

## **Memories of Mrs Judy Davies (nee Watts)**

Mrs Judy Davies was the youngest child of David and Mary Watts, born in West House, Westgate in 1925. Her father, David, was one of the founders of Watts & Morgan auctioneers and estate agents. He joined the firm as an apprentice to John David, auctioneer, and then went into partnership with him. When JD died, David Watts went into partnership with Hopkin Morgan and the firm became Watts & Morgan. Colwyn Jones came into the firm after Judy's father left. David Watts was given the Freedom of the Borough in 1956. Sidney Thomas (who ran a painting and decorating company; ? the brother of Bertie and John, undertakers) made the casket for the Freedom presentation from a rotten beam found in the church. David Christopher Watts did not serve in WW1 as he had peritonitis. He became the Borough Agent, an Alderman, and later received the Freedom.

Judy's parents met in Newton, Porthcawl. David Watts was camping there with his friend Arthur Gwyn, and the latter introduced David to his cousin and to Mary (Harris) who was there from her home in the Forest of Dean, where her father was a tinplate worker. After their marriage, the couple first lived, for about six months, in the Poplars, to where they had to fetch their water from the town hall pump. When they got married, Birds had an ironmonger's shop, and Roger Bird's grandfather gave Mary a laundry basket and told her to fill it with whatever she wanted from the shop as a wedding present, which she found extremely useful.

Judy's older brother, Roy (David Roy) Watts was killed during WW2 when serving with the 5<sup>th</sup> Welsh regiment (which consisted mainly of miners). He had joined the Territorial Army and so was called up early in August 1939. She recalls him marching with the group along the Porthcawl seafront when they were given a week's holiday there before being sent abroad.

Her sister Kathleen, four years younger than Roy, and four years older than Judy, studied as a 'masseur' (physiotherapy) for three years in Cardiff before further training in Taunton in WW2 with the Taunton Army Corps, and then working with them in Sicily and northern Italy (she taught tapestry work, for example, to help the wounded exercise their fingers). When war ended, she was stranded in Naples – as a civilian she was not shipped home. Her father approached the local MP (in Pontypridd then), Arthur Pearson, who immediately arranged transport home for Kathleen within three days. Kathleen worked for a while in the South London Hospital for Women, but later emigrated to Canada, returning to visit her parents most years. She took Canadian citizenship.

Judy Watts was born in West House, Westgate, a rented property, and lived there till she was nine. They had running water in the house, which was rare in the town in those days. Her parents then had West Winds, Love Lane, built in 1934/5 and the family moved there. There were no council houses in Porth y Green at that time. There were two chicken farms however – one opposite West Winds and one on Windmill Lane, and they provided plenty of manure for the garden of West Winds. Norman Roderick bought land from the Watts family there to build his house off Broadway, to the west of West Winds. (Eventually, after David Watts died, his widow moved into Four Winds, opposite the primary school on Broadway, where Judy had attended as a pupil in the 1930s -then called the Board School).

The Morgan family lived in Cusop, next door. Sarah the mother always referred to Arthur as 'my dear son', but never said that about her other son Cyril. Arthur died in the war, leaving Vera and Cyril as the only children. There was no electricity in the house – the family did not want it. When a street light was to be installed in the area, it might have gone outside Cusop, but was put on the corner of Windmill Lane instead so it would not give light into the Morgan's house. Sarah Morgan would scrub

her garden path daily. Later, she was bedridden for several years. Judy remembers visiting her upstairs and being impressed by the beautifully embroidered top to the sheet (apparently it was just the top of a sheet kept as a turn-back to go on top of an ordinary sheet). Vera had to keep a coal fire going constantly in the bedroom for her mother, getting up during the night to attend to it. Once a week, she would go shopping in Cardiff and left sandwiches for her mother and Cyril – ‘her brother could not cut a sandwich’.

Judy always walked to school and back, including at lunch times. To get to West Winds, she walked past the Grammar School. Mrs Williams, the headmaster’s wife, shouted at her however (as a High School girl passing the boys’ school), so she walked through Birds’ yard instead. Everybody always walked out on Sunday afternoons.

The family shopped at David Williams, the grocer in 33 High Street (he was from Bridgend and had a shop there too). He had a van and delivered on Fridays. Later, they shopped at Wadhams in Eastgate.

The two infants’ teachers in the Board School were Miss Davies and Miss Aubrey, who lived together on the High Street. Miss Miles (later becoming Mrs Buchalik) shared a junior classroom with Mr Frederick, then you moved into Miss Thomas’s class (she ‘hit you under the seat’) and lastly the class of Mr Sloman, headmaster. Then Judy moved to the girls’ High School on the Aberthin Road, recalling there were a few boarders still when she joined the school. They lodged with the head, Miss Bennet Jones, in the school house, on the left side of the building as you face it from the road). She showed me a photo of Miss Gunter, who taught her history, geography and also art (chs06897). Girls stayed at the High School until form 5, taking the ‘CWB’, then had to go to Bridgend if they were felt suitable for further education. When she started at the High School, there were three grades of girls – the ‘town’ girls, those who came by train and those who came by bus. The ‘train’ girls had to use the buses when the trains stopped operating. Some came from Llantwit Major, some from St Nicholas. She recalls a double decker bus every hour coming from Talbot Green. During World War 2, the pupils had an extra week off school when a bomb fell in the nearby railway goods yard and they had to wait a while for the bomb disposal unit to come. She recalls there was a lot of timber stored in the yard. From Sunday School, there were outings to Barry on the train.

Judy left school then and went to a commercial college in Cardiff for two years before joining her father’s firm in Cowbridge. She eventually married John Davies, who was working in the Cowbridge Midland Bank, and their first home was East Villa, Eastgate. It had been lived in previously by the two Williams sisters (nicknamed ‘the Shetland ponies’ as they were very short) and was in a ‘terrible state’ when Judy & John moved in. There was a hole straight from the living room down into the cellar, for example. They had a £300 grant towards its repair and restoration. They installed an Aga cooker in the very thick dividing wall between the front room and the kitchen. They sold the house when John was transferred to the bank in Craven Arms, Shropshire, and they lived then in Ludlow. John Davies was the captain of Cowbridge Cricket Club for about 14 years. Judy had a bench installed in his memory at the club, which she has just replaced.

Judy talked of her work at Watts and Morgan, and the weekly cattle markets in the town – held on Mondays. Watts & Morgan were responsible for running the market every third week, Herbert Thomas another week and Seth Phillips (of Newport) the other third. Watts & Morgan staff always heled out Herbert Thomas, and vice versa. Where the sheep market is today was then a field, with a stile into it from West House, Judy’s home. The market was on the High Street too (where the car park is now, alongside the Market Place) – for sheep, pigs and calves. Cattle were sold in the area behind Old Hall after lunch. It was quite a big market. Cattle were driven up the main road to the

railway station to the trains. The Masons Arms beside the market was open from 6 am till midnight on market days. Bridgend was 'a very good market'. It was the first market in the country to take TT cattle (they were kept in separate pens). Watts and Morgan used to hold a market in Peterston, and Seth Phillips one in Ely, but the dealers did not like these little markets and so a larger one focussed on Cowbridge.

She recalls a constant stream of family visitors to her home, coming over the stile at the back of the house, for the two annual fairs – cold boiled beef and apple tart were served for the March Fair days. Lilian Davey, a much loved maid for the Watts, boiled a pan of potatoes all day for mashing and serving with the boiled beef. Lilian's parents lived in the Butts. Her father 'took to the drink', but her mother was 'very well spoken' and had been a governess to the Russian royal family for several years.

The family always attended Llantrithyd church after Judy's mother refused to attend Cowbridge church when she found out the vicar, David Williams, had been 'carrying on with another woman' whilst his wife was still alive. Judy and John were married at Llantrithyd, and Judy still goes to church there most weeks. Judy's grandmother (a Harris) lived in what is now called Thira Cottage, 46 Westgate; before her there were Elsie Basset and her mother. The family by tradition always attended Llantrithyd church however, and Judy was married there. Judy's grandfather (a Harris) lived in the Poplars for about six months. Water had to be carried in there from the Town Hall pump. This pump was restored in memory of Judy's father.

John Davies. Judy's husband, was captain of Cowbridge Cricket Club for about 14 years, and Judy was an honoured guest at the recent ceremony for the restored 'Fred Dunn' gates of the club. She has recently renewed a bench there that she had originally had installed in his memory.

Judy recalled memories of some of the shops when she was young - Mrs Hinton's, for example, and that of Thomas & Evans (bread sweets and cakes). Mrs Hinton ('Goldie') moved her shop across the road to the north side (? where Oscar's is today). She sold china and a mixture of goods. A story was that she went on holiday for a fortnight, leaving her very upright bicycle propped up against the side of the town hall, and it was still there on her return.

There were four butchers (Oakley, David, Edwards and Morgan), who all bought their meat from Cowbridge cattle market, and Judy's mother bought her meat from each in turn each year to support their businesses.

Judy swam in the town's swimming pool in the river Thaw – High School pupils one day a week, and boys in the Grammar School another day. Boards were put up at each end to maintain sufficient water. One end was very muddy and full of natural springs. Mr Penny oversaw the baths. He had lost a hand in the Boer war and had a hook as a replacement. Judy thought he lived in one of the nearby mill cottages.

Mr Rowsell lived opposite Judy when she lived in West House. He sold tea from a suitcase, walking round the villages, with quite a few different makes. Her mother always bought his tea. He lived in one of the terraced houses; had no pension.

Dr Brown Miller was in Stafford House, and Dr Naysmith came as his partner. Both were Scottish ('no bedside manners'!). The surgery was the first room on the left, the waiting room on the right. Their GP duty at weekends alternated with the other Cowbridge practice, that of Dr Booth Meller. When Judy and John Davies lived in East Villa, John had to be in Dr Naysmith's house (opposite in Eastgate)

with a bottle of whisky and a lump of coal every New Year's Eve before midnight. He had been working (in the bank) until about 11 pm.

Judy's father played Bridge every Monday in the Bear. He never carried money, nor drank alcohol, nor wore a watch but could always tell the time. He resigned from the St Quentin's masonic lodge as he did not like it there. When he retired, he had a gold pocket watch, a gold chain for his wife, and a silver salver as gifts.

Judy's mother co-founded the WI with Mrs Owen Phillips (her husband was headmaster at Maindy school). Once a year, the group gathered in St Quentin's House, Llanblethian for afternoon tea; usual monthly meetings were held above the Electricity Showroom (now Bar 44).

Mr Reg Williams ran the chemist shop (now Great House pharmacy). He was 'a character'. He made up his own medications, including 'Mary Barton's pills for constipation' (Mary Barton had run a dame school on the corner of High St and Eagle Lane). There had been two chemists further up High Street before Mr Williams, and he had their recipe books for medications. All these books are now in the Myddfai Centre of the National Botanic Garden of Wales, deposited there by Mr Williams's daughter Mary after he died. Every November to March, Romany gypsies came to St Hilary, the men working on the farms, hedging and ditching. Mrs Lee, the 'matriarch of the tribe', made a liniment from the field herbs and passed on the recipe to Mr Williams. It became famous in the area as the 'St Hilary liniment', soothing sore skin, and in fact Mr Williams made so much of it, it went all over the country. David Watts would never be without a jar. Mr Williams also made a cough mixture with blocks of solid liquorice, which he wrapped in bay leaves (these would be in the mahogany drawers lining the pharmacy – it is thought these too went to the Myddfai Centre when the shop was refurbished.) The chef at the Bear Hotel was famed for his rice pudding. He used to place bay leaves from Mr Williams's shop on the top as it cooked (flavoured no doubt with liquorice). Mrs Lee would come to the Watts's house in Westgate two days after Christmas to get goose grease for her liniments. This goose fat was collected separately from the goose itself so it was not flavoured with sage and onion. Mr Williams also did a lot of animal cures – there were few vets in those days. He cured canker, for example, in spaniels' ears. Other remedies of his which Judy treasured included Diana's handcream and Diana's tooth powder – Diana was his niece.

Mr Williams the chemist was Chairman of the Bench, and Judy recalls she and Mary Williams being sent to him as they had no identity cards on them when they went once to a town hall dance during the World War 2. The Williams family lived in what is called Franklen House, behind and at right-angles to the Great House pharmacy. Mr Williams had cases of soap stacked in the back bedroom, bought in a year early as he claimed they should be 'hardened off'. His daughter Mary, Judy's close friend, never qualified as a pharmacist, but worked in the shop. She married John Jenkins and the eventually lived in The Old Bakehouse, Llanblethian. Her brother, John Williams, was a major in the army.

There were three ladies in the town (Mrs Jenkins who lived where Sorrento is, Mrs Yorwerth and Mrs Thomas, whose husband was manager of the Midland Bank) who all used to sit in their upstairs' windows watching everything that went on in the town. Similarly, Mrs Hufton, who lived at 50 High St., would watch from her downstairs' window.

Judy can remember the houses in Church Street, opposite the side of the Duke, being pulled down. She remembers a cobbler living there, and also a man 'whose father had done well, but he had turned to drink'. The people from the houses were re-housed by the council on Broadway.

There were three cobblers in the town, Mr Sanders in High St, one in Eastgate and one in Church St. David Watts wore Lotus boots, much used for tramping round farms with his work, and when they needed re-soleing he was horrified they had to go back to the Lotus factory at a great cost. He was used to paying Mr Sanders 1 shilling and eleven pence for new soles.

Judy spoke of her grandmother Watts farming at Llanmihangel Place. There were three dairies in the house, which then belonged to the Dunraven estate. Her grandmother had been a Jenkins, but married a Watts. They had twelve children, but two sons were killed in WW1 in the Dardanelles, one coming over from his then home in Canada to serve with the Canadian forces, and the other one from Hereford. After her husband died, Grandmother Watts's son came to farm there with her, but she eventually moved to Llantwit Major.

One daughter, Morfydd Watts, went to Glasgow university to study dairying, and ended up in North Wales running a cheese factory. She used to cycle around the area inspecting cows. She always said that Brie cheese was made of the poorest quality milk, sold off cheaply. As a child, Morfydd had attended Llandough school, walking there from Llanmihangel. The headmaster beat her regularly however and she was very unhappy, so moved to Llysworney school as a weekly boarder, walking there across the fields with 6 pence for her lodging money. She later attended Miss Culverwell's private school in Great House, Cowbridge High Street, and as an excellent artist copied the painted bird panels in the front room there (Mrs Williams's 'sanctuary'), which can still be seen within the pharmacy today. Morfydd's copies now hang in Judy's house. Morfydd went on to the High School, when that opened and the private school closed. She was once reported to the headmistress for not wearing gloves. She remained a very good artist, and when her husband died, she sold many of her paintings in North Wales to help with funds.