

Bontdolgadfan

Richard Hill

I stand on the simple stone bridge and slide my finger along the edge of carvings of my initials set into the slate slab, the only permanent record of my being here almost sixty years ago. I wonder how much water has flowed under this particular 18th-century bridge since I last played here?

This village, Bontdolgadfan, is smaller now. I guess I've grown in proportion to it's shrinking. It was a lifeless and inert river with no fish, save the dead fish. Contaminated by old abandoned lead workings at 'Dylife', a way upstream. But the river was a great place to play, as I frequently did, and would.

The village nestles in the valley beneath the high mountain 'Newydd Fynyddog'. It instills the feeling of claustrophobia, then and now.

In the quadrant between the road and river stands what was our farmhouse called 'Pen-y-bont', translated as 'Bridgend'. Now earning its' owner a healthy holiday let. No permanent tenant.

My mind conjures up the sound of cattle hooves crossing the bridge from field to farm for milking. The cows issue a distinctive aroma as all cows do. They belch and fart.

I return to the present day.

In a field nearby, a farmer mows grass to make silage or hay. The smell of new-mown grass "drowns" all others as does the sound of the mechanical mowing machine. My dad did this.

I move to the farmhouse to stand below what was my bedroom window. Through these panes I viewed real images of the world, within I imagined wondrous worlds that formed my ambitions. And me? I am the son of perfect parents who gave me the world.

I posted this on my course 'website'. Here's some more...

Our farmhouse was called 'Pen-y-bont', translated as 'Bridgend'. Our farm was divided into two, separated by the road and the river (Afon Twymyn). On one side were the farmhouse, a barn and some other farm buildings, the other side, the cowshed, the dairy, more farm buildings and 16 acres of land which was spread around the village.

There was a small river that ran through the centre of the village called 'Afon Twymyn'. A 18th century stone bridge carried the road from one side to the other. It was a lifeless and inert river with no fish, save the odd dead fish. This was due to contamination caused by old abandoned lead workings at 'Dylife', a way upstream. But the river was a great place to play, as I frequently did.

Mum was an excellent cook and created much excellent food in the small, cramped kitchen. It must have been quite a chore to convey the various foodstuffs between the kitchen and living room up and down three steep stone steps. She made loads of pickles and preserves plus a wide range of other things.

Down in the cellar was a very peculiar sight. A large bowl filled with eggs underwater (or so it seemed). The water was something called 'water glass'. It was claimed that of all the old-time methods of preserving fresh eggs the 'water glass' method gave the best and most dependable result. Fresh, unwashed eggs kept in a solution of water glass would remain good and useable for 4 to 6 months when properly collected and stored. Before refrigeration became commonly available keeping fresh eggs in a crock of water glass was the preferred method of egg preservation.

I wrote these extracts that I intend to work into a biography. But that's all for today.

Thank you for reading this far.