

Llangynhafal

**SJ 1331 6337
105980**

Introduction

Situated within 3km of four other *llan* settlements, Llangynhafal shelters beneath the Clwydian Hills close to the end of a lane that fades into a track that continues up the side of a small valley and ascends Moel Dywyll. The church signalling the historic core of the settlement was set on gently sloping ground with a small stream cutting a shallow valley less than 100m to the north. The modern focus of Llangynhafal, however, centres around Carneddau Farm and the Golden Lion Public House, and is set at a more accessible T-junction nearly 400m away and on a different lane from the church.

The settlement, whether modern or historic, looks westwards down into the Vale of Clwyd with Denbigh just over 8km distant to the north-west.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llangynhafal 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 church is named as *Langenhaval* in the Norwich Taxation of 1254, and as *Lankynaval* and *Llanganhavall'* in 1291. As with most *llan* names this refers to the saint's church, in this case Cynhafal.

Cynhafal was reputedly a saint of 7th-century date, and this dedication together with the shape of the churchyard and its position on the east side of the vale in the shelter of the Clwydians makes a strong case for an early medieval origin for the church if not necessarily the settlement.

As is normal with these small church settlements there is a dearth of information on the historical development of Llangynhafal until relatively recently. It has been pointed out that it is set at the junction of a well-used track over the Clwydians and another leading down from Ffynnon Cynhafal, though in itself this does not signal a reason for settlement development and expansion. There is no convincing evidence on the ground to indicate that the settlement was larger at any time in the past (though see below), and as depicted on the mid-19th-century Tithe map, it was very much the same then as it appears today.



Llangynhafael, photo 95-C-0155, CPAT 2014

The heritage to 1750

Built in the Perpendicular style, St Cynhafal's church (100612) is little altered as far as can be established, with a double nave and bellcote. It was apparently renovated in 1669 and restored in part in 1869-70 and again in 1884. It retains its late medieval roofs and a medieval font, and has a fine range of internal wooden fittings that are predominantly 17th- and 18th-century in date, including a dedicated box pew. The attribution to St Cynhafal is said to be unique in Wales.

The churchyard (19791) has seen modifications to its shape over the years, but there can be little doubt that at originally it was a raised sub-oval enclosure, the traces of which can still be seen on the ground, particularly on the eastern side.

Plas-yn-lan (102907), adjacent to the church, is an elaborate timber-framed and brick structure of 16th-century and later date, restored in the mid-1980s. Plas Iago (104542), 200m south of the village is a stone, single-storeyed structure but has an undated cruck-framed timber hall at its core.

The holy well known as Ffynnon Cynhafal is nearly 450m to the north of the church and a little higher up the slopes of the Clwydians below Moel Dywyll. It has a large roofed well-chamber in brick and a stone basin, and was reputedly resorted to by a local poet, Gruffydd ap Ieuan ap Llewelyn Fychan (c. 1485–1553), in the hope of a cure for his leg.

Earthworks (19792) survive in the field on the opposite side of the lane south of the church. These have not been characterised and require more detailed assessment.



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.