

Hope

SJ 3095 5836
105943

Introduction

Hope lies about 8km to the north-west of Wrexham, on the A550, and Caergwrle with which it has close ties occupies the opposite bank of the Alyn Valley less than one kilometre to the south. The church at Hope sits on the lip of the valley overlooking the Alyn, with Wat's Dyke following the high ground of the valley edge just a short distance behind it. The settlement has developed on the west-facing slope, but growth was slow until the 20th century when it expanded dramatically and now reaches almost to the river itself.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Hope 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. 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).



Hope, photo 95-c-0070, © CPAT, 2012

History of development

Hope emerges in 1086 in Domesday Book, as a manor held by Gilbert de Venables rather than as a settlement as such. The church dedication, the churchyard shape, its position on the edge of the river valley and the recent identification of several early medieval inscribed stones built into its fabric reveal this to be an early medieval foundation. Indeed the stones and the fact that it was a portionary church in 1291 point to this being a mother church for the area, and thus one of the first ecclesiastical centres to be established.

In Domesday Book, the name of the manor was the same as it is today. This apart the earliest references to Hope are from the late 13th century as with *le Hope* in 1283-4, but later came *Hob* (1580) and *yr Hob* (1590). The name is derived from Old English 'hop' meaning 'a plot of enclosed land' or as the most recent authorities have noted, 'enclosed land in a marsh', perhaps referring to its position on dry land beside the Alyn. But they point out too that in Shropshire a place called Hope indicates 'a small remote valley'.

The rate at which Hope developed through the Middle Ages is impossible to gauge, though with settlers being encouraged at Caergwrle only a short distance away, it is probably unlikely that Hope emerged as a nucleated village of any size. Even after the Reformation growth was probably slow. An estate map of c.1790 does show a concentration of buildings around the churchyard, but that this is an accurate reflection of what was there is open to question. In the first part of the 19th century Samuel Lewis termed it 'an insignificant village'.

The heritage to 1750

Wat's Dyke (110000), one of the two great Saxon linear earthworks that acted as a frontier between Mercia and the Welsh runs along the eastern edge of the settlement. The earthworks here are in a variable state of preservation, but substantial sections of its course are statutorily designated.

The church of St Cynfarch (106393) – though 17th and 18th century sources mistakenly believed the dedication was to St Cyngar – is of medieval date, mostly of Perpendicular build and double-naved with its tower from the 16th century. Little of medieval date survives in the way of fittings: there are the early medieval stones previously alluded to, some stained glass of around 1500 and fragmentary wall paintings. Later in date is the funerary monument to Sir John Trevor who died in 1629 and a Jacobean pulpit.

The raised churchyard (105928) is curvilinear on the west and south; the original line has almost certainly been modified on the north and east, though there is now no evidence of a relict boundary in the garden on the east and the carpark on the north.

Examining the plan of the village, it seems likely that many of the lanes converging on the churchyard date back to the Middle Ages, a pattern that might be classed as reasonably typical of quite a number of early church settlements. Only parts of the Gresford Road (the B5373) can be written off as a modern intrusion in the landscape.

No traces of earlier settlement have come to light in recent years. An evaluation of land off Sarn Lane (SJ 3087 5831; 105929) within 110m of the church revealed nothing of the earlier village design or material of medieval date.

There are few obviously early buildings in the village. The only ones recorded, other than the church, are Hope Cottage (105922) which is of the 17th century, but was altered in the 19th century, and Tythe Barn on Sarn Lane, a dwelling converted from a timber-framed tithe barn of the 17th century.

Medieval open fields were still discernible as late as the mid-19th century in the form of long enclosed (fossilised) strips to the north of the village in the vicinity of Stryt Isaf and Ffordd-las.



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