

LIG Notes 22nd August 2024 Visit to Llanshiver

Present: Maureen Lloyd, John Price, Victor & Cherry Williams, Sylvia Illingsworth, Bronwen Jenkins, Elsa Harflett, Sylvia Bigglestone, Rob Davies, Ann & Howard Dean, Richard Harris, Jenny Francis, Vicky Gore, Iris Lloyd, Robert Collingwood, Lucy Trench, Celia Jones, Janet Russell, Paul & Sue Buckingham

Apologies: Wendy & Dainis Ozols, Joan Lloyd, Jennifer Lewis, James & Jenny Martin

A team from various parts of the country have carried out an archaeological dig at Llanshiver from Monday 19th August. Painscastle Local Interest Group were very pleased to meet the team of Peter & Lisa Heath, Monica (Nikki) Gooch, Mary Strickland, Hannah Butters, Amelia Morley and Nigel Roberts, Gerry, Harry and Hugh Martyr.



The oldest part of Llanshiver

Juliet Lewis began by welcoming and introducing everyone. She explained that Llanshiver is a corruption of Llys Ifor or Ifor's court, which probably refers back to Ifor ap Gruffudd who was bailiff for the local area at the end of the thirteenth century. Ifor was initially working for Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, or Llewelyn the Last, but by 1277 he had changed sides and led an army against Llewelyn. He continued to work for the marcher lords and King Edward I up to the end of the century, and it seems likely that his court was here or

hereabouts. There was a moat around part of the house, shown on several old maps, and it was still evident up until the 1960s when it was filled in by the Lloyd family who lived at Llanshiver from the early 1900s. Jonathan Williams in his History of Radnorshire in 1859 says of Llys Ifor, "This habitation has been in ancient times encompassed by a deep trench of considerable depth, and by a high rampart, or vallum." Llanshiver is mentioned several times in Kilvert's Diary; he describes it as a fearfully wet swampy place with a high bank which made the kitchen dark.

Monica (Nikki) then described Pit 1 which was dug near where they had understood there was a small bridge across the moat. At the bottom of the pit, which was about a metre in depth, they found black residue (which was very smelly), waterlogged wood and water weeds. There was compacted clay and it was very silty with a root spring. Several cut pieces of wood were found; there was one small piece, as the rest had rotted away, which probably could be identified as part of a support post of the bridge, as it was perpendicular, not lying on its side. There were very few finds and the pit was closed up.

Pit 2 was dug in order to establish the extent of the moat or where it finished. There is quite a slope on the site so the pit was deep. The bottom of the pit



Some of the finds

contained black smelly fibrous material and the end suggested the terminal of the moat. Mary Strickland was in charge of Pit 3 and she explained that it was dug on the first day, after de-turfing. The soil was sieved but with very little result so afterwards that was abandoned. A stone lined feature was discovered but its purpose was not evident; there was some charcoal and sand, and 1950s glass, bits of pot, etc. The area was divided in order to reveal different parts of the trench and an interesting obsolete pipe was discovered dating to the 1860s.

It is important to keep the sides of the trenches clean so that the different layers or contexts can be identified and each of the pits has been drawn meticulously to scale by Amelia Morley. This shows the exact measurements of the trenches, the layers and any objects they contained and an aerial plan of each trench. Several people asked questions about the dig and the finds which were modern. These finds had all been recorded and studied. Monica will produce a report which will be sent to the owners and CADW, as well as to all the members of the team, including observations and conclusions of the Llanshiver dig.



Llanshiver is in a hollow and well protected from the elements, inaccessible from one side because of Rhosgoch Bog, but it has an overall view towards Bryngwyn church and the road the other side of the bog towards Newchurch. Whether the moat was a defensive feature or not has not been established, and the date of its construction is still a mystery.

However, it was an interesting evening, meeting real archaeologists and trying to increase knowledge of the local area. Grateful thanks go to the Lewis family and the whole team of archaeologists for their efforts, and for explaining methods of modern archaeology and engaging with the group for everyone's knowledge and benefit.