

The Tilley family – *information from Ros Hunt (nee Tilley)*

William Tilley was born 14th February 1824 in Bishops Cannings, Horton, near Devizes, Wiltshire, a carpenter by trade. He married **Mary Davies**, born 1819 in Llanfair (Whitechurch), Pembrokeshire, in Llansannor church. She had been a serving maid to the farming family at Windmills, Llansannor (1841 census). In the 1851 census they were living in St Nicholas, with their daughters Eliza, 4, Lydia, 2, and Mary Ann, 1 month. The elder two had been born in Trebetyrn Farm, to the north of Cowbridge. William purchased Trebetyrn in 1870 for £1620, and died there on July 21st 1895 aged 71 years.

(Rosalind Hunt believes that male Tilleys, as skilled carpenters, worked on the wood panelling at Llansannor Court.) Her grandfather's uncle William, other Tilleys, and eventually Mary Ann Tilley on her own, continued to live at Trebetyrn until 1925. (Though Mary Ann, educated at Great House school, Cowbridge around 1863, and a pupil teacher there, died at Stacey Road in Roath, Cardiff in 1925).

William and Mary's son, David Tilley (senior) was born on September 3rd 1855, and was educated at the Eagle Academy in Cowbridge. In the 1861 Cowbridge census, the family was living in Westgate - William, 37, a master implement maker, employing 2 men and a boy. They had sons William, aged 7, born in St Nicholas, and David, 5, born in Cowbridge, in addition to their three daughters.

In 1871, still in West Village, Cowbridge, William Tilley was described as a master implement and carriage maker, employing one man and one boy, and also a landowner. Daughter Eliza, 24, was a dressmaker and milliner, daughter Lydia, 22, a draper's assistant, Mary Ann, 20, a pupil teacher, William junior, 17, a carriage maker's son, and David, 15, a scholar.

By the 1881 census, still in West Village, daughter Eliza B. Tilley was head of the household, aged 34 and a housekeeper. Her brother David, 23, was living with her, a carriage and implement maker.

(Their brother, William Tilley junior, christened 1853 and educated at Cowbridge Grammar School, went up to London as a customs and excise officer, and died shortly afterwards in 1876, aged 23. He was found drowned in a shallow pool in Hampstead.

'Suicide of a Cowbridge man at Hampstead' - S Wales Daily News 3/3/1876
On Thursday morning a police constable found the dead body of a well-dressed young man, face downward, with a handkerchief laid over his eyes, in the Rat Pond, Hampstead Heath, a very shallow pool. A letter was found upon him in which was written 'I am William Tilley of 18 Belmont St. Chalk Farm. Father's address is Mr William Tilley, West House, Cowbridge, S Wales.'

A gravestone in Holy Cross church shows Trebettyn Tilleys - Mary Tilley died in 1881, William Tilley died aged 71 in 1895, and Mary Ann Tilley died on May 17th 1925 – the last member of the family at the farm).

David Tilley senior invented farming equipment (some of which is at St Fagans Folk Museum). His wheelwright's business was in North Road, Cowbridge, where he had a forge (Rosalind, his granddaughter, remembers a big metal ring in the ground, used for putting the metal rim on the wheels; a Mr Newton eventually took over as the blacksmith there).

David was also a brilliant businessman. He owned several properties in Cowbridge, Llantwit Major, The Herberts near St Mary Church, Swansea and Cardiff (in Cathedral Road, for example) and was mayor of Cowbridge three times. As such, he was the instigator of the swimming baths in the Thaw (there was a plaque with his name), founder of the town fire brigade (all volunteers - he was the first captain, and in the family is still his silver helmet and axe); he had a water tank installed at the east end of the town (till then firemen had to collect the water from the river in the centre); he pushed for the change of the river course to its present position, and he was one of the founders of the Young Men's Institute, behind the Town Hall - a place to keep youths off the streets. He also helped set up the Boy Scout movement in the town. His philosophy (like that of his son who followed him) was to best serve the town and its citizens. He was not interested in the politics. A family stained glass window can be seen, to his memory, in Holy Cross church, on the left by the pulpit.

David Tilley's first wife was Eva Caroline Tutton, born on October 8th 1855 (the three Tutton sisters were assistant teachers at the primary school on Broadway, where their father was headmaster). David had bought, and lived for a short while, in Westgate House (later the home of Dr Owen Thomas), but then moved across the road to Ivy Cottage, Westgate after his marriage in October 1881. He had the house transformed into Ivy House, with a large façade – the original cottage was retained behind, built in a right-angles. The stone for the front came was quarried from Tyla Rhosyr.

Eva suffered several miscarriages, had one baby who lived just one hour, and lost another at three months old (see further family notes). Their only living child, a son George Eaton Tilley, born in West House on December 14th 1883, died on November 5th 1888 at Ivy House, aged nearly 6, of diphtheria (there was an epidemic in the town). Eva's heart was broken. She died aged 41, on October 3rd 1896. Ivy House is reputed to be haunted with her sobbings. (These eased when a photograph of George was placed in the sitting room by the present owners, but they still find objects moved around the house, especially those belonging to boys, and footsteps can be heard on the stairs).

David Tilley senior continued to live in Ivy House, with Eva's unmarried sister Mary Eliza Tutton, five years older, who continued to work as a primary school teacher and

became a head teacher by 1911. They had a domestic servant. In 1917, at the age of 62, David married Gwennlian David, head milliner for Williams the drapers at London House, Cowbridge (91 Eastgate). She was about 39 years younger. (She was born in Seven Sisters, nr Neath, on October 14th 1893, and died aged 77 on March 16th 1971). Her mother had ensured that all her daughters learned a trade. Gwennlian was an apprentice milliner in 1907, in 1909 was working in Treherbert, in 1914 in Llanbradach, then Cwmcarn, in 1915 in Crumlin and in Cowbridge by 1916. Gwennlian's sister Mary became matron of a hospital in the valleys, to where David Tilley went when he became ill. Another sister (Alice) was a seamstress/tailoress, who worked from her home (Eastgate House, on the corner of Cardiff road and St Athan road) whilst her husband, Mr Escott, ran a butcher's shop in the town.

During the First World War, David Tilley senior was in charge of food rationing. He and Gwennlian had a child, a son, **David Franklin Tilley**, on July 21st 1919, and he became the apple of his father's eye, taken everywhere by his father. The framed photograph of the town's dignitaries on the Bear Field, at the 26th Annual Cowbridge Show of 1923, has David Tilley (senior) third from the left on the bottom row, with little David next to him, second left.

David Tilley senior died on June 29th 1926.

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Mary Tilley (nee Davies) was born 1819 in Llanfair (Whitechurch). She married William Tilley on August 23rd 1846 at Llansannor and died at Trebettyn aged 62. Buried at Cowbridge 6th July 1881.

William Tilley, born Horton, Wiltshire 14th February 1824, purchased Trebettyn in 1870 for £1620; he died there aged 71 on July 21st 1895, and is buried at Cowbridge.

He was a carpenter and she a servant/maid at Windmill, Llansannor. The 1841 Llansannor census shows, at Windmills, William Thomas, farmer aged 75 with Barbara & Noa Thomas, and their servant **Mary Davies**, plus another 12 yr old farm labourer. At Trebettyn then was a 60 yr old farmer William Mordecai and his family.

Their son **David** Tilley was christened November 1855 and educated at the Eagle Academy in Cowbridge.

He married **Gwennlian** (above) at St Mark's church, Newport on 9th April 1917 by the Revd. Isaiah Roberts (ex Cowbridge minister). She was his second wife.

His first wife, **Eva** Caroline Tutton, was born 8th October 1855.

Married **David** Tilley October 6th (?) 1881.

Died 3rd or 6th October 1896 in Cowbridge.

Their children were :

Herbert David Tilley, born 10th August 1882, died 11th November 1882.

George Eaton Tilley, born 14th December 1883, died 5th November 1888.

Son (unnamed) died after one hour.

Mary Ann Tilley (spinster), born St Nicholas 1850 – sister to David.

Educated Great House, Cowbridge 1863. Pupil teacher.

Died 74 Stacey Rd Cardiff 17th May 1925. Buried Cowbridge.

Gwenllian (who became the second Mrs **David Tilley**) was born 14th October 1893 in Seven Sisters, Neath.

Apprenticed 1907. In 1909 in Treherbert; in 1914 in Llanbradach, then Cwmcarn; in 1915 in Crumlin, and Cowbridge in 1916.

Head milliner at London House, Cowbridge (91 Eastgate).

Died aged 77 on 15th March 1971

Her son, David Franklin Tilley was born in Cowbridge 21st July 1919 and died at 25 Westgate on 6th March 1995.

Properties owned in the town by the Tilley family were :

1). The Old Blue Bell, 2 High St. (now Filco) – possibly purchased because David Tilley was instrumental in having the river changed and the new bridge was built right beside this building. There was a slaughterhouse at the rear, alongside the river, and a mounting stone outside. The road had been raised, so there were two or three steps down into the central entrance door. There were flagged floors, and the two rooms on the right had a connecting door between them. David Tilley used the building for storage. He stored a bread slicer there, for example, and ice cream equipment he had bought from Pendine.

2). The Milk Bar, 22 High St, was bought, probably as a going concern, by Gwenllian Tilley about 1939, and she organised the food rationing from there in the Second World War. It was double-windowed, with a central door, and on the left was the shop with a counter and shelving running towards the rear; on the right were two rooms, with a connection between, containing tables and chairs for the café. Upstairs was used for storage (and a WC, which was rarely used) until, around 1959, it became a meeting room for youngsters, with a record player. The Milk Bar was run at that time by Mrs Tilley's daughter-in-law (Rosalind Hunt's mother), who had moved back into Cowbridge with her family from Llantwit Major, and Mrs Gwenllian Tilley then concentrated on her shop

across the road at 57 High Street. Mrs Tilley junior eventually 'threw out' the teenagers from above the café when troubles occurred.

3). The drapers ('*Bonne Marche*') at 57 High Street, now the Spar. This was a large building stretching across at least two former ones, with differing ceiling heights. There was a door on the left, as you face the building, then a large shop window; then a double window with a central door, then yet another door (which now leads up to the dental practice above). At the top of the stairs, on the left side of the building, was a small flat occupied by a Mrs Hogan (where Rosalind's parents lived when they first married), and then a larger flat where Rosalind and her family lived when they returned to Cowbridge from Llantwit Major in 1959.

There was a long garden, with a paved area between buildings, sheds on the left-hand side and the old wash-house on the right. At the end of the garden, by the rear door into North Road, was a coach house/stables, more or less opposite the former Tilley forge.

Bonne Marche sold haberdashery and linens, shoes and clothing. When a new baby was born in the town (in or out of wedlock), a layette was assembled there and given as a present.

There was a beautiful till, and a suction tube, which Mrs Tilley had installed, to send the cash for change. Initially the shop had been run by a Mrs Pointer (a lovely lady), whilst Gwenllian Tilley operated the Milk Bar, but then Gwenllian took over when her daughter-in-law relieved her of the Milk Bar. She bought goods for the shop at Rapports in Cardiff.

Mrs Gwenllian Tilley twice became mayor of Cowbridge, was president of the women's group of the British Legion, was the first female churchwarden at Holy Cross church, and held other such titles in addition to running her shops. She received the Freedom of the Borough, along with Sir Cennydd Traherne, shortly before she died at the age of 77 on March 16th 1971.

David Tilley junior had been born at Ivy House on 21st July 1919. He studied architecture before serving in the army in World War II. Money put in trust for him had been used whilst he was away by his widowed mother to buy various properties (a bakehouse in Llantwit Major, for example). Then family properties were sold off, and young David and his wife Joyce (he had married Joyce Beatty Dotchon from Barry) found themselves living a hand-to-mouth existence in Cowbridge (above 57 High St), and later in Commercial Street, Llantwit Major. (His mother charged him rent on properties that he owned).

David (junior) and Joyce's son, David Andrew Tilley, was born on February 6th 1948, and their daughter Rosalind on 16th February 1950. Both children attended Eagleswell School, Llantwit Major at first, until they moved back into 57 High Street, Cowbridge in

1959. David Tilley junior became mayor of Cowbridge as both his parents had before him. He pushed hard for a roundabout to be built at the west end of the town to take Llantwit traffic from the new by-pass, for example (but was told there was no need for it as a Llysworney by-pass would shortly be built!). The family lived for a while in a newly-built house in the Broadshoard, more or less behind his mother in Ivy House, but returned to the family home at Ivy House after Gwenllian's death. They continued to experience the ghost of Eva there.

David and Joyce Tilley sold the family business at 57 High St. about 1969, Rosalind helping her father sell its shop contents. (Fineware supermarket took over these premises). Joyce Tilley was by then working in admin. at St Athan RAF Camp, and David found similar work there too until they both retired. After Joyce suffered a heart attack, she and David moved back into the smaller Broadshoard house, which the family had continued to own but had rented to the Bear Hotel whilst they lived in Ivy House. The two 'cottage' houses next door in Broadshoard (Ash Tree cottages) were later built in the garden of Ivy House, where the old stables and a coach house had once stood (these were full of Rosalind's grandfather's 'stuff' and pictures of the first Mrs Tilley, put there by his second wife). When David Tilley (junior) died suddenly of a heart attack in March 1995, his wife Joyce moved into sheltered accommodation at Geoffrey Ashe Court, at the east end of the town. Rosalind bought the Broadshoard house herself and still lives there. Joyce Tilley died in 2011.

Son David Andrew Tilley (Rosalind's brother), was 6ft 4 inches in height. As a boy, he won a scholarship to Hereford Cathedral School and became head chorister there. He was eventually Chief Environmental Health Officer for the Vale, but sadly died quite recently. He and his wife Helen had two children, David Michael (born 1976) and Caroline Eva (born 1978). Rosalind Hunt (who worked at Cardiff airport in its early days) also has two children, Simon (born 1976) and Philippa (born 1978), and she now has seven grandchildren.

Interview by Betty Alden, November 2013 with Mrs Rosalind Hunt (nee Tilley).

William Tilley
carpenter, wheelwright,
implement-maker
b. Horton, Wilts., c. 1824
d. 1895 MI at Cowbridge

—= Mary
b. Llanfair, Pembro., c. 1818
d. 1881 aged 62 MI at Cowbridge

Elizabeth
bapt. Llanannor 1847
living in Cowbridge 1881

Lydia
1848

Mary Ann
bapt. St Nicholas
1850
d. 1925 unmn.
MI at Cowbridge

William
1853
d. 1876
buried
St Pancras
Cemetery,
London
MI at
Cowbridge

David Tilley
bapt. Cowbridge 1855
d. 1926 MI at Cowbridge
coach-builder etc. Mayor 1895, 1909, 1910

m. 1 Eva Caroline Tutton, dau. George Eaton Tutton
(Master of Cowbridge Board School)
1855-96 MI at Cowbridge

m. 2 Gwendolyn
Mayor of Cowbridge 1943-4
c. 1900-71 MI at Cowbridge

Herbert David
bapt. and buried
Cowbridge 1882
MI at Cowbridge

George Eaton
1884-88
MI at Cowbridge