

Llanfwrog

SJ 1136 5779
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Introduction

Llanfwrog is now effectively a suburb of Ruthin, linked to the town by large modern estates on the west bank of the River Clwyd. The church occupies a pronounced end of spur position projecting into a broad flat valley that to the east rapidly broadens out onto the Clwyd valley floor. A road - the B5105 - passes over the top of the spur, curves around the churchyard and then drops gently eastwards towards Ruthin, less than a kilometre away.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Llanfwrog 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

The early forms of the place-name are interesting for their variety: *Lanwrauc* in 1254, *Llanmurrok* in 1291, *Llanvorok* in 1559 and *Llanvoorog* in 1684. That this was the ‘church of [or dedicated to] Mwrog’, a saint who is otherwise unknown to history, seems to be generally assumed rather than proved, and the past picture is complicated by the fact that some time after the Norman Conquest the church was re-dedicated to Mary the Virgin, today’s church getting the best of both by twinning them in the modern church dedication.

St Mwrog is thought to have lived in the later part of the 7th century AD, and there can be little doubt that the church was founded in the pre-Conquest era, as its circular churchyard attests.

The scale of any settlement around the church cannot be judged, in the Middle Ages or indeed in the centuries immediately after the Reformation. The emergence of Ruthin may well have constrained settlement around the smaller and older places of Llanfwrog and Llanrhudd. Maps of the late 18th century indicate a small settlement of church and scattered houses, some lying around a patch of common to the west of the church. By this time, Ruthin was expanding with housing spreading westwards across the River Clwyd and along the road towards Llanfwrog.



Llanfwrog, photo 95-C-0146, CPAT 2014

The heritage to 1750

The church dedicated jointly to St Mwrog and St Mary (100870), has a double nave and is largely of 15th/16th-century date though it was much restored in 1869/70 when the north nave was almost entirely rebuilt; the west tower is undateable except for its west door which is thought to be 14th-century, and the porch is of the 19th century though it may incorporate earlier woodwork. Inside is a disused font of late medieval date, re-used fragments of the rood screen, an early 18th-century table and a range of wall monuments from the middle of the 18th century onwards.

The churchyard (105993) is distinctively circular, except on the north where the topography has necessitated, perhaps at a later date, a straight wall buttressed by massive supports, and on the west where the graveyard has been extended. With the latter, an earlier curving line is depicted on an estate map of 1826 and can be recognised though only faintly on the ground. The churchyard contains displaced memorials, one of 1640 propped against the wall being of particular interest. The lych-gate (105992) is perhaps of 18th-century origin.

There are buildings of some age to both west and east of the church suggesting a steadily developing settlement after the Reformation which is still in evidence today. West of the church Brynffynnon (105994) carries a datestone of 1746; Ty-gwyn is a two-storeyed, sub-medieval house of late 16th-century date, originally half-timbered, but significantly altered in the mid-17th century and again in the Victorian period (105995); Pen-y-bryn is a timber-framed, three-unit dwelling probably of the 16th century (105996); Glan yr Afon, outwardly Victorian, has apparently earlier features internally; and the Old Alms Cottages were founded in 1605 and rebuilt in 1708. To the south the Cross Keys Hotel opposite the church is considered to be 18th century or earlier but modified. Ty-cerrig is late 17th or early 18th-century, while the contiguous building known as Hafan (= OS Nafan) and seemingly grouped

with Ty-cerrig is a modified cruck-framed hall-house, thought to be of medieval date with an inserted 16th/17th-century fireplace; this has been confirmed by dendrochronology where a series of dated roof timbers indicate that Ty Cerrig was likely to have been constructed during 1501 (105997). A full description can be found on the Coflein website. About 125m east of the church on the south side of Mwrog Street, a row of several houses reveal fabric that may go back as early as 1600, now confused by later modifications.

South of the church and adjacent to the modern cemetery, earthworks (105999) cover a pasture field (OS plot 4574). Terraces with lynchet edges lie close to the cemetery, with ridge and furrow beyond. On the basis of what shows on early aerial photography, the latter may run into the field to the south.

Further ridge and furrow (19700) was previously identified immediately west of Ty-newydd at the extreme western edge of the village. It has not been established whether this is still extant.

Low earthworks (19701) exist on the flat valley floor beside the stream and below the church. These require characterisation through detailed fieldwork.

Estate maps of late 18th-century date show both the church and, 100m to the west, a patch of unenclosed common at the stream confluence. This common together with a ford and perhaps the village pound is shown on a print of 1794. Some of the earlier houses were sited around the edge of the common. This layout may have been disrupted by 1826 when a smithy was built on the common itself. South of the church, Cerrig Lane was little more than a track leading past irregularly shaped strip fields.



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