

Llanferres

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Introduction

Llanferres has developed on the eastern dip slope of the Clwydian range where the River Alun cut deeply into the hillside on its course northwards. Sheltered by the hills to the west, the village itself occupies a gently sloping ledge, before the land drops away more steeply eastwards to the river. The settlement lies on what is now the A494 trunk road linking Mold 6km to the north-east with Ruthin 7km to the south-west.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanferres 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 earliest reference – almost inevitably to the church – is in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 where *Lanwertey*s is encountered. *Lanuerr[es]* appears in 1283 and *Lanverreys* in the later taxation of 1291. Later variations are similar except for a document of 1699 which gives *Llysickill alias Llanferres*, a reference to the ancient township of Llys-y-cil which was virtually co-extensive with the parish. Of Berres (or Berreis), the saint to whom the church was dedicated and the place-name recalls, nothing is known, permitting recent commentators to theorise that the original dedication was to the faintly better known St Briutius.

An early medieval origin based on the association with the obscure St Berres and the shape of the churchyard is perfectly feasible, but is little more than speculation. Unfortunately, Llanferres is equally anonymous in the Middle Ages and virtually nothing is known of how it developed, its lack of significance arguably reinforced by the fact that neither John Leland in his travels around Wales in the 1530s nor Edward Lhuyd at the end of the 17th century found reason to mention it.

There is currently no evidence for a nucleated settlement here. Evans in 1795 depicted only a couple of buildings in the vicinity of the church and even by the mid-19th century, the church was accompanied only by the Druid Inn to the south, the rectory built in c.1813 to the west and two farms, Ty'n Llan to the north and Rhos Farm further north still. A second public house, the Red Lion, had come into existence only a few metres to the south of the Druid Inn by the end of the 19th century.



Llanferres, photo 08-C-0238, © CPAT 2014

The heritage to 1750

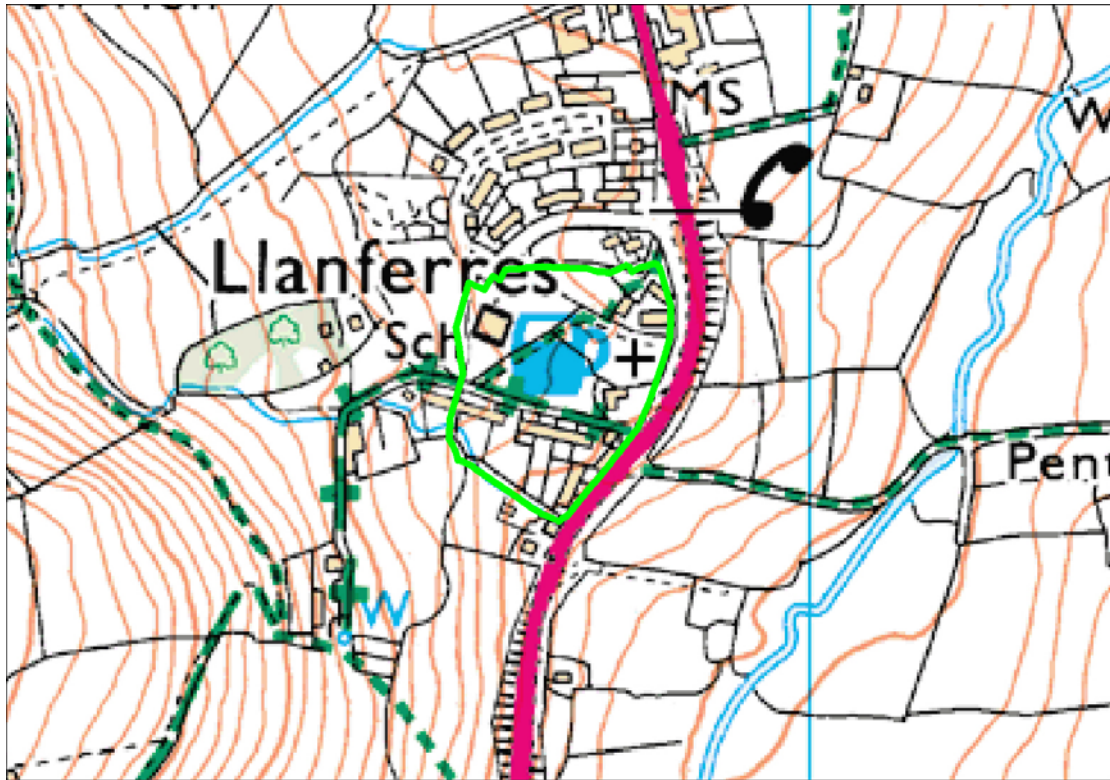
Structurally, little if anything survives of the medieval church at Llanferres, which in the middle of the 18th century was said to be ‘ a very ancient structure... so ruinous that [it] is in great danger of falling..’. A 1650 datestone could relate only to the eastern gable end, and it is fairly clear that much of the church was rebuilt in the 1770s, dates of 1772 and 1774 being given by different sources. There were further additions in 1843 when the south transept, vestry and west tower were added. So were galleries but these have now gone, removed during further restoration in 1891-2. There are two sepulchral slabs of the late 13th and early 14th centuries, and a mutilated effigy from the late 14th century. There is an undated church chest, the font carries a post-Restoration date of 1684, a bench displays memorial plaques the earliest of which is from 1709, and there are several memorials from the 17th and earlier 18th centuries.

The churchyard is now of irregular form, owing in part to an extension appended to the original western side in 1905. An earlier curving boundary on the west can still be discerned on the ground and hints at an original curvilinear enclosure. The wall around the rest of the present churchyard was probably erected in the 1720s, but it would not be surprising to find that the turnpike road when it was created in the 18th century (see below) shaved off some of the churchyard edge. An attempt made in 1993 to locate an earlier *llan* boundary outside the northern wall, was not successful.

The buildings of Tyn Llan to the north of the church are listed, but of late 18th and early 19th-century build. No other houses in the village are known to have a long history, though it might be conjectured that there was an earlier building on the spot where the Druid Inn now stands.

The road pattern around Llanferres has changed considerably over the last two to three hundred years. Originally a cobbled way ran around the western edge of the churchyard, a

portion of the main thoroughfare from Mold and Cilcain in the north to Llanarmon in the south, and this was still shown on John Evans's small-scale map compiled in the 1790s and published in 1795. But around the turn of the 19th century this was replaced by a turnpike road running around the eastern side of the churchyard, though the older road was not closed until 1818. Much more recently a new line for the A494 has been constructed a short distance to the east of the turnpike.



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