

## **Abergwesyn** **(Llanfihangel Abergwesyn and Llanddewi Abergwesyn)**

SN 852526  
2550

### ***Introduction***

The conjoined settlements of Llanfihangel Abergwesyn and Llanddewi Abergwesyn are sited in the narrow upper reaches of the Irfon valley, at its confluence with the Nant Bach-helyg system, close to the boundary between Dyfed and Powys. Llanfihangel, which is now the predominant settlement, lies between the rivers while Llanddewi is located on the west bank of the Irfon. Collectively they are known as Abergwesyn on modern maps and in recent records.

This brief report examines its emergence and development up to 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 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 may 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. Numbers in brackets are primary record numbers used in the HER to provide information that is specific to individual sites and features. These can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website ([www.archwilio.org.uk](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).

### ***History of development***

Though now a single settlement, and treated as such for the purposes of this survey, Abergwesyn in fact comprises two settlements on opposite sides of the River Irfon. Each formerly had its own church and these gave their names to the settlements. Their close proximity, albeit separated by the river, implies an imperative for adjacent estates to have their own places of worship in the Middle Ages.

Llanfihangel Abergwesyn is centred on the ruins of St Michael's church on the eastern bank of the river. This church was a chapelry of Llanafan Fawr and at the Dissolution in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century was in the possession of Strata Florida Abbey.

Llanddewi Abergwesyn lay to the west of the river, and was focused on the now ruined church of St David. This settlement has all but disappeared and only two houses now remain. St David's church was a chapelry of Llangammarch (according to Edward Lhuyd writing at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century), but also a possession of Strata Florida Abbey.

While the name *Abergweffyn* (meaning mouth of the river Gwesyn) first appears in 1273, the churches are referred to at a rather later date with *Llanyhangleabergwessen* referenced as late as 1578 and *ll. dewi A. gwesyn* about two years earlier.

Both settlements seem to have been depopulated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and their respective tithe surveys show them to have been much the same size as they are today. The two parishes were united in 1864 and St David's church was subsequently demolished.

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

#### Llanfihangel Abergwesyn

The ruins of St Michael's Church (4424) are enclosed by the remains of an embanked polygonal churchyard some 75m across, standing above the west bank of the Bach-helyg. The church was built in 1870, replacing what was presumably a medieval structure, in order to serve the newly united parishes and was demolished in 1964. The site is arguably the earlier of the two Abergwesyn settlements, and perhaps early medieval (20123), but neither the church nor the churchyard show any outward signs of great antiquity. One of the few medieval furnishings, the font which is considered to be 13<sup>th</sup>-century, was removed to Beulah Church on rebuilding.

There are no buildings of any great age in the settlement. The Grouse Inn (2911) is a large stone building on the road-side to the north of the church. Now a private house, it is probably of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. Pen-twyn Farm (2912) has a range of 19<sup>th</sup>-century farm buildings of local architectural interest.

A small enclosed earthwork platform (2913) survives to the south-east of the Grouse Inn. This appears to be the remains of a relatively recent house site.

#### Llanddewi Abergwesyn

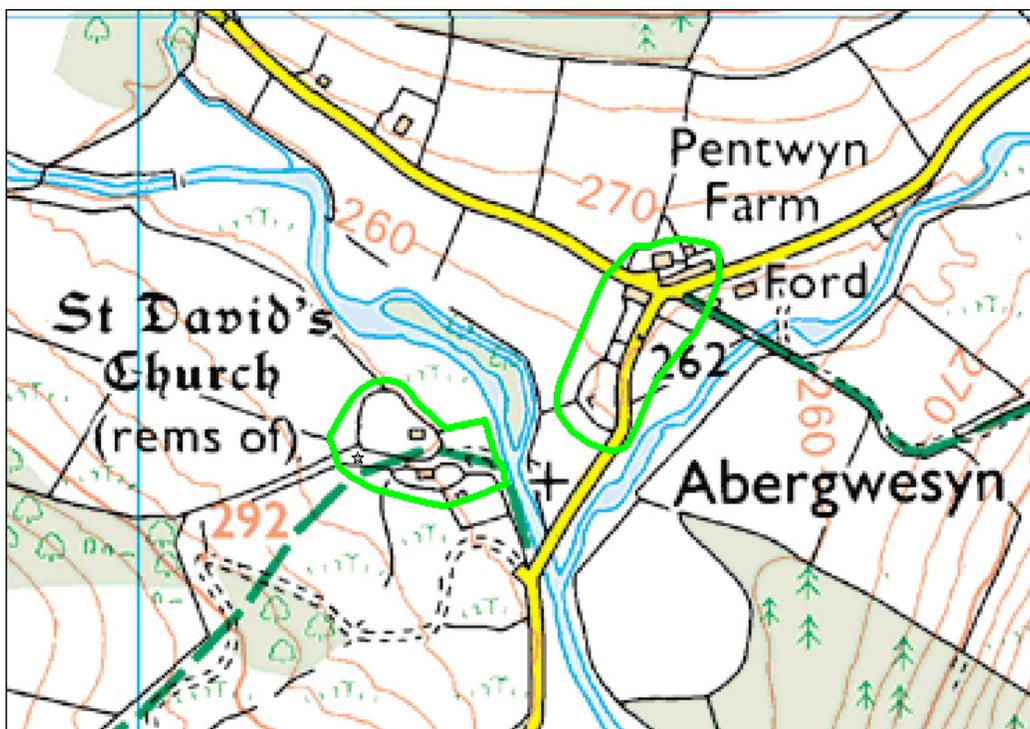
The ruins of St David's Church (1188) stand within the remains of an elongated polygonal churchyard on the west bank of the Irfon river. The church was last used in 1865 and was partially demolished in 1886 against the wishes of the parishioners. The building was a simple, single-cell structure and was presumably of medieval date. It is said to have been the smallest church in the diocese. Its font, too, went to Beulah church, and is thought to be the earlier, perhaps 12<sup>th</sup>-century.

The churchyard (20122) is still contained on the west by a substantial bank and ditch, although this now lies outside the present churchyard wall. The eccentric position of the church suggests that the churchyard may once have been smaller but was enlarged upslope to the west.

It has also been suggested that the southern part of the original churchyard enclosure has been separated off by a trackway and a small dwelling cottage – Irfon Cottage – now occupies the isolated segment (the original bank and ditch still being used as the southern boundary of this property). This is said to have been built in or just before the 1840s. The north-eastern boundary of the churchyard is formed by a substantial river scarp, implying that there may have been some erosion on this side, although the river has now retreated from it.

Ffynnon Ddewi (3453), a holy well, is recorded as being close to Llanddewi Abergwesyn church. Thought to have been lost, it is probably the stone-surrounded spring emerging about 80m to the south-east of the church foundations.

In summary, nothing has yet emerged to suggest that either of these historical places was anything but a church settlement in the Middle Ages and more recently, *i.e* a historic church with perhaps a single dwelling, farm or inn adjacent.



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