**Myths – Leave them alone!**

Gwyn Thomas, the late Anglo-Welsh author and raconteur, told a tale of a Glamorganshire village’s deep pond. So dangerously deep that no local had ever ventured further than the shore’s edge. The dark waters apparently reached down into the mysterious underworld, and the fear of drowning kept even summertime boy swimmers away. Then one day an inquisitive stranger arrived. Bent on debunking this silly myth he rowed a boat right out to the middle, to stick his oar all of five feet into the bottom. Gwyn in his unique style concluded by saying, that this was also the exact distance between the fleeing interloper and the pursuing village posse, as he was promptly run out of town.

We have a few local tales as well. On your interrupted way to Carmarthen at the red light just below Bronwydd, look far left at Cwmgwili mansion. The 4th out of the five upstairs first floor windows apparently held a sad secret. Locals passed down the tragic story of a boy who went to war and was killed. So the grieving family bricked up the window to keep the room exactly as he’d left it. A visible memorial to commemorate a war victim!

. When a young boy I made a stupendous discovery on reading an old copy of the church magazine Y Cyfaill Eglwysig (The Church Friend) for 1937. There, in an article on Llanpumsaint parish, it revealed a massive secret. At the base of the old quarry, on that last downward bend on Rhiw Graig. lay the opening to a hidden tunnel. Not only was it a secret escape route from Pantglas castle above, but ran all the way along the forest to Troedyrhiw fields, to link up with the Roman Road, a whole mile away. Bois bach! What a discovery! Could there be treasure, skeletons or coins hidden away there? One afternoon, after gulping one last lung full of fresh summer air, I switched on my borrowed torch, hoping the battery would last, bent double and crawled in through the narrow cave entrance, into the great unknown........

Locals avoided Pantybwci in the dark, particularly on windy winter nights. Roughly translated Pantybwci means the goblin’s hollow, but worse than that the sow in chains rose from the underworld there at Halloween and other dark nights. For Hywel, who once lived at Gwynfryn Bronwydd, a stout fearless countryman, it was a place to avoid. Walking homewards from his courting trips around 1900, he’d make a huge detour to avoid Pantybwi, he’d rather not risk tangling with the forces of the other world. Rachel Hannah, brought up at nearby Blaencors, confirmed this fear and apprehension amongst locals. So where is Pantybwci? It is that first road junction, south of Pontarsais on the B4301 towards Bronwydd. Do not drive there on full headlights, but rather walk to it in winter darkness, on a night when the wind howls through the trees of this eerie hollow. You may then appreciate Hywel’s apprehension.

At the risk of being run out of the area I venture to reveal more. That sad window at Cwmgwili mansion? Mr Griffie Philipps, the current Lord of the Manor, tells me that no boy got killed in war. A mundane explanation revealed that the window had been bricked up by his father, Si Grismond Philipps, in order to install a fireplace there. After his time Griffie decided to open it all up and place two small glass windows. And what of my great voyage of discovery under Rhiw Graig? After three timeless yards my torch revealed a solid stone rock face, to end all hope and expectation. Perhaps one should just live with one’s dreams!!

*Arwyn 2018*