



## **LLANCARFAN SOCIETY**

### **Newsletter 28: April 1990**

The March Newsletter was so late that this one seems to follow hard on its heels as it needs to be circulated before the Early Spring Bank Holiday walks.

Spring has come with a vengeance now: the bluebells and cowslips are in full blossom and the orange-tip and tortoiseshell butterflies are abroad, though the severe frosts which coincided with the pear and apple blossom will probably nip the fruit crop in the bud and have partly spoiled the flowering of the two big cherry trees in the garden of the Fox and Hounds.

The Parc Dyffryn article produced a great deal of comment from members, some of whom have passed copies on to newspapers, councillors and representatives of the CPRW and Glamorgan Wildlife Trust. I was concerned that the article might be a bit on the controversial side for our pages but so far I have had only support - from a lot of people. Most responses have been in terms such as: "that proposed vandalism of your part of the Vale.", "--- needs concerted action to avoid such a disaster to the Vale." and "--- will help even if it means tramping from door to door." The most useful action from each member who feels like this, is to write objecting to the application for planning permission, complaining to their MP and objecting again when it goes to the Welsh Office, (which it probably will within weeks).

Some better news is that the Village Hall is now finished. A short note about its management appears in this Newsletter.

### **FUTURE EVENTS**

**EARLY SPRING BANK HOLIDAY WALKS:** these are on schedule for Monday 7th May. This year it is walks, rather than walk, as Valerie Watts and Len Mortimer have kindly agreed to lead a Church and village walk in Llantrithyd. A lot of you have returned slips for this, so it will obviously be another popular function. The Llanccarfan village walk will be having its third annual repeat! Please meet at 10.30 a.m. at Llantrithyd Church for the Llantrithyd walk or 11.00 a.m. in the Fox and Hounds car-park for the Llanccarfan walk. If it has been at all wet the Llantrithyd walk will need wellingtons. As usual the Llanccarfan walk will return to the Fox so that those who so wish may have lunch there. If the weather is fine we suggest that the Llantrithyd contingent brings sandwiches and the Society will top this up with the odd bottle of something, if you don't want to rush back to the Fox.

**CRAFT FAIR, SPORTS AND BARN DANCE:** We take this opportunity to announce that we intend to compete with Wimbledon Tennis, Test Match Cricket, World Cup Football, many fetes and all other organisations that think the first Saturday in July is the best day on the calendar. We will again hold our now annual Craft Fair, Sports on Saturday, July 7th. We are committed to a repeat of our successful venture of last year in combining with the Church in helping to run the Barn Dance in the evening.

**MEMBERSHIP:** We have so far received renewals from 119 mailing addresses for this year compared with a total of 150, last year. We would remind those who have enjoyed the Newsletters in 1989 that we will be unable to cover the costs of postage for sending them out to those who have not renewed membership by June. We would like to thank those who have rejoined for their continued support and particularly those who have helped by writing for the Newsletter.

**Village Hall:** At long last the refurbishment of the Village Hall is completed and, on 19th April, it was christened by a first public meeting to consider the formation of a Community Association and to elect its officers. A good crowd attended; standing room only by the time the Deputy Mayor of the Vale Council opened the meeting.

Because the Hall serves the wider Community of Llancarfan, including residents of several adjacent villages, it was suggested that the Association should be named the Llancarfan and District Community Association. This suggestion was adopted as was a standard form of constitution which governs all other Community Associations in the Vale.

The Deputy Mayor was elected as inaugural President, Patsy Smith as Honorary Secretary and Ros Hunt as Treasurer. Representatives of eight village organisations were nominated as committee members together with six independent members of the public. The Llancarfan Society is represented by our Hon. Secretary, Barbara Milhuisen. Other represented organisations (in strictly alphabetical order!) are the Community Council, Cricket Club, Parent-Teacher Association, Parochial Church Council, Sunday School, Tennis Club and Tuesday Club.

A great debt of gratitude is owed by our community to the Church for their willingness to sell the Hall to the Vale, and to the Vale officers who negotiated all of this with Ken Vincent representing the P.C.C. The scheme would probably have come to nought if stalwarts like Roger Fuller had not prepared plans for the conversion and Sue Taylor had not taken on all of the necessary correspondence. It is also timely to pay tribute to the late Rachel Burrows who tried very hard, a few years ago to reach this present goal and the interim committee of various good folk who worked on the project at that time. The building contractors have made a good and sympathetic job of the restoration and the Hall is no longer the decaying eyesore that it had become. Our thanks should also go to them for the tidy way in which the work was undertaken - even near-neighbours were little inconvenienced.

For those who have not seen it, the exterior of the hall has hardly changed, except for the

demolition of the ugly toilet block by the river and the opening of a pair of double doors into the churchyard, at the riverside end. Great care has been taken to match the yellow brick surrounds and wooden frames of the old doors and windows. There is also now an external stairway to an upper room which will double as a meeting room, projection gallery and observation-post. The hall is now connected to mains drainage with internal toilets and a new kitchen-area. Redecoration, a new heating system and sanding of the floor complete a very satisfying restoration.

Long may it be the venue for functions in the future.

Ivor Jones 1910-1990 Formerly of Great House, Llancarfan by Barbara Milhuisen

I first met Ivor Jones in the early 1940's when he returned to Llancarfan after practising as a chemist in Exeter (ref. Valerie Cram's contribution to Newsletter 20), but I had known him all my life having heard tales of my mother's childhood growing up in Llancarfan including mention of her first sweetheart, namely Ivor.

Ivor and his family settled very happily, he quickly recovered his health and good spirits and began work as a civilian in RAF St Athan where he cycled to work until his retirement. Soon after Ivor and Enid came to live at Great House, their only son, John, was born in the same house as his father before him and named after his grandfather - the well respected coalman, postmaster, beekeeper and choirmaster.

Ivor, in my memory of him was a firm but loving and caring father to his three daughters, my friends Valerie, Sylvia and Patsy, making sure they went to church and were family members of the newly formed church choir (the cassocks were made from defunct black-out material and the surplices from my aunt's white nursing uniforms).

To other children in the village Ivor was the kind man who organised walks, not just in the village but day trips to Fontygary. We would set-out early, take enough food for the day, something to swim in and always a ball to play with and the sun always shone.

In 1948 the Jones family moved to Rhoose and a recent conversation with Enid recalled for her the excitement of having her own house again. Even though they were happy in Llancarfan there was not much room for four active children, later to be five when their other daughter, Francis, was born.

I lost touch for a few years but my mother never did and, in the last years of her life her eyesight deteriorated. She was a member of Rhoose Derby and Joan Club where number of ex-Llancarfan people were reunited.

By now, Ivor was no longer riding his bike but had a car with which, in his very generous way, he gave lifts to so many people. Every week he and Enid would return my mother to Barry; without their help she would never have managed these visits which meant so much to her.

When the Llancarfan Society was formed it was Valerie who joined first, then Ivor and Enid. Ivor by now was not in the best of health but, like his sister (Blodwen Badcock), he had a devoted, caring partner. Enid, with her nursing skills and the help of their children, grandchildren and by now great grandchildren, cared for Ivor to the end. He died suddenly but to his family a happy release.

After cremation Ivor has again returned to Llancarfan. His ashes are now interred in the same grave as his brother Edgar.

## Drains by John Etherington

When I came to Llancarfan in 1967 there was no mains drainage. This did not surprise me as my childhood home was also without this apparently essential facility. However, in our steep-sided valley it was immediately apparent to neighbours if anything went wrong, consequently "drains" were a frequent topic of conversation and no evening in the Fox seemed to go by without some mention of the subject.

An illustration of this near obsession came one day in 1968 when we were still building. Because my garden is very steep, it needed terracing and to avoid digging, I built the garage-sized cesspit half above ground and then constructed a stone retaining wall in front to conceal it. By the time the wall was built, the cesspit was in use: at least we knew for certain that it didn't leak! The retaining wall served a double purpose, providing a dump for soil and rock from our foundations as well as hiding the red brick monstrosity.

Quite co-incidentally during this time our television set blew-up but my brother, an electrical engineer, fitted a new tube and left us with the old one to dispose-of. Rather than giving it to the dustmen - nasty dangerous explosive glass object - I decided to break it up and bury the remains under my terrace. We threw the tube down behind the wall followed by a halfhousebrick which caused it to disintegrate with an entertainingly substantial "bang!"

Dick Jorie, who then lived at Pembroke House opposite the Fox, was working in his front garden but, the moment the echoes of the exploding TV tube had died down, he came running up the road looking distinctly anxious. "Are you alright?" he shouted. "Yes", I said, wondering what the fuss was about. Dick looked most relieved, which I understood immediately when he breathlessly said "I thought your cesspit had burst!" Pembroke House and the Fox are about ten feet downhill from my garden and the pit held 4000 gallons! Bit of a slur on my brick-laying ability, I thought afterwards.

The "drains" conversations surfaced in the proceedings of the parish council on more than one occasion. Going through some Society records the other day, I found an undated newspaper cutting from the Western Mail or Echo. Whichever it was I am sure there will be no objection to our reproducing bits of an article from a year so long past:-

"Some villagers in the Vale of Glamorgan's beauty spot Llancarfan are pouring sewage straight into the stream that runs through the village."

"Mr David Lougher of New House, Llancarfan, urged Llancarfan parish council last night to investigate a report he had heard that two or three villagers used the stream because they did not have cesspits."

"Another Llancarfan resident Mr J Cann replied: 'I'm sure there are no illegal actions taking place in this village but I think Mr Lougher is correct in saying the temptation is always there if there are three houses without a cesspit.'"

Under the headline "18th century horror" the article reported further discussion of the need for cesspits to serve these older houses. Mr J G Morris said "Maybe, by fighting for this we will be condemning the houses."

Nothing was resolved at this meeting and Councillor Vivian Thomas, then chairman of the parish council, said that "the council would bear the matter in mind for the next meeting."

I'm not sure when all this took place but, at guess, in about 1961 or '62. David Lougher and the two Johns, Cann and Morris, are not only still with us, but members of the Society. Perhaps they can remember when, and whether the matter was satisfactorily resolved? They could even tell us which houses were involved though it is quite easy to guess. It didn't lead to their being condemned and doubtless, thirty years on, in estate agency parlance, they are desirable country residences.

Not so long ago and before the days of cess-pits, each house in the village was furnished with its little stone house in the back garden, the Ty Bach. Before Ceffyl Du could be built on the Black Horse Land we had to knock down the old Ty Bach which was built of stone and slate. The driver of our excavator had great trouble getting it to fall down as it slid around or tilted like a matchbox when he pushed it. Very substantial, they were!

We are on main drainage now and it all seems a very long time ago. No one ever greets me, these days, with "How are your drains?" Perhaps it's all for the best but, you know, it was yet another of those silly little things which held country communities together.

Polecats again and birds: on the very day that the last Newsletter, with its note on the Brook Cottage polecat was being posted, my daughter Clare and husband Ethan, were driving from London to our other home in Pembrokeshire. On the A40 just north of Haverfordwest, in the headlights, what should appear but another polecat. A prediction fulfilled though not in Llancarfan.

The village has been raucous to the sound of jackdaws for the last month or more. Daily we watch one popping in and out of a disused chimney of Chapel House next door. Another family have taken-up residence in the School roof and cluster around the

ventilator under the southern pine-end, like a sweeps convention. The hollow branches of the big ash above Cross Green house yet more and the tree is rarely without at least one sentinal. It looks a bit Hitchcockish sometimes.

Half-way through the Community Association meeting in the Village Hall last Thursday there was a faint outbreak of squawking and chirruping, very much like parliamentary heckling. There must be yet another nest in the old chimney of the hall!

Anyone whose lawns are as unkempt as ours might have noticed that, where the mower has cut through dandelion heads so that the seeds don't blow away, the goldfinches, bullfinches, greenfinches and others are having a field day of free meals around the village. JRE

Coed Garnllwydby Frank Jameson (Warden, Coed Garnllwyd)

A walk through Coed Garnllwyd in April is rewarding. Enter via the footpaths and over the stiles, either from Garnllwyd Farm or from the equestrian centre at Middlehill. This week, not long past All Fools Day, the floor of the wood was shining yellow with celandines and scattered with the drooping heads of wood anemones, clumps of violets, primroses of course, and the first of the bluebells (surely too early by a fortnight!). If you take the winding path to the north from the lower stile, after some 300 yards it becomes less distinct - look around for small clumps of the herb-Paris with its easily recognized four 'oval' top leaves symmetrically arranged eight to ten inches from the ground, and an inch or two above them, its strange delicate little green flower. It is of the lily family, found in ancient woodlands but not common in Wales.

Strike uphill through a bramble-free area over carpets of ubiquitous dog's mercury until you come to the top path. On the way you are likely to see the flowers pf the beautiful little early-purple orchis with its rusty-spotted leaves. On the edge of the wood is a specimen of wych elm with daughter stems from suckers, a species somewhat resistant to Dutch Elm Disease and therefore an interesting survivor of "the Plague".

Not far from the top stile is an enormous ancient beech tree that has been the anchorage for generations of rope swings. Most of the trees, however, are oak and ash. All through the wood, some 12 feet up selected trunks, are nest boxes placed there to increase the number of suitable nesting sites andd thus encourage more small birds to breed in Coed Garnllwyd.

On the south side of the steep footpath that links the two stiles (turn left from the top stile or right from the bottom), minor paths bring you to clearings where recent felling has taken place. Nowadays it is easy to fall into the trap of supposing that ancient woodlands like this charming and interesting example need only to be left alone to maintain their interest. The woodman with his chainsaw is seen as the ultimate vandal. Yet, it was only 100 years ago (or less) that woodland such as this was managed on a systematic basis to



provide some of the essential needs of the rural community.

In your walk through the wood you will notice that only a minority of the trees are single-stemmed. Many (both oak and ash) have 2, 3 or 4 stems coming from the same stool. This shows that the trees were at some time coppiced cut down and allowed to grow a limited number of shoots again - to provide poles, posts, firewood etc. Hazel coppice would have yielded material for baskets and other woven items. (Hazel rods have recently been supplied from Coed Garnllwyd for roofing purposes in the restoration work at Cosmeston mediaeval village). In one or two places in the wood are flat areas, apparently excavated from the hillside, which could have been used by charcoal burners, though no firm evidence has come to light but waggon tracks used for hauling out woodland produce are still plain to see.

As the 20th century wore on, the materials provided by the wood became outmoded, and its management slowly ceased. Even so, the present middle-aged would hardly see a great deal of difference between the wood they knew as kids and the one which is there now. Yet the trees are growing older, many becoming past prime or dying and falling in storms, damaging others. Meanwhile the canopy is thickening, reducing light to the floor. Ground-level species disappear and the wood slowly becomes more uniform and less interesting.

Coed Garnllwyd - a protected "site of special scientific interest" - was bought in 1984 by the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust. Since then, the Trust's aim has been to restore to part of the wood a management regime not unlike that applied by our forefathers. Small areas (quarter of an acre or so at a time) have been felled each year, leaving occasional good standards, and those areas replanted from Garnllwyd's own native oak. The cost of this work is helped by the sale of firewood and fencing posts. You will notice the use of plastic Tuley tubes to protect the trees and create a favourable microclimate which encourages quick growth above the bramble scrub, the bane of foresters on this site. Woodland management is organised by John Zehetmeyer of the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust (formerly Forestry Commission) using volunteer labour from the British Trust for Conservation, the Guides and Glamorgan Wildlife Trust.

Three such areas have been created between 1984 and 1990. Cattle, which previously had access, from time to time, into the south of the wood have been excluded in the hope that a more interesting ground flora would establish there. So far, our enemy the bramble is getting the best of the bargain! We do make an effort once or twice a year, to clear the paths of this menace and other obstacles. In the felled areas there has been a noticeable increase in the number of butterflies attracted by the combination of shelter and sun.

It is hoped to continue, over the years with the felling and replanting of selected areas which will eventually come to harvest in rotation, thus maintaining at least part of the wood in a condition to pass on to future generations. During this process, the visual appearance of the wood as a landscape feature has to be borne very much in mind and the outer fringe left intact.

Do any Senior Citizens have any direct recollection, or memory of tales told by older relatives, of woodland management in days gone by?

Frank Booker, formerly of Llancadle

by Phil Watts

Easter saw the passing of one of our oldest past-residents. Frank Booker, formerly of Llancadle, died on Easter Monday at the home of his daughter Dorothy in Lincoln. He was 96. Frank spent six months of his time with Dorothy and six months with his other daughter, Marg, in Barry. He could be seen on the Bowling Green of Barry during the summer months and kept very fit and active throughout his years of retirement. He will be remembered for the way in which he nursed his sick wife in Llancadle for many years before he died. He served the church as church warden and also was a member of the Parish Council for many years.

Signs of the Times and Progress

by Phil Watts

If you drive from Llancarfan to Bonvilston on the Ty-to-Maen - Abernant road, you will now be able to read with ease some new road-signs that would probably be better placed in an urban area or on a motorway.

I refer to the stretch of road from the Bakehouse to the top of Mill Hill. First there is a double corner sign on a nine-foot metal post which has now taken on a 45o list toward Llanvythin, persuaded by a large, moving vehicle. Next, written on the road in large white letters, three feet in dimension, are the words SLOW-SLOW spaced 200 yards apart. One is tempted to say slow slow- quick - quick - slow, in the words of Victor Silvester's dancing tuition.

Then, placed at the bottom of the Mill Hill, before one negotiates the corner, is a "motorway" sign of the black and white church type, indicating a sharp bend. At the top of the hill are two signs indicating that the road to Llanvythin is a dead-end and, on the Abernant side of the hill are repeats of all those at the bottom, for the benefit of travellers from Bonvilston to Llancarfan.

I wonder if this is to be repeated on all of the sharp bends in the Vale? No doubt the signs are to help those who insist that the best road to Llancarfan from the A48 is via Pen-yr-Heol Cross. The authorities have always refused our request to signpost Llancarfan via the Old Post.

Perhaps we can record this little episode as signs of the times down the road of progress. Other things that happen as progress are the removal of corners from our roads and their widening so that vehicles are able to travel even faster. This is followed by the placing of sleeping-policemen in the road to slow down traffic! Why not leave the corners there?



While on the subject, Abernant-Bonvilston road, a movement is afoot to widen the bridge at Abernant and straighten and widen the one at Whitewell, probably resulting in the character of both being destroyed - more progress!

Footnote from the editor. Noticed on a cycle-ride: a similar nine foot sharpbend sign on the other side of the A48, beyond Greenway, was so ill-erected that last-month's gales have blown it over, wrenching the concrete base out of the soft ground!

A note from Charles F. Shephard, Narberth: Mr Shephard writes to say that Bob Evans (Newsletter 27) was not entirely accurate: "chairs" were given at Bonvilston Eisteddfodau on some occasions. Bob Shephard won in 1950, 1952 and 1953. On each occasion he was given small chairs, the first two, about three inches high and the last one a little bigger, about ten to twelve inches, with the Royal arms carved on it. The winning poems were "Clouds", "Friends" and "Hands".