

## OBITUARY – Mrs. Dilys Gaskill.

Dilys attended primary and secondary education in Birmingham. She graduated as a teacher at Leicester College of Education. As a student teacher, Glyn was her mentor for her final teaching practice in 1969. This was a very fruitful arrangement which led to Glyn proposing marriage to her on St Valentine's Day 1969 and their ensuing marriage in 1970. During her final teaching practice, the two of them took a school party by train to the coast of Inverness-shire as part of their outdoor pursuits work. Setting up camp and digging latrines were part of the syllabus. When setting off on their return trip there as a signal workers strike. Their first train took them to the top of Shap – waited for an age and then reversed for several miles. The following train journey involved many changes on local lines aiming for Leicester. As the party had not been fed for several hours, it was decided to buy snacks – mainly Mars bars. Dilys was the only one with any spare cash, so this was commandeered for the common good. The party arrived back in Leicester some 24 hours late. No mobile phones or credit cards in those days.

Dilys joined the teaching staff at Stonehill High School in Leicester and left in 1970 to get married and move to Wales. She did supply work at Cyfronydd, special school for girls, Montgomeryshire, until 1973. Cyfronydd is currently the home of William Haigh, another special person. Dilys and Glyn set up their first home at a rented cottage between Guilsfield and Meifod. Rent was a punishing £3 a week. Sarah was born there on Boxing Day 1971 and then David and Huw, undiagnosed twins, on 27 April 1973. This meant the family had grown from two adults to a total of five individuals in a couple of years. Their cottage was wanted by the landlord so the young family had to move. The old head teacher's house at Chain School Cottage Maesbury Marsh was bought and the young family moved in. The cottage was a two-up and two-down with a lean to corrugated iron structure which housed the kitchen and bathroom. When the floor of one upstairs room had to be replaced, due to rot, living space was at more than a premium. Glyn replaced the floor with second hand / previously used timber providing a new-found wealth of living space. In 1974, Isfryn, the current family home, was purchased. An Edwardian, three-bedroomed semi, which felt

like a palace. The house was bought with all the contents right down to a full coal shed and well-stacked pantry. The tin of Fray Bentos steak and kidney pie was treated with suspicion and it was some time before it was consumed.

Dilys became a local councillor by a process which reflected equality at the time. The then chair of the Parish Council came and knocked on the door of her house. Glyn answered and was asked – would he allow Dilys to stand for the Parish Council. Glyn's response was to please ask Dilys herself. This he did, and Dilys stood for election.

Having been elected in 1991, she quickly became involved in working with the Clerk, who was also the Community Regeneration Officer for the Borough. This led to undertaking a Village Appraisal for Llanymynech and Pant, which in turn developed into over 20 Projects over many years. Some of the memorable occasions during that time were winning the Village of the Year competition for Shropshire, the following year becoming runner up in the national competition, with a presentation ceremony in London, publishing Village Memories books, winning the Community BURA Award against entries such as the Falkirk Wheel.

She then stood for election to Oswestry Borough Council in 1999 and it was obvious that her role there would be high profile. As a Borough Councillor she never missed an opportunity to get the A483 mentioned in the Council Chamber. In any discussion she would speak to raise the subject of the A483 and the need for a Bypass of the villages. Getting many press campaigns, visits of Government Ministers and MP's and national television, which resulted in a memorable photo of the newly elected MP's kneeling in the middle of the road, shaking hands across the Border.

In 2001 she was elected as a Shropshire County Councillor. Whilst serving on those Authorities, her efforts led to large grants being awarded for the Parish, such as the project undertaken at the Limeworks Heritage Area. The aim was to preserve and transform the valuable

industrial site and its history as a visitor attraction, as well as restoration of the Montgomery Canal wharf and stables. This was followed by funding a Heritage Economic Regeneration scheme in Llanymynech, enabling historic buildings to be given grant aid for preservation, as well as lectures and study courses.

Her service to local government in Shropshire has been sterling – 10 years as a Shropshire Councillor, 12 years as a Borough Councillor and Mayor of Oswestry, and 30 years as a Parish Councillor, including Chairman of the Council for 12 years.

Her passing on the 14th February 2023 has meant the loss of an energetic, enthusiastic and dedicated friend to the community.