



SAD TRIBUTE: Mrs Margaret Hall (seated) with her husband Rod, and behind them, from the left, Emma Smith, Alistair Isaac, Rosalind Isaac, Stephen McGuire, Robert McKenzie, Nicholas Isaac, Andrew Wenzel, Ian Stafford, Katie Wenzel, Sarah McKenzie, Colin Lewis, Amanda Maddox, Owen Williams, Wally Wenzel, Terence Lewis, Julie McKenzie, Darren Young, Debbie Wenzel, Jackie Williams, Glyn Davies, and Mark Isaac.

VILLAGERS GATHER TO REMEMBER CHRIS

On the bitterly cold Sunday afternoon of December 17th, a sad little group met at "The Corner", that point at Caerwent's village cross-roads where generations of the youth of the village have met to laugh, cry and discuss their dreams. As each generation moves on, so another replaces them. Its always been that way, and hopefully always will.

As time passed, those on foot were replaced by those with bicycles. Then came the mo-peds and the light motor-cycles, and finally the youngsters were able to afford cars. The chain was unbroken. But two years ago, tragedy struck when teenager Chris Hall, lost his life in a road accident on the A48 near the village. He was a passenger in a friend's car, travelling to meet their pals at "The Corner".



Wally Wenzel delivers his address to the villagers.

The effect of the tragedy was immediate - a generation of Caerwent youngsters could not bear to continue to attend their traditional meeting place, and the silence and feeling of loss was tangible through all generations of the community. Those who lived nearby missed the noise, the laughter, the cheerful banter, the music and the sounds of the cars coming and going.

But the youngsters never forgot Chris, and as members of the village youth club they decided to erect a lasting monument to him, and what better memorial could there be than a seat? A place for future generations to sit and talk just like Chris and his friends did.

This wasn't just any old seat though. As a lasting tribute to Chris the young people of this village started to raise funds for a work of Craftsmanship that would be a fitting tribute to their late friend. It took them two years, but eventually they raised over £600, and were able to commission the construction of the seat.

The emotional and touching ceremony of dedication was performed by village Youth Leader Wally Wenzel, Chairman of the Youth Club, in these words:

"There is a beautiful new addition to the village, as families and friends of Chris Hall gather to dedicate a memorial bench on the village crossroads. Chris tragically died in an accident on the A48 almost two years ago. This bench is the culmination of efforts by his friends in his memory. For many generations I am told young people have gathered at the village cross, as did Chris. Here they share many happy times, sometimes not to our pleasure. As future generations follow this tradition we know that Chris's spirit will look after them, and keep them safe. I feel very proud of the former members of our Youth club for the efforts they made for their friend. They worked hard to raise funds, and worked closely with myself, Debbie Wenzel and Jackie Williams to make the bench a reality. Special thanks go to Nick Isaac, and Katie Wenzel for their leadership, and drive; also to Sarah MacKenzie, Amy Lewis, Amanda Maddox and Sarita Thompson for their efforts with the Discos and raffles. Special thanks must go to Glyn and Margaret, and their patrons at the Coach and Horses Inn for their donations. We must thank Mark and Rosalind Isaac for their support and guidance, and Jackie Williams for all her efforts to ensure all the appropriate planning permissions were correctly obtained. The bench was hand made by Mr Harry Stebbing, of Great Hockham, Thetford, in Norfolk. Harry is a specialist craftsman in English hardwood, and his labour will long be remembered, and admired by the users of this bench. Finally, to Chris Hall who will always be in our hearts, we dedicate this bench to you."

To conclude the dedication, Wally read out a poem written by one of Chris's friends - who asked to remain anonymous.

A LOST FRIEND

How you shocked us all when you did suddenly go,
Our tears of grief did freely flow.
Now time has gone by and that sad day's in the past,
Never will we see you, but in our memories you'll last.

As we look to the sky and you look from above,
You were such a good friend and you'll always be loved.
They played 'Good riddance' as we all said goodbye,
Your death is the truth, but we wish it were a lie.

People will leave never to return,
A lesson to make the most of our lives is one we must learn.
The moment you're born you start to die,
You left without a word - not even 'goodbye'.

People will come and people will go;
You look for the reason but you never know
Why they were born, only to die,
They have fun on earth then return to the sky.

To lose someone is never easy, and no words soothe the pain,
But remember your friend, 'cos in higher glory he'll reign.
Life without you has driven us up the wall;
We'll remember forever - our good friend **CHRIS HALL**.

A wreath was laid on the bench by Debbie Wenzel. Purple was Chris's favourite colour. It was the colour of his car, and the wreath was adorned with purple ribbons as he would have liked.

Wally asked those assembled to join him standing in silence as a measure of their respect for Chris and to remember Chris on this sad occasion.

In response, Chris's parents spoke briefly to thank the members of the youth club for the tribute they had paid to their son, adding that the youngsters of the Caerwent Youth Club are an example to young people everywhere, and that they were glad that Chris had been associated with them.

The proceedings having come to a close, after tearful embraces, the group quietly went their various ways, leaving Chris's wreath and his seat as a mute memory of the tragic loss of a fine young man.

