

Llanafan Fechan

SN 973503
2568

Introduction

Llanafan Fechan, the name now more commonly contracted to Llanfechan, is a minor settlement comprising a church and a farm lying beside the A483 road on the north side of the Irfon valley. It lies 7km to the west of Builth Wells.

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).

History of development

Llanafan Fechan is a typical isolated church settlement, comprising a church and a single farmstead. It has probably never been significantly larger than it appears today, and has certainly not altered since the time of the 1840 tithe survey.

Documented references to it are late in date. In 1543 it was *Llanavon vechan*, which serves to emphasize its comparatively unimportant status.

The church is dedicated to St Afan and was formerly dependent as a chapelry on one of the mother churches in the area, either Llanafan Fawr or Llangammarch Wells, the former being the more likely. Although there is no positive dating evidence for the founding of the settlement, the sub-circular churchyard and the putative associations with Llanafan Fawr may point to an early medieval origin.

The heritage to 1750

The small church of St. Afan (20138) was completely rebuilt in 1866. The present building comprises an undivided nave and chancel with a northern vestry, southern porch and a small west bellcote. Despite its modern fabric the church is a typical medieval size and plan and probably reflects the footprint of its predecessor. The 14th-century font, within, presumably comes from this earlier building.

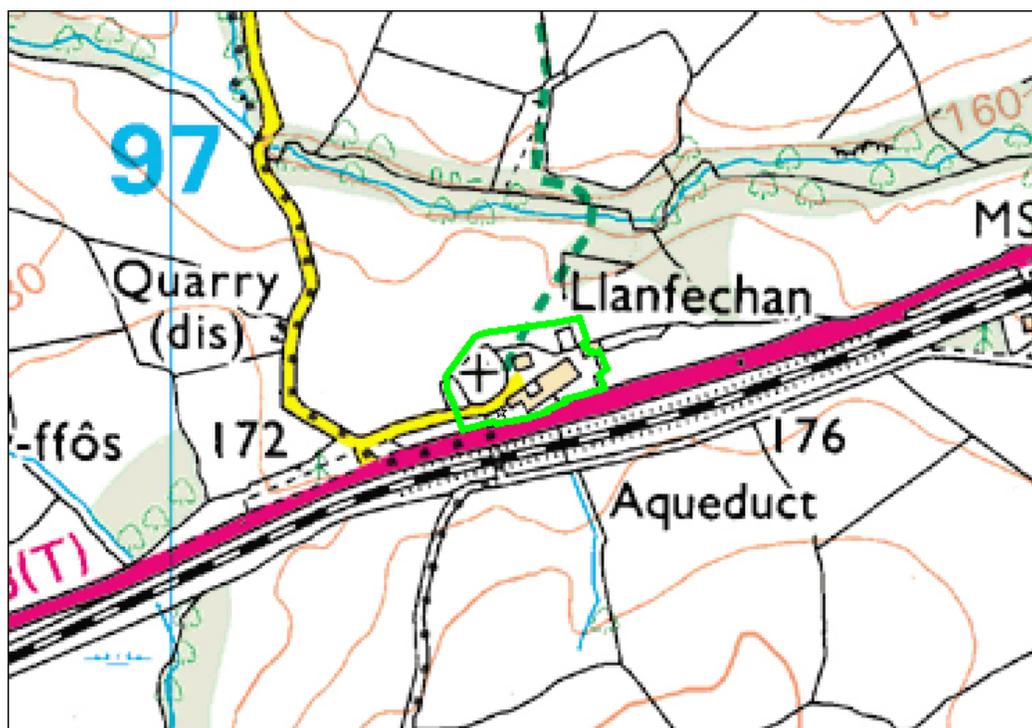
The church stands on a distinctive mound (2972), assumed to be the piled debris of its predecessor, and within a raised, stone-revetted, curvilinear churchyard (2973), perhaps originally some 45m across. The churchyard has been truncated on the west, and the bank defining the isolated segment can still be traced in the adjoining derelict plot. The line of the churchyard bank may also have been straightened on its north side, though no obvious signs of its former line survive in the field bounding the enclosure here.

The church is accompanied by a range of farm buildings and a farmhouse (2974), none of which appears to be earlier than the late 18th century. Some other elements of the earlier settlement pattern, if they existed, are likely to have been removed by the works for the road and railway.

The remains of undated ridge and furrow cultivation (2975) survive in the field immediately north-west of the church and presumably once formed part of a field system for the settlement.

Three isolated house platforms (8357, 8358 and 8359) lie some 150m to the east of Llanafan Fechan. However, these are too far distant to be considered as part of this settlement and presumably represent an isolated farm.

In summary, Llanafan Fechan (otherwise Llanfechan) is a small historic church settlement without any obvious medieval settlement growth around it.



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