

Campaign to prevent liver disease is launched

A PLAN to halt the rising toll of death and ill health caused by liver disease has been launched for Wales. Backed by £1 million of Welsh Government funding, the Liver Disease Delivery Plan will seek to address a problem that has seen deaths from liver disease in Wales more than double in 20 years.

The increase is largely due to the rise in alcohol misuse, obesity and blood borne viral hepatitis, but cases of liver disease due to these three causes are almost entirely preventable.

The issue is a UK-wide one, but Wales is the first part of the UK to respond to medical journal The Lancet's Liver Campaign, which calls on the NHS and other bodies to work towards tangible targets for reducing the burden of death and ill health.

As well as the £1m funding, another £1.377 million of annual funding linked to the Blood Borne Viral Hepatitis Action Plan, which came to an end this year, will also continue.

The new plan aims to help develop more seamless services between the different organisations providing care and treatment to patients.

People will be encouraged to take greater responsibility for their health, and there will be a drive to increase expertise in liver disease throughout the NHS in Wales, and improve early detection.

"Liver disease is increasing in Wales. Some of it is unavoidable but much is a result of how we live our lives," said deputy health minister Vaughan Gething.

"With support and encouragement people can take responsibility for reducing their risk, particularly when it comes to the amount they drink, as alcohol continues to be the biggest cause of liver disease in Wales."

City history presentation

ANY over 50s living in Malpas, Bettws or Shaftesbury, Newport, are invited to a presentation on the history of the city from the Newport City Centre Museum and Art Gallery.

The history presentation, which will be at Malpas Court Mansion House, will be on Thursday, May 14 from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

The talk is followed by afternoon tea.

To book, please ring Adam on 01633 210284 or email adam.smith@newport.gov.uk.

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'It was daunting to start again from scratch'

FIRST PERSON

Trip of lifetime: 13,000-mile journey will raise cash for St David's Appeal

David surveys African venture

By Emma James

DAVID THOMAS, 70, is the co-founder of Newport chartered surveyors Hutchings and Thomas. He tells the South Wales Argus about his business, his mammoth 13,000 mile drive from London to Cape Town (which was documented weekly in the Argus) and being exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts' Summer Exhibition

Mr Thomas wants to stress that the money he is raising has nothing to do with the cost of the trip, which he has already paid for, but that all sponsorship money and donations collected during the trip will go to the Argus St David's Appeal.

Mr Thomas is writing to all of his clients and inviting Argus readers to sponsor his route at certain stops of his route. Any form of sponsorship will be appreciated. Argus is pleased to sponsor the trip. Contact: Nicola Nolan Brooks, Argus assistant, 01633 77006. All cheques should be made payable to Argus St David's Appeal.

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ADVENTURE: A South Wales Argus article from David's African journey of 1998



INTO NEWPORT: David, centre, with Richard Hutchings at the opening of Hutchings and Thomas in Newport in 1993

"I WAS born in Swansea in 1945. My father was a solicitor and my mother was a housewife. When I was one, we moved to Surrey where I was brought up. I went to Malvern College and then to College of Estate Management and I qualified in 1965 when I was 20 years old.

"I went to art college briefly before that but my father said I was mucking around and he said to go and do something sensible. I wanted to be a painter; I painted all the time. All my life I have been interested in art and have just loved painting and sculpture. Neither of my parents were into art.

"When I was 23 I was still living in Surrey, but when I got married to Sue we moved to Earls Court in London. I then started working at a firm called Donaldson's, a very well-known firm. We had three children, a daughter Claire who was born in 1970, Martin in 1972 and Michael in 1978. When we had Claire we decided we didn't want to bring her up in London so we moved to Bristol and I worked in Bristol for nine years.

"Then in 1990 I saw an advert for a firm in Newport called Powell, Tuck and Partners and so that year we moved to Monmouth and I became a partner at the firm. We bought an old farmhouse dating from the 1600s, it was derelict and we completely rebuilt it did it up which took 35 years but it is now finished.

"In 1988 we sold the firm to Abbey National and myself and three other partners worked for them in Cardiff for five years. But then two of us, myself and Richard Hutchings, decided we'd start again. Abbey National heard that and asked



MOVE: David Thomas, around 1980

us to leave. So we left there and set up Hutchings and Thomas in 1993. We didn't have any cars, we just had two of their mobile phones and no office. We came across to Newport with not much at all. That morning was daunting; when we left I thought, I have got three children and no job. It didn't take long though and we got it going. Fortunately, the landlord at the offices we used to be in with Powell Tuck and Partners at Goldtops from nothing was still there and he said we could come back in here. So we found ourselves back where we had been before. We had to get these cheap old second-hand cars.

"We were based in Newport but were working all over the country. I used to do a lot of work for the biggest Spar retailer in this part of the country, Capper and Co. We had a turnover approaching £1million. There was a satisfaction of building something up virtually from nothing and in the end we had about 15 people working for us. We started in 1993 and our first employee joined in 1996.

"About five years ago Richard Hutchings, whose son is in Goldie Lookin' Chain, wanted to retire so he left. Then I became a consultant. Now Robert Carew-Chaston, David Pugsley and Haydn Thomas are carrying on the business and I'm gradually working less and less.

"In the middle of this I was also a magistrate for ten years. I was also a governor at Coleg Gwent and continued to paint. I painted virtually every day, mainly from photos at the kitchen table. I used to watch the TV with one eye and paint with the other. I always used to do oil but now do more watercolours. I paint buildings and landscapes mainly but do people as well, mainly people who interest me like historical characters.

"The Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition is on every year, there's about 16,000 pictures submitted and they choose about a tenth of that. I thought I'd have a go. You go up there and you can put three paintings in. I managed to get a picture in two years run-



SURVEYOR: David Thomas outside Hutchings and Thomas in Gold Tops, Newport

ning in 1982 and 1983, but then I got rejected for about five years. They hang your work in the exhibition for about two to three months and they are all for sale. My father went and he bought my painting for £200.

"One of my paintings was an old palace in France and I did it through the gates with the palace in the background.

"With my other paintings, I don't usually sell them or give them away because they are my babies. Because I'm only painting in the

evenings, they only take me a week. A watercolour is only a couple of hours. I have painted scenes from Spain and France and the States. I take a lot of photos and then bring them home and work on them, although I'm not always satisfied with the end result.

"In 1998, two of my friends - one who I went to playgroup with and had known since aged three, and another I had known since 16 - wanted to do a big drive. The two of them had done quite a few drives, mainly around England,

and they decided to do this one to Cape Town from London without going over water at all. I got on board and late in the day thought I might as well raise some money for charity, and in the end I raised about £2,000. We started from Canary Wharf and went through the Channel Tunnel and then we went right through Europe. Places to stay were organised but we did take tents and some people camped, but I'm pleased to say we never unpacked the tent once. From Turkey we went to North

Africa, we went down through the whole of Africa. We were going to go through Ethiopia but they started fighting. A lot of the places we went through you wouldn't be able to go through today. We drove 13,000 miles and we were very fair about sharing the driving - every hour we swapped around. We would stop as well and have a wander. It was absolutely wonderful to get to Cape Town and sit by the sea and have a beer, it was absolutely such a relief. The drive was incredibly stressful. The roads

are extremely bad in Romania and in Africa, our tyres kept bursting. Then you have got the locals charging around in big lorries. Some of these countries are completely lawless. We drove as fast as we could the whole way and it took six weeks. Several of the other vehicles didn't make it at all, some crashed.

"After that I said I would never do it again, but then 10 years later in 2008 I did another one. We drove 7,000 miles from Arizona to Fairbanks in Alaska.

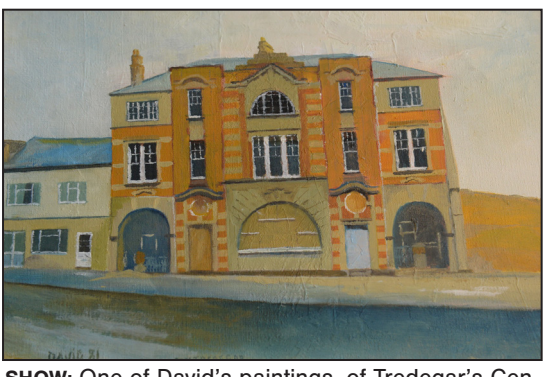
"It was incredibly eventful. We did 500 miles in one car but then it blew up, we walked to a nearby Indian reservation and found a Navaho Indian who had a pick-up truck and he agreed to drive us to Salt Lake City. Me, my friend and this Indian sat in the front of this truck and drove for two days.

"We found a German mechanic who specialised in the engine and left it with him while we took four different cars to do the rest of the journey. That trip was about two-and-a-half weeks and then I definitely said no more for good.

"Now I come in most days to the business and keep painting. "The company is doing very well, which is always nice."



IN AFRICA: Mr Thomas at the Cape of Good Hope in 1998 at the end of the 13,000-mile drive



SHOW: One of David's paintings, of Tredegar's Central Surgery, from 1981, that ended up in a Royal Academy of Arts exhibition

NEWS IN BRIEF

Join the readers

MEMBERS are sought for a new reading group at Abergavenny's Mardy Park Resource Centre.

The group meets every Wednesday from 10am until noon and started last month.

Volunteer Lindsay McDougall said meetings at Abergavenny Library were so successful they chose to hold others in another part of the town.

For more information about Abergavenny Library's reading groups, call 01873 735980. Other groups wanting to use Mardy Park Resource Centre can call 01873 853706.

Help ex-military

A SOUTH Wales military charity has launched a new campaign to raise money for its career coaching programme for ex-armed forces personnel.

Hire a Hero wants people in Gwent to recognise how support given to ex-servicemen can help them find employment.

The Six for Six campaign has been launched after a report by Hire a Hero found ex-armed forces personnel are six times more likely to get employment if searching with support.

You can donate via text by sending 'HSIX46' and the amount you would like to donate to 70070.

Teddy bear picnic

IF you go down to Newport's Beechwood Park on May 17 you're sure of a big surprise - that's the day the teddy bears have their picnic.

There will be free family activities from noon until 2pm around Beechwood House in the centre of the park.

Children can meet Peppa Pig and Fireman Sam, have their faces painted, watch the Defying Gravity dance troupe and join in with sports.

There will also be a best-dressed teddy competition at the event, organised by the Beechwood Park Group which aims to regenerate the area.

Events secretary Matthew Pimm said: "We are seeking donations for both stalls so if anyone has any toys, teddy bears, chocolate or sweets they could kindly donate it would be appreciated.

"If any local businesses are interested in sponsoring the event then please feel free to contact us at beechwoodparkvolunteers@gmail.com or 07985 413053."

Delays expected

TRAFFIC lights will be in place on Redbrook Road, Monmouth, for three days to allow for engineers to renew a leaking communication pipe. The work is due to be carried out between May 6 and 8.