



**Merthyr
Housing**

*Where People
Come First*

**Tai
Merthyr**

*Lle Daw Pobl
yn Gyntaf*

Free

The Autumn Beacon

The Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association Newsletter

**Warm
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FREE PRIZE DRAW

Wherever you see the **Prize Draw Logos** you have the chance of winning either a voucher for Boots, Tesco or some other goodies.

It's FREE and easy to enter...

Send your name, address and phone number by e-mail, text, on a postcard or on the back of a sealed envelope telling us the name of the Prize Draw item you would like to win (one entry per prize item), along with the answer to any question. The winner of each prize draw will be the first name drawn following the closing date.

Post your entry to: Beacon Prize Draw, Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association, 11/12 Lower High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8EB
Email your entry to: mtha@mtha.org.uk
Text your entry to: 07867 359 427



Last Months Winners

The winners of the free prize draws in the Summer Beacon were:

Mrs A O'Neill, Treharris wins a **£20.00** Vue Voucher for correctly answering that the Spanish Riding School is in Vienna.

Mrs D Morris, Twynrodyn wins a **£20.00** Boots Voucher for knowing that Jennifer Lopez starred in Anaconda.

Miss M Sims, Merthyr wins a **£20.00** Tesco Voucher for her answer that a Lieutenant Commander is the next rank above a Lieutenant.



Food Co-op Coming to Dowlais

Elim Church, Dowlais, Friday 25th Oct at 11.30am

Save money and eat healthily at only **£3 a bag**. Each bag contains 5 different varieties of fruit or veg or salad or stir fry.

For winter stews, stew pack are **only £2**, just add meat. The food co-op is run by volunteers so can also offer rewarding opportunities, So what are you waiting for? **Get ordering your bags on the numbers below...**

Nicky: 01685 352 835
Carly: 01685 352 836



Mark Your Calendar

£2

Stew

Veg

Fruit

£3

Salad

FLAMING AUTUMN'S BACK AGAIN

*They've turned from green to brown you'll see
And fallen at our feet.
Not patients in the hospital –
But leaves dropped in the street.*

*The Autumn's here, as you will note
And shorts are gone from sight.
The pale white legs are hid from view
That's one less shock to blight.*

*The summer tans are down the pan,
No more the short-sleeved shirts.
The winds are cooler don't you find?
And gone the mini-skirts.*

*It's on with thermal underwear,
Warm blankets for the night.
And balaclavas are in vogue.
Hell! Don't you look a sight?*

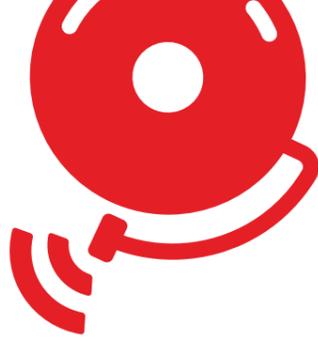
*The funeral cars are polished up
Directors at the doors.
These are the months for custom so,
Make sure the next ain't yours!*

*Gas prices up, electric too.
And boilers going bust.
And TV adverts urging 'Buy'
It really is unjust.*

*Cheer up. Cheer up, all is not lost.
Soon Christmas will be here.
With children wanting pricey toys.
Love Autumn whilst it's here!*

Written by
Geoff Daniels
(Dowlais Stables)

Fire Safety in the Home



DID YOU KNOW

- 1 People living in rented accommodation are seven times more likely to have a house fire than owner/occupier.
- 2 Not having a working smoke alarm doubles your risk of death.
- 3 Candles cause five times more fires a day than any other cause of domestic fires.

- If your deep fat fryer, hot oil pan or chip pan is on fire, **'DO NOT THROW WATER'** onto the burning oil – turn off the heat, attempt to close the lid of the fryer or smother the fire with a damp cloth to restrict the oxygen. Consider replacing your cooker top deep fat fryer with an electric one.

The Shed & Outhouse

The shed or outhouse is perhaps the most overlooked place in the house when it comes to fire safety. All those cans of paint, petrol for the lawnmower, the BBQ gas cylinder, bottles of turps and methylated spirits...

If you want to make your shed or outhouse safer make sure you store all flammable liquids in appropriate containers. If you have a heat source like a water heater in your shed or outhouse, make sure your flammable items are kept well away from it.

Dispose of paint and oil-soaked rags immediately after use – don't store them in a pile in the corner. Disconnect power tools when not in use and never start up petrol powered tools inside the shed or outhouse.

Some of you may rent garages from us, please ensure you follow the fire safety tips above. Finally, consider having a fire extinguisher in the garage – a fire extinguisher and smoke alarm.



The Kitchen

With its electric-powered utensils, hob, oven and chip pan, the kitchen is one of the most fire-dangerous places in your home. Most house fires originate in the kitchen.

The tips below can make your kitchen a safer place:

- Don't overload electrical outlets with multiple appliances.
- Ensure that your cooker, if gas, is checked annually by a trained gas safe engineer, and that all its connections are safe if it's electrical.
- When cooking, reduce the chance of accidental spillage by turning saucepan handles towards the rear of the cooker.
- Store machines where children can't get at them.



Keeping Living & Sleeping Areas Fire Safe

Eliminate the possibility of electrical fires in the bedroom by turning off electric blankets, heaters, TVs and hair straighteners at the wall when you're not using them.

If you're a smoker, please, be fire safe and don't do it in bed.

Do not leave unattended candles lit.

In the living room, screen open fire and log burners. Make sure you keep the appointment to have your chimneys cleaned each year. Don't leave embers and ashes smouldering in open fireplaces overnight.

If you use a free standing electric heater make sure there is a meter of clear space on all sides.

Regularly check that all electrical outlets and cords are safe and not loose or exposed.



Win a £20.00 Vue Voucher
What does UNESCO stand for?
(See contents page for entry details)



Preventing Fire in Other Areas

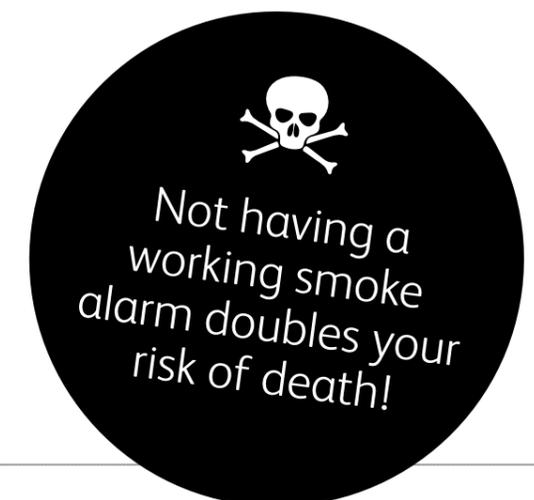
The bathroom, with its combination of water and electricity, poses another fire safety challenge. Turn off and unplug all electric appliances when not in use. Don't allow towels or clothes to dry over ovens and hobs.

Mats and other belongings kept in the communal areas of blocks of flat can cause fire and trip hazards and puts others at risk so please keep these areas free.

A smoke alarm is the cheapest way to save a life – so don't remove any which are fitted in your home. If they are broken or missing then please call Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association.

When the unthinkable happens...are you insured?

Imagine losing everything you own or everything in one or two rooms. Imagine having to move house due to actions of others. Think of the cost of removals, new carpets and curtains. Well in the last 12 months this has happened to families who have not been insured.



Fire & Flood Damage

We have had three serious house fires but hardly anyone had house content insurance. Sadly, one person lost everything except the clothes that they escaped in.

Houses next to or even two or three doors away from bad fires have had their furniture ruined from smoke damage.

We realise that money is tight for everybody but not having house content insurance is a very high risk – you are risking losing everything.

Cost how much you would need to replace just the basics, e.g. beds and bedding, drawers and wardrobes, cookers, pans, kettle, cutlery and fridges, table and chairs, sofa, curtains etc.

Now think of the cost of replacing all your non-essential items that make life a little better like TVs, DVD players, Freeview or satellite boxes and microwaves.



Then think of the cost of replacing all the personal items of you and your family, clothes, shoes, children's toys, their sport kits and school uniforms. The list goes on.

We have building insurance to replace only the building but it's the inside that makes it your home.

Many companies offer content insurance at competitive rates and on pay as you go type plans.

Gas Safety

MTHA will check your gas boiler and appliances they own annually, however they will not check gas appliances they do not own such as your cooker. If you have a new gas cooker or other gas appliances then you should arrange to have them checked and served annually like your boiler. All checks should be done by a person who is 'Gas Safe registered' this is a legal requirement and that they are registered as a gas engineer who can make sure it's safe.

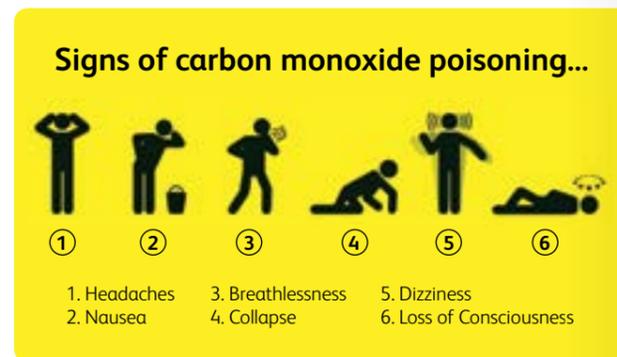
Also, in order to keep your gas equipment safe, do not cover or block any vents in your property.

Carbon Monoxide Alarm (CO Alarm)

MTHA are putting Carbon Monoxide detectors into properties where the boiler is not externally vented. We are doing this because Carbon Monoxide is a poisonous gas that has no smell or taste.

Breathing it in can make you unwell and it can kill. In the UK, more than 50 die from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning every year, and 200 people are left seriously ill.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to those of food poisoning and the flu. However, unlike flu, carbon monoxide does not cause a high temperature (fever).



What MTHA are doing

- Ensuring all the gas appliances that are owned by them, such as your boiler, are checked annually.
- Repairing faults with gas appliances when you report them.
- Putting CO detectors in homes where boilers are not externally vented.



If you have a monitor you should...

1. Test the unit weekly by pressing test/hush button in the middle of the unit until it makes a sound.
2. Do not paint the alarm as it won't work properly and will damage it.
3. Make sure all gas appliances that you own are installed, repaired or serviced by a registered Gas Safe engineer. For more information contact MTHA and ask to speak to someone in our gas team.
4. Report any concerns that you have to MTHA.

If you have a carbon monoxide monitor and it makes a sound for no reason you must contact:

TRANSCO on **0800 111 999** and MTHA on **0800 731 4293** then:

1. Open the doors and windows and ventilate the home.
2. Ensure there are no fumes in the area such as paint, thinners, hair spray, chemical cleaners and aerosol spray.
3. Ask everyone in your property to immediately move to fresh air, outside is best, or to a door or windows that is directly open to the outside. You should stay at these locations until someone from TRANSCO attends.

Warm Home Discount

NOW OPEN!

The Government's Warm Home Discount is now open!

The scheme offers a £135 rebate before the end of March 2014. While many elderly people qualify automatically for the rebate there are 2 further groups who also qualify but must apply for the grant.

- **Group 1** – A spouse or someone else living at a property but who is not the named person on the electricity account who is A) 75 or over and getting the guarantee credit element of pension credit and B) under 75 and only getting the guarantee credit element of pension credit.
- **Group 2** – Also known as the broader group, who must check with their supplier to see if they qualify though most suppliers offer the grant if you are in receipt of ESA, JSA, income support or have an annual income of less than £16,190 (conditions apply to this).

Below is a list of the most popular energy suppliers nationally (commonly referred to as the big 6) as well as a link to their website pages devoted to the Warm Home Discount with guidelines on how to apply and more details on the eligibility criteria.

- **SWALEC:** www.swalec.co.uk/helpandadvice/extrahelp/priorityplan/
- **EDF:** www.edfenergy.com/products-services/for-your-home/safe-warm-and-well/warm-home-discount.shtml

- **British Gas:** www.britishgas.co.uk/products-and-services/gas-and-electricity/the-warm-home-discount.html (Application over the phone, for pre-payment customers phone number is **0800 294 8604**, for credit customers **0800 072 8625**)
- **E.On:** www.eonenergy.com/for-your-home/saving-energy/need-little-extra-help/warm-home-discount/warm-home-discount-form
- **Npower:** www.npower.com/spreading_warmth/content/warmhomediscount/ (Application over the phone – **0808 172 6999**)
- **Scottish Power:** www.scottishpower-onlinecomms.co.uk/warmhomediscountcustomers/

If you think you may be eligible for this free government grant but you are unsure about how to apply then contact one of the community development team who will be happy to visit you at your home and assist you in applying for the grant and we will even offer internet access at your home to assist you to apply.

There is a limited pot available for this grant so you need to act now! If you think you qualify for the grant and contact MTHA Community development team on **01685 352 800** or email ljones@mtha.org.uk – You can also contact us via www.facebook.com/merthyrhousing or Twitter [@merthyrhousing](https://twitter.com/merthyrhousing)

Mental Health

Mental health problems can affect anyone at any time and they can be very varied ailments including self-harming, eating disorders, depression and OCD. Some mental health problems are described using words that are in everyday use; for example, 'depression' or 'anxiety'.

This can make them seem easier to understand, but can also mean people underestimate how serious they can be.



Behind a painted smile – by a tenant with mental health illness.



Living with mental health problems is a lonely illness because other people can't see it! It isn't like a physical disability which can be obvious such as a walking stick.

Because it can't be seen people are afraid of it but not everyone who has mental health problems is a mass murderer so it's the same as not judging a book by its cover.

People don't understand it and think the people with mental health problems need to 'pull themselves together' which can feel like a slap in the face for someone with the illness.

Having a form of mental health illness can feel like having a cloud come down over you and you can't see the end of the tunnel. It can make you feel very lonely because people think you're mad!

They don't even want to speak to you never mind be a friend.

Because of the illness they have trust issues because they believe that they are going to be let down by people they think they can trust even if there is no rational reason for believing this.

Even small things, that to anyone else would be sorted straight away can seem like the end of the world situations and without help can become out of control situations that escalate.

There are people and places that can help and support you if you have mental health problems but sometimes realising you have a problem and who to ask for help can be the biggest hurdle.





Brecon Beacons National Park Day

On Friday the 26th of July, we were lucky enough to have day canoeing and kayaking on Llangorse Lake courtesy of Ceri Bevan and Huw Price of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The day was split with half the day canoeing and the other half kayaking.

Many of the group had never been before so this was an education to them all. They learnt how to paddle and how to steer and control the canoes and kayaks. The session was great for team building as they had to work in pairs to steer and control the canoes and to play the games that were planned. We had many spillages into the lake with games being played and with rivalry on the lake amongst the group. Community Development Staff were no exception to the falling in and one staff member also lost a shoe at the end!



Win a £20.00 Boots Voucher

Who was the first non-royal to appear on a UK postage stamp?
(See contents page for entry details)

Folly Farm Experience



Not all of our young members were old enough to come with us on this year's residential. So for those who couldn't come, we thought that it was only fair that they had a nice day out. We wanted to do something that the group would remember and really enjoy, so what better trip to go on... Folly Farm!

An early start was needed so at 7.30am on the 30th of August we started our day out. We arrived at our destination at 10am on the dot and went straight into the park. Our first stop was the sensory zone where the group saw snakes, spiders, parrots, tropical fishes, tortoises and armadillos. There was a penguin talk due, so as we made our way to this the group looked at animals such as lemurs, emus, meerkats and skunks. When we arrived at the penguin enclosure we had a talk about their eating habits, where they are from and their way of life.

Our next stop was to the Folly Barn where some of the group handled some ferrets and others milked a goat. The group got to see some lambs, giant rabbits, horses, ponies, and pygmy goats. Before we knew it was lunch time!

The group had an hour playing in the may adventure play grounds that they had and then it was time to visit the giraffes. The group were up in the viewing platform and were lucky enough to get close enough to stroke one of them. From here we went on to visit the piggery and have a tour on the tractor train, before finishing the visit in the indoor fair.



Summer Residential

This year we went to Rhossili won our summer residential. We stayed at their activity centre that overlooked the bay at Rhossili. The group that came along worked very hard to fund the residential from sponsorship, bag packing at Tesco and organising a raffle.

The first fun activity that the group got to take part in was a session swimming at Swansea's LC2 fun pool. The pool has three slides for the public to enjoy, that have many twists and loops; it has a wave machine, a splash zone, and many water guns around the pools. The group spent a good two and a half hours in the pool enjoying one of the top attractions in South Wales.

Any visit down west must be accompanied by a trip to Wales' only roller-coaster park at Oakwood. We spent the day down at Oakwood where the group enjoyed rides on Megaphobia, Speed, Drenched, Bounce and many more.

Some members of the group had never been to theme park before and it was their first experience of roller-coasters – once they had their first ride, there was no stopping them.



In all the group raised **£800** so that they could attend free of charge and get to do the activities which they had planned.



Win a £20.00 Tesco Voucher
In Monopoly, the green set consists of Bond St, Regent St and which other?
(See contents page for entry details)



Having the great weather that we had, after Oakwood we decided that we would spend an hour or so in Saundersfoot. The group enjoyed crab fishing off the harbour wall, a visit from a local seal as he popped up off the harbour whilst the group was fishing, time spent on their beach, a tour of Tenby lifeboat and then a visit to the famous £1.20 shop.

Our next two days in the Gower were spent enjoying their award winning beaches. Blessed with beautiful weather the group enjoyed a day at Port Eynon beach and half a day at Caswell. Both days the group enjoyed the opportunity of body-boarding, playing in the sea, playing ball games on the beach and of course, sand castle building. A trip to the beach is never complete unless you sample some local ice cream and many '99s' were sold to the group!

A big part of the residential was healthy cooking and trying to encourage the group to help us cook and learn what is going into their food. On all occasions when we cooked, the group got stuck in with helping us prepare salads, chop fresh vegetables for cooking and they even helped with the cleaning up. The group saw what was going into their food and learnt about the importance of a good diet in helping to stay healthy.

The residential would not have been possible without the help from people who donated prizes for our raffle or allowing us to bag pack at their store. Our thanks goes to the following companies/organisations for helping us achieve our fundraising target:



Residents Group Gives Charitable Donation to Local Boy

Georgetown Residents Group is always on the lookout for local causes they can help, and this year they couldn't have found a more deserving case than Scott Abbruzzese.

Scott, an avid rugby player for Treharris Rugby Under 16's, was struck down with Osteosarcoma last September when he was just 14. While training for a rugby game, he broke his left arm, and the resulting x-ray revealed the cancer.

Two biopsies later and Scott began chemotherapy at the specialist Skypad Unit at the University Hospital of Wales, and limb salvage surgery as part of his treatment. The procedure involved the removal of his humerus and the insertion of a metal bone in its place.



Scott

Nicola Garbett, who is the team manager for Treharris Rugby Club, and also a Community Development Officer at the association mentioned Scott's case at a meeting with Georgetown Residents Group. The residents at the meeting were struck by Scott's story, and decided they would like to help.

The group gave a small donation of £25 to Scott's family from funds they had collected at the meetings. Scott's mother Natalie has been bowled over by the support both Scott and the charity 'Teenage Cancer Trust' have received from the community through the two fundraising events.



Annual General Meeting 2013 at the Bessemer Hotel

Tenants, board members, staff, shareholders, partners and contractors all came together for the 35th Annual General Meeting of Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association at the Bessemer Hotel in Dowlais.

As well as the official side of the AGM, there is also an opportunity for us to recognise the work of our tenants who get involved in their communities. This year the awards were dominated by volunteers at Kevin Ryan Court with Terry and Jean being awarded the 'Desley Reynolds Memorial Award' for their contribution with the Luncheon



Club over in Kevin Ryan Court in Georgetown, together with Rhidian who volunteers every week in the Credit Union collection point. Marcia and Marcelo were recognised for their papier mache craft sessions held with the residents every week.

The young person's award went to Jade whose confidence has increased dramatically whilst joining in with the youth group and its activities. The event was concluded with a presentation on Redhouse (The Old Town Hall) showing the before and after work of the project and a lovely buffet which everyone enjoyed.

WE NEED YOU!



Welfare Reform – Universal Credit

As Welfare Reform slowly but surely takes a hold on our tenants, and more importantly your limited finances, we at MTHA are committed to giving you as much help and support as possible.

Universal Credit will be the next benefit change to be implemented and although no actual date has been set these changes appear to be imminent.

When Universal Credit is implemented, anybody without a bank account or without access to the internet (doesn't have to be your own computer) will be at a disadvantage.

In order for us to give you the best possible support and see where our help is most needed 'we need your help'.

We need to know if you have a bank account and if you have access to a computer/internet. More importantly if the answer is no to both of the above we need to know how we can support you.

Please contact us on **01685 352 800** and **press option 2** and update us with your present circumstances.

Get in touch

Web: www.mtha.org.uk
Email: mtha@mtha.org.uk
Enquiries: 01685 352 800
Text: 01685 722 514

Repairs & Maintenance

Freephone number
0800 731 4293

Lower rate for mobile users
03301 239 015

Heating breakdowns
0800 328 4322

Lower rate for mobile users
03301 239 622

Carbon monoxide can kill make sure you get your free gas check:

Freephone
0800 328 4322

Maintenance Services

Lynette Evans
Maintenance Officer
01685 352 820

Rents

Lisa May
Senior Rent and Financial Inclusion Officer
01685 352 830

Julie Collins
Senior Rent & Recovery Assistant
01685 352 822

Brenda Gittins
Rent Assistant
01685 352 815

Community Development

Niki Priest
Tenant & Community Development Officer
01685 352 804

Carly Litchfield
Tenant & Community Development Officer
01685 352 836

Nicola Garbett
Tenant & Community Development Officer
01685 352 835

Bethan Thomas
Youth Inclusion & Development Officer
01685 352 839

Housing Services

Karina Quinlan/Niki Priest
Tenancy Management Officer
01685 352 814

Jason McInnes
Tenancy Management Officer
01685 352 813

Lianne Farmer
Supported Housing Officer
01685 352 838

Christine Craig
Housing Services Officer
01685 352 825

Colin Higgins
Dispute Resolution Officer
01685 352 827

Helpful Contacts

Domestic Abuse Helpline
0808 801 0800

Shelter
01792 469 400

Care & Repair
01685 723 771

Merthyr Police
01685 722 541

Safer Merthyr Tydfil
01685 353 999

Shop Mobility
01685 373 237

Drug Aid
01685 721 991

Merthyr Women's Services
01443 693 737 (24 Hour Line)

Welsh Water Emergency
0800 052 0130

All Wales Drug & Alcohol Helpline

24 hours a day 7 days a week bilingual support
0800 633 5588



Merthyr Housing
Where People
Come First

Tai Merthyr
Lle Daw Pobl
yn Gyntaf