



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 34: December 1990

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A SLIDE-SHOW and the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at the Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. on Friday 25th January 1991. REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED. Please come, as we need to elect or re-elect Committee Members and adopt a formal constitution for the Society (after three years!).

The present Committee (which just "grewed") comprises: Chairman and Newsletter Editor, John Etherington; Secretary, Barbara Milhuisen; Treasurer, Phil Watts; Joyce Andrews; Geoff Burrows; Andrew Griffiths; Derek Higgs; Gwynne Liscombe, Mick Mace.

John Etherington is resigning as Chairman but is willing to continue as Editor. Phil Watts is resigning as Treasurer but is willing to stand for a newly created post of Membership Secretary. All other members are willing to continue on the Committee. At the least we need nominations for Chairman and Treasurer.

Nominations may be made by the Committee, or Members of the Society, before or at the A.G.M. Nominations made in writing should carry the name of a seconder and the nominee should have agreed to serve if elected.

If you wish to see a copy of the proposed constitution before the A.G.M., members of the Committee hold draft copies.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: these fall due next month and remain at £5.00 per mailing address. Any senior citizen who lives alone is eligible for a half rate subscription of £2.50. Payment should be given or sent to Phil Watts, Abernant Bungalow, Llanccarfán CF6 9AD. PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED RENEWAL FORM AND MAKE SURE WE HAVE YOUR UP-TO-DATE ADDRESS INCLUDING A POST CODE.

The last Month: the weather has been really up and down since the writing of Newsletter 33. On November 1st it was beautifully warm and sunny; a Red Admiral and Small Copper butterfly seemed quite happy in the churchyard beside the Fox and Hounds but, by November 3rd the first real frost came with almost 1/8 inch of ice on the field horse-trough above Cross Green. Lots of leaves still remained on the trees but they were falling like snowflakes as the frost thawed in the morning sun. Most of the remaining leaves, except the hazel, went with the gales on November 18th and 19th. Amazingly, a few leaves were still on the hazel on December 8th, with snow visible from Penylan Barn, lying on Exmoor and to the northeast of us on Garth Hill above Taffs Well.

On the same afternoon of the 8th, Graham Brain and Mike Higgs erected the Christmas Tree by the ford and, in the evening, snow began to fall on us, but it did not come to anything. The Christmas Tree was switched-on during the evening of Wednesday December 12th by the three children who won the different age-groups painting competition in school. Mike and Cilla Evans have displayed the winning and runner-up paintings in the Fox and Hounds. Some of them are so good that prints would make good Christmas cards.

Badgers: Phil Watts passed-on to me a copy of the Glamorgan Badger Group Newsletter which reminded me that this is a bad time for these lovely beasts. Boxing Day is a traditional time for the horrific pastime of badger-baiting and we try to keep an eye open for strange happenings near the setts around the village: I know that others also watch them. If any of you walk the more remote parts of the village keep watch for strangers, particularly if accompanied by very dirty small dogs and shovels. Very large fines and sometimes imprisonment are now often meted out to badger-diggers and an attempt is being made to make it illegal to interfere with setts as well as with the badgers themselves.

What is a Grappler? Gwynne Liscombe posed this question in his article on the Blacksmith Shop in Newsletter 32. At our last Tuesday gathering in the "Fox and Hounds", Lyn Price of Moulton gave the answer by bringing one into the bar. It is a dung-fork with the tines bent at right angles just below the cross-piece and it was used for emptying a two-wheeled dung-cart. This was tipped-up in the field and its load pulled-out by hooking the grappler into the back of the heap. Lyn has a very long memory of farming in the Vale and still has many of the old implements which have disappeared from use in the last 50 years.

Lyn also made two corrections to the note on Ty Uchaf, Moulton which was in the last Newsletter. The Three Horseshoes burned-down in July 1962, not 1963 and the reeds for thatching Ty Uchaf came from Poland, not Somerset. It was the thatcher who came from Somerset! Very satisfying to know that the Newsletters are read in such detail!

Blacksmith's Prices 1990: from information given by Vanessa Newton, Old Mill.

Gwynne Liscombe's article in Newsletter 32 quoted blacksmithing prices, during the years 1914-1948, which must break the heart of today's horse owner. Nowadays the blacksmith travels to the horse and very rarely works a forge. Prices are compared with those from Gwynne's article which are given in brackets.

4 Removes £21 (1s.9d. in 1914; 5s.0d. in 1948)

4 New shoes £24 (3s.6d. in 1914; 17s.0d. in 1948)

4 New shoes (pony) £23 (3s.0d. in 1914; 10s.0d. in 1948)

Trim hooves £7 (4s.0d. in 1948). New fork-handle £6.50 (1s.6d. in 1916)

Oil wheels of dray £2 (3d. in 1914 - owner's oil!)

Today, the price for horse, cob, hunter and young horse would be the same. Interestingly, the fork handle has gone up 86 x, horse-shoeing 140-150 x but removes 240 x since 1914-16! This prompts a social comment - in those early years horses were working beasts, but are now kept for leisure riding. A fork was a working tool then, and still is, but today only the frugal or poor resort to a new handle.

Our modern blacksmith had no idea what a grappler was (but see item above).

Floods: Past Present and Future

by John Etherington

Memories of the past in Llancarfan seem to revolve around outlandishly bad weather. The great snows of 1947 and 1962-3 and floods, which were more frequent than snowstorms, are still vividly recalled by many older members. In particular, flooding seems to have been more frequent and much worse in the distant days between the Wars and earlier; is this an exaggeration of memory or was it really so?

Lyn Price of New House Farm, Moulton, recalls the flood of 1928 which was so bad that there was an eight foot depth of water in The Old Parsonage and water lying in the road from there to New Mill. It was in floods such as these that the Church used to suffer: older parishioners have told of floating pews whilst the 1947 winter flood washed Melville Morgan's pigs away down the river from The Green.

When Llewellyn Griffiths lived at Caradoc Cottage (Top End), at least one flood was so severe that water overtopped the slope between Old Mill and Broadhayes. This was probably the same 1928 flood that Lyn described: eight feet of water in the Parsonage would just about correspond with the level of the road adjacent to the land where Beechcroft now stands. Llew talks of the rushing water knocking coping stones from the stone walls and tells the following story of Charlie Hiddles.

Charlie's father was a soldier and the horses of his transport group were stabled at the Mill; Charlie was making his way from Top End to Ty Uchaf (High Lanterns) with an umbrella to shelter him from the downpour. On the bridge beside the upper ford, the umbrella caught in the overhanging bushes and he overbalanced into the swirling water and, like Melville's pigs twenty years later, was swept down to the lower ford where the water became a little quieter as the river widened against the bank of the orchard (now Old

Orchard). By good luck, Winnie Lawes, one of Llew's cousins was nearby and dragged the waterlogged Charlie from the river. Winnie had been to the well at Rose Cottage (now demolished to make way for The Hollies).

The last really serious flood was in the late summer of 1968 when an August thunderstorm brought the water up to the lower bar of the "Fox and Hounds" (before the restaurant extension was built). The kitchen of Brook Cottage was flooded but this was not unusual, as it was some years before Harry Hughes raised its floor-level. Before this, the house often suffered, even in quite minor floods. Fordings, the bungalow beside the ford, stood in about a foot or two of water whilst, away from the river, spectacular torrents made a waterfall down the front steps of Woodlands and the usual fountain emerged from the kitchen floor of Pembroke House!

During the 1968 flood, if memory serves, the Church was not seriously affected and there was certainly no water in the road by the Parsonage indeed the river-level was several feet below the house. The pressure of water demolished a stone wall opposite Old Mill but the flood did not extend too much further uphill past the Mill. This was the thunderstorm in which pigeon egg-sized hailstones dented aircraft at Rhoose (and my caravan).

One of my own memories concerns the garage of Pembroke House which stands beside the river opposite the entrance to Whitechapel (the former Wesleyan Chapel). In the early 1970's the occupant of Pembroke House was the proud owner of an E-type Jaguar which was carefully parked in the garage each night. One evening, it began to rain very heavily - as much going up as coming down - and, by the time the Fox closed, the river was already roaring well. I walked down toward the ford to have a look, worrying a bit about the houses on the low ground. The water was already well past Brook Cottage so, on the way back, I knocked at the door of Pembroke House to warn that the EType would soon be a submarine. Well, the owner had not lived in Llancarfan for very long, and thought this to be a joke in poor taste as he was already in bed. However he finally agreed, a bit put-out, to move the car. It was a wise decision because, in the morning though the river was quietly chuckling in the sun, there was a wet tidemark on the walls of the garage about four feet up. Be warned: if you have never seen a Llancarfan flood, don't trust the river!

Yet another memory, after a torrentially rainy night, is of a great sheet of water in the lovely valley running away down toward Cliff Farm and round the corner to Kenson Bridge. It was like a miniature Norwegian fjord and it would hardly have been a surprise to see those ominous black, square-rigged sails appearing from behind the spur of woodland which juts into the valley!

What causes these floods? In summer it is usually the combination of a very heavy thunderstorm and soil so dry that it cannot soak up the water. It is said that a high spring tide, backing-up the river, helps but I have never been sure of this. In winter, as in 1947, the floods are caused by snow melting on frozen ground, especially if it has drifted into this valley. Occasionally a log, or vegetation, jammed under a bridge, will make matters worse.

Are floods less serious now? Is the river kept clearer of vegetation or is there another

explanation? A conversation with Harry Hughes over 15 years ago, gave me a clue. Harry ran-away from school before he was legally old enough. He sought-out work and one of his first jobs was in the gangs of men who were engaged to straighten and clear rivers in the Vale; jobs which were intended to cut-down unemployment whilst doing some socially useful work. One of the rivers was ours. Harry was 59 when he died in 1975 so this must have been about 1930.

The river straightening is one clue and the house, named New Mill, another. The river used to wind and twist through the flood-plain in the valley below the village - look at the early 6-inch Ordnance Survey map on the wall in the "Fox and Hounds". The river curved almost to meet the road below the Old Parsonage, away again and then turned toward New Mill which, as its name tells, was the last water mill to be built in Llancarfan; unwisely as it proved, because where there was often insufficient head of water to run its undershot wheel despite damming of the river.

The bends in the river and the dammed millpool were sufficient to cause much more serious flooding in the village than today. Llew Griffiths also suggested that fences across the river in the valley below the village trapped vegetation and added to the problem. Nowadays the River Authority (supposedly) should keep an eye open for this sort of thing. In those early days no-one had fitted carpets, furniture was more robust and possessions fewer: perhaps no one worried so much about the occasional wetting?

No doubt the Fox and Hounds car park will be awash again one day, and Brook Cottage will have its feet in water, but not in the house thanks to Harry. Thankfully, however, it seems unlikely that we shall ever see again the really spectacular floods which our older members remember.

Llantrithyd Church electric lighting: There can be very few churches nowadays which serve an active community but do not have electric light. St Illtyd's at Llantrithyd is one such, being illuminated by oil lamps. However, when Val Watts guided us round the Church during the May Day walk she pointed-out a wall plaque which reads:

The Electric plant for Lighting this Church and the Rectory Was Generously Presented by the Right Honourable Lord Glan Ely.

D. Banks-Williams B.A. B.D. Rector

The first letter of each word is inscribed in red and the remainder in black.

After some years of service the generator broke-down and it was beyond the resources if the church at the time, to renovate or replace it, as was the

cost of installing mains electricity when it came to the village - or was it a matter of preferring to remain with the homely oil lighting which seems so gentle to modern eyes?

There is no clue to the date of the gift or the reason for it. Probably, it was after the First World War; Lord Glan Ely of St Fagans was President of the University College of South

Wales and
Monmouthshire from 1919-1929. Can anyone tell us more about him?

I am most grateful to Val Watts for providing the information on a unique church plaque.

Writing for the Newsletter? Recently we have appealed for articles and information to be included in the Newsletter and several members have responded with memories, bits of family history or documentary records which will help to keep us in print for some time to come. However, many of our members are relative newcomers to Llancarfan and some have said that they feel unable to give us anything useful or interesting.

This is not altogether true. Even if you don't have memories of the area you can help by looking at your deeds, particularly if you have an old house in the parish - all sorts of goodies have turned-up in this way because names of owners link together from one house to another. Even if your house is new, the deeds relating to the land are often very helpful and most useful of all are Abstracts of Title which trace the buying and selling of a property over the years. These are the very records which it is almost impossible for the the Society to get hold of without a great deal of work. You don't even need to struggle reading the legal jargon - just let John Etherington have a photocopy and he will suffer in the cause of the Newsletter! The sting in the tail is that most Building Societies or even bank deed-stores make a small charge for access but they will copy for you.

One or two particularly kind people are helping by doing some archive research and we shall soon be able to start a series of articles on the history of ownership, and where particular families lived, during the past century or two. Much of this was initially started and helped along by property deeds and other family records.

Sycamore: The great sycamore tree at Walterston, in the garden of Trewallter Fawr, is no more. It was cut down in the third week of September. Even the oldest of our members will remember it as a huge tree for it must have been all of two centuries in age - the big elms we lost to disease, from Coed-yCrynallt, would be ca.180-90, if still living.

All Saints Day 1990 by Jean Hunt, Copperfield, Llancarfan

Today I strolled around Llancarfan churchyard in glorious sunshine, some two days after All Saints Day. I looked at the many graves of men, women and little children, and thought of their lives - some long - some cut tragically short - some barely begun. There they lay - I imagined enjoying, as I did, the glorious autumn sunshine - how rarely do we see such light in gloomy November.

I thought of my dear ones - two sisters who both visited me here in this pretty village - for Tom and I have been living quietly here for some 20 years. My younger sister, Alice, was killed crossing an ill-lit Edinburgh street (Oh, those canny Scots councillors) in 1974. She

walked along the self-same path in Llancarfan churchyard and even went to church one morning, for she, unlike me (at that time a lapsed Presbyterian) belonged to the C. of E. - an experience obtained in her student days, when, as a gifted violinist, she won a scholarship to the Academy of Music in London and studied under Frederick Grinke. Perhaps you saw her in the village - a shy, slight girl who was often mistaken for a teenager. My elder sister Anne, her children Elise and Lio, and husband Terje, visited me here on a flying holiday from their home in Oslo - and we feasted right royally in the "Fox and Hounds". Anne died of double cancer - was it only two weeks ago? A year ago she had planned to visit me and check up on my health after two bouts of the "big C" - and probably we should have squabbled - in the way of sisters - as we so often used to do.

Nowadays I rarely go to the "Fox and Hounds". That was my father's haunt and honestly - "Where is your Dad?" was often a question put to me by Trixie Phillips! As many of you will remember the "Fox" was "Harry's" pub! Ah, where is Harry now - in our memories. No flowers on his grave - yet we all "loved" him - we even said he was the village. So I borrowed a flower from Ernest Badcock - he wouldn't mind - and all our saints - all our Llancarfan dear ones - smiled as we, who are left hurried busily on our way - just as they used to do. Yet surely our houses are getting bigger and bigger - as our families grow smaller? Well luckily - for soon there won't be enough room for us all - according to present statistics. But do we really need such ginormous houses? Why can't we learn from our "Saints" whose houses nestled so snugly into our land - the green, green land that Harry loved so much. We tried to save a field - Tom and I - and happily horses delight our eye - and pheasants (only too soon to suffer a sudden death) stagger drunkenly before our eyes - glutted with elderberries (the pheasants, not the Hunts - although I do like a good malt whiskey!). But for how long will that field delight the gaze? For my lifetime, I trust (although with all that whiskey, I shall doubtless stagger on to a ripe old age!).

Oh, dear fellow villagers - the present Llancarfan saints - let's build small - small is beautiful, and surely we should leave our children a beautiful heritage? Perhaps this is just a dream - a vision - like William Morris. Cut out the whiskey, I hear you say!

Let's learn from the Norwegians - well something - they are jolly good at central heating - but somehow they have kept their love of their land. We too should say: "Ja, vi elsker dette Land!" (This may be too rude to translate!).

So, perhaps I won't nag Tom for a bigger and better studio - although it is rather cramped when I stand between the deep-freeze and the filing-cabinet! And my dirty old "white" waggon (lead-free petrol) is good for another few years I trust.

Skol! - as they say in the Fox".

Some Thoughts on Roads: from a conversation with Llewlynn Griffiths

In previous Newsletters, various people have commented on the coming of piped water and electricity to the village. These are things around which everyday life revolves: even the most hardened countrymen amongst us notice when high winds or snow deprive us of

power and complain about the lack of water when necessary maintenance-work shuts us off, or when an accident severs the main (remember that spectacular fifty-foot fountain by Ty-to-Maen twenty years ago?).

A conversation with Llewellyn Griffiths put the thought into my mind that no one has really commented on the surfacing of the roads. Nearly all of us drive around these lanes in our cars, often too fast, or catch the village bus to Barry, expect the post in the early morning, and delivery drivers from the city to call uncomplainingly with parcels, animal feed, fertilizer, bricks sand and what-have-you. All of this is made possible by our tarmac roads without which a car would need a lot more servicing.

Our ancient network of hundreds of miles of lanes came into this century with a surface of hammered stones, rolled-in to make them passable by horse-drawn carts and waggons. Llew reminded me that, in those days, the road surface was much more at the mercy of local conditions and weather than today.

Between the village and Monastery Mill, the road is crossed by a number of streamlets and in winter our clay subsoil would squeeze-up like toothpaste between the stones of the road surface so that the centre of the road became a great longitudinal hump, flanked by the deep, deep ruts of the cart-tracks filled with water in wet weather. Where possible the roadman would maintain a roadside ditch in an attempt to drain the worst of this and another of Llew's memories of this section of the road is of a steam traction engine hauling a

waggon to the mill becoming bogged in the roadside ditch. No going to the nearest farm to enlist the aid of a tractor! Another steam engine had to be sent-for from Cardiff to solve the problem.

Even where the road was not flooded the rolled stone surface was not waterproof and water would literally flow up from the foundations: if a frost came, this would become a sheet of ice covering great lengths of road. Llew recalls, as a child, sliding down the slope from the Blacksmith Shop to the river-bridge past the Church Hall.

The newfangled tar surface must have appeared in the late twenties perhaps? Who remembers? And just as a bit of social history, does anyone know how it was all paid-for at a time when we were in a real recession. It must have cost a king's-ransom, for most of Britain's roads were surfaced during that same period when it was becoming necessary for the motor-car and lorry. Come to think of it, we can't even afford to maintain all these lanes properly in 1990.

Tarmac dates back to more than a century before the lanes were surfaced, but had it been used earlier would probably not have survived horse-drawn traffic. The old farm waggons with three-quarters of a ton on each wheel and a two and a half inch wide, rigid iron tyre must have pounded the roads like sledge hammers. The sudden change to the pneumatic tyre early this century both allowed and demanded that the tarmac road should become universal.

A letter from Mavis Coles: In answer to the editorial question in Newsletter 33 about place names: I always knew the road which runs north from Penyrheol Cross to Warren Mill, as Shag Lane. The site of Shag Cottage was probably the road junction at the top of the long

hill in Shag Lane. There used to be a small window at the back, facing the road, where you could stop for a glass of lemonade, buy chocolates, sweets and cigarettes. I remember when we lived at Penyrheol Cross, on the corner, and went for walks up this lane, the banks were covered in violets, the lovely deep pink kind, also smothered with wild strawberries. The field on the right was literally yellow with cowslips, year after year, and the banks covered with daisies. The Post Office, opposite the garage was kept by Miss Rousel, who sold the biggest boiled sweets I have ever seen, in the shape of strawberries - Oops! I must stop - off I go down memory lane again!

Editor: The strawberries (wild ones, not sweets) are still there, and a few violets but the cowslips have gone. The cottage on the junction at the top of the hill has been greatly enlarged and modernised - I think it is called Crossways but I'm not sure whether this was the one which Mavis describes? Penyrheol Cross is just to the west of the garage in Bonvilston - Penyrheol Cottage was demolished in the 1930's.

In Memory of Mardi Jones by Phil Watts

Since the last Newsletter we have to record the death of another person who was brought-up and married from the village of Llancarfan. I refer to Margaret (Mardi) Jones (nee Evans), formerly of Garnllwyd, daughter of William and Dorothy, husband of Dr Peter Jones, High Street Surgery, Barry.

Those of us who had the pleasure of knowing Mardi will remember her happy disposition and her enjoyment of living. It was always a tonic for anyone feeling a bit down to meet Mardi and have a few moments in her company.

I grew up with Mardi and followed the same trail to school; it was our practice to leave a stone on the gate to indicate to the other that the one coming behind would have to put a move on so as not to be late and engage the wrath of "Gaffer" Davies, the Hedmaster. The appointed spot, I remember, being Llanvythin stile, sometimes known as Tyn-ty-Gros (I am not sure of the spelling - our older members might put it right?).

Our thoughts go out to Dr Peter, at this time, but we only have to look at her three magnificent sons Stephen, Jonathon and Hugh, to remember what a wonderful person Mardi was.

Cottrell Park: some of you will remember that the worries about the Parc Dyffryn development, in the summer, were multiplied by a new planning application for a hotel, golf-course and leisure-complex at Cottrel Park, north of the A48. At the end of November it was announced that Leading Leisure Plc, the parent company of the proposed developer at Cottrell, was to cease trading on the Stock Exchange. Thought you might like to know. By the way, does anyone also know what is going-on in at County Headquarters concerning New Settlements in the Vale? It seems to have become ominously quiet.

Found: in the churchyard, a sports bicycle. It was abandoned about three months ago and has been reported to the police. The frame-number or a very accurate description will reclaim it. Contact John Etherington at Ceffyl Du.