***Historian’s Appeal***

*Many years ago when I was rsearching my book on Llanpumsaint I recall visitng one retired individual in high hopes. I knew that throughj his work he’d been in possesion of a good camera, a rariety during the 1940’s and 50’s . I also knew that he’d taken many interesting local shots of life during that era. Hence my optimism! Answering my knock he said, “Come in and sit down. You know I moved house after retirng! Well! We went through everything and it all went neatly into boxes. , All the rubbish went into clearly marhed T boxes destined for the Tip, and everything we wanted kept for our future bungalow went into a B box. Yes I had a whole boxfull of local photographs carefully placed in B boxes, the one’s you’d want. Unfortunately the man carrying the stuff out accidentally placed that B box on the wrong side of the drive. Sorry! The bloody lot ended upin the tip!”*

*A sad loss of some unique evidence, but the losses continue, and unfortunately are on the increase nowadays. The scenario often happens like this. An old couple having spent their whole lives in the same home, have carefully kept old handed down heirlooms sometimes from two or three generations. There could be Diaries, Account Books, Family newspaer cuttings, family photographs or various bits of written history and, from the late 20th century, tapes. Descendants hurriedly sift through on a restricted visit after the funeral, before the Estate agent is requested to clear out the remainder before planting his For Sale sign. So off it all goes to Nantycaws and oblivion. Someone interested gets to know but too late. It happens nowadays with increasing rapidity wiping out a whole spectrum of recent social history.*

*So what can be done? There are no easy answers. Sometimes documents that people regard as important are historicallyworthless and need to be blue bagged .out of the way. So how should they know what could be of value? You could ask a local historian for an opinion, or contact the Carmarthen Archives Department. For though closed for research, the specialist staff are still there, experienced and qualified to advise. Why not make a copy anyway just in case, it’s cheap enough nowadays!*

*I have also experienced over-possesive people , divulging that theypossess some rarety, but unwilling to either show or share them. I recall one case when a person whispered in my ear that he held an old Account Book of payments to workers dating back to the railway construction era around 1860. I wasn’t allowed to see it or make a copy. Eventually he went to the Crematorium and the evidnce went to the tip. Fortunately I have been allowed to photostat some things which people wanted safely kept in drawers. So if you have something of future historical value please allow a copy to be made at least. Ecclesiastical Authorities have gone further, Church Registers are removed and copies retained in individual churches.*

*One wonders whether some future historian will look back at this generation, painfully perplexed at how every Email, whether trite or true, lay secure on a blue cloud, whereas other bits of vital social history had been hastily removed to Nantycaws, without further thought.*

*Arwyn 2016*