

Hubert Thomas

I was born in Llanblethian Farm in 1916. I remember my mother saying that Mrs Hancock from Llysworney had acted as midwife. She had attended my mother when my sister was born, so my father got the pony and trap out to go to Llysworney to get Mrs Hancock. The Carnes of Nash Manor owned both Llanblethian Farm and Great House, opposite. My sister Vera had indifferent health, and so the Carnes promised my parents that they could have Great House, which was drier and a better building, when Mr Durston the butcher ended his lease. Two memories of living in Great House - pushing my brother Alan in the pram into the river, accidentally of course, and being operated on by a surgeon and nurse from Cardiff, in my father's bedroom, when they removed a TB gland in my neck. I was home from school (the Junior school on Broadway) for three months after that. I also remember my first day at school - being driven there in the horse and trap by my father and Dai Cox, who had Broadway farm, and then Miss Rees the infants' school headmistress welcoming me with a toy giraffe - I went in quite eagerly, like a lamb to the slaughter.

We moved to Penyrheol Farm in Llysworney in 1925. This was my mother's family home; she too was a Thomas. Three of the sons of the farm had gone out to the United States after the Civil War - William, a reporter on the *Glamorgan Gazette* (and whose letters home are now in the Glamorgan Record Office), Thomas who later farmed West farm in Wick, and David who was the most successful in America. David came back to farm Stallcourt in Llanblethian, and was murdered for his money on Llanblethian Hill in 1886.

When we were at Llysworney, and after I had started at the Grammar School, I had to have another operation, this time on my chest. This was on the advice of Dr Dai (Evans, father of Blair Evans of Llancarfan). The operation was carried out in the Cottage Hospital in Bridgend, and this time I had to spend two terms at home, recuperating. I had fallen so far behind in school that it was decided I should leave, and my father got me to spend the next year on the farm. These were hard times on the farm, and farming was at a low ebb - I remember taking a dray full of lambs to Llantwit Major market one week, and we were only offered 27/6d for them. "Take them home", my father said - only to find that the next week the price had fallen to 25/-.

In 1933, I started as a junior clerk in the Health department of the Council Offices in Eastgate. This building had been converted from Pickard's grocers shop in 1924. I started a correspondence course - and was helped in my maths by Mr McAdam from the Grammar School, a lovely man. On passing this, I went on to a Public Health course in Cardiff, for which I was given a half-day off a week. When I went up to London for the exams, I stayed with the nephew of Nurse Rawnsley, the health visitor who worked with us; she was firm, but very kind. The results were posted on the board at the offices of the Royal Sanitary Institution, and my cousin Kate who lived in London sent me a telegram to say that I had passed. I was so excited that I gave the telegraph boy 2/6, a princely sum in those days!

When my father died in 1938, my mother continued ^{at the farm} for a short time after his death, and then my sister and her husband took over the farm. We still lived in Llysworney; though there was a cricket field behind the council houses, and a soccer team too, I didn't play much sport, except for tennis on the court of the old Llysworney school teacher. I'd go to the cinema in Cowbridge, but more often Alan and I would walk to Pentre Meyrick to catch the bus to Bridgend, where we'd go to the cinema, have a pint, and finish the evening with fish and chips.

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When the war started, and there was danger of air raids, Mrs Carne offered my mother and my sisters (but not Alan and me) the chance to share the cellar in Nash Manor. I recall the nearest bomb to fall very clearly. The air raid warning had sounded, and Alan and I were alone in the house. We looked out and saw a parachute coming down slowly - and then realised that there was a bomb attached to it. It fell in the copse before Sheepleys Close, on the Llantwit road near to the Manor. It caused some damage to the pigeon house in Nash Manor grounds. The next day we went to inspect the damage, and found some of the nylon ropes which had been used to attach the parachute. I cut some off and for some years used the piece to tie up my dressing gown.

I also remember seeing the glare in the sky when incendiary bombs were dropped on Aberthin Road in Cowbridge.

Whereas Alan was in the Home Guard, and then in the RAF, I had been classified as grade III, unfit for service, because I'd had TB. We had several people billeted on us - Nurse Rawnsley was the billeting officer. The first evacuees came by train to Cardiff, then by bus to Cowbridge. They were taken to the cinema and sorted out there; we had a mother and her children, but they did not stay in the area long. Afterwards RAF officers were billeted on mother - that's where I learned to play three-handed bridge.

Pat and I got married in 1943. Arthur Gwyn, the Town Clerk, divided his mother's house next to the Council Offices into two, so that we could live there and keep an eye on his mother. I was conveniently close to my work. *One of my duties in the 2nd was carrying the reports of air raid damage & this was more interesting than many old think.*

I worked for 41 years with Cowbridge RDC. I have fond memories of many of the councillors and of my colleagues. Richard Morgan, chairman of the Council, farmed in St Hilary; other farmers were Richards of Brigam, and Llewellyn Jenkins. The latter, who enjoyed a pint, would frequently go to The Bear after meetings. He kept his old dilapidated van in the Brewery yard, and as a JP could always get the services of the policeman to push-start the van, no matter how many pints he had drunk! Joe David from Llanharan, also later to be Chairman of the Council, was a very kind man; he would always look after Jack Jenkins, a coalminer from Llanharan, when they went on conferences. The council was always short of money - the only way that Dai Jones, the rate collector, could get any floor covering for his room was to claim that the money was falling through cracks in the floor - and then the ^{linoleum} provided only covered the area under the table. I can remember another rate and rent collector ^{hiding} in the stationery cupboard when a certain young lady called in to see him!