

Llanychan

SJ 1147 6211
105985

Introduction

Llanychan lies in the centre of the Vale of Clwyd, little more than one kilometre from Llanynys and nearly 8km south-east of Denbigh, with the B5429 passing through this church settlement. The church itself is set on the edge of the river terrace created by the River Clwyd, and a distinct drop to the valley floor is discernible beyond the churchyard wall. Behind the churchyard the ground levels out and then continues to rise gently towards the Clwydians.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanychan 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

The first reference to the church and thus to the settlement is in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 when it is referred to as *Ecclesia de Lanaban*. Three centuries later the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* named it as *Llan Hichen*. Hychan is claimed as a 5th-century saint, one of the family of Brychan, eponymous founder of Brycheiniog, and this is only one of two churches dedicated to him, the other being in Llanfarian, just south of Aberystwyth. No explanation has been given as to why an otherwise obscure south Walian saint should have a church dedicated to him in the Vale of Clwyd.

The dedication together with the shape of the churchyard and its location imply that the church was an early medieval foundation. According to Archdeacon Thomas writing at the end of the 19th century the church was supported by the smallest parish in the diocese of St Asaph, a mere 567 acres.

But such passing references apart, there is nothing to inform us of how this church settlement might have developed.

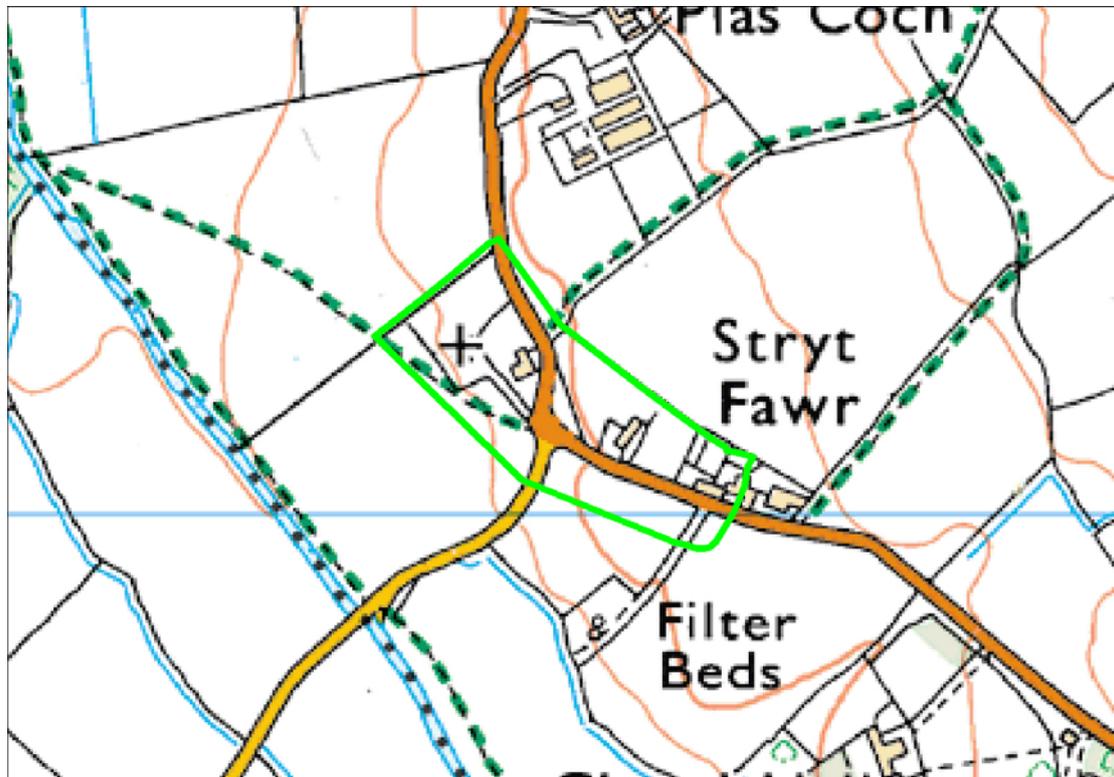
An estate map of 1785 and the Tithe map in the mid-19th century present a consistent picture of a settlement comprising the church and two nearby farms, and with the exception of the school introduced in 1866 is as it is today.

The heritage to 1750

The small church (105913) of St Ychan (Hychan) consists of a single chamber with a Perpendicular west doorway, but otherwise little else of obvious medieval interest, most of the walls having been rebuilt in later centuries. Internally most furnishings are 18th-century (the reading desk, the altar rails) or later, although fragments of pre-Reformation woodwork from the roof have been reused. The church was restored in 1877/8.

The churchyard (19797) is virtually D-shaped, but is sufficiently curvilinear on one side – the north-west – to suggest that originally there was a curvilinear 'llan' here.

Nothing else of archaeological or historic interest has been recognised in the immediate vicinity of the church. The age of Stryt Fawr and Stryt Fach has not been determined, although both were in existence in the second half of the 18th century. The field systems as shown on the earliest available large-scale maps from the late 18th century hint at former medieval open fields, subsequently fossilised as strips through enclosure, but nowhere near Llanychan is the pattern particularly distinctive.



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