



## **LLANCARFAN SOCIETY**

### **Newsletter 58    December 1993**

The second of the Annual Dinners was held in early November, attended by our President, Professor Sir Keith Thomas. The Village Hall was packed to capacity and a good time was had by all. Again we have to thank all those whose help made the evening such a success and the caterers, Evans of Porth, for an enjoyable meal. A report of Sir Keith's address appears below.

Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to you all. If you want something to do during the holiday, what about writing for the Newsletter - we are running short of contributions (again!).

#### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Sadly, membership renewal is due in January, 1994 and new members will be welcomed. The charge will remain at five pounds per mailing address or two pounds fifty for Senior Citizens living alone. A renewal slip is enclosed with this Newsletter. We are circulating newcomers to the area with invitations to join - if you know anyone who would like to be a member, please let Phil Watts know.

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

**CHRISTMAS TREE AND CAROLS:** The lights on the tree will be switched-on to the accompaniment of carols on 11 December at 7.00 p.m.

**DUCK EGG RACE:** Gwynne Liscombe is organising another Duck Egg Race on Boxing Day at lunchtime, in aid of charity. Members of the Society will be assisting as usual and the now traditional tug-of-war through the ford will also add spice to lunch at the Fox and Hounds.

**WHIST DRIVE:** The next Whist Drive will be on Friday, 25 February at the Village Hall.

**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, Llancafán, Barry, South Glamorgan, CF62 3AD. Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to the Secretary, Sheila Mace, Pel y Dryn, Llanbethery, Barry, South Glamorgan, CF62 3AN. Arrangements for visits to sick members: Len Fairfax, Summit View, Aberthin, Cowbridge, S. Glam. (Cowbridge

772654).

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SIR KEITH THOMAS' ADDRESS: ANNUAL DINNER - NOVEMBER 6TH 1993 - by

Phil Watts Keith came to live at Pancross Farm in 1935 when his father started farming there. He stayed until 1950 when he left for the army and did not return except for the odd visit. As a youngster he used two buildings in the village - the School for education and the Church Hall, now the Village hall, for recreation.

Keith described how, during his journey to the village he would pass Mrs Sweet's house, Johnnie Jones' sheds, then Les Griffith's and on to Johnnie Jones' house, past Maurice Griffiths' then up the hill to school. Everyone was known to everyone else: there was no need to use the name of the property - just give the surname of the occupant.

At the school there were three teachers - Miss Connie Griffiths, Miss Morfydd Thomas and Mr George Davies. A record was kept of daily attendance on a blackboard high on the wall. The number was 48.

The journey to the Church Hall was not so frequent but just as rewarding. Whist Drives were very popular at that time, when young and old would sit down and play together. He felt he had been cheated if the Whist finished after 18 hands to accommodate the dancers and dance bands.

Another dominating feature of the village was Pancross Wood. The high elm trees each with several rook's nests, the constant cawing and fluttering of the occupants and the high winds making the trees creak and groan gave the village a constant source of life.

On a quieter note, the river meandered through the bottom of the valley with its many pools of trout. The river was always an attraction to youngsters looking for bullheads under the many stones, minnows in open water and there was always the occasional eel. There was much talk of tickling trout in the village by the more capable inhabitants. Some made use of the deep pools below Cliff.

As a country boy he knew where the best primroses grew and where to find violets; also the best mushroom fields. Bill and George Tucker showed him where the best rabbit fields were and how to stalk rabbits. Bill would sometimes catch a rabbit with his hands. Further afield, pheasants could be tracked down - they belonged to Boothby Fonmon Estate but then one had to be quiet and keep low!!

The houses are now different and the people are not quite the same. Times have changed, transport has changed. The three times a week bus exists but not in such great demand. Cricket teams had to be met at the bus stop then shown the way to the ground and then by that time very often the home side had disappeared.

Many of those years of growing up were war years. As well as the drone of night bombers there were instances of daylight raids. There was one memorable occasion when the school field was being used for a tea and sports: a damaged plane jetisoned its bomb-load on the outskirts of Llancarfan near Penonn. Those war years gave us shortages and rationing but also many good times.

The memories of a boy growing up in Llancarfan still exist today because, to encourage

himself to sleep, he often recalls the slow journey down Pancross Hill past the houses into the middle of the village and up the hill to school - lasting memories.

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Keith closed by saying that he was very proud to be our President and thanked the Society for asking him to hold office. He has promised to attend future dinners and judging by the reception he received we all look forward to that very much.

#### JOTTINGS PROMPTED BY THE DINNER by Phil Watts

In order to encourage our President to attend again, perhaps we should organize a cricket match followed by a Whist Drive before a dinner of local pheasant and trout!

A member was heard to say that, to pass the examination for Grammar School, marks were given out of 300. Keith obtained 297 losing 3 marks for bad writing!

What are the advantages of a country upbringing as described by Keith. Does it produce the following:- a sense of humour; a sense of appreciation; some common sense?

Keith mentions George Davies schoolmaster. Most of his pupils will recall that he rarely used the cane but had a habit of nudging uncooperative pupils with a protruding knuckle in a closed fist to the pupil's arm. This had the effect of triggering the memory button!

#### CHIMNEY SWEEPING IN FRANCE by Barbara Milhuisen

Recently I swept my chimney. It should have been done at the end of last winter but I had not bought my brushes then. They were obtained from a mobile hardware shop, and consist of red plastic rods with two heads, one nylon and the other a composite metal.

I have a variety of chimneys each with their own chapeaux (cowl). The first is fixed into my Godin stove which heats a primitive central heating system. It burns mainly wood but it does help if it is supplemented with a kind of coke, but I have to make a round trip of 40 miles to buy it. This chimney has quite a small circumference. My main chimney is over an original fireplace which I renewed with the proceeds when I sold my car. It has very good access.

To the room behind I transferred my wood burning stove with it's own chimney, knocked a hole in the wall and inserted that chimney into the original in the other room. All worked well until the sweeping.

The stove chimney is demountable so I take it down and move it outside and clean it there. It was almost closed up with the residue of the damp wood I had burned. Then came the main chimney, again the same problem, great lumps of what looked like congealed tar and my rods weren't long enough. There was nothing for it but to climb inside and bash away. I have a white and brown dog which follows me everywhere. Neither of us was white for very long.

While up the chimey I remembered childhood experiences with chimneys in Llancarfan. My mother used to sweep our chimney as everyone usually only had a coalfire. She was doing well until the brush and my mother were both stuck up the chimney. I was called up and pulled my mother down and sent up again

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but failed to dislodge the brush. Then my little brother had a go. (He assures me in the years following he took over the job and became quite accomplished).

My mother then said "Go and tell Melvyn Morgan if he wants his brushes back he will have to come and get them". Mr Morgan duly arrived with his ladders, and the brushes emerged onto the roof.

My grandmother was also a very independent lady and maybe she had the best idea. Once a year she would deliberately set fire to her chimney. Fortunately the house is still standing. (It was called Ford Cross then).

I have learned my lesson. My new wood has arrived and is presently being cut into 13" pieces, stacked and put into the barn for 2 years. It is bought by the pie (1 metre x 1 metre x 1 metre). The local woods are coppiced and most people in the country have their own area of woodland.

I often light fires in my garden. My neighbour has his own vineyard and just loves producing alcohol in many guises. The wine is quite legal as he declares same to the douane - the other is not. He has a still which my husband collaborated with him in making.

One day I was walking my dog downwind from the barn of Monsieur -----: there was a distinct aroma of something brewing. I realised if I lit a fire it could disguise what was going on over the fence. The next day there was a knock at my door. In staggered Monsieur ----- clutching a few bottles. Usually when he visits he has a whisky, this time he declined because in producing the Eau de Vie he has to keep tasting, he said he had been doing this for 3 days. Now when he is operating his still he climbs over my fence with old tyres and creates a terrible stink and plenty of smoke to disguise the fact he is producing enough of the hard stuff to supply all of Ariege. I am glad this smoke is not going up my chimney.

P.S. I have a wood burning stove waiting in the wings which came from Abernant. Also have some footsteps made by Jim Cannon some 40 years ago for my mother and step-father (I think a wedding present).

I would dearly love to take to France a wooden gate preferably made by Mr David Griffiths when he lived at Glan-yr-Afon. So if anyone has one and would care to part with it I can offer in exchange a holiday in France with free chimney sweeping lessons thrown in.

#### SWEEPING ABERNANT BUNGALOW CHIMNEY by Phil Watts

Country house chimney sweeping can be quite an experience. The normal brush head very often not broad enough to bring the soot down from the full circumference of the chimney. At Abernant we augmented the brush head with a stout stiff holly bush and this proved very effective.

However, sweeping Abernant Bungalow chimney was quite a routine operation and could be accomplished very easily in a short time. It was decided to sweep the chimney at 6 o'clock one morning before the hours of daylight, before breakfast and before the children

went to school but we had not allowed for errors. I knew how many rods it took to reach the top and then relied on the sudden surge when the brush poked through the top of the chimney (no child to warn as it was still dark). Five rods used, then six, then seven, eight, -5-

doubt in the mind how many rods did it take, nine and ten: convinced now there was a mistake in the counting or the length of the chimney. Only one thing for it to look outside. To my horror the brush and rods were coming through the lounge window. Have you tried pulling rods back down a chimney when they are bent over on to the roof? The next thing, roof ladders on to the roof and disconnect brush and rods at chimney height. "Another fine mess you have got us in Stanley" (Laurel and Hardy).

I don't think we tried chimney sweeping in the dark after that!

When we were first married and lived in Cardiff, our neighbour said he would sweep our chimney. I had never swept a chimney - not a town one anyway - so allowed him to do it. We had just had the room decorated and it was looking good. But our neighbour failed to get the brush to the top, he got more soot on himself than in the grate, his trousers were covered in soot and everytime he bent down to pick up a rod his buttocks touched our beautiful wallpaper, giving us a series of black marks round the wall 3ft high. I soon learned how to sweep a chimney!!

## SCHOOLS IN WALES 1500-1900

In Newsletter 56 we wrote about the school which occupied part of the Church House until some time in the latter half of the last century. The details came from *Schools in Wales* by M. Seaborne. In reading this book, one or two other items of interest were found, relating to schools in the Vale:-

Merthyr Mawr - a thatched, L-shaped, schoolhouse was built for John Nichol in 1837. It has now been converted into two private houses which originally comprised a schoolroom and teacher's dwelling.

In the Vale of Glamorgan it appears that the adaptation of Church Houses as schools at first resulted in fewer National Schools being purpose-built. The earliest of the National Schools in the Vale is at Cadoxton near Barry (1847). Interestingly, the local community in Cadoxton had not been disrupted by religious differences: it was reported that "the Dissenters had assisted in haulage for the new school and would send their children."

Seaborne describes the ventilation system of the board-school at Llanelli which utilised wooden shafts discharging stale air to a central turret, a method of ventilation used in many schools at the time (1889). I am reminded that Llancarfan C. P. School still had metal ventilation cowls on the peak of the roof when I first came to the village in the 1960's but these have now been removed. I am not sure how these functioned but they were certainly common on schools of the period all over Britain.

The Central Welsh Board (for education) described Barry County School as having "one of the most excellent sites in the country." The view from the site, across the Bristol Channel to Somerset and Devon was and is magnificent.

The Llancarfan Church House was also used at one time as a Workhouse or Poorhouse under the provisions of the Poor Laws. I believe this function overlapped with its use as a school but quite how is less clear. Does anyone know for certain?

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#### VALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS STRIKE: 1919 by John Etherington

Despite having lived in Llancarfan for nearly a quarter of a century and working in South Wales for about 30 years, I was quite unaware that this strike had occurred. Most of us know that the two decades between the wars were times of industrial turmoil but how many realise that agricultural workers were also involved in a militant struggle for their rights. We have commented before that it is all too easy to see the past in a glow of nostalgia which might not be recognised by those who lived the hard life of the early industrial countryside.

The first move toward the strike followed a meeting of farm labourers at Llantwit Major on 3 June, 1919. James Kennet, as local secretary, handed in notices of mass withdrawal of labour on Saturday 21 June. A meeting between representatives of the National Union of Agricultural Workers and the National Farmers Union failed to arrive at an agreement and the decision to act on the notices was taken at a further meeting of labourers on that same Saturday evening.

The reason for the confrontation stemmed from social and working conditions which were intolerable and caused a contemporary writer to describe them as "the tyranny of the countryside." Wages were low, despite grindingly long hours, increasing mechanisation was reducing the need for labour and the long-established tradition of the tied-cottage completed the farmers' whiphand. The tied cottage, particularly in the anglicized areas of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and south Pembrokeshire, bound most married workers to an employer and yet the tenancy was subject to a week's notice!

Early in 1918, David Rees, a former mayor of Aberafan, was appointed as the organizer for Wales of the National Agricultural and Rural Workers Union. Later in the same month he addressed a meeting at the White Lion Hotel, Llantwit and James Kennett, a farm labourer at Boverton, proposed the establishment of a local branch. Kennett's employer was David Jenkins of Boverton, a farmer and leading official of the National Farmers' Union. Shortly after the meeting at the White Lion, Jenkins dismissed James Kennett and gave him a week's notice to quit his tied cottage. Prior to this, Jenkins had publicly claimed that farmers did not disapprove of the men's organization!

Kennett continued to undertake his union duties and resolutions were passed by several



branches in the Llantwit area pressing a claim for 50s. instead of 33s. 6d. for a 45 hour week with double-time during harvest. Militancy was no doubt increased by the preceding announcement that farmers' profits had risen from 9s. 6d. to 33s. 2d. per acre during the course of the War.

After considerable haggling, farmers' representatives on the district wages committee adopted a new minimum rate of 41s. 6d. for a 54 hour week but refused to consider a special overtime rate for the hay harvest. It was this deadlock which prompted the meeting on 3 June and ultimately led to the fourweek withdrawal of labour by over 300 men during late June and July.

At first the farmers were adamant, hoping to wear-down the strikers but, by the end of the third week were probably experiencing difficulty with the harvest. Rather suddenly an NFU subcommittee was elected, given plenary powers and the strike was settled with a guaranteed 54s. per week and special harvest payments - a remarkable victory for the agricultural workers of the Vale.

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The victory was not long-lived as it was overtaken by the ending of the postwar boom. In many areas of Wales, wage agreements were ignored and men even sought permits to work for less than the statutory minimum. By the midtwenties, wages had fallen back to about 31s. per week, at which level they remained, not to rise substantially until World War II increased farm profits once again.

Information for this article came from *The Rural Revolt that Failed* by D. L. Pretty, University of Wales Press (1989). The dust cover of the book shows James Kennet with his 16 year old son in the front row of the victorious strikers outside the New White Hart, Llantwit. There are still Kennetts in the local 'phone book - any relatives, I wonder? Probably none of our members have personal recollections from so long ago, but does anyone remember father or grandfather talking of these events and their influence on farms in Llancarfan?

#### ARTHUR, LLANCARFAN AND LEGEND

In Newsletter 57 we talked about Caradog of Llancarfan and the legends of Arthur. There is a further connection: Lifris of Llancarfan wrote a *Life of St Cadoc* in the late 11th century. This refers to Arthur and treats him as a less than heroic figure, a blend between the local leader, of Welsh tradition, and the great ruler of later legend. Lifris did not think highly of Arthur - he is first presented, dicing for money with Kay and Bedivere on a hilltop where he attempts to ravish a fugitive girl until dissuaded by his companions. Later, he reappears involved in a quarrel over blood-money and obstinately refuses to accept any but cattle of a certain colour in payment. This bit of tyranny was thwarted by a miracle worked by St Cadoc.

Note:- Some scholars believe that Llancarfan was the home of a learned clerical family, one of whose members, Lifris, wrote an immense Latin Life of Cadog ---. (Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales).

#### NEWS OF MEMBERS. FRIENDS AND PLACES

We collect items of local information from all sorts of sources - the editor sees the Barry and District News each week and the Western Mail every two days or so. A lot of items which would interest members are probably missed please send any local news items in press cuttings etc. to John Etherington when they catch your eye. Word of mouth information is also acceptable unless it would be libelous in print!

The Barry and District News (18 November) featured several columns and a photograph headed "Work experience for a Llancarfan puppy". Troy is a golden retriever who was bred by Vanessa Newton, Old Mill, and is now being "puppy walked" on behalf of Dogs for the Disabled. He is the third puppy donated by Vanessa to this charity which provides dogs mainly for people in wheelchairs. Troy will be taught to fetch and carry anything from telephones to letters and papers as well as opening and closing doors, operating light switches and barking for attention.

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The same edition of Barry and District News reported the first of the Llancarfan Markets held at the Village Hall. This was a great success with local stallholders and customers from all over the Vale. Markets will be held at regular intervals on the first Saturday of each month from 10 to 12 a.m. People are requested to take-up stalls - details from the Hall Committee.

Last month we mentioned the Footpath Survey which the Community Council has to complete during the next two years. It is said that there are approximately 275 miles of footpath in the parish - a distance comparable to Fishguard to London! Every footpath will have to be walked, reporting on the condition of entrances, exits, stiles, gates and fences. There is a lot of form filling to be done. The Community Council is looking for volunteers to assist in this task - please contact Joan Scott-Quelch, Penylan House, Llancarfan (0446 781366).

A newsletter circulated by Brian Pullen, Llancarfan Co-ordinator of Neighbourhood Watch, lists the usual opportunist crimes such as thefts from vehicles, stolen bicycles and so on, against which we can all try to be more vigilant. Encouragingly for the Watch scheme he also reports an attempted burglary at his own home, Nauvoo, which was foiled by the barking of Steve Powell's dog at High Lanterns, across the road. Steve and Georgina were awakened, switched on their outside lights and frightened-off the thieves. A noisy dog



seems to be a useful companion nowadays.

We should have reported in an earlier Newsletter that St Cadoc's Church is now holding a monthly prize-draw. The draw is held after the service on the first Sunday of each month. Tickets from Elizabeth Harris, 2 Decca Radar Station, Llancarfan. First and second prizes £25 and £10, the balance going to Church funds.

We have had a letter from Betty Tobin of New Brunswick, Canada, who is trying to trace information on her mother's family, Richard and Cecila Lloyd: some of their children were buried at the Wesleyan Chapel (now Whitechapel). Rose Lloyd and John Gregory were married at the chapel in April 1926, the first marriage ever held there even though it was built in 1814. Betty has tried unsuccessfully to find the Wesleyan Chapel records - the Glamorgan Archive has nothing nor is there anything in the Mormon files despite "almost every Chapel in South Wales" being there. We have often commented on the need to see these records - does anyone know where they may be?