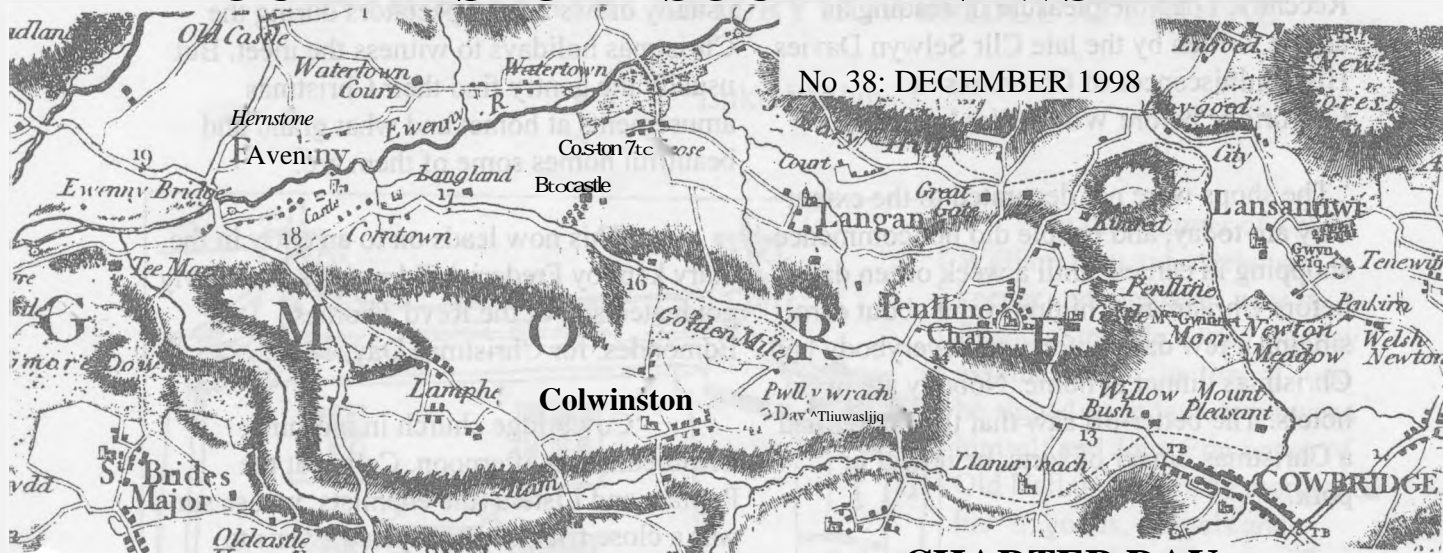


COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 38: DECEMBER 1998



MEETINGS FOR 1999

January 8th: 'The Cistercian Way - a 600-mile walk around Wales'.

Dr Maddie Grey

February 5th: 'Windsor Castle'.

Denis Heal

March 5th: 'Cardiff Mourns for a much-loved Marquess'.

Diane Walker

April 9th: 'The Vale - Scenery and Settlement'.

Viv Kelly

OFFICERS, 1998 9

President: Revd Norman Williams

Chairman: Jeff Alden, 773373

Vice-Chairman: Yvonne Weeding,
772878

Hon Secretary: John Miles, 772270

Hon Treasurers: Ivana Locke, 773252
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Programme Secretary: Derrick Kingham,
01443 228889

Publicity Officer: Jimmy Keay, 772879

Historic Monuments Officer: George
Haynes, 772415

Newsletter: Jeff Alden

Committee: Betty Alden, Arlene Boulton, Gwynneth Keay, Keith Jones, Bruce McGovern,
Val Shannon, Iris Simpson, Viv Whythe.

CHARTER DAY

For the 1999 Charter Day celebrations to be held on Saturday 13th March, we intend to go back to previous arrangements, with members being asked to provide a plate of savouries and a plate of the dessert course. Tickets - and further details - will be available in the January meeting.

BOOKS

History Society Library

The following books, belonging to the society, may be borrowed by members on request to the chairman:

Glamorgan: the Greater Houses
(RCAHM)

Glamorgan: Mediaeval Secular
Monuments (RCAHM)

Excavations in Cowbridge
1977-88 (GGAT)

Old Cowbridge: Hopkin James

CHRISTMAS in COWBRIDGE

Recently, I had the pleasure of reading an article written by the late Cllr Selwyn Davies. His reminiscences of Christmas in Cowbridge before World War I stated:

‘The shops were not decorated to the extent they are today, and people did not commence shopping in earnest until a week or ten days before Christmas. Children went about carol singing a few days before, and everybody had Christmas dinner at home. Nobody ate in hotels. The better-off saw that the poorer had a Christmas dinner of sorts, be it beef or pork.

Services were held in the morning in chapels and the church, and in one chapel there was a concert where the children recited and received gifts of books from the Sunday School, and the adults sang...’

Selwyn had also written about the stratification of society in that time, which fits in with this observation written in 1881, by an American. Wirt Sykes:

‘If society goes out at all on Boxing night, it goes to a full-dress concert, with artists of a high order... The centre of the hall was set apart as the “reserved full-dress circle” at such a concert I once attended in the little town of Cowbridge. The hall was a rustic assembly-room - the smallest of town halls - a dozen single gas-jets served to light it; but it was large enough for the town - the queer, quaint little old town of Cowbridge - and the “full-dress circle” thereof contained aristocrats of the bluest blood, the most high-toned noses, the most delightful manners, some of whom could trace their lineage back to William the Conqueror’s Norman knights....

Save on some such occasion as this, the gentfolk in Wales amuse themselves very little in the public eye. They have their fox-hunting of course - an amusement which

usually draws many spectators during the Christmas holidays to witness the meet. But usually the gentry find their Christmas amusements at home: and what grand and beautiful homes some of them are!’

This now leads on to an entry in the diary kept by Frederick Edmondson, the newly graduated son of the Revd Thomas Edmondson, for Christmas Day, 1862:

‘Cowbridge church in morning, Llanblethian in afternoon. Called at the Poplars and Listers (the chemists, whose son was a close friend). Family and Evans to dinner’ not much information there, but fortunately we also have the entertainment book kept by Mrs Harriet Edmondson, showing menus and table settings for that day.

The table was laid for the first course of Gravy soup, removed for the Roast Turkey, Boiled leg of mutton, sausages, artichokes, potatoes, curry, bread sauce, and caper sauce. The second course included all the following - macaroni, blancmange, mince pies, jam tart, gateau de pommes and plum pudding. Well done, Gwenllian Thomas, cook, from Llansannor!

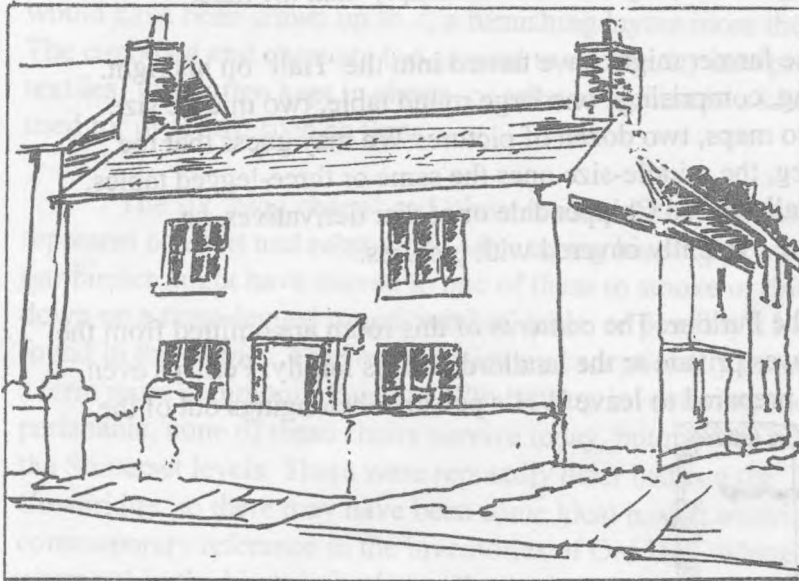
Goose, plum pudding and beer was provided for the servants at 5pm, before dinner was served for the family.

To work off the effects of the Christmas over-eating, Frederick rode to Cardiff on Boxing Day, and on the 29th went hunting; the meet was at Llanmihangel, with 15 out - ‘killed three hares, two good runs; going went well enough’. The following day there was a ‘ball at Margam in the evening - very grand, but not particularly pleasant. We all went. Home at 6.30am.’

Thus the Edmondson family seem to have behaved in very much the way that Sikes observed - I wonder if they met?

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COWBRIDGE ALEHOUSE

Luke Millar



In the summer of 1765, William Howard, Alehouse keeper and victualler, was in financial trouble. Or so we may assume, for on the first of June he signed an indenture between himself and John Edmondson of Old Hall, by which he mortgaged his goods, chattels and furniture and implements of household particularly in the schedule ... in the dwelling house of the said William Howard at Cowbridge ..." for the sum of £60.

The schedule provides us with a rare example of an almost complete inventory of a vernacular town-house interior. The particular feature of such inventories is that they had to be taken at one go, to avoid items being moved around and miscounted, so it is usually possible to follow the appraisers around the house - providing, of course, that one knows which house it is.

I first came upon this document when searching through the Edmondson papers in 1988. There was no clue to the location of this dwelling, until I stumbled upon it quite by chance. Calling one day at No 5 High Street to examine a piece of furniture, I was struck by the similarity of the interior to the probable layout of Howard's house. Two years later, the house was purchased by a developer who divided it into two, and during the alterations the builder kindly allowed me access, and even provided a copy of the existing plans. He was rather disappointed by the lack of interesting old features in the house, but told me that he had found an old tiled floor well below the previous level of one room. It was the existence of two rather unusual rooms, this 'Tower room' and the 'dark room', and the fact that they occur in the order that the appraisers might have found them, which convinced me that I had the right place.

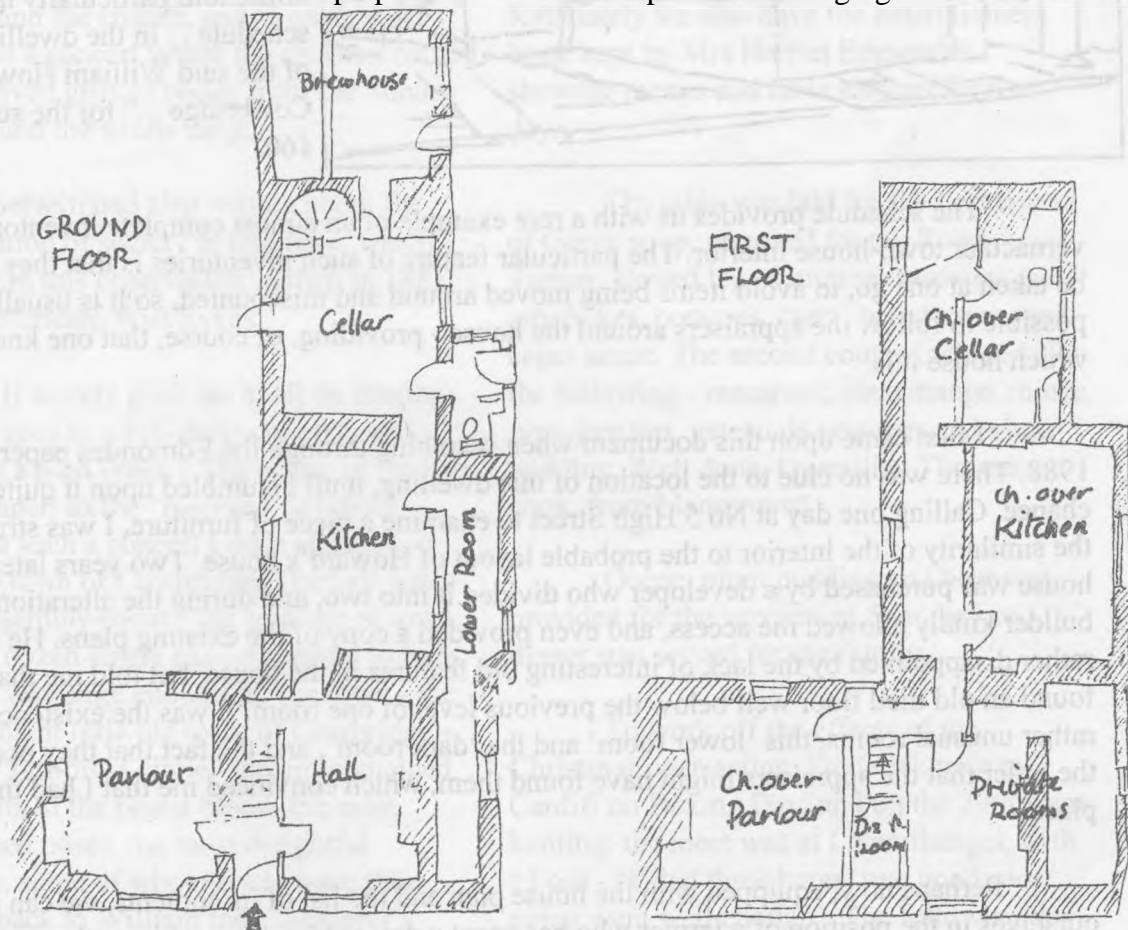
Perhaps now, equipped with the house plan and the list of its contents, we can put ourselves in the position of a farmer who has spent a day or two driving his cattle to market, and has completed his business in the town. The evening is closing in, and he is looking for a night's rest and refreshment before the long walk home.

Walking eastwards along the High Street, passing the gaol on his left and the Blue Bell Inn on his right, he approaches the old river bridge but, before he gets to it, he turns left into the house on the left side of the lane which now leads to the old brewery building.

The interior would not strike us today as resembling any sort of public house, but we must appreciate that the modern pub, with its bars serving a variety of people in the same building, was very much a 19th century creation. Public houses in the 18th century can be broadly divided into Inns - serving food, wines and accommodation, Taverns - serving wines and perhaps coffee, and Alehouses - serving ale of course, but by the 18th century the best of them also provided food and lodging as well, no doubt more cheaply than the inns.

Entering the passageway, the farmer might have turned into the 'Hall' on his right. This was furnished for formal dining, comprising "one large round table, two middle size ditto, six wooden bottom chairs, two maps, two dozen of pictures. We may guess that the large round table was an oak gate-leg, the middle-size ones the same or three-legged tables, and the chairs almost certainly the tall-backed Chippendale or earlier derivatives, so numerous in the area. The walls were evidently covered with pictures.

On his left was the door to the Parlour. The contents of this room are omitted from the inventory, and it seems likely that it was private to the landlord and his family. Perhaps even the hard-headed Mr Edmondes was prepared to leave WH's personal belongings out of the bargain!



Proceeding through the hall, he would enter the 'Kitchen'. This was the heart of an alehouse, where food was cooked and served, and the customers drank and smoked - a hot, noisy, convivial place, containing

"One dresser, equipped with eight pewter platters, nineteen pewter plates, one pewter basin, one Cullinder, one cover, one tin coffin, six earthen plates, three pewter quarts, six pewter cans. One small long table, five joint stools, two small round tables, one cupboard,

one chest, six twig chairs, three leather ditto. Five brass candlesticks, four iron ditto, one iron toaster, one brass pistle and mortar, two brass pepper boxes, one grid-iron, one pair of tongs, poker and shovel."

The dresser obviously contains the various serving dishes, a few drinking vessels and some utensils. The 'small long table' is what we might wrongly call a refectory table; examples in the Vale have square chamfered legs and rails at near-floor level, and the stools would have been drawn up to it, a furnishing layout more than a hundred years old in 1765. The cupboard and chest are too general to enable any interpretation, but foodstuffs (as well as textiles) were often kept in chests, or arks, so a chest in a kitchen was likely to have been used for dry stuff, such as flour.

The six 'twig chairs' and 'three leather ditto' together with the small round tables, represent comfort and relaxation. After taking his supper, whether in the hall or the kitchen, our farmer might have moved to one of these to smoke or drink his ale, putting the 'quart' down on a three-legged round 'cricket' table, or possibly a little oak tripod pedestal, still to be found in the district. The 'twig' chairs are exceptionally interesting. "Twig" or "twiggen" is a term more commonly found in 17th century inventories, and refers to basket work. Being perishable, none of these chairs survive today, but modern chairs of this sort are still made on the Somerset levels. There were reputedly osier beds on the Thaw valley levels above Cowbridge, so there may have been some local basket weaving. This is substantiated by a contemporary reference in the inventories of Old Hall, where there were '2 twig plate warmers' in the kitchen, basketwork stands to hold plates before the fire.

The cooking equipment appears sparse, but the grid iron suggests spit-roasting. Also, since Howard was in difficulties, the equipment of the house may have suffered losses. Altogether, the kitchen provided seating for thirteen people, but presumably the table and stools would also have been used by the landlord and his family.

In the 'Lower Room' beyond the kitchen, there were "two large casks, two small ditto, five tubbs, four pailles, one tundish, one small brass boyler, one iron pot, one tin kittle, one hoarse to dry clothes", and beyond that in the cellar, "nine casks, four stillings". The brewhouse contained only "one large vate, one middle size ditto, one small tub, one bucket..." The existence of a brewhouse does not in itself indicate that this was an alehouse, because many town houses would have one, but the existence of twelve casks on the premises, and the seating in the kitchen, indicate liquor volumes far beyond any domestic needs.

There were three letting bedrooms in the house. In "the chamber over the parlour" we find "one feather bed, bedstead and its appurts, one pair of blew curtains one bolster two pillows, two blankets, two sheets, one white quilt, one chest, two small picture tables, six twig chairs, two small looking glasses, six pictures". It is over-furnished for a room with only one bed, and it is likely that extra furniture was assembled in it for the purpose of the inventory, although it may have provided enough furniture to enable a guest to enjoy comfort and privacy as an alternative to the sociability of the kitchen.

More typical perhaps is the furnishing of the "chamber over the kitchen", which contained 'two feather beds, two bedsteads, four blankets, four sheets, two bolsters, one quilt one rug and two pair of Blew Plod curtains, one cabinet, two leather bottom chairs one twig ditto'. The "chamber over the cellar" contained similar furnishings appropriate to its single bed, and one twig chair. "Plod" is probably plaid, a worsted material woven with intersecting

stripes. It was fashionable in the early part of the eighteenth century, and the 1711 inventory of Dyrham Park in Gloucestershire had a "Plod Room" where hangings, curtains and seat covers of this material must have produced a striking effect. It was found throughout the 18th century in humbler interiors too, but only as curtain material.

One chamber remains unaccounted for, that over the hall, including a little space in the outshoot over the lane. Presumably, like the parlour, this was the landlord's quarters. Finally we have the "Dark Room", a tiny windowless room over the stair head, which contained 'one dust bed, two blankets, one rug, one bolster'. A dust bed was a mattress filled with chaff, and this underprivileged space was probably occupied by a servant.

The impression, then, is that our farmer could retire to a plain but well-appointed room for his night's rest, probably bearing one of the nine candlesticks from the kitchen to light him on his way.

The Building

The extract from the Tithe Map of 1844 shows the position of the house, nearly opposite today's Bridge Garage. The plans are taken from the modern survey before alterations, with definitely or possibly contemporary walls hatched in.

The oldest part of the house appears to be the front part on the street, the kitchen being an addition with a separate pine end against the old building, plus another add-on (the 'cellar') and yet another, the brewhouse area. The room names are my own conjectures, based on the logical sequence of the appraiser's movements through the house. There is some confusion about the bedrooms in the rear wing, where I have assumed one stud wall only to be old, but I have not had the benefit of a historic architectural study.

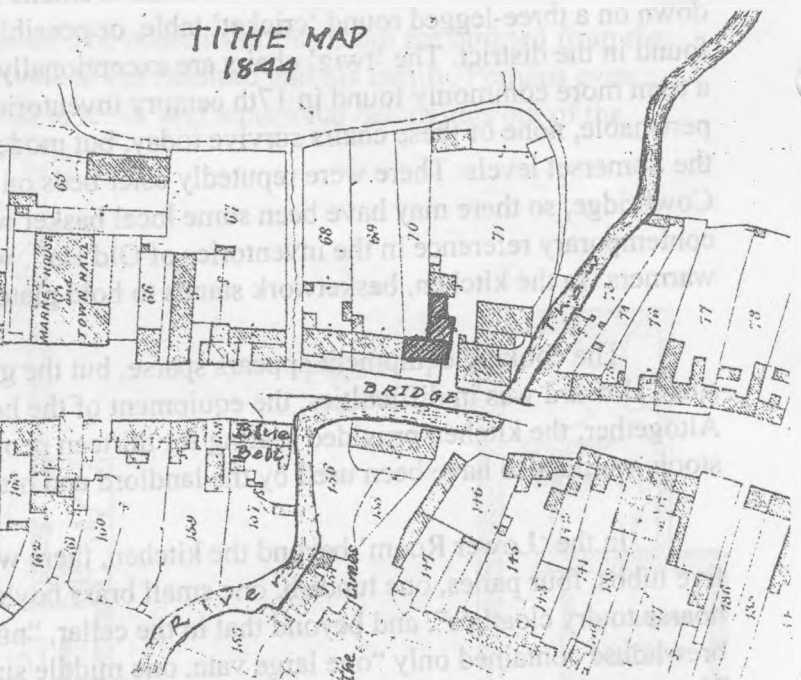
References

The Indenture containing the inventory is deposited in the Glamorgan Record Office, numbered DD/ED 182

'The English Ale-House, 1200 to 1830' by Peter Clarke (Longman 1983) provided background information

Details of 'Plod' are taken from 'Furniture History', 1986, Dyrham Park Inventories, and from Nancy Cox, preparatory work for 'A Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities', Wolverhampton Polytechnic, 1990

'The Diary of William Thomas' provides contemporary details of excise licensing of alehouses in the Vale, indicating that they were subject to supervision by the magistrates. He also provides sharp comments on the Edmondes family, their acquisition of wealth as stewards to the Aubreys of Llantrithyd, and their ruthless treatment of debtors.



History of St Quentin's Castle : Extract IV

There are three 'castles' at Llanblethian on the same site. According to research by the Royal Commission, these are :

- An earthwork castle built at the very beginning of the 12th century, probably by Herbert I de St Quentin.

- Before this was removed, a stone keep was put up. The visible remains of this measure just under 12 metres externally, with walls 3 metres in thickness. The Royal Commission believe that it was conceivably bigger than the 14 metre square keep at Kenfig. This would make it the largest keep in Glamorgan after that at Dinas Powys. Next year's excavations by CADW should allow us to know. It was probably built by Richard I de St Quentin.

- The third castle is that of Gilbert de Clare, started around 1307 but not finished in 1314 when he was killed at the Battle of Bannockburn. Additions could have been made since but have disappeared along with a lot of the pre-1314 construction. The main existing remnant being the Gatehouse.

Before proceeding further, it might be useful to speculate on why the first and subsequent castles were built at Llanblethian and not at Cowbridge.

Very recent thinking is that in the Middle Ages, the traditional East West route through Cowbridge had been abandoned, perhaps because persistent flooding. There is evidence that the Romans already experienced flooding problems. The revised road forded the River Thaw at the lower part of what is now Llanblethian and

the first castle was built on the nearest high ground to defend the crossing.

Also, by this time, there would have been quite a lot of maritime traffic using the port at Aberthaw. A natural route to the North might have followed the Thaw valley, making Llanblethian a very strategic crossing point.

There are a number of considerations to support this theory. Why have there been no finds in Cowbridge dating between the Roman occupation and the beginning of the 13th century? Why is the Broadway called as it is?

It is interesting to plot a route from around the current traffic lights, along Broadway and the bottom of Llanblethian, climbing the hill and explaining the siting of Llanblethian church. From there onwards to where stood Llanfrynach village of which only the church remains.

From there perhaps back to the original Roman road along the existing track or perhaps a more Westerly route via Llysworney?

This could explain the siting of the first two castles, but why did de Clare build on the same site in 1307? Cowbridge town had been re-established at least sixty years earlier.

It is well possible that he was using St Quentin's tower as a defensive point during the construction, with the idea of removing it once the new building had been completed. Because the castle was not completed would explain why the St Quentin keep was not removed. Photographs taken around 1900 show the keep still standing to the same height as the Gatehouse.

Tracing the early St Quentin history in Glamorgan has not been easy. This is because very few records exist for the period during and immediately following the arrival of the Normans. The problem is compounded by perhaps well meaning people wishing to fill the void by 'inventing' some history to fill the gaps.

This trend was started by a series of chroniclers and 'poets' who have composed different versions of what is called the *Brut*. Some of this may have inspired Sir Edward Stradling who, between 1561 and 1566, wrote his work called *Winning the Lordship of Glamorgan* in the 1570's, the antiquarian Rice Merrick used Stradling's work as a basis of his own. More recently, Iolo Morgannwg embroidered even further on this history.

Sadly, Stradling's account of Fitzhammon and the twelve knights who conquered Glamorgan around 1093 is mostly fictitious. Robert de St Quentin probably never existed at that time, Richard Syward only arrived in 1233 and even the Esterlings, as the Stradling family was originally called were not in Glamorgan until much later.

Stradling's account has been passed down the centuries. Scores of history books and articles include one of two sentences : *the first castle was built by Robert St Quentin, one of Fitzhammon's knights, and actually recorded, A.D. 1094, a most unusual occurrence or Robert St Quentin caused the walls to be raised around Cowbridge in 1091.*

Despite the constant repetition of these two statements, firstly, if there was a record in 1094 it no longer exists and

the authors never give its source. Secondly, the town walls have been dated as being built in the early 14th century and although current thinking may now place them at a slightly earlier date, they were certainly not there in the 11th century.

Despite the name Robert de St Quentin being cited so many times, when researched it is clear that the sole source is the one reference made by Stradling. There are no other base sources and as it is possible to document the St Quentins of that time, it is fairly safe to say that the only Robert de St Quentin properly recorded was in Suffolk in 1283 and again in Yorkshire in 1292.

There is just one niggling doubt. Rice Merrick, who was certainly of good faith, if misguided in some of his sources, wrote in 1578 : *I have read in the Register of Neath, of Henry de Sancto Quintino and of Richard de Sancto Quintino, of Herbertus de Sancto Quintino, Lord of Llanblethian, and of Hugo de Sancto Quintino, son to Robert de Sancto Quintino.*

The Register of Neath would have been the records, since lost, kept by the Abbey. Even these would have been written some time after the period and errors might have occurred. Herbert I and Richard I de St Quentin existed. Could the monks or Rice Merrick have combined the two names to make a Robert? Could his Latin have been not quite good enough to understand the exact relationship of Hughes (Hugo) with the others? Henry is difficult to explain but it is not a name traditionally used by the St Quentin family.

(To be continued.....)

George Haynes

Conservation work on St Quentin's Castle : Update

Work for this year has now finished. The scaffolding has been removed and it is possible to see the gatehouse in all its glory.

CADW have been able to advance their programme. Next summer, they will finish work on the inside of the Gatehouse. It will then be open to the public, including access to the two ground floor guardrooms and the observation platform on the first floor.

The rest of the castle grounds will also be open to the public and the only area fenced off will be the mound behind the Gatehouse. This will allow CADW to excavate what is most certainly the stone keep built by Herbert I de St Quentin.

The whole site will then be open to the public.

George Haynes

OUR LANDSCAPE AND BUILDING HERITAGE

Item 5 of the History Society's Charter reads "To encourage the preservation of ancient rights, sites, buildings and footpaths".

A period of improved economy also means an increase in land development proposals. Some of these could be considered to be against the interests of our landscape and building heritage.

A proposal is before the Council for permission to build two houses in the field next to Castle Hill, Llanblethian, between Porth y Green and Castle Cottage. If the application is

successful, the developer intends to build more houses on the site.

If built, these houses will surround and block the view of St Quentin's Castle, which is now visible from the top of Constitution Hill. They will seriously negate the hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money which have been spent to conserve the castle.

The site is shown on old maps as the Castle Bailey and the Royal Commission has found the foundations of a substantial medieval village which stood there.

Unless there is enough reaction, planning application will be granted. If you think this is wrong, please write, quoting the reference, 98/00882/FUL to:

Mr J. Maitland-Evans
Director of Planning
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Dock Offices
Barry CF63 4RT

Once permission has been granted, it cannot be revoked. Please act now.

Jeff Alden
George Haynes

Letter from America

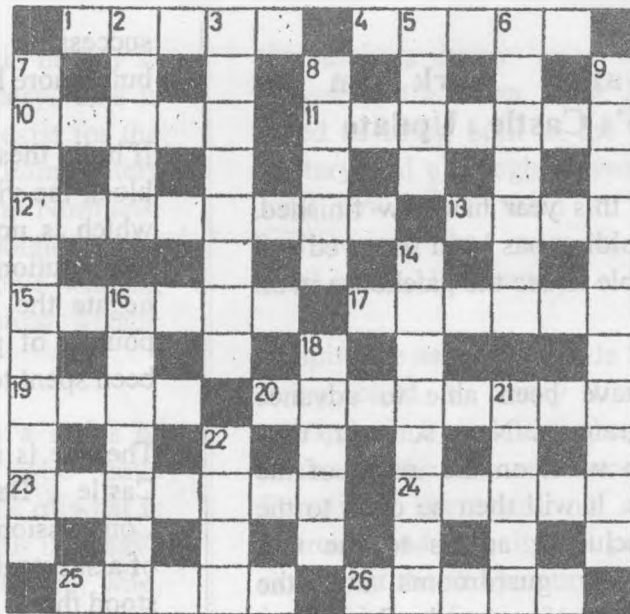
Much more about this next time - but this is a quote from a letter written about Cowbridge by someone who emigrated as a young girl in 1884,:

"All the store-keepers were 'dubbed' with little quaint verses, like this; "Mr Jones, so they say, has a green grocery across the way", and so on - a sing-song sort of thing. I wish I could remember them. There was one about a "Miss Stibbs who kept a bakery" - in fact every shop keeper had such a jingle attached to his business."

Does anyone have any knowledge of these jingles? We certainly know that Miss Stibbs' bakery was where the Ogmere Vale bakery is today.

CROSSWORD

(mainly with
local history clues)



ACROSS

1. The end - for the Greeks (5)
4. Where many skeletons were discovered in Llanblethian (5)
10. A Barry point (5)
11. What the Cowbridge town walls were probably *not* built for (7)
12. Llandough Castle furtrader who lost his fortune in the Russian Revolution (7)
13. Lewis the poet, or site of castle? (4)
15. Archimedes has found it! (6)
17. Inhabitants of Nash Manor and Great House, Cowbridge (6)
19. Bovian Oxonians could have rowed here (4)
20. WIAY or CIAP (5-3)
23. Usually the drier and more fertile part of a region (perhaps the Vale as compared to the Blaenau)(7)
24. Sir Leoline Jenkins' job at Llantrithyd (5)
25. Wat revolutionary? (5)
26. Cowbridge town house today occupied by Watts & Morgan, and Roddam Travel (5)

DOWN

2. Ebenezer the solicitor or John the secretary? (5)
3. Cowbridge industry 1860s - 1950s (8)
5. Elizabethan collar (4)
6. Local castle with some Norman herring-bone walling (7)
7. Lady donor of the Llanquian aisle (4,7)
8. Level means of obtaining coal (5)
9. Cowbridge inn, next to the sports facility of the same name (6,5)
14. Occupation of many an inn-keeper in 19th century Cowbridge (8)
16. Inn - now Basil's (7)
18. Mediaeval unions (5)
21. A Lewis - a Welsh poet who lived in St Quentin's (5)
22. A Cowbridge hill - though it doesn't sound like it! (4)

Very many thanks to Luke Millar and to George Haynes for their contributions to this newsletter. (I am responsible for the remainder.) Comments on the articles would be welcomed - to Jeff Alden, 773373

FOR SALE

'Old Cowbridge' by L. Hopkin
James. Very good condition; £40 o.n.o.
Mrs Anne Hatherall, Cowbridge
773045

I have been very pleased with the response to my request for old photographs, and I know many members enjoyed the slides made from them in November's meeting. We intend to have a similar meeting - but with different pictures - in next year's programme. The Friday morning class on the buildings of Cowbridge is very enthusiastic - but does anyone have any deeds, indentures or indeed any old documents relating to any properties in Cowbridge, from which we can extract the relevant information? I will of course be very careful with anything loaned, and will return it promptly! More photos and letterheads will also be welcomed ! JA.