Hen Bandy

Hen Bandy in 2020. The barn can be seen in the background. A third building originally stood directly in front of the viewer, next to the stream.

Hen Bandy (Old Fulling Mill) is peculiar in that, although the buildings remain and have been occupied within living memory (as of 2021), there is no documentary record of it operating as a pandy or fulling mill. However, the name, the location and other factors make it very likely that more than three hundred years ago it was a working fulling mill. A spindle whorl of medieval design was found on the site, supporting this idea.

Hen Bandy stands at the confluence of two streams, where the stream running through Pentredŵr joins Nant Eglwyseg. Today (2020) there remains a barn standing alongside the road and behind it the dilapidated remains of the cottage, part of which still has a roof with some folorn items of furniture still inside and the old cooking range still in place.

The tithe map of 1844 shows three buildings on the site (No. 270).

However, the tithe map of 1844[1] clearly shows a third building on the site, adjacent to the Pentredŵr Stream. It seems very likely that this third building, now totally gone, was the original fulling mill, with power for the fulling being driven either directly by the flow of the stream or via a culvert or pipe from higher up.

That it was once an an active fulling mill is supported by the name of one of the adjoining fields. Field number 268 on the tithe map was called Cae Dentir or Tenter's Field. This is a common field name in an area close to a Pandy and indicates the field where the cloth would be hung out on tenter hooks to dry.

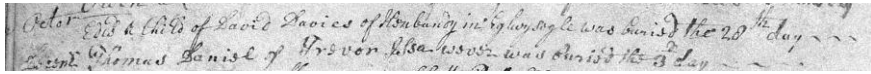
The tithe map of 1844. Field No. 268 was called Cae Dentir. Courtesy National Library Wales.

Who was living at Hen Bandy can be identified with certainty in records as far back as 1719, when it was occupied by Anne Jones. It belonged at this time to the Wynnstay Estate and was rented for the princely sum of £2 per year[2].

Rental records indicate that Hen Bandy was one of the properties owned and rented out by the Wynnstay Estate at least as far back as 1625[3], but unfortunately it is not possible to identify the tenant at that date. Even in these earliest records there is no mention of fulling operations having been carried out at Hen Bandy.

Following on from Anne Jones, in 1736 and 1737, Edward Davies was recorded as renting 'Henepandy Tenement' from the Wynnstay Estate[4] and was still there in 1748[5]. As it was referred to as Hen Bandy, it is clear that the use of this building as a mill had ceased by this time. It has not been possible to discover any certain details of Edward Davies' family, as the records are very intermittent, but it appears that he may have had a son David who continued to live at Hen Bandy and, in turn, had a son of his own whom he named Edward after his father.

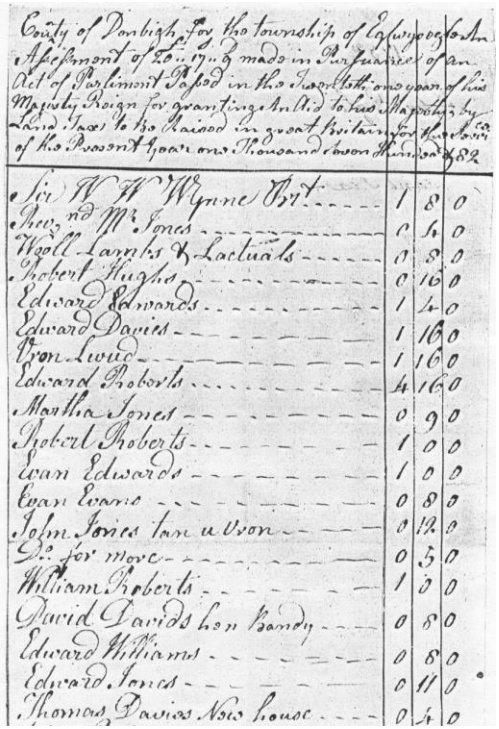
The parish registers for Llangollen record the burial of Edward, child of David Davies of Hen Bandy in October 1766[6]. Sadly, as was often the case in the early burial records, the register does not record the name of Edward's mother. However, it seems quite possible that it was Elizabeth, and that David, his father, died, because between 1778 and 1781 Elizabeth Davies, widow, was paying 8 shillings land tax[7].



28th October 1766. Edw(ar)d a child of David Davies of Hen Bandy in Eglwyseg was buried.

Elizabeth Davies, widow, of Eglwyseagle died in 1782 and was buried at St Collen's Church on 13th February[8]. It seems possible that Elizabeth and David also had a son, David, who survived his parents, as, between 1782 and 1796 David Davies (or sometimes Davids) continued to pay the 8 shillings land tax for Hen Bandy[7].

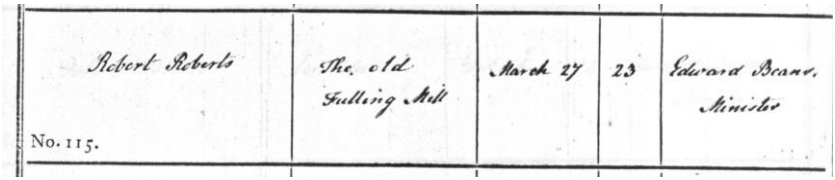
At some point over the next twenty years the Roberts family moved into Hen Bandy. This is indicated from the record of the burial of 23 year old Robert Roberts of The Old Fulling Mill (Hen Bandy) in the Llantysilio parish records of 1824.



Sir W W Wynne Bart	1	8	0
Revd Mr Jones	0	4	0
Wall Lands & Lactuals	0	8	0
Robert Hughs	0	16	0
Edward Edwards	1	4	0
Edward Davies	1	16	0
Evan Lewis	1	16	0
Edward Roberts	4	16	0
Martha Jones	0	9	0
Robert Roberts	1	0	0
Evan Edwards	1	0	0
Evan Evans	0	8	0
John Jones Tan u Vron	0	12	0
Do for more	0	3	0
William Roberts	1	0	0
David Davids Hen Bandy	0	8	0
Edward Williams	0	8	0
Edward Jones	0	11	0
Thomas Davies Nois House	0	4	0

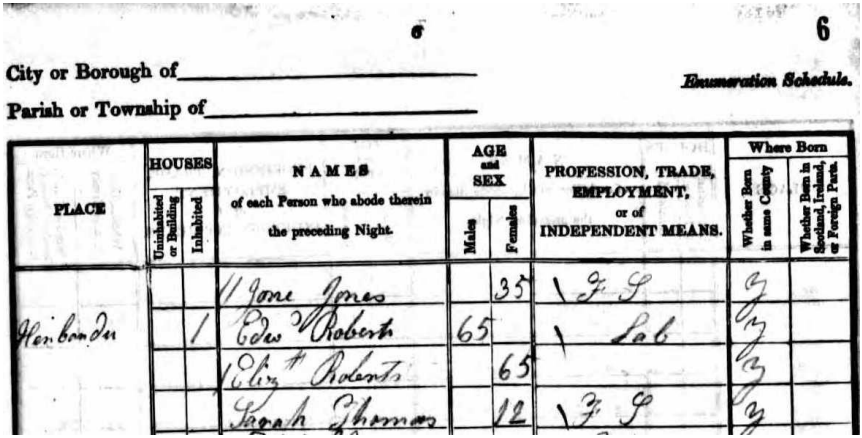
The Eglwysegle Land Tax for 1782. Courtesy National Library Wales.

Robert Roberts' burial at Llantysilio Church in 1824.



Robert Roberts No. 115.	The old Fulling Mill	March 27	23	Edward Beane, Minister

Seventeen years later, in the census of 1841, we find 65 year old labourer Edward Roberts living at Hen Bandy, with his wife Elizabeth, also 65 and their 12 year old servant Sarah Thomas. It seems possible that Edward and Elizabeth may have been the parents of the unfortunate young Robert, but it has not been possible to discover a definite link.



6 6

City or Borough of

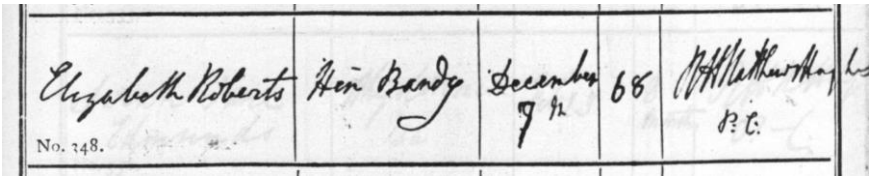
Parish or Township of

Enumeration Schedule.

PLACE	HOUSES Uninhabited or Building	HOUSES Inhabited	NAMES of each Person who abode therein the preceding Night.	AGE and SEX Males	AGE and SEX Females	PROFESSION, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT, or of INDEPENDENT MEANS.	Where Born: Whether Born in same County	Where Born: Whether Born in Scotland, Ireland, or Foreign Parts
Hen bandy			Jane Jones		35	F S	Y	
		1	Edw Roberts	65		Lab	Y	
			Eliz Roberts		65		Y	
			Sarah Thomas		12	F S	Y	

The section of the 1841 census schedule showing Hen Bandy.

Edward was still at Hen Bandy in 1844[1], but sadly Elizabeth had died late in 1841.



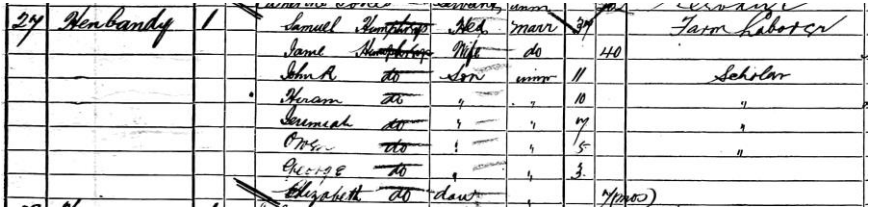
Elizabeth Roberts	Hen Bandy	December 7th	68	W Matthews Rg.

No. 348.

The burial record for Elizabeth Roberts in 1841.

By 1851 John Edwards, an agricultural labourer was living there with his wife Elizabeth and their son Edward. John was 63, Elizabeth 58 and Edward 25 years old.

Hen Bandy continued to have a turnover of tenants. By 1871 Woodsman Thomas Evans lived there with his wife Ann, daughters Elizabeth, Catharine and Sarah and son, also Thomas. As a woodsman, Thomas would have felled trees for fuel, but also would have been skilled in turning and working the timber to make items such as spoons, bowls and items of furniture. He would almost certainly have had expertise in other woodland crafts, such as fence making, trapping and fishing.



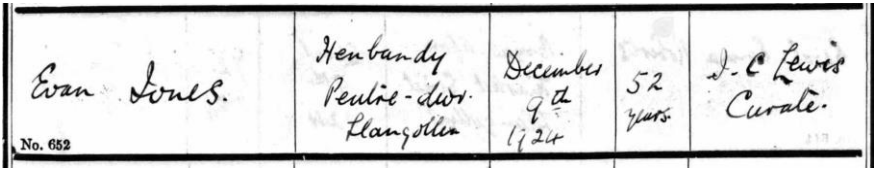
The section of the 1881 census schedule showing Samuel Humphreys and family living at Hen Bandy.

Ten years later the Evans family had also moved on, to be replaced by Samuel Humphreys, a 37 year old farm labourer and his wife Jane, who was three years older. Having moved down the hill from Hendre, they had six children, John, Hiram, Jeremiah, Owen, George and Elizabeth, who ranged in age from 11 years down to 7 months old.

Another ten years and another family had moved into Hen Bandy. By 1891 Samuel and Jane had moved to Brymbo, where Samuel became a gasman, and it was 55 year old slate quarryman Evan Edwards who lived at Hen Bandy with his wife Margaret, daughter Hannah and son Howell. Evan was originally from Llangollen, but Margaret was from Dolgellau and they had evidently lived there previously because both of their children were born there.

By the turn of the 20th century 49 year old widow Ann Jones lived at Hen Bandy, along with her son Evan, who was 26 years old. Before moving to Hen Bandy they had lived in one of the cottages in Pentredŵr.

Evan had previously been a farm labourer but was now a slate quarryman working in the Moel y Faen quarry. Ann and Evan were still paying £3 and 10s rent to the Wynnstay Estate for Hen Bandy in 1907 and the census' for 1911 and 1921 show them still living there. The 1911 census indicates that not only had Ann lost her husband but also at some point another child. She was recorded as having had two children, but only one still living. Sadly, she was also to lose Evan as well, when he was killed in an accident at the quarry in 1924.



Evan Jones' burial at Llantysilio Church.

After the First World War occupancy of Hen Bandy changed again. Ernest Nicholls was born in Oldham in 1881[9] and grew up there. After the First World War he had no wish to go back to his business ways and so moved up to Llantysilio[10]. At first he and his wife lived in Cae'r Hafod, an isolated cottage on top of the mountain above Pentredŵr.

Ernest Nicholls, on the right, with a friend outside Hen Bandy.

She was the first president of the Pentredŵr Women's Institute in 1926, and older members remember her walking down through the forest, carrying a storm lantern, to light her way to the village school for meetings[11].

Some years later Ernest was living at Hen Bandy, and was the postman for the village. In an article in Country Quest in 1986 Mary Hamer recalled visiting Ernest, who was a cousin of her mother and aunts, when he lived there[10].

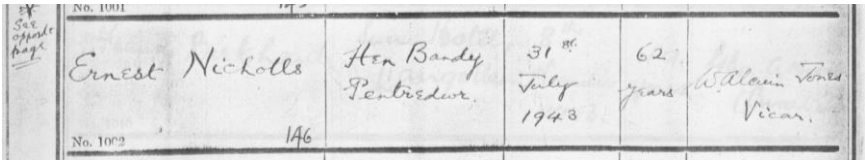
"He chose the life of a country postman, riding around the Pentre Dŵr area on a pony delivering the mail. To me so long ago, Ernest's way of life was perfection, and I longed to share it with him. He had a few hens, two Cairn terriers for rabbiting, a goat and a donkey. He used all of the fruits of the countryside to make jellies and jams and many other interesting preserves. The jellies I remember seeing on the old kitchen table running through a sock. The land he loved supplied all his needs, and there he lived in a way that produced much shaking of heads by the aunts. He also made regular sallies forth to the Britannia Inn."

There is no mention in these recollections of Ernest's wife and so it seems possible that by this time she had died or they had separated. Another article in Country Quest, later in the same year, recounts some further details:-

"People remembered Mr Nicholls' donkeys and how they welcomed him home by their braying in the trees above the village. From memory we think Mr Nicholls was "something in cotton in Liverpool" before coming to live in our area. So many people knew him as a postman and agree that he was a gentleman, remembering that his way of life had earlier been quite different"[11].

Mary Hamer went on to say:-

"One day Ernest decided to cut a branch off a tree that was hanging over a caravan in his garden. He was on the wrong end of the branch when he cut through, he fell and broke his leg, and his way of life was never the same again"[10]. Ernest Nicholls died in July 1943 and was buried in St John's cemetery, Llangollen.



No. 1001					
Ernest Nicholls		Hen Bandy Pentrisdwr.	31st July 1943	62 years	W. Alwin Jones Vicar.
No. 1002	146				

Ernest Nicholls' burial record (above) and grave stone (below).

After the Second World War, in 1947, some Wynnstay Estate lands were sold to cover the costs of death duties. Hen Bandy was sold along with Tan-y-Fron Farm. The old iron fire grate from Tan-y-Fron was installed there and Hen Bandy was rented out as a holiday cottage until the middle of the 1950s.

The lane running past Hen Bandy in the 1950s. The road went through a ford and note the small footbridge over the stream.

With increasing traffic in the 1950s, the stream in front of Hen Bandy was put through a culvert under the road to reduce flooding. Hen Bandy remains part of Tan-y-Fron lands today, although sadly is now unoccupied and part derelict.

Culverting the stream in front of Hen Bandy in the 1950s.

The upstairs room in Hen Bandy in 2020.

Downstairs in Hen Bandy in 2020.