

Llanwrtyd

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Introduction

Llanwrtyd is an isolated church accompanied by a few scattered houses. It lies on the western slopes of the Irfon valley, at the base of the steep Pen Y Ddinas hill, and is some 5km from Llanwrtyd Wells and higher up the valley.

This brief report examines its 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).



Llanwrtyd church, photo 95-C-0625 © CPAT 2011

History of development

Llanwrtyd is a typical isolated church settlement from which the parish derives its name and which in the 19th century also provided the name for the new spa development of Llanwrtyd Wells. The name Llanwrtyd combines the term for church and an otherwise undocumented personal name Gwrtud or Gwrtyd, but the earliest reference to it is a late one: *Llanworted*

appears only in 1543. Speculatively, we may wonder whether the original dedication of the church has been replaced by the present one to the more famous saint in whose diocese it was during the Middle Ages.

Traditionally the church was founded by St David in the 6th century, and the curving boundary around the west side of the churchyard and its location beside the river would certainly support the contention that it was established well before the Norman Conquest. Later it was classed as a chapel attached to Llangammarch.

Its development throughout the Middle Ages and into the post-medieval era is largely undocumented.

The heritage to 1750

St David's Church (20120) comprises a nave and separate chancel, a large southern porch and a bellcote. The present building is mainly 14th-century and 16th-century, although parts were restored in 1861/2 and 1935. The church formerly had a rood screen and loft as is evidenced by the surviving mural stair in the south wall of the nave. The only medieval furnishing in the church is the 14th or 15th-century font.

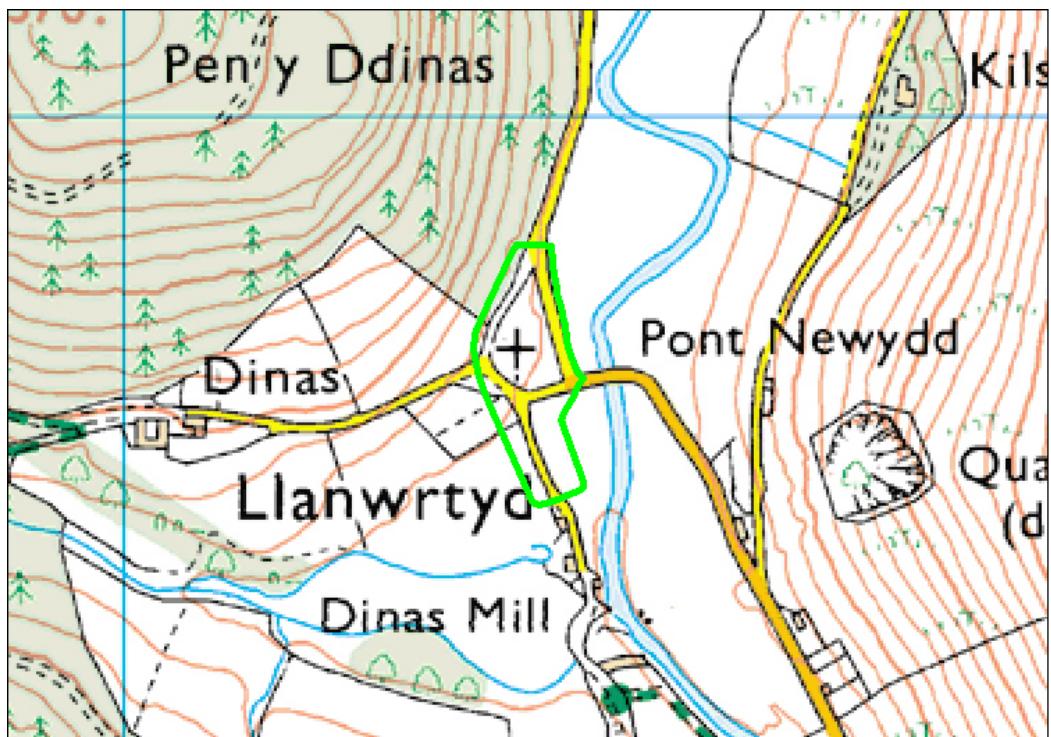
The church contains a cross-carved grave-marker, probably of the 8th or 9th century (3029). This was discovered in 1897 amongst stone from a demolished cottage at Ystafell-fach (Llawdref farm), and erected at the end of Berthddu bridge, before being brought to the church in 1902 or 1903. There is thus no direct link between the early medieval memorial and the church, but curiously Edward Lhuyd at the end of the 17th century referred to a stone in the church whose incisions were by then obliterated. This is hardly likely to be the Llawdref but could conceivably signal another early medieval inscribed stone which has now been lost.

Today the church stands within an irregularly elongated churchyard (2980) but the remains of a former sub-circular churchyard (2981) can clearly be seen. The older enclosure, which is some 60m across is followed by the modern boundary around the west and south sides of the church and survives as a substantial bank and ditch around the east and north within the present yard.

The only other building surviving in the settlement is Dinas Mill (2982) some 200m south of the church, which takes its name from Dinas, the sub-medieval gentry house 300m to the west.

The area between the church and the mill would be the most suitable place for further settlement, though this is pure conjecture for no traces of any earthworks now remain. The road connecting these two sites formerly continued south as the main road to Llanwrtyd Wells (Pontrhydferrau) and other lanes converge on the church from east and west. The 'main' road was only moved to the eastern bank of the river with the building of the Dolycoed Hotel in the late 19th century.

At present Llanwrtyd gives the appearance of a church settlement without any sign of a nucleated community developing around it.



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