

# LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 170 JUNE 2017

CHURCH BELL FOUNDRY

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A.D. 1570

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WHITECHAPEL  
BELL FOUNDRY LTD

In 1999 this Georgian shop front in London's Whitechapel welcomed Llancafarn to its (now) 447-year-old foundry to recast the bells of St. Cadoc's. Made Big Ben too. It has just closed. Phil Watts has rescued the story . . .



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## EDITORIAL

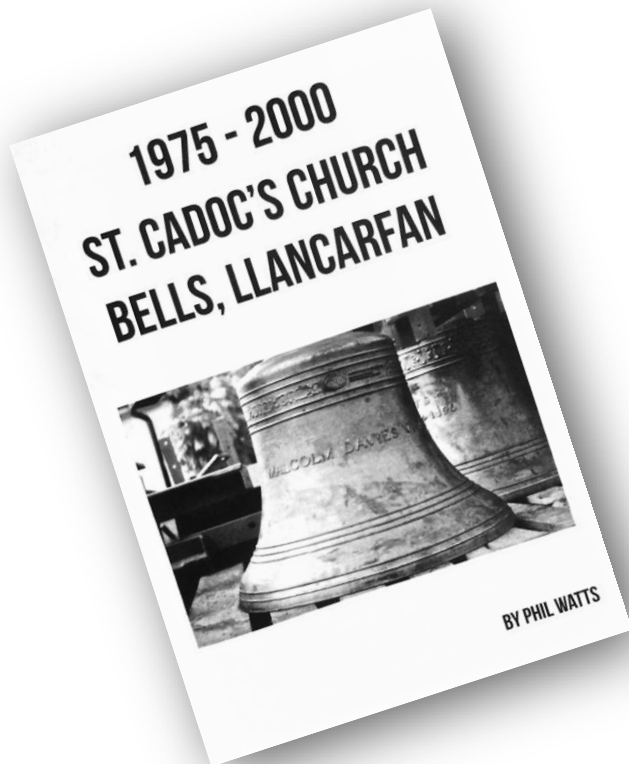
### THOUGHTS FOR EDITORS, PRESENT & FUTURE

Thrilled though one always is by the aquatic trans-Carfan contests on Boxing Day, it's worth noting that when it comes to editing your newsletter there is a tug-of-war too. This rope has at least three ends. One is **Interest**, one is **Detail**, and the third is **Available Space**. It is a privilege that this newsletter is there to record an historical archive of our ancestors' (and own) doings & discoveries, but also painful at times to have to edit some of the minutiae as a concession to **Available Space**.

The fact is, when editing this newsletter one sometimes has to squash things. It's not just a case of herding words, but of trying to use memorable pictures, hoping to make best use of the eight *colour* pages with which our printers, the ever helpful *Infographics*, bless us. (Incidentally, as an indirect knock-on from weeks of internet deprivation by ITS Technology, the picture-editing software I've used has stopped working, so I'm frustrated that this edition's image presentation feels a bit basic. Sorry.) On the other hand, the National Library of Wales has asked to digitally archive our humble magazine, so that should put some lead in our society pencils.

There are many village tales to be told (and bells to be tolled) in this June 2017 newsletter – including a follow-up after Professor Bill Jones's Llantwit Major Society talk on letters from and to America. Squeezed out though from our extracts from his account was this, from a David Morgan of Providence, who in 1870 wrote to explain to his mother in Wales some unfamiliar American phrases. These included 'I guess', and 'rightaway'. Best of all was his conviction that they were taking the Mickey when, in answer to some of his conversational comments, they would often reply 'y y'. Only if you repeat 'y y' with a proper Welsh pronunciation will you hear the Americanism that remains a commonplace response even to this very day.

## SUMMONED BY BELLS



*Did this story ring a bell?* Perhaps you've picked up the news that the Whitechapel Church Bell Foundry – the oldest manufacturing company in Britain – has just closed down in its present historical London premises? Various aspects of the company's trade will carry on elsewhere, but it is profoundly sad that those 447 years of traditional skills have now left the workshops in which they were first practiced. The shop you see on our front cover was built in 1670, only four years after the Great Fire of London. It is listed, and must survive – but in what new guise?

Anyway, you will recall that this was the foundry which created Britain's most resonant marker of time, the Big Ben bell. Not to mention America's Liberty Bell, and more handbells than our own campanological historian Phil Watts can – well, shake a handbell at. **And – this is where Llancarfan chimes in – in 1999 the Whitechapel Bell Foundry recast the bells of St. Cadoc's.** So it is the happiest of coincidences that Phil has just brought together his own memories and images of the remarkable project that reshaped the soundscape of our village.

Phil's copious records, seen above, are a classic example of drawing on the resources that the Society Newsletter has preserved during the last 30 years. In this case, Phil has chosen not to re-narrate the accounts he contributed & notes he took at the time, but to compile them, essentially for his own and posterity's historical records, in a convenient (very limited edition) reference form. [Others might well wish to pursue a similar assembly of other recurring topics from the newsletters, all available online courtesy of Chairman Graham Brain.]

And so here, for the first time in their original colour, it is also possible to share some of the village pictures recorded between the time when the church's bell installation was condemned, back in 1994, and their triumphant re-hanging five years later. The pages ahead are adapted from Phil's notes. Over to him . . .



St. Cadoc's earliest mural bell ringer

■ The first St. Cadoc's bell was recast by an itinerant bell founder, Thomas Stone, in 1646. He would arrive with his family to make a mould of sand and clay. We think the cast making could have been where the tennis club now stands because, on excavating the site in 1975, John Wood found there an area of burnt soil and stone work. Two other bells were also cast later, in 1664, by John Palmers of Gloucester.

■ Over two centuries later, my grandfather William Liscombe of Llanvythin Mill was associated with the Victorian recasting of a ring of four bells in 1890. These though were always unsatisfactory, unmusical and too heavy for the tower.

■ I was not personally involved in bell ringing until 1975. Then Harry Hughes introduced John Morris and myself to the bells of St. Cadoc's tower. From the time I started I kept a book with a record of those ringing the bells.

■ Bill Field was then the vicar. He came to Llanancarvan in 1972, as a sick man, with two years to live, and a mission to close the church because of lack of support and debt. In fact he retired twenty years later, with plans to refurbish the church, plans then carried on enthusiastically by Rev. Malcolm Davies.

■ However, the bell installation was condemned in 1994, but was adapted for chiming until recasting could take place. Then it became known that fifty per cent funding could be obtained for bells to be recast to ring in the Millennium. So the Restoration Committee had the courage to combine the reconstruction of the tower with the installation of a recast ring of six bells. Half of the £40,000 cost was raised locally, and a plaque was placed in the tower naming the major contributors.

■ The dismantling of the bell structures began on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1999. The bells were carried to Whitechapel Foundry by Steve Powell's (Ty Uchaf) transport, accompanied by me & the Rev. Malcolm Davies as passengers. Pictured here are the old bells as they were loaded for their London journey.





*Images clockwise from the Top Left :*  
 Malcolm Davies with the old bells in the Whitechapel foundry; a recast bell bearing his name; celebratory cake (another was made of cement!); the arrival of the new bells in 1999; practicing the peals – Phil Watts, Sue Evans, Philip Gammon, Georgina Powell, Robert Harris & Roger Harris, 12 Dec 1999.

■ After being recast, the bells were tested by Nicholson Engineering at Bridport, and then were assembled in the church tower.

The bells were dedicated by Bishop Barry on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1999 and a team of local ringers rang in the millennium.

Many local people played their part in dismantling the four Victorian-cast bells, and villagers re-assembled to celebrate the new ring of six. Vicar Malcolm was hauled up and down the tower several times, greatly to the joy of onlookers.

Could this be the new route to heaven?

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

At the **Society's AGM** on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, an anticipated introduction to our local wells & their history couldn't go ahead because of access issues with the hall's projection screen. It is hoped to reinstate this talk at a later stage. This meant that the usual administrative business of the AGM held sway. As noted elsewhere, Audrey Baldwin & Phil Watts resigned from the committee after many years of service. Gordon Kemp and Shiela Hughes were invited to join the committee, and happily they accepted.

Following the local government elections, at the **Community Council** level, it is useful to note that John Angell is Llancarfan Chairman, Martyn Hughes is Vice Chair. They are joined by Jane Lott (Llancadle), Katherine Kemp, Joann Quelch, Melinda Thomas, & Tony Thomas. Llantrithyd ward is represented by Arthur Paulett, Alexandra Rees and Philip Bear. Trouble them gently!

Representing us now in the **Vale Council** are Gordon Kemp and Matt Lloyd. Gordon is appointed Cabinet member with responsibility for Social Services, Health and Leisure. So your society and its concerns can claim a friendly recognition at several levels of government.

We understand that the **Village Hall** committee has also had personnel changes, with Matthew Valencia in the Chairman's seat, and Kay Brain continuing in the role of Treasurer. Grateful thanks for their commitment to the hall's success went to several retiring members, including Sue Taylor, Gwyneth Plows, Ann Ferris & Gordon (him again) Kemp.

### **Fund-raising for village defibrillator : from [llancarfancine@gmail.com](mailto:llancarfancine@gmail.com)**

Following Society discussion, the *Fox & Hounds* is seeking donations to fund a Community Public Access Defibrillator (CPAD) for Llancarfan, supported by the [SADS UK charity](#). Individuals, groups and societies can make donations via the [Just Giving website](#). Donations can also be made in person via a SADS UK collection box in the *Fox* bar. The fund raising target stands at £1,500, which covers the defibrillator and storage cabinet, plus installation and maintenance. Further details available in the pub - or just ask Andy!

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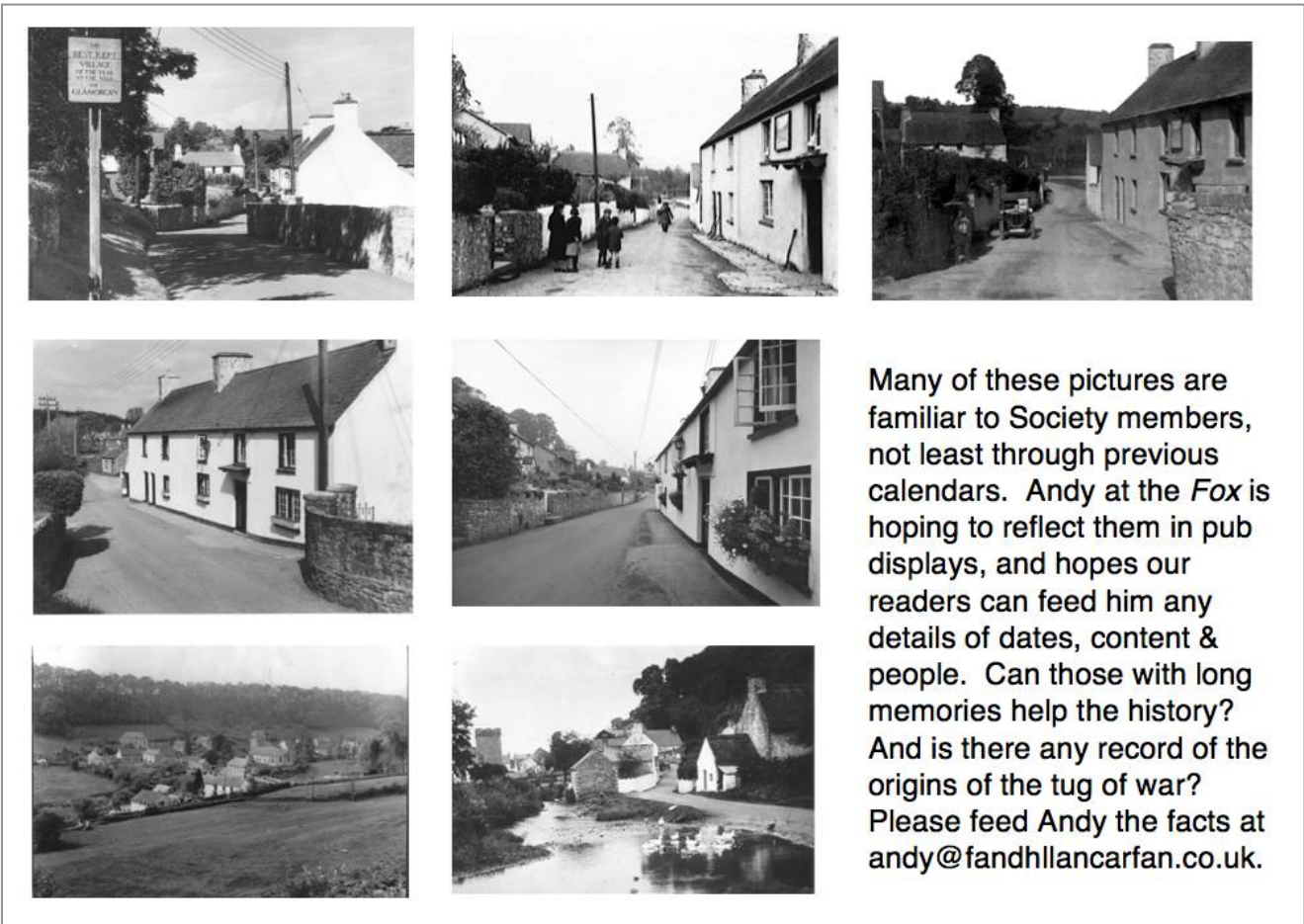
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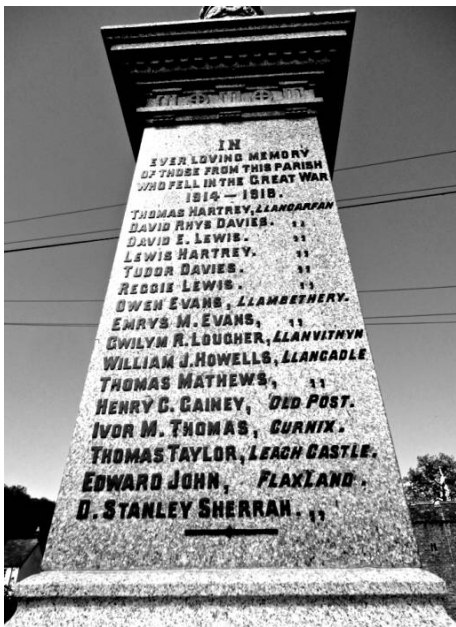
Please visit our revitalised site at <http://www.llancarfansociety.org.uk>

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



Many of these pictures are familiar to Society members, not least through previous calendars. Andy at the *Fox* is hoping to reflect them in pub displays, and hopes our readers can feed him any details of dates, content & people. Can those with long memories help the history? And is there any record of the origins of the tug of war? Please feed Andy the facts at [andy@fandhillancarfan.co.uk](mailto:andy@fandhillancarfan.co.uk).

## OUR UNIQUE MEMORIAL?



Stuart Stanton, an authority on war memorials throughout Wales, has kindly been in touch to alert your Society to a curiosity about our village war memorial which *could* make it unique in South Wales. He says – and his *Facebook* movie is on the address below – that it follows the ‘very peculiar way of listing not only the names of servicemen *but also their addresses*’. Apparently this invaluable recording of those we remember, complete with their homes, is not uncommon in Welsh language memorials, notably in mid-Wales and the north. But Stuart says this is the furthest south he’s ever discovered such an example.

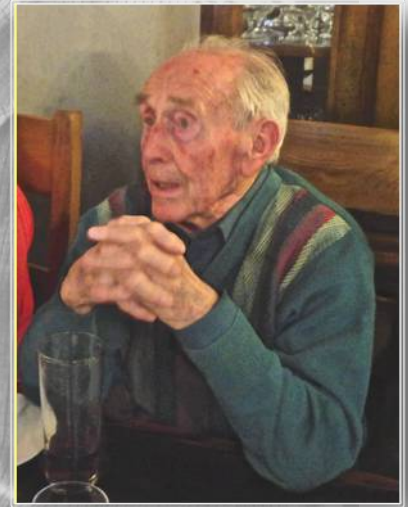
The memorial says ‘Erected by the parishioners’, but it uses no Welsh text. Records of course survive of its dedication in 1920, but we’ve seen nothing about the individuals who, as it were, composed the record. Why the Welsh language tradition? (And why not of course?) Who recorded our heroes in their Vale homes? Thoughts would be very welcome.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-qLJlozgB8&index=10&list=PLLpfS84cDKTF2WPUUpvSn6UsgPI3YABpI0>

LLANCARFAN  
SOCIETY  
⌘  
30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
BUFFET  
EVENING



Founding committee members of this prestigious society gathered to share memories on April 11<sup>th</sup>. Those hosted by the present committee included [Left] Derek Hicks, [Right] Phil Watts, [Bottom Left] John Cann, and Andrew Griffiths, seen [Bottom Right] with another founder, your President Barbara Milhuisen. Back then, Andrew clocked in as youngest member of the original committee.



Graham Brain did the formal welcoming for this old committee get-together, and a tasty *Fox & Hounds* buffet lubricated anecdotes & the melancholy sharing of reflections on time's eternal flight.



PHIL WATTS's countless contributions to the Society were also celebrated when Phil left the committee at the AGM. And the lady who has brought balanced judgments to every meeting has retired too – AUDREY BALDWIN. Thanks to these & other long servers we have much to live up to. We wish them well.







LLANCARFAN  
SOCIETY  
⌘  
30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
MAY DAY  
WALK



*Clockwise from Top Left* : The ruins of Llantrithyd Place; St. Illtyd's Church; Prof. Maddy Gray displays Mansel tomb; Place in 1830; walkers set off around the Aubrey domain.



## 30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY MAY DAY WALK

*President Barbara Milhuisen writes :*

*"This year's Llancarfan Society walk around Llantrithyd brought back many happy memories. An earlier visit in the early 1990s had explored aspects of the flora with Dr. John Etherington, who was of course a founder member, and also about the fauna, accompanied by Len Mortimer, a fondly-remembered gamekeeper from Lancadle. So this time around I was hoping for the historical half of the story . . . and I was not to be disappointed!"*

As ever, *adds your editor*, your society committee see it as their duty to keep their President in a good mood, so it is encouraging to have Barbara's endorsement of this year's walk, an exploration guided as so often by our ever-supportive, always-willing member, Professor Maddy Gray.

However, Maddy would be the first to confirm that this year's walk was more than a little tinged with sadness. As we gathered in the church for our taste of history, generously welcomed with drinks by Jeanne Bear & Carol McCarthy, we shared a sadness with the Llantrithyd ladies as they dressed the church for the following day's funeral. This was to be the family and the village's farewell to the late John Fairfax, the warmly respected Llantrithyd farmer.

Maddy Gray and I were particularly aware of the sadness, because only three weeks earlier, Mr. Fairfax had walked us around the surprisingly extensive ruins and mounds of Llantrithyd Place, well known to locals, but to visitors from distant (!) Llancarfan an un-plumbed mystery of local history. We had come away from our hours with Mr. Fairfax having learnt very much more about the vanished fishponds and raised walkways & river bridges that had once been the elegant gardens of the mansion of the Bassetts, the Mansells, and the Aubreys [*see p.9*]. Equally poignantly, these fields and woods had been John Fairfax's childhood haunts, and history breathed within him.



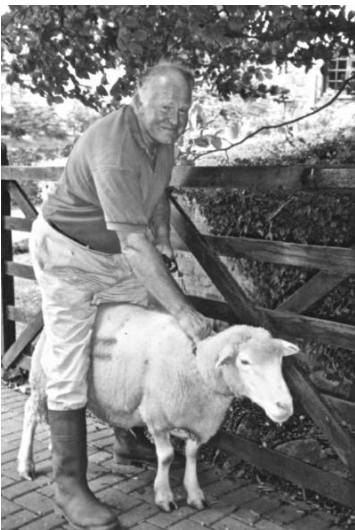
The May Day walk route took our select number of walkers north-west of the church, up to Ty Uchaf (home of early Methodist gatherings), then across the fields to Llantrithyd House, then again following the field path to re-join the road below Wren's Castle, and finally via Tre Aubrey back to Llantrithyd Place and its ruins. A simple circuit. However, before we left, Maddy re-introduced us to the fine, famous (and colourful) 'altar tomb', whereon are modeled the effigies of Anthony Mansell & his wife, daughter of John Bassett. Beneath them pray their many children (few surviving into adulthood). And above the tomb, the figures of John Bassett and his wife kneel at prayer.

We also had a clue to the prayers that their ancestors continued to pray, many moons after the official state rejection of the Roman Catholic church. Maddy directed us to the ancient memorial cross slabs recently viewable again on the chancel floor. Four of these, she pointed out, have inscriptions asking for prayers for the souls of the dead, 'in clear defiance of reformed thinking'. She says the most striking carries the inscription 'Pray for the soule of Ryce Mansell here in grave Aetat Anon Domini 1583'. Ryce was a child – as were three others identified. Maddy wonders whether, while not being actually recusants, the parents were particularly concerned to see that their children were 'properly' commemorated, even if this defied state instructions. Perhaps Maddy may elaborate on this in a future newsletter.

The walk itself took us much further back into history. Crossing from Ty Uchaf we viewed the mounds of an enclosure, bank and ditch, thought to reach back 2,500 years. Down by Tre Aubrey, returning to the church past an elegant pigsty, we looked across the (muck-spreading!) field to see what is described as a 'moated ringwork', which one can find documented, for instance, in *Morgannwg* (see *Welsh Journals Online*). The Glamorgan History Society dug the site as 'recently discovered' from 1961 onwards.

Time then defeated us, leaving much more to be discovered in a future visit, both to the vanished Llantrithyd Place gardens, and the remarkable wells, hidden in Coed Horseland. John Fairfax left us a legacy of future quests.

## JOHN FAIRFAX



Sally Laight, John's daughter, has kindly shared the family's tribute to 'Jack', aged 81, spoken at his funeral service on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Moving to Wales when he was one, Jack 'there began his adventures at Wrens Castle'. First a wartime pupil at Llancaf Primary, then at Cowbridge Grammar, he left to join his father on the farm. He was also an active player with Cowbridge RFC. When not farming or playing rugby he was courting Joyce. Simon and Sally were born in the early 1960s. They travelled with their dad over South Wales as he followed his role with the 'Min of Ag'. The 'children' spread their wings to Hong Kong & Australia 25 years ago, which called for 'numerous'

parental visits. Grandchildren Sophie, Megan, Emma & Jamie were to join the audiences for his tales of the past. They say only grey squirrels, mink killing his ducks, foxes taking lambs – and any off-form Welsh rugby - got his goat. Sadly, his sudden death left his wife and children no personal 'goodbye', and our Society's sincere condolences go to Joyce and the family.



Expect high jinks on the **1<sup>st</sup> of July** - of a gentlemanly & ladylike nature of course - in one of the big barns at lovely Penmark Place Farm, with grateful thanks to Julian Radcliffe from the Llancarfan Society.

No tickets sold on the door. Entry is only by their advance purchase (like the ones above). These are available from **Graham Brain** (email [gjbrain@gmail.com](mailto:gjbrain@gmail.com) or phone 07873225744), **Sue Taylor, Ian & Penny Fell, Katherine Kemp**, and (after they're married for the last-minute ones!) **Andy & Becci Farquharson**.

Date again : **1st July**

Time : **19:30 to 23:30** (the paid bar closes at **23:00**)

Price Adult : **£15.00**

Child : **£ 7.50**

Revel and swivel to the music of the band – **Uisge Contraband** – (<https://uisgecontraband.wordpress.com>) - who come with their caller. Tickets also include the **hog roast** (or **vegetarian option**), and salads.



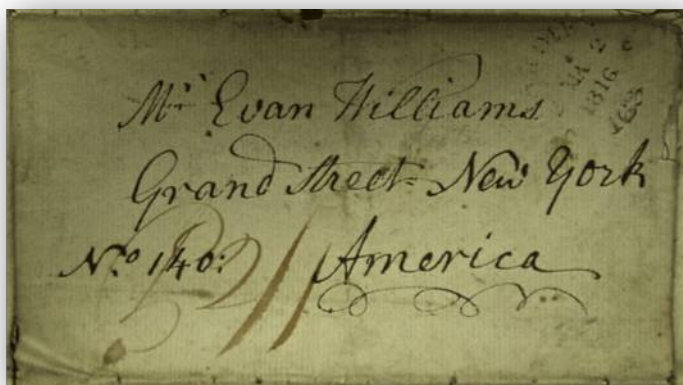
## AND WHILE WE'RE DANCING

On May Day the *Fox & Hounds* drew on musical friends to entertain us with the sunniest (when it wasn't raining) of free afternoon concerts in the form of *The St Louis Express*. Limbering up for the Barn Dance were the usual village suspects, 'sent' by the swing of vocalist Mark, Shirani (sax & clarinet), Steve (guitar), Rich (double bass) and Phil (drums). And if this is how to 'Bring in the May' - then let's do it every month!

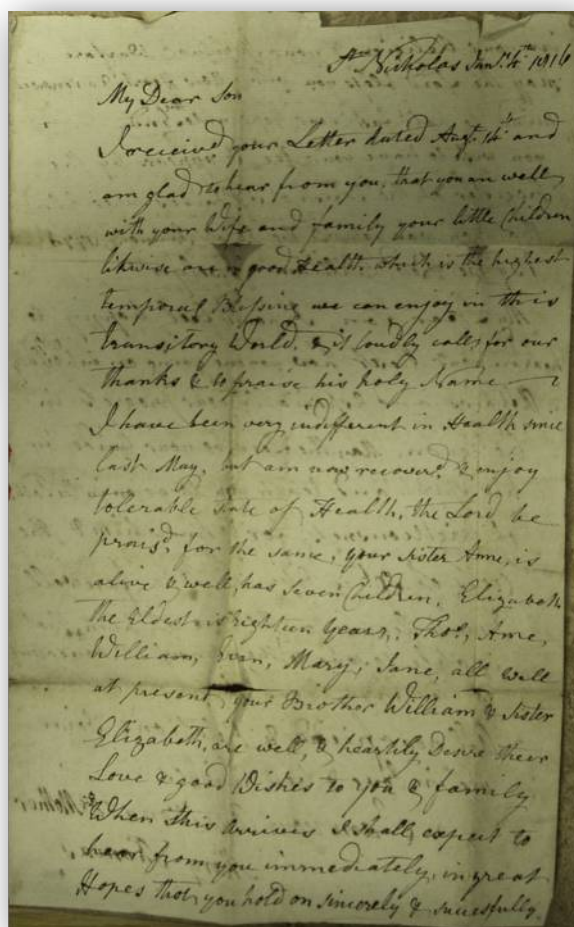


## WRITING HOME [Part 2]

## LETTERS OF MANY JOURNEYS



You will hopefully recall that in the last Newsletter (March 2017) we were able to report on Professor Bill Jones' Llantwit Major History Society talk about snail mail across the oceans – the letters between early emigrants abroad & their families here, either longing for news of home-life, or of the lives that pioneering relatives were building in those distant worlds.



I was excited last time when, following his lecture, Professor Jones generously shared several previously unpublished letters from his researches. These allow us a glimpse into the lives of people, their struggles and beliefs, who lived in our own villages two hundred years ago. We are particularly grateful for the chance to absorb them. The letters (*Cardiff MS1.432 in Central Library*) link Lancadle, Llancafarn, St. Nicholas and New York – and are astonishingly well travelled.

The letter pictured above for example left St. Nicholas in January 1816, was received in America (and hopefully replied to), but was then returned to Wales again in 1909, nearly a century later. The second letter, also returned in 1909, was sent from Lancadle, dated 29 April 1822, and appears to have been carried personally to Grand Street, New York by William Giles, 'a son of John Giles of Llancafarn'. It is clearly then of particular local interest.

Looking first at the letter shown above, which is to Evan Williams from his 'affectionate mother' Mary Thomas (note the un-explained different surname), one is struck by the powerfully religious content of almost the entire greeting. Mary Thomas is replying, on January 4<sup>th</sup> 1816, to a letter written on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1815, the year before. In other words, son Evan was writing home from New York *only two months* after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. Britain

was suddenly not at war with France. Might it be that Evan had realized that his letter from America had suddenly a better chance of delivery?

Certainly Evan was pleased to tell his mother that he, his wife & family were in good health. However, his letter was prompted by a very particular need. *He wanted to know how old he was!* This becomes clear from Mary's reply :

*"You wish to have your Age, it appears by the Register of the Parish of St. Brides' Super Ely that you was baptiz'd, the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1771 By the Revd William Lewelyn -"*

The St. Brides' registers need a visit to confirm the date as '1771', not a possible reading of '1774'. But why Evan's age? Did he perhaps have a particular work-seeking reason for needing to know exactly how old he was?

Whatever the reason, Evan was certainly *not* too old be spared a letter of motherly religious guidance 'in the Paths of Righteousness'. The poignancy of this distant grandmother's pleasure in knowing that "your little children likewise are in good health" slides immediately into an assertion that health "is the highest temporal Blessing we can enjoy in this transitory World, and loudly calls for our thanks and to praise his holy name." Mary (presumed to be at least in her 60s?) has been "indifferent in health", but is presently in a "tolerable state", and she reports that Evan's sister Anne now has seven children, Elizabeth the eldest being eighteen. [Other family names appear in the full transcript, which *can* be made available should a *Newsletter* reader wish to take ancestry investigations further.]

And then, as almost a gloss on the shared practical news, Mary calls on the passion of religious conviction : "I should be happy to hear in your next how you are going on in Worldly Affairs, and especially your progress in Religion, may the Lord be your Guide . . . for to know him and the Cross of Christ is Eternal life, farewell, I must leave you to the care of him . . ."

One feels that such 'Bible talk' must surely hide, hopefully offer comfort to, so many pains of separation. But then again, as Professor Jones discusses, we can not be entirely sure of a writer's literacy. Evan's mother could have been born as early as 1750, and it was very common for someone to draw on another's help in crafting a letter, often falling back on the stock phrases of pious greeting that available guide books to letter writing certainly encouraged. Could the firm handwriting here suggest a helping hand?

**The second letter of 1822**, carried to New York by William, son of John Giles of Llancarfan, is also to Evan Williams, being addressed to 'Our Dear

Brother and Sister' [we assume sister-in-law]. This time though it is from 'Your affectionate brother & Sister, Samuel and Elizabeth Williams'.

Once again the letter shows a religious tone and conviction. Samuel (who is brother to Evan's sister Ann, though he's not mentioned in his mother's letter) talks of living with his wife Elizabeth in Lancadle. They have a four-year-old son (another Evan) and a fourteenth-month-old Richard. It seems that "Father and mother are yet alive, but . . . they are breaking fast". Sister Ann is again mentioned with her seven children. But "brother William is dead three years to Christmas last". Plenty of clues then to research here.

Perhaps the most historically significant aspect of the letter is the insight given into the struggles of this farming community. 1822 is still suffering the effects of the post-1815 Corn Laws, and poverty penetrates Samuel's "short account of the times here - of no comfort to us this long ago" :

*"Every thing here has gone very dead in all circumstances of life, no work, consequently no money circulating, farming business has gone so dull, having no encouragement to carry things on, great number do fail, no selling on any thing, and what is sold are for little money, rents are high, and taxes are high, great quantities of goods are going to mark up little money, so farmers are put to the stake, and the poor pinched till they are ready to drop - unless a swift change will take place, it will be very lamentable . . ."*

All of which suggested a good reason to be in New York, not in the Vale of Glamorgan. And this, we could assume, was what motivated the letter bearer, William Giles, to travel from Llancafán to America, "persuaded in and of himself to come over to try what he can do". We wonder what it was?

**Three letters remain**, and are again a challenge to more research. The first is dated February 21, 1909, and sends the 1816 and 1822 letters to an 'Edward Thomas'. The sender is Mrs. Mary E Wright of 146 Devoe Street, Brooklyn. Edward Thomas had apparently asked to see the letters, presumably hoping to help Mary Wright with her ancestral research. Mrs. Wright says she has just about given up trying to track down her 'Father's people', there being so 'many Williams and Thomas's that it will be kind of hard to locate them'. In April Mary, having had no answers, tries to get the letters back 'as keepsakes', and a third June letter chases the old letters again. But – for some reason – they are not returned to Brooklyn. Instead they end up, a continuing puzzlement, in the Cardiff Central Library Archive.

Evan Williams? Now there's a present day name to conjure with. Lancadle connections? Like I said, the letters cry out for further family detection.

**Ace Reporter 'Megan of Year 6'** has written both the stories behind these snapshot doings from our lively village school. Thanks, Year 6, for your tales!



Oak's assembly was based around **Wiggle and Worm**. It was a humorous event featuring Explorer Gabriel going on an adventure, and discovering creatures such as frogs and caterpillars. We had a variety of children dressed as animals and bugs,

jumping, wiggling and crawling onto the stage. They recited lines fluently without any mistakes, and the tale ended with Gabriel's Mum taking him away to have a well-needed bath. To end their fantastic assembly, Oak Class sang two mini-beast songs. We hope to see more performances from the youngest school members.

### **Swim in the Summer**

Between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of May, Key Stage 2 children from Llancarfan School got very wet at Fontygary Swimming Pool! All junior pupils had their daily hour-long swimming lessons, and they learnt a variety of strokes.



A bus picked us up early every morning and, due to the short drive, there was more time to be spent in the pool, learning or improving our swimming techniques! We worked very hard until Friday. Then we were treated to a fun-and-games' session where we had swimming relays, games, and went on the water slide. In the pupil versus teacher race, Henry from Year 6 came first with a very impressive swim. Commiserations though to Class teacher Mr Bilney who came in Third!

27 May : Miss Hemming arrives and Mr. & Mrs. Farquharson pay to leave the churchyard



### **AND FINALLY – BECCI & ANDY DAI THE KNOT**

OK – forgive the bad pun – but many congratulations to these hard-working members of your society committee. It was a lovely St. Cadoc's wedding duly celebrated by numerous villagers.