

Llanfihangel-yng-ngwynfa

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Introduction

Llanfihangel lies in the hills of central Montgomeryshire, some 7km south-west of Llanfyllin. The church surmounts the crest of a small hill isolated from the main ridge to the east by a shallow valley. The village has expanded along the side of this valley, but modern housing has been confined to the sides of the main road (the B4382) further south.

This brief report examines Llanfihangel'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).

History of development

The name *Llanvihangel* is first recorded in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 and *Lamvyhangell in Gwunva* appears in 1375. Translated, this means 'St Michael's church in Gwynfa' which was a district within the cantref of Mechain.

The early history of the settlement and its subsequent development are unknown; the dedication and perhaps the hill-top location might argue for a foundation late in the early medieval period or even perhaps after the Norman Conquest.

By the middle of the 19th century, the settlement consisted of no more than the church, the adjacent farm of Penisarllan and a cluster of cottages, rather smaller even than today.

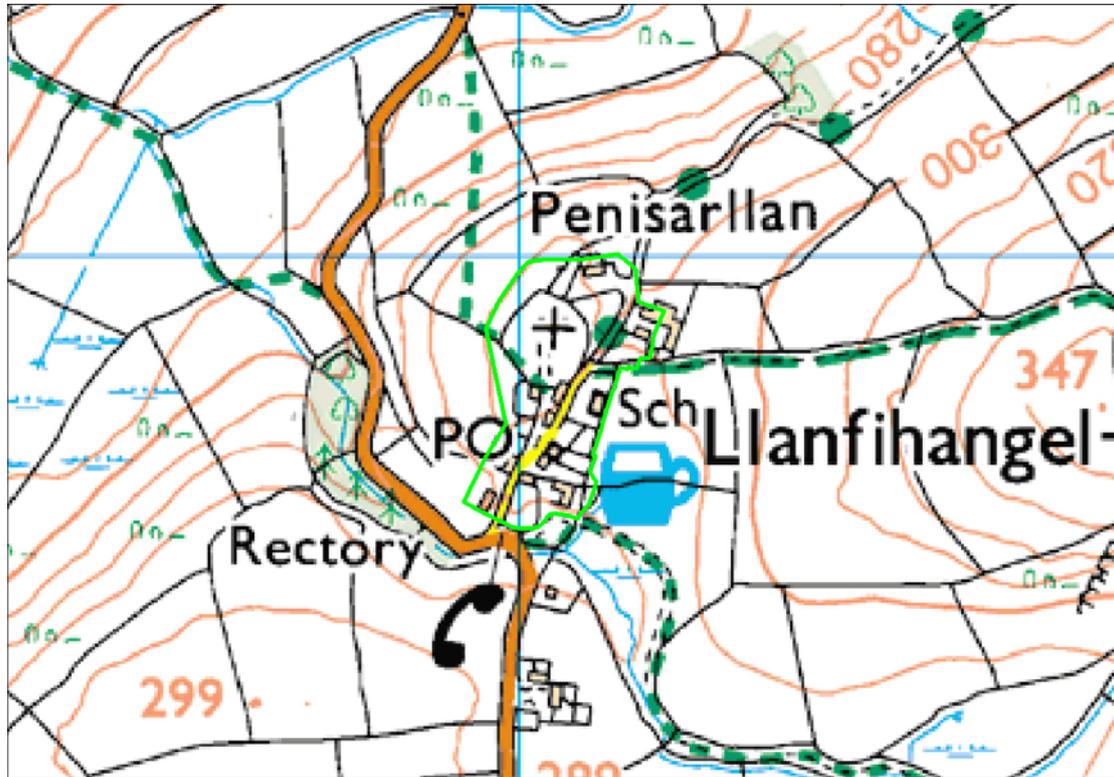
The heritage to 1750

St Michael's is a rarity amongst the churches of Montgomeryshire in that it is placed on a hill top, though the dedication in this respect is highly appropriate. There have been several churches on this spot. The present church (7612) was built in 1862, replacing a church that itself had been erected only in the 16th or 17th century. From the earlier, medieval building, three inscribed memorial stone fragments have been preserved, two being cross incised fragments, the third part of a grave slab to Madog ap Celynin dated to around 1340. Other survivals include a bell of 1638, a simple medieval font and some benefaction boards probably of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The present churchyard incorporates the scarp bank of its diminutive polygonal predecessor (7613), the complete circuit of which can still be established.

At least three holy wells have been associated with the immediate environs of the village (1226, 1689 & 1690) but none can now be accurately located. St Michael's well was reputedly only some 150m from the church and was formerly used for baptisms, yet its position today is not known even though it was visited by the Royal Commission in 1910.

There are no listed buildings here, although the Rectory (7700), a modernised form of what was said to be a 17th century original, was once listed in the now obsolete grade III.



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