

Llansannan

**SH 9342 6584
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Introduction

Llansannan is situated on the A544 between Llanfair Talhaiarn to Bylchau, seven and a half miles to the south of Abergele and the same distance to the west of Denbigh. The village lies on the floor of the valley of the River Aled. The church and most of the settlement are positioned on slightly raised ground above the west bank of the river, where it makes a sharp bend towards the north-east. To the north and west of the village, the valley sides rise steeply. A small stream, the Afon Bach, enters the village from the west and marked the southern extent of the village prior to recent expansion.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llansannan 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 require modification 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

Like so many other settlements, the village is named after the holy man to whom the church was dedicated, in this instance, St Sannan. It is recorded as *Llannsannan* in the Norwich Taxation of 1254, as *Lansaman* in the 1291 Taxation and in its modern form in 1458.

Archdeacon Thomas, the St Asaph diocesan historian, no doubt borrowing from earlier books on the lives of the saints, claimed that the founder of the church is said to have lived here in religious seclusion and was one amongst several of the religious to have been buried in Gwytherin.

There is little information available on the size and growth of the settlement in the Middle Ages and in the centuries immediately following the Reformation. The earliest visual source is an estate map from the years 1772 to 1774. It is disappointingly inaccurate – the churchyard for instance is shown abutting the River Aled unless we are to envisage a significant reduction in its size around the turn of the 19th century – but one detail that does seem to be correct is that the direct line of the A544 eastwards to the river crossing is a 19th-century creation. Previously the lane to the north of Aled Terrace had taken the Llanrwst road on a more circuitous route to the river and then along its side southwards to the bridge.

The centre of the village appears to have changed little since the Tithe survey of 1841. The village had a very compact centre, with the church and almost all the houses lying to the west of the river. The vicarage lay east of the river. A short distance to the west of the village were a few outlying buildings at Dalar-bach, Fron-bugad and Hendre-llan. Apart from the

enhancement of the A544, the roads have not really altered. Long narrow fields (crofts) are indicated to the south-west of the village near Bro Aled school.

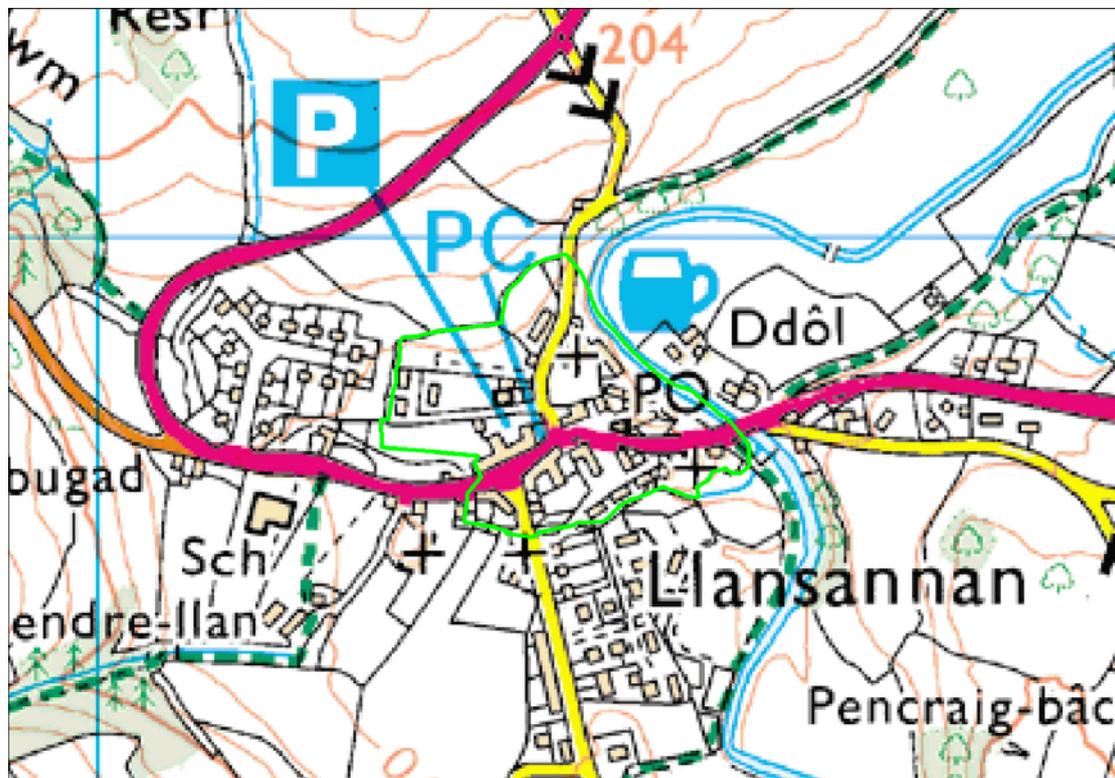
The heritage to 1750

St Sannan's church (105468) is built in a prominent position on a terrace high above the river. The church is double-naved. Although it dates from the 15th century, it was rebuilt or remodelled in 1777-8 and Victorianised in 1879, and it is not clear how much medieval fabric has survived. A round-headed south window dates to the earlier rebuild, but the western bellcote, timber porch, geometrical windows and boarded ceilings are all Victorian. Internally, there is nothing medieval; a churchwarden's bench dated to 1634, a chest of 1683, an 18th-century font and a pulpit of around 1700 imported from a church in Liverpool constitute the furniture from a pre-Victorian era.

The churchyard (105475) may originally have been circular, but has since been modified. It now has a curving outline on its western side, while the eastern boundary is dictated by the sheer drop down to the riverside. The Saracen's Head may have encroached on the south side of the churchyard. The ground level inside appears slightly raised.

Neither the Royal Commission nor Cadw have identified any buildings of pre-1750 date in the village other than the church.

A mound recorded at Llansannan (100521) was largely destroyed to make a flat area for a car park for Capel Coffa Henry Rees. The upper layers of a mound were still visible in the 1990s, preserved in the hedgebank; the top one metre looked artificially made up with layers of soil and rubble. Its significance is unknown, however, and its artificiality is in question; the HER considered that it was probably a natural feature.



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