



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 27: March 1990

Apologies for the lateness of this Newsletter. The editor has been snowed under with both work and domestic commitments for the last few weeks.

Typically British, we often start with a comment on the weather. Throughout the end of February and beginning of March it continued stormily variable and those who know of the editor's professional interest in the subject have prompted the suggestion that the 'greenhouse effect' is to blame. Without answering that one, we can at least say that human beings have short memories and that many winters are pretty freakish. One member pointed-out that the daffodils are very early this year but, going back to 1905, Edith Holden's Nature Notes of an Edwardian Lady introduces February with a watercolour of bursting daffodil buds - and she was a very accurate observer of nature.

Much more recently, last year's March Newsletter commented on the earliness of the daffodils and recorded wood anemones in the second week of February not open until mid-March this year. However, it has been very warm - Joan and Phil Quelch told me that they had picked mushrooms this month - with hardly any winter frost the soil has not really got cold and the mushrooms probably think it is still autumn! No records, though: the Vale Herald and Post True or False quiz for the second week of March told us that the warmest February ever, was not 1990 but 1891 with three consecutive days when the temperature reached 67°F!

Probably the most striking thing this year has been the masses of sweet violet in the hedgebanks, particularly the white variety but also all colours from deep magenta to the palest lilac as well as the common blue-violet. Northcliff Lane which joins Dyffryn to the Five Mile Lane, was literally white with them in places - far more than usual.

In an earlier Newsletter there was a comment on the increasing number of trees in the valley around Llancarfán, but in the hedgerows on the high ground they disappear each time we have a gale. Last month was no exception and many old trees have fallen or been seriously damaged by loss of huge branches. The elms went ten years ago, leaving ash as the commonest fieldboundary trees. Most of these are old and often have heartrot. There are few young ones and allowing trees to grow-up out of the hedges is a nuisance for mechanical hedgecutting. In any case, there is no agricultural reason for doing so: the fungicide-soaked larch posts from the 'forestry' are easier to use and last longer than crooked farm-grown posts.

Future Events

SPRING BANK HOLIDAY WALK: this will be held on Monday, 7th May commencing at 11.00 a.m. As usual we shall arrange a gentle walk around Llancarfan, guided by some more or less knowledgeable folk and return to the Fox and Hounds in time for lunch. It is possible that we may also take a 'breakaway' group to Llantrithyd if we can find a willing leader. Please return the enclosed slip to John Etherington if you want to come - we need to have a rough idea of numbers.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Some subscriptions are still outstanding. Please send your £5 to Phil Watts. We can only send free copies of the Newsletter for a month or two. Incidentally, a thank-you to all of those members who sent letters with their renewal - all sorts of interesting information has come in. Some appears in this Newsletter and some is filed-away for the future.

Pigsties: South Glamorgan and nearby areas of South Wales have a tradition of the round "beehive" stone pigsty. This is mentioned, for example by H. N. Savory in Stewart Williams' Vale of Glamorgan Series, Vol. 1. "--- even in the Middle Ages the Vale develops a local combination of characteristics which are obvious to every visitor - its embattled church towers and beehive pigsties, which are distinctively Welsh, and its type of thatched cottage, which recalls Somerset and Devon and no doubt owes something to those imported English peasants who gave the Vale its numerous place names ending in - ton."

A good example, on the southern side of the road through Llantrithyd, has just been restored to its original condition. It is in, or adjacent to, the garden of The Meadows, a modern house at Tre-Aubrey, not far from the point where Nant Llantrithyd runs beside the road. I have not had the opportunity to stop and ask - do any of our Llantrithyd readers know its history? Jenny Morris, Llantrithyd told me that there are also very old stone arched wellheads in the woodland nearby. Again, do we have any history?

A note from Valerie Watts, Llantrithyd

On reading about the Ploughing Match in the last Newsletter, Valerie wrote to Phil Watts recollecting that her brother, Trevor Harris, won the First Prize for the best cultivated garden plot at Llancarfan School in 1934.

Valerie enclosed a copy of the original letter which accompanied the cheque for 7s. 6d. (37.5p !). It was headed Llancarfan and District Agricultural Improvement Society and signed by the Hon. Secretary, Herbert R. Thomas, Auctioneer, Valuer and Estate Agent, High Street Cowbridge.

Readers will know that Herbert Thomas is a member of the Society and wrote some notes for us in Newsletter 9 - a real link with the old village before the commuters came. In those notes he said he was secretary for many years and that Committee meetings were often held in the Fox and Hounds.

Valerie's letter, which ends on a note of sadness, says:

"After reading the Newsletter I thought about the time my brother Trevor won first-prize - the competition was for the best plot of garden in Llancarfan school. You will remember

they were below the school on the hill.

I found the original letter and had a copy made to send to you. He bought a watch for 5/- and a book which is still here. 7/6 went a long way 56 years ago. I hope it will be of interest to you. Trevor died a year ago today so I couldn't send you the original letter - we have to keep it."

The Fox and Hounds

Sadly, this month, we said goodbye to Joyce Andrews as licensee of the Fox. Joyce, her daughter Sally and son-in-law, Peter Lennox, have been part of everyday life in the village, for seven years. Since its inception the Llancarfan Society has held monthly meetings and other functions in the Fox and on many occasions we have had good reason to be grateful to Joyce, Sally and Peter for their help.

We all wish them well and hope that, as members of the Society, they will continue to appear at our various events.

We welcome Mike Evans, our new licensee, to Llancarfan.

Polecat: Earlier this month, Paul Schmit of Brook Cottage was looking out from his kitchen window toward the ford when he saw a black or dark brown animal, like a very large weasel or a dark ferret, close to the water. This was almost for certain a polecat which, according to the Dyfyd Wildlife Trust's *The Nature of West Wales*, has recently spread south from its former stronghold in North and Mid- Wales and so we shall perhaps see them again. During nearly thirty years in this part of South Wales I have never seen one but have twice encountered escaped ferrets, the domesticated version of the polecat.

The Parc Dyffryn Trust Development

by John Etherington

As editor of the Newsletter I have said before that I shall refrain from commenting on local planning matters because they are often controversial and it would perhaps be a misuse of the position to air my sometimes strong views. However, the Parc Dyffryn affair is different, both in scale and also because the developers have chosen to sell their money-making idea on environmental grounds which are part of my professional concern.

For expatriates and those who have not read the 'flier' which has been delivered to many local households, the proposal is to develop an area of 768 acres of land straddling the Five Mile Lane (A 4226), about quarter of a mile from the A 48. The development is huge. It reaches from Brook Lane, south of St Nicholas, across almost to Greendown!

Four hundred "high quality" houses would be built in 73 acres of "woodland village" to the east side of the road. One hundred and seventy two acres of the best agricultural land

would be kept as a part of Redlands Farm (redeveloped as a "Village Farm"), 300 acres of broadleaf "forest" will be planted and the remaining area, to the west of Five Mile Lane, will accommodate a racecourse and country house hotel. The site will also include an independent co-educational school and land for a primary school, if required.

The developers claim that "the project will have the enhancement of the local environment as its central aim". Under the heading "Britains first ecological village" various claims are made concerning the use of materials which, "in production, use or disposal, do not harm the environment". "Homes will be highly energy efficient so as to reduce their consumption of non-renewable fuel resources". "To help offset the effects of carbon dioxide produced by the energy demands of the new housing, 300 acres of woodland will be planted. This will help to reduce the greenhouse effect."

Some of these statements are a cynical exploitation of the generally growing worry about our global environment. For example, the saving of a little central-heating fuel is of small consequence compared with the additional fuel consumption created by traffic to and from 400 luxury out-of-town homes, a school of several hundred pupils, a hundred-bed hotel and not least the long-distance transport implications of yet another racecourse.

Without details the developers also promote the idea that Parc Dyffryn will provide a "much needed habitat for wildlife". Readers of these Newsletters will not need telling that, despite losses to modern agriculture, this part of the Vale remains a pretty marvellous lowland wildlife sanctuary which can only suffer from further disturbance.

The block of land to the southwest of Sycamore Cross reaches half way across the Vale to Llancarfan without any road access. The southern end includes the woodland of Coed Quinnet, Coed Ffynon Dyfrig and Coed Garnllwyd, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Glamorgan Wildlife Trust Reserve. It is by reason of this inaccessibility that it is the haunt of owls, buzzard, kestrel, sparrow hawk, even the occasional peregrine, heron, kingfisher, fox, badger, hare, a myriad smaller creatures and a jewel-box of plants including some rarities. Supporting their devotion to "ecology" the developers ominously tell us in their covering letter that "Local people will thus have access to more than 400 acres of land which until now has been private property."

Do we want this land converted into a tarted-up urban parkland roamed by the inhabitants of 400 houses, doubtless with the universally uncontrollable scramble-bikes, air-rifles and the other appurtenances of city-fringe living? Do we want a racecourse with a public address system which will fill this valley with noise and make our complaints about aircraft look silly? Is this enhancement of our environment? Incidentally the racecourse apparently takes in the area of Coed yr Aber, the only substantial mature woodland on the Development site. New woods for old, but what happens to the wildlife in the fifty years before the trees grow? Who prevents the new trees from being vandalised - we can't control such vandalism of roadside trees let alone open access woodlands.

Well, that gets it off my chest, but what about you, the members of the Society - past and present residents of Llancarfan? What do you think? Am I alone in being so horrified, not just at the proposal (money after all) but at the cynical misuse of all the hopeful ideas which have taken hold of society during the last decade? What is our Community Council's

response? Would it be useful for Bonvilston, St Nicholas and Llancarfan residents to raise a petition against this proposal?

Remember, the scheme has not yet been granted a planning permission and indeed, the developers have ridden carriage and horses through the system by opening an exhibition at Redlands Farm Barn without even obtaining a change of use permission (Western Mail, March 20th). It's up to us. If we want the Vale to be further suburbanised this is the way, but if we don't, both corporate and individual objections may help. On a rough and ready straw poll I think more than three quarters of our parishioners are against the scheme, most of the remainder sitting on the fence with one or two excited by the enhancement of their businesses interests or property values.

Late news. The Western Mail of 29th March carried a short article announcing that the Council for Protection of Rural Wales has entered the fray. Their spokesman made the point that only concerted opposition will divert this and other threats to the Vale and the Welsh countryside. The statement also contained an invitation for concerned individuals and organisations to contact the CPRW.

A letter from Isobel Moffat Maesyffynon, Bonvilston
with a note and Poem from Bob Evans.

"I wondered if you'd like to include the enclosed in one of the Llancarfan Society Newsletters. It was Bob's contribution at a recent Thursday Club meeting in Trehill. He brought the chair with him to show it off."

"So here is the farmers boy from Village Farm (when it was a farm!) expressing his thoughts on spring":-

The countryside is bursting; Come join with us and welcome
Its new life seems to sing - The ever glorious SPRING!

This poem won the chair in an Eisteddfod held in Llancarfan in the late 'forties. Eisteddfods were held in Bonvilston and Llancarfan for a couple of years at that period. I could never win in Bonvilston being beaten regularly by Miss Hilda Bray (now Mrs Jack Calvin Thomas), so I succeeded in Llancarfan where she didn't compete. In Bonvilston we always had the full churning ceremony with the "A Oes Heddwch?" pieces, but no chair. In Llancarfan though, a miniature wooden chair was presented, which was made, I believe by the late Mr Tudor Liscombe (the Baker). I am the proud owner of one of these chairs - a reminder of many enjoyable evenings. R. Evans.

An apocryphal tale? - the Odd Window of St Cadoc's: At a lecture in Barry recently, Mr Ron Norton told a story which I have never heard before nor have I found it in any of the usual writings about the village. I am grateful to my wife's mum, Netta Bowyer for passing the story on to us.

First a bit of history. After the Civil War had ended in 1646, the deposed Charles I

anticipated that his opponents would quarrel amongst themselves. This indeed came to pass and, by 1648 Charles had succeeded in allying presbyterian with royalist in the outbreak of the second Civil War of which the first signs came from Wales. The gentry of the Vale were mainly royalist and, in May, 1648, their forces and disaffected parliamentary troops from the west, met Cromwell at the battle of St Fagans where they were bloodily defeated.

Mr Norton told the following tale but said he had no evidence for its veracity:- Before the battle of St Fagans the landed gentry of the Llancarfan area met in St Cadoc's church, presumably to discuss strategy. After the battle, Cromwell angered by this meeting and its consequences, showed his displeasure by detailing troops to damage the church with cannon fire. That sacrilege is commemorated to this day by the presence of an odd window.

The only reference to the church windows which the editor has found is in the account of Llancarfan Village by G. T. Clark in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* Series 3 vol. XI of 1865. This details each window, identifying its stylistic age and concludes:- "The monastic patrons and landowners probably rebuilt much of the fabric in the Decorated and Perpendicular periods. The Raglans probably built the chapel and they or the Bassetts of Llanveithen (sic) put in the Tudor window." The Tudor window is square-framed and in the north wall of the chancel; it is the only obviously 'odd' window but Clark did not think it demanded comment except to say " The design is poor, and the execution inferior."

Has anyone else come across the story? Is there documentary evidence or was it a tale told over the churchyard gate to explain the odd window? A similar version appears in *Churches of the Vale of Glamorgan* but in this case the desecrator was a royalist.

JRE

A contribution from Les Griffiths

I'm fine thank you Old age is golden, I've heard it said
But sometimes I wonder, as I get into
There is nothing the matter with me bed
I'm as healthy as I can be. With my ears in drawer; my teeth in
I have arthritis in both my knees cup, my eyes on the table until I
And when I talk I talk with a wheeze. wake up
My pulse is weak and my blood is thin Ere sleep overtakes me, I say to
But I'm awfully well for the shape myself
I'm in. Is there anything else I could lay on
the shelf?
Arch supports I have for my feet
Or I wouldn't be able to be out on I get up each morning and dust off my
the street. wits,
Sleep is denied me night after night And pick up the paper and read the
But every morning I find I'm alright. obits.
My memory is failing my head's in a If my name is still missing I know
spin I'm not dead

But I'm awfully well for the shape So I have a good breakfast and go
I'm in. back to bed.

How do I know that my youth's all
spent?
Well, my get up and go has got up and
went.
But I really don't mind when I think
with a grin,
Of all the grand places my get-up
have bin.

Visitors: Walking the dogs a week or two ago it was a pleasure to meet John and Doreen Williams, formerly of Bridge House. They had been for lunch in the Fox and then on to a tour of inspection which produced the surprise of the new development at the northern end of the village. This, and the Parc Dyffryn proposals prompted John to say "Llancarfan is a very precious village - you really should resist any further building". What do others think? It doesn't seem so easy to resist, these days.