

ROADS AND RAILWAYS.

The mail coach from London to Milford had ceased to run about the year 1850. The proprietor of the Bear Hotel, John Thomas, afterwards a prominent auctioneer, provided post-horses and carriages for hire, but there was comparatively little need, for most people were accustomed to walk great distances to suit their purposes. Artisans often walked five or six miles to their daily work. The main roads were at various distances intercepted with turnpike gates of a large size, quite five feet in height at each entrance to the town, and at points on the main roads. Charges were made for horses, donkeys, cattle, etc., passing through. These charges were really rent for the use of the road to meet expenses of repairs. The gates were generally kept by elderly people residing at the gate-cottage adjoining, who were often slow of action. It was very trying at night-time, especially when snow was on the ground, or during heavy rain, to wait for the response of the call. These gates were abolished in the year 1880.

The roads were repaired where required every winter by layers of local rough stone, quarried by the roadside, or adjacent land, and broken up to the size of a goose egg by elderly men with hammers. The stones were worked into the road surface by the heavy traffic of the day, and when worn down would become very muddy in wet weather, and very dusty when dry, thus causing clouds of dust to arise, and until the arrival of the steamroller, watercarts were used to spray water to lay the dust. The mail coaches ceased to run before my day, but I heard from ostlers, named Dick Rees (who never wore a hat), and "John the Black Horse" (a son of the innkeeper), which is the inn now known as the Duke of Wellington, that the coach was drawn by four horses, changed at stages about every twelve miles; at the Five Bells, near Cardiff, the Castle, Cowbridge, Pyle Inn, and so on. The horses used to gallop (except, I presume, on the hills) the whole distance between each stage. It was represented to me that on one occasion they started off from Pyle before the driver had mounted, and did not halt until they drew up in the ordinary way on the pitching in front of the Bear Hotel, Cowbridge.

At that time there was not a direct road to Bridgend. The main road westward was the old Roman road through Corntown, then an industrious pottery village, presumably passing near Ewenny Priory, and I assume that there was a ford instead of a bridge over the Ewenny River. I assume that the road from Brocastle was not completed when the coaches were running, for I have seen references to it in plans as the "new road," and in my early days it appeared to be a new road. The "Golden Mile" was then an open common.

I have a faint recollection of the cutting of the first sod of the Cowbridge Railway to Pontyclun by Dr. Carne, of Dimlands, afterwards St. Donats Castle, who led a procession through the town dressed as a navvy with a shovel on his shoulder. There was great enthusiasm locally, and many tradespeople ventured to invest £50 in shares, and lost the greater part of the investment, for the company worked the line at a loss. I do not remember the date of opening, probably about the year 1860, with two small power locomotives and two small coaches, which one engine failed, on

16/5/1930
bridge, Pyle Inn, and so on. The horses used to gallop (except, I presume, on the hills) the whole distance between each stage. It was represented to me that on one occasion they started off from Pyle before the driver had mounted, and did not halt until they drew up in the ordinary way on the pitching in front of the Bear Hotel, Cowbridge.

At that time there was not a direct road to Bridgend. The main road westward was the old Roman road through Corntown, then an industrious pottery village, presumably passing near Ewenny Priory, and I assume that there was a ford instead of a bridge over the Ewenny River. I assume that the road from Brocastle was not completed when the coaches were running, for I have seen references to it in plans as the "new road," and in my early days it appeared to be a new road. The "Golden Mile" was then an open common.

I have a faint recollection of the cutting of the first sod of the Cowbridge Railway to Pontyclun by Dr. Carne, of Dimlands, afterwards St. Donats Castle, who led a procession through the town dressed as a navvy with a shovel on his shoulder. There was great enthusiasm locally, and many tradespeople ventured to invest £50 in shares, and lost the greater part of the investment, for the company worked the line at a loss. I do not remember the date of opening, probably about the year 1860, with two small power locomotives and two small coaches, which one engine failed, on one occasion at least, to pull up the gradient leading to Ystradowen station. Eventually the Taff Vale Railway took over the line, and on September 29th, 1865, the first train came from Pontypridd to Cowbridge. The day was observed as a general holiday, and a free ride was given to all who availed themselves on the return journey to Llantrisant junction. Great expectations were aroused by tradesmen from this acquisition, but in course of time it proved detrimental to their business by taking people out of the town and district rather than bringing them in. This, with the construction of the Vale of Glamorgan Railway later, and stock sales at Llantwit Major, deprived Cowbridge market of its predominance as a centre for live stock sales. Just as the new live stock market was built in the year 1888 a serious epidemic of foot and mouth disease occurred in the neighbourhood, when farmers were prohibited from sending stock to market. Butchers made a practice of visiting farms to buy stock, and thus the custom of attending markets decreased to a great extent, and diverted business from the town.

In the year 1873, I travelled to Bristol by rail for my prelim. examination which was a tedious journey, the Severn being crossed in a steam tug from Portskewet, which was unpleasant especially in rough weather. In 1875 I made my first journey by rail to London, the day before my second examination. Starting from Cowbridge at 7.30 a.m., there was an hour's wait at Llantrisant, and (the route then being via Gloucester) Paddington station was reached between 5 and 6 p.m. By that time I was quite exhausted. The Severn tunnel was not then constructed. It was the most tedious journey of my experience, so different from the three-and-a-half hours' run at the present day, with better accommodation.