

Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog

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Introduction

Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog has grown up on the southern lip of the flood plain of Afon Ceiriog as the fast-flowing river drops down off the Berwyn mountain range, at a place where a tributary, Nant y Glog, converges from the south. The church occupies a slightly higher spine of rock which protrudes from the lowest slopes of Pen y Glog towards the river. A number of lanes meet here and the B4500 terminates in the village, some 14km to the west of Oswestry.

Though modern housing is now spreading in ribbon fashion southwards up the valley of Nant y Glog, the village core remains compact.

This brief report examines the background to Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog up to the years around 1750. For a fuller explanation of the more recent history of the settlement, it may be necessary to examine other sources of information and particularly for the origins and nature of some of the buildings within it.

The accompanying map is offered solely 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 adopted in the HER to provide researchers with information that is specific to the individual sites and features. These can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

Lanarmon is first documented in 1270, *Lannarmam* in 1277-8, and in fuller form as *Llanarmaior in Disfrynkeyrianc* in 1291. Similar though not identical versions appeared later in the Middle Ages and into the Tudor era, but it was John Evans who put the modern form of the name onto his 1795 map of north Wales. The meaning of the name is straightforward - the 'church of Garmon in the Ceiriog valley'.

Nothing is known of the early history of Llanarmon. Traditionally this is the site of a 5th-century church foundation, if a direct link with the shadowy figure of St Garmon is accepted. Indeed, more than one source cites this as his place of burial. But even if the association with St Garmon is considered to veer more towards legend than fact, the nature of the dedication, the churchyard morphology and the topographical setting in conjunction point to an early medieval establishment.

Whatever the story of the settlement in the medieval and Tudor periods, both documents and archaeology are mute.

The Chirk lordship map dating probably from the fourth quarter of the 18th century shows a small village at the crossroads, with no more than three dwellings in Nant y Glog valley, and the flatter land to the west of the village divided into arable strips, otherwise known as quilllets. When the tithe survey was compiled fifty or so years later the quilllets had largely disappeared while the form of the settlement had changed but little.

The heritage to 1750

The simple church of St Garmon (100998) dates entirely to 1846 when its medieval predecessor was demolished revealing a hoard of 15th-century coins now in the British Museum. Archdeacon Thomas recorded that 'the old church was a parallelogram in form with a square flat tower at the west end and a south porch; the floor was of clay covered with rushes and it was seated with benches and two large, high-backed pews'. The Victorian church consists of a nave and chancel in one, with a west tower and short spire over a porch. There is some undated furniture and altar rails from the late 17th or early 18th century, but little else was retained from the earlier church.

The churchyard at Llanarmon (19742) is broadly elliptical; though now rather more rectilinear than curvilinear it offers the impression of having had its face shaved back to a set of straight lines. It is generally raised but only on the north is its form dictated by the topography. No evidence remains of any earlier enclosure.

Tomen Garmon, a large but irregularly-shaped mound (100985) in the churchyard, is sometimes classed as a preaching mound, in keeping with other churches linked with St Garmon as at Llanfechain and Castel Caereinion, both in Montgomeryshire.

The earliest portions of the West Arms Hotel (19743) may date back to the 16th or 17th century, but much of it is of 18th-century date. And a little to the south a small flannel mill (42818) now converted to a shop may have originated in the 18th century. No other houses of any age have been identified in the village.

Open ground may once have existed immediately south of the West Arms with Nant y Glog edging it on the east. This has subsequently been infilled with houses, though its form is still detectable in the layout of lanes and an alley. From a later 18th-century map of the manors of Chirk and Chirkland it might be inferred that there was an open area of rectangular shape here, and this has the appearance of a small market place though there is no independent evidence that Llanarmon boasted such a facility in the medieval era. Perhaps more plausibly it could have been a green or small common, the setting for the thrice-yearly fairs.



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