

Llanrhudd (Llanrhydd)

SJ 1399 5775
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Introduction

The church settlement of Llanrhudd occupies level ground beside a minor lane 1.5km to the east of Ruthin. In this neighbourhood the Clwyd follows a course on the western side of the vale, but a series of tributary streams, the chief amongst them being Dwr Ial, converge in the vicinity of Llanrhudd, passing the church little more than 100m to the east, with the building and its graveyard deliberately sited on the lip of a gentle river terrace.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanrhudd up to the year 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it might be necessary to look at other sources of information and in particular 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

Also reportedly known in the past as Llanfeugan, Llanrhudd (or Llanrhydd) was the parent church for newly established Ruthin, and appears as *Ecclesia de Lanruth* in the Norwich Taxation of 1254, a form which with minor variations continued through the later Middle Ages and into the post-Reformation era. The growth of the town, however, effectively marginalised the older settlement (assuming there was one), the church's value in 1291 was only £5, and there is no mention of it in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535 when it was presumably subsumed in the reckoning of the town. It is generally assumed that the second syllable of the name is the adjective 'rhudd' meaning 'red' or 'brown', referring to the colour of the building stone, but does not explain why the original dedication did not survive in the place-name.

The church is supposed to have been founded by St Meugan in the 6th century, though this dedication is really the only tangible evidence of an early medieval (i.e. pre-Conquest) origin. The nature and scale of any earlier settlement around it has not yet been determined. By the middle of the 19th century Llanrhudd consisted solely of the church together with Plas Llanrhydd and the mill, and from this it might be inferred, though with no great certainty, that there was never a nucleated settlement here. Nevertheless it retained its own identity with the ecclesiastical parish surviving to the end of the 19th century.

The heritage to 1750

Llanrhudd church (19798) is dedicated to St Meugan. It is single-chambered with the earliest surviving fabric perhaps 15th-century in origin with a single Perpendicular window surviving in the north wall, and a broadly contemporary south door and porch. Some restoration may have taken place in 1626 and in 1852 it was restored by a Victorian architect who retained more of the old building than some of his contemporaries would have done. Inside is a late

medieval rood screen, some fragments of stained glass from the 15th or 16th century, a succession of monuments from the late 16th century onwards, a plain font and a 17th-century altar table.

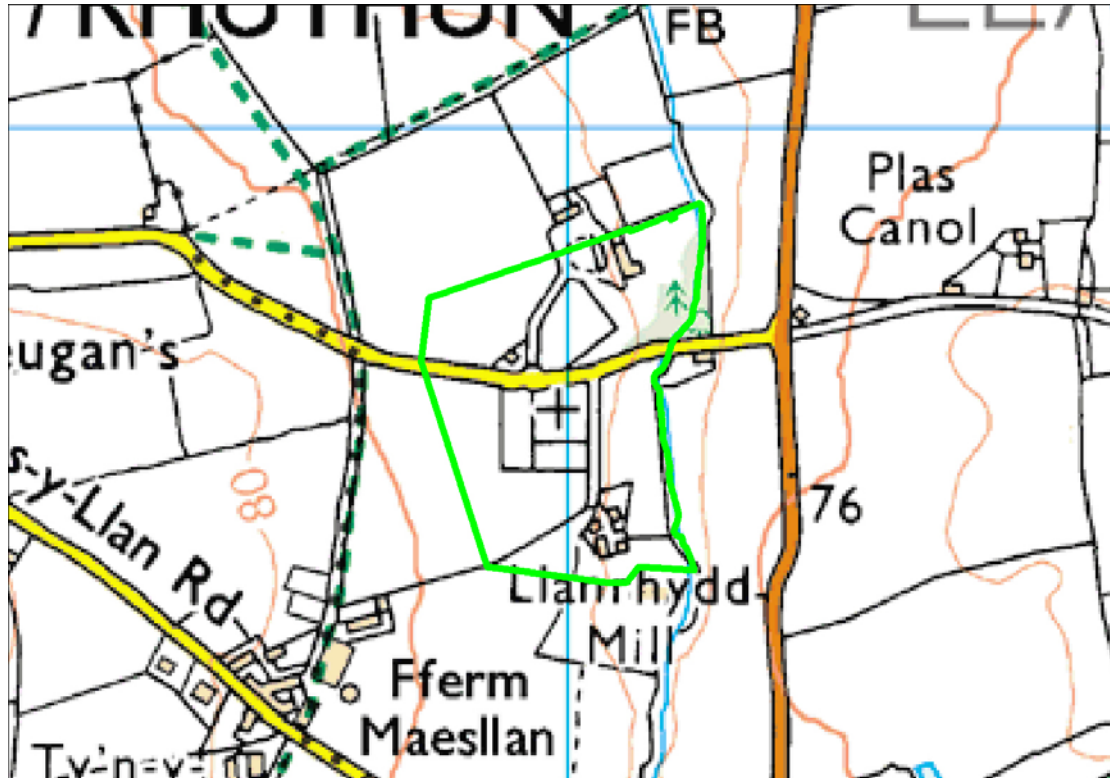


Llanrhudd Church and churchyard cross, photo 3053-0001, © CPAT 2014

The churchyard (19799) is rectangular and there is nothing to suggest that there was an earlier curvilinear 'llan'. An elaborate churchyard cross, one of the more notable Denbighshire crosses but now reduced to a decorated shaft and a socket stone, stands beyond the south door of the church.

Llanrhydd Hall on the north side of the lane opposite the church is a small gentry house with 16th or early 17th-century origins as a timber-framed building. It was extended and partly encased in brick in the early 18th century, with further alterations in the second quarter of the 19th century. In 1703 it was the home of the High Sheriff of Denbighshire. For Llanrhydd Mill, the only other building in the settlement, we have not been able to establish any details of its history, though an estate map of around 1720 confirms its existence at that time.

Though the surviving evidence is slight, there can be little doubt taking early maps and aerial photographs in conjunction that open fields lay in the immediate vicinity of the settlement in the medieval era. It is unclear, however, whether these could be the fields farmed from Ruthin or from a settlement, now lost, at Llanrhydd itself.



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