



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 62 June-July 1994

"In the peaceful valley of the Carfan River in the Vale of Glamorgan stands the beautiful and unspoiled village of Llanccarfán. If you visit it you will feel as if nothing could stir it into activity. You will hear only the singing of the birds and you will begin to understand the silence of the lovely countryside which is now being destroyed so quickly and in so many places. (Stan Awbery 1956).

What would he think now? In the intervening years the southerly view has changed, with a larger cement works and the building of Aberthaw-B power station. The wartime Rhoose airfield has grown into an international airport and very recently its giant service-hangar has replaced the south-eastern horizon. From high ground in the parish the wind turbines of Taff-Ely are visible and they may soon be closer: in this Newsletter we report a planning application for four turbines on a site near Llanbethery. If nothing else, Stan Awbery would have admitted he was only too right in saying that the countryside was being destroyed quickly. On a brighter note, the Society is flourishing - after the very successful May Day Walk and the Barbecue, Phil Watts reports that our membership remains healthy, numbers now standing at 174 mailing addresses with just a handful of outstanding subscriptions.

BARBECUE 1994

The Society has been blessed with good weather for most of its functions since we found our wings in 1987. The barbecue this year was no exception: it was dry, calm and warm but there was just sufficient veil of cloud over the sun to keep us all from frying.

By the kind invitation of Arwyn and Margaret Rees we gathered in the garden of Penonn Farm with that wonderful view of the village spread-out 200 feet below. This view has changed little since Margaret's childhood at Penonn, which she wrote about in the last Newsletter, as most of the new houses are not visible from here.

As the first guests arrived, an array of charcoal grills were well alight with a seemingly enormous array of kebabs, sausages, spare ribs and home-made beefburgers sizzling away. Chefs were Russel Watts, Roy Booker, host Arwyn Rees and Christine Preece whose efforts should be applauded: they managed to cook for some 100 guests with not too much queuing. The salad table looked in imminent danger of collapse under the weight of contributions from a host of kind lady-members of the Society (despite the fact that we always solicit the help in these words I have always thought it a bit sexist - I bet at least some men made a salad? - shame on you if not).

The food won universal acclaim and the bar ran smoothly in the expert hands of Joyce Andrews, Derek Higgs and Alan Taylor - none of them will mind my saying - professionals from both sides of the bar in the Fox. I have entered the usual trap of naming names but there were so many others - Val Watts sold raffle tickets as successfully as ever but everywhere there were comings and goings by all our other helpers, fetching and carrying and making sure we were all happy. Thank you all - perhaps we need a long-service medal awarded for help at 25 Society functions - there would be a lot of recipients by now.

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DATES FOR THE DIARY

ANNUAL DINNERS: These are on Saturday 24 September and Friday 4 November, cost £10.00. A booking form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

WHIST: A Whist Drive will be held on Friday, October 21 at 7.30 p.m, in 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, Llancarfan, 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).

A WIND POWER STATION AT LLANBETHERY?

A planning application has been submitted for four wind turbines on land to the south of Llanbethery - each 3-bladed turbine would be 175 feet in height to the tip of the rotor (115 feet to the rotor axis). The promoters of the scheme point out that the turbines will not be visible from a great distance and, from Llanbethery they will be seen against the backdrop of the existing Power Station and power transmission towers (which are of comparable height to the turbines). They also draw attention to the relatively low noise emission from the turbines and the fact that they are situated under the flight-path to the two adjacent airfields.

More comprehensive information is available in a document which may be consulted at the South Glamorgan County Council offices.

Probably there will be some strong views on this matter - what do readers think?

THE WAR YEARS AT GOWLOG by Jeff Thomas, Masterton, New Zealand.

I thought the above might be an interesting subject for my annual contribution to the newsletter and especially appropriate in this the 50th year since the D-Day landings.

Although I can't honestly say that I remember Neville Chamberlain's Declaration of War I do have lasting impressions of the anxiety which it caused and the despondency of the radio reports as the Nazi's gained control of Europe. Later of course that changed to pride as the allies turned the tables and began their advances through Europe and North Africa - those are the best memories.

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The Battle of Britain pilots were my boyhood heroes and their exploits had the same effect on me as an 8 year old that the stars of sporting arenas have on small boys today. Names such as Douglas Bader, Alan Defre, Sailor Malan, Stanford Tuck and Johnny Johnson were revered and my favourite book "So Few" was an account of the fighter squadrons' incredible achievements, the title of which was of course taken from the most famous of all Churchillian speeches. Much later I had the great honour of introducing my number one hero Douglas Bader at a London Dinner of the Commonwealth Golfing Society.

In Llancarfan the L.D.V., or was it the Home Guard?, was formed and various defensive strategies against air attack and invasion put in place. Do you remember the barrage balloons like enormous elephants in the sky, the apprehension of the air raid warnings then the relief of the all clear sirens, the searchlights flicking through the night sky, the dull thud of the anti-aircraft guns (Big Bertha at Aberthaw or perhaps Rhoose), and the eerie light of incendiary bombs?

I've made it sound as if we were in the front line but of course we were relatively safe as it was the cities which bore the brunt of the German bombing raids. Still they were pretty exciting times for me.

On a remote farm we watched from a distance and were inconvenienced mainly by rationing and the limitations of the coupon system. Although on a farm food rationing did not have the same impact as in the towns we did miss those items which quickly became luxuries and I think of chocolates, ice-creams, fruit etc. What a thrill when mum managed to get a bunch of bananas or brought home a box of dates as a Christmas treat or a cake of chocolate which was distributed at the rate of two squares per week. Clothing and petrol restrictions certainly clipped our wings and ensured that "our journey was really necessary".

The blackout too was a hassle trying to ensure that no light escaped from the house and having to cover the car headlights with black discs with a small slit allowing just sufficient illumination to follow the road. Must have been very tricky navigation for my father returning from evening visits to Charlie at the Red lion or Nelly at the Green Dragon with

vision impaired in more ways than one.

One of Vern's and my hobbies was collecting shrapnel and burned out incendiary canisters which landed on the farm. I remember huge chunks of tortured metal from exploding shells and from bombs which were way off target such as the landmine which landed in the river making an enormous crater which later became a popular fishing and swimming spot. The story going the rounds at the time, probably originated by that great humourist Dilwyn Griffiths, was that the explosion catapulted a trout onto the front lawn of the Talbots.

A precaution we took was to sleep in a downstairs bedroom beneath the Granary which was part of the barn adjoining the farmhouse. The blast from that landmine hurled a heavy cast iron weighing scales from one side of the Granary to the other making such a clatter that we thought the barn had been hit.

The most spectacular and the most tragic event at Gowlog was late in the war when the Canadian pilot of a spitfire apparently blacked out while in a steep dive and crashed into what we called the pool field. The plane cartwheeled across the field throwing the Merlin engine over a haymow and scattering that magnificent machine over a wide area. I recall finding a magazine of bullets

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hundreds of yards from the point of impact and for months afterwards we came across bits of metal, clothing and the pilot. The wreckage was under armed guard for some days and I learned more four letter words from those airmen than I have before or since.

I hope I have rekindled a few memories for you of those days, some good and, no doubt many bad but more importantly perhaps some of my recollections will prompt some discussion in future newsletters.

WIND POWER STATIONS - a letter from John Etherington

Once again I am writing to myself as editor of this Newsletter so that I can present my own opinions. This time it is the vexed matter of wind power stations (they are not farms - it just sounds better).

My professional interests make it inevitable that I would favour any means of harnessing natural energy which is both free and without the pollution problems associated with burning fossil fuels or nuclear power generation. When the first large wind turbines were being tested in Wales (near Burry Port), ten or fifteen years ago, I welcomed the development.

Now I have changed my mind. There are many reasons. The first came to me when I saw the first of these "farms". On high ground, their landscape impact is immense - in itself a good reason for thinking twice before any further development but it is the simple

arithmetic of their actual worth to society which clinches my decision to oppose the siting of land-based wind turbines in Britain.

Many more than 1000 wind turbines are needed to replace one power station (one wind turbine typically generates less than one megawatt compared with several thousand megawatts from a conventional power station). Any power station so replaced is still needed for back-up in case the wind does not blow. This only ceases to apply after very many wind turbines are built and, unlike a power station, they do not create any local employment.

The main reasons for substituting wind energy for fossil fuel sources are that it is free, and produces no carbon dioxide, sulphur and nitrogen oxide pollution. This is all true but can be countered with the argument that it is impracticable to replace sufficient conventional power stations because of the huge numbers of turbines needed. To replace half of Britain's fossil fuel generating capacity would require more than 100,000 wind turbines. As I have written elsewhere:- are there sufficient windy hilltop sites in Britain?

Ineffectual investment in wind turbines would be more usefully placed in energy conservation which would reduce fossil-fuel consumption and pollution whilst eliminating the need for the wind controversy (a pity that it is less profitable for the investors). This is not "pie in the sky" - it has been done elsewhere and in this country.

It is my belief that investment in wind power is attracted almost entirely by subsidy. Wind power is heavily subsidised out of the non-fossil fuel levy (which we all pay on our fuel bills) - it is difficult for the lay person to discover what this is worth to the generating body but Countryside Guardians say nearly six times the per unit payment compared with fossil fuel. I do not know if this is correct but it is certain that any substantial subsidy is attracting investment in this area without regard for the needs of society.

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Government has already sanctioned land-based wind-power by approving the allocation of a fraction of the non-fossil fuel levy to its support. For this reason it is not possible to oppose a planning application on the grounds that wind power is of low cost-benefit. However, if you feel strongly enough to write to your M.P., the Secretary of State for Wales or the Minister for the Environment, it is important ammunition in spelling-out the failings of the technology.

My own prediction is that wind "farms" will prove to be yet another political embarrassment brought on us by a knee-jerk response to scare-stories about acid rain and global warming - important matters, but distracting attention from more immediate causes of environmental destruction.

This letter is prompted by the planning application for four turbines at Llanbethery. The applicants have cleverly exploited the fact that industry has already marred the view to the south and that that air traffic already imposes constant noise on the inhabitants. Despite this, I believe that the siting of wind turbines here cannot be justified on any criteria of

need. We are being subject to a commercial confidence trick without even the carrot of jobs.

CHIMNEY FIRES by Mavis Coles:

Phil Watts wrote about domestic items used for purposes other than that for which they were designed (Newsletter). In days past most farmhouses and country cottages could boast a shotgun which added the odd rabbits, pigeons and less legal quarry to the cooking pot. The following was found in The Domestic Handbook, author unknown (price threepence - old pence):-

Chimney on Fire: When a fire occurs, as it should not if the chimney is kept clean, shut every door and window to exclude the draught. A wet blanket, carpet, or rug held before the fireplace is also a most effectual way of excluding the air. A quantity of salt thrown on the fire in the grate of the chimney will very much assist in extinguishing the flames, by causing the soot to fall. A gun fired up the chimney while the blanket is held up, will, by the concussion of air, bring down most of the soot. If it is practical to reach the outside of the chimney, the top of it should be covered over with slates or tiles till the fire dies out.

KING ARTHUR AND THE SAINTS OF LLANCARFAN - a note from Mavis Coles

Mavis sent us the following extract from the book, All About King Arthur: In Search of the Facts by Geoffry Ashe (1969):-

The Welsh of the dark ages gave the title of "saint" very freely, as a sort of compliment. Hence, hundreds of Lives of the Saints were written, handing on whatever was said about the holy men of Wales. Some of the lives are so full of legends and miracles that they are nearly as far-fetched as Culhwch and Olwen. But there are solid facts scattered through them. And several bring Arthur in.

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These lives were written by the Abbey of Llanccarfán in Glamorganshire, where the monks passed on traditions about him. The saints whom he meets are named Cadoc, Carannog, Padarn and Gildas. Fanciful as the Lives are, they take us a step back from the fairy-tale world towards reality.

In the Life of St. Cadoc, Arthur appears twice, both times as a leader of warriors. Near the beginning he helps a princess to elope. She marries her lover, and Cadoc is their first son. Many years later, when Cadoc has become Abbot of Llanccarfán, Arthur quarrels with him

about sanctuary rights and demands cattle as recompense for a wrong which he says Cadoc has done him. The cows are duly delivered, but they change into bundles of fern. Arthur yields - understandably.

ILLEGAL SIGNS by John Etherington

A few years ago, some of you may remember that there was a local planning row concerning an illegal sign, advertising a riding stables, which was erected on the north side of the A48 near St Hilary, almost opposite to Mulligan's Restaurant. When I last passed that way the sign was still there.

It is odd to recount that this is not the first such argument about a sign at St Hilary. In 1921 Hancocks were ordered by Cowbridge Magistrates Court to remove the roadside sign pointing to The Bush Inn, St Hilary, following a successful prosecution by Glamorgan County Council for disfiguring the beauty of the surrounding countryside. A tongue-in-cheek competition, was run by the Western Mail to find an acceptable sign, of which the winner was startlingly

simple - a neatly trimmed and shaped bush carrying a lettered sign - whether this shrubby totem pole was ever built or grown is unknown.

Do any of our members know?

Information from Brian Glover's book on brewing in Wales, Prince of Ales.

POTHOLE PATROL by Phil Watts:

The phantom yellow paint sprayer who works by night. Here are two stories of the yellow paint sprayer that we can see on our country roads.

It is known that County Highway authorities mark the potholes of our roads to indicate to repairers McNiff and Curran what repairs are required.

In County Cavan in Southern Ireland, Martin Hannigan got fed up with driving around his county being given a rough ride by driving over and through so many potholes. (Daily Telegraph, April 25th). So he decided to take the matter into his own hands. At a cost of £35 per week he provided himself with a supply of yellow spray paint and he organized his own programme of pothole marking in the County. Because he had a full time job, the only time he could operate was at night. This seems to work, it brings to the attention of highway authorities the number of potholes this also alerts the repairers and the potholes get filled in. As another bit of publicity he has produced drawings of himself in an inflatable dinghy on a water-filled potholes, crossing from side to side, which he has displayed in prominent places.

The second story is of a vehicle with orange flashing light appearing on Abernant bridge in the middle of the night accompanied by the opening and closing of vehicle doors. Witnessed by Viv Price and heard by Phil Watts. After a short period of flashing light and mysterious noises the vehicle proceeded in the direction of Llancarfan. The only visible sign of any change on the bridge the next day was some yellow paint giving instructions to the road repairer.

Now we wonder if there is any connection between the phantom road sprayer of County Cavan and the vehicle with the flashing light in Llancarfan?

THE BRIDGES OF THE THAW by John Etherington

In a book called The Ancient Bridges of Wales and Western England by E. Jervoise (1936) there is a short section on the river Thaw - it is hardly surprising that it is short as Jervoise claims to have visited over 5000 bridges on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

He quotes John Leland's Itinerary in Wales, written in the mid-1500s. Leland identified the river by its Welsh name of Afon Ddawan (but spelt it Thawan) and named the following Bridges:- Ponte Vain (i.e. Cowbridge), Pont Llanblethian, Pont Landough, Pont Melinhe, Pont Kigman and Pont Newith. Jervoise says that the bridge at Llanblethian is the only remaining 16th century bridge with its four small pointed arches.

Today, Gigman Bridge is the only one of these which is named on the 1:25000 O.S. map. Pont Melinhe (Felin - mill) is at Howe Mill and Pont Newydd must carry the Barry to Llantwit road - when it was newydd I don't know.

ST CADOC

The following was found amongst an exhibition of Church School work in Haverfordwest Public Library during May 1994. It was contributed by Cilcwm Voluntary Controlled School:-

^There was once a Welsh boy called Cadoc who, more than anything, wanted to read the Bible but the Bible was in Latin and poor Cadoc couldn't understand it so he went to see a holy man in the next valley but the holy man turned Cadoc away because he could not spare the food to feed him.

Cadoc sat under a tree and prayed. While he was praying he saw a mouse carrying a grain so he caught it and tied a string around its middle. He let the mouse go and followed it by means of the string until it disappeared into a pile of stones.

Cadoc told the villagers and when they dug into the pile of stones they found a cellar underneath which held several sacks of grain - enough to feed the village and so Cadoc was now able to stay with the holy man and learn Latin.

After Cadoc left the villagers built a church on the very spot which the mouse had found."

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(Ed.) I have not met this story before and know nothing of its origin. Cadoc seems to have preceded Francis of Assisi in his empathy with animals another story is that two stags assisted him in the building of the first church in Llancarfan. These fabulous beasts are, in part, the model for our tie and headsquare. I originally read this in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (G.T.Clark 1865). Stan Awbery's *Village of a Thousand Saints* has another animal tale in which Cadoc was guided to the site for the clas by a wild boar - is the mouse story a more acceptable version of this? It is not clear what Awbery's source was - it may well have been a word of mouth story collected in the 1950's when he was researching the original articles which appeared in *Barry and District News*. I shall send a copy of this to Cilcwm School and ask where they found the original.

!!!! SEE HARD COPY - OBITUARY TO AUDREY DEERE HERE !!!!

NEWS OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PLACES

The new Vicar of Llancarfan, the Reverend Malcom Davies, will be instituted on 13 September 1994.

Overseas members Tom and Doris Lougher (nee James) are visiting from Canada and will attend one of the annual dinners.