

**CPAT Report No 268  
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## **WELSH HISTORIC CHURCHES PROJECT**

### **THE HISTORIC CHURCHES OF THE CONWY VALLEY**

#### **CHURCH SURVEY**

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Report for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

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**WELSH HISTORIC CHURCHES PROJECT  
A REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONWY VALLEY**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The nature of the resource

The churches described here are those within or adjacent to the Conwy Valley in north Wales which has some claim to represent a coherent region as far as church architecture and morphology are concerned. Since local government reorganisation in 1996 this area has fallen completely within Conwy County Borough, but prior to that date the western half was in the county of Gwynedd, the eastern portion in Clwyd. This area includes the east portion of the Deanery of Arllechwedd in the Diocese of Bangor, and in the Diocese of St Asaph, the deanery of Llanrwst, and much of the Deanery of Rhos.

This report represents a joint effort between the Clwyd-Powys and Gwynedd Archaeological Trusts (CPAT and GAT respectively), reflecting their individual involvement in the different parts of Conwy County Borough.

The western part of the Conwy Valley area incorporates 20 churches of medieval date, all of which meet the criteria for inclusion within this project, namely churches of medieval origin which are still owned by the Church in Wales. Ecclesiastical buildings not included within the study are the two Post-reformation chapels at Gwydir Uchaf and Penrhyn, both of which are scheduled ancient monuments. The eastern half has 14 churches, one of which, Llangwm, is disused, but is included here for the sake of completeness. It should perhaps be noted that while all of the churches fall in Conwy County Borough, Abergele and St George which are now in Conwy, are assessed with the churches of Denbighshire and the Vale of Clwyd in a separate report.

The full list of 35 churches in alphabetical order follows. Those prefixed by a Primary Record Number (PRN) are churches within GAT's study area, the remainder which lack numbers are those examined by CPAT.

908	Betws y Coed		Llanelian-Yn-Rhos
	Betws yn Rhos		Llanfair Talhaiarn
6916	Caerhun		Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr
6918	Capel Curig	7012	Llangelynin
6963	Capel Garmon		Llangernyw
	Cerrigydrudion		Llangwm
6924	Conway	7019	Llangwstenin
6929	Dolwyddelan		Llanefydd
6932	Eglwys-Rhos	7031	Llanrhychwyn
6964	Eglwysfach	7034	Llanrwst
	Gwytherin		Llansannan
6934	Gyffin Parish	7081	Llansantffraid Glan Conwy
6945	Llanbedr y Cennin		Llysfaen
6965	Llanddoged	7053	Penmachno
	Llanddulas		Pentrefoelas
	Llandrillo-Yn-Rhos	7074	Trefriw
6961	Llandudno	7080	Ysbyty Ifan

## 2 CHURCH SITES: ORIGINS

### 2.1 Pre-Norman Ecclesiastical Sites

The identification of those churches whose origins, in whatever form, fall in the early medieval era depends largely on a combination of circumstantial evidence: the curvilinearity of churchyards (see section 5.1.1), dedications to British (i.e. Celtic) saints (see section 6.1.1), specific topographic locations (see Edwards and Lane 1992, 3ff), and more rarely direct historic references of variable integrity. Individually none except perhaps for the last of these criteria may be particularly significant, but collectively they assist in the determination of early medieval foundations. In 8 instances the evidence is reasonably convincing and these include Gwytherin and Llandrillo-yn-Rhos which have been claimed as an early monastic sites (a *clasau* or mother churches), and for a further 6 the



evidence is equivocal. No church in the area retains masonry or architectural details which can legitimately be claimed as early medieval.

#### *Probable*

Betws yn Rhos	Llandrillo-yn-rhos	Llansannan
Gwytherin	Llangernyw	Llysfaen
Llanddulas	Llanefydd	

#### *Possible*

Caerhun	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llangwm
Llanelian-yn-Rhos	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr	Penmachno

Early medieval inscribed and incised stones also represent potential evidence. While it is not possible to assert categorically that a particular stone was originally erected at the site where the church evolved, it can reasonably be assumed in some cases, as where several stones are found in the same church. Three churches in the Conwy valley fall in this category, namely Gwytherin, Llangernyw and Penmachno.

## **2.2 Medieval Ecclesiastical sites**

On present evidence only four churches appear to have had their origins in the medieval era. These attributions are due more to a lack of early medieval characteristics than to positive indications that there were founded in the 12th century or later, though in the case of Pentrefoelas there is some evidence to suggest that it was established as a chapel some time after 1195.

Cerrigydrudion	Pentrefoelas	Trefriw
Conwy		

## **2.3 Post-medieval Ecclesiastical Sites**

Pentrefoelas can also be classed in this group for a new church was constructed on a virgin site in the village around 1771, replacing the earlier church which was sited elsewhere in the settlement.

# **3 MEDIEVAL AND LATER CHURCHES**

## **3.1 SURVIVAL**

Most of the churches in the area retain some medieval fabric, and fifteen have reasonable amounts of architectural detail surviving; and all reveal some degree of restoration in the 19th century. Listed below are those churches where medieval fabric and architectural details survive to the extent that the building does appear to be an authentic medieval edifice.

Betws y Coed	Gyffin	Llanelian-yn-Rhos
Caerhun	Llanbedr y Cenin	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr
Capel Curig	Llandrillo-yn-rhos	Llangelynin
Conwy	Llandudno	Llanrhychwyn
Dolwyddelan	Llanefydd	Llanrwst

Some churches have what is probably medieval fabric but little more. Two - Cerrigydrudion and Llysfaen - have solitary architectural features: at the former a 14th-century window is re-used in the vestry, at the latter the cyclopean south door might be medieval.

Cerrigydrudion	Llangernyw	Llysfaen
Llanddoged	Llansanffraid Glan Conwy	Trefriw
Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llansannan	

## 3.2 ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

**3.2.1 Norman (or Romanesque)** Although there is no carved Romanesque sculpture in the area, as exists, for example, at Penmon (Anglesey), two churches, Llandudno and Llanrhychwyn, contain examples of the round arch belonging to this style. At other churches, such as Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, it is possible that some of the masonry is 12<sup>th</sup> century, although this is difficult to confirm.

Llandrillo-yn-Rhos

Llandudno

Llanrhychwyn

**3.2.2 Early English** Details of broadly 13th-century date are not common in this area. The west front at Conwy is the best example, but there is also the blocked arcade at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos and perhaps the narrow slit windows in the nave at Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr. Llangernyw is claimed as 13th century, essentially on the basis of its plan form and on the simple two-centred doorway in the south wall, and a similar date has been proposed for the south door in the chancel at Gyffin.

Conwy  
Gyffin

Llandrillo-yn-Rhos  
Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr

Llangernyw

**3.2.3 Decorated** Conwy is, again, the principal example of Decorated architecture in the area. Features of this style are found in two other churches: the north door at Betws y Coed and the re-set window with ogee-headed lights at Cerrigydrudion.

**3.2.4 Perpendicular** The late medieval period, particularly from the mid-15th century, witnessed an increase in church building, and, with the exception of Conwy, it is from this period that the best quality work is to be found. Particular examples of note include Dolwyddelan, Llanrwst, Llanddodged, Llanrhychwyn, Llanefydd and Llandrillo-yn-Rhos and the arcade at Llysfaen.

Caerhun  
Conwy  
Dolwyddelan  
Eglwys Rhos  
Gyffin  
Llanbedr y Cennin

Llandrillo-yn-Rhos  
Llandudno  
Llanelian-yn-Rhos  
Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr  
Llangelynin  
Llangernyw

Llanefydd  
Llanrhychwyn  
Llanrwst  
Llysfaen  
Trefriw

**Windows** Rectangular-headed and arch-headed windows are common, usually with panels above, and there is a reasonable survival of original dressings. Llangernyw is included here for although the east window is a Victorian replacement, the east walls of the transepts incorporate dressed stone from late medieval windows in the masonry.

Caerhun  
Conwy  
Dolwyddelan  
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos

Llanelian-yn-Rhos  
Llangelynin  
Llangernyw

Llanefydd  
Llanrhychwyn  
Llanrwst

**Doorways.** The standard form of doorway on the eastern side of the Conwy valley is 'cyclopean', constructed of large slabs of limestone, frequently unchamfered. These are generally attributed to the Perpendicular era, usually on the basis of association. The arches tend to the rounded shape rather than the pointed, such as Llysfaen, and this shape is true also of those in the west, although here the arches are more usually constructed of radial voissours.

Betws y Coed  
Caerhun  
Dolwyddelan

Llanbedr y Cennin  
Llandudno  
Llanelian-yn-Rhos

Llanefydd  
Llanrwst  
Llysfaen

**Towers.** Two towers exist in the area: at Conwy and at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos. The former incorporates the west wall



of the 12th-century monastic church, but the upper stages date from the 15th century. The date of the tower at Llandrillo has been variously attributed to the 15th century and to 1552.

*Arcades.* Apart from Conwy and Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, which contain arcades of 13th-century date, the remaining arcades are of 15th-century or early 16th-century date. Medieval arcades formerly existed at Llanddoged and Trefriw.

Conwy  
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos

Llanelian-yn-Rhos  
Llanefydd

Llanrhychwyn  
Llysfaen

### 3.2.5 *Post-medieval era*

New buildings erected in the immediate post-Reformation era include the chapels at Gwydir Uchaf and Penrhyn, although neither fall within the remit of this study. The chapel at Llanrwst is a good example of 17th-century work. Two churches - Capel Garmon and Eglwysfach - were completely rebuilt in the later 18th century. A post-Reformation church at Llanddulas was built in 1732 but demolished to make way for a Victorian structure, and a similar fate befell the church of 1771 at Pentrefoelas.

The tower at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos may have been built or modified in 1552 with further changes implemented around 1600. Some rebuilding is thought to have occurred at Cerrigydrudion in the 17th century, and probably at the eastern end of Llangernyw in 1720. Capel Garmon was rebuilt in 1789, and Eglwysfach in 1782, though both underwent further significant restoration work in the 19th century.

A round-headed south doorway remains at Llanfair Talhaiarn, the sole remnant of a more extensive refurbishment, including the windows, which took place in the late 17th or 18th century. Round-headed windows in both stone and wood remain at Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr and may date to soon after 1781. Those in the south wall at Llangwm together with the chancel arch belong to a remodelling of 1747. And there is a round-headed window, though with Victorian dressings, in Llansannan.

Capel Garmon  
Cerrigydrudion  
Eglwysfach  
Llandrillo-Yn-Rhos

Llanfair Talhaiarn  
Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr  
Llangernyw

Llangwm  
Llanrwst  
Llansannan

**3.2.6 19th/20th-century** Eleven churches (listed below) were built anew in the 19th century. Virtually every other church in the area underwent some degree of restoration during the century.

Betws yn Rhos  
Capel Garmon  
Eglwys-rhos  
Eglwysfach

Gwytherin  
Llanddulas  
Llangwstenin  
Llansantffraid Glan Conwy

Penmachno  
Pentrefoelas  
Ysbyty Ifan

Betws-yn-Rhos, Gwytherin and Pentrefoelas were constructed on the foundations of their predecessors, in the last case an 18th-century structure on a greenfield site. Llanddulas was erected on a new site in the churchyard, and the same is true of the church at Capel Garmon which was built to one side of its predecessor in the previous century.

## 4 CHURCH BUILDINGS

### 4.1 Building Materials

It can be anticipated that most churches in an area will be constructed of local materials and this is certainly true of the Conwy Valley area. During the survey an attempt was made to classify the masonry used in each church; this was a subjective assessment without the benefit of geological training. Two churches - Llandrillo-yn-Rhos and Llanfair Talhaiarn - have parts of their exteriors disguised by render.

All of the pre-19th-century churches on the eastern side of the Conwy Valley to have a limestone component in

their masonry. Llysfaen is entirely of limestone, while the rest have varying mixtures of limestone, shale and sandstone. Where sandstone occurs it is either early in date or is re-used as at Llansannan. Pebblestones, presumably from nearby watercourses, were utilised at Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr and Llangwm. Ashlar masonry is largely restricted to the Victorian phases of some churches. On the western side, the churches are constructed of local stone mainly from the Ordovician and Silurian shales, except for Llandudno which is built of local limestone.

## 4.2 Church Plans

The following lists cover only those churches with pre-19th-century fabric survivals. Wholly Victorian buildings are not included.

### 4.2.1 Naves and chancels

Single cell churches where nave and chancel are undifferentiated externally, and divided by a screen or no more than step internally, are now rare, although the majority started in this form, and were later extended either by the addition of an aisle, or a chapel. The church at Llandudno and the redundant church at Llangwm are the only ones that fall into this category. Multi-cellular churches where the nave and chancel are of similar width are listed in the next section.

Only one church - Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr - has a chancel that is separate and distinct from its nave. No 'weeping' chancels have been recognised.

### 4.2.2 Multi-cellular churches

The majority of churches can be classed as multi-cellular. Most distinctive are the so-called double-naved buildings, the seven examples listed here (\*) reflecting the tradition common in the Vale of Clwyd to the east, and continuing as far west as Trefriw. It is well known that the double nave is a late development in the medieval period, being attributed usually to the late 15th century or early 16th century even when there are no confirmatory architectural details. Masonry and structural changes at several of the examples in this area reveal the development of double naves from single-cell buildings.

Cerrigydrudion  
Llanddoged  
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos\*  
Llanelian-yn-Rhos\*

Llanfair Talhaiarn\*  
Llangernyw  
Llanefydd\*

Llansannan\*  
Llysfaen\*  
Trefriw\*

*Aisles* are found in the seven double-naved churches listed above, where one of the naves, and in this area it is without exception the south, functions as such together with the chancel, while the other is an aisle which usually contains seating, the organ and sometimes a subsidiary altar. The double naves tend to be of the same height, and clerestories are absent.

*Transepts* are found only in Llangernyw church and these may be as late as the 15th century.

*Chapels* The small south cell attached to the chancel at Cerrigydrudion has been termed a transept but is better classed as a chapel, and indeed has been referred to in some literature as the Giler Chapel. A date of 1503 has been put on its construction. Chapels are more of a feature on the west side of the area, and were added on to existing churches.

Caerhyun  
Capel Curig  
Cerrigydrudion  
Conwy

Dolwyddelan  
Eglwys-rhos  
Gyffin

Llanbedr y Cennin  
Llangelynin  
Llanrwst



#### 4.2.3 Towers

There are two medieval towers in the area, at Conwy and Llandrillo-yn-Rhos. The former incorporates the west wall of the 12th-century monastic church, but the upper stages date from the 15th century. The date of the tower at Llandrillo has been variously put in the 15th century and in 1552. There is a 19th-century tower at Llanrwst.

#### 4.2.4 Bellcotes and belfries

Conwy, Llandrillo-yn-Rhos and Llanwrst excepted, all the churches have west bellcotes. Apart from Llangwm where it might be 18th-century, these are all of 19th-century date.

#### 4.2.5 Porches

The majority of the churches have south porches, rebuilt in the 19th century. Llangernyw, Llangwm, Dolwyddelan, Llandudno and Penmachno have them on the north side of the church. Some uncertainty clouds the dating of Cerrigydrudion and Llanneffyd, while Llangwm is probably 18th-century. Conwy has two porches, the north one of which is medieval. Other medieval porches exist at Llanbedr y Cennin, Llandudno and Llangelynin while that at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos can be documented to c.1540. Caerhun porch contains some medieval masonry, and at Llanellian-yn-Rhos a 19th-century porch has the late medieval roof timbers of its predecessor re-used.

Caerhun	Llanbedr y Cennin	Llangwm
Capel Garmon	Llanddoged	Llanneffydd
Cerrigydrudion	Llandrillo-yn-Rhos	Llanrwst
Conwy	Llanellian-yn-Rhos	Llansannan
Dolwyddelan	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llysfaen
Eglwys-rhos	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr	Penmachno
Eglwysfach	Llangelynin	Trefrew
Gyffin	Llangernyw	Ysbyty Ifan

### 4.3 Internal Architectural Features

#### 4.3.1 Timber roofs and ceilings

Nineteen of the churches have surviving medieval roofs, and of the pre-19th-century structures only Llansannan and possibly Llangwm have had their timberwork replaced in the last three hundred years. Most of the medieval roofs are considered to be 15th or 16th-century and in the naves are of open type with arch-braced collars and/or tie beams, and often with windbraces, but generally fairly plain with little elaboration. However, the arch-braced collar-beam roof had a very long life, at least from the late 14th century through to the late 16th century, and close dating by roof type is not yet possible. The amount of timber replacement varies, and at Llanfair Talhaiarn for instance it seems likely that not much of the original medieval timber remains.

Betws y Coed	Llanbedr Y Cennin	Llangelynin
Caerhun	Llandrillo-yn-Rhos	Llangernyw
Capel Curig	Llandudno	Llanneffydd
Cerrigydrudion	Llanellian-yn-Rhos	Llanrhychwyn
Dolwyddelan	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llysfaen
Eglwys-rhos	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr	Trefriw
Gyffin		

Formerly a common feature were wagon and barrel roofs in the chancels, but many were removed during the 19th and 20th centuries. The roof in Llanellian-yn-Rhos is notable for its painted scenes, and its north 'chapel' wagon roof is also painted, though in this case what can be seen is almost certainly Victorian or later. The painted ceiling panels at Gyffin are also of particular importance.

#### 4.3.2 Rood screens, lofts and stairs

This area is relatively rich in screens. Conway is a particularly fine example, and those at Llanrwst and Dolwyddelan are also of note, together with the parclose screen at Gyffin. East of the Conwy, Llanelian-yn-Rhos is the only church where the rood screen survives, in this case only the lower part. Painted panels from the loft at Llanelian have also survived. Fragments from the rood screen at Llysfaen have been used as a parclose screen between the chancel and the vestry.

*Rood screens.* The following churches contain complete or partial remains of screens:

Conway	Llandudno	Llanrwst
Dolwyddelan	Llanelian-yn-rhos	Llysfaen
Gyffin	Llangelynin	

#### 4.3.3 Galleries

Most galleries were removed during the restorations of the later 19th century. The only survivals are the 1838 gallery at Betws yn Rhos and the undated example at Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr which has been very heavily restored in recent years.

### 4.4 Furnishings and Fittings

#### 4.4.1 Wall paintings

Medieval and later wall paintings have been recorded in the past in several churches, e.g. Cerrigydrudion. None survive, or at least are now visible.

#### 4.4.2 Stained glass

Eight churches have surviving medieval fragments, while at Llangwm fragments were noted in the last century, but it is not possible to determine whether these survive today.

Betws y Coed	Llandrillo-yn-rhos	Llannefydd
Cerrigydrudion	Llangwm?	Llanrhychwyn
Dolwyddelan	Llangwstenin	Llansantffraid Glan Conwy

#### 4.4.3 Fonts

The font is the most durable of fittings and on occasions virtually the only one to have survived the wholesale Victorianisation of a church (e.g. Gwytherin and Llanddulas).

There are a number of 12th and 13th-century fonts, as, for example, at Betws y Coed, Caerhun, Gyffin, Llanbed y Cennin, Llandudno Llanrhychwyn and Penmachno, the disused square bowl at Llandulas, and one with nailhead decoration at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos. Other later medieval examples remain at Conwy, Capel Curig, Dolwyddelan, Llangelynin, Gwytherin, Llanelian-yn-Rhos, Llanfair Talhaiarn and Llangernyw, but it is noticeable that several of these are no longer used for baptism. Post-reformation fonts exist at Llanelian-yn-Rhos, Llannefydd (dated to 1668), Llansannan and Pentrefoelas.



Betws y Coed  
Caerhun  
Capel Curig  
Conway  
Dolwyddelan  
Gwytherin  
Gyffin  
Llanbedr y Cennin  
Llanddoged

Llanddulas  
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos  
Llandudno  
Llanelian-yn-Rhos  
Llangelynin  
Llangernyw  
Llangwstenin

Llanefydd  
Llansannan  
Llanrhychwyn  
Llanrwst  
Llansantffraid Glan Conwy  
Penmachno  
Pentrefoelas

#### 4.4.4 *Stoups*

These remain in only three churches, of which Dolwyddelan and Llangernyw are medieval, and that at Cerrigydrudion, in 18th-century marble, may even have functioned as a font.

#### 4.4.5 *Piscinae*

One medieval piscina remains - disused in the Victorian church at Llanddulas.

#### 4.4.6 *Altar Tables*

A single altar table has been recorded, at Llanefydd, this carrying the date of 1636. Communion tables at Dolwyddelan and Trefriw are dated to the 17th century and 18th century respectively.

#### 4.4.7 *Altar rails*

Seventeenth-century altar rails are to be seen at Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr, Llangernyw and Llanrhychwyn.

Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr

Llangernyw

Llanrhychwyn.

#### 4.4.8 *Pulpits*

17th-century pulpits remain at Llanrhychwyn and Trefriw, 18th-century examples at Llanbedr y Cennin, Llangelynin and Llansannan, though the last of these was brought from Liverpool in 1894. Betws y Coed's pulpit is undated and that at Llanddoged is a three-decker. Fragments from the 18th-century pulpit at Llanefydd and an undated pulpit at Llanelian-yn-Rhos survive in their respective churches.

Betws y Coed  
Llanbedr y Cennin  
Llanddoged

Llanelian-yn-Rhos  
Llangelynin  
Llanefydd

Llanrhychwyn  
Llansannan  
Trefriw

#### 4.4.9 *Reading Desks*

Two churches, Betws y Coed and Llanbedr y Cennin have reading desks, the former from 1697, the latter of the 18th century.

#### 4.4.10 *Chests*

Five churches have chests, those at Cerrigydrudion and Llansannan dated to 1730 and 1683 respectively. That at Caerhun is attributed to the 16th century.

Caerhun  
Cerrigydrudion

Gwytherin  
Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr

Llansannan



#### 4.4.11 Seating

Remains of medieval seating survives at Conwy. None of the churches in the areas retains its pre-19th-century box pews except for Dolwyddelan and Llanbedr y Cennin (though Betws yn Rhos has got one set of Victorian pews and a plan showing the 19th-century layout and ownership of the pews in the church, and Llanddodged also has 19th-century pews). Re-used panels, usually for a dado, are to be seen at Llanelian-yn-Rhos and Llangernyw.

Two dated benches have been preserved at Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr (1753) and Llansannan (1634), and there are 18th-century benches at Trefriw.

#### 4.4.12 Benefaction boards

In contrast to most post-Reformation fittings benefaction boards are surprisingly common, with nine churches to the east of the Conwy displaying either wooden or stone examples. Eighteenth-century wooden examples have been recorded at Cerrigydrudion (1737), Llanelian-yn-Rhos (1735), Llanfair Talhaiarn (1717), and Llangernyw where nine panels were formerly attached to the front of the gallery (1748). One dated stone tablet is at Llangwm (1734), and there is an undated stone one at Llannefydd.

Cerrigydrudion	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llannefydd
Gwytherin	Llangernyw	Llansannan
Llanelian-yn-Rhos	Llangwm	Pentrefoelas

#### 4.4.13 Poor Boxes

An 18th-century poor box is to be seen at Llannefydd.

#### 4.4.14 Medieval monuments

A number of churches have medieval monuments including effigies of Gruffydd ap Dafydd Goch at Betws y Coed (14th century), and of Howel Coetmor at Llanrwst (15th century); others survive in Conwy and Ysbyty Ifan. Llannefydd contains fragments of two miniature effigies of supposedly 14th-century date. This area is also relatively rich in 12th to 14th-century graveslabs. The collections at Conwy (6) and Ysbyty Ifan (3) are of particular note, Llannefydd has two 14th-century cross-inscribed sepulchral slabs, and there are broadly similar relics at Gwytherin (2), and at Llangwm where a fragment is built into the porch.

Betws y Coed	Llandrillo-Yn-Rhos	Llannefydd
Conwy	Llandudno	Llanrwst
Gwytherin	Llangwm	Ysbyty Ifan
Gyffin		

#### 4.4.15 Post-medieval monuments

None of the churches has monumental sculpture as such, though a plaque of 1671 in Llysfaen might have come from a tomb formerly in the church. Pre-19th century mural tablets are common. Llannefydd has the earliest (1614) and Llanfair Talhaiarn and Llansannan also have 17th-century examples.

Betws yn Rhos	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr	Llansannan
Cerrigydrudion	Llangwm	Llysfaen
Llanelian-yn-Rhos	Llannefydd	Pentrefoelas
Llanfair Talhaiarn		

Brasses Dolwyddelan contains a brass of 1525, and there is one of 1741 at Llannefydd.

#### 4.4.16 Bells

Information on bells has been collected from a variety of sources, but has generally not been verified by fieldwork because of access and safety issues. There is a 14th-century bell at Llanrhychwyn, and a 16th-century bell at Conwy. The remaining early bells are post-Reformation, of which there are at least six examples, that at Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr dated to (1594).

Caerhun	Llanelian-yn-Rhos	Llannefydd
Conwy	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llanrhychwyn
Dolwyddelan	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr	

## 5 CHURCHYARDS

### 5.1.1 Shape

Churchyard shape has been referred to above (section 2.1) as an element in determining the likely early medieval origins of a particular church site. The following list is of those churchyards where a reasonable degree of curvilinearity remains. Caerhun, situated within a Roman fort, is rectangular in shape.

Betws y Coed	Llanddoged	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr
Betws yn Rhos	Llanddulas	Llansannan
Llanbedr y Cenin	Llandudno	

### 5.1.2 Relict boundaries

In addition some churchyards exhibit traces of earlier circuits, usually in the form of relict banks. In places such as Betws yn Rhos and Llanddulas these banks may complete an existing circuit, in others they may suggest an earlier curvilinear enclosure.

Betws yn Rhos	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llannefydd?
Llanddulas	Llangernyw	Llysfaen
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos		

## 5.2 Churchyard features

### 5.2.1 Prehistoric and medieval stones

Two churchyards have early medieval stones in them. Gwytherin has a line of four, one with a Latin inscription, while Llangernyw has two cross-inscribed stones. The latter also has two boulders, which have been viewed as prehistoric by some writers. There is a 13th-century cross-slab at Conwy.

### 5.2.2 Wells

There is a well in the churchyard of Llangelynin, and one near to the church at Llysfaen.

### 5.2.3 Crosses

The only remnant of a churchyard cross is at Llannefydd where the cross stump and base support a sundial.

### 5.2.4 Sundials

Eight churches have sundials, but others have disappeared from Llangwm, where only the base remains, and

Llysfaen during the present century. Pentrefoelas is included here though it was set up some time after 1916; the others carry 18th-century dates.

Betws y Coed	Llandrillo-yn-Rhos	Llanefydd
Caerhun	Llandudno	Pentrefoelas
Eglwysfach	Llanelian-yn-Rhos	

### 5.2.5 Gravestones

Gravemarkers in the churchyards of the region were not examined sufficiently closely to obtain a clear picture of the patterns of burial and monument survival, but an attempt was made to distinguish the earliest legible gravestone or slab. Almost certainly the details could be refined by consultation of existing churchyard records prepared by the local family history group. Fourteen churches in the region have gravestones and slabs going back into the 18th century (listed below), and seven of these (marked \*) have 17th-century markers. A chest tomb from 1612 at Llanelian-yn-Rhos is the earliest. (Note: no attempt was made to record post-medieval graveslabs in the Gwynedd churches, so the list below refers to those only in the east of the area).

Betws yn Rhos	Llanelian-yn-Rhos*	Llansannan
Cerrigydrudion	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llysfaen*
Gwytherin*	Llangernyw*	Nantglyn*
Llanddulas	Llangwm	Pentrefoelas
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos*	Llanefydd*	

### 5.2.6 Lychgates

Five lychgates appear to pre-date the 19th century.

Betws y Coed 1737	Llandrillo-yn-Rhos 1677	Llanrhychwyn 1762
Caerhun 1728	Llangernyw 1745	

### 5.2.7 Yews

Mature and ancient yews were recorded in eighteen churchyards. Notable is the venerable tree at Llangernyw which has been claimed to be 4000 years old and the oldest tree in Wales.

## 6 DEDICATIONS

### 6.1.1 British Dedications

Seventeen churches have dedications to British saints, including Llanefydd with its joint dedication to Nefyd and Mary. One church, Pentrefoelas, has no known dedication.

Capel Curig	Llandudno	Llanrhychwyn
Dolwyddelan	Llanelian-yn-Rhos	Llanrwst
Gwytherin	Llangelynin	Llansannan
Llanddoged	Llangernyw	Llysfaen
Llanddulas	Llangwstenin	Penmachno
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos	Llanefydd	

### 6.1.2 Earlier dedications

For two churches, there is evidence, of a different dedication at an earlier date. Gwytherin was for a time dedicated to St James, while Llanelian-yn-Rhos may originally have been dedicated to St Eleri.



## 7 POTENTIAL & INTEREST

### 7.1 Archaeological Potential

#### 7.1.1 *Survival of deposits*

Establishing the degree of survival of the sub-surface deposits that are or were an inevitable component of the total archaeology of every historic church is, in the absence of full excavation, an impossible task. Externally the lowering of the ground surface and the digging of drainage trenches around the church footings can have a detrimental effect on vital stratigraphy relating to the building and later maintenance of the structure. Inside the church, the excavation of vaults, the insertion of burials beneath the floor, the lowering of floor levels, the introduction of heating systems involving boiler houses and sub-surface ducts, and any restoration work that necessitated disturbance below ground level, will all have been damaging archaeologically.

Some of these activities are more easy to recognise than others. Underfloor heating usually leaves visible signs, even if the scale of work cannot be gauged. On the other hand the deliberate raising or lowering of the ground level within a church may be very difficult to assess, and even mention of such work in a faculty petition is no guarantee that it was actually carried out.

#### 7.1.2 *External drainage*

Almost every church has some evidence of external drainage, the only uncertainties being Llangwm and the Victorian church at Betws yn Rhos.

#### 7.1.3 *Underfloor heating and new flooring*

Disturbance of floors during 19th-century restoration work took many forms, including lowering the floor in advance of resurfacing, and inserting underfloor heating. The following are medieval churches with no evidence for underfloor heating or other severe disturbance.

Betws y Coed	Gwytherin	Llangernyw
Betws yn Rhos	Llandudno	Llanefydd
Caerhun	Llanelian-yn-Rhos	Llanrhychwyn
Capel Curig	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llansannan
Cerrigydrudion	Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr	
Dolwyddelan	Llangelynin	

On the basis of the previous two lists Betws yn Rhos may be the only church not affected by either external drains or internal ducting.

#### 7.1.4 *Underfloor vaults*

The following churches are known to have vaults, but others must certainly exist for which no details have been gleaned.

Betws yn Rhos	Llanfair Talhaiarn	Llangernyw
Llanelian-yn-Rhos		

#### 7.1.5 *Churches with 'lost' elements*

A number of churches rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries may retain significant archaeological deposits belonging to the earlier church. These include Capel Garmon, Penmachno, Llanddulas and Pentrefoelas. The north aisle at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, if it was ever built, may also be of significance.

## **7.2 Archaeological and architectural interest**

Based on the lists given in sections 2, 3 and 4 certain facets and features stand out as being of particular interest in the churches of the region, and every effort should be made to ensure their continued survival.

### **7.2.1 *Sub-regional church groups***

Though the churches of the Conwy Valley environs have been treated as a group for the purposes of this synthesis, it is clear that at least one smaller type-group exists within it. Double-naved churches of which there are seven (section 4.2.2) are a feature of the Vale of Clwyd to the east and it appears that the distribution of those in the Conwy valley region represent an extension of that distribution along the coastal strip.

### **7.2.2 *Church roofs***

Open roofs of late medieval forms survive in a significant number of the churches (see section 4.3.1). Of particular importance are the painted wagon roofs in the church at Llanellian-yn-Rhos and Gyffin.

### **7.2.3 *Benefaction Boards***

The consistent survival of pre-19th-century fittings is not a noteworthy feature of the churches in the area. While benefaction boards may not be the most intrinsically interesting of church fittings, their frequent occurrence in this area is worth noting. (section 4.4.12).

### **7.2.4 *Churchyard monuments***

Nearly half the churches have surviving 17th-century monuments, a much higher proportion than the areas examined in Powys. Like all external monuments these are vulnerable to weathering and consideration should be given to a programme of recording

### **7.2.5 *Churches of particular merit***

Of the churches included, the following were considered to contain medieval remains of particular merit

Caerhun	Llanbedr y Cennin	Llannefydd
Conway	Llandrillo-yn-Rhos	Llanrhychwyn
Dolwyddelan	Llanellian-yn-Rhos	Llanrwst
Gyffin	Llangelynin	

### **7.2.6 *Churches at risk***

Of the churches which contained upstanding medieval masonry three are now redundant, and therefore considered to be at risk.

Betws y Coed	Capel Curig	Langwm
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