



## LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

### Newsletter 79 December 1997

Our tenth anniversary year has passed successfully for the Society and we have even managed to beat last year's lowest ever total of only four Newsletters! In the early years of the Society we produced almost one a month but this is no longer possible. We are running short of easily accessible historical information and rely much more on current affairs to fill the pages nowadays. The only sadness is that some of the news is rather stale by the time it reaches you. However, expatriate members tell me that it is all read with interest and forms a valued link with home. This Newsletter is a bit out of the ordinary, being half-filled with our long-delayed proposals for a book on Llanccarfafan and an invitation to members to give their opinions and offer other help. I shall be particularly grateful for replies to the various queries you will find in the proposals - my address is the first one below.

Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to everyone.

**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, Phil Watts, 23 Heol Sirhwi, Cwm Talwg, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, CF62 7TG. 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).

### EVENTS PROGRAMME 1998

This Newsletter is accompanied by a 1998 events programme. Some of the dates have not been finalized and will have to be announced in future Newsletters. If you require further information, contact a member of the Committee (listed in the programme). You will notice we have some new functions this year: please let us know if you are tired of the current run of events and if you have any new ideas. Many thanks to all members who have supported us over the past ten years.  
PW

### DUCK EGG RACE

Continuing a tradition which is now a good many years old, Boxing Day late morning will see another Duck Egg race. It does not have the prizes of the lottery but the odds are much better! Please come along and support this charitable event.

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**The position of Membership Secretary has been taken-up again by Phil Watts. A renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter, which should reach you before Christmas. It will be recalled that Phil resigned this office when he moved from Abernant to Barry and Margaret Rees, Pen-Onn, took on the post, carrying out the duties with enthusiasm and bringing in many new members, particularly at the time of the Barbecue-Hog Roast. Margaret has relinquished the post because of the greater demands on her time by the newly formed golf club at Cotterell Park. For the next 12 months she will be Ladies Vice-Captain and, the following year, Ladies Captain. We wish her well for the next two years. We are sure she will carry out the duties with her usual thoroughness and enthusiasm. We are grateful for her services during the past year. She will continue to be a Committee member. PW

#### WHIST DRIVE

Held in the village hall on November 21st this event suffered competition from other functions and was not supported as strongly as some of those in the past. Twenty-five people played and everyone had an enjoyable evening. With the support of the raffle, assembled by Ruth Watts, we even showed a profit!

Here again we must say that we never aim to make profit, just to cover the expenses. The occasion is rated successful by the enjoyment of the social event. PW

#### DECEMBER GET-TOGETHER

This is the third occasion on which we have held this event in the Village Hall. From small beginnings we are gradually gaining the confidence of the people. Some 30, or so, folk attended and enjoyed sausage rolls, pasties, nuts, crisps and mince pies, thanks to the catering of Beryl Price. The greatest attraction was provided by Alan Taylor's mulled wine which brought the comment:- "You can have too much of a good thing!" Much of the evening was spent singing carols, with organist Molly Vincent. Another magnificent raffle was put together by Ruth Watts. PW

#### LLANCARFAN SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER, SEPTEMBER, 1997 by Phil Watts.

The tenth annual dinner of the Society was held at the Bear Hotel in Cowbridge as we were not sure whether the Fox and hounds restaurant would be open in September, consequent on Edgar Balchin's retirement. The decision proved to be a good one, despite misgivings about holding this celebration outside the village.

We have previously held dinners in the Fox and Hounds, the Llancafarn Village Hall and at Rhoose Hall (before ours was renovated). We shall probably be able to make a secure booking at the Fox and Hounds for next year.

All our dinners have attracted people we have not seen for many years and this was no exception. At the risk of leaving someone out I will name those who travelled from afar: Sir Keith Thomas from Oxford, Harold Fairfax from Kent, Tom and Doris Lougher from Vancouver (third time to an annual dinner), Margaret Griffiths (Moseley) from Cumbria and Jennifer from Shrewsbury,

-3-

Barbara Milhuisen from Southern France, Mike and Val Cram from Gower, Richard and Mary Lougher from Pyle, Towyn and Audrey William from Wenvoe as well as locals from Barry, Cowbridge, Llancafarn etc. The fact that it was held on a Wednesday prevented some people from coming - we do try to accommodate the majority.

The dinner itself took its usual informal course with speeches kept to a minimum so that there was more time for a chat and to socialise. Our chairman, Phil Gammon introduced Sir Keith after mentioning the events of the year and the financial state of the Society. The future production of a Llanccarfan book is very much on peoples minds - it is felt that some progress should be made in this direction.

Sir Keith began by saying that he was very conscious of being an absent president. I am sure, after listening to him talk, we were all very grateful for his attendance, and look forward to hearing him speak again. Sir Keith spoke of his childhood in Llanccarfan and his memories of the years until he left for the army in 1950. As he recounted his life in Llanccarfan as a boy, it seemed that there is one common factor for those who spent their formative years here: we all had a happy childhood. This is why Llanccarfan means so much to those who grew up here. I did not fully realise this until I left on April 3rd this year.

I am in the fortunate position of being able to drift in and out of the village when I feel like it. Since moving I have compared the speed of life (and of the car) - when we lived in Llanccarfan we took everything for granted: the hedges, the trees, the birds, the hills and the valleys anything we missed on the way out we could have a look on the way back. Now we drive more slowly and take it in the first time. So I now know how those who have left feel and appreciate why the village means so much to us all.

In his speech Sir Keith mentioned the school, the church, the church hall, and the "pub". The essential ingredients for any thriving village, all four have seen some very good years - the school since 1875, the hall since 1912, the pub for three or four centuries and the church since the fifth century.

Each one of them has also experienced years when things were not so good. Fortunately all four appear to be in capable hands now. The school has around 100 pupils, the hall is flourishing and well-used, incidentally receiving many compliments on the hanging baskets provided by the Llanccarfan Society this year. The south aisle of the church has been re-roofed and repaired, also the porch, at a cost of over £100,000. The second phase is shortly to be commenced with work on the tower and bells in time for for the millennium. We have new tenants in the Fox in the persons of Digby and Jenny Rees, both well known throughout the Vale. Jenny was the daughter of Jim Cooper, Cwm Ciddy, and Digby, son of David Rees, well known to the farming community as a member of John Rees and Sons of Merthyr St, Barry.

Whilst writing, I was trying to remember all that Sir Keith had said but I have failed! The strong point that comes through is that he had a very happy time while he lived here and is always happy to return. This goes for all of us, past and present. We are all trying, at this stage to put together the stories told to us by our parents the stories we only half listened to, perhaps suggesting that we were many years too late in forming the Llanccarfan Society. Amongst other things, the proposed Llanccarfan book will contain accounts of life from about 1900 to 2000 - what is called in modern terminology, oral history. Let us hope that we can all get it together. I am sure that our editor will be glad of Sir Keiths offer of help. Not to be outdone by such an eloquent speaker as Sir Keith, the evening concluded with Gwynne Liscombe, Phil Watts and Tony Thomas having

their say on life in the village for young boys. Valerey, Sir Keith's wife, was presented with a bouquet of flowers. The raffle prizes were won by P. Watts, T. Thomas and Mary Lougher - it couldn't be a fiddle - just proves they bought a lot of tickets!

It was a wonderful evening much to be remembered - and into the next day before some people went home. Some folk did not have to go home but stayed the night at the Bear Hotel - what a clever thought!

#### OBITUARY - MORFYDD (MAIMIE) WATTS by Phil Watts

At the age of 86, we have to record the death of Morfydd Watts on Wednesday November 19th.

Maimie had suffered poor health for the past couple of years. She fought adversity with great courage and stubbornness, never complaining unnecessarily. She lived the last 15 years of her life in Rhoose, having moved from Dalemead in Llanbethery,

She will be remembered by many of our members as Miss Thomas, who taught the middle class in Llancarfan Primary School when the head was George F. Davies and the infant teacher was Connie Griffiths. She also taught under the headship of Mr Samuel.

Maimie came to Llancarfan in 1930 as a student teacher. She was a native of Brynamman, a connection which she kept all her life through her sister, Menna. Welsh was her first language in 1930; she had been a pupil of Ystalafera Grammar School. Her quiet disposition served her well during her career, gaining the confidence of the children who, having endured the more forceful methods of Miss Connie Griffiths, in the infants section, needed a couple of years of confidence-building as preparation for the scholarship class of Mr George (Gaffer) Davies.

Mamie married Sid Watts in August 1942, had one daughter, Daphne, now living in Witney, Oxford, and two grandchildren, Rachael and Michael.

While she was single she lived with Mrs Sweet at New House, Llancarfan, and later with Mrs Weight at Chapel House. She started her married life, living in High Croft Llanbethery in rooms with Mrs Grey then moved to Chapel House, Llancarfan (the part nearest the road), then back to Llanbethery when the Council houses were built.

She had a good knowledge of all the old families of Llancarfan and we shall miss another connection with the past. Though she lived for 67 years in the Llancarfan area she still considered Brynamman home. We are grateful that she stayed and for the part that she played in the community.

GALES by John Etherington

A few weeks ago we survived a severe gale which reminded me of the Society's Annual Dinner in 1989. This was held in Rhoose Community Hall on 28th October. During the afternoon it blew so hard that many trees were laid-low around our lanes and at one time I noticed that my car, parked outside the Hall, was rolling like a ship at sea - I was a bit concerned that it would be overturned. Rhoose airport recorded a gust of 124 m.p.h., an all-time record for the area, but despite the weather most of our hardy members arrived for the Dinner. The U.K. gust-record is only 20 m.p.h. more than this so Rhoose was pretty nasty place that afternoon.

The day after writing about the Rhoose gale I happened to read an article in Maritime Wales (Volume 10, 1986) entitled "The Great Gale of 1908". This gale blew from the southwest from Monday, 31st August to Tuesday, 1st September. Amongst its casualties was the three-masted sailing ship Verajean which, after attempting to leave the Bristol Channel in the teeth of the wind, was beaten back to Barry Roads where she tried to anchor in deep water but both anchors over-ran their cables and were lost. The Verajean was driven ashore on Rhoose Point and, by some miracle, the crew escaped.

In the same storm a four-masted barque, The Amazon, drove on to Margam sands after leaving Port Talbot. Her master was a former landlord of the Red House Hotel, Ely Harbour (known to some members, I suspect). The wreck is commemorated in the name of the Amazon public house in the Sandfields area of Port Talbot, but it is a sad reminder that the master and several crew were drowned in the disaster.

We have written about various floods and snowstorms which have afflicted Llancarfan but I wonder whether members can remember any severe gales and their consequences for the parish? Dates to think about are 1938, 1926, 1945 and 1954 amongst others.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT

The Llancarfan maps, drawn by Syd Perkins, are available again on parchment paper - well worth a good frame. Each map contains a terrific amount of information which was gleaned from many sources including conversations with older members of the village community (the maps were drawn in 1969). The same maps have also been printed on tea-towels.

Prices are: Maps      £10.00 each

Tea-towels £ 3.00 or two for £5.00

#### NEWS OF MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND PLACES

Phil Watts has written an account of Bellringing during 1997 which will appear in the next Newsletter. For the moment, anyone who is interested in learning the art, or who can already ring, should telephone Phil on 01446 738501 or Malcolm Davies, 01445 750241: ringing sessions are on Tuesdays from 7.30 to 9.00 p.m. alternating between Penmark and Bonvilston.

A couple of Newsletters ago we commented on a proposal to use the Barry Island Butlin's Holiday Camp as a prison. Sense has prevailed and the site has been acquired by the Vale Council

who propose its redevelopment as a recreational facility, open space and an area of varied housing development. Seems more satisfactory for our neighbours in Barry!

The Barry and District News of 20 November recorded the opening of the Heart of the Vale Trail, a 15 mile network of restored footpaths linking Llanblethian, Llanmaes, St Athan and Llanbethery. Clearing these public paths has taken 3000 hours of volunteers' work. It may not come as a surprise that the opening was sadly marred by one landowner who barricaded and fenced a part of the route. The Vale Council intends to enforce the legal right of way.

In the last Newsletter, Letty Gardner called the last train to Aberthaw "the Rodney". The editor doesn't know why this name was used but it applied to all last trains, not just those to Aberthaw. In his book which we reviewed in the last Newsletter, Ronald Alway recalled that the last trains on both the Taff Vale Railway and the Great Western lines in the Rhymney Valley were called Rodneys. Anyone know the explanation?

Jeff Thomas, writing in the last Newsletter told us that New Zealand would be the first inhabited land to welcome the dawn of the year 2000. The Geographical Journal identifies Hakepa Hill on Pitt Island, in the Chatham Group, as the first land to catch the sun on 1st January, 2000. Most of Antarctica will of course see the sun immediately after midnight, but as it will not have set, it can't rise either - can it?

LLANCARFAN: A VALE VILLAGE: PROPOSALS FOR A BOOK by John Etherington

#### INTRODUCTION

Long-standing members of the Society will know that we have always intended to publish a book outlining the history, geography, social aspects and wildlife of Llancarfan. This proposal was formulated at around the time of that first momentous meeting, convened by Phil Watts in the Fox and Hounds during 1987. I don't think any of us realised then that the Society would prove to be so successful. We certainly did not think ahead ten years!

The proposal was put on ice at about the time I left Llancarfan to live in Pembrokeshire. Now that my retirement is becoming just a bit less busy I have resurrected the suggestions which were first looked at by the Committee before I left the village in 1991. At a Committee meeting on May 13th this year it was agreed that I should go ahead with the planning stage of the book.

I now have an outline of the chapters which are needed. Some of the material is already written and simply needs editing. Other parts will be an anthology of extracts from previous publications and I am currently tracking down authors and publishers to obtain permissions for this. Finally there are some missing chapters which will need more research.

## TITLE, TYPE AND PRODUCTION OF BOOK

I have proposed the provisional title "Llancarfan: a Vale Village" and my first question is whether anyone can dream-up a better short title than this?

I envisage a book of 150 to 200 pages comprising about threequarters text and the remainder, photographs, maps and other figures.

With a substantial sum available from Society funds to underwrite the book it should be possible to produce something of quality, with a number of colour illustrations. We need to consider whether the underwriting is simply "pump priming", the cash to be recovered from sales, or whether we want to subsidise production to keep the final price artificially low (at least for members). Your views will be welcome.

I would suggest a specially bound limited edition by previous subscription, offered to members (about a hundred copies?) and a standardly bound edition for sale.

The content of the book would not be "academic" - rather it would be pitched at a mid-level to appeal to casual readers as well as being an authoritative study of the village. There are several local publishers/printers who undertake work of this sort and I know of others elsewhere in Wales. I have already had some provisional discussions and obtained informal quotes.

## CONTENTS

Contents will be as follows subject to suggestions for improvements and alterations. Please write to John Etherington to express your views. The letters represent sections of the book and the numbered headings are chapters.

### A. PREFACE

### B. INTRODUCTION

### C. THE SETTING

1. Geographical setting and today's landscape
2. Prehistory and early history

### D. SOCIAL GROUPS

3. The Church: St Cadoc's - St Illtyd's. The "Age of Saints";

- Monasticism; Henry VIII to modern times; Disestablishment onward
4. The Chapels
  6. Public Houses in the parish
  7. Village Societies past and present

#### E. WORK

8. Village crafts and industry: the blacksmith shop; wheelwrighting and carpentry; mills; other crafts
9. Agriculture past and present

#### F. SOCIAL ORGANISATION

10. Schools
11. Houses old and new; Buildings and building materials
12. Wells and water supplies
13. Public services - water and electricity

#### G. FAMILIES

14. Families thro' the ages

#### H. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

15. Wildlife and conservation

#### I. MISCELLANY

16. A Llancarfan miscellany - anecdote, folklore etc.

#### J. THE FUTURE

17. The future: planning and prospects

#### ILLUSTRATIONS

I already have copies of a number of old photographs, drawings, paintings etc. but once the project is under-way a copying session would need to be arranged. I shall be grateful to know of any old photographs, drawings or paintings of the village which I have not already seen.

Aside from production of the book, I would like to compile an inventory of paintings and drawings of the village, both published and unpublished, amateur and professional. Any information would be valuable.

There must be many property Deeds which I have not seen which may be useful. Have you seen those for your land and do they go back to pre-World War 2 or earlier times?



#### TIME SCALE

When Mick Mace retired from the Chairmanship of the Society he made the valuable suggestion that the book should appear in time for the Millennium. I hope we might meet this target, at least by publishing during the year 2000.

It would be particularly appropriate as Llanccarfan reached its peak of fame about a thousand years ago.