

Ralph Bird, Cowbridge

I was born in 1897, so my earliest memories are of the beginning of the twentieth century, but I have some knowledge of family events before that.

My uncle Nathaniel was in charge of the family ironmongery business in the 1880s. He was a great character and highly respected throughout the neighbourhood. Before he died aged 66 in 1893 he started a fund to build an institute in the town; his contribution virtually covered the cost of the building which is at the rear of the Town Hall. When uncle Nathaniel died, my father who was an engineer and surveyor by profession took over the business. When he was the Borough Surveyor he lived first at Brynhafryd and then at St Quentins, both large houses in Llanblethian. At that stage in his life, he had in his employ a coachman-gardener and two housemaids.

When father was the local surveyor he caused all the area refuse to be tipped in Waun-y-Gaer (always known as 'Bird's field') because it was so low-lying that every winter it became completely flooded and the water often came right up to the stables which were at the bottom of the garden. The High Street near the Town Hall also became flooded and sometimes the water could not be kept out of the shop and the house. The refuse dumping largely cured the trouble in the field but not completely so until the County Council straightened out the course of the river and dredged the bed deeply. The line of beautiful willow trees in what is now the Garden Centre was planted by my father during that period.

The garden was at the rear of the outhouses and for several decades in the early 1900s contained a large lean-to greenhouse which housed a most extensive vine, which originated from a cutting taken from Hampton Court. It was an attractive garden with two lawns, flower beds, flower borders and a large bush of pampas grass. Behind the garden were stables and beyond the stables was the meadow of Waun-y-Gaer.

There used to be quite a long lean-to shed extending from the stables towards the church. The first part of this shed was used as a blacksmith's shop and this was operated by Harry Webb whose wife subsequently ran a small grocery business where the Ogmere Vale Bakery now operates. Harry was a great character and would allow the children to operate the bellows. There were actually two bellows - one either side of the forge. His assistant was Gwyn Thomas, a stocky man who could strike resounding blows with his hammer.

Gwyn's brother Charlie, who died in 1978, was a friend of mine when he worked for Mr AS Evans at the Bridge Garage in the very early days. Harry Webb eventually moved to a new smithy at the rear of Arthur John's premises in Bear Lane and he was joined by Gilead Spencer who was a wheelwright and carriage builder. The smith and the wheelwright were complementary to each other. When the smithy was at Waun-y-Gaer there was an understanding between Dad and Harry that horses could be housed in our stables when our own pony was not in residence.

Running alongside the Butchers Arms stable building was a very large wooden shed which belonged to Dr Meller. In it he kept all sorts of gardening requisites, including large quantities of canes - some of which were purloined by me for the window games, which you shall read about later. The Doctor had a large garden at the rear of his house and a still larger one down the Town Mill road. This was bounded on the south side by the drive leading to the Verlands where Mr Tom John lived. I must have spent scores of hours assisting the Doctor in his gardens. He swept the board at whatever flower show he chose to exhibit.

Our shop was kept open during the week until 6.00 pm, and until 9.00 pm on Saturdays, or even later if there was a customer to be served. Every day a wide assortment of hardware was put on display on the pavement. Above what is now the covered right of way to the west of the shop was a small warehouse and such items as rolls of wire netting were lifted from the pavement by means of a hand operated hoist; the arm of which swung out over the pavement. At that time there was no objection to cluttering up the pavement. The passageway was also used as a place of storage and a little way down was a 50 gallon tank of paraffin. This sold at about 4d per gallon. The courtyard was stone flagged and every Saturday morning it was the custom to use hard brooms and sand and water to clean the surface. My part in the proceedings was to go to buy a bucket of sand for the price of one halfpenny from Mr Trott at the Lodging House, which is the large house at the junction of the Bear Lane and Eagle Lane.

(There were many tramps in those days and some of them got a ticket from the police station which entitled them to a night's lodging).

At that time the house and shop were lit by acetylene gas and we had an acetylene generator in the courtyard adjoining the house. We developed a fair trade in carbide among the large country houses who used the same means of lighting. The carbide was packed in round 1 cwt drums and not easy to handle. It was often my job to re-charge the generator, which was really a miniature gas works. Sometimes the smell of the half consumed wet carbide was pretty bad. All deliveries from the shop at that time were made by means of a horse-drawn dray. The odd motor car now began to appear - a Daimler at Penllyn Castle whose registration number was L6, a chain driven Wolseley belonging to Sir Thomas Mansel Franklen of St Hilary, L9, another Wolseley and a Talbot belonging to Mr EH Ebsworth at Llandough Castle and a White steam car which Sir Francis Price Fothergill used at Hensol Castle. Mr PT Bassett, a veterinary surgeon whose home was at New Beaupre, and whose brother lived at Crossways, used a Humber three wheeler with tiller steering to visit his sick animals. The local registration numbers were L for Glamorgan, BO for Cardiff, DW for Newport and CY for Swansea.

The early years of motoring were a frightening time for horses and when going to Llandough Castle we would stop at Lake Farm and listen very intently in the hope that we would catch the sound of any motor car that might be coming from the Castle. It was always our practice when on country roads to be looking out for clouds of dust which told us a car was somewhere ahead.

The general condition of roads was pretty bad. Pot holes abounded and a heavy layer of dust was always in evidence. In those days roads were repaired in a very primitive way, although there were steam rollers in use. They were adorned with the emblem of a rampant horse in brass and this was very impressive. It was quite appropriate too, because few horses could be persuaded to pass them. A large heap of stones would be carted to the side of the road and stone breakers were employed to break the stones up by means of special hammers. The stone breakers wore spectacles fitted with very fine mesh wire gauzes to prevent splinters from entering the eye. The broken stones had to pass through a large sieve and those which did not get through had to be cracked again. It was a heart breaking job during bad weather and it was the duty of the surveyor to check the work every few days. I often went with Dad on these journeys which were made in a horse drawn gig.

In the main street the road was tarred and I vaguely remember Dad being sued as the responsible officer of the local Council by Colonel HS Watson of Llansannor Court. He had many valuable horses and one of them slipped on the tar before it had been sanded and sustained serious injury. There was great relief when the charge of carelessness was dismissed by the Court.

If anyone was gravely ill in a house bordering the main street, it was the custom to lay down much sand and some straw in the immediate neighbourhood to deaden the noise made by the horse-drawn vehicles. There were of course many of these. Brakes drawn by two, three or four horses used to pull up on Saturdays and Sundays at some of the Cowbridge public houses. When ascending the Tumble or any similar hill a number of the passengers were expected to get out and walk.

In the building now occupied by the electrical shop at the side of the Town Hall there was a bakehouse operated by a Mr Gibbs. He used to spend a great deal of his time during the winter afternoons fast asleep by the fire in the Institute reading room. This room was on the left of the entrance hall and it contained most of the daily newspapers, together with copies of *Punch*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *Tatler* and the *Sketch*. The *Strand* magazine was also available and this was very popular because each month it featured a Sherlock Holmes detective story. The periodicals were auctioned each year at Christmas time and each copy was collected by the successful bidder when the new edition was placed on the table. On the right of the hall was a similar room which acted as a library. The books were housed in glass cases which were kept locked, but opened every Monday evening. At the rear were two fairly large rooms, one for meetings whilst the other housed a large and a small billiards table. The caretaker was Mr Fred Knapton who lived in one of the three cottages to the right of the Institute and which were demolished in the 1930s.

The Armoury which was situated between the Blue Bell Inn and Mr Miles' grocery shop had an open forecourt (now Filco carpark) where we played lots of cricket. The wall nearest the Blue Bell was partially covered with ivy and had a small ledge about ten feet above the ground. If the cricket ball, after being hit, got lodged in the ivy, the fielders kept their places until Mr Miles was free to examine the position. It was he who decided whether a fielder would have caught the ball if it had not been trapped in the ivy, and if he said yes, the batsman was given out.

Another childhood game was "buttons": the game was to lean on the pavement by the gutter and throw the button along the floor to the wall of the house, the nearest being the winner who would win all the buttons in that particular throw. We also played tops, and of course, every autumn saw the emergence of our iron hoops; the girls used wooden ones. One game was to let the hoop go at full tilt down a slope, hit a large stone that had been placed in its path and then see the hoop leap into the air and jump over an obstacle. This often happened in the Slade field opposite the old railway station and sometimes the hoop would clear the wooden railings and land on the road. If a hoop got fractured it was repaired for a penny or two by Harry Webb the blacksmith. A halfpenny at that time was a real coin of the realm. With it one could buy two and a half Woodbine, Cinderella or Ogdens' Tabs cigarettes from Miss Stibbs and the choice of sweets costing a halfpenny was quite extensive.

The Royal Oak Inn was run by the Fitzgerald family and as Billy Fitzgerald was of our age, we were allowed sometimes to play in the skittle alley, the only one in the locality. We also did a bit of boxing in the skittle alley as Billy possessed two pairs of boxing gloves. The Horse and Groom and the Druid Hotel each had billiard tables.

In 1908 I became a day boy at Cowbridge Grammar school which was always known locally as The College. I still remember very vividly walking down Church Street on my first morning and I was very proud of the red cockerel on my black cap. It cost my parents £3 per term to keep me there. This represented a real sacrifice, because if one takes the cost of labour as a common denominator that £3 equalled about £70 in 1980, perhaps more. At that time wages for non-skilled workers were in the region of £1.10s to £2. I was at the school for six years; my headmaster was the Revd William Franklen Evans, MA, and the assistant masters were David Percival Jones, Charles Mayo, RC Hadland, Ralph Jones and Ronald St Clair Wall. Of these, Ronald Wall (who was a former pupil) and Charles Mayo were killed in the First World War.

Cricket was played in the summer term, soccer in the winter term and during the first half of Easter term whilst hockey took up the second half. Every Friday morning we had drill or PT or were taken for a long walk. Sergeant Bradbury was our tutor and he was a very decent chap. He lived next door to the Wesleyan Chapel. We also had a miniature shooting range and I still have a medal I won in 1909. On Sundays the boys (including myself) wore Eton jackets and striped trousers. The jackets were cut very short and were known as bum-freezers.

The Fifth Form generally had a dozen boys, the Fourth and the "modern" Form each about ten whilst the Third Form was always the largest with eighteen or twenty pupils. There was no Form II and the First Form usually had less than a dozen. The ratio of pupils to tutors ensured that each boy had a fair share of personal attention. There were only about fifty or sixty pupils before the war and most were boarders. Some of the boarders came from homes which were very far-distant from Cowbridge, such as the brothers Deza from Brazil. There were only two in the Sixth Form in 1908; they were Jones *major* (Boggy) and Davies *major* (Plug). Jones *major* married a daughter of Mr AS Evans and was later knighted for services as a government official in East Africa.

In the summer, school hours were from 6.55 to 8.00, 8.55 to 12 noon, 1.55 to 4.00 and 6.55 to 8.20. In the winter the early morning sessions started at 7.30 instead of 6.55. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons were free, but we were in trouble if we did not turn up for games on the school field. I think my happiest hours were those spent at the cricket games we played alongside Dr Shepherd's hedge which formed the boundary of the garden belonging to Dynevor Cottage. We were of course the junior kids and we had an exercise book to keep score. There was a large garden where the big car park now stands and if we could possibly clear the garden wall with a big hit, we scaled the wall and never found the ball until

we had sampled the lovely peaches which grew all along the south wall which now adjoins the Old Hall grounds.

I used to play in goal for the school both at soccer and hockey and played for several years in the cricket First XI. I enjoyed cricket most of all. I was reasonably successful at the school sports, winning several prizes. I wouldn't say my behaviour was better than average and I often got the stick. This could be terribly painful as administered by WFE. Most fun we had in the evening studies when we got armed with strong elastic which propelled a really hard piece of compressed paper held V-shape by the teeth. Our targets were usually those who "swotted" too much but this form of target practice was much disliked by the master in charge and often resulted in the culprit being sent to the Headmaster's study for the stick. I should have mentioned that in the early days there was a very elite girls' school run by a Miss Culverwell at what is now Great House. My sister was a pupil there and it became known that one or two of the boarders used to make a precarious escape from the dormitory at night time to meet the girls in the church yard.

During the school holidays we used to do some stupid things, usually in the dark. One night we got a hiding from the landlord of the Masons Arms because we were in the market and had securely fixed a pin into the frame of the window to the right of the side door. To the pin was attached strong cotton and a few inches from the pin a large button was fixed to the cotton. The cotton reached over the market wall. Every time we jerked it the button rapped the window pane. Out would come the landlord and of course there was no-one to be seen. On the third or fourth occasion he must have spotted the button, so he went down his garden and came upon us from the rear. He laid into us good and proper! This game was called "tap tap".

On another occasion we attached the black cotton to the knocker of Mr John David's door. He lived at Llwyncelyn and was the founder of the firm of John David, Watts & Morgan, auctioneers and estate agents. We trailed cotton across the road and crouched behind the railings of Old Hall opposite. The knocker would knock, the door duly opened, no-one to be seen. Perhaps it was the second knock that prompted Mr. David to stay inside the door and as soon as it knocked again he flung the door open. This time the cotton broke and we all ran off hell for leather. In those days there was very little traffic after dark, our greatest risk was the possibility of a pedestrian walking into the cotton.

The worst thing we did was to demolish the contents of Miss Stibbs' right hand window. This is where the Ogmores Vale bakery shop now operates. At the base of the window there were round holes presumably for ventilation. We would stare into the window and push a garden cane through the hole. One night the background to the window display consisted of 5lb bags of flour mounted one on top of the other. By pushing the bottom ones with the cane the whole lot would collapse. We did this sort of thing fairly often but Miss Stibbs was very old and it was rather unkind to play her up in this way.

In Mr Bill Pickard's grocery shop in Easstgate, the side of the rectangular window was boarded up but not very tidily. Through gaps in the boards we could push in our magic wand and lay low the cardboard boxes, show cards and anything else he had in the window.

In the three garages which were operating in Cowbridge at that time, car hiring was of course, very popular. Mr Arthur Evans at the Armoury ran a Charron limousine and a Humber Tourer. Mr Mills of the High street Garage ran Model T Fords whilst Mr Jones (West End Garage) first had an 18 hp V twin Riley and then in 1912 he went to Scotland to take delivery of a 12 hp Argyll. This was a lovely open four seater with torpedo body and was the first make of motor car to be fitted with front wheel brakes. The twin cylinder Riley was most difficult to start when cold. All of these cars were started by handle. In the winter it was often necessary to jack up one rear wheel of the Model T Ford to ease the friction in the transmission before the engine could be started. There was of course always a chance of the car jumping off the jack when the engine did start and the rear wheels began to revolve. In such a case the chap at the handle had to be pretty quick off the mark!

But the fun really was with the motor bikes. Mr Evans had the Triumph, Humber and the Royal Enfield; Mr Mills had the Premier, the James and later the Rover and the Lincoln Elk; Mr Jones had the

BSA. and the Rudge Multi. Hill climbs and reliability trials were very popular and many are the tales connected with them. Billy Jones imported a semi-professional rider called Clisset from Barry to compete at Eweny Hill climb and this caused quite a sensation. Races from the Town Hall to the top of Primrose Hill were frequent events, scouts being placed at the junction of the Aberthin and Llanblethian roads to stop all traffic.

The Brewery Office opposite the Duke was manned by Mr Joe Staien who lived at St Hilary. He had a James motorbike and a very popular type of coach built sidecar called the Canoelet which cost 12 guineas. It was possible to buy a wicker sidecar for as little as £3.15s.0d. Every time Joe went home to lunch he would run alongside the bike and as soon as he had gained a little momentum (going downhill) he would drop the exhaust lever, start the engine, get on the bike and before he had passed the Town Hall he would have transferred himself to the sidecar. I should have pointed out that at that time there were no clutches or gear boxes on motor bikes. It was direct drive by belt from the engine pulley to the belt drum on the rear wheel. Joe would get up a good speed, blowing his bulb horn nearly all the time and would shoot past the crossroads where the lights now are at a good 30 - 35 mph so that he could climb Primrose Hill. He never had an accident.

At a later date Dr Temple, who was an assistant to Dr Meller and lived at Llantwit Major, went one better. He had a 6 hp Royal Enfield and sidecar in which he always sat whilst on his rounds. He had the footbrake pedal extended through into the sidecar for emergency stops and he also had a huge klaxon horn which could be heard for hundreds of yards. The clutch was within comfortable reach and this was of course, a great advantage to the driver in the sidecar.

Bill Croome, the sweep, had a Premier and he carried all his brushes and canes in his sidecar. George Durston the butcher also had a Premier and sidecar for delivering meat. George was also a part-time AA patrolman and used to spend his Sundays directing traffic at the point where the Porthcawl road leaves the A48.

On fine Sundays a few motor cyclists, usually from Cardiff, would frequently come to Cowbridge and stop outside one of the pubs. They were much admired by the locals - there were beautiful Red Indians, Harley Davidsons, a four cylinder Henderson and sometimes a lovely water cooled Scott which had a twin-cylinder two stroke engine and was of unconventional design.

Although I never had a motor cycle ride on a Sunday, my brother Bruce often joined his friends and went quite long distances on Sunday afternoons. The big problem was, of course, how to dodge mother because she was very upset if she knew what was going on. It might be of interest to recall how the shop was operated at that time. There were two doors from the shop into the house. One was in the corner next to 12 High Street and the other immediately opposite the front door which was a little to the west of centre. This second door led into the small passage or hall belonging to the house. It was possible to enter the house from the front door on a Sunday without seeing the shop because a red coloured curtain hung on either side, reaching from the ceiling to the floor. It was behind this curtain that the Triumph motorcycle was hidden away and it used to emerge after mother had gone to Sunday School, Bruce meanwhile being laid low either with a headache or some pain somewhere.

Although I played association football for Cowbridge, our great love was cricket, and during the summer my brother and I played most Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. Cowbridge had a very fine ground and always employed a professional. A vivid recollection is that of a wreath in the shape of a cricket bat which the Cowbridge Cricket Club placed on the grave of Mr Russell the professional, who was probably the greatest batsman ever to play for Cowbridge. He made many centuries and more than one double century. Other 'pros' included Trevor Preece, Gange (who played for Gloucestershire and was a fast bowler), Geary, Pell and Edwards. The first war meant the loss of three of the five Dunn brothers, all of whom were fine cricketers. The Revd Owen Jones (known as Bingo) was quite a character with his slow leg breaks, unorthodox cricket apparel and some original stokes while at the wicket!

Croquet was played immediately inside the entrance gates to the cricket field and the box containing the equipment was kept at Stafford House, then occupied by Mr WA James, who was a builder. I was always delighted to have a game of croquet. Before the war a bowling green was

constructed near the north corner of the ground, not far from the further rugby posts as they now stand. It was however built by amateurs, and the sport never became really popular before it was abandoned.

Cowbridge had a very good soccer side which played on the far side of the cricket field: Dick Moynan, who was a trainee surgeon, always played his soccer wearing white gloves. There was also a good rugby XV which played on a field at the back of Cae Stumpie immediately opposite Heath House garden. The stumpy field (as it was known) also used to stage live pigeon shoots. Each bird was placed in a collapsible box which was opened by means of a long length of cord - a cruel sport.

My mother was a staunch member of Ramoth Baptist Church. We were not allowed to have a Sunday newspaper, whilst cycling on the Sabbath was sternly forbidden. The family had to attend Ramoth twice each Sunday, plus Sunday School in the afternoon, as well as the Band of Hope and a prayer meeting during the week. The Band of Hope was a weekly meeting for the youngsters at which volunteers sang or recited. It was good fun but I remember being much ridiculed by Bruce because on one occasion I decided that I would sing "Somewhere the Sun is Shining" and, having no singing voice, I expect the entertainment must have been very laughable.

Sometimes we had a get together generally around Christmas time in the school room where we had childrens' games. One that was quite exciting was to spin a tray in the centre of the room and call upon the sweetheart of the moment to catch it before it stopped spinning. Another great adventure was provided by the figure of a large donkey which had no tail. The detached tail had adhesive material at the top. Each competitor was blind-folded and stuck the tail on the donkey. The one nearest to the correct position was the prize winner.

Between seventy and eighty children went to Sunday School, and they were supposed to have a minimum attendance record to be eligible to join in the Sunday School treat. The most popular destination was Barry Island because of the lovely sands and the children's swimming pool. We believed that the tunnel through which the train passed was specially constructed to form part of the fun. Donkey rides were of course very popular. Sometimes we went to the Leys, by brake. The tee boxes on the golf course used to contain sand for teeing up, but I thought they were receptacles for golf balls. When there was no-one around I would search through the sand to look for balls, but of course I never found any. Another place (also by brake) was Marcross. The light-house and fog horn were great attractions.

For several years in the early 1900s we enjoyed the entertainment provided by the Cowbridge Minstrels. They held concerts in the Town Hall, two each winter, and I still recall two of their jokes. "Tell me, Sambo, if Queen Mary kissed King Edward and King Edward kissed Queen Mary, what public building would they represent?" Blank faces, "Why - the Royal Exchange of course". Enormous laughter. JW Hall was a hay merchant who lived at Rhoscelyn, hence the following: "Say, Sambo, why is a load of hay like a piece of silver?" More blank faces, "because it is Hall marked, of course".

The minstrels were like our present day Black and White Minstrels - their faces and hands completely blacked up and their costumes were very good indeed. They sang popular comic songs and always produced a number of topical jokes. The late Charles Davies (hairdresser) was responsible for the make-up.

There were three doctors in Cowbridge and they were looked upon with great respect. Dr Charles Booth Meller lived at Caercady House, a lovely house opposite the Bear Hotel. Dr Meller was an eccentric who never charged poor people for attendance and medicine, neither did he make any charge to any minister or clergyman. He always wore formal dress, a silk hat and frock coat. His mode of transport was by gig and stallion, accompanied always by his groom. He had several stallions, and the stables were located where the High Street Garage now stands, next door to Barclays Bank. Dr Meller was very fond of the Bird family and took good care of us. If I were ill he would bring me lots of oranges and on many occasions he would present us with a crate-full.

The other two doctors were Irish - Dr Hastings Torney who lived at Sorrento House and Dr Richard Moynan who lived at Woodstock House. Moynan was a good cricketer but he disliked fielding. He had an extraordinary understanding with his maidservant who, wearing a white apron with ribbons

flying from her bonnet would come across to the Bear Field hedge and then wave to the doctor. This however, never occurred before the doctor had had his innings. The news was always the same, "Sick patient getting worse, immediate attention needed", and off the doctor would go. Dr Moynan had a 10 hp four cylinder blue Humber two-seater which was looked after by Sgt Bill Brown, who was the Town Hall caretaker and driver of the fire engine. Dr Torney had a single cylinder 6 hp green De Dion two-seater.

In the garage run by Mr Mills there appeared in 1915 what in those days was considered to be a very desirable two-seater motor car. It was called an Enfield Autolette and we decided to buy it, for a very small sum, and I remember very vividly driving it out of the garage and down to 14 High Street. That short journey was a great adventure because I kept on going from one side of the road to the other. The road must have been perfectly clear, otherwise there would have been a collision.

Dr Meller, as I have said, had his stallions, but about the time we acquired the Enfield Autolette he for some reason which I do not recall, gave up the horses and he asked Dena if she would drive him around in the Enfield. Of course Dena was delighted and a charge per mile was agreed upon.

Now the Enfield was no ordinary motor car. In the first place it had a vertical twin cylinder water cooled engine and it was quite impossible to imagine the vibration which was set up at certain engine speeds. Perhaps between 24 and 27 mph you would be shaken to pieces, but at 28 mph it was very much better. The alleged rating was 8/9 hp and this was insufficient to climb the Lake Hill with the doctor as passenger because he was really a very large man and must have weighed at least 16 stone. When this was first discovered I believe I was driving as I remember reversing down the portion we had climbed and then turning into the road leading to Llandough. There we turned round and negotiated the hill in reverse gear, which had a very much lower ratio than the first forward gear. To be ascending the Lake Hill backwards was quite an experience but it was either that or go by some other route.

It must have been soon after the war started that I joined the Metropolitan Bank of England and Wales. I started at Pontypridd but after a year or so I was transferred to Cowbridge. The Cowbridge branch was where HR Thomas now have their offices. It then became the London Joint City and Midland Bank and then the Midland Bank. The manager was Mr Robert Thomas, one of four brothers. All were farmers and no-one knows why Robert became a banker. His interest was certainly very much in the land and he kept a flock of prize Kerry sheep at St Hilary. He was also a well-known bee-keeper.

In those days the last post out from Cowbridge was at 8.20 pm and there were occasions when I only just succeeded in catching it. The Manager's interest in the Kerry sheep, in the bees and in the building at that time of the Baptist Manse were some of the reasons why I was kept late. The copying of letters was not done by means of carbon sheets, but by means of damp cloths. This process is probably worth relating. A special book with wafer-thin pages which were numbered was kept to preserve a copy of every letter sent out. A damp cloth of special texture was placed above each page with the letter underneath and the book then placed in a press. Now this was very much a hit-or-miss method because success or failure depended upon many things. The cloth must not be too damp or too dry, the press must not be pressed too much or too little and the time the book stayed in the press was also very important. As I was the junior clerk, it was my duty to copy the letters after they were signed, place them in the envelopes, stamp the envelopes, place them in a special leather post bag and then post them at the post office. The leather bag was taken back to the Bank on the following morning.

If any one of the foregoing rules for letter copying was broken it could mean either a very faint and almost illegible copy being produced or else a copy which although legible, meant that the actual letter to be posted could be a shambles. The ink could run from every word just as if flies had walked across it. Perhaps the worst to suffer was the Manager's ink-written signature. I got into diabolical trouble many times because of this copying business and gradually became more and more frustrated with my job. Although I was classified by Head Office as being "indispensable" I did not report for duty one morning, but instead went to the recruiting office in Cardiff and joined up as a despatch rider in the Motor Transport section of the RASC.

When I returned to Cowbridge after being discharged from the Army, the business was at a low ebb because manufactured goods were very scarce indeed and we had lost the Lister engine agency to Arthur John. We did manage, I remember, to obtain a small supply of BSA 12-bore double barrel hammerless shotguns with left hand choke which sold at the amazingly low price of 12 guineas. I became the proud possessor of one, and for many years enjoyed shooting, chiefly over the Flemingston Moors after wildfowl.

We also bought a new Model T one-ton chassis with cab, upon which Gilead Spencer the wheelwright built a drop side body and he also made wooden hoops upon which a brown canvas top was mounted, just like the old covered wagons.

In May 1922 on a lovely early summer morning, a telephone call which I happened to answer was destined to alter our whole way of life. It was from Mr Sydney Byass at Llandough Castle, asking whether we could arrange for him a demonstration at Llandough of one of these new Atco motor mowers. We arranged for the Atco demonstrator to come from Newport, and we stayed at the Castle for some hours making quite sure that the gardener and the chauffeur were completely familiar with the operation and maintenance of the machine. I used the machine myself and thoroughly enjoyed doing so because it was very easy to handle. Having a nine-bladed cylinder, it cut beautifully. The sale of this first motor lawn mower was so exciting and inspiring that I made up my mind that mowers would provide us with a living.

That, of course, is another story.

She shared her later years with us at 14, High Street. Her hair was parted in a straight line down the centre and she always wore a white bonnet.

My late sister Dena also used to spend some time at St. Fagans, and I very clearly remember Percy Bush, the great rugby footballer, calling on Grannie with his horse-drawn covered bread van and taking Dena with him on part of his round. I also remember Billy Milward (afterwards to be best man at our wedding) calling one day with a Charron motor car. His wife Lena was a close friend of Dena's. As I cannot recall the thrill of getting into the motor car, I can only assume that I did not have a ride.

Several of the workers on the Plymouth Estate became known to me. Mr. Pettigrew, the head gardener, later became nationally known. Billy Culverwell looked after the lovely cricket ground and bowling green. Mr. Phillips kept the Post Office and Miss Milden had an attractive sweet shop at the bottom of the hill leading to the railway station. At the top of this hill was a lovely ornamental water trough which provided drinking water for the villagers. My brother Bruce went to the St. Fagans Council School for one term. In later years he played cricket for the Honourable Windsor Clive's XI.

In those days practically the whole workforce of the village found employment on the Plymouth Estate. The same could be said of other villages in the Vale - St. Nicholas depended upon the Duffryn Estate (then owned by the Cory family and nationally famous for its gardens) - Pendoylan upon the Hensol Castle Estate then owned by Sir Francis Price Fothergill who lived at Hensol Castle and Penllyn upon the Penllyn Castle Estate which was owned by Colonel H.R. Homfray.

I first went to school at what is now Pantfaen on Broadway and I have a few photographs of classes in which I was included. They were taken around about 1903 or 1904, and few of these boys, if any, are alive today

In those early days roads were repaired in a very primitive way although there were steam rollers in use. They were adorned with the emblem of a rampant horse in brass and this was very impressive. It was quite appropriate too, because few horses

could be persuaded to pass them. A large heap of stones would be carted to the side of the road and stone breakers were employed to break the stones up by means of special hammers. The stone breakers wore spectacles fitted with very fine mesh wire gauzes to prevent splinters from entering the eye. The broken stones had to pass through a large sieve and those which did not get through had to be cracked again. It was a heart breaking job during bad weather and it was the duty of the surveyor to check the work every few days. I often went with Dad on these journeys which were made in a horse drawn gig.

A toy which I was given when a child was a small tricycle only a few inches long but the handlebars controlled the front wheel. For many months it gave me much pleasure because I was allowed to have it on the table before a meal started and my joy was to manipulate the steering and get the two rear wheels to pass between closely placed obstacles without touching them.

I was always very fond of cricket - Wilfred Rhodes being my hero. In those days Australia were very strong and we had photographs of individual players stuck on our bedroom walls. On the back of a postcard showing the M.C.C. team I had recorded, when seven years old, the scores in their match versus Victoria.

In 1908 my father took me to Lords Cricket Ground where for nearly three days we watched Yorkshire playing Surrey. Lord Hawke was Captain of Yorkshire and I still remember nearly all the 22 players.

Another vivid recollection is that of a wreath in the shape of a cricket bat which the Cowbridge Cricket Club placed on the grave of Mr. Russell the professional, who was probably the greatest batsman ever to play for Cowbridge. He made many centuries and more than one double century. We have a photograph of his grave.

I used to travel with the Cowbridge first XI as the scorer and we still have some photographs in which I am seen holding the scoring book. Croquet was played immediately inside the entrance gates to the cricket field and the box containing the equipment was kept at Stafford House, then occupied by a Mr. W.A. James, who was a builder. I was always delighted to have a game of croquet.

always known locally as The College. I still remember very vividly walking down Church Street on my first morning and I was very proud of the red cockerel on my black cap. It cost my parents £3 per term to keep me there. This represented a real sacrifice, because if one takes the cost of labour as a common denominator that £3 equalled about £70 in 1980, perhaps more. At that time wages for non-skilled workers were in the region of £1.10s.0d to £2.0s.0d. I was at the school for six years and still have nearly all my term reports. My headmaster was the Reverend William Franklen Evans, M.A. and the assistant masters were David Percival Jones, Charles Mayo, R.C. Hadland, Ralph Jones and Ronald St. Clair Wall. Of these, Ronald Wall (who was a former pupil) and Charles Mayo were killed in the First World War.

Cricket was played in the summer term, soccer in the winter term and during the first half of Easter term whilst hockey took up the second half. Every Friday morning we had drill or P.T. or were taken for a long walk. Sergeant Bradbury was our tutor and he was a very decent chap. He lived next door to the Wesleyan Chapel. We also had a miniature shooting range and I still have a medal I won in 1909. On Sundays the boys (including myself) wore Eton jackets and striped trousers. The jackets were cut very short and were known as bum-freezers. I have a photograph of myself so attired.

Some of the boarders came from homes which were very far-distant from Cowbridge. The brothers Deza were natives of Brazil. There were only two in the Sixth Form and in 1908 they were Jones Major (Boggy) and Davies Major (Plug). Jones Major married a daughter of Mr. A.S. Evans and was later knighted for services as a government official in East Africa.

The Fifth Form generally had a dozen boys, the Fourth and the "modern" Form each about 10 whilst the Third Form was always the largest with 18 or 20 pupils. There was no Form 2 and the First Form usually had less than a dozen. The ratio of pupils to tutors ensured that each boy had a fair share of personal attention.

I could of course write many pages about my life at the school, but I will content myself with relating a few of the highlights. There were only about 50 or 60 pupils before the war and most were boarders.

In the summer, school hours were from 6.55 to 8.00, 8.55 to 12 noon. 1.55 to 4.00 and 6.55 to 8.20. In the winter the early morning sessions started at 7.30 instead of 6.55. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons were free, but we were in trouble if we did not turn up for games on the school field. I think my happiest hours were those spent at the cricket games we played alongside Dr. Shepherd's hedge and which formed the boundary of the garden belonging to Dynevor Cottage. We were of course the junior kids and we had an exercise book to keep score. There was a large garden where the big car park now stands and if we could possibly clear the garden wall with a big hit, we scaled the wall and never found the ball until we had sampled the lovely peaches which grew all along the south wall which now adjoins the old Hall grounds.

I used to play in goal for the school both at soccer and hockey and played for several years in the cricket First XI. I enjoyed cricket most of all. I was reasonably successful at the school sports, winning several prizes.

I wouldn't say my behaviour was better than average and I often got the stick. This could be terribly painful as administered by W.F.E. Most fun we had in the evening studies when we got armed with strong elastic which propelled a really hard piece of compressed paper held V shape by the teeth. Our targets were usually those who "swotted" too much but this form of target practice was much disliked by the master in charge and often resulted in the culprit being sent to the Headmaster's study for the stick. I should have mentioned that in the early days there was a very élite girls' school run by a Miss Culverwell at what is now Great House. My sister was a pupil there and it became known that one or two of the boarders used to make a precarious escape from the dormitory at night time to meet the girls in the church yard.

During the school holidays we used to do some stupid things, usually in the dark. One night we got a hiding from the landlord of the Masons Arms because we were in the market and had securely fixed a pin into the frame of the window to the right of the side door. To the pin was attached strong cotton and a few inches from the pin a large button was fixed to the cotton. The cotton reached over the market wall. Every time we jerked it the button rapped

the window pane. Out would come the landlord and of course there was no-one to be seen. On the third or fourth occasion he must have spotted the button, so he went down his garden and came upon us from the rear. He laid into us good and proper! This game was called "tap tap."

On another occasion we attached the black cotton to the knocker of Mr. John David's door. He lived at Llwyncelyn and was the founder of the firm of John David, Watts & Morgan, auctioneers and estate agents. We trailed cotton across the road and crouched behind the railings of the old Hall opposite. The knocker would knock, the door duly opened, no-one to be seen. Perhaps it was the second knock that prompted Mr. David to stay inside the door and as soon as it knocked again he flung the door open. This time the cotton broke and we all ran off hell for leather. In those days there was very little traffic after dark, our greatest risk was the possibility of a pedestrian walking into the cotton.

The worst thing we did was to demolish the contents of Miss Stibbs' right hand window. This is where the new bakery shop now operates. At the base of the window there were round holes presumably for ventilation. We would stare into the window and push a garden cane through the hole. One night the background to the window display consisted of 5lb bags of flour mounted one on top of the other. By pushing the bottom ones with the cane the whole lot would collapse. We did this sort of thing fairly often but Miss Stibbs was very old and it was rather unkind to play her up in this way. Mr. Bill Pickard kept a grocery shop where the fish and chip shop now stands. The side of the rectangular window was boarded up but not very tidily. Through gaps in the boards we could push in our magic wand and lay low the cardboard boxes, show cards and anything else he had in the window.

There was real drama in my young life when our shop window at 14, High Street was broken into during March Fair week and a velvet-lined case containing Ingersoll watches was stolen. I remember that the case was found near the Poplars, but I am not sure whether any watches were recovered. At that time one could buy an Ingersoll watch which was guaranteed for five years for 5s.0d and there was a choice of finishes, either gold, silver or gun metal. A very thin model sold at 6s.6d. If one went wrong, we sent it back to Ingersolls (postage perhaps 2d) and it would come back promptly

in 100% condition. The shop was kept open until 6.00 p.m. and on Saturdays it was 9.00 p.m. or even later if there was a customer to be served.

Every day a wide assortment of hardware was put on display on the pavement. Above what is now the covered right of way to the west of the shop was a small warehouse and such items as rolls of wire netting were lifted from the pavement by means of a hand operated hoist; the arm of which swung out over the pavement. At that time there was no objection to cluttering up the pavement. The passageway was also used as a place of storage and a little way down was a 50 gallon tank of paraffin. This sold at about 4d per gallon. Lower down still was what we called the Malthouse, whilst some steps at the bottom of our courtyard led up to what was known as "Brown's Shop." This was a relic of the days when Uncle Nathaniel employed a plumber and they have already been referred to. The courtyard was stone flagged and every Saturday morning it was the custom to use hard brooms and sand and water to clean the surface. My part in the proceedings was to go to the Lodging House (which is the large house at the junction of the Bear Lane and Eagle Lane) and buy from Mr. Trott a bucket of sand for the price of one halfpenny. It was of course, quite heavy to carry, but the bucket was never over-full.

My other job was to pump the water from a semi-rotary pump in the back kitchen. The actual cleaning job was carried out by my mother, sister and a maid. My reward was one halfpenny. This halfpenny was doubled every week by taking a gallon of paraffin to a Mrs. Jones who lived by the Southgate.

Coming back to the Lodging House, there were many tramps in those days and some of them got a ticket from the police station which entitled them to a night's lodging. We always thought that Trotts Lodging House was pretty grim and a place to be avoided.

It must have been in 1908 or 1909 that Mr. W.E. (Billy) Jones came back from South Africa where he had been a mining engineer. He was the father of Arthur Jones, currently living at Llansannor Court. He opened the West End Garage opposite the Bear Hotel. It was not really a suitable type of building for a garage because it did not have a wide frontage, although it went back for probably 50 yards.

I am not sure whether Mr. Arthur Evans (Dr. Dai's father) opened his garage before or after Billy Jones, but there was not much in it. Mr. Arthur Evans started his business at the Armoury (already referred to). This garage suffered in the same way as Billy Jones, too narrow. A few years later Mr. Arthur Thomas Mills built a most elaborate garage in the High Street with living accommodation over. It is now the site of the Co-Operative Store. He called it "The Cowbridge Garage Company." Today planning permission would have been withheld for such a set up. They could not keep exhaust fumes from percolating into the living rooms and had there been a serious fire, it would have been very difficult to escape.

Intense rivalry soon made itself felt between these three businesses. Car hiring at that time was of course, very popular. Mr. Evans ran a Charron limousine and a Humber Tourer. Mr. Mills ran Model T Fords whilst Mr. Jones first had an 18 h.p. V twin Riley and then in 1912 he went to Scotland to take delivery of a 12 h.p. Argyll. This was a lovely open four seater with torpedo body and was the first make of motor car to be fitted with front wheel brakes. The twin cylinder Riley was most difficult to start when cold. All of these cars were, of course, started by handle. In the winter it was often necessary to jack up one rear wheel of the Model T Ford to ease the friction in the transmission before the engine could be started. There was of course always a chance of the car jumping off the jack when the engine did start and the rear wheels began to revolve. In such a case the chap at the handle had to be pretty quick off the mark!

But the fun really was with the motor bikes. Mr. Evans had the Triumph, Humber and the Royal Enfield: Mr. Mills had the Premier, the James and later the Rover and the Lincoln Elk: Mr. Jones had the B.S.A. and the Rudge Multi. Hard to believe, but quite true - Billy sold a tiny two stroke Motosocoche to Mr. Robert Thomas of the Metropolitan Bank before the first war. This same Company is in operation in Switzerland at the present time supplying industrial engines to Ransomes and others. The potential locally for motor cycle sales was good and every sale was quite a local event.

Hill climbs and reliability trials were very popular and many are the tales connected with them. Billy Jones imported a semi-professional rider called Clisset from Barry to compete at Ewenny Hill climb and this caused quite a sensation.

Races from the Town Hall to the top of Primrose Hill were frequent events, scouts being placed at the junction of the Aberthin and Llanblethian roads to stop all traffic. The Brewery Office opposite the Duke was manned by Mr. Joe Staien who lived at St. Hilary. He had a James motorbike and a very popular type of coach built sidecar called the Canoelet which cost 12 guineas. It was possible to buy a wicker sidecar for as little as £3.15s.0d. Every time Joe went home to lunch he would run alongside the bike and as soon as he had gained a little momentum (going downhill) he would drop the exhaust lever, start the engine, get on the bike and before he had passed the Town Hall he would have transferred himself to the sidecar. I should have pointed out that at that time there were no clutches or gear boxes on motor bikes. It was direct drive by belt from the engine pulley to the belt drum on the rear wheel.

Joe would get up a good speed, blowing his bulb horn nearly all the time and would shoot past the crossroads where the lights now are at a good 30 - 35 m.p.h. so that he could climb Primrose Hill. He never had an accident.

At a later date Doctor Temple, who was an assistant to Doctor Meller and lived at Llantwit Major, went one better. He had a 6 h.p. Royal Enfield and sidecar in which he always sat whilst on his rounds. He had the footbrake pedal extended through into the sidecar for emergency stops and he also had a huge klaxon horn which could be heard for hundreds of yards. The clutch was within comfortable reach and this was of course, a great advantage to the driver in the sidecar.

Bill Croome, the sweep, had a Premier and he carried all his brushes and canes in his sidecar. George Durston the butcher (his shop was where Martins' paper shop now stands) also had a Premier and sidecar for delivering meat. George was also a part-time A.A. patrolman and used to spend his Sundays directing traffic at the point where the Porthcawl road leaves the A48.

In the year 1911 my brother Bruce acquired a second-hand 1909 Triumph. It had the popular 3½ h.p. engine, bore and stroke 85 x 88 - 499 c.c. Today this would be rated very much higher. I very much regret that I have no photograph of this machine because it was the source of the greatest possible thrills and adventures for me.

CHAPTER 2

WAR

Very soon after war was declared in 1914 Bruce, together with many members of the Cowbridge Cricket Team, joined the 5th Battalion of the Welsh Regiment. We have a photograph of them which was taken outside the Town Hall. Among others in the picture were Bruce, Jack and Frank Dunn, John Ffoulkes, Lyn Llewellyn and the club professional whose name was Pell and who came from Huddersfield. Several of these boys never returned from the war.

Bruce joined the machine gun section of the Battalion and after training at various camps, including Burnt Island in Scotland, he and his friends were eventually posted to Suvla Bay in the Dardenelles, and I remember very clearly the anguish of those days, when the Battalion was almost wiped out by the Turks. Bruce had a miraculous escape but suffered from dysentery for many years afterwards. After coming home he was posted to Llanion Barracks at Pembroke Docks, enjoying the rank of Company Quartermaster Sergeant. It was during this time that he met the girl he was soon to marry.

I was 16 when the war broke out and my father and I were at Middlesboro where we were staying with friends of the family, the Reverend and Mrs. M.P. Evans. Mr. Evans was a Baptist Minister and a great preacher. At the larger railway stations at which we stopped, such as Derby, I was tremendously impressed with the big engines which seemed to make noises quite different from the G.W.R. engines at Cardiff. Of course we were soon back home.

The Glamorgan Yeomanry Battalion (T.D.) was quickly mobilised and we had 3 N.C.O.'s billeted upon us. Bruce had of course left us by this time and the billeting money was very welcome. It is a far cry to those days but strange to relate one of those N.C.O.'s was alive until recently and I met him at the Bridgend Bowls Club where he was a member. The soldiers of course were not teetotallers and many a time they tried to crawl up the stairs late at night without waking my mother. If she heard them they would be very seriously lectured at the first opportunity. I remember that the late Captain Herbie Homfray was one of the Officers, and his father, the late Colonel Homfray became a Brigadier; a monument to those who died was erected on the Stalling Down.

In the garage run by Mr. Mills and in the year 1915 there appeared what was in those days considered to be a very desirable 2 seater

The Singer of course was our pride and joy. Like the Enfield, it was no ordinary car because the 3 speed and reverse gear box was housed in the back axle. It had lots of brass and copper which were a joy to keep highly polished. It was of course a very much better proposition for taking Doctor Meller on his rounds than the Enfield. As few spares were available during the war we often had to rely on Uncle Dan (my mother's brother) who had an engineering works at Taffs Well and who was able to fabricate a replacement for whatever was broken. The photographs we still have of the Singer show it to be a very attractive little car. I frankly cannot remember what eventually became of it but when I went away when I was 18 years old it was going very well.

It must have been soon after the war started that I joined the Metropolitan Bank of England and Wales. The Cowbridge branch was where Messrs. Herbert R. Thomas & Son now have their offices. It then became the London Joint City and Midland Bank and then the Midland Bank. The Manager was Mr. Robert Thomas - one of four brothers. All were farmers and no-one knows why Robert became a Banker. His interest was certainly very much in the land and he kept a flock of prize Kerry sheep at St. Hilary. He was also a well known bee-keeper.

I was posted to the Taff Street Pontypridd branch and commuted by means of the Taff Vale Railway. One of my fellow travellers as far as Llantrisant was Tommy Torney, the only child of Dr. and Mrs. Torney. He was a most likeable boy and was killed in the war. A plaque to his memory is on the wall of Cowbridge Church just inside the north door.

The starting salary as far as I can remember was well under £1 per week plus 2s.0d per night if a minimum number of hours of overtime were put in. The Manager at Pontypridd was Mr. W.D. Hodges and he was a very strict disciplinarian. Even after hours, smoking was strictly forbidden. I could relate some very funny stories about my stay at this branch, but then if I put down all my funny experiences I would never finish my story.

So I must leave Ponty, because after a year or so I was posted to Cowbridge. This was, of course, a bad thing for the Bank to do. In the first place I got to know a lot about the financial state of many business and private individuals throughout the district and secondly it is bad to have a close friend of the family as one's boss. It could only lead to incidents and some unpleasantness.

In those days the last post out from Cowbridge was at 8.20 p.m. and there were occasions when I only just succeeded in catching it. The Manager's interest in the Kerry sheep, in the bees and in the building at that time of the Baptist Manse were some of the reasons why I was kept late. The copying of letters was not done by means of carbon sheets, but by means of damp cloths. This process is probably worth relating. A special book with wafer-thin pages which were numbered was kept to preserve a copy of every letter sent out. A damp cloth of special texture was placed above each page with the letter underneath and the book then placed in a press. Now this was very much a hit-or-miss method because success or failure depended upon many things. The cloth must not be too damp or too dry, the press must not be pressed too much or too little and the time factor of the book in the press was also very important. As I was the junior clerk it was my duty to copy the letters after they were signed, place them in the envelopes, stamp the envelopes, place them in a special leather post bag and then post them at the post office. The leather bag was taken back to the Bank on the following morning.

If any one of the foregoing rules for letter copying was broken it could mean either a very faint and almost illegible copy being produced or else a copy which although legible, meant that the actual letter to be posted could be a shambles. The ink could run from every word just as if flies had walked across it. Perhaps the worst to suffer was the Manager's ink-written signature. I got into diabolical trouble many times because of this copying business and gradually became more and more frustrated with my job. Although I was classified by Head Office as being "indispensable" I did not report for duty one morning, but instead went to the recruiting office in Cardiff and joined up as a despatch rider in the Motor Transport section of the R.A.S.C. It was the Royal Engineers I should have joined because a despatch rider in the Engineers also learnt signals and it was a permanent appointment with the rank of Corporal. They wore a broad blue and white armband.

However, I was not told anything about the Royal Engineers and it is because of what appears to be at the time an insignificant happening, that the course of one's life is decided. Anyway I am alive today and perhaps I would not have been had I been told about the Engineers. As it turned out, I got attached to the Artillery soon after going to France and I stayed with the R.G.A. until I was discharged.

Sturmev Archer gearbox and thence by belt to the drum on the rear wheel. The original silencer was replaced by a straight-through copper exhaust pipe with a fish-tail ending. When climbing the long hill out of Taffs Well which was wooded on either side, the sound from the exhaust was - to me - very impressive.

From 1919 until 1926 my brother largely was involved in selling Diabolo cream separators and Petter engines. He was highly successful with the Diabolo and finished up, I think, in the first six for sales in a countrywide competition. Our chief rival was the Melotte sold by Arthur John. The Melotte was red, the Diabolo was green and the Alfa Laval which we took up later was finished in black and gold. The Petter was a two stroke water cooled farm engine, but could not compare with the slow revving and utterly reliable Lister. We also sold some lighting sets and installed one in the Duke Hotel. The Petter engine used to run its big-end bearings about every six weeks because of petrol mixing with the lubricating oil, but the bearings were split white metal and we could put a new set in in about 20 minutes.

W.E. Jones installed a Lalley light in his garage opposite the Bear Hotel. He used two 40 gallon drums as silencers and they were pretty efficient. With the Petter engine we sold Richmond and Chandler Chaffcutters, grinding mills etc. A particular memory is of Mr. Herbie Homfray of Penllyn Court giving us the order for the Chaffcutter etc., but he insisted on a Lister engine which Arthur John installed. It was a day of rejoicing whenever my brother secured an order for the complete outfit including the engine. Of course we had to bed these down in cement and line up all the pulleys which sometimes caused acute anxiety.

Money was very tight and most farmers took extended credit or paid by means of promissory notes.

My brother also pioneered the sale of radio sets when Savoy Hill started I think in 1923. Colonel Homfray favoured us with a good order. Crystal sets were of course, very inexpensive and very popular together with the Cossar Melody Maker, the Mullard and the G.E.C.

I tried to make a contribution by selling to the motor trade Bristol windscreen wipers at 5s.0d each, Bristol tyre pumps at 2 guineas each and Simoniz cleaner and polish.

The surface adhesion afforded by the afore-mentioned lugs was superb and the gentle slope into the hedge was negotiated in great style. All this time I was hanging onto the handles like grim death! We ended up with the plough share dug deep into the sloping ground and the tractor on its side with engine roaring and wheels spinning. I managed to free the stuck throttle and eventually all was quiet. I had to get help to rescue the tractor after I had succeeded in detaching the plough.

By this time I was in no state to carry out a decent demonstration and I did not do sufficiently well to persuade Sir David and his gardener that he could cultivate his market garden more efficiently, more quickly and more economically if he were to buy an Auto Culto.

Another serious drawback with this equipment was the difficulty of loading into and unloading from the lorry. We often had to go some distance to find a suitable bank or piece of rising ground on to which we could place one end of the loading planks. The plough and all the other bits and pieces were awkward to lift and carry and many a barked knuckle was the result. No tears were shed when we eventually packed the job in. This had been real pioneering - in later years machines like the first Auto Culto, but vastly improved, were sold in their thousands.

Our first post-war transport at Cowbridge was a second hand Ford Model T 10 cwt pick-up. Except in warm weather, it could not be started unless one rear wheel was jacked up to relieve the friction caused by the epileptic clutch. We later bought a new Model T one ton chassis with cab upon which Gilead Spencer the wheelwright built a drop side body and he also made wooden hoops upon which a brown canvas top was mounted just like the old covered waggons. One journey in this is described in my list of Singular Occurrences.

I must have been a bit light-headed in those days because I explored the possibility of running a bus service between Cowbridge and Pontypridd, and I was going to be the driver. What eventually put paid to the idea was the exorbitant charge which the various public authorities were going to levy for every mile which we travelled over the roads within their boundaries. However, no permission from anyone was needed to transport the local soccer team on their away fixtures, and this I did.

COWBRIDGE 1914 - 1918.

I found the article by Councillor Selwyn Davies in the April issue of the magazine to be of much interest.

There are very few of us left from those far-away days but perhaps a little further information might not be out of place.

Before the First World War there were 3 garages, 23 public houses, 2 breweries, 3 Doctors and one Blacksmith. One of the Doctors, Dr. Charles Booth Mellor attended to his patients invariably dressed in a top hat and a long-tailed coat. He was very much loved and respected and a great philanthropist. The other two were Irish; Doctor Hastings Torney and Dr. Moyhahan.

Only two of the public houses were self-supporting - the Duke and the Bear. The landlords of all the others were fully employed in various capacities unconnected with the beer trade. In those days, the City Inn, the Bush and Cross Inn were all quiet country inns with rarely a customer during the daytime.

The two Breweries were situated in the High Street - one opposite the Duke and the other near the present Betting Shop at the Bridge (but the other side of the river (before it was altered).

I believe Colonel Honfray owned the first motor car in Cowbridge. I remember it well - a blue Daimler limousine - L.6. - the sixth car to be registered in Glamorgan. Other early motor car owners were the late Mr Ebsworth of Llandough Castle, the late Sir Thomas Mansel Franklin and Sir Francis Price Fothergill of Hensol Castle. The cars were Wolseley, Talbot and a white steam car. I do not know who the first lady motorist was but my late sister, Mrs Dena David, started driving in 1914. I had my first licence in 1911 (one could get a motor cycle licence at the age of 14 in those days). I used to borrow my brother's 1909 $3\frac{1}{2}$ h.p. Triumph.

The late Mr Arthur Evans opened the first garage, about 1909, at the Old Armbury, which stood at the site of the Spar Deep freezer shop. Mr W.E. Jones opened his garage opposite the Bear (now Eddershaws) and soon afterwards came Mr A.T. Mills, who built an imposing place where the Co-op now stands. The imitation motor car wheels are still to be seen at the window corners. There was much rivalry between the three. Motor cycle races were held starting at the Town Hall and finishing at the top of Prinrose Hill. Stewards stopped all traffic at the cross roads where the traffic lights now operate!

Every March a great fair was held in Cowbridge and the main street was choked with carts which were parked on either side of the road. "Roundabouts" were sited on the Bear Field and it was a great time for the youngsters.

Compulsory attendance by Grammar School boys at all 11.00 a.m. Saints Days Services at the Church was the rule. We did not get a half day but if the Revd. Isaiah Roberts officiated we had to return to finish off the morning session; where the Curate was not in so much hurry and if the service finished after 11.30 a.m. we were allowed the rest of the morning off! The Vicar had a tiny 6 h.p. single cylinder De Dion car.

Before 1914 there were only 60 boys at the School. The hours were 6.55 - 8.00 a.m. (7.30 - 8.00 a.m. in the Winter); 8.55 - 12.00 (Noon); 1.55 to 4.00 p.m.; 6.55 - 8.20 p.m. The Headmaster, the Rev. William Franklin Evans was greatly respected by the staff and pupils.

When the War broke out most of the cricket team joined up at once. Several joined the 5th Welch Regiment. Two of the Dunn brothers, Frank and Jack, were killed at Suvla Bay. They went there with my brother Bruce. A third brother, Tom, was drowned at Monmouth early in the War. That meant the loss of three brothers out of 5 whilst Mr and Mrs Dunn also died during the War. One brother - Guy - still lives.

(Concluded overleaf)

COWBRIDGE W.I.MARKET - OPENING DATE.

The opening date for the Cowbridge W.I.Market is:

FRIDAY, 6th MAY 1977 - at 10.30 a.m. in The Lesser Hall.

Coffee and Tea will be served.

Mrs Irene M.Harris,
Hon.Secretary.

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DR.BARNARDO'S HELPER'S LEAGUE - COWBRIDGE BRANCH.

A COFFEE MORNING will be held in the Clubhouse of the Cowbridge and District Athletic Club on:

WEDNESDAY, 15th JUNE 1977 - 10.30 a.m. to 12.00 (Noon.

STALLS: Cakes/Delicatessen; Bring and Buy/Produce; Boutique;

Tombola; Raffle.

Tickets - 20p.

Mrs B.S.Martin,
Hon.Secretary.

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COWBRIDGE AND DISTRICT EARL HAIG POPPY DAY APPEAL.

The total amount raised for the 1976 Poppy Collection in the Cowbridge and District area was £715.49.

This is an increase of £223.49 over the amount raised in 1975.

The organiser wishes to thank all the Collectors, old and new, and other persons who contributed to this worthy cause.

Mrs B.Robinson, Hon.Organiser.

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COWBRIDGE AND DISTRICT FLOWER ARRANGEMENT CLUB.

The first Meeting of the newly formed Cowbridge and District Flower Arrangement Club will be held on:

4th May 1977 - 7.30 p.m. at The Institute, Cowbridge.

It will be a flower arranging demonstration.

Mrs Gwen Thomas. Hon.Secretary.
Telephone: Cowbeidge 3823.

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COWBRIDGE 1914 - 1918 (Continued).

By the way -- one could post letters up until 3.20 in the evening for delivery almost anywhere in the United Kingdom the next morning. How times have changed!!!!

Ralph Bird.

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