

We feel that we cannot do better than end our history with the childhood reminiscences of Mr. Stan Williams, who was born in the village in March, 1904, and has lived here all his life. His childhood thus covers the years before the First World War. Here are Stan's recollections of the "old days" in his own words.....

THE ROADS were very rough in those days, and there were no rubber tyres. All wheels had steel bands and could be heard coming a long way off, especially on Market days when some of the farmers would be coming home from market what they used to call 'Market Peart', very often coming at a gallop until they reached one of the Pubs, and then one of the boys that was handy would have to hold the horse, sometimes until closing time, and then sometimes had a penny - or nothing.

All the haulage had to be done with horses, and journeys to Hereford and other parts were frequent, to fetch or take different things. Also, lime had to be carted from the lime quarries in Radnorshire. Perhaps two teams of three or four horses used to go, and they looked quite a picture with all the brasses shinging and the horses with their coats shining like silk and full of life. The waggoners used to shine all brasses the night before, for the journey was started very early in the morning.

In the early days transport was very limited, and there were three or four people in the village that used to do carrying, some using a four-wheeled vehicle called a wagonette, and others a trap, both drawn by aged horses. When they were taking you to market you would have to walk most of the way, for when approaching a hill you would have to unload and walk to the top as the load was too heavy for the old horses, and when going downhill the load was too much to hold back.

Mr. Williams was the first to drive a car in the village which was owned by Spencers of Glan Arrow. A very big machine it was, it had fitted very big brass lamps; the big ones used to burn carbide and the smaller ones, such as the rear lamp and side lamps, used to burn paraffin. The first Hackney carriage car was owned by a Mr. Ivins, then staying at Riverside; afterwards the business was sold to Mr. Jim Kington of the Grove House. Mr. Gransmore also owned a bus and it was driven by Mr. Ted Blatchford. Messrs. Bengryst also started Bus services. Mr. Gransmore lived at Burcot and started the present Garage, and he was very clever in the working of any job that was connected with metal. He was also an expert in the working of a lathe.

Wages for farm workers were from twelve to sixteen shillings per week. General workmen got from twelve to fourteen shillings for a six-day week (six in the morning until six in the evening). A Stockman's wage was about sixteen shillings for mostly seven days and no half holidays. Stockmen used to be paid a little extra in the breeding season, for there was quite a lot of night work to be done. The workmen used to have a bit extra for the harvests - £1 for the hay harvest and £1 for the corn harvest,

in the fine weather working until dark at night. Cider and milk were mostly supplied free as most of the farmers used to make several barrels of cider with the horse-worked stone mill, for there was no sale for the cider apples like to-day. The farmer often had three barrels on tap; one, the sweetest, for use by his own household, one for the workmen, and one for visitors that were always thirsty, and that one tasted much like vinegar so that when they had a good jug of that you wouldn't have any more visits from them for a time. They always knew which farm had the best cider.

Some of the farms had young workmen living in at the farm. They mostly used to sleep in the attic in the top of the house, very often overrun with rats. The food consisted mainly of bacon and rabbits and an occasional old hen that was not quite good enough to send to market. Eggs were like gold to the farmer and all had to be taken to market. The farmer as a rule went to market once a week, not five times like the present day.

Corn used to be cut with hook and crook, and women and sometimes children used to follow behind and bind the corn into sheaves; then came the manual reaper, a machine like the mowing machine. Two men used to ride on the machine, one to drive the horses and the other to push the heaps of straw off the machine. Women used to follow and tie that up into sheaves. Then came the selfbinder, the first of which came to Lynch Court, and that did away with a lot of hand work, but when the crop was laid flat by a storm it then had to be cut by hand. The hay crop had to be cut with scythes, and when the mowing machine came into use some of the farm men used to put iron spikes in the standing crop to break the machine, for the machine was doing the work they had been doing. The women used to work quite a lot on the farms, doing seasonal work. The chief job was hop picking, and they had to walk to the nearest hopyard and that was at Bidney; no transport supplied in those days. The money earned hop picking used to go to buy boots and clothes for the children for the next twelve months, only one pair to wear Sunday and weekday.

There were one or two molecatchers in the parish. They used to catch moles and rabbits in the Winter and help with harvesting in the Summer.

All the old people grew herbs in their gardens, and they used them to make tea or ointment to treat the different ailments in man and beast.

The village could always hold its own as far as agriculture was concerned, for living in the village, living not half a mile apart, were three Champion Ploughmen, in the name of Messrs. George Roberts, Jim Williams, and Bert Mainwaring, and when they went to plough in any of the County matches you could be sure of some prizes were coming to Eardisland. Jim Williams was also a ploughing Instructor to the County Council.

The food was always plain (no peaches and cream for tea), and children were brought up to live like Commandos and could find a lot of food growing wild - blackberries, nuts, watercress, wild plums and mushrooms - and there was also a little white bulb that they used to call 'pignuts' that used to grow in the meadows, and the children used to spend hours digging them up with their knives; they used to be eaten raw. Then there was always rabbits, also a nice trout if you knew how to catch them. Nearly all the cottagers kept a pig, and it used to be fattened,

killed and cured, and that would keep the house going for the next twelve months, for butcher's meat was only had sometimes on the weekend. The people lived hard but were healthy, and the doctor didn't pay as many visits as at the present day.

The Court House Charity finished at the beginning of the Second World War. It was given in the form of wheat that was supposed to be grown on the Marlow fields, to a number of needy widows. It was said that the Charity was to be given as long as water flowed under Eardisland Bridge.

Gipsies have always visited the parish, and a favourite place for their encampment was Pigmore Common. There they would stay until the police or the keepers would move them on. They would also put in for the night in any of the lanes, especially Tadpole lane, waiting until dark, and then they would put their horses in the farmers' fields and take them out at dawn. In the day time women used to go around the village begging, while the menfolk would be making clothes pegs, mops, and artificial flowers, which would have to be taken around to sell.

Games were played much the same as to-day, but there wasn't much leisure time as the children used to go and find a job after school hours to earn a few coppers, for they very seldom had any money off their parents. Pembridge Fair was always looked forward to, as that was the chief entertainment of the year and people used to come for miles around. It was also the main hiring fair, and men and boys used to hire to farmers for twelve months. The hiring finished about the end of the First World War.

On the wide verge between Tadpole Bridge and Lynch Court, Quoits used to be played in the evenings or Sunday mornings, with cider or beer for refreshment. The quoits were iron rings about ten inches in diameter, and were pitched into a bed of clay about four feet square with a peg standing in the middle. In the old Cricket field where all the village sports used to take place stood the old Cricket Pavilion, but it is now taken down and all that stands to mark the spot is the lime tree that used to shade the building in the Summer. The tree was planted by Mrs. Clowes. In the hedgerow at the back of the Pavilion stood a row of massive trees, four oaks and five elms. All but two were blown down by the great gale in 1916, and the remainder have been felled since.

The children used to go around Carol singing at Christmas time. One of the verses popular with them ran:

"I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
A pocket full of money and a cellar full of beer,
A good fat pig to last you all the year.
Will you please give us a Christmas box?
If you haven't a penny a ha'penny will do,
If you haven't got a ha'penny God Bless You."

At Legions Cross, in the small plot there stood a toll gate cottage. At Heybridge there used to be another ford adjoining the footbridge. The ford was used regularly when the river was low for horses and carts going to and from the Nun House farm, and also for hauling hay from the fishery meadow which was rented by the farmer at the Nun House farm.

The old Pigeon House at Burton Court stands on the spot where the Home Farm buildings used to stand. The dairy for the

farm and Burton Court house used to be at the house in Burton Lane that was called the Dairy House. When the old farm was taken down some of the building was used to build the Cricket Pavilion. Near the main gates at the drive there was a cottage, and the tenant was an old lady in the name of Miss Francis. The house at the entrance of the back drive was built for Mrs. Clowes in memory of one of her relatives, General Wolfe, and the cottage was called Quebec Cottage.

When the Colonel and Mrs. Clowes and their son Pat came to live at Burton Court it meant more or less a holiday for most people in the village. The family arrived by train to Leominster station and was brought by horse carriage to near the Staick House, and there the horses were unhitched and the carriage was pulled by tenants, workmen, and villagers to Burton Court where teas, beer and sports was enjoyed until a late hour.

The two cottages near Tadpole Bridge called Orchard Cottages were also built for Mrs. Clowes, and as will be noticed are of Irish design, for Mrs. Clowes spent many years in Ireland. Burton Court house was altered quite a lot in 1912, and the front door entrance was rebuilt and the family crest put on the stonework. The front gardens were also laid out differently.

The animals on the farm consisted of chestnut-coloured horses, black pigs, black Welsh cattle and black Welsh sheep. Some of the sheep and cattle had bells on their necks, and the sound of the bells when the animals were running could be heard quite a long distance, especially at night.

The Radnor and West Hereford Hounds used to meet at the Court two or three times a season, and all the followers would have refreshments. Hunting was very good there for there had to be a fox or two in the coverts, otherwise next morning the keeper would have to go to the gunroom and explain why there were no foxes (for the keepers used to shoot every fox they come across although it would have meant a week's notice to leave if they had been found out by the Colonel).

Garden Fetes were often held on the lawns and in the gardens at the Court, and everyone on the place had to help to get everything ready and the Colonel and Mrs. Clowes did everything to make them a success.

Tree felling was only done at Burton Court Estate when timber was needed for use in repairs on the Estate, and then it was only cut from the thickest places in the coverts, for Col. and Mrs. Clowes were most particular about felling timber on the Estate. Unfortunately, in the Second World War some of the best timber had to be cut down, and when the Estate was disposed of to different owners some of the coverts were never replanted.

The fir trees on the lower side of the bridge were planted by Mr. John Roberts', gardener for the Revd. Barker, then living at Staick House. There were two boats kept on the river, the property of the Revd. Barker. One day a Mothers' Meeting party was being held at the Staick House, and Mr. Southern - then living at Glan Arrow - offered to take some of the party for a trip up the river. The boat was loaded with four of the bravest of the party, and on approaching the arch of the bridge the boat suddenly sank and the occupants had to stand up in the sunken boat up to their waists in water while Mr. Southern carried them one by one to the bank amid applause from the

spectators that were standing on the bridge, and black looks from the very wet occupants of the sunken boat.

There is a very large oak tree standing in the Southalls meadow. The tree is known as the 'Eardisland Oak', for the whole tree covers more ground than any other in the parish. There is also another tree, a Wellingtonia, which stands in the centre of the Old Mound, and it has always been a good landmark for nearly anywhere you stand in the parish you can see the top of the tree.

Mr. Aldridge was very much liked by his parishoners and could often be seen about the parish with his little dog Ben. He had a pony and four-wheeled gig, with two seats in front and one for the coachman (who was Andrew the Sexton). Mr. Aldridge was a very bad horseman, and it was rather frightening for Andrew as the Vicar would always drive, and always with the reins nearly under the horse's feet, and the wheels of his vehicle would be missing other traffic by inches.

The Sunday School parties would mostly be in the form of a picnic to some neighbouring farm. The children would have to carry all the refreshments with them and it would be walking, accompanied by the Vicar, the Sexton, and some of the choir. The Band of Hope parties would be about the same, only all the children had to wear a wide blue sash over their shoulders.

Mr. Wood, the Schoolmaster, was a Master in word and deed and you could travel the country over and not find a more disciplined school. There were somewhat over a hundred pupils in the school, and in lesson time you could hear a pin drop. Children were taught to show respect to the teachers or others by raising their caps or saluting and girls used to curtsy. When any visitor visited the school the children used to stand up to attention and not sit down until they were told. There was always a good thick hazel rod on Mr. Wood's desk and when you had to go out to his desk to be punished you knew you had had it. Mr. Wood was a keen sportsman - Cricket, Bowls, Fishing, Shooting, etc. All the children at the time thought it hard to be under such a strict Master, but years after leaving thought themselves highly honoured to have been taught by a Master like Mr. Wood.

The Revd. Greenhough was a fine old gentleman and always had a word with everyone he met. The children looked forward to meeting him, for there would always be a penny. Mr. Laurie was also very kind to the children and used to be always giving tea parties. Miss Hilda and Mrs. Mulloy also used to give a lot of their time to help in any entertainments connected with anything in the village. Mr. and Mrs. Artindale also gave parties, and there was always a Christmas party, one year given by Col. and Mrs. Clowes and the next year by the Miss Blackmores. The village was not without an entertainment producer, for Mr. Harvey had the Minstrel Troupe which consisted of the village children and some grown-ups. The proceeds were used to help anything such as the Church, etc. The party used also to travel to neighbouring villages, and the transport that used to take them was a horse brake (a four-wheeled vehicle drawn by two horses), but the concerts were very well supported.

The Coronation of King George V was a big 'do'. The School yard was laid out with tables and laden with big joints of beef, and every one had a good sit-down feed. There were

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Cardisland Mothers' Meeting at Glau Arrow,
1914.

barrels of beer for grown-ups and ginger pop for the children. After the feast sports took place in the Cricket field, and to finish off there was a display of fireworks.

Old Henry Yeld that lived at Arrow Bank was also a familiar figure and a keen fisherman, always boasting of that Big Fish that Got Away. He was also a Hereford cattle breeder and always bred good bulls. One was named Modern Yankee, one Yelds Masterpiece, and the last one he had was called Grass and Hay, for that was all the bull was fed on.

Mr. Spencer also lived at Gāan Arrow and could be often seen about the village on his tricycle, followed by his favourite dog, Ravishaw. When the old gentleman wanted to go up over the bridge he used to shout to anyone near to give him a push. Very often the tricycle would run back and upset, and the tricycle, Ravishaw, and himself would be all mixed up on the side of the road, the poor dog getting all the blame.

Two rather familiar figures in the village were John Davies (Ranter Jack) and Andréw Powell (the Sexton), both always ready to drink your or any visitor's health. It was always a busy time on Jack on New Year's Eve, as he generally had the job of carrying the beer to the ringers at the Belfry; and carrying a jug of beer, dodging the parson (for there was no intoxicating drinks allowed in the churchyard) and trying to wrestle with the quantity he had already consumed was no small job. Jack was always about when the hounds met, very often wearing a scarlet hunting coat that was given to him by Col. Clowes. Jack was usually somewhere where a gate had to be opened for one of the horsemen, and then sometimes he would be given a tip, and when he got to the pub at night you could bet he had always seen the fox.

The Rates for the parish were collected by a Rate collector, Mr. George Parry. He used to be a familiar figure - if not a welcome one - when he used to go around on a white pony.

The Blacksmith's shop was a centre of activity, keeping two men on regular work besides the owner, Mr. Morris, working himself. He was also a cycle builder, one of the first in the County. He was a craftsman as well in wrought ironwork, and some of his work in the building of gates can be seen at Manor House and in the Churchyard.

The Old Reading Room, now turned into a cottage. was used as a Men's Clubroom, and for meetings for Mothers' Meeting members and any other small meetings. The room was approached from the outside by steps from the garden in front of the house. One day when some of the Mothers' Meeting party were going along the platform on top of the steps the whole structure gave way, one woman breaking her leg, and giving the others that also fell a bad shaking.

The first cyclist was Mr. Bycroft Roberts. He would as a rule most of the time have only one pedal on the machine, for he was always crashing into the hedge. Also he very often came in contact with any pedestrian that was in his way, and quite frequently there would be one of the children of the village mixed up with him and his machine. We also had a few riders of racing machines who used to compete in the local sports - namely, Messrs. Bert Mainwaring, Pat Byrne, Jim Webb and others. Bert was quite a professional at the

game and won quite a number of prizes at different towns. He used to ride a machine with wooden rims on the wheels, not like the metal rims as used to-day.

The Fishery was laid out by Mr. Bycroft Roberts, then living at Riversdale. The fish were bred to be sold to re-stock some of the country's rivers. They were put into round cans, loaded on to a dray drawn by two farm horses, and started at 4 o'clock in the morning on the journey to Leominster station to be sent by rail, so as to reach their destination the same day. Visitors were allowed to go over the Fisheries by getting a ticket from the owner, and they would be shown around, which was very interesting, especially at feeding time. The Great War came, and the place was closed down as the expense of upkeep was too great.

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That's all Folks

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