



TICKER NEWS

Official newsletter of the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation & Aftercare Charity



Meet our exercise instructors

In the months since our last issue, we've said goodbye to two of our long-standing Cardiac Rehab Exercise Instructors, and welcomed four more!

The past few months have seen quite a few changes for our classes. In May we said goodbye to Maja Baraskiewicz, who taught our Monmouth and Monday Llanfoist classes. Then, in summer, we had news that two more of our long-standing instructors were leaving.

Callum Simmonds, who took our Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Nantyglo and Blaenavon classes on Wednesdays, accepted a full-time role with the Gloucestershire Cardiac Rehab Service. And Helen Sanchez, who was in charge of the Tuesday Abertillery and Usk classes, decided to take well-earned retirement after a long career in cardiac rehab.

We can't deny it was a blow. But the good news is we now have four new highly experienced instructors in place, and plans to introduce a trainee instructor, starting in January (we'll have more on this in our next newsletter).

So, with our new timetable up and running (see below), let's introduce you to all five of our expert instructors:

Tom Stone

Tom has been with us since 2021. He teaches our two Saturday morning classes at Llanfoist (9am-10am and 10am-11am) and is a full-time member of the Aneurin Bevan Cardiac Rehab Team.



Tom started his career as a sports coach in 2010 and is qualified to work in multiple exercise referral settings including Cardiac Rehab, Cancer and Pulmonary Rehab, and Falls Prevention. He gained his MSc in Strength and Conditioning in 2022 and has a real passion for cardiac rehab exercise and the benefits it can bring.

"I really enjoy watching members progress," he says. "As they improve physically, people start to open up and become more sociable. And that's such an important part of people's recovery and ongoing mental health."

Joe Lane

Joe has taken over our Blaenavon class at the new time of 1:30pm-2:30pm on Fridays. He's an Exercise Referral Professional for Halo-Torfaen Leisure >>



Location	Day	Time
Abergavenny – Llanfoist Village Hall, Church Lane, NP7 9LP	Monday	15:15 – 16:15
	Saturday	09:00 – 10:00 10:00 – 11:00
Abertillery – Wyndham Vowles Community Centre, Crown Street, NP13 1PJ	Wednesday	09:30 – 10:30
Blaenavon – The Band Hall, Broad Street, NP4 9NH	Friday	13:30 – 14:30
Ebbw Vale – All Saints Catholic Church, Tredegar Road, NP23 6JQ	Wednesday	11:00 – 12:00
Monmouth – Monmouth Leisure Centre, Old Dixton Road, NP25 3DP	Wednesday	14:00 – 15:00
Tredegar – Fresh Active Gym, 28a Gwent Shopping Centre, NP22 3EJ	Wednesday	14:45 – 15:45
Usk – Usk Memorial Hall, Maryport Street, NP15 1AD	Wednesday	12:45 – 13:45

<< and is based at Cwmbran Stadium. He has a degree in Sports Studies and completed his Cardiac Rehab Exercise Instructor training in 2023. Joe also holds multiple other specialist exercise qualifications, including Cancer and Pulmonary Rehab, and Exercise for Long-term Neurological Conditions, and Obesity and Diabetes Management.

A former rugby player, he is now a keen runner and a regular at the gym. "I really enjoy providing a platform to help individuals improve their health and fitness," he says. "Seeing people reach their fitness goals is something that makes me smile, but also seeing the many physical and psychological benefits that brings them is also very rewarding."

Phil Matthews

Phil teaches our Monday Llanfoist class, which runs from 3:15pm-4:15pm. He works as an Exercise Referral Professional for Aneurin Leisure and is based at the Ebbw Vale Sports Centre. Phil's been involved in the fitness industry for over two decades, and he's been an integral part of Aneurin Leisure's National Exercise Referral Team since 2014, with specialist qualifications including Cardiac Rehab Exercise.



His interest in fitness started at a young age. He first represented Wales at just 14 in cyclocross and continued to excel in cycling throughout his youth. He then transitioned to running, where he truly thrived, representing Wales for more than 20 years in road and cross-country races. "Helping others achieve their fitness goals is what drives me every day," he says.

Will Teague

Will is a self-employed Cardiac Rehab Exercise Instructor. He's taken on our Abertillery, Ebbw Vale, Usk and Tredegar classes, which are now on Wednesdays, and he also runs his own classes, works with private clients and leads a weekly class for Barry Healthy Hearts Club.



Will has a degree in Physical Education and Sports Science and an MSc in Clinical Exercise Physiology from Worcester University. He completed his Specialist Cardiac Rehab Exercise Instructor training in 2018 and worked part-time for the Cardiff & Vale Cardiac Rehab Team before going fully self-employed.

"I like the community aspect of classes – bringing people together to learn those healthy habits that will help keep them fit and active," he says. "I've also learned that the social element of classes is really important, so making sure people enjoy themselves is the main thing."

Nick Worms

Nick has taken over the Monmouth class, which now runs on Wednesdays from 2pm-3pm. He's worked in fitness since 2012 and is an Advanced Fitness Instructor and Exercise Referral Professional at Monmouth and Chepstow Leisure Centres. Nick holds specialist qualifications in Cardiac Rehab Exercise and Obesity and Diabetes Management, and he's a keen advocate of Pilates and kettlebells.



"I love the camaraderie and enthusiasm of the Monmouth class," he says. "These wonderful people have everything to play for and they come week after week and push themselves along. How can you not love that?"

A fresh start

Thank you to all our members for your patience while we recruited our new instructors and made the necessary revisions to our weekly timetable. We know this has meant changes for many of you – including our Nantyglo class, which has now amalgamated with the Ebbw Vale class.

We hope you are all settling into the new schedule and enjoying being back at a regular class. Remember: you're welcome to attend as many classes per week as you like. So if for some reason you find you can't make your usual day and time, why not give one of our other classes a go?

FUNDRAISING ROUND-UP

Record-breaking Challenge

This year's **Potato Growing Challenge** saw record entries – 223 in all – and some pretty impressive results, too!

In the Adults' Class, Gilwern couple Chris and Bob Straughan scored the double, with Chris scoring winning place with her whopping 2.307kg harvest, and Bob taking the runners-up prize with 1.792kg. Both smashed the previous record of 1.47kg set by veteran Gilwern grower Bryan Jones in 2023.

In the Children's Class (Under 16), Abergavenny's Rowan Indge took first place, with a 1.037kg harvest. And runner up was last year's winner, Poppy Harper, of Raglan, with 919g.

A big thank you to everyone who took part – and to our generous sponsors, Abergavenny Garden Centre, who provided the essential potato growing kits. Together you helped us raise a record-breaking £1,115!



Above: Gilwern's Chris and Bob Straughan with their record-breaking potato haul. Right: Children's Class winner Rowan Indge's harvest.

Have you won a place in our 2026 calendar?

We're delighted to announce the 12 winners of our "My Happy Place in Nature" photo contest – and to give you a preview our stunning 2026 calendar, available to buy now!

We received scores of fabulous entries for our photo contest, so whittling them down to our final 12 winners was no easy task. But our judges have made their selection, and here are our calendar stars as they'll appear, month by month:

January – *Golden fleece*, Simon Walter
February – *Snowdrops in the snow*, Neil Dufty
March – *Coastal tranquillity*, Bethan Evans
April – *Spring sunset*, Suzanne Indge
May & cover – *Wings of gold*, Anwen Whitehead
June – *Colour in camouflage*, Amelia Millett
July – *Harvest time*, Judith Wayne
August – *Summer evening*, Lucinda Gaskell
September – *Wild camping*, David Kelly
October – *The tide rises, the tide falls*, Bridget Royce
November – *Sunset over the blues of the Welsh valleys*, Torri Grenfell
December – *Red grouse*, Mike Warburton

Our overall winner is 16-year-old Anwen Whitehead. Her gorgeous photo of a puffin, taken earlier this year on Skomer Island, wowed the judges with its colour and

composition and earned her the top spot on our calendar cover (shown above).

All 12 winners will receive a copy of the calendar, and we'll also be sending Anwen a specially signed edition of TV presenter and wildlife cameraman Hamza Yassin's latest book, *Hamza's Wild World*.

As well as featuring uplifting photos, our practical A4-size calendars provide generous space for noting events, include UK and Irish public holidays and other important days, as well as marking key dates for our Charity. You'll find these tagged with a heart. We've also added helpful monthly tips in our "Did You Know?" panels on each month's photo.

Plus you'll find a special surprise on the back cover (shown right): a montage of some of other favourite entries!

The calendars cost £7 each and are perfect for Christmas gifting. You can buy yours now through Class Assistant Allen Cleveland or by emailing marketing@cardiac-rehab.org.uk.



LUCK OF THE DRAW

Our members had an astonishing run of luck in the **Rotary Marches Community Draw**, which took place on 7 September.

All five winning tickets for the cash prize draw were either bought by our members or sold by them to friends and family. Here are the lucky numbers: 09853, (£250), 09942 and 11166 (£150 each) and 11370 and 10620 (£75 each).

And there's more good news, because our Charity was one of a dozen local groups to benefit from the Draw, which is funded by the Rotary Clubs of Abergavenny and Monmouth. Thanks to your efforts, we received £1,580 to help fund our long-term classes.

Triathlon raises over £1,950 for us

How's this for a big cheque? It's the proceeds from the **Clayton Shorthouse Memorial Triathlon**, which took place at the Ebbw Vale Sports Centre on 31 August.

We're honoured to be the beneficiary of this inspiring event, which was set up to honour Clayton, a keen triathlete and local legend who died suddenly in 2023 from an undiagnosed heart condition.

Thanks to all the participants, organisers, sponsors, volunteers and supporters, and the generosity of Clayton's family, this year's event raised a total of £1,956.05 to help fund our work in the community.

Created by Clayton's wife Linda and friend Ian Reynolds from Abertillery's Piranha Tri Club, the entry-level Super Sprint event celebrates Clayton's legacy and encourages newcomers to give triathlon a go – just as he always did.



Above, left-right: Triathlon organisers Ian Reynolds, Linda Shorthouse, Ebbw Vale Sports Centre Manager Emma Scott and Aneurin Leisure's Interim Director Tom Kivell with our Chair Jacky Miles

We're already working with the organisers on next year's event, set for Sunday 30 August, with plans to add a junior race and a relay, to make the day even more inclusive. Plenty of time for you to find some team mates and start training!

Top tips from the Gwent Heart Health Event

We were delighted to attend the **Gwent Heart Health Event** on World Heart Day, 29 September. Organised by the Gwent Public Health Team and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, this day-long event brought together some 70 people, including members of the public and a range of experts, to talk about all things related to heart health.

Here are our top three take-homes from the event.

1 Statins do more than control cholesterol

Consultant Cardiologist Dr Freya Lodge explained how they also work to stabilise atheromas (the fatty plaques that build up in arteries), reducing inflammation and making them less likely to rupture and cause a heart attack or stroke.

2 Keep an eye on your blood pressure

High blood pressure is linked with a range of serious health problems including kidney disease, heart valve issues, atrial fibrillation and dementia. Yet modern medication means it's also one of the most easily treated health problems. Normal blood pressure is between 90/60 and 120/80, so make sure you see your GP if your numbers creep up.

3 Exercise helps control your blood sugar levels

That's because regular exercise helps develop fast Type 1 muscle, which uses blood sugar efficiently and helps keep blood sugar levels under control. People who don't exercise have more slow Type 2 muscle, which is less efficient at using blood sugar, making blood sugar levels harder to manage.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Tredegar Remembrance Day Concert

Join us in Tredegar on 11 November for a stirring **Remembrance Day Concert** with **Tredegar Orpheus Male Voice Choir** and special guest star **Stephanie Webber**.

The Tredegar Orpheus is one of the Valleys' leading male voice choirs, and since appearing on *The Voice UK* and wowing the judges back in 2015, Ebbw Vale's own Stephanie Webber (pictured right) has forged a stellar career in musical theatre, and is currently headlining on some of the world's most luxurious cruise ships.

We're honoured to be the chosen charity for this unique benefit performance, with proceeds from ticket sales helping to support our classes.

Tickets cost £6 each and are available from Class Assistant Allen Cleveland or your Instructor. Or you can call Choir

Secretary Sheridan Jeffery on 07583 897 170.

Here are the key details:

- **Venue:** Orpheus Hall, Rawlinson Terrace, NP22 4LF (disabled access)
- **Doors open:** 6:30pm for 7pm start
- **Paid bar** for a selection of beers, wines and non-alcoholic refreshments

Please do come along, and bring your family and friends for what's sure to be a very special evening of musical entertainment.



Nov

25

Join us for our Annual General Meeting

Our **Annual General Meeting** will take place at 2pm on Tuesday 25 November at the Crickhowell Sports Association Pavilion, home of the Crickhowell Bowls, Cricket and Tennis Clubs.

There's free parking onsite, and if you're heading into Crickhowell on the A40 from Abergavenny, the entrance is on the left, just after the Crickhowell Group Practice.

Doors open from 1:30pm, with free refreshments and a chance to socialise with our Trustees and fellow members ahead of the meeting. We look forward to seeing you!



PHOTO: Canva

CRICKHOWELL COMMUNITY CAROLS

We've teamed up with **Crickhowell Choral Society** for their annual **Community Carols Concert**, at St Edmunds Church, Crickhowell, on Tuesday 16 December from 6pm.

Featuring children's choirs from Llangattock, Llangynidr and Crickhowell Primary Schools, this much-loved family event offers a feast of carols and seasonal favourites, and a chance for everyone to join in.

Entrance to the concert is free, and we'll be serving up refreshments and mince pies during the interval, with proceeds helping to fund our long-term classes.

CRICKHOWELL CHORAL SOCIETY
Conductor: Stephen Marshall

An evening guaranteed to get everyone in the Christmas spirit!

