

*Abergavenny and District Civic Society
Preserving the best, improving the rest
A great place to live, work and visit*

Dear members

This year (2014 – 15) has been particularly busy and has seen the Methodist church hall, our new home, full of members and guests enjoying a very varied programme of meetings. We are grateful to the Methodist Church for their warm welcome. Cllr Martin Hickman, the incumbent mayor for that year, and Peter Johns, clerk to the town council, spoke at the October AGM about the future of the town and how the Society might be involved, with members also being asked what they felt were the society's future priorities.

The programme gave us interesting historical and archaeological information about St Mary's church and later how historical buildings might be rescued through finding suitable and relevant uses to contribute to heritage led regeneration with examples from the Prince's Regeneration Trust projects. The Fforest Fawr Global Geopark provided an overview of the geology of an area close to us, we learnt about the international legacy of the Blaenavon World heritage site and at the final meeting Officers from Costain explained how challenges would be met to protect the Clydach gorge whilst work was being undertaken on the innovative road building to complete the dual carriageway through this sensitive area. Bee Friendly Monmouthshire and Bees for Development, Monmouth, saw the hall filled to capacity and inspired us about how to protect and improve the habitat of pollinators. Homemakers, a local social enterprise, and Carl Touhig from MCC's Waste and Street Service, gave a fascinating account of how waste is sorted and recycled to the benefit of the community. We are grateful to all our speakers who give so generously of their time to provide us with a truly fantastic programme

New members have joined this year and as always we extend a warm invitation to you to get involved and play an active role in the society. We struggled to manage without a Secretary this year even though it is not an onerous position. Our secretary is a point of contact and sends out emails to members from the gmail account, taking just a couple of hours a week; you would attend 10 early Monday evening steering group meetings throughout the year but **no** minutes are taken in this position!! Anyone interested in getting involved will get lots of support so do get in touch. The society needs fresh ideas to ensure that Abergavenny remains a bustling, vibrant, relevant town for generations to come. If an interest group fires you up, do come and join! Don't be shy, it can be good fun and you will learn a lot on the way.

Smart Town

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Fairfield Car Park Strip Improvement – Anna Petts

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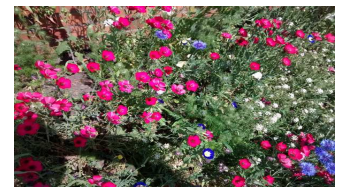
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Is there a patch near you that can be given a makeover? Get in touch if there is.

Planning – Dick Cole

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A year ago we were preparing an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding our Understanding Abergavenny project. In November we submitted a £70,000 three-year bid for a part-time project officer, to aid completion of our survey and extensive engagement with the town's residents. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful; it seems that our plans for interpretation might have been stronger and our public engagement plans needed more focus on 'non-traditional audiences'. These were both matters on which advice would have been sought from the project officer.

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Abergavenny Regeneration Report – Tony Konieczny

The chair and vice chair have represented the Society on both the Town Team and the Business Improvement District (BID) steering group. It has been an eventful year with a tremendous amount of work going into promoting the advantages of a BID for Abergavenny. The National Eisteddfod will be hosted here next year and there is much work to be done to get the town ready for this prestigious event and to maximise the potential benefits for the local economy.

Gone are the days when we could look to MCC to find funding to support local initiatives. The authority has to make swingeing cuts to its budget, which will, inevitably, impact on the services offered and the degree of support available for a variety of community schemes. The Whole Place Plan was introduced in 2012 to find new ways of delivering initiatives in the community by MCC working in partnership with local communities. Abergavenny Civic Society has taken an active role in the Whole Place project from the onset and continues to be a valuable contributor and trusted partner.

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My personal view is that the BID fundamentally asked the question "Do the Town Centre businesses want to work collaboratively to improve the viability of Abergavenny?" and the majority, rather disappointedly, have declined.

The Town Team now called "Team Abergavenny" is making progress in delivering the Whole Place Plan and the next few months will see a major refurbishment of the High Street area. This and other work will be completed before the National Eisteddfod arrives in August 2016. The Society will, no doubt, be

called upon to support Team Abergavenny to make this event a success for the local community as well as the thousands of visitors who will descend on the town.

The Civic Society and Abergavenny on the World Wide Web – Ruth Coulthard

Exciting news! We have a new website for the Civic Society giving details of all meeting dates and other useful links as well as some of our latest news. We'd love to hear your feedback to find out if it's working and what else we could be doing to improve it. There is a section for news so we would welcome any contributions from members about anything of interest in our town. Take a look if you haven't already at www.abercivsoc.com. Our website has become part of the digital archive of the National Library of Wales.

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Last, but not least, if you are a member of the Facebook community, don't forget to keep a check on, and even post to, our own page. You can find the link on our website. This is a great way to keep the wider Abergavenny community abreast of latest news and our activities.

Gavenny Project report – Tony Konieczny

As this goes to press, we are hopeful that we may have found a satisfactory solution so that a fish pass can be constructed at Philpot's Weir in the not too distant future. We have been in conversation with the owners and a variety of august bodies to try and find a solution that will be acceptable to all.



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And on the social side Kath Bransom

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In January we were again fully subscribed at the Annual Winter Lunch, where Jems Catering looked after us in the Our Lady and St Michael Centre. It was lovely to see some of the founder members as well as many new faces. These occasions are always lively and well attended and offer members the chance to catch up with friends old and new.

In June, the Civic Society was able to support the Melville Centre by having a stall at their Charity Yard Sale. We raised around £130, a great result for 2 hours work. Many thanks to those who helped on the stall and those who donated items of bric a brac. Thanks also to Sue K, who grew lots of Cavalo Nero, exotic black kale plants, from seed. These were snapped up by keen gardeners at and after the sale and really boosted the takings. As many of you know, the Melville Centre Working Group (a bunch of enthusiastic volunteers) has been formed to encourage more use of "The Melville." Income generated will be used to improve, preserve and raise the profile of this wonderful old building and show people what a great resource we have in our midst. The Centre boasts a 75 seater theatre where it's possible to see an ever increasing range of events and a new programme will be available for the autumn.

Finances and 100 Club – Ian Vicary

After a slow start, and a lot of help from Sue, we managed to sell 73 tickets for the 100 Club which generated £834 for the Association and £850 in prizes. It also provided some fun doing the draw!

Some of the £834 has already been earmarked as our contribution towards the cost of improvements to the tatty strip along the Fairfield car park, Park Avenue, which includes the wonderful flower troughs provided and filled by some of our members. This work will continue in October funded by the Society in partnership with the Town Council. Some of the money will be used to provide a further trough and some seating in that corner of the car park. These are worthwhile projects that will brighten the town up for both residents and visitors in the long term. We wanted to use some 100 Club money towards some artwork on the old cattle market hoardings as they might be with us for some time.

Unfortunately the group we wanted to do the work no longer have the manpower. If you know of any local artist and youth group that might be interested in participating in this scheme please let us know.

We hope that we can repeat or even improve on this success in 2015/16 by selling all 100 tickets. Please dig deep and help us to fund or part fund more worthwhile projects in the future. Remember that all your family members and friends can join the 100 Club so spread the word. Application forms are available now, simply email ian@vicary1name.freemove.co.uk or ring 854929, and remember to let me know your lucky number if you have one and it has not already been bagged by someone else.

Membership – Mike Foden

Individual Membership has increased overall this year. 11 members resigned for various reasons but we made up this shortfall with 13 new members joining after attending some of our public meetings. At present we have 104 paid up members and 17 affiliated members including 2 new ones.

We are very grateful for all the support given to us by the following businesses:-

Abergavenny Music, Angel Hotel, Celtic Computer Systems, Emmelines Homebaking, The Hardwick Restaurant, Homemakers Recycling, Jaybee Soft Furnishings, Judd Bros, The Kings Arms, Owen Davies Consulting, Red Builders Ltd., Catherine Roberts & Steven Harris (Architecture & Energy), Robin Elt Shoes, Serendipity Hair Salon, Smiles Better Dentists, Taurins Taylor Associates, The Wool Croft and Abergavenny Business Club

Subscriptions for this coming year 2015 - 16 are due on 1st September so please pay by cash or cheque to the Membership Secretary **Mike Foden, 3 Lansdown Drive, Abergavenny, NP7 6AW**. Or you can pay by standing order which makes everyone's life a little easier. Contact Mike for a form.

Under 65 £10	Over 65 £8	Student £1	Affiliated membership £20
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NEWS FLASH ... about the Gunter Mansion, Cross Street – Amanda Peters

The Gunter Mansion in Cross Street Abergavenny is a Grade 2* listed building that has an important place in the history of Abergavenny, and in the story of Catholicism in post reformation Monmouthshire. It is well known to many members of the Civic Society and of Abergavenny Local History Group, as both organisations have previously made efforts to protect the building and encourage the owners to undertake required remedial works.

After many months of negotiation, The Welsh Georgian Trust (www.welshgeorgiantrust.org.uk) has finally acquired an option to purchase this historic building and has ambitious plans to restore the building and help revitalise this area of the town. A local 'Friends of Gunter Mansions' group has been established to help raise funds and ensure that local needs and knowledge are included in future plans. A brief introduction to the project will take place at the Civic Society AGM on 12 October.

In the meantime, for more information, please check out the website on www.guntermansion.org.uk or contact info@guntermansion.org.uk If you are interested in joining the 'Friends' group, please contact Amanda Peters on 07985 289412

Programme of meetings to run up until June 2016

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

Once again we find ourselves with 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 other topics, please let us know. As always some flexibility is required to accommodate issues/topics that arise.

14 Sept - The Monmouthshire and Brecknock Canal

A chance to hear from the Canals and Rivers Trust about the challenges they face looking after such a unique waterway, from how it was constructed alongside mountain slopes to the exciting plans for the future - with even a full restoration being planned.

12 October - Our annual **AGM** with guest speakers Robb Merchant from **White Castle Vineyard** and Edward Holland, Vice Chair of the group **Wine and Heritage Alive in Monmouthshire**. An opportunity to hear about the inspirational and infectious story of creating this vineyard from the owner himself and the ambitious project to restore an ancient barn on the site to develop a heritage skills training venue. Amanda Peters will also tell the Society a little more of the ambitious plans to restore the Gunter Mansion

9 November - Farming Futures

The challenges and future of upland hill farming and commons management

Alvin Nicholas, Commons Development Officer for the Forgotten Landscape Partnership project in Torfaen will talk about the issues and threats to our upland commons, how they are currently managed and projects to help them survive.

14 December – Another festive treat to conclude our programme before the Christmas break but details yet to be finalised. Watch this space! **TBC**

January 2016 – time for our Sunday lunch and social get together – date and time TBC

8 February - King Henry VIII High School pupils will join us to share their aspirations and concerns about the town. We will consider how we can work together to make improvements for all. **TBC**

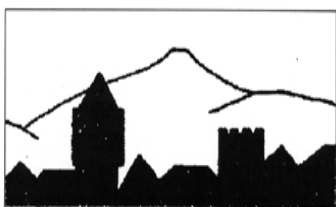
14 March - The **National Trust** and the **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority** share the care of most of our beautiful countryside in and around Abergavenny. Join us for an entertaining event to hear more from our local wardens, the innovative projects they are undertaking and the challenges they face in maintaining and enhancing our upland environment.

11 April - River Gavenny, the river that gives its name to our town is very special, not only for its beauty but for the important role it plays in helping keep one of the country's most protected watercourses healthy. Learn more about our project to enhance the quality of our river, the wonders of the River Usk and also an inspirational project about the River Taff which we can learn from. We will be joined by Natural Resources Wales and also members of the Gavenny Project Team.

9 May - Saints and Sinners – Rescuing and Restoring Abergavenny's Gunter mansion'

Amanda Peters discovered more than she bargained for when she took on the tenancy of part of this historic building in Cross Street to open the Pot and Pineapple sweet shop. We will learn how a rough sketch on a paper sweet bag turned into a major project, led by the Welsh Georgian Trust, to restore an important building and help re-vitalise this part of the town.

13 June - The Mysteries of Historic Building Listings Edward Holland, Heritage Consultant, offers us a fascinating insight into an area which is a mystery to most of us. He will explain about his work, why buildings are listed and give us an insight into some of our local heritage treasures.



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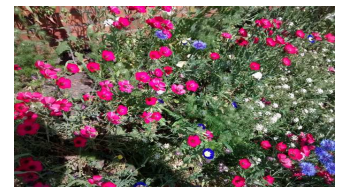
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And on the social side Kath Bransom

It was standing room only at December's meeting, where a full house was enthralled by Daniel Morden's storytelling. The tales encompassed joy, sorrow, intrigue and humour, but all bore Daniel's light touch and engagement with the audience, including several references to our seasonal refreshments of mince pies and "non-alcoholic punch!"

In January we were again fully subscribed at the Annual Winter Lunch, where Jems Catering looked after us in the Our Lady and St Michael Centre. It was lovely to see some of the founder members as well as many new faces. These occasions are always lively and well attended and offer members the chance to catch up with friends old and new.

In June, the Civic Society was able to support the Melville Centre by having a stall at their Charity Yard Sale. We raised around £130, a great result for 2 hours work. Many thanks to those who helped on the stall and those who donated items of bric a brac. Thanks also to Sue K, who grew lots of Cavalo Nero, exotic black kale plants, from seed. These were snapped up by keen gardeners at and after the sale and really boosted the takings. As many of you know, the Melville Centre Working Group (a bunch of enthusiastic volunteers) has been formed to encourage more use of "The Melville." Income generated will be used to improve, preserve and raise the profile of this wonderful old building and show people what a great resource we have in our midst. The Centre boasts a 75 seater theatre where it's possible to see an ever increasing range of events and a new programme will be available for the autumn.

Finances and 100 Club – Ian Vicary

After a slow start, and a lot of help from Sue, we managed to sell 73 tickets for the 100 Club which generated £834 for the Association and £850 in prizes. It also provided some fun doing the draw!

Some of the £834 has already been earmarked as our contribution towards the cost of improvements to the tatty strip along the Fairfield car park, Park Avenue, which includes the wonderful flower troughs provided and filled by some of our members. This work will continue in October funded by the Society in partnership with the Town Council. Some of the money will be used to provide a further trough and some seating in that corner of the car park. These are worthwhile projects that will brighten the town up for both residents and visitors in the long term. We wanted to use some 100 Club money towards some artwork on the old cattle market hoardings as they might be with us for some time.

Unfortunately the group we wanted to do the work no longer have the manpower. If you know of any local artist and youth group that might be interested in participating in this scheme please let us know.

We hope that we can repeat or even improve on this success in 2015/16 by selling all 100 tickets. Please dig deep and help us to fund or part fund more worthwhile projects in the future. Remember that all your family members and friends can join the 100 Club so spread the word. Application forms are available now, simply email ian@vicary1name.freemove.co.uk or ring 854929, and remember to let me know your lucky number if you have one and it has not already been bagged by someone else.

Membership – Mike Foden

Individual Membership has increased overall this year. 11 members resigned for various reasons but we made up this shortfall with 13 new members joining after attending some of our public meetings. At present we have 104 paid up members and 17 affiliated members including 2 new ones.

We are very grateful for all the support given to us by the following businesses:-

Abergavenny Music, Angel Hotel, Celtic Computer Systems, Emmelines Homebaking, The Hardwick Restaurant, Homemakers Recycling, Jaybee Soft Furnishings, Judd Bros, The Kings Arms, Owen Davies Consulting, Red Builders Ltd., Catherine Roberts & Steven Harris (Architecture & Energy), Robin Elt Shoes, Serendipity Hair Salon, Smiles Better Dentists, Taurins Taylor Associates, The Wool Croft and Abergavenny Business Club

Subscriptions for this coming year 2015 - 16 are due on 1st September so please pay by cash or cheque to the Membership Secretary **Mike Foden, 3 Lansdown Drive, Abergavenny, NP7 6AW**. Or you can pay by standing order which makes everyone's life a little easier. Contact Mike for a form.

Under 65 £10	Over 65 £8	Student £1	Affiliated membership £20
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NEWS FLASH ... about the Gunter Mansion, Cross Street – Amanda Peters

The Gunter Mansion in Cross Street Abergavenny is a Grade 2* listed building that has an important place in the history of Abergavenny, and in the story of Catholicism in post reformation Monmouthshire. It is well known to many members of the Civic Society and of Abergavenny Local History Group, as both organisations have previously made efforts to protect the building and encourage the owners to undertake required remedial works.

After many months of negotiation, The Welsh Georgian Trust (www.welshgeorgiantrust.org.uk) has finally acquired an option to purchase this historic building and has ambitious plans to restore the building and help revitalise this area of the town. A local 'Friends of Gunter Mansions' group has been established to help raise funds and ensure that local needs and knowledge are included in future plans. A brief introduction to the project will take place at the Civic Society AGM on 12 October.

In the meantime, for more information, please check out the website on www.guntermansion.org.uk or contact info@guntermansion.org.uk If you are interested in joining the 'Friends' group, please contact Amanda Peters on 07985 289412

Programme of meetings to run up until June 2016

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

Once again we find ourselves with 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 other topics, please let us know. As always some flexibility is required to accommodate issues/topics that arise.

14 Sept - The Monmouthshire and Brecknock Canal

A chance to hear from the Canals and Rivers Trust about the challenges they face looking after such a unique waterway, from how it was constructed alongside mountain slopes to the exciting plans for the future - with even a full restoration being planned.

12 October - Our annual **AGM** with guest speakers Robb Merchant from **White Castle Vineyard** and Edward Holland, Vice Chair of the group **Wine and Heritage Alive in Monmouthshire**. An opportunity to hear about the inspirational and infectious story of creating this vineyard from the owner himself and the ambitious project to restore an ancient barn on the site to develop a heritage skills training venue. Amanda Peters will also tell the Society a little more of the ambitious plans to restore the Gunter Mansion

9 November - Farming Futures

The challenges and future of upland hill farming and commons management

Alvin Nicholas, Commons Development Officer for the Forgotten Landscape Partnership project in Torfaen will talk about the issues and threats to our upland commons, how they are currently managed and projects to help them survive.

14 December – Another festive treat to conclude our programme before the Christmas break but details yet to be finalised. Watch this space! **TBC**

January 2016 – time for our Sunday lunch and social get together – date and time TBC

8 February - King Henry VIII High School pupils will join us to share their aspirations and concerns about the town. We will consider how we can work together to make improvements for all. **TBC**

14 March - The **National Trust** and the **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority** share the care of most of our beautiful countryside in and around Abergavenny. Join us for an entertaining event to hear more from our local wardens, the innovative projects they are undertaking and the challenges they face in maintaining and enhancing our upland environment.

11 April - River Gavenny, the river that gives its name to our town is very special, not only for its beauty but for the important role it plays in helping keep one of the country's most protected watercourses healthy. Learn more about our project to enhance the quality of our river, the wonders of the River Usk and also an inspirational project about the River Taff which we can learn from. We will be joined by Natural Resources Wales and also members of the Gavenny Project Team.

9 May - Saints and Sinners – Rescuing and Restoring Abergavenny's Gunter mansion'

Amanda Peters discovered more than she bargained for when she took on the tenancy of part of this historic building in Cross Street to open the Pot and Pineapple sweet shop. We will learn how a rough sketch on a paper sweet bag turned into a major project, led by the Welsh Georgian Trust, to restore an important building and help re-vitalise this part of the town.

13 June - The Mysteries of Historic Building Listings Edward Holland, Heritage Consultant, offers us a fascinating insight into an area which is a mystery to most of us. He will explain about his work, why buildings are listed and give us an insight into some of our local heritage treasures.