



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 35: January 1991

The year has gone again! Happy New Year to you all. Sorry the December Newsletter was so late - as usual the Christmas Holiday got in the way and we also had a problem with the printing. Hope it did not prevent anyone from coming to the A.G.M. on the 25th January. An account of the meeting and slide-show will be in the next Newsletter. The last Newsletter was obviously read with interest - within a few days of its appearance it prompted letters from Ken Lougher on floods and Phil Watts on roads. It also found the owner of the bike we retrieved from the churchyard. A lot of letters arrive with the SUBSCRIPTIONS so remember yours and get writing, or persuade someone else to write it down if you are not a scribbler.

Les Harrhy added a bit to the story of flooding by telling me that the straightening of the river was in the 1950's and, indeed, Peter Badcock said he remembered riding on one of the dumper-trucks doing the work, when he was a boy. Now, you folk with long memories - what did Harry Hughes remember from the 30's - was this just cleaning-out of the rivers or was there another episode of straightening? Les also recalled the story of Dai Griffiths, Glan yr Afon, doing the News of the World crosswords so well that he was banned from entering - anyone know if this is right? There are certainly stories of the house being full of many years-worth of the newspaper.

This month we carry the first instalment of a two-part article by Dick Evans of Evington in Leicestershire. Dick has written for us before, starting by telling us that his first infant memory was of being carried to Garnllwyd in 1915. Later he wrote of his memories of Llancarfan before all the post-War changes altered it for ever from the quiet farming community to the present day commuter village in which even agriculture employs no one from the village itself. Dick has now given us a two-part account of his departure to sea in the depressed days of the 1930's seeing the world through the eyes of a country boy from a village where some might never have travelled more than a few miles.

AN EDITORIAL CHANGE: at long last, John and Sheena Etherington have managed to sell Ceffyl Du and will be moving to West Wales in mid-February. A mixture of relief and sadness. This really does make it essential that someone volunteers to write a few "day to day" notes for each Newsletter, otherwise the snippets about current affairs will come to an end. John will continue all of the usual editing and, providing the flow of articles and information are kept-up, the Newsletters are safe for the time-being. The new address for letters to the editor is: John Etherington, Parc-y-Bont - New Buildings, Llanhowell, Solva, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, Dyfed, SA62 6XX.

Was I the Jonah?

Part I; by Dick Evans, Evington, Leicestershire

First Voyage

Things were hard in the way of jobs in the 1930's. I had been out of work for a little while and to fill in my days I helped Bill Watts with his milk-round in Barry and Barry Dock. I was walking by the Seaman's Union Offices there, when a large gentleman, standing in the doorway, said "Good morning" and, without thinking I asked him whether there were any jobs going. He replied "Yes" if I would care to go to the docks and go aboard "S. S. Iddesleigh", which he said had a white "T" on a red funnel, and ask the Chief Engineer if the Steward's job was still vacant. The "T" stood for "Tattum" (Lord Glan Ely's name before he was made a Lord).

I got the job - Steward to the Engineers' Mess - and the ship was sailing to Vancouver. My geography was not too good and I had no idea where this was could have been Timbuktu!!. I started work next day at 7.30 a.m. which meant leaving Llancarfan at about 6.00 a.m. to cycle to the docks. I didn't know much about stewarding but soon learnt. When signing-on I met all members of the crew I was to spend several months with, and one advantage was an advance on pay - £5 - which helped quit a bit! I had to buy a "donkey's breakfast" (a pallet stuffed with straw). I was able to make a small monthly allowance to mother.

The only sailing I had done previously was on White Funnel paddle steamers, Glen Usk and Glen Avon, to Weston-Super-Mare etc. When we left Barry Docks the ship turned in a large circle. I wondered why and was told this was to test the compass! We sailed down the Bristol Channel, passing Rhoose, Fontygary and Aberthaw. The Engineers Mess was amid-ships and contained my kitchen with cabin next door, which I shared with a cabin-boy called Barry. The messrooms and cabins were oak panelling and brass and one of my jobs was to keep them polished.

Just a word on the crew - white engineers, captains mates, bosun and one or two deck-hands, West Indian donkey-man and stokers. Malays made up the rest of the crew together with a Portuguese cook. The engineers I looked after were three Geordies and a Scot from Dunfermline, so I had my work cut out to understand them.

We travelled out "empty ship" so when we hit a swell the propellers came out of the water, creating a terrible noise, but one got used to it and to the noise of the engines and steering gear. We spent our leisure playing cards and swapping yarns in the cook's galley. I remember seeing the Ushant lighthouse whose beam can be seen for miles, also passing the Azores (one blaze of blue flowers) and St Vincent Island, then on to the Panama Canal.

In the Atlantic I saw what looked like pale tobacco and was told it was "Gulf Weed". We were in the Gulf Stream which I am told controls our climate. On the subject of tobacco we used to buy 1/2lb tins of Capstan Flake and spend hours shredding it so we could roll our own cigarettes. We could also buy ship's Woodbines which were larger than those on shore, but if put in the ashtray and left to burn a few seconds, all that was left was a couple of inches of ash owing to the saltpetre put in to keep them moist.

We had reasonable food: eggs, bacon, porridge etc. and bread baked by the cook. Meat lasted about three weeks to a month - no 'frig' or freezer in those days - only an icebox filled with 20lb blocks of ice. It wasn't a pleasant job helping to clear the iceboxes of old meat and water, ready to take on fresh ice when we docked in such places as Vancouver. When the fresh meat had been eaten we had salt pork etc. It was my job to cut up limes, pour boiling water on them and add sugar, the drink being used to combat scurvy. For supper we had cocoa and ship's biscuits which needed a hammer to break them.

We eventually arrived at the Panama Canal - an event which I will always remember. In the first lock, coloured people took over control of the ship. Pumps lifting the water and the ship to a higher level of the next lock were terrific. Little engines took the ship along to the next set of locks - four locks on the Atlantic side. We then sailed into the actual canal and saw tented barracks of the U. S. Army guarding the canal. It was an experience seeing where the canal had been hewn from solid rock. Wild life along its banks included alligators etc. We sailed about 40 miles to another set of locks down into the Pacific where we were 12 feet lower than in the Atlantic!

Sailing along the coast of California we saw a complete ship of about 10,000 tons, blown on shore by a hurricane, about 1/2 mile inland. Also saw the lights of San Francisco. Weather for us was nice and we made our beds on deck at night.

On arriving at Vancouver we docked for a week and took on wheat. Going ashore the first time for weeks it was strange seeing traffic driving on the wrong side!! It was like walking into a scene from "Rose Marie" with Royal Canadian Mounties and full-blooded Red Indians. The snow on the Rocky Mountains was a back cloth to it all. Will never forget our first meal ashore - an inch-thick steak which nearly covered a large oval platter and side dishes of chips etc. I think the rate of exchange was four or five dollars to the pound so we did well with our money.

In Stanley Park we saw Indian Totem Poles with crude, but fine carving. I went to see Glen Rice's hill-billies (a show like Carol Levis' Discoveries) and Dick Powell in "Twenty Million Sweethearts". No smoking was allowed as buildings were of wood. The Chief Engineer had made friends on previous trips and invited them on board for tea, so out came the best bone china and Chinese tea which looked like green twigs. However much you used, it never looked any stronger!

From Vancouver we sailed to New Westminster and took on more grain. Men fishing for salmon had large nets with cork balls at intervals on them. The first ball in the water had their firm's flag on it. Casting the net, the trawler went round in a full circle, finishing at the first ball. When the cork balls bobbed down out of sight, salmon were in the net and quite a catch was hauled on board.

From Westminster we sailed on up the Fraser River with terrific trees either side. Saw giant rafts made of logs, with log cabins at the rear, and also lumberjacks rolling the logs into position with their feet. We called at two lumber camps at Port Alberni and Chemainus, and took on timber: ready-made doors, pick handles, planks and barks of timber 4ft x 4ft (square) x 20ft length, all of which were put on top of the grain in the holds and the rest to a height of 13 feet on the deck.

At Port Alberni identical twin girls were in charge of two identical tugs. In Chemainus a lad put his tongue on the hand-rail of a bridge over a small stream and it was so cold that his tongue stuck to the rail - fires were lit each side to free him! I had toyed with the idea of jumping ship and trying to make my fortune in British Columbia but this incident put me off - too cold!! I got to know the customs official on board our ship and he got me fishing tackle to fish for rock cod. I caught quite a few and the cook scaled them and cooked them for supper. I cast for the last time and caught a strange fish and was told to stand clear as it was a dog fish, just like a small shark, with a poisonous spike on its back. I believe the stokers ate it. I bought a lumberjack shirt to protect me from the cold and it was the first tunic-shirt I had seen.

Sailing out again into the Pacific, flying fish were landing on board, to be eaten by some of the crew - also saw shoals of Porpoises. We went through the Panama Canal at night and through the Chief Engineers night binoculars I saw the wildlife such as birds and crocodiles.

Sailing into the Caribbean we headed for Port Royal where we took on coal. Everything on board had to be battened-down and portholes closed to keep out coal dust and prevent pilfering so the heat was terrific, 110-120oF. Ashore there was one rum shop, so there were a few drunks among the crew coming back on board, including stokers who were knocked out with a truncheon by the Chief Engineer and carried by the donkeyman on to the top of the boilers "sweating it out" in a short time ready to start stoking again!

Heading for home, telling each we would be there for Christmas, we met the worst storm for 40 years in the Bay of Biscay - waves 40 to 50 feet high. Life-lines were put out to help moving round the ship. I fitted strips of wood across table-tops to prevent dishes being flung around. The Second Mate was washed under some of the deck timber and we had to drag him out of his sea-boots. The Chief Engineer supplied us with stiff rums - he used to say to me "if you were meant to burn to death you won't drown this trip"!!

On the third day the ship rolled, when we were having a drink in the cabin, and this put the lifeboat deck under water so we were standing on the bulkhead instead of the floor. We shook hands thinking we were going to drown but, after what seemed to be an eternity, the ship settled back on an even keel. Quite a number of ships were lost in this storm. A firm called "Ropner", carrying iron-ore, lost all hands and their ship, when the cargo moved and the ship turned turtle. The only way we could get some rest was by wedging our backs against the bunk-board.

We had five days of storm and drifted miles off course but limped into the Azores' island of Faial, the town of Horta. We were in a bad way - lost all deck-cargo and lifeboats and the funnnel was knocked askew. The people of Horta welcomed us with open arms and called us "The Christmas Ship" as we gave them a lot of work. We used the "Cafe Europa" for meals and drank Vino which was cheaper than their water. Germans manning the cable-station invited us to their mess. They had a drink called "Tigers Milk" made by putting eggs, with shells into a cask of Brandy. When the brandy had eaten the shells it was fit to drink - very potent!

On Christmas Day we awoke to a band ashore playing "Christians Awake" and we had the Mayor and Dignitaries on board for lunch. In return, they invited us, on Boxing Day, to a football match with Dinner in the evening. The cabin-boy bought a cross-bred canary, which he hung in the cabin. The ordinary island canaries were as common as sparrows. I did not, however, appreciate the

canary whistling at three-o'clock in the morning.

On New Years Day we sailed for home, passing, in the Thames, the longest pier in Britain; Southend. On reaching the Canadian Dock at Rotherhithe we rushed on deck as someone shouted that we were being filmed by Pathe Gazette however it was a ship in front of us which had saved a lot of people in the storm! We finally docked at the Surrey Commercial Dock. The Chief and 2nd Engineer's wives came on board, so I had extra work to do!

My sister Edith was a nurse at the Millar General Hospital in London so we used to meet for a meal at Lyons Corner House, dance at the Hammersmith Palais and saw Jack Payne, good shows and bands. Also saw Grace Moore in "One Night of Love". She had a wonderful voice but was later killed in an air crash.

One night I had to walk through Blackwall Tunnel to return to ship, owing to the trams stopping because of the smog which was terrible in those days. At the dock gates, however, no-one was allowed in for fear of falling in the dock so I slept at the Seamen's Mission. After a fortnight it was goodbye to London and back down the Thames, round into the Bristol Channel, docking in Cardiff. The deck-hand, Jimmy, took me back to his home in Loudon Square, Tiger Bay. In those days police were always there in "twos".

So, back to Llancarfan.

The Disestablishment of the Church in Wales by Charles F Shepherd

Younger members and perhaps the not so young people may be interested in an historical event of 70 years ago which had an effect on the whole of Wales and indeed the parish of Llancarvan (sic).

In some magazines, covering the Parishes in Cardiff and the surrounding area, there is much about the Great Debate which took place in 1912. This was the year when the Bill to Disestablish the Church in Wales came before Parliament. It was eventually passed in 1914 but owing to the outbreak of the Great War its enactment was postponed until 1920. There are several items of interest mentioned, especially in Bonvilston Parish notes.

In June 1912 a large demonstration against the Bill took place in Hyde Park, in London, followed by a meeting which filled the Albert Hall. People from all over Wales and England attended.

In the same month there was, as mentioned in the Bonvilston notes, a "Demonstration, five miles long of Churchmen and Churchwomen marching four abreast." As a boy of 10 I went with my aunt and other members of St Catherine's Parish in Cardiff to join the other Parishes. We came to the City Hall. Naturally this event of 70 years ago is rather hazy but I recall singing hymns and no doubt there were prayers and speeches.

In October a larger meeting was held, in the City Hall in Cardiff, which was addressed by Archbishop Davidson of Canterbury.

When the Act came into being the Bishop of St Asaph, Dr A G Edwards was elected the first Archbishop of Wales.

I should be interested to know whether there are any notes in Llancarvan Church records of meetings being held in the Parish to discuss this question. From what I have read, all Parishes had

several discussions on this, what was then considered a vital subject.

A letter from Phil Watts

Dear Mr Editor, I write to you in connection with your article in a previous Newsletter regarding the proposals that go under the heading of Parc Dyffryn Trust which are now well known to all our readers.

Most readers will know that we are lodging copies of all our Newsletters with the Glamorgan Archive and so I believe that you should not feel guilty about using Llancarfan Society Newsletters to give voice to your opinion for, as you state, the majority of our readers are in support of your thoughts. I feel that it is only right that future readers of our Newsletters, via the Archives, should know what we in Llancarfan are thinking in 1990 and what bearing it may have on future events.

The much publicised meeting in Cowbridge to organise opposition to Parc Dyffryn, was a great success and you, as a principal speaker, should take great credit for your efforts and the volume of support which you received.

If it can be established that there is a need for some 400 houses in the Vale of Glamorgan, then I feel there is a better case for increasing the size of existing villages by small numbers, using accepted means of infill, already being permitted by the planning authorities following Government guidelines. The need of the villages appears to be for more people rather than bigger houses.

Most of the Council Houses in the area have now been sold, so our stock of "starter" houses has now been used-up. So, where are our children, who have married and wish to continue living in the area, to live? They will generally not be able to afford present day building-plot prices. They are also prevented by planning restrictions from using the land owned by their parents so what hope is there for young country folk to be able to live in the country. We can all quote cases of parents, applying to the planning authority for permission to for the use of their children, being refused. In the near future we would like to apply for permission at Abernant for the use of my daughter, Vivienne. No doubt everyone locally will wish us well but, to be realistic, what are the chances?

Perhaps it would be better to wait a few more years and take-on a parents' property and the old move into an urban residential home for the elderly; how about an application for a row of retirement houses? - or better still, a row of starter homes for the young in Llancarfan?

To return to the Parc Dyffryn proposal, let us hope that all our readers have written their letters to the right authorities whether they object, or support the scheme. After all, who is to know if they are right, there may be greater thoughts than our own that will say we are wrong. Unfortunately, or fortunately, not all of us will be here to see the results! Thank you for your good work John; long may we have your services.

Editor's note: there are now some more developments on the Parc Dyffryn front - see the end of this Newsletter.

A letter from Peggy Deere, Pencoed: Peggy is not a member of the Society but sees the Newsletters and wrote the following to Phil Watts. Phil and Peggy are related as their respective mothers were cousins.

Have just been reading the Newsletter, for November, of the Llancarfan Society that you sent to Audrey. Looking at the article by Mavis Coles; does she know that William Lougher of Treguff (1797-1873) married his first cousin, Cecil Lougher of Old Wallace Farm, Wenvoe. Their daughter Cecil (or perhaps Cecilia) married Edward Williams and their daughter Cecil/ia married Morgan Deere - so the Lougher strain comes in again!

My grandparents Lougher were, as you know originally from Treguff (John Lougher) and the Garnllwyd branch so Audrey and I have a very strong Lougher connection. I expect you have a copy of Edwin Loughers "Family Tree" as I have? It only goes to show how Vale families intermarried.

Best wishes to the Society - I wish I lived nearer. Regards to Gwynne and Dilys - (Blacksmith Shop article very interesting) - pity our grandparents stories were not recorded on tape - Granny Lougher had some good tales to tell ---.

New Settlements in the Vale.

In the last Newsletter, the note on Cottrell Park closed by asking whether anyone knew what was going-on at County Hall in relation to the proposals for "New Settlements" in the Vale. Within days of writing that note we received a letter from the Council for Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW) saying that the proposed alterations to the County Structure Plan are now subject to public consultation.

There will be a permanent exhibition at the Vale Council Civic Offices in Holton Road, Barry between Friday 18th January and Friday 1st March. It will be possible to record your views at the exhibition or to communicate directly with the County Planning Officer, South Glamorgan County Council, County Hall, Atlantic Wharf, Cardiff, CF1 5UW. Local exhibitions will be opened, for shorter periods, at Cowbridge Library (21st-26th January), Llantwit Major Library (28th January - 2nd February) and Rhoose Library (4th-9th February).

The proposed alterations will probably permit areas of new industry along the M4 and give powers to establish new settlements (new villages) in the presently unpopulated parts of the agricultural Vale. This would include opening the door for the Parc Dyffryn proposals.

When the matter of Parc Dyffryn arose we did not have time to solicit members views and the Committee decided not to submit an objection in the name of the Society. However, there was almost unanimous feeling against the development (see Phil Watts' letter above). Once you have seen the proposals, please write to the Society to say whether you support, or are against, the concept of new settlements. Providing we have more than a handful of letters, they could be submitted by the Society in evidence of the local and regional viewpoint. Write to Barbara

Milheusen or John Etherington. More information will appear in the next Newsletter.

The CPRW has also launched a campaign for the establishment of legally enforceable Green Belts as a means of protecting the open countryside between South Wales conurbations. The need for such Green Belts was stressed in a motion passed at the meeting concerning the Parc Dyffryn proposals, held at Cowbridge Town Hall in June last year. If you feel this is a good idea it should be included in submissions to the County or Vale Councils. Carstickers are available from CPRW or John Etherington has a few.

The Vale Council is also seeking residents views on a new district-wide plan. These should be sent to the Director of Planning Services, Vale of Glamorgan Borough Council, Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry, CF6 6RU. Support for Green Belts could also be expressed in letters on this matter.

Stop Press: Western Mail January 26. Welsh Secretary David Hunt will reopen the debate on the establishment of Green Belts when he addresses a major environmental conference, soon to be held in Cardiff.

A letter from John Etherington: Dear Editor, It seems strange to be writing to you as my alter ego but it is the only way I can put something in the Newsletter without readers thinking that I am writing for the Society rather than expressing my own thoughts (you have always said you would publish any letter if it was not offensive or obscene).

I was moved by the sentiments expressed in Jean Hunt's article last month and it is good to see the Newsletter carrying something a bit different for a change.

Jean worried that we were forgetting Harry Hughes, who was for more than thirty years, "the village". It isn't likely. Those few of us who used to drink with Harry in the Fox remember him all the time - he seems to find a way into many conversations and in my own case never a week goes by but I am reminded of him. Harry would not have bothered too much about the flowers on his grave - he would have wanted to know that his friends would continue as always, and that perhaps his spirit (if he believed such a thing) could wander over the fields where he lived for a time by Castle Ditches. I could never forget his memories of the foxes and badgers watching him sitting in the doorway there during summer dawns.

I hope a few such recollections are preserved in the article which I wrote about Harry in Newsletter 12. Without someone to write about us, each is forgotten within a generation and a gravestone is small reminder of a person. Local history not only preserves the memory of inanimate things but confers a sort of immortality on many ordinary but wonderful people who will otherwise survive only in impersonal electoral roles, census returns, names on deeds or even "Harry's Bar".

It is sad to realise that many of that old crowd who stood and sat at that top bar have gone for ever; Harry's closest friend, Glyn the Coalman, Bill Price, George Tucker who had "worked for three castles", Bill and Alice Rees to name a few. I was privileged to know them a little, as part of

the old Llancarfan which was changing so quickly when I came here 23 years ago and, praise be, some are still alive and kicking hard even if we are getting a bit frayed at the edges!

Jean bewailed the size of the houses. Well, that reminded me of the struggle to get planning permission for Ceffyl Du on the Blackhorse Land in 1967. I visited the old Cardiff R.D.C. office in Park Place to see a gloomy soul who took great pleasure in telling me that it would be "very difficult" to comply with the planning regulations in such a place. The buildings were to be "so designed as to give a horizontal emphasis" and the "density, elements of design, the materials of construction and the means of enclosure --- in sympathy with the aesthetic character of the existing village."

In the end we obtained permission for a bungalow and, of the dwellings on Broadhayes land, three of the four along School Road were bungalows. Those, lower down on the private road, started as dormer bungalows but the last one to be built was a house and, as the years have passed, so each of the three on School Road has sprouted an upper storey extension. The style of the new phase of building during the last three years or so, certainly cannot be recognised as reflecting the old Glamorgan County Council requirements and, in this environmentally conscious age, Conservation Area to boot, one wonders whether planning officials do have any sympathy with "aesthetic character" of anything but urban surroundings?

Footnote: The conditions reproduced in paragraph six were taken from a Glamorgan C. C. Planning Permission document, dating-back to the development of Broadhayes' field in 1966 and kindly lent by Tony and Kath Davies.