

THE
Carmarthenshire Antiquary

The Transactions of the Carmarthenshire
Antiquarian Society and Field Club

Trafodion Cymdeithas Efrydu Hynafiaith
a Natur yn Sir Gaerfyrddin



Volume (Cyfrol) VII

1971

H. Bowen Evans.

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THE MORRIS FAMILY OF CARMARTHENSHIRE

By D. L. BAKER-JONES, M.A., J.P.

THE MORRIS FAMILY originated in the parish of Llansteffan wherein they acquired the status of prosperous yeomen. As far back as the 1670's Stephen Hughes the nonconformist minister took out a licence to preach at the house of one Evan Morris of Llansteffan. The parish church and churchyard contain the graves and monuments of various members of the clan, including an 18th century memorial to one of the Morrises who resided at Pantyrathro. Family tradition maintained that Morris of Pantyrathro was related to the Morrises of The Ferry, a large farm on the right bank of the river Tywi about half a mile from the village of Llansteffan. In earlier times, that is to say, about 1672-3 The Ferry was a small mansion and the home of a prosperous family. It is at this spot that our history really begins.^{1 2} David Morris of The Ferry was born in 1745/6, and baptised in the parish church on 6th April 1746. He was the son of David Morris and his wife Sarah, whose will was proved at Carmarthen in 1767. On 29th June young Morris was married by licence at Newchurch, Carmarthen, to a lady named Jane Harry, the widow of David Morley of Ffynnonddrain. David Morris was still under age and a necessary Fiat for the ceremony is dated 28th June 1766 and reads partly as follows:—

"David Morris, both of the parish of Newchurch, Carms. Fiat issued by John Morris (Surrogate) with the consent of the mother of the said David Morris."³ Jane Morris was born in 1731 and was therefore about fourteen years older than her youthful husband. She is described as a capable woman of business and probably well-to-do, as her late husband David Morley was a trader who made a "respectable livelihood" by attending fairs and markets.⁴ Reading between the lines it would seem that Jane was extremely helpful in assisting her husband in his commercial and financial ventures. She had moved from Ffynnonddrain and had opened a business as a general dealer in Dark Gate, Carmarthen. There she and her husband worked very diligently on the premises later to be occupied by Messrs. Lloyds the butchers. In April 1787 David Morris was appointed agent for Sir Herbert Mackworth and others who had opened a banking house in the town.^{5 6} By 1791 Morris, described as "merchant of Carmarthen," had prospered sufficiently to take over

the bank of David Parry, which had been in existence for some years previously.

It is also probable that Morris at this time, too, acquired the Furnace Bank and as a result of the amalgamation, the lucrative family business of David Morris and Son was set on a sound basis.

Later on in the 1830's Morris' Bank became known as "The Carmarthen Bank," as the original bank of that name belonging to Messrs. Waters, Jones and Co., had been dissolved.⁷ By now various members of the Morris family were gradually making a name for themselves in Carmarthenshire and West Wales. The business was thriving and acquiring a reputation for its reliability. In civic affairs within Carmarthen itself and in the county, the name of Morris was well known. Even as early as 1798 William Morris was elected a member of the Common Council of Carmarthen with the support of the Whigs of the town. Not much is known about him. It was his brother, David Morris I, who really prepared the foundation of the family fortune. He was a man of tremendous industry and ambition, and guiding the course of a dependable banking house was no mean feat as Morris was of yeoman stock and modest fortune. Nevertheless he was not deterred in any way by the collapse of similar enterprises. Many other firms had found themselves in jeopardy and there was always the danger of issuing notes on unmarketable securities. Drovers were incessant in their requests for loans, while the needs of a large agricultural community made constant and risky demands.

It was not surprising, therefore, that Morris overtaxed his strength. Frequent visits to the fashionable watering places of Tenby and Swansea only temporarily helped his already failing health. It is recorded in a family Bible, which used to be at Coomb, that he suffered from the effects of sleeping in a damp bed in Tenby. In any case Morris did not long survive his elderly wife, and he died on 25th September 1805 at the Bush Inn in Swansea whither he had gone for sea bathing. He was scarcely sixty years of age. A large mural tablet of black and white marble was erected in the old parish church of St. Mary's, Swansea to record his death. The monument was removed to the chancel of the large modern edifice, which in the last century replaced the ancient

church. This building was destroyed along with many of the old memorials in the air raids on Swansea in 1941. Although no visible record of his lifetime survives, Morris succeeded beyond all expectations. He had laid the foundations of a family fortune, his descendants were to play an outstanding role in the civic and political annals of Carmarthenshire as Members of Parliament, High Sheriffs, Deputy Lieutenants, Justices of the Peace, and Mayors of the county town—public spirited servants of the community and leaders in social, political and religious causes for over two hundred years. David and Jane Morris had three children: —

Thomas Morris,

William Morris,

and Rachel Morris who was married to a Mr. Timmins of Carmarthen.

Thomas Morris the elder son of David Morris I was born on 8th June 1768. He was mayor of Carmarthen on several occasions,—1804, 1822, 1837 and 1838. He was High Sheriff for the county in 1834 and it is probable that for this last occasion he obtained a grant of a coat-of-arms from the College of Arms to be carried on his trumpeters' banners. This coat is registered⁸ and can be described as follows—"Azure between two chevronels or three roses argent seeded and barbed or in chief two escallops and in base a fleur-de-lys all argent." The crest chosen was—"A chanticleer gules treading on a nowed serpent vert" and the motto—"vigilans and prudens." The crest on the notes of the Morris Bank is also engraved on much of the family silver and as early as 1811 silver tokens to the value of 12d were issued by Morris and Son bearing the crest of a cock. Not a great deal is known of Thomas Morris's career, character and tastes. Unfortunately no portrait of him seems to have survived. He is described as being of The Cottage, Llansteffan, and preserved the keen business acumen of his parents. On 29th September, 1796 he purchased from Earl Mount Norris and his son Viscount Valentine the Castle, lordship and all the manorial rights of Llansteffan including courts leet, courts baron, view of frank pledge, lands, tenements, chief rents and hereditaments. In addition to the ancient seigniorial privileges Morris also owned 18 holdings which in 1797 yielded an annual rent of £573 - 3 - 0.⁹ The lordship of Llansteffan remained in the possession of the senior branch of the Morris family until 1919, when Edward Harold Morris of Bryn Myrddin sold the castle, Castle Farm

and the manorial rights to Sir Owen Cosby Philipps, Bt. (Lord Kysant), who had married Mai, elder daughter and coheirress of Thomas Morris of Coomb, and grandson of the original purchaser. The acquisition of the lordship gave Thomas Morris a status much coveted at the time, as many of the landed gentry vied with one another in reaffirming ancient seigniorial rights which they deemed to be theirs if not "de jure" then at least "de facto."¹⁰

On 27th August 1807, Thomas Morris was married at St. Peter's Church Carmarthen, to a young lady named Maria Thornton. She was about nineteen years of age at the time, while her husband was considerably older, being in his fortieth year. Young Maria was the daughter of a Mrs Elizabeth Thornton, whose origins are not clearly known. It appears that she had claims to gentility, and was even thought to be descended in some way from an English nobleman. The story goes that one day Mrs Thornton arrived at Carmarthen on the London coach accompanied by three children, a boy and two girls.¹¹ From Carmarthen she removed to Llansteffan and took up residence at a comfortable villa known as The Grove. Before long Mrs. Thornton was received into local society, and in course of time her daughter Maria was married to Thomas Morris the banker. The other daughter Eliza became engaged to a member of the ancient family of Mansel, whose country seat of Iscoed stood opposite Llansteffan on the bank of the Tywi. Unfortunately Eliza's romance was short lived, as her betrothed came to a sad end when he was challenged and shot dead in a duel by John Vaughan Lloyd of Green Grove and Brynog in Cardiganshire. Eliza died a spinster and was buried along with her mother in an altar tomb close to the north wall of the nave of St. Peter's Church. There is very little to add about Eliza's rather unhappy life, save that she was intimate friend of Rose Aylmer the early love of Walter Savage Landor.

But to return to Thomas Morris the banker, he died from some gouty complaint on 3rd August 1839, while his widow Maria survived her husband for over thirty years. She retired after his death to a house at St. Leonards-on-Sea but continued to visit The Cottage at Llansteffan. She stayed from time to time at Coomb and Bryn Myrddin the other family homes of the Morrisises. A photograph at Bryn Myrddin shows her a stately old lady with aquiline features. It is said that she was

particular and severe in her manner, and for diversion had, as a pet, a pink and white cockatoo. Her brother Charles Thornton was adequately provided for financially. Born about 1780 he was able to buy himself a commission, and is spoken of as a "Colonel" which suggests that at some time he served in the Militia or some other light fencible force. He lies buried in an altar tomb, enclosed within wrought iron railings, to the West end of St. Mary's Church at Tenby. The inscription thereon reads as follows—"Sacred to the memory of Charles Thornton Esq., of Carmarthen, who died August 11th, 1846 in the 67th year of his age. Deeply and deservedly regretted by his relatives and friends."

William Morris the younger son of David Morris I and brother of the last mentioned Thomas Morris was Mayor of Carmarthen in 1800. After a busy life devoted to the affairs of the borough of Carmarthen and the expanding family banking concern, he died on 10th January 1810 at the young age of 42. He left issue, by Mary Jenkins his wife, who died in 1833, two sons and daughter—David Morris II, M.P. for the Carmarthen boroughs, Thomas Morris of Green Castle and Jane Morris.

The elder son David Morris II was in many ways the most outstanding figure in the Morris family. Although he was only a junior partner in the Carmarthen banking house, he managed to amass a large fortune. He resided in an old fashioned house of moderate size adjoining the Post Office in King Street, Carmarthen where he died on 30th September, 1864. He was M.P. for the united boroughs of Carmarthen and Llanelli from 1837 until his death, having been duly elected six times during a period of twenty seven years. Two good life sized portraits of David Morris were painted by the hand of Thomas Brigstock the eminent Carmarthen artist. One of these, showing him seated, hangs in the Shire Hall, Carmarthen. The other in the Town Hall, Llanelli is the most pleasing and depicts the subject standing with a high hat in his hand. Morris was a man of excellent taste, judging from the fine furniture and personal objects that once belonged to him. He was notoriously generous, and consequently highly popular with the free and independent electors of Carmarthen and Llanelli. He presented a clock to St. Peter's Church, Carmarthen and many were the stories told of him and his activities. One was to the effect that after each success at the hustings, he used to be borne shoulder high in triumph by his supporters through



DAVID MORRIS, M.P.



BRYN MYRDDIN

the streets to his house, whilst all the way he threw golden guineas to the delighted citizens.¹² On the other hand when certain members of the Morris family were collecting for the starving Irish peasants, and approached their rich relatives for a contribution he presented them none too graciously with a four penny bit !

David Morris was first elected to Parliament in 1837. It was a time of ferment and unrest, The reform Act of 1832 had left most non-conformists and radicals disappointed. The extension of the franchise in the towns did not give the vote to the lower classes, and in the counties political power was still attached to the ownership of land. Dissenters were intent on redressing their religious and economic grievances and naturally put their trust in the party professing liberal principles, but in fact the Welsh liberals like the Tory members of Parliament were invariably land owners, and members of the Established Church.¹³ Even with mass support it was a hard struggle for the most enlightened Whigs to secure urgent reforms. But in 1837 victory was theirs when the radical David Morris ousted the Tory, David Lewis of Stradey. With considerable astuteness Morris refused to bind himself in any way to one particular faction, but promised to support every measure towards political and religious freedom, which he considered to be of paramount importance. During his long period as M.P. from 1837 to 1864 Morris had the unswerving support of radicals, dissenters and even of a few Tories. His election addresses make interesting reading as social and political documents, while at the same time providing a clue to his outstanding success, in securing the confidence and trust of a fairly wide cross-section of the electorate. In his first election address of 1835 he described himself as a warm friend of the poorer classes,¹⁴ and one of the most glaring causes of their discontent was the improper manner in which votes were taken at elections, resulting in a totally ineffectual representation of the mass of the people. In some respects the situation was tantamount to the self election of representatives of the ruling classes —“whose interest is quite at variance with the larger portion of the nation.” Some landlords were singled out for attack, and Morris gave examples of constituencies where the lord lieutenant and his supporters were able to manipulate the votes of their tenants and dependants thus setting the wishes of the majority at naught. Consequently members were being returned to Parliament through the influence of peers and to

represent the latter's interests. Morris reiterated a time honoured principle of the constitution that no King, peer, minority or oligarchy could impose taxes on the electors. His sympathy lay in no uncertain terms with those who paid tithes to support a church to which they held no allegiance. Addressing himself in particular to dissenters and Catholics he urged them to strive towards—"the free exercise of your elective franchise,—to change it from a degrading mockery, from a curse, as it is become under the present mode of polling, to change it from an inducement to your landlords, to your creditors, to your magistrates, to your customers, to your former friends and relatives, to quarrel with and oppress you, into a real benefit ; into one which will distinguish you as a freeman from a slave." The morals of the whole community, he alleged, were corrupt, leading to bribery, perjury, profligacy, even perverted justice, by making the magistrate to be dreaded as a tyrant and not respected as a judge. Conservatives, he described, as "destructives"—"who do not hesitate against all laws moral and divine to threaten you with ruin if you do not vote for them."

Morris was devastating too in his strictures on the Tory establishment who enriched their—"families by perpetuating useless places, sinecures, unmerited pensions, by maintaining the Church in its overgrown and ungodly state, by undue influence in the Army and Navy and other means full as injurious to the country as advantageous to themselves."

Morris' political campaigns must be focused against the background of Welsh social conditions at the time. There was ceaseless agitation for the abolition of nonconformist disabilities, and only very gradually did their lot improve. In 1836 marriages in nonconformist conventicles had already been legalised, and pioneers such as the Rev. David Rees of Llanelli fought for the abolition of church rates and tithes. Local agitation could do little more than foster popular hatred of it. Various motions in the 1830's had attempted to introduce voting by ballot and the Welsh press gave it wide publicity. But it was the election of 1837 which brought the matter into sharp relief in that Lord Cawdor had ordered his tenants to vote for Rice Trevor one of the Tory candidates. This flagrant interference with democratic freedom was brought to the notice of the House on 12th June, 1838. Although Cawdor's action was

defended by people such as Sir James Graham, the member for Pembroke, Rice Trevor not only admitted the truth of the allegations, but also argued that a legitimate influence was attached to landownership which the landlord had every right to exercise.

Morris and his supporters, people of the calibre of David Rees (the dissenting minister whose motto was "Agitate") were singled out for attack by David Owen (Brutus).¹⁵ The latter a convert to the Established Church and Tory allegiance, regarded the ballot as a sign of cowardice and demanded the retention of an independent fearless open vote—"pleidlais gyhoedd wrol a theilwng o Frythoniaid anymddibynol." Even Rees had doubts about the wisdom of universal male suffrage and was ready to admit that the peasantry was not ready for it.¹⁶ Morris's dilemma was to prove that violence was not part of his political creed, while Rees was labelled as a wolf in sheep's clothing—a preacher of the Gospel and the fomentor of insurrection. When the Rebecca Riots broke out—against turnpikes and tollgates, increased tithes, unequal distribution of rent charges and county rates, not to mention the hardship following the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834—responsible leaders realised that things had gone too far. Even so the politically inarticulate peasantry had no means of redress except through a few notable men in the county who had sympathy with their social grievances. The Royal Commission set up in 1844 to enquire into the state of South Wales gave ample evidence of the lack of goodwill between landlord and tenant. Of the older gentry and influential landowners, Sir James Williams of Edwinsford alone put the case in a nutshell when he admitted that "the magistrates of this county have completely lost the confidence of the people."¹⁷

In the town of Llanelli there was bitter enmity between David Rees and the Rev. Ebenezer Morris, Vicar of the Parish. Although much of the controversy has been recorded elsewhere, some aspects of it need to be repeated here in order to show the wide rift between the participants and David Morris' place in relation to them. Nonconformists could be compelled by the church vestry to serve as church wardens, and in this capacity were obliged to defray parochial expenses. Failure to comply meant prosecution in ecclesiastical courts resulting in fines or imprisonment. Great hardships followed and one David Jones of Llannon (a

Unitarian by creed and a weaver by trade) came to an untimely end when trying to escape from his captors. Partisan feeling was running high. In 1832 Ebenezer Morris had physically assaulted William Chambers because of the latter's radical sympathies, and agitation was stirred up further in the pages of "The Carmarthen Journal," "The Welshman," "Y Diwygiwr" and "Yr Haul." Tories claimed that nonconformists wished to overthrow the throne, destroy the church and appropriate private property. As a result the polemics of Brutus and David Rees "assumed the proportions of gladiatorial combat" while Ebenezer Morris regarded all radicals, nonconformists and reformers as "the friends of Infidelity and Popery."

It is therefore all the more remarkable that at the time of the 1847 election the name of David Morris was unanimously submitted as the most suitable candidate for the Carmarthen Boroughs. He had already held the seat for ten years and was regarded in the highest esteem. About forty electors petitioned him to stand again for Parliament and amongst the signatories were Ebenezer Morris and David Rees—the two arch enemies of widely different political and religious persuasion. Moreover Morris was supported by a new class of voter—the industrialists William Chambers, senior and junior, Richard Nevill and many other "respected inhabitants of Llanelli." Thus David Morris' integrity, persistence and loyalty to principles gave him the allegiance of very varied factions. Although divided by class and religious creed, they were united in their struggle for social reform and political equality. And when William Chambers proposed the nomination of David Morris he was seconded by the Vicar the Rev. Ebenezer Morris who made almost a radical speech. He appealed to Welsh national sentiment, and in referring to Morris said that when it was seen that "Tory rule and Tory influence (was) extending itself over this fine county it was gratifying to have someone to express the sentiments of the British people, a man of the people's choice." He went on to say that against Tory influence in the county support for Morris was paramount as "the electors were now standing in the last trench of their independence."¹⁹

In the campaign Morris defended his parliamentary record and showed how in the previous parliament he had voted for the reduction of public expenditure which included the civil list, unnecessary pensions

and augmentations of grants to the Royal Family, the abolition of flogging in the army, the extinction of negro slavery and the mitigation of the severity of the poor law. There were less serious matters too, which some of his supporters wished to change. A petition was put to Morris (in some ways anticipating the election result) asking that the traditional jollities following an election victory should be abolished. But Morris had much more sense and understanding of popular feeling, when he suggested that any monies he would distribute would be for the poor of the parish. In any case Morris was duly elected and chaired through the towns of Llanelli and Carmarthen by his supporters. He was "received with the utmost enthusiasm during the whole course of his route. Not the slightest disturbance took place but all seemed to vie with one another who could show the greatest respect for their highly esteemed fellow townsman." Even the "Carmarthen Journal" had to concede a well deserved victory to Mr. Morris, and in its editorial had this to say—"though disagreeing with Morris' politics yet because of the needs of the town and the qualities of Mr. Morris the Journal were gratified in congratulating him, but that many of his friends and supporters are firm followers of the established church and look with a jealous eye on all questions affecting their peculiar interests."

A great dinner was held at the Boar's Head to celebrate Morris' triumph and the following list of victuals consumed at the banquet is not out of place here.

Dinner at the Boar's Head

5 large salmon	120lbs of new potatoes
6 tureens of mock turtle	50 quarts green peas
6 tureens of gravy soup	24 cauliflowers
2 buttocks of beef weighing 66lbs each	24 dishes carrots
1 round of beef weighing 50lbs	12 dishes turnips
4 pieces of beef	12 plum puddings
4 saddles of mutton	12 raspberry and currant tarts
4 legs of mutton	12 gooseberry tarts
4 tongues of mutton	16 sago, rice and other puddings
6 quarters of lamb	12 blancmanges
32 loins of veal	140 custards
15 couples of ducks	dessert—figs, French plums, raisins and
15 couples of chickens	almonds.

David Morris lived to campaign in three other elections—1852, 1857 and 1859. His popularity was universal with the electors of Carmarthen and Llanelli and this lasted until the end of his life. He had held the seat for almost thirty years. He lived among his constituents, understood the problems of farmers and country folk, and knew at first hand the hardships of the period.

David Morris was never married and he devised a moiety of his large estate of some 5000 acres of valuable landed property in Carmarthenshire and an immense fortune of over £240,000 in cash to each of his two first cousins the bankers Thomas Charles and William Morris. He died on 30th September, 1864 at Carmarthen and was buried on 7th October at the Carmarthen Cemetery. It is recorded that "his funeral was attended by 728 persons on foot, including Odd Fellows, Ivorites, Gentry and the general public, twelve carriages and four mourning coaches."²⁰

Morris was open handed to the poor and alleviated the distress of many. His parliamentary speeches were comparatively few, yet one cannot accept the verdict that his record in the House was undistinguished.²¹ It is true that he did not brandish Rebecca's torch at Westminster. He knew too well the terror and suffering caused by the extreme and fanatical elements amongst the rioters. He even defended the magistracy of the county as he knew from personal knowledge that they were not altogether corrupt as a class, nor were they all the reactionary enemies of the poor.

One interesting aspect of this period, too, is that Morris along with the Chambers, Nevills, Jennings and others represent a new and powerful class in society. Some of them had their roots deep in the Carmarthenshire soil, while others were adventurous newcomers to the industrial and commercial scene—employers of labour, manufacturers and financiers. They were gradually acquiring wealth, land and middle class education, but hitherto were not fully accepted. Emerging as new and important county families they still had to assert their rights along with radicals and nonconformists against the older landed gentry entrenched for centuries in the strong bastions of power and lineage.

Of David Morris' younger brother Thomas Morris, not a great deal is known. He seems to have owned and resided at Green Castle, where

a small ruin dominates the bend of the Tywi some two or three miles below Carmarthen. He married a widow with no children to whom he left all his property. A half length portrait of him at Bryn Myrddin shows a fairly young man of florid complexion wearing a white stock and a blue coat with brass buttons. Morris died in London on 21st July, 1855 aged 62 years and was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery. He is commemorated by a tablet on the south wall of the sanctuary of Llansteffan Church. Thomas Morris was of a very kindly and benevolent nature whose life was singular for its unaffected piety, sympathy towards the poor and numerous acts of Christian charity.

Jane Morris was the only sister of David Morris, M.P., and Thomas Morris of Greencastle. She was twice married—firstly to Captain Henry Davidson of the Indian Navy and secondly to the Rev. J. R. Moore an Irish cleric who survived his wife by thirty years or more. Captain Davidson and Jane his wife are also remembered by a wall tablet in the chancel at Llansteffan. It bears the arms of the Davidsons and includes an embattled tower with two helms and an annulet above and below, surmounted with the Christian symbol of a lamb and flag as a crest. It is placed above a small square pillar supporting funerary urns and decorated with laurel sprays. On the left is a weeping female figure kneeling with her head resting against the base of the arms and in addition there are inverted torches signifying mortality. Captain Davidson lived at Grove House, Llansteffan and had distinguished himself when he preserved the lives of the crew of the frigate *Alceste* during a dangerous embassy to China. Davidson was a man of simple and unostentatious habits motivated by a strong sense of duty and the highest standard of probity. To paraphrase a famous passage from the prophecy of Micha—"he did justly, loved mercy and walked humbly with his God." He died in Carmarthen on 31st October 1842 aged 68. Jane his widow, who as we have seen, later became Mrs. Moore died on 9th May, 1856 aged 65. She had endeared herself to a large circle of friends and during her long residence at Grove House won the gratitude of numerous poor and friendless people through her active benevolence and her gentle disposition. She bequeathed £200 (no small sum in those days) for the relief of the poor of the parish of Llansteffan and various other sums to charitable institutions throughout the kingdom.

We have now to consider some other members of the Morris family, namely, the children of Thomas Morris and his wife Maria Thornton. Thomas Charles Morris the eldest son was born on 8th October 1808. As far as education is concerned T. C. Morris never went to one of the large public schools in England, but boarded with a tutor and one or two other pupils at Robert's Rest, Ferryside, previous to his entering the family bank at an early age. Morris was very hard worked at this little academy. Its inmates were well fed and always had buttered toast at breakfast, although for their daily ablutions the pump in the stable yard was deemed all sufficient !

In 1835 Thomas Charles Morris married Mary Elizabeth, elder daughter of the Rev. Thomas Scott Smyth, Vicar of St. Austell in Cornwall and Fellow of Oriel College Oxford.²² Morris had made the acquaintance of his future bride in Stradey Park near Llanelli where Miss Smyth was then staying with friends, the family of Mansel Lewis. It proved to be a most happy union. Miss Smyth belonged to a family of good standing and great intellectual prestige, as can well be seen in the history of this family drawn up by the distinguished musician and author Dr Ethel Smyth, Mus.Doc.²² On her mother's side Mrs Morris was descended from John Ryle banker of Macclesfield and ancestor of John Charles Ryle first Bishop of Liverpool and the father of the late Rt. Rev. Herbert Edward Ryle, Bishop of Winchester.²³

Morris was Mayor of Carmarthen in 1846 and again in 1856. He was a Justice of the Peace, a Deputy Lieutenant for Carmarthenshire and High Sheriff in 1866. It was he who built the present mansion known as Bryn Myrddin which was completed about the year 1858. Like other members of the Morris family he was very influential in the affairs of the county town. Indeed that amiable and quaint antiquary the late George Eyre Evans averred that the borough of Carmarthen was ruled by the Morris family and their satellites. T. C. Morris was a loyal and devoted "St. Peter's Boy," as all those born within the sound of St. Peter's bells used to be called. And in later years all household goods and supplies intended for Bryn Myrddin had to be ordered through the tradesmen of Carmarthen whence it was thought the wealth of the Morris family derived. As a town councillor from his early years and later as an alderman, Thomas Charles Morris played a leading

part in many civic movements, and he and his relations were virtually the founders of the Infirmary in Priory Street.

Morris was regarded as the gentlest and most pacific of men although in his younger days he was capable of strenuous if not pugnacious conduct. When on 19th June, 1843 an armed and mounted force of the daughters of Rebecca invaded Carmarthen with the intention of wrecking and burning the work house, the Mayor and certain Town Councillors including Thomas Charles Morris did all that was possible to cope with the serious situation that had arisen. It so happened that the 4th Light Dragoons had come to the "Ivy Bush" in Spilman Street when the magistrates received information of the proceedings of the mob at the work house. Without losing time Morris led the military to put an end to the disorder. On the way up he cried out "Now my men cut and slash away" whereupon Major Parlby instantly retorted "Not one of you obey any man's orders but mine."²⁴ No doubt Morris, being then about 35 years of age, was carried away by the excitement of the moment. The workhouse in any case was saved, but the wild passions roused during the event brought the correspondent of the "Times" to Carmarthen. Morris was attacked by many as a reactionary and enemy of the poor, whereas in fact he and his cousin David Morris, M.P. were constantly campaigning for social reform. On 20th September, 1843 a letter appeared in "The Swansea Journal" dealing with the dangers of violence and the breakdown of law and order fomented by the rioters. It referred directly to Thomas Charles Morris and had this to say about him—"that it would be difficult to find a gentleman more conciliating, [sic] kind and unaffected who had been made the butt of slander and of almost every opprobrious name, because he in his magisterial capacity, led the dragoons to the work house on the day of the Carmarthen display." The letter went on to say that along with William Chambers he had been an unflinching advocate of the cause of the farming community in trust meetings, in the parish vestry as well as on the hustings, and far from being reactionary he had actually attended (amid the derision of the squirearchy of the county) a Rebecca meeting on Mynydd Sylen.²⁵

Thomas Charles Morris inherited a moiety of the estate of David Morris, M.P. as well as the Old Bank House in Spilman Street, Carmar-

then, (held originally under lease from Jesus College, Oxford). At the time this house was a fine old town mansion with a tall flight of steps leading to the front door and with a good garden at the rear. Later on Morris moved to The Cottage at Llanstephan, but finding the ten miles distance between that place and Carmarthen long and inconvenient, he decided to build a new residence on the farm known as Penybanc above Abergwili. His health suffered, too, in the mild damp and relaxing climate of Llansteffan, and accordingly Bryn Myrddin was erected and completed by about 1858 on the shoulder of Merlins' Hill. Mrs. Morris who was English or rather Anglo Irish by birth strongly objected to the original name of Penybanc. How could she, a bankers' wife, write letters to her English friends from Penny Bank? Her protest won the day, so the new house was christened Bryn Myrddin, a name both euphonious and suitable in every way.²⁶ Penybanc had originally belonged to Thomas Johnes of Hafod in Cardiganshire, who had early in the century recommended it as an admirable site for a large country house for his friend George Cumberland,²⁷ and presumably when financial difficulties beset the learned squire his Abergwili farms were taken over by the bank of Morris and Sons. Bryn Myrddin is a large solidly built mansion-house in a plain unadorned style which is rather commendable and remarkable for the mid nineteenth century. It is therefore free from the grotesque Gothic and mock Tudor faults of many of the West Wales houses of the period. Several delightful designs were submitted before the house was built. One of these depicts a villa in the 'Italian style' and slightly similar to Falcondale near Lampeter. On the other hand one design was of a Regency house, well proportioned, following plain classical lines with the addition of a considerable amount of iron work along the balconies and in the verandahs. Happily the least desirable suggestion was rejected, and this was for a house combining the two previously mentioned plans but including a rather oriental looking belfry or spire above the centre of the garden front.²⁸

Life at Bryn Myrddin has been described by the distinguished antiquary and genealogist, the late Herbert Millingchamp Vaughan, in his book "*The South Wales Squires*."²⁹ The house is superbly placed below the famous hill from which it draws its name. Looking up the rich vale of Tywi one can see on a clear day the ruined castles of Dryslwyn, Dinefwr and Carreg Cennen, Paxton's Tower overlooking Llan-

arthney and the ruined Middleton Hall, Golden Grove and Grongar Hill made famous by Dyer's famous poem. Southward Carmarthen town stands out conspicuous in the vale, and from the top of Merlin's Hill itself one can see Llansteffan castle outlined against the sea. Just below the drive one may catch a glimpse of Abergwili Palace and the attractive pools known as the Bishop's ponds.

Everything at Bryn Myrddin was so bright, cheerful and jolly, where large house parties of twenty to thirty people were entertained by the hospitable Mrs. Morris. Vaughan describes other activities too—"We had prayers every morning before breakfast, read by my grandfather who always appeared at this hour in a long dressing gown, and seemed to spend most of his time during this meal in cutting slices of bread for us youngsters. This occupation was sometimes varied by his reading aloud extracts from the Times concerning the personal doings of his political idol, Mr. Gladstone, who as a pronounced young Tory I had to listen to with smothered resentment. Such a kind gentle old face he had The only fly in the ointment of our holidays at Bryn Myrddin was the morning service held in the drawing room on Sundays. For some reason we all cordially hated this family prayer meeting, so much so that some of the younger ones used to hide in the bushes in order to avoid it. But they were invariably sought, caught and dragged into prayers, often with rebellious and tear stained faces. It certainly was something of a trial for it lasted over an hour. We had to read the Psalms aloud in turn with our elders, and the older children were even called on to read the lessons for the day. Finally my grandfather would produce a volume of Dean Vaughan's "Sermons for Children," and in the midst of his discourse he would break down and weep. Then there ensued a general stir among the grown ups, and a glass of water would be hastily brought. All this occupied time and childhood is ever impatient of delay . . . I have never known any house where true Christian kindness (I am using the epithets deliberately) so bubbled over as at old Bryn Myrddin. If ever there existed a real altruist in the best sense, it was my grandfather . . ." Vaughan recalls, too, the ponies, dogs and all sorts of other pets including guinea pigs at Bryn Myrddin, the great joy of coursing and to be called very early on some dark morning in the Christmas holidays and then "to ride in the wan foggy atmosphere of the breaking dawn up to some moorland stretch, where a band

of squires and farmers was collecting for a day's sport. Sackville Gwynne, of Glanbran, then living in Quay Street, Carmarthen, was always a prominent figure at these gatherings with his beloved grey hounds"

Bryn Myrddin was regarded by the poor as a general emporium, where almost anything could be obtained free for the asking. As a result clothes, meat, soup, wine, puddings, flannel and medicine were sent out in quantities far and wide. Again the traditional folk customs were observed at Christmas and the New Year—the kissing bush and Mari Lwyd. The latter was performed by two men, one of whom was dressed in a sheet and carried a horse's head decked with ribbands (this robe has since been deposited at the County Museum in Carmarthen). The menage also included some rare and picturesque characters—Davy Evan the crusty old gardener, James the Welsh butler and Jane the garden woman—"For her working day dress she always wore a short russet skirt, buckled shoes and a blue-and-white check apron; whilst her head-gear consisted of a peaked black felt hat with ear lappets of coarse white lace. With her bent back, her peaked hat, her wizened face and with her bezom in her hands, she looked exactly like one of those pictures in old books, and one almost expected to see her sail away on her broomstick to keep tryst on Frennifawr or the Van Mountain, or wherever the local hags held their festival."

We have seen that the marriage of Thomas Charles Morris to Miss M. E. Smyth was a very happy union. By her Morris had nine children, and it was a very sad blow when the eldest son and heir William Charles Morris died on 3rd October, 1847 aged eleven years, after a long and painful illness. His parents were deeply distressed and a striking marble bust of him was commissioned and used to be at Bryn Myrddin but is now at the County Museum. Mrs. Morris lived at Bryn Myrddin for about fifteen years and was a tender and devoted wife and mother. It was said of her that Christian faith alone ruled her heart and in her tongue was the law of kindness. She died at Bryn Myrddin on 13th June, 1873 at the comparatively young age of fifty seven.

In 1871 Thomas Charles Morris decided to sell the family banking concern to the National Provincial Bank, which had opened a branch in

Carmarthen. Morris took this step partly on account of the competition of this powerful newcomer and partly, too, on account of the speculative tendencies of William Morris his younger brother and partner. The absorption of the old bank of David Morris and Sons after an existence of over eighty years meant the end of what was called "the Morris domination" over the ancient borough of Carmarthen.

Henceforward Morris was a free agent and his only business consisted of trustee and private matters which he transacted in the basement of the old house in Spilman Street. His pursuits were mainly those of a country squire, offering hospitality to all and sundry and sharing the friendship of eminent scholars such as Bishop Thirlwall of Abergwili Palace and Judge Johnes of Dolau Cothi.

Some three years before his death he issued strict instructions for his funeral.³⁰ His survivors were told not give liberally to would be claimants, as he had been guilty of "injudicious profusion in giving away money ad lib" during his life time. His funeral was to be strictly private and no scarves, hatbands or other mourning were to be worn. His servants were to receive 20/- each for every year or part of a year's service. Expense was to be cut to a minimum, as he wished to put an end to ostentatious and expensive funerals. But his wishes were not carried out, Morris died on 19th March, 1886 and was buried beside his wife in the family vault at Llansteffan after an immense public funeral. The Venerable Archdeacon James preached the oration and referred in glowing terms to the deceased's work for the borough of Carmarthen as councillor, alderman and mayor on four occasions. He was a liberal in politics although he was a member of the Established Church. He had been the first treasurer of the Infirmary and his private charity knew no bounds. An honourable and unselfish man, he was a true lover of Carmarthen and its citizens and a most generous landlord to his many tenants on his Bryn Myrddin and Llansteffan estates. A local poet composed several stanzas to his memory, and notwithstanding their homely style, they expressed sentiments universally held at the time—

"One so kind and openhearted,
One so trusty, who'll forget?
From this world he now has parted
One like him is seldom met.

All his principles were purest
 Every deed a shining light,
 And in all transactions honest
 All his motives true and bright "

Etc.

By his will Thomas Charles Morris bequeathed £30,000 to be divided in equal shares among his four daughters, whilst Bryn Myrddin was left to his second son Edward Harold Morris, the property being charged with an adequate annuity to his eldest son Charles Smyth Morris a bachelor and invalid. Amongst the various items of Morris' personalty valued at the time were,—contents of cellar £4-5-6, silver £262-1-0, watches and jewellery £100 and wearing apparel £10, which point to his unostentatious way of life, and homely and modest nature.

The Rev. Edward Morris the third brother of Thomas Charles Morris was born 3rd March, 1818, he obtained a commission in the army and became a captain of the 94th Regiment. He retired from the Army owing to ill health and later graduated in law at Jesus College, Cambridge. He practised at the Bar for a brief period before ordination at Worcester in 1853. In due course he became Vicar of Bernard's Green near Malvern where he died in 1854 at the early age of thirty six. Edward Morris was twice married—firstly to Fanny Foley of Ridgeway near Haverfordwest, by whom he had a daughter Camilla. She married James Colquhoun Colvin of the Bengal Civil Service. Camilla had been for years the ward of Thomas Charles Morris at Bryn Myrddin following her father's death. When she married Colvin it was thought that she was too delicate to stand the climate of India, to which objection the local medico pronounced that if anyone could keep alive in the Vale of Tywi, he or she could withstand the climate in any part of the world! Mrs Colvin died young leaving an only son, born in 1879, Col. James Morris Colquhoun, R.E., V.C.

The Rev. Edward Morris married secondly a first cousin of his late wife—Lucy daughter of the Rev. William Vernon, rector of Hanbury, Worcs. By her he had a son Major Edward Coxwell Morris and a daughter Jessica wife of Capt. R. T. Thomas. In 1887 Major Coxwell Morris married Miss Frances M. Thomas by whom he had the follow-

ing children—

David Morris a Colonel and later Brigadier in the Royal Engineers.

Lucy Morris and

Gwendolen Morris.

Thomas Charles Morris' sisters also deserve our attention as they married into and founded families which were important in Carmarthenshire and beyond.

Maria Morris the eldest daughter of Thomas and Maria Morris was born in 1809 and about the year 1825 she married Thomas Prickard of Dderw and Neuadd. The latter owned a substantial estate of about 8000 acres in the neighbourhood of Rhayader and St. Harmon's in Radnorshire. The family was originally ap Richard and later changed its name to Prickard. Thomas Prickard was regarded as something of a humorist in the family, and amused or rather confused his hearers by making up conundrums and nonsense verses. One of his familiar jests was—'Mare eat oats

Hare eat oats

Impudent hare eat ripe oats'?

The Prickards had eight children of whom the third son the Rev. W. E. Prickard married in 1865 his first cousin Maria Morris of Bryn Myrddin. They too had a large family of eleven children to whom Thomas Vaughan Prickard, c.v.o. owned Dderw up to fairly recent times.³¹ The youngest son of Dderw, Arthur Octavius Prickard was a fine classical scholar and had a distinguished academic career at New College, Oxford where he was eventually Senior Honorary Fellow. A. O. Prickard died at Fleet, Hampshire, in May 1939 at the age of 96.

Frances the second daughter of Thomas and Maria Morris was born in 1813 and married Capt. William Garnons Hughes, R.A. of Glan-cothi, a younger son of the family of Gwynne Hughes of Tregyb. Thanks to the influence of his brother-in-law, Thomas Charles Morris, Capt. Hughes obtained an appointment with a salary of £300 a year at the Stamp Office at Carmarthen, whither he travelled to and fro daily by his coach from his residence in the parish of Llanegwad. Like his brother-in-law, Hughes, made every attempt to restore law and order

during the Rebecca Riots at Carmarthen in June 1843, when he was roughly handled by an infuriated mob.

Capt. and Mrs Hughes of Glancothi had a large family and the eldest son Col. William Gwynne Hughes was born in 1841. He married Nina elder daughter of George Henfrey of Villa Botti, Spezia, a Commendatore of the Crown of Italy, and this union took place shortly after the marriage of her younger sister Beatrice Henfrey to Gwynne Hughes' cousin J. W. Gwynne-Hughes of Tregyb, Lord Lieutenant of Carmarthenshire. Another brother Capt. John Hughes of the Royal Scots, married Ada daughter of Edward Abadam of Middleton Hall. The latter's sister Edith Abadam became in 1885 the wife of Edward Harold Morris of Bryn Myrddin, while the Rev. Edward Hughes was for many years rector of Ludchurch with Templeton in Pembrokeshire.

Elizabeth (Bessie) Morris born in 1814 was the third daughter of Thomas and Maria Morris. She was brought up from her infancy by her grandmother Mrs Elizabeth Thornton of The Grove, Llansteffan. Elizabeth Morris was thrice married, her first husband being Thomas Harris of Ventnor, Isle of Wight, by whom she had two children—a daughter Annie, wife of the Rev. John Farmer vicar of Sutton, Nottinghamshire, and a son Capt. E. Charles Harris who married his first cousin Emily Charlotte Morris of Bryn Myrddin. On relinquishing his army commission Capt. Harris was appointed deputy chief constable of Carmarthenshire and lived at Allt-y-fran, Llanelli, and at Bryn Tywi, Llangunnor. After her first husband's death Elizabeth was married on 3rd October 1853 to the Rev. John Vernon, rector of Shrawley and youngest son of Thomas Shrawley Vernon of Hanbury Hall, Worcestershire. This second matrimonial venture ended most unhappily, for Mrs Vernon found it necessary to leave her husband's house at short notice on account of his abominable behaviour, nor did she ever become reconciled to him though he survived until 1875.

Julia Morris fourth and youngest daughter of Thomas and Maria Morris was born in 1816. She was married to Barry Parr Squance, a lawyer of considerable fortune who practised in South Wales. For some years Mr and Mrs Squance resided at Glanbrydan near Llandeilo. Later Julia Squance settled at Tonbridge Wells. In an old family

album she is shown as a tall handsome woman. By her will she left legacies to her numerous Morris nephews and nieces including £300 to her god child Mrs Julia Vaughan of Llangoedmor near Cardigan. But the bulk of her wealth which was originally derived from the Morris estate, was left by Mrs Squance to a personal friend some fifteen years younger than herself—General Henry Hope Crealock “Soldier, artist and author” who benefited to the extent of some £15,000. Crealock was a personal friend of the Morrises and of the Vaughans of Llangoedmor. He served with Capt. Herbert Vaughan of the 90th Perthshire Light Infantry. Capt. Vaughan died of wounds received during the storming of the Redan at Sevastopol in September 1855, and Captain Crealock, as he then was, made an excellent posthumous portrait of him in crayon much prized by the family. Mrs. Squance left an only child Julia Oliver who inherited her father’s vast wealth. She died without issue at Edinburgh, and left an incomplete will which the fact of her Scottish domicile made all the more difficult of interpretation. Years of litigation followed and many spurious claims were submitted by persons claiming kinship with the deceased. The bulk of the estate was frittered away, until finally sixteen first cousins of Mrs. Oliver received about £1,400 each from what was left.³²

Thomas Charles Morris had nine children,

1. William Charles Morris 1836-1847, whose early death has been mentioned already.
2. Charles Smyth Morris who died unmarried 28th March, 1912 aged eighty four. He was educated at Rugby and New College, Oxford, and resided at Radnor House, Penllwyn Park, Carmarthen. He was a J.P. for the county of Carmarthen.
3. Edward Harold Morris (of whom hereafter).
4. John Ryle Morris, who died unmarried aged 42 on 30th October, 1897. He was a B.A. of Jesus College, Cambridge and was drowned whilst bathing at St. Helen’s Bay, Auckland, New Zealand.
5. Maria Georgina Morris who married her cousin the Rev. William Edward Prickard of Dderw.
6. Frances Sophia Morris who married Reginald Brodrick Schonberg, barrister-at-law and legal reporter to The Times, of Seend House, Wiltshire. They had two children, a daughter Frances Mary born 23rd November, 1881, and a son Reginald Charles Francis Schom-

berg, C.I.E., D.S.O. and Bar, of Seend Lodge, Wiltshire who had a distinguished military career as Lt. Col. of the 2nd Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders, one of H.M. Consuls General and a state guide in East India and Malaya. After an interesting and varied career as soldier, diplomat and explorer he was ordained priest at Beda College, Rome.

7. Emily Charlotte Morris who married her cousin Capt. Edward Charles Harris of Bryn Tywi.
8. Julia Anne Morris who married John Vaughan of Plas Llangoedmor near Cardigan.³³
9. Mary Elizabeth Morris who died when an infant in 1859.

As has been pointed out already Thomas Charles Morris devised the mansion house and paternal estate of Bryn Myrddin to his third son Edward Harold Morris. The latter was educated at Rugby where he distinguished himself by winning the Album prize for Latin verse and his colours as a cross country runner.³⁴ Later on in life Mr. Morris qualified as a solicitor and was a partner in the firm of Barker and Morris, Carmarthen. Amongst his colleagues in the profession he was considered second to none for his lucid and concise style in drafting documents and deeds. He was universally respected for his complete integrity. Apart from his legal duties, he was a tremendous sportsman and a great lover of country pursuits—shooting, fishing and riding with the hounds. Foreign travel did not lure him away from his native Carmarthenshire which he loved more than any other place on earth. He was a generous and sympathetic landlord, a great churchman, regular in his devotion and an active warden at Abergwili. He was strongly opposed to the disestablishment and disendowment of the Welsh Church, and took part in public debates and marches of protest in London and elsewhere. In April 1885 E. H. Morris married Miss Edith Abadam daughter of Edward Abadam, Esq., of Middleton Hall, Llanarthney. The latter was the son of Edward Hamlin Adams who had changed his surname by adding the Welsh patronymic 'ab'.

The Adams family were of considerable antiquity. In the early 17th century they had settled in the West Indies when one Lieut. George Adams³⁵ emigrated to Barbadoes during the Civil War. The family claimed descent from John Lord Ap Adam of Beverston and Tidenham in the county of Gloucester, a baron of the realm summoned to Parlia-

ment from 1296-1307. Moreover their family tree goes back even to Frankish kings.³⁶ The Abadams came to Middleton Hall in the early 19th century and acquired the great mansion and estate originally in the possession of Sir William Paxton.³⁷ The wedding of Edward Harold Morris and Edith Abadam was solemnised at Llanarthney Church and was a day of great rejoicing. Tenants of the estates jointly subscribed over £50 for a wedding present, Mr. C. A. Cooke of Christ Church Carmarthen was the organist and master of the Choristers, several volleys of cannon, were fired and church bells rang out from Carmarthen town along the Tywi as far as Llandilo. The reception was held at Middleton Hall where a banquet had been prepared by Messrs. Fortnum and Masons. A tea party was given at Llanarthney school for all the children of the neighbourhood, and abundance of "cwrw da" was provided, according to a local journalist. The merrymaking reached its climax with bonfires and fireworks on Merlin's Hill and over toward's Paxton's Tower.

Edward Harold Morris and Edith Abadam had four children—

1. David Morris who died in infancy.
2. Ryle Edward Charles (1892-1971) educated at Bath College and Christ Church Oxford. Mr. Morris was commissioned in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and badly injured during the 1914-1918 war.
3. Mary Morris born in 1887.
4. Vida Morris born in 1889.

In the spring of 1931 Mr. Ryle Morris was married in Vienna to the Countess Alicemargit Hoyos eldest daughter of Count and Countess Edgar Hoyos von an zu Stuchstein, of Schloss Sooss, Lower Austria. The name of Hoyos is well known in diplomacy and traces its descent from Richildus de Hoyos a Castilian nobleman of the seventh century. Later in 1519 four members of the Hoyos family joined the entourage of Charles V, King of Spain, when he inherited the Germanic Empire. One became Governor of Trieste and the other Bishop of Guzk. In successive generations the family received from the Crown extensive properties, notably those held by the head of the family in the early part of this century, Count Hoyos von Sprinzenstein. In royalist times the Marques de Hoyos, representing the Spanish branch of the family, held high office at the Spanish Court and was also Alcalde of Madrid.

Mrs Ryle Morris has also close connections with England, for her grandfather Count George Hoyos married Miss Alice Whitehead daughter of the inventor. Her father Count Edgar Hoyos, a prominent figure in diplomatic circles, married Countess Ilona Kinsky zu Wchinitz und Tettau, daughter of Count Zdenko Kinsky of Czech and Georgian descent who owned vast estates at Chlumitz in Czechoslovakia, now confiscated by the communist regime. The Countess Ilona died at Bryn Myrddin a few years ago.

WILLIAM MORRIS OF COOMB

William the second son of Thomas and Maria Morris was born on 25th June 1811, and was educated at the Old Grammar School at Carmarthen before entering the family banking business. He was very active in municipal affairs and was mayor of Carmarthen in 1842, 1844, 1851 and 1852. As a tribute to his last term of office a public testimonial was made to him at a function held in the Ivy Bush. The proceedings were organised by Lewis Morris, Mayor, and a superb piece of plate in the form of an epergne was presented to Mr. William Morris. In the congratulatory speeches before some hundred and forty guests, it was explained how Morris had been instrumental in bringing many benefits to the town. In the opening of the South Wales Railway he had been an active pioneer and through his efforts a market building had been erected for the sale of livestock and produce. This was second to none in the Principality and the source of considerable revenue in the borough. During his various periods of office Mr. Morris had taken steps to remove nuisances and as guardian of public health he had secured a plentiful supply of water for the town while every step had been taken to fight pestilence and disease. Moreover manufacturing industries in the town and county had greatly benefited from Mr. Morris' help. It was natural therefore that such a person of influence, who was also highly esteemed in the community should have been chosen as High Sheriff of the county in 1858. At this time he displayed on his carriage panels and trumpeters' banners the Morris coat of arms originally given to Thomas Morris for his year of Shrievalty in 1834. Morris was also a Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Lieutenant of the county. On the death of his cousin David Morris, M.P. in 1864, Morris

was elected to represent the united boroughs of Carmarthen and Llanelli a position he held for four years. He was chiefly responsible for the erection of a large memorial window (completed in 1866) in the north transept of St. Peter's Church, Carmarthen in honour of his predecessor David Morris, M.P., and the stone tracery of this window was executed by R. Kyrke Penson the architect.

In 1847 William Morris had married Magdalen Mary Anne the daughter of Sackville Frederick Gwynne of Glanbran near Llandovery. The fine old mansion of Glanbran (destroyed by fire many years ago) was once the imposing seat of a large estate and the home of the famous Sackville Gwynne (1751-1794)³⁸ patron of Welsh harpists and one of the finest players of his day upon the triple harp—according to Edward Jones, Bardd y Brenin. Magdalen Mary Morris was reputedly the sole heiress of this branch of the Gwynne family. Her father, so the story goes, the erstwhile squire of Glanbran, managed to dissipate much of his patrimony and finally ended an unedifying career as a cab driver in Liverpool. His son Sackville Gwynne lived in a house in Quay Street, Carmarthen and as he had died unmarried his sister Mrs. William Morris was the sole surviving legatee of his estate.

William and Magdalen Morris resided for many years in the roomy old house on the south side of Spilman Street, Carmarthen (another property belonging to Jesus College, Oxford) and opposite the bank wherein dwelt Thomas Charles Morris.

After the death of his cousin David Morris, M.P., half of whose fortune had fallen to him, William moved to Coomb or Cwm in the parish of Llangynog and within easy reach of his paternal acres around Llansteffan. The ancient family mansion of Cwm had been acquired by Thomas Morris, senior, of Llansteffan Cottage together with lands and manorial rights over Penrhyn following the downfall of the original owners. The mansion of Cwm as its name suggests is in a picturesque dingle. Its name was anglicised to Coomb and it was here that Mr. Morris built a large and commodious mansion to replace the original house. The latter and its contents have been described in a recent article.³⁹ Judging from its rather marked architectural style *it would appear* that the new house was designed by R. Kyrke Penson. He lived for a time at Robert's Rest, Ferryside and was much in demand in West

Wales as an erector of churches, builder of schools and mansions e.g. Dynevor Castle, Westfa near Llanelli for Mr. C. W. Nevill, and Bronwydd in Cardiganshire for Thomas Davies Lloyd (whose niece married Tom Morris of Coomb).

Coomb is an attempt to recreate a Tudor manor house. The general effect is plain and the architect has avoided such scenic and extravagant embellishments as may be seen at Bronwydd and Dynevor. The house is built of local stone with freestone dressings. It is gabled and dormered, and at right angles to the entrance and terrace elevations stands the chef d'oeuvre of the whole exercise, a lofty tower with mock machicolations forming a corbel course supporting a short spire. While the designer inclines towards the odd and pseudo—baronial in some details,—the incongruous tower, a Romanesque arch with a cinque foil window above the front door, an octagon billiard room surmounted by a clerestory and tiled dome—the redeeming features of the house are its broad surface of wall for the eye to rest on and elevations generally free from meaningless and profuse ornament. The garden front is broken at terrace level by a central bay window, with a balcony above it punctuated by quatrefoil openings.

The philosophy behind this type of house was to convey an air of dignified repose, jovial hospitality, lordly splendour and (so they thought) a more artistic creation than the cold, formal mansions of the Georgian era. The Morris family enjoyed country life and wanted a house which would remind them of ancient times when there was feasting in the hall, tilting in the courtyard, when the yule log crackled on the hearth and mummers beguiled the dullness of a winter's evening. The lord of the manor felt proud of his broad acres and imagined his bowling green filled with lusty youths, while gentle dames sat spinning in their boudoirs, and in the deep window recesses family groups watched as gallant cavaliers rode out a-hawking.

Morris and his wife thus lived in a very opulent style which caused some qualms of anxiety to Thomas Charles Morris his elder brother and partner at the bank. William possessed a more hearty and jolly nature than Thomas Charles, and was physically more sturdy. Although forthright and blunt in expressing his views, nevertheless he was genial and lighthearted.

William Morris died on 25th February, 1877 and his remains were interred at Llangynog. Later his widow retired to the old home in Spilman Street. She has been described as a tall handsome woman with downright and rather alarming manners. It appears that she was not on very congenial terms with her sister-in-law at Bryn Myrddin. Some years after her husband's death Mrs Morris married her second husband—a certain Mr. Reid, an elderly gentleman who had been a friend of Mrs. Morris and her late husband during their seasonal residence in London. Mr Reid continued to visit Mrs. Morris after her husband's death, and as these visits to a widow were not regarded as proper in the circumstances Mrs. Morris refused to allow him to make further calls. This impasse was finally settled by matrimony and Mr and Mrs Reid enjoyed many years of married bliss, spending their time alternately at their Carmarthen and London residences. Mr. Reid was regarded as a kindly old gentleman, a learned bibliophile capable of warm friendship and sympathy, and whose single peculiarity was the wearing of a velvet skull cap.³⁹

There were two sons and a daughter at Coomb—Thomas, William and Magdalen Mary affectionately known as 'Iffie' Morris. The elder brother Thomas was born in February, 1849 and held offices of honour and trust in Carmarthenshire as a Justice of the Peace, Deputy Lieutenant and in 1882 was High Sheriff. During this year of office a sentence of execution by hanging was carried out within the precincts of Carmarthen goal at which, according to the custom of the day, the High Sheriff had to be present. This duty was apparently regarded as something of a lark by Tom Morris and his friends, who on the night preceding the execution entertained the public hangman to supper at one of the hostelrys of the town. The company became rather boisterous after their meal (which certainly was not of a tectotal nature) and amongst other antics the hangman was persuaded to give a full rehearsal of the lethal part of his business. For this purpose the High Sheriff was chosen as the victim, mounted a chair, and a drop was arranged with the result that Tom Morris was nearly hanged in reality in the midst of this horseplay. He was only rescued from strangulation almost at his last gasp! Tom Morris married Alice E. A. daughter of James Lloyd of Bronwydd, Cardiganshire and his wife Susan Maria Anne Saunders-Davies of Pentre, Pembrokeshire. James John Lloyd was the brother

of Sir Thomas Davies Lloyd 1st Baronet of Bronwydd and the famous and picturesque "Tivy Side" character the Rev. Rhys Jones Lloyd the 'squarson' of Troedyr, Cardiganshire. Tom Morris died on 28th January, 1894 leaving issue—

Thomas Morris who was born on 31st May 1879. He was a 2nd Lieut. in the 6th Dragoon Guards (Carbineers) and was killed in the South African War on 26th January, 1902.

Of the two sisters, coheiresses of the Coomb estate after their brother's death, Mai Alice Morris was married in 1902 to Sir Owen Cosby Philipps K.C.M.G., M.P. (later first and last Baron Kysant of Carmarthen 1863-1937) the third son of the Rev. Sir James Erasmus Philipps, M.A., Bart., of Picton Castle, Pembroke, vicar of Warminster and prebendary of Salisbury, and his wife Mary Margaret eldest daughter of the Hon. and Rev. Samuel Best rector of Abbots Anne, Hampshire and third son the Rt. Hon. Sir William Draper Best, D.C.L., P.C. first Baron Wynford.⁴⁰ Lord and Lady Kysant had three daughters,

1. The Hon. Nesta Donne who married firstly in 1921 the 10th Earl of Coventry (killed in action in 1940) and secondly in 1953 Major Terence Vincent Fisher-Hoch son of John Henry Fisher-Hoch of Basle, Switzerland. Mrs Fisher-Hoch, T.D., O.S.T.J., was appointed a D.L. for Carmarthenshire in 1965, and resides at Plas, Llansteffan.
2. The Hon. Olwen Gwynne who married firstly in 1925 the 7th Baron Suffield, and secondly Colonel F. R. P. Barker.
3. The Hon. Honor Chedworth (1908-61) who married firstly A. G. Henderson later 2nd Baron Farrington, and secondly C. V. Pilkington.

Gwladys Morris the younger daughter of Tom Morris in 1903 became the wife of Colonel Delme William Campbell Davies Evans of Highmead, Cardiganshire and later of Penylan, Carmarthenshire⁴¹ and had issue as follows—

1. Delme Chedworth Gwynne Seymour Evans who was born 20th October, 1921 and educated at Harrow and Sandhurst. He was Queen's Messenger and died tragically in a motor accident a few years ago.
2. Dorothy Elizma was born 21st January, 1904 and married Bowen

Summers, The Grove, Balneath, Co. Meath and formerly of Milton, Pembs.

3. Joan Isabella Seymour born 2nd December, 1908 and married firstly H. D. M. Hulton-Harrop and secondly Samuel Dixon Musson of Headley, Hants.
4. Elizabeth Delme Louise born 6th August, 1910 who married John Hill Meredith of Blewbury, Berkshire.

William (Billy) Morris the younger brother of Thomas (Tom) Morris of Coomb was born in April 1851 and married Mary Emily the daughter of the Rev. Thomas Evans (who died in 1882). Mention of this union brings us to a tragic event in the Morris annals. The Billy Morris resided in a small house called Maesgwyn near Llansteffan whence they seldom emerged and were rarely seen. Then one morning in 1882 their bedroom was found locked and no reply to any inquiry was received. Finally the door was broken down and the pair were found insensible from alcoholic poisoning. One was already dead and the other expired a few hours later. Their only child William Sackville Gwynne Morris, a boy only three years old, was at once taken to Coomb and brought up in the nursery there with his little cousins ; nor did he know till he was nearly grown up that the three Coomb children were not his own brother and sister. Later W. Sackville Gwynne Morris resided at Castell Pigyn near Abergwili. He died unmarried on 30th January, 1930, having been killed instantaneously by a fall from his horse whilst out hunting. He has been commemorated by a tablet in Abergwili Church to the parish of which he bequeathed a considerable sum of money—a legacy of £4000 the income of which was to be devoted to the upkeep of the Church and Church Hall, and for the benefit of the poor of the parish.⁴²

In concluding this survey of the Morris family I wish to express my debt to the late Mr Ryle E. C. Morris of Bryn Myrddin and to Mrs Morris for encouragement and help, for the loan of family papers and photographs and for her generous hospitality at all times. The writer of a family history is faced with several difficulties—he must be animated with an enthusiasm for his subject and yet must not ignore the laws of truth and integrity. As a class the Welsh gentry have been much maligned. They were the product of their age, of causes over which

they had no control. They were governed by the conventions and ideals of their generation. In the preceding pages we have traced along the tortuous paths of genealogy the rise of a family from yeoman stock, and have seen how its members inter-married with ancient Welsh families and with English and European nobility; how the family acquired wealth, education and a special place in the social strata. The first David Morris had the genius for business and finance; David Morris M.P., possessed amiable manners, an untarnished public and private character, a temper not soured and a heart not hardened by the veering of public opinion. A pioneer in the democratic struggle for reform, he was a cog in the inexorable process by which the middle class was to lose to the class below what it had won from the class above.

Thomas Charles Morris stands out as a Victorian *pater familias* at his best and one admires his simple tastes, sober dignity, frank manners, generous friendship and even ascetic piety. Moreover many momentous events in the history of Carmarthenshire have been touched upon—the rise of the early banks, the ferment of the Rebecca Riots, the struggle for electoral reform and religious toleration. Inevitably, too, one has witnessed a little of the life of some of the great houses of the county—the banquets, weddings and the social round, and overheard the ‘polite nothings’ of the drawing room. Lastly the object has been not to gain a verdict of condemnation or acquittal, for it is not freedom from faults, but the possession of unique qualities which kindles our interest in important families and causes them to be held in living remembrance.

NOTES AND SOURCES

- ¹ A great deal of this article is derived from a typewritten and unpublished source entitled *The Family of Morris of Llanstephan in Carmarthenshire. Some Notes and Facts* by Herbert M. Vaughan, F.S.A., 1942."
- ² *Early Banks in West Wales* by Francis Green. pp 144-149. Vol. 6 *Historical Society of West Wales Transactions*.
- ³ *Marriage Bonds and Fiats*. p. 98. Vol. 5 *ibid*.
- ⁴ Alwyn Evans M.S.S.
- ⁵ Bryn Myrddin and Plas Llansteffan Papers. Carmarthen Record Office.
- ⁶ Sir Herbert Mackworth was M.P. for Cardiff from 1765-1790; grandson of Sir Humphrey Mackworth (1657-1727) industrialist and parliamentarian. For a full account of the family see D.W.B. London 1959.
- ⁷ *Loc. cit.*
- ⁸ It is not included in "The General Armorial" of Sir Bernard Burke. London 1884.
- ⁹ Bryn Myrddin and Plas Llansteffan Papers.

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- 10 In Lewis "A Topographical Dictionary of Wales." Vols. 1 and 2 London 1833 several landowners are mentioned claiming manorial rights. An examination of the family papers of the gentry of the period also shows that there was constant litigation in connection with baronial and similar claims.
- 11 loc. cit.
- 12 The last survivor who remembered receiving a guinea was the late Colby Evans, music agent and stationer, Guildhall Square, Carmarthen.
- 13 For a full account of this period see chapters 1 and 4 of "A History of Carmarthenshire." Volume 2 edited by Sir J. E. Lloyd. Cardiff 1939.
- 14 "A few words addressed to the Electors of Carmarthenshire by a loyal reformer, an advocate for the ballot and a friend to the Dissenters and the farmer." Bath. 1835.
- 15 See D.W.B. for an account of Brutus and David Rees.
- 16 See D. Melvin Davies "Hynt a helynt Brutus y Dychanwr (David Owen 1795-1866)" — Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales. Vols. xii-xv.
- 17 See article on "Edwinstford: A Country House and its Families" by D. L. Baker-Jones in "The Carmarthenshire Historian" Volume 2, 1968.
- 18 "The Rebecca Riots" by Professor David Williams. Cardiff University of Wales Press. 1955.
- 19 loc. cit.
- 20 William Spurrell: "Carmarthen and its Neighbourhood." 1897.
- 21 See page 32 "The Rebecca Riots." *supra*.
- 22 Dame Ethel Mary Smyth was born in London on 23rd April 1858. Her best known operas are *Fantasio*, 1898; *Der Wald* 1901; *The Wreckers* 1906 and *The Boatswain's Mate* 1915. A vigorous figure in the feminist movement she was made a D.B.E. in 1922. She also wrote a number of books including a biography of Maurice Baring.
- 23 The Rt. Rev. Herbert Edward Ryle was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge; was Principal of St. David's College, Lampeter; Hulsean Professor of Divinity, Cambridge; President of The Queens' College, Cambridge; Bishop of Winchester.
- 24 Henry Tobit Evans; "Rebecca and Her Daughters." 1910. pp 62-63.
- 25 loc. cit.
- 26 loc. cit.
- 27 H. M. Vaughan: "Some letters of Thomas Johnes of Hafod." *Y Cymmrodor*. Vol. 35.
- 28 Kindly shown to the writer by Mr and Mrs R. E. C. Morris of Bryn Myrddin.
- 29 H. M. Vaughan: "The South Wales Squires." London Methuen. 1926 pp 20-31.
- 30 loc. cit.
- 31 "Who's Who in Wales," Cardiff 1920.
"Who's Who 1901."
- 32 Kelly's Handbook to the Titled, Landed and Official Classes 1911.
- 33 loc. cit.
- 34 Julia Anne Morris married John Vaughan of Plas Llangoedmor near Cardigan. Their son Herbert Millingcham Vaughan 1870-1948 was the distinguished historian, antiquary and genealogist. The Vaughans (originally of Brynog and Green Grove) were related to the Vaughans of Trawscoed and were descended from Collwyn ap Tangno of Harlech in Merionethshire, Head of the 5th Noble Tribe, whose ensign and motto they displayed—sable, a chevron between three fleurs de lis argent; non revertar inultus.
- 35 Information provided by the late Mr. Ryle E. C. Morris.
- 36 T. Nicholas "Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and County Families of Wales." Vols. 1 and 2. London 1872.
- 37 Pedigree at Bryn Myrddin. (*pace*—"English Genealogy" by Sir Anthony Wagner, Garter King of Arms, Oxford University Press 1971, which makes it abundantly clear that the concept of proving pre-Conquest descent cannot any longer be entertained).
- 38 See essay on Middleton Hall and Samuel Pepys Cockerell by P. K. Crimmin in "The Carmarthenshire Historian." Vol. 4 1967.
- 39 D.W.B. London 1959.
- 40 loc. cit., see the essay by Major Francis Jones, c.v.o.—"Cwm (Coomb) A Carmarthenshire House and Its Families." *The Carmarthenshire Historian*. Vol. 7 1970.
- 41 For the life of R. K. Penson see "Archaeologia Cambrensis" April 1886 pp 150-151. D.W.B. London 1959.
- 42 Burke's Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage. London., D.N.B.
- 43 "Who's Who in Wales, 1920."
- 44 "South Wales Leaders—social and political" by Ernest Gaskell, London (N.D.).
- 45 Abergwili and its Parish Church of St. David's by the Rev. D. Jenkins. Carmarthen. 1936.

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