

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER 184 DECEMBER 2020



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AUDREY BALDWIN—who, for a while, held the distinction of being Llancarfan’s oldest resident—sadly passed away on November 14th.

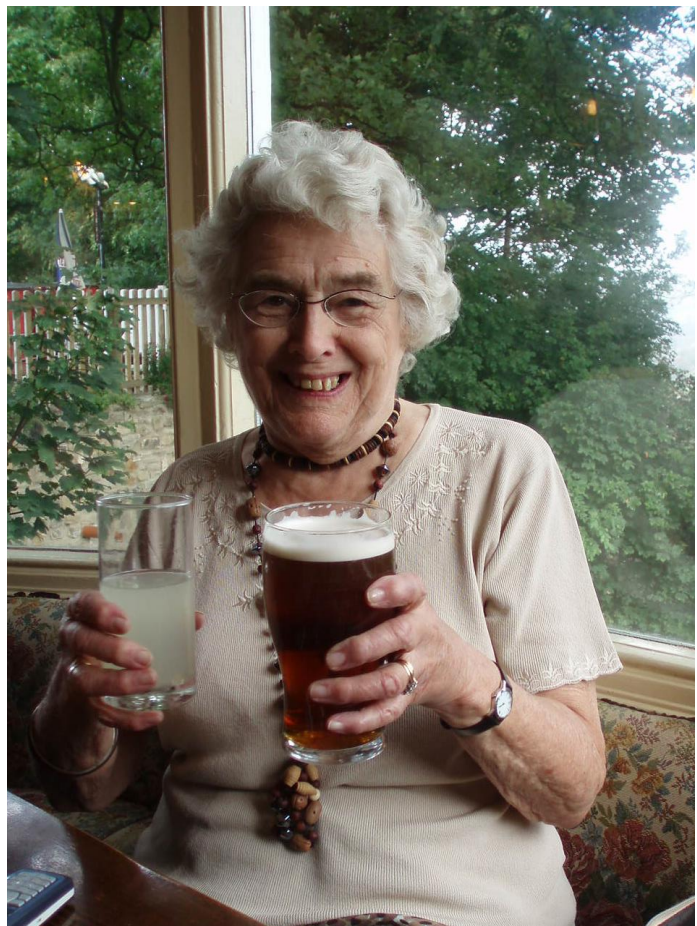
Audrey said that she loved living in Llancarfan because “it feels like being wrapped in a soft, warm blue cloak.” For over 40 years she was at the heart of village life, working tirelessly with the Tuesday Club, Llancarfan Society, LDCA, charity events and supporting neighbours in moments of need.

Sue Taylor, Jackie Prole and Ann Ferris created a book of memories for Audrey’s family – we thank them for the chance to include some quotations here, to reflect her wonderful contribution to Llancarfan.

Firstly, Audrey’s son Duncan has sent us some background to her life:

Audrey was born in Otley, Yorkshire on December 6th 1924, the year when Stanley Baldwin was elected Prime Minister twice, once at the beginning of the year and once at the end. She lived in Burley-in-Wharfedale. During World War II, young Audrey manned a local telephone switchboard and served with her mother as an auxiliary nurse to attend the wounded from German bombing.

Audrey met her husband to be, Ian Baldwin, whilst both were participating in amateur dramatics with Ilkley Players. They married on June 5th 1948. Ian and Audrey turned their hand to dairy farming and ran the farm until 1958; during this time they had their three children: Duncan, Robert and Pamela. After Ian gave up farming he worked with Phoenix Assurance Company, a job which eventually took him to Scotland. Audrey brought up her children with a constant loving hand and all three went on to Scottish universities.



Throughout their lives, Audrey and Ian were keen churchgoers. When Ian’s job took them from Scotland to Wales in 1978, they settled into village life in Llancarfan. Sadly, Ian passed away in 1991 and then in 1999 Pamela died prematurely at the age of 45. Audrey immersed herself in matters of the village and said many times that she had never settled as happily or had so many friends as in Llancarfan....

... AND....FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS REMEMBER

Audrey was my neighbour, friend and a wonderful person; she had arrived in the village a month before we came in 1978; it was Audrey who invited me to join the Tuesday Club and from there came my involvement with the rest of the Village activities. Audrey was a very active member of everything she joined and would



quietly have her say as and when required. She would be at the Jumble Sales – working on the evening before and throughout the whole day – it was hard even when she was in her 80s to get her to sit down and rest; there would always be “plenty of time for that later”.

Audrey’s dinner parties and happy hours were always a delight - wherever she was she would be the life and soul of the party – full of laughter and fun. For me, there has always been an Audrey in the village and it seems very strange that this caring, loving and fun-loving person is no longer with us. – *Anne Ferris*

My overriding memory of Audrey will always be of someone whose home was always open to visitors. She welcomed villagers and those from further afield to

coffee mornings, keep-fit classes, Burns Suppers and New Years’ Eve in her warm and welcoming lounge. There was always a supply of tea, coffee, homemade scones, shortbread and whisky - Famous Grouse of course! Woe betide anyone who tried to offer her Bells! She will be so greatly missed. – *Alison Hannaby*

What a Lady! We have so many wonderful memories of Audrey and of her super husband Ian, but one to share is the successful Llanccarfan Pantomime Productions. They wouldn’t have been the success they were if Audrey and her wonderful friend Audrey Porter hadn’t taken on the massive job of making ALL the many complicated costumes. We and the village were truly blessed to have known Audrey. – *Georgina & Steve Powell*

When we arrived in the village ten years ago, Audrey was one of the first locals to welcome us. She made a point of climbing the many steps to our new front door to say hello and introduce herself. This was no mean feat even for a relative youngster and we’re so glad she did. Later on, when the village hall cinema launched, Audrey was one of the first to sign up for membership - a regular audience member, often bringing a tot of whisky to enjoy during screenings. On one memorable occasion, having sat through a performance of the rather risqué Liberace biopic “Behind the Candelabra”, Audrey was asked if she enjoyed the film. “There wasn’t as much piano playing as I expected,” was her telling response! – *Jim Barratt*

I will always remember how Audrey would turn up with a three-course meal for us, when my Alan [*Sue's husband*] was so ill and my time was spent looking after him. Thanks to Audrey we always had good food in our house and she would come and spend time with Alan, so I could go out shopping. I never heard her say a bad word about anyone, even if they had upset her, she would always find a reason to be friends! I cannot believe she will not be there any more to give me the wisest of advice. – *Sue Taylor*

The wonderful Rabbie Burns evenings when we all gathered together in her lounge, wearing something tartan. The haggis took centre stage of course, accompanied by the tatties and neeps. Followed by Cranachan and (yes, you have guessed it) washed down with the old wee dram or two. – *Jackie Prole*

Audrey was a leading light in the village activities, always the voice of reason on all the committees and always encouraging to those she was with. I recall vividly her 90th birthday celebration in the hall...once we had all sung her Happy Birthday, she stood up and asked us all to be quiet for a moment ... she clasped her hands together, closed her eyes and said she was sending out love vibes to everyone.... she said "Can you all feel them?" And we all said "Yes we can!" A very special moment. – *Kay Brain*

Remembering lovely Audrey who never sought the limelight, but quietly did so much. – *Mary Gammon*

I have so many fond memories of Audrey over the years. It was my honour and privilege to help with her care during her final weeks at home. She was a very special lady and will be missed. – *Fran Winterbottom.*

Audrey, on behalf of the Llanccarfân Society thank you for all you did on the committee, supporting functions down the years, Church on Sundays and all the special days, and flower arranging....as a newcomer you gave me every encouragement! We will miss you, and I join all the other groups in the village to say we will never forget you. –
Barbara Milhuisen



RESIDENTS' CORNER: Andrew Archbold

Meet our local vehicle—and whale—recovery specialist.....

I grew up on a council estate in Cardiff with a very caring and hardworking family. From a young age I always had a passion for all things mechanically driven, from a petrol lawn mower to the old steam trains abandoned at the railway sidings at Barry Island.

I purchased my first car at the age of 12, an old Fiat 500 bubble car to tinker with, my mum thinking I would never get it started - until she came home one day to find that I had turned the back garden into a dirt track speedway.

I left school at the age of 15 and worked at a petrol station owned by Stephen Powell, who later offered me the opportunity of an apprenticeship as a vehicle mechanic at Powell's Garages Ely where I later qualified and got involved in vehicle rescue and recovery. In those days some garages used an old beaten-up Land Rover or Ford Transit to recover vehicles, but now it's a whole new ball game where some of the bigger machines can cost in excess of £750,000 for one vehicle.

The recovery industry today is a highly competitive and demanding business governed by health and safety legislation. We have to train the drivers to a very high standard to comply with the contracts we hold in supporting the emergency services, keeping the strategic road network clear from incidents and congestion on a daily basis.

So as each day starts from the moment of the first phone call, what excites me is not knowing what experiences the day is going to impose upon us. When you see Kieran or myself rushing out of the village day and night, we may be on our way to a stranded motorist, just like those in the vehicles that take a wrong turn at the ford, or an incident with the motorway closed due to a major accident involving multiple vehicles.

We now have multiple depots with specialist forensic inspection bays and we assist with forensic and mechanical examinations of vehicles to support the local authorities in crime prevention. The job has taken us to many parts of the world, sometimes as a guest of a manufacturer from across the pond - a "jolly" - or into some of the strangest places in Europe where you would not normally go on vacation.

We have recovered vehicles from as far afield as Israel, Romania and Russia, to name just a few. We have rescued members of the Royal family, film stars, footballers and many more. We've done lots of work for BBC

Wales, including setting up scenes involving vehicles for Torchwood, Doctor Who and Casualty—and we've occasionally appeared in scenes as extras.



We have, over the years, recovered trains, planes, helicopters and livestock, but what was probably the most unusual recovery was the 35 ft minke whale from Jacksons Bay, Barry, which is today still the only whale ever recovered as a whole in the UK.

Interestingly the Natural History Museum in London removed the spine from the whale and it is currently being filmed at the bottom of the North Sea in production of a Blue Planet documentary, to be televised sometime in the near future.

Although we face extremely traumatic scenes each and every day, we do have rewarding moments when we are able to assist and help a stranded motorist and turn what might be a bad day for them into a more positive situation once we get them back on the road to continue with their journey. As we enter the winter months we have to be fully prepared in advance with regards to our vehicles and staffing levels due to the significant rise in demand from our key customers.

Last year was a special moment for me as I was awarded a fellowship by the Institute of Vehicle Recovery for my contribution to the industry and my participation each year at Truck Fest, where we get a chance to display our skills doing demonstrations and helping raise funds for various charities throughout the UK.

I am sure we will all agree that this year has been very challenging for many of us due to the pandemic but I am pleased to say we have had a busy year and the business has gone from strength to strength. May I and all the staff at ASK Recovery take this opportunity to wish you all well and that you stay safe and have a very Merry Christmas.

'TIS T

LLANCARFAN HALLOW'EEN
FUNFAIR OF FEAR 2020



THE SEASON TO BE GHOULIE



Saving our Landscapes & Selling our History: Ian Fell

As the last newsletter contributions rather proved, Pen & I are not alone in mentally excavating the past in lock-down. Grabbing our 'keep fit' walk, we often find ourselves hovering with neighbours in talk-starved bubbles – all physically repelling each other like the same ends of a magnet – but collectively exchanging fond memories of our several pasts. 'Write them down!' says Pen. 'It's what the *Newsletter's* for.'

As incomers of only 25 years, some of our memories are from other places and seem to hold awful warnings for Llancarfan. For instance, I've just looked at *Google* aerials of my mother (& my) native village, and am depressed to see endless new housing estates smeared across our childhood fields. (It is much like the *Darren Farm / Clare Garden Village* invasion.) Surely here lies a call to protect our Llancarfan fields!

But that's not what I meant to write about. I wanted in fact to share a comment from a letter written by no less than Beatrix Potter. (I've been swotting up on her recently.) In May 1927 she wrote to Bertha Mahony, a friendly American publisher (who'd also swotted her up). Beatrix enclosed fifty signed drawings of *Peter Rabbit*. Why? Well she hoped that American fans would buy them at a guinea apiece, and thus boost her appeal to protect a woodland stretch bordering on Windermere. There were no flies on businesswoman Beatrix! She wrote:

'Alas! So many of our heirlooms – our pictures, our ancient books, even our old timbered houses – are crossing the Atlantic – would not American friends help to save a bit of our scenery?'

As you might predict, Beatrix's New England contacts *did* chip in quite generously, and the lakeside woodland was 'saved for the nation'.

Though a pioneering conservationist, Beatrix *could* be ambivalent about American money. So in 1927 she also wrote about a painting by Lakeland artist George Romney that 'when Americans are willing to give £50,000 for a single Romney portrait, it is better that it should go'.

As it is, Beatrix's 1927 anxieties about shipping our history across the Atlantic turns out to be particularly relevant at that time to our neck of the woods. I realise that she was writing mainly about the Lake District, not the Vale of Glamorgan, but she *did* know our Welsh countryside, both north & south. (You might perhaps also recall that Beatrix first wrote about *Peter Rabbit* in a child's letter when on holiday in Tenby.) Furthermore, as a teenager

holidaying over the Severn, Beatrix enjoyed a Somerset outing to Dunkery Beacon. Confiding in her secret diary, she said that while looking down into Devon was not very interesting –

‘ . . . northward to Wales over the long narrow strip
of the Channel it was very fine.’

Now I’m not jingoistic enough to think she glimpsed only the specific charms of Llancarfan across the water! But had she again gazed across the Severn in 1927, she could well have picked out a particularly fine castle then owned by an American. I refer of course to St. Donats.

One knew that this was a castellated love nest for Hearst and his mistress, but I’ve only just understood its role as a transit store for antiquities bought to ship overseas and recreate Olde Englande in America. (I’ve taken this in recently because I’ve heard of a certain Herbert Granville Fell who it seems advised Hearst on good things to buy for export. Yet another Fell family shame to feel guilty about?)

You doubtless know the tales better than I do. Tradition says Randolph Hearst, the American millionaire publisher (who was satirized in Orson Wells’ *Citizen Kane*¹) was swanning up the Severn in a stately schooner when he glimpsed on our Vale shoreline the charming & crumbling St. Donats. Smitten by instant passion, he bought it with his small change.

Looking back at contemporary newspapers (mainly for local relevance in the *Western Mail*) you find a complex but no less romantic tale. In 1925 St, Donats was already in American hands, those of a diplomat called Richard Pennoyer. He sold it after only three years of draughty ownership. Randolph Hearst, who was an even more compulsive collector of antiquity than any *Bargain Hunt* contestant, noticed photos of St. Donats in *Country Life* (featured as early as 1907). Re-alerted by the 1925 ‘For Sale’ sign, Hearst asked Alice Maud Head, managing director of *Good Housekeeping* (which Hearst also owned), to snap up St. Donats. Unseen! (Miss Head thereafter found herself responsible for spending Hearst’s money on the castle until at least 1939.)

The papers were thrilled. The *Western Mail* of 17 August 1925 cried

FEUDAL RELIC AS MILLIONAIRE’S BRITISH HOME.

It was ‘in far-away America,’ they affirmed, that ‘Mr. Hearst saw the illustrations of St. Donats in “*Country Life*”, and now “*The Daily Graphic*”

¹ *Hearst also features in Netflix’s newly-released movie **Mank**.*

understands Mr. Hearst is likely to be in residence at St. Donats two or three months each year.'

Auctioneers Stephenson & Alexander closed the Hearst deal on September 29th. The *Western Mail* enthused that America was '... already talking about Squire Hearst, & speculating on the new owner of St. Donats Castle becoming a nationalised British subject and, perhaps, like Astor before him, a peer of the realm. Lady Astor, they hint, may soon welcome Mrs. Hearst into the House of Commons. Which of the Welsh M.P.'s will she unseat?'

As it happened, Mr. Hearst didn't turn up for his first brief residence in St. Donats until three years later. The Vale was however empowered to mount a welcome for *Mrs. Hearst* on her flying visit on the 9th of June 1926. Mrs. Hearst – **'THE NEW CHATELAINE AT ST. DONATS'** – having 'passed from room to room, from turret to turret' declared 'we are going to love Wales and its people'. (More cynical observers were speculating that Mrs. Hearst, saddened by a loveless marriage, was making sure to lay early-ish claims on any castle inheritance.)

There are rich stories elsewhere of Hearst's ten years or so of flying both the 'Union Jack' & 'Old Glory' from St. Donats' towers, not to mention his castellated cavortings with his mistress, actress Marion Davies, and his film industry guests. But his British manager, Alice Head, confirmed that by 1933 Hearst had only visited six times. Later, a gossip account in *The Era* said that by 1936 the aging and almost bankrupt Hearst was rather more often 'in residence for short periods several times yearly'. (' "Old Bill's latest" is a great topic in the village inn.') However, by September 1938 Alice Head told the *Western Mail* that 'Baron' Hearst had put St. Donats' on the market. It would not be cheap. 'We want a reasonable price for it, having regard to what Mr. Hearst paid for it, and the £250,000 which he has already spent . . .'

Again (and in fact), as the aforementioned Beatrix Potter told an American friend in 1932, that she 'used to lament the export of old furniture, and even historical houses; [but now] that trade is slack'. Slumps & depressions can undermine even kings of the castle.

'There will,' said Miss Head, 'be a gradual dispersal of the treasures'.

So it was that over the next months & years, auction houses bristled with a glut of armour, stones, furniture, Old English Silver, 'the Highly Important Collection of William Randolph Hearst, Esq.' In other words, the sale of a vast amount of antiquity and heritage, stored at St. Donats, things which for twelve years had temporarily adorned the castle whilst awaiting deportation to the States. Unsold St Donats was requisitioned by the Government shortly after the declaration of war. A melancholy end to this deflated millionaire's American dream of castles in the air.

NEWS FROM SCHOOL.....

Croeso i Llancarfan! We were delighted to welcome our new Reception cohort in September. We have all been very proud of how quickly they settled in, learnt the school routines and made friends.



Gratefully Received Donation!... Dragon's class were delighted to be donated this fabulous toy cooker from past pupils and Llancarfan residents Sian & Megan. Thanks so much. It's proving to be extremely popular!

Remembrance Day.... Every year local resident Mrs Evans kindly delivers a box of poppies and poppy stationery to Llancarfan School for the children to purchase and help raise funds for members of the British Armed Forces past & present. This year the children raised £130.61! On November 11th, children socially distanced on the school yard to hold a two-minute silence. Year 6 pupils paid their respects at St Cadoc's Cenotaph. They wrote moving messages of remembrance on individually decorated poppies which together formed a large wreath.

The weather may be cold and wet but that hasn't stopped the children enjoying their Outdoor Learning Forest Schools sessions! Here the children are enjoying toasting marshmallows over the fire pit.



EVENTS.....Children in Need

To raise funds for this worthwhile charity, our School Council decided that everyone should dress in pyjamas and create wacky hairstyles. On the day, we raised £60.65.

Even the teachers wore PJs!

Black History Month..... Year 6 had an opportunity to recognise the outstanding contributions people of African and Caribbean descent have made. Some names were very familiar to us such as Mo Farah and Martin Luther King, but it was really interesting to hear about Mae Carol Jemison, who was the first black female to travel to space.



SOCIALLY DISTANCED REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY: NOVEMBER 8TH 2020



IS THERE NOTHING that can stop LS President Barbara Milhuisen? Here she is on a rainy, windswept day, valiantly walking circuits of St Cadoc's to raise yet more money for charity. Bravo!

BARBARA SAYS: "Thank you for supporting me in my "Marathon for Murals" at St Cadoc's and Rhoose Library. To Sue Taylor for organising and collecting donations; Gordon and Katherine Kemp for counting the rounds in the rain, standing shoulder to shoulder with Matthew Valencia, who didn't stop filming; Sheelagh Lewis and Scruff for setting the pace; and Tony for sustaining me with coffee to send me on my way to Rhoose. Mission accomplished!"

Grandparents Tony and Sheelagh Lewis are delighted to introduce the latest arrival to their family. Son Matthew and his wife Rhian are celebrating the arrival of Nia Hâf Lewis, born on



Tuesday November 10th at 10.30 in the morning, weighing 7lbs 3oz. A sister for Ffinian, nearly 5, Tomos, 11, and Samuel, 13.



WHAT A WONDERFUL WINTER WONDERLAND TREAT we had on Sunday December 6th, with houses beautifully decorated and lit along the trail, a quiz, gingerbread houses for the kids, and a fundraising Christmas Tree Festival in the grounds of St Cadoc's (pictured on the cover). The Spencers' syringe-bedecked tree won first prize. Paul Jenkins won the hamper. A big Thank You to all those who helped organise the event and sponsored a tree.



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