



## **LANCARFAN SOCIETY**

### **Newsletter 49 August-September 1992**

Apologies to you all for the long gaps between Newsletters during the past three or four months, The editor finds the summer weather (!) too precious to spend a great deal of time at the keyboard. Not, I may say, idling in the sun - mixing concrete and outdoor carpentry has filled the time. The apology also includes all those kind contributors who are waiting to see their work in print.

Whilst thinking about preparation of Newsletters, I want to say thank-you to all of the Committee members who have supplied me with notes and information to keep the Newsletter filled with news of current affairs, even though I am no longer in Llanarfarn every day. Particular, thanks to Phil Watts who has been anchor-man in this task and sends a packet of papers once or twice a month. Because they have all been so good about this I seem to know more about the everyday goings-on in Llanarfarn than I used to as a resident!

We are still short of writings from members so may I appeal yet again for letters and articles - even the shortest notes of personal memories will help - the May Day walk provided a few of these by word of mouth but there is nothing quite like a sheet or two of notepaper otherwise so much detail is forgotten.

#### **DATES FOR THE DIARY**

The ANNUAL DINNER will be on Friday, September 25th in the Village Hall - if you have not returned the booking slip enclosed with Newsletter 48, please do so quickly or you may be unlucky - a week or two ago there were only a dozen or so unfilled places. The next LLANARFARN SOCIETY WHIST DRIVE will be on Saturday, November 14th at the Village Hall. We have changed to Saturday this time as so many members have said that they find Fridays difficult.

The DUCK EGG RACE will be held as usual on Boxing Day, December 26th, finishing at the Fox and Hounds. Proceeds this year will be shared between Maes-y-Coed special school, PHAB and Respite Care for Families of Handicapped Children.

#### **RESIGNATION OF SECRETARY**

At the July meeting of the Society, our Chairman, Mick Mace, accepted, with great regret, the resignation of our Honorary General Secretary, Barbara Milhuisen. Barbara, who had earlier intimated that this would be her last attendance as Secretary, is to leave shortly to live in France.

On behalf of the Committee and all members of the Society, the Chairman proposed a formal vote of thanks to Barbara for all her hard work in the Society and wished her well in her new home across the Channel. It was agreed that a small token of our appreciation be presented at an appropriate social occasion in the very near future.

Should any member of the Society wish to offer his or her services as successor in the post of Secretary, the Chairman or any member of the Committee would be delighted to hear from you!

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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. We will also be pleased to print short announcements of village functions but they must be sent in writing, at least 6-8 weeks in advance. 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 any Committee member until Barbara Milhuisen is replaced as Secretary. Arrangements for visits to sick members: Len Fairfax, Summit View, Aberthin, Cowbridge, S. Glam. (Cowbridge 772654).

RUBBISH DUMPING a note from Gwynne Liscombe

I read with interest the article on rubbish dumping, in the May Newsletter. I agree that it is a frustration and an irritation picking up rubbish dumped by others, but I am afraid that this is "par for the course" in the society in which we live. If we wait for the local authority to do everything, I am afraid that little may be achieved even though they may be obligated to do so by statute.

I remember the days in Llancarfan, particularly when we won the Best Kept Village competition, when virtually everything which moved was picked up and put in it's place, wherever that might be. I remember too the pride that people took, not only within the curtilage of their own property, but often in the grounds outside. Sadly this practice seems largely to have disappeared, although there are exceptions, and I did feel when I was in the village very recently, that it looked rather shabby despite summer greenness.

Perhaps Llancarfan should enter the Best Kept Village competition once again, but it would need tremendous co-operation on the part of everyone.

I am sure that some Society members have good stories to tell about the previous entries into the Best Kept Village competition.

LLANCARFAN IN LITERATURE II by John Etherington

In Newsletter 45 we quoted extracts from various writings about the village of Llancarfan. We are still hoping that readers might contribute further items but here are some more which were already in the files.

In Newsletter 18, when we used the entries in Ernie Badcock's diary, concerning 1920's farming in the Vale, the editor commented on the apparent absence of steam ploughing in

the area. A bit of information has surfaced from D. W. Howell's *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales*, Routledge & Kegan-Paul (1978). He wrote that "Steam ploughs, which were common in certain areas of England from the 1850's, were rarely found in Wales ---." "The one farm in the Vale of Glamorgan that adopted steam ploughing was Boverton Farm (735 acres)."

Howell says that steam ploughing was little used in Wales because it was not suited to the smaller fields and shallower soils of the Principality but this is not altogether true of the Vale where agriculture is more like that of lowland England. We do know for certain that steam tackle, owned by contractors, was used in the Vale for threshing, for example there is a

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photograph in *Welsh Rural Life* by E. Scourfield, Stewart Williams (1979) which Lyn Price, Moulton, identified as taken at Sutton Mawr. Many older members must have memories of this and certainly Llew Griffiths remembered steam traction engines going to Monastery Mill (Newsletter 34).

Entries in reference and guide book are may be of interest. Take for example *The Oxford Companion to Welsh Literature* (Meic Stephens 1986) where the editor, quite unexpectedly found the following:-

Llancarfan, a parish in the Vale of Glamorgan where, according to tradition, Cadog founded a monastery in the sixth century. There, in the pre-Norman period, the Gospels of Gildas were kept. Some scholars believe that Llancarfan was the home of a learned clerical family, one of whose members, named Lifris, wrote an immense Latin *Life of St Cadog* at some time between 1061 and 1100. The version of the *Life* which has survived appears to be a composite one, with the additions of chartulary and administrative documents relating to the monastery and its clerics. A carved stone, dating from the ninth or tenth century and bearing an inscription from the eleventh or twelfth is preserved in Llancarfan church, but according to *Annales Cambriae* the site of the monastery was destroyed in 988. Llancarfan's independence came to an end about 1100 when the Normans bestowed the church on the abbey of St Peter, Gloucester. Rhisiart ap Rhys composed two poems in praise of Cadog. Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams) was born at Pennon in the parish of Llancarfan, for which he created a brilliant, but totally fictional, past.

Even guide books may set us thinking: the *Shire County Guide: Glamorgan* (Hilling 1991) starts trivially enough with "This attractive village, lying in a small valley in the Vale of Glamorgan, has a stream running through the middle of it." Later however we learn that "There is a disproportionately large church." Presumably he means disproportionate to the visible size of the village - one wonders if he realized just how big a Parish the Church had to serve? Any thoughts on the size of our Church?

The Victorians started the fad for guide-books and one which covers our area is Mr & Mrs S. C. Hall's *Book of South Wales, the Wye and the Coast* published by Arthur Hall, Virtue and Co. in 1861. The Introduction tells us that the authors have generally

"followed the route of the South Wales Railway, commencing at Gloucester and ending at Milford Haven; making excursions from the line to the valleys and riversides, that give to the country its attractions of beauty and character." Sadly, though these excursions led them to Llantwit Major, they did not reach our more remote part of the Vale which has always been neglected (perhaps fortunately) by visitors.

However, their description of Llantwit contains one item which may throw some light on events in Llancarfan in the early 1800's. In the main text they write that "The tithe barn on the hill is one hundred and twenty by twentyseven feet; and there are people living who saw the huge building crammed to the ridge, with ten or twelve sacks outside." They add, as a footnote: "Greatly to the discredit of the Dean and Chapter of Gloucester, this splendid barn was recently ordered to be taken down, and the materials sold. Such an act of Vandalism was, however, fitly repaid, as the proceeds of the sale of the tiles and timber were not enough to pay for the destruction. The oak that composed the roof was said to have been one thousand years old, and to have been cut down in the parish."

A tithe barn, probably of similar magnificence, stood in the south western corner of Llancarfan churchyard, also under the jurisdiction of the same Dean and Chapter of Gloucester. The editor has always wondered at the lack of

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physical remnant - was it also destroyed in a parallel act of ecclesiastical vandalism? Does anyone know?

#### A TRIBUTE TO BARBARA MILHUISON by Membership Secretary, Phil Watts

I would like to add a special tribute to Barbara Milhuisen on her retirement as our General Secretary. When the original group of founder members first met in the Fox and Hounds in April 1987 it was thought necessary to have a record of the discussion. Barbara happened to have a notebook in her bag and so she became our secretary, a post which she has admirably filled ever since.

As a head of Maes-y-Coed, a special school, everyone has been special to Barbara as she has to us as a Society. I cannot think of anyone who has a greater love of Llancarfan. She has attended almost all of our functions. She is also special to Ruth and myself as she played the organ at our wedding after tuition and instruction from my mother. We now intend to celebrate our Ruby Wedding with her in France in a place which she assures us is not unlike Llancarfan.

A LETTER FROM EUNICE BODENHAM (NEE LLEWELLYN) to Phil Watts  
Merril (John) and Des Pritchard celebrated their Silver Wedding on Sunday (8 March). They had a party and Joan and Maureen Morgan (Green) were there. We had a great time reminiscing of the old times and your Newsletter came into the conversation. We were saying how we enjoy reading them - we don't know the people living in the village but we

still enjoy hearing about the place. Phil, remember when we used to go to the Fox and ring the bell on the Sweet Shop opposite and Betty or Mrs Harris would come to open and we would spend our penny. I can still recall the smell in there.

It was great reading about Dick Evans - my memory of Dick is when the Church was raising funds and it was decided to hold a Whist Drive and Dance, but something happened and some acrimony set in. One morning when I got up there was a note on the Blacksmith door. I ran over and there was a poem on the door. I don't know why, but I have never forgotten it. It was said in the village that Dick wrote it - this must have been about 1937 or '38:-

The cause I am about to say is good Old English dances have gone before  
About the dance I wish I could It's rhythm now from Top to Toe  
Dont you think you are making things How the Deuce can you waggle your  
hum Bum in a blinking dance without  
One and six with no drum a drum

I think most of the village came along and read it.

Phil Watts wrote the following notes on Eunice's letter:-

The whist Drive was followed by a Dance in aid of Church funds. The admission fee would have been 1/6. Local objections were raised to the noise of the drum, an institution of 1930's dances. Previously, old English dances were held with a piano only. In line six I think it might be "new" not "now". I believe the poem could well have been authored by Dick because I have heard my father tell the story of the rhyme on the Blacksmith' Door - he probably

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had inside information. The objectors were the residents of Bridge House (now Bridge Cottage) - some will remember two single schoolteachers living with their bachelor brother and aged parents.

P.S. I have subsequently spoken to Dick on the telephone and he says that if no one else will take credit for it, he will, but maybe we shall get reaction from someone like Llew Griffiths.

With regard to the smell in the sweet shop I wonder what she means? - I remember the sweets they sold were laid out in open boxes or jars. I wonder if the smell was that of liquorice which was very popular in those days rolls of liquorice with a sweet lodged in the middle. The building, being of wood, and locked most of the time, would absorb the various smells - just a thought.

(Phil wrote these notes on 31 March and ended his letter " I wonder whether any of our readers have memories of April 1st pranks - I know I had to beware of my grandfather Liscombe.").

## MORE ON IOLO MORGANWG; BARD OF PENONN by John Etherington

Despite the various fictions which Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg) foisted on Welsh history he must have been a man of exceptional attainment and knowledge for his creations fooled the world of scholarship for century or more until the work of G. J. Williams, from 1916 onward, exposed the forgeries (see also Newsletters 40 & 44).

Amongst the sources which Iolo Morganwg claimed to have used was the Sebright manuscript collection belonging to Thomas Johnes of Hafod, in Cardiganshire, which had been assembled by the the chemist, botanist, philologist and antiquarian, Edward Lhuyd. Johnes was given the mss collection by Sir John Sebright whose ancestor, Thomas, had purchased it after Lhuyd's death.

Hafod was almost a Welsh Shangri-la, a privately created heaven in the hills of mid-Wales, surrounded by 10,000 acres of estate-land on which Johnes practised his amazingly advanced ideas of forestry and upland agriculture. Despite the rebuilding of Hafod in the early 1800's and despite the planting of some four million trees which grew to fine, mature timber, almost nothing now remains of the estate above Cwm Ystwyth (The Lost Houses of Wales, 2nd edn, Lloyd, 1989).

Iolo Morganwg's claim that much of his material was found in the Sebright collection cannot be checked because the manuscripts were destroyed, together with much of Hafod, by a disastrous fire which started on Friday 13 March, 1807.

Johnes' correspondence has recently been published by R. J. Moore-Colyer (A Land of Pure Delight, 1992, Gomer) and in it there are three letters addressed to Edward Williams, their tone indicating close acquaintance. The letters are almost domestic in content: all relate to Edward Williams' work as a stonemason among the quarries of the Vale. Two of them concern the price of agricultural burnt-lime and in the third, Johnes thanks Edward Williams for his advice on the use of marble in the rebuilding of Hafod and also makes some reference to the losses of mss and books caused by the fire. The two men hatched an unfulfilled scheme to ship lime from the quarries of the Valecoast to Cardiganshire via Aberystwyth.

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Despite the doubts which have been cast upon much of Iolo's "history", MooreColyer suggests that his transcriptions provide almost the only clues to the content of the Sebright collection of Lhuyd mss and the other Welsh mss which were destroyed by the 1807 fire. Thomas Johnes died in 1816 probably as a consequence of the stresses imposed by the fire and its financial aftermath.

## NEWS OF MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

By kind invitation of Pam and Derek Higgs a party was held at Carreg Llwyd in mid-July for the Committee to say farewell to Barbara Milhuisen. The Society is not the only loser by Barbara's departure to her new life in France. The local press has carried various tributes to her as the former headteacher of Maes-y-Coed school. Her pupils and friends in



the School thought a great deal of her.

After a long and painful illness Pat Kilday died on August 19th at her home in Barry. Pat and her husband, Norman, lived at the Decca Station on the Cemain Road for many years during the 1970's and 80's. She will be fondly remembered as an active member of many Llancarfan organisations. We send our condolences to Norman and the children.

We also report with great sadness the death of Frank Clode of Moulton, whose wife Doreen died such a short time ago. Our sympathy to the family in this double bereavement.

A boule evening was held on August 3rd at the Three Horseshoes, Moulton. Despite continuous rain and a limited attendance, Phil Watts writes that it was a successful event and worth repeating.

Phil also writes:- In June we had a visit to Abernant from Betty Vizard, presently living in Canada and formerly of Pancross Cottages, sister of Madeline, Olwyn and Cissy. Madeline is a Society member and lives in Rhoose. The three sisters are now proud possessors of Society scarves. We now have two left.

St Hilary Women's Institute recently held a fork supper at Abernant. Society members' present had the pleasure of meeting Tricia Evans who was staying at Garnllwyd with mother and Sue and Geoff Evans. Some people she had not seen for over 40 years were present - there were fond recollections of cycling to the A48 to catch the school bus.

At the same event there was discussion of landmines being dropped in the river below the Bakehouse during the war. Apparently they were dropped by parachute but nobody seemed to know why. (Editor's note - when I was a child we acquired a green and white silk parachute rope which was taken as a souvenir from one of these mines - my understanding is that they were modified sea-mines and could not have withstood the impact of being dropped without a parachute. See John Rowland's letters in Newsletter 21 & 22).

Community Watch reports an attempted burglary at Hillside. The culprits were disturbed at about 3 a.m. and were believed to be youngsters.

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#### POISONOUS PLANTS - A CAUTIONARY STORY

In his last packet of papers sent to the editor, Phil Watts enclosed a couple of newspaper cuttings concerning the dangers from a number of cultivated and wild plants. In his covering letter he wrote:-

It is relevant to myself as I have been attacked by one of these plants in Abernant garden. It is the one I believe to be Rue (*Ruta graveolens*). The circumstances were that I decided to tidy up the whole garden area. This involved handling many plants which have been

there for years and which I have handled on many occasions before.

I recall putting my arms around the plant, I think to tie it up and stop it from spreading around. The plant has a small yellow flower on a head similar to parsley in seed. Following this, the inside of my arms became covered in a rash, turning into blisters which burst, leaving red marks. I am waiting for them to disappear - the doctor said I was allergic to something!! Take antihistamine tablets and follow with calamine lotion.

This is one plant I shall be getting rid of and that I shall not be touching with bare hands again. It has taught me not to be so amorous with these garden plants!

Note: Many plants do this same trick - for example the wild parsnip which grows commonly on the limestone soils around Aberthaw - the juice sensitises the skin to sunlight and the blisters are like those which you get with very bad sunburn. Another culprit is the giant hogweed which we don't see often in the Vale.

The article in the Sunday Express listed many other plants - amongst the 13 most dangerous was tobacco - the leaves cause weakened heartbeat, coma and death - what did all those old countrymen and sailors do to themselves with chewing tobacco? Another was rhubarb - its leaves being poisonous despite the delicious stalks on which they grow in many of our gardens! Llancarfan churchyard is full of yew: the seeds inside the red "berries" and the foliage, are very poisonous. One of the reasons commonly given for its occurring in churchyards and not in the surrounding countryside is that it is so toxic to cattle that it was rooted-out of hedgerows and woodland-edges.

#### MOUSE

A mouse ventured onto my lawn  
to quench a morning thirst

from diamond goblets grass-suspended in the early sun.

A moving shadow sensed through corner of an eye,

like a clarion

sets Mouse in motion, half in little rushes, half in leaps,  
(a hawk? - a quick clean death, perhaps?).

But bird is slow, ungainly; awkwardly  
its thick bill grabs, loses, grabs twice more  
and black wings take to air, uncertainly;

within dark talons Mouse, a piece of carrion.

"Francesco"



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FROM THE SOUTH WALES DAILY NEWS, 2nd April 1913 contributed by Dilys Liscombe The children of the village, then, as now went to school at St Athan. The master, William Richards or "Billie" as we boys called him, was a good master for that age, but a better beater. His reputation with the stick was known far and near, and the stinging blows he gave with his left hand (the right was deformed) we boys never forgot.

We removed to Llanvithen (sic), and I was sent to Llancarvan School. My first master there was a Wesleyan preacher, who kept school at the chapel, and later Thomas Williams, brother of Edward Williams the clockmaker.

Life on the farms was quite different from life in farm-houses today. The workmen were provided every morning with broth, they themselves providing bread. We, the family, always took broth for breakfast and for supper, oatmeal, usually in the form of flummery, and with it milk or honey.

Wages for the farm servants:- head hauliers ranged from £7 to £8; boys who drove the oxen, £2.10s. 0d. to £3; servant girls £4 to £5.

When I came to Tyle House, Boverton, over sixty years ago the wages to my first servant were £9 with board and lodgings and to workmen who lived out, 11/- to 12/- a week. In later years of my tenancy I paid 11/- a week with board and lodgings and £12 to £14 to servant girls.

(Extract from "Vale of Glamorgan in the 19th C. - source material written and prepared by Nigel Williams. Coordinated for Geography and History at Eagleswell Junior School)

Editorial note: presumably the wages in £ are yearly? Flummery - a kind of food made by coagulating wheatmeal or oatmeal. Fl - for Welsh ll- (O.E.D.)

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS:** At a recent Committee meeting it was noted that Newsletters were still being sent out to some members who have not renewed their subscriptions this year. The Committee found this unacceptable and resolved to cease deliveries at once. In future it was suggested that, if the subscription which is due in January, is not paid by the time of the A.G.M. in March, membership will be automatically terminated.

The Society has bought a portable barbecue for its social occasions. This is also available

on loan to members for a payment of £5 - it hs already had one outing in addition to the Barbeque at Abernatnt where it is available from me.