

Ystradowen, the train, WW2 & Ash Hall – some further memories of Alf Charles

(as passed to Jeff Alden, but only in part. Alf's reminiscences can be found in 'Cowbridge & District Remembered').

.....via the Ash Hall hill to Llanharry and Llantrisant, with the train guard acting as conductor. This pleased me as I was dropped off much nearer my home than the railway station. I remember that people were surprised that they bothered to substitute the bus in such difficult times.

It was in this hall in January 1941, a brilliant moonlit night, that we had a Sunday School concert. Soon after it started, the Luftwaffe launched a heavy attack on Cardiff. Even at 12 or 13 miles' distance the hall seemed to shake as the bombs fell and anti-aircraft guns responded. I was taking part in a sketch, forgot my lines and the sketch ended in about half its allotted time. As we walked home afterwards, we looked towards Cardiff to see the explosion of bombs and A A shells, with searchlights criss-crossing the sky.

Ash Hall was also the centre for the distribution of gas masks in 1939, and for their upgrading when an extra filter was attached with green tape. It was also the H Q for the village troop of Home Guard.

When my grandfather was still well enough, he would order chicks, a few days old, from breeders in other parts of the country. Mr Lewis the stationmaster would send a message by word of mouth that the chicks had arrived, and my grandfather, my brother and I would go along as soon as possible to collect them – they were twittering away in their cardboard boxes. Grandfather also regularly ordered his seed potatoes from Perth in Scotland, and these also came by train, but it was not quite so urgent to collect them. Another regular trip with my grandfather was to Llanharry limekilns to collect lime for the garden or for decorating the cottage walls.

The Sheep Shearing match was an annual function, organised by Pendoylan and Ystradowen Sheep Shearing Society, and held in the small field near the top of the railway bridge. Competitors came from far and wide, and the day always concluded with a dinner in the church hall attended by the Mayor of Cowbridge and other local dignitaries. The President of the society for many years was the Rev. Gower Williams, Vicar of Pendoylan.

Typed by B Alden in 2017