

## **Baking in Reynoldston 1930 – 1970**

**by Godfrey Jefford and Godfrey Davies**

Between the 1930s and the 1970s, three bakeries operated in Reynoldston. The families involved were Jefford, Clement and Davies.

The first to be established was the Jefford Bakery at *Cefn Bryn House*. Baking was undertaken in a purpose built two-storey building attached to the northern pine end of the house, adjacent to the road that runs to Henys Well. (The building has been replaced by an extension to the living accommodation). The owner of the bakery was William Stanley Jefford, grandfather of Godfrey Jefford, co-author of this account. He had learnt his baking skills when working with his father who had established a successful baking business in Swansea. I have been unable to establish the date at which the bakery started at *Cefn Bryn House* but it was a well - established business by the time I was born there in 1927. My memories stem from the early 1930s, hence the title of this article.

Setting up a bake house in Reynoldston in the early 1900s was not without its difficulties as there was no electricity supply, mains water or drainage. This meant that the pair of baking ovens had to be heated with coke and water had to be hauled from the well that exists near the Post Office. Originally, a cart- horse was kept and employed to haul a

cart- mounted water butt. From the mid 1930s a tank, mounted on a car towable trailer, was used. Hot water was obtained from a coal-fired domestic boiler, situated in what is now the drive to the house known as *Fernbank*. The dough machine within the bake house was belt driven from a Lister stationary engine which had to be started up for each batch. A rudimentary electricity supply (ahead of the installation of mains power) was installed to provide electric lighting for the early starts necessary to produce the daily bread.

Flour, the main ingredient, was supplied weekly by the Weavers Flour Mill in Swansea. The main product was white bread with some wholemeal and small brown loaves under the trade name *Atta*. Bun loaf was also available. In the late 1930s, an attempt was made to introduce confectionary but this was abandoned, as it proved too difficult to provide the necessary room for the products in the delivery vans.

Bread was produced by the traditional method. After mixing the dough, it was allowed to rise before being cut and weighed for hand moulding into one, two and four pound loaves. The most popular loaf size was the two-pound tin, but the range included sandwich loaves, cottage loaves, batches and a circular “crown” loaf.

Although bread could be purchased directly from the bake house, the vast majority of the output was delivered to customers over a wide area of Gower, using two delivery vans. Around 1933/34, one van, an Austin 12, was purchased from Fletchers of Swansea. Before commencing its work, it was shown at the Gower Show as an advertising display for Fletchers. By 1939, this van had covered 100,000 miles delivering bread. The delivery area covered included all of South Gower as far as the top of the Mayals Road. In North Gower, all of the area was covered to the edge of Gowerton and Three Crosses, including more remote areas such as Welshmoor.

William Stanley Jefford retired in 1944 when *Cefn Bryn House* and the baking business were sold to members of the Clement family. Wilfred and Reginald Clement had set up a competitive bakery within 100 yards of Cefn Bryn House. The foundations of this building can be seen, above *Belvedere Cottage*.

*The remains of the Clement Bakery, with Cefn Bryn House in the background.*

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The Clement Bakery.....

I have little detailed knowledge of this business.\* It operated throughout the 1930s and during the War years. My understanding is that the Clement brothers worked in the Jefford Bakery before setting up their own business. The Clement operation continued until approximately 1947.

The third bakery established in Reynoldston was that of Frank Davies. He was assisted by his son Godfrey Davies who, together with his wife Shirley, has provided this description of work within the bakery.

“In 1946, my father, Francis Arthur Davies, started his own bakery alongside his home *Dan-y-Bryn*. My father did all the baking himself, assisted by his wife Elizabeth and other family members. When I left Gowerton Grammar School, at the age of 16, I began working for my father in the bakery. I also attended the Technical College in Swansea, where I gained my City and Guilds qualification in Baking and Confectionary.

The days were long in the bakery. Work began at 4.00am, Mondays to Saturdays. We finished at 6.00pm on most days. On Saturday mornings, my day would begin at 3.00am, so that I could play football for South Gower later in the afternoon. The early starts enabled me to get the coal-fired ovens stoked to the correct temperature. Whilst the triple-decked Collins ovens were rising to 480° F, the first mixing

of the flour was taking place and there was time for a quick cup of tea! My father and I then moulded the dough by hand and whilst this was left to prove, we had our cooked breakfast and then returned to bake bread.

By 8.30am, the first van was ready to be loaded by my uncle, Raymond Fisher, who then delivered the bread to households and shops in Llanrhidian, Llangennith, Knelston, Rhossili, Hoton and Porteynon. The second van would be loaded by my father and I, so that by midday we were ready to deliver to Oxwich, Penmaen, Parkmill, Ilston, Llandimore, Cheriton, Llanmadoc and, of course, Reynoldston.

People could also buy their bread direct from the bakery, so we had many customers calling in each day to purchase bread and to have a chat.

Each day we made between 500-700 loaves as well as dozens of rolls and teacakes. At Easter time we were extra busy making trays of hot-cross buns. During the summer months we supplied holidaymakers with fresh bread at the Gower camping and caravan sites. Sometimes we made 4lb sandwich loaves which we supplied the Scout and Guide camps at Penrice. In the autumn we made the special Harvest Loaf in the shape of a wheat sheaf for St. George's Church.

An added perk for some of our customers was the roasting of their turkeys on Christmas Day. No turkey was too big for our ovens and with such an even temperature, they cooked to perfection.

Work at the bakery was exhausting but rewarding. Our customers enjoyed our bread and, at the time, we knew

virtually everyone living in Gower.

However, in 1972, faced with increasing competition from large suppliers and the ailing health of some family members, the bakery finally closed its doors – the end of an era!”