



LLANCARFAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

April 2025. Issue No 193



Coffee Morning

On Friday, 21st March, the Llancarfan Flower Arranging group hosted a coffee morning to support the Welsh Children's Air Ambulance.

In addition to coffee and tea, attendees had access to a selection of delicious homemade cakes, scones, biscuits, and Bakewell tart. The event was attended between 50 – 60 people and raised almost £700 through ticket sales and a raffle with further donations still coming in.

Appreciation is extended to all those who contributed to making the event a success.



KEEPING HISTORY ALIVE

A message from The Editor
(Maddy Palmer) and The
Llancarfan Society.

Local history isn't simply a catalogue of grand events – lords, castles, saints and folk law. Even though we do possess that unique St. George etching. More often than not, it's about everyday life, that's overlooked. Consider the red weather event Storm Burt, our search for candles, gas stoves, takeaway menus before relenting and a walk to the Fox. Or the village show, the local ambition and competitive spirit, played out in the form of prize onions, Jams and Victoria sponges.

Now, from a Yorkshire perspective, let's be candid. It's also about the gaps, the silences, the uncomfortable truths we tend to avoid. Who owned the land before the tennis court? History isn't a linear narrative; it's a contested space, a battleground where memory, selective amnesia, and the victors' narratives collide.

Especially post-Covid, with increased social detachment, we've witnessed a retreat, a weakening of shared connection. This highlights the importance of documenting local history. It's an act of resistance, a reclamation of our narrative, particularly against the fleeting, often distorted accounts found these days on social media.

Our village comprises of diverse voices, and history, by its nature, is messy, fragmented, and contradictory. In our current climate of isolated digital bubbles, we should remember our interconnectedness. While nostalgia is a temptation, it's not the goal. We must confront the past, grapple with its complexities, to understand its influence on our present. (I am getting to my point)

The Llancarfan Society has realised that we have a significant gap in our historical record. We did not capture the COVID Pandemic in the village. We are keen to hear from you over the next few months for a one-off special edition that captures the stories, memories, and images of everyday resilience, quiet acts of kindness, and the unique challenges we all faced as a community.

We want to hear from you – your experiences, and recollections. Because, in reality, history can be about the small, the intimate, the fiercely local, because that's where the real story lies, isn't it?

Our village history is a collective story of our experiences. The Society's efforts to preserve this heritage rely entirely on your contributions.

Please email llancarfansoc@gmail.com
www.llancarfansociety.org.uk

Society Subs: The annual reviewal date
will be 1st April 2025

Household / Couple Membership £15
pa

Individual £10 pa

Membership form:

www.llancarfansociety.org.uk

Please return membership form to
llancarfansoc@gmail.com

NOTES FROM THE VICAR

I have an ambivalent relationship with social media.

Over the years I've dipped in and out of a few of the plethora of available platforms including Twitter (now 'X') and Facebook, but have since let them go and don't particularly miss them.

Notwithstanding my reservations, we all witnessed the obvious usefulness of platforms such as WhatsApp during the Pandemic and I still make use of it, to a limited degree, in some aspects of my personal and professional life.

But the dangers associated with over-dependence on social media are well known to most of us. On the one hand it is an almost miraculously efficient and effective means of keeping us connected, but on the other, it offers the opportunity for people to hector, undermine and even abuse anyone whose opinion differs from their own.

That word 'platform' is apposite; as though someone declares their individual beliefs without a care for the minds or hearts of the hearers. We clergy would do well to remember that our pulpits very easily become 'platforms' if we fail to base all we say in prayer and love. We were taught that an effective preacher establishes a relationship with the hearers that enables both to enter a deep place.

I'd suggest the same principle applies to anyone who feels moved to share their thoughts, beliefs and convictions with others. Using a platform to shout as loudly as possible rarely induces anything other than irritation.

I suppose in a roundabout way I'm appealing to those old fashioned virtues of manners and courtesy. So, what do these look like in day to day life? An effective starting point involves inviting others to share their own thoughts on a subject rather than telling them what they should think. Asking a person to explain their ideas and perspective establishes a positive and creative foundation for future engagement and conversation, any reasonable teacher knows this much.

This all seems to me like common sense based on good manners and courtesy. But here's another thought on this subject. I recently came across the word 'Optative', it describes verbs which speak of deep longings and desires. In the Bible Christians interpret passages like the Magnificat, the Psalms and Revelation as expressing a yearning for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all our exchanges were infused with a sense of longing for a world where abundant life was shared and enjoyed by all?

The season of Lent offers us a chance to embrace new disciplines and jettison unwanted baggage and habits. Whatever our tradition or beliefs there is no time like the present for us to commit ourselves to generous and graceful engagement with others. So why not make a promise to become that person who asks others to share their thoughts and ideas before offering your own; to long and search for ways of making life more joyous and abundant for everyone; to be courteous and show good manners to all without exception regardless of their status, views and opinions?

It's surely worth a go, isn't it?

Fr Michael John



**TOM JONES
TRIBUTE
WELSH NIGHT**
1 MARCH 2025

**Singalike
celebrations
paying tonsil
tribute to the
Ponty legend.**



**A fun filled night for 48 in the
village hall. Revels & nostalgia
– enriched by double acts – not
least between 'Tom Jones' &
Nerys Johns - & any one else
she caught. (We draw a veil over
Kevin & Edward's pas-de-deux!)**



VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY: THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY

IAN FELL

I should never have done that last Christmas piece about Hallowe'en – if you see what I mean. This has resulted in Maddy, your new editor, deciding that I'm someone who knows about life's turning points, anniversarial or seasonal, and how we marked them. The problem is, while several of us now find ourselves defined by years as village elders, we have in fact now lost so many of those who held the real memories. The moral is – for all you young citizens of Llancarfan – get out your mobiles and record your grannies.

OK. I may now be a grandpa, but I was a mere 2-years-old when VE Day happened for real. I was blissfully unaware of the horrors that our parents had rescued us from, and was blessedly about to inherit the opportunities of the post-war reforms. (Whatever happened to them?) But as a would-be ace reporter of VE Day, I'm strapped for personal memories. I was still probably trying to understand the CC41 labels on my hand-me-down first shorts, and certainly plotting revenge against those ladies who pricked my arm to defend it against Diphtheria.

Fortunate it is then that your Society Newsletter has preserved better documentation of celebration. For instance, Phil Watts, our distinguished elder and Newsletter pioneer, captured his VE Day half-century memories in the Summer of 1995 (Newsletter 68). But his account couldn't have differed more from those black & white newsreel images (which we'll see a lot of) of the thousands roistering in Trafalgar Square.



"This was a quiet day in Llancarfan," writes Phil in 1995. "With no organised event taking place, as a decision had been made to concentrate on V.J. Day + 50 [Victory in Japan] on Saturday August 19th." Consequently, Phil and his devoted wife Ruth settled for suitably 'green' festivities. "Ruth and I decided we would do something that we did 50 years ago, and that was to ride our bikes . . . Instead of waving to people from cars we were able to stop and talk and even get dragged in for a cup of tea."

The 'Fox' though did get a touch more reckless. It "played war - years music, and issued ration books to customers which, when produced at the bar, gave customers a discount". [Worth noting for 2025, Reynard?]

It seems – according to edencamp.co.uk – that by 1944 the price of a pint had risen from 6d to 1s 3d. Customers found themselves rationed to a pint, or half-pint, a head. Apparently 'too many drinkers were chasing too few pints, as barley was diverted from breweries to bakeries'.

Anyway – Phil ended his restrained account of the 50th anniversary celebrations with the 'alarming thought that fifty five million people lost their lives in World War II – no wonder people celebrated with relief'. And amid all the search for jollity, one can only share Phil's feelings. ['Lest we forget', you may wish to look again at the newsletter for September 2014 (No 159) where, with massive help from Llantwit historian Nigel Williams, we shaped - in advance of the 70th VE day anniversary - mini-biographies of the 17 men recorded on our village memorial.]

Strangely enough, Phil's record of his and Ruth's dignified (or exhausted) reticence in celebration finds its echoes in the available newspaper records for our neck of the woods. For instance, the Western Mail report of the actual VE Day – 8 May 1945 – found little to celebrate in headlines other than 'Flood Lights for Cardiff'. But only on the civic buildings. 'Unless there is a last-minute reprieve people living in the five-mile dim-out coastal belt of South Wales will not be able to see their buildings flood-lit, as hoped for on "VE" Day. Cardiff is the only exception . . . during celebration days only. After that they must revert to the dim-out Order.'

At least the Western Mail was able to report that 'most shop windows were gaily decorated with red, white and blue when they closed' and that people had 'stayed near their homes over the weekend, ready to hoist flags and bunting immediately they heard the official announcement'. But there seem to be no records of the wonderful street parties one hoped to find. Perhaps they were all, like Phil said of Llancarfan 50 years later, 'concentrating on VJ Day', which was August 15th? It is true that the Western Mail of August 16th, 1945 was able to picture a vast crowd decently gathered 'for a peace service outside Cardiff City-hall'.

Well – Phil's account written for that 50th (8 May 1995) anniversary brings back, funnily enough, some very particular Welsh memories for Penny & me. You see, we were in Cardiff on that very 8th of May, having just been offered jobs at the National Museum of Wales. Sadly we hadn't even discovered Llancarfan by then – we've only managed 28 years here. So (while apologizing for this personal nostalgia) I recall that after a morning spent exploring the past in St. Fagan's, we accidentally watched London's VE Anniversary celebrations on the telly in the Merrie Harrier, Landough, and then found our way to Landaff, where (equally by accident) we discovered a very lively street party in one of those tiny street rows near the cathedral. It proved a lovely introduction to South Walian welcome and friendship.

Which also brings me, again with apologies, to my second bit of personal nostalgia. The fact is, in 1995 I was almost an Official Government Celebrator of VE day!

You see, for several years – a spin off from my job in TV education via Channel 4 – I found myself making a number of ‘educational’ films commissioned by the government. And in the last months before I left television, I had worked with government educationalists to prepare several video series for use in schools.

I was asked to do a special film for 1995. Just before VE Day 1995, the government planned to send parcels with this film to every school in Britain, all accompanied by rather fine facsimiles of wartime ‘printed ephemera’ for teachers to use with their classes.



A VE Day street party in Rhymney Valley in Mid-Glamorgan.

They duly sent the parcels. And the novelty was that they arrived (like the picture here) disguised as ‘British Red Cross Prisoners’ Parcels’. I don’t know, but I dare say one might have even landed with the young ‘prisoners’ of our much-missed Llancarfan School. There’s posh.

Now, according to the ‘Teachers’ Guidance Notes’, ‘this video follows six children on their journey of enquiry to find out what happened on VE Day’. Which it did. We’d taken these bright youngsters around the country, to ‘wartime’ Dover, then to evacuee Gloucestershire, then to computer-literate Hull (where they’d pioneered a CD-ROM!) – and finally to the wonderful Royal Welsh Regimentary Museum in Brecon.

This was my and the kids' favourite, because there we discovered letters from a conscript called Meredith. An artist and soldier, he was still stuck in Japan well after the war, waiting to come home, but writing to his sister in the valleys. He chatted about the Hollywood films he was entertained by whilst kicking his heels in Japan, and meanwhile his sister was also watching the same movies in (if I remember) Aberdare!

Well, I'd like to show you more, but I don't have a VHS machine to play my antique videos on!

So you see, I was nearly 'Official' on VE Day 1995. And thirty years on, I remain honoured to be able to ask those with a few more years than me to remind us of the freedoms and the future ideals for which our parents fought.

BARBARA MILHUISEN – NOW 90

Shares her VE Day memories & reminds us that even celebration took place in the shadow of war

On the morning of May 8th, 1945, I was living in Ty-Uchaf, Llancarfan. My father was in the RAF, away in Belgium. My mother, my brother and I, and our evacuees, awoke to a warm, sunny day.

We were excited – the Village Council, led by "Red Ruth Jenkins" had organised a party to celebrate victory in Europe – at last.

We met at the Church Hall, now the Village Hall, and set off on a Fancy Dress Parade around the village. Of all those take part, only Tony Thomas is still living here, at Pancross.

He led the parade, mounted on his pony, Winnie, up to the Blacksmith's shop, past the Baptist Chapel, along to the Fox & Hounds, and on to the Ford.

I was walking with Clive, and Margaret and Beatrice Griffiths, taking off our socks and shoes and paddling through the river. No time for our game of stabbing eels with forks! Up the road we went, turned right, up to the school, and down School Hill. Then came a blow – half way down the hill, we were met by the police who took Mrs Mary Griffiths away with them. They told her that her husband, Bob Griffiths, had been killed accidentally by Canadian troops.

We, though, continued down the hill to the party, then all climbed back up School Hill to "the Tump", opposite the school, for a bonfire and fireworks. It was the first time us children had ever seen or heard such noises. I remember feeling not very happy as I thought we were going to be bombed again.

PS this week I had lunch with Andrew Griffiths, Mrs Griffiths' son, him who was born later that year – I first saw when he was 2 hours old. He never knew his father, of course; he spent his first ten years at Top End.

BLACKOUT

Penny Fell

In the White Chapel, hidden behind the hill and wrapped in thick walls, we don't hear the sound of wind very much, The night of 6/7 December 2024, it was different. Sleep was punctuated by the restless sound of gales as Darragh flew into Wales. We woke late and murmured about getting a cup of morning tea. But the light didn't go on. Or the kettle. Nor the central heating - of course.

The cold and gloom of a December morning was punctuated by insistent pinging of phones: "Anyone else having a power cut?" "Yes" "Yes" "Yes" "Yes!" Then eerie quiet as mobile signals were silenced by the affected mast. Llancarfan has had blackouts before but this was the first one which brought home how dependent we are on things digital to keep in touch with loved ones. Families outside the village tried desperately to make contact as news of Wales's damage and destruction spread via the media.

It was, luckily, a first world problem. On Saturday, people either drove or walked up the hill to find a connection and issue family bulletins. Kindly folk dropped in on neighbours and posted updates and forecasts for reconnection.

This was extremely helpful as, at one point, official outlets were simultaneously saying it would take several hours/ a day/two days to restore - or (thank you National Grid) - there was no problem in our area whatsoever.

This was news to the flower-arranging volunteers who, with icy resolve and icier fingers, gathered in the village hall to complete the annual charitable Christmas wreath-making . (Raising a heart-warming £1325 for the Childrens' Air Ambulance - hooray!)

I think we all learned one or two things. Landlines are now useless in case of emergency. Never throw away that old camping stove you thought you wouldn't need again. Do not rely on electric garage doors if a storm is threatening (especially if your freezer is locked away with the car). Do not underestimate the presence of a village pub in our midst. In the evening, we sloped over to the Fox & Hounds to ask if they would kindly boil a pan of water for us on the gas cooker and found tables spread out with plate upon plate of sausage, peas and buttery mash dished up for a fiver, to nourish any starving mendicants. Nothing has ever tasted more ambrosial, consumed in the lamplit bar, full of folk swapping Saturday telly for socialising.

On Sunday morning, when the blackout persisted, I think we all stopped relying on official predictions for how long this ordeal would last and listened to any neighbours living close enough to pop out and talk to the men in white vans and hard hats working on repairs. The most confident prediction seem to be that the village would light up again by that evening.

There was, of course, for Strictly Come Dancing fans, an added dimension to a weekend of drama. Saturday 7 December was semi-finals night; Sunday would see the results broadcast.

Addicts were left nail-biting & waiting to discover whether Chris McCausland had danced into the final week. Popping down to M&S café for a coffee on Sunday afternoon, we found no shortage of neighbours already down there – included one devoted husband downloading the previous night's show onto his laptop for the benefit of his wife (Mr Wantock, you were a hero!)



Around about 7.15, on Sunday evening, as candles guttered in living rooms around Llancarfan, lights snapped back on. For most people, the ordeal had lasted around 35 hours – for some, it was longer. Many were still without internet connection for weeks.

However, one family managed to weather the storm with basic utilities in place, even managing to watch Strictly. If you passed the Brain's house at Ynys Dawel, you saw a fetching coral cable snaking from the garage and the glow of lamps indoors.

We asked Graham Brain to explain how come? He replied thus:

"I had a 12VDC to 230V AC 300W inverter, in my Aladdin's cave, which allowed me to connect it my car via the cigarette socket and run an extension lead from the inverter to a few LED table lamps and also to the Openreach equipment/router. So we had Wi-Fi and some lights throughout."

So, people, how startlingly simple...next time, we'll all know!

CHANGING FACE OF LLANCARFAN

As many people will be aware, the internet has greatly assisted research into family history. In addition to your own efforts, you receive assistance from others carrying out their own research for related family trees.

Recently, someone obtained and uploaded the marriage certificate of Katherine's grandparents who were married in St Cadoc's Church on 27th December 1924. He was a carpenter's labourer and she was a school teacher at the village school. Both their fathers were described as farm labourers. He was from Gilston and she lived at Broad Hayes Llancarfan. He was 27 and she 25.

Interestingly the 'upload' included 15 other marriage certificates spanning the period 1923 to 1933. These revealed the average age of men as 28 and women as 23. Only 4 of the grooms came from the parish whereas it was home to 14 of the brides. This perhaps, reflecting the fact that most marriages took place in the parish church of the bride. The furthest distance from Llancarfan for a bride was Barry but for a groom it was Southampton. With that one exception all the grooms gave an address in Wales.

Occupations were given for all the grooms but only two given for the brides – both school teachers. Did this mean that the other 14 were still living with parents and perhaps performed 'domestic duties' or was it normal not to record the bride's occupation unless it was a profession such as a teacher? Most of the grooms had what can be described as manual occupations which included labourer, farm labourer, two farmers and one dairyman; also a baker from Llancarfan, a police constable from Barry and a grocer from Cardiff. The person giving his address as Southampton is described as a cable engineer. The occupations of the fathers included 7 farmers and 11 farm labourers or labourers.

I then decided to look at more recent marriages in St Cadoc's to see how things had changed about a hundred years later. Looking at the same number of certificates from 2014 to 2019, the average age had increased to 31 and 32 and only two grooms and two brides gave their address as being in the parish. Presumably the rest demonstrated a connection with the parish. Does this show a desire to 'fly the nest' or the lack of affordable property in the villages?

There was also, although not unexpected, a change in the type of employment to professions and managerial employment, teachers, estate agents, a doctor, a dentist and a solicitor. The same is reflected in the occupations of the fathers. Another notable difference is that whereas in the 1920s and 1930s only one couple gave the same address in recent times 14 out of 16 couples gave the same address.



Katherine Kemp's Father and Grandparents

Going back 50 years, the average ages are 26 and 25, with the number of brides living in the parish being 4 and grooms 10. Only one couple had the same address. Only one groom is a farmer and only one a farm labourer; six of the fathers are recorded as farmers – clearly demonstrating a move away from a community where most worked on the land to a dormitory area.

Going back further it is difficult to provide ages for those marrying as it is only from 1852 that these are given. Before that all that is recorded is 'of full age'. Prior to 1838 occupations are not recorded. Addresses were also not given. All that is recorded is the parish of the parties and it is very rare to see either bride or groom not recorded as 'of this parish'. In the early 1800s very many parties sign by way of a mark 'X'. Perhaps surprisingly the last use of a mark is as late as 1896 by a 25 year old labourer.

I hope this 'ramble' through the records has proved interesting.

Gordon Kemp

SNIPPETS

Situations Vacant.

UNDELT WAITER Wanted; clean and respectable; only those with good character need apply.— 122, Bute-road Locks, Cardiff. 1468p21

WANTED. an industrious, steady Man, to garden, groom, and milk. Character indispensable. Wages, £20.— Vicar, Llancarfan, Cowbridge. 1456p23

1879-02-19 Western Mail - Situation Vacant

Tribute to Clive Llewellyn Jenkins

25/11/1939 - 09/02/2025

Clive was born at Ford Cross Cottages (no 1). It was a Sunday. I saw him when he was a few hours old, a beautiful blue-eyed boy from our Irish ancestry.

He was christened in St Cadocs Church on Christmas Day, 1939. At about two years old, he wanted to escape from Ty-Uchaf, where we had moved, so he'd toddle along the road and appear in school.



Clive Jenkins & his sister Barbra Milhuisen

At first, Sammy (Mr Samuel) would tell me to take him home. But eventually, Clive was so keen to be in class that Mr Samuel agreed he could stay. So he started school in the First Class, moving up to Miss Griffiths and then Miss Walls. He passed the 11-plus to go to Barry Boys' Grammar School- a bus would take him to Romilly School and he'd walk the rest of the way.

Always very enterprising, Clive did jobs from boyhood, to earn money. He had his own shed in the garden where he kept animals - including a monkey which escaped!

At sixteen, he left school to start earning and helped towards my education. (I was in Surrey, on a scholarship, training to be an Occupational Therapist).

Clive did everything to help - learned to drive, taught me to drive, looked after Mother and found time to marry his childhood sweetheart, Brenda. He later bought a bus and ran a mobile shop, delivering to surrounding villages.

An early home owner, he snapped up a bungalow at an auction, then bought a shop in Barry.

But before starting their family, Clive and Brenda moved from Wales, emigrating to Canada., where their daughter Deborah was born; before long, they were back in the UK, in Wellington, Somerset, where their family was completed by a son, Paul. Their next move was to Biggin Hill, Kent. This is where, incidentally, our father had flown with the legendary "Cat's Eyes" Cunningham. Clive's last move was to Westerham where he set up his own successful business importing confectionary, a family firm which Paul later took over.

Clive was a founder member of the Llancarfan Society. He always attended dinners and May Walks, later bringing his children and grandchildren. He was a fount of stories and memories, and never forgot his roots.

I have just returned from his funeral in Kent. It was very Welsh - Abide with Me, recorded by Kathryn Jenkins, Tom Jones's Green Green Grass of Home. And of course, we all stood to attention for My Hen Wlad fy Nhadau. Throughout his life, he never lost touch with Llancarfan.

NOTES FROM THE GREEN' POTTING SHED

NO MOW MAY



As we all know wildflower meadows have disappeared in the UK landscape at an astonishing rate. Some ecologists believe around 97% have been lost over the last 100 years and it's only the work of conservation charities such as Plantlife and Wildlife Trust that have saved so many.

While the manicured lawn has long been a symbol of domestic tidiness, allowing grass to grow freely offers a wealth of benefits for local wildlife. Lawns, often ecological deserts, transform into havens of biodiversity when left untouched. Bees, butterflies, and other vital pollinators find sustenance in the dandelions, clover, and wildflowers that thrive in longer grass.

Beneficial insects, like ladybugs and lacewings, take shelter and find food, naturally controlling garden pests. Even small mammals, such as hedgehogs and toads, discover refuge and sustenance in the growth.

No Mo May was introduced by Plantlife in 2019 with the aim of increasing Meadow like conditions; government statistics show that almost 5% of land in UK is covered by gardens and 1.5% by verges I haven't seen any studies showing the results of this endeavour, but I often see around our village and South Wales during May an astonishing variety of wildflowers and grasses on the unmown verges.

Plantlife's ask is simple, 'do nothing'. Knowing that just five daisies, two dandelions and six buttercups together provide enough nectar to support a honeybee a day. That one acre of wildflower meadow can contain three million flowers, producing one kilogram of nectar sugar. That's enough to support nearly 96,000 bees per day.

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/your-no-mow-may-lawn-guide/>