



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 69 October - November 1995

Last month another annual dinner brought together old friends. Our President, Sir Keith Thomas was unable to attend, but sent a message to the diners which also appears as our first main item in this Newsletter.

That dinner also reminds us how fast time is passing and how successful the Society has become: Phil Watts tells me that membership stood at 191 mailing addresses in October. We have acquired some new members and only three have failed to renew this year. Who would have believed that the handful of folk who met in the Fox and Hounds one evening in 1987 would be founding such an enterprise. We shall obviously celebrate a tenth birthday fairly soon, so perhaps all these hopeful portents will set some of you writing for us to make sure that the Newsletter flourishes for the next couple of years!

A LETTER TO MEMBERS from Sir Keith Thomas, President, Llangarf Society
I am sorry once again to be unable to come to the Annual Dinner of the Llangarf Society. I know that the President of the Society is not expected to preside. But neither is he expected to be a perpetual absentee; and I greatly regret that the pressure of other commitments has turned me into that, or something very like it.

At all events, I hope that the Society will have another cheerful evening in the Village Hall which is so full for me of personal memories and associations, not all of them happy. How many Whist Drives have I attended there and how few prizes did I ever win! How many quicksteps and waltzes did I, a non-dancer watch enviously from the side! How keenly do I still remember the sniggers and hoots of the audience when the conjuring display which Gwynne Liscombe and I were rash enough to stage turned into a disastrous fiasco! These humiliations apart, my memories of Llangarf are very precious ones; and it is always a comfort to me to think of the Ivy Pool, where as children we fished vainly for trout, and Pancross Wood where we played fox and hounds ("whistle squeak or holloa, so the dogs can follow"), and the river below the school, where under the bridge you could catch bullheads. When the Llangarf Society's Newsletter arrives (and what an excellent publication it is and how much it owes to its devoted editor!), I drop everything else and spend a nostalgic half-hour reliving the 1940's.

I grew up during the Second World War and it was a regular children's sport to go out in the fields above the village to pick up the burnt-out shells of incendiary bombs dropped during the previous night's air-raid. I remember the landmine which fell between Ty To Maen and Garnllwyd and the red glow on the horizon on the nights they bombed Cardiff. Yet to us children, it seemed a time of great security and there was no sense of danger.

We roamed free and played everywhere. How lucky we were! I hope that Llancarfan is still a good place for children to grow up and I wish the Society a very good dinner and every success in the future. Long may it continue!

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DATES FOR THE DIARY

DECEMBER GATHERING OF MEMBERS: Tuesday, December 5, in the Village Hall. Mulled wine, mince pies and a log fire! Everyone welcome.

ILLUMINATION OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE: Saturday, 9 December, at 6.30 p.m.

CHILDREN'S PARTY: Saturday, 16 December, 4-6 p.m. Details from Kay or Graham Brain 781080.

NEW EVENTS PROGRAMME FOR 1996: more details later.

1 March (Friday): Whist Drive

8 March (Friday): A.G.M.

6 May (Monday): May Day Walk

14 June (Friday): Treasure Hunt

30 June (Sunday): Barbeque

August: Hog Roast - date and venue to be confirmed 28 September (Saturday): Annual Dinner

25 October (Friday): Whist Drive

22 November (Friday): Quiz Night

3 December (Tuesday): Social Evening for all members

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).

MORE ON CLOCKS by Trudy Fuller

Yes, all right Gwynne Liscombe, I will own up. I am the owner of the Henry Williams clock. It was probably made in the house now known as Broadhayes and according to a letter dated 1937 from the Cardiff Museum, it was constructed in the mid eighteenth

century. When one of my father's cousins died in Penarth about twenty eight years ago, we decided that it should return to Llancarfan and I became the proud owner. I had the case and the mechanism overhauled and it kept good time. It is an eight day clock recording the date and the High Water at Bristol.

LLANCARFAN SOCIETY WHIST DRIVE by Phil Watts

Another successful Whist Drive took place in the Village Hall on Friday October 27th. 48 people attended which meant that there were 12 tables of whist. This is one more table than our previous best of 11.

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The prize winners were; 1st Gents, Mrs Val Lovering; 2nd Gents, Mrs Sylvia Hook; 3rd Gents, Mr Alf Everett; 1st Ladies, Mrs Nancy ?; 2nd Ladies, Mrs R. Thomas; 3rd Ladies, Mrs Betty Williams; Lowest Gent, Mr Gwynne Liscombe; Lowest Lady, Mrs Jenny Glover.

Raffle: 1st, Mrs Joan Latham; 2nd, Mrs Mary Griffith; 3rd, Mrs Margaret Rees.

We were pleased to have young as well as the old present - a lad of 11 years of age - Derek Brock's grandson. Customers of the 6 Bells, Penmark, will remember Derek being landlord in the fifties. Also present Mrs Stiles, previous landlady of the 6 Bells, Derek's mother-in-law.

Our next Whist Drive will take place in the Village Hall on March 1st (1996) at 7.30.p.m. See you there!

OBITUARY: DR JOHN F. ROWLAND by Phil Watts

It is with regret we record the death of Dr John Rowland on October 14th, 1995, suddenly and without illness. John was born and lived at Ty To Maen until he studied medicine and served in the R.A.F. He lived all his married life at Rose Cottage, Heol-y-Mynydd, Southerndown. We can sympathise with family for losing a husband, father, and grandfather at the age of 68 which is not considered old these days.

John and I went to the same schools, Llancarfan and Cowbridge Grammar beating the same trail (by bicycle to A48 to catch school bus). John was always slightly ahead of me: he liked to get to the bus stop early to enjoy a smoke before the bus came along. The journey home was much faster, being downhill, than the one in the morning.

A source of amusement we have shared ever-since was the day when I came off my bike on Pencarreg Hill one wet November day when the roads were greasy and covered with cow dung, as now even in these days of more modern transport. We were both travelling at speed down Pencarreg Hill and two old ladies were walking their spaniel dogs. There was a collision between my bike and the first dog which sent me over the handle bars and head first along the road in the mud. The ladies coming running full of concern and said, "Is the dog alright?" Fortunately, I wasn't hurt and the bike was OK. Just a muddy mess. John and I have often recalled this amusing episode when ever we met over the years.

Films were not allowed on Sundays in those days but John and I often went to the Sunday night Band concerts in the Capitol (no longer there) in Cardiff. John had the ability to play the piano by ear - to me this seemed unfair because I could not get my fingers to go to the right notes - mainly through lack of practice which convinced my mother to stop wasting money on lessons.

John did his National Service as a flying officer in the R.A.F. and was an expert on records and statistics of that Service and flying in general. Another of his loves was also to do with flying and that was birds. We are told that bird food arrived at Heol-y-Mynydd by the lorry load.

Llancarfan Society is fortunate to have had John as a member and to have several contributions to the Newsletter from him. The reader will recognise that he was thorough, and paid great attention to detail and was dedicated in all that he did.

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I know that his family will miss him, the Society will miss him and I know that I shall miss him for our boyhood connections. Although our meetings were few in later life, I always felt that if there ever came a need there was a person in John I could turn to - but then he was like that to everyone - that was John. Thank you.

OBITUARY: DILYS LOUGHER by Phil Watts

It is with regret that we have to report the death of Dilys Lougher of Rhoose at the age of 75.

Dilys had been in poor health for a number of years and confined to her home. This must have been difficult for she had been a very active lady in the Rhoose area - being a member of the Darby and Joan Club, W.R.V.S., Women's Institute, supporter of Whist Drives and other community activities. She will be missed in the Rhoose area.

Dilys was the wife of Edwin Lougher and mother of Melvyn, now residing in Australia, and the late Gerald. Dilys was a native of Penmark, living in one of the Kenson Cottages. I do not know how Dilys and Edwin met but Penmark is about halfway between Rhoose and Llancarfan. Could it be a stopping off point on the trek from Rhoose to Llancarfan and back again?

We have been told by Ken and Gladys Lougher that they made many sorties to the vilage of Llancarfan to meet up with the rest of the Lougher family at Cross Green, Monastery Mill and Garnllwyd.

THE BIRDS by Frank Jameson (July):

If Alfred Hitchcock had been making his horror film in 1995 and chosen Llancarfan for location filming, he would have saved himself the trouble of searching for feathered "extras". For the past two weeks the jackdaws, who last plagued the southern end of the village two years ago, are back in force. They have strange but predictable habits.

The flock, which number many hundreds, does not roost here but arrives about 5.00 a.m., assembling in the tall horse-chestnut by the Nant Carfan opposite Monastery Field. There, in a diabolically cacophonous discussion, the decibels of which do not start to diminish till well past seven, they formulate their feeding plans for the day. Having woken everybody in the neighbourhood at crack of dawn, by mid-morning most of the mob will have dispersed leaving a variable number feeding on the ground or chattering noisily in the trees.

Late in the afternoon part of the flock usually returns to the chestnut tree for a while until, around six, they fly-out in groups of 10-20 in a southwesterly direction, to an unidentified roost (possibly in the woods beyond Cliff Farm) leaving us to enjoy our sundowners in relative peace.

One morning about seven o'clock, when the jackdaws were feeding in great numbers on our field and lawn, I gave them a couple of barrels from the shotgun, hanging the corpses from canes in full view. They left us for five

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days. When they returned they seemed immune to further treatment of this sort. Cartridges being expensive I tried clapping two boards together. They fly-off, only to return almost immediately.

The daws seem to have driven off most of our songbirds, though a pair of blackbirds and a thrush still feed on the lawn in the evening. But our tame robin has stopped coming down and pecking for crumbs round our feet in the summer house though he still sings sweetly for us from the trees.

One day I saw the whole flock in the sky over Pancross as they wheeled and circled like a swarm of bees. They were mobbing a pair of ravens:- there must have been more than five hundred.

The last time we had a visitation, the jackdaws stayed about four weeks. Perhaps we are now more than half way through this disturbing Hitchcock feature.

Editorial: Here in Pembrokeshire: "(the communal roost) at St David's Cathedral being notable for causing so much noise during their evening assembly that it eclipses the best efforts of the choir!" (Birds of Pembrokeshire, Donovan & Rees).

NEWS OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PLACES

There was an unusual happening on the Church roof on Friday, 13 October. A workman inspecting the snow-box at the river end of the roof-valley was jumped-on and attacked by a grey squirrel which had a nest of babies in the snow-box. Speculation is that they were preparing for hibernation but no doubt a man peering into the snow-box afforded a good

landing platform for a squirrel coming from the trees in the Fox and Hounds car-park. It seems that the Powers-that-be disapprove of all the disturbance to the church, as operations were also interrupted by a very severe thunderstorm during the summer (Phil Watts)

Yet more daffodils have been planted in the churchyard and on various grass verges. Thanks go to Phil Watts, Alan Taylor, Margaret and Arwyn Rees for this work. The village is a spectacular sight in the spring these days.

The Western Mail recently ran a half-page feature on Bob and Sue Watts' vinyard near Bordeaux. We have mentioned them before as former Llancarfan residents. They lived at Timbers during the 1970s - 80s. Some of you may be familiar with their Chateau du Seuil vintage bearing a Welsh dragon on the bottle. The chateau is at Ceron on the Garonne.

Former Llancarfan girls who attended Barry County School, will remember head teacher, Gwyneth Vaughan Jones who celebrated her 100th birthday a couple of months ago

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From the Barry and District News "50 years ago" column:- Messrs Arthur T. Hammond and Son auctioned the following properties. "Oaklands", Llancarfan, £525; 76 Castleland St, £310; 18 and 20, Glamorgan Street, £302 10s each. Anyone know where Oaklands is?

PROPERTIES FOR SALE IN LLANCARFAN by Phil Watts:

On one page of the houses for sale columns of the local paper can be found a number of Llancarfan properties priced at £159,950; £225,000; £149,950 and £350,000. There are two others for sale at £250,000 and £190,000. At a rough estimate the total amounts to one and a quarter million pounds.

It seems a long call to the days of the early fifties when I remember three houses changing hands for £120, £180, and £250 - a total of just over £500.

Another house a few years later was auctioned in the Church Hall and sold for £2,500 and people wondered how could they raise such a large sum of money!

Editor's note: In our news of members friends and places section (above) there is a further memory of house prices 50 years ago - odd that it should have appeared at the same time as Phil's thought on the matter.

RETIREMENT OF LIL PARSONS FROM THE FOX AND HOUNDS by Phil Watts

Coinciding with the change of tenancy of the Fox and Hounds from Mike Evans to Mike Ashmore, Lil Parsons retired from active service at the age of 86. Her retirement could be described as premature because she is the sort of person who led you to believe that she was part of the establishment and handed on to a succession of employers.

Lil was first introduced to the Fox as a part time relief in 1965 so, for the past thirty years, she has been the lady who goes from table to table in the bars saying, "Have you finished with your glass love?", or to the more favoured, "How are you today love?". She is a very small lady and gave the impression that she either passed through your legs or under the table but very adept at getting through crowds to replenish the glass-washers in the kitchen.

Lil is very caring and hard-working lady and despite having spent a lifetime surrounded by ill health and poverty, was always the first to share concern for the misfortune of others.

Lil was born in the Rhondda of a mining family. Through illness, her father had to forsake the mines and became sexton of Trealar Cemetery: this meant living in the middle of a cemetery and, in modern times could be described as the "Dead Centre".

Those of us who have worked and drunk at the Fox and Hounds will miss Lil's enquiring questions and tales of her friends and loved ones. Lil is a very talkative lady and your part of a conversation with Lil is that of listening.

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The Fox will not be quite the same without Lil Parsons she has done all the jobs that are to do at the Fox except that of drawing pints and taking money - "That is nothing to do with me love" - as a reward she would take a glass of lemonade.

Unfortunately, Lil is in poor health and awaiting hip replacement but those who attended her farewell appearance at the Fox and Hounds will know that there is nothing wrong with her vocal cords. We would like to wish her well for the future.

A LETTER from Les Moffat following a Summer walk in Llancarfan

We had a very interesting and nostalgic day when you (Phil Watts) saw us. I recalled how they used to block the the brook at the bridge to wash the sheep. I also recall your dad blocking it for us to bathe occasionally in the summer. Also I remember him carrying us across when it flooded in the winter as we used to walk to school (from Whitwell) then. This was a 2 mile walk for a school beginner but, later, they put on the school bus which we had to walk up to Pen-yr-heol to catch. It was quicker to run to school. We had to run most of the way when we were late. When we got to the village we would listen to hear if the Morgan's of Walterston were running down their road, and when the first bell rung we'd know if we had to put a spurt on. There were five of us who mostly played together:- Dave Morgan, Colin Gibbon, Layton Lougher, Gethin Thomas and myself.

When passing the school, the present Head Teacher was at the gate so I introduced myself and she showed us round the school. I realised my age when I saw full grown trees where our school gardens used to be. Also how overgrown the tump has become, outside the school where bonfire night was held. Gwynne Liscombe came out of a field opposite the school and spoke to me. I remember when his dad used to run the Bakery. If mum asked us to buy a loaf on the way home there would be large bits missing out of the sides by the time it reached home!

LLANBETHERY by Ken Walls

The census of 1881 shows that there were then 19 properties occupied, i.e. about half the present number of buildings. Where it has been possible to identify the various families with their houses the following details give some insight into the village life at that time. (Editor: Ken provided a map which we cannot reproduce here - to identify position I have numbered the houses 1-10 from the Wild Goose eastward and indicated whether they are N or S of the road thus the "Goose" is 1N).

The Wild Goose Inn (1N) Ann Thomas (widow) Publican
(previously the Masons Arms) 3 children

The Vines (3N) Mr & Mrs Thomas David Farm Labourer

6 children

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Farm (5N) Mr & Mrs William Jenkins Farmer
190 Acres 6 children

1 Governess
3 servants

Sycamore Cottage (6N) Mr & Mrs Owen McCarthy Farm Labourer

5 children

High Croft (8N)Mr & Mrs Evan ElwardFarm Labourer
(previously New House)5 children

Higher End Cottage (9S)Mr & Mrs William EvansThatcher
4 children

Cartref (7S)Mr & Mrs Thomas PriceBuilder
1 child
1 servant

Windways/Fairfield (4S)Margaret JenkinsWidow
(previously one thatched4 children
cottage, now demolished)

Court House (2S)Mr & Mrs John HarriesFarm Labourer
2 children

The information was supplied by Carol Dunn who has lived in Llanbethery since her early childhood in the 1920's and has kindly shared with me some of her reminiscences.

She remembers when there was neither piped water nor electricity in the village. Cisterns to catch rainwater were common and some houses had pumps in their kitchens, but for many villagers it was necessary, when wanting drinking water, to walk a footpath 250 metres long (extant but very overgrown) to a pump in the valley. Until a few years ago the pump was still there, but it has since been removed (Ken enclosed a sketch).

In about 1934 water mains were laid and electricity came in 1938. One person who was instrumental in pressing the authorities for these services was George Davies, the headmaster of Llancarfan School. He lived at Cartref from 1931-1941. In 1975 the school celebrated it's centenary. George Davies attended the event, as did Mrs Mary Dunn (Carol's mother) who was 90 that year, thus one of the very early pupils. Mrs Sweet from The Manse next door was another early pupil who also attended the celebrations.

Carol recalls travelling on the railway which ran through Llanbethery Halt to call on her mother's aunt who lived in Aberthaw. The lines were removed during the last War to make munitions. Her walk to school every day was via the footpath to Crosstown and then over the fields to emerge on to the road at Llancarfan opposite Fern Cottage. She was however spared the walk to Carmel Chapel on Sundays as her grandfather, living at High Croft, took her in his governess car.

In the 1950's two bakers delivered bread and a butcher had a delivery round in the village.

The butcher attempted to hand in the meat one Sunday to Carol's grandmother but was promptly told to take it away. In those days the potatoes for Sunday's lunch had to be peeled on Saturday so clearly one could not be expected to indulge in commerce on the

Sabbath. How times have changed!

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LLANCARFAN CHURCH HAUNTED? by Megan Hamber

Over 100 years ago there was a rumour that Llancarfan Church was haunted. My explanation of this was that, when my father (John Collier) was a young man he and his friend crept into the church when the vicar's wife was conducting choir practice with a young ladies' choir. They hid and when the choir was singing they joined in with a bass part then crept out again. They repeated this the next week. The vicar's wife was so perturbed she closed the practice and gathered up the books and the choir was not continued for a number of weeks, until they felt the "ghost" was gone.

These are the tales my father would tell. He was a great raconteur.

At the same time there was an old lady in the village whose name was Betsy. She had a donkey and a cart. The name of the donkey was Ranton and it moved at a snail's pace so my father thought he would liven things up a bit. He jumped in the cart, took a plank of wood and brought it down on the donkey's rear at the same time shouting at Ranton. Whether it was the impact or the noise of the air as it came down, who knows?, but Ranton took off and ran for miles as if possessed. He would slow down again until my father (still in the cart) would shout "Ranton" then he would take off again at breakneck speed. When he was ambling through the village my father would shout "Ranton" and he would fly off again.

My great grandfather, William Jenkins, and his wife, Ann, are buried in the Baptist graveyard. William in 1890 and Ann 10 years previously. He was Deacon of the Chapel for 40 years. He was also a shoemaker renowned throughout the Vale. When my father was a young man he used to travel the Vale on horseback measuring people's feet for his grandfather to make the shoes and boots.

Their daughter, Ann, married William Collier my father's parents. My grandfather died in 1927 and they were both buried in the Baptist Chapel graveyard. My grandfather lived in Llwynypia but was brought to Llancarfan for burial. We buried him "with ham" (as they used to say) in the Fox. He was a great character and at 86 didn't have a grey hair and never used spectacles. When he came to stay with us in Barry, we would take a train to Aberthaw and walk to Llancarfan, no car no buses. We went to visit Auntie Jessie and Uncle John Buckley who kept the Post Office in the house at the bottom of the Chapel steps (Hillside). It had a front door in the middle with steps leading down to the road. This has now been blocked up. Uncle John was a very jovial soul but she was the most miserable woman I ever knew. I never saw her smile and she rocked herself in her rocking chair all day.

My grandfather was a wonderful story teller. He lived in India for 17 years and used to tell this story which I believed was gospel truth. He kept a rattlesnake for a pet and one day a burglar entered so the rattlesnake twined itself round the burglar's body and rattled out over the balcony for the Police to come.

Can you beat that for a far fetched story?