



Winifred Huish in The Limes,  
about 1916

## WINIFRED HUISH, ABERTHIN

Mrs Huish, née Burnage, still lives in the house in Aberthin into which her family moved in 1918. She deals here with Aberthin and Cowbridge from about the end of the First World War, and in a remarkable feat of memory has retraced her steps through Cowbridge - a town she knew well through helping her mother deliver newspapers - in the 1920s.

I moved from Mountain Ash, where I was born in 1912, to Cowbridge when I was a few months old. (My grandparents, my mother's parents, were from Trehyngyll.) After living in the Limes for a few years, my mother, Mrs Burnage, rented a cottage in Aberthin belonging to Llanblethian church in 1918. It had to be re-thatched before our family - mother, two boys, two girls - moved in. This is the cottage in which I live today.

My mother kept three or four cows, some pigs, chickens and geese. We rented land from various farmers, and the cattle also used to graze on the common, and on the verges of the lane going past the house up to the Cardiff road near Cowbridge, when they were being taken to their field. It was my job to make sure the cattle wouldn't get on to the Cardiff road. The cows were kept for milk, cheese and butter. The cheese was made in one of the two rooms of the cottage - we heated the milk to blood heat, put rennet in it, and let it settle in an earthenware pan, with a muslin cloth on top, and with a saucer put on the cloth. We'd skim the whey off the cheese into the saucer. When the cheese was ready, we'd mix it with salt or sage - that was very tasty, the sage cheese. It was a white, creamy, Welsh cheese. We made enough for ourselves, sometimes with enough left over to sell, and we also made butter for customers. The pigs were killed for bacon and pork - I can remember the bacon hanging from the rafters - and

the pork was for home and sometimes for customers in Cowbridge. The calves were reared for veal mostly. Dai Escott, the Cowbridge butcher, would often say 'keep that one for me'; and they would also be taken to markets at Ystradowen (this was a big market, held opposite the White Lion), at Peterston, or at Cowbridge. Tom Thomas of Stallcourt was a big cattle dealer, and he would often buy cattle off the fields, and get drovers to drive them to Stallcourt or to his other fields to finish them off; I can remember that we also sold a lot to Harry Thomas, his son.

We would tend to graze one field, and keep the next for hay for winter feed. When we made a mow of hay, the boys would go down into the Marriage, the marshy land near the river, and cut reeds to make a thatch for the haymow.

As well as the bigger farmers, quite a few people in Aberthin kept one or two cows for their own use. Pant Wilkin, kept by Frank Rose, had fields stretching up towards Welsh St Donats, and Llanquian, kept by Watkins, had a few fields going up to Hatches Lane, the back road to Welsh St Donats. Similarly, John Radcliffe at Sweetings (he had bought the farm from the Yorwerths) had land where Downs View Close and the Spinney is today. The other farmers drove their cows through the village to find grazing. Bill Jones at Paradwys used to bring them to our lane or on to the Cardiff road; the Thomases at Cartref brought them to the Slade or to a field on the top of the common; Miss May Collier of Brynhyfryd, who used to sell milk, brought her animals through the village to fields behind Maes Lloi. The Fredericks at Court Farm used to go up Hatches Lane but also on to the common, while Alice Williams, and later the Bowens, at Aberthin House, drove the cattle through the village to the meadows reached via the Cowbridge road, over the Marriage near the river Thaw. Bill Richards at Penylan, who had land on the Maendy road, used to take his cows as far as Newton Cross, and also along the road to Cowbridge where the school is today.

I remember that on six days a week, Jones Paradwys took his milk to Maendy platform to be sent by rail to the main line at Llantrisant; on Sunday mornings, he'd have to take the milk to Llantrisant as there were no trains on the Cowbridge line. All this stopped, of course, once lorries started collecting the milk, and the churns would be left at the roadside to be collected.

Aberthin House was one of the bigger farms, but for much of the time Alice Williams - previously Alice Lane - rented out her land; we rented



Eastgate, 1908

some of her fields. Early on, Mrs Williams took in lodgers there, such as Mr Roberts from Broadway School, and some masters from the Grammar School. It was then bought by Rees of Penmark for his daughter, who had married Aubrey Bowen. The farmyard was in what is now called The Orchard. Near the stream were cottages which were used as farm buildings, while the orchard proper was near the Hatches lane. When Mr Frederick of Court Farm bought Aberthin House in about 1938, he rented it out, but kept the farmyard and built a hay barn there. When I was very young, the Yorwerths owned River Row and Sweetings. Ted Rue who was farming in Trebettin bought the Row in the 1920s, and lived in one of the five houses; the Fredericks eventually bought those too.

The first people I can remember in Great House were old Mr and Mrs Hughes. Mr Hughes had land in the Perrogs, the sloping land on the Cowbridge side of Stalling Down, and in Cae Mawr and the Maes meadows behind Cae Lloi, but I can't remember him with cattle. He used to keep huge cart horses and farm implements in his barn on the Llanquian road. Then George John, who had been born in the village but had moved away, wanted to return, so he bought the barn and converted it into a

house in about 1920. The Fredericks also bought this after Mr and Mrs John died, in about 1940.

In 1924, my mother bought the farmyard in the middle of the village (next to the Hare and Hounds) at the Owen Williams sale, when the whole Crossways estate was broken up, and we used it as our farmyard after that.

Unusually for the village children, my sister and I (and three others) went to school in Cowbridge, on Broadway, rather than to Maendy. Among my teachers were Mr Frederick (from Court Farm), Miss Doris Miles (Mrs Buchalik), the Misses Kate and Mary Tutton, Miss Dolly Williams and Mr Sloman the headmaster. I left at the age of fourteen, and came home to work. I used to carry water from the pump near the chapel, one of three pumps in the village (the others were on the common opposite Penylan, and on the Llanquian road near Crud yr Awel; there was also a water spout near Brewery Cottage). I also used to deliver newspapers, because my mother had the agency (from 1913 to 1943) for the *Echo* and for all the Sunday papers. I delivered newspapers from the time I was in a Welsh shawl in my mother's arms; and later when I was transported in a push chair, in the pony and trap, and on the crossbar of my brother's bike.

On Sundays, we - mother, me and my brother Jack - would go at about 5.30 or 6.00am, come rain or shine, in our pony and trap to fetch the newspapers from Llantrisant station. Then we delivered them to Rhydhalog Farm, just out of Talygarn, to Ystradowen, Trerhyngyll, Maendy (where we'd leave the papers for Prisk, to be collected), Welsh St Donats, Aberthin and Cowbridge, and then on by pushbike to Llanblethian. I think I knocked every door in Cowbridge - I could never play 'Knock, knock', because everybody recognised my knock.

Mother never had a shop but, after 1943, my brother Jack's wife took over the agency and then started a shop in Cowbridge. That was in the building now used by Thresher's and where Colin Campbell, who had lost a leg in the war, had a greengrocery and teashop and also sold ice cream. The Reynolds family took over the larger shop for a time; their ice cream was out of this world! Later Jack moved to his shop where Nicholas the butcher is today.

Because I delivered newspapers all over Cowbridge, I can remember all the shops and pubs of Cowbridge of my youth. I only went into the pubs to deliver the papers. Starting at the east end, there was the Crown and