

"Twixt Chain and Gorge"

A History of Radyr and Morganstown



Gelynis Farm . Morganstown .

RADYR AND MORGANSTOWN

NEW HORIZONS HISTORY GROUP

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PREFIX

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Dennis Nottage
Chairman
Radyr Farm
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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The community of Radyr and Morganstown lies some six miles to the north west of Cardiff, to the west of the River Taff from the point where it passes through the gorge in the hills which mark the boundary of the coastal plain of Glamorgan. Mostly situated on the high ground above the escarpment which rises from the river, it is now essentially a pleasant residential suburb, with a population in 1981 of 4408, benefiting from good rail and road communications with Cardiff and, more recently, from the proximity of the M4 motorway which crosses the village at its northern extremity.

There has been much housing development since the war, which has changed the appearance of the village significantly, and indeed in that context almost 400 acres which were formerly part of the administrative parish had been ceded to the City of Cardiff by 1967. Only the open countryside to the west, and the old parish church of St. John Baptist, hold obvious traces of the past.

Nevertheless, the history of the community can be traced from the earliest recorded times, and indeed its very name reflects part of that history, from the period when the land was held by two branches of an ancient Welsh princely family. The chief roads follow the routes established centuries ago, and in many cases their names are those given when all the people of the village gained their living from the land, oblivious of the changes which in succeeding centuries would change the face of the village, and indeed have a wider impact on this pan of Wales.

In the Beginning

IN THE BEGINNING

Like much of South Glamorgan, the basic rock on which Radyr stands was formed of small pieces of purple sandstone and greyish white limestone cemented together with red sand and soluble lime, created from an accumulation of desert rock debris some 275 million years ago, when South Wales lay in the latitude of the present day Sahara. Described in geological terms as a Permo-Triassic Breccia, because of its particular prominence in the village it is now known internationally as Radyr Stone, and is a significant feature of the landscape. The glacial valley of the River Taff cut through a large bed of it, and the firm base which it provided for the wide shallows of the river in the area produced in due course the original fords which were to be of particular importance in the history of the village

As the glaciers retreated, at the end of the Ice Age, the soil created on the material which had been swept down over the centuries provided a fertile base for the woodlands which progressively covered South Wales and supported early man and the animals on which he depended for his survival. Those men have left little trace within the parish, however; even their burial sites, prominent in the surrounding countryside as cromlechs in nearby [Pentyrch](#)¹, or as the large tumuli on the Upper [Garth](#)² have been obliterated. Two places within the parish boundaries, however, give some idea of the lives of these remote people, showing both how they sought shelter and the sort of social order they were beginning to develop.

In the Beginning

In 1912, a local resident, Mr. T.E. Lewis of Morganstown exploring the slopes of the nearby Lesser Garth hill, discovered a cave in the limestone, with a main passage about 60 yards long, and some 50 feet high and 20 feet wide at its largest point. Its steep slopes and deep fissures held the debris of centuries, among which were found several traces of early man, including fragments of worked flint such as were used by hunters in the Stone Ages (5000-3000 BC). The cave was later



A view of the cave inside the Lesser Garth

excavated archaeologically by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, in 1922, and again in 1963 by Mr. M.S. [Hussey](#)³ with the aid of volunteers from local caving clubs. These more detailed excavations revealed a history of occupation similar to that found in the Culver Hole Cave in the Gower. The people who lived in the Lesser Garth in the Bronze Age, around 1000 BC, left behind fragments of pottery and worked bone, such as roughly made awls, a fine needle, and a weaving comb made from a cow's rib. There was also a large quantity of animal bones representing the remains of meals. The cave then appears to have been lost or abandoned for many centuries, until the period during and immediately

In the Beginning

after the Roman occupation. Sherds of Romano-British coarse pottery were found by all three investigators, suggesting that the cave had been used, probably intermittently, by people who may have been exploiting the ironstone known to have been quarried from the area during this period. A few hundred years later, the cave was again used, but this time as a workshop for metal workers in the Dark Ages, between the 5th and 7th centuries. Both Lewis and Hussey found evidence comprising pottery, crucible fragments, and small pieces of bronze and tin, comparable with material obtained from the Dark Age site at Dinas Powys, which had been expertly excavated and dated by Leslie Allcock of University College Cardiff in 1954/58. (The cave roof has now collapsed in places, making further investigation dangerous if not impossible).

The second reminder of the prehistoric past is found in the woodland area at the southern end of Taff Terrace and to the east of Woodfield Avenue. A mound of some 30 feet in diameter consisting of heavily burned stones and charcoal, but with no bones or other indications of kitchen refuse, was partly excavated in 1916 by Mr John Ward, Keeper of Archaeology at the National Museum and Mr William Clarke, a dedicated amateur archaeologist, the grandfather of Mr W.R.P. Clarke of [Radyr](#)⁴, assisted by local residents. Flint flakes, and other stone implements used in cleaning and preparing skins, together with minute fragments of rough brown pottery provisionally ascribed to the Late Iron Age period were found. Such "burnt mounds" are quite numerous in Wales and, more particularly, in Ireland where more recent scientific excavation has shown that they can be ascribed to various dates between the Early Bronze Age and the Middle Ages, often showing intermittent use over very long periods of time. From descriptions in early Irish poetry, it is reasonably clear that these areas were traditional gathering places where, after hunting, the kill would be brought and cooked. Small game would be encased in clay and placed in the embers of a large fire, whilst larger animals would be placed in a pit filled with water which would then, as in Polynesia today, be brought to boiling point by dropping in stones which had been previously heated in a large fire on the top of the mound. For this reason, the burnt mounds are always found near a stream or river of clear water.

The First Accounts

THE FIRST ACCOUNTS

The first historical reference to Radyr is drawn from the Life of St. Cadog written in the 11th Century by Lifris, son of Bishop Herewald of Llandaff, who became Archdeacon of Glamorgan and head of the important monastic settlement at Llancarfan.

Writing of events which occurred in about 530 AD, Lifris describes how Cadog, then head of the Celtic church enclosure at Llancarfan, was summoned to the death bed of his father, Gwynllyw (later known as St. Woolos) ruler of an area which included present day Newport and lands to the west. The servant, named Istan, who had been sent for him, following in this part of his journey the ancient route which can still be traced between the old church at Witchurch and the old parish church of St John Baptist at Radyr, found the ford of the Taff impassable because of floods described as extending "from the ford of Pennugual to the hill of King Morgan, called in Welsh Rhiw Morgan". Istan managed however to attract the attention of a hermit named Tylyway, who had his cell on the western bank, and he agreed to fetch Cadog from Llancarfan. On his return, Cadog and twenty followers were entertained at what Lifris described as a villa or tref (home) named Aradur Hen, before crossing the river the next morning.

The story of St Cadog also describes how the hermit, by striking his staff in the ground, miraculously created a spring of

The First Accounts

water with healing properties. There are indeed a number of references in early writings to the curative spring near St John's church and generally referred to as a Holy Well, called Pistyll-y-Goleu (usually translated as "the bright water spout").

Analysis of evidence from various sources has now identified this site with a spring which still exists in the woodland a few metres to the west of the railway signal box at the southern end of the marshalling yard and approximately 600 metres north of St John's church. It is now almost lost in the undergrowth, although it was well cared for in the last century and was referred to by railway workers as the 'Pitcher Cooler', apparently a corruption of the original Welsh name.

Whilst there is no certainty that Lifris' account accurately describes events which took place some 500 years earlier, it does appear to confirm the existence of an ancient route using a point at which the Taff could be forded, which was later developed as a pilgrim route, and that by at least the 11th century there was some form of settlement and possibly a simple early church on the high ground on the western bank. It may be that the present church of St John's, first built in stone in the 13th century, does indeed stand on the site of the hermit's cell, and the most favoured explanation for the early name of the village, Aradur, is that it was derived from the Latin 'oratorium', or house of prayer.

The name also appears in a story, reported by the 18th century writer Iolo Morgannwg, about one of the early princes of Glamorgan, Morgan Mwynfawr (ie The Courteous) who was the ruler of the territory in the seventh or eighth centuries AD. His father's name was Athrwys, and perhaps because of this the

The First Accounts

early manuscript described him as "a son of King Arthur who, on returning from Caerleon, sometimes resided at Caerdydd, sometimes at Radir and at other times at Margam".

Similarly, Morgan Hen (ie. The Old) who enlarged the territory of Glamorgan before his death in 975 AD and gave his name to the area was reputed to have lived , amongst other places, at "Adur". Was it one of these who gave his name to "The Hill of King Morgan" to which Lift-is referred? Whatever the truth of the stories, it is significant that the writers felt that Radyr was sufficiently well known to their readers to need no further explanation. Some time would have to pass, however, before Radyr began to emerge from the mists of legend.

The Manor of Radyr

THE MANOR OF RADYR

By the time of the Norman conquest of South Wales, land was being cleared progressively for agriculture, and the countryside had become organized into small areas called "commotes", or loose groups of villages or hamlets protected by a local Welsh chieftain. These were again grouped into larger areas defined often by major geographic boundaries and under the control of senior chieftains. These areas were the "cantrefs", or Welsh Lordships. What is now Radyr was historically part of the Cantref of Meisgyn (Miskin), which extended from the Brecon Beacons to at least Llandaff and perhaps originally to the coast, and comprised all the land around what is now Aberdare, Pontypridd and Llantrisant. It was flanked to the east and west respectively by the similar but larger Cantrefs of Senghenydd and Glyn Rhondda. These were three of the traditional seven Cantrefs of the one-time kingdom of Morgannwg.

The Normans acquired the fertile Vale of Glamorgan by force between 1081 and 1095, and King William Rufus allowed a Marcher Lordship of Glamorgan to be created in 1093, based on Cardiff and under the control of Robert Fitzhamon, to protect the borders or Marches of England. The Welsh chieftains, having nominally acknowledged Robert as overlord, were allowed to continue to rule the large upland portions of the Cantrefs, but it is possible that the Normans took steps to safeguard the northern edge of their territory. Around Cardiff can be found the remains of a number of mounds, similar to the

The Manor of Radyr

simple earthwork fortifications known as 'mottes', of the type associated with Norman knights of the 11th century; these existed at Thomhill⁵, at Whitchurch near the Fox and Hounds, and at Morganstown⁶, next to the playing fields. The last, which is about 120 feet in diameter and some 18 feet high, was at one time surrounded by a water filled moat and would have been surmounted by a timber palisade enclosing a wooden keep.

Between 1242 and 1247, however. Earl Richard de Clare, then Lord of Glamorgan, consolidated his position by bringing all the commotes of Meisgyn and Glyn Rhondda as well as a few other minor lordships under his own direct control. Complete Norman rule of Glamorgan was achieved when his son, Gilbert the Red, acquired control of Senghenydd and Afan in 1289, and from this point, a centralised administration was established, allowing land holdings to be traced more easily.

Radyr appears to have been created as a "buffer zone" between the Normans on the coastal plain and the Welshry of the upland cantrefs, possibly before 1242, and it does not seem to have been a manor organised in the usual Norman fashion, under which the holder would have been obliged to provide his feudal overlord with men for military service, but instead to have been purely an administrative unit held on lease by a Welsh chieftain subject to some payment and undefined responsibilities⁷. The name of Maerdy Farm, the ruins of which existed until recently on Radyr golf course but which in its time would seem to have been a large and imposing house, has been suggested⁸ as marking the site of the 'Maerdref, the name given in the earliest Welsh documents to the principal farm of a commote and probably the home of the chieftain or one of his officials.

The Manor of Radyr

By this time also, the settlement which became the medieval centre of Radyr had begun to take shape, on or near the site traditionally associated with Aradur Hen and the hermit's cell. The church of St John Baptist is first identified in official documents in 1254 when it was valued for taxation at £4, and was probably built by the De Clare family at the beginning of the 13th century. Some of the free stone near the windows and a few of the terminal heads of the window arches appear to have been carved from a limestone known geologically as 'Sutton Stone', which was also used for the earliest work on Llandaff Cathedral which can be dated to that period, whilst the eastern window, removed on the reconstruction of the church in 1869, comprised three equal narrow lights appropriate to a 13th century design. The most significant remains of the early church, however, are in the chancel whose arch, which is only some nine feet high and wide, and which also shows traces of original paintwork, is of typical 13th century style. The two corbels above the arch are of similar date and held the rood beam, which supported an elaborate rood screen until its removal, in a very decayed state, in about 1850.

These, and other features of the original church, were described in reminiscences published in 1895 by the Reverend William David of St Pagans, whose family had lived in Radyr for many generations and whose father was churchwarden at St John's in about 1840". He noted, for example, the wall-plaque inscribed "Pulvis et umbra sumus" - "Dust and shadows are we" - which is now mounted on the exterior of the south wall of the chancel. However, the pulpit, tall pews, and other fittings elaborately carved in oak which he recalled would not have been features of the church when it was built. Apart from the chancel

The Manor of Radyr



screen, this was probably devoid of any seating and indeed the nave would have been used for secular as well as religious purposes, as was the custom of the time, by the people of the hamlet.

They appear to have lived just to the north of the church, where the foundations of a number of poor quality cottages with associated pottery fragments dated between the 12th and 14th centuries were found during the construction of what is now Danescourt Way. Nearby again, but west of the church, on the highest point in the immediate area, on a site now covered by the gardens of 5 -19 Heol Aradur, was the manor house. This was a large stone building, initially some 23 metres by 5 metres with walls some 60 to 70 cm thick, but rebuilt at least once on a larger scale and with walls over a metre thick, which suggests that a second storey was added. It is possible that the rebuilding was

The Manor of Radyr

necessitated by damage caused in the uprisings of Owain Glyndwr or Llewelyn Bren but, whatever the cause, it would certainly have been much stronger, and an imposing building for the period, incorporating carved limestone and roofed with sandstone slabs, capped with green glazed ridge tiles¹⁰.

A survey made in 1307¹¹ gives the first firm evidence of the size of the manor of Radyr. The demesne, or home farm, under the direct control of the Lord comprised 68 acres of arable land, three of meadow and one of pasture. A further 52 acres were held by 10 "customares", tenants who, "by custom", performed various ploughing and other autumnal tasks for the Lord of the Manor. In a later record, there is also a reference to "cottars", peasants who had erected hovels on the Lord's waste land for which they would pay a minimal rent and who worked for day payment for either the Lord or the customares. The Lord's household would also include some slaves; four bondsmen were sold from the manor in 1263.

The hamlet was surrounded by arable fields, divided into strips of between half and one acre separated by grass banks or ditches, which were cropped in rotation with wheat, rye, barley or oats, and whose outline could still be seen in a twenty acre field south of Radyr Court Road before the housing developments in the 1970's. Beyond these fields would be waste land for communal grazing and extensive woodland owned and controlled by the Lord. By 1348 the arable land had increased to 81 acres, valued for tax at 70 shillings per annum; the waste and woods were progressively cleared during the following centuries.

The river Taff would have played an important part in the life

The Manor of Radyr

of the manor, both as a source of food and of power. Lifris' account of St Cadog's visit tells how the hermit made his living by fishing, and the records of the adjacent manor of Whitchurch, which exist from about 1266, carefully note the dues received from the fisheries in the Taff, from Tongwynlais to Llandaff Ford. These varied between 13s 4d in 1314 and 10 shillings in 1349, and it is likely that similar revenues would have come to the manor of Radyr at that time. Perhaps more importantly, the river also powered the mill which was an essential part of the manorial system, although it would be many years before a mill was actually built within the parish. The people of Radyr would have used the mill on the opposite bank, where the current could more easily be diverted into a mill stream to power the water wheel, at what became known as Melin Griffith. The first record of 1295, however, shows that the mill, which had normally returned 14s 4d to the manor of Whitchurch, was now burnt out and yielded no revenues. It must have been well rebuilt, however, for in 1307 it was worth £4 to the estate, rising to £5 by 1314, indicating the increasing use of the land in the area for arable farming¹².

The mill was originally leased to Griffith, son of Ifor Bach - famed for his raid on Cardiff Castle - from whom the mill took its name. By 1307 it was held by one Llewellyn ap Griffith, popularly known as Llewellyn Bren, who in 1316 headed a revolt against the Normans after his lease had been confiscated together with his bailiwick of Whitchurch. Once again, in 1316 the mill was "burnt down and destroyed by war", but by 1349 it was again grinding and was worth £6 13s 4d. Evidence that it was used by the people of Radyr is found in the accounts of Radyr manor in 1492, where there is a reference to the sum of

The Manor of Radyr

three shillings being normally paid for the use of the Lord's mill.

The boundaries of the manor at this time were not recorded, but a survey carried out in 1570 for the Earl of Pembroke as titular Lord of the Manor showed the demesne as including Wattral (Waterhall), Maesy-llech and, to the west, Maerdy; there were also three tenements, or rented holdings, of Radyr Isha (Lower Radyr), Radyr Ucha (Upper Radyr) and Goetre. The boundary to the south was the Clawdd Constable (Constable's Ditch) a considerable bank and ditch which separated the manor of Radyr from the manor of Llandaff and which at one time extended from the river to beyond the present Llantrisant Road; traces still survived until recently, although the major part was destroyed when the railway cutting was made. Although this may have been intended as a protection for Llandaff, it would also represent the extent of cleared land in this part of the manor in the 12th century.

Outside the demesne very little of the waste land had been enclosed or woodland cleared, or 'assarted', up to 1570. The 1570 survey lists only four freemen holding land for which rent was paid direct to the Lord of Glamorgan and, as J Barry Davies has shown, these all appear to be descendants of the 14th century Welsh Lord of Radyr, Cynwrig ap Hywel. This indicates how little the area had developed during the previous three centuries, during which of course it would have suffered the same difficulties as the rest of Glamorgan, with disastrous harvests (particularly in 1315 and 1370), flocks of sheep wiped out by scab infections, and the bubonic plague or Black Death in 1345/50, which reduced the population in most parts of Glamorgan by one third. In addition, there were local battles between the Marcher Lords; in 1321, for example, when the Manor was held by Hugh

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Despenser, Lord of Cardiff, the Mortimer family raided the Despenser lands with an army of 10,000 men and took and destroyed ten castles and devastated 23 manors, including Radyr. Reports at the time claimed that the destruction was complete. The stock was driven from the farms, standing crops cut down, agricultural implements taken away or burned, timber felled, the manor houses gutted and all records and deeds destroyed. Similar devastation no doubt followed the revolts by the Welsh lords against oppression. The revolts led by Llewellyn Bren (1316) and Owain Glyndwr (1400) were also particularly devastating; in the first, Llewellyn ap Cynwrig, who then held the demesne of the manor, remained loyal to the Lord of Glamorgan, and the local mill, Melin Griffith, which lay in the adjoining manor of Whitchurch but on the boundary with Radyr, was burnt and destroyed by war, as it had been 21 years before. No rent was paid by the manor in that year. Even as late as 1461, Morgan ap Llewellyn ap Ieuan, who held the demesne lands of Radyr from Richard Earl of Warwick, Lord of Glamorgan, was unable to pay his annual rent of 70 shillings.

The Lords of Radyr

THE LORDS OF RADYR

Strictly speaking, since 1242 when it was taken from Hywel ap Meredith into the Lordship of Robert Fitzhamon, Radyr has never had a resident 'Lord of the Manor'. Over the centuries, that position has been held by a number of individuals and indeed at one time the manor was held by the Crown. In 1405, Joan of Navarre, wife of Henry IV, was granted the custody of a number of manors in Glamorgan, including Radyr, which had previously been held by Thomas le Despenser who was executed for treason on 4 January 1400; they should have reverted to his heir when he came of age, but the boy died young, and the manors passed through his sister to the Beauchamp family.

The day to day administration of the village and its surrounding lands, however, has always been in the hands of others who held the manor on a form of lease. The first such 'leaseholder' of whom there is a record was Cynwrig ap Hywel, who in 1307 also held the lease of a large part of the adjoining manor of Whitchurch; by thus giving effective possession to the hereditary claimant of the title of Lord of the Manor, the Norman Lord of Glamorgan secured the loyalty of the Welsh tenantry, through their allegiance to their native lord. A descendant of Iestyn ap Gwrgant, the last Welsh Lord of Morgannwg at the time of the Norman Conquest, Cynwrig and his heirs administered Radyr for over 150 years until the demesne lands passed to Thomas Mathew in 1469 following his marriage to Katherine, daughter and co-heiress of Cynwrig's great-great-grandson, Morgan ap

The Lords of Radyr

Llewellyn ap Ieuan. Some years earlier, she had received them, with 40 acres of arable land and three tenements (ie. houses held on lease) as her share of her father's estate together with 300 acres of land in Pentyrch, Llantrisant, Llanilltud Faerdre and elsewhere¹³. The Mathew family, indeed, may have already owned some land within the manor through the marriage of Crisley, an earlier heiress of the Cynwrig family, and Thomas Mathew's great grandfather¹⁴.

At that time, there were two large manorial houses in Radyr: the original manor house of Radyr Isha near the church, and Radyr Ucha, on the site now occupied by the entrance to the comprehensive school. When the former passed to Thomas Mathew, the latter and its lands remained in the possession of another branch of the descendants of Cynwrig ap Hywel, who adopted the patronym of Morgan. Although they subsequently sold part of their lands, in the area now occupied by Morganstown, that branch retained Radyr Ucha for a further four generations, until by 1596 it also was acquired by the Mathews. Much of the land became a deer park at that time, whilst Radyr Ucha itself became a farmhouse. The Reverend William David, Rector of St Fagans, whose ancestors had lived there, recalled that in the 1840s it was still of a substantial size, with a finely decorated upper chamber with wainscotting and carving typical of the 16th century. It was demolished in about 1850, but part of it was reclaimed and converted into two cottages, which were demolished in turn when the school was built in the 1970s. One member of the Morgan family who was born at Radyr Ucha in the 16th century was Giles John David Morgan, known as Giles ap John the Poet, who has been more recently identified by the historian Dr. Prys Morgan¹⁵ as Sils ap Sion, whose work is now

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regarded as an important part of Welsh literary tradition. By his own admission, however, he was in his lifetime a soldier, merchant, farmer and often drunken fool, who caroused his way from fair to fair. His branch of the family adopted the patronym Giles and his descendants held for many years the post of Verger and Sexton to Llandaff Cathedral, into the 18th century.

Radyr Isha was always the principal house of the demesne, however, and the Mathew family were no doubt concerned to ensure that it reflected their standing in the county. The old house, which had stood to the west of the church for over 200 years, was no longer suitable, and accordingly a new house was built to the east of the church and near the road which led from the ford over the Taff. By the 16th century, the historian Rice Merrick of Cottrell could write of "*ye manor house by the west of ye church, sometime ye house of Morgan Llew ap Jeban, now decay'd*", and its remains were subsequently completely demolished, and the stone removed even from the foundations in places, when the deer park was laid out.

The new house, which became known as Radyr Court, must have been an impressive building, similar in size and perhaps in appearance to The Van at Caerphilly, seat of the Lewis family, or Beaupre Court near Cowbridge, which were built at about the same time. In two storeys round a central courtyard, with a large and no doubt imposing gateway, it survived into the 19th century, but was largely demolished before 1830, probably following a fire, and the surviving wings turned into a farmhouse, later to be developed into the present Radyr Court Inn. Substantial foundations of the old house remain, however, below the gardens of the inn and nearby shopping centre.

The Mathew Family

THE MATHIEW FAMILY

The Glamorgan County History indicates that the family acquired the status of minor squires by purchases and marriage in the 15th and 16th centuries. They claimed descent from Aidan ap Gwaethfod, who was Lord of Skenfrith in Gwent in about 1100 AD, and certainly the senior branch of the family, that of Llandaff, used as an emblem the crest of Gwaethfod – a black lion rampant on a silver background - whilst the Radyr branch adopted the heathcock as their badge. Whatever their origin, the family can be traced clearly from Ieuan ap Gruffudd Gethyn of Glynogwr, otherwise Sir Evan Gethyn, Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and traditionally hereditary guardian of the shrine of St. Teilo at Llandaff. His grandson, David Mathew, inherited the family lands in Glynogwr but also purchased Corntown and Wallas in the Vale of Glamorgan in about 1430 and later land at Llandaff, including the lease of Llandaff Court. He was knighted in 1461 at the Battle of Towton, where he was the standard bearer of Edward IV, but was killed by the Turberville family in a riot at Neath and interred in Llandaff Cathedral in 1464. His fourth son, Thomas Mathew, married the heiress of Radyr and also formally adopted the patronym of Mathew for the family, whose genealogy had previously been in the Welsh form.

The power and wealth of the Radyr branch prospered under Thomas Mathew. Both the estates gained by his marriage to Katherine, and the profits of his Office as Receiver of Ogmore

The Mathew Family

from 1446 to 1460, increased his standing in the county; when Thomas died in 1470 he was succeeded by his eldest son, David, who had been appointed as squire to the future Henry VII, and who married in 1475 Alice Vele, the sole heiress of Robert Vele of Gloucestershire, whose family had held the manor and castle of St. Fagans since 1320. Thomas' daughter, Sioned, also made advantageous marriages, first to Thomas Stradling of St. Donats and again to Rhys ap Thomas, Justiciar in Wales to Henry VII and probably the most influential man in the Principality at that time.

The Mathews thus became one of the leading families in the County with extensive lands and important and useful connections. Their estates were strengthened by the fact that Thomas had adopted the English system of primogeniture, by which the family lands were maintained as a single unit entailed to the eldest son, with only financial provision for any younger sons or daughters. Their position was reflected in their lifestyle, and David Mathew was renowned for his hospitality both to travellers and to the gentry of the Vale. Charles Morgan, a local historian who wrote a history of Radyr in the 1920s, has described¹⁶ how, in the centuries before the Reformation, thousands of pilgrims, often carrying as offerings large wax tapers up to ten feet long, would have passed through Radyr each year on their way from the shrine of St. Teilo at Llandaff to the shrine at Penrhys in the Rhondda, where there was a sacred well and a wonder-working image of the Virgin, like the famous one at Walsingham. It was customary that such pilgrims might be entertained at the great houses on the way, and certainly at Radyr Court the sick and feeble were attended to. An elegy of the 15th century on the death of David Mathew's daughter Elspeth tells

The Mathew Family

that "*her parlour was to numbers of invalids like a hostelry*". The writer, Rhosiart ap Rhys, was probably the household bard, as he had held that position at Llanharan when David Mathew acquired that manor.

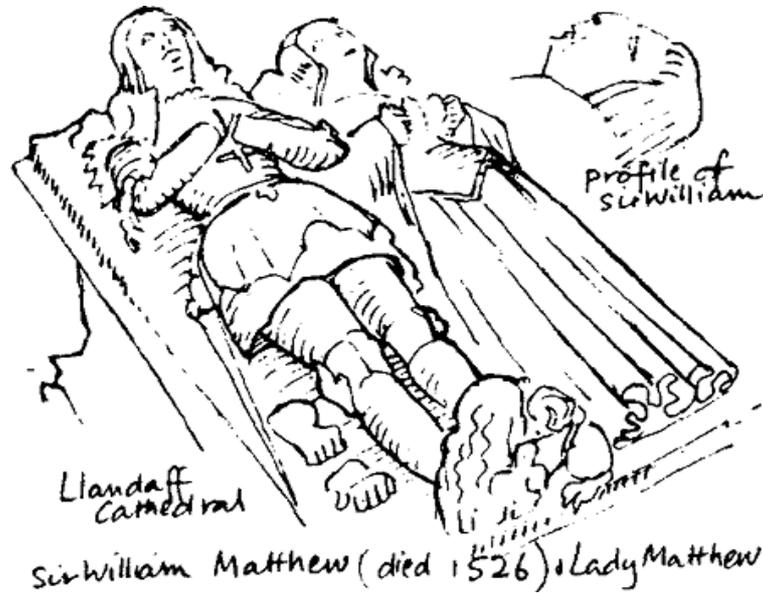
David was also a great benefactor of the Church: his legacies included bequests to the Greyfriars in Cardiff and to the Friars Preacher in Cardiff and London, and it is possible that he may have provided the pews and other furnishings of the church in Radyr described by the Reverend William David. Unfortunately, David died without male issue, and his brother William, who succeeded him in 1504, thus forfeited the land at St. Fagans. Like his brother, however, William was a staunch supporter of the Tudor dynasty, having been knighted by Henry VII at Bosworth in 1485, and also maintained the family tradition of patronage both of the Friars and of the Glamorgan bards until his death in 1526. One of the bards, Lewis Lang, described in a poem how:

*"To Radyr, a second Arthur's court, comes the wine of the fair island,
Paris, Rome and St. James. Sir William's Palace is a second St. Paul's.
The place we speak of is a second Court of Ynyr, the court of a knight to
which are summoned steeds and men. Every kind of man travels to the
headland at Radyr. From the court comes food for four hosts, there are
wine tables and bards to sing."*

Sir William's tomb, like that of his grandfather, can be seen in Llandaff Cathedral blazoned with his armorial bearings, which were restored in 1989 by the present head of the family.

He was succeeded by his son, Sir George, during whose

The Mathew Family



lifetime the standing and influence of the family was probably at its zenith. He was indeed a man of many parts; active in public affairs, his first appointment as Overseer of the Royal Iron Mines at Llantrisant in 1528 led to many other offices within the county, culminating in his election to Parliament in 1553 as the second Member to represent Glamorgan, and as Sheriff of the County in the following year. He lived in some state at Radyr, for in 1554 he was summoned to answer in the court of the Exchequer for retaining sixteen armed and liveried men beyond the ranks of his household. In domestic matters also his lifestyle was on an Arabian scale, for he was credited with 24 children, sixteen by his two wives and eight illegitimate¹⁷.

He was followed in 1558 by his eldest son, William (1531 - 1587), who continued to extend the family lands, which now included estates scattered over an area extending up to 15 miles

The Mathew Family

west and north west of Cardiff. His inheritance placed him among the dozen leading landowners of the shire; at the Muster of 1570 he was one of the ten Glamorgan gentry charged with the provision of one light horseman for the defence of the county. He was elected to Parliament in 1577 but, to quote from the History of Parliament:

"He was unwise enough to support a measure saddling the shire with more than the fair share of the cost of rebuilding a bridge over the Taff at Cardiff which the county had claimed, since its collapse six years earlier, to be the town's responsibility. Mathew's fellow gentry were naturally incensed at this move on the part of a man to whom they were paying five shillings a day, one shilling more than the going rate for Welsh county MPs, to represent their interests at Westminster. Next, in 1585, when there was famine in Cardiff, Mathew upset the county by speculating in grain. The next year he incurred, in his capacity as piracy commissioner, the more dangerous wrath of the Earl of Pembroke by citing his proteges, the borough officials of Cardiff, before the Privy Council on charges of collusion with pirates. Pembroke's reaction was to charge Mathew with collusion in a murder. He evaded summons before the Council in the Marches of Wales, of which Pembroke had recently become president, on the plea of illness and denounced to Burghley, the Queen's chief minister, Pembroke's whole administration of the land; but the Privy Council supported Pembroke and imprisoned Mathew, who died in the summer of 1587 before the matter came to trial."

The Mathew Family



Like his father, William had a large family and the marriages of his many daughters further strengthened the links between the Mathews and other gentry families. A memorial to his fifth daughter, Zirophaeniza (known as Martha) which can be seen in the church at Llangattock-nigh-Usk is reproduced above. Her first husband had been Mathew Johns of Llangattock; although following his death she

had married again, to Andrew Powell a Judge on the Brecon circuit, when she herself died in 1625 she was buried near her first husband and described on her memorial as a widow, even though her second husband was still alive.

The Decline of the Mathew Family

Although her memorial proudly bears their heathcock badge, by the time of Zirophaeniza's death the Mathew family's fortunes had declined dramatically. Whilst her father had at least two sons by his mistress Agnes, sister of Sils ap Sion of Radyr Ucha, no legitimate male heir survived from his marriage

The Mathew Family

to Margaret, daughter of Sir Charles Herbert of Swansea and Cogan Hill, and on his death the estate passed to his brother Henry. Unfortunately, Henry also had no legitimate sons and on his death in 1600 the third brother, Edmund, inherited both the estate and the manor house at Radyr Court.

Within Edmund's lifetime, the fortunes of the Mathew family of Radyr appear to have crashed, for a variety of causes. As J. Barry Davies has observed, it is not clear which factors contributed most, but part of the problem must have arisen from the need to provide dowries for 21 daughters within two generations as well as caring for eight illegitimate children together with all other members of the family. It is ironic that whilst Thomas Mathew had boldly broken with traditional Welsh forms of inheritance and name in an endeavour to establish a family which would rival those of the new Norman rulers, he could not foresee the effect of the unique preponderance of daughters which subsequent generations would produce within the family. A secondary cause may have been the development of a new deer park which, by dispossessing farming tenants from the traditional demesne lands, reduced the family's potential rental income.

The possession of a deer park was the sign of the successful Tudor gentleman and in 1578 there were thirteen in Glamorgan. It is known that Sir George Mathew had had one made before 1536, when it was recorded that "*George Matthews had a park not quite finished and another park with deer newly made, two miles above Radar by north west*".¹⁸ This is identified with a site near Llaniltern, a parish to the north of Radyr, where the area is still commemorated by the names Parc-y-Justis and Craig-y-Parc. This would have been at some distance, however, from

The Mathew Family

Radyr Isha, whereas the best families would have had their park adjacent to the family seat. Given the character of the family, therefore, it is not surprising that in 1578 Rice Merrick, a Clerk to the Peace for Glamorgan who recorded much of the local history of the county during his own period and reminiscences of earlier periods, should have described the deer park of George Mathew near Llaniltern as "*now ended*" and that in 1596 another historian of the time. Rice Lewis should have recorded another deer park belonging to the family, but this time "*hard by the house*".¹⁹ Archaeological and other records show that this occupied the area now bounded on one side by the river and on the other by Heol Isaf, and running from the manor house to what is now Woodfield Avenue. The Reverend William David's memoirs stated that in the early 19th century a wall seven feet high existed on the east side of the old park, where the railway now runs. Until the present housing estate was built, other parts of the wall ran from the churchyard to the Llantrisant Road, where a cottage known as Ty Parc stood, now the garden of a house in Heol Aradur; the original hamlet of Radyr stood just to the south of the wall. The park must have reverted to farming in the early 17th century, for by 1776 it was shown as divided by enclosure.

Perhaps the most important cause of the family's decline, however, was the effect of industrialisation and the parallel decline of the manorial system. For over one hundred years, every head of the family had occupied a leading position in local society, serving on the Commission of the Peace and also as Sheriff or Deputy Lord Lieutenant. But the end of the 16th century had seen the beginning of major changes in society and in the form of local government. Locally, the borough of Cardiff

The Mathew Family

was beginning to grow in importance, and whilst William Mathew, following the example of his father, had played an active part in these events, his influence declined when he incurred the enmity of the Earl of Pembroke. There were also continuing difficulties with his neighbours - in 1596 the rivalry between the Mathews of Radyr, the Lewises of The Van and the Herberts of Greyfriars in Cardiff erupted in a series of brawls which were serious enough to be reported to the Court of Star Chamber in London, and in the following year, although Sheriff of the County, Edmund was again reported for brawling in public. Nevertheless, Edmund brought to his inheritance not only the family pride and volatility, but also the spirit of the merchant venturers who were to transform the face of the country.

In the days before limited liability companies, industry was financed by the individual or by partnerships. Each partner in the company risked his whole wealth in an enterprise, and this often resulted in strange and constantly changing partnerships. What happened at Radyr was no exception. It was recognised in the 16th century that the ironstone within the Lesser Garth was suitable for smelting, using the charcoal from the nearby woods. As early as 1557 William Mathew is known to have inherited an interest in ironworks at Pentyrch, probably sited at the foot of the Garth near the present Ynys Bridge. These were rapidly expanded in later years. In 1564, Sir Henry Sidney of Sussex set up a new forge at Pentyrch, prompted no doubt by the decision of the Privy Council which, concerned at the shortage of suitable timber for men-of-war, banned the further felling of the great oak forests of south east England for charcoal burning. He brought in iron workers from Sussex and Europe, such as

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Gelynis Farm, Morganstown.

Hugh Lambert, an iron master from Tonbridge in Kent, described as "a Frenchman", who in 1570 bought part of the Radyr Ucha land from Morgan John and built the house now known as Gelynis. Another newcomer was Thomas Mynyvie, who leased from Henry Mathew part of the desmesne lands of the manor situated west of the Llantrisant Road, then called Fferm Goch, and who may have been the builder of the house known as Wetrel, later called Waterhall. He and William Mathew were partners in an enterprise involving the sale of plate iron, to be shipped from Cardiff to Rye in Sussex and to Bristol; one of their transactions led to a law-suit against the partners alleging undue delay in delivery.

It was during Edmund's association with Mynyvie, however, that the works switched from the production of iron plates to the casting of cannon, for sale in London, Bristol and the West Country for arming merchant ships. Some of this ordnance seems to have found its way abroad, and the political turmoil of the time, and particularly the wars with Spain, made this a

The Mathew Family

potentially dangerous and financially risky enterprise. Edmund had to give a financial bond to be forfeited if he recommenced the export of ordnance in contravention of the export monopolies granted by the Privy Council. Despite this, in 1602 he was again accused of exporting cannon illegally between 1582 and 1600; the serious nature of his offence is evident from the wording of the Privy Council ruling.

"That especial care be had to put downe Edmond Matthewes esquire for casting any ordnaunce at his ffurnace neere Cardiff in Wales because from that place very easilie they may be carried into Spayne; for five or six yeares past most that he has made has been stolen beyond seas, and as the officers of that port are poor and dare not displease him, that place is very unfit for casting ordnaunce."

This second accusation was successful. However, in 1625 the merchants of Bristol petitioned the privy council to allow forty guns and other pieces of ordnance to be made yearly at Cardiff "where the best ordnance is made" to be sold at Bristol and Barnstaple.

The losses incurred for various reasons led to Edmund borrowing from his nephew, Sir Henry Billingsley, in the first instance £8,000, at a time when the income of the estate could not have been more than £600 per annum. He used the Mathew lands, forges and ironworks as security for this loan. As his debts mounted he arranged a second mortgage with Sir Hugh Smythe. By 1607 Edmund's debts had reached £25,000 and in 1608 Billingsley learnt of Edmund's deception. Smythe

The Mathew Family

succeeded in getting his case before the Court of Chancery first, however, and it was not until 1611 that a writ was issued granting Billingsley possession of the mortgaged property. The writ was brought to Cardiff by commissioners appointed by the Court, including Humphrey Sheppard and Richard Batherne. They also carried warrants to arrest George Mathew, one of Edmund's sons, and his associate Reginald Gwyn, but when on 19 May they seized Gwyn and took him to a house in Cardiff, George Mathew burst in with drawn sword. Bloodshed was prevented by the arrival of John Edwards, one of the bailiffs of Cardiff, who first seized Mathew but then allowed him to escape, disarming Batherne instead.

Eleven days later, the warrants were renewed for the arrest of George Mathew and his father and for the questioning of the bailiff. A warrant had also been issued, by the Sheriff of Gloucester, for the arrest of another of Edmund's sons, Thomas. It was served on him on 30 May by one John Crosse when he caught up with him in Stow on the Wold. Thomas promised to submit if Crosse would dismount, but when he did so leapt on the horse and charged Crosse to the ground, wounding him severely. Thomas, '*a great huge man*', then jumped off and, kneeling on Crosse's stomach, would have throttled him if the townsfolk, gathered for market day, had not overpowered him. Like George, he was then committed to the Fleet prison in London. The family continued to resist the writ, however. Richard Batherne was attacked on Cardiff bridge by a man armed with a billhook, and an hour later, when he was coming out of his lodgings in Cardiff, was stabbed in the back by another of Edmund's sons, Lewis, and as the report says, '*languisheth in peril of his life*'.

The Mathew Family

Matters now came to a head, and on 12 August 1611 the Sheriff of Glamorgan, George Lewis of The Van, supported by the King's Sergeant at Arms from London, sought to take possession of Radyr Court. They appeared before the house with what they supposed to be a sufficient force, but found it barricaded against them. When the Sergeant at Arms displayed his mace of authority, the Sheriff graphically reported that:

"We were answered only by a gentlewoman at a window, being one of the said Edmund Matthew's daughters, that they had received commandment from their parents not to deliver it, nor would they, but would rather die. Whereupon, after a full hour run out of an hour glass, and the offenders continuing their disobedience, we caused an assault to be made against the chief gate of the house, being very strong, (all the other doors and lower windows being walled up) and then they within began some to hurl stones from the gutters of the house, others we might see running towards the gate with weapons, targets, muskets and callivers, so settled and prepared for resistance that we could not at this time perform the service, being assured that there are near one hundred persons assembled in the house ... which is not to be won without ordnance to batter it and shedding of much blood".

Unfortunately, the records do not show how the problem was overcome, but Edmund's son, Captain George Mathew, eventually succeeded to the possession of what remained of the estate. The great days of the Mathews of Radyr were now at an

The Mathew Family

end, however, and in 1625 the estate was sold to the Lewises of The Van, and Captain George and his family moved to Thuries, in Ireland. From this time, none of the major landowners in Radyr now lived in the parish. There would be several of wealth and influence, - the Davids, the Rowbothams, and the Bassetts, - but none would again have the dominance of the Mathews.

The Lewises²⁰ were in background similar to the Mathews, and indeed claimed descent from the same Welsh princeling. The family's main home, built of stone taken from Caerphilly Castle, was The Van, an Elizabethan house of some standing, the ruins of which are still visible about a mile outside Caerphilly on the Draethen road. The height of the family's influence came in the early 17th century when two members of the family, father and son and both named Edward, were knighted. The older Sir Edward added extensively to the family landholding, gaining St. Fagans in 1616 and Radyr in 1625. The estate in due course passed to Thomas Lewis whose only daughter, Elizabeth, married Other, third Earl of Plymouth, in 1730, and their son. Other Lewis, who became fourth Earl, succeeded to the Lewis lands in 1736.

The change from Mathew to Lewis has to be seen against the background of wider changes in the government of England and Wales. The upheavals of the civil wars led eventually to a strengthening of local as distinct from national authority, with administration increasingly in the hands of the gentry in their capacity as Justices of the Peace who, through the Courts of Quarter Sessions, were responsible not only for the punishment of crime but for the control of many aspects of local life. From the point of view of an historian, local records become more important; whilst generally these are not always complete,

The Mathew Family

The Account of Wm. Herbertville as Overseer of the poor & Surveyor of the Highways in the Parish of Kase for the year 1768

paid for ale. at the parish meeting	0	5	0
paid for hiring my Kate	0	0	6
paid John ab John the first week 2-8 for six weeks 3 a week	1	0	6
paid for his coffin 10 for opening his grave tolling the bell 1-8 for dropping his Corpse 1 for candles & trouble in Margaret Griffiths house at the time of the Burial 1	0	13	0
paid for swearing the constable	0	0	6
paid for 6 1/2 of cloth for John ab John & Robert Wynn for waistcoats 10 Canvas 3 Buttons 3 Staylaps & thread 1/2	0	11	0
paid for making the said waistcoats	0	1	8
paid for a pitch of Lime & the carriage to mend the parish house (Chimney & for saving the 10 hours a storm & mending the thatch & paid the mason 8	0	1	6
paid Woulhan Thomas of wookes at 2 8 a week	0	17	6
paid Cate Cadogan for nursing 10: Thomas Child 8 weeks	0	12	0
paid for Candle 1-4 Flaxseed for potticoat & wraps 3	0	4	4
paid the Midwife	0	5	0
paid the first quarterly payment 1-8-2 the second payment 5-11 the third payment 5-1/2 the fourth payment 5-7	2	4	8 1/2
paid towards the support of Wm: Thomas when she was sick in a Fever the first time	0	2	0
paid towards the Childs maintenance for 2 weeks for a search at Bridgend for the father of the Child	0	1	6
paid towards the support of Woulhan Thomas's Child when she was very ill	0	2	0
to towards her funeral expenses	0	5	0
paid Wm: Thomas when she got sick in a fever the second time for the first fortnight 1/2 a week for four weeks 2 a week	0	10	0
paid for a Commitment for Mary Richard	0	1	0
paid the old Breerton	4	5	3
	12	6	1 1/2

Carried over

The accounts of the overseer of the poor and surveyor of the highways for 1766 included in the churchwardens' accounts as referred to on page 36.

The Mathew Family

Brought forward		£	s	d
Paid towards the Reparation of Newbridge		2	0	2 1/2
Paid John Ross for making a Rate for that purpose		0	1	0
Paid the Constable for attending 4 meetings, a ticket for and a List of the Freeholders		0	4	0
Paid for making the Land & Window Duplicates		0	4	0
Paid Elizabeth Howell 33 weeks at 1/6 p ^r week		3	18	6
Paid 8 ^d 2 weeks at 1 p ^r week		0	2	0
Paid Robert William 53 weeks at 8 p ^r week		1	8	6
D ^o for a pair of shoes 4, for a shirt & making it 2/9		0	6	9
Paid at the meetings at Newmill for an order to change the Surveyor of the Highways 1/8 my Allowance. 1		0	2	6
my usual allowance for the Tythe Barn		0	2	6
Paid Edmund Cadogan 2 a week for 4 weeks		0	8	0
Paid D ^o a peck of Barley 2, a week of work to horse rent		1	7	0
Paid towards Margaret Griffith's Waleis a peck of tobacco		0	4	6
Paid D ^o for ten weeks 2 p ^r week		1	0	6
Paid a Thatcher for 2 days work upon the parish House 2/8 nine score Bolles of D ^o a thousand spars 1/8		0	13	0
for solving the Thatcher 1/8 three iron work 8		0	0	6
Paid for putting a handle in the pickaxe		0	2	6
Paid at Newmill for an order to change the Overseer and my allowance		0	1	6
my Rate and Account		0	1	6
Paid the Constable for making two Lists of the Tythe that was at Cadogan's Waleis man's attendance at two		0	0	0
Militia meetings				
Paid Laurence John & towards the repair of the causeway by Do'n & Hart		3	0	6
Disbursed as Overseer of the poor		2	1	8
Disbursed as Churchwarden		24	9	7
Disbursed in all		1	3	6
Received by rate		25	13	1
Ballance due to the parish		31	8	8
		5	15	7

The Act of Mr William Turbot will be allowed of
by us the partitioners under named

John Hobbs the new Overseer
Morgan William began his year the 13
of May 1767

John Price
William Morgan

The Mathew Family

those for Radyr are unusually detailed. More than eighty wills made during this time by Radyr people still survive, and at their best they give the background to a full account of life on farms in the parish²¹. The parish registers are complete from 1725²² and the churchwardens accounts cover the period from 1740 to 1795²³. There are several taxation returns including the Hearth Tax of 1670²⁴ and a rare tax return of the Commonwealth period²⁵, as well as two fine maps, the Plymouth estate map of 1766²⁶ and the more complete Tithe Map of 1841²⁷. These, together with the census returns for every ten years from 1801 onwards²⁸, present a remarkably detailed picture of the parish between the time of the civil wars and the industrial revolution.

The Civil Wars

THE CIVIL WARS

During this period, life in the village, as in many other country parishes, appears to have been affected only indirectly by national events, although there can be no doubt that the people of Radyr would have had a grandstand view of at least one part of the conflict which had a major effect upon the shaping of the nation, namely the struggles between King and Parliament.

The Glamorgan gentry were on the whole in favour of the King, at least in the early stages of the war. "*All Wales is the nursery of the Kings Infantry*", said a contemporary, and the Vale of Glamorgan as the most populous part of the country was a rich recruiting ground. So numerous were the Welsh soldiers captured by the Parliamentarians that the Puritan, Walter Craddock, preached to them in Welsh on Tower Hill. At the battle of Edgehill in 1642, William Herbert of Cogan Pill and Sir Mathew Cradock were killed and Sir Edward Stradling of St. Donat's was taken prisoner. Miles Mathew of Llandaff, in command of the Life Guards, carried the Royal Standard and helped the King and Duke of York to escape. The defeat of the King at Naseby in 1645 led to a new phase of the war. Charles now based himself at Raglan Castle, the home of his staunchest supporter, the Marquis of Worcester, and looked to South Wales for increased support.

At the same time, however, a growing independence was visible in the Glamorganshire gentry. They were increasingly

The Civil Wars

concerned with the influence of outsiders in the running of the county, whilst the publication by Parliament of Charles' correspondence with the Irish papists did not help matters. The King met the gentry and their followers drawn up in full military array at St. Pagans and made considerable concessions to them, but Glamorgan was not to be wholeheartedly for the King again. Indeed, by early 1646 the county was governed by a committee of Parliamentarians, but once again the gentry objected to being governed by outsiders and went so far as to lay siege to Cardiff Castle. It was during this siege that a Parliamentary vessel fired at Cardiff Castle to show the besieged defenders that help was on the way.

The final stage of the conflict, sometime known as the second Civil War, saw the most important engagement in the area, the Battle of St. Fagans. By 1648 Parliament was in control of most of the country, and started to disband its army. However some troops in West Wales were dissatisfied with the terms of their discharge and determined to march on Cardiff and seize the castle. As they advanced, they attracted support from Royalist sympathisers in the Vale of Glamorgan, and by the time they left Cowbridge the rebel army, mainly Welsh but including some English, numbered about 8,000. In response, Colonel Horton who commanded a brigade of regular troops at Brecon, including some elements of the cavalry of the New Model Army, force-marched 3,000 men through atrocious weather to intercept the insurgents before they could reach Cardiff. Crossing the river between Radyr and Llandaff, probably using both the fords and the bridge, they advanced along the old route to the west, following what are now the Fairwater and Pentrebane

Roads, so as to block the advance of the opposing force, by now

The Civil Wars

at Peterston-super-Ely, by deploying along a line between Pentrebane Farm and St Pagans Castle. The opposing armies were in position by 4 May, and battle was joined on the morning of 8 May, in drizzling rain and over soft and muddy ground. Even though they were outnumbered, the superior equipment and discipline of Horton's forces meant that the outcome was never seriously in doubt, and after two hours the Welsh army was utterly routed, losing over 1000 killed and 3000 prisoners. There is no record that any part of the action took place within Radyr, although there may have been some pursuit of fugitives as they sought to flee from the battlefield. A small cannon ball of the period was recently found at Radyr Farm, and there is a tradition that the Ty Nant mound was used by the Parliamentary gunners to bombard Castell Coch, where Royalist troops were sheltering. According to legend, a local woman was supposed to have been captured and killed by Royalist troops at Gelynys Farm, where her ghostly bloodstain is said to be visible to this day!

It is not clear what part, if any, the Lewis family may have played at this time, for some members supported the King and others favoured the Parliamentary cause. Nevertheless, in a letter to John Nashe M.P. in July 1648, William Lewis complained that "*my bailiff in Wales writes me that my tenants at The Van and St. Fagans where Laugharne (the Royalist general) was routed will abate me £500 in rent for the quartering of the whole of the Parliamentary army before and after the battle of St. Fagans*". The inhabitants of Radyr must have had some very hungry soldiers billeted upon them! Nor was William Lewis the only person to be affected financially. In 1650, a will made hastily by David Morgan of Radyr was written on the back of a

The Civil Wars

rate return for 1649, "*towards the maintenance of the forces for the security of England and Ireland from the 23rd September 1649 to 23rd December 1649 rated after 7d in the pound*".

This document is of considerable interest because it is the first showing each household in the parish, thirty four in all, which suggests a total population of about 160". It also gives the names of the head of each household, from Morgan Roberts clerk (i.e. clergyman) to Captain Henry Morgan. Finally, it is the first document to mention the "*tithing barne*", on which the churchwardens paid £1.3s.4d. (This must have been of considerable size, for throughout the 1790s it was always rated as being half the value of Maes y Llech Farm but its exact location is unknown. The only possible clue is that a field next to Radyr Farm is called Barn Field on the 1766 Plymouth map).

The Years of Peace

THE YEARS OF PEACE

- FOR THE rich

What was life like in Radyr between the end of the Civil War and the early 1800s? Two wills show one aspect. On 19 January 1665 Henry Bassett of Radyr Farm wrote his last will and testament. He started conventionally enough :- "First I recommend my soul unto Almighty God my maker hoping assuredly by the merritts of my lord and saviour Jesus Christ to be made a partaker of everlasting Glorie in his heavenly kingdom and my bodie to the earth whereof it is made". He went on to make donations to the cathedral at Llandaff, the poor of Llandaff and Radyr, and to the curate "for my fore gotten tithes". He then proceeded to make bequests in a very long four-page will.

Unfortunately, he died heavily in debt, leaving his executors, his three sons in law, with a considerable problem. In March one of them, Thomas Rees, wrote to the Court of Probate at Llandaff refusing to act as executor. The final outcome was that the will was put on one side and the estate granted probate as though no will existed, i.e. by letters of administration. In September his widow, Catherine, signed an agreement to 'pay all the debts of the sayd deceased so farr forth as the goodwill there unto extends and the law her bind'. The document of greatest interest however is not the will itself but the fine inventory which was attached, listing the possessions of the deceased. First, and unusually, his landholding was included; Radyr Farm itself was held on a lease from the Earl of Pembroke with one life, that of Catherine Bassett, still to run out of the number of lives, usually three,

The Years of Peace

for which such leases were granted. Henry also had two parcels of land in Whitchurch and a town house in Cardiff; the four leases together were valued at £220. However, the lease with the highest value, £300, was not a lease for land, but that to the income of the Treasurership and Prebendaryship of the Cathedral at Llandaff, which he held from Jesus College, Oxford, for a period of twenty years.

The inventory also gives a good idea of the nature of farming and the way of life of one of the richer inhabitants of the parish. Henry Bassett had six oxen with which his servants would plough; he kept seventy-three sheep, eleven cows, five 2-year old cattle, and seven horses. There were six acres of corn in the ground, probably winter corn, as the spring corn would not have been planted when Henry Bassett died on 1 February. But he was primarily a lawyer rather than a farmer, and this is evidenced by the room by room breakdown of his chattels in the inventory, from which the house that stood in 1666 on the site of the present Radyr Farm can be reconstructed. It was a substantial building on three floors, consisting of fifteen rooms including a well furnished hall, a study, six bedrooms, and two lofts, as well as the kitchen, buttery, brewhouse and cellar. As well as the usual list of chairs, tables, stools, beds, mattresses, gratebacks, fire irons and pots and pans, there was a clock and books to the value of £5 in the study. Last but not least, six pewter chamber pots!

The size of the house is confirmed by a return made in 1670 for the Hearth Tax, which required a payment of two shillings per annum on every hearth in a house. Katherine Bassett had by far the greatest number of hearths in Radyr, seven in all, with the next largest, James Rosser, having only four. (The same return

The Years of Peace

gave the number of hearths at St Fagans Castle and at Bryn-y-Gynnen, the old manor house at Llandaff, as thirteen in each case).

This picture can be compared with that of the neighbouring farm, Maes y Llech, some 80 years later, on the death of Oliver and Mary Rowbotham in 1751. Oliver, a prosperous farmer from Llanedynr, had married Mary James, daughter and heiress of Maes y Llech farm, on 27 August 1737. They had three children - Mary, baptised in 1738/9, John in 1741 and Oliver in 1743. From the churchwardens' accounts we find that Oliver was churchwarden, overseer of the poor, and surveyor of the highways in 1744. He was in all ways a larger than life character. There is a memorial plaque to him and to Mary inside the church of St. John Baptist, to which he had presented the Jacobean silver which is amongst the church's treasures. Unfortunately, the plaque is now illegible, but when the Rev. William David noted it towards the end of the last century, it stated that Oliver weighed thirty-one stone.

On his death, which was closely followed by that of his wife, four persons, including "John Morgan of Radir", became bound to the Probate Court of Llandaff to administer the estate on behalf of the children. An inventory was drawn up and presented to the court on 27 May 1751. Once again it is full and detailed, down to the last tablecloth and napkin. Being drawn up in May, it gives a particularly full picture of the farm at Maes y Llech. There were ten oxen for ploughing, nine young steers, eleven cows and calves, ten heifers, one bull, four workhorses, one mare and foal, one filly, forty ewes and lambs, twenty-six sheep, twenty-nine lambs, one sow with seven piglets, another sow, fifteen other pigs, poultry of all sorts.

The Years of Peace



Jacobean Silver presented to the church by Oliver Rowbotham

On the arable side of the farm, there was grain in the barn, and a rick of wheat still unthreshed estimated at sixty bushels. There were eight acres of wheat in the ground, twenty-three acres of barley, and two acres of oats and peas.

The house which was smaller than Radyr Farm had been 80 years earlier, comprised a parlour, kitchen, dairy, bakehouse, brewery, and three bedchambers, one containing lumber. But the Rowbothams' lifestyle was more luxurious than that of the Bassetts; the inventory mentions a great deal of gold and silver, including five gold rings, silver shoebuckles, teaspoon and thimble. Other items of special interest include saddles and rugs.

Thus there is a fairly clear picture of what life was like for the well-off farming class in the parish, but what of the others?

The Years of Peace

- The Yeomen ...

Morgan John, described as "a yeoman of Radyr" who died in 1726, may well have been typical of the majority of the population at that time. His will and the accompanying inventory, reproduced on page 46, reflect a hard but not necessarily uncomfortable life - two feather beds, two cupboards, two table and two chests show that his house was reasonably furnished, whilst barley in the barns and wheat in the mow show that his plough oxen had been put to good use. He does seem to have some cause for concern about his children's future, however; the farm stock was to be divided between his sons John and Thomas, "but if my said son Thomas Morgan will keep company with or marry the daurtor of Thomas ffrances I give my household stuff entirely to my son John Morgan". Incidentally, although the will is in English, he appears to have used the Welsh form of nomenclature, signing himself Morgan John but naming his sons as John and Thomas Morgan.

- And the Poor

It is easiest to consider those at the opposite end of the social scale, who by the standards of the time were classified as 'the poor'. Since Tudor times, responsibility for those who could not sustain themselves for one reason or another had been placed on the rest of the inhabitants of the parish in which they were born or in which they had established a right of settlement. It is significant that there were fewer poor in Radyr than in other nearby parishes. Of the 31 heads of households listed in the Hearth Tax return for 1670, only six were rated as being 'under the value and poore'. On the other hand, Pentyrch had 40, Llandaff 32, Llantrisant 27 and St. Pagans 18, whilst in Cardiff

The Years of Peace

An Inventory of all and singular the
 Good Chittels and Chattels of Morgan John Late
 of the parish Radyr in the County of Glamorgan
 and diocess of Landaffs yeoman & also made valued
 and appraised the 27 day of February anno
 Domini 1726 by Thomas Morgan and Francis
 William appraisors as followeth

1726

	l	s	d
From his wearing apparel valued at	01	10	0
From ready money in y ^e house	00	13	0
From 2 fether beds with appurtenances	03	00	0
From beds and parlor upholst. att	03	10	0
From 2 Cupboards 2 tables and 3 Chests	03	10	0
From all y ^e rest of Lumber stuffs	00	05	0
From Implem ^{ts} belonging to y ^e fire	00	10	0
From blawing and Tayry vessells att	00	05	0
From 4 oxen valued att	16	00	0
From 2 Cows valued att	03	00	0
From one yearling cow & year old Steer	01	10	0
From one hearse att	03	00	0
From wheat in the mow att	07	00	0
From Green wheat in the ground	07	00	0
From Barly in y ^e barns att	15	00	0
From Implem ^{ts} belonging to husbandry	00	10	0
From p ^{er} tilly of all sorts att	00	01	6
Suma	69	14	6

An Inventory of the goods and chattels of Morgan John
 dated 27 February 1726

The Years of Peace

almost every street seems to have been populated with large numbers of poor, described there simply as 'paupers'. The position in Radyr was due to the fact that, as the Plymouth family owned the majority of the land, it was what is known as a 'closed' parish, with settlement restricted only to those workers needed on the farms; what development did take place, in the hamlet of Groeswen in the 18th century and in Morganstown in the 19th, was outside the Plymouth estate lands.

Those heads of households who were taxable met annually in a general vestry meeting to appoint an overseer of the poor, as well as other officers such as the churchwarden and the surveyor of the highways; often indeed, as was the case in Radyr, the same person carried out all three functions. The annual vestry also considered the accounts for the previous year and those for Radyr, which have survived for the years 1740 -1795, show the running of the parish at its most detailed. The faded handwriting on the old pages brings back to life many of the long-dead people of the village, even without the reminder, written on a blank page in a copper plate hand:

"When this you see remember and bear it in your mind when I am dead and laid in grave pray look upon this line. Wrote by me Morgan William May 14 1785"

Naturally, the churchwardens were concerned firstly with the upkeep of the church fabric and its services, and replacement of the church bell rope, an unusually frequent expense, the whitewashing of the church with lime, the washing of the vestments, and the cost of the three annual communions, Whitsun, Christmas and Easter, are all included, as is that of special prayers, "*for the*

The Years of Peace

safe delivery of the Queen in childbirth" in 1766, and "*for the safe delivery of the King from assassination*" in 1786. But one wonders what occasioned the need for "a prayer against vice" ?

The accounts also reflect the impact of Acts of Parliament on the people of the parish. The Militia Act of 1757 which had required every parish to provide, by ballot, one able bodied man to serve in the Militia also provided for a substitute to be found if the man chosen could not serve. In 1782, the parish paid two guineas to an unnamed man to quit the militia, and £6.10.0 to be paid to his substitute. But the care of the poor appears to have taken up most of the churchwarden's time, and the greater part of the parish rate. Relief was often "outdoor", i.e. given in the home, but the parish also owned a cottage at Groeswen where the poor could be housed. The account book has many references such as "*lock for ye parish hous*", and "*mending the parish house chimney and thatch after a storm*".

As already noted, Groeswen had developed as a small hamlet on land not owned by the Plymouth family, near the ancient cross marking the pilgrim way to Penrhys, at the junction of Heol Isaf and the Llantrisant Road. The Plymouth estate map of 1766 merely shows a number of fields round that junction with the name Groeswen, but by the time the tithe map was prepared in 1841 there was a group of four or five cottages facing Heol Isaf, which have now disappeared entirely. For those of the poor who were still able to live in their own cottages, relief was given in both money and kind. For instance, in 1752 the overseer '*paid Anne Edwards to buy coal, to buy flannel, thirty nine weeks at 6d. per week*'. In 1786, in one of the few references to the craftsmen of the village, 'Evan the Smith

The Years of Peace

was in need of relief; could this have been because, as noted by the contemporary diarist William Thomas of nearby Michaelston-super-Ely, he was '*one of the greatest gamesters of ball one day in our parts*' ? In any event, the overseer paid the rent for the smithy, which stood near the poor house in Groeswen. Another reference to a village craftsman comes in 'paid to Elias the shoemaker for two pairs of shoes for Thomas Rees' children'. (His workshop, from other sources, is known to have been in his home in Ffordd Llas, where he is believed to have led one of the first Methodist meeting houses in the village.)

Many of those receiving relief were old and many were at death's door. 'Paid William Evans to buy candles and other provisions for those who watched him in his sickness', and soon afterwards 'paid towards William Evans coffin and what belonged to his funeral. Paid William Evans' daughter in law for watching, laying out his body, the bell and the grave'.

The overseer also paid out medical expenses, and in this respect Mary John was very costly to the parish. In 1786 '*paid Mr Bloom Williams surgeon for attending to Mary John at the time she broke her arm at Llandaff £10 10s*', which in those days was a considerable sum.

Because Radyr had relatively few poor of its own, the overseer spent a great deal of time assisted by the constable appointed by the vestry on the removal of those with no right of residency in the parish. Firstly he had to discover the parish of origin of the pauper. In 1781 'paid for a warrant to bring William Thomas to swear as to his parish'. The next stage was the removal of the pauper as can be seen in the case of Mary Roberts, '*my allowance for going to Lantrisant upon the account of Mary*

The Years of Peace

Roberts. (Llantrisant was where the Justices met in Petty Session, a kind of magistrates court, and where warrants would have been issued.) *For going to Cardiff and Llanishen for a warrant to swear her parish. For going with her to Cardiff I and the constable and for orders to go with her to her parish. At Groeswen for meat and drink. To going with her to her parish'.*

The process sometimes worked against the parish of course; in 1791 the overseer was obliged to pay for *'the removing of Eleanor Turberville's household furnishings from St. Faggans'.*

The overseer also had to ensure wherever possible that the fathers of illegitimate children took financial responsibility for them, rather than that they should become a cost to the parish. Enquiries would be made; *'paid for Gwenllian Thomas' oath as to the father of her bastard child'* and *'for a horse to carry Ann Rosser to her deposition at two several times'.* Sometimes he would be successful; *'paid for a warrant to apprehend the father of Catherine Lewis' bastard, paid for ale at Chappel (Llanilltern) and Llandaff where he was one night and day in custody'.*

On the whole, however, provision for the poor appears to have been made with care and not without compassion, at least initially. But gradually the cost increased, and more and more pages of the account book are taken up with the poor. For example, the accounts for 1742 include *"two sacks of coal for Old Griffith and his wife 1s 2d."* and again *"paid for a breast of mutton for Anne Edward 8d."* Often it is possible to trace the story of some person in the parish for several years, as they struggled to survive despite their poverty. The accounts for 1762 include *"for a pair of shoes for Isabella's child 1s 6d "* and

The Years of Peace

at a later date "*flanel for a shift for Isabella's daughter and making 2s ½d*". In 1763 she received "*a pettycoat and bedgown 3s 8d, and a pair of shoes 1s 10d*". In the following year, the parish bought flannel again for the little girl, but in 1765 her story ends. "*Paid Lewis Williams for a coffin to Isabella's child 9s 0d. For digging the grave and ale to the Clerk 1s 4d.*".

The growing need for a more mobile workforce made the process of removing paupers to their parish of origin increasingly time consuming and costly, and in 1776 Henry Jones, who acted as overseer of the poor '*at a sallary from William Terberville of Waterall*' attended a meeting at Llantrisant concerning the state of the poor. The 'abstract of returns relating to the expense and maintenance of the poor in the County of Glamorgan in 1803'³⁰ shows that in that year Radyr raised £134.4s.3¾d. in poor relief compared with £97.15s.11d averaged over the three years 1783-5. It also shows that in 1803 Radyr spent only £9.2s.6¼ d on the church, highways and militia; about one fifteenth of what had to be spent on the poor. The problem was even greater in the cities than in the countryside and reform, though delayed by the Napoleonic wars, finally came through the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which removed responsibility for the poor from the parishes and placed it in the hands of elected Guardians. Supervision by central Government was restored by the creation of a central Poor Law Board. Even the County came under attack as a means of administration; Poor Law Unions were grouped around a centrally convenient market town regardless of county boundaries, and thus Radyr was covered by the Cardiff Poor Law Union, which included two parishes in Monmouthshire.

Poverty certainly appears to have been widespread in the

The Years of Peace

parish, at this time, when the average annual expenditure on the poor was £195³¹. Poverty may have diminished in later years but a return for 1889 shows that one inhabitant of the parish was an inmate of Cardiff Workhouse and seven paupers were in receipt of outdoor relief presumably administered by the two parish overseers of the poor³². Private charity supplemented public provision: in January 1897 the parish magazine noted that through the generosity of church members the Rector had been able to distribute some beef and coal to deserving cases.

The overseer also had other duties, such as ensuring public health, although until the 1830s this entailed little more than clearing dead sheep from streams! In Radyr, vermin seem to have been a major problem, especially polecats; in 1752 '*killing of two cats*' and again in 1759 '*killing two more pole cats*'. But his main task other than caring for the poor was that which came from his post as surveyor of the highways.

The King's Highway

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the village was served by only a small number of roads, of which the main ones were the highway to Llantrisant and the present Heol Isaf leading to the Taff gorge. There was also the road from the ford and a number of minor tracks, of which the most obvious survivor is perhaps Ffordd Las. The only one to retain any semblance of its former state however is the stretch of the old road which lies between Radyr Farm and the golf course. This once ran from St. John's church to Pentyrch, and might perhaps have been known as Heol Uchaf.

The responsibility for the maintenance of such roads and any minor bridges had been laid on the parish in Tudor times; each parishioner was subject under statute to do six days' work on the highways. The early churchwardens' accounts suggest that these days could be occasions for some festivity: '*paid for ale for the parishioners gathering stone to mend the highway*'. However, more and more often as the period progressed this system was replaced by the employment of paid labour; '*paid Isaac Davies for mending the highway*', '*paid William Thomas labourer for 154 days work on the highway*', '*paid Henry Thomas smith for hedging twice*', '*clearing watercourses*', '*opening gutters*', and '*paid for pitching sixty four yards of causeway at 3d. a yard*'.

Apart from this last entry, the work seems to have been rudimentary, being mostly concerned with the filling of large

The King's Highway

holes with stones. The equipment too was basic; many references can be found to the repair of pickaxes and sledgehammers, and on one occasion a completely new one had to be made; '*paid Henry Thomas smith for making a new sledge*'. The parish of Radyr was fortunate in that it did not have to maintain any bridge over the Taff, the nearest one being in Llandaff parish. However, there is a reference in the accounts for 1766 to the '*reparation of Newbridge*', most probably a bridge over the brook at Ty Nant, whilst in 1771 the account book refers to '*paid John Griffiths for making a new causeway by Ty-yn-Nant 1s 6d.*', which suggests that this low lying part of the village was then liable to flooding.

The maintenance of the highways was of particular concern to the Court of Quarter Sessions³³, which could enforce action if a road was 'presented' to it as needing repair by 'inditing' the parish involved. Thus, on 13 July 1736

'We the persons subscribed being two of His Majesties Justices of the Peace in and for the said countie doe herby certify that the highway leading from the ford called Rhyd y Radir on ye river Taff e from ye parish of Radir to the church and village of Whitchurch in ye said countie which stands presented.... hath since such presentament been well repayed by and att the expense of ye inhabitants of ye said parish'.

The parish officers did their best; in Radyr in 1745 they '*paid Mr Llewellyn towards discharging the highways from under presentament*'. But it was a losing battle; in 1753 '*the jury present the highway leading from Velindre in the parish of Whitchurch*

The King's Highway

towards the house of Thomas Morgan in the parish of Radyr to be out of repair', and so on. From the 1770s the old system could no longer cope, and in 1773 appeared the first reference to a payment for the use of the Turnpike Road.

Turnpikes were established throughout the country from the latter part of the 18th century as a means of improving the condition of the major roads, many of which had received little more than patching since they were first built by the Roman engineers. The concept was simple: tolls would be collected at certain points on the roads which were to be improved, marked by gates, chains or 'turnpikes', and the revenue would pay for the upkeep as well as providing a profit for those who had financed the particular stretch of road work. As far as Radyr was concerned the main road through the parish from Llandaff to Capel Llanilltern came under the Cardiff Turnpike Trust. (Other roads remained the responsibility of the parish. The accounts for 1777 show that 10d. per day was paid for raising gravel and mending the road leading from Radyr towards the River Taff, sixteen yards of road six feet wide at 6d. per yard were made on the Drisgol Road and five shillings were spent on mending the road from Ty Isha towards Llandaff Bridge, whilst in 1779 six shillings were paid for widening the road from Ffordd Las to Pentyrch). The order books of the Cardiff Turnpike Trust³⁴ exist from 1780 to 1805 but are of little interest because the collection of tolls was farmed out whenever possible. Although the Trusts were created as profit making organisations they do not seem to have been very successful money raisers. In 1794 the order book reports that "*several Toll gates within the district having been put to auction and no person having bid for the same*", and in 1797 the tolls were farmed out for the sum of £550 3s 2½d

The King's Highway

"being last years takings".

During those periods when the trust was directly responsible for their revenues, the order book is most interesting. On 4 February 1786 they confirm *'Barbara Morgan to collect the tolls at Llandaff gate and chain in the room of her late father'*. There was also a barrier where the Waterhall Road joined the Llantrisant Road, the origin of Radyr Chain, to intercept people who might evade tolls at Llandaff Gate by taking the road from Llandaff Bridge now known as Radyr Court Road. The most famous occupant of this tollhouse was one Rachel, fondly remembered by the Rev. William David: *'The sexton of Radyr Church was an old woman, Rachel, of the Chain, who lived alone in a comical little cabin about nine or ten feet square which stood at the corner of the adjacent crossroads, where she kept charge of a chain stretched across the road and lowered only on payment of toll by any traveller.'*

By the 1840s the turnpikes were extremely unpopular; in west Wales they led to the Rebecca riots; but rioting also occurred in the Llantrisant area and the Groesfaen gate was razed to the ground. The chain at Radyr was also a cause for hostility. Consequently the government established a commission of enquiry which reported in 1844, having taken evidence from numerous sources including Thomas Richards, a vegetable vendor from Pontypridd, who complained *'I have a small donkey cart. I go to Llandaff to buy roots of all discriptions and garden stuff in order to sell them again and when I bring my donkey cart from Pontypridd to Llandaff I pay 3s in gates. I cannot bring more than 15s worth of goods in the cart'*.

The Turnpike Trusts in South Wales were abolished in 1851 and responsibility for the main road through the parish passed to the Llandaff Highways Board. Tolls were still collected however and it was not until the creation of the Glamorgan County Council in 1888 that the responsibility for the roads passed to the county.

The Changing Pattern

THE CHANGING PATTERN

The course of the 19th century was to bring great changes. There was an administrative as well as an industrial revolution bringing changes necessary to adjust the country to a new age and a rapidly rising population; the population of England and Wales, some 9 million in 1801, had by 1881 reached 25 million. The administrative changes came spasmodically involving parliamentary reform in three stages: poor law, public health, education and local government, all of which had their impact on Radyr as on every other parish.

At least initially, however, these changes would have had little effect on what was still a sparsely populated agricultural area, and one which remained almost wholly under the control of one family.

By the latter part of the 18th century, the Plymouth family owned about 1150 acres in Radyr; a survey of their lands in 1766, contained in a map held by the Glamorgan Record Office²⁶, names a total of nineteen tenants, the main ones being:-

Mr. Oliver Rowbotham & Partners	Maesyllech	172 acres
Mr. John Rees	The Lodge & Ffordd Las	121 acres
Miss Barbara David	Maerdy Farm	105 acres
Mr. Morgan Williams	Radyr Farm	102 acres
Mr. John Thomas	Radyr Court	106 acres
Mr. William Turbervill	Wattrel	73 acres
Mr. William Morgan	Cwm Farm	73 acres
Mr. Thomas Thomas	Part of Radyr Park	71 acres
Mr. Lewis Thomas	Garth Isha	68 acres

The Changing Pattern

The other holdings averaged about 26 acres, ranging from the four acres farmed by Mary Rosser between the main road and the river to the 56 acres farmed by Friswith Morgan, named as the other part of Radyr Park.

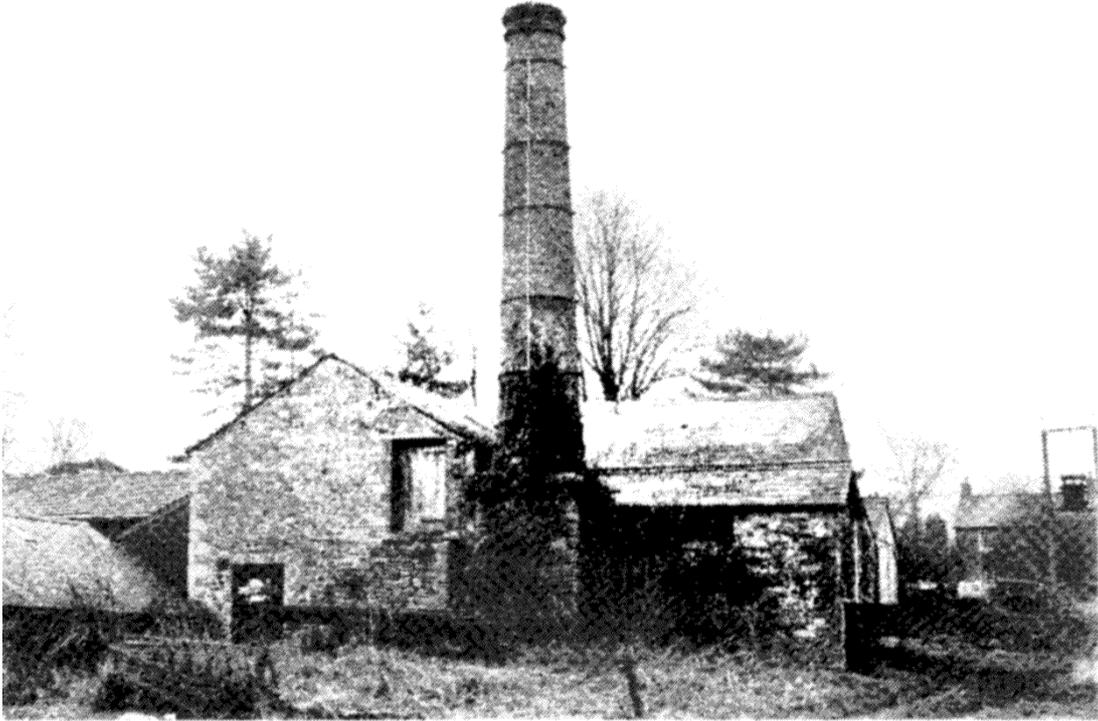
The only substantial part of the parish not owned by the Plymouth family was that which had once been attached to Radyr Uchaf, and which included both Gelynys and Ysgubor Fawr farms and the area which in due course became Morganstown. The map shows that in 1766 all this land belonged to "Mr Phillip Williams ", and it is interesting to read, in the diary of William Thomas of Michaelston-super-Ely for April 1768:-

"Was buried in Radyr from Whitchurch Phillip Williams, son of Phillip Williams of Radyr Farm. Died of 49 years of age from a long lingering dropsy. A sort of a largish man with an apprehension from a child especially in learning ye letters, yet of a mockish gaming temperament. Had a great belly from infancy. He married but never had a child. Some piece of freehold land he had after his father did fall to his brother Morgan"

Morgan Williams, shown as the tenant of Radyr Farm on the 1766 map, had succeeded his father in that position on the latter's death in 1763.

As with the larger farms, the names of many of the smaller holdings are still to be found in the village today - Dyrys Coed (corrupted to Drysgol) and Bryn Melin. Some field names shown on the survey maps are also still current, such as Woodfield, and Lime Kiln Field, while others reflect graphically the sort of

The Changing Pattern



The engine house at Radyr Court Farm

land or the crops which a particular field was carrying – Furzy Field and Pease Field on Garth Isha, or Briery Field on Cwm Farm, and Willow Pool on Maerdy, or Pigges Field and Horses Field on Radyr Park. The field and road pattern revealed by the survey map has changed very little since 1766, except of course for the impact of the railway and more recently the motorway, and the considerable development of housing during the last 100 years. Even there, the old field boundaries can still be traced, where land was sold for building field by field.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the pattern of agriculture was beginning to change. Methods of cultivation had been improved, following the establishment of the Glamorgan Agricultural Society in the mid-eighteenth century, and landlords were increasingly concerned to see the farms on their

The Changing Pattern

estates run efficiently and profitably to the benefit of themselves as well as their tenants. A number of the farms in the parish were now quite large, having absorbed the smaller tenancies shown on the Plymouth Estate map of 1766. In 1836, for example, Evan David at Radyr Court farmed over 700 acres, of which more than 300 were in Radyr and the remainder in Llandaff and Fairwater.

In about 1850, the farmhouse and its buildings were remodelled and extended into a 'model farm', in a central power house, the chimney of which dominated the whole complex. Both Radyr and Maes-y-llech farmhouses were rebuilt at about the same time, and their lands extended to more than 300 acres and to some 250 acres respectively. The Tithe Schedule of 1841, which gives a detailed description of all the farms in the parish, shows that the main land use was for arable farming, in the hands of the tenants of a small number of landowners, of which the largest was the Plymouth estate.

The New Industry

THE NEW INDUSTRY

As the century progressed, however, the number of people in the parish who depended on other work increased significantly. The local industry of iron founding, which had ceased in 1625 with the closure of the works at the foot of the Little Garth owned by the Mathew family, had been revived by 1745 on a new site near the foot of the hill leading to nearby Pentyrch. Like its predecessor, this forge and foundry used the ironstone and dolomite from the adjacent Garth, but on a much larger scale. At an early stage, it became evident that the site was not suitable for the extended processing which was now required, and a rolling mill and tinsplate works were opened in 1748 on the site of the old corn mill at Melin Griffith. The corn from the Radyr farms was ground henceforward at a new mill, working by 1744, on the western bank of the Taff, the ruins of which can still be seen between the railway and the river. By 1774, this was operated by the then owner of the Pentyrch Iron Works William Lewis, who was very much a local entrepreneur, with farms, iron ore mines, quays and a forge in Cardiff, and who was responsible to the commissioners for the turnpike roads in Radyr at this time.

As the Melin Griffith Works developed, a greater head and more regular supply of water was required and, in 1774, the old weir was renewed and strengthened. The records note that this entailed '*ripping up old stakes, wattling, pitching etc.*', which suggests that it replaced an older fish trap on the site, part of what had been the profitable salmon fisheries which had yielded an annual revenue of £24 as early as 1600³⁵. Indeed, the new weir

The New Industry

was also provided with fish traps, and until the 1880s the Melin Griffith Company collected a steady income from the trapped salmon which were caught and transported via Newport to Bristol for sale. These traps were broken up when the Welsh Water Authority in 1989 constructed a new fish ladder to encourage the salmon which had returned to the river.

A narrow waterway or leat was cut from a point above the new weir direct to the rolling mill, not only supplying water for the mill but, as the Taff was now navigable above the weir, also enabling the foundry products to be brought to the mill by barge from a landing stage near Gelynys Farm to which they were brought by packhorse or wagon from the works. In 1805 the Hartford family who owned Melin Griffith bought the Pentyrch Iron Works, as the foundry was now called, and henceforward the two parts of the operation became increasingly integrated. The Harfords sold the business to their cousin Richard Blakemore in 1810 and under him and his nephew, Thomas Booker, the barge traffic, with its high transshipment costs, was abandoned in favour of a tramroad which linked the ironworks and mill more directly. The route of this can still be seen in part, from the road near the garden centre at the foot of the Little Garth to Gelynys Farm, where it crossed the river by a new bridge built of iron, which was opened in 1815. Originally using horsedrawn trucks, the tramroad was converted in 1871 to locomotive use and became known as the Pentyrch and Melin Griffith Railroad; because it existed before the Tall Vale Railway was developed, for many years its locomotives had precedence where it crossed the main line. The original bridge was swept away in a flood in August 1877 and replaced by a new bridge, built of steel, at a higher level; the old name, Iron Bridge, is still used, however.

"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown
The New Industry



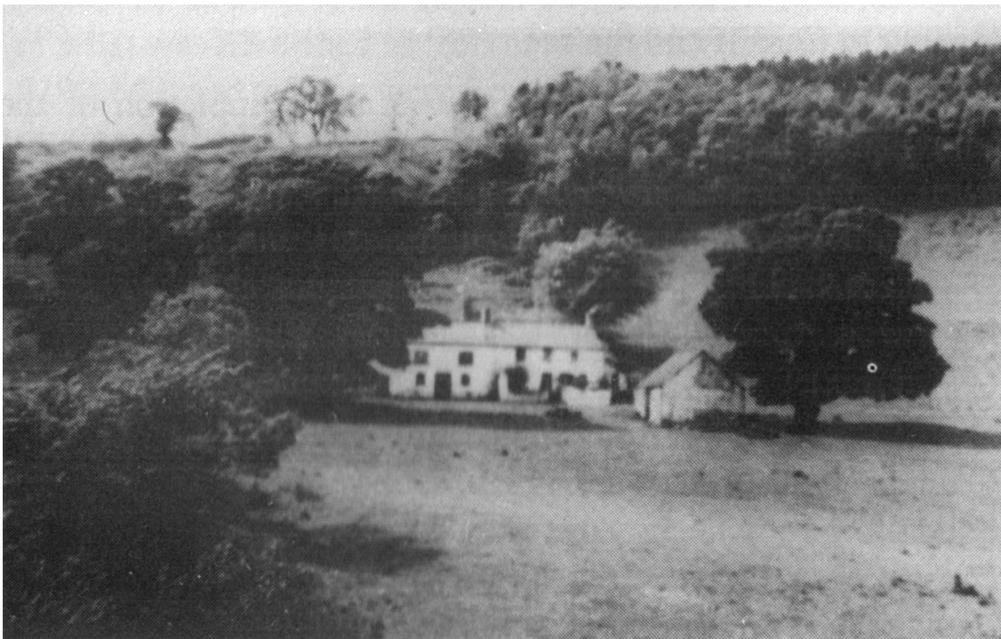
Morganstown – Bethel Chapel can be see on the left

The expansion of the works created a demand for new housing in the parish: by 1841, ten cottages had already been built at Ty'n y Berllan, as the nucleus of present day Morganstown. At that time, however, it was known as Pentre Poeth, or 'village of fire', sometimes shortened to 'Pentre'. It is not clear how it got its original name, though it has been suggested that it came from the smoke which rose above the hamlet either from the charcoal burning on the Garth or from the spontaneous combustion of low grade coal seams which appeared near the surface at the foot of the hill. According to an account written in 1804³⁶, one of the seams had been on fire for many years, the spot being generally traced by smoke issuing from the surface of the ground, which was covered at the spot by cinders, and that:-

The New Industry

"About two years ago, Mr Richards, the son of a very respectable clergyman from Llantrisant, in pursuit of game fell up to his middle in this heap of ashes and was very much scorched".

The earliest reference to the hamlet in the parish register is a baptism in 1845; between then and 1850 there were twelve others, with the parents' address being given as 'Pentre', but between then and 1878 the full name 'Pentre Poeth' was used. After that, all references are to 'Morganstown', after Philip Morgan, on whose land most of the houses were built. Although several farms had existed in that part of the parish before 1800, including Ysgubor Fawr and Garth Isha, Ty'n y Berllan, the iron workers' cottages and the Bethel Chapel, built in 1842, and Teaman's Row, built after 1847, marked a new development.



Garth Isha Farm

The Iron Road

THE IRON ROAD

It was the development of industry elsewhere, however, which was to have the greatest effect on the future of the village. The iron trade in the Dowlais & Merthyr area began in the eighteenth century, with the development of the ironworks at Dowlais (1759), Cyfarthfa (1765), Penydarren (1774) and Hills Plymouth (1777), whilst the steam coal trade, which brought even greater prosperity to the owners in later years, developed from the production of coal surplus to local iron founding requirements. Transport was essential to both of these major industries, and the local iron masters sought means more efficient than trains of pack mules on the roads and tracks leading to Cardiff and the sea.

The first major step forward was the completion of the Glamorganshire Canal from Merthyr to Cardiff, in 1798; this allowed large loads to be carried much more efficiently, but also, and in the longer term more importantly, encouraged the construction of tramroads from nearby collieries to points along the canal by means of which laden trucks could be pulled to waiting barges by teams of horses. The iron master, Samuel Homfray, at Penydarren, owned one such tramroad and the Cornish engineer, Richard Trevithick, whom he had invited to build a forge engine, fired his imagination with a bolder idea: the construction of a steam locomotive capable of pulling heavy loads of iron along the tramroad to Navigation House (Abercynon), an important point on the canal. Homfray wagered £500 on its success with Richard Hill of the Plymouth works,

The Iron Road

simply on the engine's ability to travel the nine miles to Navigation House with loaded wagons, not on its making the return journey. In February 1804 he won the wager: five wagons loaded with pig iron and seventy men made that first journey, and nothing would ever be the same again.

Nevertheless, it was to be some years before the possibilities of the invention were fully utilised. Despite a number of abortive attempts, it was not until 1835 that Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who was already involved in the construction of the Great Western Railway, was asked to estimate the cost of a line from Merthyr to Cardiff and, after a meeting of industrialists in Merthyr in the same year, a decision was taken to promote a company for this purpose. Despite formidable opposition from the Canal Company, the Taff Vale Railway Act received Royal Assent on 21 July 1836. Brunel's estimate for the construction of what was described as 'this crooked little line in Wales' was £190,649, and tenders were first invited early in 1837. The first section of the line, between Crockherbtown in Cardiff (near the present Queen Street Station) and Navigation House at Abercynon (now Aberdare Junction) was opened on 8 October 1840, with intermediate stations at Llandaff and Pontypridd; twelve days later the Board resolved to open up a station, to be named Pentyrch, at Morganstown Part of the original station, which was situated at a point where the Pentyrch and Melin Griffith tramroad crossed the new railway, still remains, though now a private house.

The line had been designed primarily to meet the needs of industry, but passengers were carried from an early date, although in primitive conditions. Third class passengers were crammed into open vans known as 'tubs', which they had to

The Iron Road

share with merchandise and livestock, whilst second class accommodation was not much better. The most such passengers could expect was some sort of overhead covering, although the sides of the carriages above waist level were unprotected. One traveller in 1852 wrote a graphic account³⁷ of what it was like to travel on the line in its early days:-

" In a few moments we were shut in, and were whirled away in the most detestable, disgusting, and misanthropic third-class carriage it was ever my ill-luck to travel in. It seemed as if the projectors of the railway had a selfish desire to deprive the passenger of all the external beauties on either hand, and it was only by rushing from one small opening (about a foot square) to another that I could see anything of the locality I was being swept through at all. The doors open inwardly, and as the guards are not over nice one's legs are in absolute danger, if necessity or choice places you near the corners, of being assaulted"!

Nevertheless, the first passenger train from Cardiff to Pontypridd travelled the twelve miles in 31 minutes; the present time for the journey is 28 minutes, although admittedly there are now more intermediate stations!

The Taff Railway Act had made provision for a branch line to be built to Cogan Pill, at Penarth on the west bank of the river Ely, which would have left the main T.V.R. line at Radyr, but this was not proceeded with at the time. It was not until the congestion in Cardiff Docks became acute, due to the increasing volume of coal traffic, that a decision was taken to develop docks at Penarth, and the Penarth Dock and Railway Company

The Iron Road

was formed in 1856. The necessary Act received Royal Assent in the following year, and the new line was opened in 1859. From that time, Penarth Junction in Radyr assumed great importance, with growing freight responsibilities, and the new company resolved both to build an engine shed there, together with six cottages in what is now Junction Terrace, and to put in a siding to serve Radyr Quarry. Quarrying at that time was highly labour intensive, as the accompanying photograph shows.

Clearly the quarrymen and railway workers engaged in this massive operation could not all have come from within the parish, and it is possible therefore that the position of the new station was determined at least in part by the need to enable workmen to reach the quarry and associated sidings.



The Iron Road

The new line also served traffic brought by the Rhymney Railway, which had been linked to the Taff Vale Railway in 1858 at a junction near Taffs Well named after the nearby inn, the Walnut Tree. Indeed, the importance of that junction became such that in June 1863, following the opening of a temporary station there by the T.V.R., they closed the Pentyrch station at Morganstown, despite protests from the local inhabitants, and it was not until 1883 that there was again a station within the parish. However, this, the present station, was at Penarth Junction, which by this time had been developed both into a major marshalling yard, often with three or four shunting engines at work at the same time, and as a significant employer of local labour. In 1873, for example, the T.V.R. Board accepted a tender for the construction of twelve cottages in what is now Junction Terrace, at a cost of £150 each.

The final expansion of the railways within the parish came in 1889, with the opening of the Barry Railway, a mineral line without freight or passenger facilities, which ran along the westerly edge of Radyr after crossing the Taff on the Walnut Tree Viaduct, of which now only one pillar remains.

PEOPLE

All these changes were reflected of course in the composition of the village. For example, Radyr Stone had been used for many years; the Roman masons used it to make pivot blocks and door stops for their fort at Cardiff, and it was found in the foundations both of the original 12th century manor house of Radyr Isha and of Llandaff Cathedral, where it was also used for repairs to the Lady Chapel in the 18th century. But it was not until the quarry to the south of the present station was opened in about 1850 that commercial exploitation began on any considerable scale, introducing for the first time a major new industry within the parish boundaries. Worked for some 60 years, at its peak it was a large undertaking, employing a considerable number of men. The lace of the quarry was some 200 yards long and up to 60 feet high, and the stone was used from the very outset for railway arches and retaining walls; in 1869, the then owner William Smith advertised in the Cardiff and County Calendar that stone from the quarry had been used in the building of Penarth Docks. It was also used on an increasing scale for ornamental work throughout the Cardiff area, such as coping stones on bridge abutments and garden walls. The famous architect J Pritchard responsible for most of the rebuilding of Llandaff Cathedral utilised it on very many of his buildings notably St Michaels College at Llandaff and the Cathedral Lych gate where unusually it has a tooled face. By the 1920's, however, the quarry was no longer viable and in the 1930s it was used by Cardiff R.D.C. as a household refuse tip until, some thirty years later, it was covered in and seeded. Some remnants

"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown *People*

of the original face remain, however, to give some idea of the scale of what was once a major industry, so large that it featured in the itinerary of the Geological Survey of Great Britain in 1888.

For most of the 19th century, however Radyr remained a district of scattered cottages either attached to farms or in some cases, such as that of the railway, to particular sources of employment. There was only a small amount of concentrated settlement in Morganstown, related to the quarrying on the Garth and the ironworks, but apart from this a traveller would hardly have regarded Radyr as even a village, despite the existence of the old church of St John Baptist near Radyr Court. The population in 1811 was 106 but by 1851 this had quadrupled to 417, of whom a good number lived in Ty'n y Berllan cottages at Morganstown, no doubt patronising Robert Miles' general shop next to the Ty-yn-y-Nant alehouse.



The Hunt meets at the Tynant

"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown
People

There were no 'great houses' at that time save perhaps Radyr Court where the David family, tenants of the Plymouth (or as it was then Windsor Clive) estate, were moving up the social scale. The census of 1861 shows that in that year their household contained a governess, lady's maid, cook, housemaid, groom and gardener, and by 1865 the then Evan David was a J.P. and practised as a land agent and surveyor as well as being a farmer and landowner outside the parish.

Radyr Farm at this time was occupied by David Lewis, who had come into the parish by 1842. His daughter Charlotte was to marry Thomas Lougher of Llandaff, and their son Lewis, born in 1871, was to occupy a very prominent position in the very different village that Radyr was to become in the next century. He moved to Radyr at the beginning of the First World War and represented the village on the Glamorgan County Council from 1922-48 and on Cardiff Rural District Council from 1934 until his death in 1955. Member of Parliament for Cardiff East and later for Cardiff Central in the 1920's, and knighted in 1929, his civic career culminated in his appointment as Sheriff of Glamorgan. He lived at Dan-y-Bryn for a number of years, and it was his company which developed the land on which Windsor Avenue and Park Road were built. It is interesting to note a connection with 16th century Radyr, as an earlier member of his family, Richard Lougher of Sker House and Tythegston, married Elizabeth Mathew, one of the daughters of Sir George Mathew of Radyr Court.

The majority of the people were still natives of the parish, with Welsh being still widely spoken; the religious census of 1851 records alternate services in Welsh and English in the parish church. There was a growing number, however, who had

"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown
People

come from further afield - from Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Wiltshire, Cornwall, Somerset or Ireland - to work either in the ironworks or on the farms, for agricultural workers' wages were higher in the area than in the West of England because of the need to counter the attraction of the industrial areas further north, whilst others came to work on the railways, and indeed it was the latter development which was to transform the face of the village.

The opening of the new passenger station on what had been previously primarily a freight line enabled the business and professional men of the newly prosperous and rapidly expanding City of Cardiff to consider living in rural surroundings but with quick and convenient access to the city. Immediately after the opening of the station, a programme of house building began which was to transform a relatively poor rural parish into a pleasant residential neighbourhood for the growing middle class of Cardiff.

One of the first to take advantage of the siting of the new station was George Fisher, who was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Taff Vale Railway in 1884. At about that time he bought Ty Mynydd, a late 18th century farmhouse owned by the Rowbotham family which stood on the brow of the hill between Radyr and Morganstown, with a commanding view of Cardiff in the distance. W. Beddoe Rees was commissioned to 'gothicise' the house, transforming it into an imposing mansion commensurate with the owner's status. What George Fisher had acquired was indeed a country estate, surrounded by woods, with several farms and cottages, and a lodge to house his coachman. Similarly, towards the end of the century Mr Henry Lewis acquired Ty Nant House, which had previously been the

"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown
People



Ty Mynydd House from the South

home of Mr George Evans, a surgeon who was the first of the new professional classes to make his home in the village, together with part of Gelynys and the farms of Goitre Fetch and Goitre Fawr. Lord Windsor still owned most of the land of Radyr, however, and it was on this that the new housing was to be developed.

Whereas the rate returns us show that there were 139 properties in the parish in 1885, 40 more has been built by 1896, including two large houses on Heol Isaf, south of Ty Mynydd, namely St. Radigunds and Dan-y-Bryn. Other smaller, mainly semi-detached, houses were built at this time on Heol Isaf and on Station Road, which until then had been no more than a track leading down to a fordable point on the river.

"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown
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Among these was 'Bryn Teg', the home and surgery of Dr. Robert Mathias, Radyr's first doctor, more recently converted into the first public house in Radyr itself, the Radyr Arms. The first shop in Station Road also dates from this time, for 'The Shop' featured in the rate return for 1896, situated on the north side of the road and probably purpose built, with a bakery at the rear, now occupied by Ablett's the greengrocers. The first shopkeeper, Lewis David, was also the sub-postmaster, although the nearest money order office was at Tongwynlais and the telegraph office was at the railway station. It is possible, however, that there was an earlier shop in that area, for John Jenkins is listed as a grocer in a Cardiff directory for 1880, possibly working from the house known as 'The Cottage' which he owned at the corner of Station Road and Heol Isaf.

These developments brought to an end the old days of self sufficiency, when farms and cottages drew their water from wells or streams, and where earth closets were the only form of sanitation. In 1894, urban and rural district councils took over what was left of the civil functions of the churchwardens, and henceforth they and the vestry were only concerned with the affairs of the Church. Under the new system Radyr and Morganstown were included in Llandaff and Dinas Powis R.D.C.; the parish representative forthwith "respectfully called the attention of the District Council to the need for a water supply, and to the urgent need for some system of drainage". A Clerk of Works was appointed the following year, and the Rectory is known to have had piped water installed by 1895, whilst Ystradfodwg & Pontypridd Sewerage Board was rated for land and sewers in the village in 1896. In that year also the National Telephone Company was rated for its 'wires and appurtenances' in Radyr.

Throughout this time, the population of the entire parish rose steadily. From 519 in 1881, it reached 610 in 1891, and rose again to 816 in 1901. Their material needs might be met by the changed structure of local government, but what of their spiritual and educational needs?

THE CARE OF SOULS



Parish Church

Until the late 18th century, the religious life of the village was centred on the old parish church of St. John Baptist. From the 17th century the living of Radyr was held by the Lewis and later the Plymouth families, the rectorship having passed to the Lewises when they acquired the Radyr Lands. As rectors, they retained the difference between the income of the living from tithes and what was paid to the curate whom they appointed to conduct the services of the church. The parishioners, most of whom were also tenants of the family, seem to have been content with this arrangement, for non-conformity appears to

The Care of Souls

have made only little inroad into the parish before the early 19th century. The general indifference of the time is indicated in the reminiscences of the Rev. William David. In 1895, when he was rector of St. Fagans, he wrote of the place of the church in Radyr in the 1830's.

" There was no resident clergyman, no curate even ever came to the parish to visit the sick, to collect and teach the children Church catechism, to seek out candidates for confirmation, to encourage the lukewarm to come to Church, or to instruct any thirsting to be guided into the way of righteousness. The one weekly service was bilingual and held alternately in the morning and afternoon ... The regular congregation consisted only of members of my family, the parish Clerk and the Sexton. Occasionally two brothers Rees, Thomas Williams of Waterhall and his daughter, and Joe Hobdy, a lame octogenarian, put in an appearance.

The Parish Clerk, Robert Davidson, was my father's bailiff and one, perhaps, of only two Englishmen then in the parish. It was considered the duty of the Clerk to lead the responses in a voice louder than anyone, else. At the Welsh services my father, being bilingual and alone able to read in 'yr iaeth Gymraeg'. officiated as Clerk."

He went on to describe how Sunday afternoons in the summer were marked by handball matches played against the west wall of the church between men from Radyr, Llandaff and Whitchurch for beer, which was bought in 3 or 4 gallon flagons

The Care of Souls

from a public house at Groeswen, which gained most of its trade on these occasions. The other alehouse in the village at this time was the Ty-yn-y-Nant, literally 'the house in the stream', on the road from 'Radir to ye forge', whose landlord in 1766 was one John Rees. In 1793, Ann Williams and Ann Evans paid the parish rate for the premises, but by 1824 the licence had passed to Evan Jones.

Even by this time, however, the influence of dissent within the church had already become apparent in the parish, through the personality of Daniel Jones, who was appointed as curate in 1780. Starting as a schoolmaster in St Fagans, he was quickly appointed not only to Radyr but also to Penarth and Lavernock as curate, but despite the considerable distances between these parishes he preached in each of his churches every Sunday before returning to St Fagans and the Methodist meeting house for evening service. This was the time when Methodism was still developing within the Church of England and Daniel Jones, although an active Methodist, remained within the Church until his death in 1821.

Methodism, as a separate denomination came to Radyr from St Fagans in the early years of the 19th century. The licence of the first meeting house in Radyr was taken out in 1822 by John Samuel, a miller from St Fagans³⁸. According to the biography of the Rev. William Evans of Tonyrefail³⁹ he used to walk from Pentyrch to St Fagans each Sunday calling at the farmhouse at Brynmelin on the way, to hold a service in the meeting house at the shoemaker's shop, which was situated in Ffordd Las. Twenty years later, it was replaced by the present Bethel Chapel in Morganstown, which, by 1851, had a flourishing congregation of over 150.

"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown
The Care of Souls



Bethel Chapel, Morganstown

There were other dissenting groups in the village. In 1821 a room at Gelynys Farm was registered for Protestant non-conformist worship, whilst in 1838 a licence was granted to David Davies as minister to hold congregational worship at Radyr Ucha. Both of these had ceased to exist by 1851, however, when a religious Census was taken⁴⁰ but within a few years non-conformity in the village was to take a decisive step forward, following the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Lear.

He had been born in Somerset, in 1828, but came to Radyr in 1853 as foreman of the Goods Department at Penarth Junction. He and his wife, who came from Llantrisant, first attended the Wesleyan Methodist church at Taffs Wells but became increasingly concerned at the lack of religious instruction for the children in Radyr. In consequence, they decided to hold a Sunday School in their own house in Junction Terrace, which was attended by as many as 80 children at any one time.

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Mr and Mrs Alfred Lear

Encouraged by this, they decided to take another step by holding evening services for adults, again in their small cottage, where for two years many of the local preachers gave their first sermons in Mrs. Lear's kitchen. When increasing numbers made this impossible, the Taff Vale Railway agreed to provide a wooden hut opposite the houses in Junction Terrace, which served the congregation for some twenty years. When this in

The Care of Souls

turn became too small, the forerunner of the present Methodist Church was built on Heol Isaf, and opened by Mrs. Lear on 29 May 1901. Mr. and Mrs. Lear continued to play an active part in its life for many years, however, and he is particularly remembered in connection with the Sunday School anniversaries; when a younger man, it was his special task to carry the folk from Melingriffith on his back across the river, when the water level was right!

The growth in the population also affected the parish church, of course. By 1896, when the Board School was opened and the Church Rooms reverted to the Rector and churchwardens, it had become clear that with the growth of the parish the old church of St. John's could no longer meet all the needs of the community. The growth of Morganstown and the development of new houses in Radyr meant that the majority of parishioners now lived at some distance from the site of the medieval village of which St. John's had been the centre. Consequently, when consideration had been given to the provision of a house for the resident incumbent the first choice of site, near Radyr Chain, had been over-ruled in favour of the present position midway between Morganstown and the old parish church, where the Rectory was completed in 1887. As an interim measure the next step was to alter and improve the Church Rooms, with the addition of choir stalls, to fit them for divine service. Opening services were held on 20 September 1896 in what then became known as Radyr Mission Church. At the same time plans were made to build a second church in the parish, to be called Christ Church, on a site next to the Rectory. When this was opened for services in 1904 the Mission Church reverted to its former use as the Church Rooms and became the scene for social events.

Unwillingly to School

UNWILLINGLY TO SCHOOL

There was no public provision for education until the Education Act of 1870 although earlier some state assistance was given to some voluntary bodies. According to the diarist William Thomas, himself a schoolmaster, there were in the 1760s a number of schools in the surrounding area, some private ventures and some associated with the church, including the circulating school held in Radyr in 1754 and again in 1775, first at Groeswen and then at Maerdy Farm, with more than thirty pupils attending.

Sunday schools were in being in the parish by the mid 19th century, one organized by the daughters of the David family of Radyr Court and one, much the larger, at Bethel, Morganstown. According to the official report on educational provision in Wales in 1847 there was at this time no day school in Radyr but pupils from the parish were in attendance at voluntary day school either at Llandaff or St Fagans. The census records for 1851 showed a number of children returned as scholars, though there is no certainty as to whether this referred to attendance at day schools or only at Sunday schools. At these latter it perhaps can be assumed that, on the model of the 18th century circulating schools, pupils were taught to read the scriptures. The Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School started in Radyr in 1853, whilst in the census of 1861 a school master is recorded as living in Morganstown and Webster's Directory of Bristol and Glamorgan 1865 notes an Infant School at Tyn y nant. The register of marriages at the Parish church, however, shows illiteracy widespread in the earlier years of the century for

Unwillingly to School

most couples could not write their names though there is an improvement in the 1860s.

Like the rest of the country, Radyr benefited in due course from the importance increasingly given to education as the century progressed. In 1880, a National Society school was established through the exertions of the new vicar the Reverend H.J. Humphreys, the first resident incumbent since the early 19th century, who had lodged at Radyr Farm from 1878. (The National Society was a body set up in 1811 to provide schools in which, as well as elementary education, the principles of the Anglican Church were taught). A meeting of the vestry in 1878 considered a scheme for a new school and decided that a voluntary rate of one shilling in the pound be levied to assist in defraying the cost. The Vicar announced that Lord Windsor had promised a site and £300 and the Taff Vale Railway Company also promised £300. In the event, Lady Mary Windsor Clive gave the site and the cost of erection of what became known as the Church Rooms - about £1100 - was borne mainly by Lord Windsor.

The new school was opened on 1 July 1880 with Mr J.R. Mark as master. The number on the role in 1881 was 87, but, by 1882 a new regime had taken over. Under the provision of the Education Act of 1870 a School Board had been elected to provide non-denominational elementary education in Radyr parish. It is to be assumed that in those days of bitter sectarian strife over education the strong non conformist element in the parish had exerted itself. At all events the National Society and the Vicar (now Rector) and churchwardens were replaced by the Radyr School Board which held its first meeting at the school on 13 April 1882. Of its five members, elected by ratepayers, two

Unwillingly to School

were non-conformist ministers. The Vicar and two laymen filled remaining places. The chairman of the board elected at this meeting was George Fisher, a director of the Taff Vale Railway at that time living in Cardiff but within a few years to take up residence at Ty Mynydd. Subsequently the Board took over on lease the premises of the National School (the present Old Church Rooms), resolved that a precept of £60 be issued on the parish rates and appointed the master and the two pupil teachers of the National School to similar posts in the Board School and shortly after added a sewing mistress to the staff.

The school was opened as the Board School on 21 August 1882 and closed next day for the remainder of the holidays. School fees were set in November 1882 at 2d. per scholar. Attendance was compulsory but in order to save expense the appointment of an attendance officer was not made. In 1883, following a 'request' from the Department of Education an attendance officer was appointed. Average quarter's attendance to June 1883 was reported as 129. Reports of the annual inspection in these early years indicate that standards were not very satisfactory. The inspector in 1882 found arithmetic particularly bad and spelling backward, though handwriting and reading were more satisfactory. In 1884 the children were found to be rather talkative on examination day. Reading throughout was indistinct, monotonous and altogether wanting in intelligence and so was recitation. Results in grammar and elementary science did not justify a grant. In 1886 there were sharp criticisms of school organization. At 3.15 p.m., it was reported that the change indicated in the time-table to take place at 3.10 p.m. had not occurred and that when the change was effected the time-table could not be followed as the school was without any supply of

Unwillingly to School

ink. Further, three scholars who were marked present were really absent, a 'reprehensible mistake' which it was hoped would not occur again. Standards of work generally were not satisfactory!⁴¹

The Church Rooms continued to be used as the school until 1896, when the adjacent 'Board School' was opened, and by then provision had also been made for some children at least to go on to further education. Under the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889 schools had been founded at Pontypridd and Penarth (intermediate, or as they became popularly known, county schools) maintained from public funds to offer education to grammar school and university entrance level. Boys and girls from the parish were able, subject to passing an entrance examination, to enter these schools. There appears to have been some line of demarcation in this respect between Morganstown and Radyr. Pupils living in Morganstown entered Pontypridd Intermediate School while those from Radyr travelled to Penarth - in each case by rail. Finally, under the Education Act of 1902, elementary education in rural district areas passed to the control of the County council as local education authority, the school boards being abolished as had been most of the various other boards set up during the nineteenth century to deal with such matters as highways and public health.

The Edwardian Era

THE EDWARDIAN ERA

During the first decade of the 20th century, the population of the parish rose by some 50%, from 816 in 1901 to 1238 in 1911. Although there was some development in the south of the parish and in Morganstown, where by 1906 there were 76 houses or cottages compared with 46 ten years earlier, most of the new building was in the area now thought of as 'old Radyr', on Heol Isaf, Station Road and Drysgol Road. Lord Windsor still remained the major landlord and retained his farms, and Colonel H. O. Fisher was still at Ty Mynydd, though the cottages owned by him and his family had increased in number. Henry Lewis, the third main landowner of Victorian times, retained Ty Nant House and other properties. But increasingly new names now appeared on the rating lists. Mr. Franklin Thomas of Dan-y-Bryn, who was to be the Radyr member of the Rural District Council for 21 years and its first Chairman when it was renamed the Cardiff R.D.C.; Mr Trevor Stanley Jones of 'Frondeg', a J.P. and Sheriff of Glamorgan; Professor George Knox of the School of Mines at Treforest, who built Heol Isaf, the large house on Heol Isaf opposite Windsor Crescent, on the site of the former farmhouse of that name, are but a few of the men in the parish whose names were well known in the wider community of South Wales. Other residents, less well known perhaps, also played their part. Three local men, James Jason, T. Bore and F. Williams, who were arrested for trespassing on the railway bridge across the river successfully defended themselves when the case was heard at Llandaff magistrates court in 1909 by

The Edwardian Era

producing witnesses to testify that there had been a ford at that point before the bridge was built, and that therefore there was still a right of way.

Original Radyr Street Light



The facilities available in the village continued to be extended. In November 1906, gas lighting was used in the Old Church Rooms, and in 1907 the Radyr Electric Company Ltd. was formed when the Earl of Plymouth gave consent to Mrs. A.M. Thomas of Dan-y-Bryn to convert certain greenhouses into an 'electric lighting and engine house' for a period of 21 years. The local authority subsequently authorised the company to provide electric lighting in Radyr, by means of cables laid by the R.D.C.. The generator, powered by a gas engine, was in a shed in the grounds of Dan-y-Bryn, later to be used by Mr. George Williams for his greengrocery business. Other facilities also increased; the shop in Station Road was taken over in 1910 by Mr. Richard Woods, who extended the business considerably, with deliveries to nearby villages by horse and cart, including the bread and cakes baked on the premises. The shop remained in the hands of the family for generations, serving the people of the village until it closed in 1979.

Life for the middle class households of Radyr during the Edwardian years was reasonably comfortable, with most having residential maidservants, whilst at the bigger houses such as Ty Mynydd a full staff, including butler and coachman, would be kept. At this time the first cars began to appear in the village, mostly driven by chauffeurs, who lived in a row of cottages built at the top of Taff Terrace and consequently known as 'Chauffeurs Row'.

All this supported an active social life. The cricket club had

The Edwardian Era

been established in 1890, on land near the river provided by the Earl of Plymouth, but this was extended to include a beautifully maintained bowling green, with pavilion, and four grass tennis courts, which later became the responsibility of the Radyr Lawn Tennis Club following its formation in 1914. The Golf Club had been established in 1902, the course having been laid out on land leased from the Earl of Plymouth which had formerly been part of Radyr Farm, replaced after a fire in 1909 by the present building in Drysgol Road, which was opened in 1911.

But the clouds were beginning to gather. The 1914-18 War - the first totalitarian war experienced by Great Britain – made its impact on Radyr and Morganstown as on every community in the country through conscription, food rationing, and most poignantly through human losses. The contribution of the parish is commemorated by the war memorial in Heol Isaf, but in other ways also the community gave support. By October 1914 committees were at work to collect garments for use by the Red Cross in assisting refugees from Belgium and to collect funds for a 'Radyr Bed' at a Welsh military hospital. There was also an unofficial military training group, the Citizen Guard, in which men too young or too old to enlist banded together to drill twice a week under a competent instructor. The Parish Magazine reported in October 1914 that already four men had joined H.M. Forces whilst about twenty-five were prepared to be sworn in as special constables for the protection of the parish in case of need. In November 1914 a ladies' committee was formed to assist and maintain Belgian refugees, and in 1917 the whole parish was mobilised into seven districts, each of which was to provide one day's supply of vegetables each week for the V.A.D. hospital opened that year at 'Aldersyde' with Mrs.

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Franklin Thomas of Dan-y-Bryn as Commandant.

The whole community was thus involved in one way or another in a common purpose, perhaps for the first time in its history since Cynwrig ap Hywel built his manor house on the high ground near the church which even then was ancient.

The years between the wars were to see many more changes, though not on the scale of the developments in recent years. These changes, and the recollections of the people of the community whose lives they affected, will be covered in a further volume.

Appendix

MAP NAMES

Many of the names accorded to streets, houses, farms etc. in the area are Welsh or of Welsh origin. Some of the older names have, for various reasons, changed in spelling over the years and their origins are doubtful; some street names given in modern times contravene the rules of mutation. Nevertheless, the following translations of Welsh names found on local maps may be interesting to those unfamiliar with Welsh.

Ael y Bryn	Brow of the Hill
Blaen y Coed	Front of the Wood
Bryn Castell	Castle Hill
Bryn Coed	Wood Hill
Bryn Derwen	Oak Tree Hill
Bryn Golwg	Hill View
Bryn Hyfryd	Pleasant Hill
Bryn Melin	Mill Hill
Bryn Rhosyn	Rose Hill
Cae'r Craig	Rock Held
Cefn Coch	Red Ridge
Cilfedw	Birch Nook or Recess
Clos Brynmelyn	Yellow Hill Close
Coed y Llyn	Lake Wood
Craig Castell	Castle rock
Cwm Farm	Valley Farm
Cwm ffynnonau	Valley of Springs
Cwrt Tymynydd	Mountain House Court
Dan y Bryn	Below the Hill
Drysgol	As the 1833 Ordnance Survey map shows the name as Yrysgol (the School) Drysgol is possibly derived from ty'r ysgol (school house). Alternatively it may be a corruption of Dyrys Coed (Tangled Wood), the name of a small farm through which the road passed.

Appendix

Ffordd Las	Green Way. This is part of an old track connecting Whitchurch to Pentyrch through Radyr.
Garth	Hill or Ridge
Gelynis	e.g. as in Gelynis Farm. Possibly derived from two words:- Cil (retreat) and ynys (river meadow).
Goitre Fawr Goitre Fach	Large and small Goitre, the term possibly derived from coed-tre (woodland homestead).
Graig Hir	Abbreviation of y graig hir - the long rock.
Graig Lwyd	Abbreviation of y graig lwyd- the grey rock.
Graig Wen	Abbreviation of y graig wen - the white rock.
Gwern y Cegyrn	This is the name of a wood adjacent to Llantrisant Road. From Gwern (swamp) and cegyrn (mounds/tumps). Hence marshland with tumps.
Heol Aradur	Aradur road.
Heol Isaf	Lower road. Possibly so named to differentiate it from the older highway running from Llantrisant Road through the golf course to Pentyrch.
Heol Syr Lewis	Sir Lewis Road
Llantrisant	Church or village of three saints (Saint Illtyd, Tryfodwg, and Gwynno).
Llwyn Brynmelyn	Yellow hill grove
Llwyn Drysgol	Drysgol grove.
Maerdy	e.g. as in Maerdy Collage, now demolished but previously sited on the golf course. Probably derived from Maer - a steward - hence steward's house.

Appendix

	Maes y Llech	Llech means slate, flat stone or place of refuge. It is not known with which of these the Maes (field) is associated.
	Maes yr Awel	Meadow of the breeze.
	Maes y Bryn	Hill meadow.
	Min y Coed	Edge of the wood.
	Pant Tawel	Quiet valley/glen
	Penrhos	Head of the plain.
	Pentwyn	Top of the hill
	Radyr	E.L. Chappell ("Radyr Place Names", Cardiff and Suburban News. Oct 8 th 1938) lists 19 spellings of the name. The figures in brackets denote the earliest mention of each.
Aradur	(11 th century)	Radur -1263
Radure	-1314	Radour -1316
Radier	-1401	Rader -1567
Rader	-1567	The Rader -1607
Aradier	-1554	The Radir -1584
Yr Adur	-1596	Radyr -1587
Radir	-1607	Aradir -1747
Radire	-1600	Rayder -1607
Radyer	-1603	The Reader -1630
Radien	-1754	

Since the 17th century the most usual names are Radir and Radyr.

Treforgan Morgan's Town. Named after Philip Morgan, on whose land most of the old cottages were built in the 19th century.

Appendix

Te Gwyn	White House
Ty Mynydd	Mountain House
Ty Nant	Brook House
Ty Parc	Park House
Ty'ny caeau	Homestead in the fields. Radyr Farm appears so named on the 1833 Ordnance Survey map.
Ysgubor Fawr	Large barn

Appendix

REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS

RCHM	Royal Commission on Historic Monuments
CNS	Cardiff Naturalists Society
GCH	Glamorgan County History
PRO	Public Records Office
GRO	Glamorgan Records Office
CCL	Cardiff Central Library
NLW	National Library of Wales

SOURCES

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7. J. S. Corbett 'Glamorgan Papers and Notes on Lordship' (1925)p.40.
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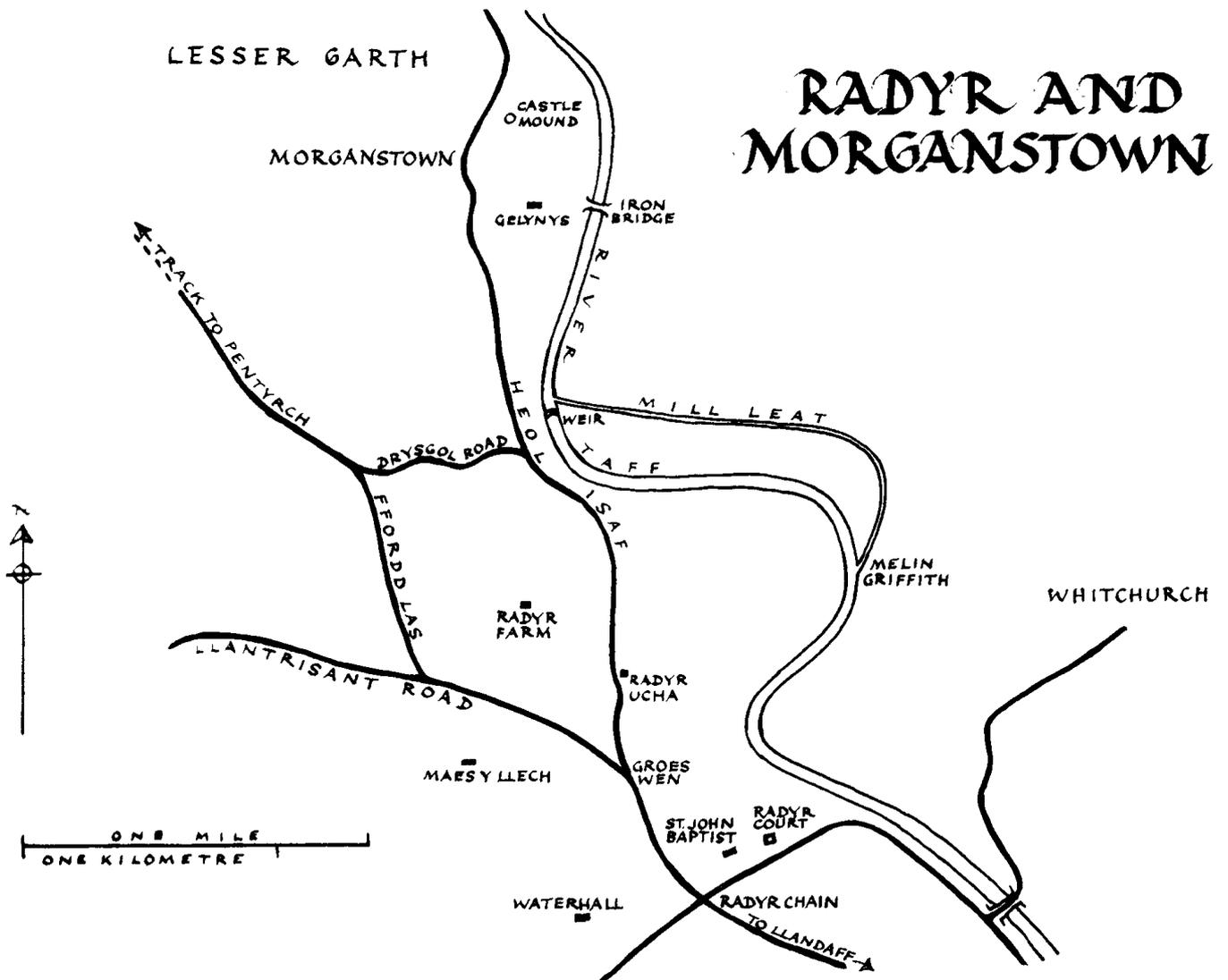
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21. All wills of the Llandaff Probate Court to 1850 are kept at the NLW.
22. GRO.(on open access)
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24. PRO microfilm copy (on open access).
25. NLW.
26. NLW copy GRO (D/I) PI. I S)
27. NLW copy GRO.(P/66)
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30. CCL.

Appendix

- 31.S. Lewis A TOPOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF WALES 2v
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Appendix



"Twixt Chain and Gorge" – A History of Radyr and Morganstown
Appendix

