

## **Hirnant**

SJ 0504 2295

15704

### ***Introduction***

The village of Hirnant lies in the north-west of the county, approximately 10km north-west of Llanfyllin, on the B4396 from Penybontfawr to Abertridwr. In its present form it consists of a few houses grouped around the church. The valley of a stream, the Hirnant, a tributary of the Afon Tanat, provides shelter and the settlement with its southerly aspect is set back against the base of the steep northern valley slope. The stream itself is little more than 60m distant from the churchyard.

This brief report examines Hirnant's emergence and development up to 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 provides 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 may 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. Numbers in brackets are primary record numbers used in the HER to provide information that is specific to individual sites and features. These can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website ([www.archwilio.org.uk](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).

### ***History of development***

The church's dedication and the shape of the churchyard point to an early medieval genesis. The precise date at which this occurred, however, may never be known, and its subsequent history cannot as yet be determined.

Hirnant, meaning 'long stream' or 'long valley' in English first appears as *Hyrnant* in 1254, and in its modern form in 1377.

The present distribution of dwellings in Hirnant mirrors the layout of a century and a half ago. There is nothing to suggest that in earlier centuries the population of the settlement was any higher.

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

St Illog's church (7632) consists of a single chamber with a bellcote at the west end. It was largely rebuilt between 1886 and 1892, but it retains its late medieval north wall. A 13<sup>th</sup> century font was preserved from an earlier building and various of its fittings and furnishings are believed to have come from the old church at Llanwddyn, now beneath Lake Vyrnwy. After being declared redundant, the church was restored through local effort in 1999 and is now used for community events and religious services, being managed by a charitable trust.

The sub-circular churchyard (7631) was modified, probably at the time when the rectory was re-built in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The difficulties of developing a garden behind the new house led to the construction of a wall across the churchyard, the north-western section then being

turned over to domestic use. The original course of the churchyard boundary on the north-east may also have been modified, with faint earthworks outside the present wall defining a more curvilinear perimeter.

Listed buildings in the vicinity of the church are the rectory (7633) which was built in 1749, and is said to have re-used 16<sup>th</sup> century beams from an earlier structure; and Ty'n-y-Ilan (60933) on the south-west side of the churchyard is probably an 18<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding of an earlier farmhouse. Another farm, Ty Mawr (8364), lay to the north-east of the churchyard, but this appears to have been reduced in size since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and apparently is no longer occupied.

The configuration of roads and fields reveals a degree of landscape reorganisation over the last two or three centuries. The B4396, south of the Hall (300m south-west of the church), is a relatively recent construction, while a track running past the church on a north-west/south-east axis may once have been of local importance. A quillet, surviving opposite Ty'n-y-Ilan at the time of the Tithes survey, reflects a different alignment from the present boundaries, but one that is paralleled by a field bank opposite the now demolished Capel Hebron, so an area of strip fields beside the stream is a possibility.



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Welsh Assembly Government. Licence number 100017916.