



**LIGHTS!  
CAMERA!  
ACTION!**



**LLANCARFAN SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER 187  
SEPTEMBER 2021**



## **CONTENTS**

- 3    Remembering Betty Pullen**
- 4    Cousins at War & The Malingerer's Mentor**
- 8    The Knights Templar ride into town....**
- 9    ....as does a TV circus**
- 10   Late summer supping**
- 11   Our musical youth**
- 12   Our priest in the Corner House**

**Notice from St Cadoc's: Any volunteer pianists willing to support our church services would be very welcome, as the current musicians are in their seventh and eighth decades. If you can help, please contact Sue Taylor:**

**Sue.taylor45@btinternet.com**

## REMEMBERING BETTY PULLEN

***Betty, a local resident for many years, sadly passed away earlier this year. Her daughter Christine and son Steven write:*** Betty and Brian lived in “Nauvoo” for over thirty happy years. They were very involved in village life and met some lovely neighbours over the years, some of whom became good friends. Betty joined the flower arranging class and kept fit. She also became involved in St Cadoc’s church, where she was confirmed. Some of the kneelers at the church were sewn by Betty.

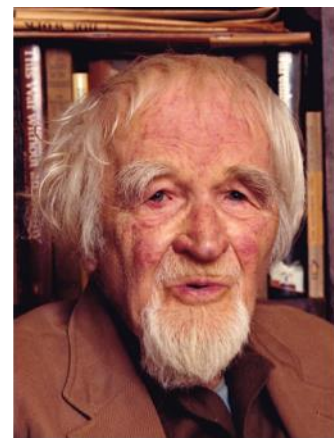
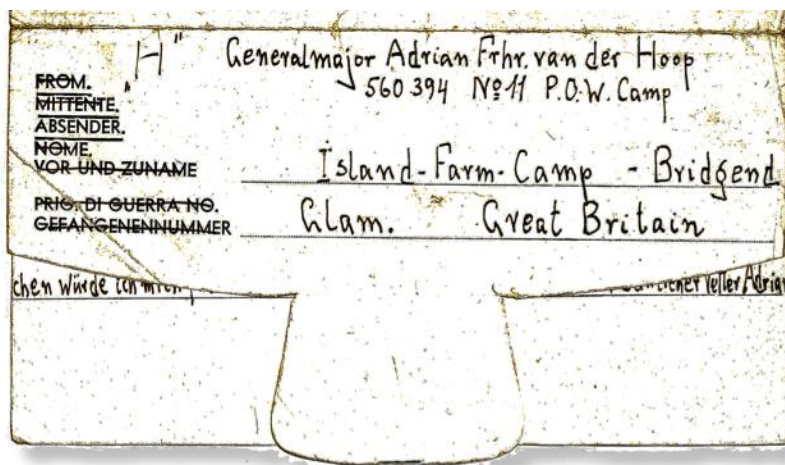
Betty and Brian also had a holiday home in Spain, where they spent a few months a year, often joined by us and their grandchildren, James and David. Ill health eventually forced the couple to relocate from Llancafarn back to Barry, where Brian sadly passed away in 2016. Most of their friends from Llancafarn have also passed now, but all the wonderful memories remain. Let’s hope they have all found their “Nauvoo”.



## Cousins at War & The Malingerer's Mentor

Ian Fell

Having emerged from exploring the contents of our White Chapel attic, I'm still on the alert for memories of the wartime broadcasts of Lord Haw-Haw. So far I've only been told that he used a holiday retreat in North Wales, nestling beside the Porthmadog-Blaenau Ffestiniog railway. (The cottage was appropriately named *Coed-y-Bleiddiau -The Wood of the Wolves!*) You may recall that our friend René Halkett was, though not lupine in himself, one of Britain's counterpoints to 'Lord Haw-Haw'. We were exploring why he received letters from our local Prisoner of War camp – 'The Generals' Camp' at Island Farm in Bridgend. Here, with a fine photograph of René in Camelford in 1982, is a reminder :



There are several such letters, written in German, which I've kept, so far un-translated, ever since I became René's 'literary executor' (whatever that means) when he died in early 1983. They are, after all, personal family letters – copies of which I must have passed to Generalmajor Adrian's wife, Dorothea (Dorle) van der Hoop, who I met in the 1990s (she died in 2007). The earliest van der Hoop letter is dated 26 June 1946. One assumes it will still have been monitored by the camp authorities, even ten months after the war in Europe ended.

Adrian Frhr. van der Hoop was René's cousin, with whom he played as a small boy here, at the delightful family seat of Hof Schmitte near Biebertal. Adrian



lived in a house behind the mill on the left, while René's family spent the Summer in the 'toy castle' seen on the right.

According to René's semi-autobiographical book, *The Dear Monster*, first published in Britain 'as a warning'<sup>1</sup> in July 1939 - Adrian and he played what René called 'the strangest game I have ever heard of'. "We all," he said, "used to have small, flat tin-soldiers, and hundreds of them. Being soldiers' sons we knew how the officers of the General Staff used to conduct battles on the map with exactly the same toys, and we imitated them, writing out orders for every movement and taking everything very seriously. But my cousin A. went further. His soldiers represented the army of a minor German Land, and he was the ruler and supreme army-chief of that country . . . With this well-organised army he calmly set out to conquer the world bit by bit.'

Within a very few years both these cousins found themselves involved in the real thing, World War 1, on of course the German side. By the time René was aged 14, in that traumatic 1914, he had been placed in the *Royal Prussian Cadet Corps*. He didn't enjoy it, but with the outbreak of war "my uncle, my father and I had already had telegrams instructing us to join our units, and for the first time I felt something like pride and enthusiasm. Because my cousin [Adrian] was only a blinking civilian while I had my order like a grown up soldier."

Things were to change dramatically, both in the short and the long term. On 3 July 1914 Adrian (now nearly 18) entered the Army as a Fahnenjunker, which was 'the lowest rank of a candidate officer'. The following two decades bristle with stories which will be left untold. But take it that by 1936 René had escaped with Hilde to Britain, while Adrian was a Commandant in the German Army High Command. His WW2 career ended in Norway, where he was Commander of the 3992-man Division Group 'van der Hoop'. He became a Prisoner of War in May 1945. How much each then knew of the other's fate, I do not know – but for sure these two cousins, on desperately opposed sides, would not have shared that knowledge with anyone. Adrian however clearly qualified for imprisonment in Bridgend's 'Generals' Camp' – where we will leave him until later in this narrative.

So what then happened to René? As reported earlier René, though now working at Dartington in Devon, was in 1940 (as with the entire German and refugee population of Britain) classified as an 'enemy alien'. Despite having 'signed up' for service in London - and even with his powerful friends like military strategist Basil Liddell Hart pulling strings for him – he faced the inflexible mandate that:

**'all foreign-born recruits go to the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps'.**

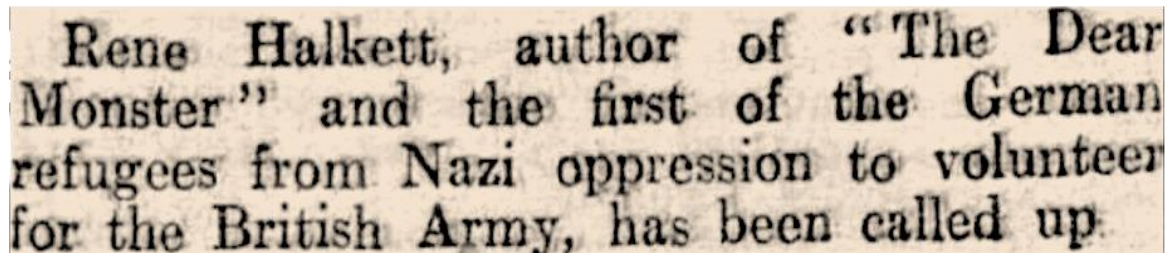
'I am commanded by Lord Reading', blustered a 'jobsworth' of a Lieutenant Colonel, described by René as 'obviously straight out of mothballs' :

---

<sup>1</sup> So described in a dedication to a reader in Collaton near Paignton, Devon.



'You are not going to London, Herr Halkett. You're going to Westward Ho! Westward Ho! – just across our Severn of course - Is automatically spelt with an exclamation mark. René Halkett's reactions needed several more. "It was a holiday camp! Chalets!! I was an Auxiliary Military Pioneer!!! It was ghastly!!!!'<sup>2</sup>



Rene Halkett, author of "The Dear Monster" and the first of the German refugees from Nazi oppression to volunteer for the British Army, has been called up.

The syndicated newspaper report above recorded his fate. And only at last, after many months and a strange stretch of fake job interviews, René was ultimately assessed as 'useful', and secretly joined the Political Intelligence Department [PID] near Bletchley Park on 1 May 1942. Here he quickly became a key writer and broadcaster with the inner circle of Sefton Delmer's 'black propaganda' team. From then until VE Day, 1945, he worked with a team of propagandists in a (still charming) house called The Rookery, Apsley Guise – known covertly as R.A.G.

Back here in Wales, we were continually warned from the very start of the war about the dangers of listening to propaganda. Llancarfan ears may even have heard one of the most popular speakers from the Ministry of Information, a Mr. Bernard Newman, who made regular appearances throughout South Wales. He was an expert on spies, but, under cover of entertaining tales of '*Spies in Fact & Fiction*', he was sent to issue awful warnings about the "many still at large, clever and watchful – always prowling around with eyes and ears wide open, waiting for a scrap of indiscrete conversation".<sup>3</sup>

We must, he told us, be ever careful "not to be caught in the same predicament as the French. The enemy will endeavour to spread false rumour and confuse the civilian population, but we must "stand put" and kill any lie which "Haw-Haw" and his Nazi employers may try to circularise."<sup>4</sup>

But while the British were inevitably seduced into 'listening in' to German propaganda, people like our friend René were broadcasting exactly the same sort of propaganda to Germany. Well, very similar - Delmer said his team did it with greater subtlety!

He felt one could not change minds by broadcasting a barrage of overt lies, or indulging in abusive ridicule of the Germans. His idea was to disseminate 95% truth, but with one convincing paragraph of misinformation slipped into it. This was what

---

<sup>2</sup> René forgets that earlier Westward Ho! 'aliens' had before that been deployed in tents on Dartmoor!

<sup>3</sup> *Glamorgan Gazette*, 10 January, 1941. His Cardiff venues included the Reardon Smith theatre at the National Museum, and the Capitol Cinema. All illustrated with magic lantern slides.

<sup>4</sup> *Glamorgan Advertiser*, 24 October 1941.

Delmer aspired to, but could not always deliver, such was the beastly business of deceit in which Halkett found himself entangled.

“One of my tasks,” René told me, “was the daily newspaper, *Nachrichten für die Truppe*, that was dropped over the German lines, and had an undeserved good reputation as a source of fairly reliable news. *News for the Troops* : “I wrote the leading article in that, every day. And every night it was cooked up what I should talk about. And when I was in bed at two or three o’clock in the morning a man stopped with a motorbike, a soldier, and I had to read the proofs, half asleep. And the articles had to be signed, so I invented ‘Oberlieutnant von Ö’, and was put on writing and reading scripts about the military situation. I only became established once I wrote those signed leaders.”

René’s taped accounts of his subversive role as part ‘newspaper’ journalist, part broadcaster, could nowadays fill many an hour of *Radio Four*’s historical transmissions. But back in the second world war this was not nostalgia, this was for real. Indeed it was part of the destructive mission to demoralise the enemy. It could be nasty:

“Once,” said René, “Delmer gave me something to copy that had to be written in German – that is, in handwriting *recognisable* as learnt from a German school. We captured information from the correspondence of German ‘service people’ – of a man, say, evacuated from his station in Norway to Germany, who had died on transport. We got somehow the name and address of his wife in Germany. Someone wrote a letter purporting to come from a nurse who was on that transport ship, writing to his wife. Since Delmer told me to copy it, I did:

“It breaks my heart, but these things should be known. He was badly wounded, but there was no need for him to die. Only we couldn’t be bothered. And people you can’t be bothered with get *die Spritze*.” Meaning ‘the syringe’. René said to Delmer, ‘Please do not give me that kind of script again.’

But apart from his subversive broadcasts, René’s greatest deceit was to write a compact booklet called *Krankheit Rettet*. or ‘Sickness Saves’, known as ‘*The Malingerer’s Handbook*’. This book was based on the work of a Canadian professor, J. T. McCurdy who, drawing on WW1 experience, wrote of what today is called ‘post traumatic stress disorder’ - the psychological and physical response to the horrors of war. McCurdy had studied psychological disturbance – ‘Conversion Hysteria’ – where ‘an idea is carried over into a physical symptom’.

McCurdy’s key realisation was that **‘by far the most difficult problem is to differentiate a conversion hysteria from malingering’**. This proved *invaluable* to Delmer’s trouble makers. So in the next *Newsletter* I must offer a fuller account of how, as war turned in Britain’s favour, René’s book taught demoralised Germans the best ways to simulate illness and escape the war. It was René’s career opportunity to become **‘The Malingerer’s Mentor’**

## Knights in White Satin

*Sue Taylor*

Earlier this year St Cadoc's Church was visited by two Knights Templar who were tracing the Pilgrimage route taken in 1290 by a group of pilgrims from Swansea to Hereford, called the St Thomas Way. This motley crew's destination was the Shrine of St Thomas Cantilupe (also known as St Thomas of Hereford) in Hereford Cathedral. Among the group in 1290 was William Cragh, a Welsh outlaw, walking barefoot and



wearing a rope noose around his neck. Cragh had been hanged in Swansea by Lord William de Briouze, the local Norman ruler. But the execution had ended unexpectedly and the dead man came back to life, in what local people understood as a miracle of St Thomas of Hereford. (He began to show signs of life the day after his execution and over the subsequent weeks made a full recovery.) Cragh, together with Lord and Lady de Briouze, travelled

to Hereford to give thanks at the tomb of the saint, calling along the way at, among other places, Ewenny, Llanccarfan and Usk. The Sovereign and Military Order of The Temple of Jerusalem, otherwise known as the Knights Templar, was founded in Jerusalem around 1118 AD and still exists today to follow the devotion of Christian ideals and to spread these teachings throughout the world. The word "Knight" actually means "Servant".



## DRAMA ON OUR DOORSTEP

**There was much excitement in the village in June**, when a TV crew swooped in to film scenes for “Prizefighter: The Life of Jem Belcher”—the true story of a boxer who became the youngest ever world champion at the age of 19 in 1800. Among the actors gracing us with their presence were Ray Winstone and “Game of Thrones” cast member Julian Glover. Our editorial team were not quick enough on their feet to bag a chat with either, but in an interview with Wales Online, Winstone said it was lovely to be in “exotic” Wales and described Llancarfan as “lovely” and the locals as “beautiful”. That’s one luvvy who can come back any time.



**LATE SUMMER FUN:** It was great to see locals gathering (covid-safely, of course) again over the summer—and not just at the Fox. On Saturday September 4th the LDCA held a “Late Summer Supper” on the grass behind Llanccarfan Village Hall. The 50-plus guests enjoyed chicken, tatties and salad, plus a choice of desserts, at candle-lit tables under gazebos (kindly provided by Byron of Llantwit Major and cowbridge Lions; thanks also to Beryl and Llewellyn Price for lending the hay bales). The weather was kind and the gazebos, though adding to the atmosphere, weren’t needed to keep attendees dry. The big prize in the raffle—a hamper packed full of goodies—was won by Mandy and Richard Wantock (right). A huge amount of work was put in by the organisers, especially Frances Valencia and Nicola Tummon, to ensure the evening went smoothly. Thanks also to Andrew Tummon for his help in the kitchen, to Ollie and Meryl Spencer for their bar skills, and to everyone else who helped out, not least with all the clearing up on Sunday.



**IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE** not one but two good nights out in the space of a few weeks. Alas, it wasn’t to be. The Llanccarfan Society Annual Dinner scheduled for Friday September 24th had to be postponed due to covid-19 concerns within the enclosed space in the Village Hall. New date to be confirmed.



## VILLAGE PEOPLE DANCING TO VILLAGE PEOPLE

A musical and games-playing blast from the past: the first night of the Village Youth Club, on October 23rd 1991. We're informed, hopefully reliably, that the DJ-in-residence was Gareth Tickner. Thanks to Steve Powell for sending in the photos.



**ORDINATION CELEBRATION:** *Congratulations to Kevin Barry of this parish, who on June 26th was ordained as Deacon at Llandaff Cathedral, by Bishop June. He celebrated at the Fox afterwards with family and friends – an occasion made even more special by the fact that it also happened to be Kevin's birthday!*

*Kevin writes:* "This has taken me just over four years of studying and working in placements. There are four recognised positions in the Church in Wales, for Ministry, Deacon, Priest and Bishop. You remain as a Deacon throughout your time in ministry, even the Bishop is a deacon! I am currently at Wenvoe, St Lythans and Sully. They are a busy parish and I often find myself helping or preaching at four or five services each Sunday plus mid-week Eucharist. I really enjoy working within the community and making things happen for the better."



On January 30th 2022, Kevin will be Priested by the Bishop in Wenvoe Church, and with a fair wind he will be joining the East Vale Ministry Area, and helping Fr Michael, who has recently joined us, at St Cadoc's in Llancarfan, along with the other ministers in the area.

**All contributions to this newsletter are copyright of the Llancarfan Society and may be edited, but it is not intended to restrict re-use by contributors of their original works.**

**Editor: Matthew Valencia**

**Deputy Editor: Penny Fell**

**Society President: Barbara Milhuisen**

**Society Chairman: Gordon Kemp**

**Society Secretary: Katherine Kemp**

**Subscriptions & Membership: Joann Scott-Quelch, 2 Penylan House, Llancarfan CF62 3AH**

**For past issues, visit [www.llancarfansociety.org.uk](http://www.llancarfansociety.org.uk)**

**Letters, queries and contributions: [matthewvalencia@gmail.com](mailto:matthewvalencia@gmail.com)**

**NEXT COPY, NEWS AND LETTERS DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 30TH 2021**