



# Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Llanelli Llanelli Historical Society

President: Sir David Mansel Lewis, KCVO, JP, FRCA, KStJ

## Volume I

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### Christmas Social

The Christmas Fancy Dress Social was a great success again this year. Almost 70 came together in the Lliedi Suite, with around half in colourful, historical costume. Once more we displayed that involvement in local history can be pleasurable, entertaining and most of all, fun!



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There was quite an aeronautical theme at this social evening. We were transported back to 1928 with a visit from Amelia Earhart, and also from the boys' own hero, Biggles, (at least that was the name that was circulating when Lyn John blew in!)

Carole Ann Smith and John Wynne Hopkins were kept busy during the evening, Carole Ann selling copies of *Athena*, the publication of the Llanelli Writer's Circle, and John with his very popular Christmas cards. Proceeds from the sale of his cards will go towards purchasing display cases to house the models of Llanelli's ancient monuments created by John and his students. These models were on view at our Open Day in 2003 and hopefully we shall see them again at the 2004 Open Days.

Doesn't it make you feel safe when you know that the Society's funds are in this man's hands?!

During the evening, people did wonder what Captain Morgan (Albert Vaughan) had on his shoulder. The truth of the matter was that his parrot had done a runner, and the best the old pirate could do was to replace it with a penguin!!



### Monthly Raffle



Caroline, our chairwoman, presented Marjorie Witty with a small gift of appreciation. Ever since the first meetings of the Society Madge has loyally sold the monthly raffle tickets and raised the funds that keep the society ticking over. Without her good work, and the support of you, the members, in purchasing tickets, we could not cover the expenses of the Society.

The prize of a framed picture of old Llanelli went to a travelling monk (Tony Lister). We also had some additional raffle prizes this month, with the

CD, *Llanelli the Birth of a Town*, kindly donated by Benita and William Rees, a bottle of wine kindly donated by our youngest member Dylan James, and a copy of *Athena* from Carole Ann Smith, Secretary of the Writer's Circle.

### Llanelli Town Council's Generous Support

The LHS Secretary received a letter from the Building and Finance Committee of the Llanelli Town Council in November informing her that they had resolved to make the Society a grant of £200. The Society is extremely grateful to the Town Councilors and thank them for their generosity.



## Social Events

In true LHS fashion, members rallied to the call for help with social events, and a group of volunteers has come together to organise trips, visits and outings for the coming year.

Pamela Raikes, Carole Ann Smith, and Benita and William Rees, will be meeting in the new year to get the first outing planned and organised. They will keep us posted on developments.

Anyone with suggestions, or offers of help, please approach a member of this new group.

### Open Day 2004 14th -15th May

It is planned to organize an exhibition to celebrate Local History Month 2004. We plan to exhibit in the Llanelli Parish Hall, as we did last year, but have it open for 2 days this time rather than 1.

Much of the work that members have been involved in since the last exhibition will be on display, together with lots more. We encourage you to become involved. There are many tasks that need to be covered if it is to be the success of last year. If you would like to be involved in any way then please approach a member of the committee so that you can be included in the planning meetings.

### Future Newsletters

If you have any news you wish to share, please pass it on to the editor, Joyce Mollet.

[www.Llanelli-Historical-Society.co.uk](http://www.Llanelli-Historical-Society.co.uk)

## New Year customs in Old Llanelli



The celebration of New Year's Day or Dydd Calan has many traditions. One of these is the **Mari Lwyd** (the decorated skull of a horse) brought back to life and paraded through Welsh villages. This was practised in the Llanelli area, but died out in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Helen Raby, prolific Llanelli writer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, records this custom for us. Writing in *Carmarthenshire Notes* (a journal edited by Arthur Mee) in 1889, she shares a personal anecdote of her experience of the custom *Pen Cefyl*.

*"I can well remember being frightened, when a very little girl, by the man who bore the horse's head chasing me round the kitchen at Brynymor, to obtain the half-crown my father had given me to put in the hat, which the horse's head held between its teeth.*

*The head was well blanched - a skeleton head of course. It had glass eyes, and its mouth opened and shut by means of a string with a loud snap. It was decorated with bows of different coloured ribbons, and its teeth looked to my childish eyes fearfully large, reminding me of the wolf in little Red Riding Hood.*

*Well, this head was fixed upon a pole, and the pole carried by a tall man enveloped in a white sheet, who contrived to pull the wires so that the head kept bowing and snapping its jaws continually.*

*A party of young men, some of whom wore masks on their faces, accompanied the "Horse's Head" to various gentlemen's houses, and they were generally entertained for an hour on cakes and ale; in some places a cold meat supper was given them, and a couple of shillings dropped into the hat."*



## Death of Llanelli Mayor

It was with great sadness that we heard of the sudden death of our mayor, Councillor Hywel Phillips. The secretary, Joyce Mollet, Colin Morgan and myself worked closely with him on the Llanelly House project last summer and formed a close working relationship.

His enthusiasm for Llanelli and its people was exemplary; the town has lost a good ambassador, and he will be sadly missed. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife and family.

(Caroline DeAbreu, Chair)

## Death of Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins

Since the article below was written we have received the sad news of the death of Mr. Ted Hopkins and his wife Harriet. Mr and Mrs Hopkins died within days of each other, the funeral taking place before Christmas.

We extend our deepest sympathy to their family.

We also thank Mr. Gerald Hopkins for permission to include the article and photograph

## Reminiscence/Oral History Project

The Reminiscence/Oral History Group that has combined with the Health and Well Being Project in a joint venture, continue to meet on a regular basis and have started visiting residential homes and sheltered accommodation to talk with, and record the reminiscences of the older generation. Interviews have been recorded on audio and videotape. Those interviewed have enjoyed sharing their memories and Society members are gaining a fascinating insight into the industrial and social history of the locality.

There was a report on the project in the Winter Issue of "Local History News," the magazine of the British Association of Local History.

## LHS Committee

### Chairwoman:

Caroline DeAbreu: 01554 756141

### Secretary:

Joyce Mollet: 01554 755388

### Treasurer:

John Williams: 01554 810677

### Committee Members:

Peter Francis: 01554 759920

Derek Newton-Goverd 01554 775943

John Wynne Hopkins: 01554 750761

Lyn John: 01554 774273

Alec Jones: 01554 757656

Ken Jones: 01554 772479

Vaughan Jones: 01554 756232



*We hear you're  
not well*

Brian Cripps has not been well. We are thinking of you, Brian and Lorna, and wish Brian a speedy recovery.



*Colin Rees and Iris Vereschinsky have been visiting Hafon Y Morfa and here we see Colin talking with 97-year-old Ted Hopkins who lives at Hafon Y Morfa with his wife Harriet. Ted is one person whose memories of Llanelli's industries, and the communities that grew up around these industries, have been recorded on tape. His memories are very clear and we have enjoyed the many insights he has given us.*

### Group Members

Chris Davies

Beth Follows

John Golightly

John Harding

Jean Kirstin

Joyce Mollet

Ann Parry

John Parry

Colin Rees

Iris Vereschinsky

Marjorie Witty