

Llan

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Introduction

Llan lies beside the B4518, 2km south-south-west of Llanbrynmair and about 14km to the east of Machynlleth. The church and the older houses surrounding it occupy the summit of a small hill that rises above the valley of Afon Twymyn, a tributary of the Dovey. Modern housing beside the road southwards utilises the most gentle of the hill's slopes.

This brief report examines Llan'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 only as an indicative guide to the historic settlement. The continuous line defining the historic core provides 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).



St Mary's church, photo llan 033, © CPAT, 2012

History of development

The shape of the churchyard points to an early medieval origin, but the date of the church's foundation and the subsequent history of settlement around it are unknown. What can be said with some certainty is that the dedication to Mary is not the original one, although whether as local tradition would have us believe, it was Cadfan (with a lingering folk memory surviving in nearby Dolgadfan) will perhaps never be established.

Up to the end of the 19th century this settlement was known as Llanbryn-mair, a name then transferred to the village that had developed around the Wynnstay Arms on the turnpike road 2km to the north. Presumably to avoid any confusion, the name of the original settlement was consequently shortened to Llan.

The name can be loosely translated as 'the church at Mair's hill' and first appears as Brenmeyr in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 and Brunmeyr in 1293. St Mary the Virgin, Brynmair in Keveilioc appears in a document of 1429, and it was only in 1470/1 that Llambryn mayr was recorded.

The heritage to 1750

St Mary's church (7617) is a single-chamber structure of 15th century (or perhaps earlier) type with an added north transept and 16th century porch and a wooden bell turret. The only earlier feature is a 13th century font, although medieval screen fragments have been incorporated into some of the later wooden furnishings.

The original oval shape of the churchyard (7618) can still be detected, particularly on the south side where the burial ground has been extended to the road in the last one hundred and fifty years.

Opposite the church is a dwelling, formerly perhaps a school, with a date stone of 1856. Almost certainly earlier is Hafod y Llan (8784) on the north-east of the churchyard, though by how much is unclear. There is, however, nothing to suggest that Llan was a nucleated settlement in the Middle Ages or the Tudor era.



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