



## The Story of Splott in 50 objects - a catalogue of ideas

We're looking for objects - things, places, people, events - that tell the story of Splott. We're creating a 'pocket museum', a deck of cards with each card telling a story about a different object of Splott, along with a virtual museum on the Inksplott website.

Here's a catalogue of ideas of the sort of thing we are looking for.

What do you think of them? What is missing? What needs to be in there? What would be your suggestions?

Is there anything you can add to their stories, any memories, anecdotes, sad or funny things that you associate with the object? Do add anything extra to any of the objects.

### Overview of the story of Splott

The broad history of Splott can be divided into four main chapters or epochs:

1. **Pre 1850 Marshland** - Tidal environment creates a marshland and challenging conditions for local shepherds and farmers to overcome adversity.
2. **1850 Industrialisation** begins with a 'steel town' created within Cardiff attracting an immigrant community of 'outsiders' made up of a cocktail of Catholic working class, Welsh-speakers to create a tight-knit community to overcome adversity of a hard, dirty work, and challenging environmental quality yet close to Cardiff city centre
3. **1978 Deindustrialisation** witnesses a community in context of facing massive adversity of contraction of the steel works, no longer 'steel town'. Employment moves towards service sector as seeks to overcome adversity.
4. **Renewal** - drawing on best of old community with influx of different immigrant communities along with new creative industries outliers to overcome adversity and create a new chapter in the story of Splott.

### **First mention of Splott**

1440 Splott mentioned first time as bounding certain lands of Isabel le Despenser, Countess of Worcester and Warwick.

The name 'Splott' believed to come from the Old English words for a patch or plot of land'. Sadly, it's a myth that the name comes from shortening 'God's plot'.

With suggestions of gentrification now taking place there's a joke that its name is now pronounced 'SpLOW'.

### **1550s Earliest example of Splott in Welsh**

A poem by the Elizabethan poet Dafydd Benwyn, possibly the most prolific of the bards of Glamorganshire, on the death of William Bawdrip of Splott.

### **1596 William Bawdrip of Penmark**

Prominent Splott resident. He built a 'fair house' at the Splott and made it his chief residence and later, in 1626, became Member of Parliament for Cardiff.

### **Splott Beach**

Known locally as the 'Foreshore' sadly a former industrial dumping ground and now an opportunity to become a local open space.

Popular fishing on the foreshore (and Will The Fish)

### **1858 Graigddu Brick Co**

The brickworks manufactured over fire 305,000 fire bricks a year. You can still find brick remnants on Splott beach.

### **First pubs**

Grosvenor public house sadly closed 2008, The Cottage, and the New Fleurs

The Moorland or The Grosvenor? The Ruperra? The Bomb and Dagger? The Winbourne?

**1886 The last shepherd dies**

The area between Cardiff and the Bristol Channel (known as East Moors) was marshland, apart from the farms of Pengam and Splott.

Census records reveal how 56-year-old John Fisher, was a shepherd and his 53 year old wife, Mary, a milk woman. Both born at High Bray, Devonshire. John later died, aged 92, in 1886.

**1882 Brains brewery**

Founded by Samuel Arthur Brain. It was first located at the Riverside, which is now nestled in a very calm and quiet district Splott.

HRH the Duke of Cambridge inaugurated the Brains Dragon brewery on 16th March 2019.

**1882 first school Splottlands**

With 1,500 pupils when it opened.

The school was demolished in 1971, and the STAR (Splott, Tremorfa, Adamsdown and Roath) Centre has occupied the site since.

**1887 The Maltings Built for Cardiff Malting Co.**

Now a listed building, and reckoned to be the best large scale example of maltings in Wales retaining industrial character in its conversion.

**1888 St Saviour's Church**

Major landmark for Splott now a Grade II listed building.

**1890 'Dowlais Cottages'**

A rectangular grid of attached houses expanded east of the industrial location in order to accommodate the new steelworkers and their families.

### **1891 East Moors Steelworks opens**

The plant closes in 1978 primarily due to obsolete equipment not being upgraded, and overseas competitors having cheaper workforces.

Steel production continued in Cardiff at Allied Steel and Wire which unfortunately went into receivership in 2002.

### **1894 First Welsh-speaking chapels open**

A network of chapels open including Aion, Walker Road (1894, Welsh Baptists) Bethlehem, Eyre Street (1895, Welsh Independents) and Jerusalem, Manon Street/Walker Road (1892, Calvinistic Methodists)

Ysgol Glan Morfa a Welsh-medium primary school opened in 2005 as the first Welsh Medium Education School in Splott.

### **1894 Splott Library**

It was the first purpose-built library or reading rooms in Cardiff.

The Old Library became derelict between 2003 and 2013. Local rugby club, Old Illtydian RFC, took control of the building and brought it back to life and is now a flourishing centre of community activity.

### **1895 Moorland Park/Queen Elizabeth Fields**

Originally known as Moorland Gardens and now Queen Elizabeth Fields. The public space is protected by Royal decree as part of the late Queen's diamond jubilee as a Fields in Trust in perpetuity, meaning it's a public space for ever more, The park boasts Splott's oldest surviving trees, planted around 1870.

### **1899 Bridgend Street FC formed**

Local football teams also included Splott Albion

**1899 Len Davies**

Football legend, played for Cardiff City FC in the 1927 FA Cup Final, beating Arsenal 1-0 to become the only Welsh side to lift the trophy. He helped Wales win the Home Championship trophy in 1924 and 1928.

**1901 Splott University Settlement (SUS) founded**

Promoting education and recreation for the people of the district, it moved in 1906 to its building on Walker/Courtenay Road.

**1902 Splott Park**

Featuring an open air swimming bath. The Splott Park drinking fountain (1909) was donated by members the Samuel family in memory of their brother, Arthur Edward Samuel, who was a solicitor in practice in London. One of a series of fountains they donated to Cardiff parks

**1905 Baseball in Splott**

The South Wales Baseball Association created. Welsh women's baseball popularity grew during World War I among the young women factory workers.

**1910 first flight over Cardiff**

Splott Park was the starting point for famous Welsh aviator and airship builder Ernest Willows' flights across Cardiff in his airship in June 1910 arriving at City Hall seven minutes later, flying at 300 feet.

While flying above Queen Street Willows dropped a letter addressed to the editor of the South Wales Daily News, announcing his successful flight and claiming the prize which had been offered for the first airman to fly across the city.

**1913 Splott Cinema**

Offering over 2,000 seats in its heyday claiming to be the first cinema to be built for "talking pictures" in Cardiff.

It became a successful bingo hall when the game was legalised in 1960, under several owners including Top Rank, Mecca Bingo Club and finally Rive Bingo Club until its closure in 2009.

The empty building was destroyed by fire in 2015.

### **1914 Splott Park goes to war**

During World War I six acres of sports pitches were converted to allotments to grow food. After the war two captured guns were placed in the park beside its bandstand until 1929.

During World War II ARP (Air Raid Precautions) Wardens were based in the park's bowls pavilion.

The open air swimming bath was kept filled to serve as an emergency water supply and sports pitches were again used for allotments. Barrage balloons were sited in the park 1942-5.

### **1923 St Illtyd's College the first Grammar School for Catholic Boys in Wales.**

The school was opened as a grammar school on a site in Courtenay Road. The main school building was badly damaged by a bomb in 1941 during the Second World War. Severe overcrowding because of the damage led to the school moving to its current location in Rumney.

### **1928 Old Illtydians Rugby Football Club**

The club is a member of the Welsh Rugby and a feeder club for the Cardiff Blues. The club also runs mini and junior sides.

When the club was formed its school had only been going for 4 years and had a limited range of 'old boys' to choose from resulting in a team average age of 17.

### **1931 Splott Aerodrome**

Changed its name to Cardiff Municipal Airport when scheduled passenger flights began in 1933 offering flights to Weston-super-mare for today's equivalent of £16.70.

In 1937 it became the base for the 614 County of Glamorgan auxiliary air force and renamed RAF Cardiff.

Its short runway, lack of night flying facilities and proximity to residential areas led to the closure of the Airport in 1954.

### **1929 Cllr. Gordon Houlston**

A Splott Labour Councillor for over 30 years, Chairman of South Glamorgan County Council, and Deputy Lord Mayor and Lord Mayor of the City of Cardiff. He was made a Papal Knight (KSG) by Pope John Paul 2 for services to the Catholic Church.

**1937 Dame Shirley Bassey**

Although the singer originated from nearby Tiger Bay her family moved to Splott when she was two and attended Moorland Primary School and Splott Secondary Modern School.

**1939 Peter Gill**

Cardiff-born playwright and theatre director Peter Gill uses Splott and Tremorfa as the settings for several works.

**1939 The Imperial Wales - Britain's oldest greasy spoon café**

The 'Imps' is 85 years old and reputed to be the oldest 'greasy spoon' café in Britain and still serving one of the best fried breakfasts around.

**1942 Splott trolley-buses**

An all-electric powered public transport system was launched in Cardiff with over 20 of its trolleybus fleet made in Splott.

**1943 John Humphrys Broadcaster and presenter**

Born in the Splott area, radio and television news presenter and host for TV quiz show Mastermind, and presenter on Classic FM.

**1943 Clive Sullivan MBE first black captain for Great Britain in any sport**

Son of an Antiquarian mother and Jamaican father, Clive played Rugby League for Hull FC and Hull Kingston Rovers. He captained and represented Great Britain 17 times and appeared at three World Cups,

When he died of cancer in 1985, aged 42 the city of Hull renamed the city's main approach road in his honour.

**1945 James Callaghan becomes Splott's MP**

Winning the Cardiff South seat in 1945 Callaghan went on to become Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary before becoming Prime Minister 1976-9.

**1963 Lynn Bowles**

Splott-born broadcaster and a former traffic reporter for BBC Radio 2, her Splott birthplace became a running storyline on the nationwide Terry Wogan show.

In 2009 Wogan was given an honorary title 'TAFFS' - Terry's Adoring Fans From Splott on his radio show in its final week by local resident and broadcaster Noreen Bray.

**1965-1979 Jessie the steam engine**

Splott Park was home to Jessie, a steam engine retired from the nearby steel works.

**1979 Craig Bellamy footballer, head coach**

Welsh football legend Craig Bellamy grew up in Splott. He is now Head Coach of the Welsh national football team.

**1986 No Fit State Circus formed****1990 Phoenix Bowls Club****1991 India Centre opened****1992 Magic roundabout**

Commissioned as part of Cardiff Bay Public Art Strategy in 1992. Artist Pierre Vivant, used road signs to create geometric shapes. Its official name is 'Landmark'. Local company, Standard Signs, was employed for the original installation.

**Portuguese diaspora in Splott****1994 'Blue Flash, Power Box and Mesh Chips'**

Created by local artist John Gingell in 1994. Built on an electricity substation on Tyndall Street featuring a large red box with the blue and yellow lightening to symbolise electric current.

**2006 Torchwood location**

Splott featured as the location for an episode in BBC science fiction drama 'Torchwood'. The episode was written by local resident Helen Raynor.



**2008 OASIS Centre**

Now one of the biggest refugee and asylum seeker support centres in the UK with 320 volunteers supporting its work.

**2015 'Iphigenia in Splott'**

A modern-day reworking of the classic Greek drama set in Splott, by Welsh playwright Gary Owen. It premiered at Cardiff's Sherman Theatre in 2015, before transferring to the National Theatre in London and the 59E59 Theatres in New York in 2016.

**2015 Splott Community Volunteers**

Poverty alleviation charity, Splott Community Volunteers, began life as XXXXX, operating a breakfast service out of various community spaces in Splott and Adamsdown.

Known for their community breakfast club, the charity leased a space at the back of the old STAR Leisure Centre in February 2023, enabling them to provide more services to the people of Splott and surrounding areas.

In November 2024, SCV won Volunteer Group of the Year at the Cardiff Volunteer Awards.

**2016 STAR Hub opens****2016 InkSplott launches**

Local resident Lynne Thomas set up Inksplott, a hyperlocal news site, in March 2016 to capture and report all the wonderful things that are going on in Splott, the land of the speedbump.

Inksplott profiles local businesses, interviews local characters, covers local news and lets people know what's happening right on their doorstep.

**2018 Green Squirrel launches**

A community-led environmental group transforming an unused site into an eco-friendly social hub for Splott and Adamsdown.

**2019 Railway Street Cherry Tree shortlisted for 'Tree of the Year'**

What an achievement! Many would raise an eyebrow at a tree from Splott deserving a top spot in such a salubrious national award, but the Railway Street cherry tree, nominated by Splott resident Hannah Garcia, came fourth in the competition run by the Woodland Trust after a swell of support from Splott residents.

<b>Lower Splott</b>
The 17 lost streets of lower Splott. A thriving community of houses and shops demolished to make way for the building of industrial units.
<b>Biscuit factory / old Leo's site</b>
<b>Splott Bingo Hall</b>
<b>The Grosvenor Pub- Photos Inside</b>
<b>The Winbourne pub</b>
<b>Library Park</b>
<b>The Bomb and Dagger pub</b>
<b>Splott Market</b>
<b>The pet food shop on Splott Road</b>
<b>Peter's Barbers on Carlisle Street</b>
<b>Cardiff paint Supplies on Carlisle Street</b>
<b>St Alban's Catholic Church</b>
<b>St Saviours Church</b>
<b>Tremorfa Park and Park Run</b>
<b>St Alban's Rugby Football Club (The Buns RFC)</b>
<b>Bridgend St Football Club</b>
<b>Splott Albion</b>
<b>S.T.A.R Opera</b>
<b>Splott operatic society</b>
<b>Splott historical society</b>
<b>Splott Amateur Dramatic Society</b>

<b>The Gypsy Traveller Site on Rover Way</b>
<b>Splott Bowls Club</b>
<b>Splott Park Bandstand</b>
<b>The Citadel on Splott Road</b>
<b>Kaler the milkman, with his horse and cart, stabled in Swansea Street</b>
<b>The salt and vinegar man</b>
<b>The Italian ice cream vendor who cycled the streets selling his homemade Mickey and Minnie ices</b>
<b>Door to Door Butcher, Greengrocer, Tally Man (brushes and dusters)</b>
<b>Smith's Sweet Shop – Black Jacks (what other candies do people remember?)</b>
<b>The Railway arches at the end of Swansea Street where kids played and tramps slept</b>
<b>The Ocean Club</b>
<b>Carlyle Street - cotton and yarn</b>
<b>Carlyle Street - Pastry and Pies</b>
<b>Neath Street Dance Hall</b>
<b>Splott NOT Splö</b> Irreverent swipe at gentrification
<b>Oasis and the Oasis Food Truck and Oasis Choir</b>
<b>Bernice Ruth Rubens</b> - first female recipient of the coveted Booker Prize
<b>The Splott Carnival of 1970s.</b> Images would be found in the South Wales Echo. It originated on Ordell Street and ended in Tremorfa.
<b>Any more to add?</b>