

## **Bear Hotel – 63 High St.**

### **Architectural details**

(Source : Royal Commission AHM Glamorgan Vol III. pp 144,5)

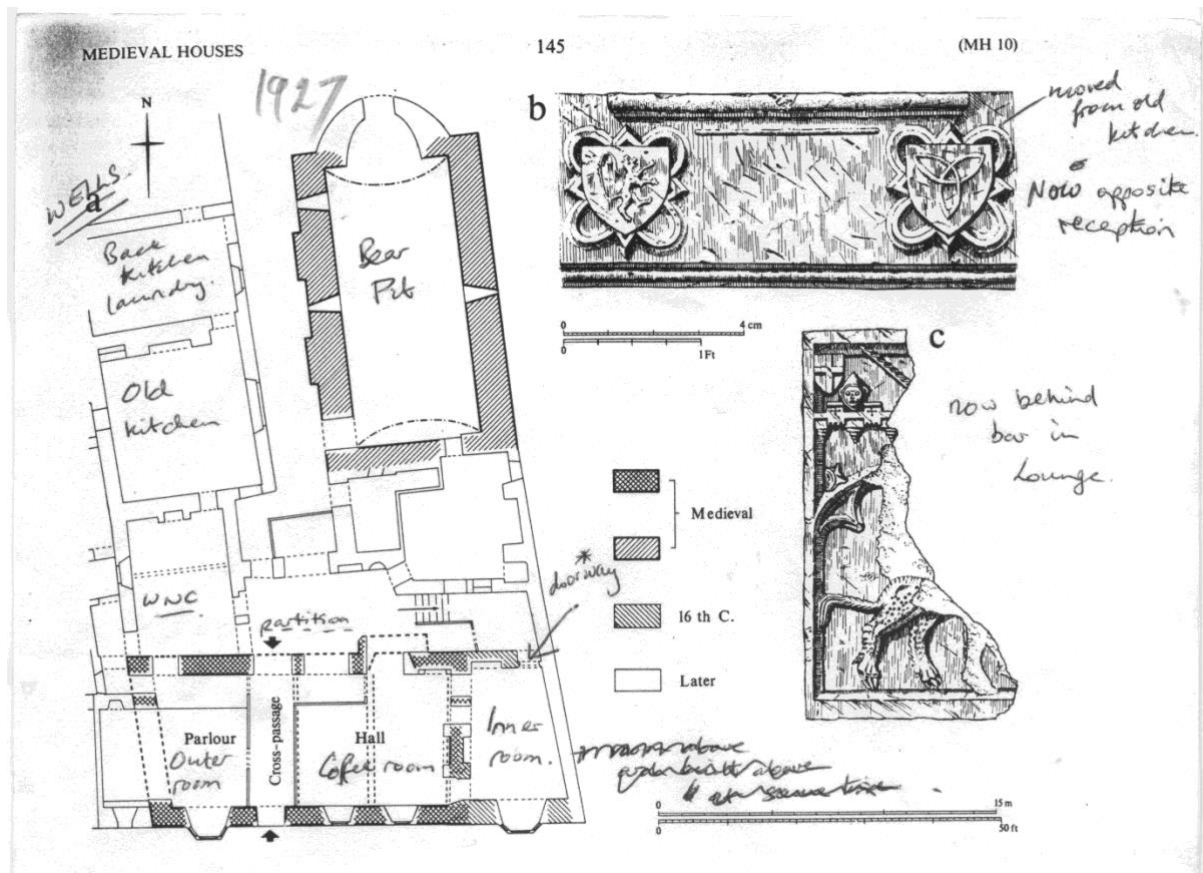
*A grade II listed building, retaining substantial evidence of medieval origins, as well as much of the character of its 18<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding.*

The Bear inn was probably a three-unit, lateral chimney, hall-house of late medieval date, subsequently converted into a storeyed house.

The building has suffered much alteration and reconstruction but appears to have consisted of a hall between cross-passage and outer room on one side and possibly an inner room on the other. Although the present inner room is later than the hall it is more likely to be a reconstruction than an addition. The walling of the hall and outer room is of squared coarse rubble, that of the inner room of random rubble. Apart from the well-built quoins there are no early external features. Internally the only medieval masonry details are the dressings of two stone fireplaces, one badly mutilated and the other reset. The outward-projecting fireplace on the N. wall of the hall was largely destroyed when a later archway was inserted. However, fragments remaining in situ show that this fireplace had roll-moulded stone jambs and an elaborately carved lintel, the small surviving fragment of which is decorated with arcading, cusped and embattled. Within the arcading is a leopard (of which only the hindquarters remain) while above the embattled ornament is a shield bearing a cross and alongside a head. There are fragments of a second carved stone fireplace lintel, probably contemporary with the hall fireplace, reset in the N. wall of the later annexe on the N. These have two shields, one bearing a lion rampant (reversed) and the other a trefoil. Both shields are set on quatrefoils. These fireplace details are the main evidence for the medieval date of the building. The reset fireplace may have been removed from the W. wall of the outer room when this was destroyed.

The hall has heavy ceiling beams, broad-chamfered with plain stops, probably late-16<sup>th</sup> century in date. The inner room (to the E. of the hall) has a dressed-stone fireplace backing onto the hall. It has plain-chamfered jambs and a four-centred head leading into a small projecting rear chamber. Both doorway and fireplace are probably late-16<sup>th</sup>-century. The plaster ceiling over the inner room, probably early 18<sup>th</sup> century (but restored in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century), is decorated with winged cherubs' heads about a central motif of a dolphin within an oval panel. The first-floor plan is obscured by later partitioning. There are plain-chamfered ceiling beams, and the roof trusses, though largely obscured, appear to be early.

To the N. of the house and linked with it by later additions is a formerly detached structure, probably also of medieval date. The ground floor is spanned by a long barrel vault. The first floor was converted into an 18<sup>th</sup> century assembly room when a bowed end was added.



### Ownership

(Research primarily of Jeff Alden, and students of his class).

Formerly the Cowbridge town house of Llanmihangel Place, it has long been linked with the Thomas, Edwin, Wyndham and Dunraven families. It was sold by the Dunraven estate in 1913 (D/D SA 3/424).

A deed of 1675 (27<sup>th</sup> year of Charles II) refers to the eastern part of the property, then owned by the Stradlings but which was later incorporated into the Bear (see Burgage rentals) : Between Sir Edward Stradling and Richard Carne – house, one stable and half burgage of land in Cowbridge, adj. on the east the house and garden of Sir Robert Thomas of Llanmihangel, now in the tenure of Richard Carne, on the north with the walls of Cowbridge, in the possession of Matthias Deane. (*Dunraven* ?46)

A lease of 1667, Sir Edward Thomas and Robert Thomas to John Carne (one messuage, one and a half burgages with gardens, as lately held by Richard Powell (*Dunraven*) makes no mention of an inn but it is named in 1738 when Quarter Session records show the registration of dissenters – Quakers – who desired to use the Bear for meetings.

In 1768 Lady Charlotte Edwin (of Hanover square, London) leased it as an inn to John Edmondson ('formerly in occupation of Robert Thomas and then of John Giddings innkeeper') (*Deeds*) ; in 1778 the Bear Inn is described as 'with stable, long room, cellar and garden' in the lease from Margaret Edmondson (widow of John) to Thomas Edmondson of Llandough castle (D/D Ed 155). In 1814 a Dunraven paper records the lease of a capital inn or public house known by the sign of the Bear, by Lord Adare to James Simpson of Cowbridge, including stable, coachhouse etc. (*Dunraven* 76).

1738 Samuel Edwin, one and a half burgages - The Bear	BR 146
Sir Thomas Stradling, one a half burgages – The Stable	BR 147
1738 Registration of dissenters (Quakers) who desired to use the Bear – quarter sessions	
	<i>Re Toleration Act of 1658</i>
Ca 1751 Robert Thomas innkeeper	D/D Ed 350
1758 Robert Thomas innkeeper	“ ”
1762 Lady Charlotte Edwin freehold; John Giddings tenant	BR 142
Mrs Vernon, half burgage – The Stable	BR 143
John Giddings buried at Cowbridge July 1774 aged 56	Parish records
John Giddings married Catherine Thomas at Cowbridge by licence on February 20 <sup>th</sup> 1759. She was the widow of Robert Thomas alderman of Cowbridge who died November 15 <sup>th</sup> 1758 aged 43. They had 5 children who all died as infants and were buried in the Alderman's aisle in Cowbridge church – Robert Thomas, alderman, his 5 children and Mr and Mrs Giddings. John Giddings is also described as an alderman.	
	<i>WAF Fisher, MS 4. 1221 42/174, Cardiff library</i>
1768 Lease, Lady Charles Edwin to John Edmondes	
1773 Lady Charlotte Edwin 9s.9d.	LTA
Walter Williams for new stable, 1s.6d.	LTA
1778 Leased to Thomas Edmondes, formerly in occupation of Robert Thomas decd. and then John Giddings	
1778 Walter Williams of the Bear Inn – with stable, long room, cellar and garden.	
1784 Charles Edwin owner; Walter Williams occupier, 13s.	LTA
Lady Vernon owned; Thomas Griffiths occupied, 2 shillings	LTA
1792 Charles Edwin owner; C Bradley occupier	BR
1795 Christopher Bradley innkeeper, mailcoach proprietor and auctioneer	Directory
1800 Charles Edwin owner; Christopher Bradley occupier, 13s.	LTA
Charles Edwin owner; Christopher Bradley occ. , old stable, 3s.	LTA
1804 Michael Glover. Posting at 1/- per mile	<i>'Cambrian' newspaper</i>
1806 (Thos. Wyndham deleted) Hon. Wyndham Quin owned; Michael Glover/James Simpson occupied, one and a half burgages, Bear Inn	BR 146
1807 M Glover (?decd.) and brother Richard Glover	Deeds
1808, 3 <sup>rd</sup> September M Glover respectfully informs his friends and the public that he has reduced the price of posting; and from the superior accommodation of his house, hopes for their kind patronage.	<i>Cambrian</i>

1813 All that garden in western village of Cowbridge adjoining the turnpike road through the town, now in occ and tenure of James Simpson, and capital mansion with yards, gardens, curtilages and stables, coachouses and other outbldgs within the town of Cowbridge as Whitlock Nicholl Esq now holds for a remainder of a term of years (45 yrs approx. then unexpired),

and ....parcel adjoining to and behind the Bear Inn called little town walls occupied by James Simpson

*Dunraven 194 in NLW (these from a bundle of 18 deeds for all sorts of Glam. Properties)*

1815 Thomas Wyndham owner; Mr Simpson occupied, 13s. and 3s. LTA

1822/3 James Simpson Directory

‘William Simpson was one of the sons of Simpson old innkeeper of the Bear and brother to Mrs James Bradley, whose husband was of the Bear. He was a great drunkard and often kicked up a great row at fairs and markets’.

*Note (from David Jones of Wallington) in scrapbook of WAH Fisher, Vol 48 11 Cardiff library*

1822 Cowbridge Book Club – above society will be held at the Bear Inn on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, when the members are requested to pay their subscriptions..... H S Plumptre, treasurer Cambrian

1823, 8<sup>th</sup> February James Simpson, having quitted the Bear Inn, begs to return his licence and grateful thanks to nobility, gentry, gentlemen, travellers and the public in general for the favours bestowed on him during his thirteen years of residence at Cowbridge, and begs leave, recommending his successor James Ballard.

James Ballard – neat chaises, able horses, careful drivers. Cambrian

1823, 31<sup>st</sup> May ‘A numerous and very respectable party of gentlemen from various places in the county met at the Bear Inn yesterday to welcome Mr Ballard the new landlord. Dinner, which consisted of every delicacy of the season, was served up in great style and the wines were allowed, by excellent judges who were present, to be of a superior description’.

*Cambrian*

1823, 16<sup>th</sup> August Cowbridge Turnpike Trust – tolls for the east, west and south gates to be let by auction at the Bear Inn on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Last year performed £610 above expense of collecting them.

*Cambrian*

1827-35 James Simpson Ballard Directories

1830 Lord Adair owner; James Ballard occupier, 16s. LTA

1832 Earl of Dunraven owned; J Ballard occupied, one a half burgages, Bear Inn BR 146

1835 Inn and Posting House, James Ballard

1848-50 Henry Gardner Family and Commercial directory

Ca 1850 The Mail Coach from London to Milford Haven ceased running. The proprietor of the Bear Hotel, John Thomas, afterwards a prominent auctioneer, provided post horses and carriages for hire, but not much business was done because local people were accustomed to walk long distances in those days. It was not unusual for artisans to walk 5 or 6 miles daily to and from their work.

*From ‘The Cowbridge Story’ by John Richards*

- 1851 John Thomas, innkeeper born Ewenny, farming 50 acres, employing 2 men, plus wife, sister and 6 servants *Census*
- 1852 John Thomas (or Thomas John) *Directory*
- 1858 George Morgan *Directory*
- 1861 Mary Miles Ormandy from Winterbourne, Gloucestershire, with 2 children, niece, visitor and 4 servants. *Census*
- 1865/66 Mary Ormandy *Directory*
- 1865 Miss Ormandy, Bear, Family and Commercial Inn
- 1868-71 Elizabeth Ormandy (posting) *Directory*
- 1871 Elizabeth Ormandy from Hambrook, Gloucestershire, with mother, niece, 3 servants and a lodger *Census*
- 19.10.1873  
Margaret Williams died aged 74. She was the daughter of an ostler at the Bear, but rose to a position of great dignity and entertained the Allied Sovereigns in London in 1815 as the Lady of the House of Lord Ponsonby, one of our diplomatists. Buried at Cowbridge.  
*David Jones of Wallington*
- 1875-1906 Thomas Thomas (The Bear became known as a hotel. The Cowbridge Farmers' Club met at the Bear (1895 *directory*). Mr Thomas was a National Hunt starter; he retired to live at Ty Hen, 41 High St.) *Directory*
- 1881 Thomas Thomas from St Hilary, with wife, 2 sons and 6 servants *Census*
- 'Tom the Bear – great uncle of Sir Ivor Thomas of Dinas Powis'. In 1881, Thomas Thomas was presented by the Master with a silver medal for bravery in rescuing 5 hounds which had fallen into old lead mines at St Hilary. It is recorded the Mr Thomas, when at last hauled up from the old pit, had the fox in his arms.  
*From 'The Cowbridge Story' by John Richards*
- 1891 Thomas Thomas, with wife, one son, 8 servants and 2 boarders *Census*
- 1901 Thomas Thomas aged 63, with wife, son Harry S, 21, and niece Fanny Wride, 24, barmaid, b Monkton, plus 4 servants (Ann Williams, 44, waitress b Ewenny, Catherine Price, 18, kitchen maid, William Rees, 48, boots, b Cowbridge, and Richard Rees, 40, farm labourer cowman) *Census 165*
- After Tom the Bear, there was a family named Davis (3or 4 sons who went to the Grammar School)
- 1910 Earl of Dunraven owned; T Morgan occupied *PRO IR58/18461/318*
- 1910-12 Thomas Morgan (brewer from Pontyclun, see 1-3 High St. He bought the Bear for £1200 from the Dunraven estate in 1913 – sale docs D/D SA 3/424; D/D SA 8/22) *Petty Sessions*
- 1912 William Morgan
- 1914 Mrs Ruth Morgan
- 1920 Miss Nancie Jones (?manageress)
- 1923 John Liptrott (manager); ?owned by a Greek shipowner

1926 P. Douglas Gray (proprietor) – he went to live in Weston

1927 Sold to F. Williams, Great House, Penllyn *PRO IR58/ 18461/318*

Mr and Mrs Fred Williams bought the Bear from Gray for £3500. Their son Evan Williams won the Grand National on 'Royal Mail' in 1937 (owned by High Lloyd Thomas). Photos of the horse and rider can be seen in the Bear.

The ballroom above the Bear Pit became a dining room during and after WW2. The Bear Pit was used as a beer cellar whilst the Williamses were there.

1945 Mr and Mrs John and Gwyneth Williams, son and daughter in law of Fred Williams (Mrs Gwyneth Williams's reminiscences appear in the *CRS publication 'Cowbridge and District Remembered'*).

1955 Dinner at the Bear held in March when 11 founder members of the Cowbridge Women's institute were present (all still members). The Institute had been founded in 1934 by the Glamorgan Federation of Women's Institutes, and monthly meetings were held at the South Wales Electricity Board's demonstration room. The first officers were Mrs Gilbert Williams and Secretary Mrs D Watts.

1959 Glyn and Owen Williams, brothers to John

1963 squadron Leader Johnson

1960s Geoffrey Evans, cartoonist - Western Mail (from the Barley Mow, Craig Penllyn)

### **The Bear as a social centre :**

For most of its time as an inn, the Bear was an important centre for meetings, assemblies and balls, only rivalled for part of the time by the Spread Eagle.

1736 Cowbridge Book Society Annual Dinner at the Bear; the society failed, revived in 1764, then failed again. *James & Francis 'Cowb. and Llb. Past and Present'*

1760s/70s Stalling Down race week included dinners and balls at the Bear. *William Thomas's diary*

1763 Great meeting of gentlemen in the Bear... to settle about the militia. *Wm. Thos. diary*

1764 'The gentlemen educated at Cowbridge School... are desired to dine together at the Bear Inn... on Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> august inst at 2 o'clock.

Those who intend to meet there are desired to send to the landlord of the inn a week before in order that provision may be made accordingly.' Edward Thomas Esq., Henry Llewellyn, Esq. stewards  
*Glos. Journal, Aug.13<sup>th</sup> 1764*

1765 Meeting of Freemasons at the Bear, including Mr Higgins (sic) of the Bear *Wm. Thos. diary*

1767 A great meeting of gentlemen at the Bear for electing a member of Parliament *Wm Thos.*

1772 Glam Agricultural Society formed in a meeting at the Bear *Glam Historian Vol 2*

1778 Court Baron of the Manor of Llanblethian held at the house of Walter Williams, maltster

*D/D CI 1/218*

1814 Payment made by John Miles snr. of rent of Llansannor estates to use of JF Gwyn Esq....Mr Simpson for entertainment of builders at a sale of Llansannor lease £3.13s.10d.

*DD/SA5/C/909 – 66 Somerset RO (indistinct notes)*

1830 'Sir, on Thursday last, I passed a couple of hours at the Bear Inn, Cowbridge, and had occasion to witness a public exhibition..... so dangerous and objectionable. ... For a considerable period about a dozen stallions were paraded up and down in front of the Inn and Post Office; some of them were displayed at full trot, others were encouraged in prancing, kicking, and making extensive circumgyrations, at the full length of the rein. .... As a large concourse of people is usually assembled round the Bear, which is a well-frequented Inn, and the only posting house in the town, it is a subject of wonder that no lives were lost by the violent and ungovernable conduct of the horses.....

*Cambrian newspaper 27/3/18*

1852 'A new and unknown fever holds the pleasant market town of Cowbridge in a grip of fear. Known by the locals as 'the Cowbridge fever', it strikes indiscriminantly at young and old alike. So far two people in the town have died, but this figure could reach double figures by the end of the week.

The fever appears to have been prevalent following the highly successful County Ball held at the Bear Hotel. Present at the function were not only civic dignitaries of the Vale, but also members of the local gentry as well. They were the first to come down with the symptoms of the malady which are severe headache and sickness of the stomach.

County engineers and health officials who have been investigating the outbreak seem to place the blame on the town's out-of-date drainage systems. Many houses, as well as the Bear Hotel, just empty water into the town's ditches. Normally this drains away, but unusually high rainfall caused the ditches to overflow and pollute the main drinking water. In an attempt to combat the fever, housewives are being urged to boil all water before using it. Whether this will be successful, only time will tell.'

*Extract from the first CHS newsletter ca 1975*

Among those who died (from this illness) were the 30 year old Rector of St Athan, Revd. Henry Rayer, the Rector of St Hilary, Revd. George Traherne, Captain Jenner of Llanblethian and Mrs Joseph May of Cowbridge.  
TM Price of Boverton, Glamorgan Gazette,  
16/2/1923

1889 Norton's dance at the Bear

*Diary of Revd FW Edmondes (unpub.)*

### **The Bear as a coaching inn.**

From the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth, the Bear was an important coaching stop on the route between London/ Swansea/ Milford Haven. In 1793 it was 'the principal inn where travellers are accommodated with post chaises, horses etc'. 'There is a famous story of a runaway coach where the coachman and guard halted at a small inn for refreshment in Ewenny. The horses continued with the coach on their journey before the men returned; the passengers knew nothing of the problem until the horses drew up at the Bear.'

*David Jones of Wallington papers*

There was considerable rivalry with other establishments in Cowbridge, particularly between Glover of the Bear and Bradley of the Post Office (and formerly of the Bear).

*Conflicting adverts in 'The Cambrian' 12/5/1804*

**Plas Llanmihangel, the Bear, and the Dunraven estate.**

The original owners of the Llanmihangel estate and the builders of the Tudor manor house, Plas Llanmihangel, was the Thomas family.

Some time before 1687, the estate was sold to Humphrey Edwin (1642-1707), a wealthy Londoner, though originally from Herefordshire (Lord Mayor of London in 1697). He became Sir Humphrey and Sheriff of Glamorgan in 1687. He had five sons and four daughters.

His eldest son was Samuel, who married Lady Catherine Montagu, daughter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Manchester; they had three children.

Samuel's son, Charles Edwin, married Lady Charlotte, daughter of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Hamilton. She is named on a 1768 lease of the Bear, in her own name as her husband had died in 1756.

Charles Edwin was succeeded at Llanmihangel by his sister Ann who married Thomas Wyndham of Clearwell, Glos. These Wyndhams had bought the Dunraven estate in 1642. Thus the Edwin family merged with the Dunraven estate.

The succession was as follows :

Thomas Wyndham = Ann Edwin

Charles Edwin (retained the Edwin name; died 1801)

Thomas Wyndham (resumed the Wyndham surname; died 1814)

Caroline = Henry Windham Quin in 1810, later 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Dunraven

*Source : Dictionary of Welsh Biography*

Dunraven estate was named as owners of the Bear on the Ale House recognisance of 1842, and the tithe schedule of 1843.

1974 The 'Bear Pit' restaurant built on the vaulted lower ground floor

2006 A ballroom, the St Quentin's suite, built at the rear of 61 High St (architect Andrew Parker, Great Barn, Bonvilston)

***Sources/abbreviations :***

*GRO Glamorgan Record Office*

*PRO Public Record Office (Kew)*

*SRO Somerset Record Office*

*LTA Land tax assessments (GRO)*

*BR Burgage rentals (GRO)*

*D/D Deposits in GRO*

*Tithe, census, electoral registers, directories etc – in GRO*