

Joyce Tonkin's reminiscences

22.04.01

I was born on 8th July 1907 at the blacksmith's house in Pendoylan. My mother, Alice, had been in service at Penllyne Castle and then in Radyr. My father, John Sanders, was apprenticed to the blacksmith in St Nicholas, and my parents were married in Radyr Church. My grandfather managed the Vale of Glamorgan brewery which stood opposite the Duke of Wellington in Cowbridge. I was the eldest of four children, all girls - Joyce, Zena, Cynthia and Monica. Both Cynthia and Monica died before they reached the age of five and are buried in Cowbridge churchyard.

When I was 6 months old, we moved to Cowbridge, and lived in a house opposite the Police Station in Westgate, near the nonconformist chapel. We then moved to Town Mill and my father's smithy was in Eagle Lane, next to the old lodging house, where he concentrated on shoeing horses. On a few occasions he attended the Smithfield Show as a blacksmith, where he was highly commended. He also kept the hooves trimmed of the Hereford bulls which were shown by the better-off farmers.

I remember the outbreak of the First World War, when the Glamorgan Yeomanry mustered on Stalling Down. Cowbridge was the gathering point for horses for the army before they were sent to France. The horses were kept in the Market. My mother had seven soldiers of the Yeomanry billeted on her at a time during the war, each for a period of three months, before they were sent to France with the horses. I remember one Irishman, a Regimental Sergeant-Major, who was billeted with mother for some time, who made great use of the 22 public houses in Cowbridge at that time.

I went to school on Broadway, Cowbridge. I remember Mr Sloman and Mr Harvey, who was a strict disciplinarian. There was also Mr Phillips, who married Miss Baden, who taught Science at the Girls' High School. I then went to the High School, where Mrs Forrester was the headteacher and Miss Gunter taught History and Geography.. She live opposite what became the cinema in Eastgate.

I left school at 16 and went to Clarks College in Cardiff for a year. I caught the 7.45am train from Cowbridge, and on some occasions on the journey home I had to walk from Pontyclun because the train would not wait for the connection.

I then went to work at the Cowbridge Garage, in the office, for Mr Arthur Mills, who came from Cardiff and sold bikes as well as cars. He was the main Ford dealer, and became Mayor of Cowbridge four times. he had two children - Freda, four years older than me, and Clifford, who was younger. They kept two maids in their house over the garage; I used to stay to look after the house when the family went to their Porthcawl house for the summer. Mr Mills then built and opened the Pavilion Cinema in September 1927, and I worked in the box office there. Mr Mills wanted to open on Show Night (the Vale Show) but the work could not be finished in time. The first film shown in the cinema was "This House of Vanity" and the films always played to crowded houses. The first films were of course silent, with a pianist, but talkies were introduced when the cinema was sold to Phillips of Pontyclun. The Hunt Ball was always held in the ballroom of the cinema.

I married in 1932, and went to live in Gloucester, and then Leicester. I worked in the cash office of a munitions factory there during the war. I came back to Cowbridge at the end of the war because my mother needed help in the cafe she ran on the Downs this was a little wooden hut, next door to the Road House (today's Mughal Emperor). Mother did teas and cakes, and there was a tent at the back where the washing up was done. We then built the cafe across the road (now known as Norman's Cafe) and built Richmond House in 1957. The cafe was originally a cart shed, and the cafe was known as the Richmond Cafe.

Before the war my only surviving sister, Zena, married Ivor Treharne, a corn and agricultural merchant, and they lived in Town Mill Road. Town Mill Road then was tree-lined with large gardens, and I remember my uncle Reg had an apiary there, near to the

Joyce Tonkin's reminiscences

22.04.01

Mill. Tom John lived in the Verlands House, and he had a brewery in Pentre in the Rhondda. There was a large garden there in which Becky Jenkins' father worked. The Johns had two Daimlers; he kept a chauffeur for his wife, who would often be taken into the Dorothy cafe in Cardiff for half a dozen cakes. They had one son, Maurice, who had married one of the Thomases from Stafford House; every Monday morning Mrs John would stand by the gate of their drive waiting for a letter from her son.

Stan Treharne, the milkman, was Ivor Treharne's brother. He came from Penylan, and his wife's mother lived in the brewery house of the Vale of Glamorgan Inn, where my grandmother also used to live, and where I spent much time as a child. The bottling shop was where Dai John's clothing shop now is; the bottles of lemonade were sealed with glass marbles. The brewery was at the back - through the double doors at the side of the 'Vale'; the house was where the pub is today.

In Church Street, next door to 'Granny' Jenkins, lived John John, known to everyone as 'Johnny Glassy'. He was a diminutive man, but a jaunty character who frequented all the meets. He had a little white beard, used a thumb-stick, and always wore a bowler hat and breeches.

At the end of the war, Dr Moynan of Woodstock House, opposite the Masons Arms, rolled a barrel of beer to the Town Hall. This was in November 1918. He was another man who always wore breeches.

I too remember Ma Haig, coming into Cowbridge from Llanblethian. She always came in a donkey and cart. She liked a drink or two, and always went into the Railway Inn (now Basil's). The donkey always knew his way home!! Sometimes however, when Ma was in the pub, the boys would untie the donkey and put him in the cart backwards.

We didn't have much to amuse ourselves when I was growing up, apart from visiting friends. In the summer we might catch a train to the Leys for a day out at the seaside.

*In the
March Fair, a parade of stallions took place at 2pm, from
the Masons Arms to the Duke of Wellington. There was also a
fair & a market, & rambles for the children.*