

LLANSPYDDID

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Introduction

Llanspyddid lies beside the A40 trunk road, 3km west of Brecon. The settlement has developed on the southern edge of the Usk valley, with the land behind it continuing to rise gently upwards towards the foothills of the Brecon Beacons. On the far side of the main road from the church, the ground dips sharply to the floor of river valley.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanspyddid 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

If there was a St Ysbyddyd he (or she) is otherwise unknown in early literature, although the recent authoritative volume on Welsh place-names does point out that a giant with the name Ysbyddaden appears in a medieval Welsh tale. *Lannspitit* is referenced as early as 1100, and even earlier from the 11th century could be *Lanespetit* though this the document in which it appears is later, from c. 1200. *Lamdespidic* is given in 1127. Tradition has it that Llanspyddid was the burial place of Anlach, Brychan's father.

The early history of Llanspyddid is as obscure as virtually every other small village in Brecknock. The Llandaff charters refer to a church or perhaps even a monastery here in the pre-Conquest period. Collectively the dedication, the early medieval stone in the churchyard, the churchyard's morphology and the riparian location combine to confirm the pre-Conquest establishment of the church at Llanspyddid. One other authority has gone further, suggesting that it was a royal burial ground in the 6th century.

The emergence of a settlement here could be a medieval phenomenon but at present there is no evidence to corroborate this suggestion. Equally, it could have happened long after the Reformation and may even have been boosted by the upgrading of the Brecon to Carmarthen road as a turnpike road in the 18th century, though prior to that in 1675 it was classed as a 'small village'.



Llanspyddid, photo 05-c-0162 © CPAT, 2013

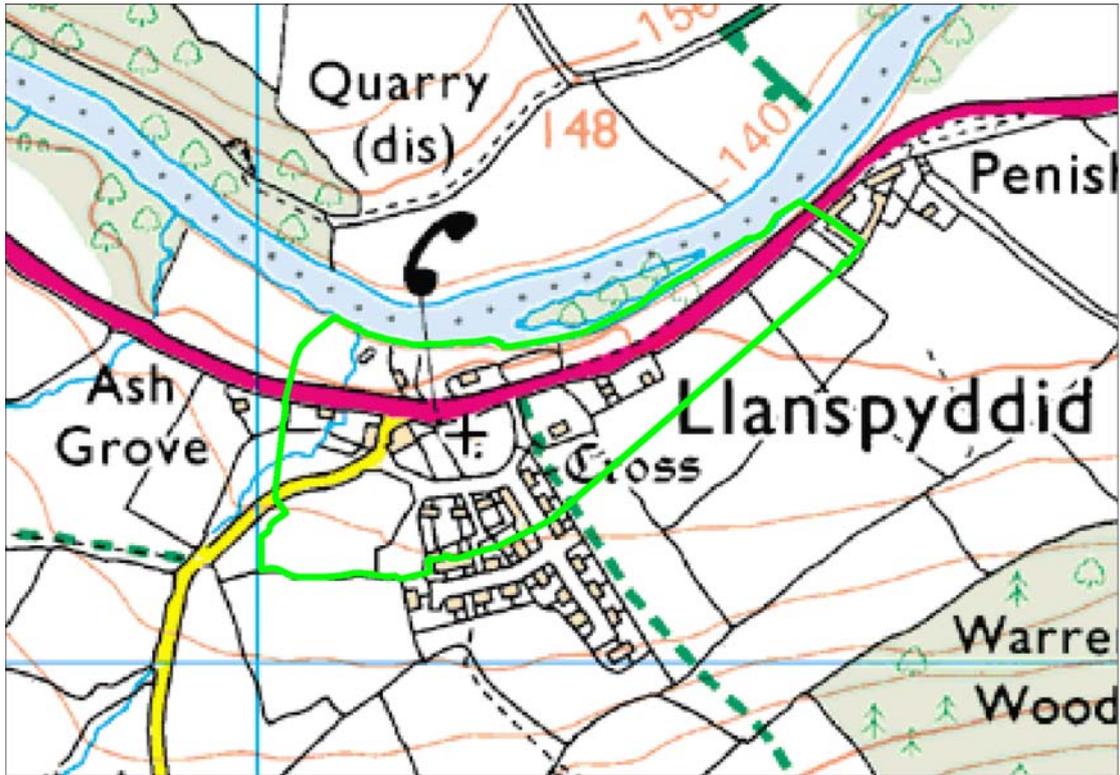
The heritage to 1750

The church of St Cadog (Cattwg) comprises a simple nave and chancel in one, probably of 14th-century date. To this a porch with interesting decoration was added in the 16th century. The church was restored in 1880 and some rebuilding appears to have taken place at this time. Inside is a 13th-century font and a Romanesque stoup, while the Victorian pulpit utilises fragments of a late medieval screen. There is also a good range of 18th-century mural tablets.

The churchyard boundary curving around the east and south sides is interrupted on the west by a straight boundary wall, clearly a later insertion that truncated the original graveyard. From the course of the lane running around the southern side of the church, it can be inferred that the churchyard was once considerably larger, incorporating the ground which Llanspyddid Farm now occupies; and this has been confirmed to some degree by archaeological evaluation in 1994. Possibly too it extended closer to the river before being cut through by the turnpike road, in which case the old vicarage lies in what was formerly the churchyard. The existing churchyard contains a cross-carved stone of the 8th to 9th century.

Llanspyddid Farm, stone-built is late 17th- or early 18th-century in origin. The range behind, now Copper Beech Barn, is probably slightly earlier.

Earthwork platforms have in the past been identified in the field to the south-west of the church, and lynchets resulting from cultivation and one such platform were built over in 1992. The tithe map of c.1839 and aerial photography hint at a slightly more complex picture that may or may not have some bearing on the nature of the structure of the earlier settlement here. To the east of the churchyard narrow but short enclosures on the south side of the road could be residual open-field strips of medieval date and these were certainly present further to the east beyond Penishapentre. They could also, however mark, tenement plots, and one, now lost, property mapped in 1839, shows as earthworks to the east of Maesyrfhaf. On the north side of the road a series of small plots ran down to the river.



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