

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 145

MARCH 2011



A TRIO OF TWINS

*There was a ray of sunshine in this
winter of much sadness.*

*Born to Lucy & Tim Squire of
Llanbethery, twins Sophia &
Oscar. And to Dr. Helen Isom
(formerly Burrows) & her husband
Paul, twin boys, Theodore James
& Jeremy Peter. Not to mention
the 4-year-olds (see within).*

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SEEDY SATURDAY
A COMMUNITY SEED SWAP
VILLAGE HALL : APRIL 2nd : 10 `til 12.
Please see the back page for details.

EDITORIAL

For some time we had been planning to interview Tony Thomas, one of our best-known neighbours. Then the biogas issue blew up, so to speak. However, we are of the opinion that we must never confuse our respect for fellow villagers with the issues with which they are occasionally associated. So this newsletter contains both our mini-biography of Tony, and also, on pages 14 & 15, a brief report on aspects of the 9 March presentation & discussion about the possible biogas scheme.

***Rhodi Grey* meets TONY THOMAS**

“Not such a bad b.....r after all!”

Tony Thomas is 76 years old. Together with his son Edward, he has one of the largest mixed farmlands in Wales, with 2650 acres, of which 1200 acres are wheat – also making them one of the largest wheat farmers in the Principality. They have a herd of 800 cows; Tony has been Chairman and President of the County Land Owners’ Association for Glamorgan and Monmouth; has been Chairman of the Vale Show; is still President of the All Wales Ploughing Association, and is an active member of the Community Council. Yet, when asked, his proudest achievement in life is his close-knit family - Joan, the farmer’s daughter from Kenfig, whom he met at a New Year’s Eve Dance in Bridgend, and married in 1956; his son Edward, his daughters Jane, Wendy & Nicola, and his eleven grandchildren.

Tony’s life story is a fascinating tale with which some of you will be familiar, but I, as a relative new-comer, a townie who did not really understand country life with all its hardships and joys, was curious to discover more about a man who is held in respect and affection by many, and is an enigma to others.

So where to start?

He was born on November 3rd 1934 in Wick, into generations of farmers. His grandfather rented a 260-acre farm there and gradually built it up through hard work (“hard work and hard men” are phrases often used by Tony when talking about his fore-bears).

His grandfather had six sons and, in almost a biblical way, set each of them up with the finances to go off into the world and make their own way. Tony’s father married and rented a 50-acre farm in Wick, before renting the tenancy of Pancross, a 250-acre farm, where he moved to with his wife, four-month old Tony, and his older brother, in March 1935.

His memories of those early years were of - no running water, no electricity and no telephones. There were 26 houses in the village of Llancarfan, and only the blacksmith and the schoolmaster had cars. The villagers were country people who kept chickens, pigs and some had cows. Farming in those days was very different too –now after harvesting a combine can thresh in one hour what took, weather permitting, five days for up to ten men! It was hard (that word again) physical work with all of the family helping.

Tony started at Llancarfan School on September 4th 1939 and was one of the fifty-one pupils who shared the war-time experiences that have been covered

in earlier issues of the Newsletter. After leaving Llancafarn School, and after a short period at Barry County School, he went to Dauntseys – a public school in Wiltshire - which had its own farm. There, as Tony relates it, he became the only person ever to gain a distinction in the Cambridge School Certificate Examination in Agriculture. He knows this to be true because it was the only school that did it, they only did it for three years, and he was the only one to gain the distinction!

[While we talk of education, I digress for a moment. I have referred to farming being in Tony's blood, but not so his older brother, Keith, who would have been expected to take over the farming responsibilities. Tony & Keith's mother was brought up in Llanbradach, and after gaining an Honours degree in English at Cardiff University, she became headmistress of the school in Marcross, where at a village dance she met Tony's father. So with the other genes in his blood, Tony's brother left the farm to study at Baliol College Oxford, then went on to become a Fellow of All Souls and President of Corpus Christie College, for which he received his knighthood.]



Tony, meanwhile, left school at fifteen and returned to the farm, which by now was growing its dairy side, having started, before the war, selling milk to a dairy in Barry and cream in Bridgend market. His mother used to rear and send chickens to her aunts in Scotland at Christmas. Sadly in 1950 Tony's eight-year-old sister died and his grief-stricken mother was not able to care for the chickens that year. Tony took over,

buying day-old chicks, brooders & feed. He built the business up, selling table poultry and eggs, then hatching eggs and then point of lay pullets, so that by the middle 60's when the cow numbers increased and the chicken shed space was needed, he was the largest poultry farmer in Glamorgan.

As mentioned earlier, Tony and Joan were married in 1956 and set up home in the cottage at Pancross. Gradually and sometimes reluctantly, Tony's father acquired more land; Walterstone Fawr in 1957, Cliff in 1962, and Middlecross in 1964. Tony was increasingly taking over the day to day running of the business and his name was added to that of his father's in the

Tenancy Agreement when he was 21. In 1961, aged 26, he became a partner in the then 640-acre operation.

In 1964 his parents moved, enabling Tony and his family to move into the Pancross farmhouse. In 1970 they obtained the Tenancy of Home Farm at Sully and in 1972 Tony bought Walterston Fach. In 1975 he bought the freehold of Pancross from the Church in Wales, being the only tenant in Wales to buy land at that time. Having built up a herd of champion breeding stock over the years, they used the opportunity to sell off prize cattle from time to time to fund the business growth, though making sure they kept the best to re-establish and grow their own herd.

Tony's best buy, he believes, was the one he had to be most patient to achieve – the farm at Boverton Place. He rented 200 acres there in 1961, but had to wait until 2001 to buy the whole 700 acres from the Duchy of Cornwall. This was owned by the Prince of Wales from whom, Tony is proud to say, he has invitations to Highgrove, and Christmas cards from Charles and Camilla.



Joan and Tony Thomas

Has he made mistakes? Of course he has – anybody who grows a successful business makes mistakes along the way. He concedes that the flood-washing system for the new dairy built in 2004 led to an 'unfortunate situation', with the chemical reaction causing an unforeseen smell to drift down over part of the village. The system has now been abandoned.

But in farming you have to move with the times. The economics of farming, increasingly reliant on the demands of the major supermarkets, now (says Tony) dictate that you must grow to survive. You have to innovate - without which Pancross would still be 250 acres with horse-drawn ploughs.

Farming will always be for "hardmen". But talking to Tony, I did learn that even the hardest of men have a genuine soft and caring side. As one long-time adversary of Tony Thomas said, calling to apologise one day, "You are not such a bad b.....r after all!"

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

Hopefully the winter has now passed – and what a winter, catching all by surprise with those early, heavy snow falls. Just as well they invented 4x4s, and wasn't it good to see the true spirit of villagers helping each other out?

Having hacked through the compacted ice, Boxing Day proved to be another great success, with the annual tug-of-war contests and the Duck Egg Race. This last turned out more of a marathon than a sprint, owing to a slow-running stream. But events banked £375 towards the Church Conservation appeal.

On a similar theme, we hear from Blair Evans that the total amount raised for the 2010 Poppy Appeal was a record £1,422-87. Congratulations to Blair, Rae & Jane John. Blair would like to acknowledge the contributions from the schools in Llancarfan, St. Nicholas & Pendoylan, numerous public houses, and Glamorgan Wanderers Rugby Club.

Sadly the winter took its toll and we have lost a number of our friends during the last few months, including Jeff Saxton, Geoff Burrows, Paul Gray and Ann Radcliffe. Many fine tributes had been paid, but space permits only edited memories of them on Page 10 below. However, you could read a selection on the Llancarfan Society website at www.llancarfansociety.org.uk.

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY : 2011 EVENTS

Subscriptions are now due for 2011/2012

2 nd May	May Day Walk
6 th May	AGM at Village Hall 7.30 p.m.
12 th June proposed	Ruth Watts Cup Petanque at 2.00 p.m.
15 th July	Mystery Trip
20 th August	Village Show
24 th September	Annual Dinner at <i>Fox & Hounds</i>
6 th December	Christmas Social Evening

Whist Drives are held last Tuesday of each month. 7.30 p.m. Village Hall : £1.

TUESDAY CLUB

On February 15th, Tuesday club members took the long trek for a lunch outing to the *Fox & Hounds*, an enjoyable gathering and excellent meal.

15 th March	AGM
23 rd April	Jumble Sale

CHURCH NEWS

- 3rd April Mothering Sunday - 10.30 am Children's Church followed by 11.00 am Holy Eucharist (Family Service)
- 11th April Annual Vestry Meeting for the Parish of Llancarfan in the Church
- 17 April Palm Sunday. Service begins at 10.45 am - Blessing and Distribution of Palms, and Palm Sunday Procession with Donkey - followed by Holy Eucharist in Church
- 18th-20th April Mon/Tues/Wed in Holy Week - 7.00 pm Evening Services of Meditation + Compline (the traditional night office of the church) in: Llantrithyd (Mon); Llancarfan (Tues); Penmark (Wed).
- 21st April Maundy Thursday - 7.00 pm Maundy Thursday Celebration of the Last Supper, including Foot-washing, Eucharist, Stripping of the Altar, and followed by Vigil in church until midnight
- 22nd April Good Friday - Service of "The Last Hour" be held in: Llantrithyd at 11.30am; Penmark at 1.00pm; Llancarfan at 2.30 pm.
- 23rd April Holy Saturday - 8.00 pm - The Easter Vigil, Lighting of the Easter Candle, Renewal of Baptismal Vows & First Eucharist of Easter
- 24th April Easter Day: 5.30 am Easter Dawn Service at Penmark, followed by hot cross buns and coffee; 11.00am Easter Day Eucharist (Family Service) at Llancarfan

The Church is now closed again during the working week, apart from the Wednesday service, as the next phase of wall-painting conservation begins. The work will take place until Easter, when the *Open Church* policy, which has proved so successful, will re-commence.

On February 6th the new *Children's Church* service took place, with the young ones having their own get-together at 1030 a.m., before joining in the Family Service, starting at 1100. As part of the family service, the congregation shared with friends, parents & godparents the baptism of twins Thomas & Alfred Bilney from Llanbethery, aged 4, who were welcomed into the church.

BRIDGE

Patsy Smith wonders if there is enough village interest to form a Bridge Club? Anyone keen to join, or to learn, should contact her on 01446 751448.

TENNIS Nothing to report. Deuce!

CRICKET Annual Curry night Thurs 14 April. All welcome says Rob John.



HOLIER THAN THOU & SLIPPIER THAN SNOW

As spring arrives and winter (we trust) retreats, there is a catalogue of accidents to be credited to that pretty white stuff which fell recently from Llancarfan skies. Neither bones nor steel were safe in the face of the freeze that ate our roadways and toppled our neighbours.

Our dearly-loved membership secretary, Audrey Porter, is now safely returned to us after breaking her hip. She thanks all her friends ‘who phoned, sent cards, flowers and chocolates’ and visited her in hospital. Audrey was ‘overwhelmed by your kindnesses.’ Meanwhile too, our Chairman Mike Crosta struggled (for obvious painful reasons) to scribe his account of a pre-Christmas ordeal on Walterston Hill:

‘It was exhilarating walking up, but walking down I slipped in the thick snow – and putting out my hand broke my wrist in three places. Sue & Alan Taylor came to the rescue and took my peculiarly-shaped wrist off to the University Hospital, Cardiff. There two nurses tried to stretch it back into alignment – but a mediaeval rack might have been more effective. There followed the insertion of a plate at Llandough Hospital, which (under a general anaesthetic) I didn’t feel. At last the stitches are out, the plaster off, the surgeon confident – & I’ve a young blond physiotherapist to help exercise!’

As for the roads, the devastation remains all too evident. We know of many villagers who continue to shatter tyres and bend wheels by driving through the potholes, often hidden by puddles, which have been gouged out on our approach roads. Quick to appear - is it hidden springs that cause the roads to hollow out? – some chasms have been decently repaired, while others have been temporarily patched, only for further holes to erupt again.

However, we now understand that our holes increase in value if one paints a yellow frame around them. So hopefully Sotheby’s will shortly be taking these prized works of art off our hands, and the resultant auction revenue will offset the damage to our village’s crumpled wheels.

RIGHT : on the pull in the Tug of War.

OPPOSITE : the more romantic side of Llancarfan’s winter. Two egrets proved rare visitors, dogs snow-trotted, children & parents sledged among the hoar-frosted trees, robins piped, & we discovered an unfinished Picasso.



IN FOND MEMORY

Geoffrey Burrows : 1923 – 2010

Geoff & Rachel first came to Culvery (from Llanishen) in March 1968, a lecturer's post at UWIST bringing Geoff to Cardiff, one of his many roles in life. He had served with the Royal Navy, and as a Liaison Officer with American forces during the D-Day landings on Utah Beach. Civilian life involved him in the development of the first ultrasound machine, working too in evolving the earliest automatic landing systems for aircraft. Geoff retired slightly early from Ferranti computer systems in 1987 due to failing eyesight. He spoke Welsh, French, German & Russian, and his interests, from skiing to bell-ringing to history, were widespread. Despite his later frailties, he clung to Llancarfan, the village and the people he loved.

Squadron Leader Paul Gray, RAF (Ret'd) : 1931 – 2010

Paul Gray was buried at St. Cadoc's, Llancarfan, on January 28th. It was his final association with the church whose future he had fought for, playing a leading role in the 1990's cash-crisis fund raising campaign which secured its living survival. A churchwarden, he had joined the RAF in 1952, escorted royals in Aden, and left the military briefly to re-train in hotel management. By 1964 he was back with the RAF, as a catering officer, in many diverse locations. He organized countless Royal Reviews, retired in 1989, but found himself back at St. Athan, still creating events, as Community Relations Officer. He finally retired (again) in 1993, fondly admired as 'a character & a gentleman'.

Ann Radcliffe : 1934 - 2010

The remarkable Ann Williams, born at Aberogwyn, moved to Penmark 50 years ago – to marry 'her beloved Andrew'. As Ann Radcliffe, she had 3 children, and later took pride in her 4 grandchildren. But her connections to Llancarfan stretched right back to her childhood in Llancarfan school. Later she attended Stonor Girls' School in Bath, but returned here to become a full part of country farming life. Her hobbies were legion, and her knowledge of botanical names for flowers and plants was limitless. A founder member of the Llancarfan Society, she brought to it the philosophy of an Elder and stalwart of the Zoa Presbyterian chapel in Bonvilstone. Some 18 years ago, with her chapel friends and others, she undertook a Pilgrimage to the Holy land. Ann was a great raiser of money for charities, an engaging member of our society, and she was still correcting her friends on botanical pronunciation even as her end drew near.

Jeffery Saxton : 1923 - 2010

Jeffery was born in Bradford in 1923 but moved to Penarth aged 2, where he stayed until 1978. After a near-miss bombing next to his home, he moved from the Home Guard into wartime service as a Lieutenant Navigator in the Far East & Naples. Just before the war, aged 15, he began his lifelong career with Beal & Son of Cardiff, purveyors of anchors and chains to the world (which he travelled widely). In his leisure life he excelled at rugby and rowing, and was a rowing judge in the 1958 Commonwealth Games. On retirement he took up riding with the hunt, and when falling off became a bad idea, he took to racing and his garden. Until a month before his death he and his wife Ann would still travel the UK, following the races.



THE CASE OF THE CURIOUS CAPTIVE

Your Editors felt that a wall-paintings free Newsletter issue would be desirable. However, developments in St. Cadoc's have proved irresistible. Conservator Jane Rutherford came back to the church in the first week of March – her brief, to find out if there were more traces of mediaeval paintwork anywhere else on St. Cadoc's walls. And the news is that there are.

The whitewashed area known as the 'chancel arch' – that elegant bridge which frames the north aisle altar and reredos – is bristling with colourful clues. To discover them, Jane made small 'windows' in the limewash, and yet again we can now glimpse more ancient colouring.

No evidence yet as to what is depicted. The arch is where a giant cross – 'the rood' – would have hung, originally fronted by a massive elevated gallery, 'the rood screen'. (You can still see on the north wall the stairway leading to St. Cadoc's vanished rood screen.) But what was painted behind the cross?

Visitors to Llantwit Major may have spotted the patterned chancel arch decoration rescued and restored in St. Illtyd's. Other churches, however, went in for major story-telling depictions, notably of *The Last Judgement* or *Doom*, in which tale many Brueghel-like characters are doomed to be separated, good from bad. Then again, some arches elsewhere display royal coats of arms, painted in royal allegiance well after the Reformation. Time – and minute surgical excavation of the limewash layers – may reveal all. Meanwhile, renewed work on the *south* wall confirms that secrets still remain.

Meanwhile . . . beep beep beep . . . I've started so I'll finish . . . by asking another question. The next time you're in the church (closed now for

conservation except for services until Easter) cast your eyes over the wonderful painted castle. Then find the tiny, highly curious figure of a person, peering out of a castle window. Who is this? Is this 'merely' a castle servant, curious to get the hot news as his princess is served up for the dragon's dinner? Probably. However, one recent visitor has spun a much more devious theme (and as it happens, she is the Victoria & Albert's authority on underwear. But that's another story!)



She wondered – if this painting was created early in the reign of Henry VII, as a tribute to the first Welsh king to claim the English throne – if there might be a political allegory here. She even suggested that the tiny rubber-necker could in fact be a

prisoner, one of the defeated Richard the Third's princes in the tower? It's a wild thought perhaps – but it does add an intriguing twist to the dragon's tale.



More Monarchic Revelries

Llancarfan proposes a similar recognition of royal events this 29th of April. Handouts invite us to celebrate the marriage day of Prince William and Kate Middleton. This album snap is from the *last* time Llancarfan invaded the streets with fizzy drinks and iced fancies - the royal Jubilee of June 1977.



CARING AGAINST THE PRICKS

Jackie Hartery extols the delights of a prickly pastime

Being a hedgehog carer is not just a prickly pastime, but also time consuming, smelly, mucky, and most of all immensely rewarding!

I started some years ago with a few injured and newly orphaned hedgehogs. Over the last couple of years though I've become involved with taking in 'autumn juveniles'. These are hoglets, born in late summer or early autumn, too small to be able to hibernate, so in need of surrogate parents.



Sadly, says The British Hedgehog Preservation Society, the hedgehog population has declined by 50% over the last ten years. So it is very important to recruit carers, & rear needy ones until strong enough for the wild. Most of 'my' hoglets start off at the tiny weight of 200 grams or less - and they must be at least 700 grams to hibernate successfully. If you can't get their weight up before winter sets in it means caring for them until the springtime.



I enjoy hand-feeding the babies with a syringe and keeping them warm in small blankets on a specialist heat pad. I have to keep them in their cages all Winter, so I wash their blankets in the washing machine and clean out their cages thoroughly, rather a job!

I do the hedgehog laundry between the family wash, including clothes for my husband Bob. The machine is cleaned, of course,

after the hogs' laundry, but on one occasion evidently not well enough. That was when Bob started yelling! Apparently he had found a prickle in his sock, left in amongst the washing. I won't repeat what he was calling me, but I told him that this was the 'joy' of living with 17 hogs, our guests at that time!

On the whole life runs smoothly, but we *did* have another instant when one of them escaped. We assumed that the cage catch must have come loose, because our feisty hoglet Pippa suddenly appeared while we were eating our lunch. Our dogs don't normally take too much notice, but when they see scampering hoglets across the floor they let us know something is amiss!

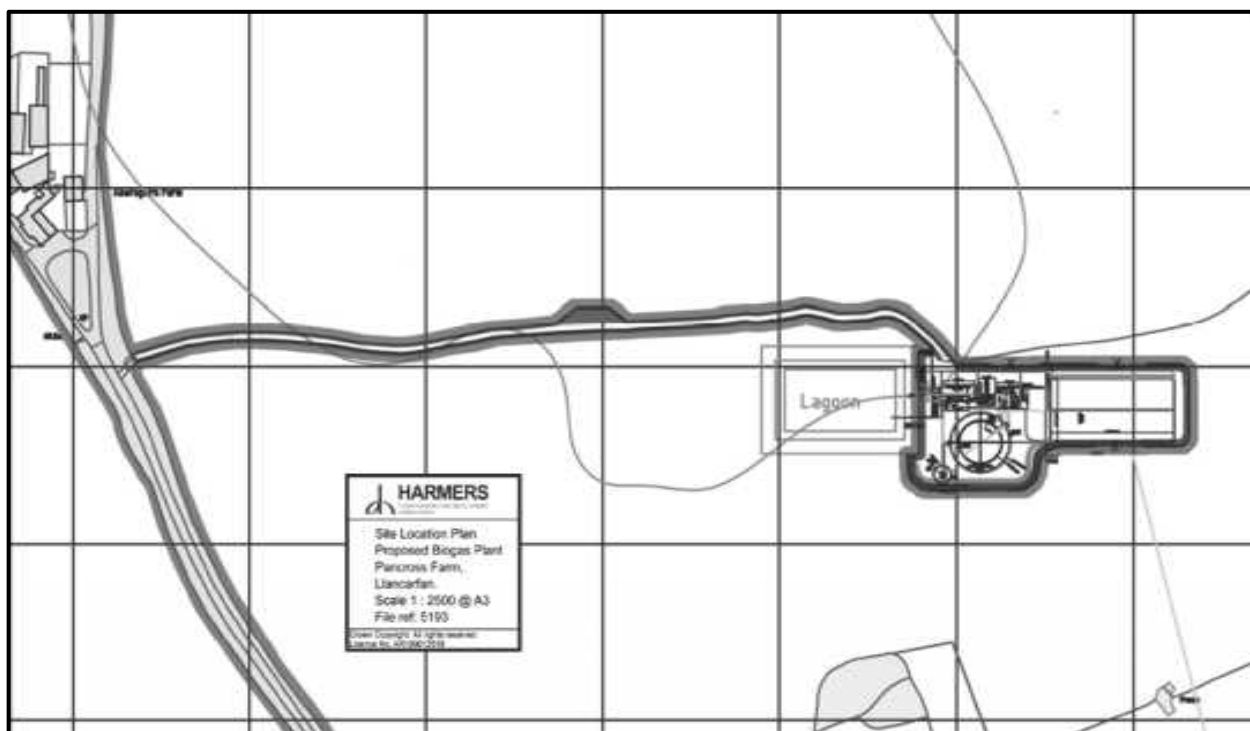
These little creatures move surprisingly fast, but Bob and I finally cornered Pippa. I picked her up and she promptly bit me, which is unlike a hog, but maybe not our Pippa! So she is now confined to the 'goose house', an old stone building in the garden, which is a halfway house to freedom. (She now weighs 1 kilo 124 grams, and was just 230 grams when she came to us, so that is another success story to make it all worthwhile!

Grateful thanks to all those who supplied me with old newspapers. Anyone wanting to know more, or people willing to take the hogs for "soft release" (which means giving the hedgehogs support in gardens for about a week, providing shelter and food, but allowing them to adjust to the wild) please email me, Jackie Hartery, at jackieandbobh@gmail.com.

BIOGAS : The right thing (just) in (just) the wrong place?

The little map opposite is our small 'quotation' from one of many copyright documents and images presented to over 100 concerned people in Llancarfan Village Hall on March 9th. It shows the proposed nature and location of a large Biogas complex, subject of a planning application by a new company called *Vale Bio-Energy*. To digest the scheme in its entirety is impossible here. Many people, hoping to understand or make representation, will wish to read views & questions submitted to the Community Council, and information on the council's planning register at <http://vogonline.planning-register.co.uk/PlaRecord.aspx?AppNo=2011/00118/FUL>.

The meeting, chaired by our neighbour Tony Thomas, was an attempt to explain to interested parties what *Vale Bio-Energy* wants to build to the north of Pancross Farm, on the crest of the wooded hillside that tumbles down to Llancarfan village. Walkers, local & visiting, on the lovely Valeways Millennium Heritage Trail will have passed the pathway's slurry lagoon, which now marks the applied-for site of the potential 'energy farm'.



We understand that the scheme uses a slurry & maize silage mix, digests it in a large domed chamber, and produces (on a 50-day cycle) methane gas burnt to generate electricity. In Tony Thomas's words: 'We hope to make money from electricity - but we won't compete with Aberthaw!'

On the evidence of this 'lively' meeting, *Vale Bio-Energy* have a significant number of resident anxieties to compete with too, many of which questions should be submitted urgently to the Vale's Planning Officers. Issues of smell, respiratory problems, flood, noise, traffic, waste, explosion, flare-offs, visual intrusion on a sensitive landscape, prevailing winds – all of these were raised. Raised. But not settled. David Herbert, brought in from *Biolak*, who make the Anaerobic digesters, proved expert in his field, but was sadly unbriefed to quell fears beyond the digestion process. 'We're in the hands of the consultants,' he said - but *did* undertake to research questioners' anxieties.

Tony said he was 'no big greeny' – though surely many of us *do* warm to the green aspirations of biogas, and support farming enterprise. His colleagues too spread the promise of a 90% reduction in odours, of generators quiet as a U-Boat's engine, and of a dome, painted white, blending into the landscape.

But where else had a process of this nature happened on a hilltop above a vulnerable village? The experts could produce no example. So despite the presentation, great anxieties remain – and our spokesman, Councillor Jeffrey James, Planning Committee Chairman, was duly urged to represent the urgent questions formally submitted by a village, anxious to negotiate.

WORLD BOOK DAY @ LLANCARFAN PRIMARY

The pupils of Llanccarfán Primary have taken part in world book day by dressing up as their favourite characters. On the 3rd March everybody had lots of fun-Class 4 had a read-a-thon and Class 5 even designed their own autobiography!! Some classes designed a bookmark, sat in a Hotseat to be questioned about their favourite character and acted like it all the way through the day. There was also a range of activities such as world book day quiz, word searches and lots more!!!
by Jackie, Niamh and Nialeagh

CYCLING PROFICIENCY

Year 6 have been doing Cycling Proficiency to make them aware of Road Safety. We have been doing this for 4 days between 7th and the 10th of March. Year 6 have been taught by Miss Akers who is a Road Safety Officer. We learnt right turns, left turns, overtaking, U turns, starting and stopping. There were two levels to complete, we learnt a lot and had good fun.
by MF, LW and CG.

ST DAVID'S DAY

Barac won (3150pts.) so Max Cunningham, house captain, and Alex Griffiths, vice captain, were over the moon. Dyfan (2885) finished 2nd and Cadoc (2830) finished 3rd. Congratulation to Molly Connolly-Davis who was the winning bard and gained 200 house points for her house-even though it didn't affect the outcome!
by AG, JP, MC

FAIR TRADE FORTNIGHT

In school we are going to celebrate fair trade fortnight by collecting fair trade stickers, tags and labels. The person with the most stickers will win a prize. The staff use fair trade coffee and tea and when we have chocolate, it's fair trade chocolate.
by TU, SG, PW and JR

The Llanccarfán Society invites you to attend



Seedy Saturday
A Community Seed Swap

Saturday April 2nd 10am - 12noon
Llanccarfán Village Hall

Bring your spare seeds, small seedlings or propagated plants to swap with other local gardeners.
Any seed or plant donations welcome!
Refreshments will be available.

For more information or to arrange to donate seeds in advance of the day, please contact Sara at llanccarfanseedswap@gmail.com

**NEWS FROM
BUDDING
SCHOLARS &
OF A SEEDY
SATURDAY!**

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