

### Some Further Memories – by Selwyn Davies

I think I had better start at Cardiff where I was born, and from where I came as a babe in arms and frequently during the years to Cowbridge. Leaving Cardiff on a stopping train, we ran through the delightful lower reaches of the Ely river, through Ely, St Fagans and Peterston-super-Ely to Llantrisant, where we changed from the G.W.R. to the T.V.R. (Taff Vale Railway).

Llantrisant had four platforms, including an island and a bay. There could be four trains there at once – Cardiff/Swansea; Swansea/Cardiff; Llantrisant/Penygraig in the bay; and the Cowbridge train on the left-hand side of the island platform. Alas the station is no longer there, trains running non-stop Cardiff/Bridgend. The Cowbridge train had come from Pontypridd, having crossed the main lines to get to the platform. The train usually consisted of two coaches, with an engine in the middle, with controls at either end of the coaches. In effect, the engine propelled while the driver in the control navigated the train. Five minutes to Llanharry station, which had a station master and also a slip-off into a lime kiln and another to the iron ore works.

Across Ystradowen Moors with a down gradient and a rollicking 40 m.p.h. to Ystradowen station, again with a station master (Bill Lewis, whose son lives in Cowbridge), and a siding for the saw mills. Next Maindy and Trehyngyll Halt – a high-sounding name, but just a plain wooden platform with a corrugated iron shack, as was Aberthin Halt a mile on. Slow up for the staff to be passed to the signalman, and into Cowbridge station, and Stationmaster Williams, whose son Frank is a staunch churchman of ours. Now this was a comparatively new station, built for the extension of the level to Aberthaw. The old station was where Druids Green estate is now, and consisted of a covered platform, several sidings, an engine shed and goods offices. Two or three engines would be depoted here and a medley of trucks, carrying hay, fertilizers, agricultural machinery, livestock and, of course, coal. It was a hive of activity, and one of the outstanding characters there was Dan Punter, father of Gwilym. (I should have said the journey from Cardiff, if there was a good connection at Llantrisant, took 45/50 minutes).

Cowbridge station had the honour of unloading and loading the King's bull, which was being exhibited at Cowbridge Show in the 20s and 30s.

Now if one wanted to get to the Leys or Barry, one caught one of the 4 or 5 through trains from Llantrisant through a cutting, then Beaupre woods, first stop St Hilary Halt, then St Mary Church Road station, Llanbethery Halt and Flemingston Moors, St Athan Road station and eventually Aberthaw Low Level. In passing, I would say that the stations between Llantrisant and Cowbridge were in, or very adjacent to, the place whose name they bore, but the ones between Cowbridge and Aberthaw were quite a distance from the villages involved. At Aberthaw, the train would be pushed into the sidings, while the engine went off back to St Athan Road to do some shunting with lime trucks. The passengers would proceed up a hill, under a bridge carrying the Bridgend/Barry line, and into Aberthaw High Level to entrain for Barry. Before the war, this line carried a very important train known as the Port to Ports express. Starting at Swansea, then Port Talbot,

Bridgend, through Llantwit, Aberthaw, Barry, Barry Docks, Penarth, it arrived at Cardiff whence it travelled over the G.W.R. to Banbury, the old Great Central to Sheffield, Great Northern to York, and the North Eastern to Newcastle, taking, I think, about 10 hours. It was composed of G.W.R. coaches one day and Great Central the next, and had a restaurant car. There was a through coach to Hull.

There were, I think, about 10 trains a day between Cowbridge and Llantrisant, the first leaving here about 7 a.m. and the last arriving here about 11 p.m., known as the Rodney, because if one was not a very respectable character he was known as a Rodney. Can anyone tell me why? The engines later on were usually 0.5.2. tank engines – for the uninitiated, this is translated as the front bogies, six couple driving wheels and two trailing wheels under the small tender or coal bunker. There were about 5 or 6 coaches. As there were no buses then, the trains were well patronised. They were happy, care-free and relaxed days, and I think we are far worse-off by the passing of them. At least the trains did run, whereas frequently these days the buses do not!

Alongside the road from the station to Eastgate St. were allotments and tilled mostly by railwaymen. The Fire and Ambulance stations are there now.

When Cowbridge became a station of some importance, houses were built for the employees in what is now known as Croft St. It used to be called Taff St.

Travellers on the railway after the 1914-18 war – Milton Adams, now churchwarden and organist in Llanblethian, who was an official at Ely station,  
Bill Edwards, father of Bob Edwards, Woodlands Close, bank manager at Tonyrefail,  
Bob Williams, father of Terry Williams of Cowbridge and of Glyn Williams, ex County Librarian, who is in the Inland Revenue at Pontypridd,  
Dr Evan Thomas, M.O.H. and Hon. Physician to the Queen, who was student then at Cardiff University,  
Ralph Williams, son of the Bear Hotel, and brother of Evan Williams who won the Grand National on 'Royal Mail' in 1937 – he was an engineer,  
Bill Davies, a bank official and brother of Mrs Mabel Caines,  
Harold Yorwerth, son of Tom Yorwerth, several times mayor of Cowbridge, who worked at the docks,  
Willie and Leonard Webb, brothers of Miss Annie Webb, the latter's widow being Mrs Gwyneth Webb – both students in chemistry,  
Glyn Davies who lived in Llanblethian – he was the right-hand man to Joe Hall, a hay merchant in Cardiff.  
There must have been others, and if I have failed to mention them, I crave pardon as my memory is not what it was.

N.B. This article was written by Selwyn Davies, then of 'Preswlfaf', Westgate, Cowbridge, in the 1970s for the parish magazine.

It was typed in September 2013 on to the computer by Betty Alden for the local history archive.