

A
BRIEF
HISTORY
OF
LITTLE MILL
LANVITHIN



by
John M Cann



THE EXTRA PAROCHIAL OF LLANFITHIN

Based on the 1840 Tithe Map.
Six holdings outlined, all with different owners.

The spelling

Llanfithin is used to indicate the whole Extra parochial district and Llanvithyn for the Mansion House and lands, as in the 1981 O/S maps. However, where references are being quoted the spelling is as in the reference. Lanvithin in the title is the spelling in the first of the Little Mill deeds. The various names for Little Mill and spellings of Llanfithin, are in bold or larger font when they are first used

Cover picture from an 1889 black and white pencil sketch by David Jones of Wallington, by kind permission of Cardiff County Council Library Services.

A Brief History of Little Mill, Lanvithin

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Llanfeuthin grange

1190-1536 There was a pre-Norman cemetery and a chapel of around 1190 and the whole of Llanfythin became a grange of the Cistercians of **Margam Abbey**.¹ This is why Llanfythin is extra parochial and paid no tithes to the Church. Margam owned about 470 acres parcelled out into several tenancies, occupied and worked by lay tenants. Little Mill may have existed but it was most likely a separate tenancy, though owned by Margam Abbey.

1536-1712 With the dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, the tenant of Llanfythin was Sir John Raglan of Garnllwyd, the neighbouring mansion, but he didn't buy it. In 1546 the Crown sold it to Sir Edward Carne of Ewenny Priory. He died in 1561, and a few years later his son Thomas assigned the **grange of llanvithen** to Hugh Griffith & his son William, the infamous Welsh recusant.

William Griffith of Lanvithin

An important Glamorgan recusant (one who refused to attend the services of the Church of England, a penal offence) he owned a lot of property in the Vale of Glamorgan and elsewhere, obtaining the grange of Llanvithin in 1565, though sharing his time between many other places (on the continent with other catholic exiles, his mother's 'safe house' near Uxbridge, and his houses in St. Mary-super-Montem & Herefordshire). As a result of the 1587 inquisition (which gives the 300 acres for Lanvithin, Ref. PRO C.142/181/106) the income from two thirds of his estate was paid direct to the exchequer until 1600 when he gave up his recusancy & conformed and so had his estate restored.²

Hugh died in 1577 owning only 300 of the 470 acres of Llanvithin. William owned the same in 1587² and sold it all in 1602 to Hugh Sandford, a neighbour in Wilton, Hereford, for £1,300. In 1628 Sandford sold it to a branch of the Bassetts who were already occupying it. The family link is unknown but Thomas Bassett sold to Sir Richard Bassett of Beaupré in 1679. After Sir Richard's death Robert Jones (the 1st) of Fonmon bought it in 1707.¹

Little Mill & its Owners

1602-1774 The original 1602 Indenture of sale by Griffith of the grange of llanvithen ("*commonly known as Monkton Farm*") exists in the Fonmon archives in the Glamorgan Record Office.³ A small attachment is headed "*A true and perfect note of all such leases as are meant and intended to be excepted in and by ye deed indented herunto annexed.*" These 'excepted' leases total about 170 acres, the difference between the whole of Margam's grange and that which Griffith owned. One is "*Item one lease heretofore made unto Ieuan David of and upon one mill and too and twentie acres of landes arable meadow and pasture for and during two lives at and upon the yearly rent of twelve poundes and other duties.*" So Little Mill was part of the grange of llanvithen in 1536, already separated by 1577 and by 1602 leased to a Ieuan David & probably his son.

Thomas Richard of Walterston owned Little Mill when he died in 1729, though when or from whom he acquired it is not known, but it may have been still in the possession of the descendants of Sir Edward Carne. In his will (NLW LL1729/138) Thomas Richard left all his estate to Elizabeth Hopkins of Porthkerry for her life, after which Walterston Messuage & Lands was to go to her brother John, Grindon plus three acres to her brother David, and **Little Mill, Lanvithin** to go to her brother **Thomas Hopkins**. Elizabeth married John Holland in 1732 and subsequently he sold the Walterston inheritance to her brother John for 5/- (GRO D/D Mbn 194). One assumes that John parcelled out the inheritance by a similar tactic and Thomas owned Little Mill from ca. 1732.

In 1766 Thomas Edwards of Cardiff bought Little Mill for £300 from the estate of Tho^s Hopkins of London. It was "*All that Watergrist Mill with its appurtenances Called the Little Mill and one Orchard and . . . containing in the whole ab^t 15 acres more or less*".⁴

Thomas Edwards & Thos Hopkins

This was almost certainly the Thomas Edwards (1716-94) of Llandaff who was Steward to the Cardiff Lordship (of Lord Windsor) from 1756-71 and a Clerk of the Peace from 1763-94.⁵ He was doubtless a Solicitor so may be a partner of the firm 'Edwards, Wood, Wood & Dalton' from whose draft deeds the information on the sale of 1766 comes.⁴ The draft Indenture is "*between Thos Jay of the County of Northampton, Gent (1st part) Sarah Hopkins of London Wo & Executrix of Thos Hopkins of London decd (2nd part) and Thos Edwards of Cardiff Esq. (3rd part)*" Thos Hopkins had previously mortgaged the property to Thos Jay. Sarah Hopkins repaid Jay and "*Agreed with Thos Edwards the absolute Sale & purchase of the Inheritance of Sd premises*" for £300. Thomas Hopkins was the youngest son of Thomas and Catherine Hopkins of Porthkerry (one assumes that Catherine was probably a Richard and related to Thomas Richard) Thomas married a Sarah and apparently moved to London prior to his death in March 1765. (The Diary of Wm Thomas CCL)

1774-1824 Little Mill deeds exist from 1774 to 1905. In August 1774 Robert Jones (the 3rd) of Fonmon exchanged, with Thomas Edwards, property in St. Fagans for "*All that Messuage tenement Mill and Several Closes of Land . . . called little Mill Farm containeing about twenty ffour acres . . . at Llanvithin in the parish of Lancarvan . . .*" Sometime after this exchange a map (*see p. 6*) was inserted in a Survey book of Robert Jones estate.⁶ Written on it is "*This Grist Mill and land below Lanvithin bo' of Mr Edwards*" and "*Let for £30 to George David - Between Lanvithin house & the river*".

In December 1809, for £1,000, Mr Thomas Jenkins of Penmark, farmer, bought "*All that Messuage etc. . . . called Little Mill ffield and containing about twenty four acres*" This was part of a major deal with Edward Jenkins and his brothers in which Mrs Joanna Jones and her son Robert Jones (the 4th) of Fonmon sold "*one ffarm called Lanvithin containing 187 acres, one other farm called Lanvithin Vach containing 24 acres, one other farm called fflexland vawr containing 134 acres . . .*"⁷ as part of an enforced sale to cover the considerable debts of his profligate father.

In a second 'Felin Fach' (probably the factory) were two female servants (28 & 11), two male servants (13 & 11) and a Farmer, John Morgan (35). The David household were down to five by 1851, with the departure of Thomas, his wife and daughters. Jenkin David (32) Miller 'Employs 1 Lab', was now Head of the household with a wife Margaret (29) but no children They had however a 12yr old girl as House Servant, a 19yr old man 'at the Mill' and John David (47) Ag. Lab. (down as a servant not relative)

Under Little Mill in the 1861 census, the Davids have gone. We now have Evan Jones (44) Farmer of 25 acres, his wife Margaret (48), sons Edward (15) and John (7), a daughter Maria (13) Scholar, and boarding, William Thomas (46) a married Ag. Lab. (*agricultural labourer*) In the 1871 entry John is now the Scholar, both Evan and his son Edward now Millers, and the entry headed **Llanvithyn Mill**, the name by which it is again known today.

According to William Liscombe, reported in the South Wales Echo in 1928 when he claimed to be 70, he came to Little Mill when he was 13.⁸ But he was born on the 4th of July 1859 in Exton in the district of Dulverton, Somerset.¹¹ So William was actually in his 70th year, nor was it correct that his father Robert Liscombe and family came to Little Mill in late 1872 or early 1873. They were in West Aberthaw when their son Walter was baptised in St. Athan on 27th Oct. 1875, when their daughter Dorcas Edith was on 27th Oct. 1878, and in Aberthaw Mill when Walter was buried on 6th January 1880.

In fact there was another miller (and his family) in Little Mill in 1873. The death certificate of David Hopkins shows that he was a miller in Lanvithin Mill on the 30th of December 1873, when he "*Died from injuries, received on the 26th of December, to his right hand and arm it being dragged in and crushed between the cogs of the mill*". His son William, by then 23, was a 'Miller & Farmer' of Little Mill in January 1879 when his wife Alice Eliza gave birth to a daughter Annie. He had been a Miller in Llancafarn on their marriage certificate of Dec 1876, which was doubtless Little Mill. By 1881 the Hopkins farmed just up the road in Pencarreg.¹⁰ It is unlikely that William was related to Thomas Hopkins owner of Little Mill from ca. 1732 to 1766.

In the 1871 census, the whole family of Robert and Sarah Liscombe were in Butchers Farm, Luxborough, Somerset.¹¹ It would seem that they first moved from Somerset to the Aberthaw Mill, St Athan, probably when William was 13. They left there for Little Mill probably in 1880 after their son Walter died, leaving Henry and William to run the Aberthaw Mill. Henry (26) and William (21) were both millers in Aberthaw Mill in 1881, with their sisters Sarah Ann and Mary Jane.¹¹ The 1881 Census for Little Mill has Robert Liscombe as 48 a Cornmillier & Farmer of 20 acres, with his wife Sarah (43) sons Frederick (13) & James (11) and daughter Dorcas (2). While Robert Liscombe had a twelve year lease on Little Mill from 2nd of February 1889,¹¹ he and Sarah moved to Cwm Barry Farm sometime before 1891 taking Frederick and James with them.¹¹ By 1896 Robert was farming Downs Farm, Llantwit Major, and only then did he transfer his lease of Little Mill to his sons Henry and William, for £40.¹¹ But his sons had actually taken over the Mill before 1891 when the census gives Henry (35) Miller, head of the household with his brother William (31) Miller, his sisters Mary Jane (26) Domestic, & Dorcas Edith (12) Scholar, and Thomas Nash (15) General Servant. Henry had stopped milling by 1894 and was selling and carrying.¹¹

Under **Llanvythin Mill** in 1901, William is now head, Miller and Farmer Employer, has a wife Jane (35), a daughter Doris Jane (8) Scholar, sons Tudor William (5) & Ivor Walter Lougher (3). Brother Henry now 47 is Retired/Miller and there is a boy of 16 Carter to Mill & Farm Worker. Soon after this Henry dissolved the partnership with William and went back to his parents who were now in Downs Farm, Llantwit Major, where he died in 1907 aged 52 of TB of the lung.¹¹

The **Woollen Manufactory**, built by Thomas Jenkins before 1820, appears to have been part of the Little Mill tenancy until at least the 1930s. It is on the Tithe Map of 1840, though not in the Apportionment Book, but may appear in the 1841 Census as the 2nd Felin Fach being used by some of the Little Mill household. It is not in the 1851 Census return, but in 1861 as **Factory** it has Edward Wilde (29) and his wife Mary (37) both Wool Weavers.

There are in fact ten people living in the Factory, Mary's children by a previous marriage (her son William Collier (19) Ag. Lab. & four daughters aged 12, 11, 8 & 5) and two daughters aged 2 by Edward. In addition they have a boarder Phillip Norton (36) Wool Weaver. The boarder has gone by 1871 as have all but one of the stepchildren (now called Wilde), one of Edward's own young daughters is no more, and only Edward is now a Woolen Weaver.

In 1881 the household head is David Thomas (42) a Wool Manufacturer, also down in the Census as a 'Boarder'! He has a wife Elizabeth (30) two sons John (17) a Wool Weaver and David (6) and 6 daughters (aged 20 - 3), a total of 10 people living in the Factory.

By 1891 **Factory House** is uninhabited. The Factory appears in the 1878 O/S map as **Woollen Mill**, but in Sale particulars of 1905⁹ the plan shows the Factory as 'Woollen Mill (disused)' and the Schedule as 'Ruin & Garden'.

The Liscombe Years

1880 -1940 It looks as though Robert Liscombe rented Little Mill for £50 pa. at least from the renewal of lease in 1889 (Thomas David paid £80 in 1823) The 1905 Sale Particulars, give "*Little Mill 24a. 1r. 27p. Now and for many years in the occupation of Mr Wm. Liscombe and his predecessors, upon an annual 2nd February tenancy, at an annual rental of £50, tenant paying all outgoings. The Buildings comprise Corn Mill, in full working order, Dwelling House, four-stall Stable, Cow Shed, three Pig's Cots, &c*".⁹ William Liscombe bought it at this auction with the aid of a £600 mortgage from William James of Newport, Gentleman. Sometime before 1914 William appears to have resurrected the disused 'Woollen Manufactory' and converted it to a bakehouse. In 1927 William sold **Monastery Mill**, the name it retained until the late 20th century, to Mr W. Radcliffe for £1800. Nonetheless he continued to run the Mill until the 1930s and his son Tudor continued to bake bread in The Bakehouse until around 1937.

Little Mill was a working mill probably from the 15th Century, certainly the early 16th, until well into the 20th, some 400 years.

Born and Bred in Little Mill

The Liscombes

Since the conversion of Little Mill in the 1960s there have been children brought up there, though none of them will have been born there. Prior to it becoming uninhabited in the 1930s, one person still alive, Phil Watts, was nearly born there - although the actual birth took place in Barry, he and his mother returned to Little Mill when he was a day old, and he remained there for his first year, after which they lived in Abernant just up the road. Phil's mother Doris Jane (bapt. 16 July 1893) was certainly born and bred in Little Mill as were her brothers Tudor (bapt. 3 May 1896) & Ivor (bapt. 2 July 1898). All were children of William and Jane Liscombe. William Liscombe's sister Dorcas Edith (b. 1879) was not born but was bred in Little Mill.

There was at least one other child born in Little Mill probably just before the Liscombes came. Annie Hopkins was born in January 1879 daughter to Alice and William who was a Miller and Farmer. Annie certainly spent the first one or two years of her life at Little Mill.¹⁰

The Davids

Neither Thomas David (1784-1865) nor his wife Gwennlian (1785-1860) were born in Little Mill, though Thomas may have been related to the much earlier tenants with the same surname. They were from Little Mill by 3 November 1812 when Thomas their eldest son was baptised, and probably before 10 June 1810 when Ann their eldest was baptised, both in Llancarfan Church.

In fact all their eight children appear to have been born and bred in Little Mill. Margaret baptised on 30th Nov 1814, Edmund on 6 May 1817, Jenkin on 4 April 1819, Mary on 19 April 1821, Cate on 24 Oct 1823 and Rebecca on 30 Oct 1825. Margaret and Edmund, like Ann and Thomas, were baptised in Llancarfan Church and hence in the parish register.

The others appear in the 'Penmark & Aberthaw Calvinistic Methodist Society Non-parochial Register'. Jenkin and Mary were both baptised at home in Lanvithin Mill, and Cate and Rebecca in Aberthaw.

Of Thomas & Gwenllian's children, Jenkin had offspring born in Little Mill. His wife, Margaret Mumford of Llantrithyd, although already married to Jenkin in the census of 1841, appears not to have started a family until 1851 with the birth of Richard, baptised in Llancarfan Church on the 27 July. On 13th Oct 1853 a second son Thomas was baptised, though probably died young as he is not in the 1861 census. Their next child Gwenny (named after her grandmother) was also baptised in Llancarfan Church on the 25 Nov 1855. Their later children were born in Penarth.

It is very likely that Thomas and Gwenllian's eldest daughter Ann while married to Richard Thomas a butcher in Peterston Super Ely, had her baby Sephora in Little Mill, as Sephora claims to have always lived with her grandparents and the Parish Register records the baptism of *Deborah* Thomas daughter of Richard and Anne on the 17 April 1840 from Little Mill. In the 1841 census Ann Thomas was a female servant at Upper West Farm, Monknash. *Sepporah* was with her aged one 'at nurse'. Ann died 8 Nov 1843, in Little Mill according to Sephora then three. From then on Sephorah lived with Thomas and Gwenllian, her grandparents. So she was born and, at least partially, bred in Little Mill.

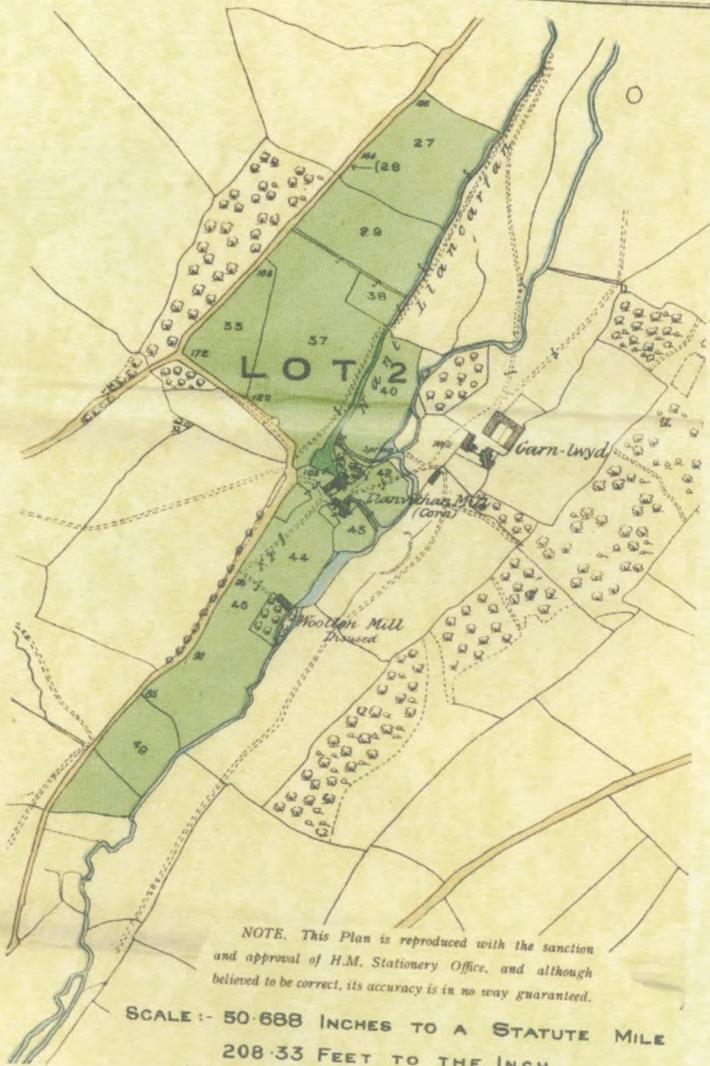
Much of the information from 1774 on is from the Little Mill Deeds. My thanks to Graham Levey and Phil Watts for the opportunity of making partial transcriptions of these, which are available in 'A History of Little Mill, Lanvithin' by John M Cann, Malthouse, April 2002 / revised Feb 2003 & May 2006.

References

- 1 RCHM Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan
Vol IV Part 1 pp 232&3
- 2 'William Griffith of Llanvithyn: a Glamorgan Recusant'
Morgannwg XXX (1986) pp8-19
- 3 1602 Indenture GRO D/D F 2118
- 4 GRO D/D XeO 39 pp 212-18
- 5 Information from Brian Ll. James
- 6 GRO D/D F/Vol 26 (See p. 6)
- 7 This is in both the Little Mill deeds, and a Flaxland 1810 Indenture
- 8 In the South Wales Echo of 1st October 1928, reprinted in the
Llancarfan Society Newsletter No. 99 August 2000
- 9 Sales Brochure for Little Mill, Flaxland and Broomwell, with Deeds
- 10 Information from Gwyneth Whitworth ,
granddaughter of Annie Hopkins who was born in Little Mill.
- 11 From Elizabeth Ann Jones, William Liscombe's great granddaughter,
extracted from family papers, mostly the
research work of Gwynne Liscombe, grandson of William Liscombe.

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NOTE. This Plan is reproduced with the sanction and approval of H.M. Stationery Office, and although believed to be correct, its accuracy is in no way guaranteed.

SCALE:- 50.688 INCHES TO A STATUTE MILE
208.33 FEET TO THE INCH

FROM THE SALES BROCHURE OF 1905



Little Mill in the 1900s, with William and other Liscombes
Courtesy Phil Watts

