

Chapter five

JOHN CHARLES SELLERS 1874-1967

My grandfather John Charles Sellers, known as Charles, was the second of nine children. He was born in Wyke Green near Axminster on 12 April 1874 when Queen Victoria was on the throne. The general election held five weeks earlier was the first to be conducted by secret ballot. It was won by the Conservatives under Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli.

When he was about nine Charles, his parents and his four brothers and sisters upped sticks and made the hundred-mile journey to Cardiff where they rented a house at 146 Cowbridge Road. His first job, when he was still in his teens, was as a live-in gardener for Robert England who had a home, bakery and grocers shop close by at Perivale House in Picton Place.

When he was twenty-two Charles married twenty-year-old Eleanor Eliza Tyte in St John's Church in Canton on 25 May 1896. Nelly, as she was known, was born in Westbury on Trym. She was the third daughter of stableman Henry Tyte and his wife Eliza Collins who had moved to South Wales two or three years after the Sellers family.

Charles was then a carman employed by Solly Andrews. He drove one of his horse-drawn omnibuses and also delivered freight. Solomon Andrews was, as they say, world famous in Cardiff. The new Market Buildings in St



A Solly Andrews bus in 1863

Mary Street which he built to house Cardiff Market was known by the popular name 'Solomon's Temple'. He also built the Andrews Arcade in Queen Street which was demolished about 2005.

A baker and confectioner, he came to Cardiff from Wiltshire in 1856 with nothing. He peddled brandy snaps and sticks of rock along St Mary Street then leased a shop in James Street where he made pies. Not long after buying his first horse and cab, he had stables all over Cardiff. He started its first horse-drawn bus service. His empire grew to include shops, furniture removal, confectionery, building and undertaking. He brought the first bananas to Cardiff. He sold Andrews Grandmother's Embrocation Oil which was 'guaranteed to cure anything short of rigor mortis'. He became the country's leading private bus manufacturer and made other specialised vehicles including hearses for his undertaking business and wagons for furniture removal, inspiring an early advertising jingle:

The firm of S Andrews and Son
Can supply you with a currant bun
With a cheese or a nail
Or can move you by rail
Or by hearse when your journey you've done.



Solly Andrews

He was a staunch Wesleyan Methodist. He died at the age of seventy-three in 1908 but his name lived on above his ever-open garage in City Road. It had begun as a stables in what was then known as Castle Road. He turned the house at the front into an ironmongery shop. It eventually became a petrol station and was the first garage in Cardiff to be open twenty-four hours a day. It was still trading under its founder's name there when I was growing up.

Charles would have qualified to vote if his annual rent was ten pounds or more a year, now about fifty pounds, but it was probably less. Charles and Nelly lived in Saltmead Road sharing the house with his sister Gertie and her husband James Burge. The peninsula between the mouths of the Taff and Ely rivers was known as West Moors. It was an area of creeks and bogs, a muddy estuarine habitat regularly inundated by the tides. When the Plymouth Estate built the Penarth Railway and Penarth Road to get its coal to Penarth Dock, major infrastructure projects were built across the moors on curving embankments. They formed the Grangetown framework around which workers' housing was squeezed. Between 1880 and 1900 Saltmead, to the north of Penarth Road bounded by a loop from the Great Western Railway to the Penarth Railway, was filled with terraced streets. The massive influx of workers into the booming coal port meant there was no shortage of tenants for the small houses, despite the permanent damp. Within ten years the housing stock began crumbling back into the marshes. It took decades to damp-proof and rehabilitate it by which time Saltmead had become synonymous with damp-riddled housing. Perhaps in an effort to avoid the stigma, Saltmead Road was renamed Stafford Road.

Charles' father died in 1902 when he was twenty-eight. His mother died seven years later. About that time Charles and Nelly moved to Beda Road in Canton. I am fairly sure the rent there would have been enough to qualify him to vote. His brothers Henry, Bert and Percy left the family home in Nottingham Street to lodge with Charles and Nelly. By then, Charles was working as a horse and cart driver for Cardiff Corporation, the precursor of Cardiff City Council, a job he kept for the rest of his working life. Charles and Nelly had no children. She died in December 1912 when she was thirty-six.



Horses groomed and driven by my grandfather won several prizes. This picture was taken around 1910

Nine months later, on 27 September 1913 in Cardiff Register Office, Charles married Nelly's younger sister Amelia Maud, known as Maud. He was thirty-nine and she was twenty-four. Until the Deceased Wife's Sister's Marriage Act was passed in 1907 it was illegal for a man to marry his late wife's sister. Maud was born in Penarth on 15 July 1889 the ninth of ten surviving children. Her family had moved there in the late 1880s from what is now a northern suburb of Bristol. Maud's father died when she was fifteen. She did not go into service like some of her sisters. She stayed in the family home in Rutland Street where she helped her widowed mother 'look after' her two older brothers.

Neither Charles nor Maud had much of an education but they could both read and write. A year after they married the First World War broke out. Charles just missed being called up. The Military Service Act of January 1916 conscripted single men aged between eighteen and forty-one. Charles would have been forty-two when it was extended to married men in June. Later the upper age limit was extended to fifty-one.

Charles and Maud spent their married life in a small terraced house at 23 Wellington Street in Canton. Their first three children were born in the three years following their marriage. Their two youngest were not born until after the end of the war. The war years and the subsequent depression would have been difficult for the Sellers family. Charles and Maud had three young children, wages were low and taxation was high. The allotment must have been a godsend and it is not surprising that Charles spent all his free time tending it. Together with the small back garden it would have produced enough eggs and vegetables to feed the family with a surplus to sell in small amounts. Nothing was wasted. Even the flowers grown in the garden brought in a few shillings every week. Maud would pickle or bottle damaged fruit and vegetables.

Charles's brother Henry lodged with them until about 1922. He slept in the second bedroom while the two boys 'topped and tailed' in a camp bed in the tiny boxroom. Baby Lily slept with her parents. Both sides of the family were close: brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins often dropped in.

In 1922 Maud, then thirty-three, would have had the right to vote for the first time. In 1930 local authorities began an assisted wiring scheme to encourage people to connect their homes to the public electricity supply but I think Wellington Street still had gas lighting until much later. Their landlord was not fond of spending money on the house.

Wellington Street is a small section of the east side of the A4161 which runs across the city from Cowbridge Road East near the centre to Leckwith Road in the west. The site was outside the city boundary in the mid-nineteenth century when the houses were built to accommodate the ever-growing influx of economic migrants. It consisted almost exclusively of terraced housing. In 1911 Kitchener Road primary and secondary schools were built at the west of end Wellington Street. The Sellers children and their friends were educated there. The primary school is still open and still home to Bessie the rocking horse. In the early 1900s local farmer Jacob Andrews took the antique toy as payment for a milk delivery. In the 1930s, after his children had outgrown the horse, he donated it to the school. In 2011 it was restored and briefly reunited with the original owner's son John, then aged eighty-three, who was a former Kitchener Road pupil.



In the garden of Wellington Street with my parents in the early 1960s

The front door of Charles and Maud's home opened on to a passage which ran from front to back. The parlour and the kitchen led off it and at the end of the passage was the back kitchen. Outside the back door was the toilet and the coal hole which the coalman filled once a week, carrying the dusty sacks through the house on his back. Woe betide him if he spilt anything in the passage or on the front step.

A small area between the toilet and the wall of the house was shielded from the elements by a sheet of corrugated iron wedged overhead. Maud used the mangle that stood there to wring water from her washing before she hung it on the line to dry. As a child I was constantly scolded for playing with the mangle but it was great fun to spin the big wheel that turned the rollers. My grandmother had lost the top of the index finger of her right hand down to the first knuckle. She said she had caught it in her mother's mangle when she was a child. I do not know whether the story was true or whether she had suffered some other childhood accident. A tin bath hung above the mangle. It was taken into the kitchen on bath nights and filled with water heated on the range.

The back kitchen was bitterly cold in winter. It had a flagstone floor, some wooden shelves and a sink with a cold water tap where people generally washed. There were three lethal stone steps leading up to the passage. I lost count of the times I fell up or down them. I would be in floods of tears with a bump the size of an egg on my forehead or my knee. My grandmother's remedy was to rub butter on the offending spot and tell me that I should stop crying and forget about it.



There was a similar stove in the back kitchen in the 1920s

Having prepared food in the back kitchen, Maud would carry it up the steps and into the room known as the kitchen where the family lived. All the cooking was done there on a range. It had a metal plate on one side on which saucepans were boiled. Beneath it was an oven. Pots were stood to simmer on a shelf of metal bars that was pulled up and out from the front of the range. There is no better toast in the world than that made on a toasting fork in front of the fire in a range even if your hands do get a bit hot! In the early 1920s a gas cooker was installed in the back kitchen. Mice were a constant problem. Charles used to take up some of the kitchen floorboards from time to time and put down poison and traps. The family cat did its best but the job was too big. When she was a young child my aunt had used a pair of scissors to trim the cat's whiskers. It had a fairly miserable existence after that as it was unable to judge width. It bumped its head every time it tried to enter a room where the door was ajar.

The range provided the only heating in the house so the first job each morning was to rake out the ashes, clean it, polish it with blacklead and light the fire. There were shelves and a cupboard each side of the chimney breast above which hung the portraits of Maud's parents. Charles and Maud each had an armchair next to the fire. Other members of the family sat at the wooden table which, when meals were over, was covered with a chenille cloth. I have the wooden clock which



A range identical to the one in my grandmother's house in an almost identical fireplace. It was still there when she was rehoused in the 1970s. When the fire was first lit the metal cover with a handle was held in front of it so air was drawn up the chimney and the coal caught light more quickly. That handle could get very hot!

hung above the table. There was an old treadle sewing machine in the kitchen on which Maud made all the family's clothes. It had probably belonged to her mother whose father was a tailor.

The gas mantles were lit every night well into the 1930s. Maud would climb up, open the valve, strike a match and wait for the gas to arrive. It would give a familiar 'pop' as it caught light. It was probably the late 1930s before electricity was installed.

Upstairs were three bedrooms. Charles and Maud slept at the front in a bed with a big brass bedstead. When their children were growing up, the three girls slept in a double bed in the second bedroom and the two boys still 'topped and tailed' in the boxroom which was only slightly bigger than the camp bed. On a high shelf (well out of the reach of little hands) half way up the stairs were maturing jars of jam and pickles made from fruit and vegetables too bruised for everyday use.

The parlour was at the front. It was only used on special occasions or for piano practice. A gas fire was installed in the 1930s or 1940s. Photographs of Charles's parents hung each side of the chimney breast. Charles played the accordion which he called his squeezebox. Syd played the mandolin and Gertie played the piano. Charles and Maud would never have been able to afford anything as expensive as a new piano. It was old and full of woodworm and had probably been passed down the Sellers family. At Christmas and other family celebrations relatives would come to the house, some of them on foot but others, known collectively in the family as the Barry girls, would come on the bus from Cadoxton ten miles away. Extra seating was made from wooden planks resting on upturned orange boxes. They played and they sang and a good time was had by all. I once asked my aunt why the family parties were always held at 23 Wellington Street. 'Because they could hardly push to piano to Barry' was the reply. Ask a silly question!

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Charles and Maud's younger son Billy made the family its first radio, a crystal set or, as it was commonly called, a 'cat's whisker'. It comprised a thin wire lightly touching a crystal, usually of galena, to make a simple rectifier. Cat's whiskers were used in many radios from about 1906 until the Second World War. In those days, many radio sets had no amplifier and so were powered only by the radio energy they picked up through their antennas. That meant that only one person could listen at a time and only through headphones. The set was kept on a shelf above the cupboard at the side of the range. The children used to fight over who should wear the headphones.

Card games were a great source of entertainment. A jar of ha'pennies was kept on the shelf next to the crystal set and whist, nap, rummy or cribbage were played when there were visitors. Charles's brother Bert and his wife Jinny would visit most Saturday nights. At other times his sister Gertie and her son Tom would come in from their house next-door-but-one.

Charles fed the family and supplemented his income by growing and selling fruit, flowers, vegetables and eggs. He had a chicken coop and a greenhouse in the tiny back garden. He also had an allotment in Leckwith Road where, except in winter, he would cycle practically every day. He grew potatoes, onions, carrots, cabbage, cauliflowers, string beans, lettuces, radishes, cucumbers and spring onions. He made deliveries to regular customers. My aunt, his youngest daughter, remembers taking a raffia bag of beans and tomatoes to 'posh' houses that had a front garden, railings and a gate. Maud confided to her that she had always wanted to live in a house 'with a bit of green in front'.

Anything surplus to requirements was advertised for sale by putting it on the parlour window sill which overlooked the street. In summer there was always a vase of flowers there. Passers-by would knock the door and buy the flowers for half-a-crown. Some would make a point of calling in on their way to the cemetery. Others, having stayed too long in the pub after the Saturday football match, would buy flowers to try to appease a cross wife. As a child it was my job, late on a Saturday afternoon, when crowds of men surged past on their way home from the football match, to run out into the street, stop one of them and ask: 'How did City do?'

Charles worked on his allotment until he was in his late eighties. He would sometimes ask his son-in-law Cliff to take him up in the car. Cliff was more than willing to do that but balked at filling the boot with a load of chicken manure.

Charles's only indulgence was his geraniums. The area outside the kitchen window between the outside toilet and the wall of the house next door was glassed in to form a rough and ready conservatory where he grew and propagated geraniums. The window was all but obscured by masses of bright red flowers for the greater part of the year. There was a lean-to greenhouse in the garden where he grew tomatoes.

The house was always the centre of our family life. After my aunts and uncles married and moved they and their children were still weekly visitors. Maud's nephews Jack and Wilf lodged with them after their parents died shortly before the Second World War.

Charles probably retired in 1939 when he was sixty five. He would have been entitled to a pension of the equivalent of twenty-six pounds a week. It was not until 1946 that the National Insurance Act was passed introducing a contributory State pension scheme for all.

At the start of the war the government supplied an air-raid shelter free to low-income families. It was designed to be topped with earth and used in the garden. It accommodated six people and was known as an Anderson shelter after Sir John Anderson who was Home Secretary during the Battle of Britain.



My grandfather and my uncle Syd at the allotment in about 1930

The shelter in Charles and Maud's garden was dug into the ground with only the top foot or so above ground level. The family used it during the repeated bombing raids on the nearby docks. They rigged up a battery to power a light bulb and kept blankets in the shelter. Each time they heard a bomb drop nearby, Charles would peer out of the door to make sure the house was still standing. Sometimes, when the approach of large numbers of bombers was anticipated, the air-raid warden would knock front doors and advise people to go directly to the more robust communal shelter on the corner of the street. After the war Charles heaped soil on the roof of the shelter and for many years he grew strawberries there. When I was a child he kept his seed trays and garden tools inside and down there in the dark it was a good place to play 'pretend'. We children were instructed never to go into the garden without bringing back a weed and I was taught at an early age how to distinguish a weed from a plant.

I lived at Number 23 with my parents and grandparents until I was nearly three and I slept there most weekends until I was in my early teens so that my parents could have a night out. My old cat Whisky, who had been left behind when we moved, was always pleased to see me. I was devastated when he eventually died of pneumonia at a very great age. He was virtually the same age as I was. My father had tucked him down the front of his overcoat and brought him home not long after I was born.



Whisky and me in the back garden

Charles and Maud used to give my cousins and I a shilling pocket money every week. The coin fitted perfectly on the narrow shelf formed by the top of the wainscoting in the kitchen. It was always there waiting for me on a Saturday. Some would be spent at the chip shop up the road where I could buy a tuppenny bag of chips or a bag of the crunchy pieces of batter which had dropped off the fish during deep frying.

I never loitered, particularly in the winter, in the outside toilet. Toilet paper was an unheard-of extravagance. A nail on the wall held six-inch squares of the *South Wales Echo* which my grandmother softened slightly by crumpling them. At Christmas, if she bought oranges, the

tissue paper that used to be wrapped around them provided some seasonal luxury.

My childhood bedroom was the one in which my mother and aunts had slept when they were growing up. It still had its war-time blackout curtain. This was drawn before I went to bed in an effort to make me quickly fall asleep. The pitch darkness made me very frightened. The tiny boxroom where my uncles had slept a generation before was where Charles overwintered his tomatoes. In summer, when the fruit was still green, it was picked and wrapped in small squares



Coombs where my grandfather bought chicken meal

of newspaper then carefully layered in a cardboard box which was stored under the bed. The fruit ripened very slowly and we had tomatoes virtually all year round. In early summer I can remember being allowed to go into the greenhouse and pick and eat the first of the baby fruit which were incredibly sweet and tasty. There was an ash path (made from ashes from the range) to the end of the garden with narrow flower beds on the right and vegetable beds on the left. The chicken coop was at the far end.

Chicken meal and straw were bought from Coombs on the corner of Albert Street and Cowbridge Road. As a child I loved going there with my grandfather to gaze at all the things on sale. I can remember the wonderful earthy aroma in the shop. My mother told me that when she was growing up a chicken was killed every Christmas. In those days when they could afford little meat, the anticipation of Christmas dinner was huge. I loved to help feed the hens when I was a child but I admit I was less enchanted when my grandmother spent a quarter of an hour chasing an old recalcitrant hen around the back kitchen so that she could pour vinegar down her throat to try to make her more tender a few days before breaking her neck.

Sadly, Charles suffered a series of strokes in the early 1960s. His bed was moved downstairs and the front parlour became the bedroom. Whilst confined to his bed he developed Alzheimer's Disease. Maud thought his relative isolation was not good for his mental condition. They had never had a television so she rented one and put it near his bed. Unfortunately, as is not uncommon with Alzheimer's sufferers, Charles was fearful of the strange man he thought was in the room. He became so disturbed that the television was removed. Maud kept it in the kitchen where she watched it avidly and developed a lifelong passion for all-in wrestling.

Charles died when he was ninety-three on 29 March 1967. He had never been to the cinema, or driven a car, or used a telephone.

Some weeks later Maud went out to 'look at the shops' for the first time in years. On her way home the trolley bus moved off before she was properly on the platform and she slipped beneath it. She had problems with her health for the rest of her life. She continued to live in the house in Wellington Street until about 1974 when the street was demolished and redeveloped. By her own choice she was one of the last to leave. She was rehoused in a flat in Ely near her son Syd. She was eighty-five and had never before had the luxury of an inside toilet, hot running water or a bath. I don't think the novelty ever wore off. But what she liked best was to sit and watch the wrestling on TV on a Saturday afternoon.

She died when she was eighty-nine on 14 March 1978.



My grandparents during a day out at Southerndown in the late 1950s in our glorious two-tone (olive green and cream) Hillman Minx

Chapter six

CHARLES'S SIBLINGS

BESSIE SELLERS

Charles's older sister Bessie was born in Kilmington in 1872. She was ten or eleven when the family moved to Cardiff. She did not marry but spent most, if not all, of her working life as a servant in the home of shipbroker Eugene McCarthy and his family. When Bessie was nineteen the McCarthys lived in Cowbridge Road. After Sarah McCarthy died her husband and children moved to Ryder Street. By the time Bessie was thirty-nine she had become the family housekeeper at their home in The Philog in Whitchurch.

A 231785

CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY of BIRTH.

SUPPLIED AT THE SPECIAL FEE OF 6d. APPLICABLE IN CERTAIN STATUTORY C

THIS CERTIFICATE IS ISSUED FOR THE PURPOSES OF *National Health Insurance Act* and for NO OTHER USE OR PURPOSES WHATEVER.

Registration District *Exminster*

842 BIRTH in the Sub-District of *Exminster* in the Counties of *Devon a*

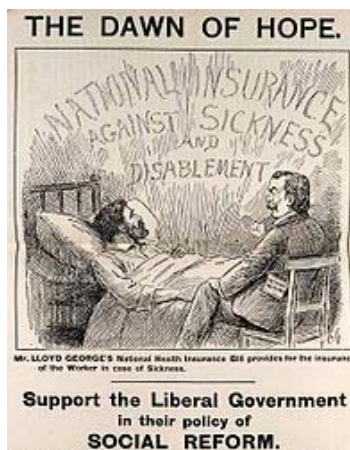
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
When and where born	Name (if any)	Sex	Name and Surname of Father	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother	Rank or Profession of Father	Signature, Description and Residence of Informant	When Registered
<i>16th February 1872. Kilmington Devon.</i>	<i>Bessie</i>	<i>girl</i>	<i>Charles Sellers</i>	<i>Emma Sellers formerly White</i>	<i>Farmer Labourer</i>	<i>Emma Sellers mother Kilmington</i>	<i>Twenty sixth March 1872</i>

I hereby certify that the above is a true Copy of an Entry of Birth in a Register Book in my custody.

Witness my hand this *23rd* day of *February* 193*4*.

Above: Bessie's copy birth certificate

Below: leaflet published in 1911 advertising the new National Insurance scheme



In 1935 when her brother Thomas's wife died she left the McCarthy family and moved in with Thomas and his teenage children in St Fagans Road. She was sixty-three. Two years later she obtained a certified copy of her birth certificate. It was supplied by the Registration Officer in Cardiff for the 'special' fee of sixpence and endorsed 'Issued for the purposes of the National Health Insurance Acts and for no other use or purposes whatsoever'. She might have been ill and wanted to apply for one of the rudimentary benefits that were available. The sick could claim the equivalent of about twenty-seven pounds a week. Or she might have been anticipating her pension claim. The pensionable age for women was lowered from seventy to sixty in 1940 when, then aged sixty-eight, she would have received about twenty-three pounds a week. She died in 1949 when she was seventy-seven.

GERTRUDE BURGE

Charles's younger sister Gertrude, known as Gertie, was born in Wyke Green in 1877. At the age of fourteen she went into service at the Great House in Ely, the home of rope agent Stephen Collier, his wife and eight children. She married thirty-one-year-old James Burge, known as Jim, when she was twenty-three.

Jim was from Stogumber near the north coast of Somerset. His father James was a widower with four grown-up children when he married Jim's mother Harriet Charlotte Turner. She was twenty or thirty years younger than her husband, an orphan who had found work as a servant when she was about ten. By the age of fifteen she had learned the craft of lacemaking and moved into lodgings in her home town of Honiton. A young man named George Sparkes and his family lived in the house next door. Harriet had an illegitimate son whose father was unacknowledged but whom she named James Sparkes Turner. The boy lived with his mother and stepfather for three years. He died when he was seven about five years before Jim was born.

Jim was eleven when his seventy-five-year-old father died. The following year his mother married James Calloway, the widower who lived next door. Four years later he died. Harriet moved into the Stogumber Almshouses where she lived for over twenty years making ends meet by taking in washing. She died there in 1912 when she was seventy-six. Meanwhile, sixteen-year-old Jim found a job as a brewer's labourer thirteen miles away in Taunton. Several years later he moved to Cardiff where he worked as a brickyard labourer. In 1892 he married dressmaker Ellen Saunders who was nine years his senior. Ellen and her family were higher up the social scale. Her father had been a Devon farmer of substance but he may have fallen on hard times because he moved his family to Swansea where he worked as an industrial insurance agent. Jim and Ellen lived in Llantrisant Street in Cathays where Alfred William John was born in 1895. Ellen died there when her son was three. Gertie Sellers married Jim two years later in 1900. They moved into her brother Charles's home in Saltmead Road. By 1911 Gertie and Jim were renting their own house in Craddock Street where Gertie's brother Thomas and Emmaline Crawley, whom the census described as a hotel servant, lodged with them. Jim had become a horse driver probably for Cardiff Corporation. Their sons were born in Craddock Street before they moved, just before the First World War, to Wellington Street, to the house next door-but-one to Gertie's brother Charles. Her brother Thomas again lodged with the family between his discharge from the army in 1919 and his marriage in 1921. Jim died in 1929 when he was sixty. As a child I can remember Gertie as a kind but rather terrifying old lady always clad in black. She died in 1958 at the age of eighty-one.



Hope Street Baptist Church outing 1926. Gertie is seated front row left with her niece Dorothy on her lap

I cannot find Gertie's six-year-old step-son Alfred Burge in the 1901 census. He was not taken in by Jim or Ellen's family. Jim may have informally put him into the care of local people where he might have been misregistered under their surname. By the time Alfred was sixteen he was living with Gertie and Jim in Craddock Street and working in the boot trade. At the outbreak of the First World War he joined the 8th battalion the Welsh Regiment as Private 12932. He was promoted to Lance Corporal and killed in action in Gallipoli in the Balkans on 8 August 1915 four days after arriving there. He was twenty.

His half-brother Stanley James Burge, known as Stan, was born in 1909. He married Annie Morgan when he was twenty-nine. In 1939 they lived in Theobald Road. Stan was a chef and Annie worked as a sewing maid in a hospital perhaps the City Lodge. Stan died in 1988 when he was seventy-eight. Annie died in 1997 when she was eighty-six. They had two children: Brian and Avril.

His brother Thomas Charles Burge was born in 1911. In 1939 he lived with his mother and worked as a clerk. An address book of my mother's compiled around the time of the Second World War records Tom's address as the Borough Arms Hotel in Malmesbury. He did not marry. He was a self-taught physiotherapist approved by the Welsh Rugby Union and the Welsh Football Association. He spent his Sunday mornings treating players injured the previous day. A smell of liniment pervaded his house near Victoria Park. He died in 1993 when he was eighty-one. He was a regular visitor at Charles and Maud's home where, after his mother died, he always ate his Sunday dinner. He was very kind to us children and we were very fond of him.

HENRY SELLERS

Charles's brother William Henry, known as Henry, was the fourth child. He was born in Wyke Green in 1879. The family moved to Cardiff when he was three or four. He began his working life as a haulier and later became a gardener. After their parents died he and his brothers Albert and Percy lodged in Beda Road with his older brother Charles and his wife Nelly.

He was living with Charles and his second wife Maud in Wellington Street in March 1916 when, at the age of thirty-seven, he was conscripted into the army as Private 297160 Sellers of the 23rd Welch Pioneers. His civilian occupation is recorded as market foreman. Five months later he was sent to Salonika where he qualified as a railway platelayer. He was injured in 1918, spent some time in hospital, then returned to active service. The page of his army record is so faded it is unreadable. He was discharged in April 1919 and went back to live with Charles and Maud in Wellington Street. His army pension was still being sent there in 1922. My aunt says his 'personal' chair was the one beneath the clock and he exasperated everyone by sitting on the evening paper as soon as it was delivered to make sure that nobody read it before he did.

He did not marry. He died in Quarry Hill House in St Mellons, an old people's home, in 1968 when he was eighty-nine. An announcement of his death was published in the *Daily Telegraph* a week later.

GEORGE SELLERS

George, the fifth child, was born in Wyke Green in 1881 about a year before his family moved to Cardiff. As a young man he worked in a grocer's shop. He died in 1902 when he was twenty-one.

SARAH JANE LEWIS

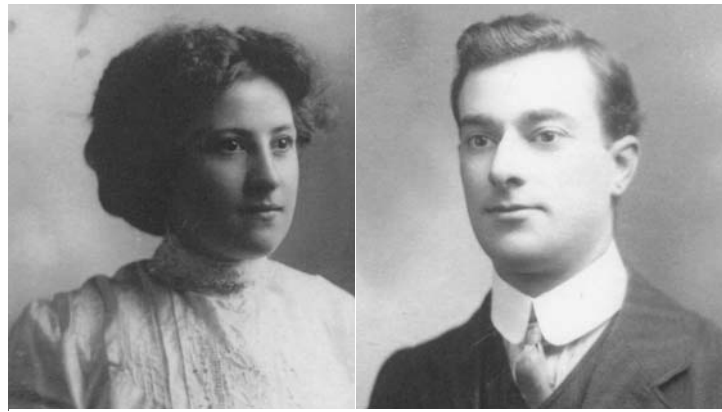
Charles's sister Sarah, the sixth child, was born in Cardiff in 1884. Before she was sixteen she went into service in Beda Road with Pembrokeshire draper's clerk Thomas Symonds and his family. She married Idris Lewis from Treorchy when she was twenty-five. They lived in Senghennydd Street in Treorchy. Idris worked underground driving a stationary engine. They seem to have had three or four children. Iris Martina married Ernest Thomas in 1932. Ruby Maud married Edwin Reynolds in 1955 and died in 1988. The other three entries are still closed in the 1939 Second World War rationing register under the government hundred year privacy rule. Sarah probably died in 1952 when she was sixty-eight. Idris probably died in 1966 when he was eighty.

THOMAS ALFRED SELLERS

Charles's brother Thomas, the seventh child, was born in Cardiff in 1887. When he was thirteen he worked for grocer A.J. Jones of Theobald's Stores in Canton. He stayed in the grocery trade all his working life. As a young man he lodged with his sister Gertie in Craddock Street and Wellington Street.

He enlisted in the army in June 1915 when he was twenty-eight as Private 98837 Sellers of the 5th Brigade, the Middlesex Regiment. He served with the British Expeditionary Force in France where he was rapidly promoted to sergeant. In November 1916 he took a gunshot wound, probably from a sniper, in the right temple and was evacuated to the Northern General Hospital in Newcastle. He was left with a twenty per cent visual disability. He was compulsorily transferred to an army base in Norwich where he served until he was discharged in March 1919.

He went back to the grocery business and lodged again with his sister Gertie until his marriage in 1921. He was thirty-four when he married Ada Parkin, the daughter of a blacksmith. She was born in Wyndham Street then her family moved to Allensbank Road. Thomas and Ada lived in Wyndham Crescent. By the late 1920s he had become the manager of the shop where he worked. He and his family moved to Carmarthen Street. By the 1930s they



Ada Parkin and Thomas Sellers

moved to St Fagans Road in Fairwater. Ada died in 1935 when she was forty-one. Shortly afterwards his sister Bessie had moved in. Thomas died in 1954 when he was sixty-seven.

Thomas and Ada had three children. Alfred John died in Swansea in 1981 when he was fifty-nine. Miriam Olive would have been twelve when she and my aunt Dorothy were bridesmaids at Syd and Mary Sellers's wedding in 1936. Miriam had kidney problems and died in 1940 when she was sixteen. Hilda May was seven when her mother died. She was brought up by an aunt on the

Parkin side of the family. She had no contact with her Sellers relatives and knew very little about them. In 1950, when she was twenty-two, she married Douglas Harold Stuart Price. They had two sons. I am in touch with Michael who lives in Birmingham. Richard died in 1971 when he was seventeen. Hilda died in 1987 in the Marie Curie hospice at Holme Tower in Penarth when she was fifty-nine. Douglas stayed on in the family home at 91 Heathway. He died at Michael's home in 2010 when he was eighty-two.



Hilda Sellers and Douglas Price on their wedding day in 1950. Her father Thomas Alfred Sellers is on her left

ALBERT JAMES SELLERS

Charles's brother Albert, known as Bert, was the eighth child. He was born in Cardiff in 1889. He became a baker. He lodged with his sister Gertie in Craddock Street after the death of his parents. When he was twenty-four he married Lilian Susan Tyte, Maud's younger sister. She died two years later when she was twenty-two.

The following year he married Maria Jane Jones, known as Jinny, from Railway Street. As a child I would generally sleep at my grandparents' house on Saturday nights and can well remember Uncle Bert and Auntie Jinny who used to visit every week. They would spend the evening playing cards with my grandparents. I quickly learned the rules of nap, whist, rummy and cribbage. I watched with fascination as the piles of ha'pennies they used as stakes moved back and forth across the kitchen table. Jinny died in 1970 when she was seventy-nine. Albert died in 1984 at the age of ninety-five.

They may have had six children. William James married Marjorie Williams in 1952 and died before his father in 1979 when he was sixty-two. His brother Charles married Violet Thomas when he was twenty-one. Charles' daughter Gaynor married Ronald Naish in 1968. Early in their married life they lived in Llanbradach next door to my cousin Ann. Charles died in 1988 aged sixty-six. Violet died aged eighty-three in 2004.



Charles Sellers and Violet Thomas wedding 1943

PERCY REGINALD SELLERS

Percy was the ninth and youngest child. He was born in Cardiff in 1893. In 1908, when he was fifteen, he started work with the Great Western Railway at Cardiff Station as an office messenger. He was paid the equivalent of about four pounds fifty a week. Three years later the census records him a seaman, lodging with his sister Gertie in Craddock Street following the death of his mother.

He married Rosa Selina Holder, known as Rose, in Bridgend when he was twenty-two. She was from Gloucester, the daughter of a railway shunter. After they married they lived in Gloucester. Some time later his brother Charles decided to visit him. He and Maud set out on the bus but when they got to Gloucester Maud discovered that she had left the note of Percy's address on the kitchen table. Charles muttered a few choice words and, in desperation, he stopped someone in the street to ask if he knew a man called Percy Sellers and if, by any chance, he knew where he lived. The man took one look at Charles, gave him prompt directions and remarked that, judging by his nose, he must be Percy's brother! In 1939 Percy and Rose were living in Cinderford and Percy was working as a collier. He was fifty-nine when he died in 1952. Rose died in 1963 at the age of seventy-seven.

Chapter seven

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

There is no way of knowing how much contact there was between members of the family who moved to Cardiff and those who remained in the West Country. Communication by letter was not difficult. The Penny Post, a quick and reliable universal mail service, had been in operation in the UK for nearly twenty years when the first members of the family arrived in South Wales.

Those living in the Cardiff area were in close touch. After the death of their parents Charles's younger brothers all lived with him and his wife or at the home of his sister Gertie until they married. Afterwards there were frequent visits. His uncle Henry and three of his Sellers cousins lived in Cardiff. But on his mother's side, after his aunt Charlotte White died, only her brother Tom remained in South Wales.

Maud saw all the Tyte family regularly. Her eldest sister Kate was twenty years older than she was and, perhaps naturally, it was her daughter Cassie who was a regular visitor. Cassie's brother Cyril Powell, his wife Florrie Thomas and their children lived nearby in Leckwith Road. Maud often saw her sisters Annie and Alice. After her brother Jack died in 1935 his sons lived with her until they married. Her mother's uncle Dennis Collins lived in Wyndham Road for some years before returning to Bristol. The children of his stepdaughter Maria Scrase (who was her mother's cousin both by birth and by marriage) were well-known to the family, particularly Wally, Percy, Herbert, Phyllis and Dorothy. Maud was in touch with Mary Desmond, daughter of John McCarthy, a Collins cousin of her mother's, all her life and fond of her daughter Ellen Clode who was close to her own age.

Wellington Street was a close community where everybody knew everybody else. Particular friends of my grandparents were the families who lived near Number 23: the Nurses, the Cosletts and the Cawleys on either side and the Thompsons across the road at Number 138. Many of the houses were owned by the Smart family who lived in South Morgan Street. Lily Smart collected the rent. She had a sister called Rosie. There were numerous 'corner' shops in the street, the nearest of which was kept by the James family. There were six pubs close by: the Red Cow, the Rover Vaults, the Greyhound, the Wellington Hotel, the Duke of York and the Wyndham Hotel. The house numbers ran consecutively. On the south side, the same side of the street as Charles and Maud, were:

COSTER FAMILY AT NUMBER 14

Teddy Coster, who drove a horse and cart, was a familiar sight in Wellington Street. Local children were instructed to shout whenever they saw him so someone could dash out with a bucket to collect the manure! The first Teddy Coster was Edward Thomas Coster, a butcher from Mile End in London. He and his family moved to Cardiff in the late 1880s. He died in Wyndham Road in 1904. His son Harry Edward was a fruit and vegetable dealer. In the 1920s he and his family moved to Wellington Street where he died in 1927. His widow and children stayed on in the house. Joseph Edward, born in 1908, was the third Teddy Coster who in my day was a rag and bone man. He died in 1984 when he was seventy-six. His sister Edith, who married Ernest Owen in 1936, also lived in number 14. Their daughter Dorothy was described to me by Barbara Collins, who as a child lived at number 22, as her 'mortal enemy' when they were at school in Kitchener Road.

BORD FAMILY AT THE RED COW AT NUMBER 18

The Bord family kept the Red Cow. Thomas Bord, a cabinet maker from North Cadbury in Somerset, moved his family to Cardiff in the 1850s. His son Charles became the landlord of the Red Cow in the early 1900s. Before he took over the Red Cow he and his wife Annie lived in Tudor Road where he had two lodgers. Roland Bottomley (1879-1947) spent some years in Sir Henry Irving's theatre company in London before appearing in several long-running musical productions. He was Bandmaster Van Vuyt in *Miss Hook of Holland* which ran for 550 nights in London before touring Australia. He went on to appear in Hollywood films such as *The Neglected Wife* (1917), *A Man's Home* (1921), *Modern Marriage* (1923), *Dawn of a Tomorrow* (1924), *Raffles* (1925) and *Enticement* (1925). Among the plays Percy Anstey (1876-??) appeared in were *Bonnie Dundee* (1899) and *Twelfth Night* (1902) in London. At the Herald Square Theatre on Broadway in New York he appeared in *The Only Way* (1902), *Children of Kings* (1902), *A Cigarette Maker's Romance* and *Rouget de L'Isle* (1902). When the company returned to the Prince's Theatre in Bristol Percy appeared in *A Cigarette Maker's Romance* (1903), *The Only Way* (1903), *The Breed of Treshams* (1904), *Hamlet* (1904) and *Eugene Aram* (1905).

Charles and Annie's son Sidney married Clara Williams from DeBurgh Street in 1922. They then took over the Red Cow. Their younger son Ernie ran the pub in the early 1930s. In 1934 he married Olive German. His grandmother Annie died in 1934. His grandfather Charles died in the pub two years later when he was seventy-three. Ernie died in 1979.



Roland Bottomley and Ruth Lincoln as Sally in *Miss Hook of Holland*

cawley gallery



Left: Emma when she was 23 in 1914, Freddie and Emma when she was 54.



Above: Cliff, Edna, Vera and Joan
Left: Joan and her mother, Freddie Allen
Below: Joan and Freddie's wedding 1942, Cliff Cawley and Fred Allen



NURSE FAMILY AT NUMBER 22

George and Mary Nurse moved into Number 22 in the late 1890s. George was from North Wootton in Somerset. He drove a horse and cart for Cardiff Corporation. Before her marriage Mary Willis, as she was then, was in service in Wordsworth Street in Roath. They had five children: Mary, Beatrice Ellen who was my grandmother's friend, the woman we knew as Nellie Nurse, William, Thomas and Minnie.



Sam and Minnie Cosslett on their Golden Wedding in 1954

COSSLETT FAMILY AT NUMBER 22

George and Mary's youngest daughter Minnie Nurse married Sam Cosslett in 1904. I do not know when her parents left Wellington Street but she and Sam had moved into the house by the time he enlisted in 1916 as 399544 Private Cosslett in the Royal Army Service Corps. Both Sam and Minnie died at Number 22: Sam in 1960 when he was seventy-seven; Minnie the following year when she was seventy-six. They had six children.

Bill whose daughter Dorothy is pictured left, Winifred who was known as Cissie, Gladys, Freddie, Samuel and Mabel. Sam married Dolly Allsopp in 1951. When they lived at Number 22, before they moved to Insole Gardens, I used to play with their daughter Janet. Sam died in 1983 at the age of seventy-one. Dolly died in 2011 when she was eighty-six. Mabel married Stan Collins in 1940 when they moved into Number 22. She died in Llandough Hospital in 1996 when she was eighty. Stan died in 2005 when he was eighty-eight. Their children were Barbara, Alan and Lynda.



**Above: Sam with his son Bill's daughter Dorothy in 1935
Below: Mabel about 1940**

CAWLEY FAMILY AT NUMBER 24

When Charles and Maud moved to Wellington Street in 1913 Jane Shumack and her daughter Emma lived next door at Number 24. Jane's sister Mary married Solly Andrews in 1855 in Trowbridge and then moved with him to Cardiff. Emma was practically the same age as Maud. Her elderly father Alfred had died in the Cardiff Mental Asylum in Whitchurch the previous year. Emma married Smith's striker Freddie Cawley in 1914. His father Robert was a blacksmith from Beer. Many of the extended Sellers family lived there and a few had moved to Cardiff. Both the Sellers and the Crawleys lived in Saltmead Road in 1901 and they may already have been friends.

Freddie joined Emma and her mother at Number 24. They had four children: Clifford, Vera, Edna and Joan. In the early 1940s the family moved to a three-storey house in Tudor Road. When their daughter Joan married Frederick Allen on Boxing Day in 1942 they moved into the top floor. My aunt Dorothy would sometimes go there after work and stay overnight. Freddie Cawley died in Tudor Road in 1948 at the age of fifty-eight. Emma died in 1954 when she was sixty-three.



Freddie's brothers and sisters were frequent visitors to Wellington Street.

Annie married dock worker Joseph Lerol. They lived in Tynant Street with their children Violet, Ivy, Lilian and Iris. Electrician Bill married Mabel Lewis. They lived in Rookwood Street with their children Dora Mabel, Frank, Ethel, Ivy, Elsie, Grace and Olive.

Machinist Ernie married Ruth Drury. They lived in Court Road and then in Barry with their daughters Beatrice and Freda. Charlie, also a machinist, married Isabel Pearce. They lived in Bridgend with their sons Cecil and Allan.

Alma married railway worker Joseph Othen. They lived in Penarth Road with their son Cyril.

Walter was described as a welfare worker in 1939. His wife's name was Constance. I think they lived in Cardiff. Gertie married Stanley Philips in 1915. I do not know where they lived.

Harold, who was called up as 3382 Private Cawley to the 4th Western Company on 25 November 1916, was exempted from combatant active service on conscientious grounds. He was fined two pounds for disobeying orders on the day he was called up and confined to the guard room. Two weeks later a court marshal sentenced him to six months imprisonment with hard labour. He was transferred to Wormwood Scrubs but released after three months and sent to a works centre in Wakefield under the authority of the Committee of Employment by arrangement with the Army Council. He married Winifred Edwards. They lived in Bridgend where he worked as a caretaker.

Freddie and Emma's oldest child Clifford and his wife Jayne may have lived in Newport. Neither Vera nor Edna appear to have married. Joan married engine driver Freddie Allen on Boxing Day 1942.

When Freddie and Emma Cawley left Number 24 the Green family moved in. I think the children were Annette and Malcolm. Mrs Green used to offend my grandmother's sense of propriety by yelling their names down the street at the top of her voice when she wanted them to come home.

BURGE FAMILY AT NUMBER 25

Charles's sister Gertie and her husband James Burge moved into Number 25 just before the First World War and brought up their sons there. Her brother Thomas lodged with the family between his discharge from the army in 1919 and his marriage in 1921. Jim died in 1929 when he was sixty. Gertie died in 1958 when she was eighty-one.

JAMES FAMILY IN THE SHOP AT NUMBER 26

In 1911 the grocer's shop at Number 26 had been kept by the Burland family for over ten years. After the Burlands left, three generations of the James family kept the shop. Unfortunately, without any birth or death dates to use as a guideline, there are too many Edward James to search through.

NUMBER 31

There was a public house at Number 31, not named in any of the censuses, which I think must have been the Rover Vaults. My aunt Dorothy remembers it being on the corner of South Morgan Street. In 1911 it was kept by Sidney and Clara Evans. Their children were Ivy, Leonard and Phyllis.

The only surviving map of Cardiff on which the individual houses in Wellington Street are marked and which I have access to is an 1880 Ordnance Survey map. Not surprisingly, more houses were built between then and the time my grandparents moved to Wellington Street. Some dwellings were also converted to shops and vice versa. I have spent days pouring over the map in conjunction with the 1901 and 1911 censuses but have been unable to fathom the street numbers of the houses opposite Number 23. This is compounded by the fact that in both censuses Wellington Street was divided into three (slightly different in each census) which were part of different districts of Cardiff. Whether I run the numbers 80-146 on the north side of Wellington Street from east to west or from west to east, the numbers opposite Number 23 are not right. I have listed the people I remember on the north side in numerical order.

On the north side of the street were:

NUMBERS 89 AND 90 THE DUKE OF YORK

There was a pub called the Duke of York at Numbers 89 and 90. My aunt Dorothy remembers it as on the corner of Albert Street. It closed in 1975 when the street was redeveloped. It was run in 1911 by Arthur and Bertha Price. Their daughter was called Violet.

Barbara Collins says she remembers standing at the bedroom window at night and watching the drunks coming out of the Wyndham Hotel which was on the corner where Wellington St and Cowbridge Rd split. She says she saw many a good fight

until her Mum heard her out of bed and sent her packing! But I am wondering whether she could have seen that well right up to the east end of the street. I am wondering if it was the Wellington Hotel or the Duke of York which was nearer.



Duke of York

NUMBER 130 THE SLOMAN FAMILY AT THE GREYHOUND

The Slomans kept the Greyhound pub. James Sloman, who was a stonemason, was born in Devon. He moved to Cardiff and married his wife Fanny in the 1870s. They lived in South Morgan Street where they had six children. Frederick James Sloman, the fourth child, was born in 1874, the same year as my grandfather. He married Harriet Litton in 1896. Soon afterwards he took over The Greyhound. He died at 99 Cowbridge Road in 1940 when he was sixty-six. Harriet died in 1961 aged eighty-seven. They had six children Winifred, Edith, Frederick, Arthur, Leonard and Dorothy.

NUMBER 131 THE WELLINGTON HOTEL

In 1901 and 1911 Number 131 was the Wellington Hotel kept by Sidney Collins and his wife Elizabeth. They had four children: Mary, Herbert, Dorothy and Reginald.

NUMBER 138 THE THOMPSON FAMILY

Ernie and Clara Thompson were friends of Charles and Maud. Ernie's father Charles Thompson was a joiner from Cheadle. He and his wife Georgina Poole had eight children before they moved to Cardiff. Charles died in 1898 when he was forty-six. Georgina died in 1940 when she was eighty-eight.

Ernie was their sixth child. He married Clara Hurle, the daughter of a plasterer from Frome, in 1909. They moved in with her parents, sister Esther and brother Albert at Number 138. Ernie and Clara's son Ernest was born in 1910. Ernie died in 1966 when he was seventy-nine. Clara died in 1979 when she was ninety.



Georgina Poole

Chapter eight

THE TIMES 1900-1919

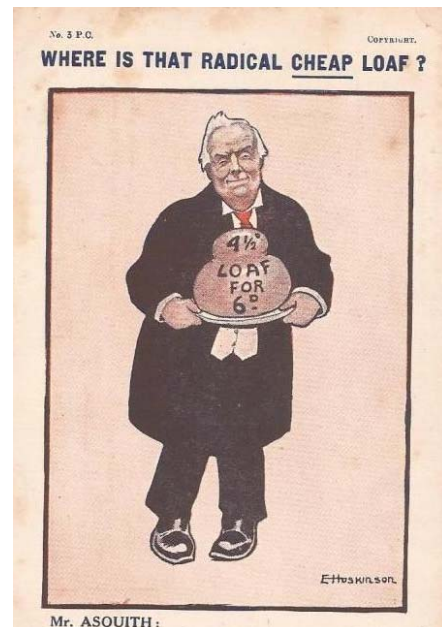
The zoo in Victoria Park was opened in 1900. Motor cars were licensed for the first time on the first day of 1904 and number plates were introduced together with a speed limit of twenty miles per hour. Millicent McKenzie was appointed a professor at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire in Cardiff, the first woman appointed to a chair at a British university-level institution. On 28 October Edward VII granted city status to Cardiff.

There was a general election in 1900 when Lord Salisbury's Conservatives again allied with the Liberal Unionists and secured a large majority over Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Liberals. In July 1902, in failing health, Salisbury resigned. He was succeeded by his nephew Arthur Balfour.

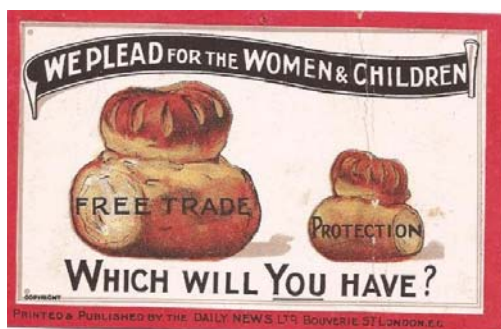
The common ground between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists was their opposition to Irish Home Rule. In the intense debate over overseas trade in the early 1900s both the Liberals and the Conservatives held an unshakeable belief in free trade while some of the Liberal Unionists like Joseph Chamberlain favoured a tariff system in which the Empire formed a trading bloc and duties were imposed on imports from elsewhere. Balfour favoured free trade with retaliatory tariffs against those who imposed them on British goods. It pleased neither the free traders nor the tariff reformers. Wheat production was insufficient to meet demand and large quantities were imported from the USA and Russia. As bread was the staple food of the poor working-class people tended to see tariffs as a vehicle to raise the price of food. The debate was nicknamed 'Big Loaf, Little Loaf' suggesting that, for the same price, a bigger loaf could be bought under free trade. In Cardiff the sitting Member Sir Edward Reed was returned in 1900 as a Liberal and, when standing for re-election on gaining a government post in 1904, as a Liberal Unionist.



Political posters issued during the 'Big Loaf Little Loaf' debate



Caption above left: I don't know whether your eyes are better than mine, but when I first saw these loaves I was absolutely unable to tell which was the big one. I know there is a difference, because I know that in the smaller one a few ounces less flour had been used in order to correspond with the amount of the tax, but it is still, I think, a sporting question - which is the big one and which is the little one. See Mr Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham



In 1903 Chamberlain surprised his Liberal Unionists and his Conservative colleagues by launching plans for tariff reform in a speech in his Birmingham constituency. His public departure from a policy of free trade caused immediate problems in the Unionist alliance. Chamberlain resigned from the cabinet to campaign for tariff reform. Three ministers followed him leaving Balfour's cabinet weak. Supporters of free trade left the Liberal Unionist Association in protest. Chamberlain took over the leadership of the Liberal Unionists but a large number, including a few MPs, migrated back to the Liberal party. Chamberlain's proposals for tariff reform dominated politics for the next three years.

But by 1905 few Unionist MPs were still free traders. Balfour retained little authority and resigned as prime minister in December. Edward VII invited the Liberal leader Henry Campbell-Bannerman to form a minority government. Herbert Asquith and other senior Liberals tried to force the sixty-nine-year-old Campbell-Bannerman into the House of Lords to allow Asquith to govern as Leader of the Commons. Campbell-Bannerman immediately called a general election. In his first public speech as prime minister he launched the Liberal election campaign focusing on the traditional Liberal platform of 'peace, retrenchment and reform'.

The Liberal Party won a large majority at the 1906 general election. The Conservative and Liberal Unionists leader Arthur Balfour and more than half his MPs lost their seats. The Labour Representation Committee, which gained a respectable number of seats in an election pact with the Liberals, then reformed as the Labour Party with Keir Hardie as its leader. This was the last election in which the Liberals won an absolute majority in the House of Commons. In Cardiff Ivor Churchill Guest, first

Viscount Wimborne, a first cousin of Winston Churchill was elected. He sat for Plymouth in 1900 as a Conservative but, during the controversy over protectionism, he and other members of his family followed Churchill into the Liberal Party in support of free trade. He sat for Cardiff until 1910 when he became Baron Ashby St Ledgers. He was later appointed, as Lord Wimborne, one of the last Lords Lieutenant of Ireland serving at the time of the Easter Rising.

Campbell-Bannerman was a moderate social reformer who favoured improved conditions for the poor and the working class but like Gladstone opposed too much state interference. His government allowed local authorities to provide free school meals though it was not compulsory. It strengthened the power of the trades unions by legislating to prevent them from being sued for damages incurred during a strike and giving some workers the right to a certain amount of compensation from their employer if they suffered an accident at work.

The new City Hall was opened in Cathays Park in 1906 and the King and Queen opened the Queen Alexandra Dock in 1907. That year Campbell-Bannerman's health deteriorated. Following a series of heart attacks he began to fear that he would not be able to survive to the end of his term. He resigned as prime minister in April 1908. His health declined quickly and he died nineteen days later. He was succeeded by his chancellor of the exchequer Herbert Asquith. Edward VII was holidaying in Biarritz. He refused to return to London citing health grounds. Asquith was forced to travel to Biarritz for the official 'kissing of hands' of the monarch the only time a British prime minister has formally taken office on foreign soil.

The Asquith government became involved in an expensive naval arms race with the German Empire and an extensive social welfare programme spearheaded by Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George. Winston Churchill at the Board of Trade had measures passed against sweatshop conditions. The social welfare programme was controversial. A number of bills were voted down by the Conservative-dominated House of Lords.

The national old age pension scheme came into force on the first day of 1909 and labour exchanges were opened to give information on employment. A National Pageant of Wales was held at Cardiff Castle in late July and early August.



Ivor Churchill Guest 1906

In 1909 Lloyd George produced a deliberately provocative 'People's Budget'. It systematically raised taxes on the rich, especially landowners, to pay for welfare programmes and new battleships. There were many public meetings, some of them organised by dukes, to protest the budget. One of its fiercest opponents in the Lords was Viscount Harcourt for whose widow Margaret Rose Sellers, Charles's cousin, was to work for many years as a cook. Lloyd George attacked the peers claiming 'a fully-equipped Duke costs as much to keep up as two dreadnoughts' and was 'less easy to scrap'. Privately, the king urged Conservative leaders Balfour and Lord Lansdowne not to oppose the budget. The Finance Bill passed the Commons in November but was rejected by the Lords when Lord Lansdowne moved a resolution stating that the Lords were entitled to oppose the bill as it lacked an electoral mandate. By tradition the Lords did not interfere with finance bills and the vote provoked a constitutional crisis. A general election was inevitable.

The election in January 1910 was dominated by talk of removing the Lords' veto. A possible radical solution was to threaten to have the king pack the House of Lords with freshly-minted Liberal peers. During the election campaign Lloyd George talked of 'guarantees' and Asquith of 'safeguards' which would be necessary before forming another Liberal government. The king informed Asquith that he would not be willing to contemplate creating peers until after a second general election. Some in the Cabinet suggested that the right to create peers be given to the prime minister. Balfour refused to be drawn on whether or not he would be willing to form a Conservative government but advised the king not to promise to create peers until he had seen the terms of any proposed constitutional change.

The election resulted in a hung parliament with the Liberals having two more seats than the Conservatives but lacking an overall majority. The Liberals formed a minority government dependent on the support of the Irish Nationalists. Pressure to remove the Lords' veto now came from the Irish MPs who wanted to remove the Lords' ability to block the introduction of Irish Home Rule and threatened to vote against the budget unless they had their way.



D A Thomas

In Cardiff Liberal David Alfred Thomas often known as 'DA' was elected. He was born during a thunderstorm. His father, a coal-owner not noted for his cheerful temperament, is said to have remarked 'Well, I see nothing for him but the workhouse'. Thomas refused to take the side of the coal-owners' organisation during the strike of 1898. His Cambrian Collieries continued to work, making a great deal of money for the shareholders. In 1906 he persuaded the relatively small Rhondda coal companies to work together as the Cambrian Combine. They dominated the coalfield, operating individually but working together to regulate prices and wages. Not surprisingly the price and wage regulation was not popular with miners. It resulted in the Cambrian Combine Strike which began with a lockout at Thomas's Ely Pit in Penygraig in 1910 and culminated in one of the most violent events in Rhondda history, the Tonypany Riots (see page 83).

Thomas had stepped down from his Merthyr seat to fight the marginal Cardiff constituency. Disappointed when he was not offered government office he did not stand in the second general election later that year. Having made a fortune as owner of the Cambrian Collieries he returned to politics as David Lloyd George's emissary to the United States. In May 1915 he was aboard *RMS Lusitania* when she was torpedoed. He and his daughter Margaret were among the survivors. There was a poster on the Cardiff *Evening Express* newsstands about the sinking that read 'Great National Disaster. D. A. Saved'. Reportedly he was immensely amused. An aged collier, on being informed that Thomas had been in the ship when it had gone down, declared 'I will wait till tomorrow. He always comes out on top, and I promise you this: he will come to the top of the water again with a big fish in each of his hands'. In 1916 Thomas was created Baron Rhondda and Viscount Rhondda in 1918.

More than six months after the general election Asquith admitted that there were no 'guarantees' of the creation of peers to counter Conservative domination in the Lords. The cabinet considered resigning and leaving Balfour to try to form a Conservative government.

To ensure the support of the Irish MPs, Asquith hinted in the debate that he would ask the king to break the deadlock in the Lords by a mass creation of peers, contrary to Edward VII's earlier stipulation that there be a second election. The budget, for which the Liberals had obtained an electoral mandate, was passed by both Commons and Lords in April. The king, who was advised by Balfour and the Archbishop of Canterbury that the Liberals did not have sufficient electoral mandate to demand creation of peers, thought the whole proposal 'simply disgusting'. Lord Crewe, Liberal leader in the Lords, announced publicly that the government's wish to create peers should be treated as formal 'ministerial advice' which, by convention, the monarch would be obliged to obey. Edward VII died on 6 May 1910. So heated had passions become that Asquith was accused of having 'killed the king' through stress.

The new king, George V, was reluctant to carry out such a drastic attack on the aristocracy as the first act of his reign. It required all of Asquith's considerable powers to convince him to make the promise. Asquith did not make it public at the time. His government was so unstable that a general election was called at the end of the year.

Tax the Land and Not the People's Food.

THE DUKES, LORDS AND EARLS

Say they will be ruined if undeveloped land and unearned increment contribute a trifle towards the national revenue.

As they say that, they wink the other eye

For they know that up to the present the traders and workers are carrying more of their share of the burden.

FOR INSTANCE:

Cardiff Castle, with all its mediaeval magnificence and its extensive private grounds, containing 503,200 square yards, is rated at £924. Nearby is a tailor's shop, with an area of 470 square yards, which is rated at £947.

IS THAT JUST? NO!

It is a crying injustice - the result of Landowners law-making in bygone days.

Liberal Party election leaflet 1910



On 13 June 1910 Captain Robert Falcon Scott and his officers enjoyed a farewell dinner at the Royal Hotel in St Mary's Street before beginning their attempt to be the first men to reach the South Pole. Scott's ship *Terra Nova* set sail from Cardiff two days later on an expedition to undertake scientific research and exploration along the coast and interior of Antarctica. Ninian Park football stadium was opened to serve Cardiff City FC: a member of the English Football League despite being based in Wales. On 4 November Ernest Thompson Willows made the first flight from England to France in his dirigible *City of Cardiff* having earlier in the year made the first flight across the Bristol Channel by airship from Cardiff to Minehead.



Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart and his wife 1910

After the December 1910 general election the balance of power remained the same. Asquith was able to curb the powers of the House of Lords through the Parliament Act of 1911. The power of the Lords to veto money bills was removed. Its ability to veto other bills was limited to delaying power whereby a Bill would become law if passed a third time by the Commons. The length of a

parliament was reduced from seven years to five (the king would have preferred four years). So the Lords could now delay for two years, but with some exceptions could not defeat outright, a bill passed by the Commons. Asquith's victory marked the permanent end of the House of Lords as a major base of political power. It was the last election to be held over several days and the last before the First World War.

In Cardiff Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart, son the the third marquess of Bute, won the seat at the second attempt having lost the January general election to D A Thomas. He was a Liberal Unionist whose party merged with the Conservatives in 1912. In that year he took command of the 6th Battalion the Welsh Regiment. He was killed in action in 1915 leading an night attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt in northern France when he was thirty-two. His statue is in Gorsedd Gardens.

After his death Conservative Sir James Cory came in at the by-election. He was the younger son of John Cory founder of Cardiff-based John Cory Sons & Co (not the John Cory the son of Richard Cory who founded Barry Docks and Cory Brothers). He sat from 1915 to 1918 then from 1918 to 1923 for the new constituency of Cardiff South.

The price of Irish support in 1910 was the Third Irish Home Rule Bill which Asquith delivered in 1912. His efforts nearly provoked a civil war in Ireland over the province of Ulster. The legislation for Irish Home Rule was due to come into effect in 1914, allowing for the two-year delay under the Parliament Act as a result of its defeat in the Lords. By that time the Cabinet was discussing allowing the six predominantly Protestant counties of north-east Ulster to opt out of the arrangement. The discussion was suspended on the outbreak of the First World War.

Although Asquith was a right-wing Liberal he continued to work with Lloyd George in setting up unemployment insurance helping to set the stage for the welfare state in Britain.

In 1911 MPs voted to receive salaries for the first time. In July the National Insurance Act 1911 came into force introducing National Insurance payments. After a national strike in 1912 a minimum wage was introduced for miners. Unemployment and Maternity benefits were introduced in January 1913.

The German invasion of Belgium in 1914 raised the spectre of German control of the entire continent. The 1839 Treaty of London had committed Britain to guard Belgium's neutrality in the event of invasion. Talks with France in 1906, kept secret from most members of the cabinet, had set up the mechanism for an expeditionary force to co-operate militarily with France.

In July 1914 the Reservists, men who had served their allotted time with the army and the navy and who were simply waiting in reserve, were recalled. This was a precautionary step. Britain was the only European power not to have a system of conscription and these time-served men were a crucial part of Britain's defence network. As the *South Wales Echo* reported on 3 August 1914:

Cardiff GWR Station was the scene of great enthusiasm as the various contingents from neighbouring towns arrived to entrain for Devonport, Plymouth and other naval depots. About sixty men were called up from Cardiff and their arrival with their friends and relatives at the station approach soon caused a very large crowd to gather...The enthusiastic crowd grew to such proportions that the station gates had to be closed and a posse of police was introduced to the platform to regulate the crowd.

At 11.30 that night just before the midnight deadline, the train finally pulled out. About 300 men were packed into the carriages and they left with repeated cheers ringing in their ears. In the crowd there were many seriously visaged people and many women who were moved to tears at the call for their husbands and sons.

On 4 August 1914 Asquith and the cabinet asked the king to declare war on the German Empire. Britain was in alliance with France and Russia against Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Later Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers and Portugal, Italy, Romania, Greece and the French colonies of north Africa joined the Allies.

Lord Kitchener proposed a volunteer army of perhaps a hundred thousand to support the Regulars. The target was quickly reached and overtaken many times. Units of Pals were promised that, if they enlisted, they could serve alongside their friends and work colleagues rather than be shipped off to fill gaps in Regular Army battalions. Cardiff's Pals were the Cardiff Commercial's the 11th Battalion the Welsh Regiment. Its main recruiting centre was Gladstone Road School where I was an infant pupil just under forty years later.

The war was fought not only in Europe but across Africa from west to east. As each side eyed the other's territory small contingents of British, French and Belgian troops led large numbers of African conscripts in a fight against German officers and their native conscripts. The oil-rich land around the Persian Gulf, much of it under Ottoman control, looked attractive to an empire whose military was increasingly oil-powered. Other countries who joined the war were driven by territorial ambition. Bulgaria looked for chunks of Serbia, Greece for pieces of Turkey and Romania had its eye on Austro-Hungarian territory. Australia and New Zealand took over German Samoa, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Looking back a hundred years it is hard to see why the majority of the population wholeheartedly backed the war. The press played an enormous part. At the start of the war the government realised propaganda would be necessary to keep public enthusiasm high in the absence of conscription and it skilfully manipulated both editors and war correspondents who produced a flood of idealised stories of British heroism and German barbarism supported by both fact and fiction written by John Buchan and Rudyard Kipling.

In January 1915 a memorial to Captain Robert Falcon Scott, in the form of a model lighthouse, was erected on an island in Roath Park Lake, commemorating the support given to Scott's expedition by the people of Cardiff. Several months later an amphibious assault was launched against the Ottoman army, which was thought to be weaker than the German army, at Gallipoli to knock the more vulnerable Ottoman Empire out of the war. Many of the Allied troops never made it out of their landing craft before being shot dead. By the end of the year the campaign was abandoned. Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty had been responsible for the plan and following the disaster spent some years in the political wilderness.

By early 1916 two and a half million men had enlisted though working class men showed less zeal, volunteering at a noticeably lower rate than professionals and white collar workers. Charles Sellers's younger brother Thomas Alfred and his wife Emma White's nephew both volunteered and fought throughout the war on the Western Front despite both having been fairly seriously wounded. Charles's brother William Henry was conscripted and spent the war in Salonica in Greece. His sister Gertie's stepson Alfred Burge died at Gallipoli four days after landing.

The strategy at the start of the war was that heavy guns would control the battlefield instead of being a useful support for infantry attacks. The stable lines on the Western Front made it easy to build rail track that delivered all the shells the factories at home could produce. The high rate of fire over a long period of time had not been anticipated and there was soon a shortage of artillery shells. The *Times*, at the behest of its owner Lord Northcliffe and his ally Lloyd George, sought to force parliament to adopt a national munitions policy under a strong leader. Coupled with the failed offensive at the Battle of Gallipoli, it caused a split in the cabinet.

Asquith became head of a new coalition government bringing senior figures from the Opposition into the cabinet. The Conservative leader Bonar Law was given a relatively minor job as Secretary for the Colonies, former Conservative leader Arthur Balfour replaced Churchill at the Admiralty and Kitchener, who was popular with the public, was stripped of his powers over munitions which were given to a new ministry under Lloyd George. But by autumn 1915 Asquith's Coalition was close to breaking up over the issue of conscription. The losses in France were so great that there were not enough volunteers to replace them. In March 1916 conscription for single men between 18 and 41 was brought in by the Military Service Act. Married men in the same age bracket were conscripted a month later. On 4 March 1916 the third war budget raised income tax to five shillings in the pound, twenty-five per cent.

Critics increasingly complained about Asquith's lack of vigour over the conduct of the war. When he fell ill Kitchener said 'I thought he had exhausted all possible sources of delay; I never thought of the diarrhoea'. General Haig, recently appointed Commander-in-Chief of British forces in France, attended a cabinet meeting in London in 1916 to discuss a proposed Somme offensive. It was agreed with some reluctance as Kitchener and Robertson supported it but the cabinet was more concerned with the ongoing political crisis over the extension of conscription to married men which could potentially have brought down the government. Haig recorded that Asquith attended the meeting dressed for golf and clearly keen to get away for the weekend although on a later occasion he recorded that Asquith was still capable of discussing military operations cogently despite being clearly the worse for drink. The story goes that on Whit Monday 1916, after Kitchener's ship was sunk by a mine while on his way to Russia, Bonar Law wanted to discuss the succession to the job of Secretary of State for War. He was irritated at having to travel to Asquith's home in Berkshire and at finding Asquith playing bridge with three ladies. After Bonar Law had refused to wait until the hand was finished, Asquith offered him the job. He declined as he had already told Lloyd George that he should have it.

The weakness of Asquith as a planner and organiser was increasingly apparent to senior officials. He was forced out in December 1916 after he refused to agree to Lloyd George's demand that he be allowed to chair a small committee to manage the war. Lloyd George became prime minister with the nation demanding he take vigorous charge of the war. A *Punch* cartoon of the time showed him as 'The New Conductor' conducting the orchestra in the 'Opening of the 1917 Overture'. The fall of Asquith split the Liberal Party into two factions: those who supported him and those who supported Lloyd George in the coalition government. Lloyd George was backed by the Conservatives and the press baron Lord Northcliffe who owned both the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*.

The five-member War Cabinet consisted of the prime minister, three Conservatives (Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords Lord Curzon, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons Andrew Bonar Law and Minister without Portfolio Lord Milner) and Arthur Henderson who unofficially represented Labour. The War Cabinet was a successful innovation. It met almost daily making all major political, military, economic and diplomatic decisions. In February 1917 bread was put on ration, followed a year later by meat, sugar and fats.

The war brought an increase in working hours in many industries, a fall in wages, high inflation and high income tax. Between 1914 and 1918 trades union membership doubled from about four million to about eight million. Work stoppages and strikes became frequent in 1917 and 1918 as the unions expressed grievances regarding prices, liquor control, pay disputes, dilution (the employment of women particularly in engineering and shipbuilding), fatigue from overtime and from Sunday work and inadequate housing.

Conscription put six million men into uniform. About three-quarters of a million lost their lives and over a million-and-a-half were wounded. Many of the dead were young unmarried men but a hundred and sixty thousand wives lost their husbands and three hundred thousand children lost their fathers. Politicians were faced with a crisis. Withholding the vote from the very men who had fought to preserve the British political system and Empire was unacceptable. They needed no reminding of the recent overthrow of the Romanov monarchy and the Russian nobility. A similar revolution of workers and soldiers in Britain was not an impossibility. Lloyd George brought forward the Representation of the People Bill a hybrid of legislation proposed in 1916 to provide for the registration of voters who had changed their place of residence because of war work. It had virtual cross-party unanimity. It was enacted in February 1918. It enfranchised practically all men over twenty-one and many women over thirty.

In spring 1918 came a series of military and political crises. Germany launched the full scale Spring Offensive hoping for victory on the battlefield before American troops arrived in numbers. More troops were needed to fight a mobile war. Lloyd George found a half million soldiers, rushed them to France and asked American President Woodrow Wilson for immediate help.

Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice the head of the War Department made the spectacular public allegation that the War Cabinet had deliberately held soldiers back from the Western Front and both Lloyd George and Bonar Law had lied to Parliament about it. Lloyd George had apparently unknowingly misled the House about the size of Haig's forces by including labourers, most of them Chinese, Indians and black South Africans. Asquith, still the Liberal leader in the House, attacked Lloyd George further splitting the Liberal Party. Lloyd George vigorously defended his position, treating the debate as a vote of confidence which he won. The German offensive stalled. The Allied victory came on 11 November 1918. Lloyd George called an election immediately after the signing of the Armistice with Germany. His reputation was at its zenith.

The 1918 election was the first to be held after the passing of the Fourth Reform Act. It was the first in which voting took place on a single day. The election also marked the end of the Liberal dominance in Wales where for the first time Labour won more seats. The Conservative MPs included record numbers of corporate directors, bankers and businessmen.

Lloyd George and Conservative leader Bonar Law identified candidates who agreed to support them in coalition with a letter of endorsement, signed by both, known as a 'coupon'. The election is often called the coupon election. Coupons were issued to 159 Liberal candidates and 364 Conservatives some of whom rejected them. It was also known as one of the khaki elections because of the role of the demobilised soldiers in the immediate postwar setting. Labour decided to fight it out independently, as did those Liberals who did not want a coupon.

The split persisted in the Liberal party between those who were aligned with Lloyd George and the government and those who were aligned with Asquith, the party's official leader. Most of the pro-coalition Liberals were re-elected. Asquith lost his seat and his faction was reduced to thirty-six. The Labour Party made a net gain though two of its leading members Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson lost their seats. The coalition won a landslide victory. Lloyd George remained prime minister even though Bonar Law's Conservatives outnumbered his pro-coalition Liberals.

After the passing of the Fourth Reform Act in 1918 the constituency was split into Cardiff Central, Cardiff East and Cardiff South. Canton was in Cardiff Central. James Childs Gould was elected and sat until 1924.

The important issue was the voters' evaluation of Lloyd George in terms of what he had accomplished and what he promised for the future. His supporters emphasised that he had won the war. Emphasising his record on social legislation Lloyd George made his famous call for 'a country fit for heroes to live in.'

In 1918 there was a major flu pandemic which was unusually deadly. The mortality rate was twenty times that of the usual flu epidemic. It infected five hundred million people across the world including remote Pacific islands and the Arctic. It killed somewhere between fifty and a hundred million people, three to five per cent of the world's population, making it one of the deadliest natural disasters in human history. It is said that it killed more people in twenty-four weeks than AIDS killed in twenty-four years, more in a year than the Black Death killed in a century.

Most influenza outbreaks disproportionately kill juvenile, elderly, or already weakened patients. The 1918 pandemic predominantly killed previously healthy young adults. Modern research, using virus taken from the bodies of frozen victims, has concluded that death occurred from an overreaction of the body's immune system. The strong immune reactions of young adults ravaged the body, whereas the weaker immune reactions of children and middle-aged adults resulted in fewer deaths.

To maintain morale wartime censors minimised early reports of illness and mortality in Germany, Britain, France and the United States. The press was free to report the epidemic's effects in neutral Spain creating the false impression that Spain was especially hard hit: thus the pandemic's nickname Spanish flu. There are several theories as to its source but the close quarters and massive troop movements of the First World War undoubtedly hastened the pandemic and increased transmission in Europe. A lethal second wave struck in late 1918 then, after the peak in the second wave, new cases dropped abruptly almost to nothing. One theory is that the virus mutated rapidly to a less lethal strain. This is a common occurrence with influenza viruses: there is a tendency for pathogenic viruses to become less lethal with time as the hosts of more dangerous strains tend to die out. Lloyd George was one of the survivors of the epidemic.

After the First World War came demobilisation, a slump in trade, the depression, the abdication crisis and another world war. Demobilisation in 1919 was a fairly lengthy process because of the number of servicemen involved. Some senior politicians did not consider that the war was really over. A large standing army would have been needed if it had been decided to send troops to Russia to fight the Bolshevik Revolution as well as to Ireland to suppress the Nationalists and to the Rhineland as an army of occupation.

The demobilisation camps that housed the troops were not pleasant places. They were overcrowded, poorly supplied and subject to rigorous discipline. No one knew from one day to the next where they might be sent or when they might be able to return to their families. The men were 'kept busy' with meaningless drills and exercises. This was what they came home to after years of suffering in the trenches and watching their friends die. To many it must have felt like prison: scant reward for the sacrifices they had been asked to make. Early in January 1919 rumours were rife among the British troops that they were to be sent back to France. Those in Folkestone picketed the docks. They were joined by soldiers returning from leave who were about to re-embark and Colonial troops on their way home. Ten thousand men marched through the town supported by the people of Folkestone. At the same time four thousand troops demonstrated in Dover. Fifteen hundred members of the Army Service Corps seized lorries and drove them into Whitehall. In the next few days there were mutinies in several places including Bristol, Kempton Park and Aldershot. Three thousand troops bound for France after returning from leave refused to board their ships. A few hours later they marched into Whitehall. A reserve battalion of Grenadiers and two troops of the Household Cavalry surrounded them with bayonets drawn. Fearing a blood-bath when machine guns were trained on them the demonstrators surrendered.

When at last they returned to their families rapidly rising unemployment meant that many ex-servicemen who had been promised a 'land fit for heroes' by the Lloyd George government were unable to find work. The government's ambitious programme of reconstruction was shelved during the 1921 economic slump.

Rising unemployment following demobilisation heightened social tensions. There was a series of ugly race riots in Liverpool and Cardiff in June 1919. The local white population clashed with black workers and seamen who were left unemployed at the end of the war. In Cardiff white ex-servicemen including Australians stationed in the area headed lynch mobs that terrorised the city's black community during a week of violence that left three men dead and dozens injured. In the aftermath the government repatriated hundreds of black people: six hundred by mid-September 1919.

SELLERS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Many First World War records were lost when the War Office was bombed during the Second World War. I have identified the following members of the Sellers family.

WILLIAM HENRY SELLERS

my grandfathers brother

was conscripted in March 1916 aged 37. He arrived in Salonika on 24 August 1916 where he was wounded. He was demobbed on 27 April 1919.

THOMAS ALFRED SELLERS

my grandfather's brother

enlisted on 22 June 1915 in the Middlesex Regiment aged 28. He served with the British Expeditionary Force from November 1915 to November 1916 when he was promoted to lance-corporal, corporal and sergeant. On 13 November 1916 took a gunshot wound to the right temple hospitalised in Newcastle. He was released three months later and permanently and compulsorily transferred to a desk job in Norwich. He suffered headaches and dizziness and was adjudged to have 20 per cent loss of sight in right eye. He was demobbed in February 1919.

ERNEST STREET

my grandfather's mother's nephew

had been a serving soldier since 1901 in the Welch Regiment. He was discharged on 12 March 1913 and re-enlisted on 16 June 1913 when he was 33. He served in France from 23 November 1914 to 5 April 1915. He was wounded on 31 March 1915 by a gunshot to his buttock at Neuve Chappelle and sent home from 6 April 1915 to 20 December 1915. After returning he suffered shell shock at High Wood on 8 September 1916. He was discharged as no longer physically fit for service on 21 February 1918 due to a disability following another gun shot wound to his left elbow.

ALFRED BURGE

my grandfather's nephew

enlisted in the 8th battalion the Welsh Regiment in 1915 as lance-corporal. Arrived in the Balkans on 4 August 1915 posted missing presumed dead four days later. Killed in action at Gallipoli on 8 August. Buried in panel 140-144 of the Helles Memorial Cemetery in Turkey.

WILLIAM JOHN HARNER

my great-great-grandfather's brother's grandson

already a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy when war broke out he was wounded in action in 1916 in a U-boat attack in the North Sea and died of his wounds shortly afterwards.

WALTER HARNER

my great-great-grandfather's brother's grandson

was awarded two gallantry medals for his part in the blowing up of the viaduct bridge at the Zebrugge Mole in Belgium in 1918.

Chapter nine

TONYPANDY RIOTS 1910

The Tonypandy Riots of 1910 and 1911 (sometimes collectively known as the Rhondda Riots) were a series of violent confrontations between coal miners and police that took place in and around the Rhondda mines of the Cambrian Combine, a network of mining companies formed to regulate prices and wages. The riots were the culmination of an industrial dispute between workers and mine owners. Home Secretary Winston Churchill's decision to allow troops to be sent to the area to reinforce the police caused ill feeling towards him in south Wales throughout his life. His responsibility remains a strongly disputed topic.

The conflict arose when the Naval Colliery Company opened a new seam at the Ely Pit in Penygraig. After a short test period to determine what would be the future rate of extraction, owners claimed that the miners deliberately worked slowly. They were paid by the ton of coal removed, not by hours of work, so there would have been little point in working slowly. The faceworkers argued that the seam was difficult to work because of a stone band that ran through it.

On 1 September 1910, the owners posted a lock-out notice at the pit closing the site to all 950



Police block the street

workers not just the seventy at the newly opened Bute seam. They reacted by going on strike. The Cambrian Combine called in strikebreakers from outside the area. The miners responded by picketing the pit. On 1 November the miners of the South Wales coalfield were balloted for strike action by the South Wales Miners' Federation. Twelve thousand men working for the mines owned by the Cambrian Combine went on strike. A Conciliation Board was formed which agreed a wage of 2s 3d per ton [just under ten pounds] but the men rejected the agreement.

In a separate dispute in the neighbouring Cynon Valley men had been on strike for a month. The Glamorgan Constabulary resources were stretched so on Sunday 6 November the Chief Constable of Glamorgan assembled two hundred imported police around the Tonypandy area and enquired about the procedure for requesting military assistance.

The strikers had shut down all local pits except the Glamorgan Colliery in Llwynypia. As the police were being deployed in Tonypandy miners became aware of the owners' intention to bring in strikebreakers to keep pumps and ventilation going at Llwynypia. The following day strikers surrounded and picketed the Glamorgan Colliery to prevent strikebreakers from entering. There were sharp skirmishes with police officers posted inside the site. Although miners' leaders called for calm a small group of strikers began stoning the pump-house, a portion of the wooden fence surrounding the site was torn down and there was hand-to-hand fighting between miners and police. Just after midnight after repeated baton charges police drove strikers back towards Tonypandy Square. In the next two hours a demonstration in the square was dispersed by Cardiff police using truncheons which resulted in casualties on both sides. Glamorgan's chief constable Lionel Lindsay, supported by the general manager of the Cambrian Combine, requested military support from the War Office.

Home Secretary Winston Churchill, after discussions with the War Office, delayed taking action. He felt that the local authorities were overreacting and believed that the Liberal government could calm matters down. He despatched Metropolitan police officers, both mounted and on foot, and sent some cavalry troops to Cardiff. He did not specifically deploy cavalry, but authorised its use by civil authorities, if deemed necessary. Churchill's personal message to strikers was 'We are holding back the soldiers for the present and sending only police'. Despite this assurance the Home Office authorised military support when the local stipendiary magistrate requested it later that day. Troops were deployed after the skirmish at the Glamorgan Colliery on 7 November before rioting on the evening of 8 November when during the evening shops were smashed systematically but not indiscriminately. A few remained untouched, notably that of chemist Willie Llewellyn rumoured to have been spared because he had been a famous Welsh international rugby footballer. There was little looting but some rioters wore clothes taken from the shops and paraded in a festival atmosphere. Women and children who had been outside the Glamorgan colliery were involved in considerable numbers. No police were seen at the town square until the Metropolitan Police arrived around 10.30pm, almost three hours after the rioting began, by which time the disturbance had subsided of its own accord. A small police presence might have deterred window-breakers but police had been moved from the streets to protect the residences of mine owners and managers.

At 1.20am on 9 November orders were sent to Colonel Currey at Cardiff to despatch a squadron of the 18th Hussars to reach Pontypridd at 8.15am. One contingent patrolled Aberaman and another was sent to Llwynypia where it patrolled all day. Returning to Pontypridd that night the troops arrived at Porth as a disturbance was breaking out. They maintained order until the arrival of the Metropolitan Police. There is no complete record of casualties since many miners would have refused treatment from fear of prosecution for their part in the riots. Nearly eighty police and over five hundred citizens were injured. One miner, Samuel Rhys, died of head injuries, said to have been inflicted by a policeman's baton.



Tonypany residents outside the damaged shops

Authorities had reinforced the town with four hundred policemen, a company of the Lancashire Fusiliers billeted at Llwynypia and the squadron of the 18th Hussars.

Thirteen miners from Gilfach Goch were arrested and prosecuted for their part in the unrest. Their trial in Pontypridd lasted for six days in December. They were supported by marches and demonstrations of up to ten thousand men who were refused entry to the town. Custodial terms of two to six weeks were issued to some of the accused, others were discharged or fined.

Purported eyewitness accounts of alleged shootings persisted and were relayed by word of mouth. There are no records of any shots being fired by troops. The only recorded death was Samuel Rhys. The workers returned to work, ten months after the strike began and twelve months after the lockout which started the confrontation, on the first Monday in September 1911 having been forced to accept the 2s.3d per ton negotiated by the Conciliation Board prior to the strike.

Churchill's role in the events at Tonypany during the conflict left a negative attitude towards him in south Wales that still persists. The main point of contention was his decision to allow troops to be sent to Wales. Although this was an unusual move seen by those in Wales as an overreaction, his Tory opponents suggested that he should have acted with greater vigour. The troops acted more circumspectly and were commanded with more common sense than the police, whose role under Lionel Lindsay was, in the words of historian David Smith, 'more like an army of occupation'. The troops were also generally viewed with less hostility than the local and Metropolitan police.

The incident continued to haunt Churchill through his career. Such was the strength of feeling that, almost forty years later when speaking in Cardiff during the general election campaign of 1950, Churchill was forced to address the issue stating: 'When I was Home Secretary in 1910 I had a great horror and fear of having to become responsible for the military firing on a crowd of rioters and strikers. Also, I was always in sympathy with the miners...'

A major factor in the dislike of Churchill's use of the military was not in any specific action undertaken by the troops but the fact that their presence prevented any strike action which might have ended the strike early in the miners' favour. The troops also ensured that trials of rioters, strikers and miners' leaders would take place and be successfully prosecuted in Pontypridd in 1911. The defeat of the miners was in the eyes of the local community a direct consequence of state intervention without any negotiation and was seen as a direct result of Churchill's actions.

In 1940 when Chamberlain's war-time government was faltering, Clement Attlee secretly warned that the Labour Party might not follow Churchill because of his association with Tonypany. In 1978 there was uproar in the House of Commons when Churchill's grandson, also Winston Churchill, replying to a routine question on miners' pay, was warned by James Callaghan not to pursue 'the vendetta of your family against the miners of Tonypany'. Ninety-nine years after the riots a local council objected to a street being named after Churchill in the Vale of Glamorgan because of his sending troops into the Rhondda.

FATAL MINING ACCIDENTS 1878-1913

1878

11 September 268 miners at Abercarn in an underground explosion

1880

10 March 6 miners at the Bedwellty Colliery in Tredegar in an accident

15 July 120 miners and 69 horses at Risca Colliery in Crosskeys in a firedamp explosion killed

10 December 101 miners at Naval Steam Colliery in Penygraig Rhondda in a firedamp explosion

1882

11 February 6 miners at the Lewis Merthyr Colliery in an accident

3 March 5 miners at the Henwaen Colliery in Blaina in an accident

1883

1 February 5 miners at the Lewis Merthyr Colliery in another accident

25 June 6 miners at the New Duffryn Colliery in Rhymney in an accident

21 August 5 miners at the Gelli Colliery in an accident

1884

27 January 14 miners at the Naval Colliery in Penygraig in an accident

8 November 15 miners at the Pochin Colliery in Tredegar in an accident

1885

24 December 81 miners at the Maerdy Colliery in the Rhondda in an accident

1887

18 February 30 miners killed at Cwtych in the Rhondda in an underground explosion

18 February 39 miners at Standard Colliery in Ynyshirin an accident

1888

14 May 5 miners at the Aber Colliery in Porth in an accident

1889

15 August 3 men at Wenvoe Quarry

1890

6 February 176 miners at Llanerch Colliery in Pontypool in an underground explosion

10 March 86 miners at Morfa Colliery in Port Talbot in an accident .

1892

26 August 110 miners at Parc Slip Colliery in Aberkenfig in an underground explosion

1893

11 April 63 miners at Great Western Colliery in Pontypridd in an underground fire

1894

23 June 290 miners and 123 horses at Albion Colliery in Cilfynydd in a firedamp explosion. Then the worst disaster in Welsh mining history.

1896

28 January 57 miners at Tylorstown Colliery in the Rhondda in an underground explosion

1901

24 May 81 miners at Universal Colliery in Senghenydd in an accident

10 September 12 miners at Llanbradach Colliery in an accident

1902

4 March 5 miners at Milfaen Colliery in Blaenavon in an accident

3 June 6 miners at Gerwen Colliery in Llanelli in an accident

11 November 5 miners at Deep Navigation Colliery in Mountain Ash in an accident

1905

10 March 33 miners at Cambrian Colliery in Clydach Vale in an underground explosion

11 July 120 at Wattstown in the Rhondda in an underground explosion. One man survived.

1907

5 March 6 miners at Windsor Colliery in Abertridwr in a shaft accident

10 November 5 miners at Seven Sisters Colliery in an accident

11 December 7 miners at Dinas Main Colliery in an accident

1909

29 October 26 killed at Darren Colliery in New Tredegar in a mining accident

The first mines rescue station in south Wales was opened at Aberaman.

1913

14 October 439 miners in the Senghenydd Colliery Disaster, Britain's worst pit disaster.

1913 is the peak year for coal production in Wales.

Total 2,219 in 35 years is 63 a year well over one a week.

Chapter ten

BUTE FAMILY

The Marquesses of Bute were descended from John Stuart 3rd Earl Bute, Tory prime minister for a year between May 1762 and April 1763, whose family seat was Mount Stuart House on the Isle of Bute.

His son John Stuart married Charlotte Jane Windsor, granddaughter of the Earl of Pembroke who brought him most of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. In 1776 he was elevated to the peerage in own right as Baron Cardiff, of Cardiff Castle in the County of Glamorgan. He succeeded his father as 4th Earl of Bute and several years later, his father-in-law's titles having become extinct on his death in 1758, was created Viscount Mountjoy, in the Isle of Wight, Earl of Windsor and 1st Marquess of Bute. After his first wife's death he married Fanny Coutts daughter of banker Thomas Coutts whose sister Sophia married Francis Burdett.

His son John Stuart Lord Mountstuart married Elizabeth Penelope McDouall-Crichton, Countess of Dumfries, only child of the Earl of Dumfries, who brought him the family seat of Dumfries House and its estates. He was Member of Parliament for Cardiff from 1790 until his death in 1794 aged twenty six.

He predeceased his father so his son John Crichton Stuart first succeeded his maternal grandfather as seventh Earl of Dumfries and then his paternal grandfather as second marquess of Bute. In 1805 he expanded the family name to Crichton Stuart. He contracted an eye condition and remained partially sighted for the rest of his life. He married his first wife, Lady Maria North, granddaughter of the former prime minister, in 1818. She inherited much of her father's wealth. They lived a relatively secluded life in Mount Stuart House on the Isle of Bute. He was dour but industrious with a flair for land management. He focused his daily routine around extensive correspondence with his estate managers, making biennial tours of his estates. Maria died in 1841. Four years later he married Lady Sophia Rawdon-Hastings daughter of the Marquess of Hastings and the Countess of Loudon who brought him the family seat of Loudon Castle near Galston in Ayrshire.

Bute set about commercially exploiting the vast wealth that lay in the South Wales coalfields principally by leasing the land and mineral rights to local ironmasters and coalowners and levying a charge on each ton of material extracted. He began constructing the Cardiff Docks, a major project which, despite running heavily over budget, enabled further exports of iron and coal and magnified the value of his lands in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. When violence broke out in the Merthyr Rising of 1831, Bute led the government response from Cardiff Castle, despatching military forces, deploying spies and keeping Whitehall informed throughout. The contemporary press praised him as 'the creator of modern Cardiff'. On his death he left vast wealth to his son.

MERTHYR RISING

Throughout May 1831 miners and others who worked for William Crawshay took to the streets of Merthyr Tydfil calling for reform, protesting against the lowering of their wages and general unemployment. Gradually the protest spread to nearby industrial towns and villages and by the end of May the whole area was in rebellion. It is said that for the first time the red flag of revolution was flown as a symbol of workers revolt. After storming Merthyr town the rebels sacked the local debtors' court, distributed the goods that had been collected and destroyed the account books containing debtors details. Among the shouts were cries of Caws a bara (cheese and bread) and I lawr'r Brenin (down with the king).

On 1 June the protesters marched to local mines and persuaded the men on shift there to stop working and join their protest. In the meantime, the government in London dispatched contingents of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders to restore order. Since the crowd was now too large to be dispersed, the soldiers were ordered to protect essential buildings and people. Next day while employers and magistrates were holding a meeting with the High Sheriff of Glamorgan at the Castle Inn, 7,000 to 10,000 workers led by Lewsyn yr Heliwr (also known as Lewis Lewis) marched there to demand a reduction in the price of bread and an increase in wages. The demands were rejected, the marchers attacked the inn and the 93rd (Highland) Regiment opened fire. After a protracted struggle in which hundreds were injured and some killed, the soldiers were compelled to abandon the town and withdraw to Penydarren House the old ironmasters' mansion. For four days, magistrates and ironmasters were under siege in the Castle Inn and the protesters effectively controlled Merthyr.

For the next eight days Penydarren House was the sole refuge of authority. The protesters commandeered arms and explosives, set up road-blocks, formed guerrilla detachments and had banners capped with a symbolic loaf dyed in blood. Those who had military experience took the lead in drilling the armed para-military formation and created an effective central command and communication system. They ambushed the 93rd's baggage-train under escort of forty of the Glamorgan Yeomanry on the Brecon Road and drove them into the Brecon hills. They beat off a relief force of a hundred cavalry sent from Penydarren House. They ambushed and disarmed the Swansea Yeomanry on the Swansea Road and threw them back in disorder to Neath. They organised a mass demonstration outside Penydarren House.

Strikes broke out in northern Monmouthshire, Neath and the Swansea Valley. However some of the town folk started to flee Merthyr in panic. Government representatives in Penydarren House managed to split the protesters' council. On 6 June when 450 troops with levelled weapons marched to a mass meeting at Waun above Dowlais the meeting dispersed and the protest was effectively over. The next day the authorities regained control of the town through force. Twenty-six people were arrested and put on trial for taking part in the revolt. Several were sentenced to terms of imprisonment, others to transportation to Australia and two were sentenced to death by hanging: Lewsyn yr Heliwr (also known as Lewis Lewis) for robbery and Dic Penderyn (also known as Richard Lewis) for stabbing Private Donald Black of the Highland Regiment in the leg with a seized bayonet.

When one of the police officers who had tried to disperse the crowd testified that Lewsyn yr Heliwr had tried to shield him from the rioters his sentence was commuted to life and transportation. He died in 1847 in Port Macquarie. Melbourne's government was determined that at least one rebel should die. The people of Merthyr were convinced that Dic Penderyn, a twenty three-year-old miner, was not responsible for the stabbing and eleven thousand signed a petition demanding his release. Penderyn was hanged at Cardiff market on 13 August 1831.

In 1874 a Congregational minister, the Rev. Evan Evans, said that a man called Ianto Parker had given him a death-bed confession that he had stabbed Donald Black and then fled to America fearing capture by the authorities. James Abbott, who had testified at Penderyn's trial, later said that he had lied under oath claiming that he had been instructed to do so by Lord Melbourne.

CARDIFF DOCKS

Between 1822 and 1848 Bute played a central role in the creation of the Cardiff Docks. The existing sea port connected some of the iron works and coal pits to the sea via the Glamorganshire Canal. It was small and inefficient but a new port, coupled with an expansion of the industrial rail connections, would deliver a direct return to Bute from shipping rates, improve the value of his lands in Cardiff and increase the value of the royalties he could charge on his coal fields.

The first phase was to build the West Bute Dock and connecting canal in Cardiff to supercede the Glamorganshire Canal. Parliamentary permission was acquired in 1830 despite opposition from the local canal companies of iron masters. The project proved more complex than planned but the dock opened in 1839. The cost was far more than anticipated soaring to the equivalent of over twenty seven million pounds. Bute had to mortgage his local estates. To make matters worse, the dock did not receive the expected traffic from the larger ships which Bute put down to a coalition of ironmasters and others intent on ruining him. He responded by putting commercial pressure on shipping companies to abandon the Glamorganshire Canal and using his feudal rights to force shippers to move their wharfs to his docks. His efforts paid off and trade through the docks rose quickly but between 1841 and 1848 it brought in a gross income of just under six million pounds, a relatively disappointing figure compared to the size of the investment. Successive marquesses would find themselves under huge pressure to continue investing and expanding in the docks and subsequent phases of construction over the coming decades.

The third marquess was a year old when his father died. Trustees were reluctant to commit the estate to large-scale expenditure and it was not until 1855 that the sea lock, outer basin and inner lock that formed the East Bute Dock were built. The Roath Dock followed in 1887. The Queen Alexandra Dock, begun ten years later, was opened in 1907. His father had built streets of terraced housing radiating from Bute Street, leading from the city centre to the docks, for seamen and dock workers. It was increased considerably as the new docks opened.

John Patrick Crichton Stuart the third marquess had a vast range of interests which included religion, medievalism, the occult, architecture, travelling, linguistics and philanthropy. A prolific writer, bibliophile and traveller, as well as somewhat reluctantly a businessman, his energies were on a monumentally Victorian scale. In 1865 he met William Burges and they embarked on an architectural partnership the results of which long outlasted Burges' death in 1881. Bute's desires and money allied with Burges' fantastical imagination and skill led to the creation of two of the finest examples of the late Victorian era Gothic Revival Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch. The two buildings represent both the potential of colossal industrial wealth and the desire to escape the scene of that wealth's creation. The theme recurs again and again in the huge outpouring of Bute's patronage, in chapels, castle, abbeys, universities and palaces. Castell Coch was reconstructed during the 1870s. Its portraits tell the story of the ownership of the Bute Glamorgan Estate from William Herbert, 1st Earl of Pembroke down to the 3rd Bute and his wife Gwendolen.

He converted to catholicism causing considerable controversy at the time. The family has remained catholic. He married Gwendolen Fitzalan-Howard, daughter of Lord Howard of Glossop, granddaughter of the Duke of Norfolk. Between 1868 and 1886 he financed the rebuilding of St Margaret's Parish Church in Roath creating a new mausoleum for the Bute family with sarcophagi in red marble. In 1866 he donated a site in Cardiff Docks for the Hamadryad Hospital Ship for sick seafarers and on his death in 1900 bequeathed the equivalent of nearly two million pounds towards the cost of a new bricks-and-mortar hospital which became the Royal Hamadryad.

He was involved in a notable company law case, known as 'the Marquess of Bute's Case', reported on appeal in 1892, called *Re Cardiff Savings Bank*. He had been appointed to the board of directors of the Cardiff Savings Bank as 'President' at the age of six months in effect inheriting the office from his father. He only attended one board meeting in the next thirty-eight years. When the bank became insolvent following a fellow director's fraudulent dealing, he held that he was not liable as he knew nothing of what was going on. It was not suggested that he ought to have known what was going on, or that he had a duty of care to inform himself as to the affairs of the bank. The case set a famous legal precedent, now superseded, for the minimal view of the duties of company directors. It was naturally a considerable embarrassment although he escaped legal blame.

His son the 4th marquess John Crichton Stuart like his father had a passion for architecture. He was responsible for restoring Caerphilly Castle. He became 'the man who sold a city' when in 1938 he disposed of the remaining Bute family estate in Cardiff.

His younger brother Lord Ninian Edward Crichton Stuart married the Hon. Ismay Lucretia Mary Preston daughter of the 14th Viscount Gormanston. He left the army to concentrate on politics, passing into the Reserve of Officers in 1907. In January 1910 he was adopted as the Unionist candidate for the United Boroughs of Cardiff, Cowbridge and Llantrisant. He was defeated by D A Thomas but won the seat at the General Election the following December. When Cardiff City football club was seeking guarantors for the construction of its ground, Lord Ninian was a principal supporter and to express its appreciation of his generosity the club named its ground Ninian Park.

He became Lieutenant-Colonel of the 6th Welsh Territorials and in 1912 took command. On the outbreak of the First World War he volunteered for foreign service with the entire battalion. In an address to his men before leaving for the front, he said: 'I am prepared, as I am sure you are, to lay down my life for my country if required'. They served with the Expeditionary Force in France from October 1914. In October 1915 after sixteen hours on the road and two days without sleep the 6th Welsh took part in a night attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt near La Bassee. After a bayonet charge they took a section of enemy trenches but were later driven out by the Germans using aerial torpedoes and bombs. When Lord Ninian learned that his best friend Major Browning had been left behind in the trench he led an attack to try and save him thereby losing his own life when, standing up to lead his men, he was shot in the head by a sniper and died instantly. Major Browning was later reported missing. Of the eight hundred and forty two original members of the 6th Battalion only thirty survived at the Armistice. Lord Ninian is commemorated by a statue in Gorsedd Gardens in Cathays Park.

His brother Lord Colum Edmund Crichton-Stuart was a Conservative politician. He served as Member of Parliament for the Northwich constituency in Cheshire from 1922 to 1945.

STREET NAMES

The influence of the Bute estate on the naming of Cardiff's streets was huge. The districts of Adamsdown, Penylan, Maendy, Mynachdy, Cathays, Rhydypennau, Blackweir and Pontcanna are the names of rural estates once owned by the family. Ninian Park, Cardiff Arms Park (the Cardiff Arms Inn was once temporary home to the second marquess), Bute Park and Sophia Gardens are all memorials to the family. Family predecessors as lords of Cardiff Castle are commemorated in Riverside in Fitzhamon, Despenser, Clare and Tudor. The Butes, their associates and the titles of the family are commemorated in the names Bute, Dumfries, Windsor, Mountjoy, Crichton and Mountstuart. I have been able to identify:

Arran Street, Bruce Street, Burges Place, Bute Street, Crichton Place, Clare Road, Clark Street, Collingdon Street, Colum Road, Corbett Road, Cumnock Street, Cumrae Street,

Dalmuir Road, Despenser Gardens, Dumfries Place, Fitzalan Road, Fitzhamon Embankment, Galston Street, Glossop Terrace, Guildford Street, Gwendolen Street,

Howard Gardens, Hunter Street, Inchmarknock Street, Lady Margaret's Terrace, Lewis Street, Loudon Square, Maria Street, Mountjoy Square, Ninian Road, Pitman Street, Pomeroy Street, Priest Street, Rennie Street, Richards Terrace, Ryder Street

Sanquahar Street, Smeaton Street, Sneyd Street, Sophia Street, Stephenson Street, Talbot Street, Tudor Road, Tyndall Street and Windsor Place.

Chapter eleven

THE TIMES: BETWEEN THE WARS 1920-1939

Andrew Bonar Law's Conservatives won the 1922 general election with an overall majority. J. R. Clynes led the Labour Party. The Liberal Party was split between the National Liberals who supported Lloyd George and the Liberals who supported Asquith. Labour for the first time surpassed the combined strength of both Liberal parties. Leading Conservatives like Austen Chamberlain, Balfour and Lord Birkenhead who were not members of Bonar Law's government hoped to hold the balance of power.

In Cardiff Central the Conservative industrialist James Childs Gould came in again. One of the questions which taxed Bonar Law's brief government was that of inter-Allied war debts. Britain owed money to the USA but was owed four times the amount by France, Italy and the other Allied powers. Exports were needed to earn foreign currency, trade had not returned to prewar levels and the debt was hard to repay. On a trip to the USA Stanley Baldwin, the inexperienced chancellor of the exchequer, agreed to repay forty million pounds per annum to the USA rather than the twenty-five million which the British government had thought feasible. On his return he announced the deal to the press when his ship docked at Southampton before the Cabinet had been able to consider it. Bonar Law contemplated resignation but was talked out of it by senior ministers. Shortly afterwards he was diagnosed with terminal throat cancer and, no longer physically able to speak in parliament, he resigned and died later that year. Baldwin became prime minister. A general election was not due for five years but he felt bound by Bonar Law's 1922



James Childs Gould

pledge that there would be no introduction of tariffs without an election. Free trade imports were driving down prices and profits and the country faced growing unemployment. Baldwin called a general election in December 1923 to seek a mandate to introduce protectionist tariffs which he hoped would drive down unemployment. This protectionism would remain a key party policy during his lifetime.

On 13 February 1923 the BBC made its first broadcast from Cardiff (station 5WA).

Baldwin's Conservatives won a majority of seats at the 1923 election but the Liberals united under Asquith and together with Labour gained enough seats to produce a hung parliament. In Cardiff Central James Childs Gould came in again. In May 1925 his shipping and shipbuilding conglomerate Gould Steamships & Industrials Ltd ceased trading with a deficit of today's equivalent of thirty-eight million pounds. In the opening session of the new parliament in January 1924 the government was defeated in a motion of no confidence. Ramsay MacDonald formed a minority Labour government with the tacit support of the Liberals. He became the first Labour Prime Minister, the first

from a working-class background and one of the very few without a university education. Ten other cabinet members came from working class backgrounds.

His first priority was to undo the damage caused by the harsh 1919 Treaty of Versailles. He settled the reparations issue and came to terms with Germany. The king noted in his diary 'He wishes to do the right thing... Today 23 years ago dear Grandmama died. I wonder what she would have thought of a Labour Government!'

MacDonald's government extended benefits under the Insurance Acts and a new housing act expanded municipal housing for low paid workers. In 1924 charges were brought against the editor of a Communist newspaper for alleged incitement to mutiny by his publication of a provocative open letter to members of the military. It was known as the Campbell Case. Its prosecution was suspended allegedly due to pressure from Labour backbenchers. The Liberals and the Conservatives accused Labour of being under the control of radical left wing groups and united to pass a motion of no confidence in MacDonald's minority government.

The Conservatives led by Stanley Baldwin won a large majority in the 1924 election. It has been in part attributed to the Zinoviev letter, a forgery which purported to be a directive from the Communist International in Moscow to the Communist Party of Great Britain advising the resumption of diplomatic relations by a Labour government to hasten the radicalisation of the British working class. It was published in the *Daily Mail* four days before the election. In Cardiff Central Conservative Lewis Lougher was elected. He had established his own shipping company, Lewis Lougher & Co, at the age of twenty-nine. He then became chairman of shipping companies in Cardiff, Penarth and Barry, chairman of the Federation of Bristol Channel Shipowners and of the Cardiff Chamber of Trade. He also became a housing developer, a director of Whitehouse Precast Concrete, Danybryn Estates and Ben Evans & Co a Swansea department store. Before 1924 he sat for Cardiff East. While in the Commons he successfully introduced a private member's bill enacted as the Road Transport Lighting Act 1927 which obliged cars parked at the roadside to show sidelights between dawn and dusk. Baldwin's new cabinet contained many former political associates of Lloyd George including three former Coalition Conservatives, Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead and Arthur Balfour and the former Liberal Winston Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Widows, Orphans and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act of 1925 provided a pension of ten shillings a week for widows with extra for children and ten shillings a week for insured workers when they reached sixty-five.

In February 1925 an estimated 100,000 people lined the streets of Cardiff for the funeral of 'Peerless' Jim Driscoll a former British featherweight boxing champion who had fought his way out of grinding poverty in Adamsdown. In April, after a slow economic recovery had begun, the Conservative Chancellor Winston Churchill, on advice from the Bank of England, restored the pound to the gold standard at its prewar exchange rate of 4.86 US dollars to the pound. Exports became more expensive on world markets and the recovery immediately slowed. To offset the effects of the high exchange rate the export industries tried to cut costs by lowering workers' wages. The industrial areas spent the rest of the 1920s in recession and received little investment or modernisation. Throughout the 1920s unemployment remained at a steady one million.

The Trades Union Congress called a General Strike in May 1926 in an unsuccessful attempt to force the government to prevent wage reduction and worsening conditions for eight hundred thousand locked-out coal miners. Some 1.7 million struck in support mainly in transport and heavy industry. The government enlisted middle class volunteers to maintain essential services. Baldwin declared martial law which lasted more than six months. The electricity industry was nationalised the same year.

In 1927 three men were killed in an explosion at the Dowlais Works, East Moors in January. The first ever radio sports commentary from Wales was made on 5 February in the coverage of the Wales v Ireland rugby match at Cardiff Arms Park. On 23 April Cardiff City won the FA Cup beating Arsenal 1-0 at Wembley Stadium and taking the trophy out of England for the first time. A total eclipse of the sun was 98 per cent visible in Cardiff on 29 June.

Baldwin's government passed the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act in 1928 which widened suffrage by giving women electoral equality with men. It gave the vote to all women over twenty-one regardless of property ownership.

By 1929 the number of motor vehicles in Wales exceeded 100,000 for the first time. Poor law unions and workhouses were abolished and responsibility for public assistance was transferred to local authorities. Workhouses became hospitals or public assistance institutions under their control.

Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Party won the 1929 general election but failed to get an overall majority. The Liberals led by Lloyd George regained some of the ground they had previously lost and held the balance of power. It was the first election in which women over the age of twenty-one were allowed to vote under the provisions of the Fifth Reform Act hence the name Flapper Election. It was fought against a background of rising unemployment with the memory of the 1926 General Strike still fresh in voters' minds.

In Cardiff Central Ernest Nathaniel Bennett was elected for the Labour Party. He had led a colourful life before coming in and holding the seat until 1945. He was registered with the Turks as a war correspondent during the Cretan insurrection in 1897. He was captured by the Greeks, threatened with execution but saved when recognised by a Greek officer who had known him at Oxford. He was a war correspondent at the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan the following year. He wrote an article shortly afterwards for the *Contemporary Review* in which he complained that Kitchener's army had committed atrocities against wounded Dervishes after the battle. It provoked a hostile reaction from patriotic readers. He joined the Voluntary Ambulance Corps in South Africa at the outset of the Boer War. He was accredited as a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* to cover the Italo-Turkish War in what is now Libya. During the Balkan War he was attached to the Turkish Army for whom he worked as a press censor in Thrace.

He left the Liberal Party and joined the Labour Party in 1916. He unsuccessfully contested a number of seats until he finally secured Cardiff Central in 1929. He was close to Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden who became godfather to his eldest son.

MacDonald's second government, having the cordial support of Lloyd George, was in a stronger parliamentary position than his first. In 1930 he was able to raise unemployment pay and pass an act to improve wages and conditions in the coal industry addressing issues which had led to the General Strike. He passed a housing act which focused on slum clearances. An attempt by the Education Minister to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen was defeated by opposition from Catholic Labour MPs who feared that the costs would lead to increasing local authority control over faith schools.

MacDonald's government had no effective response to the economic crisis which followed the Stock Market Crash of 1929. Philip Snowden was a rigid exponent of orthodox finance who would not permit any deficit spending to stimulate the economy despite the urgings of Oswald Mosley, Lloyd George and the economist John Maynard Keynes. Mosley put forward a memorandum in January 1930 calling for the public control of imports and banking as well as an increase in pensions to boost spending power. When this was repeatedly turned down Mosley resigned from the government and formed the New Party. He later converted to Fascism.

By the end of 1930 unemployment had doubled to over two and a half million. The government struggled to cope with the crisis and found itself attempting to reconcile two contradictory aims: achieving a balanced budget in order to maintain the pound on the gold standard and maintaining assistance to the poor and unemployed at a time when tax revenues were falling. Snowden appointed a committee headed by Sir George May to review the state of public finances. The May Report of July 1931 urged large public-sector wage cuts and large cuts in public spending, notably in payments to the unemployed, to avoid a budget deficit.

The proposed cuts split the Cabinet and the trade unions bitterly opposed them. A small majority in the Cabinet, including MacDonald, Snowden and James Henry (Jimmy) Thomas, favoured such measures as necessary to maintain a balanced budget and to prevent a run on the pound. The minority included senior ministers such as Arthur Henderson who made it clear they would resign rather than acquiesce in the cuts. With this unworkable split MacDonald submitted his resignation in August 1931. He then agreed, on the urging of George V, to form a National Government with the Conservatives and Liberals. This was greeted with great anger in the labour movement. There were big protests in Glasgow and Manchester. Many in the Labour Party viewed it as a cynical move by MacDonald to rescue his career and accused him of betrayal. MacDonald argued that the sacrifice was for the common good. MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas were expelled from the Labour Party. They formed a new National Labour group which received little support in the country or the unions. Arthur Henderson became leader of the Labour Party. MacDonald decided that a quick election was necessary.

Meanwhile a growing number of Liberal MPs, led by Sir John Simon, opposed the party's support of MacDonald's government and began to co-operate more closely with the Conservative Party, even advocating a policy of replacing free trade with tariffs, something anathema to many traditional Liberals. The party split. At the 1931 election, while supporting the National Government, those in favour of Conservative protectionism formed the Liberal National Party. The Liberals led by Herbert Samuel campaigned in defence of free trade. A third group also emerged. The Independent Liberals under Lloyd George opposed the National Government completely but it had few adherents amongst prominent Liberals beyond Lloyd George's own relatives. The Labour vote fell sharply and the National Government won a landslide majority. Although the overwhelming majority of MPs were Conservatives under the leadership of Baldwin, MacDonald remained prime minister. The Liberal National faction was part of the governing coalition. The three factions of the Liberal Party never reunited and Liberal support continued to shrink. A handful of Labour Members including Cardiff Central's Ernest Bennett stood on the National Labour ticket. Bennett retained his seat and was rewarded with a junior ministerial position as Assistant Postmaster-General.

MacDonald, Chamberlain and Runciman devised a compromise tariff policy which stopped short of protectionism while ending free trade. The 1932 Ottawa Conference cemented commercial relations with the Commonwealth by a series of tariff agreements. The 'Samuelite' Liberals resigned from the National Government though they continued to support it from the backbenches. By 1933 they had abandoned it completely and crossed the floor of the House leaving the Liberal Nationals supporting the government. The two groupings were now completely separated.

Wales collected the 'wooden spoon' in the 1933 Home Nations Championship but, after ten attempts, beat England at Twickenham for the first time.

In 1933 Germany left the League of Nations. By the beginning of 1934 Baldwin was talking of rearmament. He rejected the 'belligerent' views of those like Churchill because he believed the Nazis were rational men who would appreciate the logic of mutual and equal deterrence. The Labour Party strongly opposed the rearmament programme. In 1933 and 1934 MacDonald's mental and physical health declined. He became an increasingly ineffective leader. His speeches in Commons became incoherent. His pacifism, which had been widely admired in the 1920s, led Winston Churchill and others to accuse him of failure to stand up to the threat of Adolf Hitler. MacDonald was aware of his fading powers. He resigned in June 1935 in favour of Baldwin but remained in the cabinet taking the largely honorary post of Lord President vacated by Baldwin.

The National Government led by Baldwin won the 1935 election. Labour, under the caretaker leadership of Clement Attlee, improved on its poor showing in 1931. The Liberal National vote held steady. Sir Herbert Samuel and Ramsay MacDonald lost their seats. The Independent Labour Party stood separately from Labour for the first time since 1895. The Scottish National Party contested its first election. The Communist Party gained its first parliamentary seat West Fife. In Cardiff Central Bennett again retained his seat for National Labour, lost out in the subsequent ministerial reshuffle and returned to the back benches. The major election issues were continuing unemployment and the role of the League of Nations, particularly regarding the Empire of Japan.

The accession of Edward VIII and the ensuing abdication crisis brought Baldwin's last major test in office. The new monarch was 'an ardent exponent of the cause of Anglo-German understanding' who had 'strong views on his right to intervene in affairs of state'. It has been said that the government's main fear was his indiscretion. The king proposed to marry Wallis Simpson, an American woman who was twice divorced. The high-minded Baldwin felt that he could tolerate her as 'a respectable whore' so long as she stayed behind the throne but not as 'Queen Wally'. She was distrusted by the government for her known pro-German sympathies and she was believed to be in 'close contact with German monarchist circles'. Baldwin joined the royal family in trying to dissuade the king from the marriage. News of the affair was broken in the papers at the end of 1936. There was some support for the wishes of the king. The romantic royalists Churchill, Mosley and the press barons Lord Beaverbrook of the *Daily Express* and Lord Rothermere of the *Daily Mail* all declared that the king had a right to marry whichever woman he wished to. This crisis assumed a political dimension when Beaverbrook and Churchill tried to rally support in parliament for the marriage. The majority sided with Baldwin and his Conservative government.

Baldwin still hoped that the king would choose the throne over Mrs Simpson. For the king to act against the wishes of the cabinet would have precipitated a constitutional crisis. Baldwin would have had to resign and no other party leader would have served as the prime minister. When the Cabinet refused the morganatic marriage Edward VIII decided on his own volition to abdicate.

The king was succeeded by his brother George VI. He conferred the title Duke of Windsor on Edward who then married Mrs Simpson in France in 1937. Baldwin had defused a political crisis by turning it into a constitutional question. His discreet resolution met with general approval and restored his popularity.

After the coronation of George VI in May 1937 Baldwin resigned. His last act as prime minister was to raise the salaries of MPs from twenty thousand to thirty thousand pounds in today's terms and to give the Leader of the Opposition a salary. This was the first rise in MPs' wages since their introduction in 1911 and it particularly benefited Labour MPs.

Neville Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin. He was widely seen as a caretaker who would lead the Conservative Party until the next election before stepping down in favour of a younger man. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was seen as a likely candidate. Chamberlain had few friends among his parliamentary colleagues. An attempt by his Parliamentary Private Secretary Alec Douglas-Home to bring him to the Smoking Room in the Commons to socialise with his colleagues ended in embarrassing silence. Chamberlain compensated for these shortcomings by devising the most sophisticated press management system yet employed by a prime minister. Officials at Number 10 led by his chief of press George Steward convinced members of the press that they were colleagues sharing power and insider knowledge and should espouse the government line.

In 1937 Chamberlain oversaw the passage of an act aimed at bettering working conditions in factories by placing limits on the working hours of women and children. Coal deposits were nationalised the following year. Another major piece of legislation was the Holidays with Pay Act which recommended that employers give workers a week off each year with pay. It caused the great expansion of holiday camps and other leisure accommodation. The Housing Act of 1938 provided subsidies aimed at encouraging slum clearance and maintained rent control. Plans for the reform of local government and the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen were shelved on the outbreak of war.

Chamberlain sought to placate Germany and make the Nazi state a partner in a stable Europe. He believed Germany could be satisfied by the restoration of some of her colonies but Germany was in no hurry to talk to Britain. In 1938 Hitler began to press the Austrian government to accept 'Anschluss' a union between Germany and Austria. Chamberlain believed that it was essential to cement relations with Italy in the hope that an Anglo-Italian alliance would forestall Hitler from imposing his rule over Austria. Eden believed Chamberlain was being too hasty in holding out the prospect of legal recognition of Italy's conquest of Ethiopia. The Cabinet backed Chamberlain. Eden resigned from office. Chamberlain appointed Lord Halifax as Foreign Secretary in Eden's place.

After the fall of Austria Hitler's next target was the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. The cabinet urged Czechoslovakia to make the best terms it could with Germany. Britain and Italy signed an agreement. In exchange for recognition of Italy's Ethiopian conquest Italy agreed to withdraw some 'volunteers' from the Nationalist (pro-Franco) side of the Spanish Civil War. The Nationalists, who already had the upper hand, were victorious the following year.

Hitler was expected to signal his intentions in his 12 September speech at the annual Nuremberg Rally. The cabinet agreed that, if war seemed inevitable, Chamberlain would fly to Germany to negotiate directly with Hitler. There was tremendous tension in the days before Hitler's speech as Britain, France and Czechoslovakia partially mobilised their troops. Thousands gathered outside 10 Downing Street on the night of Hitler's speech in Nuremberg. The following morning Chamberlain and the cabinet were informed by secret service sources that German embassies had been told that Germany would invade Czechoslovakia on 25 September.

Negotiations with Hitler by Chamberlain and representatives of France, Italy and Czechoslovakia took place throughout September. At a meeting in Munich Chamberlain and Hitler signed a three-paragraph 'Anglo-German Agreement'. Hitler apparently thought it 'of no further significance whatever'. Chamberlain thought the opposite. He returned to London in triumph. Large crowds mobbed Heston. The streets were so packed with cheering people that it took Chamberlain an hour and a half to journey the nine miles to the Palace. After reporting to the king he went to Downing Street where both the street and the front hall of Number 10 were packed.

The Commons discussed the Munich Agreement on 3 October. Duff Cooper the First Lord of the Admiralty resigned. Churchill spoke harshly against the pact. But no Conservative voted against the government. Twenty or thirty abstained including Churchill, Eden, Cooper and Harold Macmillan. In the aftermath of Munich Chamberlain pursued a course of cautious rearmament. He resisted calls to put industry on a war footing. Having considered a general election immediately following Munich Chamberlain instead reshuffled his cabinet. By the end of the year public concerns caused him to conclude that 'to get rid of this uneasy and disgruntled House of Commons by a General Election' would be 'suicidal'. There was no general election until 1945.

Chapter twelve

THE TIMES: SECOND WORLD WAR

On 1 September 1939 Germany invaded Poland. Two days later the United Kingdom declared war on Germany. The Army was officially mobilised and the 'blackout' was imposed across Britain. No lights were allowed to be shown in houses after dark. Charles put up a thick black cotton curtain on most of the windows. National Service for all men between 18 and 41 was introduced. The 40,000-spectator Ely Racecourse which had opened in 1855 was closed for the duration of the war as was the zoo in Victoria Park.

With little land action in the west the initial months of the war were dubbed the 'Bore War', later renamed the 'Phoney War' by journalists. Chamberlain, in common with most Allied officials and generals, felt the war could be won relatively quickly by keeping economic pressure on Germany through a blockade while continuing rearmament. The government submitted an emergency war budget about which Chamberlain said, 'the only thing that matters is to win the war, though we may go bankrupt in the process' but government expenditure rose by little more than the rate of inflation between September 1939 and March 1940. Chamberlain's popularity was high.

On 14 October 1939 HMS *Royal Oak* was sunk by a German U-boat in Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands with the loss of 833 crew. Two million men between 19 and 27 were called up for military service on 1 January 1940. Parliament passed the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1940 giving the government full control over all persons and property.

The bombing of Cardiff during World War Two became known as the Cardiff Blitz. In the late 1930s Cardiff Docks was the biggest coal port in the world. It is not surprising that it was targeted by the Luftwaffe. I cannot find an authoritative estimate of the number of people in Cardiff who died or were injured. Wikipedia notes that more than 2,100 bombs fell on Cardiff, many on civilian buildings, when 355 were killed and 502 were injured. The figures quoted by other sources for individual raids add up to far more than this.

The bombing began in 1940 with three attacks in July and another in August. The worst offensive came a little over four months later on the night of 2 January 1941. It lasted for ten hours and involved a hundred German aircraft. In that raid alone 165 people were killed, 427 injured and 350 homes were destroyed. The nave of Llandaff Cathedral was amongst the buildings



Above: Blackstone Street behind Wellington Street was badly damaged. Below: Craddock Street fared even worse



damaged. Riverside and Canton were the worst hit areas: of the 116 people killed there that night, fifty died in De Burgh Street off Wellington Street.

There were two further air raids in January 1941 followed by a sustained attack between 27 February and 1 March. Three more raids followed in March and four in April. There were more sustained attacks between 4 and 11 May. The only bombing in 1942 was between 30 June and 2 July. In 1943 there was a raid on 7 May and a sustained attack between 17 and 18 May. The latter was believed to have been in retaliation for the 'Dambusters' raid which took place on 16 May.

My aunt Dorothy worked in Spillers record shop in St Mary Street during the war. Whenever there was a daytime air raid the staff would leave the shop to take shelter under the walls of the castle (which would have offered no protection) watching the planes coming over and the bombs dropping.

Two bombs fell on Cardiff Central station but failed to explode. The first dropped through a platform canopy and buried itself near the line. The second fell nearby. Rail traffic had to be organised so that it could pass safely without causing vibrations that might set off the bombs. Ballast trucks were placed on two of the tracks as blast shields. The progress of the bomb disposal team was agonisingly slow. Its priority was to disarm the first bomb as it was fitted with a short time fuse. A 'clock-stopper' (a powerful electro magnet) was attached to the bomb to arrest the fuse mechanism. Holes were drilled in the casing and steam was fed through heavy-duty hoses to liquefy and expel the explosive. On the fourth day of the operation the empty casing and the cylindrical pocket containing the fuse were blown up finally rendering the bomb safe. The search then began for the second bomb. Because the track left by its passage was twenty-five feet deep it was concluded that it must have been a small bomb that had come to rest well below street level and posed no danger. The search was abandoned.

A register of everyone in the country, much like a census, was hurriedly compiled in September 1939 in preparation for rationing. Petrol rationing was introduced immediately. Early the following year bacon, butter, sugar, all meat, tea and margarine were rationed. Jam, cheese, clothes, eggs and coal were rationed in 1941. Some people considered food rationing to be very unfair because eggs, butter and meat could be obtained fairly easily without coupons in rural areas. By the summer of 1941 greengrocers in the towns were taking their lorries into the country to buy vegetables direct from growers. In 1942 rice, dried fruit, soap, tinned tomatoes and peas went on ration. Sweets and chocolate were rationed in 1942. Each person was allowed about 2oz (55 grams) a week. Biscuits followed and the milk ration was cut to two pints a week. Sausages were the last thing in 1943.

Rationing continued long after the war. A summer of continual rain in 1946 ruined the wheat crop. Bread and flour were temporarily rationed until 1948. Clothes rationing ended in 1949. Petrol rationing ended in 1950 after eleven years. It was followed by canned and dried fruit, chocolate biscuits, treacle, syrup, jellies, mincemeat and soap. For items still on ration the weekly individual allowance was: one-and-a-half ounces of cheese; an ounce of cooking fat; six ounces of butter; eight ounces of sugar; two pints of milk; one egg and three ounces of bacon. In 1952 tea rationing ended after thirteen years. In 1953 sweets and sugar came off. In 1954 fourteen years of rationing ended when meat officially came off ration. However coal rationing continued until 1958.

In 1940, as the Second World War unfolded and France fell, Scottish Unionist Member Archibald Ramsay was interned as a security risk and potential traitor. He professed extreme right-wing opinions, was pro-German and avowedly anti-Semitic. He compiled a *Red Book* of members of his Right Club who he deemed to hold the 'right' views. The names were not made public until 1989. Cardiff Central's Member of Parliament Ernest Bennett was among them so it seems probable that he was a member.

The Right Club had no written constitution or rule book and its membership list was secret. Other than what Ramsay told them on recruitment, members seem not to have been entirely sure of all the political positions with which they were being aligned. Ramsay may have sold membership to Bennett based on the Club's pro-German, pro-peace and anti-Bolshevik line which would have been broadly consistent with Bennett's views. He had been highly critical of the terms of the Versailles Treaty which he considered to be too harsh and liable to sow the seeds of renewed conflict. It is generally conceded that Ramsay's anti-Semitic philosophy would have been at odds with Bennett's expressed position. He made it clear on numerous occasions that he was against the persecution of the Jews by the Nazi government. In 1936 he said that he deplored Germany's harsh treatment of its Jewish subjects and in 1939 he said that he could not accept German explanations of Jewish arrogance, their mutual control of the legal and medical professions and so on as any justification for wholesale methods of persecution. Bennett sided with the Arabs against the Zionists on the question of unlimited Jewish immigration to Palestine which hardly made him an anti-Semite. He was against a separate Jewish state in Palestine, which he feared would lead to conflict with the Arabs and the enmity of the Muslim world, though he was willing to accept a significant and expanded but not politically dominant Jewish presence in Palestine. He retired from the House of Commons in 1945.

The National Service (No. 2) Act came into effect on 18 December 1941. All men and women between 18 and 60 were then liable to some form of national service, including military service for men under 51 and unmarried women between 20 and 30. The first military registration of 18-year-olds took place. The schedule of reserved occupations was abandoned.

'Exercise Spartan', a major rehearsal for the following year's Allied invasion of Normandy, was staged in March 1943 across southern England. Total evacuation of an area near Portmahomack in Scotland began in November to make way for rehearsal of the Normandy Landings. The first 'Bevin Boys' were selected from conscripts to work in the coal mines

On 28 March 1944 Allied convoy T4, forming part of amphibious Exercise Tiger (a full-scale rehearsal for the Normandy landings) in Start Bay off the Devon coast, was attacked by E-boats, resulting in the deaths of 749 American servicemen from LSTs. The D-Day Normandy landings began on 6 June. 155,000 Allied troops landed on the beaches beginning Operation Overlord and the Invasion of Normandy.

No general election was held during the Second World War until Allied victory was assured. The 1935 House sat until 1945. The parliament saw two leadership changes. Neville Chamberlain took over as Prime Minister and Conservative leader in 1937. He resigned in 1940 when Winston Churchill became prime minister and formed an all-party unity government for the duration of the Second World War.

Chapter thirteen

THE TIMES: POST WAR

On 8 May 1945 eight days after the suicide of Adolf Hitler and the collapse of Nazi rule in Berlin, V-E Day was celebrated throughout the UK. Churchill made a victory speech and appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace with George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. Street parties were held throughout the country. The demobilization of the armed forces began five weeks later.

The 1945 election was precipitated by the Labour Party's decision to pull out of the wartime National Government which had been sitting for ten years. The war was over in Europe and Attlee refused Churchill's offer to continue wartime coalition until the Allied defeat of Japan. The results were not declared for three weeks because of the time it took to transport the votes of those serving overseas. It was an unexpected landslide victory for the Labour Party giving it its first majority government and a mandate to implement its postwar reforms. The result of the election came as a major shock to the Conservatives, given the heroic status of Winston Churchill, but reflected the voters' belief that the Labour Party was better able to rebuild the country following the war.

One of the main reasons for Labour's dramatic win was its platform of social reform. The Beveridge Report, published in 1942, proposed the creation of a Welfare State. It called for a dramatic turn in British social policy with provision for nationalised health care, expanded state-funded education, national insurance and a new housing policy. The report was extremely popular. Copies of its findings were purchased widely turning it into a best-seller. The Labour Party adopted the report eagerly promising to create full employment, a tax-funded universal National Health Service, the adoption of Keynesian economic policies and a cradle-to-grave welfare state with the campaign message 'Let us face the future'. The Conservatives accepted many of the principles of the report but claimed that they were unaffordable. They were not willing to make the concessions that Labour proposed and hence appeared out of step with public opinion.

In the most famous incident of the campaign, Churchill's first election broadcast backfired dramatically and memorably. Denouncing his former coalition partners, he declared that Labour 'would have to fall back on some form of a Gestapo' to impose socialism on Britain. Attlee responded the next night by ironically thanking the prime minister for demonstrating the difference between Churchill the great wartime leader and Churchill the peacetime politician. He went on to argue the case for public control of industry. Another blow to the Conservative campaign was the memory of its 1930s policies. It was believed that appeasement had allowed Germany to become too strong. The inter-war Conservative governments were generally blamed for the era's mistakes, not merely for appeasement but for the inflation and the unemployment of the Depression.

There was strong support for Labour in the armed services who feared the unemployment and homelessness to which the soldiers of the First World War had returned. Writer and soldier Anthony Burgess remarked that Churchill, who often wore a colonel's uniform during the war, was not nearly as popular with soldiers at the front as with officers and civilians, noting that Churchill often smoked cigars in front of soldiers who had not had a decent cigarette in days.

In May 1947 the Liberal Nationals and the Conservatives merged at constituency level and the Liberal Nationals changed their name to National Liberals. They fought the 1950, 1951, 1955, 1964 and 1966 elections as allies of the Conservative Party. To confuse matters, their candidates stood under a variety of names including 'National Liberal', 'National Liberal and Conservative', 'Liberal and Conservative' and so on. Even established Conservatives with little or no former connection to the Liberal Party used the National Liberal name when standing as candidates in some constituencies. To all intents and purposes the National Liberal Party merged with the Conservative Party in 1948 bringing it an extra eleven seats.

In Cardiff Central in 1945 George Thomas was elected. Thomas George Thomas (Tommy Twice) was born in Port Talbot the second son of Zachariah Thomas, a Welsh-speaking miner from Carmarthen. His mother was Emma Jane Tilbury the daughter of a founder of the English Methodist Church in Tonypany. He had two elder sisters Ada May and Dolly, an elder and a younger brother. His father became a heavy drinker. After he joined up at the start of the First World War Emma was less than pleased that she had to take her marriage certificate to court to prove she, not the woman in Kent to whom he had allocated his soldier allowance, was Zachariah's wife. He never returned to South Wales. He died of tuberculosis in 1925.

George Thomas was brought up by his mother in Trealaw across the river from Tonypany. His siblings left school at thirteen. His sisters went into domestic service, his elder brother went down the pit and his younger brother worked in a shop. George was a teacher first in London and then in Cardiff. He lived with his mother in Plasturton Gardens. Maud knew her and I think they belonged to the same sisterhood group. I seem to remember she knew Ada and Dolly too. She voted for George Thomas religiously at every election and would never hear a word against him. Whenever his name was mentioned she would remind us that he was always 'so good to his mother'. His mother's endorsement was always a key part of his election address.

Thomas held his seat at Cardiff Central and after the 1950 reorganisation at Cardiff West until his retirement from the Commons at the 1983 general election. Harold Wilson made him joint Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department in 1964. He served as Speaker between 1976 and 1983 during which time, by tradition, the seat was not contested.

Thomas was a deeply religious man and a prominent member of the Methodist church. He was a local preacher and former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference. After his death in 1997 Leo Abse 'revealed' that Thomas had been homosexual which was no surprise to anybody. Any man who died a bachelor in his late eighties whose main interest in women was centred around his own mother and the Queen's was likely to be a homosexual. What was a surprise was Abse's revelation that Thomas had lived a life shrouded in guilt, repression and fear fuelled by repeated attempts at blackmail, one threat so dreadful that he had to borrow eight hundred pounds from Abse to resettle the blackmailer in Australia.

In 1946 the popular quiz show *Have a Go!* with Wilfred Pickles was first broadcast nationally on BBC Radio. I think Maud listened to every episode. She was certainly still listening all through the 1950s when I was growing up. In 1947 the government nationalised the coal industry and Cable & Wireless Ltd. The same year the poliomyelitis epidemic in the UK began.

The railway industry was nationalised in January 1948. The National Health Service began in July bringing the right to universal healthcare free at point of use. With it came changes to the National Insurance scheme.

The 1950 general election was the first to be covered on television as well as radio although the footage was not recorded. After boundary reorganisation the constituency became Cardiff West. The campaign focussed on the potential future nationalisation of more industries which had the support of the Labour party. The Conservatives accepted the mixed economy which the Attlee government had created but were against further nationalisation. The Liberal Party fielded 475 candidates. Leader Clement Davies felt that the party had been disadvantaged in 1945 when it ran fewer candidates than were needed to form a government. He arranged for the cost to be off-set by taking out insurance with Lloyd's of London against the loss of deposits by more than fifty candidates. A record number of 319 lost their deposits. Attlee won again but without an overall majority. George Thomas came in again for the new constituency.

There was an air disaster at Llandow Aerodrome in 1950 which at the time was the world's worst. An Avro Tudor V aircraft crashed on 12 March killing eighty of the eighty-three people on board. The private passenger flight had been travelling from Dublin Airport with seventy-eight passengers and five crew. Seventy-two passengers had initially booked but the plane had been stripped to accommodate another six for the charter trip to watch the Welsh rugby team compete against the Irish in the Five Nations Championship at the Ravenhill Stadium. Amongst those who died were three members of Abercarn Rugby Football Club. Llanharan RFC lost six members of their playing team. Both clubs remember the victims with symbolism on their club badges. On 25 March in the final game of the 1950 Championship against France at the Cardiff Arms Park, the crowd stood in silence while five buglers sounded a Last Post tribute to the memory of the supporters who had died in the plane crash.

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The House of Commons, following damage by bombing in the war, was used for the first time in October 1950. Funding the war had crippled the country financially. It still had to pay to defend its empire and the demands of the welfare state were high. That year the standard rate of income tax was forty-seven-and-a-half per cent. Surtax was ninety-seven-and-a-half per cent. In 1937 a single man earning the equivalent of £576,000 took home £359,000. By 1950 this had fallen to £107,000. Inflation had almost halved the value of the pound.

Defence accounted for ten per cent of national production. Conscription in the form of National Service was maintained to meet manpower requirements. There were troops in Korea, Germany, Egypt and Aden. There were naval bases in Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Simonstown in South Africa, Singapore and Hong Kong. The RAF had airfields in Oman, Gan in the Indian Ocean, Cyprus, Egypt and a huge base in Habbaniya in Iraq. The Korean War was expensive. In April 1951 Aneurin Bevan, recently appointed as Minister of Labour and National Service, John Freeman and Harold Wilson resigned from the government in protest at Hugh Gaitskell's Budget announcement of prescription charges for dental care and spectacles in order to meet the financial demands imposed by the Korean War. The king and queen opened the Festival of Britain in May 1951. The king died in 1952.

Hoping to increase its majority Labour called an election twenty months after the 1950 general election. George VI was concerned about his absence from the country on his planned 1952 Commonwealth tour while the government had such a slim majority. The Labour government, which by now had implemented most of its 1945 manifesto, was beginning to lose cabinet ministers like Ernest Bevin and Stafford Cripps due to old age. The Conservatives looked fresher, with more new MPs. Their manifesto 'Britain Strong and Free' stressed that safeguarding 'our traditional way of life' was integral to the Conservative purpose. They did not propose to dismantle the welfare state or the National Health Service. The Liberals' poor showing got worse. It was only thanks to fraught local arrangements that five of their six remaining MPs were elected in the absence of a Conservative candidate. While the Liberal Party struggled to survive, National Liberals managed to win nineteen seats. George Thomas came in again for Cardiff West. Churchill had a majority of two.

Elizabeth II was crowned in June 1953. The *Times* exclusively carried James Morris's scoop of the conquest of Mount Everest by a British expedition on 29 May.

The Conservative Party substantially increased its majority at the 1955 general election under new leader and prime minister Anthony Eden. He had long been considered heir apparent to the Conservative leadership and only became leader a few weeks before the election on the retirement of Winston Churchill. The Conservatives took advantage of the end of food rationing, gradual economic growth and the good mood created by the recent coronation of Queen Elizabeth. Eden was telegenic, although not a great public speaker. It was the last time the Conservatives won the majority of seats in Scotland: after 1959 Labour established itself as the dominant party, a position it maintained until the rise of the Scottish National Party at the 2015 election. It was the last election fought by Clement Attlee who was then seventy-two. George Thomas came in again for Cardiff West.

For the first time television took a prominent role in the campaign. Three hours of the television coverage presented by Richard Dimbleby survives. On election day, the *Daily Mirror* printed a front page headline 'Don't Let The Tories Cheat Our Children', urging its readers to elect Labour on the basis that it had 'built a better Britain for us all'.


The British Empire and Commonwealth Games were held in Cardiff in July 1958.

The election in 1959 was a third successive victory for the Conservative Party which again increased its overall majority. Following the Suez Crisis of 1956, prime minister Anthony Eden became unpopular. He resigned early the following year to be succeeded by Harold Macmillan. Hugh Gaitskell had taken over the Labour leadership from Clement Attlee shortly after the 1955 election. The Liberals also had a new leader in Jo Grimond.

GENERAL ELECTION
25th OCTOBER - 1951

CARDIFF WEST
CONSTITUENCY

TO MAINTAIN
**PEACE AND
FULL EMPLOYMENT**



VOTE
T. GEORGE THOMAS
The Labour Candidate

It's never happened before!

**SIX YEARS OF
FULL EMPLOYMENT**

FORWARD with LABOUR

OR

BACKWARD WITH TORYISM

THE OFFICIAL POLL CARD SENT
YOU BY THE RETURNING OFFICER
GIVES YOUR ELECTORAL NUMBER
AND YOUR POLLING STATION.

KINDLY VOTE FOR THE LABOUR CANDIDATE
BY MARKING YOUR BALLOT PAPER THUS:

THOMAS X

Owing to paper shortage, which I am sure you will appreciate, I am sending one Election Address to each family. Will you kindly pass this address to each member of your family. Thanking you, George Thomas.

49, Plattarun Gardens,
Riverside,
Cardiff.
October, 1951.

Dear Friends,

At the unanimous request of the Cardiff West Labour Party and Trades Union Movement, I have the honour again to seek your support at the Poll.

This Election is being fought at a critical time for Britain and the world. The threat of another world war hangs over all peoples.

To drive peace is not enough. Britain must have a wise and responsible Government. Labour's record in office has proved that she is just such a Government. It was only the patient yet firm behaviour of the British Labour Government that prevented the outbreak of world war early this year when MacArthur wanted to attack China.

The other mistake of Mr. Attlee has wowed homely another blood bath! In contrast the Tories have given way to wild and irresponsible statements that show their approach to foreign affairs to be still based on the old imperialist principles. We dare not risk the Conservative handling of delicate foreign issues.

Here at home Labour is the Party that believes in planning the nation's resources. Fair shares and full employment can only be maintained by wise and careful planning. The old folk and the lesser paid workers would be the most heavily hit by the Tory policy of attacking food subsidies and by their proposal to change the Hours Restriction Act.

It is of significance to Cardiff Electors that the Conservative Party voted time and again against the small Leasehold Reform Measure Labour passed last June this year. We propose to give full Leasehold Reform during the next two years, despite the opposition of the Tories.

When you cast your vote on October 25th, remember the sort of Britain you want to see. I believe that we must continue to struggle towards a social order where all men are treated as brothers. The strong must help the weak; the rich must help the poor. We have started to build a nobler Britain and I ask for your support to continue the job.

Once again the Liberal Party have paid me the tribute of not nominating a candidate against me. I have always considered it a solemn trust to guard the Radical tradition. My approach to the problems of life are certainly more in harmony with the Liberal outlook than a Conservative could ever hope to be.

I need hardly assure you that if I am honoured by re-election, I shall continue to give my life to the service of the Constituency. For six and a half years I have honestly striven to be a friend to you all—regardless of Party. Believe me, I deeply appreciate the warmth of your friendliness to me throughout the years. I shall do my best to prove worthy of you all.

Every blessing to you.

Yours very sincerely,
J. George Thomas.

1951 election manifesto

LABOUR'S POLICY STATEMENT

OUR FIRST DUTY: PEACE.

MAINTENANCE OF FULL EMPLOYMENT.

HOUSING
Present rate of 200,000 new houses a year and increase it as soon as raw materials and manpower can be spared.

TO KEEP DOWN THE COST OF LIVING.
We shall extend price controls.
New Auction Markets in provincial towns to reduce the price of fruit and vegetables, Food Subsidies and Bulk Purchase.

CONTINUE AND EXTEND OUR CARE FOR THE AGED.

EXTEND OUR POLICY OF GIVING ALL YOUNG PEOPLE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION.

As soon as Tax reductions become possible we shall still further reduce taxation of Wages, Salaries, moderate incomes and moderate inheritance.

GEORGE THOMAS' MOTHER WRITES:
"As a housewife and a mother I am concerned more about two major problems than I am about anything else. These problems are whether peace is going to be protected and whether the higher standard of life of our people is to be maintained."
"During the past weeks I have been with George at street teas in all parts of Cardiff West. It has been a joy for me to see the magnificent parties you have arranged—especially in what were once the streets where almost everyone was unemployed. Our standard of life is undoubtedly higher."
"The cost of living has increased everywhere in the world, but less here in Britain than in any other country except Norway and Sweden—two countries with Labour Governments who plan their resources."
"Australia and New Zealand warn us of the heavy increases in cost of living whenever the Conservatives gain power."
"My son George has given his full time to serving you. He will not let you down know, for see in our home his determination to do his best for all."



Left: George Thomas' mother writes:

'As a housewife and mother I am concerned more about two major problems than I am about anything else. These problems are about whether peace is going to be protected and whether the higher standard of life of our people is to be maintained.

'During the past weeks I have been with George at street teas in all parts of Cardiff West. It has been a joy for me to see the magnificent parties you have arranged - especially in what were once the streets where almost everyone was unemployed. Our standard of life is undoubtedly higher.

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'Australia and New Zealand warn us of the heavy increases in the cost of living whenever the Conservatives gain power.

'My son George has given his full time to serving you. He will not let you down know (sic) for (space) see in our home his determination to do his best for all.'

The Conservatives enjoyed an upturn in fortunes as the economy improved under Macmillan, and his personal approval ratings remained high. They fought under the slogan 'Life is better with the Conservatives, don't let Labour ruin it' and were aided by a pre-election economic boom. Macmillan very effectively summed up the mood of the British public when he said that most of the people had 'never had it so good'. He was very popular and was described as a politician of the centre ground. He had been elected for Stockton-on-Tees during the 1930s when it experienced large scale unemployment and poverty. The Labour Party fought a generally effective campaign with television broadcasts masterminded by Tony Benn under the umbrella of its manifesto entitled 'Britain belongs to you' which accused the Tories of complacency over the growing gap between the rich and poor. Hugh Gaitskell undertook that a Labour government would not raise taxes if it came to power despite the fact that the manifesto contained pledges to increase spending primarily by raising pensions. This led voters to doubt Labour's spending plans and is cited as a key reason for its defeat.

The *Daily Mirror*, despite being a staunch supporter of the Labour Party, wished Macmillan 'good luck' on its front page after his win. Future Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was elected for the first time in Finchley.

After the sudden death of Hugh Gaitskell early in 1964 Labour chose Harold Wilson, who was then thought of as being on the party's centre left. Sir Alec Douglas-Home, then the Earl of Home, had taken over as Conservative leader and prime minister the previous autumn after Harold Macmillan announced his resignation. Douglas-Home shortly afterwards disclaimed his title under the Peerage Act 1963 in order to lead the party from the Commons.

Macmillan had led the Conservatives in government since January 1957 and despite initial popularity and a resounding election victory in 1959 had become increasingly unpopular in the early 1960s. Douglas-Home faced a difficult task in rebuilding the party's popularity with only a year between taking office and facing a general election. He delayed calling a general election to give himself as much time as possible to improve the prospects of his party. Wilson had begun to try to tie the Labour Party to the growing confidence of Britain in the 1960s asserting that the 'white heat of revolution' would sweep away 'restrictive practices...on both sides of industry'. The Liberal Party enjoyed a resurgence after a virtual wipeout in the 1950s and doubled its share of the vote primarily at the expense of the Conservatives. Harold Wilson won the election with a majority of four.