



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 20: June 1989

The Village Walk, held on the Early Spring Bank Holiday, was a great success. There were more than forty participants who were taken around the circuit by Andrew Griffiths, Phil Watts and John Etherington. Many old friends were encountered, in at least one case after a 30 year gap! The weather smiled upon us, and so many former residents and long-time associates of the village turned-up that all sorts of items of recent history were recollected. Thanks are due to Joyce Andrews for arranging our pre-walk coffee - a very civilised improvement on last year's assembly in a damp car-park! A successful raffle was organised by Dilys Liscombe. After our return to lunch and refreshment in the 'Fox', a duck-egg race was held between the lower ford bridge and the 'Fox' car park bridge. Seventy eggs at £1.00 each raised a useful sum for the Society and a holiday visitor must have gone away very pleased with his £25 first prize!

So successful was the walk that it is certain to be repeated next year but we will hold an evening walk later in the summer for slightly more athletic souls who would not mind the climb up out of the valley with a mile or two along field paths. Date 17th July: see Future Events notes.

Question: Of which house, in the centre of the village, has the front elevation remained unchanged, except for a cat-door, since its building in the early 'thirties?

Answer will appear in next Newsletter but it is interesting to note that the former Church Room, now Community Hall, has also changed very little. I have a framed photograph from the early 40's which shows the Hall, exactly as it is now (except for the new vandal-proof covers to the lower windows - a sad reflection on our times). The photo was given to me by Gwynne and Dilys Liscombe and was taken by Gwynne's father, Tudor, who lived at Woodlands. Incidentally, on that photograph there is no sign of the stabling for horses which was called for in the Diocesan Faculty which featured in the last Newsletters. Were the stables amongst the buildings on the other side of the road adjacent to the Parsonage?

-ooo-

Future Events

Craft Fair and Children's Sports. This will be held at Pancross Barn on Saturday 1st July from 11.00 a.m. onward, followed by a Barn Dance in the Evening. Licenced bar and refreshments for both events. Proceeds from the day's events will go to the Community Hall Restoration Fund while the Dance, organised by the Church, will be in aid of the Church Restoration Fund.

Anyone interested in obtaining a stall at the Fair or in need of further information should contact Barbara Milhuisen (Secretary) at 73 Tynewydd Road, Barry. Telephone Barry 720507.

The Llancarfan Society will be running its own stall and we invite any members who would like to exhibit a craft item, or product of any hobby, to do so. Not for sale but just for interests sake. Do you paint, sew, knit, engrave, take photographs, make wooden gnomes or write poems. Why not show the rest of us?

Anyone willing to volunteer a pair of hands on the day of the Fair will be more than welcome. Contact Phil Watts at Abernant, Barbara Milhuisen or any other Committee member.

The Barn Dance, or more accurately, dance in the barn, will have music provided by Grand Slam Jazz, a band which has recorded for the BBC. Tickets, which include a chicken supper, are £4.00 and obtainable from Ken Vincent at Middlecross, Llancarfan or Barbara Milhuisen, address above.

It is hoped that the dance will attract some 300 people, as in previous years, and the organisers would be most grateful to any lady or gentleman who will be willing to provide desserts to follow the main course. A bowl of jelly if you are unskilled, up to a work of art if you are a real chef! Contact Ken Vincent, Middlecross.

Evening Walk. This will be held on Saturday, 17th July, commencing at 7.00 p.m. from the Fox and Hounds and will cover two to three miles of footpath and lane, including the climb to the top of the eastern side of the valley. This will be a slow, informal walk (you don't need to be a marathon runner or even jogger!) and will be postponed to a later date if it is raining. If this happens we will post a notice on the Fox and Hounds door, earlier in the day. Wellies if it has been wet, otherwise walking-shoes will do.

Church Visit. On the day of the Village Walk your editor managed to misarrange things (there is a better but unprintable word!) so that we missed a possible visit to the Church; humble apologies to Father Field who wasted part of his morning waiting for us. This note is addressed to those who would like to attend a conducted tour of the Church. We obviously need to have a rough idea of the numbers involved: if you would like to join a party at some time on Bank Holiday Monday, 28th August (or around that date) please send a card to me (John Etherington, Ceffyl Du, Llancarfan), or tell me you are coming. Date and time will be announced in the next Newsletter.

-ooo-

An outlying part of the Parish. Newsletter 8 featured a short article on the Cowbridge and Aberthaw Railway which reminded us that this parish, not so long ago, boasted its own steam locomotives, railway track and stations. During a recent cycling jaunt around the Vale we came across a notice at Cross Inn, announcing the temporary closure of the unclassified road between Gigman Bridge and Springhill (St Hilary), to allow British Rail engineering staff to dismantle a bridge over the old railway, presumably because it has become unsafe. More than half a century after the closure of the line, British Rail, which was not created until 1948, still has a hand in our community affairs! By the way, the road is barely surfaced, though passable, and must be very little changed from the early part of the century when the bridge was almost new. Its banks were lined with bluebells and ferns, several swallows and a cuckoo made a summer, and when we reached the high ground of Springhill the view of the sea was almost lost in the heat-haze of an early May afternoon. We are so lucky in the Vale; even though our agriculture is of the 20th century, the rolling

countryside with steep-sided valleys has protected us from the loss of hedgerows which has turned parts of arable England into a prairie. The cowslips and orchids may have gone from most of the fertilized meadows but the hedgebanks are still a paradise. It might have been a century ago except, perhaps, that the hedges then would have been neatly laid rather than the spiky brushes of machine-cut twigs, stock proofed with pig-netting.

JRE

-000-

A letter from Ken Lougher, Burry Port.

I am a new subscriber to the Llancarfan Society and enjoyed reading my first Newsletter, March '89. In it, the Editor said he would appreciate any notes or comments of interest to his readers so I would like to submit my observations on Ernie Badcock's diary. It is noted that a great deal of time was spent on ploughing. Apart from the slower method of horse ploughing, in those days, and more often than not with a single furrow plough, the old time farmers used a lot more arable land to grow their own cattle fodder.

As a young lad, living in Rhoose, I spent all my school holidays on farm work, very often at the "Model Farm" between Rhoose and Barry. Apart from getting extra pocket money, I was kept out of mischief. My duties were mostly helping with the harvest and milking cows. The morning milking was easy, with help from the other employees but in the afternoon I was sent down from the harvest field to do the milking alone. This was no great chore with the "Alfa Laval" milking machine.

Reference was made in the diary to the chaffing machine. This was usually situated in the loft where the straw and hay, when cut, went down a chute to the lower floors where it was mixed with the minced root crop, the pile being turned over by shovelling. In the granary there would be a machine-operated corn mill. We did not mix this meal direct to the pile of fodder but added some to each bucket-full as it was fed to the cows. One would not expect much nourishment from straw, but this supplied the fibre required for the healthy function of any digestive system. Another supplement sometimes was "brewers grain" brought from the breweries in Cardiff. This was grain after fermenting and smelling like beer. I remember some pigs that were fed too much of the grain and were tottering around like drunks. They may have had a hangover next morning!

There is never a lack of a job that needs doing on a farm. If there was a delay in the harvest because of heavy dew or a shower of rain, I had a regular job cutting thistles with a scythe in any of the grazing fields. I soon became very proficient with a scythe.

With mechanisation, ploughing was done in much less time. I remember as a child in Hawaii going with Dad to see the "Fowler's Steam Plows" at work preparing for cane planting. These traction engines had a huge coil of steel hawser underneath between front and back wheels. The engines would be situated up to half a mile apart. The plough, which consisted of a double set of 16 ploughshares, was tilted to work in either direction as it was hauled from one engine to the other as they worked their way forward on to new

ground. There were also big tractors with track-laying wheels in use.

You made mention of the Ferguson tractor. After retiring from business in Rhosse, my wife and I emigrated to Ontario, Canada. The Massey tractor factory was in Brantford and this Company later joined with the Ferguson Company and so produced the new Massey-Ferguson farm machinery. The factory in Brantford is now closed because of economic reasons. Each year, bigger and bigger combine harvesters were made. To my mind, such heavy machines compacted the soil and caused rainfall to run off before it could soak into the ground. In Canada where there are few hedgerows the soil erosion easily followed the lay of the land into creeks and rivers. To realize how farming methods have progressed, I have seen in Canada, wheat over-sown on clover fields. The wheat gets a start before the clover is cut and is well established before the hard winter sets in.

Many of us remember the hay pitching pole, the hay mows and corn ricks, neatly thatched by experts at their work. And, when the hay was needed it was cut out in chunks with a large, vicious looking hay-knife. It may be cheaper and save time to have the huge round bales of hay dumped near the farm buildings, some bales being rolled in black plastic sheeting. What I think is untidy is a mound of square bales or silage, covered with black plastic sheeting and held down with dozens of old car tyres thrown on top. I am not a farmer, so I have no right to criticise. We must move with the times to compete. So different from the times when Uncle Tom farmed Stallcourt Farm, near Cowbridge and we cousins drove cattle to Llantwit market, running ahead to each crossroads to keep the cattle in the right direction. When the cattle were sold there was always the possibility of having to return with sheep. I remember my father saying that, as a lad, he would take a wagon load of hay to the brewery stables in Cardiff then bringing back a load of gas lime. It was necessary to have an extra horse hitched- up to climb Tumble Hill. The journey would take all day.

Are we happier today, or more content, in this faster mode of life?

Llewellyn Kenneth Lougher

Notes In the last extract from Ernie Badcock's diaries it was noted that he never mentioned steam ploughing, but it was done in this part of the world. The Industrial and Maritime Museum in Cardiff has a short film which is worth seeing. The great V-shaped reversible ploughs seemed to sail across the fields quite effortlessly - none of the low-gear diesel roar which we know today - I remember my father extolling the virtues of the steam-engine which provides the same torque at all revs, needs no complicated gearbox and was serviced with simple technology.

-ooo-

A letter from Valerie Cram, nee Jones, Kingsbridge, ner Gorseinon.

We lived at Great House with my grandfather, Mr John Jones and his daughters, Blodwyn and Alice. Grandad was sub-postmaster at the time.

My father, Ivor Jones, was one of the "Jones boys" mentioned in a previous Newsletter. He was a dispensing chemist for Timothy White & Taylor, Chemists in Newton Abbot, Devon and returned home to Llancarfan to convalesce, after a serious illness, with my mother, Enid (nee Evans of Rhoose), my two younger sisters and self. At the time of our arrival in Wales, February 1943, from Devon, war was in progress with a vengeance and Llancarfan was a "haven of tranquility and peace". We were "coming home", as it were, and never returned to Devon.

Sylvia, Patsy and I (Valerie) attended Llancarfan School; Patsy in Miss Griffiths' class, Sylvia in Mrs Thomas' and myself in Mr Samuel's. I remember that the three R's were well taught!

The memories crowd back: among my happiest were running through the woods above Great House and "down the meadow" under Pancross Hill and paddling in the ford by the Fox and Hounds.

We used to be very nervous of Tom Shanklin the village tramp, known as "Old Tommy Shanks". It was rumoured that he ate roasted hedgehog cooked over an open fire and slept under the hedges. He certainly did not seem to have a fixed abode.

As we grew up we lost our elderly vicar to retirement and welcomed the Rev. Picton Thomas from Merthyr Tydfil, who was to bring a new aspect to village life. He founded a Church choir and I have remained a member of a Church choir to this day, presently St John's choir, Gowerton near Swansea. He taught us hymns, chants for Psalms and Anthems and I was very sad to see him leave for a new parish, Ynysybwll. Incidentally, Mrs Watts, Philip Watts' mother was organist for many faithful years. I did meet the Rev. Picton Thomas in later years in Bridgend General Hospital (as it was then), visiting a patient there, I was a student nurse.

Then I met my husband, a serving Police Officer, Mike Cram - now retired and we moved away, finally to settle at our present address near Swansea. However, looking back over the years, I realize that Llancarfan will always remain in my heart with many lovely memories such as wheeling my baby brother in his pram through narrow lanes to Garnllwyd and Abernant on sunny days in spring and later, riding through the village on my bicycle with John perched on the back, through the village ford (if my mother had only known!).

That same river flooded-out Mrs Pickett's Cottage (now Brook Cottage) nearly every year. One year the Church flooded to a depth that overturned heavy pews with everything else floating around the Church. We were horrified and, as soon as the water subsided "got together as a man" and cleared-up the resultant mud-soaked mess, followed by fund raising to replace the ruined articles.

Last, but not least, standing in the village forge, opposite Great House, where Mr Joe Lewis, the blacksmith, shod horses and did other tasks. Mr Gwynne Liscombe's father delivering bread, Tom Bryer's parents as licencees of the Fox and Hounds and Mr Diamond of the "Diamond Stores", Rhose with weekly deliveries of groceries. Walking to Fontygary in the summer to bathe in the sea and picnics on Llanbethery Moors.

My grandfather was, I remember, active until well into his eighties. He walked miles delivering "the post" to villagers and local farmers. He would leave around 8-9 a.m. and return in the late afternoon. He would then (after a meal) carry on with bee-keeping, laying concrete paths, repairing walls etc. on his property: a small-holding and surrounding pasture land (now sold) which were rented-out to a Mr and Mrs Pauline (?).

Well, these are only a few memories but I send sincere regards to anyone who remembers us and hope to join the Llancarfan Society in the near future.

Valerie Cram, nee Jones, formerly of Great House, Llancarfan.

-ooo-

Expensive wildlife: The saga of the pheasants goes on. Tony and Kath Davies' study window was broken a week or two ago by one in its long glide down from the wood. Presumably they either see reflected light in a window, or perhaps light from another window on the other side of the house, and just don't realise that there is glass in the way. Again, this one was unhurt and flew off none the worse for the accident.

Not just birds that cost us money. Walking the dogs, one early morning, a fortnight ago I saw a fox trotting along on the other side of an overgrown hedgerow and realised that they were going to meet, quite literally nose to nose, as our dog ambled towards a gap in the hedge. Predictably, the fox did

not waste any time but took off almost like a sprinter and raced across the field with Dylan in hopeless pursuit. The last thing I saw was both animals diving through the fence on the far side, but the fox was smaller than the dog, who seriously unzipped his undercarriage on the barbed wire. I will spare the anatomical details, but this led to a wasted Sunday morning and a £25 vet's bill for anaesthetic and stitching-up. Disturbed dog returned home to drunkenly reel around the house and garden until late afternoon by which time he wanted another walk! The following day he was running like the wind again; dogs are tough!

-ooo-

Random Jottings

The usual displays of Primroses and fewer Cowslips have made the village a lovelier place during the past few weeks but we have also seen less common flowers: Early Purple Orchids, though not many of them, in the first week of May and Common Spotted Orchids later on at the beginning of June. The habitats of these have become much rarer in

this area as ill-managed fields have been ploughed and reseeded. It is the price we pay for pints of milk and lambjoints, but none the less, sad.

Several older members have talked of the day when a German aircraft unloaded its bombs before reaching the anti-aircraft batteries protecting Barry docks. They fell in the village, some on the "banky" field beyond Ford Cross. We have always assumed that the shallow depression in the ground by the footpath between Broomwell Hill and the top of Cross Green Hill was one of the craters. Does anyone know? - or know where the others fell? It came to mind during yet another dog-walk when we noticed that the depression had been filled-in with soil remining from a water-pipe trench on Steve Powell's fields.

Mrs Thatcher and others, every now and then, get excited about rubbish in Britain. I have certainly complained before about the quite unnecessary flytipping of mattresses, refrigerators and black bags in the passing places along the lanes. This year it seems worse than ever, in particular all of the paper, fag-packets, plastic, lager cans and old tyres which the Council flail-mowers have unearthed in cutting the grass verges of the lanes. Most of it has been thrown from cars but I'm sure this note will not reach the culprits. What do we do about this? We pick-up a lot of the smaller things but the need to do it offends my soul. Many primary schools are now including this sort of social responsibility in their curriculum; perhaps when these little ones grow-up they will be less reserved about speaking sharply to offenders?

Membership: A few subscriptions are still outstanding but membership holds-up well (132 paid-up so far). Cheques (£5) to Phil Watts at Abernant. Anyone interested in joining the Society or who can contribute memories or stories of Llancarfan, let the Secretary know or write to the editor, John Etherington, at Ceffyl Du, Llancarfan. This really is the last Newsletter which we can afford to send-out to unpaid ex-memebers!

Production of Newsletters: some of you will know that the large-scale copying for more than 150 members was becoming difficult. This month is the begining of a new era, as Mavis Coles has volunteered to undertake the copying with scanning equipment which will also allow us to reproduce photographs. None this month, but hopefully soon. We are all very grateful to Mavis, particularly the Editor. If anyone wants to write anything with one or two photos, prints should be good contrast black and white about 8 x 6 cm.