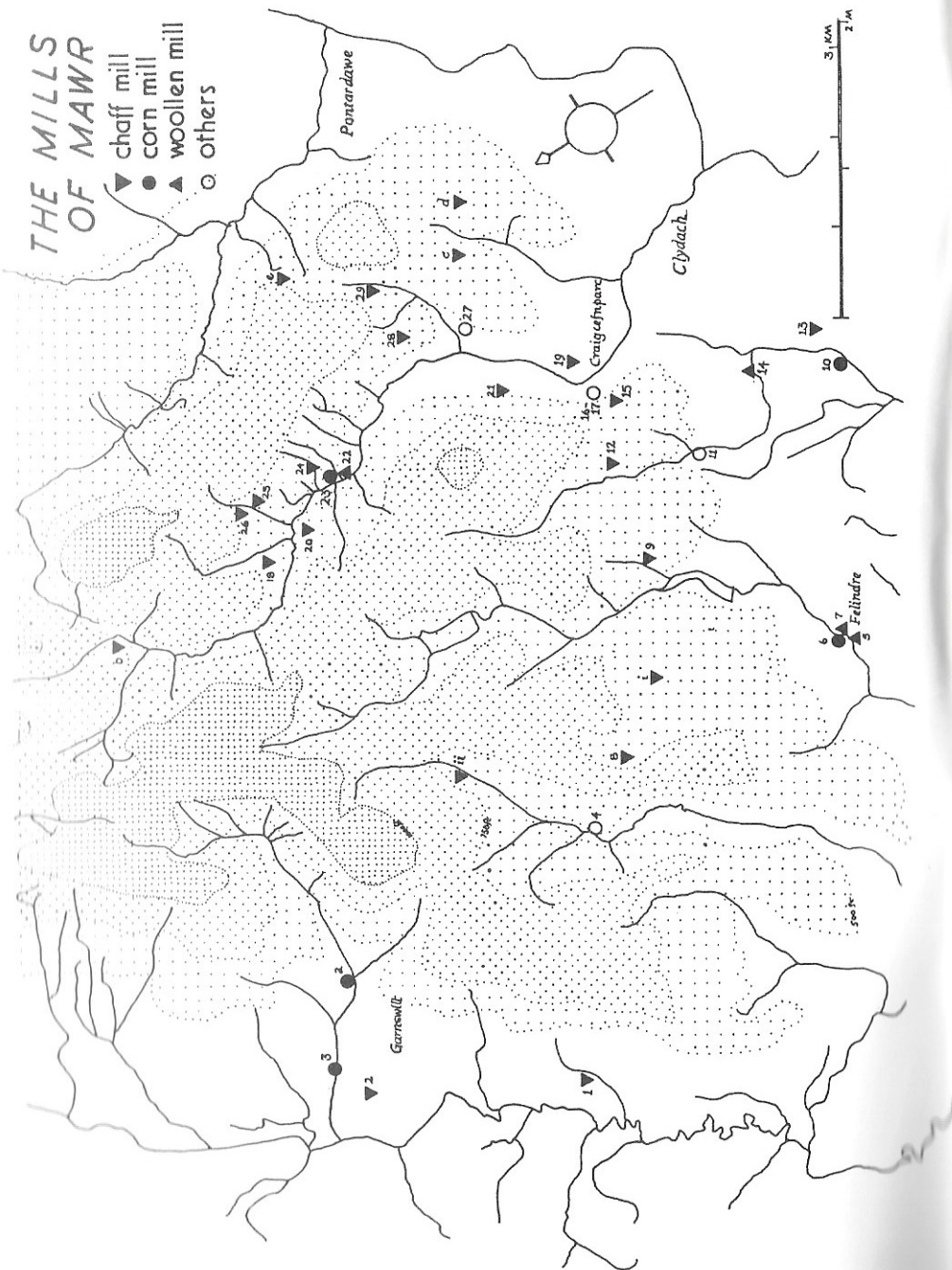


# THE MILLS OF MAWR



## THE MILLS OF MAWR COMMUNITY

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### Introduction

This article is a list of all the water-powered mills and related complexes of various sorts that once existed in the area that is now termed the Mawr Community (or Civil Parish) in 1988. It has been drawn up mainly from local living knowledge, best recorded now before old memories, and the ruins of old buildings, are lost forever. I hope it will prompt other researchers to dig deeper into this subject, but would warn them that the present Community boundary does not conform to the boundaries of the old civil or ecclesiastical parishes.

Mawr is a recently expanded area. It consists of the villages of Craig-cefn-parc, Garnswllt and Felindre, with the little hamlets of Rhydypany, Salem, Cwmcerdinen and Baran. Many of the mills listed here would appear in the archive records of other older parishes; for instance, Melin-y-Cwm was formerly in the old parish of Rhyndwyclydach. All locations are given in detail, with Ordnance Survey National Grid References from the most suitable OS map sheet, "Clydach and Pontardawe" (SN 60/70, "Pathfinder Series", 1:25000 scale, approximately 2.5 inches to the mile).

Thirty-four sites are listed, from west to east. Thirty-three were possibly water-driven, whilst one was steam-powered. Twenty-nine are now in the Mawr Community; five are just outside the boundary and are listed last. Only scanty proof remains at some sites, while the only remaining intact mill is the Felindre flour mill. Many are simple farm chaff mills, and no doubt there were more.

I would like to thank the many farmers, especially Mr Arwyn Davies, for help in drawing up this list. I dedicate this article to Mr William Henry Jones (born 1894), the last surviving miller in Mawr, still very much alive in 1988 and the proprietor of the last intact mill at Felindre, currently the oldest parishioner of Mawr.

The Mills of Mawr (see map)

[1] Hendrewen Farm (SN 6125 0770), at Pentre-tan, Garnswllt: a small chaff mill for farm use.

[2] Ynystawelog Farm, Garnswllt (SN 6245 0975): a small chaff mill for farm use. A large pond survived until recently.

[3] Felin Garnswllt (SN 6275 0995), once a large commercial flour mill at the rear of Garnswllt Post Office on the Cathan river. It gave its name to Lon-y-felin, the street which leads to an ancient ford at the confluence of three rivers - the Cathan, the Amman and the Llŵchwr. This area is a truly ancient tribal boundary and is today the Community, Borough, County and Parliamentary boundary. In the days of the Marcher Lordships, after the conquest of Free Cymru, this was a disputed area and led to the building of the fort complex on the Penlle'r-castell promontory. It was also reputed to be the site of the slaying of

a pig creature in the tale "Culhwch ac Olwen", an independent native story in the ancient saga of the Mabinogion, suggesting Arthurian-style strife in the Celtic Golden Age of Cymru.

[4] Glynacasnod Farm, Cwmcerdinen (SN 6350 0610): allegedly the site of a thriving mill on the headwaters of the Dulais. The name is reputed to be a corruption of 'Glyn yr Asynnod', or Glen of the Pack-mules; whether it was a woollen mill or wheat mill is unconfirmed - or even whether it was a mill at all!

[5] Nant Ddu (SN 6360 0270): near the road crossing of the Nant Ddu, just before its confluence with the Lliw, is a small ivy-strewn wall that is reputed to be the remains of an old flannel mill. The local Archaeological Trust records it as a Pandy. Close by, at SN 6370 0290, is a ruined 'efail' or smithy.

[6] Felindre (SN 6375 0275), once a thriving commercial flour mill. It is still the centrepiece of the village of Felindre, and the origin of the village name. Its age is uncertain, but it has been in the same family for several generations. This mill worked regularly, and commercially, into the 1960's. It last worked in the week of the Dyffryn Lliw National Eisteddfod in August 1980 and was filmed then for television. Now in 1988, the miller, William Henry Jones, who lives opposite, is quite a celebrity as a very sprightly ninety-four-year-old! He says that the mill only needs some attention to its leat and to the wooden buckets on the wheel, and it could easily start milling again. It is worth a visit (by arrangement with the owner, Mr Jones, and his family or friends). I truly hope that the publication of this article can go some way to help raise interest in conserving this as a working mill and not as some future converted home for a yuppie as 'Ye Olde Mill'! On old maps this is sometimes confused with Felinwen, on the river Llan (no.10 below).

[7] Gwëydd (SN 6380 0270): near where the Felindre Welfare Hall now stands was once a weaver's workshop known as 'gwehydd' or 'gwëydd'. Although it was near the river and a small stream, the looms were treadle-driven. The last weaver was the paternal great-grandfather of Gwynfor Evans, the first Plaid Cymru Member of Parliament. The weaver's brother, another relative of Gwynfor Evans, was a village wag. He had been a sailor and kept a pet snake to frighten people: he frequently emptied the Shepherds' Arms Inn in the village by pulling the foreign snake out of his pocket.

[8] Blaen Nant Ddu Farm (SN 6395 0535) once had a small chaff mill. There was once a large reservoir here to supply Swansea, but it was closed as it was flooding the old Graigola Merthyr Colliery. Only the farm remains today.

[9] Cwmcile Farm (SN 6565 0395) once had a large chaff mill complex. There are scanty remains now of a large pond, the cast-iron frame of a mill wheel, many ruined stone buildings and several trackways, which indicate quite a substantial animal-feed industry, although nothing stands today. This farm was the scene

of a most vicious fight between the Morgan family, who were alleged to be members of the heroic Hosts of Rebecca, and the Glamorganshire Constabulary. Pitchforks, pokers and pistols were used in the battle; Chief Constable Napier was flooded by a grandmother wielding a poker, and was ridiculed by the London Press at the time. In the subsequent Assize Court trial the Morgans were described as 'yeomen' or 'gentlemen farmers', presumably due to the status of owning a farm and a mill. The family is buried in Salem Chapel graveyard. There are pleasant walks near here around the Lliw reservoirs.

[10] Felinwen (SN 6635 0105) was until some years ago a commercial flour mill and farm at the road crossing the river Llan between Pontlasse and Rhydypany. It was then converted by a local businessman into a large executive home; now it is a private nursing home, and not recognisable for its past. (See also [7] above.)

[11] Cyngordy Fawr (SN 6640 0290) is known locally as "Y Bracty" ("the malt-house"). Ruins still stand where the Salem to Rhydypany road crosses the Llan. Incidentally Salem Chapel still baptises new members traditionally in the river here. "Y Bracty" was a highly regarded mill that made barley pulp or malting grist for the nineteenth-century breweries of Swansea. Special tiled floors are evident, with holes for gentle heating to germinate the barley starch into sugars. A lengthy leat can also be traced - crossed now by the road. Cyngordy Fawr farm had a room with a similarly tiled floor. This farm has been in the same family since the depression that followed the Napoleonic Wars: sadly it has just been sold and split up into three parts.

[12] Llidiardau Farm (SN 6675 0375) is a ruined farm that allegedly once had a chaff mill. There is limited running water but a large man-made water-course is reputed to have been a leat draining local fields.

[13] Pant yr Uchedydd Farm (SN 6680 0110) once possessed a small chaff mill.

[14] Rhyd-y-Pandy (SN 6680 0190) is today dominated by the Masons' Arms Inn. The hamlet nearby has only recently been called Rhydypany: it was until some years ago known as Pantycelyn. The name Rhydypany was specifically reserved then for the area where the road crosses the Llan; translated, it would mean "the ford by the fulling mill". This firmly indicates the former existence of a fulling mill. There was once a shop and a tollgate near the ford by the tavern (now the bridge and the Masons' Arms area). Incidentally it was this tollgate that was smashed by the Hosts of Rebecca which led to the fight at Cwmcile Farm ([9] above).

[15] Cefn Parc Farm once had a mill pond and water wheel at SN 6740 0340, with a rope pulley or chain drive to the farm at SN 6730 0335, working a chaff mill. Sadly a child was reputed to have been drowned in this pond years ago. Cefn Parc (which means "behind the enclosure") is the farm which gave its name to the

village of Craigcefnparc.

[16] "Yr Engine" (SN 6745 0345): perhaps this should not be included as it was a mortar mill driven by a steam traction engine situated where the bus shelter is now by Craigcefnparc School. It was fed by the offcuts and rough bark from the sawmills ([17] below) opposite the road. Both these mills were owned by the late David John Morgan y Saer.

[17] Gweithdy'r Saer (SN 6750 0345) was a water-powered sawmills complex, which had a millpond just below the road with a dam and a large water wheel, the shaft of which drove a host of woodworking and sawing equipment. A fatal accident was apparently caused by this drive-shaft. A point of interest here is that the massive natural spring at SN 6740 0340, which once fed this site and sites [15] and [16] above, was also for many years the source of mains water supply for most of the village of Craigcefnparc.

[18] Llwyn Ifan Farm (SN 6790 0750) had a small water-driven chaff mill and circular saw.

[19] Cathelyd Ganol Farm (SN 6795 0355) once had a small chaff mill. This farm is of curiosity interest for two reasons. Firstly, it was "attacked from above and below": it suffered an air raid in the Second World War (bomb craters can still be seen today), and its old farmhouse was ruined due to mining subsidence. Secondly, the father of the present farmer had two grandsons who were rugby internationals - David Gay, No.8 for Bath and England, and Elgan Rees, wing for Neath, Wales and the British Lions.

[20] Twll y Gwyddel Farm (SN 6795 0685) once had a chaff mill. A literal translation of the name is "Irishman's Hole"; it is a very old name whose origin is tantalising! Its lower woodland forms part of the new Cwm Clydach bird reserve run by the R.S.P.B., and open to visitors.

[21] Glyncoch Farm (SN 6810 0430) in Craig Cwm once had a very large chaff mill preparing feed for over forty work-horses and pit ponies. Water was obtained via complex culverts from the springs at Lluast via Rhydygwin. The mill wheel was apparently a very long distance from the farm buildings and involved an extraordinarily long shaft drive. When the local authority used up the water supply at Lluast to supply domestic water to Rhydygwin and Rhydypany via a pipe in a very deeply cut trench, the chaff mill had to be driven by power supplemented by a rack and gear horse-engine turned by four horses walking in a circle! This area has several very pleasant footpaths leading through the Cwm, and on to the R.S.P.B. reserve mentioned above.

[22] Ffatri'r Cwm (SN 6825 0625) was a large commercial woollen mill complex with a miller's house, now sadly ruined.

[23] Melin y Cwm (SN 6825 0640) was once a busy commercial flour mill with a miller's house. It appears on the 1650 Survey of

Gower as 'Clydach Mill', but is now sadly ruined. The millstones are at Craigcefnparc Primary School. This and the previous site are part of the Holland Estate, sadly subject of population clearances.

[24] Ty Ucha'r Felin Farm (SN 6845 0645) once installed a chaff mill, but it is alleged that it may never have worked!

[25] Nantymoel Isaf Farm (SN 6850 0720) had a small chaff mill.

[26] Nantymoel Uchaf Farm (SN 6850 0745) also had a small chaff mill.

[27] Lefel Gwaith Moody (SN 6890 0435) once had a large water-driven colliery ventilation fan. This fan used to turn non-stop, and if not regularly tended for lubrication its bearings would screech in the night. Pit ponies used to be released here to run back down to the main colliery complex at the Lone nearly two miles down the valley from this airway. Young village boys used to ride the horses wildly down the valley. Moody's level was a self-draining slant at the Lone, as is still witnessed by the rusty water surging out day and night from its mouth (SN 6840 0260).

[28] Llechart Fach Farm (SN 6915 0485) had a farm chaff mill. The farmhouse here is very old: it is also close to a mysterious fort and hut remains, and not far from the classic neolithic site known as Carn Llechart.

[29] Llechart Fawr Farm (SN 6980 0485) had a chaff mill.

There are also vague reports of water-driven chaff mills at Ceunant Farm (SN 6480 0700), now a guest-house for tourists, and at Ffynnon Llefrith Farm (SN 6450 0460). No doubt there were many more small water-powered mills used by farming families for chaff-cutting, threshing, and even flour-milling.

Just outside Mawr Community there were also the following:-

[a] Cwm Felin (SN 6360 0925) was a commercial flour mill which was approached through trackways from Mawr at Garnswllt. The mill has long since gone, but the millstones lie on the Mawr side of the river.

[b] Hafod Wenol Farm (SN 6800 0935) had a small water-powered chaff mill and sawmill. Nearby is Penlanau Farm (SN 6750 0910), once a busy stopping place on the old drovers' trails with massive bread ovens for feeding the drovers whose herds were stockaded there.

[c] Allt-y-fanog Farm (SN 6960 0390) had a chaff mill.

[d] Eithrim Farm (SN 7010 0355) had a chaff mill.

[e] Heol Ddu Farm (SN 7045 0560) had a chaff mill.

ADDENDUM:

The following information has been discovered since the drafting of this article.

(a) Ffynnon Llefrith (SN 6450 0460), noted as 'possible', was definitely a water-powered farm chaff mill; apparently a man was killed by the long drive shaft.

(b) Gelliwren Isaf farm (SN 6235 0205) had a water-powered chaff mill which worked until the 1930's. The nearby Gelliwren Ganol (SN 6290 0235) had a chaff-mill powered by a horse-engine, the gears of which were still there some years ago.

(c) Rhos Fawr farm (SN 6580 0335), in the lower yard of which is a duck pond (formerly a mill pond) which is the source of the Nant y Tarw, apparently had a chaff mill at SN 6560 0302. It is difficult to envisage how a shaft might have run back to the buildings: however pulleys still survive.