

Llanelwedd

SO 046518
16165

Introduction

Llanelwedd faces Builth Wells across the Wye, close to the point where the river having meandered down a broad valley is committed to a tighter channel hemmed in by hills on both sides. The settlement has developed on the river bank in the shelter of Llanelwedd Rocks, the southern end of a craggy ridge that terminates directly above the river. Here, the A481 joins the main arterial road, the A483, less than one kilometre from a crossing point of the river into Builth Wells.

This brief report examines Llanelwedd'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 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).



Llanelwedd church, photo 95-C-0607 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

Llanelwedd or 'the church of St Elwedd' is first recorded as *Lanelweth* in 1283. It has been claimed that Elwedd is the same as Eiliwedd, one of the legendary daughters of Brychan Brycheiniog.

The focus of Llanelwedd may have shifted in historic times. It has been argued that a spur in a prominent position above the Wye, which was probably first used in the early medieval centuries, was abandoned in favour of a riverside location sometime during the medieval period.

The subsequent growth of Llanelwedd is unclear. In 1777 a fire destroyed all but the church and there is an implication in the report at the time that the village was then larger. Evaluations to the east and south-east of the church in 2010 failed to identify any traces of activity, implying that while the church may have been set on the river bank, the settlement was elsewhere. In the mid-19th century, the church and no more than five cottages overlooked the river, and by this time the road through the village had been turnpiked.

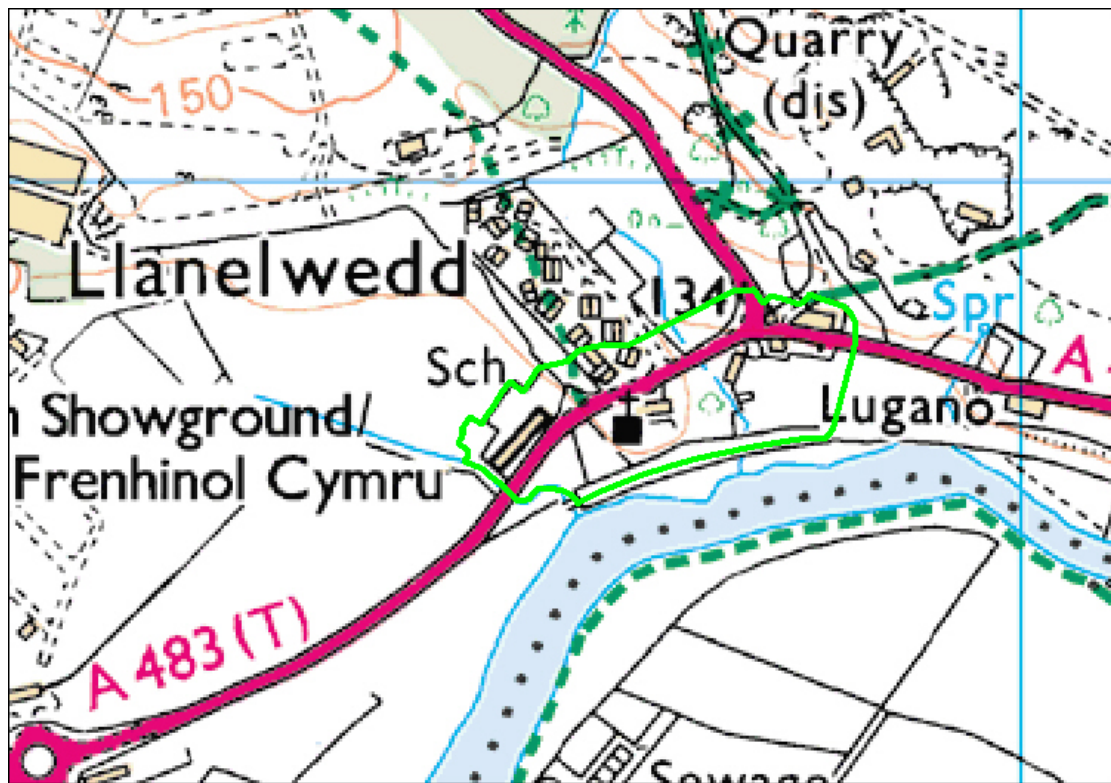
The heritage to 1750

Tradition has it that the early medieval church dedicated to St Elwedd lay within a still visible enclosure (601) at Cae Henllan – a significant name – on the spur 500m to the north-west of the present village (and within the Royal Welsh Showground). A sketch shows a polygonal enclosure with the church set in the north-east corner, and this was confirmed by a geophysical survey in 2004, which hinted at an earlier, more curvilinear enclosure. The site was partially excavated in 1910. Much of the surrounding ground has been landscaped and terraced.

St Matthew's Church (16028) by the river has a nave, chancel, north aisle, south porch and west tower. The tower is 14th-century, while much of the rest was rebuilt in 1877, apparently copying the 15th-century original.

The churchyard (16240) is completely rectilinear; though raised high on the west side; this is due to the cutting back and revetment of the natural slope.

A cockpit (3787) on the east edge of the village has now been destroyed by quarrying. Another post-medieval feature, the parish pound (4103), which lay on the opposite side of the road to the church has also disappeared, but a toll house (6247) survives at the junction of the Llandrindod and Knighton roads.



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