

Northop

SJ 2456 6841
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Introduction

Northop occupies a landscape that which falls gently away to the Dee Estuary around 4km to the north. There is little variation in height within the historic core of Northop although the churchyard occupies the west end of faintly elevated ground. The Northop Brook runs north-westwards through the village without having a noticeable effect on the local topography.

The setting of Northop is disturbed by roads, the A5119 running northwards from Mold 5km away to meet the A55 trunk road which now swings around the northern fringe of the village, and the B5126 coming in from Connah's Quarry to the east.

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



Northop, photo 95-c-0092, © CPAT, 2012

History of development

Northop is the presumed site of an early British church dedicated to St Eurgain, a daughter of Maelgwyn Gwynedd, who was reputedly active in the late 6th century AD. She supposedly had a cell in neighbouring Cilcain, and subsequently founded the church at Northop.

A mother church and clas has been claimed for Northop on the somewhat tenuous evidence of its receipt of a portion of the Cilcain church revenues.

The name as *Northoppe* is first documented in 1283, appearing intermittently thereafter. In the Norwich Taxation of 1254 the church is referred to as *Lhanensgeyn*, and in the taxation of 1291 as *Lanewrgayn*. The two came together – as *Northope al' dict Llanergen* – in 1458-9. The Welsh name of Llaneurgain was still in widespread use in Archdeacon's Thomas' time at the end of the 19th century. The English name means something along the lines of 'dry land to the north'.

The size of the medieval settlement in Northop is impossible to determine, assuming that there was a settlement around the church. Clearer is its expansion in the post-medieval era, lying as it did on the post road to Holyhead. Edward Lhuyd at the end of the 17th century recorded 50 houses near the church. It was then the parochial centre for five townships and four hamlets, but as a parish it has been reduced in size by the creation of other parishes, including Flint and Connah's Quay.

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Eurgain and St Peter (100307) is an imposing building with a long history, though whether this is the site of the earliest ecclesiastical foundation in the Northop area is impossible to verify. About 1200 a small stone church was constructed on the site of the present north aisle and was enlarged later in the medieval period. It now consists of a nave and chancel, a north aisle and a Perpendicular west tower which was reputedly completed in 1571. Much of the church was rebuilt in 1839-40, retaining little more than the internal arcade, and the nave's hammerbeam roof. Restoration work was carried out in 1876/7. In the north aisle are four medieval effigies and there are fragments of two sepulchral slabs of similar date, but all other medieval furnishings and fittings have gone.

The churchyard (19918) is solidly rectangular and raised by about one metre on the south side. It was extended on at least four occasions between 1837 and the 1920s. There is no evidence either on the ground or on early maps of any curvilinearity.

The street pattern in Northop has been altered considerably since the beginning of the 18th century. Dwellings fronted onto one main lane, High Street, which followed a more sinuous course than now. The existing alignments of several of the older buildings and many of the tenement plots suggest this, and it is confirmed by an estate map of 1717. At its eastern end this gave on to an open rectangular area off which the roads to both Chester and Flint led. The stream ran across this open space. Whether it should be termed a green is a moot point. The lane that ran eastwards on the south side of the churchyard also had houses along it. At the western end beyond the intersection of minor lanes, a narrow tract of common called Northop Green beside which a few post-medieval dwellings had sprung up, extended for several hundred metres. This layout was gradually modified over the next two hundred and fifty years. High Street appears to have been straightened by the end of the 18th century, an event which may have been tied in with the turnpiking of the road. A road south of the B5126 (itself a modern creation) was closed and is now only a footpath through the Soughton parkland. The open space at the east end of High Street had been built over by the middle of the 19th century. Brook Street was a rather more obvious thoroughfare in the 18th century than it is today.

The old grammar school (100306), built around 1608, abuts the north-east edge of the churchyard. Of stone and with five bays, it has mullioned windows, a schoolroom open to the roof and what may have been the master's lodging with its own door in the gable end. Its 15th or 16th century roof trusses are re-used. The building was altered in the 19th century and restored in 1975-8. Its excavation in 1975 revealed three phases of development.

Plymouth House (19920) is from its plan of 17th century date and contains a Jacobean staircase. It takes its name from the Earl of Plymouth, one of the larger landowners in the district, who acquired it in the early 18th century. The Red Lion public house (97706), opposite the church, has been dated to the 18th century

Though beyond the immediate environs of the village, Llys Edwyn (100289) is less than a mile to the north-west. It is encompassed by a bank and ditch and has been associated with the 11th century historical figure, Eadwine (or Edwin) of Tegeingl. Excavations in 1931 revealed traces of a stone hall, probably of the 13th century, with timber predecessors. Other listed buildings are of more recent date.

Lower Soughton (Sychden) Hall lies a few hundred metres to the south-south-east of the village. Asymmetrical and of brick, it was an Elizabethan building, but was rebuilt or remodelled in 1865-6, and it was perhaps at this time that the parkland around the house was extended, modifying the existing landscape, and Parkland Farm was built. The field system with ridge and furrow and traversed by holloways (17441) all within the parkland, reflects the earlier 19th century situation. It has now been converted into a golf course, adjacent to the hall. Further ridge and furrow (19919) appears faintly in a field (OS plot 7036) to the south of the Vicarage. This parkland is included with the grounds of Soughton Hall to the south in the non-statutory Cadw/ICOMOS register as a Grade II* listing.

Other ridge and furrow (19528, 19532 and 19533) has been recognised on the south-west edge of the settlement.



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