



## **LLANCARFAN SOCIETY**

### **Newsletter 26: January-February 1990**

#### Future Events

A WHIST DRIVE will be held on Saturday, February 24th, 7.30 p.m., at Rhoose Community Hall. Refreshments and raffle. Tickets (75p) are available from Barbara Milhuisen, 73 Tynewydd Road, Barry; Phil Watts, Abernant Bungalow, Llancarf, or at the door.

#### Subscriptions

A Happy New Year to all our members! Sadly, that greeting also means that another year has passed and the time for renewal of membership is with us again. We have managed to minimise costs during the year and to make a small profit from various events, allowing the subscription to remain at £5.00 for 1990. A renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please make sure that your name and full address are on the slip so that we can maintain an up-to-date mailing-list. The form and your subscription should be sent to Phil Watts, Abernant Bungalow, Llancarf, Barry, South Glamorgan, CF6 9AD.

Buffet Supper Next to the first Annual Dinner in 1987, which had to be held in two sittings on two different days, the Buffet Supper at the Fox and Hounds on January 8th, proved to be the most popular indoor event we have organised. It was not easy to count, but judging from the attendance slips which were returned and the various last-minute 'phone calls, it attracted about 100 people. Casual visitors to the Fox, in this second week of the New Year when most people are down to their last few pence, must have wondered what was going-on!

Grateful thanks are due to Joyce Andrews for providing the buffet. Ruth Watts and Dilys Liscombe organised the raffle which covered the costs of the evening and, yet again, made us a small profit.

The Christmas Holiday Another Christmas has gone and the world is a year older. Village festivities started with the Carol Service in the Church on December 17th and the switching-on of the Christmas tree, by the ford, on December 18th. Unfortunately the weather was awful for the Christmas tree ceremony, with heavy rain. However a large gathering of children, parents and others repaired to the shelter and warmth of the Fox and Hounds where carols were sung. The tree shone brightly each evening until shortly after the New Year when vandalism by a group of young lads destroyed many of the lamps on the tree. It seems so sad that many attempts to arrange community activities come to grief on this problem of mindless destructiveness and all the more so in this case as it seems that the boys concerned were here by invitation for a party.

Happier thoughts are provoked by the success of the usual Boxing Day events. The tug-of-war through the ford matched a Llancarfan team against the Three Horseshoes, Moulton. After a series of rope breakages, which added to the enjoyment for a great crowd of onlookers, but not for the participants, Llancarfan was well and truly beaten. A bucket-collection was held in support of the Romania fund and raised £120. The Phab and Maesycoed Special School egg-race was equally successful though it was over very quickly because the rain-swollen river was running so fast. Those of us who were dabbling in the river at the finishing-post had great difficulty in separating the winners. Perhaps we need a photo-finish video next year?! Phab and Maesycoed each took £187 from the proceeds of the race which was organised again this year by Gwynne Liscombe, tickets being sold via his colleagues in Phab and through Barbara Milhuisen, Head of Maesycoed. First prize went to a Phab worker from Newport but the second prize, a meal for two in the Fox and Hounds, was won by - guess who? - Edgar Balchin proprietor of the restaurant!

In Memory of Tom Ranger, The Manse, Llanbethery by Phil Watts  
It is with great sadness that I am writing to tell you of the death of Tom Ranger, husband of Molly (nee Sweet), on Monday 29th January.  
I have known Tom for nearly fifty years. He introduced me, together with many others, to a football team in Bonvilston, which led me to be actively concerned as a player and as a referee for 35 years. I am grateful for the happy times that it brought me. Being a few years older he was always around to give counsel to the younger element, he never showed great annoyance, only slight displeasure, sufficient for one to get the message. I have heard of Tom being described as 'one of nature's kindly gentlemen'. He lived his whole life in the country, close to nature and fond of his garden. A very kind, patient man. Tom and Molly were married in 1949 and soon came to live in New House, Llancarfan before moving back to the Manse, Llanbethery. Thank you Molly for bringing Tom to Llancarfan and allowing us to share some happy times in years gone by. He will be greatly missed.

Village Stories: Mrs Eleanor Williams, Aberogwrn, told us two stories in the last Newsletter which seem very typical of the tales which were related, again and again, around villages before radio and television filled our minds with other things. Reading her note I was reminded of another such story which must have been recounted at the beginning of the century to Marianne Spencer, writer of Annals of South Glamorgan, from which we have quoted before. She may well have heard the following whilst drinking one of those cups of tea provided by Dr Evan Thomas' mother so long ago at Llanvithyn Farm (Newsletter 8).

"On the hill at the back of the land above Llanveithin, there stood ---- an old building known as the Grange. It was built on a level piece of ground near the top of the hill ---- the eaves of the house resting on the hill behind. This tenement was forty feet long and consisted of two rooms below and one large room above. In this room Mabsant was held, year after year in January, until the place became too dilapidated. A very old road, still in constant use, led from Llanveithin by gentle ascents up to this building. Almost the last

time that Mabsant was held here, a practical joke was played upon the revellers by an old man who was then living at Whitwell. Catching a hen and mounting the hill at the back of the Grange, he put the bird down the chimney, whence it descended cackling and fluttering, and bringing plenty of soot in its downward course, right into the midst of the revels below, terrifying the dancers and sending them flying helter skelter down the stairs and out of the house."

Annals of South Glamorgan 1913

Elsewhere in the book, Marianne Spencer describes Mabsant as the annual holiday held on the feast day of the tutelary saint of the parish and a time for "general carousings and ball playing". At Kenfig, a few miles to our west, the ball play was an endeavour to throw it over the church tower. Any memories of such tales amongst grandparents of older members?

Many of these stories, like this one, also remind us that farm and domestic animals were much less respected in the "good old days". We have lost and gained.

Cuba Cottage: As you enter Llancadle from the Llancarfan direction, the first house on the left is 'Cuba Cottage'. In the last Newsletter the editor asked whether the name was related to the involvement of Llancarfan people in the sugar industry at the beginning of the century.

Mrs Letty Gardner has replied, telling us that the cottage was named by her mother, Mrs Bealing, when she went there to live. Previously it had been known as 'The Cottage'. Because it belonged to Llewellyn Hughes who lived and worked in Cuba, it seemed sensible to call it 'Cuba Cottage'. Llewellyn was the son of Alfred Hughes, Vicar of Llancarfan from 1870 to 1913. In 1899 the Church register records the marriage of Llewellyn Frederick Hughes, aged 31, to Helena Spencer, daughter of a Llancarfan farmer. Llewellyn's occupation and place of residence was given as "engineer, Solidad Cuba". Megan Hamber's note in the last Newsletter (25) confirms that he was in the sugar industry.

The link between Llewellyn Hughes and the sugar-planting Lougher family (Kenneth Lougher's article: Newsletter 24) is strongly suggested in a letter written from Hawaii in 1891 by Robert Lougher to his sister Jane at Garnllwyd. At the close of the letter, he wrote: "Llew Hughes wishes to be remembered to all of you. Your affectionate Brother, Bob.", more or less confirming that Llewellyn Hughes was in the Hawaiian sugar industry with the Lougher brothers at that time (Gwladys Lougher's article: Newsletter 24).

Jane Lougher was subsequently to become the grandmother of our Treasurer, Phil Watts and Committee member, Gwynne Liscombe, by marrying William Liscombe of Monastery Mill. This is recorded in Phil's articles on the life of his mother in Newsletters 11.

The Llancarfan Ploughing Match: A Conversation with Dan Thomas, the Hollies, formerly

of Flaxland Fawr

by Phil Watts

The Ploughing match was last held in 1938 at Llanvithyn Farm on fields adjacent to Cemain Farm. A previous venue was near Sycamore Cross, probably by permission of Jim James, Sheepcourt Farm. On this occasion, Dan remembers over 40 entrants for the hedge laying competition. The field was not big enough and some had to be moved into the next field, indicating how popular the event was in those days.

Other venues were fields near Crosston, probably part of Pancross Farm and also at Gileston where there was some excellent ploughing, reflecting the better grade of land.

The event was not held during the War (1939-45) and the balance of funds was divided between the Wenvoe Show (now defunct) and the Cowbridge Show. Cups also went in this direction and are believed to be still in existence and competed for.

My own recollection of the (1938?) Llancarfan Ploughing match was having my photograph taken with David Lougher (now of Penonn), holding marrows from the show. The photograph appeared in the Barry paper.

Dan also remembers having a drink in the beer tent at the 1938 Llancarfan Show with Sam Davies, Whitton Bush and his saying that it had been a bad year for making hay. The day of the show was fine and the hay was fit for gathering from the field at Whitton Fawr. The next day he would have been able to have it in the rick but, alas, overnight there was a great storm and Llancarfan was flooded. Another case of not making hay while the sun shines!

After reading Nellie Williams contribution to Newsletter 25, Dan added the further memory of the travelling tailors, recalling being told by his father that, while the family farmed Ty Clyd Farm, Whitchurch, a tailor used to travel from Llancarfan to Whitchurch to stay at the farm for a week at a time making breeches for farm workers. The tailor was Danny Gibbon's father.

Danny Gibbon was the publican at the Fox and Hounds until about 1913 and later lived at The Nook (Morningside) and then Middlehill (see note below).

Ty Clyd Farm was owned by sisters, the Misses Booker, land owners and wellknown in hunting circles. The farm was sold to Cardiff Corporation to allow the building of a mental institution which is now Whitchurch Hospital.

Editor's note: according to the current street-map of Cardiff, the old Ty Clyd farmhouse is still in existence. Middlehill cottage was demolished in the mid-70's to make way for a new house. A few years later its name was interchanged with that of The Talbots, the next-door property in the Llancarfan direction. We will endeavour to track-down the Ploughing Match cups - if they still exist the inscriptions will be of great interest.

A note letter from Gwynne, Liscombe, Divisional Director, Phab

I would like to thank the Llancarfan Society on behalf of Phab, Wales for their donation of £25.00 towards our work in South Wales.

The donation, though quite unexpected, is very much appreciated and will help towards mounting our residential programme in 1990. We hope to provide up to 400 places.

A publication: One of our expatriate members, Charles F. Shepherd, has published a booklet entitled "My House is a House of Prayer" A Meditative Walk round a Church. Some members will know Mr Shepherd's 'Bonvilston: the Story of a Picturesque Village' in Stewart Williams' Vale of Glamorgan Series, Volume 3. The new booklet is available at 70p (post free) from the author, Blackheath, Llanteg, Narberth, Dyfed.

Foxes Did anyone in the village hear the the foxes during the mid-weeks of January? I remember the first description of the unearthly sound, which I read when I was a child after first hearing the animals in wartime Kent. "During the month of January --- one may hear the scream of the vixen, and it is a noise that one is unlikely to forget, sounding as though a horse were trapped in agony or a man being murdered. It has happened that people, being unaware of this characteristic of the vixen, have actually organized search parties ----".

The bedroom window of Ceffyl Du, built on the old Blackhorse land, looks out into the woodland of Coed-y-Crynalit where the over-arching trees trap and magnify every sound, particularly on still, clear mornings. The first performance was well before dawn, in the third week of the month. Sheena woke with a start, imagining goodness knows what horrible bloodshed, in some awful dream battle. Even the resident tawny owl was disturbed and went-off with disgusted "twick"'s and screeches. The vixen screamed for five minutes or more, waking our dogs, and then the silence which fell was almost tangible in the intensity of its contrast. I slipped off to sleep again but when I let the dogs out at 7-o'clock they rushed dementedly about the garden baying and barking after the creature which had disturbed them. Fortunately our fences are in good order, these days!

Retrievers and hunting-dogs seem to be particularly sensitive to the smell and sound of foxes. Some of you will remember that our Labradors had an illfated encounter with a fox last summer; the story was in Newsletter 20. This might also be the place to recall another fox story dating from the early 70's. We had a Siamese cat and a yellow Labrador in those days, the immediate predecessors of the present managerie. One early summer morning we heard the cat yowling more noisily than usual in the garden. I looked out of a window to see him confronting a greyish-red, young adult fox which lost its nerve after a few moments, and took-off in a loping run with the cat in hot pursuit! It is often said that foxes take cats, but predatory animals generally keep well clear of each other - even a minor injury can be lethal to a hunter. It is not easy to surprise a cat in the open, when they are much more wary than indoors. They

can instantly change from a warm ball of fur into a razor-waving hoodlum and most foxes would need to be very foolish or inexperienced to tangle with one. I suppose there may be exceptions: most big dogs will run a mile if a cat becomes aggressive but a tiny Jack Russell, with its ratting instincts can be lethal.

Thinking about foxes reminded us that we had not been to see the Broomwell badgers recently, though we look down, twice each day, from the hilltop at Penylan to make sure that strangers are not about any bad business. It was good to discover that spring-cleaning and extension of premises was going on apace, with great mounds of the white gritty soil thrown out. Badgers bury their dead by walling them up in an abandoned part of the sett and amongst the new soil tumbling down the bank to the stream we came upon a badger skull, so old that it was encrusted with lime from the soil, almost like a fossil. The Broomwell setts are probably centuries old and, hopefully, will be there long after we are just memories.

John Etherington

A conversation with Millward Harrisby Philip Watts

Millward recalled that the first bomb of the 1939-45 war to drop on Llanccarfan parish was a single one on Edward Williams' farm in Llancadle, date not known.

Some other wartime information that has not been mentioned in our Newsletters was that on Llanbetherly Farm, in the Downs area, there was laid-out a dummy airfield with sets of lights intended to deceive enemy aircraft at night. It was maintained by two or three airmen who were billeted at Treguff Farm. Apparently there were dugouts as well.

On one occasion, date unknown, when enemy aircraft were making a raid on St Athan aerodrome, probably guided by the decoy lights, a number of incendiary bombs were dropped in the middle of the village of Llanbetherly. It appears that the thatched roofs in the village were in danger of catching fire and several bombs had to be extinguished before greater damage was done.

The procedure was that when the air raid warnings sounded the Air Raid Warden would patrol the area along with elements of the Home Guard. The two responsible for extinguishing the bombs on this night were Maurice Sweet, the Llanbetherly Air Raid Warden and Millward Harris as a member of the Home Guard.

Also told to me by Millward, but I have heard many times before, was how old Tom Shanklyn came to be in prison for a couple of weeks. This story is not told as a slight on Tom's character but more to show a weakness in his personality which allowed him to become a victim of the social structure of the times.

It was the practice of William Liscombe, Monastery Mill, to kill a pig and cure the bacon in the Bakehouse (at that time he was using the premises to bake bread to supply his local customers). It was also a common practice not to lock places up in those days - it was not deemed necessary.



However, a number of the ham flitches, sides of bacon, call them what you may, went missing. The police were informed and an investigation began. The local policeman led the enquiry: he was based at Penmark or St Nicholas. One of his enquiries took him to the Fox and Hounds where Tom was consuming amounts of David Harris' ale and upon being given more sustenance, Tom was able to co-operate with the law and say that the missing bacon was buried at Abernant. This proved to be correct. At that time a man by the name of Bill Davies lived at Abernant, a well known poacher. He also went to prison with Tom because of the missing sides of bacon. It seems that Tom was only the accomplice in this affair and that he had only shown where the hams were. It was not his idea to steal. Tom was never a man to think of tomorrow or how the ham would provide many a meal - he would be no more concerned with food for today than tomorrow.

I can't help thinking that if William Liscombe had thought that Tom Shanklyn was involved with the missing hams, the law would not have been invoked at all. Local people thought more of Tom than to concern him with police enquiries. The matter could have been dealt with on a more intimate basis.

Another story relating to Tom and William Liscombe is on the occasion when hay was short during one of the winters at Monastery Mill. Tom took it upon himself to borrow, or take without asking, some hay from Llanvithyn Farm, then being farmed by Wally Lougher. Tom delivered, free of charge to Monastery Mill, an amount of hay that he could carry on his back; whether he made more than one journey is not clear. But, what is clear, is that Wally was able to follow the trail of loose bits of hay from Llanvithyn to the Mill! This matter was resolved without the intervention of the law.

Another story that relates how nice a character Tom was, is illustrated by his being given the job of digging a hole for a gatepost on Penylan Farm by Joe Lewis. The instructions were to dig a hole 3 foot deep, place the post in an upright position and make firm the ground around, and ready to receive the gate. But, on investigation it was found that Tom had taken notice that the post had been marked by Joe at 3 foot from the base and decided that it was not necessary to dig the hole 3 foot deep: if he cut a foot off the post it would not be necessary to dig the hole more than 2 foot thus keeping everybody happy, the post in the ground to the mark and less work for Tom in digging the hole.

There are countless stories told of Tom and his life in the Parish of Llancarfan. His communication with children, his life in the various barns and sheds, the work that he did or didn't do and his exploits in the Fox and Hounds are all worth repeating. It seems a great pity that when the time came for him to be removed from the Parish and he was to live his life of retirement in a foreign parish, and to be buried in a paupers grave, that greater effort was not made for his body to be interred in the place where he had lived and worked - Llancarfan. I wonder if it is still not too late for something to be done by those who remember him?

Millward also recalled that, between the Wars, John Buckley (Hillside) owned a mule and trap with which he used to take people, who had no transport of their own, to Barry on

shopping trips and other business.

Omissions from Ruth Watt's notes on the cricket club (Newsletter 25)

Ruth and Phil have added the following: Two very functional and necessary members of the cricket club were Jenkin Dunn, Treasurer and Charlie Wheeler, Head Groundsman (he advised watering the wicket and transporting water from the river with George Palling's horse and cart). Sylvia Dunn was not mentioned as part of the Dunn family as she had already moved away having married Billy Jones, son of John Jones, Great House.

Weather: our last Annual Dinner was held on a day of a record-breaking gale and, together with the great hurricane which swept southern England in October 1987, one would think we had experienced enough of a battering to satisfy the statistics for the next century. Not so. Thursday, 25th January 1990 brought yet another howling gale and whilst Llancarfan, sheltered in its valley, suffered relatively minor damage, houses which received the full force of the wind lost roof slates and older corrugated iron barns were badly damaged.

The roof-timbers of the unfinished house at Ty-to-Maen were overturned and parts of Barry looked like a war-zone, the streets littered with slates, tiles and bricks. The woods are full of broken branches and the last of the trees which succumbed to Dutch elm disease have tumbled. At least we escaped the snow which caused problems not so far away: on the bright, clear Saturday morning the summits of Exmoor and the Brendon Hills, twenty five miles away, across the Channel, were dazzling white in the sunshine and then, a few days later, West Wales and the West Country suffered awful flooding. Perhaps the weather is changing!

Llancarfan recipes: We haven't had any readers' responses to the request for recipes so here is something of our own, centring around sloe gin. At Christmas we bought the most enormous pineapple with a label around its neck suggesting that it could be served, chopped and sprinkled with kirsch. Having tried this before, we did the same thing with home-made sloe gin, which we make with no added sugar, so that it is pretty sharp. The contrast with the very sweet pineapple was delicious and the red colour improves the look of the rather insipid fruit. We make sloe gin most years, collecting them here or in Pembrokeshire. You can use the cheapest gin available - one of our best batches was from a Californian supermarket at about two dollars a litre about a pound then!

Collect the sloes when they are as ripe as possible but before they begin to mildew. They are also better after the first frosts. The fruit will ripen some more in a warm room but again beware of mould. The next bit makes a great difference: wash them and put them in the freezer; the great advantage is that you can wait until some cheap gin turns-up but,



better than that, freezing damages the fruit-pulp and skins so that the juice just floods-out when they thaw. Fill a clean wide-necked jar (we use coffee jars) with the fruit, add a tablespoon of crushed bitter-almonds. Top up with gin and forget the whole thing for about six months. Decant the sloe-gin into clean green or brown wine bottles, preferably with recessed bottoms, as sediment comes down for the first month or two. You can sweeten it at this stage if the sharpness is too much for you. Re-bottle after three months if you haven't already drunk it! The colour is magical if you serve it in tiny crystal glasses, from a small clear-glass decanter, but don't keep it in the decanter as the colour slowly fades in daylight. Avoid waste - try eating the gin-soaked sloes!

JRE

Local Press: All sorts of things happen in and around Llancarfan and it is hardly suprising that the local press features us now and then. The Western Mail ran an article on Viv Price's Trevithyn Farm a few weeks ago, following his winning of the Royal Welsh farm buildings and works competition. Unusually for these days, Trevithyn is a new farm which Viv built, starting in 1968. For those of you who have moved away it is to the north of the road just before you reach Abernant on the way toward Bonvilston.

Then, just as this issue of the Newsletter was complete, I saw that the Western Mail monthly magazine, Welsh Style for February, contained a short article on Trewallter Fawr, the 16th century house at Walterston and its restoration by Mrs Non Evans and her former husband John Hefin Evans. Older members will remember the house as Walterston Fawr.

Corner House: Joan Evans (nee Morgan, formerly of The Green) has sent as a photograph of Corner House, taken many years ago, when it was under thatch. At that time it was only one and a half stories in height, the half being given by "eyebrow" windows under the thatch into the loft rooms. The photo' includes Bill and Elizabeth Hartrey standing outside the front-door, dating it to the first two decades of the century. The photograph of Llancarfan, dated about 1910, in Roy Dennings' Vale of Glamorgan in Old Photographs shows Fern Cottage with similar 'eyebrows' in its thatch.