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HISTORY OF COWBRIDGE.

By the Rev. B. Richards (Nennius), Morriston.

The ancient history of Cowbridge in common with other important places in Cambria, has, to a great extent, been lost during the many wars and disturbances that occurred in former ages when the chronicles and histories of the Cymry were often consigned to the flames and otherwise destroyed. Now in order to give the reader a view of the history of this ancient place as concise and complete as we can, we will collect all the historic matter we have been able to glean into separate divisions, such as the situation, name, antiquities, &c. of Cowbridge. Firstly, the

Situation, Population, &c.

Cowbridge is a Borough and Market Town, in the hundred of Cowbridge, County of Glamorgan, South Wales, 12 miles west from Cardiff, and 170 miles from London, on the main road through the county.

Its situation, though low, is salubrious, and its appearance prepossessing. It lies apparently in a deep bottom rising in the midst of a small level plain, surrounded on every side by higher lands, and sheltered by spacious hills. The town consists chiefly of one spacious street, extending for more than half a mile along the turnpike road; the houses in general are well built, and several of them are handsome. It is well supplied with water from springs, and from the river Thaw which passes through the centre of it.

The amount of the population of Cowbridge has remained almost stationary for many years. It has not been blessed with the rapid and important increase which has been the good fortune of Cardiff, Swansea, and other towns in the county within the present century. In 1831 the population of Cowbridge amounted to 1091. In 1851 the number of inhabitants was only 1066; and in 1861 it amounted only to 1094. It is a remarkable fact that the number of the inhabitants differed only 3 persons in 30 years. In 1851 the number of inhabited houses was 224, and in 1861 they were only 235.

The Name.

In Welsh this place is called *Pontfaen*, that is Stonebridge; this however is no doubt a corruption of Pontyfon, of which the English name, Cowbridge, is a literal translation. The Celtic words Bu, Mu, and Mon, all of them signified a Cow, and so the Romans understood this name,—as they denominated one of their stations on the Julia Strata, [which must have been situated at this place or its vicinity]. *Bovium*, from Bovis, the Latin word for Cow. Some old Welsh farmer probably threw some trees across the river Thaw and clodded it over in order to convey his cattle to the other part of his farm, and the place was naturally called Pont-y-fon or Pont-y-fuwch, which has been properly rendered in English, Cowbridge.

One of the Swansea Guides gives the following explanation of the origin of the name.

The bridge over the river which runs through this place has very small arches. The author says, that when the bridge and town were first built, a butcher was driving a cow to be slaughtered, which being worried by dogs and otherwise over driven ran under one of the arches of the bridge and got so entangled by its horns that it was obliged to be killed in that situation; from which circumstance the place was called Cowbridge.

But if the former interpretation be accepted which seems to us much more natural and forcible, and if the place was known to the Romans, the latter explanation must be rejected, for this spot was distinguished by the name of Pont-y-fon (Cowbridge) long before the town was erected.

Its Ancient History.

About the year 1088, Sir Robert Fitzhamon, the Norman adventurer, secured the quiet possession of the Lordship of Glamorgan, by the defeat of Jestyn ab Gwrgant, at the battle of the Great-heath near Cardiff. Jestyn was the last governing prince of the ancient province of E-syllwg. Having thus reduced this important division of ancient Cambria, the Conqueror proceeded at once to divide it between his Norman retainers, and the Welsh Lords who had aided him in obtaining the great prize. He also provided for the sons of Jestyn, probably with a view of keeping the claims to the Lordship dormant if at any time an opportunity should occur of a rising against him. The law of might, the Magna Charta of all Conquerors was glaringly evident in this distribution. The native Princes and Chiefs despoiled of their rightful patrimonies, had, with the exception their portions allotted to them

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Thus we find the town of Cowbridge in the possession of the first Lord Marcher in South Wales. This place is also represented in many ancient accounts as included in the Royal demesnes of the Princes of Glamorgan before the time of Fitzhamon, who appropriated to himself everything appertaining to the sovereign dignity he had acquired by conquest. But according to Caradoc of Llancarvan, Dr. Malkin, and other venerable Historians, this town was soon added as an appendage to the Castle and Lordship of Llanblethian, which was given at the time of the conquest to Sir Robert de St. Quintin. According to the above authorities Sir Robert in 1090 or in 1091, built a stone wall, having 3 gates about the town of Cowbridge. These gates were all entire in the time of the celebrated tourist Leland, but only the South gate now remains, which was formerly called Porth Melinau, and is still an ornament to the town.

The Castle and Lordship of Llanblethian remained in the possession of the St. Quintins till the reign of Henry III., when the family became extinct in the male line. It was afterwards possessed by the Herberts from whom it descended to the Windsors: and during the last two centuries it has been in the hands of several different parties. This Castle was at least taken twice by the Welsh during the frequent wars that took place between them and the Normans. It is also much questioned whether the present building is the Castle erected or perhaps more properly rebuilt by Sir Robert de St. Quintin, as it is certain that another Castle stood on Llanblethian hill, which might have been the original. Mr. Homfray says, according to some ancient manuscripts, Richard III. rebuilt the Castle under the Stewardship of Sir James Tyrrel, and from the architecture of the present remains I should be much inclined to think they are of that date. The Sywards, the Norman Knights of Talavan, formerly held their Courts at Cowbridge, jointly with the St. Quintins of Llanblethian, though they differed in some of their usages and customs.

The Corporation.

The government of the town of Cowbridge by a Charter of Incorporation confirmed in the 33rd year of the reign of King Charles II. is vested in a Mayor, who is also deputy Constable of the Castle of Llanblethian; two Bailiffs, twelve Aldermen, twelve Common Councilmen, a Town Clerk and other Officers.

The Mayor is appointed by the Marquis of Bute as Lord Paramount, and is such for life. The present Chief Magistrate is R. C. Nichol Carne, Esq., of Nash Manor, two miles and a half distant. The worshipful the Mayor is a Patron of the forthcoming Eisteddfod and an energetic supporter of every movement that conduces to the elevation of the people, intellectually and morally.

The Bailiffs of the town are annually chosen on Michaelmas eve, from among the Aldermen, four of whom are nominated for the purpose by the Councilmen, out of which number the Mayor selects two. The Aldermen are elected from the Councilmen by a majority of their own body, as vacancies may occur. The Councilmen are elected in the same manner from the Burgesses, by the Aldermen, and a majority of their own body. The Town Clerk is also appointed by the Right Hon. the Marquis of Bute and the other officers by the Corporation.

(To be continued in our next.)

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HISTORY OF COWBRIDGE.

By the Rev. R. Richards (Neunius), Morriston.

[Continued from Friday, Jan. 25.]

The successful competition at the Cowbridge Eisteddfod, 1866.

Cowbridge was formerly one of the eight contributory Boroughs within the County of Glamorgan which returned a member to Parliament since the year 1537. The right of election was vested in the Burgesses at large, in number between seventy and eighty, about one half of whom were resident; but since the act for amending the representation of the people was passed, Cowbridge is contributory with Cardiff and Llantrisant in the return of a member. The present representative is the Hon. Colonel Stuart, a near relative of the Marquis of Bute. The right of election is vested in the resident Burgesses only, if duly qualified according to the provisions of the Act, and in every male person of full age occupying, either as owner or as tenant under the same landlord, a house or other premises of the annual value of not less than ten pounds, provided he be capable of registering as the Act directs. The present number of houses of this value, situated within the limits of the Borough, which comprise an area of little more than thirty-three acres, and which were not altered by the late boundary act, is about sixty.

The Freedom of the Town is acquired by an apprenticeship of seven years to a resident Freeman; it is inherited by birth by all the children of Freemen, and obtained by marriage with a Freeman's daughter or by gift of the Corporation. The Mayor and Bailiffs are Justices of the Peace, exercising exclusive jurisdiction within the Borough apart from the County.

Charities.

Cowbridge is one of the most remarkable towns in Glamorganshire; if not in Wales, for its Charities, and we shall now endeavour to give a short account of the most important of them.

Thomas's Charity—A field lying in or near Stallingdown, in the parish of Llanblethian, and situate on the south side of the road leading from Cardiff to Cowbridge, has been chargeable with £1 12s. per annum, arising as it would appear from a writing made in the year 1710, and now in the custody of the parish officers of Llanblethian, under the gift of one William Thomas.

Of the above rent, the town of Cowbridge and the parish of Llanblethian are each entitled to 12s., and the parish of St. Hilary to the remaining 8s.

Wyndham's Charity.

Rebecca Wyndham left by will the sum of £100, which, together with the interest thereof, was used to purchase the moiety of a tenement of lands called Pencoed, in the parish of Llanilid, the profits of which were, by the said will, directed to be applied towards apprenticing poor children of the town of Cowbridge at the discretion of the minister and churchwardens of the said town for the time being. The property is let at the full rent of £40 a-year; the whole of which, after defraying the necessary charges on the estate, is applied as directed.

Katherine Williams's Charity.

Katherine Williams, by will, dated the 27th of November, 1682, and proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, the 18th of December following, after stating that the sum of £100 was in the hands of Mr. Loughor, of Newton, secured on mortgage, thereby directed that the same should stand to the use of the poor of the town of Cowbridge for ever; and that £3 of the interest of the same should be applied to apprentice a poor boy of the aforesaid town, and £3 to clothe three of the oldest men, and four of the oldest women of the town yearly.

Wilcox's Charity.

Mary Wilcox devised two closes of land, situate in the parish of Llanblethian, and directed the rents to be yearly distributed to the poor of the town of Cowbridge, at the discretion of the bailiffs for the time being. The above property, comprising about two acres of land, subdivided into two small fields, lying to the south of the east gate, and bounded to the west by the high road leading to the port of Aberthaw, is let at the yearly rent of £8 8s., which, after deducting 3s. for land-tax, and also the expense of repairs, (if any), is applied by the bailiffs as directed in the will. Walter Williams also devised the yearly sum of £4, for ever, to be distributed to the poor of Cowbridge by the bailiffs of the said town for the time being. But by far the greatest object of interest connected with the ancient town of Cowbridge is the Free School, and Sir Llewellyn, or Leoline Jenkins's Charities. Now, since Sir Leoline became such a great benefactor to the town of Cowbridge, and his history being so intimately connected with it, it may not be uninteresting here to give a short abstract of his life.

Sir Leoline Jenkins

Sir Llewellyn was born in the parish of Llantrisant; his father's name was Jenkin Llewellyn, who was a small freeholder in the above parish, but the son, according to a practice then, and to some extent, common in the country, took to his surname his father's Christian name. Llewellyn was instructed in the rudiments of the Latin and Greek languages at the Grammar School, in the town of Cowbridge, whence he was removed

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At this place he became acquainted with many eminent characters: amongst others with Dr. Frewyn, Archbishop of York, and Dr. Sheldon, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.

Having been forced, by the misfortune of the times, to leave the kingdom, after a second attempt to settle in Oxford, he travelled, during the period of three years, over many parts of France, Germany, and Holland, by which means he acquired a proficiency in the languages of those countries. At the restoration he returned to Oxford, was elected a Fellow of Jesus College, and soon after, on the resignation of Dr. Mansel, he was unanimously chosen Principal of that society. During the Dutch war, his profound knowledge of civil and maritime law procured for Leoline Jenkins the appointment of Assistant Judge in the Admiralty Court, and on the death of his associate, Dr. Exton, he was made sole Judge, in which situation his charges and decisions are deservedly held in high repute, even to this day. In the year 1668, the Archbishop of Canterbury, at the express desire of King Charles II., appointed him to the vacant situation of Judge of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

On the death of Henrietta, widow of King Charles I., in 1669, her property being claimed by her nephew, Louis XIV., of France, Dr. Jenkins, with others, was commissioned to go to Paris, where he claimed and recovered the queen mother's effects, discharged her debts and provided for her interment. He discharged his trust in this affair so much to King Charles's satisfaction that he conferred upon him the honour of knighthood on his return to England. Soon after this Sir Leoline was chosen to be one of the Commissioners authorized to treat with the Scotch deputies respecting the union of the two countries. In the year 1671 he was chosen a representative in Parliament for Hythe, in Kent, one of the cinque ports.

In 1673 he was sent as an Ambassador and Plenipotentiary to the congress at Cologne to negotiate a peace; and, on the failure of that negotiation, he went in the same capacity to Nemigen, and succeeded in conjunction with the celebrated Sir William Temple in concluding a treaty. After his return to England in 1679 he was chosen one of the representatives for the University of Oxford.

In the year 1680 Sir Leoline Jenkins was sworn a Privy Councillor and appointed Secretary of State. He retained the seals for four years—a period of uncommon difficulty, owing to party rancour and animosity. On resigning his office as Secretary of State, in consequence of his declining health, he retired to Hammersmith, but being re-elected to serve in Parliament for the University of Oxford, he was again, on the accession of James II., sworn one of the Privy Councillors. But his indisposition soon returned, and he died on the 1st of September, 1684. His remains were conveyed to Oxford and interred in Jesus College Chapel. His friend, Dr. Fell, at that time Bishop of Oxford and Dean of Christchurch, wrote his epitaph in Latin, which enumerates his offices and honours in regular progression, and concludes with styling him almost a second founder of Jesus College.

Having never been married, he bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to Jesus College, the remainder he gave to charitable purposes, a considerable portion of which was given, as we shall soon see, to the Cowbridge Grammar School.

To be continued in our next

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The successful composition at the Cowbridge Eisteddfod, 1866

Sir Llewellyn Jenkins affords a striking example of a person born of humble parents, rising, by the aid of his own genius and talents to great wealth, and to the highest honours of the State. He left behind him a high character for learning in his own profession, and for great integrity in the whole of his public conduct, having passed through all the high offices he was called to fill with an unsullied reputation. Cowbridge may well be proud of its intimate connection with the memory of such a noble character as Sir Leoline Jenkins.

The Free School and Sir Leoline Jenkins's Charities.

The Free Grammar School of Cowbridge is of uncertain foundation. It is of great repute, and is supposed by some to have grown out of the ruins of an ancient establishment at Llantwit Major, and to have been removed to this place in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Sir Leoline Jenkins therefore was not, as has been erroneously stated, the founder of this venerable institution. On the contrary, his benevolence was probably directed to it, by the recollection that he had derived the first elements of his great knowledge from this source. He may, however, with much propriety, be considered here as well as at Jesus College, as a second founder; for it is to him the young men on the foundation owe, in addition to a small annual stipend while in school, the probability of enjoying considerable advantages in Jesus College, Oxford, where there are two Scholarships, two Fellowships, and an Exhibition, exclusively confined to Students educated at this School.

The Literary reputation of this institution has kept pace with its academical advantages, under a succession of very able Masters. The present master is the Rev. Thomas Williams, M.A. Vice-Chancellor Knight Bruce, and many other celebrated men were educated at this establishment. The following account of Sir Leoline Jenkins's Charities is given in the report of the Commissioners of enquiry concerning Charities:—

"Sir Leoline Jenkins, by will, dated shortly before the first of September, 1685, (at which time he died), devised to the Principal, Fellows, and Scholars of Jesus College, Oxford, all his lands, tenements, and hereditaments, and the Free School, and School-house, with its appurtenances in Cowbridge, and charged his said lands first, with the yearly payment of £100, for ever to the following uses, viz., to the Schoolmaster of Cowbridge for the time being (to be nominated by the Principal of the College), so long as he should not undertake any cure of souls, but should keep wholly to the business of the school, £10 per annum, besides the use of the said school-house, orchards, and appurtenances, rent free, in consideration that he should teach gratis five scholars to be known by the name of pensioners; and he devised £6 to each of the said five pensioners, to be continued for four years and no longer; and he thereby directed that the said pensioners, upon every vacancy, should be nominated by the Master, and approved by the Principal, and that they should not be admitted until full 12 years of age, nor after 16; and the said Testator devised to three of the said pensioners as should be fit for College, an annual exhibition of £10 a piece for four years, if they should not in the meantime be elected to a Scholarship or Fellowship of the said house; and after reciting that there might be in the said school other hopeful youths for their learning besides the said five pensioners, he appointed £10 a year more to the schoolmaster for the teaching of ten youths the most towardly in the School, who should be elected by him out of the town of Cowbridge and the neighbouring parishes, being the children of such as should not be able to pay for their schooling, and the remaining £20 per annum he gave for apprenticing poor children born in the parishes of Llantrissant, Llanblethian, Ystradowen, and the town of Cowbridge, or for clothing poor old people of the said three parishes and town, at the discretion of the said schoolmaster, he first consulting the respective ministers thereof, but the determination being left to himself; and he directed that the said places should respectively receive the whole of the £20 every fourth year in the order before mentioned, and that the said master should give an account of what he should so order, year by year to the Principal of Jesus College; and the said Testator, after having augmented the allowances payable to the Principal, Fellows, and Scholars of Jesus College, provided a maintenance for two additional Fellows at the same rate as the other Fellows might have, and desired that one of the said Fellows should be called the Scholar and Alumnus of King Charles II, and the other the scholar and Alumnus of King James II, and that amongst them a respect should be had *æacteris paribus* to those bred at Cowbridge School; and he directed that when the said two Fellowships should be founded and endowed, that two of the three exhibitions from Cowbridge School aforementioned should be reported new additional scholars of the house, equally with the other 16 to all intents and

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The sum of £70 is now yearly paid by the society of Jesus College to the Master of the Cowbridge Free Grammar School, for £20 of which he instructs gratuitously in the Classics five pensioners, now called monitors, and other boys to the number of ten, upon application made to him for that purpose; he has at present none of the latter description of scholars, but the former class is always full. The sum of £30 is devised amongst the five pensioners, who are appointed between the ages of 12 and 16 by the Master, from the most deserving objects that are presented to him. They enjoy the pension for four years from the term of admission, and when removed to the University they have the exclusive benefit of one exhibition, two Scholarships, and two Fellowships at Jesus College. The remaining £20 is distributed by the Master in clothing and blankets to poor parishioners of the parishes of Llantrissant, Llanblethian, Ystradowen, and the town of Cowbridge, at the time and in the manner specified in the will.

To be concluded in our next



PUBLIC AND RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS.

Town Hall.

The old Town Hall, Shambles, and Market-house, which stood in the centre of the principal street, obstructing the thoroughfare have been removed, and the old County Bridewell situated at that place has been converted chiefly by subscriptions into a neat Town Hall, with jury rooms and other apartments.

The Church.

Cowbridge is commonly reputed a parish, but it has no distinct Incumbency; the Chapel which was originally a Chapel of Ease to the Church of Llanblethian, is still served by the Vicar of that Parish. The Chapel dedicated to St. Mary is an ancient and venerable structure, its tower appears at a distance like the embattled turret of an old Fortress. The Church contains several handsome monuments of modern erection, and two or more of ancient date, one to the memory of the Carnes of Nash, and the other to that of the family of Jenkins of Hensol, near Cowbridge.

There are likewise places of worship for Welsh and English Baptists, Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodists, &c., in this town, some of which are well and respectably attended.

Trade.

The trade of Cowbridge is chiefly local, and depends principally on agriculture. The markets are held on Tuesday and Saturday; the Saturday market is chiefly for butchers' meat and other provisions. There are also several important fairs held here, principally for cattle, one on the first Tuesday in February one on the Tuesday before March 25th, one May 4th, one June 24th, and another September 29th, which are a great help to the town. There are likewise two great markets on the first Tuesdays in August and December.

The South Wales Railway passes between here and Llantrissant at a distance of about four miles, but a branch from that line to Cowbridge, is now completed, which no doubt will give new life to the old town, and a great impetus to its trade.

The environs of Cowbridge.

If Cowbridge itself possesses no great attractions to the stranger, its neighbourhood affords much. Contiguous to the town, to the north west is Penlline Castle, which was the work of the native Britons, prior to that event which deprived this district of its independence.

The manner of laying the stones, called the herring-bone fashion, is an acknowledged mark of its extreme antiquity; this mode of building being found in the oldest parts of Guildford, Corfe, and other very ancient Castles. Penlline (Penllwyn), signifies the top of the wood or bush, and like other elevated spots, is thought to afford a kind of prognostic for the weather, which is specified by Iolo Morganwg in the following lines:—

“ When the hoarse waves of Severn are screaming aloud,
“ And Penlline's lofty Castle's involved in a cloud,
“ If true the old proverb, a shower of rain
“ Is brooding above, and will soon drench the plain”

The ancient Castle is to a great extent hidden by a modern house which has been inserted in it, and is now occupied by J. Homfray, Esq.

Llandough Castle is also in the immediate vicinity of Cowbridge. It formerly was part of the Hensol estate, and has been greatly enlarged and ornamented within the last century. Its situation is one of the most beautiful in the luxuriant Vale of Glamorgan, and it is now unoccupied.

Hensol and Fonmon Castles, are not very distant from Cowbridge. Hensol Castle, formerly belonged to the Jenkinnes, a Welsh family of great antiquity and high respectability. David Jenkins, Esq., of Hensol, was one of the Justices of Wales in the 17th century, and was a person of distinction for his learning, and for his steady adherence to the cause of King Charles I.

Richard Jenkins, Esq., grandson of the Judge, commonly called Captain Jenkins was a very good performer on the Welsh harp, and is said to have made his own harps. The Castle and estate of Hensol descended by intermarriage to the Taibots, and afterwards by purchase to different parties.

Fonmon Castle.—This Castle and Lordship was, at the conquest, given to the Norman Knight Sir Oliver de St. John. In 1618, Fonmon was bought by Colonel John Jones. Col. Jones was a native of Gower, Glamorganshire, and is thought to have been descended from a Breconshire family. He signed the death warrant of King Charles II, and took his seat in the Council of State at the commencement of the Commonwealth. But, in common with many others in those troublous times, he met with his death on the scaffold at the restoration. The present proprietor, R. O. Jones, Esq., is descended from him.

Another place of great historic interest in the neighbourhood of Cowbridge is the village of Ystradowen, which is remarkable for the great battle fought there between Cynan ab Siyflt and the Saxons, and still more so, for the meeting of the Welsh bards, under the immemorial patronage of the Hensol family, at whose expense they were annually entertained, with every indication of native hospitality, on the 28th of May. The last assembly under these auspices took place on the 28th of May, 1726; just before the death of Richard Jenkins, Esq., the last of the family. The Ystradowen Eisteddfod continued to be held till the year 1730, after which date we hear nothing of it.