

## Cwmbran Notes

The name of the town in Welsh means "valley (cwm) of the crow (brân)"

Untruth: Cwm means valley and bran is the breakfast cereal which for years has been quarried out of a thick seam nearby, hence Cwmbran is the home of All Bran.

The new towns in the United Kingdom were planned under the powers of the New Towns Act 1946 and later acts to relocate people from poor or bombed-out housing following WWII. Later developments included the 'expanded towns': existing towns which were substantially expanded to accommodate what was called the "overspill" population from densely populated areas of deprivation.

Following the New Towns Act 1946, ministries and county councils were asked to nominate sites for housing. For Wales, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government proposed Church Village and Cwmbran. The Church Village proposal was vetoed by the Ministry of Power as new housing there would have interfered with plans for the expansion of coal mining in the area; however, Cwmbran was passed in 1949.

[Cwmbran](#), Torfaen (designated 4 November 1949) to provide new employment opportunities in the south eastern portion of the South Wales Coalfield.

The longest established employer in Cwmbran is biscuit maker Burton's Foods, who employ 1000 people to make its Jammie Dodgers and Wagon Wheels biscuits. As of 2005, the Cwmbran plant produces over 400 million Wagon Wheels a year.

[Safran](#) Seats Great Britain (formerly Zodiac Aerospace) is the current owner of a factory in Cwmbran which employs 1000 people for manufacturing aircraft seats.

Goldie Looking Chain song & video Fresh Prince of Cwmbran:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvuxYxmlfrc>

From Cwmbran: Lee Dainton: A TV presenter and host of Dirty Sanchez (a British stunt and prank television series). Co-presented with Matthew Pritchard aka Dirty Vegan. Owns a skateboard shop in the town.

Jak Jones (born 29 July 1993) is a Welsh professional snooker player. Jones is from [Cwmbran](#), [Torfaen](#) in South Wales. He became a professional in 2010 at the age of 16 after winning the 2010 European Under-19 Snooker Championship in Malta. He reached the final of the [2024 World Snooker Championship](#) as a qualifier, losing 18–14 to [Kyren Wilson](#) in the final. He overcame Stuart Bingham 17–12 in the semi-finals to reach the World Championship final where he lost 18-14 to Kyren Wilson. Two of Jones's losing opponents, Trump and Bingham, criticised his playing style, complaining about his tactical approach. Jones responded that the comments were an excuse.

## **Llantarnam Abbey**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaDDpxM9oi0>

A Cistercian house founded in 1179 as a daughter house of Strata Florida. The remains of that abbey are incorporated into the present buildings housing the Sisters of Saint Joseph. The fine barn, boasting 11 bays, is one of the finest medieval remnants. HISTORY In 1179 a Cistercian monastery was founded here as a daughter house of Strata Florida. The Cistercian order was never as popular in Wales as it was in England, and Llantarnam was one of only a handful of Cistercian monasteries in the country.

When the abbey was dissolved at the Reformation the property was sold to William Morgan, an ardent Catholic. Morgan converted the monastic buildings for use as a family home. He also had to pay regular fines for not going to Anglican church services. The amounts of fines piled up, so Morgan finally paid a large lump sum to become exempt from future fines.

In the 17th century a Morgan descendent added a new house in the abbey grounds. The Morgans also helped Jesuit priests return to Britain, and hid them from the authorities. In 1679 one of the priests, David Lewis, was captured just outside the Abbey and executed in Usk. Lewis is remembered as one of the 40 Martyrs of England and Wales, men and women executed for their religious beliefs between 1535-1679.

The Abbey passed through several hands - including the government's - until 1946 when it was purchased by the Sisters of St Joseph. It is now home to a community of sisters, which seems somehow appropriate, as if the abbey has come full circle from its origins as a religious community and has now returned to its roots.

Parts of the original 12th century abbey and the 16th century house built by William Morgan are incorporated into the current house. Surrounding the abbey house is parkland laid out in the 19th century on the site of a medieval park.

In the grounds are a medieval tithe barn, and just to the west is the church, formerly a chapel associated with the abbey. There is a walled garden, complete with a labyrinth.

## **Llantarnam Grange**

Llantarnam Grange is based in a 19th century manor house in the centre of Cwmbran New Town. The foundations of the house date back to the 12th century, when a farmhouse stood on the site, called Gelli Las. For the majority of its existence the history of Gelli Las was intertwined with that of Llantarnam Abbey which was founded by Cistercian monks in 1179 in nearby Llantarnam village. The Cistercians took over huge tracts of land, setting up monastic farms called granges to provide food for the abbey. Llantarnam Abbey is believed to have had around fourteen of these granges, one being Gelli Las (Green Grove).

After the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, the Abbey was taken over as a private house by William Morgan who owned all the attached estates, including Gelli Las. The farmhouse appears in the survey of the manor in 1634 and the estate passed down through the Morgan family until 1707 when Sir Edward Morgan's daughters, Anne and Frances agreed to a partition of the estate. By the 1830s another descendant Reginald James Blewitt was in residence, virtually rebuilding the abbey in 1837. It was sold to Sir Clifford Cory in 1895 who lived there until his death in 1941. In 1946 the abbey became the home for the Sisters of Saint Joseph as it still is today.

It isn't known when Gelli Las was sold off from the rest of the abbey estates although it could have been when the estates were partitioned in 1707. However we do know from the Apportionment of the Rent-Charge in lieu of Tithes in 1844, Gelli Las was then owned by John Lawrence. It is referred to as being "one hundred and fifty acres, tithe free by prescription and very well known." John Lawrence sold Gelli Las to Henry Crawshay in 1862, who in turn sold it to Alfred Colerick Pilliner in 1871. Pilliner is noted to have been a Justice of the Peace and one of the principal landowners in the district. The Holy Trinity Church in Pontnewydd, Cwmbran was said to have an oak screen dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Pilliner of Llantarnam Grange.

Sometime during the 19th century Gelli Las was converted from a farmhouse into a gentleman's residence, probably by Alfred Colerick Pilliner as his initials can be found on a plaque above the bay windows. He was probably also responsible for changing the name to Llantarnam Grange – a title perhaps more in keeping with his grand new residence and referring to its former history. The property passed to Pilliner's family on his death in 1887 and was sold in 1905. Little is known of its owners until 1914 when Mr. John Fox-Tallis was resident at the Grange and recorded as one of the principal residents in the area.

In 1932 Llantarnam Grange was bought by William Thomas Jones, who was Managing Director of Avondale Tinplate Works. He and his wife, Margaret who had died in 1911, had four children – Thomas, Wilfred, Arthur and Jesse. Thomas's son Richard has told us how he remembers the house when he visited it as a child in the 1940s, playing with model trains under the billiard table, skating on the pond when it was frozen and magic lantern shows in the cellars. The Grange had a large kitchen garden and orchard, which allowed them to be virtually self-sufficient during World War II. The gardens led down to Grange Road (St David's Rd was not then built); there was a sunken lawn and a revolving summerhouse. At the rear was a farmhouse and stables occupied by a tenant farmer, the farmland for the estate stretched as far as the other side of the current shopping centre. William Jones died in 1951 and Llantarnam Grange passed to his four children and was put up for sale in 1952.

Llantarnam Grange was bought at auction by Cwmbran Development Corporation, which was formed following the New Towns Act in 1946 to create New Towns all over Britain. In 1953 the building was let to the General Post Office who used it as a sorting office. Cwmbran was just a small village at that time and more space was needed to deal with the anticipated extra demand following the building of the New Town and its houses. Work on Cwmbran Town Centre began in 1956, built predominantly on the grounds and farmland belonging to the Grange estate. The Bus Station was built on top of the Kitchen Garden, a car park built over the orchard (now the site of the cinema complex) and Glyndwr Road now

runs straight through the area where the stables once were. Lucas Girlings took over the lease of the building in 1958, using it as a drawing office but were forced to give up the lease in 1964 to enable the building to be demolished to make way for a park in the town centre.

In a last minute reprieve the General Manager of Cwmbran Development Corporation suggested that Llantarnam Grange's position made it the perfect venue for a meeting place for small societies and clubs – something that was seen as vital to the social and cultural growth of the New Town. Renovation of the building cost nearly £12,000 and on 30th April 1966 Llantarnam Grange Societies Club was officially opened with an exhibition of work by John Wright and Tom Rathmell. A trust was set up to run the club, with local theatre, art and camera clubs meeting there as well as the galleries could be hired for art exhibitions and social functions. In 1983, with the demise of the Development Corporation, the running of Llantarnam Grange was transferred to an independent Board of Trustees and it became a registered charity. Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre was awarded annual revenue funding status from the Arts Council of Wales and has gone on to gain a national reputation for the quality of its exhibition and learning programmes and staying at the heart of the region's artistic community.

### **Exhibition: CACÚLO – TONI DE JESUS**

Toni De Jesus • Based in Cardiff [@fireworksclaystudios](https://www.instagram.com/fireworksclaystudios)

Cacúlo: (ca·cgu·lu) a word from Madeiran slang that means a mound of earth or clay.

This touring exhibition builds on ideas from Toni De Jesus's solo show at MUDAS – Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Madeira (Portugal, 2023). It focuses on the interplay between the artist, the work, the material and place.

Toni has a history of migration, which creates a feeling of both belonging and not belonging. Parallel to this, his work exists in the space between tradition and breaking with tradition, functionality and non-functionality, craftsmanship and idea-based art. This space in-between is where Toni's identity is formed. Driven by a desire for connection, Toni explores themes of place, memory, and loss; core elements of his migrant experience.

Through examining how local materials, such as sand, rocks, sediments and clays have been used with ceramics throughout Maderia's 600-year history, Toni was able to find a tangible link between what defines where he comes from and what he is.

He also delves into non-physical heritage, the sharing of stories, gossip and songs passed down from family and locals. This creates a parallel between something that is solid, like ceramics fired in a wood kiln and the perishable, like the whisper of how my grandmother met my grandad. The developed work explores these notions in a different context. Living in Wales for the past nine years has transformed Toni into the person he is today.

**'Family Group' sculpture by David Horn** made in 1965. Presented to the people of Cwmbran by The Cwmbran Arts Trust unveiled by Leo Abse MP 23 September 1965 relocated to this site November 2001. .. this statue now sits in a garden-like setting, outside Llantarnam Grange, but was originally positioned within a spiral ramp so that it could be viewed from all angles & heights.

This is a scan I made of the head of the bronze sculpture on Monmouth Walk in Cwmbran town centre, South Wales. According to the text on the pedestal it was erected in July 1982 by the Cwmbran Development Corporation. It also says it is the only replica of an original located in Hyde Park, London. However, despite web-searching and looking through images of Hyde Park sculptures, I haven't been able to find out any more about it.

#### [Year of the Child Drinking Fountain](#)

Theo Crosby (1925–1994) and Polly Hope (1933–2013) and A. & A. Sculpture Casting (active c.1978–c.1988)

Artist who trained as a ballet dancer and subsequently at the Slade School School of Fine Art. Hope worked extensively throughout Europe. Although she studied initially as a painter and sculptor, she made her reputation with large quilted fabric works, mostly on an architectural scale. Commissions included Cwmbran New Town, St Peter's Church in Whitstable, the headquarters of NMB Bank, Amsterdam, and the Victoria & Albert Museum. She had many solo shows in Europe and America and was the second wife of the sculptor Theo Crosby.

#### **Year of the Child Drinking Fountain**

[A. & A. Sculpture Casting \(active c.1978–c.1988\)](#) and [Polly Hope \(1933–2013\)](#) and [Theo Crosby \(1925–1994\)](#)

Hyde Park

Unveiled 4 December 1981. A memorial to the Great Children's Party held in the park in 1979.

[The Shakespeare's Globe](#). Hope designed a ceramic zodiac mural and four corner sculptures which wrap around the towers of the Globe Theatre complex.. She was subsequently married to [Theo Crosby](#), an architect best remembered for his work to reconstruct [Shakespeare's Globe](#) Theatre.

**References:** Thanks to Wikipedia and other online sources for the information contained in these notes.