



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 44 January-February 1992

RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Last time we commented on the fleeting year and the amazingly quick reappearance of Christmas. This time the reminder that time is passing is the need to ask you for the 1992 subscription which remains, as always, at £5.00. The Chancellor would be pleased to see this - perhaps we should hand the Exchequer over to our present and former Treasurers! A renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter - please confirm your address and postcode to keep our records up to date.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

We shall be repeating the always-popular MAY DAY WALK, on Monday, 4th May, this year, with emphasis on the Deer Park at Llantrithyd. This is for the benefit of those who missed the visit to the Deer Park last year.

There will be a BARBECUE at Abernant on Friday, June 12th. Phil Watts tells us that the playing of Boules will be introduced. This delightful French game has already taken-hold locally. The Three Horseshoes, Moulton, have a boulescourt (or whatever the correct name should be). What about a challenge cup and/or Society Boules prize? We can guarantee the wine; perhaps the weather will be kind and give us a Mediterranean day. Perhaps some of our younger readers would like to come along and play?

The ANNUAL DINNER will be on September 25th, also a Friday.

ADDRESSES: Contributions for the Newsletter (which will be very welcome) should be sent to the Editor, John Etherington, Parc-y-Bont - New Buildings, Llanhowell, Solva, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, Dyfed, SA62 6XX. Subscriptions and problems with mailing: to the Membership Secretary, Phil Watts, Abernant Bungalow, Llanccarf, Barry, South Glamorgan, CF6 9AD. Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to Barbara Milhisen, 73 Tynewydd Road, Barry, South Glamorgan.

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEWSLETTER: these are very welcome. It does not matter if they are handwritten (even short notes are quite acceptable) but please, when you send things in longhand to John Etherington, would you write the names of people and places in capitals otherwise all sorts of mistakes creep in - one, which I have just found before publication, was the name Gosslyn which sounded very strange and turned-out to be Gwilym!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: This was held on 24th January - too late for a full report to appear here. We had a very successful evening in which the formal business was done within about 40 minutes, and a most interesting slide show, featuring historic houses of South Glamorgan was followed by cheese and wine. The only sad thing was a rather poor attendance - probably the fog and frost of the previous few days discouraged "out of town" members. A detailed report will appear in the next Newsletter.

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OBITUARIES by Phil Watts

In late December 1991 we learned of the death of two well-known local farmers, Lyn Thomas Williams formerly of Ford Farm and David Edward Thomas ex Llanbethery Farm.

David Thomas farmed Llanbethery Farm in conjunction with his brother Gwilym for over 50 years after the death of their father. David was probably the only remaining person of the parish who was born and lived the whole of his life in the same village - Llanbethery. David married Betty Hill from Bonvilston and they lived in Cartref, the house across the road from Llanbethery Farm. David and Betty had two children, Linda and Richard. David and Gwilym were always known as the boys of the farm; farming to them always seemed orderly and unhurried. The rickyard has now disappeared and so have the farm buildings wherein so many happy days were spent.

Lyn Williams formerly of Ford Farm died on Thursday, December 19th and was buried on Friday, December 27th. He was aged 69 years. Lyn was always known as Lyn of Ford, not only in Llancarfan but also over most of Wales. Lyn had gained great acclaim throughout much of Wales as a shepherd, winning many prizes in the sheepdog trials. In August 1992 he was to organize the Welsh National Sheepdog Trials at his farm, Croes Heolydd, Bassaleg. This would have been the ultimate in his career as "one man and his dog". We are pleased to hear that the trials will still take place on the farm.

Another reason for fame for Lyn is that he ran a Friesian Holstein Herd which was known as the Carfan Herd. Lyn farmed Ford Farm, after his father Tom, until the early seventies when he moved to his present farm Croes Heolydd which gave him more scope and opportunity for his farming sons David, Robert and Gwyn. The family was completed by daughters Linda and Sarah and wife Nancy.

Lyn once told me that he was amazed that his father was able to make a living from 10 or 12 cows, and bring up a family, as he found it difficult to make ends meet with 100 cows. Little did he realize that the number would multiply be three with milking three times a day.

Lyn was a confirmed family man. He always impressed me by using such phrases, to me, as "Young man" or "My boy"! He was always grateful for anything you could do for him and always willing to help others.

We all set out to get to the top of the hill, some of us get half way and some threequarters, some slip back and try again but Lyn was a man who got to the top as a farmer, shepherd

and family man.

GRAVESTONES

The appeal for help with recording of War Memorials and Gravestones last month, reminded me of that unusual stone in the Bethlehem Chapel yard. It had an impossible date - February 30th perhaps, or was it the last day, plus one, of another month? Does anyone remember or have an exact copy of the inscription? Is it recorded elsewhere as a curiosity - perhaps in a school project report?

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The stone was probably put to the sledgehammer with many others by the builder who first bought the chapel before its conversion into a house. The intentional smashing of many stones was a desecration of the memorials to those who thought they would rest for ever in peace but the damage was not only a spiritual vandalism but also the obliteration of a bit of history. Too many such things happen. Times change and it is so much better that old buildings should take on a new lease of life but there is no need for all memory of their former lives to be wiped-away. A barn should remain recognisably part of the countryside scene and, even more so, the chapels which made modern Wales what it is, should not lose the last reminders of generations gone-by.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Once again the Christmas Tree has graced the triangle of green beside the lower ford. Geoff Burrows wrote "Here the now usual Christmas Tree is, I think, the best ever and in the evening it looks splendid bearing a mass of white lights (much better than coloured ones)."

Barbara Milhuisen also wrote about the tree: "The Christmas tree lights were switched on by the winners of the Christmas painting competition at Llancarfan School, the two winners being - Infants - Molly Buttril* - Juniors - Melissa Cowen. This happened on December 12th. The lights remained on until the weekend before Christmas when the tree snapped-off in the wind but a repair was made and the tree re-erected. At the switching on ceremony the carol singing was accompanied by some musicians from Cowbridge School. Electricity for the lights was donated by Mr and Mrs D. Higgs and, as in other years, the Llancarfan Society gave £25.00 to help with the funding of the tree. Special thanks are due to Graham Brain and friends for organizing the event."

* Molly was ill on the day when the tree was switched on and a substitute took her place.

DUCK EGG RACE

Despite a late start and impromptu arrangements, another duck-egg race was held on Boxing Day, the eggs sailing from the Ivy Pool to the Fox and Hounds. Arrangements and organization by Gwynne Liscombe, ably assisted on the day by Phil Watts and Derek Higgs. Some £265 was raised and, as in previous years, the profits shared between PHAB Wales and Maes-y-Coed School, Barry.

The first prize winner of £60 was, appropriately, Wayne Jenkins of Llantwit Major, a former pupil of Maes-y-Coed School and a previous winner of duckeggs!

Gwynne is threatening, or promising, we shall have a grand event in 1992.

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CHURCHYARD GAMES

A day or two ago we found a new book in the library*, *Country Churchyards in Wales* by Donald Gregory (published by Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 1991). He seems to have liked Llancafarn and says:- "--- there is much to savour; it has an ambience all its own." We would all agree about that.

He also says:- "--- it has a very large churchyard indeed in which there are relatively few gravestones. The unconsecrated north side of the churchyard must have given much scope here for secular activities in times past, a clue to which is provided by the survival in windows on the north side of gudgeons, which once held shutters, put up to protect the precious glass from straying balls!"

Well, the shutter hinge-pins (gudgeons) are there, but this interpretation has never come to mind before. Does anyone know more? Is this conjecture on Mr Gregory's part or does it appear in some other publication? Certainly churches, churchyards and church houses were used for activities which would surprise us today and we have already repeated Marianne Spencer's record of ball-games associated with Mabsant in the churchyard at Kenfig (Newsletter 26).

* By the way, Sheena Etherington has asked me to acknowledge the usefulness of the Public Library in St Davids. Since we moved to Pembrokeshire, this tiny, part-time library has been a source of all sorts of interesting books on Wales and Welsh history which have helped to keep up a flow of oddments for the Newsletter.

NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

This was held in the Village Hall. It was very successful and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. Delightful food was provided by Mrs Val Harmer and Mrs Claire Evans assisted by very able helpers.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME by Barbara Milhuisen

This has now been implemented and road signs are to be erected in the very near future. The need for the watch was illustrated at our last monthly meeting in the Fox and Hounds on Tuesday, 7th January. Some of the committee's cars were parked in the car park over the bridge. The Secretary left first and all was well with her car but, half an hour later, when the Treasurer left, her car had been broken into. Unfortunately only one house directly overlooks this car park and policing is difficult. Very different from the days, not so long past, when no one locked their doors.

OVERSEAS NEWS

Phil Watts writes: I have recently had a letter from Jeffery Thomas, now living in New Zealand. He recently spent some time in South Wales, calling on Audrey Deere who was good enough to give me his address. I wrote to him and have received a reply.

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He lived in Gowlog as a boy until about the age of ten. His father's name was Norman Thomas who married Mary Griffiths, a native of Llancarfan. They moved away in approximately 1940.

He has promised to contribute to our Newsletter and would like to know of any contemporaries who may be around. He has also promised to become the first member from New Zealand so, on the strength of this, and a successful negotiation with our bank I have included him on our mailing list.

Our Lougher cousins Tom and Gomer (Robert) are thrilled to receive our Newsletters and never fail to find something of interest and have renewed their membership.

THE BARD OF PENONN by John Etherington

Introduction

At the end of the notes on Walter Mapes, in Newsletter 40, I suggested that an article on Iolo Morgannwg's life would be a fitting tribute to this remarkable son of Llancarfan. The following account is culled from various sources, the most useful of which is *Writers of Wales - Iolo Morganwg* by Prys Morgan, University of Wales Press (1975). Quotations from this text are indicated as (PM). By coincidence, the *Welsh and Borders* magazine, *Country Quest* (August, 1991), also contained a feature on our Welsh bard. This is very much a secondary account, drawn from the researches of other writers any errors or omissions are almost certainly my own.

"Iolo Morgannwg was born plain Edward Williams, according to himself, in 1746, that is 1747 in modern style, in a cottage at Pennon (sic) in Llancarfan ---" (PM).

His father, also Edward, was a stonemason from Llandough (Cardiff) of farming stock. His mother, Ann Mathew, or Matthews, came from Coychurch and seems to have had delusions of grandeur, claiming descent from the great Glamorgan poets of the 15th and 16th centuries. One wonders if this was not the stimulus which started Iolo on the path to literary fame (or infamy?). Iolo learned his father's trade in his early years and earned his living as a mason for a considerable part of his life.

Between 1751 and 1755 the family moved to Flemingston which became his home and ultimate place of burial. In later years Iolo painted a very nostalgic picture of the Vale in the mid-18th century, cherishing its music and folk songs, for the destruction of which he bitterly attacked Methodism.

He was taught to write Welsh verse by another Edward Williams of Middlehill and also William Robert of the Ydwal. Amongst his friends were the compilers of a Welsh thesaurus and a Welsh dictionary:- respectively, Thomas Richards of Coychurch and John Walters of Llandough (Cowbridge). Walters' facility for minting new words may well have sowed the seed of Iolo's creativity in a slightly less reputable field.

In 1770, Iolo's mother died, at which time he began to hoard a private archive of notes. After his mother's death his asthma grew worse and he began to dose himself with laudanum. During the seven years after this he began to

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wander - to North Wales first and then, in 1773, he and his brothers went to London after which he worked for a while in Kent, returning via Bristol and was home again in Flemingston by 1777.

He left home again and worked in Devon and Cornwall in 1779 or '80 and later for the

Margam Estate in a quarry at Pyle. In 1781 he returned again to Flemingston and married Margaret Roberts from St Mary Church. Using her money he set up a builder's shop in Llandaf and another in Cardiff but these failed. He then bought a sloop which also failed to make money and so he took up farming at Rumney - this also failed, by which time Iolo must have been thoroughly depressed. His daughter was born in 1782 and in 1785 he fled across the Bristol Channel to Wells, Somerset, to escape his local creditors but returned to Flemingston whence he was committed to Cardiff prison in 1786-7. His son Taliesin was born in 1787.

During the 1780's he started to style himself Iolo Morganwg and wrote imitation 14th and 15th century Welsh verse (cwydd) a collection of which was inserted as an appendix to a book of verse by Dafydd ap Gwilym the 14th century poet, published by the London Welsh. This appendix became the most famous part of the book and was not revealed as a forgery until early in the 20th century. Iolo claimed that the verses had been found in scattered manuscripts which he had located.

In 1791 he left the family in poverty and went to London. He contributed forged documents to support the legend of Welsh speaking North American Indians in the Mid-West supposedly descended from Welshmen who accompanied Prince Madoc in the discovery of America around 1170.

During all this time he pressed the idea that the Welsh bards were the successors of the ancient Druids and manufactured prayers and chants for a Gorsedd at Primrose Hill in 1792.

By late 1795 Iolo was back in Wales and from 1800 to 1815 he spent time at a property of his father's in Gileston.

At this time he was paid to collect material for a Welsh Archaeology, which was published by the Gwyneddigion society in three volumes, the Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales (1801-7). Iolo wrote an introduction to the first volume which was an early flowering of Welsh nationalism with an attack on the Tudor Acts of Union. The first two volumes were a mixture of fact and fantasy but the third volume was entirely forged.

In 1819 the Cambrian Society held an eisteddfod at Carmarthen to which the elderly Iolo was invited and he succeeded in persuading the guests that the gorsedd of bards should be associated with the eisteddfod though in this case the circle was but a few pebbles from his pocket - "by the late 19th century when the eisteddfodic movement had become a veritable obsession with the Welsh people, the pebbles from Iolo's pocket, had come to look like the very rock on which the eisteddfod movement was founded." (PM).

An aspect of the Iolo saga, which seems less well known, is his production of songs and music. He collected and "decorated" Glamorgan folksongs, some of which were included in the collection Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg by Maria Jane Williams of Aberpergwm (1844). She admitted in one or two cases "even to have got the music from Iolo" (PM) and relied heavily on Taliesin for words which were lifted from his

father's papers."

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If one remembers that the book contains songs such as Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn (Watching the White Wheat), Y Deryn Pur (The Faithful Bird), Y Fwyalchen (The Blackbird), Y Ferch o'r Sger (The Maid of Sker), all of them bearing Iolo's hallmark in style, one can see how he has enriched the lives of millions without them knowing it. Many of you will remember the wonderful voice of that marvellous actor, comedian and singer, the late Ryan Davis, in Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn. The song is also on Max Boyce's The Road and the Miles --- and has been recorded by several folk-groups.

In 1826 Iolo Morganwg died and his son Taliesin started to sift through the mass of papers which had accumulated. This numbered 88 volumes (!) which were bought, after Taliesin's death (1847), by Lord and Lady Llanover in 1853 (Lord Llanover was Benjamin Hall, master of Rhymney Iron Works, M.P. and namesake of Big Ben in Westminster).

GOATS: the Western Mail supplement, the Weekender (Saturday, January 18) featured a photograph of member, Mrs Jan Brown and two of her goats, a cashmere and a remarkably handsome curly angora in the lovely setting of Castle Lodge Farm close to Castle Ditches. The article concerned the great increase in unusual breeds of animal being farmed for specialist wools: as well as goats, llamas, alpacas, guanacos and long-haired rabbits provide raw material for the fashion trade.

A LETTER from Phil Watts

Dear Mr Editor,

Please may I say thank you to all the enquirers and well-wishers during and after my recent illness. I am glad to say that I have just about recovered now. Ruth is saying that I am about 80% - I have retorted that she means that I am not quite 16 ozs! Print this at your peril. Being a person who has never been ill for more than about 48 hours I have found this recent state of affairs difficult to handle.

Now I must apologize for inaccuracy and omission in my recent articles.

Firstly, the inaccuracy was that I described Llanvythin Farm, in the time of Rees Maddock as being over 300 acres. This was an overestimate and it is authoritatively stated that it was more like 200 acres.

Now the omission: in my list of farms and farmers I failed to mention George Palling using

Great House, later owned by Johnie Jones and then owned by Ernie Badcock. The sheds stood on a site now occupied by The Grange and Culvery, homes of Joyce and Frank Jameson and Geoff Burrows respectively.

Also in the same list I said that Edward Williams was farming Crosston and then Llancadle Farm simultaneously - this was inaccurate; he farmed the two places consecutively allowing Tom Tucker to farm at Crosston.

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THE DEERE FAMILY

In a postscript to his letter (above) Phil Watts wrote: "I am reminded, using the name Audrey Deere, that her father, Charles, after he retired from the Red Lion at Bonvilston, wrote a book The Recollections of Charles Deere. He was a contemporary of Norman Thomas, Bill Watts and Dilwyn Griffiths, father of Barrie Griffiths. If any of our members would like a copy, there may be some available.

By chance, the editor was completing the Iolo Morganwg article at the same time and found the following, related to Iolo's early love poems: "He had, from his youth been friendly with various girls, one of whom had been the daughter of the high sheriff of the county, Kitty Deere of Ash Hall at Ystrad Owen near Cowbridge. Such an affair could come to nothing in the 18th or 19th centuries, ----- many of his later poems refer to the high-born girl who falls in love with the man of lowly status."

The family has been in the area for a long time - this was just after 1770. Judging from the 'phone directories the family has remained faithful to South Glamorgan - there are none in the West Wales directory immediately adjacent. If you are interested in Charles Deere's book, please contact Phil Watts.

LLANCARFAN NOTES

The editorial wild-life notes have more or less come to an end since we moved to Pembrokeshire. However, in the last week of November I attended an informal dinner at The Blue Anchor, Aberthaw, with some of my old colleagues. It was a good evening and I did not manage to get away until after midnight. Driving past Caemaen, just before reaching the A48, I met a tawny owl which had settled on the road. He must have been dazzled by my headlights and sat watching as I pulled-up to within a very few feet. After thinking for half a minute he took-off with great silent wing-beats and sailed away over the

wall of Llantrithyd Park. It was an end to the evening which was wonderfully evocative of our years in Llancafarn as we lived constantly with the "kuwik's" and "hoo's" of the owls in Coed-y-Crynallt.

At the A.G.M., Pam and Derek Higgs told me that they have recently been plagued by a pair of foxes which have visited their garden most nights, digging holes to bury items from the rubbish (half a loaf!) and other things. They can sometimes be a nuisance and seem to be very prolific of the last few years in South Wales - going home after the A.G.M., I came across one which had been killed by a car near Haverfordwest and Pam said that son, Mike, accidentally ran-over one close to Llancafarn a short time ago - following this the foxes nocturnal visits stopped so it may have been the dog of the pair? JRE