

Information from Gordon Wesley on archive material

No 1. is William "Will" Hawkins, my mother's uncle (my maternal grand uncle) who was caretaker at the Old Hall. Whether he was also responsible for the main building I don't know. No 2 is his obituary in, I assume, a local or regional newspaper. I stumbled on the obituary on line just as it is but cannot find it again! There is no date given. However, I have information from Will Hawkins' death certificate which shows he died on 18 September 1950, aged 65, at Old Hall.

Dates :

Most of the images are probably a little earlier than I had thought.

If, as the obituary states, he left Tonyrefail for Cowbridge in 1932, that would coincide with the Grammar School moving into Old Hall that year. Maybe that is when he took up the post? That would, anyway, date the images to 1932 at the earliest. He was from a Tonyrefail mining family. My mother left Tonyrefail for London at the age of 14/15 i.e. 1934/35 and that is about the age she appears (we guess) in the photos. Whether they all left Tonyrefail for London together, I don't know. All the rest of the family appear in London in the 1939 register.

All the other photos are of family members, with or without Uncle Will.

Judging by the clothes the pictures were taken on at least 2 occasions. Whether they were on a day visit, i.e. Tonyrefail to Cowbridge and back, or later from London on a staying visit I don't know. But we reckon they were taken 1932 –35.

No 5 has Aunt Jane sitting on the right.

My own memories of being there are rather limited, I'm afraid. I remember Uncle Will and Aunt Jane's parlour being below ground level and seeing the wheels of military vehicles along the High St., of which I recall the Bear Hotel, the Town Hall and a shop that had toys in the window. I can remember going round the Hall with Uncle Will and going into at least one dark classroom. Of the grounds I particularly remember in the wall, somewhere on the right, a doorway or gate which led through a tunnel directly into the cattle market. I guess to a small boy the wall was so thick it seemed like a tunnel! Visits to Llantwit Major and walking through a field of cattle. I think we must have been there a few times at least. I remember feeling happy there.

Most of these have been of the sunken garden (it seems like it was the place to have your photo taken and why not?)