

## Clocaenog

**SJ 0835 5414**  
**105951**

### *Introduction*

Clocaenog lies in the hills that border the valley of the River Clwyd on its western side, about 6km south-west of Ruthin. Nant-du, a stream that has carved a moderately deep but gently sloping cleft through the hills, runs eastwards, joining other streams before swinging north on its way to join the Clwydog. Part of the village lies beside the stream, but the church and some dwellings occupy higher ground looking down onto the valley. To the south-east lies Cefn Cloion, a tract of upland that for long remained common.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Clocaenog 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](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).

### *History of development*

The first documented reference to Clocaenog, and this to its church rather than the settlement itself, is in 1254 when *Colocaynauc* is recorded, followed by *Clocaynauc* in 1266 and *Clocaenok* in 1349. The name incorporates two elements, *clog* and *caenog*, which collectively mean something akin to 'lichen-encrusted rock or knoll'.

Nothing is known of the beginnings or subsequent development of the settlement. The dedication of the church might be a pointer to an early medieval origin, but there is little else to corroborate such an early beginning. Its development through the medieval and later centuries is uncharted, but from earlier maps (from the 19<sup>th</sup> century) we can infer that the church was at a distance from the gradually expanding settlement which lay on the valley floor to the east.

According to Samuel Lewis in 1833 Clocaenog was almost completely 'surrounded by unproductive and widely extended heaths'.

From earlier maps (from the 19<sup>th</sup> century) we can infer that the church was at a distance from the gradually expanding settlement which lay to the east. In 1841 the village sheltered in the valley bottom while the church on the higher ground above was accompanied by no more than two houses, and from this it might be inferred that any medieval or early post-medieval settlement is perhaps unlikely to have been around the church. Only in the relatively recent past has infilling led to the space between the two being closed.

### ***The heritage to 1750***

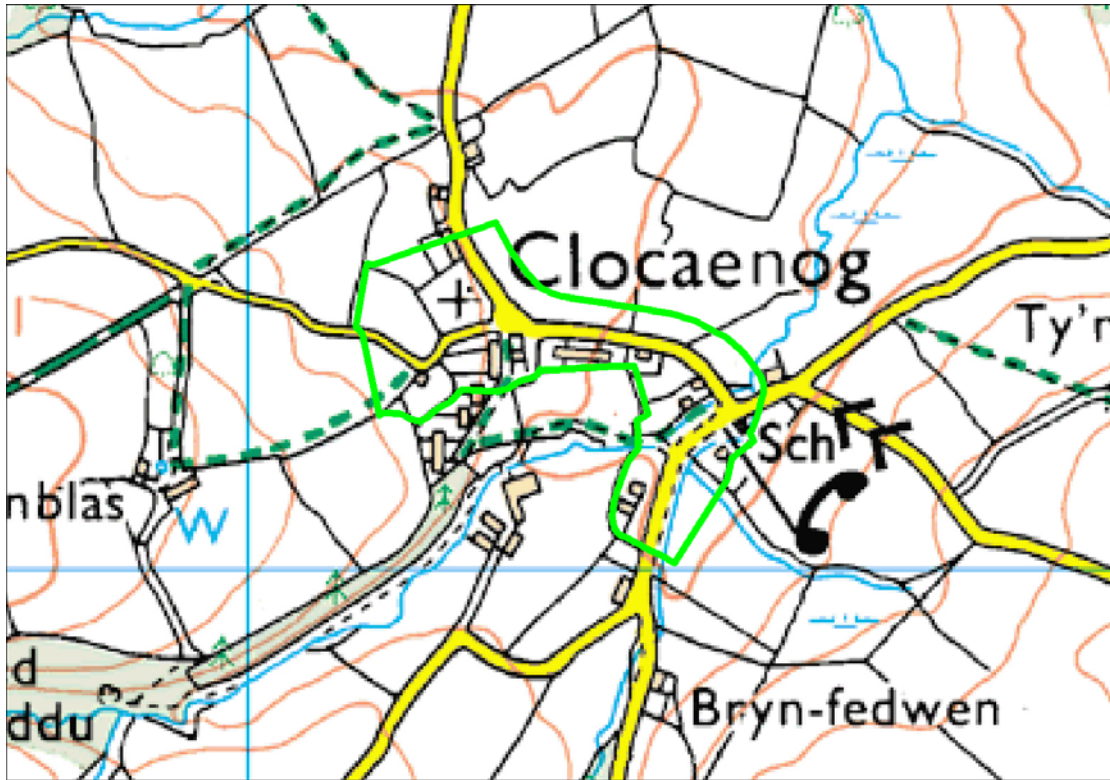
The church (100765) consists of a single chamber with a west bellcote, and may have some masonry of medieval date. The east window is said to have once carried the date of 1538, though this is no longer visible. The church was restored in 1856 and again in 1882, and during the latter wall paintings were exposed but not preserved. The font is considered to be 15<sup>th</sup> century, there are 16<sup>th</sup>-century fragments of stained glass, a wooden chandelier of 1725 and a pulpit of 1695, while outside fragments of a Romanesque shrine, presumably 12<sup>th</sup> century or a little later, are built into the bellcote.

Changes in the dedication of the church are a cause of confusion. The Ordnance Survey give it as St Trillo's which concurs with the past view of the parish authorities, and this gels with what Samuel Lewis recorded in 1833. But Edward Hubbard names it as St Foddhyd's (confusingly also known as St Meddvyth, a daughter of St Idloes) and in this respect follows Archdeacon Thomas, the leading, 19<sup>th</sup>-century authority on the diocese of St Asaph. A cleric in Bangor expressed a wish to be buried in the church of *Sancte Medwide Virginis* in 1530. A note in the church additionally raises the spectre of an imaginary and wholly unattested St Caenog – this can be discarded. Today it is known as St Foddhyd's in the diocese.

The churchyard (19729) is rectangular, with a modern extension to the west; there is no evidence to suggest a different shape at any time in the past.

Small cottages of uncertain age but probably no earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> century lie close to the church. Ty-isaf for instance is identified as a building remodelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> or even the 20<sup>th</sup> century from an earlier house, but with a spurious date inscription of '1511' cut into the mantel beam of the fireplace; it was derelict when visited by the Royal Commission in 2003. There is also an intriguing mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century record of a large old building, 'Ty-mawr', within the village which traditionally was a residence of the Bishops of Bangor. A large quadrangular building enclosing a courtyard, it had been replaced by a cottage and a smithy by 1856, and its site is now, and perhaps surprisingly, impossible to pinpoint. A cruck-framed, hall-house known as Paradwys stands on the south edge of the settlement on the opposite side of the stream from the church; not dated in the NMR, it is presumably sub-medieval.

No earthworks of any significance have been recognised in Clocaenog. An archaeological watching brief in 2001 at Bryn-Ilan on the north-eastern edge of the churchyard identified nothing of interest.



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2014. All rights reserved. Welsh Assembly Government. Licence number 100017916.