

A different country

A PEMBROKESHIRE CHILDHOOD IN THE 1950s

By Phil Carradice
Amberley Press, £12.99

YOU realise you must be getting old when someone you were in school with publishes his memoirs.

Phil Carradice is a prolific writer and broadcaster, having turned his hand with great success to poetry, children's novels and history, but for his latest book he has ventured down the road of autobiography.

And although the time he writes about is little more than half a century ago, it really does seem like a different world – a world in which youngsters had the freedom to explore and to learn from their mistakes, free both from traffic and the strictures of the nanny state.

Phil grew up on the outskirts of Pembroke Dock, which at the time was still recovering from the devastating bombing of the German blitz. It was, as he recalls, a great place for an adventurous boy to grow up in, offering a variety of unofficial playgrounds

– from the back alleys and bomb-sites of the town to the green fields and wooded shoreline of the Pembroke River.

Like most houses in the town in the early '50s, the Carradice home was lit by gas, and like many other families they fattened a couple of pigs in a sty at the bottom of the garden. 'Relatives abounded in Military Road', Phil recalls, and uncles, aunts and grandparents seem to have been forever dropping in.

One of Phil's heroes is Dylan Thomas, and there appears to be a conscious nod towards the poet's own tales of his upbringing in Swansea in these pages; one thinks of the uncles snoring and belching in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, while Phil's line 'in my memory there was always snow at Christmas and postmen slithering along the deep-rutted pavements' could easily have come from that story.

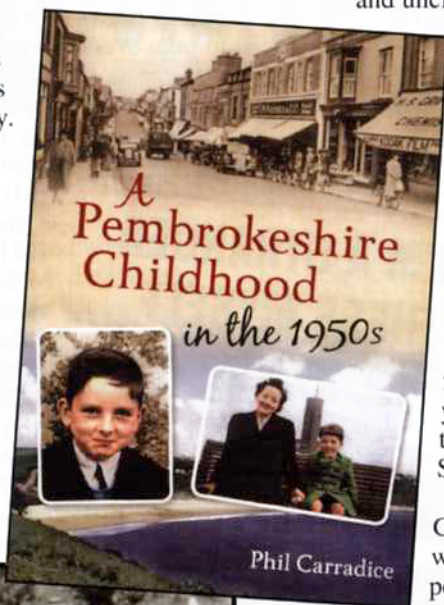
And while the young Dylan and his friends escaped to Cwmdonkin Park, the young Phil had the Barrack Hill on which to play and to pretend to be Davy Crockett, Stanley Matthews or Stirling Moss.

Moving from junior school to Pembroke Grammar School was a wrench in many ways. Old friends were lost, while to compensate there were new friends to be made, new subjects to learn and inspirational teachers to learn from – and, crucially, rugby to be played.

I discovered from this book that Phil appeared in several of the dreary school plays that I was forced to sit through as a junior pupil in the Grammar School, for which I may never forgive him. However it was as a rugby player that I first became aware of him – he was the county hooker and captain of the school First XV while I was an oik in the Under 13s, and as such he was a figure to command respect.

(This respect was in no way diminished when he and several other members of the First XV were hauled up in front of the headmaster for going for a pint after a school match in Whitland – an incident duly recalled in this book).

Girls, rock 'n' roll, winklepickers, steam trains, the Cuban missile crisis and much more all make their appearance in this warm-hearted, beautifully written and honest account of an upbringing in a world that is fast receding. **KJ**



A Carradice family picnic on Llanreath beach – one of numerous illustrations from the new book

The shops of Tenby

FIVE years of diligent research by John Woodcock, a professor at Cardiff University, have borne fruit in the form of a new book entitled *The Shops of Tenby, 1870 to 1970*.

The 128-page hardback, published last month by Zoe Books at £20.00, tells the story of the town's businesses in words and pictures, with numerous images drawn from the archives of Tenby Museum compared and contrasted with more recent colour photographs of the same properties.

The book is available from Tenby Museum and from local bookshops.

