

Notes from Local Interest Group – Thursday September 24th 2020

Apologies: Joan Lloyd, Iris Lloyd, Cherry & Victor Williams

Present: Mo Lloyd, Wendy & Dainis Ozols, Helen Barnett, Richard Martin, Lucy Trench, John & Evelyn Bally, Ghena, Gethin and Thomas Davies, Jenny & James Martin, Richard Thomas, David & Anwyn Price, Richard King, John Price, Penny & Ifor Williams, Roy Lloyd.

Leigh & Wendy Miles from The Old Rectory, Bryngwyn, invited the group to view their collection of old agricultural and country machinery and memorabilia. We arrived from 6pm to make the most of the natural light, although the shed was well lit and well ventilated.

Leigh seems to have inherited his love of collecting and preservation from his father and they have been picking up items, through farm sales and other contacts, since the early 1970s. The ground floor of the shed is home to many different types of vintage tractors, not only from Britain but also from America and Europe. They come in many different shapes and sizes and some of them look as if they were quite a challenge to drive. Some of these had the local Radnorshire registration number, FO, as well as neighbouring Breconshire registration number, EU. There was a crop loader which picked up loose hay from the row in the field and lifted it to the trailer to be carried to the barn, this before even little bales were invented let alone the big bales of today.



Perhaps pride of joy is the steam locomotive which looked magnificent gleaming in the evening sunshine, parked outside for all to admire. This engine has attended several vintage rallies over the years. In the centre of the shed was an old steam roller; I think this one was the Breconshire one. Each county had a roller for repairing the roads and when it moved to a new site it pulled its living van along behind it. The van would be parked in a layby so that the driver would be able to make a cup of tea in his breaks and stay until the job was finished.

The shed has a gallery on three sides with a collection of field machinery, some horse-drawn, some unusual items, and most provoking memories of how people lived and worked in the past at a time when labour was provided by horse or human. There are so many items - clever little adaptations, labour-saving devices, fascinating insights into engineering in its purest form; Leigh certainly has an amazing collection.

One section was devoted to dairy. Even in upland areas, many farms produced milk for the Milk Marketing Board, milking a few cows, cooling the milk into churns and then transporting it to be picked up by the milk

lorry. There are butter churns of all shapes and sizes, along with cheese-making equipment. Many people remembered how their mother or grandmother told them about making butter when they were young.

Along one side was a collection of root pulpers, corn mills, a potato riddler, a chaff cutter and early threshing equipment, all for feeding livestock through the winter.



There is also a collection of old washing machines, most with their mangle attached - turn the handle to wash the clothes, then out they come, swill them in clean water and put them through the mangle, all done in a few minutes, ready for the next load (no waiting for the washing drum to whiz around at 1500 revs!), and then onto the line to blow in the wind. Monday was wash day so a dry day to start the week was always needed.

Interspersed with the big items are the small things, the tools, the lamps, the vermin traps, even the advertising signs to encourage your next purchase. The evening was very interesting, with people trying to work out the purpose of the object, or the way it was designed, as well as provoking memories from the past. We are so grateful to both Leigh and Wendy; they were both so willing to talk about the items, where they had come from, as well as how they work. All this achieved in a Covid19 secure environment making everyone's visit so enjoyable.