

Llanelidan

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Introduction

Llanelidan lies to the south of the upper Clwyd. A secondary road, the B5429, passes through the village to join a trunk road, the A494, further west. This links Ruthin, nearly 8km to the north, with Bala in Gwynedd. The church sits fractionally above the valley floor on the east side of Afon y Maes, accompanied only by a public house. The modern village is set at a slightly higher altitude on the opposite side of the stream some 300m away.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanelidan 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).

History of development

A document from the beginning of the 13th century provides the first reference to the church or settlement, then termed *Llanhelidan* (1207). In the Norwich Taxation of 1254 it was recorded as *Lanelidan* and in its present form it appears as early as 1390. St Elidan whose church provides the basis for the place-name, is an obscure saint with this the solitary dedication in his name.

The history of Llanelidan has not been chronicled and few references to the settlement are encountered in documentary records. We might suspect an early medieval foundation, but only from the obscure British dedication. Even if a church was here before the Conquest, this does not mean that a settlement developed in the vicinity, and sadly there does not seem to be a single strand of evidence that would point to a nucleation growing up around the church in the Middle Ages.

Even in the middle of the 19th century the stylised Tithe map, supported by the 1819 Ordnance Survey surveyors' drawing, shows the church and only one building, the public house, in close proximity. Westwards, the triangle of lanes that now forms the focus of the scattered hamlet of Llanelidan supported no more than two dwellings.

The heritage to 1750

St Elidan's church (100914), with its two naves, a characteristic of the Vale of Clwyd, and its double bellcote, is said to have been partly rebuilt in 1460 and this seems to correspond with the appearance of the southern nave. But the earliest architectural details date from the late 13th century and are to be found in the north nave. A vestry was added to the west end of the north nave in the 19th century, although there are hints that this could be an earlier extension,

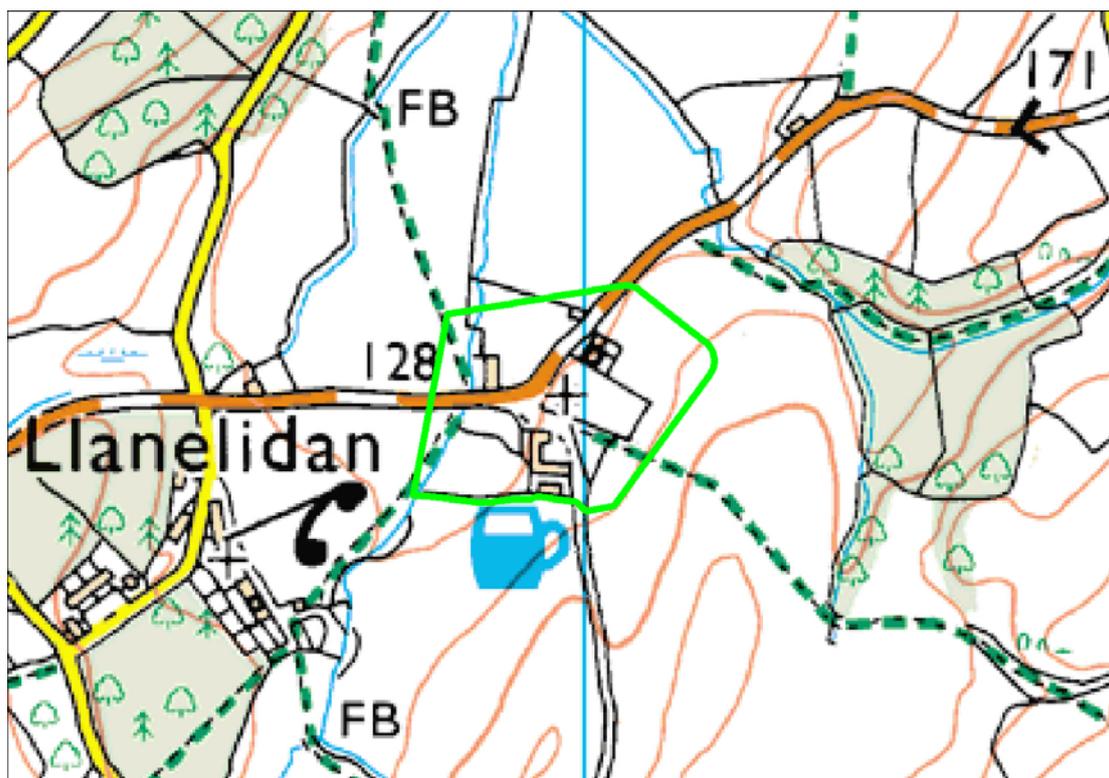
perhaps of the 17th century. Internal features include timberwork re-used from the medieval rood screen, a font and piscine, and some stained glass from the 15th century, a Jacobean pulpit, and some 18th-century box pews.

The churchyard (19730) is now rectilinear with a substantial extension on its eastern side. Hubbard in 1986 claimed it was originally circular, but the surviving traces are not entirely convincing. Particularly on the west side, the churchyard is raised well above the road.

The buildings in the vicinity appear to be of relatively recent date. The Rectory 250m to the west of the church was purpose-built at the very beginning of the 19th-century; the Leyland Arms adjacent to the church presents a 19th-century face to its clientele, but there is an older range of buildings behind, associated with the former farm, Ty'n llan, though its date remains a mystery. There is no evidence for earlier dwellings amongst the scattered houses on the west bank of the valley.

On the west side of the stream, a pasture field rising gently towards the village (19731; OS plot 7846) displays a tract of ridge and furrow cultivation of unknown age that does not extend over the whole field. The nature of other low earthworks in the same field are obscure, but could be modern.

No other earthworks of any significance have been recognised, but little field survey has been conducted in this region in recent years.



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