



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 46 April 1992

This April Newsletter follows hard on the heels of the last one so that you can be reminded of the May Day Bank Holiday walk. Spring is certainly with us now - the daffodils which Society members planted on the river banks were a glorious sight earlier in mid-March and we hear that a vote of thanks to the Society has been recorded in the Community Council minutes.

These first few months of the year are also rewarding for the Newsletter as several members send letters with their subscriptions - some of this year's batch will appear here and in the next Newsletter or two.

The last month has been dominated by the General Election. Members who no longer live in the Vale might be interested to know that it was particularly exciting (if this is the right word!) in the Vale constituency. The sitting Labour Member, John Smith, was ousted by a mere 19 votes to Conservative, Walter Sweeney! This must be close to a record.

The note on the churchyard, printed below, reminds us that Llanccarfann Community Council is unusual in acting as its own burial authority. In a future Newsletter we shall publish an account of how this came to be - much of the story is documented in the past Parish Council minute books.

MAY DAY WALK 1992

This will be on Monday, May 4th, and includes visits to Llantrithyd Church and Llantrithyd Place, together with the Deer Park. Meet your guides, Val Watts and Len Mortimer at 10.30 a.m. at Llantrithyd Church. After the walk we shall retire to the Fox and Hounds, Llanccarfann in time for lunch and the usual raffle.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

There will be a BARBECUE at Abernant on Friday evening, June 12th at 7.00 p.m. Entrance fee £2.50 children £1.00. Picnic chairs and tables would be very welcome.

The VILLAGE FETE will be held at Mr & Mrs Frank Jameson's field, The Grange on Saturday July 11th, the ANNUAL DINNER will be on September 25th (also a Friday) in the Village Hall, and the DUCK EGG RACE, as usual on Boxing Day, December 26th, finishing at the Fox and Hounds.

Other events for which dates are not yet fixed are the CHURCH BARN DANCE in late June at Pancross Barn, and a LLANCARFAN SOCIETY WHIST DRIVE in October or November.

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, Llancarfan, Barry, South Glamorgan, CF6 9AD. Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to Barbara Milhuisen, 73 Tynwydd Road, Barry, South Glamorgan, CF6 6BA. Arrangements for visits to sick members: Len Fairfax, Summit View, Aberthin, Cowbridge, S. Glam. (Cowbridge 772654).

SICK VISITOR

Len Fairfax, who was elected as a new member of the Committee in January suggested, at his first Committee Meeting, that the Society might appoint a Sick Visitor - someone who could visit poorly or disabled members of the Society if they so wished. When the Committee welcomed the idea, Len very kindly volunteered to serve in this capacity. Len and his wife have been firm supporters of the Society since its inception. Len came originally from Wren's Castle, Llantrithyd, attended Llancarfan School and now lives in Aberthin. He will be well-known to many members of the Society. If you know of someone who would appreciate a visit please contact Len Fairfax at Summit View, Aberthin, (Cowbridge 772654). Len's address and 'phone number have been added to our list of addresses which appear each month. Len says he needs warning of overseas visits! - but seriously, a letter or telephone call is always possible.

Len has already visited Millward Harris at Southway Old People's Home on behalf of the Society. Millward is being well looked after but, as an active man over the main part of his life, he is finding the loss of both legs a great handicap for one used to the wide expanses of the countryside by following the hunt and farming all his life. Our feelings and good wishes go out to him.

NEWS OF MEMBERS AND FRIENDS:

Congratulation to Committee member, Derek Higgs and his wife Pam on their 40th Wedding Anniversary which brought together many old friends and reminded us all how quickly the village has changed over the last decade.

Lyn Price, Moulton, has come out of hospital and is under strict instructions not to do any work, but it is to be assumed that he will resume farming, in a supervisory capacity, through the summer. It is a sign of spring when folk become active. Look after yourself Lyn.

We are sorry to hear that our friendly postman, Bob, has been ill following a heart-attack. We wish him a speedy recovery so that we may have our post on time!

John and Laura Alvey, formerly of Beechcroft, Llancarfan, subsequently Old Barn, Picketston, and now resident in Launceston, returned to Llancarfan to attend Derek and Pam Higgs' 40th Wedding Anniversary celebrations. They had the pleasure of staying at Cliff House with Mr and Mrs L. Bovington who are members of the Society. Cliff House appears in the Vale of Glamorgan

official list of Bed and Breakfast accommodation. John and Laura strongly recommend it to anyone who needs accommodation locally. Part of a letter from them appears below.

Sadly, we have heard that Mike Bryan, formerly of Cattwg Cottages, Pancross, has died. Since moving from Llancarfan, Mike has been living on a smallholding in Sully.

MAY DAY AND MID-SUMMER TRADITIONS by John Etherington

Whilst reading various books for the article on Llancarfan in Literature (Newsletter 45), I found several references to local May Day traditions in Trefor Owens (1987) Welsh Folk Customs

This seems a most appropriate time to talk about this, as the Llancarfan Society has, itself, founded an ongoing tradition of the annual May Day Walks which have featured the village of Llancarfan, Llantrithyd Church, Llantrithyd Place and, more recently, the revitalized Deer Park.

The first day of May was known in former times as Calend Haf, the calend of Summer, marking one of the two pre-Christian divisions of the year into winter and summer. Many of the traditional festivities of May Day seem to be derived from pagan origins, and May Eve shared with the other "spirit nights" (yspridnos), Midsummer Eve (St John's Eve) and Halloween night, the belief that supernatural powers were unleashed.

Bonfires were lit on the Eve of May and it is believed that the last of these Beltane fires were kindled in the 1830's in the Vale of Glamorgan. To run between two such fires or to leap over the fire was a means of ensuring a plentiful harvest.

The maypole tradition flourished in parts of Wales but, in the Vale of Glamorgan its counterpart was the Summer Birch (Y Fedwen Haf) which was placed in position on the eve of St John at midsummer. Owen's book cites a poem of the late 18th or early 19th century, by William Roberts the blind poet of Yr Ydwal, Llancarfan, Taplas Gwainfo (A musical gathering at Wenvoe). This gives a contemporary description of the birch raised in Wenvoe: "Sir Edmond Thomas had sent his carpenter to trim the pole until it was round in shape, and to decorate it with many-coloured pictures. The young women decorated it with gilded and ribboned wreaths and it was surmounted by a weather cock and banner. If anyone were to try to steal it there would be a crowd of hefty lads in opposition.

The diary of William Thomas (1727-95) of Michaelston-super-Ely adds a frightening glimpse of these "mindes". In 1768 the St Fagans' villagers were forced to guard their birch with guns against the attack of about fifty persons from St Nicholas and district. A day or two later the St Nicholas people were to be joined by others from Penmark and Llancarfan. St Fagans was compelled to recruit about a hundred persons from Llandaff and Cardiff to prevent the theft which would have been considered a disgrace for years.

In this worryingly lawless late 20th century we would not tolerate such goings on!

Note: Robert Williams of Yr Ydwal was a friend and mentor of Iolo Morganwg but where is Yr Ydwal - any suggestions?

-4-

A MISSING GRAVESTONE

In Newsletter 44 we mentioned the "impossible" gravestone of the Baptist Chapel which was destroyed by the builder when the chapel was first bought speculatively for conversion. Memory of its inscription has not been entirely lost as Stan Awbery's Llancafarn: the Village of a Thousand Saints records that the stone was erected in memory of Elizabeth Evans who died on 30th February 1837.

EDWARD VIII IN BOVERTON

It is a bit outside our home territory, but we have recently come across a record of Edward VIII visiting Boverton in 1936. Though not in our parish, I bet those of you who were children at the time had a day off school to see the royal visitor. Does anyone remember?

The occasion was part of a two day visit to South Wales and is immortalised in a British Paramount News film which shows the visitors descending from a train near Llantwit - it was not standing at a platform as steps were needed. The King was taken to view The Welsh Land Settlement, an agricultural training society formed to help unemployed miners at a time when one third of the Welsh population was unemployed. The film-shots show the royal party in a farmyard fronted by several archways of the "flat-arch" construction so typical of the Vale. Does anyone know which farm this was?

Sheena Etherington found this film-clip, quite by chance, in an Open University television programme. As a sad postscript, the presenter points out that the Welsh Land Settlement Society was a flop. Does anyone know more?

LOWER GREENWAY: the Western Mail Business and Farming Supplement, 26 March featured Barrie Griffiths' farm shop, which started by roadside sales of potatoes in the 1960's and grew-up to the successful large shop it is today. The Newsletters have talked about many aspects of changing farming but this change to horticulture is something we have not so far mentioned. Lower Greenway ceased dairying in 1974, partly because the farm was crossed by the A48 making a problem for moving a present day large herd. The land was put down to horticulture, growing vegetables for the shop. At present this is combined with egg production from 5000 birds and beef-fattening in redundant poultry sheds. At present the shop serves something like 1000 customers per week.

CHURCHYARD

The editor, having spent half his life looking out over the churchyard from Ceffyl Du was pleased to hear that the Community Council is implementing a wildlife management scheme based on a plan provided by Society member Mrs Joan Raum of Paddocks, Walterston, wearing her other hat, of the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust. Joan recently undertook a survey of the flowering plants in the churchyard and, whilst not finding any special rarities, her list shows the enormous number of plant species which will occur in a site like this which has never been fertilized or treated with weedkiller as have most modern agricultural grasslands.

-5-

Mrs Sue Taylor provided the information for this report. Sue reminds us that Llancarfan is one of the few Community Councils which acts as its own burial authority and that the Council controls the churchyard management in collaboration with Father Feild and the PCC.

Until the last few years in which the churchyard grass has been close-mowed throughout, the northern part of the burial ground, which has few or no gravestones, was allowed to grow-up each year and the hay was cut and gathered by the late Dai Phillips, Penonn. At that time the deep grass was a riot of colour, full of wild flowers just as all of the old hay-meadows used to be. Joan Raum's survey shows that most of these herbs have persisted and hopefully we shall see again the flowers of Ox-eye Daisy, Agrimony, Meadowsweet, Fleabane, Tufted Vetch and many others, attended by a myriad of butterflies and flooded by the birdsong that so many visitors to the village remark upon.

MEMORIES OF LLANCARFAN by Megan Hamber

When I was a youngster, Llancarfan was a second home to me. My parents and I would either walk from Barry or take a train to Aberthaw and then walk. When my grandfather came to stay with us from Llwynypia we would walk from Aberthaw station to visit Auntie Jessie and Uncle John Buckley in the Post Office.

Years later, nearly sixty years ago, I taught piano to the children of the village. They would come to my cousin, Jinny Weight in Chapel House and I taught them in the parlour. As I remember there were Olive and Sybil Weight, Mary and Danny Phillips, Kathleen Watts, Betty Palling, Dilys Lewis, John Rowlands and Graham Price now known as Graham Jenkins - maybe there were more.

I went on Tuesday by the four o'clock bus or on my bike of a Saturday morning. When waiting for the bus on Tuesday night I would wait for a telephone call from my fiance, Jim, who was working in Liverpool. I waited in the dark between the two graveyards and when the phone rang I would jump out of my skin!

In the summer, my father, who was in his late seventies, would walk from Barry and then we would walk home with a stop for refreshment at Moulton.

Much later I taught Jeniffer Griffiths, and Nia Phillips from Penonn, but they came into Barry for lessons. Whether any of them made anything of it I don't know but I enjoyed my visits.

Ivor and Jinny Weight were a delightful people. I remember Ivor juggling eggs on the garden path - he dropped one and said "Oh 'ell!" and was not seen for an hour or two to escape the wrath of Jinny. She was the most fantastic embroideress and we always had a lot of fun together.

I have the happiest of memories.

-6-

TELEPHONES

Megan Hamber's article, above, contains a reminder that the telephone box has not always stood in the corner between the Village Hall and the bridge over the river. Indeed, it has not always been a telephone box as such: in Newsletter 9, Herbert Thomas wrote: "The Post Office, with Mrs Buckley as Post Mistress, was very much in the centre of things. I used to telephone there and leave messages for Audrey." The post office was, at that time, in Hillside, next door to the Blacksmith's Shop.

The late Ernie Badcock's records include some transcripts from the Parish Council minute books just before the First World War. Two of these are:

April 14 1914 Proposed telephone call office Llancarfan. GPO required guarantee
£13/10/year. Accepted.

April 1 1915 Proposed telephone and post office be opened 8am to 8pm instead of GPO
proposal of 8.30-1 or 3-7.30.

The telephone remained in the post office until well after the 1920s when Herbert Thomas used to leave messages for Audrey Lougher of Cross Green (his wife to be). Ernie's transcripts of the P.C. minutes help again:

Sept 1 1931 Telephone kiosk asked for.

These transcripts of the Parish Council minutes contain no record of the arrival of the kiosk but this is probably in the full minute books which are lodged with the County Archive.

When the telephone box was first introduced to the village it stood near Bethlehem Chapel yard, where Megan recalls being startled by its ringing, but we have no record of the move

to the corner by the Village Hall. Anyone remember when and why?

LES BOULES by Barbara Milhuisen

Introduction: in Newsletter 44 we announced that the playing of Boules will be introduced at the Barbecue on June 12th. For those without experience of this game, Barbara Milhuisen, our Secretary and French connection has written the following:-

There are British bowls and French boules and they are not the same thing, though having an obvious connection. Instead of the carefully constructed "woods" and manicured grass of the British bowling green the French have smaller metal boules and play on gravel.

There are two sorts. Le jeu Lyonnais (the Lyon game) is governed by an International Federation, organises World Championships and has a rule book 70 pages long. It is played in a space defined by a wooden framework of specific shape. La petanque has smaller boules and shorter, different rules (e.g. you don't run up to the spot when throwing your boule but stand still, "feet together" - which is what petanque means).

It too has a world championship, but is generally much more relaxed and informal and can be played on any suitable bit of gravel or flat surface, preferably next to a cafe. It is particularly popular in the south of France

-7-

where the evening partie de petanque in the shade of the plane trees and lubricated with lots of pastis, is a hallowed tradition.

The aim in both games is similar to bowls. A jack (in petanque it is called the cochonette - the piglet, and in the jeu Lyonnais, le but - target) is thrown and each player tries to throw his boules as close to it as possible.

The pair who end up with any of their boules nearest to the jack count a point for each one nearer than the nearest of their opponent's. It sounds simple until you start to play it.

Epilogue: well, it sounds marvellous - we just need seventy degrees or more on the day; Phil and Ruth can stock-up on bottles and away we go. If you don't come to the barbecue you will miss an experience!

EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO PHIL AND RUTH WATTS from John and Laura Alvey, formerly of Beechcroft, Llancarfan

Laura is well and I am fully recovered from my two spells in hospital last year, so everything in the garden is lovely, or will be soon, depending on the weather.

We enclose our annual subscription to THE SOCIETY and wish it well. It is in some respects our life-line with the Village and keeps us in touch with the events therein. We look forward to each edition of the Newsletter and can well appreciate all the good work expended by your goodselves and all the others connected with its publication.

CHRISTMAS TREE - A LETTER from Graham Brain

Graham has written, thanking the Society for our donation of £25 toward the 1991 tree - the biggest so far at about 23 feet. Also thanks to Derek and Pam Higgs who have donated the electricity during the past few years.

At the April Committee meeting it was resolved that the Society will, in future years,

donate the cost of the electricity as well as making our usual donation.

SCARVES

Supplies of Llancarfan Society ladies scarves and squares are now available with the same stag-motif as that on the ties. They are available at a cost of £5.50 from Phil Watts or Barbara Milhuisen (addresses above).

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Following the adoption of the Watch scheme in Llancarfan Community, notices have now been erected at the entrances to Llancarfan. Llanbethery and Llantrithyd.

-8-

Reading the current Neighbourhood Watch Newsletter it seems that one of the main problems, even after repeated police warnings, is that property and premises are so often left insecure - the suggestion for padlocking the runner of an "up and over" garage door seems eminently sensible and would protect many bicycles and tools against opportunist thieves.

GLAN ELY AGAIN

In the last Newsletter Phil Watts reminded us of the booklet The Recollections of Charles Deere of Bonvilston: sadly this is now out of print but it is well worth borrowing a copy to read. One thing that it tells us is that William Tatum, later Lord Glanely, owned Great House in Bonvilston - possibly this all interlinks with the relationship to the Vicar of Llantrithyd, the Rev Banks-Williams, mentioned in the last Newsletter?

CAR PARKING - THE FOX AND HOUNDS CONNECTION

Many years ago, Phil Watts recalls for us, there were numerous protests and public meetings concerning the parking of cars which were visiting the Fox and Hounds on sunny summer days or warm evenings. The editor remembers a Rolls Royce plus capped chauffeur, cheekily parked on the drive of Ceffyl Du for just this reason!

Apparently, as so often happens, the clock has gone full circle and the Fox and Hounds is now finding a problem of visitors to the village using and overfilling the pub car park. Presumably this has been made worse by the much increased use of the Village Hall since its refurbishment.

Mike and Cilla Evans, landlord and landlady of the Fox, ask that anyone organising a function in Llancarfan should consult with them if they expect many visitors in cars.

WHIST DRIVE

The account of the February 28th Whist Drive did not get into the last Newsletter. Phil Watts wrote as follows:- It was a great success, being well attended by players and helpers alike. There were ten tables and the organisers are grateful to Kath Watts and Margaret Rees for selling tickets before the event. This gave some guideline as to the numbers expected, how many prizes to offer and so on.

The theme was Welsh, as it was so near St David's Day - several of the prizes were Welsh wine produced at Llanerch Vinyard near Miskin. I managed to obtain packets of tea with a Welsh dragon logo on the outside and an umbrella to keep off the Welsh rain! We are grateful to Mrs Mary Griffiths for making Welsh cakes. The Hall was suitably decorated with daffodils.