



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 30: July 1990

Sorry it has taken more than a month for this Newsletter to appear but we are currently almost without any contributions. The May Newsletter asked for articles and notes but this brought no response. We have quite a collection of archive material, but it takes time to write-up into articles, whereas something from a member takes only a few minutes to type if it needs no editing.

What sort of thing do we want? Previous articles have concerned the history of the village: things as diverse as living-memory family records and the thousands of years of Castle Ditches' existence. Several people have asked whether we can have more of this sort of thing, perhaps with some biographical detail within families? It is only too easy to forget that this has always been a village of comings and goings, and that many readers only remember the families who were here during their stay in Llancarf. Anyone who has a local history of more than a generation in the area could help with a family tree; just a list of brothers and sisters, mum, dad, grandpa and grandma would help.

We also have a lot of incomplete history of families and people during the past century or so. Much of this has come together as memories, hearsay and randomly acquired documents but adding enough information for it to be publishable needs some dedicated archive research which no one seems to have the time to do. One day it will be done I hope but if not, we can only print speculation, as in the American Detective-story article below.

Recently we broke new ground with one or two poems. Incidentally the printing of the full version of Bob Evans' prize-winning poem in the last Newsletter got us into further trouble with Charles Shepherd who had previously pointed out that Bob was inaccurate in saying that chairs were not awarded for Eisteddfodau in Bonvilston (Newsletter 28). To set the record straight, Charles Shepherd told us that Bob Shepherd won in 1950, 1952 and 1953, being awarded a chair on each occasion.

Opinions vary as much as contributions and so does feedback from readers. Concerning our articles on the proposed Parc Dyffryn development, responses have come back which include a dozen or more letters and messages of support for John Etherington's article, a suggestion that the Society should circulate a petition for members' signatures but also a complaint that we are devoting space to planning matters!

BARBECUE: August 19th

By kind invitation of Phil & Ruth Watts, a LUNCHTIME BARBECUE will be held at Abernant on Sunday, August 19th commencing at 12.00. Tickets £1.50 "on the gate".

Bridge Club: The last Newsletter announced that Pam Higgs hopes to start a village bridge club, but an incorrect telephone number was given. Would any interested members of the Society telephone or write to her at Bonvilston (0446) 781377, Carreg Llwyd, Llancarfan, CF6 9AD.

Annual Craft Fair, Sports and Barn Dance: The Craft Fair was held at Pancross on Saturday, July 7th by kind permission of Tony and Joan Thomas. The Committee had spent a few breathless weeks beforehand as the bookings of stalls seemed to be much fewer than in previous years. Barbara Milhuisen carried the brunt of this, as she arranged the letting of stalls but, to misquote a bit, it was "alright on the day". We recruited just about enough

stall-holders to make the barn look full and a fair number of people turned up despite the grey, wet weather. Never arrange to do anything on the day of a Llancarfan Society Craft Fair - the gods have not smiled upon us in the three years that it has been held though last year was not quite so bad.

Our gratitude goes to Steve Powell and Tony John who organised a very successful Children's Sports in the afternoon once the weather had dried-up enough. Surprisingly, this was also a repeat performance of the two previous years - we have always managed to hold the sports despite bad weather. Steve also very kindly recruited sponsorship of £80.00 to cover the prizes for the sports: the names of all the sponsors are given below. Thanks are due to a host of people: the ladies who manned the refreshments stall, Joyce Andrews, Pam Higgs, Ruth Watts; the men who cleared up before and after: Phil Watts, John Etherington, Les Harry, Derek Higgs, Ken Vincent, and Edward Thomas. Andrew Griffiths provided floodlights and Mick Mace and Roy Booker rigged the coloured lights around the barn; Dilys Liscombe, Kath Watts and others ran the raffle.

As last year, the Society also organised the bar for the Church Barn Dance in the evening and we share the profits from this enterprise. Despite various competing events ranging from another barn dance to the World Cup and Wimbledon, a good sized crowd enjoyed a country and western style band. Thanks to Ken Vincent and Mick Mace for the organisation that went into this event. Joyce Andrews, John Etherington, Derek Higgs and Phil Watts manned the bar and Kath Watts did a sterling job of maintaining a supply of clean glasses. A special thank you to Phil who did all the ordering and accounting for the bar. Ruth Watts changed her hats and transferred to the Church ladies group serving supper.

We thank the following people for donations toward the children's sports prizes: Norton Evans, Cars Cardiff; Philip Jenkins Car Sales; Steve Powell Garages Ltd and David Williams, Evan Williams Jnr. There was a surplus from these donations which we shall keep until Christmas to do something for the children: last year we used the money to help-out with the village Christmas Tree.

Lost property: Ruth Watts lost a picture of a single rose and two buds. Molly Vincent has a couple of other unclaimed items.

Churchyard: For the second year running the Community Council has awarded the contract for maintenance of St Cadoc's Churchyard to the Woodlands Centre for the

mentally handicapped, in Barry. Last year the churchyard was kept in a very tidy condition so it seems that our Community can simultaneously solve the problem of looking after the churchyard and channel funds into a very deserving cause. The team provided by the Woodlands Centre is part of a Community Co-operative which provides work-experience for residents at the Centre of all ages between 18 and 60.

PHAB Cycle Marathon: Two years ago, you will all remember, Graham Brain with some robust colleagues and friends undertook a one day marathon cycle ride from Birmingham to Llancarfan - some 120 miles. Well, they've done it again!, this time aided and abetted by various young men from the village and a team from the Three Horseshoes, Moulton. At the end of the day Mike Evans arranged quite a celebration at the Fox and Hounds. The substantial proceeds from sponsorship and a bar collection were in aid of PHAB, a charity which brings together the physically handicapped and able-bodied within the community. Because Gwynne Liscombe is their regional Director, the Society has previously been involved in fund raising for PHAB: you will remember the Boxing Day egg-races. If you would like to make a donation, even though you did not sponsor a cyclist, please send it to Graham Brain, Ynysdawl, Llancarfan CF6 9AD.

An American Detective-story

by John Etherington

A few months ago Mollie Ranger received a letter from a Mr and Mrs Johnson in Montana, U.S.A., her address having been given to them as a resident of our parish. Mrs Johnson wrote that her grandfather, William Evans and grandmother, Martha Lydia Evans, were born in Llancarfan, from where they emigrated to Montana in 1882. Martha's maiden name was Lougher. The reason for writing was that the Johnsons intended coming to Llancarfan during their summer holiday in this country during which they hoped to trace something of the family background.

Mollie gave Phil Watts a copy of the letter in the hope that he might be able to help. Phil passed a copy on to me which I first read when I had been looking through the census of 1881 to prepare the notes associated with Megan Hamber's letter which we printed in Newsletter 25. This was a fortunate coincidence, as the Evans' emigrated within 12 months of that census.

They lived in Llanbethery: William Evans, age 29, occupation thatcher, born in Llantrithyd and Martha Lydia Evans, age 28, wife, born in Llancarvan (anglicised spelling - widely used at that time). The children given in the census were Thomas (3), Mary Jane (5), Elizzia (1) and Amelia (1 week - again a bit of luck to catch the census!). There was also a visitor to the house, Mary Jane Lougher (17) who was presumably a relative of Martha Lydia? The only other local thatcher in the census was Richard Evans, age 34, a resident of Llancadle - was he William Evans' brother?

I wrote to Mrs Johnson:- "Llanbethery, Llantrithyd and Llancarfan are all within the parish of Llancarfan and, even today consist of only a few dozen houses to each village. Many,

which stood in your grandparents time still exist, generally much modernised. Most residents now work in the nearby city of Cardiff or the town of Barry. A few houses locally are still thatched. In your grandfather's time most were roofed in this way and he no doubt worked on many of them as thatch only lasts a few years, especially the uncombed cereal-straw thatch used at that time."

The Lougher family is still well represented in the area but Martha Lydia does not appear in their known family tree. However, now comes an interesting bit of speculation. Last year, in Lllancarfan, Paul Schmit found a buried gravestone in the garden of Brook Cottage. An account of this is given in the Newsletters of September and October, 1989. Extracts are given below:-

"During the digging for foundations some of the paving slabs had to be lifted and one was discovered to be a gravestone. It was a bit time-worn but still legible and recorded the interment in 1851 of Martha, wife of William Lougher of this parish, aged 27." (Newsletter 23).

"A bit of genealogical research for which we thank Peter Etherington, the editor's brother, revealed that Martha's husband William was a shoemaker living in the village. This was recorded by the 1851 census when Martha was 27, the year of her death ---" (Newsletter 24).

Was the Martha who died in 1851 the mother of Martha Lydia, Mrs Johnson's grandmother? The age given in the 1881 census would be two years too young if the 1851 Martha died in childbirth as was so common in those days. It was also not uncommon for ages to be 'guesstimates' in the census and other records (and, did ladies remain at 28 for several years even then?).

The name Evans, though so common in Wales, was uncommon in this parish. In 1859 the only Evans on the Electoral Register were Thomas Evans of the Green Dragon, Llancadle and Miles Evans of Llancadle Farm. Thomas was still there in 1869 but not Miles (we must beware, though, as franchise was not then universal so the Electoral Register is not so useful a source as the less frequent census records).

Because Richard Evans (of the 1881 census) also lived in Llancadle it is quite possible that these Evans' were also Mrs Johnson's forebears. Both houses survive and the Green Dragon still has a thatched roof. It has recently been extended and renovated. When it was re-thatched, was some of William Evans' handiwork stripped from beneath the old straw and reeds?

Except for the census records from 1881, this is all speculation, so perhaps I should not have called it a detective story, rather a fairy tale? However, some more delving into records may establish whether the other Evans were close relatives and whether Mary Jane Lougher was perhaps Martha Lydia's half-sister. It is interesting that the seven year old daughter was also Mary Jane - certainly suggesting a close relationship.

The story comes up to date with this Newsletter. Mr and Mrs Johnson visited Llancarfan at the end of June, visiting Phil and Ruth Watts, Mollie Ranger and Father Field to look at Church records. They have also boosted our numbers by joining the Society. I hope, during their stay, that they discovered more and look forward to hearing from them if any of this speculation has been confirmed.

Note: Paul Schmit says that most of the paving slabs at Brook cottage are gravestones, probably from the churchyard, which a former occupier of the cottage, George Pickett, looked-after in former days.

A letter from Ken Lougher, Burry Port: The current article on "Foxes" (Newsletter 26) reminds me of my days in Rhoose. Our garden reached down to the railway line and, beyond that, were the cement works quarries and the high cliff bordering the channel. Because of the cliff and the danger of foxhounds going over the edge there was no hunting in that area and it was a haven for foxes which burrowed into the piles of loose rocks and soil. Even though there were plenty of rabbits, the foxes made daylight raids into our orchard and chicken run. On times, a dozen hens would be killed before we could get to the bottom of the garden when we heard the commotion. That is the trouble with foxes; they cause wanton killing. I must admit, a vixen's cry is a chilling sound.

We had a big garden and Dad and I learnt to work the heavy clay soil when the weather was right. Being near the channel, with little chance of late spring frosts, we would finish setting-out the garden before many were ready in Llancarfan. Many a day, at Dad's request, I would cycle to Llancarfan to dig the garden at Crossgreen for Uncle Jack and Aunty Mag (Lougher). The soil was black and so light to dig, it was a pleasure to work it. I got a bob or two, I know, but for a hungry growing lad I did enjoy the lovely meal Aunty Mag would put on the table. Uncle Jack and I would walk up to the field to get the cow for milking. There was a hollow in the field which Uncle explained was a "dewpond", saying that there were many such ponds in the area. To make a pond a hollow was dug and then lined with alternate layers of clay and straw. In time surface water would run into the pond, perhaps helped by heavy dew, then cattle had water to drink. No doubt it would be at a much later date that the stone-built horse ponds were made, within the hedge bordering two fields. Then came the old discarded bathtub placed in a field and replenished with water; now it is piped water to a trough and ballcock valve. Progress has been made in every way. I wonder if some of these dewponds are not mistaken for overgrown wartime bomb craters.

Years ago so many villages had their quaint old characters such as Tom Shanklyn of Llancarfan. Are they about today, of a younger generation and do we live a faster and busier life and not notice them? Tom was always available to do odd jobs. Today it is almost impossible to get a man to come and dig a little bit of garden. With frozen vegetables so conveniently available, so many new houses are now built on small plots of land and many older houses have gardens that have been put down to lawns or paved-over.

Part of our plot Lillian has for her flowers and shrubs. As we are in Canada during the summer months I sow only root crops, also shallots and onion sets. When we return in the Fall, in spite of some weeds, we harvest a good crop to last us well into the winter months.

Editor's note: The hollow in the field above Crossgreen which Ken's Uncle called a dewpond is the one which we failed to identify when John Rowland wrote about wartime bomb craters and other matters (Newsletters 21 & 22).

We have some other members who would testify to the nastier habits of foxes, beautiful animals that they may be. A year or so ago the Newsletter recorded the demise of some ducks and I have a vivid memory the field opposite Crossgreen being strewn with dismembered chickens, about 20 years ago, just after I came to Llancarfan.

A letter from Dick Evans, Evington, Leicester: Reading the last Newsletter (26), in which mention was made of the local "Point to Point" races, reminded me of the days I used to go there. I also remember David Harris having a lift in the bookmaker's car and, when they were travelling down Primrose Hill into Cowbridge they laughed to see a car wheel passing them on the road, until they reached the traffic-lights and their car keeled-over - it was their own wheel!! Horses running came to mind - Sunbeam and Barnstormer, ridden by Captain Morrell. I used to place my one shilling bet with Frank Moody, noted heavyweight boxer (I believe he tried for the heavyweight title of the world). Talking of boxers, we had several good ones in South Wales, i.e. Jack Peterson and Tommy Farr. I watched the Welsh Grand National recently on T.V., held at Chepstow. I remember when it was held on Ely Racecourse.

War Memorial - notes by Phil Watts: in the last Newsletter we asked if anyone had memories of the raising of funds for the building of the War Memorial. Phil has delved-out the following information from the minutes of Parish Council Meetings, the books of which are deposited in the County Archive. Various of his notes are appended in brackets.

February 3rd 1919. Letter received from the District Council regarding distribution of War Trophies. It was decided that a suitable trophy for the parish would be a Trench Mortar (Note - apparently this would be displayed somewhere in the parish - I wonder if they ever had it? - if so where they put it?). It was also recorded that the parish had contributed 68 volunteers of whom 11 had paid the supreme sacrifice.

April 15th 1919. Proposed by Mr G. Lougher, a meeting to be called for Tuesday April 29th to consider what steps to take with regard to War Memorial Fund already started. (Note - there was no record in the minutes of this meeting: it seems as though there was a separate committee which kept separate funds and raised money by public subscription).

January 12th 1922. War Memorial Charity Fund. (Quote): As per resolution of the Llancarfan War Memorial Committee the sum of £25 was voted to be handed over to the

Council as Trustees of a Fund hereinafter named Llancarfan and Llanvythin War Memorial Charity Fund such fund was created to repair and maintain the monument erected in the Village. The £25 having been invested in British Consols. This council moved on the proposition of Mr G. Lougher Seconded by Mr J Williams that Mr R Thomas Manager London and City Midland Bank Cowbridge to be appointed Treasurer and any dividends received from this investment should pass directly into the said Treasurer's hands into an account apart from the common fund of the council hereinafter to be named the Parish Council No 2 Account.

November 14th 1924. Sum of £2.20 (2 Guineas) paid to Mr E. J. Hopkins for work incurred. (Did not say what the work was or who Mr Hopkins might have been).

With any luck we shall have more to say on the subject of the War Memorial.

More Road Signs: Llantrithyd this time: After 70 years the sign marking the entrance to the village on the St Mary Church road has been moved. This much we learned from a cardboard poster beside the road. It sounds like a story for the Newsletter - come on you Llantrithyd members, tell us what has happened.

Village Hall: Things are beginning to happen. The Tennis Club held an evening of "races" earlier in June; the Hall's first booked function and a Cheese and Wine party was enjoyed by a good selection of villagers on June 29th, profits to be put toward a "Grand Opening" street party on September 9th.

Parc Dyffryn: the story continues: A public meeting, organised by the St Nicholas and Bonvilston Parish Council, was held at Cowbridge Town Hall in mid-June. The meeting was packed to overflowing and after some interesting contributions from our MP, various County Councillors and representatives of the Council for Protection of Rural Wales, a motion was unanimously passed agreeing to oppose in all possible ways both the Parc Dyffryn proposals themselves and South Glamorgan's move to alter the County Structure plan to allow the development of new settlements in open countryside. It was the feeling of the platform, and I imagine the meeting at large, that the Vale has plenty of expensive housing and that the real social-need is for low-cost housing adjacent to jobs and within existing communities.

The message, loud and clear, was that individual letters to the Vale of Glamorgan Council and South Glamorgan County Council Planning Departments are the most likely way in which the individual voter can alter the course of events - after all we are voters. The proposals to amend the Structure Plan will be open to public comment later in the summer - look for the advertisements.

Hedges again: In Newsletter 23 I wrote about the ages of hedges in the parish. A day or two ago I remembered this when the chance came to walk over the whole of the proposed site of the Parc Dyffryn development. The last time I visited this land was 17 years ago when a former student of mine, Philip Masters, was surveying hedgerows in this area. It is a real horror story for, of the mile upon mile of hedges which Philip identified as very old (4-500 years - well before the Parliamentary Enclosures), almost half have been grubbed-out on Blacklands and Redlands Farms. Most of this land is not visible from the road and so it was not obvious that these farming operations were going-on. Incidentally, this was all done long before the present controversy about Parc Dyffryn blew-up - indeed Philip Masters commented in 1973 that hedge-removal was under way at Blacklands.

Closer to Llancarfan, relatively few old hedges have been lost and there is a tendency to think that that the Vale is not threatened by hedge removal in the way that arable southern England has been damaged. There is no statutory control over this sort of activity and most farmers would quite rightly see it as good agriculture, making easy access for the much bigger modern machines. Like so many other problems of the countryside it is down to the consumer who wants the pint of milk at a third the price of a pint of beer. What is the answer?

JRE