

LLANGASTY-TALYLLYN

SO 1333 2615
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Introduction

Llangasty-talyllyn lies on the southern edge of Llangorse lake, nearly 9km east-south-east of Brecon. The church occupies ground that slopes gently down to the lake shore little more than 100m away, and is perhaps no more than two metres above the present water level.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llangasty-talyllyn 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

The name signifies the church of St Casten (or Casteu) at the end (or edge) of the lake and incorporates a dedication that is unique. The earlier forms of the name are various. In 1643, it was recognisable if misspelt as *Llangastey Talyllym*, and before this in 1513 it was *Llangasten*. The year after Henry VII's accession the church was termed *Sci Castani juxta marā*, while in 1321/2 it was linked to neighbouring Llan-y-wern as the [lands of] *Londeworne, altera Costinio*.

The origin of the church as an early medieval foundation seems incontestable, though it is only the obscure dedication that is convincing. There is however no evidence that a settlement developed around the site, either before the Conquest or during the Middle Ages. The earliest available maps – from the beginning of the 19th century – show the church as a solitary structure on the edge of the lake.

The heritage to 1750

The 'dark, ancient and decaying edifice' that was the church in 1838 was rebuilt in the years after 1848. Of the earlier nothing remains and there is little known of it, though an unverified report suggests that it was of mid-16th-century date with a tower appended in 1670. The exception could be the lower stages of the tower – these might have been retained from the earlier building. The removal of earlier furnishings and fittings by the Victorians was thorough. Only fragments of the medieval screen were utilised in the new chancel screen, 'a good example of the unintelligent use of medieval material, jumbled together without knowledge or understanding' as Crossley and Ridgeway put in their definitive work on Breconshire screens. Three bells of 17th- and 18th-century date were also saved.

The shape of the churchyard is polygonal, but with its curving west side, it gives the impression of originally having been more curvilinear, though time has shaved off its other curves. This seems too borne out by geophysical survey in 1993 which reportedly identified a curvilinear feature beneath the eastern churchyard wall which excavation demonstrated to be a ditch.



Llangasty, photo 05-c-0068 © CPAT, 2013

The adjacent school was constructed at broadly the same time as the church (c.1850) and in similar style. At a greater distance is Llan, a farm where the house appears to be a long-house derivative though undated.

No traces of earlier settlement can be detected in the fields surrounding the church, though geophysical survey in 1993 did reveal unexplained features to the east of the church.



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