

This is not my life story but stories of growing up in a family of nine. Mum, Dad and my four brothers, Leonard, John, David, Glyn and my two sisters, Sheila and the baby of the family, Margaret. We were to lose our brother John at the age of fifty-two, a great shock to us all. John left behind his wife, Sibyl, daughters Caroline, Sarah Marie and sons Anthony and the twins Wayne and Dale. We were born at Six Bradford Terrace, Llanymynech. When I say we were born at Six Bradford Terrace, one of us wasn't born there and that was Glyn. He was born in Welshpool hence those immortal words, 'I am the only true Welshman.' The border of England and Wales ran through the village. I was born on the English side of the border but step off out front step and you would be in Wales. Six Bradford Terrace had no electric and the toilet was outside, and every winter the pipes would freeze and come the thaw the pipes would burst sending water everywhere. The house had two front rooms, one with an open fire that Mum cooked on and the other front room was used by two evacuees we had staying with us. The house had two bedrooms and all us lads shared one. During the winter we would have big overcoats on the bed to keep us warm. Washday for Mum was in the shed out in the yard, and Dad would light a fire under a big boiler before going to work. Mum had a mangle to get most of the water out of the clothes. We were as poor as church mice, no such thing as pocket money perhaps a penny now and then to spend in the Hide sweetshop that was just behind our house. The little sweet shop that Margaret ran out of and almost got run over. We used to eat sugar and dripping butties and stew once a week when we would feed another family. Reg and Nora Jones and their two daughters Sandra and Desiree lived next door. We would go and play with Sandra and Desiree.

Every time we went to play next door we would play doctors and nurses. After a bit of nursing we were fit for anything. Mum suffered from very bad fits and when Mum was in a fit it would frighten us. We would run next door and get Nora. Nora was very good with Mum. As soon as Mum went into a fit, our Glyn with his chest bursting with pain would run to Pant and back. When Nora returned to work Mum would knock her up in the mornings. We did not go far from home in our early years. We would go next door to play and sometimes we would sit on our front step with Mum. There would be quite a few of us sitting on the steps. All our friends would come and sit with us. We would sit and watch Mama Rabbit trying to ride his bike home after being on the beer.

With the border of England and Wales passing through the village, we had to have two schools. We went to the English school that was behind our house. We had to go through a little farmyard on our way to school. In the yard there was a nasty cockerel that would take at us. If I knew then what I know now I would of booted the flaming bird. It was only a small school with a big playground. The highlight of the year was sports day. We would go down to the playing fields that were marked out like a running track. I was useless at running then, my legs were like two sticks of celery and they would be going flat out and I was not going far.

One occasion I did not look forward to was the Christmas carol service in the church. One year I had a very bad throat and instead of saying to Miss Pugh, one of the teachers, that I had a sore throat, I said I had a throat

ache. Miss Pugh said you cannot have a throat ache, get on and read. If only I had said sore throat. At the bottom of the playground you would be looking over a small field with a caravan in it. It was the home of Jack Edwards. The field is the graveyard now, Mum and Dad are buried there.

As well as going to school we had to go to Sunday school. Mrs Gunning and Mrs Humphries were the teachers and Mrs Lewis played the piano. Sunday school would be going along all right when suddenly we would hear those dreaded words. We must start on the Anniversary. We were all given our recitation on a piece of paper and come anniversary day, it would be all grubby and hardly readable but it would get you through on anniversary day. I would have my anniversary word perfect the day before. I used to think I would get it right this year. We would go to Sunday school a bit earlier on the day to get ourselves on the stage. You could see the schoolroom getting full and when Mrs Gunning stood up you could hear a pin drop. A couple of songs and recitations and it would be my turn. I would walk to the front of the stage putting my hand into my pocket for that grubby piece of paper. It would be the same every year, lost again! There I was standing on the front of the stage with all those folk looking at me. Most of them strangers, where did they all come from? I would stutter through my recitation, sit down and it would all be over for another year.

Mum would take Glyn, Sheila and Margaret to Aberdovey for a week and we would have a day out in Welshpool. Dad would take us to Welshpool and he would go into a pub for a pint and we would sit on the step outside. Many a time Dad would throw his hat into the house before he came in after being on the beer with his mates. Dad could be found with his mates sleeping under the church wall after being on the beer.

Dad had a garden a bit lower down and we would get the top of the spring onions and use them as straws. There was a plum tree in the garden next to Dads. The tree had been there for years but never had a plum on it. But one year it had one plum on it right at the top. There it was, shining red, and it got me better of me. Looking was not enough, so I climbed the tree for that one plum. I was one branch below it when the branch I was standing on gave way and I fell into a bunch of nettles. I was stung all over so it was dock leaf hunting time.

We used to have a few visitors to the village when we were young. Levin the Jew would walk through the village carrying his bag of cotton over his shoulder. Another visitor was a knife and tool sharpener. He would have a big sharpening wheel fixed to his bike and he got it turning by peddling. On occasions a man would walk through the village playing the bagpipes. As soon as Mum heard him she would get us all indoors. Mum said it was a sign of death. I think it was one of those old wives tales. A black man would visit the village carrying a suitcase. The first time I saw him I thought he was coming for me. When we were naughty, Mum would say, if you don't behave a black man would come and take you away. No one knew what was in his suitcase, perhaps naughty boys and girls. One year an evangelist came to the village and pitched a tent in the playing fields. We would all sit around and listen to him talk about Jesus. He never preached to us but spoke to us. He was one of the nicest men I have ever met.

Dad would trim the trees that were, and still are, down one side of the village. It was our job to carry the sawn off branches down to Dad's garden to be burnt later.

It would soon be time to leave the village school and go to the Oswestry boy's modern school. We would have to walk down the road and catch the steam train into town. The train would leave the village stop at the next village. Pant, and pick some more kids up. One morning a lad tried to get on the train before it had stopped and his leg went down between the platform and a carriage, cutting his leg off just below his knee. One cold, frosty morning I put some cold water on my hair to keep it down. Walking down the road to catch the train, my hair froze and sitting in a warm carriage it thawed out and all the water ran down my face.

My first year in school went well, but I didn't know what was in store for me the next year. Knowing our Glyn today, you might not believe what I am about to write. I had my hands full with Glyn, getting him to school and in school, once I got him there.

The first morning Glyn got on the train and I had no idea what was going to happen as soon as the train stopped in town. One minute Glyn was standing by me on the train and the next minute he was gone. I thought nothing of it as I walked out of the station and I saw Glyn getting on a bus and going back home. I had never seen anything like it. This went on for some time, he would get off the train and catch the bus home, until one morning Glyn decided to walk to school. I thought everything was all right now, but it didn't end there. As soon as the whistle went Glyn came to the line that I was standing in. I told him to go to another line of boys and he started crying but I had to go. I hadn't been in my classroom long when I had to go to Glyn's classroom as he would not stop crying. I even had to sit outside and watch him as he did his PE. Finally Glyn stopped crying and I could settle down to my own learning. I often wonder when Glyn moved up north, did he cry for me.

Another school year past and I was going on to my third year at school. This year was to be my worst year. I could not believe what was to happen. Glyn was at last settled down and I thought things would go well.

I was made head of dinner table. As head of the table I was responsible for seven other lads who sat at my table. I would have to go to the serving hatch and get the lunch and serve it out. This one day we were a plate of meat short and Dixie Jones, one of the teachers on dinner duty said. Someone has had two plates of meat and until one of you stands up, you do not start eating. I never took two so I didn't stand up. We were all sitting when this lad called the teacher over and said that I had taken it. I couldn't believe it, I didn't take two plates and the lads at my table said so, but the teacher didn't believe me. I was marched down the dining hall and made to stand outside. When all the lads came out of the hall I was taken back in and that was the start of what was to be weeks of questioning.

I was taken out of my lessons once a day for weeks and questioned. There seemed no end to it but I was not going to own up to something I had not done. Weeks later I was sent for by the headmaster. It wasn't the first time he had questioned me. As I entered his office I thought, here we go again.

He turned to me and said we believe you now. I hardly said a word but as I was leaving his office, I said 'will you please tell the whole school that I didn't take two plates of meat.'

I was glad Glyn had settled down in school because there were times when I was going to say 'yes.' I did take the plate of meat, but Glyn said you didn't take it - keep saying 'no'. A few weeks later I was sent for again and was told by one of the teachers, that we are having trouble with Glyn. I thought not again. I was told to go to the hospital that was close to the school. Glyn had been playing football in the playground. A lad's shoe came off and caught Glyn right between the eyes. So off I went and as I was walking into the hospital I could hear Glyn's voice. I found Glyn with blood all down him and the nurses trying to stitch a big cut between his eyes. They were having an awful time trying to stitch him. I had to hold his hands behind his back while two nurses held his arms and one nurse stitched him. After he was cleaned up and stitched I took him home. Next morning Glyn had two big black eyes and as we were heading for our summer holiday he had two extra weeks off school. It was funny really, the lad whose shoe came off and caught Glyn was the same lad who said I had taken two plates of meat. He must have had it in for the two of us.

As I have said, we didn't go far from home in our early years. Sheila and Margaret would go down me street to play with the Williams family and I would go to play with Mrs Pugh's grandson, Christopher. Mrs Pugh's funeral was the first funeral I went to. I have been to an awful lot since. As we were growing older we would take a walk around the rectory lane and make whistles out of a little twig. In the hedgerow there was a plant that was hollow so we would get a few berries and use it for a peashooter. For some time, Derek, Glyn and I would be the three always together and now we were in Oswestry School we had the world at our feet. Derek's mum smoked and one day Derek took a fag out of his mum's packet. We were big lads now smoking. Glyn did have one puff but turned green so Derek and I finished it off. We were puffing away when all of a sudden we had smoke stains on our fingers. That same night someone broke into one of the shops and stole all the fags. Next morning we heard about a break in and thought if the police saw the stain on our fingers they would think we took the fags. Walking down the road to catch the train, we were rubbing the smoke stains off our fingers and we nibbled them red raw.

Llanymynech was a thriving village with its shops, pubs and places of work. The village had a butchers, a bakers, a paper shop, a cafe, a chip shop, a post office, a cobblers, a cycle shop, a little sweet shop, a barbers, a saddlers, a tailors and one or two shops that sold all sorts. That was a lot of shops for a little village, people didn't need to go into town to shop like today. All the shops were very busy. I am not going to write about all the shop owners, just the ones that played a part in my life. The barber was Daddy Roberts and he would cut a bit of hair and pull a bit and it used to hurt. Arthur Jones was the saddler and he was always busy. When the hounds' man bought the hounds to the village he would call into the saddlers before taking the hounds down to the river to go otter hunting.

Jones the saddler had some chickens on a small piece of land just behind his house and close to the road. On that bit of land he had two chicken huts. One day Glyn, Derek and I were leaning on the wall when I jumped over the wall and crawled to the chicken huts, put my hand inside and got an egg. I was back over the wall with an egg in my hand. There we were, three of us staring at the egg. What now? We couldn't take it home! To this day I don't know what we did with it. Harry Pugh was the tailor. Harry had a daughter Joyce who was a bit funny and when we first started to deliver parcels for Harry, Joyce would frighten us, but we got used to her. Joyce spent her days walking around the village picking all the rubbish up and taking it down to the river bridge and throwing it into the river. Joyce lived on her own for many years after her mum and dad died. Joyce's life came to a sad end. One day while walking down to the river she was knocked down by a motorcycle and died a few days later.

We would walk over the fields delivering Harry's parcels. Sometimes we would take them to the post office. Wherever we went David and I would always fight. What we fought over I don't know. This one day we had been fighting and David tried to run away from me. As he was running away I started throwing stones at him, so he decided to get over a fence. As he was getting over the fence he caught his leg on some barbwire, cutting his leg. He had to have it stitched and the scar is still there today.

The four garages seemed to be busy and one of them ran a bus service into town.

There were no skateboards about then or roller skates. No trainers, no tracksuits, which was a good job really, we couldn't have afforded them. We used to make a three-wheel cart and they would motor on. Three pram wheels, a piece of wood, a couple of nails and a piece of string. It was just like a Rolls Royce to us. We would pull the cart to the top of the village, turn it around and with one push we were away. You had to get on quick before it went. Derek and I pulled the cart up as usual this one-day, turned it for home and jumped on. I was steering as we headed down to the village, when I lost control and came off the path and veered across the road in front of a car. The car was only going slow and there we were, Derek and I, lying on the road in front of the car. We were not hurt so we got up, leaving the cart where it was and ran down to the village. I think our David went and got it. Another time Derek and I were coming down on the cart again when I lost control and ended up in the hedge. I pulled the cart out of the hedge and said to Derek to get on. No way, he said, you would kill the both of us. Get on, I said, but no he wouldn't get on, so I jumped on and was down in the village in no time. Sometimes we would go down to the railway bridge with our carts. We would start from the top of the bridge and end up right down past Bromley's farm and it was a long way back. So we didn't do it very often. We would fall out about whose turn it was to go on the cart. One time we had two carts and we would race around the village. If you were the one pushing, you would have to make sure you pushed forward and not down. If you pushed down, the cart would tip up and the two of you would be on the ground. The races had no finishing line, the winner was the one who kept on his feet. Many a time we would have gravel rash and would be near to tears. It was not a pretty sight to see lads crying from gravel rash.

One major problem when you crashed the cart you could guarantee one of the wheels would buckle and we would have to go searching for another one. In the end we ran out of wheels. I think women were sick and tired of having kids.

The villages held a carnival and show every year and it was a grand occasion. On the day before the carnival they would erect a marquee on the playing fields. Tables were put all around the inside of the marquee so everything could be on show. On the morning of the carnival most of the folk would be dressing their floats and getting dressed up in their costumes to be judged later on the field. Dancing troops would arrive along with the band. We would all form a procession and it would work its way through the streets. Our Glyn and I would be on a float with Charlie Ingram and Albert Kynaston and Goodwin driving the float. We were only young at the time and it would be a rough ride through the village for us. We went as washerwomen and the soapsuds were flying everywhere. We went to Oswestry carnival a couple of times, one time we went as a barber shop. It took weeks to get all the stuff out of our hair. The streets in the village would be packed. Some men would be drunk already. The procession would make its way to the playing fields where the judging in the marquee had been done. Len Leg would walk away with the silver cup once again. The crowning of the carnival queen would take place and once the judging of the floats and fancy dress was over, it was time for the highlight of the day. The one thing people had waited all day for. (The fancy dress football match). Men dressed as women and women dressed as men and the two captains Charlie Ingram and Mrs Pugh. I don't think they knew how much pleasure they brought to the people of the village and surrounding areas.

There would be a dance in the village hall to finish the day. Men would leave their empty beer bottles all over the field and we would be up early next morning, collecting them and taking them back to the pub and get a penny a bottle.

As we were growing older we would wander a bit further from home while on our summer holidays. We would take a walk along the canal path and cross over the black bridge. It wasn't a bridge, it was just an iron girder across the canal. It was a bridge many years ago. It was used to get the lime from the limekiln. The girder was about a foot wide and about eight feet high above the canal. Most of the lads would run across it, but not me. I would be down on all fours. It was a nightmare, I had to inch myself across but once across we would walk to the old limekiln. All that was left of the limekiln was a big mound with two entrances in it. You could walk inside but I didn't bother. Close by there was this tall chimney (it was known as the big chimney). It was that tall you could see it from miles away. The chimney had a ladder on the outside of it and I only knew one lad to climb to the top.

In the field close by, Reg Ethelston kept a horse and it hadn't been broken in. No one would cross the field with the horse in it. Reg used to walk the horse through the village. We thought many a time he would break loose. If we were bored, we used to go and stand outside the chippy. The fish and chip shop had a corrugated roof and it was under a big tree and lads would climb the tree and walk on the roof. Again I have only seen one lad climb to the top of the tree. It was the same lad who climbed the big chimney.

Spindle owned the chip shop and we gave him a dog's life. One night someone threw Ziggy's hat in the boiling fat. Another time after Merv, Glyn and I had been scrumping, we all had cookers in our pockets. Cookers were no good to us so Merv said, shall we try and throw an apple through the chip shop sign. The sign was a square glass box shape with chip shop on it. Glyn and I said, no way, but knowing Merv we knew he would. He started throwing the apples and missing by a mile, until one apple hit the sign sending glass everywhere. It was time to do a runner. We didn't go to the chip shop for a couple of nights.

Instead of going across the black bridge, we would go down to the river. There was a couple of ways to the river. One way was down past the chapel, on down past a house where a man bred maggots for bait for the fishermen who came to the village fishing (what a stink). A little further down we had to cross the railway line. We used to go for a ride on the train with the driver. On the train, not in a carriage, it was a wonderful feeling. It was a dangerous thing to do really. Once at the river we would have a paddle and all the little tiddlers would be around our feet. The other way to the river was better for the lads who could swim. We would all go this way, boy and girl swimmers and non-swimmers.

We would walk along the riverbank until we came to a spot where some of the lads could cross the river and dive in. I was a non-swimmer and I still can't swim. The lads would be diving off the opposite bank while we would be paddling in the river. The river where we paddled was fast flowing but very shallow. This one day Ziggy asked us if he could come with us. Now knowing how Ziggy was (simple) we thought it over and we all agreed he could come but we were to regret it. Ziggy ran home and got a towel. We thought nothing of it, until Ziggy went behind a hedge with the other lads to change into their trunks. All the lads behind the hedge were roaring with laughter and when they all came from behind the hedge, we all were. Ziggy had got his mother's knickers on as trunks and a bar of soap in his hand. Now with the river shallow but running fast, Ziggy sat down and started to have a wash. He got quite a good lather on his face and put the bar of soap in the riverbed. Not thinking (Ziggy didn't think) the soap floated away. With all the soap off his face Ziggy looked down for his soap. Seeing no soap there, Ziggy started cursing and thought someone had taken it. Ziggy stood up and his mother's knickers were see through (Ziggy was a big boy). All the lads were laughing but the girls didn't know where to look. The girls said it was them or Ziggy, so it was the first and last time we took Ziggy to the river.

We were getting tired of the river so we would take a walk to the hill. We would walk along the bottom of the hill until we came to a big tunnel in the rock. The tunnel had old rusty railway lines in it. The quarry men would bring stone out of the hill on it. From the roof of the tunnel, water would gently drip as if a gentle reminder of all the sweat lost by the quarry men. For some time I wouldn't go through the tunnel. I used to think I would get halfway through and it would cave in. All around the entrance to the tunnel there were branches from where Dad would get his firewood.

Once through the tunnel it opened up into a big hole. It was like a scene from Jurassic Park. The size of the hole was enormous and there were big

boulders lying all around as if work had come to a sudden stop. A lad fell down the rock face and he was very lucky to live. He had a few bruises and he lost an arm. He could of lost his life. One day some bright spark suggested walking up the path to the top of the hill. Some of the lads ran over to the path and started walking to the top. There were sheer drops on both sides of the path so there I was again down on all fours. At one time I couldn't go up or down. I had to go one way or the other, so I inched my way to the top. I heard it was a great view from the top and there was I on the top with my eyes shut. I opened my eyes and it was worth climbing the path (just once) to the top. It was a brilliant view. We were looking down on the village and it was true you could see the church clock. You could see for miles not only looking down at the village, you could also see the Shropshire Plains and the river winding itself through the fields. The highest point on the hill was the Giant's Head. It got its name because when looking up from the village it looked like a Giant's Head sticking out of the rock. We would spend a lot of time on the hill and on a hot day there was always a cool breeze. I had no intention of going back down the path so I set off to walk down to Pant and then home. I was not the only one walking home that way. I never did climb up the path again.

The school holidays were long and hot then, so on some days we would just stand about the village. This one hot day a farmer from down the road asked us if we would like to earn some money helping him catch his sheep. With that word 'money' we were on the back of his pickup. It was a scorching afternoon and we were sweating cobs. We were dying of thirst when all of a sudden I saw an ice cream van in the next field and ran over to it. I got about five yards from it and it disappeared. Your mind plays funny tricks on you when you are running around after sheep in the scorching sun. With all the sheep caught I was nominated to go and get the money off the fanner. I was devastated when he said he would come up to the village in the morning and pay us. There we were, dying of thirst and a long walk home. He never did pay us. We never saw him again.

Some days we were really bored and at the bottom of the playing fields there was a Bowling Green. But they wouldn't let any youngsters play bowls. They were old miserable men who didn't like youngsters, never mind let us play bowls. It is so different today, lads of our age took over the bowls and have built a new club. They have quite a few players now and have got a couple of teams playing in the league.

A little further down the road there used to be a couple of grass tennis courts and again they wouldn't let any of us play. It was all rather posh and we were not good enough to play in their company. They were snobs and we would have to watch from outside the courts. It was a lovely smell, freshly cut grass and that's all we could do was smell. They had a shed where they would change and keep the mower in. we would stand on the gate looking at them playing tennis and being young we would aggravate the old ladies. Just as they started to play, one lady would shout 'Balls' to you Mrs so and so and we would shout and 'Balls' to you too. Eventually the ladies became too old to play and we were allowed to play. It was a waste of time hanging about hoping to play tennis, for when the chance came I

was useless. Merv was a good tennis player. They have new tennis lawns now up by the village hall.

We would have a game of cricket some evenings and somehow we would get some wickets, a bat and a ball and it was a real cricket ball. We would get the heavy roller from the Bowling Green and when no one was watching we would roll the ground to make it easier to play cricket on. One night Bob Jones was batting and our David was back stump. Bob went to hit the ball and turned around and hit David on the head. Sam from Four Crosses hung around with us and we would go for a ride in his car, so we let him play cricket with us. I was batting this one night when I smacked the ball in the air. Now instead of Sam waiting with his hands away from his body to catch the ball, he was looking up and he was under the ball as it was coming down. He missed catching the cricket ball and it hit him right in the eye. When we went over to him I thought I had knocked his eye out, there was blood everywhere. The blood was pouring down his face. We had to go and get Jack Beeston as he did first aid. He took him to hospital to have his eye stitched.

We had two paper rounds, one in the morning and the Liverpool Echo on a Saturday night. I delivered the papers with John, David and Glyn. We saw one or two accidents while on our paper round. This one morning, John and I were just starting our round when a motorcyclist lost control of his bike. He crashed into the railings by the cafe, then into the railings by the butchers before ending up under a lorry. He was killed instantly and John had to go to court as a witness. The first paper we delivered just out of the village was to Miss Moon up Penyfoel. We had to climb up two lots of steep steps to get to her house. We were told that Miss Moon's house was haunted and David and I were going to find out it was. We used to help Miss Moon in the garden and one day David and I were the only two close to the house when all of a sudden the doorbell started going in and out. At the same time the wall bells in the house started ringing. I looked at David and without a word we were jumping down the steps and running back home. We had proof that the house was haunted, now we had to work out how to deliver her papers. It would have been alright in the light mornings but not these dark winter days. We decided to take it in turns to deliver Miss Moons paper and when it was David's turn I would stand a few yards away. When I heard David coming down the steps, I would jump over a fence into a field we had to cross to deliver the next paper. Miss Moon had a brother Jasper and we had to deliver his paper and there was a long drive leading up to his house that we had to walk up.

Walking up the drive we would watch the red squirrels climbing the trees. You never see red ones these days. We were all right delivering Jasper's papers until one day a dog came towards us and it would walk just past us, then turn around and follow us. It was a sly dog. I knew he would bite us before long. So again we took it in turns at delivering their paper to the house. This one morning it was David's turn to take the paper to the house and David was about twenty yards in front of me. I spotted the dog coming before David did and I shouted 'look out' David the dog's coming. The dog walked past David towards me. He went just past me, turned around and

came at me from the back and bit me. We never walked up the drive again, we left Jasper's paper in a drainpipe at the start of the drive. David

and I went on strike one morning for more paper money. Cyril the shop owner said 'More money, no way.' So David dropped the paper bag at his feet and said 'No extra money', then we are going on strike. We walked away and Cyril shouted what about the papers and we just kept walking. We needed the money but we were not getting enough for the papers we delivered. Cyril said he would see what he could do. David and I just kept walking away saying that's not good enough, Cyril. All right I will give you more money, he said.

It was Glyn and my turn to take the papers and it was the same at Miss Moons, run up the steps and jump down them. We had avoided Jasper's dog but there were more dogs to face even worse than Jaspers. Den Bromley had two little corgis and they would bite first chance they had. But Walgate's dog was the most frightening dog I have ever faced. We told Cyril we would not deliver Walgate's paper and he said leave it at the house just below. Every morning we would walk very quietly to the house where we left the paper and every time the dog heard us. He would come flying down the road after us. He must have been sitting waiting for us, I am sure he could tell the time. We were sick and tired of the dog but we delivered the paper.

The Saturday paper we delivered was the Liverpool Echo. We would walk down to the station to get the papers off the train. The first paper we delivered was to the Baileys. We had to walk up a long drive to the Bailey's house and thought nothing of it during the light nights. But come the first dark night it was a different story and what a shock we had. Glyn and I were walking up the drive when Glyn said there is a man crouching in the field. The field ran along the length of the drive and when I looked, there he was crouching down looking at us. For a few moments we froze and then decided the best thing to do was to make a run for the house and run back again. The first night's paper was delivered. We didn't think he would be there the next Saturday night but he was. As we walked up the drive we saw him and we decided to take it in turns to go to the house. We would both walk almost level with the man and one of us would make a run to the house and back. All through the winter Glyn and I delivered the Bailey's paper with great courage. The first light night came and we were walking up the drive and we noticed the man was a tree trunk. But the funny thing was that the man was there again come the first dark night. It was nerve wracking on the Saturday night round.

Another scary night was when we were delivering papers down Chapel Lane. It was a still winter's night and with the moon shining we could see a long way. We were standing by a small garden gate when all of a sudden the gate closed. Another ghost, the village was full of them. We never said a word, we just ran down Chapel Lane and across the road without looking and dived into the house. We grabbed a candle each and just stood there looking very white. I think we frightened Mum and Dad. I don't know about Glyn but I never slept that night When I tell folk this story they believe me but they do question me about the ghost. We had a week's break until the following Saturday night but I was worried all week.

One Saturday morning after our paper round we were asked if we would go beating for foxes. Glyn and I went beating through the gorse and the bracken. The first time we went I think we were a bit frightened. Before we started we were told by beating we would drive the fox or foxes out into the open where they would be shot. Sounds cruel but a fox can kill a lot of chickens once in the chicken run. A fox will not kill one chicken and take it, it will kill all the chickens and only take one. As we delivered the papers we would see that a lot of the houses kept chickens.

I can't remember if we killed a fox or not. Another time we went beating for pheasants and that was a bit scary. The sound of the guns would be whistling everywhere. It was a matter of keeping your head down. We were always helping someone. I can remember going to the village hall and helping Reg Jones clean it. It was an old wooden hut and had seen better times. Now and again they would show a film. The only film I can remember seeing was 'The Cruel Sea.' The folk of the village decided the time had come to build a new village hall. Harry Pugh was one of the folks who got plans drawn up and work started on a new one across the road from the old one. The old one was knocked down. I didn't know until our Glyn told me recently that it was knocked down by Ted Evans. Ted went on from there to open a breezeblock yard where the sawmill used to be.

When the sawmill was working we would go with Frank Hayward to get the sawdust to mark the football pitch out. On a windy day the sawdust would be flying all about the place. Not long after the game had started you couldn't tell if the ball had gone out or not. Frank marked the ground out for many years. When the sawmill burnt down Frank marked the pitch out with lime. Every morning of a home game Frank would mark the ground and put the nets up. One of our uncles was a referee about this time and I'm sure he was drunk on some occasions while in charge of a game.

When we were watching a night game we spent most of the game fighting off the gnats. They would get in your hair and there was no way of stopping them. Down behind the old sawmill there was a railway line going to an army camp. There was a dolly cart on the lines that men would get to work on. It had two handles, one on the front and one on the back and you used it just like a dolly tub, up and down.

One Saturday morning after helping Frank Hayward to get some sawdust to mark the football field out, we decided to have a go on the rail cart. The rail cart was just below the sawmill and it was a four wheel cart that ran on railway lines. It was used to get men from the village to Nesscliffe camp where they worked. So the harder you pushed the handles up and down, the faster you went. There would have been at least seven or eight of us on the cart, far too many. Off we went on the cart and we were going faster and faster. One of us shouted to the lads working the handles, that we were going too fast. The more we shouted the faster we were going and we had to cling on. The cart was made for two and there we were all piled on. We were going as far as the road bridge over the line but with no brakes on the cart we went flying past. The cart came to stop, well past the bridge. When we got back to the bridge we went and stood on top. We could see all the hounds in the kennels. We had walked over the bridge many times on the way back from Pant. Going this way home we would walk down to

Bromley's farm and then up the road home. While standing on the bridge we decided to go home on the cart a lot slower. At a gentle pace we were heading home when all of a sudden the wind in our faces got stronger and it meant one thing, we were going faster. The cart was flying along and we were heading towards the buffers at the sawmill. Our feet were red hot trying to stop and we hit the buffers. We all ended up on the cinders at the track side.

There were a few orchards that we used to scrump but the best were Lewis the farmer and an orchard where we used to go and do some gardening. We used to help a man in his garden in the day and scrump his orchard at night. There would be four or five of us and we were paid for helping him and his wife used to bring drinks out for us. We could see all the apples in his orchard and at first we said we would not scrump his orchard but the temptation was too great for us. This one night, we decided to scrump his orchard. We had to go through his gate then walk down towards his house then through a hole in the hedge. We were all through the hole and were walking down to the orchard when we heard something. One of us said make a run for it and we dived for the hole in the hedge. It was a dark night and I made a dive for the hole but it turned out to be the wrong hole. The hole I dived for had a wooden stake in it and I got scarred all down my face. We all ran down to the village and stopped to talk about our escape.

Some time later, little Dave came walking down the road and told us he had been scrumping in the orchard of the man we helped when he had to make a run for it. It turned out we frightened Dave and Dave frightened us. Getting in to Lewis the Farmer's orchard was awkward but once in, the apples were the best. It always seemed a bit scary but this one night we thought we heard something. I said it was a twig snapping. Then one of us said they had seen someone so it was back over his wall and we ran up to the village. It was the same night Merv threw the apples through the chip shop sign.

After all the apples were picked it was hard to find something to do. We could find things to do so as soon as the snow arrived. One winter it had snowed and then frozen hard so we made a slide on the ice and snow right down the middle of the road. The slide was about thirty yards long and with holes in your shoes, your feet would be on fire. We used to sledge down a field that had a big dip in it. As you came over the dip you would be in the air and wouldn't land until you hit the hedge at the bottom of the field.

Football was to play a big part in our lives. Mum, Dad, Sheila and Margaret would support us. John never played football but was very keen on the game. Leonard, David, Glyn and I all played but never in the same team. We used to go to Four Crosses to watch Rodney Rovers play. I didn't know then that I would be playing alongside most of them. At the end of the season Rodney Rovers held a supper for the players and their wives. One year Glyn and I were invited to their supper to sing. We sang our hearts out and they had high hopes for Glyn and I in the music world. We would of done well, only two other brothers brought a record out about the same time. I think their names were Phil or Don something or other!

We would go to see them play on most Saturdays and from then on we were hooked. Our first venture playing football was with Rodney Rovers

juniors. But it was with the village teams we played for most of all. The three of us played for Llanymynech juniors, David, Glyn and I. We got to a cup final one season and the game was played on Oswestry town's ground. We had a lot cheering us on. The first game aided four all and our David scored the four goals. We lost the replay three two and David scored our two goals. David scored six goals in the two matches and still ended up on the losing side

For many years, two brothers. Bill and Arthur Evans hadn't spoke. Bill ran Rodney Rovers and Arthur helped run Llanymynech. It came as a big surprise when in 1959 the two teams joined. Rodney Rovers became Llanymynech's first team and the village team became the reserves. Although they went on to win trophies and I was playing in the team I didn't think it was fair on the village lads. There were some good players in the village that missed out

Our Leonard was the best of the two goalkeepers but didn't play in the first team. Every chance we had, we would be down the playing fields having a kick about (when we could get a ball). Merv Bromley's dad looked after the footballs and would not let us have one for a kick about. When Arthur Evans took over looking after the balls, he was just as bad but did mellow over the years.

We would spend every chance we had having a game of football. All the lads in the village and from the area would be down on the field after school. You didn't have to tell anyone. As soon as we got off the school train we would shout to one another. See you in a bit. Everyone seemed to arrive at the playing fields at the same time. We would leave home after tea, just two of us and by the time we reached the playing fields, there were twenty-two. We would have enough for two teams most nights. Some nights there would be fifteen or sixteen a side. One lad who came was Barry. Barry was born disabled and had irons on one leg but it didn't stop him playing. Barry would play in goal and he put his heart into it and became a very good keeper. They said Glyn and I had to be the two captains so we could not be in the same team. One team would be winning 5 or 6 nil, even more sometimes and it was getting dark. So we would say 'The next goal is the winning goal.' And that was that until the next night. I think they were good old nights but not the good old days.

One chap came to the village, he was courting Elsie Jones and he would come down to the playing fields and play in goal. It didn't matter what the weather was like, he would be diving all over the place. On wet nights he would be covered in mud. At the end of the season they would reseed the goalmouths. Harry Haycocks would sow the seeds and tell us not to play there. It was no good telling us we were playing there the next night. Scoring goals was not the same without the proper goalposts. Harry would come down to the playing fields most nights and catch us using the goalposts. In the end they took the goalposts down and we had to use coats or jumpers as posts.

I was working at Powells and Sheila I think as well. One day a cow kicked me and I had to miss a game. Margaret went to work in Welshpool. Leonard, John and David left the village to work but it was only to Pant. Glyn worked in the village, working close to home was handy for night

games. One time when Glyn and I were working for Percy Swain we stood about all day - it was pouring down. When Percy came to see us we asked if we could knock off earlier as we had a night game. I don't think Percy was happy as he said. 'You will not work in the rain but you will play football in it.'

As I have said, our John didn't play but he would run the line. He was always fair and I can remember Doug Hughes asking John as he was running the line. 'Why didn't you flag the other player offside?' John said for the simple reason he was not offside. Leonard was a good goalkeeper and could play out of goal. But most of my football was with David and Glyn. Even more with Glyn but they were both very good footballers. Our David was an outstanding goal scorer. One game Glyn and I didn't play in was a Welsh cup-tie against Welshpool at Llanymynech. Llanymynech were the underdogs that Saturday but went on and won two nil. Our David scored twice. I like to think Arthur Evans and I played a big part in the result.

The night before the game, Arthur and I climbed the gable end of the village school and rang the bell. It had not been rung for many years. What made us do it, I don't know? We got a piece of string and started climbing the wall. We got as far as the windows but there was some way to go to the bell. Arthur said he would push me to the bell. One good push and I was there. I was at the bell and I heard Arthur saying. 'Tie the string to the bell and drop the string.' I thought the call came from some distance away and I looked down and saw Arthur standing on the ground. I said, 'How am I getting down? I have nothing to cling to. Don't you remember you had to push me up to the bell. Arthur said, 'Just throw the string down.' I was not going to do that, he would ring the bell and run off. I clung onto every joint in the bricks and finally got down and rung the bell.

The headlines in our local paper read, referring to Welshpool, (For whom the bell tolls). I honestly think David was the best goal scorer to play for Llanymynech. David could score with both feet and was brilliant scoring with his head. He went on and scored a lot of goals for Llansantffraid before moving up north where he was known as the Welsh wizard. What a player Glyn was, he had everything. Good tackling, a good goal scorer and was outstanding with his passing and he never knew what tiredness was. He would not stop running for the whole ninety minutes. Watching football on TV, the crowd claps if someone passes the ball thirty yards. Glyn was passing it forty yards years ago and not many passes went astray. With the coaching lads have today, if our Glyn had that chance I honestly believe Glyn would have gone a long way in football! I have fond memories that will last a lifetime, of playing football with two gifted brothers. Out of all the lads I have played football with, Merv Bromley was by far the best footballer.

Even in our teens, we would play hide and seek around the village. When I tell people we used to play hide and seek, no one believes me but we did. They say 'How can you play that in a village?' Then if they have enough time I tell them. There would be quite a few of us in the village, boys and girls. We split into two and one would hide and one would seek. After a while we had to amend the rules. We could not find Merv this one night. We had found all the others, so we gave up and we were all standing together by the Cross Keys wall. We were playing hell about Merv, saying this is stupid, he could be anywhere. After some time we decided to call it a night

and started to split up and make our way home, when all of a sudden we hear Merv's voice. He had climbed onto a roof at the back of Cross Keys and had been standing above us all the time. So we agreed you could not hide for more than three quarters of an hour. Serious game, this hide and seek. We used to play tick. It used to scare me to death, it's no wonder I have got a bad heart. I don't know who it was but I was being chased up the road towards the crossroads one night. I was determined not to get ticked and as I came to the crossroads I went right across without stopping to look. Coming up the road at the same time was a fire engine and I ran right in front of it. It frightened me that much I kept running. I went up past the Dolphin pub onto the canal path. I ran along the canal path over a style across one of Savage's fields, across the playing field and through the back door into our house.

There were a lot of lads and girls standing at the crossroads and they screamed as the fire engine just missed me. Our Glyn thought I was splattered like a fly to the front of the fire engine. No joking, it was that close, I was very lucky.

With quite a few youngsters in the village we decided to get a youth club going. We had to have one adult before we could open a youth club, so we asked quite a few but they said 'no'. It was then I was glad we scrumped their orchards. This was their chance to get us off the streets. A newcomer to the village, Mr Gill, said he would help us, so we got the youth club up and running. Most of the pop stars of the time were appearing in Shrewsbury so we would hire a bus and go and see them. We saw quite a lot of groups and solo artists. Rosemary Clooney was singing at one show and after her first song she said, you are very nice, and our David shouted back, you are very nice yourself. We went to see Norman Wisdom and he was brilliant.

We were branching out now, so I hired a bus to go to Blackpool to see me lights. When we got there, I could not believe it. There were bright lights for miles. We were walking along when we came to a big fun fair, it was not a fun fair after my experience. In we went and the first and last ride I went on was the big dipper. Jonny Jones and I got on the big dipper and all of a sudden all I could see was the sky. We were climbing slowly to the top of the rails when all of a sudden we were hurtling down. What a fright it was, I grabbed hold of Jonny's new blazer, sending the buttons everywhere. When I got off the big dipper my legs had gone and all Jonny said was, 'Look at my blazer, it's brand new.' A few days later, Jonny saw the funny side and we had a good laugh. We went to Blackpool the following year but I did not go on the big dipper, I just walked around. One time on our way back from Blackpool the bus ran out of diesel and the driver had no money, so we had to have a whip round. Our trips to Blackpool came to an end, some would put their names down and did not turn up and we were out of pocket. As we grew up, the youth club just fell away.

After our youth club had finished, we used to still hang about the village, scrumping orchards. But in the light nights, lads would ride through the village on their motorbikes. There were about ten of them and they would come roaring through the village. It was not safe to cross the road. Around

this time there was a walking race, it started in Oswestry and would go to Buttington and then back to town. Our John and Arthur Evans would enter but they never won it. It was always won by two long-legged brothers. Lads on their bikes would ride and see who was leading and one of them ran into a wall and died. We saw one or two bad accidents. John and I saw a man lose control of his motorbike and end up under a lorry. He was killed and John had to go to court as a witness. The worse accident I saw was when George's brother Dave knocked an old lady over, killing both of them. George was standing with us on the crossroads when the accident happened and did not know it was his brother until we got to the accident. The lads on the motorbikes used to go to the Isle of Man to watch T-T Races. They used to get into all sorts of trouble. One night they got drunk and when they returned to their b&b. they started jumping up and down on their beds and it broke so they did a runner. I went on the back of Gig Wild's bike once and we were going a hell of a speed and as we went around a comer Gig shouted, '-Lean with me.' Lean with him! I was frozen upright. As he leaned over I could see how fast we were going, when all of a sudden I opened my mouth and the wind took my breath away. Gig kept shouting, 'Lean with me', but I couldn't, I was frozen upright and couldn't lean. When I got off my legs were shaking and I knew I had been like this before and it was when I got off the big dipper.

Leonard said he would teach me to drive and things were going well as we approached the river bridge in Llansantffraid. I stopped before going over the bridge - I thought it was too narrow to drive over. Leonard was on a short fuse at the best of times and as I crept over the bridge he said, 'Put your foot down a bit', and the next minute he was shouting you have to stop here. I stopped and then turned and headed for Llynclys. As we were going along, Leonard said, 'You had better put the lights on.' I was doing all right well I thought it was, then Leonard said, 'Get in fourth.' I put my foot down to change gear and all of a sudden I was grinding the gears and the lights were going from dip to full beam all the time. Now it was panic time and Leonard said, 'Have you got your foot on the clutch?' and he looked down and started cursing. He said, 'Why have you got your foot on the dip switch and not the clutch?' What a stupid place to put a dip switch. All sorted out we were heading for Llynclys crossroads and Leonard said, we will go straight across here. So what did I do? I went straight across and headed for home. By now Leonard was ranting and raving. He said, 'You should of stopped and looked then gone across towards Knockin.' I was a bag of nerves, I wished I was on the back of Gid Wild's motorbike. At last we made it home and as we were getting out of the car, Leonard said, 'I'm not going with you again.' I said 'Why not?' Leonard said, 'You will kill the both of us' I thought to myself I had heard those words before and then it clicked it was when Derek and I came off our cart. Leonard never did take me out again but our David took me and I didn't think I was any trouble!

I must add I did fail my test and did not bother again until I was in my mid thirties. Leonard used to come home blind drunk and would have driven

home. Instead of David not saying anything, he would always argue with Leonard. Most Saturdays it was nightmare and one night he came home drunk and said he had crashed the car and Mike Pugh, Leonard's mate was in hospital. He had not crashed the car, it was parked perfectly against the wall. He could not of parked it better if he had been sober.

I could go on forever about the times Leonard would come home drunk and every time David would argue with him. David had a car and he kept it down around Rectory Lane. I do not remember what happened to it. Time was moving on and Leonard got married and we had peace on a Saturday night. We got thrown out of Six Bradford Terrace and we were spread around the village until the council gave us 28 Bronwylfa. John got married and went to live in Pant and soon after our Margaret met Jim. Jim was lodging at the Lion Hotel and for some reason he came and lodged at our house and the peace of Bronwylfa was broken. The very first night Jim started snoring and I mean snoring. It was vibrating all around the hill. People in Four Crosses could not believe the amount of thunderstorms Llanymynech was having. Jim snored that loud I could not sleep and I was working hard and I needed my sleep. One morning I had a word to Dad about Jim snoring but it was a waste of time. I told Dad that I was not sleeping and Dad said, Jim is going to marry Margaret, so I would have to put up with it.

The night before the wedding, all Jim's family and his best man John came up from London. Jim's Dad was a lovely man, his Mum was all right but she could swear. She would swear every other word. I thought if Dad heard her, it would be no cussing here. The reception was held at the Cross Keys and we played football just after the reception. It was a stupid thing to do, play football on a belly full of beer. At night I went on the beer again with Jonny Morris. We got the bus into town and I didn't remember much more. The next thing that I could remember was waking the following morning on top of the bed. I learnt later that David and Ann found me as drunk as a coot by the park gates in town.

I got on with Jim's family really well and Glyn and I would go to London at Christmas to stay with them. They always gave us a good time. Jim's Dad was a big man a gentleman. One time when Glyn and I were stopping down in London with Jim's Mum and Dad, one little Irish man kept picking at us. Big Jim had warned him a couple of tunes but he didn't listen so he lifted the man off his feet, struck him against the wall and threatened to hit him one. We never heard from him again. Another time Glyn did an early morning flit. When we got up in the morning Glyn had gone. Time passed and Margaret was pregnant with Jimmy. Jim was working away at the time so Margaret came home towards the end of her pregnancy. We were sitting watching a football match on the tele, when there was a panic Margaret started to have her baby. David and I took Margaret into town to her flat, then into hospital and then little Jimmy came into the world. That next morning David moved up north and married Ann.

Glyn and I were still played football and having a kick about at nights but that was to come to an end. We were mostly village lads or our mates who were playing for the village. Jonny Evans and Mac Lewis started fighting one night and we pulled them apart but didn't expect what was to happen. We held Jonny and Mac's hand behind their backs and thought that was

that, but Mac head butted Jonny breaking his nose. Jonny was taken to hospital to have his nose set and the ; following morning Mac went to hospital to see Jonny and they were mates again. A couple of nights before I nutmegged Mac and he said, if you do that again, I will break your legs. So I turned around and did it again. Mac was fuming but I was a bit too fast for him.

Some weekends we would go with our mates to the Last Inn , There would be two cars fall and on the way home they would race each other. Sometimes it would be very dangerous. They would take over on corners and would be going flat out. I got to the point of being | frightened so I stopped going. Around this time we were becoming I friendly with George Williams. I shouldn't say we, although George was a mate of mine, Glyn became a very good mate to George

Our Glyn had a nickname (Tutty). He had that nickname for years. I think I know how he got it but I could be wrong• Every time George saw Glyn he would have a big grin on his face and would shout Tutty. He could have been yards away, he could have been close to you but he always shouted Tutty. I have said George had a rough deal in life but was a good mate of ours and we were good mates to George. Most Saturday nights we would go on the beer in town, and most Saturday nights we would get drunk and George would end up sleeping on our settee. Mum soon got used to George sleeping at our house but I don't know if Mum ever got used to the smell of George farting, but he was first to have some breakfast on the Sunday morning. Every Sunday morning Mum would give us a fried breakfast and every Saturday night George knew. It didn't matter how drunk he was, he would never make a noise going into our house.

We used to get the beer down us, and sometimes too much. One Saturday night after a bellyful of beer we got a taxi to the garrison. I don't remember getting in me taxi. But as the taxi pulled up at the garrison I opened the taxi door and another taxi crashed into it. It made an awful mess of the two taxis and as I got out I can remember one of the taxi drivers saying. Just sign this piece of paper stating what had happened and everything would be all right. The taxi driver put a pen into my hand and a piece of paper on the bonnet of the taxi. I could not see the paper so I just scribbled on me paper and walked away. Glyn and George were nowhere to be seen, they had walked away once I opened me taxi door. Another night we were walking home down Llyncllys, when a cow stuck its head over the hedge and made an awful noise. We were away running down the road. George was not a good runner, he started shouting at us to stop. I think we were all sober within minutes.

It is sad to see George today, he is in a home and does not know what's going on. I was talking to his brother Dave the other day and he said; it is a waste of time going to see him now. But as soon as I get my heart operation over with and I am well, I will go and see George. Well I am coming to the end of my stories about my life growing up with my family in Llanymynech. I have, I am sure, missed one or two stories and will be reminded by my brothers or sisters. Llanymynech as we knew it, is so different today and yet if you drive through the village it is just the same. Six Bradford Terrace that was run down and not fit to live in, is still there but modernized. The house

that Mum and Dad struggled to bring us up in and looking back to it makes me wonder how they did it or did they do it The pub that was next door is a restaurant now. The row of trees that Dad used to trim are still there.

Most of the shops have gone, even the paper shop has closed. I took my son-in-law, Mark, down to the village to show him around and I was amazed at all the houses. I showed Mark the playing fields where we played our football. I stood leaning on the gate showing Mark and telling him of how, with my three brothers we used to play football. We never ran up and down the line before going on me pitch like they do now. All we did was walk down to the village hall on a Saturday after a bellyful of beer, the night before, get changed and run on and play. As I have said I played football with David and Glyn more than Leonard. Memories like I have said, playing football with two gifted brothers will last me a lifetime. Memories of scrumping orchards, they have all gone now, memories of the paper rounds and the ghosts. And memories of silly things like being too frightened to climb the path to the hill, or going over the canal bridge on my hands and knees. We have all married and got families and extended families. I have a good wife, Bronwen and two great grown up kids, Jennifer and John, and we are about to have our first grandchild, but that's another story!