

Llangunllo

SO211713
16170

Introduction

Llangunllo lies high up the valley of the River Lugg, 8km west of Knighton, with surrounding hills towering over it. A small tributary stream dropping down from high ground on the west creates a spur with the river valley and it is on the tip of this that St Cynllo's church was founded. The older houses shelter below the church close to the valley floor, but modern development is now extending the village up the northern slopes of the valley.

This brief report examines Llangunllo'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).

History of development

Llangunllo's early history is unchronicled. However, there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that this was one of mid-Wales's mother churches, and thus an early medieval foundation of regional significance.

The dedication is to an obscure early medieval saint, though one with several other churches bearing his name including Nantmel, Rhayader in the past, and another mother church, Llanbister, indicating that he was an important saint in the area covered by northern Radnorshire. The church is not mentioned in the 13th-century ecclesiastical taxations and the first reference – as *Llangetlau* – comes in 1323, with *Llankenllowe* in 1395.

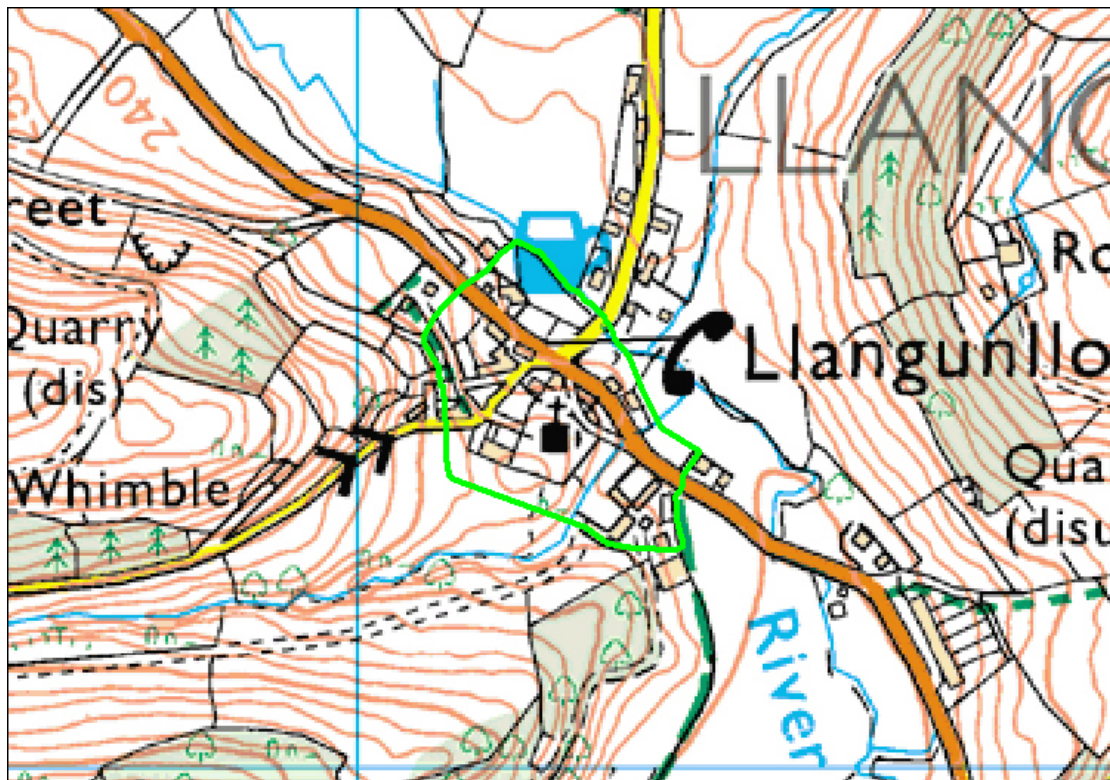
At what stage dwellings started to group around the crossroads below the church cannot be determined. The atypical pattern of small lanes isolating separate blocks of ground is reminiscent of some larger nucleated settlements that developed organically, but this is hardly conclusive and the local topography may have had a significant influence on the growth of the village. Edward Lhuyd's correspondent at the end of the 17th century claimed about six houses in the village. By the middle of the 19th century the settlement consisted of the church, the Great House and more than a dozen other dwellings. By Radnorshire standards this was quite a sizeable village.

The heritage to 1750

St Cynllo's Church (16034; Grade II listing) was largely rebuilt in the Victorian era, its nave and chancel in 1878, the west tower in 1894 - its predecessor had a foundation stone of 1687 - and the porch in 1896. Of the medieval structure, some masonry survives in the nave and chancel and there is a 13th-century lancet window in the former. There is a re-used doorway at the west end. Virtually nothing in the way of furnishings and fittings has survived the restorations and rebuildings.

Llangunllo churchyard (16034) is surprisingly rectangular. It is raised, in places up to 2m, but this is largely the result of its position on a sloping spur. It might be tempting to infer an earlier and larger enclosure defined by an arc of property boundaries bordering the lane to the north-east. The churchyard indeed looks out of place in its shape and size, and unusually has as its main entrance an approach from the west which gives the appearance of a late insertion. For the present, though, all this is at best speculative.

In addition to the listed buildings - The Stores which is part of a range of buildings along the street frontage and the Great House which is classed as mid-18th-century - there are several stone-built cottages which might go back to the 18th century, but little that can be attributed to an earlier period.



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Welsh Assembly Government. Licence number 100017916.