

Shirley Hemmersley

I came to live in Pentredŵr during the war to escape the bombing in Liverpool, I was almost 5yrs old. My dad who was in the RAF had been captured in Singapore and was a prisoner of the Japanese. We lived at Plas-Ddu and when I started school it was at the village school. Miss Charles was the teacher for the infants and Mr Morris was the headmaster who taught the older children. There was a room divided by a sliding partition, which was sometimes pulled back to make one large room, Miss Charles taught the young children in one and Mr Morris had the other room, we had coal fires in the winter so it was quite cosy. And a Mrs Roberts made lovely school dinners. After a while Mr Morris retired and Iorweth Roberts took over as headmaster.

We got our water from a small spring just up from John Pickett's farm and our milk from Hughes farm. Mrs Hughes was a lovely homely person who always had the kettle on and made us very welcome. Mr Hughes used to let us help with haymaking and other jobs around the farm, the highlight of the year was the harvest and people from around would come and help to get the hay in, Mrs Hughes would make tons of food to feed the helpers and a good time was had by all.

They had quite a large family, Alwena, their eldest daughter, was my best friend then there was Wynn, Mair, Eryl, and Rhys. We all went to the village school with Raymond Thomas, Stuart Mac Tavish, John Henry Thomas... John Pickett and his sister Glenys, who lived in Bwlch Mawr, the farm above Plas-Ddu. Pat Bennison who lived up near the Horseshoe Pass with her mother, her father was a captain in the Navy, and just came home when he was on leave I think. There were two small brothers called Cyril and Selwyn that walked from over the Old Pass every day to school and walked home again in the evening, I don't know where they lived but it was a long way and they were only young.

As the war progressed my Nana came to live in Ty-Canol at Worlds End, so at Christmas we used to walk up through the woods loaded with a Christmas cake made by my mum and all sorts of goodies to spend Christmas together, singing as we walked along. If we were lucky sometimes Frank Bellis would come by and offer us a lift in his pony and trap, that was a real treat.

We used to go to Eglwseg Church sometimes with Mrs Williams who was friends with my mum, it was a long walk there and back, sometimes Mrs Williams would ask us to stay for tea and that was always special, she usually had a trifle with lashings of cream and I used to play with her daughters Margaret and Ethel.

I also used to go to Sunday School at the chapel most Sundays and I liked that. Eisteddfods were also held in the chapel with competitions and refreshments. My mum used to make clothes for people in the village she even made bridesmaids dresses when Alwena's aunty got married.

We used to visit Mrs Bond, she lived in the second cottage in the village from the school end, she was crippled with arthritis and very frail, her husband had to do everything for her, There were 13 cottages in the village, with Jones shop where we got our rations. Sarah Parry used to keep the post office in the middle of the row of cottages with her daughter Elsa. Mrs Woods lived at the White Hart with her daughter Betty.

Every November everyone used to pile onto a bus and all go to Oswestry to the apple fair, we used to buy loads of apples and wrap them in newspaper and they would last us all through the winter, we used to bottle Damsons, gooseberries, plums - anything we could get our hands on. We enjoyed bread and jam for our tea and if we were lucky our mums had been baking so there would be cake and even home baked bread, I don't remember ever being hungry, Of course we were lucky living in Pentredŵr because the farmers would often have fresh made butter and eggs, and hanging from the ceiling of Mrs Hughes living room there was sides of bacon etc.

We kept chickens of our own so we had plenty of eggs, which were used for baking. and making egg custards and all sorts of good things to eat. Sometimes we would go for a walk, up the Old Pass and round down the Horseshoe Pass, we considered that a nice little stroll. The winters were always fun for us children, especially when we got snowed up, which was quite often, the school would be closed and we would go sledging and having fun building snowmen, I built an igloo once and sat in it all day with our little dog. In winter we used to walk down to Llan as the buses couldn't get through the snow and we had to get to Llan to get our accumulator charged up so that we could listen to the radio. There was no electric, we just had oil lamps, which didn't really give much light. But we really needed the radio to keep up with events that were happening around the world with regard to the war. We would always raise a glass on New Years Eve at Ty-Canol for my dad, hoping that he would be home next year.

The war ended when I was 11, and my dad came home. tired and weary after his experiences in the prisoner of war camps of Japan. Our life changed, we left Pentredŵr, the year of the first International Eisteddfod in Llangollen We went to live at Sealand RAF camp. But Pentredŵr will always be a very special place that I love to come back to often. and see the friends that I had. It's a big part of my life, and I think I was really lucky to have lived there as a child, I couldn't have wished for anything better.