

SOME NOTES ON THE THREE PARISHES AND THE CHURCHES OF FLEMINGSTON, GILESTON AND SAINT HILARY IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN.

These notes on the Parishes and the Churches of Flemingston, Gileston and Saint Hilary were compiled during the three years (1975 to 1978) when I was Rector of Flemingston and Gileston and Vicar of Saint Hilary during the short time when those three parishes were grouped together as one living. It would have been difficult to serve in an area so rich in history, folk-legend and local anecdote without developing an interest in its past. That personal interest was intensified when I became aware that my predecessors in those parishes had left behind them various notes and jottings - some in the actual Parish Registers and others in letters and even on scraps of paper - which related to the history of the churches and of the surrounding area. These I collected from the various safes, vestries and shelves on which I found them and, after making a copy of each one, deposited them with the Glamorgan County Archive with the exception of the earliest Register of Flemingston (begun in 1570) which had already been deposited with the National Library at Aberystwyth. Local historians will be glad to know that facsimiles of all the Parish Registers were provided for the churches so that such records are still available in the area to which they relate.

It seemed to me to be important that so much information - some of it merely fragmentary - should be brought together in some coherent form. This was followed by the thought that this was the responsibility of the one person who was party to all the information and that was myself. It was a task that I found somewhat daunting as I had no academic background in the writing of a history. I would be the first to acknowledge the invaluable help of the staff at the then main library in Cardiff and of the staff at the National Library at Aberystwyth. With their help, I was enabled to check much of the information contained in the letters, notes and jottings, against the original sources. This was not possible with all of the material which I had collected since it had involved exhaustive and painstaking research from sources that are not easily traced. I have, however, no doubts as regard the veracity of the material since it was invariably accurate in those instances where it could be checked.

For the sake of other researchers I should list the sources from which I gained the information contained in the following notes. My major sources as regards Flemingston and Gileston are an outline history of Flemingston written at the back of one of the Parish Registers by the Reverend Rees Morris, Rector of Flemingston from 1895 to 1926 and who became Rector of Gileston also in 1914; detailed notes on both Flemingston and Gileston by the Reverend John Humphreys, Rector of both parishes from 1940 to 1951; together with the latter, there is extensive correspondence between the Reverend John Humphreys and Mr. W. A. H. Fisher of Ty Mawr, Aberthaw dating from 1940 to 1951. It is this correspondence, in particular, to which I am indebted for much of the information regarding the lists of Incumbents of Flemingston and Gileston. My major source for the information on Saint Hilary is that of some notes prepared by the Reverend John Guy for my predecessor as Vicar of that Parish, the Reverend Douglas Harris.

It would take too long to list all my minor sources of information and, where possible, I have acknowledged these in the main body of the text. Inevitably, there are some that I may overlook and I apologise, in advance, for any such omissions. I would express my thanks to Canon Stanley Mogford, my neighbour at Cowbridge at the time I first wrote these notes and who gave me much helpful advice both on this subject and on many other matters. My thanks too, to the parishioners of these Vale parishes who contributed many additional items of information to those in my possession and who gave me such encouragement that I feel that I owe it to them to put the material into a more permanent form.

DAVID WILLIAMS.

AN ASIDE: ONE DIVERGENCE OF OPINION!

On only one matter did the author find a divergence of opinion between the views of the three main sources of these notes i.e. Mr. Fisher, the Reverend Rees Jones and the Reverend John Humphreys. This concerns their views of the incumbency of George Augustus Biederman who was Rector of Flemingston from 1818 until 1859.

Rees Morris, in his notes on the history of the Parish of Flemingston, says (Biederman), as his name signifies, was an Englishman (!), but had acquired the Welsh language in order to be eligible to hold the living. From this we may infer that the English people thought better of the Church in Wales, and endeavoured, at last to stop the traffic in Welsh livings, in which they were farmed out to Englishmen who seldom or never came to their parishes and who had neither sympathy nor knowledge of the character and requirements of the Welsh people.'

Mr. Fisher, in contrast, writes critically of Biederman and states that 'he never came near the parish after his induction' but 'enjoyed the profit of the benefice for nearly 41 years, dying in 1859'. John Humphreys' comment is rather milder, 'he (Biederman) seldom came near to the parish after his induction'.

Without implying too much partiality, it could be significant that the Reverend Rees Morris' approving attitude towards Biederman sprang from his own commitment to the Welsh language. He was an ardent advocate of the Welsh tongue and was highly regarded as a preacher in the Welsh language. He held a local lectureship which required that he preach a sermon in Welsh annually at the Church in Llysworney, a task for which he was paid 'one guinea per annum'.

Mr. Fisher's somewhat tart dismissal of Biederman may well have been occasioned by the details that he discovered regarding Biederman's appointment as Rector and which he (Mr. Fisher) recounted in a letter to the Reverend John Humphreys some 15 to 20 years after the death of Rees Jones who may well therefore have been unaware of the circumstances of Biederman's appointment

It appears that Biederman's predecessor, the Reverend John Williams, although a brilliant scholar was suffering with consumption and was Rector for only three years before his death at the age of 31. Mr. Fisher records that 'whilst he was dying of consumption, the then Earl of Dunraven who had possession of the Llanmihangel estate, had the next presentation of the two livings (Llanmihangel and Flemingston). He put them up for sale "With the prospect of early possession". It was openly advertised in the papers and was thought to have been an indelicate proceeding.' Indelicate or no, and in spite of a rebuke from the then Bishop of Llandaff the advert in the 'London Gazette' produced a buyer in the person of John William Biederman, who then nominated his nephew as Rector of the livings.

It is Mr. Humphreys' comment that proves the most accurate regarding the entries in the parish registers. They record that, in 1819, the Reverend George Augustus Biederman visited his parish and conducted two Baptisms and one Burial; between May 1820 and December 1821, he took another three Baptisms and two Burials. All other entries of services conducted during Biederman's incumbency are signed by the Assistant Curates, Watkin Edwards and John Powell - employed by Biederman with a payment of 2 guineas per annum to each! The duties of these latter were to include the burial (on December 20th 1826) of one, Edward Williams - better known as Iolo Morganwg.

THE PARISH OF FLEMINGSTON AND THE PARISH CHURCH.

The Church of Saint Michael at Flemingston dates from the Fourteenth Century and still contains features dating back to that period. As a whole, though, the Church is largely the result of a thoroughgoing restoration carried out in 1858. There exist two rough drawings of the Church, one before, and one after, this restoration and they indicate that, amongst other things, the Church was extended at the West end.

There are suggestions that there has been a Church on the site since the 6th Century but most of these (not all) stem from the writings of Iolo Morganwg and need to be treated with some caution. In one of his manuscripts, Iolo states the original name for the village was 'Llanelwan'. In another manuscript he maintains that, at a later time, the village was known as 'Llanfihangel-y-Twyn' implying that the dedication to St. Michael dates from comparatively early times. This is the dedication mentioned in all the documentary evidence that we have, except that the Will of Christopher Fleming in 1540 makes mention of 'the High Altar of St. Teilo'.

It was, almost certainly, the Fleming family from which the name 'Flemingston' originated. Local suggestions that the name is derived from the settlement of Flemings in the neighbourhood of Llantwit Major (and who started English schools in the area) can be totally discounted since they fail to take account of the fact that they settled here only in the reign of Elizabeth I and the name 'Flemingston' was in use a matter of centuries before that - as were the local variants 'Flimston', 'Flymston', 'Flimpston' etc..

However, it should be noted that the Sir John Fleming who was one of the 'Twelve Knights' who aided Sir Robert Fitzhamon to wrest the possession of Morgannwg from Iestyn ap Gwrgan on behalf of the Norman King in 1090, did not receive his reward of a grant of land at Flemingston as is often supposed. That grant of land was at St. George's -super -Ely. This is borne out by an old manuscript, 'A Breviat containing all the Manors and Lordships of Glamorgan'. In this, it is stated, 'Saint George's was given in the devison of Fitzhamon to Sir John Fleming, knight, in the year of our Lord God 1092 where he builded a castle yet called the castle of Saint Georges standing on the very bancke of the River of Ely ...' It may be from this that Iolo derives the idea of the name Llanelwan' since there was a Church at St. George's which had been built there in the time of Ufelwy (Ufelwyn or Ubilwynus) who was a disciple and type of Suffragan Bishop to Saint Oudoceus, Bishop of Llandaff. From this church, St. George's was originally known as 'Llaunfelwyn', and this is close enough to 'Llanelwan' to, perhaps, cause some confusion.

The Fleming's castle at Saint George's was one of the establishments sacked by Llewellyn Bren in 1318 during the latter's rising against Turberville, Lord of Glamorgan. For greater safety, the Fleming family appear to have decided not to rebuild the castle at Saint George's but to build a new castle on their land at Wenvoe. A brother of the first Wenvoe Fleming then married 'the heiress of Llanfihangel-y-Twyn', thus acquiring her lands which became 'Flemingston'. The heiress may well have been the 'Lady Joan Fleming' whose effigy is still in the church which, presumably she either founded or rebuilt at this time. Her new husband, no doubt with recent memories of Llewellyn Bren, built a fortress called Saint Michael's Castle'. Some of the walls of this castle are still to be seen on one side of the churchyard but the major part of it was destroyed by Owain Glyndwr and his followers in 1410. The site is now occupied by Flemingston Court, the manor house which the Flemnings built in 1430- perhaps having decided that castles had had their day!

The Fleming family seem to have integrated into the life of the Vale and gained an acceptance from the Welsh inhabitants which was denied to many other Lords of the Manor. The hospitality of Sir John Fleming is sung in the 'cyweddau' of Dafydd Benwyn and another Fleming, 'Crystor', is praised as a 'peaceful' man. The Fleming who reputedly married the heiress of Llanfihangel-y-Twyn was given the accolade of an affectionate Welsh nickname, 'Fleming Melyn' ('Yellow Fleming') on account of his blonde hair.

In the course of time, the Fleming holdings in Flemingston passed, by marriage, to the Thomases of 'Llanmhangel and Bettws'. These sided with Charles I in the Civil War and, like many of the leading families of the Vale of Glamorgan, were so impoverished as a result that they were forced to sell their properties. Those at Flemingston were purchased by Humphrey Edwin in 1684. From the Edwins, Flemingston passed to the Dunraven family who sold their holdings in the parish within living memory. Flemingston Court was to witness another assault from an invader during the ownership of the Dunraven family. That was to come from William Randolph Hearst at the time of his acquisition and enlargement of Saint Donat's Castle. He negotiated the sale of the wooden panelling from the main room of the Court and had it shipped to America where, like much else, it may even be still in store. Photographs exist of the original appearance of the room which is now a sorry shadow of its former self in spite of the valiant efforts of the present owners to make good the damage.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

As mentioned above, the Church, as we see it today, is basically the 14th Century building much restored in 1858. We are fortunate in having a description of the Church some ten years before its restoration. This is recorded in 'Notes on the Older Welsh Churches' by Sir Stephen R. Glynne, Bart. He visited Flemingston on 27th September, 1848 and noted: 'A small church, consisting of a nave with south transept, a porch and a chancel. Over the west end of the nave is a gable for two bells in open arches.

The porch is set very close to the west end of the nave, and has a wood roof and a stone seat on the west side only. The outer door is continuous, the inner door cut in the centre. At the West end is an obtuse lancet, now closed; and in the south-west part of the nave is a small window, with obtuse arched head and hood-moulding, having three-foil feathering. The transept is very large in proportion to the church and has a three-light window of third-pointed character; and on its east side a single trefoiled window with an ogee head. In the wall of the transept is a fine sepulchral arch, with mouldings and shafts of Middle-pointed character. At the west end of the nave there is a stone bench. There are no original northern windows, but one modern one. The roofs of both nave and chancel resemble those at St. Mary Church; that of the nave is plainer, and that of the chancel has the eastern portion boarded. The chancel arch is a rude, misshapen one, bulging out and without mouldings. The east window is of two lights, square-headed with label. On the South of the chancel is a priest's door, and two single windows with obtuse trefoiled heads, one of which has mouldings. There is a rood-door at some height on the south side of the chancel arch. The font has an octagonal bowl on a stem. The exterior walls of the church are whitewashed, according to the practice of the neighbourhood.'

Some of the features mentioned by Sir Stephen Glynne have now disappeared; the windows were largely replaced in 1858 and the church extended at the west end. The chancel arch was replaced and the rood door destroyed in tile process. Although the walls appear to have been largely rebuilt, much of the original woodwork of the roof was saved and the corbels on which the roof beams rested were incorporated into the new walls. A new roof was constructed over the old beams. The font is still to be seen, now fitted with a new wooden cover. The architect's drawings for the cover and for the new communion rails are deposited with the Glamorgan Archives. The church has been much beautified since the restoration of 1858 by some fine stained glass and woodwork. The sepulchral arch in the transept now houses a fine early fourteenth century of a lady in a long robe and with a wimple covering her neck and chin. It is a little strange that Sir Stephen Glynne makes no mention of this effigy in his notes as it is one of the most striking features of the Church. Somewhat mysterious is the fact that it is now placed with its inscription facing the wall, causing it to be very difficult to read! If the arch in the transept were its original location, it could be that the restorers of 1858 reversed it so that the lady occupies the traditional position for a lay person, that of facing east - this presumes that, originally, she faced west which is the traditional position for a priest or bishop. As it seems unlikely that she was ordained to either of these offices, it could be that the effigy was once placed against a north wall, possibly in the nave rather than in the transept, and with the inscription facing outwards so that it could be read. Be that as it may be, the inscription itself is very clear. It is in Norman French and reads 'Merci ripvr lalme prierta carante ivrs dame lhone flemeng glvt ici dev de lalme eit'. A suggested rendering in modern French reads: 'Dame Joan Fleming git ici, Dicu de l'alme ait merci. Repos de l'alme priez quarante jours'. It seems probable that this is the heiress of Llarifihangel-y-Twyn who married 'Fleming Melyn'. It would appear to date from the early 14th Century and this would accord with the time of her marriage; paradoxically, there is no tomb for her husband who probably originated the name 'Flemingston'!

On the right hand side of the altar in the chancel is the remains of a mediaeval piscina. Another is to be found in the transept, indicating that there was once an altar there also. In the north wall of the nave there is another, much simpler, sepulchral arch containing a very worn tombstone from which most detail has been eroded. There is the outline of a cross which can be traced on its surface and some claim to be able to decipher the name 'Elizabeth'. The definite identity of the person buried there will remain a mystery. It is said that there was, at one time, a memorial tablet in the chancel in memory of Margaret, wife of Edward Pritchard, a notable Rector of whom, much more, later in these pages. This engraved tablet recorded her burial on 17th March, 1707/8.

Another souvenir of Edward Pritchard which has all but disappeared after its removal at the 1858 restoration, is a vertical sundial which Pritchard designed and placed in the apex of the outside of the south wall of the transept immediately above the window. It was of 15 hour duration, from 5.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. with half-hours marked by three small dots; its accuracy was renowned throughout the Vale. Although its remains are still in the churchyard, it was, sadly, never replaced after its removal in 1858 and it is now much damaged.

The restoration involved a marked change in the exterior character of the church; there seems to have been a local tradition that all the buildings in Flemingston were whitewashed - a distinction recalled by Iolo Morganwg in his poem dealing with his 'exile' in Somerset. This practice extended to the walls of the church but was discontinued after the restoration of the building. This set a new pattern and the practice of whitewashing the walls of the houses in the village followed suit so that only a few are whitewashed today.

There are in existence two pen and ink drawings of St. Michael's Church Flemingston. They are signed 'S. J. Byrne' and one shows the church as it was in 1945 whilst the other is drawn from a print of C. H. Waring dating from about 1850 and shows the church as it was prior to restoration. I have not been able to find a copy of the original Waring print

CHURCH TREASURES

Flemingston Parish Church is fortunate in possessing two great treasures; a lovely chalice, dating from 1607, and a complete set of Parish Registers dating from 1576 to the present day.

The chalice was lent to the Ecclesiastical Art Exhibition which accompanied the Church Congress held at Swansea in 1909. It was described in the Exhibition Catalogue thus:

'Loans catalogue - Glamorgan - Page 124. Item no.110'

'Lent by the Vicar (the Reverend Rees Morris) and the Churchwardens of Flemingstone, Glam 110. Chalice 6" high with paten cover. The bowl is small and oviform in shape, richly chased, standing on a baluster stem. The foot is engraved with a peacock's feather design and is unlike any other cup in Llandaff Diocese. It is hall marked 1607. It is of very similar shape to the Penmark chalice of 1602.' The paten cover mentioned had been missing for some time in the 1970's and was located as a direct result of the reading of that catalogue entry. It is now reunited with the chalice but is obviously not of the same manufacture even though the physical dimensions enable it to fit the chalice. It would seem to be of older workmanship than the chalice.

The Parish Registers are amongst the oldest in the former County of Glamorgan. Those of St. Donat's date from 1570, Llantrithyd from 1578, Llanmaes and Llandough from 1583, St Mary Church front 1584 and Wenvoc from 1588. The Flemingston records are thus the second oldest.

The first mandate for keeping registers of Baptism, Marriage and Burial was issued by Thomas Cromwell in 1538 and in his capacity as Vicar General to Henry VIII. It was Cardinal Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo who first instituted registers in 1497. It is noteworthy that this followed the discovery of the New World and the impact this made upon Spain, just as Cromwell's action followed the dissolution of the monasteries in this country. The resulting mass movements of population made some system of registration necessary. It is possible to trace the progress of register requirements in terms of response to social upheaval but that is an issue to be explored elsewhere! Suffice it to say, at this point, that Cromwell's mandate stated that Baptisms, Marriages and Burials were to be entered weekly.

There are some 800 fragmentary registers dating from 1538 but the issue was not pursued until the accession of Elizabeth 1st in 1558. Even then the practice of keeping registers was not fully observed until 1597 when it was decreed that parchment register books should be purchased at the expense of each parish and that all the names from older books (often on unbound leaves) should be therein described from the year 1558 onwards. Hence it happens that many parish registers date from that particular year.

All the old registers record Baptisms, Marriages and Burials in the calendar order in which the services were taken; sometimes recording a family record on a particular page. These entries are referred to as 'entries promiscuous' - a title relating to their non-separation of the three classes of entry and not to any moral judgement! The family entries in the Flemingston registers record both happiness and tragedy. The entries for the 1620's to 1640 are full of erasures from those who did not want to face conscription by either King or Parliament. The names of notable inhabitants are also to be found in these pages. The burial of Edward Pritchard

the maker of the sundial is the name of one who deserves further attention. Similarly, Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg) whose burial is duly recorded, as are the baptisms of his children - in spite of his Unitarian avowals!

TWO NOTABLE INHABITANTS OF FLEMINGSTON

Edward Pritchard

He was made Rector of Flemingston on February 17th 1700. Local rumour implied that this was the result of an influential kinsman - one, Pritchard of Llancaiach. He was to remain as Rector for 42 years. He was born at Llantwit Major and may have been the son of Thomas Pritchard, Rector of Llanmihangel and grandson of David Pritchard, Rector of St. Donat's. As a young man he acted as Agent's Clerk at Llanmihangel. During his tenure of Flemingston, he kept a school in which he taught Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Astronomy. His fame as an astronomer was such that it is said that Isaac Newton visited him on several occasions, staying two or three weeks at a time. Iolo Morganwg was a later occupant of Pritchard's house in the village and knew many who had been taught by him. Iolo records that, 'One of Pritchard's scholars, Morgan John of St Athan, once in company, where there many other respectable gentlemen heard a young man ask him - "Mr. Pritchard, pray sir, what is your age? You are supposed to be very old." "I am three score and two and five more." "Three score and seven it seems, I thought that you were much more. I had been told that you were more than a hundred." "Pshaw! You are but a young man, sir. I am three score, sir, and two score, sir, and five more. An elderly gentleman then asked if he were really 105. He seriously answered that he was, and that he had been in Holy Orders and had officiated as a cleric for upwards of 83 years. This was a few years, not less than four or five before his death.' His recorded age in the registers (98) thus seems to be at least ten years in error.

Edward Pritchard well remembered the happenings of the Civil War and expressed himself on the matter in these terms: 'The storm whilst it blew over us was dreadful, but it cleared the air of most infectious and stinking fogs, and gave us a more wholesome air, and a better state of health. I pray God we may never want such another storm.' Iolo Morganwg also says of him: 'He appears by some accounts that I have had of him by a very sensible woman who had been well educated at his school, and was a great favourite of his, to have had some singular religious opinions. He was a Sabbatarian, and an Universalist. He often said to her - 'Molly, we are still, the most learned and wise of us, in the weak infancy of divine as well as of human knowledge. There are generations coming, Molly, that will have stronger eyes than any have yet had - and will see much clearer and farther than any have yet seen. I shall not live to see any of this, you may live to see a little, and your children may see more, but the third generation Molly, will see what we cannot know, perhaps what we dare not mention. Attend to your Church, Molly, but above all, Molly, read and study your Bible, and never lend your ears to the dogmatists that will once more ruin our poor country for a while. I see them coming, Molly, God help and deliver a poor world.' Thus in an oracular manner would he often express himself. He was fond of gardening, and detested hunting, shooting and angling, but, above all cockfighting, bull-baiting and horse racing. He would often retire into some sequestered corner of a field, wood or thicket, with a couple of books under his arm to read and study.'

When the Methodists first appeared, he expressed some dislike of their conduct and tenets, but warmly cautioned all of his acquaintances against persecution of any kind whatsoever. He once remarked, 'They may possibly bring on again such times and things as I have seen.' It is said that he was ordained at the Restoration of Charles II, this may indicate that his first ordination had been according to Presbyterian or Independent principles.

Edward Pritchard had been Assistant Curate of Llanmaes and was Rector of Llanfihangel at the same time as he held the living of Flemingston. He made the following provisions in his will; to the Cathedral at Llandaff he left two shillings and six pence; to his nephew Francis Pritchard of Dinas Powis and to his brother John Pritchard of Bristol he left sixpence each; to his loving friend David Sweeting of Aberthyn, he left all his books and manuscripts. He was buried at Flemingston on 24th June, 1742.

Iolo Morganwg mentions the accuracy of Pritchard's sundial and adds that he could work at all 'mechanick trades'. He also tells us that Edward Pritchard was not the only person in Flemingston to live to more than a hundred years:

Jennet Francis, contemporary with Mr. Pritchard, died before him at the age of 112 or more. She danced a few months before her death. She called Mr. Pritchard a young boy, whose birth she well remembered, and, long before that, she remembered PRW DEWCH and was one of those women who so called the men out of the woods, to have their victuals when they were hiding from the press gangs of both King and Parliament. PRW DEWCH are the Welsh words used to call cattle to their fodder. She had been one of twenty six women reaping a field of wheat where not a single man could venture to appear. She would relate very affecting stories of the general tenderness of the women towards the men, who in those troublesome times were obliged to hide themselves in the woods and would declare that she had never heard of a single instance of a man having been betrayed or discovered to the press gangs by a woman.' Iolo here adds, 'Such it would seem are many female virtues that, owing to an absurd system of educating them they are never brought into action, perhaps never roused from a sleep wherein they have ever lain.!

Edward Wiliains (Iolo Morgaiiwg)

This most famous son of Flemingston has had much written about him and, as above, has been quoted even more. It would be invidious to attempt a scholarly appraisal of the man when others have already done so. It would, however be a great oversight if we did not give some consideration to the man and his writings which have a direct relevance to the Village of Flemingston.

He was born at Pennon, Llancarfan, in 1747 and was the son of Edward Williams of Gileston and Ann Mathew of Llanmaes their wedding is recorded in the registers of St. Athan Church in 1744. Soon after the birth of young Edward, they moved to St. Athan but by 1756 they had moved again to the cottage in Flemingston which has been the home of Edward Pritchard. It was quite tiny, with only one small room on the ground floor and with only two very small bedrooms, without ceilings above. If Sir Isaac Newton did stay here with Pritchard, he would certainly not have been impressed by its grandeur!

Edward junior was trained as a stonemason but realised that his true craft lay elsewhere, in the history and culture of Wales. He was a lifelong sufferer with Asthma and this, too, may well have inclined him away from manual work to more literary pursuits. Although it is sometimes stated that he was self-taught, his studies were guided by John Walters, Rector of Llandough and Vicar of St. Hilary - a noted scholar and lexicographer. He *was* also helped in his studies and researches by another clergyman, Thomas Richards of Coychurch, and it was through his studies with the latter that he became fascinated with the bardic tradition and saw himself as its true heir. He adopted the bardic name of Iolo Morganwg, the name by which he is best known. Those who would wish to pursue further the details of his career and range of interests will find them painstakingly researched in the late G. J. Williams' biography, 'Iolo Morganwg'⁷ published (in Welsh) in 1956. Professor Williams also wrote the script of a talk, delivered posthumously by his friend, Aneirin Talfan Davies on the Welsh Home Service in 1963. This talk (in English) was later published by the BBC. A short quote from the talk serves to illustrate the breadth of Iolo's researches and interests:

'He was, in his early years, a romantic poet, and throughout his life, a romantic dreamer. Everybody agrees that he was the greatest authority of his day on the history of Welsh literature and on many aspects of Welsh history. He was also an authority on such subjects as horticulture, agriculture, geology and botany and, in his old age, he was prepared to lecture on metallurgy in the school which his son had opened in the new industrial town of Merthyr Tudifil. His manuscripts show that he was a musician who had composed scores of hymn tunes, and that he took great delight in collecting folk-songs. He was a theologian who helped to establish the Unitarian denomination in South Wales, and a politician who revelled in the excitement of the early years after the French Revolution.

His Unitarian beliefs did not prevent his having his children baptised at Flemingston Church, nor was he refused burial in the churchyard. The date of his funeral is recorded as taking place on December 20th 1826. He was buried just outside the West end of the Church and the extension of the building in 1858 meant that his burial spot now lies within the Church building. To mark the place there is a memorial wall tablet to him and to his son, Taliesin; this was erected by 'Caroline, Countess of Dunraven, and other admirers'. Close to it is a memorial window depicting Christ among the doctors, this was given by Iolo's great grandson, Mr. Iltyd Williams of Middlesborough whose family long maintained an interest in the village and in the church.

The cottage in which he lived was demolished not long after his death and in the space it occupied there now stands the barn of the Gregory Farm. The manuscripts which once all but filled the house were carefully preserved and are now kept at the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. They are so numerous that any scholar would find it a daunting task to read through them and they bear eloquent testimony to the man's industry.

His love of his home village is evident by the way that he boasts, 'The lands in the parish of Flimston are some of the best of the best part of the County. The soil is strong and deep, considerably more so than in some of the adjacent parishes. Mr. William Hooper, a very good farmer and my valuable friend in that parish, was newly, if not the first that introduced what we call good liming.' 'The lily of the valley grows in the woods here in the parish of Flimston ... and the white hyacinth.'

However, he did not get on well with all his neighbours: 'I think that the native farmers are in plural the greatest slovens and the most ignorant of men, even in their own profession, of any living.' 'The Glamorgan farmers are, except comparatively a few, far less intelligent and, as is usually the case, far more self-conceited, than those of Breconshire.' This is, perhaps written in one of those spells of bad temper for which he was well-known and which led him to quarrel violently with even the best of his friends. A tendency which led Theophilus Jones of Brecon to refer to him as 'mad Ned'. The object of his spleen was sometimes Thomas Williams, founder of Bethesda'r Fro and a noted Welsh hymn writer. He lived in Fleniingston Court in Iolo's lifetime, but the latter had little time for him and pilloried him in the verse 'Song of the Hypocritical Preacher'.

Iolo's conceptions were often greater than were their fulfilment. Witness his comment on his proposed history of Glamorgan: 'I have very long conceived a plan for superb History of Glamorgan, a County very interesting in its ancient as well as its natural history, but shamefully unattended to.' It was to be 'shamefully unattended to' by Iolo himself for it came to nothing.

Historians have found him an unreliable guide, for fact and imagination are propounded by him with equal vigour. Some have suggested that the boundary between fact and fiction may well have been blurred by his constant dosing with laudanum in order to relieve his asthma. It may equally well be due to the love of romance and the tendency to exaggerate common to

all who share the Celtic temperament This, however, did not stop him criticising the same tendency in others: 'John Harry's age ascertained from register A lying old devil as ever was. Swore by his God that he was 118 years of age and could remember King David'.

Following his account of Jennet Francis and her memories of the Civil War, he found a less congenial old lady in 'Catherine Rees alias Jenkins of the same parish; died about 1768 at about 100 or more - an illiterate rustic. She could give no interesting account of anything that happened in her clay, only that men and women of all ages in her young days had the general habit of smoking. She remembered Morris Dances by women, all in breeches, continuing with companies of men dancers. She lamented the discontinuance of Sunday dancing'.

Of great interest is Iolo's list of those living in 'Fhmston' and his list of unoccupied houses. The Vale was suffering a high degree of depopulation and he records, 'After looking at St. Athan and Flimston, let the mournful (for he must be so) observer proceed to the next village of Boverton ... and observe what were once populous places. The numerous farm houses and cottages in ruins will give an idea similar to no other but that of the recent depredatory progress of an invading army having passed through the country, beating down all before him'. In spite of that gloomy picture, Iolo longed for the whitewashed cottages of his native village when he was away from it and yearning for his return.

Perhaps a final quote from his writings should be the epitaph that he suggested for himself?

'In memory of Edward Williams of this parish; mason whose building lies here in complete ruin, yet shall the materials be collected together again by the great Master-Builder forming a structure of very superior workmanship, founded in the Rock of Ages, never more to fall, never more to experience the least decay whatever storms or floods may beat against it.'

A LIST OF THE RECTORS OF FLEMINGSTON

1349. Thomas de Bentham is nominated to the living on March 6th. The living 'is in the King's gift by reason of his custody of the heir of Hugh le Despenser'.
1443. John 'Rector of Flimston' is mentioned in a Deed
1540. '(Sir) Harry Price, Rector' signs the Will of Christopher Fleming
1541. Edward Elmely is appointed Rector on August 10th.
1554. John Flanders is appointed Rector by John Fleming, 'Patron', on September 20th. Hugh Griffith and Henry Rogers acting as sureties.
In the margin of a composition book of the same year the following note is made: 'Sir John Flanders, clerk, parson here, Jenkin Philip and Ieuan Gronow, Churchwardens do say upon their oathes that the Commisioners dyd take from the sayd church
A chasuble of olive velvet
A chasuble of grene silke
A cope of olive silke
A cross of copper
And thereof as yett no restitution to the said paroch church'.
1560. Thomas Williams is mentioned in Kitchin's Report as 'nonresident, a student at Oxford'. Williams' is probably a mistake for 'Wilkins' - see next entry.
1564. Thomas Wilkins, alias Parker, is mentioned in a Deed of May 16th - 'A bond between Jane Lyson, alias Voss, of Saint Donats and others who are bound to Thomas Wilkins, alias Parker, Rector of Flimston, and James Wilkins, alias Parker of Saint Donals, Yeoman'.
- 1600 (about). Sir George Williams is 'rated to subsidy' in 1609. He married 'Eva, daughter of Morris Mathew of Roos'. In 1601, there is an entry in The reglster dated February 14th 'Penelope, d. of George Williams, Clerk, baptised'. whether he was Rector or Assisarat Curate during this period, we do not know as he is not mentioned elsewhere.
1627. John Powell appointed on July 20th by the patron, one Lewis Thomas. He was an M.A of Oriol College, Oxford, and had been Rector of Llansannor since 1621. He is listed as the 'son of Howel ap Howel ap William ap Sir Howel of Bettws and was said to be a native of Llangynwyd.
- 16--? Henry Williams. A Royalist Chaplain, he was ejected from the living of Flimston 'by the Propagators'. He became Chaplain to the army of Charles I in which he was held in high esteem as a great wit and a poet. A non-ordained person named Rees David was intruded into the living and no entries are made in the Registers during the period of the Commonwealth. Williams was restored to the living in 1662 when he signed himself 'Henery' Williams, Clarke, B.A., Rector of Flimston and Vicar of St. Mellons'. His wife, 'Cecilia ferch Thomas' was buried at Flemingston in 1662. He resigned in 1665.
1665. Another Henry Williams is appointed to the living on November 27th by the Patron, Robert Thomas of Llanmihangel. He was suspended in 1670.
1677. Miles Jones is appointed on March 29th by the Patron - now a John Tombs. Jones was the son of Miles Jones of Cowbridge and an M.A. of Jesus College, Oxford. He was also made Rector of St. Brides Major in 1683.

- 1699/1700. Edward Pritchard is appointed on February 1st by the Patron, Humphrey Edwin. He has already been mentioned in some detail above.
1742. James Morgan is appointed on December 12th by the Patron, Charles Edwin. He was born in 1701, the son of Thomas Morgan of Eglwysilan. A B.A. of Jesus College, he had been Rector of Llanmihangel since 1727 and was also Rector of Llanilid. He died on December 30th 1763 and was buried in the Chancel of Llandough Church. His gravestone has, apparently since been removed
1763. William Church is appointed by the Patron, Lady Charlotte Edwin. He was the son of William Church of Newport and an M.A. of Chiistchurch, Oxford. He married Catherine Deere of Ash Hall.
1815. John Williams is appointed on July 20th by the Patron, H. William Quinn Esq.. The youngest son of Thomas Williams of Newton and his wife, Elizabeth Gibbon of Trecastle, he was baptised at Cowbridge on February 13th 1787. By 1810 he was a B.A. of Jesus College and became Rector of Llanmihangel. He died on January 12th 1818 at the age of 31 and was buried at Pendoylan where there is a memorial tablet to him on the North wall of the Church, immediately adjacent to the pulpit.
1818. George Augustus Biederman appointed to the livings of Llanmihangel and Flemingston on the nomination of 'John William Biederman, patron for this turn'. (for the circumstances of this see the introductory page 'An aside: A divergence of opinion').
1859. Samuel Jones appointed on the nomination of the Earl of Dunraven. It was during this incumbency that Flemingston Rectory was built. He died on June 7th, 1895.
1895. Rees Morris is appointed on the nomination of the Earl of Dunraven. In 1914, he was also appointed Rector of Gileston, the two parishes remaining combined for over 70 years. It was also during his incumbency that the Church in Wales was disestablished and disendowed. One result of this was that private patronage ceased in Wales and was replaced by a system of Diocese, Bishop and Province making appointments to parishes in 'turns'.
1926. Arthur Williams, Assistant Curate of Llantwit Major is appointed Rector by the Diocesan Patronage Board
1939. On the death of the Rector, a 'locum tenens', Carron Rees, the retired Vicar of Kilvey, Swansea, is asked to take temporary charge of the parishes of Flemingston and Gileston. In the previous year, the Llandaff Diocesan Conference had passed a motion authorising the Bishop (at that time Timothy Rees), 'when opportunity occurs, to amalgamate Eglwys Brewis with Flemingston and Gileston with St. Athan'. With the death of the Bishop and the Rector within a year of each other, the re-arrangement was not carried through and the Second World War was to transform the entire neighbourhood shortly afterwards.
1940. John Humphreys, Rector of Llangan and Vicar of St. Mary Hill was appointed Rector of Flemingston and Gileston by the new Bishop of Llandaff, John Morgan.
1951. John Vernon Davies appointed as Priest in Charge. He was made Rector in 1954
1956. Thomas Douglas Harris appointed Rector of Flemingston and Gileston and was also made Vicar of St Hilary in 1963.
1975. David Williams inducted to the grouping of the three parishes; these were later re-grouped to link Flemingston and St. Hillary with Cowbridge, and Gileston with St Athan.