

The Cross, Llanblethian

The Cross, Llanblethian, is named after the medieval preaching cross which stands on the green outside the house, where, it is claimed, the Llanblethian 'pleasure fair' was held up to the mid-nineteenth century. "It was held annually from time immemorial on the green on Easter Monday, when the village and neighbouring lads and lasses assembled for physical and social pleasure, dancing to the music of such primitive instruments as the tin whistle or concertina, and regaling themselves with the simple refreshments of the time, provided by elderly dames of the village", wrote EW Miles in 1923.

Originally a cottage, *The Cross* had two wings added during the nineteenth century - the right wing towards the mid-nineteenth century and the left wing in the latter half of the century. These were, undoubtedly, added to accommodate the increasing number of residents at the house. Today, both wings are joined by a front porchway, which provides a spacious inner hall. The rear of the right wing has an unusually steep and narrow staircase leading to a number of small rooms, with low ceilings, obviously previous servant quarters. Additional spacious bedrooms were built on the upper floors of the two wings. A large room downstairs balances the lounge in the left wing and overlooks an expanse of shrubbery and lawn, initially cultivated by Lady Byass during her stay there during the second World War. The house is on rising ground and has lovely views over the village and countryside.

The field *Tair Erw wrth yr Eglwys* ('Three Acres beside the Church') on which *The Cross* was built, was land belonging to the Carne family in the late sixteenth century. It eventually passed to Rees Adam of *Stallcourt*, who sold off the lower part, of about one acre, to Joseph Thomas, a gardener of Llanblethian, who converted it into a garden. In this deed, the lane at the bottom of the garden is referred to as 'Heol Gristly'. Thomas sold the land in 1806 to John Rowland, and it is Rowland who built the first house on the site. He quickly sold it to Sarah Morgan of Eglwysilan (but later, after marrying Thomas Morgan, of Leach Castle and of Llancarfan). An early tenant of the Morgans was Molly Evans, earlier a servant to the Treharnes of St Hilary, and the (unmarried) mother of Hester Kennedy, who despite her illegitimate birth, married Revd Browne Williams of Llanmihangel and moved in gentry circles.

The mortgaged house was sold to Robert Nicholl of *Dimlands*, Llantwit Major, in 1818, and by him to the Rochdale-born William Royds who was then living in *St Quintins*. It seems to have been a property investment for Capt Royds, as different occupants are recorded - John David and others in 1831, Anne Lewis in 1840, Mrs E Traherne in 1849.

According to the 1851 Census, *The Cross* was then occupied by Edward Hodges, a widower, and family. He was a schoolmaster, employed at the National (or Church) School established in 1839 on the Cardiff Road in Cowbridge. He was born in Mevagissey, Cornwall, and had three young children, sons John and Edward and daughter, Elizabeth.

The conveyance of the property from William Royds, then of Batheaston, Bath, to John Morgan of *Crossways* in 1853, stated that the house was then in the occupation of Nathaniel Plimer, an artist-decorator, and Miss Margaret Entwistle: this may well be when a wing was added. Margaret Entwistle became the owner in 1854. She was another of the Rochdale people who had come to Llanblethian in the nineteenth century; she had lived with her brother in *Crossways* before moving to *The Cross*, though it was called *Brynawel* in the 1861 census, when she lived there with two servants

On the death of Margaret Entwistle in 1870, the house passed to her great-niece, Frances Traherne, the youngest daughter of Revd George Traherne of St Hilary. She moved into the house with her mother, Mrs Ellen Traherne, also born in Rochdale. Two unmarried, residential servants were employed, Mary Wright (house/parlour maid) and Margaret Richards (cook). Frances died in 1872, however; her heir was her brother, Revd George

Montgomery Traherne of St Hilary (who planted the clump of trees on Stalling Down); he conveyed *The Cross* to John Homfray of the Penllyn estate in 1879, the year Ellen Traherne died.

In 1881 the house was occupied by John Watkin Phillips, physician, who was born in Wrington, Somerset. He was aged 50 and resided there with his wife, Mary, and family. Mary (from Llantwit Major) was 35 years of age. They had one son, Arthur, aged 9, born in Cowbridge.. Dr Phillips used a pony and trap to transport him to visit patients and employed a groom, who resided at the house, named Stephen Hitchcock. There were also four general domestic servants, all unmarried - Henry Russel (15), Susan Hopkins (20), Jane Nugent (15) and Julia Williams (24). Dr Phillips moved from *The Cross* to High Street, Cowbridge, and thence to *St Crispin's*, Eastgate, in 1894.

Frederick Dunn had moved into *The Cross* by 1884. In the 1891 census he is described as a mining engineer, aged 46, married, born in Carmarthen. His wife, Harriet, 31 years of age, bore him six children, Frederick (9), Gwenllian (8), John Robert (6) Francis William (4), Hugh Aubrey (3), and Augustin (1). A governess named Lily Jones, aged 27, born in Oxford resided at the house. The Dunns employed three servants - Caroline Wood (nurse/domestic), Sarah Davies (under-nurse) and Mary Roberts (domestic). Frederick Dunn was a leading citizen in the area and a County Magistrate for the Cowbridge Petty Sessional Division.

The Dunns were the nearest equivalent of the 'Lord and Lady of the manor' in Llanblethian at this time. On Investiture day in 1911, for example, it was recorded in the Parish magazine that "Mr and Mrs. Dunn very generously entertained all the children of Llanblethian to an excellent tea on the lawn at *The Cross*. After tea, sports were provided and the successful competitors received useful prizes. The rest of the evening was passed in listening to selections on the Gramophone. As the children left *The Cross*, Mrs Dunn presented each child with an Investiture Souvenir in the form of a beautifully designed box of butterscotch which we feel sure each recipient values."

Following the death of Frederick Dunn on 29 August 1911, his wife continued to live at *The Cross* until her death on 26 March 1915. They are both buried in Llanblethian Churchyard.

The boys were all keen cricketers, and members of the Cowbridge Cricket team. Tragically, three out of the five Dunn brothers did not survive the first World War. Frederick E P Dunn, however, continued to serve Cowbridge Cricket Club for many years as a player, secretary and President, and the Memorial Gates at the entrance to the Athletic Club grounds are a permanent tribute to his memory. He died on 17 December 1959, aged 77.

By 1923, *The Cross* was the home of William Brabazon Hallowses, JP, a Glamorgan Magistrate for the Cowbridge Petty Sessional Division.

During the Second World War, the house was occupied by Lady Byass (a member of the Gonzalez Byass sherry family), who had moved from Llandough Castle when it was occupied by soldiers. She was a formidable personage with a piercing voice. Every Sunday morning she would insist on being taken by pony and trap to Llandough Church where she played the organ (much to the dismay of the local congregation as her playing was somewhat discordant!

Named after the medieval preaching cross which stands on the green outside the house. It was claimed by EW Miles (in a letter to Hopkin James, MS 4.1015, Cardiff Library) that the green was the site of the Llanblethian 'pleasure fair' up to the mid- nineteenth century.

The field *Tair Erw wrth yr Eglwys* on which The Cross was built (see 1806/8) was land belonging to the Carne family in the late sixteenth century.

- 1592 21-year lease, Elizabeth Herbert of Cowbridge, widow, and Edward Carne of Cowbridge, Esq, to Edward Jenkin Willod of Llanblethian yeoman, close of two and three-quarter acres adjoining west the churchyard wall in Llanblethian, now occupied by Edward Willod
GRO D/D C 89
- 1616 Lease for three lives, Edward Carne of Nash to Edward Willod of Llanblethian, wife Bridgett and John William Meyrick, son of John Williams. late of Llanblethian, weaver, close of two and three-quarter acres called Tair Erw Wrth Yr Eglwys
D/D C 92
- 1788 These premises were part of the estate of Revd Thomas Bruce. On his death, they were sold by auction to Rees Adam of Stallcourt, who later sold about 1 acre to Joseph Thomas
D/D C E/35
- 1806 Joseph Thomas of Llanblethian, gardener, to John Rowland of Llb, carpenter, for £84, all that parcel lately converted into a garden by Joseph Thomas, containing about 1 acre, at lower end to the south of a close called Tair Erw wrth yr Eglwys, having Llb Hill on E and N, the road from Llb village to Llb church on W and a certain lane called Heol Gristly on the S, as was purchased by Joseph Thomas from Rees Adam and now in tenure and occupn of John Rowland
D/D WP Box 5 Bundle 25
- 1806-8 John Rowland built a new house on the land
D/D C E/35
- 1808 John Rowland to Sarah Morgan of Eglwysilan, spr, all that house, garden, yard and pses together with the parcel of land abt 1 acre
D/D WP Box 5 Bundle 25, hereafter 'WP'
- 1810 Thomas Morgan and Sarah Morgan, his wife, of Leach Castle but now of Llancarfan, James Simpson, Mary Adam, widow of Rees Adam, Edward Adam of Cowbridge, butcher, (1)
to Revd Robert Nicholl of Dimlands, Llantwit Major and Edward Nicholl of Usk (2)
WP
- 1817 Thos and Sarah Morgan mortgaged property (then in tenure and occupation of Molly Evans) to James Simpson of Bear Inn, Cowbridge, innkeeper
WP
- ('Molly Evans lived at the Cross, Llanblethian, 1800 - 1810. She was*

mother of Hester Kennedy who afterwards married Revd Browne Williams. She (HK) was the natural daughter of Molly Evans, but after her marriage was taken in hand by the gentry and was a great favourite. Her patron was William Lewis Traherne. Molly Evans had lived with the Trahernes as a servant. Afterwards she went to London and there was begot with child.'

David Jones quoted in WAH Fisher, bk 18, p 63: Cardiff Library)

(1820, 22nd July Married on Thursday last at Llanblethian church by Revd GA Beiderman, Chaplain to the Rt Hon Earl of Liverpool and Rector of Llanmihangel, Miss Kennedy to the Revd JB Williams, curate of Neath. Cambrian)

1818, 4th April To be sold by private contract : A modern built cottage, garden and convenient outbuildings together with a field of pasture ground thereto adjoining, containing one to two acres, situate on a salubrious spot in the pleasant village of Llanblethian, and now in the occupation of Mrs Evans at the low rent of £15 pa. There is a river abounding with trout and other fish within 200 yards of them. Apply : Wm Perkins, solicitor, Llantrithyd
Cambrian

- 1818 Thos and Sarah Morgan and others to Robt Nicholl of Dimlands, house etc lately in tenure of Mary Evans and now in tenure and occupation of Charles Loder Carne, Esq, for £255 *WP*
- 1825 Conveyance, Robt and Iltyd Nicholl to William Royds of Llanblethian, house now in tenure of Mary Evans as above, for £255 *WP*
D/D C E/35
- 1831 Capt Royds prop, John David and others, occ *LTA*
- 1840 Wm Royds, owned, Anne Lewis, occ *Tithe#180*
- 1849 Mrs E Traherne *Hunt & Co*
- 1851 Edward Hodges, national schoolmaster, b Megavissey (Cowbridge National School, Cardiff Road, est 1839) *Census#11*
- 1852 Nathaniel Plimer, occ, Capt Royds, o - Llanb. Rates *NLW - R13 2/5*
- 1853 Conveyance, Wm Royds of Batheaston to John Morgan of Crossways for £250, all that messuage, garden, yard and pses called The Cross now in occ Nathaniel Plimer and Miss Margaret Entwisle (2 different occupants - was this when the wing was added?) *WP*
- 1854 Conveyance, John Morgan of Crossways, yeoman, to Margaret Entwisle, gentlewoman, for £250 *WP*
- (1856 Lease, Wm Watkin Bassett of Bonvilston, capt in HMs 56th Reg of Foot to Margaret Entwisle of the Cross, 3 fields - Cae'r Eglwys, Cae'r Castell,

Cae'r Mynydd, 5ac 29 perches, lying adjoining each other at the back of
and near then dwelling house of Margaret Entwisle

WP

- 1861 Brynawel - Margaret Entwisle, funded proprietor, b Rochdale + 2 servants
Census #11
- 1870 Death of ME, aged 76, leaving f/h dw ho to her godchild and great niece
Frances Elizabeth Treharne, youngest dau of Revd Francis Treharne of St Hilary
and leasehold property to nieces Ellin Treharne and Elizabeth M Parry WP
- 1871 Ellen Traherne, aged 65, widow, b Rochdale + dau + 2 serv WP
- 1872 Frances E Traherne died intestate; heir was Revd Geo Montgomery Traherne WP
- 1874 Mrs Traherne, occ, EM Traherne, o, The Cross #11, Glam County rates
- 1879 Sale of furniture at The Cross *Western Mail*
- 1879 Conveyance, GM Traherne and others to John R Homfray (Penlline estate) WP
- 1880 Mrs Ellen Traherne *Slater's*
- 1881 John Watkin Phillips, physician, +w + s + 5 servs *Census #13*
1881 Death of Mrs Phillips, wife of Dr Phillips of The Cross *Western Mail*
- 1884 Frederick Dunn, Bryn Awel *Kelly's*
- 1885 FW Dunn, occ at £50+ rent *Electoral Register*
- 1891 Frederick Wm Dunn, mining engineer, b Carmarthen + w + 5s +d + 6 servants
(chn aged 8 and 9 born in Blackheath, of 6 and under in Llanblethian) *Census#57*

(in 1895 Kelly's, FW Dunn was a JP, in 1906 Kelly's, a magistrate)
- 1901 Frederick Wm Dunn, mining engineer, b Carmarthen + w + 5s +d + 4 servants
Census#15
- 1911 Death of FW Dunn of The Cross *Parish records*
- 1912, August 29th A memorial was held in Llanblethian church, and the presentation made
of oak furniture, in memory of Mr F W Dunn J P who died 8th August 1911 *From Tilley
scrapbooks*
- 1914 Mrs Dunn *Kelly's*
- 1915 Death of Jennett Dunn *Parish records*
Death of three Dunn sons *Cowbridge war memorial*
FEP Dunn continued as secretary and initially captain of Cowbridge Cricket Club.
Dunn Memorial Gates to C Athletic Club are in his memory

1923,6 William Brabazon Hallowes, JP

Kelly's

194? Lady Byass, who had moved from Llandough Castle
)

1950s Mr and Mrs Charneau, of Royal Sovereign pencil factory in Pontyclun
)

1961-90 Mr and Mrs Hume Anderson (purchased from Homfray Penllyn estate)
)

1990-2002 Mr and Mrs John Clowes
)

2002- Mr John Foster Thomas
)

Local knowledge

Roadside cross (outside The Cross, on Church Road) – listed 22/02/1963 (amended 16/09/1999) as a Grade 2 monument for its medieval structure.
'Of medieval origins, stump of square shaft in square socket on base of three restored square steps. Sides of socket retain traces of arcading'. *Record no : 13145*

Sources/references :

GRO = Glamorgan Record Office

PRO = Public Record Office, Kew

NLW = National Library of Wales

Hunt & Co, Kelly's = trade directories in GRO

D/D = deeds in GRO

Parish registers, County Rates = in GRO