

A WALK ABOUT LLANBLETHIAN

The lordship of Llanblethian covered Llanblethian parish and St. Hilary. The first lord of Llanblethian was Robert St. Quentin who held lands in Wiltshire, Dorset, Essex and Yorkshire. His successors the Siwards held Talyfan (comprising Llanharry, Llansannor, Ystradowen, Welsh St. Donats and Pendoylan) as well.

The CHURCH (St. John the Baptist) : the earliest reference to a church at Llanblethian is in an undated charter of Nicholas ap Gwrgant, Bishop of Llandaff 1148/1153. The Church by now belonged to Tewkesbury Abbey and attached to the Church were the chapels of Welsh St. Donats, Llanquian (St. James) and Llansannor.

The south transept or chapel seems to have been added to a mainly 13th century building early in the 14th c. The tower was added in the 15th c. (Somerset or Glastonbury style - cf. St. John's, Cardiff and NW (Jasper) tower at Llandaff Cathedral.). Note stone seats in porch and marks of sword sharpening.

Memorial to Sir Leoline Jenkins erected by Jesus College, Oxford in mid 18th c. Father came from parish - buried with his wife in churchyard (tombstone in porch on left as you enter). Sir Leoline, Sec. of State to Chas. II, b. Llantrisant 1623, 2nd founder Jesus College, Oxford, d. 1685. Benefactor of Cowbridge Grammar School, gave Church tenor bell (1685). Brother Evan Bequeathed lands at Talyfan, part of the rents of which are still divided annually between Llanblethian and Ystradowen parishes.

Early 14th c. sepulchral slab of Walter Torig.

In 1898 during restoration the plaster was stripped off and one small fresco found, a representation of some of the instruments of Christ's passion, saw, sword and scourge, in red and yellow. The crypt was rediscovered and 150 skeletons found and reinterred in the churchyard, on the chest of one a priest's chalice.

In the 19th c. the 'General Picton' (now Picton House) a short distance uphill from the Church was a public house, closed in the

A WALK ABOUT LLANBLETHIAN

1920's. Milton Adams had the last pint. The Oddfellows met there, and there lived Bernard Knights, pathologist - hence his pen-name in his detective novels : Bernard Picton.

'Outside the 'Picton' a Pabill for dancing in, a rudely built structure, posts, with wattled sides, and thatched. The young people would meet twice or thrice a week for dancing. The paraphernalia of the Morris dancers was kept in this Pabill. It was accidentally burnt down. There was another like it at Penmark'.

THE CROSS (Mr. & Mrs. F.H. Anderson) Early Victorian wings. Middle quite a lot older. The stables bear the date 1854. Mr. Dunn resided here in 1895. Of his six children, 3 of his five sons were killed in the 1914-18 War : the Fred Dunn memorial gates to Cowbridge Athletic Club are to a surviving brother of a sporting family (Father Dunn was a mining engineer and Churchwarden). Other residents included the Byass family who moved from Llandough Castle. Lady Byass had a link with Port Talbot Ironworks .Her son was Col. Sir Geoffrey Byass, MP - the Gonzalez-Byass sherry people.

Note base of medieval preaching CROSS.

'Pen-yr-Ardd' was originally part of 'Hill House' ground.

HILL HOUSE (Mr. & Mrs. A.G. Larby) (Present building perhaps 1850s but wing dates from 1726. Stables across road were part of Hill House land.) or its predecessor was the residence of Edward Sterling for a while in the 19th c. His son John Sterling (1806-1844) was a close friend of Thomas Carlyle who later wrote his biography. John was a retired army officer whose commentary on despatches from the Peninsular War was said to be the birth of the 'military expert', his views being published in 'The Times' which then employed him as a writer on military topics

Carlyle describes in his 'Life of John Sterling' how Sterling would walk to the top of Llanblethian Hill to see the mail coach come over the brow of Stalling Down on its way to Cowbridge,

A WALK ABOUT LLANBLETHIAN

bearing the despatches for him. Carlyle visited Llanblethian about 1850 and described it as 'a cheerful group of human homes' clustered like 'a little sleeping cataract of white houses with trees overshadowing and fringing it'.

A hillock in the garden (lovingly built by Alan Gibbs) is known as Carlyle's twmp.

THE OLD VICARAGE was built in 1870. The stables date from 1822. Lemuel Hopkin-James lived here. The porch area bears the date 1901 and the inscription in Latin 'Pax Intransibus, Salus Exeuntibus' (Peace to those entering, Health or Wellbeing to those leaving).

LLANBLETHIAN HOUSE (Mr. & Mrs. E. Freeman, Mr. & Mrs. D. Minas) dates from the early 17th c. This was the dower house of the Dunraven estate and for 60 years the home of Colonel Wyndham-Quin (later Earl of Dunraven). Was one house. Freeman side probably servants' quarters (low ceilings, stables outside). Minas - higher rooms, music room (floor lowered and ceiling raised to accommodate an organ when Nicholls lived there). No land attached (apart from garden). Also inhabited by Wm. Bruce (tablet in Church, d. 1768), Bassetts (Beaupre).

BELGRAVE HOUSE On site of 'King's Head Public House (John the Weaver's : John Thomas). JT died intestate in 1866 (aet. 82). One daughter took the building over without reference to the other two : wrangling till 1887.

GREAT HOUSE was built in 1702 for Thomas Wilkins, a lawyer and official of the Court of Great Sessions. David Jones of Wallington lived here from his birth on 28 May, 1834 to 1854, only child of Thomas Jones, maltster, and his wife Hannah who had been companion to Mrs. Markham of Nash. His father d. 1858 and is buried in Llanblethian Churchyard. Never married. Settled in 1875 at Wallington in Surrey. By 1879 he was able to retire and devote the rest of his life to historical research. D. 11 July, 1890. His studies, diaries and sketches are a mine of information about this area.