



## LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

### **Newsletter 72 March - April 1996**

The Annual General Meeting has come upon us again and I have made one of my now rare journeys to the Vale. It really is a late spring - the countless daffodils which the Society has planted along road verges in the village, and on Pancross Hill, were only just showing their-flower buds: looking back to past Newsletters I have often been able to see great drifts of blossom when arriving in the early evening for the A.G.M.

#### NEXT EVENT

The Annual Walk will be held on Monday, May 6. Assemble at the Village Hall at 10.00 a.m. The walk will be unfamiliar to some: down the Carfan valley toward the sea almost to Penmark and then eastward along the valley of the Weycock, returning via Penonn. Those who find this too much like hard work will be able to remain at the Village Hall for coffee, chat and the return of the wanderers for lunch.

#### A NEW DATE FOR THE DIARY

HOG ROAST will be held at Pennon on Friday, 2nd August. Details on the enclosed booking slip for the barbecue, hog roast and dinner.

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 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, Llanarf, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 3AD. Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to the Secretary, Sheila Mace, Pel-y-Dryn, Llanbethery, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 3AN. Arrangements for visits to sick members: Len Fairfax, Summit View, Aberthin, Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan (Cowbridge 772654).

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting was attended by 29 members, the last to be chaired by Mick Mace who had tendered his resignation before the meeting. Our long-suffering treasurer, Joyce Andrews, has also resigned. We are grateful for the work which these two have done for us. Thanks are also due to all Committeemembers, and those other folk who help with the Newsletter and Society functions.

Mick nominated Phil Gammon to replace him as Chairman, seconded by Ruth Watts while Sue Taylor has agreed to act as Treasurer with the assistance of Mrs Marjorie Hobbs.

After the close of formal business, Mick introduced Mrs Rosemary Davies of the Glamorgan Archive Service to speak on "Tracing Family History". Using slides with examples from her own family history she illustrated the diversity of sources which may be used, with particular reference to the

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Public Record Office and explained how an outline family history may be fleshed-out with much more detail of the individuals concerned. After a fruitful question and answer session, John Etherington proposed a vote of thanks for an interesting talk.

### THE DIARY OF WILLIAM THOMAS 1762-1795

The Cardiff and South Wales Record Society & South Glamorgan County Council Libraries Department have recently published the diary of Vale schoolteacher, William Thomas, edited by Roy Denning (1995). The book is available from The Cowbridge Bookshop. One of our members has kindly abstracted a set of entries which are relevant to Llanccarfan and which we thought you might like to read (in their original spellings and punctuation):-

1 Dec 1775: Was buried in Llanccarfan Edward of Broad Close formerly, of about 70 years of age. Reduced poor in the world, after being once very able, but a thievery sort of man.

11 May 1781: Was buried in Llanccarfan Thomas Jones, my fellow clerk, of 81 years of age, from half a year lingring. A man that once had Broad Close etc in freehold, but by being Bale, Drinking etc went through it.

28 Nov 1781: Was buried in Llanccarfan, James Howel, formerly of Croston, from which he received 20£ a year during his life. Of 80 years of age or more.

15 May 1785: Was buried in Llanccarfan, being the 20th lately buried there, Basset Jones, nephew to Thomas Jones of Llanccarfan, deceased, from five to six days severe fever. Of about 45 years of age, he left behind a wife with three or four small children very poor, being a very drunken man.

28 Jan 1787: Was lately buried in Llanccarfan, Charles Matthew, of about 64 years of age. A man that once was a Methodist preacher, but afterwards went an actor. In all vanity and greedy of the law. He was by birth from Molton in Llanccarfan, but married in St. Hilary. He was father to the wife of Thomas Lewis of Michaelstone Court.

5 Sep 1788: Was buried at Llancarfan since last March, Chrisogan Lewis, daughter of William Lewis the bailiff of do. deceased, from long lingring. Of about 40 years of age. She was an ale-house keeper and never married.

8 Jan 1789: Was buried in Bonvilston, The Revd. Edward Thomas of do. Vicar of Llancarfan, Pendoylan and St. Mary on the Hill. Of 54 years of age, from a few days sickness, a great drinker.

13 March 1789: Was buried in Llancarfan since the month of October last, Ann Hugh, alias Howel, daughter of John Howel, late of Molton, etc., deceased, and wife of William Hugh of Llancarfan. Of about 30 years old.

Since May last five persons that received relief from the parish was buried at Llancarfan, vizt. old John Pierce and one William Roberts, with the daughter in law of Jane of Molton, a lame woman, and two others.

23 April 1789: Was buried in Llancarfan from Cardiff, where he was under the Doctor's hands, being he had his shoulder broke, the servant of Robert Thomas of Hampston in the parish of St. Lythens.

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16 July 1789: Drowned this four weeks past at Aberdda, by washing themselves after landing coal from a boat, being in drink, two young men, one of them a servant to Mr. Williams the Clockmaker of Llancarfan.

6 May 1790: Was buried in Llantrithyd the said Robert of Rydhalog, or Robert Rees. He was a cutter of horses and a Miller at Llantrithyd. He was buried this twelve or more past from a lingring disease, of about 50 years of age.

6 May 1791: Was buried in Llancarfan about these two years past, having relief from the Parish for years before, Stephen Davies, once a great Pig Drover and in great sway and credit. He married Kitty Robins of Swanbridge and went to Cowbridge to keep an Inn, but some disease came on he and wife that they both went Melancholy, and so he continued to his death and she for years. He was from Pembrokeshire by birth but became a parishoner of Llancarfan by some land they had there, but she and children. came to her mother at Swanbridge, where she is now and he on the parish of LLancarfan after roving a while about. He might be about 55 years of age.

#### THE PERKINS' DIARY by John Etherington

When I read the above extracts I remembered reading elsewhere about the drowning at Aberthaw. At first I thought I must have seen a pre-publication entry from the Thomas' diary but, after a lot of thought, and searching past issues of the magazine, Country Quest, I found a 1987 article by William Linnard, formerly of the St Fagan's Folk Museum, entitled "A Diarist of Distinction" concerning John Perkins who lived at Pentre and then Ty-Draw Farm in Llantrithyd. His diary covers the years 1788-1801 and is housed at the Folk Museum. By some quirk of fate, both of these diaries which have survived, against the odds, refer to the tragedy at Aberthaw. Perkins wrote: "two young men were drowned at Aberthaw (12 June 1789)". He refrained from judgemental comment on their sobriety! and did not mention that one worked for Mr Williams, Clockmaker of Llancarfan, who was almost certainly the Henry Williams, detailed in the the recent article by Gwynne

Liscombe (Newsletter 68). As Henry died in the following year, did this shock contribute to his going?

#### LLANCARFAN IN LITERATURE IV - LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES by John Etherington

This is the fourth of an occasional series which appears when we have enough information to put a few paragraphs together.

Apart from a few books and articles written about Llanccarfafan it is unusual to find more than occasional reference to our village in any one text so it came as a useful surprise to find 16 indexed items and many more passing references in Wales in the Early Middle Ages, Wendy Davies (1982), Leicester University Press. The author uses manuscripts of mediaeval origin to provide clues to the way of life in the Middle Ages. Amongst these, Lives of the British Saints (*Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae*) feature prominently and The Life of St Cadoc provides the bulk of the references to Llanccarfafan.

A note of caution is necessary: "Such written lives are almost all manuscript copies made at a much later date than the original, some in Latin, some in Welsh. The copies are frequently embellished to suit the intentions of the times ---- sometimes --- to suit the claims of the see to territories claimed

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by other bishoprics --. the mediaeval copyists were seldom motivated in their work from a sense of history." (Baring-Gould & Fisher. Lives of the British Saints).

However, Wendy Davies makes the point that much of the background detail would have been considered unimportant by the copyists and probably rendered faithfully. Thus, comments on everyday life may well contain more than a few grains of truth but we must beware the incorporation of 11th and 12th century daily experiences which would already be drifting away from those of the immediately post-Roman peoples. It is less likely that the works of the early poets suffered similar transmutation and they also may offer valuable clues to early mediaeval conditions.

Our setting is the fifth century onward, amongst the decaying relics of the Roman occupation, before the unification of Wales, but Lifris' Life of St Cadoc was probably written in the early 1100s and it was revised by Caradoc of Llanccarfafan some years later.

The imagery of the early Welsh poets and the Lives, depicts wooded and intractable landscapes: St Iltyd came upon a thick wood with wild animals and an "unfelled wood" near Llantwit while St Cadoc sent his monks into the woods to fetch timber for building. Llanccarfafan was "impassable before Cadog cut paths" and travelling was difficult - it took three days for the 50-60 miles from St David's to Llandeilo Fawr. Much later, in 1188,

Giraldus Cambrensis recorded eight days from Anglesey to Portskewett (the old Severn crossing).

Long journeys were impossible without hospitality and Cadog's Llancarfan acquired lands, and stewards to manage them, specifically to provide sustenance for travellers. It is relevant that Giraldus observed "no one begs in Wales." Despite such difficulty, individual travels are recorded: Cadog's master-builder Llywri travelled about with his children seeking work.

The monastic settlements may have been fairly large - certainly huge households of workers, soldiers, dependent women and children were attributed to Cadog and Illtyd, suggesting nucleated settlements of some size rather than isolated, unostentatious farmsteads. The roofs of Llancarfan could be seen from a distance and much earth was moved in the early building work. Thus, Cadog's Llancarfan may have been an embryonic township - one of the first post-Roman centres of population and it also reached-out and expanded.

The Abbot of Llancarfan, in two cases created monastic dependencies - built a church in one case and in another permitted a member, Elli, to build a church and monastery from which an income was assigned to Llancarfan. The Life of Cadoc depicts his sending workmen to Neath to found a new community. Most monastic settlements were small - the Lives mention numbers less than a dozen, but Llancarfan and Llantwit were probably much bigger though we have no physical evidence.

Five miles away, there is some archaeological evidence at the Iron Age fortification of Dinas Powis which was reoccupied between the fifth and seventh centuries of mediaeval times. It was excavated by Leslie Alcock in the 1960s. The inhabitants were affluent, having imported goods from as far afield as Aquitaine, N. Africa, the Mediterranean, Aegean and the Near East.

The waste pits excavated at Dinas Powis showed that its occupants ate well. They contained pig, cattle and sheep bones (in the proportions 61, 20, 13). The Lives show that the monastic diet at Llancarfan included fish and milk;

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Cadog was reputed to have given a barrel of beer, a fat sow and 50 wheaten loaves to soldiers who came to request food. Cadog was "fortunate in owning many fertile lands" and he received renders from others: "Gwengarth having been given a villa by King Morgan gave an annual render of beer, bread, flesh and honey to Llancarfan - also a valuable sword to one of its clerics." Those who took shelter at Llancarfan had to pay with a ewe or 4d.

Though Roman buildings were durable, for example those of Caerleon remained roofed until the 12th or 13th century, the post-Occupation timber structures were impermanent and when Cadog went away from Llancarfan to Ireland, his first buildings fell-down (just as today the limestone soils of the parish rot the bases of hazel and ash fenceposts within a

year or two - elm is better but not much). Despite their impermanence, the Life suggests that Cadog's works at Llancarfan were substantial.

It is too easy to under-rate these people who have left us no written records. Myres, in the Oxford History of England (Vol 2 1986) describes the period as "a culture as completely devoid of durable possessions as any culture can be." Such an interpretation is not altogether supported by Welsh evidence: the mediaeval poetry contained rich images of goldsmithing and jewellery which were once thought fanciful, but the Dinas Powis excavations revealed jewellery-working using glass, enamel and gold. Spinning, weaving, leather working, flint-knapping and iron smelting were also evident at Dinas Powis.

There are other written records indicating smithing and metalworking: Gildas is recorded as having forged his own bell (in The Life of Cadoc), weapons were exchanged for goods and silver was used as a currency for exchange.

The charters appended to The Life of Cadoc contain useful references to lands and farming. Lists in monastic renders give the flavour of the time:- "twelve measures of beer, a sester of honey and additions, from the Villa Cadroc by the river Thaw." Other commodities include "loaves 40-60, a wether, butter, cheese and oats. The diet specified in the penances included bread, eggs, cheese, milk and fat, suggesting that everyday food must have been remarkably good. Llancarfan had sheep which were kept on Flatholm (Echni), to which the monks rowed from Barry, and fishing rights on the Usk and Neath. Mead was made from honey and became the symbol of bounty in the poetry.

Daily life became as structured as in modern times: charters in the Lives refer to procurators, priors and praepositors who managed income and acted as abbot's deputies and, by the 10th century, the Llandaff records also include smiths, stewards and later, scribes, stewards and teachers, together with a cook and medical doctor. The Life of Cadoc refers to a steward, cook, sexton, doctor, messenger, grave digger and praepositors: officers for kitchen, bakery and consulate.

Social organisation and law and order were based on a power-structure which reflected gross inequalities - Lifris said that Cadog was more worthy than David "by birth" and has chapters detailing how people could become subject to "the service of Cadog" - strangers who set sail and were driven back to Cadog's harbour of Barry (Glan-y-Mor?). Those committing perjury on St Gildas bell or Gospel were to be taken "half-naked to Llancarfan" by the clerics.

The story of Ligessauc Lawhir, who had killed three of Arthur's men is redolent of the power struggles of the time:- he came to Llancarfan seeking the safety of sanctuary by appealing to Cadog, whose power was greater than that of Arthur. Laymen, clerics and judges then assessed the worth of the

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dead in terms of oxen. Loss of face and insult was as important as crime itself and Arthur's pursuit of Ligessauc was an affront to Cadog's sanctuary. Llancarfan was

powerful - the compensation-cattle due to Arthur, when paid by Ligessauc, turned to ferns - allegorising his power to overthrow a local chieftain (Arthur being more realistically depicted in the Lives than in the subsequent myths of folk-memory).

Such power could be dynastic as the monks were not celibate: the Abbot Paul of Llancarfan numbered his own brother amongst the monastic household.

Rights of the common man were small, and slavery was a part of mediaeval Welsh life. There are two records in *The Life of Cadoc* of his laying a curse to ensure that individuals would remain slaves for ever and the Lichfield Gospels contain a marginal note, written in the 9th century at Llandeilo Fawr, recording manumission - a deliverance from bondage - by payment of 4lb 8oz of silver. However, for this to be possible slaves must have been able to accumulate wealth. Perpetual servitude persisted until remarkably late: the latest recorded gift of people was made to the Abbot of Llancarfan in 980 (Wendy Davies (1983) O'Donnell Lectures).

Cadog wielded the power of cursing - his victims not only became slaves but were burned to death or swallowed by the earth. Men were blinded when they attacked Cadog's barn and he defended himself from wolves by turning them to stone. Giraldus commented that Welsh and Irish saints were more vindictive than others: Cadog caused a barn and attendant to burn and cursed the bees that followed Modomnoc so that they would never flourish again in Llancarfan. He caused the death of two attendants who allowed his book to be left on Flatholm and killed a steward for dereliction of duty - "Cadog, especially, is the saint of the curse". The emphasis is on the saint as a controller, a wielder of power, a magician: Cadog could carry burning coals in his habit, but such stories abound in the Lives and both cursing and strange powers may be a remnant of paganism.

Less than perfect; perhaps more myth than reality, Cadog has been remembered for 1500 years and in pre-conquest times people came as pilgrims to Llancarfan on the day of his festival. He is one of the most important Welsh saints and there was a basilica over his tomb at "Beneventum" (probably the Roman Bannium, now Y Gaer, near Brecon, rather than in Italy, as some have said). Cadog's shrine, with a gilded wing, rested in his church at Llancarfan.

## NEWS OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PLACES

Committee matters: The recent Whist Drive was extremely successful and the Committee were delighted with the response - especially from people outside the area. Derek Higgs proposed that the Society should take some action in the continuing saga of Dyffryn House and Secretary, Sheila Mace, agreed to write from the Society to the Vale of Glamorgan Council stressing the need for the house and gardens to remain open to the public.

Phil Watts tells us that he has taken the first bookings for this year's Annual Dinner on Saturday, September 28. He has heard from Mrs Madeline Baldwin nee Vizzard, formerly of Pancross Cottages, that she is holidaying in this country for three months from her home in New South Wales. She is attending the dinner and hopes that as many people as possible, who remember

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her, will come to meet her again. She has two sisters in Canada and another still in Rhooose - the family make up a substantial party of our overseas membership!

Congratulations to Evan Williams who rode three winning horses in recent point-to-point meetings at Magor and at Erw Lon, Carmarthenshire where he achieved a double.

Llancarfan School has received a glowing report from the School Inspectors. Pupils and teaching staff alike should be congratulated in these days when we hear so much adverse comment about education.

Margaret Jones nee Lougher (David's sister) writes that when she was in Llancarfan school she remembers Len Mortimer having a gold watch award for 100% attendance for some number of years. She wonders if any other such awards are documented?

In the last Newsletter we asked if Megan Hamber was the first member to feature in 50-years ago in the Barry and District News. At the AGM I learned that she was not. However the claimant of the title, who appeared four years ago, wishes to remain anonymous as it reveals too much about the passage of the years! I suppose we only grow proud of our great age when well past three score years and ten!

#### TAIR ONNEN

In the last Newsletter we commented on the Forestry Commission's intention to apply for planning permission to develop a new village at Tair Onnen. During the A.G.M. I learned that this has, to date, gone no further and that the South Glamorgan strategy for mineral exploitation may prevent such a development as the whole proposed village lies in the buffer-zone surrounding the quarry at Pant-y-Ffynon. In the same context we noted that the Vale of

Glamorgan Local Plan was out for public consultation. The enquiry has now been abandoned for reasons which are not altogether clear, though it does seem more sensible that this work should not have been undertaken until the new unitary authority came into being.

OBITUARY: FRANCIS ROY BOOKER by Phil Watts and Mick Mace



It is with great sadness that we report the death of Roy Booker of Redholme Cottage, Llanbethery, on 3rd April, aged 75. Roy was much loved by all, and will be remembered best for his many acts of kindness and thoughtfulness. He was always particularly helpful to members of the opposite sex. A good turn could often be accompanied by a practical joke and that is where the thoughtfulness would come in: he would go to great lengths to play a joke on someone, but never with malice.

Born in Llancadle and married to Mary, who, in the well-worn phrase, was a "Barry girl". After demobilisation from the R.A.F., Mary and Roy lived in Redholme, where they both died. Roy was a Spitfire pilot, of which he was very proud and of the service which he served so well. He recently had publicity about the 50-year anniversary of flying out of Llandow fighter station. It would indeed be a notable event if he did not wear his R.A.F. tie.

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He recently told the story of meeting the vicar of Llancarfan, Tom Evans, during the war. The vicar congratulated him on being presented with his wings as a fighter pilot and the three proud stripes on his arm. The next time Roy met the vicar he had "lost" his three stripes and the vicar wrongly thought that he'd been up to no good and had them taken away! The truth was, of course, that he had been promoted to pilot officer with one insignificant ring lower down his sleeve!

Roy flew planes in many parts of the world, Australia being one, but he found difficulty in navigating his car to places outside the Vale! His response to wisecracks was always that "There was more room up there"!

The Vale will miss Roy who was well known and respected all round. He served his apprenticeship as an electrician at the local cement works and moved on to become foreman at the power station, from which he had great difficulty in retiring.

One of his good turns was to service the Christmas lights around the bar at the Fox and the Wild Goose. The number of times when bulbs had been loosened by other customers to set Roy on the trail is too numerous to quote but he'd always laugh it off with "Oh crikey, aye!" or "Get away!" Never a real swear word.

Roy was a believer in euthanasia and would not wish to see anyone suffer so it is with great relief that we know he did not suffer at the end - he died sitting in his armchair watching television - a very peaceful departure.

----- well how does one follow that. I think Phil has said it all about a wonderful friend, not only to me but to everyone he knew in the Llancarfan community and beyond. Roy would do anyone a kindness and no one any ill. Yes, I miss him so much because we had built up a camaraderie well known to most, based on a series of eternal leg-pulls. When Sheila and I moved to Llanbethery in 1981 we soon became friendly with Roy, and of course with Mary who was always the life and soul of any company - many were the laughs we shared and Mary's sudden death was a great shock to us all.

I suppose the most well known jape, at least in the Wild Goose, was my sexchange chicken Henrietta, which laid not one, but two, eggs to prove that my country born pal was wrong in his insistence that the bird was a cockerel, until I found that a certain person was sneaking up the side of our bungalow and planting the eggs in her run. After a name change to Henry, when Mr Booker finally confessed, there followed an exchange of appropriate cards at birthdays! I think everyone was in on this joke except me.

Sadly Roy was not to receive the full-size Henry, complete with chocolate eggs, which he was to have discovered in his porch on Easter morning - the saga had not finished as he had thought!

Sadly, also, will he be missed at the Remembrance Day Service this year when, having retired as churchwarden, I had looked forward to standing with him, although this was probably inadvisable, the way he polished his medals for their annual airing! Roy will be in my thoughts on that day.

I am assured that all members of the Society who knew Roy (and was there anyone around here who didn't?) will join Phil and myself in heartfelt sympathy to Steve, to Christine and the whole family, most especially to the grandsons whom he adored. If it is any consolation in such a loss, I now

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remember how Roy said, on more than one occasion, that he wanted to "fall off his perch" before any mental or physical disablement. And so it came to pass - he died the way he would have wished to go.

Truly, "he grew not old, as we who are left grow old", for Roy Booker was eternally young at heart to the end. Per Ardua ad Astra - May he rest in peace.

## THE MOUSE AND ST CADOC

A year or so ago we included the delightful story of St Cadoc's rescue from famine by a foraging mouse. At the time I asked if anyone knew the origin of the story but, whilst reading Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould and J. Fisher's Lives of the British Saints for the article Llancarfan in Literature IV, I came across the original version. I should have known this, but one can't read everything! According to Lifris, his biographer, St Cadoc left Llancarfan and went to Ireland after building his monastery. When he returned, it was not directly to Llancarfan but to Llanspyddid, near Y Gaer, west of Brecon (Roman Bannium). It was here, during a famine that the mouse led him to to a concealed underground grain store - interestingly when Sir Mortimer Wheeler excavated the Roman fort at Y Gaer one of the finds was a granary. Baring-Gould and Fisher had suggested that one of the hypocausts, the underground heating passages of the fort, could have been used as a grain-store. JRE

