

## **Reminiscences of Cowbridge in the 50s from Tim Edwards, Woodlands Close, Cowbridge and Melbourne, Australia – March 2012**

His mother is Lynda Edwards, now 94 yrs, who was prominent in Cowbridge Dramatic Society.

Tim, born in the 1940s, grew up in the town and attended Bontfaen primary school but did not pass for the Grammar School. Like several others of his age, he went to Monkton House, Cardiff for private secondary education, travelling into Cardiff daily on the bus. He served in the army and emigrated to Melbourne, Australia in the 1960s (but is staying at his former home off Westgate in 4 Woodlands Close to settle his mother into Southway residential care). His brother Peter also emigrated to Melbourne in the 1960s, and the boys had hoped their parents would go to live there as well, but they chose to remain in Cowbridge.

Woodlands House, on Westgate, was built between 1923 and 1929, and the row of semis behind (Woodlands Close) about 1938. Mr and Mrs Whone lived at the house, owned the land behind, and had the houses in the close built for their children, but they all went their separate ways. The builder was Robert Thomas and son (Gethin). The manhole covers on the footpath at the side of no.4 have his name on them. Tim's house was no. 1. His parents had the first choice of the houses to rent, and later took up the opportunity to buy. They lived there from the day of their wedding in 1937 (just 12 months in Porthcawl first).

Tim's godmother close by, at 'The Nook' on Westgate, on the site where Anne Williams lives now in Ty Gwyn – The Nook was built about 1924, and another house there, 'Wayside' (also gone) was built the same time.

Butts area – on the corner of the field strip where the old toilet block stands was a sand pit for the town's youngsters. Great play area. Outline of the plot in one of the photos he will try to send us. Line of oak trees going towards former Verlands House from there.

Butts cottages, row of 3. Coxes lived in middle one. Around Westgate, round the corner from there, in the row of tiny cottages lived Albert Morgan (church organist) with son Murray and daughter Diane; Walter Carswell (mace bearer in latter years with one of the Bonds, but worked as a plate layer on the railway - daughter Winnie; Mrs Cruse; Jack Bishop – worked at Cowbridge railway station.

In Stafford House was Dr Miller, who had his surgery in the front room (Dr Naysmith took over the practice, and had his surgery in his home in Eastgate). Dr Miller was active in the Dramatic Society. For the annual carnival, the society hired a truck from RT (Rob) Thomas – Old Woman in the Shoe, one year, Pirate Ship another. Held in Bear Field where the grandstand stood.

Large house before Stafford House was lived in by 2 'funny' men, didn't know their names. Wore black coats.

The house after Stafford House used to flood.

In Preswylfa was Selwyn Davies (before him Miss John who always sat in the window).

Tim's grandfather was in West House – William David Edwards. Before he had grown up in Eastgate, the 3 storey house on the south side where Morgan the butcher's was. He had been schooled at the Eagle academy, famed for its copper-plate writing. He died in 1953. After him, Dr Owen Thomas (partner to Dr Naysmith) lived in West House, with his wife Betty.

Next to West House lived Miss Tom, who ran a private school there. Tim's mother Linda assisted there. Children were taught by Miss Tom for the scholarship exam (like Tim Edwards). She married someone from Picketston and moved away. Next door was a piece of land which Eddie John bought (now modern house set back from the road).

In the bungalow on the east corner of Broadshoard and Westgate (now a row of town houses), lived Mervyn Evans and wife Dorothy (son John) – he played cricket, formed a Sunday morning drinking club (Ducal Drinkers - photo of them in museum), met in the Duke. Just behind the post box on the wall on that corner was the war time EWS (emergency water supply). Where the Red Cross hut stands was a cadet hut, built during or just before the war, for ? 2<sup>nd</sup> Welsh regiment.

In David Pierce's old house, opposite Old Hall, there was a dame school.

In the cottage off High St, bordering the lane running past the former garden centre, lived Sol Newman, then his son Peter who died recently, and now Peter's widow.

Up on Broadway, Cowbridge end, was Tom Bessant, market gardener (now Brookfield Park estate), and across the road in Broadway Villas (2 adjoining houses built by brothers) lived Barbara Davies (nee Bowen) who ran a small riding school behind them (now called The Stables). It was sold to Welsh Water.

Mog Davies lived in one of the council houses – son Haydn went up to Cambridge and became a rugby blue (I remember him there). His other son Keith lived opposite the Red Lion in Bonvilston. Mrs Cox, 2 Broadway, was a 'real character', 'like a gypsy, rough as old boots'. Had bantams. Brought up her grandson Dougie Cox.

Barbara and Tim recalled the horse Argo, ridden by Kay Meller's eldest sister Margaret from John O' Groats to Lands End – she kept her horses behind the Horse and Groom.

Recollections of the hunt – Mrs Evelyn Homfray from Penlline Castle was a fine horsewoman, rode side-saddle. The hounds were kept up at the castle until the war when it was requisitioned (possibly used by American troops/convoys who were very evident in the town around the time of the Normandy landings – camped out for example on

Newton moors). Llandough Castle was used as a convalescent home in the war (for people with sexual diseases).

There was otter hunting in the Thaw (not known whether any caught), and hare hunting with basset hounds.

Vic and Ken Westcott lived in Picadilly, Llanblethian. Big and tall. The Westcott family ran the Tuck Shop on the corner of Church St and High St. (No 50 High St) Shop at front and café behind. Another tuck shop was run by Molly Williams, wife of Trevor (who was a shoe salesman in Caerphilly and commuted there daily). They lived in the tiny house next to Coopers Lane. Their one son Paul was dressed as the Queen, sitting on Margaret Meller's racing pony, one carnival or festival day. Next door was HF Parker, accountant, whose son went to Monkton House.

Where Oscar's is was Mr Yorwerth's office – all brown, couldn't see inside. He was a solicitor and became the mayor.

John Davis's father used to run the brewery in the town.

Swimming baths – the sheds were still there after the war and Tim recalled swimming there, very cold. Philip Gibbs, big lad, jumped in; also Raymond Punter who lived in a council house on Broadway.

In the police station was Sgt and Mrs Rees. He died young. They had a daughter Cynthia who became Mrs Thomas, mother to Pat John (Dai John's wife). Mrs Rees remarried Mr Yorwerth and they lived at Thorn Villa, Westgate. (?or was that Sgt Rees before he died).

Next to Caxton House lived Ann Aubrey – her dad was in the RAF during the war.

Diana Thomas, whose father drove the council steamroller (he was very small and it was very large) became Diana Bird, marrying Roger Bird. Roger's younger brother, Rodney Bird, married Mary Raymond, sister of John Raymond transport.

Jim Ball, in charge of roadside maintenance around the area to the south of the A48, including Llantrithyd (where he is buried) cycled around. Lived at 26 High St (Nicholas the butchers now) – used to find Barbara a pony to ride every year. Had son Don Ball who joined the police and became a constable in Pontypridd.

The late Pat John (Dai John's wife), daughter of Cynthia Thomas, lived in Llwynhelig House. Had at least one brother (Lindsay). There was a well-used footpath from Llwnhelig across to Newton, but was lost when the bypass was built (begun 1963, finished early 1966).

By the 'Market Place' (Masons Arms) was a weighing scale and a little office building (to do with the sheep market). It had a stone-built urinal attached for market traders, the automatic flush going off all the time – entrance in the Butts.

The double-decker Rhondda bus left every hour for Talbot Green, Pontyclun and Llantrisant (still running in 1963). It parked at the back of the Town Hall.

Mrs Milton Adams was in Westgate (one of a pair of houses on the south side). Her husband was organist in Llanblethian church. Lyn Adams (?son) was the signalman on the railway. In the primary school on Broadway, during the war, were Miss Coghill, Miss Aubrey, Miss Knapton, Miss Miles (Mrs Buchalik) who taught Welsh, Marian Adams for a while, Mr Frederick who lived in the white house on the road to Aberthin, Mr Roberts taught the non-scholarship class, and Miss Thomas the scholarship class – she was very strict and gave homework every night. She lived by the entrance to the railway station.

Croft Terrace belonged to Taff Vale railway.

Professor Bernard Knight's mother kept the shop (general store) on Broadway (Mr Cox's old farmhouse) in the 1950s. Her husband was organist in Llantwit Major. Bernard Knight became the chief crime pathologist for Britain. He lived at Picton House, next to Llanblethian church and wrote crime novels under the name of Bernard Picton.

The town mill in Townmill Rd. became a storage depot, having ceased as a mill, and was used to store all sorts from the garage on the bridge, which burned down at one point.

Billy David the butcher lived above his Eastgate shop, as did Mr Oakley in High St, but Bob Morgan the butcher lived in Glan yr Afan.

One-eyed Katie John (Dai John's grandmother) used to stand in the ironmonger's doorway in her overall – everyone was terrified of her. Dai's elder brother Arthur died young. Katie married the original Arthur John, mother to Tom.

Where Tenovus is was Vospers garage with a restaurant upstairs, and people lodged there from the army during the war. Where the delicatessen came was Mr Campbell's shop and cafe (he was from Scotland) and had the best ice cream in the town – but not always available. Mrs Tilley was the first to bring ice cream back after the war, in her Milk Bar (where the High St fish and chip shop stands) – 'one a day, dear', she'd say. It was the first shop to have neon lighting. There were stairs inside, and you'd be served ice cream in little silver things, with unusual flat spoons with a raised edge. There were queues a mile long when ice cream started back. Westcotts by the post box on the corner of Church St also had ice cream, and sweets. Burnage's little newsagents shop was next to where Davies the newsagents is today. Mrs Tilley also owned the large shop where Spar now stands. Had 2 funny old ladies serving. Stocked fabric, dresses, material – very mean on giving samples.

Nanette, where Quills was, stocked knitting wool and she was a hairdresser too. Before it had been Goldie's shop. Same entrance as the shop on the right of it (Thomas and Evans). Then was Arthur Jones's garage (fire engine place in war time). When Yorwerth packed up, Goldie moved across the road to that premises – toyshop. She became mayor about

1951 (Florence Goulden, with her niece Diana Thomas /Bird as mayoress. She married Bill Hinton). About this time the train service ended. Not much fight to keep it going.

The river was diverted twice – flowing underground with a right-angled turn under the road initially, then eventually straightened possibly late 50s/early 60s.

Two humped bridges at the bridge by Town Mill – one for the mill leat. Llanblethian mill still working by the Stones in the war time. Jack Sanders lived in one of Town Mill cottages. There was a walled garden opposite in Town Mill Rd. Reg Sanders kept bee hives there.

Mr Hewish from Aberthin delivered the milk to the primary school in a funny old van. Always called at Cowbridge Council school.

The British restaurant was held where the bookies came (now dress shop, 91 Eastgate) – early part of war. 2/- for a meal. Had bentwood chairs. You walked in at the front and went downstairs, but when the school had gone (the infants) you'd go upstairs. Go left, turn, glass window looking over the river and see trout, then double-backed and up to top floor. Cooking area right down at the back. Lovely smell of hops from the brewery opposite. Cows often there in the river. Went for school dinners to the grammar school after the war. Junket, tapioca, sago, macaroni, semolina. Mr Roberts, woodwork teacher, rather nasty. Insisted on everything being eaten up (stumps of cabbage, horse meat, whalemeat sausages – testing out food in war).

Got your milk in an open jug outside your back door. Deliveries from Ken Rose of Pant Wilkin farm, Mr England, Mr Goldsworthy of Mount Pleasant farm.

*Interviewed & typed by B Alden*