



# VADO GILBERTI: EARLY HISTORY OF GUILDFORD

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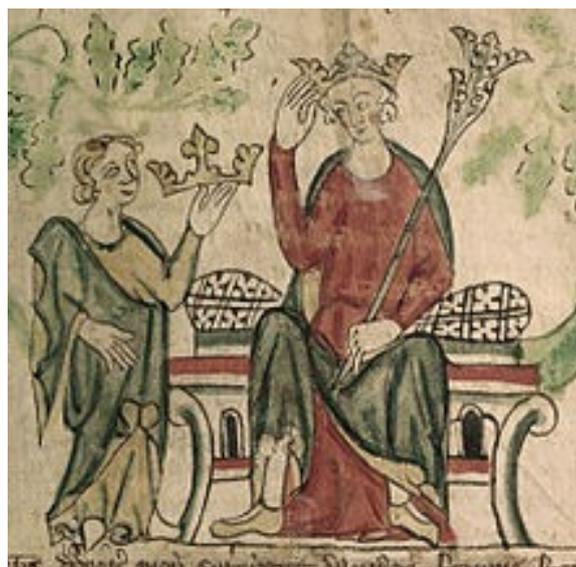
Llangwm Ferry

Much has been written about medieval Llangwm, but older Langums will know that a large chunk of what we now know as Llangwm has rather a different history. Although now part of Llangwm, Guildford and Llangwm Ferry were until quite recently (1950s) part of Burton parish, which gives rise to quite a different story.

Following the Norman Conquest and establishment of their fort in Pembroke and settlement of the neighbouring area, the Normans employed Fleming mercenaries to take the area north of the Haven. However, Burton, including the land to become Guildford and Llangwm Ferry, remained initially in the hands of the Bishops of St David's. That changed in the late 12th century, when Peter de Leia, Bishop of St David's (1176–1198), sold much of Burton to the Norman, Philip de Stackpole (d. 1257), of the Stackpole estate, who had become rich through his participation in the Strongbow invasion of Ireland. Geraldus Cambrensis (Gerald de Barri), who had been a rival of Peter de Leia for the bishopric, strongly criticised Peter for this sale: *"for squandering the property of the diocese, ... in order that before his decease nothing should remain unsold, even that bit of an estate which used to be reserved for the table of the bishops when they visit his church at Burton, he sold (to the Stackpoles) for Irish gold"*. To be fair to Peter de Leia, his reason for the sale to Philip of Stackpole may well have been to raise funds for the urgently necessary rebuilding of St David's cathedral.

On 8th July, 1307, Edward II (the first English prince to be named Prince of Wales) came to the English throne. As part of his accession, he had an inventory made of his inheritances throughout the kingdom. This takes the form of the *Inquisitions Post Mortem of Edward II*, dated 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1307. Here, Burton appears as belonging to the Barony of Walwyn's Castle, which itself was a detached portion of the Earldom of Pembroke. Since Gilbert de Clare, the heir to the Pembroke earldom, was still a child (born 10 May 1291, killed at the [Battle of Bannockburn](#) on 24 June, 1314), Pembroke itself was actually in the ownership of King Edward II until Gilbert came of age. The *Inquisitions Post Mortem* tell us that, within Burton, the small medieval Benton Castle and its surrounds, represented a knight's fee to be served under the Barony of Walwyn's Castle (that is, in return for the rights to Benton, its lord had to equip and maintain a knight, his horse, armour, weapons and his attendants for military duty under the direction of the baron).

According to the *Inquisitions Post Mortem*, in 1307 the knight's fee was held by Thomas de Roche, "Lord of Llangwm". This apparently gave him a vast estate of 10 carucates (perhaps 1200 acres) of land, as well as one curtilage – i.e. Benton Castle – valued at 2s yearly. Unusually, the Benton castle estate was not



*Edward II shown receiving the English crown in a contemporary illustration.*

itself a manor and probably never had a vill (settlement) associated with it. Instead, the manor house proper was presumably located at Williamston. The area was heavily wooded, including Benton Wood adjacent to Llangwm Ferry and today still extending from Benton Castle up to Port Lion. Whether Thomas was indeed “Lord of Llangwm” as implied in the *Inquisitions*, is unclear as the Latin “Dominus” may equally be translated as “Master”, a polite title to indicate a high (e.g. knightly) status. Thomas also seems to have been one of the Roch side of the de la Roche family, and we know from other sources that, at this time, his cousin, David de la Roche, held the rights to Llangwm.

So, what does this have to do with Guildford? An article by Joseph Hunter and J M Traherne in the *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 1852, documents a deed, written in Medieval Latin, from the de la Roche family documents, in which Thomas acquires land and workings in Guildford. In this deed, dated 1300, an Adam Baret transfers his interests in Giberichsforde to Thomas de Rupe (Latinised version of de la Roche). Hunter and Traherne suggest that Giberichsforde is a copying error for Gibbrick-Ford, or Gilbert’s Ford. In a second deed of transfer, also in 1300, Philip, the son of the cloth-fuller, Thomas Martin, transferred his rights in the same area to Thomas de Rupe. These included “the cloth-fuller’s mill and one acre and a half acres with five dwellings, and a plot of land for a dwelling, and five orchards and with all other appurtenances in, and on, the land held by tenants in Gilberts Ford, as measured by pacing, and will be freely assigned to his children with all customs and easements of the aforesaid mill and adjacent land, dwellings and orchards”. The Latin version of this second document names the settlement *Vado Gilberti* (which translates as Gilbert’s Ford). Hunter and Traherne argue that Giberichs forde/ Vado Gilberti/ Gilbert’s Ford are all the same place, which we now call Guildford. The identity of Gilbert is not known. It could be Gilbert de Clare of Pembroke, or Gilbert de la Roche, the father of David, or someone entirely different.

The identity of Adam Baret, and why he had holdings in the area is unclear. Henry Owen in his *“Old Pembroke Families”*, writes that the Baret family came from Carmarthen. However, it may be of interest that at about the same time, an Adam Baret, and his kinsmen, Roger Baret of Benton and Adam de Benton, appear in documents in John Hodgson’s extensive *History of Northumberland*, where Benton is a district about 4 miles to the north east of Newcastle upon Tyne. Could Benton Castle be so-named because it, too, had once belonged to the lord of Northumbrian Benton? Are the residents of Guildford really displaced Geordies? (Why, Aye, man!).



An old map (Ordnance Survey, 1890) showing the name as Guilford (no "d". When was that added?)

This is the period when the Normans and their Fleming allies are thought to have driven the Welsh out of the area, so it is of great interest that Thomas de Roch’s wife has the Welsh name, Nesta, while one of the witnesses to the deeds has the Welsh name Philip ab Cadugan. Clearly, the Welsh were not only still living in the area, but were of sufficient status to have married into the Norman aristocracy, and sufficiently important to have acted as guarantors for property transactions.

According to Henry Owen’s *Old Pembroke Families*, Thomas de Rupe left a son, William, and four daughters, one of whom, Joanna, married David de la Roche of Llangwm. The anniversary of this event was celebrated by the Llangwm History Society a few years ago. In 1336, William was granted £400

annual rent out of the manors of Burton and Hodgston by John de Stackpole. Presumably this included the estate associated with Benton Castle previously held by his father. William, who was Lord of Roch, also leased a home and land at Roch to John Baret, suggesting that the Baret family were long term associates of this Roch branch of the de la Roche family, consistent with Adam Baret signing over his possessions in Guildford to Thomas de Roche in 1300.

Guildford also appears in the records a few years later, in 1376, when the extensive holdings of the de la Roche estate are listed in the *Inquisitions post mortem* following the death of Sir John de la Roche of Roch castle. As well as the manor of Langum, among the property listed separately is “a parcel of land at Guildford, near Langum under the Stackpole estate of Isabella, widow of Sir John Wogan of Picton”.

From this history, it appears that far from Guildford being a suburb of Llangwm, in the Middle Ages, it was Guildford that belonged to the senior part of the de la Roche dynasty, with Llangwm in the hands of the junior cousins, and can trace its history back to the time when it belonged to St David's.

*Dai Stephens grew up in Llangwm, following a long line of the Stephens family living in Llangwm Ferry and Guilford. He still has a home in Llangwm Ferry, and visits regularly.*

*Following stints in Llangwm VC School, Barn Street Primary School in Haverfordwest, and Haverfordwest Grammar, he studied Biological Sciences at the University of Sussex, before obtaining a PhD in Physiology in London. Following research work in London and Manchester, he spent 12 years in Berlin, Germany, before returning to Sussex as a Professor in Neuroscience. Since his retirement he has taken up an interest in local history, especially of Pembrokeshire, and published his first historical article “Medieval Llangwm in Context” in the Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society in 2019. He is currently working on a History of Llangwm Ferry, from which this article is an extract.*