

## Education for the people: memories of school and university in the 1920s and 1930s (newsletter 5, Jan 2001)

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*In 1921, Betty John started at the little village school in Michaelston-y-Fedw. Primary schools were very different in those days. On the one hand, the country lanes were quiet and safe: a 6-year-old could walk nearly two miles to school on her own and loiter in the fields on the way home on warm summer afternoons. On the other hand, schools were small and facilities were necessarily basic. At Michaelston, all the children from 5 to 14 were taught by two teachers, and very few went on to secondary school. Michaelston was still surprisingly remote, and transport was difficult. Betty John's struggles to attend grammar school and eventually to go to university testify both to her own determination and to the value her farming family placed on education, for girls as well as boys.*

I started school at Michaelston y Vedw two weeks before my 6th birthday. The first morning I was taken in the 'trap', but after that I walked the  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles with my lunch in a satchel. My early discontent with school was noted and the teacher, Miss Baker, made an enquiry which resulted in Mother asking me why I was so unhappy there. I replied that 'I thought I'd have been able to read Comic Cuts after two weeks and I couldn't'. The situation was soon remedied. I had a magazine, the Rainbow, which had to be read to me. My brother Walter had the Boys' Own, sister Marie had Home Notes, Dad the Farmer and Stockbreeder. There was also the weekly Christian Herald and the daily Western Mail, picked up at the St Mellons newsagent by the milk cart.

The school had from 28 to 35 pupils. Miss Baker taught the infants in the 'little room' and Miss Taylor, the headmistress, had charge of the rest up to 14 years in the 'big room'. There were up to 15 in Miss Baker's class, all seated in long desks. Sometimes we used slates, sometimes with lines. One cupboard had all the books, paper, pencils, slates and other aids to learning, and there were only the two free-standing cupboards in the big room. There was quite a bit of oral work including chanting of the tables - from the two times table up to twelve. I can still say my money tables without thinking of the meaning - '12 pence one shilling, 20 pence one and eight, 24 pence two shillings', up to '120 pence ten shillings'. We did the same with weights, liquid measures and length, using pecks and bushels, roods and perches. We used crayons a lot but painting sessions were few.

Miss Taylor's class in the big room varied between 16 and 20, aged 7 to 14. The desks were in pairs with no space for books but each section with its inkwell. It was a very responsible job to keep the inkwells topped up - a steady hand was needed. We practised handwriting in special books with four-lined paper, carrying the top part of the letter to the exact position and the lower part to the bottom line. Pen holders had loose nibs and were collected into a box at the end of each day.

I've been asked how Miss Taylor dealt with teaching such a wide age range. When you consider that I was taught in that room from 7 years to 11 years 2 months, and that at least for the last two years of that period I was taught with the top group, and sometimes on my own at the next level up, it seems that there were two main levels of instruction and plenty of examples of sums to be carried on with when Miss Taylor's attention was given to the other group. There was plenty of reading out loud, and less able readers must have picked up a lot from listening and following the text. I remember the shame at 9 or 10 years of pronouncing 'ugh' as 'ug', the quiver of Miss Taylor's lips as she corrected me and the suppressed hoot from Morgan Lewis. He was aged 13 or 14, and much better at English (though not at arithmetic) than I was. Oh! the shame of it. That boy would have benefitted from further education if he'd had the opportunity. I wonder what happened to him. Opportunity was the key word.

We had craft sessions about once a week (usually Friday afternoon). We made raffia mats, pot-shaped containers with lids and waste-paper baskets. The girls knitted and sewed, but I don't remember doing anything useful and frequently I did extra English or arithmetic at that time. Before Christmas, endless strips of coloured paper were pasted together to form paper chains. We made endless Chinese lanterns by colouring stiff blank paper with a contrast border then folding it across

the middle, making 1/4" cuts up to the border, then sewing the sides up and sewing paper handles to the top. These would be hung up from the paper chains.

There was about a ten minute break, morning and mid afternoon, and about an hour dinner break. These all varied according to the weather. We ate our lunch on the stone steps in the front of the school and then chased around the playground alongside the church yard - hop scotch, tops, conkers, skipping, tag, ball games, round games, touch. In one game, one person faced the wall. The rest started 15-20 yards back, aiming to move forwards to touch the one at the wall without being seen moving. The one at the wall counted to 5 and turned. If she saw someone moving, she sent her back to the beginning. The first one to touch her took her place at the wall. We only went round the back of the school to the toilets, which were the earth closet type - one for the girls, one for the boys and one for the teachers.

The pupil entrance was at the back into a communal cloakroom and then the two classrooms. We weren't allowed to look in through the windows where Miss Taylor and Miss Baker lived: we were told it was very rude to do so. However, Miss Taylor and Miss Baker could keep a good look-out on what was going on.

About once a week when the weather was good, we were taken out into the playground for exercises and organized ball games. If the weather was bad, we stood by the side of our desks and did arm and bending exercises. In the early years, the last half hour of the day was story reading time. A coal fire (by the teacher's desk!) warmed each room. There was little benefit for those at the back of the room. One older boy kept the coal scuttle full. Wet coats and stockings were often put to dry on the high fire guard and steam would rise from the drying clothes.

When Ivor Radcliffe came to live at Druidstone House, he gave us our Christmas party at least one year. There was a tea, games and a small toy present for each pupil and a box of chocolates for Miss Taylor and Miss Baker. As this was a church school, the local vicar visited each week, looked at the register and sometimes spoke a few words. I remember Mr Richards as vicar. He committed suicide in the late 1920s, but by then I had left to go to Caerphilly Secondary School.

On warm spring and summer days, we loitered and played a lot on our way home. We knew where all the nests were and the patches of primroses and wild sweet-smelling white and blue violets. Sometimes we cut across the fields to Ty Hir and down the track to the Laundry Cottages, getting to the road by Cefn Mably bridge. Later, those Laundry Cottages were to be used as a centre for greyhound training and the young women working there would be seen walking the dogs along the side of the road. One had to be careful where one stepped.

That wasn't the only problem with the road between Cefn Mably bridge and Cefn Mably corner. After heavy rain, the river Rhymney flooded the road right to the corner, covering the field alongside. Many times, water entered the milk cart, and I've known us with our feet up on the seat of the governess cart as poor old Lady or Bonny were pushing their way against the current. The flood water was black with coal, as the Rhymney flowed down from a busy mining valley, and when the excess water drained away a layer of coal dust would be left behind. In the late 1920s, cart loads of coal dust were dug out of the side of the river bed where it had settled over the years. The Tredegar Estate sold the coal dust to make Phurnacite. Dad had 2s. a load (10p in present money) as his share of the business.

One winter's day, it started snowing before we arrived at school, and by 11 a.m. the snow was quite thick on the ground. All the village children had been sent home before 12 and the rest of us couldn't understand why we were being kept there. There wasn't much being done and Miss Taylor was spending a lot of time at the front window. Then, early in the afternoon, there was Edward with the milk cart at the top gate. All the children down our road were piled into the cart to be taken home or near to home - Mary Weston from the house near Cefn Mably corner, May Sayce from below Cefn Mably House, Jeffrey Merritt from the police house near Cefn Mably lodge, Grace Crisp, Freda

Thomas, the Rowe children from between Cefn Llwyd and Pentwyn. Now I knew what Miss Taylor was waiting for.

Jeff Merritt's father looked after Ruperra Castle, cycling up there by 9 a.m. each morning and returning late in the afternoon. Ruperra Castle was only occupied for short periods as Tredegar House was the main Morgan family residence. Forces were stationed there early in the war but a fire destroyed much of it later on.

The school was closed in the late '50s. The school rooms are now used as a village hall, but the living quarters which Miss Taylor and Miss Baker shared in my day were bought by a Domestic Science-trained daughter of the Croes-carn-einion family, Doreen Davies, and added to and improved to make a modern dwelling. I was at school at the same time as John Phillips, Clearwell. Poor chap, he had to partner me in old dance routines - he hated it. Also Joan Jones of Bridge Farm: her father bought the better bottom fields of Cefn Llwyd after we left, cut down the bit of woodland between and ploughed across from his fields to the Cefn Mably road. This was just after the war when the need for food was great and cereal crops were paying well. Then there was Freda Thomas from Pentwyn, the next farm up the valley, who started school when I did. She used to put a stone on the gate at the bottom of Cefn Llwyd lane if she had passed before I did on my way to school. Freda married a Tatchell well known in the Vale of Glamorgan as an animal haulier. Her older sister, Edith (a bit younger than my sisters) married a Husband from Lisvane. The three sons are still well known in the milk collection and delivery business.

Recognizing the parental interest and the bit of potential - my brother having gone on to Monkton House and one sister to Cardiff High School for Girls - Miss Taylor suggested I was put in for THE SCHOLARSHIP. This was a first for Miss Taylor and I was aware of her organising work in her class of 7-14 year olds to get 30 minutes free to concentrate on me and the homework I was supposed to have done the night before. It was usually done, but once my heart sank to my boots (to my disgust, I was given boys' boots to wear to contend with mud and rough roads) and I felt the size of a gnat when I had to give the excuse 'I'm sorry, Miss Taylor, but we had visitors last night'. The threat was: 'Your visitors will stop you passing the Scholarship exam, Betty'. No idle threat! I don't think it happened again.

It took a big effort to get children on to further education if you lived in the depths of the country. Part of our problem was that Cefn Llwyd was in Michaelston parish but on the west bank of the Rhymney, so we were in Glamorgan and could not go to the nearest school, Basaleg in Monmouthshire. Cardiff High School, where Marie went, had also been closed to Glamorgan pupils by the time I sat the examination. Transport was the difficulty, with the nearest bus route a mile away. Cycling the three miles to St Mellons and leaving the bike with one of the milk customers in the village, then the corporation bus into Cardiff was the usual route, but during the winter my sister Marie spent the week with the Brutons in a farm near Llanedern - Pwll Coch, I think. Marie came home for weekends and bounced me around the kitchen table. Friday afternoon was a favourite time. My brother Walter (8 years older) had left Michaelston school aged 11-12 to go to St Mellons. He spent so much time fighting with Billy Bishop from the village that it was thought better to separate them. He later went on to Monkton House.

Anyway, at 10 years 9 months I sat the Howells School scholarship (achieved an entrance but no scholarship and we couldn't afford boarding fees) and the Caerphilly Secondary School entrance. On my results I was also offered a place in Cowbridge Girls' School but couldn't take it because of the boarding fees. I had to be taken by trap to the Twyn School in Caerphilly for the examination, arriving before 9 a.m. and staying all day. It was a drive of five miles uphill all the way to Rudry, then along the ridge to Van Road and Caerphilly. We must have started at about 7.30 a.m. Sister Marie took me, returned home and came back at 4 p.m. I ate my lunch alone in the Twyn School classroom - I didn't know anyone.

When I sat the 'Scholarship' entrance to secondary school, I didn't turn the arithmetic exam paper over and only did the seven problems on the first side. There were three more on the other side. No

wonder I finished early. In the oral that followed in the July I remember one question: 'Which is the greater figure in 1.1'. One bit of advice I gave to any pupils was based on my mistake.

It was a traumatic occasion, but I 'passed' and started in the school in 1926 at the end of the General Strike. When it came to the time to get me there, I think back now that it was truly amazing I ever attended Caerphilly Grammar School. Mother haunted the Glamorgan Education Department offices all through that summer. First they tried to get me a place in the newly-opened Basaleg Grammar School, at that time in Rhiwderin, but it was in Monmouthshire and places were restricted. Then it was suggested that I should cycle the three miles to St Mellons, bus to Cardiff and train to Caerphilly each day. An alternative suggestion was that I should cycle the five miles up to Rudry and down to Caerphilly each day. Mother thought both journeys too much for an eleven-year-old on her own. Eventually, a small grant was made towards travel and board in Caerphilly, taking into account what daily travel would cost.

I had to go into lodgings with the Misses Sheppard, two maiden ladies who ran a shop in Caerphilly High Street and who were known to my parents as their father had a saddler's business opposite the Baptist chapel we attended in Castleton. I travelled to Caerphilly on the Sunday evening, frequently straight from chapel, catching the 9.05 p.m. from Queen Street station, and returned after school on the Friday - train to Cardiff, bus to St Mellons, then the 6 p.m. Danygraig bus to 'Cefn Mably Corner' and a mile walk to Cefn Llwyd. After I had been in Caerphilly Secondary School for two or three weeks, it was a shock to be offered, in class, a pair of shoes. At the weekend, I asked my parents if I should go to the member of staff in charge and lay claim to the free shoes, as I knew we were short of money. But I was told that it wasn't necessary. This was in September 1926, just after the General Strike, and conditions were very grim for many mining families and their children. One of them, Gwen Edwards, who was in my class, I met again recently (she's Julie Morgan MP's aunt). Gwen said she remembered me as being very different from the other children. I accepted the fact that I was an 'odd one out', being the only pupil in the school in lodgings etc.

Gwen was ill sitting the scholarship exam. She was brought by car and had a blanket wrapped around her. She still came top of the list. Gwen should have gone to university but money was too short in a mining family in those difficult mid-thirties. She did a two-year teacher training course at Barry training college and was out and teaching by the time I had completed one of my five years in university.

I didn't do well in school. Being away from home and the only pupil in that situation didn't help. I cried in bed most nights, that first year, and my Sundays were unbearable: I got more and more miserable as the afternoon passed. But I never wanted to give up. This was the only way I could get an education, and from an early age I had wanted to be a teacher. In those days, a teacher had status, especially a secondary school teacher. So I had to get to university and take a degree: it didn't really matter what in, as long as I qualified and could manage the course. It took me five years to matriculate - the brighter pupils managed it in four. By the time I got to the 6th form, the boys had separated off to Caerphilly Boys' Secondary School, above the church. Most of the girls went to Teacher Training College - Barry was a favourite - so the 6th form was now geared to Training College entrance.

In the 6th form I played in the hockey team (as captain and goalkeeper) and the tennis team, was House Captain (Ty Cenydd) and Sports Captain. Our school colours were green and yellow - green blazer bound with yellow, a green and yellow striped cap, navy gym slip and white blouse, long black woollen stockings. That put me off long black stockings for life. I'd improved accident-wise by the time I went to Caerphilly, but when I was at Michaelstone I fell over so much I rarely wore stockings without darns on the knee. (And I had to do my own darning.) Of course, I always had healing scabs on my knees. The condition was so chronic that, when I was six and asked to be bridesmaid to Len's oldest sister Hilda, I was warned she wouldn't have me if I had scabby knees. In the end, they were powdered over well and the scabs hardly showed in the photograph.

I was the only girl wanting to take Maths for Higher Certificate, and the school could not teach me on my own. The only possible combination on offer that I could manage was English, History and Geography, as French and Welsh would have been impossible. During the few weeks between the School Certificate results being published and me fixing up my 6th form subjects, Mother, knowing about my uncertainty over the choice of subjects, had an appointment with the registrar at University College, Cardiff to get advice. She was told that I could enter the college at 16 and read for a degree but I wouldn't then be able to teach - it would be the degree that ministers took. That wouldn't do.

After two years in the 6th form, I got a credit in Geography (G.C.S.) and passes in English (G.S.S.) and History (S.S.), which I found very boring. Miss Locke, my teacher, later told me I yawned a lot and could start the whole class yawning. Anyway, a credit and two passes was not enough for a Higher School Certificate. But without a Higher School Certificate, how was I going to get to university? Lack of funds cut out all ideas of any university except the local one, the then University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire in Cardiff. One difficulty was that Cardiff had no Geography department, and that seemed to be my best subject. Also, how was I ever going to find the money for four years in university? Looking ahead, it seemed a lifetime.

Mother was determined I should have my chance. It had been a major miracle I had got to grammar school, and it would be even more so to be a student at a university college. Having failed H.S.C., I had no chance of entrance to the 'Normal Department' to train for teaching, which would have given me free tuition and a grant. Mother took me along to County Hall and the best I could have was a loan of £25 a year for 3 years, conditional on a satisfactory annual report from my subject departments.

The first week of term in October 1933, I signed up for Intermediate English and Economics (I couldn't bear the thought of History!) and was investigating the possibility of Geology in an Arts degree, but was most unhappy. Dad had talked to the Director of Education for Monmouthshire, T.G. James, an ex-Baptist minister who had preached in our chapel in Castleton and was known to the family. He said, 'Send the girl to see me - I'll give you an appointment time'. I went to County Hall, Newport, and well remember Mr James saying 'What are you doing an Arts degree for? English teachers are two a penny. What do you think about studying Biology? There is a good opening there - I've just appointed a teacher to start teaching Biology in such-and-such a school. There are going to be a lot of openings to teach Biology in the next few years'. I just about knew what 'Biology' covered, as only Botany was taught in Caerphilly, but what I'd been told made a lot of sense. It was probably the best advice I'd been given in years. Within two days, I'd cancelled my Arts course and signed up for Intermediate Botany, Zoology and Subsidiary Geology, having been exempted Intermediate Geology on my H.S.C. Geography result, though I had to attend an extra 2-hour session each week to cover the work I'd missed. I joined a special class for mining engineers who had to attend a course in Geology. The Science Department fees were a few pounds more than the Arts, then there were lab. fees, Students' Union guinea, all of which just about came to the £25 borrowed.

I was on my way. The new subjects were most interesting. In Inter Botany and Zoology we shared classes with the medical students. In the labs, I remember half a long bench of women (half pure science and half medical students), then three and a half long benches of men, nearly all medical students. The pure science men students joined us in the second year after H.S.C. That year, 1933-34, we were still living in Cefn Llwyd. When I had a 9 a.m. lecture, I got up at about 6.30 and had breakfast, usually porridge which had been left on the side of the American stove and slowly cooked during the night. At about 7.30 I travelled with Dad in the milk cart to the top of the Began hill where it met the Druidstone road. There were only a few stops to deliver milk up to that point but many from there on, so I walked the half mile or so to the village in St Mellons and caught a bus at about 8.20. The return journey was usually a bus at about 5 p.m. from the bottom end of Newport road to St Mellons and the Danygraig country lanes bus at 6 p.m. to Cefn Mably corner, then a walk of a mile up to Cefn Llwyd. For a few months Cyril, who collected our milk for Lloyds' dairies, arranged his times to pick me up on the corner of Richmond Road and Newport Road and I was home an hour and a half earlier. In the winter there was always a fire lit in the sitting-room for me to carry on with my studying after high tea between 6 and 7 p.m.

If I went to the Saturday night dance in the Students' Union (and I usually did), I either spent the night with Marie in Waterloo Gardens and then went home on Sunday morning or caught the 10.30 bus from Queen Street and the 11 p.m. bus from St Mellons to Cefn Mably corner. As the dance did not finish until 11 p.m., this went much against the grain, and a number of times I walked the 3 miles from St Mellons to Cefn Llwyd, once or twice with company. Very occasionally I had a partner who had a car. Dad would be in bed when I got home, but Mother was always up waiting for me. Frequently there would be something savoury keeping warm in the fireside oven - bacon, egg, sausages &c. She sat and listened to my experiences as I ate my supper. I realize now that was reward enough for the cooking and the wait.

We moved to Hendre Isaf, south of St Mellons and only a mile from the main road, during my second year. Travel was easier now. My needs had determined where Mother and Dad could possibly move to when Cefn Llwyd became too big for him to manage with no son to help and carry on after him. Hendre Isaf was 60 acres and almost half of that was taken during the war to build storage sheds. This was the part of the farm south of the main railway line. Hendre Isaf was in the depths of the country then, on the moors, with reens instead of hedges. A new hazard we had to deal with was animals slipping into the reens. I helped get one cow out. A rope was tied around her middle and a horse pulled her out of the muddy water. The last time I checked up on Hendre Isaf, I saw a pub across the road and houses filling up the gap to the main road.

I was a student at university now but I was never sure if I would be able to go back the following year. The £25 loan covered the initial bill but I had to be kept clothed and have travelling expenses. That sub of 10s a week to pay my bus fare and incidentals was a big sacrifice for my parents. When I had the chance of working in the old C.W.B. examination board offices in Cathedral Road checking exam results for 6 - 8 weeks in July and August, I thought I was in clover. I did any overtime available. Mr Rosser was the assistant secretary then. We never saw the secretary: I realized later that he was a very sick man, arriving at work by taxi and never leaving his office. Mr Rosser was a very harrassed man, frequently literally frothing at the mouth as he tried to get some order out of this temporary bunch of student workers. Daily we were threatened that dreadful things would happen to 'the young lady who made a mistake'. We were not allowed to talk, and we were squashed with our piles of scripts and forms into all corners of the C.W.B. offices. After the scripts were checked and recorded, scripts and records were checked and re-checked: slave labour without a doubt, but I was glad of the 35s to 40s a week that it paid, and was able to put about half of that away.

Miracle of miracles, the £25 was renewed for a fourth year to enable me to do an Honours year in Zoology after graduating in Geology, Botany and Zoology. I had a second class honours, second division (a good honours degree by later measure): not bad, since I was told by a teacher present in the staff-room of my old school that some teachers had stated I was not university material.

I still couldn't teach unless I had a fifth year to complete a Teachers' Training qualification. I failed to get into the Education Department in Cardiff, so I applied to the Maria Grey college in London. I needed London matriculation for this application. I had Welsh matric. as Geography was included in the Science grouping for Wales, but not for London. However, as I had graduated, I was granted London matric. for a fee. I think it was £5, a considerable sum in those days. I was lucky to be accepted in the Maria Grey college in Brondesbury. We attended lectures in the college and in Senate House, where the staff of the University of London lectured to postgraduate students from colleges all over London. We spent all our Fridays there. Sir Percy Nunn was one of our lecturers. I has a much wider experience than if I had been able to get into the Education Department in Cardiff. In Speech Training, much effort was devoted to trying to get rid of my Welsh accent - especially the 'y' ending on words like 'valley'. I was given special speech exercises. We also had several classes in the Ginner Mauer dancing school. The Maria Grey college was half post-graduate training and half Frobel training. As post-graduates we had more freedom than the Frobel students.

What about the cost? Having proved myself by graduating, and as I was now living in Monmouthshire, I applied this time to County Hall, Newport, and was given a grant of £25 towards my fifth year. Having been accepted into the Teachers' Training department, my fees were paid, plus an

allowance for my keep, and when I settled my account in the first week in college I had £5 back as the account came to about £100 and the allowances came to £105. But I still needed subs to cover train and bus fares etc.

I did my teaching practice in the Green School, Isleworth, where the Biology teacher was a wonderful help. But after the first week there, we students were asked to use a little side room and not the staff-room as the staff objected to having us about.

I got my Dip. Ed. in June 1938 but stayed on in hall with some others for a few days to act as subjects in the University of London honours psychology practical. The money we picked up during the day we used for tickets to a show at night. I saw the Insect Play and Glamorous Nights among others.

I started applying for teaching jobs about Easter, and by August I had applied for at least 80 south of a line from Liverpool to the Wash without success. How I came to apply to St Hilary School, Edinburgh, I can't remember, but I must have been getting desperate by the end of August and would accept anything. I started there at the end of September 1938. My pay was £100 a year plus board, in three equal instalments at the end of each term. I had the C.W.B. money to get me started but was heavily in debt well before the end of the autumn term and barely covered the debt with the £33 I received at the end of December, in spite of very careful budgeting. And so it went on moneywise for the rest of the year. It was a shock to receive notice from County Hall, Cardiff, that my loan was now payable and was wanted as soon as possible during the summer of 1939.

St. Hilary's was hard going, as I had to take a lot of General Science classes for the Scottish equivalent of Matric., which was University Entrance. To help me on, I attended two evening classes a week in Chemistry and one in Physics, as I had little experience of either. This meant travelling from Morningside to the Heriott Watt college, which was then a technical college. My dinner was kept for me to have on my return by one of the teaching staff and brought over to the senior boarding house where four staff including me had their rooms. I have kept friendship with all three colleagues. I realize now how supportive we were to each other. The house was Applegarth, Cluny Drive, Morningside, under the Braid Hills, which we could see when we took the girls out in crocodile on their Saturday and Sunday walks.

When I saw an advertisement for a Biology job in Chepstow Grammar School in the Times Ed. Supp. (which we always studied minutely in our common-room), I started enquiries. Our local County Councillor, Mr Jenks of the Carpenters' Arms, Rumney, was on the Education Committee. He promised Dad that he'd do all he could and that he'd get his friends to vote for me. I was home on holiday when I heard that I was one of the three short-listed. The others had better qualifications than I did but there was no-one else from the county. There was a full committee meeting on appointments day, and there were about 70 present, including Lord Raglan, when I was interviewed. Before the interview, I had met up with a woman who I'd known at college who was applying for a French post in Bedwellty. She introduced me to her county councillor and he said he'd heard my name passed around.

There was a lot of overt 'tit for tat' bargaining in teaching appointments in those days - you vote for my candidate and I'll vote for yours. I remember my husband, Les's tale about his interview for a Biology post in Cardigan Grammar School. Interviewed with him was a local 2(ii) honours woman (I knew her, as she was one of the other three Welsh students in the Maria Grey Dip. Ed. year) and a first-class honours Oxford graduate. The local Welsh-speaking woman was appointed and the Oxford graduate couldn't believe it had happened. He talked to Les about it all through the train journey from Cardigan to Cardiff - and of course there was Les with a First as well. This was also in 1939.

Anyway, I was appointed to the Chepstow post. I remember it as a halcyon time - but that was in August 1939 and by September war had broken out. Well, it's all comparative, isn't it.

