

*The notes below were made from a CD interview (now lost) and the words were apparently hard to hear. Gus's words were slurred and he had a heavy cold. He was probably interviewed at home as there's what sounds like a grandfather clock ticking away in the background and an occasional mellow chime. The names are my best guess. The interviewer clearly knew Gus and his family well and also the area they talk about. He tries to prompt Gus to record his family history, his farming practice and that of the Vale - thought to have been written by Jeff Alden*

### **Vale farmer Augustus Evans (Gus) interviewed by Vincent H Phillips on 2-12-1981**

Gus was born on Glyn Taff farm, near the crematorium in Treforest. Was it a big farm? He doesn't know the acreage, because he was only three and a half when he left. No idea how many acres. His Mam was from Mynydd Meio, Eglwysilan but not sure where she was born. Her mother was from the Brecon area-possibly Llangynider. There was some connection with that area, but he doesn't really know the details.

Gus's Father was from a different area, Cwm Abertridwr, Senghennydd area, a farm on the valley slope. He remembers the names of other farms: Carn Moel Ddu, Craig yr Ifan, Blaen y Cwm, Trefnant, Troedyrhiw, Llanbradach, Maes ty olaf.

Gus can remember his paternal grandfather who was from Carn Moel but can't remember his maternal grandfather.

When he was three and a half, a toddler, the family moved to Castellau Fawr. Then to Tal y Fedw farm which was near the chapel and common land, then, when he had grown up, moved to this farm in the Vale where he's been ever since. He still has 36 acres and has sheep and raises calves, helped by a nephew now.

Went to school in Beddau, a 2-3 mile walk from the farm. Remembers some fellow pupils Aled and Gladys. At 13 did an exam- a labour exam which had to be passed at that age. Then left school to get a job.

First job: Worked on Castellau Fawr, the big family farm, which had lots of plantations, a valley full of fir trees planted by the Aberpergwm estate which owned the land. This was possibly sold later on to the Treharnes. Gus remembers Judge Gwilym Williams of Miskin Manor. Mrs Williams, his wife, was sister to the old man of Aberpergwm family. They were all right as landlords.

A cottage on the estate became empty and Richards of the Lamb and Flag wanted it. His sister was going to get married and wanted Penbwlch uchaf. it. Their father wrote to the Aberpergwm estate to enquire about it. His brother Edward took Tal y Fedw in 1908. He married in 1921. A farm in Llantwit became free and Edward applied for it. David and David, the agents, wanted a reference so he asked the vicar and another agent called Spence, who mentioned that he also had a farm available- Marcross Farm, St Donats. It was rather big for his brother who said to Gus 'If you take Tal y Fedw from me I'll take Marcross.' The landlord agreed. His brother died in 1937, a young man.

They were 8 children altogether; only two of them left now. His sister used to live on her own in Wick but now lives in Church Farm, Monknash with her daughter. The other daughter lives in Chepstow. She's 80 now.

What kind of farming did Gus do? A dairy herd. Did he make cheese? If we had extra milk left over. Williams of Mountain Ash bought all the milk he produced. Any left over, Gus would take the milk down to Queen Street, Treforest. Milking at 6 by hand; morning and night, all hands on deck.

How about workers on the farm? There were 2 men and 1 woman who lived in a cottage on the land, which has now collapsed. Everyone helped with milking by hand. Basic equipment: a stool and a bucket that was only used for milk; some churns. Before the cooler system was invented, the milk was kept in the shed which had a supply of water to keep it cool and worked very well. The shed was split into two and 24 cows could be kept in the shed. Altogether 48-50 cows could be kept in the shed.

Gus normally bought Irish cattle in Fishguard. They were sold at fairs in Caerphilly, Cowbridge, or the Bullring in Llantrisant. He'd buy 20 at one go in October/November. He always bought a Hereford bull. Calves would be born in the spring. One animal a week would be sent to Fred Thomas, the butcher, in Tonyrefail. Gus made two journeys a week to Tonyrefail: he went on Monday to deliver the cow, preferably one which had gone dry. It would be killed on Tuesday and weighed on Thursday. He'd be paid on the spot after the weighing. How much did he get per pound? 6p a pound.

Sometimes Gus would buy cows in Llantrisant fair, sometimes as many as 25. On a Wednesday, he might buy 'Springers' in Pontypridd market. Charlie Griffiths would buy his calves for veal.

Stock would be housed outdoors and be fed up on the fields. They were also fed cake, barley meal, crushed oats, flour. Gus would try to draw a hard bargain with the salesman because he'd be after 20-30 tons of feed. Talked him down from £5.10 to £5.

Gus always concentrated on dairy- never bothered with bullocks. How many cows in milk? How many cows to milk?

In November, Gus would go to Aberdare to buy a Hereford bull to put with the Irish heifers. The bulls were from Ystrafellte and that area. The bull would be sold in May at Llantrisant fair because he didn't want to feed the bull until November. Always bought Hereford bulls.

Who would do the buying? He remembered his father buying the stock, and he also trained Gus to buy and sell. The dealer was called Organ. Did he have luck with purchases? Yes! He'd go with a pocket full of money, but later cheques came into use. The 1914 war caused upset all round and the money went out of it.

What breed were the Irish cows? Short Horns which were red all over. Had he ever seen a Glamorgan cow? Yes, he'd seen some in Margam. They had white backs and red faces. There were not many around. Were there more when he was a child? No.

(Did Gus get that cold from being too long outdoors?)

Was there anything to see of Castell Talyfan, the old castle, on Gus's land? Only ruins- nothing to see now. Just ruins with the farm around it.

How were cattle housed on Talyfan farm land? There was the manger with a walk behind and tie-ups (bishlath), stands. (Q. Were these called rester or ester? No). Did you see what the old people used before the chine? They used the yoke, which father could make: a piece of timber, probably ash, with a bend, a hole in the top with a staple and knob on the end wrapped round a post. The chine was more effective because it gave more freedom to the cow. Did he call it eirw or erw?

English was the language of the school, not a word of Welsh. How did Gus manage without knowing a word of English? Gus, now in his 80s, was born in September 1891 and reckoned he started school in 1895. (He's keeping very well for his age). The Schoolmaster was Welsh. Started to learn English in the infants' class from Miss Jacobs, who could also speak Welsh, and from Lottie Morgan from

Llantrisant, both now dead. All the farmers were Welsh-speaking: Pen Bwlch, Ty Draw, Gelynnog, Cyn Coed; all Welsh speaking.

The teacher, Mrs Richards from Cefn Llwyd farm, who had a son the same age as Gus, used to tell them off for talking Welsh. 'Down with the Welsh!' she'd say. She said English was classier.

Did Gus know a woman over 100 living in Cowbridge? No, but did know her brother, Thomas the Quarry.

What about chapel? Did Gus go to chapel from Castellau? Yes – it was all in Welsh and the minister Griffith Evans was a pretty good poet. What about Sunday school? Yes, they went to that. Was there anything going on during the week? Solfa class. GD Davies- gave a class once a week in the chapel. Gladys Did you go to Sunday school? Was there anything going on during the week? GD Davies gave a Solfa class once a week in the chapel. Gladys, a Welsh speaker, went because she could really sing, but Gus didn't. Any local Welsh speakers now? Tom, who must be 80 plus. Does Gus remember David Davies the Downs? He was from Tonyrefail and could speak Welsh; went to Cowbridge market and gave the solfa class in the chapel.

Gwen was born in Pontypridd. His sister, aged about 83, lives in Gelli Goch. Her husband Trefor is dead now. She can still talk Welsh but tends to talk English to him now. She lived on Windmill farm Llansannor. They built a house on the farmland. Her daughter now farms Windmill. Was there a windmill? I can't remember one.

Did Gus use a *car llusg*? Yes they had two and a gambo. Mam used to go up the field . She'd say 'take the load home' and his sister would take the cart. Edward and Jim were older than Gus and they would take one load and we'd take another.

The *car llusg* had no wheels at all, but a smooth surface underneath like a slide. There were rails around the side. Emlyn James of Llantrisant was the carpenter and wheelwright and carts were bought from him.

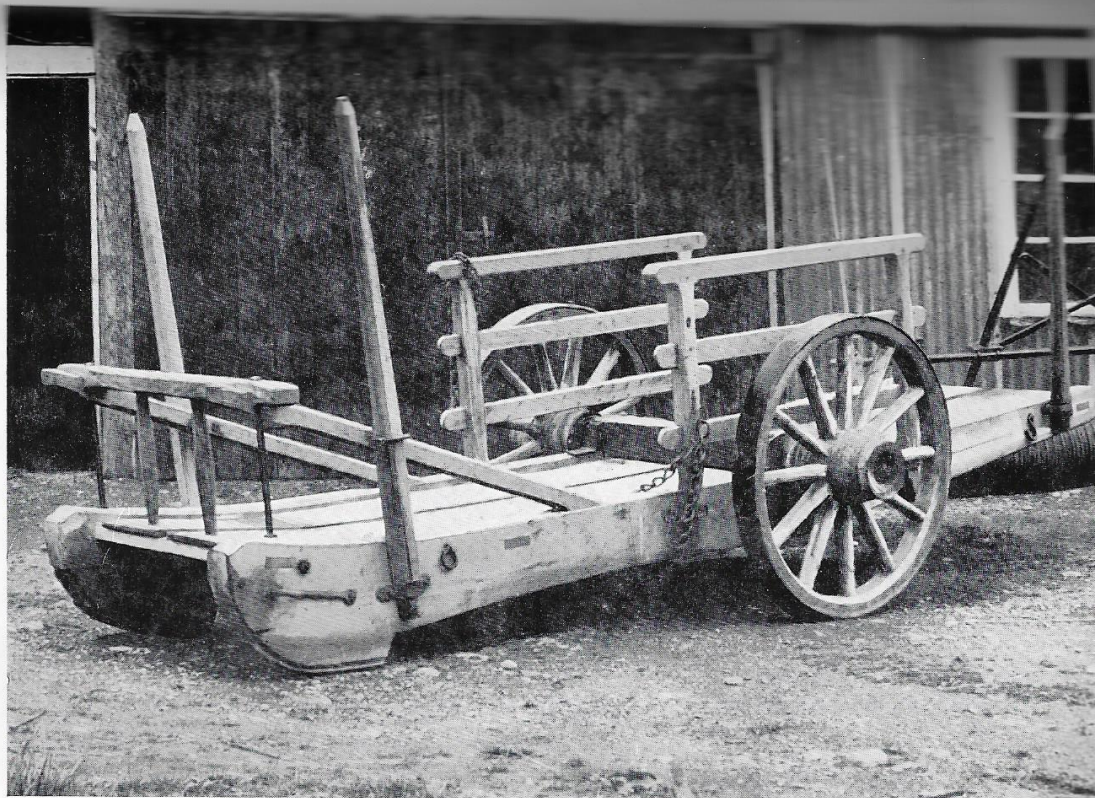
A vet or farrier was needed very rarely: Williams of Pant Draen from Upper Boat, or Treforest would be called in. He was a farmer who must have had training to treat animals too. If cattle were ill or out of sorts with a temperature, they used to be blooded from the end of the tail.

Did you have a personal doctor? Yes: medicines were linseed oil and turps and salts.



Ffig. 9. Car llwyg ar fferm Nant-y-llan, Llanymynech, Sir Powys.

Ffoto: G. H. Peate.



Ffig. 10. Whilcar yng Nghwm Elan, sir Faesyfed.

Ffoto: I. C. Peate.

Trwy ganiatâd Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru