



## **LLANCARFAN SOCIETY**

### **Newsletter 11: June 1988**

The Early Spring Bank Holiday dawned grey, wet and windy. Those of us who were leading the guided walks looked at the weather with little hope but by 11.00 the first patches of blue sky had appeared and, unlike the rest of the country, we finally had a sunny, warm and enjoyable morning. Three groups were led by Andrew Griffiths, Gwynne Liscombe and John Etherington with a total of thirty to forty walkers, though no one did a head-count. This was about ten more than the number of booking slips returned - various people turned up at the last minute, probably because it was such a pleasant morning. The participants ranged from present inhabitants of the village to past residents, some recent and some going back to the days before Llancarfán grew so much in the 1950's and 60's. In all, a great success with many reunions and one which has prompted suggestions for an encore or perhaps similar walks in other adjacent villages, for example Llantrithyd. We shall announce another walk, probably to be held one evening, in the next Newsletter.

Our especial thanks go to Vanessa and Ian Newton at Old Mill who put-up with us all trooping into the house to look at the remnants of the mill machinery. A former owner installed a glass partition in the room containing mill gear so that it can be seen easily without creating an awful cleaning and dusting problem! Vanessa and Ian also allowed us to remove the cover from the old water ram chamber which is in the northwest corner of their garden. The ram is still in amazingly good condition considering that it has not been used for thirty years. Thanks also go to the leaders of the groups and especially to Gwynne Liscombe for the loan of old photographs, the enlargements of which added to the interest as we looked at various parts of the village. This certainly showed how valuable it would be if we could collect together other old photographs, drawings or paintings for copying - does anyone have prints from any time before the early 50's?

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Announcements. Our fellow society, the Llancarfán Cricket Club has asked us to express their gratitude to Tony Thomas, Pancross Farm for permission to use an area of land at Pancross as a cricket-ground. Matches can now be played at home and cricket returns to Llancarfán after almost two decades.

A few misprinted copies of Newsletter 10 may have been sent out with the first part of Dick Evan's letter missing. If you received one of these send a card to John Etherington, Ceffyl Du, and a new page will be sent with Newsletter 12.

We can only afford to circulate a Newsletter of 3-4 sheets each time and, as a result, there is now quite an accumulation of unpublished material. Don't despair if your piece has not reached the top of the heap yet. It will appear in due course, more or less in queuing order, and above all please go on sending us your writings otherwise we shall run out of articles next year. Some of the longer contributions may appear in a yearbook if we can get this organised. The Glamorgan Archivist, Mrs Patricia Moore, has written to thank us for depositing the first nine Newsletters with the County Archive and requests that we continue to do this. Those of you who have contributed items can be content that the work will be preserved for the future.

The School Open Day was held on Thursday May 5th. Not many committee members could attend as it was a working-day but Barbara Milhuisen reports that the projects relating to village and church history were really splendid, including drawings, photographs and written work. Congratulations to all of the children whose work made the projects possible.

Publication of the Newsletters has attracted more people to some of the village paths and, in particular the walk along the mill race which Norton and Margaret Evans have made so much more accessible during the last few years since they bought the land. In the spring it is so beautiful with the wildflowers which they have encouraged. Sadly, some visitors seem unable to restrain themselves from picking great quantities of flowers. This offends my professional sensibilities as a biologist and worries me that we may unwittingly have helped to bring the countryside under even more pressure.

Articles this month. In the last Newsletter, Phil Watts wrote on the life of his father. In his introductory notes, Phil said that this was 'typical of the quality of life that was enjoyed by people living a simple life in Llancarfan at the turn of the century.' In those days, such a short time ago, husband and wife, mother and father, were perhaps much more a mutually supportive partnership and with less material expectation or self-seeking than we are used to today. Certainly this aspect of social change emerges from the other half of Phil's article which follows below.

Les Griffiths was the first contributor of an article to our Newsletters. This month we have another of his memories and it is followed by the record of a conversation with his brother Llewellyn (Llew) Griffiths by Phil Watts. Llew has also given us some notes which will form another short article later-on.

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The Life of Doris Jane Watts (nee Liscombe) of Abernant, Llancarfan, Barry.  
by Philip H. Watts

Born: Monastery Mill, Llancarfan, September 11th 1892. Mother: Jane Liscombe (nee Lougher, formerly of Garnllwyd). Father: William Liscombe, Miller.

Doris' father, William Liscombe hailed from Somerset via Downs Farm??, Wick and West

Aberthaw? She attended Llancarfan School and also a girls school in Penarth, described by Bill Watts as a school for ladies - emphasising ladies. At that time Doris probably lived with Damaris Howell (sister of Jane Lougher), and her husband Arthur who was Registrar for the area. I wonder who taught her music? She was reputed to have played the Church organ, off and on, for 70 years. She probably worked at home after school, there being plenty to do at the Mill.

When the men went to war in the 1914-18 period, the girls were left to run the bread rounds. They appear to have been well run by Jane and William Liscombe and there are some very amusing stories of adventures with horse and bread van in the rural areas of Pendoylan, Peterston, Bonvilston, Aberthaw, St Athan, Penmark and of course Llancarfan. It is well known that horses are creatures of habit and would always make water and disperse other matter in the same place on the round. The girls found this very amusing and would relate it with great hilarity. The girls would have been Mabel Watts (later Liscombe), Evelyn Lougher (later Deere) and Connie Griffiths. There were probably others.

Courting in those days was very much an adventure - Doris would be allowed to such things as Church Bible classes and concert practices from which Bill would bring her home, kiss her goodnight, Doris would say goodnight to Ma and Pa and then jump out of the bedroom window to resume courting with 'Willie' (Bill), probably in the hay barn - at the risk of being startled in the dark by William Liscombe's late night feeding of cows in the shed.

In the days of limited entertainment much had to be made of events as they took place. Doris and Bill are known to have walked to many dances in Pendoylan, Peterston, Penmark and other surrounding areas. It is alarming to hear that they frequently only arrived home in time to go to work the next day at 6-o'clock. Charlie Deere, Red Lion, Bonvilston was an accomplished pianist and I believe used to play at all the dances. They used to work hard and play hard. I wonder if times have changed all that much. I believe that one commodity absent from this way of life was alcoholic beverage. Could this be an example of the influence by Lloyd George on the life of the nation?

During the years between the wars a lot of time was spent organising and taking part in village concerts. Jane Liscombe was a prime mover in these matters, the front room at Monastery Mill was often a rehearsal room. Dressing-up has been and still is much liked by members of Watts' and Liscombe's family!

Doris worked very hard during her life, having a preference for the outside, she was equally at home gardening as with the many duties attached to keeping cows and horses. She was particularly adept at accumulating great quantities of wood for the fires. She could swing an axe like a man and drive wedges into the trunks to split into lengths for sawing.

Shopping trips from Abernant are worth recalling. Her route to Barry shops would take

her through Garnllwyd Wood, past Whitton Rosser to the Five Mile Lane where she would catch a bus which used to run from Talbot Green to Barry. This journey would begin before noon and the return would be after dark, a hurricane lantern would be left near an appropriate gateway and we children would wait to see the light appearing from the wood and then we would go to meet her. This was a route that had a number of hunting gates.

When the bungalow was built at Abernant it was intended that Doris, William and Kathleen would reside in the bungalow while the condemned cottage was to be repaired. However, Doris and Bill refused to cooperate and they preferred to sleep in railway waggons placed on the farmyard. Some of the older readers will recall that, at this time, Abernant House had props against the front wall, the roof bending in the middle. Raymond Vizard rebuilt the front wall, asbestos sheeted the roof and renewed windows all for the sum of £180!

Doris found great reward in making butter, cheese. There have been many hours of turning the handle separating the milk from the cream. During the War goats were kept at Abernant to help along the wartime rations. Visits to Billy-goat meant a journey of three miles to Warren Mill: this she did on foot with a halter on nanny-goat but she somehow managed to take her bike there was no way she was going to walk home if the nanny-goat had to be left behind.

In her later years Doris had the pleasure of sharing a lot of her time with her grandchildren, Vivienne and Russel - this she did with a lot of love and kindness.

She died at Easter time in 1980 and was buried in Llancarfan Churchyard. The week before she died she had a heart attack which left her hand and leg numb indicating a lack of circulation and slight paralysis. But, in spite of this, on the Saturday she insisted on doing the vegetables for Sunday lunch. 'I'll do them in warm water' she said 'it will do me good'. This, I think sums up the courage of the woman and I am inclined to think they do not make them any more like that.

The Portsmouth connection. On October the 5th, 1944, my sister Mary Watts married Ron Thomas from Portsmouth, a Petty Officer in the Navy. Ron served in destroyers, operating from the Channel ports of Devonport and Portsmouth, taking part in the D-day landings. The naval ports had large populations of service personnel consequent on its being wartime. Beer was rationed, pubs only open while beer lasted. When Ron met Bill Watts and was introduced to Hancocks' Home Brew and found that Dai Harris had more beer than he could sell, he thought he had found the land of milk and honey! September 17th, 1945, saw the birth of the first grandchild, Elizabeth Anne Thomas. Due to calls of service life, tours abroad, etc. it was necessary for Mary and Anne to spend a lot of their time at Abernant. Anne commenced school at Llancarfan Primary in company with Peter Badcock and Jennifer Griffiths but later visits were confined to school holidays. When a permanent home was set-up in Portsmouth and Ron finished in the Navy he joined the Police. Anne, with strong roots at Abernant was most insistent on staying with Nanna:

yielding to daughter pressure, Anne was put many times on the train at Portsmouth, alone, and sat in the charge of the guard to Cardiff station where she was collected by Doris Watts. Would we do this 40 years on?

Notes Hunting gates - provided and maintained by Glamorgan Hunt, usually connecting land of different ownership.

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Recollections of my life in Llancarfan from the age of five years

by Les Griffiths

My mother was born in Llancarfan. My grandmother, on my mother's side, was Kathrin Hopkin, living in Llancarfan and my grandfather, John Griffiths was from St Nicholas. They had seven children, three girls, Margaret Ann, Mary Jane and Elisabeth and four boys, William, Thomas, Llewellyn and David. My grandfather on my father's side was Robert Griffiths of Maesteg and his wife was Catherine Bedford also of Maesteg. They had two children, Gwen and John. My Grandfather Robert was a widower for many years. He was a tailor and had a bachelor brother, William, also a tailor and gentleman farmer.

My mother learned her trade as a dressmaker and practised it until her marriage. She would spend two or three weeks at a stretch living in on farms in the Parish, making and mending clothes. They moved a lot after the marriage as my father worked for the old Barry Railway Company and they were living in Glamorgan Street, Barry when I was born on January 23rd 1905. I had a brother and sister older than I and two brothers younger than I am. My sister, the eldest of the family was born in Llancarfan, my brother Bedford in Rhoose and my two younger brothers Robert and Llewellyn were born in Llancarfan.

My father's last move with the railway company was to Energlyn near Caerphilly where we lived for three years. We returned to Llancarfan in the spring of 1910 and I have many happy memories of 74 years in Llancarfan. We returned to Caradoc Cottage where grandfather and his brother had been running a tailoring business and smallholding since 1905. The time had come when my parents had to take care of them as they were too old to cope with the work. We always had plenty of fresh milk, butter, cheese and eggs; also a large garden and apple orchard as well as soft fruit trees, blackcurrents and goosberries.

My mother did all the milking and dairy work. The cows were brought in morning and evening for milking. The milk was then taken to the dairy and poured into large steel pans, left to cool and the cream skimmed off with a skimmer, a thin steel disk, slightly dished. The cream was poured into a large earthenware stein. This was done every day for a week at the end of which the cream would be poured into a churn and churned for butter. My

mother also made fresh milk cheese, skimmed milk and butter milk which was the residue from the butter after churning and used for feeding pigs and poultry. As time went on we acquired a machine which separated cream from the milk making work in the dairy much easier. The surplus butter and cheese, also eggs and poultry were taken to Barry at the weekend and sold to regular customers, most of whom had a regular order for produce.

Most of the land in the Parish of Llancarfan was owned by large estates amongst which were Jesus College, Oxford and the Aubrey Estate, later to become the Radcliff Estate. In the eighteen and early nineteen hundreds farm work was the main source of local employment. The farm labourer, as he was termed in those days, was looked upon as a very humble worker. Nevertheless, he was also a very skilled worker; he had to be able to handle a team of horses, plough a field with a horse-drawn plough, milk a herd of cows by hand, build a rick of hay or corn, dig a ditch and lay a hedge. In a very wet summer I have seen a field of hay having to be mown with a scythe because the ground was too soft to carry a horse drawn mower.

When the hay was ready for carrying it would be raked into rows, cocked ready for pitching on to the waggon. The man on the waggon was the loader and it was his job to load in such a way that the hay would stand the journey to the rick yard. A long-handled pike or pitching fork was used for pitching onto the waggon and again off the waggon onto the rick. Larger farms had horse-drawn pitching pikes. Making hay was considered a skilled task; it had to be made in such a way that it would stand up through all winds and weather. The hayrick was left to settle for a few weeks and then thatched with straw to keep it dry through the winter months. This was another skilled job for the farm worker.

'With labour must I earn my bread: what harm?  
Idleness had been worse: labour will sustain me.' John Milton.

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A conversation with Llewellyn Griffiths, brother of Les and formerly of Caradoc Cottage

by Phil V

Llew has a great love for shooting and fishing. He talks like a man who loves and cares about the countryside. He talks of a magnificent oak tree at Ffynnon Dyfrig (east of Abernant on the edge of Garnllwyd Wood). Every year a white owl used to nest in the oak. The same owl nightly visited Llancarfan Church. Llew would set his watch at dusk and dawn the owl was that regular. I am not sure whether Llew knew it was the same owl by the mice in the oak being from Llancarfan Church or whether they were on nodding terms when passing Caradoc Cottage.

Llew remembers Mr Buckley of Postmaster fame, cobbler and relative of Jennie Weight. Mr Buckley, he recalls had a novel way of catching eels in the river. He would take a length of hemp, push it into the river wall at the Fox and Hounds with a long stick. The eels would get the hemp stuck in their throats or gullets and they could be pulled-out. No hooks required - perhaps this would satisfy the anti-cruelty brigade.



Llew remembers his brother, Bedford under the instruction of brother Les, catching a trout with a rabbit wire. Perhaps this was more luck than skill certainly unlucky for the trout. Evan Thomas of Llanvythin often invited Llew to fish and shoot with him at Llanvythin and other local spots. Rabbits abounded on Llanvythin Farm in the pre-myxomatosis days. He recalls being a beater for Macintosh of macintosh fame and other gentry from Bonvilston who used to shoot Garnllwyd.

Notes. A few weeks after Phil gave me this article I had the pleasure of meeting Lew myself. He expanded on some of these things, for example when the beaters had finished traversing Garnllwyd Wood the escaping birds would fly down the valley past Caradoc Cottage where Lew and his brothers would lie in wait to fill the family larder! Catching fish was another part of their lives. The trout used to lie in the deep pool below the millrace waterfall and the boys would capture these by damming the river to send all the water down the millrace to the overflow sluice. The pool would then be baled-out and the fish captured. Some of their other techniques were even more novel and perhaps should not appear in print! Mr Buckley's technique with wool for eels was called 'clotting', so Lew said - in East Anglia I think the same method is called bobbing. Llew has also given us various notes on his memories which will appear in a later number.

#### Letters

Dr Evan Thomas, Tyla Rhossyr has continued his interesting series of letters to us. His memories were revived by the mention of Jane Liscombe in Phil Watts' article in Newsletter 10. Jane Liscombe was sister to Dr Thomas' grandfather, William Lougher. He recalls that his grandfather would walk from Llanvythin to the end of the drive where he would listen to the nightingale singing in Basset's Wood, confirming Dick Evans' memory of the long-absent birds, also mentioned in the same Newsletter. Dr Thomas suspected that Basset's wood had been cut down; it may well have been coppiced but it still exists and has even had some replanting during the last year or two.

Dr Thomas also wrote concerning Mr Hopkins of Pancross whom Phil mentioned in his article. Mr Hopkins' son David had five or six children two of whom attended Llancarfan school together with Evan Thomas. Olwyn and Gwynne Hopkins of Llanbethery are two more of those same children. As Phil's article said, Mr Hopkins was a widower but he remarried and his second wife, Marie, lived to be 100. To further complicate the story, William Lougher married Mary, sister of Mr Hopkins, Pancross and consequently the Hopkins children are cousins to Dr Thomas who wrote: '--- indeed, most of the villagers seemed to be related to one another!!'

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#### Future events.

Barbecue. There will be a barbecue starting at 7.00 pm on 10th June in the field opposite the school, above the tennis court. Entry charge £1.00.

Craft Fair. From 2.0 pm on 2nd July we shall be holding a Craft fair, Carboot sale (no traders) and Children's Sports at Pancross Barn. Stall-space is offered at £3.00 per

position. Contact Barbara Milhuisen, West Lodge, Aberthaw. (phone 0446/750233).

Entry fee will be £1.00 - accompanied children (under 12) free.

Dinner and Whist Drives. We intend to hold a dinner in September and hope to find a hall or restaurant which can accomodate about 150 to avoid last year's problems. Several whist drives will be held once the evenings begin to drawin and it is likely that they will be in Rhoose Hall as we have had so much support from that direction. More details in the next Newsletter.