

Memories of Llangwm's Village Shops and Other Retailers in the 1950s and '60s

by

Graham Stephens



Graham Stephens remembers the village shops and roundsmen from the 1950s and '60s...

Johnnie Palmer's shop was a village institution. Constructed as part of Cleddau House, it was the focal point of village life and an emporium of everyday needs.

You entered the shop under a verandah flanked by an office on the right and small room to the left which was part of the residential side of the house. The shop had a pair of hardwood stained doors, glazed at the top and with a large plate glass window to their left

(which I seem to remember was broken in a storm one year). Inside the shop was a wrap-around counter with the left section fronted by a freezer unit, probably installed in the early 60s. This was the first time we experienced somewhere to buy frozen food in the village. Johnnie also had orange lollipops and blocks of Lyons Maid ice cream. There were the ubiquitous Birds Eye peas and probably lots more. All this was very new in the village.

The main counter was backed by wooden shelves lining the back wall which

contained rows of tinned food. On the left of the counter I remember a display unit with Cadbury's chocolate bars - a penny

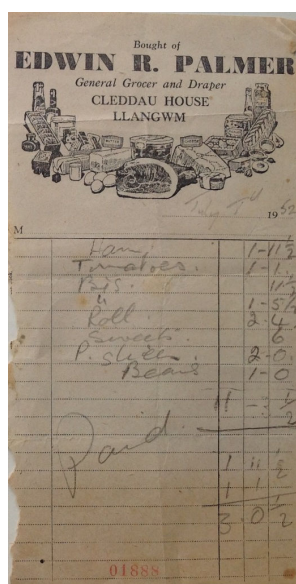
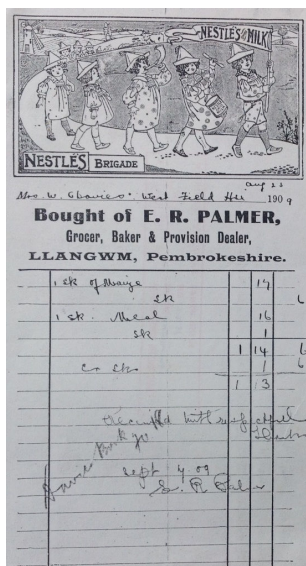
one (old penny) and a threepenny one stay in the memory. On the right hand side of the counter was the red bacon slicer with a large, hand operated circular blade which peeled off bacon or cooked ham slices according to the desired thickness. There was also a cheese cutter with the cheese (Cheddar of course) being cut from a large block using a

cheese wire.

At Christmas time Johnny and wife Margaret bought in Christmas toys which occupied the space behind the freezer. In November, Guy Fawkes night saw fireworks being stocked and Llangwm endured a period of youngsters setting off these 3d bangers in people's front gardens around the village.

The stores for the shop were in the old brick "bake house"

situated behind Holloway House (now converted into a residence). Here were kept



orange and banana boxes, sacks of potatoes and a tank for dispensing paraffin. A wooden stair ladder gave access to the top floor. On the pine end of the main Cleddau House, affixed to the wall, were a couple of chewing gum machines and also a cigarette machine.

There were lots of people who worked in the shop over the years including for a short time my mother Rona. Joyce Jones spent many years behind the counter as did Lil Saies and Jean Jones. Johnnie also did deliveries. I remember in the 50s he had a green Austin station wagon with a wooden framework. Later he acquired a blue, split screen VW van with a sliding side door. Charlie Hill from Port Lion did some of the deliveries.

Chris Palmer, Johnnie and Margaret's son was my best friend. We grew up and did everything together and that included quite a lot that we shouldn't have! I do remember one incident when, around the age of eight or nine, we were tearing around the house on our bikes. I came around the corner by the shop and ran straight into a Miss or Mrs Morgan from the house at the top of the Holloway. She was carrying two heavy shopping bags and, unable to stop, I crashed straight into

her. She fell flat on her back and the shopping bags went flying. I don't think we were allowed to do circuits of the house after that.

There were other shops in the village which I remember as a child. Gus Brown had a sweetshop in the first house on the left as you go down to the stepping stones in Guildford; the side porch which formed the shop is still visible, now as an extension to the main house. Boiled sweets in jars lined the shelves and were dispensed in cone shaped paper bags. There seemed to be an explosion of these boiled sweets in the 1950s, probably as a response to the end of rationing after the Second World War. The outcome was of course an outbreak of rotten teeth in young children.



Alberta's, on The Green, was another such sweet shop run by what appeared to be a very old lady. She was probably not that old at all but with her white hair tied back in a bun, she seemed really elderly to the youngsters who frequented the shop.

For a short time Number 1 Edwards Pill also became a small fruit and vegetable shop. It was run by Horace Churchill and his partner (sister to Mr Adcock who owned the Nursery at The Gail). They later

went on to run the Hilltop Café in Hill Street, Haverfordwest.

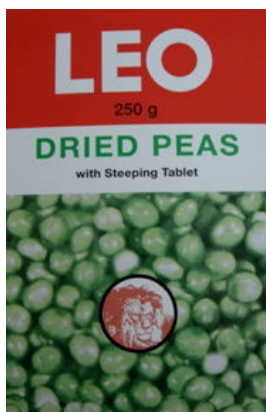
There was also a small butcher's outlet attached to Llangwm Farmhouse at The Kilns and run by Selwyn Morgan who also owned and ran the farm. The small extension can still be seen but is now part of the house.

The Bakery at the top of Main Street (and accessed by the steep drive opposite to the current shop) was run by brothers Graham and Emrys John. Although not a shop as such, it was always possible to walk up to the bakery itself to collect bread. Alternatively, both Graham and Emrys had their rounds which delivered fresh bread (and cakes) around the village after they had finished their early morning start at the bakery.

The old Post Office at the bottom of Main Street was run by Mrs. Lillian Jones. In addition to the usual Post Office related items, she too sold sweets. There were always two ladies behind the counter, Mrs. Lil Jones (the owner) and also Mrs. Lottie Jones who lived at the top of Main Street.

To service this range of retail outlets, Llangwm had its own bank. The Midland

Bank opened three mornings per week as an extension of the main bank in High Street, Haverfordwest. I clearly remember the night safe built into the front wall of the property which was one down from the entrance to Llangwm Farm.



One of the main retail developments of the 50s and 60s was the number of mobile shops that went around the village. I can remember at least eight or nine. There were two butchers:

Ronnie Thomas from Hook who drove an old black Ford van and always walked into the house announcing himself by calling out "Ronnie, Butcher". His opposition was Selwyn Morgan from Llangwm Farm who as well as having the shop at The Kilns, also drove a grey Bedford, purpose built shop-van with rear opening doors and a



proper shop counter. Every household showed allegiance to one or other of the butchers on their weekly rounds. Ronnie came on a Friday to

Llangwm Ferry and Selwyn on a Tuesday. Both were always resplendent in their butchers' aprons and if my memory serves me well, Selwyn also wore a straw boater whilst serving his customers. Raymond Wilcox, who worked for Selwyn, later took over the round.

With many households using paraffin for heating and cooking (and up until the mid-1950s in parts of the village, lighting as well) it is no surprise that there were two entrepreneurs specialising in deliveries of that product. Billy Lloyd from Mastlebridge came around every week with his van packed full of ironmongery, paint, glassware and various other trinkets as well as paraffin. Also on the fuel distribution were Josiah and Melvin James who had a tank installed in their Commer Cob van from which they dispensed the fuel. I also have vague recollections of another mobile ironmonger coming around in the early 50s. I have no idea of the owner's name but as a very young child at the time, the image that has remained is of an old green and black, box-shaped van (almost certainly of pre-war vintage) with round or oval windows at the back.

In the 1960s and 70s, John James of Llangwm Hill had a purpose built mobile shop, suitably done out in bright blue livery with his name written on it. Deliveries for Llangwm were on a Wednesday afternoon.

There was also a fruit and veg delivery van although I can't remember the owner's

name (possibly 'Green', or is that just by association?). Similarly, there was a fish merchant who operated out of Milford Docks and came around once per week.



A mainstay of village life was of course the doorstep delivery of milk. Hubert and Ivy Thomas from Llangwm Hill Dairy at Deerland never failed to get through even in the worst of the winter weather at a time when snow in January was taken for granted. Using their old Ford milk float in cream and black livery, duly fitted with snow chains, they were always the first vehicle to negotiate the Ferry Hill after an overnight snowfall.

Another liquid delivery I remember was the Corona lorry coming around selling bottles of pop. There seemed to be so many different flavours. Where can you buy 'Dandelion and Burdock' these days? Alderwick's too did deliveries but I don't remember them coming down to The Ferry.



Then of course, like today, there were the coal deliveries. With their blackened faces and sacks over their backs, the sight of just the lorry arriving would send the dogs into a frenzy of barking.

Harry the coalman was such a nice chap though the dogs never appreciated that.

Finally, who can forget Toni Rabaiotti (or Rabi-toot as we used to call him on account of his lack of chimes and use of the van's horn) who faultlessly turned up every Friday evening in his blue and white ice-cream van selling the distinctive Rabaiotti's Italian white Ice cream which always gave you an 'ice-cream headache' if you put too much in your mouth at one time.

Once Johnnie Palmer had closed his shop in the early 1970s, other shops sprang up to service the needs of the village, notably Julie Golding's shop and Post Office in Mill Street and later Tudor Thomas' shop on The Green . Tudor is the son of Ronnie Thomas the butcher so the tradition of family retail continued. Tudor and wife Pat then moved the shop and Post Office to the top of Main Street where it was later run

by Julie Golding's daughter Pat Morris. Having run both shop and Post Office for many years, ill health forced Pat to retire. Into the breach stepped Pat's brother David Golding who is the current proprietor of the newly named Cleddau Stores and yet another example of families continuing the retail tradition.



I'm sure people who have lived in Llangwm for many years will correct me if my

memory has played tricks. Equally, they may be able to add to this recollection and possibly supply photographs to further enhance the memories. If you can, please get in touch so that we can preserve this small part of our village's evolution.

*Graham Stephens
March 2020)*



Cover photograph: Inside a typical grocery store of the early 1900s - this was taken at the re-created Gwalia Stores at St Fagans National Museum of History.

Page 2: Original bills of sale reproduced courtesy of Chris Palmer.