

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025

Abergavenny Local History Society - January 1st 2025 to December 31st 2025.

The Society's **membership** continues to grow with a total of 75 new members joining this year bringing the current total up to 316. Due to increasing costs, it was necessary to raise the annual membership fee to £20.

The **objects** of Abergavenny Local History Society (charity registration number 1098582) are:

1. To promote the local community's knowledge of and interest in history
2. To provide local historical and general interest information for visitors
3. To support Abergavenny Museum and Castle

Achievements to meet these objects:

1. To promote the local community's knowledge of and interest in history

The Society enjoyed another excellent season of **lectures**. This year's programme has been very varied and our thanks go to the Talks and Visits team. The 2025 lectures included:

- Simon Wragg: "The Grwyne Fawr Reservoir and its Builders"
- Roger James: "Charles Rolls and Henry Royce"
- Benjamin Price: "Voices of 1842: Child Labour in the South Wales Coalfield"
- Madeleine Gray: "St George - The Llancafarn Mural Explained"
- Frank Olding: "Edmund Jones and the Nantyglo Fairies"
- Huw Williams "J. M. W. Turner in South Wales"
- Mike Barker: "Tramroads of the Forest of Dean"
- Roger James: "The Morgans of Tredegar House"

The **visits programme** for 2025 was fully booked and was once again a great success. The visits included a weekend trip in May to Lincoln and day visits to:

- June 18th: Llanelli House and Cardiff Coal Exchange
- July 17th: Bath Abbey and Dyrham Park
- August 14th: Stokesay Castle and Ludlow

The 2026 programme is almost fully booked and the visits include a weekend trip to the south coast of England in June and day-trips to Avebury, Madresfield Court near Malvern and Hestercombe House near Taunton. As of November, new committee member, Jo Campbell, is shadowing Bianca Emberson as Visits Administrator with a view to Bianca stepping down from the role in 2026. We are grateful to Bianca for all her hard work and to Jo for volunteering to fill the role.

The **monthly email newsletters** to members have continued, keeping members informed of the lecture programme and other activities. Events at historical sites and museums have also been publicized.

The Society continues to contribute to the **Abergavenny Focus Magazine**, delivered to all households in the area. The articles are linked to each month's talk that month.

The **Schools History Bursary** awarded to local students going on to study history at university is still available but, unfortunately, no applications were received this year.

2. To provide local historical and general interest information for visitors

The new sub-committee has made some progress with the Society's project to erect new **ceramic information plaques** around the town. A formal pre-application advice request to Monmouthshire County Council Planning Service established that the plaques will not need listed building consent. We currently await confirmation from the owners of the buildings that they are still happy for the project to proceed.

The Society's very active **Research Group** continues to operate successfully. This year's on-going projects include transcribing the Town Commissioner's records for the area and updating the **Street Survey**. The group's new e-journal, *The Gobannium Gazette*, goes from strength to strength and the Young ALHS web-pages have now gone live.

The Society's **website** has been regularly updated throughout the year. However during the year, it became clear that the current **Abergavenny Street Survey** website was no longer sustainable. With the invaluable help of Sandra Marks and other members of the Research Group, the survey was successfully migrated to a new, more sustainable website and training was offered to volunteers for editing and updating the survey. We are very grateful for all their efforts.

Members of the Society continue to contribute articles in the *Gwent Local History Journal* and the *Monmouthshire Antiquarian*.

Reserve stocks of our **publications** are now at manageable levels and storage problems have been alleviated. In September, Andrew Brown joined the Society and took on the role of publications officer. We are grateful for his willingness to help.

The Society continues to provide **information to the wider public** via its website and Facebook page. The public can access information about guided walks, leaflets and books, Society activities, and annual and financial reports. Queries and enquiries can also be posted and are dealt with promptly. A second edition of **Trails and Tales for Families** was published in August.

Thanks to the sterling efforts of the Society's secretary and other members of the committee and the research group, the Society participated in the commemorations to mark the **VE Day 80th Anniversary**. The society's book *A Town Remembers* (originally published in 2002) was updated and republished as a PDF.

To coincide with a planned exhibition at the Museum on the history of **Wendy Boston Bears** and the company's associations with the town, the research group is digitising Alison Newsam and Liz Davies's book *Wendy Boston and the Bears* with a view to republication as a PDF.

The Society's support for the **Gwent Local History Council** and the **Plas Gunter Mansion** project continues. In May, the society participated in a talk on the "Lost Pubs of Abergavenny" at The Vaults which raised £450 for Plas Gunter Mansion.

The Society also continues to respond to **queries** from the public regarding different aspects of local history.

3. To support Abergavenny Museum and Castle

The **Victorian Garden** in the Museum grounds continues to be maintained and enhanced by a small but dedicated band of volunteers. After many years of dedicated work, Paddy Beynon and Carolyne Watkins stood down from caring for the garden. Lynne Sheridan and Ros Grant have kindly volunteered to take their places and we are grateful for their commitment.

The **Curator** of the Castle and Museum continues to sit as an ex officio member of the committee.

4. Officers and Structure:

President: Ken Key

In July 2025, Ken celebrated his 100th birthday with a small celebration at home. A special edition of the Summer Newsletter to celebrate the occasion was sent out to all members.

Committee

There has been a welcome addition to the committee, and former committee members are still working hard on various aspects of the Society's work, e.g.: research, website, hosting talks, publicity and the Victorian garden.

Committee Members (with their main responsibilities) were confirmed at the AGM in May 2025. New members co-opted since then are highlighted below:

Chair: F. Olding.

Secretary, website and social media: C. Maciejewski.

Treasurer: J. Cormack.

Lecture & visits: H. Morgan, J. Zaijcek, B. Emberson, **J. Campbell.**

Membership Secretary: J. Patrick

Publicity: all members of the committee

Schools Liaison: J. White

Technical Officer (talks): R. Langford-Johnson

Without portfolio: D. Morgan, George Beale

Monmouthshire Museums representative: R. Rogers

The committee dealt with business via regular Zoom meetings with a return to some face-to-face meetings in the Spring and Autumn.

Many thanks to all my colleagues for their hard work, support and encouragement throughout another successful year.

Frank Olding
(Chairman)