

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 157

MARCH 2014



Ah! Christmas 2013!

*Mistletoe, crackers,
fir trees, lots of
lovely memories!*

*Well no - as a
matter of fact
this was taken in
Walterston on the
29th of August, 2013.*

And the reason?

*Elementary,
my dear
Cumberbatch.*



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EDITORIAL

Our committee meetings happen roughly six times a year - the outcomes of which include events, the Village Show, this newsletter and so on. You've all done meetings, those necessary tedious rumblings of the engine somewhere down in the bowels of the ship which try to make things fun for when we get back up on deck, sunbathing and supping Martinis and ignoring the approaching iceberg. *But at the last meeting we saw the iceberg.* Our treasury team had got together and crunched numbers, and confirmed that the Llancarfan Society is (on average) living beyond its income by around £600 per annum. Just now we're still above water, so don't abandon ship. But whether it be through enticing events, or increased membership, or whatever sources, we need to bring in more funds to stay afloat. So, with apologies to our village pockets, *from 1 April the membership fee increases to £15 a household, and £10 for single occupancy.* No, there won't



be a bedroom tax. Now of course the quid pro quo is that we have to generate more activities that are *relevant to our vital community*, working across the generations to do things that matter to the village. So that's why there's a questionnaire included herewith. Please help us respond to your needs by popping your responses (anonymously) in the Longwood House postbox opposite the *Fox*. Which brings to mind this Veronese curse box shown in a guidebook, discovered by Mike Crosta, in which you could post your complaints against immoral money lending! But hopefully your responses won't curse us too vigorously & we can continue to make some fun for all while staving off the arrival of the iceberg.

WANDERING WITH NOMAD *or* A SPRINGTIME SAUNTER WITH ARWYN REES

Those of us reared on the Home Service's *Children's Hour* will perhaps remember *Wandering With Nomad*, a series about nature and the countryside. It was presented by an author called Norman Ellison, and it brought a cosy understanding of the countryside we were growing up in.

I had an echo of this childhood influence in the 1970s, when I worked on a TV nature programme called *Man & Boy*. In this, a learned countryman introduced a youngster to nature's wildlife. The youngster in this case grew up to be the now quite famous natural history cameraman Simon King OBE. Even at 14, Simon showed remarkable knowledge of nature.

My third wandering with such an inspirational and knowledgeable companion was on May 1st last year, a blissfully sunny morning during which our neighbour Arwyn Rees took me for a walk around our village fields. I hasten to add that Arwyn and I are of the same generation, and that he is no ancient nomad! But as his student companion, I was privileged to walk in Arwyn's country footsteps.



Arwyn took me, with permission, across some of the landscape that he used to farm until a few years back. Our mission had a purpose. He had kindly agreed to help me investigate the site of the cottage in which Iolo Morganwg was born, and to re-discover the restorative 'Rag Well' in Breeches Wood.

But before searching there was more to see. Dropping down behind Pen'onn onto the footpath that then cuts up to Penmark, we looked over the valley of the Kensall or Waycock river, much of it Arwyn's former land. When he came here from the loamy fields of Llanedeyrn, he (as Margaret knew already) was told he had arrived in 'real man's country', where the limestone & clay made tougher farming. For twenty-three years here, like his champion ploughing forebears, he met the challenge.

It remains a lovely valley, worth exploring, despite the giant strides of the power lines from Aberthaw, their access vehicles having changed and almost obliterated what seems a forgotten routeway to Kensall Bridge.



It was however opposite this gateway to Pen'Onn itself that we began looking for clues to lolo (or the Williams family's) humble cottage. Just exactly where was it, had any of the building survived, and were there any remaining clues to match up with the photograph you can find on the back of the March 2013 Newsletter 153? (That's the edition where I mistyped Arwyn as 'Arwyn Hughes' after an old museum colleague. Sorry.)

The short answer, as yet, still seems that one can't be sure. How much of today's home of Mr. & Mrs. Lapham, formerly used for dray storage, has been altered beyond recognition? Only the stile (a common feature) to a former farm well is a recognizable companion model to that on the 1913 photograph. This then remains a cry for help to those with long memories.



The second objective in Arwyn & my jaunt was to find the 'Rag Well' in Breeches Wood. (There are earlier accounts of this well in the Newsletters, most recently in the June 2012, Issue 150). To get there, I was surprised how far we had to walk up the Moulton road before we cut across the fields to our left, and then dropped down, hoping to find it in the woodlands' slippery depths. Arwyn knew where it was, he believed, but nature can change and hide things.

What we were looking for was the 'Medicated Spring', identified by John Aubrey back in 1695, and recorded by Aileen Fox in August 1935 when she took samples to analyse from the supposed healing waters.

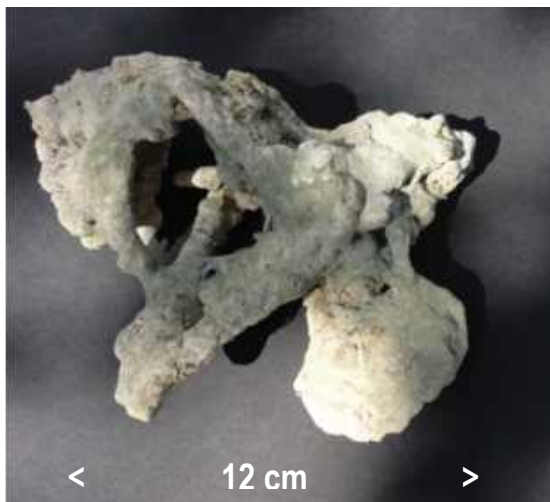
Well, thanks to Arwyn's memory, find it we did. Unsurprisingly, things had changed since Aubrey's time. No waterfall splashes today under 'an old Oak with Hoary Moss; on the Boughs whereof [hung] Two Crutches.'



Clearly though, this was the Rag Well, confirmed by 1906 & 1935 images. It took its name from the cloths & rags which pilgrims dipped into the healing waters, afterwards hanging them above in the branches, as if they were ritual offerings to the spring.



Unlike Aileen Fox though, we found no drapery of 'old rags, pieces of dish-cloth & calico'. However, from in the lime-rich spring-water we *did* fish out two petrified objects. Not cast aside crutches! - but just possibly votive offerings?



What we *can* surely confirm are the restorative powers of the Rag Well. While neither Arwyn or I confessed to having any particular disease for treatment, yet as we tangled our way out of the woods, back into the May Day sunshine, we both declared ourselves thoroughly restored to health!

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

PEGGY JACKSON IS OFF TO ST. FAGAN'S

The Church in Wales has sadly confirmed that Peggy – aka ‘the Archdeacon of Llandaff & priest-in-charge of Penmark with Llancarfan with Llantrithyd’ - is to leave her Llancarfan home for a new parish.

Greatly to be missed as a good friend to many of us, Peggy will move closer to Cardiff to be priest-in-charge of St Fagans & Michaelston-super-Ely. She will move at the end of March, and be licensed at a service in St Mary's Church, St Fagans on Wed 9th April, at 7.30 p.m. It fits in, of course, with her post as Archdeacon of Llandaff, a job she took up in 2009 when she joined the Llandaff Diocese from Southwark. There she had been Dean of Women's Ministry, Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral, as well as Team Rector of Mortlake with East Sheen.

During the last nine months, Peggy has directed the challenging business of the Llandaff Cathedral Chapter, ‘until’ – in the reticent words of the press handout – ‘the new Dean could be appointed’. Here in Llancarfan, while Peggy was acting ‘Dean’, Revd Dr. Mark Dimond has juggled many responsibilities in St. Cadoc's, earning affection and gratitude. But we understand that a ‘house of duty’ role is now to be created, giving ‘Sunday plus two days a week’ of duty to Llancarfan, Penmark & Llantrithyd. This is one day more than was allocated for Peggy, but doubtless the PCC is anxious to know how things will evolve.

BOASTING

The church's visitor booklets, which sell like hot cross buns, have recently been congratulated by a New Zealand academic as ‘probably the best produced & most detailed such pamphlets I've seen in a parish church’. True, as Dr. Chris *Jones* he *could* be biased, but many thanks!

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY EVENTS CALENDAR 2014

1 st April	Subscriptions Due
5 th May	May Day Walk : look out for future details
6 th May	AGM 7.30 pm in the Village Hall
TBA	Seedy Saturday in the Village Hall
22 nd June	Ruth Watts Petanque Cup
13 th or 20 th July	Mystery Trip
16 th August	Village Day & Show : look out for publicity
26 th September	Annual Dinner in the Village Hall : tickets £22.50
5 th December	Christmas Social Evening

Please note that a fund raising event is pencilled for November, and that Whist Drives happen the last Tuesday of each month in the Village Hall.

THE VILLAGE SHOW DAY

Swelling even more impressively than the Nant Carfan in flood, the Village Show will bloom this year beyond the flowers and the spreads into a fully blown feast day. Look out for notices & merriment.

JUMBLE

As much a tradition as the Tug of War, the **Ladies Tuesday Club Jumble Sale** is on *Saturday the 5th of April*. Please pillage your attic for good quality goods, collect from others if you can, and bring them to the hall. Things will be welcomed between 6.30 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. on the evening before, or before 11.00 am on the day itself. Any queries please to *Kay Brain* 781080, or if necessary to *Sue Taylor* 453 / *Ann Ferris* 350.

CONGRATULATIONS & BEST WISHES

Jackie Chugg & Ralph Prole got married on Saturday 15 February, hosting many grateful friends and villagers in celebration of their union in the dramatic venue of Cardiff's Masonic Hall. As a detailed write-up in *The Gem* has recorded, bride & groom asked for presents to be replaced by donations to charity, remembering the sad loss to cancer of both Jackie & Ralph's previous partners. We can only add that the new Mr. & Mrs. Prole were delighted to set off for their Caribbean honeymoon, because their boiler wasn't working & they hadn't had a phone for days!

Many village messages of 'get well soon' have gone to Jean Hunt of *Copperfields*, who at the time of writing is in Springbank Nursing Home, regaining full health after serious surgery. Jean writes that she's still no intention of doing what she's told, but we do hope that in the interests of recovery she'll make a few exceptions to her rebellious nature!

ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

Spring / Summer dates from Gary Dunsford of Llancarfan Tennis Club :

Tues 4 March	AGM 8.30 p.m. in <i>Fox & Hounds</i>
Sun 6 April	2.00 – 4.00 p.m. Tea & Cakes session on which non-members are welcome to learn more about the club.
Sun 15 June	A BBQ will sizzle from 2.00 to 4.00 p.m.

Coaching for all ages, including adults, will start in May. Forms will be passed out via Llancarfan school, but others may express an interest to any committee member. Gary.dunsford@gmail.com or 01446 754378.

THE REAL CHRISTMAS



Veronica Hall's
Grandchild Freya



Thom Fell



Becky Mepharn

VISITORS



Kelly Jones, Victoria Tamplin
Rose Stevens & team

Tug of War 2013

For once,
a sunny
Boxing Day
brought
bumper
challenges
across the
unusually
tranquil ford



Dylan Barratt, Griff Ford & Team



The village boys versus . . .



. . . the unquenchable Sharon Tamplin

THE REAL CHRISTMAS



Llancarfan Primary School Nativity Christmas 2013



AND THE PRETEND ONE



Benedict Cumberbatch



Man with long stand

In August 2013 *Sherlock* filmed Non & Nigel Booth's lovely Walterston home as that of the detective's parents.



Watson unriddles Christmas



A big lamp



Amanda Abbington, Mark Gatiss, & Martin Freeman

Episode Three aired on 12 Jan 2014.



Cuddles his wife



A kitchen crime



Three Chinese Cumberbatch fans

As ever, while locals turned a blind eye to the telly men, *Sherlock's* eager groupies came for a glimpse of the stars.



Holmes & Mycroft share a furtive fag

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR CUMBERBATCH

Non Evans and Nigel Booth's wonderful dwelling at *Trewallter Fawr* could readily be described as 'A Study in Scarlet', given its traditional ox-blood facade (very good for warding off witches). But back in August the Non & Nigel were more than happy to welcome not card-carrying witches, but a sizeable coven of television folk, filming for the third episode in the latest BBC Wales' hit series of *Sherlock*.

In a funny way it was very much a family affair. Given the striking nature of their house, Nigel & Non are quite used to being a film location. So they got on well with the latest crew who, says the nonchalant Nigel, were great to have around, broke nothing, and cleaned up when they left!

As for the actors, they too were family. The episode starred not only Martin Freeman (*The Office* & *The Hobbit*) and his partner Amanda Abbington, but also Sherlock's parents – that is, Benedict Cumberbatch's real dad & mum, Timothy Carlton & Wanda Ventham. Then again, the storyline was concocted by Mark Gatiss (*League of Gentlemen*) and Steven Moffat (*Dr. Who*), who is married to Sue Vertue, *Sherlock*'s producer. Sue Vertue very kindly let us take our photos – though we were sworn to secrecy until the programme was transmitted.

And so it was that Booth & Evanses sat around the telly on January 12th, trying to follow the ingenious & convoluted plot that involved Christmas at Sherlock's family home (aka *Walterstone Fawr*), endless industrial espionage, and an evil world-dominating entrepreneur described by Sherlock as the 'Napoleon of Blackmail'. Bedazzled by the Christmas tree lights, viewers tried to unravel why Sherlock had to drug his brother Mycroft over Christmas lunch, & then steal his laptop crammed with more surprises than a box of Christmas crackers.

At least, that's what we were told happened. The fact is that, like us, Nigel & Non were so occupied with spotting the tv shots of their blood-red house, festooned rooms & elegant kitchen, that none of us had the slightest idea what Sherlock was solving. But it was all very enjoyable!

Oh yes, and back in August, after a nice chat with the Freemans and the brilliant Mark Gatiss, we caught up with Benedict Cumberbatch – who was grabbing a reclusive location lunch in the Welsh Hawking Centre's car park. Three sparky young groupies waited patiently by the gate, they having travelled *from China* for a glimpse of the man who embodies the remarkable detective, now seen through the lens of the 21st century.

ST GEORGE, COUNT DRACULA, & THE GOTHIC HEART OF FILM

“Do you not know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know where you are going, and what you are going to?”

Back in January, our film impresario Jim Barratt schemed to scare the pants off Llancarfan with the Film Society’s presentation of *Rebecca* and *The Shining*. This happened under the dark cloak of the British Film Institute’s *Gothic* season. Billed as ‘The Dark Heart of Film’, the idea was to ‘celebrate the cinema of nightmarish intensity, uncanny vision & monstrous imagination’. In our case, it was tales of secrets & terror. (Next Autumn, we’re told, we could be in for a Sci-Fi session.)

‘Gothic’ though, when you think about it, is a puzzling word. It can mean so many things. It can refer to lost Germanic tribes, type-faces, a mediaeval period of art & architecture, ‘the Gothic novel’, Pugin’s Victorian ‘Gothic revival’ (see Burges’s stunning décor in Cardiff Castle), not to mention the punk makeup & clothing of the Gothic rockers.

But now - perhaps you recognize the quotation at the head of this piece? It’s from that most Gothic of books in the English language - *Dracula*. This Bram Stoker novel has shivered more spines since its publication in 1897 than John Millard has cooked Sunday lunches. Stoker’s book has dripped life-blood into so many films too - from *Nosferatu* to the horrors of *Hammer* (which company was almost literally raised from the dead by *The Woman In Black*, the film that lightly thrilled us in 2012.)

Back with the plot, Bram Stoker continues as follows: “Do you know what day it is?” asks the old Romanian lady, frantically placing a rosary on vampire investigator Jonathan Harker’s neck. “As an English Churchman,” replies Harker, “I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous.” But still he clings to his rosary talisman - for Harker is in Transylvania, and it is the eve of St. George.

The Eve of St. George? Just a minute. So alright, Transylvania – part of Romania - celebrates the feast of St. George in early May, not on the 23rd of April as in Britain. But what’s all this about ‘the evil things in the world’ having full sway that night? How dare *Dracula’s* author, Bram Stoker, suggest that on St. George’s Day the ultimate evil would be unloosed? How dare he malign the saint of our marvellous paintings!

Well now. You doubtless know that in Britain the St. George’s Feast was

celebrated as a **Red Letter Day**, an occasion to praise the saint, enjoy holiday frolics, and raise church funds – even after the Reformation. But in Transylvania, while St. George is saintly, his Saint's Day eve is scary!

Bram Stoker dug up an account of *Transylvanian Superstitions* written by a Scottish lady writer called Emily de Laszowska.¹ She reported that 'perhaps the most important day in the Roumanian's year is that of St. George . . . the eve of which is said to be still frequently kept up by occult meetings . . . in lonely caverns or within ruined walls . . .' Most significantly, she recorded family members of Dracula's deadly species:

'. . . decidedly evil is the *nosferatu* or vampire, in which every Roumanian peasant believes as firmly as he does in heaven or hell. . . . every person killed by a *nosferatu* becomes likewise a vampire after death, and will continue to suck the blood of other innocent persons till the spirit has been exorcised . . .'

Inspired by this, Bram Stoker sank his teeth into the Scottish lady's anthropology, summoned Count Dracula from the grave, and left a literary legacy from which *Hammer Films* still suck the gory details.

Meanwhile, back in Gothic Llancarfan, whenever I talk about St. Cadoc's wall-paintings to visitors, I underline how important it was for the person who sat on the throne of England to venerate St. George. (Henry Tudor surely took this need to heart, as did the Bawdrip & Raglan sponsors of our paintings. A William Bawdrip, after all, ultimately became a Knight of the *Royal Order of the Garter*, which is dedicated to St. George.²)

The *Order of the Garter* was founded in 1348. Then ironically, over there in Europe, a copycat Order was created in 1408, sixty years later – *The Order of the Dragon*. Strangely, this *Order* 'aimed at defending the cross and at the destruction of its enemies, symbolized by the ancient Dragons (*Draconis tortuosi*) with the help of St. George.'

The founding members of the *Dragons* were 24 nobles of the kingdom. Their symbol was a circular dragon with its tail coiled up around its neck, and on its back the red cross of St. George. Most surprisingly, the *Order of the Dragon* had remarkably similar aims to the *Order of St. George*.

¹ *The Nineteenth Century Journal*, July 1885, pp. 130-150.

² Following the *Battle of the Spurs*, 13 October 1513.

Transylvanian St. George & Dragon



It is this fact which loops us back to the fictional Dracula, long thought by many to have been inspired by a certain Vlad Tepes of the noble family of Dracula – ‘Vlad the Impaler’ to his enemies. And Count Dracula’s father, also called Vlad, was affectionately nicknamed ‘Vlad Draculea’ because *he actually belonged to the Order of the Dragon*.³

Now - by the time Vlad Junior, the young Dracula, was fighting to defend the Christian cross against the pagan Turkish armies, ‘Dracula’ had become

his family name. The family was proud to inherit the traditions of the *Order of the Dragon*. So the man who became Bram Stoker’s fictional Dracula actually fought under the *Order of the Dragon* and upheld the very same principles that Britain’s Knights of the Garter fought for under their *Order of St. George*.

Unfortunately though, Vlad Junior, aka Dracula, had a weak spot. He became ruler of Transylvania from 1448 to 1476, and history confirms that he sensitively defended his Christianity by impaling his defeated enemies on stakes. Even the Pope finally disapproved. And so this is why today the name of ‘Dracula’ is dramatised in the realms of horror, why Bram Stoker created the vampire count, and why Jim Barratt knew we’d greatly enjoy a taste of the Gothic. Probably.


MEANWHILE,
HERE’S OUR
ANNOTATED
PICTURE OF ST. G.
& THE D. - DRAWN
BY THE VILLAGE
SCHOOL’S CLASS
ONE AFTER THEIR
RECENT VISIT TO
DISCOVER THE
PAINTINGS!




³ ‘Dracul’ in Romanian means ‘dragon’ – and just to confuse us it also means ‘the Devil’.

NOTES & QUERIES

Every now & then, people email the Newsletter (as they regularly contacted the much-missed Alan Taylor) asking things which only those of long memory or obsessive archival burrowing can perhaps answer. But can any reader offer interesting pointers? Here are two queries :

 *Robert Traczyk sent his kind regards, and wrote:*

I notice in one of your Llancarfan newsletters that you mentioned Horace Price. He was a great Uncle of mine, and I remember visiting him in the 1970's during my summer school holidays. Do you know what become of him? My great grandfather built a house on what is now the power station - I believe it was called *The Elms*? Do you know anyone who might have pictures of the house? All my family linked with Horace have passed away and I now live in London. robtraczyk@yahoo.co.uk

 *Gary Dunsford and Charlotte Wood (01446 754378) have emailed to say that, since moving into The Manse, Llancadle, they've puzzled over many things, and are open to either facts or even wild theories! :*

- Why does their garden extend further than other houses and wrap around the bottom of next door?
- When was the house built?
- 'Manse' is the name for the residence of the Minister for the Presbyterian church. For which chapel was it the Manse?
- Why is the Minister's house so large for a 50-person hamlet?
- Why is the porch behind the house and the garden L-shaped?

'The deeds show,' *elaborates Gary*, 'that the Calvinistic church sold the house in 1948, but it dates from well before then . . . William Lewis is listed as a Calvinistic Methodist minister in Llancadle in 1881. There was a small chapel in Llancadle until the 1960's. As there were also chapels in other hamlets, could *The Manse* have been built expecting the minister to cover multiple hamlets, heading on horseback from the back porch?'

WHEELS AROUND WALES

You might have thought that Llancarfan School's intrepid parents would have let down their tyres and raised their feet after last year's cycling expedition, when *6 riders rode 300 miles in 4 days* from Killarney to Llancarfan – but not a bit of it. Paul Rebhan [*The Hollies*] proudly reports that their saddle-sore journey raised £5000 for the School (see the new music room outside the reception) and for the charity *Dreams and*

Wishes. 'But,' reveals the determined Mr. Rebhan, 'the goal this year is even greater - with a ride around Wales.'

'Our *Tour de Galle*,' adds Paul, 'will cover 400 miles in four days! And this year we are not just 6 but 13 riders. Those cycling so far are Head Teacher Colin Smith (Cycletastic!), and with him will be parents and friends of Llancarfan - Oli Spencer, Roger Phelps, Ian McMeechan, Mike Marshman, Richard Corkhill, Jim Barratt, Tom Rebhan, Ali Rebhan, Martin Williams, Paul Clancy, Del Evans and me, Paul Rebhan.'



Paul & team at
last year's Bikers' BBQ

The ride starts on the 20th of June, circling back to Llancarfan school by the 23rd June – and surely to be greeted, says Paul, 'by a fanfare of screaming school children!' More, we hope, in our June issue.

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For many of the past issues & more details please see the (to be updated) website at <http://www.llancarfansociety.org.uk/>

NEXT COPY DEADLINE PLEASE : 21 MAY 2014

Emma Has Hatched Her Hatty Book!

This was the thrilling countdown to publication for talented local illustrator **Emma Levey** as her very first self-illustrated children's book awaited its February launch. Brilliantly drawn & poetically told, Emma's book about Hattie Peck's world-wide quest for eggs will surely feather Emma's nest for her next book, on which the paint is very nearly dry!

amazon.co.uk
 Love reading 4kids.co.uk

Waterstones.com

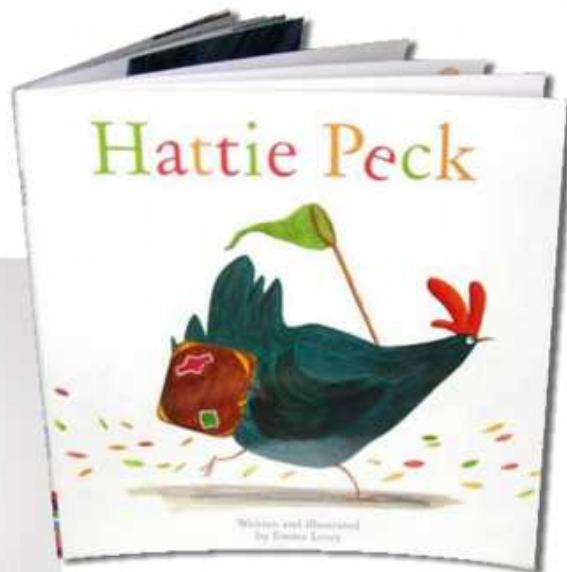
Hattie Peck (Paperback)
 by Emma Levey, Emma Levey

Format: Paperback 32 pages

1 days until publication

Hattie Peck by Emma Levey
 £6.99 Paperback Prime

Available for pre-order. This item will be released on 1 February 2014.



Meanwhile, here's Hattie pedalling in a painting **not** in Emma's book. This was Kay Brain's commission to mark her husband's epic 'Break' Charity Cycle down Extreme Britain!

Meanwhile, a rattling good celebrates St. Cadoc's wonder

read walls!

Roger Rosewell is a leading expert on medieval wall paintings. His new book from Shire Publications does Llanccarfan proud, with splendid images of our increasingly important works of ancient art. Anyone wanting to compare & contrast across Britain, and to understand where our paintings fit into the history of our ancestors' creativity, should buy '**Medieval Wall Paintings**'. It is beautifully illustrated in full colour throughout, and worth every groat - price £7.99. It is a very good value pointer to Britain's religious and domestic painting, and serves to underline how remarkable are the St. Cadoc's discoveries

