

Llanefydd

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Introduction

Llanefydd (and also Llanefydd as given by the Ordnance Survey) lies at the junction of a number of minor roads four miles south-west of St Asaph. The village is situated on a north-facing gentle slope in an upland area to the south of the River Elwy. It is overlooked by Mynydd y Gaer hillfort to the north-west.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanefydd 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 require modification 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

Interpreted as the ‘church of Ufydd’, Llanefydd is first recorded as *Llanuvyth* in 1256, *Lanvddud* in 1329, *Llanvydd* in 1511 and *Llanefidd* in 1704-5, but as *Llanefydd* in 1679.

The village is named after St Nefydd. Traditionally the church was founded by Nefydd in the 5th century, but according to Archdeacon Thomas the St Asaph diocesan historian writing at the end of the 19th century, it was later re-built on a spot further south and re-dedicated in the name of St Mary the Virgin. However, Owen and Morgan, the modern place-name specialists have pointed out that the association with Nefydd is a relatively modern one, as revealed by the name variants given above, and they also cite the fact that Ffynnon Nefydd (for which see below) was termed *Fynnon Yvydh* by Edward Lhuyd’s respondent at the end of the 17th century. It should be pointed out, too, that Thomas’ argument for the existence of an original chapel further to the north and close to the holy well (see below) was based solely on the field name *Pant yr Hen Eglwys* which cannot be traced in the main mid-19th-century source, the tithe schedule; the suggestion then cannot be disproved, but the existing evidence is slight.

Of the village’s original size and form nothing is known, but by the end of the 17th century there were six houses around the church according to Edward Lhuyd’s respondent. A more vivid impression is provided by an estate map of 1734, a relatively rare occurrence in this region at this time. This shows a near D-shaped churchyard (which may be a reasonably accurate representation), a dwelling in its own enclosure that was attached to the north side of the churchyard (still there but probably derelict by the time of the first large-scale Ordnance Survey map in 1874/5) and beyond this a small common with a few other houses around it, the remnants of which were still apparent in the 19th century though in a less cohesive form. There were also several houses and ancillary buildings to the east of the church and beside the lane heading up from the south.

Modern housing has been added to the north-west end of the village, but other than this, the village has hardly changed since the Tithe survey of 1844.



Llanefydd cross base, photo 3053-0011 © CPAT 2014

The heritage to 1750

St Mary's Church (101993), dedicated to St Nefydd and St Mary, is double-naved and of Perpendicular design. The northern nave is perhaps the earlier of the two. The south porch has a cyclopean inner doorway reconstructed in the early 18th century. There is a double western bellcote on the south nave, apparently renewed in the 1859 restoration. The roofs remain from the late medieval period, there are sepulchral slab fragments from the earlier 14th century, stained glass fragments of late medieval appearance, a small font bearing the date 1668, a 17th-century altar table and an 18th-century poor box, and various wall memorials from the early 17th century onwards.

The raised churchyard (105537) is relatively small and polygonal in shape, but its curving wall on the north-east side might indicate an early circular churchyard. It contains the base and shaft of a medieval cross, which has travelled around the village, having been in the centre of the village at the junction of the Llansannan and Denbigh roads before migrating to the grounds of the vicarage in 1871 and then moving to the churchyard in the 20th century. It is not clear whether it was a churchyard or a village cross when it was first erected in the Middle Ages.

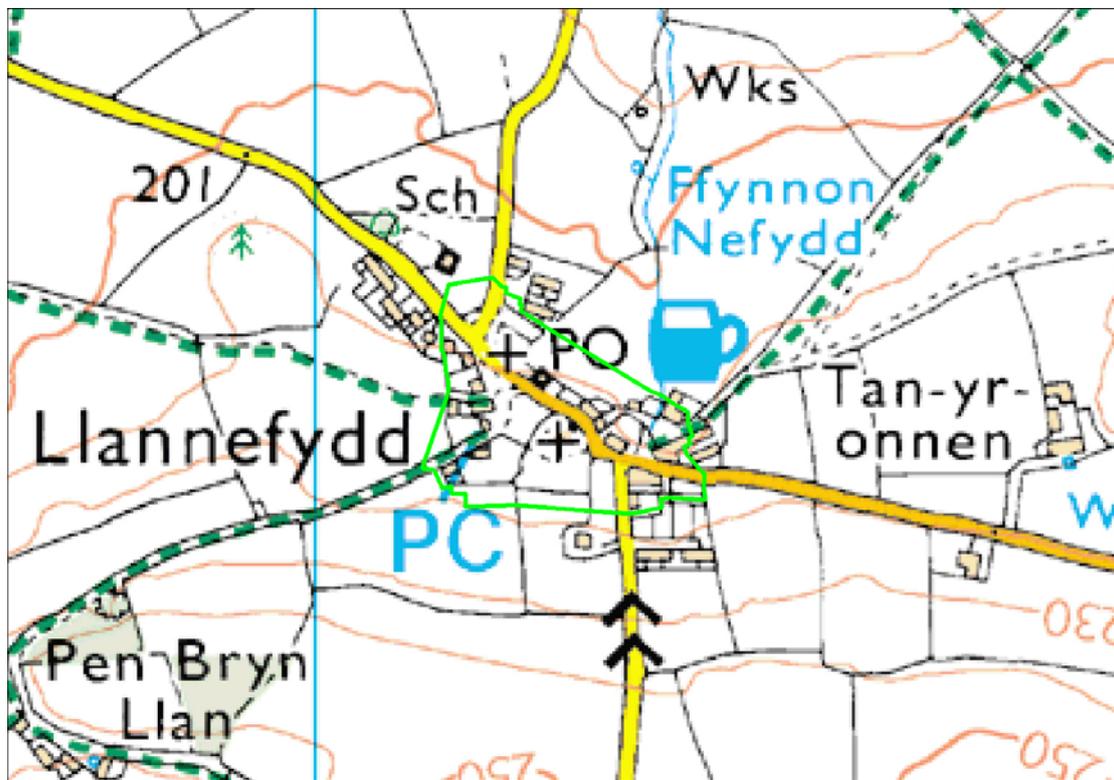
A feature known as *Bedd Ffrymden* or 'Ffrymden's Grave' is described in the church history pamphlet as a circular ditch, with stones set on their ends around the grave. The site was said to have been cleared in the 1890s, but was located at 'the back of the churchyard'. No surface traces are now evident. The antiquary Richard Fenton at the beginning of the 19th century claimed it was 'near' the churchyard and surrounded by yews, and that Frymden was reputed

to be a saint. Almost all of this information first surfaced in the Edward Lhuyd's *Parochialia* which was compiled in the two to three years of the 17th century.

In the village centre the majority of the houses are stone-built, and of 18th or 19th-century date, though there is every likelihood that they occupy the sites of earlier buildings.

Ffynnon Nefydd (101436), potentially to be considered as a holy well is a spring less than 300m to the north of the church. Even in 1912 it was considered 'neglected' and despite its name it appears to have attracted little attention since. When visited in 2003 the site had been grassed over and there was no visible trace of it, although a local source suggests that it once took the form of a bath and had a wall built around it by the vicar in 1604.

In the pasture field between the churchyard and Tynrhwyll is a possible building platform (105536), close to the churchyard wall. One platform is insufficient to signal a shrunken settlement but it is an unusual presence in eastern Conwy.



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