

CONTENTS

- 3 Kay Heath; our new vicar; and a celebrated urologist
- 4 Ian Fell's Bubble with his Dad
- 7 Llancarfan's big paintings on the small screen
- 8 Before Atlantic College
- 10 Celebrating St David's Day
- 11 Post-war memories of the village school

LLANCARFAN NEWS, FROM THE ARCHIVES

From Barry Dock News, April 9th 1897...

every sort of crime. d :e LLANCARFAN. S "LITTLE THINGS." - On Wednesday evening f next the Rev W. Daniel, Barry Docks, will deliver d a lecture at Llancarfan Wesleyan Chapel, entitled e "Little Things," when the chair will be occupied by Mr T. Price, Llanbethery. The proceeds will e be towards liquidating the debt on the chapel. e PENDOYLAN

...and Barry Dock News, April 24th 1896

was accordingly neld over.

LLANCARFAN.

Whit-Monday Eisteddfod.—For the benefit of male voice parties who intend competing on "Valiant Warriors" at the forthcoming eisteddfod at Llancarfan, and with a view to attracting more parties, the committee have decided to advance the prize offered to £4. The charge of admission to front seats will be 1s 6d. It may be mentioned that the prospects for a successful eisteddfod in every way are exceedingly bright.

KAY HEATH – We were very sad to hear that Kay passed away recently. She used to live in Moulton, moving more recently to Barry, and was a member of the Ladies Tuesday Club and a regular at the Coffee Mornings held on Mondays at Audrey Baldwin's. Kay continued to keep in touch with the older Llancarfan Ladies right up to the recent lockdowns.



NEW SHEPHERD FOR THE FLOCK

The vicarage at Pancross has been a little mournful and empty over the last months but we're delighted to say that there will be a new occupant when Rev Michael John moves to Llancarfan at the end of May as the



village's new priest. He has been appointed to the East Vale clergy team, with pastoral care for Llancarfan and Llantrythid.

For the last nine years, Rev John has been vicar at the Parish of Pentyrch and Capel Llanilltern (Creigiau). Before that he ministered in Tenby. Although he arrives as a neighbour in early summer, his official duties won't start until September, by which time the pandemic may have subsided enough for us

to get to know him without Zoom chaperonage. Interestingly, although he will have care of a new church, he may still be under the eye of the same old patron saint. Hs current church is dedicated to St Cattwg – said to be the Welsh name for Llancarfan's own Cadoc.

TOAST OF THE TOWN: Those who visit the wine-themed movie nights in the Village Hall, hosted by Amanda and Howard Kynaston, might know Howard as a connoisseur – and indeed a source – of fine wines. But in his day job (from which he retired last month) he is better known as Professor Howard Kynaston, recently awarded the St Peter's Medal - the highest accolade conferred annually by the British Association of Urological Surgeons – for his contribution to the advancement of urology. Many congratulations, Howard – we look forward to toasting your achievement with a glass or two of Bordeaux when at last the Fox reopens.

My Dad was many things. He ran a mental hospital for nearly 40 years. He campaigned for improvement in his Whalley, Lancashire village. He was a long time council member, ultimately Mayor of the Ribble Valley. He was a popular Lancashire historian, publishing over 1100 local paper pieces. And he was an early local exponent of stand up comedy! In short, he was a lot to live up to, unchallenged on his patch.

Now, here in the White Chapel, we have remained locked down (I know, tell me about it!) since last March. And as the Summer sunshine began to retreat last year, Pen and I resolved, not only for me to respect her supremacy in argument, but also to rescue something from our anchorite existence. So I decided to form a bubble with my Dad.

The shortcoming in this resolution was the unhappy fact that my Dad died, aged only 77, a full 33 years ago. But he <u>did</u> leave behind a great wealth of writing. And I confess that I had not read more than a fraction of his 1115 'Whalley Windows'. So, me being aware that I have now lived longer than he did, a bubble with his writing seemed a good thing.

So far, by Spring, I've read five hundred or so of his pieces. Some of them I knew well, notably local history ones that subsequently spurred me into further research. (By the time I was allowed to edit the *Llancarfan Society Newsletter*, I was pretty familiar with digging for local history and its associated anecdotes.) So in lock down I've pushed Penny's tolerance to the limit repackaging treasures from my Dad's writing, and sometimes augmenting his writing with facts that I've found out later. Who knows, perhaps a few eccentrics in my native village might just wish to read and follow up on these clues from the past.

But how research has changed. My Dad would write a piece about (say) events in 1844 because some villager had passed on to him a fragmentary newspaper page that they'd discovered under several generations of wallpaper. And then in May 1971 there was the lady who said "I've brought you a shirt pattern to read!" This proved to be a pattern cut from the local paper dated '1934'. My Dad shared the news from the shirt lap, and was particularly intrigued by the adverts printed on the sleeve part of the pattern – 'Cut two of these' said the instructions. The 'ads' showed prices like 'Men's heavy working socks for 1/- a pair' [5p] and a '4 foot bedroom suite, really smart' for 7½ guineas [£7.87p].

Today's researchers have a reduced need to reply on shirt laps stuffed with history, or even to make countless treks to the archives. I've

quoted before what our first Society President, Sir Keith Thomas, said to Hilary Mantel. She wrote an Introduction to the *Folio Society* re-issue of Sir Keith's brilliant *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Hilary Mantel said that 'Keith Thomas has performed his life's work with scissors and ink, staples, index books, old envelopes, cardboard boxes, and forests of slips of paper'. Whereupon Sir Keith admitted that '... some of them get loose and blow around the house, turning up months later under a carpet or a cushion!' 'The sad truth,' he added, 'is that much of what it has taken me a lifetime to build up by painful accumulation can now be achieved by a moderately diligent student in the course of a morning.'

Anyway, in my bubble with my Dad, I came across pieces like those my Dad wrote about a place that is now an elegant Lancashire hotel with attached golf course. Back in the 1970s this was a working farmhouse. But throughout our childhood, we all knew the place as 'Madhouses'.

The explanation, of course, for its local name is that 'Madhouses' was exactly that – a private 'lunatic asylum'. Local lore doesn't hold with political correctness. And given that my Dad ran a state mental hospital - essentially the main local industry once the bottom fell out of cotton – he knew interesting things about his trade. Our local 'Madhouses', it seemed, had been looking after 'gentry' mental patients since the 1700s, even before George III made madness a fashionable concern.

However, because one thought triggered another, I *then* remembered that Llancarfan had — not a 'madhouse', but certainly a 'Poorhouse'. This was in a building just to the left of the church's south gate. If this 'church-house' hadn't been demolished, it would abut on the present village hall. I remembered too that I knew next to nothing about it.

Our poorhouse is marked on a large scale map called 'Glamorgan XLVI', surveyed in 1877-79, published 1885. In fact John Etherington alluded to it in earlier newsletters, Numbers 56 & 58. Your previous editor related that in Llancarfan, visiting 'Education Commissioners had noted that the upper storey of the church-house was used as a school house and the ground floor as a poor house.' He was referring to an 1849 survey, which is now easy to access on online – though it provides no further enlightenment about the occupants and nature of the ground floor 'poor house'. There is certainly more to be discovered here.

However, ever willing to be distracted by all aspects of local history, I was delighted to find that this survey featured a very thorough assessment of our local school (before, of course, its replacement was built up the hill). Historically, and indeed in the light of our struggle to

keep our present school alive and vibrant, this 1849 'Education Commission' report [my notes in brackets] makes illuminating reading:

Parish Of Llancarvan.

'I visited this parish on the 15th of March. It has no large proprietor resident. It contains a day-school connected with the Church, held in the upper storey of the church-house, the ground floor being used as a poorhouse. I did not find the school assembled, the master having received leave of absence for a week, upon some business of his own in Pembrokeshire. The school had been kept open with great difficulty by the incumbent *[ie. the vicar]*, with a constant fluctuation of masters, there being no regular funds for its support.'

'The last master, a very efficient one, left because he could not be provided with 50L [£50] per annum and a house. The present master was said to be less efficient. The funds were raised, in a considerable proportion, by the incumbent and his own personal friends, some of whom live in London and Brighton, and have no other connection with Llancarvan than their knowing the Vicar.'

'I found the school-room in bad repair, its lime floor all broken into holes, and the scanty desks down one side of the room much cut and worn.

The master's desk was of the rudest description, standing upon three legs. Books are provided as they best can be, upon no fixed plan, chiefly by the incumbent [the Vicar], who, as he told me, "when he went to Cardiff sometimes brought five shillingsworth home with him."

Beside this, the Methodists and Wesleyans have schools in the parish.

All the scholars in the day-school have to attend on Sundays, and all learn the

All the scholars in the day-school have to attend on Sundays, and all learn the Church Catechism. The incumbent informed me that no objections were made by the parents on either of these heads.'

'The parish had made a grant of 25L towards opening the present schoolroom, and erecting a pew in the church for the scholars. It is well able to maintain a school, but the class of persons by whom alone it is inhabited are very little alive to the advantages of education.

Indeed, among the farmers there is a feeling, that it they educate the children they shall lose them as labourers.'

Hmmm. So that's where Llancarfan went wrong with Sir Keith.

Anyway, in conclusion, I still remain largely ignorant about the other floor – the village poorhouse. Please tell your Newsletter more.

And of course, that Commissioner's report of 15 March 1849 is **just** the encouragement we need to keep displaying the (some have even said 'unsightly') sign on the wall outside our chapel. It still reads 'Save Llancarfan School'. And surely we haven't thrown in that towel yet?

A MEDIAEVAL PICTURE BOOK

Very sadly of course, St. Cadoc's has suffered like the rest of us from the lock-ins and lock-outs of this eternity of the Covid plague.

But at least one current TV series is whetting the appetite of would-be visitors to amaze themselves in due course with our prestigious church wall paintings. And in BBC Cymru's 'The Story of Welsh Art', the amiable presenter Huw Stephens has awarded our church perhaps the biggest accolade:

'One place is unique,' enthuses Huw, as he enters our ancient church. 'It's like stepping into a mediaeval picture book!'

Huw Stephens, a radio presenter best known to date for his enthusiasm for music in Wales, shares the nation's visual creativity in a *Wildflame* for BBC production launched on St. David's Day. The

series is still to be seen on *iPlayer* at the time of printing, its three parts offering a rich pilgrimage around 'Welsh' art, following an historical line from 'Barclodiad y Gawres', the neolithic *carved* passage grave, via wonderful ancient art and artefacts, all the way to present creativity.

Alongside our St. George, the Gallant and the Deadly Sins, this neck of the woods is favourably reflected. In the first episode for instance there's a chance to peep into the National Museum's Nantgawr art store, view the wonderful carved oak 'Jesse' in Abergavenny's St. Mary's Priory (there too is tracery woodwork which is compared with our enigmatic reredos screen) – and charming primitive paintings are shown of the palatial Margam House of the Mansel family, destroyed in the C18th. We heartily recommend a viewing of this enriching series!

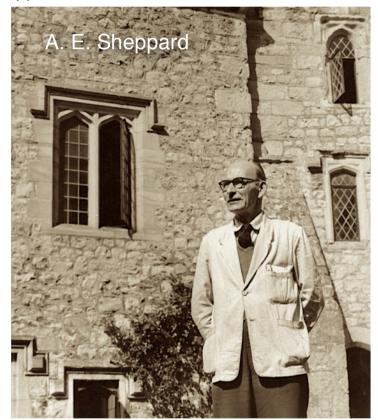
BEFORE ATLANTIC COLLEGE

As a gesture of historical collaboration we offered our recent newsletter article, Saving Landscapes & Selling History, to our neighbouring Llantwit Major History Society. Llantwit's Acting Chairman, Graham Phillimore, kindly circulated the piece, which had an enlightening response from **Dr Robin Sheppard**, who shared his father's eloquent reminiscences, written it seems in the 1960s for the **Atlantic College Magazine**. Dr. Sheppard's father was college porter there from 1936, where he had the good fortune to court Robin's mother, she being engaged as a maid to film star Marion Davies. Dr. Sheppard has kindly let us reprint his father's memories here. Dr. Sheppard's

father wrote:

Of all the legends

and stories that surround "Bro Morgannwg", our lovely Vale of Glamorgan, none have been more elaborated and distorted than those concerning the late W. R. Hearst, sometime newspaper owner, maker and breaker of men, of minds, of reputations and of truth itself.



What manner of man was this William Randolph Hearst? What thoughts compelled him, notwithstanding his luxurious homes in sunnier climes, to buy a castle in South Wales? Unseen, unsung, the result of a chance meeting on a liner with the owner and his wife, who even then were fleeing from one of the legends of St. Donats; a legend that he himself fulfilled even before he bought it.

Be the reason what it may, Hearst bought, visited it, found it cold and comfortless and hurriedly left. But in that one brief visit St.

Donats had captivated him. He called in Sir Charles Allom, one of the foremost architects in the restoration of medieval buildings, and under Sir Charles's guidance central heating was installed and various alterations began. Another brief visit was made and a swimming pool was planned and built on what was probably the last remaining jousting and tournament ground in the country. More alterations and additions; the Bradenstoke Hall was installed; the Lady Anne Tower re-built, all under the watchful eye of Sir Charles, to whom great credit is due for the excellent way in which old and new were blended into the fine building we know today.

And while all this was going on, Hearst's representatives scoured the world for antiques and 'objects d'arts et vertue'. His armourer, Mr. Raymonde Bartell, repaired and embellished them until St. Donats was a veritable Aladdin's cave.

Then, while work was still in progress came the guests - for weeks, a week-end, or maybe for just one meal. From all over the world, notabilities, notorieties, film makers, film stars, would be's, had been's, politicians, authors, editors, successes, failures, the lot.

Then the Great Man Himself for a mere six weeks in each two years. But what was he really like this man, this myth, this legend of power and autocracy? This man who on the way to St. Donats could dismiss by telegram his local representative, the man who had been in charge of the preparations, and this without any apparent cause and with no appeal? The perfect dictator.

Yet once he arrived at St. Donats he appeared to fall under its spell. Gone it seemed was 'The Chief' and his place was taken by 'Mr. Hearst', English Country Gentleman.

A great deal of publicity has been given to the alleged 'orgies and gaiety'. What was the truth that lay beneath the gossip? While some of his guests were, no doubt, guilty of excesses in one form or another, W.R. himself lived an almost frugal life. He ate sparingly, preferred cookies to caviar, drank practically not at all and took exercise with Spartan thoroughness. For his guests however, it was a different story. The best was not good enough; too much was insufficient. To want was to have and naturally many made the most of it.

It seemed though that Mr. Hearst came for peace, for quiet, the things that eluded him the most. Certainly he was a vastly different person at St. Donats. He who in America would brook no errors either of omission or commission could here overlook both.

Caught by him swimming in the pool during prohibited hours and expecting to be dismissed immediately, I was surprised to hear him say, "Enjoy yourself whilst young. Swim as long as you wish".

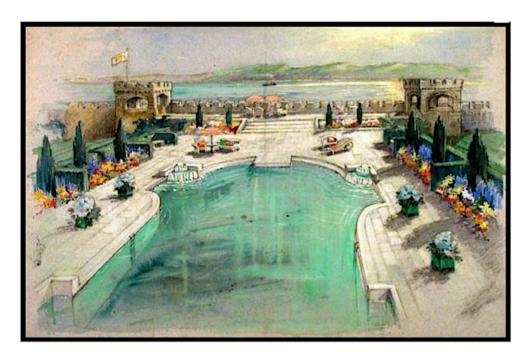
He lived apart from his wife and would have been able no doubt with his wealth and power to have obtained a divorce. He refrained from doing so because, I believe, of his religious principles. He was as chaste as it was possible to be living with another woman. His moral behaviour was impeccable; he phoned his wife every day and ruled children with a rod of iron where their marital relationships were concerned.

In the late evening he would come to the telephone exchange room (where the shoe racks are now) and, leaning against the switch board, he would phone New York with the outline of the day's leading articles for his papers. His policies would be adjusted to suit circulation.

Truth would be sacrificed to expediency; black become white; voice and temper would rise; then suddenly, a quiet "Thank you, Goodnight, get yourself a drink", and he would be away to attend to his guests.

A.E.Sheppard

1930's painting of
St Donats
swimming pool –
a picture sold in
a PBA Galleries
auction of Hearst's
images. Architect
Julia Morgan's
pools are
described as
'exquisitely
engineered stage
sets for
hedonism".



MEMORIES OF LLANCARFAN SCHOOL, 1947-1952

My family moved to Ty-Mawr in Llanbethery village on the 7th January 1947. I believe the snow started on January 20th and lasted for eight weeks. One of my earliest memories is of walking past the vicarage with my father on the way to buy bread from Mr Liscombe's bakery in Llancarfan. The drifts were higher than the wall opposite the vicarage.

The school was a typical village school with only three classrooms so each class had two school-years in it. The infants room was separate while I think there was a partly glazed partition between the other two.

In the infants we were taught by Miss Griffiths, who lived with her brother in a house opposite the village hall. She was a good strict teacher. I think the times-tables were displayed around the walls and we often had to stand up and recite them. It must have worked well because I cannot get them out of my head after 75 years.

In the middle class we were taught by Miss Owens, who I think came from Barry or Rhoose. She taught us art which I enjoyed, and also took us on nature rambles up the track opposite the school to point out various things in the hedgerows. She also did PE for us and I still remember her large chest bobbing up and down as we jumped around the playground.

The top class was taught by the headmaster Mr Samuels, who I think drove every day from Whitchurch. He was a strict disciplinarian. It was rumoured that if a boy was to be caned, he would give them his penknife to cut a branch from the school field. Difficult decisions — too thick and it hurt more, too thin and the boy would have to cut another. However, I don't remember anyone being caned in my time there.

He prepared us for the 11-Plus. I remember a spelling lesson where he would walk around the room asking us to spell certain words. I got it wrong once and was hit over the head with the weighty dictionary. It didn't improve my spelling. He sought to inspire us by talking about a farmer's son from Pancross who had done very well and went on to university. Memories can play tricks as I thought he studied mathematics at Cambridge, whereas Sir Keith Thomas got a scholarship to Oxford.

The toilets were outside, down the slope from the school, past a wall where the girls did handstands. Separate toilets for boys and girls with wooden seats and buckets beneath. One adventurous boy tried unsuccessfully to pee over into the girls' area. The boys did gardening in the allotment area below the toilets. A varied assortment of tools were

stored in a wooden shed, and we would scramble and fight over the boots, which were hard from lack of dubbin and many had no laces. I often wondered later whether the wooden doors below the toilet blocks had a bearing on the good vegetables we managed to grow, often pulling radishes straight out of the ground and eating them after a quick 'clean' with our hands.

School dinners started in the later years and ours were brought in a Land Rover by a man from I think St Nicholas. His assistant had Downs Syndrome and walked with an unusual gait. We had to carry the metal containers in single file and we followed and imitated his walk. This behaviour would not be acceptable today.

After school it was quicker to walk home to Llanbethery than catch the school bus, which set off via Moulton in a wide loop to Bonvilston and Llantrithyd. We often looked in at the blacksmiths, a mysterious world with a glowing furnace and the smell of burning horse hair. Up the hill we would pass Pancross farm with an orchard over the road directly in front of the farmhouse. There was a cherry tree among the apple trees and though we were tempted to pick some we never had the nerve.

Although I didn't appreciate it at the time, the basic education at Llancarfan school was very good, and I went on to Cowbridge Grammar School and later Swansea University. I still have my celebration mug from the school centenary in 1975.

REMINDER: It's that time of year again. Annual subscriptions were due on January 1st. A link to details of how to pay by cash, cheque or bank transfer is available on the Llancarfan Society homepage: www.llancarfansociety.org.uk

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