

## THE WATER-WHEELS OF ST NICHOLAS

Stephen Harries

### 1. TREHILYN (SM 902 381)

The mill was located by the stream, which was about one hundred yards from the main farm buildings. The water was taken from the stream with its source at Rhos-y-caerau. The mill building is still to be seen, also the millpond, which was used to boost power during drought periods.

The mill itself was free standing; the stones used were three feet in diameter, and were driven by belt and pulley. In addition it had a thrashing machine driven by a shaft, and a gorse mill. The mill worked up to the late 1930's.

### 2. LLANDRUDION (SM 908 379)

A water-wheel was located in the barn prior to the 1914-1918 war. The wheel was said to be approximately fourteen feet in diameter by two feet six inches wide, and was used for grinding corn.

An interesting feature of this set-up was that the water came from a spring which was accumulated in a pond approximately 300 yards from the farmstead, and controlled by a sluice. As the land was flat, a channel about two hundred and fifty yards long, which emerged in the moor, had to be opened.

### 3. TREVAYOG (SM 905 371)

This water-wheel was used up to the late 1930's: it drove a mill, a chaff-cutter, a pulper and churning. The source of the water again was a nearby spring, impounded in a pond and controlled by a sluice. There is also mentioned a gorse-mill house, in a position suitable for a wheel to be driven by the same water-supply; but there is no actual evidence of any machinery.

### 4. CAERSEGAN (SM 906 366)

As in other instances the mill building and the water-wheel were located a short distance from the farm, to utilise the water supply which again came from a spring quite near the mill, and collected into the millpond. All machinery was removed before the early 1920's.

### 5. VELINDRE (Felin Velindre) (SM 894 361)

Felin Velindre is a smallholding, having about seven acres of land, and was run as a mill until 1925. It includes a house, mill, kiln, stable, cart-house, pigsty, a well and a garden.

The water-wheel and mill have been restored to working order, and are being used to grind wheat for flour. At present the main task in hand is to restore the house, which has the traditional Welsh "big chimney", with a baking oven for four loaves only and a traditional style fire-place on the opposite side. The only way to heat this kind of oven was to light a fire inside it, and when enough heat had been acquired, to remove the ashes and put in the bread. The floor of the house was of earth and lime.

The water is diverted from the stream into a leat which is about 400 yards long. It also has a millpond, required to boost

the power when the thrashing machine was in use; this was driven by approximately 80 yards of shafting to the barn at Velindre.

6. LLANFERRAN (Morfa-bach) (SM 886 370)

This water-wheel was located about 300 yards from the farmyard, again near the source of water. It was smaller than average, being only required to drive a gorse-mill. It is unique as it was a direct drive: the spindle of the water-wheel carried through the gorse-mill, therefore no cogs were involved.

The main difference from the other mills is that the water does not flow into Aber Bach, but to a small bay about a mile further north named Pwll-crochan.

7. LLYS-YR-ONNEN (SM 900 355)

The mill building and millpond are the only remaining evidence of a once-efficient village business. Again a feature of interest is the powerful spring which fed the millpond, and provides the ducks and waterhens with a healthy environment.

8. TRESISILLT (SM 893 355)

The mill building is located by the roadside, a distance of about eighty yards from the farmstead. At the mill was housed a gorse-mill, a common feature; but the wheel also drove a shaft to a thrashing machine situated at the farmstead.

The water supply was via a leat about 300 yards long, which has been closed so as to make cultivation with farm machinery easier, as it came through the fields.

9. FELIN NEWYDD (SM 894 350)

This grist mill worked up to the mid-1950's. It was a complete unit, as it contained three sets of grinding stones and a flour-grading machine, as well the power-driven sack-hoist.

The water came via a leat from the stream, which was adequate at all times as it was quite near Aber Bach. Here again all the machinery has been removed, and the mill building is used for other purposes.

10. TREGWYNT WOOLLEN MILL SM 894 348)

This factory derived its power from the water-wheel until the installation of electricity during the mid-1950's. Again water was diverted from the stream, which was adequate at all times.

The water-wheel is in its original position inside the mill as an added tourist attraction at this well-known woollen mill. Electricity is now the main power source, with a generator as a stand-by.

11. FELIN FAWR (SM 887 350)

The last mill on the stream that flows from Rhos-y-caerau to Aber Bach worked until the late 1940's. Here again all items of mill machinery have been removed, and the mill building converted to a dwelling.

By the time the water flowed into the sea it had been utilised many times; yet it was not polluted, but had added oxidisation, which was an asset to all stream life.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those living in the above-mentioned premises, and many others living in the district who have so much knowledge of local history and have shared this information with me.

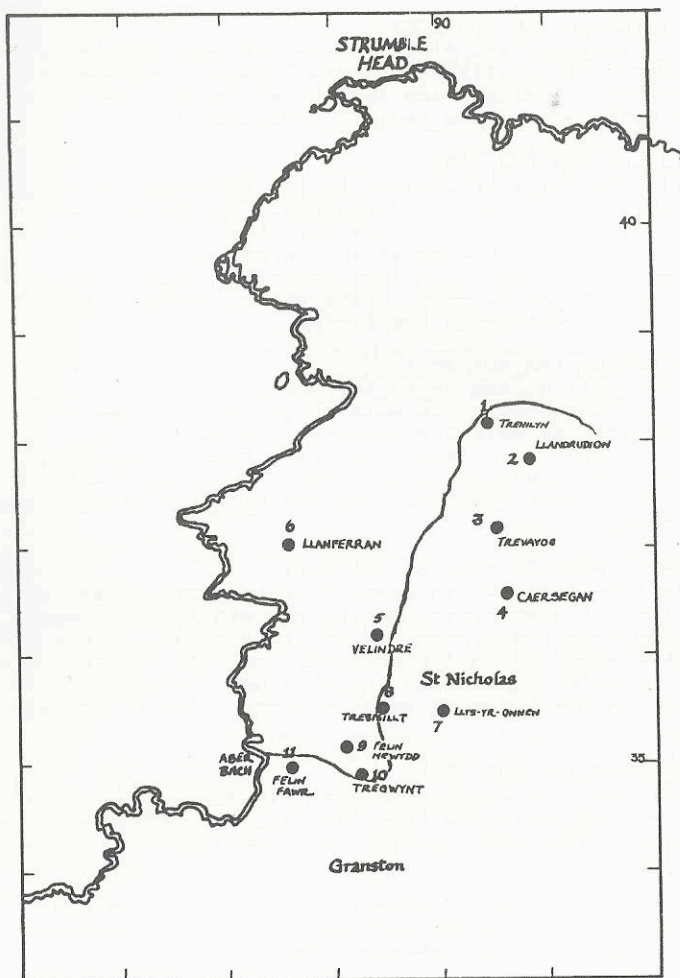


Fig.1: Waterwheels in St Nicholas