

LLAN-GORS

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Introduction

Llan-gors lies on the B4560 from Talgarth to Bwlch and the Usk Valley, 9km to the east of Brecon. The church lies in the bottom of a valley adjacent to the stream known as Nant Cwy, with the valley sides rising quite gently to the south-east and rather more sharply to the north-west, but with the houses of the village on both of them.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llan-gors 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 only 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. The HER can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

The name (Llangorse in Ordnance Survey English, Llan-gors in Welsh), reflects the presence of Llan-gors Lake and its marshy periphery, Welsh ‘cors’ meaning marsh. *Llan Cors* appears in the years between 1136 and 1154 and the church as *Sancti Paulini de Lancors* between 1147 and 1176. *Llangors* is documented in 1543. There was too an alternative name, now obsolete. *Mara*, a latinized form of Old English *mere* meaning ‘lake’ or ‘pool’ was used in the early 13th century and *La Mare*, as is found in 1331. The two names were linked as late as 1739 in *Mara...otherwise Llangorse*, and this last spelling is the anglicized form used by the Ordnance Survey. Less certain is an association of Llan-gors with the *Lann-beulin* of the Llandaf Charters.

An early monastic establishment, referred to in the Llandaf charters and supposedly dedicated to St Paulinus, is believed to have functioned in Llan-gors from the 8th century perhaps until the Norman Conquest. Recent research has opined that this was the literary centre of Brycheiniog before the Conquest, and may even have been a *clas* centre. The site of this monastic settlement is not known – it was presumably somewhere close to the lake edge but not necessarily on the site of the present village, though this possibility would be accepted without question by some authorities.

Notwithstanding this, from the morphology of the churchyard and its location adjacent to a stream it can be inferred that the church was an early medieval foundation, a view reinforced by the three incised stones, two of which certainly had been incorporated in the medieval masonry of the church or had been dug up from the churchyard. The dedication, it appears, could commemorate a holy man who was St David’s teacher.

Llan-gors has been claimed as the former borough of 'Mara'. But whether there was a nucleated settlement here in the Middle Ages and this is now reflected in the layout of the present village is not clear.

The earliest accurate map that is available, the Ordnance Survey surveyor's small-scale depiction of 1814, is really too late in date to be informative, while an estate map of 1738 in the National Library displays an incomplete picture of the settlement.



Llan-gors, photo 05-c-0042 © CPAT, 2013

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Paulinus retains some 15th and 16th-century fabric together with a tower believed to be of the 15th century. But much of the church was rebuilt in 1874. The font may be from around 1300, but most other early furnishings and fittings have been removed. There are three early stones, one with a Latin inscription that places it in the 11th or 12th century, another, a fragment from the 9th to 12th century, and a cross-carved stone of the 10th or 11th century, and from a much later era – the 18th century – a good range of wall memorials.

The outline of the churchyard is distinctive curvilinear, reinforced by the fact that a segment of it became detached on the west side when the road was straightened out at some unspecified point in the past (this was subjected to an uninformative geophysical survey in 1993). Furthermore an existing boundary and the line of the lane suggest that the Castle Inn and the adjacent old school occupy the southern segment of the original enclosure.

Faintly sinuous and continuous property boundaries, most noticeable south of the road leading south-eastwards out of the village and north of the church to the west of the road may have some significance. For the former there is some 19th-century map evidence to confirm ribbon development with houses accompanied by crofts at the rear, conceivably reflecting the presence of tenement plots of medieval origin, and indeed on this evidence one authority has suggested that the village was deliberately planned.

Pendre Uchaf on the northern fringe of the village is believed to have a mid-17th-century house at its core, while Lower Pendre is earlier 17th-century. Neuadd, closer to the village centre has some 17th-century detailing, but is notable for its mid-19th-century antiquarian Gothic Revival architecture structured around the former farmhouse and well displayed in the 19th-century barn. The old mill to the east of the churchyard may be on the site of the one mentioned in a parliamentary survey of 1651. Powis Terrace opposite Ty Mawr on the lane running eastwards from the village is a 17th-century long-house derivative. Together these farms on the outer fringes of the village indicate a thriving community at Llan-gors in the 17th century and from this it can probably be inferred that the nucleated core of the village was in place.



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