

Title: Thomas, Gwynedd_ Interview_Complete
Creators: Rick & Julia Goldsmith
Project: Herefordshire Life Through A Lens
Tagline: Films, stories and exhibitions inspired
by the photographic archive of the Derek
Evans Studio 1950s-1980s
Subject: Autobiography, Hereford FC, 1972 FA Cup
match, May Fair, Famous actress,
Heritage
Publisher: Catcher Media Social CIC
Tags: Gwynedd Thomas, Hereford FC, 1972 FA Cup
match, May Fair, oral history, heritage,
PV, participatory film-making, community
film, Herefordshire

Identifier: Thomas, Gwynedd_ Interview_Complete
Interview Date: November_20_2018
Location: Salvation Army Church, Edgar Street,
Hereford, Herefordshire, UK
Source: Catcher Media Social CIC
Interviewee: Gwynedd Thomas (speaker, female)
Interviewer: Marsha O'Mahony (speaker, female)
Camera & Sound: Richard Goldsmith (male)
Producer: Julia Goldsmith (female)
Transcriber: Marsha O'Mahony (female)
Language: English

Type: Video
Video Format: MPEG-4
Bit rate: 18.4 mbits/s
Frame rate: 25 FPS
Aspect ratio: 16:9
Width: 1920 pixels
Height: 1080 pixels
Scan type: Progressive
Audio Format: AAC
Audio Sampling rate: 44.100 kHz
Audio Bit rate: 222 kb/s
Stereo/Mono: Mono
File Size: 4.13 GB
Duration: 32 mins 10 seconds

Type: Audio
Audio Format: MP3 audio
Audio Sampling rate: 44.100 kHz
Audio Bit rate: 256 kb/s
Stereo/Mono: Mono

File Size: 59.5 MB
Duration: 32 mins 10 seconds

Original copyright: Catcher Media Social CIC CC BY-NC
Holder: Catcher Media Social CIC, Herefordshire
Libraries, Herefordshire Archive and
Records Centre

Full transcription Interview with: Gwynedd Thomas

Abstract: Gwynedd Thomas is a member of the Salvation Army in Hereford and a keen amateur photographer. She recalls the excitement of the May Fair, the Flea Circus, Mouse Town, the dancing girls. Even though not a football fan, she was at the legendary Hereford Utd vs Newcastle Utd match in 1972, caught up in the Cup fever.

0.00

GT: My name is Gwynedd Thomas. I was born and bred in Hereford, though I have a Welsh name, my father was Welsh. I'm a member of the Salvation Army and this is where we are at the moment in the Salvation Army Citadel in Canonmoor Street, opposite the football ground.

MOM: Can I ask, are you a football fan?

GT: no, I'm not. I never watch football on the television, but I got carried away in 1972 with the cup fever that, well, was involving the whole city, the whole county. We were all football mad, football crazy. Yes.

MOM: can you describe what the atmosphere was like in the city in the build-up to the big match?

GT: right, in 1972, in the run up to the iconic match between Hereford Utd and Newcastle Utd, because Hereford had been doing so well, people were getting generally excited and then when they drew against Newcastle, cup fever just took off. And together with a friend at work, we decided we had to see this match come hell or high water, so we took time off work, we were on flexible working hours and queued up for tickets. And the queue was very very long down Edgar Street and the draw, I think it was 2-2 draw, which was at Newcastle that took place, and we weren't sure when the actual replay was going to be because the weather was dreadful. So as soon as the tickets went on sale, we queued up for our tickets, we were very pleased to get them. And then we were patiently waiting for when the match was going to be: it was on, it was on, it was off, it was off. Another friend queued up for tickets and she was a knitter, so in about two days she knitted a black and white scarf. I wasn't a knitter so I bought my scarf and patiently waited for the day to dawn when the match was going to take place. I seem to think that it was

still a bit dodgy the day before whether it was going to be on or not. The pitch was like a mud bath, but I think in the day it was a bit drizzly but it didn't actually rain. It was a long time ago to remember. I was 23 then, many moons ago! (laughing)

MOM: so the day in question, can you take us through the day?
GT: On the day I walked, I walked to meet my friend at the gate and we were standing at the Meadow End. We got there very early and obviously all the tickets had been sold. But I think some people must have got in without tickets, people climbing trees, come climbing up the pylons where the lights were, very precarious. I don't think health and safety today would have allowed that sort of thing to happen. But the atmosphere was fantastic. People screaming and shouting ages before the kick off. Fantastic atmosphere. The players, because I was at the Meadow End, I was seeing the rear view sometimes, front view other times. I didn't wear glasses then, my eyesight was a bit better, but fantastic atmosphere and I didn't believe for a minute that we would win. I hoped and prayed that we would. And the first goal, ooohhhh, very sad, I think MacDonald scored first. And then eventually the fantastic Ron Radford goal. Everybody went mad, the pitch was invaded. I didn't. I was about two or four rows back, lots of youngsters in front of where I was standing. Pitch invasion and then the game recommended, and then we were in extra time and at that point we were one all. And I thought, we're not going to win, please Lord, please Lord (laughing).../

5.00

GT: .../will someone up there listen to me! And, yea, Ricky George scored the winning goal in extra time and another pitch invasion. And then afterwards, my friend and I just went back to our respective homes and that was that. No celebration – don't drink – went home to see if we could see anything on the television. And obviously it was televised. Absolutely fantastic. And Ron Radford's goal became the goal of the season and I don't know if it became the goal of the decade or the century after that, but it was possibly the goal of the century. Yet round about that time Hereford hopper buses were introduced, they were lovely yellow and green mini buses and we were asked to vote for iconic names to be given to these buses. I remember there was a Ron Radford bus, there was a Gilbert Harding bus as well and I think there was a Pipping bus but obviously to do with Bulmer's cider. I can't remember any of the other names but I was always pleased to be getting on the Ron Radford bus! (laughing) That was nice. But of course we've only got common or garden buses now. They appeared on the hopper buses a long time ago.

MOM: was there any singing on the day? Any particular songs?

GT: There was singing, but because I wasn't a football supporter

I didn't know which songs they were so I didn't join in. but there was a lot of chanting: 'Hereford, clap clap clap, Hereford, clap, clap, clap', and I don't know if I'm allowed to say something politically incorrect that I shouted together with everybody else, 'MacDonald's a fairy, MacDonald's a fairy!' and I did so much shouting and screaming I had a sore throat for several days afterwards. That will teach me to say unkind things about Malcolm MacDonald! (laughing)

MOM: so it's the end of the match, what's the atmosphere like then?

GT: fantastic. There was a pitch invasion for the second time. Absolutely fantastic and the supporters going away from the match shouting, 'Hereford, Hereford, we won, we're going to win the cup', and things like that. You know, fantastic atmosphere.

MOM: you were joking before about the players being pin-ups?

GT: yea, well, Colin Addison, quite good looking, bit of an icon as far as the ladies were concerned, we all rather liked him. There used to be a drama series on the television called United and because the game was on the Sunday I couldn't go because I was here at church, there was a charity game between the United television team and Hereford Utd and I have got that photograph somewhere but needless to say I can't find it. But the Hereford Utd players looked equally as dishy as the actors from the television programme, United. Yea, so Dougie Tyler, Colin Addison, Mick Mcoughlin, Ricky George, I can't remember any of the other names. The friend who knitted a scarf, her husband is a plumber and Colin Addison lived just a few streets from them then, so they knew him quite well. Because of that, I didn't know him but knew about him, it was just as though we were one big family. Although I went to a few more games after that, I went to the West Ham match, I remember Bobby Moore with his little legs running around in lovely little white shorts (laughing) went to a few more games after that but thought, no, this isn't for me, the atmosphere wasn't the same. I had not inclination to actually find out the rules of football and to get more interested. So I can't remember the last time I watched a football match on the television.

MOM: is there anything else you would like to add about the football match?

10.00

GT: no, other than I did go to a few more games, and then, at some point, I can't remember when, the Salvation Army band went and played before one of the games, just one of the normal games, nothing special, and we were able to collect for our charity. I can remember passing a great big bucket round. So we got to see the match for free. It was misty so you couldn't see

the other side of the pitch. I had no idea who Hereford Utd was playing, no idea at all. That would probably be the last.... that happened twice, when the Salvation Army band played before a match and that would be the last time I saw a live football match. And the last time I watched a match on television, can't remember. A long, long time ago.

MOM: tell us some of your memories of the May Fair?

GT: I was born in 1948, from a young age I would go to the May Fair every night with a friend, or we would meet up with a few friends. And in those days a ride was thr'pence, so on half a crown you could go on every ride you wanted to go on. The atmosphere was fantastic. So through the late fifties, sixties the stalls, the sideshows were fantastic, like saw the lady in half, sleeping beauty, the big lady. Very politically incorrect little sideshows you paid to go in. The dancing girls that would always be located in Commercial Road opposite the Baptist Church, that didn't go down very well. And then a bit further down, just past the Odeon used to be was a car park and on that car park there was always a boxing booth, wall of death with the motorcycles whizzing round, and there was a rotor. If you don't know what a rotor is it's like this great big tube with a floor that moves up and you're standing on the floor with your back to the wall that's moving round. It's getting faster and faster and faster and then the floor pushes you up and the speed holds you in place so you're stuck to the wall like an insect. The floor drops down and you're spinning round at I don't know how many miles an hour, stuck to the wall, I used to love that. Couldn't do that now. Used to go on all these exciting rides. But nothing like the rides today where, I don't know, you're paying a fiver for a few seconds. No, it's not the same, so I don't go to the May Fair at all now. But when I used to go round with my friends it was just interesting just observing everyone else enjoying themselves. And for quite a few years used to buy these little silver balls, about the size of a tennis ball, filled with sawdust on a piece of elastic so we would all be going round bouncing these and they would burst and all the saw dust would come out. Yes that was good.

MOM: you were telling me before about the dancing girls?

GT: yes, you were supposed to be over 18 to go and see the dancing girls. I don't know what articles of clothing they were removing, if any, but you'd overhear conversations of people coming out talking about them with their 'aertex knickers', and gosh, what's nice about that! (laughing) There was always a protest from the church. You know, every May Fair time, this isn't right having the May Fair girls right opposite. There was some swing boats as well, you know, the old-fashioned swing boats, and the dancing girls, opposite the church. And the streets used to be heaving with people, you couldn't move, you could walk on peoples' heads. And the May Fair used to go all

the way up Broad Street, King Street.../

GT: .../High Town, Commercial Street, Commercial road, and into this car park as well. It covered more of the city than it does today.

MOM: you mentioned the bearded lady. Did you ever venture into these side shows?

GT: oh I went into sleeping beauty.

MOM: can you describe that for us?

GT: well I used to go in and see the sleeping beauty side show. she would be in a glass case yea, and obviously oxygen coming in somewhere. Like almost a coffin when you think about it lying on a sort of satiny bed, very very still. She was a real person, she wasn't a model. You could see that she was breathing her chest going up and down and she'd just be lying there and I suppose and every so often they'd give her a little break and stop you going in for a few minutes. And the bearded lady, it didn't really look like a beard, but yea. (laughing) Oh and there was a mouse town as well with like little tiny houses with mice running around. I remember that. Flea circus, I remember that. I'm not sure if there were any fleas, you just saw things moving about and you just assumed they were fleas. (laughing) yea, the mouse town was there several years in a row. Some of the stalls and sideshows actually had prizes that were worth winning, not like some of the stalls today. You'd pay a £1 for a go and you'd win a prize worth a £1. But you'd pay something like sixpence and

15.00

GT:.../ there was a stall at the end of Broad Street and it was there for years with lovely prizes and you bought a ticket and it had a name on and in the centre of the stall there was a stand with all these names on the tickets and a light flashed and whichever name the light stopped on if you'd got that name you won the prize. So they obviously waited til they had sold enough tickets so they knew what income they needed to part with a decent prize. And then you could pick what you wanted off the stall if you won. So that was there for many many years. I used to just watch in amazement. I think I might have had a go once. You're not supposed to gamble in the Salvation Army you see and that was a gamble so you are gaining by somebody else's loss. So I was a bit naughty even having a go. (laughing)

MOM: someone told me it was the place to go to hear all the latest music releases?

GT: Well, there was the, on the waltzers, I can't even remember what the ride used to be called, which was a ride with

motorbikes and other forms of transport that you sit astride and you went up and down. Can't remember what that was called. Grand National? I'm not sure what it was called. But with lots of the latest pop music blaring, om the waltzers yes, and the dodgem cars. Yea, well it's the same today except the pop songs of today well they're not really songs are they. Noises, not proper music, is it? (laughing)

MOM: was it a place to be seen?

GT: I think there was an element of wanting to get off with the boys who worked on the rides. I'm just thinking when I was at secondary school and some of the girls would go and get themselves all dressed up and go to the fair, but possibly yes. (laughing)

MOM: what can you tell me about Hereford Beach?

20.00

GT: Hereford beach, well it's not so much a beach now. I don't know what they have done down by the river, but if you walked over the Victoria Bridge from the Castle green side, it would be immediately to your left. And in the summer when the river was low, it was a pebbly beach area heaving with families, children, taking a picnic, sitting on a blanket, children paddling. sometimes the river was that low you could walk across from one side to the other. And there weren't so many weeds there as there are now. And I don't think I've seen Hereford beach for a long while now, even when the river is low. It doesn't seem to be there anymore. Just a very small area, mot like it used to be. And we seemed to have long hot summers. All my school holidays it seemed to be one sunny day after the other. So I don't know if I have this vision of it always being nice in the school holidays but it did seem to be very often.

MOM: you were painting a lovely image earlier of your childhood, going off all day, not a care in the world?

GT: when I was young my little gang, just my friends in the street, we were nearly all girls. We used to play boy's games, cowboys and Indians and we'd go off for the day on our bikes. Didn't have watches, go off for the day with a little packet of sandwiches and a drink. We could be away all day and nobody would worry about us. and we'd get back when we were hungry. The furthest we cycled was to Wormsley golf course because there are always lovely daffodils there and picked them and bought them back. We shouldn't have done but we did. And it was quite hilly. It was easier coming back than going. But we'd be there all day. We'd cycle up Aylestone Hill and down the other side til we got to the river. paddle and swim in the river there. nobody bothered about us. we'd go for walks. Where the River Lugg is, before so many houses were built, we'd collect frog spawn. Some

of the building sites in Hereford, when the houses were being built along Whitecross Road between Raneleigh Street and the Monument on the right-hand side, that was a field with cows in and there were also some allotments. So when those houses were being built, also the houses up Wordsworth Road, along the Green Lanes, we'd go and play on the building sites, create little dens, we'd make see saws out of planks of wood. Nobody told us off, nobody did. Go and play, it was a paradise for children. We'd play I the street. I lived in a cul-de-sac. There was hardly any traffic, would play in the streets til late at night. It was just idyllic and I can't imagine what it must be like to be a parent today worrying about the kids because, obviously bad things must have happened, but I wasn't aware of them. It was just fantastic. I wish I could go back and be a kid again. And I loved being at school. I adored school. It broke my heart when I left school. I cried and cried. I can't imagine anyone doing that today.

When I would be four or five possibly, my grandmother used to take me for a walk up Whitecross Road and there was a seat by the Monument and we used to just sit and watch the world go by. And the odd car, and it would be the odd car. And my grandfather died unexpectedly, he was the driver, and my mother got a driving license. Because she got one before a certain date she didn't have to pass a test and I can remember sitting with my grandmother and suddenly mother came along in our car and it was quite exciting.../

25.00

GT: .../So that road was so quiet it was unbelievable. Very few people had cars. Very few people had televisions. I can remember, I'm not saying we were the only people in my street to have a television, but my friend in the street didn't have a television, and I can remember getting excited, because there was only BBC when we got our first television. Got very excited. There was a programme about chimpanzee and I went running across to my friend over the road and asked her to come over and watch it. So we watched that. Getting really excited about something like that. Quite a few people got a television for the coronation. I can remember a few neighbours coming to watch on our television.

MOM: what about telephones?

GT: we had a telephone. I can't remember not having a telephone. The old Bakelite. We had a business in town at Westwoods Fish Café, which was in Eign Street, which had two-way traffic would you believe. The shops used to be open quite late as well I seem to remember. I had two phone numbers to remember, home and the business, and for years I remembered them. I can still remember my home number. 2790 that was! Hereford 2790.

MOM: tell us about your school days?

GT: well I went to St Michael's School which was originally in Broomy Hill and because it was going to be relocated to the end of Ingestre Street, which was round the corner from Raneleigh Street where I lived – and still live. I've only ever lived in that one house – my parents sent me to St Michaels School. It was a wonderful school, I loved it. I loved the teachers. It broke my heart when I left. I cried and cried and cried. After St Michaels School I passed the 11+ and went to Lady Hawkins at Kington, which I loved. This was in the days when the teachers wore caps and gowns. Quite large classes, mainstream, but then we merged with the comprehensive school there and it became a bilateral school, which meant you had an A and a B and a D stream, which the grammar school kids never moved down but the C and D stream kids had a chance to move up. And it was the first bilateral school in the country I remember. And we had a new building that we continued to use the old building and also Hergest Croft, which is now Croft gardens, so every day some of my lessons were at Hergest Croft, so walk up the hill, have a couple of lessons, back down again. We weren't allowed to wander around the gardens unfortunately. So it wasn't until I left school that I actually paid to look around the gardens and had a cup of tea, in where used to be one of my classrooms. It was a fantastic school to go to. So both my junior school and secondary schools were lovely. Then I didn't know what to do so when I left school I ended up becoming a civil servant in the Ministry of Defence, which I absolutely adored. So I'm lucky aren't I.../

30.00

GT: .../when I was at St Michaels School I shared a desk with Susan Brownbridge who was a daughter of the Brownbridge family, they had an electrical store in Hereford. Diana Brownbridge, otherwise known as Diana Day, was an child actress, she was in some of the films of the day, I'm not aware of them apart from some of the St Trinian Films and she was also on the Jimmy Clitheroe show on the radio. When she wasn't filming she actually came to school some days. She didn't have to wear uniform. Our uniform was green blouses and brown gymslips but I always remember she had a beautiful knitted arran cardigan with lovely different coloured bobbles on, probably cost an arm and a leg. So she attended school sometimes and I used to get invited to parties at the Brownbridge house that was interesting, to meet up with Diana. She used to run DeeDees gift shop which was part of the Left Bank complex.