

## Fishweir by Jeff Alden

**Introduction by John Etherington:** - During the 1980s and 90s, Sheena and I often cycled out to the northwestern part of Llancarfan parish to Gigman Bridge crossing the river Thaw, continued round through Flemingston and back home via St Athan. I always felt that *Fishweir*, which is just outside our parish, deserved mention in a Newsletter but never collected together the necessary information. Jeff Alden has now done it for us and the following article is reproduced with his kind permission, from the Cowbridge and District Local History Society Newsletter 57 (April 2005). It was written following a visit to Fishweir by a party of Society members.

Fishweir is one of the minor gentry houses of the Vale, situated in the Thaw valley between St

Mary Church and Flemingston. Like the *Bush* [which the party had visited for lunch], it was built in the mid-sixteenth century, and was first noted as the home of Thomas Bowen who had married Anne Kemeys of Cefn Mably (and was related to the Llanblethian Kemeys family). Their daughter Catherine became the first wife of Richard Bassett of Beaupre in about 1586. Their son,

Edward Bassett lived at Fishweir and was described as being of Fishweir when he married Catherine Carne of Nash Manor. The Bassetts got into financial difficulties as a result of the Civil War, and were forced to sell up. The purchaser of the house and lands was Sir Edward Mansell of Margam. Neither he nor any member of his family resided at Fishweir; it became a tenanted farm - perhaps fortunately for us, for the house was not modernised. It was left to the Bevans,\* when they took over more than 20 years ago, to preserve all the early features which remain in the house.

One of the rooms downstairs was in a sorry state with a vestigial stone staircase; the room and the staircase have been rebuilt. The two principal rooms were the kitchen and the hall; the kitchen has a great fireplace, about 14½ feet wide, as befitted a gentry house. The fireplace in the hall, though smaller, contained a hiding place, just big enough to conceal a man. The hall also had wide stone arches over what were termed dais seats.

Upstairs, the great chamber over the kitchen has the remains of probably the original plaster frieze on two walls, with fleur de lis and Tudor rose devices among others. The loft showed modern steelwork as well as the original oak beams - and the burns of tallow candles dating back to when these were the servants' quarters.

Outside, the large stone-built barn - reputedly the tallest in Glamorgan - indicates the importance of Fishweir as a farm.

Thanks are due to Mr and Mrs Bevan for their welcome, their hospitality and an informative tour of the house.