



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 22: August 1989

Last month started with thunderstorms, one of which was so violent that it resulted in an almost 12-hour power cut and reminded us how dependant on electricity we have all become. I am old enough to have lived with gaslight but not candles or oil-lamps. Pleasant enough to lean on the bar of the Fox, lighted as it was meant to be and smelling of candles, but it was difficult to count the change and in any case the till couldn't be used! The fridges were off and the lager got warm - no loss to me but some regretted it.

Farmers rushed hither and thither in the morning, with generators on tractors - milking has to be done but it is impossible by hand with today's huge herds. Even the Newsletter had to be put to one side because a new-fangled electronic machine makes it all possible.

Our great-grandparents lived more with the daytime - early to bed and early to rise - but they did try; spinning, knitting or lace-making by lamp or candlelight. It must have seemed miraculous when the early gasburners first came, and then that amazing invention, the incandescent mantle. It all seems so long ago and yet it was but yesterday.

After the thunderstorms the rest of July and early August has been one dry day after another and the grain harvest seems to have gone without the slightest hitch. The end of the month has been full of butterflies of all sorts - particularly noticeable on Pancross Hill where they favour the flowers of the knapweed and scabious which grow on both sides of the road on the field-banks. Perhaps it is the drabness of the greenery in the drought, but by contrast the knapweed seems a more vivid purple than I have ever seen it before.

The last Newsletter had to be prepared in a great hurry, to announce the postponement of the evening walk, and I forgot to include the answer to the question in Newsletter 20. The house with an unchanged front elevation, except for cat-flap, is Woodlands. It was built by Gwynne Liscombe's father, Tudor, in 1929. It is the house high on the hillside under Coed-y-Crinallt, and overlooking the Fox & Hounds.

Another snippet of such information turned-up on the evening walk when Joan Evans (Nee Morgan, formerly of The Green) remembered that The Hollies, built in 1935, was the first house in the village to have a parquet floor. Then, looking across toward the wood, Joan said "All the gorse has gone". Gorse still grows on the very steep fields of Broomwell and Ford (though the goats are doing their best!) but I think very few of us remember it elsewhere. Eithin is the Welsh word for gorse and the Perkin's map of the village which we have mentioned before gives an alternative* origin of Llanfythin as Llain fu'n eithin. The plant once covered much of the plateau and buried seed germinated in many places when the natural-gas pipeline was put in almost 20 years ago, particularly nearer to the A48 where the soils are more sandy. (Llain means narrow enclosure). From all this chat you will realise that the evening walk was a success. A lovely evening after a too-hot day attracted about 30 people of all ages.

We climbed up to the top of Broomwell Hill above the school and turned right along the footpath so that we could look down on the village and, in the other direction to Castle Ditches. We turned left at Ford Cross along the lower footpath to Broomwell, returning back up the lane to Penylan Barn. The footpath past the barn took us to the top of Cross Green Hill and back down to the lower ford where the party dispersed, mostly to the Fox' garden.

-2-

Many people would like to do it again, with some different routes. Incidentally, those who walk often, complained about the number of footpaths which are illegally blocked by fences and also that many have become over-grown because so few people use them. Too few of us walk anywhere these days.

*The commonly cited origin is the "chapel of St Meuithe" - hence

Llanfeuthin (the m soft-mutating to f).

JRE

Future Events: This Newsletter will not circulate before the barbecue at Abernant, kindly organized by Phil and Ruth Watts, for Monday, August 7th. A report will appear in the next Newsletter.

The Annual Dinner will be held in Rhose Community Hall on Saturday, October 28th. A booking form will be enclosed with the next Newsletter. Several people have expressed some dissatisfaction with the meal which we had last year, so we are changing the caterers, but we shall attempt to keep the price the same.

Church Visit: We have had little response to the suggestion for a visit to the Church at the end of this month so shall not name a firm date. Perhaps a little later on, early in the Autumn, will be better as folk will be back from holidays?

Oil Wells in the Vale?: I have had to do a lot of driving around this part of South Wales in the last couple of weeks. First at Rhose and then near Pencoed, I came across convoys of lorries and groups of gents in fluorescent yellow jackets laying out great skeins of cables. The Echo for 4th August told me that this was the onshore exploration division of Shell doing a seismic survey for oil-bearing rocks between Pontypridd and Rhose. Selfishly, I can't help hoping that they fail to find anything, though the experience in Dorset seems to be that onshore wells do not cause too much disturbance. The drilling rig which worked for a few days at Walterston, recently, is unconnected with this - it was sinking a well for the farm!

More on the Tennis Club

Writing a modern history is difficult because other people can remember things that are left-out. This is the preamble to admitting that I have got into trouble again, despite the fact that I checked all my memories with various founding-officers of the club! Good humouredly, Tony and Kath Davies and Phil and Ruth Watts have pointed out that they were well and truly amongst the first members. Apologies to you all. Kath also reminded

me that a substantial number of the early members stood as guarantors for the National Playing Fields £400 loan, to the tune of £25 a head, often £50 a family. This was really quite a large sum of money in those days when houses here sold for £5,000-£10,000!

Annals of the Vale of Glamorgan (1913) by Marianne R. Spencer: some of you will remember Dr Evan Thomas' contribution to Newsletter 8 in which he recalled that Marianne Spencer had presented his mother with a copy of this book as recognition of her assistance in giving information about the

-3-

Llancarfan area as well as cups of tea and other hospitality. Dr Thomas lent us his copy of the book recently and various abstracted items of interest will appear in future Newsletters - incidentally, a reprint was published in 1970 and may possibly be found in second-hand bookshops.

The following extract concerns the Church: "A large and remarkably perfect gargoyle, representing a lions head, is to be found on the exterior of the east end of the church at an angle where the roofs of the chancel and that of the Raglan Chapel meet. The head is exactly over the pipe which carries water

from these roofs, and through the mouth of the gargoyle the water is discharged over the pipe, which is grasped firmly by the forequarters of the animal. From the unusual position of this gargoyle, it has hitherto been overlooked in every description of the church."

When functions were held in the field adjacent to the school garden and the riverside hedge had not grown-up into trees, this would have been easily visible. Now it is more difficult, but off I rushed with a pair of binoculars only to be disappointed. This noble Llancarfan beast has been replaced with a most undistinguished concrete hopper, now of some age. What happened to the animal, which was in good condition only 75 years ago? Someone might even remember him? I told the story on the evening walk and Joan Scott-Quelch suggested that he may be one and the same fellow who now lives inside the Church?

Craft Fair: The last issue did not have sufficient space to pay tribute to various kind people who made donations toward the childrens sports. These were Nita Dally, Derek and Pam Higgs, Peter Lennox, Richard Powell & Partners, Paul Schmit and Sam Smith Travel. In total, £50 was donated, of which £26 remains in an earmarked fund which will be put toward a future event for the children.

We are also most grateful to Joyce Andrews, Peter & Sally Lennox who kindly supplied the bar stocks at very favourable terms. Our bar-takings were quite substantial and the profit was divided between our Community Hall Fund and the Church Restoration Fund. In grand total we have been able to give £334 to the Community Hall and £71 to the Church Fund; a pretty good effort for a small organisation.

The Cowbridge Gem did us proudly with a front-page photograph taken at the Craft Fair. I hope this will persuade a few more folk to join the Society (you might get your picture in the paper!).

Bombs: Reader's comments, a letter from John Rowland and Ernie Badcock's diary for the period.

The Jottings on war-time bombs, followed by John Rowland's letter (Newsletter 21) have aroused a lot of interest. Vanessa & Ian Newton, Old Mill, told me that a number of 20 mm cannon-shells (which could have come from a Spitfire) have been unearthed in their garden where they may have fallen or they might be discarded souvenirs of the time. Blair Evans of Ty-to-Maen added the information that other bombs had fallen in the river north of the farm and also below Llanvythin.

-4-

Blair's information is expanded-on by another letter from John Rowland, who also lived at Ty-to-Maen. Concerning my question about craters in the field above High Lanterns (Ty Uchaf) and Cross Green, John says he has no record of bombs in that field but suggests the possibility of anti-aircraft shells or rocket projectiles which often failed to explode at altitude but did so on landing - the small crater is about the right size for this - about 6 feet in diameter.

John also wrote: "The location of the two parachute mines on 28-29th April 1941 was as follows. 1. On the sloping field below Llanvythin drive, roughly opposite the Bakehouse. It stripped the roof off the latter and left a shallow crater in stony ground. 2. If you proceed from Ty-to-Maen towards Bonvilston you will know that the first bend is right, the next left handed and the third, again, right handed. At the latter there is a gate on the right entering a narrow field which runs down to the Carfan Brook. It fell in the river here, removing several trees and making a deep water-filled crater. The field was buried in mud and rock and, had it fallen the previous night, would have destroyed our entire dairy herd. It was always, thereafter, called the "landmine field" (though of course they were adapted sea mines of cylindrical type, about 8 feet long overall).

Although now probably silted up it should still be possible to find the spot. All the earth covering the field was put back in the crater.

Mr Melville Morgan of The Green beat me to the site to get the parachute housing which was used for boiling purposes long afterwards. I did get some of the parachute but all my souvenirs were thrown out in 1944 when at University, apart from the rear part of two incendiary bombs which I still have.

Phil Watts recalls two separate incidents, I think. On 23.7.40 three bombs fell in a field at the rear of Whitewell near Greendown farm leaving craters of 30, 25 and 20 feet in diameter. On 24.8.40 during a raid on St Athan RAF Station one fell near Abernant, one below the wood at Garnllwyd and one at Ford Farm. The rest of the stick fell at Tredogan."

Ernie Badcock's diary for the days in question has some related information but he then lived at York Place in Barry and so events in Llancarfan probably took second place to

happenings nearer the coast. He married Blodwen Jones (Great House) on 30th April 1941, a day after the landmine explosions, so it is unlikely that his mind was much on these things anyway!

1940 23rd July (No entry relating to the war).

1940 14th August GERMAN PLANE BROUGHT DOWN OFF BARRY; seen by spectators. One off Rhose supposed down too. One down officially.

1940 24th August (Various farming matters). Rom. (cinema) East of Chicago 2 air-raid warnings while there.

1940 28th August (No entry relating to the war).

1941 28th April Raid on St Athan. (presumably the night of the landmines).

1941 29th August Raid at night. Called out. Bombs on Romilly Park, Oxford St etc. People killed including Geo. Gibbs 3 year old son Melville. Mrs Gibbs injured. Much damage done.

-5-

John Rowland's letter also contains various other items of village history which will be used in future Newsletters.

Ernie Badcock's diaries: The diaries are mainly records of everyday domestic and working life, but here and there are entries concerning happenings which were important to Llancarfan or even moved the world. When we first glanced through the diaries, we picked out some well-remembered times and searching for the entries in the previous article reminded me that these may be interesting, not least for their poignant mixture of mundane and historic events:

1939 September 3rd: WAR DECLARED BY ENGLAND ON GERMANY. Germany given until 11 (morning) to leave Poland or answer our note. Chamberlain on wireless. All entertainments cease. Ed and Dilys here to tea. Mr Newman visited after looking for father in hospital.

1941 January 2nd: Llandaff Cathedral badly damaged - raid from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Bombs in Wenvoe. Many lives lost. 4 bombs in Rhose. many bombs and fire in Cardiff. big damage. many lives lost. 103 dead, 320 injured.

1945 May 2nd: German armies in Italy unconditionally surrender. Germans announce Hitler dead.

1952 February 6th: King George VI died suddenly in sleep. Princess Elizabeth and Duke of Edinburgh in Kenya on way to Australia. Returning at once. No radio or cinema etc. News on 11 a.m. radio. Told by woman while digging kitchen garden. Mr Liscombe put church flag at half mast.

1962 22nd November: Dig and tidy herb bed. President Kennedy assassinated in Dallas, USA.

1969 July 21st: Neil Armstrong (3.56 a.m.) and Edward Aldrin (4.15 a.m.) on moon. First time man has stepped on another planet. Excellent t.v. pictures.

1978 24th January: Les informed me that services terminated in Chapel and vestry.

Weedkiller Who on earth thought of, or authorized, the horrific weedkiller spraying which has so damaged the hedgerows from the Carmel junction into Llantrythid village as far as the Church? I don't think it can be anything else. This lovely hedged lane has been sprayed on both sides to a height of about ten feet, indiscriminately taking the field-hedges, the hedges of domestic properties and the hedgebanks full of plants, butterflies and birds. I suppose it just could have been an accident; a farm sprayer which someone forgot to turn-off when returning from the fields but even if this is the case it is unforgivable negligence. If it was a conscious decision by the Local Authority it is contrary to just about every idea of conservation and environmental awareness which we are repeatedly assured that it respects. One can only hope that the weedkiller was one which damages only the green leaves rather than a systemic herbicide which can kill whole plants. Even so the ugliness will last until winter, or beyond, if many branches fail to make buds for next spring.

-6-

Hedges: The last two newsletters have contained bits and pieces on hedges and a longer article on the age and origin of our hedges will appear in the next issue or so. However, this brings me to the planting of hedges and a problem which I did not notice until it was too late. When the new car park was created for the school, small hedgebanks were built from the topsoil on the site and hawthorn, holly and other seedlings, planted on top of the banks. Unfortunately this old, fertile soil is full of weed and grass seed which has grown into a jungle and, during the long drought has totally outcompeted the hedging-shrubs for water. They are now dead. Presumably the Council will replant next winter and, with hindsight, just a few moments weeding once a fortnight will solve the problem. It is a common mistake - gardeners always weed their vegetables but no one remembers that young trees and shrubs need just as much care.

JRE

After leaving Llancarfan School by Barbara Milhuisen

This is the sequel to an article which appeared in Newsletter 17 entitled Llancarfan School during the Second World War. It ended with the sentence

which begins this one:

I left Llancarfan school in January 1945 to follow in my mother's footsteps except that she had to walk to Moulton to have a lift in Norman Hardy's cattle lorry to get to the County School; I had a second hand bike but not for long.

Margaret (Griffiths) and her cousin Beatrice and I cycled, September to November, then through the intervention of Mrs Ruth Jenkins as Parish Councillor, the Education Department provided a taxi. Not any old taxi but Bartax' best Rolls Royce. In it travelled Margaret, Beatrice, Tom Bryer, Keith and Tony Thomas and myself and, from Fonmon, Pat Lyons and Margaret James.

My education continued until I was 21 and I emigrated to Canada. When my mother told Maurice Griffiths he was so encouraging, saying: "That's how the Empire was made." But I only lasted six years and then returned to live in Llancarfan. At that time, as now, there was no Post Office in the village. Mr Johnny Jones had died and Alice, his daughter no longer dispensed stamps. There was pressure from somewhere and two houses were built, the only ones since the homes for agricultural workers at Pancross in 1942.

My mother was persuaded to try for the position of sub-postmistress - by now she had married Charlie Bryer and we were all living at Ty Uchaf (High Lanterns). It was fantastic to move into a new house which went with the job and as our neighbours were Mr and Mrs Lewis and Elizabeth. I think we moved in a few days before the Lewis' - my mother's sojourn at the Post Office is another story - miss her dearly but have many happy memories, particularly of the year we won the "Best Kept Village" cup.

My mother hated housework but loved her garden and anything involving the outdoors. I am not so sure that Mr Lewis shared her love of gardening but they did share a common purpose; a determination to work and have the village look its best.

-7-

They had a code of signals. Mr Lewis had to pass our window on the way to school in the morning. My mother would be looking for the keys and cash-box (which she kept under her bed) and would not have much time for making arrangements. In the evening a different signal - a raised arm and scything motions meant "I will call for you later and, blisters permitting, we'll be on our way."

In between they would sharpen and take care of their tools. I think Mr Lewis was secretly glad of the opportunity of neglecting his own garden. They shared a happy sense of humour together, both saying "This is the last time, we are not going to do anymore." - but of course letting Mrs Lewis or Charlie Bryer hear them.

When the cup was duly won and Mrs Jenkins allowed it to be exhibited in the Post Office, disaster nearly struck. My mother was gardening again and had put a chip pan on to heat. When it caught fire, where did she throw it but in the passge where the cup was, on its chenile pedestal? The cloth caught fire and the cup was very hot - would it melt? Anyway

it was black and dirty. My mother confessed to no one except Mr Lewis and henceforth when he passed the window he would make polishing signs! Maybe it is significant we never won the "Best Kept Village" competition again.

An editorial apology: When I sorted through the files to find the draft of Barbara's article I was horrified to discover that the first part appeared as long ago as February. I also found several, as yet unpublished items which people have given me since we started the Newsletters. When articles need writing from notes rather than just copying from a draft, it does take a long time and has to be fitted in amongst many other chores. I am sorry if anyone thinks their contribution has been lost; they will all appear in due course.

Kingfisher again: In Newsletter 15 Derek and Audrey Porter said they had seen Kingfishers on the river near Millrace Cottage and The Green. They have appeared several times since then and this morning (August 6th), as the editorial dogs had their morning walk, one perched for a little while on the alder tree by the lower ford (kingfisher not dog). Electric blue and orange
it then flew off, a flash of vivid colour in the early morning sun. In all of my twenty-one years in Llanccarfan I have never seen one in centre of the village before - it is so good to know they are still here where our older contributors have remembered them.