

Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr

SH 9896 4940
105503

Introduction

Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr is situated on the B5105, three and three quarter miles east of Cerrigydrudion, a small settlement amongst high hills covered in rough pasture. The modern village which appears to go by the name of Bro Alwen is situated on rising ground on the western flank of the River Alwen. The river here flows through a steep-sided narrow valley, wooded and craggy on its north bank, a high bridge spanning the river below Bro Alwen and accompanied by the Crown Inn. The church, together with one or two old houses, lies beside the river amongst flat low-lying pasture fields, a couple of hundred metres upstream of the bridge.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr 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

The English translation is the ‘church of Michael in the valley of Myfyr’. In the Norwich Taxation of 1254, the church was recorded as *Llanwihagel* and in the 1290s as *Lamyangel*. *Llanvyhangell Llenmyvyr* is documented in 1388 but in 1614 it is *Llanvihangell llyn Myver*, the ‘llyn’ element supposedly reflecting the pool formed by the river downstream of the bridge, as explained in a document of around 1700. Subsequently, ‘llyn’ changed to ‘glyn’ as the need for a qualifier, to distinguish this from other Llanfihangels in the region.

Nothing is known of the origin and early history of the settlement: we may assume an early medieval church here based on both the dedication and the form and location of the churchyard but there is nothing to convince us that a settlement developed around it. And Edward Lhuyd’s respondent claimed that there were only two houses by the church in 1699.

At the time of the 1841 Tithe schedule, the settlement was considerably smaller, consisting of the church and a few homesteads north-west of the bridge, one or two buildings (presumably the Crown Inn) at the north end of the bridge, and a further couple (including the chapel) along the roads south of the bridge. The whole of the area of Bro Alwen was undeveloped. Dolhyfryd, some distance east of the bridge, may be the site of a mill: it was described as ‘Cae du factory’ and the field between it and the bridge was ‘Dol y felin’.

Collectively the evidence of the few historic maps available reveals a changing landscape. The B5105 as it nears Llanfihangel is a 19th-century creation, emphasising that Bro Alwen is essentially a modern creation. The original lane (shown on Evans' map of 1795) was the green lane running off the modern road, west of Ty-isa, south-eastwards towards Ty-ucha and Ty-celyn before swinging to the north-east and picking up the minor lane dropping down the hill to the earlier bridging point of the Alwen. In doing so it also emphasises the isolation of Llanfihangel church. There is a further point, focusing on the Alwen itself. The river between the bridge and the church and beyond is remarkably straight in a watercourse that meanders so much in this area – its deliberate canalisation, though, seems unlikely, if only because it is difficult to conceive of a reason why it should have been undertaken. An earlier course or courses lay further south for a substantial river terrace is followed by a sinuous linear corridor immediately to the north of Bryn-hâr Farm. The period when the Alwen created this terrace could have been thousands of years ago, yet it could also have been in historic times, leaving the possibility, which can be no more than speculation, that the church originally lay on the north side of the river.



Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr, photo 95-C-0248 © CPAT 2014

The heritage to 1750

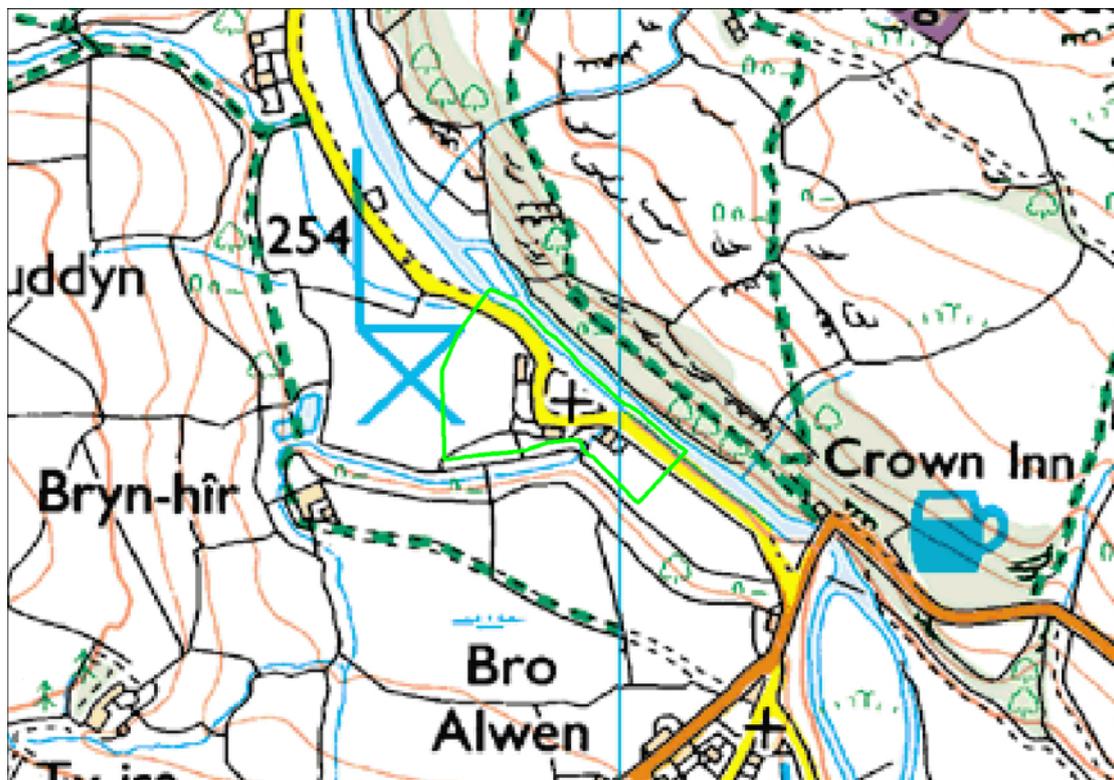
St Michael's church (105459) is single-chambered, with a long history which on the basis of two blocked windows could have commenced in the 13th century. An eastern extension to the building is probably contemporary with the 15th or early 16th-century arched-braced trusses of its roof. The church was apparently extended slightly westwards at the beginning of the 20th century. The west gallery remains, incorporating re-used 17th-century altar rails, but apart from one or two other furnishings there is little of any age that has survived.

The churchyard (105529) is rounded at its western end and together with the river on its north-eastern side creates a D-shaped enclosure, sufficient to suggest an early medieval origin for Llanfihangel.

Tan Llan (105530) beside the church is built of whitewashed rubble stone and is probably of 17th-century origin, although it shows later alterations from the 20th century. The Crown Inn (105531), down river, is stone-built and whitewashed and of late 18th- or early 19th-century construction, though not sufficiently architecturally distinctive to determine which. It boasts a detached stable building.

The bridge over the Alwen adjacent to which the Crown Inn stands, was constructed very late in the 18th century, probably in 1797 or soon after, replacing a bridge that was slightly downstream. It has a single arch and is considered to be a fine example of its type.

The oldest of the buildings in the centre of the village appear to be 18th- and 19th-century whitewashed stone dwellings, entirely in keeping with the evidence of road changes presented above.



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