

Llangynog

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Introduction

An isolated ruined church with no obvious signs of associated settlement is all that remains of Llangynog. Sited on the western bank of the upper reaches of the Nant Gwyn, adjacent to the B4520 Builth Wells to Brecon road, it is some 6km to the south of Builth.

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).



Remains of Llangynog church, photo 95-C-0399 © CPAT 2011

History of development

Llangynog was formerly the focus of a small ecclesiastical parish to the south of Builth Wells. It is the only obvious, entirely deserted, church settlement in the region, and thus has a high archaeological potential. It has, however, left little impression in the documentary record, and its first appearance seems to be in 1578 as *Capel Cunok*. Nevertheless, it lies within a few

hundred metres of the old road from Builth Wells to Brecon, almost certainly a more important routeway in past times than today.

The church was certainly a medieval foundation if not earlier (see below) but was only a chapel-of-ease to Llanganten. It was little used throughout the 19th century, because of the parish's small population, and last saw worship in October 1956, although elsewhere it is claimed that it was closed for divine service in 1916. It was deconsecrated in 1963 (after which the roof beams, bell and font were removed to Maesmynis church to be used in its refurbishment), and it was subsequently demolished.

The churchyard has a 'characteristically' early medieval form, small and verging on the curvilinear, and it is possible that Llangynog might have emerged as a settlement after this time. There is, though, no direct evidence for medieval or earlier secular settlement around the church, and it is possible that it has always been an isolated structure.

The tithe survey of 1847, which can provide hints of past medieval activity, shows only a single house – Ty-capel – next to the church.

The heritage to 1750

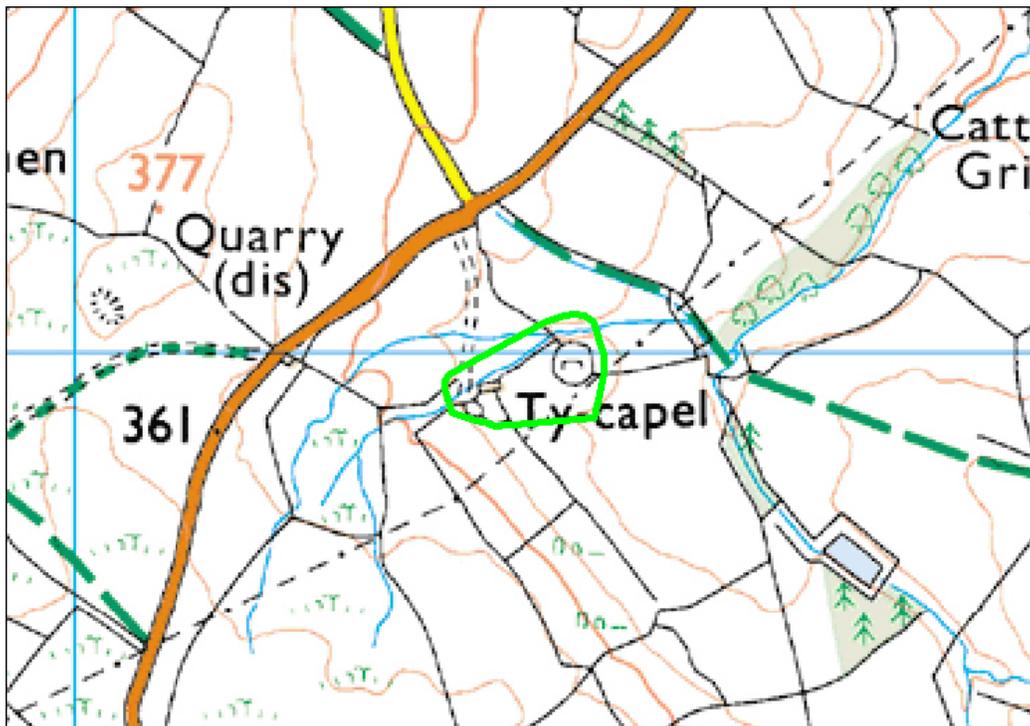
St Cynog's Church (20153) was apparently a small, singled-celled structure of medieval type, although mainly of 17th-century and 18th-century build according to existing records. It was largely rebuilt in 1882. The building does not figure in medieval records and its earliest documented date is 1717, although it is possible that it was of early medieval origin (see below).

The church sits within the remains of a raised sub-circular churchyard (5483), no more than 35m across and contained by a dry-stone revetment wall. This is a characteristically early medieval shape, although there is no corroborative evidence to support such an early origin.

The church lies in what are now improved pasture fields showing no obvious signs of habitation, though three conjoining holloways may hint at a possible focus. One (2679), runs east from the churchyard to a ford across Nant Gwyn, where it joins another (2680) running south-east from the modern road. The third (2681) runs north from the church towards the modern road, and with the other two forms the third side of a rough triangle. While none of these features need necessarily be of any great age (all could be merely field lanes), they could represent the road network of some now vanished former settlement centred on the church. Topographically this area would be well suited for settlement.

Ty-capel (2682), the only building anywhere near the church, was demolished in the second half of the 20th century. It probably dated from the 18th century, as a date of 1753 was incised on the fireplace lintel.

In the absence of any substantive evidence to the contrary, Llangynog may be seen as a church settlement serving the dispersed community in the area, though future work might modify this view.



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