



A Victorian Wedding

On 29th April 1881, farmer Thomas Rogers married Ann Williams, also of farming stock and eight years his junior, in the ancient church of St Bueno in Bettws Cedewain.

Thomas was a native of Tregynon and born in 1853. He was brought up one of twelve children on the 180 acre farm of Bryncoch about two miles southwest of Bettws Cedewain above Highgate. The 1871 census shows it in the possession of his 65 year old father, William Rogers and his wife Mary. William was a tenant of the Hanbury-Tracys of Gregynog. Thomas, 18, was a Carter, the youngest of five sons still living at home.

By 1881, Thomas was a mature 28 year-old and felt financially secure enough to consider marriage. By this time he had left the family home and become a tenant farmer in his own right. The census shows him in possession of Cefnwastad farm on the northern edge of Llanllwchaearn. This consisted of 53 acres of mainly arable farm, just enough to be able to support a young family.

Thomas's bride, Ann Williams, born about 1860, was a close neighbour in Bettws at Glomen farm. Golomon, or Glomen about three miles away, as the crow flies from Bryncoch, was farmed by Ann's father, Thomas, another tenant of the Gregynog estate. The farm was only half the size of Bryncoch and Thomas Williams needed to supplement his income by doing some weaving as well. There were at least eight surviving children in the family, so both money and space might have been tight. Perhaps it was for this reason that at the time of her marriage, Ann was living in the home of her uncle, Thomas Jones, at Bettws Hall, possibly undertaking some domestic duties.

Picture the scene. Early in 1881, Ann, accompanied by her mother, excitedly entered the shop of Henry Morgan, Draper of Royal Victoria House, Broad Street. To say that this was just a draper's shop was an understatement. It was a veritable emporium, consisting of no less than five departments, including millinery, mantles and tailoring. His shop always boasted the latest designs from London and Paris, which could quickly be made up by his expert team of seamstresses.



Henry Morgan's advertisement

Ann knew exactly what she wanted. She had seen the illustration in one of Henry's advertisements in *The Montgomeryshire Express*. It was an exquisite three-piece outfit consisting of bodice, skirt and cape. Wouldn't this look wonderful all in white! Her mother had other ideas. She had no time for the new-fangled weddings in white, a trend begun by Queen Victoria forty years ago. No, *her* daughter's wedding dress needed to be worn more than once. Ann senior came from a long line of farmers. If you were going to spend a lot of money on a new dress,



The bodice of Ann's wedding outfit

you needed your money's worth. Practicality was the name of the game. The dress would also be her daughter's very best Sunday dress, brought out on special occasions, and would have to serve her for a long time! So, a compromise was reached Ann could have her dress, but it would be in a sensible shade of green!

And so it was on a Spring morning in 1881, Ann, on the arm of her father, walked down the aisle of the parish church of Bettws, dressed in her silk taffeta dress wearing a white bonnet, to be joined in holy matrimony with Thomas.

The couple seemed to have prospered. The census of 1891 indicates that they had taken on the tenancy of new farm, Lower Bryn a farm of some 93 acres. The land bordered the very edge of Penygloddfa and consisted of cow pasture, arable and a small amount of woodland. The farmhouse was home to three daughters - Ann, Alice and little eleven-day old Mary. There was also a domestic servant and two farm servants as well as a 61 year old visitor. In total, the marriage would produce nine children, but sadly, by 1911 five of these had died in infancy, including little Mary of the 1891 census.

Thomas also seems to have been held in high regard in the community. Thomas was prominent amongst the 45 tenants of the Gregynog estate and was frequently referred to in accounts of the annual rent audits. These seemed to have been convivial affairs where Lord Joicey stood the cost of a three course meal accompanied by copious amounts of ale and many toasts. In 1901, for example, "The Health of Mr David Rogers and Mr Thomas Rogers, given by the Chairman, were next

drunk with musical honours, and were suitably acknowledged. Mr Thomas Rogers proposed the Health of the Hostess, and said that they all joined in praising the well served and excellent dinner they had partaken of.

Thomas also tried his hand at local politics. In May 1908 he sought election to the Newtown and Llanllwchaiarn District Council as an Independent “in both politics and religion”, reasoning that “I live in a central position, very convenient to attend to the requirements of any part of the Constituency and the Council meetings”. Unfortunately, he was unsuccessful in his bid to launch himself on a political path.

Ann and Thomas Rogers remained at Lower Bryn all their married life. Ann herself died at the relatively young age of 53 in 1913, but Thomas survived until 1933. They were both buried in Llanllwchaearn Church, along with their unmarried daughter, Alice who died in 1960.

In 1975 two of the surviving daughters, Mary Vaunda (who remained single) and Rosa Lloyd (nee Rogers) donated the dress worn by their mother in 1881 to the Textile Museum, providing an interesting and tangible link with these past lives.



Lower Bryn farm can be seen on this late 19th century O.S. map. Today, it has been swallowed up by new housing.