



When all roads led to Cowbridge...

COWBRIDGE, as an ancient walled town, always had a traffic problem. Its thick, protective walls, built to protect the worthy burgesses from the marauding Welsh from the hills, were pierced by either two or four gates.

The Eastgate and the Westgate spanned one of the busiest main roads in the kingdom, a road which carried much of the commerce and travellers between London and Ireland.

While the shortest all land route from the capital to Fishguard and other West Wales ports was the road through Gloucester and Brecon, many travellers preferred to travel as far as Bristol and then take a ship for the short passage to Cardiff and then on through Cowbridge to the West.

DOUBT

There is some doubt about the existence of the Northgate, for if it existed it could only have led out on to the meadows on that side of the town.

The Southgate led to St. Quantain's Castle, which dominated the walled borough and it is the Southgate arch which now is the only one of the gates which remain.

The Northgate might never have existed. The East and West gates were demolished in order to allow the larger stage coaches and other large vehicles to pass through the town once the walls served no further purpose.

EXPENSE

The Southgate arch survives along with a section of the town walls.

Its survival was not due to any wish on the part of the ancient and very realistic burgesses to preserve it, but simply because in those days there was no need to go to the expense of knocking it down.

Probably the truth of the matter is that the road to the south had lost its importance, for the castle was in ruins and the only thing of interest to the borough on the south side of the town was the town mill.

HAZARD

Today, however, things are different. The arch is as serious a traffic hazard as the old arches which spanned the main road in the days when they were removed.

The grammar school, which once nestled comfortable on the town side

of the wall, has become enlarged and much of it is now on the south side of the arch.

There has been considerable housing development to the south of the town in the past decade or so and the county council has built a home for senior citizens in the same area.

So today there is a continuous stream of traffic passing through the town arch. Each schoolday, hundreds of pupils of the grammar school have to pass to and fro through the arch on their way to lessons in various parts of the school.

DANGER

The combination is a dangerous one, Cowbridge Borough Council were reminded on Tuesday when Coun. N. E. Williams, whose home is close to the arch, referred to the constant danger and the almost suicidal antics of motorists who use it.

After describing how cars, instead of slowing down to negotiate the narrow arch, accelerated to try and beat the car coming towards them on the other side of the arch, braking only at the last moment.

After he had said that pedestrians, including the

schoolboys, were constantly in danger from cars which drove through the arch at far too fast a speed, Coun. Williams exclaimed: "There is bound to be an almighty crash there before very long."

The problem before the council was what to do to protect the pedestrians. It cannot take the action which their hard-hearted predecessors in office would have done, and removed it, because now it is protected as an ancient monument.

COUNTY

It was decided to try, once again, to have a pedestrian way cut through the town wall on the east side of the arch, through what is now part of the grammar school storeheds.

On a previous occasion this suggestion was turned down by the county council who, as owners of the grammar school and as highway authority, will have to deal with the matter.

Now, however, the borough council hope that, in view of the increased traffic hazard, the county council will go ahead and provide this safe way for pedestrians, many of whom are pupils at the grammar school.