

55 High Street

A Grade II listed building

CADW/RCAHM

- 1661/2 (possibly) Lease for 99 yrs, Thos Mathew of Castlemynach to Alex William of Llanblethian, yeoman, mansion ho and appurtenances in Cowbridge For the lives of Alexander William, Katherine Powell and Elizabeth William
D/D D 157
- 1689 99 yr lease, Charles Mathew of Castlemynach to Anne Jenkins of C, widow, that mansion house where Anne Jenkins lives, between Ho of Edward Bates on E (No 53) and house of Wm Price on W (No 57)
D/DD158
- 1732 House of Charles Talbot (adj E ho of Richard Bates)
D/D Ed 18
- 1738 Edward Thomas, gent, for 1 burgage
BR#137
- 1762 Earl Talbot late Edward Thomas, f/h, Mrs Morris and Cath Griffiths, ten
BR#137
- 1768 Will of Edward Thomas of C, gent, - to niece Mary Thomas, dau of bro John Thomas, mess and gdn in occ Wm Humphreys, gent, held by lease from William, Earl Talbot
- 1773 Cissil Morgan, widow, 7/6d
LTA
- 1778 Earl Talbot, f/h. William Morris and Cath Griffiths, 1 b
BR#
- 1784 Lord Talbot, o, Edward Ballard, occ, 10/-
LTA
- 1799 Sold to John Thomas esq. of Cowbridge by Rt. Hon. George Talbot [Baron Dynevor]
Deeds
- 1804 John Thomas Esq, landlord, Edward Ballard, ten
BR#141
- 1816 Mrs Mary Powell, widow, landlord, Misses Thomas, ten, l b
BR#141
- 1830 Mrs Powell, o and occ, 10/- (exonerated)
LTA
- 1843 Owned by Edward Bradley, occupied by Rev. John Powell
Tithe
Bradley also owned No 57, and 62 where he lived; Powell in 1786 sold 59 High Street for £160 to Mr Evan Jones and another.
Deeds of No 59
- 1850 Conveyance, Edward Bradley to Joseph May
Deeds
- 1851 Richard Felton age 43, tailor and draper, b Cowbndge
Ann Felton age 43 wife b Cowbridge
William Felton age 19 tailor journeyman b Cowbridge
Richard Felton age 16 scholar (making cloth)clerk b Cowbridge
Thomas Felton age 13 chemist apprentice b Cowbridge
Marion Felton age 11 scholar b Cowbridge
George Felton age 5 " b Cowbridge
John Roderic age 17 tailor's apprentice b Cowbridge
Census# 116
See notes on the Feltons
- 1861 The Feltons have moved OUT of 55 into 59 and the May family moved IN from No.59
Joseph May age 50 Groom and ostler Pyle
Fanny May age 10
Charles May age 8
Catherine Davies age 22 Housekeeper
Census#87
- (In 1851 Joseph and Margaret May have 6 children
In 1853 Margaret May dies when her 7th child, Charles is a baby,
She was a casualty of the County Ball at the Bear
(Charles becomes traveller in colliery grease, at age of 18)
Census
Parish Recds
Details see Bear
Census

By 1861 census, only 2 children remain at home.

- 1864 Margaret May his 3rd youngest child marries Lewis Jenkins, Maltster of Cowbridge. [See info, for No 53/51]
- 1863 Joseph May sells to Mrs. Mary Perkins. [He goes to the Ancient Druid Deeds Mary David of Batsleys Farm, St Athan, married Edward Perkins, son of John Perkins the Rector of Gileston. After her husband's death she moved to Cowbridge (first to 7/9 High St), and then built a house on the site of the old Cross House. Her niece Corena Davies lived with her, to whom she left nearly all she had
WAHF Vol 18, p76 (Cardiff Central Library)
- 1871 Mary Perkins age 72 widow and railway shareholder, b Eglwys Brewis

Corina Davies age 30 niece annuitant

Catherine Jenkins age 24 domestic servant Monkknash *Census#95*

[A Corina Davies is recorded as living in Batsleys Farm in 1851, the sister of the head of family, Daniel Davies aged 22. Corina is recorded as being 18. This age does not tie in with the age of Corina Davies recorded in 1871.]
- 1881 Corena Davies age 40 annuitant Glos. Bristol
Eliza Jenkins age 37 general servant Llanmaes
Elizabeth Jenkins age 3 visitor Bridgend *Census#257*
- 1891 Corena Davies age 50 living on own means, born Somerset Bristol

Corena Sloper age 7 scholar [niece] Penmark
Catherine Jones age 27 domestic servant Cowbridge *Census#252*
(A gravestone in Penmark church reads "Corrina Sloper [alias Davies] born Aberthaw 1884, wife of Roland Davies for 38 years, mother of.....daughter of John and Mary Sloper. Died Winchester 1945
Parish Recds Will of Mrs. Mary Jane Sloper 1/9/45)
- 1901 Cambrian House,
William L Jenkins, 34, wine and spirit merchant, aerated water manuf, b Llanblethian
Margaret K Jenkins, wife, 29, b Llansannor
John L, son, 3, b Cowbridge
William E, son, 2 months, b Cowbridge
Edith ML Clatworthy, 19, domestic servant, b Bridgend
Mary J Bishop, 15, nurse, b Stoke Edith, Herefs

Census # 169
[William Lewis Jenkins is the son of Margaret May and Lewis Jenkins]
See Nos.53/51.
- 1910 William Lewis Jenkins, Cambrian House. *Kelly*
1910 Cambrian House, occ W L Jenkins, o Lewis Jenkins Vale of Glamorgan Brewery. 21 year tenancy from 1896. Old stone and slate structure in fair upkeep, contg 4 good bedrooms and boxroom, 2 sitting rooms, kitchen, scullery, 2 pantries, coal store. *PRO IR5 8/18461/308*
- 1914 & 1920 William Lewis Jenkins *Kelly*
- 1921 Margaret Kate Jenkins and William Lewis Jenkins at No55 *Electoral roll*
- 1923 Lewis Jenkins of Cambrian House sold the "Greyhound" *Deeds*
- 1966 House named as The Cross *D/D Xam 200*

1971 Sold to Mr FG Bruton It was still a residential property. *D/D Xam 200*

The House at this time was a 2 storey residence having 5 rectangular sash-cord windows upstairs and 2 sets of similar windows down-stairs, 2 each side of the front door, showing a symmetry characteristic of Georgian times.

(In paintings showing the old Town Hall the premises can just be seen in the left-hand corner. A white gate appears to jut at right angles from the house wall in to the street to separate No 55 from No 53. To the left of the front door which opens straight onto the street tall iron railings appear in one picture. These have gone by the 1900s. On one early print there is a hood over the front door, but in the next reference there is only a flat stone covering set above the front door.

Its central position in the town means that a substantial building would have occupied the site since the founding of the borough in the mid 13th century.)

1980s Bought for use as the offices of Watts and Morgan, who then changed the windows to bow windows downstairs, and since have introduced rectangular bays.

Colwyn Jones

1970s Roddam Travel, west side, Headquarters, hair salon, east side

1980s Roddam travel, west side, Eleganza hats, east side

1999 Culver Travel, west side, Watts & Morgan, estate agents, east side
Sarah Renwick, 1st floor.

Notes on ownership and occupancy (by Brian James) - based on D/D Xam 200

The house is plot 46 on the tithe plan of 1841-4. The whole parcel, including a garden extending northwards to the town wall, measured 27 perches. The street frontage is approximately 40 feet, and the original length of the plot from the street to the town wall was approximately 185 feet; this was extended in the 1850s to North Road, to a total length of about 215 feet. There is some reason to suppose that something like 40 x 185 feet was the standard medieval burgage plot in this part of the town.

Ownership

The oldest surviving deed (1799) shows that the Talbot family of Hensol were owners of the house through much of the eighteenth century. (The deed recites a lease granted by Lord Talbot in 1733). Since it formed a part of their Castellymynach estate, rather than their Hensol estate, the line of descent probably goes back to Robert Williams of Ty-mawr, Aberthin, whose daughter and co-heiress, Cecil, married in 1662 Thomas Mathew of Castellymynach.

The granddaughter of Thomas and Cecil Mathew, another Cecil, married in 1709 Charles Talbot, later created Lord Talbot of Hensol. The Talbot property in Cowbridge and Llanblethian in the 18th century was moderately extensive; in 1782 it passed to yet another heiress named Cecil, Baroness Dynevor in her own right. Lady Dynevor died in 1793 when the title and estate were inherited by her son, George Talbot Rice, 3rd Baron Dynevor. In 1799 much of the Cowbridge and Llanblethian property was put up for sale in order to raise cash to redeem the land tax on the Castellymynach estate. (1) Not quite all of it was sold, however, for as late as the 1840s 13 acres (including Ty-mawr, Aberthin) belonged to Lord Dynevor. His name is still commemorated by Dynevor

Cottage on Town Mill Road, built in the corner of a small field belonging to Lord Dynevor.(2)

55 High Street was put up for sale by auction at the Bear Inn in 1799, and was bought for £102 by John Thomas, an attorney who lived with his mother and sister in the adjoining house (No 57). The Thomases were an important Cowbridge family, originally from Llangan, but one with peculiar pretensions. In the first place, John began to spell his surname with a double s - and this is the spelling in the title deed - to the amusement of others who had no need of pretension. The Rev. John Carne of Nash is reported to have wondered if he was Jack Thomas or Tom Jackass. A second oddity was that when Thomas's middle-aged sister Mary married another local attorney, Edward Powell, in 1808, a special licence was obtained from the Archbishop of Canterbury to allow the ceremony to take place in the "dwelling house of Mrs Cecil Thomas in this Parish of Cowbridge"(3); tradition adds that the ceremony was conducted in the drawing room of No 57, which would probably have been on the first floor above what is now the Spar Supermarket. But tradition assigns no reason why they should have wanted to be married in such a private and unusual way.

Mrs Mary Powell inherited 57 and 55 High Street, and lived at No 57. She died in 1837 leaving no close relatives, and bequeathed both houses to Edward Bradley, grandson of her first cousin, Elizabeth Wilkins. The Bradleys were a prominent family involved with horses, innkeeping and land agency; they were becoming wealthy, but did not yet have the social position of the Thomases and Powells. The young Edward Bradley did not live in Cowbridge at the time; he mortgaged No 55 with other property to his father and another for £1,500, but defaulted and the house was sold in 1850 for £330.

The next owner was Joseph May, described in the conveyance as a gentleman. But there is no reason to believe that he was entitled to call himself that. He appears in the parish register and the census as "ostler". The houses he lived in indicate, however, that he was a prosperous man; he was possibly the owner of a livery stable rather than the employee of an innkeeper.(4) Unfortunately for May, 1850 was not a good year for such trades in Cowbridge since, with the opening of the South Wales Railway, traffic along the main road drastically declined and the mail coach from Bristol to Swansea and other long-distance coach services ceased to run. It can be suggested that his circumstances became less favourable and that this was one factor which led to his selling 55 High Street. At the 1871 and 1881 censuses he appears as the licensee of the Ancient Druid (44 Eastgate), which was not one of the major hostelries in the town.

Mary Perkins bought the house from Joseph May in 1863 for £400. The widow of Edward Perkins of Monkton, a gentleman farmer of the St y Nyll family, she was a lady of private means, describing herself in the 1861 Census as a landed proprietor and in the 1871 Census as a railway shareholder. She died in 1875 leaving 55 High Street to her niece and companion Miss Corena Davies, daughter of William Davies of Batsleys and sister of Daniel Holford Davies of Eglwysbrewis. The house remained in the possession of her trustees and of various members of her family until finally sold by Miss Florence Corena Sloper Wood to F. G. Bruton in 1971, though none of them actually lived there after Miss Davies's death in 1895.

Occupiers

The story of the occupancy of the house begins a little uncertainly in 1733 when a lease for three lives was granted by Lord Talbot of Hensol to Edward Thomas, an attorney; the unanswerable question is, did he ever live there? By the time that Edward Thomas came to make his will in 1768(5) the house was occupied by William Humphreys, gentleman, another attorney - also known as William Humphreys of Garth Graban, Llantrisant. The lease passed to Edward Thomas's niece, Mary Thomas (who married John Munden in 1770), but the occupier in 1773 was Cecil Morgan, widow of John Morgan and mother of the Revd Dr Jonathan Morgan, rector of Headley in Surrey. When the freehold was

sold in 1799 the lessee and occupier was Edward Ballard, mercer (but variously described in contemporary sources as shopkeeper, tallow chandler and skinner). The lease did not expire until the death of Gwilym Thomas of Penlline in 1813 - one of the nephews of Edward Thomas the attorney - but it seems that the family had sold the lease to Edward Ballard, since he was not apparently a relative. After the land tax was redeemed in 1799 there is no entry in the annual assessments from then until the late 1820s, and there is no way of finding out if Edward Ballard continued to live there until the expiry of the lease.

The deed of 1850 records that the house was "formerly in the occupation of the Misses Thomas, milliners, afterwards of the Revd John Powel and now of Richard Felton, tailor". A Sarah Thomas, milliner, is listed in Pigot's Directory for 1822, but whether she was one of the Misses Thomas cannot be determined; Powel, rector of Llanharry 1841-55, was the occupier at the time of the tithe award (1841-4) and is listed in Pigot's Directory for 1835; Felton (6), a tailor and draper, was occupier in 1851, and Joseph May (owner-occupier) was there in 1861. Even though several of the residents were tradesmen, it does not seem that the house was a retail shop with shop windows; it was probably always (until fairly recently) a private residence.

Mrs Mary Perkins and her niece were the occupiers from 1863 to 1895. Thereafter the house was let, and for many years was the home of William Lewis Jenkins (1866-1923), son of Lewis Jenkins, owner of the brewery in the adjoining premises (53 High Street).⁽⁷⁾ He was a grandson of Joseph May, the owner of 55 High Street from 1850 to 1863. Margaret Kate Jenkins, William Lewis Jenkins's widow, was the tenant in 1935.

Brian James 1997/9

1. In 1798 redemption was permitted by the payment of a lump sum of fifteen years' tax.
2. 189 on the Cowbridge tithe plan. The house (which is a cottage only in name) was in existence by 1851.
3. L.J.Hopkin James, *Old Cowbridge*, p. 172.
4. May was at 77 High Street in 1841-4, 59 High Street in 1851 and 55 High Street in 1861. His name is not listed in any of the directories published during these years. In an article in the *Glamorgan Gazette* on 16 Feb 1923, he is stated to have been 'in charge of the Bear Hotel yard and stables, where scores of horses were stabled, as well as the chariots and carriages of the county gentry'. His wife was one of the victims of the fever following the County Ball of December 1853.
5. G.R.O. D/D St 1/2.
6. Richard Felton subsequently lived at 61 High Street, where he and his son were for many years the postmasters of Cowbridge.
7. Alderman Lewis Jenkins (1835-1929), of the Caergwanaf family. He was one of Miss Corena Davies's executors and trustees.

The Felton Family (from Parish records and Censuses)

1742 Birth of Mary not recorded in Cowbridge; she dies as Mary Felton in Cowbridge 1833 (or 1834) aged 91

1777 Hester Felton marries John White. Witness is Richard Felton [1] who cannot write. According to the distribution of dates and the similarity of family names, the

- following might be the children of Mary and possibly Richard.[1]
 1801 Marriage of William Felton and Elizabeth Wilkin. [Neither can write]
 1802 Marriage of Richard Felton [2] and Margaret Thomas. Witnessed by William Felton
 RF dies 1845 age 63; MT dies 1860 age 84. [Only Margaret can write]
 1803 Birth of Richard Felton [3] [Not recorded]. Son of either William or
 more probably Richard [2]

RECORDED BIRTHS TO RICHARD FELTON [2] AND MARGARET

- 1807 Elizabeth. She dies 1866 age 58. Richard [2] the father, is described as a labourer
 1810 Mary
 1813 Thomas
 1815 William
 1819 Margaret Richard [2] the father, now described as a servant.
 1829 Dec 26th marriage of Richard Felton [3] and Ann, both of Cowbridge.

RECORDED BIRTHS TO RICHARD FELTON [3] AND ANN

- 1830 John
 1832 William recorded 1851 as age 19 tailor/journeyman
 1834 Richard [4] recorded 1851 as age 16
 1837 Thomas recorded 1851 as age 13 an apprentice chemist
 1842 Edward dies age 9 mths.
 1844 Margaret dies an infant
- 1843 Richard [3] and family live at No.77 - Llwyn Celyn *Tithe*
- 1851 Richard [3] and family live at No. 55[now the property of Joseph May.] Census
 He is described as tailor and draper as early as 1835 *Pigot*
- 1860 Margaret Felton dies age 84. She was therefore born in 1786, *Parish records*
 and is probably the mother of Richard [2],
- 1851 Margaret Felton is described as a laundrywoman, age 73, living *Census*
 in Prince's Buildings. (Verity's Court)
- 1861 Richard [3] and Ann live at No.59 [swapping with Joseph May]. *Census*
 He is now tailor and postmaster
- 1868 Ann dies age 62 *Par Rec*
 1869 Richard [3] dies age 63 *Par Rec*
 1871 Thomas Felton is in No. 61 as chemist and postmaster. *Census*
 Speaks Welsh and English
 With him are Mary Felton, who seems to be the sister of Thomas (now aged 30) and
 described as Housekeeper. Emmeline Felton age 14, his niece, from Middlesex,
 described as postmaster's assistant. She is probably a daughter of either John,
 William or Richard [4], who are not recorded in Cowbridge after 1851.
- 1881 Thomas Felton age 43 is now chemist, postmaster actuary, dentist and operates the
 P.O. Savings Bank. He has married Harriet age 31 from Tredegar and has 2
 children Ann age 5 and Thomas age 3
Census
- 1888 Harriet dies age 38 *Par Rec*
 1891 At No. 61 Thomas has his daughter helping in the post office *Census*
 Thomas, his son, is a scholar
- 1894 Thomas dies age 56 *Par Rec*
 No ref after this date to the Feltons

Cardiff
16.8.99

Dear Jeff,

These notes, based on the deeds of 55 High Street, may be of some use. The deeds were given me by my friend Dr W.E.Church (the brother of Mrs Florence Corena Sloper Wood) to take to the Record Office. They are now GRO D/D Xam 200.

The house owned by Thomas Morgan was 68 on the tithe plan. He died in 1823 but his name continued on the land tax assessments as owner down to 1830. According to their wills, the house was sold about 1820 to his nephew, Jenkin Morris of Cowbridge, maltster, who left it to his nephew, David Bassett Williams. I doubt if either the owner or the occupier on the tithe apportionment belonged to the same Williams family.

I am very much looking forward to seeing the book.

Yours, Brian (James)

Sources/abbreviations used in the research :

GRO Glamorgan Record Office

PRO Public Record Office (Kew)

Most documents used here can be found in the GRO (eg tithe, census, electoral registers, directories, land tax assessments – LTA (land tax assessments), and burgage rents – BR).

D/D are deposits within the GRO

Description

The house forms part of the continuous line of buildings along the north side of High Street, more or less in the exact centre of the town, and facing the junction with Church Street. In former times this junction was the market place where stood the cross in front of the town hall. This central position in the town almost certainly means that a substantial building would have occupied the site since the founding of the borough in the middle of the thirteenth century. The present building appears to date from the eighteenth century, but - as in the case of so many in the main street of Cowbridge - earlier fabric may be concealed behind a later facade. The house formerly had a narrow forecourt enclosed by iron railings and a gate; the purpose of these would have been to protect the front of the house from the animals which thronged the street at markets and fairs. An early nineteenth-century picture of the market place includes an oblique view of the house, showing the railings and open gate, and also indicating that the front door then had a semi-circular canopy or hood.²

The house is plot **46** on the tithe plan of 1841-4. The whole parcel, including a garden extending northwards to the town wall, measured 27 perches. The street frontage is approximately 40 feet, and the original length of the plot from the street to the town wall was approximately 185 feet; this was extended in the 1850s to North Road, to a total length of about 215 feet. There is some reason to suppose that something like 40 x 185 feet was the standard medieval burgage plot in this part of the town.

The land tax assessment of the house in 1784 was 10 shillings; the window tax in 1773 was assessed on eleven windows. Both these indices place the house among the more substantial ones in Cowbridge.

There is no evidence that the house had a name before 1923 when it appears in the parish register as "Cambrian House", and is so named in a deed of 1935. However, in another deed of 1966 it is called "The Cross", a name which seems to have applied in the nineteenth century to the house next door (no 57). The houses along the main street were not numbered until about 1910.

1. *Cross and hall were demolished about 1830.*
2. *Several important houses in the Vale of Glamorgan retain this early eighteenth-century feature, e.g. the Great House at Llanmaes, Gileston Manor and the Court House at Llantwit Major.*

Ownership

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it was sold, however, for as late as the 1840s thirteen acres (including Ty-mawr, Aberthin) belonged to Lord Dynevor. His name is still commemorated by Dynevor Cottage on Town Mill Road, built in the corner of a small field belonging to Lord Dynevor. (4.)

55 High Street was put up for sale by auction at the Bear Inn in 1799, and was bought for £102 by John Thomas, an attorney who lived with his mother and sister in the adjoining house (no 57). The Thomases were an important Cowbridge family, originally from Llangan, but one with peculiar pretensions. In the first place, John began to spell his surname with a double s - and this is the spelling in the title deed - to the amusement of others who had no need of pretension. The Rev. John Carne of Nash is reported to have wondered if he was Jack Thomas or Tom Jackass. A second oddity was that when Thomas's middle-aged sister Mary married another local attorney, Edward Powell, in 1808, a special licence was obtained from the Archbishop of Canterbury to allow the ceremony to take place in the "dwelling house of Mrs Cecil Thomas in this Parish of Cowbridge" (5.); tradition adds that the ceremony was conducted in the drawing room of no 57, which would probably have been on the first floor above what is now the Spar Supermarket. But tradition assigns no reason why they should have wanted to be married in such a private and unusual way.

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Felton (8), a tailor and draper, was occupier in 1851, and Joseph May (owner-occupier) was there in 1861. Even though several of the residents were tradesmen, it does not seem that the house was a retail shop with shop windows; it was probably always (until fairly recently) a private residence.

Mrs Mary Perkins and her niece were the occupiers from 1863 to 1895. Thereafter the house was let, and for many years was the home of William Lewis Jenkins (1866-1923), son of Lewis Jenkins, owner of the brewery in the adjoining premises (53 High Street)(9). He was a grandson of Joseph May, the owner of 55 High Street from 1350 to 1863. Margaret Kate Jenkins, William Lewis Jenkins's widow, was the tenant in 1935.

The ground floor of 55 High Street is now divided between the Roddam travel agency and John David Watts and Morgan, house agents.

Brian James 1997/1999

7. *G.R.O. D/D St 1/2.*
8. *Richard Felton subsequently lived at 61 High Street, where he and his son were for many years the postmasters of Cowbridge.*
9. *Alderman Lewis Jenkins (1835-1929), of the Caergwanaf family. He was one of Miss Corena Davies's executors and trustees.*

?55 High Street – notes of David Jones of Wallington (in notebooks of WAH Fisher) :

‘My father born 1784 close by Cowbridge remembers as a boy the Judges coming to town, the Sheriffs retinue to receive them and all the flourish of trumpets which greeted them. Older people I have heard speak of similar purpose. The house next door to ‘The Cross’ used to be called the Judges’ lodgings, even in my schooldays. It was one of the most respectable houses then in the town – low, sashed windows, stuccoed front and heads stuck between the upper windows. The current story in the town was that the assizes were taken away because Mrs. Bradley of the Bear, who was a termagent and ruled her husband, tried to inflict her will on the Judges and so offended one of them that he declared he would never come to the town again and he..... to remove the assizes’.



55 High St (1970s) – ‘Eleganza’ hat shop on the right-hand side, run and owned by Mrs Clifford Morris. ‘Headquarters’ hair saloon on the left side.

