

Notes from Local Interest Group 28th July 2022

Present: Maureen Lloyd (ML), John & Juliet Lewis, Wendy Ozols, John & Margaret Price, Regina Goodge, Marilyn & Mervyn Price, Barbara Lloyd, Tim Francis, Elsa Harflett, Vicky Gore, Iris Lloyd, Howard & Ann Dean, Joan Hughes, Don Evans, Robert Loxston, Janet Russell, Carol Sheen, Gaynor Price, Helen Barnett, Cherry & Victor Williams, Paul & Sue Buckingham, Marisa & John Olliver, Richard Harris, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Celia Jones, Grace Davies

Apologies: Dainis Ozols, James & Jenny Martin, Jenny Francis, Joan Lloyd, Evelyn Bally, Allison Joyce, Jennifer Lewis

ML welcomed everyone to Llanshiver, home of John and Juliet Lewis, and said how wonderful it was to see such a good attendance on a lovely evening.

Llanshiver History

ML began by telling us a little of the history of Llanshiver. She said that it was a very old site, Llys Ifor being its old name; this means Ifor's Court. It was named after Ifor ap Gruffudd, who is recorded as being the bailiff of Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales for Elfael Is Mynydd. There is some speculation about the location of his manor, Brynysceuyll, but it was probably close to the current site of the house. Ifor ap Gruffudd is mentioned in the Patent Roll of 1292, being pardoned for an offence against Walter de Baskerville (Eardisley). He is also mentioned as having clashed with John de Braose (Glasbury) in an entry in the Welsh Assize Roll. It appears that his loyalty to Prince Llewelyn had collapsed in the war of 1276-77. By late summer 1277, Ifor had transferred his allegiance from Llewelyn to King Edward. He was then constable of the troops from Elfael Is Mynydd, part of the central Wales army, fighting for Edward I and led by Hywel ap Meurig. That army drove Llewelyn back into Gwynedd uwch Conwy, the only territory Llewelyn controlled by the end of the war. In 1292, Ifor was one of the two chief taxators for the lordship of Elfael is Mynydd, acting for Ralph de Tony.

There follows a gap in the history relating to Llanshiver. (The following information was found by Don Evans.) In 1653, John Carpenter from Hinton in Norton Canon left a clause in his will to pay (from his Radnorshire lands of Llanshiver and Pwll Wilkin) the sum of 40 shillings per annum to the poor of Norton Canon parish.

In an indenture of 1680, William and Anne Lewis borrowed £230 from William's brother, Walter Lewis, gentleman of Clyro parish, in order to buy Llys Ifor from John Philpott, late of Hereford. Another indenture of 1685 mentions £230 again, and it appears that Walter Lewis bought Llanshiver and some other property from his brother. There are also various mentions of the Beavan family of Newchurch as owners of Llanshiver into at least the 1820s.

The tithe map of the 1840s records the owner of Llanshiver as being Thomas Williams; at this time the farm was occupied by William Lloyd, although the 1841 census records the farmers/occupiers as the Gore family. In the 1851 and 1861 censuses, the Gore family (first Samuel and then William) are recorded as living there. Samuel is buried at Bryngwyn church and William took his family to be coal miners at Nantyglo in the early 1860s. By the 1871 census, the Morgan family were at Llanshiver, in 1881 and 1891 the Meredith family were there and by 1901 it was occupied by Benjamin Lloyd,

whose family lived there for four generations. The farm was around 240 acres, and so large by local standards.

Bob Lloyd sold Llanshiver in 1993/94 to Ruth Stevens; who sold it a year later. Les Bowen bought most of the land and Gaynor Edwards bought the farmhouse, buildings and the fields around the house. The conversion of the large barn was completed; this was sold, with a few acres, to Alex and Boz Wiggins. John and Juliet Lewis bought the house, with 43 acres of land, 18 years ago. Some of the land that was originally part of the farm is now owned by Andrew Lloyd from Cefn y Blaen and the rest by Les Bowen of Upper Llanshiver.

Llanshiver Barn

We started the tour by looking at the barn conversion. Juliet showed us an aerial photograph to illustrate what the entire site looked like before the barn was converted. The road that is used to approach Llanshiver today was not the main access in the past. Originally, access was via a green lane which came more directly from Rhosgoch. Bob and John Lloyd had slowly, over the years, built the present access road.

Juliet said that the oldest part of the barn is the central bit; the two “ends” are slightly newer. The western end of the barn has brick edging around the windows and doors and so looks slightly different. Cattle were housed in one part of the barn and the rest was used for hay, etc. A separate small barn housed horses.

The conversion has been very sympathetically done with the main sitting room open to the roof, which has exposed timbers – all very attractive.

Farm

We then walked down to a small field where John talked to us about the farm. He and Juliet have 43 acres here at Llanshiver, and they also own land in Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. He comes from a farming family from Worcestershire and he and Juliet moved here from near Pershore some 18 years ago. The mainstays of their farming are sheep and trees.

The Lewises keep EasyCare™ sheep. These sheep shed their fleeces and so there is no need for shearing. The breed has other advantages: they rarely suffer from maggots or fly strike; they do not need to be tailed or castrated; their feet are good; and, they are very easy to lamb. John told us that the ewes generally “find a quiet corner and get on with it” at lambing time; they always lamb outside. Of the 80 ewes that lambed this year, John only needed to help two to lamb. The lambs have narrow heads, making them easier to lamb. The main drawback is that the lambs tend to be on the lean side. The sheep take longer to produce meat and will need feed in order to get to 18kg dead weight for a dressed carcass. The EasyCare™ breed is based on the Wiltshire Horn, which is the only British sheep to shed naturally. A Welsh farmer, Iolo Owen, developed the breed by crossing Wiltshire Horn with Glamorgan Welsh; the resulting breed is a half to two thirds Wiltshire Horn, the rest Glamorgan Welsh. The ram lambs sometimes have horns. John described the sheep as “a breed with a following” and “a work in progress”. Here at Llanshiver, they are being kept at their upper limit in terms of height, ie around 1000 ft (around 300m). The sheep can cope in a hard winter if it is dry, but in very bad weather John can bring them in as they have one very large shed. This large shed had been built around the Dutch barn by the Lloyds when they were here; they used it for their cattle. Extra feed comes from silage, hay and blocks, never cake. They do have some sheep on their other land in SW Wales.

Here at Llanshiver, the Lewises planted 12 acres of trees when they arrived, 18 years ago. These trees are now over twenty feet tall and have done very well. (In Carmarthenshire, they have planted around 300 acres of trees.) There is some older woodland on the farm which has been left with very little management and which is full of bluebells in the Spring. There is another plantation on one side of the access road.

Llanshiver House



Llanshiver circa 1900 with the Lloyd Family

Juliet began by saying that the house is located in a hollow and is, therefore, quite sheltered from the wind, protected and easily “hidden” from attack.

We were given a tour of the house and gardens by John and Juliet. The house is actually made up of three different parts, dating from around 1600, later in the 17th century and the 1860s. We started our tour in the kitchen, which was built onto the house in the later part of the 17th century. This room was originally two, a kitchen and a dairy. It was very dark with just two small medieval windows, later replaced. In one wall, there is a bread oven with a huge chimney behind. On the opposite side of the kitchen, the wall used to be an outside wall and on the sitting room side you can see where there was once a window. Juliet showed us some old plans and pictures to illustrate this.

The central sitting room is the oldest part of the house and dates from about 1600. It has a large fireplace with a solid wood lintel above. There are flagstones under the carpet. The ceiling is low with very old, solid wood beams. At one end, and behind a solid wood door, is an old, curved stone staircase. The rest of the ground floor is in a part of the house that was built in the 1860s and this is where the dining room is located. This room was once very wet (Juliet wonders whether there is a spring beneath the house) and so the Lewises replaced the floor and laid concrete beneath. A new front door was added in the 1860s, but this is seldom used.

Upstairs, the ceilings are very low in the section dating from the 1600s. Once again, there are signs of a former outside window above one of the doors, showing where the house must have been extended. A very interesting door frame, with a shaped top, leads to one of the bedrooms. The beams in this part of the upper storey are very rough and so were probably not intended to be seen; the space here was possibly not originally used for bedrooms, but may have been used to store

grain. On the stone stairs leading up from the sitting room there is an Elizabethan window, the only one left in the house, square in shape with small square glass panes; the glass is very thin according to Juliet. The second staircase to the upper floor dates from the 1860s.

Outside, Juliet pointed out an old cider apple press which John brought from his farm in Worcestershire. The differences in ages of the parts of the house are obvious from the outside. You can see where bits have been added at various times.

Juliet took us around to the northern part of the property where the moat was located. There is no documentation so no-one knows exactly how large it was, but it was a deep ditch when the Lloyds lived here. The ditch and bank were mentioned by Kilvert in his diary. Joan Lloyd has told the Lewises that the moat was filled in some time in the 1960s. It used to have to be dug out regularly in order to prevent the water from becoming stagnant and smelly. Apparently, there was once a bridge over the moat which one had to cross to get to the outside loo. At one end of the part of the garden where the moat was there is now a pond which Juliet said used to be a plastic sheep dip that one former resident had repurposed! Beyond the kitchen, Juliet showed us a small outbuilding which used to be the pig sty.

Back in the house, Juliet read us some extracts from Kilvert's Diary in which he mentions visits to Llanshiver. He was far from complimentary about the house. In an entry from March 1870, he mentions the bog and arriving at the house and seeing the "tall dark yew of Llanshiver". Mrs Morgan, the resident, gave him tea and cake and showed him the moat and told him about the skeleton of a "Scotch pedlar" which had been found when the moat had been dug out. He described the moat as a broad deep ditch, and Llanshiver as "a fearfully wet, swampy place and very unhealthy". He went back to Clyro over the hill via Holly House. In a later entry, he again describes Llanshiver as "a strange dark old house".



Llanshiver as it looks today

The evening was rounded off with refreshments served in the kitchen. ML thanked John and Juliet for their kind and generous hospitality. We had all thoroughly enjoyed learning more about

Llanshiver and felt very privileged to be able to look around this extremely interesting house. For some of us, learning more about their flock and the benefits of keeping EasyCare™ sheep was a bonus. Many thanks to them for a most enjoyable evening.