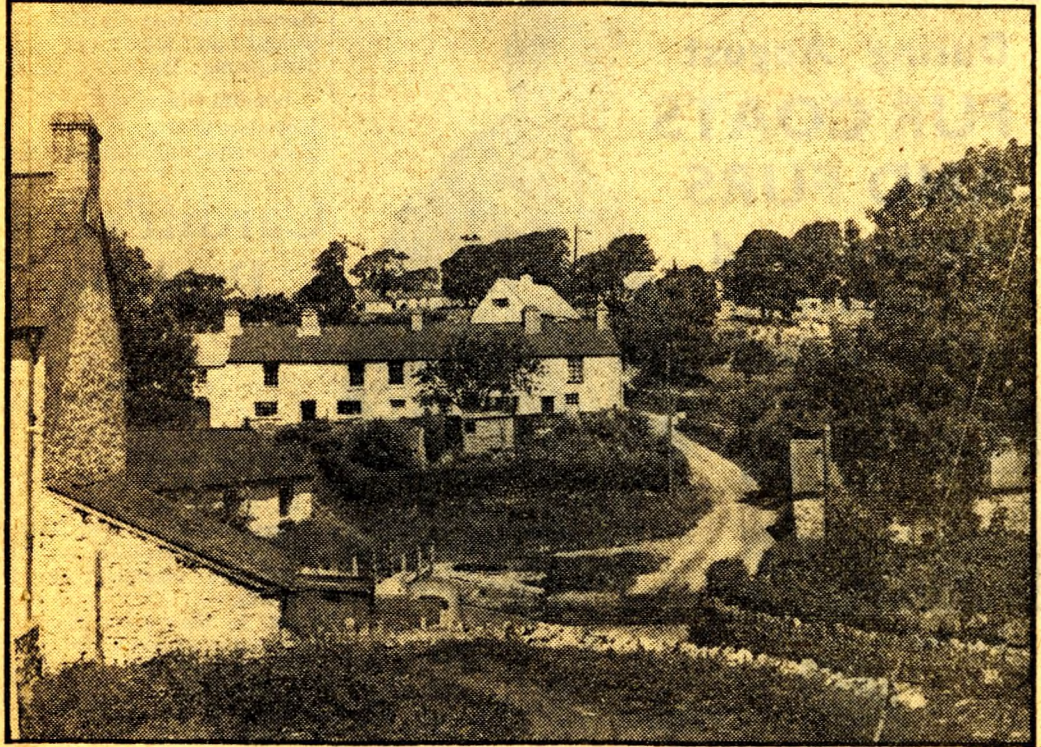
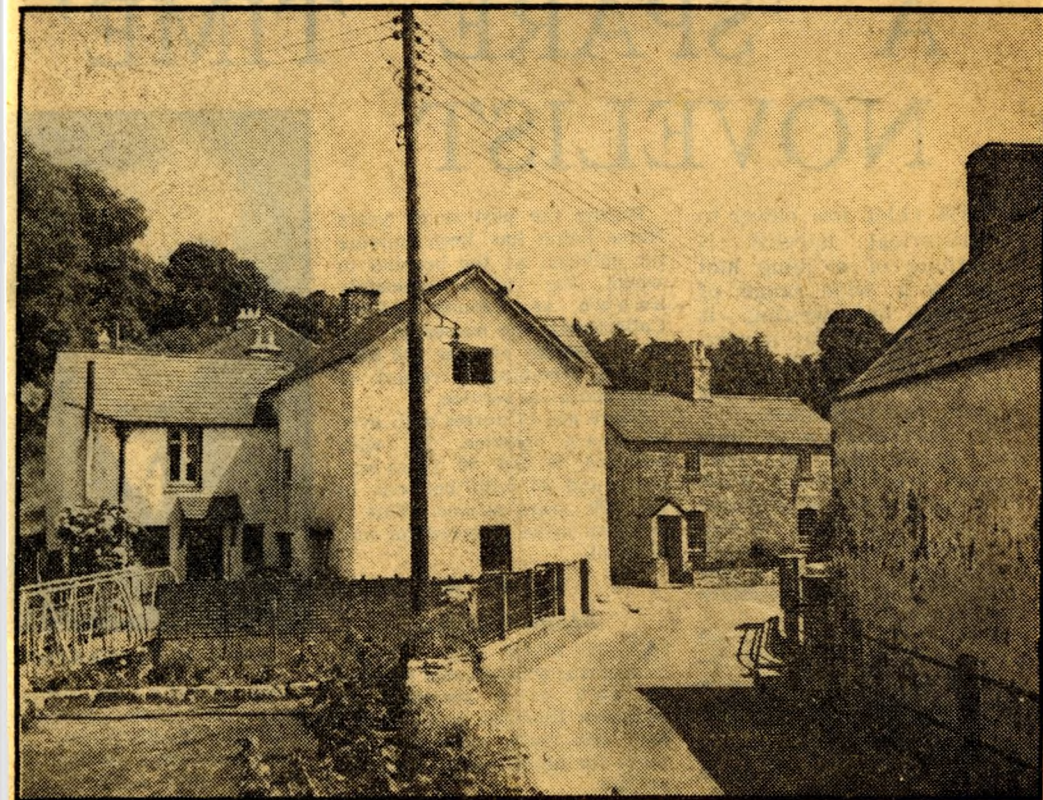


LLANBLETHIAN — QUEEN OF THE VALE



Award For Village Which Charmed Carlyle

LLANBLETHIAN, a mile south-west of Cowbridge, has been judged the best-kept village in the Vale of Glamorgan, it was announced at Barry how to-day.

sleeping cataract of white houses with trees overshadowing and fringing it" was how Thomas Carlyle described the village a century or so ago. These *South Wales Echo* pictures show that many of the houses are still white-washed, and a wealth of

trees still cast long shadows on their cool walls.

Llanblethian, as the best-kept village in the Vale, wins the D. C. Jones Challenge, competed for annually.

The handsome gold trophy was presented to-day by Sir Robert Webber to Mr. John Roberts, chairman of the Llanblethian Parish Council.

'Cheerful Homes'

There has been a lot of rebuilding in the village, including the house where Carlyle stayed. Gaunt electricity pylons are dotted here and there, buses pass through the old streets every two hours, but at heart the village remains, to quote Carlyle again, "a cheerful group of human homes."

Cottages dotted among the greenery beside the River Thaw

make this a more pleasant place to live in than any planner could envisage. One feels it is worth looking after.

"Everybody has tackled the job of tidying the village with real enthusiasm," says Alderman Robert Thomas, chairman of the parish council. "That is why we have won."

Yet it was not until mid-June that a parish meeting was held at which the 600 villagers decided to enter the competition. Since then it has been all hustle and bustle.

There was, for instance, the question of who was responsible for cutting the large area of grass in front of the ancient church which dominates the village skyline. A group of volunteers hastily banded together, borrowed a mower and the job was done.

The villagers first competed last year, but then they stood little



chance. Even the prettiest of villages must move with the times, and the appearance of the place was temporarily marred by the dirt and disorder of digging as a sewage system was laid to their homes. Now the scars of picks and shovels are healed.

The village has a strange connection with London. One of its oldest roads is called Piccadilly—and nobody seems to know why. Another road, the main approach to the village, is called Broadway, and it is around that area that a fine estate of council houses has been built in recent years.

Excavations reveal that this area was inhabited and fortified in pre-historic times. A picturesque later relic is the main gateway to St. Quintin's Castle, whose lofty ivy-clad towers were probably built in the 14th century.

Carlyle came to write of the village in his biography of a friend, John Sterling, who lived there. A retired Army officer, Sterling wrote for "The Times"

from despatches forwarded to him at Llanblethian from the battlefields of the Peninsula War—and became the first military correspondent of British journalism.

Record Entry

The competition for the tidiest village, started three years ago, has so caught the imagination of the Vale that there was a record entry this year.

The villages at first were individually inspected by separate panels formed by the management committee on which six public bodies are represented. Seven villages, Llanblethian, Bonvilston, Coychurch, East Aberthaw, Peterston-super-Ely, Penllyne and St. Bride's Major, were selected for the final judgment by Mr. Stephen Lee, of Rhosili. Of Llanblethian Mr. Lee wrote:

"This village has taken great trouble to tidy everything. The verges have been trimmed and even nettles have been tackled. The streams are very clean. A portion of waste ground hidden

from the road has also been neatly attended and gardens were attractive and well-kept. The worst feature were the surrounds of the village hall."

Inns Tidier

Mr. Lee said his report on all the villages adjudicated on might sound unduly critical of their noteworthy endeavour. In general, he said, it was remarkable that on the whole the inns were the tidiest places and the village halls the least satisfactory.

Rather blatant advertisements marred one village. Yet the seven villages clearly showed that a great deal of effort had been put into the competition. Mrs. Batrick, vice-president of the women's institute, and Mr. Frank James, clerk of the Llanblethian Parish Council, accompanied the chairman when he received the trophy.

Other villages placed in order of preference were Coychurch, Peterston-super-Ely and Bonvilston.