



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 71 January-February 1996

The last year and the first month of the new one have given us some contrasts:- record breaking heat, wetness and lack of sunshine in various parts of the country. The aftermath seems to be a very late start to spring. By January 9 last year we had snowdrops, but this year, as I type this on February 5, they are barely showing above ground and the last fortnight of freezing weather has slowed things even more. No sooner had I written this than snowstorms swept over the country, causing great problems in West Wales, the Valleys and Gwent but I gather Llanccarfán was not cut-off or seriously affected by the snow.

I have commented on the strange fact that our Society includes many people who have lived in Llanccarfán for ten or twenty years and yet, because they were different tens and twenties, had never met until our social occasions brought them together. A handful of members who have spent the whole of their lives in the parish were originally known to many more. One of these was Len Mortimer who, very sadly, died before Christmas: his obituary appears in this number.

EVENTS IN MARCH & APRIL

WHIST DRIVE March 1 (Friday): in the Village Hall at 7.30.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING March 8 (Friday): at 7.30 with a slide-show by a member of the Glamorgan Archive Service.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

This year our Chairman, Mick Mace, and Treasurer, Joyce Andrews, have announced their resignations after several years of service: nominations for these, and other posts on the Committee, to the Secretary, Sheila Mace, preferably before the A.G.M., or at the meeting. Mick and Joyce are willing to remain on the Committee. Derek Higgs is resigning from the Committee on which he has served since the inception of the society.

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).

-2-

OBITUARY: LEONARD THOMPSON MARK MORTIMER by Phil Watts

Len died on Thursday, December 14, 1995, aged 79. That day, the Vale of Glamorgan and, in particular Llancarfan and Llantrithyd, lost one of the greatest characters who could ever belong to the countryside. Whenever in his presence, one was always uplifted by his jovial personality; to be entertained by one of his stories was always a pleasure. Emphasis was always on the superlative and the number of foxes that had been caught in the area during the year always managed to reach three figures - he was heard to say "You believe me or believe me not"! You could not deny him a slight exaggeration here or there. Len could always improve an account of an event, even if seen by your own eyes.

Len achieve the best of life with simple habits. He dressed well, he lived and worked hard and enjoyed life and also helped others to enjoy life. He lived a happy and contented life, without great cost. He never seemed to have much need for money: a generous man so rich in all the good natural ways of life.

Len's main hobby was his gamekeeping which he practised for over 60 years from Cowbridge to St Nicholas, down to Barry and Five-mile Lane, and Penmark. He knew every field, wood, hedge and copse in the area. Born in Llancadle he lived and worked all his life in the Vale. His main aim in life was to protect the countryside.

He survived a serious quarry accident which put him in hospital for over 12 months, after which he often said he would never be afraid to die. He believed he had been in another world for six weeks after the accident. He recovered to become a very strong man indeed. Not one you would like to tangle with on a dark night. He had many adventures in his work as a gamekeeper. Poachers were likely to suffer if they were a bit slow in getting away from Len. To be sure they would not come back again if they encountered Len for the first time.

Len's way of relaxing was to sing in the pubs, which he continued to do right up to the time of his death. The patrons of the Carne Arms, Llyswornny, Cross Inn, Llanblethian and the Fontygary Inn, will remember him with great affection. He loved singing and would have been pleased with the singing of the congregation at Llantrythyd Church on the day of the funeral - as he once said to me of the singing at my mother's funeral - "I have never

heard singing like it". I think he had the best chorus of all, as they sang Abide with Me, and How Great Thou Art.

Len regularly brought his family and friends to Society Barbecues; we are grateful to him for leading us on May Day Walks to the Llantrythd Wells and Deerpark.

Len is no longer with us, but memories of his life and stories of his own telling to us, who had the pleasure of living, singing, working and talking with him, will stay with us for ever. The joy that Len had, of living the last 20 odd years with his wife Marjorie, was a joy to behold. I am sure she, like us all, will miss him greatly. The countryside is much poorer for his loss. We must all be grateful for his loyalty and dedication in the service of nature; one of nature's kindest gentlemen. Thank you Len.

-3-

RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

A renewal form was enclosed with the last newsletter - if you have lost it, the subscription remains at £5.00 or £2.50 for a senior-citizen living alone, payable to Phil Watts at Abernant Bungalow.

PARC DYFFRYN MARK II by John Etherington

Some years ago, the proposal to build a substantial sized new village, in open countryside, south of St Nicholas aroused such anger and concerted opposition that the proposal was withdrawn. A new suggestion has now surfaced, this time through a Government agency, the Forestry Commission. Once again I am writing to comment on this from a personal viewpoint, not as editor of the Newsletter. Some of you may disagree with my views?

The 190 acre forestry site at Tair Onnen is redundant and the property services agency of the Commission, Forest Enterprise (Wales) has proposed a new community of 900 houses and a school, together with facilities and work units.

The first I heard of this was on the 10.00 pm HTV News of 21 November and a fuller report appeared in the Cowbridge Gem two days later.

Councillor Tony Williams (Welsh St Donats) who orchestrated much of the opposition to the Parc Dyffryn project has pointed out that South Glamorgan would have to reinstate the New Settlements policy which was deleted from the County Structure Plan at that time. The Vale District Plan also prohibits such developments but is at the moment out for public consultation.

The site at Tair Onnen is much smaller than the 768 acres of Parc Dyffryn but 900 houses are proposed, compared with the 400 of that scheme. This would be a relatively high density development and aside from its impact on the countryside would generate substantial additional traffic on the already busy A48.

Forest Enterprise is charged by Government with obtaining maximum return from the sale of the land but points out that the final decision is at the door of the local authorities.

During the early years of the century, when the Commission was buying large parcels of land it was never envisaged that they should be resold for this type of development or for motives of profit. It seems sad that such a proposal should come from the agency of the Forestry Commission which has stewardship of enormous areas of British countryside. If it is successful it bodes ill for the future.

N. B. In Newsletter 37, Phil Watts commented that the Parc Dyffryn proposals were withdrawn in the same week as the Gulf War ended but he expressed "doubt that both have gone away for ever"! How right he was.

-4-

LLANCARFAN: A LANDSCAPE OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE

Llancarfan and the surrounding countryside has been awarded a top grading in the draft Register of Landscapes of Exceptional and Great Historic Interest compiled by the Countryside Council for Wales, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, CADW and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts.

It is particularly ironic that such an award can be made whilst proposals for major development are being put forward just outside the parish at Tair Onnen (as outlined in the previous article). I am reminded of Stan Awbery's contention, in 1957, that the Vale had deserved designation as a National Park, but by the late 50s, was so much industrialised that this was no longer possible*. Much more has been lost since then.

According to a South Wales Echo article, the Vale's chief planner has said that "the Grade one designation would give Llancarfan even more protection against development proposals". We can only hope so.

The register describes the area as the "best surviving and most complete historic part of the Vale of Glamorgan, and contains evidence of land use from the prehistoric period onward." Amongst the notable features are listed the Iron Age Hill Fort, the early Christian monastic site and the AngloNorman layout of Church, village and its environs.

* Stan Awbery (1957) Llancarfan the Village of a Thousand Saints. p. 98.

A LETTER FROM LES MOFFAT formerly of Whitewell

When Les wrote to Phil Watts with his subscription he enclosed a letter with some of his memories:-

It was very interesting to get the Society Newsletter. It is over 50 years since I lived down that way and 60 years since I went to school at Llancarfan, so I have to rack my brain when it comes to remembering some of the names of both places and people.

You refer in one part to games that used to be played - one I recall was Knights on Horseback which we played in the school field, when you would pair-up and get on each others backs and try to get the others off. The last pair standing would be champions. Another was the Hoop and the Guider which we used to trundle it along. I believe Joe Lewis, the blacksmith, used to make them. I recall him as a great character. How he used to tolerate so many kids in the smithy when he was shoeing horses I don't know and I don't ever remember a cross word to anyone. I've stood and watched him make the shoes from a bar of iron, through heating, shaping and making the nail holes to fitting them on to the cart-horse's hooves.

I hadn't been down to the village for a long time and the first time I went down there by car, I had our four kids in it. I was describing everything to them as we went toward the smithy. I told them about it and said I could almost fancy I could hear the ring of his hammer on the anvil. When we got there it was not imagination as he was there, and at that time he said he came out of retirement to shoe the few horses left in the district. Although it must have been over thirty years since he'd seen me, he could still place me as one of the Moffat boys. He was turned 80 then.

-5-

Are there many still around who remember the sweetshop opposite the pub? Dai Harry kept the pub then, and it was usually his daughter who looked after the sweet shop. It was a wooden hut across the road and you could still spend a farthing at that time but halfpennies were most common.

Phil Watts added some notes to Les's letter, saying "I had forgotten about the knights on horseback - that was for boys only and could get quite rough but kept us fit. One or two others that come to mind are "Motor Cars": running around school yard with a stick held horizontally as the steering gear - sometimes there were two side by side. Making of paper aeroplanes was very popular - they used to be flown from the elevated twmp opposite the school. We used to make propellers from bent paper held onto a stick with a pin and as you ran forward so the propellor rotated.

HANDWRITING by John Etherington

Before the last Newsletter was transferred to the duplicator sheets the editor discovered a transcription error which caused such hilarity that we considered leaving it for you all to see - however pride took over and it was corrected.

The error was in Phil Watts article, Origins and the Search for Work. In his inimitable handwriting he wrote:- "Both my grandfathers were millers --". Sheena Etherington has very kindly done a great deal of typing for the past few numbers of the Newsletter and, not knowing Phil's family history, she copied this as "Both my grandfathers wove mittens"!

This slipped past the first proof-reading (memories of the "Paris in the in the spring" advertisement - we read what we expect to see). The draft went off to Mavis Coles for typing onto the duplicator sheets so I had to phone her with a correction. She had already typed the offending paragraph and said "I thought it was odd - I didn't know that. Then I wondered how they did it."!

The moral of this is that if you send handwritten pieces for the Newsletter, please remember to write proper-names, and anything ambiguous, in capitals. Both Sheena and I have awful handwriting so we are in no way judgemental, and have had to learn to do the same thing.

ELIZABETHAN SMUGGLING by John Etherington

Sid Perkins' map of Llancarfan includes a note on the port of Aberthaw:"Aber y ddaw afon used by raiders, smugglers and traders. The storms and tidal waves of 1483, 1584, 1607 and 1798 silted up the harbour. 1586 The Trynytie exported goods for John Lloyd of Llancarfan - butter, bacon, hides, sheep, tan hides, gloves, corn and ale."

This is engraved on my memory as I have owned a copy of the map since it was drawn in 1969 and so my eye was drawn almost magnetically to the following sentences in a book which I had casually picked-up in the library:-

-6-

"The Glamorgan ports, especially Cardiff, Barry and Aberthaw, specialised in the illicit export of agricultural produce, mostly to Bristol and Barnstaple. The traffic was well organised, and the supply lines between Cowbridge, Cadoxton and other localities in the Vale of Glamorgan and the clearing depots along the coast operated uninterruptedly. Butter, cheese, tallow, wheat and skins were conveyed by night and temporarily deposited in the cellars of well disposed persons near the quayside to await loading - also by night. --- Further east, at Newport, the law was circumvented by the gentry in the neighbourhood, who had a partiality for Spanish and French wines unflavoured by custom duties. One of the most prominent among them, George Herbert, owned a bark, the Green

Dragon, by name, which transgressed the Queen's regulations every time it left port ----." (Owen, G. D. (1964) Elizabethan Wales, University of Wales Press).

A couple of points arise from these quotations. Many years ago I used to encounter black rabbits on the road from Llancarfan to Dyffryn and a zoologist colleague in the University told me that the black-furred rabbits had originally been kept in warrens to provide for the glove trade. Various places on the Glamorgan coast, for example the Bulwarks at Porthkerry and Nash Point, near Southerndown, have the remains of artificial warrens, often called pillow-mounds. Were the gloves of John Lloyd's Trynytie of rabbit skin? I have often wondered about the name of the Green Dragon at Llancadle does it perchance have a nautical origin?

CHURCH NEWS

The first phase of the Church restoration is almost complete and the restoration of the tower and peal of bells due to start soon. The "buy a tile" appeal is still open and further contributions would be received with gratitude. Forms from the Vicar, Malcolm Davies.

A brief history of St Cadoc's has been prepared and copies are available in the Church.

The front gates of the Church have been restored with the help of a grant from National Power.

This year, on May 23, 24 and 25, the Second Ecumenical Pilgrimage from Llantarnam Abbey to Penrhys will take place. Anyone who wants to walk a part, or the whole of the way, will be welcomed. Details from Malcolm Davies.

NEWS OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PLACES

CANON AUSTIN EVANS: With great sadness we have heard of the death of Canon Austin Evans who was Vicar of Llancarfan from 1964 to 1972. He was born in 1902 in Ammanford and educated at Llandovery College and Keble College, Oxford, before his theological training at St Davids, Lampeter. After ordination in 1926 he served for three years in the parish of Bettws, Cwm Amman and the remainder of his ministry in Roath, Penarth and Llandaff Cathedral. He was then Vicar of Glyntaff, Pontypridd from 1937 to 1964. When he retired he moved to Barry and continued to serve the Church of All Saints until his death. His ashes were buried in Llancarfan on 19 January. Austin Evans is remembered with joy and pleasure by all who knew him.

DOMINIC GAMBORINI: It was a great shock to hear of the untimely death of Dominic Gamborini, formerly of Beechcroft, on January 16. The Society was represented at the funeral.

EGG RACE: The Boxing Day Duck-Egg Race raised £758 which was split between St Cadoc's restoration fund, Phab Wales and Maes-y-Coed Special School. Many thanks to Gwynne Liscombe, and helpers, for organising this now traditional event

NANTGARW CHINA: Some of you may have watched a recent On the Road with Elinor on ITV in which Elinor Jones looked at the archaeological investigation and restoration of Nantgarw China Works. Amongst those interviewed was Terry Drake, the potter from Aberthaw who is researching the production of the slipcast Nantgarw porcelain. Many members will know Terry as a regular at the Fox and Hounds and others may remember his giving pottery demonstrations at some of our earlier Summer Fairs at Pancross seven or eight years ago.

FONMON: Early in January, the BBC Radio Wales series "Fine Families" featured Fonmon Castle and presenter, Jeanette Minns, interviewed the present resident, Sir Brooke Boothby, a direct descendant of Phillip Jones who "backed the winning side" during the Civil War and subsequently purchased Fonmon and its estates. Should this programme be repeated in future, it is well worth hearing.

PENMARK: The Secretary of the Glamorgan Family History Society, Mrs Maureen Bullows has published Penmark Past, an illustrated history of the village. Priced at £8.95 and published by Browns of Cowbridge, the book was recently launched at the Six Bells. It covers the century up to 1931 - about the time when electricity and piped water reached the village.

MEGAN HAMBER has often written for us, most recently in Newsletter 69. Is she however, the first of our members to feature in the Barry and District News column of Memories - 50 years ago? On January 18, 1946, she is recorded as producing the pantomime, Bold Robin and the Babes at the Porthkerry Road Methodist Church. She was also the pianist.

RUBBISH TIPPING: The High Court has rejected Blue Circle's appeal against their failure to obtain planning-permission for a rubbish-tip in the giant Aberthaw Quarry. The High

Court backed the Welsh Office view that birds would be attracted and pose a hazard for the two airports. There was also concern about contamination of groundwater (Barry and District News).

FILMING: At some time in April, the S4C series Halen yn yr Gwaed (Salt in their Blood) will show film which was shot in the Fox and Hounds and includes various locals including Sam and Patsie Smith. Keep your eyes open.

-8-

PETANQUE: A Petanque challenge has been arranged by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff at the Pentwyn Leisure Centre, Cardiff for Thursday, June 13. The Society hopes to enter a team.

IRISH FAMILIES IN THE VALE by John Etherington

In the last Newsletter we commented on the apparently large number of Irish families which settled in Penmark in earlier years. A quick survey of the 1891 and 1881 censuses shows that there are other oddities of this sort which probably stem back to immigration at the time of the Irish famine in the 1840s.

At the moment I have only been able to look at the census records for Llancarfan, Llancadle and Llanbethery but they show that no Irish families settled in Llancarfan but, in 1881, there were three in Llancadle and five in Llanbethery. By 1891 these were reduced to two and four. The ages and birthplaces of the children suggest that many of these families came to Wales at least twenty years before these records were made.

It is interesting that many of the families remain to the present day. They are Barret (Barrat), David, Driscoll, McCarthy, Murphy, Power, Riordan and Stokes.

I would be most grateful for a volunteer to research this enigma by looking at the previous censuses for these three villages and also for Penmark as it was the Phil Watts' comment on Irish families in Penmark which started these thoughts. All that would be needed is a listing of those individuals of Irish birth and details of the birthplaces of their children at each census.

MASON'S ARMS - LLANBETHERY

This was renamed the Wild Goose shortly after I came to Llancarfan in the 1960s but I have often wondered why it was the Mason's Arms. However, the 1891 census shows the publican as Thomas Thomas, aged 36, Mason & Publican - does the name date from this time? JRE

