

## MEMORIES OF OVERTON

### Salop Road (or Street)

From Penyllan Street on the left (east) side of Salop Road there is -

The 13 acre Bowling Green field, which provided grazing for horses of the Bowling Green Inn. The field extended to where the present petrol station is. There are memories of it being used for informal football games. The village 'pound' and toll house had also been on this corner.

**The Methodist Church** was built on the corner of the field and opened in December 1938. More details of the Chapel can be found in "*Memories of Penyllan Street*" notes. Tommy Thompson who built the chapel also built the bungalow to the right.



The houses between there and the garage (see picture to left) were also built at about the same time.

The **garage** business was set up by Auguste Onckelinx who moved his business here from what is now the Corner Shop in the High Street (see "*Memories of the High Street*").

At first this was a wooden building with a galvanised workshop at the back. The present shop building replaced the wooden building in 1934.

He also ran a taxi service known locally as Onkys.

**Memory of Mary Caspar** "Journeys further afield almost always involved a train journey, and this usually started at Ruabon, or occasionally, Gobowen. There was no 'bus service to either station, as a taxi was necessary. This was either Onckelinx (Onky) or Tommy Thompson. If my memory serves me, the taxi fare for the five mile journey was 10/-."

The Wason family bought the business in 1945 and 2 of the 4 sons met and married two daughters (Gwen & Kath) of the Davies family who ran the butchers business on the other side of Salop Road and farmed locally.

No 41 Salop Road was a grocers business in 1901 run by Samuel Edwards.

In 1898 it was described as "*Samuel Edwards, Baker, Grocer & provision Dealer. Agent for Spinner 'Charming' Tea, 60 Strand, London. It consists of the finest and rarest Teas grown in India and China. Sold at 2/8 per lb*".



The next but one cottage 1871 to 1901 was lived in by Walter Cross, shoemaker. His brother was Colin Cross and his photo in postman's uniform is in the "*Memories of Bangor Road & Turning Street*".

These terrace cottages were built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century or early 19<sup>th</sup> century but at two different times. The two cottages on the right end of the row, 38 and 37, were built at a lower height, but now all roofed to one height.

To the right (*and in the right of the picture*) are 4 cottages 36 to 33, which were built before 1838. 36 was called Lilac Cottage, 35 Glanway Cottage, 34 Rose Cottage, all 3 now combined into one house. In the 1930s they were lived in by Jack Roberts (rent £6.10.0d per annum) Mrs Jane Peake (rent £5.4.0d per annum) Mrs Frost and Mr & Mrs Josie Stafford (£5.4.0d rent per annum). In the 1930s Mr Stafford provided the only place in the village you could buy a newspaper on a Sunday.

At one time Ada Hodgkinson lived in no 34 and as a young girl she had worked as a maid at Fairfield where she slept in the attic.

### **Fairfield**

Fairfield was built around 1830. In 1861 it was lived in by Timothy Roberts, Accountant & Auctioneer, his wife, children & servants. Previously William Bennion had owned it and lived here, brother of Dorothea, Mary Ann and Caroline Bennion of Wrexham Fechan, all children of a Wrexham lawyer.

In 1895 it was lived in by Benjamin Wright L.R.C.P. & S Edin., Surgeon and in 1901 it was lived in by James Richmond, also a surgeon.

In the 1937 and in 1947 it was rented by Miss K J Lyon, who paid £55 a year rent per annum to the Bryn-y-Pys estate. It was then lived in by Miss Mary Lloyd.

Behind Fairfield there was an icehouse in the garden and a field of walnut trees. There are memories of picking the walnuts on frosty days.

To the right the 3 white cottages were built in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is a story that they were an inn called "The Bluebell". It appears that the left hand cottage was the inn and the two to the right were created from the stables or barn. Clay pipes have been dug up in the land behind.

The Reeves family had lived there from before 1871. Job Reeves was a brick layer setter and in 1901 there were still 6 children and a niece living in the cottage. The youngest son Percy had a butchers shop in Salop Road next door to the Bryn y Pys. Next door to the Reeves family lived the Gabriel family. In 1871 Thomas Gabriel was a carpenter, his grandson was Billy Gabriel, and his son George was an excellent cricketer. In 1937 and 1947 Billy Gabriel was paying £6.10.0d rent per annum to the Bryn y Pys estate.

The house to the right is called Pump House. In 1947 it was lived in by T C Harding who paid £6.10.0d per annum rent to the Bryn y Pys estate. The Salop Rd. pump stood at the corner of what is now Springfield Park. In the early C20<sup>th</sup> it was replaced by a standpipe and tap. (*see notes on 'Overton Utilities'*)

The houses of **Springfield Park** were built in 1988. The land was offered at public auction in 1978, Lot 1, 8 acres of prime residential building land with a frontage on Salop Road with outline planning permission, and Lot 2, 4.1 acres of 'agricultural accommodation' land with access from Station Road. The houses were built by J E Parry (Rossett) Ltd and offered for sale by Wingett's & Sons. *See plan right*

Beyond the entrance to Springfield Park, No 27 was built before 1838. It was lived in by an excellent tailor, Warrel H Gabriel who in 1937 and 1947 paid £6.10.0d rent per annum to the Bryn y Pys estate. His father Thomas, a postman had lived there before him as had his grandfather Thomas, a carpenter.

**The Almshouses** were built in 1848 on Gravel Pit Field, in memory of Caroline Bennion of the Wrexham lawyer's family. They are built in ashlar in the gothic-style and bear the inscription "A.D. 1848. *These almshouses were erected to the memory of Caroline Bennion, late of Wrexham Fechan by her affectionate sisters. Faithful in the unremitting exercise of charity to the poor and every Christian virtue, she departed this life on 6th February 1847.*" The almshouses were to be occupied by widows over 60 years old, resident in Overton and attending the Church of England. The sisters (Dorothea and Mary Ann Bennion) gave the land and paid for the building and also gave an endowment of over £1,000 for the upkeep of the buildings, furniture, clothing etc. and 4 shillings a week for inmates, paid on Monday mornings. (It was Mary Ann Bennion who paid for the building of the school masters house in 1852.) In 1898 it was reported that "there was a dearth of suitable candidates" in Overton suitable to occupy the almshouses!

To the right number 23 "Dee View" was once "the bottom shop" general grocers of a good size and with a petrol pump in front of the house. It was built and run by Mr Frank Edwards, an ex miner from St Martins, who also bought the almshouses. Mrs Edwards was the daughter of Colin Cross, bootmaker and postman whose photo is in "*Memories of Bangor Road & Turning Street*". Frank Edwards also had a grocery van and Mrs Edwards ran a cafe at the shop during WWII.

Later the petrol station was enlarged by Joe Evans, known as "Esso Joe's", and a garage forecourt made to the right of the house. Mr Evans was helped by his sister Barbara,

The house to the right, 'Marlyn Lodge' is built on where the garage forecourt was till the 1980s.

In the early C20th a small golf course was created between the gas works and the present Springfield Park area.

To the right of the footpath the 2 new houses were built in 1992 & 1993 on what was part of the garden of Mossleigh.

To the right is 'Mossleigh' previously known as **the Gas House**

Overton had its own gasworks, in Salop Road. Overton's gas works were founded by the Gas, Light and Coke Company of Chester in 1873 and stood at "Mossleigh" on the corner of Musley Lane and Salop Road. In 1881 and 1891 Thomas Owens is listed as the gas maker at the Gas House.



The rear of the building was the “Retort Unit” where the gas was produced from coal and its bricked-up window could be seen from Musley Lane. The roof of this section was originally built of steel trusses and laths to which slates were tied with wire – all designed for fire prevention in what must have been a dangerous area. In the garden is the base of the gasometer, still buried in the ground. Tar was a byproduct and traces could still be found. During the 1950s subsidence in the garden revealed an underground tar storage tank still containing tar.

It continued to supply gas to the village till 1916 when it closed and was sold to Mrs. Keen’s grandparents to become their home and called ‘Mossleigh’. George Reeves, lived here a greengrocer and fishmonger. (George Reeves, a son of Job Reeves of Salop Road, had been a bricklayer and fishmonger in Back Lane, Overton on the 1901 census, with son George age 2)

Lane End Cottage standing on the corner of Musley Lane was once two cottages. The 1<sup>st</sup> cottage was lived in by Harry Harris and then Stan Henshaw who both paid £6.10.0d rent per annum in 1937 and 1947 respectively, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> cottage by H H Evison who paid £7 rent per annum in 1937 and 1947.

This is where the toll gate (called the Primrose Hill Gate toll gate) was, collecting tolls from the Ellesmere Road and from Musley Lane. Some time ago a resident found a George III penny (he was king 1760 – 1820) in the hedge here, which was the period that the toll gate was operating.

### **ACROSS THE ROAD (and working back toward the centre of the village)**

There were once two cottages, now demolished.

**Penydyffryn** was originally called Primrose Hill (Villa)

In 1841 to 1861 Harriet Basnett age 50, the widow of a surgeon, her daughter Harriet Davenport 30, wife of land surveyor & servants lived here.

In 1871 it was occupied by Jane Harris, a widow, her niece and servants.

In 1874 Mrs Mary Fawler Maude moved in and changed the name of the house to Penydyffryn. With her was her daughters Mary & Edith and son Joseph plus servants. She was the widow of Rev Joseph Maude, Vicar of Chirk, who died in 1874.



She was an author, poet and hymn writer and her most well known hymn is “*Thine for ever God of love*” which she wrote in 1847.

Her youngest daughter Edith married Francis James Chevasse who later became Bishop of Liverpool. (*The story of their son Noel Chevasse, Double VC is in the February & March 2007 editions of the Overton Oracle*)

Mrs Maude and her daughter Mary Julia Maude played a prominent part in St Mary's church life. On her 90th birthday she was presented with an illuminated address & rose bowl by the people of Overton. She died in 1913 aged 94. Her daughter Mary Julia Maude was a talented artist and also ran bible classes in the house in the 1930s and lived there till her death in 1934.



*Photo above: Mrs M F Maude  
Photo left: Mrs Maude & daughter  
outside Pendyffryn*

Pendyffryn was then lived in by E M Benjamin, a director of North Wales Power. In 1947 Major C Bolland paid £103.5.0d rent per annum for Penydyffryn to the Bryn-y-Pys estate.

Roman Catholics of the area celebrated Mass in a caravan in the grounds of Pendyffryn until the building of the Catholic Church on Wrexham Road in 1958.

Pendyffryn was lived in by Matthew Erasmus Richard Samson (known as Matt) from 1960 to 1990. He had replaced Dr Casper as Overton's doctor.

To the right of Pendyffryn there were 3 cottages built in 1816. This was the "**Bottom Chapel**" where Primitive Methodists (known as the "Prims") first established a chapel in Overton (a religion



formed after John Wesley's death in 1795) In 1851 John Pearce, servant and caretaker and his & family lived in Chapel House (now the left hand cottage) and the centre and right hand cottages were the Chapel.

The preacher till his death in 1913 was Eli Thompson of Lightwood Green (*photo left*)

The right hand cottage was lived in during the late 1940s and 50s by Wilf McDowell (*see photo of him at end of this article*) and his family before moving to Machine House in Penyllan Street. He also had a bicycle shop where the veterinary surgery is now.

To the right two new houses were built in 2010

To the right there was a **blacksmiths** and cottages now called Valley House.



In 1848 Richard Price, Richard Edwards, and Widow Martin rented 3 dwellings and the smithy for an annual rent of £18.18.0. In 1851 Richard Price was the Master Blacksmith, and in 1891 the blacksmiths were Charles Hughes, Edward Jones & James Morris. In 1937 & 1947 Mr E. Parry Morris was blacksmith and paid £20.16.0d a year rent to the Bryn y Pys estate for the "Smiths shop etc". The right hand cottage was lived in the 1940s Mrs Howard and was head of the newly built school canteen in 1946. Later it was lived in by Auguste Onkelinx who had retired here from the garage. His wife was a Morris.



Next come 2 sets of three terraced houses (numbers 13 to 8). The houses were rebuilt by the Bryn y Pys estate after 1858 and replaced cottages that were there from the late 18th century. They were fronted by metal railings, some of which survive. (see picture left)

They were lived in by the Fowles family at No 13 (£13 rent per annum in 1947) followed by Billy Lewis in No 12 (£13 rent per annum

in 1937 and 1947), and John Cooper (free rent in lieu of repairs in 1947). No 9 was lived in by Mr & Mrs Pryce Roberts from 1890 (rent £6.10.0d rent per annum), and Ex Inspector Owen Jones at No 8 (£13 rent per annum in 1937 and 1947).



To the right is Millwood Rise which was built in the 1960s. A barn, 2 cottages and a house once stood here. The gates from one of the cottages are now in front of 'Ivanhoe' in Willow Street.

One cottage was lived in by Mr & Mrs Charles Downward (£5.12.0d rent in 1947), and the other by Mrs Williams who sold fish. (See photo left: The projecting barn, 2 cottages and the house to the right are where the entrance to Millwood Rise is now)



To the right is a pair of semidetached estate houses (numbers 7 & 6) built by the Bryn y Pys estate in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Outside number 7 was one of the taps installed by the Bryn y Pys estate in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The house to the right was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1851 to 1871 it was a grocers & bakers run by Edward Ashley. In 1891 and 1901 it was a grocers run by George Jones. It is possible that this is the shop advertised (see left)

After the house was sold by the Bryn y Pys estate, it belonged to Percy Reeves and was rented out. Later it was lived in by Mr Reeves' younger daughter Jane and her husband.

Mrs Birchenall also ran a grocers and sweet shop there and in 1937 paid £22 a year rent for the cottage and shop to the Bryn y Pys estate. By the 1950s it had become a house and was lived in by Miss Hamer who had previously been housekeeper at Bryn y Pys.

To the right in the space before the Bryn y Pys Arms was a butchers shop run by Percy Reeves. (see picture right)

*“There were two butchers in Salop Road, with only two eyes. Each had lost one eye in WWI.”*



**Bryn-y-Pys Arms** was an old coaching inn. It possessed a large yard used in the 18 & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries for livestock sales. In 1848 it was described as “very old”. Its function room was the venue of many celebrations. Francis Richard Price of Bryn-y-Pys held wedding festivities there on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1826.

Before 1848 to after 1871 James Parslow was Inn keeper, his wife Martha plus barmaid, housemaid and ostler lived

there. His rent to the Bryn y Pys estate in 1848 was £98 per annum.

In 1881 it was kept by Josiah Prodger, his wife & 5 children and was known as the Bryn y Pys Arms Hotel.

In 1891 Henry Bithell and wife were innkeepers, replaced in 1895 by Charles W Sharp.

*The inn courtyard and archway from the road can be seen in the photo to the left*

In the 1940s Frank Pratt was landlord of the Bryn-y-Pys with his wife Violet.

During the 1950s the function room at the rear was used by the Rifle Club and the Army Cadets as an indoor rifle range. In late 20<sup>th</sup> century it was used as Wingett’s auction rooms.



The Bryn y Pys closed in the 1990s (the last publican was Barry Corns) and was replaced by the houses of Bryn-y-Pys Court.

.To the right of the Bryn y Pys were 3 cottages. (see left of photo to left). In 1851 the left one was lived in by George Duke, a bricklayer’s labourer and a Chelsea pensioner. Out-pensioners were ex soldiers who received a pension from the Royal Hospital but lived in their own homes. George served 22 years with the 11<sup>th</sup> (Nth Devon) Regiment but in 1836 was declared unfit for service for military duty because of chronic rheumatism. Later Tom Keyhoe lived with his wife Mary in this cottage. In 1947 he paid a rent of £6.10.0 per annum to the Bryn y Pys estate. Tom Keyhoe was killed in a motorcycle accident on the Overton to Wrexham Road close to Marchwiell in the 1950’s. Mrs Griffiths lived in another of the cottages.



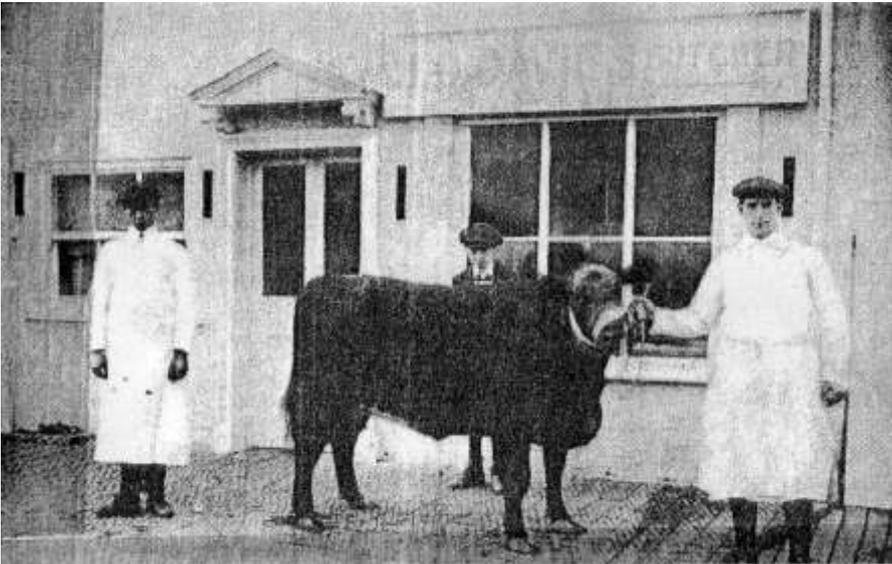
The cottages were demolished in the 1960s to make a carpark for the Bryn y Pys pub. (see picture at start of Bryn y Pys section)

To the right was the **Cross Keys pub**. (see right of picture) The publicans in 1841 were Edward & Phebia Richards. By 1861 this was a private house.



This later became a butchers shop run by Mr Jack Davies and his family, before that by Fred Price. In 1947 Jack Davies was paying £6.10.0d rent to the Bryn y Pys estate.

But the cellars from the original pub were there until filled in when the new houses were built on the site in 2006. (see yard at rear of butchers in photo to left)



J D Davies butchers shop, *photo c1930*. Pictured is Jack's Davies son Ron (born 1917) on left. Other 2 unknown.



There was a wooden bungalow on the corner of Salop Road and Penyllan Street. The Hassells lived there, followed by Jack Dulson. It was then lived in by Mr & Mrs Richard (Dickie) Cross who moved there after keeping the Cocoa Rooms.

Picture to the left is Dickie Cross outside the bungalow (left) with Wilf McDowell of Machine House. He had a bicycle shop where the veterinary surgery is now.