

**Colwinston: a historical journey**

**by Chris Hawker**

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*Cover illustration: Corner House Farm (now The Sages).*

*Below: Colwinston Church*

*Both sketches by Jeff Alden. Reproduced by kind permission of Mrs Betty Alden.*



## *Acknowledgements*

I am very grateful to the very many people who have informed the development of this ‘story’. Mention must be made of Phil Jones who shaped many ideas and whose enthusiasm has kept local history alive in the village. Personal stories told to me by Clive Hawkins, Gwynneth Jeavons, Sheila and Jack Madge, Marion and Will Thomas and others tell of life in the more recent past. Richard and Myfanwy Edwards have given an insight into recent farming development. Pam Haines has prepared a history of the Church from which I have borrowed. This ‘project’ started with reading R. Gwyn Thomas’ *History of Colwinston*, based on a personal archive he built over many years as a tenant farmer, District and County Councillor, and a true champion of the village in the second half of the 20th century. This history is intended to complement and update his work, taking a more chronological approach. It will also be supported by the forthcoming publication of an updated village record, *Colwinston – A Changing Village*, being published by the local community, led by Heather Maclehose.

Cowbridge History Society encouraged me to develop this into a final text, in particular putting me in touch with local experts and advising on the final presentation. The accuracy and authenticity of the work has depended heavily on the detailed knowledge and authority of Brian Ll. James. He has generously shared so much of his extensive (and unrivalled) knowledge of the Vale’s history. I just hope this presentation meets his high standards and approval. Richard Morgan of the Welsh Place Names Society has provided specialist knowledge, particularly on the likely origins of the name of

the village and Latin translation and readings of old texts. The staff of the Glamorgan Archives and the National Library of Wales are thanked for their careful management of precious historical documents, and for their patience and forbearance.

The Society will also separately publish a full ‘source’ and reference guide for this book, together with some otherwise unpublished source documents for those who wish to use this work for further historical research.

As with any history, it is open to improvement from new sources and interpretations yet to be discovered but, in the meantime, responsibility for any errors remains mine alone.

*CH June 2018*

## *Introduction*

This ‘explanation’ of the village of Colwinston has been compiled from a number of different records to form a single story, linking the past to how we find the village today. It charts the history and development of the village against the background of wider political events and social changes to show how these have shaped this Vale village, its economy and community life.

The wider historical developments will also have impacted other Vale villages (and indeed those further afield). Colwinston’s ‘explanation’ can inform, and be informed by, those histories of the development of other Vale villages being published in this series by Cowbridge History Society.

The Vale’s villages are often viewed as rural retreats benefiting from some of the best agricultural land in Wales. This history shows they have more often been contested territory facing political and economic events which have sometimes challenged their very survival.

In Colwinston’s case, absentee landlords traded the land, loyalty and hard work of tenant farmers and landless labourers at will. The established church, with nominal vicars often living elsewhere, was frequently rejected as local people found their own more rewarding alternatives. There was a short ‘flowering’ of a post-feudal society in the 19th century as the village benefited from economic developments elsewhere in South Wales, but agricultural life was devastated by the impact of the world wars in the 20th century. And now ‘industrialised’ agriculture and motorised transport

mean that the village's 'society' is made up of a mix of longer standing families, new commuters and retirees who share their lives through a new range of community organisations.

So, while you could say that we are 'lucky' to enjoy the pleasures of Colwinston's village life today, maybe we are actually the beneficiaries of the determination, self reliance and inventiveness of our Welsh forebears. And that challenge and change in rural life is a constant we will need to embrace.

## *Why here?*

Neolithic and ‘Beaker’ people migrating from the continental mainland from 2800 BC onwards settled in the Vale of Glamorgan<sup>1</sup>. Bronze Age burial mounds alongside Twmpath, the Bronze Age barrow at Golden Mile Farm<sup>2</sup>, axe heads buried on land at Highfield Farm<sup>3</sup> and Iron Age kilns are evidence of continued farming.

The basis for an agrarian village at Colwinston probably lies in the gentle valley going east to west towards the village, providing a water supply in the rich farm lands of the Vale area. A natural bowl exists with an exit leading down Church Lane. The village is notable for the somewhat steep slopes in the central area, making it quite unlike other Vale villages in its topography. The watercourse is now underground but rises to the surface in prolonged wet weather.

The older village houses are situated on higher ground overlooking meadows, probably built on the sites of even older simple dwellings. Livestock was fenced in at night and it is thought the area between Garden and Penlan Cottages and Church Cottage provided protection and water for this purpose. Title deeds and old census records call this area ‘The Square’. A village well near Ty Draw would have been a local meeting place, and watercress was harvested from the open watercourse at the ford across the road<sup>4</sup>. A ‘clapper’ bridge (next to the current roadway) was built there for pedestrians. Thus, perhaps, the core elements of a ‘village’ community came to be established.

The Romans came to this part of South Wales in 75 AD (after considerable local opposition), building their route to the west coast (now the A48 as it goes past the village), also improving the link to

the wider world for the village. It may have been (Celtic) Silurian tribespeople who built their own Roman-style villas, for example, at Ely and Llantwit Major<sup>5</sup>. Welsh ‘princes’ of Morgannwg ruled after the Romans left (creating the area known now as Glamorgan), though increasingly owing allegiance to the Wessex Anglo-Saxons<sup>6</sup>. Sometime during this period<sup>7</sup> the Silurian settlement came to be called ‘Colwinstūn’, linking Colwine (an Anglo-Saxon name known in south-west England), and ‘tūn’, meaning farm or settlement<sup>8</sup>.



### *Norman rule and formal land ownership*

Caradog ap Gruffudd and Iestyn ap Gwrgant were ruling in Glamorgan when a Norman invasion from Gloucester was planned by Robert Fitzhamon, probably in 1093. There is no historical evidence for the story that an Einion ap Collwyn treacherously recruited the support of the new Norman invaders to Iestyn's faction in a major battle at Hirwaun, nor that he had anything to do with the name of the village; he is more likely to have originated from North Wales<sup>9</sup>. Fitzhamon did nevertheless lead a Norman invasion of the area from Gloucester or Bristol, possibly coming by sea as the Severn River would have been a substantial barrier in those days. Colwinston thus became part of the Lordship of Glamorgan.

There are many theories about how the original village common running alongside the present A48 came to be called the 'Golden Mile'. Folklore has it that troops in these battles were stationed near Colwinston and received a golden coin in payment<sup>10</sup>, or was it simply that the yellow gorse would show up at this point along the Cowbridge to Ewenny road? It is also thought the area was used in later years for troops to gather: for example, Royalist troops in the Civil War<sup>11</sup>.

The new Norman 'Marcher Lords' assumed formal and legal land ownership, often challenging and opposing the English crown. They ruled in their own right and not under the control of the King of England. Lands were divided up amongst the new French nobles. William de Londres was granted the lordship of Ogmores (which included Colwinston) by Fitzhamon as a 'mesne tenant', i.e. an 'intermediary' tenant between the Lord of Glamorgan (Fitzhamon

and his successors) and others to whom the mesne Lord would let farm land. De Londres had built a castle at Ogmores, effectively then the western boundary of Norman rule.

As was common practice among the Normans, Maurice de Londres established Ewenny Priory in 1141 under the Benedictine Abbey in Gloucester and gave ‘the Church of St Michael of Ewenny, the Church of St Bridget with the Chapel of Ugemore de Lanfey, the Church of St Michael of Colvestone [sic], with the lands, meadows and all other things belonging unto them’ to the Abbey<sup>12</sup>, as described in the Gloucester Chronicles 1141. (It is suggested that this was to counter misdeeds of various kinds, including his part in the death of Gwenllian of Deheubarth and the robbing and defrauding of the Cathedral Church of Llandaff, for which he was threatened with excommunication if he did not make amends<sup>13</sup>.) There is strong evidence that Colwinston church and its stone construction was the work of the de Londres family<sup>14</sup>, built on the site of a pre-existing church.

The church tithes for Colwinston now flowed to Ewenny Priory, along with the rental from a further grant of a 66-acre farm made between 1140 and 1148<sup>15</sup>. (The 66 acres may represent Ty Maen farm which, when the ex-Priory lands were split in the 1670s, became part of the Turberville estate.)

There was a clear and ever-present need to defend the Norman gains from both the sea (Vikings based in Ireland) and the land; the rest of Wales was engulfed in opposing the Norman and then Plantagenet rule. The de Londres family granted tenancies to others in return for rents and ‘knights’ services’ at Ogmores Castle.

This included the establishment of a 'Manor of Colwinston' which would itself then have tenants of various status which linked them to the bond of land tenure, referred to as a 'feudum' or 'fief'.



*Above: Former agricultural buildings at the same location as the Golden Mile homestead (as shown on the 1840 Tithe Map), but possibly from a later date. Photo © the author.*

### ***Priory, Church, Landowners, Farms and the creation of the 'Manor of Colwinston' in the 'Lordship of Ogmore'***

The new landowners needed farmers to work 'their' new possessions. Land was managed under a feudal model with tenant farmers being granted either 'freeholds' (or as 'free tenants') often in exchange for providing military services or sometimes as 'villeins' or 'villains' (as 'bondmen' with farmland and 'cottars' with cottages and gardens), holding their property in return for working on the Lord's estate and paying tithes and rents. These were 'customary tenants' whose rights and obligations were set out as 'customs' of each manor; these rights could often be inherited down through generations, and therefore also sold or exchanged. These were different for each manor, though they were broadly prescribed by law. Initially these may have been granted to Norman supporters from England or France, and it is likely that Anglo-Saxon English was used in the manor at this time. Nevertheless most people living in the area were landless labourers, sometimes able to take sub-leases on parcels of land.

Of Colwinston's tenants at the time there is very little information; however, a 13th-century text records a grant by William, the son of 'John of Colwinston', of a piece of land in Colwinston between the de Londres' 'grange'<sup>16</sup> and the house of 'Nicholas, son of Phillip the miller' to the lord Maurice de Londres. This is described as all his pasture which lies in the moor between Colwinston village and the stone bridge ('Stembridge') in exchange for four acres of arable land, 10 shillings and one "crannock" of

corn<sup>17</sup>. It would seem that, for an unstated reason, William was reducing his ‘investment’ in the village<sup>18</sup>. The document is witnessed by many neighbouring landowners, suggesting that John had quite a high status. This Maurice de Londres is presumably a descendant of the 12th century Maurice de Londres but this is the only known document in which he is described as the ‘Lord of Colwinston’ for this time.

The ‘grange’ was probably located near the church, and would have been a large, possibly semi-fortified, house for the de Londres steward. The naming of the area known as ‘The Square’ in this central part of the old village may have also derived from this time, though no actual evidence why it is designated as such survives.

This document also implies that the Manor had a mill; this *may possibly* have been situated near fields still known as ‘Millhams’ on the 1840 Tithe Map, south of Parcau Farm. A footpath still extends into the fields from the lane heading south from the village past Ty Draw Farm at its junction with the Ewenny to Llandow lane. The footpath continues down to Stembridge Brook where the brook and the local lie of the land suggests there could once have been a mill pond and wooden mill structure. This is the furthest part of the south western corner of the Manor (and parish) but the village is still clearly visible from this point. This mill seems to have gone by the 18th century, when tenants were required to give service at the Lord’s mill in Ewenny. Brocastle Farm also has a field called Waun Vellin (‘melin’ = ‘mill’ in Welsh).

There is also some evidence that a Robert le Regny (who also

held land in England) may have been a 14th century freeholder, probably of the land at Brocastle. Brocastle and Hilton Farms are long-standing freehold properties in the 'Manor of Colwinston', paying much reduced rents. The 'Calendar of Inquisitions' (records of the English king's business affairs) of 20 September 1348 shows le Regny as a landowner in Colwinston and the inheritance of his lands by John le Regny. A further record shows inheritance by David le Regny on the death of John as a minor (hence the matter is noted in the King's records). It is thought this may be the freehold of Brocastle Farm as the rentals equate to that for Brocastle in later documents<sup>19</sup>.

Rents, fines and heriots (amounts to be paid on the tenant's death or on transfer to another lessee) were paid in crops or animals. The tithes were paid to Ewenny Priory and the vicar (usually appointed by the Rector, in this case Ewenny Priory) to provide a vicar's income and meet the costs of running the church.

In the Middle Ages all churches displayed wall paintings in order to impart religious knowledge. Traces remain in St Michael's Church on the west wall of the chancel arch depicting the consecration of St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, and the story of the young mother who left her baby in the bathtub to attend the service; the baby was miraculously saved from death by boiling while the mother was attending the bishop's consecration. The wall paintings are thought to be 600 years old and are painted in tempera on a fine lime plaster<sup>20</sup>.

The English monarchs had no legal authority in the Marcher lordships, other than when they became landowners in their own

right. When a Lordship was inherited by a minor, the King would take control, though it would revert to the descendants of the original family. The Lordship of Glamorgan (with its income) was inherited by King John in 1208, through his marriage to Isabella, Countess of Gloucester. The marriage was annulled and Glamorgan reverted to her successor, Gilbert de Clare. Eventually it passed to Richard, Duke of Gloucester (the future Richard III), on his marriage to the co-heiress, Anne Neville, in 1472. Henry VII therefore acquired the lordship by conquest, when he defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.

The Ogmores lordship passed through two de Londres generations and then by marriage to the de Chaworth family. Maud de Chaworth inherited the estates at one year old and was betrothed to Henry of Lancaster at ten years old and so the Ogmores 'lordship' became part of the Duchy of Lancaster after 1351<sup>21</sup>. It was subsequently inherited by the Crown through Henry IV (1399-1413), though always administered as a private possession of the King.

The English king also played a part in the destiny of Colwinston. Sir Roger de Bavant had become the 'Lord of Colwinston' by 1340 (he either inherited or purchased the 'lordship' as a part of a much wider set of estates). This was for the 'mesne' land around the village with the exception of the church and the 66 acres previously granted to Ewenny Priory.

In 1344, for reasons unknown, he gave his property to King Edward III, who (again for reasons unknown) subsequently endowed the Colwinston property upon the Dominican nuns at Dartford Priory in Kent, though it also seems there were challenges to the grant,

requiring the king to appoint and send officers to secure the income from the Manor<sup>22</sup>. The Priory would appoint a local agent to manage and draw the income from their property.

Thus the rental income from the village was then going to support two Priors (the tithes flowed only to Ewenny), each with an interest in the extraction of rents from tenants by appointed stewards.

In a further twist, Roger de Bavant's heirs continued to claim the manor of Colwinston. This *claim* passed by marriage to Sir John Dauntsey, and thence to his granddaughter Joan, who took Sir John Stradling as her second husband. Stradling successfully asserted his right to the manor in 1425<sup>23</sup>, and it became (for a time) part of his wider estates across South Wales (which included the lordship of Llampha - Stradling's 10 'carucates' of land, equivalent to an area of 800 or 1,200 acres, had to provide the service of one knight at a rate of 6s 8d). However, the rights of the Prioress of Dartford were successfully re-asserted in the 16th century during 'a minority' (when the inheritor is under age)<sup>24</sup>.

Famine in 1315 and the Black Death of 1349<sup>25</sup> and its recurrences in the following years had jointly caused a substantial fall in the Welsh population (by at least a third). Glyn Dŵr's 1402-5 invasions into Glamorgan further devastated farming, especially in the Norman English areas such as Colwinston. Many of those who survived the plague fled in the face of the invasion. The result of these dramatic events was that many tenancies lay desolate, farms and cottages abandoned and there was no labour to keep any 'demesne' (i.e. directly-managed) farmland under crops. Other land had to be re-tenanted, often by farmers from the 'Welshry' to the



north and west of Colwinston who had not suffered so much from Glyn Dŵr's activities<sup>26</sup>. However, rents and incomes for landlords were much reduced and the power of labour, and their wages, increased. This may also be how the village came to be predominantly Welsh speaking.

## *Reformation and the end of the Priors*

After the Welsh Tudors took the English throne in 1485, Wales became formally incorporated with England (under Henry VIII) from 1536. By 1539 English law was also extended to cover Wales and the County of Glamorgan was formally established as an administrative and judicial unit. A key reason for the Acts of Union was to end the independence of the 'Marcher' Lordships.

The year 1536 also saw Henry VIII famously seizing all monastery lands, including Ewenny and Dartford Priors. One of his Commissioners, Sir Edward Carne, was able to lease the Ewenny Priory land in 1537 from the king for £20 10s. 0d. annually, plus a pension of £6 13s. 4d. to the prior and £3 16s. 6d. to each of the monks<sup>27</sup>. Carne eventually purchased the Priory for £727 6s. 4d in 1546 with all its rights and property including the tithes and advowsons (the right to appoint clergy, thus also including those for Colwinston)<sup>28</sup>.

In 1543 he had also purchased the Colwinston estate of the nuns at Dartford Priory<sup>29</sup> for '23 years purchase', i.e. 23 times its annual rentable value, so becoming the dominant landowner and lord of a finally unified 'Manor of Colwinston'<sup>30</sup>. The manor by this time included the two substantial freeholds (at Hilton and Brocastle Farms), and numerous smaller tenancies<sup>31</sup>.

The Carnes did not establish a 'manorial' hall or large house in Colwinston and so management continued through stewards. There is no formal record of the extent of the Manor but later records suggest that it was a 600-acre area<sup>32</sup> (700 'modern' acres) largely consistent with the parish boundary (excluding Stembridge which

was, until 1974, an independent parish). It consisted mainly of lands around the current village core and included Brocastle and Newlands farms north of the A48 (the ‘portway’), though boundaries may well have changed over time.

The unusually large number and extent of ‘customary’ tenancies (as opposed to short-term leaseholds) differentiates Colwinston from other local manors (and subsequently enabled the development of separate farms). It provided some stability and income for those tenants, effectively co-operatively managing village life in the absence of a local landlord, and, though they sometimes either sold or sublet these tenancies, this may have helped to ensure some continuity in the village during this period.

After the Reformation, Cranmer’s *Book of Common Prayer* introduced new liturgy following the establishment of the new Anglican Church, for example changing the meaning of the mass. Simpler wooden holy tables were substituted for the original stone ‘mensa’ or altar table. In the case of St Michael’s, the stone altar was taken into the churchyard and lies on the south side of the churchyard at right angles to the gravestones. The Pre-Reformation bell which the square medieval tower with its battlement was built to carry has survived, with its Latin inscription “Sancte Michael ora pro nobis” (Pray for us St Michael) invoking the saint to which the church is dedicated. There were originally three bells in the tower but two were broken and the metal sold in 1722 to pay for the reseating of the church.

Although the new services were conducted in both Welsh and English, there was local resistance to the momentous religious

changes being driven from London and Canterbury that took place in the 16th century. This was reinforced by feelings across Wales that had been simmering for centuries through conflict between Welsh church leadership from St Davids and the imposition of control from Canterbury.

Despite benefiting financially from the Reformation, Carne remained firmly Roman Catholic until his death in Rome in 1561. Led by the Carne family, Colwinston remained one of the pockets of recusants (people refusing to attend Anglican services) into the 17th century. While the parish priest sought to administer the new Anglican rites, Roman Catholic priests, (under the protection of the Turbervilles of Penllyn Castle), continued to administer the sacrament according to the Roman rite<sup>33</sup>. The “Popish Plot” scare resulted in two priests, John Lloyd and Phillip Evans, being arrested and hanged, drawn and quartered on the Heath at Cardiff in 1679<sup>34</sup>.

## *Feudal ownership and agriculture*

The Norman tradition of primogeniture (inheritance of the family's land/property by the eldest son) ensured the large estates in this part of Wales were generally not divided between the wife and/or sibling children on death of the father. This was in contrast to the traditions in areas further west and north which followed traditional Welsh inheritance practices whereby all males, including illegitimate children, inherited an equal share.

From the 16th century, tenants with 'customary rights' (and duties) within the manor became known as 'copyholders'. They either held land for three generations or had inheritable 'copyholds', so called because tenants were given copies of an entry in the Manorial Roll as evidence of their tenancy<sup>35</sup>. Copyholds were customarily inherited by the youngest son on the 'Borough English' model in the Manor of Colwinston. These 'customs' of the manor followed those established centuries earlier. However, copyholders would sometimes place their copyholds in the hands of trustees, so that they could determine inheritance outside the 'customary' model, perhaps to the oldest son.

Labour costs increased with scarcity following the impact of the plague and invasions, and the older feudal models of fealty and loyalty slowly changed. The management of the incomes from manors was formalised by their owners through 'Courts Baron' and a twice-yearly 'Court Leet' at which appointed stewards required tenants to attend<sup>36</sup>. Tenants were obliged to have a 'view of frankpledge' meaning that all the tenants in the manor were jointly liable for each other's actions and the Court Leet could administer

local justice (including fines) through a group of local tenants being sworn as a local 'jury'. The Court also appointed bailiffs, haywards and other 'officers' from local tenants. Rents, fines and heriots were increasingly being paid in money at the twice yearly Leet Courts rather than through the provision of military service or working on landowners 'demesne' farms or their mills (however, there was a mill at Ewenny in the 17th century, and Colwinston tenants were still required to have their corn ground there).

In the 1670s, with no sons to inherit after six generations in the Carne family, their lands were split between two surviving Carne daughters (Blanche and Martha) upon their marriages. The land at Colwinston (with Llandough and St Mary Church) became the property of Sir Edward Mansel, Baronet of Margam, when he married Martha Carne in about 1665<sup>37</sup>. (Married women could not legally own property until a change in the law in 1882.) It would seem that the Mansel inheritance included the tithes and advowsons for the Manor originally granted to Ewenny Priory but not the additional grant of 66 acres of land made to the Priory which went to Blanche's inheritance (subsequently becoming part of the Turberville estate).

The freehold properties in the Manor effectively separated and became parts of larger estates, the Morgan family (later Sir Charles Morgan who became Lord Tredegar in 1859) owning the Brocastle freehold from the 16th century as part of his wider estate. The Lewis family of Van near Caerphilly (and subsequently owners of St Fagan's Castle) bought Corntown Farm soon after 1600 and then may also have acquired the Hilton freehold, all later inherited by

the Earl of Plymouth and subsequently passed by marriage to Robert Henry Clive<sup>38</sup>.

Bussy Mansel became the 4th Baron of Margam in 1744. In 1750<sup>39</sup> he sold the remaining land and rights of the ‘Manor of Colwinston’ to David Thomas ‘of Bath’ – including the rights to the tithes and the advowson (the right to appoint the Vicar) of the Church - for £3,800<sup>40</sup>.

David Thomas’ father, Edward Thomas of Tregroes (1655-1717), had married Anne Morgan, the heiress of the copyhold in Colwinston called Pwllwyrach. This property, as a copyhold, was passed by Edward to his youngest son David (1703-1769). It seems that David Thomas, actually a barrister in London<sup>41</sup>, may have made the offer to Bussy Mansel as the last of the Mansel male line. He would become the ‘Lord of the Manor’ and be able to access political privileges as a landowner. It is thought that the Thomas family can trace their origins back to the vast Gwaithfoed ‘kindred’ which included the Herberts, owners of Powis Castle. Edward Thomas’ more immediate family though descended from long-standing Colwinston copyholders.

A new ‘manor house’ was built at Pwllwyrach. Whilst the main building dates from the 1770s, it is thought to have been a remodelling of an earlier building, possibly built when the manor was purchased from the Mansels (or based on an earlier farmhouse). It is understood that the building was then often let to other people by the Thomases, as their business was in London<sup>42</sup>. Thus, for the first time, the ‘manor’ of Colwinston had a ‘manor house’, but effectively still with an absent ‘lord’.

The Manor was then passed to David Thomas' second son, another David (1742-1830), in 1769, as the older son (Robert) had died in 1760. This David Thomas, who was High Sheriff of Glamorgan in 1777, married Mary Curre of Clemenstone. As the one son who survived him (and by only one year) was the unmarried Rev. Robert Thomas (1771-1831), the (largely absentee) Vicar of Colwinston, the manor was passed to his grandson, another David (1801-1853), who married Eliza Prichard. Hubert de Burgh Thomas, their son (1842-1878), inherited the Manor in 1853. He only lived to 36 and in 1878, the year of his death, he put much of the estate up for sale in twelve lots, though only Yew Tree Farm, Ty Draw Farm, five houses and some smaller fields were actually sold<sup>43</sup>.

The remainder of the Manor is again without a male heir after his death. His sister, Mary Anna Thomas, had married her cousin, Charles John Collins Prichard (1830-1903) in 1858 and the remaining estate was passed to her in 1878. Her older brother Rev. Robert Curre Thomas (1846-1930), Vicar of Colwinston, appears to have been passed over. She placed her land at Colwinston in trust to ensure its inheritance by her son, Hubert Cecil Prichard (1865-1942)<sup>44</sup>.



### *The village on maps - and its name*

An old map of the area (probably 1550s) shows the lordships now claimed by the Duchy of Lancaster (see above) south of the Ogwr, stretching down to Southerndown<sup>45</sup>. Here the village appears to be recorded as ‘Colwyn’s Tone’. Nevertheless, the village name was usually spelt as one word, and the village seems to have been recorded in a number of different spellings over the years, including ‘Coulston’ in old wills and on a map by Thomas Kitchen of 1759<sup>46</sup>. More recently it has most commonly been written as Colwinstone or Colwinston, with the -ton/e pronounced as in Modern English ‘con’ or roughly the same as the modern pronunciation of ‘ton’ (the weight). The Ordnance Survey has used ‘Colwinston’ since 1833 (reflecting the usual pronunciation) but there is evidence that even official sources (e.g. census records, post marks) included a final -e until relatively recently. Colwinston residents recall that teachers in the local school chastised children for spelling it without an ‘e’ in the 1940s and 50s<sup>47</sup>. It is thought this usage was simply an affectation to distinguish the village name in some way and did not reflect a different pronunciation.

The Welsh name of the village was not often recorded in documents in those times because of restrictions on the use of Welsh. It is possible that the current ‘Tregolwyn’ was derived from a Welsh translation of ‘tun’ to Tref, and a re-interpretation of Colwine through association with the Welsh word ‘colwyn’, typically applied to rivers and streams from a fancied likeness between the dashing behaviour of a puppy and the movement of a fast flowing stream, reflecting local topographical features, perhaps the Colwinston

Brook in flood. 'Colwyn' has mutated to 'golwyn' because 'tref' is a feminine noun. Tregolwyn first appears in writing c.1566 as 'tref golwyn' although it is likely to have originated at a much earlier date<sup>48</sup>.



*The former baptismal pool, as refurbished in 2011. (photo by kind permission of Mrs C Jones.)*

## *Village development in the 17th and 18th Centuries*

Records for the 1670 Hearth Tax Assessment, Manorial Rolls from 1674, 1705 and 1710, and the 1782 Land Tax Assessment tell us something of the organisation of the village and the Manor during these times.

In 1670 there were 45 ‘Hearth Tax’ Assessments: 25 houses had only one hearth, 14 had two hearths, four had three hearths and only two had four. Ten of these households were assessed as being too poor to pay the tax.

At most, 18 of these householder names also appear on the 1674 Roll for the Manor of Colwinston, then effectively covering the parish. Some tenants listed on the manorial rolls lived outside the village. Tenants were also often ‘sub letting’ their properties to other occupiers, and these would be liable for the Hearth Tax.

The most legible Rent Rolls available for the Manor of Colwinston for this period are those for 1674, 1705 and 1710 (together with an additional document on arrears from 1711/12) when it was part of the Penrice and Margam estate<sup>49</sup>. These handwritten documents are of varying quality, sometimes actually in rolled-up scrolls. Unfortunately, they rarely specify actual locations of properties, only the size and nature of the various tenancies.

Between 1674 and 1710, these rolls show two freeholders (the Morgans of Brocastle Farm and Richard Lewis of Hilton Farm), 22 or 23 ‘customary’ tenants or leaseholders, and between 13 and 18 ‘customary’ cottagers, totalling around 40 freeholders and copyholders with ‘customary’ rights. Others who had no ‘customary’ rights included between 18 and 21 leaseholders, 11 to 14 tenants, and

about 30 'renters'.

By 1674 there would appear to be approximately 48 houses (at least two in disrepair) in the village. Some individuals hold or lease land in more than one category. Some copyhold owners may hold these as part of larger estates, some might be residing in nearby villages. The income from Colwinston received by Sir Thomas Mansel was £106 10s (and a large number of capons or hens). This was a very small part of the total Margam estate income, amounting to at least £2,700 between 1700 and 1710<sup>50</sup>.

While the numbers of tenants and leaseholders remain broadly consistent, family names appearing on the rolls through all these years seem to change, with only 17 seeming to be on all the rolls over the 36 years involved. While shorter lifespans and difficulties identifying inheritances through Welsh patronymic naming (resulting in changes to 'second names' with each generation) could account for some of this, there is evidence of a number of changes of ownership of the tenancies. For example, Edward Thomas ('gent'), who originally acquired land in Colwinston by marriage, had acquired at least seven other tenancies in Colwinston by 1705. But it would also have been that some families moved 'through' and left the village, as agricultural incomes, after rents had been paid, were poor and depended heavily on the quality of the harvest.

The 1782 Land Tax records show that there are now a total of 19 different landowners in the parish. These included the original freeholds, copyholds which are now classed as being 'owned', as well as a number of smaller areas which would appear to have been

purchases from the Manor.

The Thomas family had now taken over the ‘Manor’ lands which used to be owned by the Penrice and Margam estate; there are seven leaseholders listed for this land with 22 occupiers. However, some freeholders and copyholders have also sold on parcels of land to others, some of whom are leasing their land in turn to 14 other leaseholders. In total these ‘properties’ are being rented out to 36 different ‘occupiers’ liable for the tax. The Earl of Plymouth is now listed as an owner (as opposed to a freeholder within the Manor) with five leaseholders and nine ‘occupiers’. Edward Lewis, who lived outside the village at the Great House, Penlline, is an owner and the grandson of one of the ‘customary tenants’ of 1674. The Turberville family is an owner (Ty Maen Farm and other land including land at Newland) with an Edward Bowen as an occupier; Edward Bowen also leases land from David Thomas as well as being listed as a landowner in his own right.

Very few family names seem to carry through to 1782 as occupiers from the 1710 Manorial Roll; possibly five family names may be common to the two lists, with a further five that may carry through from the 1670 Hearth Tax as ‘occupiers’ across the parish, but many more names have disappeared with each list<sup>51</sup>.

Social developments in this time included the provision of a ‘circulating’ school by the Welsh Circulating Charity School Movement, visiting Colwinston during the winter months from 1745 onwards. The schools ‘circulated’ through local villages staying three months at a time. Focusing on the Anglican catechism, they nevertheless taught children to read in Welsh, keeping the

understanding of the language alive and possibly paving the way for local Welsh 'free churches'. The movement closed in 1779.

Colwinston also made a small contribution to the history of democracy when Colwinston's copyholders successfully claimed the right to vote in 1734<sup>52</sup>. This was at a time when only independent landowners could vote in elections, usually to support a local large landowner to take up the Parliamentary seat. Actual elections were rarely held as usually the local 'electorate' simply agreed not to contest a proposed powerful landowner. However, the enfranchisement of the Colwinston copyholders may well have been promoted by the then owner of the Manor of Colwinston, Bussy Mansel, who was standing as a Tory in a contested election against Lord Talbot (a Whig). In any case Mansel lost the election. However, it was an indication that copyholders were increasingly seen as landowners. All long-standing copyholds were eventually changed to freeholds by the various Copyhold Acts enacted in the latter part of the 19th century, with the final Act being in 1925.

## *Challenges and change in the 19th Century*

The Tithe Map from 1840 and censuses from 1801, 1811, 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1901 reveal the extent of change going on in the village community during these times.

The 1801 Census reports that there were 48 inhabited and two uninhabited houses in Colwinston; by 1811 there were 52 inhabited and two uninhabited houses. These houses drew their water from three known wells, one at Goose Park (now Splott Farm), one at Parcau, and one at Ty Draw. Some houses had rainwater tanks, though it is also known that Rose Cottage had its own well and it may be that other older houses (Church Cottage, Penlan Cottage) were able to draw water from wells, with underground water in the depression that runs southwards down to the church.

The 1836 Act for the Commutation of Tithes was enacted in the Parish in 1839. Tithes of corn and pulses were paid to the ‘Impropriate’ (lay) Rector (in this case the ‘Lord’ of the Manor, David Thomas) and of wool, milk, animals and birds to the vicar, by now Evan Jones (who had previously been a long-serving curate to the various absent vicars, serving three local parishes). The Rectorial Tithe was commuted to a £122 rent charge per year and the Vicarial Tithe became an £88 rent charge. Thus in 1840 a Parish Map was prepared to show how this should properly be apportioned.

The 1840 Tithe Map and 1841 Census records help to show the increasing pace of change now taking place. There are now 30 owners listed on the Tithe Map. These include David Thomas (Pwlllywrach and much of the central core of the village – and with ‘Sporting Rights’), the Hon. Robert Henry Clive, Earl of Plymouth

(now owning Hilton Farm and other land on the west side of the parish<sup>53</sup>), and Sir Charles Morgan (Brocastle Farm and much of the Parish land north of the A48). These latter two seem to have the land of the two original freeholds. Other land is owned by Edward Bowen (Church Farm), Thomas Cullys (Chapel Farm) and Jesus College, Oxford (at Corntown, the College bought the farm from Robert Henry Clive<sup>54</sup>), as well as many smaller holdings by others. Land was sometimes sold by the Manor, either because harvests were poor or to pay for other investments, and there were a number of new 'gentlemen' owners coming into the local land market. It was also common to mortgage farmland so the owners could invest in other more lucrative (but sometimes more risky) ventures; if these failed then the mortgagor might well end up in ownership of the property.

The Tithe Map also shows that there are now 53 houses or farmhouses (either 'homestead' or 'cottage and garden'), 21 of which (mostly in the village core) are owned by 'David Thomas' i.e. within the now somewhat reduced 'Manor of Colwinston'.

The 1841 census shows that the village supported 56 households across the whole parish (ranging from one to 14 people, sometimes including servants and farm workers). Most occupations are listed as either 'farmer' or 'agricultural labourer', though there are also two carpenters, three tailors, one publican, one cooper, one shopkeeper, a pauper and one pedlar. One hundred and thirty years earlier, the Manor had been supporting 70 households.

Unfortunately, most of the addresses for the 287 people listed on the 1841 Census are given as 'in the village'. However, 37 families on this census can be identified against 1840 Tithe Map



records as living in individual houses or farms. Sixteen named occupiers of properties on the Tithe Map do not appear on the Census (but these properties may be part of larger estates and/or the tenants may be living in neighbouring villages). Twenty-one families appear on the Census and are not listed as ‘occupiers’ on the Tithe Map. These would probably include families being accommodated within farm properties as farm workers (with their families), some sub-letting of tenancies, as well as part of the pattern of population turnover in the village. In later censuses many more people are identified as living at ‘Heol Fawr’ and this does seem to be an area where there may have been some more informal or temporary housing arrangements.

The substantial ‘churn’ in the village population continued as farms did not provide for reasonable or stable incomes for many. The new industrial developments around South Wales also began to attract people away from the village. Census records show that of the 268 people living in the village in 1861, only 98 had been living in the village in 1851. One hundred and sixty-eight people died or moved away in that decade, to be replaced by a high number of births and people moving in from West Wales and Ireland<sup>55</sup>.

There was always an area of common land of approximately 70 acres, lying alongside the A48, known as the Golden Mile Common. This was ‘enclosed’ by an Act of Parliament of 1868 through the ‘Golden Mile Award’ made by the Enclosure Commissioners. This split the common amongst Hubert de Burgh Thomas as Lord of the Manor and 19 copyholders<sup>56</sup>, and was only finalised in 1871. Four acres and nine perches were retained ‘as a

place for Exercise and Recreation for the inhabitants of the...parish and neighbourhood' and two acres and six perches were retained as an 'allotment for the Laboring Poor'. No 'award' is made to the Manor's two Freeholders as only the copyholders had grazing rights.

The 1901 Census and a 1902 Rental Value Assessment show the overall population to have declined to 213, with 52 households now living in approximately 47 identifiable properties, 20 of which are owned by the Pwlllywrach estate. Occupations now include groom, butcher (x2), 'domestic', cook, gamekeeper, shoemaker, blacksmith, collier, carpenter and builder, publican, miner/hewer as well as the predominant 'farmer' and 'agricultural labourer'.

## *Reminders of old Colwinston*



*Left: Mounting block  
outside Village House*

*Below: Former slaughter  
house at Lower House  
Farm*



*Left: Ancient cross in St Michael's*



*churchyard*

## *Social Developments in the Village*

The 1861 census shows some children to be attending a private school located on Twyn yr Eglwys. The origins of the present school are in the building now known as Ty Colwyn, where a school was established in 1871 as a 'National' school supported by the (then) Church of England. There were 27 children on the original register<sup>57</sup>. This building is also thought to be the original village tithe barn (although another site has also been identified across the Ty Draw road from the 'Old Parsonage'<sup>58</sup>; it is possible there may have been two, one for the Vicarial tithes and one for the Rectorial tithes). From 1875 the school was funded through a voluntary Parish rate. The school moved to its present site in 1970.

The church was restored in 1879 by Henry J Williams of Bristol; in the course of this, the location of the old rood loft was discovered, the doors at the entrance and upper level were replaced and a new door was placed in the porch. New windows were inserted in the nave, the old stone pulpit was replaced by an oak one and a new oak communion table, lectern and chancel furniture were installed. The contractor was Thomas Thomas of Colwinston and the cost of £800 was defrayed by Mrs Mary Collins Prichard who had recently come to live at Pwlllywrach and, as patron of the 'living', wished to put the church in a good state of repair. In 1881, when additional accommodation was required for the then 64 parishioners, the architect John Prichard simply reseated the church with open benches at a cost of £120<sup>59</sup>.

However, a challenge to the Anglican church came through the development of chapel communities in the village, particularly for Welsh language speakers.

There is evidence of some families in Colwinston practising Methodism as early as 1771, possibly attending the chapel at Aberthin, where they would have come under the influence of Rev. David Jones, the rector of Llangan from 1767 to 1810 or of the Rev. David Williams, the minister of Aberthin Chapel, who lived in Llysworney<sup>60</sup>. A Wesleyan Methodist chapel was founded (in the grounds of what is now Colwinston House, where a garage abuts the road) in 1825.

The Seion (Calvinistic Methodist) Chapel was built in 1830, surviving until 1996. A Baptist congregation (from the Ramoth Chapel in Cowbridge) converted an existing building at Chapel Farm in 1843 into the Ebenezer Baptist Chapel and a separate Baptist church was established here in 1852. The last minister, Rev A. E. Powell of Balarat, Pencoed, retired in 1944<sup>61</sup>. The pastor for 40 years, he walked or rode to Colwinston to take morning and evening services<sup>62</sup>. The baptismal pool was made in the river which was blocked off in the field below Cynma House. The last recorded baptism during this period was that of Gwyneth Jeavons, the granddaughter of the then owners of Rose Cottage.

The Manorial Rolls for Colwinston show that the Court Leet met at the Sycamore Tree Inn in the 1840s; the pub was itself a 'copyhold' property (being auctioned as such as late as 1919). The building originates from the 17th century, and was probably a

yeoman's dwelling. The Hare and Hounds, located on Crack Hill, seems to have had tenants from 1815.

In 1865, a village branch of the 'Philanthropic Order of the True Ivorites Friendly Society' was established at the Sycamore Tree Inn, conducting its business in Welsh. This provided a vehicle for villagers with independent incomes to save (and borrow), and then possibly to buy their own properties; it finally closed in 1960<sup>63</sup>.

### *Twentieth Century village transformation*

The parish population in the early 20th century formed around the Pwllwyrach House and Farm and a number (approximately 19 in total) of small farm units stretching west-east from Ty Maen to the Yew Tree and Chapel Farms, north to Claypit and Highfield Farms and south including Ty Draw and Stembridge and Parcau Farms. Dairy farming was especially predominant around the main village. Stembridge, an independent parish, also known as Steynesbrugge and Stone Bridge, since the 13th century, was incorporated into the Community of Colwinston in 1974. Welsh speakers comprised 60% of the population in 1901 (by 1921 this had declined to 32.1% and by 1931 to 24.1%).

Some of these farms were tenanted and some were owner-occupied properties. Although tithe payments had become relatively minor, they were only finally abolished in 1936, with the beneficiaries being given annuities in lieu.

The Pwllwyrach estate sometimes acquired farms, including the copyhold 'Golden Mile Farm' in 1898 for £1600, incorporating them into the estate. The original farm is now a ruin. In addition there were labourer's cottages (most still owned by the Pwllwyrach estate), the Church and the Parsonage (and the then Vicarage) and three chapels. Some farms and houses on the higher ground had rainwater storage tanks; other houses were built along watercourses to be able to access water using their own wells. Agriculture was supported by other trades including the Sycamore Tree Inn<sup>64</sup>, a forge and blacksmith, baker, shoe maker, post office and horse breaker.

Colwinston would always have reasonable road access to

other centres with its proximity to the A48. Surplus agricultural produce was also exported (originally by sea) to Bristol and then to the growing communities in the South Wales coalfields by rail. It was a substantial walk (or easier ride) to the Southerndown Road Railway Station (now closed but visible from Castle-upon-Alun at Croescutta). The railway was sometimes used for outings - for example, to visit Barry Island in the 1940s. With motorised transport, the population could travel further afield (on chapel outings, for example), though obviously links further east remained limited by the Severn Estuary.

There are continuing and accelerating changes to the population which also then begins to grow away from its agricultural origins. The industrial growth in the South Wales coalfields also provided an economic alternative for many as the need for intensive labour on farms was replaced by machinery, and village populations declined<sup>65</sup>. The industrial developments also generated new markets for agricultural produce. Some of the original houses fell into disrepair as these population movements took place.

Twenty-three villagers signed up to fight in the First World War and all returned, so the village is one of 53 'Thankful Villages' in the UK. However, the war left agriculture in a sorry state, with land exhausted from overproduction and a much reduced workforce. More land and buildings were being sold by the larger estates, often to pay for death duties or private school fees. For example, the Pwllwyrach estate sold several village properties in the early 1920s. Cowbridge Rural District Council built new accommodation in the 1920s at Maes y Bryn, in part to re-house some whose



accommodation had been condemned. These houses were originally reliant on rainwater collected from the roofs.

There were several shops in the village at various times in the 1900s; these included a Mrs Coffey, who ran a shop from the Old Parsonage (in the 1930s), and Gwen Thomas ('Gwen the Shop', the mother of R. Gwyn Thomas and his brother Eiryn), who ran a shop at Chapel Farm. Llew Davies had a shop at Heol Fawr (located in front of the current Greystones) and a Mr Bullock ran a market garden providing vegetables from fields now occupied by Greystones and The Hollies. It is also understood there was a bakery on the road in front of The Retreat, though the dates are not known – the hill in front of this was known as Bakers Hill.

The post office has moved around the village. Its first known location in Victorian times was at the house now called 'The Ramblers' (the original postbox is still visible) with an Ellen Hitchcock as postmistress in 1911. It moved to Penlan Cottage and was run by a Mrs Burgess, from where the original manually operated telephone exchange was also started. By 1961 it had been taken over by Mrs Kath Freeman at Rose Cottage. From 1967 to 2001 it was run by Mrs Marion Thomas from BelleVue Bungalow, the site of the current postbox.

A simple building (though well fitted out inside) served as the 'Institute' (built to the east of Forge Cottage), shown on maps after 1919 on land leased by the Pwllwyrach estate, eventually to be replaced by the current Village Hall. It was known for a range of social activities, as well as for being poorly heated.

Colonel Hubert Cecil Prichard (1865-1942) came to live at

Pwllwyrach in 1903 after a military career. His son Hubert de Burgh Prichard (1907-1944) married Rosalind Christie, famously the only daughter of Agatha Christie (by her first marriage).

The Second World War saw four fatalities, now commemorated by a memorial erected in 2014 on the village green; the dead included Hubert de Burgh Prichard<sup>66</sup>.

Rosalind Prichard remarried in 1949, becoming Rosalind Hicks, eventually moving away from the village. Her son Mathew Prichard (b. 1943) had been given the proceeds from the royalties of Agatha Christie's play, *The Mousetrap*, by his grandmother. He subsequently used the substantial sums from the play to establish the Colwinston Charitable Trust in 1995, which now supports a range of arts organisations across the UK.

The main business for the Prichard family is now the management of 'Agatha Christie Limited' (established by Agatha Christie in 1955 and developed by the family to manage the considerable incomes from the books and associated royalties) in London, James Prichard being the current Chair and CEO.

The smaller, mostly tenanted, farms became unviable in the latter part of the century. As tenants retired and tenancies were relinquished, they were incorporated into the Pwllwyrach Estate to create a single major agricultural business focusing, on sheep and beef cattle rather than dairy farming. The estate also sold and purchased pieces of land, benefiting from EU amalgamation grants, to create the estate as it is today alongside other holdings in the parish. This is now managed by the Edwards family with a 'three generation' tenancy.

Those farm buildings between Ty Maen Farm and Colwinston House (built originally as a Dower House for Pwlllywrach) not already sold by the Pwlllywrach Estate were gradually sold as residential houses, with the barns and rickyards between the farm houses also being sold off for development.

Gradually, ‘modern’ features found their way to the village. This included mains water in 1935, and electricity and telephone (a replacement for the original red telephone box now stands on the village green) from 1946 onwards. A new water main was laid from the A48 in 1972 and a new sewerage scheme laid in 1973. Beech Park was built in the 1960s, with other small developments following.

Further restoration work was carried out for the church in 1971 following a fire which badly damaged the chancel and the brass tablets either side of the altar displaying the Ten Commandments. It was at this time that the words “Holy, Holy, Holy”, painted in beautiful scrollwork above the chancel arch, were painted over.

## *And Now, the 21st Century*

The majority of the agricultural land in the parish is now part of the Pwlllywrach estate (mostly north east and south of the village core). Brocastle Farm, Church Farm, Claypit Farm and Ty Maen Farm hold land bought and/or inherited in the parish over the centuries. Land to the north west of the village is also farmed from Corntown Farm. Other individuals have also purchased land on the north and west side of the village, some bought from farms that closed down (some of this land had come from the original Golden Mile Common) and some from Welsh Church Act Fund land. Other land and property is owned by the Vale of Glamorgan Council for the Church in Wales school, the Village Hall and its field (on land exchanged for 'parish' land originally from the enclosure of the Common) and the remaining social housing. Finally most other housing is now owned by individual house owners, either 'new build' housing or in the form of older houses purchased originally from the Pwlllywrach estate, the Council, the Chapel organisations and the Church or other original villagers and farmers.

The most recent restoration work at the church was carried out at the millennium with the benefit of a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund together with grants from other bodies and funds raised by the villagers. A much-needed vestry, kitchen and toilet were built on the north side of the church, the interior and exterior walls were limewashed and the roof repaired at a cost of £350,000.

Thus the village developed from an exclusively agricultural economy based on tenant farming (albeit one where there was a

substantial turnover in both owners and residents over many centuries) to a community made up of commuters, farmers and agricultural employees, home-based workers and retirees. The population more than doubling the 1901 population of 213 to 447 at the 2011 census.

The main fabric of the village was thus set until 2016 when the developer Redrow plc. built the 64 new homes on land now known as Heol Cae Pwll (purchased from Lower House Farm), further increasing the village housing stock and population. This has brought many new (and returning) families to the village to join with and support a particularly vibrant set of community organisations for which the village has become known. This community spirit has been recognised by the village's inclusion in national media 'top village' listings. With this housing development has also come 'fibre' broadband to extend the opportunities and challenges provided by the internet to the residents of the village. And so the 21st century finally arrived, albeit a little late.

***BEFORE AND AFTER***

*(photos by kind permission of Mr R G Thomas)*

*17th century barn at  
Highfield Farm...*



*...Now  
“Charlie’s Shop and Cafe”*



## *Conclusions and Reflections*

This book is the result of research undertaken to ‘explain’ the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of this village as we find it now. Nevertheless, while there has been a shared economic and political history for this part of Wales, this history has also impacted on Colwinston uniquely to create the village we know today. On the other hand, looking outwards from the village experience adds a perspective to the wider history that we can more personally own. We are living with its consequences.

The village’s very existence may well have been determined by a set of geographical and topographical features in the landscape which meant early tribespeople could defend their stock and homes from raids. The Roman road and the way the Romans generally worked with local tribes when they ‘invaded’ would have enabled local communities to develop and stabilise. The early adoption of Christianity could have helped to shape social structures, resulting in the building of an early church.

We do not know why a Saxon may have given his name to the village, or how this could have happened during a period when the tribes were still dominant. It may be that this came about as local tribes both resisted Saxon invasion and nevertheless accommodated some level of immigration and integration with their powerful neighbours – as has been so often the case in the history of this part of Wales.

The Norman invasion of Glamorgan and other parts of south Wales determined the development and history of these areas from

this point on. The ‘Bro’ development was shaped by the imposition of Norman political and ownership structures by the invading lords. The ‘Blaenau’ areas in the north of Glamorgan acted as a ‘buffer’ zone with the other communities thriving independently in the rest of Wales. So the population here became serfs living in structured and externally owned communities.

While Llysworney was managed from the local grange as a ‘demesne’ property to provide produce directly for the new lordship, Ewenny had its Priory, Llampha had its Manor and Penllyne had its Castle, Colwinston’s ‘mesne’ tenants were managed from further afield. Individual families may thus have had a greater level of independence, provided they supported the defence of the Ogmor Lordship. Two quite large freeholds were granted, probably to Norman soldiers, amongst a set of more tied tenants. These tenancies could be traded with their various rights and customs, with people coming and going to live in the village from an early time.

We really know nothing of the lives of the landless majority, except that they had to eke out a living with no security. Life was often short and living conditions harsh. Many found roles in English armies an attractive alternative, perhaps as members of the famous Welsh archers fighting the English king’s wars on the continent.

The granting of land and titles in Colwinston to support not just one, but two, religious institutions, may well have contributed to its isolation. The impact may have been that the tenants had to develop more local interdependence on each other under the looser management of the Priors’ stewards, whose main preoccupation was to deliver the incomes from the tenants to the two Priors. The



Black Death and Glyn Dŵr's attempts to unify the country meant more population movement, with immigration from Welsh communities further west attracted by the better agricultural land. With this came the first glimmers of empowerment as agricultural wages rose.

Feudal management gave way to the development of major estates and traded landholdings in the ex-Norman areas. In other parts of Wales, local families could maintain their own land ownership and inheritances. In Colwinston's case, the parish became part of a succession of a number of wider estates, but always managed from afar. Possibly the continuing tenants did not notice any great difference when the ownership changed, manorial records continued to demonstrate mutual reliance and the self management of village life.

By the 18th century, the power of the 'gentry' was gradually being broken, rural areas followed urban and industrialised areas with developing democratic structures, though slowly at the start. The rise of the free churches expressed this growing sense of independence from an English hegemony in Glamorgan, as in other parts of Wales. Colwinston supported three different Welsh-speaking chapels, a surprisingly large number for the population. But perhaps this sense of local empowerment also reflects the long history of village self-management.

And so the economic and political power of the larger landowners was finally being breached. Some of the tenant farmers began to build their own estates from their hard work, ingenuity and, often, their marriages. Heirs to some of the old landed monopolies

sold up, preferring to invest their money in the burgeoning capital-rich cities. The development of new ‘gentleman’ farmers meant that some people had the chance to make something of themselves. If they were successful, they built up their own estates and land holdings; many also helped to develop more modern farming methods. They were also quick to challenge the old families in political roles. Eventually, tied copyholders gained the powers to own their land outright (with Colwinston’s own copyholders playing an intriguing role in this history).

At the same time, a descendant of one of Colwinston’s copyholders became a lawyer in London and bought out the remaining estate land in the village. The church was refitted and junior family relatives appointed as vicars. Though the Parsonage was never deemed good enough for them to actually live in the village; not perhaps that many in the village actually cared by now.

The main road was still away to the north, and the new railway line some way to the south, keeping the village connected but still isolated. Even the ‘big house’ at Pwlllywrach was usually reached without going through the village.

The draw of the nearby coalfields for some village people brought new residents from further west and from Ireland; not many in the village can now go back more than a few generations. The secular organisation of the True Ivorites in the village enabled some families to eventually buy their properties from the struggling and declining ‘manor’, keeping some population in the village. The children from these families had to seek new kinds of jobs in the nearby towns or left the village, with the houses then being bought

by incomers seeking a rural lifestyle. English gradually replaced Welsh across the village with the English-medium school, an increasing number of incomers and the need to work in industrial and commercial businesses beyond the village.

The impact of two world wars and industrialisation finally brought an end to the long-standing agricultural dominance, despite the chief local landowner actually living in the village for the first time in its history. Land ownership around the village is now shared across a number of interests; though new agricultural and entrepreneurial skills are critical to the effective exploitation of these fields.

Then the strange quirk of the ‘Agatha Christie’ phenomenon created a whole new business opportunity for the Prichard family, taking their interests back to London. The house at Pwllwyrach is now distant and outside the mainstream of village life again.

So does all this history really affect us now? New kinds of residents have brought their money and motor cars to join longer-standing farming (or ex-farming) families, changing the village and finding a new use for it away from its origins. The ‘new-fangled’ internet is already helping some build new kinds of businesses.

Arguably, the village has supported successive ‘waves’ of residents over the centuries, as the fate of agriculture, pestilence, war and nearby industrialisation drew population away and sucked new residents in. This current phase is, in a way, a continuation of a long-standing process.

There was no central manor house to dominate, or be taken over by the industrialised rich or turned into a National Trust

property. Even though two urban communities lie within ten minutes of the village, there is no great desire to widen the access roads. You do have to *choose* to live here, and many place great emphasis on the village pub, the societies (including the much-copied Philosophical Society), pantomime, youth club, the fete and the Village Hall for our local social entertainment.

The school (and its survival) means that young people grow up knowing each other, and although most young people have to leave the village for their work and career, the new housing in the village has drawn some back to Colwinston.

Just maybe the ghost of that feudal self-determination and co-operation is carried on through the way we organise our community life, handed down through the manorial ‘juries’, the chapels, the Institute, the pub, interlinked families and ‘Mari Lwyd’ and other traditional entertainments.

And perhaps the shape of the village, the lack of a village manor house and the spread of the housing created by the old copyhold and freehold farms means expansion does not result in the loss of a ‘core’ the village never really had. The lack of a ‘through’ road limits access to and from the outside (alongside a refusal to properly name the roads). This, together with the wide views across fields that enabled its self-defence in the long distant past, means that all can experience a feeling of space but also a sense of separateness. And the need to invest in and secure a mutually supportive community in an increasingly complex world.

Just as they had to in the past.

***Appendix: Changes in village population from published records***

Date	Record	Population	Houses (Inhabited/ Empty)	Households	Property Owners
1670	Hearth Tax		45		
1674	Manorial Survey		48		
1782	Land Tax Assessment				19
1801	Census		50		
1811	Census		54		
1815	Parochial Return	223			
1840	Tithe Map		53		30
1841	Census	287	55/5	56	
1851	Census	270	60/2		
1861	Census	274	57/2		
1871	Census	247	51/7		
1881	Census	212	44/2		
1891	Census	231	50/2		
1901	Census	213	47	52	
1902	Rentals		47		29
1911	Census	201	47		
2001	Census	406			
2011	Census	447	163 (approx)		
2018	Estimate	600+	227 (approx)		

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## *About the Author*

Chris Hawker moved to Colwinston in 2016 with his wife Anne Lueken.

Born in Devon, he moved around southern England before working in the Falkland Islands and then gaining his first degree from the University of Hull. Following an initial career in third world development, including project management in Northern Kenya, he worked in youth work, voluntary organisation development and in research and consultancy in London, Yorkshire and South Wales, also collecting two Master's degrees. Initially recruited by Mid Glamorgan County Council to implement new legislation for community care services, he established and managed community care services for the newly-formed Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, before advising the Welsh Assembly Government on planning and performance management for social services.

Following eight years in corporate and partnership development for Southampton City Council, he set up and managed health innovation programmes, initially for the University of Southampton before establishing the Wessex Academic Health Science Network. He was also a senior partner in the EU Innoserv project on innovation in social and health care services before moving back to South Wales.





**CORNER HOUSE FARM,**  
COLWINSTONE, COWBRIDGE.

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Messrs. JOHN DAVID

**WATTS & MORGAN**

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Have received instructions from Mrs. Sarah Morgan  
(who is giving up the land), to **SELL BY AUCTION,**

**On Thursday, March 22nd, 1928**  
VIZ. :—

Three Excellent Cows (one with calf, one due to calve in March and one in June), Sow in farrow, 2 Store Pigs, 25 Laying Hens, 12 Iron Hurdles, Grindstone, Trap, Set Trap Harness, Hay Knife, Ladder, Pair Steps, Pikes and Rakes, Chaffcutter, 6 Pig Troughs, Scythe, Pig Bench, Small Churn, Milk Pans, Cheese Vats, Milk Buckets, Lawn Mower, &c., &c.

Also 1½ H.P. Tange Engine (in good order) and Refrigerator, to be seen at Pwlllywrach.

**SALE AT P.M.**

Three Months Credit on Cows.

Auctioneers' Offices: Cowbridge and Bridgend.

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GIBBS & BROWN, PRINTERS, COWBRIDGE

*Above: 1928 Sale of goods notice for Corner House Farm (see front cover illustration). Note the hyper-corrected spelling of Colwinston.*



*Milestone on Crack Hill, dating from the reign of King William IV.  
Photo from Cowbridge History Society archive.*



*Above: Two views of the new development at Heol Cae Pwll.*

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- 1 James, B. Ll. 1974 pp 163-169
  - 2 Savory H.N. 1984 p.185
  - 3 <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/treasure-trove-bronze-age-artefacts-3407818>
  - 4 Thomas, R.G. 2001 p 17
  - 5 James B. Ll. 1974 p 169
  - 6 James B.Ll. 1974 p. 171
  - 7 Either before, or possibly after and as part of, the Norman settlement.
  - 8 Personal communication Richard Morgan:

‘There is no reliable evidence that Colwinston contains the Welsh personal names Collwyn or Gollwyn. Collwyn is in any case generally regarded as an error or variation of Gollwyn and I have seen no evidence that Einion ap Gollwyn was directly associated with Colwinston. Late medieval Welsh poetry associates him with the coming of the Normans to south Wales and early pedigrees state that Einion ap Gollwyn was a member of the ‘tribe’ Llwyth Gollwyn recorded in ‘Hen Lwythau Gwynedd a’r Mars’ (printed by P.C. Bartrum in Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts). Einion is said to have migrated to Morgannwg from north Wales and to have been ancestor of a tribe in Senghennydd (the area extending from Cardiff to Merthyr Tudful). It is extremely difficult assigning dates to characters recorded in genealogical manuscripts and even distinguishing fact from fiction. Fictitious and ‘ghosts’ often appear in this sort of evidence and it was often fuelled by over

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imaginative antiquarians such as Rice Merrick and Iolo Morganwg.’

9 Griffiths R.A. 1966

10 Thomas R.G.2001 p 36

11 Personal communication, Carl Hadley, civil war canon balls have been dug up in the area.

12 List of Donations in the Gloucester Chronicles 1141, quoted in Morris, P. 2006.

13 Morris, P. p. 4

14 Davies R.R. p 286

15 A later detailed description of the de Londres’ grants in a charter between 1223 and 1250 reads:

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‘And the church of St Michael of Colwinston with its lands and tithes and all it appurtenances, and sixty six acres of land in the same villa.’ (Patterson, R.B, 1998 pp 11-29).

It is thought that the 66 acres was Ty Maen farm which, when the Priorly lands were split in the 1670’s, became part of the Turberville estate, and was therefore not passed to the Margam estate in the 1670’s with the rest of the ‘Manor’.

- 16 Probably located near the church, this would have been a large, possibly semi fortified, house for de Londres steward (for example a site such as the location of the current ‘Old Vicarage’), and may have given rise to the designation of the area known as ‘The Square’, though no evidence of its actual location survives.
- 17 A number of bushels, possibly as many as 10 bushels.
- 18 See appendix 3, this Maurice de Londres is presumably a descendent of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Maurice de Londres but this is the only document in which he is described as the Lord of Colwinston.
- 19 Records in the ‘Calendar of Inquisitions’ Post Mortem 9 No 81 20 September 1348 show Robert le Regny as a landowner in Colwinston and the inheritance of his lands to John le Regny. A further record (Calendar of Inquisitions Misc (Chanc) Vol 8 p.44 shows an inheritance to David le Reyny on the death of John as a minor.
- 20 Orrin, G.
- 21 Davies R.R. pp. 290-291

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- 22 From research carried out by Brian Ll James, detailed in Appendix 1.
- 23 Davies R.R. p. 295
- 24 Davies R.R. p. 634 n.84
- 25 Jones J. G. p. 45ff, German G.E. p112
- 26 Davies R.R. p. 302
- 27 Richard, A.J. 1965 p 67 and Williams, G. (i)1974 p 207
- 28 Williams, G. (i) 1974 p.210
- 29 Personal communication B. Ll. James
- 30 Williams, G. (i) 1974 p212
- 31 The unusually large number and extent of customary tenancies (as opposed to short term leaseholds) would have differentiated Colwinston from other local manors. It provided stability and incomes for those tenants and, though

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they sometimes either sold or sub let these tenancies, this may therefore have helped to shape a more stable community in the village.

32 1674 Survey of the Manor of Colwinston (held at National Library of Wales). See also appendix 3.

33 Williams, G. (I) pp 235-6 and 249-251 and Thomas R.G. 2001 p.60

34 Williams, G. (ii) 1974 p. 475

35 This would detail the payment in agricultural produce and labour on the lord's 'desmesne' land. Later this was commuted to an amount of money. Inheritable copyholds were legal possessions and could be sold and used as mortgage guarantees.

36 Records of Manor of Colwinston Leet Courts as part of the Margam and



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Penrice Estate are held at the National Library of Wales, and records of Manor of Colwinston Leet Courts in the 1840's are held at Glamorgan Archives. Such court records were written in Latin until 1733.

37 <http://thepeerage.com/p39901.htm>

38 Personal communication Brian Ll. James.

39 Actually the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1749 according to the then Julian calendar where the year end was fixed on Lady Day the 25<sup>th</sup> March. The switch to the Gregorian calendar was made in 1752 in England and Wales.

40 See appendix 4.

41 Married to Susannah Copinger.

42 The business of the Thomas family was in London, or for later generations of the Prichards, in military service.

43 See appendix 5

44 Copy of the Trust arrangement held at Glamorgan Archives.

45 Probably one of the earliest maps made of anywhere in Wales.

46 Williams, J. 1975 opp p25

47 Personal communication Mr and Mrs W Thomas.

48 Personal communication, Richard Morgan.

49 These are all handwritten documents of varying quality, sometimes actually in rolled up scrolls. Unfortunately they rarely specify actual locations of properties, only the size and nature of the various tenancies. The Penrice and Margam Estate records are available at the National Library of Wales. Some records from the 1840's are at the Glamorgan Archives but later records

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cannot be traced.

50 Jenkins, P. 1983 p. 46

51 Either through surnames or assuming surnames from Welsh patronymics, however some surnames are of common surnames used in the area and there may well be no family link.

52 Heywood, S. 1791

53 This may have been inherited through the Lewis of Van (Nr Caerphilly) estate which by now seems to have included Hilton Farm.

54 The Clives were investing heavily in developments in Penarth and Grangetown in Cardiff. (Personal communication Brian Ll. James.)

55 James B. Ll. 1968 p. 15

56 No 'award' is made to the Manor's two Freeholders as only the copyholders had grazing rights (1674 Manor Survey -See Appendix 3).

57 Thomas, R.G. 2001 p.72

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- 58 Personal communication Mr and Mrs W Thomas, Colwinston. There may have been two tithe barns, one for the Vicarial Tithes (usually animals) and one for the Lordship tithes, mainly crops.
- 59 Parish Records, reported in Thomas, R.G. 2001 p.57
- 60 Personal communication Brian Ll. James.
- 61 James, B. 2016.
- 62 Thomas R.G. 2001 p.67
- 63 Thomas, R.G. 2001, p.96
- 64 Manor of Colwinston Leet Courts were held at the Sycamore Tree in the 1840's. The building itself originates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- 65 Howell, D. 1986
- 66 Killed in action at Falaise, leaving his wife to manage the estate. She later married Anthony Hicks in 1949 and moved to Torquay.