

LIG Visit to Cefnige Mill and Llandeilo Graban Motte 26th July 2018

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), Wendy and Dainis Ozols, Sue and John Ievers, Robbie Gore, Jenny Francis, Ann and Howard Dean, Rob Sutherland, Ginny Guy (GG), Helen Barnett, Roy Lloyd (RL), Richard Thomas (RT), John and Margaret Price, Gareth Jenkins (GJ)

We parked the cars at Tinker's Green (SO 124448). ML thinks that this spot may have got its name from the tinkers or travellers who might have stopped here to sell their services and wares.

Cefnige Mill

We walked down the road to the bridge over the Bachawy (SO 126447), from where we could see the old mill. ML explained that, over the years, the mill's name has been spelled a number of different ways, for example Kevenny, Kevenyge, Mellin Geninge, Cefneg and Cefnige. Gareth Jenkins told us that Cefnige is a derivative of Cefn-y-Gaer, which means "behind or below the fort"; there is certainly a reference to its having been called this in 1784. ML circulated an old photo of the mill, probably taken in around 1940. The building in the photo was probably built in the 1830s.



The earliest record of the mill that ML has been able to find is from 1555, when it was sold to Humphrey Baskerville by Robert ap Gwillim, yeoman of Llandeilo. In 1567 it was leased (for 21 years) to Rees ap Gwillim. It is recorded that, in 1592, the mill was granted, by the Crown, to Roger Vaughan, "for three lives". By this time, it is referred to as a grist mill (for grinding corn). He was also granted "suits of mill". This meant that all of the tenants within the parishes of Llandeilo, Llanbedr and

Trewern had to take their corn to this mill to be ground into flour. ML told us that, in 1592/3, a complaint had been made that Roger Williams and Rice ap John, both of Llandeilo, had not been using the mill to grind their corn (they had "withdrawn suit in the previous two years").

In 1608, Cefnige was still a King's Mill, with an annual rent of 15s. This was the third highest rent for the eight Crown mills in Radnorshire at the time. In 1615, it was sold by Edward Ferrers of London, a mercer (cloth merchant), and his brother Philip to Thomas Baskerville. In 1784, the tenant was listed as Mrs Baskerville; her rent was 15s pa and she was 13 years in arrears! It is not clear when Cefnige ceased to be a crown mill, indeed it seems likely it always was.

In 1811, the mill's tenant is listed as Joseph Biddle of Skreens Mill. In 1784, his father, Richard Biddle, held the crown mill of Hothnant (Rhosgoch). Next there is a record from 1824 which states that the miller was someone called Tully. In 1828, Joseph Biddle took out a one thousand year mortgage for £400 from John Cheese of Kington to build the house and mill that were in the photo that ML showed us at the start. In 1830 it was advertised for sale, "a newly erected and well-accustomed water corn mill, called Gevenege Mill ... consisting of two pairs of stones, dressing mill, bins, Clover Mill, etc, together with a comfortable dwelling house, good stabling and outbuildings. Also, an acre and a half of rich meadow land adjoining, the whole being freehold of inheritance." Mr Biddles was the proprietor and occupier. The advertisement included the note -"Four Hundred Pounds of the Purchase Money may remain on mortgage of the Premises, if desired."



Very little now remains of Cefnige Mill

The census returns show four different families living at the mill between 1841 and 1911. They are: 1841 Edward Herdsman (miller), his wife Ester and William Evans (mill servant); 1851 David Jones (miller) and his family; 1861 Thomas Prosser (miller) and his family, also James Morgans (servant); 1871 Thomas Prosser and his growing family; 1881 Thomas Prosser and family, as well as Henry

Williams (miller's servant); 1891 Thomas Prosser and his family of three generations now (Kelly's Directory shows that Prosser was the miller until 1895); 1901 the mill is listed as unoccupied; 1911 George Beaven (miller) and his family. It is possible that the mill was still functioning up until the 1930s. By the 1950s, the mill was occupied by the Watkins family; they had ten children.

RT showed us a copy of a sales document dating from 1920; this shows Cefnige Mill as Lot 2 in the sale. He has been given this document by Joyce Lloyd, who had been brought up at Upper Llandewi and who still lives locally. The lot is listed as a "freehold grist mill and land, situated in the parish of Llandeilo Graban, containing by admeasurement 1 acre, 1 rood and 11 perches. The buildings comprise: dwelling house, stone built with tile roof, containing kitchen, pantry and two bedrooms; a mill with three floors, equipped with the necessary grinding and dressing apparatus; and outbuildings comprising cow house with stone and slate roof, pig sty, etc.". The rental value is noted as £8 pa and the tithe rent charge value (1919) as 12s, with a land tax of 3s 8d, payable by the landlord.

The mill was an overshot mill, with the water wheel on the right as you look at the now derelict building. The mill race/leat is about 200 metres long and at least 1 metre deep. In the summer, this is not easy to follow as the valley floor is so overgrown. However, its course is quite clear on one of the maps that ML had brought along to show us. The house is small and there is not much of the building left. RL said that he remembers when there was much more of the structure still standing. Back in the 1950s, when he was a schoolboy, there had been plans to flood the valley to create a reservoir, but the rocks upstream were not suitable and so the plans were abandoned.

There used to be a pool in the river upstream from the mill and Edwina Griffiths was baptised here in 1955, along with her brother and Dilys and Joyce Parry. It is probable that the pool used was near where the leat returned to the river. (This may also have been where a later family tried to develop fish pools.) Edwina says that the girls wore white dresses and the boys white shirts for the ceremony. Her father and someone else held a pole across the pool and the children held onto this as they walked out into the water. The preacher was T R Williams. Each child took it in turns to put on a thick belt which the preacher held on to as he immersed them in the water for their baptism. Afterwards, the children changed in the mill and Edwina remembers that Mrs Watkins was still living there at the time. It was common practice for chapels to baptise children only when they were old enough to give their consent. This was the last time this site was used for baptisms; later they took place by Llanbachawy farm.

Llandeilo Graban Motte

We walked back up the hill to look at the Motte (SO 125449), which is on land belonging to The Lane Farm, Llandeilo Graban (the Pughs having very kindly given us permission to visit). The motte has a base diameter of 34m and is 7m high from the base of the ditch which encircles it. The ditch itself is very wide and 2m deep. The summit of the mound is flat and about 19m across. The ditch contains no water. If the ditch is included, then the overall diameter of the motte, a SAM (scheduled ancient monument), is 48m.

The motte is completely man-made and it has no bailey (an enclosed courtyard beneath the mound). Paul Remfry, the historian, thinks that it was a look-out post in the west for Painscastle (and that Dolbedwyn motte had a similar function to the east). He believes that it was built to support a palisade, or curtain wall. There would have been a tower or hall within the wall. He also thinks that rock from the ditch would have been used to build stone buildings on the summit.

In terms of date for the structure, it is certainly medieval. It could have been built in the 1180s, a time of relative peace in the area after Elfael had been taken over by Einion o'r Porth (Einion ab Einion Clud)

in 1179. It is possible that Einion used this time of peace to refortify his castles and also build the mottes at Llandeilo Graban and Dolbedwyn (to protect Painscastle).

GG thinks that it is possible that the motte could have been built by a minor lord to show off his status, when there certainly would have been a hall on the motte but whether it was constructed of stone or wood is not known.

The group then took the opportunity to examine the motte more closely by climbing up onto the mound. Since it is now heavily wooded, the views are not what they once would have been, but it is certainly in a commanding position above the Bachawy valley, with good views in all directions, both up and down valley and over to the Begwns to the south and Llandeilo and Llanbedr Hills to the north. Everyone agreed that the steepness of the slope and depth of the ditch would have made it a very easily defended site.

Some of the group found an old piece of farm machinery at the edge of the ditch. It was an old hay tedder and very similar in design to the more modern equipment. It was made by S & J Bamford and RL said that they were based in Uttoxeter. RL went on to say that one of their directors set up the company JCB.



LIG members visiting Llandeilo Graban Motte

At the end of the evening, we went back to Tinker's Green where we enjoyed refreshments, very kindly provided by Maureen Lloyd and Jenny Francis, whilst admiring the views and watching the very nearly full moon rise above the Begwns and the sun setting behind Llandeilo Hill. Many thanks to ML for organising such an interesting visit for us and to her and GG for all the time that they spent researching the two sites.