

1: Map of Llanbradach Mill and its surrounds taken from the Llanfabon tithe map of 1842. Approximate scale: $\text{---} = 528 \text{ feet (161m)}$

Inset: Enlarged sketch of Llanbradach Mill and the Smithy. The Mill House is sometimes known as Mill Farm.

THE CORN MILLS OF CAERPHILLY AND THE SURROUNDING DISTRICT - PART II

Glyndwr G. Jones

Llanbradach Mill

The date of erection of the first corn mill at Llanbradach is not known. This mill is also sometimes called the Ystrad Mill.

William Thomas, who died before the year 1664, left his Caerphilly lease to his son Lewis for life. The third son of Lewis held the lease of the Caerphilly grist mill.¹ In 1676 William Thomas of Llanbradach held a moiety of a mill and also a moiety of a tucking or fulling mill situated near the castle at Caerphilly.² Although this lease was for 99 years it was renewed on 20 June 1691.³ How long the Thomas family continued to lease the Caerphilly grist mill is not known, but presumably as long as they held this lease there would be little need for a grist mill on their estate at Llanbradach.

The Llanbradach Demesne appears to have been improved when it was in the hands of William Thomas. His will was drawn up in 1689 and proved in 1692.⁴ There is no evidence that the mill at Llanbradach was erected in William's lifetime and the first positive evidence found for its existence is Emanuel Bowen's large map of south Wales published in 1729 where it is marked as 'Llanbradock Mill'.⁵ It is also marked as 'Llanbradach Mill' on Thomas Kitchin's map of Glamorgan dated 1754.⁶

There are early references to millers in the parish of Llanfabon but there is no indication which mill they worked. Abraham Lewis, widower, married Alice Phillip of Merthyr on 8 August 1698. Lewis' occupation is given as miller of Llanfabon.⁷

William Morrice drew a map of the Llanbradach Demesne in 1763 for its owner William Thomas.⁸ This shows the position of the mill and presumably the miller's house, and also a small square near the mill. In 1795 another map of the estate was drawn for Thomas Thomas by Thomas Morrice.⁹ On this map the square near the mill is marked as 'kiln', presumably a drying kiln for corn similar to the one that once stood near Rudry Mill.¹⁰ The map also notes that the mill and the two fields behind the mill were leased, but the miller's name is not given. The two fields leased with the mill are numbered 26 & 27 and contained between them 4 acres 0 roods 39 perches in Statute Measure or 1a.3r.14p. in Customary Measure.¹¹

The 1841 Census for the parish of Llanfabon gives the first fairly full details of occupants of Llanbradach Mill and the few houses near by.¹² Ten



years later the same miller mentioned in the 1841 Census was still there.¹³ His name is given as Thomas Richards and his age is stated as 69. Thomas was a native of the parish of Llanfabon and in addition to running the mill he farmed 60 acres of land with the aid of two labourers. Also living at the mill house were two of Thomas' sons, William aged 32 years and John aged 12 years. The fact that Thomas and all his children had been born in the parish of Llanfabon may indicate that Thomas may have held the lease of the mill for a long time.

Thomas Richards in his will dated 15 September 1851 bequeathed to his sons Evan, David and John and to his daughter Margaret, wife of Thomas Thomas, five shillings each.¹⁴ To his son William he left for his lifetime his estate, both personal and leasehold. Thomas Evans of Troedyrhiw and Thomas Lewis of the Duffryn, both neighbours, were appointed trustees by Thomas Richards to 'overlook' William. Thomas the miller died in June 1854 and by the time his will had been proved at Llandaff on 15 September 1854 William Richards had been declared an imbecile.¹⁵

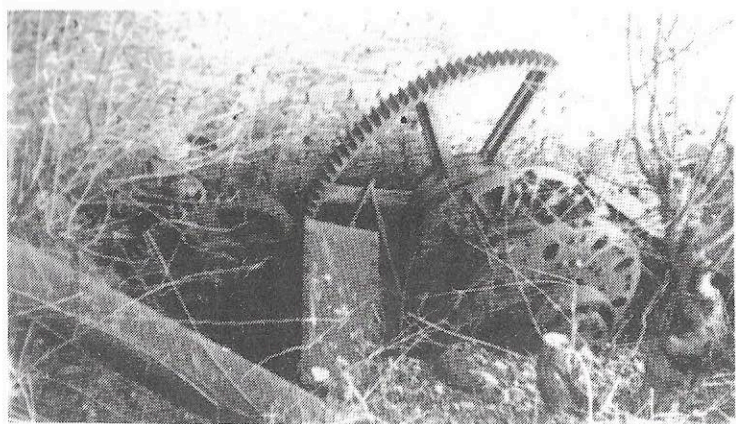
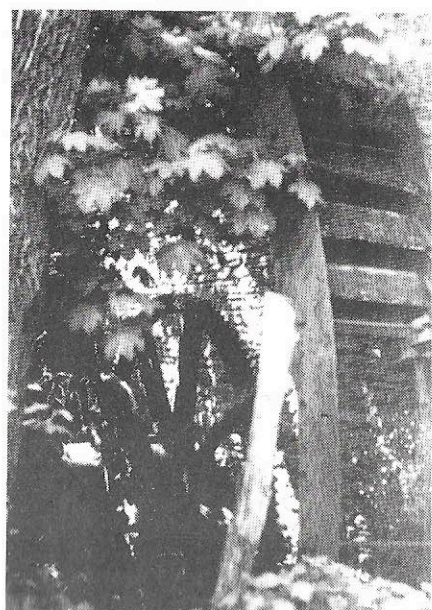
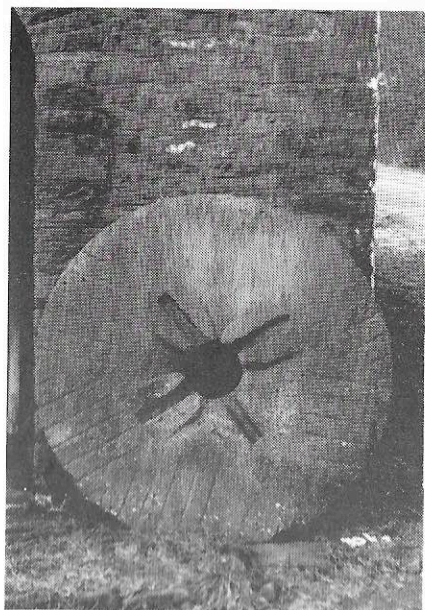
In 1861 Thomas Lewis, a 42 year old miller and a native of Llanbrynmair, Carmarthenshire, was living at the mill. Thomas' wife Rachel was born in the parish of Mynyddislwyn whilst most of their children, including a five month old son, were born in the parish of Gelligaer which may indicate that Thomas Lewis was a new tenant of the Llanbradach Mill.¹⁶ Thomas Lewis was still at the mill in 1871, but it would seem that there was little future in small local mills as Thomas' eldest son Henry is described in the census for that year as a miner.¹⁷

The various census returns from 1841 onwards refer to the mill at Llanbradach as the Ystrad Mill. Mrs Elizabeth Ann Jones, nee Lewis, was born at the mill, then known as Mill Farm, in 1902.¹⁸ The mill was not then working but her mother could remember it working in the 1880s. Mrs Jones' mother lived until she was five years old at the Glyncoch Mill, Pontypridd. This mill, like the Llanbradach Mill, belonged to the Thomas family. Glyncoch Mill was worked by Thomas Richards, the grandfather of Mrs Jones. Unfortunately Mr Richards was killed at the age of 52 through the failure of the assistant miller to engage a safety device on the water-wheel. Mrs Richards was left with five young children and after this tragic event moved into part of the mill house at Llanbradach.¹⁹

2: (opposite, top) Llanbradach Mill (Photo: G. G. Jones, 20 February 1968)

3: (opposite, centre) Back of mill with remains of water-wheel, 1936

4: (opposite, bottom) Mill house, left, old smithy and smith's house, right
(Photo: G. G. Jones, 20 February 1968)



5: (top, left) Upper millstone, Llanbradach Mill
(Photo: G. G. Jones, 20 February 1968)

6: (top, right) Remains of water-wheel circa 1936
(Photo by permission of V. C. Hardacre)

7: (bottom) Hub and gearing of water-wheel
(Photo: G. G. Jones, 20 February 1968)

It is not certain if there was any family connection between the Thomas Richards mentioned above and the Thomas Richards of Llanbradach mill who died in 1854.

Llanbradach Mill seems to have ceased to function in the 1880s, but the farm that was associated with it continued. Also attached to the Mill Farm was a cottage called Ty Isha which still stands unoccupied on the main road to Caerphilly.²⁰

The 1842 Llanfabon tithe map shows that an estimated 45 acres of land was being farmed with the mill, some 15 acres less than is reported in the 1851 Census.²¹

The Mill Building

The Morrice estate maps show the mill as a rectangular building. The first edition of the OS 1/2500 map surveyed in 1873 and 1878 shows the building in its present L-shaped form.²² In about 1923 a firm of builders from Pontypridd, whose name appeared to be Seaton, renovated the mill.²³ The mill was probably re-roofed at this time with its stone slates and, on inspection of the upper windows, the roof appears to have been lowered, possibly during this renovation. The arches in the lower part of the building may also date from this time. It is not known when the machinery inside the mill was removed, presumably to increase storage space for the farm, but the water-wheel and its external gearing was preserved, for there is sometimes an attachment towards the old picturesque.

Technical Details

The remains of the mill's water-wheel and the external machinery are of an unusual design. There seems to be no comparable machinery elsewhere, and dating of the remains is uncertain.²⁴ The water-wheel is of the pitch-back type, 26 feet in diameter and 25 inches wide, fitted with 80 wooden floats. The shroud or outer rim of the water-wheel consists of 20 cast-iron segments, ten forming one side of the wheel, with integral slots for the floats. The rims are supported by 20 wooden spokes each $8\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in section. There are ten spokes to each side of the wheel and these are bolted to the rim segments. Attached to the cast-iron axle, which is 24 inches in diameter, is a pair of flanches or flanged wheels each with ten sockets for joining the spokes to the axle. These can clearly be seen in illustration 7, and they measure 62 inches in diameter by 5 inches in width. The large geared wheel seen in the photograph and mounted on the axle is 9 feet in diameter, 6 inches wide and has 112 teeth. This wheel in a normal mill layout would be known as a pit-wheel and would be inside the mill building. A smaller gear wheel or pinion is driven by this 'pit-wheel' and is 50 inches in diameter, 6 inches wide and has 54 teeth. The pinion is mounted on a 12-inch diameter shaft, which passes through the wall of the

mill. The photograph also shows a rectangular iron box, now dislodged; originally this was bolted on to a 12-inch diameter iron pipe which carried water from the pond behind the mill and it controlled the flow of water to the wheel. The iron pipe can be seen in the lower left hand corner of the photograph where it has fallen.

No other machinery of the mill remains except for one upper millstone, made from local quartz conglomerate, similar to that which outcrops near the Traveller's Rest, Thornhill, Caerphilly.²⁵ The millstone is 54 inches in diameter and $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches thick at its centre. One of the Llanbradach millstones was removed some years ago to Y Ynis, Tongwynlais, then the home of Robert Rickards, Agent for the Thomas Estate.²⁶

The early water-wheels of the mill were of course much smaller than the present wheel and they would have been made of wood. There is some indication of this in the mill pond wall where the remains of an old sluice or exit for the water to the wheel can be seen lower than the present exit.

At the time of writing, the Llanbradach Mill water-wheel is once more being erected by John West, the local blacksmith, and Major G. M. T. Linsay, the present owner of the Llanbradach Estate.

The Smithy

Mention should also be made of the blacksmith's shop that stands next door. The exact age of this building is not known. It does not appear on the estate plans of Llanbradach Demesne drawn up by the Morrises in 1763 and 1795 although this is not in itself sufficient proof to deny its existence at that date. The Land Tax for 1798 shows that Florence Lewis was assessed 7-shillings and 11 pence for Ystrad and an old smith's shop. The owner of the land leased was Thomas Thomas Esq. of Llanbradach. Was this old smith's shop the one that still stands today next to Llanbradach Mill?²⁷ Was the Ystrad, leased by Thomas Thomas to Florence Lewis, the old Ystrad House near the mill which has now been rebuilt?

The 1841 Census refers to the area around the mill as 'Cwm y felin' (Mill Valley). Near to the mill stood a cottage known as Tai'r Felin and this is perhaps the cottage marked as no. 233 on the Llanfabon tithe map. In 1841 this cottage was occupied by Wm. Jones aged 70 and his 65 year old wife Joan. Nearby lived Lewis Jones the blacksmith.²⁸ Lewis' house is called 'Ty'r Efail' (Smith's House) in the 1851 Census returns and is marked as no. 232 on the tithe map; his age is given as 49 in 1851 and he was a native of Llanfabon. His son William, then aged 19 and born in the neighbouring parish of Eglwysilan, was also working at the smithy in 1851.²⁹ Also living at Tai'r felin in that year was Jane Jones, a 67 year old pauper. Despite the difference in name, she was probably the widow of William Jones mentioned above. Jane knitted stockings which were sold at the markets and fairs held on the Twyn, Caerphilly.³⁰ Lodging at Tai'r Felin in 1851

were two stone masons and a labourer. These people were engaged in rebuilding Ystrad House and were presumably employed by Edward Simonds, a 49 year old Hereford born 'Master Mason', who was living near the mill at the New House.³¹ By 1871 William, the son of Lewis Jones, was running the smith's shop. He must have found business brisk for he was able to employ two assistant smiths.³² The smith's home was also used as the local Post Office but demands on this service must have been very light. Next door in perhaps Tai'r Felin there lived Catherine Richards, a 40 year old washerwoman, and Mary Williams a boarder.³³ Tai'r Felin seems to have been demolished in the 1880s and the smithy itself seems to have ceased as a business before the turn of the century. In Mrs Jones' childhood the smith's house was occupied by Isaac Davies who was employed as a woodward on the Llanbradach Estate.³⁴

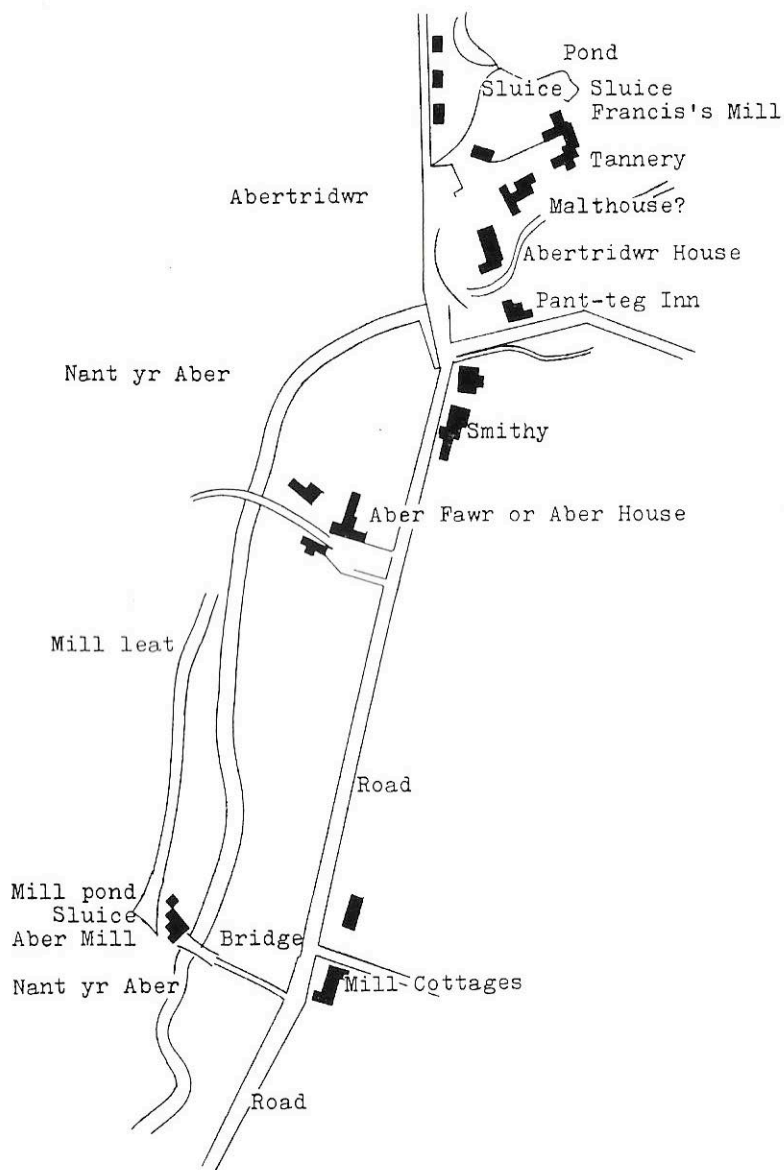
Later, a family by the name of Loader, probably related to Mr Davies, lived in the house until circa 1969. The house then remained empty for some time until it was bought by Mr & Mrs John West of Llanbradach. They renovated and moved into the house in June 1974. Earlier, on 1 January 1973, Mr West re-opened the old blacksmith's shop attached to his home.³⁵ It is a pleasure to see the revival of an old craft especially in these days of mass-produced goods. In addition to shoeing ponies and horses, a necessity brought about by the fairly recent popular increase in horse riding, Mr West undertakes all types of smithing including wrought iron work and is justifiably proud of his enterprise and craftsmanship.

Curiously, the old farm whose land adjoined that land which once belonged to Mill Farm is called Tarran y mwrthwyl (Thunder of the Hammer). Perhaps it once had a smithy?

When the author first remembered the old mill dwelling house it was divided into two dwellings (see illustration 4). In 1971 it was bought and completely modernised as one dwelling.

Aber Mill

The earliest reference found relating to this corn mill at Abertridwr is contained in a document dated 1751.³⁶ This document is concerned with a dispute which arose over the use of the Nant yr Aber Brook, then called the Risca Brook, which provided power for a water-wheel which in turn drove the bellows providing the blast for the iron furnace at Energlyn. It would seem that a person by the name of Thomas Evans had bought land on both sides of the Nant yr Aber and diverted water from the brook to serve his mill. It would appear that the water course to the mill at Abertridwr had been made in living memory. This diversion of water from the brook to serve Evans' mill prevented the water-wheel at the Caerphilly furnace from working, thus causing an estimated loss of £150 to £200 to the owners of the furnace. If this was the case it would seem that the miller was holding back the water from the brook by means of a dam



8: Map of the Aber Mill, Francis' Mill and area based on the Ordnance Survey 1/2500 map, 1st edition, surveyed in 1873. Some features have been widened for clarity but the approximate scale is $\text{---|---|} = 440 \text{ feet (134m)}$

or mill pond, otherwise the water, after use by the miller, would have flowed downstream to turn the furnace's water-wheel.

The mill at Abertridwr and the above mentioned 'Iron Works' are marked on Yates' large scale map of Glamorgan which was published by J. Cary in 1799.

In 1798 the mill was owned by Joseph Brown and leased to Thomas Isaac who was assessed 9 shillings tax for Cwm y Aber and 9 shillings and 6 pence for the grist mill.³⁷ There was a Mary Edward Isaacs occupying the Draethen Mill at this time also.³⁸

Joseph Brown, the owner of Aber mill in 1798, also owned the house near the mill known as Aber House. This has long since been demolished and should not be confused with Abertridwr House which stood near the present Abertridwr Square and was demolished in March 1972.³⁹

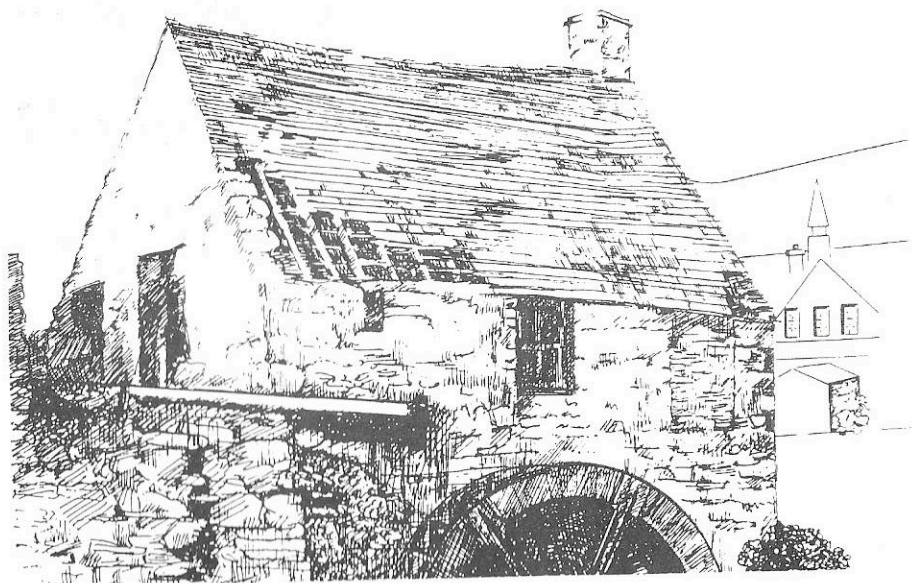
In various trade directories of the period, Joseph Brown is described, under 'Brown and Brown', as an edge tool and spade manufacturer of Aber.⁴⁰ Where the firm of Brown and Brown manufactured their tools is uncertain. The Aber Mill was still a grist mill at this time and as far as is known always remained so, unlike the Nantgarw corn mill which was later turned into a forge.⁴¹ The smithy which once stood on the corner of the Square at Abertridwr was perhaps too small for the manufacture of tools, but if tools were made in the Aber Valley the smithy seems to have been the most promising site.

Whilst on the subject of edge tools the following should be mentioned. Local legend often endows its buildings with great antiquity and traditionally the Aber Mill is said to have been a cutlery workshop in the time of the Romans.⁴²

In 1819 Joseph Brown became a bankrupt, perhaps through the depression that followed the Napoleonic Wars.⁴³ Nor would it seem that Edmund David, miller last of Aber Mill, was any better off. In 1820 he was in Cardiff Gaol for debt and was to petition the next Quarter Sessions, to be held at Swansea, for his release.⁴⁴ The conditions in the prison at Cardiff at this time were far from salubrious, and there had been complaints about the crowded conditions of the debtors there.⁴⁵

By 1841 Aber House, Aber Mill and the blacksmith's shop were owned by Thomas Thomas. The area consisted of 213 acres⁴⁶ and was occupied by Thomas Jenkins who presumably farmed the land. Cwm yr Aber did not form part of this estate.⁴⁷

The 1841 Census records a 35 year old miller, Thomas Morgan, living in a 'house near Aber'.⁴⁸ Whether he worked at the Aber Mill or the mill at Cwm yr Aber, later known as Francis' Mill, is not stated.



9: *Aber Mill, date unknown. This drawing by W. Lazard was made from an old photograph of the mill which appeared in Dewi Aur's history of the Aber Valley*

Ten years later William Lewis, a 30 year old 'Master Miller', was working Aber mill.⁴⁹ By 1861 William was living at Hendredenny Ganol Farm which consisted of some 41 acres of land and was within a mile or so of the mill. Hendredenny Ganol had formerly been in the hands of William's father Lewis Lewis, a native of Rudry.⁵⁰ William Lewis kept his interest in the old mill and it would seem that he either leased the mill for a time or employed millers to work it, though this is uncertain.

Edmund Lewis, who had been the miller at Energlyn Mill, Caerphilly, moved in 1862 to a house near Aber Mill.⁵¹ Edmund was about 70 years old at this time and it is not known if he was a relative of William Lewis. Dewi Aur states that Edmund Lewis had been the old miller, well known in the district, and quotes a line of verse which illustrates the flour-covered appearance of the old millers: 'Gwas gwlad, mewn gwisg lwydwen' (A servant of the land, in light grey clothes).⁵²

By 1871 Edmund Lewis was 79 years old, unemployed, and was living at the newly numbered 10 Mill Street, Abertridwr. Next door to Edmund lived Isaac Davies, a 56 year old miller, native of Llangamarch, Breconshire.⁵³ Whether Isaac was employed at the Aber Mill or the nearby Francis' Mill is not known.

A directory for 1880 states that William Lewis was then the miller at Abertridwr,⁵⁴ and according to Dewi Aur, William Lewis of Hendredenny Ganol was the last person to work the Aber mill.⁵⁵ William Lewis appears to have died between the years 1891 and 1895.⁵⁶

Near the mill were two houses, a stable and a cowshed. The stable and the cowshed were converted into a dwelling and in this house lived Mrs Lewis the widow of Edmund Lewis the miller. These houses near the mill appear to have become empty about 1903 and to have fallen into decay.⁵⁷ How long the disused mill survived after the death of William Lewis is a matter for conjecture. Presumably it survived into the twentieth century. A photograph of the Aber Mill, partially dilapidated, appears in Dewi Aur's book published in 1927.⁵⁸ The local school at Abertridwr which stands near to the site of the old mill is called the Aber Mill School.

Francis' Mill

This corn mill was formerly situated near the present Abertridwr Square and was within a mile of Aber Mill. Francis' Mill was part of a complex that at one time included a tannery and a malthouse. The date of erection of this mill is uncertain. It is not marked on Greenwood's map of 1828 but it is marked on the first edition of the OS 'one-inch' map dated 1833. This does not mean that Francis' Mill was not in existence in 1828.

As the name implies the mill was owned by a family whose surname was Francis. The family seem to have lived in the locality of Abertridwr for many years and some members lived at Groeswen. It has not yet been established whether the Francis family built the corn mill which bore their name or whether it was acquired as a going concern.

In 1798 Richard Francis was assessed a tax of 15 shillings for lands called Tir y Groeswen which he had leased from the Rev. Powell Edwards.⁵⁹ Some years earlier in 1787 another Richard Francis was baptised. Presumably this Richard was the son of the Richard of Groeswen who was likely to have been the owner of the mill in 1851.⁶⁰

The records of baptisms for Eglwysilan have an entry for the baptism of John, the son of Samuel and Catherine Lewelin, miller of Cwm yr Aber. This baptism took place in 1813 and in the following year Richard the son of Richard and Margaret Francis, farmer of Aber Mill, was baptised. These entries pose two questions. Was there a mill at Cwm yr Aber, later to become Francis' Mill, being worked in 1813 by Samuel Llewellyn? Or did Richard Francis in addition to farming the land work the Aber Mill and employ Samuel the miller?

Richard Francis was still at the Aber Mill in 1826 and in an entry for that year he is given the title of Yeoman. In 1832 there is mention of a miller of Cwm yr Aber by the name of William Williams. William the miller was

in the district in 1819 when he is recorded as being the father of the 'base daughter' of Elizabeth Thomas.⁶¹

It is believed this is the same William Williams who is mentioned as living at 'Felyn Fach' in 1851.⁶² In this census the entry number noted for Felin Fach is 10. Number 7 is Caermoel, no.8 Graig yr Hufen and no.14 Maesdiofal; these three places are farms which are situated fairly close together in what is now Senghenydd at the very end of the Aber Valley. Because of its entry number, Felin Fach ought to be close to these farms but in fact the mill is some distance away. The 1841 Eglwysilan tithe map apportionment roll lists the building simply as a mill, no name being given. The map shows its number as 2578, that the mill was owned by Thomas Thomas, presumably the same Thomas who owned Aber Fawr or Aber House, and that it was occupied by David Homfrays.⁶³ Felin Fach is situated on the very edge of Eglwysilan parish at the foot of Mynydd Eglwysilan. This is well outside Cwm yr Aber or the Aber Valley but presumably for administrative purposes the mill was included with Cwm yr Aber.

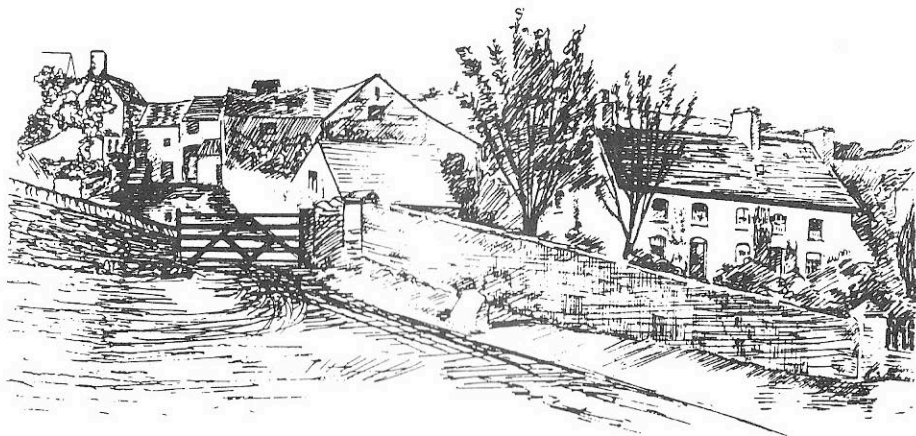
According to the 1841 Census, a 40 year old weaver by the name of David Humphrey was living at 'Velin Fach'. This is likely to be the same person whose occupation of the mill is recorded in the 1841 tithe apportionment and that Humphrey not Homfrays was the correct name.

Felin Fach is an old mill; in 1798 it was owned by Thomas Morgan and occupied by David Israel.⁶⁴ By 1861 Edward Morgan, a 41 year old coal miner, was living there.⁶⁵ He was still living at the mill in 1871.⁶⁶

It would seem that this small mill had been converted into a dwelling house some time before 1841, which poses another question. Was this mill worked or occupied by Samuel Llewellyn in 1813? If so it may mean that Samuel did not work for Richard Francis and that Francis' Mill was a fairly late addition to the Aber Valley.

Felin Fach still stands near the Nant Cae-dudwg, not far from Llanfabon Parish Church. This mill is now a cottage and it was sold in 1972 by the Taf Fechan Water Board to a Cardiff doctor.

The foregoing information is somewhat confusing. In 1841 there is no confusion about Francis' Mill. The Eglwysilan tithe apportionment shows that Richard Francis owned and occupied Cwm Aber which consisted of a mill, homestead and some 34 acres of land. These are numbered 1676 & 1677 on the tithe map. Mr Francis also owned Penygroes, near Groeswen, with 22 acres of land. In addition to owning land he had by 1841 leased the following farms locally: Graigwen (150 acres), Blaen Ifor (28 acres), Cwm Ifor (60 acres), plus other land which was mostly situated between Abertridwr and Energlyn. Much of this land was upland pasture, suitable only for sheep grazing.⁶⁷



10: *Abertridwr, circa 1880? The corn mill (Francis' Mill) is on the left, the tannery and malthouse, centre, and on the right is Abertridwr House which was demolished in 1972. Drawn by W. Lazard from an old painting.*

In 1841 Richard, the son of Richard Francis, was farming Graigwen, presumably being employed by his father.⁶⁸ By 1851, Richard, then aged 36 and still a bachelor, was back in his old home at Cwm yr Aber and working as a maltster.⁶⁹ There was a malthouse and a tannery attached to Francis' Mill and presumably Richard worked here. The area around the mill, tannery and malthouse, sometimes called Cwm Aber, became known as Abertridwr (the confluence or junction of the three waters). It is not known exactly when the name Abertridwr became commonplace, possibly the area had been known by this name for centuries. The first edition OS 1/2500 map of the area surveyed in 1873 uses the name Abertridwr for the area around Francis' Mill and the area immediately beyond the mill is marked as Cwm yr Aber.

Richard Francis died in December 1852 aged 65 years⁷⁰ and the business in part at least seems to have been taken over by his eldest son Richard. Richard junior was farming 34 acres of Cwm yr Aber in 1861 and he is listed as employing two men and a boy.⁷¹ Ten years later Richard was still at Abertridwr with his wife Mary, and they employed three servants, two of whom were aged 12 and 13 years.⁷²

The OS 1/2500 map of Abertridwr⁷³ surveyed in 1873 shows the tannery which formed part of the Francis' family business. The tannery seems to have shared the building which housed the corn mill. The date of building of the tannery is uncertain. Dewi Aur mentions that some ruined houses were demolished to make way for it. It appears that many years prior to this demolition there lived in one of the houses a 'Doctor Llwyd'.⁷⁴

Edmund Lloyd, apothecary of Cwm Abertridwr, was buried on 9 July 1778.⁷⁵

One written reference relating to tanning in the Francis family is contained in the record of the baptism, in June 1847, of Louisa who was the daughter of William Francis, tanner of Whitecross (Groeswen) and his wife Gwenllian. William, baptised in October 1821, was the son of Richard Francis senior.⁷⁶ The 1871 Census notes that William was then living at the Pant-teg Inn, Abertridwr. His occupation is given as Innkeeper and Tanner and he employed four men.⁷⁷ How long the tannery at Abertridwr continued to function is not known. William appears to have died by 1880 for in that year a directory states that Gwenllian, the wife of William and a native of Llantrisant, was licensee of the Pant-teg Inn. Whether any of William's sons followed their father into tanning and whether the tannery at Abertridwr continued is not yet known.⁷⁸ Directories show that Gwenllian Francis was still the licensee of the Pant-teg Inn in 1891 but by 1895 this public house was in the hands of James Davies.

The Francis family also produced malt for brewing. There is an obvious connection between this industry and the Pant-teg Inn next door.

Pigot's Directory for South Wales for the year 1844 lists Richard Francis of 'Aber' as a maltster. Slater's Directory for 1851 gives the same information. In 1868 Slater's Directory has added maltster and tanner after the name of Richard Francis. This was Richard junior. There were other maltsters in business in the Caerphilly area: the 1868 Directory lists John Rowlands of Bedwas House (Bedwas Fawr, demolished circa 1970) as a maltster. In the 1880 Directory, John Rowlands is still listed as a maltster and his abode was still Bedwas House whilst his son, also named John, was running the malthouse at Abertridwr. Kelly's Directory for 1891 notes that John Rowlands was still making malt in Abertridwr but by 1895 the Directory lists John Rowlands as a shopkeeper and local Postmaster.

During the 1890s Abertridwr was fast changing from a peaceful bucolic back-water to a mining valley. The decay of the old order was hastened by the construction of the branch railway.⁷⁹ Whether part of the complex which consisted of the mill, tannery and malthouse continued to function until the coming of the railway is uncertain, but doubtful. It would seem that the malthouse continued to be used up until 1891 but not much later, the corn mill and tannery having by this date become disused. The photograph of the construction of the railway in the Aber Valley in Dewi Aur's book shows that the mill and tannery are in ruins.

Abertridwr House itself remained until it too was finally demolished in March 1972.⁸⁰ In the sale of the effects of the late W. F. Rowlands of Abertridwr House there was a considerable amount of scrap iron. Included in this lot was an iron pillar, embedded in the lawn, which served as a support for a stone trough once containing flowering plants. Great

difficulty was found in removing the pillar and when finally it was torn from the ground it was found to be part of the old mill machinery. This was swiftly destroyed under the hammers of the workmen.⁸¹

Technical Details

Very little can be said on this subject. There is an old photograph which shows that the water-wheel at Aber Mill was very similar to that at Rudry Mill.⁸² The water for the water-wheel at the Aber Mill was delivered through an iron pipe which was identical to the system employed at both the Rudry and Llanbradach mills.

The mill leat for the Aber Mill shown on the first edition OS 1/2500 map is incomplete. The tithe map for 1841 shows that the mill race commenced at a point on Nant yr Aber just below the point where the road from Aber House crosses this stream. Presumably there was a weir at the junction of Nant yr Aber and the leat for the Aber Mill.

References

1. Clark, G.T., *Limbus Patrum Morganiae et Glamorganiae* (The Genealogies of Glamorgan), (1886), p.31
2. National Library of Wales [NLW], Bute Papers, Box 91, GA.1, Senghenith Leases, Nos. 32 & 50
3. see note 2; *Cronicl Caerffili*, No. 2, p.12
4. For an interesting and scholarly account of this family read 'The Thomas Family of Llanbradach and Ystrad Mynach' by Hilary M. Thomas in *Glamorgan Historian*, vol. 10 (1974)
5. The Thomas family seems to have had an interest in corn mills. The 1841 Eglwysilan tithe apportionment shows that Thomas Thomas owned the Aber mill as well as Felin Fach near Llanfabon Parish Church.
6. The British Library has a copy of this map. There is also a copy at the Glamorgan Record Office [GRO].
7. Eglwysilan Parish Registers
8. GRO, D/D Tho. E.1
9. GRO, D/D Tho. E.2
10. Rudry tithe map 1843
11. Land measurements in Wales varied widely at this time. See Davies, W., *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of South Wales* (1815), volume II, p.503; *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 97, p.195
12. Public Record Office [PRO], H.O.107.1414
13. PRO, H.O.107.2457
14. This Thomas Thomas should not be confused with the Thomases of Llanbradach. Margaret mentioned in the will appears to have been married to an agricultural labourer living at Tai'r Ystrad. See entry No. 15, 1851 Census, Llanfabon.
15. see note 1, p.553
16. PRO, 1861 Census
17. PRO, 1871 Census
18. I am most grateful to Mrs E. A. Jones of West Cottage, Broughton Road, Wick, near Cowbridge, for this information.
19. see note 18
20. Marked as 'Ty Isaf' on the first edition of the OS 1/2500 map.

21. All tithe maps can be seen at the PRO. The GRO also have some duplicate tithe maps.
22. This L-shape is also apparent on the 1842 Llanfabon tithe map.
23. see note 18
24. It may have looked like the machinery from Hockley Mill, Hampshire. See Reynolds, J., *Windmills & Watermills* (1970), p.25
25. *Cronicl Caerffili*, No. 2 (1974), p.23
26. see note 18
27. PRO, Land Tax, Glamorganshire, 1798: IR.23.117
28. see note 12
29. see note 13
30. For the history of Caerphilly's markets and fairs see *Caerphilly*, No. 2 (1970), pp.16-33. *Caerphilly* is the journal of the Caerphilly Local History Society.
31. see note 13
32. see note 17
33. see note 17
34. see note 18
35. I am grateful to Mr John West of the Mill Forge, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed, for this information.
36. *Caerphilly*, No. 1 (1968), p.41
37. see note 27
38. *Cronicl Caerffili*, No. 2 (1974), p.19
39. *Caerphilly Leader* newspaper, 10 February 1972
40. All of the directories mentioned in this article are to be found at the Guildhall Library, London. Holden's Directory for 1811 lists Brown and Brown of 'Abber' under Caerphilly. See volume 3
41. *Cronicl Caerffili*, No. 2 (1974), p.17
42. Aur, D., *Hanes Hen Aneiddau Dadfeiliedig Cwm yr Aber a'u Preswylwyr* (The History of the Old Ruined Dwellings of the Aber Valley and its Inhabitants), (1927), p.51
43. *Cambrian* newspaper, 30 October 1819, p.4, col.4; PRO, Bankrupt Docket Book, No. 22669, 27 September 1819
44. *Cambrian* newspaper, 23 September 1820, p.2, col.3
45. *Cambrian* newspaper, 18 September 1819, p.3, col.3
46. 250 acres according to the 1851 Census. Presumably Thomas Thomas was of Llanbradach?
47. Eglwysilan tithe map and apportionment roll
48. see note 12
49. see note 13
50. see note 42, p.30; 1851 Census
51. *Cronicl Caerffili*, No.2 (1974), p.15
52. see note 42, p.48
53. see note 17
54. see note 40
55. See also the history of the Price family in *Cronicl Caerffili*, No.3 (1975), where the Francis family are mentioned
56. see note 40
57. see note 42, p.48
58. see note 42
59. see note 27
60. see note 13
61. Eglwysilan Parish Registers
62. see note 13
63. see note 21
64. see note 27
65. see note 16
66. see note 17
67. see note 11, Davies 1815, p.248, where he mentions the fine breed of sheep raised on the 'Eglwysilan Downs'. Whether the wool from these sheep was used in the woollen manufactories of Caerphilly is not known. For the history of Caerphilly's woollen industry see *Caerphilly*, No.1 (1968), pp.17-29
68. see note 12

69. see note 13
70. see note 61
71. see note 16
72. see note 17
73. Glamorgan XXVIII.16
74. see note 42, p.21
75. see note 61
76. see note 61
77. see note 17
78. Dewi Aur mentions in his book a person by the name of John Williams who was known locally from his occupation as 'John Tanner' and who lived near the Aber tannery. He worked for Mr Francis (see note 42, p.22).
79. For an insight into the history of the Aber Valley see the articles on Senghenydd by J. Basil Phillips in *Caerphilly*, Nos.1 and 3
80. see note 39
81. I am most grateful to Mr B. Owens, 6a The Square, Abertridwr, for this information.
82. *Cronicl Caerffili*, No.2 (1974), p.21

[Editor's note: This article was first published in *Cronicl Caerffili* in 1975; there are thus no references to the 1881 and 1891 Census, which are now available]