

Research Document:	Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge
Accession Number:	chs01214

Cowbridge History Society Research Documents are compilations by the Society of information on particular properties or other topics taken from various sources. They may be updated as additional information becomes available, and being in 'Word' format are searchable (for example for surnames), using 'Find'.

Most of the information was researched and assembled by study groups led by Jeff Alden during the period 1997-2007. The Cowbridge Record Society was established in 1999 to publish books using this research, such as 'Cowbridge Buildings & People' and 'Llanblethian Buildings & People'. The Society later merged with the Cowbridge and District Local History Society and is now 'Cowbridge History Society'.

Future editors are requested to identify changes they may make in accordance with CHS guidelines.

E.M. Alden, January 2018

Source Abbreviations	
GRO	Glamorgan Record Office
LTA	Land tax assessments
	Tithe, census, directories etc all in GRO
RCAHM	Royal Commission Ancient & Historic Monuments
LL	Llandaff probate
BR	Burgage rents (GRO)
PRO	Public Record Office (Kew)
WAH Fisher	Scrapbooks in Cardiff Central Library

Copyright and disclaimer:

Copyright: Cowbridge History Society. The Society can take no responsibility for any inaccuracies in this document.

Date	Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge	Source
	<i>The present house was built in the early 19th century and is a Grade 2 listed building.</i>	CADW/RCAHM no 13228
	<i>This was the town house for Caercady, near Welsh St Donats. The house looks rather imposing; it has 3 storeys with unaltered bay stuccoed front elevation with roll moulded and modillion eaves cornice. It has a slate gabled roof, with a rendered stack to the rear and a stone stack to the right-hand side, built up in brick. There are 16-pane sash windows, but 12-pane sashes (4 over 8) to top floor; ground floor windows with cornices on consoles, first floor windows have shouldered architraves, pulvinated friezes and cornices; smaller second floor windows have shouldered architraves. There is a central 4-panelled door with overlight under a Doric porch with flat entablature with triglyph frieze on 2 columns and pilasters to wall.</i>	
	The stables, which were attached to the house, have been incorporated into the rear of High Street Garage.	
	Interior – very few major alterations have been carried out to the interior of the house since it was built. However, a new kitchen has been constructed from part of the central corridor and the coal yard. There are 6 panelled doors, a 19 th century marble fireplace and a staircase with straight balusters.	Dr Kay Meller (resident)
	Owners & occupiers :	
1738	John Reynolds, quarter burgage in tenure of Mrs Hudson	BR#24
1762	Edward Jenkin, late John Reynolds	BR#24
1772	Edward Jenkin, in his own possession	BR#24
	Edward Jenkin, in the land tax assessments of 1773 & 1784, is also listed as the owner & occupier. It was obviously an important house, being taxed at 6/8d in 1784	
1793	Will of Edward Jenkin of Cowbridge, gent.	LL/1793/25
1799	Jane Jenkins owned & occupied, 6/8d	LTA
	David Jones of Wallington made the following comments on the Jenkinse in the early 1800s :	

Date	Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge	Source
	<p>‘...such disagreeable people. These were Mr & Miss Jenkins, people somewhat advanced in years, very eccentric and exceedingly cross-grained – the lady especially. If we may suppose her to have been possessed by an evil spirit, it was one impelling her always to be engaged in a lawsuit with someone or other of her neighbours, innocent people probably; unsuspectingly drawn into some breach of the law by the annoyances pertinaciously inflicted upon them by this cantankerous old woman, her brother or servant. Mr Jenkins was believed to be far more amiable in disposition than his sister but goaded on by her to take part in this warfare against their neighbours.</p> <p>Dr Salmon (their new neighbour) was assured that the former owner and last occupant of the (neighbouring) house, a quiet widow lady, was so harassed by the continual litigation involved by the close neighbourhood of Miss Jenkins that her peace of mind was utterly destroyed, and grief hurried her to her grave. On the first morning after (Salmon’s) removal to the house, the kitchen, lighted by two windows looking out upon Miss J’s back yard, was found to be in total darkness. In the night she had got her brother and servant to help her, and they had removed an immense dungheap, the accumulation of years, and had piled it firmly against the windows. This “nuisance” was speedily thrown down and the “boys” entered upon the work of retaliation in good earnest. The whole stock of syringes from the surgery was brought out and brought to play upon the old woman....drenching her from head to foot’.</p>	
1806	Jane Jenkins owned & occupied, three-quarter burgage	BR#25
1830	Dr Thomas owned, Peter Kinnidy occupied, house, 8/-	LTA
1832	John Thomas owned, Mr Swann occ., three-quarter burgage	BR#25
	“Dr Swann, medical man in Cowbridge, 1838-45. Was with Talbot of Margam as medical attendant upon yachting cruise in Mediterranean. All fell into hands of Algerian pirates. In captivity for some time; finally ransomed. Swan died young, about 1845; left wife and three or four children”.	WAH Fisher, MS 4, 1221
1837	Cowbridge – house to let and entered on May 1 st next, in the centre of Cowbridge, fit for a small genteel family. Apply, Mr Thomas, Caercady	<i>Cambrian</i> , 23/12/1837

Date	Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge	Source
	<i>John Thomas of Caercady (Welsh St Donats) owned the property in the early part of the nineteenth century, and after his death in 1842 his wife Mary Ann took over. The tenant at the time of the 1843 tithe map (property 204) was George Morgan, who was a watchmaker (Pigot's directory 1844)</i>	
1843	John Thomas owned; George Morgan occupied	Tithe
1844	George Morgan, watch & clockmaker	Pigot's
1849	John Jenkin Thomas of Leeds, freehold house & garden opposite the Bear Inn	Register of electors
	Unusually, at the time of the 1851 census (#42), the occupant was Michael Farrar, science master at the Grammar School, who lived there for a short time with his wife, children, 3 boarders and 2 servants – probably because this was the time of the re-building of the Grammar School. Presumably, Farrar moved there when the re-building started in 1847/8	
	<p>Other residents listed in the deeds are Celia Hudson & John Cook, but it was then owned and occupied for about 25 years by Mary Ann Thomas, who had moved there from Caercady House at Welsh St Donats (a much older & grander country house). The Cowbridge house was the town house of that at W St Donats, where the original house and land originally belonged to the family of Edward Jenkins; Mary Ann was descended from the Jenkinsons on her mother's side. She married John Thomas RN and bore him five children. There are various memorials in Welsh St Donats church to the Jenkins & Thomas families.</p> <p>Following Mary Ann's move from Welsh St Donats, it was found she frequently needed medical treatment. Local wisewomen put her health down to the 'ghost of Caercady'. Men who had been condemned to death for crimes committed were led past the house before being hanged outside the town, and one was reputed to have returned. One evening when a knocking was heard on the door of Caercady House, Mrs Thomas allegedly asked a neighbour, who was sitting with her, to open the door as she knew it was the ghost who had been knocking for the past week. The fearless neighbour opened the door to find it was a local farmer, who had a habit of sleeping in Mrs Thomas's attic over the stables, it being preferable to spending the night in a doorway of a shop in the High Street!</p>	
	After the death of Mrs Thomas, a family disagreement led to an Order of Chancery in 1876 for the estate to be sold by auction.	

Date	Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge	Source
1879	<p>The property was conveyed to John Francis Griffith of Llansannor House. The tenant at the time was Edward Ord, a solicitor. According to the 1881 census, he was a bachelor and employed a general clerk & 2 servants. The first reference to him in Cowbridge is in the 1871 census, living with his mother at Heath House, Eastgate; he then appears in Owen's directory (1878) as living in the High Street, in Slater's (1880) as a solicitor and in Kelly's (1884) as solicitor and Hon. Secretary to the Glamorgan Hunt. There are no entries in any of the directories after this date, when he would have been about 33 years of age, but <i>Rees & Gwyn's Journal no 11</i> suggests that he was struck off as a solicitor in 1887. He had lived in Llanblethian House in 1861 with his widowed mother, who is also recorded as 'of Llanblethian' in Webster's (1865) and Kelly's (1871).</p>	
	<p>Dr Charles Booth Meller was the next resident. He arrived in Cowbridge from Ecclesfield, Yorkshire, to work in the practice of Dr JW Phillips, following the untimely death of Dr Stanistreet in a railway accident. After a year, he decided to set up on his own, with consulting rooms in Caercady House. He bought the property in 1922, having engaged a young lady assistant from Ireland, whom he married in 1923/4 when he was in his early sixties and she was considerably younger. They had 4 daughters.</p>	Census#38 of 1891
	<p>Such was Dr Meller's medical skill and great popularity that he was said to have more patients on his register than any rural doctor in the whole of the Principality. His equal treatment of rich and poor alike, and his kindness to all clergymen, whom he considered grossly underpaid, were such that his name was to become proverbial throughout the Vale for over 50 years.</p>	
	<p>He was a very keen gardener. A postcard from his gardener in 1907 stated : 'One small garden full of bulbs is at the back, the larger one is 5 minutes' walk away. I came here as a gardener and to help in the house on Saturday and like the place, 12/- all found which is not so bad. There is an acre of flower garden and a small greenhouse, but nearly the whole is for dahlias which are not much trouble.....' (<i>the additional garden was in Town Mill Rd</i>)</p>	

Date	Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge	Source
	<p>Dr Meller's first mode of transport was by gig and stallion, and he was always accompanied by his groom; he had several stallions. With the introduction of the motor car, he used Mr Ralph Bird's small 8 hp car for visiting patients, with a chauffeur. His appearance, especially in his latter days, was most striking; he wore a massive beard down to his middle, and, dressed in his top hat and frockcoat, always retained the tailored look of the doctor. He continued working in medicine until he died in 1936.</p>	
	<p>His wife then took over the practice. His second daughter was the only one to follow in his footsteps, and became a GP. After qualifying, she worked in Manchester for a few years, but returned to join the Cowbridge practice in 1955 and moved into Caercady House with her husband and family. In 1974, a new Health Centre was built and the practice moved from Caercady House to these new premises (in old Hall grounds). Dr Meller and his wife were local councillors for many years, and his wife was at one time mayor of the borough. Caercady House has thus been occupied by members of one family for over one hundred years.</p>	
	Extracts from censuses :	
1851	<p>Michael Farrar, science master CGS aged 36, wife Caroline, 25, sons Charles & William, 5 & 1, and daughter Caroline, 3. Also boarders William P Davies, 14, Herbert T Davies, 12, Alf Adams, 11 (all born Monmouth), Matilda Dring, cook aged 20, b Oxford and Eliza Phillips, housemaid, 14, b Glamorgan.</p>	Census#42
1861	<p>Mary Ann Thomas, landed proprietor, married, aged 69, b Bridgend, with cook Maria Davies, 22, b Llanharan, and housemaid Mary Elias, 19, b Ewenny.</p>	Census
1871	<p>Mary Ann Thomas, 79, widow, with companion Anna A Thomas, ?44, unmarried, b Cowbridge, housemaid Mary Rees, 18, b Llanblethian, dressmaker Charlotte Cummings, 17, b Boverton, and helper Harriet Williams, 12, b Prisk</p>	Census
1881	<p>Edward Ord, solicitor, 29, unmarried b St Mellons, with solicitor's general clerk Edward Boughton, 18, b Cardiff, groom Robert Boughton, 16, b Taynton, Glos., and general servant Mary Davies, 32, unmarried, b Pencoed.</p>	Census#39

Date	Caercady House, 58 High Street, Cowbridge	Source
1891	Charles Booth Meller LRCP (Edin.), physician & surgeon, Medical Officer & Public Vaccination, Bridgend Rural Sanitary Authority and Certifying Factory Surgeon, aged 32, unmarried, b Nettlebed, Oxfordshire, with a cook Sarah C..., 35, unmarried, b Chelsea, London and servant John A Phillips, 17, b Penllyne.	Census
1901	Charles B Meller, 42, with brother Thomas B Meller, 40, b Nettlebed, Walter Cooper, physician, 25, b Silchester, Hants, Fitzwilliam RA Evans, 40, b Rathmines, Dublin, groom William Stallard, 30, b Dundry, Somerset and domestic servant Edith Richards, 40, b Cowbridge	Census
1910	CB Meller occupied, JF Griffiths of Llansannor House owned – in very poor general repair. Floors bad & very damp throughout.	PRO IR58/18459#42
	Family of John Thomas RN	
	John Thomas of Caercady House, Welsh St Donats married Mary Ann Jones, daughter of Rev John James Jones of Caercady House and Rector of Gelligaer.	
	Their children were :	
	John Jenkins Thomas, Lieutenant in 5 th Dragoon Guards, died 5/1/1851 aged 27	
	Mary Ann Thomas, 11/8/1826 - 18/4/1880, married George H Jenkins of Caercady House	
	Laura Ann Thomas, 15/2/1832 - 25/8/1911, married James Bevan Gwyn, Rector of Rockingham, Northants	
	Caroline Eliza Thomas, died 7/9/1857 aged 24	
	Sarah Frances Thomas, 4/7/1828 - 6/2/1895, married Richard Humphrey Hill, Rector of Stanway, Essex	