

Llysfaen

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Introduction

Llysfaen lies less than a mile from the North Wales coast, and approximately a mile and a half south-east of Old Colwyn. The older part of the settlement, with houses strung out at intervals, is located around the fringes of Mynydd Marian, a limestone hill with an old Telegraph station on its summit. The church and the centre of the present-day village lie at the north-east corner of Mynydd Marian, just below its summit. Large estates of more modern housing extend eastwards towards Llanddulas. To the north and north-east of Llysfaen are huge areas of limestone quarries.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llysfaen 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 place-name can be translated as ‘stone court’, with the earliest reference in 1254 being to *Lleswaen*. *Lisnaen* is given in 1291, *Lessemeyr* in 1316 and *Lesmaen* in 1334. 1737 sees the appearance of the modern name. An alias reflects the church dedication. In 1545 or soon after, there is a reference to *ll. Gynfran ne llysvaen* and in 1559 *Llysvaen in Llangenvrayn*.

The development of Llysfaen through the Middle Ages and into the Tudor era remains obscure. There are no hints that a nucleated village emerged during these times and in the Survey of the Honour of Denbigh of 1334, Llysfaen is mentioned only in reference to a mill. Considerably later, in 1699, Edward Lhuyd’s respondent revealed that there were only two or three houses near the church, and by Samuel Lewis’ time (1833) only five.

The 1839 Tithe map shows a sizeable area of unenclosed common land on the top of Mynydd Marian and leading from this, three roads to the north, two to the south, one to the east and one out to the west towards Ty Mawr. Along the north edge of the common stand the church, vicarage and several other buildings. To the north of these were a strikingly large number of long narrow strip fields running north-west to south-east, described as quilllets in the apportionment. These no longer exist. On the south edge of the common were a number of farms and cottages. Fields were small and irregular in shape. Two smaller areas of common formerly existed south of Mynydd Marian.

The heritage to 1750

St Cynfran's church (100466) lies just below the summit of Mynydd Marian, at the junction of the road up from Llanddulas and that from Penmaen Rhos and Old Colwyn. Like so many other churches in the area, it is a double-naved structure, the northern nave being the earlier, possibly 13th-century, with a narrower east end that may represent an intermediate extension, before the construction of the south nave in the 14th century. There is a cyclopean south doorway. The church was drastically restored in 1870. The south porch, west bellcote and all the windows belong to this restoration. Inside some late medieval roof timbers have been re-used, and a few panels from the rood screen have been preserved. Otherwise of a pre-Victorian age there are only a few wall memorials of 17th- and early 18th-century origin.

There is the possibility of a former circular churchyard (105538) at Llysfaen, with a scarp bank forming a platform around the northern side of the church. The present graveyard is rectilinear and of moderate size, and contains a sundial dated to 1731.

The oldest secular buildings lie at some distance from the centre of the settlement. Ty Mawr (105539) out to the west of the church by about 900m, is an end-chimney house, uncharacteristic of the locality, which can be attributed to the second half of the 16th century, with 17th-century alterations that included the sub-division of an open upper hall. Plas yn Llysfaen (105540) 800m to the south-east is mainly early 19th-century in date, but has a 17th-century north-west wing.

In the village itself, none of the standing houses looks to be any earlier than 19th-century in date, though they may occupy the sites of earlier houses.

Ffynnon Cynfran (100465) lies about 90m to the north of church and is 2.2m in diameter and when seen in the 1980s it was filled with sludge to ground level. It is still partly surrounded by a semi-circular dry-stone wall, and in 2011 could be seen to contain water though it was vegetation covered. This might be thought to be a holy well, but it was ignored by Francis Jones, the leading authority on Welsh wells in the second half of the 20th century. Archdeacon Thomas at the end of the 19th century, however, detailed how local people resorted to the well to seek a blessing for their cattle on the saint's day.



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