



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 50 October 1992

This Newsletter is a bit of a milestone, being our half-century. Perhaps this is cheating because the first couple or so were not really Newsletters in the proper sense of the word - maybe we should celebrate when we get to 55 - this will be about the time of the A.G.M. Another Annual Dinner has passed: some 70 folk packed the Village Hall for a most enjoyable evening of Minestrone, Roast Beef and Strawberry Gateau together with an impromptu cabaret provided by messrs Milhuisen, Watts and others. Seriously though, it was wonderful to see Barbara back from France so soon and to share with her the flavour of her favourite sparkling wine.

If you regret missing this highspot of the year the next dinner is on September 24, 1993 though we intend to reduce numbers to 60 out of kindness to our caterers and concern for member's comfort. If we are much oversubscribed, a "duplicate" dinner will be held. More details in Dates for the diary, below.

Every now and then a series of letters or articles link successive Newsletters. This time we have a contribution from Jeffery Thomas of Masterton, New Zealand, formerly of Gowlog, Llanarf. Jeffery was remembered in the letter from David Evans (formerly of Garnllwyd) in Newsletter 48. The editor is horrified to find that Jeffery's letter was written in May. Apologies for the delay but it reflects the way in which the Society is thriving, that several months elapse before items are published.

SECRETARY

Following the resignation of Barbara Milhuisen as Secretary, Sheila Mace has kindly volunteered to take her place until the A.G.M. next March. She was informally co-opted during the Annual Dinner and communications for the Committee should be sent to her at Llanbethery (address below).

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, Llanarf, Barry, South Glamorgan, CF6 9AD. Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to the Secretary, Sheila Mace, Pel y Dryn, Llanbethery, Barry, South Glamorgan, Arrangements for visits to sick members: Len Fairfax, Summit View, Aberthin, Cowbridge, S. Glam. (Cowbridge 772654).

DATES FOR THE DIARY.

Having passed the annual dinner, we are ready to start thinking about next year though there remain a couple of events to entertain us before the end of 1992. Provisional arrangements are as follows:-

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DUCK-EGG RACE: The annual race, organised by Gwynne Liscombe will be on Boxing Day morning, proceeds to be shared between Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied (PHAB) and the Margaret May Memorial Trust for Respite Care. The Trust was set-up by Barbara Milhuisen commemorating Margaret May who looked after handicapped children in Gladstone Road for many years. The race will start below the upper ford and finish at the Fox and Hounds Bridge as usual lucky numbers from Gwynne Liscombe or at the Fox and Hounds before or on the day.

WHIST DRIVE: this will be on Saturday, November 14 in the Village Hall at 7.30 p.m. We have chosen Saturday this time as many members complained they could not get to Friday Whist Drives. Another Whist Drive will be held in February.

SOCIETY A.G.M.: to be held on the evening of March 12 at the Village Hall the entertainment, speaker and other arrangements to be announced later.

MAY DAY WALK: there will be a walk on the May Day Bank Holiday, starting at the Village Hall with a cup of coffee and a biscuit. The hall will be booked for the whole day and it is suggested that members might like to return after the walk bringing their own refreshments for an "indoor picnic". Any suggestions for a variation on the theme of the usual walk would be gratefully received.

GARNLLWYD WOOD WALKS: two walks will be held on May 17 and May 18, to look at the wildlife of Garnllwyd Wood which is a Nature Reserve of the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The leader will be Joan Raum, of Walterston and, as each party will be restricted to 10-12 people, Joan has kindly offered to lead two walks. We aim to start at 7.00 p.m. on each evening from the yard of Garnllwyd, by kind permission of Geoff and Sue Evans. Names should be given or sent to Phil Watts or Secretary, Sheila Mace (address above).

If you are coming, please bring insect repellent, protective clothing and wellington boots. Please do not be put off by this as we are told you will be well rewarded for the effort. In the words of the Salvation Army "Come and join us".

BARBECUE: Abernant in June, chef Gwynne Liscombe. Details to follow later.

ANNUAL DINNER: this was so popular that a preliminary booking list is already open for next year: names and numbers are being taken by Phil Watts for 24 September, 1993, with a maximum number of 60 as we were a little overcrowded in the Village Hall this year. Confirmation of booking will be needed before August 31, 1993, cost £10 for a similar roast meal to the one we had this year. If there is a substantial overbooking we shall hold a second dinner. It is a pity the hall is not bigger but isn't this a remarkable tribute to the enthusiasm of all our members, five years into the existence of the Society? As usual more details and booking slips will appear in the Newsletter a couple of months before the dinner.

CENOTAPH: an event which does not directly involve the Society is the laying of a

wreath on the Cenotaph on Armistice Sunday by the Community Council Chairman. This will take place on November 8.

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The Committee is well aware that we seem to do the same things each year: if this is boring and members have other suggestions we shall be pleased to consider them and we would particularly value ideas for activities which will involve younger members.

OBITUARY - LESLIE HOPKIN GRIFFITHS - by Phil Watts.

Leslie Hopkin Griffiths of David Davies House, Barry, formerly of Fern Cottage, Llanccarfan died on September 4.

Leslie was born in Barry and moved to Llanccarfan at the age of three or four years and lived with his parents at Caradoc Cottage (Top End), at that time a small-holding. His father, John Griffiths, was a tailor by trade, an accomplished lay preacher and also delivered the mail.

Leslie's apprenticeship at the local carpenter's shop was delayed because of his weak chest. Later he worked for the Aubrey Estate as a maintenance carpenter. Quite a number of properties in the area were owned by the Aubrey Estate including Les' subsequent home, Fern Cottage. Later he followed his trade with the Aberthaw Cement Company. His chest weakness did not allow him 100% attendance at work. His home was full of expert adaptations and improvisations; reading, rug-making and tapestry work were some of his hobbies.

After the death of his wife, Phyllis, he continued to live at Fern Cottage but found the unequal battle of attending to garden, house and perhaps coping with loneliness, too much and moved to Barry where he enjoyed good health for a number of years.

He served on the Llanccarfan Parish Council and spoke with pride of how they used to attend to the many stiles on footpaths. Les and Phyllis were very fond of walking and were often seen on the road to Abernant to exchange cowboy books with Bill Watts. Les' mode of transport was a motor cycle - Lee Enfield with hand gear-change, before he changed to the more modern Japanese models; always well maintained, sumptuously clean and shiny (in those days farmers had tens of cows, not hundreds!).

Leslie Griffiths will be best remembered for his work and service for Bethlehem Baptist Chapel as deacon, organist, custodian, Sunday school teacher and anything else that needed doing. Sunday school seaside outings were an essential part of the village and Les would make sure that all the youngsters had a seat on the bus whether they had half a crown or not, skilfully organising it not to be on the same day as the Church Sunday

school outing - this way the children had two outings.

Les was a kind, mild, gentle man, always well dressed and groomed, a devoted husband and a much loved father and grandfather. The four score years, plus, that he lived are the years that most concern the Llancarfan Society and we are very fortunate that he frequently contributed to our Newsletter.

We shall miss him very much, his daughters Margaret and Jennifer will miss him but I am sure that we will all feel proud that the people of Llancarfan were able to share the life of one of God's gentlemen - LESLIE HOPKIN GRIFFITHS - GRATEFUL THANKS.

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LLANCARFAN 1937-45 by Jeffery Thomas

One of my earliest recollections of life was sitting in a van with my parents Norman and Mary Thomas and baby brother Vernon, moving from Beddau to live at Gowlog Farm. I was three at the time and the year was probably 1937. We lived at Gowlog for 8 years and returned to Llwynocrwn Farm, Beddau in 1945 at the end of the war.

I do not remember much of those first few years in Llancarfan but I have memories of war being declared and the anxiety which that caused my parents and grandfather Johnny Griffiths who had retired from farming and was living with us. Maternal grandmother Joan, (nee Jervis) had died in 1935. I suppose when I reached school age that events began to make indelible impressions upon me. No doubt time has blunted the accuracy of these recollections and I apologise for any aberrations but here for what they are worth are some of my memories of school life in Llancarfan.

My first teacher was Connie Griffiths who was related to my mother so she took a special interest in Vernon and me - we even went to her cottage for lunch with the Treguff boys. As I progressed through the classes I was taught by Miss (or was it Mrs?) Fowler and the headmaster, Mr Samuel. My closest friends were Waldo Edwards, Bob Morgan, David Saviour and Peter Newton while other contemporaries were the heirs and heiresses to Llanveithin, Garnllwyd, Pancross, Wren's Castle, Treguff, Pencarreg, Aberogwrn and several other farms in the district. I wonder how many of them are members of the Society?

Our favourite pastimes at school were football on the sports field, marbles, conkers in season and racing "Matchbox" cars along the school wall. Classroom time does not stir any significant memories but I can recall growing vegetables with some pride in the small garden plot allocated to me, the nature rambles around the village, sports days in the field near Broomwell (or Brummel as we called it) The dread of having to perform at St David's Day school concerts also made a lasting impression.

Those were war years and so the school was prepared for enemy attack with all the windows taped and solid brick walls built outside each classroom window. I remember the

air raid warnings and suppose we had a shelter but I can't visualise it.

After school we trooped down to the village to wait for our bus and as that was often late, passed our time by jumping off the bridge onto the riverbank with raincoats streaming behind us - imitating Mr X the hero of one of the popular comics of the time. Having worked up an appetite and if the pocket money permitted we then indulged in a warm, fresh sixpenny batch bought from Tudor Liscombe.

I could ramble on for pages but to minimise boredom I will sign off now, and if I get the thumbs up from the editor will contribute some memories of life at Gowlog to a later edition.

Notes: Jeffery wonders about his contemporaries as present day members of the Society - is it time to circulate another membership list? He also queried his own memory of "Matchbox" toy cars - possibly these did not appear until after the war and he remembers Dinky toys? Anyone remember?

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The colloquial pronunciation "Brummel" is interesting, partly because Vale vernacular turns Bonvilston into Bovelston and also because earlier maps render Broomwell as Brimwell - any suggestions about the origin and meaning of the name?

Gwynne Liscombe has previously recalled the Anderson shelters around the village but no one has mentioned a school air-raid shelter - any memories of it's location (and illegal uses) from members?

PLANNING PERMISSIONS

Llancarfan seems to be torn-apart by struggles over planning permission at the moment. In addition to the application by the Land Authority for Wales, opposite New Mill, there is another suggestion for an area extending behind Hillside and Chapel House. Several domestic applications are also in the pipeline for appeals. Our Membership Secretary accurately said "planning equals sadness". The Barry and District News of 14 July reported that the Vale Planning Director had charged County Council Planners with blatantly disregarding their own policies in proposals for "open countryside" development at Llancarfan. Councillor Hilary James said "The beauty of the country lane south of

Bethlehem Chapel would be destroyed --." So it goes on.

SNIPPETS

The documents which Des Williams of Rumney sent with his enquiry about Mary Russel and Levi Jones (Newsletter 48) contain one or two interesting items £2.2s (two guineas) per annum as a cottage rent in 1843 takes us aback in these days when a pint of beer can cost as much! The price of two thousand spars (hazel pegs) for thatching was four shillings, and payment for rethatching of the cottage, four shillings and eightpence! In the sale of her effects the most expensive item was a chest of drawers at £2.0s and a feather bed at £1.8s.4d. - interestingly, the bed was sold by weight (40lb). The total of the sale was £5.14s.5d. from which was deducted "To Beer at the Sale" 4s.0d.!

Des Williams has also sent us some more papers relating to his family - one, a copy from the 1841 Tithe Map, refers to the orchard of Bethlehem Chapel as belonging to Sir Thomas Aubrey - an interesting link with the account in Les Griffiths' obituary (above). Les' home, Fern Cottage, was originally part of the Aubrey Estate.

Recently, reading a Pembrokeshire Coast National Park leaflet on the North Pems village of Nevern, the editor discovered that St Brynach, who founded the Church in Nevern, "-- was fed by angels, had stags to drive his coach and a wolf to herd his cows." The emblem on the Llancarfan Society tie and scarf is related to the legendary white stags which helped St Cadoc haul timber to build the monastery in Llancarfan and after which the brook, Nant Carfan, might have been named.

One of those coincidences. In the last Newsletter we referred to Hafod, Thomas Johnes huge estate in Cardiganshire which was finally abandoned in the 1930's. A few days after the Newsletter was printed, the Western Mail and HTV News carried the story that a thousand acres of the Hafod estate including

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the area occupied by the house are to be restored to their former treecovered glory as a memorial to the advanced silvicultural ideas which allowed Johnes to convert upland sheepwalk into his Shangri-la.

ROAD VERGES

During the annual dinner Joan Raum commented on the enormous damage which is being done to the grass verges and hedgebanks of the Vale by vehicles being driven over or into them. This is something which has crept up on us as lorries have become more powerful, wheels bigger in diameter and four-wheel drive is no longer confined to a few agricultural vehicles. The result is that many habitats of rare plants have recently been reduced to seas

of mud or cliff-faces of crumbling soil, the plants and animals gone for ever. Incidentally, this abuse also gives the local authorities huge bills for reinstatement of road verges. Guess who pays?

What can we do? Well, a moment's patience would not go amiss - if you drive a 4x4 or even fancy yourself as a stunt-driver, don't slither all over the verges to save a few seconds (what will you do with the time anyway?). Farmers - please tell your drivers not to clamber up the banks as a modern tractor can - your fathers couldn't do so much damage with their tiny lowpowered Fergis which would probably have rolled over anyway, but a three or four foot bank seems no obstacle to some of the giants now using lanes which originated in times of pack-horses and horse-drawn waggons. History tells us that the road surfaces were then a morass but at least the hedgebanks were relatively safe.

SCRUFFY LLANCARFAN

In a way related to the last item was the following note which arrived amongst all of the papers which Phil Watts forwarded to me after the last Committee meeting:- As I write, I am reminded that there should be a followup to Gwynne Liscombe's report that the village was looking scruffy and in need of a tidy-up, perhaps needing something like an entry to the Best Kept Village competition to inspire people with a little enthusiasm. As a Society it is probably a matter which we have to accept with regret, but if any members have other ideas for remedying the situation please let us know: at least it can be discussed at a Committee meeting and we could be a forum or platform from which the matter could be highlighted.

On the same sad subject, the Tennis Club Autumn Newsletter carries a report of vandalism: cutting of the court netting, graffiti and damage to school property across the road. We can bemoan all these things but do nothing, or each of us can keep an individual eye on property and collect the odd item of rubbish as we go about our daily tasks.

OTTERS?

It was thought that an otter had been seen at Pickett's Bridge near Broadhayes. Ruth Watts saw an animal that looked like an otter scurry across the garden at Abernant and Arwyn Rees saw a similar animal on his farm but offers the explanation that it might be a mink. Mink have been seen and shot

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in the area. If the sightings prove to be otters this is a setting back of the clock to the time when they were common in the Valleys and Vale. Today their nearest homes are usually in West and Mid-Wales.

NEWS OF THE PARISH, MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Bob and Sue Watts who used to live at Timbers (next door to Ty To Maen) were recently featured in the Western Mail. Bob, formerly a barrister in Cardiff, and his wife, have moved to France where they are renovating a vineyard, the Chateau de Seuil, near Bordeaux. Currently producing some 20,000 bottles a year of a Graves sec, Bob and Sue market locally through the Noble Grape, Birchgrove, Cardiff. Our best wishes to T. Robert, Susan Watts et fille in their venture.

We hear from Barry that Mr and Mrs Stanley, formerly of Sycamore Cottage, Llanbethery are in poor health. We wish them both a speedy recovery. Until he retired and left Llanbethery, "Stan" was a familiar part of Llancarfan life and Jess was a staunch supporter of many village activities.

Calvert Harris has suffered a stroke but is making good progress which we hope continues.

Len Fairfax continues to visit sick members for a chat and to bring some cheer, despite not feeling so good himself. Len reports that Geoff and Betty Martin are now in better health: we were all disappointed not to see them at the Abernant Barbecue this year.

We hear from Portsmouth that Ron Thomas, husband of Mary (formerly Watts, of Abernant), has gone into hospital for an operation. He has been troubled by sciatica but the difficulty now appears to be a circulatory problem needing surgery. We wish him a speedy recovery but we shall not be sending Len Fairfax!!

The Village Hall Committee is disappointed that the recently refurbished Hall is not receiving enough use. The number of bookings is quite low and the cost of heating is causing some concern. It is feared that an increased charge will only serve to deter further use. We have been approached, as a successful organising body to assist in some way. The Society committee has responded positively and no doubt we shall have more to report later.

LADIES LLANCARFAN SOCIETY SQUARES AND SCARVES

A further order of 12 squares and 12 long scarves has been made and they will be available shortly, price £5.50, either from Secretary, Sheila Mace or from Phil and Ruth Watts, Abernant.

NARCISSI - a note from Phil Watts

Following last years successful plantings the Society has purchased another two sacks of narcissi and daffodils. Planting requests have been received from Moulton, Penmark, Llantrithyd and Llanbethery (the last has been done thanks to George Wood, Mollie Ranger, Roy Booker and Mick Mace). Does anyone else want bulbs for planting in public places elsewhere in the parish?

We are also hoping to have the Community Council's permission to plant snowdrops and crocuses under the trees leading to the main door of the Church - incidentally we are still receiving reports of the use of the seat which was placed there in memory of Joan Harrhy - it is worth reflecting that she was the first to respond to my initial letter to the Gem.

CHURCH ROOF AND FINANCES

In the last Newsletter we mentioned the parlous condition of the Church roof. Part of the Thanksgiving Sermon was given over to a pep talk by the Archdeacon of Llandaff, the Venerable David Lee, on the state of repair of the roof and how important it was that the church should survive in Llancarfan despite the work of the Death Watch Beetles. The church has survived for many generations but he emphasised that we are the chosen generation to make sure that the building remains intact for future generations.

As a contribution to solving this problem a musical entertainment was held at Fontygary, arranged by the church organising committee of Joan Thomas, Beryl Price and Sam Smith. Music was supplied by a group calling themselves "Half Tidy", comprising farmers from the Cowbridge area and some former members of Cowbridge Choir, led by Philip Bradshaw, well known in the Vale as a veterinary surgeon with David Llewellyn's Park Group. Philip, incidentally, attended our first dinner in the Fox and Hounds. In these cost conscious times they are to be congratulated on contributing their services free: a very successful evening raised £857.

BELL RINGING by Phil Watts

We are happy to report that practising and training is continuing and there is life in the tower still! In past years we were reminded by John Etherington that the level of his bungalow was the same as that of the only opening in the bell tower! He used to say that he went to the Fox and Hounds when we started and waited for us to join him for a drink! It is well known that bellringers need to be lubricated as do our bells. Ringers are Tony

John, Linda John, Steve Powell, Georgina Powell, Jane Story, Graham Brain (until his recent illness, now fortunately past) and Joanne Brain. Phil Watts has been joined by David Gay and Tony Woods (Bonvilston) in giving instruction and assistance. Our ringers have been privileged to have the use of the bells in St Mary's Church, Bonvilston.