

Welcome...

Welcome to this first newsletter of Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society.

As the founding Chairman of Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society I am delighted to introduce our new newsletter. This has been in the pipeline for some time and we have certainly had no shortage of enthusiastic contributors.

The theme of the mountain, its landscape and geology, its history, archaeology and the legends surrounding it certainly inspire people in many ways and I hope that this will be reflected in this first newsletter, and in forthcoming issues.

When we started the Save Twmbarlwm Campaign in April of last year we had no idea of the enthusiastic and passionate response we would get from so many local people. This was reflected in the fantastic attendance we got for our launch at Crosskeys Rugby Club last October and the many letters and emails of support we have received before and since then.

The sad decline of the tump area and the access paths over recent years has been the result of erosion, public carelessness and intrusions by off road vehicles, especially motorbikes.

Perhaps the biggest issue was the lack of responsibility and care of the mountain and its scheduled ancient

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You'll find more information and photos on our website - so please visit it regularly to keep up to date.

Gwent's Most Iconic Landmark



Co-ordinates: 51.62736, -3.09365
Height: 419m (1,374ft) above sea level

OS Grid reference: ST 24394 92627

monument (SAM) has received over the last decade.

In the 1980s Gwent County Council undertook the restoration works on the tump. It was they who built and maintained the steps to the top and the low fence around it. They also raised the level and partially paved the top of the tump. When Gwent CC was abolished in 1996 responsibility for the upkeep of the SAM and footpaths on Twmbarlwm was not handed over to the legacy authority, Caerphilly County Borough Council. This was almost certainly an administrative oversight but, coupled with increased visitor numbers due to the popularity of the Cwmcarn Forest Drive, led to the decline we have all become familiar with in recent years.

However, the establishment of our society and your strength of feeling is already making a big difference. Caerphilly County Borough Council, Torfaen County Borough Council and the landowners, the Trustees of

Llanarth Estate, are about to enter into an agreement to restore Twmbarlwm tump to its former glory.

Our Society will also be very much involved in this process over the next few years. It is also likely that we will take on some of the management of the site to ensure that Twmbarlwm can be enjoyed by our grand children in the same way that it was by our grand parents

The mountain is iconic in many ways. It is a source of inspiration, solace, joy and awe to so many of us and with your help and support we want to keep it that way.

If you want to see the 'Tump' restored to its former glory and sympathise with our cause - please join us, it'll only cost you a tenner. Go to the website to get an application form or pick up a leaflet available in many places locally or at one of our events.

Rob Southall

www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

Why Care About The “Tump”?

Twmbarlwm, the man-made mound on the summit of the mountain above Risca is a well known south Wales landmark. Clearly visible from Newport, Cardiff and the motorway in between, to many it is a symbol of Gwent, and its distant silhouette is often a welcome indication to the traveller that they are nearing home. The view from the top is spectacular.



The “Tump” as it is known has served many purposes through time. Historians and archaeologists seldom agree but plausible cases have been put forward for a hill fort built by the Silures, the Iron Age tribe who inhabited the area before the Romans; a Roman signal point and a Norman (or Welsh) motte and bailey castle.

In folk legend, it has been rumoured to be the burial site of a giant; a sacred site to the Druids; the burial mound of the horse Lord Tredegar rode at the charge of the Light Brigade; and the location of buried treasure guarded by a swarm of bees.

More recently the site has become an important local amenity. This has come at a price. The erosion caused by the many walkers and mountain bikers who enjoy the site is threatening to undermine the foundations of the tump itself. Litter louts have been active and some fly tippers have made a special effort to reach the higher slopes. Off road bikers have used the mound as a giant bike ramp, the deep furrows gouged by their tyre tracks all too visible from afar.

We decided to do something about it. A group of local people created Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society with the following objectives:

- to protect and preserve the ancient monument on the summit of Twmbarlwm and its immediate environment
- to ensure that there is secure and robust fencing in place to prevent access by off-

road vehicles – especially scrambling and quad bikes

- to ensure that fencing and stiles are properly maintained
- to seek to improve the quality of footpaths on the mountain and to work to ensure that pedestrian access is not the cause of further erosion
- to raise the public perception of the importance of Twmbarlwm in historical, environmental and community terms.

Over 100 people attended our launch event at Cross Keys Rugby Club in October. The evening was a huge success and we now have almost 70 members. Our challenge now is to harness all that enthusiasm and to move the Society forward.



What Needs To Be Done

There is a lot to be done if we want to achieve our objectives. We want to work effectively with local partners including Caerphilly County Borough Council and Torfaen Borough Council, Cadw, Gwent Police and other public sector organisations. We will need to develop a constructive working relationship with the landowners, Llanarth Estates. Their co-operation will be essential if we want to do work to improve the site.

We need to take a systematic approach to fund-raising so that we can take full advantage of grants or any other funding that could further our objectives. We need to develop an effective communications policy to inform and educate people about the importance of Twm Barlwm and to ensure that the Society and its work have a high profile. We need more academic research into the site and we also need practical people who would be prepared to help out with hands-on maintenance tasks. We also need to build a strong relationship with other local community groups who have similar interests and objectives.

This is a long and ambitious list but we are confident that the knowledge, experience and enthusiasm of our members will help us to rise to the challenge. Thank you for your support. We look forward to seeing you at one of our events in the future.

Further information about the Society can be found on our website: www.cymdeithastwmbarlwm.blogspot.com which can also be accessed from www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

Motor Bikers Need To Be Educated



Forgive them, for they know not what they do...

WE WANT TO STRESS that as a society we are not out to bash motor bikers and 4x4 off-roaders but everyone needs to realise the damage they can do to our historic monument with their activities. Even walkers and mountain bikers can cause irretrievable damage to our landscape with inconsiderate activities.

Break through the top-soil of the mountainside with a spinning wheel and create a rut and over time the elements of wind and rain will soon erode it away to make it into a large unsightly, rock-strewn trench.

Look at an aerial photograph of Twmbarlwm and you will see the intricate patterns of the race-tracks created by scrambling bikes in only the last 10 years.

Illegal use of Off-Road Bikes - The Facts

- It is illegal to drive any mechanically propelled vehicle including mini bikes, mini quads, scooters or any off-road motorbike on a public road without insurance, road tax, driving certificate or MOT certificate.

- Such vehicles can be driven off-road on a suitable piece of private land with the owner's permission but not on streets, common land, moor land, forestry land, playing fields or in parks as well as footpaths, bridleways or byeways. If you do not have the permission or legal authority, you will be committing offences under the Section 34 of Road Traffic Act 1998 and the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000.

- If you are caught riding illegally on public land, you could face having your vehicle seized and destroyed.

Walkers should phone 101 whenever they see any motorised vehicle on the common. Don't forget to ask for a log



The kids above are probably only 14 years old - they think it's great fun riding their mini-scramblers to the top of the historical Twmp. But the photo above shows what happens to the landscape because of the damage they initially cause. This slope was a smooth grass bank less than 10 years ago.

number. There is little the Police can do if there are no identifying features, but it is still worth reporting the incident and asking for a log number. That way there is statistical evidence of the size of the problem. If you have a camera, especially if it has a good zoom on it, take a photo. Recently a member of our society was able to give the Police photos with enough information that action could be taken against the illegal riders.



More evidence of the damage inflicted on the Twmp by vandals.

Common Land

Why it is special...

On the Risca side, from the cattle grid on Mountain Road the area around the Twmp of Twmbarlwm is subject to Common Land legislation.

Common Land is unique. It is historical land, which has remained largely undisturbed through the centuries, a remnant of medieval times when people relied on commons for their survival. It is land where the owners of nearby properties have rights to graze animals, collect wood and bracken or dig peat for example. Those rights still exist, although are not exercised as they were in the past.

There are 1.3 million acres of common land in England and Wales, registered in over 9,000 separate units covering all types of landscape and habitat.

All common land has an owner, whether it is a local authority, the National Trust or private individual - in the case of Twmbarlwm it is the Trustees of Llanarth Estates.

The public has the right to walk on all registered commons, subject to certain restrictions, and on many commons there is also a right to ride on a horse. No vehicles may be driven, nor fires lit, on common land.

Rights of Way

A right of way is a path that anyone has the legal right to use on foot only, and sometimes using other modes of transport.

- Public footpaths are open only to walkers
- Public bridleways are open to walkers, horse-riders and pedal cyclists
- Restricted byways are open to walkers, horse-riders, and drivers/riders of non-mechanically propelled vehicles (such as horse-drawn carriages and pedal cycles)

Road Traffic Act

Under section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002, a police officer may stop you and issue a warning (verbally in the first instance) if:

- 1 the driving of your vehicle is likely to cause harassment, alarm, distress
- 2 you are guilty of careless driving
- 3 you are driving on ANY land without the land owner's SPECIFIC permission or on any road being a Footpath, Bridleway or restricted byway (Thus being in contravention of Section 34 of the Road Traffic Act).

The Story So Far...

THE CAMPAIGN to save Twmbarlwm started even before the society had formed, with several concerned local citizens writing to the letters page of the Argus in April 2010 about the threat to the ancient monument on Twmbarlwm from litter, erosion and off road motorcyclists. This was followed up by communications between our fledgling campaign team, the local authority, Caerphilly County Borough Council, and the owners of Twmbarlwm, the Trustees of Llanarth Estate.

During this time we also received letters of support and encouragement from a wide range of people including Don (now Lord) Touhig, the former Member of Parliament for Islwyn.

An appearance at last year's Crosskeys Green Park Festival in May helped build momentum and led to the first meeting of the society at Crosskeys RFC on Monday 7th June.

Tidy Twmp Litterpick

The first activity of the society was the 'Tidy Twmp' litter pick on the evening of Monday 28th June when around twenty so enthusiastic volunteers from Cymdeithas Twmbarlwm Society and Islwyn Ramblers, along with 2 countryside wardens from Caerphilly County Borough Council, took part in a thorough clean-up of the summit area of the mountain.



Official Launch

Our society was officially launched on Monday 18th October to a packed house of over 100 people at Crosskeys Rugby Club. Those in attendance were treated to presentations on the Silures by Dr Ray Howell of University of Wales Newport; the Norman castle, or watchtower, on the summit by archaeologist Neil Phillips of A.P.A.C. Ltd; Dr Maddy Gray, of the University of Wales Newport, provided an insight into the medieval pilgrimage routes from Llantarnam Abbey to Penrhys over Mynydd Maen; while Richard Davies of the Ancient Cwmbrian and Cistercians Project entertained us all with his passionate and articulate delivery on ancient historical remains on the Torfaen side of Mynydd Maen.

The evening closed with a stimulating discussion, and question and answer session, which was joined by, among others, popular local author Chris Barber, archaeologist Stuart Fry and Gwilym Games of the Friends of Arthur Machen.

Raising The Profile

The Committee formed after that Launch Event decided that to achieve our aims of restoration and on-going care of Twmbarlwm, we would need to raise its profile and illustrate the mountain's importance to a wider audience – and, of

course, to raise the funds needed to achieve our aims.

To that end we started a programme of events to entertain and inform people and all have been well attended.

Cistercians

Richard Davies (pictured below) joined us again in January for the first of our monthly lectures. Richard, who is Project Officer of



the Ancient Cwmbrian and Cistercians Project, provided an insightful and entertaining overview of the project's findings and their relevance to Twmbarlwm and its locality. He also incorporated a number of myths and legends from the area into his talk.

The second of our monthly lectures in February was a fascinating evening devoted to medieval pilgrimages in south-east Wales. Dr Maddy Gray, who is Reader in History at the University of Wales Newport, provided an enthralling overview of pilgrimage routes to and between Cistercian abbeys. The focus of the talk was the route over the shoulder of Twmbarlwm from Llantarnam Abbey to the Shrine of the Virgin Mary at Penrhys. This was one of the most important pilgrim routes in Wales until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

Dr Gray is organising a walk following the Llantarnam to Penrhys pilgrimage route over three days in September. Anyone wishing to take part will be able to sign up to walk the complete route or just part of it. For more details email: madeleine.gray@newport.ac.uk



Dr Maddy Gray

Artistic Inspirations

In March we enjoyed an illustrated talk from *Gwilym Games* (pictured below) of the Friends of Arthur Machen. In his talk he explored literary references to the mountain and its surroundings from medieval times onwards.



The "mystic tumulus" of Twmbarlwm had a special significance for influential Caerleon-born fantasy and horror writer Arthur Machen (1863-1947) as part of the landscape which inspired his work. He also described how Twmbarlwm appeared in the poetry of the famous tramp poet W. H. Davies. The editor of the South Wales Argus in the twenties and thirties, William John Townsend Collins a good friend of Machen, also wrote a poem dedicated to the strange folklore surrounding the mountain.

Following the talk, Keith Hackwood, a talented local author and poet, recited two of his poems inspired by the mountain to the delight of the audience.

Welsh Government and Local Authority Support

While these events and activities have taken place we have continued to lobby both the Welsh Government and the local authorities to get the tump area and access paths restored to their former glory.

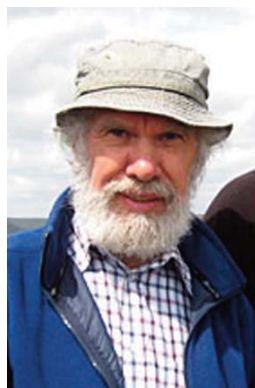
Earlier in the year we learned that as a result of our efforts Caerphilly County Borough Council had linked up with a grant bid made by Torfaen County Borough Council to the Valleys Regional Park which will allow them to undertake works on Twmbarlwm 'Tump' to protect it, upgrade footpath access to the Nant Carn valley from Mynydd Maen and possibly provide a small car park and interpretation signage below Twmbarlwm on the lane up from Risca.

Caerphilly Council are currently awaiting the go ahead from the owners, the Trustees of Llanarth Estate, So it currently looks hopeful that restoration works will start in the Spring of next year. We will keep our fingers crossed. Watch this space for more news.

The Mystic Tumulus

Early in May the well known author Chris Barber (pictured below) gave a fascinating talk on "The Mystic Tumulus of Gwent Legend, History and Mystery".

Chris delved into theories concerning the origin of the name of the mountain, its many legends and mysteries and showed how Twyn Barlwm featured in the writings of his close friend and local historian Fred Hando. He also compared the mountain with other sites of a similar nature in Wales.



Chris was involved in the Gwent County Council project in the 1980s to restore the mound and showed us seldom seen photographs of the work in progress at that time which led to a Prince of Wales Award for the scheme.

E V E N T S

JULY

- 4th Committee Meeting**
7.30pm - Crosskeys RFC
- 10th Walk: Lost Farmsteads of the Cwmcarn Valley**
Rob Southall
9.30am - Meet at the visitor centre, Cwmcarn Valley.
Tel: 01495 270078 for details

AUGUST

- 1st Committee Meeting**
7.30pm - Crosskeys RFC
- 21st Nature Walk**
Dave Richards
Local area, exact location TBC

SEPTEMBER

- 5th Committee Meeting**
7.30pm - Crosskeys RFC
- Saturday 3rd – Monday 5th Llantarnam-Penrhys Pilgrimage**
Dr Madeleine Gray
Walk from Llantarnam to Penrhys over three days

OCTOBER

- 3rd Committee Meeting**
7.30pm - Crosskeys RFC
- 17th Western Valleys Walks and More**
Ralph Collins
7.30pm - Crosskeys RFC

NOVEMBER

- 7th Committee Meeting**
7.30pm - Crosskeys RFC
- 21st The Silures**
Dr Ray Howell
7.30pm - Crosskeys RFC

Other events we are hoping to hold include:

- Welsh Long Houses
- Dry Stone Wall training
- Welsh farm workers' cottages
- Industrial history of the Twmbarlwm vicinity (walk)
- Early Motte and bailey castles
- Ghost walk/Ghost evening?
- More litter picks
- Place names of Gwent
- The Geology of Twmbarlwm
- Cwmcarn Colliery
- The Cwmcarn Reservoir Disaster

Check the website regularly for more information on events - and if you have any ideas for an event please contact Rob Southall via the website:

www.twmbarlwm.co.uk

The Inspirational Mountain

Twmbarlwm has inspired many artists, writers and poets for centuries – as has been discussed during many of our lecture events (see page 5). Here we present some artistic endeavours inspired by “our” mountain.

Extract taken from “Glimpses of West Gwent” Rex H. Pugh 1935

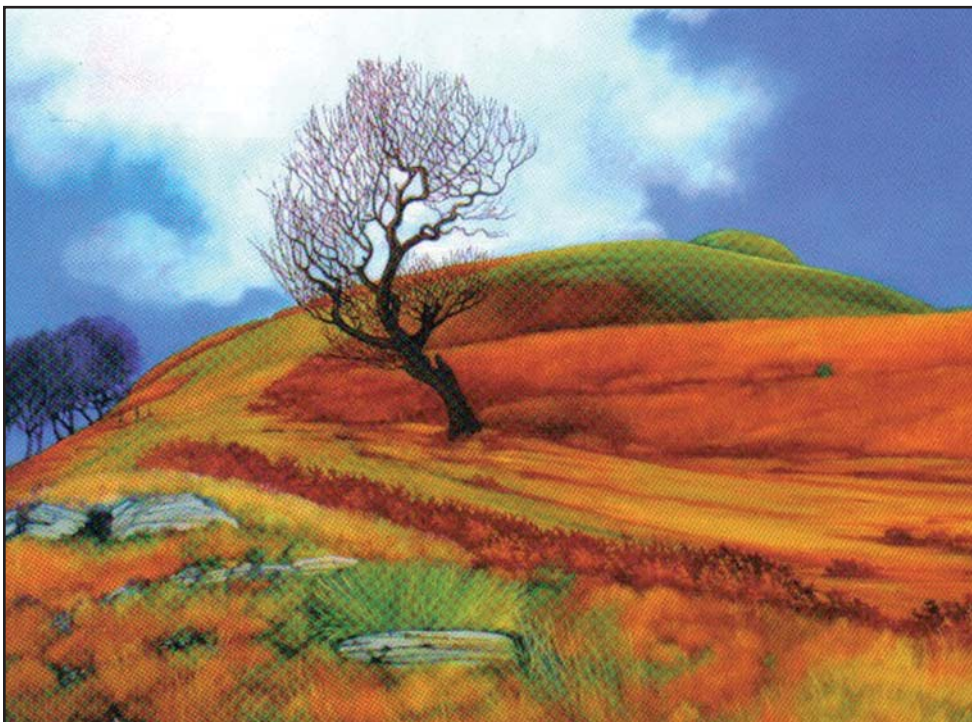
Justice On The Heights

(from “In the Gold and Purple”)

The first part of this poem is semi-satirical. It was prompted by a discussion at Newport Town Council on the advisability of erecting new Law Courts. The discussion was growing tedious, when a humorist suggested that a suitable site would be Twyn Barlwm! The poet, who was present in the role of Critic, weighs the possibilities of such suggestion. Law courts on Twyn Barlwm would certainly be a novelty in the modern age and would attract crowds of spectators (many in aeroplanes). But is the idea as new as it seems? Was not justice administered on Twyn Barlwm in ages long ago? The poet now lets his imagination wander and it conjures up a vision of the past.

On the crest of a hill

To the people a chieftain made known his Will.
His long grey hair o'er his shoulders hung,
The words of wisdom were on his tongue;
He sat in his seat on the Hill of Laws,
And justly decided each tribal cause;
Law-giver, father, judge and chief,
He checked the turbulent and punished the Thief
Did right by the poor-hewers of wood,
And ruled and judged for the tribal good.
And judgement over, he raised his hand to bless.
For the right he bade them stand-
To live or die for their tribe and land.
At the end a shout made the hillside ring;
“All honour to Barlwm, our father and king!”
And when Barlwm died with scarce a pause,
They bore his corpse to the Hill of Laws
They set him again in his judgement seat,
With his crown at his head and his shield at his feet;
They dug the rock from the stony ground
And raised o'er his head a mighty mound
Which the people could see for miles around
And they gave it his name, and we call it
Still
Twyn Barlwm – the tomb on the Judge's Hill
W.J.T.Collins



KEITH HACKWOOD, a local author and poet, entertained us with some of his work at our literary evening in March and he's kindly given permission to reproduce one of his poems below:

Unstruck

Twmbarlwm is backlit by lightning
She is lost to a terrifying dance

I shuffled nine times backwards saluting
the moon
Her bruises licked my eyes
A harmony circled my heart, a green rose
A hole in the sky
Weeping greenly

At Ynys Wydryn a devil wind elates me,
Blackness rinses in a rain of tears
Wringing deep into black mystery
Down Findhorn's ever flowing race

Riven with dancing and comet-tailed
I am broken from spine to skull –
A roseate mist curtains my setting,
Madoc is whispering omens to the wind

Across this setting two birds sail,
Souls through Machen's sunset
Heading for Goldcliff's bright starsong
And the music of tide-change

Twmbarlwm made vital by lightning
Is silent in holy dance
Keith Hackwood

“The Hill of Dreams” by well known local artist and CTS member, Mark Williams.

See more of Mark's work at MarkWilliams-art.co.uk

Fred Hando's Literary View

CHRIS BARBER, who gave a talk to CTS in May, (see page 5) fondly recalled the work of Fred Hando. Fred was a close friend to the Barber family and Chris was fortunate to have the experience of accompanying the Gwent author and art historian on many of his journeys around the county.

Fred first wrote about Twyn Barlwm in his first book *Rambles in Gwent* (1924) where he commented:

“To many a son of Gwent, exiled in distant lands, home thoughts conjure up a vision of a skyline, long and nobly undulating, with a strange tump towards the left, upheld by a bare mountain shoulder. The vision appears usually in sunset colours, with the hill pale mauve against a primrose sky. Sailors have seen it, whilst fighting for life in the ‘Roaring Forties’; miners out at ‘the back of beyond,’ puffing at their evening pipes, have found the vision floating among their smoke-pictures; Tommies, entrenched before the Vimy Ridge, have watched while the ‘Pimple’ changed magically into the ‘Tump,’ while Souchez became Risca, La Targette dissolved into Pontnewydd and Arras seemed a dream-figment of Pontypool. This mountain vision sets the Monmouthshire man apart; it is his birthright, his symbol of home”.

Chris Barber has published two volumes entitled *Hando's Gwent* which pay tribute to Hando's work – they make great reading and can be found in most book stores or online at Amazon.com

Nostalgic for Night Hikes, Beacons and Wagers

In this first of the series "Memory Lane", Cedric Mumford gives us a small collection of his "Tump" related memories

Night Hike to Twmbarlwm

IN 1951, OR THEREABOUTS, Doug, the Scoutmaster of the second Pontymister Troop decided to organise a Night Hike to begin at midnight from the Troop's hut on Park Road. I was eleven at the time and very much a Tenderfoot, as new Scouts were called. There was very little street-lighting in those days and no Ty-sign estate, so from Moriah Hill onwards we stumbled along via stony lanes. After a wearying trek in pitch darkness, we duly arrived at a hollow just off the exposed ridgeway leading from the Twmp towards Pontypool, feeling tired and chilled by the dew-laden air. As the Rangers began to unpack the tents best-laid plans were found to have gone astray: the tent-poles and pegs had been left behind!

We younger ones were kindly put under cover of the loose canvas while the more experienced lads went off to find sticks to use as poles. Even today trees are scarce along the ridge so it was a long time before suitable branches were found, cut and shaped to hold up the tents and peg down the guy-ropes.

It was not a comfortable night. The tents had been erected on a slope that caused us to roll against the tent wall. There were no proper sleeping bags in those days only a blanket folded over and loosely stitched to form a bag. When we awoke, after a few hours chilly sleep, we found such a dense fog around us that we could barely see each other. There being no fuel for fires we had no choice but to pack up and return to our hut without so much as a cup of tea for breakfast. There, all our various cans of food were emptied into one big pot and mixed to provide a welcome, hot meal that tasted of everything and nothing.

The Coronation Beacon

THE MEMBERS OF Second Pontymister Troop were largely drawn from Machen Street and Phillip Street in Risca, where the local gang was famed for the immense bonfires

constructed for Guy Fawkes Night. It therefore seemed only right that when it came to the Queen's Coronation it was fitting that the Troop should be asked to help build the Beacon on Twmbarlwm. Council lorries transported suitable logs and timber to the base of the final rise, and the Scouts hauled the fuel from there to the top. I recall feeling dismayed that instead of allowing us to

MEMORY LANE

build the stack it was constructed by officials according to a detailed plan. At the centre was an open space into which the person lighting the beacon could step. As most of us had helped build and light much bigger fires in the Long Bridge Field, we felt miffed that after all our labours we would not be trusted to ignite the pile.

As dusk fell, after a long day's labour, we stood looking to the South, much as our ancestors must have done when Viking ships threatened the coastal villages. It thrills me now to recall the sight of a distant fire appearing in the gloom and then to see our beacon set ablaze. Witnessing the signal passing on to the north forged a bond with other communities that did more than anything to give a sense of belonging to one nation.

Beavis's Lorry

MY FATHER, JAMES Gomer Mumford, often told a story about the time when a firm of lorry manufacturers issued a boastful claim that their lorries could go anywhere where people could walk. If any transport company could name a place where the lorry failed to go they could have the vehicle as a prize. At that time the Beavis family had a business recovering coal duff from the Ebbw and transporting it by lorry to be made into coal brickettes. Old Mr Beavis, as my father called him, challenged the firm to drive a lorry up onto the Twmp. It got as far as the surrounding ditch, so say, but failed to get up the Twmp itself.

My father had helped set up a farm

shop selling meat at the Beavis farmyard in about 1927, and as he lived on the farm he would have heard the story first hand. Throughout his long life he often repeated the tale without ever changing a word. But was the story entirely true? Evidence that the story is feasible is that a spanking new, old-fashioned lorry bearing the name Beavis Transport Contractor is shown on the front cover of the book: Old Crumlin to Pontymister in photographs, Volume 2, by Brian Collins and Terry Powell. As the lorry is labelled No. 4, one has to ask: why photograph that lorry rather than Nos. 1, 2 and 3? Was it the prize?



Anderson's Pond

IN THE 1950'S any form of gambling, other than a bran tub at Christmas, was forbidden, so older youths, of a less law-abiding type used to gather on Sunday afternoons to play cards for money at Jackson's pond, a sort of reservoir sited some distance along the ridge from Twmbarlwm towards Pontypool. Only once I went there, and then only out of curiosity as like most boys I attended Sunday school in the afternoons. Just to watch the cards being dealt, and the coins tossed into the pot, seemed a risky business as we were all fearful of the Police in those days. I don't know why, because they had no cars or helicopters and we would have seen them approaching on foot from miles away.

We're sure many of you have your own stories and memories associated with Twmbarlwm – get them onto paper and send them in – we'd love to include them here and on the website.



Revival of a fine Local Tradition



Photo: Terry Evans

The inaugural CTS Good Friday walk to the top of the Tump was heralded as a great success - Grace Lloyd and Terry Evans give their reports on the day...

WE GATHERED ON Pontymister Bridge at the appointed time of 10:30 am on a very fine Good Friday morning. As I gazed up at Twmbarlwm, dominating the skyline, I felt a wave of apprehension. It looked very far away and very very high. Maggie Thomas, who was leading the walk, assured me that we would be up there in no time. As a deskbound office worker, and infrequent walker, I wasn't so sure. However, I tried to dismiss the mental images of mountain rescue helicopters and St Bernard dogs with brandy caskets around their necks and set bravely off with the others.

Sure enough, before I knew it, we were striding up through Ty Sign, attracting a few quizzical looks from passers-by. Then across a field and onto the mountain road by the Upper Grippath Farm. It was great to see others joining our band as we plodded ever upwards, and the opportunity to chat with new and old acquaintances soon passed the time.

As we crossed the cattle grid and marched purposefully on we were passed by motorbikes and vans carrying still more motorbikes. Some of our number produced cameras and spent a few minutes photographing the registration numbers and vehicles, which magically seemed to disperse, leaving the mountain peaceful, for once. We gathered by Sue Evans' car at the car park on the Risca side, and picked up the newly designed Twmbarlwm T shirts and some leaflets.

The final pull up to the summit was exhilarating, with a group of people already up there, watching our approach. I sat down on the tump, wondering if I would

ever get up again, and tucked into a sandwich and well earned drink. The atmosphere was wonderful, and it wasn't long before we saw what looked like a line of ants marching towards us from the north east. The Ancient Cwmbran Society! A cheer went up as they crested the tump and joined us. I estimated there were probably up to a hundred people on the tump at one stage, with not a single sound of a motorbike to disturb our picnic.

I chose to accompany Maggie Thomas on the way down, which was interesting, to say the least. Suffice to say that never again will I believe a Rambler when they describe 'a bit of a climb'. Ramblers are well hard and not to be messed with. My evening was spent in a hot bath and applying evil smelling linaments to my aching muscles, resolving that I should do this much more often. What a wonderful experience. I can't wait for next year!

Grace Lloyd



Thanks to Dave Standing and Matt Rosser for these photos - see more on the website.



THERE HAVE BEEN very few years in my lifetime that I have not walked up the Tump on Good Friday and I have many fond memories from childhood when the whole street or Sunday school group would organise a walk to the top - it wasn't a religious event, just a fun, communal day out. So when CTS agreed to promote and help revive this tradition I offered my keen support.

The day arrived unseasonably bright, clear and warm and I was happy to see about 30 people arrive at 'The Stoney Bridge' Pontymister and we got together for a group photo.

Although I walk up this mountain every week, this walk was already feeling special - I could sense that everyone thought the same.

As we walked through Ty-Sign some of us oldies recalled what this route was like before Ty-Sign was actually built - when Holly Road was just a country lane and there was a large house where the playground now is - we used to call it the "old miser's house".

So on up Mountain Road and a short-cut across the fields at Pentwyn farm as we would have done when I was a lad.

One of my highlights of the day occurred just after we crossed the cattlegrid which marks the entrance to the common land of Twmbarlwm - from the woods on the right I heard the sound that is the famous soubriquet of Risca natives - it was a Cuckoo - my first of the year and a sure sign that spring has truly sprung.

Then came the final assault to the top of the tump itself - as we crested the final rise the view of the tump spiked with crowds of people already there was truly a sight to behold.

I stayed at the top for an hour or so and I was pleased to see a continual flow of people arriving in that time including our fellow campaigners from Cwmbran.

I asked a few strangers why they had come today - a few said it was a family tradition but quite a few more said that they'd seen our posters and press release and decided to join in - I only hope that we'll be able to whip up the same enthusiasm in coming years when the weather is not as clement.

Terry Evans

