

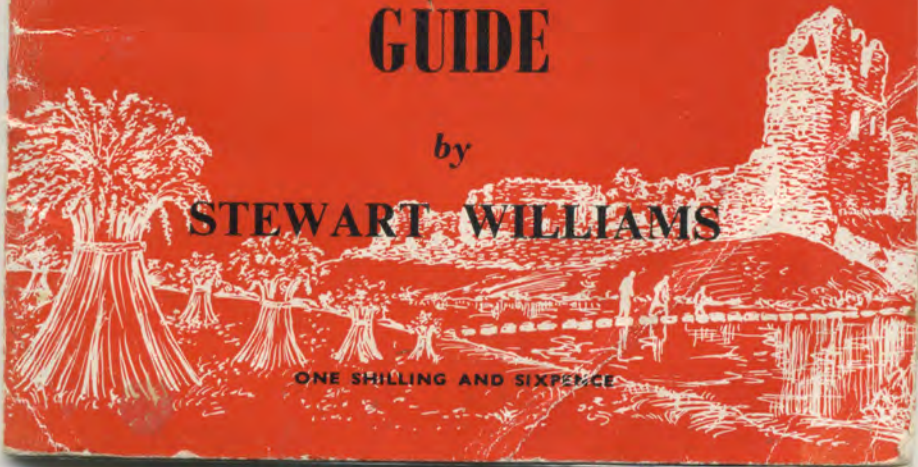


THE
VALE OF GLAMORGAN
GUIDE

by

STEWART WILLIAMS

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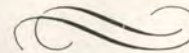
by

Stewart Williams

(SECOND EDITION)

On such terms it is called Vale of Glamorgan. But call it by whatever name, it is a most pleasant fruitful region ; kind to the native, interesting to the visitor. A waving grassy region ; cut with innumerable ragged lanes ; dotted with sleepy unswept human hamlets, old ruinous castles with their ivy and their daws, grey sleepy churches, with their ditto ditto, for ivy everywhere abounds ; and generally a rank fragrant vegetation clothes all things ; hanging in rude many-coloured festoons and fringed odoriferous tapestries, on your right and on your left, in every lane. A country kinder to the sluggard husbandman than any I have ever seen. For it lies all on limestone, needs no draining ; the soil, everywhere of handsome depth and finest quality, will grow good crops for you with the most imperfect tilling.

Carlyle.



Cover Photograph : A peaceful corner of the Vale at Llanbethery

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Foreword

by

THE CHAIRMAN, VALE OF GLAMORGAN SOCIETY

THE Vale of Glamorgan—what does this name conjure up? There have been, and always will be, arguments as to any precise geographical definition. But for most purposes the “Vale” can be said to embrace all the region “from the foothills of the larger mountains in the North to the sea in the South, and from Ely and Penarth in the East to Kenfig in the West.”

It is really an undulating plateau, the highest spots being little over 400 ft., most of it lying between 50 ft. and 200 ft. above sea level. Along this plateau and in the valleys lie villages, but no large towns. All of these are steeped in historical associations, for there are to be seen pre-historic and Roman remains, ancient churches, castles and manor houses. There is, too, the ancient Borough of Cowbridge. The busy A48 bisects it, and thousands pass along the highway every day. Yet, in many of our villages, peace and tranquility are to be found.

As one who has been for many years a student of this locality, it gives me much pleasure to write this Foreword. Mr. Stewart Williams, in compiling this little book, has garnered much information, culled from many sources, and has presented it in a form which will be of interest to all who visit the lovely Vale of Glamorgan.

Charles F. Shepherd

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THERE is nothing in the present day appearance of Aberthaw to suggest that at one time in its history it was a thriving port, of greater importance even than Cardiff. In the 16th century vessels sailed from Aberthaw to the west coast of France, and there was considerable trade with Brittany in salt and wines.

A century later, trade had expanded and ships from this tiny port sailed to Barbados, St. Kitts and other places in the West Indies and returned with cargoes of tobacco, rum and sugar.

Local trade also prospered and surplus produce of the Vale farmsteads and limestone, which was considered to be the best for hardening under water, were shipped to Bristol, Minehead, Watchet, and other places across the Bristol Channel. It was limestone from Aberthaw which was used in the construction of the docks at Sebastopol, and Smeaton used it when building the Eddystone Lighthouse.

Years ago smuggling flourished in the locality and many tales have been handed down of the adventures of those involved in it. This part of the coastline was also popular with wreckers who plundered wrecked ships and often lured vessels to their doom by showing false lights along the cliffs.

For nearly 600 years men of the Vale have quaffed their ale and swapped yarns in the old Blue Anchor Inn at East Aberthaw, seen on the right of this photograph.





The ruins of Boverton Place where King John is said to have been hidden.

To-day many villagers find their employment at the Aberthaw Cement Works the four stacks of which are a prominent landmark in the Vale. The main road through the Vale separates the works from its huge bowl-shaped quarry.

Further industrialisation is taking place at the Leys where a giant power station is nearing completion. A fine view of the Leys, the most southerly point of Glamorgan, can be obtained from Aberthaw.

The River Thaw divides Aberthaw into east and west. On the right bank stands West Aberthaw. One of the most attractive buildings in the East Village is the "Blue Anchor Inn", with its pretty thatched roof. It is said to be of 14th century origin.

The stone walls of the "Blue Anchor" vary in thickness from 2 ft. 9 ins. to 8 ft. It was certainly built to withstand the batterings of storm and tempest to which this part of the coastline is prone.

As long ago as 1606 Sir Edward Stradling of St. Donat's built a sea wall at Aberthaw, at considerable expense, but it was completely destroyed by a great storm a few months later.

A favourite spot with picnickers and holidaymakers is Pleasant Harbour which is near the village. An extensive stretch of sand is revealed when the tide is out.

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The village of **Bonvilston**, or Bolston as it is often called, is situated on A48 some eight miles west of Cardiff. It owes its name to the De Bonvilles who were Lords of the Manor in Norman times. It was Sir Simon de Bonville who gave it the Welsh name of Tresimon. The Church is dedicated to St. Mary and was rebuilt in 1863. In it are memorials to a number of prominent Vale of Glamorgan families, especially the Bassetts. The ancient circular font is reputed to be the smallest in the Diocese being only 1 ft. 8ins. high and 1 ft. 10 ins. across.

* * *

The village of **Boverton** is situated about a mile to the east of Llantwit Major. The ruins of Boverton Place are a prominent landmark in the village. It is said that King John, hunted by the barons who wanted him to sign Magna Carta, was hidden in this building by his divorced wife Matilda.

Adjacent to Boverton is the modern village of Trebefered which was built to accommodate the unemployed miners who, during the industrial depression, formed themselves into a co-operative movement and successfully established a market gardening business. Others have joined the original sixty members and the "Welsh Land Settlement Society" has turned out to be a great success.

Cowbridge Grammar School, which was founded in 1608 by Sir John Stradling, is the oldest grammar school in Glamorgan. In the distance is the South Gate.





Since the 17th century many thousands of bowls, vases, jugs and pots have been made at Ewenny. Here the potter is seen at his wheel (see opposite page).

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Cowbridge has been called in Welsh "*Y Dref Hir yn y Waun*", or "The Long Town in the Meadow" and this is an excellent description of this little market town of just over 1,000 inhabitants which is situated twelve miles west of Cardiff and seven miles east of Bridgend on the London to Fishguard road.

Cowbridge is the marketing centre of the Vale and has been for centuries. In the 18th century a thriving trade was carried on with the towns on the English side of the Bristol Channel through the port of Aberthaw. Market day is Monday and it is then that the town's agricultural importance becomes apparent.

There are many distinctions to which Cowbridge can lay claim.

It is certainly the only town in the county that provides evidence of having been a walled borough. Cowbridge also had one of the first printing presses in the county. It was owned by Rhys Thomas, a local man, and

was first operated in 1770. On the death of the owner in 1791 the press was sold to a Cardiff man for seventeen guineas.

The present Town Hall is built over the old gaol and it is still possible to see the cells—grim reminders of a bygone age. The old Town Hall was situated near the Duke of Wellington Hotel and was demolished in 1830 to ease the traffic problem which, believe it or not, existed even in those days.

Situated off the main street are the impressive grey stone buildings of Cowbridge Grammar School. Founded in 1608 by Sir John Stradling, and endowed by Sir Leoline Jenkins, Judge of the Admiralty and Home Secretary under Charles II, it is the oldest grammar school in Glamorgan. Over the years it has supplied the colleges of Oxford with six principals. In the field of sport the school claims to be a pioneer of rugby football in this part of Wales.

Among the many interesting buildings in the main street is the Bear Hotel which was at one time the starting-point for some stage coaches and the changing-point for others.

Near Cowbridge is Tair Onen, the largest forestry nursery in Great Britain. It covers an area of 100 acres and there are always 40,000,000 trees of all ages and species under cultivation.

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The Church of the Holy Cross was founded in the 13th century. It is situated between the Duke of Wellington and the Grammar School, and is notable for its squat, octagonal tower.

Cowbridge is very proud of the fact that it is one of the smallest chartered boroughs in the kingdom.

* * *

Ewenny, which is a mile and a half south of Bridgend, is full of interest for the visitor.

The Priory, situated on the south bank of the river of the same name, has been described as "the best example of a fortified monastery in the British Isles" and "the best example of Norman ecclesiastical architecture in the Principality". The Church, with its beautiful interior, and the conventual buildings, lay within a walled enclosure measuring about 190 by 130 yards.

The Priory was founded by Maurice de Londres and was given by him to the Abbey of Gloucester in 1141. In the south transept is a tombstone which carries a Norman French inscription to this effect:—

*"Here lies Morice de Londres, the Founder,
God reward him for his service. Amen."*

Other memorials to the de Londres family include those of Hawise and William (Maurice's father).

The site of the conventual buildings is partly occupied by a mansion which incorporates some mediaeval walling.

The battlemented walls, although breached in several places, and the main gateway, with its door and portcullis grooves, stand as a grim reminder of the bitter struggle waged between the Welsh and the Norman invaders.

It is interesting to note that the Priory was sold to Sir Edward Carne in 1546 for the munificent sum of £727 6s. 4d. It passed from the Carne family to the Turbervilles in 1700 in which family it remains.

The Ewenny Potteries were opened in the 17th century by a family named Jenkins whose descendants still own and work them. There is a plentiful supply of good clay in the locality and the discovery in recent years of ancient kilns suggests that many farmers tried their hands at pottery.

Rollers, powered by a petrol engine, roll the clay until it is soft and ready for use. The potter then takes over and under

The main gateway of Ewenny Priory which is regarded as one of the best examples of a fortified monastery in the British Isles.





Fonmon Castle has been continuously inhabited since the time of the Normans. Its present owner is Sir Hugo R. B. Boothby, Bart.

his skilful hands a vase, bowl or pot takes shape. Hardening is the next stage, and this is done in a warm room. Glazing follows and then finally the pot is "fired" (or baked) in a kiln. Lime green, blue or buff are the traditional Ewenny colours.

Ewenny ware was widely used in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries when the village was situated on the old coaching road which ran from the bottom of Crack Hill through Corntown to Laleston, over the old dipping bridge. The potteries were on the branch of this road which led to Bridgend, and their eminent position made them widely known to travellers. Wares were taken to local farms and markets by donkey pannier.

* * *

Beautifully situated overlooking the valley of the Thaw some three miles south of Cowbridge is **Flemingston**, perhaps best known as the home of Edward Williams (1746-1826) "Iolo Morganwg," a learned stonemason, who was one of the most distinguished antiquaries and poets of his time. In the Church of St. Michael can be seen a memorial to Iolo which was erected to his memory by the Countess of Dunraven.

* * *

The hamlet of **Fonmon** is roughly a mile inland from Fontygary and was originally built around a pool.

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Fonmon Castle is situated to the north of the hamlet and has been continuously inhabited since the time of the Normans. It is surrounded by magnificent trees and is invisible from a distance, although it stands on high ground not far from the sea. The oldest part of the Castle is the Norman keep. Great expansion and reconstruction took place during the second half of the 13th century, and further additions were made in the 17th century. The impressive outward appearance of the Castle is largely due to the battlemented parapet which surmounts it.

Alterations were made to the interior of the Castle in the middle of the 17th century. The Georgian library, created by Robert Jones III, whom Reynolds painted, has one of the finest rococo ceilings in Wales. In the large kitchen is a great dresser displaying a fine array of pewter. The kitchen also contains the remains of a dog spit.

The St. John family occupied the Castle until the Civil Wars. In 1656 the Castle and Estate were sold to Colonel Philip Jones, who played a prominent part on the Parliamentary side during the Civil War. Colonel Jones was Controller of Oliver Cromwell's household and in the entrance hall hangs a fine portrait of Cromwell by Robert Walker.

Famous visitors to the Castle have included John and Charles Wesley and Howell Harris, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist. Its present owner is Sir Hugo R. B. Boothby, Bart., a direct descendant of Colonel Philip Jones.

* * *

Fontygary is an attractive little resort four miles west of Barry. It adjoins Rhoose and its beach of pebbles and sand, backed by high cliffs, is extremely popular with locals and visitors. A cafe, putting green, and other amenities are added attractions.

John Wesley was a frequent visitor to Fontygary. He stayed at a local farmhouse and made numerous excursions to Fonmon Castle. In recent years several caravan sites have been established at Fontygary and the ideal location has had much to do with their mushroom growth.

Sir Hugo R. B. Boothby, Bart. (left) and Stewart Williams admire the fine portrait of Oliver Cromwell, painted by Robert Walker, which hangs in the entrance hall of Fonmon Castle.





Fontygary Bay, four miles west of Barry, increases in popularity each year.

Situated five and a half miles west of Barry (turn left at the Monument, St. Athan) is the attractive village of **Gileston**, with its thatched cottages, manor house and church. The church, which is dedicated to St. Giles, dates from the 15th century.

Nearby is Limpert Bay where once stood an ancient inn which served those who sailed up and down the Bristol Channel from this point. It was a port of call for the vessels which traded between Bristol and Swansea.

* * *

The parish of **Llanblethian** surrounds Cowbridge; the village, situated in a hollow, is a mile south-west of Cowbridge.

The Church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, occupies a commanding position overlooking the village. Its Perpendicular tower dates from 1477.

The remains of the unfinished Castle of St. Quintin's, started by Gilbert de Clare in 1314, stand on a site formed by the horse shoe bend in the River Thaw. Part of a fine gatehouse and remains of the walls can be seen. An earlier castle, said to have been erected in the 11th century, was situated on Llanblethian Hill.

Thomas Carlyle was a notable visitor to Llanblethian.

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Llancarfan is situated in the valley of the Carfan River two miles south of the London-Fishguard road at Bonvilston. Fifteen hundred years ago it possessed a monastery and college which is said to have been located in a meadow to the south of the Church. At this time it was the home of a thousand saints. It was celebrated for every kind of learning and was the first college of its kind in the country. Its decline came with the advent of the Normans who reduced it to the status of a Parish Church.

The Church is dedicated to St. Catwg (or Cadoc) and was rebuilt during the early years of the last century. The tower has narrow slit windows, generally used for defence, together with embattled parapets.

There are also two Nonconformist chapels in the village, the Wesleyans and the Baptist. The former has been closed for some years, and attendances at the latter are very small.

* * *

Two miles south of Cowbridge is the village of **Llandough**, notable for its Church and Castle. The Church of St. Dochau has been completely restored. It is a building in the Early English style. There is a memorial on the south wall of the nave to three children of the Bassett family. Their ages—18, 23 and 26 years—plus the fact that all three died

Gileston, with its thatched cottages, still presents a rural scene, although nearby at the Leys a new giant power station is sited, which has transformed this part of the coastline.





Llancafán, steeped in history, is one of the most beautiful villages in the Vale of Glamorgan.

within the space of five weeks lead one to conjecture as to the circumstances surrounding their demise. Beneath the inscription is this unusual couplet :

*"William died first, and lies outward of all,
John in the middle, and Freswith next the wall."*

Llandough Castle is a modern building said to be erected on the site of an earlier castle which was the home of the le Wales (or Walsh) family. Thomas Carlyle resided at "The Cottage" during his stay in the Vale.

* * *

Llanmaes is a small village roughly a mile north-east of Llantwit Major.

The ancient church, dedicated to St. Catwg the Wise, is built in the early English style, although the large font is Norman. A mural on the north wall, unfortunately in very faded condition, is said to depict St. George rescuing the princess from the dragon and also priests dressed in eucharistic vestments. Among the Church Plate is a Paten said to be one of the few hall-marked pre-Reformation Patens in existence.

The parish register is the oldest in the Vale of Glamorgan and dates from 1583. Instances of longevity abound . . . for instance, one relates to Ivan Yorath, a native of Llantwit Major, who was buried on

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Saturday, July 17th, 1621, at the ripe old age of 180. He was a soldier at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and to quote the entry, "lived much by fishing".

A Latin inscription on the tower records that it was erected in 1632 at the cost of the Parish and friends to the memory of Edward Llewellyn and Illtyd Nicholl, wardens of the church.

The Nicholl family, a name which figures prominently in the history of the Vale, have resided in the Great House near the church for generations.

The old Independent Chapel of Bethesda y Fro is situated to the east of the village.

* * *

Llanmihangel must be included in this book, although it can hardly be described as a village. It is a picturesque spot halfway between Llantwit Major and Cowbridge.

Llanmihangel Plas, an imposing Tudor mansion, was rebuilt in the 16th century by James Thomas, a Sheriff of Glamorgan. The interior contains several interesting features including a 16th century fireplace above which are coats of arms carved in stone.

The Church of St. Michael is a small edifice and is served by Llanmaes. Sir Humphrey Edwin, Nonconformist Lord Mayor of London in 1698, died here in 1707 and is buried in the churchyard.

A quiet corner of Llanmaes, showing the tower of the ancient church which is dedicated to St. Catwg the Wise





Llantwit Major Church.

Many stories have been built around Llanmihangel. Probably the most famous is that concerning the white-clad figure of a woman, branded a witch because of her supposed powers of magic, which is said to rise from the pond in the dell at certain times.

* * *

The hamlets of **Llansannor** and **City** are situated near the source of the River Thaw, three miles north of Cowbridge.

Llansannor Court, an imposing Elizabethan residence, is still occupied and the ivy-covered Church of St. Senewyr stands in the grounds which surround the mansion.

* * *

The most notable feature of **Llantrithyd**, which is situated three miles east of Cowbridge, is Llantrithyd Place, formerly the seat of the Aubrey family. Now a decaying grey stone ruin covered with ivy, it was, even a century ago, a splendid mansion with "magnificent staircases, embossed and panelled ceilings, carved chimney pieces and armorial embellishments."

The Church of St. Illtyd, which adjoins the mansion, contains several memorials to the Aubrey family.

* * *

There can be few places in Great Britain that can offer so much to the historian as **Llantwit Major**. It is likely that it was the locality of one of the Druidical Seminaries referred to by Julius Caesar, and it was certainly the site of the first Christian University in Britain.

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In 1888 a Roman villa was partially excavated just outside the town uncovering a mosaic pavement. Further evidence of Roman occupation has also been found.

Situated in the centre of the town is the Town Hall, which was built by Gilbert de Clare, known as Gilbert the Red, Earl of Gloucester, who was born in 1243 and died in 1297. It was destroyed by Owain Glyndwr during one of his skirmishes in the neighbourhood of Llantwit, and reappeared as a Church Loft where Sunday morning markets as well as courts and town festivities were held. Outside this interesting old building John Wesley held open-air meetings in the 18th century.

Other famous people who have been associated with Llantwit include Christmas Evans, the famous Welsh divine, who preached the opening sermon at the Baptist Chapel; and Daniel Jones of Agra, the famous Indian missionary who was born here.

More than a mile to the south-west of the town is the beach, which is very popular in the summer months.

The centre of interest for the visitor is the ancient Church of St. Illtyd, the general design of which is considered to be unique. The unusual looking interior is due to the fact that it really consists of two churches—the West or Old Church, and the East or New Church. Among the features in the East Church is the Jesse Niche. Jesse is lying down asleep and out of his side grows a tree, bearing in its foliage heads of the ancestors of Christ, who is Himself represented on the top branch. Also in the East Church are a Norman Font, Wall Frescoes and the grave of Mathew Voss who died in 1534 at the age of 129.

Llantwit Major, one of the most important centres in the Vale, has much of interest to offer the visitor



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The portion known as the West Church is remarkable for the carving and the heraldry of its roof, which is considered of great archaeological value. The timber is Irish bog oak—said to be able to defy the death-watch beetle. Here also are the remains of ancient crosses and memorials of the dead.

Llantwit Major has always been considered a healthy spot, to which can be attributed the longevity of many of its inhabitants.

* * *

Llysworney, which is two and a half miles west of Cowbridge, is traditionally associated with Nudd Hael, the 6th century chieftain who was an exceedingly rich and benevolent man.

In the village is a well, enclosed within four walls, which has given a steady flow of water for many centuries.

The Church, which is dedicated to St. Tydvil, has a massive central tower.

In the vicinity is the site of an Early Iron Age fortified settlement which was explored in 1949 by Dr. H. N. Savory of the National Museum of Wales.

* * *

It has been said that the village of **Marcross**, which is three miles west of Llantwit Major, owes its name to Philip de Marcross, but the records do not confirm this.

The Church of the Holy Trinity, which is of Norman origin, is situated on the left bank of a valley. Although small in size it is worthy of attention. The chancel arch, with its unusual chevron ornamentation, dates back to the 12th century, and the gabled tower is probably 14th century.

In the churchyard, near the gate, is the base of an ancient cross which has been adapted to act as a sun-dial.

Three water mills existed in the parish in the 13th century, and the local wells were noted for their curative waters. Indeed, a popular folk-rhyme about one of the wells runs as follows :

*"For the itch and the stitch,
Rheumatic and the gout,
If the devil isn't in you,
The well will take it out."*

A delightful walk from the main road, past the Church, takes us through a pretty glade to Nash Point, which is popular with visitors during the summer months.

On Nash Point are two lighthouses, only one of which is now in use. They are distinctively painted in black and white hoops. The beam can be seen for over twenty miles around, while the penetrating note of the fog-horn is well known to sailors who pass up and down the Bristol Channel.



The Nash Point lighthouses are well-known to sailors who pass up and down the Bristol Channel.

Many vessels have been wrecked and lives lost along this coastline and it was as a result of the wreck of the *Frolic* in 1931 that the authorities took action and erected a lighthouse. The boat was bound from Haverfordwest to Bristol, the night was stormy, and it drifted on to the Nash sandbank. Eighty people—many of them influential—lost their lives in this disaster.

The Lords of the Admiralty, aboard the *Black Eagle*, paid a visit to Nash in 1840 and very nearly came to grief on the same sandbank. Fortunately the weather was calm and a calamity was averted.

Some writers claim that a castle existed at Marcross in the 12th century, but there is no evidence to support this.

* * *

Although it is by no means typical of the Vale the charming old-world village of **Merthyr Mawr**, which is just over two miles south-west of Bridgend, is well worth a visit. The green pasture land and thatched cottages provide a contrast with the miles and miles of sand hills, known as Merthyr Mawr Warren, which lie to the west.

Archaeological discoveries of great importance have been made in the vicinity and the cases of the National Museum of Wales contain many wonderful specimens from Merthyr Mawr. A Neolithic Age burial place containing skeletons of men and women who must have lived 1500 years B.C., was discovered in 1901. Roman brooches and inscribed stones have also been found at Merthyr Mawr.

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The sweetly-spired church of St. Teilo is comparatively modern, but around it are gathered some ancient stones including a Celtic cross.

The ruins of Candleston Castle stand on a limestone cliff about half a mile from Merthyr Mawr. The blown sand has turned the immediate area around the Castle into a desert waste. Undoubtedly it was at one time the centre of a fertile region.

* * *

The ruins of a grange of Neath Abbey can still be seen in the village of **Monknash**, which is some six miles south-east of Bridgend. Sir Richard de Granville was made a gift of these lands in 1130, and together with other donations in Wick, Marcross and St. Donat's, they made the Neath Abbey lands of some considerable size.

The Church of St. Mary dates from Norman times. It is popularly supposed that the roof timbers came from wrecked vessels of the Spanish Armada.

The wooded slopes and babbling stream of Cwm Nash lead to the sea. This is a delightful spot which is well worth visiting.

* * *

Nash Manor, once the residence of the Carne family, adjoins Llysworney. It was in early times a possession of the See of Llandaff and is mentioned in ancient documents.

* * *

Ogmore-by-Sea, situated at the mouth of the River Ogmore four miles south of Bridgend, is an attractive seaside resort which is increasing in popularity each year.

On the west side of the river is Merthyr Mawr Warren, an impressive stretch of sand dunes which extend to Newton. Often the prevailing south-westerly wind uncovers flints and stones, crude knives and axes, which belonged to people who inhabited this area many hundreds of years ago.

About a mile out to sea is the dreaded Tusker Rock, a treacherous reef which has claimed the lives of many good sailors.

Holidaymakers have a choice at Ogmore—they can use the golden sands or the delightfully springy turf which skirts the rocky foreshore. Nearby is Craig-yr-Eos, where Iorwerth Fynglwyd lived. In addition to his writing, Iorwerth also carved the famous Sutton stone which was quarried locally in mediaeval times and used in the construction of Castles and Churches in the Vale.

From Sutton Hill, overlooking the river Ogmore, a fine view can be obtained of Ogmore Castle and the much-photographed Stepping Stones. The Castle ruins are situated on the south side of the River Ewenny, a little above its confluence with the Ogmore. The Stepping Stones across the river lead to the charming village of Merthyr Mawr. There is a legend that a fair member of the de Londres family (probably Hawise,



The Stepping Stones across the River Ogmore

who married Walter De Braose in July, 1223) was responsible for the construction of the Stones so that they would enable her suitor from the village on the opposite bank to visit her without inconvenience.

Ogmore Castle was founded in the 12th century by William de Londres, who was one of Fitzhamon's brothers-in-arms. In 1928 the ruins were placed under the guardianship of the Commissioners (now Ministry) of Works, who have since carried out their conservation. The Stepping Stones are also in the Ministry's protection.

During clearance works in 1929 an early stone inscribed in Latin and the early Celtic "mark" writing as seen in Ireland was found: this is now in the National Museum of Wales.

Admission to the Castle can be obtained all the year round, the fees being adults 6d., and children 3d.

* * *

Penllyne Castle occupies a commanding position on the north side of the London-Fishguard road from where it can be glimpsed on the skyline,

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A view of the village street in Penmark taken looking through the ornamental gates of the Church of St. Mary

surrounded by thick woodland. Along with the village and church, it was destroyed by Owain Glyndwr in the 15th century. Numerous alterations and additions have been made to it over the years. A portion of the original castle is incorporated in the modern stables.

Penlyne Church, a building of modern construction, is situated at the entrance to the castle drive and blends with the lodges and general approach. Almost two miles to the south is the Church of Llanfrynach (dedicated to St. Bernach).

Near the Church are two double stiles, known locally as coffin stiles and thought to be the only examples of their kind in Glamorgan. There is a block of stone between the stiles on which the coffin rested while the bearers crossed over into the field.

* * *

The village of **Pendoylan** (pronounced Pendeulan) lies in the Ely valley, 1½ miles to the north of A48 and on the most direct route from the Rhondda to Barry. The parish church, which is dedicated to St. Catwg (Cadoc), retains some mediaeval features, and nearby, in a field to the east, is Ffynnon Catwg (St. Cadoc's well). Half a mile to the south there springs another holy well which is named Ffynnondeilo (St. Teilo's well) and situated in the garden of an interesting old house

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bearing the same name. In the same neighbourhood, near the road which leads southwards from the village, is the 16th century manor-house of Caerwigau Uchaf.

Adjoining the village inn—the Red Lion—is a post-war housing estate which has more than doubled the population of the village. North of the church are six almshouses and the Church in Wales Primary School, which was built in 1874 by Miss Fothergill of Hensol Castle. The latter mansion, which is 1½ miles to the north of the village, was formerly one of the finest residences in the county. Now a mental hospital, it was built in 1730 by Lord Chancellor Talbot.

Between the village and Hensol is the little hamlet of Clawddoch. Both Clawddoch farm and Bethania Presbyterian Church, which is situated nearby, had interesting associations with the celebrated singer, Madame Clara Novello Davies. She was the first to play a musical instrument at the church, where her grandfather, William Evans of Tyfry and later of Clawddoch farm, was an elder for a long period.

* * *

Four miles north-west of Barry is **Penmark**, strategically situated on a high plateau. A castle of some size existed here at one time, but except that it was built by Gilbert de Umfraville, one of Robert Fitzhamon's knights, its historical associations are lost in the mists of time. It was demolished, some historians say, during Owain Glyndwr's rebellion against Henry IV. The only remains still to be seen are the curtain wall, terminated by two round towers, which stands on the edge of a ravine overlooking the swift flowing Weycock brook, a tributary of the Thaw, which runs below.

As is the case with so many villages in the Vale, the Church dominates the scene. Dedicated to St. Mary, the Church has an embattled western tower. The interior is spacious and the tower is open to the nave with the result that the six bellringers can be seen by the congregation as they perform their duties. A point of interest is the scratch dial which can be seen on the south wall outside the Church. These dials were widely used before the 15th century, when clocks were not in general use, as a means of indicating the time of the service.

A number of memorials to the Jones family of Fonmon can be found inside the Church. Major General Oliver Thomas Jones fought with Moore in Spain and another member of the family served as a Member of Parliament for the county during the reign of Queen Anne.

* * *

Situated on the river Ely, with a station on the main Cardiff-Swansea railway line, the village of **Peterston-super-Ely** lies in the south of the parish which bears its name. The interesting old church of St. Peter is in the centre of the village, and near it is a commodious church hall built and given to the parish in 1925 by Mrs. Brockett Grover, a local lady. In all probability the village derives its name from St. Peter and not from Peter le Soore, to whom the fee of Peterston was granted after the Norman

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conquest. Traces of the Norman castle can still be seen. In the north of the parish, over two miles from the village, is the old farm house of Llanwensan, which seems to have been the site of a mediaeval chapel of ease attached to the parish church.

Since the coming of the railway, Peterston has been the focal village of the lower Ely valley region. The train services have now been drastically curtailed, but modern planning has done much to ensure its continued importance as a residential centre. In the post-war years, for instance, a large new housing estate has come into being. Another very recent and interesting development has been the extension of the parish boundary to include the garden village of Glyn Cory and the historic Baptist chapel of Croes-y-parc. In the graveyard in front of this chapel can be seen the tomb of Dafydd William, the renowned Welsh hymnwriter who was one of the foundation members of the cause.

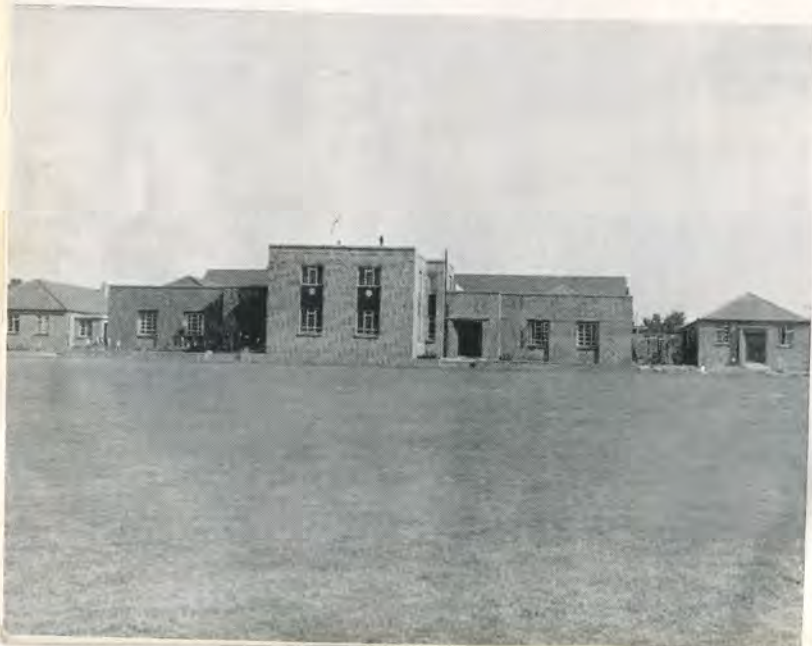
* * *

Porthkerry, two miles west of Barry, is a favourite spot with holidaymakers. Its name is said to have been derived from Ceri ap Caid, a Welsh chieftain, who used the place as a port for his fleet of ships.

It is said that a castle existed on the cliff some four hundred years ago, but was carried away during a terrific storm. Whether this is true or not it is a fact that old maps have Castle Rock marked on them.

A notable landmark is the viaduct which spans the park.

Coleg Y Fro, Rhoose, the Y.M.C.A. College which was established in 1950 by the Welsh National College of Y.M.C.A.'s as a College of Christian Education.



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The Church on the hill in the hamlet is dedicated to St. Curig. John Wesley preached here in 1740 and on several other occasions during his journeys through South Wales.

* * *

At the turn of the century **Rhoose** was just a small village, a cluster of thatched cottages and farms grouped around the village pump. Two factors influenced its development—the opening of a cement works (and later an asbestos works), and its ideal coastal situation which attracted people to settle down in the area. Now Rhoose has the largest Civil Airport in Wales on its doorstep and this, together with post-war housing development, has transformed it from a mere village into a busy holiday centre.

Rhoose, which is three miles west of Barry, is of little historical importance, but we know that it was connected with the smuggling trade which flourished in the vicinity in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Screened by a row of council houses is Coleg Y Fro, the Y.M.C.A. College which was established in 1950 by the Welsh National Council of Y.M.C.A.'s as a College of Christian Education. Each year more than 2,000 students pass through this valuable centre of Christian learning which is dedicated to much the same task as were its predecessors in Llantwit Major and Llancafarn fifteen centuries ago.

* * *

St. Athan, situated to the west of the River Thaw, is familiar as the location of one of the largest R.A.F. Stations in the country.

The Church, dedicated to St. Tathan, is hidden behind the village inn and the Post Office. A memorial to John Williams (1728-1806), the famous Welsh hymn writer, can be seen in the churchyard, and effigies of Sir William de Berkerolles and Sir Roger de Berkerolles lie in the Church, which was built by Sir William in the 12th century.

Tradition tells the story of one of the Berkerolles who went to Jerusalem on a crusade. Upon his return he was told that his wife had been unfaithful to him during his absence. She was consequently



A view of the Church of St. Tathan at St. Athan.

condemned to stand in a pit up to her neck in the field until she starved to death. Her sister visited her every morning and as she was not allowed to carry any food she soaked her long dress with the dew of the grass which the sister sucked and by this means she was kept alive for ten days. Her husband discovered later that she had been faithful to him and he pined away.

Between St. Athan and the Aberthaw Cement Works, on the left hand side of the main road, are the ruins of East Orchard Castle which for many generations was the home of the Berkerolles. Tradition has it that an incident of great interest took place here during the time of Owain Glyndwr. Desiring to know what the ordinary people thought about his efforts to deliver them from their bondage, Glyndwr, accompanied by a knight, disguised himself and toured the countryside. He presented himself at the home of Sir Lawrence de Berkerolles (Roger's son), who was sightless, and after the usual courtesies was invited to stay the night. Prior to departing on the following morning Glyndwr shook his host by the hand, thanked him warmly for his hospitality, and then revealed his true identity. This had such an effect upon Sir Lawrence that he was struck dumb and never recovered his speech.

Visitors approaching the village of **St. Bride's Major** from the west pass through two chestnut groves, one on each side of the road. They were planted by a former Countess of Dunraven to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo. General Sir Thomas Picton, who died in the battle, visited St. Bride's Major to see his brother Edward, who was the vicar at that time, shortly before leaving for Waterloo. It is said that he attended his last service at the local church, and quaffed his last pint of ale at a local inn.

The Church of St. Bride stands on the side of a hill and contains a number of interesting monuments to the Butler and Wyndham families.

Many adjectives have been used by writers to describe **St. Donat's Castle** which is situated two miles west of Llantwit Major. Its present magnificence is due to the late William

St. Hilary is one of the most attractive villages in the Vale, as this glimpse of the Norman Church suggests.



Randolph Hearst, an American newspaper magnate, who purchased it in 1925 and carried out extensive repairs, alterations and additions, taking care at the same time to preserve as far as possible the ancient parts of the building. He also built a superb swimming pool in the grounds.

A splendid view of the Bristol Channel and the descending gardens can be obtained from the terrace.

There was a fortress on this site in Roman times, and we know that it was rebuilt in 1092. For six hundred years the Castle was owned and occupied by the Stradling family. To-day it is the property of the National Magazine Co. of America.

When the National Eisteddfod of Wales was held at Cardiff in 1938 the Bards were entertained at St. Donat's and they marched in their robes through the grounds. One of the rooms occupied by Lloyd George at that time still bears his name.

The Colyn Dolphyn Tower on the cliff was erected as a look-out by Sir Harry Stradling who had been captured and held to ransom for 2,000 marks by the pirate. Dolphyn was later captured and hanged from a tree in the Castle grounds.

The beautiful church of St. Donat's lies in a dingle below the Castle walls. It dates from the 11th century and has a 14th century tower. It contains many memorials to the Stradling family.

Nestling in a valley on the banks of the Ely some six miles north-west of Cardiff lies **St. George-super-Ely**. Its Church built in the shape of a St. George's Cross is remarkable as being one of the smallest cruciform churches in the country. The Castle, now a farm-house, was built by the Le Flemings. In the Parish is Coedarhydyglyn, the home of the Lord Lieutenant of the County (Colonel C. G. Traherne, T.D.), the grounds of which are entered from the top of the Tumble Hill. This house was built in 1830.

St. Hilary, two miles south-west of Cowbridge, is a charming old village ideally situated on rising ground commanding a magnificent view of the Vale and the sea beyond.

Thatched cottages with old world gardens cluster around the Norman Church, which is dedicated to St. Hilary. The four-square embattled tower is decorated with four gargoyles. Inside the Church the chancel has a Norman arch and the font is also thought to be of that period. The chancel contains a window illustrating the life of Christ and a reredos (ornamental screen behind altar) carved in stone and marble of the Last Supper.

Beaupre Castle, which was once the seat of the Basset family, is located about a mile from St. Hilary. The ruins, which can be reached by climbing the stile near the bridge over the River Thaw on the main St. Athan-Cowbridge road and crossing the fields by way of a track near the river bank, have been preserved and are maintained by the Ministry of Works. Worthy of note are the two fine archways, Italian in design,

dated 1586 and 1600 respectively. They are reputed to be the work of William and Richard Twrch of Bridgend. Admission is free and the Castle is open to the public from 8.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., Mondays to Fridays, and 8.00 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays. It was popularly supposed that Magna Carta was compiled in this Castle because a Justiciary, by name Philip Bassett, was contemporary with King John. But this myth was destroyed when it was established that there was no Bassett in the locality prior to the 13th century.

Near the Church of St. Hilary is an old pathway which leads to St. Hilary Down. On a fine day the views from this point are breathtaking. The monument, which is a prominent landmark, was erected as a memorial to the men of the Glamorganshire Yeomanry who were killed in the 1914-1918 War. Nearby is the mast of the T.W.W. Commercial Television transmitter.

* * *

The village of **St. Mary Church** is grouped around the Church of the Annunciation, and is situated three miles south of Cowbridge. Iolo Morganwg's wife was born in the village.

* * *

St. Nicholas is a small village situated on the London-Fishguard road some six miles west of Cardiff.

The Church of St. Nicholas, built in the Decorated style, contains some interesting memorials.

Dunraven Bay, Southerndown, with Dunraven Castle on the extreme left.



Near the village (take the road which runs south to Dyffryn House) is the Tinkinswood long cairn, and a mile further along at St. Lythan's is another cromlech. These have been described by archaeologists as "the most striking examples in South East Wales of megalithic tombs". They represent a custom of burial which was practised by Neolithic people about 2000 B.C. Mr. John Ward, a former Keeper of Archaeology in the National Museum of Wales, made a scientific excavation of the Tinkinswood cairn in 1915. Both monuments are under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works.

Dyffryn House, built in 1893 by the late Mr. John Cory, is a graceful mansion set in magnificent grounds. It is celebrated for possessing two fronts, that on the south being one of the most imposing in the county. European and Oriental shrubs and plants are cultivated here.

* * *

Southerndown virtually adjoins Ogmore-by-Sea and is a popular seaside resort. The attraction is Dunraven Bay, which is backed by high cliffs. A fine stretch of firm, clean sand is revealed at low tide. From the cliff-top magnificent views of the Bristol Channel and the opposite coast can be obtained.

Situated in the hollow behind the headland known as Trwyn y Witch (the witch's nose) is Dunraven Castle, a mansion of most impressive appearance. At present occupied by the Workers' Travel Association who use it as a holiday centre, it was formerly the Welsh residence of the Earls of Dunraven.

As long ago as 1050 a fortress existed on this site, and writers have stated that it was burnt by the Saxons. Thirty years later it was destroyed by Rhys ap Tewdwr. In the 12th century the site was granted by a member of the de Londres family of Ogmore to Arnold le Boteler* who built a castle. The castle was destroyed in the early 15th century by Owain Glyndwr.

The ownership remained with the Boteler family until the middle of the 16th century when it passed to the Vaughans. A century later it was sold to John Wyndham from whose family it descended to the present Earl of Dunraven.

Stories are often told of the Wreckers of Dunraven who operated during the Vaughan period. Indeed, Walter Vaughan is said to have taken to ship-wrecking as a profitable pastime. More than one vessel, attracted by the moving lights which were attached to grazing sheep, was dashed to pieces on the rocks at Dunraven.

* *The arms of the Boteler—or Butler—family were three golden cups on an azure shield, hence the inn of the same name in the village of Southerndown.*

* * *

On the coast near Llantwit Major is **Tresillian Cove** and at the mouth of this attractive little valley is Tresillian House, which was once an inn much frequented by smugglers.

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The caves nearby provided excellent cover for their nefarious activities and it is said that underground passages led from them to the big houses in the neighbourhood. A great deal of romance surrounds these caves and it is generally agreed that the parents of General Sir Thomas Picton, of Waterloo fame, were married in Reynard's Cave, sometimes called St. Reynard's Church, which was used in the same way as the Gretna Green blacksmith's shop.

* * *

The scattered and thinly populated parish of **Welsh St. Donat's**, with the exception of the small farm known as Pant-y-lladron (thieves' hollow), lies entirely to the North of A48.

The village, some two miles distant in the centre of the parish, contains the delightful old church of St. Donat and a former gentleman's residence known as Great House. The circular Welsh pigsties mentioned by B. H. Malkin as being a distinctive feature of the village have long since disappeared. One, however, can still be seen at Heol-y-march, near the road which skirts the edge of Hensol Forest and leads to Bonvilston. Mynydd-y-glew (mountain of the brave) between Heol-y-march and Hensol is an area of absorbing interest to nature lovers.

Caercady, a gentleman's residence half a mile to the west of the village and now the home of Mrs. C. C. Williams, is plainly visible from the London-Fishguard road as one crosses Cowbridge common. In the days when executions took place on the common the phrase "You will see Caercady before you die" was a proverbial warning administered to many a wayward youth embarking on a career of crime.

* * *

The Church of St. James, with its gabled tower, and a couple of dismantled windmills, are the most prominent features of **Wick**, a village situated six miles from Bridgend.

Wick merges with Broughton where some disused malthouses can be seen.

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The "Best Kept Village" Competition

By PETER S. GABE, M.B.E. (Honorary Secretary)

IN 1953 when this Competition for the "Best Kept Village" in the Vale of Glamorgan was inaugurated, only Gloucestershire had attempted a similar contest, and that had lapsed following the war years. Last summer no less than forty-three counties in England and Wales had followed us, by setting-up similar types of competitions, ten being established in Wales. Many are organised by Rural District Councils or Branches of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England or Wales, some by Women's Institutes, and in one case by a local newspaper and in another by a section of Rotary.

Here in the Vale of Glamorgan we enter another year and those Villages that will be entering must soon be making plans to restore their villages after the dormant winter months. The winning villages in the Vale since 1953 have been St. Nicholas, Llysworney, Llanblethian, Peterston-Super-Ely, St. George, Pendoylan, St. Hilary.

Each dissimilar and varied in size and character, as they must be, because the adjudicators pay no regard to architectural features, but select the villages that have been best kept, and although a winning village is prohibited from competing in the year following award, it is notable that no winner has yet achieved the maximum effort required on more than one occasion.

EQUAL CHANCE

Every competing village stands an equal chance of attaining distinction—or, indeed, the competition would be pointless—but it has clearly been demonstrated, that it is the village that responds to leadership and organises its effort, that is likely to emerge the winner. This, after all, is one of the keynotes and aims of the whole framework, with inhabitants sinking individuality and working together as a team for the betterment of their village in the common good. This year the competition takes an important step, which we believe is both inevitable and far-reaching. The Management Committee are introducing a Scheme Award of Annual Grants which will be made available to every contest village which attains a required standard of marks in the judging.

GRANTS

Whether a village is large or small the basic Grant will be attainable to every village that satisfies the judges it has achieved a desired level, but grants must be used to improve the village whether to purchase materials or equipment for constructional work, horticultural items, or even to save with some particular object in mind. The scope is limitless. In the first year of the scheme the amount available for Grants cannot be large, and it has been preferred to spread them over the maximum number of villages rather than concentrate them on the few. We are confident, however, that the Grant Fund to be opened can in time provide adequate and rewarding returns to all villages that make a worthwhile effort, and it is believed that this form of reward will certainly be followed by other counties, raising these Competitions to a new level and opening a fresh

Vale of Glamorgan Guide

chapter both in aim and purpose which can offer material aid to the villages and encourage them to make the best of their resources and embark on projects they otherwise may not have been able to attain.

This Competition came into being to encourage the villages of the Vale to safeguard their identities, particularly against growing industrial-spread, and as a means of stimulating the inhabitants to preserve the features of their individualistic villages. It is good to know that a Vale of Glamorgan Society has also been established which will encourage those who love the countryside and are interested in the historic background of the Vale to discover for themselves much of its hitherto sparsely publicised beauty and history. Too much can hardly be done to safeguard or instruct concerning the inheritance of an area both enriched with history and natural beauty.

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★ Services covering A48, which is the main Cardiff-Swansea trunk road through the Vale (via Cowbridge), include the Cardiff-Carmarthen and Cardiff-Bridgend-Porthcawl services of Western Welsh, also the Cardiff-Swansea Express Service operated by N. & C. Luxury Coaches Limited.

★ The prospective traveller would be well advised to obtain a timetable of services from the Barry or Bridgend Offices of Western Welsh Omnibus Company Ltd., or direct from the Central Bus Station, Wood Street, Cardiff (price 1s. 3d. post free).

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