

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 169 MARCH 2017



A new run
for the
Famous Fox.
Andy, Jim
& Rhiannon
take up the chase



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EDITORIAL

A couple of village correspondents (I respect them as friends) were discomfited by comments I made in my last editorial. Knowing this – and given that we always welcome reactions – they were invited to put their reservations in writing. For which our thanks. The view was that my take on last year was ‘party political’, and so contravened the brief of this historical journal. It’s a debateable point, but fortunately, in that I’ve had supportive observations from other members about the balance of my comments, I haven’t lost much sleep. As it happens the committee has just redrafted its rules to take on board web developments, &c. – but the advice that ‘it is not the intention that the Society's newsletter should formally represent sectarian views likely to arouse controversy’ still rightly holds strong. Though I hope vigorously expressed, I genuinely *did* believe that my comments were not ‘sectarian’, but (post referendum) a consensus view across the spectrum. What we *should* get to grips with is the difference between ‘politics’ and ‘*party* politics’, which the ‘sectarian’ caveat must have in mind. I can’t control how people interpret my words, but I too prefer to avoid ‘party politics’. I also know one must be discrete when commenting on local arguments which might result in litigation. But then again, how other than political does one classify defending the school against closure, care for our environment, or even the choice of charitable donations (often reflected in these pages)? And what distorted image of our village are we preserving for future readers? Surely we can’t hand on a Technicolor fantasy of a sheltered Brigadoon, inhabited by Pollyanna’s offspring, a place hidden from the outside, and mistily sheltered from the real world that shapes us. What sort of historical record is this? But thanks for writing. Funnily enough, after fifty years of professional journalism and of telling the tales of history, I’ve at times faced conflicting comments from many viewpoints. But as long as they balance out, I suggest we’re doing a tolerable job.

THE MAN WHO WAS MICK MACE

Mick Mace, OBE, Commander of the Order of St John, holder of the Freedom of Bletchley Park, former Station Officer for the Fire Service in Cardiff, died on the 26th November, 2016. As we recorded in our last Newsletter, Mick passed away in Llandough Hospital, some weeks after a car incident on Pancross Hill.

It took the capacity service in St. Cadoc's to remind parishioners what a man of many facets Mick Mace was. The be-medalled guard of honour at his funeral was distinguished, among others, by many Fire Service colleagues, alongside some of whom he served for 45 years. But it became clear from the pulpit tributes that his facets reflected so many aspects of society. Apart from his public service, Mick was known for his devotion to the church and his chairmanship of the Parochial Church Council, for work with the St. John's Ambulance in Barry, and not least for his concern for Llanbethery, where he lived for some 36 years (including those following the death of his wife Sheila in 2014).



Cinema fan on May walk



Mick & Sheila, Pakistan Flood Appeal



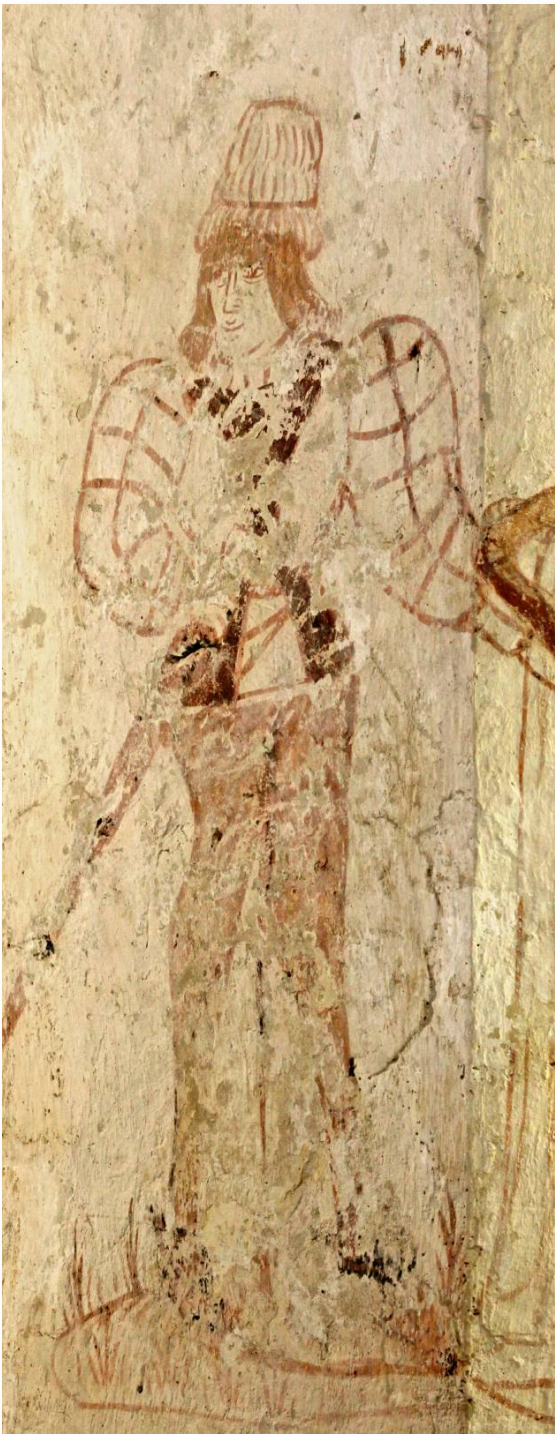
OBE at Buckingham Palace

The Rev. Malcolm Davies painted a picture of a man who 'would be completely honoured and overwhelmed' by those who paid tribute to him. Malcolm struggled sensitively with the impossibility of 'compressing 90 years of service into a few short minutes'. And while he, and Mick's old friend and colleague Neil O'Brien, related again some of the well-loved anecdotes surrounding his under-age wartime work as a Fire Service volunteer, tributes also revealed that Mick found himself fighting water as well as fire. This was in the church in the early 1990's, where rain through the roof demanded buckets & pans, and water was fought off only by Mick sourcing galvanized sheeting to place under the tiles.

Back in October 2010, Newsletter 143 was able to trace some of Mick and Sheila's life. These tales reward revisiting (including that of his climbing through the window of his bombed-out wartime school to rescue his school books). And of course it was remarkable to learn again of his work in enemy intercept, 'capturing' the morse code which supported the decoding brilliance of Bletchley Park, shaving (it is said) years off the war with Germany. In summing up Mick's 'commitment to life', Malcolm attributed the words 'warmth, generosity, pride, courage, joy and integrity', words which surely all who knew him could endorse.

A DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF FASHION

Back on the last day of 2016, the annual *New Year's Honours List* revealed itself in all its quirky glory. Mo Farrar, Andy Murray, Jessica Ennis – it wasn't difficult to endorse recognition of *their* achievements. On the other hand - tell me if I'm wrong - I *did* have some difficulty with the honours handed out to Dame Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, and to Victoria Beckham, OBE. All this on account of their 'services to fashion'.



Services to fashion? Que?! Well yes, I suppose those ladies *have* promoted commerce and trade. But surely their services are accessorised with irony when seen alongside the knighthood awarded to Ray Davies of 'The Kinks' - he who, in February 1966, satirized 'A Dedicated Follower of Fashion'. 'He thinks he is a flower to be looked at', taunts the Kinky song – 'One week he's in polka-dots, the next week he's in stripes.' I concede that those jibes were aimed, not at women, but at us fashionably-liberated *men-folk* of the swinging Sixties. (Private modellings of my 1966 Carnaby Street suit strictly by appointment.)

Nowadays of course I'm more a 'dedicated failure of fashion'. So I can allow myself to be slightly comforted by the real historical subject matter of this piece. This wraparound tries, firstly, to shed more light on the 15th century warnings against fashionable excess as depicted on our church walls. Then secondly, we learn briefly of the similarly fashionable, socially important, clothing habits of a pillar of our local society, Sir Thomas Aubrey of Llantrithyd (c.1565-1641).



Ignoring the fact that the gentleman to the left is being led off to purgatory by a cadaver, those who have read Maddy Gray's church guide to that section of the wall paintings will know that he is 'The Gallant'. He is dressed in the height of fashion of the late 1400s. We know this, partly, because his costume was not only described at the time but legislated against. More in a moment.

The complementary image on the next page is that of 'Superbia' – 'Pride' – which was said to be the most wicked of our Deadly Sins. What perhaps we haven't underlined previously is how closely Pride is in fact related to our Gallant. Both these gentlemen, if

that's what they are, are tarred with the same brush. Their critics included not only the church moralists, but also the British monarchy & the Commons in parliament.

Even as early as 1337, a Royal statute was enacted to regulate what people might wear. Closer to our gallant's heyday, updated laws were issued in 1463 and 1483 (the last being spot on for when we think the painting was created). These laws have been described as '**Sumptuary Laws**', suggesting they were there to control **Consumption**. In fact though, the messages given out by our Gallant and our Pride turn out to be rather more complex than an attempt to stop us wasting our resources.

In puzzling out for our visitors what those who commissioned our paintings wanted us to learn, I have drawn heavily here on an excellent (but tricky to get hold of) academic paper by the late Professor Claire Sponsler, detailed below¹. From her close analysis of the royal prohibitions re who can wear what, you realise that the fashion police of 1483 had motives at least as devious as the 'fashionistas' of *Vogue*.

One assumes that the main purpose in painting graphic messages on the church walls was to improve our moral behaviour. It seems self-evident, doesn't it? Here are the sins to be avoided, the good deeds to be delivered, an empowering knightly saint to fortify our faith, and awful warnings should we fall short of perfection.

On the other hand, if a priest chose to look at our Gallant and our Pride in the light of the Sumptuary Laws, he could abstract several sermonfuls of material – and not just for our moral guidance. The clear fact of these paintings (whether or not the sermons they stimulated made the point) is that their morality is the cloak behind which hide messages of social control. Know your place.

Maddy's *Dancing with Death* booklet relates in some detail the fashionable excesses of our archetypal Gallant. He has silly pointed shoes of excessive length (more clearly seen in other contemporary images); he has indulgently-padded, expensively-quilted shoulders on his immodestly short jacket; worst of all, to quote



¹ Claire Sponsler. *Narrating the Social Order : Medieval Clothing Laws*. **Clio** ; Spring 92, Vol. 21, Issue 3, p.p. 265 – 283.

words from Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, his 'scantinesse of clothyng' fails to cover 'the shameful membres of men' and 'the buttokes of [t]hem faren as it were the hyndre part of a she-ape in the fulle of the moone'.

Supported by the royal statutes, any St. Cadoc's priest would have every encouragement to criticise such fashionable excess. He could also challenge indulgence in luxurious fabrics. But curiously, in the (perhaps unique) case of our Gallant, the priest would have to explain why our Gallant got at least one thing right. He is wearing a woollen Monmouth cap. Here, for once, he is 'buying British', and so supports the Wye-side woollen trade.

As it happens, a general 'Buy British' legal imperative goes right back to 1337, when the royal statute directed that 'no man nor woman, great nor small . . . shall wear no cloth, which shall be bought after the feast of Saint Michael next coming, other than is made in England, Ireland, Wales, or Scotland . . .'² Merchants are forbidden to import such foreign cloth, lest they be punished 'at the king's will'. Might this ring any bells in Trump's would-be protectionist States of America?

Unfortunately for morality, there is a small exception to Edward III's 1337 clothing law. Included in the above prohibition are the words 'the King, Queen and their children only except'. It was in practice a case of 'Buy British, unless you happen to be Royal', which one might think rather deflates any moral message against luxurious excess.

Luckily for the moralisers, the Gallant embodied yet another vice with which the priest could counter any argument. The Gallant's flamboyant indulgence in fashion was a clear symptom of his **Pride**. And this, of course, shows how he is related to our curious young deadly-sinner in parti-coloured hose, he who sits on a humble stool yet has a royal crown placed upon his head. This is the superbly self-satisfied 'Superbia', Pride himself.

It is still difficult to feel confident in understanding some of the symbolism of our Pride character (notably the scimitar and the political references of the creatures crowning him). However, it is clear that Pride is someone who is getting above his station. (We still wonder whether this is a satire on Henry VII, aspiring in exile to the throne of Britain.) What *is* quite obvious is that Pride doesn't know his place in society. Just like the Gallant's 'services to fashion', Pride's upper body, elegantly topped off with ermine and a crown, shows that he doesn't respect his God-determined place in the world. Fashion is not just fashion; clothes made visible a person's social standing.

The royal statutes and the symbolism of our paintings gave out strong messages about fashion and its ability to indicate our ranking in the hierarchy of power. But it's difficult to think to what extent the agricultural community of Llancarfan could afford to dress above its station. Spiky shoes are not too good when you're ploughing fields. *Narrating the Social Order* suggests that the laws were less and less aimed at us commoners – though the wall-paintings clearly are. And a 1400's devotional work certainly criticised the 'wretched knave, that goeth to the plough and to cart . . . [W]hereas sometime a white kirtle and a russet gown would have served such-a-one well, now he must have a fresh

² *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol.1. p.280 f.

doublet of five shillings or more the price . . .'.³ So perhaps even the humble ploughman felt he could be upwardly mobile by dressing above the rank his rulers wished upon him.



FAMILY AND SOCIETY IN
EARLY STUART GLAMORGAN:
THE HOUSEHOLD ACCOUNTS
OF SIR THOMAS AUBREY
OF LLANTRITHYD, c.1565-1641



Edited by
LLOYD BOWEN

Around 1548, the Reformation began to whitewash away all of our church's moral illustrations. Then in 1603 James the First repealed the statutes concerning hats, caps, foreign trade and 'excesse of Apparell' and 'all other Acts heretofore made concerning Apparell'. So when Sir Thomas Aubrey of Llantrithyd began to keep his financial accounts (some survive from 1623 onwards), he had no church walls to criticise him or guide him on what to wear. Sir Thomas was no social climbing ploughman. But in the book shown here⁴, Lloyd Bowen illustrates how for Vale gentry, fashionable garments were vital to social standing: 'Sir Thomas Aubrey's elevated social position needed to be confirmed at all times by displaying his status through easily recognized symbols such as a fine wardrobe'. [p.10.]

Aubrey's *Household Accounts* deserve far more study than a review of his clothing budget. Building works, furnishings, wages, legal matters, coal & lead, even medical expenses offer rich source material to re-imagine his life at Llantrithyd. Space here allows only a few examples from the notes of a dedicated follower of fashion:

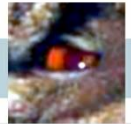
'Apparell & other necessaries that concerne my self [1627].	
6 yards of Turkey gromam, att 7s. per year	£2.2s.0d.
For an ell of taffita	13s.4d.
For a paire of damasked spurrs	12s.
For two dosen of silke and gould points	2s.
For 3 quarters of sattin	9s.11d.
For 6 yards quarter of fine Spanish cloth at 17s per yard	£5.6s.4d.
For 6 ells of Florence tafita sarcnett at 10s. per ell	£3.
Paire of silke taseells	2s.6d.
For 2 dosen of rich buttons for the cloke	12s.
Payd to Mrs. Bowringes for cloth for shertes, hancarche[efs], night capes & 4 dosone of silk poyntes	£5

Lloyd Bowen totals the complete 1627 list of clothing costs at over £46. (A servant's annual wage was between £1 & £3.) But he notes that damascened spurs, inlayed with gold or silver designs, were an important signifier of Sir Thomas's knighthood. Peanuts too - when told that in 1640 Sir Lewis Mansel of Margam spent £230 on clothing and jewellery. But should we seek moral guidance from this year's May Walk at Llantrithyd, we might view the ruins, review the Household Accounts, and again conclude that status, stately piles, and even fashion are ever doomed 'as chimney sweepers' to come to dust.

³ British Library MS. Add.41321, Fols. 101 b-2.

⁴ Publication of the *South Wales Record Society*, No.19. 2006. ISBN 0 9525961 9 9.

ANIMAL CRACKERS!



Alison Hannaby has been a keen photographer of the village's Eagle Owl during the winter months. Steve Vink reports a final sighting, eyeing up the family dog. Steve noted too that, on rapid take-off, the owl blessed him with seagull-like precision.



Meanwhile, the window-sill robin wishes to submit a complaint. Not only have the bird feeders been invaded by a squadron of high-flying finches - gold, green, long-tail, you name them - but the squirrel has also pushed in on the nuts. Is nothing sacred?

And a final quirk, overseen behind the White Chapel a few summers ago. Sightings of a slow-worm, once a commonplace hereabouts, seem fewer. But is this warfare or a tangled passionate embrace captured on camera?



Please don't forget the Society's forthcoming Calendar Photograph Competition. We're welcoming high-resolution images. We wish only that you keep masterpieces scenic, free from people close-ups, and no Selfies unless taken by birds!

AND A PAGEFUL OF JIMS!

THE BIG FRIENDLY JIM

Back just before Christmas, village youngsters were swept away by *The BFG* – or in this case the BFJ – otherwise know as The Big Friendly Jim.

Adding another modern classic to his **first fifty film shows** in the village hall, Jim Barratt invited all of us youngsters to a gigantic performance of the brilliantly realised Roald Dahl story. Photo-realistic animation really has come into its own with this movie. And there's no denying that, as Wales' resident expert on rural cinema, Jim towers over us all!

Next on screen

Friday 17 March :

Hunt for the Wilderpeople 2016 12A

Thu 30 Mar : *Nocturnal Animals* 2016, 15

Friday 28 April : *Sully* 2016, 12A

JIM THE MOVED ON & JIM THE JUST ARRIVED

There is no doubt that many clients of the *Fox & Hounds* will think fondly of the ingenious dishes created by James Milward [L.] during his stint as our chef and host through the Autumn months. We wish him well in his next ventures.

But now we welcome the latest Jim team - Jim Dobson and his wife Rhiannon. This talented young couple have been feeding and warming clients since the 6th February – and we managed to slow them down just long enough to snatch our cover picture. Squeezing in with them as we went to



press was the team's surprise addition - Andy Farquharson, who's just joined *The Fox* as General Manager. Andy – a Society Committee member & (with his fiancée Becci) a much-welcomed villager – was last written about in these pages as a BBC Operations & Logistics Manager. Hopefully we'll be able to share the menu of Andy's cunning plans as he gets his feet under the table.

Meanwhile, Jim and Rhiannon Dobson have taken the helm. They are working as head chef and front-of-house manager respectively. For a number of years the couple ran the acclaimed *Potting Shed* pub, and a boutique hotel, *The Rectory*, in the Cotswolds. They have also worked extensively in Europe. Rhiannon is originally from Church Village, where her parents still live, and she was keen to return to her native south Wales.

'Running the *Fox & Hounds* is perfect for us,' says Rhiannon, who made several passionate villagers very welcome on (for instance) St. Valentine's night. A terrific Chateaubriand confirmed the team's enthusiasm for serving lovely food. 'We aim to ensure that the pub becomes the heart and soul of the village once more,' she says. 'We want to create a warm, relaxed, welcoming atmosphere where families can enjoy a Sunday roast, drop by for a good pub meal, have a simple supper or something rather more elaborate.'

So, another village opportunity to keep the *Fox* on the run. And for us to join Harry Lewis, the Coach House Inns' boss, in thanking and praising Nicola for holding the fort – or the hot plates – throughout the recent times of change.

LETTER FROM DISTANT BONVILSTON!

We were more than pleased to hear that our 'bread on the waters' **2017 *Calendar*** brought pleasure to Mrs. Kathleen Lougher of Bonvilston – the Lougher name for centuries resonant throughout Llancarfan. (There *are* still remaining calendars, highly prized for photographic memories. Just ask!)

Mrs. Lougher kindly wrote :

- March 2017 : A beautiful photo of "Pen Onn", where my husband, the late Arthur Lougher, was born in 1923.
- July 2017 : *The Fox & Hounds*, about 1920. David & Amelia Harris ran the pub for many years. They had eight children who used to entertain in the evenings. Betty played the piano and Elsie & David sang.
- September 2017 : *The School*. I was thrilled to see my daughter, Christine Lougher, in the photograph taken about 1957. Sadly no photo of my son – David Lougher – and his cousins Julie, Neal, Nigel and Ian in the 1960s. The head was Mr. Lewis & teacher Corelli Tolchard.

Apologies for the late circulation of this newsletter : scuppered we regret by Internet access problems & last-minute content changes.

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

SOCIETY DATES SCHEDULED FOR 2017

Committees : 7 March / 18 April [AGM] / 6 June / 4 July

General Society Events :

1 May May Day Walk around Llantrithyd : See notices for details

18 April AGM : See notices for details of speaker

2 July Petanque : The Ruth Watts Cup

Sat 1 July The Barn Dance **PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGE**

22 Sept Annual Dinner

8 Dec Christmas Social Evening

St Cadoc Holy Week and Easter Services 2017

[please see church notices for Penmark & Llantrithyd]

Weds in Lent	9.30 am	Eucharist & Stations of the Cross.
Palm Sunday	9 April	
	11.15 am	Solemn Eucharist at St Cadoc with Donkey parade.
Mon to Wed in Holy Week	10-12 April	
	9.30 am	Eucharist at St Cadoc and Stations of the Cross.
Maundy Thurs	13 April 7.00 pm	Eucharist of Last Supper, washing of feet, and watch until Midnight. List in the church to choose your time for the watch.
Good Friday	14 April	
	10.00 am	Stations of the Cross for all at St Cadoc's.
	1.15 pm	Liturgy of the Day with Holy Communion at St Cadoc's.
Holy Sat	15 April	
	8.00 pm	St Cadoc Easter Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter.
Easter Day	16 April	
	11.15 am	Solemn Eucharist at St Cadoc.

Just a note that at Easter the school is selling chicks (not real ones!) to raise money for Velindre Hospital. The cute knitted chicks are made by Velindre Hospital volunteers, & are filled with chocolate eggs. They cost £1.00 each.

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**NEXT COPY, NEWS &
LETTERS DEADLINE :
21 MAY 2017**

ANDREW VICARI 1932-2016. Penny Fell introduces the memories of Jenny & Johnny Morris, formerly of Llancarfan & Llantrithyd.

“There is an empty chapel in a glorious setting, shrieking to be painted. I am going to convert it into a studio.” Those were the words of Andrew Vicari, in the 1960s, before becoming Britain’s richest living artist, and self-styled ‘painter of kings.’ So he announced his arrival in the Wesleyan chapel. Wales-born son of an Italian restaurateur, alleged grandson of a clown, Andrew was first to make the chapel a home. As seen in Newsletter 168, he died late in 2016 after a life of extremes. He was almost unknown in the UK, yet museums are dedicated to him in Saudi Arabia. In 2001 he was the UK’s 18th richest person (just behind Paul McCartney) yet was bankrupt by 2014.



“In the 60s,” *writes Jenny*, “Andrew became a good, if rather eccentric, friend. We often visited him in the White Chapel, and he us in *Glan yr Afon*. Andrew had been the youngest student ever to receive a scholarship to the Slade School of Art. He was taught by Lucien Freud, then later became world famous as the official painter of the first Gulf War and subsequently of the Saudi royal family. Back in those days,

however, he was a young, charismatic addition to village life; he set up huge easels in the chapel, working in the wonderful light. He fitted in well!”

“I especially remember one summer evening being invited to a party. Some of us, including Andrew, decided to dress up as the fairies from a 'Midsummer Night’s Dream'. We all went to the *Fox and Hounds* first, full of happy people enjoying their evening. But the extraordinary thing was that no one took any notice of us wearing our wings and waving wands!”

“With an important exhibition looming, Andrew decided that Woodie (Edward our son, a pupil at Llancarfan School) was a good subject for a portrait. Every day, for about two weeks, Woodie walked over to the chapel to 'sit' for his picture. The exhibition proved a great success and the painting sold at a much reduced price to Woodie’s parents! In time Andrew’s sitters included Augustus John, Sophia Loren, Norman Wisdom and many Saudi royals. This made him wealthy - in 2004, he was cited in the *Sunday Times Rich List* as being worth £92 million, owning properties in Monaco, Nice and Riyadh.”

“Unfortunately this opulent lifestyle did not last. Much of his money seemed to disappear, perhaps because he was over generous with his hospitality, or maybe just careless! Whatever the case, at the end of his life he returned to his family in Neath, where he was most at home. Once again, we were closely in touch in his final years. The picture opposite shows Andrew visiting our home near Pontardawe in 2015. Behind him is his portrait of our son.”

PF Postscript: it was rumoured that Andrew painted murals on the White Chapel walls, but Jenny believes this to be untrue. So it may be a relief to hear there will be no fundraising drive for restoration work to rival St Cadocs! Andrew’s local memorial will remain the vivid recall of those who knew him.

A WELCOME FROM WALES – AND FRENCH WITH TEARS

Our President, Barbara Milheusen, has finally returned to the bosom of the Vale of Glamorgan. As a prime creator of your society, Barbara nevertheless felt the pangs of separation when leaving her distant views of the French Pyrenees. Tears still come to her eyes as she tells of chatting on the phone to her neighbours – and of missing the fun of playing ‘Le Scrabble’ in French! The battles of ‘Scrabble’ apart, Barbara’s farewell to France had its dramas :

■ Having decided, *writes Barbara*, to return permanently to Wales, I sold my house in France, but have still kept a vineyard and barn. I then bought a house as near to Llancafán as I could afford.

Twenty five years ago I retired, took my car and trailer, cat and dog, and spent most of my time in France, there in the village where my husband died and is buried. It took three days to get there, but the experiences surrounding getting back to Wales took even longer.



My visitors in France were very important to me. First came my brother and family, and they finally bought a house there, nearly next door. Others included Phil and Ruth Watts, who celebrated their Ruby wedding with me in rustic style. Ian and Penny (Fell) dropped in to interview me. Graham and Kay Brain also visited, and looked after my house and animals. As for my birthdays, I celebrated my 60th playing rounders, my 70th

playing cricket, and the best was my 80th – in my garden, with my family and 80 guests, playing touch rugby. I still have the bruises.

Time came to come home. So I turned to Dominic, Audrey and Graham Jenkins' grandson. The Jenkins had also visited, so could give Dominic directions on how to get there. When the day arrived, I told my neighbours to expect a Welshman. Dominic was informed that I lived in the last house of the village. However, he arrived rather later than expected, stopped in the square, checked the names on the letterboxes, and finally found Jenkins (my brother's house) with his torch. Then he began to look for an entrance.

Meanwhile, I had given them up for the day, and had gone to bed. Suddenly I awoke - to see the shadow of a gun flickering on the wall, and pointing at me. If I can translate the words that I heard, these roughly amounted to 'Barbara! Get up and identify! Intruders to the village!'

Back in the square, Dominic had turned to the house opposite Clive's, only to see a person, all in white, with a rifle pointing through her window, telling him to account for himself. 'Barbara!' shouted Dominic. 'Barbara!' The lady finally summoned him to follow her. Dominic understood, and she walked ahead, in front of his van, carrying her gun, finally bringing him to me. I then had to identify him. Just about satisfied, my neighbour – did I say her name is Anthonia? - returned home to reassure her husband, who had been upstairs with his other gun, also determined to see that the village was safe.

Dominic made his escape, back to Wales, and has moved my goods to where I now live in Rhoose. Anthonia and her husband have made their peace with my intruder, and are promising to visit me here, minus their guns. I for my part am planning to have Dominic on hand to greet them – just in case!

WRITING HOME

Chances are there will be several young people this Autumn who we must congratulate as they leave home to pursue training in distant seats of learning. If they happen to be anything like those of us sent off in the 'Press Button A' era, they *may* not be the *best* of communicators back to their family seats. *Facebook* & *Twitter* have possibly made things easier, but one suspects that parents must still cope with the inevitable cross-country silence.

Imagine though the isolation and separation felt – around 150 years ago – when so many family members braved full oceans as 'economic migrants' to establish new lives across the globe. Such realizations were brought home a few weeks ago when Llantwit's admirable *History Society* invited Cardiff University's Professor of Welsh History, Bill Jones, to talk about 'Welsh

emigrants from Glamorgan and their correspondence home'. His 'Letters from America' proved intriguing, entertaining, and certainly moving.

So - *were* our ancestors any better at keeping in touch than nowadays? We can't be sure – because though thousands of letters survive, many more have vanished. But the evidence found in the remaining letters suggests that even back then the need to apologize for not getting in touch was commonplace.

Professor Jones focussed mainly on the surviving Welsh language letters, these being less studied. We knew that it could take months to hear of death or disaster, even of welcome news. And, whatever the language, our hearts reached out to the writer who asked "A ydynt oll yn fyw? / Are they all alive?"

Listening to Professor Jones brought home just how much myopic letter-pouring he braved in his researches, in archives & libraries, everywhere from the National Library to the tiniest newspaper collection. Ironic then that some of these letters are now readily accessible on computers – using, for instance, the National Library's *Welsh Newspapers Online*. Take this story of those awaiting news from Australia, found in the *Merthyr Telegraph*, 29 Aug 1857 :

'The arrival of an Australian mail this week was gladly welcomed by all. Women cried for joy, and stout-hearted, and strong-framed men shook ere opening the letter . . .' As for the postman, he 'had been for many months "bored, teased, and blowed up," by a persevering Irishwoman, who was anxiously expecting a letter from a darlint [sic] boy in America . . .'

Much over-excited journalism describes *that* particular mother's despair, until - *after a whole year* - the postman finally carried a letter from America. Then the lady 'to his utter alarm, fell down and prayed to the Virgin . . . he only by dint of great effort succeeded at last in calming the poor overjoyed woman.'

Such was the fascination with news from afar that neighbours would often gather round to hear the contents of a distant letter. Indeed, the sender might well have asked that family news of the New World should be widely shared with friends & relatives. The reading often turned into a public performance.

But what, you ask, has this to do with Llancarfan? Well, rather excitingly, *since* his Llantwit lecture, Professor Jones has generously sent us an ***unpublished and previously unseen set of letters***, written to and from our very own patch of earth. To be specific, to/from Lancadle and St. Nicholas. Space prevents reproduction this time round. So – rather like the lady hoping for a letter from her 'darlint' boy – we'll just have to wait until the June issue. But as one letter was written in 1816, three months' delay can hardly hurt!

ALL THE PLUSSES – YEAR 6 SCHOOL COUNCIL REPORTS . . .



Earlier in February a group of maths whizzes from Lllancarfan School went to Ysgol Y Ddraig to participate in a fun maths challenge tournament with 11 other schools in the Vale. Lllancarfan Primary came 5th out of the 11 schools. Not too bad but next time we want to come 1st!

Percussive Plusses

On Friday 6th February, Patrick and Luke from Musical Adventure visited Lllancarfan School to teach us percussion! Each class had a 1-hour workshop. We all had our own instrument, we learnt percussion, start and stop signals, and some dance moves to go with the music, and it was really good fun! It was brilliant being allowed to be so loud with the instruments too, although all the teachers may have gone home with headaches! There were 3 different instruments: a scraper, a drum and a block drum. We all thought the workshops were amazing and we hope they will come again!



Tarmac's Big Plus

Pupils from our School eco committee were thrilled to accept a £100.00 donation from Aberthaw cement plant to assist with upgrading our bio-diversity area. Children gave representatives Kara Bennet & David Taylor a tour of the school grounds to explain our bio-diversity projects.

Headteacher Mr Smith said 'It's fantastic that Tarmac have supported their local school and community in this way. The children have requested that this kind donation be used to help re-line our pond. Our bio-diversity area is vital for outdoor learning.'

Girls Plus Boys

We've now got an amazing girls' rugby team and they've recently taken part in several tournaments against other schools in the Vale. Mr Bilney is really proud of them, saying they've played brilliantly for such a new-formed team. They both won or drew lots of matches and just get better and better! On Friday 13th February 2 mixed teams played in a tournament on Barry Island. Both teams amazed, winning 6 matches & drawing 1.

