



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

December 2025. Issue No 195





Photos of Sinfonia Cymru, Wreath Making, Buble Night



Photos from: Vale of Glamorgan Ensemble,
Christmas Wreath Making, Carols by tree...Tree
works & Tractor Parade.



Special thanks to the following:

The Fox & Hounds for mulled wine and mince pies

Graham Brain and Mike Ponting's quiz fund for a donation towards the new lights.

Tony Nolan - Donation £300 towards the tree and some additional new lights

Anne ferris for the electrical connection

Edward Thomas (Pancross Farm) Loan of the landing shovel to put the tree up and place the lights.

The Xmas tree crew... John Ford, Max Evans, Paul Jenkins, Martin Williams, Martyn Hughes
Lights turned on by Felix McDonald

Note from the Editor

As the calendar closes on 2025, it is impossible to ignore the change in our village. This past year was not about incremental adjustment. It was about genuine, foundational evolution.

The most visible, and perhaps most difficult, aspect of this transition was the removal of the primary school buildings. Watching the temporary classrooms, structures that anchored generations of memories. Finally come down. Seeing the playground transition into a building site, served as a potent, physical reminder that a chapter of Llancarfan's history has ended. Though inevitable. This process signals new housing. And an expansion of our community base.

This shift should present us with a focus of integration. The challenge, not merely absorbing new developments, but actively ensuring that the essential character of Llancarfan remains intact.

Fortunately, not all evolution is marked by demolition. The arrival of our new pub landlord, Adam, is a strong counterpoint to the structural upheaval. The Fox and Hounds is not simply a business. It is the vital, historical and social heart of our village. A fresh face, bringing new energy and ideas to this central pillar. Reinforces that while physical landmarks may change. What communal places we have, bind us and remain central and vital.

I am reminded as we all sang Carols acapella by the Ford to welcome in the village tree last Sunday. That the spirit of Llancarfan is not preserved in the empty space of our once village school. But in the connections, we forge in the vibrant space' of our community.

If you have any stories, editorial or photos you would like to add to our newsletter, please email:

*llancarfansoc@gmail.com
www.llancarfansociety.org.uk*

Society Subs: The annual reviewal date will be 7st April 2026

Household / Couple

Membership £15 pa

Individual €10 pa

Membership form:

www.llancarfansociety.org.uk

Please return membership form to

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President : Barbara Milhuisen

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Newsletter Editor : Maddy Palmer

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Ian Fell

Anne Ferris

Gordon Kemp

Susan Taylor

Fr. Michael John

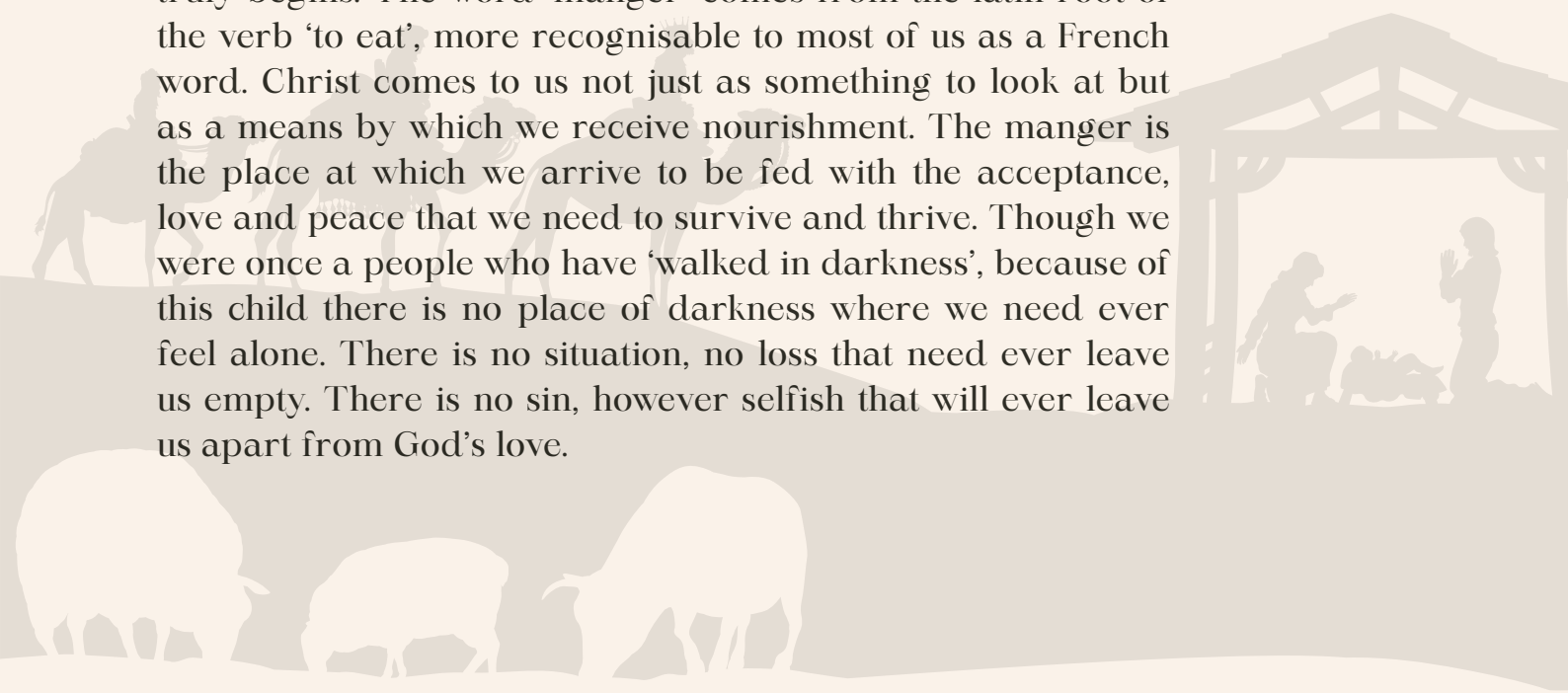
A Note From Michael John: The Manger

The Manger; a place of nourishment

I spotted Christmas decorations in people's houses as early as November 1st this year. By the time you're reading this, if you are the sort of person who enjoys decorating at Christmas, your house will no doubt be already sparkling with tinsel and lights. Our household has an annual summit to discuss the date when the tree and decorations can go up. I desperately try to hold to the idea of the season of Advent as a time of reflection and penitence, but it's a battle I lose most years, at least in terms of tinsel, lights and trees.

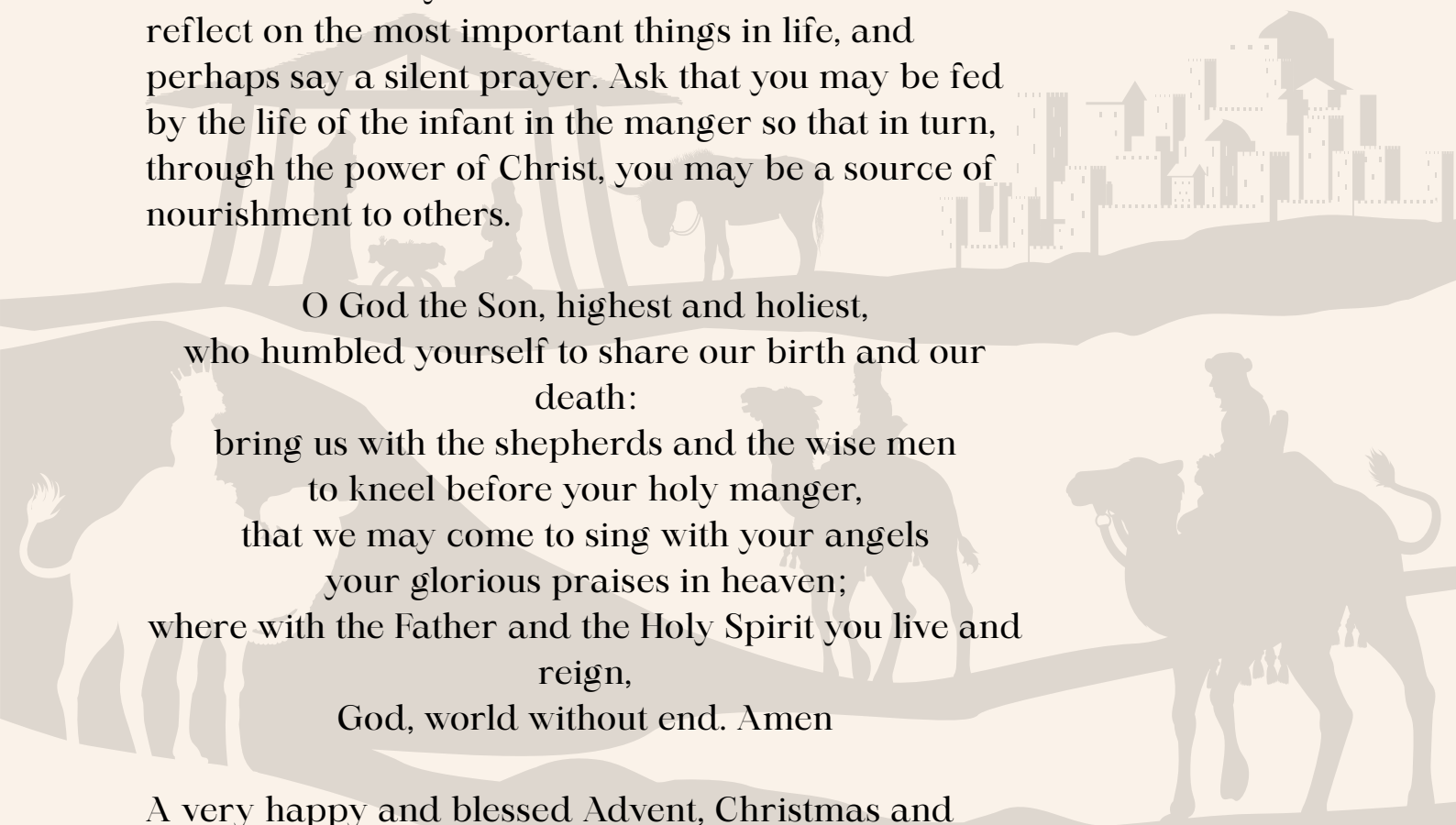
But there is one aspect of the decorations that I refuse to budge on: the placing of the crib. I have three basic demands relating to the crib which are non-negotiable: first, It lives near the front door as a form of message or greeting to visitors; second, the Christ child may not be put in the crib until after Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and the wise men must travel around the house until Epiphany; and third, the crib stays until the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the temple on February 2nd. My children have always felt this to be a double whammy. Decorations up later than most and the crib still up long after many have forgotten Christmas. Who'd be the child of the Vicarage?

Joking aside, for me the crib is the Christmas focal point and I still get a thrill from that moment when the babe is laid in the manger; the Advent waiting has finally past and Christmas truly begins. The word 'manger' comes from the latin root of the verb 'to eat', more recognisable to most of us as a French word. Christ comes to us not just as something to look at but as a means by which we receive nourishment. The manger is the place at which we arrive to be fed with the acceptance, love and peace that we need to survive and thrive. Though we were once a people who have 'walked in darkness', because of this child there is no place of darkness where we need ever feel alone. There is no situation, no loss that need ever leave us empty. There is no sin, however selfish that will ever leave us apart from God's love.



Focussing on the manger as a place which feeds us might offer a particular challenge in the 21st century; if you're like me, I invariably feel ashamed of my excessive consumption at this time of the year. It's ironic that our festive over-indulgence leaves us feeling empty and dissatisfied and we end up feeling compelled to seek something that will fill us with a new sense of meaning as we enter a new year. So, we may join a gym, or resolve to walk, run or swim, we may decide to cut out fatty foods or chocolate all of which may well be good decisions for a healthier life ahead. However, what lies within the manger offers us the deepest kind of nourishment that leaves us with a lasting satisfaction. It is the place that fills our longing.

In Llancarfan Church, and in most churches the crib will remain until the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the temple on February 2nd. It is always a touching and nostalgic scene but for Christians it represents a place of encounter through which our whole life can be renewed. So, whether in church, at home, or whilst shopping, if you come across a Christmas nativity scene take a moment or two to reflect on the most important things in life, and perhaps say a silent prayer. Ask that you may be fed by the life of the infant in the manger so that in turn, through the power of Christ, you may be a source of nourishment to others.



O God the Son, highest and holiest,
who humbled yourself to share our birth and our
death:
bring us with the shepherds and the wise men
to kneel before your holy manger,
that we may come to sing with your angels
your glorious praises in heaven;
where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and
reign,
God, world without end. Amen

A very happy and blessed Advent, Christmas and
Epiphany to you all. Michael

I don't know about my wall-talking colleague Sam (the Smith), but I often refer to the walls of St. Cadoc's as 'the margins of the church'. And why not? As we all know, many of the most exciting things happen in the margins of life. So it is with our wondrous wall paintings, which I'm tempted to describe as the Banksys of the 15th century. What I mean is, like Banksy's graffiti, they are moral observations, full of humanity, rich with talented graphic craftsmanship, and are often ingenious in their witty relationship with their medium – meaning the walls themselves.



For instance, in St. Cadoc's, think about the physical use of a corner in the splay of the first church window - to the right of the main door. That's the one showing the image of 'Death & the Gallant'.

Now compare this to Banksy's ironic use of the garage corner in his 'Season's Greetings' street art painted in Port Talbot. *Neither our Gallant nor the little boy can see what's hidden around the corner.* It's the same joke, cracked again, 540 years apart!

Well of course, as with our other St. Cadoc wall paintings, the pictures should by law have disappeared on or around 1549. This was when the 14-year-old son of Henry VIII, the boy king Edward the Sixth, expressed his adolescent zeal by ordering churches to destroy all forms of ritual & iconography associated with Roman Catholic worship. Previously his dad Henry, once he'd managed to divorce Catherine of Aragon, in fact continued largely to enjoy his traditional ritual practices and display. But Edward danced even more strictly to the Reformation tune. Images which traditionally venerated the saints were among countless depictions to be

purged from Britain's churches – 'no memory of the same'. And as we know, our paintings *did* vanish – rather like those Banksys which have been asset-stripped by the exploiters of art.

But what you ask (with justification) has this to do with 'Monarchs in the Margins'? Well I've recently been thinking, *not* about the wonderful paintings themselves, but the timing of their vanishing.

I identified the date 1549 above, because this was the year of Edward's legal injunctions in the First Act of Uniformity. In fact countless churches dragged their feet about obeying the law. Queen Mary's short Roman Catholic reign confused matters dramatically by repealing Edward's Act. Then, 10 years later, Protestant Queen Elizabeth re-asserted *her* version of an Act of Uniformity, making Mary's changes 'void and of none effect'. Surely confusion and tergiversation would continue to reign, not least in this rural, Roman-Catholic-practice-leaning nook of Wales. It is more than possible that our George's spectacular lance avoided the challenge of the limewash brush for quite some years.

Now - readers will probably have heard of the Cornish 'Prayer Book Rebellion', triggered by opposition to Edward's First Act of Uniformity in 1549. The West Country uprising, a disastrous rebellion against change from Papist religious practices and ceremony, was painfully quelled by a military force, fortified to no small extent by musters of soldiers from Wales and Glamorgan. We know that several of our big local families did thereafter continue their preferred Roman Catholic practices, but they still toed the line and put down the Cornish.

Some, like me, continue to puzzle when reading 'The articles of us the commoners of Devonshire and Cornwall', a 'flyer' in which the rebels expressed their arguments against change. Perhaps most curious is their poignant and intriguing 'Item 8'. Here they write (as survives in an English, not a Cornish version) that 'we will not receive the new service because it is but like a Christmas game ... And so we the Cornishmen (whereof certain of us understand no English) utterly refuse this new English.'

There are so many issues to unpick from these words, targeting and rejecting the rather elegant and restrained words of what in

subsequent centuries still survives as Archbishop Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*. But I'll leave these puzzles for now to a footnote.¹ Because, coming back to our walls, there are traces here which relate specifically to *one* particular version of *one* particular verse of *one* particular psalm which was prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer* for monthly reading in Britain's 'Reformed' churches. Congregations would surely know this psalm well, as indeed did Henry VIII, he having commissioned in 1539 the English language Great Bible, the companion source of texts for worship to Cranmer's 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*.

Let us agree that our wall paintings could likely have been covered with limewash on, or a few months after, Whitsuntide 1549. Then (date unknown) many words were written over the limewash – the writing surviving in a classic Gothic font, the use of which mainly disappeared with the 16th century. Below is one layer of words which (rather miraculously) have survived until today :



Now back in Newsletter 172 (Dec 2017) we discovered where these words came from. Time and again we had puzzled with visitors how the fragmentary letters 'chr' might be completed. Could this read 'put their trust is christ', or 'trust in church'?

Then Llancarfan's good friend, Madeline Gray (Professor Emerita of Ecclesiastical History) delved into her profound textual memory and unearthed the very line in Psalm 20, the psalm which was

¹ Whether 'drama' or 'sport', it is difficult to pin down the exact meaning of the Cornish 'Christmas game', also described as a 'play' in other versions. There is even more confusion in the gloss on a Welsh language report of this rebellion which compares the new Prayer Book practices to 'bear baiting'. 'Ni vynwn Ni ddim or gwyssaneth Saesson newydd nar hware bairs nei gristmas gam'!

ordained in Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* as required reading during Morning Prayer on the 4th day of every month. Modernised, it reads in full :

‘Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses:
but we will remember the name of the Lorde our God.’

Rather attractively, this is what that sentence looks like in Gothic font, reproduced here directly from Henry VIII's Great Bible :

Some put theyꝛ trust
in charettes, and some in hoꝛses: but we wyll
remembꝛe the name of the Lorde oure God.

The psalms have been in fact reprinted countless times. But (given that they were originally translated from the Hebrew, or then the Greek – or even modified in the English) the wording often differed slightly. And the pleasing thing is that the phraseology on our walls *seems most closely to echo* the wording of the first English translation as printed in the 1539 Great Bible. Later editions, for instance, did use slightly modified phrases, and even as early as 1592 they turned the psalms into doggerel verse :

7 In chariots some put confidence,
and some in horses trust :
But we remember God our Lord,
that keepeth promise iust.

Rather interestingly, in Henry VIII's original & personal prayer book, this being in Latin and preceding his Great (English) Bible, there are many marginal annotations in Henry's own 'royal hand'. Alongside 'our' psalm quoted from above, Henry noted (with the words 'pro rege oratio') that this is 'an appropriate prayer for kings'.

Hii in curribus, & hii in equis: nos
autem in nomine dei nostri inuocabi-
mus. **I**pli obligati sunt, & ceciderunt:
nos autem surreximus, & recti sumus.
Domine saluum fac regem: & exaudi: *pro rege oratio*
nos in die qua inuocauerimus te.

British Library
Royal MS 2A XVI
f.22v & f.23r
as digitised online.
[combined image here]

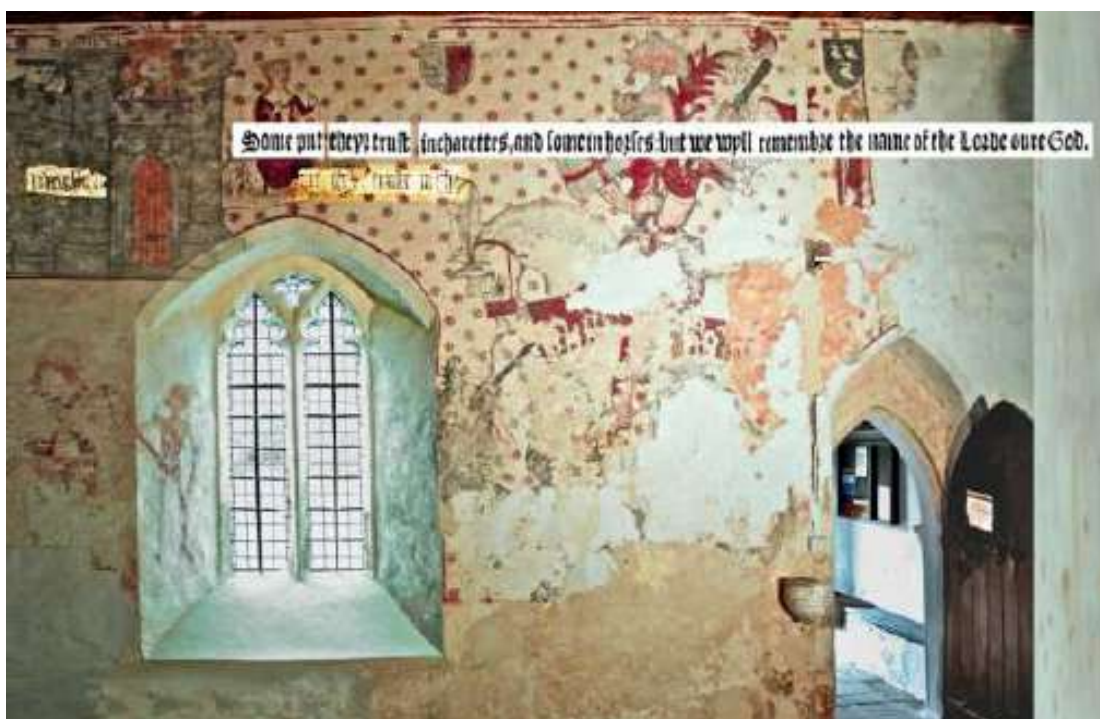
So - if this psalm was appropriate for praying for the king, it was clearly also fine for the monarchist walls of St. Cadoc's church.

Now some time ago I suggested subversive things about *our* particular 'chariots' quotation from the psalms, a thought generously acknowledged as a possibility by Maddy Gray – in her accessible investigations of '*Some Trust In Chariots*' to be discovered on her '*Heritage Tortoise*' website back in April 2016.

In Maddy's words she notes that 'Ian has yet another suggestion. The bit about not putting your trust in horses would have overlain the huge equestrian figure of St. George. Was this done within the lifetime of those who would remember the wall painting of the saint – and was a deliberate dig at the cult of the saints?'

Well yes, it could be a subtle satire about the proscribed adulation of the saints. Then again, I still have a suspicion that such a comment might equally be a way of hinting that 'you can't paint out our inner practices and beliefs with a few coats of whitewash'.

Anyway, whatever the import of the text, it becomes clear that – as in the photographic experiment shown below – if the wall had originally quoted the whole of the verse, it would have stretched well beyond the George & his steed, and obliterated the deadly sins as well. What a loss those pictures were to future sermons!



I could go on. (I do go on!) There are other quotations on the walls, typically illustrated by neighbouring fragments of text also discovered on the South wall. These are indeed fragmentary, and rather eccentrically spaced on the lime-wash base. Among the decipherable English texts, which in time others will elucidate, are fragments which read :

‘Lorde, I have loved ye habitation of thy house, and ye place where thyne honour dwelleth’ - again as illustrated opposite. Please note that the placing here of the first section of the verse is hypothetical and unconfirmed.

This quotation has been identified by Maddy Gray as from another psalm, Psalm 26. To me this seems closer to a conventional exhortation to hold the church in respect and reverence.

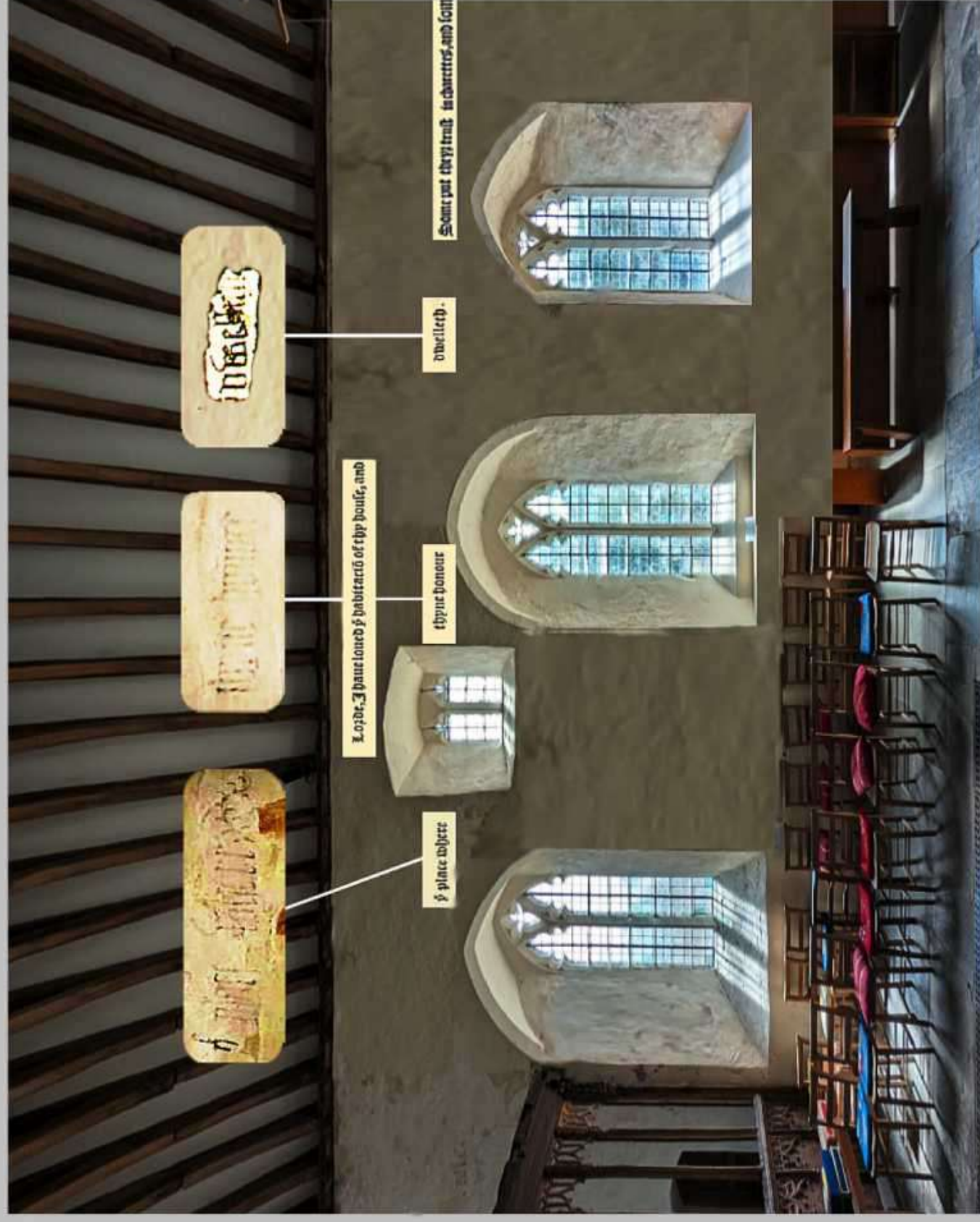
But I will conclude here with a final painful irony.

The texts written across the whitewash – those words which were used to wipe out our remarkable paintings - were themselves ordered to be expunged as part of the action of those promoting the Puritan commonwealth. This happened in 1645, around a 100 years after our St. George disappeared. In that year the use of Cranmer’s *Book of Common Prayer* was itself banned (Bishop Thomas Cranmer having himself been burned at the stake in Oxford under Queen Mary’ reign in 1556.) So yet another layer of lime eradicated another stage in the cruel history of church dogma. And this time it stayed well and truly whited-out until 2008.

The fragments of text, some of which we can explain and some which remain to be decoded, were painted on a wall which survives, in pictures and words, as a manuscript of history. Those fragmentary re-discovered layers symbolise and distil the traumatic changes imposed upon the cultural practices of Britain.

You wonder what King Charles, our latest British monarch, thought in this October 2025, sharing a ceremony with the Pope under the stunningly painted ceilings of Sistine Chapel? Anyone here fancy a bit of peace, love, & mutual tolerance, rather than the brutality behind the competitive power-grabbing of the rituals of faith?

Note :
The placing
of the first
half of the
verse
across the
top here
is an
hypothesis
and as yet
not
confirmed.



LLANCARFAN VILLAGE SHOW 2025

Chairman Kathrine Kemp

It's always an exciting moment when the Show marquee is erected because it represents the culmination of 9 months' work by the Show Committee in bringing all the elements together. There are, however, aspects of the preparatory work over which the Committee has no control – the weather and the extent of community participation. There were concerns this year that the long dry summer would result in fewer entries in the flowers, fruit and vegetable classes. We need not have worried! Although entries were down in the baking classes, the number of entries overall exceeded those of 2024 and a number of people commented that the standard was better than that of the Vale Show!

As ever, the day before and Show Day are busy with preparations and we rely on volunteers to assist with tasks which vary from collecting gazebos and tables (borrowed from neighbouring halls); erecting those gazebos and positioning and covering the tables; writing entry cards and directing entrants to the right location to stage their entries. Show Day starts at around 8 a.m. when the hall is opened in readiness for last minute entries from 8.30 a.m. Between 8.30 a.m. and 10.15 a.m. when the Judges arrive, stewards are busy ensuring that there is sufficient space for all entries and that they are displayed to their best advantage. An intense morning of judging is rounded off by the Judges' Lunch which this year was prepared by Kay Gay and Esther Emerson.

Despite the weather the day was a huge success. In view of the bad forecast, entries were located in the Village Hall, the Church and the marquee. This provided sufficient space for the popular Dog Show to take place in the marquee, otherwise it would have been rained off! The 'pop-up' café in the hall, ably manned by Shelagh Hughes and her daughter Georgie, did a roaring trade selling teas/coffees and delicious home-made cakes donated by Haidee James. Added interest included a stall selling honey made locally by Vale Apiary in Moulton, the RNLI and a stall selling interesting items made by our neighbours at Elidyr Communities Trust, who also submitted a number of entries.

We were delighted that Tony Thomas agreed to present the trophies, some of which were awarded to members of his family, including his great-grandson! The day was rounded off with a well-attended hog roast with entertainment provided by Pisky Led and the bar run by Adam and The Fox and Hounds team. The wet weather certainly did not dampen the community spirit!

The Committee extends thanks to our sponsors, Burnett Davies Letting Agency, Pancross Farm, The Fox and Hounds and Waterloo Foundation. Thanks must also go to Llancarfan Community Council for giving permission for the marquee to be erected in the burial ground and to Fr. Michael John for allowing use of St. Cadoc's.

Next year's Show will be on Saturday 15th August and the Committee hopes that it will be every bit as good as, if not better, than this year's. The Schedule of Classes for 2026 will be available shortly.



Pandemic Pond!

From Lockdown Project to Wildlife Haven: Our Garden Pond Journey

When the world shut down in March 2020, our family needed a project to help keep us sane and provide purposeful activity. I can't recall why, but we settled on the idea of digging a pond in the back garden. Little did we know that the muddy hole we started excavating would quickly become such a thriving ecosystem that continues to surprise and delight five years on.

Armed with spades, a rusty pickaxe and endless, enforced free time, we attacked a spare patch of flat lawn at the foot of a bank towards the top of the garden. It has commanding views across the village but was rarely visited (and only then for mowing). It seemed like a good spot to create a new focus and help the local wildlife.

Going in, we knew nothing about ponds, but the internet served our immediate needs for basic information. We bought a plastic liner online, sized for a hole roughly five metres long, two across and a depth of up to one metre.

Any romantic notion of easy digging quickly met reality: as everyone familiar to the village will know, the soil was heavy clay, studded with stones that threatened to puncture the pond liner.

Still, we persevered, hauling the soil and stones up the bank and across the garden to an area where it was easily dispersed out of sight. Each spadeful brought new discoveries, including pottery shards, bits of old pipe and larger rocks that required extra effort to heave out. Our hands blistered and backs ached but there was something deeply satisfying about the physical challenge when everything else felt so uncertain in the world.

The hole dug, in a sort of kidney shape with a shallow gradient at one end to allow animals to wade in safely, we added the liner and buried the edges under clods of turf from other parts of the garden. It didn't look very inviting to wildlife, but we trusted the process, inspired by what we read online. It was still early days.





We'd decided to let nature fill the pond. Tap water, with its chlorine and chemical treatments, would harm the ecosystem we hoped to create. This meant waiting for rain, which was a test of patience during one of the driest springs in memory. April crawled by with barely a shower. We drained four water butts dotted around the property but still more rainwater was needed.

It was slow going, but finally, by the end of May, the pond was full. Within a week, our crystal-clear achievement had transformed into something resembling pea soup. The water had turned a lurid green; algae had found our pond. A bit of research revealed this was normal, part of the pond finding its balance.



Nature worked faster than we expected. Despite the unappetising water, more life soon arrived. Pond beetles appeared first, diving and surfacing like tiny submarines. Armed with identification guides, we kept an eye on different types, learning to distinguish diving beetles from their various cousins. Soon, pond skaters joined them, impossibly walking on water, while waterboatmen rowed themselves backward across the surface. Water snails appeared from nowhere, slowly traversing the liner.



The following year, we added native British marginal plants, including flag iris, floating four leaf clovers and marsh marigolds. The transformation was remarkable. That summer, our first dragonflies arrived: common darters hovering like miniature helicopters, broad-bodied chasers defending their territory, and black-tailed skimmers basking on warm, mossy stones.

We learned these ancient insects are among nature's most successful predators, with a hunting success rate of over 95%, far exceeding lions, sharks or birds of prey. Delicate damselflies followed, their electric-blue or ruddy orange bodies catching the light.

Each year brought new residents, and the ecosystem grew more complex, maturing and rebalancing. The green water cleared as plants and wildlife found their equilibrium, then blanket weed appeared and barley straw was added to help contain the spread.



Then, in 2023, the ultimate validation: newts arrived. We spotted our first one by chance and it was a welcome surprise, a prehistoric form gliding through the water. The arrival of newts signalled the pond had matured into a truly healthy ecosystem. These remarkable amphibians are indicator species, only colonising waters with good quality and established food chains. Now we have a thriving colony that returns each spring, their numbers growing annually, confirming our pond has become a genuine wildlife refuge.

This year we added some more native plants, including waterlilies and rushes, to provide shade and refuge for various little critters but also competition for the algae.



Looking through photos from 2020 onwards, the transformation is astounding. What started as a lockdown distraction has become our garden's beating (and buzzing) heart; a testament to patience, natural processes and the remarkable ability of wildlife to make the most of even the smallest sanctuary.

Article by Jim Barrett.



NOTES FROM THE GREEN' POTTING SHED

Merry and Bright



If you're anything like me, by the time December rolls around, the garden starts looking suspiciously soggy. I know it's resting, but frankly, I'm getting bored! Winter doesn't have to mean surrendering to the grey. Over the years, while Peter isn't looking, I've learned a few tricks and planted with colour in mind. And to keep the garden 'Merry and Bright'.

My secret weapon is the stuff that never quits: evergreens and variegated foliage. I treat my evergreens like the indispensable, slightly judgmental relatives they are. We're talking dense, dark conifers that stand rigid against the frost. But to really jazz things up, we have various Holly' and the yellow-splashed Spotted Laurel. Luckily, the previous owners left me with multiples of Mahonia, whose architectural spikes not only look like something from a fantasy film but smell fantastic when they bloom. More recently, I've added various Eucalyptus trees and bushes, whose silvery-blue foliage gives me a lovely bit of height and that wonderful, crisp smell.

In the last year I have also planted varieties of Bamboo. Contained in deep circular planters. Sunk in the ground. (They are less back breaking than digging in bamboo barrier). But they offer differing heights and structure that complement the brown sunflower stems I left behind. They may be technically 'dead,' but they add wonderful, spooky texture against the frost.

But for pure drama near the doorstep, I rely on pots. I stuff them with Cyclamen. Their little heart-shaped leaves and bright pink, red, or white butterfly-wing blooms make the perfect splash of colour, in what is a leaf graveyard from the cherry tree.

So, there you have it. By focusing on plants that either refuse to die or simply embrace the cold with a flamboyant stem or a cheeky bloom, I keep my garden looking less like a soggy tundra and more like a carefully curated, slightly eccentric winter wonderland, all while Peter is busy planning the build of his toolshed.

PHIL WATTS - OBITUARY

We were saddened to hear of the death of Phil Watts on 30th August, this year. Llancarfan was central to Phil's life – and he was central to life in the village for nearly a century. He was Founder Member of the Llancarfan Society; a tireless collector of village history and memories; the driving force behind the petanque piste; and much more. With his impeccable timing, Phil passed away, not only on the anniversary of his & Ruth's fondly remembered wedding, but also on the day of the Village Show. Quite rightly, everyone was gathered together to hear the sad news. Phil's family, Russell and Vivienne, have given permission for us to publish a version of their eulogies, as shared at his packed funeral on 26 September in St Cadoc's church.



VIVIENNE

We all have our own memories of Phil —whether you knew him personally or heard stories about him from others. His sense of humour was memorable and he always made us laugh.

Life in Llanccarfan, and sport, especially football and cricket, all played a special part throughout his life. Born on 7th August 1929 in Barry to Doris Jane and William Watts. Dad completed the family with older sisters Mary and Kathleen. After living at Llanvithyn Mill, the family moved to Abernant. Dad attended Llanccarfan School then went to Cowbridge Grammar School. He'd ride his bike to Bonvilston and catch the bus.

He was the only boy with a football - Cowbridge was a rugby playing school.

At the age of 13, Dad began playing in the men's side for Bonvilston and after home games he had his first experience of a pub, which was The Red Lion. We visited there not long ago, and he loved reliving those memories.

He also had a passion for cricket and recalled making his own ball from a bicycle inner tube and a bat using compressed paper and willow. Needless to say, there probably weren't too many boundaries scored with this equipment!

Upon leaving school he briefly tried his hand as an electrician's apprentice, but quickly realised it wasn't for him and decided to leave. Then in 1950, he was called up to the RAF. By this time, a Landgirl named Ruth had come to live in Llanbethery. There was an immediate spark between them, they became a courting couple and, on 30th August 1952 here in St Cadoc's Church, they got married. The reception was held in the Church Hall but no alcohol was allowed—hard to imagine that happening today!

Their three bridesmaids—Anne, Daphne and Claire—are here with us today. In addition, Barbara Milhuisen, was the organist and she is here today and is playing one of the hymns.

After he left the RAF in 1953, Dad and Mum lived in Broadway, Cardiff. Russell was born there in 1956. But they spent much time at Abernant, eventually building their bungalow and coming "home". Dad joined the Cardiff City Housing Department as a Rent Collector, whilst working the farm. He later also worked behind the bar at the Fox and Hounds and recalled a pint then as costing 1 shilling and 7pence (less that 8p.) How different from now!

Dad enjoyed village life, he sat on the Parish Council, and involved himself with many events and activities – he was a founding member of Llanccarfan Society in 1987 and enjoyed bell ringing and cricket matches.

His first car was a 1937 Morris 7 with running boards. Dad taught Mum to drive—until she was unable to get behind the wheel because she was expecting me!

I arrived in the winter of 1962, when heavy snowfalls made it impossible to leave Abernant. Dad would walk to the A48, determined to fetch essentials for the family.

The Fox and Hounds played a considerable part for the Watts family, Dad behind the bar and Mum as secretary for the restaurant, Russell had carparking duties and I joined later for kitchen and bar duties.

There was great delight when grandsons Rhodri arrived in 1989 followed by Rhys in 1993. Lots of happy memories playing in the garden at Abernant. Dad was never happier than when he was outdoors being busy. My memories take me back to the cement mixer in regular use, lots of willing volunteers coming to help with the summer haymaking, lots of homemade elderflower cordial shared around and I felt very grown up at being allowed to drive the tractor.

Dad worked as an Education Welfare Officer until his retirement then, in 1997, he and Mum decided to move from Abernant to the Big Town of Barry. But they continued to join in village events and meet up with friends. Mum and Dad celebrated their Golden Wedding in 2002 and renewed their vows here in St Cadocs, with a reception over at the Fox and Hounds.

Sadly, a while after, mum's health started to deteriorate. Throughout this time Dad cared for her till her passing in 2006. To help with the void, dad had the idea of writing a book. "Llanccarfan Memories" was born, published and sold many copies with generous donations to the church and Ladies Tuesday Club. "More Llanccarfan Memories", followed based on the diaries of Ernie Badcock.

A stroke in 2020 meant that dad was not permitted to drive. It had been his independence to go to Bowls and to Llanccarfan. He felt then that life was changing. Only a short time ago we celebrated his 96th birthday, that's not a bad innings. He was on top form that day with his sharp wit and smiling eyes you could see how much he enjoyed the attention and being with the ones he loved most.

This year has seen dad's health decline, Rhodri was living with his Gramps and Rhys came home from his travels. So on the day which would have been mum and dad's 73rd Wedding Anniversary dad reunited with his beloved wife Ruth, our mum. I'd like to finish with one dad's favourite comedians Tommy Cooper

'I went to the funeral of a tennis player the other day. It was a great service.'

Rest easy dad. You were a true gentleman in every way.

Just over a decade ago, we encouraged Dad to put pen to paper and capture the many stories he so fondly and frequently recounted. The result was a remarkable chronicle: *Memories of People and Places During My Lifetime in Llancarfan*. These are some poignant extracts from this document, offering just a glimpse into a lifetime of memories—of love, community, resilience, and change.

Phil wrote:

1966 stands out for many reasons. Nationally, it saw the completion of the first Severn Bridge, the tragedy of the Aberfan mining disaster, and England's historic World Cup victory. For our family, however, the most significant event was Ruth's major operation at Llandough Hospital, which happened just a day before the World Cup final. On the day of the match, I visited Ruth at the hospital. With no television in the wards, she insisted I return home to watch the now-famous extra time. Her selflessness shines through even in this memory.

By 1973, I had grown disillusioned with local government and decided to try my hand at pub management. Trixie Phillips, then running The Fox and Hounds, offered me a role as assistant manager alongside Sid Black. This period was a tough learning experience, and ultimately, a disappointment as it didn't lead to greater things. Running a pub demands total commitment—seven days a week, always welcoming. Money was tight, and it became clear Sid would always have precedence, so I returned, cap in hand, to the Housing Department in Cardiff. I was welcomed back, though I lost my seniority and had to start over, but thankfully, my pension rights from 1956 remained. Looking back, I consider myself fortunate.

1974 marked a new professional chapter as I joined S. Glam as an Education Welfare Officer, a role I held until my retirement in 1992. Russ acquired his first car—a Vauxhall, with the tax disc still in my possession. Ruth and I enjoyed our first holiday abroad, a short but memorable trip to Magaluf. I also stood for election to the Llancarfan Community Council, topping the poll, though I often felt Abernant was distinct from the village. I served as councillor for five years, working closely with Ernie Badcock, the clerk, in an area known as Llanfythin, separate from Llancarfan village.

Around 1979, I owned a blue Nissan. One winter, heavy snow forced me to leave it at The Fox car park. Days later, brushing away the snow, it started effortlessly—a testament to Nissan's reliability that won my loyalty. That winter brought the worst snow I can recall; we trekked home to Abernant from Llancarfan in a blizzard, sticks in hand, snow horizontal, grateful for the warmth of home.

In 1984 I convinced Russ to renovate the cottage at Abernant, a project completed with James Builders from Fonmon. Russ remained in the cottage until his move to Cowbridge in 1997, coinciding with our own move to Barry.

1987 The Llancarfan Society was born in this year. As we waited for Vivian Thomas's funeral procession, someone remarked that funerals were the only times we gathered. Moved by this, I wrote to the Gem newspaper, inviting ideas for community gatherings. Andrew Griffiths and Joan Harry responded first, and soon a committee was formed at The Fox and Hounds. Dinners followed, and the Society flourished - currently nearing forty years strong.

April 15th, 1997, marked our move from Abernant to Barry. Having spent my entire life at Abernant, the move was a wrench. Only after relocating did I fully appreciate the freedom and beauty of the countryside. Barry's limitations—roads, pavements, crowds—were a stark contrast. Yet with age, I recognise the wisdom in living closer to services, thanks to Ruth's foresight.

1998 We remained actively involved with the Llancarfan community. Ruth continued with keep-fit and the Tuesday Club, while both of us served on the Llancarfan Society committee. I tended various local gardens and helped organise events such as the Ruth Watts Petanque Cup and Society barbeques—efforts that kept us in touch with village life.

In 1999 The St Cadoc's Church bells had remained silent for a long time, they had been condemned as unsafe. On behalf of the St. Cadoc's Restoration Committee I led fundraising for their restoration, successfully securing grants and donations. When the bells were taken to London for recasting on a lorry donated by Steve Powell of the village, Rev. Malcolm Davies and I went with them. The bells were in place to ring in the new Millennium!

2002 Our golden wedding year brought a special surprise church blessing from Rev Malcolm Davies, and a village reception at The Fox and Hounds, marking 50 years together in the company of friends and family.

2006 brought with it the devastating loss of my beloved Ruth. Ruth passed on 23rd August 2006 – 7 days short of our 55 years of marriage. Her loss changed everything for me, but I had learned some self-reliance during her illness—and I'm still learning! I continue to manage, with her memory ever-present.

Final footnote

Phil remained an indefatigable collector and treasurer of Llancarfan stories to the end of his life. Active to the last, two days before he died, he shared snapshot memories of childhood and youth with his longstanding friend, Barbara Milhuisen. He talked firstly about school transport back in the day, before the invention of health and safety and stranger danger!
School

At the beginning, I was taken to school on the back of my father's motor bike and sidecar, used for his milk business in Barry. I'd be dropped at Ford Cross with Mrs Amelia Evans, to wait till Glenys could take me on the last leg to school. Later, Mary (Watts) took me to school on her bicycle (three on a bike!). As I got bigger, I walked from Abernant with the Evans children at Garnllwyd and the Hughes family from Llanvithyn Mill. There was a new postal service in the village, and sometimes the postman gave us a lift in his delivery van...

and Wartime....

Many buses used the A48 to take women workers to the ammunition factory in Bridgend. Evening time, we had searchlights and guns trained from Leach Castle High Field. There were a number of bombs dropped near Abernant. My father said it was because William Liscombe was showing a candle through his bedroom skylight. There was a Land Girl hostel at Sycamore Crescent where some local boys found their brides. Both Italian prisoners of war and land girls were taken in lorries to farms in the Vale of Glamorgan to work. Some came back to say thank you for the treatment they received at Garnllwyd.

We owe so much to Phil's devotion to the village. It is fitting, therefore, that the new Llancarfan Archive in the Village Hall will be dedicated in memory of Phil Watts. There'll be more news of this in further issues.