



## **LLANCARFAN SOCIETY**

### **Newsletter 29: May 1990**

The May Day Bank Holiday walks in Llanccarfau and Llantrithyd were well attended and we thank Valerie Watts and Len Mortimer for their informative tour of Llantrithyd Church, Llantrithyd Place and the wells of Ffynnon Echo. Phil Watts guided the Llanccarfau village walk and the editor is particularly grateful that this allowed him to escape to Llantrithyd to learn some more local geography. The weather was fine and the Llantrithyd party finished its walk by indulging the old country tradition of a picnic, with the odd glass of wine and beer before returning to the Fox and Hounds where a raffle draw took place after lunch. We are grateful to Barbara Milhuisen for her gift of wine. Len Mortimer provided some additional bottles and John and Jenny Morris kindly allowed us the use of their garden at the Old Rectory for our picnic. The combination of weather and company served to make a quite lovely morning - perhaps we need a few more walks and other outdoor events?

Len is very partisan about Llantrithyd and has no doubt that it is a better village than Llanccarfau! It is difficult not to agree when our village becomes so crowded with visitors to the Fox and its centre is so tightlypacked with houses compared with the long spread-out village of Llantrithyd. It certainly has a lot to offer for the visiting walker as we learned on Bank Holiday Monday. Later on we shall do an article on Llantrithyd Place and its history. Sufficient to say here that Len showed us the impressive ruins of the 16th century house which was, successively, the home of the Mansells, Bassets and Aubreys. Below the house is an adjacent courtyard of cottages and outbuildings together with the old walled garden with its south-facing wall alcoves where skeps of bees were once kept. The valley-bottom has the remains of a complex of fishponds with their cobbled bottoms, water channels and remnants of the sluices and fish traps while, across the valley, on the hillside below Cemain are the wells of Fynnon Echo with their corbelled stone roofs, at least as old as Llantrithyd Place for which they once provided the water. Dimpled channels in the meadows show clearly where the waterpipes once ran across the valley to the house.

#### FUTURE EVENTS: CRAFT FAIR, CHILDREN'S SPORTS AND BARN DANCE.

By kind permission of Mr & Mrs Tony Thomas these events will be held on Saturday, 7th July at Pancross Barn and field. The Craft Fair will open at 11.00 a.m. and continue through the day. Refreshments and snacks will be provided. The Sports will commence at 2.30 p.m. As last year, the Barn Dance will be organised by the Church, and the Society will provide a bar. Tickets available from Mr Ken Vincent, Middlecross. Anyone wishing to book a stall at the Craft Fair or needing further information, please contact Barbara Milhuisen (Secretary) 73 Tynewydd Road, Barry (Phone Barry 720507).

#### BARBECUE.

By kind invitation of Phil & Ruth Watts, a lunchtime barbecue will be held at Abernant on Sunday, August 19th commencing at 12.00. Tickets "on the gate".

**RRIDGE CLUB:** Pam Higgs hopes to start a village bridge club. Would any interested members of the Society telephone or write to her at Bonvilston (0446) 781566, Carreg Llwyd, Llancarfan, CF6 9AD.

Parc Dyffryn Trust - again: More comment has come in concerning the article on the Parc Dyffryn development proposals which included the question: "What is our Community Council's response?". Joan Quelch, Clerk to the Community Council, answered this one. As soon as the Community Council had any inkling of the Parc Dyffryn proposal, a letter was written opposing the changes to the South Glamorgan Structure Plan which will be necessary to permit such an extensive development in open countryside. At the time, no formal objection to the Parc Dyffryn proposals could be lodged as the planning permission was not sought until immediately before Easter.

A public meeting has been convened by St Nicholas & Bonvilston Community Council to pursue the matter. The meeting will be at Cowbridge Town Hall on Tuesday 12th June at 7.30 p.m. It would be valuable for as many members of our Community as possible to attend this meeting.

Those of us who have already lodged objections to the proposed alterations to the Structure Plan received a duplicated reply which noted that a proposal for a new village at Capel Llanilltern appeared in the first review of the Structure Plan in 1985 but this was rejected by the Secretary of State. A second review is now being undertaken and the letter pointed-out that, as development of new villages has been under consideration since 1985, "there is no connection ---- between the principle of new settlements and the current proposals at Parc Dyffryn." Despite this assurance, such a change will be necessary for Parc Dyffryn to go ahead. The second review of the Structure Plan will be open to public consultation for six weeks in the autumn. Individuals and organisations could then lodge an objection.

The Council for Protection of Rural Wales has asked local Societies and other organisations to submit objections to the Parc Dyffryn development (Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council) and to the changes to the Structure Plan (South Glamorgan County Council). We discussed this at the last Llancarfan Society Committee meeting but reluctantly concluded that we had no mandate from members to do this. However anyone who feels strongly about the Parc Dyffryn proposal or the changes to the Structure Plan should submit objections individually.

So far no one has written in support of the Parc Dyffryn scheme but it would be interesting to hear from the other side, if it is represented in our membership?

This part of the Vale is under the most intense pressure for development that it has ever experienced. In addition to Parc Dyffryn, there are current planning applications for an hotel and leisure centre at Cottrell Park

north of the A48, a golf-course near St Nicholas and proposals have been put to South Glamorgan for a large business park and light industrial development around Cardiff (Rhoose) Airport. The Cottrell development has previously been approved in principle by the Vale Council and it was supported by St Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council. The golf course at least does not involve such an irreversible change of land-use as does Parc Dyffryn. The airport proposals are new and, in view of the employment prospects which they will

bring, are likely to be supported by South Glamorgan County Council.  
JRE

Country Lore and wildlife: A few weeks ago, while waiting for his herd to go in for milking, Viv Price quoted the old saying about the weather:- "If the oak is out before the ash, in for a splash: if the ash is out before the oak, in for a soak". I have always thought this was a self-fulfilling prophecy, the ash always coming into leaf so late that we can console ourselves that a dry summer is on the way. It does depend a bit on what "out" means as the ash flowers (little brush-like things) are open long before the leaves unfold. This year the two have been much closer together and a few ash leaves in my garden did beat the oak by a day or two. I just hope the saying is not too accurate, though we do need an enormous amount of rain to make up for the dry weather of the last month or two. More news in October!

Unexpectedly spending another spring in Llancarfan has allowed a few more editorial cycle rides in the Vale. At the beginning of the warm weather at the end of April we found a couple of dead adders which had been run-over near Burton Bridge just outside the parish and a day or two later a similarly squashed, very large slow-worm by Old Parsonage. Those who don't like snakes and legless lizards will probably not mourn their passing, but it is sad that wild things are so vulnerable to cars. A hedgehog perished in the same way at Pancross a day or two ago and reminded me of the last verse of a little poem to the hedgehog which appeared in a recent Newsletter of the British Hedgehog Preservation Society:

When he and I walk side by side

And as the cars dash past

unslowed

Beneath the shadow's screen  
He leaves, as levelly we stride  
road

A courteous space between;

The thought occurs to me  
That there are hogs upon the

Less likeable than he.

This was signed W.H.O. and originally appeared in Punch on 22nd October 1924! I dedicate it to those who drive our lanes too fast.

At the end of April some turf was laid to tidy-up the drainage works close to the ford. A day or two later it was obvious that the new grass was dying from drought. We threw a dozen or two buckets of river-water on the bank to help it, and discovered, wriggling in a hollow, a bullhead. Until the 1960's the shallow runs of the brook contained dozens of these little fish but most had disappeared by the 70's. Good to see things are still improving and we can add another fish to the trout and sewin which have returned to the river in the last few years, together with kingfishers and frequent visits from a heron.

War Memorial: Joan Quelch, as Clerk to the Community Council, has been contacted by the Imperial War Museum which is compiling a nation-wide inventory of War Memorials. Various details are needed, for example how was the Llancarfan War Memorial paid-for? The inscription simply says "Erected by parishioners". Does anyone know whether it was done by donation or was it in the good old tradition of fetes and jumble sales? Any other information will be useful.

An appeal for articles: We are running very short of material for the Newsletters which is why so much of this one comes from the editor. If you have any information on the village and its former inhabitants, please scribble something, otherwise we shall have to send-out a few very slender Newsletters whilst waiting for contributions to trickle in.

Mother and Toddler Group: On the second Spring Bank Holiday the Group organised sponsored "toddling races" in the car park of the Fox and Hounds. The proceeds will help the Group which will make its headquarters in the newly refurbished Village Hall. Isn't it marvellous to see so many little ones growing-up in the area - it seems no time ago that we were worrying about the possible closure of Llancarfan School because there were too few children.

Isobel Moffat & Bob Evans - an apology: In Newsletter 27 we printed parts of a letter from Isobel and should have followed this with Bob's prize-winning entry for a Llancarfan Eisteddfod in the 1940's. By an oversight, we printed only a few lines of the poem: the full version follows, together with the accompanying text from Newsletter 27.

Isobel's introduction to Bob's poem read:- "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" Isobel Moffat

## SPRING

The wintry day is ebbing  
The March wind has his fling;  
A scent pervades the evening -  
The welcome scent of spring.

The days are already lengthening,  
There's more warmth in the sun.  
The children are enjoying  
heedless  
Their after-tea-time fun.

The crocuses are pushing  
Their small heads to the light,  
Where snow-drops in their splendour  
watches  
Have proudly won the fight.

The daffodils and tulips,  
hedges  
The budding lilac tree;  
The primrose in the hedgerow  
-  
Awakes the sleepy bee.

The birds have started twittering  
Their love-song to their mate;  
The swallow comes and the cuckoo,  
welcome  
Ere April's very late.

The squirrel's slowly stirring,  
The hedghog slowly yields.  
The mole is busy building  
His castles in the fields.

The sheep are quite contented  
Amid the sweet young grass  
Their lambs are gambolling,  
  
That life will quickly pass.

The farmer's boy is whistling  
In fields down by the brook;  
He ploughs the soil and

The seagull's hungry look.

The gaunt bare trees and  
  
Are donning their new cloak;  
We wait and watch in wonder

The ash first? --- or the oak?

The countryside is bursting;  
Its new life seems to sing -  
'Come join with us and

The ever glorious SPRING!

Bob added the following note:-

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 charring 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.

Castle Ditches hillfort, Llancarfan  
Etherington

by John

Much of the information used here was brought together by Keely Scott whilst preparing a report for the third year of her Degree studies. I am grateful for her help. This article is dedicated to the memory of my parents who inadvertently inspired its writing by taking me to Maiden Castle in 1953. -----  
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A little way below Ford Cross, Nant Carfan is joined by the waters of Moulton Brook and Ford Brook. These two smaller streams run in deep valleys, separated by a spur of hillside which is crowned by the Iron Age hillfort of Castle Ditches, a ten and a half acre enclosure which has overlooked our village throughout recorded history. It is one of the biggest Silurian earthworks in South Glamorgan and probably originated from an earlier enclosure, the present ditch and bank being constructed later, probably during the last five hundred years BC. When the Romans reached South Wales in about AD 50 it was already an established landscape feature.

Hillfort may be something of a misnomer, as evidence from sites which have been excavated suggests that the smaller ones were defended farmsteads containing a number of circular wattle & daub, thatched dwellings together with other structures for grain storage and animal shelter. The forts supported a mixed-farming economy with pasturage for sheep and cattle which have been identified by bone remnants, and arable crops of wheat and barley for which the clues are preserved grains or grain-impressions in pottery.

Castle Ditches has not been extensively excavated so we must make inference from other nearby sites. A smaller farmstead at Whitton Crossroads was excavated by the Archaeology Department of University College, Cardiff in the late 1960's. The reconstruction drawing, reproduced in South Glamorgan's Heritage (D. M. Robinson 1985. Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust) shows a ditched, palisaded enclosure of round hutments surrounded by fields and woodlands at the time of the Roman Conquest. There are other nearby hilltop fortifications: Castell Moel near Leach Castle Farm, Bonvilston; at Llantrithyd, Llanblethian, Caerau, Dinas Powys and at The Bulwarks, Porthkerry. Others, at Summerhouse Point, Llantwit Major, and at Nash Point are promontory forts overlooking the Bristol Channel. The fact that the "forts" are so close together, interspersed with smaller farmsteads, suggests intensive use of the countryside

by relatively small family or "tribal" groups. All of the sites, listed above, are within a less than a day's cross-country walk of Llancarfan.

Castle Ditches is guarded to the north by the very steep slopes of Coed-y-Cwm descending to the Ford Brook in Cwm Flaxland. On the south side the land plunges equally steeply into Cwm-y-Breach, the valley of Moulton Brook. The lane which passes Ford Farm and climbs up this hillside skirts very close to the southernmost part of the hillfort. There is a kink in the lane at the top of the hill where it meets the bank and ditch. The western end of the fort overlooks the valley of Nant Carfan, again protected by the very steep slopes of the spur of hillside between Coed-y-Cwm and Cwm-y-Breach. Only the narrow eastern end of the enclosure is accessible without a steep climb and the site must be one of the most easily defensible hilltops in this area of relatively flat Vale of Glamorgan countryside.

Our hillfort is quite small compared, for example, with the gigantic triplebanked structure of Maiden Castle in Dorset which encloses an area of 45 acres - almost three times as big. Castle Ditches is "univallate" - enclosed by one bank and outer ditch. It is a contour fort, the embankment following almost exactly the contour-line a little below the hill summit which forms the central enclosure. On the west and south west sides there is a counterscarp bank: a smaller bank on the outside of the ditch possibly made by throwing ditch-cleanings downhill. The entrance to the fort is on the southern side in a re-entrant angle close to the kink in Broadclose Lane but the nature of the entrance is masked by agricultural damage to the banks.

Trial excavations in 1963 and 1964 showed that the ditch was originally flatbottomed and shallow, south of the entrance, but much deeper on the eastern side (which is the least naturally protected by steep slopes). During this work, fallen stone was found in the ditch by the entrance suggesting that the face of the bank may originally have been revetted (clad in drystone walling) but no evidence of this remains. There is also some evidence that the present fort was built on the site of a pre-existing, smaller structure. Many of the English hillforts which have been fully excavated, occupy sites of former Neolithic "Causwayed Camps". At the present day, Keely Scott's measurements show that the south western rampart is 2.5 to 3 m in height and the ditch about 4 m wide and 1.5 m deep with a counterscarp bank 7 m wide and 1 m high.

These hilltop fortifications coped with neighbour-trouble rather than serious warfare. For example, the forts rarely enclose a well, suggesting that seige was not expected, though we do know that the Romans besieged and overthrew Maiden Castle, and maybe their success was due to this being an unexpected ploy. Water had to be fetched from the nearest stream, in our case probably Moulton Brook, two hundred yards away and over 100 feet downhill. As in the third world today, a sustained water supply was crucial and must have committed the water carriers (the women?) to a great deal of repetitive labour each day.

Most of the Castle Ditches enclosure is now pasture but part was arable not more than 20-30 years ago. Sadly the banks have recently been overgrazed by horses, and possibly now



by goats, so that some are seriously eroding. Keely Scott's measurements suggest that the banks have lost height since the archeological work in the 1960's. Some intentional damage was done by construction of a farm access in the 1970's, resulting in a successful prosecution of a former owner (South Wales Echo 11th March 1980). It is tragic that a structure which has survived more than 2000 years as a man-made landscape feature should now be at risk from greedy over-exploitation of the land.

Note: We visited Henllys Castle hill-fort, near Cardigan, at Easter. Several huts of Iron Age pattern have been reconstructed there, using the original post-holes (exposed by archaeologists) as a guide to size and position. The circular huts, of steeply sloped reed thatch on yard-high wattle and daub walls, are as big as a small cottage and unbelievably cosy inside; they must have been warm and dry shelter in winter, albeit a bit smoky. The support poles were almost certainly of long, slender, coppiced timber such as Frank Jameson described in Newsletter 28.