

## Newsletter 120 October 2003

### Editorial

This will be the last Newsletter to be edited by John Etherington though as I said in Newsletter 119, you won't get rid of me that easily and there will be much more yet to come from my keyboard.

Since I wrote the last Editorial, the arrangements for the future have altered slightly. Material for the Newsletter should be sent to Ann Ferris at *Fordings*, Llancarfan, CF62 3AD . If anyone has unpublished material which was sent to me, please continue to correspond with me about it and I will make sure it finds a place in forthcoming Newsletters. Further arrangements for the Newsletter will be announced in due course.

I shall miss writing to you several times a year and hope that the Society continues to go from strength to strength as time goes on.

It is a sadness but also a privilege to include the funeral eulogy to "Lil" Parsons who many of you will remember over her many years at the *Fox and Hounds*. Lil was such a delight to us all that I am pleased to devote quite a lot of space to her memory. She was part of an old South Wales which we shall not see again.

### Local Matters

**DARA ST Athan** The saga of St Athan and the DARA service facility continues. One month it is on, with many new jobs, the next month off and so on. In July it was reported that the MOD was forced to issue a statement after a leaked internal MoD report suggested that the Dara St Athan facility should close with the loss of 2,000 jobs. If the report's recommendations were carried out, it would mark a complete U-turn by the MoD regarding the St Athan facility.

By late August the *Barry and District News* reported that the WDA jhad completed a deal for 800 acres of development land for a future aviation business park, securing the jobs of the folk already employed by DARA. This seems to be one of those never ending stories of which the denouement will be doubtful until we get there.

**Harrier accident - St Athan** Not unrelated to some of the fears surrounding the DARA story above, a Harrier Jump Jet from an RAF base in Rutland made a forced landing at St Athan in late August. The aircraft struck a bird during a training flight and the pilot requested permission for an emergency touchdown. He was unable to prevent the aircraft overshooting the runway as arrester gear cannot be used on Harriers which are not designed to be stopped in this way. The Harrier tore through a fence and hedge onto the main road, narrowly missing houses and the adjacent railway line.

Those who have worried about additional noise and danger from the new DARA development have hardly been reassured by this incident.

**Memories** Over the years many items of interest to the Llancarfan area have appered in the "50" and "25 years ago" column of the *Barry and District News*.

In mid June it was recorded that, at the Penmark Parish Council meeting, 50 years ago, Sir Hugo Boothby deprecated the decision by the Education Committee that Rhoose School was to be renamed 'Rhws'.

The September 4 *Barry and District News* 50-year report included "Richard John, son of a Llancarfan farmer, assumed office as Clerk to the Glamorgan County Council at a salary of £4,100 max."

**Alfred Mills 92nd birthday** Alfred has often allowed us to publish his work in the Newsletter and is well known for his writings on local matters in the *GEM* and elsewhere. He was 92 at the end of June and was given a pilot training flight from Rhoose as a birthday present from the *GEM*. Many more of them Alfred!

## **Blankets from Llanfytlin** by John M Cann

Just when I thought it was at last safe to answer the door, there was Phil Watts again with a huge black bag that he could hardly lift. 'If this is more deeds, I'm in real trouble' I thought as I slammed the door. But Phil blocked my move with his recently repaired knee. And the bag wasn't full of old deeds, but pieces of old blankets. I hurried to sit Phil down and make a cup of sweet tea, but his explanation put my mind at rest.

These blankets were originally in Phil's mother's chest of drawers in Abernant, then in a barn, and more recently in Phil's garage. Phil's mother claimed that they had been made in the Llanfytlin Woollen Factory, which was, of course, part of the Little Mill holding in 1892 when Phil's mother Doris Jane Liscombe was born in Little Mill. By 1892 the Factory was uninhabited, and had doubtless stopped manufacturing, but it was still functioning in 1881 when Doris Jane's grandparents Robert and Sarah Liscombe were in Little Mill. So if these pieces of blanket were from the Factory, they would need to have been handed down from Sarah Liscombe's time, and made around the 1880s. In fact an article in the South Wales Echo in 1928 says that Jane, Phil's grandmother *"still has a quantity of the last pieces of flannel manufactured there over 50 years ago"*. But Phil and I had both forgotten this.

So with very little hope that they would prove to be old enough to be from the Factory, Phil and I went to St. Fagans museum, where Christine Stevens, an expert in textiles, had kindly agreed to look at Phil's odd assortment of pieces of material. After a great deal of inspection of all the various pieces, and rejection of a few that were obviously more recent, to our amazement and delight Christine Stevens came down heavily on the main pieces being old enough to have been made in the Factory. Their 'provenance' strongly suggests they were.

All the pieces were, she said, woven on a narrow loom to a 30" width. This is roughly the present width of the pieces, but two widths would originally have been joined together, and there was some small evidence left of this on some of the pieces. The ends had then been turned over and whipped on a whipping machine. As such machines did not come into use until the 1860s, the blankets could not be older than that. They had clearly been finished by nap raising, either by a machine or more likely by a simpler hand method. While such blankets were still being made in 1920, they were unlikely to be later than 1900. In fact Christine Stevens was confident that they looked earlier than that with 1870/80 being a very likely date.

None were in good enough condition to be worthy of storage by St. Fagans, and really only of local historical interest. Nonetheless, Phil Watts has quite a few pieces, which he would be pleased to give to anyone wishing to keep them for posterity.

Amongst these rather plain grey pieces of blanket there was also a patchwork 'quilt' which had a lining that is in all probability an old blanket of similar age to the pieces. More exciting was a squarish delicate piece of flannel which Phil & I had ignored. When she first pulled it out Christine Stevens like us assumed it was some form of runner or cloth. In fact when opened it turned out to be a baby's garment. A cloak like dress from a square piece of woven cloth with one corner lined and button holes all around the lined part which folds over to form the collar. All the detailed work, the button holes and the finishing of the edge of the square had been lovingly done by hand. This was of a similar age to the blankets, so the likelihood is that the work was done by Sarah Liscombe, and this baby's 'wrap' used by her children and grandchildren, certainly Phil's mother, and great grandchildren, maybe even Phil himself if only he could remember that far back.

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Phil and I thought that this was quite enough excitement for one day, but then it was revealed that there were two full patterned blankets from Llanfytthin in the *Museum of the Welsh Woollen Industry* at Dre-fach Felindre. St. Fagans had records of their donation on file, and were kind enough to copy both the information and black and white photocopies of the blanket patterns.

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The information on both of these blankets came from the donor Mrs A. M Bonny, of Rhoose. This is Muriel Dunn of Llanbethery, her sister Carol is still alive.

Both are Carthens (thick blankets used as bed covers). For one the wool had been spun in the woollen mill in Llancarfan and woven there on a 42" width loom. This had been used in the mid 19th century by Mr & Mrs John Smith (Muriel's great grandparents) and was made from wool from their own sheep at *New Wallace Farm*. It is a double woven Carthen (82" long by 84" wide) made in two pieces and seamed down the centre. It has a beige warp and navy weave, with a navy warp and weave in a strip down the centre. The overall pattern is of diamonds. The head and foot are rolled and hand stitched and the sides left plain.

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The other carthen was spun at the woollen mill in Llancarfan, but woven elsewhere on a 36" width loom. It belonged to Muriel's great uncle Hopkin Smith of *Sutton Mawr Farm*. It is a single woven carthen (82" long by 72" wide) again made in two pieces seamed down the centre. The warp is beige woven with dull green to form a pattern of concentric diamonds overall. The head and foot were rolled and hand stitched (so probably before 1860) and the sides left plain.

It is not possible to see these products of the Factory at present as the woollen museum at Dre-vach is being refurbished, but until it reopens you can always look at some rather less posh pieces of blanket, courtesy of Phil Watts.

**A footnote - village crafts** The editor recollected that, at one of the very first Craft Fairs, held by the Society in the Barn at Pancross, Barbara Milhuisen had exhibited a blanket which had been woven at the *Woollen Mill*. Hoping to obtain a photograph he wrote to Barbara, in France, and received the following reply.

*At the craft fair you mentioned we had an exhibition of craft-work from the village. The blanket you remember was not mine but Muriel Bonney's. She, as I am sure you will know, then gave all her blankets to the museum [St Fagan's].*

*My contribution to the fair was a skirt that I had made for my mother. I had sheared the sheep, spun the wool, dyed it, woven it and then made the skirt as part of training as an Occupational Therapist. The sheep was an English one!*

*I have two spinning wheels here, one Welsh and the other French, as well as an upright loom. I worked for a while at Glanrhyd Hospital, Bridgend, where they had a good collection of spinning wheels and every kind of loom imaginable. About eight years ago I discovered that all the weaving equipment was being sold-off so I rescued an upright loom and a few handlooms which I brought here. I need some motivation to get them in use again.*

*This is an interesting area although very few people seem to do any craft work except patchwork but there is an excellent textile museum at Lavlanet a few miles away.*

## **Baptisms at Little Mill** a further note by John M Cann

'In Search of Sephora Thomas' in Newsletter 118, speculates that the children of Thomas and Gwenllm David who were not baptised in St. Cadoc's, Llancarfan were possibly baptised at Zoar. I was wrong. Thanks to Brian James I have now inspected the 'Penmark & Aberthaw Calvinistic Methodist Society (Non-parochial) Register. This gives the baptisms of all the children of Thomas and Gwenllian who weren't baptised in Llancarfan.

In 1823 Cate, and in 1825 Rebecca, were both baptised in Aberthaw. Cate, of course, was eventually Catherine Norman the aunt with whom Sephora Thomas lived from around 1863 for ten years. However, in 1819 Jenkin (who followed his father as the miller) had been baptised at home in *Little Mill* by Richard Thomas of Lisworney.

Thomas and Gwenllian also had a daughter Mary again baptised at home by Richard Thomas in 1821. I know nothing more of her, I'm afraid.

By the way, thanks to Bob Saunders, we have yet another spelling of Sephora appearing in the 1871 census - Sephira Thomas is living with her Aunt Catherine Norman in Cowbridge Road, Canton. Can anyone find record of her marriage to Timothy Kemp? It was probably under yet another name!

## **Loose ends** by John Etherington

For years I have looked for a copy of *Glamorgan Reminiscences* by David Alexander (1915). Out of the blue, at a local library sale, there it was - a Stewart Williams facsimile for £0.50 - a bargain, methinks!

It contains a reference to "Will Miles and his hounds". Will was a foot huntsman of great repute and it was said that there were consequently few foxes in the Vale at that time. Will was commonly known as "Will-o-Grindyn". Now - does anyone know whether this is a rendition of *Greendown* and what the dates might have been? Early 1800s perhaps? The author, David Alexander was the son of John Alexander of *The Mount*, Penmark, and grandson of William who came to Penmark to manage the *Fonmon Estate* and racing stud. John was a contemporary of Iolo Morganwg and spent much time in his company when young.

## **Edward Williams and Middlehills**

by John M Cann

**Edward Williams of Middlehill** was referred to by Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams of Pennon) as 'the bard who taught me the elements of the bardic craft'. But Brian James, who knows more about him than most of us says he is a shadowy figure, an innkeeper who may indeed have been the Edward Williams who died in 1762 aged 55, but about whom very little else is known. It is even a problem to be certain which of the two Edward Williams, he or Iolo, wrote some of the works attributed to him. More interesting to us perhaps is with which of the Middlehills that were in Llancarfan parish should his name be linked.

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By a great piece of luck, it is possible to solve this last mystery. Of the two Middlehills one was in Lancarvan Hamlet across the road from the other in Walterston Hamlet and Manor. Both are shown in the 1840 tithe map, unnamed. The 1851 Census names them Middlehill Major (Lancarvan) and Middlehill Minor (Walterstone) They are clearly shown on the 1878 O/S map as Middlehill-fawr (Lancarvan) and Middlehill (Walterston) the site of which is now 'Old Middlehill'. But of which Middlehill was Edward Williams ?

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There is a Court Leet of 17th May 1759 for the Manors of Cosmestone, Lequith and Walterstone which includes :-

***"The Old presentment continued***

***What was not done -***

***We present a ditch between little flaxon and***

***Middlehill and the s<sup>d</sup> ditch***

***ought to be done by Edward William".***

This is obviously the ditch / waterway between the lands of Little Flaxland and Middlehill-fawr, not Middlehill Minor. In the same document the freeholders and resiants of Walterston are listed, there is no Edward William recorded, so he was of Middlehill in Lancarvan Hamlet. Whether he lived there is another matter. Clearly the Walterstone Court Leet considered him to be responsible for dealing with the ditch, so he was either the tenant that lived there, or more likely owned or held a long lease on the holding, but with a tenant in it.

**Middlehill, Lancarvan** is shown (unnamed) in the 1767 estate maps of Kemeys Tynte of Cefn Mably. It was still in the possession of Charles Kemeys Tynte in the Tithe apportionment of 1840. Kemeys Tynte may, however have bought the holding in 1762 when, Edward William died, as in the GRO there is a 1748 '*mortgage (by lease of 999 years) by Jane Williams, widow of Francis Williams, late of Wenvoe and Francis Williams her son to John Mayo of Cardiff, yeoman.*' This is of a '*Messuage, tenement and land called Middle Hill, in the occupation of Edward Mathews; in Llancarfan.*' This says '*Jane Williams is now seized as of freehold for and during her life & in one third part etc..... known as Middle Hill in the parish of Llancarvan as her third or Dower of the Estate*' So Kemeys Tynte must have bought it from the Williams family.

Howard Thomas is certain from the outline floor plan shown on the 1878 O/S map that this Middlehill was built around 1600, the likely ground plan is as shown. So it was doubtless the Middlehill referred to in the Parish Register in 1633 when '*Alice Alexander of Middlehill widow*' was buried in Lancarvan. It clearly still existed in 1851 when it was referred to as Middlehill Major in the Census, and in 1861 when there are two Middlehills in the Llancarfan Census, though with the same name. There are no entries by name for it in the 1871 or 1881 Censuses. Some time between 1878 and maybe 1960 Middlehill was levelled to the ground. However, its site is now grassless due to horses congregating by a gate. It is extremely stony and there is one dressed stone visible, and other places where brushing away the dry earth reveals strong suggestions of pieces of wall line. The footpath down to Garnllwyd shown on the 1878 O/S still exists, and where it goes into Garnllwyd woods there is evidence of a once decent sized roadway through the woods towards Garnllwyd.

**Middlehill, Walterston** is much more recent, as it being called Minor suggests. The size and shape of the original house are shown on the 1842 Estate Maps of William Jenkins of Walterstone, and the 1878 O/S map. From these Howard Thomas says that it was a standard cottage built between 1760 & 1820. A description is given in a sales brochure of 1912. '*The THATCHED COTTAGE contains:- Two Kitchens, Back Kitchen and Two Bedrooms, and there is also a Two-Stall Stable, Tool House and Garden*' This ties in well with the usual design, as shown. The 'bedrooms' were, fairly certainly, above the kitchens, possibly with small windows under the thatch. But they would have been more like lofts. The stable was doubtless the extension on the west end shown on the 1917 O/S map, and the back kitchen a southwards extension on the East end, shown in the 1972 O/S map (though strangely not on the 1917). Graham Jenkins visited George and Agnes Gibbons in Middlehill bungalow, and never knew it thatched. So it was converted to a red zinc roofed bungalow before 1940. Graham and David Hall are certain that all the bungalow was single storey. One assumes that putting zinc roofing would have made any upper 'loft' bedrooms even more uninhabitable, and they were probably sealed off when the asbestos or plywood ceilings were put in. Only the extension to the west (the two stall stable) appears to have been left and used as a small cowshed. The 'back kitchen' became the main kitchen and dining area, with a lower roof line than the rest of the bungalow. Here an east door was the normally used entrance and led to the main living room (previously the east Kitchen).



The 'real' but seldom used front door onto the road opened into an internal lobby leading on the east to the living room and kitchen, and westward to two ground floor bedrooms.

When David Hall demolished it in the 1970s the zinc sheeting covered the whole of the building, including the cow-shed and the thatch was still under it. He remembers that there were two small bedrooms and a bathroom. All the rooms had been created using stud partition walling, doubtless done when the bathroom was installed, probably in the 1950s. The site and the cottage were rather wet and a concrete hard standing was poured on top of the rubble, later to form the base of a barn and now the Agricultural Engineering workshop and offices of David Evans, which he has named 'Old Middlehill'.

But, never mind, it wasn't Old Middle Hill' that Edward Williams was of, it was the one across the road.

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### **Hatches, matches, dispatches -Llancarfan - July 2003.**

Happiness and sadness is reflected in the following announcements.

To Ray and Blair Evans the birth of a grand-daughter, to Melanie a daughter, and to Dilys Evans, a great grand-daughter. Dilys has been 'Granny Evans' for a long time in Llancarfan, an extended title is sure to be borne with a lot of happiness.

The wedding of Keith Thomas and Melinda Vaughan took place on Saturday July 5<sup>th</sup> in St. Cadoc's Church. The village has looked forward to this day for a long time. The weather was fine and the Rev. Malcolm Davies conducted the service - conditions that usually go together! We wish the Bride and Groom continued health and happiness in Llancarfan for many years to come.

Sadness is reflected in the news of the death of Lillian Parsons (Lil) who was part of the *Fox and Hounds* with Trixie Phillips for many years. She will be remembered for her friendly homely touches associated with the *Fox and Hounds*: who could forget, 'How are you today love'? Part of the eulogy which was given at her funeral is reproduced below. PW

### **Funeral Eulogy - Lillian Parsons (more often called Lil)**

Lillian was born in Dinas, Rhondda 94 years ago and died 9<sup>th</sup> June 2003 in Swansea.

She left school at 13 to run the family home and attend to her three brothers and ailing mother. Her father, at this time was the sexton of Trealaw cemetery. During her years there, she cleaned the offices and church, but all her wages were put into the family "kitty".

Lil told many a tale of exploits about living in a cemetery, including the odd accident. Throwing cold water over a brother bathing in the family tin bath by the fire resulted in a mad chase through the cemetery and sadly resulted in a broken flower vase on a grave. Her father was given the excuse of frost damage, which must have been difficult to accept in the summer time! Lillian learned at a young age to talk her way out-of tricky situations.

Covering for her sister's illness, who was in service, Lil, after cleaning the black-leaded grate, mistook the soup stock bowl for soapy-water and scrubbed her hands in the bowl. To her horror it was used in the soup and served to the gentry upstairs. As no one witnessed the event she kept her counsel and to the best of her knowledge there were no serious casualties.

She married Gilbert, which was a very happy marriage, but sadly he developed Alzheimers disease at 63 years of age and she nursed him for 13 years,.

During her early married life she assisted the local midwife in home deliveries, and actually brought her niece Bronwen into the world, because the midwife was delayed. Another voluntary activity was to "lay out" the bodies after death. The front parlours were draped in white sheets to hide pictures and battered wallpaper. These sheets were kept in a large trunk, along with candlesticks and a bible at her home.

Because of Gordon's health problems the family moved to Barry in the mid 1950s, and became members of All Saints Church.

To enable her neighbour to visit her newly born grandchild, Lil was asked to cover her job at the *Fox and Hounds* pub, in Llancafarn for a couple of weeks. At 56 years of age she received her first pay packet. The cover for her neighbour actually lasted almost 30 years! The only reason it ended at the age of 86 is that her son had to insist on her retirement due to a severe arthritic hip, which resulted in an immediate hip replacement. Lil was not too impressed by, her son's actions!!

Waking from her operation, she was greeted by the curate of All Saints. She focused in on his clerical collar and asked, "have I passed over?".

Lil was not a natural drinker, but during the tug of war in Llancafarn on one particular Boxing Day she was the chief taster for the hot punch and was too enthusiastic in getting the taste right. She was taken home a little worse for wear - a one-off condition, which she was never allowed to forget!

Her life in Treallaw cemetery confused nursing staff last year when she was in hospital. The staff thought, she was depressed, with her chatter about, the cemetery. Fortunately the family was able to explain her background!

Lil gave her life to caring for others, nursing terminally ill patients in their, homes and being an adopted mother and confidant to family friends and neighbours.

She played a significant part in caring for evacuees, during the Second World War. Lil told a tale of having a sick husband at home, recovering from an operation, a frail son at that time, and an elderly stroke gentleman living with her, for whom she was caring, when a call came from the local school that she was expected to take a child evacuee and should collect him forthwith. Quite determined in her mind to explain to the authorities that because of her circumstances she was unable to take an evacuee, she set off hand on hips, for the school. When she arrived, the last little boy was standing alone and as she entered the school hall he picked up his little case and walked towards her. She put her arm around him and said, "come on sweetheart". Her so-called protest had melted away and she had yet another addition to the family. Sometime later his sister, who was unhappy in her temporary home, joined the Parsons household.

She loved her immediate family and was very proud of her grand children's achievements. Angela provided a home for her grandmother, for her latter years in Swansea. With a lot of support from family and carers, Lil enjoyed her life as an adopted "Swansea Jack". This also enabled. Christopher to spend more time with his Gran. As one of her carer's Annice said, "she was a little gem"

### **Llancafarn Wesleyan chapel - some notes** by the Rev. David M. Walker

The small amount of information I have about Llancafarn is rather confusing.

<p>During some research into the Chapels of Llancafarn Graham Jenkins corresponded with the Rev. Walker, the Minister of Worsley Road Methodist Chapel, Manchester. David had spent some in the 1990s researching Welsh Methodism and provided the following information which is presented here in the hope that others may respond to some of the points it contains.</p>
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David Young's "Origin and History of Methodism in Wales" (1893) states that the chapel was built in 1814. William Griffiths was a local preacher who obviously played a leading role in the chapel. His name crops up in a number of places. Young also mentions the Lougher family as being of some significance at Llancarfan.

The chapel was part of the Cardiff Circuit. At first the English and Welsh speaking chapels were all in the same Circuit and Young says that Llancarfan was used by "English and Welsh Wesleyans worshipping in one chapel". However, this cannot have been the case for long as the English- and Welsh-speaking work in South Wales was divided in 1817. A Second South Wales District was created, being the Welsh-speaking churches. Llancarfan was included in this District and in 1847 became part of a newly formed Cowbridge Circuit. (This information is from A.H. Williams, *Welsh Wesleyan Methodism 1800 - 1858*). In 1858 the Cowbridge Circuit consisted of 8 Societies and had a total of 121 members.

A Welsh book, whose title escapes me at the moment, but was written in more recent years, \* has an interesting appendix listing all the Welsh Wesleyan chapels with their dates. This lists the first Llancarfan chapel as 1814 with a second chapel (same site) as circa 1859, closed in 1952.

How this tallies with the 1851 census I do not know. The entry there is: *Ebenezer*, Llancarvan Village. Wesleyan. Erected 1835. Space: free 110; standing 300. Present: morn.56; aft.75; even. 94. Average (6 months): morn 60, 'total'[?scholars] 60; even. 80. William Griffiths Jnr. Deacon.

I can tell you that in the Statistical Returns as at 1<sup>st</sup> July 1940, Llancarfan is listed under the Welsh speaking South Wales District as part of the Cardiff Circuit.

\* The only Welsh book known to the editor is *Capeli Cymru*, (1980) by Penri Jones, Y Lolfa Press. I have not seen this - my reference was from Anthony Jones' splendid *Welsh Chapels* (Sutton, 1996 - first published by National Museum of Wales 1984).