

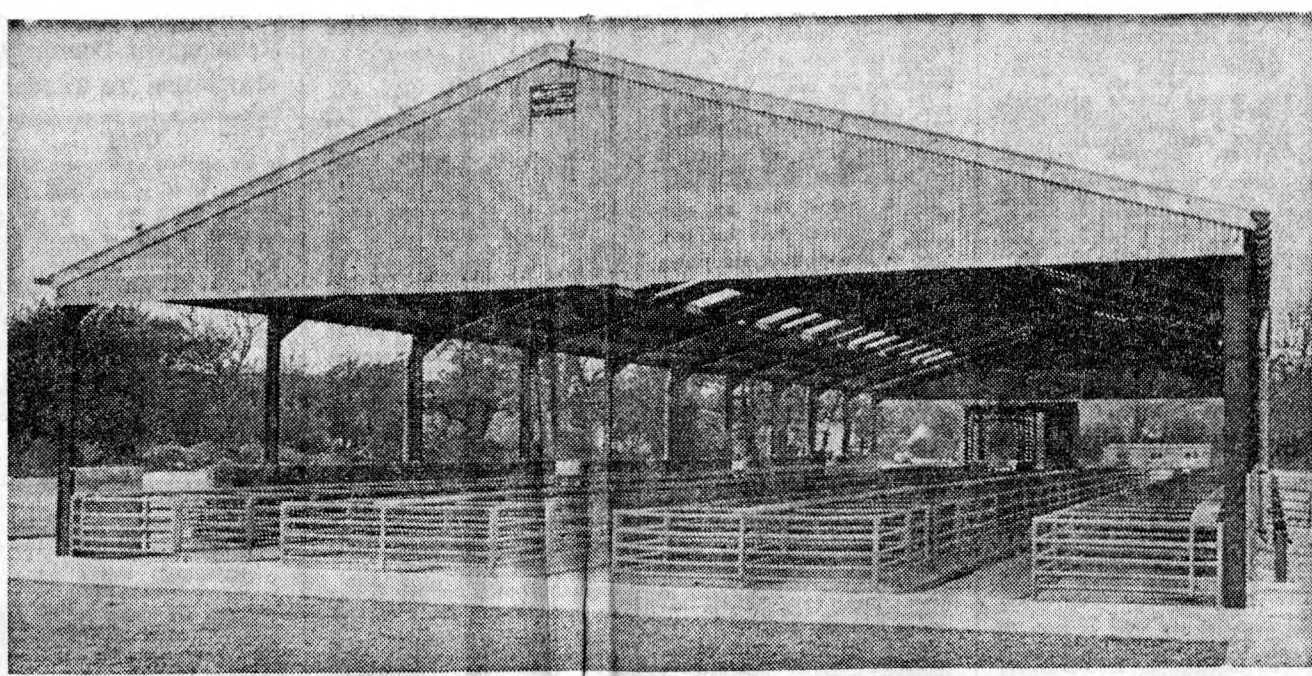
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● The new sheep market at Cowbridge. It will open on Monday.

**New sheep mart for
go-ahead Cowbridge**

By Malcolm
Rees

THE ancient borough of
Cowbridge — a town
steeped in history—has in
recent years shown its
willingness to accept
change and present a more
modern face to the world.

One of the best-known
institutions in the borough is
the market, which dates back
hundreds of years. But even
here Cowbridge has continually
developed and improved
facilities.

The latest innovation is an
up-to-date covered sheep
market with accommodation
for 1,300 sheep in the 150
pens. Included in the
development, which will be
formally opened next Monday,
are the latest unloading
facilities and more than
adequate car parking space.

The new market stands
near the cattle market, which
was rebuilt in 1958 and later
covered. Together they are a
tribute to the modern
approach of the local council



and the auctioneers who run
the market.
The oldest records
preserved in the town show
that a market had been
established in 1630 but it is
more than likely that the
event existed long before this
date. Indeed, Cowbridge
itself probably dates back
more than 900 years. The
Normans founded a settle-
ment in 1091 but there was
probably a settlement even
earlier.

A survey conducted in 1630
showed that two major annual
fairs were held in June and
September, with market days
every Tuesday and Saturday.
Traders were charged with pen-
ing a day for pitching their stalls
and displaying their wares.

Stalls were erected in the
streets and fairs were gene-
rally considered a nuisance by
the local residents, who were
expected to clean the refuse
which always remained.
In 1886, with the granting
of a charter, a cattle and
sheep market was built at the
Butts adjoining the old town
wall. At this time four well-
patronised stock and pleasa-
nt fairs were held annually in
the town. During these fairs
many horses and other
animals changed hands.

Mr. Robert Thomas, one
of the auctioneers at
Cowbridge Market, busy
at the last sale in the old
sheep market there.

after that was covered in. The
sheep market was also con-
sidered out-of-date but it was
not until 1968 that new con-
struction began.
The market has been
designed for quick, easy
handling of stock and a large
area has been prepared for
the parking of cars and
lorries.

The new market should see
the end of long traffic jams
in the town, which occurred
every market day, as farmers
had to queue to get their
animals in.
Cowbridge Market is the
major outlet for the prime
stock produced in the fertile
Vale of Glamorgan and the
vastly improved facilities
which now exist should stimulate
interest in the weekly
event.

A magnet

Covered accommodation
should prove attractive to
buyers from a wide area who
appreciate the best facilities.
The market will be opened
by the Mayor of Cowbridge,
Councillor Jack Roberts.
Among those present at the
opening will be Alderman
Edward John (chairman of the
market committee) whose
grandfather, the late Alder-
man Edward John, played a
prominent part in the rebuild-
ing of the old market in 1889.
Auctioneers who will con-
duct the business of the
market are Messrs. Herbert
R. Thomas, Son and Edward
Thomas at the turn of the
century.

Mr. Herbert Thomas has
been selling fat stock for more
than 50 years, holding his first
sale at the age of 17.
One of the founders of
Messrs. John David, Watts
and Morgan, the late David
Watts, served the borough as
mayor and was made a free-
man.

Team effort

Main contractor for the
sheep market was Robert
Thomas (Cowbridge) Ltd.
Pens were supplied by Messrs.
Gush and Dent, of Llandybie,
the scales by Messrs. E. and
A. Ashworth, of Newport, and
the building by D. H. Smith of
Leominster, Shropshire.

With the construction of
Cowbridge bypass traffic has
a much easier time in the
town and cars are even able
to park in the main street.

Shopping is now much
easier and, with the building
developments in the area,
there is also a greater demand
for goods of every description.

Local traders have responded
to this stimulus and have
themselves provided good
facilities in the town, making
Cowbridge a good shopping
centre as well as a busy
market town.

Peep shows

Fairs were held in March,
May, June and September.
May Fair was mainly con-
cerned with horses and cattle
but was also used for the
hiring of farm workers, male
and female.

It was the custom to employ
workers on a yearly agree-
ment and it was during this
fair the agreements were
reached.

The other three fairs were
concerned mainly with sheep
and lambs and as with the
May event attracted
dealers from as far afield as
London and Bristol, as well
as many other parts of the
country. To cater for visitors
new inns were established in
Cowbridge.

It was customary for busi-
ness to end by 2 p.m. and
entertainment begin. Street
acrobats and tumblers were
always popular attractions and
occasionally the fairs were
visited by Italian organ
grinders with monkeys and
performing bears.
There were sideshows sell-
ing almost everything, special
peep shows, hand-driven
roundabouts and colourful
parades adding to what were
considered the highlights of
the year in the small market
town.

Queues ended

In the early days of the
animal markets trading
usually was privately carried
on, farmers dealing directly
with the butchers. At the turn
of the century some stock was
sold by auction but this was
not common.

Before the First World War
the market began to fall away
and stock from Cowbridge and
district went to Llantwit
Major.

During the war all stock
was graded and business
began to increase.

After decontrol auction sales
began with the sales con-
ducted by Messrs. John David,
Watts and Morgan, Mr. T. J.
Yorwerth and Mr. Herbert R.
Thomas.

There was fluctuation in
the market during the years
after the war but from 1926
there were regular markets.

With the Second World
War stock was once again
graded and sold direct to the
ministry and this continued
until decontrol in 1954.

The cattle market was
rebuilt in 1958 and shortly

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