

The Mill, Llanblethian

For at least 475 years a water-powered corn mill has existed in Llanblethian. The 1570 Manorial survey records its existence, and then in 1582 and 1587 the then Lord of the Manor, the Earl of Pembroke, leased 'one water grist mill called Llanblethian Mill' firstly to Howell Meyrick and then to Thomas Williams, yeoman, of Llanblethian. Sixteenth-century deeds relating to the mill also exist - and also the sad details of an inquest in 1679 when Hopkin Rees, yeoman, was killed by the water wheel.

Revd David Nicholl of Llanblethian (possibly the father of Revd Henry Nichols, the first Sir Leoline Jenkins Missionary Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, who served in the 'Welsh tract' of Pennsylvania in the early years of the eighteenth century) took a eighty-year lease in 1694, but the 1767 Manorial Rentals show William Bruce of Great House as the owner. A fuller account of the occupants starts with the sale of the mill, and Cowbridge Town Mill, by the Bruce trustees in 1796, to Henry Edmund, a Llanblethian farmer.

When Henry Edmund died in 1830, his will - leaving the mill initially to his wife Elizabeth - eventually gave rise to a large number of people with an interest in the property. However, in 1840 Elizabeth was owner and occupier, and by 1851 Edmund Edmond was installed as miller, living there with his wife Mary, two sons and two daughters. By 1861, he was regarded as a miller maltster. In that year his son William, also a miller, married Gwenllian the daughter of John Jenkins, a farmer living in *Greystones* in Factory Road, and by 1871 William was the resident miller.

When the mill was auctioned in 1877 (and sold to John Hopkins) it was described as "house, mill, stable and pigsty in front of the mill, garden and orchard (where there were growing several walnut trees), croft or quillet of land which divides the Rover Thaw from the meadow called Gwayn Beddor" (the field leading to Cowbridge mill). The advertisement stated that "the machinery of the mill has recently undergone considerable improvement, a machine for refining flour has been added, and the large wheels are of iron". William Edmund continued living there with his wife, three sons and three daughters, but by 1884, he had been replaced by David Spencer, born in Pendoylan, who lived there with his wife, three sons (David, Llewellyn and Gilead - the latter became a wheelwright in Bear Lane in Cowbridge) and their adopted daughter Emily Humphreys.

Llewellyn later took over the mill for a time, and was there in 1920, but then it was taken over by Harry Stone, who lived there till 1954. Initially, flour was the main product. They also had a bakehouse on the other side of the road (where *Afon Ladradd* is today), and delivered bread (in competition with Thomas's bakehouse), to the villages around Cowbridge. The Stones had a regular contract to supply the Grammar School with bread, and an intermittent one with the Girls' High School. At this time the mill was still owned by the Hopkinses, who had given the land for the Baptist Sunday School, and kept horses in the walnut orchard.

Harry's son, Walter, helped keep the mill going until it was closed in 1948. Walter Stone states that closure happened after a visit from some local councillors with the River Board engineer, who explained that the sluice gates were contributing to the flooding of Cowbridge, and so Harry volunteered to close the mill and give up the water rights. By then the demand for milling had decreased considerably, however. The

mainstay of the mill's production had become rough-crushed grain for cattle and chickens, and engineering developments meant that farmers could fix attachments, called kibblers, to their tractors to produce the rough-crushed grain themselves.

The mill is now a private house, but the stones of the mill leat, which led to the mill wheel, are still in existence, buried in the garden.

'Llanblethian Buildings and People' 2001

1570 (24/9/12 Elizabeth) William Gibbon ... 1 pcell p.ti.juxt.molendin.de
Bute inquisition

1582 (1/8/25 Elizabeth) Henry, Earl of Pembroke, to Hywel Meyrick – one water grist mill called Llanblethian mill
Bute D/218/3, National Library of Wales

1587 (10/11/30 Elizabeth) Henry, Earl of Pembroke, to Thomas Williams of Llanblethian yeoman – one water grist mill called Llanblethian mill
Bute D/218/6 NLW

1633, 30th September Between Philip, Earl of Pembroke, and William Bassett of Button gent. – one water grist mill in Llanblethian, one cottage or old house in Cowbridge built against the wall of the said town, in the north side of the east gate, wherein a smith sometime kept a forge, now in possession of William Bassett
Bute D/218/11 NLW

1679, 19th April Inquest at Cowbridge – Hopkin Rees of Llanblethian, yeoman, was killed by the wheel of the water grist mill

1694, 29th September Indenture between Jeffrey Jeffreys and John Jeffreys of London, trustees of the Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery, and Revd David Nicholl of Llanblethian – all that water grist mill commonly called Llanblethian Mill – 80 year lease at £4 a quarter
Bute D/218/17 NLW

1767 William Bruce Esq., owner of Llanblethian Mill and a plot of ground - £2 rent (Windsor rentals)
D/D Dav 39

1778 William Bruce owner - Llanblethian Mill and plot of ground
Bute R6/17-19 NLW

1792 Mr Thomas Williams of the Mill - £3 (Llanblethian accounts, probably) *P/13/1*

1796, September 12th Indenture of lease and re-lease between John Knight Esq. and Revd Thomas Hole and Henry Edmund
D/D X57
(Hole and Edmund were heirs of Revd Thomas Bruce, who died 1790 *D/D Br 71*)

1821 – 31 Henry Edmond, owner and occupier – mill and 7 acres, 9s/4d
Land Tax Assessment

Henry Edmund had lived in Cowbridge Town Mill between 1794 and 1799, according to land tax assessment records. He moved into Llanblethian Mill about 1800.

1830 Henry Edmund of Llanblethian yeoman died. His will, dated 10/1/1812, devised Llanblethian Mill to his wife Elizabeth, and then daughters Mary, Rebecca and Elizabeth. Subsequent conveyances were complicated by the number of his descendents with a share in the property.
D/D X57

1840 Elizabeth Edmondes – owner and occupier
Tithe 317

Elizabeth, Henry Edmunds's widow, continued to live at Llanblethian Mill until her death in 1844, according to trade directories of that period, and also her obituary in 'Y Drysorfa Gynulleidfaol', 1844. A daughter of Henry and Elizabeth married the Revd William Griffiths of Llanharan (part owner of the mill in an 1877 conveyance).

The 1841 census for Miskin, shows the miller there as Edmund Edmund, who later appears as miller in Llanblethian from 1848. His son, William, was a baker and shopkeeper at 38 Eastgate, Cowbridge in the 1901 census.

Information from his descendent, Michael Edmunds in 2003

1847 Daughter born to Richard and Catherine Evans of Llanblethian, miller
Llanblethian parish records

1848 Mention in a trade directory of Edmund Edmund as miller of Llanblethian mill
Info from descendent Michael Edmunds 2003

1850-1865 Owner : William Griffiths of Llanharan
Electoral Register

1851 Edmond Edmond, 49, miller, born Pencoed, plus wife Mary, 45, born Llanarfarn With sons William, 20, born Llantrisant, and Thomas, 16, born Llanharry, and daughters Mary, 14, and Rachel, 11
Census 59

1861 Edmund Edmond, 57, miller maltster, wife Mary and daughter Mary, 24, milliner
Census 68

1861 Marriage of William Edmund, miller, of Llanblethian, son of Edmund Edmund, miller, to Gwenllian Jenkins of Llanblethian, daughter of Thomas Jenkins, farmer
Llanblethian church records

1871 William Edmund, 41, miller and farmer, born Tonyrefail, with wife Jane, 35, born Llanblethian, son Edmund, 7, born Llanblethian, daughter Margaret, 5, born Llanblethian, and visitor Llewellyn Jenkins, scholar, born Llanblethian *Census 74*

1876 Daughter born to Evan Deere, miller, Llanblethian *Parish records*

1877, 4th September Sale of freehold property at the Bear Hotel, Cowbridge :

1). House, mill, stable and pig sty in front of the mill; garden, croft and orchard adjoining – now in the occupation of Mr William Edmunds

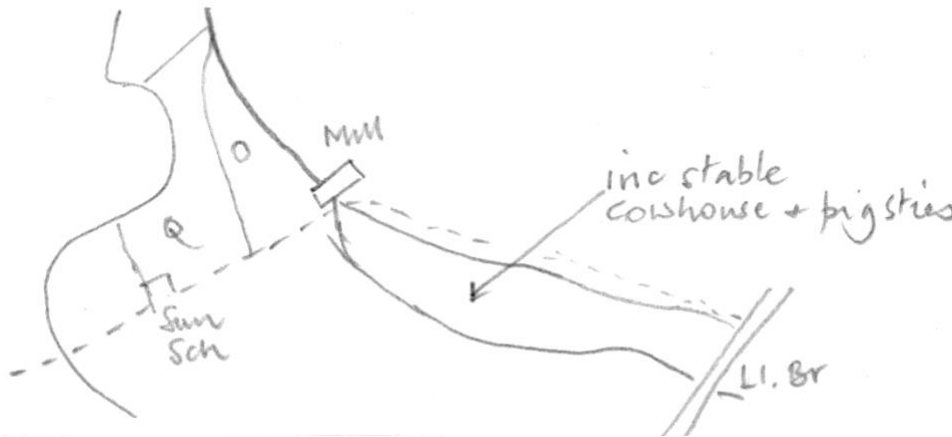
2). Field near Cowbridge Town Mill

“The machinery of the mill has recently undergone considerable improvement; a machine for refining flour has been added, and the large wheels are of iron”.

*Newscutting from the scrapbook of David Jones of Wallington
(in Cardiff Central Library)*

1877 Conveyance of Llanblethian Mill – the Revd William Griffiths and others to Mr John Hopkins....all that water grist mill commonly called Llanblethian Mill, with the dwelling house, outbuildings and gardens thereto adjoining, and also all that orchard where there are, or were, frequently growing several walnut trees, and all that croft or quillet of land which divides the river Thaw from the meadow called Gwayn Beddor

D/D X 57



1877 sketch by J Alden

1881 William Edmund, 50, miller (corn), born Llanblethian
Elizabeth Edmund, wife, 43
Edmund Edmund, 18, son
Margaret Edmund, 14, daughter
John Edmund, 9, son

- Thomas Edmund, 8, son
Gweny Edmund, 5, daughter
Elizabeth Edmund, 1, daughter *Census 76*
- April 1881 A Berkshire boar pig was kept at Llanblethian mill, 'bred by one of the highest breeders in England'. *Glamorgan Gazette*
- 1884 David Spencer, miller, Llanblethian water mill *Kelly's directory*
- 1891 David Spencer, 48, miller, born Pendoylan (spoke Welsh)
Wife Margaret, 50, born Cardiff (spoke Welsh)
David Spencer, 20, miller's son, born Llancarfan (spoke both Welsh and English)
Llewellyn, son, 16, born Llancarfan
Giliad, 7, scholar born Llanblethian
Emily Humphreys, adopted, 13, scholar *Census 79*
- 1896 David Spencer *Electoral register*
- 1910 'My father, Thomas Price Spencer, was born at the Old Mill in 1910. He lived there with his family until 1926. They moved to Newbridge, Gwent, after the business they had failed. The mill was first worked by my great grandfather, David Spencer, about 1870, although the history must go back much further. I now live in Pittsburgh, USA, but have fond memories of trips we took to Llanblethian with my father as a small boy. He would show me where he played as a child - the castle at the top of the hill was one of those places. I have visited there recently, as I stopped by during my trip over for the world cup. I have many relatives buried at the St John the Baptist church yard - my great grandfather David, and my grandfather Llewellyn, just two of them. My father was killed in a car crash in 1970 when I was just 17. I wish I had asked him more about the mill and about his life there.'
E-mail to Jeff Alden 15/12/1999 from Tony Spencer
- 1912 David Spencer, miller *Kelly's directory*
- 1912 Hannah Spencer, his wife, died aged 57 - he then married her sister Elizabeth
Llanblethian church records
- 1914 William Nell, miller *Kelly's directory*
- 1920 Llewellyn Spencer, miller *Kelly's directory*
- 1926 ? Edwin or Edmund Lewis, insurance agent, Mill House, Llanblethian
- 1920s Harry Stone
- 1930 Death of Elizabeth, aged 80 years, the second wife of Davis Spencer (and sister of his first wife).

Interview with Walter Stone, Llanblethian :

August 2000

Walter's father, Harry Stone, was in the mill from the 1920s to 1954. The mill ceased to operate in 1948. This was after a visit from Councillors Percy Smith and Johnson Miles, with the River Board engineer Mr Wright, who said that the sluice gates were contributing to the flooding of Cowbridge. Harry volunteered to close the mill and give up the water rights. The demand for milling had decreased considerably by then as farmers could fix attachments to their tractors (kibblers) to produce rough crushed grain for cattle and chickens, which was formerly the mainstay of the mill's production. Walter kept the mill going over the years. They also had a bakehouse opposite, where Afon Ladrud is today.

There were at least four bakers in Cowbridge and Llanblethian at that time. – the Stones, Thomas, Harry Gibbs, and Watts (where John Thomas the undertakers is now in Eastgate). The Stoneses delivered to the villages of Sigginston, Llysworney, Llandough, St Mary Church, Welsh St Donats and Penllyn. They had a regular contract too with the Grammar School (40 boarders there), and an intermittent one with the Girls' High School. With the High School, they were eventually undercut by the Co-op (political considerations).

The mill was owned by Hopkins, in trust to Arthur Jones (Cowbridge garage). Hopkins gave the land for the Baptist Sunday School in Piccadilly (now a private house), and kept horses in the walnut orchard.

See further details of the mill from Walter Stone in 'Cowbridge and District Remembered', and in the article on file.

In the 1950s, the Stones had a shop in the mill (the room on the right of the front door), then in the '60s Mrs Stone ran a shop from their bungalow after they moved out of the mill.

Memories of Roy Harris, living in Ar y Mynydd

In subsequent years, the mill has been a private house, with a plot of land across the river Thaw accessed by a little bridge.

Sources/references :

D/D = deeds in Glamorgan Record Office (GRO)

Llanblethian rates, parish records and most other documents sourced here = held in GRO