



A brush with  
**love, life**  
and  
**laughter**



Written and illustrated  
by  
Alwyn (Taffy) Parry

Croeso, Welcome, Kia Ora



**Key**

- Porth Yr Aur
- County Grammar
- Twthill
- Ysgol Hogia
- The Square
- Stryd William
- Cwellyn

Now in my twilight years I have enjoyed brushing back the cobwebs of time to reveal dormant memories. I hope you will enjoy the recollections of the period, as seen through the eyes of a little boy growing up in Wales, during the 40s and 50s. Then accompanying him through the challenges of his school years, before he departs as a sixteen year old to his first job in London and five years later makes his life changing decision, to journey to New Zealand.

L.S. Lowry's amazing ability to illustrate life in the 30s with the simple deft use of his brushes and just a little colour, has always intrigued me and finally four years ago inspired and challenged me to try, albeit naively, to illustrate the memorise of my childhood.

The black and white photographs must be credited to my Auntie, who unlike today, was the only person I knew, who had a camera. The portraits capture a realistic snap of the era and I am sure you will agree my 'great' sense of dress, which has changed little over the years!

I have dedicated 'A brush with Love Life and Laughter' to my six year old great great nephew, Jack Parry of Altringham, in the hope when he reaches my age he too will be inspired to have fun writing about his life... Now wouldn't I enjoy being around to read that!

There is nothing left to say but to invite you to read, reflect and enjoy.

Alwyn



My grandparents generation, had waved goodbye to the years of the Great Depression and the carnage of the First World War, to find history repeating itself, as the 40s were greeted with yet another war, the Second World War. The children of Caernarfon had long forgotten the nights when they congregated under the gas light, which tinged the end of their terraced street in a greenish-blue hue. On this corner of Stryd William the boys and girls had traditionally met to plan their evening entertainment of hide and seek, knock doors or other more personal and private escapades. Now the light was permanently extinguished and only the volunteer wardens were abroad, their bagged gas masks slung over their shoulders, their helmets gleaming in the still moonlit night. Their objective as they strolled along the broken pavement of the terraced streets, to seek out any glimmer of light which might escape from the long line of black draped windows.

It was part of Britain's war efforts to frustrate the ability of the Luftwaffe navigators to identify landmarks, as they guided their pilots towards their targets. On this clear April night, their planes droned overhead, following the Welsh coastline, heading N.E towards Liverpool to blitz the docks.

Below, in one of the terrace houses a small bulb cast the shadow of its tasseled shade onto the sloping bedroom ceiling and the black blinds. The mirror on the wardrobe door, reflected the scene of Mrs. Jones comforting my mother, as she struggled to give birth to her second son... me. So began Alwyn's association with his parents Annie and Will Parry and brother Llewellyn and the Land of my Fathers... Wales. Although in truth, it was a couple of years later when I got to know my father, as he was serving with the Glider Regiment in Salisbury.

The street is situated in Caernarfon, a small town in the N.W of Wales with a population of some 10,000 mainly Welsh speaking people. The region is steeped in ancient history, where archaeology digs have uncovered remains of Iron Age villages and Roman forts. The town is dominated by its ancient castle and town walls, which together with those in Conwy and Harlech, were built by Edward I to contain and quell the rebellious Welsh.

Another feature, central to the town is Twthill, a 400-foot-high rock formation, from its summit a 360° panorama can be enjoyed of the surrounding geography. The Isle of Anglesey lies to the Nor West and is separated from the rest of the mainland by the fast flowing Menai Straits. Large sand banks border the shorelines which are met by the green coastal plains which tumble down on either side to embrace the tidal flats. To the East, the undulating fields and fern contoured hills, host historical small villages and chapels, where once the quarrymen and the farm workers lived. Today controversially, many of the houses have become holiday homes offering B&B and concern grows at the ability of the local population to remain and retain the Welsh way of life. The surrounding farmlands are crisscrossed by a labyrinth of dry stonewalls, a sprinkling of whitewashed farmhouses and drooping long limbed black oaks, which offer shelter to long tailed sheep. Silhouetted along the skyline the backdrop of the mountains of Eryri (Snowdonia) rise, the missives, keepers of rocky outcrops, craggy passes and beautiful lakes, bedecked and often enshrouded in gray clouds, which bustle along the tops where eagles once soared.

Whenever I visit Eryri, I think of Sir Edmund Hillary where his team of climbers tested their equipment before venturing to Everest. I was 12 years old when my father took me to see the film of Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, conquering the famous peak. I wonder what my father might have said, if he were to have learnt that Sir Edmund would come knocking on the door of his son's home in Wellington New Zealand, 25 years later... so unravels destiny and another story for another day.

Below Twthill, lies Stryd William in a shallow steep sided valley, the once soot covered brown-red bricks of yesterday are today plastered with pebble-dash, p.v.c windows have replaced the old peeling sashed window frames, designer doors stand where once the uniform red wooden doors with their gleaming brass letterboxes and shining brass knockers welcomed the visitor. The worn blackened slate door steps and blue slate roof still survive, continuing along the length of the now shortened street and the once smoky, now redundant chimneys, are receptors to a festoon of TV aerials.





How things have changed, during my childhood the adjoining Margaret Street ended in a brick wall, which we would climb over onto Cae Sale. There, we would play football, build dams, sled when it snowed, or raid orchards, which grew next to the Cadnant stream. The field's purpose was to temporarily hold the sheep and cattle brought in from the surrounding farms, then on sale day, the animals would be shepherded over a small bridge into the adjacent sales yards.

When the field was wet, we would return to where the streets crossed and where the massive Seilo Methodist Chapel stood, forming a center of activity whether it was for play or prayer. Towards the town, Tommy's Fish & Chips shop stood, where an investment of 1d (penny) would return a newspaper cone of golden-brown batter crumbs, however if a bit short on finance a 1/4d (farthing) would acquire an oxo cube, which could be licked with equal contentment.

The shop shared the T-junction with Queen Mary Street which climbed steeply out of the valley. The polished blackened slate doorsteps of the houses, were built at 45° to the pavement and were worn thin on one end, as the other end was too high to step onto.

Towards the town center the two junior schools stood, Ysgol Rhad directly opposite the tannery and just around the corner of the fly infested factory, Ysgol Hogia. The yards, fascinated the children, their faces squashed between the iron railings of the gate, watched, as the men wearing long gloves and aprons the reddish colour of inner tubes, would salt and stack the hides up on top of one another. Once stacked, they would wash down the residue of blood and gore into the Cadnant, to combine with the waste and droppings of the sales yards. The stream would continue its meanderings past the back of the houses, to exit in the Straits, not far from our favourite swimming spot.

Both schools were built of stone and typical of the Victorian era, long tall windows, dusty wooden floors and a spartan collection of cast iron radiators, an architectural invitation for colds and runny noses. A mandatory morning ritual, was the swallowing of a brown capsule containing cod liver oil, whether it did any good or not, I never knew, but the teacher would always stand over you to ensure that you swallowed the pill.



Before starting lessons the class of about 40 or more pupils would be told to don alternative coloured cotton loops and join the team wearing the same colour. Exercises would slowly begin by clapping hands above one's head, eventually leading to jumping, legs apart, clap, bend, touch the floor with both hands flat between your braced legs, then ditto, ditto, ditto. It was so repetitious, the boys would engage in trying to confuse everyone by deliberately miss timing their jumps. Their success soon became apparent with the three lines of pupils ending up

looking more like a platoon of wellington, wearing, waddling geese, walking backwards, than a team of gymnast! The warming up exercises abandoned, we would be marched back a little warmer to the cold classrooms to begin our lessons.

Computers were yet to be invented, instead the youngest pupils would be provided with chalk and a wooden framed slate and thus armed began their lessons. Older pupils showed their advancement, by dipping wooden shafted steel nibs into inkwells of blue ink, before blotting their way across the paper. Most of the boys were better carvers, since it was mandatory for each boy to carry a penknife and their scribing ability was evident on inspecting the oak top of the desk, as were their initials.

It was the same curriculum for most of the children based on the 3R's writing, arithmetic and reading. I seem to remember being introduced formally to English, when I was about eight or nine as it was very rare to hear locals speak anything but Welsh, as it is today. I remember Miss Rowlands trying to teach us to revise and remember similes and metaphors in preparation for our 11+ examination but they made little sense, as was trying to speak English which was as foreign to my tongue as Russian or Chinese would have been. As a Welsh speaker, I would translate from my own language e.g., 'blocks of flats' became 'flats of blocks' before uttering 'might as well put the violin in the ceiling'... when I'd had enough. Today, it is recognised that the speaking of more than one language is an advantage and I hope parents in Wales, will continue to encourage their children to use and learn both languages.





The rented homes along the terraced streets, sheltered mostly poor families, supported by lowly paid fathers, many of whom worked in the slate quarries. Although poor they were rich in their companionship and support they received and shared with their neighbours. Housewives were proud and busied themselves 'brassing' the brass knockers and letterboxes until they gleamed gold. With the same conviction, on their knees as if praying, hair in curlers and held in place with a turbaned scarf, they would blacken and polish the shining welcoming black doorsteps. The glistening clean windows were also testament to their pride, the white lace curtain a cataract to the privacy of the front room. It also formed the backdrop where a favourite plant or inherited antique vase would take center stage on the windowsill for the passing foot traffic to admire.

Each house was a duplicate of its neighbour, with two rooms up and two down and a narrow staircase leading up from the lobby. The two downstairs rooms comprised the living area and the front room; the latter reserved for special occasions, weddings, funerals and the rent collector. Outside at the back, a lean-to kitchen with a gas stove, a kitchen sink and a small red gingham cloth covered table, the rest of the walls supported shelves and a few hanging metal pots. The Ty Bach (toilet) occupied one corner of the slate tiled court yard and its white washed walls hosted the tin bath and washing board. Against the opposite wall stood the mangle and the hundredweight jute bag of rationed coal nestled in the corner.

Many of the housewife's would work as char-ladies, by going out to clean or take in washing, subsidising the meager wages of their husbands. Monday was mother's washday and the tin bath was filled with hot water from the large kettle and topped up from the brass tap in the yard. The clothes would be soaped and then rubbed up and down along the ridges of the glass washboard; washing machines were unheard of. The hard work would continue squeezing and heaving heavy flannelette sheets, guiding them through the mangle whilst turning the wheel, which powered the squelching, squeezing, rubber rollers. Mother's raw hands would then use the carved wooden pegs, she had brought from the basket

carrying gypsy at the door, rather than refuse, for fear of her retribution in form of wrath or worse – a curse. Mam would proceed to peg the washing onto the clothes line and hoist the line up with a long forked pole to catch the wind. Unfortunately rain was not unusual and then the wet washing would be gathered and brought in and placed on to the wooden horse. The clothes rack hung on pulleys above the fireplace, and the washing added further to the already damp environment and a further excuse for the wallpaper to brown and peel at the corners.

Sunday was the weekly bath day and the tin bath would be relocated in front of the fireplace. The black kettle would boil on the fire and would be again used to replenish and warm the shared water. No bottles of shampoo to choose from, just a block of coarse carbolic soap which invariably sought refuge in ones eyes, causing strong protest. The resulting blood shot eyes accompanied you as you made your way around the corner to chapel in your Sunday best.

There were public baths with a 3d slot operated door available below the public library, which I think my mother would sometimes use, but I never got to experience that luxury. Neither was the visit to the outside loo, any more luxurious as the inevitable task of wiping one's bottom was achieved with ripped pieces of the Caernarfon & Denbigh news paper, which were harpooned by a rusty nail to dangle against the back of the rickety bolted wooden door.

The fireplace was also a source of energy and enjoyment. Come supper time, we would be allowed to poke the dying embers of the frugal fire alive. A hunk of bread (sliced was not heard of) speared onto the extendable fork was soon toasted and the offering spread with a thick layer of lard sprinkled with salt. If we were very lucky, it might be accompanied by a cup of cocoa and sugar too! Come winter, a pot of stew 'lobs scows' bubbled away for days with more vegetables being added daily to make it linger longer. Food generally was short and my mother would hoard the white blue printed packets of rationed 'Tate & Lyle' sugar, to bottle fruit in season and to make jam. Eggs were pickled and a piece of tripe was regarded as a delicacy, well at least by my mother, who knew the lady at the Tripe Shop well.



Fish was also sometimes on the menu. If the weather was fine after chapel, the family all in our Sunday best, would go for a stroll along the many public footpaths along the river or feed the swans at the park. We would meet up with other families and jangle (chat) just like in chapel, it was an important part of life and how the community kept in touch with one another. (To see a phone in a terrace home would have been as rare as seeing an elephant sitting on the front pew in chapel). We would eventually arrive at the castle and the slate quay and if the fishing boats had caught the tide, we would buy two or three herrings to accompany us home for dinner the next day.

After the War, every Saturday, dad would take me with him to the allotment where the result of his endeavors to supplement our meager rations was evident in the large range of vegetables he was growing. He would plant seed, weed and harvest his plot and once having finished the toil for the day, he and his fellow gardeners would sit in a circle on upended wooden ex-ammunition boxes discussing the state of the nation, football or share the odd story, as they puffed on their Woodbines.

Most winter nights, dad would arrive home from work in the dark and my mother would feed him by the fire, as he tried to warm up after a day up on the mountain. It was probably the same in most houses along the street. If it was raining, we were not allowed out, we would play cards or listen to Galw Garri Tryfan (calling Detective Garri Tryfan) on the wireless, inevitably the radio would have a fit of statics, crackling like an electric storm just as the

play reached its climax and no amount of slapping the H.M.V radio's varnished wooden cabinet, would encourage it to return to the station. Disappointed at not knowing the ending and another early day for dad, we would all head for bed in an endeavour to save the rationed coal.



Winters were cold and snow on the uninsulated slate roofs would find my brother and I fighting for the ownership of the two gray ex-army blankets and eiderdown we shared, before snuggling up to one another on the kapok mattress, which in turn was supported by the twanging metal springs of the small double bed.



The War had created considerable shortages and as a result most commodities were rationed, the lack of petrol, ensured motor vehicles were used mainly for emergency services. A unique exception was the Rolls Royce, which saw service at weddings, for the grieving at funerals, or often as an ambulance for mothers to be and when not in use for these essential services, sat waiting hopefully for employment as a taxi at the railway station.

Other special providers were Owen y Glo (the Coal) and Jack Llefrith (the Milk) whose horse had died making his wooden cart redundant. Both men empathised with the needs of the community and readily offered smaller quantities of their commodities when they were short of ration coupons or more likely money. Owen would shovel a smaller amount of coal on to the Avery scale sitting on the back of his flat deck lorry and then tip the weighed coal into a smaller jute bag, then heaving it onto his back, he would carry it through the front door and deposit it in the backyard. An old friend recalled how when they ran out of coal he would

be given a bucket and told to walk along the railway lines in search of coal, which may have fallen off the back of the tender of the steam engine.

Jack Llefrith had a ladle which hooked on to the handle of the churn. On request for a smaller amount he would dip it into the churn to measure out a  $\frac{1}{4}$  pint of milk and pour it directly into my grandmother's jug. Her needs were minimal, as no one had refrigerators, a larger amount would have been wasted. If payment was due and nobody was home, Jack would find the money either in the bottle on the doorstep or a note saying the money was on the kitchen table. The Yale key to the door in most homes, dangled on a piece of string on the inside of the letterbox, Jack would retrieve it, unlock the door, deposit the milk on a slate shelf, and pick up his money.

Clothes were also rationed and as the Rolls Royce picture shows my brother being the oldest was best dressed and the youngest received the hand me downs. Unfortunately for me, Llewellyn, resembled a giraffe, whilst he described me as too short to cut cabbage. The trousers I am wearing, were hardly tailor made, having to be adjusted by turning them over at the top, over my belt, to prevent my ankles from disappearing at the bottom!

Most of our clothes were gray, often patched and when the collars of the shirts were worn out, they would be taken to Mrs Pritchard – a neighbour with a foot driven gold decorated black Singer sewing machine. She would turn the collar over or make a new one out of the shirt's tail. Eventually when there was no tail left, the shirt would be retired and would re-enter service as polishing rags for mother. Socks would be darned, many of the children wore heavy leather boots, the soles embedded with a multiplicity of tri-headed iron studs to prolong the life and limit their visit to the cobbler. However, the boots also became a mechanical device, allowing the kids to slide down the steep pavements leaving contrails of sparks.

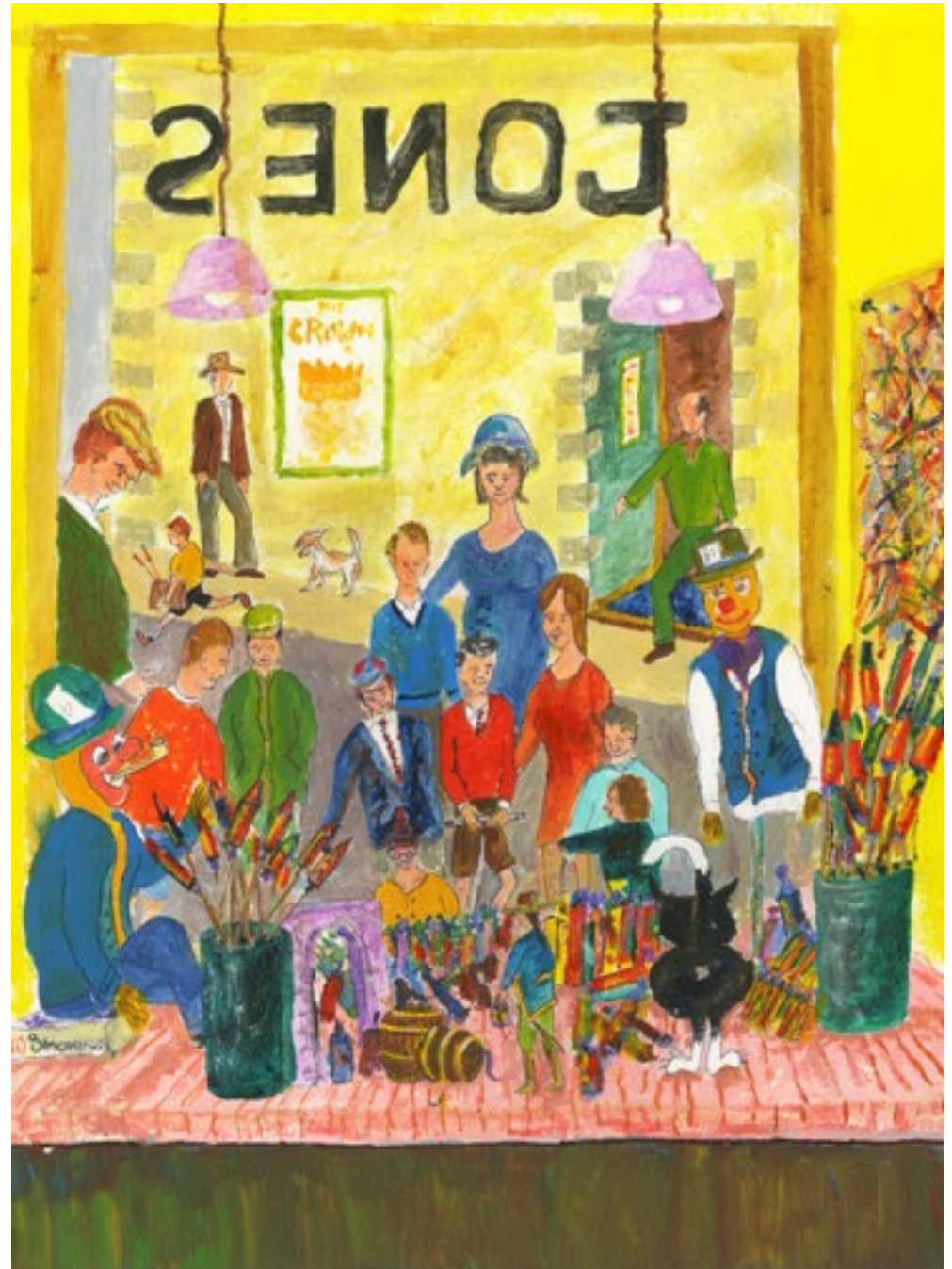
The absence of motor vehicles enabled the streets to become the playgrounds, where worn out tennis balls were kicked with gusto between piled sweaters acting as goal posts. Girls skipped, played marbles and hop scotch or played with their knitted colourful golliwogs (there was no inference of colour prejudice, indeed most of us had never seen a black person).

Apart from a couple of swings and a see-saw in the park, the children were left up to their own devices to create their own games and playing fields. Twthill became the venue for the re-enactment of Glyn Dwr attacking Edwards imagined army. Our jackets fastened like capes around our necks, waving and clanging wooden swords against borrowed dustbin lids, accompanied by fearsome yells and screams, the imagined English army soon capitulated.

The 5th November was celebrated when the result of our working assiduously collecting old furniture, boxes, hedge clippings into a huge heap and guarding it fastidiously against marauding neighbouring kids, was set alight. The bonfire was enormous and funds had been found from somewhere to purchase a small quantity of sparklers and bangers as we danced and pranced about casting long shadows into the night.

Prior to the long expected celebration, lunch time would see us outside Huxley Jones, admiring all the colourful variety of fireworks on offer. We had been banned on entering on mass as one of the boys had been caught shoplifting. His father, the cobbler, whose shop was only around the corner, put his leather strop to use for another purpose that day. I never saw the boy after we left school but read in the financial papers that he had been very successful and was worth several hundreds of millions of pounds! Just imagine the firework display we could have had, had that be true then.

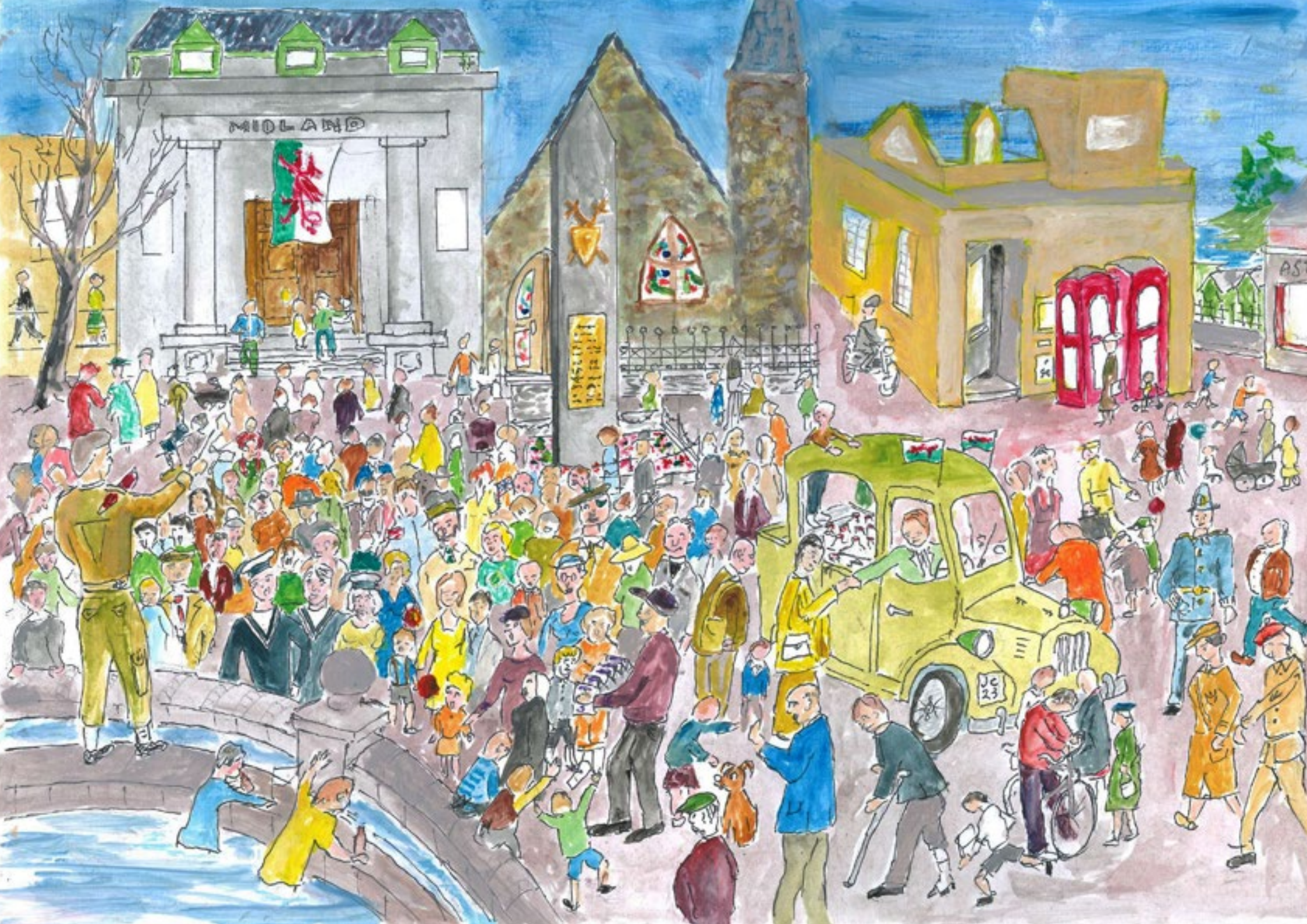
Other entertainment unbeknown to our parents was rock climbing. Following Ed Hillary's success, Twthill became our Everest and the site of a daring rescue. One of the boys had become frozen on Clogwyn Mawr (a steep craggy face) having failed to emulate his fellow climbers ascent and not daring to move either up or down. It was up to his companions to rescue him. Innovation was called for, probably a word they were not acquainted with, however, it took but a little time for them to find an abandoned old brass bed head, tie their knitted red and navy school scarfs to one end and lower it down the steep face. The boy held on to be lifted to safety, maybe the forerunner of hovering helicopter rescues for which the RAF have become famous for on Eryri.





Back in 1945, victory had been declared. Most were happy, whilst others were sad, as memories of loved ones were rekindled knowing they would never be returning to join the celebrations. The children were laughing, joining the army ranks, as the marching soldiers headed towards the square and the town and country folk united for the celebrations. My father was on leave and well known within the community as a naturally gifted musician and conductor, it took little persuasion for him to step up onto the fountain and lead the mingling crowd 'And there is singing we had ynte' said an old friend of his, on retelling me the story.

I could not claim to having inherited any of my fathers undoubtable musical talents, but I did once sing with Sir Bryn Terfel, the world famous bass-baritone who was in concert at the Wellington City Hall. Or more accurately, later that evening at the Red Dragon – the only Welsh pub in the Southern Hemisphere with 50 other Welsh patrons where he had come for a pint after the concert! 'And there is singing we had ynte!'





The square was the hub of the town's activities, following the war years, more and more stalls would be erected each market Saturday. Competing stallholders vying for the shillings and pence of the shoppers, offered: fruit, vegetables, second hand clothing, old and new tools, fish, hard to get ladies nylon seamed stockings, tea sets made in China and China made in Stoke on Trent. A lady in traditional Welsh costume, her tall black hat standing above the crowd, was an easy target for the children, who were very adept at skimming tantalising pieces of Welsh home made rock, off her plate of tasty offerings. English and strong Welsh accented voices combined noisily as bids were made, for this or that, some aggrieved, some delighted, all added to the squabbling, laughing day. The smaller boys would roam about the town investigate bins, abandoned cardboard boxes and explore dark corners of the castle walls, trying hard not to get into trouble or at least not getting caught. Fishing was a great past time and whilst the pier was out of bounds, due to its dangers, the temptation of catching crabs easily by balancing on the cross beams over the fast ebbing tide was often to much of a temptation.

The Square, on Saturday evenings, would be taken over by the teenagers and twenty plus, where both sexes would walk around the block via Palace Street, under the Guildhall and back to the square. In reality it was more like a farmers market, without the farmers prodding and pinching, well at least to start with, as both sexes measured one another up before making a bid. Finally if luck was in, condescending eyes would meet and a walk in the quieter quarters of the town along the harbour front and under the shadows of the castle and town walls would ensue. I wonder what the wall witnessed over the centuries? But of course the stories will never be told. 'Well, well medda Will wrth y wall. Ddidodd y wall ddim byd wrth Will.'

When the old Guildhall clock struck ten o'clock it would seem to strike fifty times or more. I am inclined to think that it was a warning in ancient times to tell the people that the gates in the town walls were about to be closed, but I

am not sure, despite my age. However, the striking of the clock had a magical effect on the young people of the day, as the absence of private cars saw them rushing for the last bus heading for home to the outlying villages. Many of these have descriptive Welsh names such as Llanberis, Deiniolen, Waenfawr, Cwm y Glo, Rhosgadfan, Felinhelli, Llanwnda etc. The town would be empty, silent once more, except for a few stray dogs, with no buses to bark at or chase, sniffing and marking some of the piles of rubbish left by the market traders, whilst a lonely policeman checked that the shop doors were securely locked. As there was no television, the Liverpool Echo's evening edition was compulsory reading and the family's weekly investment with Littlewood's Football Pools checked, against the soccer results. With nothing to celebrate, there was little else to do than go to bed and plan what to do the following day.





DOWN YMA COFIS BACH



Most mornings, we would wake to the departing chorus of echoing steel studded boots, accompanied by the hacking smokers coughs, as the quarrymen made their way along the street and up the hill to catch the bus, to the slate quarries of Eryri.

After arrival at the bottom of the mountain they would walk up the tracks towards their allocated working areas, and when winter was around the corner, leave crunched tracks through early snow, which might have fallen overnight. Depositing their swag bags in the little slate cabins,

they had built from waste for shelter, the men would start work to bring down the towering rock faces of slate. Precariously balanced on steps they had previously hewed, they would drill holes into the slippery surface and insert dynamite.

No hard helmets or orange high-vis waterproof jackets, just soft Dai caps perched as precariously on their heads as they were on the cliff face. Many wore navy overalls with a bib and over the top a well worn Harris tweed jacket with leather patched elbows, a knitted knotted woollen scarf tucked into the buttoned up coat, helped keep the cold out, brown thick patched corduroy trouser tied with string above the ankle, a pair of stout leather hobnail boots completed their working uniform.

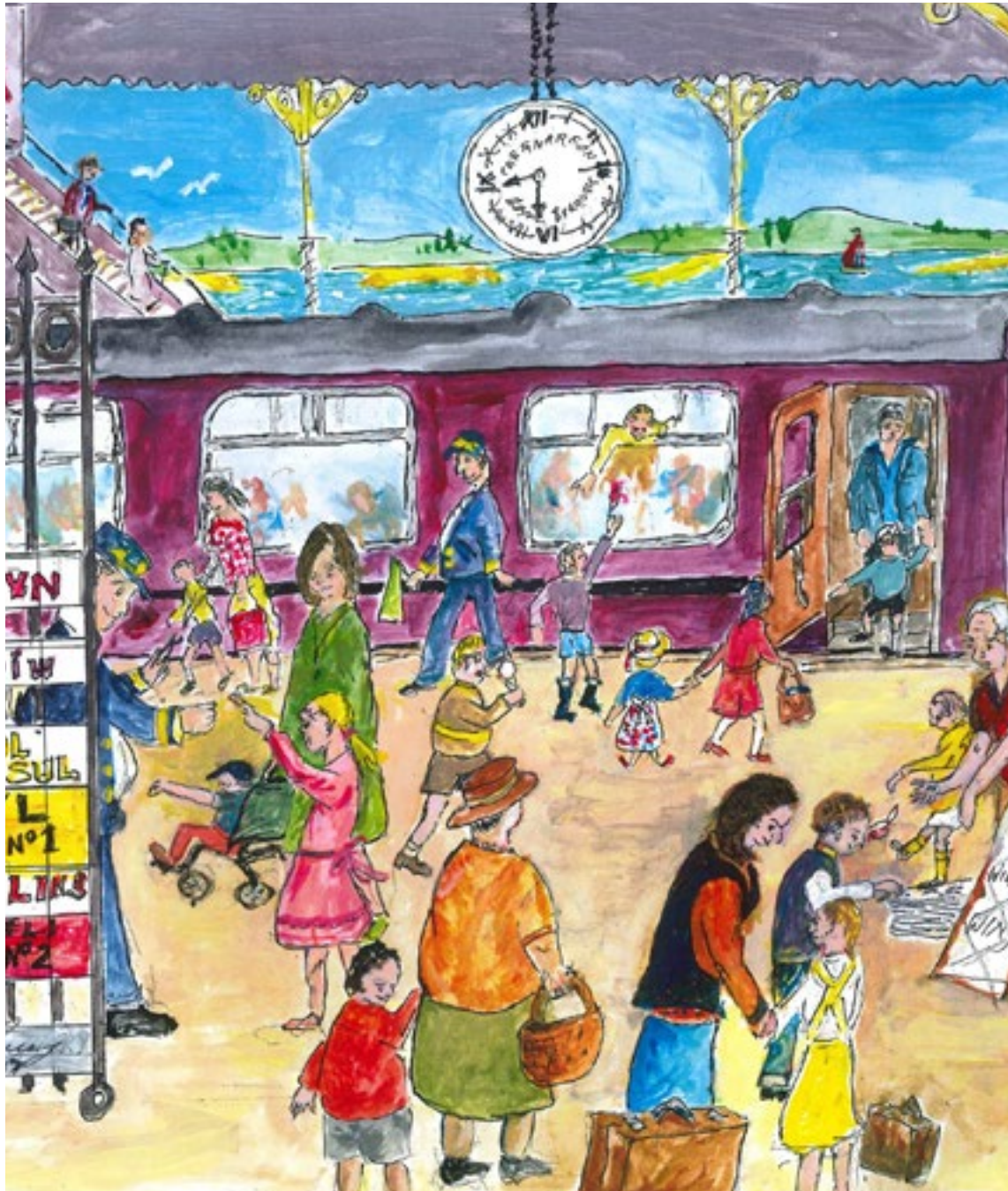
Having placed the dynamite they would seek shelter, until the siren blew and the plunger depressed to bring down a huge rockslide of slate. It was not unusual to find only 20% of the fall was usable, the balance had to be manually disposed of before production could begin. Millions of tons of the purple-blue waste mark the dumps, which scar the mountain scenery throughout Snowdonia.

Much of the splitting and dressing of the slates was done by hand, using a mallet and cold chisel to split the rock along its grain, then when measured by scoring the surface a hand guillotine would be used to finally shape it to the desired rectangular size. Later the stacked slates would be loaded by hand onto small carriages and pulled by train to the harbours of Felinhelli or Caernarfon where they would be loaded for export or distributed throughout the country, to roof the nation.

Today, most of the quarries have been closed, the slate replaced by cheaper products. No longer does the Quarryman have to shorten the fuse in a desire to be economical and sometimes risk the consequences, nor do they have to bow to the owners demands to supply 120 slates and be paid for 100: the excess being claimed as insurance against breakage. It was no wonder strife and rebellion was always a daily subject for the men when they had a short break, whilst trying to warm up over the open fire in their cabin over a quick lunch and hot cup of tea.

Like many of his peers, my father had started work as a twelve year old boy, although starved of education, they were ambitious to find alternative work and adamant that none of their sons would follow their footsteps. The quarries which were once the major industry of North Wales employing about 15,000 men, they have long been replaced by climbers and laughing tourist enjoying new facilities such as flying foxes which send the patrons to huge height and speed over the abandoned slate strewn waste land. The little trains still pull carriages along narrow gauge railway lines but are now filled with comfortably seated visitors, enjoying a festival of colour, as they meander amongst the mountains painted by nature in rich colours of the purple heather, grasping on to craggy rocky outcrops, orange fern knolls, blue-purple lakes, gushing white waterfalls and towering mountains.





Back in Stryd William, it was not unusual, come the weekend to hear a few neighbours singing as they came home, having had an ale or two on the Saturday night. But the following day they never failed to appear in chapel, whether that might have been different had the pubs been allowed to open on Sundays, will forever be open to conjecture!

However, as children we were brought up to a comparatively strict Methodist upbringing and the Seilo chapel around the corner had great influence on both our prayers and play. Here we learnt to sing in unison, take part in plays, compete in the eisteddfod, hopefully to be rewarded with a few pennies and a blue ribbon. There was no alternative to attending Sunday school, even as I later became a reluctant participant, but there was a fantastic reward for attending.

This was in the form of a trip to Rhyl, for a whole day! It was a real treat as most children only got as far from home as their adventurous bikes would take them, as very few parents owned cars or indeed could drive.

When the great day arrived, the station's concrete platform would echo to the ringing of the children's studded boots as excited children ran about mingling and greeting friends. Finally after exploring most corners of the platform, running through the big black engine's steam, as it hissed it's impatient to get away, the big clock would show the departing time was near. The children would clamber aboard, to join patiently waiting parents, the banging and crashing of doors would follow, windows dropped as the excited children pulled on the leather straps, heads out shouting and encouraging last minute stragglers to hurry up. Finally the station master would shout 'all aboard', blow his whistle, wave his green flag and in reply, the engine would hoot, hiss, vent it's stream of white hot steam of frustration and slowly but surely, the wheels would ponderously turn click, clickety click... clickety clack... clickety... and we were off.

CAERNARFON  
PLATFORM 2



On arrival at Rhyl the entire congregation would head for the beach, where we were welcomed by the braying of the donkeys and a sea of striped numbered deck chairs for hire. Soon our families were seated and settled in almost tribal chapel clusters of Baptist, Methodist, Annibynwyr etc. on separate pieces of the beach, the men with rolled up trousers, shoes tucked under the canvas, their toes warring with the sand. Knotted handkerchiefs, balanced on many a gleaming head to protect the sheen from the peeping sun and the bombardment by flocks of sandwich, seeking, squawking, seagulls.

It was so exciting, being with your family enjoying and sharing new experiences, such as a donkey ride and the Punch and Judy show, although neither spoke Welsh. We laughed just as much as the older children who understood what was being said so that we would not be regarded as being 'dwb' (thick). A great industrial effort would be made to build a sand effigy of Caernarfon Castle, surrounded by moats which did not hold water, no matter how many buckets of water we poured into them. Eventually, we would become distracted, tummies would begin to rumble and we would be led off the sands to one of the restaurants facing the sea.

Dodging between hordes of people, tramping cheerfully along the wide promenade and dodging behind the clattering bell ringing trams, we reached our destination. There we were greeted, by a waitress, in a jet-black dress, adorned with crisp contrasting white starched doily collar, cuffs, and an apron tied with a neat bow at the back. Balanced on top of her equally blackened teased up hair, a half moon shaped stiff white linen tiara. I recall my father collecting the profanity of cutlery and putting it to one side, stating, all we need was a knife fork and spoon, the rest were redundant to our cause. It was quite likely that he had no idea what to do with the array of utensils, any more than his children, as we waited impatiently for the fish and chips all three of us had ordered. Finally the silver tray offerings arrived, accompanied by thin slices of pre-margarined white bread on separate white plates, all was quickly devoured and a unanimous agreement reached, that the cod was not as good as Tommy Chips. However to be fair, nothing could have tasted good as we hungered more for the fun at the promised land, the Fun Fair.





The English speaking stall holders ignored our Welsh and concentrated on how to prise our pennies out of the now candy flossed pink fingers. Not that it was a difficult task, as everything was so bright and beautiful and the loud cheerful barrel piped music just added to all the excitement. Eyes darted from stall to stall, each representing a new challenge with so many appetising prizes on display, you could win. You never knew unless you tried, you might be lucky to hook up a yellow duck from the floating circling flotilla and win a prize. Dad showed his skill with the rifle, despite the misaligned gun sight and I got a prized brown cowboy hat, Llewellyn won a goldfish in a jam jar, by putting ping-pong balls into a clown's mouth, as it turned its head from side to side. On top of all that, there was the thrill of driving your very own bumper car and after riding the elephant at Noah's, there was still the death-defying figure eight yet to come.

Back on the train, tired, we would chew on the long pink rock, the name Rhyl, scrawled in red continuously and inexplicably through its entire length of white sugary mint center. Gesticulating, enthusiastically with our sticky fingers, recalling the great day's happenings, and already planning next year's excursion.

From time to time I would check that the little blue velvet box was still in my pocket, it was a surprise present I had insisted on buying for mam, from a street vendor. Mam, had been unwell again and had not been able to accompany us. It was many many years later when I came across the little blue box again, abandoned in the back of a drawer, inside it, lay a small bejeweled tarnished gold new moon with a broken clasp, a child's symbol of love and love not lost.







Christmas was the other highlight of the year it was about the mid 40s and Llewellyn had told me not to expect any Christmas presents as times were hard "but Llew" I questioned, "but but... what about Sion Corn?" (Father Xmas) to which he had replied that Lord Haw Haw (the Nazi propaganda chief) had broadcasted that Santa and Rudolf had been shot down over Germany and he had not heard anything more since the War had ended.

I was suspicious, he was hiding something, so I determined to wake us both up, when Santa arrived to prove him wrong. We blocked up the chimney and carefully leaving the bedroom door slightly ajar, we balanced several books bridging the gap. We put out a bottle of Corona's, Dandelion and Burdock (Coca Cola had not conquered Wales at the time) and left carrots for Rudolf. Satisfied with our preparations we propped ourselves up on our shared pillow, ready on guard, Llewellyn with torch in hand, ready to greet the man in a red suit.

Mam came in on hearing our waking excitement, Sion Corn had been and must have cast a spell over us, as he had not woken us, whilst he filled our darned stockings with an apple, orange, banana, pomegranate and a few chocolates wrapped in tinsel. Excited, I unwrapped the brown paper, to reveal a book about all the wild animals in Africa and last but not least my special request, a Corgi camouflaged metal Spitfire!

Overlooking our uncontained excitement and gratitude, with a smile, Mam said, "Dad was resting, as he'd had to help Santa deliver the presents to all the other children. Santa had not been feeling very well after all the books that had fallen on top of him. He had asked Dad, to thank you for the drink and carrots, but asked that we never repeat that trick ever again!" I quickly agreed, as I knew then that Santa had escaped and that he spoke Welsh. Having concluded this, as he had given me a Spitfire, just like I had requested when I wrote to him in my neatest handwriting in Welsh and which Mam had posted on my behalf to the South Pole. I couldn't wait to show my friends my presents and tell them how Dad had been out all night helping Sion Corn too.



There were other forms of entertainment and cold winter Saturday afternoons would see us head off to the Empire, where we would get into trouble for turning off the gas side lights, forcing the usherette to have to reignite them with a big whoosh, accompanied by a big cheer from the child audience, followed by a stiff warning a repeat would have us all walking out early! The Empire used to show films like the Three Stooges the fore runners to today's Mr Bean, and re runs of silent movies of Key Stone cops or Arthur Askey, and George Formby, although I loved the Stooges and laughed heartily at the cops, I preferred the offerings at the Guildhall Pics.

It was an adventure to visit the Guildhall, not only did they show cowboy films, you could also fly paper aeroplanes off the balcony to glide across the screen. Generally we were in a gang of two or three, we would pool our resources and one would pay the 3d whilst the others would run around the corner to the fire exit, it wasn't long before the bar was lifted and the door opened to allow free access. We would sneak in and guiltily slump low into a seat, so as not to be seen, before we became mesmerised by Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers, and especially the Lone Ranger. It was not long before we joined the rest of the kids in rewarding the masked hero for his brave feats with loud cheering whilst the enemy were booed even louder. Inevitably after the Lone Ranger rescued the wagon train from the attacking Apaches and saving the beautiful young cowgirl, who had fallen head over horseshoes in love with him, the film would end. But not before he had holstered his pearl handled guns, reared his gallant white horse, casually waved his arm and with a 'hi ho Silver' disappeared into the dusty sunset, with Tonto traipsing behind bare back on a Dalmatian patched horse. We could hardly wait till the following Saturday's three penny worth of black and white drama.

Running home, we would slap our rumps, and by cocking our thumbs and extending our forefingers we would soon shoot down the remaining Red Indians, whom we imagined were chasing us.



LAFUR

LAPOR

ST. THOMAS

MAGYH DU

THE GREAT

MAGYH DU

Few people had T.Vs the first time I saw one was in 1953, when I was invited to a friends house to watch the Queen's coronation. Even at this early age I had been brought up to have little respect for the Monarchy. Many had already begun refusing to stand up for God save the Queen, which we regarded as the English national anthem when it was played at the end of each session in the pictures. On this occasion however I was watching T.V transfixed to the screen, not looking at the ceremony but at the seated dignitaries, where hopefully I would catch sight of my uncle Tom Hayes, who was a Captain in the Engineers and was serving as an usher in the Abbey.

T.V was in its infancy, although my friends 11 inch wooden set was coloured, well sort of, his father had brought and fitted a sheet of clear plastic over the screen. The plastic had been printed with a series of blue dots along the top third, gradually diminishing in size and colour as they moved towards the center, whilst the lower third had been similarly treated but in green, the middle portion remained clear. My claim to have seen the Coronation in colour immediately arouses contentious shouts of impossible! I never saw my uncle.

When Goronwy. O. Roberts became Caernarfon's first Labour M.P, my father was absolutely delighted. He was chairman of the local party and trade union secretary and had worked hard canvassing on Goronwy's behalf and I had delivered hundreds of pamphlets. So it was with great pride that we both went down to the Guildhall to see his inauguration. Later as a thank you, I received a book about parliament signed by Goronwy. Sadly this little memento was unfortunately lost when moving between flats somewhere in Wellington.

Looking back one can understand how I became engrossed with politics at such an early age. On my mother's passing, my father and I would spend most evenings jousting rhetorically, about Christianity or rather my agnostic tendencies, Republicanism and my membership of Plaid Cymru (Welsh Nationalist Party). I should probably have been doing my homework but as my brother was hardly ever home, my father and I relied on each other to fill the gap left by her absence. Later I celebrated that he had finally voted Plaid Cymru!

In those days the imposing Guildhall building was almost twice the height that it is today, but unfortunately fell into disrepair.

I can recall my father was almost killed when a slate fell off the roof shattering on the pavement besides him. Years later, suntanned ambling along the palmed shoreline of Tahiti, in well fitting cotton shorts, I was to suffer a similar experience, when a large coconut fell off a swaying 60 foot high palm to embed itself in the sand just inches from where my head had just been. Life is sometimes so very fickle...

Come Summer, friends would meet at Porth yr Aur (Golden Gateway) the ancient towered gateway of the towns surrounding walls, which lead out to the Menai Straits. It was exhilarating fun, diving off the sea walls, swimming across to the buoys, which marked the channel of the River Seiont. The area was fondly known locally as Sou' de France, although we knew nobody had been to France, as no one wore sunglasses. We would douse ourselves in coconut oil in an endeavour to become the brownest of the brown, as we lay in a row baking in the sun's U.V rays.

When the tide was out we would use the swimming pool, it was probably a two mile walk, carrying our towels and knitted bathing costumes along the shore, looking across the sand banks to Anglesey across the Menai Straits. We were provided free 1/2d tickets to cross the bridge during school holidays although I never had to pay as it was my uncle's job to collect the fare. However, rather than pay the exorbitant fee of 3d to enter the baths we would use the 'free entrance', over the wall and under the barb wire, when the manager was busy. Once inside and changed, we looked like everyone else as there were no sophisticated wrist bands to tell who had paid.

Our preference, however, was always Porth yr Aur and the copious lush growth of seaweed growing along the seawalls encouraged exploration and amazing discoveries of marine life and discarded human garbage. On one occasion, we discovered a length of copper pipe and my friend by blowing hard into it mimicked the returning call of a fishing boat, alerting the bridge attendant to open the swing bridge to allow it into the inner harbour. So we watched with amusement, as my Uncle ran to close the gates at both ends before clambering up to the control tower, half way through the operation, we noticed his exasperation as he looked out to sea with no boat insight, just two little boys standing on the Lee Ho jetty chortling with laughter and waving a length of copper pipe, victoriously!







Observing nature was always of great interest to me, as was my perverse hobby of collecting bird eggs, which had me exploring local coastline, forests, copses and hedgerows. The challenge was not without its dangers from climbing tall trees for a crow's egg or the thief being attacked by a magpie or diving seagull. Once the egg had been stolen it would be pin pricked at both ends and blown and then safely nested in a cocoon of cotton wool before being proudly displayed. Given what I now know, I would be the biggest critic of such a hobby, but in defense of my innocence and the practice, it was educational. I doubt today that there are many children who could

recognise which bird, lived in which nest, just by observing the method of construction and materials used, or which bird laid which egg simply by recognising the size, shape, colour and decorations of its eggs.

I was also influenced, by my Auntie Margiad a matron at the T.B sanatorium in Tregaron, who with the Cook, would take the scraps of meat left over from the patients dinner to the dump. There they would throw their offerings to the scavenging five remaining Welsh Red Kites. Since then, a Trust has successfully saved and revived the population of the Welsh icon from extinction and many can be seen majestically soaring amongst the cloudy skies. I thought of Margiad when I photographed these two kites (barcut) flying over Tregaron I know how much she would have admired the Trust's success.

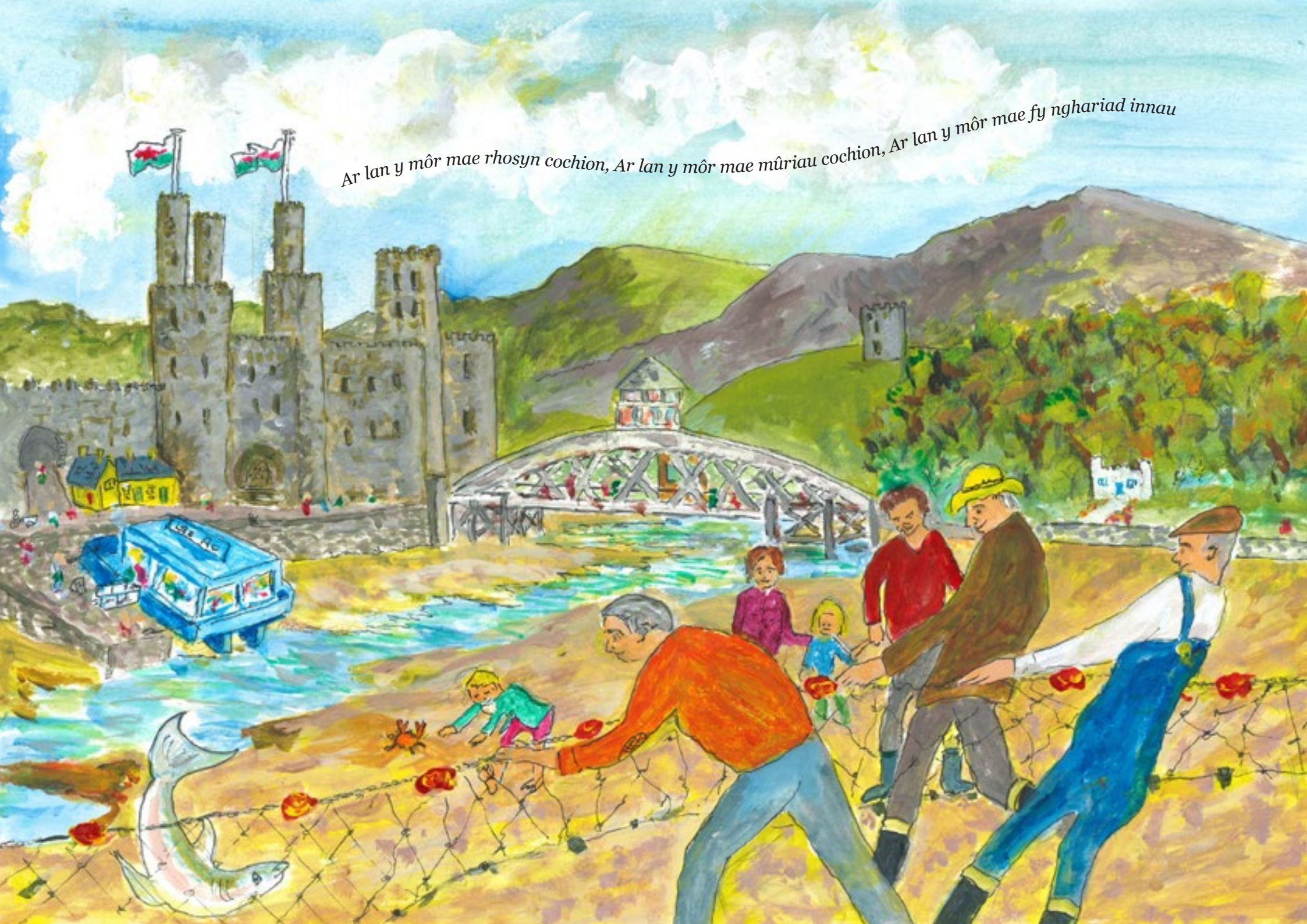
Although we were confined to a small world, it was not without the reward of enjoying its natural jewels during the passing of the day. I suppose it would not have come at all as a surprise to my family to learn that I had later self-published a book about birds entitled, Tommy Tui's Journey.

Caernarfon's massive Castle was built, by Edward I, in just 5 years for £25,000, most of England's annual tax around 1120 a.d, it was intended as a part of a ring of iron, to surround the rebellious Welsh. Although historians suggest that he was victorious, it is doubtful if he ever did so totally. To appease them, Edward promised to give them a prince who spoke no English, a subtle deception, as he sent his wife to Caernarfon to give birth to his son. So began the tradition of using the castle to crown the Prince of Wales.

During my school years, the local history and the influence of the Romans, the Castle or Twthill, where the last of the Wars of the Roses was fought, never featured in the curriculum, neither were visits to the surrounding mountains and countryside encouraged. Given the parents inability to drive the children anywhere it was not surprising that we grew up relatively ignorant of our own surroundings. However it did not curtail our inquisitive nature and many hundreds of miles were logged up on our iron horses, the lack of traffic allowed extensive and safe exploration of narrow roads and farm lanes, lined with dry stone walls.

It was not unusual to see a dozen or more bicycles parked on top of one another down at Porth yr Aur, the boys sitting on the polished stone walls legs dangling over the thirty foot drop oblivious of any danger. We would watch as the sandbanks appeared above the ebbing tide and if the salmon was in season, a team of 5 or 6 licensed fishermen would row their boat out to the bank. On arrival, one or two would remain on the sand holding onto one end of the net, whilst the rest of the crew rowed towards the middle of the fast flowing channel of the Straits, feeding out the net in a semi circle, before returning to join both ends on the sandbank. Together, they would haul in the net and although we were some distant away we could see the result of their endeavours as the beautiful silver bodies of the salmon entangled in their net were brought ashore. Occasionally a pod of dolphins would add further to our entertainment as they frolicked, pirouetted and skimmed across the waves in an endeavour to catch their supper. Before departing for the night, we would enjoy the sinking golden sun, as it slid down behind Aber Menai till another day but not before basking the sea in a splattering of gold sequins and making the castle and town walls blush. The image gave vent to a little Welsh love song: *Ar lan y môr mae rhosyn cochion, Ar lan y môr mae mûriau cochion, Ar lan y môr mae fy nghariad innau.*

*Ar lan y môr mae rhosyn cochion, Ar lan y môr mae mûriau cochion, Ar lan y môr mae fy nghariad innau*





Entertainment, in another colourful form was the annual arrival of the circus. Immediately, secret planning took place on how to access, paying not a considered option due to the lack of funds. After discussing where we could crawl under the edge of the big top, without being eaten by a lion or captured as had previously happened by the ringmaster, we opted for a new unique approach.

We had observed the clown giving out free tickets, for allowing him to stick a poster on peoples property. This got us thinking which we put into practice. Introducing our selves to the clown, we offered him a large red apple as big as his nose - it worked- with a huge smile only a clown can produce, we received our tickets. All were satisfied with the deal, except for Cledwyn the grocer whom we had 'borrowed' the apple from!

A few days later, Mam had insisted that I go to Min y Nant for a packet of tea. Cledwyn was busy serving but I knew, he knew, I was there. It seemed ages before the Siop was empty and he beckoned me over. Nervously I eyed my worn toe caps and blurted out "I didn't mean to pinch the apple". Kindly he replied "now tell me why did you do it ?" I could not get the story out quick enough, how we had given the big red apple to the clown in exchange for two tickets, the seats had been right on the edge of the ring, immediately next to the entrance where the elephant and the horses came in and...

With a characteristic smile, Cledwyn said "he would look at the apple as a loan, as the two of you showed so much enterprise, even if it was unorthodox! However, as we had received a reward for our investment, was it not fair, that he to should also profit from his loan? So, in return why don't you and Glyn fold down and stack all the old boxes in the shed for me and we will be all square".



GOLD FLAKE  
CIGARETTES  
ARE BEST FOR YOU

MIN Y NANT



GRUCER

LYONS  
TEA

BAD  
OFF  
WALK

I thought that I would dedicate these two pages to Stryd William, the Seilo Chapel and the Welsh language, as all three played a large part in my childhood. The scene depicts every day life on the corner of the street, the prevalence of uniformed men a reflection of the call-up days. The police constable a reminder, of the friendly kick in the pants from his size thirteen gentle boot which was always preferable to his threat to tell our parents of our wrong doings. His affable boot resulted in us becoming angels, well at least for a couple of days. To the left I have tried to depict my grandmother waving goodbye to the memories of the cold days of the Great Depression.

One thing which is personally important to me is the Welsh language, which I am told is also God's language. So I hope non-Welsh speakers will forgive me for a little indulgence, as I have included a humorous little poem I wrote alluding to this fact. It does not lend itself to being translated, but if non-Welsh speakers were to learn the language, they may be over joyed by the bonus they will receive at the end of the day.





## DUW CYMRO YW

Ymdrechu mi wnaif  
I dreiglio ac odli  
Yn iaith ein Duw  
Yr rhyn lle cefais fy ngenni  
Rwyf wedi heneiddio  
Llawer ers hynnu  
Gwyn i'w fy ngwedd  
A rhwyd fy Nghymraeg  
Ond ni anghofiwn i byth  
Fy hiraeth o hyd  
Am wlad yr Eryri  
Lle distaw fydd galw  
Creigiau y Wyddfa  
Dowch adra hen go  
Mae yma beint yn dy ddisgwyl  
Ar gownter y tafarn  
Lle cei sgwrsio  
Am ddyddiau yr ysgol  
Am lawer o ffrindiau  
Rhai sydd yma  
Ac rhai sydd ddim yma  
Mae fy nhro i  
Dim ond rownd y gornol  
Ond dyna roeddwn yn disgwyl  
Ers cefais fy ngenni  
Ond rwyf mor lwcus  
Nar llawer or Saeson  
Oherwydd fy mod  
Yn siarad yn barod  
Iaith yr hen Saint  
Ac ni bydd rhaid  
Disgwyl mewn rhes  
Am yr hen gloch i gannu  
Ac ir lliadiat I agor  
Oherwydd fy mod  
Wedi cael gwahoddiad  
Gan cynghorion y cymylau  
I sleidio yn ddistaw  
Drwy drws bach yn y cefn  
Sydd wedi ei farcio  
Gan Angylion y nefoedd

Welsh speakers only if you please,  
Thank you

It was April the first, when my father sent me to see Rees the barber with 3d and a note to give me and Gelart the dog a haircut and not to forget our eyebrows. It was of course April fools day, but it did not matter so much as my dog would accompany me most of the time. Even PurrC, my cat, would escort me to junior school about a mile away before receiving a final tickle under the chin and obediently returning home.

Mr Rees was also involved, when a tragic accident occurred outside the gate of Cwellyn, where we were now living, as my father had obtained the position of gardener and caretaker of the old manor house. The old surrounding rambling gardens, orchard and extensive lawns had become my play ground, which I shared with an abundance of birds and animals. For several weeks I had been observing and enjoying the cartwheeling playing hares on the lawns, when Gelart took off in pursuit of one.

Out of the gateway they both raced with just a small distance between them when suddenly I heard the squeal of brakes. Rushing out just in time to see a lady shooing away Gelart who was intent on a pathological examination of the hare's carcass. I was surprised to see the hare was still breathing, more so when I realised the damage it had done to the mudguard on colliding with the Austin 10. Two little girls had got out of the car and on seeing the hare in distress had also become distressed, wailing their anguish. The mother was also unsure what to do, so I lifted the hare up and suggested she go.

By chance, Mr. Rees happened to be passing and suggested he might be able to help. Rummaging quickly through the box sitting on the carrier of his bike, I noticed him pouring some dark liquid from a small blue bottle onto a piece of cotton wool, before beckoning me over and applying it to the hare's nose. I felt the hare stiffen as it took in a massive breath, it's eyes returned from the oblivion they had been visiting and I had to let go as it kicked out with its strong long back legs. In an instance it was off, I grabbed Gelart who was equally surprised at such an amazing recovery and the two little girls cheered. The lady smiled gratefully and as Mr Rees was in his white coat, asked where his veterinary practice was. He replied 'I am not a Vet, I am Rees the Barber and I used some of my patented 'hair' restorer ! (Which you can see advertised on the mirror

in his shop). The little tale epitomised how we would amuse each other with telling tall stories, it was an art. Today, with the advent of so much new technology challenging the way we communicate, I hope it does not become a lost art.

A few readers may be aware of how the village of Beddgelert acquired its name, a great little tall story about a valiant dog which protected an innocent child's life, a fable which I have always loved. As a result years later I incorporated Gelart's name in a logo for equipment I designed and manufactured for use by physically challenged children and which was exported world wide. A successful story which proved helpful to both the children and their care givers. Gelart designed with empathy.





for a smooth look  
*Bylcream*  
is best

RESTORER  
REEZ HAR

HERALD

HERALD

1-9-51  
Cymro  
PAPUR  
DRE



Eleven was a magic number. It was the age when we were expected to make the transition from junior to secondary school. All the children were made to sit the 11+ examinations in both Welsh and English, the latter as our second language. Passing or not would determine whether you went to the County Grammar School or on failing to the Secondary Segontium School, which I favoured, given it was situated directly opposite home.

When the anxious awaiting of the results was over, the whole school would be allowed out, to celebrate the success of the boys who had passed. The successful students would be carried to their home high on the shoulders of some sweating, stalwart, shoulders, whilst all the rest of the school followed along, chanting and singing repetitiously 'oh Alwyn ydi gora (is the best) y gora, Silasi ba, Silasi basa, gorilla, gorilla, a jing jing a jingo, oh Alwyn... until the snaking throng finally arrived at their destination. The porter, would be adequately compensated with a small fee for his endeavours, whilst the entire school scrambled on mass as they competed for the showered pennies, half pennies and sweets thrown by the proud family in celebration. With no more goodies on offer, the next successful pupil would be raised aloft on to a pair of willing shoulders and off the caravan would go again, singing Oh Arfon ydi gora...

Many parents had to dig deep to kit out the first year student generally in a new adequately oversized (to last 2-3 years) navy blazer, the top pocket decorated with a red embroidered shield, showing three stacked lions crowned by a castle wall and a raven sewn on the pocket. A red and navy triangular segmented cap and striped tie of the same colours, gray long short trousers and gray socks with knotted elastic garters, which became our artillery pieces, when braised between finger and thumb and loaded with a cartridge of folded paper. The final item a second hand leather satchel, or one crafted by the local cobbler with the expectation of a heavy and robust life. Each morning as I went to school, I had to face up to all the children coming in the opposite direction to the Segontium school, it was not without some drama and a lot of heckling at first, but eventually I was ignored. Neither did I find the first years of learning easy, for example being taught French by an English teacher meant that I had to translate both languages into Welsh and then back again. It might have been easier had I been a competent English speaker or the French teacher had been Welsh.

My mother who had been fragile all her life and after a short illness, had passed away. I can recall going to see her in her bedroom where she lay ill, to say goodbye to her before going to school. I can still see her clearly, as she smiled proudly at me, propped up on her pillow, besides her a burnt out stump of a small night candle and a Smiths alarm clock pointing to the time, I kissed her and departed, never to see her again. Her parting left me bitter at God for taking her, over time I became an agnostic and on reflection probably more independent and rebellious, than most of my fellow students.

During my first years, my father, whose limited education had little to contribute towards unraveling my homework and the mysteries of Algebra and  $H_2SO_4$  were totally foreign to him as they were to me. Even during these early formative years, the relationship between me and the headmaster were contentious. He would always address me in English and I would always reply in Welsh, by this time my political leanings were all too clear to see. I had painted the three green triangles representing Plaid Cymru's logo on my satchel and my blazer's lapel shared their badge with my colourful Robertson Marmalade cricket playing golliwog medal.

On one occasion, he accused me of originating the 'FREE WALES' sign on the boy's toilet. Truthfully, I replied in Welsh that I had not painted out the 'W' with an X which now read 'FREE xALES'. My reply, in my own tongue, upset him more than the original misdemeanor and got him onto the subject of replying to him in English.

It was an amusing antidote, almost forty years on I met the headmaster's son, he told me, much to my amazement, that his father (then ninety+) remembered me! Given the hundreds of boys and girls that had attended the school before and after, I was naturally intrigued. He responded by saying his father remembered me, because he'd had to apologise to me. I had a vague recollection of being grilled relentlessly for weeks whilst he accused me of a misdemeanor of graffitiing another pupils book with obscenities. He had no doubt it was my writing, which I kept denying, knowing I was completely innocent. Eventually a teacher marking another pupils book found the real culprit, my innocents proven, I was left off the hook. However not before suffering several detentions for replying to the Gaffer in Welsh!







I loved cricket and a shiny cork ball, sculptured with my penknife to create a void for my index spinning finger (must tell the Aussies that they should use the technique as it's much better than sandpaper) was never far from my grasp.

There were differences, when the family's poverty affected the students ability to participate in school activities, a glaring example was when the school insisted that all boys had to wear cricket whites, if they wanted to represent the school. A friend arrived in a bibbed white paint splattered overall, two sizes too big, with the legs rolled up but keen to be included in the team.

There was no similar demands the next season and everyone returned to shorts, until compulsory new redcaps with a navy blue peak were introduced. All the senior boys refused to buy them and for days were seen wearing trilbies, flat Dai caps and even a bowler hat, in protest of having to buy expensive caps in their final years. I made my rebellious support known, by wearing the original segmented cap, I had been given on starting school and was by then unique and more like a kippah, balanced on the back of my head.

By this time we had been living in Cwellyn for several years, the old manor housed the offices of the Gwyrfai Council and our family 'enjoyed' the servants quarters and the attic as our home.

During the colder seasons, my fathers job included emptying the previous days ashes from about 12 office fireplaces, before resetting them again in the early morning with kindling, which he had cut. The job was not complete until he had filled and carried the heavy buckets of coal up to each office, from the cellars. The offices would be cleaned on Sunday, the old wooden desks waxed and polished and the lino floors mopped. The embers carted back daily to the greenhouse, where they were used to stoke the boiler from which the hot water would reticulate through the greenhouse' encouraging the tomatoes to grow and become thirsty.

Like most teenagers I probably rebelled, at the imposition of having to give up my cricket practice and nights at Porth yr Aur, but there were really no alternatives, to watering the greenhouses in the evening and



giving a helping hand, cleaning the offices on the weekends. This was particularly the case following my mother's passing. My father and I had an affable relationship, except when my school report came out, on one occasion my favourite headmaster had written 'it's a shame Alwyn isn't sixteen he could leave school' I was 13 at the time. My memory of that day is best forgotten and did nothing to improve my French nor my hearing for a few days.

Maybe, the headmaster and I were destined never to have a happy relationship, as he was certainly not grinning when he caught me perched on the highest branch of an almost

totally denuded holly tree in the school garden. Realising there was a shortage of red berried holly that Xmas. I had persuaded a friend to join me in a new commercial venture, where by, I would use my tree climbing skills to harvest the berried twigs and he would pack them into sacks, ready for the Saturday market. When I heard the headmaster cough, my accomplice had already disappeared and there was little use in saying 'pw y fi?' (who me) as I had been caught red handed.

Despite my lack of progress at school, I did seem to have a natural entrepreneurial flair which followed me throughout life. I put much of it down to the experience, I gained from the opportunities presented to me, living on the old estate. The fertile land which surrounded Cwellyn supported a large mature orchard and I would collect the windfalls during the long evenings of the apple season. Although some were indeed caused by natural causes, the greatest numbers would occur when I climbed the trees to shake the branches and prove Newton's theory of gravity correct. I targeted the hungry Segontium children at lunchtime from across the road, serving them a handful of two or three apples for a penny from an old bath full of windfalls. Then with sometimes less than 20 minutes to get back to my own school, about two miles away, I would run down Llanberis Road and up Gypsie Hill, finally arriving just in time to hear the bell ring for the end of lunch break or to be met by patrolling

Prefects, who would reward my hard working session, with yet another detention.

However, I was not to be discouraged as another opportunity to increase my entrepreneurial skills and income was presented in the form of several large lilac trees. Using my proven climbing skills, I would unburden the trees of their proliferation of aromatic flowers and bundle them into generous size bunches. The old wooden wheelbarrow, filled with the lilacs and the drifting enchanting aroma, made a beautiful picture as I pushed the squeaking wooden wheel down to my old haunts, Stryd William. Soon I would be knocking on a door and greeting each housewife by name with an unbelievable offer not seen on T.V “hello Mrs Jones smell these for FREE beautiful ynte and... Yes you can keep all of this large bunch for only 3d!... diolch yn fawr Mrs Jones. The deal was done and I was only five steps away from the next potential client and knocking the shinning brass knocker... “Hello Mrs Davies, smell...”

I don't think Edward I would have ever envisaged that the mammoth castle he built would give a little Welsh boy the opportunity of creating a small profitable business, centuries later. The English visitors who now arrived on the buses to visit the castle, were no longer carrying bows and arrows, but fat wallets and a desire for something wet and cold, having been cooped up for several hours as they were bused along winding roads and up and down mountain passes. They appeared very grateful when they stepped down from the coach, to be greeted by a young smiling brown face offering a warm welcome to Wales and an ice-cream, for just sixpence. Having fulfilled the passengers needs I would ride my bike with the fridge on the front, towards a few locals. Unlike the tourist they would ask in Welsh “how much?” and I would quietly reply “tair ceinniog os gwelwch chi yn dda” (three pence if you please).

Years later I was visiting New York and standing in a line about to enter the Twin Towers, when a young black boy came along, with a fridge on his bike, I asked for an ice-cream and laughed when he charged me \$3.00! I asked him if he would like to sell me his business. We both enjoyed the comradeship, as I ate the ice-cream and told him my tale, little realising the horrific carnage which was to occur there just a few years later.

Although the War had ended some nine years previously, there was still a general shortage of fresh fruit and especially during the winter time when it was expensive. It was therefore not surprising when everyone at school that day joined in the scramble for a feast of free oranges which had fallen ‘accidentally’ off the back of a lorry (with a little bit of help from John Wylt)... later the field of snow looked as if it was dotted with marigolds.





My gardening duties were less onerous during winter and I would enjoy playing hooker for the school's second team. Sometimes we would travel some distance by bus for some away games, which included several public schools, such as Rydal and Treaddur Bay, the distinct difference of their English accent, and lack of spoken Welsh, was not lost on us, nor was the intensity with which we approached the game lessened.

When an old friend from London days read the story he reminded me of how we used to make up stories to impress the girls at the London Welsh dances. When asked what we did for a living, I can recall expanding on one unlikely yarn that I was a shepherd in Hyde Park. Later when Howard went up to Oxford to sit his entrance exam and sat down to dinner at one of the college halls, his fellow candidates started a round of 'what does your father do?' Many knew each other having been to the same Public school or by association and replied 'oh my father was the Bishop of... ' whilst another replied 'he looks after the estate' etc. Tempted to make something up and on reflection glad that he didn't he replied that his father was a collier. Silence. 'What did he say? Sounded like collier. Must have misheard.' Then one of them clapped "I say chaps that's a good one, must remember that one". Everyone laughed and after that, said Howard, I was 'a jolly good fella, what'. Later Howard was awarded a Fulbright scholarship.

I always looked forward to our visit to HMS Conway, a Merchant Navy training school, based opposite Felinhelli on the Anglesey side of the Straits. Old gray motorboats, crewed by the cadets, would chug across towing two or three wooden longboats through the swirling, whirl-pooling waters to collect us. We would climb aboard enthusiastically, our rugby boots knotted together, dangling around

our necks and not a life jacket in sight.

The highlight of the visit was to sail past their training ship, the ancient HMS Conway, the wooden galleon was painted in black and white stripes, black hatches indicated where the cannons ones sat, witness of its previous function as a man of war. The three tall masts with crows nests, pennants fluttering, laced intricacies of rigging, ropes, wooden pulleys, aging yellowed canvases wrapped around varnished spars, all transpired to bewitch me, as I sailed past. Sadly, not long afterwards, the great galleon which had served and survived famous battles with Nelson, came to grief and broke her back under the Menai Bridge, when being towed to Liverpool for a refit.









The Welsh are renowned for their singing but I am not so sure that our effort to create a skiffle group by running our thimble dressed fingers up and down the washboard, clapping spoons, sucking and blowing on the mouth organ, drumming the upturned tin drum and strumming a hollow vibrating tea chest etc was appreciated. 'Hold me down Tom Doolie' would echo through the cold room which we shared with the crates of free milk and the 'sniffle' group might have been a more apt name. It was astonishing to note later the success of so many of the pupils of the day who became judges, squadron leaders, M.Ps, Lords, share brokers, Q.Cs, surgeons, airline pilots, airport managers, Coronation Street actors, valuers, headmasters, detectives, businessmen and even a spy, despite our obvious singing ambitions no one came near to emulate our idol of the time, Tom Jones.

The Noson Lawen a traditional 'happy evening' was often enjoyed when friends of all ages, congregated at my home, where my father had both a piano and an organ in the one room! Their harmonising voices will never be forgotten as they sang hymns, and traditional folk songs, which had been handed down over previous centuries. The passion for singing throughout Wales, was no doubt encouraged by the popular attendance of the many chapels which were the cornerstones of the communities. However with the demise of religious participation, one wonders, what the future will bring to the Welsh culture and traditional male voice choirs.

As we grew older the Aelwyd became our Mecca, in the winter evenings where ping pong and billiards occupied much of our spare time or we would join a group of friends to participate in rehearsing plays, like Will Cwac Cwac. Later we were to compete at the National Urdd Eisteddfod and our team won that year, when the Eisteddfod was held in Caernarfon.

The club was also the venue for a monthly dance and the Gay Gordon's (how the meaning of language has changed) was soon abandoned in favour of the twist and rock and roll or towards the end of the evening a little shuffling snog to the Green, Green, grass of home. (Provided of course your invitation to dance was accepted by the girl!)







I was sixteen, time to find a job. I turned down an offer (from one of my dad's contacts) to collect the rent from council houses in favour of the Board of Trade, London. The title, conjured up thoughts of being involved with trade deals, something which I perceived I was proficient and experienced at! However, the position of clerical assistant with an annual salary of £285.00 which greeted me in the Companies Registration Office, Bush House, The Strand was a reflection of my poor educational prowess, which was nobodies fault but my own.

I lived in a hostel in Onslow Gardens, South Kensington, where I shared a small sparsely furnished bedroom with three other young public servants. Soon after my arrival, I overheard one of the residents with a broad Yorkshire accent asking a friend whether he had met the new fellow, "by gum he is Welsh and he hardly speaks English" I made a mental note to find my fellow countryman, thinking I might be able to help him, before it dawned on me I was the subject of the conversation! Thankfully Crafrwr Vowles was at hand and suggested, that I adopt his South Walian accent, which he sang up and down, like the contours of the Rhondda Valley, where he came from. Nowadays when I visit Wales, they are truly surprised at the purity of my Welsh language but quickly admonish my English semi Antipodean accent as being 'posh'. Then as today, South Kensington was a desirable address and along the street were many luxurious apartments. A few of the lads had motorbikes parked outside, whilst our neighbours greeted their girlfriends in loud Eaton accents before taking off, with the distinct roar of their E-type jags.

Meantime, I was commuting to the Strand to a soul destroying job of filing dusty company returns, it was not my idea of becoming a trading guru. Thankfully I was soon promoted and found considerable interest in becoming a very small cog in a very large team promoting Britain's

negotiation with the EEC. Had I stayed around I might even have become involved in Brexit!

Commuting was expensive and as the hostel was situated between two underground stations, I would buy two tickets in the morning one to work at the full price of one shilling and three pence and one to the next station in the other direction for 3d. Using the latter to return home at night, a grand saving of 5/- per week, a bonus, when your weekly wages was a little more than five pounds a week and little was left when you had to pay about £3.10s for your hostel accommodation.

Crafrwr Vowles and I worked in the same office and on the way to work via the public gardens at Templeton on 1<sup>st</sup> March (St. David's Day) we decided to harvest a large bunch of daffodils. On arrival at the office, we decorated each desk with a bunch of the yellow beauties, the boss was not overly impressed, but we were not surprised, as he often wore a red rose in his button hole. Vowles later became a Police Inspector but never asked me for a reference!



I played rugby and swam for the B.O.T teams but despite scoring three tries in successive games (one in each! A fluke) my boss deemed I was taking too much time off for sports during the working week and the waiver was waived.

Most evenings at the hostel, the boys during winter would stay in doing their washing or sitting and chatting aimlessly in the T.V lounge. Once it got a little warmer and the nights longer a group would get together and walk up Queensgate to Hyde Park for a game of soccer. I would often leave them to it, preferring to walk across the park to swim in the green Serpentine with the ducks and their ducklings.

My main social activities on Saturday, was to catch up with old school mates Cled, Eric and Howard at the Calthorpe Arms, Kings Cross, sing our hearts out over 2 or 3 pints of bitter, before crossing the road in a semi-inebriated state to the London Welsh dance.



During the winter evenings I would work a couple of nights in a Piccadilly hamburger bar and come Sunday would take off to Ruislip to clean the Kodak offices. Later in the evening I would catch up with my friends at the Three Tuns for a cheese roll and a pint, before strolling across Marble Arch to join fellow expats having a sing song at Speakers Corner. Sometimes we would have arranged to meet a girl we had met at the dance the previous night and it wasn't long before we excused ourselves, to stroll under the green canopy where smog was not unusual and neither was a little snog.

It was 1960. Wales had lost to South Africa in the quagmire, then named Cardiff Arms Park, the grins of the winning team were the only way to distinguish them apart, as all thirty players and the referee were all black and we knew that that could not be true, given the Springboks' policy.

Four of us had hitch hiked down from London and after the game had indulged in pursuing a pint or two between pubs. We had taken little notice of the continued rain, although drenched, as we had intended to catch a train back to Paddington. We were therefore surprised to learn that the River Taff had overflowed and the City of Cardiff was totally isolated, with no way in or out. Having had no luck in finding a

hospitable girl to offer us a cuddle and a warm bed to share, we called in at the Police Station. No they replied to our plea for B&B, we are already full of drunks, suggesting that we walk to Bute Street, where there was a Salvation Army Hostel, but warned given the weather it might also be full!

Eventually we found our way, Tiger Bay was engulfed in the blackness of the storm, lightning flashed across the angry sky and by chance temporarily lit the Salvation Army sign. Gratefully we knocked loudly on the door, several times we knocked, until above a window jarred open, an angry woman irritably shouted down to us "what are you men thinking knocking on a women's hostel door this time of night and if we were to persist she would call the police". The slamming of the window finished the conversation, not that we were scared of the police, but none of us had the courage to try and knock again.

Our persistence was eventually rewarded, a large concrete edifice, dark paint peeling, as uninviting as any one star hotel in darkest Africa. There we stood in our drenched duffle coats and deep puddles which threatened to drown our already saturated shoes.

We rang the heavy bell, muffled ringing filled the yard, minutes passed before the door groaned open. An undressed bulb cast a dim light onto where a little old man stood, dressed in a long Salvation Army nightshirt and a skinny tasseled night cap with concentric circles, in the same purple colour the Army is renowned for. Hunchbacked, the miniature Quasimodo, was escorted by his body guard, clumsily adjusting his braces over his pink vest and buttoning up his fly.

From his lofty position he questioned unwelcoming "did we not know that all guests had to be in by 10.00 o'clock?" We explained that we were from the North, had got lost in the big capital and had nearly been washed out to sea by the flooded Taff (a masterpiece we thought to encourage a bit of empathy). Finally the gates were unlocked and we were invited in, apprehensively we paid our seven shillings and sixpence (7/6d) a little reluctantly after noting the noticeboard advertised, one night at three shillings and nine pence (3/9d). He explained the tariff was by compensation as all strangers had to pay for two nights as they often left, having wet their beds.





No showers or towels were offered as we followed him to the dormitory, our shoes squelching as they discharged our watery footprints onto the bare boards. He flicked a light switch to reveal some 35 beds, many occupied by grumpy disheveled bearded faces as he directed us towards four empty beds. As he was departing, he pointed to the light switch, and told us to turn it off when we were ready, but not to forget to lift the bedposts and place them inside our shoes, otherwise we might be coming to breakfast barefooted, which was served at 6.00am.

Even my dad had condescended to rent (too expensive to buy) a TV (after I had left school) a real sign of change. Conscripted had ended, and the khaki uniforms of war readily abandoned. In celebration longer hair became the norm, replacing the short back and sides of the military, the drab gray rationed clothing of our up bringing, swapped for colourful designed alternatives. Mary Quant led the way for the ladies with shortened skirts and simple elegant brightly designed women's clothing. The young men took easily to tight fitting drainpipe hipsters trousers without turn-ups, replacing the baggy shapeless gray flannel trousers, supported by elasticised braces and a leather belt. Well polished ex army black boots disappeared in favour of feet pinching winkle pickers. Teddy boys, spent up large on Edwardian style clothing with velvet collars, their thick white crepe soled blue suede shoes, giving them extra height, bedecked by oily hairstyles, shaped in front with a droopy elephant trunk and a duck arse at the back and plastered heavily with brylcream to keep everything intact. Most of us brought our clothes and anything else of any substance on H.P (hire purchase). The once distinctive prevalent City's attire of bowler hat, pin stripe trousers, accompanied by waistcoat and a flower in a button holed black jacket, with a broly of the same colour and the Times under the arm, began to wain.

The period was not without its political intrigues and Profumo the UK Minister of Defense, was defenseless, when news broke of his affair with Christine Keeler who just happened to be also dating the Russian Defense Attaché. Fist hammering, Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro proposed establishment of nuclear armed rockets in Cuba, threatened another world war between the super powers, thankfully, it was resolved by John. F. Kennedy conceding to remove similar American based weapons from Turkey.

Meantime the Russians were rocketing ahead, making substantial headway with Sputnik's, Laika the dog barked in space much to my horror and finally a few years later Yuri Gagarin celebrated my

birthday, on the 12 April 1961, by becoming the first man to leave earth and come back alive.

On the Western side of the World, Elvis Presley records blared and rocked the town halls, as the waltz gave way to rock and roll. Enoch Powell's unrelenting voice rocked Parliament with his vitriol, denouncing immigration. Meantime young and old massed in Trafalgar Square to voice their opposition to nuclear bombs and to be carried away by policemen into black-marias.

The dreams of going overseas on holiday was fruitless and the only consideration when Easter, Xmas, or August leave came about, was to head home to Caernarfon. Recognising the inadequate pay regime the B.O.T issued us with a couple of train tickets initially to take us home, but as we grew older and our salaries increased, the travel grant was reduced.

I had long taken to cash in the rail tickets and then make the choice either to remain in the empty London hostel or hitchhike home... the rebate being used to prop up my holiday pay. The main problem with hitch hiking the 480 kms home, was the length of time to get from central London onto the A5 (later the M1) as leaving the office before 5.00 was generally frowned upon. Getting a lift was fairly straightforward during the early evening but traffic used to dry up the further North West I went, until beyond Llangollen, dark, my begging thumb would light up very infrequently as the cars drove past at speed. The result on one occasion a 16 hour road journey and for once I didn't enjoy the sound of the gently whispering brook and the company of ghostly sheep, as they emerged out of the mountain mist. I shall never forget that particular journey and I have to smile when I hear complaints berating the long 24 hour flight to New Zealand from Europe.

However, I was almost 20 years old and had concluded that I could never enjoy a future living in London and decided to immigrate. At the time individual Governments were encouraging people to migrate to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, having done my due diligence, I opted to apply to the latter. My main reason being, that the New Zealand Government guaranteed me a job immediately on arrival, and that had to be a priority given my precarious financial position. However there was a negative as to go to New Zealand – I had to pay the massive sum of £25.00 towards the subsidised passage compared to £10.00 for the other two countries, after careful consideration I remained with my original decision, after all, neither fielded a team like the All Blacks



A year or so later, I returned home, for the final time to bid goodbye to my father, who was by then happily remarried. It was a tearful farewell, I asked him not to accompany me down to the square as I wanted to remember him at home. I shouldered my ex-army surplus haversack and with a passing friend carrying my small suitcase of books and a few trinkets which I did not need during the journey, I left home not knowing when or if I would ever return. I walked down to the square silently to catch the Crosville bus to Bangor, to catch a train to London and then onto Southampton.

My previous overseas travel experience, apart for my visits to HMS Conway, had been to the Isle of Man, a day trip on the steamer St. Tudno which sailed from Llandudno. So, it takes little imagination to envisage my reaction as I stood on the gangplank of the S.S. Northern Star, gazing up at the sheer green steel sides. Towering above me the riveted plates were topped with a sea of cheering yelling faces, hanging over the edge, frantically waving or gripping onto the white safety rail, as they exchanged their farewells with friends and family, standing 70 feet below on the wharf.

Having found my wedge shaped four bed cabin, somewhere below where the anchor hung and with no sea views, I dropped my rucksack and retraced my steps to the top deck. I stood quietly removed from the crowd, in contemplation at leaving my family but firm in the belief that New Zealand was going to offer me a new way of life. The explosive sound of the ships horn, drowned the noise of the cheering crowd, confetti and streamers languished in the oily water, whilst several ropes of laddered knotted nylon stockings could stretch no further and parted. The distant voice of the crowds and the last farewell were left unheard, as the now churned waters gave way to the ships momentum and we were sailing.

Shaw Saville had built two ships the S.S. Southern Cross and the S.S. Northern Star to cater for the growing stream of immigrants (£10.00 pomes) and returning residents, the airlines at the time were still in their infancy but only a few years away from taking over world travel. My ship was on her second journey, carrying approximately 1250 passengers and about an equal number of crew, it was to be a memorable sourjourn. It wasn't long before bands of youthful immigrants and those returning from their O.Es had formed, all intent on enjoying the cheap booze, cigarettes, and for some free sex.

There were also many families on board determined to seek new lives in a new country.

I had to be cautious to refrain from over expenditure due to my financial predicament as I had to budget for six weeks before I could earn any money. As it was I'd had to borrow £18.10s from Margiad, the grand sum of my tax rebate for the year, which she in turn lay claim too. She ensured that I would not spend her advance prior to my journey, by sending it to the ships Pursers Office. It was with much relief that I collected the treasure the very next day, showing my identification ( I had no passport ) paper with no picture stating that I was 5 foot 8 and a half inches tall with brown eyes (imagine traveling the world today with such documentation). I was also to win 10 shillings on the ships tote which I regarded as a god send having guessed correctly the distance the ship traveled per day and a huge return on my investment of 3d, given that I was not a betting person.

Life on the ocean waves suited me extremely well, between swimming in the ships pool, playing deck cricket and quoits, there was free breakfast, lunch to exploit, and dinner together with the company of two returning Kiwi girls from Hawke's Bay to share and enjoy. My cabin companions were two boys from Devon, whom were on their way to NZ to take up positions as shepherds and Ted a Liverpool bus driver made up the foursome. He immediately re christened me, Taffy, on finding out where I originated from and the name has stuck ever since.

In the meantime I had found that I enjoyed the shipboard life and if truth be told I probably had the taste of what it might have felt to be a (penny less) millionaire.

The ships first stop, Las Palmas the Canary Islands for bunkering and I enjoyed exploring the village life of the local peasants, whilst opting out of the souvenir shopping frenzy. I had instead ambled up a dry mud caked road to the top of a hill, ignoring some rolled barbed wire and a skull and crossbones to enjoy the scenery, by chance I had walked into a prohibited army zone. It wasn't long before I saw and heard a Spanish guard as he tripped over his bayonet sheath and hung onto his shinny black plastic bridge shaped hat, sitting at a distressed angle on his head.



AP

By the time he arrived, he was completely out of breath and could hardly lift the rustic bayoneted rifle he was carrying. However, behind the dark unshaven face and excited eyes he found some energy and began 'pointe de bayonets' waiving his gun up and down for me to capitulate. Communication was impossible as he spoke no English, and his Welsh was even worse, but finally I received a smile when I proffered him a cigarette. We parted amicably enough, with him wearing a senior service behind each ear and puffing on a third, whilst his helmet still sat at a ridiculous angle.

A few days later I had gotten up early to enjoy our entrance to Cape Town and what more magnificent location could you chose to build a City. I don't intend to dwell or write a travelog about the City only to say that it left a lasting impression, which saw me return and indeed by chance fortunately meet and shake hands with Nelson Mandela.

Durban was the next stop the new ship broke down with water filtration problems, giving me an extra few days in port and the opportunity to explore a wild game reserve. It was like reliving the book I had received one Xmas, seeing all the live animals in their natural surroundings on mass and tracking several black rhinoceros, down wind with a guide, a real highlight. However there was a very low point, I had entered a shop where a white Afrikaans was serving a Bantu lady, on my entry he literally stopped serving her and turned to give me his full attention. I protested to no avail and I left Africa convinced that I could not support apartheid.

Fremantle, was the next port of call, here I was to separate with Wendy Carr, who was returning home to Perth, we were both innocent shipboard romantics, although the physical thing went no further than holding hands and the brushing of lips. We wrote to one another for a couple of years until it became apparent that the distance was a step to far. Whilst, I have since traveled back and forth extensively to every other state in Australia, I have never been back to Western Australia, one day, maybe?

Melbourne, new arrivals were replacing passengers who had left, I met a couple returning to the UK who were totally dissatisfied and bitter about their Australian experience, I gave them a wide berth from then on. Meantime, I had found that you did not smoke in Victoria's Cinemas and had to confess reluctantly I had enjoyed the Kangaroo tail soup.

Later it became a habit of mine to savour the local foods of whichever country I was visiting, that is until I was in Vanuatu, when I refused the fruit bat they intended to cook for me, when it was brought first to my table 'alive' to show it was fresh! Instead I opted for a coconut crab! Which was finger licking good.

Day by day, we were getting closer to my final destination, Sydney was to be our last Australian port, before departing across the ditch for New Zealand. The remaining Aussie with whom we had been friends for the six weeks journey, departed, leaving behind mutual enjoyable memorise as the ship steamed under the harbour bridge, leaving the Sydney Opera House in it's wake to it's early growing pains.

Early morning, Wellington September 1963, I stood on the deck of the Northern Star as she made her way into the harbour. I was greeted by the picture of seabirds, their trailing webbed feet, creating criss crossing contrails across the tranquil waters, as the ships wake vexed it's way ashore to break like white lace, as it kissed the distant rocks. The contoured hills, sprinkled with wooden houses and colourful rooftops, appeared like confetti sprinkled onto a lush green lawn. I fell in love with Aotearoa New Zealand.

A tear licked my leathered face, I had arrived at my new home. I shouldered my haversack, checked my wallet, with my total assets of £3.10s and walked the gangway for the last time, onto the welcoming Wellington wooden wharf. Kia ora.

Now it was up to me...







...and now it's up to you.



A teacher with many years of teaching, in a leading Wellington girl's school, said "I can imagine many children becoming engrossed with your book for the stories and lovely illustrations". Adding, "whilst the book is highly entertaining and engaging, students can relate easily to the historical realism portrayed".

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*Recommended readership 14 to 100+  
A book which all the family can share and enjoy.*

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Careful considerations have been given to the choice of the paper, the font, the placement of the illustrations and the size, shape and weight of the book, to maximise the enjoyment of the readers when co-reading. The choice of a laminated cover was made intentionally to save weight, as I envisage the book will no doubt be shared amongst friends and relations. If you desire to order a copy of:

### A BRUSH WITH LOVE, LIFE AND LAUGHTER

Please visit my website:

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[www.taffynz.com](http://www.taffynz.com)

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I would like to thank all those friends, acquaintances and strangers who responded so positively to the pilot PDF which I sent out to you during the pandemic. Your positive encouragement and enthusiasm encouraged me to re-write the story and continue my adventures with the paint brush. To name everyone would fill another book, so my apologies to those I have not named but Vita, Gerard, Rebekah, and Aida do need to be mentioned and I almost forgot Tomos the dog who waited so patiently for his walk.

Finally I do hope that you have enjoyed the journey and that it has brought back bountiful cheerful memories of friends, places and your own experiences. Kia ora.



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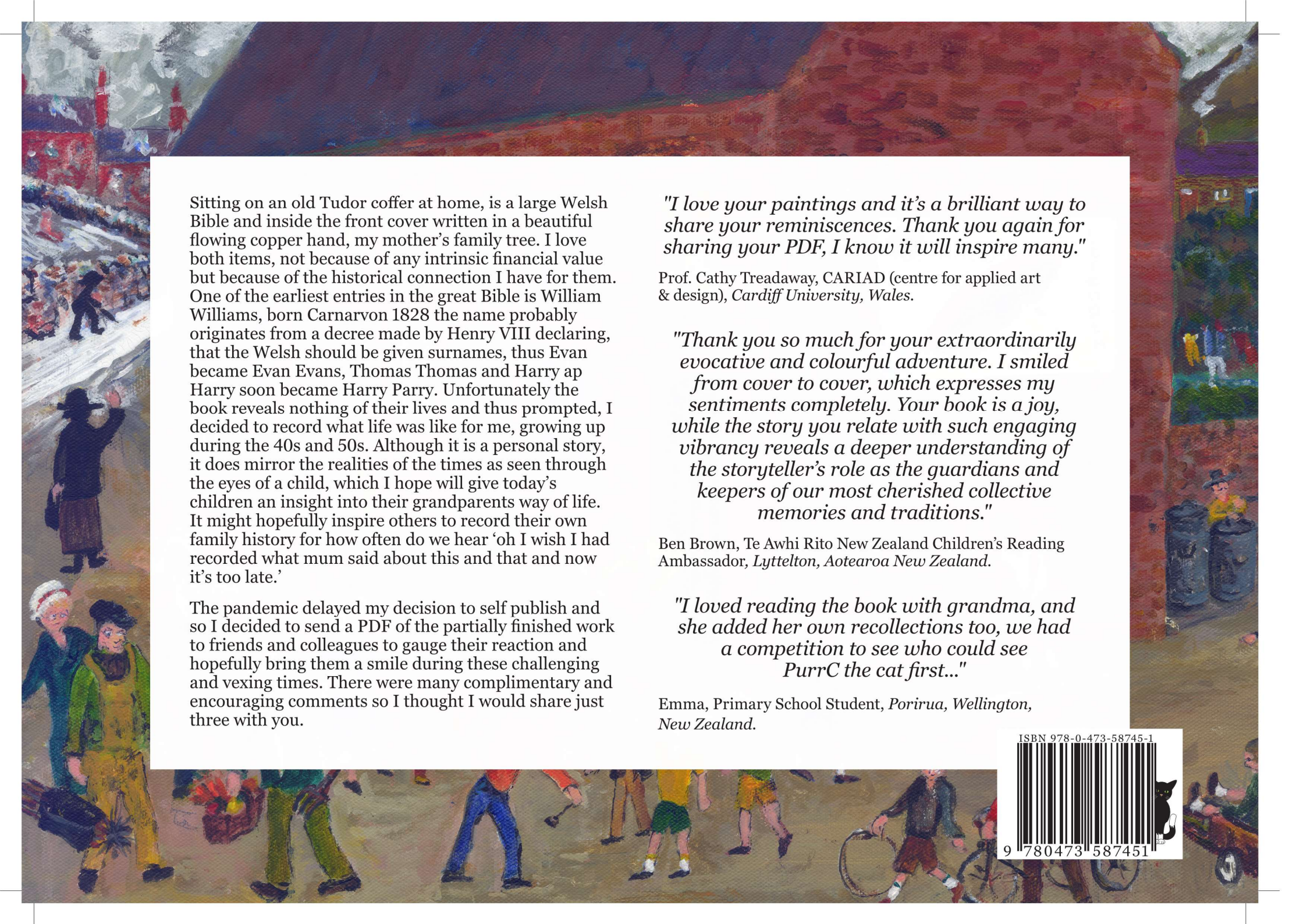
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Sitting on an old Tudor coffer at home, is a large Welsh Bible and inside the front cover written in a beautiful flowing copper hand, my mother's family tree. I love both items, not because of any intrinsic financial value but because of the historical connection I have for them. One of the earliest entries in the great Bible is William Williams, born Carnarvon 1828 the name probably originates from a decree made by Henry VIII declaring, that the Welsh should be given surnames, thus Evan became Evan Evans, Thomas Thomas and Harry ap Harry soon became Harry Parry. Unfortunately the book reveals nothing of their lives and thus prompted, I decided to record what life was like for me, growing up during the 40s and 50s. Although it is a personal story, it does mirror the realities of the times as seen through the eyes of a child, which I hope will give today's children an insight into their grandparents way of life. It might hopefully inspire others to record their own family history for how often do we hear 'oh I wish I had recorded what mum said about this and that and now it's too late.'

The pandemic delayed my decision to self publish and so I decided to send a PDF of the partially finished work to friends and colleagues to gauge their reaction and hopefully bring them a smile during these challenging and vexing times. There were many complimentary and encouraging comments so I thought I would share just three with you.

*"I love your paintings and it's a brilliant way to share your reminiscences. Thank you again for sharing your PDF, I know it will inspire many."*

Prof. Cathy Treadaway, CARIAD (centre for applied art & design), Cardiff University, Wales.

*"Thank you so much for your extraordinarily evocative and colourful adventure. I smiled from cover to cover, which expresses my sentiments completely. Your book is a joy, while the story you relate with such engaging vibrancy reveals a deeper understanding of the storyteller's role as the guardians and keepers of our most cherished collective memories and traditions."*

Ben Brown, Te Awhi Rito New Zealand Children's Reading Ambassador, Lyttelton, Aotearoa New Zealand.

*"I loved reading the book with grandma, and she added her own recollections too, we had a competition to see who could see PurrC the cat first..."*

Emma, Primary School Student, Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand.

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