

## LLANGENNY

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### *Introduction*

Llangenny lies beside the small river known as the Grwyne Fawr, some 2km to the east of Crickhowell. Grwyne Fawr passes within a few metres of the church and the settlement thus occupies a valley floor position. Only in the last one hundred and fifty years has the settlement begun to develop and spread up the valley sides.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llangenny 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](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).

### *History of development*

The name alludes to the church of St Cenau, but the settlement is not documented until Edward VI's reign when it was known by its present name. The absence of earlier, medieval forms has been attributed to the fact that Llangenny was a chapelry of Llangattock and thus did not warrant its own name. However, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the *Liber Landavensis* referred to a *Lann Cetguinn* (possibly Cedwyn?) and it has been cautiously proposed that this could be an earlier form from which Llangenny was derived.

It has been further suggested that if Llangenny is *Lann Cetguinn* it falls in with a group of three other churches – Cwmdy, Llangenny and Partrishow – recorded in the *Liber Landavensis* as having been consecrated about 1060 by Bishop Herewald of Llandaf. It is highly unlikely however, that this event marked the first appearance of a church at Llangenny, for it marks an episode of one-upmanship over the diocese of St Davids in the expansion of Llandaf's ecclesiastical control over the border region.

It has yet to be determined whether a settlement grew up around the chapel in the Middle Ages. On the evidence of an estate map from around 1800 which showed only three buildings on the lane approaching the church from the south, it seems unlikely, though Breconshire does have a number of settlements where the medieval population was greater than its modern counterpart.

### ***The heritage to 1750***

St Cenu's church has a complicated history that can be read to some degree in its fabric. With a medieval core, it was extended probably in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century by the addition of a new nave and chancel. Restoration occurred in 1864 and again in 1894. The font is of 12<sup>th</sup>-century date, and the few other medieval furnishings include a stoup and piscina.

The present churchyard reflects recent expansion. Now polygonal, the original churchyard was rather more circular and a relict boundary curving around the west side is still detectable.

Ffynnon Cenu (St Cenu's Well), in reality a spring, lies in woodland on the east side of the river, opposite the church. Traditionally it is supposed to have been associated with St Cenu's oratory, and according to a 19<sup>th</sup>-century antiquary was supposed to have been of considerable repute in earlier times. The demolition of the putative oratory in 1790 led to the discovery of an early medieval iron bell, now in the National Museum, Wales.

Church Cottages set beside the churchyard wall are considered to be 18<sup>th</sup>-century in date. The only listed structure (other than the church) is Llangenny Bridge erected in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, 200m to the south of the church. Houses forming a nucleation, as noted above, are few even today, but dispersed along the lanes leading to and from the village are older dwellings such as Druid's Altar (which takes its name from a nearby prehistoric standing stone) and Golden Grove.

The configuration of lanes at the heart of Llangenny has been modified in recent times. The road edging the west side of the churchyard is recent: previously the only lane running up the valley would past the church and west of School House and Yew Tree Cottage where only a farm lane now exists. In addition the lane beside the river leading to the church may itself be a replacement of one lying some 25m further west where a ridge is now visible under pasture.



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