



Abergavenny and District Civic Society

Preserving the best, improving the rest

A great place to live, work and visit

Dear friends,

What a year of interesting speakers and varied topics with an extra bonus meeting thrown in due to timing issues for Mark Hand, Head of the MCC's Planning Department, who, in July, talked about the Local Development Plan, which gave rise to debate and many questions.

A major highlight was the presentation given by Dr Ami Jones MBE, Clinical Lead Consultant at Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service Cymru (EMRTS Cymru) and Consultant in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine, Nevill Hall Hospital. She gave us an insight into the challenges of working in the Wales Air Ambulance Service. Serving two tours in Afghanistan as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserves with 203 Field Hospital, she tended to unimaginable life threatening and life changing wounds. We gladly gave our loose change to send Ami off with £146.71 for the charity.



Two excellent meetings were led by members. Patrick Hannay who gave us a talk on the development of Modern Architecture which many members thought opened their eyes and explained much that they had not previously understood. Then local architect Steven Harris talking about obstacles and issues relating to progress being made in providing energy efficient and zero carbon buildings in the future.

Our Christmas social meeting was tremendous fun with Jabolique, a group of performers from Usk, providing us with an amusing, musical look at the history of our lovely market town. A chance also to meet and chat with other members.

Grateful thanks go to all our speakers who give so generously of their time to provide us with such a fantastic programme and thanks to Kath and Clive Bransom for providing tea and coffee at meetings.

Our Society wants members with new ideas to keep Abergavenny a bustling and vibrant town and needs people who want to get actively involved. The executive committee welcomes suggestions, fresh ideas for projects and new members to stop us from getting stale. Want to get involved? Please get in touch at abercivsoc@gmail.com or phone for a chat with current Chair, Stan Pochron (01873 854180) or Vice Chairs Dick Cole (01291 673617) or Jane Hemington (07956 564918). Let us know if you have an idea for a future project for the society and if any of the current projects appeal don't be shy, come and get stuck in - it can be great fun and you will learn a lot on the way!

And to the social side Kath Bransom

After a couple of years of visits to The Kings Arms in town, we decided for 2019 to venture further afield and went to Llansantffraed Court. It proved to be a popular choice in terms of venue and we were a good crowd on the day. Opinions about the lunch itself, however, were varied.

Most people, but definitely not all, enjoyed their food but many found the drinks very expensive. £8.50 for a small glass of wine and a fruit juice and £28 for a bottle of everyday wine? Hmmmm.

And as for next year? We've had a couple of suggestions already. If you have any recommendations, please let one of the executive committee members know. We need an accessible venue with an interesting, sensibly priced and reliable menu and nearby parking. We await your suggestions!

Planning – Dick Cole



The Society has not felt the need to comment on many planning applications during the past year. We objected to applications for 25 eco-homes straddling the National Park boundary at Llantilio Pertholey. Popularly named 'tellytubby' homes, with unusual architecture (illustrated) and some low carbon features, this development conflicts with the Local Development Plan and our objectives to preserve the character of the hamlet and the Gavenny valley; the architecture was not opposed in principle. This application and another nearby to which we had previously objected remain undetermined.

We generally welcomed the design of a scheme for 106 homes at Grove Farm, Llanfoist and, unlike many Llanfoist residents, made some favourable comments on a proposal for 'luxury' apartments at Llanfoist but expressed concern about the access. We also supported the County Council's proposal for an events pavilion at Abergavenny Castle, believing that excessive noise disturbance could be controlled, but the Council's planning committee refused the application.

We have submitted comments on the County Council's draft guidance on infill development and have supported the Council's efforts to overcome a Natural Resources Wales refusal to permit the long-awaited Llanfoist pedestrian/cyclist bridge because of a small increase in flooding risk.

In the autumn of 2018, as an early stage of the Local Development Plan (LDP) revision process, we proposed to the County Council that the undeveloped part of the Gavenny valley and the open buffer between the National Park and town development boundaries should be designated as Green Wedges. We also suggested the protection of a line for a western by-pass.

In July we were consulted on the Strategic Growth and Spatial Options for the new LDP, which looks as far forward as 2033. While we welcome the aspiration to attract more jobs to the county, we are wary of building more houses that will be occupied by commuters to work outside the county. New housing land allocations are much more readily taken up than employment sites. A higher percentage of new housing should be affordable. While some local growth is desirable, especially new jobs, we would prefer that most new development should be located in the south of the county, where matching housing with jobs and provision of good public transport, are most likely to succeed. In the coming autumn we will be consulted on the County Council's Preferred Strategy, which will give a clearer indication of the implications for Abergavenny.

The Brecon Beacons National Park LDP Preferred Strategy was published for comment in July and a generally supportive response has been submitted, though with a strong objection to a 'candidate site' for housing at Llwyd Du, north of Deri Road. Close collaboration between the Park and MCC will be necessary.

Over Fifty Years of Commitment - a History of the Society Dick Cole

With particular help from Mike and Judy Foden, Dick Cole has compiled a summary of the Society's history since it was formed in 1967/68. This is available on our web site at <http://abercivsoc.com/history> The summary is based mainly on the minutes of committee meetings and annual reports, but sadly little has been traced from 1967-1987 or 2005-2010. This may be unsurprising as any minutes were recorded in longhand and read out for adoption at the next meeting!

Our '**Take a Look at Abergavenny**' paperback, published in association with the Local History Society, and drawing on the lengthy character survey, continues to be offered for sale at just £5 by Cable News, the library, the One Stop Shop, the museum, the Melville Centre, Emmeline's Tea Room and the Chapel Café as well as through the History Society, Gunter Mansion and of course ourselves.

Fairfield Improvement project – Tony Konieczny



It seemed as though the project to remove the derelict trolley park and refresh this area would never happen after setbacks and delays in 2018. However, work started in April 2019 and within a week the transformation was complete as you can see from the photo on the right.



The two new benches were installed, and the new planter was duly planted out with a variety of colourful blooms. The Town Council troughs were moved from beside the pedestrian crossing at the request of SWTRA and re-installed on the Fairfield side making a dramatically colourful show. This little project will eventually be graced with a small plaque commemorating the involvement and financial contribution of the Society.

Member Anna Petts continues to tend the existing planters as well as the new one. Sue Konieczny and Anna potted on and bought plants so that once the work was completed the new planter would be full of bright, colourful flowers attracting bees and pollinators. Whilst dead heading and watering the planters Anna has received many compliments as this little corner is now seen as a small oasis where people can sit and rest and enjoy the flowers. The Society truly appreciates being allowed to use the Constitutional Club's water supply during another summer with long, hot, dry spells of weather.

Bloomin' Abergavenny! –Tony Konieczny and Judith Vicary



Most of our members support various organisations within the town. Our Membership Secretary, Mike Foden, is also a leading light with the Friends of Bailey Park. They are a small group of dedicated volunteers but need some extra hands to keep on top of the sensory garden and ancillary beds. The sunken garden was looking derelict and at one of the gardening sessions, I suggested to Mike that the Civic Society might take on renovating the sunken garden as a project. We then sought matched funding for the project from Abergavenny Town Council (ATC) which was granted. We were committed! Judith takes up the story.

Well it seemed a good idea at the time! However, Tony's proposal that the Civic Society should take on board the recreation of the Sunken Garden in Bailey Park has gone far beyond the original remit. This neglected plot was tackled by a group of CS stalwarts, having been weeded, mused over, then planted with hardy, insect loving, (don't forget the Monmouthshire bee), drought resistant perennials that satisfied everyone's idea of what it should be. Borage and poppies were transplanted into three circular beds and solved the problem of enhancing another rather abandoned area of the park. We are grateful for the assistance of those caped (or rather, yellow vested) heroes, The Cantref Crusaders, (shhhh), in achieving this minor miracle.

Anxious to help the dwindling numbers of Friends of Bailey Park, and to consolidate the improvement of the Sunken Garden, a number of us attended the AGM with Chair, Shirley Barnfield and executive members, to discuss ways in which other interested parties might help with improving the general look of the floral area of the park. I would like to think that my earlier brush with the Cantref Crusaders and my requests for help amongst friends and neighbours, may have helped to contribute to the promotion and development of this worthy cause. I will be sending a comprehensive article to the Chronicle about the Civic Society's participation, and to raise awareness for the need for help from the wider community.

Communications – Judith Vicary

Back to my Communications Secretary hat now. My aim is to continue summarising speakers' contributions for the archives, although this is difficult when topics are technical or beyond the ordinary experience of most people. The Black Mountain Land Use Partnership talk had me poring for hours over

the details before sending a decent account to the Chair. Some subjects may even reach the Chronicle, after a few knocks on the editor's door. I will promote meetings on the Digiboard by Boots, now that it is working again. Look out for more "Communication" from me in September.

Finances and 100 Club – Ian Vicary

The Society's finances remain in a healthy state with both membership and 100 Club receipts slightly higher than last year. We also had a steady flow of income from the sale of **Take a Look at Abergavenny & Mardy** book, which is recouping the cost of printing, and a donation from the residual funds of the former Civic Trust Cymru.

There were no big spending projects this year. We made £100 donations to Abergavenny Arts Festival and to Friends of Linda Vista for shrubs for the bank that they have cleared.

As mentioned by Tony, we received a grant from ATC for £400 which we are match funding to spend on various small gardening projects around the town. We have spent £222 on the Sunken garden in Bailey Park and the new planters opposite Nevill Hall Hospital. This has been in addition to what was spent last year on the Fairfield Project to provide the benches, an improvement that has made a real difference.

If you have any ideas for enhancing the town for both residents and visitors, or of any gardening projects to brighten up, perhaps a neglected corner of the town, please do let us know.

This year we sold ninety-six numbers for the 100 Club. Thank you for your continued support. This September let's make it all 100. It is still only £24 per number, that's less than 50 pence per week.

Application forms will be sent out soon but, if you wish, you can just send your payment in the post now to me at **17 Lansdown Drive, Abergavenny, NP7 6AW** or of course you can set up a standing order, a facility also offered for payment of annual subscriptions. Contact either Mike Foden, Membership Secretary, on **855263** or me on **854929** for more information and a standing order form or download one from our website www.abercivsoc.com

Membership - Mike Foden, Membership Secretary

Individual Membership has increased once again this year. 10 members withdrew their membership which sadly included two deaths. Others were unable to attend the meetings and cancelled their support. We made up these losses with 13 new members who joined up over the year, some joining after attending a meeting once they saw what we get up to. We currently have 124 paid up members.

We are hugely grateful for all the support given to us by the following affiliated business members: **The Angel Hotel, Celtic Computer Systems, Emmeline's Tearoom, The Hardwick Restaurant, Homemakers Recycling, Jaybee Soft Furnishings, Judd Brothers, The Kings Arms, Owen Davies Consulting, Catherine Roberts & Steven Harris (Architecture & Energy), Smiles Better Dentists, Taurin Taylor Associates and The Wool Croft.**

Subscriptions for 2019 - 20 remain the same and are due on 1st September by cash, cheque to **Membership Secretary, Mike Foden, 3 Lansdown Drive, Abergavenny, NP7 6AW**. Prefer to pay by standing order? Forms are available from either me on 855263 or Ian on 854929

If as a member you are not planning to re-join the Society then please let me know by email at mikejudy@talktalk.net and we will update our records accordingly.

Under 65 - £10	Over 65 - £8	Student - £1
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Programme of meetings to run up until June 2020

Venue – Methodist Church Hall, Castle Street, unless otherwise stated, starting at 7.30 pm

As always there are no shortage of topics to choose from for the coming year's programme of meetings. We hope you like it and, if you have suggestions for any other topics, please let us know.

Please note that 2 of our meetings, dates in italics, are on the first Monday of the month due to when Easter falls and the availability of our December speaker

9 September - Rural and green transport

Mark Lloyd and Mike Powell from Monmouthshire County Council join us to talk about the issues of active transport in our rural area. Learn about the many diverse projects that have been funded as well as plans for the future which include electric vehicle charging points, active travel, commuter travel and more. Jack Thurston, a local author, broadcaster and cycling advocate, will join us to discuss the role of walking and cycling in the rural transport mix.

14 October - AGM at 7pm followed at 7.30 by an update on the Town Hall refurbishment with Cheryll Haskell, Hub Manager, David Baxter, Manager of the Borough Theatre and Project Manager, Poppy Harris

11 November - Julian Hyman, Programme Manager of The Grange University Hospital

Mr Hyman will present an overview of services that will be offered by the new Grange University Hospital, Llanfrechfa and also discuss the implications for Nevill Hall Hospital, for both patients and staff

2 December - Don Balkwill will tease and delight us with a collection of his 'Forgotten Gadgets' at our sociable festive evening. See if you can identify what some unusual historic items were used for! Festive refreshments will be served.

January 2020- an opportunity to get together and socialise over lunch – *date & event tbc*

10 February - Dame Claire Clancy DCB DL, High Sheriff of Gwent

Dame Claire will give us an insight into her very busy year as High Sherriff of Gwent

9 March - "What's in a Name? Some Streets of Abergavenny." – Dr Gill Wakley

Some street names are obvious, others need some history knowledge, others are unknown. Why 'Ireland Street', for example? Was Holywell really Holy? And if you have any favourite places you would like to know about, please let Gill Wakley know in advance. Research takes time!

6 April - Community working for the community

Representatives from the Melville Centre, Abergavenny Community Centre and Abergavenny Community Enterprise will tell us about the progress they have made, the challenges and exciting opportunities that are coming their way

11 May - Glandŵr Cymru's plans for the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

David Morgan, Glandŵr Cymru (The Canal & River Trust in Wales) Development and Engagement Manager, will enlighten us about the Canal and River Trust's new health and wellbeing campaign and also the many opportunities that brings for our very own canal.

8 June - A year in the life of a Mayor – Cllr Tony Konieczny

Civic Society member and town councillor Tony talks about his year in office as Mayor of Abergavenny. Some highs and lows and probably some unexpected left field surprises!