



## LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

### Newsletter 76 March-April 1997

Spring seems to have come very early this year - at least here in editorial Pembrokeshire. The daffodils were well in bloom for St David's Day and all of the grass fields were fertilized by mid-March. The 12-acres which I look at whilst typing the Newsletters was brilliant green and a foot deep in new growth at the end of the month.

By the last week of March we had already seen Peacock, Tortoiseshell and Red Admiral butterflies but, suprisingly the swallows have not beaten the record they established here two years ago when they arrived in time for my wife's birthday during the second week of March.

A couple of weeks later as I finish the last bits and pieces of this Newsletter we are in a quite severe drought: the grass has not stopped growing yet but the soil is remarkably dry for early spring.

#### 1997 SUBSCRIPTION NOW DUE

The subscription remains at £5.00 or £2.50 for a senior-citizen living alone. It is payable to our new Membership Secretary, Margaret Rees, Pen-Onn Farm, Llanccarf. A renewal form was enclosed with the last Newsletter. A Society lapel badge is available to members at the time of renewing their subscription. Roll-up!MAY WALK

A walk in the area of Castell Moel, Bonvilston will be led by Dr Madeleine Gray on Monday 5 May starting at 10.00 a.m. Details of the walk, meeting place and return to the village hall, are enclosed with this Newsletter. Dr Gray will discuss the history of the area in relation to the talk which she gave at the recent A.G.M. (see report below).

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, Margaret Rees, Pen-Onn Farm, Llanccarf, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan. Agenda items and correspondence for the Committee to the Secretary, Sheila Mace, Pel-y-Dryn, Llanbether, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 3AN. Arrangements for visits to sick members: Len Fairfax, Summit View, Aberthin, Cowbridge, Vale of Glam. (Cowbridge 772654).

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on 7 March in the Village Hall. It was quite well attended despite a hiccup in our announcement system - the editor failed to mention it in the last Newsletter. This might not have mattered but, unfortunately, our list of 1997 events was not ready for circulation. Some hasty 'phonecalls partially rectified the error but we apologize to anyone who

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consequently missed an interesting evening listening to Dr Madeleine Gray talking about the development of the parish from pre-Roman times to the present day.

Dr Gray, who is Co-ordinating Tutor for Local History in the University of Wales, College of Cardiff, has promised us an article, based on her talk, which will appear in a future Newsletter. She has also agreed to lead the May Walk, on Monday, 7 May, following footpaths around Castell Moel near Llege Castle Farm.

The AGM ran its normally uneventful course, most of the officers and committee members being returned unanimously by the assembled members. There are one or two changes which we have already noted, in particular the resignation of Phil Watts as Membership Secretary, his replacement by Margaret Rees and the appointment of Mr R Hutchings (Bluestones) as Auditor following the sad loss of Norton Evans earlier in the year.

Officers for 1997 as follows:

Chairman	Phillip Gammon.
Secretary	S. Mace.
Treasurer	S. Taylor. & M. Hobbs. Membership Secretary M. Rees.
Newsletter Editor	J. Etherington.

Committee for 1997 as follows:

L. Fairfax. (Sick Visitor) A. Griffiths. V. Watts. D. Higgs. G. Burrows. A. Taylor. M. Mace. R. Watts

Auditor: Mr. R. Hutchings, Bluestones. Llancarfan.

## WHIST DRIVE AND QUIZ-NIGHT by Phil Watts

Apologies for the lateness of this report which was held-over from our much delayed last Newsletter (ed).

The Whist Drive at the end of October was not so well attended as usual and our usual standard of 11 tables was cut to four. As well as the usual clashes the whist drive coincided with various holidays and the half-term. This was a passing hiccup and we shall not be discouraged from holding further whist drives in future.

The Quiz Night, held at the Fox and Hounds on 22nd November was a new venture for the Society and, sadly, was attended by only 12 people. However, it was a very cold night!!

Those who did come had a challenging evening under the stimulating questioning of Gwynne Liscombe who managed to include some local knowledge as well as general knowledge questions.

Winners were Mr & Mrs Phil Gammon and Mr & Mrs Derek Higgs with the able assistance of Margaret Rees.

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PHOTO'S OF THE PARISH RAILWAY? a request from John Etherington

In Newsletters 8 & 41 I wrote an article and some notes on the former Aberthaw to Cowbridge Railway which, shortly after its construction in 1892, was taken over by the Taff Vale Railway and finally closed in 1932. Part of the railway, between St Athan Road and St Marychurch Halt, ran through the parish of Llancarfan and, seen from the Flemingston side of the Thaw with steam trains in transit must have been quite a sight.

The first article and the subsequent note prompted all sorts of memories from members who remembered walking to and from one or other of the stations or halts, and travelling on the line to Cowbridge or further afield.

At the time, I asked whether any members had photographs of this part of the TVR branch line, in particular including locomotives and trains. No one replied but I have now been reminded of the request by finding a photograph of St Athan Road Station in John Hutton's Taff Vale Railway Miscellany (Oxford Publishing Co. 1988). Sadly, this was a modern photograph of the closed station

Does anyone have such a picture? If we don't have a response this time I shall try asking the same question in the Western Mail - someone must have some photo's.

## ABERTHAW

The last few Newsletters have featured items on the port of Aberthaw written by John Williams, the editor and the Acting County Archivist (Newsletters 71, 73 & 74).

Yet another reference to sea-trade with Aberthaw has turned-up in a book by G. Jenkins (Maritime Heritage - Ships and Seamen of Southern Ceredigion, Gomer, 1982):-

"Slates were transported from Cilgerran to the quays of Cardigan in lighters and those destined for export were known as "sea slates" as opposed to the "land slates" that were taken to the market by cart ---- sea slates, in the 1830s, sold at 9 shillings per thousand. Many were taken across the Irish Sea to Waterford, Wicklow and Dublin. In addition

large quantities were taken---to Bristol Channel ports such as Aberthaw, Cardiff and Swansea."

(More than ten years ago the editor paid £1 per slate for second-hand Caernarfon slates!)

#### A SENSE OF BELONGING: NAMES AND PLACES; NAMES AND OCCUPATIONS IN LLANCARFAN by Gwynne Liscombe:

For years I have heard names of people living in the Llanccarfán area connected to the place where they live or lived. This probably has much to do with the Christian names, and sometimes surnames, being similar and this method is used to distinguish between them.

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I am listing some that readily come to mind with some comments.

Lyn of Ford - Lyn of Moulton, Dai Glan-yr-Afon, Dil Talbots (Griffiths) (who now would be Dil Middlehill!!), Dil Pencarreg (Griffiths).

George Gibbon Middlehill (who would now be George Gibbon Talbots!!).

Ted of Ford - Ted of Crosstown (later, Ted Llancadle)

Bill Evans Broadhayes - Bill Evans Garnllwyd

Mary Top End (Griffiths of Caradog Cottage) - an interesting one. Mary moved to Rhoose from Llanccarfán over 40 years ago but I often hear her referred to even now as Mary Tepend.

Tom of Pennon - Tom Flaxland. Interestingly, I hear Margaret Rees (his daughter) sometimes referred to now as Margaret of Pennon.

Ruth (Watts) referred to as Ruth Abernant - maybe some years ago to distinguish from Ruth (Jenkins) The Hollies.

Bill (Thomas) Blackland - Bill (Thomas) of Greendown.

Lougher Llanvithyn, Lougher Treguff, Lougher of Cliff

Tommy Griffiths - Pembroke Cottage. Tommy Griffiths was an expert thatching peg maker who also harvested hay from the Churchyard and made a small mow under the large ash tree.

I wonder if this "sense of belonging" is dying out? The list is probably endless and I am sure there are nicknames and professional connections which many will remember e.g. Jo Blacksmith - maybe to distinguish from Jo Davies Middlecross.

In my younger days I heard talk of Wooden Jane and Iron Bill who I believe lived in a house between Bridge Cottage and Corner House - she had a wooden leg and he had an iron hook hand. Did they do the post round? I remember Mrs Rene Richards of Whitton Rosser Farm talking about them.

Possibly or even probably part of the decline in this phenomena is the absence of extended families living in the area.

Any further thoughts or perhaps even better examples?

A NOTE from Audrey Porter & Ruth Watts:

Congratulations to Pam Higgs, her daughter-in-law Linda, and Bethan & Megan for organising such a successful Bring & Buy sale on Saturday, 25th January in aid of the Blue Peter Leprosy Appeal.

After all their hard work they richly deserved the £250 they made. Thanks are also due to all those who helped and contributed on the day.

ST NICHOLAS - OUR NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE by Alexander Marriott Moore

Editorial note: This article was written in 1939 when the author was 83. It was originally entitled "Christmastide, 1939". Alexander Marriott Moore was born at St. Nicholas on August 4th, 1857 and died at Stroud in 1940. He became master saddler and post-master in the village before retiring to Gloucestershire in the mid-1930's.

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The typed manuscript, which was passed-on to me by Phil Watts, has probably not been published before, but it is such a useful comment on the last century in the Vale that I could not resist including it despite the lack of provenance and permission. It may have been written as an essay for a local eistedfodd - does anyone know? Apologies if there is anyone out there who should have been asked for permission.

ST NICHOLAS

This is my eighty-third Christmastide. A long time it would seem to many people, but to myself nothing extra-ordinary, probably because from my earliest days, and all my married life, I have received nothing but consideration from my parents, my dear wife and my children.

It is only when I review and think of the days long ago that the Christmas Day of 1857 seems a long way off. This is accounted for by a change in the people, the disappearance of a lot of friends and companions and their places being taken by a new generation. The

village itself is altering. New houses being built on or near the site which housed one's friends.

Cottrell House has been transformed from a country house to a mansion Dyffryn House now a magnificent pile of buildings, was much smaller and had fallen into a miserable state of decay and a lot of farmhouses and cottages have been re-built or extensively repaired.

The church was re-roofed before my time and a school and house was built in the 1850's. This was kept by a Miss Knowles, who was succeeded by Mr. Bilby, a Norfolk man who lived with us, and was a perpetual source of anxiety to my mother. He was an old man who had slipped down the social scale by drink, and indifferent teaching abilities, and who publicly burnt my first copy book, for which I was privately thankful, as I could not show such a despicable thing to my mother and father. He was perfectly harmless and well-liked, as education at that time was endured not encouraged.

My first recollection of the old church was on Advent Sunday when I was very small. My mother had bought me a new coat of thick, rough cloth, with brass buttons and a pair of gloves to go with it. I can still see myself sitting there and noticing for the first time the words of the collect for the day, "Cast away the works of darkness and put on the whole armour of light", and wondered what the old canon meant. Never since that time, have I heard or read this prayer but the whole scene comes before me, although this happened nearly eighty years ago.

At that time the choir sat in the West End of the church, and Miss Knowles used to play the harmonium. After she left, Mr Bilby used to give the Key Note. The conductor of the choir was Tommy Miller, who was the estate mason, and was allowed by Mr. Bruce Pryce to have his cottage rent free.

Mr. Miller's family had good voices and all sat in the choir. Later, John Miller was a principal tenor in Wells Cathedral. Miriam Miller used to take the soprano solos in the anthems. Thomas and William Miller had very powerful bass voices. Another good bass was Robert Thomas and he and his daughter were a good help. I remember the old man walking into church one morning with a neatly folded pocket handkerchief resting on his head. His daughter had placed it in his box hat ready for church and the old man had not noticed it.

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At this time the woodwork in the belfry was getting very shaky, so only one of the five bells could be rung. William Griffiths was the sexton and he had to climb the steps to the first floor to do this. When the old canon left the vestry to conduct the service, old Jimmy Ellis went from his desk at the bottom of the church and pulled a wire, which stopped old Griffiths' further exertion, and when the old man had clumped down, the service began. Mr Jimmy, as he was respectfully called, used to wear ribbed trousers, and as he had a fairly long stride, it resulted in a cwich cwach, which, I regret to say, was sometimes

augmented by the choirboys - who were not a bit better behaved seventy years ago than they are today.

We used to watch with great interest the arrival of the Dyffryn House party. First a footman would arrive with a large bag containing prayer and hymn books. Then the old squire came along, followed by the ladies. But this featured small compared with the arrival of Mr. Lewis Bruce, the Manor House. He had lost the use of his legs and had to be lifted off his horse by John Edwards at the church gate, and carried into the church. Cottrell people were also regular attendants and used to sit behind the door.

At this time St. Nicholas was a busy place - a village almost self-contained.

We had three butchers, two shoemakers, two carpenters shops, one saddler, one blacksmith, one tailor, two sawyers, two grocers, two wheelwrights, two public houses and one policeman. All were kept busy with work from the surrounding farms and villages. Then we had one bard, Tom Rees of the Downs, who used to wake me at nights en route for home after the closing of the public houses.

Transport services were very poor and a great deal was made of the good nature of farmers and others who used to drive to Cardiff. One two-horse bus used to come from Llantwit Major to Cardiff on Saturdays and a light wagon kept by William James of St. Athan occasionally had a seat to spare by the time it reached St. Nicholas. But a good many people walked and one lady, Sarah Ellis, used to walk into Cardiff each Saturday for her weekly supply of grocery and got home in time to cook dinner for her family.

The present day custom of wearing short skirts was anticipated but I cannot say that the effect was very good as thick woollen stockings and heavy laceup boots did not help very much. But at that time people had to walk and as soon as the roads were very badly kept, trousers and skirts well up out of the mud were a distinct advantage.

At this time St. Nicholas was well noted for people who had long passed the age limit. Kitty Earl, John and Ann Morgan, were over 85 years. Mr. Howard was nearly 90. Barabara and John Rees, William Earl and his wife followed closely. Tommy Minnett, the gardener at Dyffryn House, was an old man, but his sister who died at 100 was still living. I remember speaking to this old man and as I am now 82 years of age, the both of us can cover a considerable space of time.

Old John Jenkins, the tailor, would take his box hat out for an airing, but he was young and spritely at just over 80. Ann John and Mary Miles were contemporaries of Edward and Betty Jones. Only one or two were bedridden out of the lot and were able to walk to the door when the Poor Law officer called on Thursdays with a little help from the Parish Funds. He was a man named Eagleton.

The shortage of water for domestic purposes used to cause a lot of excitement and hard work during the dry summer months as it had to be carried from the well. Women and children formed a constant stream of water carriers down the Well Lane, and in several very dry summers we had to go further afield to Homri. No wheeled casks were used - share and share alike was the watchword until one morning it was found that Tom Morgan had gone down at midnight with casks, and had emptied the well. The non-existence of Parish Stocks prevented the dire punishment of the man! I used to look with boyish admiration of "Mary of Muddlescombe" who would lift a big milking pail full of water, place it on her head and walk all the way home without resting anywhere.

#### NEWS OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PLACES

With deep regret we announce the deaths of Calvert Harries of Penllyne and Bill Jones of Bryn Glas Farm, Coychurch. Our sympathies go to both families. Just before this Newsletter was completed we heard of the death of Megan Hamber after a serious and distressing illness. Many members knew Megan and others will remember her many contributions to this Newsletter. An obituary will appear in the next number.

The Society has been accepted as an "Organisation" member of the CardiffNantes Fellowship. Our thanks to Mick Mace for arranging this.

Joan Raum of Walterston wrote recently to tell the editor that she had talked with a Mr William Jones, a warder at St Fagans Museum of Welsh Life. Mr Jones is an amateur local historian with a particular interest in the Llancarfan area and expressed willingness to talk to me about his studies. However, I am so rarely in Cardiff and always tied-up with other business that I wonder whether anyone might volunteer, via Joan, to have a chat with Mr Jones either to collect information or to inveigle him into writing for us. Any offers?

Congratulations to Nia Jones who has been appointed by the National Farmers Union as an Area Officer for the Vale and Ogmore Valley. Nia lived for many years at Pen Onn Farm when it was farmed by her father, the late Dai Phillips. Nia and her husband continue to farm in Llancarfan.

#### IRISH NAMES IN THE VALE



Last year we wrote about the Irish surnames which have featured so prominently in the Llancarfan area. I had hoped we might have tracked-down the history of their arrival but, so-far, no more progress.

However, members might be interested in a note on the subject which Phil Watts sent me about a year ago. This related to one Owen McCarthy who appeared in the 1881 census list for Llanbethery.

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Phil wrote that there was a Hannah McCarthy who lived in Llanbethery until 1949. She occupied Sycamore Cottage where the late Mervyn Stanley later lived. This was when it was still a thatched cottage without an upstairs though there was a small window above the door but because of decay the room was not used.

Hannah is recalled as a witch-like woman who always wore a black conical hat. Ruth Watts, who came to the village as a young woman recalls having to visit Hannah one day and being very frightened by this woman in black. Hannah rarely left her cottage but she did once visit Ty Mawr where Rith lived when she first arrived in Wales.

As an interesting bit of family history, Harry Date, of Ty Mawr, became Vicar's Warden to Leonard Payne who married Phil and Ruth - Ruth then being Ruth Groves. Leonard later baptized the two children, Russel and Vivienne.