

GREENCROFT BOOKS

About the Author

J. Ivor John, now into his 83rd year, was born and bred in Haverfordwest. As a child his home territory was the Old Bridge and Bridgend Square, and his early schooldays were spent in Prendergast School. At the age of twelve he entered Haverfordwest Grammar School, but after only two years there he was pressed to become a clerk in the Council Offices in High Street. So ended his childhood, prematurely, shortly after the commencement of the First World War. He worked in local government for fifty years, but outside of his home life his great love was the Methodist Church, which he served as local preacher, Sunday School superintendant, and in a variety of church offices. Now retired from active service, he lives with his wife Gwladys in Cherry Grove, Haverfordwest. The couple have three grown-up children and seven grand-children.

Those who remember Ivor John's sermons will know that he has always been a craftsman with words. But in this, his first book, he reveals his sense of humour and his ability as an astute observer of the local scene. His memory is as sharp as ever, and his enchanting recollections will bring pleasure to all who read them. His words paint for us a picture of a gentler, warmer age.

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RECOLLECTIONS

A Haverfordwest Childhood
1901 — 1915



J. IVOR JOHN

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To Pop, with Love
Christmas 1983

This little book is published through the joint efforts of Brian and Inger, Heather and Ken, and Hilary and Richard. It is a surprise Christmas present for the author; while Pop wrote most of these words several years ago, he had no idea that they would be published and had probably given up hope of ever seeing them in print. So, to Pop and to Mum, who has done more than we will ever know to encourage and cherish our budding author. Happy Christmas!

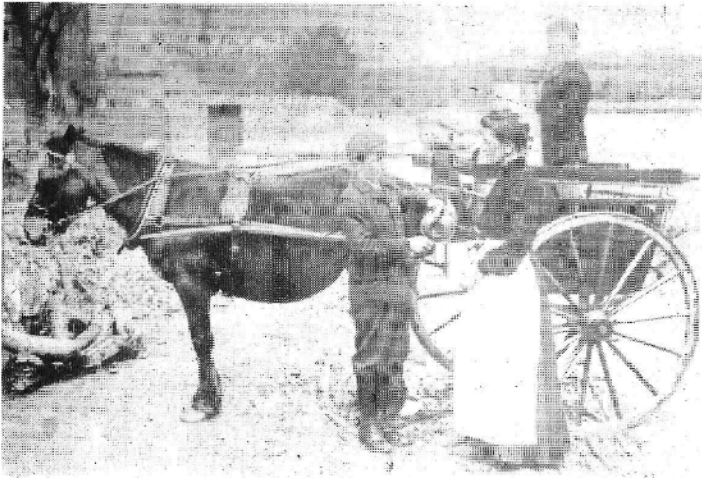
PREFACE

The years 1901-1915 were marked by a series of momentous events which seem to have acquired the sanctity of ancient history. When Queen Victoria died in 1901 the Boer War was still in progress. In 1903 Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first powered aircraft flight. Three years later San Francisco was destroyed by a great earthquake and fire, and in London the Women's Suffragettes were making the news. In 1909 Peary reached the North Pole and Bleriot made the first cross-Channel flight. In 1910 King Edward VII died and was succeeded by King George V; Asquith and the Liberals held power in two General Elections. During the Antarctic summer 1911-1912 Amundsen and Scott made their epic journeys to the South Pole; as we all know, Amundsen won the race but Scott became the hero. The year 1912 saw the sinking of the Titanic, and in 1914 Europe was plunged into a terrible conflict which was to become known as The Great War.

Almost immune from all this, a small boy called James Ivor John was growing up in a small country town in Pembrokeshire. Ivor John is now 82 years old, but his memory is as clear as ever and he has recorded, in these delightful recollections, the incidents, the people and the everyday scenes which impressed themselves upon his young mind. This little book will bring great pleasure to those who belong to the author's own generation. Those who belong to a later age will find themselves transported, as they read, to the Honey Harfat of 75 years ago. This is first-hand local history, no less real and no less relevant than the history of international politics and national events.

In preparing my father's notes for publication, and in recording our conversations, I have had fun and I have learnt a great deal. I hope that Recollections will bring equal enjoyment to the reader.

Brian John
November 1983



The daily milk delivery. The fresh milk was contained in the gleaming churn mounted on the milk cart, and then measured out into the housewife's jug.

1. THE OLD TOWN

As a small boy during the early years of the century, I considered Honey Harfat to be a town of some distinction. Its people were enjoying more and more contact with the outside world, but the community was tightly-knit and many of the local characters were a good deal larger than life. The age of mechanisation and electricity was ushered in but hesitantly, and the new technology was greeted with awe by some and with outright suspicion by others. Haverfordwest was by no means the centre of world affairs in the years before the Great War of 1914-1918, but it was my town, and from the vantage point of my 82nd year I can recall and enjoy the adventures, the trivia and the people of the day who instilled into me that most wonderful of qualities - a sense of belonging.

In my boyhood days and well into my teenage years, horse-drawn vehicles were as familiar in the town streets as the superceding petrol-driven cars, vans, lorries, and buses are today. Traffic was more leisurely and slow paced; there were no zebra crossings or traffic lights. One didn't even have to look right and left before crossing the road. First on the morning scene were the horse-drawn milk carts with their tall churns and their brightly polished brass embellishments and taps. Each milk cart had a low step at the rear on which the milkman stood to hold the driving reins. There were no milk bottles in those days. At the shout of "Milko!" the housewife would come out with a jug. Also early on the scene were the four-wheel grocer's wagons starting their journeys to supply village shops perhaps as far away as St David's. Such journeys involved a full day on the road, which in winter could be extremely hazardous. Farmers and their wives came into town in their traps or farm carts to do their shopping and collect animal food and farm equipment. On Saturday mornings, in particular, traps and carts were lined up in the streets outside the public houses which provided temporary

stabling accommodation for the horses. Wagonettes and other four-wheeled vehicles were also familiar, and the gentry had their more elaborately-styled two-horse carriages with liveried coachmen for their excursions into town.



View towards the New Bridge and High Street from Salutation Square, about 1900. Notice the horse-drawn traffic and the horse trough in the centre of the square.

A great deal of traffic was generated by the railway station. Blands wagons daily conveyed goods to the shops from the station and goods yard. Railway passengers were also catered for. Numerous hire carriages would be lined up in the station precinct before the arrival of the down trains, just as motor taxis are today. One such link-up was Moriarty's passenger four-wheeler bus, drawn by two and sometimes four horses, which had far away St David's as its ultimate destination. This service operated on three days a week and its timetable was put up at the station entrance or exit. This announced that the service would operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays (DV) and on Saturdays (DV or not).

Bread deliveries were also by horse-drawn and covered two-wheelers and those of my relative Billy the Baker of Salutation Square were mostly nocturnal. I recall that as a boy I palled up with a local baker named Stanley Williams and often during school holidays accompanied him on his country round, delivering to places such as Picton. The attraction of this baker's round was partly attributable to the fact that on the quiet country roads I was allowed to drive.

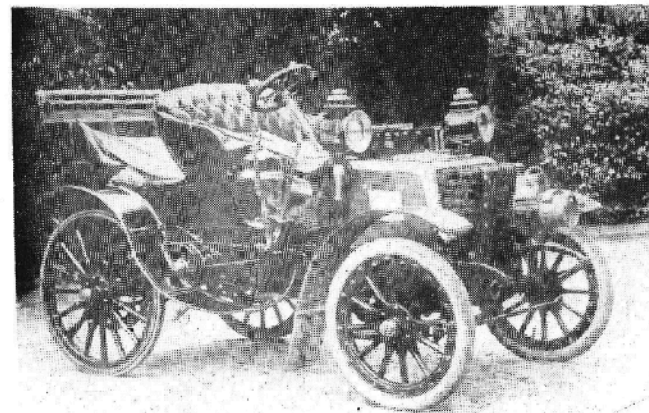
Solo horse riding was not such a prominent feature but I recall many horsemen using the horse mounting steps on Bridgend Square.

One particularly nostalgic memory concerns the horse-drawn chip cart with its coal fired fryers and protruding pipe chimney, and the familiar cry "All hot chips!" A penny or two would purchase a bag of chips that was like a benediction at the close of the day. And the fact that the

tired old horse would occasionally deposit a pile of steaming manure at your feet as you sampled the first few chips à la carte did not detract in any way from your relish and satisfaction.

From Steam to Petrol

I was brought up in close proximity to Blands Garage on Bridgend Square. As a small boy I was greatly intrigued by mechanical marvels on four wheels that let off bangs and emitted smoke. My presence in and around the garage was familiar to Mr John Andrew Bland (the boss), Mr Dean Bland, Chief Mechanic Mr Tom Hines, Mr Jack Nicholas and others on the large staff. The earliest marvel on wheels was the steam car which before use required a preparatory period called "getting up steam". One day such a process was going on in a steam car parked in the centre of the square, whilst I played alongside. Suddenly, to my amazement, the car started to move, quite unoccupied. Gaining momentum it crashed into the Dennis lean-to kitchen at the entrance to Prospect Place. Then the first petrol car appeared on the scene, an open two-seater Metz Lion. Imagine the thrill I felt when Mr Dean Bland invited me to accompany him on a trial run to the top of Arnolds Hill and back. The speed! The wind in my hair! This was something to remember, to boast about to my less fortunate, pedestrian contemporaries.



This early Daimler was one of the first cars to roar around the streets of Haverfordwest.

Vanished Trades and Occupations

Most of the crafts which were features of the town's life in the early part of the century have now disappeared in the new age of machines and mass production. I recall Mr Vaughan the Cooper with his workshop in Prendergast Hill, just beyond Hill Park Chapel, with his hooped barrels, tubs and ladles. Another such craftsman was William Thomas the Cooper in Dew Street, who was incidentally a good Methodist and grandfather of the last Grammar School Headmaster, Mr W.G. Thomas. Next to where we lived on the Old Bridge was a cottage that was the home and workshop of a Mr Poole who was skilled in umbrella assembly and repairs. In Bridge Street was a book-binding business run by a Mr Rogers. A few doors away was the confectionary business of Mr Charles Butler who, I firmly believe, was the first and last maker of real ice cream in Haverfordwest. Even as I write I seem to recapture the exquisite taste and heavenly texture and touch of the delectable product.

Then there was the coachbuilding business of Gilbert and Howard Thomas. They had two workshops on Bridgend Square, one opposite our house and a bigger place between the Bridgend Hotel and the building later adapted as a shop by Mr Archie Griffiths. The construction work on the various types of horse-drawn vehicles was carried out on the ground floor and then the trap (or whatever) was pulled up two long parallel tracks to an upstairs paint shop which was free from dust. The vehicle was let down by the same method on completion, beautifully stained and varnished. Further along towards Salutation Square was a Farrier Smithy shop of Jack and Benny John, whose horseshoes were made, fitted and fastened. Quite a big business in those days. Opposite, on the other side of Jubilee Gardens, was the Blacksmith's Shop of Arthur Phillipps. No shoeing here but such things as wheel banding and ornamental gates. These were some of the Blacksmiths shops in lower town but they have all now disappeared. Cabinet making was also big business both at Lewis's on the New Bridge, replaced later by the County Theatre, and Reynolds' workshops in Hill Street. Incidentally, my father James John was apprenticed by the former. Just down the river in Lower Quay Street was a Tannery, now also defunct. A Chandler's business in Dew Street and a Maltsters establishment in Quay Street have suffered the same fate.

Toffee making was also in vogue in those days. For example, toffee was made on a small scale by Mrs Merriman in Prendergast Hill, who did good business with three adjacent schools full of sweet-loving children! I recall a regular toffee stall in the market with shallow metal trays of toffees of various kinds, broken into small edible pieces with small metal hammers. I believe the proprietors came from the Portfield area. Later on a Mr Crutchley emerged as a sweet and toffee maker but this business terminated some time ago. Incidentally, the first paper-wrapped toffees appeared with the opening of the Star Supplies Stores in Bridge Street, in premises later occupied by Halewoods. I recall that the toffees (known as "gob stoppers") were as hard as iron being responsible for the destruction of more than a few fragile teeth.

There were other trades or crafts too, for example that represented by Miss Davies the Glover in Prendergast and that of the itinerant knife and scissors grinder with his specially built hand cart and treadle-operated grindstone and flying sparks. Finally I recall the Pop Works at Higgons Well on the Frolic, or to give it its official trade title,

the Mineral Water Works. This was quite a thriving business which has gone the way of others and is no more, although it is pleasant to read that the spring water is still used in mineral water manufacture. We were able to slake our thirst at the Pop Works at wholesale prices, but perhaps the greatest attraction was the recovery of glass marbles from the dumped broken bottles which are now generally referred to as Codswallop Bottles and which are nowadays quite valuable.

One of the most familiar of figures on the street scene was the lamplighter. At dusk he would sally forth carrying his long pole at one end of which was a hook and a slim perforated brass cylinder enclosing a pilot light, sustained I imagine by wax and wick. With the hook inserted in a chain ring he would turn on the gas and then insert the cylinder through an aperture at the base of the street lamp glass casing to ignite the gas. Towards midnight he would go the rounds again, this time using the hook to turn off the gas. Mention of gas reminds me that the town's Gas Works was in full production when I was a child. When the ovens were burning, mothers would take their children there to inhale the poison fumes in the belief that they would cure whooping cough. A by-product of the works was coke which was in great demand for domestic fires. Frequently during the winter months I was involved in the homeward transport of bags of coke in my home-made hand cart, a big box mounted on old pram wheels.

Lastly on the matter of old trades and professions there were the saddlers and harness makers, all true craftsmen who took immense pride in their handiwork. I recall their harness sets richly ornamented with brass. Their workshops and windows too were adorned with a variety of other equine brasses. Three such craftsmen in my boyhood orbit were Mr Crabb in Bridge Street, Mr Thomas in Quay Street and Mr Tom Ray in Prendergast, a good Methodist who invariably because of deafness sat in glorious isolation at the front end of the Wesley Chapel gallery overlooking the pulpit.





This wonderful photograph of a Llangwn fisherwoman was probably taken before the turn of the century. She is standing outside St Mary's Church, Haverfordwest.

2. MORE ABOUT TRADE AND TRADERS

The following interview was recorded on 5th October 1983 at 7 Cherry Grove, Haverfordwest. In it, the author recalls the Llangwn fisherwomen, the town's trading vessels, the sawmills, the lime kilns, and much else besides.

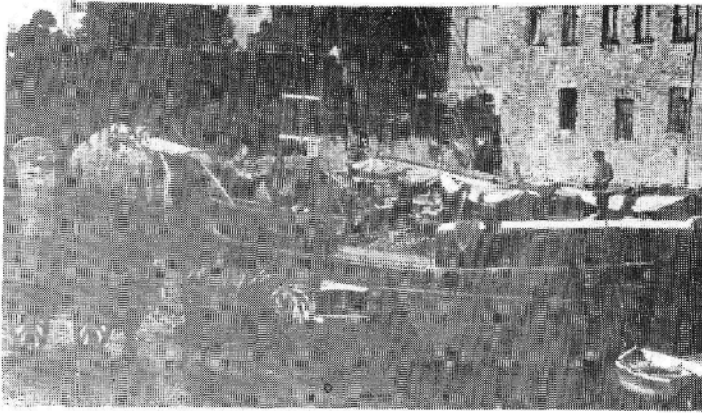
Question: Let's think first of all of some of the aspects of trade and traders when you were a child. Do you remember the Llangwn fisher ladies coming to town?

Answer: Oh yes of course I do. They were a regular feature of town life. I remember the visits just once or twice a week of these ladies from Llangwn with their pannier wicker baskets and shawls and black hats. They would go from door to door selling their fish and then return home. Before the days of buses they mostly walked to Haverfordwest (and sometimes to Milford) to sell their fish, which their menfolk had been catching overnight in the inner reaches of the Haven.

Question: Thinking about ships and fishing, do you remember the sailing vessels coming up to the Haverfordwest quays when you were young?

Answer: Not sailing vessels. But I remember the Waterlily. I think she was a steam ship; she had to come under the railway bridge and they had to raise part of that bridge mechanically to allow her to pass through to the upper reaches of the river. The Waterlily carried limestone from the West Williamston quarries in the south of the county. The crew

would discharge their cargo of limestone overboard into the river and from there it was collected by carts and taken to the lime kiln. So they would dump their stuff below the New Bridge where the District Council car park is now, or thereabouts. There was a lane leading from that point into Cambrian Place going past the timber yard.



A sailing vessel discharging limestone blocks into horse-drawn carts just below the New Bridge, Haverfordwest.

Question: So there were saw mills working there?

Answer: Oh yes. There was Robinson Davids Saw Mills and there was also a little minor establishment alongside called Herbie Nichols where logs which were surplus to the requirements of the timber yard were cut up into firewood. They sold bundles of firewood round the town.

Question: I read somewhere that there was another saw mill in town. Was that near the old Churn Works? I've seen North Gate Saw Mills referred to.

Answer: I'm not sure whether that was a timber yard or a saw mills or what. There was a water mill at the bottom of Crow Hill up by the river.

Question: Was that working when you were a child?

Answer: No, I can't remember that. I think it became obsolete before the turn of the century. There was never any traffic of any sort. But it was known as the Old Mill.



This photograph of the Haverfordwest riverside was taken from the Parade around the year 1900. Note the piles of limestone below the New Bridge; the Quay Street warehouses in the foreground; the three sailing ships in the river; and the sawmills and timber yard on the site now occupied by Cambria House.

Question: What about coal barges? Did they come up between the bridges?

Answer: Oh yes, they came up between the bridges from Hook, you see, these low barges full of culm with two or three bargemen on board with long poles. They came up on the high tide, and there was slow progress and much manipulation to get under the bridge arches. Of course, there was always a crowd of on-lookers when this was going on. Incidentally, Milfordians often referred to Harfats as "Longnecks" because they craned their necks over the New Bridge to see the barges. Anyway, there was a lot of wisecracking going on every time a barge was coming near to the arch of the bridge. I remember one wisecracker who shouted out to one of the bargemen "Who stole Haroldston church door for a rudder?" After all the talk and jokes and laughing they would be under the bridge and across the river basin near to the Old Bridge where Robinson's Coal Yard was located. They had a facility there for the barge to tie up alongside the back of the coalyard where, the next day, it would discharge its load. Then on the next high tide it would be off back to Hook.

Question: So that coal was sold as coal? It wouldn't all be made into culm balls?

Answer: The farmers would come with their farm carts to buy a load of culm and they would make some of it into balls when they got home.

Question: How many of the lime kilns were working when you were a boy?

Answer: Only one. The others were defunct before my time. That one was active for quite a long time in my younger days. It was owned by Mr Billy Warlow.

Question: Was Billy Warlow the man who would actually be looking after it or was there someone else as Manager?

Answer: Oh, he was there every day, you see. Before they closed for the day they would put the broken up limestone on top and then during the day they would turn out lime from a grating at the bottom. This was sold to farmers for their land and anybody who wanted lime could come and buy it at the base of the kiln in Cartlett Road.

Question: I've heard that the lime kiln was a great haunt for vagrants. It's difficult to realise today, but there must have been a lot of beggars and homeless people when you were a boy?

Answer: There were a lot of vagrants and tramps especially, you see. And in the winter they would go to the kiln purely for warmth. They'd sit around the perimeter on top of the kiln and often they would have their little stoves and they'd boil water and make tea. In cold weather they'd sleep there too, and sometimes we heard of tramps being killed by the fumes.

Question: Let's turn to energy supplies. Do you remember electricity coming to the town? Apparently in the early years of the century some of the traction engines at Portfield Fair were giving way and electric generators were beginning to appear.

Answer: The steam engines used to generate the electricity. They had a dynamo on the engine and I remember some sort of belt and a flywheel connected to this dynamo. That generated the power for the lighting of all the stalls and roundabouts. That was quite widespread by 1910. But there was no electricity in any of the shops or businesses.

Question: So I suppose that where power was needed people had to depend on steam engines?

Answer: It was all steam engines then, especially traction engines.

Question: So they would have been quite a common sight around the town then, these traction engines?

Answer: Oh no. Only on fairgrounds. You see the first development after candles was the naked gas light, and then we had the incandescent gas mantle and that was the second development. Later on, electricity came in, and that made life much easier.

Question: You mention the Fairs. Some of the Menageries and things like that were down on The Track on Jubilee Gardens. But Portfield Fair was always up at Portfield on St Thomas Green, and the May Fair as well presumably? Were they hiring fairs in your day or were they just Fun Fairs?

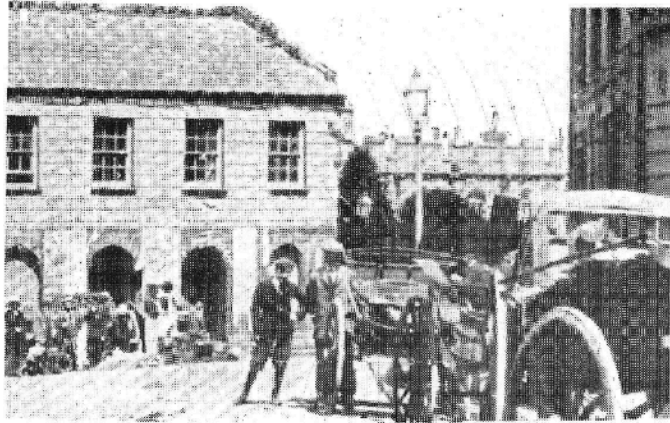
Answer: At the October Fair, on the upper part of St Thomas Green, there was an assembly of farmers and would-be farm servants waiting to be hired. The farmers would ask "Art tha hired, boy?" There was a story of one of these would-be servants who went down into High Street and into a tobacconists shop opposite the Shire Hall where he asked the shopkeeper "Hast tha got any drop-handled pipes?" He meant curled pipes that looked like the drop-handlebars on a bike, you see. The October Fair was the hiring fair and you'd have a mutual "handshake contract" for twelve months at a certain wage.

Question: There were presumably no animals at the Portfield Fair since that was just the hiring fair? How long did that continue? Did that go on till after the First World War?

Answer: Oh yes, well after that.

Question: What about the other markets in town? There was a corn market and a fish market originally.

Answer: The fish market was near the old Grammar School, near St Mary's Church.



The Old Fish Market at the bottom of Dew Street.
Later on, and before its demolition, it was
used as a Municipal Milk Dairy.

Question: So that was still functioning as a fish market when you were a child? The corn market was next to the Palace Cinema in Hill Street. Did they demolish part of it when they built the cinema?

Answer: Oh yes. It was all reconstructed around 1912. There was another corn market at the bottom of Prendergast Hill, called Phillips's. They used to take in stocks of corn from the farms and wholesalers and sell it there. Funnily enough, the election results of the local polls were always announced from the main corn market in Hill Street.

Question: Presumably the Market Hall wasn't there then? Was there a market on that site or not?

Answer: It was an open sort of market. I recall, with stalls on the sides. An open air market.



3. DISTANT MEMORIES

My boyhood was never dull. In contrast to modern trends with so many artificial, ready-made aids to enjoyment, we had to be creative and make our own fun. Occasionally these exercises were punctuated by excitements that were not planned. I recall at least three episodes that were not only exciting but also fraught with personal peril.

Once upon a time, while freewheeling quietly along the Cartlett Road on my brother Sydney's bicycle and blissfully unaware of danger, I was knocked flying from behind by a driverless runaway horse drawing a cart. Fortunately I was knocked clear of both although the cycle was a twisted write-off. I got off with some cuts and bruises and a blood-bespattered head.

Traction engines which I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, were a source of never-ending wonder. I was never far away when a traction engine was about, and so it was when an engine belonging to J.H. and R.O. Morse, Trehowell, Mathry, drawing a heavy four-wheel trailer which had just been loaded with culm from a Hook river barge, turned into Old Bridge to start the homeward journey. The corner of the trailer struck and snapped off the top half of a street lamp just near where I was standing. It crashed to the ground only a foot away. Strangely this escape is linked in my memory with a view that very night of Halley's Comet in the north-western sky. And to think that only a few hours before I nearly saw a whole galaxy of stars in broad daylight..... I know now that this must have been in May 1910, since this was the occasion when Halley's Comet was last clearly seen from the Earth.

Our swimming pool, unheated, was the River Cleddau, a few hundred yards north of the Old Bridge and known as the Moor. The youngest

bathers were completely nude. There wasn't a house in sight. Towels were as superfluous as trunks because we had races to get dry. Here in the shallow water we learned the rudiments of the swimming art and only the older boys, good swimmers, would dare venture out when the tide was up and the water very deep. It was considered by the elders that I had, after much instruction and practice, qualified for this distinction and graduation was by swimming to the opposite bank and back at full tide. Here goes! Accompanied by my brother Sydney in front and by Jack Dennis (Cuppy) behind, I got across. Now the return journey with the same escort. In my eagerness, I got too close to my brother who led the way, with the result that I caught a blow from one of his feet right under the chin. I was temporarily out cold, recovered and panicked but the experienced Cuppy grabbed me and with reassuring words conducted me to the safety of the other bank. I had graduated and the honour was symbolised not by the presentation of a graduate hood and gown, but by the acquisition of bathing trunks.

Jubilee Gardens and the Big Shows

Close to our house was a large open space known as Jubilee Gardens, which we always referred to as "The Track". This was land reclaimed from the marshes of the Western Cleddau and it was our rendezvous for games such as rounders. That was around 1910-1912, before the Drill Hall and Greens Motors Garage were built. This was also a convenient central site for visiting shows such as Haggars Bioscope. Spectators had to sit on hard wooden seats about five inches wide. Patrons were enticed inside by an immaculately dressed manager named Walter Gibbons, aided by a troupe of dancing girls who did their act on a small outside platform before each performance. Wally would declare, "Roll up! The members of the orchestra are taking their seats!" The orchestra consisted of a pianist and a fiddler. Then there was the Bostock and Wombells Menagerie with wild animals in their wagon cages arranged in a rectangle with an overall canvas canopy. Elephants bathed in the nearby river. Our home was barely more than 200 yards away and I remember the sound of roaring lions when I lay in bed at night. Travelling circuses invariably pitched their tents on the site and more than once I felt the impact of a stick on my backside as I attempted, with various accomplices, to get in under the canvas.

Jubilee Gardens was often the venue for political rallies and election meetings at the time when Asquith was Prime Minister. Other uses of the open space I recall were quoits matches and a rally following a procession to celebrate the disestablishment of the Church in Wales in the year 1914.

The Town Sports

This popular annual event held on the Bridge Meadow on August Bank Holiday was something exciting and not to be missed. There were track and field events, cycle and horse racing and lots more besides. One great attraction was a huge balloon, used for giving rides limited to the length of a strong wire cable which was let out and drawn in on a drum contrivance operated by a heavy traction engine. We usually availed ourselves of the back door and our gratis entry was afforded by the

Prendergast Alley. But alas many adults began to share what we boys regarded as our peculiar privilege and because of the growing loss of income the sports committee hired out and posted policemen to stop the gap. After an extraordinary general meeting of the gang, a plan to defeat this move was propounded and adopted unanimously. Consequently, on the day of the sports, I approached the Secretary and offered my services as a programme seller. The offer was accepted and soon I was in possession of a few dozen printed programmes. In no time at all these were divided between my confederates in crime. One by one, and at discreet intervals, they passed through the entrance gate holding their passports aloft and shouting "Programmes! Programmes!"

Sport and a Criminal Record

My sporting achievements were not conspicuous and did not attract the headlines. Like all small boys of the time I enjoyed frequent football games in the street. One indelible memory is that of a kickabout game with several friends on Bridgend Square during the dinner hour. I was so engrossed in a masterly dribble that I failed to detect the stealthy approach of an over-sealous police officer (one Inspector Jones) who happened to be walking to the Castle from his Prendergast lodgings. The other boys spotted him and scattered. I felt a grip on the collar of my Norfolk jacket. There, with a smug and satisfied look on his face was the policeman, looking for all the world as if he had apprehended a notorious criminal. Clearly he anticipated a police medal for gallantry. The outcome was that a week or so later, a policeman called at our house to serve on me a blue paper or summons to appear before His Majesty's Justices of the Peace at the Shire Hall, to answer a charge of unlawfully obstructing the King's highway by playing a game thereon, to wit, a game of football, contrary to specified statute. At home and amongst my confederates in crime this presented a golden opportunity for merriment and leg-pulling at my expense. But I was furious. Obstructing the King's highway, my foot! In those early years of the century cars were as rare as UFOs, and at the time of the offence there hadn't been a horse-drawn cart in sight.

My father went to the Shire Hall on the appointed day to plead guilty on my behalf. After the gallant Inspector had given evidence, the imposing array of beaks withdrew their grinning necks and with suitably grave expressions on their faces, conferred. There was a buzz of whispers. Then, the conference over, the august Chairman cleared his throat. Assuming the poise of dignity and authority and finality that the occasion demanded, he announced, "We find the defendant guilty and order him to pay a penalty of six pence." When father returned and announced the shattering news I thought "Good God! It's prison; I've only got three ha'pence!"

When the local lads were involved in a football match (as distinct from a mere game), we preferred to play on grass. The chosen venue in a very limited range of choices was frequently the Jockey Field reached by Prendergast Alley. This field lay behind the Prendergast house of Mr Arthur Hill, a poulterer who was used to graze his horse there. If the advance scouts reported that the said horse was not in the field, it meant that the owner was out in the country on business. On such occasions we played our matches in peace. Sometimes however, we would

miscalculate and old Arthur would spot us as we battled for supremacy on his field. His strategy was not to grab one of us but to grab the ball. He would creep nearer and nearer to the edge of our pitch and then sprint after the ball whilst we scattered in all directions. He would return to his domain with our football under one arm, at the same time shaking his fist to signal that he was very angry. But we knew that Arthur's bark was worse than his bite. Diplomatically we would give him a couple of hours to cool down and then we would knock on his front door. Sometimes I would head a deputation almost overcome with feigned emotions of repentance which I had to give a form of words in a plea for the return of our football. Respectful 'Sirs' would flow like torrents as we vowed never to repeat the offence. Dear old Arthur could not stand such emotion. He always relented and gave us back our football.

Rugby was a sport with which I was less familiar. My memories of rugby matches are hazy, but there is a memory of one great occasion that I hold clearly in my mind. A large crowd lined the touch lines for a needle rugby match played on the field above Millbank, now the site of a housing area known as Cherry Grove and Queensway. I was just a small boy standing near the goal line. The excitement was intense. Time was running out and the town side was trailing by a single point. The Harfats rallied and surged forward in a final effort, spurred on by a highly partisan crowd. The ball was kicked forward along the ground and stopped just over the line. This was it. Billy Summers of Prendergast dashed up to dive on it for victory. He dived all right - but the ball was no longer there. Standing only a yard away, I had responded to an irresistible urge and while Billy was still airborne I had kicked it out of his reach and over the dead ball line. Pandemonium! Howls of rage followed me as I vanished at the speed of sound to the familiar fastnesses of the Milly Hills below.

Junior Employment

The Royal Statue. In my boyhood days pennies were scarce and not easily come by. Consequently I was alive to the smallest opportunity of acquiring personal wealth. I saw one such opportunity in a tall tin shed being erected between the old copper beech tree and the paper shop on Bridgend Square. The shed was in later years demolished when the site was being prepared for an indoor military rifle range. I soon discovered that the shed was to be used by a Mr Dudley Morris to mould a big plaster statue of King Edward VII as a model for a more substantial work in stone to be erected outside the Shire Hall in High Street. There was, I recall, an air of secrecy about the whole project and there was a 'Private, No Admittance' notice on the door. I also observed that indispensable water was not laid on because the sculptor carried it in a can from a nearby property and emptied it into a tank inside the shed. My chance had come. I said, "Sir, I can save you that trouble. I could fetch the water every day after school and fill up your tank for you." It was a deal. There was no trade union haggling about terms. He simply said "Thank you very much. That would be a big help." So it was that every afternoon after school I would make five or six return journeys with the can to an outdoor tap in Evans' nearby coal yard. And every Friday I would receive a six-penny piece from the sculptor. And more than that. I was allowed to stay and watch him fashion and build over many weeks a magnificent white plaster model statue of the King about ten feet high. Also the final

sculpture in stone never materialised. I know not why. But I retain happy memories of the working association with the gifted and very pleasant Mr Dudley Morris, who in later years, I believe, was art master at the Local Grammar School. I also recall with relish the memory of a munificence that provided me with sure supplies both of Mrs Merriman's treacle toffees and of ginger beer from Mrs Thomas the Mangle at Millbank.

The Coalyard Roundabout. Opposite our house was a coalyard owned by Mr John Evans and operated by him and his stepson, Mr Willy Smith. In those days there was a demand for a fuel called "balls". It was made from a semi-liquid mixture of culm or coal dust and clay which was shaped into small balls by the housewife as fuel for open fires. Round a circle of about twenty feet diameter a three feet wide layer of culm was laid. The clay, which had been soaking in barrels for some days, was chopped by mattock or shovel into small lumps which were distributed over the surface of the culm before another layer of the latter was laid down. Then water was poured over the whole area and this was where I frequently came into the picture. The mixing operation was done by two horses, one ridden bare back, and the other closely following and linked to the lead horse by a rope. I rode the lead horse more times than I can remember, slowly round and round for an hour or more while the two bosses with shovels turned the inner and outer edges into the centre to ensure a thorough mixing by the horses hooves. When this was ultimately accomplished the whole was shovelled into a big pile and covered with sacks. Meanwhile a much more congenial and exciting task was to take the horses down the adjoining river lane and into the deepest parts of the river to wash away the mess from their legs and bodies. In the summer evenings there was the ride to a grazing field in Slade Lane beyond North Gate, now the site of a housing estate. Billy Smith would ride one horse and I the other, both bare back. On one of these occasions, the horse that I was riding in leisurely fashion took fright and bolted, not stopping his mad gallop until he got to the field gate. How I stayed on that horse's back I do not know. Later a horseman told me it was easier to ride a horse at a gallop than at a trot. I'm not sure that I agree.

Boyhood Amusements

No catalogue of boyhood events would be complete without reference to the Sunday School and Rechabite outings by grocer's wagon to Broad Haven and Newgale. What exciting crawls they were! We certainly had time to see and admire the landscape... All but the smallest had to walk up the hills and there is the happy memory of teas as we sat around the green sward by the old kiln on the Haroldston side of the Haven, or near another kiln at Newgale. Unforgettable too were the Wealey Sunday School treats at Cashfield. For many who are alive today that name conjures up memories of the processions to that pleasantly situated field beyond Crow Hill, and overlooking the winding Cleddau. Tea in the grass in the welcome shade of tall trees, clothes baskets filled with slices of cakes, dollins of hot tea, the races round Uncle Tom and back, the games, the swings, the scramble for sweets. I treasure a copy of a photograph of the Sunday School staff of those early days given to me by Mr Alan Thomas, formerly of Cashfield.

I have often wondered since how our large family squeezed into a horse-drawn wagonette. We did it several times, once on the long journey to Fishguard to see the wonder ship Lusitania. I recall that it was not



This photograph of Haverfordwest street urchins was taken around the turn of the century, in the upper part of Barr Street. In the background, notice the milk cart with its shiny milk churn.

a very pleasant outing; it rained quite a lot and the four-funnelled Gunarder lay at anchor out beyond the breakwater. Other frequent and more pleasant wagonette outings were to Houghton to visit Grandfather and Grandmother John. I retain a mental picture of the old gentleman with a long white beard sitting up in bed and looking rather austere, and of Grandma who seemed the soul of gentleness. During the many times in later life when I preached in Hill Mountain Methodist Chapel, I remembered that these good kinsfolk lay buried in the adjoining graveyard. This too was the chapel in which my dear father was brought up and needless to say, I hold it specially dear.

My First Smoke

My grandfather Thomas Davies, who lived with us, was an inveterate pipe smoker; for him, none of the fancy blends with fancy aromas, such as a blend called Real Jam which my father smoked. Grandfather smoked the real stuff, Ringer's Shag Extra Strong. One of his pipes left lying around with a half-smoked bowl of this dynamite mixture tempted me to have a go just to see what it was like to suck that stem and emit clouds of smoke. Matches were readily available and I sat under a horse wagon parked near Jubilee Gardens. Wonderful! I was actually smoking a pipe! But, strange. Grandpa didn't cough like I did. Then the nausea set in; things were going round and round. I emitted clouds of smoke all right, but also the contents of my stomach. Good heavens! Was I going to die at the tender age of eight? I vowed never to smoke again. But like most vows this one was made to be broken, and before I was twenty I had started again. Having started cigarette smoking I continued until I was nearly fifty. I did not, however, become a nicotine addict like Harold

Beer, son of the Old Bridge tailor. His craving was for Woodbines, then obtainable in packets of five for twopence, pre-decimal. By a strange contractual arrangement with Mrs Nichols, a dear old soul who kept a little shop at the end of Old Bridge, he purchased two and a half Woodbines at a time. I could never match his affluence or his capacity for negotiating financial coups of this magnitude.

Boxing Clubs and Gospel Meetings

Amongst my early recollections are those of boxing clubs. In my orbit there was one in the shed on the riverside of Jubilee Gardens, another at the rear of the Bull Inn, Prendergast, and a third at the rear of Bridge Street. They were well conducted and boys were admitted and encouraged in the noble art. I visited all three and was the recipient as well as the giver of some bashings. Those who may have thought that these dens, together with the multitudinous pubs in the town, created imbalance in the moral life of the community were pacified somewhat by the corrective influence of gospel meeting houses, Bands of Hope and Rechabite meetings for juveniles. Prominent in my memory amongst the former is the Gospel Room in Prospect Place, not far from the kilns. One of the most faithful adherents was Blind Billy. There was another gospel room over Joseph Lewis' carpenter's shop in Cartlett. I possess a copy of the small paperback hymn book used there. These places of worship were primarily for adults. My personal allegiances as a boy on week nights were the Band of Hope meetings at Wesley and Hill Park and also the Juvenile Rechabite Club at Lower Temperance Hall. It may give pleasure to some if I conclude this paragraph by saying that the attraction to boxing did not last long but that I have been a total abstainer all my life.

A River Baptism

The junior grapevine had communicated the place and the time. It was to be something quite out of the ordinary - a river baptism at the old paper mill, agreed by the rector following a special request by a portly Prendergast lady. The lads were in the front row of the congregation on the river bank. The rector, either the Reverend Joel Davies or the Reverend Acryl Jones (I don't quite remember which), holding the large candidate's hand, led her slowly and nervously over the uneven river bed to mid-stream where the water was almost waist deep. Then, after the recital of the words stipulated in the service of baptism, came the immersion. As she went under, supported by the rector's arms, the dear lady panicked and to everyone's delight pulled the rector in with her. It made the day for us lads, irreverent pagans that we were.

Parliamentary Elections

My recollections of these go back to boyhood days, upon which the impact of Liberal Party philosophers and campaigning was inescapable. Both my parents came from families with strong Liberal affiliations and my dear father was a founder member of the Haverfordwest Liberal Club. I recall the excitement during the electioneering campaigns (probably in the year 1910) of Liberal candidate Walter Roach, with large open air meetings and the lusty singing of the Party's rallying song: "The land,

the land, the land on which we stand. Why should we be beggars with the ballot in our hand? God gave the land to the people!" My immature political mind could never quite comprehend this particular philosophy but I imagine it was a protest against pernicious leasehold systems and violation of laws relating to rights of way and common land, not all of which may have since been eradicated. Later memories of David Lloyd-George are still vivid, in particular those of huge mass meetings addressed by him at Castle Square, Haverfordwest and in the big market hall at Pembroke Dock. This was an awesome personality and in this sphere, as in the realm of preaching, fire in the belly always evoked my respect and often admiration. It was sad that a statesman of such stature who had contributed so much to the life of our nation generally seemed in his later years to get his thinking muddled and to take some wrong turnings.

Be Prepared

One of the highlights of my boyhood was membership of the First Haverfordwest and Prendergast Troupe of Boy Scouts under Scoutmaster John O. Morgan. The uniform and scout pole were treasured symbols and proud boosts to personal ego. Added proud adornments were the little circular arm badges denoting proficiency in various aspects of scouting. The first test to be passed, that of Tenderfoot, was the lighting of a fire on Tan Bank and the frying of a meal. I also recall we had an indoor shooting range in the loft of Mr Sammy Phillips' large grain store at the bottom of Prendergast Hill. My outstanding memory of these happy scouting days, however, was the participation of the Troupe in a World Jamboree in Birmingham. After the long train journey, we made our beds in one of many large marquees on the jamboree site. I was only about nine and it was my very first night away from home. I don't mind confessing that one or two tears trickled down my cheek as I lay there. Next day the vast assembly of scouts from all over the world marched past before H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and other VIPs. Another treasured memory of scouting days was a troupe camp under canvas at Lydstep Haven and an invitation to tea at the big house by the first Lady of St David's, a very gracious lady. She presented each of us with a book of coloured reproductions of art masterpieces thereby nobly performing her good deed for the day.

All these memories were revived many years later when I was honoured by invitation to be guest speaker at the twenty-first birthday celebration dinner of the Haverfordwest Wesley Scout Troupe under Scoutmaster Harold Thomas, who like Scoutmaster John O. Morgan, did a grand job of work.



4. HARFATS AND OTHERS

Before the age of radio and television Haverfordwest people had to make their own entertainment for the greater part of the time. Stories and gossip were essential features of the way of life. There were few private secrets. All the local scandals were common knowledge; but for all that, long before the coming of the Welfare State, the community was a caring one where help was generally near at hand for those who needed it. Some people, of course, found great difficulty in fitting into society, and looking back over 82 years some of the "characters" of my childhood seem a good deal larger than life.

Polly was a dear, harmless, toothless little woman who lived near us. She was a great talker and communicator of hot news. She had a son called Johnny who was doing army service somewhere in the Middle East, apparently in conflict with the Turks. This must have been at the beginning of the Great War. Polly could not read her son's letters and invariably took them to the office of a nearby garage where they would be read to her. The reader knew that whatever he read would in due course be communicated to the neighbours and for fun would read out to the admiring but somewhat gullible mother things that Johnny had not written. My mother was always one of the first to hear the news: "Mrs John, my Johnny is a good boy. In this 'ere letter today a says 'Mother I am very short of money, can you send me a pound, and can you send the Christian Herald as well.' Then a says at the bottom, 'Mind Mother, don't forget the Christian Herald.'" And on another occasion: "Mrs John, what do you think? Johnny killed one of them old wicked Turkeys all by 'imself and a's going to have a medal." Looking back Polly was probably subject to epileptic fits. She also had a reputation for feigning faints in the doorways of nearby pubs and murmuring "Brandy! Brandy!" When this was administered, compassionately free of charge, it had a remarkable recuperative effect.

Charlie Marlan was an ebullient character who, as he walked, emitted strange vocal sounds. He had a beautiful strawberry nose and a gold ring under his necktie knot. He sported a fawn bowler hat and was fond of 3X peppermints. He once gave me one, and I still recall my burning tongue. Henny Too Tiff is an abbreviation of "Henny too stiff" which was reputed to be his excuse for not working. I thought though that he was a genuine rheumatic. He shuffled along so slowly with the aid of a stick and looked so sad.

Billy and Annie Bowskin were domiciled somewhere beyond Prendergast on the Fishguard Road. Billy always carried a long sapling stick and Annie, who was very short, always wore an apron and boots. They made frequent excursions to town where they indulged in drinking bouts. Billy was always noisy and wild when drunk; Annie, who followed in his wake, was quieter. As a small boy I remember her standing over a gutter grating on Bridgend Square and wondering when she moved away why steam was rising from the depths.

Willy Pagan, an inoffensive and industrious character who worked for Mr Billy Warlow at the lime kilns, drove a horse and cart which was loaded with limestone deposited by the Waterlily crew on the river bed. Joe Booty was a member of the rag and bone fraternity. He was inoffensive, short-sighted and he shuffled along with his hessian sack over his shoulders. Georgy Fourpence was a respected light horse and cart haulier who lived in Prendergast. He had a reputation for talking to his horse as if convinced that the poor animal would understand everything that he said. One day driving up High Street at a speed he considered much too lazy and slow, he was seen to point at the town clock and was heard to speak thus in loud tones of reprobation: "Can't tha see that clock? Quarter past eleven and we got to be in Johnston by twelve. Geddup!" Esther Bumby was another local character. Apparently I was her pet aversion as I often used the forecourt of her cottage in Prospect Place as a short cut to get into Cartlett Road. As I disappeared into the distance she would shout "I'll have the law on you!"

The Lower Town was full of characters. Klondyke had a box-like hurdy-gurdy hanging from a strap around his neck and with a handle to wind out the tunes. Jack the Irishman was a strong bearded character, arrogant and wild when drunk. It always took two policemen to get him to the Castle lock-up. After drinking he had an obsession for horses. Any horse in sight he would claim as his own, exclaiming "That's my horse, and I'll have her too." Often he had to be restrained physically by the owners and others. Tommy Mammy was a colourful but harmless character whose chief preoccupation was collecting rags and bones. Will Kitty was a drover from the Fishguard area who had a black patch over one eye and who was never without his drover's stick. He was a lively and musical in drink and often clashed with the police, against whom he had a strong and loud-voiced aversion. I recall one occasion at the outbreak of the First World War when the local Fourth Welch Regiment Territorials had been mobilised. As they marched along the Old Bridge, he danced and sang "Boys of Abergwain marching along, old Bowen and Morgan shirkers." Bowen and Morgan were local policemen, and they were not amused.

Davy Seven Waistcoats was a waggoner who lived in the Prendergast area. Jack Rough (Mr John James) was another respected citizen with a horse and cart used for the transport of light goods. He lived in

Cartlett. I recall a dialogue typical of Harfat repartee, overheard one stormy day: "Very rough, Mr James." "Yes, rough enough for seven waistcoats."

The Workhouse

In addition to the locals, there were many travelling vagrants in town. They were here today, gone tomorrow. Many of them would spend the night in the Workhouse or in Mrs Powers' lodging house in Quay Street. If the Workhouse was full, or if they couldn't afford to pay for the lodging, they might spend the night huddled around the lime kiln - whatever the weather. Sometimes tramps would be given shelter even if they had no money, on condition that they spent part of the next day chopping wood or doing various jobs about the house. A good number of local people (for example, from the poorer parts of town such as Quay Street and Cartlett) became more or less permanent residents of the Workhouse: they had to be looked after by law. Many of them were too ill or too old to work; they lived out their days with few comforts and little enough medical care. For such people life brought few of the moments of light relief that were available to the other people of the town.



5. SCHOOL AND FAMILY LIFE

Question: What do you remember about your schooldays in Prendergast?

Answer: As a very small child I went to the Infants School. There was the group of three schools together: the Infants School, the Girls School and the Boys School. The Infants School Headmistress was Miss Perkins, a gracious old lady. I remember also Miss Littlemore and Miss Brown. Very happy days. And from there I graduated of course in due time to the Boys School, only a few yards away. The Headmaster was Mr Edward Williams, a very highly esteemed member of the profession, very popular with the boys. I have a mental picture of the main hall of the school with a big board recording in gold print the names of all those who had passed scholarships into the Grammar School. Later on my name was added to that board when I won a county scholarship. When Mr Williams retired, Mr George Thomas became Headmaster and he was there at the time I passed into the Grammar School. He had a class of six or seven of us senior boys and he was a very good, helpful tutor.

Question: Nicknames were very common during your childhood. Can you recall the nicknames of some of your schoolmates?

Answer: Oh yes. These are some that I can remember: Cupboard, Tatters, Tipper, Todde, Drummer, Troll, Posh, Knucky, Cocky, Pincher, Bunt, Crow, Hattler, Dumpling, Bapsier, Sheegles.

question: Did you look on yourself as connected with Prendergast or Harfat? There was quite a lot of rivalry between Prendergast kids and town kids wasn't there? Prendergast was more or less a separate village.

Answer: Prendergast always had a unique character or personality and the people had a sort of reputation for being separatist. They were not really part of the town. The school drew its population mainly from Prendergast Parish. One or two pupils came from outside, from the country areas.

Question: Were there gangs of kids from Prendergast and gangs of kids from the Old Bridge?

Answer: Well that was typical of the town. There were gangs of boys from Prendergast and from Old Bridge and even from Cambrian Place. There were no vicious rivalry, just friendly clashes....

Question: Can we turn to the traditions of the town? You don't actually say anything in the notes you have written down about the local beliefs or customs or superstitions and so on that you had either in the family or in the community. Did you celebrate things like May Day, Guy Fawkes Day and so on with great gusto?

Answer: Well, yes of course Guy Fawkes. That was a big night, mainly a family occasion. Later on they had the public firework displays on Bridge Meadow on a big scale, but in my younger days it was a question of buying a few squibs and catharine wheels and all that and just having individual or family fun.

Question: You don't remember the barrels being rolled down High Street or anything like that?

Answer: No, I don't remember that. I've heard about it of course.

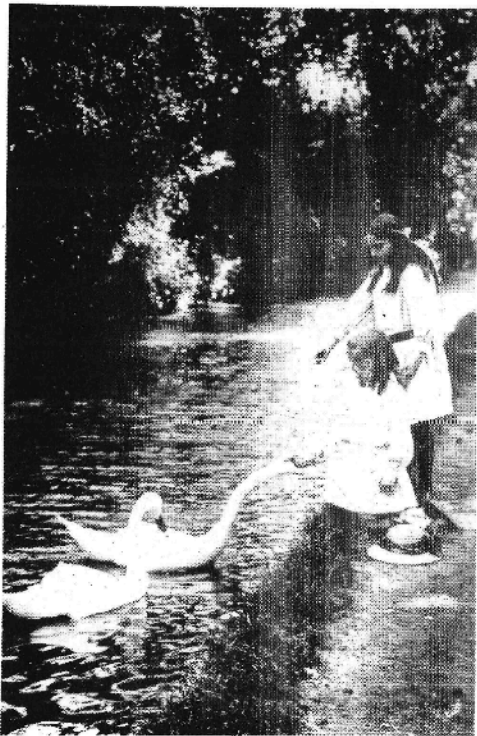
Question: So that would have been before your time. And the making of tar balls which was an old tradition apparently. But that was again before the turn of the century, I suppose. What about May Day? Did you celebrate May Day at all?

Answer: No, I don't know. Of course, there were the two fairs, the May Fair early in May every year on St Thomas Green and the Portfield Fair on October 5th. But I think there were some celebrations in the schools. I've got a faint recollection of a maypole in one of the schools. I think it must have been the girls school.

Question: Would there have been a May Queen? In many areas they used to appoint a May Queen with her attendants.

Answer: I think that was tied up with the school celebrations, not on a town scale but on a more local scale.

Question: One hears a lot about the days before radio and television, when reading and story telling would have been the main amusements. Do you remember any local superstitions or beliefs?



Scotchwells, around the year 1910. At this time the walk was well laid out and beautifully maintained. Now there is a large car-park on this spot.

Did you kids think that certain houses were haunted? As children we were quite convinced that Scotch Wells House was haunted. Were there places that you were afraid of or where it would be very daring to go and explore?

Answer: You mention Scotch Wells. The walk went right through Scotch Wells House and beyond it. There was the little brook on the left and above that were the gardens of Scotch Wells House. At that time it was the home of the Samson family. There was a mysterious building like a big black shed or summer house, but I don't recall that it had any windows. We always thought it was haunted because there was no sign of life there, and we had an idea that it was occupied by evil spirits. We never, never went near it.

Question: What about other places in town? Were there any places that were taboo or where the kids would be frightened of going? What about the Castle? Did you ever go up to the Castle as kids?

Answer: Well not really, because in those days the Castle was the police headquarters.

Question: So you'd stay as far away as possible from there?

Answer: Oh yes, of course.

Question: What about family traditions? What was Christmas like in your family as a child?

Answer: Nothing elaborate. Financial considerations played a part as they did in most families in those days. I don't think we had a Christmas tree, but we had of course the usual Father Christmas idea. I remember writing the letters to Father Christmas and putting up the stockings at the bottom of the bed at night and all that. That was typical I think of all the families.

Question: Because you were a big family weren't you?

Answer: Yes, we were seven or eight altogether.

Question: What did you eat for Christmas Dinner?

Answer: Always a goose.

Question: Did you raise the goose yourselves?

Answer: We'd buy it from the woman who supplied butter from a farm near Haverfordwest. I recall one occasion when we had a particularly fine goose for our Christmas dinner. Anyway, we were all round the table and the goose was on the table nicely cooked. Father began to carve and we soon realised that he was having difficulty. The thing was so tough that he couldn't get anywhere near carving it. It was quite frustrating. There was nothing on that goose that we could properly eat. It was as tough as old boots. So we had to go without our Christmas goose on that occasion. The goose was on a

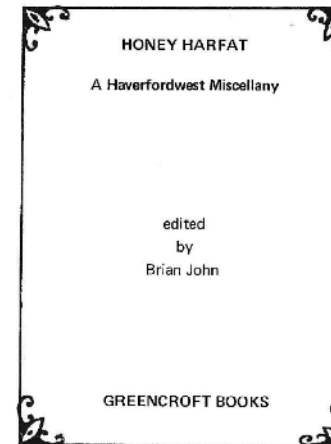
large plate and after the meal Victor and I took it up to the landing where there was a window. With due ceremony we placed the goose on the window sill. Then we lit two candles, one on either side and pretended to fall down and worship the wonderful thing. In spite of our disappointment it was all a bit of a joke. I've never forgotten the goose we could never eat.

Question: You mention candles. What was your lighting? Did you have gas lighting in the house?

Answer: Oh no, no. We had oil lamps. There was no gas in the beginning, just paraffin oil and candles. We had a lamp with a glass and shade on the table and then candles in the bedrooms. Gas was a much later development.



Also of interest:



This little book was published in 1979 to celebrate the five-hundredth anniversary of the Charter of Incorporation of Haverfordwest 1479. It is still available in the hardback souvenir edition at the special offer price of £1.95. Copies may be obtained from local bookshops or direct from the publishers, Greencroft Books, Trefelin Cilgwyn, Newport, Pembro. Dyfed SA42 0JN. For postal delivery, please send £2.30 (which includes postage and packing) with your order.

