

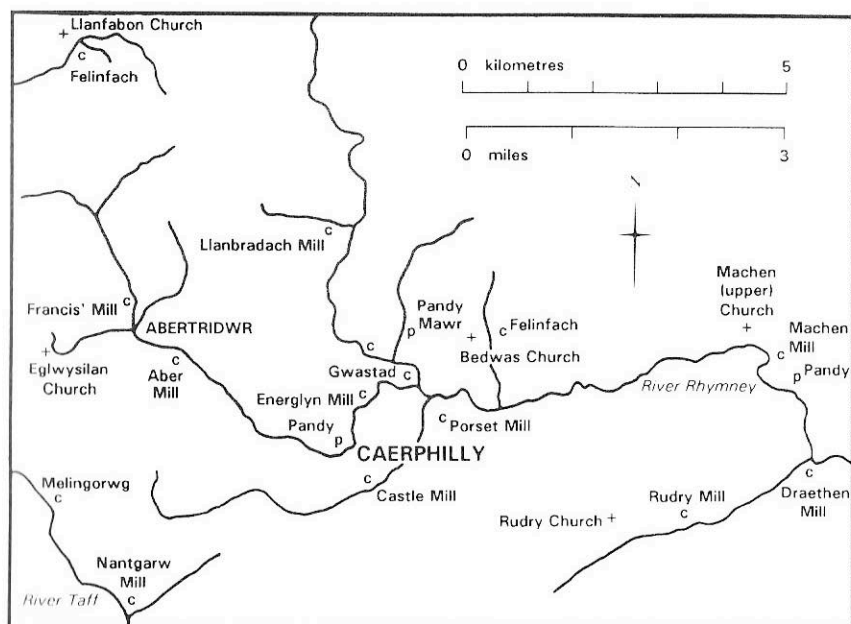
## THE CORN MILLS OF CAERPHILLY AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICT - PART III

Glyndwr G. Jones

This final article is primarily concerned with the forgotten and half-forgotten small corn mills of the area. Indeed, so little is known of these mills and so ephemeral appears to have been the life of some of them that the only evidence of their very existence is their name on some old map (figure 1).

I had heard it rumoured that one such mill once stood near the brook called Nant y Bwch just below Pandy Mawr in the parish of Bedwas. This place would appear to have been Pandy Bach and perhaps because of its name people may have thought it was once a mill but I have not been able to find any documentary evidence to support this theory. Presumably Pandy Bach took its name from the old fulling mill, Pandy Mawr, close by (figure 2).

Pandy Bach is marked on the first edition of the 1in Ordnance Survey map of 1833 but it does not appear on the 1841 Bedwas tithe map, though I have sketched in its position on my drawing of the 1841 map. I conclude from this that Pandy Bach probably ceased to exist sometime between 1833 and 1841. In Bedwas churchyard there is a gravestone to Mary, the wife of William Morgan Rees of Pandy Bach, who died in 1786 aged 42 years, also Wm. Morgan Rees who died on 29 November 1830 and Edward Rees their son who died in 1852 aged 70 years.<sup>1</sup> The gravestone does not say that William and Edward were of Pandy Bach at the time of their deaths but perhaps Pandy Bach ceased to be a dwelling after the death of William in 1830.<sup>2</sup>

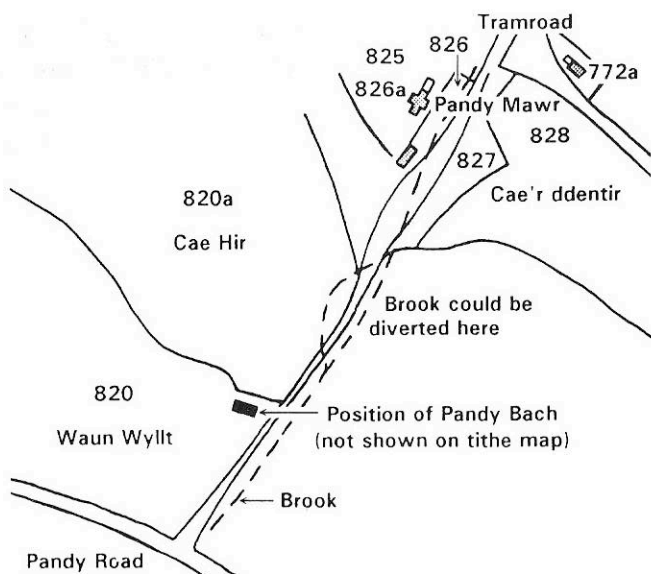


1: Sketch map of the Caerphilly area showing rivers and locations of the mills mentioned in parts I, II and III.

c = corn mill, p = pandy or fulling mill

The mills in the area are covered by Ordnance Survey 1:25 000 first series sheets ST18 Caerphilly, ST 19 Gelligaer and ST 28 Rogerstone, and their grid references are:

Caerphilly Castle Mill, ST 156 870; Energlyn Mill, ST 152 876; Pandy, Caerphilly, ST 151 876; Porset Mill, ST 166 883; Old Mill, near Pwllypant, ST 155 890; Gwastad, near Pwllypant, ST 154 891; Felinfach, Bedwas, ST 173 893; Pandy Mawr, Bedwas, ST 161 895; Pandy Bach, Bedwas, ST 160 892; Rudry Mill, ST 208 865; Draethen Mill, ST 222 874; Machen Mill, ST 217 887; Pandy, Machen, ST 222 884; Llanbradach Mill, ST 146 929; Aber Mill, Abertridwr, ST 126 891; Francis' Mill, ST 119 895; Felinfach, near Llanfabon Church, ST 109 934; Nantgarw Mill, ST 120 853; Melingorwg, Upper Boat, ST 102 874.



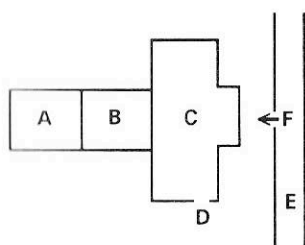
2: Positions of Pandy Mawr and Pandy Bach, from the Bedwas tithe map, 1841. Note that neither the brook nor Pandy Bach are marked on the tithe map.



3: Pandy Mawr, Bedwas, east frontage circa 1950.

There was an Edward Rees farming Pandy Mawr in 1841.<sup>3</sup> The brook could at one time be diverted above Pandy Bach (see figure 1) but the purpose of this diversion is not clear. Today a pile of stones marks the site of Pandy Bach but I am told that 60 years ago the walls of this place were still standing.<sup>4</sup>

Pandy Mawr was occupied by three families up to 1963.<sup>5</sup> The building, once a fulling mill, also at one time housed a charity school; today it is a ruin.<sup>6</sup> The photograph of Pandy Mawr (figure 3)<sup>7</sup> was taken from the road.



4: Sketch of Pandy Mawr, showing:  
*A. Governess' House, B. Charity School, C. rest of building sub-divided into homes for various families, D. old door, possibly part of the original building, E. road, F. position from where the photograph was taken. The Governess' House would appear to have been an addition, presumably when the Charity was established.*<sup>8</sup>

Finally, before dismissing the rumour that a corn mill once existed at the Pandy it should be remembered that fulling mills and corn mills were often sited on the same mill race for convenience, as was the case at Energlyn, Caerphilly, and at Machen.<sup>9</sup>

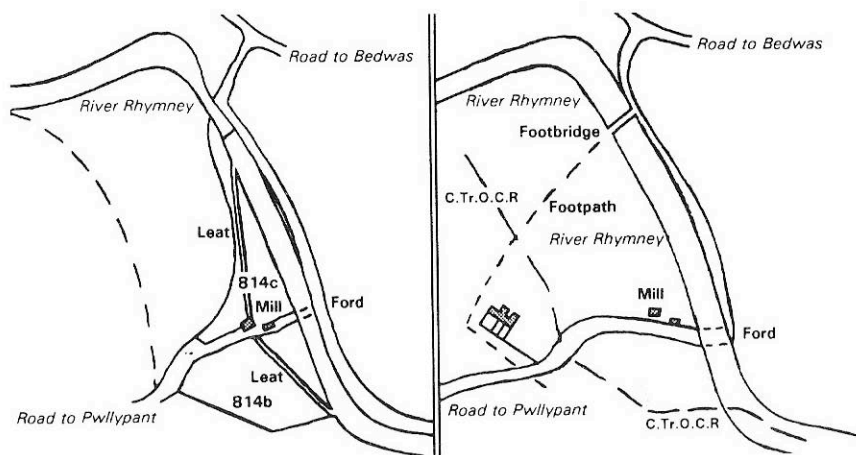
There are indications that a mill once existed in the parish of Bedwas near Ty Gwyn and Penrhiw farms. The brook that divides these farms is called Nant Cwm Hen Felin (old mill valley brook) whilst fields alongside this stream are named Waun y Hen Felin and Waun Rhiw Felin.<sup>10</sup> The Tredegar records contain a deed of 1541 which mentions the boundaries of a piece of land being leased. One meadow called 'Susanna' and a 'brook Nant Melyn Coet' are mentioned in this deed. Presumably this is Waun Susan, no.435 on the Bedwas tithe map of 1841, which has as one of its boundaries Nant Cwm Hen Felin. There are two farms named Ty Gwyn,

fairly close together, on the 1841 map; Penrhiw is no.440, Ty Gwyn is no.492 and fields Waun Rhiw Felin and Waun Susan are nos.484 and 435 respectively.<sup>11</sup>

There is also a farm called Felin Wynt (Wind Mill) at the top of the parish of Bedwas.<sup>12</sup>

## The Old Mill

This place is now known as Mill Cottage and was also known as Ford Cottage. Although situated near Pwllypant on the opposite side of the Rhymney river from Bedwas it forms part of the original parish of Bedwas. The reason for this is that the river changed its course one turbulent night. The old course of the river that formed the boundary between Glamorgan and Monmouthshire is marked as C.Tr.O.C.R. (centre track old course of river) on the 25in Ordnance Survey map of 1873 (figure 5). There are records of great floods in this area in 1606, 1708 and circa 1811. At least one local flood is mentioned in a local triban.<sup>13</sup>

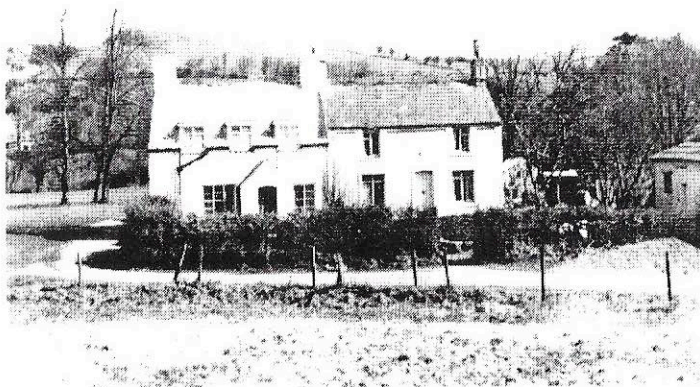


*Bedwas tithe map, 1841*

*25in O.S. map, Mon. XXVII.14, 1873*

*5: Position of the Old Mill, Bedwas*





6: *Gwastad, Caerphilly, 12 April 1969*

Whether this mill was erected before the river altered its course is doubtful, the position of the mill leat or race on the Bedwas tithe map of 1841 tends to prove this. This mill is described as the 'Old Mill' in the apportionment roll to the Bedwas tithe map. This document also shows that the mill was owned by John Davies of the nearby Glyn Rhymney farm and was leased to Henry Lewis. It would seem from this evidence that the mill had ceased to function and had presumably been converted into a dwelling place. The 1841 map shows the mill and a nearby building which may have been a shed or stable for the mill. The area around the mill is known as 'Gwastad' or in English, a level area. There are two cottages near the mill (they were formerly three dwellings) which bear the name Gwastad (figure 6) and were formerly situated just inside the old county border of Glamorgan.<sup>14</sup>

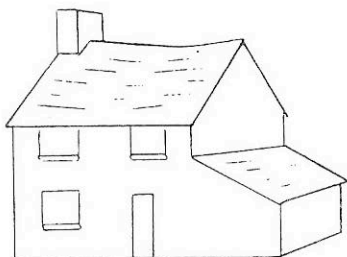
Presumably there must have been a weir across the Rhymney river to serve the mill for the level of the river can drop to a trickle in a hot dry summer.<sup>15</sup>

The 1851 census for Bedwas, entries 81 & 82, show there were coal miners living at the 'Old Mill'. They were Henry Harris, a 35-year old native of Machen, his wife Jane and a six-year old son. Also living at the mill was Evan Jones, 21 years of age, also a Machen man.<sup>16</sup> There is no record of the occupants of the mill in 1861 for this part of the census was destroyed during the 1939-45 War.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately the 1871 census has survived and under entry no.13 is 'Velin Vach' which is the old mill. Living there was William Roberts, a 42-year old coal miner, and his wife Margaret aged 30. There was a William Roberts living at the nearby Gwastad in 1841 but whether this was the same person is not clear.<sup>18,19</sup>

Wyndham Roberts an over-man at Llanbradach colliery lived at the old mill; his widow Margaret was known as Margied Robart and was a midwife.<sup>20</sup> This would appear to be the same couple who are mentioned in the 1871 census.

This Velin Vach should not be confused with the Felin Fach (the name means little mill) near Bedwas church which is entry 96 and 97 in the 1871 census.<sup>21</sup>

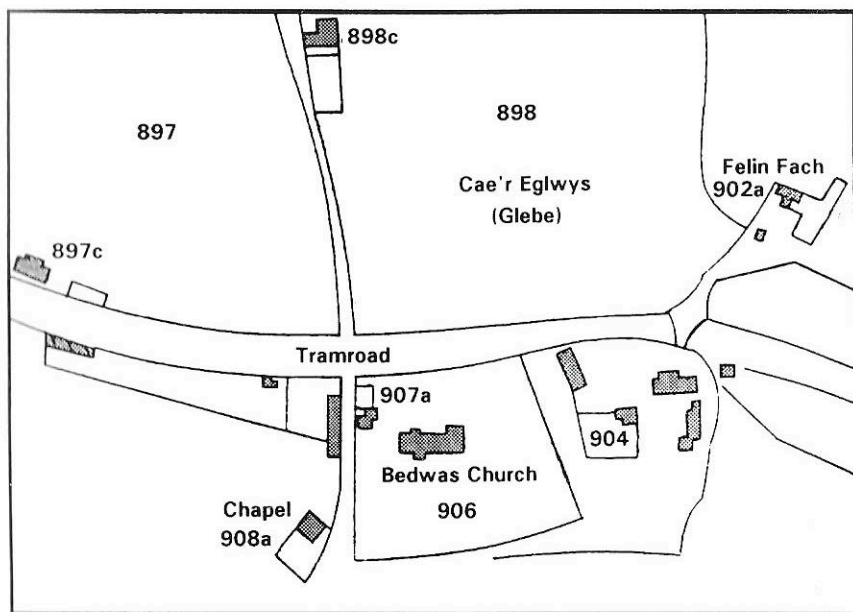
The small sketch (figure 7) shows the mill as it was, although recently extensions have been added at the back and front.<sup>22</sup> The sketch is done from memory and therefore its accuracy is suspect. When Henry Lewis held the lease of the Old Mill in 1841 it included 1 acre, 3 roods, 20 perches of land according to the Bedwas Tithe map.



*7: Sketch from memory of the Old Mill, near Pwllypant, formerly in the parish of Bedwas, as it formerly appeared. It is now known as Mill Cottage and has recent extensions at front and rear.*

## Felin Fach

There are at least four corn mills within five miles of Caerphilly which bear this name. Originally some of these mills would have had a different title, but because of their small size they often became known as Felin Fach. The remains of one of these little mills is still to be seen near the parish church at Bedwas. It is marked as no.902a on the 1841 Bedwas tithe map (figure 8) and as Felin-fach on the first edition of the 25in Ordnance Survey map.<sup>23</sup>



8: Position of Felin Fach corn mill from the Bedwas tithe map of 1841

Felin Fach obtained its power from the St Darrog's Brook which fed the mill pond just above the mill. The parish church of Bedwas is dedicated to Saint Barrog.



The age of this mill is not known, nor when it ceased to function. The stream that fed the mill is very small and perhaps in summer there would have been a considerable delay before the mill pond contained sufficient water to provide power for the wheel. Some small mills were only able to work during the winter when there was a good supply of water and some of them were used only by farmers to grind their own meal. It was the larger mills like the one at Rudry with its French burr millstones that were capable of providing fine white flour, which was a luxury to some.<sup>24</sup>

Felin Fach was once part of the estate of Doctor Joseph Davies of Ty Isaf Farm, Bedwas. Dr Davies is remembered more for his dedication to fox hunting than for his application to medicine. He was sometimes called 'Baron Bedwas'.

By 1841 the mill had been converted to a dwelling. It was occupied by John Jones, a 55-year old agricultural labourer.<sup>25</sup> The same Census shows that a miller by the John Thomas was living just above the mill. It has not been possible to pin-point John Thomas' house with certainty but it was almost certainly one of two cottages built by Evan Richards of Tycwmisha, Bedwas, in 1841 and called Pen Cae'r Eglwys. It is marked as no.898a on the Bedwas tithe map or perhaps 898d adjacent which were two cottages leased by Evan Richards from Sir Charles Morgan.<sup>26</sup> In 1861 John Thomas, then aged 50, was living with his wife Miriam at Meadsfoot Cottage in what is now Pandy Road, Bedwas. (entry no.88).<sup>27</sup> John was born in the hamlet of Van and his surname and birthplace as well as his occupation would seem to indicate that he was one of the Thomases of Porset.

I do not think that Thomas the above miller ever worked Felin Fach despite living close to the mill in 1841. The house marked 898c on the Bedwas tithe map is called Ty Melyn (Yellow House). This is the spelling used in the 1871 census under entries nos.101 and 103. The present owners of the house, Mr & Mrs Walter Lewis, state that the name which appears on the deeds of this

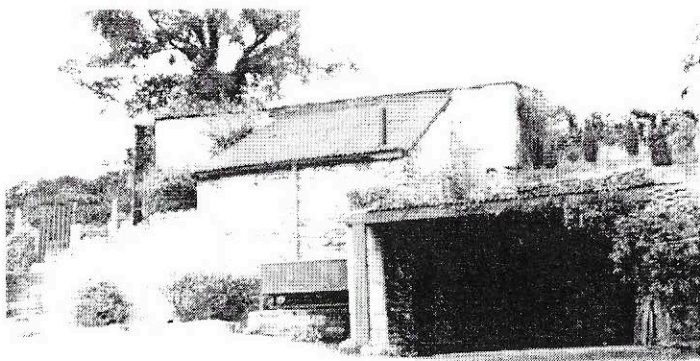
property is Ty Melin (Mill House). If this is the original name of the house it may be that the miller of Felin Fach lived there. Alternately the house may have taken its name from its proximity to the mill.<sup>28</sup> In 1841 Ty Melyn was owned and occupied by Mrs Mary Williams, a 70-year old widow whose husband was a clergyman.<sup>29</sup> For many years Ty Melyn was two cottages and became one house when they were acquired by Mr & Mrs Lewis.<sup>30</sup>

In 1851 George Llewellyn, a 40-year haulier, was living in the mill. Entry no.38 refers to it as the 'Little Mill'.<sup>31</sup> As a haulier George would possibly have been working in a local colliery and may have been related to the Llewellyn family of the nearby Llwyn Llynfa Farm.<sup>32</sup> There were also hauliers working on the tramroad, later to become the Brecon and Merthyr Railway.<sup>33</sup>

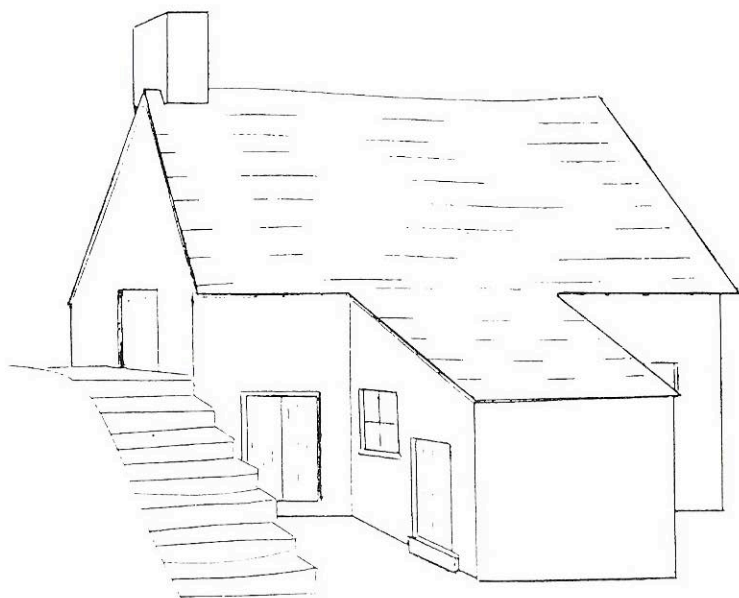
Entries 80 & 81 of the 1861 census both refer to 'Velin Fach'. It would appear that entry no.80 was the mill and living there was David Price, a 53-year old native of Cilycwm, Carmarthenshire, whose occupation is given as 'Coal Agent'.<sup>34</sup> Entry no.81 records the name George Lewis, a 57-year old haulier, who apparently lived at the nearby Balaclava Cottage.<sup>35</sup> David Price was still living in the old mill in 1871.<sup>36</sup>

A family by the name of Phipps lived at Felin Fach for some time and may have been amongst the mill's last inhabitants. The mill ceased to be a dwelling in about 1910.<sup>37</sup> Despite some local opposition the roof of the mill was removed circa 1950.<sup>38</sup> Today the lower portion of the mill remains. This has been roofed over and it is used as a store for Felin Fach Farm (figure 9).

According to 'Hanes y Bedyddwyr' (History of the Baptists) by Dr Jones of Carmarthen,<sup>39</sup> the Baptists began to hold meetings in Bedwas at the same time as meetings were held in Caerphilly. About 1798 religious meetings were held in Pwllypant and afterwards at Felin Fach, Bedwas.<sup>40</sup> Whether this was the Felin



9: *Remains of Felin Fach near Bedwas Church, 03 September 1971*



10: *Sketch of Felin Fach, Bedwas*

Fach near Bedwas Church or the other Felin Fach or Old Mill near Pwllypant is not clear.

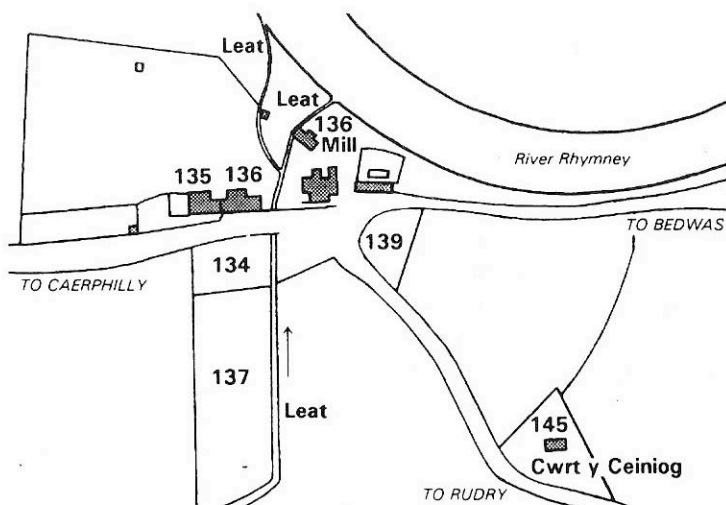
The remains of the old mill pond can still be seen in the high ground behind the remains of the mill. I am told that the water-wheel for this mill was on the right hand side of the building as you faced it for the left hand side of the mill was taken up by a flight of steps to the upper storey. When the mill became a dwelling the upper storey contained two rooms.<sup>41</sup> Felin Fach was a very small house in which to raise a family but perhaps it was no smaller than dozens of other cottages in the locality.

The enclosed sketch of Felin Fach (figure 10) has been drawn from the remains of the mill and the memories of various old Bedwas people and therefore its accuracy cannot be absolutely certain. However, enough of the mill remains and the fact that it once had a very steep stone-tiled roof gives a fair representation. It is not certain if the outhouse shown in the foreground was a continuation of the main roof of the mill but this style of roof on older buildings is common locally.

### Porset Mill

This mill, the remains of which can still be seen in the yard of Porset Farm, is an old corn mill. It is marked on the Plymouth Estate Map of 1766. Porset is situated on the old road from Caerphilly to Bedwas and it forms part of the hamlet of Van which was once attached to the parish of Bedwas. In 1766 Porset was already leased to James Price<sup>42</sup> who may have acquired it from his brother Nicholas. Later James' brother Charles appears to have lived there for some time.<sup>43</sup>

Charles Ward, a tanner, lived at Porset before the above Prices. He appears to have died in 1731 leaving an estate valued at £668, a considerable sum in those days.<sup>44</sup> No connection between the

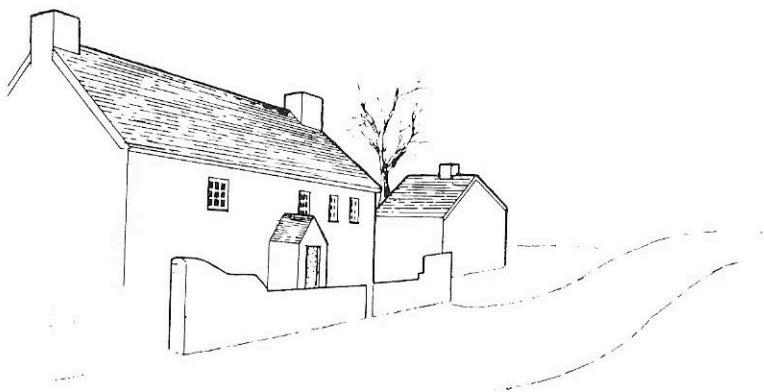


11: Porset Farm and Mill, from the Van tithe map, 1846

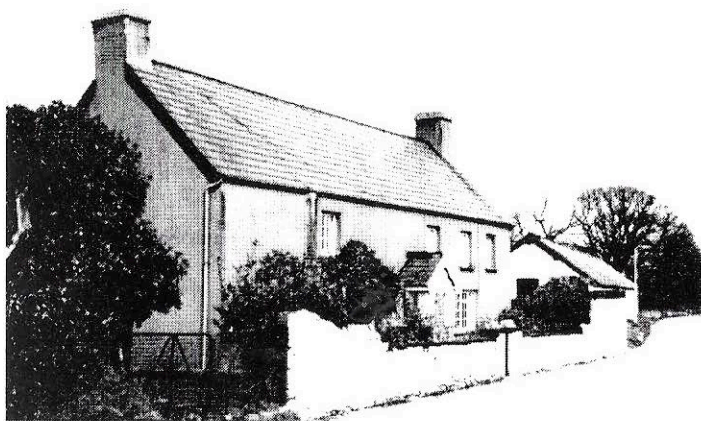
Ward and Price families has been discovered, except that both families were connected with tanning. It seems that a large family by the name of Ward lived at Pandy Mawr, Bedwas. John Ward, a church warden of Bedwas church, died in 1701.<sup>45</sup> I have not been able to trace a connection between John Ward and Charles Ward.

Whether the Thomas family of Porset took over the property from the Prices has yet to be proved but during the tax year 1786-87 John Thomas was assessed six shillings (30p) tax for the six windows in his house at Porset.<sup>46</sup> John Thomas was again taxed in 1790, this time for land. The valuation of his land in that year was £5 5s (£5.25) on which John paid £1 1s (£1.05) tax.<sup>47</sup> Both above documents mention only one Porset, presumably the present Porset Farm, with one occupant. In 1841 John Thomas of Porset was described as a miller; he was born circa 1779 and was presumably the son of John Thomas whose name appears on the Land Tax assessment for 1790.<sup>48</sup> The John Thomas whose name appears in the 1841 census died in 1850 aged 71 years.<sup>49</sup>





*12: Sketch of Porset Farm around 1900 taken from an old photograph<sup>49</sup>*



*13: Porset Farm, Caerphilly. 12 April 1972*

The Van tithe map of 1846 shows that John Thomas was still living at Porset but this map is somewhat confusing. The apportionment roll belonging to this map shows that John was in possession of 76 acres of land at Porset together with no.136, which is listed as 'Homestead Mill and Croft'. This homestead would appear to have been the house or cottage which stood alongside the mill leat next door to the present Porset Farm and was removed early this century to make way for the present cowshed. If this is so then presumably John lived here at this time not in the present Porset Farm which appears from the 1846 map to have been two dwellings (figures 11, 12 & 13). The Public Record Office copy of the Van tithe map appears, even upon close examination, to have two number 133s.

This confusion in numbering led to the statement that John Thomas occupied a half of the present Porset farmhouse.<sup>50</sup> It would appear that either one of the number 133s is perhaps a mistake and should read '135' or that it is a badly drawn '135'. Number 133 on the 1846 map is listed as 'Homestead' and is part of the present Porset farmhouse. It was in the hands of Edward Lewis from Rudry, who also leased 33 acres of land, most of it alongside the Porset Brook adjoining Bedwas Road. No.135 on the apportionment roll is listed as 'House and Garden' and was the home of Rowland Jones, mentioned in the 1841 census as a maltster aged 70 years.<sup>51</sup> It would appear that Rowland Jones lived in part of the present Porset farmhouse, sharing the same roof as Edward Lewis, and that John Thomas lived next door. This seems a little odd when one remembers it was John's father who was taxed for Porset in 1790. John Thomas is listed as a miller in the 1841 census but presumably he also farmed his 76 acres of land adjoining Edward Lewis' 33 acres. It would be interesting to know how the farm buildings were shared at Porset, and whether Rowland Jones produced malt at Porset or worked at the nearby Gwern y domen Farm, which also made malt at one time. There was a maltster living in at Gwern y domen Farm in 1851.<sup>52</sup>

John Thomas' son Isaac was living near Porset at 'Cwrt Ginog' (Cwrt y Ceiniog or Penny Court?)<sup>53</sup> in 1841 with his wife Mary.<sup>54</sup> Isaac was a young man at this time. He was born circa 1815,<sup>55</sup> his wife Mary being some five years his junior.<sup>56</sup> On the death of his father in 1850 Isaac appears to have taken over his father's share of Porset for in 1851 he is stated to be living at 'Porsed' and employing three labourers, one miller and three female servants. By this date Edward Lewis was aged 67 years but he was still living at Porset and farming his land.<sup>57</sup> Isaac, a farmer in 1841, may have farmed Porset, although he was living at 'Cwrt Ginog' at the time. By 1861 Isaac's acreage at Porset had increased from 76 to 110 acres. Presumably he had acquired Edward Lewis' 33 acres and may have taken over Porset Farm as his dwelling at the same time. In 1861 Isaac was still employing a miller, which indicates there was plenty of work for the mill, and four labourers.<sup>58</sup> Isaac died in 1883 aged 68 years and he is buried with other members of his family in Bedwas churchyard.<sup>59</sup>

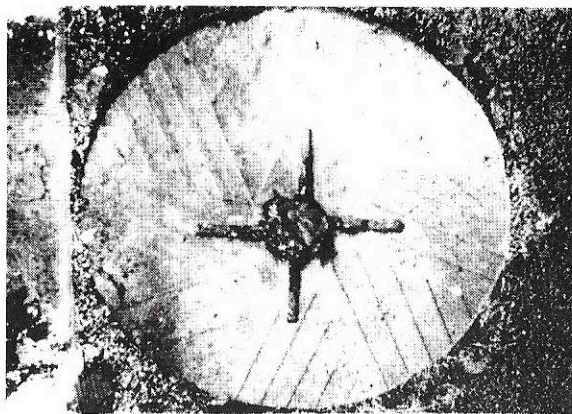
If the miller employed by Isaac Thomas of Porset was the John Thomas mentioned earlier, he would not have had far to walk to Porset from his home in Pand y Road. It is not known when Porset Mill ceased to work; Isaac seems to have worked the mill until his death for he was at 'Possoth Mill' in 1880 according to Slater's Directory for that year. John the grandson of Isaac was 18 years old when his grandfather died and he told his daughter that he broke the millstone. Whether this was during Isaac's lifetime or after his death is not known.<sup>60</sup> The mill does not seem to have been working by December 1887, for at that time barley was taken from Cwm Farm to Energlyn Mill to be ground. Normally the local mill would have been used.<sup>61</sup>

Isaac's son Henry did not follow his father in farming Porset. According to his grand-daughter, Henry was not a hard worker and was not very interested in the farm.<sup>62</sup> Henry Thomas lived in the cottage that adjoined Porset Farm.

## Technical Details

The leat for Porset Mill commenced at Porset Brook, some considerable distance away from the mill. The making of this mill-race must have been a costly undertaking. The junction of the leat with the stream was alongside the present Bedwas Road near the site of the old Rhos Llantwit Colliery and gasworks.<sup>63, 64</sup> Whilst this colliery was working this leat appears from the map to have been confined, for a short distance, in a culvert.<sup>65</sup> The leat crossed the fields behind Porset Row and then disappeared under the road to re-emerge in the yard of Porset Farm and, after passing the site of the mill, it crossed a field named Berllan Isha and joined the Rhymney River. The mill was situated high above the river on a glacial moraine.<sup>66</sup>

The one remaining millstone at Porset, like the stone at Llanbradach Mill, is manufactured from Old Red Sandstone Quartz conglomerate (figure 14). This rock outcrops in a ridge which runs



14: Porset Mill: upper millstone. 12 April 1972



between the Wenallt (above Rhiwbina, Cardiff), via the Traveller's Rest, Caerphilly, and Lower Machen, thence north-eastward to Pontypool.<sup>67</sup> So similar are the Porset and Llanbradach millstones that they could have been made by the same hand locally.<sup>68</sup> The millstone formed a step to the garage which was constructed from the old mill, and can be seen in this position in the photograph (figure 15). This upper millstone is 50in (1270mm) in diameter by 4in (101mm) thick and the central hole is 8½in (216mm) in diameter.

The remains of the corn mill still stand in the yard of Porset Farm. At some time in the past the mill has been converted or rebuilt into a garage. Perhaps initially this garage was a coach-house, the conversion taking place perhaps early this century when the cottage was removed and the present new cowsheds were built.

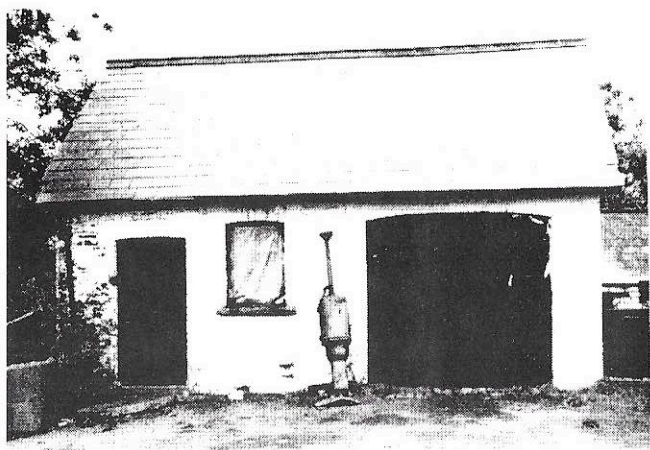
There is a considerable fall in the level of the ground at the mill site, which is, of course, common with a mill. The present remains of the mill show a single storey from the front but two storeys at the rear, the lower storey being cut into the bank (figure 16).

In the lower portion of the mill the outline of the wheel arch, which allowed the shaft of the water-wheel to enter the mill, can be seen. This has now been blocked up by stone. This arch is situated on the left hand side of the mill facing the river and indicates the position of the water-wheel as does the water supply leat which is marked on the Van tithe map and Ordnance Survey map.<sup>68</sup>

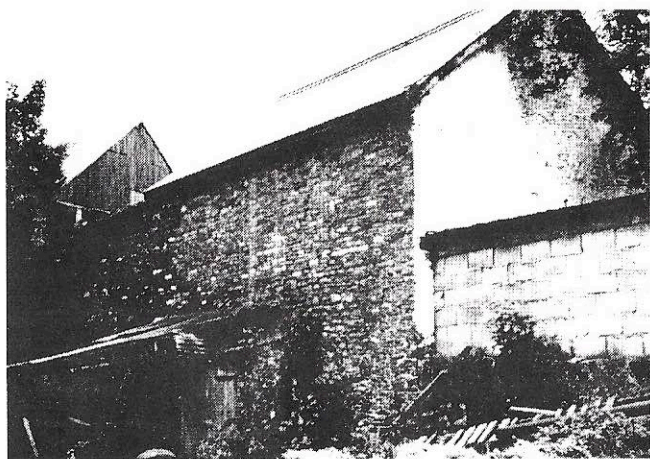
Inspection of both Porset and Felin Fach, near Bedwas Church, indicates that both corn mills were driven by overshot water-wheels.

Porset Farm still remains. Some of the windows of the farm were enlarged when the present owners, Mr & Mrs Tydir-James, bought the farm in 1966, but outside it remains much the same as I remember it as a boy when I lived opposite.





*15: Porset corn mill, Caerphilly: front view. 01 September 1971*



*16: Porset corn mill, Caerphilly: rear view. 01 September 1971*

The last farmer to farm Porset was Mr W.E. Williams ('Eddie Porset') who was born at Porset about 1900. He was the grandson of Ann Price, the widow of William Price who had farmed Porset after the death of Isaac Thomas. The Prices came to Porset from Mynydd Mayo Farm, Caerphilly. This farm is half way between Groeswen and Abertridwr. William was related to the Prices of the Bowls Inn, Penyrheol, Caerphilly.<sup>69</sup> Mr Williams retired from farming through ill health in the autumn of 1956 and left the farm to live in Caerphilly. The farm was sold to Mr W. Jones, a butcher, who sold most of the farmland to the old Caerphilly Urban District Council for housing. Today the Lansbury Park and Castle Park estates cover most of the land that once was Porset Farm.<sup>70, 71</sup>

In 1956 whilst Porset was still being farmed, the mill leat which still ran through the farm yard had by this time become badly polluted. This pollution was caused by the tar plant, near Caerphilly railway station, discharging its effluent into the Porset Brook which fed the mill-race. Fortunately this anti-social activity was stopped.<sup>72</sup> At this time also the bottom half of the mill building was used as a tractor shed and this tractor never required anti-freeze, even in the coldest weather for the old mill building lower portion never got very cold.<sup>73</sup>

During the time when the Thomas family lived at Porset, Dr William Price, the cremationist, used to walk into farm's kitchen and help himself to food if there was no one about. When the farmer and his family returned from the fields they were too frightened of the doctor and his eccentric ways to protest.<sup>74, 75</sup>

At the time of writing, the small circular building which once stood in the garden of Porset Farm is only discernible by its foundations.<sup>76</sup> In 1956 half of this beehive shaped building was still standing.<sup>77</sup> This stone building was probably a Welsh pigsty and they were once fairly common.<sup>78</sup> I am told also that the leat still runs under the surface of the yard at Porset and that it has been piped in places.<sup>79</sup>

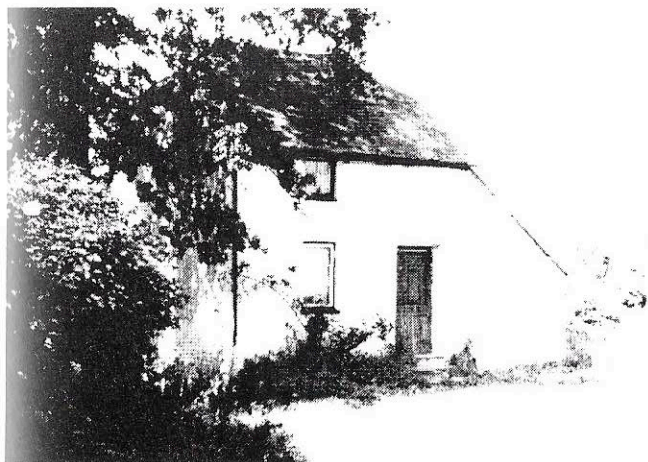
It is curious why there were so many little mills. At least one place is named after such a mill, this being Felinfach in the next valley. Perhaps it was the ambition of every 'gentleman' farmer to own a mill on his estate. Some of these small mills flourished for a while by grinding the farmers' own grist and perhaps that of their neighbours as well. Where the farmer was also a miller as at Machen<sup>80</sup> the mill continued, but where a miller had to be employed the mill became expensive and the building was converted to other use. Originally the local mills supplied a local need, though some of the larger corn mills like the one at Energlyn, Caerphilly, supplied a wide area.<sup>81</sup> The building of large steam driven mills and the import of cheap flour from North America finished many of the small mills by the 1880s, though some of the larger corn mills like those at Rudry and Energlyn were able to continue work long after this date.<sup>82</sup>

The mill with the sound of its running water-wheel was once commonplace, but alas most of these local small industries have disappeared as have many of the mill buildings. One mill however has managed to survive into the 1970s and this is at Gelligroes, near Pontllanfraith.<sup>83</sup>

### Porset Toll Gate Cottage

Although the toll cottage has no direct connection with corn milling, it is included here for its links with Porset Farm.

The cottage (figure 17) was situated near the farm, on the opposite bank of the Porset Brook which is the boundary between the hamlet of Van and the parish of Eglwysilan. Originally it was the home of the toll-gate keeper who was responsible for the collection of tolls on the section of turnpike road between Caerphilly and Bedwas. Most of the keepers were from outside the area, some originating from Somerset.<sup>84</sup>



*17: Porset Toll Gate Cottage, Caerphilly, in 1956*

Although Porset Toll Gate Cottage was in the parish of Eglwysilan, its garden was situated just across the small bridge (sometimes called Pont Ty Merchant after the nearby farm, or Port Porset) in the hamlet of Van. This garden, marked as no.131 on the 1846 Van tithe map, was leased to William Rosser. The 1841 census shows that 'Wm. Roser' was keeper of the Van toll-gate (just below the ruins of the Van) in that year whilst Henry Rees was living in the toll-gate cottage at Porset. In 1861 and 1871 Henry Randell, who was a road labourer, lived in the Porset cottage whilst his wife Ann is listed as 'Toll Collector'.<sup>85, 86</sup>

John Thomas, grandson of Isaac of Porset Farm, and Anne his wife lived at the toll-gate cottage from 1892, by which time the road toll system had been demolished,<sup>87</sup> until John died in 1950 and Anne in 1955.<sup>88</sup>

The cottage was sold in 1956 to a Miss Minnie Fitzgerald who was a member of a travelling show company. She used the cottage as a store for a while and the field near the cottage was used as winter quarters for the showmen's trailers. Miss Fitzgerald did not keep the cottage for very long and she sold it to a Mr Lee who in turn sold it to Mr Boobyer. Some time during this period the cottage was let to family for a very short time. Mr Boobyer later sold the property to Mr Rhys Edwards, who obtained planning permission to build two bungalows on the land belonging to the cottage. The cottage, which was left empty, was gradually destroyed by vandals until it had to be demolished sometime about 1958 or 1960. At the time of writing only the base of the cottage remains, which measures 22 feet (6.71m) by 16 feet (4.88m). There is a photograph of the ruins published in the South Wales Echo newspaper early in 1969.<sup>89</sup>

In the catalogue of the Goodrich (of Energlyn) Estate sale for Saturday 7 October 1905, 'to be held at Cardiff', lot 17 is described as the Porset Toll Gate Cottage with 1 acre 1 rood 29 perches of land let to Mr John Thomas on an annual 1st of May tenancy at a rent of £4 per annum. Close of pasture lands forms part of Tir Merchant Farm<sup>90</sup> which was let to Mr John Lewis.<sup>91</sup>

When I was a boy I often noticed the half-door of the cottage was open in summer, presumably to admit light and air. The cottage had three rooms, a living room, one bedroom and a small room, called the pantry, which was two steps down from the living room. This pantry contained a small fireplace and this room was only large enough for a table and dresser. At the back of the living room fireplace was a large oven which was heated by burning wood. When the oven reached the right temperature the hot embers were raked out of the oven and food to be cooked was inserted and the door of the oven was sealed with mud. According to Mrs Thomas, 'the bread baked beautifully'.<sup>92</sup>



## Notes

1. I am grateful to Mr Jocelyn G.Davies, Cwm Farm, Bedwas, for this information
2. Wm. Morgan Rees was assessed £1 0s 3d for the Poor Rate in 1802 on a valuation of £4 10s 0d. In 1813 he was taxed 3s 6d for a house (see note 1)
3. 1841 census, Public Record Office (PRO), London
4. see note 1
5. see note 1
6. Although Pandy Mawr had not been used as a fulling mill for several hundred years the field next to it, 828 on the tithe map, is called 'Cae'r Ddientir' (Tenter Field). For the history of the charity school at Pandy Mawr see 'Caerphilly' (the Journal of the Caerphilly Local History Society), No.3, 1971, p.26
7. Photograph was supplied by Mrs A.Davies-Jones, Trefaldwyn, Bedwas.
8. The Alldworth documents relating to the school at Pandy and other places are to be found at the Glamorgan Record Office (GRO), Cardiff, and at the Bristol Record Office. For the shape of the Pandy see no.826a Bedwas tithe map, 1841, also included sketch map. See also 'Caerphilly' No.3, 1971, pp.26-35, for a history of the Alldworth Charity. Note 3, p.55, field no.1074 on Bedwas tithe map is also Cae Ddientir (Tenter Field)
9. See 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.2, 1974, pp.14-16 & 18-20
10. see note 1
11. These names would appear to be old
12. see note 1
13. 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.3, 1976, p.36
14. The county boundaries were altered from 1st April 1974
15. 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.1, 1973, p.9: F.Grose's account of 1775
16. 1851 census, PRO
17. 1861 census, PRO
18. 1871 census, PRO
19. Eglwysilan tithe map, 1841, no.1508
20. see note 1
21. see note 18
22. see note 1
23. Sheet Monmouthshire XXVII.14/Glamorgan XXIX.14, surveyed 1873, 1875, 1878
24. 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.2, 1974, pp.20-22
25. see note 3
26. see note 1
27. see note 17
28. I am grateful to Mr & Mrs W T Davies, Felin Fach Farm, Bedwas, for this information
29. see note 3
30. see note 1
31. see note 16
32. see note 1
33. Hauliers on the tramroads had a poor reputation with some people. See the comment made by Augustus Morgan, the Rural Dean of Machen, in the 1847 Report of the Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales, in 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.1,1973, p.19
34. see note 17
35. see note 28
36. see note 18
37. see note 28
38. I am grateful to Mrs A.E.Davies-Jones, Trefaldwyn, Bedwas, for this information

39. The author's name is David Jones; I am told he was a doctor but I have not found out what subject his doctorate was in. The full title of his book is '*Hanes y Bedyddwyr yn Neheubarth Cymru*', published in 1839. The Pwllpant and Felinfach extract is on p.633
40. see note 28
41. see note 28
42. GRO: D/D Pl.3, map drawn by Edward John Eyre. Porset is on p.19
43. '*Cronicl Caerffili*' No.3, 1976, pp.18 & 19
44. '*Morgannwg*' (Journal of the Glamorgan History Society) vol. XIX (1975), p.33
45. see note 38
46. Window Tax, hamlet of Energlyn, 1786-87; GRO
47. Land Tax, 1790; GRO
48. see note 3
49. I am grateful to Mrs E.Thomas, 37 Celyn Avenue, Caerphilly, for this information. Mrs Thomas is the great grand-daughter of Mr I.Thomas of Porset who died in 1883.
50. '*Cronicl Caerffili*' No.3, 1976, p.35
51. see note 3
52. see note 16
53. There are other theories about the origin of this name. See H.P.Richards, '*A History of Caerphilly*', 1975, p.153
54. see note 3
55. see note 49
56. see note 3
57. see note 16
58. see note 17
59. see note 49
60. see note 49
61. see note 1; Mr Davies' grandfather took barley from Cwm Farm to Energlyn Mill at that time
62. see note 49
63. see note 53, p.119
64. The pumping shaft(?) of the Rhos Llantwit Colliery remained visible until about 1950 close to Bedwas Road. I believe there is now a garage on the site. The Porset Brook flowed between the pit shaft and Bedwas Road. Near the shaft stood the gas works with its blue gasometer, but it had long ceased to produce gas (see note 63). The gasometer was in use up to about 1958 when it was demolished. At the time of writing only the gas works manager's house (called Malvern House) remains to mark the position of these works.
65. 25in Ordnance Survey map, sheet Glamorganshire XXXVII.2, 1st edition, 1875
66. I am grateful to Mr E.Evans, Assistant Keeper, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, for this information.
67. see note 66
68. '*Cronicl Caerffili*' No.2, 1975, p.23 & No.3, 1976, p.3
69. '*Cronicl Caerffili*' No.3, 1976, p.41
70. see note 1
71. I am grateful to Mr & Mrs Tydir-James of Porset Farm for this information.
72. But streams in the area are still dirty; see '*The News*' newspaper, 21 May 1976, p.1
73. see note 1
74. see note 49
75. Dr Price's ancestors lived at Porset. See '*Cronicl Caerffili*' No.3, 1976, pp.12-52
76. see note 71
77. see note 1
78. Iorwerth C.Peate, '*Tradition and Folk Life, a Welsh View*', 1972, plate 5 & p.34; also Fred Hando, 'Monmouthshire Sketchbook' No.779, in the '*Weekly Argus*' newspaper, 19 June 1969, published in Newport.

79. see note 71
80. 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.2, 1974, pp.18-19, Machen Mill
81. 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.2, 1974, pp.14-16, Energlyn Mill
82. 'Cronicl Caerffili' No.2, 1974, pp.20-22, Rudry Mill
83. 'Caerphilly Leader' newspaper, 14 September 1973, p.8
84. see the various censuses
85. see note 17
86. see note 18
87. For information on the Porset Toll Gate see J.H.Mathews (ed), 'Cardiff Records' Volume 3 (of six, published between 1898 to 1905), p.266 and other pages
88. see note 49
89. see note 49
90. 'Ty (=house) Merchant' on some OS maps, but here as 'Tir (=land) Merchant'
91. I am grateful to Mr H.Simons, 19 Corbett Crescent, Caerphilly, for showing me the catalogue
92. see note 49

## Post script

Since the completion of the above, further information has come to light:

On page 27, a William Roberts was mentioned as living at Gwastad in 1841. This could not have been the William Roberts who was living at the Old Mill in 1871, for the 1841 census shows that Wm. Roberts of Gwastad was aged 30 years. Perhaps the William of Gwastad was the father of William of Old Mill; he would have been a young father.

The Wyndham Roberts mentioned on the same page is perhaps not the same person as Wm. Roberts but his son who is listed as 'Windham Henry' in the 1871 census and who was three years of age at that time.

Further information about the geology of the Caerphilly area can be found in '*Geology of the South Wales Coalfield, Part 1: The Country around Newport*', 1899, p.81.