

58 High Street - Caercady House

PRIMARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Land Tax Assessments; 1843 Tithe Map; Census Forms; House deeds;

SECONDARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

Directories: Butcher's, Kelly's, Pigot's, Harrod's, Webster's, Slater's

Notebook of David Jones of Wallington (Cardiff C. Library)

Booklet "Cowbridge - Aspects of an Ancient Borough" by Sixth-Form Students of the Girls' High School, Cowbridge.

Cowbridge & Llanblethian, Past and Present, by Brian Ll. James and David J Francis.

CADW

Verbal information from Dr Meller present owner and occupier of Caercady House.

EXTERIOR

The present house was built in the early 19th Century and is a Grade II Listed Building, Record No 13228.

The house looks rather imposing; it has 3 storeys with good unaltered bay stuccoed front elevation with roll moulded and modillion eaves cornice. It has a slate gabled roof, with a rendered stack to the rear and a stone stack to the right-hand side, built up in brick.

There are 16-pane sash windows, but 12-pane sashes (4 over 8) to top floor; ground floor windows with cornices on consoles, first floor windows have shouldered architraves, pulvinated friezes and cornices; smaller second floor windows have shouldered architraves. There is a central 4-panelled door with overlight under a Doric porch with flat entablature with triglyph frieze on 2 columns and pilasters to wall. RCAHM

The stables, which were attached to the house, have been incorporated into the rear of High Street Garage.

INTERIOR

Very few major alterations have been carried out to the interior of the house since it was built. However, a new kitchen has been constructed from part of the central corridor and the coal yard. There are 6 panelled doors, a 19th century marble fireplace and a staircase with straight balusters. Dr K Meller

OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS

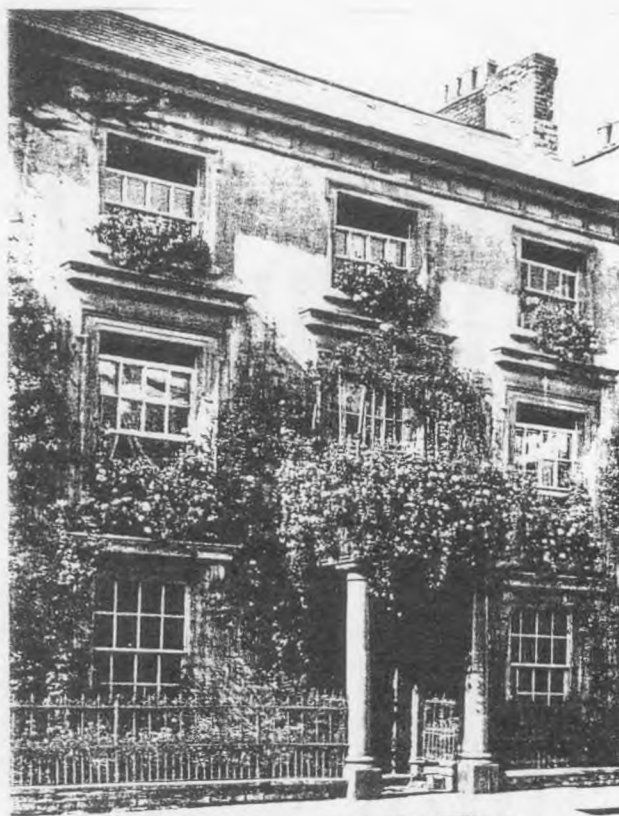
1738	John Reynolds, $\frac{3}{4}$ b in tenure of Mrs Hudson	BR#24
1762	Edward Jenkin, late John Reynolds	BR#24
1772	Edward Jenkin, in his own possession	BR#24
	Edward Jenkin in the Land Tax Assessments of 1773 and 1784 is also listed as the owner and occupier. It was obviously an important house, being taxed at 6/8d in 1784.	
1793	Will of Edward Jenkin of Cowbridge, gentleman	LL/1793/25
1799	Jane Jenkins, o and occ, 6/8d	LTA

David Jones of Wallington made the following comments on the Jenkinses in the early 1800s:

"....such disagreeable people. These were Mr and Miss Jenkins, people somewhat advanced in years, very eccentric and exceedingly cross-grained - the lady especially. If we may suppose her to have been possessed by an evil spirit, it was one impelling her always to be engaged in a lawsuit with some one or other of her neighbours, innocent people probably; unsuspectingly drawn into some breach of the law by the annoyances pertinaciously inflicted upon them by this cantankerous old woman, her brother or servant. Mr Jenkins was believed to be far more amiable in



14. Caecady House, once the town house of the squires of Caecady, Welsh St. Donat's



His surgery at Caecady House in the High Street must have been the envy of all window-box gardeners

41. Dr. Charles Booth Meller



disposition than his sister but goaded on by her to take part in this warfare against their neighbours.

“Dr Salmon, (their new neighbour) was assured that the former owner and last occupant of the (neighbouring) house, a quiet widow lady, was so harrassed by the continual litigation involved by the close neighbourhood of Miss Jenkins that her peace of mind was utterly destroyed, and grief hurried her to the grave. On the first morning after (Salmon’s) removal to the house, the kitchen, lighted by two windows looking out upon Miss J’s back yard, was found to be in total darkness. In the night she had got her brother and servant to help her, and they had removed a immense dungheap, the accumulation of years, and had piled it firmly against the windows. This “nuisance” was speedily thrown down and the “boys” entered upon the work of retaliation in good earnest. The whole stock of syringes from the surgery was brought out and brought to play upon the old woman... drenching her from head to foot.”

1806	Jane Jenkins, o and occ, ¾ burgage	BR #25
1830	Dr Thomas, o, Peter Kinnidy, occ, house, 8/-	LTA
1832	John Thomas, o, Mr Swann, occ, ¾ b	BR#25

“Dr Swann, medical man in Cowbridge, 1838/45. Was with Talbot of Margam as medical attendant upon yachting cruise in Mediterranean. All fell into hands of Algerian pirates. In captivity for some time; finally ransomed. Swan died young, about 1845; left wife and three or four children”.

WAHFisher, MS 4.1221, Cardiff C library

1837 ‘Cowbridge - house to let and entered on May 1st next, in the centre of Cowbridge, fit for a small genteel family. Apply Mr Thomas, Caercady’
Cambrian, 23/12/1837
 John Thomas of Caercady (Welsh St Donats) owned the property in the early part of the nineteenth century, and after his death in 1842, his wife Mary Ann Thomas took over. The tenant at the time of the 1843 Tithe Map (Property #204) was George Morgan, who was a watchmaker (Pigot's 1844).

1843	John Thomas, o, Geo Morgan, occ	Tithe
1844	Geo Morgan, watch and clock maker	Pigot
1849	John Jenkin Thomas of Leeds, freehold house and garden opposite The Bear Inn	Register of Electors

Unusually, at the time of the 1851 census(#42), the occupant was Michael Farrar, Science Master at the Grammar School, who lived there for a short time with his wife, children, 3 boarders and 2 servants - probably because this was the time of the rebuilding of the Grammar School. Presumably Farrar moved there when the rebuilding started in 1847/8.

Other residents listed in the deeds are Celia Hudson and John Cook, but it was then owned and occupied for about 25 years by Mary Ann Thomas, who had moved there from Caercady House at Welsh Saint Donats (a much older and grander country house). (Mary A Thomas, 1861 census#149, 1871 census#166. 1874:MA Thomas, o and occ, house - Glam Cty Rate). The Cowbridge house is regarded as the town house of the Welsh Saint Donats house. This latter house and land originally belonged to the family of Edward Jenkins; Mary Ann was descended from the Jenkinsees on her mother’s side, and married John Thomas RN, and bore him five children. There are various memorials in Welsh Saint Donats Church to the Jenkins and Thomas families. Following her removal from Welsh Saint Donats, it was found that she frequently needed extensive medical treatment . Local wiseacres put her ill health down to the "ghost of Caercady". Men who had been condemned to death for crimes committed were led past the house before being hanged outside the town and one was reputed to have returned. One evening when a knocking was heard on the door of Caercady House, Mrs Thomas, allegedly, asked a neighbour, who was sitting with her, to open the door as she knew it

was the ghost who had been knocking for the past week. The fearless neighbour opened the door to find that it was a local farmer who had a habit of sleeping in Mrs Thomas's attic over the stables, it being preferable to spending the night in a doorway of a shop in the High Street!

After the death of Mrs Thomas a family disagreement led to an Order of Chancery in 1876 for the estate to be sold by auction.

1877 Caercady Estate Sale. Lot 29 - family residence in Cowbridge, lately in tenure of Mrs Mary Ann Thomas with dining room, drawing room, library, 7 bedrooms, kitchen and usual offices (title deriving from indenture of 1826) GRO Fo.LB61.658.82

In 1879 the property was conveyed to John Fraunceis Griffith of Llansannor House; the tenant at the time was Edward Ord, a solicitor. According to the 1881 census (#39), he was a bachelor and employed a general clerk and 2 servants. The first reference to him in Cowbridge is in the 1871 census, living with his mother at Heath House in Eastgate; he then appears in Owen's Directory (1878) as living in the High Street, in Slater's (1880) as a solicitor and in Kelly's (1884) as solicitor and Hon Secretary to the Glamorgan Hunt. There are no entries in any of the Directories after this date when he would have been about 32/33 years of age, but *Rees and Gwyn's Journal No 11* suggests that he was struck off as a solicitor in 1887. He had lived in Llanblethian House in 1861 with his widowed mother, who is also recorded as 'of Llanblethian' in Webster's (1865) and Kelly's (1871).

Dr Charles Booth Meller was the next resident. (census#38 of 1891). He arrived in Cowbridge from Ecclesfield, Yorkshire, to work in the practice of Dr J W Phillips following the untimely death of Dr Stannestreet in a railway accident. After a year he decided to set up on his own, with consulting rooms in Caercady House. He bought the property in 1922, having engaged a young lady assistant from Ireland whom he married in 1923/24 when he was in his early sixties; she was considerably younger. They had 4 daughters.

Such was Dr Meller's medical skill and great popularity that he was said to have more patients on his register than any rural doctor in the whole of the Principality. His equal treatment of rich and poor alike and his kindness to all clergymen, whom he considered grossly underpaid, were such that his name was to become proverbial throughout the Vale for over 50 years.

He was a very keen gardener. A postcard from his gardener in 1907 stated: "One small garden full of bulbs is at the back, the larger one is 5 minutes walk away. I came here as a gardener and to help in the house on Saturday and like the place, 12/- all found which is not so bad. There is an acre of flower garden and a small greenhouse, but nearly the whole is for dahlias which are not much trouble...."

His first mode of transport was by gig and stallion and he was always accompanied by his groom; he had several stallions. With the introduction of the motor car, he used Mr Ralph Bird's (Garden Centre) small 8 hp car for visiting patients with a chauffeur. His appearance, especially in his latter days, was most striking; he wore a massive beard down to his middle and, dressed in his top hat and frock coat, always retained the tailored look of the doctor. He continued working in medicine until he died in 1936.

His wife then took over the Practice. His second daughter was the only one to follow in his footsteps and become a GP. After qualifying, she worked in Manchester for a few years, but returned to join the Cowbridge Practice in 1955 and moved into Caercady House with her husband and family. In 1974, a new Health Centre was built and the Practice moved from Caercady House to the new premises. Dr Meller and his wife were local Councillors for many years, and his wife was at one time Mayor of the Borough. Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge, has thus been occupied by members of one family for over 100 years.

EXTRACTS FROM RELEVANT CENSUS FORMS

- 1843 J Thomas (Owner), George Morgan (Tenant) (Tithe)
- 1851 Michael Farrar, Science Master, Grammar School, Aged 36, Married.
 Caroline Farrar, Wife. Aged 25.
 Charles Farrar, Son, Aged 5, Scholar.
 Caroline Farrar, Daughter, Aged 3, At home.
 William B Farrar, Son, Aged 1, At home.
 Wm P Davies. Boarder, Aged 14, Scholar, Born Monmouth.
 Herbert T Davies, Boarder, Aged 12, Scholar, Born Monmouth.
 Alf Adams, Boarder, Aged 11, Scholar, Born Monmouth.
 Matilda Dring, Cook, Aged 20, Unmarried, Born Oxford.
 Eliza Phillips, Housemaid, Aged 14, Unmarried, Born Glamorgan.
- 1861 Mary Ann Thomas, Landed Proprietor, Aged 69, Married, Born Bridgend.
 Maria Davies, Cook, Aged 22, Unmarried, Born Llanharan
 Mary Elias, Housemaid, Aged 19, Unmarried, Born Ewenny.
- 1871 Mary Ann Thomas, Landed Proprietor, Aged 79, Widow, Born Bridgend.
 Anna A Thomas, Companion, Aged 44?, Unmarried, Born Cowbridge.
 Mary Rees, Housemaid, Aged 18, Unmarried, Born Llanblethian.
 Charlotte Cummings, Dressmaker, Aged 17, Unmarried, Born Boverton.
 Harriet Williams, Helper, Aged 12, Unmarried, Born Prisk.
- 1881 Edward Ord, Solicitor, Aged 29, Unmarried, Born St Mellons.
 Edward Boughton, Solicitor's General Clerk, Aged 18, Unmarried, Born Cardiff
 Robert Boughton, Groom, Aged 16, Unmarried, Born Taynton, Glos.
 Mary Davies, General Servant, Aged 32, Unmarried, Born Pencoed.
- 1891 Charles Booth Meller LRCP (Edin), Physician & Surgeon, Medical Officer and
 Public Vaccination, Bonvilston District, Cardiff Union and Cowbridge District,
 Bridgend and Cowbridge Union and Medical Officer of Health, Cowbridge
 District, Bridgend Rural Sanitary Authority and Certifying Factory Surgeon,
 Aged 32, Unmarried, Born Nettlebed, Oxfordshire.
 Sarah C ? , Cook, Aged 35, Unmarried, Born Chelsea, London.
 John A Phillips, Servant, Aged 17, Unmarried, Born Penllyne.
- 1901 Charles B Meller, 42 + Thos B Meller, bro, 40 b Nettlebed, + Walter Cooper, 25,
 physician, b Silchester, Hants + Fitzwilliam RA Evans, 40, b Rathmines, Dublin
 + William Stallard, 30, groom, b Dundry, som, + Edith Richards, domestic
 servant, 40, b Cowbridge Census#150
- 1910 CB Meller, occ, JF Griffiths, o, Llansannon Ho. (In very poor general repair.
 Floors bad and very damp throughout.) PRO; IR58/ 18459#42

FAMILY OF JOHN THOMAS, RN

John Thomas RN of Caercady Ho = Mary Ann Jones (dau of Revd John James Jones of Caercady
 d 7/1/1842, aged 52 I Ho and Rector of Gellygaer

I	I	I	I
John Jenkins Thomas Lieut in 5th Dragoon Guards d 5/1/51 aged 27	I Mary Ann= 11/8/26- 18/4/80	I Geo H. Jenkins of Caercady Ho	I Laura Ann= 15/2/32 - 25/8/1911 Rockingham, Northants
			I 4* I 5*

4* Caroline Eliza
 d 7/9/57, aged 24

5* Sarah Francis = Richard Humphrey Hill
 4/7/28 - 6/2/95 Rector of Stanway, Essex