

If you have occasion to climb the stairs to the dentists next to Great House pharmacy in Cowbridge, you will notice the filled-in outline of a large window, with stone mullions. This was a seventeenth-century window of Great House, the garden of which had stretched along the High Street for some distance. When Great House was advertised for letting in the *Cambrian* newspaper of the 1800s, the view towards the river, and the garden itself, were considered major selling points. However, Robert Franklen, the owner of Great House, lived at Clemenstone, near Wick, and in the period between 1830 and 1840 leased or sold off all the garden for building.

The first plot was leased by Robert Stibbs, and on it – and adjoining Great House – he built his three-storey dwelling house and shop. He was a baker and confectioner, born in Cardiff; he ran his shop here, and members of the Stibbs family kept the bakery going into the twentieth century, to be followed by Charlie "Buns" Davies, and then Mrs Webb whose shop is pictured here. The Ogmore Vale bakery today operates in a building with a long tradition of selling bread and cakes.

I had intended to include a photograph of the filled-in window in *How Well Do You Know Cowbridge* but found that the photo did not have sufficient contrast to merit publication. What has occurred, however, is that the Stibbs family has appeared three times in the book. Robert also owned property in Eastgate, Nos 10 and 12, and it was there that he installed the 'Chinese pattern' railings, the former communion rails which he bought from the church when it was refurbished in 1850. It was his oldest son, Thomas, who was reputed to have thrown an inkpot at his teacher in the Eagle Academy (after a severe caning from the disciplinarian teacher, William Lewis). The pot smashed against the wall and left what John Richards in *The Cowbridge Story* called a 'stain of freedom', which stayed on the wall for many years. The completely renovated upstairs room in Halcyon Daze in Westgate now shows no sign of this youthful impetuosity. The third member of the family to be mentioned was another son, Frederick, who appeared in the marathon football match in Aberthin in 1868; he was to marry Margaret Griffiths, a neighbour and the daughter of the Cowbridge blacksmith, and still has relatives living in Cowbridge today.

A few more details about the Stibbs family: Robert Stibbs is also listed as the 'owner' of pew 57 in Cowbridge Church, but he is not recorded as the occupier. His eldest child, Anna Maria, married Nathaniel Bird, one of Cowbridge's prominent businessmen, who was largely instrumental in having the Cowbridge Institute built behind the Town Hall. Local history deals continually with these family connections; that is part of its fascination.

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