

Down Memory Lane

(Written for the parish magazine in 1977 by Dora P Sheryn, nee Hosking)

This is a short story about my limited association with Cowbridge.

I was born at Barry in 1901, but my mother and family were all born at St Nicholas (her maiden name was Griffiths). During my childhood, she used to tell my sister and me about her life as a child and about going to the Church School. I do not know if this is a true fact, but one of my memories was that she described how they all went to Cowbridge Market Days, and that the street was a mile long and had 52 public houses there. It was the market place for many miles around, so hence the need for these drinking houses. During my youth it sounded dreadful, as signing the pledge and avoiding strong drink was a necessary adjunct in those days to a satisfactory moral living.

Then during 1921 I completed my Teachers' training Course at Barry, and was sent to Cowbridge Infants' School for the final month of that school year. Miss Rees was the head of the department, and Mr Slocombe (Sloman) was the headmaster. It was the first time for me to be away from home, and I stayed at a house near to the river in Cowbridge (this was before the course of the river was diverted to its present location). The number of the house escapes me, but I know it is still standing and the family who housed me was named Musto. I had to buy my own food, and one fact remains with me to this day. I fancied a tomato and was surprised that it cost four old pence. Otherwise I have no memory of the cost of living at that time but I know that the tomato was an expensive 'fancy'. As my stay was short, leisure time was limited, and all my energy after school was concentrated on preparation for next day's lessons and a walk up and down the High Street. The village was very quiet but I do remember passing by the Bear, and many of the other inns which my mother had mentioned in those childhood tales.

The railway station, and trains going to Pontyclun, was then another interest. The old Post Office, now used for sorting, was then adjacent to the station for convenience of mail despatch. There was however only a limited train service, and the means of transport to and from Barry was not easy. I overcame this by travelling in a sidecar attached to a motor cycle which was driven by a Mr Williams of the Co-op Stores (then situated near to the present Post Office) and his manager Mr Somerfield. The motor cycle combination was also their means of a delivery service. On our journeys, we used to pass Sycamore Cross, and this reminds me that my grandfather, Sam Griffiths, who works for the Mackintosh estate, planted the trees which are there to this day.

With all the changes it is hard to remember the 'old village', but my son, who is the sub-postmaster, will now have many more memories to add to our family story about this historical and memorable town of Cowbridge.

(typed by Betty Alden, September 2013)