



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 10: April 1988

The social history of Llanccarfán must typify that of many Vale villages close to the coast. Modern day instability of population in which families have come and gone very rapidly was mirrored, in the past, by extensive interchange between the coastal ports and the West Country of England. Moelwyn A. Williams, in his chapter, 'Aberthaw', of volume four in Stewart Williams' Vale of Glamorgan Series, wrote: 'Although harvest gangs from Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire were attracted to the Vale it was, in fact, more accessible to the Somersetshire harvestmen who, in consequence tended to arrive there more frequently and in larger numbers. Their impact on the local agricultural community provides an interesting aspect of social history ---'.

Despite this continuing influx from England, some families maintained extremely stable links with the Vale. In an article entitled 'Family stability through the ages', Grace Wyatt has used the example of the Lougher family (Local Historian, 15, 132). One Richard Lougher, from Cwrt-y-Carnau on the banks of the River Llwcher, adopted the name in the 1400's, subsequently moving to Sker (in the Borough of Kenfig). A family tree, researched and compiled by Major Edwin Lougher, traces the family on the male line to the present day and shows all of the earlier members resident in the Vale (Newton Nottage, Tythegstone, Bonvilston and latterly Llanccarfán). Grace Wyatt has established the present day distribution by a search of British telephone directories and found 78 Lougher entries, of whom 50 are still in the Cardiff and S.E. Wales area.

The reason for all this family history is that our main article in this Newsletter is the first of two, by Phil Watts, on the life of his father and mother. Phil is related to another of our Committee members, Gwynne Liscombe: Phil's mother and Gwynne's father were brother and sister, son and daughter of William Liscombe and Jane (nee Lougher) of Monastery Mill (Little Mill). Jane's father was Robert Lougher of Garnllwyd and in the main-line of the family tree described above.

The interesting part is the coming together of the Lougher stability and the Vale mobility, for William Liscombe came originally from the Somerset and Phil's grandfather and grandmother from Wiltshire and Somerset. The genes for 'staying put' must however be fairly strong as a century has passed since those two West Country incursions, but Phil's two children and Gwynne's two children, and his grandchildren, are still all residents of the Vale in this age when the search for jobs has taken many of us hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles from our roots.

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The Life of Bill Watts
by Philip H. Watts

WILLIAM HENRY WATTS (BILL) of Abernant.
Born: Peterston Mill, November 10th 1892.

Henry Watts, Bill's father, came from Westbury, Wiltshire with his brother Sidney. They employed a housekeeper by the name of Mary Bunstone who later became the wife of Henry and mother of Bill, his sister, Mabel, and brother Sidney. Mary Bunstone is believed to have come from Somerset originally; there must have been other Bunstone's and I have heard my father speak of his cousin Gus Bunstone.

When William was about 5 years old his father died leaving uncle Sidney to run the mill. Bill attended Peterston school where he was greatly influenced by Mr Bailey, the headmaster. Handwriting was one of the strong points of the school and this was reflected in his own. Bill struck up a strong friendship with Philip Baker, the son of the Three Horseshoes public house; he was killed during the Great War but Bill wished that he be remembered by naming his son after the boyhood friend.

When William was aged about 10, uncle Sidney also died, the mill was sold and the remainder of the family moved to Glenroy Street, off City Road in Cardiff and Bill attended Marlborough Road School. A story was often told of the day when an essay was set by the teacher on 'Roath Park' which resulted in Bill's one-sentence essay which read: 'Roath Park is surrounded by railings.' The further result was 100 lines of 'Roath Park ---'!

The family later moved to Great House, Llancarfan, joined by a cousin, uncle Charlie Watts who was to run a smallholding at Great House. Charlie Watts was a big man, a boilermaker by trade and a good rugby player, playing for several first-class clubs including Bristol where he found work and it is also known that he walked to Liverpool in search of work, but it is strongly suggested that he only lived at Great House as long as Mary Watts had money! Mary continued to bring-up the family at Great House; Bill, with brother and sister Sidney and Mabel, attending Llancarfan School. Punishment for misdemeanours used to be, sent to bed without any food. Sidney was said to have been a difficult child - perhaps what we would call a problem child in modern times. Some of the activities would be better described as pranks. One day a tramp asked Sidney the way to Aberthaw so he sent him up School Hill and shot him in the backside with an air-gun! Sidney was confined to bed for two days without food!!

When Bill left school he started work at Pancross Farm for Mr Hopkins where much of his work was to take loads of hay and straw into Cardiff. He became an accomplished driver having the ability to drive teams of horses. This he did later, in Canada, and for the Army in France during the Great War. Mr Hopkins had several attractive daughters we are told. I believe that Mrs Hopkins had died early in life. The son, David was the father of Olwyn and Gwyn Hopkins, Llanbethery. He farmed New House Farm at Moulton before Llewellyn Price (senior).

In order to have the use of a tied cottage, Ford Cross, Bill went to work at Penonn farm for a Mr John. During the Great War the family was at New Mill. Money from the sale of Peterston Mill was put in trust for the children until the age of 21 when Bill Watts took his share, sailed for Canada and worked on a farm near Winnipeg. He was accompanied by three others, one of whose names I believe to be Gwilym Edwards, a relative of Waldo Edwards of Llantrithyd.

Bill returned home in 1914 on the death of his mother and, like many others from the area, volunteered for war service. He enlisted in the Army Service Corps and spent the war years transporting goods to and from the front line. Many amusing and sad stories have been told over the years. Letters to his girl friend Doris Liscombe have been retained by the family but no one has found the courage to read them yet. After the war Bill Watts married Doris Liscombe on May 29th 1919, in Llanccarfan Church, and honeymooned in

Porthcawl. They lived at New Mill in Llanccarfan and worked for William Liscombe at Monastery Mill. Later, a family business was set-up in Eastgate Street, Cowbridge, a Bakery & Confectioners shop. A neighbour of Dilys Lougher in Rhooose used to work for them as a young girl (as did Audrey Lougher of Cross Green who thus met and became wife of Herbert Thomas of Brocastle, Bridgend - Newsletter 9).

Doris Mary Watts was born on March 1st 1920 and Kathleen Watts on November 29th 1921. The business continued until the slump of 1926-27 and they returned to Monastery Mill to help run the farm, mill and bakery at the Flannel Factory (Bakehouse). The ownership of the property in Cowbridge was retained and passed on to Tudor Liscombe at the death of William Liscombe in 1941. The property today is used as an undertakers. The period 1921 saw the introduction of the bus service from Cowbridge to Cardiff by Albert Maddox. This service was used on Saturdays for travel to Cardiff to watch Cardiff City in their heyday. The bread round was abandoned for a number of hours and resumed on completion of the match!

Philip Henry Watts was born on August 7th 1929 and the family continued to live at Monastery Mill with Jane and William Liscombe. Tudor Liscombe had married Mabel Watts in 1920, making use of Monastery Mill until the new house known as Woodlands was ready for occupation. Brother and sister married brother and sister - it is felt in the family that this cuts down on the number of relatives!

The family continued to live at Monastery Mill until sometime between 1932-34 (the time is not clear) when it was sold to the Radcliffe Estate. It is recorded somewhere that the mill last worked in 1934. The family purchased Abernant Farm at this time but there appeared to have been some discord in the Liscombe family, i.e. Jane not sleeping with William. The long and the short of it is that there was insufficient accommodation at Abernant for everybody. Jane wife of William was displeased by this move and, in her independent manner spent the daytime at Abernant and night time at Woodlands in Llanccarfan, home of Tudor and Mabel Liscombe. I remember my grandmother heating a house brick, wrapping it in newspaper and carrying it to Woodlands for placing in her bed.

By this time a milk round had been established and added to the family business. Bill Watts bought milk from William Liscombe and distributed it in the area as well as Barry, using a motor cycle side-car. Many of the youngsters of the day used to accompany Bill on the round - some of the names I remember are Dick Wigg, Dick Evans, the Griffiths family, Llewelyn, Bedford and Bob. They retained their loyalty over the years by visiting Bill in his old age. Dick Evans is believed to have failed to attend Barry County School because of the milk deliveries.

Foot and Mouth disease struck the farm in 1936-37 and the herd consequently had to be destroyed. The only work available in the area at this time was at the Forestry at Tair Onen. The wage at this time I remember to be in the region of £2 per week - slightly above the agricultural wage. As the nation prepared for war better work was obtained at St Athan, building hangars and other buildings at the airfield.

Associated with milk deliveries, as today, was the delivering of newspapers: it is worth recording that each Sunday Bill would bring 72 News of the World from Barry for David Griffiths, Glan-yr-Afan (carpenter and wheelwright), who was a crossword fanatic and won many prizes over the years; one crossword compiler admitted defeat.

The war years of 1939-45 saw the departure of his workmates, Mr Evans, Harris, Griffiths and Morgan to the war. Social life, darts matches and Hancocks ale tasting declined, substituted by the necessity to work overtime. Bill had now obtained more permanent work with the RAF and Air Ministry at St Athan. He retired in 1958 as a diesel engine driver in the Power House at the RAF West Camp.

Bill's part-time war duties were those of Air Raid Warden and service in the Home Guard, with Uncle Tudor Liscombe as Area Commander; headquarters at the Church Hall and Pancross Barn. Sargeants Alf Gibbins, Alf Vizard and Ted Williams. Corporals Hughes (Monastery Mill) and Roy Booker (correct me if I'm wrong) and Idris Lewis, an up and coming Second Lieutenant. As a favour Bill used to carry newspapers for people unable to get away from the village. This would also give him cause to call on Publicans 'out of hours'. David Harris, Charlie Bryer, Trixie Phillips, Glyn Llewellyn, 'Fox and Hounds' and Dick Evans and Gethin Lloyd, 'Green Dragon' to name but a few. The public house gardens received his careful attention, also as a favour, but probably for reward. Runner beans, I am told, were special to these houses because of the direction of the urinal drain. When paper deliveries became too much for him I took on and developed the Sunday paper round - still on a bike I may add, until we had motor cycles and in the end a Ford Anglia van, which became a trip out for Russel (legs) and Vivienne (in carry cot). These deliveries I estimate to have ended in about 1964.

Bill Watts spent his years of retirement at Abernant with his wife Doris and daughter Kathleen: Philip, son and Ruth, daughter in law, Russell and Vivienne grandson and granddaughter living in a bungalow constructed in his beloved garden. The bungalow was built by Raymond Vizard, a well liked character from Penmark, and professional footballer

with Cardiff City, Barry and Bath in his younger days.

During the final years of work Bill had to be lifted on and off his 49cc NSU Quickly (pedal assisted), consequent on his arthritis. During the previous 20 years he had travelled by cycle, come rain or shine, though with some difficulty in passing the Fox and Hounds and Green Dragon. During his retirement he became an avid mail order shopper, perusing the papers for gadgets and bargains. He became an agent for Janet Fraser. As a golden wedding present, in 1969, he bought Doris a new small-wheel cycle, the former machine quote 'not bloody safe - you will break your neck'. Doris and Bill were then 77 years of age.

A life-long friend of Bill was Morris Griffiths, Bridge House (now Bridge Cottage). Morris was a carpenter, prisoner of war during the 1914-18 War and worked for many years at Rhoose Asbestos Works. During Bill's retirement Morris used to call for him and take him on sentimental journeys, the most frequent being to Charlie Deere's at the Red Lion, Bonvilston. Charlie married Doris' cousin Evelyn Lougher who lived at Cross Green, Llanccarfan before marriage.

During his last years he suffered Crohn's disease, a bowel complaint. Another well-known sufferer was General Dwight Eisenhower. In 1967 Bill had a colostomy but he still carried on digging his garden with a special springloaded spade; this encouraged broad shoulders; legs were provided by Doris, Kathleen, Russel and Vivienne.

Bill loved watching TV cowboy films - he used to spend the evening in the bungalow watching John Wayne and the like. On a summer evening with the volume turned up, the sound of gunfire used to echo around Abernant and I used to wonder if it was safe to come in. He used to watch our TV because Doris would not have one. She relented later when he was confined to bed for long periods.

Bill Watts died in June 1972. He was buried in Llanccarfan Churchyard having lived a life of kindness and courtesy, giving happiness to those closest. A man with a wonderful sense of humour, thought for others, regardless of station in life; I feel very proud as a son to have shared so many of his years of living near the village of Llanccarfan.

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Llanccarfan as I remember it.

by Richard W. Evans (Dick)

I used to go with one of the farmers whose turn it was to help repair the ram and I was also one of the people employed to dig trenches from Peterstone to Llanccarfan and district for the supply of water to houses and farms.

Talking of water reminds me of the time I spent in the rivers tickling trout. I used to catch a lot - 27 one Sunday morning (David Harris will vouch for this!). I also caught 'Joey', the

trout in the Ivy Pool - one lb - weighed in the Fox and Hounds. These trout used to help my pocket money. Another way of supplementing my pocket money was by driving Mr Sherrah in his pony and trap from Flaxland to Carmel Chapel every Sunday morning for 6d. Another ruse worked by the boys (no names!) was to let-out Mr Gunstone's little pigs from Ty to Maen and then receive 6d. each for getting them in!

The hounds used to meet in Blacksmith's square and we boys followed them at lunch-time. I remember returning at 3.45 pm on one occasion and the older boys telling me to go up the steps and into school the back way - this I did, expecting them to follow me, but I was on my own, going in when the children were singing prayers. Mr Davies, the Headmaster, chastised me, not for missing school but for having the cheek to go in during prayers! Dilys Liscombe enquired about games at school: We played football with a tennis ball - 14 or 15 a side, and also a game called 'Strong Horses'.

My earliest recollection goes back to Armistice Day in 1918 when I was carried to the celebrations by the 'Rowlands Girls' from Garnllwyd (Mary and Damaris). I also recollect meeting my father (George Evans) on his return from the War, outside the Horseshoes at Moulton.

One of our little gang used to love lighting fires and one day lit a bundle of straw being carried by Tom Shanks, on his back, up school hill. We all scrambled over the school wall to watch events. He soon felt the heat and his language turned the air blue! Another episode also concerned Tom Shanks. Melvyn Morgan was going to collect milking cows from a field near Ford Cross and took a shortcut through the graveyard and suddenly a head popped up over the edge of a newly dug grave (it was Tom) and said 'What's the time?'. In Melvyn's words he 'didn't stop running until reaching Ford Cross (our house).

Another incident: we used to put down night lines to catch fish and one morning found a big Aylsbury Drake, half dead on the end of the line. We had to kill it and were feathering it in the house when someone knocked at the door and asked whether the boys were in and would they look for the drake which had not returned the night before! We were given 6d each for looking, and ate the drake!

I wonder if the bells are still rung as we used to ring them - Sunday (morning and evening), weddings and the Old Year out and New Year in. The ringers were Bob and Lew Griffiths, David and Millward Harris, John Bryant, Bryn Williams, Cliff Morgan and myself.

I used to spend a lot of time at the old Bakehouse with George Durham and sisters watching Mr Durham rolling out dough and weighing same and using a long-handled shovel to put it in and out of the large ovens. The loaves had such names as 'Swansea', 'Crown', 'Cottage', 'Batch', Large and Small 'Tins'. Bits left over were made into 'fingers' which, straight from the oven, buttered, were delicious. The old watermill supplied flour to the Bakehouse and corn to the farms. I spent many happy hours with Gwynne's (Liscombe) grandfather, who owned the Mill and Bakehouse. He had a saying 'You can

tell and honest miller by the hairs growing from the palms of his hands'!

When the Liscombe and Watts' family moved to Abernant I spent a lot of pleasant hours there helping Bill Watts with the milk round in Barry. He also taught me to drive the motor-cycle with box for carrying churns. Bill Watts was one of the most amiable and cheerful people I ever met, always the same, and it was people like him and his wife, Dai Harris and family, of the Fox and Hounds, Johnny Jones (the Coal), Tudor and Mrs Liscombe who made the village entertaining and pleasant.

I wonder if any of the old short cuts are still in use, such as Ford Cross to Fontygary, along Cliff meadows by the river, where one could see kingfishers, collect duck eggs and watercress - on the way passing Fonmon Castle, through Fonmon village. Also a short cut from Ford Cross to Walterstone where we found a bee orchid by the small orchard belonging to Ford Farm in the 10 acre field called Penlan.

Country life is all about birds and animals - such as lying in bed at night listening to Nightingales and Owls and seeing my sister, Glenys' cat bringing in young, live rabbits and placing them on the mat in front of the fire. The cat disappeared when my sister went on holiday until the day of her return. We had a mongrel dog called Gyp, borrowed by farmers, when thrashing, to kill the rats. There is a snapshot of Gyp by a record pile of rats which he had killed. There used to be a lot of hares on Flaxland Farm and I'm sure people will remember other animals.

Dilwyn Griffiths of the Talbots had a horse called 'Egypt' which no fence could keep in once he heard the hunt and Edwin Morgan of Walterstone had a horse, Peter, which used to win lots of prizes in 'Musical Chairs' at Fetes and Gymkhanas. You could see the horse doing the same thing in his own field, galloping round in a circle and shooting off into a corner. Also at Walterstone Farm were prize Hereford bulls with names such as Sam, ap Sam, Resolute and a cow named Lux. Some bulls were sent to Argentina to boost their herds so, when you eat Corn Beef, who knows??

Pubs used to be closed in Wales on Sundays but we usually overcame this problem. After bell-ringing we went stealthily to the Fox and Hounds barn (now demolished) where there would be a surprise gathering, each with a glass of Hancock's flagon bitter. Alternatively we went to the Mason's Arms at Llanbethery. In the evening we walked to Llancadle, over the gate by the Bealing's cottage, over the wall and through the back door into the Green Dragon. One evening there, we found the village bobby by the fire. We turned to rush out but he called us back and bought us a drink! We also used the Blue Anchor at Aberthaw. During the week we were sometimes warned by the bobby which pub the police would be raiding. To make sure of a peaceful drink on Sunday we also joined the Conservative Club at Rhoose.

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Extracts from the editor's letter replying to some of Dick's questions.

Yes, there are still badgers in the bank at Broomwell and perhaps more foxes than some

would like; various ducks and chickens have made meals for them this year. The trout are another story. Twenty years ago my daughter learned to tickle trout in the stream at Broomwell but they have gone now. The water looks sterile in winter, then grows great crops of green blanket weed in summer because of the fertilizer runoff. The Ivy Pool is no better and it is rare to see a trout there nowadays, or the bullheads under the stones by the ford. A silage-liquor accident about three years ago left the stream littered with dead eels. It's the saddest thing about modern agriculture. You can't really blame the farmers but I wish it could be different. There were kingfishers to be seen until seven or eight years ago, particularly down-river from Bridge House but I'm afraid the loss of the fish has sent them elsewhere in search of food. There is still watercress near Cliff but I don't think I would eat it these days.

The old thatched 'Horseshoes' at Moulton, where you met your father in 1918, burned down in 1963 but the name is continued in the new, rebuilt pub. There is a restaurant upstairs which is decorated with some of the old tools from the Blacksmith's Shop in Lllancarfan. Gwynne and Dilys Liscombe donated them after Joe Lewis' death. It is a pity that they could not go on working, but at least the old anvil is still used at Pancross Farm and passers-by enquire the use of the old wheel banding-plate, even though the Shop has gone.

Yes the bells are still rung as they used to be, though the ringers have changed - Phil Watts, who you must remember as a very young lad, is one of them and still lives in a bungalow at Abernant where the old house that you remember is currently being rebuilt as a home for his son, Russel.

The old footpaths still exist but they're hardly short-cuts any more - the motor car has changed all that. The best are south down the valley to Penmark, north to Garnllwyd or over the top of Pen'lan to Broomwell. The Penmark path comes into its own as a short-cut when snow has blocked the lanes around Pancross - I have had to leave my car in Penmark on more than one occasion, and Derek Higgs recalls walking to work in Barry during the 1962-3 snow, using the same short-cut.

I have never heard nightingales in Lllancarfan but the owls are still here in numbers - the tawny owls are the noisiest! My Siamese captures the descendants of the rabbits which survived Glenys' cat so perhaps too much change has not come upon these more enduring things. The hares are not so noticeable at Flaxland but towards Whitton, and on the other side of Five Mile Lane, they are still there, leading the foxes a merry dance. The bee orchid intrigued me - I've never seen one in the Parish, though they still grow on the railway embankments at Aberthaw. We still have a few early purple orchids and cowslips; the best place was in the banky field opposite New Mill but grassland improvement has taken them from there.

I hope these ramblings bring back some memories and tell you a bit about the present day in the village. Thank you for taking the trouble to write. It helps no end to keep the Newsletters filled and so many people have told us they remember various things but

somehow never get around to writing them
down.

JRE

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Mistakes. I suppose that editors always get into trouble. I have already given you an incorrect date for a monthly gathering in Newsletter 8 and the 'deliberate error', which no one identified, was that I managed to convert the Wild Goose into the Flying Goose in the same Newsletter (it used to be the Mason's Arms, hence the reference to stone). Now I have to confess to another. Richard John who was formerly Clerk to Glamorgan County Council, came from Flaxland not Penonn, as my notes to Albert Newton's letter had it. Lyn Price's sharp eyes picked this one up. The authors and other experts read the longer articles before they are published but these short notes are my responsibility. 'Must try harder'.

JRE

Announcement and thanks. During the first year of the Llancarfan Society, our treasurer, Derek Higgs, has given sterling service in handling a great deal of mail and sorting out the birth-pangs of our multiplying membership. Derek now finds that the demands of his job leave him insufficient spare time to continue in the post of Treasurer and, with great regret, has offered his resignation, taking effect from the time of our next Committee meeting. We all offer him our heartfelt thanks and wonder where we are going to find another Treasurer who will not only leave the books in immaculate condition but address and deliver envelopes as well!

Last month's whist drive Newsletter 9 was more or less put together before the last whist drive was held. I found room to thank all the folk who helped organise the event but what I didn't know was that about half of the folk who supported us, came from Rhoose - 16 in all. To them, we extend our thanks for adding to the success of the evening.

Future events.

School Open Day. The headmistress, Ann Maddocks tells us that the children have finished their projects relating to village history and some of the material will be exhibited during their open day on Thursday May 5th. Visitors are welcome between 9.30 and 11.45 am and 1.30 and 3.15 pm.

Barbecue. There will be a barbecue during the evening of 10th June in the field opposite the school, above the tennis court (Gwynne Liscombe thought you might be interested to know that this used to be a part of the Broadhayes smallholding and was called 'Furthest Field'). Entry charge £1.00. Time 7.00 p.m.

Craft Fair. On the afternoon of 2nd July we shall be holding a Craft fair, Car-boot sale and Children's Sports at Pancross Barn. Further information will appear in the next Newsletter but we are soliciting applications for stall-space at £3.00 per position. Contact Phil Watts at Abernant.

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Snippet Did you know that creatures stranger than the Ceffyl Dwr once roamed our parish - or close to it? A last minute visit to the Dinosaur exhibition at the National Museum in Cardiff told us that dinosaur bones were found at Pant-y-Ffynnon, Bonvilston. For those who are interested in geology they came from the Triassic rocks, not from the much older Carboniferous Limestone of Hall's Quarry (laid down long before the dinosaurs evolved).