

LLANELIEU

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Introduction

Though only 3km to the east of Talgarth, Llanelieu occupies a remote location approached by minor lanes on the north-western slopes of the Black Mountains. The church lies in the loop of a stream that runs off the lower slopes of the Black Mountains, with a second smaller stream converging on it from the east. The churchyard is on a slight slope yet the church appears to occupy a platform which is unlikely to be completely natural.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanelieu 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

Llangelen is the first form of the name, recorded sometime in the years between 1148 and 1155. In 1210 it was termed *Langeleu* but by 1406 it had become *Llanelewyth* and in 1482 *Llaneliw*. The English translation of the name is an obvious one ‘the church of St Elyw’ to whom it is still dedicated, and apparently a grand-daughter of Brychan. However, recent authorities have questioned whether ‘*Gelyw*’ could be a stream name rather than a personal name and that St Elyw who only put in appearance around 1400 was a back formation.

The church dedication and the morphology of the churchyard, though hardly regular, point to an early medieval foundation, reinforced by the presence of two pillar stones of early date.

Nothing is known of the past history of this settlement. Even at the time of the Tithe Survey in the mid-19th century, it consisted of nothing more than the church, the court and Ty-du cottage. It was hemmed in by two expanses of open land, Rhos Fach Common on the south and Rhos Fawr Common to the east. On this very restricted evidence it seems unlikely that Llanelieu was ever anything more than a church settlement.

The heritage to 1750

The supposedly 13th-century church of St Elyw has seen minor changes in subsequent centuries including the insertion of a 15th- or 16th-century west window. Some of the eastern end was rebuilt after 1869 when Sir Stephen Glynne recorded single-light square-headed windows that have now gone, and there was limited restoration work in 1905. Two cross-carved stones, incised sometime between the 7th and 9th centuries, reside just outside the

porch, and it seems very likely that these have been relocated from elsewhere in the churchyard. Inside, parts of an elaborate 14th- or 15th-century screen survive, there is a font, altar rails and a pulpit all post-Reformation, wall paintings of various types including a fragmentary late 17th-century Royal Arms, and an interesting range of 18th-century wall monuments.



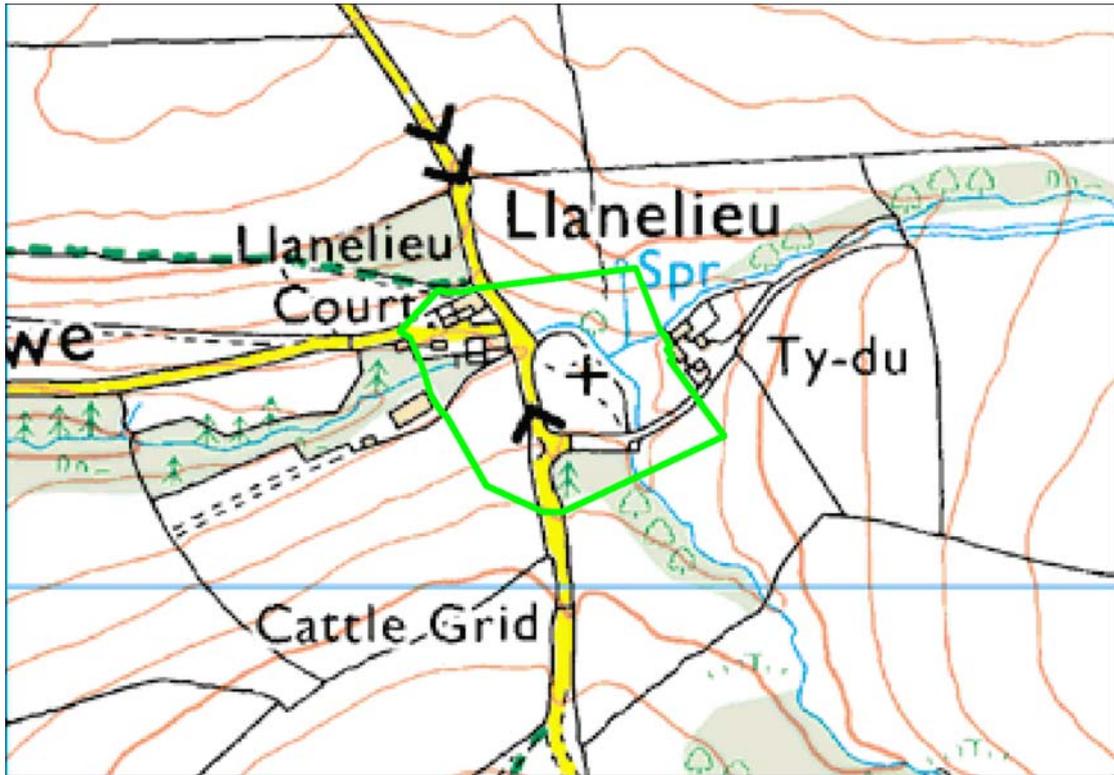
Church of St Elyw, photo cs03-007-0037 © CPAT, 2013

The churchyard itself is a large enclosure with a vaguely sub-circular ‘feel’ to it even if in plan it appears as an irregular outline, and is of a size seemingly out of proportion to the number of marked burials that it holds.

Llanelieu Court less than 60m to the north-west of the church raises intriguing issues. The house itself is thought to be of 15th- or 16th-century details with 19th-century additions. It incorporates two late medieval pointed arches which have been claimed as the remains of a monastic cell belonging to Llanthony Abbey – and there is nothing to suggest that these arches have been imported from elsewhere. Inscribed stone voussoirs give a date of 1676 and the initials of the Aubrey brothers, owner of the court in the late 17th century.

The old pound for holding stray stock was still in place between the church and the court at the beginning of the 20th century but has now been demolished. The stocks, too, which were positioned immediately to the south of the churchyard and were depicted on early editions of the Ordnance Survey map have gone, while the theme of punishment was also continued by a yew tree by the churchyard which doubled as a whipping post, the felon’s hands inserted into holes bored in the wood and held in place by a bar.

Despite the lack of modern settlement around the church, no traces of earlier house sites have been observed. However, at least one building, presumably a cottage, existed to the south of the lane leading to Ty-du, less than 40m from the churchyard. It appears on an estate map attributable to the 1460s.



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