

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 160
DECEMBER 2014



HO! HO!
... and
possibly
HOE!



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EDITORIAL

One way or another, this Christmas edition has turned out to be somewhat saintly. Saints Nicholas, George, Cadoc - they all get a look in. But given that many of the saints tended to be of a contemplative nature, any encouragement for us to be thoughtful is probably no bad thing. Volunteers are now well advanced in gathering the poppies from the Tower of London's moat; but as we know, the Great War was *not* over by Christmas. In passing then, my thanks are due to the readers who expressed their welcome for the biographies of the village's lost men in the last edition – and thanks are also due to those who have offered more insights and anecdotes in this issue.

On another tack, December sees the start of a new chapter for a valued quango which has been distributing European funding, and stimulating projects in the Vale, since 2003. *Creative Rural Communities*, based in Cowbridge, has enabled many excellent projects and initiatives in the Vale. These have included for instance walking & biking trails attached to Coast & Vale signage & promotion, they've stimulated & managed *Coastal Camping*, championed local food-makers, funded *Pride in our Village* & Farming grants – even set up a *Iolo Morganwg Trail*. Llancarfan has done very nicely from C.R.C. They enabled volunteers to establish our *Best New Film Society* (enquire within), have enriched church interpretation, supplied the Fox's shelving under *Pub is the Hub*, & paid for the village 'Welcome' panel which your society & Community Council are deploying. Things are changing, says Phil Chappell (Senior Rural Regeneration Officer) but he still intends to help communities to access millions of £££, 'by hook or by crook.' It may just happen under a different banner. Fund seekers should watch that space.

HO! HO! AND POSSIBLY HOE!

While the real Father Christmas will certainly do his best again this year to disguise the growing gap between the hyper-rich and the rest of us¹, the following thoughts explore an alternative bringer of promise & festivity to the dark days of December. The gentleman is on the cover of this edition. His 'Ho Ho' bit is to do with jollity; and the 'Hoe' mis-spelling (along with spade, rake and plough) is to do with fertility. He is of course *The Green Man*.

To be honest, I know we can't possibly get to the bottom of what he means. There are some curiosities in life which invariably yield no definitive conclusion. Take a (sort of relevant) example. Ley lines are those supposed mystical straight lines of energy that (if you look at the maps) are thought to link geographical points of ancient (perhaps religious) significance. And if we take seriously the publicity for the 2014 Crickhowell *Green Man Festival*, this is still believed. They say that 'in the beating heart of the breathtaking Black Mountains, where mystical ley lines converge amid ancient oak trees, something truly magical is stirring.' Fact is, while the festival may indeed be magical, any proof of ley lines remains as rare as dragon's teeth.

But then, when it comes to monstrous molars & draconian dentures, we'd all probably like to believe in dragon's teeth. And so it is with The Green Man in our village church, who has long remained un-noticed, I'm told, even by the church's regular devotees. But now at last we've managed to get a decent image of him, peering down like some mediaeval security camera, assessing our sins, up there from among the north aisle timbers. So the time is ripe for a few more clues (or red herrings) about The Green Man and his associates.

There is some suggestive evidence that the 'pagan' British precursor of our jolly old red-cloaked Santa Claus was a turn-of-the-year 'Spirit of the Wildwood' who we can call 'The Green Man'. The fact is, Saint Nicholas is a comparatively recent import into Britain's Christmas. We were greening the halls with boughs of holly long before the old gentleman and his reindeer got stuck down British chimneys. Green Men, of whom you will find countless in European churches, were a much earlier adoption than Saint Nick.

As it happens, before they were labelled 'Green Men' (by Lady Raglan in a 1939 *Folklore* article), the academics who noticed them called them 'foliate heads'. (Coincidentally, this was the Lady Emily Raglan who married into the

¹ In early 2014, the richest 85 people on the globe shared a combined wealth of £1trillion, as much as the poorest 3.5 billion of the world's population. This is abstracted from an *Oxfam Report* of January 2014. By the September of this year, it only took the wealth of 66 super-rich to match that of the world's poorest.

ancient line of the Raglan/Herbert/Beaufort family, a branch of which is thought to have founded the Raglan chapel in the south aisle of our church.)

Lady Raglan's 'Green Man' conjecture linked him to the 'Jack-in-the-Green', to 'Robin Hood', and to 'The Garland King'. While her version of his relatives has been challenged by later research, the multiple forms of the Green Man are still confidently interpreted as a 'symbol of rebirth or a cycle of growth'.²

One well-worn query is often raised. Why, if the Green Man *is* descended (as is often suggested) from some pagan deity, was he allowed space in a mediaeval church? And the old chestnut answer points to the established Christian ploy of 'if you can't beat 'em, adopt 'em, and then Christianise their practices'. This was certainly true in the case of many Christianised pagan festivals, not least the festivities of Christmas and New Year. Back then, for instance, the church was clearly able to absorb the festive turning points of the solstices and equinoxes. It then cloaked them in Christian ritual, and so regularly gave house room to what seems to us to be pagan iconography.



St. Laurence, Ludlow's Green Men (under choir stall seats) are significant in that they are carved alongside the personal badge of Henry VI. He was King from 1422-61 and again from 1470-71. These Green Men can therefore be dated to about 1425.

Nowadays, if we conclude that our Green Man alludes in some way to the yearly cycle, and to mankind's hopes for a re-greening of the earth, then thinking of him than as a Green Father Christmas seems rather jolly. Again, what better time to ask him to exercise his pagan powers than around the Winter solstice, when (encouraged by mid-winter bonfires, and death & resurrection traditions like the Mari Lwyd and St. George mumming plays) we are all desperate to see the sun come climbing back into the Winter Vale?

Mention of St. George prompts us to recall some other curious facts in the jigsaw puzzle of belief. Sir James Frazier's seminal book *The Golden Bough* (1922) tells us that in some European countries **St. George is a green man in**

² See <http://www.greenmanenigma.com/>

his own right. There are rather too many examples to quote here, but Frazier describes several European St. George's Day (23rd of April) festivities.

The common factor in all these celebrations is a character called the 'Green George' - or in Ruhla (Germany) 'The Little Leaf Man'. In Carinthia (Austria) Frazier informs us that the Green George is 'a young fellow clad from head to foot in green birch branches'. The boy who enacts the Green George can often end up being ducked in a river, to ensure that rain will turn the meadows green. (I knew there was a symbolic meaning in our Boxing Day tug of war!)



Kilpeck's Green Man carvings date from about 1140

One final bit of evidence might throw some light on the matter. We learn that the name George is from the Greek 'Geos', which means 'earth-worker' or farmer. Surely (and who more able than George to support the Green Man?) this makes him a very good saint to venerate in our farming countryside?

So, to sum up, these are some green tendrils of thought suggesting a forgotten link between the Green Man, St. George's agrarian status, and even a Green Father Christmas. So next time you're in the north church aisle, look up (with a torch until we can light him properly) and unravel your own views as to the inner meaning of **The Green Man**. Ho, ho – and possibly Hoe!

A GEORGIAN POSTSCRIPT

I've been working on refreshed interpretation (justifying our Heritage Lottery & Creative Rural Communities' funding) for the church wall paintings. This will include a short movie, which features the village youngsters' splendid St. George animation. Revisiting the church panels underlined for me the Europe-wide veneration of St. George. Mike & Jan Crosta arrived back from Vieste on the heel of Italy clutching this image of the St. George they discovered in Vieste cathedral. Vieste's patron saint is paraded each St. George's Day, horse racing takes place on the beach, and celebrating visitors are offered free omelettes (yet another curious twist to the St. George festivities)!



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

ST. CADOC'S CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

21 st December	1900 The Nine Lessons & Carols service.
24 th December	1500 Christingle & Crib Service.
24 th December	1130 Midnight Mass.
25 th December	1100 Christmas Morning Eucharist.
6 th January	1800 Joint Parishes Epiphany Service.

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

5th December, 7.30 pm. An evening of Christmas Entertainment with the *Four Just Men* singers. Light refreshments & bring your own wine. Tickets £7.50 from Gwyneth Plows (713533), Sue Taylor (781453) & Ann Ferris (781350).

LLANCARFAN COMMUNITY CINEMA

Thursday 11 December : 7.15 pm for 7.30 pm : *Dan Y Wenallt*

This is a Welsh language film adaptation of Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* (with English sub-titles). It stars Rhys Ifans & Charlotte Church, and is directed by Kevin Allen, who made the hard-hitting Swansea-based drama *Twin Town*. *Milk Wood* is of course a quintessentially English-language play, but classically empowered by Welsh language and culture. It is notable to learn that this translation, by T. James Jones, was also recently performed by the cast of *Pobl y Cwm*. The greatly respected T. James Jones was once script editor for the series. The Llancafarn Community Association will provide refreshments, while profits from the screening go to the village hall.

Sat 13 & Sun 14 Dec : 3.00 pm for 3.30 pm FROZEN SING-A-LONG

Not a shivery film show with the radiators turned down, but two family matinees of Disney's most successful animated feature ever. Demand has driven the cinema to run two performances of the film's Sing-A-Long version. Profits for The Better Life Appeal, of the Wales Adult Cystic Fibrosis Centre. Tickets by email from llancafarnine@gmail.com or call 01446 781 144.

BOARD WITH A WELCOME - & MORE EDUCATION ON THE WALLS

Your Society can give itself a pat on the back for its role in drawing down European funding from Creative Rural Communities. There have been some differences as to its location, but village and visitors will now benefit from a new 'welcome' panel, which helps to promote the cultural treasures of St. Cadoc's, and celebrates Llancafarn as the birthplace of Iolo Morganwg, the 'Bard of Liberty'. The award positions the village as a place of



pilgrimage in the vale. This complements other panels elsewhere, notably one intended for Bird's Lane, Cowbridge, which starts a *Iolo Morganwg Trail*.

In a separate project, the Rev. Bill Thomas, former Archdeacon of Llandaff (who serves as a valued member of the St. Cadoc's Conservation Panel), has put great effort into securing C.R.C. funding for the enhanced interpretation in the church. The products of his funding quest (which has involved me – Ian Fell - and several contractors) should be viewable in the church sometime from mid-December. Low-key panels on the protective lecterns are funded by the C.R.C. and Lottery educational grants, and are complemented by a simple silent explanatory film, mentioned above, and much enhanced by those animations from village youngsters, which they created in September 2013.



PETANQUE YOU VERY MUCH

The future use & maintenance of the Petanque Piste, greatly enjoyed by a prime number of villagers and their sometime opponents, has proved the subject of extended Committee debate. At issue is the cost, which has been a matter for discussion with members of the Tennis Club. It is likely now to be confirmed that your Society will fund one more year's presence on the site, whilst working for the establishment within that year of a new (hopefully successful) Petanque club, which club will pay the rent in subsequent years.

A questionnaire is now asking for feedback re a Petanque Club's potential use. Your committee, several of us having greatly enjoyed the bonhomie of tossing our boules with skill & élan, has every hope that a taste for the game will grow in the village. Training can be offered! And please note - a Petanque match held on 28th September (competing with Llanmaes) raised monies for both Marie Curie & The College Fields Nursing Home. Twenty-five attended, the outcome being the triumph of Llancarfan Ladies over Llanmaes Men! Phil Watts also promoted a match on the 23rd November, with a more exclusive attendance but much enjoyment.

VISITORS FROM MARS would not have understood the gathering in the village hall on 8 November – in which three of us told lies about the wine we were all getting merry with. But Sam Smith, Jim Barratt and I were told afterwards (by chairperson Gwyn Plows) that the *Call My Bluff Wine Tasting* had made an 'enjoyable & happy evening'. It also raised £376 for the village hall. Grateful thanks to all supporting it – and those who supported us home!

NEXT EVENTS DEADLINE : 21 FEBRUARY 2015



**REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY
9 NOVEMBER 2014**

120 people gathered by the Llancafarn memorial to take part in a remembrance tribute led by the Rev. Michael Short. Afterwards a full 95 people retired into the church for the service that followed.

PCC member Steve Pearce read the traditional extract from Binyon's *For the Fallen*, echoing the reading often given previously by Mick Mace, who (though present at the service) is recovering from hospitalisation.

We will remember them.



**FOR THEIR TOMORROW
WE GAVE OUR TODAY**





The rain held off nicely for a fine turn out of tractors & ploughs at September 14th's Annual Ploughing Match of the Ploughing & Hedging Society at Marcross. Chairman Andrew Studley, ably supported by his wind-blown colleagues Sarah Radcliffe & June Studley, was delighted to see a return to horse-powered ploughing, lovely farm workhorses turning the soil alongside fine vintage tractors & some soil-splitting modern monsters.



**WE PLOUGH
THE FIELDS**



A VERY SMALL PLACE : A DARDANELLES' ENCOUNTER

Readers will have registered the name of **Gwilym Robert Lougher**, which was among those read out at the memorial during the moving ceremony on the 9th of November. Nigel Williams' tragic 'roll call' in September's newsletter said that farmer's son Gwilym was the highest ranked casualty recorded here.

Lawrie Williams, whose well-known family home was in Llanvithyn from 1969 to 2007, has been able (with our thanks) to give a first hand glimpse of life for his uncle, and also of life in the Royal Army Medical Corp for Gwilym Lougher, the 35-year-old son of William & Mary Ann Lougher of Llanvithyn :

'Some years ago,' writes **Lawrie**, 'I edited the letters and Journals of my uncle, Captain H.W. Williams (known at 'Fat') of Bonvilston Cottage. These covered the whole of his service in the Royal Navy during the 1914-1918 War. He was a mid-shipman in the battleship *HMS Agamemnon*, which was sent to the Dardanelles in March 1915.'

'This ship took part in the shelling of Turkish forts, and in supporting the Army landings. By August 1915, Captain Williams was on shore at Suvla Bay, where for two weeks he helped to evacuate the wounded. In a long letter to his parents, dated 19th August, Fat wrote the following . . .'



"We had to do with RAMC people belonging to the Welsh regiments for the most part. Although one doesn't hear much of the RAMC and they don't do the fighting I think they deserve more praise than anybody. They worked day and night carrying stretchers from the front to the beach, through

sand up to their ankles and under fire from shrapnel and snipers the whole time . . ."

"The world is a very small place. An RAMC major came down to our dug-out one day to beg a loaf of bread. We had just got some from one of the ships. He stopped and talked for a few minutes and asked what part of the world I came from. I told him and he said 'Good lord, you're L. G. Williams' son of course. I remember you well: I live within two miles of Bonvilston'. He told me he was the son of the farmer near the sliding wood at the end of the Llancarfan lane. I've been through the farm a good many times."

“I had quite a good yarn with this officer and he was quite amusing and told me all about how we laid out the tennis lawn. He was quite a cheery soul and I managed to get four or five pounds of bacon out of him. We had the devil of a feed next morning; fresh fish, fried bacon and bread and jam. The fresh fish we found floating around on the surface, stunned or killed by the concussion of Turkish shells bursting in the water. The fish were jolly good too; ‘it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good’. It wasn’t often that we had a breakfast like that though; for the first week we lived off bully beef and biscuit, and water was very hard to get before the wells were found .”

‘The RAMC Major,’ continues Lawrie, ‘was of course Gwilym Lougher. ‘Perhaps,’ Lawrie suggests, ‘he was an Acting Major while on service, though only a Lieutenant by substantive rank. As noted previously, Gwilym Lougher died in Cairo on Friday 21st September 1917. Fat survived both World Wars and retired from the navy in 1949 as a Captain, to farm at Bonvilston Cottage. The privately published edition of his WW1 letters, Journals, and Diaries, which I prepared some while ago, has now been turned into an ebook and published this month as *Fat’s War*. It can be downloaded through using the following Internet link: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Fats-War-Letters-Diaries-Midshipman-ebook/dp/B00PTHKX5G>. ‘

CAUSE OF DEATH : SURVIVED

Hopefully, during the next years in which Britain will continue to commemorate the Great War, we will receive more shareable anecdotes of those who served. Meanwhile, it is intriguing to add to the list of survivors a Llancarfan man whose record has been preserved in an unexpected source. He is Private Gwilym Edwards, and his service features in the records of *The Canadian Great War Project*. See : <http://www.canadiangreatwarproject.com>.

Born in Llancarfan on 19 March 1893, Gwilym enlisted with the 29th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry on July 10th 1915. Why was he in Canada? His mother is named as Mrs. Margaret Edwards of King House, Llantrithyd. When did she learn that her son was wounded at Pozieres on the Somme?

The record, rather poignantly, lists this news as ‘Cause of Death : Survived’. It also notes that Gwilym Edwards’ name is regularly mis-spelled on most military documents, and that he was discharged at Calgary, Alberta on September 30th, 1917, being ‘medically unfit due to wounds’.

THE SLIDING WOOD

Meanwhile, as is so often the case, one query begets another. And it just so happens that Kay Brain has been researching for us in-comers the enigmatic ‘sliding wood’ that Lawrie Williams’ Uncle referred to (above). Kay has promised to throw light onto this puzzling woodland in a future issue.

SAINT CADOC & THE GREAT WAR VETERANS

Earlier this year, a trip to Brittany introduced Penny & me to more St. Cadocs than you'd ever find - even at a Fanzine Convention of Supersaints. (No, I don't really think there is such a gathering, but when you consider it, saints and superheroes do have a lot in common.) Anyway, we saw a great many effigies, some very fine and elegant, while others had a primitive antiquity.

None of them however was more curious than the one we discovered in a small oratory outside a rather desolate suburban Chapelle Saint Cado at Loudéac in mid-Brittany. The saint's effigy (below), obviously crudely repainted at times since its 17th century creation, now stands like a 'Mini Me' alongside Saints Roch & Samson. However, still displayed in the church is a photograph giving poignant evidence for a belief in the saint's healing powers.

Look closely at the early 20th century image below of the traditionally-dressed ladies kneeling before the solitary saint. It appears to be the same effigy (though Cadoc's symbolic crosier has today given way to a less appropriate knobbed staff). But leaning against the front of the oratory you can make out several sticks and at least one crutch. These are said to be the abandoned walking aids of 1st World War veterans, support no longer needed by the

former Breton soldiers, restored to health by their faith in St. Cadoc.

One can't help but be touched and intrigued.



CINÉMATOGRAPHE

ACROSS THE CENTURIES



LEFT : LLANCARFAN COMMUNITY CINEMA TODAY, WITH ITS STATE OF THE ART EQUIPMENT AND LUXURY SEATING!

BELOW : NOT US WHEN WE STARTED BUT THE EARLIEST FILM SHOW TO A PAYING AUDIENCE, LE GRAND CAFÉ IN PARIS, 1895



ABOVE : EARLY FILM SHOWS AT THEATRE ROYAL, BARRY

BELOW : LOYAL MICK MACE'S OWN CINEMA WELCOME



BANNERS & AWARDS, AWARDS, AWARDS!



FILM FUN FOR ALL AGES



THE DAWN OF CINEMA : THE LLANCARFAN FILE

“Before films found themselves featured as the main attraction in venues specifically built for the purpose . . . cinema appeared in a variety of exhibition sites. Everywhere, from outdoor fairs to department stores, opera houses to dime museums, offered films.”

<http://www.filmreference.com>

Since the dawn of the cinema age, **writes Jim Barratt**, films have been exhibited in unusual spaces not built for the purpose, like our Village Hall.

As long ago as 1895, when the Lumière brothers hosted their first public film performance at Le Grand Café in Paris, enterprising showmen have lured audiences into makeshift auditoria to gaze in wonder at stories told in light and (since 1927) sound.

Llancarfan Community Cinema is simply continuing that long and noble tradition. Technology has certainly changed, but the essence of our offer remains the same as that of cinema’s early pioneers. This is the chance for friends and neighbours to share in the magic of movies on the silver screen where they are intended to be seen. No matter how big your telly is at home, you can’t match the communal, big screen experience.

Now in our third year of operation, we’ve been blessed with support from many quarters, enabling us to buy state of the art equipment and comfortable seating. Yet putting on a monthly film show is far from a straightforward exercise, requiring time and money to do it successfully. Here are a few facts and figures to put this into some perspective:

- ❖ Contrary to popular belief, we can’t show any old film in the Village Hall. Titles have to be available on DVD and licensed for ‘non theatrical’ screenings. Most films *are* licensed in this way, but there are notable exceptions (like *Star Wars* and *The Life of Brian*). Sorry, we can’t show them.

- ❖ A film licence generally costs between £100 to £120. Add in hall hire charges, marketing, and equipment spend etc., and the average film screening costs £150 to put on. That means we need to sell around 35 of our 60 available tickets to break even; any fewer and we risk making a loss. Sale of ice creams and soft drinks however does help to balance the books.

- ❖ Taking into account film programming, marketing, ticket sales, refreshment procurement, set up time, front of house duties and clearing up, every screening involves around 25+ volunteer hours a month.

The upshot is that we're always on the look out for new volunteers, members and audiences to keep the show going. So if you'd like to contribute in any way please let us know.

Even if you can't make a contribution directly, we'd appreciate your help in spreading the word. Just pass details of our screenings to friends and family who might come. Our web site - www.llancarfan cinema.co.uk - has more information. Here's looking forward to many more future screenings!

❖ *Editor's note : Do you have memories of watching films in the Village Hall in previous decades, or in other makeshift venues locally? We'd love to hear your experiences, for publication in a future newsletter.*

❖ *Meanwhile, good neighbour **Gary Osborn** has kindly sent us the following explanation of the photograph (on the back page), which features John Ford, Martyn Hughes & Gary himself, clearly involved in some pagan ritual around a cauldron. We can't wait for a sip of their magical potion! . . .*

A PRESSING ISSUE

On a crisp October afternoon, a (possibly) ancient Llancarfan tradition was resurrected in the garden of Brookside. It was time to make cider! There had been much scouring and scrumping of any remotely accessible apples across the village on the preceding days, helped by Mr. Scott-Quelch's apple tree whacking tool (he was also very nearly brained by a particularly large apple, but thankfully his foot broke the apple's fall instead).

The recently acquired apple press, courtesy of Keith and Melinda, was brought into action by the three novice cider makers, pictured overleaf. A seemingly never ending supply of apples was chopped and loaded into the particularly vicious-looking crusher, mainly by the children of the village (a scene sure to give any health and safety inspector a nightmare). Then, as the handle was turned, the first golden liquor dripped from the press. *[MORE]*

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Edited by Ian Fell : ian@felltoearth.net

Society President Barbara Milhuisen

Society Chairman Ian Fell

Secretary Gwyneth Plows

Subscriptions & Membership to

Joann Scott-Quelch, 2 Penylan House, Llancarfan CF62 3AH

For many of the past issues & more details please see the (still to be updated) website at <http://www.llancarfansociety.org.uk/>

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Three hours and several sore backs later we had made close to 70 pints of apple juice, generated an enormous amount of pomace, and our wives had organised and booked a trip to Bath for themselves! The vat is now bubbling away nicely with a due date of the end of January.

Assuming we survive the drinking we hope to do it all again next year, and there was even talk of making a bit of an event of it, encouraging all comers to bring their apples to be squashed.

Finally, as I mentioned, we are all novices and if anyone out there does have any cider making experience any advice would be gratefully received!

Gary Osborn

❖ A glimpse of the director's POV while recording the Welsh language 'Songs of Praise' – *Dechrau Canu Dechrau Canmol* – shown on S4C on 23rd November. Shot in St. Cadoc's, the programme paid tribute to a colourful venue with sacred music from young musicians. We understand that a 2nd Cadoc showing is on 15th March – but check the transmission times.



❖ What better way to end this Christmas edition by ensuring that Santa knows about new arrivals? With Becky Mepham (née Levey) (*left*) is her & Greg's baby son Finley, while Sara & Gareth Tickner celebrate here the arrival of William Alexander. Welcome!

