



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 21: July 1989

The first day of July, the Saturday of the Craft Fair and Sports was a bit grey, but comfortably warm and with almost no rain. What a contrast with last year's torrential weather! The Fair went-off to everyone's satisfaction: most of the stalls did reasonable trade, the children certainly enjoyed the sports and the Society benefitted by selling over 200 entrance tickets; as children came in free we must have had 300 to 400 visitors during the day. I say "the Society" but, this year it is the Community Hall fund which will receive a substantial cheque from the Society, assisting the purchase of the necessary furnishing and equipment after refurbishment and alteration of the Hall is completed. In addition to the "trader" stalls there were several other "good causes", one of which was the Society stall from which raffle tickets were sold to good effect. Our stall also displayed examples of various craft and hobbywork done in the Village. Income was further boosted by a hot-dog stall, "guess the weight of the cake" competition and "treasure hunt" as well as the charges to stall-holders.

The ladies of Tuesday Club kept us refreshed with tea, coffee and soft drinks whilst the Llancarfán Society Committee members manned the bar. Daytime barsales were not very great but this year we broke new ground by continuing into the evening, providing the bar for the Church Barn Dance. The bar profits will be split between the Church restoration appeal and the Society's donation to the Community Hall fund. The whole day was most enjoyable even for those of us who were on our feet from first thing on Saturday to the early hours of Sunday morning. We always have a little moan that it is the same old faces and pairs of hands which appear for the less "fun" things; behind the scenes preparations and Sunday morning clearing-up. It was not quite so true this year: a lot of folk helped and many of them were firsttimers. The co-operation with the Church was also a milestone: the village fields a whole collection of different organisations and I hope this might mark the beginning of a new era of collaboration which will in any case be necessary to turn the Community Hall into a flourishing enterprise.

So many people helped in the end that it is difficult to name everyone. A big thank-you to all of them and I hope helpers and visitors alike enjoyed the day as much as I did. Last, but certainly not least, thank you to Tony and Joan Thomas for the use of Pancross Barn and for help in all sorts of other ways. So many village functions depend on their generosity in giving space for dances, fairs and concerts.

So many people provided sponsorship for the children's sports that we have surplus funds. This residue has been earmarked for another children's function later in the year (perhaps a contribution to the firework party or the Christmas-tree - what do you all think?). We are most grateful to all the sponsors of whom a full list will appear in the next Newsletter.

Future Events

Evening Walk: Postponement. For unavoidable reasons, the Evening Walk scheduled for Monday, July 17th has to be postponed to Monday, July 24th. Incidentally the editor apologises for confusing you all by saying that it was a Saturday in the original announcement - he looked at June, not July, in the calendar and all the proof-reading failed to find the error! Meet at the "Fox and Hounds", 7.00 pm. You will need wellingtons if it has been wet, otherwise strong walking shoes. The walk will not be too energetic but be

prepared to climb to the top of the valley and walk a couple of miles. If it is raining the walk will be postponed - we will put a notice on the Fox and Hounds door earlier in the day if postponement looks inevitable.

Barbecue: There will be a barbecue at Abernant Bungalow, by kind permission of Phil and Ruth Watts, on Monday, August 7th, commencing at 7.30 pm. Tickets 'on the gate' £1.00.

Church Visit: so far, there has been no response to the suggestion for a guided tour of the Church, either on the Bank Holiday Monday (28th August) or some time around that date. Please let John Etherington know if you would like to come - word of mouth will do. We need more than (say) ten people to make it worth-while.

Annual Dinner: This will be on Saturday, 28th October at the Rhoose Community Hall. No further arrangements have been made yet; are you all happy for us to provide the same sort of informal meal which we had last year, allowing people freedom to circulate and talk to old friends?

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Obituary notices: with sadness we announce the loss of Tom Thomas, formerly of Flaxland and more recently of The Hollies, John Hopkins who left High Lanterns (Ty Uchaf) a few years ago and Ada Tucker, widow of the late George Tucker. Our sympathy goes to all three families.

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Llancarfan Lawn Tennis Club: Early Days

John R Etherington

Several members who recall the early days of the Tennis Club have suggested an article on its beginning. This is a good idea and it might be extended to other organisations in the village, old and new. Some have gone forever like the Ploughing Matches recalled by Herbert Thomas and Gwenora James, some have died and been revived, sometimes more than once; I think the Cricket Club falls into this category. It is flourishing at the moment but had peaks of activity which are fondly remembered by middle-aged and older members who lived in the village through middle decades of the century. The Tennis Club and the Ladies' Tuesday Club are both relatively young but have given enormous pleasure to many folk in the Community area.

In 1968, a group of villagers used to meet for 'knockabout' badminton on the lawn of Fordings (the bungalow next to the ford), then the home of Doug and Norma Hughes. Amongst these people were Brenda and Jim Grove from Whitechapel, Pam and Derek

Higgs from the adjacent Carreg Llwyd and Dilys and Gwynne Liscombe from next-door at Broadhayes. This was before the major development of the present-day village centre. The only new houses were Underwood House (Diana and John Atkins), Carreg Llwyd and Old Orchard (then occupied by Mr & Mrs Christian-Edwards). Jim and Brenda had just purchased the old Wesleyan Chapel from its occupier, Andrew Vicari, now an artist of some repute while John and Sally Etherington were clearing the undergrowth from the Black Horse Land where Ceffyl Du now stands. Of these, many still live in these same houses, and most are members of the Society.

The badminton led to the suggestion of a more permanent arrangement whereby a Tennis Court could be built. This was all formulated one day over coffee in Broadhayes, the folk present being John & Iris Cox (original owners of Nauvoo and probably the first life-members). At the time Dilys Liscombe's father Jehoiada Lewis, Llancarfan blacksmith, owned several fields, the

former smallholding of Broadhayes. He was persuaded to lease a part of the most distant, Furthest Field, to the newly formed Tennis Club under the Chairmanship of Jim Grove with Brenda Grove as Secretary and Gwynne Liscombe as Treasurer. The lease was granted with a restrictive covenant, arising from Jehoiada's deep religious convictions, a ban on Sunday playing. It was estimated that the work would cost £700 and an initial loan of £400 was obtained from the National Playing Fields Association. Some years later the lease was renegotiated to allow Sunday playing and is set to expire in 1999.

The Club had a very detailed set of rules of which I still have a copy. This tells us that membership was one guinea (if you remember what that was!), juniors at half-price and family membership at three guineas. The real winners were those who took-out life membership at ten pounds (why not guineas, I wonder?) though the club rules are not quite clear - was this individual or family life membership? Gwynne's memory, and Derek Higg's, is that it was a family life membership. There are several still others around; about ten families took-out life membership - what do they think? David Lougher, Penonn and Tony Thomas, Pancross were trustees of the new club.

Early in 1968 John Woods (of steam traction engine fame) was commissioned to excavate the area on which the court now stands. He did this by cutting into the hillside and pushing the spoil downhill to make the steep bank which now forms the western edge of the court. The site was then left to settle for several months. My first memory of involvement was lending the surveying equipment and helping to do the levelling during this early excavation work. I have a photograph of this, taken by my brother Peter, which includes Jim and Brenda, myself and Sally, my two children, Clare and Nick, then six and four, our two dogs and John Woods driving a Drott tractor-shovel. When he started digging-out the site, John encountered burned soil and stonework which led to his suggesting that lime had been burned in that corner of the field or perhaps a building had once stood there.

Much more vividly I remember a rather moist day spent, with Gwynne, installing the clay tile drains in a trench which extends along the eastern side of the court and downhill

toward the artificially banked part of the site where they discharge at the ends of the court. John had excavated a trench using a JCB with a narrow bucket, but it needed deepening and grading which we did with a narrow trenching spade. This had already dug the foundation trenches for Ceffyl Du and has subsequently made holes for countless fenceposts here and in Pembrokeshire as well as connecting Ceffyl Du to maindrainage two years ago. It still has the same handle - I cannot say this for any other tool which I have ever bought. The trench, in our sticky yellow clay, was half-full of water and by lunchtime we were literally smothered. I thought Mary Webber might eject us from the Fox when we repaired there for a pie and a pint (or two, I think!) but we were accepted without our wellingtons.

The next stage was the erection of the fencing which involved various weekend working-parties. This was not altogether successful on the made-ground of the downhill side as the posts had to be re-erected a few years later where they had tilted. A concrete edge was provided and, in those early days we could only afford to complete the surface with stone dust rather than anything better. Roger Fuller, Penonn, played an important part in arranging all of this. Everyone who played was expected to rake the surface and roll it with Phil Watts' roller which was left on the court for this purpose! Margaret and Norton Evans kindly donated the shed for storage of these items and a little later Fred and Heather Adams lent their caravan for use as a clubhouse.

The inaugural match involved the Chairman, Jim Grove in drag, playing the Secretary. Brenda tells me that she was so distracted by Jim's appearance that she lost!

With a "mortgage" to fund and maintainance soon needed, subscriptions were not enough to support the club. A number of Summer Fetes and Sports were held at Pancross, coupled with a dance in the evening. Coincidentally, as the report of this year's Llancarfan Society Craft Fair and Sports appears above, memory is that the bars in those far-off days were manned by the same group of reprobates! Disco dances were held in the Church Hall, there were coffee mornings and cheese and wine events. The "centre" of the village seems to have been a more sociable place at that time, I think because most of us shared the common bond of building or restoring houses and being involved in a new communal activity such as the Tennis Club. It was certainly an era of parties and I remember the dawn breaking over this lovely village on many occasions, meeting the kids with Viv Price on the milk round and once coming home as Joe Lewis walked from Crynallt to the Baptist chapel to feed his chickens. What did you think of us Joe? Bit wild, we were, really, but probably no more so than the real old days! Perhaps we just grow older?

During the first few years, some other officers and committee members of the Club were Audrey Porter, Marjorie Hobbs, Joan Quelch, Roger Fuller, Joan Burge, Sally Burge and others. For a year or two I was a Committe member and used to play tennis with Clare until she grew old enough to win every time. I think she was fifteen then - about 1976 - so the present surface was not laid-down until some time after that date. I then allowed my

membership to lapse but those original life-members still belong, presumably until the lease runs-out. A profitable investment.

Acknowledgements to Marjorie Hobbs for first suggesting this article and to Gwynne Liscombe, Brenda and Jim Grove for contributing their memories.

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A contribution from Les Griffiths

Les, who is one of our frequent contributors has written with the following excerpt from "Llancarfan: The Village of a Thousand Saints" by Stan Awbery.

Llancarfan had close association with the serious troubles which broke-out in South Wales about the middle of the last century. The whole of the area was thrown into confusion by a series of disorders. They were called the Rebecca Riots and arose out of the increasing number of tolls which were being imposed by road owners and which had to be paid by those who used the roads. This burden had become so intolerable that the people adopted novel means of removing them. Gangs of men, dressed as women, would descend on the gates suddenly under the cover of darkness of night and destroy them. This occurred frequently and the Government appeared helpless to prevent them. A Commission was sent down from London for the purpose of enquiring into the cause and suggesting a remedy. These riots are mentioned because it was a Llancarfan boy who took a leading part in them. He was David Davies, born at Treguff, and known locally as Dai 'r Cantwr (David the Singer). The son of a local farmer, he worked as farm labourer & contractor and was a local preacher of some merit. It is said that he was called Dai 'r Cantwr because he taught people to sing and led the church choir in the gallery of the church. He is remembered particularly for the part he played in destruction of the toll gates during the time of these riots. The tolls and gates were increasing rapidly in Carmarthenshire to which he had emigrated, seeking employment.

-5-

The burden was heavy to farmers when travelling to market with their merchandise and when carting lime for their fields. They therefore formed a secret-society for the purpose of destroying these gates. Dai 'r Cantwr took part in many of the midnight raids. He was ultimately arrested and tried at the Carmarthenshire Winter Sessions in 1843, together with thirty-nine others. He was found guilty of destroying the gates at Spudder's Bridge and sentenced to 20 years transportation to Van Diemen's Land.

When the judge was pronouncing sentence Dai 'r Cantwr listened attentively and left the dock smiling. While in prison he wrote "The fame which might have been mine I have forfeited, and no more will I see Llancarfan, the haunts of my youth".

An old Lord who was sympathetic to Rebecca wrote to assure him that while the waters of the rivers of Glamorganshire flowed his memory would remain fragrant. In February 1844 he was removed in chains from Carmarthenshire to Millbank in London. While in

prison he composed several Welsh songs, among them "Can Hiraeth y Bardd am ei Wlad" - "The poets longing for his country". These were printed in leaflets and sold in all village fairs where they became very popular. In March 1844 he sailed for Tasmania. He was seventeen weeks on the voyage out in an old convict ship. He was indentured to several masters in the new country and received a conditional pardon in 1855. There is no record that he ever returned to his beautiful Llanccarfan which he loved so dearly.

Notes: a fictional account of the Rebecca Riots can be found in Alexander Cordell's *The Hosts of Rebecca*. Gwynne William's *When was Wales* explains the origin of the name in a quotation from Genesis: "And they blessed Rebecca and said unto her, let thy seed possess the gates of them that hate thee ---".

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A letter from Dick Evans, Leicester: formerly of Ford Cross Cottages.

I intended to start this letter by answering your question on "crooks", mentioned in Newsletter 18 but see that the answer has now been supplied (Newsletter 19). I will just mention, however, that here in the Midlands a different method is used in hedge-laying: the tops of the hedges are plaited with hazel branches. I remember hedging and ditching competitions being held in Llanccarfan in conjunction with ploughing matches and wonder whether ploughing matches are still held?

Regarding the fish mentioned in Newsletter 18, I am pleased that there is life in the river. I used to catch two kinds of trout - one type stayed in the same pool and the others which we called "wanderers" could be caught anywhere on the river; these had a larger head and more of a dull colouring. I caught one as far up the river as Greendown. We used to see spawn in most of the still pools. (Llewellyn Griffiths might throw more light on this subject).

I was interested in the "Where are you now" item in an earlier Newsletter. Several people come to mind including the "Parsons family" who lived on the small-holding on Ford Lane; the "Singletons" of Moulton Public House and "Culverwells" of Penonn. We used to go to Penmark through a gate opposite Penonn Farm, passing a cottage in the field but I cannot recall seeing anyone living there - any clues as to who lived in the cottage? Also there were the "Bowens" of Penonn, Doris Lawes; the "Lamberts" of Llanbethery; the "Seallys" who lived at Aberthaw Hill; the "Mortimer" family of Llancadle; a family at

-6-

Llanvithyn called "James" and the "Edwards" who lived in the cottages at Pancross - Mr Edwards taught us lads to ring the bells of Llanccarfan Church. All of these families - where are you now?

Watching Harry Seacombe's Sunday programme, Highway, on TV recently, when he visited St Athan aerodrome, brought back further memories, one being when I was working there and accidentally drilled into the main high-tension cable (by the married

quarters) causing St Athan and surrounding district to be without electricity - the luckiest day of my life!!

I was pleased to read in your last Newsletter that something positive is being done about Llancarfan Village Hall and hope it will give as much pleasure to everyone as it did in my day in Llancarfan. We had Saturday "6d. hops", concerts etc. My cousin played the accordion for the "hops" and I remember the first time the microphone was used (rigged-up by the vicar's son, Ralph Thomas).

All for now. Yours sincerely, Dick Evans.

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A note from Phil Watts, Abernant. Fencing: It has long been established that gaps in hedges, made by wandering sheep and cattle would be replaced by cut branches placed at an angle of 45o and held-down by "crooks"; posts and rails with or without barbed wire or wire netting according to the need and availability. It has been known in the past for these items to be substituted by unwanted iron bedsteads and galvanised sheets. Now there seems to be a new fashion establishing in the area and that is the use of the pallet platform and baler-cord with variation in colour. The pallet platform is favoured by the sheep farmer and the baler-cord by the pony people. Effective use of the baler-cord for fencing seems to be by knotting and arranging into squares. I am reminded of the Irish fisherman's description of a net - a bunch of holes tied together by rope!

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A letter from John Rowland of Southerndown - formerly of Ty-to-Maen

During the years 1940-41 the Vale of Glamorgan was bombed on numerous occasions, culminating in two one-ton parachute mines at Llancarfan on the night of 28-29 April 1941.

But, to get back to the query in Random Jottings (Newsletter 20), the facts are as follows. The 14th August 1940 was a typical British summer day. Rather thick, broken and patchy cloud and not too warm. There had been a lot of enemy activity during the afternoon and several red-alerts. There was, that afternoon, as I recall, a Church party going on in the field opposite the Church next to the School gardens.

At Ty-to-Maen at around 6.45 pm the noise of aircraft was heard and being a great aircraft enthusiast I rushed out to the Orchard and through a large gap in the clouds saw a twin-engined aircraft closely followed by two Spitfires. Almost immediately there was a long burst of machine-gun fire and the three aircraft disappeared from view in cloud, heading toward Barry at a height of about 2000 feet.

Seconds afterwards the screaming of bombs fitted with whistles on the fins (which produced a noise very similar to a "Stuka" in a dive) was heard. After some seconds this died away and there was silence, indicating that the bombs

had failed to explode. Miss Nora Bryan, on her return from the Church gathering said that they had seen black objects falling from one of the aircraft before it disappeared in cloud.

The aircraft, a Junkers Ju. 88 medium bomber, crashed shortly afterwards in Sully Bay with no survivors. The log book was later recovered showing that it belonged to LEHR GESCHWADER 1 and was based at ORLEANS-BRICY in France. Although it was named as a training unit it was in fact a fully operational unit and operated against this country during the Blitz. One of the crew of the Ju. 88 was an Oberleutnant Heinrich. As well as the log book, I think the body of one crew-member was recovered from the sea. Until the early sixties a number of German aircrew were buried at Boverton Cemetary but were later removed to the German War Cemetary at Cannock Chase, Staffs.

The aircrft was shot down by the late Wing Commander Stanford Tuck leading a section of three Spitfires from 92 Squadron RAF Pembrey, Carmarthenshire (now Dyfed). He claimed two Ju. 88's on this sortie after the aircraft were intercepted north of Cardiff. During the engagement his wing man, Sgt Pilot Havercroft was forced to crash-land on Maerdy Mountain after being hit in the glycol tank by return fire from the bombers.

Nine unexploded bombs were located on Penonn Farm (the nearest, 400 yards from the house). All were removed, except one, by the bomb disposal squad. The last was exploded in situ just over the hedge at the top of the very steep field known as Cae Negins (spelling and meaning of second word?) facing you as you cross the river below Ford Cross.

Some weeks later, Mrs Williams of Ford Farm was picking mushrooms (I think) in the same field and accidentally found a hole half-way up the slope in which she was reported to have felt the fins of a bomb (50kg). This was also exploded in situ and the resulting crater filled-in by Tom Shanklyn for my father (the field was then part of Ty-to-Maen).

As a footnote, and to give an idea of how "peaceful" the Vale of Glamorgan was in 1940-43 (but particularly '41) I will give some figures just for St Athan/Llantwit Major district. This area received, courtesy of the Luftwaffe, 371 high-explosive bombs, 2 parachute mines and upwards of 6000 incendiaries (und doubtless a more than negligible number of still undetected, unexploded items). If there is any interest in the subject I have extensive records including the incendiaries of September 1940, parachute mines of 1941 etc. In fact, two incendiary bomb tails have survived. In the early 1960's I obtained Luftwaffe target maps and air-photographs of Cardiff, Swansea, St Athan, Llandow and Rhoose. One of Cardiff Docks was taken before the outbreak of war and the quality is excellant.

Postscript - sent in a separate letter. I have just realised that I didn't give the exact location of the bombs at Penonn. From the top of the "hilly bank" beyond Ford Cross, they ran in a double line across the fields to the Moulton Road which was closed.

Notes. In the covering letter John also wrote the following, which does not directly

concern Llancarfan but is of considerable local historical interest: "I heard from Sqd. Ldr Alfred Price, the Air Historian, that, in interviewing a Luftwaffe General (Koller, I think) he learned that a massive air-strike against Cardiff was planned for the night of May 10-11th 1941 as Cardiff was much involved in the Atlantic Convoys. Targets had been assigned and bombloads worked-out but, by sheer chance, on the previous night Bomber Harris attacked Berlin. Hitler was so incensed that he ordered all available air

-8-

craft to London as retaliation. This was the famous fire-blitz on the City from which came the picture of St Paul's surrounded by a sea of fire. As the invasion of Russia was then being planned, it was the last major raid of the blitz and Cardiff was saved a nasty experience."

We still have not positively identified the "crater" which I mentioned in the random jottings. It was very shallow and barely visible. There is also a much larger hole in the same field, origin unknown but of an odd funnel-shape, not like a field-quarry - is this one of the parachute mines, for which you did not give locations? Phil Watts describes another set of bombs which were dropped in a widely spaced line, the first near Leach Castle Farm, then Abernant and Garnllwyd. The "jottings" crater is on that same flight line.

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A letter from Frank Jameson, The Grange.

The rash of breaking and entering by kamikaze pheasants reported in your recent issues prompts me to write to you about the better thought-out and more painstaking efforts of another burglarious bird. At one time blue tits were chief among our feathered friends in showing their friendly feelings by surreptitious removal of putty from one's windows, and then only in winter weather. Now staccato hammer blows have replaced the alarm clock for us retired persons, as some magpie demolishes the fifteenth load of putty I have replaced in the living room window frame in the past few months.

They will take it hard and covered in old paint, soft and covered with temporary protective pieces of wood, or of course not covered at all. They regard with short-lived suspicion suspended sticks of kindling covered with aluminium foil, rotating in the wind, designed to give a cautionary clout to the backside of the offending birds. They are soon back at their tricks. The geography of a steep, populated valley precludes the use of a 12-bore, where a magpie is always a "low bird". The craving of blue tits for oil in winter is understandable but surely no nutritional deficiency can account for the 'pies predatory purpose toward my putty in the spring or summer. You suspect that the pheasant is tempted by an opposite window much as a reckless aviator is occasionally drawn by all that open air-space on the other side of Tower Bridge. My magpies, I believe, are straight out of Rossini, and have spotted

something bright and shiny in the living room which they think they can (given enough time) obtain by removal of a pane of glass! Evidence for this might be their complete indifference to the aluminium foil on the revolving stick.

It seems there are two forms of bipedal intruders we need to fear nowadays. Has anyone else been troubled similarly by putty-pies and if so have they come-up with any remedies?

Note. Editor has a list of birds which have flown into windows or birds and animals which have done other odd things in the garden. This will appear in a future Newsletter but it would be interesting to know of other observations on windows, birds and animals.

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Community Hall - though not fully restored and converted, the Hall has hosted its first event since the completion of stage-one of refurbishment. The most recent Community Council meeting took place there on 15th June but I gather it can only be used for daytime events at the moment as the electrical installations have not yet been inspected.