

# LLANCFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 144

DECEMBER 2010



"Life is just one damn thing  
after another"  
*Elbert Hubbard*  
(1856-1915)

"It's a dog's life"  
*Ben (the Kennel) Millard*  
(2010)

**AND A HAPPY  
CHRISTMAS TO ALL  
OUR READERS!**

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## EDITORIAL

We get the impression that the production of this Christmas edition has been taken over by the dogs of the village. Yes friends – Santa Paws is coming to town. You will therefore find a more canine tendency in the content of this issue, giving (say the dogs) due recognition to the village's animal population.

However, not even Jake and Ben can match the charisma of the dragon whose full facial features have appeared – for the first time in 460 years it seems – on the south wall of our church. Had we known this ancient monster lay there to be uncovered, which of us would have slept easily at nights? We consider this on the following pages, and in our colourful centre-spread.

It only remains for us to wish us all, hounds and humans (and even dragons) alike, a fulfilling Christmas, and a Happy New Year.



## THE PAINTINGS THE REFORMERS DIDN'T WANT US TO SEE!

A sort of mental howl-round happens when you find yourself telling the same story time and again. You get to wondering 'Did I say that before?' And such has been the publicity generated by the wall-painting revelations in our own St. Cadoc's church, that when it comes to telling the truth for posterity in the Llancarfan Society Newsletter, you suspect your readers have heard the echo too.

However, given that the Conservation Appeal has now been launched (a copy of the leaflet is enclosed herewith), we cannot moan about the reverberations of publicity. Both the ITV and the BBC have given us very generous coverage, as have *The Western Mail* and *The Gem*. All of which serves to underline the fact that 'The Paintings The Reformers Didn't Want Us To See!' are indeed quite remarkable survivals of 15<sup>th</sup> century folk art. Furthermore, and to our astonishment, they continue to appear, thanks to the painstaking conservation work on St. Cadoc's south wall.

For those of us close to the project, it was tantalising, waiting for the scaffolding to come down on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> of November. When it did disappear, glimpses and fragments, hidden for so long behind Mrs. Fell's borrowed curtains, suddenly resolved into the most remarkable pictures.

If you haven't yet seen the latest rescued expanses of mediaeval art, do take the earliest opportunity to be amazed. Only George still hides behind his twenty-one layers of lime-wash – not out of fear of the dragon, but because he could still drop off the wall without painstaking intervention by the curators.

However, Jane Rutherford and Ann Ballantyne have rewarded us now with a full face of the dragon (you can almost smell his or her breath!) and the head of George's horse. These portraits are as finely drawn as any Posy Simonds' cartoon (the artist behind *Tamara Drew?*). Yes, it's true that your Italians had been re-born into church-enriching 'Renaissance' art well before the 1480s (probably the date of our paintings). But that's not what our itinerant artist was about. Think (if you wish) of Giles, not Giotto!

Then, when you've feasted your eyes on the draconian detail, look up at the anguished princess & lamb, king & queen in their newly-revealed castle. Here our artist *has* tried a gesture towards new-fangled perspective in his massive fortress walls. And he was unable to resist the delicious inclusion of a vassal, rubber-necking from a small window, probably thinking 'I knew it was time for the princess's lunch, but didn't know she was on the menu.'

Below this fortress, seemingly painted by ‘another hand’, the man formerly distinguished by his Monmouth cap (Llancarfan’s very own Compo) proves to be a mediaeval gallant. Not that his gallantry is any defence against the cadaver who is to be seen leading him off on a Dance of Death towards purgatory and ultimate judgement. Our churches contain many awful warnings about our mortality – but the zombies in *Shaun of The Dead* have found a special ancestor here. Look at the worms crawling in his bones, and the drifting shroud that barely enfolds him. This picture hoped to bludgeon us into being good while we could, quite as powerfully as any hell-fire preacher!



Relaxing as it is to joke about these remarkable survivals, let’s not forget the facts (which you can find documented in our on-going interpretation in the church). There is to our knowledge *only one other such* ‘Death & The Gallant’ in Britain – later than ours, in Newark, Nottinghamshire. Another similar duo in Salisbury cathedral was sketched by Victorian antiquarians (as shown here), and then puritanically painted out. And the Salisbury ‘Death’ was almost polite by comparison to our own!

Have a thought, too, about the scale of the paintings. Only two other wall-painted George & Dragons have been revealed in Wales. One has been found in lovely Llangattock Lingoed church, where George is defined mainly by his ‘negative’ outline. The other remains in fragmentary hints in neighbouring Llanmaes. But (not to count our Georges before they’re hatched), there is surely nothing quite like St. Cadoc, Llancarfan’s astonishing survival.

At the revelatory launch evening on the 29<sup>th</sup> (shortly after a visit by some 30 students, accompanied by our adviser Maddy Grey from the University of Wales), local councilors, AM representatives, bountiful HLF, Cadw and other benefactors, were invited to stand back in amazement. They did just that!



Back in the late 1540s, young Edward VI (or his dubious protectors) had wished that our rich heritage should be obliterated so that there was ‘no memory of the same’. And it has taken these full 460 years for us to regain those cherished relics of a wonderful art, created from his kitbag of ochre, charcoal and stencils by a forgotten travelling maestro!

## JAKE'S PROGRESS

*If you haven't met Jake, Rachel Evans' dog, then which trees have you been sniffing? Mike Crosta celebrates Jake in this Canine Christmas Special!*

You have to appreciate how Jake arrived in the village, and since then, his transformation. Timid and fearful, his tail firmly between his legs, he came from unhappy circumstances to a dog's paradise. Soon, well trained and obedient, he became a different dog. Or did he? Jan and I suspect he doesn't think he's really a dog, but a very small human.

For instance, he came to believe he was an important cog in the wheel of horse-care. It was fascinating, the speed with which he and the horses raced around the field, Jake inches in front of the pounding hooves. Nothing could twist or weave faster than Jake, sheer enjoyment on the faces of dog and horses as they relished the chase.

When he remembers to be a dog he's the friendliest of neighbours. He visits regularly to be fussed over, or to roll on the lawn and have his tummy rubbed. He knows the sound of Jan's car, will race to our drive, tail wagging furiously, be quite bemused if somebody else gets out, and will then run to check the other door in consternation.

At times he will appear noiselessly when Jan is sunbathing, the first sign of his presence being a wet nose in her ear! *[I must try that: Ed.]* Then, in the black of night, it's quite disconcerting to park the car and find a black-as-night dog checking to see if we're alright. It's not that we often feed him either. Though he must have a secret hoard of goodies somewhere because, if we *do* give him a treat, he's off home immediately to stash away a ball or a bone.

What unhappiness he has known in life we don't know. However once, when the guns were blazing at the pheasant shoot, he just crouched, shivering, against a corner of the house until I carried him back home.



Anyway, in case you still think Jake is just a dog, look at these. On the left is Jake's present incarnation. On the right is Anubis, the Egyptian God. Don't tell me you can't see a distinct resemblance!



## WHAT'S OCCURIN'? OR MAYBE EVEN OCCUR'D!

*As Christmastide is once more upon us, your usual editors are delighted to have yet another authoritative submission from our distinguished correspondent, Ben Millard, of the Kennel, the Fox & Hounds.*

### **BEN'S TAIL 2010**

Well here I am again, reporting back on another year in Llancarfan. It's not been so easy these last few months to keep up to date with Village events, as I have been on what I call "garden leave". With all the changes taking place at the *Fox & Hounds* (of which rather more later) I have been relieved of my sentry duties in the car park and sent over the wall into the garden. (John, with his Raymond Blanc chef's hat on, calls it his 'vegetable and herb cultivation facility'!)

I, therefore, must now rely more on the barked messages of the neighbourhood dogs (my Rovering reporters) to keep me informed. I will therefore apologise in advance for any "secrets" they may have withheld.

So to begin at the beginning - the year started with one of the coldest Januarys in many a year, followed by a warm Spring, a hot Summer and a wet, but beautiful, Autumn.

If there is one word to sum up life in the village this year – it must be "scaffolding". I cannot recall a time when so many people had extensions built, chimneys fixed, and old houses made new. And then there was the Community Hall extension, which some hoped might be ready for the Village Show, but now they trust will be ready for the official opening next Easter.

Vying for space to block the road and the churchyard was the latest phase of structural preservation and restoration work within the church. I am told that there is now a magnificent ancient picture on one of the church walls of St. George and the Dragon. The other one of a load of bones sounds much more interesting to me!

And then there was the refurbishment of the *Fox & Hounds* - the new restaurant at the front, the snug and the bar at the back, and St. Pancras

station where my kennel used to be. I like it, John and Sue like it, most locals and visitors say they like it too, so it has probably been a good idea.

Another aspect of village life this year has been a spate of what the youngsters call “head banging”. Two unfortunate local residents managed to end up in hospital as a result of this new trend, but I am pleased to report that Trevor and Tom are now back to their old selves.

Sadly this year has been marked with too many deaths of village folk, old and young. The village has been greatly saddened to think of those who have passed on, so I will say no more other than that they will all be missed and will never be forgotten.

There have been five baptisms in the church this year and fifteen candidates for confirmation. Darren, the chef at the *Fox*, married Nicky, Howard Kynaston and Amanda get married in December, and there have been lots of “big” birthdays, especially for 70-year-olds. And the gongs!!!! Three villagers were awarded well-deserved Honours by the Queen in 2010.

The Village Show was the best ever, the Cowbridge Male Voice Choir filled the church for a wonderful musical evening in July, the various societies have been very active – and the cricket team had an especially good season. I hear that that the Whist club had their best-attended year ever, and the Flower Arranging classes have blossomed.

This year the School welcomed a new Head, Mrs. Sally Brereton, who has settled in very well, I’m told. Evan Williams, our local racehorse trainer, has had a most successful year marked by numerous top-class winners, with *State of Play* coming third in the Grand National. But on the other paw, the horses owned by the *Fox and Hounds Racing Syndicate*, trained by Evan, have been less successful. I was looking forward to re-acquainting myself with them over a tin of “Pal” when, as luck would have it, one of them won a race in November!!

Well that’s me pawing for another year. See what I did there? Though at the time of writing I still have the Boxing day Tug of War and Duck Egg Race to look forward to on Monday December 27<sup>th</sup>, and, of course, Christmas itself.

Yes - this dog is definitely one for Christmas - and all donations will of course be gratefully received!!



PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PICTURES  
ON THE NEXT PAGE  
RUN ACROSS THE CENTRE SPREAD  
OF THE PRINTED VERSION  
OF THE NEWSLETTER





CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP LEFT :  
 ROYALS IN THEIR CASTLE, DRAGON  
 & HORSE, SNOW & SCAFFOLD, VEN.  
 PEGGY BIDS WELCOME, THE DRAGON  
 TURNED, & DEATH & THE GALLANT



29 NOV 2010



## WHAT'S OCCURIN'? OR MAYBE EVEN OCCUR'D!

### CHURCH NEWS

The services for December are:-

- 5<sup>th</sup> December – Family Service and Refreshments at 11.00am
- 15<sup>th</sup> December – Christingle Service for the School pupils at 10.30am
- 17<sup>th</sup> December – Study Group in the Rectory at 7.00pm
- 19<sup>th</sup> December – Nine Lessons and Carols Service at 7.00pm
- 24<sup>th</sup> December – Crib Service and Christingle at 2.30pm
- 24<sup>th</sup> December – Midnight Mass at 11.30pm
- 25<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas Family Eucharist at 11.00am
- 26<sup>th</sup> December – St. Stephen's Day Sunday Service at 11.00am



Those who attended the Open Evening on November 29<sup>th</sup> will appreciate the wonders that are being restored in the church, and the funds that still need to be found.

The PCC are inviting people to pledge a monthly sum over the next three years to contribute towards this very worthwhile project. The appropriate forms can be obtained from the church, and members of the PCC.

### LLANCARFAN SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

On 25 September [writes Sue Taylor] Society Members filled every available table in the *Fox & Hounds* Restaurant, to celebrate the 23rd. Annual Dinner. As usual members came from far and near to attend. And as always the ever-loyal Barbara Milhuisen, who used to live in *Ty Uchaf* Cottage, came from her home in France.

Over the years we have been to many different venues, but everyone agreed it is always best at home in 'The Fox', where we were made most welcome. We felt it particularly this year where the new restaurant format enabled a more interactive atmosphere.

The dinner is always informal, and after grace by the Venerable Peggy Jackson, Chairman Mike Crosta welcomed everyone and expressed our thanks to Gwyneth Plows for once again taking on her annual triumph of organising the event. This is no mean feat, given that members join us from so many different localities.

## **DUCK EGG RACE & TUG OF WAR**

The annual Duck Egg Race will take place on Monday December 27<sup>th</sup> around noon after the Tug of War across the ford.

Entries for the Duck Egg Race at £1 each can be obtained at the *Fox & Hounds*, from members of the PCC, and the Llancarfan Society Committee. Entrants for the Tugs of War, men, women, and children, are always welcome.

## **COMMUNITY BUS**

Societies and groups will be interested to know that there is now a Community Bus for hire (with driver supplied) in the Vale. The bus is a 13 seater and can be hired at £25 for a half day and £50 for a full day. The first 40 miles of travel are included in these hire charges. After that the charge is a further 40p per mile. Parking and toll charges are extra.

Obviously this service will be much in demand so we suspect you would need to book early. Contact Gwyneth Plows on 01446 713533 for more details.

## **ROYAL WEDDING**

Just to give you early notice, a Village Street Party is being planned for April 29<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the Royal Wedding. It is hoped that everyone in the village will join in (unless you have been invited to the wedding itself!!) what should be a fantastic occasion.

Details need to be finalised, licenses and permissions obtained, so it will be the New Year before further information will be available. In the meantime put the date in your diaries, once you get them.

## **LLANCARFAN TUESDAY CLUB**

The December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting is at 7.45pm, with the promise of Christmas Party Fun and "Nibbles". For the January 18<sup>th</sup> session, 2011, there is NO evening Meeting. Clubsters will be "Lunching out", says *Audrey Baldwin*, with the venue to be announced.



## **SOPHIE HAS SUNG**

As we go to press we learn that 13-year-old Sophie Thomas of Pembroke House was a finalist in the Music in the Vale (Intermediate Singing Competition) at the end of November. Congratulations, Sophie!

## A SOWER WENT FORTH

Sara Tickner of Cadoc Cottage has written in to sow the seeds of a great idea. Please let us know what you think, and perhaps the Llancarfan Society can help to blow on the dandelion clock (if you see what we mean) and help to make things happen. Sara writes:



I wondered whether there would be any interest in the community in doing a seed swap? This is where people turn up with packs of seed that they have saved themselves from their gardens (generally no commercial seeds) and swap them 1-for-1 for other gardeners' excess.

The idea occurred to me as I collected far more seeds than I could possibly sow myself again from some of the poppies, marigolds, nasturtiums, pansies and so on in our garden this summer/autumn. We didn't save any of our vegetable seeds, but we could rescue some from squashes we've yet to eat!

Do any other gardeners have the same issue with excess seedlings? If we held an event in February or March, when some people may already have started their seeds growing, it shouldn't require much (!) work. On the day we'd only need a few tables to display donated excess seed packets. Anyone approaching a table could choose a pack of seeds in exchange for dropping one of their own. Some may simply wish to donate their seeds!

We might even persuade a local nursery to donate some of *their* collected seeds in exchange for publicity - or perhaps let them bring a stand of plants to sell? And it would have the advantage of helping people to grow plants that flourish in local conditions. What do you think?

PS Sara writes that she has some spring cabbage seedlings looking for a good home. And we're sure one of your editors can find a fine crop of nettles and wild garlic corms, going very cheap!



## THE CONFLAGRATORY CASE OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLES



Last year when Christmas approached, I (*Ian Fell*) shared a true but spooky little tale about a voice-text on my mobile phone from ‘Hangman’s Field’. Like most ghosts of my acquaintance, it wasn’t one. Somehow however a Christmas fireside *needs* the telling of ghost tales, and at such times I will happily join the Red Queen in believing ‘as many as six impossible things before breakfast.’

One such shiversome theme, enthusiastically breathed on by Charles Dickens, Poet Laureate of Christmas Tales, was of people bursting into flames at the slightest provocation. You may recall for instance the volatile Mr. Krook in *Bleak House*. He was the hoarder of papers that could reveal Lady Dedlock’s skeleton in the cupboard. As a punishment for being nasty to Gillian Anderson, Krook quite rightly burst into flames with not a Swan Vesta in sight.

As it happened, some readers hauled Dickens over the coals for treating his character to a roasting. He was roundly accused of encouraging ‘uneducated superstition’, but later he claimed to have researched personally some thirty cases of ‘spontaneous human combustion’.

I make no such investigative claims. I merely relate here some hot gossip fanned when chatting over dinner during the *Mystery Trip* outing. Here our discussion concluded that, if such a phenomenon exists, ‘men of the cloth’ are particularly prone to fiery outbursts.



My first evidence for this was gathered at a reception, which followed the Jewish wedding of a good friend’s son. It was a splendid affair of great conviviality, during which just occasionally the dining would erupt, like a mini-belch of Vesuvius, into dancing.

I recall that, while the rabbi was still in attendance, it was only the men who danced. And –the point of this tale – so did the rabbi. The dancing took place even between the dining courses, such jolly cavorting clearly promising a digestive benefit.

But what we hadn’t anticipated was that, after he’d whirled round the room with the bridegroom, the rabbi’s hat would burst into flames.

It was one of those black, wide-brimmed hats, with some sort of wide ‘moat’ built into the brim. The crown, it gradually dawned on us, had been fortified against all invaders. It must have been, for the rabbi had been able to fill the moat with alcohol, set fire to it, and revolve among us with his head wreathed in a halo of fire. Whether it was an ancient Jewish tradition I know not, but this hot-headed tribute to the newly-weds welded a successful marriage!



The second incident though *did* have roots in a time-honoured local tradition. Christmas. It involved our fondly-remembered (and still regularly-welcomed) vicar called Malcolm. As his valiant organist (not in Llancafarn but up at Llantrithyd) reminded us over supper, this was *The Conflagatory Case of the Christmas Candles*.

As locals know well, being without electrical power, Christmas at Llantrithyd church is charming. The place is decked with nature’s symbolic greenery, and lit only by paraffin lamps and flickering candle-flames. The congregation feels borne into Dickens – and on this occasion, Malcolm was spreading good cheer and shedding good tears in his candle-lit pulpit as bountifully as if he sprang from the very pen that made Pickwick and the Cheerybles.

Then Josephine the organist started to cough politely. ‘Malcolm?’ But Malcolm was in full Christmas flow. ‘Malcolm!’ The joy continued. ‘MALCOLM! Sorry but – you’re on fire, Malcolm!’

Malcolm now swears that his first reply to Josephine was ‘Oh no I’m not!’ – to which his congregation responded, in best pantomime tradition, ‘Oh yes you are!’ And he certainly was. The sleeve of his surplice had drifted into the pulpit candles, and its flames were threatening to illuminate his sermon with a decidedly earthly light.

Persuaded of his fate, with one bound Malcolm manfully strangled the sleeve & beat out his personal yule-fire. It was all over in seconds. Josephine the organist even managed to resist setting this Dickensian adventure to any suitably dramatic chords.

Hereafter though they say there’ve been no more candles ringed around the Llantrithyd pulpit. There is no further encouragement for pyrotechnical pastors (or roasting rabbis) to turn themselves into distressingly dramatic Ghosts of Christmas Present.

That said - particularly if you’re a vicar – please do have a careful Christmas!

## 1975 - WHEN LLANCARFAN SCHOOL WENT TO LONDON



Clearing out some drawers, Sue Evans found this photo, marking the time when Mr. Evans, then head of Llanccarfán School, organised a trip to London.

Mr Evans (no relation to Sue) was probably worried whether his innocent children would adapt with resilience to the big city, and to the cultural experiences he had lined up for them. He need not have bothered. Within a short time of booking into their hotel, says Sue, the kids found out that if you lifted the bedside phone and asked for – well, anything – a kindly person would deliver it. Furthermore, each room had a fine stash of beverages, apparently for unlimited consumption by the occupant. Whoopee.

Worse still, as the group descended on Madame Tussaud's, Mr. Evans found his 19 pupils had become 18. Thea Evans (Sue's daughter) had vanished. She was nowhere to be found amongst the effigies of Victoria, Albert, John, Paul, George or Ringo. And by the time she was located, Mr. Evans had visibly aged. It is a matter of record that Llanccarfán Primary never strayed far from the Vale for a long time afterwards. Mr Evans must have been fearful even to organise a nature ramble without equipping this lot as a chain gang!

We know some of the class names : let us know if any are familiar to you!

## Llancarfan PS school page



Christmas Concert!  
Christmas concerts are being held at Llancarfan P S, on Tuesday the 7th and Wednesday 8th. There are still tickets available from Mrs Jones, the administrator. The Infant concert is called "Born in a Barn" and the Junior "The Pied Piper". We hope lots of people will come!!!

Lacrosse  
Y6 enjoyed 4 lessons of lacrosse with Tom from the Penarth lacrosse team. He taught us how to pass, catch and score. Once we had learned all the basic skills, eventually, we played a match. We hope to set up a lacrosse club in the new year and enter a couple of tournaments



Drumming at school  
Class 4 recently had six sessions with Adrian Wiggins to learn Samba reggae drumming. They did a class assembly and showed us their samba reggae drumming talents.



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