

# LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 150

JUNE 2012



BUMPER 32-PAGE  
EDITION MARKING  
25 YEARS *of*  
THE LLANCARFAN  
SOCIETY

*“ How these curiosities  
would be quite forgott,  
did not such idle fellows as I am  
putt them downe! ”*

**John Aubrey** 1626-1697  
*Antiquarian cousin of Sir John Aubrey  
of Llantrithyd Place*

## CONTENTS

2	Editorial	19	Ruth Walls
3	On Reaching One Fifty	20-21	Warhorses & Vale Horses
4	Rumble in the Jumble	22	4 Lessons & a Cancellation
5-6	100 Years of the Village Hall	23-24	Llancarfan : Historic Habitat
7-9	Summoned by Wells	25	Flower Power
10-12	Llancarfan & Charles I	26-27	Biogas
13	Ben Millard Does Hollywood	28-29	School Past & Present
14-15	What's Occurin'?	30-31	May Day Walkers
16-17	A Village Vanishes	32	Jubilees : 1977 & 2012
18-19	Frank Wordsworth Jameson		



### THE WELL OF SAINT JOHN

The old well of Saint John, in the parish of Newton-Nottage, Glamorganshire, has a tide of its own, which appears to run exactly counter to that of the sea, some half-mile away. The water is beautifully bright and fresh, and the quaint dome among the lonely sands is regarded with some awe and reverence.

## EDITORIAL

In Richard Doddridge Blackmore's *The Maid of Sker*, the narrator is an old fisherman called David Llewellyn. He claims to be a rather reluctant storyteller, sitting as he does at the mouth of the well of Saint John at Newton Nottage. At times, he feels, his words

ebb and flow like the strange waters of the well. Sometimes his memories slither into the advancing sands, and for a time are lost. But nevertheless, his tale begins and ends, sitting beneath the grey round tower of stone, with his pitcher for water and his audience for company.

For 25 years, many splendid members of the *Llancarfan Society* have sat at our equivalent of the well mouth, and told their stories. Shaped by the pioneering editorship of Dr. John Etherington, the *Newsletters* now form a pretty unique documentary of village history. You will find a few more stories here today – including tales of wells – in this anniversary edition. There will be pictures too. And best of all, your treasure trove of history now sits somewhere in the sands of the website. They do say these will last forever on the web, but you might just like to sift out a couple to capture from the void before, like the lost village of Kenfig, the sands shift over all our memories.

## ON REACHING ONE FIFTY

Let us not hide our flickering lamps under a bushel (should a bushel be to hand) - Llancarfan has achieved something notable in creating 150 newsletters, documenting village life, past & present, for present & future readers. These narratives of Llancarfan and our communities, whether trivial or traumatic, form a unique treasure trove of what has happened so far.

If you ever dip online into past issues, then you'll know the first **98** of them have been indexed (by a team of number crunchers led by Ann Ferris). Alan Taylor & David Edwards regularly update these issue numbers online at <http://www.llancarfansociety.org.uk/html/newsletters.html>. When you count & categorise the topics, you begin to get a sense of what folk thought the future should know. Here are a few 'stats' – but do go to the issues themselves!

The numerically hottest topic in the indexed issues is – a sobering thought – **Obituary**. But then, while we may be dropping like flies, at least those we respected and loved have been recorded as making their mark on the village and beyond. Surprisingly, the second hottest topic, reminding us of its cultural impact on village history past & present, is the **Church & St. Cadoc**.

If you group together all those narratives of times past, then (unsurprisingly) **Memories** are the third most popular contribution. (Indeed, if you include specific *wartime* memories with this, then 'Memories' lick St. Cadoc's.) Those of us still avoiding an obituary tribute – us living **People** – feature as the 4<sup>th</sup> most recurrent theme! Interestingly, **Animal** articles nudge out of their burrows and nests a full 38 times. The history of specific **Places** generates some 36 articles, while local **Literature** merits 26 accounts. Note too that – underlining water's importance – **Wells & Water** bubble up in 25 issues.

Active **Social Issues** are overtly discussed 19 times, **Family** sagas appear in 15 newsletters – as does the **Fox & Hounds** – and then we're down to 10 or fewer accounts of about 50 themes & subjects that shape our community.

The statistics confirm that Dr. John Etherington, the first long-serving editor, and constant burrower into Llancarfan's past & present, heads the list of the *Most Diligent Contributors*. His 'items' number about 274. Anniversarial thanks must go to John, and to our ex-president Phil Watts who has 137 contributions to his name. Our present president, Barbara Milhaisen herself made double figures, with also significant contributions from David & Dick Evans, Mavis Coles, Gwynne Liscombe, Les Griffiths, and dear Frank Jameson. Finally, eighty-eight more contributors merit our thanks for writing pieces when they had tales to share about this remarkable valley in the Vale.



**RUMBLE IN THE JUMBLE**  
 ~ 1975 & 2012 ~  
 More plastic and less wood – but some things are constant in the eternal cycle of the Village Hall Jumble Sale



Re-opening 2012



**ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE VILLAGE HALL**



Jane Williams, Mayor John Clifford, Siân Vaughan and Nigel Booth



**Concert Party 1913/14**

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE VILLAGE HALL

**Mike Crosta : Chair, Llancarfan Society**

Our village hall has stood the test of time remarkably, and as a very old lady is looking fit and well. This was even the case before she had plastic surgery, some nips and tucks, Botox and strategic enlargements, to keep her looking good and young for her age.

You've seen the lovely black and white photograph of her in 1913/14, with some finely dressed villagers posing happily outside. It would be easy to imagine that scene today as a fancy dress party, and nice to think that in another hundred years time there will be similar records for people to enjoy. Perhaps this is what the newsletter can achieve in due course.

The latest extension, incorporating an extra storage room, disabled toilets, and kitchen facilities was completed this year, and is proving invaluable already. This was underlined when so many people fitted in for the official opening by Mayor John Clifford on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. The good & the mighty, younger & older, the lively & livelier, all attended. All seemed to enjoy themselves too. Our re-opening colour photographs might prove equivalent to those early black & white images. The 'old girl' has hosted many a good event, even pantomimes, plus the usual bucolic and jolly village gatherings.

What *must* be recorded are the efforts of the few who brought this extension about, often in the face of difficulties, setbacks and dissent. For instance, the church, by mistake, had registered as theirs the land needed for the extension. This had to be rectified in order to re-register the land's owners as the Vale Council. The many unexpected & difficult problems would be as tedious to record here as they were to resolve, often at short notice.

The upshot is, if the naysayers had prevailed, there would be no extension and certainly the opportunity would have been lost for good.

Many people helped. However, without the tenacity and energy of three in particular, there would have been no extension. To those three, Sue Taylor, Alan Taylor and Nigel Booth, should go the Villagers' heartfelt thanks.

Let us celebrate the extremely enjoyable and well-attended reopening party. What a good party it was! Let us look forward to many events in the future. Some of the best (and bucolic) events have involved villagers of different age groups, which should certainly be encouraged more. As for me, I vaguely remember the opening *Neil Diamond* night, and being whisked off by Joann Scott-Quelch to join well-lubricated dancers. Keep them coming!

## SUMMONED BY WELLS

Ian Fell

In 1960 John Betjeman, poet and saviour of St. Pancras Station, published a diverting verse autobiography called *Summoned by Bells*. The phrase rings true, not least for those of us in Llanccarfan who are sung to on a regular basis by (ever more impressive) peals and tolls that mark a turning point in our village lives. Even the occasionally ringing down of the bells brings a sense of anticipation for a forthcoming summons.

However, many who made a pilgrimage to our village in the not-too-distant past were summoned, not by bells, but by wells. In fact, by *our* wells and *their* ills. Llanccarfan (as has been recorded several times before in these 150 *Newsletters*) was famous for its (now sadly neglected) medical springs.

We all need water. But water that cures our medical ills is quite another kettle of - er - water. Our distinguished former President, Sir Keith Thomas, wrote in his seminal book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, of our ancestors' helplessness in the face of disease, and of their religious, or magical, belief in the power of water. When the church (mainly before the Reformation) encouraged this trust in its mystical powers, a holy water carrier, with orthodox approval, could indeed tour the parish 'so that the pious could sprinkle their homes, their fields and their domestic animals'.<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Life of Saint Cadoc*, when it came to baptising the baby saint, a fountain sprang out of the dry earth to do this. The spring then turned 'both in taste and colour, into mead . . . Therefore if any dwellers in that country . . . should drink the same, it would never fail nor lose its sweetness.' Dubricius too, first Bishop of Llandaff, is said to have blessed several of Llanccarfan's springs, which waters were apparently used in St. Cadoc's font.

After the Reformation though, when the church ceased to serve as the chemist to the community, this weakened National Health Service had again to be supplemented by private medicine. Old beliefs died hard, ancient practices survived (with or without their Christian gloss) and Llanccarfan's time-honoured springs retained their appeal and it seems their potency.

In 1695, my favourite 'local' historian John Aubrey wrote to the *Royal Society* in London '*Concerning a Medicated Spring in Glamorganshire*':

'In Llanccarfan is a Medicated Spring, much frequented from several Counties, time out of Mind, for the Kings Evil. There is a Rill of about an Ell broad between Two Collines, covered with Wood . . . the Rill falls from a Rock Eight or Nine Foot

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<sup>1</sup> *Religion & the Decline of Magic*. p.32

high, which makes a grateful Noise . . . Above this Spring (about a Yard broad and deep) spreads an old Oak with Hoary Moss; on the Boughs whereof [hang] Two Crutches. A Graduate Doctor hereabout imputes the Vertue of the Spring to the Lime Stone . . . *for the Kings Evil.*'

'The King's Evil' or 'scrofula' was a tubercular inflammation of the lymph glands, so named because a touch from the reigning monarch was thought capable of curing it. But if you didn't happen to have a king to hand, you could still draw on the magical qualities of the Llancarfan spring, infused with the traditions of the pre-Reformation church.

Aubrey's 'Medicated Spring' was of course far from unique – there were well over a thousand holy wells in Wales.<sup>2</sup> But in Llancarfan itself, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust lists six such springs or healing wells around this valley. These it names as *Llancarfan Holy Well*, *Ffynnon y Clwyf / Ragwell*, *Ffynnon y Waun*, *Ffynnon y Briwlon*, *Ffynnon Dyfrig*, and *Ffynnon y Fflameiddan*.

The one for the King's Evil is 'Ffynnon y Clwyf', short for 'Clwy'r Brenin', and is apparently marked on the 1900 Ordnance Survey map. Then too, just on the Molton Road opposite Tom & Jean Hunt's bungalow, a newly-installed pipe dribbles water by the field gate. Richard Tamplin fitted the pipe as an overflow for the well above – this being *Ffynnon Llancarfan* (ST 0526 7004), which has 19<sup>th</sup> century mortar, and stone 'spreads' & lynchets of possibly medieval date.<sup>3</sup>

Now you may say these things are all but forgotten. Nobody in living history would believe in the properties of these springs, springs flowing with the traditions of the pre-Reformation church. But In fact (and not published in this *Newsletter* before) the photograph here was taken in September 1906, precisely dated by a Mr. F. Murphy.

This ragwell is shown on page 40 of *South Wales & Monmouthshire at the opening of the XX Century*. Underneath it a caption reads 'Rag-Well, Llancarvan. So called from the cloths and rags which the pilgrims dipped into the healing waters for which Llancarvan was once famous.'



<sup>2</sup> The standard survey, *The Holy Wells of Wales* (Francis Jones, University of Wales Press, 1954). lists 1179, of which 180 are in Glamorganshire, 7 being ragwells (of only 10 ragwells noted in Wales).

<sup>3</sup> D.N.Richards : Field evaluation for Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, *Morgannwg*, Vol 37, 1993.



The spring was known as *Ffynnon y Fflameiddan* – ‘Fflameiddan’ being the Welsh for an inflammation called ‘erisipelas’. Once again, it had been visited time out of mind to cure what was a very painful-looking streptococcal infection of the skin. (Remember that penicillin was not released for use by the general public until after World War Two.)

However, 1906 was far from the last date for the spring’s restorative applications. A further image (shown here) was taken in August 1935 by Aileen Fox, the wife of Sir Cyril Fox, director of the National Museum of Wales.



Breach Well, Llanccarfan, Glam. The spring rises below the horizontal trunk and rags can be seen hanging from the branch above.

Aileen Fox described<sup>4</sup> how she talked to Mrs. Williams of Ford Farm, Llanccarfan, and had discovered ‘3 old rags – pieces of dish-cloth and calico – and a piece of brown wool’ tied to the over-hanging branches. Mrs. Williams had been cured of the erysipelas there, by ‘using the water for drinking to the exclusion of all other fluids . . . applying mud from the source as a plaster on the affected parts . . . and tying a rag, preferably from the underclothing, by the well.’

Aileen Fox pulled strings, had the water analysed, and the laboratories found little more than dissolved limestone. The scientists reported ‘no evidence that the spring could be classed amongst any of the group of medicinal springs’.

But Mrs. Williams got better.



As it happens, we discussed these wells during our vicar, Peggy Jackson’s, *Lenten Talks* back in February. Other memories came tumbling out about ‘The Well Garden’ alongside the school (always the coldest), another Rag-Well at Llantrithyd known to Mr. Derek Hanks, and tales of yet another spring at Aberthin. So our paddling in the shallows of this pool of history could go on for quite some time. Please do write and tell us more!

<sup>4</sup> “A rag-well near Llanccarfan”. *Reports and transactions (Cardiff Naturalists’ Society), 1900-1981*. Vol. 68 (1935), p. 37-38.

## LLANCARFAN, CARISBROOKE AND CHARLES I

*Dr. Maddy Gray, Reader in History at the University of Wales, Newport, has thoughts about a seventeenth-century memorial in Llanccarfann church.*

The recent discoveries on the walls of Llanccarfann church have produced excitement on an international scale. But there are other treasures, some less spectacular than St George and the Guide to Sins – but all worth looking at.

Just inside the south door of the church (rather vulnerable) is a simple incised cross slab with an interesting story to tell. The design of the slab is part of the story. If you go to Llantwit Major or Llanblethian (for example) you will find a number of medieval tombstones with intricately decorated cross-heads & shafts. Our stone is much simpler – a plain cross on a stepped base.

Peter Ryder of the *Church Monuments Society* has surveyed all the medieval cross slabs in the north of England. He says that you rarely find cross slabs on memorials after the Reformation. But in fact we have so many of them in south Wales, and indeed in the majority of medieval churches in the Vale of Glamorgan. We did have a local Catholic population, but these cannot all be Catholic graves – one of them, in Llantwit Major, commemorates a 17<sup>th</sup> century vicar of the parish. Because our chapel tradition is so strong, we forget how traditionalist was our religion in 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.



The inscription on the (reused) stone is fascinating as well. It says

HERE LYETH THE BO  
DY OF ROBERT  
DAVID 1628

on the top, but underneath is

W R  
7 5

then a partly worn poem (the missing bits are in square brackets)

[MY HOPE] ON CHRIST  
[IS FI]XED SURE  
WHO WOUNDED  
WAS MY WOUNDS  
TO CURE W R

The date looks like 169 . . . (the last number I cannot decipher).

⌘

This little poem is intriguing, to say the least. The Victoria & Albert

Museum has a seventeenth-century window with this poem scratched on its glass. According to tradition it came from Carisbrooke Castle and was scratched by Charles I when he was a prisoner there.<sup>5</sup> A quick trawl with Google (how did we ever do research before the Internet?) shows that the poem is actually quite common on gravestones, often with some other lines. This version below is on the monument of Thomas Urquhart of Kinundie in Ross and Cromarty (I found it in Charles Rogers' *Monuments and Monumental Inscriptions of Scotland*, bits of which are available online) -

My hope shall never be confounded,  
Because on Christ my hope is grounded,  
My hope on Christ is rested sure,  
Who wounded was my wounds to cure;  
Grieve not when friends and kinsfolk die,  
They gain by death eternity

Thomas Urquhart died in 1633. So the poem *predates* Charles's stay at Carisbrooke – but he could have come across it somewhere and felt that it expressed his own feelings in captivity.

Wales was predominantly Royalist in the Civil War, and conservative in sympathies after the Restoration. Whether WR (whoever he was – or whoever she was, for that matter) knew about the poem's connection with Charles I we will never know.

The line about Christ's wounds has a very medieval feel to it - medieval churches were full of strange pictures of the disembodied wounds, just two hands, two feet & a wounded heart (you can see a reconstruction in St Teilo's Church at St Fagan's – & see below). And the Pilgrims of Grace, who nearly toppled Henry VIII from his throne, carried a banner of the Five Wounds.

Like the cross though, this does not necessarily mean that Robert David or the mysterious WR was a Catholic. The wounds also figure in eighteenth-century Methodist hymns; the best known might be Charles Wesley's Advent hymn 'Lo! He comes with clouds descending'. We belt this one out with great enthusiasm in the weeks before Christmas - but do we really think about the words of the third verse?

Those dear tokens of His passion  
Still His dazzling body bears,  
Cause of endless exultation  
To His ransomed worshippers.  
With what rapture, with what rapture  
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

<sup>5</sup> (See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4726774/Treasure-island.html>).

You find the same ideas in Welsh hymns. William Williams Pantycelyn had a wonderful image of making his nest in the wounds. So our two 17<sup>th</sup> century inhabitants of Llancarfan were well in the main stream with their poem.

We know nothing else about them, or why they are commemorated by the same stone. It is just possible that in spite of the long time between them that 'W R' was Robert David's son, and had taken his father's Christian name as his surname. In the 17th century Welsh people were just moving over from the old patronymic form of names (William ap Robert ap David ...) to the English style of surnames. But there is a crossover period during which names look like surnames but change with each generation – so David Edwards's son could be Robert David, Robert David's son could be William Robert, & so on.

Has anyone else out there had any thoughts on this memorial, or on the people it commemorates? They were most probably yeoman farmers – it would be lovely to know where they farmed.



*Above : Christ's Wounds on a vestment chest in Bedwellty Church near Bargoed*



*Italian artists re-create images in St. Teilo's at St. Fagan's National History Museum*



## Ben Millard Does Hollywood

We know this looks like ‘a word from our sponsor’ – some chance! – but Sue Millard and our former canine correspondent Ben have rocketed to stardom, following Ben’s horrifying fall and subsequent ‘remarkable recovery’. Ben & Sue are now a popular feature on the *PetPlan* site. The company filmed our stars frolicking in the vale, proving that their insurance safety net has indeed brought a new lease of life to the dog who puts the *Hound* into Llancafarn’s *Fox*.

See: <http://www.petplan.co.uk/my-petplan/customer-stories.asp>



And given our readers’ soft spot for animals, this offers an excuse to feature this stunning image of the stag that strides high above our valley church. Our filmic neighbour *Jim Barratt* captured St. Cadoc’s stag at sunset.

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

### LLANCARFAN SOCIETY ANNIVERSARY DINNER : FRIDAY 14 SEPT

*Gwyneth Plows writes:*

It has been decided to hold this year's dinner in the village hall, marking the Hall's Centenary and our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Places on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> are limited to 50, with a closing date of 1<sup>st</sup> September (which will be strictly adhered to). The price will be £18.00 per head, and please Bring Your Own Wine. Bookings through me, Gwyneth, on 01446 713533. There will be a choice of starter and pudding, and the main course will be served as a buffet.

### PLEASE SEND US YOUR SUBS

Yes - the Society's Premium Bonds have won another £25.00 for the Funds! But please send *outstanding subscriptions* - £10 per address or £5 for single households – to Joann Scott-Quelch, 2 Penylan House, Llanccarfán CF623AH.

## LLANCARFAN COMMUNITY CINEMA



The showing of HUGO as a test screening with a view to establishing regular cinema showings in the Village Hall was sadly cancelled. However, the cinema showings are only postponed. **Jim Barratt's article on page 22 shares the vision.** If you'd like to learn more about Llanccarfán Community Cinema, or join the mailing list, please visit the web site and sign up. If you fancy offering your services as a volunteer please contact Jim on 01446 781144 or jim@biggerpictureresearch.com. <http://llanccarfancommunitycinema.wordpress.com/>.

### SOME ST CADOC'S EVENTS

Sun & Wed	Services at the usual times	
Sat 16 Jun	Mar. Hywel Glynn Jones & Rebecca Eveleigh	1.00 pm
Fri 29 Jun	Wine Tasting Evening in Village Hall	7.00-7.30 pm
Sat 14 Jul	Mar. Robert Lewis & Kathryn Bartlett	3.00 pm
Sun 25 Jul	Pet Service	4.00 pm
Sun 19 Aug	Vale Evensong	7.30 pm
Sat 25 Aug	Mar. Rory O'Neill & Alys Meredith	2.00 pm

## STOP PRESS NEW HEAD

The Llancarfan School Governors have just announced that from September *Mr Colin Smith* is appointed to succeed Sally Brereton as new Head Teacher. Mr Smith has extensive teaching experience and is currently Deputy Head at Garth Primary School in Maesteg. *See Sally's farewell, pages 28 & 29.*

## CRICKET

Our cricketing news is limited (our *Hawk-Eye* must be switched off). We know that the Annual Curry Fundraiser went off on April 26<sup>th</sup>, and that cricketing fixtures have been severely affected by the wanton weather. The most pride-inducing news is that 6'5" Freddie John, now studying in Oxford, has been selected for the MCCU Cricket Academy, and has already earned his spurs in two first-class fixtures against Worcester & - er - Glamorgan.

## TENNIS : MICHAELA WEAVER

The tennis season started with a buzz this year in Llancarfan. The Lawn Tennis Club opened the court in April with a social gathering to include afternoon tea, and games on the court for the children. Over fifty people came for the afternoon. It was great to see villagers and friends at the beginning of the season, and to welcome and introduce the new members. Club membership is open to everyone, whether tennis is your game as a serious player, a novice, or it isn't your game at all! Social members are very welcome too. Committee members are in the process of registering the club with the *Lawn Tennis Association* which will give members entry to the British Tennis Membership Wimbledon ballot. Tickets will also soon be on sale for the **Summer Barbeque** to be enjoyed by all, with games to entertain the children on the court while the adults enjoy the social occasion. Put the date in your diary for **Sunday afternoon on 8<sup>th</sup> July**. For information on tickets or membership please contact [tennis@theimprovementconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:tennis@theimprovementconsultancy.co.uk) and your enquiry will be passed to the appropriate committee member.

## THE GREAT BRITISH STORY – LLANCARFAN CHAPTER



The television historian Michael Wood's new series, *The Great British Story*, began transmission on BBC2 on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> of May. Readers may also remember that Michael's team filmed our St Cadoc's *Paint Your Dragon* event last September. **This features in Episode 5, called *Reformation***. So, to see yourselves or your village, glue your eyes to the box for this episode, **currently** pencilled to transmit on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July. If you can't wait, there is also a *Great British Roadshow* day at St. Fagans, tied in with the series, on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June.

# A VILLAGE VANISHES

Little Mill

Across ford to school




Fox & Hounds

School across village





An aerial photograph of a village built on a hillside. The houses are clustered together, with some featuring blue roofs. The foreground is a lush green field.

Church, ford, ducks & Fox

Old Mill



Smithy & Baptist Chapel

Fern Cottage & Hillside House



## Frank Wordsworth Jameson : 1926-2012

*It is almost unbelievable that by the time this is read, it will be over two months since Frank Jameson died. A moving service commemorated his life on April 10th, attended of course by Joyce, their four children and countless family, friends and villagers. Many will long recall the grandchildren's lovely musical tributes at the commemoration. **Sam Smith** has allowed his **Gem** tribute to Frank to be edited and reproduced here:*

“ Frank Jameson was one of Llancarfan's best-loved & respected citizens, and it was a great loss to the community when he died on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Frank was born in Dublin on August 29, and still retained his Irish passport. He was born at the home of his grandparents, but somewhat unusually, spent the first six months of his life on a houseboat on the River Nile in Egypt. In 1930 he moved to Standwell House in Old Oxted, Surrey, and aged four went to preparatory school there. In 1940, he went to Uppingham School in Rutland, and then in 1945 he went up to Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

In 1952, he joined the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (which in those days still did develop and advise) and on June 24, 1954, married Joyce. After this, their married life took them to Northwich, Cheshire, Barnstaple, Brecon, and then Cardiff. Then Frank and Joyce came to Llancarfan, where they have stayed, making many friends along the way.

Frank was a great family man and with four children, Sarah, Ruth, Rob and Richard, had plenty to do. Luckily, being a man of the outdoors, he and the family spent a great deal of time exploring nature, taking many trips to varying and exciting places, activities which he carried on with eight grandchildren.

Frank was a wonderful father and grandfather, with a remarkable variety of talents – while being a private man, he was also a great raconteur and hugely enjoyed entertaining his friends – a quality which I, for one, will sorely miss.”

*Those scouring past issues of this Newsletter can find instances of Frank's raconteur skill, his observation of nature – and his sense of humour – as in this Hitchcock-mirroring extract about **The Birds**, written in July 1995:*

‘ If Alfred Hitchcock had been making his horror film in 1995 and chosen Llancarfan for location filming, he would have saved himself the trouble of searching for feathered "extras". For the past two weeks the jackdaws, who last plagued the southern end of the village two years ago, are back in force. They have strange but predictable habits. The flock, which number many hundreds, arrives about

5.00 a.m., assembling in the tall horse-chestnut by the Nant Carfan opposite Monastery Field. There, in a diabolically cacophonous discussion, the decibels of which do not start to diminish till well past seven, they formulate their feeding plans for the day . . . Late in the afternoon part of the flock usually returns to the chestnut tree for a while until, around six, they fly-out in groups of 10-20 in a southwesterly direction, to an unidentified roost (possibly in the woods beyond Cliff Farm) - leaving us to enjoy our sundowners in relative peace.

*Llancarfan will miss you, Frank.*

### **Ruth Walls : 1916-2012**

Ruth was brought up in Croydon, and on leaving school became a secretary in ICI in London. After ten years she resigned to give birth to her first child in July 1944. By this time her husband was a Prisoner of War in Germany, having been captured in Normandy on D-Day in the previous month.

Her husband's job entailed moving from Croydon - firstly to Somerset, then Yorkshire, Hereford and finally to the Cardiff area. Ruth was an accomplished amateur artist and made many friends in the Cowbridge and Llantwit Major Art Clubs. She also enjoyed the friendship of the W.I. and the local National Trust. Walking was another of her activities and, when 61 years, walked the Coast to Coast Path across the North of England, a distance of 190 miles.

When we came to Llanbethery in 1976 our intention was to stay only for 4 years but we have experienced such a happy and peaceful time here that we have now lived in the village for 36 years, half our married life.

*Our condolences to **Ken Walls**, who kindly shared his memories.*

■ The sad record of lost villagers took a poignant turn in April for the Levey family at Little Mill. Bob Stokes was the man who adopted the declined and virtually derelict Llanfithyn Mill in the 1960s, and began to restore it for future generations. The mill he left in 1976 was a characterful reincarnation of a valley treasure that had originally helped to feed our forebears. Graham Levey bought it in 1979, and in time he and Maggie established their own dynasty in what is now Little Mill Cattery. When Bob died two years ago he recorded that the haven which had made him happiest was Little Mill. He hoped his ashes could form his memorial by being scattered there. So the family asked to fulfil his wishes, and consigned Bob's dust to the landscape around Little Mill, a return home to his favourite valley.

## WARHORSES ON THE IRON ROAD

After reading Sara Tickner's welcome account (*Newsletter 149*) of the navvies who, when building our Cowbridge & Aberthaw railway, lived near Treguff, member Richard Tamplin has kindly lent your editor a book. This is Colin Chapman's very detailed *The Cowbridge Railway*, published in 1984.



The fact is that railways run through the sinews of me & my contemporaries like fibre optics run through the present generation. So – although Colin Chapman's book throws only a limited light on the lives of the navigators – it proves an enjoyable & informative record of our vanished railway.

(This year, as it happens, the lost line from Aberthaw to Cowbridge will become even more lost. One of the two stone pillars that supported the girder bridge over the St Athan Road is scheduled to disappear in the B4265 road-widening scheme near to Burton Bridge and Llancadle Moor –

pending Assembly funding. I understand that the stone from this pillar should return to the Fonmon estate, which is currently also conserving the listed 1888 Pebble Limestone Company's building down at Aberthaw. This was a key client of our railway. It is widely said that Aberthaw Lime was used by John Smeaton to build the Eddystone Lighthouse, because of its water-resistant properties. It seems though that Smeaton, though he *did test* Aberthaw lime, actually used lime from Watchet, across the water, not too far from Somerset's *Blue Anchor!*)

In some ways the Cowbridge & Aberthaw Railway (built between 1888-1895) never realized its potential. At one stage the promoters of the Vale of Glamorgan Railway (which forms the present line from Barry to Llantwit Major) feared that the Cowbridge & Aberthaw might carry on and form a sneaky link to the new docks at Barry. This didn't happen, but in the competitive and political world of railway building, the two overlapping railway routes found it very difficult to cooperate. Present day explorers might perhaps still find around Aberthaw, in the tangle of trees and overgrowth,

fragmentary traces of two 'stations', the Aberthaw High Level and Low Level, evidence of two railways unable to agree about a junction between them.

But *do* track down Chapman's book. He tells of Cowbridge's unease about the navvies' presence, and of an attempt to promote their 'spiritual uplift' by setting up a labourers' mission in the Dissenting Chapel! In fact, says Chapman, many were local men otherwise employed as agricultural workers.

Further facts from *The Cowbridge Railway* prove poignant in the light of present attempts to save the Cowbridge Cattle Market. During the First World War, Cowbridge was not only a collection point for hay for the cavalry, but a place to which commandeered horses were taken for despatch to the battlefields of France. The horrors of 'Warhorse' reached far into this Vale.

Our railway also played its part in that war by bringing back wounded soldiers from the front to the small military hospital set up at New Beaupre, down the hill from St. Hilary. But as for the fate of our Vale horses, there must surely remain many tales to be told.



## HORSES IN THE VALE

These rescued photographs evoke life on the land, getting on for a century ago. Our pictures show horses ploughing the fields at Flaxland, the Llancarfan blacksmiths awaiting their next call to shoe a beast, and pitchforks at the ready for haymaking in the fields around Llantwit.



## OUR COMMUNITY CINEMA : FOUR LESSONS AND A CANCELLATION

This is a very different article, *writes Jim Barratt*, to the one I had planned. Our test screening of Martin Scorsese's *Hugo* was cancelled, and so I cannot report, as hoped, that the projection ran smoothly to a packed house.

What I can say is that we still intend to launch the not-for-profit monthly film club from September onwards (fellow volunteers include Penny and Ian Fell, John Ford, Paul Jenkins, Gary Osborn, Paul Rebhan and Jane Williams). Our ambition is simple enough: to experiment with the best in big screen entertainment for local audiences, from the latest blockbusters to art house films of distinction. We'll keep ticket prices sensible, patrons can bring their own convivial refreshments, and post-screening socialising is obligatory! We may even lay on special events, all suggestions gratefully received.

We're in good company, with over 500 film societies across the UK. We'll be treading in the footsteps of Britain's first ever film club, started in London in 1925, whose membership included H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw.

We're fortunate to have support from the Vale of Glamorgan's Creative Rural Communities team, who arranged the loan of screening equipment from the British Federation of Film Societies. There are stereo surround speakers, a digital projector & a sizeable 12' x 6' screen, promising a quality experience.

Positive Lesson One: the aborted *Hugo* screening suggested there is plenty of support for regular screenings, ensuring the club's long-term future.

A Second Valuable Lesson is one any ARP Warden could tell you: good blackouts are essential. We plan action here, because a small amount of light intruding through any windows and doors could spoil the overall effect.

Lesson Number Three is that choosing the right film takes a great deal of thought, and wide ranging consultation is key. For our first performance we wanted a title with broad appeal, yet suitable for families with older children so parents didn't need babysitters. Settling for *Hugo*, it then became clear that the latish start time (8.00pm, to enable setting up seating and equipment in the hall, used by the *After School Club* until 5.30pm) didn't suit a family audience during school week. We won't know how many of 50 tickets would sell on the night, but we're better prepared for the programming challenge!

One Final Lesson struck home the evening of 24 May while I was musing on the inaugural screening that never was. As I sat in my garden listening to the bells of St Cadoc's I made a mental note: don't pick a screening night when the bell ringers are practising . . .

## **LLANCARFAN – AN HISTORIC HABITAT**

*by Deb Rees of The Old Post Office*

Beauty, history & tranquillity make Llanccarfán a fantastic place to enjoy wildlife. It is unusual to walk through our village without seeing something of interest. However, one mammal species remains mysterious even though hundreds of them live amongst us. I am, of course, referring to bats.

We have just seventeen species of bats in the UK. Law protects them all because their numbers have decreased so dramatically over the past decade. Bats tend not to be seen during the day, preferring to come out at night to feed on insects. They produce high-pitched noises and hunt their prey by using an echolocation system. The noises are generally far too high-pitched for adults to hear, but children can hear some bat calls. It is little wonder that an animal that we rarely see or hear often goes unnoticed. For no apparent reason too, they are often regarded with fear and loathing.

As Britain was gradually deforested, bats have taken the opportunity to roost in buildings. Different species of bat prefer different places to roost (or shelter). Common pipistrelles often choose modern houses and like tight spaces such as behind bargeboards. Other species of bats prefer older buildings. Some people may be surprised to find themselves landlords to bats, having shared their homes for years without being aware of them. Bats are not rodents, so they don't nibble or gnaw or cause damage. They don't make nests either; in fact they are clean, sociable and spend hours grooming.

Flying uses a lot of energy, so bats have huge appetites! All UK bats eat insects, including beetles, moths, flies and midges. A tiny pipistrelle can, for example, eat around 3,000 midges and other small flies in a single night. Fortunately for them, Llanccarfán has a plentiful supply of insects from nearby woodlands, hedgerows, pastures and waterways.

The abundance of good foraging sites make Llanccarfán a wonderful place for bats - and another incentive is the presence of St Cadoc's church and churchyard. The church and its surroundings appear to supply everything a bat might need. There are many options for roosting, from the roof-space to numerous nooks and corners, and the labyrinth that must exist in the walls themselves. As a bonus, there is a weather-free space for flying in the nave. Doubtless bats have enjoyed all on offer for many generations, regardless of the problems they might be causing the humans who share the church.

There are at least four species of bats living in St Cadoc's church; these include Pipistrelle, Brown long-eared, Natterer's and Serotine bats. Of these Serotine bats are particularly exciting as there are very few known roosts in

Wales. The Serotine bat is one of the largest bat species in the UK and their favoured prey are large beetles, which they find over farmland and grassland.



Natterer's Bat

For the past three years, the number of Serotine bats present in the church has been monitored through the National Bat Monitoring Programme, run by the Bat Conservation Trust. Volunteers carry out colony counts in June throughout the UK, and the results are collected and analysed.

The Serotine bat colony in St Cadoc's proves fairly stable with twenty-nine bats being recorded in last year's survey.

Taking part in such colony counts is ideal for beginners. The Bat Conservation Trust supplies plenty of information and they can put anyone in touch with local bat groups.



Listening at St Cadoc's



Adult Pipistrelle rescued off a busy road

Carrying out a colony count is easy - you just need to settle down outside a roost at sunset and await the start of the show. Using a bat detector lets you hear the bats as well as seeing them, which makes bat counts a lot more entertaining. If a bat whizzes past your head, you know you are watching one of this country's rapidly diminishing spectacles. Whether we study bats for a living, or watch them in our gardens, they enrich our lives, a new facet of the natural world to marvel at and try to understand.

***All are welcome to St Cadoc's serotine bat counts, the first on 12<sup>th</sup> June. Meet outside at 9.15 pm, weather permitting - bats are not keen on rain!***



## FLOWER POWER

Mary Gray reports that in March, the Llancafán Flower Arranging Group was proud to be an acknowledged part of the *Breast Cancer Care Show 2012*. The group created 37 table arrangements for a fundraising evening in the City Hall, Cardiff. Among the 400 guests were actor/singer Richard Burman, Ruth Jones, Sian Williams, Audrey Porter's Jonathan Hill, & the Welsh Rugby



Team. Llancafán's flowers brought elegance to the occasion, and at auction added to the £75,000 raised for *Breast Cancer Care Cymru*. "My thanks," says Mary, "for their hard work & loyal support go to (left to right) Georgina Powell, Ann Ferris, Betty Pullen, Barbara Gay, Audrey Baldwin, Sue Taylor, Kay Gay, Jenny Knott, Beryl Price, Fran Winterbottom, Audrey Porter, Joann Quelch, Diana Atkin, Sheelagh Lewis and (elsewhere?) Melinda Thomas."

## FIELDS ON WHEELS?

Ever since mid-March, Broad Street & Boverton Garden Centre's Mobile Shop has bedded into the Fox car park from 1000 to 1030 every Thursday. Joann Quelch was among the earliest customers for John Shapland & his daughter Ceri. Rather like taking Birnam Florist to



Dunsinane, the van then sweeps off to Llanbethery and other sites in the Vale. But John Shapland has a very soft spot for Llancafán. Sixty years ago, aged eight, he was propagated as a pupil here at the village school.



## **BIOGAS : NEWS FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH**

*As part of our watching brief to record changes to our landscape, both for present enlightenment and future record, **Christopher Hanks, Vale Bio-Energy's Project Manager**, has kindly agreed to exchange his combine for his computer, and diarise progress on the Biogas scheme above us.*

***Late March 2012***

I though I'd put readers in the picture as to what we are currently doing at the Biogas site. Over Christmas, work slowed down a little but due to such mild conditions we progressed very well. We completed the concrete construction of the primary digesters early in the New Year, and when the concrete had fully cured, we were able to begin water testing of the tanks. This involved filling to the operational level (which is 5.5 metres), and then monitoring the water level for 28 days. This had to be done for each of the three tanks, after which water was added to the slurry and irrigated to the surrounding land.

The water testing is an essential element of the tank building process. Although looking at the site it looks like a single digester, it is in fact 3 tanks. There is a central primary digester, a secondary digester outside of this, and a pre-acidification chamber in the outer tank. The water test ensures peace of mind that the tanks are built, designed and strong enough to outlast all of us!



Over the forthcoming weeks we are planning to welcome the German design and installation team to begin assembling the major elements of the project. Working with local tradesmen we should be able to progress in good time.

***Late May 2012***

You will appreciate that given the current warm and dry weather, office time is somewhat limited. However, this is a summary of what we've been doing on site at since my last update.

The water testing went very well and the tank is signed off as being constructed and built to the British Building Standards for a concrete industrial tank. (The code for this is BS-8007, which has been quite an ordeal to achieve.) Any leakages seen in the monitoring process were not serious at

all, but rather a case of water coming out of the concrete as it was curing. All such areas were labeled, and an engineer advised that this was normal for this type of construction. We learnt that over a 7-day period leaks would congeal as the minerals in the concrete forced the water out, sealing the face of the concrete by reacting with the atmosphere. Be assured that we were not happy to 'back fill' the tank before these areas had been sealed and dried up.

The roof was recently installed to the tank, now finally making it weather proof and starting to resemble a biogas plant. Our German team of construction workers were on site for a month, but have presently returned to Germany for a week's break. It seems our Welsh weather has taken its toll on them!

The black pipe 'snaking' down towards the village is a length of ducting – it's temporarily stored in the field. It will be moved eventually to take a cable back to the farm and will give us a signal to indicate when slurry needs to be pumped from the farm to the biogas plant. It should be installed within the next few weeks, providing the weather holds. Make hay while the sun shines!



As far as the cattle accommodation buildings planning application is concerned, this is a Pancross Farm matter. It does not impact on Vale Bio-Energy and will not affect the performance of the plant. So I hope readers will now feel up to date with all of the goings on up on the hill at the *Vale Bio-Energy's Anaerobic Digester*.

**ENDS**

***MEANWHILE -***

Another new machine in 1912 for the Prices of Lydmoor Farm, Wenvoe



# LIFELONG LEARNING IN LLANCARFAN

From 'period' Welsh hats to 80s fashions our school dresses for the decades



LLANCARFAN 1920s –or early 30s?



LLANCARFAN 1954 – It's dated on the back!



LLANCARFAN under Head Enoch Lewis – around 1970?



LLANCARFAN 1980 : if the T-shirt above is a reliable clue?

## LLANCARFAN SCHOOL JUNE 2012



### School mini Olympics

In June the school is having a mini Olympics. The events there will be: sprints, hurdles, javelin, triple jump, long jump, shot put and discus. Each week it's a different activity and you can earn points for first, second and third. The whole school will be competing at each and every event. It's going to be held at Llanccarfan school. The school have been practicing hard.

### Christian aid week

Christian aid week is all about helping people in the third world. People there aren't as lucky as we are, there aren't even proper roads to get there! There are small towns but many of the people make a big difference. Also many people, are in fact nearly all the people, are poorly educated, and one man gives up ALL his time to teach the children for FREE!!! Please remember to give to this worthwhile cause.

### Street party

This year our school is hosting a street party on the playground in the school grounds. Thanks to the school council we have been able to do it. The purpose of the street party is to celebrate the 60th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. Every pupil in the school will get a special printed coin. We are all looking forward to this special occasion, and I'm sure you are too. So we hope we will see you there.

### Cycling Proficiency

This year the year sixes did a cycling proficiency. Class 5 went to the apple store on 4th of May. They made videos on a special apple program called Keynote and got free shirts, bags and a certificate. We are hoping to download Keynote on the Mac in the class 5 classroom and make some more amazing keynote presentations. We are waiting to get the discs back from the apple store with all our presentations on them.

### The apple store visit

On the 26th of March 2012 the year 5's set off on an amazing adventure to PGL. The year 6's did a number of law-dropping activities including canoeing, kayaking and trapeze. On the 28th it was one of the girl's birthday and we all had lots of cake, yum. Everyone had an amazing time and will remember the week for a very long time to come.



### PGL

On Wednesday the 16th May classes 4 and 5 went to Cardiff Arms Park to play a rugby tournament. All the children went and the ones not playing supported from the sidelines. The supporters were very encouraging and lots of them made banners and flags. We all had an enjoyable morning. You represented the school brilliantly.

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## SALLY BRERETON, HEADTEACHER, WRITES

"Before I move on to a headship in another school in Cardiff from September, I would like to thank the staff, parents, friends and especially the children of Llanccarfan School for a special two and a half years as Head teacher here . . ."

" . . . It has been an exciting time, and I am so pleased that the school buildings are to be improved this summer. I have particularly enjoyed my association with the Church, Jane the conservator and Archdeacon Peggy, as the exciting and historic paintings have been slowly revealed. I will be back to visit to see what else appears."

*Sally Brereton*

## LLANCARFAN MAY WALKERS LAUNCH WALES COASTAL PATH!

*Penny Fell* documents the footprints of our Southerly Striders

Thick, grey clotted clouds headed purposefully towards Glamorgan on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Squatting over the Channel, they released remorseless cataracts of perpendicular rain, drowning the holiday hopes of anyone who'd planned a more strenuous activity for Bank Holiday Monday than watching the snooker on the telly.

The *Llancarfan Society May Day Walk* – an institution since 1988 – was planned for 11 am to celebrate, in its own little way, the inauguration weekend of the new 870 mile Wales Coastal Footpath, **the only coastal route in the world to span an entire country**. The aim was to encourage villagers to sample the southernmost stretch of the path, on either side of Rhoose Point. By 10 am though it was clear that only the most foolhardy would show up. Well, them - plus Barbara Milhuisen. Barbara has travelled from France every year to take part, and isn't one to have her record broken by a few apocalyptic torrents.

So great was their dedication that it seems necessary to name the nine heroic individuals who braved the rain: Barbara (of course); Alan & Sue Taylor; Mick Mace; Mike & Jan Crosta; David Stevens; Ian & Penny Fell – and Alfie, Jake and Boggart, our well-behaved four-legged participants, waving the flag (and maybe a leg) on behalf of the canine community.



Numbers were drastically reduced this year (unsurprisingly) - and sadly there were no children. (Is it a comment on the weather-resistant nature of a generation that the average age was around 68? The number would have been higher still, were it not offset by the distinctly youthful presence of David Stevens.)

Oh ye of little faith! We can report that the walk was fabulous. In the Rhoose International Rail Station car park, the clouds lightened with an almost cinematic luminosity. By the time the party had straggled down to the coast, a washline of blue sailors' trousers was dancing over the water; and as we mounted the steps to travel along the cliffs, people were tugging off coats and hats and the sun beamed mercifully down.

By some freak, inland (Penmark? Llanbethery?) we *could* see inky black skies still disgorging shafts of rain across the landscape. But over the channel, it might have been the Riviera, with four little sailboats bobbing on the blue water.

We paused, now and then, to point out fat rabbits in the quarry and admire the way in which nature has started to reclaim the old Rhoose Asbestos Cement works, closed a quarter of a century ago. (This is now said to be 'given a clean bill of health' and jauntily described in a subsequent report as 'sitting pretty'). Then we posed for the obligatory photographs alongside the vertical shaft of slate, shipped from north Wales, our monolith marking the most southerly point of the country, & the coastal path.



Finally, as always strangely seems to happen, we found ourselves wending our way to an adjacent hostelry (*The Blue Anchor*), to accept plaudits and congratulations from those cheerleaders who had arrived for the business end of proceedings - stand up Mesdames Porter, Baldwin, Ferris, Evans, and others. The assembly thus being declared decidedly quorate, we voted that fate could do worse than send us similar weather next year.

One day, my son,  
all this will be yours!

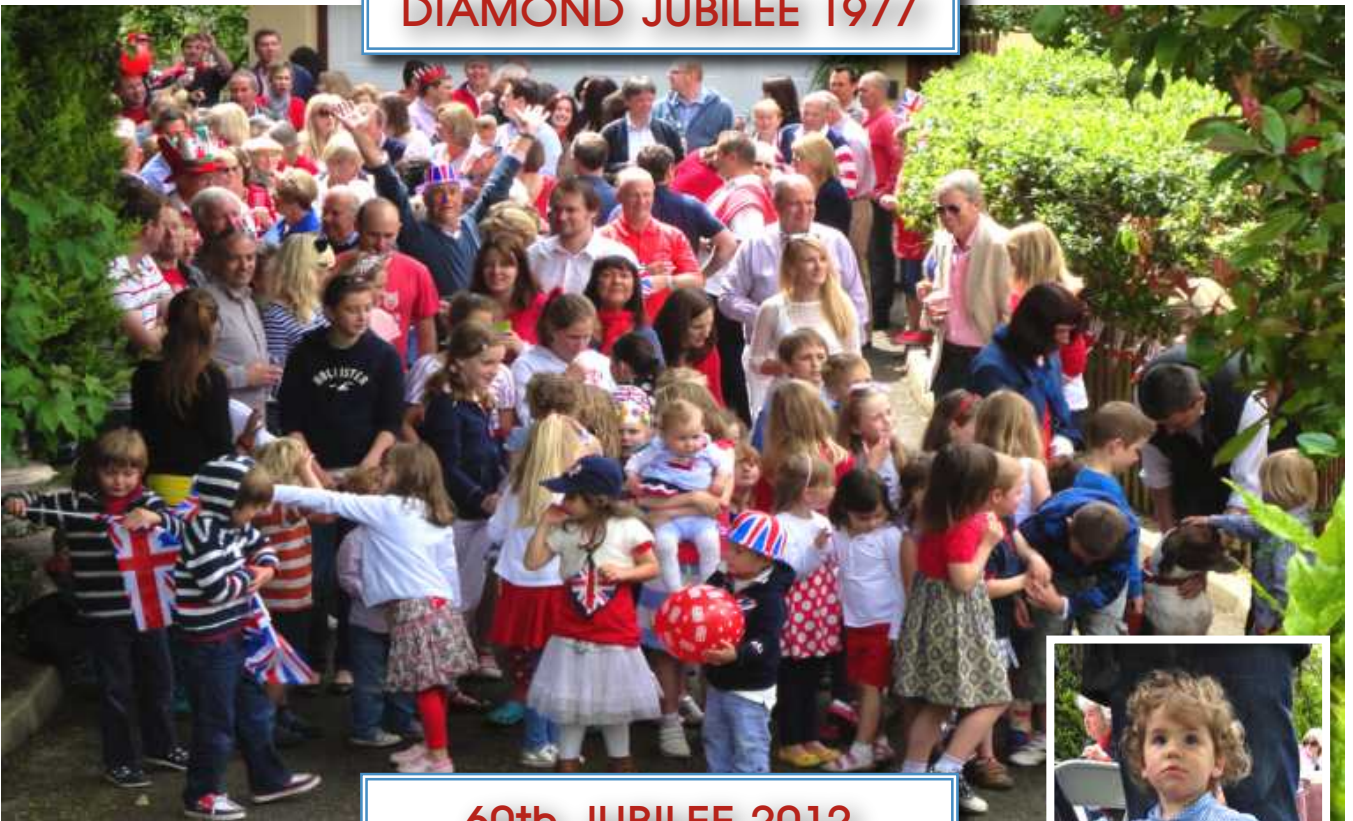


#### END NOTE

We would like to thank all those contributors who have made this unusual edition possible. This includes the donors of photographs, conserved after digitisation earlier this millennium, by Graham Brain. If anyone wishes to know their source or can elaborate on content, please get in touch.



**DIAMOND JUBILEE 1977**



**60th JUBILEE 2012**



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