

Looking Back

Best place to be, bar none

It is one of the most exclusive bars on the worldwide sporting map.

Fred's Bar only opens for five days a year.

Now the shutters are going up there at St Helen's again over the next week.

Glamorgan's arrival means it is time to give the old place its annual airing.

So old timers, the young generation and those in between will wander over to an unremarkable, drab, grey breeze block building which is more than the sum of its parts.

It was run by Fred Jenkins until the early 1980s before the baton was handed over to the St Helen's Balconiers, who plough all money raised from it back into Glamorgan cricket.

And although it officially bears their name for the duration of the annual Swansea Festival, it is still known to one and all as Fred's Bar or sometimes Fred's Shed, and remains an integral part of the famous ground.

St Helen's, the Swansea sporting citadel which stubbornly survives the slings and arrows of budget pressures, competing modern facilities and, in some quarters, a desire to move on, still calls play.

It continues to block threats to its status as a first class cricket venue with the type of relish shown by Geoff Boycott negotiating a maiden over on an overcast Monday morning at Bramall Lane in Sheffield.

Alas, that Yorkshire summer game stronghold fell away in 1973, but its West Wales cousin is still making out.

And if a day out at the cricket requires refreshments to make it through to the end, Fred's Bar will still be happy to oblige.

It does not do posh, though. The word corporate is alien, although plenty of stragglers from



THE BAR'S THE STAR The heavily populated Fred's Bar — rooftop and ground level — making another contribution to Glamorgan cricket at St Helen's and (inset) St Helen's Balconiers tea ladies at Fred's Bar pause for a moment in 1997. (From left) Mary O'Brien, Mair Williams, Ann Voisey, Dilys Lewis and Nan Philpin.

that world eventually make their way over to that special corner of the ground.

It is a meeting point for many, year after year. Behind it the traffic swarms both ways along Mumbles Road, or at least it does on a good day when outside interference is kept at bay, and in front is the fence separating dreams from reality.

The field of play lies ahead, which just leaves a social setting that has been enjoyed by fans

from around the world.

Welsh cakes, rolls, and pasties, tea and coffee, soft drinks and something a bit stronger are served up by a willing band of volunteers who put their own cricket-watching desires to one side for the greater good.

The open-fronted bar lets some light in, but perhaps not enough for the meticulous Dickie Bird and his fellow umpire to let play continue out in the middle.

But John Williams, the

indefatigable St Helen's Balconiers frontman who maintains that Fred's Bar offers the best value on the county circuit he has led trips on for the last 37 years, and his team plough on.

This dedicated Glamorgan supporters' group fights against the tide by raising enough money to persuade the county to take temporary leave of their Cardiff headquarters and inhabit the St Helen's turf for five days a season.

It is no more than they deserve, perhaps less.

But as long as the only non-English team in the 18-strong professional game continue to pop into their spiritual home, the glasses in Fred's Bar will always be half full, never half empty.

●Glamorgan's four-day LV= County Championship match at St Helen's against Northamptonshire, starts on Wednesday, followed by Sunday's CB40 clash against Nottinghamshire.

Duty Calls

SWANSEA Lord Mayor Ioan Richard will attend:

Tomorrow: 10:45am: Opening Of Chero Coffee Shop, Ty Tridev, Mansel Street, Swansea, 12.30pm: Castle Leisure Club presentation to Lord Mayor's Charity Fund, Castle Leisure Club, Morriston, 3:15pm: Afternoon tea party, Weaver's Tea Room Swansea Marina.

Neath Port Talbot Mayor Harry Bebell will attend:

Tomorrow: Long Service Awards for Neath Port Talbot Employees, Mayor's Parlour, Port Talbot, 90th Birthday — Lilian Cockings, Farm Drive, Sandfields, Port Talbot, Rotary Club of Port Talbot Annual Dinner, Aberavon Beach Hotel.

Carmarthenshire chairman Ivor Jackson will attend:

Tomorrow: No civic events.

Impact of aspirin is researched

PATIENTS with a history of heart disease who stop taking prescribed aspirin are nearly two-thirds more likely to have a heart attack, researchers have found.

A study revealed that people who had been taking low dose aspirin to help prevent blood clots forming but then stopped were at a 60 per cent greater risk of a non-fatal heart attack.

Up to half of long-term users are believed to stop taking aspirin, according to the British Medical Journal study.

The team said: "Reducing the number of patients who discontinue low dose aspirin could have a major impact on the benefit obtained with low dose aspirin. Research is now needed to evaluate whether efforts to encourage patients to continue prophylactic treatment with low dose aspirin will result in a decrease in non-fatal myocardial infarction."

Man faces drugs trial

A SWANSEA man who admits possessing crack cocaine is to stand trial next month on a more serious alternative charge of intending to supply it.

Paul Hixson, 32, of Weig Gardens, Gendros, pleaded guilty to having the drug in his possession on March 28. But at Swansea Crown Court he denied that when he had the Class A substance his intention was to supply it to someone else.

Hixson was granted conditional bail and the case was adjourned to the week of August 22.

Now and then



RACE TRACK Skewen Greyhound Stadium.

LOCALS called it the dog track.

Officially it was Skewen Greyhound Stadium and its history took in more than racing of the canine kind.

Skewen Lillywhites cricket team played

there in the early 1900s when the field was known as the Waun.

It started out as a horse track, but the ground was too soft, so the greyhounds took over.



HOMES The Meadows, Skewen, formerly Skewen Greyhound Stadium.

Rugby was also played there and football by St Mary's Church team, while Swansea Town used it as a training pitch. Another sporting use was a cycling track. Will Thomas opened the greyhound

track as a business in the early 1930s, but today it is home to a housing estate.

●Both pictures are from Neath Through Time by Robert King.