

LLANIGON

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Introduction

Llanigon lies on a by-road 3km south of Hay-on-Wye and within 200m of the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The churchyard is set on a spur on the western edge of the small valley containing the Dgedi Brook which empties into the River Wye just under 2km to the north-west. Southwards the ground rises towards the Black Mountains.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanigon 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 need to be modified 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

Sancto Egnon referring to St Eigon's church first appears between 1148 and 1155. By the time of Pope Nicholas' Taxation in 1291 we read of *Llaneygan*. Llanigon represents the anglicized spelling of the place-name.

The church dedication, the morphology of the churchyard and its location beside the Dgedi Brook all point to an early medieval foundation here.

But nothing is known of the settlement's history, though some relationship with the motte at Llanthomas 700m down the Dgedi Brook seems assured. It is possible that for centuries there was nothing more than the church here, but equally a small community may have developed of which no traces can be detected. Certainly Llanigon functioned within the Englishry of Hay and small blocks of strip fields existed nearby, suggesting medieval open-field agriculture and perhaps signifying the existence of a nucleated community here in the Middle Ages.

The heritage to 1750

The present church sits on a slight mound. Much of the building fabric may date to the 13th or 14th century, but only one medieval window survives. A curiosity is the bell chamber over the porch, almost certainly from 1670. The church was restored in 1857 when the east end was rebuilt and there was significant restoration after damage during the second world war. In the porch is a 13th-century font, and the three bells above are dated to 1670. But otherwise little in the way of furnishing and fittings has remained from the pre-Victorian m, era.

The churchyard may originally have been more circular than it is today, but only the north-east side now has a curve to it; on the Tithe Map of 1844 both north and east sides are arced, but this may be no more than a cartographic convention.

St Eigon's well lies on the opposite side of the Digedi Brook to the church. Nothing is known of its past history and unlike many holy wells it was not recorded on early Ordnance Survey maps, nor was it mentioned by Lewis in 1833.



Llanigon, photo 00-c-0102 © CPAT, 2013

The layout of Llanigon is intriguing. It seems likely that the lane passing south-east of the church and fording the brook by Ty-mawr marks an original thoroughfare through the village. It passed what in the 19th century was the specialist part of the village – the church, vicarage, inn, school and major farm – and then curved back up the hill beside the Digedi Brook where there were ordinary dwellings, more between the lane and the stream than there are today (and in passing it appears too that the stream's course was altered in the second half of the 19th century with the old channel being converted to a leat to feed the mill at Ty Mawr and a new channel being cut for the brook which must have destroyed some of the buildings mentioned above). The buildings terminated with a mill (now the Old Mill) but the lane carried on up the valley. William Rees recorded a mill here in the 14th century, but considerably more work would be required to demonstrate that it was at this spot.

Another lane ran down the hill towards Llanthomas linking the village with Hay by means of an old road from Talgarth and Hay that ran along the base of the higher ground.

On the buildings referred to above, there is information only on those around the church. Ty-mawr to the east of the church is half-timbered and of late 16th- or early 17th-century date. The Old Post Office west of the churchyard dates to the late 18th century, while the adjacent house carries a datestone of 1692.

A watching brief at Church House immediately to the north-west of the churchyard in 1997 recovered late medieval pottery sherds, indicating some level of activity in the area around the church at that time.

There are few traces of any settlement earthworks in the fields south and west of the church. A small platform of uncertain function survives in the field next to St Igon's Villas.

Llanthomas lies at some distance but is mentioned here because of its significance. Not only does it have a motte from the early days of the Norman Conquest, but in the Tudor era its 'ancient mansion' (as Samuel Lewis called it in 1833) was owned by Walter Deveraux, the Lord Chief Justice of South Wales.



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