

The History of William Stanley Evans (Stan)

21st May 1907 17th February 1983

Stan was born at Hayes Farm and attended the Primary School at Knelston before being taken out of education, at an early age, to help his father on the farm. He was able to study agriculture at winter classes in Swansea and at the age of 17 he sat many hours of final examinations (December 19th 1924).

Less than four years later, Stanley was to suffer the anguish of having his sister Kathleen (Katy) lying dead at home on his 21st birthday. He refused to acknowledge his birthday ever again. It was about this time that Stanley became seriously ill with peritonitis, though he was proud of the terrible scars that he sometimes showed others. Once he had returned home he went to watch a cricket match that was taking place on the village green. The hard ball smashed his nose, so it was a case of “back to hospital”.

In 1935 Mrs. Elizabeth Hoskins of Hillside House became widowed and she asked her great niece, Mary Gwen Bevan to leave her position at Llanglydwen Rectory, Carmarthenshire, in order to go to Reynoldston to look after her.

Miss Howell, of the King Arthur Hotel, the “Queen of Reynoldston”, had encouraged Stanley to begin a milk round. These two events were to alter his life forever because Stanley and Gwen fell in love and married on 12th November 1936 at Llanglydwen Rectory. (Gwen was born on 7th February 1912).

Hayes Farm was still rented from the Penrice Estate by

Stan's parents, William and Ann but now there was a need for larger accommodation. Two rooms were added in 1937. Alas, Stan and Gwen lost their first baby, a girl, in 1937. Happily, on the 18th September 1939 they celebrated the birth of a baby boy, Jenkyn. Stanley had always enjoyed taking part in all social activities in the village and inter village quoits matches used to be popular in his youth. He proudly carried a quoits medal, which was firmly attached to the chain of his pocket watch.

In September 1942, Stan's mother died. On the 10th June they rejoiced at the birth of a daughter, Dilys Ann. Meanwhile, William's health was failing so Stan looked to his son, Jenkyn to help with the farm. Despite this help it was necessary to employ a casual labourer and Mr. Alexander Black of Apple Grove fitted the requirements perfectly. He was a reliable, hard working Scotsman who hailed from Caldor, Nairnshire. From there he had gone to British Columbia before returning to Britain and settling in Reynoldston.

As his children grew older, Stan involved the whole family in such communal activities as picking stones off fields set aside for haymaking, harvesting and suppering of the cattle on cold winter nights. As well as running the household, Gwen was always prepared to help in any activity when the need arose.

Stanley could often be heard milling the corn. Some was ground and the rest rolled especially for the draught animals, Duke and Queenie, who were fed in the stable. At the same time he could be seen removing the shoots off potato tubers or making plaited mats from "waste" string. In those days, fur and feathers were recycled and goose feathers (white only) were a much sought after commodity. Like many village folk he loved a bet on the horse races, especially the Grand National and The Derby,

and he sometimes had a flash of inspiration when selecting. He picked E.S.B., which won. He chose this horse because the initials stood for “Bless Stanley Evans”!. Stanley also collected pools coupons, especially as the activity enabled him to be more interactive with the people of the village.

By the end of 1950, the family was faced with eviction from Hayes Farm unless they purchased it to help the owners of the Penrice Estate to pay off the heavy death duties that they had incurred.

In 1951, a baby boy William Anthony was born to Stan and Gwen but the baby died two weeks later, in August. The same year saw Stanley joining the newly formed Reynoldston Fire Brigade and he loved his position as Leading Fireman, until he retired in 1969.

At one time he even found time to serve as a Parish Councillor. One of his grandsons, Howard Evans serves on the present Community Council, as its Clerk. Howard’s favourite memories include helping his grandfather to deliver the milk and helping Gwen bring in the cows from Cefn Bryn for milking.

Stan always encouraged education because he had not been afforded the opportunity for self-advancement. He always said that he would have liked to have studied to become a Doctor of Medicine.

In June 1952, Stan’s father, William, died. Just as he was now the sole owner of Hayes Farm by virtue of a heavy mortgage, almost all the sheep died of disease. To make matters worse his son failed the entrance examinations to Gowerton Grammar School because of chronic ill health. However, the lad had one further opportunity and passed

the vacancy examination. So Jenkyn transferred from Penclawwd Secondary Modern to Gowerton Grammar School in September 1954.

Despite financial constraints, Stan and Gwen enjoyed farming, especially as their son's health had improved sufficiently for him to give much help in all kinds of activity.

Stanley was a man who kept to his word and, as William had promised Hugh Leyshon of Box Farm that he would sell him a field known as Claypit, the sale took place in March 1957, much to Gwen's disgust. The field was sold for £100 and his father's verbal agreement had been honoured.

In 1957-1958, Stan had a garage built for his new Standard van. He also acquired a tractor soon after the death of his father and followed this with new equipment. All these advances made the horse drawn machinery idle but the iron frame used to attach the old machinery to the tractor tow bar was left attached to the old hay tedder that was used to the end.

The changing regulations on the production of milk meant continual changes took place culminating in the addition of a dairy and the changeover to machine milking. Stan was able to increase his herd by purchasing a further ten acres, bought from the Clement family.

In 1959, their daughter had a prize giving ceremony at Gorseinon Further Education College. After this she left to work in Bristol where she met and married Eddie Hewitt.

It was around this time that Stanley and Gwen set off on their first and only holiday together after trusting their two

children to run the farm business for a few days. They set off to Llangollen but because Mr. Black had to make hay, Stanley arrived back within “hours” because he could not rest in the knowledge that his son and the old man might not be able to cope. His work ethic was so powerful that he felt that he had to be there.

The curse of ill health struck again in 1962 when Jenkyn developed pneumonia. When he recovered, Stanley suffered from the same condition. Fortunately both recovered quite well.

There was never any discussion as to any succession to the property. Life was left to unfold and in September 1963 Jenkyn left to teach in Birmingham. Just before this Stan had bought a brand new diesel version of the Ferguson tractor. He did his best to attract his son back to the village and even bought a house in his son’s name. This was “Mancalla” (on the top road and named “Rowan”) which was resold in 1967. After this Stan obtained planning permission for a bungalow to be built in the fields known as Castle Park. Even before this he had offered to buy the lad a small holding called Blaen Coed (Welsh Moor) after the death of its owner Mr. William Pugh. Jenkyn refused the offer as he did not consider himself to be robust enough for a life in agriculture. His parents had slaved so hard against all the odds in order to succeed, so it was about time Stan and Gwen enjoyed the fruits of their labours. The bungalow never materialized and the plot was sold in 1969. Prior to this, the mortgage on Hayes Farm was redeemed in 1968.

As the children showed little interest in continuing the line in farming, the field next to Box Farm was sold in April 1970 to Dr. and Mrs. Mervyn Evans and finally the land and most of the buildings were sold to Mr. Colin Davies in November 1971. After this, Stan continued his milk round

for a further twelve months with milk from Cambrian United Dairies.

It was due to Mr. Colin Davies' support that Stan continued in farming up to the age of 65 years. Gwen helped all she could and for the bulk of the long holidays, Jenkyn helped at seedtime and harvest but the family assistance was not sufficient in itself.

In 1971, Gwen had her first hip operation, followed by another in 1976. After this, Gwen's sister Mary came to look after her whilst Stan went for a short annual holiday. One of the highlights of these trips was a journey on a hovercraft.

Upon his retirement Stan bought a new, black Austin Allegro in which he was able to clock over 40,000 miles. Stan even tried to get Gwen to move to a brand new home. When he managed to take her to a show house she refused to stay and ran away from the scene!

Stanley and Gwen were married for 46 years and he lived to see five grandchildren born: David - 1966: Howard - 1966:Pryce - 1968:Andrew - 1969 and Cora - 1973. Thanks to Gwen's refusal to leave Hayes Farm all of them were able to enjoy happy memories of life in Reynoldston.

The year 1965 had been a turning point. Their son Stanley Jenkyn married Jean Gittoes at St. Mary's Church, Kineton and they settled down in Wombourne, Staffs. Shortly before Christmas 1965 Stan was hospitalized with a severe chest infection and Jean and Jenkyn arrived to help Gwen with all the farm business for two and a half weeks. However, after this Stanley had to return to full duties in the first week of January 1966.

By the time Stan retired life was somewhat easier with piped water instead of drinking water transported by bicycle once the milk had been delivered. The water had come from the pipe below Reynoldston Post Office. Also electricity had made a great difference. However, Gwen spurned greater comforts and Stanley had to live without having even a telephone.

Meanwhile, Colin had given Stan freedom to treat the land as if it were still his, to help and to shoot a rabbit for the pot whenever he chose to do so.

Stan was always socializing, chatting and giving practical help. He was very concerned about his wife's health for a long time and on 17th February 1983 it appears he gave little thought to his own problems. It was a bitterly cold day and after visiting Florrie Daniels at Western House, he returned across the field and warned Gwen not to go out because it was "so bitterly cold". He proceeded to the rickyard to move some bales. Colin warned him not to and to wait until they could share the task. This advice was not heeded and when Colin returned he found Stan had passed away on what turned out to be Stan's mother's birthday. Thus ended the life of one of the most enthusiastic members of the 20th century community of Reynoldston.

Written by Jenkyn Evans

(This is by no means the first time Jenkyn has appeared in print. Many of you will have read about his own Childhood Memories 1939—1945 on the BBC web site WW2 People's War—Childhood Memories 1939—1945. This is a fascinating account of "Reynoldston at War". People in the war story include Winston Morris, Gwen Evans, Brian Smith, Alan Pinniger, Nellie Thomas, Stanley Evans, Myles Stapleton, William Evans, Mr Palmer, Tom

Davies, Ronnie Jefford, Laurie Moreton, Gower Davies
and, of course, Jenkyn himself.)

Childhood Memories 1939-1945