

LLANILLTYD

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Introduction

Llanilltyd lies on Mynydd Illtyd, about 8km to the south-west of Brecon. It is located within the parish of Defynnog. The church occupies a remote spot on an undulating ridge between the valleys of the Usk and Afon Tarell, with boggy moorland to the west and the major peaks of the Brecon Beacons forming a backdrop to the south.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanilltyd 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

The name refers to the church of St Illtyd, for there is nothing else other than a farm here. It was apparently recorded as *Eglwysceyll* in the 14th century and as *Capel ylldyt* on Christopher Saxton's map of 1579. An estate map of c.1781 shows it as *Illtid Chapel*.

Tradition has it that this was the site where the 5th-century saint was martyred and then buried. There is no means of substantiating the tradition, and similarly it is impossible to demonstrate that this was an early medieval foundation, likely as it seems.

Its history through the Middle Ages is likely to be that of a remote chapel on an isolated upland above the Usk valley, but one traversed by a Roman road still in use which may have made access easier for it was no more than 500m away. That settlement ever developed around it seems unlikely.

Its status as a chapel was never enhanced to that of a parish church and it remained as a chapel-of-ease in the parish of Defynnog until 1887 when the parish of Llanilltyd came into existence.

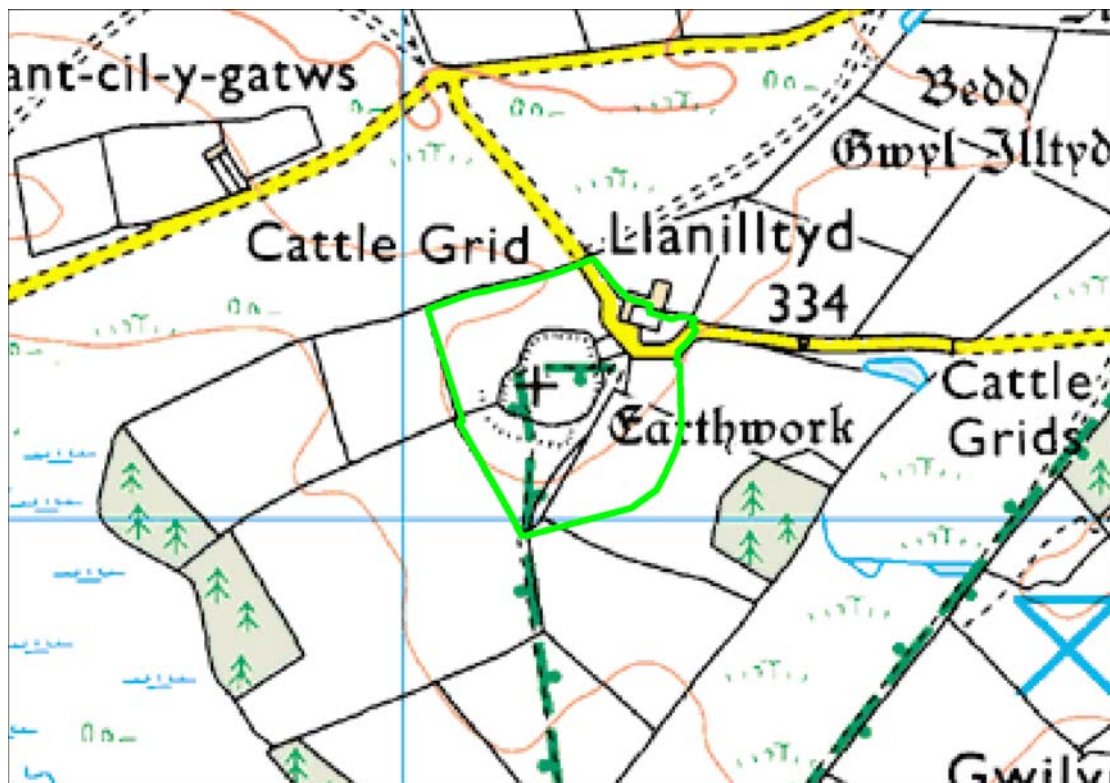
The heritage to 1750

St Illtyd's church was rebuilt in 1858 and nothing of its predecessor remains, although a medieval date seems likely. In the 1990s, its deteriorating condition led to it being demolished to wall-stub height, so that now only the outline remains.

The churchyard, sub-circular in outline, displays a complex pattern of earthworks which are almost certainly late prehistoric in origin. Llanilltyd is thus a good example of the early medieval re-use of a pre-existing enclosure as a church enclosure and presumably burial ground, a labour-saving approach well-evidenced in south-west England, less so in Wales.

The farm of Llanilltyd, the only companion to the church, is a late 18th- or 19th-century addition to the landscape. An estate map of 1781 shows the church without the neighbouring farm which must have originated as an encroachment on the surrounding common. The situation is confused, however, by the Royal Commission's record which claims that the barn is earlier, dated to 1761, while the adjacent byre is from 1830.

Llanilltyd represents one of the best examples in the Brecon Beacons National Park of an isolated chapel serving a dispersed farming community.



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