

OLIVER VINCENT MORGANS

MAY 1920 - SEPTEMBER 1990



**This nostalgic history story is an addition to the
Catalogue of Kidwelly Local History Society,
for The Kidwelly Castle School Log-Book,
December 1929 to February 1944.**

The photograph on the front cover shows Oliver Vincent Morgans, sitting on his mother's knee. She was Eliza Morgans, wife of Benji Morgans. Nobody knew what was going to develop at that stage.

My wife, Madeline, looking through this Kidwelly History document, noticed the name of Oliver Vincent Morgan and immediately recognised the young lad as my uncle. We spent a couple of days reading through, with almost constant smiling at the number of times he was mentioned. I was unaware of his early 'education'?

Currently being the Chairman of the above Society and nephew of the above-named character, I feel that he deserves recognition for his very varied life, beginning with his school time showing the start of his character.

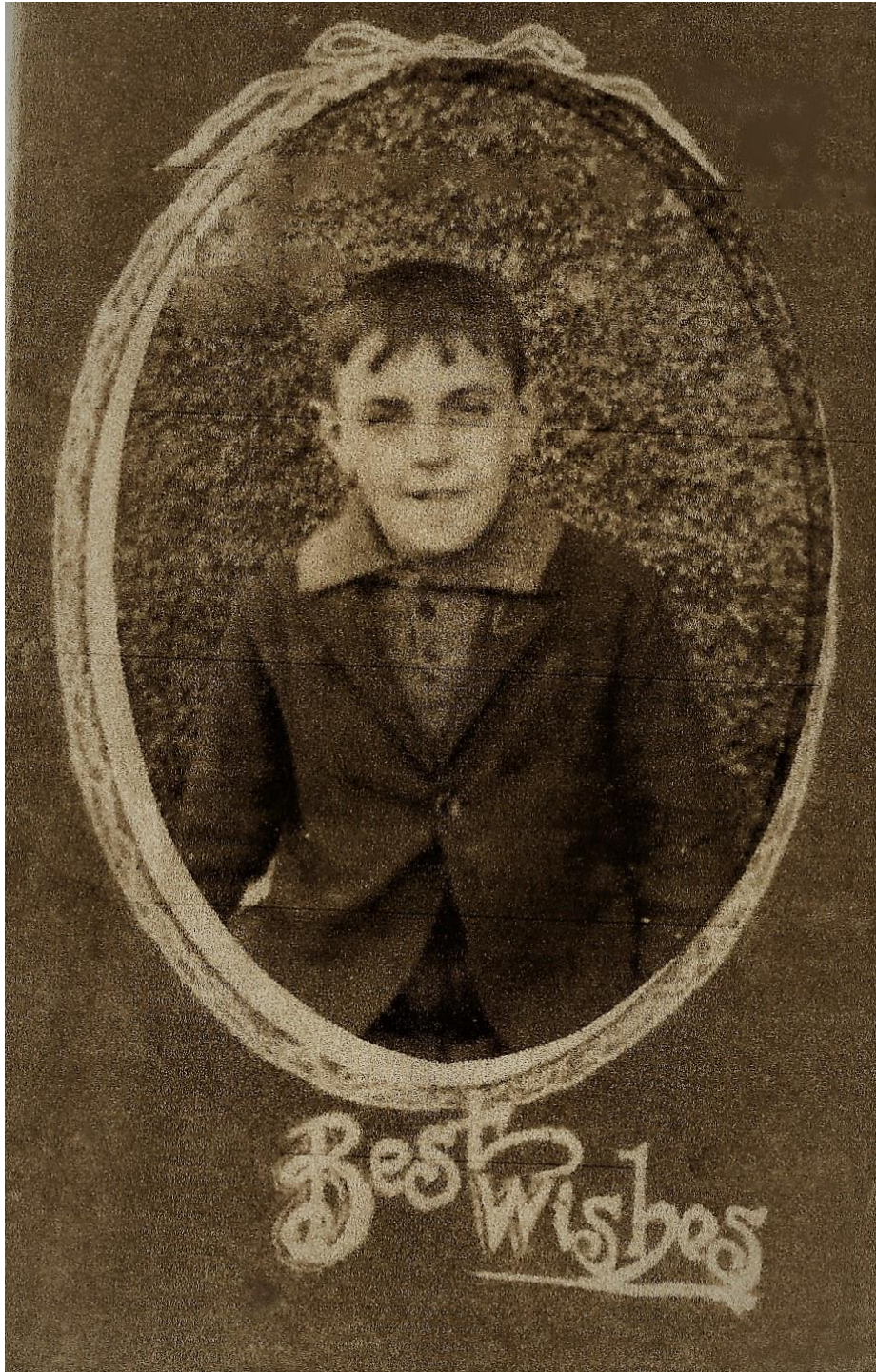
Oliver, always known as Vincent, came into the world on 8 May 1920, being the baby of the Morgans family, born in Kidwelly. He was the last of his mother's seventeen pregnancies, not all of them going the full term. Eight survived to adult age although Vincent's older sister Iris died as a teenager. Nobody in the family knew what was going to affect their lives, along with many others, throughout his life. He was the favourite in the family, being the 'baby' all his life.

When one looks at the cover photograph, Vincent's mother has an aged look on her face. She may have been worn out carrying so many children for all those years.

Perhaps Vincent was given leeway during his early years, especially when his mother died when he was only nine and then the family were brought up by his father, but especially his elder sister Bessie taking on the 'mother' role. 'Mischief' could have been a middle name.

Vincent, although named Oliver Vincent Morgans, was registered as Morgan, starting school. Unfortunately, there are no reports of his introduction to school, but we can assume that he settled in without any problems. His friends and relatives remember him always with a

cheeky smile on his face. With an independent character, he still mixed with all the other children and was no problem to the teachers at that stage. Truancy appeared to be an easy part of his education.



Vincent as a boy at school, sometimes.

The Log-book starts under the heading of 'Events', with the date of 19th May 1930 being the introduction to the Log-Book of:

"Vincent Morgan, playing truant all day."

20th May. "Vincent Morgan brought near the school by his sister, but when the Headteacher went to look for him, he had gone."

17th June. "100% children attended am. 3 away in the afternoon, two went for a walk." Vincent not mentioned as one of them. "Too much of this goes on in this area during the summer months". Of course, this is haymaking time, which for Vincent possibly meant, "making hay while the sun shines".

10th July. "More haymaking absences." No names, but there is an unrecorded comment from a lady in the area who knew of Vincent's character, when she saw him on the top of a "gambo", (haycart) and called to him from her upstairs window. "I can see you good boy and I'll be telling your father." *Funny words, as he was not being a particularly good boy.*

Oliver Vincent's name had not been mentioned further, until:

23rd June 1931. "Oliver Morgan playing truant. His father stated that he had been sent to school."

3rd December. "Oliver Vincent Morgan slipped on the playground and fractured his forearm. On October 27th he fractured his arm while cycling near the Town Hall and was absent for about a fortnight. Since the afternoon of 17th ult he had been back at school and had his arm in a sling. During this period he was not allowed to go out to play with the children, although he went out more than once and had to be sent for. This afternoon he went out, and in less than two minutes he slipped and fractured his arm in the same place as formerly – he had only had the splints off the week. He was taken straight away to the doctor (Dr Peace) and sent home. This was reported immediately to Mr Mansel, - the Manager's Clerk."

During his adult life, he told his wife about the first fracture, but never mentioned the second incident. Neither did his daughter know of that.

14th December. “Claim form filled in for Oliver Vincent Morgan’s fractured arm.”

19th Feb. 1932. “Vincent Morgan is absent all day, - although he has been sent. He plays truant very often.”

1st June. “Owing to a Festival at Llanelly today in connection with the church, a large number of boys are away today. Oliver Morgan, who is very fond of playing truant, was found playing in the park during the afternoon by the headteacher and brought back to school.”

There must have been many reasons why Oliver did not go to Llanelli with the other children, but I am not going to guess which one would be true. Like his body, his mind was very mobile.

10th April 1933. “Oliver is away this morning. He is known to play truant very often.”

1st May. “One of the absentees today was Oliver Vincent Morgan who only attend 2/8 last week. This boy is continually absent.”

My own view on this seems to suggest that this is my uncle’s only consistency through his education, although there are no other occasions of misbehaviour within the school.

11th May. “Reported this afternoon to Mr Ben Morgan, Elm Grove Lane, that his son Oliver Vincent Morgan, has been absent 15 times since Easter – a possible of 26 attendances. This was done, as it is known that during most, if not all of those absences, the boy was playing truant.”

17th May. “On the 16th May P. J. Williams visited the school to see Oliver V. Morgan on the instructions of the boy’s father. The boy was spoken to re his playing truant and he made a promise to reform.”

26th May. “Since Serg’t Williams called here to see Oliver Morgan, on his father’s suggestion, the boy has not missed once.”

One month gap to:

22nd June. “Oliver Morgan present today after having played truant all day on the 21st. When he arrived at school he was caned for his absence, as his sister had written saying that he had been sent to school.”

17th July. “Oliver Morgan away in the afternoon.”

18th July. “Oliver Morgan away all day, and his father informed in the afternoon, as it is believed that he is once more playing truant.”

4th October. “Attendance Officer here at 10.0 oclock and took particulars of the attendances of Vincent Morgan. Attendance Officer here again at 2.oclock to look for Vincent Morgan.”

Presumably, he did not find him.

16th April 1934. “Oliver Morgan has already lost 2 afternoons this term.”

8th May. “Oliver Morgan was 14 yesterday and today he is absent all day – playing truant.”

I believe that Oliver Vincent decided that he was leaving school as he was 14, but was not signed off, nor did he return to the school after his birthday. Presumably, the school thought it easier not to pursue him further. A final school report is not known. What he learnt at school might have been difficult to teach, but some of his subjects were not on the curriculum. We are fortunate that the Headmaster recorded the Log-Book, which is still a memory of our history.

Presumably, the young lad officially started his working life, still assisting local farmers with many duties. I suspect his attendance was better there than at school, although we do not have any work reports to confirm this.



Vincent with his sister Lilian.

It is not known when he started work at the local colliery, but he is recorded as an underground mine worker. He was certainly there in 1939.

During the war, he started courting his future wife, Marjorie Sargent, who came to Kidwelly from Sussex, having been moved from a home looking after evacuees who were close to the war-time bombing. As it became more dangerous in Sussex, they were moved to Broom Hill Mansion in Kidwelly, cooking, cleaning, and nursing the babies, as Marjorie was a nursery nurse. During that period, she met Vincent and became friends. Their courting developed, becoming engaged. The photograph on page 9 was taken for that occasion.



Kidwelly bridge where the couple first met, and Capel Sul, our ex HQ



Broom Hill Mansion was the home of Sir Alfred Stephens.

This very prominent business man in Kidwelly, owned the reputable brick works, which supplied many bricks to companies in the north of England for the construction of furnaces. Those particular bricks were extremely hard and heat resistant. Local quarries supplied material for that purpose. During WW11, Sir Alfred made his mansion available for evacuee children, also part being converted into flats for American servicemen. I'm sure Vincent visited the Mansion occasionally, perhaps developing his early romance with Marjorie.

As, I'm sure, so many other families have not asked questions in the past of the parents and grandparents, of their times, so many memories, and discussions have not been recorded, therefore lost with the sands of time.

Any stories which can be added to this document would be gratefully accepted to enhance what we know.



While a wedding was naturally to follow, Marjorie, or Madge, decided that she wished to return to her home area for the wedding. Vincent was quite happy, but his other love was still Kidwelly.

As I am aware, he never played truant from his latest relationship. As explained previously, too many people knew him, therefore he would have been 'found out'. Their love was everlasting.



Vincent's sister Eluned, who was my mother, is at his right arm where she loved to be. The marriage taking place in Crawley Down Sussex on 7th August 1945.

After the wedding they came back to Broomhill, where Marjorie carried on caring and Vincent became caretaker, amongst other odd jobs. American servicemen were also billeted at Broomhill.

Vincent was a contributor to Carnivals in Kidwelly, some saying that he never grew up. He would enter anything for fun. The following picture confirms this as he is shown as Gorgeous Gussy Moran, in tennis outfit, with his elder sister/"mother", Bessie, in rugby kit. Billie Jean King would have been no rival, but then Bessie may have been selected for the Pontypool front row, either as the pack, or pit prop. Their carnival inclusions were annual.



After the war ended, the evacuees returned home, while Vincent and Marjorie remained at Broomhill, being virtually caretakers.

In 1951 Marjorie became homesick and pregnant and they decided to move back to Crawley Down, Sussex, as Marjorie wanted to be close to her own family for the birth their child. Gillian was the new-born and after she married, two grandchildren joined the family, which only increased his light-heartedness. Vincent was loved by people of every age, all being encouraged to laugh with him. He was bi-lingual and never lost his Welsh language, nor spoke with a Sussex accent.



Vincent stayed in the coal business, driving a lorry, delivering coal in the area. One little anecdote is remembered when Vincent was delivering coal to a new customer, whistling as he approached the side door, the lady of the house came out and Vincent said, “Where do you want this dropping off luv?” The very much southern English lady said, “I know you mean well my man, but tradesmen call me madam.” Vincent responded with, “That’s all right madam, they call me moosh.” He never gave up Kidwelly, returning for holidays, with their new baby Gillian, as often as possible. As he walked through Kidwelly, more people than not called out to Vincent, swapping tales and jokes, of which he had many.

Aunty Madge, as I knew her, spent much time involved with the church, making hundreds of hassocks, cleaning and repairing. While Marjorie went to church on Sundays, Vincent went to “The Dukes Head”, being captain of the pub’ darts team, also playing bar billiards

Vincent also spent many hours, assisting with church matters, digging graves and tidying the church yard. There is a story of Vincent, in the process of digging, when a lady passing by asked him if he was digging a grave, to which he replied, in his still strong Welsh accent, “No love, the fellow in here wants the ‘phone put in.” There is a further instance of Vincent working in the graveyard being asked by another lady, “Are you the vicar of this church”? again with an immediate response, “No, I’m the Reverend Eli Jenkins, from Under Milk Wood.” Both these gems were confirmed by the actual vicar, later speaking to the two ladies in question.

After a heavy storm in 1987, when a large tree fell, taking down part of the perimeter fence, another lady passing by asked Vincent, as he was trying to clear the resultant damage, asked him what he was doing? In his usual quick-witted manner, ‘informed’ the lady that “I am clearing the area in the initial stages, for a new supermarket and car-park.”

Being a very good friend of Tom Gravell, who was well known in Kidwelly with his lorry, followed by a car business, often when Vincent returned for a holiday to Kidwelly, he agreed a deal with Tom for a different car. Vincent had very many assets, but finance was never one of them, as he never went home to Sussex in a brand-new motor car, Tom not being too charitable either. The vehicles kept him mobile over many years, which was a pleasure for Vincent.

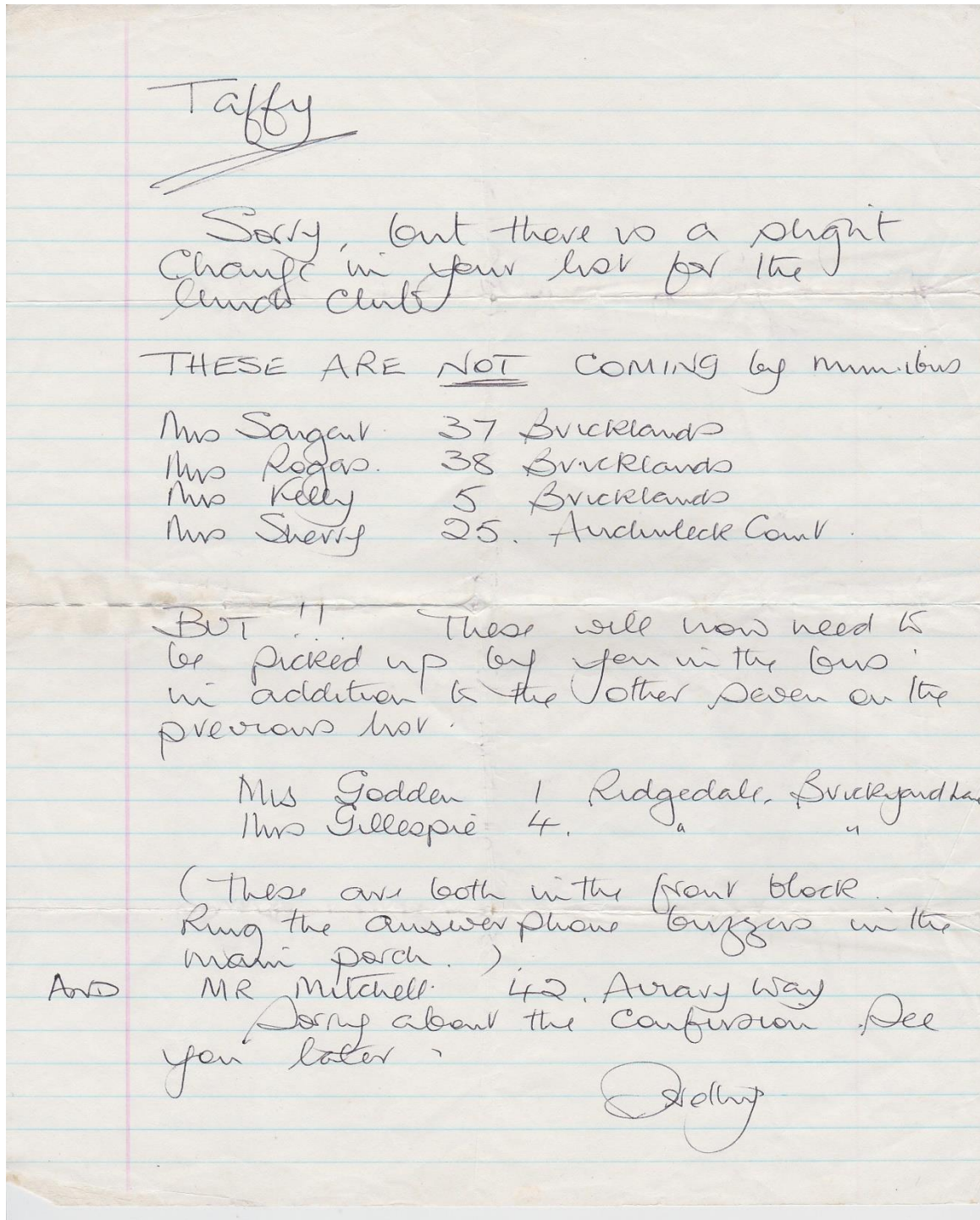
Vincent was not a sporting character, other than darts, bar billiards, or snooker and despite his absence from school education, he knew the scores, deductions, additions, multiplication, and divisions, off the top of his head. He could also think that in Welsh. He did enjoy picking cockles, boiling a large enamel bowl and making a meal of his efforts. “Cockles Kidwelly, good for the belly”, as was known in the area.

He was generally known as Vin, Vince, or Vincent, but on occasions when he crossed the line with Marjorie, he was known as:



“OLIVER”

Vincent took on the duty of collecting the old folk in Crawley Down, driving them to their lunch clubs and various outings in a mini-bus.



Toward the end of his life, he contracted the dreaded cancer, but he still carried on through his treatment helping so many others.

This may have been his last instruction for the lunch club as he had reached the point when he had an appointment to go into the local hospice in the morning, to which he said, "I can't come in then because I have to take the old folk to their lunch club. Somebody has to drive them." This he did and returned them home. He told nobody of his terminal problems and he made that final visit to the local hospice, prior to his final resting place. He died three to four days later.

There was a fitting recognition at a later time, when the Crawley Down Community Centre extended the building with a snooker room and it was decided to name it, "The Taffy Morgans Snooker Room." They also managed to persuade a member of the Royal Family, Princess Alexandra, to perform the opening ceremony, to which Vincent would have been as proud, as they all were of him.



All smiles as wait in the wet pays off

PENSIONER May Foster fibbed about her age when Princess Alexandra opened a new £1 million community centre.

The 69-year-old joked she was 21 and took wrestling classes when the Princess popped into the Pop-In Club at The Haven, Crawley Down, near Crawley.

The princess, who was half an hour late after being delayed, took time to chat to rain-drenched mums and children outside and apologised they had been kept waiting.

She told ten-year-old Craig Allen: "Oh, dear, I'm terribly late, you are getting so wet."

She was presented with a bouquet by sisters Hollie and Ruth Marshall, aged five and four, who were wearing dresses and smocks made for the occasion by mum Diane.

The Princess, who wore a gold three-quarter jacket with a gold and cream check skirt and wide-brimmed hat, was shown round by Dorothy Hatswell, Crawley Down Community Centre Association chairman and secretary Jeremy Hodgkinson.

The visit followed 12 years of



hard fund-raising by villagers to build the centre.

The Princess chatted to the two oldest members of the Pop-In Club, Ruby Heldman, 95, and Jennie Birchall, 90, and met widow Marjorie Morgans whose husband Taffy had the snooker room named after him.

Marjorie said: "Taffy helped to get the community centre idea going and drove the luncheon club bus. He would have been in his element."

During the visit the Princess watched a ballet class from the Copperfield School of Dancing and visited the youth club, social club and met members of the Haven Theatre Company.

Her last task was to unveil a plaque and sign the visitors' book.

As she was leaving she did a quick walkabout which thrilled the crowds.

by Brenda Owen

■ Princess Alex chats to the crowds



■ Dorothy Hatswell shares a royal joke

If Vincent had been there, would he have behaved himself? Maybe.

His family, of which I am one, are extremely proud to have known him and remember him with so much happiness. He will never be forgotten here in Kidwelly, or his adopted home in Sussex. His memory deserves this, raising a smile to my, and my wife's face while this is being compiled. A cheeky young boy, but a lovely man.

It was sometimes thought that if his dear wife had passed-away before him he might have returned to Kidwelly to conclude his 'education'. This partly happened when after his cremation, it was thought appropriate by his family to divide his ashes between Crawley Down and the family grave in St. Mary's church, Kidwelly. It is a pleasure to visit the grave, thinking of the memories and smiling.

There was a St. David's Day celebration in Sussex, not only for St. David, but also a tribute to the life of Oliver Vincent Morgans, with a capacity attendance. Tales of Vincent were numerous, all being in praise to the boy and man who made others' lives worth living.

From being a happy-go-lucky little lad, to being mentioned by Royalty, he achieved a lifetime of nostalgic memories. A photograph uploaded by his daughter recently on the internet received many comments from people who knew him, or knew of him, which took him further than he would have known, via the world wide web. That would have brought a wide smile to his face.

The term of legend is frequently used in the wrong context, but the word in relation to Vincent is accurate. He was a legend in his lifetime, but he would not have recognized that description, going about his business as a matter of course. He is missed, but never forgotten. Of course, there are still some characters of worth, and then there was:- **OLIVER VINCENT MORGANS**

If this has given as much pleasure to you, as it has done for me, then Vincent's life has been so worthwhile.

Vivian Summers, Chairman, Kidwelly Local History Society 2020

