



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 78 October-November 1997

I introduced the last Newsletter with a lighthearted comment on "global warming" prompted by the foul weather during the Wimbledon fortnight. However, we need to think long and hard before accepting the opinion which is freely given by many journalists, that our climate has become very much warmer, explaining everything from hose-pipe bans to the supposed increase in hay fever! Unseasonal weather is far from new. The U.S. Consul in Victorian Cardiff, Wirt Sikes, wrote:- "On the 18th December 1877, strawberries were growing ripe in sheltered places along the lanes of Ystradowen and roses grew all winter on the sunny southerly wall of my garden in Cardiff." This was in his *Rambles and Studies in South Wales* (Stewart Williams, facsimile edition 1973). If Wirt Sikes lived today he might have joined our Society - his affection for Glamorganshire shines out of his writing:- "--- the country hereabouts is known by the peculiarly fit, if not very original title of the garden of Wales ---. The climate of the county is mild and pleasant; it has a southerly outlook upon the Atlantic Ocean; and it is altogether a beautiful and agreeable region." Quite so.

ADDRESSES: Contributions for the Newsletter (which will be very welcome) should be sent to the Editor, John Etherington, Parc-y-Bont, 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, Llancaf, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan. 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 Glam. (Cowbridge 772654).

HOG ROAST AND ANNUAL DINNER

The hog roast was a great success as it was held on a gloriously fine day at Pen-onn Farm by the kind invitation of Arwyn and Margaret Rees. One can hardly think of a better venue to see the Vale of Glamorgan at its best.

The Annual Dinner at the Bear Hotel was equally successful and our President, Sir Keith Thomas has written to Phil Gammon thanking him for a wonderful evening. Our social events have become memorable occasions for meeting old friends, sometimes from very long ago, and for making new ones. Long may it continue.

NEWS OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PLACES

The Fox and Hounds is now under the new management of Digby and Jenny Rees who have previously run the Three Horseshoes, Peterston Super Ely and the Cwmtalwg in Barry. Some will remember Jenny as Jenny Cooper at the Cwm Ciddy.

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St Cadoc's Church has been given £39,700 from the Heritage Fund of the National Lottery to assist in its programme of restoration. Re-roofing was recently completed, financed by donation and a grant from CADW. The Heritage award will permit the refurbishment of the tower, internal work and repointing of the exterior. St Cadoc's is not only the thriving parish church of our Community but also a Grade I listed building.

The last Newsletter contained a short article by Peter Hatherley of the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust which included some queries concerning the Llancarfan rag-wells. The editor sent some copies from previous Newsletters and it is good to see that Peter has used this information in an article for "Snippets", the Newsletter of the Bridgend Group of the Trust. Useful publicity for our Society and again we can reciprocate by saying that if any of our members wish to join the Trust, they should contact the Glamorgan Wildlife Trust, Parc Slip, Tundu (01656 724100).

Fifty years ago:- "Residents of three Vale villages were holding protest meetings over the lack of public water supply near their houses. When rainwater tanks ran dry --- people living in Llancarfan, Moulton and Llancadle had to walk miles to collect water from a stream." (Barry and District News - Memories, September 18th). Does anyone remember which houses were affected? Llancarfan village itself already had a mains water supply by 1947. Nothing much has changed. A few weeks ago Sam and Patsie Smith's column in the Gem reported problems with water supply in Llancarfan, the reservoir at St Lythans having run dry!

Another of the Barry and District's 50-Years Ago reports:- "An exploding gas container razed Pen-Carreg Farm, Bonvilston, near Barry, destroying the house plus all the furniture and property of the owner. Although the farmer suffered severe facial injuries when he was blown through a doorway by the explosion, the rest of the family who were in the house at the time managed to escape unhurt." Pen-Carreg was a thatched house and has been remembered in earlier Newsletters as one of the older thatched houses of the parish, as so many, lost by fire.

Sam and Patsie Smith also report the good news that their anti-litter campaign is taking effect. They have thanked the school-children for keeping School Hill litter-free and comment that other parts of the village seem to have followed suit.

Joan Scott-Quelch, Clerk to the Community Council, has sent me a questionnaire produced by The Village Lock-Up Association which is "devoted to recording Britain's village lock-ups, stocks, pillories, gallows, gibbets, whipping-posts and other early detention and punishment devices." The only information which I have is the story that felons were executed at Pancross

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(or possibly Llanbethery Cross) and that they were held at Crosston prior to the dreadful event. Does anyone know if there is any historical pedigree for this story? Please let the editor know.

Internationally acclaimed artist, Andrew Vicari, is in the news again. Andrew lived for a while at the Wesleyan Chapel before it was fully converted to a house by Jim and Brenda Grove. After a stay in Saudi Arabia, during the Gulf War, as the country's official painter he is now arranging an exhibition and party in Monaco to mark the 700th anniversary celebrations of Prince Rainier's family, the Grimaldis. Central to the exhibition will be a 19 x 6 foot tryptich, currently being painted in Monaco.

CHILDHOOD GAMES - AGAIN by John Etherington

In many previous Newsletters (amongst others 13, 14, 68 and 70!) we talked about games played by children in Llancarfan and elsewhere. It has been a popular memory. I was reminded of this when I recently read a book by Bill Twamley: Cardiff and Me 60 Years Ago (Starling Press 1984). It is a lovely unpretentious book which is, for anyone who has worked or lived in Cardiff, deeply evocative of the city - at least, as it was until about 25 years ago before demolition, new roads and "modernised" pubs took away so much of its individuality.

Someone, I think Phil Watts, wrote of a game called Strong Horses. This appears in Bill Twamley's book named, Bomberino, perhaps revealing an Italian influence?

I can do no better than to quote his description:-

"One boy leaned over and stuck his head into the belly of another boy stood against the wall and the other boys all lined up behind him, all hanging onto the one in front. Then the other team all vaulted onto their backs - and the bottom team counted up to ten and provided they could stand the weight, would shout Strong Horses and they had won. --- Oh yes, "Bomberino", when you are leaning over in the middle and the first runner vaults over, then the sudden crunching weight on your head and shoulders or your back and then another and another and counting to ten takes for ever ----".

I also knew this game, far away in Kent, where it was called Jumpeniwhacker this is a phonetic rendering - I imagine it never did have a "correct" spelling - the jump is obvious. Whacker because the riders used all the tricks of the unscrupulous jockey to inflict discomfort on the horses below whilst they counted to ten! Young boys have a delightful turn of sadism!

MORE BOOKS

Two local books which may interest some readers are *Memories Live Longer than Dreams* by Ronald Alway (Janus Publishing 1996) and *The Swansea I Remember* by William Loxton (Sou'Wester Books 1990).

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Ronald Alway was born in Bargoed shortly after World War 1 and describes his early years in South Wales, his war in the Welsh Guards, his middle life as a London policeman and finally, emigration to Australia. I picked this up in the library intending to read only the first section on South Wales but became so engrossed that I had to read it all. For those who subscribe to the "cock-up" theory of history his account of the 2nd World War is breathtaking, deeply disturbing and very moving. An unusual book.

William Loxton's memories of the 1880s-90s, in Swansea, were written in 1947 and published by his daughter forty years later. There are interesting duplicates of recollections or comments which we have already published in these Newsletters. For example, in writing about childhood games he recalls Cat and Dog, which we described in Newsletters 13, 14 and 68, but he adds the further vivid detail that it often resulted in a broken window and trouble for the children and parents!

OBITUARY: MEGAN HAMBER by Phil Watts

In our last Newsletter we mentioned that Megan had died and that an obituary would follow. Megan never actually lived in Llancafarn but spent many hours visiting relatives who she has written about in previous Newsletters. Members who knew Megan will remember her as the lady who taught piano in the years preceding World War 2. She used to travel from Barry to Llanbethery on the local bus then walk to Llancafarn and give some more lessons in Chapel House. Other members will remember Megan for her more recent piano tuition: she was still giving lessons at the time of her death. She also taught piano at Howells School, Llandaff, for many years, as well as at home in Salisbury Road. She will be remembered for her great fight in recent years, against cancer and for the cheerful and devoted manner in which she had nursed her husband Jim before his death. Megan's success as a tutor must have been her cheerful approach which she spread to the world at large; it was always a tonic to have a conversation with her. She will be sadly missed by all those who knew her.

OBITUARY: MARY EVANS by Phil Watts

It is with very great sadness we have to report the death of the Reverend Mary Evans, United Reform Church, ex Village Farm, Bonvilston. Mary lived for many years at Village Farm, helping her parents and brothers, Bob and David to run the farm. The farmhouse still exists as a thatched house next to the Red Lion and the farm buildings have been converted to residential use. While living at the farm, Mary combined the duties of nursing her parents and running the farm with involving herself in all the activities taking place in Bonvilston. Everything she undertook had

the air of being successful and well organised. She had the ability of involving many people who found themselves being willing helpers even though they didn't think so! Organisations that

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come to mind were the Young Peoples Guild, the Reading Room and the Annual Carnival and Gymkhana held on the football field at Village Farm on August Bank Holidays.

After the Evans family ceased to farm and live at Village Farm, Mary was trained to be a minister in the United Reform Church at Liverpool and then spent many years at the United Reform Church in Ely, Cardiff. Here she dedicated her life to helping people of all kinds using her cheerful personality to be a very successful minister. All these people will miss her as will all of us who knew her and are grateful for the pleasure of knowing Mary.

NEW ZEALAND OR, IN MAORI, AOTEAROA (the land of the long white cloud)

by Jeff Thomas, formerly

of Gowlog

It is a cold winter's Sunday afternoon in New Zealand - a good day to stay indoors and take the opportunity to appease my conscience by contributing an item to the next Newsletter. Having exhausted my memoirs of my upbringing at Gowlog I thought it would be a nice idea to tell you a little about life in New Zealand.

The seeds of my aspirations to explore the Commonwealth countries were sown at Llancarfan Primary when I was impressed, during my geography lessons, with the attributes of such far-away countries as Australia, New Zealand and Canada. I resolved then that if ever I had a chance to visit any of those countries I would grab it. That came some years later when, after leaving Cowbridge Grammar, I was working in the Air Ministry in London and was given details of a scheme which promised a job, accommodation and free travel to Wellington, New Zealand. The only catch was that I had to stay for two years, but that was not really a problem as it is now 44 years since I set off on a 5-week voyage from Southampton, a few weeks after the Coronation.

There is a misconception abroad that New Zealand is a tropical paradise in the South Pacific, but that is far from the truth as, if you look at your world atlas you will see we are almost as close to the South Pole as you are to the North. Being a long narrow country in a vast expanse of ocean New Zealand is subject to dramatic changes in weather and the climate varies significantly from the subtropical to the quite frigid. Our situation in the southern hemisphere means that the warmest areas are in the north and our warm months are December to February while many other things are the reverse of what you regard as normal. Being close to the international dateline we lead the world into each day and there is much competition at the moment from overseas television companies to secure the best vantage points to hail the new century.

When Abel Tasman and Captain Cook explored these islands in the 17th and 18th centuries they had been inhabited by the Maoris for many centuries. They had floated down here on rafts from various Pacific islands as far away as Hawaii. European settlement did not take place to any significant degree until the early 19th century and following the Maori Wars, Britain gained sovereignty in 1840, an event witnessed by the treaty of Waitangi. That document and the subsequent suppression of the Maori race is now haunting our Government which, like those of

many other countries, is having to front-up to a myriad claims from the indigenous peoples for financial compensation and the return of land.

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From about 2 million people in 1953 New Zealand's population has grown slowly to its current figure of 3.7 million (75% in North Island). Approximately 13% are Maori or part Maori. I can claim credit for a dozen or so of that increase for my parents and brother followed me to New Zealand and I went home to find a beautiful Welsh bride, Pamela, and we have a son Peter and two daughters Louise and Helen.

Wellington is our capital city and the seat of government but Auckland is by far the largest and that northern region accounts for half the population. New Zealanders are mainly from British stock (lots of English, Irish and Scots but not many Welsh) but many other European countries have strong representation here and in more recent times large numbers of Pacific islanders and Asian peoples have settled here, so it is now a truly multicultural society.

This is probably enough for now but if you would like me to, I will write again sometime on other features of this beautiful country.

FROM LETTY GARDNER in a letter to Phil Watts

Anna McCarthy (Hannah in Electoral Register) of Llanbethery was mentioned in the last Newsletter. She had two brothers and two sisters; all were bachelors and spinsters. Anna lived in Sycamore Cottage with Dick McCarthy and his brother (James in Electoral Register) would travel to Cardiff every Saturday to visit his other spinster sister via the train at Aberthaw and return on the last train which was known as the Rodney train (do not know why it had this name, perhaps it was on the side of the engine or was it the driver?).

Dick would be well lubricated with ale ("well oiled" is another expression used) and could often be found in the narrow part of the road on Lime-kiln Hill (now very much wider to accommodate modern traffic). He would be slumped against the hedge with his legs across the road. Letty and her mother would be returning to Llancadle after visiting the shop in Aberthaw. Mrs Bealing (Letty's mother) would say "Come on Dick you had better go home.", lift him up and point him in the direction of Llanbethery - another journey successfully completed.

The shop in Aberthaw was in a shed, kept by a Mrs Withers for many years. Dick McCarthy was drowned in a pool near Penmark Place on a wet windy night. He was in the habit of walking from Llanbethery to the Whitehall pub (now the Highwayman) for his refreshment as previously described on his trips to Cardiff. Apparently he mistook the normal path and gateway past the pool, stumbled and fell and in his drunken state drowned in the pool. A branch had fallen from a tree, blocking the path and being very dark, poor Dick was unable to negotiate the extra hazards, being so "well loaded".

It is said that McCarthys were buried in Llancarfan churchyard in a part reserved for Catholics which is situated between a line from the tower to Chapel House and the Fox and Hounds - a better description would be in front of Ceffyl Du (formerly John Etherington's). As I write this account I am thinking it would be a nice walk for the Society to start at the Wild Goose (originally the Masons Arms) and walk to the Highwayman (Whitehall).

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For many years, before the relaxation of the laws of Sunday opening and closing times, the Whitehall used to be run as a club but then Billy Phillips changed the character of the place and made it into what it is today - a restaurant over a public house

PHIL WATTS IN CONVERSATION WITH LETTY GARDNER

Letty tells me she has lived in Llancarfan all her life, was born in one of the two thatched cottages on the site where Kenson Cottages now stand (built for farm labourers in the 1950's) - the name escapes me - then later moved to the cottage next to Rose Cottage. She has now lived in the Manse for over 50 years. She nursed her husband Charlie for many years and proudly drives her car to dances in Rhoose and shopping expeditions to Barry at the age of 86. We wish her well as she waits to enter Llandough Hospital for an operation.

The thatched cottages were run in conjunction with Llancadle Farm, then farmed by Samuel Howell. Letty's father worked for him. When Samuel Howell died, Owen Howell took over. There was also another Samuel Howell, a son, who was killed in the 1914-18 war.

Another story from Letty is how she used to be taken to school in a home-made trolley - a box on wheels with shafts, pushed by her brothers Evan and George and presumably accompanied by sister Cassie. Letty, being the youngest desperately wanted to accompany her brothers and sisters to school, hence the construction of the trolley.

Letty showed me a photo, taken in 1914 of Miss Alice Rees's class in school. Also in the photo is Rhys Davies the Headmaster. Letty was not able to remember the names of all the pupils but some were:- Marsh of Moulton; Gwyn McGill of Ford; Gordon Gregory, Llanbethery; Les Griffiths, Llancarfan; Billy Jones, Llancarfan; Kitty Kear, Llancadle; Cassie Bealing, Llancadle; Grace Hartrey and her twin sister, Llancarfan; Vivienne Jackson; Victor Mortimer (brother of Len and Stan), Llancadle; Letty Bealing, Llancadle; Florence Thomas, Llanbethery; May Mortimer, Llancadle; May Evans, Top House, Llanbethery and Jack Griffiths, Gowlog.

For the school photo, Letty's mother had made a very nice dress which could be best described as "posh" but unfortunately on the way to school the dress got "skagged" by a nail in the trolley. The skag is clearly visible in the photo. We do not have an account of the repercussions of the ripped dress!!

In the last Newsletter, Joan Evans asked about Wooden Jane and Iron Bill. Letty says they lived in a cottage between Bridge Cottage (formerly Bridge House) and Corner House. It is not clear when this house disappeared: it could have been removed to accommodate Johnny Jones' coal lorry. I think I remember a coal lorry being parked on this site. We both agree that the grate of the house was on view until recent times (it may still be there - I will check).

Jane and Bill's surname was Thomas and they were the parents of Alice Rees of Llancadle who lived in Woodbine Cottage (now called Hazeldene). Alice Rees was the mother of Corina Rees who would have been known to Society members and local people before she died. While employed, she worked for Social Services. Alice Rees lived in Llancadle for many years as a widow - her late husband's name was Richard.

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Wooden Jane Thomas's mother was Peggy Morgan who lived at the bottom of Burton Hill, Aberthaw, near the original humpback bridge which is still visible from the new road. Letty recalls speeding motorcyclists and cyclists frequently landing in the front of this cottage - failing to take the corner. Letty also remembers that sheep used to be washed at this point. They probably dammed the water with a door across the narrow bridge arch just as used to be done at Abernant on the river Carfan. When Peggy Morgan died Wooden Jane and Iron Bill Thomas moved to the cottage at the bottom of Burton Hill. Letty recalls that she used to pass this cottage frequently to visit the shop in Aberthaw kept by Mrs Withers. As youngsters they would repeat in the form of a rhyme:- Wooden Jane and Iron Bill/all together and together/on the bottom of Burton Hill. Wooden Jane had a brother, William Morgan who used to visit Woodbine Cottage and would also go to Letty's mother Mrs Elizabeth Bealing of Cuba cottage, next to the Green Dragon.

Letty was born in 1911 and the above will be what she has heard as well as remembers. Many thanks to Letty for giving her time and so vividly remembering the past.

My father, William Watts moved to Llancarfan together with his brother and sister Syd and Mabel, in approximately 1906 or 1907. My father was born in 1892 - he did not attend Llancarfan school but his brother and sister did. I assume the school-leaving age to have been 14 then? They lived in Great House and I have heard that, in their mischevious moments, they and others would climb the roof of this house (name not known) and tie a wet sack over the chimney which would cause the house to be filled with smoke.

A LITTLE MORE ON MANORIAL MAPS by John Etherington

In the last Newsletter I wrote about the Manorial maps surveyed by Evans Mouse. These date from the early 1600s and contain various snippets of information which have aroused my curiosity. For example, the map of the Penmark estate (1624) shows a road, marked as Windmill Way and an adjacent enclosure named North Windmill.

The countryside surrounding Llancarfan was provided with many watermills but not so many windmills. The surviving tower of the mill at Llantwit is one of the nearest which I know. Predictably, it is built of the local Liassic limestone and this is probably why it has survived. In an area with plenty of natural stone, redundant houses and farm buildings were not often completely demolished and one would expect to see, at least, ruins of the windmill at Penmark, assuming that it also was a stone tower-mill.

Part of Windmill Way still exists as a modern trackway running southeast from Penmark, under the by-pass, and on toward the airfield. The North Windmill enclosure has been absorbed by the northern edge of Cardiff (Wales) Airport. The shapes of the adjacent fields are still quite recognisable after more than 350 years.

One or two older members have written and spoken of being employed in construction of the airfield during the War years. Does anyone have memory of seeing the ruins of a windmill base or the finding of its foundations?