

## Hill House, Llanblethian

*Hill House* stands further down the hill from *The Cross*. It is worthy of mention in the RCAHM volume of farmhouses and cottages in Glamorgan, as a good example of a house with central stairs and which has the date - 1726 - inscribed on a wing of the present building. The oldest part has massive stone walls; the verandah is of Victorian date.

We are almost sure that this was one of the properties owned by Thomas Wilkins of Great House in the early eighteenth century, and after his death by his son Cann Wilkins. William Thomas, a land agent and property owner, lived there in 1775, when it was sold by him to Thomas Lewis of Cowbridge, together with the stable, barn and rickyard on the western side of the road (now converted into a separate house).

In 1791, Revd Robert Nicholl of Llanmaes bought the house (and Thomas Lewis's furniture in it), but after four years sold it on to Revd John Morgan, the vicar of Llanblethian. On his death, it passed to his widow, Mary, and then to a niece Ann Thomas, who lived in *Hill House* from 1824 to after 1840. Some of her letters, to Mrs Jones of Bath (formerly of *Crossways*) have been preserved, and give a picture of life in the village in the 1830s - vandalism linked to drinking at *The Picton*, buying a mare at St Mary Hill fair, the availability of coal from a depot at *The Golden Mile* inn, and in 1836 - "my house is full of workmen painting and papering, the walls had gone so shabby".

By 1851, *Hill House* was occupied by William Edmondes, together with his wife, sister-in-law and 3 servants. He was described in Hunt's Directory of 1848 as solicitor, Town Clerk, clerk to the Guardians of the Bridgend Union, and superintendent registrar. According to David Jones of Wallington, he shot himself in a house (now demolished) in Church Street, Cowbridge, in 1855, having embezzled £1200 from the Bridgend Union.

The next inhabitants were William Smyth, a lieutenant in the Third Iniskillin Guards, and his wife Ann (from Llandow) and daughter. Walter Smyth, their son, became a chemist in Merthyr Tydfil; his first wife died in childbirth in 1855, but he remarried Mary Annie Morgan of Llanblethian in 1866.

From 1870 to 1892 William Thomas and his wife Jane, from Merthyr, and 3 children lived here, having moved from *Cowbridge Town Mill*. William Thomas was a maltster and manure dealer, and his sons were in business with him. He owned the malthouse in Factory Road until it was taken over by Hancocks Brewery. Frank Wyatt, a faithful servant, used to drive the high-wheeled cart for hauling the barley to the malthouse. William Thomas died in 1892; his son, William Richard Thomas, who married Elizabeth Rogers (daughter of the Cowbridge ironmonger who had shot himself in 1882) took over the property.

On her husband's death in 1900, Elizabeth continued to live in *Hill House*, even after her remarriage, when she became Mrs Moon; she sold the house to Thomas Thomas of Red Farm Penllyn, who was building up his holdings in Llanblethian, in 1908. The tenants were George Morris and his wife, who had previously lived in *St Quintins*.

In 1914, Joseph Wm Hall had taken over; he was a hay dealer, and a Glamorgan magistrate; his wife was reputedly a member of the Bird's Custard family. In 1926, Francis William Crawshay lived here.

*From 'Llanblethian Buildings and People', CRS 2001*

Present building perhaps 1850ish but wing dates from 1726 (carved stone shows date). Stables across road were part of Hill House land.

The house was visited by Carlyle in 1850 in the course of his writing the life of John Stirling (1806-44) – one of the world's first military commentators and correspondents. Stirling used to get news from the front to Llanblethian and analyse it here at Hill House. In the garden, top corner towards Mount Ida, is Carlyle's 'twmp' where Stirling used to stand to see the mail coach coming over Stalling Down.

Other inhabitants : Thomas a farmer and Rogers a brewer, Joseph Hall hay merchant – married a daughter of the Birds custard family. They met while drinking water in Llandrindod or Llanwrtyd. *J Alden's notes*

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1715 Lord Windsor and others to Tristram, conveyance *Deeds (as transcribed in WAH Fisher's notebooks) = deeds WAHF*

1719, June Thomas Wyndham to Thomas Wilkins – conveyance (15<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1724 J Llewellyn to Thomas Wilkins – conveyance) *Deeds (Larby)*

1724 Thos Wyndham to Thos Wilkins, conveyance *Deeds (WAHF)*

1740, 30<sup>th</sup> August J Thomas and his wife to E Thomas – declaration *Deeds (Larby)*

1752, 23<sup>rd</sup> August J Thomas and Ann Thomas to Margaret Aubrey – mortgage *Deeds (Larby)*

1761 Cann Wilkins to Wm Thomas, lease and release *Deeds (WAHF)*

1772, 2<sup>nd</sup> May Thomas Edmondes to John Edmonds – assignment of mortgage and bonds *Deeds (Larby)*

1772, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October Margatey Thomas and John Thomas to Thos Lewis, lease and release *Deeds (WAHF)*

1774, 20<sup>th</sup> July John Edmonds to Thos Lewis – assignment of an assignment of a mortgage and bonds. Copy agreement of Miss Margaret Aubrey and Thomas Edmondes. *Deeds (Larby)*

1775 House sold by Wm Thomas of Llanblethian, Esq., to Thomas Lewis of Cowbridge, gent, for £367/10/-; capital messuage, mansion house, where Wm Thomas dwells, and stable, bam and rickyard on W side, and now held by lease by William Thomas under Lady Windsor, all premises near Llanblethian Church, lately purchased by Wm Thomas from Cann Wilkins, Esq *D/D Dav 43*

1776 Wm Thomas to Richard Thomas, lease and release *Deeds (WAHF)*

1783, 10<sup>th</sup> April Thos Lewis to Richard Williams – lease and release by way of mortgage *Deeds (Larby)*

- 1789, August Thomas Lewis and wife to Miss Rebecca Piggott – lease and mortgage *Deeds (Larby)*
- 1790,3 November Thomas Lewis to Richard Williams – deed of further charge *Deeds (Larby)*
- 1791 Thomas Lewis to Robert Nicholl, lease and release *Deeds (WAHF)*  
Estate purchased for £821,5s by Revd Robert Nicholl *D/D CF 17*  
“In this year I purchased of Mr Thomas Lewis the Llanblethian estate which cost me including all expenses attending the purchase, and the purchase of the furniture which he left behind him in the house £917.11 s.6d. (Personal account book of Robert Nicholl)  
*D/D CF 16*
- 1795 Robert and Mary Nicholl to John Morgan, lease and release *Deeds (WAHF)*  
Estate sold for £886 (but 2 closes of land sold in 1791 to Edward Nicholl of Llanblethian gent.) *D/DCF 17*

before 1805: House of Revd John Morgan

His will, Dec 1804, left lands in Llanblethian, Wick and St Brides Major to wife, Mary Morgan, then to nieces Ann and Susan Thomas

*NLW BUTE 1516, p30*

- 1798 Edward Nicholl to John Morgan – feoffment *Deeds (Larby)*
- 1800, 9 June Edward Nicholl to John Morgan – feoffment *Deeds (Larby)*
- 1809 Mr Francis Thomas to Revd John Morgan, lease and release *Deeds (WAHF)*

*‘Mr Jonathan Morgan lived at Llanblethian in the old house which stood where Hill House now stands. He was I think a lawyer. There were anecdotes respecting him floating about the village in my childhood but I can only recall one : his telling Molly the servant maid (afterwards the wife of John the Shoemaker – Sion y Crydd) on the morning of all Fools’ Day to go and milk the ducks. Molly got the pail out for the purpose!*

*His widow who was also dead long before my time was somewhat of a character. She fancied herself famous for making plain cake. Visitors called the day – the Nicholls of Ham – and the plain cake was brought out. “Take some of it Mrs Nicholl, it is very plain, there is neither cream nor currants in it”, said good, delicate Mrs Jonathan Morgan, whose stomach repelled everything rich. “Oh” said Mrs Nicholl (whose taste was not quite so plain) “I shouldn’t like it any the worse if there had been!”.*

*David Jones of Wallington in ‘Anecdotes of Glamorgan People’ 1876*

1821 Mary Morgan died

Her will, May 1821, included bequests to her husband’s nephew Charles Thomas, and his sisters Ann and Susan; to her sister in law Mrs Catherine Jones of Crossways, widow and relict of her late brother Revd Henry Jones. (Her other late brother was Lt Gen Wm Jones)

*D/D C 1148*

1823 House surrendered to Ann Thomas under terms of Revd John Morgan’s will

(Mary and Susan having died)

*Bute, p30*

1824 Ann Thomas

*D/D BE 1 -2 (Bute)*

1829-31	Miss Ann Thomas, house and land, 4/9	<i>LTA</i>
1840	Anne Thomas, owned and occupied	<i>Tithe# 183</i>
1850, 11 <sup>th</sup> January	Death of Ann Williams, aged 60, at The Hill.	<i>Cambrian</i>
1851	William Edmondson, attorney	<i>Census# 12</i>
1859	Charles Thomas of Upton Castle, nr Pembroke, o William Smith, paying £50 pa rent, occ	<i>Elect reg.</i>
1861	William Smyth, Lieutenant, 3rd Iniskillen Guards, b Ireland + wife + dau + visitor	<i>Census#9</i>
1866	Marriage of Mary Annie Morgan of Llanblethian, daughter of Thomas Morgan, gent, to Walter Smyth, widower, chemist of Merthyr Tydfil, son of William Smyth, Lieut in Royal Fusiliers <i>Llb Church records</i>	
1868	Captain William Smyth	<i>Slaters</i>
1869	Charles Thomas, of Upton Castle, nr Pembroke, owned	<i>Elect reg</i>
1871	William Thomas, 55, maltster and manure dealer + wife + 2 sons + daughter and 2 servants /	<i>Census# 16</i>
1874	William Thomas occupied; Mrs Charles Thomas owned Hill House (including 20 acres), also R Bassett Esq. owned Malthouse, King St.	<i>Glamorgan County Rate 12</i>
1881	William Thomas, 64, maltster, + wife 4 son + 2 daughters + servant	<i>Census# 14</i>
	Mary Edith Thomas married David Walter Savours of Rhoose. Had 4 children.	<i>Memoirs of Wm David Savours</i>
1888	Owner - Charles Thomas	<i>Bute sale docs</i>
1891	Wm Thomas, maltster and manure agent + son + daughter + servant	<i>Census#55</i>
1892	Wm Thomas died	<i>Mon. inscrip. Llb - GFHS</i>
1892	Marriage of Wm Richard Thomas, 39, maltster, of Lib, son of Wm Thomas, maltster, deed, to Elizabeth, 37, of Llanblethian, dau of Joseph Rogers, draper, decd.	<i>Llb church records</i>
1906	Mrs Moon, Hill House  (Elizabeth Alice Moon, formerly the wife of Wm Richard Thomas,	<i>Kelly's</i>

eldest son of Wm Thomas, who died 1900. Mrs Moon died 1934)

*Mon. inscrip. Llb -GFHS*

1908 Sale to T Thomas, Red Farm, for £1,100

*D/D SA8/20*

1910 Mr and Mrs George Morris

*Cowbridge Fire Service Records*

1910 George Morris, occ, Thomas Thomas, o

*D/D PRO/VAL/1/46*

1911, 5<sup>th</sup> January Thomas Thomas farmer and cattle dealer to Joseph William Hall of Llanblethian merchant for £2600 the 3 items as previously (then mortgaged to Thomas Thomas, paid in full 4/10/1913).

1913 "Oct. Re-conveyance of Hill House and land from Thomas Thomas"

*Gwyn & Gwyn ledger*

1914 Mr JW Hall paid off mortgage on Hill House

*Gwyn & Gwyn ledger*

(6/11/1896: Cllr Joseph W Hall nominated Mayor of Cowbridge, eldest son of late Mr Joseph Hall, implement merchant

*S. Wales Daily News)*

1914-17 Mrs Moon, late of Hill House received rent of malthouse

*Gwyn & Gwyn*

1918 Mrs Hall, Hill House, needing general cook. Two in family.

*Western Mail*

1923 Joseph William Hall, magistrate for Glamorgan

*Kelly's*

1924, 26 September JW Hall to Helen Mabel Sophonisba Crawshay, Hill House and pasture field and plantation No. 759 (2 acres 3r 11 p), and also part of fields 751 and 753 (20p)

1924 Lease, JW Hall to FG Crawshay, 17.864 acres, part of Hill House farm (fields 751,3,4,5,7 and 825)

1926 Francis William Crawshay

*Kelly's*

1928, 20 November Conveyance, Mrs GL Hall and others to FG Crawshay of Hill House, part of Hill House farm as shown.

1930s Alan Gibbs

*Viv Wythe's reminiscences*

2000 Owners - Mr and Mrs Adrian Larby. Mrs Larby is great-great-granddaughter of John Cory who founded the shipowning company of John Cory & Sons, Ltd. Her father is Raymond Cory, formerly of the Old Vicarage. Before the Larbys moved in, the house belonged to Mrs Larby's grandmother, Mrs Ethel Cory

House was built in 3 sections

(i) dated by inscription 1726 - massive stone walls up to 8 feet thick

- (ii) visible in hall where the stone floor slabs change from a diamond shape to rectangular
- (iii) verandah is Victorian

*'Welsh Style', magazine of 'Western Mail & Echo', May 1989*

**Sources/references :**

*GRO = Glamorgan Record Office*

*PRO = Public Record Office, Kew*

*NLW = National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth*

*WAHF = the notebooks of WAH Fisher, in Cardiff Central Library*

*Bute papers = in NLW & GRO*

*Kelly's and other directories = in GRO*

*Larby = occupiers of the property*

*SA = Stephenson & Alexander documents in GRO*

*D/D = deeds in GRO*

*Gwyn & Gwyn = Cowbridge solicitors*