



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 70 December 1995

This Newsletter is the Editor's Christmas present to all of you, coming as it does, only a fortnight after the last! In reality it is more an expression of guilt because laziness and the wonderful summer made me spend so much time in the open air that we have been a bit deprived of 1995 Newsletters and this is an attempt to catch-up.

A very Happy Christmas to all members and a healthy and happy New Year.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE IN JANUARY - DETAILS IN NEXT

NEWSLETTER

DUCK EGG RACE: Lower Ford, Nant Carfan, on Boxing Day in aid of P.H.A.B. Respite Care and St. Cadoc's Restoration Fund. See you there. New events programme for 1996: more details later. 1 March (Friday): Whist Drive

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

6 May (Monday): Annual 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, Llancaf, 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).

YET MORE ON CLOCKS by John Etherington

In Newsletter 68, Gwynne Liscombe wrote an account of the clocks attributed to Henry Williams of Broadhayes and also mentioned other Williamses in the village. Trudy Fuller added a note in the last Newsletter but there is more:-

In the 1975 3rd edition of Iorwerth Peate's book Clock and Watchmakers of Wales, we find:- "a family tradition of craftsmanship persisted down to recent times; for instance the Griffithses of Denbigh ----- the Williamses of Llancarfan ----- and others, all worked for several generations, in some cases the family tradition spanning three centuries." Peate must have known or suspected that the Williamses named by Gwynne were in fact related. In addition to these, he also names, as a clockmaker, one Thomas of Llancarfan. Died 1728.

There was also a watchmaker, Edward Williams, in Llancarfan a little later. I suspect he was a descendant of Henry, but have no documentary proof. Edward is mentioned in an 1875 Abstract of Title to land and property which was lent to us by Molly Ranger ('The Manse', Llanbethery). The Abstract commences with an 1828 indenture describing a 'dwelling house stable garden and premises -- in the occupancy of Edward Williams Watchmaker' - this was somewhere in the region of Great House or the Blacksmith's Shop but it is not precisely identified. An Edward Williams, watchmaker, also features in the Church Registers as Parish Clerk in the late 1840's and 50's. This was probably the same man though there is no specific proof.

ORIGINS AND THE SEARCH FOR WORK by Phil Watts

Whilst writing the obituary for Dilys Lougher in the last Newsletter and thinking of Penmark and the people that lived there, I was reminded that the names of the people of Penmark over 50 years ago showed a strong leaning towards Ireland, while the names of the people of Llancarfan had a strong flavour of Welsh i.e. Griffiths, Thomas, Johns etc. The suggestion is that Llancarfan held on to it's people of rural crafts while the surrounding parishes attracted refugees from the Irish potato famine who had been attracted by the industrial revolution.

It seems that the Celts were happy to live side by side and yet organized and employed by people of English descent - note the names of the ironmasters and coal barons. There is one big exception - David Davies. Today there is not one working coal mine in the Rhondda Valley, no ship of any size in Barry Dock and only 4 farms in the Llancarfan area selling milk. What are we all doing? Have we all retired?!

The Newspapers tell us that those who are working are working much harder and spending more time at the place of work than we did over the last 50 years. Employers in Llancarfan today have to import their labour whereas in the old days labour could be found locally.

Both my grandfathers wove mittens and came from England attracted to Wales by the new found wealth of coal, and yet they made their living by the power of water. They married Welsh girl's and they stayed and survived until the cheap importation of grain via Barry and Cardiff Docks under the trademark of Rank and Spillers.

I have just returned from a visit to Canada and seen some wonderful examples of the great power of water - it seems strange that we do not make greater use of this natural resource - perhaps we do not have enough of it. Which reminds me, we will be floating duck eggs in the River Carfan on Boxing Day in aid of P.H.A.B. Respite Care and St. Cadoc's Restoration Fund. See you there.

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PENMARK IRISH - an Editorial note

It is interesting that Phil Watts should have commented on the number of Irish people in Penmark in earlier years. A former near-neighbour of my wife, Sheena, Alfred Mills of Barry, wrote a series of articles for The Gem during last summer. One of these was entitled "Remembering Little Ireland otherwise known as Penmark" and identified Irish families named Reagan, Bryan, Nash, Murphy, Bohun and McCarthy. Alfred Mills suggested that they came because of hard times in Ireland, attracted by dock-construction in Cardiff, Barry and Penarth. In his youth (1920s) several worked in the limestone quarries of Porthkerry. Some married local girls and the families remain in the area to this day.

PHIL AND RUTH WATTS IN CANADA by themselves

As many of you will know we have just returned from spending three weeks with Tom and Doris Lougher in Coquitlam, Vancouver. We also went down to Loleta in California to visit Tom's brother, Bob, and his wife Louise. They have all attended the Society dinners - Tom and Doris twice. They read the Newsletters avidly. When you talk to these folk about Llancarfan and the surrounding areas it seems a good reason to keep the Newsletter and the activities of the Society going as enthusiastically as it has been for the past eight years. By way of explanation, Tom and Bob Lougher are my mother's cousins - hence our connections.

What did we think of Vancouver? It seems the most wonderful place to live it has terrific scenery, plenty of space, the climate is good. They tell us they have plenty of rain but it only rained on the last day we were there. Everything seems well organized and above all everywhere we went we were made welcome. No wonder the Chinese from Hong Kong are flooding in there!!

While in Vancouver we contacted Conn and Katherine Hackett who used to live in the Old Bakehouse from 1968-1978. We spent a very enjoyable few hours at their home in Whonnock, a part of Vancouver. They wished to be remembered to all that remember them from their days in Llancarfan. Their son and two daughters also live in Vancouver.

Having enjoyed the wonderful scenery of British Columbia I must admit there is nothing

better than the sight of the green fields of England (and Wales, of course) as seen from aircraft travelling from Amsterdam to Cardiff Airport.

Thankyou Tom and Doris for giving Ruth and me a wonderful time in Vancouver. I know you will read this in the Society newsletter (it will save me from writing!).

THREE VICARS AND THE BATS by Phil Watts:

Three vicars were talking one day as vicars do - discussing the problem of bats in their churches. The first one said that he caught all the bats in his church in a net, put the net in his car and drove 50 miles. Before he had returned the bats had beaten him back to the church. He had now given up.

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The second vicar said that he had become very frustrated with the bats in his church and regretted to say that he had taken a double-barrel shotgun and had blown a hole in the roof of the church. He had now given up.

The third vicar was looking quite "smug" and could not understand what the problem was. The first two vicars demanded to know how he managed to be free of the bats in his church.

He said it was quite simple really - I got all the bats in the church together, baptized them and arranged to have them confirmed - the result? I haven't seen them since!!

NEWS OF MEMBERS FRIENDS AND PLACES

Congratulations to Lynne Smith on being appointed as Head Teacher of Llancarfan School. She has already served on the staff for number of years. At the recent dinner someone said that a village should have a school, a church and a pub and should these be a good a school, a good church and a good pub then it would be a good village. During this year we have seen a new vicar, a new licensee and a new head teacher. The signs are that all three are very happy to be here and we are happy to have them. I am pleased to say that they are all members of the Society and we look forward to many years of close cooperation and association (Phil Watts).

How welcome it is to see that the seat on Pancross Hill has been replaced by a new one - I am told that some of the others have also been renewed (Phil Watts).

Tom Lougher of Coquitlam, Vancouver, asks if there is anyone in the Society who is a member of the Burma Star Association? He attended the Albert Hall meeting in March of this year.

A past Newsletter announced that the Phoenix Players would be presenting a number of one-act plays in the Village Hall on 11 November. This has now happened and was a huge success. The hall was full and the evening enjoyed by everyone who attended. The refurbished Village Hall does not have a stage so one had to be assembled, for the evening, at the opposite end to the old stage of the former Church Hall. The ante-room has now become a kitchen but the upstairs room still exists, reached by an external staircase. For this occasion the upstairs room was a dressing room and the players had to make the long journey to the stage, at the other end of the hall, in the rain! The Phoenix Players are a dedicated group. Many, many thanks and we hope they will come again (Phil Watts).

The Barry and District News (31 August) announced the release of a video, made by local film-maker Mike Edmunds, and entitled Discovering the Vale of Glamorgan. This includes some shots of Llancarfan and the nearby coast of Rhoose, Fontygary, Summerhouse Point, Boverton. Inland, Beupre, Tinkinswood

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and Dyffryn House are featured, together with many other places in the Vale. The 95-minute video costs £9.99 and is available from W. H. Smith or Martin's Newsagents in Cowbridge.

Phil Watts tells us that, after ringing the church bells in Penmark, earlier in the summer, the ringers went to the Six Bells. In the passage to the toilets, Don Hall has hung prints of some eyesores in the Vale: British Airways Hangar; Aberthaw Power Station and Cement Works, also Dow Corning. We have talked about this before: somewhere there is a balance between the provision of employment and acceptability in the environment - we probably all have different views.

The Barry and District News reported that the Cardiff Conservation Volunteers would be undertaking fencing and footpath improvement at Coed Garnllwyd during November

The future of Dyffryn House seems to be in the balance at the moment. It was given to the old Glamorgan County Council by Sir Cenydd Traherne on a 999 year lease

which was passed on to South and Mid-Glamorgan councils. Now that reorganisation is again with us the new authorities are deterred by the cost of keeping this wonderful house in good condition. It is not far from our parish and many residents drive past it on their daily journeys to Cardiff, so we have a closer interest than many. At the last report, the present owner, Lieutenant Colonel Traherne, was attempting to compel South and Mid-Glamorgan to pay for the neglected upkeep of the house (Western Mail).

Some names which may be unfamiliar to recent Llancarfan residents appeared in Leslie Moffat's note in the last Newsletter. Leslie lived at Whitewell between Greendown and the A48: Colin Gibbon was a relative of the folk who kept the Fox and Hounds between the wars. Layton Lougher is brother of David who lives at Penonn, and Gareth Thomas lived at Greendown before it grew from a single farmhouse to the hamlet it has recently become. The river at Abernant was blocked for sheep-washing using an old door (Phil Watts).

BOOKS by John Etherington

Over the years, I have spent a lot of time reviewing books and as a result have developed a compulsive need to share books which have interested me. We have never featured anything like this before, but so many things have come my way during the past couple of years that I can't resist the temptation any longer. Here are some books which anyone who lives in Glamorganshire might want to read - sorry it is a bit too late for Christmas presents.

E. Bowen (1992) Vaynor, Foxgate.

The parish of Vaynor is north of Merthyr Tydfil and includes Cefn Coed-yCymmer, Pontsarn and Pontsticill, bounded by the Taf Fechan and Taf Fawr rivers. Many years ago I spent quite a lot of time working in the region of

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Morlais and Darren Fach so this delightful and idiosyncratic book stirred all sorts of memories. It is the fruit of many years of research and is one of the most diverse local history books I have read.

It contains all sorts of delightful snippets: one, which is relevant to Llancarfan is the description of Halting the Wedding by stretching a rope across the exit from the church - it was regarded as the first obstacle in married life - this is almost a duplicate of the tradition in Llancarfan. Does anyone know how widespread it might have been?

The reservoirs in Vaynor parish (which supply South Wales) were a huge tourist attraction - after the Brecon railway was opened, 4700 tickets were sold on the day of the Pentwyn

Regatta! Transport became remarkably organised even in the days of the horse. By about 1840 there were regular services to Cardigan, Haverfordwest, Llanelli, Llandeilo, Newcastle Emlyn, Swansea and Aberystwyth. Swansea was a daily return but Aber. and Cardigan were four or five day round-trips.

The book also describes the huge number of corn-mills in the area prior to the 1800's, reminding us that grain keeps but flour does not. In this high country there were many grain-drying kilns associated with the industry. During the 1800s many of these mills became woollen factories - does anyone know the previous history of the flannel mill in Llancarfan. (latterly the Bakehouse and now the Old Bakehouse)?

Thinking of crafts and numbers, there were 335 blacksmiths in Breconshire in 1851 but only 6 in 1980!

Randall, H. J. (1955) Bridgend. The Story of a Market Town.

Just re-published by Mid-Glamorgan County Libraries (1994). A scholarly look at the largest town in the Vale. Well worth reading if you have not come across it before. A couple of snippets of information from it: in 1825 Telford proposed the abolition of the Portskewett ferry over the Severn and its replacement by a crossing from Uphill to Sully Island. Nearly two centuries on, the question of a lower-Severn crossing is still a problem. In the same chapter on roads, Randall describes the planning and construction of the new section of road past Brocastle in 1831-32. This replaced the old road which crossed the River Ogmere at New Inn (now vanished), on the line of the former Roman road.

Mary Davies Parnell (1991 & 1993) Block Salt and Candles and Snobs and Sardines, Seren Books.

A pair of delightful books dealing with childhood, primary and secondary schooling in the Rhondda Valley. They were deeply evocative of some of my own memories of school in distant England, not least because Mrs Davies Parnell is exactly the same age as I am. So many memories were stirred that I have written another short article which will appear later. For the sensitive appreciation of "Wenglish", here it is in action rather than in John Edward's affectionate but humorous use of the "language".

Raymond Howell (1988) A History of Gwent, Gomer

Recently republished in its third impression - a very readable account of our local history, much of which is related to next-door Glamorgan.

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A E Wade, Q O N Kay and R G Ellis (1994) Flora of Glamorgan HMSO.

In Victorian times it seemed that every region and county of Britain had its own Flora - often more than one. The interest in wild life, promoted largely by television, has seen a

great increase in the market for natural history books and it is interesting to reflect that this one would probably not have been a commercial proposition twenty years ago.

C Hurford & P Lansdown (1995) Birds of Glamorgan, Hurford & Lansdown, National Museum of Wales.

Again a book which will owe its success to today's wide interest in wildlife, though birds have always been top of the list. Interestingly its publication almost coincided with that of Birds of Pembrokeshire by J. Donovan & G. Rees (1994) Dyfed Wildlife Trust - equally interesting to me in my new home.

ANDERSON SHELTERS: memories collected by Phil Watts, May Walk, 1995

I suppose anyone younger than 40 might not know what an Anderson Shelter is and they would have to be somewhat over 50 to have spent time in one. John Anderson, as Lord Privy Seal organised civil defence at the beginning of WW2 and then became Home Secretary. The corrugated-iron air-raid shelter was named after him. Gwynne Liscombe, a long time ago, asked if anyone could remember where the Anderson Shelters were in the village but no one volunteered any information. This list was put together during the May Walk of 1995.

Top End /Caradoc Cottage Mr and Mrs Johnnie Griffiths, grandparents to Andrew

The Hollies Ruth and Billie Jenkins. Ruth, Joe Lewis' sister

Cross Green Ivy and Arthur Jenkins. Ivy, another sister of Joe.

Broad Hayes Lil and Billy Evans. Lil another sister of Joe. Billy and Arthur were brothers.

PenylanJane and Joe Lewis

CrynalItThis would be called Orchard Cottage then and would have been

occupied by Mr and Mrs Alf Vincent

Pembroke Cottage Mary Cannon and Tommy Griffiths

Corner House Mrs Hartrey

Fern Cottage Les and Phyllis Griffiths. Air Raid Warden

New House Margaret Sweet (Maggie)

Bridge House Morris, Ivy and Connie Griffiths

Old Parsonage Mr and Mrs Alf Gibbins

FIELD DRAINS by John Etherington

Some time ago, Phil Watts described the laying of a "bush-drain" which was kept open by packing bundles of twigs or gorse in the bottom of a trench before refilling with soil over a bed of stones

I have recently found a couple of interesting references to bush-drainage. Firstly, it is a very ancient practice, having been described in classical times by the little-known writer, Palladius. Secondly, and more suprisingly, advice was given on the construction of bush or faggot drains in the Journal of the Ministry of Agriculture as recently as 1925.

These snippets came from Fussel, G. E. (1952), *The Farmer's Tools* reprinted in 1985 by Bloomsbury books). The book suggests that bush-drainage may well have been introduced to Britain in Roman times.

GAMES Jeff Thomas recalled some childhood games (Newsletter 68) but we have had some notes on them before. The late Les Griffiths wrote an article in Newsletter 13 entitled *Boyhood Games* and, in response, Roger Hammond recollected playing Cat and Dog in London during his wartime childhood (Newsletter 14). These items are reproduced below:-

Our boyhood games in those days were whip and top, hoop and guider, cat & dog and marbles. Cat and dog was a favourite game. The cat was a piece of wood, hazel or ash, about six inches long and one inch thick, pointed at both ends. The dog was also of wood, hazel or ash, about two feet, six inches long and one inch thick. A ring was drawn on the road, the cat was placed in the centre then we would strike it on the pointed end with the dog which would cause it to spring into the air. While it was in the air you had to hit it with the dog and the one who struck the cat the furthest was the winner. All our games were played on the road; in those days there were no cars or motor bikes to worry about.

Roger Hammond (formerly of Corner House) sent a note in response to Les Griffiths' short article saying that he remembered the game which Les called Cat and Dog. He wrote: "I used to play this at school in London in about 1950. We called it Tic-tac or Tip-tap. I thought at the time that the latter name derived from the fact that the smaller piece of wood was tapped on the tip to make it rise into the air".

Editorial note: Herbert Etherington, the editor's father, talked of the identical game to cat and dog, played in the Kentish Medway Towns in about 1900. It was called Tic-Tac: he said that this described the sound made by tapping the smaller stick followed by whacking it with the larger one.

Interestingly, in Jack Jones' novel, *Rhondda Roundabout* (1934) cat and dog was played

by unemployed miners during the depression years of the 20s and 30s and, in Block Salt and Candles by Mary Davies Parnell (reviewed above) Catty and Doggy is described as a street game in Trehafod, Rhondda, about ten years later.

Can't find anything in the reference books on this obviously old game. Does anyone else know more and is it still played anywhere in this day of TV and radio-controlled toys?