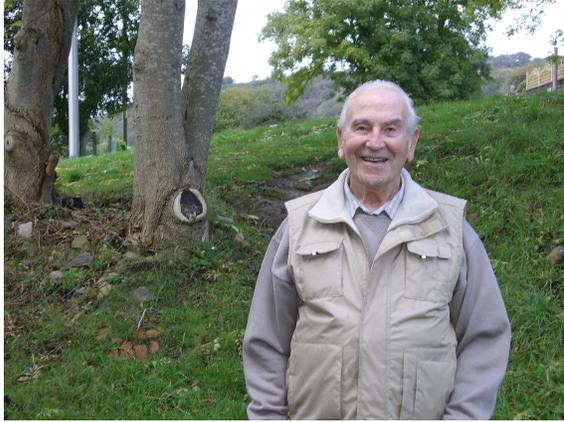


## Canal Memories - from David Davies – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012

This week I met David Thomas Davies, now aged 85 years, who told me of his early times in Pontypridd and his recollections of the Glamorganshire Canal.



David was born in 1927 at Brookfield Cottages in Glyntaff on the banks of the Glamorganshire Canal. Later the family moved to the nearby Gwern-y-geryn Road. These dwellings were very small and in 1938 David, with his parents, two brothers and one sister moved to the new council houses at Powys Place, built on a part of Jones' Farm in Rhydyfelin, close to Lock Lewis. The photo shows David at the site of Lock Lewis where the canal now lies under Ilan Avenue.

He has fond memories of life as a young boy and can recall that on Saturdays in the summer, folk walking home from the nearby Llanbradach Arms, would throw pennies into the canal for the boys to retrieve – great and rewarding fun! The P.U.D.C. council depot was nearby and the local children would swim in the canal at the “hotties” – where the warm water from the council electricity works was discharged. This warmed the canal for a stretch of about 2 miles. David reckons that he almost lived in the canal.

The community at this part of Glyntaff, called Gwern-y-geryn, was swept away when the A470 trunk road was built in the 1970s but many still recall the area with the Llanbaradach Arms and the nearby surgery of Dr Mitchell. David can still recall some of his neighbours - the Jones's, Onion's and Cartwright's. The local school that David attended was Glyntaff Primary School, situated across the canal and not far from the “Old Duke” - the former coaching inn, the Duke of Bridgewater Arms.

Gwern-y-gerwn was an important base for the Glamorganshire Canal Company which had a small warehouse and workshops here. Sacks of flour would be unloaded from the boats onto trolleys for supplying local bakeries. Occasionally the local boys would be given short rides on the boats. He recalls that there was a sunken canal boat which remained there for many years.

David explained the reason for the goldfish which could be caught in the canal – the result of a rag and bone man tipping goldfish in when their use for trading was considered to be illegal. He recalls that, after they had moved to Powys Place, his big brother would catch goldfish and keep them in their bath! David was to follow suit and on one occasion, after netting a large goldfish and handing

it to a friend, he suffered a serious cut to the foot which appeared to heal but which later became infected. This led to an internal infection, so serious that David's father, working away because of the wartime direction of labour, was called for. Having seen him, he ran 2 miles to Pontypridd for the doctor. During his 3 months in hospital David can remember hearing the first air raid siren sounded in this part of south Wales.

Prior to his army service he worked for Rediffusion, the company that provided cable radio (and later TV) to many homes. Following his "demob" from the Royal Signals he returned to his work at Rediffusion but in 1952 moved to Newport to work for Standard Telephones and Cables. In 1972 he married June Lane and remained in the Newport area, working for a number of electronic companies until his retirement in 1991.

David's involvement with the military did not cease in 1948 and from 1954 to 1963 he served as a Battery Signals NCO in the TA. He recalls his annual training each year in Germany and still keeps in touch with former soldiers at TA reunions.

19 October 2012