

Llanymynech

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Introduction

Llanymynech sits astride the border with Shropshire, 14km north of Welshpool and on the trunk road, the A483, which links mid-Wales with the north. The settlement lies on a bluff above Afon Efyrrwy. The churchyard is perched on the edge of the scarp and Chapel Lane also follows its sinuous course. Possibly a shallow valley ran between the two for the main road is at a lower level. Northwards, the ground slopes gently upwards towards Pen y Foel while behind rise the quarried crags of Llanymynech Hill.

The boundary between England and Wales follows the eastern edge of the main street, before diverging slightly to take in a very small segment of the churchyard and then cutting across the street tangentially to pick up a stream course. It is not feasible to consider the historic importance of Llanymynech without reference to that part of it in Shropshire, but the comments and recommendations are directed only at that part of the village in Montgomeryshire.

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

History of development

The shape of the churchyard and its location on the edge of a major river valley point to an early medieval foundation, though whether this will ever be corroborated by material evidence is very much in doubt.

As *Llanemeneych* this appears in 1254, with other variants appearing at later dates. With its English translation as 'church of the monks', it has been suggested that there was formerly a monastic cell or oratory here.

Little can be said about its development in the medieval centuries and into the modern era. The initiation of the turnpike road in about 1756 may have had a profound effect on the layout of the settlement and the addition of the canal (to the north) at the end of the 18th century and the railway to the south in the 1860s may also have had some impact. An important question is whether the turnpike road adopted an existing thoroughfare or followed an entirely new line. The unusually straight alignment might point to the latter. Even in the mid-19th century, there were few houses on the west side of the turnpike road, dwellings congregating on the Shropshire side of the road. Chapel Lane ran from St Bennion's

Well and continued around the north side of the churchyard. This looks to be an earlier lane bisected by the turnpike road, and there are hints of other meandering lanes on the Shropshire side which may have formed the earlier network to the north of the church.



Llanymynech church, photo 03-c-0471, © CPAT, 2012

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Agatha, an entirely Victorian rebuild, is wholly in Shropshire. The dedication is an unusual one, for Agatha was a Sicilian saint during the Roman era, and its appearance in the Welsh marches is unexplained, though as Archdeacon Thomas speculated in the 19th century, it could be a rededication stemming from the patronage of a returning crusader.

St Agatha's churchyard (7606) is curvilinear in outline.

St Bennion's Well (29) lies 250m to the south-west of the church and was used for charms as late as 1878.

The only listed buildings on the Welsh side of the border, both grade II, are The Gardd (7722) erected perhaps in the early 17th century, but remodelled, and Ty-croes (32399) at the crossroads where Canal Road crosses the main road is early 18th century in date.



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