

Llanfaredd

SO 069507
16166

Introduction

The church and farm which are the sole components of Llanfaredd sit back from the east bank of the River Wye, less than 3km to the east of Builth Wells in Breconshire. Eastwards the ground rises increasingly steeply to the heights of Aberedw Hill, 450m above sea level. From its lower slopes a small stream falls towards the Wye and where it cuts through a river terrace, Llanfaredd church was erected.

This brief report examines only Llanfaredd'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).



Llanfaredd church, photo 95-C-0332 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

The beginnings of Llanfaredd and its subsequent history have never been established. The name of the settlement and the semi-curvilinearity of St Mary's churchyard suggest that this is one of the many small churches in the region that emerged during the early medieval era.

The first reference to the settlement is as *Thlannarreyt* in 1291. The leading authority on Powys place-names has suggested that the second element could be *Maredd* or *Mareth*, and more likely the latter in view of the pre-18th-century versions of the name. This is probably identical with an otherwise unknown saint called *Mariaith* by the 15th-century poet Lewys Glyn Cothi in his *cywydd* to the saints of Elfael. The introduction of Mary as the dedicatee is probably because of the similarity in name with this obscure saint.

That a settlement of sorts previously existed at Llanfaredd is suggested by the presence of several putative house platforms set into the slope above the church, though their date is unknown..

Today the church is accompanied only by the buildings of Church House Farm, a layout that has changed only in the size of the farm and the construction of a village hall in the century and a half since the Tithe survey was conducted. Understandably, no evaluations or assessments have occurred here in recent years.

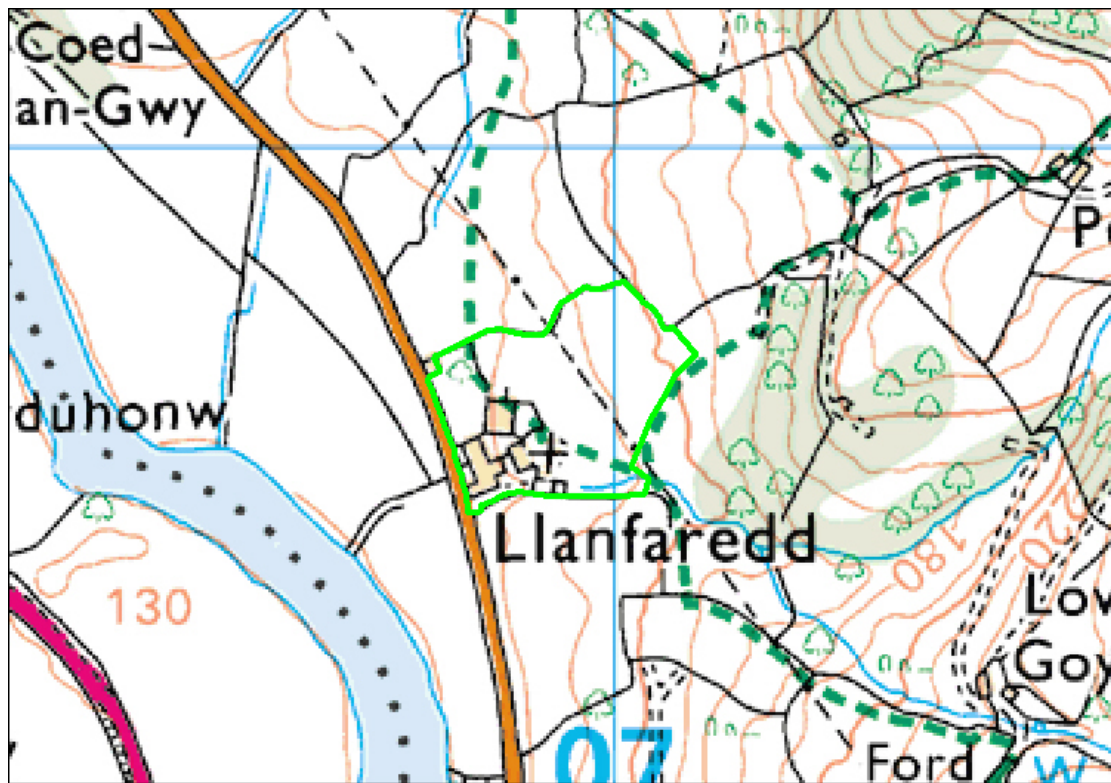
The heritage to 1750

The church dedicated to St Mary (16029) is a single-chambered building. Its masonry walls are probably medieval though of this we cannot be certain. The font is late medieval, the south door 17th-century, but there is little else of early origin. The church was restored in 1891.

The churchyard (16200), depicted as almost circular on the Tithe map, is an irregular oval of unusually diminutive size. While this may imply that this shape has remained largely unchanged since its establishment, the spread of the farm buildings has perhaps led to some minor changes in the churchyard boundary, with the straightening out of the north-east and south-west sides.

The pasture field (OS plot 0176) to the east of the church contains three or four dispersed platforms (16201) terraced into the gently ascending ground. Seen from a distance these could be of variable authenticity, but may represent the positions of earlier dwellings.

Church House Farm falls outside the parameters of this study. The barn carries a datestone of 1761 and the farmhouse itself has been added to this at a later date. The possibility of an earlier dwelling on the site cannot, however, be dismissed.



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