

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 155 SEPTEMBER 2013



Llancarfan Society Constitution. Object II.

To publish a newsletter several times each year, to be devoted to matters of local interest . . . It is not the intention that the Society's newsletter should formally represent sectarian views likely to arouse controversy, but individual member's contributions, on any subject, will normally be accepted, providing they are not libellous, obscene or otherwise objectionable.

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EDITORIAL

I'M ALRIGHT, FRACK

Given that our newspaper persuades us daily that we're going to Hell on a handcart – (I know, if we only bought another newspaper we'd know it could all be cured by an aspirin) – anyway, sometimes you feel you should do something about it. Like put the brakes on? 'We need a futile gesture at this stage.'¹ In that I'm now chair of this society, I'm told I mustn't be sat on. So I thought I should learn what *The Constitution* allowed us to do. I hadn't read it. Which explains the front page extract, in case readers hadn't read it either.

Clearly it shows that this Society is not allowed to get hot under the collar about things we probably *should* care about, just in case it arouses controversy and folk storm the village hall with heart-felt cries of 'Do you hear the people sing?', and probably end up picking oakum in Cowbridge jail.

However, our constitution *does* say that 'individual member's contributions . . . will normally be accepted'. So here's your chance, O Revolutionaries of Llancarfan. Please take the opportunity to enlighten us as to what we should be thinking and caring about. Not of course that we are allowed to have views on anything like the fracking controversy (as for instance blogged about by our present parish priest, the Reverend Mark Dimond, on <http://markdimond.wordpress.com/2013/06/27/to-frack-or-not-to-frack/>). But while this may be an historical journal, heads & sand don't mix very well.

¹ *Beyond the Fringe*, 1960.

BEAK ON A BIKE

Penny Fell

As 2013 dawned, here in the Newsletter, we thought it would be nice to celebrate with a piece about Llancarfan School's new Headteacher. Colin Smith joined last September (2012), had got his feet under the school desk, got to know his 116 pupils, and had the chance to plan for the future.

It should have made a nice article. But things did not turn out quite as hoped.

Born, bred, and (by his own admission) rather patchily educated in Birmingham, Colin Smith went to university late, in his mid-twenties:

“When I was in school, I *really* didn't see the point of it. My comprehensive school was closing down, we were a bit left to our own devices, and I left with very few qualifications. But I always knew I could do better.’

Colin did do better, going on to qualify as a teacher. He was lured to south Wales by his Swansea-born wife, and has taught here for eleven years. Firstly he wrestled with the valley vowels of children in Brackla (sounds alien to Brummie ears); and then as deputy head in Maesteg. His early experiences gave him, he thinks, something of an empathy with classroom *refuseniks*. “You can spot them – usually boys – and you've just got to tap into sports, cars, skateboarding or whatever interests them.”

A headship was the next step up : “When I dropped in my application for this job, I thought ‘Wow, this is a fantastic school - whoever gets this one is going to be really lucky. And it was me! I got the job... and, er, it's been an interesting year . . .”

It was interesting, not least because “Mr Smith” hadn't chalked up three months in the headship before he learned – overnight! - that the outstanding school of which we're all so proud was slated for closure in twenty months.

It all happened very fast, leaving him feeling a bit like a batsman, caught out when he's barely left the pavilion. “I was in shock for quite a while. I was concerned, obviously, for the school and the children and the staff, but then you think, too, hang on, what's going to happen to me? I have a mortgage and kids, like everyone else!”

However – to cling to the cricketing metaphor - he was bowled over by the way everyone in the village leapt to defend the wicket. “The support was quite outstanding – from pretty much every parent, grandparent, resident.

They set up a scrutiny committee, website : everyone could see that if you take the school out of community like this . . .” And his voice trails away.

The triumphant story of the victory in resisting the bulldozers (or property developers) has been told elsewhere. Now, as Colin Smith sits in his office at the start of his second year, the building programme [see centre spread] confirms the school’s survival. Cranes have towered over the entire village. The Vale education authority has signalled a faith in the future by installing a big double classroom cabin, revamped loos, and additional parking space.



The summer holidays buzzed with fun and profile raising activities. In June, Colin did some serious Dad-bonding with parents when a team of six took a 300-mile bike marathon from Ireland, following in St Cadoc’s footsteps. Now, saddle sore and back in the classroom, we asked where he’d like to see the school in ten years.

“Well – still here for a start! I know small, rural schools can be costly; but what will happen, I think, is that there will be greater links between primary schools to pool resources.” It’s clear to Colin where he should put any money that’s saved. “Information Technology is moving so fast, it’s incredibly hard for us to keep up – so that’s our priority. There’s a saying in the profession that we’re trying to teach our children to do jobs that don’t exist yet. We must be sure they leave here ready for those jobs, whatever they turn out to be...”

It seems you can’t start too early.

“Yes – and if we could have a Nursery here, it would be great; that would guarantee our intake (of pupils) and we could give them the very best nursery education. I don’t know where we’d put it on this site though . . .”

Maybe that’s the next school project? This year, the 138-year-old Llancarfan Primary was tested - and it came through with merit. The evidence suggests that it’s still got plenty of zest with which to tackle the 21st century.

THE BOYS FROM THE BIKE STUFF



LLANCARFAN SCHOOL'S CYCLING HEROES TWIN WESTERN IRELAND WITH GLAMORGAN'S VALE



The 27 June 5-day Killarney to Llandarfán ride – which celebrated our village's victory over plans for school closure - proved a triumph over 500 miles of aching thighs. Any talk of sharpened saddles proved unnecessary, the village's virile dads raising £3000 towards the PTA funds, and for the *Dreams & Wishes* charity. No praise is too high for the bicyclists from the blackboard jungle.



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

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Our diligent Membership Secretary Joann Quelch tells us she has been going through the membership list, and says that it 'doesn't make good reading.' 18 members have not paid their subscriptions for the last 2 years (that is 2012/13 & 2013/14) and 36 haven't paid this year's subscription, due 1 April. Payments are so easy to let slip, but this has to be a *strong reminder* that if members don't pay, they can't keep on receiving the newsletter. *So – if you still feel there's value in what the society is here for, please pay up!*

MYSTERY TRIP MYSTERY

Gwyneth Plows advises that, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Mystery Trip has been re-scheduled for October. With the approach of Halloween, it's certainly a more mysterious time to hold it. All will be revealed. Meanwhile, clear time on the calendar for the **Christmas Social Evening / 6 December**.

ANNUAL DINNER

Reflecting last year's successful gathering, the dinner will be held again in the Village Hall – **Friday 20th September at 7.30 for 8.00**. It's the usual case of bring your own wine to accompany a promised 'superb buffet'. Tickets are £20 per head, with first come, first served, and a limit of 40 people. Thanks to Gwyn Plows for yet again being your point of contact on **01446 713533**.

ROLL OVER IOLO

Don't miss the adventurous 14 Sept 'Open Doors' Saturday on which St. Cadoc's welcomes all to animate a dragon, and when folk band *Yr Hwntws* regale visitors with songs collected by local boy Iolo Morganwg. **See flyer.**

CHURCH NEWS

The ever-bountiful *Waterloo Foundation* has again come to the aid of the continuing discoveries in St. Cadoc's. They have made a 'match funding pledge' of a stunning £40,000 towards the conservation project. It is fair to say that without *Waterloo's* support (in one form or another) of the re-discoveries and their revelation for the 21st century, the entire project may well never have happened. Initial funding made investigation possible and so triggered major complementary awards from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and ultimately from a significant number of other trusts and benefactors.

St. Cadoc's has also most recently received interpretational funding from the Cowbridge-based *Creative Rural Communities*. All of which benevolence is

profoundly welcomed, and encourages the public to ‘show their appreciation’ in a pecuniary manner – as in the case of the astonishing £429 donated during a single 8 August group visit by the *Welsh Livery Guild*.

GREEN TABLETS BRING BOOST TO RHOOSE’S HISTORY

By the time this is published the horse (well, August) will have bolted. However, well done to the *Rhose & District History Society* for being chosen by Waitrose, Barry to feature in their August green-token appeal. Jeff James reports the admirable objective of dedicating winning funds towards a ‘Living Memory’ project, which sets out to collect through interview ‘the memories of local people of all generations’. Perhaps a few of Waitrose’s little green pills could also help to cure Llanccarfán’s own memory loss?

NEW SEASON FOR LLANCCARFÁN’S BLOCK-BUSTING CINEMA

Wearing not his Llanccarfán Society Vice-Chairman’s hat, but his Usherette’s Ice-cream Tray, the irrepressible Jim Barratt (with his team) has scheduled another stunning up-to-Christmas season for our film society audience.

Fri 27 Sep	7.15 for 7.45	The Great Gatsby	12A	Drinks reception & due decadence
Fri 25 Oct	7.15 for 7.45	Behind the Candelabra	15	Liberace themed ‘black comedy’
Fri 22 Nov	7.15 for 7.45	Untouchable	15	France’s 2 nd most successful movie
Sat 14 Dec	3.00 for 3.30	Despicable Me 2	U	Charity showing for School PTA



Village show Cinema stall

Jim has engineered comfort for Llanccarfán bottoms too, having sourced new nicely-padded chairs, courtesy of a *Creative Rural Communities* grant. Meanwhile (and not to count our chickens) the Film Society has hopes of consideration for a *Film Society of the Year Award*. In the Society’s submission, Jim draws ingenious parallels with our own church wall paintings : ‘Hundreds of years ago our predecessors used to gaze at walls emblazoned with stories of high drama and great power. Sounds familiar? It could serve equally as a description of cinema, the communal act of watching stories told in light and sound on the big screen.’ More news on <http://llanccarfancinema.co.uk>.



Matthew Rebhan captures the action



A tight squeeze even for the smaller crane



Didn't we leave a teacher in that hut?

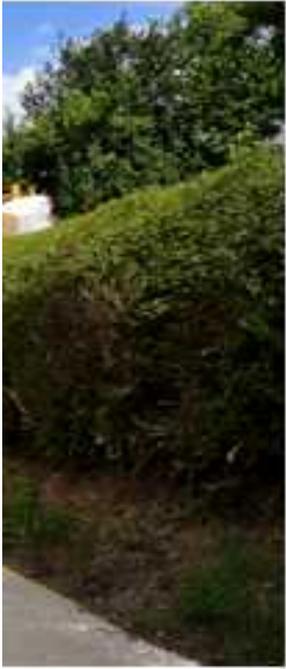


A new classroom Lands on the footings



A few minor hand adjustments





*Fine tuning from
foreman Phil*

CLASSROOMS IN THE CLOUDS

Thursday 8 August 2013 – high drama at Llancarfan Primary School as a great cranes literally swung into action to move one of the old school classrooms and (a week later) to gently lower in the latest seat of learning.



*The last slice swings
over the swings*



*A chunk of new
classroom rolls in*



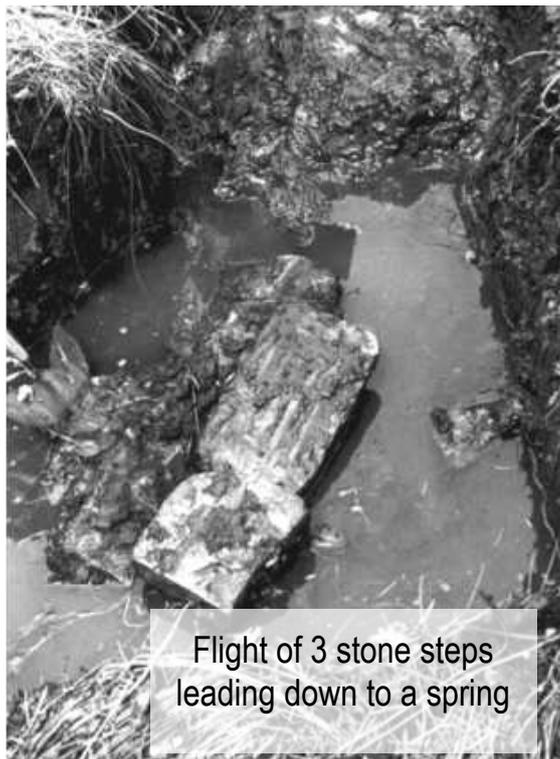
*The new classroom
slots into place*

THE CONUNDRUM OF CULVERY PARK

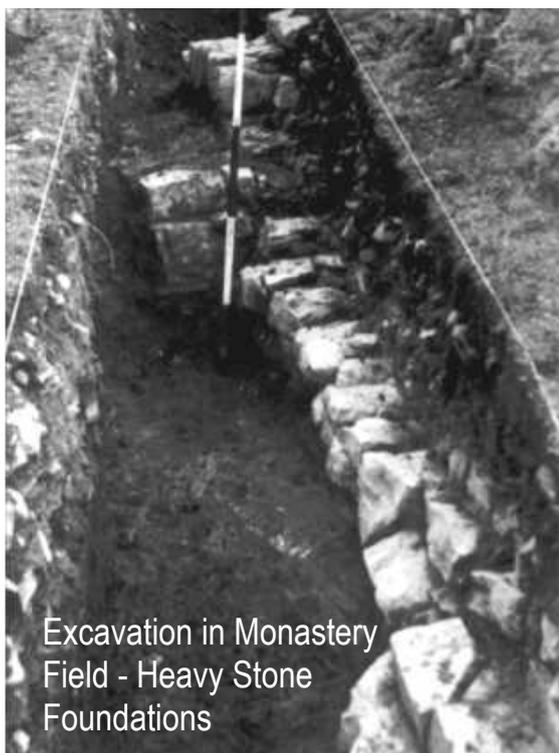
Ian Fell



Collapsed stone
shingle roof



Flight of 3 stone steps
leading down to a spring



Excavation in Monastery
Field - Heavy Stone
Foundations

Dear kind Sue Taylor has selflessly continued her & Alan's long-time determination to educate me. She regularly passes on her copy of *Current Archaeology*, for which I am very grateful. Sue will confirm that quite often this excellent magazine features activities close to ourselves. (For instance the September 2013 issue describes work done by recuperating soldiers at Caerwent. Here archaeology is used as an ingenious therapy for those recovering from the injuries of conflict. Better to find a Roman coin than a booby-trapped bomb.)

Sadly too though, this September issue also marks the untimely death in June of Mick Aston, the Somerset archaeologist famous for his work in television's *Time Team*. He pioneered 'geophys', the various ways of using electromagnetism and a version of radar to map what's underground. This, when coupled with the conventional digging of exploratory trenches, can reveal instant clues to the secrets of the past. *Time Team* made informative television, and in Mick Aston's words, 'Where else can you get a geophys result, and then dig a hole straight away to test what is really there?'

All of which is relevant to at least one site in Llancarfan, namely Culvery Park, even now handed over from (sadly to be missed) Joyce Jameson to future caring hands. This, you recall, is the landscape attached to *The Grange*, Joyce & Frank's 1960's home, often thought to hide traces of the monastery associated with St. Cadoc. The

word 'culvery' has sometimes been transmuted to 'Calvery', but surely the field name has the same meaning as that of (the pre-Tesco) 'Culverhouse Cross'. It means a 'dovecote', an important source of winter food. You can find excellent local examples of them at Llantwit Major & Monknash.

Back in September 2009 the much-missed Frank Jameson passed to this newsletter the interim findings of his own *Time Team*. Intrigued to discover the inner world of Culvery Park (and his own garden) in 2008 he commissioned some professional 'geophys' himself. In this case, back in 1964 an 'illegal' exploratory dig had in fact preceded the (let's call it) 'X-Ray Exploration' of Culvery. Three intriguing photographs from this former exploration are shown above (with their original caption notes).

The website of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust throws some light on the 'high status building debris' discovered back in 1964 : please see http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/historic_landscape/llancarfan/english/llancarfan_001.htm . It says ' . . . significant buried archaeology includes an irregular oval mound (now scheduled) in an area to the south of churchyard known as 'Culvery' or 'Calvary Park'. These early excavations revealed a well-built foundation wall dated to the 13th or 14th century by pottery fragments. There was also a collapsed sandstone roof with green glazed ridge tiles of 14th century type, and 'ditches and pits' associated with the straightening of the river. However, no evidence emerged to justify a claim 'that this was the site of the Early-medieval monastic site of Llanccarfan . . . '

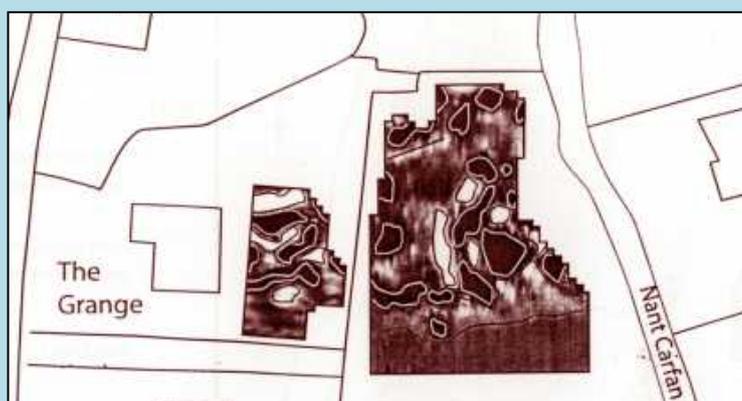
So what more, Frank wondered, might the geophys reveal? The problem was, neither the modest Frank, nor for that matter I, felt we had the technical knowledge to further decode the electronic traces on the geophysical maps produced. Frank hoped perhaps for help in interpretation from my former archaeological colleagues at the National Museum of Wales. However, time's winged chariot moved on, Frank is sadly no longer with us, and questions still hover dove-like in the air (and perch on my conscience).

The situation now is that your society has a copy of the report (by *Ark Geifysikk*), and so the possibility of further understanding remains. One supposes that any monastic traces (from the time the monastery disappeared, courtesy it is said of Viking invasion in the 10th century AD) might not be of stone, but perhaps the post holes and rubbish pits of mainly wooden buildings. But what do I know? There *were* rumours of a planned Welsh TV successor to the now-ended *Time Team* series. Would it not be fascinating if the makers of this series sought permission from *The Grange's* new owners to get to the bottom of these clues to our monastic past?



Above :
‘Culvery Park’ looking south

Right :
Example of the geophysical images enhanced from the Resistance Survey



SHOCKING VANDALISM IN A DEVON CHURCH



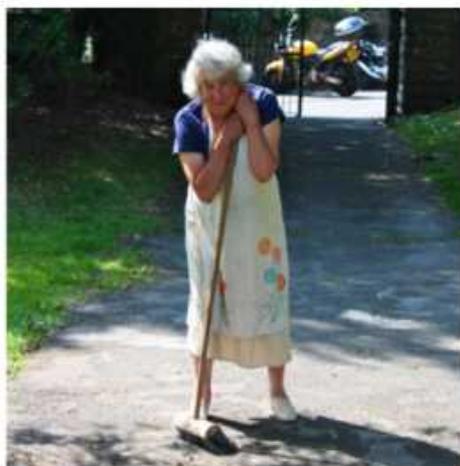
The depressing news of the theft of two 15th century screen panels from the lovely Devon church of Torbryan reminds us of the hazards that could face our own St. Cadoc's finds. We've taken a previous interest in this rarest of screens, not least because it features St. Armel (third saint on the right). St. Armel is gentler than St. George but also a dragon slayer. You can just make him out, wrapping the dragon in his shawl - then drowning it in the river.



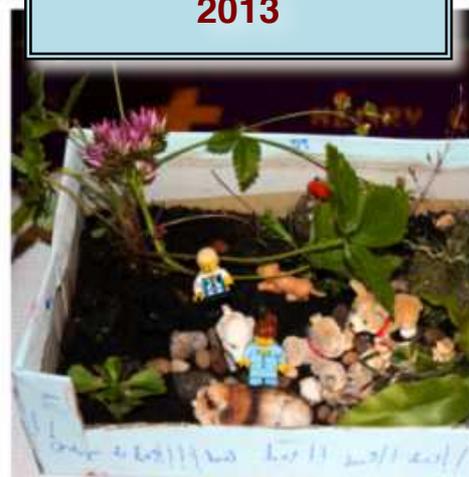


LAND'S END ARRIVAL

Our hero Graham Brain has just crowned his epic Extreme Tour of Britain with knee surgery, which underlines his stamina in raising a target-bursting £8297.82 for **Brake**, the road safety charity. See www.gbextremetour.co.uk/



VILLAGE SHOW 2013



IN CONTRAST to the sunshine of the village show, boules and awards all glistened with rain for this year's Ruth Watts Petanque Cup contest on 23 June. Phil Watts (green pullover) sent the account over the page

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THE VILLAGE SHOW

Saturday 13 August 2013

This year's village show was a fine re-awakening of this Summer tradition. Graham Brain's & Mike Crosta's pictures – thanks! - capture above and here the enjoyment, a fun day much energised by sunshine. You'll see that President Barbara Milhuisen literally swept the show to success, and that Alun Cairns MP performed his duties with zest. You must also look beneath the festivities to credit and thank Ann Ferris for her triumph of organisation, which culminated in an intensive week of grass-cutting, marquee erection, exhibit mounting, judge-stewarding, and all those Plans A & B that ensured success. [If you're thinking of starting a business, ask to see Ann's briefing sheets!] Grateful thanks to Ann & her teams for this sunshine supershow.



THE RUTH WATTS PETANQUE CUP

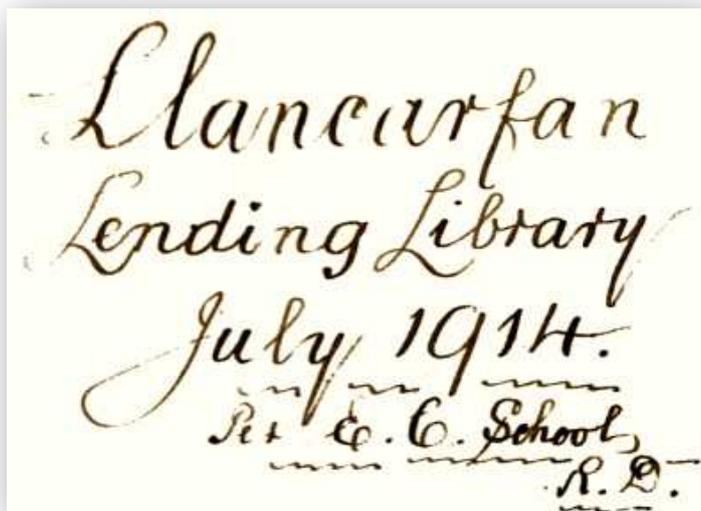
Sunday 23 June 2013

A group of crusaders assembled by Russ Watts & Trevor Morgan from Cowbridge set forth for the battle of the piste on school hill. Gathered to repel this invasion was a ladies team of Ann Ferris, Audrey Baldwin & Audrey Porter. The Barry invitation team of Phil Watts, Vic Davies & Jim Wood were also ready to do battle. Surprisingly, Llancarfan's star performer Tom Hunt found his name on the Cowbridge team sheet. The Barry team came through to the final unbeaten, but then suffered defeat at the hands of Trevor Morgan, Andrew Tucker & Gareth Petty. So, after the presentations, the Ruth Watts shield sped off to be displayed in the bar of Cowbridge's *Edmundes Arms*. Rain brought an early conclusion. Many thanks to all concerned for organising and turning up to make a successful event.

THE ANNALS RETURN

Ian Fell

Thanks to the generosity of Jeff Thomas, once of Gowlog Farm, now of Masterton, New Zealand, a remarkable relic has just returned to raise even more questions about our history. Its journey back here, via a chain of kindly couriers, was notable in itself. But for now, news of the book itself.



INSCRIPTION ON THE FRONT END PAPERS

Jeff (who backalong contributed memories to this Newsletter) has donated to the Society an ancient copy of Marianne Spencer's fine book, *Annals of South Glamorgan*. The book was published about 1913, and I have previously found it more reliable than Stan Awbery's often-quoted *Village of a Thousand Saints*. This *Annals* tells us much about our village, and (according to Dr. Evan Thomas in *Newsletter 8*) 'the chapter on Llancarfan was written mainly at Llanvithyn, and the authoress gave my mother [Edith Lougher] a signed copy in recognition of the many cups of tea, meals etc which she provided.'

Clearly this treasure from the Antipodes was not Edith Lougher's copy. In his dedicatory note, Jeff Thomas writes : 'I do not know how our family acquired it several decades ago and trust it was not 'borrowed' permanently.' He adds his hope that 'this wonderful historical record will form part of a display in Llancarfan of similarly interesting books which would be available for reading by the public'. Without a doubt this would be the sincere aspiration of the Society's committee too, once we can balance safety with accessibility.

Meanwhile, there are the intriguing questions to which we must and will return (and to which perhaps our readers can bring enlightenment). The Llancarfan Lending Library was clearly cared for in the village school? What was it? Jeff makes the 'charitable' assumption that the book came into his family 'perhaps on the dissolution of the old lending library'. Is there any record? Are there any memories? Was there a fine predecessor to our present day Book Club?

Certainly our village is no stranger to literature & learning. We know for a fact that back in 1798 a 'Llancarfan Book Society' was supplied by Iolo Morganwg himself, when he was a Cowbridge bookseller. So Jeff Thomas's wonderful restoration finds its place in a continuing Llancarfan tradition. Bountiful thanks for now, Jeff – and please watch this space for future detective work!

SENDING BACK THE SILVER

Rhodri Price of Trevithyn Farm carries on the family tradition of breeding champion cows. Last year (2012) he won so many cups & trophies at the Vale Show that he was awarded *Victor Ludorum*. This year round, the timing wasn't quite right for him to defend all his titles. And anyway, the silver had to go back to be re-awarded!

Here then is Rhodri's final photo of those glittering prizes. Among his awards, he was intrigued to note that one cup is engraved with the words 'His Majesty The King' – George V would seem to have won the cup back in 1929.

Can someone tell us the tale that lies behind that?

Anyway, sure as eggs is eggs, those spaces on Rhodri's parents' dresser won't be short of award-winning silver for long. Rhodri is already talking to his beasts about triumph in future shows. So its surely a case of congratulations to this year's winner, but watch out. Rhodri promises us that 'the Price is Right'!



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For past issues & more details please see the evolving website at <http://www.llancafarnsociety.org.uk/>