

LLANCARFAN SOCIETYNewsletter 31: August 1990

The introduction to the last Newsletter bemoaned the shortage of contributions and again we have to send out a shorter Newsletter than usual, for the same reason. We couldn't wait until more contributions came in as we need to circulate the booking forms for the Annual Dinner and to remind everyone of the forthcoming celebrations of the Official Opening of the Village Hall.

However, the news is not all bad. The appeal in the last Newsletter produced some results and various items have been sent in for publication. We at least have potential articles for the next few Newsletters but, for the time being, they will be a bit shorter than usual until the editor catches up with some of the typing.

-oOo-

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Annual Dinner: This will be held in the Village Hall on the evening of Friday September 21st. Tickets, at £7.00 per head, can be obtained by returning the enclosed booking-form to Phil Watts, Abernant, Llanccarfán, CF6 9AD.

Village Hall: Opening Ceremony and Celebration: Saturday 8th September

Due to the small size of the Hall, invitations are restricted to those resident in the Parishes of Llanccarfán, Llantrithyd and Llanbethery. The Hall Committee is sorry this restriction is necessary.

Timetable - 3.00 Opening ceremony and Service of Dedication followed by refreshments. 3.15 Children's Sports in Culvery Field, by kind permission of Mr. & Mrs. Jameson. 4.15 Punch & Judy Show in the Hall. 5.00 Children's Tea Party. 8.00 Evening Entertainment. There is no charge (BUT BUY YOUR OWN DRINKS!).

Commemorative mugs will be sold during the afternoon.

A Rubbish Walk: The roads around the village are thick with rubbish and, as usual, it has all come to sight as the flail mowers have done the mid-summer cutting along the hedgebanks. One morning, between the top of Cross Green hill and the Fox and Hounds, we picked up three cigarette packets, two drink cans, assorted sweet and crisp packets and a disgusting tissue. We left it clean only the previous day!

The next Tuesday get-together in the Fox and Hounds is on September 4th, during the week before the Village Hall Party. We intend meeting an hour early to have a tidying session. Black bags provided. Come for a useful walk, starting from the Fox and Hounds car park at 7.30 p.m.

-ooo-

Guy Fawkes Bonfires: Puffing your way up School Hill, once you reach the top you can turn left toward Cross Green or walk straight ahead under the overhanging bushes growing on the Twp and up the hill toward Broomwell. We do this most mornings with the dogs and, after rain, the path is very slippery and often ploughed up by horses hooves. Several times recently, out of the mud I have picked up oddly familiar metal discs, some with illegible lettering on them and once, a larger disc which turned out to be an old halfpenny - you remember the ones with the ship on the back - it seems about a hundred years ago!

The Twmp has not always been covered in bushes and brambles - I remember at least once in the past, when the communal spirit took us we used to keep the grass cut - hard work even with a Flymo. That must have been about twenty years ago. At one of our recent Society meetings Andrew Griffiths reminded me that even longer ago it was used as the site of the village fifth of November bonfires and, in a flash, it came to me what those rather burned looking metal discs were. Blazer buttons - one even had the solder mark on it where the little ring was fixed, the ring with which it was sewn to the jacket. What more sensible to put on Guy Fawkes than an outgrown school blazer which no one else wanted. Any of you older members remember it happening? Was it your blazer for that matter?

-000-

Llantrithyd Road Sign: In the last Newsletter we asked about the hand-written poster bemoaning the removal of the Llantrithyd boundary sign, west of the village, from the position which it has occupied for the last 70 years. The question has immediately been answered by the Community Council. The Local Authority, in its wisdom, unilaterally decided that the sign was too far from the village to be effective in slowing-down traffic. For this reason the sign was removed. After some outcry, and consultations between the Community Council and the Authority it has now been agreed that the sign will be restored to its original position!

-000-

An American Detective-story - a sequel by John Etherington and Diane Morgan.

Last month, John Etherington's first instalment of this thriller brought together the finding of the clues and piecing together of evidence concerning Martha Lydia Evans (nee Lougher), grandmother of Mrs. Johnson of Lolo, Montana, U.S.A.

To recap, you may remember that the major clue was a gravestone which was discovered last summer, being used as a paving slab in the garden of Brock Cottage. The stone commemorated the death in 1851 of Martha, wife of William Lougher. This evidence, together with information from the census of 1881 led to the suggestion that perhaps Martha died in childbirth and that Mrs. Johnson's grandmother, Martha Lydia, might have been the daughter born at that time.

Historians quite understandably get hot under the collar about the publication of such speculation without proper evidence. However, ours is a small community and we all accumulate odds and ends of knowledge which sometimes come together to make something useful. On this occasion the risk has paid off handsomely because Diane Morgan, co-author of this second instalment, had been inspired by the account of the gravestone to do some archive research which now completes the story and shows that John Etherington's version in Newsletter 30 was nearly, but not quite right.

The new evidence comes from the census records of the intervening years, the whole record from 1851 now being : -

1851	William Lougher	28	Shoemaker	b. Cowbridge
	Martha Lougher	27	Wife	b. Llantwit Major
1861	William Lougher	38	Shoemaker	b. Cowbridge
	Ann Lougher	33	Wife	b. Llantwit Major
	Martha Lougher	9	Daughter	b. Llancarvan
	Ann Lougher	1	Daughter	b. Llancarvan
1871	William Lougher	48	Shoemaker	b. Cowbridge
	Martha Lougher	19	Daughter	b. Llancarvan
	Catherine Ann Lougher	11	Daughter	b. Llancarvan
	Mary J. Lougher	8	Daughter	b. Llancarvan
1881	William Lougher	58	Shoemaker	b. Cowbridge
	Catherine Lougher	19	Daughter	b. Llancarvan

Martha Lougher (senior) did indeed die in childbirth as documented by her death certificate. She died on May 29th 1851 and was survived for only a few days by her newborn daughter, Martha, who died on June 11th. At this point the original speculation went wrong - Martha Lydia of Montana, Mrs. Johnson's grandmother, was not that child born so tragically in the year of Victoria and Albert's Great Exhibition.

However, William must have married again, very soon, because Martha (junior) was nine at the next census in 1861. Almost for certain he married the first Martha's younger sister: look at her age and place of birth.

These ages and dates definitely identify Martha (junior) as the Martha Lydia Evans who emigrated to Montana in 1882 and also explain the two year discrepancy in age which was a puzzle in the first instalment when it was assumed that the first baby Martha survived to become Mrs. Johnson's grandmother. Mr. & Mrs. Johnson joined the Society during their visit to Wales earlier this summer and so we now have the rather strange situation of a member in the USA whose links with the past and Llancarfan are better understood than those of some local members.

We still do not know where William and his family lived, as names of houses are only given for the isolated outlying farms and cottages: no more than a few of the more important houses in the village, such as the Fox and Hounds, are named in the censuses.

These additional records also confirm that Mary Jane Lougher was Martha Evans' sister who, on the evening of the 1881 census was either visiting or living with her sister's family. Why Ann Lougher became Catherine Ann and then Catherine through the three census entries is anyone's guess but as William's second wife, Ann, was no longer part of the family by 1871, could this be a reason? A painful memory? Incidentally, Catherine's age also changes by two years in the 1881 census!

There are still some very slight discrepancies of dates, though they do not throw any doubt on the story. The death certificates record that Martha Lougher died on May 29th 1851 and her baby daughter, Martha, died on 11th June 1851 but the transcription of the gravestone, found at Brook Cottage, reads:

In memory of Martha Wife of William Lougher of this Parish who died June 10th. 1851, Aged 27. Jesus her Rock Jesus her guide / To Jesus lived in Jesus died; / To Jesus now her praise is given / Within the realms of bliss in Heaven.

There are several possibilities: William must have been distressed and the stone-mason, no doubt a local man, may have inscribed the dates from memory rather than bother the twice bereaved shoemaker. There may well have been confusion between the time of Martha's death and that of her baby daughter a fortnight later.

There may yet be another instalment as we still know nothing of the male side of the family. Last month William Evans, Mrs. Johnson's Grandfather and thatcher by trade, was speculatively linked with the Llancadle Farm and the Green Dragon in Llancadle. Any volunteers to research this one?

Correction: In Newsletter 24, just to sow confusion, it was wrongly stated that Martha Lougher died in April 1851 - this was the editor's fault for relying on memory which, as you have seen before, is not very good for dates!

-000-

**Chimney Sweeping:** Driving or cycling past the old Ty Uchaf farmhouse which is being converted at Moulton, the various stages of the process have provided the compulsive viewing we associate with holes in the road or building-sites. When the roof was taken off, the verge-stones of the gable-ends were exposed and it was then very obvious how the thatch used to nestle into the half-thickness of the stone wall, the outer half being occupied by the upstanding, shaped stone blocks which are so characteristic of these formerly thatched Vale cottages built of the blue lias limestone.

Then, a little later, as some walls were knocked down one of the fireplaces came into view with its great, cavernous flue above it. Somewhere in Thomas Hardy there is a description: " --- long flakes of soot floated from the sides and bars of the chimney-throat like tattered banners in ancient aisles; whilst through the square opening in the midst one or two bright stars looked down ---". It could have been the very chimney - a proper Welsh farmhouse simnai fawr. I stopped for a moment to look and thought to myself that a chimney like that could never be swept with a traditional Mary Poppins sweep's brush.

A few months ago, far away in West Wales I had a letter from a lady who had grown-up in just such a farmhouse with a giant chimney flue and corner oven. It isn't a Llancarfan story but you might like to hear how her family swept the chimney, and older members might tell us if this was the way in the Vale. I am grateful to Miss Pamela Francis for her recollection.

"You may not know that gorse bushes were used to sweep chimneys. When we lived at Maesyblodau the large open chimney was swept each spring by this method: my brother would cut a thick gorse bush, put it on the hearth, drop a rope down the chimney and tie one end to the bush. Another length of rope was also tied to the bush. He would get up on the roof and pull the bush up the chimney and I would be underneath pulling it down. This was done until the chimney was clean. Not so the two of us, or my mother who shovelled the soot into a bucket. This was done until I and my mother left in 1954 and afterwards by my brother and his wife until the house was altered a few years later."

**Wildlife again:** All of those butterflies we saw in the spring were harbingers of something better. The fields and lanes have been simply alive with them all summer and anyone with a Buddleia or Ice Plants, in the garden, must have had Peacocks, Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals galore. Never, since my childhood have there been so many Meadow Browns and their smaller Gatekeeper cousins in the grass fields.

Kingfishers are back on the stream again this summer: a tropically beautiful bird, it has flashed away down the green tunnel of bushes which overhang the water behind the church or glittered metallic-blue down the roadside part of the stream in the early morning sunshine.

Waterside life has been just as prolific as the butterflies of the hedges and fields, with Wagtails bobbing around the ford amongst crowds of House Martins collecting mud to plaster their nests on the walls of Whitechapel and the Fox and Hounds. At Gigman Bridge, on the Thaw, there have been the most gorgeous fluttering blue damsel-flies: the ones with the dark spot on each wing and, on our last visit, a kingfisher there as well.

Some time last year we commented how few bats there seemed to be. Once upon a time the air seemed thick with them, over the stream and in gaps amongst the trees. In particular, they used to fly in dozens back and forth under the bridge beside the Church Hall. This year the warm weather must have favoured them and the numbers seem to be up again. Derek Porter counted 67 Pipistrelles flying from the roof of Millrace Cottage, though they stayed for only a few days. The females move from roost to roost carrying the baby bats clinging to their fur; there was a superb TV documentary of all this a few weeks ago.

In mid-July there were glow-worms on the Twp below Penylan House and on Cross Green Hill. On one of those very hot, still, evenings just after darkness had completely fallen, there were a dozen or more glowing away in the hedgebanks and on the verges just above Cross Green. Thanks to Phil Quelch for telling us to look for them.

-000-

Weather Lore: Of interest to us all, the subject of many a passing conversation and of the introduction to several of these Newsletters, weather has always concerned the countryman. The following extracts are taken from the writings of David Jones of Wallington, historian of the Vale as recorded by Stewart Williams in the Vale of Glamorgan Series Volume 3.

From the Bridgend paper, the Central Glamorgan Gazette in 1878: - "--- listen to what the hay-makers will tell us. If there has been a heavy dew, they look forward with confidence to the day proving fine; a scanty dew, and they are not surprised if there is rain by noon."

"If the wind is eastward in the morning and follows the sun, there will be no rain; the sun going to the wind keeps off rain; but when the wind is strong against the sun, then expect a downpour."

"Sunshine and rain; it will rain tomorrow." "When they see a frog, they consult him upon the ever-present question of the weather. Should his back be of a yellowish tint, they are hopeful; is it greenish brown? They must even be content to wait for better weather until a change of the moon. Large black slugs don't care to see abroad unless the hay is stacked and lattermath is being sought."

"Our limestone walls give truthful token of approaching change; if they sweat, rain is coming --- a leaden sky with a white fringe over the sea, is a sign of continued wet --."

"When Breaksea Point does roar and cry, Gileston Lane will never be dry."