

## Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn

SO 114284  
2580

### *Introduction*

Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn is a nucleated village, straddling the B4560 between Brecon and Bwlch. It lies on the north-western slopes of the Llangors basin overlooking the lake of the same name.

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)).



*Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn village, photo 05-C-0092 © CPAT 2011*

### *History of development*

The name Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn means ‘The church of St Michael’s at the head of the lake’, which in turn references its location near Llyn Llangors. As *Lan Mihangel* it first appears around 1100, and (*villa*) *Sancti Michael* is mentioned in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Little is known of the settlement's early history, though the church may be an early medieval foundation, based on its relatively early dedication, its valley-side position and the curvilinearity of its churchyard.

Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn is one of the larger villages studied in this survey, and has what might be called an English rather than a Welsh character. Although it is now of medium size by local standards, it has clearly been larger. Nucleated settlements such as this are a common element of the settlement of the richer lowland areas to the east of Brecon and probably reflect the strong 'English' influence to be found here after the Norman conquest. This influence can also be seen in the medieval street pattern which is typical of many small villages in England.

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

The church of St Michael (20165) was heavily restored in 1870, but the tower and porch of the 15<sup>th</sup> century building were retained, and the nave has even earlier fabric, 14<sup>th</sup>-century or even 13<sup>th</sup>-century perhaps. The church still houses a 12<sup>th</sup>-century font, but there are few other medieval fittings and furnishings.

A roughly cylindrical stone (2375), some 1.5m high, with a square socket in its top surface, stands in the church porch. The origin and purpose of this stone is obscure, though it has generally been thought of as some form of early medieval monument, perhaps an unusual form of cross shaft. The stone stood in the churchyard until 1921.

The church is set within what may be remnants of a sub-oval churchyard up to 50m across (2936), with encroachments on the west and south; this shape strengthens the case for an early medieval origin.

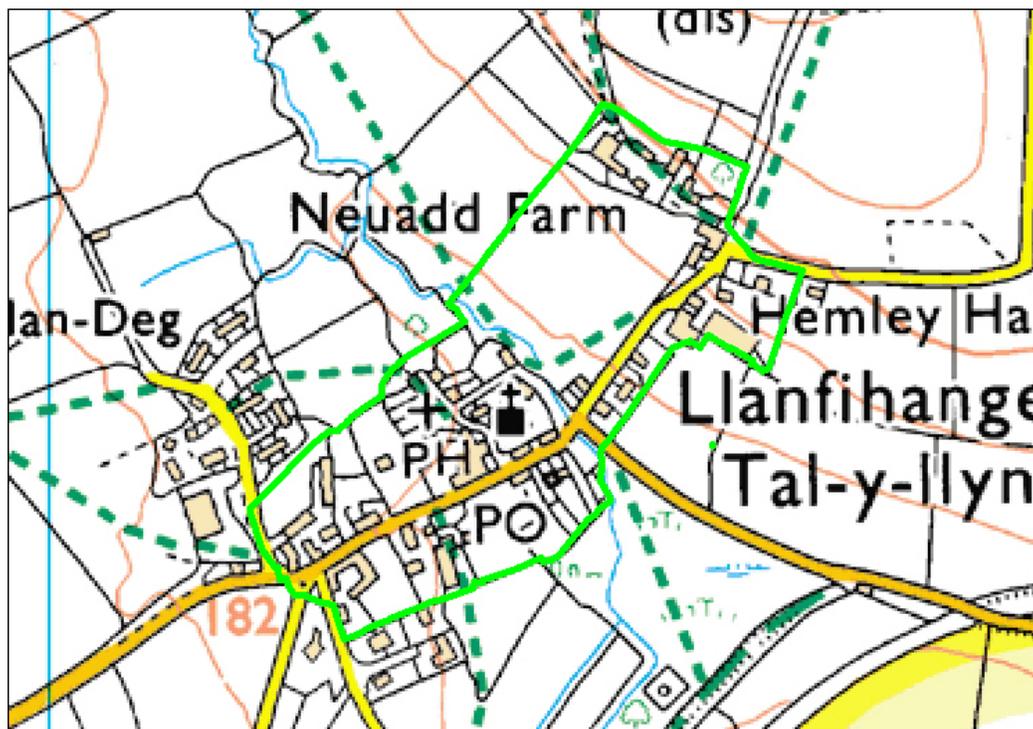
The village appears to have been almost twice its present size in the medieval period. A significant group of building platforms (2937) survives in a field to the north-east of the Tawel Brook which now marks the northern extent of the village. A pronounced holloway drops down the hillside directly towards the church and was still used as a footpath in living memory. Secondary holloways on parallel course lie out to the north-west. At least thirteen building platforms can be identified, most of them adjacent to the main holloway. These platforms are evidently the remains of a deserted part of the former medieval settlement linking the present village to the now outlying farms at Neuadd and Hemley Hall. It is one of the largest areas of deserted medieval settlement in the region.

The village contains a number of post-medieval buildings some of which are of local architectural interest. Neuadd house, for instance, is early 18<sup>th</sup>-century in date, although some earlier 17<sup>th</sup>-century windows at the rear of the house indicate an earlier building. The stone-built Hemley Hall Cottage is a two-roomed 16<sup>th</sup>-century dwelling which retains much of its original plan and fabric.

There is circumstantial evidence that suggests the layout of the village has been altered in the not-too-distant past, probably when Nant Tawel was properly bridged. The main holloway dropping down towards the stream from the north-east and the footpaths shown in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century all converge on a stream crossing about 60m upstream of the present one. This implies that the original lane passed to the north of the churchyard to meet up the modern lane running westwards towards Brecon where the latter suggestively alters its alignment on the edge of the village. On the other hand the main road through the village running south of the church is extremely straight (as is the last section of its counterpart running down the hill from Neuadd), giving the appearance of an insertion in this landscape. The southern edge of the churchyard has been cut back to allow buildings to be inserted between the church and the new road, in one case a school. As to when these changes took place is presently unclear, but a reasonable guess would be in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century.

An area of ridge and furrow (2938) survives to the south-west of the village, and a possible further area to the north (2939), although the latter may alternatively be the earthworks of a former orchard.

In summary, Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn is a significant example of a nucleated settlement in the region, with surviving evidence of medieval dwelling sites on the north-east side of the stream, the church on the south-west side, and the possibility that further settlement occurred on the same bank of the stream as the church, but close to the original lane which passed to the north of the church, rather than to the south which is a more recent creation.



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