

Efenechtyd

**SJ 1115 5577
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Introduction

Efenechtyd lies on a minor road in the hills bordering the Vale of Clwyd, some 2km to the south of Ruthin. The church shelters on the west side of a broad valley, a little above the flat floor. Four lanes meet here and a few houses are situated in the immediate vicinity.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Efenechtyd up to the year 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it might be necessary to look at other sources of information and in particular 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).



Efenechtyd, photo 95-C-0141, © CPAT 2014

History of development

Efenechtyd appears as *Eccla de Wenechdit* in the Norwich Taxation of 1254, a reference to the church rather than any settlement. Between that date and 1838 when it was first written down in its modern form, several variant names appear including *Venitghit* (1324), *Veneghted* (1530) and *y fenechdid* (1530). The name signifies ‘the monastery’ (in Welsh, *y menechdid*), although it is considerably more likely that it was a monastic grange or farm.

The form of the churchyard and its careful positioning on the edge of a valley, however, suggest an early medieval origin, its dedication to a British saint probably being superseded by that to St Michael at a later date.

Whether a settlement developed around the church in the Middle Ages has yet to be established, and Edward Lhuyd, usually a good source of information on late 17th-century Denbighshire, is silent on Efenechtyd.

At the time of the Tithe survey the church was accompanied by two farms – Penybryn (now Bryn-llan) and Llan Efenechtyd (now Plas-yn-llan) – and no more than three dwellings, one of them the Rectory.

A complicating factor is a proposed association with Valle Crucis Abbey, *menechdid*, bringing together the terms for ‘monk’ and ‘dwelling’ from which it has been deduced by some writers that there was a monastic grange here, as noted above. Against this interpretation, however, is the fact that David Williams, the leading authority on the Welsh Cistercians, associates the reference not with this location but with a farm of the same name on the banks of the river Dee in Llantysilio.

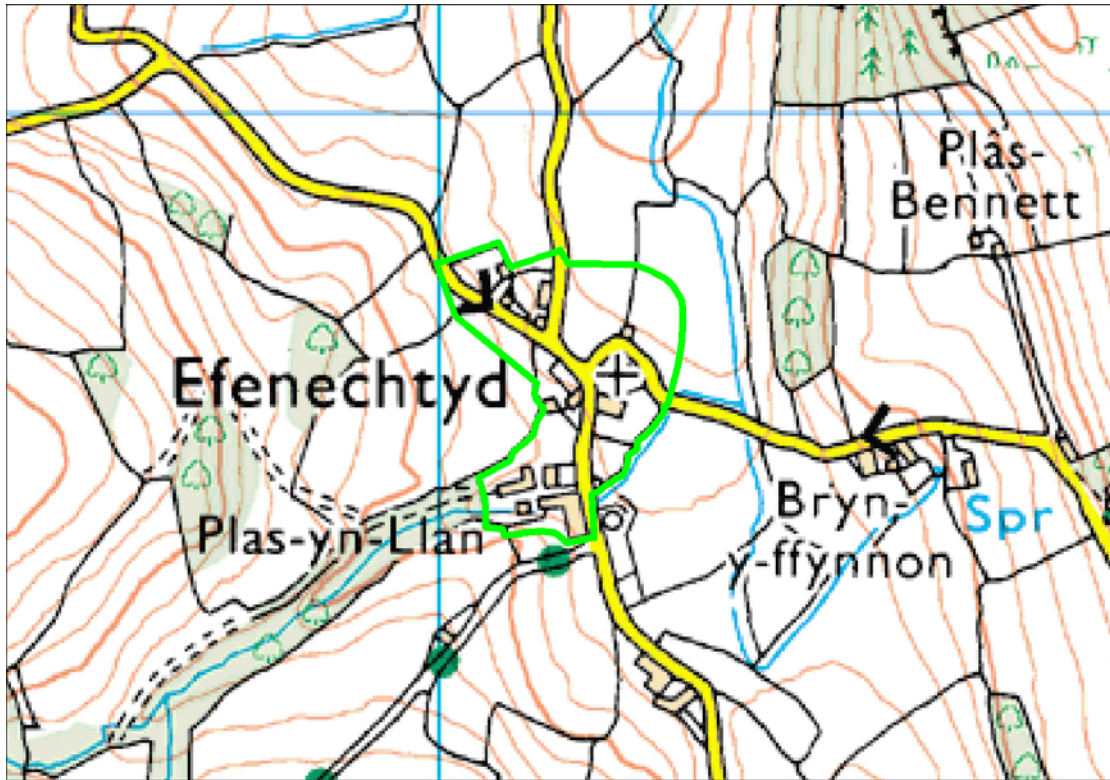
The heritage to 1750

The small church of St Michael (16774) consists of a heavily restored single chamber, though with the chancel added to an earlier nave. A decorated window in the former could indicate that the nave is 13th century. Internally there is a late medieval roof, an unusual wooden font, remnants of the medieval screen, a pulpit with 17th-century panelling, a fragment of a wall painting, and *maen camp*, a stone once used locally in games of strength.

The church is set in an irregularly curvilinear and slightly raised churchyard (19702), its boundary on the south side adjusted to accommodate the rectory and its garden. Lewis noted that in the earlier part of the 19th century the stone mentioned above lay in the churchyard.

Plas-yn-llan (19703) on the south side of the village is an early 18th century gentry house, with remarkable gate piers at the entrance to the grounds. Of its predecessor nothing is known. Bryn-llan (19704) originated in the 17th century but has later additions.

No significant earthworks have been recognised in the environs of the village. The convergence of so many lanes around the church does however reveal that this was a focal point, albeit a minor one, in the hills on the western side of the vale of Clwyd.



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