

YSTRADFELLTE

SN 9300 1345

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Introduction

Ystradfellte lies in a remote valley in the centre of the Brecon Beacons, 19km to the south-west of Brecon. The settlement occupies a slight spur that projects into the valley floor of Afon Mellte.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Ystradfellte up to the year 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 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 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. The HER can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

Translated, the name means the 'vale of [the] river Mellte'. It is first documented in 1230 as *Stradmelthin* and as *Strathvelthly* in 1316. A record of 1503 has *Stradvellte*, close to its modern name.

The church's origin is indeterminable. An early medieval beginning is a possibility but none of the usual pointers are present. Its absence from the 13th-century taxation lists suggests that it was of small value at that time, and in 1806 it was said to be a chapel dependant on the mother church of Defynnog though this may not reflect the situation in the Middle Ages.

Nothing is known of the history of Ystradfellte, and it must be doubted whether there was a nucleated settlement here in the medieval era. The earliest mapping that is relevant – the Ordnance Survey surveyors' drawing of 1813 – suggests no more than four or five dwellings south and west of the church.

The heritage to 1750

St Mary's church with its nave and chancel in one and a west tower, has blocked doorways of medieval date which could provide a guide to the original date of the nave. The chancel was added in the 16th century, but rebuilding in the 19th century has obscured the earlier history. It contains a 16th-century font and a range of 18th-century mural tablets.

The shape of the churchyard is an irregular polygon and there are no earthworks that convince as an earlier boundary.

There are no other buildings of architectural or historic significance in the vicinity of the village.

A few areas near the church may have supported dwellings that have now vanished. West of the church ploughing has revealed dark-stained soil, perhaps indicative of occupation, while to the north there are building foundations.



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