

# Parents attack plan to change schools

Western Mail Reporter

A PETITION with nearly 2,000 signatures will be sent to the Welsh Office soon by parents who are angry at plans to recognise schools in the Cowbridge area.

Glamorgan's education committee has proposed a new comprehensive school at Llantwit Major, which would be used by Cowbridge pupils. The existing Cowbridge Boys' Grammar and Girls' High School would merge to form a bilingual comprehensive school for the Mid-Glamorgan area.

The petition opposes the five-mile move to Llantwit Major and urges the retention of the two Cowbridge schools in the comprehensive pattern.

"People are really angry and raving mad about the committee's proposal," Mrs. Betty Williams, of Cowbridge, the organiser of the petition, said last night.

"We want to keep our own schools and as the committee is committed to the comprehensive pattern of secondary education, we want the two schools to become comprehensive schools in our area.

"We are not in any way hitting at the bilingual school proposed by the education committee, but we want to keep our own schools.

"There has been a fantastic

## 2,000 people may sign petition

amount of support for the petition. It has so far been signed by about 1,600 people and the total is expected to reach nearly 2,000 by the end of this week. People feel very strongly on this matter and have asked me for petition forms. I do not think it is realised how strongly we feel."

The petition, pressing for the retention of the two schools in the comprehensive pattern to which the county education committee is committed, suggests that the existing buildings of the grammar and high schools should be improved and extended as needed for the purpose.

Welsh St. Donats Parish Council have also sent a letter to Mr. Raymond Gower, M.P. for Barry, telling him of the "great dissatisfaction" felt over the education committee's reorganisation proposals.

"If they are to become a bilingual school as proposed, they would accommodate only Welsh-speaking pupils and it is felt this would mean that other children will have to travel longer distances to attend other schools," said the council clerk, Mr. C. L. Wright.

● A decision to axe 17 rural schools in Cardiganshire brought

an immediate and angry reaction from parents last night.

The county education committee decided at a meeting at Aberaeron yesterday to close the schools in a move to streamline primary education in Cardiganshire.

The condemned schools are: Trefeurig, Eglwysfach, Brynherbert, Mynach, Bwlchynan, Garthell, Betws Bledrws, Llanybi, Sllan, Tan-y-Garreg, Codafail, Swyddffynnon, Ferwig, Trefilan, Pennant, Cilcennin and Penuwch.

● Several leading Welsh educationists will support a proposal to form a national society to protect rural schools at a special meeting being held at the Royal National Eisteddfod at Ammanford on Thursday.

The meeting is being arranged by the parents of pupils at Bryn croes Junior School, Caernarvonshire, which they reopened as an independent school after its official closure.

The secretary of the parents' action committee, Mr. Harri Williams, said yesterday, "We are organising a public meeting at the eisteddfod immediately after the churning ceremony.

"Several leading Welsh educationists are supporting us and we will speak on a proposal to form a national society for the protection of rural schools.

"On the eisteddfod field we plan to distribute 3,000 copies of the statement we sent recently to Caernarvonshire Education Committee setting out the case for retaining our school at Bryn croes."

## POSTBAG

# Cowbridge school's future

It gives me no pleasure to dispute publicly with my friend Mr. J. G. Edwards, the South-East Glamorgan divisional education executive officer, but there are some comments I feel I must make.

To the county council, the extinction of Cowbridge Grammar Schools is a matter of no consequence. To the community of Cowbridge, of which the school has been an integral part for over three and a half centuries and to those of us whose working lives have been spent here, the question is not to be so airily brushed aside.

The general tenor of Mr. Edwards's remarks suggests that the opposition here is to comprehensive education in itself. This is not so. It is to the way in which this type of education is being introduced. It is strongly urged that any reorganisation in this area should start from the principle that the existing grammar and high schools be the nucleus for the "area comprehensive," as is the case with every other grammar school in Glamorgan.

It is also true, however, that the majority of people here, if they had ever been consulted, would have agreed that the present system as it exists, is more satisfactory, and less in need of urgent change, than is the case in most areas where grammar and modern schools co-exist separately. There has long been a harmonious policy of co-operation, especially in the matter of transfers for post-11-plus "late developers"; while the grammar school offers candidates for "A" Level in no fewer than 18 subjects, a remarkable total for a school of its size. Little will be gained by haste here, while much may be lost.

IOLO DAVIES.  
The Grammar School,  
Cowbridge.

# Education chief proposes surprise plan for the Vale

A NEW scheme for the reorganisation of senior education in the Vale of Glamorgan has been put forward by the Director of Education for the county, Mr. Brynmor Jones.

The scheme reverses the previous county decision to concentrate all senior comprehensive education at Llantwit Major and now proposes that instead of one large comprehensive school at Llantwit Major, there should be two smaller schools one at Llantwit Major and the other at Cowbridge.

The previous proposals would have meant the end of the centuries old Cowbridge Grammar School and Cowbridge Girls' High School whose buildings would then have been taken over to provide a bi-lingual comprehensive school where education would be by means of the Welsh language.

## FIGHT

Ever since the news of the proposed closure of the schools in Cowbridge, the local residents have fought to have Cowbridge preserved as a centre of senior education where local children could receive their education instead of having to travel to Llantwit Major.

The Director of Education's letter to Mr. J. G. Edwards, the South East Glamorgan Divisional Education Officer, obviously surprised members of the divisional education executive when they met in Cardiff. No discussion took place on the letter and it was referred to a sub-committee for detailed consideration.

County Ald. P. J. Smith, chairman of the education executive, who lives in Llantwit Major, told members that he felt that the scheme was absolutely shocking.

In his letter the director outlined the previous proposals that

1. Llantwit Major Secondary School should be enlarged to provide a 10 form entry comprehensive school to serve the catchment areas of all the primary schools south of the A48.
2. The closure of the Cowbridge schools and the use of the buildings for the new bi-lingual comprehensive schools; and
3. To use the present Llanharry Secondary School as the lower part of a comprehensive school, the senior pupils going to an upper comprehensive school to be established at Y Pant.

## HINGE

Mr. Jones pointed out that all the plans hinged on the county being able to obtain monies to extend Y Pant so that it could become a comprehensive school, otherwise there would be no grammar school to which Llanharry pupils could go once the Cowbridge schools were closed.

No allocation had been made for extensions at Y Pant so, for this reason alone, it was necessary to reconsider the position.

Mr. Jones referred to the strong representations put forward by Cowbridge Borough and Rural District councils objecting to the use of the buildings in Cowbridge for a bi-lingual school. These authorities claimed that there would be sufficient population in and around Cowbridge north and south of the A48 to justify a separate comprehensive school at Cowbridge.

## CHANGES

Circumstances had changed since the original schemes had been put forward.

While the county planning officer did not accept the population-figures put forward by the councils he tended to the view that in the next 10 to 15 years the population of the area would grow sufficiently to sustain two seven form entry comprehensive schools in the Cowbridge Llantwit Major area.

"The Administration and Development sub-committee have had to ask themselves whether they should take a step now which would commit them now to a very large school at Llantwit Major, which might make it impossible because of size alone, to justify a second school or whether, if any alternative is apparent now, which would make it possible to establish two schools, in the long term this alternative should be taken," the letter stated.

After referring to the fact that the Welsh Education Office has asked the county education authority to establish a four form entry comprehensive school in the Ogmere Valley, a far smaller comprehensive school than those previously considered, Mr. Jones' letter put forward the revised proposals.

## SCHOLARS

These are to provide a seven form entry comprehensive school at Llantwit Major catering for a full five-year course catering for scholars up to 18 years.

The establishment of a comprehensive school at Cowbridge using the existing buildings. At first this would be only a little above a four form entry but would, undoubtedly, continue to grow.

Mr. Jones said that in view of the development in the area he felt confident that the planning officer's forecast that two schools of about seven form entry each would be justified.

It was proposed to establish the bi-lingual comprehensive school at the present Llanharry Secondary School. Mr. Jones suggested that

pressure be brought on the Welsh Education Officer to allow the allocation of funds reserved in the 1971/72 design programme to build Y Pant into a 11-18 years comprehensive school, so that all children in the catchment area of Llanharry Secondary School could attend Y Pant at 11 years rather than to have a break in their education after three years.

## BOARDING

Dealing with the problem of boarding, Cowbridge Grammar School is the only school in the county which has boarding accommodation, Mr. Jones stated that the sub-committee felt that the retention of boarding was incompatible with the authority's policy of comprehensive education.

After the letter had been read, County Ald. Smith said that he had strong reservations about some of the proposals, which completely reversed the previous policy for the area. The proposals had come forward because of the representations of the two Cowbridge authorities.

## SHOCKED

He suggested that it should be referred to the staffing and development sub-committee where it could be discussed in a calm atmosphere.

He went on to say: "I am shocked that any responsible educationalist should say that you can develop a comprehensive school at only four form entry level. To me it cannot be done. It is absolutely shocking."

One of the leaders in the fight to retain secondary education in Cowbridge, Mrs. Betty Williams, commented: "If, as appears to be the case, certain individuals on the education executive committee wish to prevent the latest recommendations from being implemented then obviously the people of Cowbridge and district will want to know who they are and what possible reasons they have for being so prejudiced that they cannot now accept what the electors want and what has been recommended."

The Mayor of Cowbridge, Coun. Mrs. Mary Hall, welcomed the proposals stating that in her opinion, common sense had prevailed.

"It seems the sensible thing to do in view of the ever increasing transport costs and the difficulties experienced in getting tenders to convey the children to and from schools. We in Cowbridge want a balanced community and a community without schools is a community without a heart," Mrs. Hall stated.

# Vale needs two senior schools, says executive

A RECOMMENDATION that there should be two senior comprehensive schools in the Vale of Glamorgan has been made to the county education committee.

It came from the South East Glamorgan Divisional Education Executive which accepted a report from its staffing and development sub-committee.

Originally it had been decided to have one large senior comprehensive school at Llantwit Major and that all the pupils from the Cowbridge area would be conveyed to it.

When comprehensive education came in it would mean the end of the Cowbridge Grammar and High Schools, whose buildings would be taken over by a bi-lingual senior comprehensive school, where teaching would be in Welsh.

## NO SUPPORT

The residents of Cowbridge and district did not accept the idea that there was no need for a senior comprehensive school in Cowbridge and produced facts and figures which, they claimed, supported the case for two schools — one at Cowbridge and the other at Llantwit Major.

The Director of Education came out in support of the Cowbridge residents' contention, but his views were not supported by several members of the divisional education executive, including its chairman, County Ald. P. J. Smith.

The executive instructed the staffing and development sub-committee to investigate the matter in detail and bring back firm recommendations.

At the monthly meeting, the report was presented

and accepted without comment.

But after the report had been received, County Coun. J. A. David, Llanharan, and Coun. T. C. Lewis, Llanharry, said that they did not agree with some of the report's recommendations which concerned the future of Llanharry Secondary School.

## BI-LINGUAL

The report recommended that a comprehensive school should be established at Llantwit Major, sufficiently large to provide for the needs of all secondary pupils from the Llantwit Major and St. Athan area and that the authority should dispose of the buildings of the present Cowbridge Grammar School.

When the need for an additional comprehensive school arose, it should be organised in the present Cowbridge High School for Girls, with extensions, as and when required.

It also said that the Llanharry Secondary School building should be used as the nucleus of a bi-lingual comprehensive school, with the proviso that the children from the present catchment area whose parents do not want them to attend the bi-lingual school, be permitted to send them to the Cowbridge-based comprehensive school.

It was also recommended that the education authority be asked to include Pendoylan in the catchment area of the proposed Cowbridge Comprehensive School rather than in the catchment area of the new Radyr Comprehensive School.

## ENGLISH

The motion that the report be adopted was proposed by the chairman of the execu-

tive, who also chaired the sub-committee, and was seconded by County Coun. Mrs. P. M. Y. Winn-Jones.

County Coun. David and Coun. Lewis then attempted to raise the point that children from Llanharry should be allowed to attend the Llanharry Bi-lingual Comprehensive School, if established, and be taught in English.

The chairman ruled that as the report had been accepted there could be no further discussion on it.

While the executive has made its proposals to the county education committee, this might not be the end of the battle.

Just as the Cowbridge residents got together to fight the proposal that one large school should be established in Llantwit Major when the proposals were announced, so the people in the south are now fighting back.

## PETITION

Many people believe that the larger the comprehensive school, the better range of education can be given to the children who attend it.

In this they are supported by many leading educationists, including the heads of senior schools.

A petition, bearing over 3,500 signatures of residents in the parishes of Llantwit Major, St. Athan, Gileston, Llanmaes, Llandow, Flem-

ington and others, has been sent to the secretary of state for education and science with a copy to the director of education for the county.

The petition views with alarm the latest proposals to reverse the decision on the catchment area of the new school published in 1965 which would have established the school at Llantwit Major.

The petition expressed concern that the limiting of the size of the school at Llantwit Major would mean that many children from these parishes would be conveyed to Cowbridge and be denied the education that a larger school could offer.

## SUPPORTERS

It was the view of the petitioners that a four-form entry comprehensive school, as was proposed at Cowbridge, could not possibly provide a complete educational structure for pupils

in the 11 to 18 age range, many of whom would hope to attain A-level standard.

They then appealed for the establishment of an 8-10 form entry school at Llantwit Major.

The first shots in the counter battle have been fired, but it is doubtful if they will be the last.

There are many arguments in favour of both the one and two school factions and both have powerful supporters where support counts.

Before the final decision is made there will be a considerable discussion on all the points made by both sides, for there is no doubt that each of the proposals has a great deal of merit.

● WHAT are your views on comprehensive education in the Vale? Write to us at the Welsh Harp Building, Pontypridd. Letters should arrive by first post on Monday.

## NO THREAT OF ANTHRAX SPREADING

ANTHRAX caused the deaths of seven cows on a farm at Gwaelodygarth, Taffs Well, but a Ministry of Agriculture official said that there is no risk of a spread of the disease.

Mr. H. N. Kennedy, the

Ministry's divisional veterinary officer for Glamorgan, said that the cows had died over a short period and were all cremated at Ynysgau Farm as soon as possible.

# Vale schools promise by Welsh Office

**OBJECTIONS TO** a suggested reorganisation of schools in the Cowbridge area will receive the fullest consideration by the Secretary of State for Education, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, parents have been told by the Welsh Office.

But a senior Glamorgan education official today said a decision had not yet been made by the county and consultations were still going on with governors of schools in the area.

If the present suggestions are approved, the buildings of the Cowbridge Boys' Grammar School and Cowbridge Girls' High School would be used to form a new bilingual school to serve the Mid-Glamorgan area.

## Petition

This has brought opposition from parents, and a petition calling for the schools to be kept as local schools in the comprehensive pattern.

Mr. J. G. Edwards, divisional education officer for South-East Glamorgan, said the proposal would make only two changes in the proposals for "going comprehensive" already decided: The area would go comprehensive some 10 years earlier than previously anticipated, and a use had been found for the buildings of the two schools.

The Welsh Office statement, in a letter to Mrs. Betty Williams, of Cowbridge, added: "There is no possibility of Cowbridge being presented with a *fait accompli*."

In a letter to Mr. Peter Thomas, Secretary of State for Wales, Mrs. Williams said parents were angry at the education committee's "high-handed" action.

Major and Llanharri for their views on the development of comprehensive education in the area.

"It was decided there should be a comprehensive school at Llantwit Major, that Llanharri should go with Pencoed or Y Pant, and that the two Cowbridge schools be closed. There was no decision on what to do with these schools."

The governing bodies considered the need for boarding arrangements, and it was decided these should be at Llantwit Major. The Llantwit Major school was enlarged to cater for a seven-form entry and had now reached 600 pupils, he said.

Cowbridge parents were aware of the position and

officials had talked to parents' associations in the proposals, he said. The next development was that Welsh provision in the county became overcrowded and the education committee considered there was a need for a third Welsh secondary school.

It was considered unlikely that the money would be available to build a new Welsh secondary school in the middle of the county. "It was, therefore, decided that since the principle of comprehensive education in the area was accepted by everyone, we should consider asking for £250,000 to £300,000 to make Llantwit Major completely comprehensive," said Mr. Edwards.

The Cowbridge schools would then close as planned and the buildings could be used for the third Welsh school.

"This is, therefore, only a suggestion the education committee have in mind," said Mr. Edwards. "They have asked the divisional executive to consider it, and we have asked the governors for their views."

Some parents believed the county wanted to close the schools in order to have a Welsh school, but what was being suggested was bringing comprehensive education earlier than had been anticipated, he said.

"The principle of comprehensive education in the Vale is well known—it's no something that has been sprung on people," he added

## The cost

The committee's proposals, made with little regard for the high cost of school transport, would mean taking children out of Cowbridge to school and bringing others in from areas stretching from Cardiff to Port Talbot, she said.

The petition, bearing 2,500 signatures, would be submitted to Mr. Thomas as soon as the education committee published statutory notices of the proposals, she said.

Mr. J. G. Edwards said the county had publicised proposals for going comprehensive six years ago. Documents setting out the plans for their area had been given to children to take home, there had been governors' meetings, and everyone knew what was going on, he said.

There were some complications in the Cowbridge area with the two schools, which were old foundations, originally each serving the whole county area.

## Diminished

By 1964, the area had diminished, and Cowbridge town had not expanded, while there was expansion in the St. Athan and Llantwit Major districts. "In fact, we now convey two-thirds of the Cowbridge school children from the south," he said.

"This being the situation, we asked the governors at Cowbridge and at Llantwit

## Opposition mounts to schools reshuffle

MORE THAN 2,000 people have now signed a petition to the Welsh Office opposing plans to reorganise secondary education in the Cowbridge area—and more signatures are still being collected.

It presses for the retention of Cowbridge Boys' Grammar and Girls' High Schools as secondary schools for the area in the future comprehensive pattern.

Many local parents are upset by Glamorgan Education Committee proposals which would mean Cowbridge pupils attending a comprehensive school five miles away at Llantwit Major.

Another of the committees proposals is to use the Cowbridge grammar and high schools jointly to form a bilingual secondary school for the Mid-Glamorgan area.

## TUES. 18 MARCH '71 Revised plan for schools shocks alderman

A NEW plan for Vale of Glamorgan comprehensive schools was described as "absolutely shocking" by an education committee chairman in Cardiff yesterday.

The fresh proposals now being considered by a county education sub-committee were a complete reversal of the previous policy for the area, said the chairman of South-East Glamorgan Education Executive Committee, Alderman Percy Smith.

"I am shocked that any responsible educationists should say you can develop a comprehensive school at only four-form entry level," he said. "To me it cannot be done. It is absolutely shocking."

Under the new plan a small comprehensive school would be set up at Cowbridge boys' and girls' grammar schools—using the boys' school as the lower tier—in addition to a previously proposed Llantwit Major comprehensive school.

A bilingual comprehensive school at Llanharry Secondary School is also proposed.

Mrs. Betty Williams, of Cowbridge, organiser of a petition calling for the retention of the two Cowbridge schools, said last night, "If, as appears to be the case, certain individuals on the education executive committee wish to prevent the latest recommendations from being implemented then obviously the people of Cowbridge and district will want to know who they are and what possible reasons they have for being so prejudiced that they cannot now accept what the electors want and what has been recommended."

## Cowbridge 'raving mad' over school plan

MORE than 1,600 people have signed a petition opposing plans to reorganise schools in the Cowbridge area.

The petition which will be sent to the Welsh Office opposes Glamorgan Education Committee's proposal to site a new comprehensive school at Llantwit Major which would be used by Cowbridge pupils. The existing Cowbridge Boys' Grammar School and Girls' High School would merge to form a bilingual comprehensive school for the Mid-Glamorgan area.

The five-mile move to Llantwit Major is opposed in the petition which urges the retention of the two Cowbridge schools in the comprehensive pattern.

### Letter to M.P.

Mrs. Betty Williams, of Cowbridge, the organiser of the petition, said: "People are really angry and raving made about the committee's proposal. We want to keep our own schools and as the committee is committed to the comprehensive pattern of education we want the two schools to become comprehensive in our area."

"We are not in any way hitting at the bilingual school proposed by the education committee, but we want to keep our own schools."

The petition, she added, had already been signed by 1,600 people and the total is expected to reach nearly 2,000 by the end of the week.

The petition suggests that the grammar and high school buildings should be improved and extended as needed for the comprehensive purpose.

Welsh St. Donats Parish Council has sent a letter to Mr. Raymond Gower, M.P. for Barry, informing him of the "great dissatisfaction" felt over the proposed reorganisation.

# Education chiefs to inspect schools

10/4/71

Western Mail Reporter

EDUCATION CHIEFS who have still not decided how to develop a comprehensive schools system for the Vale of Glamorgan will inspect the two existing grammar schools at Cowbridge.

The inspection will be made by representatives of the South-East Glamorgan education executive committee whose chairman is critical of the new reorganisation plan for comprehensive education.

Committee members adjourned their private talks on the new plan after a 90-minute meeting in Cardiff on Thursday, with governors representing schools in the area.

The committee chairman, Alderman Percy Smith, has criticised a proposal to set up a small comprehensive school of only a little over four-form entry at Cowbridge boys' grammar school and girls' high school.

He said after the meeting, "After visiting the two schools we hope to come to some conclusions on the plan

which will be reported to the full education executive committee.

"I am in dispute over the small size of this proposed comprehensive school on the grounds that you cannot make adequate academic provision at only four-form entry level but I am giving other committee members and governors the chance to express their opinion."

Under the new plan, a small comprehensive school would be set up at the two Cowbridge grammar schools in addition to a previously proposed Llantwit Major comprehensive school. A bilingual comprehensive school at Llanharry Secondary School is also planned.

A petition calling for the retention of the two Cowbridge schools was signed by 2,500 residents in the Cowbridge area after the original Vale of Glamorgan plan appeared.

Under this plan one proposed 10-form entry comprehensive school at Llantwit Major would serve both the Llantwit Major and Cowbridge areas, and the Cowbridge grammar schools would be used as a bilingual comprehensive school for the Mid-Glamorgan area.

## Ministry holds up school changes

Western Mail Reporter

THE DEPARTMENT of Education and Science will delay financial approval of a Vale of Glamorgan secondary school scheme which has brought strong local objections.

A £291,652 extension of Llantwit Major secondary school to provide a 10-form entry comprehensive school with sixth-form accommodation and £50,000 additions and adaptations to Cowbridge grammar and high schools will not be included in the approved building programme to be started during 1972-73.

The department say they are reserving a financial allocation for these proposals until the position becomes clearer.

The county education committee's plans are to provide comprehensive education for the Cowbridge area at Llantwit Major and to use the Cowbridge grammar and high schools jointly as a bilingual secondary school. But their estimates of future population figures, on which these plans are partly based, are disputed by the Cowbridge Borough and Rural Councils.

### Petition

More than 2,500 residents in the Cowbridge district have signed a petition objecting to the committee's plans and calling for the retention of the Cowbridge grammar and high schools within the comprehensive pattern.

The organiser, Mrs. Betty Williams, is waiting to present the petition to the Secretary of State for Wales, Mr. Peter Thomas, as soon as the necessary statutory notices of the committee's proposals are published. She said last night, "I am very pleased to hear of the department's decision. It may be a hopeful sign."

● Talks with representatives of Glamorgan Education Committee on arrangements to be made for the raising of the school-leaving age were held at the Welsh Office in Cardiff, yesterday.

Thurs. June 17th. 1971

## New school plans approved

PLANS TO build a comprehensive school at Llantwit Major which would be big enough to include the St. Athan area were approved last night by the South-East Glamorgan Education executive committee.

The committee also decided that a new comprehensive school should be set up — when needed — at Cowbridge Girls' High School.

Cowbridge Boys' Grammar School, one of the oldest in South Wales, should be closed and Llanharry Secondary School should be the nucleus of a bilingual comprehensive school, the committee said.

Mr. J. A. David and Mr. T. C. Lewis, both governors of Llanharry Secondary School, said that they would only support the bilingual school if it admitted English-speaking pupils, as well as Welsh-speaking children, from Mid-Glamorgan and the Vale.

# New ideas soon on schools shake-up?

A REPORT on the future comprehensive education system for the Vale of Glamorgan may be made next week after a series of private talks that began in April.

Representatives of the South-East Glamorgan Education Executive Committee again met in private at the County Hall, Cardiff, yesterday.

The committee chairman, Alderman Percy Smith, said later that recommendations on two alternative proposals were expected to be received at the next meeting of the full committee.

Alderman Smith has criticised the revised plan suggested by the county education authority on the grounds that a proposed comprehensive school for Cowbridge would be too small.

Under the original plan, which led to a protest petition signed by more than 2,500 people, a comprehensive school would be established at Llantwit Major and the two Cowbridge grammar schools would become a bilingual secondary school for Mid-Glamorgan.

The petitioners want the two Cowbridge grammar schools retained as comprehensive schools as proposed in the revised plan, which also provides for a Llantwit Major comprehensive school.



THE SCHOOL—founded in 1608.

## Herbert Williams looks at the controversy surrounding Glamorgan's oldest school

SO many old grammar schools have been swallowed up into the comprehensive system that the fate of another seems, perhaps, of little importance.

But the decisions surrounding the future—or non-future—of Cowbridge Grammar School have so infuriated the staff that it's worth paying them special attention.

Founded in 1608, this is the oldest grammar school in Glamorgan, and one of the oldest in Wales. It is also one of the best.

The inevitability of educational change is accepted—albeit reluctantly in some circles—but there's a strong feeling that Cowbridge, for some reason, has come in for special adverse treatment.

Other grammar schools in Glamorgan have been used as the nucleus for the comprehensives which have replaced them. Not Cowbridge.

### 'Injustice'

The comprehensive for the area is to be based at Llantwit Major, and the buildings vacated by Cowbridge Grammar and Cowbridge High School for Girls will accommodate a new bilingual school.

This, says Mr. Iolo Davies, senior resident master at Cowbridge Grammar School, is a "conspicuous and severe injustice."

He thinks it wrong that these two grammar schools should be the only ones in the county not to become the nucleus of a comprehensive.

The headmaster, Mr. J. Idwal Rees—a one-time Welsh rugby international who has been headmaster for 32 years—agrees.

In his study overlooking the school's secluded lawns, he sat at his desk near the portrait of one of the school's founders and told me:

# Are they playing fair with Cowbridge Grammar?

What will be lost by a move to Llantwit? "Tradition," he replied. "Whatever they say, it affects everything. It affects academic standards. It affects tone."

"And tradition is closely linked up with atmosphere and buildings. It can't easily be transplanted."

### Theories

"To worship tradition, I think, is wrong. But the success of our education system in Britain is that we haven't discarded the best of our old traditions."

"Here there's a danger that those traditions will be scrapped altogether. I think that's a mistake."

"I'm fed up with the way education is being messed about by politicians and psychologists. Those psychologists! They come out with a new theory every few months. We are inundated with White Papers and Green Papers and goodness knows what."

"The trouble is that these fanciful theories come from people who have never done a day's teaching in their lives."

The present set-up in Cowbridge was expected to survive into the 1980's, and the idea of a bilingual school in which Welsh will be a medium of instruction came as a complete surprise.

"It came right out of the blue," said Mr. Rees.

"I read about it in the Press. In fact, I still haven't been told officially."

There are 480 boys in the school, 110 of whom are sixth formers—a high proportion. Fifty of the pupils are boarders, and Mr. Iolo Davies, who has taught classics there for 23 years, is angry with the decision to discontinue boarding when the comprehensive is set up.

"The impression was definitely given that the boarding element would be preserved, and the children taken to Llantwit by bus," he said.

### Growth

Boarding, he claims, is becoming not less important in our increasingly egalitarian society but more important, because people move around more and many of them like their children to have a settled education.

He says this is particu-

larly important in the Cowbridge area because St. Athan airmen posted elsewhere often choose to let their children remain at the school as boarders.

Mr. Idwal Rees, the head, said: "Some people think that boarding isn't compatible with comprehensive education, but this isn't so. There are comprehensive boarding schools in London and Coventry."

A number of reasons have been given for siting the comprehensive at Llantwit Major. One of them is that this is the natural "growth point" in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Iolo Davies, however, says this was based on an estimate of population trends made five years ago. Subsequent developments, such as the transfer of the Royal Mint to Llantrisant and the prospect of a new town north of Cowbridge, "may well have made this

estimate obsolete already" he said.

Anyway, he adds, by selecting Cowbridge as the site of the bilingual school the county authority "have, underlined what has always been true—that Cowbridge is the natural focal point of the Vale and the place where the neighbourhood comprehensive ought to be."

### Space

When I spoke to Mr. John Brace, assistant director of education for Glamorgan, however, he didn't mention the "growth point" thesis.

"The reason we are basing the comprehensive at Llantwit Major is that there's a brand-new school there, Llanilltud Fawr Secondary," he said. "Cowbridge has very old buildings and there just isn't the space. This is going to be a large, 10-form entry school."

"If comprehensive education is to be thrust on the pupils of Glamorgan, I think it only right that the principle laid down in the authority's original document on this subject should be applied in Cowbridge—that where a grammar school exists, it should be the nucleus of a comprehensive school for the locality."

"I don't see why Cowbridge should be singled out as an exception."





THE HEADMASTER: Mr. J. Idwal Rees.

# rammar?

He made no secret of the fact that Cowbridge schools would have been left alone some years longer if the idea of a third bilingual secondary school for the county hadn't come up.

Mr. Brace said they needed a third school on the basis of the growth of numbers in the bilingual primary schools.

By basing the school in Cowbridge, they could then justify bringing forward their comprehensive plans for the area because obviously the "displaced" pupils from the local grammar schools have to be taught somewhere.

So this game of musical chairs means the end of an ancient school with a fine record of scholastic success. Its only crime is that it doesn't fit in with modern theories of education.

## Suspicion

Some parents, like Mr. David Beech, a Cowbridge haulage contractor, think the educationists are "gambling with the children's lives."

"The scheme may not be a success," he said, "but the children don't get a

second chance. And what gets me is that these things take place without us having any say in it whatever."

He also thought the schools would be a great loss to Cowbridge as "they are very much a part of community life" — a point made by other local people.

This argument may not carry much weight in County Hall. But Coun. Ken George, a member of Cowbridge Borough Council, is pushing an alternative scheme.

He thinks the growth of population in the Vale would justify two seven-stream comprehensives in five years — one at Llantwit Major and the other at Cowbridge.

Whatever happens, there is a strong suspicion at Cowbridge that the school has come in for adverse treatment simply because it is an old foundation steeped in tradition.

Inverted snobbery, in fact. The suspicion may be unfounded, but one thing is absolutely certain. There is an impatience with "tradition" at County Hall and an eagerness to sweep away the old order as quickly as possible. Will the new be as good as it's cracked up to be?