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#### **EDITORIAL**

The March cover of this Newsletter asked 'Can Spring be far behind?' We were wrong. We were delayed in posting the last newsletter on St. David's Day by the most dramatic snowdrifts in many a year. Despite the recent wonderful days such as those blessing our May Day walk, this proved that one shouldn't count one's Springs until they've blossomed. In bitter snows the village voted that travel was impossible, that the pub needed to throb with locals, and that the warmest place was bed.

These sound decisions brought to mind the first night of Penny & my marriage. (Steady on, Matron!) We started our honeymoon in a country pub up in Yorkshire's Airedale. The delightfully traditional landlady decided that our bed also needed an Aire-ing! We can't quite remember what was employed to ward off the chill. Fortynine years on we might recall an antique bed warmer with a long wooden handle – as on the front cover - which held heated river stones? But surely not? The more likely device was a dangerous metal cage with a naked light bulb, surely sending many a marriage bed up in flames. But we survived, safely warmed into matrimony.

**However**, this memory was also triggered by a tale in *'Rupert of Glamorgan'*, a curiosity kindly lent by my friend Nigel Williams. Rhys-y-glun-Bren was a **wooden-legged** itinerant preacher who, on an evangelical tour, slept in a remote farmhouse :

The servant girl had considerately placed a warming pan with a long handle in Rhys's bed; but, unfortunately, she forgot to withdraw it before the preacher retired. Soon after midnight, pained by her remissness, she silently stole into Rhys's bedroom and, unknown to him, took hold (as she thought) of the handle of the obtruding pan, and withdrew it. Alas! instead of laying hold of the handle of the pan she had gripped Rhys's wooden leg, and in the midst of a deep slumber the unsuspecting Evangelist came sprawling to the floor.'...

And now, how to reduce Llancarfan village to an out-of-town sleeping centre . . .

#### THE BATTLE TO SAVE LLANCARFAN SCHOOL

#### **MATTHEW VALENCIA**

Ask a resident to name the three main pillars of the local community, and the church, the pub and the school are likely to be high on their list, if not at the very top. One of those pillars has been shaken this year—and a fight is on to keep it from being removed and shipped, Elgin marbles-style, several miles down the road.

The original proposal by the Vale of Glamorgan Council was to "migrate" the village primary school to a site in Rhoose. That description struck many as the height of euphemism, and had locals asking "When is a closure not a closure?" There are various labels one can apply to any such proposal, but the fact is, whatever one calls it, this one would represent a wrenching and painful change for the community in which the school currently sits.

After a clunky start, the campaign to keep the school at the site it has occupied for 143 years has cranked into gear over the past couple of months. Banners and posters have been hung on houses, bridges, fences and hedges. Politicians and councillors have been written to. The campaign has its own cartoon. Fourteen of the sixteen questions asked by the public at a Council Cabinet meeting on April 25th were about the school.

The campaign—which is now in full swing, under the energetic leadership of an Action Committee—has also successfully engaged with local and national politicians. Among those supporting the cause are Alun Cairns, Andrew RT Davies and Jane Hutt. Alun Cairns even rushed back from a cabinet meeting on Syria to host a public meeting in the hall. Jane Hutt has raised the issue in the Senedd. Backing from these heavyweights can only help, as the outcome for the school will be determined by politics above all.

**Gratifyingly, all these efforts have had an impact**. In mid-May, some weeks after the first consultation closed, the Council announced that it was taking the relatively rare step of launching a second consultation, after "members of the local community raised a number of important concerns regarding the impact to their local area, as well as some questions about the proposal." Attached to the revamped consultation is a new Community Impact Assessment, which is not quite as embarrassingly skimpy and poorly-researched as the first one, but still fails to capture the full impact of the proposals on the village and its environs.

Gone from the new consultation document is any mention of "migration". (Imagine how delighted residents of Llancarfan would all be if the *Fox and Hounds* announced that it was not closing but merely migrating to Rhoose or Bonvilston.) But the new proposal is not radically different, and the Council is more insistent than before that the "transfer" (as it now calls it) is not a closure. The arguments over whether the proposal stretches credibility will rumble on. Certainly, the relaunching of the consultation will be seen by many as an admission that the first one was flawed. Close scrutiny of the second one has begun in earnest.

The next few months will be a busy and anxious time for those engaged with the issue. The closing date for the new consultation is July 9th. The report will be considered by the Cabinet in early September, with a statutory notice issued a fortnight later. Notification of the final decision is due in November. The save-the-school campaign will in the meantime be doing more liaising

with politicians, councillors, the Rhoose community and others, as well as co-ordinating more letter-writing, responses to the revised consultation and a survey for parents, and also arranging more public meetings and other events.

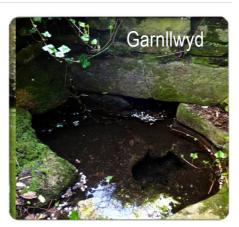
Behind all the arguments about migration-versus-closure, catchment areas, the School Organisation Code and so on, there lies a bald fact: a century-and-a-half-old school that has educated at least half a dozen generations (including the Presidents of this society) and is one of the local community's most treasured fixtures could disappear within a couple of years. One or two unkind souls have suggested that those fighting to prevent this outcome are motivated by greed or Nimbyism—fear over the impact on house prices, or over what might replace the school at the current site. Anyone who has been involved with the campaign will know that the reality is that such concerns are very much secondary, if they are concerns at all.

There is, then, much to play for over the summer months. Be prepared for the temperature of the debate to rise again, along with the mercury. We all know that the one constant in life is change. That applies to where we live, too. Llancarfan no longer has a shop or a post office, for instance, & it has been a fair few centuries since it could boast of founding a famous monastery. But that does not mean that such institutions, when threatened, aren't worth fighting for.

























#### LLANCARFAN OF THE WELLS: & THE WALK TO FIND THEM

So many people (writes Ian Fell) have made enthusiastic comments following our lovely Bank Holiday walk. Our appetites had been whetted by a talk about 'Llancarfan's Wells' during the May 1<sup>st</sup> Society AGM, and then on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May we were delighted to take a walk in what must have been this year's most blissful weather. Some of the splendid 'turn out' of around forty people found it rather hot; but all found our exploration spirited, and possibly even spiritual.

Grace & Andrew Edgar, our AGM speakers, also blessed our walk with their company. As they said in their talk, they had already made an initial survey of some of the wells back in 2016, but we believe this walk introduced them to even more. Certainly local interest has been fired by their intriguing account of what they'd discovered and felt about the 'ffynnonau' in our neck of the woods. As dowsers, they described the waters as 'carriers of energy' — a fact reinforced by today's belated learning from our ancestors in slowly reharnessing water's generating powers. (Spiritual & medical 'powers' aside, we passed the surviving evidence of at least three water-driven mills on our walk.)

As the pictures overleaf remind us, we began the walk in the delightful garden of Garnllwyd House, welcomed there by kind permission of Brian Quinn. Here was the most attractively cared-for well on our mini-pilgrimage, one described in Baring Gould's *Lives of the British Saints* as named after a certain Saint Dubricius. The orange staining of the waters seemed to confirm its perhaps less saintly role as a 'chalybeate' spring, its iron-bearing nature believed over the years to have medical qualities. (You can still 'take the ferruginous waters' in, for instance, Tunbridge Wells, served there by a costumed 'dipper'.) At Garnllwyd, Max Evans shared *his* memories of the well, adding his own childhood experiences to tales of its excellent service as a canned beer cooler!

From there, accompanied by happily circling dogs among the buttercups, we processed (avoiding the muddily chewed up right-of-way link to the pathway beside the decaying mill race) down by the Nant Carfan to the village. Here our president, Barbara Milhuisen (whose idea the walk was), reminded us of the lost world of *her* youngest years, when *all* the village's water had to be carried from its wells. She recalled too the oft-remembered village character Tom Shanks who we were told lived in a shack at the top of the fields, and got *his* water from *Ffynnon Dyfrig* above the (now) SSSI woodlands.

Passing the concrete-covered well in the 'Well Garden' alongside the school, we then dropped down past the tennis courts, and a little up the Pen'Onn road to circle the site of perhaps the village's most famous well, *Ffynnon Llancarfan* itself. Here we were kindly welcomed by Richard Tamplin, whose family have made efforts to protect the well, and to preserve its (at present largely unseen)

character with a protective fence. It is said to have stone 'spreads' and lynchets of possibly a mediaeval date [Morgannwg, Vol. 37, 1993.]

Again, when Barbara's family lived up the road (where Deborah Rees, Wasp & Bat Lady now resides!) young Barbara would be sent down here to carry water from the well. For villagers then the wells were all very practical, even if visitors saw them as a place of ancient pilgrimage. Several have now suggested that the time is ripe to restore *this* well to its pilgrim status. Indeed, among our walkers was Chloë McKenzie, an academic based in Southampton, who is promoting a St. Thomas pilgrimage trail from Swansea to Hereford. This is planned to wind through Llancarfan & the Vale. [See more on Page 12.]

However, with us having ticked off *Fynnon Llancarfan*, walkers agreed it was time to take a bate (in the old sense of a respite with food and drink) at the *Fox & Hounds*. And it was to our local hostelry that many of us would later return to enjoy the excellent barbeque the village pub had laid on for the occasion. But for seventeen stalwarts, our search for our final well was not yet over.

Off we set again, Justin & Pippa Lewis having kindly unlocked our walkers' route into the woodland track that would eventually lead us to the elusive Ragwell in Britches Wood. This well, you may recall, is the *Fynnon y Fflameiddan*, reputed to cure 'erisipilas', then a not uncommon streptococcal infection of the skin. A 1935 report by Aileen Fox described how Mrs. Williams of Ford Farm was reputedly cured there — by drinking the water 'to the exclusion of other fluids', and 'tying a rag, preferably from the underclothing, by the well.' When our band eventually found the well, you'll be pleased to know that we managed to resist hanging up our undies.

As our pictorial record above now shows, several bold walkers were brave enough to sample the restorative waters. (For my part, I gave drinking the waters a miss on this particular outing, having fallen into them when reccying the route on the previous day! Clearly though I am now cured of everything, except recklessness<sup>1</sup>.)

All in all then it proved a lovely day, enjoyed not least by our village youngsters. And, we're pleased to say, it was enjoyed too by our President & her family. Barbara is pictured here during our thwarted earlier search for the rag well, bravely retracing steps of a fondly-remembered childhood.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> My thanks to Gary, Max & Martyn for finding the spectacles lost when I tripped. We didn't need to dowse to find them!

SNOW MARCH 2018

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THE





The day after St. David's, when the Wet from the West collided with the Beast from the East.









Snow-drifted roads meant that other villages had less fun than the snow sports in March's Winter Wonderland!

While the Fox throbbed with locals, freed from getting youngsters up for school, Llanbethery & St Athan were cut off, Penmark was without water for days, & the top road from Pancross to the A48 was blocked for all but a week.







#### NOT FANTASY ... BUT FUN TO SEE!



Martyn & Hayley Hughes were among the first villagers to begin their own Winter Olympics on the snow-drifted slopes of Llancarfan.

Braving the way for other families, Tomas & Ffion took to sledging down the snow like pioneering penguins.

Meanwhile, Monty the Hound earned Hayley's thanks for using his instinctive mountain rescue skills to re-discover a tumbled Tomas.

> With thanks for the pictures to Richard Belcher & Graham Brain.







#### WHAT'S OCCURRIN'? OR MAYBE EVEN OCCURR'D!

#### **SOCIETY DATES**

**15 June** Mystery Trip **12 August** Ruth Watts Petanque

**1 September** Village Show **29 Sept** Society Dinner

**4 Dec** Social Evening

#### **LLANCARFAN COMMUNITY CINEMA**

Has pulled down its projector shutters until the Autumn. The last showing was *The Greatest Showman*, a title for which our own cinema promoters should surely be in the running. Thanks, folks!



#### ST. CADOC'S CHORIC CHORTLES

The ever-tuneful *Early Byrd* singers will join Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June's *Corpus Christi Eucharist* at 1115 am. Their contribution will include the *Ave Verum Corpus* - plainsong, a Byrd *Mass for Three Voices* & John Sheppard's Motet: *In Manus Tuas III*. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

#### THE LLANCARFAN FUND RAISERS





SPARE A THOUGHT (or even a throat if you felt like cheering) for the *Llancarfan Fund Raisers*, whose endeavours should be recorded in village history. *Ann Ferris* reminds us, very politely, that the idea for forming the Fund Raisers came about in the year when it was decided that there was not enough support to hold the Village Show. (There *is* a show this year!)

The Fund Raisers' committee comprised Jackie and Ralph Prole, Sue Taylor and Ann Ferris herself. The first event they organised was that perpetual standby, an **Afternoon Tea**. This went down a treat & was very well supported. There followed a **Musical Evening for Young Musicians & Village Entertainers**, with a light supper, much in tune with village tastes.

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NEXT COPY, NEWS & LETTERS DEADLINE: 21 AUG 2018

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Please visit our revitalised site at http://www.llancarfansociety.org.uk

Thereafter another **Tea** was organised at which the fundraisers were able to present cheques for the monies already raised. The final event was a **Luncheon**, also proving a success.

Perhaps the surprising outcome has been that – with just these four events - the Fund seekers raised **four thousand two hundred and ninety two pounds forty two pence**. **The Four Cashetiers** (if that's a real word)? amassed this decent sum - with welcome help from a few villagers and Jackie's daughter, Shelley - in what must be recognised as a sterling effort.

All the money went to local Charities. *Latch* received £1,400; *Mind* had £400; *Air Ambulance* £400.00; *Velindre Cancer Care* £1,000.00; and *Diabetes UK Cymru* £692.42. Not to forget the £400 for *Llancarfan School*.

#### **KATH DAVIES**

#### REMEMBERED BY STEVE POWELL

Kath Davies, was a dear friend and neighbour who sadly passed away in Llandough Hospital on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2018. Kath, a very pretty, caring lady, bought (with Tony, her smart businessman husband) the *Fox Hollows* plot of land in Llancarfan in 1956. They lived with Dilys & Glyn Liscombe whilst the built their house. They quickly settled well into village life, Kath working as a dinner lady in Llancarfan School, then later as a teacher's aid.

They were a fantastic couple that everyone loved. We were all made very welcome at their home as they both loved company. Tony always had a funny story to tell whilst Kath got a cuppa and cake out. They had one child, a very attractive daughter, Lisa, who was the apple of their eyes. Kath's loved her working time in Llancarfan School, and the children loved her.

In the early years Kath was a keen tennis player and involved in a lot of village events. Only in later years did she find it difficult to walk about, and didn't get involved in village life as much as she would have liked. Kath had a fantastic voice, and you always knew when she was in church as she brought the hymns alive. She and Tony always loved going to musical soirées, and very much enjoyed dressing up to the nines for the event.

Her dear Tony very sadly passed away some years ago and Kath deeply missed him. His death had a dramatic effect on her life and eventually she had to

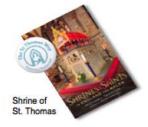


leave her beloved *Fox Hollows* in September 2014 due to ill health, and moved to a nursing home in Barry. We greatly miss our dear friend and neighbour.

#### HEREFORD CATHEDRAL: 7 JULY & ONWARDS.

A major new project is to create & to follow a heritage way from Swansea to Hereford which is inspired by a real medieval pilgrimage.

Liancarfan is to fall on a chain of historical jewels that form an all-visitor route in the footsteps of people who, in 1307, journeyed to confirm that Thomas de Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford, was the miracle maker who deserved to be enshrined in Hereford as a saint.





The trail's inspiration hangs (literally) on the medieval detective story of Welshman William Cragh, who was executed in Swansea for murder. But he stubbornly remained miraculously alive! Eyewitnesses swore that his resurrection was thanks to the saintly entreaties of Bishop Thomas – who had died twenty five years earlier. Travellers will share the delights of Liancarfan, pursuing these mysteries on a journey between the treasures of Herefordshire & Glamorgan.

### The St Thomas Way

#### Saturday 7 July, 2018, Hereford Cathedral

Please join us for an exciting day of free events to celebrate the launch of the St Thomas Way

– a new heritage route from Swansea to Hereford, inspired by a real medieval pilgrimage.



#### Highlights include:

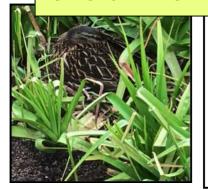
- Medieval Pilgrims living history with 'Pilgrims and Posies'
- 'Re-Making Maps of the Mind' art exhibition, by Michelle Rumney, inspired by the Mappa Mundi and medieval pilgrimage
- Medieval story-telling and music
- Guest lectures by leading scholars on St Thomas of Hereford and pilgrimage medieval and modern
- Creative mapping workshops for children and adults, led by artist Michelle Rumney (free, but require booking\*)
- St Thomas Way ale and medieval brewing
- Children's activities and dressing up
- Labyrinth for reflective walking
- Choral Evensong, sung by the Choir of the Collegiate and Parish Church of St Mary, Swansea





For timings, "workshop bookings and all further information, please see <a href="https://www.herefordcathedral.org/">https://www.herefordcathedral.org/</a>. Follow us on Twitter @StThomasWay

#### **SPRUNG AT LAST!**

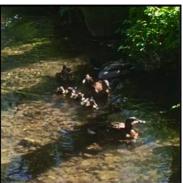


1 May: The Knott family discover a well-hidden sitting duck, nesting in their river-side garden.

2 May: Only egg shells.

Now: Mum, Dad & nine ducklings brave the river!







# PIGMENTS' PROGRESS How the Hidden Colours of St. Cadoc's Conceal & Reveal Mediaeval Mysteries

If the iconoclastic vandals of the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> centuries had had their way, the church they handed down to us would not have kept much colour for us to celebrate. Even many of our more immediate Victorian ancestors, chose (when they could raise the money) to erase any traces of the mediaeval world that shaped our culture. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so many of our churches cleared layers of archaeological lime & learning back to bare stone walls, not unattractive in their own right, but surviving evidence that babies were thrown out with the bathwater.

On the other hand, some congregations made what several other Victorian ecclesiologists considered the mistake of raising funds to re-capture 'false history', coating and cluttering their ancient relics with a tangle of Victorian Gothic. Which ever way the Victorian visionaries jumped, history was distorted in its 'restoration'.

It is hardly surprising that, when back in 1870 the Rev. Alfred Thomas Hughes, vicar of Aberavon, was appointed to St. Cadoc's, he had his aspirations too. How could he not have done, with doorstep impresarios like the Marquess of Bute commissioning from William Burgess his exotic fun palace of 'revived' Gothic that is today's Cardiff Castle? Again, Burgess's excesses are remarkable and jolly. They *do* represent *Victorian* re-invention, but very little genuine mediaeval history.

Llancarfan's Rev. Hughes had this living for 43 years. When he arrived here though, (taking up the church that another 'mining' vicar *had* accepted, but then said 'no thanks' to!), Hughes could hardly afford any wondrous Victorian Gothic restyling of St. Cadoc's. As the colourful Welsh journalist Morien was later to relate, 'the church itself had fallen into a wretched condition of dilapidation.

This dilapidation included the bells, silenced as unsafe since April 1869. Until this date the sexton 'had been compelled . . . to stand under those huge, half-rotten beams to which the bells are fastened and ring one of them . . . to the great danger of his life.' At each pull of the rope he heard the bells cry "we fall, we fall!"

Morien's later 1891 narrative explains how Hughes 'then spent £800 in restoring the venerable shrine of Cattwg the Wise to a condition somewhat worthy of its noble purpose & venerable associations.' Funds were raised, and in May 1877 The Western Mail could report<sup>4</sup> that 'the old and venerable church ... was formally opened for Divine worship after undergoing considerable repairs and renovation.'

The bells however could not ring again until 1891, because, says Morien, 'when the present vicar succeeded in obtaining funds to restore the nave and chancel he was unable to restore the belfry and re-cast the bells.' But back in 1891, the South Wales Star allowed Morien to admit that 'in the work of restoration the present enlightened vicar has dealt with its archaeological remains with loving care, so that the interior of the sacred building retains all its primitive appearance.'

In fact it was not until Marian Spencer published her comprehensive *Annals of South Glamorgan* in 1913 – we know that much of her Llancarfan chapter was written when she was staying with the Loughers at Llanveithyn<sup>5</sup> - that the following **alternative** (now much repeated) gossiping tradition emerged:

'In the restoration . . . all the colour-wash was removed from the inside of the church walls, when they were found to have been stencilled with stars. On the wall of the south aisle, immediately inside the south door, a large stencilled figure of the Virgin Mary & Child was uncovered, but was again covered up with whitewash as it was considered to be Roman Catholic.'

X

You may know that the extensive conservation of the last ten years (since 2008) has not rediscovered any Virgin & Child 'immediately inside' the main door on the south side. However, there is a figure now partly uncovered (as viewed from inside) to the right of the priest's door at the eastern end of the south aisle. Now

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> South Wales Star, 24 April 1891.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Cardiff Times, 17 April 1869.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The Western Mail, 21 May 1877.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See the reminiscences of Dr Evan Thomas of Tyla Rhosyr, Cowbridge, extracted in *Society Newletters* 8, 9, 26, 57 and 63.

divided from that door by the ancient (but misplaced) screen, people now wonder if a *full* uncovering of that painting *could* reveal this to be a limewashed Virgin & Child? On the other hand, what we see to date is difficult to interpret as such.

So, given that we like historical colour, it seems fortunate that the contents of the Rev. Hughes' purse could not stretch further than the north aisle, and possibly also along the north wall (though a few fragments of colour still survive even there). Nor, it would seem, was he able to strip back the over-painted chancel arch, where enigmatic mixed paintings have now emerged as recently as 2017.

It appears likely that Hughes made little intervention on the 'remains of the reredos'. Of this, Morien was still able to observe that while 'the lower portion of which has disappeared among the "spoils of time"... what remains is very beautiful, consisting of exquisite wood carvings'. So it was this generation's privilege that in December 2013 [ see Newsletter 156 ] we could report on the stunning rescue of the original colours by 'Polychrome Conservator' Liz Cheadle. This revelation followed the work and analysis of Conservation Joiner Cameron Stewart, and the renowned Timber Conservator from Exmoor, Hugh Harrison.

It was during this conservation that research found probably the *earliest* reference to the reredos in St. Cadoc's. A 1771 survey of Glamorgan churches noted that the 'curious and costly tabernacle, which forms a screen for the altar, and the canopy over it, are greatly out of repair'. Even back then it was in a sorry state.

Well, it is heartening to know that the remains of this intricate, glowing & gilded early 15<sup>th</sup> century reredos screen have today been painstakingly returned to glory. Certainly the screen earns respect alongside St Cadoc's wall paintings. As we illustrated on page 13, conservators have rediscovered this neglected treasure as of intricate beauty, and have been able to reveal its original glowing colours.

Conservator Hugh Harrison is now confident in remarking that while "canopy work like the reredos at Llancarfan can be found in the choir in almost every cathedral and major church in England and Wales, *none of these grand arrays of woodwork are coloured & gilded as at Llancarfan.* This lively polychromatic scheme lifts this work to *quite another level of sophistication*."

The mystery remains as to what a work of this intricacy is doing in a village church such as St Cadoc's. Theories continue to examine whether this screen began life elsewhere and that later parts of the canopy were rescued to Llancarfan. Was it a refugee from the Dissolution of the Monasteries? A discarded glory from a grand abbey? The whim of a rich local benefactor? Detective work continues to intrigue us, and to draw astonished comments from contributors to the visitors' book.

 $\mathbf{x}$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Gloucester Archives ref: D936 E/213.

## SCHOOL SPRING IN A VILLAGE



Litter Pick The Eco Committee recently organised a litter pick in the village and collected 4 bags of rubbish. In particular they found lots of litter on and around the tennis court. Please help us keep the village tidy by putting your rubbish in a bin.

Thank you.



Art Week We have recently enjoyed studying a range of works of art during our ART week at Llancarfan School. We have produced a fantastic range of artwork using different mediums. If you would like to see our art work it will be on display at the school on the afternoon of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> June between 2.30pm and 3.30pm.



Do you have clothes in your wardrobe that you no longer wear? Then please bring your unwanted & reusable clothing to us as we are holding a Rags2Riches collection on 12<sup>th</sup> July. Our last collection was really successful, so please help us to raise funds and discover the benefits of recycling. Thanks!

ARE WE NEARLY THERE YET?

