



THE LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 107 October 2001

Editorial It seems an age since I completed the last Newsletter, probably because the world has erupted into such violence during the past two months. We must hope against hope that some semblance of normality will return soon, freeing the world from both terrorism and terror.

On a much more mundane level, may I ask for some contributions for the Newsletter? Years ago we almost came to an end, scraping the barrel to fill the pages. Then, for inexplicable reasons, we had plenty of material which lasted until last summer. Suddenly, my files have emptied, so what about it? I would be happy to consider a wider variety of topics, if only to get rid of my own name as a by-line on so many articles! We have only rarely featured anything I would consider as creative writing so that field is open, whilst accounts of current activities in the village are always welcomed by expatriates. My address is on the back page!

People and places

Cancer Research For the second successive year Ann Ferris took part in "Race for Life" in Cardiff's Bute Park, starting at 9.30 on 11th July 2001. Approximately 6500 women participated and Ann completed the walk in 44 minutes. Thanks to friends (not forgetting family) near and far, £101.00 has been denoted to the Imperial Cancer Research Fund.

Cardiff International Airport and TBI, the firm that runs it, seem trouble fraught indeed. After making a take-over bid in early September, the French Construction Company, Vinci, has now withdrawn its offer, which had already been accepted by TBI shareholders. Current trading prospects do not look good in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the USA.

Tonight (19th October) as I am putting the Newsletter together, Rolls Royce have announced massive redundancies, leading to fears for employment at the BA Service Facility, Rhoose and the US-run engine-service unit at Nantgarw. We must hold our breath and hope all is well for these members of our community.

More on The Bulwarks an e-mail from Andrew Griffiths

John: I have just read *Newsletter 106* and would like to comment on the item about *The Bulwarks* at Porthkerry.

Many years ago there was a ruin of a lime kiln on the cliff tops just East of Rhoose point, this ruin was known locally as the *Bulwarks* and was very similar in size and design to the Lime Kiln at East Aberthaw. The ruin was pulled down several years ago when Porthkerry Caravan Park purchased the quarry, that supplied the kiln, and turned it into an extension of the caravan park.

The quarry and the site of the lime kiln can be very easily viewed from the new bridge that has just been built over the railway line, east of Rhoose, to service the new houses that are being built on the site of the *Rhoose Cement Works*. I hope this information will be of some use to Gareth Davies, Vancouver Island. Regards Andrew Griffiths.

Note. Gareth Davies was pleased to have this information, which probably identifies the ruin, which he remembered. The e-mail correspondence with Gareth has also attracted some interest in *Queen Street*, Barry, where Sheena Etherington, the Editor's wife spent her childhood. Gareth wrote that his wife Eileen was "also a *Queen Street* lass" whilst he came from *High Street* where his parents had the greengrocer's shop, next to *Trinity Chapel*. The Llancarfan Society web-site has done its bit in bringing folk together in this global village!

The Fox & Hounds opened under new ownership on Friday evening (8th October). The owners are John and Sue Millard who hail from Hereford, and have serious plans for the future. John is currently chef at *Miskin Manor*, so is well qualified. The following Saturday saw the re-commencement of bar snacks and the restaurant will re-open in December (Alan Taylor).

The Reynard Consortium, which arranged the original, purchase and negotiated the planning permissions for the two building plots, must be happy with the outcome. Those who lent money at the outset have been repaid and there will be a small profit to each investor when detailed calculations are complete.

The Annual Dinner was a wonderful success and everyone appeared to enjoy themselves. The food was good and I sold 38 bottles of wine and 24 cans of beer. We sold 66 tickets but there were five last minute abstentions. The raffle brought in another £70 so we made a profit. (Alan Taylor).

A centenarian! In 1999, Ernie Harber contributed some of his memories of Llancarfan and Barry to Newsletter 86. Ernie, of Cambridge Street, Barry, was the husband of Katie (née Laws). Katie and her sisters had been brought up at *Caradoc Cottage* by Les Griffith's, Maggie Griffiths, mother of Les, Llewellyn & Co. Our heartiest congratulations must go to Ernie, who was 100 on the 17th October.

What's in a name? Phil Watts has recently received a letter from John Jones of Llantwit Major, grandson of John Jones of *Great House*, Llancarfan. John's father, Ivor Jones, was very keen to have a boy child after the birth of the three girls, Val, Sylvia and Patsie. When the great moment arrived it was celebrated by the announcement of the names John CARVAN Jones. This must be quite unique - we have never been told of anyone else being named after the village and the suffix -carfan is not very common anywhere in Wales so - is John the holder of a one-off Christian name?

John Jones also recalls that he lived with Ernie Badcock in Llancarfan at the time when the village won the Best-kept Village competition on 1963.

National Library of Wales Some months ago the Editor received a request for a complete set of Newsletters to be deposited with the National Library. This has been done, and the Library is now on our future mailing list. If you write anything for the Newsletter (hint, hint) you can be assured that at least one copy will be preserved for posterity. I say "at least" because we also send copies to the Glamorgan Record Office and Cardiff Central Library as well as Barry and Cowbridge Public Libraries. The request has also had the beneficial effect of getting the Editor to update the Newsletter Indexes and to re-edit all of the older Newsletters (up to Number 80) into Microsoft Word files, which have also been deposited, with NLW.

Against the odds Searching my Vale of Glamorgan 1:50,000 O.S. Map (1982 Second Series Sheet 170) I recently found an oddity which could be unique in the British Isles. In the legend there is an explanation of how to cite a British National Grid Reference, and this is customised for each sheet, with a reference to an actual point on the sheet. The Sample Point on my 1982 Sheet 170 is THE TALBOTS and the legend goes on to explain how to obtain the map reference ST 057 707.

So far, so good, but if you investigate this on the ground you will find that you are not at *The Talbots* but at *Middlehill*! The explanation that the owner of the original *Middlehill* moved to *The Talbots* in the 1980s, and swapped the names of the two properties so that his herd-name retained some rationality.

However, fair play to the Ordnance Survey - the modern edition of the map uses the same sample point to explain the use of map references but it is now re-named MIDDLEHILL.

What are the odds against this happening? There are thousands of names on each O.S. sheet and only once in a blue moon do people change names of properties, which are big enough to appear on the map. Tens of thousands to one against, I should think.

Magic pads by Phil Watts

- Those of you who see the *Gem* will have read Alfred Mill's short piece on Dolly the horse and the traffic-light pads which used to change the signal when a vehicle passed over (*Gem* 6th September). Phil has vivid memories of these devices as his subsequent letter to the *Gem* tells us.

Dear Editor, I was amused to read Alfred Mills' story (*Gem*, September 6), of his uncle John Harvey's experience of the magic pad in the road at the junction of Eastgate Street and St Athan Road with Aberthin road.

The pads in the road at the junction were activated by downward pressure, hopefully changing the colour of the traffic lights and allowing you to move forward in safety.

They were still in position in the mid-1950s. At this time, I owned a BSA Bantam motorcycle and one-day I was travelling from St Athan to Cowbridge on a mission of mercy - to obtain a prescription from the chemist for my wife, Ruth.

Time was pressing, it was Wednesday, and I needed to get to the chemist before it closed.

On my approach from St Athan to Eastgate, the lights were red. I drove over the 'magic pad'. No immediate response. I rode over the pad again - still no change.

I waited and waited. I decided that I could not wait any longer so I got off my motorcycle and pushed it around the corner into Eastgate Street - planning to continue my journey down Westgate Street towards Williams the Chemist.

To my dismay, in the doorway of Wadhams Grocer's shop stood the local policeman. He came toward me, doing the John Wayne walk, and with a wave of his arm signalled me to stop.

"Did you see the traffic lights?" "Yes."

"Did you see what colour they were?" "Yes."

Did I see you push your motor cycle past the red lights?" "Yes."

"Did you know you should wait until the lights showed green before proceeding?" "Yes."

I didn't want to prolong this conversation as it was important that I reached the chemist before it closed. It could not be to my advantage to suggest that the weight of myself and my motorcycle was not enough to activate the 'magic pad'.

I was told later that it was common for the policeman to stand in the doorway of Wadham's shop and wait for unsuspecting lawbreakers to pass the lights when showing red.

Today the 'magic pad' has been superseded by the magic eye - the police camera! This aggravation of the law cost me £2 in Cowbridge Magistrates' Court. Today's charge would be nearer £50.

We would like to see more of friendly policemen to check some of the many criminal activities that are popular today.

Our encounters with the law in days gone by were confined to riding a bike with no lights, riding on the pavement or perhaps an illegal pint after hours in the local. How times have changed!

Yours sincerely P. H. Watts, Barry

Roman Tufa

Long ago, in Newsletter 15, the late Dick Evans enquired about the unusual soil at Broomwell, which is pale brown or white and is often thrown out from the badger setts near the brook. At the time we identified this as tufa, a material that is deposited by spring and stream water, rising on limestone, especially where the water first bubbles to the surface, passes over a fall or through rapids and can lose dissolved carbon dioxide to the atmosphere (Newsletter 18).

Such water contains dissolved calcium bicarbonate but the loss of carbon dioxide converts it to calcium carbonate, which is much less soluble, and crystallises out on the bed of the stream, or on mosses and dead plants to form a brittle, stony deposit.

In some places the formation of tufa has become famous, for example at Mother Shipton's Well near Harrogate, it is traditional to hang a garment, shoe or other object in the dripping water where it becomes "petrified" by a friable limestone coat.

The soil that Dick noticed is a very crumbly variant and can be found in several different springs in the Llancarfan valley and widely throughout the Vale of Glamorgan.¹ However, it is not always so soft, and may form a porous rock as it does further up river near *Garnllwyd*.

During the 1960s in Llancarfan, I came across several stone troughs carved from tufa which had been used as plant containers - their original purpose, I believe, was as bread-rising troughs. Growers of alpine plants are particularly fond of tufa rock as a growth medium for their plants, which root into the pores of the "stone". The source of the hard Llancarfan tufa was believed to have been the riverbanks near *Garnllwyd*. It is quite possible that some of these troughs are still in the village?

I had always assumed that the hard tufa was uncommon, but Jarret & Wrathmell's account of the Romano-British farmstead at Whitton Crossroads² suggests that there was once quite a lot of it in our areas and its softness and ease of carving probably caused it to be quarried away. Tufa hardens on exposure to the air so carved objects are more permanent and useful than the newly excavated rock might suggest.

Many readers will remember the excavations of the site at Whitton Crossroads, undertaken from 1965 to 1970. The report of the work contains the following: -

- In the second half of the second century stone structures, particularly the enclosure walls, incorporated considerable amounts of calcareous tufa: for this the nearest likely source is Llancarfan, some 3 km to the west. Tufa does not seem to have been imported after the early years of the third century.

Such relatively large quantities of tufa, used just for walling, suggest that it was not a rare material but, presumably because it could be shaped so easily, it was considered worth the effort of carting it from a valley bottom a considerable distance away. The carving residue or possibly recycled tufa was also used to surface the courtyard and trackways.

¹ *Barry: the Centenary Book* (1984) contains the following: - "In the valley bottoms of Cwm Barry and Cwm Cidy exist thick layers of white loamy calcareous marl (its local name 'gypsy soap'), deposited there by stream action. There is some evidence that these deposits, as well as those in other places in the Vale of Glamorgan (for example, Marcross), were not overlooked, being quarried for use as fertiliser and as a fuller's earth in cloth preparation."

² Jarret, M. G. & Wrathmell, S. (1981) *Whitton: An Iron Age and Roman Farmstead in South Glamorgan*. University of Wales Press.

Decoy airfield: Llanbethery

by John Etherington

The last Newsletter (106) reproduced an e-mail exchange between Peter Hayball and the Editor, concerning the decoy airfield, which was constructed on The Downs, Llanbethery, to protect RAF St Athan during WW2. Peter had found a previous reference to the Llanbethery decoy in a Newsletter on the Llancarfan web-site and was enquiring about his grandfather, Flight Sergeant William Palmer who was posted to the Vale area during the war.

St Athan is listed in Colin Dobson's recent book, *Fields of Deception* (Methuen, 2000 - based on the work of English Heritage). It is recorded as having decoys at Penmark, Marcross and Flemingston. The map reference given for Flemingston is, in fact, the site of the Llanbethery decoy whilst Marcross appears to have been the decoy for Llandow and Penmark is recorded as *Not traced* (does anyone have information?)¹.

All three sites are listed as Q/QF Sites. When the construction of decoys was first mooted shortly, before the War, the term Q Site was coined for night-time decoys by analogy with the use of Q-Ship for a Naval vessel disguised as a merchant ship.

The early Q-Sites, commissioned in early 1940, comprised a set of false landing lights with a dummy wind-T in which the four T-figures could be switched to indicate wind direction. A sunken shelter manned by two men, and including a generator-set to power the lights, guarded the sites.

It would be of interest to discover whether there are remains of a shelter at the Llanbethery site.

The later QF (Q-fire) sites were constructed on the premise that enemy bombers approaching a target would aim at fires ignited by previous bombing. A variety of devices fed by wood, coal, oil and roofing felt were used to produce fires which would burn for a considerable time and, seen from the air, be similar to fires caused by bombing. St Athan's decoy became a QF site by mid-November 1940 when the parent aerodrome was being used as an aircraft storage unit. Information from captured bomber crews subsequently confirmed that they had been ordered to bomb lights opportunistically.

Does anyone recall the remains of fire equipment - oil tanks, fire cradles and the like, at Llanbethery?

To avert difficulties from inactivity and loneliness, the personnel manning the sites were not billeted locally, but ferried in daily from the base, which they were protecting. Assuming that Peter Hayball's grandfather manned the Llanbethery site, he would have been based at St Athan.

In addition to the night-time Q-sites, a limited number of daytime decoys were built (for unknown reasons termed K-sites). These were much more complicated and expensive, including dummy aircraft. Dobson's book gives an interesting account of the involvement of technicians from the film industry in this construction work. Sound City Films, Shepperton Studios, were contracted, in early 1940, to build dummy Wellington bombers and Blenheim fighter-bombers. Their team was also responsible for developing the different types of fire equipment for the QF sites.

Air Ministry cold statistics show that the decoys were successful in diverting 3.73% of the total bomb load delivered, but this conceals a fact which must have meant a great deal to almost 6000 families. The decoys saved the lives of some 2596 people and injury to a further 3160.

¹ In the mid-1950s land at Moulton was used by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to site a radio beacon for Rhoose airport. Close to Penmark, was this perchance on the same land?

Obituary notice: Barbara Evans, née Balchin Just before this Newsletter was printed we heard with sadness of the death of Barbara, who had worked with her brother, Edgar, for so many years in the *Fox and Hounds* restaurant that she had become an indispensable part of the Llancarfan scene. A full obituary will appear in the next Newsletter.

Henry Williams, clockmaker of renown c.1727 - 1790

A few weeks ago the editor received an e-mail from Ed Cloutman of St Athan, asking for details of the Williams' family of Llancarfan. They were clock and watchmakers in the village for more than a century.

Ed, amongst other qualifications, specialises in clock restoration and has been asked to work on the Henry Williams' wall clock which has hung in the *Fox and Hounds* for many years.

Years ago, the late Gwynne Liscombe wrote an article for us on Henry Williams of *Broadhayes* (Newsletter 69/95). Various other notes on the Williams' family have appeared over the years, so I have passed reprints of these to Ed together with a Williams' family history synopsis compiled by Society member, Bob Sanders.

Whilst working on the clock Ed intends writing an article for the *Horological Journal* based around our Llancarfan family of clockmakers. More on Williams' clocks will no doubt appear in the Newsletter when Ed has finished this task.

A personal footnote: Ed Cloutman was an undergraduate of the former Botany Department of University College, Cardiff when the Editor was a rather junior lecturer. He later returned to work in the Department (by then re-named Plant Science) and we remained as colleagues for many years. A pleasure to restore contact through the Society.

Where was *Culvery House*?

by John Etherington

In Newsletter 102/01 I wrote about Morris Griffiths (senior), blacksmith of Llancarfan and Penmark.

The 1893 Poor Rate Assessment* listed Morris as the owner and occupant of the *Smith Forge* and described him as "of *Culvery House*."

It was generally believed in the village that Morris' son, the wheelwright, also named Morris, built *New House* at the foot of Pancross Hill but I have never seen documentary proof of this. The field to the north of *New House* was called *Culvery Park* and is now the site of *The Grange* and *Culvery* (built in the 1970s). When the first blacksmith of the Griffiths family, old Evan, died in 1841, he owned *Culvery Park* and the garden of *New House* was originally a part of that field.

Where then was *Culvery House* and was it *New House*?

I have a letter, dated 1891, written to an Insurance Agent in Cowbridge concerning the valuation of *New House*.* The relevant part reads: -

"Having been asked by Mr Morris Griffiths of Llancarfan to write to you respecting the value of the new House which he has built for himself at Llancarfan."

Morris Griffiths (junior) was only 21 at this time and single. The letter implies that the house had just been built, so it seems much more likely that Morris (senior) was the builder. There was an apocryphal village belief that the Morris Griffiths who built the house never lived in it: this also would be more likely if Morris (senior) was the builder.

The 1891 census gives Morris (senior) at *Shop Vawr*, with his wife, Elizabeth, sons Thomas and Morris, and daughter Jane. I have always assumed this was *Great House*, of which the roadside part was used as a shop within living memory. However we do need documentary proof of this. The same census records William Madeley at *Grocers Shop*, but property deeds, a few years later, show that William Madeley used part of *Hillside* as a grocer's shop and post-office. There were no other "shops" listed in the 1891 census except for *Post Office*, location unknown. Unfortunately, in those days of rented property, they all moved pretty frequently. Compounded by the repetitive use of Christian names this is all designed to confuse!

Does anyone have documents containing these house names? Letters in particular, known to have been written to, or from, these houses, at the time, would be most helpful.

*I am grateful, after many years, to acknowledge two people's help. Sue Evans gave me a copy of the Poor Rate Assessment, which was found at *Garnllwyd* and is now lodged with G.R.O. and Molly Ranger lent the letter of reference which was amongst the deeds of *New House*.

Cardiff Nantes Petanque

The Cardiff Nantes Fellowship issue a Newsletter several times a year. This deals with all aspects of the twinning of Cardiff and Nantes. The Petanque trophy is part of the two cities social programme and as Llancarfan Society are paid-up members of the Petanque challenge series, we automatically receive a copy as you can see from the pages reproduced below. Apologies for the poor quality of copy.

INSERT PIC

Llancarfan fossils: mixed shellfish

by John Etherington

This is the fourth of these articles on fossils. Those we have seen so far look like nothing on earth - quite literally, as they, and their groups have been extinct for tens of millions of years. The illustrations below are different because they look so much like modern clams and snails, both of which are Molluscs. Indeed, they would not raise too much of an eyebrow in many a fisherman's trawl. They would probably have been edible, or even tasted much like present day shellfish, though there were no people, or even mammals there to try the experiment.

Those in the photos were all found in chunks of rock excavated from the foundation trenches of *Ceffyl Du* back in 1968 when your editor had some hair and spent a lot of time as a human mole! Most of the excavated material was a nasty, sticky yellow clay containing weathered chunks of limestone which had been so frost-shattered in glacial times that they fell-apart on drying, and revealed their fossil contents with no work at all.

The clam-like shells are Bivalves, so-called because they have two symmetrical shells (valves), hinged at the top and opening by gaping at the bottom. Both are of the genus *Plagiostoma* and it is quite possible that the smaller shells are juveniles of the larger example, which is about 18 cm from hinge to tip of shell. A common large bivalve in these Lower Liassic rocks is *Plagiostoma gigantea* but it would need an expert to be certain - I'm not one!

The spiral fossil is no longer a shell, but a cast of the rock which had formed inside one. Careful examination of the actual specimen shows that this filling contains countless fragments of shell and other tiny fossils which protrude slightly on the etched surface of the cast. I have shown photographs of this fossil to Steve Howe, geologist at W.N.G.M., who identifies it as very similar to the Gastropod genus *Pleurotomaria* but was not critically sure without seeing the actual fossil. Gastropods include the modern snails and winkles, which mostly have conical, spiral shells like this one.

The Clams (Class Bivalvia) became well established in the Ordovician, perhaps extending back to the Cambrian, whilst the snails (class Gasteropoda) date back even further into the Cambrian. Of the animals, which we see commonly around us, these are some of the oldest in the geological record. Bivalves usually live embedded in sediment and communicate with the water above, using a long, tubular "siphon". They filter their food from water, which is pumped through their gills. The gasteropods usually feed by rasping their food from surfaces with a toothed "tongue" called a radula. You can see this if garden-snails crawl over your windowpanes "licking" at the green algae which grow on the glass (unless you have a weekly window cleaner).

For many years the large clam served as a doorstop when we lived at *Ceffyl Du*!

INSERT PIC

My hand gives scale to the two photos of "clams". The bigger one is more than six inches long. The "snail" is about two inches in diameter and the rough surface, just visible, is made up of broken shell fragments protruding from the surface

St Dubricius or Dyfrig by John Etherington

- Bishop Garmanus (Garmon) came twice at the bidding of the Synod of the Gaelic Church to put down Pelagianism. The first time he was accompanied by Bishop Lupus (Bleiddin) and the second time Bishop Severus and the heresy was quashed. Garmanus is said to have founded Llancarfan and Llantrithyd and to have consecrated St Dubricius. (Young, D. 1893. *The Origin and History of Methodism in Wales and the Borders*. Kelly, London)

Cooking is a rewarding occupation but I find it leaves the brain not enough to do. I usually switch-on the TV and just occasionally the moving wallpaper adds some new information to life. Today (26 September) was one such time: *Russel Grant's Postcards* came from Sellack, just over the border in Herefordshire near Ross on Wye. It emerged that the patron saint of the nearby church, at Hentland (*Henllan*), was St Dubricius (*alias* Dyfrig), another of that band of shadowy Celtic saints from the fifth and sixth centuries.

This might not seem very exciting but there is a Llancarfan connection. St Dyfrig's Well, close to *Abernant* is named after the saint and, as the quotation at the head of this piece tells us, he was supposedly consecrated by Bishop Garmanus who, some believe, gave the name Llancarfan, *via* the Welsh form Nantgarman and thence Llangarman.

Baring-Gould and Fisher¹ say that Dubricius founded a college at *Henllan* which attracted over 2000 clerics (where have I heard that before?). After seven years he moved to Mochros (now Moccas). How he came to Llancarfan in legend, or otherwise, I don't know, but it is said that he spent time in South Wales, one of the *foci* from which the cult spread. Porlock church, which is almost in sight of Llancarfan across the Bristol Channel, is dedicated to St Dubricius.

¹ *Lives of the British Saints* (1907-13, 4 vols).