to bring visitors here, not just because it's where I'm from, but because I genuinely believe in its appeal.

If you're interested in joining a tour or finding out more, visit my website at www.toursofwales.co.uk or search for me on Viator, TripAdvisor, or GetYourGuide under "The Wandering Bard's Tours." Please take a look — I'd love to show you what Wales has to offer!



CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS • GAIR O GADAIR Y CADEIRYDD

At the time of writing this address, I continue to be the Chair at Dyffryn Clydach Community Council, however, this may have changed at the AGM held on the 6th of May.

Focus for the next year

2025/26 marks the 3rd year of the election of the current committee and with two years left to our term, the Community Council will be focussing on how we can ensure that the Memorial Hall, the grounds and our woodlands are available for community use for years to come with much needed upgrades and maintenance, organising events that will bring our community together and on fundraising for local charities.

Precept

In January, we were set the task of setting our budget for the forthcoming year. We gave this matter lengthy consideration and recommended that given the current cost of living crisis and a rise of 7% in Local Authority Council Tax charges, we would not raise the precept for the ward. Council voted unanimously in favour of not raising the precept. This means that the sum we receive (based on a Band D property) remains at £51.23 per annum.

Well done and Thank You

I would like to take this opportunity to offer thanks to Cllr Chantele Cross-Jones who, over the past year has taken on the role of Editor of the Ymlaen magazine with gusto. Chantele has worked tirelessly in her (very limited) spare time, juggling work, family and volunteering commitments to gather stories, information and news from our community and compiled it into yet another excellent issue. Chantele you are a true example of how to successfully multitask.

Become a Councillor!

Unfortunately, the Council is still not at a full complement and continue to be in the position of having to co-opt a further two Community Councillors – If you feel that you have the knowledge, skills and abilities to be a Councillor and are interested in applying, please contact our Clerk – Mrs Andrea Mateo for further details via

DyffrynClydach@outlook.com

Cllr. Nicola Evans

Ar adeg ysgrifennu'r darn hwn, rwy'n parhau i fod yn Gadeirydd Cyngor Cymuned Dyffryn Clydach, ond gallai hyn fod wedi newid yn y Cyfarfod Blynnyddol Cyffredinol a gynhelir ar 6 Mai.

Ffocws ar gyfer y flwyddyn i ddod

Mae 2025/26 yn nodi'r drydedd flwyddyn ers ethol y pwyllgor presennol, ac â dwy flynedd ar ôl yn ein tymor, bydd y Cyngor Cymuned yn canolbwyntio ar sut y gallwn ni sicrhau fod y Neuadd Goffa, y tiroedd a'n coetir ar gael i'w defnyddio gan y gymuned am flynyddoedd i ddod, gyda gwaith diweddarau a chynnal a chadw y mae mawr angen amdanynt, trefnu digwyddiadau a fydd yn dod â'n cymuned at ei gilydd, a chodi arian er budd elusennau lleol.

Praesept

Ym mis Ionawr, gosodwyd y dasg o osod ein cyllideb ar gyfer y flwyddyn i ddod. Bu i ni ystyried y mater hwn yn faith a thrylwyr, gan argymhell, o ystyried yr argyfwng costau byw presennol, a chynnydd o 7% mewn costau Treth Cyngor yr Awdurdod Lleol, na fyddem ni ddim yn codi'r praesept ar gyfer y ward. Pleidleisiodd y Cyngor yn unfrydol dros beidio â chodi'r praesept. Mae hyn yn golygu fod y swm a dderbynnir gennym (yn seiliedig ar eiddo Band D) yn aros yn £51.23 y flwyddyn.

Da iawn a Diolch

Hoffwn achub ar y cyfle hwn i gynnig diolch i'r Cyngorydd Chantele Cross-Jones sydd, dros y flwyddyn ddiwethaf, wedi ysgwyddo rôl Golygydd cylchgrawn Ymlaen yn frwdfrydig. Mae Chantele wedi gweithio'n ddiflino yn ei hamser sbâr (prin iawn), gan gydbwyso ymrwymïadau i'w gwaith, ei theulu a gwirfoddoli, er mwyn casglu straeon, gwybodaeth a newyddion o'n cymuned, a dod â'r cyfan ynghyd i greu rhifyn rhagorol arall. Chantele, rwy'ti wir yn esiamp o sut i amlwasgio'n llwyddiannus!

Dewch yn Gyngorydd!

Yn anffodus, nid yw'r Cyngor yn cynnwys y nifer gyflawn o aelodau o hyd, ac mae'n parhau i fod yn gorfod cyfethol dau Gyngorydd Cymuned pellach. Os ydych chi'n teimlo fod gennych chi'r wybodaeth, y sgiliau a'r gallu i fod yn Gyngorydd, a bod gennych ddiddordeb mewn ymgeisio, cysylltwch â'n Clerk, Mrs Andrea Mateo, i gael mwy o fanylion ar DyffrynClydach@outlook.com

Cllr. Nicola Evans

RECIPE

West African Curry

INGREDIENTS

- Fry Light/oil
- 1 Onion finely sliced
- 2 tsp lazy garlic or 2 finely sliced garlic cloves
- 1 tsp Garam Masala
- 1 tsp Ground Turmeric
- 2 tsp Ground Cumin
- 2 tsp Ground Coriander
- 1 tbsp Dried Mixed Herbs
- 455 g Lean Minced Beef
- 2 tbsp Mango Chutney
- 1 tbsp Tomato Puree
- 115 g Frozen Peas

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large frying pan, heat the fry light/oil and gently fry the onions until softened but not browned. Add the garlic, spices and herbs and continue to saute for a further 1-2 minutes.
2. Add the mince and fry until browned, mixing it well with the spice and onion mixture.
3. Add the chutney and tomato puree and mix to combine. Cook, stirring well for about 10 minutes. If the mince appears dry add 100ml of water.
4. Add the peas to the pan and continue to cook for 5 minutes.
5. Serve with boiled rice and salad for a tasty meal!

Alternative - If you like an extra kick the original recipe used 1tsp of cilli powder and 3 whole cloves as well. Plus you can garnish the curry with freshly diced tomatoes (get in some extra veggies!)



Book Review

All The Colours of the Dark by Chris Whitaker

Chris Whitaker delivers another unforgettable, emotionally charged novel with *All The Colours of the Dark* — a beautifully written and poignant story that stays with you long after the final page.

Set across several decades and woven with haunting mystery and deep emotional resonance, the novel follows Patch, a young boy marked by tragedy, and Saint, a girl who becomes his closest companion and moral compass. Their bond grows stronger as they navigate a world shadowed by violence, loss, and injustice — but also illuminated by the quiet, persistent power of love and hope.

As with his previous work (*We Begin at the End*), Whitaker masterfully blends crime, character-driven drama, and lyrical prose. The story unfolds with suspense, but it's the emotional depth — the aching beauty in the relationships and the small, redemptive moments — that truly defines the book.

At its heart, *All The Colours of the Dark* is a novel about survival, identity, and the transformative impact of compassion. It's both thrilling and tender, with characters who feel so real you'll grieve and celebrate alongside them. Whitaker's writing is vivid and poetic without ever feeling overwrought, and there are passages that are genuinely moving — moments that touch on grief, loyalty, and forgiveness in a way that feels raw and honest.

A stunning, heartbreaking, and ultimately uplifting novel, *All The Colours of the Dark* confirms Chris Whitaker as one of the most compelling voices in contemporary fiction.

