

## 25 years of the Community Newsletter

### Part 1: Early Days - July 1974

We don't have a copy of the first newsletter printed, but our records start with Issue 2 in July 1974. It's a marvellous achievement that the Newsletter is still in production and is so popular. You may well know that this year's subscription is £2.50 (due this month in fact!) well, in 1974 it cost 3p a month or 36p to pay for the year. Not such a huge increase in 25 years is it?

It was interesting to see the number of clubs and organisations that were on the go 25 years ago - the Playing Fields Committee was just being set up. Of course there was the church, the Revd L.C.G. Jones writing of the electrical storm which had swept through Caerwent when lightning had struck the turret on the church tower causing an awful amount of damage - the tower is at least 75 feet high. He also spoke of a successful Garden Party at the vicarage, which had been held on a beautiful day and made a profit of £200. There was also the chapel (Steven Richards) and the Community Council - it was the Community Council that started this Newsletter originally, with an entry by Roy Strange, with Mary Harper being Publicity and Press Officer. There was also the Womens' Institute (Mrs B Ayres), Young Wives and Caerwent Amateur Dramatic Society (Norma Martin). There was a Junior Section, Llanfair Discoed Community Club (Gwyneth Lewis, Treasurer) and Gerry Warner writing about pigeons. Cricket seemed to be the sport of the day with both men's and ladies teams in Caerwent and Llanfair, all challenging each other!

As I said, the Playing Fields Committee was just starting up and had arranged the fund raising for the year (nothing changes!). Key fobs and bios were on sale and waste paper was collected from points around the villages and sold A 'Womble' Treasure Trail in July, Sports Day in August, the Cricket Dance at the Wentwood Inn in September followed by 'It's a Knockout' - and details later of a Furniture Sale!

A Sponsored Walk had already taken place (I believe Mabel Rogers still remembers it) and cleared a profit of over £250, which was quite a sum 25 years ago (I'm sticking with 25!). Photographs of the Walk had been taken by John Protheroe and Edward Aldaya and were displayed in Caerwent Stores.

Talking of Caerwent Stores - who remembers Arthur Edwards? That's probably going back a bit, but I can remember him, so it can't have been that long!!! There was also a competition for the best Newsletter cover (I'll print the winner on the front cover of next month's issue), and on the last page there was "Wants and Non-wants" - you could have bought a blazer, 2 pairs of jodhpurs, 2 televisions or a Hawkins Hi-Dry clothes drier - and someone was looking for a shed

A tribute was written to Mr R J Payton for his service to the community over many years. There was a further tribute to the late Arthur Griffin (written by Vernon Rees) who had been a Battle of Britain fighter and took part in the Dambusters Raid

### December 1974 and January 1975

The Playing Fields Committee held a Prize Draw and had arranged two trips to the swimming pool in Caldicot (this was a regular thing until it ran out of customers).

There was a Bonfire and Guy Fawkes Competition (judged by Owen Jones and won by Karl Bryant). The Playing Fields also arranged a Christmas shopping trip to Bristol and a ladies against gents "drag" football match on 29 December! (*full report, see below*)

Tonny Thomas wrote several articles on Llanfair Discoed "Down Memory Lane". In this issue he talked of "Granny" (Mrs Humphries of Llanvaches) helping with the birth of new babies; Dr Lawrence arriving in his horse and trap, then the proud new mother "taking her baby to get some fresh air, not in a "posh" pram or pushchair but with a blanket, like a big shawl, draped around her and her new baby, tucked in snug and warm in her arms with the shawl wrapped around them

both". He also talked of Mrs Fry (Gwyn Lewis's grandmother) going to market with her garden produce in her pony and trap, then returning with a list of items for the neighbours. He could remember "waggoners" taking loads of hay and straw from William Price at Great Llanmellin to Newport. The waggoners walked beside the horses, it was an offence for waggoners to ride on the shafts and they could be fined 5/- for doing so.

Tonny could also remember Mr W Parker farming at Lower Llanmellin and daughter Mrs C Smith playing the organ at Caerwent church for years.

There was the start of a series of articles entitled "Caerwent Family's Holiday of a Lifetime" which detailed a 15 day cruise on the TSS Regina Prima to Greece and the Holy Land, written by Arnold and Beryl Ayres.

There was a write up on the Caerwent Playing Fields AFC (by Tom Henson), who were due to play Albion Rovers in round two of the Monmouthshire Amateur Cup - "a formidable task for Caerwent." It turns out that this was an excellent and entertaining game with Albion winning 1:0. Tom was also advertising seats available for the Easter trip to Scotland at £6 per head

Mrs Evans started writing for the Evergreen Club in this issue - letting us know the winners of the whist drive. (Mrs Fuller, Mrs Williams, Mrs Tubbs and Mr P Jones) and loser (Miss A Carwardine) There were 51 members present at the meeting.

Mrs R Attewell wrote an article describing a Coffee Evening which had been held at the school on 21st November to raise funds for the childrens' Christmas party. Mrs May, Mrs Lutman and Mrs Evans were in charge of refreshments, with Mrs Attewell, Mrs Lovell and Mrs Powell selling the goods. Mr Woodman showed a cine film taken by Vicar Jones of the school sports day followed by cartoons. The profit made was £55.01 and 1½ books of Green Shield stamps (remember those?).

Fund raising also started for the repair of the church tower - a Christmas sale was held in the Village Institute (now we're talking memories!) which raised £216.00 towards the repairs.

The Playing Fields Committee was given financial assistance from the Community Council of £1,500 towards furnishing and equipping the new hall. Edith Gardner was appointed as Booking Clerk and the Playing Fields purchased 6 rounders bats! They also ran a trip to the Pantomime at Bristol and held a Christmas Draw at which Frank Harris played the organ for entertainment and dancing, with Tommy Henson beating it out on the drums. "Ponky" Blight and Jimmy Gardner organised the draw which raised £113.98.

An extra 2p was despatched across the committee table to make a "nice round figure", but alas! it was too late, the books had been closed I believe the 2p was confiscated" (by Mary Harper).

This year also saw the first Christmas tree on the Roman walls - donated by John Hereford and Cecil Stone.

*(By the way, I hope everyone has been impressed with this year's tree, it's looked beautiful and hasn't been vandalised once)*

Thanks were given by Vernon Rees to Officers and Staff of the RAF Depot for the supply of wood to the senior citizens of Caerwent (I believe this went on for quite some time).

I was going to stop there, but now I've come to the description of the "Drag Football Match" held on the Playing Field on 29 December 1974 (I haven't got very far yet, have I?) and it is so funny that I've decided to add it in full - here goes:

The visiting "ladies" arrived early and one had to be there to appreciate the glamour they brought to the Playing Fields. In no particular order, here is a short description of the "ladies" dress.

**Blooming Harper** walked confidently on to the field, sexily showing "her" red laced bloomers, beneath a fashionable outfit; on "her" head a seasonal furry hat (or was it hair?)

**Tommy the Tummy** surprised us all by arriving here today. "She" was wearing a delicate floral cotton smock, so cool and which camouflaged "her" condition so well. To take our minds away from the tum, "she" had strategically placed coloured balloons over "her" back. These, apart from being decorative, were to help "her" to take off later in the game.

**Hereford the Halter** chose a slinky white halter neck blouse, which "she" hid with a cheeky cardigan during the early part of the game, in case of a riot. But later she bravely discarded this.

**Willy the Pinny** as ever beautifully attired, left "her" kitchen to join us. Unfortunately "her" silky long black hair had to be tied back so that "she" could see where she was going. "Her" pretty pinny discreetly disclosed a leaf green skirt and contrasting pink sweater.

**Swinging Smith** gave us all a touch of Eastern promise in "her" outfit today. A skinny white blouse accentuated "her" well made figure and two hanging coloured balls gave a swing to the ensemble. "She" had tastefully wrapped a sarong around her gentle hips, letting it flow to knee length and thus following the new fashion.

**Fuller Figure** is the name which "she" uses in "her" successful modelling career. "She" chose an outfit that all the ladies with a statistic of more than 150 centimetres (work that out!) would love to own - a navy ensemble, just right for every occasion.

**Minnie Spooner** joined us straight from the coiffure - "her" twotone (3 in places) hair had been set in the latest Western style, two pretty pigtails peeping from beneath "her" blonde curls. "Her" mini-length dress caused somewhat of a stir amongst "her" team-mates - they could hardly keep their eyes off her long, shapely legs.

**The Gay Gardner Girls, Gardinia and Samantha**, to use their trade names, were as ever, beautifully and tastefully dressed. Gardinia chose an expensive, loosely fitting cotton lawn dress, while Samantha gave a preview of the latest Paris fashion in make-up. Those dark highlights on the cheekbones are the most in femininity - I hope all you lady spectators took note and I expect we will all be using them by the Spring. Thank you Samantha for introducing the mode to Caerwent.

**Stephanie** was, as ever, dressed for the occasion. "Her" beautiful blonde curly hair just set for the morning and her blue classic style dress matching "her" eyes and complimenting her ample figure.

**Sugar Plum Hicks** - for today's performance Sugar Plum chose a ballet dress of 12 layer tulle, in exciting sunset colours of pink and orange. "She" stood coyly in goal for the first part of the match and was unable to delight us with her favourite suite. But later, she gave way to her natural movements and showed us "her" realistic interpretation of the "Dying Swan".

The opposing team showed no noteworthy traits in dress but they did look remarkably fit in their shorts and tops. Those football tops will never be the same again.

The game began very gently with the home team (the real ladies) a little shy of the "other" ladies. But after the first goal both teams lost their nervousness and no holds were barred. Swinging Smith lost "her" sarong in a tumble with one of the home team. But unperturbed "she" regained her feet and continued the game, showing the latest M&S blue corsetry with matching suspenders and sheer stockings. Swinging Smith used to advantage the freedom afforded by the two-way stretch. Tom the Tum proved "her" worth several times, using the weight of "her" condition to out-manoeuvre the home team. But the subtle home team showed fitness and thought and their superior bodily skill helped them towards victory.

They tactfully changed their movements - when their feet were tired they used their hands to get the ball speedily from one end of the pitch to the other. It was obviously this startling play which confused the "ladies" and helped the home team to take the game with a score of 6-4. This final

score is, however, open to recounts and does not include all tries and conversions. Willy the Pinny sustained the only serious injury and after receiving 5 stitches in his eyelid (did he tell the sister that he was playing against ladies?) he was seen rushing into the Coach & Horses pub by one o'clock. Sympathy was overwhelming and I am told that he has not paid for a pint for himself since. The lengths to which some people will go... An amusing morning was had by spectators and players.

Your Own Sports and Fashion Correspondent.

The Teams	
Visitors	Home
Dennis Harper	Gill Hicks
Tommy Gardner	Tilda Williams
John Hereford	Doreen Ford
John Williams	Denise Payton
Brian Smith	Jill Studley
Brynley Fuller	Mary Harper
Adrian Spooner	Vi Smith
Stuart Gardner	Christine Gardner
Sam Gardner	Margaret Ashill
Steve Williams	Diane Phillips
Robert Hicks	Hilary Counsell
	Meryl Price
	Bemice Williams
	Linda Evans
Referee - Colin Harper	

### 25 years of the Community Newsletter

#### Part 2: December 1975 to February 1976

Here we go again! I've had some good feedback from last month's selection of quarter century news, let's hope this continues. The front cover of this month's magazine was the first one ever designed and originally appeared in January 1975 - it's professionally done, isn't it?

In December 1975 whist drives were started as a regular event in the hall - at 25p a ticket, organised by Robert Hicks, Dennis Harper and Ian Edwards. The first one was a poultry whist drive and was hugely successful with 89 players (the turkey was won by Mr C Hughes of Rogiet) And guess what? Talks were under way about the laying of tennis courts - we haven't got far in 25 years have we?

The Playing Fields Committee (Secretary, Catherine Spooner) advertised for a cleaner and booking clerk in January '76 and in the February newsletter we learn that the cleaner was to be Mrs Richards of 20 Eastgate Crescent. There was also an urgent advert for a typist for the newsletter - the requirements were "a good basic knowledge of typewriting, your own access to a typewriter, time ... and patience!". I can tell you that Mrs Eileen Lawrence of Little Barn, St Brides Netherwent took up this request and is still doing the job today - 25 years later.

This is a wonderful service to the community and we can't thank Mrs Lawrence enough for all her help over the years. Of course she's got it easy now - I can remember the time (so can she) when she would type the newsletter articles onto "skins" (as the Gestetner stencils were called) and "roll them off" - mostly by hand - on an old Gestetner machine in the hall. She would be there for half a

day, ink all over the place and the air turning blue, to emerge triumphant with 368 newsletters for the next issue (it's now 510).

Every month she fought that machine but every month she won - her big moment was when we took it out of the hall and let her take it home to fight it in comfort. I can vouch for the fact that all the original requirements for the job still apply, although I think I would move patience to the top of the list! At the time Mrs Lawrence was thanked "for stepping in where others feared to tread".

A regular article which appeared for several months in the early newsletters (I'm afraid we don't have the first articles) was "A Dream Come True" written by Mrs Gwyneth Lewis of Llanfair Discoed, when her youngest daughter Denise and husband Lech emigrated to Australia. In December 1975 she tells of them flying from Darwin airport to the Balinese capital of Denpasar. She describes their various exploits and their wonder at the way of life - particularly the toilet facilities!! It seems the Balinese were very strict about being properly dressed, having signs everywhere - the one that amused them said "If you are not properly dressed you will be seized and confiscated".

The Sunshine Club were holding regular meetings in the hall, with magazine articles being written each month by Mr Sid Hooper of 19 Eastgate Crescent, who later moved to Caldicot and passed away recently. He tells of Christmas wrapping paper being sold to raise funds - "it made the nice sum of £1.56".

There's also a letter from the Chepstow and District Society for Mentally Handicapped Children which thanks the following for donating £1.75 raised by "trick or treating" in the village - Gary, Michael, Nigel, Richie, Michael W, Ruth, Simon and Mark - I can just see you all trying to work out who they are!

Tony (pronounced 'Tonny') Thomas continues his stories "Down Memory Lane" and tells of Henry Oakley living at Dewstow House, who was reputed to be a millionaire (Tony believed he was). He tells of the land, gardens and farm belonging to Dewstow House, and that the groom was Arthur Peach who looked after the Shire bred stallions. "Victor King" was Arthur's pride and joy, "with feet like huge frying pans with plenty of hair to cover them, when he walked on the roads, each step he took could be heard a long way off".

Tony also talks of Arthur and his mates Crady Gordon (village blacksmith and sexton of Caerwent church for 33 years) and Joe Hazel who would go off on little pleasure trips in the trap pulled by Arthur's mule. It seems the mule knew the road and could read the signs to show the way home, as the three characters would be "swaying a bit on their seats ..."

Tony's earliest memory of a Pastor in Caerwent was Revd Berryman who was here for over thirty years and lived in the cottage opposite the school, "just vacated by Miss Edmunds". He was sorry to lose one of his best informers and critics in Percy Jones who, Tony said, had a good memory and some antique possessions. "He produced a pair of socks from his pocket one day and by the price on the tab he must have had them thirty years ago, they were 1/6d (7½p).

The Community Council at the time was discussing a play area for Llanfair Discoed and the piece of land adjacent to the church being cleared up for public use, with the Department of the Environment saying it was likely to be reserved for a museum in the future - not much changed there either then.

At least the play area in Llanfair has come to pass, and another one at Trewen which no-one had even started to think about at the time. Another interesting point is that the flats at Ash Tree Road were about to be renovated ready for use by the public.

Both the church and the chapel had Christmas articles and details of their services, with the Womens' Institute holding their Annual General Meeting and electing the following for the coming year:

- President: Mrs B Ayres

- Vice President: Mrs B Daw
- Secretary: Mrs S Ker
- Treasurer: Mrs N Martin
- Committee: *Mesdames* Barry, Maddocks, Stone and Weale.

The Evergreen Club was going strong according to Mrs E Evans, with up to sixty members attending their meetings. They had a trip to Bristol Hippodrome to see "Show Boat" and another to see "Babes in the Wood", and also held a Christmas Draw in mid-December. They also held regular whist drives at their meetings.

The Youth Club also started in the hall on Monday evenings for 5p admission, and at the other end of the age spectrum The Sunshine Club officially opened at the end of 1975, with a dinner and dance. The Secretary was J R Hooper. They were arranging an Old Tyme Dance in the hall for the 30 January 1976, with tickets at 40p each.

I was going to finish there but then I came across the Playing Fields Advert for the "Tramps Dance" in February 1976. I can remember my family going to this dressed as tramps. My dad was talking to this awful looking tramp that was unrecognisable, and this went on for most of the evening. My sister Jen was really shocked about it, and kept asking all evening who it was? You could see from her face that she was disgusted It was actually our mum and Jen didn't recognise her at all! Mum won the prize for the best dressed tramp! We all had such a laugh about that. After the dance we walked up through the village and called in on the Counsell's at 17 Eastgate Crescent - they didn't recognise mum either... Linda has never forgotten it and laughs about it even now!

## 25 years of the Community Newsletter

### Part 3: February and March 1975



*Village history in the making - the formal opening of Caerwent Village Hall*

In February/March 1975 the village hall was very near completion - floor tiles had been laid, electricity installed and painting almost completed. The stage was under construction. At that time, Tommy Gardner was re-elected as Chairman, Captain Spooner as Vice Chairman, Dennis Harper as Treasurer and Catherine Spooner as Secretary. Robert Ruffell was the representative for the Junior Football Club. It was agreed that the hall be officially opened on 31 May 1975 at the Fete and Carnival. This was to be followed by a buffet dance in the evening and tickets could be bought at £1.50 each - anyone buying tickets had to reside within the community, so they must have expected it to be a popular event.

There followed a write up by Tom Henson, Secretary of the Caerwent Football Club. Caerwent had played against Catbrook and Catbrook "had no answer to the eager Caerwent side", with Caerwent winning 6:1. The scorers were Brian Fuller, Alan Fuller, Ian Gardner (2) and Fred Robinson (2). Caerwent also scored the goal for Catbrook, but there wasn't much mention of that! There was great disappointment at the loss of a match against Undy which eliminated Caerwent from all knock-out competitions for the season. But things started to look up when Caerwent

played it's worst game ever "this was one of our very worst performances being best forgotten", but still managed to beat Caldicot Labour Club 3:2. Scorers were S Lovell and B Fuller (2). Caerwent then went on to play Caldicot Town - "there was only one team in this game" - and won 7:1. Scorers were F Robinson (3), Brian Fuller(2), Ian Gardner and P Addis. There followed a lengthy explanation of where Caerwent stood in the league goal average of 2.47 against Undy's average of 2.5 - there was a crucial game to be played on 1st May 1975 and everyone in the village was asked to support the team.

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Tony (Tonny) Thomas's article "Down Memory Lane" talked of Bill Hale of Five Lanes taking his pack of foxhounds out on bright moonlit nights in midwinter - they were called Dreadnought, Denmark, Damsel, Dabbler and Danger. Bill would take them up the Minetts Lane to "stir the foxes up". It seems they would often "find" and take reynard all through the Slades skirting Rogiet, Highmoor Hill and the Rodge near Caerwent. Tony said that Bill could run in those days (about the late 1950's) "but like a lot of us he is slowing up now".

Tonny could also recollect [Allan Cobham's Air Circus](#) coming to Five Lanes in the 1920's. The flat fields adjoining Trewen were hired from Mr Rosser of Court House, Llanfair and people could have short flights for 5/- (25p). "As Mr Percy Jones of Slough reminded me, the trip would take you as far as Chepstow in the air for 5/- return, whereas today on the bus it would not take you one way to Chepstow". It seems the fields were frequently used for aircraft after this by businessmen and many years ago there was a fatal accident when one man was killed

Tonny thought there was not much happening in Llanfair at this time - except that Miss C Pritchard had a new cycle to ride to school "sure to have set her back about £6.00".

Someone had a new battery wireless set with a loud speaker attached, all the family could hear the programme now without the aid of earphones. A 30 foot aerial had to be erected and the batteries charged - the wet one every 10 days and the high tension one every 3 - 4 months - he though it was a wonderful machine.

In a subsequent newsletter, Tony wrote of Mr Charles Hillier - "Uncle Charlie to me" - who was a stone mason and worked for Mr Oakley of Dewstow for 40 years. Tony wrote that Charles' wife, Mrs E Hillier - "Aunty Bessy" - could still be seen "running" up to the shop on nice days despite her 95 years. He wrote "poultry is one of her favourite hobbies - she still has an interest in a few laying hens and has a keen eye for a bad "doer" which she can find a use for!"

He also described in detail the home of Caerwent's then vicar, the Revd Coleman Williams, who lived in the vicarage. "It has three storeys, also a large cellar for the "goodies", a stable for two horses (fit for human habitation) a large coach-house, a harness room etc., over which was a large hay loft, and adjoining all this was ample room to keep cows and pigs, a large kitchen garden, two orchards and upwards of 20 acres of pasture land There were rockery gardens, also plenty of lawn, including a tennis court.

Where Eastgate Crescent is now, was called the Vicarage Meadow - here were held all the village fetes - and where St Tathans is built was called Canon Land - here used to be the local football pitch. Most of this pasture was let to local farmers, most of which was divided by a strong iron fence, which can still be seen today. To upkeep all this, the Rev. Coleman Williams employed a large staff including two or three domestic helps, one or two gardeners and a coachman. I can remember seeing the Reverend seated in his four wheeled coach (upholstered like a railway carriage) nice and snug inside while the driver would be outside seated on his comfortable seat, complete with rugs. The vicar would travel this way to places like Llanfair or "places he though were too far to walk".

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"Wayward Walks" began in this newsletter, written by John Nettleship (Countryside Warden). He described the walk through the Cwm and gave dates for future walks from the Tan House in Shirenewton to Golden Valley and Dinham.

Unfortunately the "Young Wives" group disbanded in March 1975 due to insufficient members.

Mrs E, Evans wrote for the Evergreen Club. In January they had been on a coach trip to Cheltenham to see the pantomime "Sleeping Beauty" and were then entertained at a concert by the Salvation Army in the Coach & Horses Hall.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Playing Fields Committee was held in March 1975. The balance sheet showed a healthy £1519.40, and many thanks were given to the local people who had put a tremendous effort in setting up the new village hall and playing fields committee - particularly to Mrs M Harper, Mrs M Strange, Mr D Harper, Mr D Williams and Mr T Gardner. It is interesting to see that there were representative members on the committee from the following organisations - the Community Council, the Parochial Church Council, the Baptist Chapel, the Women's Institute, the Evergreen Club, Caerwent Youth Club, Llanfair Youth Club, Caerwent Football Club, Junior Football Club, Cricket Club, Junior Dramatic Society and Community Club (Llanfair Discoed) - there's not nearly so many clubs in the community nowadays.

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The March 1975 newsletter commemorated and celebrated Caerwent church being 1,900 years old (75 AD to 1975 AD). The vicar wrote of the National Museum of Wales setting up a museum case of the Roman period in the church. He also wrote in detail of the exhibits in the church porch, the large stone base of the statue erected to honour a Roman, Tiberius Claudius Paulinus who had rendered a service to the Romano-British town of Caerwent and the altar to the god *Mars Ocelus* which had been erected, as promised, by a Roman soldier who had overcome a "great and terrible fear". When his prayers were answered he set up the altar to fulfil his vow "gladly and duly".

### **25 years of the Community Newsletter**

#### **Part 4: A look at April 1975**

As I mentioned in last month's newsletter the Playing Fields Committee held its first Annual General Meeting in 1975 - the newsletter doesn't mention the number of people that attended, but from reading it, it looks as if the hall was full - what a change in times. Mention was made of two successful projects promoted from within the committee - the monthly newsletter and the waste paper collection.

Throughout the year fundraising events had been held, including a sponsored walk, summer fete and Christmas draw. Outings had been held to places of interest, together with swimming and ice skating trips, and also numerous games of cricket and rounders during the summer.

This shows how very much times have changed in 25 years. In 1975 there was so much community support and people needed a focal point for activities, nowadays people don't need the village hall so much, most of us are mobile and in better paid employment, which means being able to go further afield for social activities.

At the April 1975 meeting of the Playing Fields committee, plans were discussed for the new extension to the hall, and the hire charges were revised. The piano had been renovated and was available to other organisations that might need it, also new stage curtains had been completed



The Evergreen Club was popular, with 55 members attending the April meeting and 41 members booked in for the annual holiday at the Majestic Hotel in Eastbourne. Preparations were being made for the Easter bonnet and floral buttonhole competitions.

Gill Hicks had arranged a sponsored swim for the Playgroup, which was to be held at Caldicot Leisure Centre. She was asking for donations of sit-on-and-ride toys, to stop children quarrelling over the two they presently had! She also put the call out for yogurt pots, sellotape, tins, plastic lemons, washing up liquid containers and round or square biscuit tins. And then even more - cowbells, bicycle bells, handbells, pets' jingle bells - because they wanted to make some musical instruments!

"Down Memory Lane" tells us this month of Mr E. G. Price of Caerwent House using his traction engines for threshing locally - from Trelleck to Redwick and from Langstone to Woolaston. Tom Lewis of Caerwent (Bert's father) was one of the traction drivers and Harry Weston of Blackpool Cottage was another. There were up to twelve others, including "E.G." himself and his son Roy. It was a big day for the farmer and his wife when the thresher was coming; the noise created by the "drum" could be heard for miles around with the wind in favour. The farmer's wife would count the men as she had to provide the dinner - all seated around a huge table on a flagstone floor. The food was terrific, with the milk pudding having been made in a two gallon vessel!

In later years, E.G. disposed of his Fowler traction engines and sported a Field Marshall tractor and straw baler. Ted Morgan had "come of age" and used to manage this equipment.

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The April '75 newsletter also contained a letter from Mervyn Webber, from the kibbutz where he was working in Israel. Mervyn explained that "the Kvutzat Shiller kibbutz is a socialist community, basically agricultural, where everybody is equal and all committee members are elected every three years ... it has a kibbutznik population (permanent residents) of 400 men, women and children and a volunteer force of 40 males and females from Holland, England, Australia, America and Switzerland" (Mervyn was the only Welshman).

He told of picking oranges, grapefruit, avocados and bananas; of looking after chickens and cows on the 400 acres rented from the government and of a small factory where they manufactured thread, shoelaces and underwear elastic. They worked 6 hours a day, 6 days a week with Shabat (Saturday) free, for 150 Israeli lire a month (£10); but three meals a day were provided, plus a laundry service. Three or four people shared a wooden hut.

During the 10 week stay there were two, all expenses paid, three-day trips - one north and one south. At the time of writing Mervyn had been on the trip North and had visited the Sea of Galilee, the Golan Heights, the site of Armageddon, the town of Acre, Mount Carmel overlooking Haifa and many other places of historical and political interest - I expect this brings back some memories for you Mervyn!

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The newsletter ends with "A Dream Comes True" - Mrs Lewis's story of Denise and Lech's stay in Australia. They left Perth to drive across the Nullarbor Plain to Port Augusta, a journey of 1,640 miles, taking 32 hours. They visited the town of Albany, the centre for South Australian wool producers, and also Hyden, the home of the 'Wave Rock' (218 miles from the sea). This is a huge wave shaped rock with coloured stripes from ochre, through rust, to black, caused by water washing out various minerals up stream and forming a hard crust over the wave formation.

They were stopped at Ceduna by officers of the Department of Agriculture, who asked them if they had any fruit in their possession - they grudgingly handed over three apples - this was to prevent fruit fly infestation reaching the Australian fruit farms