

LLANBEDR

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Introduction

Llanbedr lies in the eastern part of the Brecon Beacons National Park beyond the southern edge of the Black Mountains, some 3km north-east of Crickhowell. The church and its surrounding habitations occupy gently sloping ground on the western edge of the steep-sided valley of Grwyne Fechan.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanbedr up to the year 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it will be necessary to look at other sources of information and particularly at the origins and nature of the buildings within it.

The accompanying map is offered only as an indicative guide to the historic settlement. The continuous line defining the historic core offers a visual interpretation of the area within which the settlement developed, based on our interpretation of the evidence currently to hand. It is not an immutable boundary line, and will need to be modified as new discoveries are made. The map does not show those areas or buildings that are statutorily designated, nor does it pick out those sites or features that are specifically mentioned in the text.

We have not referenced the sources that have been examined to produce this report, but that information will be available in the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. The HER can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

Translated into English, the full name of the parish, Llanbedr Ystradwy (or Ystrad Yw) which was not frequently used after 1600 means 'St Peter's church in the vale of Yews', the second name referring back to the old commote of Ystrad Yw. The place-name first appears in the period 1160 to 1185 as *llanpetyr* and at the time of the ecclesiastical taxation of 1291 we read of *Lanpetr*.

The church is recorded in the *Liber Landavensis* as having been consecrated about 1060 by Herewald, the Bishop of Llandaf, together with Cwmdy, Llangenny and Partrishow, but it is highly unlikely that this was the first church on the spot.

The development of the settlement during the Middle Ages is unchronicled, but there is no reason to think that there was a nucleated group of dwellings here, and indeed the negative results from an evaluation by the village hall in 1999 tends to support such a view. The earliest map of Llanbedr which dates to 1760 shows the church, the rectory and eight other dwellings including a mill beside the Grwyne Fechan, reasonably well spaced out along the road from Crickhowell to Partrishow. In passing it can be noted that only three or perhaps four of these remain to the present day.

Llanbedr was the home in the 18th and early 19th centuries of the Brutes, a family of masons whose memorial stones create a distinctive feature in many churches in the district. Also the ecclesiastical historian, Archdeacon Thomas Payne, resided at the rectory in the 1790s.

The heritage to 1750

The church dedicated to St Peter appears largely to be of late 15th- or early 16th-century build on the basis of the south aisle and its accompanying chapel, though it is possible that the nave and chancel are earlier. The tower, too, could be earlier, perhaps 14th-century, although there is no architectural detail to confirm this. There was some rebuilding in 1897, following restorations in 1868 and 1883.



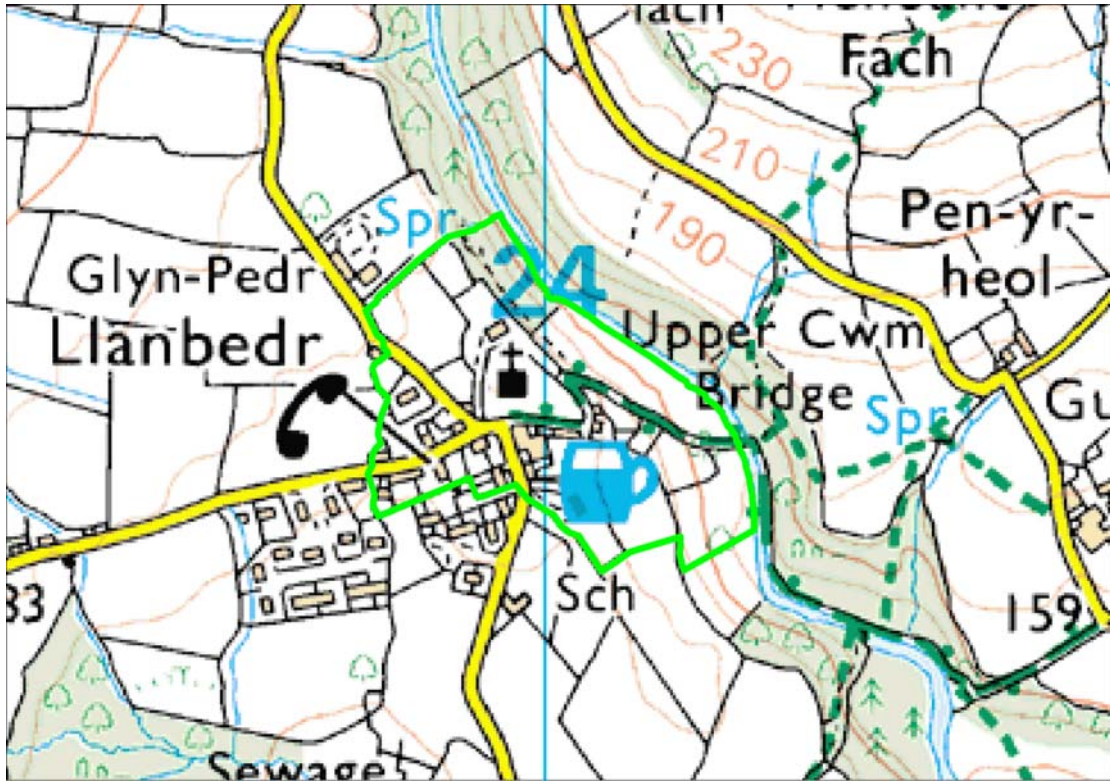
Llanbedr Church, photo 1345-0008 © CPAT, 2013

The churchyard is of a curious triangular shape, certainly modified on its eastern side where the rectory (now Llanbedr House) incorporated a slice of the old graveyard to facilitate access, probably prior to 1760. And Richard Fenton writing in 1804 noted that ‘the [rectory], situated in the church yard, the north side of which is close shaven and made a lawn of, with a walk all round’. Other, undocumented alterations to its layout can only be presumed.

Small cottages lie close to the churchyard on the south in as far as the topography allows, and perhaps reflect the initial pattern of settlement, particularly as the lane running into Llanbedr from the west and then snaking down the valley side on the east probably represents the original means of access to Llanbedr. The south to north lane is a more local route winding up the valley of the Grwyne Fechan.

Glebe Farm immediately to the south of the church was built in the late 17th century and enlarged early in the following one. Llanbedr House (the former rectory) is of 18th-century date, as is the Red Lion Inn.

Just to the south-west of the churchyard and east of Penuel Chapel on the road to Crickhowell is a spring with a stone surround, built into a wall, a metal tap has a bowl beneath, but contrary to some suggestions it seems unlikely that this is medieval. Its absence from the early large-scale Ordnance Survey maps implies an absence of local traditions associated with the spring.



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