

Llantrithyd Place from John M Cann

*Newsletter 122 asked for more information on Llantrithyd Place. When the children were very young, we had picnics in Llantrithyd Place, which was still just recognisable as a very large house. I guess we found out about it at the time and its connection with the Bassetts. More recently however it was the connection with the Aubreys, especially John who wrote 'Brief Lives' that would spring to mind. However, I was sure that I had seen a picture of a magnificent room. After a few false starts I found this and two others of the outside of the house in an article on **The Parish of Llantrithyd** written by **Brian Ll. James** in 1961 and published in '**The Garden of Wales**' ed. **Stewart Williams**. Brian has kindly allowed me to make an extract from this on Llantrithyd Place. Those who would like to know more about the Bassetts, Mansels & Aubreys should read Brian's excellent article, and for those who want fuller architectural information the **RCHM Inventory of Ancient Monuments in Glamorgan**' **Volume IV Part 1 'The Greater Houses'** has a large entry with plans. Both of these publications are likely to be in local Public Libraries.*



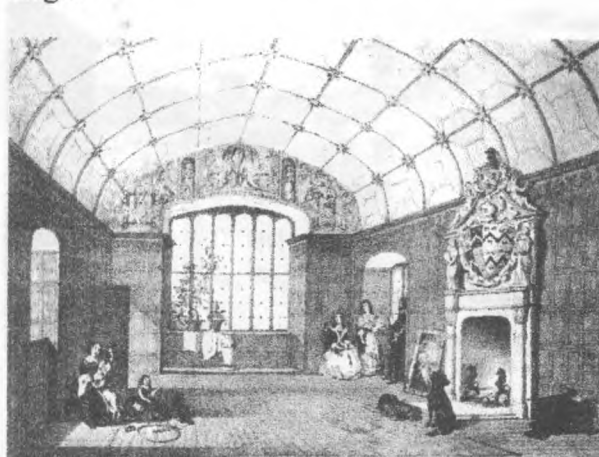
Llantrithyd Place and Church

Sepia Drawing by W. W. Young, c. 1839

Inside Llantrithyd Church a mural monument depicts John Bassett and his wife at prayer. On the altar-tomb rest the life-sized effigies of Anthony Mansel, in full armour, and his wife, the daughter of John Bassett. On the side of the tomb are represented the Mansel children as 'weepers'. It is a very short distance from the church where these gentlemen and their ladies lie to the ruins of their mansion, Llantrithyd Place. The house is now in an

advanced stage of dilapidation, most of the architectural features have disappeared and ground level has reached the old first floor level in most places. The Place was built around three sides of a courtyard, open to the west, with the principal apartments on the east abutting on the churchyard. In this part, on the first floor, was the Gallery running the whole 68 feet of the east side, having an elaborate fireplace and large windows. The drawing of this room by Mrs. J. M. Traherne of Coedriglan is probably only an imaginary reconstruction as it seems unlikely that she ever saw it in good repair. Below the south wing are ruins of extensive out-buildings and traces of the kitchen gardens, fishpond and ornamental 'canals'.

Thomas Aubrey, a Breconshire man and the son of an important lawyer of Elizabeth's reign.



Drawing Room, Llantrithyd Place

A. F. Rolfe after Mrs. J. M. Traherne. 1846

The mansion is described, by G. T. Clark and R. O. Jones of Fonmon in 1866-7, as "*a very fine example of the dwelling place of a wealthy Welsh squire during the reign of the house of Tudor, built at one time and not added to or altered over a long period*".

Writing in 1674, John Aubrey, afterwards the second baronet, declared that "*John Bassett built ye house of Lantrithyd in ye yeare 1546*". It is likely that Bassett built on an old site. One of the most prominent men in Glamorgan, John (ap) Thomas Bassett was probably to a large extent 'self-made'. He was a lawyer, and King's Attorney in Glamorgan, member for Cardiff in the Parliament of 1542, Sheriff of Glamorgan in 1545 and one of the first Justices of the Peace, but he was never more than a freeholder within the manor of Llantrithyd, which belonged to his kinsmen, the Bassetts of Beaupre.

From John Thomas Bassett descended, in the male line, the Bassetts of Bonvilston; but the bulk of the estate passed to his daughter by his second wife. It is said that Bassett fell into an "*ill oppinion*" of his first wife and disinherited his children by her. The heiress married Anthony Mansel, second son of Sir Rice Mansel of Margam. The union of the estates of Bassett and Mansel formed the basis of the importance of the Llantrithyd squires. Mansel was not destined to found a family of his name, for of his children only two daughters survived, the elder marrying Sir

Sir Thomas's son, Sir John, had not long come into his inheritance when, in 1642, the Civil War began. During his time Llantrithyd was a place of refuge to Sir John's kinsman, Dr. Francis Mansell, who had been ejected from the Principalship of Jesus College, Oxford, in 1648. Here also came Mansell's protégé, the young Leoline Jenkins, as tutor to Aubrey's son and the sons of a number of the local gentry. Sir John Aubrey was a patron of John Aubrey the antiquarian, a distant kinsman. This renowned author spent a great deal of time at Llantrithyd Place. He says in his *Brief Lives* that Leoline was a native of Llantrithyd, though others disagree. He wrote a life of Dr. Mansell in which is described how the learned doctor's retirement at Llantrithyd Place was disturbed by the "*rebell souldiery*" who broke into the house "*and one Clements a Farrier (by trade) but a Preacher by Profession, ript and toare his Canonical Cassock about him that it dangled from his Girtle downewards in so many small shreads or thongs as made them greate Sporte*". The soldiers, when they had amused themselves sufficiently in damaging the house and books, took Leoline Jenkins away and he was soon afterwards indicted at Quarter Sessions for keeping a "*seminary of rebellion and sedition*".

Another fugitive had been glad of the temporary shelter of the Place in the summer of 1645. He was the celebrated James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, the man who