

Hillside, Llanblethian Hill (Mount Ida)

This was another of the cottages owned by Richard Rees in the early years of the nineteenth century. According to Maud Gunter, the occupants had the right to cut fern and graze animals on the common of Llanblethian Hill, which rises steeply up from the lane at the back of the cottage. Those rights were still being exercised in the early part of the twentieth century.

Ann Evan was living there in 1819 when Rees mortgaged the cottage and his other properties in Piccadilly; she was also living there in 1834 when he took out a further mortgage from Elizabeth Simkins. Henrietta Perkins lived in the house in 1840. When Richard died in 1846, his widow Jane evidently found it necessary to convey the properties to Elizabeth Simkins.

In 1851, the two adjoining properties on the Hill were both occupied by a John Rice and family, both gardeners and both from Swansea, probably father and son. Within a year, there was only one John Rice and also a John Webb living in Miss Simkins' houses: we are not sure who was where.

Ar y Mynydd was occupied in 1861 by a pauper widow called Ann Harding, and also by a journeyman tailor, the Devon-born James Tout and his wife Mary, who moved to various cottages in Llanblethian during their life.

Unoccupied in 1871, the 'cottage and pigstye with garden' was occupied by Morgan Morgan shoemaker, for an annual rent of £5, when Philip Morgan became the owner in 1876. In 1881, Aaron Boobyer miller, from Stoke St Mary in Somerset, whose brother had also moved into Piccadilly, lived in the house with his wife Harriet. They soon went on to live in part of Leys Cottage, and in 1891, Thomas Jones a postman lived in Ar y Mynydd with his family. Robert Thomas remembered Mrs Tom Jones as having a laundry, and the 1891 census records her daughter Elizabeth as being a laundress.

Thomas Jones died in 1908. His obituary stated 'For many years he was familiar to the older inhabitants as a letter carrier in the district. As a faithful churchman, communicant, chorister and Sunday School scholar, the late Thomas Jones had few equals.'

By 1910, Richard David lived in the house; Thomas Williams of the adjacent Hillside was the owner. Soon after, the Harrises occupied Ar y Mynydd; they kept eight goats and cut fern from the common land on the hill for bedding. Jack Harris, sometimes helped by Frank Chissell, used to keep the paths there cut back, and burned the hillside regularly. It is a pity that no one is following in their footsteps, as bushes and shrubs have now spread all over the steep slopes. Jack Harris, who worked for Dick Jenkins of Kingscombe, used to shoot rabbits on Llanblethian Hill and sell them to the people of the village for Sunday dinner.

'Llanblethian Buildings and People', 2001

1819 Richard Rees owned; Ann Evan, widow, occupied; mortgaged to Miss Elizabeth Simkins *D/D GG 15/12*

1834 Richard Rees owned; Ann Evan, widow, occupied – further mortgage to Miss E Simkins *D/D GG 15/12*

1840 One of a number in Piccadilly owned by Richard Rees, who lived in the adjoining cottage, Ar y Mynydd. The tithe account shows Hillside occupied by Henrietta Maria Perkins. *Tithe 264*

1846 Conveyance – Jane Rees of Cowbridge, widow, to Miss Elizabeth Simkins *D/D GG 15/12*

1851 Occupied by Jane Richards *Census*

1855 Elizabeth Simkins died, leaving the property to her sister Mary Shaftesbury Llewellyn – after her death to nephew Charles Thomas Rees.

Late 1850s George and Ann Sandland moved in from Broadway. George was described as a gamekeeper and market gardener, born in Kingsbury, Warwickshire. He had married Ann Deakin in 1821, and they had two daughters who died in infancy and one son. Before moving to Llanblethian, they lived at Dyffryn Lodge, and presumably George was employed on the Dyffryn estate.

Ann died in 1867 at the age of 71; George died aged 86 in 1874.

A letter exists from Ann, written in 1856 to her son Charles (see Sandland family file) who had emigrated to Australia, having earlier kept a bookshop in Cowbridge. The letter is full of village gossip relating mostly to St Nicholas rather than Llanblethian or Cowbridge, mentioning a surveyor's wife who had been committed to Cardiff prison for theft, a certain 'Harbottle', a Tinkinswood harmer, who was dying from the effects of drink, and 'Young Jane Edwards' who had been confined in something of an emergency in the parson's house shortly after a shotgun wedding. Ann also refers in graphic detail to the tragic explosion at Cymer colliery.

Charles Sandland was baptised at St Nicholas, lived in Dyffryn lodge in 1841, and was educated at the Eagle academy, Cowbridge. He died in Victoria, Australia in 1909 at the age of 78. He had become a farmer and had eight children. Some of his school books are still in his family's possession.

1861 and 1871 George Sandland
Census 67 and 19

After George Sandland's death in 1874, Hillside passed into the ownership and occupancy of Thomas Williams, another gardener, born in Taunton, Somerset. Hillside

was described in a deed of conveyance dated February 1876 as a 'freehold messuage and cottage or dwelling house and garden, and a stable with croft adjoining the same and now used as a garden'.

Thomas Williams mortgaged the property later that same year, with a further mortgage in 1886. This one involved the Oriel family of Dowlais. Thomas Williams must have married into the Oriel family as his sons were Thomas Oriel Williams and Ben Oriel Williams, aged 11 and 9 in the 1881 census.

Thomas Williams and family were in Hillside in the 1891 census. By 1927, his son Ben was a tailor and outfitter in Port Talbot, and the property, known as 1 Hillside Cottage, was occupied by the James family (see James family file).

Billy James's grandmother (and the grandmother of his five sisters), Ann Oriel, was born on Caldey island off Tenby – the family, he said, introduced fuchsias to Caldey.

- 1867 Property owned by Charles T Rhys at the time of his death; left in his will to his wife Jennett for her life, then to niece Jennett Tonkin
- 1874 Mrs Rees owned; Thomas Williams occupied *Glam. County Rate 17*
- 1874 Estate to be sold, by order of the High Court of Chancery, Rosser v Rhys
- 1876 Philip Morgan owned; Thomas Williams occupied – cottage, garden, stable, croft, let at £10 pa *D/D GG 15/12*
- 1876 Conveyance, Mrs Jennett Rhys and Jennett Tonkin, both of Wick, to Thomas Williams, labourer of Llanblethian – cottage, stable, garden, croft (now used as a garden) etc in Llanblethian village, late occupied by George Sandland and now the said Thomas Williams.
- 1876 Mortgage, Thomas Williams, gardener, to trustees of Loyal St Quintins Lodge of the Independent Order of Oddfellows
- 1886 Mortgage, Thomas Williams to John Oriel of 8 Berry Square, Dowlais
- 1891 Thomas Williams, market gardener and family *Census 67*
- 1895 'The village shop or store. Mr Thomas Williams lived there – he also kept a small farm and had the run of the hill for sheep. He also delivered coal. His wife was an invalid for many years. The shop catered well for the needs of the village. Could usually get what you needed, oil, soap, candles, sugar, flour and sweets. Also they kept a donkey which was named Fanny. The donkey's name stuck and the family were identified by such. The

family consisted of three boys and three girls, named Lizzie, Emily and Rosie. Rosie remained at the shop, married Tom James and had a smart family. but that was later.

'Llanblethian in 1895', R Thomas

- 1927 Re-conveyance, representatives of John Oriel to Thomas Oriel Williams of Dowlais and Benjamin Oriel Williams of Port Talbot
(recites (1) mortgage having been paid off but property not re-conveyed
(2) Thomas Williams died 1927; will named his wife Ann, sons Thomas Oriel W. and Benjamin Oriel W. as executors
- 1927 Conveyance of T and B Oriel Williams to Elizabeth Ann Price of Aberavon, T O Williams, B O Williams, Emily David of Sigginstone, George Williams of Brooklyn, Llanblethian, warehouseman, and Rose Ellen James of 1 Hillside Cottages (beneficiaries under the will of Thomas Williams) –
recites will of Thos Williams who left all his estate, being nos. 1 and 2 Hillside Cottages, to be divided equally between his children after the death of his wife Ann; deed of family arrangement states that 2 Hillside be sold to George Williams.
- 1927 Vesting deed, T O and B O Williams and others to Rose Ellen James, tenant for life.

Post war Gillian Egan (nee James), one of the James children growing up at Hillside, found an incendiary bomb in the garden and played with it, not knowing what it was. John & Evelyn Harris next door realised it was a bomb and the police were called to take it away.
Gillian's memories

There were 6 daughters and one son in the James family : Pauline, Rose, Gillian, Jennifer, June and ? Ann. The youngest child, a boy, was Billy.

- 1950 Death of Rose Ellen James; deed of family arrangement between Annie Deere of Port Talbot, W H James of Rosedew, Llanblethian, Ethel Miles of Pontyclun, Thomas James of Bermuda, Oswald James of Ashdene, Factory Road, Llanblethian, Mary Nugent of Llandow, David James of Weybridge, Edward James of Doncaster, Marjorie Evans of Aberavon, Frank James of Northcote, Factory Road, Llb., and James Idris James of Reading.
- 1950s The Hallett family were living in the Kennels (Dan y Graig) *Kent Drummond & Roy Harris*
- 1951 Assent to vesting in William Herbert James re Hillside (W H James died 1965)
- 1972 Conveyance, Irene James, widow, of Hillside to Douglas and Cynthia Spragg.

The James Family of Hillside, Llanblethian – descended from the Oriels of Caldy Island, off Tenby :

There were 7 James children growing up at Hillside in the 1950s, six girls and a boy, Billy.

The two eldest girls were born in Rosedew (now called Greystones) in Factory Road; they moved into Hillside in February 1951 after the death of their grandmother, Rose Ellen James, who had lived there.

Pauline McAllen, born 16th April 1942, died in Druids Green, Cowbridge ca 2011.

Dulcie Gillian Egan, born 19th November 1943, lives in Llantwit Major, named after Dulcie Thomas, of Robert Thomas the builders, who had married Ralph James and died young.

Hillside was renovated by the Spragg family who lived there in the late 60s/70s. Douglas Spragg worked in aircraft control at Cardiff Airport.

Sources/references :

GRO = Glamorgan Record Office

D/D = deeds in GRO

Glamorgan County Rate in GRO