

Llanwyddelan

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Introduction

Llanwyddelan is set on a by-road in central Montgomeryshire, in the hills to the west of the Severn Valley, about 6km to the south of Llanfair Caereinion and 9km north of Newtown. The church crowns the end of a ridge, the ground rising gently to the south-west but dropping away more sharply eastwards. Afon Rhiw, the nearest river, is nearly one kilometre away. It is an exceptionally small settlement, although the number of houses doubled in the last decades of the 20th century.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanwyddelan 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 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 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).



Llanwyddelan church, photo 01, © CPAT, 2012

History of development

An early medieval date for the foundation of the church is certain; the dedication, the shape of the churchyard and the pre-Conquest decorated stone (see below) all attest this early origin.

The church of Gwyddelan is first recorded as a chapel, in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 as *Llanoedelan*. Two hundred years later in 1431 reference was made to *St Gwithelan de Llanwythelan in Kedewen*. The saint's name reportedly means the little Irishman, suggesting that he may have been one of the missionaries who crossed to the mainland from Ireland, perhaps in the 6th century.

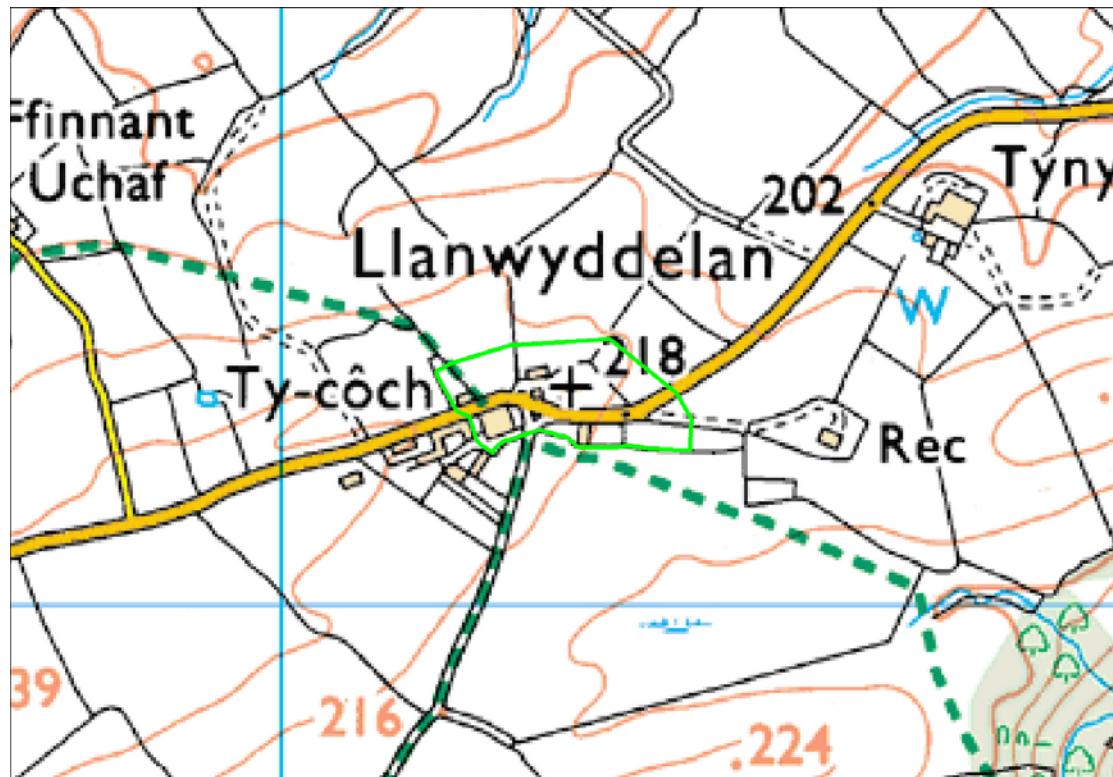
The development of the settlement cannot be determined. Even in the mid-19th century there were only four houses in the village, and at present there is nothing to suggest that the settlement was nucleated or larger in the Middle Ages.

The heritage to 1750

St Gwyddelan's church (7585), a single-chambered structure, was rebuilt in 1865, possibly on the foundations of its predecessor, itself perhaps no earlier than 1641. The medieval font and part of the rood screen survive, and built into an external buttress is a decorated slab of about the 9th century.

The churchyard (7586) has been extended in recent times (in 1938). Originally oval, its earlier boundary can be seen in the south-east sector, commencing at a point where the churchyard retaining wall beside the road gives way to a grassy bank.

There are no other noteworthy buildings within the settlement, nor is there any indication of relict earthworks or other features that might signal earlier activity.



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