

Llangadfan

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Introduction

Llangadfan is a settlement of two parts. Cann Office with Pen-y-bont, the more northerly, lies on the A458 trunk road between Welshpool and Dolgellau, while the church occupies the opposite bank of Afon Banwy, the two being linked by means of Pont Llangadfan. Until recently there was little new development in this part of Llangadfan parish, but the situation has changed in recent years with houses being built on ground adjacent to the lane running along the western side of the river.

The village is about 10km north-west of Llanfair Caereinion. Both the church and Cann Office occupy flattish ground with the valley sloping away quite sharply from their respective positions. Pen-y-bont is closer to the river and consequently lower.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llangadfan 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 Breton saint, Cadfan, is said to have had a direct association with this place, establishing a cell here in the first half of the 6th century AD, before becoming the first abbot of Bardsey Island. Certainly, the dedication and the shape of the churchyard are consistent with an early medieval origin.

Llankadvan appears in the Norwich Taxation of 1254, the meaning being the obvious one of 'the church of St Cadfan'. The present form of the name is first encountered in 1291.

Sometime after the Norman Conquest, a motte and bailey castle was thrown up on the opposite side of the river to the church at what is now Cann Office. One authority argued many years ago that the castle was entirely of Welsh build and was still in use in 1277; the latter point is indisputable, the former rather less so.

Any subsequent development in Llangadfan during the medieval era is likely to have been slight. As with so many Montgomeryshire church settlements, it is impossible to determine on the evidence currently available to us whether nucleated group dwellings developed here in the Middle Ages, though it is perhaps unlikely. Cann Office emerged in the early 19th century as a posting station on the turnpike road westwards, though its name crops up in earlier references and it seems to have been in existence in the mid-17th century, though perhaps only

as a farm. Pont Llangadfan which links the two foci is recent: in the mid-19th century the only track southwards from Cann Office led to the now disused corn mill beside the river.

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Cadfan (7576) is a single-chambered building, perhaps basically 15th century on the basis of one surviving Perpendicular window and the timberwork of the roof. It was heavily restored in 1868, and few of the original furnishings and fittings were retained.

The churchyard has been almost doubled in size since the mid-19th century, and the early 19th century lychgate is set in the still visible enclosure bank of the earlier churchyard (7577) which was smaller and sub-circular in shape.

St Cadfan's Well (1230) is a short distance below the church beside the road leading to Pont Llangadfan and is grade II listed. Unlike many of the holy wells in the region this one has an arch over it and there is a descriptive plaque, though at the end of the 18th century it was housed in a well building.

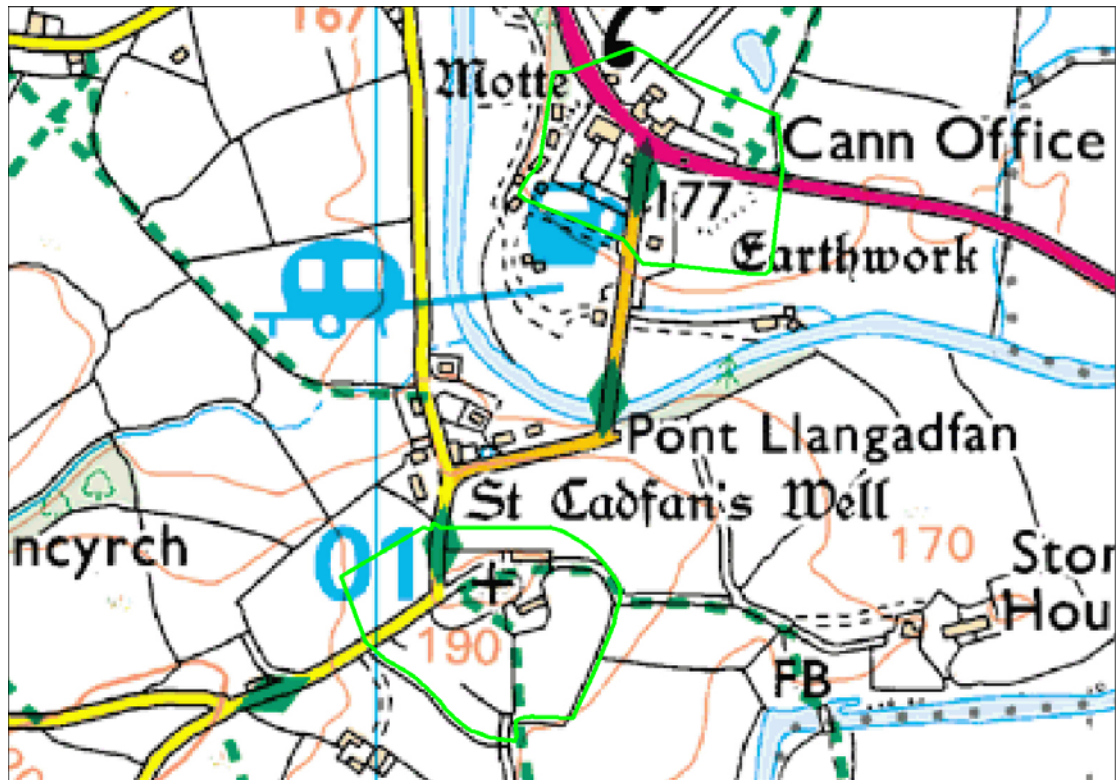
The Cann Office motte and bailey (1228) has suffered considerable degradation since the installation of the hotel. Only half the motte survives and the outline of the atypical rectangular bailey is intermittent.

A rectangular earthwork (6094) lies in a field immediately to the east of Cann Office Hotel. Its origin remains uncertain despite some limited excavation in 1962 which failed to confirm its Roman date but did produce medieval pottery.

The church and well apart, the only listed building is the Cann Office Hotel (7701) which is Grade II.

There are a few insubstantial banks west of the churchyard (7578), but nothing there that could be cited to support the argument for a shrunken village around the church.

The large field north of Rhiwlas (formerly the Rectory) was termed 'Cae hwl y Gaer' in the mid-19th century Tithe apportionment. The 'gaer' element is potentially significant, often relating to a defensive earthwork. Nothing has yet been noted here.



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