

Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd

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Introduction

Llanbedr is a settlement of two halves. The old church accompanied by Llanbedr Hall is set on the lower, western slopes of the Clwydian range, a shallow dry valley lying to the south, and westwards a gentle slope running off to the River Clwyd and Ruthin, 2km to the south-west. The old church is now effectively isolated and accessible only by a footpath. At a slightly lower altitude, the modern village centres on the Victorian church and the modern A494 which loops down off the Clwydians, several hundred metres to the south-west and south respectively of the old church. Open ground currently separates the old and the new, but both command fine views over the Vale of Clwyd.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanbedr up to the year 1750, and as a consequence focuses on the old part of the settlement. 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).

History of development

The topographical qualifier of Dyffryn Clwyd was not introduced until the 19th century, presumably to differentiate it from other places in Wales also termed Llanbedr. As *Lanpedir* the church was registered in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 and as *Ecclia' Sci' Petri* it is revealed in the later taxation of Pope Nicholas in 1291. The modern form of the name seems to have been recorded no earlier than 1795. The English translation is 'the church of Peter in the vale of Clwyd'.

Like so many other small church settlements in Clwyd, the origins and history of Llanbedr are obscure. An early medieval beginning for the church is possible though there is little solid evidence available to support this contention, and it is the churchyard shape alone that is suggestive. Whether a settlement developed around it and if so when are questions that have yet to be resolved.

The earliest cartographic depiction, which is from 1744, shows only the old church, the hall and its gardens, and several lanes and footpaths, seemingly confirming that in the post-medieval era this was nothing larger than a church settlement. The main approach to the church was from the hall, reinforcing the association between the two in the post-medieval era.

By the 1830s a scatter of dwellings had emerged along and near to the Ruthin to Mold toll road (the A494). More recent developments have emphasised this relocation of settlement along both the main road and the two lanes that join it near the Victorian church.

The heritage to 1750

The old church of St Peter (100866) is a ruin, its single chamber retaining its west wall with doorway and bellcote, the base of a Perpendicular window in the east wall, a blocked north doorway, the lower part of a south doorway with an adjacent niche for a stoup, and the base of a timber porch. This older structure has been replaced at the junction of the B5429 and A494 by 'a neat little High Victorian church, of considerable vivacity' (Hubbard) dating to around 1863 and similarly dedicated to St Peter (105900).



Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd Old Church, photo CS03-007-0003, © CPAT 2014

The old churchyard (19740) is small and irregularly oval, its straight sides accompanied by rounded corners. It is raised to a height of up to 1.5m on all sides but the east. Set on the tip of a slight spur, there is nothing to suggest that its form has been modified at any point in the past. The earliest gravestone in the churchyard dates, so it is believed, to 1677 (though one

now within the church carries a date of 1616), and generally there is an interesting set of grave markers and tombs.

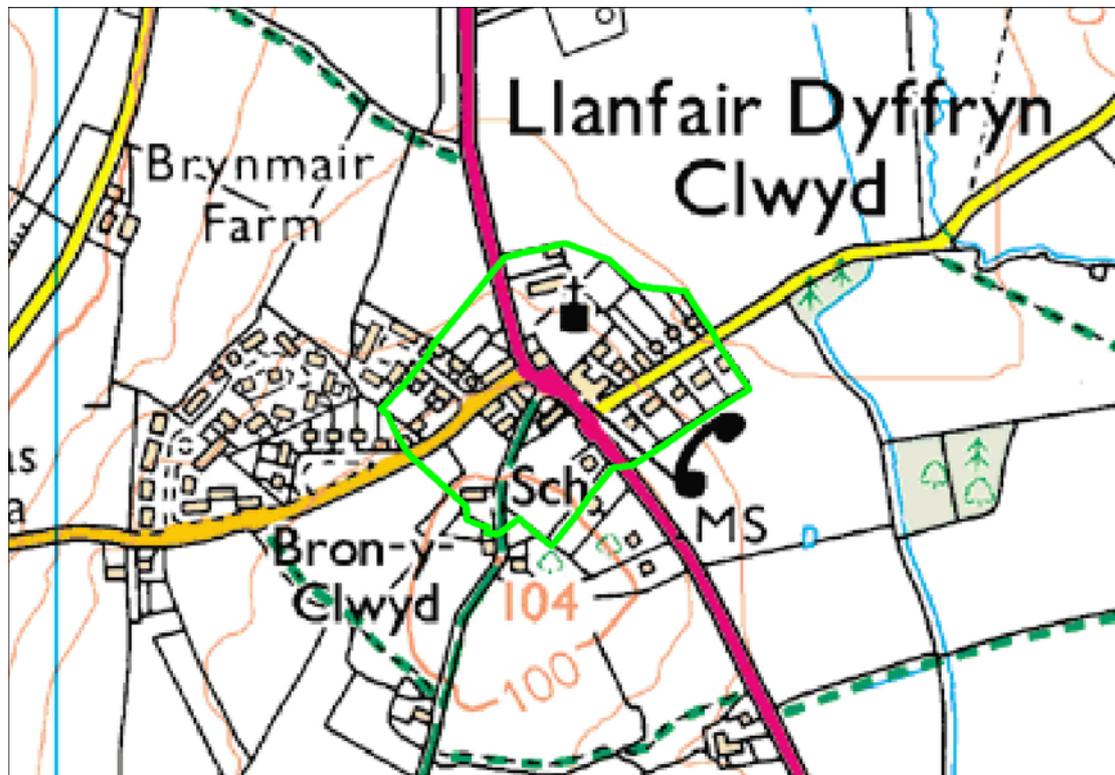
A field named as Cae Castell (19739) on a late 18th-century map and in the Tithe survey lay just north of the A494. Its significance is unclear and it is now incorporated in the house and gardens of a modern property, Robin Hill.

Llanbedr Hall (106063) was largely rebuilt in the third quarter of the 19th century. Its original date of construction has not been determined, but the present building does incorporate earlier fabric.

Wood pasture surrounded the hall at the time of the Tithe survey, and generally this was a much more open landscape than the bounded fields of today would indicate. It is referred to as a park in the accompanying apportionment and Samuel Lewis in 1833 referred to the church as being within the park. An overview of the early Ordnance Survey maps suggests a polygonal area of parkland of around 70 hectares. This is not likely to pre-date the hall's construction, and it does not figure in the *Historic Parks and Gardens Register*.

A reasonably large platform (19741) occupies the corner of a pasture field, little more than one hundred metres to the south-west of the old church. This could be artificial, but requires confirmation by methods other than fieldwork. This apart there is no sign of earlier occupation around the church though woodland on the uphill side could conceivably disguise some features.

The position of the earlier road shown on a map of c.1785 is still distinguished by a continuous field boundary 200m or so south of the old church. Its line is continued by footpaths to the south-west and perhaps the east, and there can be no doubt that it represents an earlier routeway off or over the Clwydian hills.



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