

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Henllan Adult Training Centre, Denbighshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT



CPAT Report No 996

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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Report for Denbighshire County Council

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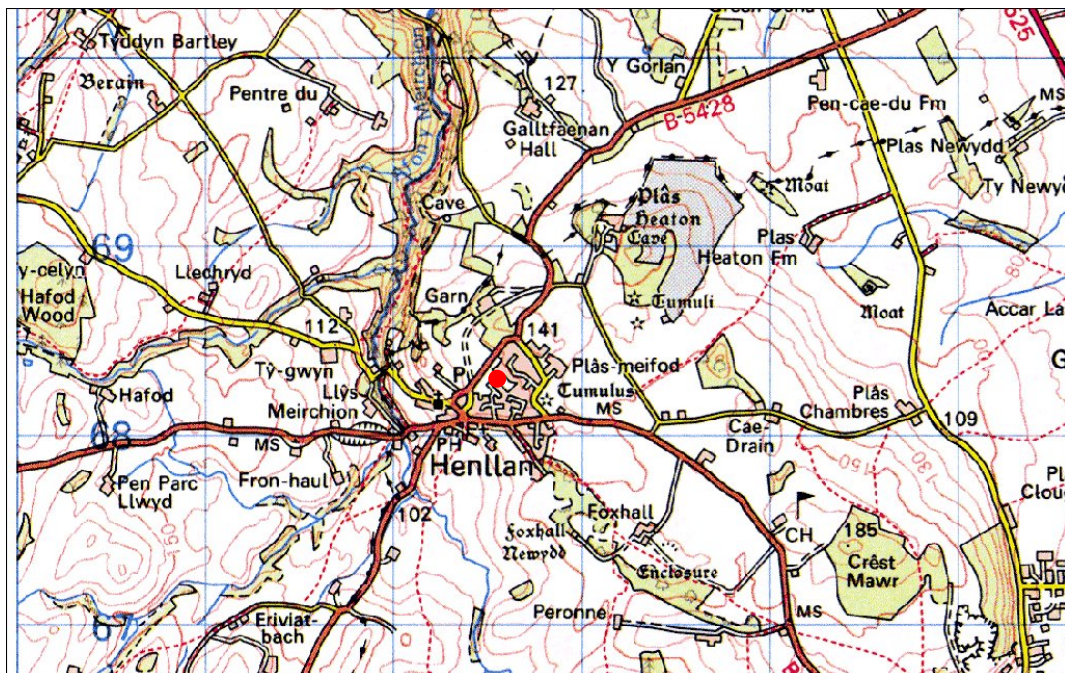
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the end of April 2009, the Field Services section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (hereafter CPAT) was commissioned by Denbighshire County Council to conduct an archaeological assessment in connection with an outline planning application to demolish the existing training centre in the village of Henllan and replace it with a residential development. The Denbighshire Archaeology Service, acting as archaeological advisors within the local planning authority, had determined that an archaeological assessment should be undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the archaeological resource, and to this end a brief had been prepared by the County Archaeologist, Mrs F Gale.
- 1.2 The curatorial brief specified that the assessment should comprise a desk-based study, supplemented by a field survey to record any previously unknown features.
- 1.3 The training centre lies towards the northern edge of the village of Henllan at NGR SJ 0255 6833, edged on two sides by pasture fields and grassland which fall within its own curtilage, but abutted by housing estates on the north-east and south-west. Its general position in relation to the village and its surrounding landscape is shown in Fig. 1, while its precise location and layout is shown in the Denbighshire County Council plan scaled at 1:1250 which is reproduced in this report as Fig. 2.
- 1.4 The centre was erected in the late 1960s, probably soon after planning consent was granted in July 1967, as an adult training centre and hostel.



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey's 1:25,000 map of 1999 with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright.
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Fig. 1 Site location

2 LOCATION

- 2.1 Henllan lies less than 3km north-west of Denbigh on the B5382. Its settlement position is interesting and somewhat unusual in as much as the early village was established on the top and upper flanks of a limestone ridge, with the detached church tower occupying an outcrop and the church itself lower down the slope. Westwards is a deep valley cut by Afon Meirchion, with to the south a small, dry re-entrant valley. The modern village has spread over the flattish plateau behind.

3 HENLLAN SETTLEMENT HISTORY

- 3.1 The first part of this section (paras 3.2–3.6) was prepared for a recent report on an archaeological assessment of another proposed development in the village – Ty Coch, little more than 200m to the south-west of the adult training centre (Jones and Silvester 2008) – and is included here because it reflects our current (and probably the most up-to-date) thinking of the origins and development of the settlement of Henllan.
- 3.2 The name Henllan is potentially significant. Perhaps it has an ecclesiastical origin, but at what point the name 'old church' was applied to the settlement cannot be determined. However, the name could refer to an otherwise unknown enclosure, probably not associated with a church, but one albeit of very early date. The church dedication to St Sadwrn may indicate an early medieval (*i.e.* pre-Conquest) origin, but the first documentary reference to it is in 1291 when it was described as a chapelry attached to St Asaph though with the relatively high value of £16 10s which might just hint that the church in earlier centuries was of greater importance. The presence of a possible holy well – Ffynnon Sadwrn – close to Fox Hall, immediately to the south-east of the village, also focuses in on this obscure saint, and probably strengthens the argument for an early medieval foundation.
- 3.3 What is clear however is that from documentary evidence alone it is impossible to determine whether there was a village clustering around the church in the Middle Ages. It is only long after the Reformation that information becomes available. By the time that John Ogilby was at work in the later 17th century, Henllan was 'a little village seated on an eminence', and Edward Lhwyd a few years later reported about thirteen houses around the church and another eighteen not far off.

The Village plan

- 3.4 The layout of Henllan is intriguing, with its numerous roads and lanes forming an irregular network of thoroughfares and 'islands', unusually complex for north-east Wales. It is the lanes themselves that provide both hints and uncertainties about the origins and development of Henllan. Some can be dismissed as recent additions to the village-scape. The narrow lane that runs down from the church tower to Llindir Street past the Institute cuts across an existing 'island', while the zig-zagging lane beside Plas-meifod give the appearance of a road established in a pre-existing landscape.
- 3.5 At the core of Henllan are four or probably five routeways coming in from various points of the compass, and focussing not on the church itself which would almost certainly have been here long before any settlement developed, but on the ground immediately to the east of it. Some of these tracks certainly had a long history, originating back in the Middle Ages if not earlier. That approaching from the north-west was referred to as 'the way leading from the parish church of Henllan towards Abergley' in 1537, that coming up from Nantglyn to the south was referenced in 1518, and there are various 16th-century references to the road from Denbigh which came in from the east. The pattern created however is slightly irregular, particular with the lane coming down from the north-east and exiting to the south-west, and this suggests that there was probably not a well-defined thoroughfare through Henllan but an area of open ground through which tracks threaded an irregular course.

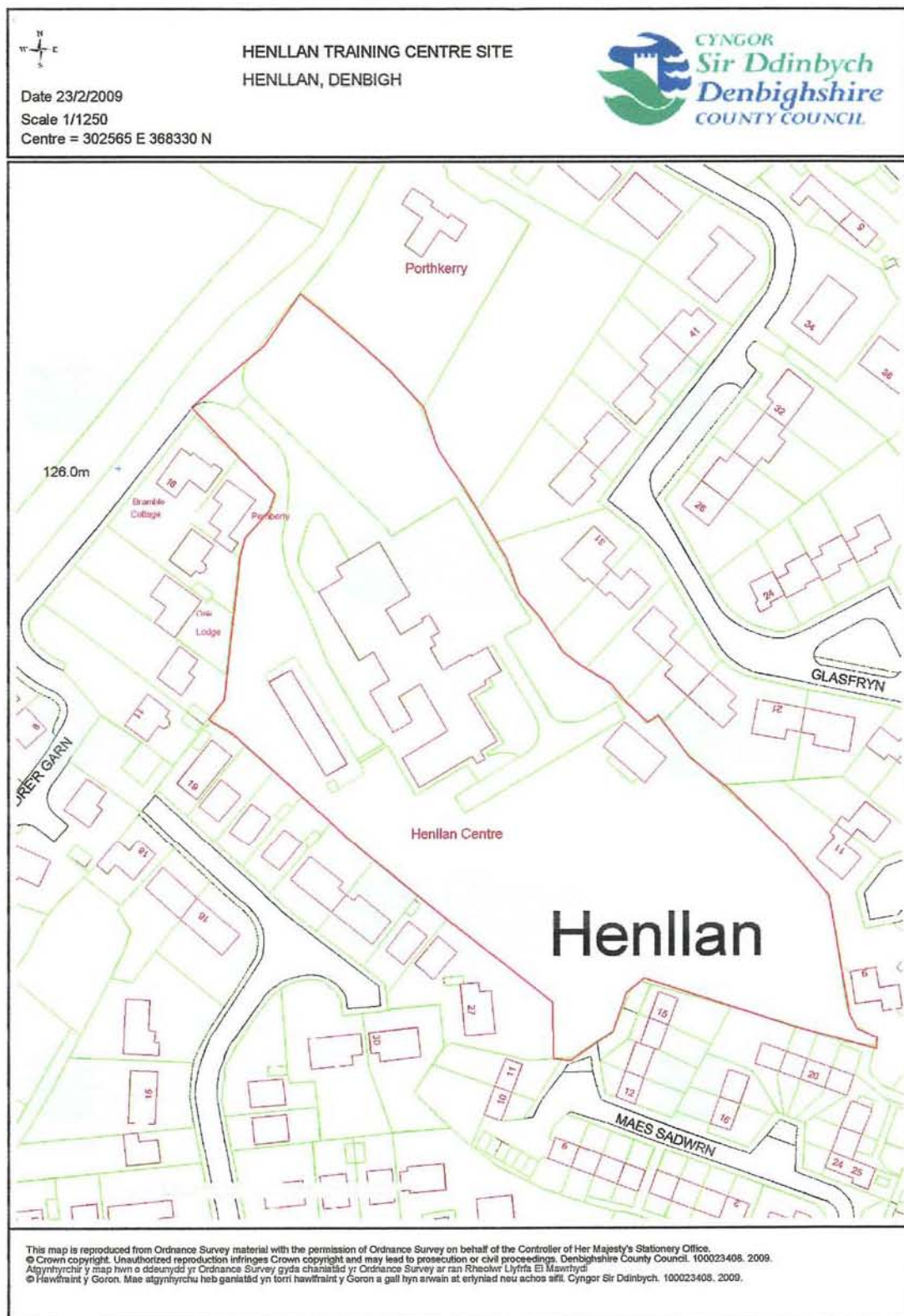


Fig. 2 Detailed plan of the training centre and its environs.
Copyright: Denbighshire County Council

- 3.6 Such open ground might be a small common, but in this area of Denbighshire, too, there were greens, an essentially English landscape form, seen nearby at Denbigh Green (and also went under the name of Lleweni Green) which was a large tract of open land until its enclosure between 1802 and 1814. On and around this common dwellings would have been established in random fashion and the lanes across the common would gradually have become formalised to create the irregular layout visible today. What this common might have been called in the past is not clear. Elizabethan and later documents refer to various commons close to Henllan such as *Craig Henllan*, *Y Llindir* and Henllan Common, and a number together with Denbigh Green should be traceable from detailed analysis of the Enclosure Map.

4 THE DESK-BASED STUDY

- 4.1 The initial assessment involved a desk-based study of readily available cartographic sources, supplemented where possible by primary and secondary documentary, pictorial, and photographic sources held at the following repositories: the regional Historic Environment Record (HER), held by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust in Welshpool and the National Library of Wales (NLW) in Aberystwyth. These were supplemented by documentary material in the Flintshire Record Office (FRO) in Hawarden; the Denbighshire Record Office (DRO) in Ruthin; and the National Monuments Record (NMR) in Aberystwyth.
- 4.2 There are no pre-19th century estate maps that provide any information on this area of Henllan and its contemporary use. The Tithe map of 1842 (Fig. 3) indicates, albeit in a slightly stylised depiction, that the centre and the ground around it fell within a single field (no. 2473) in the earlier part of the 19th century. Unfortunately, because of omissions in the National Library of Wales tithe survey coverage of the parish, it has not been possible to establish the name (if any) that was given to the field at the time.



Fig. 3 The training centre site located on the Tithe Map. Note that grid north lies at the bottom of the plan

- 4.3 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of 1874 (Fig. 4) shows that even more than a century ago the ground now occupied by the adult centre was a single field (OS no. 770), presumably though not certainly under pasture. On the southern side of the field a relatively large

limestone quarry nearly 80m long and 25m deep had been opened up, presumably earlier in the century, but the fact that it was termed 'old' suggests that it was no longer being worked. Forty metres to the south-west of the quarry edge was a limekiln. The map reflects that lime winning was a significant local industry. Another old quarry lay less than 140m to the north-east, another four 300m to the north-east round Bryn-y-garn, and others a similar distance to the south on the other side of the village. In passing we may also note that the old tree –an oak? – on the western perimeter of the centre's land and to the north of the limekiln's location was plotted on the map of 1874.

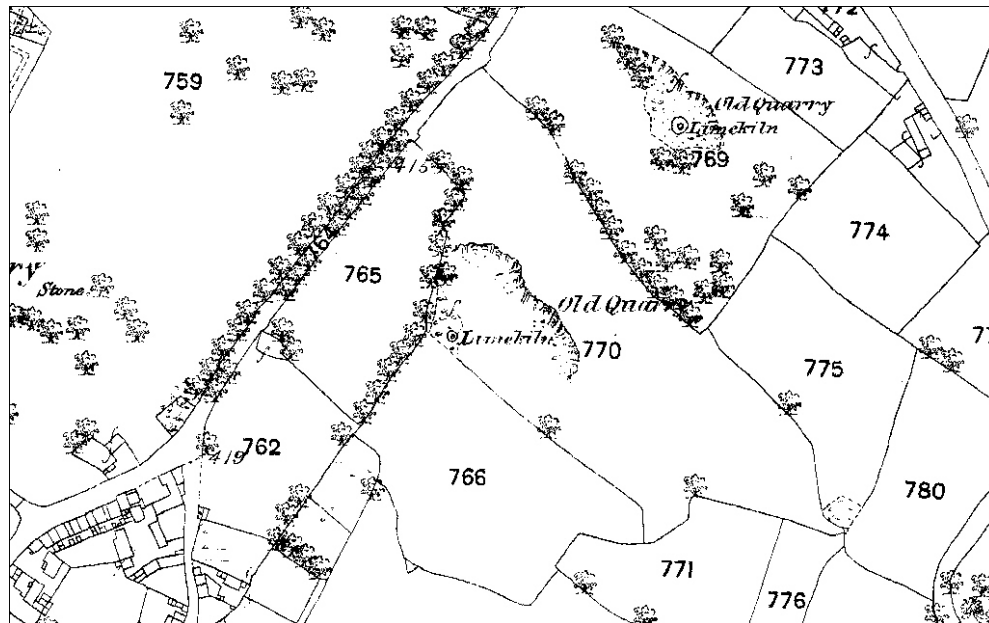


Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map of 1874.

- 4.4 The second edition of the Ordnance Survey map, produced some twenty-five years later in 1899, still depicted the quarry but the limekiln had gone (or was sufficiently derelict to be unrecognisable to the surveyors), unlike that to the north-east mentioned above which might still have been functioning at the end of the century. The third edition of the Ordnance Survey map shows nothing new.
- 4.5 There is thus no indication on any historic map that at any time in the past buildings were constructed on this large plot prior to the erection of the adult training centre.

5 FIELD SURVEY

- 5.1 The Henllan Training Centre occupies an irregularly shaped piece of ground of around 4 acres in size on a broad north-west to south-east axis. The building and its car parks are not centrally placed, but lie a little to the north-west. A modern access road runs off the public road south-eastwards to the Centre and is bounded by grass on the north and to a lesser extent on the south. Beyond the Centre (i.e. to the south-east) is a further tract of grassland divided by a wire fence into two areas of grazing land, and surrounded by housing developments. To the south-west of the Centre, the ground is overgrown.
- 5.2 The approach to the Centre reveals nothing of cultural heritage interest, while the pasture to the south-east, though slightly undulating in appearance, again has nothing that merits further attention. One low mound is without doubt a natural tump.

- 5.3 The Centre was constructed on the edge of the 19th-century quarry, the bulk of the building on the flat ground above it, the south-western wall of the building descending towards the quarry floor. How much of the quarry face was enveloped within the building there is no means of knowing, but one remnant lies beside at the start of the service road that runs along the edge of the building. Considerable landscaping is suggested on this side, for to the south of the service road the ground rises again and formerly had buildings or other structures on top, the sole remnants now being foundations and the shell of a glass-house. This must be made-up ground – it lies on the quarry floor, and then drops steeply on its south side into the back gardens of the houses beyond. It is too overgrown to determine whether any physical remnants of the limekiln remain. If they do they could well be submerged beneath spoil generated by the building works, though in passing it should be noted that the old tree noted above in para 4.3 evidently occupied an untouched knoll of limestone.



Plate 1 Landscaped area to the south-west of the Centre. The glass-house lies in the middle distance to the left of the picture, its frame still visible against the vegetation.

6 MITIGATION

- 6.1 At present it is unclear because of the amount of vegetation and the apparent deposition of material resulting from the construction of the training centre whether any remains of the limekiln survive. A level of recording appropriate to any surviving remains should be initiated when groundworks commence for the development of the site, the nature and scale of the archaeological work to be determined in a detailed brief prepared by the regional archaeological curator.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The desk-based study has produced evidence which indicates that the origins of Henllan are likely to date from the medieval period, and that there was a chapel here from at least 1291. The origins of the village itself, however, are rather more uncertain and there is no clear evidence for a settlement until the 17th century.
- 7.2 Within the area of the proposed development there is no cartographic evidence available before the early 19th century, when maps reveal that there was no dwellings or other buildings in the proposed development area. This, however, should not be taken as unambiguous evidence that there were no dwellings in this area in preceding centuries. The 19th-century maps do show that there was a limestone quarry and a limekiln within the plot, virtually all traces of which have now disappeared.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 The writer would like to thank the following for their assistance during the programme: the staff of the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth; and the staff of the Denbighshire Record Office in Ruthin.

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