

Llanbadarn Fawr

SO 087643
16155

Introduction

Llanbadarn Fawr church together with Church House Farm lies beside the A483 trunk road, 4km north-east of Llandrindod Wells. The meandering River Ithon passes within one hundred metres of the church, its course deflected by an almost imperceptible spur of rock that was utilised by the church builders. Elsewhere river terraces and the shallow depressions of palaeochannels provide the only relief in the valley.

This brief report examines Llanbadarn Fawr'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).



Llanbadarn fawr church, photo 95-C-323 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

Nothing is known of the origin and history of Llanbadarn Fawr, and on the existing evidence an early medieval beginning can only be conjectural. In favour of an early beginning is the church dedication, its location beside a major river, and perhaps the fact that it is differentiated by the affix 'fawr' to distinguish it from Llanbadarn Fynydd, which has led one authority to suggest that it might have been a pre-Conquest mother church in the region.

The earliest place-name form is *Thlanpadervau* from 1304 and *Llanbadarn Vaur* appears in 1374. The meaning is straightforward: the big or great church of St Padarn.

There are no known early maps which might indicate an earlier settlement here, and the earthwork evidence is equivocal. In terms of size, the settlement has not altered at all since 1840. In consequence it is best seen as a church settlement until more positive evidence is forthcoming.

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Padarn, otherwise St Paternus (6466), was rebuilt in 1878. The south doorway retains a Romanesque tympanum and other carved stonework (perhaps of c.1100-1150): these are rare survivals in Wales. The font is 17th century and there are 18th-century funerary monuments. Built into the porch is an inscribed centurial stone (1171) from the Roman fort at Castell Collen, and two other, Romanesque carved stones are also incorporated into the walls.

The churchyard (16250) is raised, but its shape is irregular and certainly cannot be classed as 'curvilinear'.

There are no listed vernacular buildings at Llanbadarn Fawr, but Church Farm, immediately to the west of the church has an associated timber-framed barn dated to around c.1650.

North of the church in the adjacent pasture field (OS plot 7045) are a few low banks and shallow gullies defining rectilinear enclosures and/or platforms (16249), possibly the remnants of earlier settlement. A service trench seen in the early 1990s revealed much stone in the backfill where it ran across one of the platforms.



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