

Memories of Kittle - Bert Miller

Contributed by
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Extract from Pennard Carnival Programme, 2005

He was born in Kittle in 1912. There were only nine houses in the village at that time. The Miller family lived in the old Manor House, but Bert was actually born in Barlands Cottage because the house was having its thatched roof changed for a slate one.

The house was originally built in 1786 as a place to collect tithes. What is now the kitchen was then a stable. The house was a smallholding, growing vegetables and keeping a few animals. The valley was not wooded then but was used for grazing. The noise of the waves in Pwll Ddu could sometimes be heard and the villagers knew that if they could hear the ‘Pwll roaring’ then it would rain.

There was no well in Kittle so water was collected off the roofs of the cottages and from the river in the valley. In summer the women would take the clothes down to the river to wash them. There were two other wells in Bishopston Valley, Roger’s well and Roderick’s well for drinking water.

The village green was much bigger than now as the road was not built until 1925. The green was used for an annual fayre: sheep and cattle were sold and travellers would come to sell other goods such as farmers’ overalls.

Once a year the villagers would also round up their ponies off the commons and they would be stored in the yard of the inn. The next day there would be a horse sale of the ones they wished to sell, with Mr Morris the publican acting as auctioneer. Ostlers and other horse buyers would come from Swansea to purchase them. The next day they would walk the ponies and colts to town, to High Street station. The colts were sent to the Brecon Beacons to be grown on and used as pit ponies. Not only adults, but children had their own ponies to sell. However, the monies from the sale of the children’s ponies often went on buying clothing and other necessities.

The women worked hard, doing housework by hand and washing clothes in the river if necessary and cooking on wood stoves. Coal had to be carried back to the village from Killay; bread and cakes were cooked in a brick oven. One treat was Kittle cake, a type of bread with fruit in it. The oven was heated by burning the charcoaled wood of gorse in it, then removing the hot ashes and putting in the bread and cakes to cook.

Many villagers kept pigs; they were an important part of the diet. Householders were permitted to kill only one pig at a time for their own use. So when a pig was to be killed the local policeman had to be called to check it was only one and record it. The local policeman was responsible for keeping records of livestock kept and sold. The pig would be tied up and its throat cut. When dead it would be butchered and the main joints salted for storage and some hung from the kitchen rack to cure. Other parts would be used for sausages and faggots. Whenever a family killed a pig some parts would be shared with the other families in the village.

Later, in the 1930s there was a greyhound and motor bike circuit in what is now part of Beaufort Drive.

The village green was used for village parties. There was a big party for the Queen's coronation and for the wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Marquees were put up and everyone brought their home-made wine and cakes.

Bert used to sell the vegetables they grew using a van to travel to the customers. His petrol allowance during the War was not sufficient to continue so they had to revert to using a horse and cart, which was much slower. Soldiers were billeted on the bank area of the green waiting to be called to fight. There were other similar groups of soldiers around Gower. They were in need of supplies and persuaded Bert to sell them cabbages; they took all the cabbages he had, so he had to buy more from elsewhere for his customers. Other villagers also provided food for the soldiers as no provisioning seems to have been organised. The house next door, which is now the shop, cooked ham and eggs for the soldiers. Bert supplied them with food whilst they were camping there, but one morning they had all disappeared. He had to wait for payment from the War Department but was well paid and it enabled him to bring forward his wedding plans to Mary.

Source: Pennard Carnival Programme 16 July 2005

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