

Rob Sheffield



PIECES OF US

The Rise, Decline & Future of a Welsh Neighbourhood

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OF A
WELSH NEIGHBOURHOOD

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Print ISBN 978-0-9568031-8-4

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Published by

Llyfrau Cambria Books, Wales, United Kingdom.

Cambria Books is an imprint of

Cambria Publishing Ltd.

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Dedication

To Joyce, Don, Paula, Ella and Cormac.

Acknowledgements

In April 2019, I started to meet residents from Greenhill and ask questions about the place and how it was to live there. One person led to another: *You should speak to so and so. They used to live on such and such a street and here's their number and mention me...*

Between March 2019 and April 2021, I interviewed 44 people, many in-person, and some online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone I spoke to was interested, curious and glad to have an opportunity to say something. Thank you to all of those people, (some are no longer with us). And to their friends, neighbours, sons and daughters, for easing the way.

The names of all the people I interviewed are changed in this book. The only unaltered names are those mentioned who contributed to the stories and fabric of the neighbourhood. Any spelling mistakes of names are mine.

Many people helped with this book. Mary Clare Pitson helped me speak with people in the locality. Gerald Gabb directed me to relevant, local Swansea history. Thanks to Richard Bolden at the University of West of England, Bristol, for funding the transcription of interviews. George Morgan produced the two book maps, and he worked with Ella Sheffield to design the cover. The hands image comes from the work of sculptor, Mandy Lane, <https://mandylanesculpture.wordpress.com/>, photographed by Bill Taylor-Beales, www.hushlandcreative.com, and shared by Cerian Appleby, from St Joseph's School. And thanks to Camilla Watson for sharing her community work project in Alfama, Lisbon.

I benefited hugely from writer friends who read and gave me useful comments on a very rough first draft. And thanks to Chris and the team at Cambria Publishing for making the publishing process straightforward.

Libraries helped a lot. I researched about Greenhill, Swansea and Wales in the Swansea Central Library and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. And I drafted the book in the Central and Gloucester Road libraries in Bristol, and the library of the University of West of England.

Most of all, thank you Rachael, Ella and Cormac for giving me the time and space to work on this, and the love to keep it going.

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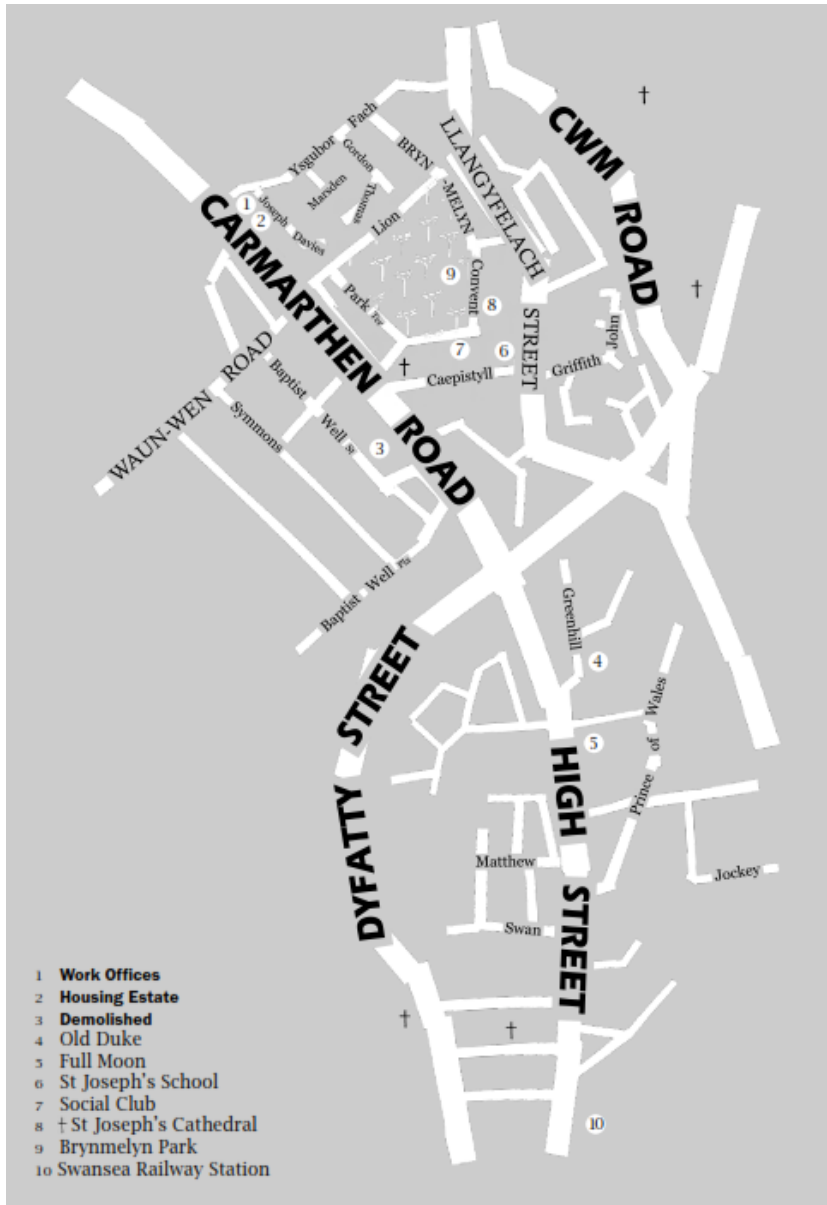
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Map of Greenhill: 1938



- 1 Red Cow
- 2 Bluebell Inn
- 3 Malsters
- 4 Old Duke
- 5 Full Moon
- 6 St Joseph's School
- 7 Social Club
- 8 † St Joseph's Cathedral
- 9 Brynmelyn Park
- 10 Swansea Railway Station

Map of Greenhill: 2023



Part 1: Becoming Somewhere

1: Urban disturbance

Arriving by train at Swansea railway station most people turn left at the exit, heading south-west to the city centre, perhaps the beach, or the long arc of the Mumbles. If, instead, you turn right and walk north along the High Street, in 10 minutes you'll be treading the old neighbourhood of Greenhill - a defiant lip of land on the city's ancient slide to river and sea.

Its Wikipedia page describes it as suffering 'some loss of identity for this once very densely occupied part of Swansea'. Identity is not the only change. Ask people from across the generations, and they will offer their singular memories of the place, describing how physical and social centres of gravity have shifted in streets changed or now gone.

Some ascribe the name 'Greenhill' to the Irish influx from the mid-1800s onwards. Roger Price called his 1992 book of the area *Little Ireland*. But the name Greenhill is older than that. Thomas Baxter's 1818 drawing shows the area's pre-industrialised pastoral location, near to, but separate from the town's main living centre around the High Street and the city castle. And, in reference to the 17th century English civil war, an 1878 newspaper reports that, while Cromwell's army were entering the town from the south, 'the king's soldiers were retreating through Greenhill gate'. (1)

The area was certainly green before the Irish arrived. Imagine landing on Swansea beach in the early 1700s and seeing the coastal plain surrounded by hills, carved through by river and streams. If you followed the broil of human activities, you'd have headed north,

passing the city castle and on to the High Street. And you'd have seen green hills everywhere. On the tended fields ahead, levelling off northwards on the partial flat of current-day Cwmbwrla, and rolling downhill, east to the River Tawe, and the nearby area of Hafod:

“Delightful Havod, most serene abode, Thou sweet retreat, fit mansion for a God.” (2)

This poem was written in the late 1730s, before the landscape of industrialisation came to Swansea. I shared it with a Hafod-born friend of mine, who laughed wryly. Like me, he grew up here before leaving for university in 1982. These were times of transition, as the city negotiated the meaning and tensions of post-manufacturing decline. Landscape and minds were scarred with the debris of industry. A serene abode it was not.

When I was a child here, the area was poor and working class. It was pre-internet, and pre-massification of university education. It was also, I remember, a cohesive place, where a lot of people knew each other. It felt safe to roam and play, and to feel as bored as any teenager wants. Bored but not scared. From 1966 through to the late 1970s, we lived on Symmons Street in Waun Wen, adjacent to Greenhill. I went to primary school at St Joseph's, and to the church of the same name. And played in the ruined houses, chapels, parks and housing estates, and on the empty fields dotted with subterranean World War two bunkers, stuck in their shadowed moment, rank with urine, home to scuttling rats.

In March 2019, the Daily Mail asked

“Is this the worst High Street in Britain? Businesses in Swansea say they are shutting up shop amid 'plague of drug addicts and prostitutes' with police called more than 1,000 times in one year...” (3)

It describes the drugs, guns, violence and claims that shop owners are closing up because the criminals have won. In the same article, the owner of the White Swan pub is reported as saying:

“I'm giving up. I have tried really hard, but people don't like to

come up here as they are scared. Even my friends don't visit. We just do not get protection up here...There is no CCTV. We have prostitutes regularly standing on the street, and there is violence. I saw a guy beating up his girlfriend, and when I tried to intervene he turned on me. The place is just abandoned. I've tried to make a real go of this place, but I've had enough."

And in May 2021, at the top of Waun Wen Road - adjacent to my old street - youths sent burning cars downhill, terrifying locals and chasing away the outnumbered police. (4) The subsequent investigation led to sentencing of youths, criticism of the police response, and efforts by the local community residents to rebuild.

My father told me that it was hard to find a kinder place than Swansea. My teenage self was sceptical. What I did know was that when many people know you in a place, it can feel like being raised by an extended family. There was a warmth and a knowing that felt like being part of something bigger. And where people on every street knew you and your people, it could be stifling. I left without a backward glance in September 1982.

I lived in Portsmouth, London, Malmesbury and Bristol. Nowhere approached the social cohesion of the Greenhill of my youth. With time, experiences and reflections, a few troubling thoughts kept returning. What was it about this time and place that had left such a mark on me? Did others think, as I dimly recalled, that it was a time and place with strong ties between people? And that this was both good and bad. And what had happened to this place I once knew so well?

And it wasn't only curiosity. Why did I still feel something that felt like guilt?

Dislodged by all this, I booked an appointment with my local GP. After a detour around my toes she asked: "And you mentioned something psychological?"

"This is a difficult thing...it's about my parents. I left for

university, and I didn't really say thank you to them. For what they did for me. And I'm not sure what to do about it."

There was quite a long silence. "You're talking about heartache", she said. And she recommended *The Four Pillars*, by Ranjan Chatterjee.

"I'm thinking of writing a book", I said, without much conviction.

"Don't write a book" she said.

In April 2019 I started talking to people in Greenhill about their past and present in this place, trying to understand more. I spoke with local residents, some of whom I'd known from my earliest years. And with teachers, priests, council workers, and political councillors. I worked through samples of daily newspaper headlines from the South Wales Evening Post, and read official documents about Greenhill. And I opened my own diaries and journals from earlier years. Then COVID arrived, closing the libraries, slowing the work, limiting physical interactions between people and making community sharply topical again. And releasing echoes of Greenhill's own past.

2: A place forming

Greenhill has long faced economic vagaries, social inequalities and environmental concerns, and that remains so today. The area is adjacent to, but not quite part of, the old-industrialised east. It's in the Castle administrative ward that includes the modern, developed marina, but it couldn't be further away, economically and socially. And it is within walking distance of the city centre and the shining symbols of Swansea's wealth. Since industrialisation, it has wrestled with the challenge of combining economic opportunities with social advancement and environmental sustainability. Post-COVID, the area faces serious problems with the city's highest crime rates; income deprivation - a net annual household income of £22,000, well below the city's average; and a strong perception that the area has become unsafe. (5)

Its history is of struggle and forming from the opportunities presented by vast, impersonal shifts. One place to start is with the White Rock Copperworks, a 25 minute-walk, north-east of Greenhill. It was established in 1737 by Thomas Coster, the Bristol Member of Parliament, mine adventurer and dealer in copper and brass. Copper ore from Cornwall landed on the river Tawe and was smelted to produce copper products. These would be shipped from Bristol to the Guinea coast in Africa, contributing to the trade in slaves who were taken on Coster's ships to Jamaica and South Carolina.

Copper smelting grew in demand, and the nearby Hafod and Morfa works were built in the early 19th century. From the late 18th century to mid-19th century, Swansea became known as 'Copperopolis', and by 1820 was responsible for producing around 50% of the world's supply. (6) And the population relied on the work - by 1823, around 10,000 of Swansea's 15,000 population were supported by the copper industry. (6)

The spoils of economic growth won over environmental concerns.

Hundreds of chimneys changed the landscape in this area, with the prevailing wind sending fumes of arsenic and sulphur east-ward onto the soil and people of Landore, Bonymaen, St Thomas and Kilvey, killing trees, crops and poisoning pastureland. While workers lived nearby, and farmers lodged court cases against works owners, those same owners lived in the city's west, in the more salubrious Brynmill, Uplands and Sketty.

Rapid economic growth needed new labour and numbers increased steadily in the following decades, as people were attracted to work, producing ingots and sheet copper, yellow metal bars, sulphuric, oxalic and muriatic acids, and sulphates of soda, copper, zinc and other chemicals, as well as coal, artificial manures and fuel. Travel between Ireland and Swansea is centuries old, and as work opportunities grew, Irish immigrants became the largest external source of people for Swansea through the 19th century. This grew from around 400 people in 1838, to 1369 by 1851, and 2800 by 1859. (7) Many settled in Greenhill, in the new workingman's district:

‘...a bleak and bare hillside where roads and streets had yet to be made, undrained and unlighted.’ (8)

In this nascent mess they were not uniformly welcomed. The same was true for their catholic priests. A young Father Kavanagh had needed the protection of bodyguards from insult and injury, on arriving in the city. But, when the cholera epidemic of 1849 struck Swansea, the same priest turned minds. Father Kavanagh offered his help to Dr William Long. Accounts describe him tending to the sick, washing them, combing their hair, making their beds. And, at the end, giving the last rites, and, when needed, placing the dead into their coffins. (9)

Through the pandemic, the Greenhill area had very high mortality rates, and an 1854 medical report explains why:

“In Charles street there were in December 1853...about six to each room, thus creating a pestilential atmosphere, ready at any time of epidemic visitation to liaise the disease among these inmates... it is notoriously common...to find one

tenant of a bed ill, with two bed companions, one sleeping at the foot and one at the side of the invalid, while in cases where death occurs, the corpse occupies the room which often serves as living, cooking and sleeping room to six or seven inmates.” (10)

Since Greenhill bordered the High Street, the effect on city centre trade was considerable:

“At the height of the epidemic, business in and around the town centre was brought to a standstill. A forbidding, eerie stillness prevailed everywhere, further emphasised by the fact that no church bells pealed out their normal chimes; shops were closed and the local copper works abandoned all workers who were not absolutely needed. It was an enforced holiday which no-one wanted, which cleared the streets of drunkards and induced many people to go to church.” (11)

Many of the bodies were buried at what is now St Matthews Church, just north of the high street. After his cholera efforts, Father Kavanagh concludes an 1852 report to the bishop of the diocese:

“Religion improves, particularly at the stations. No hostility displayed, but the people do not like our Faith!”(12)

When cholera arrived again, in 1866, the local authorities resolved to act, and cleared poor housing, including parts of the densely populated Greenhill area, which, once again, absorbed a disproportionate rate of incidence and death.

By now, the area was establishing itself as a neighbourhood with a different identity. St Joseph’s church had been established in the locality, also in 1866, but the churchgoers were served by priests from other parishes. It was clear that the growing Irish catholic population in Greenhill needed a priest of their own, and they got one. In his reminiscences, Father Richards describes his appointment as the first pastor of Greenhill, in December 1875. There was a population to serve, and he enjoyed the goodwill created from the legacy of Father

Cavanagh and others.

“I found in Greenhill an absence of bigotry amongst the Welsh people, and a good understanding between them and their Irish neighbours, which has been to this day a characteristic of Swansea and its people.” (13)

It seems to have been a good match, as he reflects after his first preaching, though the wealthier west-enders of the city fare less well:

“There is something helpful about an Irish audience which I have found in no other. They give as well as take. A fashionable West-end audience listens to you with attention, but rarely look at you, and you know not whether what you say goes home to it. There is no speculation in their eye, no play of feature, no outward sign of appreciation, but a stolid irresponsive acquiescence, consistent with a vacant mind...With an Irish audience, a body of uplifted eyes rivet themselves upon you, promptly giving the electric spark that went from you back to you again. You read in their sparkling eyes, and expressive faces the reflection of your own thoughts, and the response to every tone and shade of your own feeling. This is what I found when I preached my first sermon in St Joseph’s” (14)

A lot can be done by a small group of people, and in the coming years, it seems that Father Richards and his helpers made a genuine difference to the lives of local people:

“A few years ago, the main roadway through Greenhill was a narrow way edged with hovels, reeking with vile odours and peopled with beings on and over the verge of Pauperism. Now the thoroughfare is broad, and bordered with new and healthy cottages and shops, wherein dwell a hard-working and fairly contented population...it is largely attributable to the good influences which are at work under the name St Joseph. The Rev. Canon Richards is at the head of an energetic community of Priests, Sisters and school teachers who devote themselves to the work of spiritual and

intellectual culture with an earnestness that has already produced good results. Fixing upon a rough and declivitous piece of ground overlooking the Greenhill district, and with a fine view of Kilvey Hill, the town, and Swansea bay beyond, the Catholic authorities have transformed the barren place into a veritable hive of religious, charitable and educational effort.” (15)

By November 1888, Father Richards had co-ordinated the building of a new church, with money raised locally and from Europe, an organ from Lord Petre, and stations of the cross donated by a family from Antwerp, Belgium. (16)

There was a swirl of momentum. Infrastructure and institutions were being created, and the land itself being shaped. A distinct urban neighbourhood came into being, and in the coming decades the area began to establish the cultural customs and rituals that distinguished the neighbourhood:

“A picturesque spectacle attracted a crowded congregation to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Greenhill, Swansea, on Sunday evening, on the occasion of the annual Corpus Christi celebrations, which comprised an imposing procession around the church composed of little children garbed in white, the local battalion of the Catholic Boys' Brigade, and members of the League of the Cross in regalia, the whole forming a striking scene as the procession—about 500 strong,—wended its way around the stately edifice to the strains of the Corpus Christi hymn, 'Lauda Sion,' "Faith of our Fathers," etc. (17)

Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century working conditions were appalling. A twelve-year-old boy might work a fourteen-hour day, and a furnace-man a full twenty-four hour shift. Women and girls might collect urine from nearby houses to clean the copper sheets. Consumption, typhus, bronchitis and asthma were endemic. And the activity of work itself could be very dangerous:

“William Connell, aged 56, of Charles Street, Greenhill, Swansea, employed at Vivian and Sons’ Works, Hafod, was admitted to the Swansea hospital on Tuesday morning. It appears that Connell, who was working in the Sulphur and copper department, was tipping a barrel of sulphur into a dissolving tank, when the weight of the barrel presumably pulled him in. He was badly burnt about the body and legs, and when admitted to the hospital was in a serious condition.” (18)

And work was also precarious. Should wage earners fall ill, there was little family security:

“On Monday night, a policeman while on his beat through a slum alley in Greenhill, Swansea, found a woman and four little children, aged from 1½ to 9 years, huddled in an outhouse. He had them removed to the workhouse where they are being cared for. It appears a few months ago the husband died, and his widow, being unable to continue payment of rent...” (19)

While the neighbourhood was becoming a viable place to live, its people were dealing with the consequences of rapid, unregulated urban growth. They’d have sought their solace and support from different sources, according to temperament, opportunity and chance. Alcohol would have been a source for some, and there were riots in Greenhill in 1903 and 1905, with pokers, stones and metal raining through the air. And at St Joseph’s church on Sunday 21st May 1905, Father Fitzgerald bemoaned the role of publicans selling alcohol on Sundays, as well as weekdays. Add to this the minority that ruined the reputation of the neighbourhood:

“They had 5,000 Irish Catholics, and among them perhaps a dozen or so of thoroughly degraded families – he knew them all – who feared neither God nor man, and consequently had no reverence for the law.” (20)

In the ceaseless task of keeping the demons at bay, Priests became important authority figures in the decades to come. Father O’Hare

replaced Father Richards, and seems to have wielded an unquestioned authority:

“...the Greenhill district owed its none too favourable reputation to ‘company’ that the bank holidays of Whitsun and August always drew together, to be dispersed into the small hours of the morning by noisy and violent internal explosions...Father O’Hare...was always there. Whereas the police were powerless, his appearance was often enough to clear the streets and one of the chief officers of the force remarked not long ago, in speaking of those times, that when there was trouble in Greenhill, Father O’Hare was worth more than half-a dozen policemen...” (21)

Creation, work, danger and death - these were the trials and joys of people who were clinging to life and to living. As for the people, so for the growing neighbourhood. By the late 19th century, Greenhill was established as an urban neighbourhood area with a distinctive Welsh-Irish culture. This was due partly to the visible efforts of priests, teachers, and others in formal roles. But it was also because of the everyday work of thousands of local people whose hard work was never recorded but who accumulated a growing power and credibility and established their validity in city affairs. In the decades to come the culture and identity that developed at this time would be further consolidated, further institutionalised, and become ‘normal’. There would have been strong social connections between many of the local residents. And considerable pride, as their efforts made the area a place to live, for themselves and their families.

This was the formative time. And this was the local history of which we knew little as children, growing up there in the 1970s. In August 1972, my father took me to see “Zulu”, starring Michael Caine and Stanley Baxter. I was 8 years old, and it left a deep impression. Back home, we were told nothing about David Jenkins, an army private and one of the few actual survivors of Rorke’s Drift, who lived first at 52, then at 13 Bryn-Melyn Street, Greenhill. (22)

Nor did we know about the remarkable Griffith John, born in 1831 to a copper-working family in Greenhill. His mother died in the cholera epidemic of 1832, and his father to a further outbreak in 1849. In 1855 he sailed for China as a 24-year-old missionary and founded the Wuhan Union hospital in central China in 1866. (It's one of China's largest, with more than 5,000 inpatient beds, and treating 3.5 million patients annually.) He is remembered there through a statue of him placed outside the hospital, and his work has led to economic trade and medical collaborations between Wuhan and Swansea.

In Greenhill, he is also known because his name was used to label a block of flats, raised after a post-war housing clearance that brought conflict, and challenged the community's marked cohesion. In the late 1950s some of the older streets of Greenhill were demolished in a slum clearance, almost 100 years after the previous one. This time round, Anne Street, Brook Street, Charles Street, Emma Street and Well Street were demolished, and many people relocated to other parts of Swansea, including Portmead, Penlan, Blaenymaes and Gendros. And on the cleared ground was built the high-rise flats named Griffith John.

Aside from the human impact, the clearance also shifted the centre of Greenhill. It moved a little north-west, away from current-day Dyfatty, to become the area now bounded in the west by Carmarthen Road, north by Ysgubor Fach ('Small barn') Street, and east by Llangyfelach Street.

And this post-war practice of housing clearing was not limited to Greenhill. In *Before the Roundabout: A Swansea Childhood*, Marilyn Winstone describes a similar occurrence in the late 1950s, just north in the area of Cwmbwrla. Roads were diverted, a roundabout built, shops removed, places to meet erased. And in the 1960s, Cardiff city council decided to clear Loudoun Square, the centre and heart of downtown Butetown.

In Toronto, *The Ward* was a central urban district and had accommodated immigrants from many parts of the world. Early arrivals included British, Scottish, Irish and African-Canadians - many

of the latter being escaped slaves fleeing to Canada via the underground railroad. Later arrivals came from China, Italy and Eastern Europe. Rapid population expansion had gradually put pressure on sanitation and living condition, leading to calls for a redevelopment of this part of central Toronto. And the area was gradually cleared from 1946 onwards, through to the 1990s. (23)

In Chavez Ravine, Los Angeles, Mexican-American neighbourhoods had developed land and ties over decades, forming tight, cohesive communities. And, in the late 1950s, the area was cleared of these populations, to make way for the Dodgers stadium.

Also in the late 1950s, in Boston's West End, a housing clearance displaced thousands of immigrant, working class people. The area had become a home to Irish, Jews, African Americans and many more nationalities. (Even Vulcans - the actor Leonard Nimoy was raised here.) It was labelled 'slum housing' by wealthier Bostonians, though this was disputed by local residents. And the city government argued that the development would raise more tax for the city. The exodus led to a long-term distaste for urban renewal in Boston, and an official apology from the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 2015 for the community disruption.

3: Maddy

She'd replied to my Facebook invitation, where I'd asked for people interested to share memories of their time in Greenhill. She'd lived there in her earlier years, up to her mid-teens. And now we're sitting in her home near Swansea's seafront. We don't know each other, but she has plenty to say. Her eyes are fixating with energy and nous. After establishing whether she knows any of my family - maybe... - she starts to share her memories.

It was a community. It was an Irish community because of the Irish coming over in the depression and that. And, of course, they came over as labourers or whatever. And there was a great Catholic community. There was also a big Jewish community, mind ^a. That was on Prince of Wales Road. There was a row of shops opposite the back of the Palace, a playground - be sitting on the palace steps. And most of those businesses there - Mr Katz, big man, don't know if you remember him - and most of them were owned by Jewish people.

My Grandfather was very close to the Jewish community, he used to dig the graves in Mayhill for them, and he was an Irishman. So, I was brought up in a Jewish, Irish, Welsh community... It just dawned on me: there were quite a few Italians. Either with fish and chip shops, or ice creams.

Well, we played mostly in bombed buildings. There was a place called the Bumble - we used to call it the Bumble, I don't know why it was called the Bumble - and that was John Street and Jockey Street, behind Prince of Wales Road, rows of terraced houses. So, we used to play with a lot of those children, behind, because it was safe, to play hopscotch or skipping or whatever. And then you go on a little bit further and you'd be on the Strand, because it was all derelict,

^a Swansea had around 1000 Jewish people in 1914, it declined rapidly afterwards, with Cardiff becoming the main place of Jewish settlement in Wales. (Paul Chambers, Religious Diversity in *Wales, in A Tolerant Nation* 2015, edited by Charlotte Williams, Neil Evans and Paul O'Leary)

bombed, bomb building materials dumped. Must have been something else, sometime. Opposite was quite a big pipeworks. So we used to play in there quite a lot, how a load of pipes never fell on us I don't know, I think we all had guardian angels that lived there. We had good playgrounds. Then we'd go over the river Tawe then, on the swing bridge and play on that. We had a fantastic childhood. May have been poor but oh, the fun we had. The tricks we'd play on each other. imagine four boys and seven girls. But we did have a hell of a lot of fun. And always there for each other.

We even stowed away one day. My sister, myself and a neighbour's daughter. Well I said to D-, my sister, and B-, our friend, 'Oh David's ship is due in' and we've thought then "Oh, we'll go and see it". So off we goes to the docks which wasn't far, from Prince of Wales Road. I'd seen this boat coming in. Now I didn't know the Blue Starling, I knew what a tug was, but I didn't know what sort of ship. So, in it comes and it was coming back to pick this family up for one child. So we all got on the ship and went off to sea.

We wandered around the ship, nobody caught on for a while that three of us - I must have been ten, or something - nobody realised that we'd stored away on the ship. Eventually somebody caught on. But fortunately, it was only going to Ilfracombe. So, we were taken to the captain's quarters. We had a little telling off. And then we sat at a captain's table. Now, lucky I'd come from my grandma's, we knew about silver and serviettes and what china or whatever. And he couldn't get over that we actually knew how to use the knife, and silver, and work inwards... Anyway, cut a long story short, we had a nice day in Ilfracombe, fetched us back, and my mother was just tickled pink. So, it was headlines in the paper there, wasn't it. And I was the oldest - that was the worst. And I led them astray. Could have been anywhere. Thank God we picked a pleasure boat.

The funniest thing that ever happened to us, thinking back now, ... we'd go for a walk by the bridge, by Sainsburys there. We walked and walked and we ended up, must have been beyond Bonymaen, because we'd never been that side of the river. And when we got to

Jersey Marine, we thought we were in New Jersey. Some of us were quite young: 8, 9, 10 perhaps. We must have had a guardian to look after us. I'm a great believer in that: whether it's a relation or whatever. But we found our way home again.

But there was work about, there was plenty of work about - they just had such big families they couldn't cope. I mean my mother coped, it was just hard going, feeding and trying to dress your children. Whatever it might be - getting paper rounds all the rest of it; pinching bits and pieces from the rag store...and taking it back to them in a sack; the chemists and pinching the bottles out of the shed and taking them back the next day for a penny each. But we never took more than we needed. If you want to see a film, if you were lucky, you'd go in for nine pence, about a shilling only. And it would only take three flagons - you wouldn't take any more than that. Only if you need it. That's how we survived. (I'm not gonna be had up for this now, am I?) Not acquiring massive amounts. We'd survive. We didn't have a lot like others. That's a good name for the community: survivors. Because at one time they were all wiped out, weren't they, around that area, with cholera.

Ozzie Vanster was a royal photographer, with the glass slides and a biggish camera. And he used to dress a bit eccentric with a big white, painted hat. And he had his big, old-fashioned camera and he fell in our times. And we lived in a three-storey house, and he had the shop. And he used to cook his food, I remember that, in cod liver oil or something. The smells made me heave. And, poor man, fascinating character, he had all slides of all the years he worked as a famous photographer, glass slides. And my mother was taking him a cup of tea one morning - I think it was my mother, it could have been any one of us - and he'd had his feet in a bowl of icy water. He'd died.

And all his stuff was taken away, I don't know what he'd done with the camera, but the slides was taken away down to the Bumble, below the railway bridges, and buried there. I remember that plain, we used to pull them up, out of the dirt. And I thought it was so sad.

There was another one called Dirty Edie, because she was dirty!

She used to keep kittens down her chest. And she'd go to the fish shop, that fish shop, opposite the Full Moon now, and she'd have bits of fish and put them down her chest to feed the kittens.

I used to buy toffee apples from...the Toffee Apple Lady down there. I believe it was Anne Street. She made toffee dabs in a bit of wood. And then she makes penny toffee apples, which is the little apples. If you were really posh you could have the thrupenny one - we used to call it the Big Apple. We'd be queueing up in the lunchtime then, if you were lucky enough to have a penny.

And there were clubs. So there was the Railwaymen's Club. There's the Embassy club. There was the Lyceum club. There were lots and lots of clubs. St Joseph's, Lady of Lourdes was a very popular club. And St. Joseph's, they'd have dancing on a Saturday night. and entertainment. That was before the bingo came about. So again, there's a big social life there for people. There used to be a bookies on the corner, by the doctors there. They used to go out and put a horse on, the men. And if they won, they'd have a couple of pints. There'd be fights on Saturday night, coming out of the Full Moon. Killing each other until they sent for Canon Mooney. And they would run when they saw the priest coming, at end of pub time. Make sure that it was in order, break the fight up, just threaten them with a shillelagh.

All in all, I couldn't wish to be brought up anywhere better. The adventures. Full of adventures. I was very lucky to live in the history of Greenhill and Dyfatty Street and all that area. I had a loving family and loving mother. My stepdad was good to us. We had a vast playground. And it taught me a lot about life. Safety, taking care of my son, being grateful for what I had later in life.

My brother's settled in New Zealand, he couldn't talk about anything because nobody knew him. And he missed that more than anything. D- says, 'When you are gone, Maddy, I'll have no-one but memories.'

4: Bill

He was a close friend of my father for a long time. He has a sharp memory, likes a story, a song and is playful and mischievous. We're meeting at a café, off Oxford St in the centre of Swansea. He's recounting the years before, and during, World War 2, school-life, and how the church' social club became established.

And in them days it wouldn't do no use walking, back and forth to St Joseph's. But the beauty of it was, in them days, there was no cars about. You could play marbles, more or less, in the gutter all the way down. And I will say then...there was all the poverty. It was terrible. You'd see kids coming to school - no shoes, gyms and lumps of cardboard in their shoes. Bags of poverty. Pre-war. Well, I remember going down there as a kid and seeing it on fire, the school. That was the blitz then.

And then I was evacuated. And I can remember being at High St station as a 7 year old, a gas mask, big label, getting on a train and I thought I was going to the end of the world. And it was down to Llanelli.

Well, the thing about it was, I was lucky. I was born, so they tell me, with a good voice. Another tale now, and this one only happened say about ten years ago... One of my friends, Terry Smith, come home and he said to me, 'Bill, Sister by here, I think she knows you from when you evacuated down Llanelli'. And then, I said, 'Good God, she must have been young and all'. She came over to me, she said, 'Is your name Bill-?', I said, 'Yeah. She said, 'I can remember you singing down in Llanelli and I can remember the song you sung'. I didn't know. She said, 'Speed Bonnie Boat'. Once she said the song I remembered Speed Bonnie Boat: "Like a bird on the wing, over the sea to Skye". When I was evacuated, we had a teacher, then, from St Joseph's, with us - Miss O'Mahoney - and she was our music teacher and she used to take me around, I didn't have a bad voice, in them days.

In them days, a priest was a God, right, you know? I remember...

I'm going to confession...the school confession at St Joseph's...every confession will be full, be packed. And some of the teachers...oh God... We had one, Marky Walsh. Now he used to suffer with a bad stomach or something and he used to be dropping off to sleep all the time. See, we were having, like, bible lessons or something like that, he'd drop off to sleep and used to get one of the boys to read the bible to us. And this one used to do it always, a bloke called John Beard from up the Gors, funny enough. And he'd say things like, 'and Matthew and Mark were walking down Wind Street and they bumped into Charlie Splain's Father...' We'd be weak and he'd be fast asleep!

I remember joining the Boy's Club and what caused me to join it was, in them days, I was living in Brynhyfrydd. I was mad about football and I used to support the team Bryn United - and I can always remember the Saints (*St Joseph's*) and this was the outbreak of the war. And some of them were in their Navy uniforms, just joined, you know? And one of them became a mate of mine after, Nicky Collins, you'd know his sons I suppose. Nicky in his navy uniform. But they trounced this team I used to support. And Nicky, if I can remember right, he scored a hat-trick, and they carried him back down to Greenhill and I went with them. And from there, then, I joined the Boys Club. And it was under the church, in them days, for years. And the bloke who used to take us was a marvellous man, Holley - Willy Holley. He used to take us there and all we had virtually were little games and table tennis, we never had a snooker table or nothing then. But, what it done, it brought us together and all that.

On Carmarthen Road, the California. And we were there one day, now right, and there's the priest then, Father Griffin, and I became great friends of his, he finished down in Waterford. And one day we were down there and we were all going now. He said, 'Where you all going?'. We said, 'Going down the Cali now for a pint', and he said, 'Why don't they have a bar here?'. And at the time Canon Mooney was there and he was 'Ooohh...' about a bar. But anyhow, it didn't really happen then in Father Griffin's time, but he was the one who, I think, mentioned it. Another priest came here, then, Father Finlan, and we spoke about it and we got it - we got the bar. And when we

got the bar first, I think it was Patsy Pearce, who kept the Adam and Eve then, he used to get us barrels and bring em' up in barrels. And we used to take it in turns behind the bar...where I learnt to pull a pint.

Down the club they had a marker. The marker was the one who used to look after the beer. He was a bloke called Iron Eddy - he had a plate in his head. Danny Shehan, I think his name was. He was the marker there for years and then this character Marky Kolfer took over and he had TB. And you used to go in there sometimes, and he'd be in his long johns, I always remember. He'd take his clothes off, just be in his long johns...

But the beauty of that then, was from there it started to get bigger. And in the end, it'd be queueing on a Saturday night. Because we had an organist then, we used to get an organist then, one of them was David Alexander. He used to play the organ in the Church, and he also played the organ down the club. And they'd be queueing. My wife, who I didn't know at the time, she used to go...and she wasn't a Catholic, my missus was not a Catholic...but she used to go down there, she said, 'I remember queueing on a Saturday night'. And it wasn't outside entertainment then, it was all from in the club, mainly all Irish songs, mind...I knew characters right down there, Tommy Aldron, used to get up and sing...let me think now... 'I've met some folks who say that I'm a dreamer' - lovely Irish song. Jackie Conway, another boy, used to sing, 'The boat leaves the harbour tomorrow'. Danny Aldron used to sing all these ones about 'The brickie up and down in the lift.'. It's a comical one. He used to sing that. There was a singer then, Christy Maguire, he had a good tenor voice and he used to sing some of John McCormack's songs. And the women then...what's her name...Maguire... 'I'll take you home again, Kathleen', and all the old Irish ones. But, oh, it was bouncing.

It was another character, J-, he'd be drinking in the afternoon! Because I always remember him outside The Malsters, the pub on Carmarthen Road, by The California...we were all outside...doing a trick...he said to me, 'Bill, got half a crown?', I said, 'Yeah'. I gave it

to him, he showed em' a trick and he went in the pub and got a pint! I said, 'Where's my half a crown?'. And you know what, I found a little diary, back years, and I had in it, 'J- owes me half a crown'.

I remember one, a great bloke, and what I loved about him, Pat Dunvan...I mentioned the football team...what I loved about Pat, everybody wanted to go with the first team, didn't they, all the members. You'd have about 10 in the committee going with the first team and poor old Pat would be on his own with the under 17s, but he was great. And he was the first who always used to say, 'Encourage the youngsters, because they're our future'.