



THE LLANCARFAN SOCIETY

Newsletter 85 December 1998

Editorial Christmas is approaching as I write these notes. Another year has passed and it is encouraging that it has seen a resurgence of activity in the Society with many more people involved in collecting information for us. The Newsletter has benefited - six have appeared during 1998 and all indications are that we shall continue with this level of publication. I am very grateful to all those who have helped by writing, and sending me material. A very Happy Christmas to you all, a rewarding New Year, and if it includes some resolutions to write that long-delayed article, so much the better!

Last month I spent a day in Llanccarfán, talking to folk who have been doing research for the Newsletter and book. Graham Brain showed us his collection of photographs which have been scanned into his computing system. It is becoming very impressive, with more than 100 photographs, some almost a century old, through to events in the recent past. When the collection is finished I suspect it will be one of the best for any village in the Vale. These photos can be seen during social events in the future and will also appear on the Internet site. We hope to use some for a millennium year calendar, and of course, many will appear in *Llanccarfán, a Vale Village*. It is also intended that many of the pictures will be transferred to CD-ROM for sale to members, which will allow them to be shown on any up-to-date home computer screen.

On the day of that visit I saw, for the first time in daylight, the work which has been done on St Cadoc's Church. It is looking very fine and the final tidying-up will include the removal of those unsightly overhead electric cables to the Church and the surfacing of the main path and the path which crosses the churchyard to the gate by the *Fox and Hounds*. With the newly refurbished peal of bells it will be a church that the Rev. Alfred Hughes would have been proud of, after his appeal for help in 1875!

St Cadoc's engraving - date. My visit to Llanccarfán a few weeks ago gave some more information on the picture of the church which we featured on the back page last time. In 1875, Vicar, Alfred Hughes used it in an appeal for funds to restore the Church. Some of you may have recognised it as a copy of a coloured engraving which hangs in the church. Mary Gammon tells me that the coloured version is to be used as a Christmas card for the church, this year. The original picture was presented to Vicar Morgan in the early 1800's but we don't know exactly when. Whilst Graham Brain was scanning the colour picture into his collection, we noticed that a gravestone dating from 1848 was present in the picture but an 1864 stone was not shown - it pinpoints the time of the original engraving between those dates. John Cann spotted the dates

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We will also be pleased to print short announcements of village functions but they must be sent in writing, at least 2 to 3 months in advance.

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Llancarfan School Remembrance Day 11th November 1998

by Gwynne Liscombe

I spent a few hours in our field adjacent to Llancarfan School on Armistice Day. I was aware of the 80th anniversary of the cessation of hostilities in 1918 and had resolved to stand quietly reflecting for a few minutes at 11 a.m. Many young men from Llancarfan went to that dreadful war and, as can be seen from the War Memorial, many did not return nor from the Second World War.

I noticed activity at the School just before the appointed hour when the children and their teachers came to stand in a semi-circle between the old school buildings and the new class rooms. It was a fine, clear and still morning, perhaps reflecting the peacefulness that fell on the cessation of hostilities in 1918.

What happened next impressed me considerably. The children observed the silence standing peacefully still and eleven-o'clock chimed through a radio the teachers had with them. They sang a lovely song entitled (I now understand) *Last Night I had the Strangest Dream* by Ed. McCurdy. After a few more respectful moments they filed away to their classrooms.

How good it was to see some of the excellent traditions of Llancarfan School, not only scholastic, being continued in this generation. Miss Smith, the head-teacher and her staff are to be congratulated on arranging such a touching act of remembrance.

One can only hope the generation of children observing something which their great grandparents experienced will never have to come face-to-face with the tragedy of war themselves.

Last night I had the strangest dream
I ever dreamed before
I dreamed the world had all agreed
To put an end to war

1st and last verse - Ed. McCurdy (1950)

Editor- It is singularly moving and appropriate that Gwynne should have given us this piece for Newsletter 85 which also contains the story of Llancarfan School under the head-ship of Rees Davies, who lost his two youngest boys to this worst war the world has seen.

The full song appears on Simon & Garfunkle, *Wednesday Morning, 3 a.m.* (1964)

Welsh translation: I am most grateful to Non Evans of Trewallter Fawr for volunteering to help with this. See Newsletter 84.

A highly respected man - by Mary Gammon

Derived from School log books, the 1891 Census and other sources

Rees Davies was appointed head teacher of Llancarfan School on 4th January, 1886, when only 29 years of age. He remained for 36 years until his retirement in 1922. He and his wife, Margaret, both from the Swansea area, already had four children and another six were to be born to them in Llancarfan, at fairly regular intervals over the next 13 years. The children were:-

William. b. Swansea 1.7.79
Edith Louise. b. Carmarthen 24.6.81
Catherine Jane. b. Swansea 28.6.83
Alice. b. Carmarthen 3.9.85
John Llewellyn .b. Llancarfan 3.5.87
Olwen. b. Llancarfan 4.5.89
Idris Jones. b. Llancarfan 19.7.91
Glyndwr. b. Llancarfan 1.1.93
David Rhys. b.Llancarfan 24.2.95
Tudor. b.Llancarfan 14.1.99

Rees, with the assistance of several of his children, as pupil certified teachers, was to make a big impact on the development of schooling in the village.

They lived for many years at the property designated “Cottage No.17” in the 1891 Census, between the *Parsonage* and *Pennon Vawr* (today *Pen-onn Farm*). It seems from Sid Perkin’s map (1969) that this must have been *Newmill* - quite a squash by today’s standards! Later, they moved to Barry whilst Rees continued to teach in Llancarfan School.

The eldest son, William, became a pupil teacher at the age of 14, in May 1894 but left the following year having secured a position with “The Engineering Line” in Barry. The school log book notes that “not being much in love with the profession (he) left today”!

INSERT PIC Rees Davis

“Nepotism” ,however, continued when Catherine became a paid monitor in November 1895, at the age of 12+. She continued until May, 1897, when she started to prepare for the pupil teacher examinations. She was successful in these and was appointed in January 1898.

The log book records that on several occasions “ a member of the Board of Llancarfan School visited the head teacher at his home when the pupil teacher was under

instruction.” Catherine can be seen with her class in a photograph of 1907 - the year she obtained her Teacher’s Certificate.

Alice, the fourth child, also became a teacher and appears in a photograph of the “Lower Division, Llancarfan Council School” in 1912 when she was 27.

Of the four boys who went on to the Barry Council School, two were also to become teachers. Glyndwr, notably at Barry Grammar School where he taught maths for many years. and Idris who was eventually to succeed his father at Llancarfan. Olwen and David appear to have left Llancarfan School at 14.

David was to become a Rifleman with the 11th Battalion Rifle Brigade and fought in the First World War. Sadly, he was killed in action on October 3rd, 1915. His name appears on the War Memorial and his grave is in the Royal Irish Rifles Graveyard, Laventie, near Armentières. Maurice (Morris) Griffiths of *Bridge House* (now *Bridge Cottage*) , a childhood friend, was at David’s side when he was killed.¹ Poignantly, they are also standing together in a photograph of 1907, with David’s father, Rees, in the front row.

The log book records, rather starkly “the head teacher was away owing to family bereavement - son killed in action in France”.

By the time of David’s death the family had moved to 35 Oxford Street, Barry - maybe to accommodate those of his children who would be travelling by now to jobs, or Barry Council School. Rees continued to come to Llancarfan for the next seven years, and one wonders if any other form of transport, apart from a bicycle or foot, was available to him!

INSERT PIC School group. Caption: Rees in the front Row, David top centre next to Maurice (tallest)

On April 3rd 1922 Rees retired and his son, Idris, stepped into his shoes. It was not an auspicious beginning for only one teacher and a handful of children managed to fight their way through a heavy snow storm and the register was not opened.

Only 18-months later, on Wednesday, October 1st, the log book states “It is with deep regret that we hear of the death of the late schoolmaster, Rees Davies who had charge of this school for over 36 years. His death took place on Tuesday morning, September 30th, after a long illness. Mr Davies was greatly appreciated and highly respected in this locality.” This entry was written by his son, Idris.

Three years later, Ivor, the youngest son of Rees and Margaret was also killed in action. at the age of 19. He was buried at Le Cateau, just a few days before the end of the war. Stoically, just a days after receiving this news, Rees entered “School closed in view of excellent war news received.” One can only imagine the toll that the loss of their two youngest children, in this way, must have taken. Having also lost a daughter in 1913, it seems that family tragedy was never far away.

¹ We know that David and Maurice were together from research by Campbell Reed, who was Maurice Griffith’s nephew. More will appear in a future article on WW 1 including the story of other Llancarfan participants in this worst war in history.

The Fox and Hounds. Part IV - A Conversation with Trixie Phillips in February 1998 by Phil Watts

In 1983 there was a change in policy for the *Fox*. Instead of having a manager the *Fox & Hounds* part was leased to Joyce Andrews, her daughter Sally and son-in-law Peter. The *Old Parsonage* had now been sold and Trixie moved to Cowbridge. Mike Evans then became licensee from 90-95. Who can forget the trepidation of Mrs, Evans in drawing her first pints behind the bar. She previously worked for Dan Evans.

The pub was then run by Mike and Charlotte Ashmore for the second time, but as landlord and landlady, not as manager and manageress as in 1976. They had lived in the area since their arrival in that year. Charlotte had taught in the school and Mike ran his video business from *Cattwg Cottages* at Pancross.

Since July 1997 the Fox has been run by Digby and Jenny Rees, both well known in the pub trade. They came to Llancarfan from the *Cwm Talwg*, having previously run the *Three Horse Shoes* in Peterston. Jenny is daughter of Jim Cooper of the *Cwm Ciddy* near Barry, Digby son of David Rees who ran John Rees, Corn Merchants, in Barry, with brother John.

During all this coming and going, Trixie maintained a nucleus of dedicated faithful staff. In the early fifties we had Grace Morgan, Alice John, Alice Rees, and for all the years Trixie was at the *Fox*, Olwen Hopkins worked both there and at the *Parsonage*, often changing her uniform after the cleaning work to the more refined bar work. She could often be seen drawing a pint with a little chuckle and a little shake of the right leg. For a number of years staff could be found in the village, but as the pub expanded so it became more difficult to recruit locally.

After Tudor Liscome retired from the baking business in 1958, Mrs. May Liscombe of the *Woodlands* found time to work at the *Fox*, preparing food, washing up and generally keeping a motherly eye on everyone. The favourite recruitment area for *Fox and Hounds* staff was from St. Athan. After the restaurant opened it was necessary to send out a mini-bus to bring in the staff, and for years, the red mini-bus with the pipe-smoking Edgar Balchin could be seen making its way up and down Llancadle road several times a day. Staff also came from Barry - the best known of these was Mrs. Lil Parsons with transport arranged by Trixie or her staff. Lil Parsons was ably assisted by Mrs Morrison, Moulton, and Mrs Hammet, Gileston.

I have already mentioned one set-back for the *Fox* when the Suez crisis arose. Another difficult period followed Barbara Castle's legislation bringing in the breathalyser in October, 1967. Everyone thought that the police would be waiting in all pub car parks. Though this did not happen, it did need thinking about. The *Fox* got over this by concentrating on supplying food in the bar, and later opening the restaurant in April, 1969. The cost of a full meal then was 25/-.

Before this we had a referendum on 'wet or dry' for Sunday opening. Glamorgan became a wet county from 1961, with Sunday hours 12 - 2 pm. and 7 - 10 pm. Trixie remembers two of her better known customers having a contest as to who would be the first to have a legal pint on a Sunday. Gwyn Thomas, the well known broadcaster,

author and teacher, won by a short head from Professor Pryde who had his own labelled chair in the pub. During the hectic days of the 60's it was necessary to have a car park attendant to see that cars were parked properly and that nobody was blocked in. Car Park attendants were David Morgan, Peter Badcock, Russ Watts, Steve Booker, Gwilym Phillips and, later, Ivan Jankovic. They also put the empty bottles back in their cases - a lot of bottles used in those days.

The *Fox* was one of the first pubs to introduce ice into drinks and the car park boys dealt with the buckets of ice that had to be broken up - there was a difference of opinion of the size of the ice and the size of the gin and tonic glasses! The *Fox* also introduced a lot of fruit into drinks, Pimms a speciality and many other fancy drinks. Shandies also had two fruits and ice. The popularity of the shandy drink helped to beat the breathalyser.

Some of the characters who used the pub when Trixie first took on the *Fox* were MeIvyn Morgan, *The Green*, Mog Jones (*Broomwell*), Dilwyn Griffiths, *Pencarreg*, W.R. (Bill) Evans, *Garnllwyd*, Bill Watts, *Abernant*, Cliff and Eva Morgan, Enoch Lewis, Schoolmaster, Mike (Stan) Stanley, Decorator, Llanbethery, Les Harray, Gwynne Liscombe¹, Bill Price, *Pancross* and *Flaxland* and Bill Rees, *New Mill*.

.Favourite customers of everyone were Roy and Mary Booker. They were always on hand if there was any odd job that needed doing. Trixie introduced fairy lights around the bar area and Roy, being an electrician, was in charge of servicing and repairing the fairy lights. Very often customers would remove bulbs to annoy and tease Roy! For many years he ran a Ford car, followed by a Morris 1000, these were the recognised signs that Roy was in the bar. Roy was so popular that people used to come to the pub just to see him and have a pint as well. He was very good company and always had a good story to tell.

The Barry regulars often had races as to who would be the first to get through after a heavy fall of snow. This was usually between Norman Bowles and Norman Andrews, These people were also favoured with extra drinks for taking staff home when a lift to Barry was required. Some of the locals trying to get out of the village to work, as well as enjoy a rare visit to the pub, would bring the bread back in exchange for spare milk from the farmers who couldn't get their milk to the dairy.

Two of the people who influenced Trixie while she was in the *Fox* were the two who never used the premises: they were Joe Lewis, a strict teetotaller, and Tudor Liscombe also a non-drinker in later life. They were always helpful and good neighbours. Trixie always tried to treat the people of Llanancarfan with great consideration. Joe Lewis provided a piece of ground for the bridge to be built for the new car park.

Many people believe that it was the *Fox and Hounds* that put Llanancarfan on the map and are grateful for the increase in value of property. Who can remember property in the village changing hands for hundreds of pounds? - now it is thousands of pounds!!

The *Fox* has often been flooded after quick thaw of snow and at times of high rain fall. Water would collect behind Pancross wood and then take the least line of resistance between the *Woodlands* and *Black Horse*. The water would cascade against the wall of

the churchyard and down the front of the *Fox*, much of it flowing through the bar and living accommodation. The highest flood took place in the summer of 1968 when there was heavy fall of very large hailstones, suddenly melting, bringing a torrent of water to the village. There are photographs showing the water lapping the top of the Wesleyan chapel wall. On another occasion, a helicopter landed on the new car park checking to see if all was well in the village.

The *Fox* had certain gimmicks that other pubs did not have. On every table was placed a card with a brief history of the *Fox* and a map with directions how to get there, and maybe find your way home. The cards described the *Fox* as being on the banks of the Whitton!! Customers were invited to take away a card and hand one to a friend. As customers became more regular so they were allocated their own labelled glass and that was the glass that would be used every time they came to the pub. Another help was that your drink would not be confused with another's. My father used to keep a tag which he dropped in his pint which said "This is Bill Watts' pint"! Trixie felt guilty that, because the *Fox* was so popular, the locals were not able to have their fair share of the use of the pub, so she arranged that locals could have a free pint on a night when not so busy - an arrangement that was much appreciated by all.

Another crisis that the *Fox and Hounds* survived was when Bill Hill left to organise the airline catering at Rhoose airport when the trips to Spain became more popular. As well as running the cellar and bars Bill produced the bar meals, sandwiches, rolls, he had his bakehouse behind the stable-doors on the car park. Who can forget his lovely bread? There was always a selection of irresistible rolls and another speciality, "Scotch Eggs" on the end of the bar between the main bar and the lounge bar. Bar trade was at its height during Bill and Betty Hill's days of 1968 to 73. When Bill Hill left, John Green took over the downstairs catering. John was another character who brought more status to the *Fox*. John had run pubs and catering in the Channel Islands and he left to cater at the Royal Porthcawl Golf Club.

The *Fox & Hounds* was able to function as a considerable going concern during miners strike and the power restriction, when Ted Heath took-on the Unions, and introduced the three day week. Edgar Balchin came from Machen to open the *Fox & Hounds* Restaurant in April 1969, he brought with him his brother Bernard and his sister Barbara as the waiting staff. Barbara stayed with Edgar until he retired in March 1997. As the restaurant became more and more popular, Edgar wanted more staff. Bill Hill recommended a young lady from Rhoose by the name of Enid Williams and she stayed until March, 1997. Edgar called Enid his 'little General'. These people became known throughout the principality and customers came to sample Edgar's menu from far and wide. Edgar's menu stood the test of time: he always offered a wide variety and included everything on the menu for one price, from the starter to the mints, and the hats and crackers at Christmas time. It was always necessary to book at the *Fox and Hounds*, often as far ahead as a month. The Christmas bookings traditionally opened on July the 1st.. No bookings were taken before this date. New Years' Eve was always a good night but one had to be wary of the weather and if there were snow clouds about there could be some stranded diners if there was a sudden fall of snow!! When the dining room opened 40 people could be seated. This accommodation was doubled in the first year by the opening of the Whitton Room

which was built on top of the Bar Lounge, previously built as Trixie's living room when she lived in the Fox in the 1950's.

Soon after the restaurant opened in 1969 it was evident that some clerical staff were required to keep things in order. Ruth Watts gave up her work - as first dinner lady supervisor at the School - to work- in the *Fox* part-time. This changed to an almost full-time post with the increase in work. Ruth stayed with Edgar almost to the time he retired. Helping out, when required, after this time, Ruth was assisted with the accounts by Sheila Prosser. Sheila also did Trixie's accounts for the *Fox & Hounds*. They worked side by side in conjunction and were known as "the Secretaries". Two other stalwarts in Edgar's back-room were Sally Jones and Pam Jones (unrelated) from St Athan. They cleaned, washed, scrubbed, served and cleared away. Sally's husband, Selwyn, attended to pipes, pumps and cellar.

A person who had a great influence on the Fox & Hounds was Bill Phillips. He had also been a manager of *Bindles*. He also changed the character of such famous places as the *Caesar's Arms*, *The Highwayman*, *The White Swan* in Llantwit, and, in later years, the *Victoria Inn* in Sigginstone. Bill was a lifelong friend of Trixie and acted as a consultant on major and minor changes in the *Fox & Hounds*. Bill Phillips knew everyone, and was able to put a name on a person instantly. You were always assured of a welcome from Bill who was the master of the art of 'mine host'.

A person who has not been mentioned in great detail yet is Harry Hughes. Harry was never on the staff of the *Fox & Hounds*, in fact he wasn't on anyone's staff after he left Aberthaw Cement Works to work on his own. This seems to coincide with the time that Trixie came to the *Fox* in 1952. Harry lived in two places in the village: the wooden bungalow above Ford Farm on Ford Lane and Chapel Cottage where he dropped dead on the floor in 1975. At this time he was building a bungalow, which was known as Harry's Bungalow, next door to the carpenter's shop and now known as *Pennymeade*. Harry took on the carpenter's shop after the death of David P. Griffiths and the sale of *Glan-yr-afon*. Harry was so much a part of the *Fox*, and the village, that it was thought the most fitting memorial would be to name the part of the pub nearest the churchyard, *Harry's Bar*. It was on this corner of the bar that Harry had spent so many hours dispensing his knowledge, and counselling the customers, and often the bar staff, and even sometimes the owner and licensee. If Harry had not come to the pub before closing time someone would go to look for him.

Harry did most of the work in the village, he was a brick-layer by trade but he could do everything and had many 'tricks of the trade'. The most famous of these is probably the brick in the cesspit or more accurately described as the brick out of the cesspit, which allowed better distribution of the liquid in the cesspit, out of a cesspit! The installation of main drainage in the Llancarfan has eliminated the need for cesspits in the village. Main drainage came to the village in 1973 and for this, Vivian Thomas can be thanked. It was his work on the Cardiff Rural District Council which finally brought this aspect of village life into the modern world.

Harry's work in the village can be seen on nearly every property in the village, particularly the older houses that were not quite standing up to the strain of time. A fond memory of Harry is during the year when Llancarfan won the Best Kept Village Competition in 1963. We knew that the judges were coming on the Monday, so on the

Sunday all the local helpers, workers, advisers, strategists, generals and 'hangers-on' paraded with Harry in his green truck doing the final tidy-up. After the cup had been won there was a party of celebration at *Abernant*.

Harry remained a bachelor having resisted all the offers that came over the bar and along the bar. He was certainly the most eligible bachelor in the Vale and told me once the reason he never married was he remembers seeing the size of a bucket of potatoes that had to be peeled on a Saturday night for Sunday! Harry was a member of a very large family in Llanbethery and potatoes were the cheapest staple food that large families existed-on. Harry had a fear of being the head of another such family. He was greatly loved and has been sorely missed over the past twenty years.

The partnership of the *Fox & Hounds*, Llancarfan Village and Trixie Phillips has been a good one for all three. They have all benefited financially and combined to give enjoyment to a great number of people, villagers, customers and owners. Trixie came to the village in 1952 and found a nucleus of good resolute people who were willing to combine with her and make the *Fox & Hounds* a better place and indirectly making the village and lives of the people also for the better. This is shown by people like Bill Jenkins, Bill and Alice Rees, May Liscombe, and Olwen Hopkins, who lived and worked side by side for so many years. Only Olwen, of the above, now survives. I think we can all say that the years 1952-1998 have been great years for us, and may they long continue into the next century.

On water by Gwynne Liscombe

Llancarfan seems to be getting wetter and wetter. The recent rains have highlighted the position, and the roads have turned into minor rivers with land-slips on Pennon Hill, at Fotrd Cross and at the entrance to Cross Green Hill. I remember these before, but am sure that much of the water which accumulates and flows onto the roads has much to do with people.

As far as the flooding in the village is concerned, there does seem to have been an improvement due to the straightening of the river from *The Old Parsonage* past *New Mill* and through the meadows below *Cliff Farm*. However, a combination of high tides, heavy rainfall or rapidly thawing snow will always be a threat to the village - perhaps global-warming and increasingly high tides will make the threat greater.

To return to surface-water. There were many water courses and ditches in Llancarfan which no longer exist and I remember four wells which, in a structural sense, no longer exist, having lost their purpose. The springs which served these wells, of course remain, pumping out water in a haphazard, rather than controlled way.

The ones I refer to were in the 5-acre field (O.S.2000), opposite *Copperfield*; in the garden at the rear of *Woodlands*; in the garden of *The Hollies* and on the small plot of land at the side of *Windrush*, formerly known as *The Well Garden* or *Ty-Uchaf* garden. This latter well was the one which, I understand, provided the coldest water and from which the local butter-makers obtained their water.

All of these have now disappeared as wells and, in some cases, uncontrolled water gushes out - witness opposite the *Fox and Hounds* and Pennon Road at *Copperfield*. I remember "overflow water" from these being diverted away, in a planned way, through ditches which have long disappeared, through the actions of "man", altering a situation which the long experience, of maybe hundreds of years, had produced.

There were systems of ditches below Coed-y-Crynallt, culminating in a properly constructed water channel between *Crynallt Cottage* and the *Wesleyan Chapel* (now *Whitechapel*) and from *The Well Garden* (mentioned above), passing below the school and entering the river near the Church.

Many readers, I am sure, will remember other man-made water courses or ditches which have long-gone - have we got it right or or did they have it right? I think they were expert at diverting water efficiently from their homes and roads. Many of the roadside water-courses have also gone - oh for a man like Ivor Weight (*Chapel House*) or in more recent years Ben (Bennie) Clark of Penmark. I understand that in recent years, since his retirement, that Ben has been called out to advise on getting-rid of standing water, using his extensive local knowledge of drains and watercourses.

I really do believe that the road conditions in Llancarfan and elsewhere in the Vale are much to do with the foregoing. The destruction of watercourses and the loss of an infrastructure of ditches which has occurred during the past 30-40 years has contributed significantly. Serious floods have of course occurred during living memory which are nothing to do with the main threat seen in these notes - more to do with heavy rain, high tides or melting snow - often a combination of all three. I well-remember my father marking a flooding-line in the Church, just below the floor-level of the Pulpit and Melvin Morgan's (*The Green*) pigs floating down the river to the *Fox and Hounds*!

The Llanvithyn rabbits *are* hares by John Etherington

In the last Newsletter, I suggested that the Llanvithyn carving of three rabbits was mis-identified and that the creatures are really hares.

Since then, I have had the chance to read *The Leaping Hare* by George Ewart Evans & David Thomson, who present an enormous amount of evidence that the hare has long been an animal of deep and sinister meaning, surrounded by a weft of folktale which in no way applies to the cuddly bunny - or even the useful rabbit which the Normans brought to Britain as a denizen of artificial warrens

St David's Cathedral is not the only church to share the hare motif - it occurs on roof-bosses in several churches around Dartmoor and an example, the Widecombe **Tinners Rabbits**, is illustrated here. Evans and Thomson describe it as an "animated Catherine Wheel" in which the length of the animal's ears certainly identify them as hares. The churches were built from the wealth of the tin-miners craft of which the "rabbits" are the ancient symbol. There is yet another similar three-rabbit symbol in the stained-glass **Rabbit Window** of Long Melford church, far away in Suffolk

The similarity of the West Country “rabbits” to the Llanvythin carving is striking, as my drawing shows, but we can only speculate on the reason why this West Country symbol, probably of pre-Christian origin, came to be carved by a Vale craftsman in Sutton stone, and mortared into the Llanvythin gable-end. Just to the north of our parish, the Carboniferous Limestone was mined for lead - is it too far-fetched to suggest that the “rabbits” came to Llanvythin amongst the skills of a wandering miner?

INSERT PIC Widecomb church roof boss

INSERT PIC Llanvythin wall carving - again

In the last Newsletter I pointed out that the rabbit and the brown hare were not present in Britain during pre-Christian times. This is quite correct, but the Mountain Hare (also known as Irish Hare), which is native to Ireland and Scotland was here throughout the last glaciation. Evans and Thomson suggest that it occurred in South Wales quite recently and it seems likely that our Catherine-wheel animals represent the Mountain Hare.

In the past I have speculated that the name, *Llanvithyn*, earlier rendered *Llanveithin*, might have been wrongly attributed to a St Meuthe and that it could be a *Llan* name (in the old sense of “an enclosure”) coupled with *eithin* - furze or gorse. Much of the agricultural land in the area does revert to gorse if neglected.

An interesting side-issue is that Evans & Thompson give *cath-eithin* as a Welsh name for hare (equivalent to the Middle-English *þe fursecat*). Cats were witches familiars - so were hares!

I am grateful to Nona Rees, librarian of St David’s Cathedral, for lending me her copy of *The Leaping Hare* (1972). George Ewart Evans and David Thomson. County Book Club.

Information on rabbit and hare from *The Handbook of British Mammals*, 3rd edition., Eds Corbet, C.B. & Harris, S. (Blackwell, 1991).

A book-lovers note: If you have not come across George Ewart Evans’ books, he is well worth reading. Though born in Abercynon, he spent most of his life teaching in East Anglia and wrote some classics based on the oral history of that area. Some titles are: *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*, *The Pattern under the Plough* and *Horse Power and Magic*.