

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 149

MARCH 2012



HORNS OF A DILEMMA

This fine beast with festive horns made yet another annual Christmas appearance above the gateway of *Ty Berllan* on Llanccarfán's top road. But ironically, a second curious hound with horns is emerging to raise still more questions on the unfathomable walls of St. Cadoc's church . . .

Enquire within.



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EDITORIAL

The next issue celebrates several anniversaries. It will mark the **XXth** anniversary of the village hall re-opening, the **150th** issue of the newsletter – & the **25th** anniversary of the founding of the Llancarfan Society itself. For one print run only, this journal bloats with pride, & **aims to run to 32 pages**.

So please offer us as many evocative photographs from those 25 years as shoe-boxes & albums can yield. **Graham Brain** has already sent us photos previously collected for the **Millennium** publications, and we have the names of those who donated them. But any new offerings you think evoke life in our village – whether sepia past or rainbow not-so-past – will be greatly welcomed. **Lend them early now** to your editor for copying, ideally with a note of what they feature, and tales about them. Half our pages are in colour, & we can often rescue faded 1960s *Kodachrome* from poor vanishing Kodak.

Basking in the suns of southern France, President Barbara Milhaisen sends greetings to warm the end of winter. She was here in the village at Christmas to enjoy the Carol service, then back home negotiating with the French mafia for a Wales/France Rugby ticket. She is looking forward to the Olympics & Queen's jubilee, and suggests combining both in a village sports and a party. In the sad absence of our village show this year, Barbara throws down an Olympic gauntlet: 'Tony Thomas!' - says Barbara - 'I challenge you to another combined effort in the three-legged race, as we did as 18-year-olds at the coronation celebrations.' Now that would be an event to inspire us all!

NAVIGATORS ON THE COWBRIDGE BRANCH

Sara Tickner offers intriguing research about the vanished Cowbridge to Aberthaw Railway, following up a note from Ann Barnaby of St. Athan, whose family moved here from Bristol in 1971. Full steam ahead, Ann Barnaby!

Tracing her family tree, Ann Barnaby has discovered that her grandfather, Archibald James Parsons, was born in Llancafarn in 1890. He was listed on the 1891 census for Treguff as residing in "Huts at Kemslawn". With him were his father John Parsons, a railway labourer, mother Mary, six siblings - the eldest brother, at 15, also working to build the railway - and five boarders.

Kemslawn and the railway huts (listed on the 1891 census) were first noted by John Etherington, previous editor of this newsletter, in the summer of 1993, not long after the census was published. The 55th newsletter points to the varied origins of the railway labourers housed there, hinting at a fascinating story of these men & families who followed the railways for work.

After sampling the electoral registers across the years, John elicited a connection between the mysterious Kemslawn and the property now known as Kingsland, near the old St Mary Church station on the road to Llantrithyd. In 1874, a David Jenkins of Flemingstone Court was listed as occupying "King lands"; in 1878 he was occupier of "Kemslawn"; in 1885 the name became "Kenslawn" before reverting to "Kingsland", a name still used today!

However, there seems as yet little surviving information on the temporary lodgings created for the builders of our branch railway, though shanty towns & mission huts are recorded in other areas, some remaining even to this day.

The archives of the *Western Mail* do give us some further information on the building of this branch of the railway. On Saturday June 1st, 1889, it was recorded that on the previous night, the *Cowbridge and Aberthaw Railway Bill* was read a third and final time in the House of Lords, and passed. A small paragraph on Saturday February 8th 1890 reported for the previous day that "the first sod of the Cowbridge and Aberthaw Railway was cut in a field adjoining the Cowbridge Station yesterday." Another piece wrote of the festivities that "the town was gay with bunting in honour of this occasion."

Work on the line then began in earnest, and the railway branch was completed just over two years later. On Monday October 3rd 1892, the *Western Mail* ran a full page spread on the opening of the railway two days before, which makes fascinating reading. 'Our own reporter' documented the 6½ mile construction: "No less than 250,000 cubic yards of excavation has


been done, and, though the hard nature of the rock was such as to make this labour of exceptional difficulty, not a single fatal accident has taken place, while casualties of a lesser degree have been singularly infrequent.”

This accolade to the expertise of the engineers and workers was indeed well deserved. In *The Railway Navvies*, Terry Coleman presents “a history of the men who made the railways”, describing the incredible feats and frequent fatalities of these strong men who built over 20,000 miles of railway across Britain during the 19th century, using picks, shovels and gunpowder.

Renowned for their incredible strength, stamina and, indeed, appetites, these men really were the unsung heroes of the railway age. This book tells a gripping story of their lives and labours, understandably concentrating mainly on the construction of the great works. These were mostly complete by the time Archibald James Parsons was born in Llancarfan and raised in a hut alongside the Cowbridge to Aberthaw line. Here his father and brother shifted earth and laid tracks, before the family moved on once more, ever following the railways.



Ann Barnaby enclosed this evocative picture of her grandfather (far right) - the very same Archibald Parsons, working here on the railway in Swansea in around 1914, and following in the fine tradition of his father before him.



“ So smoothly did the train travel over the well-laid rails that there was not the slightest oscillation of the carriages observable. We passed New Beaupre . . . dotted with venerable trees. On our right, a little lower down, we passed the ruins of the castellated mansion called Maes Esyllt by the ancient Cymry and Beaupre by the Norman lords . . . Lower down still we beheld the little church of Tre-Fleming, where rest the mortal remains of the renowned Welsh scholar Iolo Morganwg . . . It was to this very locality he refers in the words my dear native dale. ”

The local historian *Morien*, once ‘world famous round here’, was among the reporters who evoked for *The Western Mail*, in his rich and romantic Victorian prose, the opening of the *Cowbridge & Aberthaw Railway*. If anyone can throw any more light on our lost shanty town, created to build the railway, kindly get in touch with the Newsletter.

A Hint Of France with memories of New Year’s Day



Not tugging but tossing, these are the weather-braving veterans of the petanque court – otherwise known as the ‘foule de boules’!

According to one team member, there was limited competitive spirit in evidence in this post-Christmas challenge match. A main objective, we’re told, was to clear heads of the aftermath of spiritual intake. The seasonal scores are therefore consigned to oblivion.

WHAT'S OCCURIN'? OR MAYBE EVEN OCCUR'D!

THE VILLAGE SHOW

As noted, owing to competition from an upstart up-country London Olympics, the ever-popular Summer village show has now been postponed until 2013.

WHIST DRIVES continue to be held on the last Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm in the village hall. Admission is £1.50.

SEEDY SATURDAY

Please look out for these posters, which bring local gardeners the rare chance to swap their seeds in the Village Hall on the **28th of April**, 10am until noon. Refreshments on tap!

THREE CHEERS – and thank you to Matthew & Richard Williams, John Ford, Max Evans, Andrew Archibald (and Tony Thomas's large yellow machine) who & which brought the Christmas tree sparkle to waters of the ford this Christmas past.



SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE. PLEASE secure family membership of the Llancarfan Society with a £10 contribution - which brings four future issues of this humble pamphlet – including a bumper Number 150, for Summer 2012. Membership Secretary, Joann Scott-Quelch, welcomes your £10 at 2 Penylan House, Llancarfan – or via any Society committee member.

**GRAND
RE-OPENING
CONCERT
23 MAR 2012**

**GWYNETH
PLOWS HAS
THE TICKETS**

Llancarfan & District Community Association
NEIL DIAMOND TRIBUTE CONCERT
TO COINCIDE WITH THE OPENING OF THE
VILLAGE HALL EXTENSION BY
THE MAYOR OF THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN
Friday 23rd March 2012 at 7:30 PM
Llancarfan Village Hall

Bring your own wine

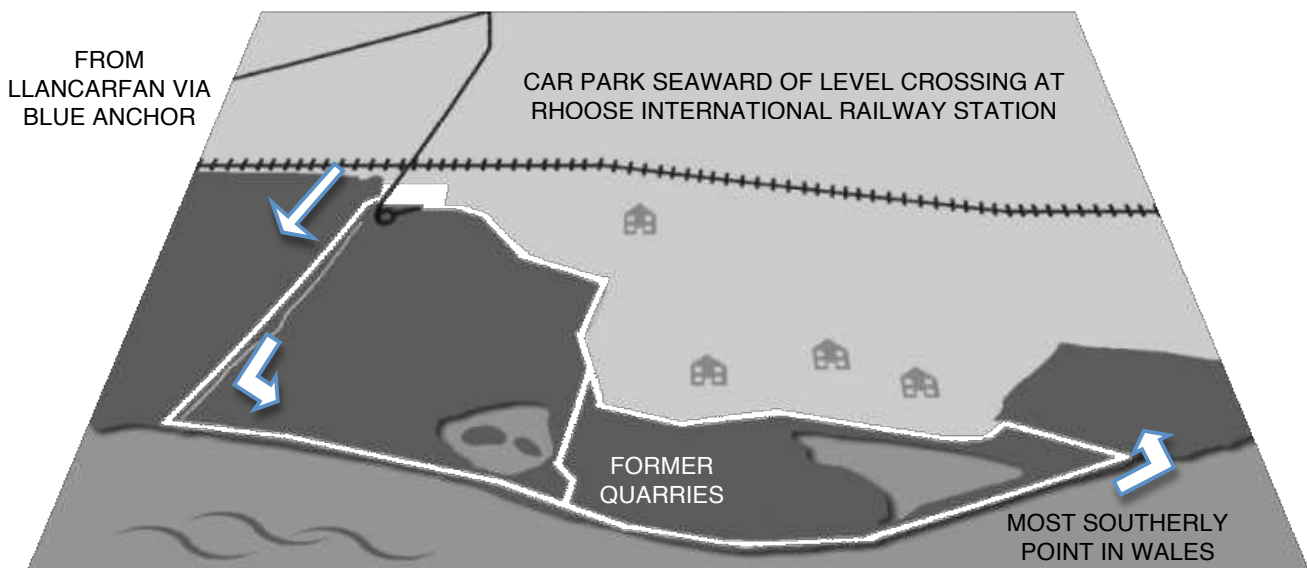
PRICE £10
INCLUDES
PLOUGHMAN'S
SUPPER

The **SOCIETY MYSTERY TRIP** is planned for the **6th of July**. **Gwyneth Plows** is also impresario behind this coach journey into the unknown. Book now - **01446 713533** - to learn where you've been to when you've been there!

ST. CADOC'S EVENTS TOWARDS EASTER:

Sun 4 Mar	Family Service	11.00 am
Sun 18 Mar	Mothering Service	11.00 am
Thu 29 Mar	Lenten Lunch in Village Hall	12.00 noon
Sun 1 Apr	Donkey around village to Palm Sunday Service	10.45 am
Mon 2 Apr	Meditation with Compline	07.00 pm
Thur 5 Apr	Maundy Communion of Last Supper followed by prayer vigil until midnight	07.00 pm
Fri 6 Apr	Good Friday 'The Last Hour' service	02.30 pm
Sat 7 Apr	The Vigil Service	08.00 pm
Sun 8 Apr	Easter Dawn Service <i>in Penmark</i> , followed by all-parishes breakfast	05.30 am
Sun 8 Apr	Easter Day Communion Family Service	11.00 am
Mon 16 Apr	Vestry Meeting for Electoral Church Roll	07.00 pm

THIS YEAR'S MAY WALK will happen on the **7th of May**. Gather at 1030 for 1100 at the extensive rail halt car park serving Rhose's airport. New-comers & old-stayers should enjoy both the company and the local history as we take a placid 2-mile stroll to the most southerly point in Wales. Nature has softened and reclaimed this former landscape of limestone quarries, protected from the sea by cliffs with fine views across the Severn. Wildlife should abound – and children & well-behaved dogs are more than welcome. There's even a sneaky short cut back if the weather or our feet prove less than fortunate.



NEXT EVENTS COPY DEADLINE PLEASE 24 MAY 2012



Sharon Tamplin (left) directs the Boxing Day pull



TUG OF FORD 2011



**LLANCARFAN HAS
A WONDERFUL KNIGHT
& DISCOVERS
ITS DEADLY SINS**

THE
BARRELS
DESCENDED

Avarice plies
Llancarfan
with Lottery
Fund wealth!



A devil & a
horned hound
flatter & crown
an over-proud
monarch?



A melancholic
suicide is
encouraged
by a diabolical
bottom.



An
enthusiastic
devil promotes
lustful kisses.



A PANDORA'S BOXFUL OF LLANCARFAN'S SINS

Our home, the White Chapel (writes *Ian Fell*) has echoed to so many sins over its 200 years, that I can hardly throw the first stone. This means I have some reservations about throwing at our readership a discourse on the sins of Llanccarfán. On the other hand, those currently emerging on our church walls pose so many intriguing questions that all Llanccarfán residents will surely wish to arm themselves with the *Big Chief I-Spy Pocket Guide to Sin*.

As the media have enthusiastically recorded, five of seven potential deadly sins have now been revealed. The two missing ones are (presumably) *Invidia / Envy* and *Ira / Anger*, which the latest generous HLF funding should reveal and conserve – perhaps thereby answering some of the questions.

But at the moment, the questions are legion. Simplest to answer (not pictured above) may be that raised by the half-revealed *Gula / Gluttony*. It appears that all our sinful acts are encouraged by devils – and what we see here is a fiend probably pouring a barrel of beer or wine down a (as yet unseen) glutton's throat. Clearly this sin has no relevance to present day citizens of Llanccarfán.

Luxuria / Lust [4] is similarly easy to get to the bottom of. In this case the little devil is zealously encouraging what appears to be a chaste kiss. But those of us who shared the Christmas cold know just what that can lead to.

Moving up to *Accidia*, [3] this is conventionally translated as 'Sloth'. But what is slothful about a man in a hat committing suicide, the act physically achieved by the application of a devil's rude rump? We must now unravel a tangle of explanations, suggesting an evolution from sloth or laziness, to lethargy or melancholy, and ultimately to self-harming loss of faith. How could a 15th century congregation cope with such psychological subtleties?

Our slothful suicide is sinking into a dragon's mouth, looking very like the conventional depiction of the Mouth of Hell. Look closely again at *Lust* [4] and you can just make out another set of dragon's teeth nibbling at the feet of the male lover. As the revelatory work continues, it is quite possible we will find a dragon's mouth gluttonously attending upon each of the sins – perhaps seven hydra-headed routeways into the belly of Hell. Time will tell.

Then – high up and to the right of *Sloth* - is *Superbia / Pride* [2]. At first sight the message might seem simple – 'Don't be proud and get above yourself'. But (and I'm no expert) the challenge comes with the person represented. Surely this is a monarch shown here? And what church wall would dare,

doubtless upon genuine pain of death, to criticise a king? Is this merely a warning to the man in the street not to aspire to anything above his (or her) station? Or can it in fact be a bold finger-wag against a living monarch on the throne? If so, which living monarch?

Without going into too much detail, current thinking dates our St. George wall-painting to the 1480s, perhaps even around 1485, paying tribute to Henry VII's landing at Milford Haven, fortifying his invading army with supporters as he marched up through Wales to battle at Bosworth field, defeating the ruling Richard III, and thus become the first Tudor king on the English throne. The jury is out on this hypothesis.

Henry VII ruled until his death in 1509, his son Henry VIII then taking the reins of reigning. Hairwise, both these kings were apparently 'ginners', as are the kings seen on the walls of St. Cadoc's. However, given the limited palette of colours available to our artists, the only other hair colours on offer were probably black or grey. So maybe there is no specific reference here?

The white greyhound of Richmond
& the red dragon of Cadwaladr.



But look again at those flattering courtiers. One is the obligatory devil. However, the other creature crowning the king is a puzzle. It has diabolical horns, but yet the rest of him is curiously dog-like. And that prompts us to remember that (before the lion & the unicorn) the attendants on the royal arms were a red dragon – and (as here) a *greyhound*. So could this be a Tudor greyhound on our walls, devilishly tempting monarchic pride?

Finally, surmounting all of our present sins, is *Avaricia / Avarice* [1]. Perhaps here our understanding has fewer challenges. Two devils seduce the victim with wealth; that on the right offering sacks of earthly treasures, that on the left pouring out showers of golden coins to put his money where his evil mouth is. Your PCC will be studying this guidance carefully as we manage the spending of the grants from the HLF and the church's other benefactors.



Two more sins still hide beneath the limewash. And on the corresponding wall, to the right of the south-west window, another canvas awaits revelation. Will we be blessed with seven counterpointed virtues? Or will there be yet more mysteries to confound our understanding of these remarkable finds?

FULL BUSHEL BAGFULS

Most folk throw out their Christmas decorations by *Twelfth Night*. This year John at the *Fox & Hounds* threw out his safe. He says some of his regulars thought it was because he needed a bigger one. “Chance would be a fine thing,” observed our favourite landlord, as he heaved out this rather lovely tribute to riches past, and went in to count the contents of his piggy bank.



However, in the previous Christmas issue I mentioned our 88-year-old friend Allen Saddler, little knowing then that we’d be driving down to his funeral in Devon on the shortest day of December 2011. But so it proved. On

the melancholy way there, though, we passed a village called Ipplepen, and I couldn’t fathom why it rang so many bells. Then we saw a brand new estate called ‘Caunter’s Close’. The mental mist lifted. ‘Owen Caunter!’ Back in the 70s I’d made a little film for the BBC there with a wonderful old man called Owen Caunter. (The film ended up on the long-forgotten *Nationwide*.)

Mr. Caunter made cider in the traditional way. His barn held a massive cider press. Owen showed us how he piled up his tumps of apples and sacking, then (with a circulating horse) squeezed the liquid gold into the troughing. His words were blissful – and we naturally asked what made his cider so special. ‘Well,’ said Owen, in a Devon accent golden as his cider: ‘Well, I drinks ‘n, and then I goes to bed of a night – and it do give you beautiful drames.’

Hey ho. As it happens, we had every hope of beautiful dreams on the Saturday following *Twelfth Night*. Friends in the Golden Valley invited us up to the first apple Wassailing ceremony to be held there for a hundred years. This ancient rite filled the orchard with ritual merriment! An apostolic circle of twelve fires surrounded the chosen apple tree, which was feted with cider, a shotgun fired into its branches, toast hung in its limbs to attract favourable spirits, and of course the hearty chorusing of Wassail songs and much jingling of Morris dancers with their night-time bells.



And that made me wonder? Whatever happened to Llancarfan’s orchards – orchards hinted at by the very name *Ty Berllan* mentioned on our cover. Who will bless our next issue please with enlightening and cider-dripping words?

IN A HOLE IN THE GROUND THERE LIVED A HOBBIT

The unfeeling rejection of Sam & Patsie Smith's application for full-time residency in Hobbiton (which is in Matamata, North Island, New Zealand) resulted in their return to Wales for the New Year. As this composite photo shows, our lovable neighbours discovered the small world of Hobbiton during their recent epic family visit to Australia, Tasmania and beautiful New Zealand. (They also bumped into Keith & Kay Hancock, erstwhile hosts of Llanbethery's former *Wild Goose* pub – still further evidence of a very small world.)



Had we known it, however, the hobbit is much nearer to home in Wales than some realize. When asked in 1955 by the poet W.H.Auden about hobbit origins, J.R.R.Tolkien said he wrote 'in a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit' whilst marking boring exam papers, and he didn't know why! But a dictionary search seems to illuminate matters. The word 'hobbit' (or *hobbett*, *hobbet*, or *hobed*) comes from the Welsh *hobaid*. *Wikipedia* confirms it as 'a unit of volume or weight formerly used in Wales & its borders for trade in grain and other staples'. It was said to equal two and a half bushels or one barrel, but was also used as a unit of weight.



However the hobbit does seem to be of a debatable size. In this Charles Dickens anniversary year, we discover a (Dickens edited) entry from *All The Year Round*, 1863. Talking about farming practices, the writer regrets that 'even if I do happen to know what a hobbet of wheat means at Wrexham, that knowledge, good for Flint, is not good for Caernarvonshire. A hobbet of wheat at Pwllheli contains 84 lbs. more than a hobbet at Wrexham; and a hobbet of oats is something altogether different; and a hobbet of barley is something altogether different again.'

And a hobbit in Llancafarn – how big is that? Anyway, Peter Jackson's new movie documenting Bilbo Baggins's adventures launches later this year – so we trust younger readers will welcome this important clarification of the facts.

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS : FROM HOBBITS TO TROLLS

In Penny's Christmas snapshot survey of 2011's new youngsters now enjoying a Llancarfan childhood, we noticed among former village boys some reticence in relating their youthful achievements. Fortunately our Society's chairman, **Mike Crosta**, can go some way to redressing the balance:

Reading articles in the Newsletter, **writes Mike**, can definitely rekindle things that have got lost in the brain's fog of time. Penny Fell's piece on Page 3 of Newsletter 148 had a very small black & white photo of 3 lads and 2 tents. A magnifying glass confirmed our first thoughts that we knew those lads. A visit to Ray Evans, who supplied the photo, confirmed that they were our son Andrew, and friends David Oakley and Max Evans.



GENUINE NORWEGIAN TROLL AS
SPOTTED BY SOCIETY CHAIRMAN



The larger tent was mine, and in fact a *bivvie* (a bivouac) passed on to me by my father from World War II. It was just large enough for two soldiers lying down. It split into two pieces, making two large waterproof capes for marches in inclement weather. Higher sides had subsequently been added.

In the 1950's, various families used to camp for the summer on Board's Farm (Fonmon Road) in large tents. This small one went behind ours, up against the hedge – for grandma to sleep in! She was obviously a good sport because she slept on a palliasse (stuffed with straw), and when the tent was taken down several mouse nests were always revealed. Now those fields are covered with estates of houses.

We had so much freedom in those 1950's, and roamed far and wide – as did our children in the 1970's. We lived cheek by jowl with nature.

Back then, a query as to our daughter Alexandra's day (she aged about 6-8) might reveal nonchalantly that they had been watching Blair Evans castrating (bullocks), or beheading chickens on some sort of conveyor belt, hanging them upside down until all the blood ran out. (Parental guidance needed?)

I also took Andrew and Alexandra, with Max Evans on my shoulders (he was a bit smaller then!), on walks around the village countryside. There was an old Troll Bridge crossing the Carfan river, just below the Bakehouse. We had to be very quiet and respectful crossing there, because there really was a Troll beneath – although we never actually saw him.

Next we would venture into Garnllwyd wood, Max still on my shoulders (sorry Max!) where we had to go quietly, not stepping on any twigs, because Red Indians lived there. We knew they were there because we used to find feathers (pigeon!) from their headdresses. But like the troll, however quiet and careful we were we never saw any.

It is surprising, you know, what you can find out on Boxing day at *The Fox*, when children, now in their 40's, get together and start reminiscing. For instance, apparently Delta Cottage had a lot of apples on its trees, which from the river could be shaken down into the water, and floated downstream. They could then be easily collected at the village hall. A bit like the egg race really.

Now this I admit surprised me a little. The lads had other uses for the river. Somehow from somewhere upstream they rode their bikes, in the water, downstream all the way to the village hall. And that Trout Pool is pretty deep! It all sounds very bumpy and wet, but no-one admitted to falling off.

However, the following doesn't surprise me at all. At a very young age (10-12) they all helped to get the hay in. None of this soulless machinery, but bales pitchforked onto a trailer, with someone on top as the load got ever higher. Then it was into the barn & onto the top to stack the bales to the roof.

It is rumoured that Max Evans (aged 10) drove the tractor and trailer, with one of the others operating the pedals because Max's legs wouldn't reach. But my lips are sealed. Anyway, I was busy doing a lot of haymaking and scarifying myself – and then I found that Blair Evans had gone off to the *Wanderers* and left me to it. All good fun!

Funny what can be triggered by a magnifying glass & a little picture. A whole rucksack full of memories, pinned down by the pegs of my dad's WW2 tent.

Llancarfan Primary School page

The school mosaic

Over the past few weeks we have been making and designing a mosaic. First of all the pupils had to draw a design of our values.

Then some of the designs were chosen to be carved into the clay. This involved printing patterns with things like pasta and pen lids. Year 5/6 smashed up tiles for the middle of the mosaic-which is our school badge. The lady who helped us was called Kate Derbyshire. We hope to see our mosaic up on the wall soon.



Thank you.

Half-term

On the 10th of February 2012 our school broke up for a week's holiday. As you probably would have thought most of the pupils were overly excited about not having any hard work to do for a week. Apart from homework! Unfortunately it didn't last as long as we thought and in a flash it was Monday morning the following week and we all had to go back to school!!!



St David's Day

Coming up is St David's day. Llancarfan school will host an Eistedfodd to celebrate. The children will be wearing the national costume and entering the Eistedfodd competitions -art work, poetry and making a 3D model (at home).

The publication of this newsletter has now been subsidised by a greatly appreciated grant from The Vale of Glamorgan Community Fund

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