

Crossways, Llanblethian

Crossways as it stands today has the appearance of a mansion built about 1900, with some additions and changes since that date, but the core of the house is much older. Parts date back to Tudor times, and the first document naming *Crossways* is of 1700. Then it was owned by Edward Deere, one of the family of landowners of the Vale of Glamorgan whose interests included Llanquian (near Stalling Down) and Llantwit Major as well as Crossways. The house and associated land stayed in the possession of the Deeres up to the death of Margery Deere in 1787, when it passed to the Revd Henry Jones of Penmark (whose sisters were Elizabeth Jones of Llysworney and Mary Morgan, the wife of the Revd John Morgan of Llanblethian).

Henry Jones died in 1795, leaving his estate to his wife Catherine for life. She let the house to a number of tenants, notably, from 1822 on, Robert Entwisle and his sister Margaret. Entwisle was a retired colonel of the 61st Foot, one of the number of Rochdale people who moved into Llanblethian in the early nineteenth century. He farmed *Crossways*, and not only as a mixed farm: a letter in 1831 from Ann Thomas of *Hill House* to Mrs Jones in Bath stated: "The garden at Crossways has been very productive of fruit. I have had a dozen and a half fine peaches from there; upward of a thousand taken off green from the trees."

Catherine Jones died in 1837, and ownership of the property passed to Thomas Bassett of Bonvilston. In addition to Robert Entwisle, Thomas Lloyd also lived in *Crossways* in 1840. He owned a house near Llanblethian Mill, and was later referred to as being 'of Foxholes', the Entwisle family seat in Rochdale.

Robert died after a long and painful illness in 1847, and his sister continued as tenant, running the farm. The 1851 census described her as a farmer of 100 acres, employing three labourers and two boys. She retired from farming, and moved to *The Cross* about 1853; by 1859 the Revd WH Beever farmed *Crossways*. Unusually for a headmaster of Cowbridge Grammar School, he was described as an expert on Shorthorns. He lived at the Grammar School, and had one of his workers – Robert Williams, aged 47, born in Llantwit Major – residing in the house.

28-year-old Edward Thomas, Southerndown-born, farmed the 126 acres of *Crossways* in 1871, with the help of one man and three boys. Two live-in servants were also employed in the house for the family of husband and wife (born 1834), two daughters and one son.

On the death of William Bassett in 1874, *Crossways* was left to his brother Richard of Bonvilston House, who had two sons, John Richard and Ralph Thurstan. It was Ralph Thurstan Bassett who was recorded as owner in 1877 and as occupier in 1881. He was born in Cheltenham in 1850; in 1881 he was described as a farmer, and in 1891 as a land agent. A wealthy man, he employed a governess for his two daughters, and seven servants. He had married ; his two daughters also married well, Dorothy Sysyllt marrying the Hon Frederick Morgan, later to be 5th Baron Tredegar, while Olive married Forestier Walker. RT Bassett was a JP, Master of Foxhounds, and a prominent member of the gentry of the Vale of Glamorgan. He was responsible for the reconstruction of *Crossways* in the last years of the century, making it a very 'des. res.'

Crossways was sold in 1906 (after the death of RT Bassett in 1903) to Anthony Miers of Bryntririon near Neath, and then sold on by him to William John Thomas, a colliery proprietor of Ynyshir in the Rhondda.

The sale of the property by Sir WJ Thomas, JP, (for such had he become) in 1917 to Owen Williams, a shipowner, of Hendrescythan near Creigiau, marks the beginning of the most flamboyant period in the history of *Crossways*.

Owen Williams was from Edern in the Lleyn peninsula. He started life as a sailor on local coastal trading ships, but by 1899 he and his brother had started the Silurian Steamship Company in Cardiff, and in the following year they set up the Golden Cross Line to run Mediterranean liner services and tramp services to Argentina. They prospered, and in 1917 the 55-year-old Owen Williams married 17-year-old Margaret Thomas, the daughter of a Pontypridd mining engineer. It might seem that his wealth was a considerable attraction! Not only did he buy his father-in-law's exceedingly dirty mine, known locally as Dan's Muck Hole (now buried under the Sardis Road rugby ground), he also bought *Crossways House* and the associated land. Owen Williams expanded the *Crossways* estate by buying land from the Nash and the Rayer estates, and entered into farming with gusto, founding a celebrated herd of Hereford cattle, which won for him a leading position among British cattle breeders. He was a good employer, with many jobs being created in the stables and stud, as well as the house and farms. Together with Mr Thomas of *Stallcourt*, Owen Williams paid for a Dinner Concert for all returned servicemen of the district. This was held in Cowbridge Town Hall - " a right old do it was. There was enough drink to have a bath in it" reported one of the participants.

Contemporary photographs of *Crossways* show that it was lavishly decorated and furnished, with 18th century French furniture, Flemish tapestries, and Swansea and Nantgarw porcelain. Williams also extended the house, particularly the north wing, where the arch over what must have been a coachway bears his initials, intertwined with those of his wife. No expense was spared on the house or on his young bride. On her 21st birthday, in 1921, Owen took Margaret to Cardiff docks to see one of his liners arrive from Italy. The deck was covered with a large tarpaulin, and when that was removed by a crane, a red Fiat sports car was uncovered - his birthday present to her.

By 1924 however, Owen found himself in very grave difficulties - agricultural, marital, and financial. His cattle were affected by disease, and could not be used for breeding, and so he could not recoup the inflated prices he had paid not only for pedigree horses and cattle but also for workaday animals. Prices slumped in the 1920s, partly because of general economic malaise and partly because the demand for horses fell in the face of mechanisation of transport and of agriculture. His wife ran away with an Indian nobleman, His Highness the Jam Sahib Sir Ranjit Sinjhi Vibhaji, the Jam Sahib of Nawangar, better known as the England cricketer Ranjitsinjhi. *Crossways* was mortgaged to him, and it must have been a bitter pill for Williams to swallow, to lose his wife and control of his house to a one-time friend. His wealth had been based on shipping, but freight rates had fallen drastically after the end of the war, and Williams had over-expanded his operations, and also bought unwisely.

The result of all this was the sale of the estate and farmland in 1924, and then of *Crossways* and its contents in December of that year. Owen Williams left the Vale of Glamorgan, laid up some vessels and sold others, and moved to London where he lived a solitary life, until he returned to Edern in 1930, with ten shillings in his pocket. It was a sad end to a varied and interesting life.

By 1930, *Crossways* had become the Prince of Wales hospital, a children's orthopaedic hospital. A newspaper report stated "It was a pleasing revelation to the visitors to note the manner in which the stately old mansion had become adapted to such great and noble work. The patients - most of them tiny tots - looked radiantly happy". The hospital also became a

centre of nurse training, and some of the glass-fronted hospital ward remains incorporated into the present house.

Llanblethian Buildings and People 2001

Dressed stone doorways, mainly 19th century, parts Tudor.

1700, 13th November Reference to Robert, son of Edward Deere of Crossways
WAH Fisher, book 27, page 35

1726 Will of Edward Deere of Crossways, leaving cash and property to son Edward, subject to £300 each to two daughters, Anne Miles and Frances Deere.

1727, 8th May Will proved .

1749 Will of Humphrey Matthew gent. – bequeathed interest on £200 for the benefit of Elizabeth Deere, daughter of Edward Deere of Crossways, and mentions his niece, Margery Deere, wife of Edward Deere.

1754 Richard Bassett to Edward Deere and wife, Margery Bassett, and from then to Anthony Maddocks. *Bute deeds*

1778 Margaret Deere of Crossways *Bute R6/17-19*

1786 Francis David Thomas, Crossways £1.4s
Edward Thomas of Crossways 12s *Llanblethian tithe accounts P/13/1*

1787 Margery Deere of Crossways, widow of Edward, died (will dated 4/6/1782)
WAH Fisher, book 40, page 57

1786 – 1821 Mrs Catherine Jones (widow of Revd Henry Jones), sister-in-law of Mary Morgan (who was the widow of Revd John Morgan of Llanblethian) *D/D C1148*

1793 Revd Henry Jones of Penmark to Charles Bassett as feoffee for use of Revd Henry Jones *Bute 1516*
(the sisters of Revd H Jones were Elizabeth Jones of Llysworney, and Mary Morgan, wife of Revd John Morgan of Llanblethian) *MBN XI/1-3*

1795 Henry Jones died, leaving the estate to his wife Catherine for life

1796 & 1797 Mr Jones, Crossways £1.19s.6d *Llanblethian tithe accounts P/13/1*

1801& 1820 Mrs Jones *Bute R6/17-19*

1821 Mrs Jones (herself and tenants) £3 *Land tax assessment*

1825 & 1831 Mrs Jones, owner; Colonel Entwisle occupier £3 *LTA*
(Col. Robert Entwisle was the younger brother of Hugh Entwisle of Llanblethian and Marlborough Grange. He and his sister Margaret lived at that time in Crossways, as did their brother Philip Bize Entwisle).

1831 Letter from Ann Thomas of Hill House, Llanblethian to Mrs Jones of Bath (and formerly of Crossways)

‘The garden of Crossways has been very productive of fruit. I have had a dozen and a half fine peaches from there, upward 1000 taken off green from the trees’.

D/D MBN 777

1834, 21st June On Friday last, John Jenkins, servant to Col. Entwisle of Crossways, injured by his cart. Long in Col. Entwisle’s employ. *Cambrian*

1837 Death of Catherine Jones – the property passed to Thomas Bassett, who left it to his second son, Richard.

Philip Entwisle, brother of Colonel Robert Entwisle and sister Margaret, had married Mary Ann Bassett.

1840 Owner Thomas Bassett; occupier Robert Entwisle *Tithe 42*

1840 Thomas Lloyd, abode Crossways, owned the house by Llanblethian Mill (He was linked with the Entwisle and Royd families, who were living in several Llanblethian properties at this time. He is later referred to as ‘of Foxholes’, the Entwisle family seat in Rochdale, Lancashire, and also ‘of Liverpool’).

Electoral register for Cowbridge Hundred

1845 Robert Entwisle of Crossways House, rent of £50+ *Electoral register*

1847 Robert Entwisle died June 1847, aged 59 *Llanblethian parish records*

1847 Margaret Entwisle (his sister) continued as tenant *Hunt & Co directory*

1849 The property passed to William Bassett of Bonvilston House – Captain in the 56th Regiment of Foot, living in St James, London *Bute deeds*

1851 Margaret Entwisle, unmarried, aged 57, farmer of 100 acres, employing 3 labourers and 2 boys, born Rochdale, Lancashire
With servants Fanny Gale, 23, born Cheltenham, and John Morgan, 27, born Llanblethian

- (John Morgan received £400 in Margaret Entwisle's will) *Census 5*
- 1852 Mr Bassett owned; Miss Entwisle occupied *R13 215*
- 1854 Death at Crossways of Ann Scruton, aged 87, who was servant to the family of John Entwisle Esq (of Rochdale) for 49 years *Llanblethian church memorial*
- 1859 William Watkin Bassett of Bonvilston owned Crossways; the occupier was Revd W Holt Beever (headmaster of Cowbridge Grammar School 1850-1862) *Register of Electors*
- 1861 The property was said to be occupied by Robert Williams, 47, an agricultural labourer, born Llantwit Major, his wife Ann, 51, born Wick, and son David, 15, a shepherd, born Cowbridge *Census 18*
- ?1864 Burial of Elizabeth Jones of Crossways, Cowbridge, 6th January, aged 55, in Llanegward, Carmarthenshire. *Burials*
- 1865 Owner of land at Crossways : William Watkin Bassett of Bonvilston
Occupier : Revd W Holt Beever *Electoral register*
- 1869 Edward Thomas *Electoral register*
- 1871 Hubert de Burgh Thomas JP (later, in Worrall's 1875 directory he was residing at Pwllyrach, Colwinston, but in the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire directory of that same year he was in Crossways) *Kelly's directory*
- 1871 Edward Thomas, aged 28, farmer of 126 acres employing one man and three boys, born at Southerndown, with his wife, two daughters and a son, five servants (2 domestic, 3 farm) and one visitor *Census 6*
- 1874 John Richard occupied; Richard Bassett Esq owned (house and land totalling 122 acres) *Glamorgan County Rate 2*
- 1874 Death of William Bassett, leaving the property to his brother Richard, of Bonvilston House, who had two sons, John Richard Bassett and Ralph Thurston Bassett *Bute 1518*
- 1875 John Richard (presumably Bassett) - rateable value £12+ *Electoral register*
- 1877 Owner : R T Bassett *Bute 1518*
- 1880 Ralph Thurston Bassett Esq JP *Slater's directory*
- 1881 Ralph Thurston Bassett, married, aged 31, a farmer, born Cheltenham, with 4 servants *Census 3*

1889 Ralph Thurston Bassett *County register (Llanblethian parish)*

1891 Ralph T Bassett, land agent, 41, born Cheltenham
Wife Maria Augusta, 35, born St Nicholas
daughters Dorothy Sysyllt, 12, scholar, born Llanblethian and Alice Sysyllt, 9,
sister-in-law Blanche E Tyler, 31, single, born Ireland
governess Agnes ?Breck, 22, born Tredegar,
5 female servants, born in various locations
One groom (David Joseph, 21) and one ground boy (George Jones, 13), both born
Llanblethian *Census 46*

(Dorothy married the Hon. Frederick Morgan, later 5th Baron Tredegar of Ruperra Castle,
in 1898;

Olive married Forestier Walker *Llanblethian church records)*

1898, 9/12 'A burglary was committed at the residence of Mr R Thurston Bassett JP,
Cowbridge, on Monday night. The second butler heard a movement outside the house at
about 7 o'clock and later in the night, and when all were supposed to have gone to rest,
he heard a sound downstairs. He at once made for the spot, when the miscreant decamped
leaving behind the only article he had time to secure on the window sill, all that being a
pair of breeches belonging to Mr Bassett.

The entrance to the house was made by cutting a wire which was over the window, and
then a piece of glass opposite the window fastener.

The police are on the alert, and it is hoped an arrest will be made'. *Western Mail*

1903 Death of R T Bassett of Crossways, aged 53 *Llanblethian parish records*

1905 The estate put up for sale, but withdrawn *D/D SA8/19*
'The gardens are tastefully laid out, being planted with choice and well-grown
shrubs and trees of every description. The lawns are extensive and comprise tennis and
croquet lawns. The kitchen garden, which is the original garden connected with the old
house before it was re-built, is well-sheltered and productive.

The Garden and Grounds are tastefully laid out with Lawns, Flower Gardens and
Shrubberies. The Kitchen Garden, the paths of which are edged with Box, lies in a very
sheltered position, and is well stocked with Fruit Trees, and has two small Greenhouses,
and two 4-light Glass Frames, which are heated with a Stokehole adjoining. The drainage
system is on the most modern lines, and is perfect. The water supply is unfailing, a steam
pump pumping the water to the tanks at the top of the house, a large supply of soft water
is obtained from the roofs and stored in tanks. The premises are lighted throughout with
ascetyline gas, the plant for its production being close to the back of the Residence. There
is also a pretty piece of ornamental water abundantly supplied with Gold Fish, a Dove

Cot, and many other attractive additions of this description. The House is also connected with the National Telephone System.

The land is of exceptionally good quality'

(There are copies of the three photos from this sale document in this file)

SA 12/1374/1

Ca 1905 'Sixty-One Views of Cowbridge', published by Miss Ann Davis, Bridge House, Cowbridge, includes views of The Lake and The Drive of Crossways.

1906 Dorothy S Morgan and Mrs Forestier Walker sold Crossways and 63 acres to Anthony Hamner Miers of Bryntirion, Neath

Bute 1519

1907 Miers sold to William James Thomas, colliery proprietor of Ynyshir, near Porth

Bute 1519

1909 Mr W James Thomas of Crossways

Cowbridge Fire service records

1914 Sir W J Thomas JP

Kelly's directory

1917 Sale of Crossways to Owen Williams of Hendre Scythan, Creigiau, shipowner

Bute 1519

1920 – 1926 Owen Williams JP, magistrate

Kelly's directory

Owen Williams, from the Lleyn peninsula, was, with his brother, the founder of the Golden cross shipping line which operated from Cardiff docks. In 1917, at the age of 55, he had married Margaret Thomas, aged 17, and sadly not only did their marriage break up when Margaret ran off with an Indian nobleman, but he lost his fortune – he had had their initials entwined, carved on an archway in stone, at Crossways.

Owen Williams died at Pwllpark, Edeyrn, N. Wales aged 70, 28th May 1938; Margaret (then Clarke) died at Tonbridge - 'Had a divorce with £5000 a year from her first husband, Mr Owen Williams, shipping magnate, but on his death in 1938 his estate proved to be worth only £5'.

31/3/1942 ?Telegraph

(See the separate articles on Owen Williams, Margaret Thomas and Ranjit Sinjhi.)

There was much reconstruction of the house in Owen Williams's time.

1924 Dispersal sale at Crossways
Sale of Crossways estate

*Book on the Golden Cross Line
D/D SA 3/686*

1925 Mortgage to His Highness the Jam Sahib Sir Ranjitsinjhi Vibhaji of Nawangar (who built the East Lodge)

Bute 1519

By 1930 Crossways had become the Prince of Wales Hospital.

'On Thursday last the Mayor and Mayoress of Cowbridge, accompanied by the members of the Corporation, paid an unofficial visit to the Prince of Wales Hospital at Crossways, where they were received by the matron and Dr DJ Evans of Cowbridge.

It was a pleasing revelation to the visitors to note the manner in which the stately old mansion had become adapted to such great and noble work. The patients- most of them tiny tots – looked radiantly happy, and no wonder among such glorious surroundings....’

Glamorgan Gazette of 18/4/1930

Crossways Orthopaedic Hospital - Glass-fronted wing for hospital ward.

Nurses’ hostel in the grounds. Nurse training – six months there before moving in

(some personal memories - anon)

‘I was in Crossways from the age of 4 for approximately four years. I wasn’t thrilled to be there but you just had to get on with it...I remember it like being a conservatory, beds lined up against the back wall and you looked out of full length windows on to a big patio, which you were rolled out on to, still in bed, when the sun was shining. I remember...falling out of bed on to the flagstones, and breaking my arm. My mam and dad weren’t too happy. As they lived quite far from Crossways (Penrhiwceiber) and didn’t have a car, they visited on weekends, one on Saturday, the other on Sunday.

Memories of Gareth Head, Sandbach, Cheshire in 2013

1965 Closure of this ‘country annexe hospital’, as the number of long-stay child patients had diminished. The main orthopaedic hospital at Rhydlafer, near Cardiff, continued to operate for several years longer.

1999 Run as a bed and breakfast establishment (the main house) by John and Mandy Davies, and previously by the Pattersons.

Said to be the subject of an arson attack when the Pattersons were there.

Sources/references :

GRO = Glamorgan Record Office

D/D = deeds in the GRO

Directories, Bute papers and other documents sourced here are held in the GRO

SA = Stephenson & Alexander sale documents in GRO