

The Revd Robert Nicholl Carne, who according to the Tithe Apportionment and Map for Cowbridge, owned a group of houses on the south side of Cardiff Road in 1843 (where the black and white half-timbered ones are today), was the youngest son of Whitlock Nicholl of the Ham in Llantwit Major. He was born in 1763 and in 1781 followed in his father's and his uncle's footsteps and entered Jesus College, Oxford, graduating as Master of Arts in 1787.

Unusually for a student, Robert Nicholl kept meticulous accounts in which he recorded his investments, the money coming from bequests he received. He notes that "during these last two years (i.e. 1786-7) what I received from my scholarship and from my curacies enabled me to maintain myself". In fact, his income during his time as a student at Oxford exceeded his expenditure by over £300.⁽¹⁾

Robert had entered holy orders in 1786 at Christ Church, Oxford and was ordained the following year. During this time he had visited Chavenage, a country house and chapel, within the parish of Horsley near Stroud, Gloucester. Later he was to become curate at Chavenage and in 1792 married Mary Woodward, a relation of the Stephens family, who had owned the Chavenage estate since 1553.⁽²⁾

Whitlock Nicholl had died in 1788, leaving his youngest son £105 p.a. and some 100 acres of land in Llantwit Major abutting the parish boundary with St. Donats ⁽³⁾. Both Robert and his wife benefited on the death of the last of the Stephens of Chavenage, when the estate passed to a cousin, Henry Willis. Willis found the pressures of running an estate of 1750 acres too great and fled to a Trappist community ⁽⁴⁾. Also at this time Robert was appointed a chaplain to the Marquis of Bute and subsequently to the rectorship of Port Eynon.⁽⁵⁾

Robert and Mary seemed to have difficulty deciding where they were to live. Houses were purchased in Bristol and an estate purchased from the late Thomas Lewis in Llanblethian in 1791 for £821 5s. . This estate, which included Hill House, was sold four years later for £886 and the family settled into Llanmaes House, a Nicholl home for centuries ⁽⁶⁾. He then concentrated on his property in Llantwit Major, increasing the estate and building a family home at Dimlands. Unfortunately Mary died in 1799 but Robert did not stay a widower for long, marrying Elizabeth Carne, the heiress to the Nash Estate, the following year.

In 1842 Eleanor Markham died and Robert Nicholl inherited the Nash Estate through his wife, provided they took the name Carne. In 1828 the Nash Estate had brought in £4112, so this was a considerable increase in fortunes.⁽⁷⁾

The Cardiff Road properties in Cowbridge were part of the Nash Estate and may have been disposed of later when the family concentrated on their Dimlands and Nash properties. Robert died in 1849, leaving household goods to the value of £750 and bequests totalling £8000 ⁽⁸⁾. It is somewhat ironic that the properties seemed to disappear on the construction of the railway line from Cowbridge to Aberthaw, as Robert invested heavily in railways with great success⁽⁹⁾

Sources

1. G.R.O., D/D C F16 Account book of Robert Nicholl.
2. Victoria County History. Gloucestershire Vol. XI pp 175-184.
3. G.R.O. D/D C 1069 Will of Whitlock Nicholl 1779.
4. Victoria County History. Gloucestershire Vol XI *ibid*.
5. G.R.O. D/D C F16.
6. G.R.O. D/D C F17 Account book of Robert Nicholl.
7. G.R.O. D/D C E6 Rent Roll of the Nash Estate 1828.
8. G.R.O. D/D C F1064/1065 An Inventory of Dimlands and Personal Property bequeathed.
9. G.R.O. D/D C F36 Papers concerning investment in the Midland Railway.