

Such gatherings cannot but be fruitful, and indirectly the whole Church benefits. But the immediate aim is simple and the message clear. The work of adult education must go forward in the Church if we are to meet in any adequate way the challenge of the time.

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JOHN WILLIAMS

SOME GLIMPSES OF LIFE IN COWBRIDGE, 1700-1850

THE young man whose name appears in the title of this article was a son of the Reverend Thomas Williams of Abercamlais near Brecon. He attended Cowbridge Grammar School, and during his stay there, in 1730 to be precise, his ill report came to his Headmaster, Dr Daniel Durell. Rumour, then as now swift-moving in Cowbridge, had it that John wanted to marry a Miss Carne, just past her twentieth year, who was by all account well equipped to shake a callow youth of 17 or 18 in his devotion to that most austere of mistresses, scholarship. There was an interview with Durell, and John's defence was

that he had talked with her through the surgery window (the school sickroom remains "the surgery" in 1953) and had walked down to the Mill and back with her, but had only talked of trifling matters and nothing of love.

The doctor thundered in his best style. John would probably be disinherited. He would be worse off than his uncle in Jamaica. And under these predictions of woe, so we gather, the romance collapsed.

But if John had to join those who have "sighed as a lover and obeyed as a son," his story remains, charming in its explanation of his behaviour, and full of strength to bring back the past. The Cowbridge of 200 years ago seems to rise up sharp before us. Let me attempt some general description of it. When John Williams and his fair one walked down to the Mill, their way was probably under a fine avenue of elms, which still stood in living memory. As they returned, they could see on their right another noble row of trees at the Limes, and before them the ancient walls of the borough, dilapidated then, and surviving now only in the South-gate and the southern boundary fence of Old Hall.

And what went on within these walls? First, as is shown by our Corporation records now at the County Record Office, there was a vigorous civic life. Our church is the last resting-place of many a man whose pride it was to have it stated on his tombstone that he was in his day Bailiff or Alderman or Magistrate of the borough. Almost throughout our period, too, a wider administration had its seat here. The cells in the basement of our Town Hall still remind us that the County Quarter Sessions were held

at Cowbridge, and the trial of serious offenders and other business then transacted at Quarter Sessions continually drew the leading personages of the county thither. So did their pleasures, the race-meetings, routs and balls: and some of the county families had their town houses, for example the Carnes of Nash known today throughout the Vale as "Williams the Chemist." Some of my readers will no doubt have had a meal in the dining-room of the "Bear." This room, during the latter part of our period, was the scene of many entertainments. One held sometime in the 1820's or '30's, so it is told, had mournful consequences. Many of the guests caught some virulent infection, and some of the county families lost their rising hopes: and the "Bear" fell under a cloud, happily long since dispelled, as a setting for assemblies of this kind. The needs of travellers, too, brought life to Cowbridge. Perhaps the most pathetic monument in the church is that to Admiral David Edwardes of Rhydygors near Carmarthen. On May 12th, 1788, on his return journey from Bath, he died at Cowbridge and was buried in our chancel under this moralising inscription:

How loved how valued once avails thee not
To whom related or by whom begot
A heap of dust alone remains of thee
Tis all thou art, tis all the Proud shall be.

Did the "Bear" or the "Duke" see the Admiral's last moments? And was he, like others of his family, a skilled genealogist?

All these facts considered Cowbridge may fairly claim to have been an important provincial centre during these years. There arose in the town a substantial class of professional and business people, Tayntons, Ballards, Edmondses and others. The ramifications and fortunes of these families would make a fascinating study; and one of the pleasures of a Rector of Cowbridge is one's frequent contact with their descendants. In the summer of 1952, for example, I had a most agreeable correspondence with a London wine-merchant, one of whose ancestors gave Cowbridge its principal treasure, the great silver flagon of 1680. There was also the charming doctor from Virginia Water. He has a sampler worked by his great-grandmother at Cowbridge at the age of nine. Was her father, as family tradition had it, a clergyman at Cowbridge? He was in fact a grocer and chandler.

Having given that general picture of Georgian and early Victorian Cowbridge, I should like to weave the remainder of my remarks around Dr Durell whom we have already seen admonish John Williams. That story, and much else about Cowbridge School and Town during the period of his headmastership, derives from a number of Durell's letter-books and other papers preserved by a descendant, Sir Thomas Mansel Franklen of St Hilary. The Doctor's papers are now part of the National Library collection known as *The Cleminston Manuscripts*: and it is to be hoped that someone, someday, will give us a full study of them. In March and June 1917 and in March 1918 the Reverend W. F. Evans,

then Headmaster, published in the Grammar School magazine three most sprightly and informative articles based on Durell's papers. Durell was a Jerseyman. A strong dash of French excitability, in fact, always marked his character. King Charles I scholar of Jesus College, Oxford, he came to the School about 1720, and the 45 years or so of his reign were not lacking in crisis and incident. Things went smoothly at first. The boys were boarded either at the School House for £13 a year or in the town for £10 a year, tuition fees in all cases being extra. But in 1737, when his young wife died, Durell's troubles began. Except for one or two boys, mostly relations from Jersey, whom he received into his family, he ceased to take boarders at the School House. Nearly all his boys, living as they did in the town, were therefore much more liable to go or be led astray; and on one occasion, the Doctor's worries moved him to lament in these terms:

It is such an idle and wicked town, where there are Rakés able to corrupt almost an Angel, and continually doing mischief among my scholars.

If one may judge from the wilder exploits of these youths, as chronicled in their preceptor's letters to their parents and others, he had indeed cause to lament. Perhaps the prize goes to one of the Doctor's nephews, whom he had with him in his own home. Gambling at Cowbridge, and various escapades of an unspecified character at Llysworney, had got the lad into trouble. He determined on a bolt for home. He crossed the Thaw by night over a fallen tree, and found himself in St Hilary, where a pigsty gave him shelter till next morning. Thence he made his way to Newport, where he was caught after a two-day absence from school. Scarcely was he back than he ran away again, only to be detected at Cardiff in an alehouse kept by a former school servant. After this he settled down. In 1747 he went up to Pembroke College, Oxford, won academic distinction, and ended life as Principal of another Oxford College, Hertford.

Sickness, as well as the *juvenilis impetus*, gave the Doctor bad moments. There was much smallpox around Cowbridge in the 1740's. Tommy Durell, another nephew, had a severe attack, and one of the letters contains a delicious description of the regimen observed by him during his convalescence:

In ye morning about 7 o'clock Tommy drinks in bed half-a-pint of cow's milk as it comes warm from ye cow, mixed with half-a-pint of snail decoction, and stays in bed about an hour. About 9 he eats a porringer of bread and milk. About half-an-hour after 10 he takes his electuary (this according to *Johnson's Dictionary* is "a form of medicine of conserves and powders, in the consistence of honey") with a glass of Spaw water. About 12 he rides according as the weather permits. At dinner he eats pretty hearty of veal or mutton, chicken, rabbit and pudding, drinking milk and water or a little red wine and water. About half-an-hour after 4 in ye afternoon he again has his electuary and Spaw water. About 7 he drinks cow's milk and snail decoction. At 8 he eats a small bit of bread and cheese or butter. At 9 or a little after he goes to bed after taking his Bolus ("a medicine," says Johnson, "made up into a soft mass, larger than pills") and a small glass of Pearl julep. Between meals, a bit of plain cake or a Cowbridge biskit. Now and then he hath a small glass of jelly made of ye calf's feet, with a shaving of Hart's Horn.

'One is constrained to wonder which was worse, smallpox or the diet attending recovery from it.

The lack of discipline in the School, the occasions of vice in which Cowbridge abounded or was thought to abound, and the recurrent smallpox, made many of the local magnates unwilling to send their sons as they had done in the past. Durell's latter years saw a steady decline in efficiency and numbers. At one stage, though it does not seem to have been presented, a petition for his removal was drawn up. It was probably the work of some disgruntled townspeople. According to this document, under Durell's predecessor, Powell, the School had been worth £1000 a year to the town: now it hardly brought the tradespeople any revenue. Durell's behaviour to the boys, so it was alleged, was marred by childishness, a propensity to curse them in public, and favouritism towards the sons of rich parents. Worst of all, although a clergyman, he had not attended Church for years except once when the Bishop was present. Durell could doubtless have uttered his counterblast to all this. It is pleasant to learn that through all his woes, his daughter Susan was the apple of his eye and the comfort of his days. We have a letter of her's, written at the age of 9, engaging in its manner of expression, and a singular proof of how early a woman can become a coquette:

Cowbridge Dec 6th, 1746

Madam,

I have been honoured with ye very fine cap you have been so kind as to send me by my Dear Papa which I reserve for Sundays and Festivals, which I am sure by reason of its beauty as well as value will cause not only an admiration but an envy among my play-fellows and ye neighbourhood . . .

Susan, through her marriage with a Franklen of Llanmihangel, is the link between Dr Durell and Sir Thomas Mansel Franklen.

EWART LEWIS

A second article in the next issue will tell of the Llandaff Diocesan Library, founded at Cowbridge c. 1711.