



**Sedgley's**

**Diamond 60**

*Sixty years, sixty people,  
sixty stories about village life  
since 1952.*

## Princess Anne opens Baggeridge Country Park

*by Mrs M Stanley*

After Baggeridge coal mine closed on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1968, bricks continued to be manufactured. The company was owned by the Earl of Dudley and the Chairman was the Honourable Peter Ward, brother to the Earl, who visited the company one day in every month.

Every year during the month of June he was host at a dinner party aptly named 'The 25 Club' where any member who had served 25 years at the company received an engraved gold watch. The Honourable Peter Ward had a daughter, Rachel, who is an actress best known for her star role in the 'Thorn Birds' TV drama, playing opposite Richard Chamberlain. When the Honourable Peter retired, his son Alexander became Chairman.

Ladies (who were mainly clerk-typists) with young children were allowed to work part-time, mornings or afternoons, whichever was suitable. Over time, change took place. A fresh young Managing Director joined the company. Typewriters disappeared; computers were installed. He stopped the part-time arrangements but offered anyone who was interested full-time employment. Those who weren't were made redundant. That took place in 1989. Seven of the ladies made redundant then remain friends, and have now been meeting as fellow workers and friends almost every week for forty years. Five out of the seven are now in their 80s.

On 17<sup>th</sup> June 1983, staff were allowed to leave their desks to go to the country park across the way to see HRH Princess Anne arrive by helicopter to officially open the park. In around 2008 the Earl sold the brickworks to an Austrian company, Wienerberger AG, and in around 2010 Baggeridge Brick Company closed. Baggeridge House was then taken over by West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust as a recruitment and training centre, and so it remains to this day (June 2012).



**Princess Anne arrives by helicopter to open Baggeridge Country Park on 17th June 1983.**



**Baggeridge House**