

Town Mill, Cowbridge

It is likely a mill existed on this spot from the Middle Ages. In 1314, the inquisition post-mortem of Gilbert de Clare included three mills in the Manor of Llanblethian, although their locations were not specified. The three known mills in the Cowbridge/Llanblethian area were all in Llanblethian parish (the one at Town Mill, one in Piccadilly, Llanblethian village, and the third, now gone, below the former Girls' High School off the Aberthin Road, where Millfield Drive is built today). The earlier deeds listed below could apply to any one of those three:

- 1622 William, Earl of Pembroke to Jenkin Williams of Cowbridge....one water grist mill and certain parcels of land (7 acres). *D 218/9*
- 1625, 1st August Henry, Earl of Pembroke to Hywel Meyrick....one water grist mill called Llanblethian mill. *D 218/3*
- 1630, 10th November Henry, Earl of Pembroke to Thomas Williams of Llanblethian, yeoman.....one water grist mill called Llanblethian mill. *D 218/6*
- 1631, 30th September Philip, Earl of Pembroke to William Bassett of Llantrisant, gent.....32 acres of arable land in Llanblethian called Blackbush, one acre lying by Llanblethian's...3 acres of land on the west side of Llanblethian's mill, 3 acres of meadow on the south side of Bommynge Well, 3 acres meadow in Piggmore on the east part of the higher mill of Cowbridge on the south side of Cowbridge called wayneburthin or burteyns meade and ?half acres called sommway adjoining the meadow last mentioned previously granted to John Gibbon, now in possession of William Bassett. *D 218/10*
- 1633, 30th September Between Philip, Earl of Pembroke and William Bassett of ? Button, gent....one water grist mill in Llanblethian, plus other Cowbridge property. *D 218/11*
- 1662-3 Thomas Mathew of Castlemynach to Alexander William of Cowbridge....all that mansion house wherein he now inhabits, merging into the lands of Cissil Jenkins on the east, the lane leading to the little mill on the west, the highway from Cowbridge to Nash on the north, and the cottages belonging to the little mill on the south. *Dynevor deed.*

- 1677, 1st June Between Philip, Earl of Pembroke and Richard Carne of Lincolns Inn....all that water and grist mill called the little mill and lands and meadow about 7 acres adjacent the way leading from Cowbridge to Aberthin on the east and to the river Thawon on the west, together with all the millstones, mill wheels etc. late in the possession of Christopher Williams gent.....99 yr lease or the lives of Richard, Howell Carne of Osmonds Ash, brother, and George, son of Richard, at £3.6s.8d. per quarter. *D 218/13*
- 1694, 29th September Indenture between Jeffery Jeffreys and John Jeffreys of London, trustees of the Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery, and the Revd. David Nicholl of Llanblethian.....all that water grist mill commonly called Llanblethian Mill, 80 yr lease at £4 per quarter. *D 218/17*
- 1719 Lord Windsor to William Jenkins, Cowbridge grist mill and a close behind containing 4 acres etc. *Quoted in Llanblethian terrier 1824*
- 1767 William Bruce Esq., owner, Cowbridge Mill and land, rent £8.14s.8d. – Windsor rental *D/D Dav 39*
- 1778 William Bruce, owner, Cowbridge Mill land. *Bute R6/17-19*
- 1779 Town Mill shown as ‘grist mill’ on Dunraven map
- 1780 Town Mill and lands, occ by Mr Milverton, £3.19s. – Llanblethian tithes *P/13/1*
- 1784 Mr Milverton of Cowbridge mills, £3.3s. – Llanblethian tithes *P/13/1*
- 1785 Mr Milverton for the mills, £3 - Llb tithes *P/13/1*
- 1786 Mr Milverton, Cowbridge, £3 and Thomas James the miller £1.3s.4d. *P/13/1*
- 1793 To let – two water corn grist mills and an excellent bakehouse situate within a few hundred yards of the town of Cowbridge, 7 acres of land. Premises in good repair. ? French stones, bins, stables etc., every appliance. Contact Mr John Miles, Aberthin
*David Jones of Wallington
Old file; Gloucester Journal*
- 1794-6 Henry Edmond for Cowbridge mill *P/13/1*
- 1797 Henry Edmund to Evan Morgan, yeoman, Llandow, those 2 water grist mills known as Cowbridge and Llanblethian mills, and the meadow above Cowbridge mill called Gwain Boddon etc., with provisos. *D/D HJ*

1798 Henry Edmund agreed to sell to William Salmon for £1000 all that bolting mill called Cowbridge mill, one bakehouse and stable, and Gwayn Boddon.

1803 Evan Morgan of Llandow yeo., Henry Edmund of Llanblethian yeo, William salmon of Cowbridge surgeon, William Day of Cowbridge, baker, George Powell of Llanblethian gent....Cowbridge Mill, reciting 1797 Henry Edmund to Evan Morgan – those two water grist mills known as Cowbridge and Llanblethian mills and the meadow about Cowbridge mill called Gwayn Boddon, and 2 meadows below Cowbridge mill and plot adjoining Llanblethian mill where several walnut trees grew and one quillet of ground (with provisos)

William Day agreed with William Salmon for purchase of above.. *D/D HJ*

1803ordered that a bridge be made over the river near Council Tut....reward for 2 guineas promised to any person giving information of the breaking down of the last bridge.

From 'Old Cowbridge' by L Hopkin James.

1804 William Day, owner and occupier, 4s.9d., mill *Llb. LTA: LTA/Cowb/5ii*

1805 John Day Seley, owned and occupied, 4s.9d. “ “ “

1805 The Corporation repaired the South or Mill gate, as oppose to removing it (as it did not impede the town's traffic), including the parish pound within it on the west side.
From 'Old Cowbridge'.

1810 John Day Seley owner, James Peters occupied, mill and land, 4s.9d.
LTA/Cow/5ii

1817 James Day Selley of Llanblethian miller (eldest brother and heir at law of William Day who died intestate) to John Jenkins of Penmark farmer (lease) *D/D HJ*

1818 To be sold by private contract :
All that freehold messuage or dwelling house, bakehouse, stable, gardens etc. with about 4 acres of good pasture land, and all that water corn grist and bolting mill....Cowbridge Town Mill. The dwelling house is spacious and commodious and in excellent repair.
The mill is attached to the dwelling house and is in good order, being replete with every necessary machinery for the purposes of preparing flour, fine and coarse, and has bins which will contain at least 4000 Welsh bushels of grain. The machinery is worked by a breastshot wheel having 2 pairs of stones (one Welsh and the other French), Thos. Bassett, solicitor, Bonvilston
'Cambrian' advert. 18/4/1818

1819 J D Seley owned; Mr Davies occupied *LTA/Cow/5ii*

- 1820-23 James Taylor, Cowbridge Mill and land 9.5 acres *Llanblethian rentals*
NLW Bute R 6/17-19
- 1821 Conveyance, J D Selley of Wenvoe farmer to James Taylor of Laleston maltster
D/D HJ
- 1821 John Day Seley owned; Thos. Davies occupied, mill and lands, 4/6d. *LTA*
- 1823 James Taylor etc. to Miss Catherine Prichard of Llantrisant spinster, lease for one
year. *D/D HJ*
- 1824 a). Cowbridge mill and lands and the castle bailey – refers to a 1719 lease, Lord
Windsor to Wm Jenkins of Cowbridge, grist mill and also Little Mill (water grist
mill)
b). Llanblethian mill and 7 acres – refers to a 1715 lease, Lord Windsor to
Thomas Wilkins
c). The windmill closes (but no mention of an actual windmill)
d). Tucking mill marked on the map in Llanblethian village, on Nant Pont Elman
(i e Factory Brook) *Bute documents D/DB E 1-2*
Map and terrier of Llanblethian
- 1826 Catherine Pritchard to James Taylor
- 1831 James Taylor owned and occupied, Town Mill and land 4/6d. *LTA*
- 1840 Owner James Taylor, occupier James Taylor, mill and yard *Tithe 275*
garden - Tithe 343
little mill meadow *Tithe 344*
- 1845-70 James Taylor, Cowbridge mill, freehold mill and land *Electoral register*
(*subsequent censuses suggest he did not stay as occupier*)
- 1850 James Taylor of Cowbridge gent. to William Thomas of Cowbridge mill, miller,
lease for 21 yrs. – water corn grist mill or bolting mill and machinery, with
dwelling house near, and a malthouse adjoining the mill and stables, cart house,
coach house and all other outbuildings. *D/D HJ*
- 1851 William Thomas head, 34, maltster and miller
wife Jane Thomas, 34, maltster and miller
sister Jane Thomas, 17
general servant Mary Rees, 20 *Census 85*
- 1861 William Thomas, 46, miller and maltster
with wife Jane, 41, sons William (8), Edward (6), and Morgan (2 weeks) and
daughters Jane (4) and Mary (2); also his sister Jane Jones (now married), 28, a
dressmaker and James Jones, his son in law, aged 5,

And Catherine Hardin, 69, professional nurse and Elizabeth Thomas, house maid aged 18 *Census 2*

1864 ‘...I, with some of the local boys..., became day pupils at the Grammar School. At that time a Mr William Thomas lived at the Town Mill, where he conducted an extensive flour milling and malting business. He had two boys who were familiarly known as Willie and Eddie, rather younger than myself and schoolmates. Not being subject to the then rigid regulations of the School Boarders, we day boys, when released from school discipline, made the Town Mill our centre, where swings and other attractions were provided for our entertainment. Amongst other games, we practised Scouting, through reading books of adventure, and Llanblethian Hill was adopted as the field of operations. I have always had the fact in my mind that it was on one of these Scouting excursions that the hill was first named “Mount Ida” by one of my companions, and I have the strong impression that it was Eddie Thomas of the mill who first suggested the name. Our little company afterwards spoke of it as “Ida” to our schoolmates - the Boarders – and it became the adopted name by the school. This must have been about 1865 and the name has really been reserved down to this day by the successive generations of the Grammar School pupils.’

*E W Miles, solicitor, Cowbridge,
in a letter to the Revd. L J Hopkin James,
of Llb. vicarage,
27th June 1923*

Ca 1866 ‘The town flour mill was a great centre for business when the late venerable Mr William Thomas controlled it and Mr James Eddolls acted as head miller. Carts and horses were constantly discharging corn and taking meal away. The town mill and premises were the playground of the Grammar School day boys, who were few in number, when the boarders were bound at their studies, for Mr William Thomas, the genial and good-natured proprietor, encouraged his boys’ playmates to join them there in the various games of the time. In wet and cold weather, we would settle down by the malthouse fire at the rear of the mill, and learn the art of malting, and discuss the topics of the time and books of adventure. We had many a scouting hunt over Llanblethian Hill, after a couple of boys who had been told off, and whose practice was to drop pieces of paper as a trail, and as one of the Thomases was called Eddie, we, in some unaccountable way, called him “Ida”, and in one of the proposals for a trail hunt over Llanblethian Hill (which was never previously referred to by any other name), one of the company suggested we call it “Mount Ida”, and from that time we adopted the name.’

*Reminiscences of Cowbridge and District,
E W Miles, Glamorgan Gazette,
April 18th 1930*

1866 William Thomas, miller and maltster, agent to the Artificial Manure Company, Town Mill *Harrods directory*

- 1866 Wm Thomas will send three horses to the Birmingham Horse Show
'Glamorgan Gazette' 6/7/66
- 1869/70 William Thomas, rent of £50+ *Electoral register*
- 1870 Will of James Taylor of Canton, Cardiff – bequeathed the mill to his nephews
Spencer and John Taylor, sons of his brother Philip *D/D HJ*
- 1871 William Harding, head, 27, flour merchant/master miller, with wife Lydia, 28,
and daughter Emily, 12; also servants Henry Williams 25 and Frederick ?
Newport, both millers, and Miriam Ashby, lady maid, aged 18 *Census 3*
- Miriam Ashby went on to marry John John in 1875, and they lived in 6 Church St
(see John John file)*
- 1872-6 Deaths of 4 young Harding children *Llb parish recds.*
- 1874 Wm Harding occupied; Mr Taylor owned – house and garden, malthouse and land
Glam. county rate 95
- 1876 Wm Harding died, aged 33 *Parish records*
- 1881 Lydia Harding, head, 37, widow, flour mills
daughters Emily, 11 and Edith, 8, and son Wallace, 5, all scholars,
plus general domestic servants Mary Rosser, 16, and John Hopkins, 19.
Census 91
- 1881 Marriage of Lydia Harding, widow, daughter of David Miles farmer, to
W H Alexander bachelor of Eastfield House *Llb church records*
- 1883 William and Lydia Alexander, Town Mills – daughter Charlotte Mary
Llb. parish records
- 1890 S and J Taylor – lease to Mr Joseph Evans Spencer of Gileston, farmer *D/D HJ*
- 1891 John Hopkins, 29, drayman labourer, b Llanblethian
wife Sarah, 28, b Pembs.
daughters Elizabeth, 7, b St Hilary, Celia, 5, b Llanblethian, and son Thomas, one
and a half, b Llanblethian *Census 95*
- 1894 J E Spencer etc. to T R Hamlen-Williams of The Verlands *D/D HJ*
- 1895 David Spencer, miller (water), Llanblethian and Town Mills *Kelly's directory*

- 1897 Town Mill – building used for slaughter house
CRDC annual report of Med. Officer of Health
- 1910 Arthur Sanders occupied, late Hamlen-Williams owned – house and ground nr
Town Mill *D/D PRO/VAL/1/46*
- 1911 Wm Davies Alexander died, aged 58 *Parish records*
- 1934 Deed of partition (Town Mill - tithe 275 part; Gwain Boddor - tithe 276,
tenure Edward Edwards):
T R Hamlen-Williams died 1905; property of estate was listed – remains of Town
Mill and messuage formerly used as miller's house and now Town Mill cottages,
let to John Sanders *D/D HJ*

Mrs Joyce Tonkin, nee Sanders, used to live in Mill house, now the two mill cottages.
She reported that the old mill was in ruins and the floors were rotten. Grammar School
boys used to go in there to smoke. Reg Sanders, her uncle, kept bees opposite
(chs 01291). *'Cowbridge and District Remembered' CRS publication*

1950s The building was used as a slaughterhouse by Roy Edwards, butcher
Memories of Roy Harris

Town Mill was re-built as a house about 1965 by Mr Boland.

Sources/abbreviations :

GRO = Glamorgan Record Office

D/D & Bute & Dynevor = deeds in GRO (as are directories & electoral registers)

LTA = land tax assessments

PRO = Public Record Office, Kew

NLW = National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

Research mainly by Jeff Alden and Keith Jones

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*Memories of Ros Hunt 2013 – Stan Treharne the milkman kept his milk for delivery in
the sheds in Town Mill Road (at entrance to what is now River Walk). Known as '20
questions Stan', he always asked these before anything else. Used to come into her
grandmother's (Mrs Tilley's) Milk Bar in High St.*