

Linkup

AUTUMN 2005

INKUP CIRCULATION 3,100



A newsletter for and by United Welsh tenants

Another great Summer Fun Day at Caerphilly... and they weren't alone!

READ THE COMMUNITY NEWS ROUND-UP ON PAGES 8 AND 9 TO FIND OUT WHAT OTHER COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN UP TO THIS SUMMER



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Paradise Found! "With a little effort, a house can be turned into a home", said Mrs Dee, a United Welsh tenant from Bargoed, and she has the photographs to prove it! Plus, all tenants should have received an 'allpay' rent payment card and Linkup looks at this new way to pay your rent.



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NSPCC says 'Help us to help the children' after their research showed that one in six children in the UK have suffered serious assault at the hands of their parents or carers. They are asking people who have spotted child abuse to contact them on a Child Protection Helpline.



in combating the problem of anti-social behaviour and an anonymous hotline has been launched in Cardiff where people can report problems from graffiti to abusive gangs and noisy neighbours.



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UW took an active part at Caerphilly's Big Cheese event this summer and invites community groups with direct links to UW to join them next year to showcase their projects. A Pilot CCTV scheme has proven successful



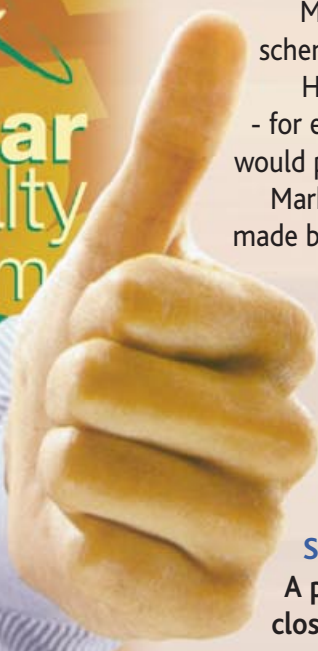
PAGES 8 & 9

Community News – from computers in sheltered schemes to a teddy bears' picnic for children, community initiatives are reaching out to all UW tenants and their families.

Also, do you have problems with disability or mobility? If so, you can now apply for 'physical adaptation grants' such as stair lifts, grab rails and level and low access showers

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Autumn may well be the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness but it's also cold and damp and Noticeboard has a hearty 'Traditional Beefy Soup' to bring some warmth back to your cockles.



5 Star members have given the 'thumbs-up' to the 5 Star Loyalty Scheme in a recent survey. The survey asked members a number of questions about the 5 Star scheme and overall 78% of those surveyed said they were happy with the scheme.

Members said they enjoyed the competitions and incentives offered as part of the scheme - in particular cash prize draws, 'make-overs', and free vouchers.

However, a number of issues were highlighted about the use of the Countdown Card - for example only 17% of members said they had used the card and 50% said they would prefer to see other incentives offered to members instead of the card.

Mark Butler, Area Housing Manager, said: "We have taken on board all the comments made by members and have decided to discontinue the Countdown Card but in its place we will be offering more prize draws and better incentives than ever before. Later in the year, we will be revealing some great bonuses for members of the 5 Star Loyalty scheme, so if you aren't yet a member, JOIN NOW!" If you'd like to apply to join the 5 Star Loyalty Scheme, please complete the form on the back cover.

LOOK OUT FOR THE NEXT 5 STAR COMPETITION TO BE ANNOUNCED IN THE WINTER EDITION!

SURVEY WINNER...SURVEY WINNER...SURVEY WINNER...

A prize of £50 was on offer for the first Survey pulled out of the hat after the closing date. The lucky winner was Miss H Tunley of Ebbw Vale.



voice4tenants - it's official!

In July voice4tenants - the new organisation that replaced the Tenants' Consultative Committee - held its first Annual General Meeting where a new constitution was adopted, four main objectives agreed and a new Executive Committee elected to manage the organisation....

Roger Dafydd, the newly elected Chair of v4t paid tribute to the outgoing Chair, Val Friday, and the dissolved TCC. "Val and the rest of the last TCC presided over a very demanding period in the development of tenant participation at United Welsh." Roger told us, "They had to look at what was needed to move the development forward then manage the changes and it is to their credit that they did not shy away from difficult decisions, even when that meant dissolving the TCC. It is very important that the new Executive Committee for v4t makes the most of the

new start and works together to make sure that as much opportunity as possible is given to all United Welsh tenants to take part in decisions which affect their homes and how they live. It is our responsibility to ensure that their voice is heard as an influence at the highest levels within the Association."



Don't forget that as a tenant of United Welsh you have automatic membership of voice4tenants. What that will mean in practice will be clearer as time goes on, but you can watch out for events and opportunities run by v4t in each edition of Linkup.

CASH PRIZE WINNERS...CASH PRIZE WINNERS...CASH PRIZE WINNERS...

There were also six 3rd prizes winners of £50 each.:

Kathryn Perkins - Maescwmmwr

Joy Vizard - Llandaf North, Cardiff

Rozan James - Senghenydd

Rosemary Jones - Aberbargoed

Gwenda Thomas - Brynmawr

Nicola Gilmore - Rhymney

EIGHT lucky 5 Star Loyalty members have won a total of £2,000 this summer - just by being a member of the scheme. The Summer prize draw winners are:

£500 1st Prize - Joan Ryan - Grangetown, Cardiff

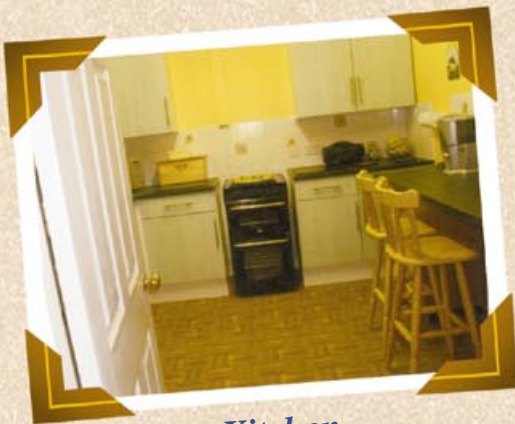
£200 2nd Prize - Mandy Jones - Caerphilly



Paradise Found!



Front garden



Kitchen

United Welsh tenant Mrs Dee recently asked for and received permission to carry out improvements to her home (on condition that planning permission, etc., was received). As a thank you and to show what works had been carried out, Mrs Dee sent United Welsh a report with lots of photographs and a commentary written entirely in verse!

Who hasn't heard of epic poems like Homer's Odyssey or Paradise Lost by John Milton? This was a poem to match those epics - chronicling the work in progress in rhyming verse, (suggested title - Paradise Built!)

Praised by United Welsh for the standard of the work carried out by Mrs Dee, her family and friends, she is very pleased with the results. As Mrs Dee says, "With a little effort, a house can be turned into a home."



Back garden

...with a little effort, a house can be turned into a home...



OUR CONGRATULATIONS GOES TO BARGOED'S VERY OWN CHANGING ROOMS TEAM!

A new way to

pay your rent...

allpay.net

...by now, you will have

received a new rent payment card from **allpay** which can be

used to pay rent and arrears at any **Post Office**, **Payzone** or **PayPoint** outlet. Please destroy your old card and start using the new **allpay** card.

To find out where your nearest **Payzone** and **PayPoint** outlets are, please visit the **allpay** website: www.allpay.net (select search payment outlets and then enter relevant details).

On the back of your **allpay** payment card you will see a 24 hour telephone number for the payment of rent and arrears using a credit or debit card. You can also pay rent and arrears via the internet, using your credit or debit card (see website address above).

United Welsh has changed to the **allpay** system because it will make paying your rent much easier:

- At the **Post Office** you can pay with cash, debit cards or cheques (cheques should be made payable to Post Office Limited)
- At **Payzone** outlets you can pay with cash or debit cards
- At **PayPoint** outlets you can pay with cash
- You can also use the **24hr telephone payment line** and pay by debit or credit card (telephone number is shown on the back of your payment card).

Please keep your new card safe even if you pay your rent by another method. If your card is damaged or lost then please contact a Customer Service Advisor for a replacement. United Welsh send regular statements so that you can monitor all the payments you have made and any rent owed. They will also send you a rent calendar if you want one, just ring a Customer Services Advisor and ask.

Have fun but keep safe on Bonfire Night - top ten hints:

- Plan your firework display well in advance
- Keep fireworks in a closed box and use them one at a time
- Read the instructions on each firework carefully, use a torch if you need to
- Keep flames, including cigarettes, away from fireworks until ready to set them off
- Light the firework at arms length with a taper and stand well back
- Never go back to a firework once it has been lit, even if it doesn't go off
- Don't put fireworks in your pockets and never throw them
- Point all rocket fireworks well away from spectators
- Never use paraffin or petrol on a bonfire
- Make sure that the fire is out and surroundings are made safe before leaving.

And remember to have fun!

United Welsh has a new team dedicated to the service of the Association's sheltered schemes. Working closely with the existing team of Sheltered Scheme Managers to make up the new Living+ team will be three people, two of whom may already be familiar faces.

Andrew Burns, Living+ Team Leader, on the left of the picture, was, until recently, a Housing Officer with the Blaenau Gwent Team and Hilary Hamilton, centre, the team administrator has also come from Blaenau Gwent.

The new Head of Service, Wayne Emery, pictured right, has joined United Welsh from Gwerin Housing Association. Keen to build on the results of last year's service review Wayne told us, "the vast majority of



our residents are physically fit, mentally alert and enjoy leisure activities and generally have a modern lifestyle. We want to modernise our approach to fit in with people's needs and aspirations."

Living+



Big Cheese

United Welsh took an active part at Caerphilly's famous Big Cheese weekend this summer.

David Williams, Community Services Manager told Linkup, "we were hoping that we would be able to go to the Big Cheese with a tenant group and showcase at least one current project there, but no groups came forward to accompany us. We've already committed to sponsorship of part of the event next year and this time we'll be starting early to help groups local to the Caerphilly area to use the event to raise their profiles."

If you are part of a community group with direct links to United Welsh and would like to discuss taking part at the Big Cheese in 2006, why not give David a ring on 20 858166?

The Community Services Team will be setting up projects to encourage recycling and to help more people get access to recycling facilities.

If you are interested in recycling issues and would like to take part in projects based on recycling, or if you are part of a group which is already looking or wants to look at recycling projects of your own, ring Wendy Griffin on 07813 893236.

The Team may be able to help you turn your interest into an active project and you may even qualify for some grant funding to help.



Recycling



Pilot CCTV scheme proves successful



The 2003 summer edition of Linkup reported that United Welsh had successfully applied for a grant from the Welsh Assembly to pilot a Professional Witness Scheme. The first scheme of its kind in Wales, it was designed to help United Welsh gather evidence against tenants involved in anti-social behaviour.

"The scheme has been tremendously successful", Mark Butler, Area Housing Manager for Caerphilly told us. "On a number of our estates we've used a surveillance company to monitor suspected breaches of tenancy agreements. It's helped the Association collect enough evidence for successful court actions although in most cases we've been able to avoid court simply because tenants have agreed to change their behaviour when faced with the evidence collected against them."

Michelle Kent, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-Ordinator at United Welsh outlined how the pilot scheme will influence future strategy. Michelle told us, "we will carry on using equipment like CCTV and noise monitors to gather evidence against tenants who are a serious and persistent nuisance to their neighbours and will go to court to terminate the tenancies of tenants who refuse to comply with their agreements."

No need to suffer in silence

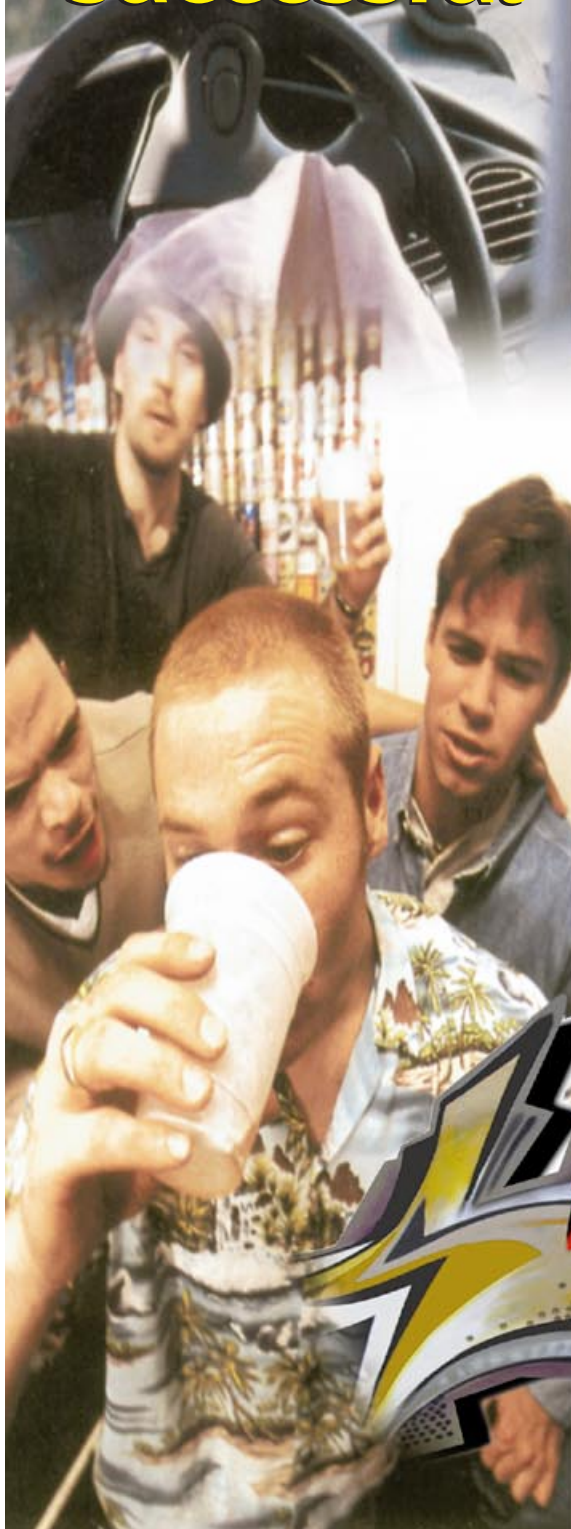
Set up by the Home Office and Cardiff Community Safety Partnership the hotline will let you report a whole range of problems from graffiti to abusive gangs and noisy neighbours. It's a one-stop-shop phone line called 'It's Your Call' that you ring instead of phoning the police, council or housing association.

Since being set up people have been ringing the hotline number and at least one call has lead to a company being identified for fly tipping.

...we will gather evidence against tenants who are a serious and persistent nuisance ... and terminate the tenancies of tenants who refuse to comply with their agreements.

If you live in the Cardiff area and are suffering anti social behaviour there's a new hotline you can ring to report it.

**YOU CAN CALL
THE HOTLINE
ON 0845 605222
ANONYMOUSLY
FROM 9.00AM TO
5.00PM MONDAY
TO FRIDAY**



Van Communities

Working with the Communities First Partnership, United Welsh is heavily involved in activities at the Van Communities, which includes Mornington Meadows. The third annual Summer Scheme was very successful, attracting even higher numbers of young people than the previous two and with activities ranging from outdoor pursuits to computer training sessions, there was something for everyone.

If there was a disappointment at all it was that the Summer Playscheme run for so many years by the Community Council was unable to go ahead this year because the Community Centre was not available as a venue. The reason for this was that activities at the Centre are placing so much more demand on the space than they ever have before so the time was simply not there to be booked for the Playscheme.

The Communities First Partnership has responded by working with the Committee of the Centre to look for funds to

extend the building, Wendy Griffin, Community Participation Officer working with the Van, thinks they have a good chance of success. "Most of the activities going on at the Community Centre are well established now and arguments for extending to meet what is still a growing demand can be shown to be strong.."

"It's disappointing that the Playscheme suffered as a result this year, but the community is keen to move quickly on extending the facilities to try to make sure that it will still go ahead in the future".

The summer has traditionally ended in a community event at the Van and this year was no exception. With circus entertainers, lots of different stalls and activities like the graffiti art workshops, the many visitors had plenty to entertain them.

Congratulations to the Communities First Partnership and to Elaine and her team at the Van Community Centre in particular, for another successful event!

Computers in Sheltered Schemes

The project to install computers for community use at some of the United Welsh Sheltered Schemes is starting to pick up.

Kerry Goodenough, the Community Participation Officer leading the project, is optimistic about how well the installations will be received. "We have a computer up and running in Blackwood now and training for people with little or no previous experience is under way. The group there is quite small but very enthusiastic and already we've had enquiries from others living at the Scheme about joining the training late."

"It's been some time since the first computer went in at Caerphilly but resources made it difficult to follow the project up properly. We'll be revisiting that Scheme now to see if there are any new users looking for training then we'll be turning our attention to more new ones, one in Brynmawr, one in Gilwern and another in New Tredegar are all planned for this autumn."

The Community Services Team is aiming to push the project out to five more Schemes before Christmas and wants to have computers in all Sheltered Schemes with communal lounges by the end of March 2006.

If you live at a Sheltered Scheme with a communal area and you are interested in taking part in the project, either to learn how to use a computer, including e-mails and the Internet, or to help others if you have some experience already, you can contact Kerry on 029 20 858126 for an informal chat or to arrange a visit.



Dinas Powys - getting bigger by thinking bigger!

The Dinas United Tenants Association (DUTA) has developed over the past year to such an extent that they are working to make some big changes at the estate. Plans to create better and more useable leisure spaces for the children and young people in the area are ambitious, but well on their way to becoming a reality.

Working with Jamie Grundy from the Vale of Glamorgan and Melanie Smith, Community Participation Officer at United Welsh, DUTA are actively looking for funding to develop a multi-sports area for the older children and teenagers and a separate safe play area for younger children.

As part of a plan of Participatory Appraisal, a major consultation carried out at a fun day organised by DUTA recently showed overwhelming support for the project amongst residents. "since the Local

Authority closed the play area at the entrance to the estate at the beginning of the summer, everybody has realised how difficult it is for the local youngsters to find anywhere safe to play or meet with their friends", one tenant told us. Dennis Baigent, Chair of DUTA is determined that the project will result in the facilities being provided as residents want. "There is suddenly such enthusiasm for making real changes on the estate and that is translating into good positive resolve for making things happen." Denis told us. "The biggest frustration is persuading others to move at the pace we would like to keep up!"

Commenting on the Fun Day itself, Melanie Smith said "by far the most of the day and its activities were organised by DUTA themselves and congratulations should go to the people actively involved in that for such a successful event which resulted in high numbers of people taking part in the consultation aimed at finding out what residents want for the estate".

Of course, the Teddy Bear's picnic went down a treat too...

Building bridges in Hengoed

The Tenants Association at Heol Rees in Hengoed has worked hard to build bridges between the generations living at the estate and to tackle anti-social behaviour there. Linkup reported earlier in the year that some major successes had been achieved in removing anti-social tenants from Heol Rees with the support of Michelle Kent, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator at United Welsh.

Aware that there are still problems with young people at the estate, the TA is working alongside the local Communities First Partnership to deal with those problems.

During the school holidays the tenants organised and ran a Play Scheme for the younger children, culminating in a street party to celebrate its success. Both were very well attended and there has been nothing but praise for the organisers both from the people who enjoyed the events and from Melanie Smith, the Community Participation Officer working with the group.

Plans are well under way for more projects designed to cement good relations with everybody living at and visiting the estate and they are looking for funding, with support from United Welsh, for longer term environmental and technology projects.



NSPCC says: Help us to help children...



NSPCC Cymru/Wales asked people to help children by filling in a survey that was delivered to 9 million homes across the UK in October.

The survey is part of NSPCC FULL STOP Week, that started in October, that asked everyone to act together against child cruelty. Television adverts in the weeks running up to the event encouraged people to talk to each other if they are worried about a child or young person.

Talking to a friend or family member can help someone, who has concerns about a child, work out what they should do and give them the confidence to act.

Research by the NSPCC shows that one in six children in the UK have suffered serious abuse at the hands of their parents or carers. More than one child in the UK dies every week because of abuse. The survey is not asking people to help children by giving money. It is a way of making sure that the NSPCC's message is getting through.

The survey also contained two cards to remind people of what to do if they think a child is being abused. One card is to keep and the other is to give away to someone else.

Anyone who has worries about a child can contact the NSPCC Cymru/Wales Helpline. Helpline manager, Chris O'Marah, said: "All too often children are afraid to get help themselves. So it's important that, as adults, we do all we can to spot child abuse and then do something about it. We have counsellors at the Helpline who are there to give advice and support to anyone who thinks a child or young person may be being harmed. The counsellor can help you to work out the best way to make that child safe."

The NSPCC Cymru/Wales Child Protection Helpline is a free bilingual service. It is open between 10am and 6pm, Monday to Friday

Counsellors can also be contacted by email on helplinecymru@nspcc.org.uk

Talk 'til it stops
FULL STOP.

NSPCC
Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.

NSPCC
CYMRU/WALES
CHILD PROTECTION
HELPLINE
0808 100 2524



TPAS Conference 2005

**Calling all
Tenant and
Resident
Associations!**

United Welsh are once again sponsoring the Annual Welsh Conference for the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service in Llandrindod Wells from the 16th to the 18th November. As part of the event the Community Services Team are supporting Tenant and Resident Associations in showcasing their work at an exhibition within the conference. Up to six local associations will be supported in the exhibition and each will have the opportunity to send a representative to the conference as a full delegate. If you are part of an active community association, would like to show like-minded people what you're up to and are interested in sending a delegate to the TPAS conference, contact David on 029 2085 8166 before the 10th November for more details on how to book your place.



Difficulties with mobility?

Tenants with disabilities or mobility problems can now apply for Physical Adaptation Grants.

Physical Adaptation Grants (PAG) are specifically designed for tenants with special requirements or disabilities and can be used to carry out specialist work such as the installation of stair lifts, grab rails, level and low access showers, etc.

This work will be undertaken by United Welsh, but only on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist (based in the Social Services department of the local council) who will assess whether there is a need for adaptation work. If you feel you need physical adaptations to your home then you should first contact your local Social Services office.

How can you apply?

- Contact Social Services who will appoint an Occupational Therapist to evaluate your needs.
- This evaluation will then be sent to the Housing Department of the local authority for approval.
- If the local authority supports the adaptation then a Maintenance Officer from United Welsh will visit you and arrange for three quotations from approved builders to carry out the work.
- The quotations will then be sent to the Welsh Assembly Government for final approval. If the proposed PAG is successful then the Maintenance Officer can instruct the successful builder to carry out the work.

United Welsh will also carry out minor adaptations (for example lever taps, grab rails, etc.) up to the value of £50 to help disabled tenants when other funding is not available.

1 in 4 women in Wales suffer domestic violence or abuse!

Are you suffering from domestic violence or abuse and live in the Caerphilly county borough area? If so, then you can now go 'online' to get information about the support and advice that is available to you.

The Safer Caerphilly County Borough Community Safety Partnership (Safer CCB) is a multi-agency group set up to work together to reduce crime and disorder and form a safer environment for local people. The partnership includes the Council, Police, Probation Service, Fire Authority and Local Health Board.

The Domestic Violence/Abuse section of the Safer CCB website is now online. The pages contain information about the support and advice available and what is being done in the county borough to tackle domestic violence.

You will also find a Directory which contains contact details and information on agencies and voluntary organisations that provide help and advice to adults and children experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE

If you live anywhere in Wales and need help or advice on domestic violence you can now ring the NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE FOR WALES ON 0808 10 800. Lines are open daily between 8.00am - 2.00pm and 8.00pm - 2.00am.

Noticeboard

united
welsh

OFFICE CLOSURE

v4t Caerphilly Tenant's Forum: Twyn Community Centre,
Caerphilly, 1.30pm Thursday, 23 November 2005

If you need an emergency repair when the offices are
closed, please contact the special United Welsh number
below.



Remember – this service is for
emergencies only!

(01495) 769624

WINNERS OF THE REPAIR REPORT SLIPS DRAWS

FIRST NAME DRAWN WINS £50,

SECOND NAME WINS £25 AND THIRD WINS £10.

June

1. Mr Gareth Jenkins,
Risca
2. Ms G Andrews,
Dinas Powys
3. Mr R & Ms F Jones,
St Mellons, Cardiff

July

1. Miss J West,
Abertridwr
2. Mr & Mrs Williams
Blackwood
3. Mrs I Bowen,
Ebbw Vale

August

1. Miss C Evans,
Abertridwr
2. Mrs L Forward,
Crumlin
3. Mrs J Watkins, St
Mellons, Cardiff

A TRADITIONAL 'BEEFY' AUTUMN SOUP

Ingredients

- 1 lb minced beef
- 1 chopped onion
- 4 cups of water
- 2 chopped carrots
- 1 diced celery
- 1 tsp salt



SERVES SIX

- 1 tsp brown sauce
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 6 tomatoes or can of tomatoes
- 4 potatoes
(cut into cubes)



Method: Put beef in a large pan and cook slowly until brown (keep stirring). Drain off fat. Add onions with meat and cook until tender about 5 minutes. Stir in remaining ingredients, except tomatoes, and heat to boiling. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Add tomatoes, cover and simmer for further 10 minutes (or until vegetables are tender).

APPLICATION

Please register me for membership of the 5 Star Loyalty Scheme

Name

Address

Post code

Rent account number

Home telephone number

Work telephone number

Mobile telephone number

National Insurance number

Signed

