

The Verlands, off Town Mill Road, Cowbridge

Verlands House

A solid, impressive house, with a fine porch, stood on this site from the early nineteenth century to 1966. Many remember the sweeping tree-lined drive (a few of the trees remain), the tall monkey-puzzle tree in front of the house, and the iron railings around the front paddock. The stone and brick wall bordering the School cricket field was the garden wall of the Verlands.

The name appears to be corruption of 'Furlong', a land measure, as the field in which the house was built was known as *Bere* (or barley) *Furlong* in 1570. At the end of the eighteenth century, it was not an arable field, but pasture land, owned by the Rev. Thomas Bruce of Great House, Llanblethian, the grandfather of the first Lord Aberdare. The field had a link with the *Bear Hotel* in Cowbridge, as the named tenants were Walter Williams, innkeeper, of *The Bear*, and then on his death, Christopher Bradley, an enthusiastic promoter of the coach trade, who may well have used this field, conveniently close to *The Bear*, for his horses.

1812 The Rev. W E Morgan owned and occupied (Verlong) *Land Tax Assessment.*

The house seems to have been built by the Rev. Edward Morgan 'of Cheltenham', who bought the land from the trustees of the Bruce estate in 1791, and who lived in the house up to 1825. He was succeeded as occupant by Thomas Llewellyn, a member of one of the important Cowbridge families of the first half of the nineteenth century. By 1851, Llewellyn was a farmer of 300 acres, employing eight labourers. By then he was a widower and had had three daughters, one of whom had married Edward Davies the currier of 44 High Street, Cowbridge.

In 1861 the Morgan family, then of Aberdare, leased the house and five fields comprising 23 acres or so, to James Ballard of Llwynhelyg, the fine house just west of Cowbridge. James was also of an established Cowbridge family – he was a property owner who had run the Bear Hotel in the 1820s and 30s, had an ironmonger's shop at 51 High Street, and had converted the family wool store and fell-mongery business at the rear of 5 High Street into a malthouse. He was an alderman of the town, a JP and a bailiff, and was considered one of the leading agriculturalists of the Vale, well-known for horse-breeding. He exhibited horses and stallions in particular as far afield as the Birmingham Horse Show.

In 1871, he lived in the Verlands with his son, James Simpson Ballard, and two servants, but died in 1879, aged 91. Lt-Col J S Ballard of the Royal Glamorgan Artillery Militia, lived on in the house till his death at the age of 48, in 1882. The house was unoccupied for a while, and then (rather surprisingly) let by the then owner Rev. DW Williams of Fairfield, Pontypridd to a labourer from Llanblethian, David Jenkins, and his small family – his wife Hannah and son Richard, who were there for the 1891 census.

In 1891, the Rev David Watkin Williams, BA and JP, died, aged 74 (*Cambrian* newspaper), and in 1893, in New York, his widow Catherine married Theophilus Richard Hamlen-Williams of Verlands (*Cambrian*).

Thomas John, a solicitor and one of a family of brewers from Pentre in the Rhondda, then moved in from Caecady House in Welsh St Donats. He married Marion Ann Llewellyn, the orphaned niece of the Llewellyn sisters of Heath House in Cowbridge in 1910. The Johns had an opulent life style – he had two Daimlers, and kept a chauffeur for his wife, who was regularly driven into the Dorothy Café in Cardiff for half a dozen cakes.

When the Hamlen-Williams estate was divided in 1934, the property was described as ‘The Verlands, and the gardens, vinery, greenhouse and pleasure grounds, stables, cow and provision sheds’.

The tenant was Mr. L E W Williams, a solicitor of Cardiff, who subsequently bought the house in 1951 and continued to live there with his family of six children. He gave a portion of the field on Town Mill Road to the Catholic Church, and then sold the remaining property for development in 1965.

Demolition of the Verlands House and construction of the modern houses started in 1967/8. The porch was moved to St Hilary and now graces the entrance to the Manor House Nursing Home there.

Jeff Alden

The excellent Local Studies section of Bridgend library in Park Street has become even more useful in recent months. Among the microfilms of newspapers stored there is the *Cambrian*, which was in the early years of the nineteenth century our local newspaper. I recently came across a poem written about Cowbridge in 1838; it included the following verses:

Now on to Cowbridge o'er the road,
And down old Constitution hill,
Where smiles that cottage, the abode
Of one who owns the Cowbridge Mill.
A pretty spot, where groups of trees
Of various kinds their foliage shew,
Which rustling in the summer's breeze,
Commingle with the water's flow.

Near is a well whose waters rare
flow murmuring o'er its crystal brink,
Where yearly children gay repair
Their watered sugar glad to drink.

So by 1838, Constitution Hill already had that name, and the miller lived in what are now two pretty cottages, next door to the Mill. Also at that time children were accustomed to going to Bowman's well to drink sugared water, something that David Jones had written about some forty years later, and I can remember going there for picnics with my children around 1970.

Very close to the mill and to Bowman's well (where 'groups of trees their foliage shew') stood Verlands House. This had been built in the early years of the nineteenth century by the Revd Evan Morgan of Cheltenham, and when the poem was written the occupant was Thomas Llewellyn, then a farmer of some 300 acres, but when he retired to live in Eastgate he was described as a 'banker, landed proprietor, town magistrate, alderman and retired corn merchant'. He was certainly one of the important personages of Cowbridge, and in fact The Verlands attracted the *crachach* of the town throughout its history. Among these was James Ballard of the Bear Hotel, who followed Llewellyn - and Ballard was a leading agriculturalist, famed for horse-breeding. Thomas John, a solicitor and a member of a Rhondda brewing family occupied the house in the early twentieth century. The Johns had an opulent life style; they had two Daimlers, and the chauffeur regularly drove Mrs John to the Dorothy Cafe in Cardiff just to buy half a dozen cakes.

The last owner and inhabitant of the house was another solicitor, Mr LEW Williams; it was he who gave a portion of the field on Town Mill Road to the Catholic Church, and St Cadoc's church was built in 1955-6. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of St Cadoc's. and will be commemorated at the end of this month by a Sunday mass and great celebrations for the congregation. I apologise for (quite inexplicably) getting the date wrong in *How Well Do You Know Cowbridge?* but at least I did sing the praises of the lovely stained glass west window, which is glorious. *Jeff Alden (ca 2005)*

'Bere Furlong' is the name given to the 7 acre field in the Survey of 1570, held by John Kemeys from Richard Carne – 'one acre of meadow near St Flethian's Well, 7 acres of land at Bere Furlong.....one parcel of land near the Mill....'

It is thought that 'bere' is an old name for barley, and 'furlong' means 'furrow'.

1790 Thomas Bruce, clerk, deceased had owned land to the north of the Mill field
(*either this land or land near Druid's Green?*)

D/D Ed 119

1791 J Knight of Dyffryn, Aberdare and the Revd. T Hole of Barnstaple to the Revd Edward Morgan of Cheltenham, all that pasture called the Vurlong (7 acres) formerly in occupation of Walter Williams, innkeeper decd., and now Christopher Bradley, innkeeper, with the lands of Charles Edwin on lease to Anne Roberts, spinster; lands of Thomas Edmondes; a close of the Rt Hon Ld Talbot on lease to

- John Franken; a narrow strip of land called the Bowling Green on lease to Revd. Wm Williams, the property of the Corporation of Cowbridge; on all sides.
D/D HJ Box 93
- 1810 Revd. W E Morgan owned and occupied, Verlong, 7s 1d. *LTA*
- 1821 Revd. Edward Morgan owned and occupied, 7s.4d. “
- 1824 Reference to Revd. Edward Morgan of Verlan House, Llanblethian, owning land near The Limes.
D/D Trecastle 74/5
- 1825 Revd. Edward Morgan owned and occupied, 7s.4d. *LTA*
- 1828 and 1830 Son and daughter born to Thomas and Emma Llewellyn*, surveyor of Llanblethian
Llb. parish records
- 1829 David William, Vurlong, servant given poor relief *Parish account book*
- 1835 Reference to Henrietta, daughter of Thos. Llewellyn of the Vurlong, as one of the 3 lives in a lease of land or sheep pens.
B/Cow 192
- 1837 Son born to T and E Llewellyn *Parish records.*
- 1843 Edward Morgan owned; Thomas Llewellyn occupied, house and garden
Tithe 273
“ “ front field *Tithe 274*
- 1845 Edward Morgan of Aberdare owned a freehold house – Verlong, near Cowbridge
Electoral register 1845/6 Parish of Llanblethian
- 1851 ‘Verlong’
Thomas Llewellyn, 57 yrs, married, farmer of 300 acres employing 8 labourers, b Cowbridge
Marie Louisa Davies, daughter, married, 25, wife of Edwin Davies, currier, b Bristol
Emma Mary Llewellyn, daughter, 17, scholar, b Cowbridge
Jane Watkins, 17, house servant, b Llanblethian *Census 84*
- 1852 Mr Morgan owned; Thomas Llewellyn occupied *R 13 2/5*
- 1855 Owner, Mr Edward Morgan of Aberdare, freehold house and land
Electoral register
- 1856 Thomas Llewellyn of the Vurlong near Cowbridge, gent., widower, purchased 6-8 Westgate from John Bevan and John Thomas for £450.
D/D X57/2/1-15

- 1861 House unoccupied *Census*
- 1861 Trustees of the will of George R Morgan of Aberdare, to James Ballard of Llwynhelig, gent., lease of messuage called the Verlong or Furlong and fields –
Front Field, 3 acres 3 rods, 23 perches (Tithe 274)
Back Field 3 acres 3 rods 28 perches (Tithe 272)
Bowmans Well Field 9 acres, 1 rod 29 perchwes (Tithe 269)
Now occupied by said James Ballard, and 7 acres (Tithe 348) and Limes Orchard (Tithe 152), now occupied by Wm Thomas miller. *D/D HJ Box 93*
- 1865 James Ballard, The Verlands, bailiff and JP for the borough
James Simpson Ballard, The Verlands, deputy mayor *Webster's directory*
(James Ballard was in Llwynhelig in 1858 *Slater's directory*)
- 1866 Captain Ballard will send 4 horses to Birmingham Horse Show
Glam. Gazette 6/7/66
- 1867 Death of Eliza Beatrice Forrester of Verlands, aged 16 mths. *Llb. parish recds*
- 1871 James Ballard, head, widower, 83, landowner, b Cowbridge
James Simpson Ballard, son, unm. 36, captain of Artillery Militia, b Cowbridge
Mary Thomas, unm. 35, cook housekeeper, b Colwinston
Mary Collier, unm. 19, housemaid, b Llanblethian *Census 2*
- 1879 Death of James Ballard aged 91 *Llanblethian church records.*
- 1881 'Verlands'
J S Ballard, head, unm, 46, Lt Col Royal Glamorgan Artillery Militia
Martha Richards, unm, housekeeper, b Cowbridge
Ann Glenton, nurse, 56, b Staffs
Mary Ann Meggins, unm. 30, servant, b Llandow
T J Braddick, visitor, 23, clerk, b Llanblethian *Census 92*
- 1882 Death of J S Ballard aged 48 *Llb. church recds.*
- 1884 'The Verlands', the property of the Revd. David W Williams, is vacant
Kelly's
- 1885 David Watkin Williams of Fairfield, Pontypridd, the Furlong (with RV of £12+)
Electoral register
- 1889 David Jenkins, dwelling house *County register*

- 1891 'The Verlands'
David Jenkins, head, 44, labourer, b Llanblethian
Wife Hannah Jenkins, 42, b Llanblethian
Son Richard Jenkins, 5, b Llanblethian *Census 96*
- 1895 Theophilus Richard Hamlyn-Williams, Verlan House, surgeon, and wife Mary Catherine – baptism of daughter, 15th April *Cowbridge church recds.*
- 1910 Marriage at Cowbridge church of Marian Ann Llewellyn of Heath House to Thomas John, solicitor, of The Verlands, son of David John, gent. decd.
Church recds.
Marian L was the orphaned niece of the Llewellyn sisters, brought up by them in Heath House*
- 1910 Mr and Mrs John *Cowbridge Fire Service recds.*
- 1926 Thomas John *Kelly's*
- 'Lovely house with 2 or 3 fields attached. John family lived there. He thought he was Cowbridge – had 2 Daimlers and kept a chauffeur for his wife. She was taken into the Dorothy in Cardiff for half a dozen cakes. Had one son, Maurice. Every Monday morning, she was down by the front gate waiting for a letter from her son. He married one of the Thomases of Stafford House'. *Mrs Tonkin, who grew up in the Mill cottage*
- 1933 Mr L E W Williams, solicitor, Cardiff, moved in as tenant on his marriage
John Edmondes
- 1934 Deed of partition – 'Verlands and gardens, greenhouse and pleasure grounds, stables, cow and provision sheds etc., tenant L E W Williams'. *D/D HJ Box 93*
- 1951 Bought by L E W Williams who continued to live there with his six children
John Edmondes
- 1956 The Williamses gave the land at the end of their drive for the building of the Catholic Church
- 1965 Purchased by Louis Fisher from 'Tip' Williams for development.
- 1967/8 Verlands House demolished *L C Fisher*

(* *Llewellyn family* :

Emma m. Thomas Llewellyn 1799-1888, alderman and bailiff

along the best known road to the place of burial. Old as the bridge appears, it has not been so long built, but that 50 years ago the oldest know road was through the shallow water just in front of it : probably there were stepping stones then originally. The Welch not only love to carry their dead to where their kindred lie, but all the neighbours and friends of the deceased ‘assist’ at the funeral, singing hymns if the distance be short, all the way, and if long through all the villages they pass. The funeral processions are thus always large and those of one or two families from the Aberthin end of the parish, up to within the last 30 or 40 years invariably avoided the bridge, and waded through the ford below it – The reason for this observance I have never heard explained. Crossing the bridge we have the farm before spoken of on the left hand, an excellent specimen of a ?small old Welch farm house.’

From the writings of David Jones of Wallington, nineteenth century (in Cardiff Central Library)



Bowmans Well

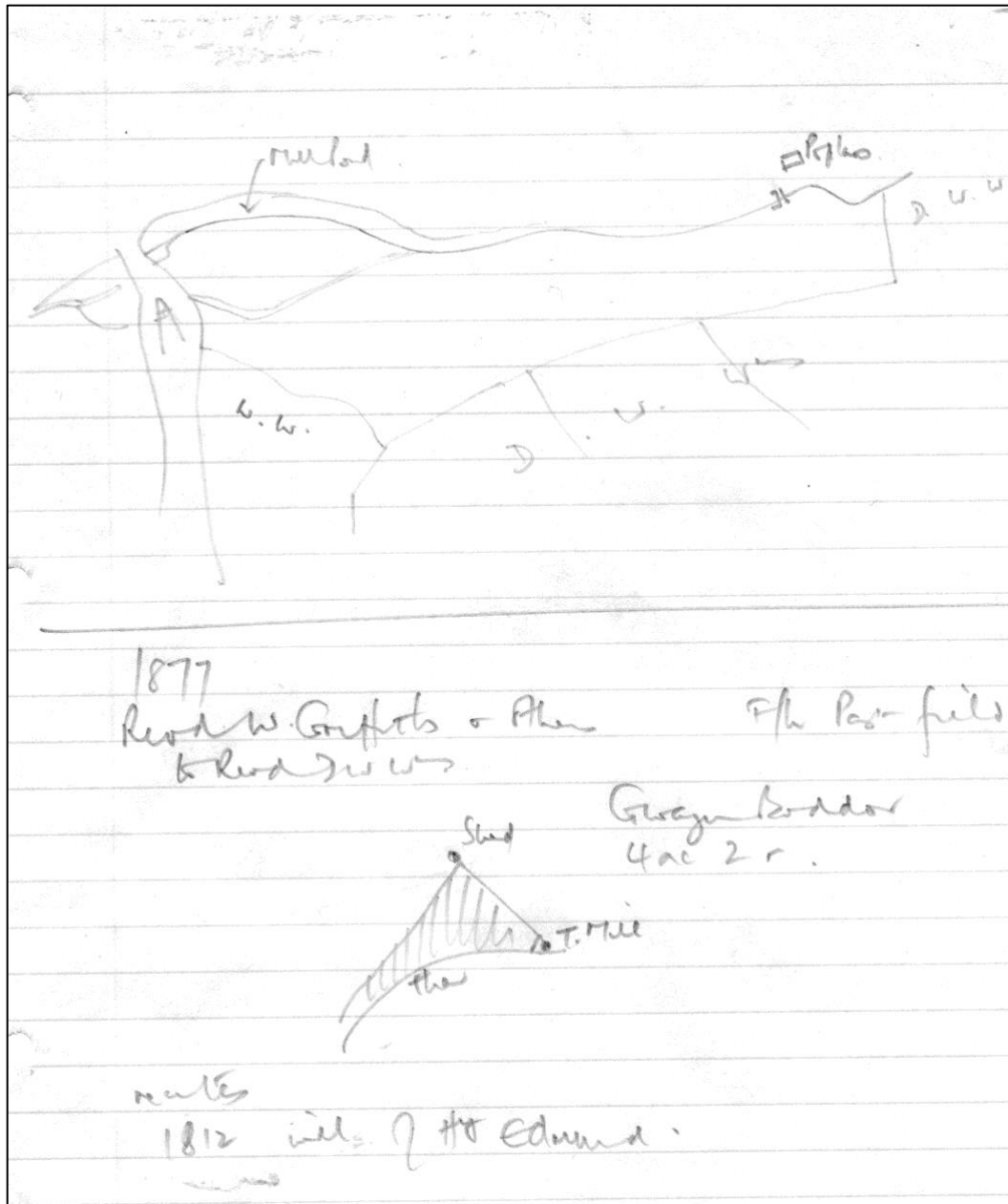
‘The name with the exact spelling appears for the first time on the large-scale Ordnance Survey map of 1877. It was probably the surveyor who decided that was what the name should be – he would have been trying to make sense of what local people told him.

Earlier spellings are these :

- c. 1560 Bumblying Well
- 1570 Bumlig Well
- 1724 Boomans Well
- 1779 Boming Well

I wonder if the name reflects to noise the water made coming up from the ground in the well – ‘bubbling’ or perhaps even ‘booming’??

Brian James, in a letter to Betty Alden July 2017



Sketch plan/notes of Jeff Alden

Sources/abbreviations :

- GRO = Glamorgan Record Office
- LTA = land tax assessments (in GRO)
- D/D and similar = deeds in GRO
- Electoral registers and directories = in GRO