



## THE LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

### Newsletter 102 January 2001

**Editorial** The Calendar has been an enormous success with compliments coming in from members all over the world. The Calendar Committee worked long and hard and deserves congratulations for bringing a touch of nostalgia to members all over the world. Many people have added observations on the photographs, some of which are in this number (p. 2). More will follow, no doubt.

The article on Tom Griffiths' motorbike as a first has prompted several people to give extra information and speculate on "firsts"- at one time I thought it might fill this Newsletter!

Newsletter 101 featured David Harris' article on the Aberthaw cement industry and we follow this with an account of lime burning in and near Llanccarfarn (p. 11). I am grateful to David for putting the idea in my mind, and setting me off on some rewarding and interesting research. Most of us assume that the internal combustion engine, electricity and medicine are the things, which make our lives worth living. Reflect a moment and you will realise that none of them could exist without Portland cement, and before the early 1800s it was lime, which served the same purpose, making weatherproof buildings possible.

Next to extracting salt from seawater, lime-burning is probably the oldest of the world's large-scale chemical industries, and the manufacture of concrete is certainly the largest of any industry today, making holes and building structures which are visible from spacecraft. Without concrete not a single part of our comfortable 21<sup>st</sup> century life would be possible.

### **Obituary notices**

**Gwynne Liscombe:** A week or two before this Newsletter was printed we heard the almost unbelievable news that Gwynne Liscombe had died very suddenly near his home in Barry. Gwynne was one of our founder members, frequent contributor and vociferous critic, but always with something constructive in mind. Together with a small band of erstwhile *Fox and Hounds* regulars, he was one of the editor's oldest friends in South Wales. We send our deepest sympathy to his wife, Dilys, and daughters Gillian and Gail together with their families. Countless people in the area have lost a friend and a rock on which they leaned. When we have come to terms with the news, a full obituary will appear in Newsletter 103.

**Flo Griffiths,** wife of Llewellyn, died some weeks ago. Llew grew up at *Caradoc Cottage (Top End)* and will be known to younger members of the Society by his contributions to the Newsletters. After living in Rhoose for some time. Llew and Flo moved to Herefordshire a few years ago. Our sympathy goes out to Llew in the sadness of his loss.

**Beryl Booth:** We were saddened to hear that Beryl Booth, formerly of *Whitton Lodge*, died on the Tuesday before Christmas, having lost her husband Jeff during the previous year. We send our condolences to the family: Helen, Linda and Nigel.

### **Feedback: Calendar and Newsletter**

**The Calendar** Since the publication of the Calendar a number of corrections and comments have arrived, together with several compliments which are aimed at the Calendar committee in acknowledgement of their hard work.

In alphabetical order, they were Graham Brain, Tony Lewis, Alan Taylor, Sue Taylor and Phil Watts. Not only was there all the preliminary work of raising the cash and planning the content, but all the original photos had to be tracked-down and borrowed for a second time. Alan tells me that Sue and Phil are particularly to be thanked for "putting in the hours". At the time I'm sure they thought "Never again!"

**Loose pages** It has been pointed out that calendar pages become detached quite easily. This is no problem if you intend to tear off the pages month by month, but some people may want to keep the calendar intact, as a souvenir copy. Undamaged it will probably appreciate in value. Paul and Jane Eddins, *Abernant Cottage* (01446 781384) have told us they are able to offer the fitting of the calendars with a ring binder. If you are interested, contact either Phil Watts or Paul and Jane. Another option is to use one of those long plastic clips, which are sold for hanging posters. Editor has done this, and it holds the calendar together without damage or modification.

### Identifications

December 2000 - **Joan Evans** wrote from Bassaleg to say the photo was Grace Hartrey, who became Joan's mother, not Grace Harty.

February 2001 - **Madeline Vincent** telephoned from the other side of the world to tell us that the note under the photograph of the *Fox and Hounds* refers to Madeline Vincent, *not* Vizzard.

December 2000 & May 2001: **Barrie Grffiths**, *Lower Greenway* and his sister **Mary Davies** have identified their father, Dilwyn Griffiths, *Pencarreg*, in the 1903 school photo. He is in the second row, far right, next to the teacher (who seems to have his hand on Dilwyn's shoulder). He is very likely also in the concert party photo - the un-named person in back row, 5th from left. Barrie and Mary recollect their father speaking of many of the people in the photo, particularly Alan Rowlands and Tudor Liscombe.

July 2001: **Barbara Tickner**, *Dan-y-Llwyfan*, wrote: "Thank you for the Millennium Calendar. It is of great interest to me as there are four of my relatives in it. There are just a few points to put the record straight: On the July page - Billy Edwards should be Ronald Edwards. Ronald, Glenys and Colin Edwards lived in *Chapel House* (behind the houses that are opposite the *Aubrey Arms*) when they went to Llantrithyd School. They left Llantrithyd School in 1930 to go to St Nicholas School (often walking there and back). The family moved to *Plas Hen*, Heol-Y-March, in October 1941. Could you please satisfy my aunt's curiosity as to who remembered the names of the children.\* Has anyone mentioned that Sylvia Payne was aunt to Diana Dors.

\* The photograph belongs to Val Watts, *Church House*, Llantrithyd, and it was Val who gave all the names. I don't think the relationship with Diana Dors has been mentioned before. (Ed.).

**Important correction:** March 2001 - the AGM is on Friday, 9<sup>th</sup>, not Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup>.

### Membership renewals: notes and comments

Many expatriate members enclose a short note with their renewal slip and subscription, each year. We have published bits and pieces from these before so here are a few more.

**Eunice Bodenham** wrote: "Thank you for the wonderful Calendar - it was great. Going through it made me feel a lot better. I have been thinking of Llancarfan a lot during the floods and wondering how the *Green* was faring. I remember when Aunty Grace had water up to the piano keys. I am lucky - nowhere near a river."

[Eunice Bodenham (née Llewellyn) was niece of Grace Morgan of the *Green*]

**Noah and Kate Williams** included a memory, which fits in with the article describing the St Athan Road Lime-works (p. 11 - 12): "--- the first time I visited St Athan was *via* the Railway Train from Church Village to St Athan Road. This was in 1925 [and I] discovered that the Station Master (Tom John) had been in school at the same time as my mother."

**Idris Lewis** wrote from Durban, South Africa: "As a member of the Llancarfan Society, I am sure there are many others in the Society who feel as I do, that we owe you all a great deal of gratitude, and admiration, for the marvellous amount of research and production work which you, and many others, put into the preparation of the monthly [News]letter. It continues to improve - I thought it was reaching its zenith but then the centennial edition arrived - **with colour** - and I felt that you had now hit the jackpot. Not-to-be because a few days later the **Millennium Calendar** arrived and I went through that with very moist eyes and Lump(s) in my throat. Many, many happy memories of people and sentimental spots arose within me. The cover-piece shows that part of the Village virtually as I remember it.

As an addition to **Llancarfan firsts. Part I Tom Griffiths' Motorbike** - I would like to add a little P.S. to say that in the latter part of the '20's and very early 30's my Aunt Elsie (Lewis), who taught at Llantrithyd School, rode a Ladies' (low H.P.) Raleigh Motorcycle daily from *Broad Hayes* to Llantrithyd. She upgraded to the School Bus when Rhoose School, to which she was transferred, opened in the early 30's! Once again my thanks and best wishes to all.

### "Traitors Close" (Newsletter 101)

Toward the end of the article the editor included some speculation on a possible Welsh origin for this name. Within a day of sending Newsletter 101 for printing I saw a letter from Richard Morgan, Archivist, GRO, passed on by John Cann. It more or less demolished the possibility of Welsh origin by pointing out that normal construction would place the generic word before the qualifier: thus "Clos Tinter" (or *Tynnu*) rather than "Tinter Clos" (to rhyme with Tyn-ty-Cross). Sadly it was too late to remove the offending paragraph, hence this correction.

**Jenkin Craddock:Newsletter 100** Somewhere in the process of preparing the illustrations of David and Elizabeth Craddock's houses, they were exchanged with each other. Apologies for this - the corrected versions have been lodged on the Web-site.

**Wrong date** Newsletter 101 p. 9 near bottom of r.h. column. *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 18, was published in 1867, not '87. A typing error added 20 years to the date.

**Cottrel elm** In the review of William Linnard's book on *Welsh Woods* (Newsletter 101) mention is made of the giant elm at Cottrell gate as it was in the 19th century. Benjamin Malkin described this tree in 1803.

### The Thomas's Splint

In Newsletter 88 1998, David Harris wrote of his life in Llancarfan during the 1930s. He recollected having to stay in bed for a long while whilst a "Thomas's splint" was used to correct a problem with his leg. I did not admit my ignorance at the time, but now confess that the editor had not a clue what this device was except for David's description and his delightful little drawing.

Some accidental TV viewing has added to the story. In the 1740's a boy was washed ashore on north Anglesey. Brought up locally and named Evan Thomas, he became a famed "bonesetter". Evan is commemorated in *St Mary's Church*, Llanfairynghornwy. Amongst other enlightened practices, he would play a musical box to patients to distract them from the pain of treatment! Evan had five sons, all of whom became doctors. One of them, Hugh Owen Thomas, b.1834, practised in Liverpool using many of his father's advanced treatments including immobilisation of fractures. At this time he invented the femoral splint which became famous. When Hugh died, his nephew Robert Jones inherited the practice and, during WW1 he introduced the Thomas splint for treating femoral fracture wounds. Prior to this the mortality rate had been

80% and most who recovered were crippled for life. The splint reduced death to 20% and reduced the disability problem.

Source: Trevor Fishlock in *BBC History* July 2000

## Future Events

The **AGM** will be held on Friday March 9th in the Community Hall, commencing at 7.30 p.m. After a short period of official business, Dr Maddy Gray will talk on the subject of *Holy Wells*. As usual there will be refreshments and nibbles. **Note the corrected date: it is wrong in the Millennium Calendar entry.**

The **May Walk** this year will be to Fonmon, probably starting from the Kenson Bridge (lower Penmark), up the valley to Fonmon Castle and its grounds. Dr Maddy Gray will provide a commentary.

**Contributions for the Newsletter** should be sent to the **Editor**, John Etherington, *Parc-y-Bont*, Llanhowell, Solva, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA62 6XX or e-mail to:-

**[eth.pbont@virgin.net](mailto:eth.pbont@virgin.net)** We will also be pleased to print short announcements of village functions but they must be sent in writing, or given to Alan Taylor, Local Correspondent.

**Contact addresses:** Subscriptions and problems with mailing: to the **Membership Secretary**, Phil Watts, 23 Heol Sirhwi, Cwm Talwg, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 7TG. **Local Correspondent**. Alan Taylor, *Windrush*, Llanearfan, CF62 3AD or e-mail: -

**[ajtaylor@cprop.demon.co.uk](mailto:ajtaylor@cprop.demon.co.uk)** Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to the **Secretary**, Ann Ferris, *Fordings*, Llanearfan, CF62 3AD

Llanearfan Society admin. and web-site e-mail: - **[llansoc@llanearfan.f9.co.uk](mailto:llansoc@llanearfan.f9.co.uk)**

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## Thatch and "Tom the Thatcher"

In the last few Newsletters we have rather overdone the story of *Y Bwthyn Bach*, the Princess's little house, and the involvement of Tom David, "Tom the Thatcher". He must have been a thatcher of some renown, being mentioned glowingly in Iorwerth Peate's classic book *The Welsh House* (1940). The following is a very condensed extract from Peate's notes on thatching in the Vale.

"It was undoubtedly in the Vale of Glamorgan that the straw-thatching technique was most fully developed in Wales. The best straw in the opinion of the thatchers is that growing on the strong soil of the blue and grey Lias limestone from St. Donat's to Penarth cliffs.

There are two methods of thatching well illustrated in Welsh practice. The first is the sculp thatch whereby the under-thatch is first secured to the timbering of the roof by means of straw bands. Mr. T. J. David, probably the finest exponent of the thatching craft in Wales today, informs me that the underthatch is always sewn or bound to the roof. Today the sewing is done with tarred twine, but in the past in Glamorganshire long brambles were used for this purpose.

The second method found in Wales, of securing the thatch is the rope-thatch. By this method the thatch is held down by a net of ropes crossing at right angles, the ends of which were either weighted with stones which hung loose or were secured to stone or wooden pins set in the walls below the eaves. [Peate continued, saying that rope thatch was now (1930s) only used on straw ricks and outbuildings]

**Village firsts** a 'phone call from Peter Badcock (formerly of *Great House*)

The article on Tom Griffith's motorbike started with questions about other village firsts: - television, telephone and so on (Newsletter 101).

Peter Badcock 'phoned to tell us that he remembered watching the Coronation in 1953 at *Great House* on his parents TV set. The living room at the lower end of the house was cleared out and other village families came to watch the programme. These included Les and Phyllis Griffiths, *Fern Cottage* and the Johns from *Corner House*.

The set was a 12" Murphy (naturally b & w) that had been purchased from Rogers in Llantwit. There were few TV sets at the time and viewers converged on friends or family wherever they could find one, so it certainly sounds as if Ernie and Blodwen Badcock's TV was the first in the village, though Peter says he believes the Griffiths at *Greendown* had one.

Lyn Price says that Tom and Joan Morgan, *Pen-onn Farm* had a TV and Oenwen, watched the Coronation there.

During the same conversation, Peter recalled that Billy Jones had a three-gear Rudge motorbike with hand change-lever attached to the tank (just like Tom Griffith's bike). When he was very young, it was said that Billy used to take the machine to the Golden Mile and would race with his friends, toward the Bridgend junction and was never beaten. This must have been shortly after WW1 and the Rudge might have been earlier than Tom Griffiths Raleigh motorbike, described last time.

John Jones, *Great House*, was choirmaster at the Wesleyan Chapel and on occasions when the Methodist minister was visiting from Cardiff he would take the bus to Bonvilston and walk to Llancarfan, spending some time at *Great House*. Billy would take him to the main road on the motorbike but, on one occasion, he offered him a lift all the way to Cardiff and managed to frighten him nearly to death on the journey! The Minister said he "didn't know if he was in heaven or hell" by the time they arrived and Billy had to prise the Minister's fingers from around his waist to get him off the machine!

**Motorcycles and cars, Llancarfan and area** - memories from Lyn Price, *Newhouse Farm*, Moulton.

Following the item on Tom Griffiths' 1920s **Raleigh** motorbike, Lyn Price has given us his memories of the same time.

Dilwyn Price, Lyn's brother, was born in 1906 and rode an **Omega** with belt-drive, in the early 1920s.

Alan Rowlands, *Garnllwyd*, had a **Verus**, which was very noisy. Llancarfan people knew when he was coming and mothers kept children off the road. He was not just noisy: he drove fast! A distinctive feature of the machine was that the back wheel appeared to go in a different direction from the front. Lyn is not sure whether this appearance was created by the manufacturer or a result of speed on the *Mill* to Llancarfan road!

Dilwyn Griffiths, The Talbots rode a **Royal Enfield**.

Bedford Griffiths, Caradoc Cottage owned a **Norton** [a bike of great racing and T.T. fame during the 50s and 60s]

Dilwyn Howell, *Broadclose Farm* (and later *Walterston*) had an **A.J.S.**, **which** he bought by catching moles and selling the skins [some members may remember that Sir Keith Thomas told us, at an Annual Dinner, how he was taught to catch moles and rabbits by George Tucker].

Llewellyn Price, Lyn's father, had a **Norton** motor cycle, fitted with a box sidecar, which was used to transport parts and servicing tools to the point of work of the thrashing machines. A lot of work was done at a distance - Sully, St Andrews etc. These parts, near the coast, had an earlier harvest than Llancarfan

Footnote: Lyn Price tells us that several people in the area had cars in the 1920s - these memories will be in a future **Village firsts** article dealing with the motor car in Llancarfan.

PIC HERE

Llewellyn Price's Driving Licence for a Motor Cycle. It covered the 12 months from 10th April 1913 to 9th April 1914. As driving tests introduced until 1935, the editor had not realised that a Licence was necessary, prior to that. The Motor Car Act of 1903 introduced licence number plates (only eight years after the repeal of the "Red-flag Act"). The signature reads Rowland Rowlands, Deputy Glamorgan Acc

We shall be grateful for any other reliable "firsts".

## **Hares - not *Llanvithyn* this time**

We have previously mentioned hare, and more than one member has commented that they could frequently be seen around the parish, particularly on the high fields near Walterston. By the mid-1980s they had become much less common, together with the grey partridge which seemed to disappear in the same area at the same time.

We tend to blame the major agricultural changes since the 1950s for many losses of wildlife. Amongst them are the introduction of pesticides, use of artificial fertilisers, change to winter cereals and abandonment of traditional haymaking for silage. Some game records from local estates force a re-think, at least for the hare.

At Dunraven, the annual bags in the period 1850-60 were variable but often 80 - 90 animals. However, by the 1920s, through to the 1950s, this had dropped to a mere 4 - 5. Further inland, at Tythegston, the bags were smaller, perhaps 2 - 3 each year in the 1880s, continuing on to 1916. From then until 1937 (last record) there were none.

These are the years, which we remember as still sustaining the old way of agricultural life. Horsemen and hay meadows, wild flowers in the hay and corn, the call of the corncrake and glow-worms everywhere on summer evenings. What was happening to the hares? - or was there a change in shooting practice?

Ref. Matheson, C. (1959-60) Further Gamebook Records for Welsh Estates *N.L.W. Journal* 11, 227-43

## ***Bethlehem and the Blacksmith Shop: an enigma*** by John Etherington

- Whilst I was writing this article, my friend Gwynne Liscombe died very suddenly, depriving us all of his wisdom and knowledge. Without him, and his wife Dilys, I would know very little about the *Blacksmith Shop*. I shall miss him terribly.

In 1814, Mary, the widow of Thomas Williams, Llancarfan watchmaker, purchased the *Blacksmith Shop*, and much other property, from Robert Jones of *Fonmon Castle* for the sum of *Five shillings, subject to an annual peppercorn*. This was derisively little, even at that time (but that's another story).

In 1828 Mary sold some or all of this property to Evan Griffiths, Llancarfan blacksmith, apparently at a substantial profit and some parts of it remained in the hands of the Griffiths' family until the 20th century. The last property to be sold was *Bridge House* (now *Cottage*) and its land, which was owned by Morris Griffiths until the 1970s. Morris was Evan's great grandson.

A deed of 1875 refers by name to the *Blacksmiths Shop* "purchased by Mr Morris Griffiths." Morris was the son of Evan Griffiths, the original purchaser, and worked as blacksmith and licensee of the *Red Cow* in Penmark in the mid-1800s. Thus, the Llancarfan *Blacksmiths Shop* was certainly a Griffiths' possession in 1875.

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The "mark", M, of Mary Williams alongside the signatures of Edward Williams, watchmaker, of Llancarfan and Thomas Williams of t

of Penmark accepting a bond in £600 in testimonium to Letters of Administration granted to Mary Williams. Mary was widow of watchmaker of Llancarfan, who died in 1802. The handwriting transcribes as: - Sealed and delivered in the presence of Lew<sup>n</sup> Thomas 1 M of Mary Williams Edward Williams Thomas Williams (See footnote).

The enigma surrounds some entries in the account books of *Bethlehem Baptist Chapel*, recording receipt of rent for the *Blacksmith Shop*. Gwynne Liscombe provided this information in his article on the account books of *Bethlehem* (Newsletter 32, 1990), and two of his specimen entries are reproduced below: -

1921 Two months rent *Chapel House* £1.16.0. 4 weeks rent *Blacksmith Shop* 18s.  
1952 Rent *Chapel House* 52 weeks £20.16.0. Rent *Little Chapel House* 52 weeks £10.8.0. Rent *Blacksmith Shop* 52 weeks £10.8.0.

This indicates that, by 1921, the *Blacksmith Shop* was in the ownership of *Bethlehem* and we certainly know that *Bethlehem*, *Chapel House* and *Little Chapel House* and the *Blacksmith Shop* were sold as a single entity by the Baptist Union, in the 1980s (to Nigel Reynolds, Builder).

*Bethlehem* was originally built in 1823 but, as Evan Griffiths purchased the *Blacksmith Shop* from Mary Williams in 1828, the shop did not belong to the Chapel at that time, nor did it pass to the Chapel before 1875.

When and how did the *Bethlehem Baptist Chapel* acquire the *Blacksmith Shop*?

Gwynne Liscombe has also reminded me that his father-in-law, Jehoiada Lewis, took over the use of the *Blacksmith Shop* in 1914. We reproduced the receipt for this transaction in Newsletter 5 (1987) but here it is again. It was signed by an Evan Morgan, presumably as owner, or agent for the owner of the business.

PIC HERE

Oct 6th. 1914 Received of Mr Jehoiada Lewis Seventy Five Pounds for Business & Materials of Smith Shop at Llancarfan amounts be Five pounds for materials and Thirty Pounds for Business Signed Evan Morgan

The March 2001 photo, in the *Millennium Calendar*, shows a very young "Joe" Lewis standing outside the *Blacksmith Shop* when he was an apprentice to Tom Griffiths (grandson of the 1828 Evan Griffiths). Tom married late in life and had no children to inherit the business but does anyone know who Evan Morgan was or how he fits into this complicated history? He does not appear on the Llancarfan Electoral Roll in 1910 or 1915. However, there was a Morgan family of blacksmiths in the village in the 1850s, recorded in the Parish Registers. Entries in 1850 and 1852 include Evan Morgan and his father Thomas, both blacksmiths. Evan married a Mary John in 1852 and, given the length of a blacksmith's apprenticeship, would have been at least 20. If this was the Evan who signed the receipt in 1914 he would have been 83 or so, certainly an age for giving up active involvement in the business.

**A footnote on clockmakers.** Mary Williams' husband Thomas, who was a watchmaker, died in 1802. They were married in 1793 and had two children, Henry baptised 1797 and Thomas, baptised 1799. Young Henry also became a watchmaker and married Jane Evans in 1821.

The most famed Llancarfan clockmaker was Henry Williams (1727-1791) who lived at *Broadhayes* for part of his life. Henry married Mary Davies in 1753 and the only recorded child was Mary Williams, born in 1756. Mary was unmarried when her father died. She would then have been 35.

The Mary who married Thomas Williams could well have been one and the same with Mary, old Henry Williams' daughter, though she would have been about 45 when her last child was born. If this is so we have a line of clock and watchmakers which covered the best part of a century. Sadly there is no proof.

The Edward Williams, "watchmaker of Llancarvan" who co-signed the 1802 bond, shown above, was probably the father of Edward Williams, yet another watch and clockmaker, who also became Parish/Church Clerk in the mid-1800s. Both have gravestones in St Cadoc's churchyard. The fact that Edward, Mary and Thomas Williams of Penmark were jointly bound in the sum of £600 suggests a relationship between them. If Mary's deceased husband had brothers, they could well have been her brothers-in-law or, if the relationship were through old Henry, they might have been Mary's cousins. We may never know.

The three Williams entered a bond for £600 in 1802. It is difficult to calculate the changed value of money over those two centuries but the bond could not have represented less than many tens of thousands today. Watchmaking must have been a good trade? And yet old Henry was always broke, according to the records.

**Acknowledgements.** I am grateful to Mike Bartlett (formerly of *Hillside*) who transcribed the recitation of title recording the transfer of property from Robert Jones to Mary Williams. Thanks are due to Molly Ranger (formerly of *The Manse, Llanbethery*) who, long ago, lent me the 1875 deeds and documentation of *New House*, which contained the information on Evan Griffiths' purchase from Mary Williams in 1828. John Cann transcribed details from Gwynne Liscombe's deeds and wills. Peter Jarvis gave me an extract from his thesis on *Clockmaking in Glamorgan in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries*. Gwynne Liscombe wrote a definitive article on Henry Williams and his clocks in Newsletter 68. 1995.

### **Rice Merrick and the Vale: c.1578**

by John Etherington

Rice Merrick (Rhys Meurig) was born in c.1520 and died in 1587. He is best remembered for his Book of the Antiquities of Glamorgan: *Morganiae Archaeiographica*.

Buried at St Nicholas, his gravestone is lost. He was the son of Meurig ap Hywel ap Philip of Bonvilston, a descendant of Miskin families. Meurig ap Hywel bought *Cottrell (Trehill) Manor* in c.1546. Rice married Mary Fleming, of Flemingston, whose mother was Elizabeth Mansell of Oxwich.

Despite the relationship with the all-powerful Mansell family, Merrick's patrons were the Herberts, Earls of Pembroke. In the *Archaeiogrphica*, he records himself as Clerk of the Peace, "appointed by William, Earl of Pembroke and after by Henry, Earl of Pembroke."

This was a social climb paralleled by many yeomen families during the same era. Land was cheap following the Black Death, and the uprisings of the 14th and 15th centuries, so property speculation flourished. Land-ownership in Llancarfan parish and nearby, still reflects these events. The Merrick star continued to rise and, by the 19th century the *Cottrell Estate* had spread to some 2000 acres in Bonvilston and St Nicholas.

Rice Merrick was in the lucky position of having fortune, time, connections and the necessary scholarship to pursue his antiquarian passions. The first such book in Wales, *Morganiae Archaeiogrphica* set the style for many of the county histories published during the next three centuries. It was composed between 1578-84, much influenced by William Lambard's *Perambulation of Kent* 1576, and comprises a general history from Dark Ages to the 16th century, followed by a "Topography" of the parishes, grouped in their respective Hundreds.

Llancarfan and its surrounding area is mentioned several times, providing a uniquely early record. Merrick's remark on the enclosure of the eastern Vale, is so frequently quoted that many local historians have the passage by heart:-

"And [it] was a champion and open country without great store of inclosures; for in my time old men reported that they remembered in their youth that cattle in some time, for want of shade to have from the Portway\*, run to Barry, which is four miles distant, whose forefathers told them that a great part of the inclosures was made in their days."



This identifies the Vale as "Old Countryside", enclosed long before the Parliamentary Acts\*\*. Merrick's description sets the period of enclosure as c.1500 and earlier.

Rice Merrick quotes from "Lord Spenser's survey" of 1320, which listed the "ploughlands" of each lordship. The original was a taxation roll issued by the Exchequer, at Cardiff, commissioned by Hugh le Dispenser, who became Lord of Glamorgan in 1327. It was intended to assess lands, which had been broken by the plough and consequently were taxable as capable of cultivation.

The ploughlands "By East Thaw", which are of interest to us, were listed as: - Walterston 3; Penmark & Llancadle 32 (22); Moulton and Lidmerston [modern Lidmore] 8; Odyn's Fee 4; Fonmon 7, Llancarfan 2 (1 1/2); Llantrithyd 12; Leechcastle 2; Llanbethery 2 1/2 and Treguff and Penonn 4 1/2. The brackets show discrepant figures found in other transcripts of the book.

In north and east England, after the Conquest, the "ploughland" was the area of arable land, which could be ploughed, with a team of eight oxen in a year. Approximately 100 acres, the area must have varied with soil type, topography and the size of the customary acre. Spenser's ploughland was probably about 80 statutory acres.

Amongst the features of the countryside, Merrick lists a "Dovehouse" and a "Fishpond" in Llancarfan (built by "Giles Philip?"). He also notes the Fishpond at Llantrithyd built by Anthony Mansell.. We looked at the remains of this fishpond, at *Llantrithyd Place*, during a May Walk, led by the late Len Mortimer in 1992. Other Fishponds, close to Llancarfan, were at Beaupre, Treguff, East Orchard and Pysgodlyn Mawr (Great Fishlake) at Mynydd-y-Glew, near Welsh St Donats.

The dovehouse at Llancarfan was almost certainly the culvery, which gave its name to Culvery Field (now part occupied by *Culvery* and *The Grange*). You can read a bit more about this in a future Newsletter.

It is less easy to locate the fishpond. Common sense indicates that it was on the valley floor close to the river, as was the pond at *Llantrithyd Place* where the water supply was controlled by dams and sluices from the adjacent Nant Llantridid, which also fed "ornamental canals". We would expect to see remnants of earthworks unless subsequent operations had obliterated them. The best candidate is the area downstream from *Old Parsonage* where the course of the river was changed in the 1930s to prevent flooding. It is also where *New Mill* had a dam and millpond (probably after Merrick's time).

The late Dick Evans remembered a hollow in the fields, which contained sufficient water for swimming for some time after floods (Newsletter 92). He recalled bathing in March, as the shallow water warmed-up quickly: just what is needed for a fish rearing pool. A final clue: - Dick's swimming pool is about opposite the site of the monastic grange in Culvery Field, a likely spot for a fishpond.

We have spoken before of the naming of Bonvilston from the de Bonville family. Rice Merrick gives us a glimpse of the last remnant of this eponymous connection: - "Simon Bonvill's house, lord of Bonvilston, builded in a wood by south Bonvilston and compassed with a moat ----. I in my time saw part of the stone carried to build other houses and a kiln there made to burn the stone of lime." This brings to mind the Old Testament and the razing of cities for, of course, in limestone country the stone can literally be burned and become agricultural or building lime, removing all evidence from the face of the earth.

\*Portway. The medieval and earlier pack-road from the Ely to the Ogmere rivers; now the A48.

\*\* Oliver Rackham. *History of the Countryside*.

Reference: Rice Merrick (c.1578) *Morganiae Archaeiographica* A Book of the Antiquities of Glamorgan. Edited by B. Ll. James (1983) for South Wales Record Society.

## People and places

**Landscape award** The Vale Council has been awarded the first ever Council of Europe Landscape Award. The Council's entry competed with Russia, Germany, Turkey and the Czech Republic amongst others. It can only be good news, as the Vale is largely a dormitory area with no massive industrial base and an agricultural economy which provides only limited employment. A thriving tourism business will allow many youngsters to remain rather than gravitating to the southeast and midlands as so many do at the moment.

Stan Awbery, MP, many years ago bewailed the fact that the Vale had lost its chance of gaining National Park status because of developments such as the power stations on the central coast and the expansion of the wartime airfields of Rhoose (and latterly St Athan).

What he would have thought of the giant B.A. service hanger which looms over *Cardiff Wales Airport*, I'm not sure. John Davies, Welsh historian, described it as Wales' "most obtrusive building". It ranked amongst the five worst buildings - "a giant shoe-box" - in a *Western Mail* survey by a member of the working group which has recently prepared a report: *Designing Success: The Case for a Welsh Commission for Architecture and Design*.

The nearby Pembrokeshire Coast National Park reaps some £295 million each year for the local economy. If the Landscape Award can help preserve and improve what remains of the beautiful Vale, we may see some locally created wealth and a future for more Vale youngsters than exists at the moment.

[I hasten to exonerate the editor from responsibility for these words - the thoughts are those of John Etherington, and if anyone has other views we will publish them.]

**Vale on TV** Local television is already promoting our landscape, architecture and produce. HTV's *Away Days* recently featured the Vale of Glamorgan as a holiday and day-tripping venue. Lucy Cohen visited the coast near Southerndown, Cowbridge and *Llanerch Vinyard*, the home of Cariat wines. I couldn't help recalling some lines by Llancarfan historian, G. T. Clark, who quoted "an early triad" of the Vale: -

"The Bard loves his beautiful country  
Its wines, its wives, and its white houses."

"Its wines are alas no more; not even the patriotic efforts of Lord Bute, in his vineyard at Castell Coch, have as yet been able to raise a murmur from the local temperance societies, but the white cottages still glisten, nestled in the recesses of the hills; and if its wives no longer enjoy a special pre-eminence in Wales it is only because the fair sex of other counties, emulous of the distinction, have attained to the same merit."  
(*The Land of Morgan*, 1883).

George Clark had an eye for the ladies perhaps, but I fear the triad might have more to do with the imagination of Iolo Morganwg, that silver-tongued writer whose imaginative thoughts on the Vale certainly gulled G. T. Clark in other ways. Can anyone tell us whether the triad was real, or flowed from Iolo's pen in his Flemingston cottage?

[Grapes were grown at Castell Coch from 1875 and Swanbridge from 1886 until 1920. They "ripened in some years" and made good wine with added sugar. *Glam. County History* I].

## **Bridleways, turnpikes and stagecoaches** by John Etherington

The first record of a traveller's plight in Glamorgan was probably Gerald of Wales' account of his journey from Llandaff to St David's in 1188. The road crossed the mouth of the river Neath with its dangerous quicksands and: - "one of our pack horses, the only one possessed by the writer of these lines, was almost sucked down into the abyss." Fortunately for history, Gerald's books and papers, though damaged, survived.  
*The Journey through Wales*

It may be necessary to observe that the roads from Cowbridge to this place - i.e. Newport - are what is here called good, nay even fine, being hard and stony, having many steep hills. One great fault they have in common with the

Irish roads, being thrown up so round that though their base occupies a considerable breadth the road itself scarcely yields room for a single carriage. In going on to one side one risks an overturn.

*Frances Grose's Tour in Glamorgan 1775,*

T. J. Hopkin's (1963) *Glamorgan Historian* 1, 158-70.

In late medieval times many "roads" were in such poor condition as to be nigh on impassable in winter. Between the latter part of the 16th and the early 19th century, these miry cart-tracks, little more than bridleways, had evolved into hard-bottomed and, in due course, level-surfaced roads. This evolution was driven by a change from an essentially local production and distribution system to the much longer distance transportation of goods.

A major change came from 1706, onward, as literally thousands of Turnpike Acts authorised the establishment of Turnpike Trusts, empowered to construct, maintain and levy tolls on specified sections of road. The first to affect Glamorgan was passed in 1764 and a later amendment apportioned the roads between Cardiff and Swansea to five Turnpike Trusts.

Cardiff was responsible for the road from Bonvilston to Rumney Bridge, with a gate at Bonvilston. Agricultural transport remained, as ever, the packhorse or farm cart and it was the vexed matter of tolls on lime-carts and wagons carrying produce, which started the Rebecca Riots of the late 1830s and early 40s, particularly in west and mid-Wales. Despite the many gates around Bridgend, Glamorgan suffered less unrest than neighbouring Carmarthenshire, though three gates were destroyed near Llantrisant in 1843. After the riots, and following a Royal Commission report, a new Roads Board was set up in 1845, consolidating all the Trusts and taking over the 50 gates in Glamorgan, for gradual elimination.

The turnpike trusts were initially seen as good investments, and several local charities invested their capital sums in this way. For example, the Mary Lougher bequest to Llantrithyd was secured, "at 5/- per cent interest by a deed poll --- from the Trustees of the Rumney Bridge Turnpike Act", and another of her bequests (to Bonvilston) was invested "on security of tolls arising from Cardiff Turnpike District". By contrast, Mary's bequest to Llancarfan was lent to the Jones family of *Fonmon Castle* and finally lost to the parish in the (probably illegal) repair of a road near the castle (Gwynne Liscombe, Newsletter 16, 1988).

The reality was that many of the Trusts did not pay interest for decades, as tolls were mortgaged to raising capital, toll collection was unscrupulously "farmed-out" whilst exemptions from tolls were sold so that much toll revenue was misappropriated. However, there is no record that Bonvilston or Llantrithyd failed to receive interest, and, in 1866, Llantrithyd was still giving the charity as "bread for the poor" (Clark & Jones, 1866-7).

In the years before rail transport, the turnpikes were the long distance routes for the Royal Mail. Prior to 1784, mail was carried by vulnerable and unreliable mounted postboys but, in that year, Government authorised the introduction of the mail-coach. The first mail-coach service between London and Milford began operating in 1785, crossing the Severn at the "New Passage", from Redwick to Portskewett.

The old medieval Portway, traversing the outlying northern section of Llancarfan parish thus became part of the coaching route, which is now, the A48 trunk road. Chocolate and maroon coloured coaches, doors emblazoned with the royal arms, and scarlet beribboned horses must have been a wonderful sight and sound. The coaches never slowed for the Bonvilston gate, no toll being payable and the gates had to be open, on pain of a forty shilling fine or imprisonment for the keeper.

Things might have been different. The great road engineer, Thomas Telford, at a meeting in the Pyle Inn in 1825, had proposed the bypassing of Cowbridge for the more convenient St Fagans, Miskin, Llanharry and Bridgend route. Telford was working on major bridges at Tewkesbury and Gloucester and was about to complete the Menai Suspension Bridge at this time.

We have the opposition from Cowbridge and the Postmaster General to thank for our local trunk road which leaves Cardiff at Ely Bridge and led to Cowbridge until the modern bypass was opened in the 1960s. It also made a great difference to the Bradley family.

The Bradleys of Penmark, Cowbridge and Cardiff were major stagecoach operators in the early 19th century. Robert Christopher Bradley of the *Bear Inn*, Cowbridge, his brother John Bradley of the *Cardiff Arms*, Cardiff, and other members of the family at the *Angel Inn* in Castle Street operated staging services between Milford and London together with a post office, mail coaches and livery stabling.

As a matter of local interest, two of Robert Bradleys's children, Christopher and Edward, for a while held the tenancy of *Treguff Place* (1840 Tithe Survey). Edward Bradley had become Treasurer and Secretary of the Glamorgan Agricultural Society in 1821, and did not resign until 1868. He worked as a Land Agent in Cowbridge.

In 1804 Robert Christopher Bradley thanked friends and public for their support during the previous 18 years and announced that he was quitting the *Bear Inn* to continue the business from his own house, the *Post Office* in Cowbridge. The mail coaching side of the business had not been without problems. In 1795, Thomas Hasker, Superintendent of Mail Coaches, wrote to Bradley complaining that mail was being carried with "common luggage" in the boot - "this too is shameful, as the principal contractor is a postmaster". In the following year Bradley again offended Hasker, who sent him a letter pointing out that "to load the roof of the coach with huge heavy baskets would not only be setting a bad example to other coaches but in a very short time no passenger would travel with it ---".

It is not recorded how Robert Bradley responded to this criticism but he seems to have been an ill-tempered man, prompting a Cowbridge wit to write: -

If signs are emblems of what landlords are,  
How like must Bradley be unto his Bear.

There may have been fireworks?

I am grateful to Frederic Bradley whose enquiry about the Bradleys of *Treguff* first set us off on this track (Newsletters 42 & 43 1991); Diane Morgan researched the Bradley relationships and Irene Jankovic unearthed information on the Mary Lougher bequests. See also: Herbert Williams (1977) *Stage Coaches in Wales*, Stewart Williams. Sidney & Beatrice Webb (1913) *The Story of the King's Highway*, Longman. Clark & Jones 1866-7.

## **Lime-burning in Llancarfan**

by John Etherington

When our Neolithic ancestors first started to cultivate land and grow crops, it was not long before they discovered that some soils were infertile but plants grew better on them where ash and calcined stone were left from cooking fires. It would not take many generations of trial and error before the realisation dawned that some stones crumbled to dust when burned, and that this dust was particularly good at improving crops. So began the process of liming, the first "chemical" fertilisation of soils, and one which farmers have used to the present day.

Lime neutralises "acid" soils and permits better root development, uptake of nutrients and water. There is archaeological evidence of ancient agricultural liming, which then continues into the historical record. Shortly after the first use of agricultural lime it would have been discovered that a wet mix of newly burned lime and soil slowly sets to a rock-like consistency and could be used in building as a cement to hold masonry and brickwork together (see box). Lime and water may be used as whitewash, which may be used to waterproof the walls and roofs of buildings.

The Roman author Pliny referred to the use of "white chalky marl" for liming in Britain and monastic records tell us that, in the late 12th c. Neath Abbey received a grant of marl in

Marcross. The tufaceous marl deposits in the valley below Marcross are similar to those at *Garnllwyd* and at *Broomwell* and it is likely that these also were used for liming (and as a fullers earth at the *Woollen Mill*). A local name, of unknown origin, for this marl is Gipsy Butter.

The Liassic limestone of the Vale is eminently suited to making lime and, consequently, Llancarfan was home to a lime-burning industry for many centuries. It started with small pits, dug amongst the fields and small, perhaps temporary kilns in which limestone chunks were stacked in layers with dry timber and then fired, either as a single burning or a continuous process. The first description of a limekiln in Wales was written by George Owen (1602) in *A Description of Pembrokeshire*.

Many of the pits are still there and more are marked on the older 1:2500 O.S. maps of the parish. Some are shown by the map symbol for a pit but others carry the legend "lime-kiln". We have no real idea of the age of the pits, but a good guess might be late medieval. Some of the pits have disappeared in modern times, for example, Gwynne Liscombe told me he helped to fill-in a lime-pit at *Penylan*, many years ago.

Within the last two centuries, lime-burning became a larger scale operation, centred on limestone quarries, in our area, or groups of kilns close to harbours on much of the Welsh coast. It is difficult to know how many quarry kilns have operated in the parish but older residents remember at least two, with small quarries and kilns at St Athan Road and at St Marychurch Road, both close to two of the stations on the Cowbridge-Aberthaw railway. The primary reason for the construction of the railway was the lime industry at Aberthaw, which dated back to a time when export of limestone brought more income to Glamorgan than coal.

The ruin of the former Aberthaw Pebble Limestone Company works still stands at Pleasant Harbour. It was opened in 1888 to exploit the great near-shore bank of limestone pebbles, which had previously been collected and carried inland, or across the Channel for burning. A tramway connected the works to the East Aberthaw road and was initially used for bringing coal in and exporting the finished lime, but within four years, an extension of the Llantrisant to Cowbridge branch of the TVR was completed, linking the Aberthaw works to Cowbridge. The railway was opened in 1892 and from that time carried coal into and lime from the works.

The opening of the two smaller lime-works in Llancarfan parish seems to have been prompted by the presence of the railway. A Thomas Taylor, who lived at *Kings Lawn (Kingsland)*, opened the North Aberthaw Limeworks in 1904. In the 1920 Electoral Roll it was named *St Mary Church Road Lime Works* and Thomas Taylor was described as "Colliery owner, Pontypridd". There was a short tramway linking the works to railway. The quarries were to the north of the roadbridge, which still exist, but the limeworks was closed in 1928. The quarries are now so overgrown that it is difficult to detect their presence.

The *Blue Lias Limeworks* was adjacent to St Athan Road Station, just above Burton Bridge. It was opened in 1898 by L. Williams & Son's and worked until 1932. No other information has come to light. Any offers?

**An interesting footnote.** According to *Kelly's Directory* it seems that the Aberthaw Pebble Limestone Co. was taken over by, or became, the Eddystone-Aberthaw Lime and Cement Co. Ltd. early in the 20th century. This may have been a firm, dating back to John Smeaton's discoveries concerning the Liassic limestone (see box and David Harris' article in Newsletter 101) or it may simply have received the name to commemorate Smeaton and his connection with hydraulic lime and lighthouse building. I am grateful to Bob Sanders for this information and would be grateful to share any other member's knowledge.

## **BOX Lime, cement and concrete**

...the Cowbridge Thaw whose waters roll into the sea over a field of water worn lias pebbles, in repute as a hydraulic limestone, in great request amongst engineers... Geo. T.Clark (1883)

The most remarkable remnant of Roman wall in the old county of Glamorgan is nearly 300 feet long and is visible within the precinct of Cardiff Castle. More than 1500 years old it is still a forbidding structure. The Romans certainly knew how to stick stones together. In the last Newsletter, David Harris mentioned the dome of the Pantheon, in which they excelled themselves. The concrete of the central part was made with pumice, a volcanic lava which is fluffed-up with air bubbles and it was probably the first use of lightweight aggregate, which we didn't manage to re-invent until the second part of the 20th century.

The older houses of Llancafán village were "glued" together with *lime mortar*. The lime was made locally by burning limestone at almost white heat in a kiln. The calcium carbonate of the limestone is changed to calcium oxide, a rather nasty white chemical, commonly called *quickslime* because it reacts violently with water, getting very hot. Lime-burning must have been an unpleasant trade as quicklime seriously burns skin and flesh.

To make mortar, the quicklime was thrown into water where it crumbled into a white slurry of *slaked-lime* which was allowed to stand for a while and then an aggregate, either sand, small gravel or even subsoil, was mixed into it.

Lime mortar took forever to set. The slaked lime (calcium hydroxide) combines with carbon dioxide in the air, and reverts to the calcium carbonate from which the lime burner had started. In other words the joints of the masonry turned back into a synthetic limestone. "Forever" is almost true. Though the mortar was strong enough to take another course of masonry after a few days, it continued to harden, literally for years.

This is where the Romans came in, with the discovery that a particular type of volcanic lava called *pozzolana*, when ground to a powder and mixed with slaked lime, made a cement which set much faster, harder and was more waterproof than lime mortar. Used with an aggregate of gravel, crushed rock or even broken brick, this made the Roman concrete which remained a mystery for many years.

We don't have *pozzolana* in Britain, but it didn't take the legionary engineers long to discover that some sorts of impure limestone made a lime which had many of the properties of the *pozzolana*-slaked lime mix which they had used in Italy. One of those limestones was the Lias of the Vale, which John Smeaton re-discovered for making hydraulic mortar, as recounted by David Harris (Newsletter 101).

From Roman times, mortars and cements have been made waterproof by adding animal fat, milk, blood, egg whites, Cheshire cheese, sour cream and about any other source of fat and protein which you can imagine! Smeaton was looking for a more durable form of waterproofing, and found it.. The addition of clay, and a very high firing temperature, makes the resultant cement waterproof when set. It is also much stronger than lime mortar because the aluminium-silicon compounds in the clay crystallise as the cement sets, bonding all together in a rock-like mineral structure.

BOX END

## More about photographs

We have appealed for photos before, sometimes successfully and sometimes with no response at all. For example we have never found photographs of steam locomotives on the wooded section of the Cowbridge-Aberthaw Railway despite appeals as far afield as the columns of the *Western Mail* and various national railway societies. Can't win them all!

Let's try again. During the 1970s in a very severe snowstorm the road to Llancadle and Aberthaw was blocked by drifts and the front of the *Green Dragon* was buried in a huge drift, reaching up to the "eyebrows" of thatch over the upper windows. This was before the pub was altered significantly from its old "cottage" style. Did anyone chance to photograph the drift,

before it was cleared? We were too busy struggling back and forth to the cement works car park where we had to leave the car for several days!