

Garthbeibio

SH 9585 1189
15662

Introduction

Garthbeibio occupies a rocky spur and overlooks the A458 trunk road that traverses the Cambrian Mountains on its route to the coast. 13km north-west of Llanfair Caereinion, it was the religious if not the geographical centre of a large, predominantly upland ecclesiastical parish on the mountain periphery. The church overlooks Afon Banwy at its confluence with Afon Twrch, the spur projecting slightly from the northern side of the valley. A network of tracks and footpaths focus on this spot. Behind the church, the rising ground of Y Fron was common land in the 19th century and, though reduced in area, remains so today.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Garthbeibio up to 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 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 may 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).



Garthbeibio church, photo 021, © CPAT, 2012

History of development

The past history of Garthbeibio is as obscure as many other church settlements in mid-Wales. It seems likely that the church has always been a focus for the spread of dispersed farmsteads in this hilly part of western Montgomeryshire, and that its origin as an early medieval chapel is betrayed by the dedication, its location on the edge of an important river valley, and the shape of its earlier churchyard.

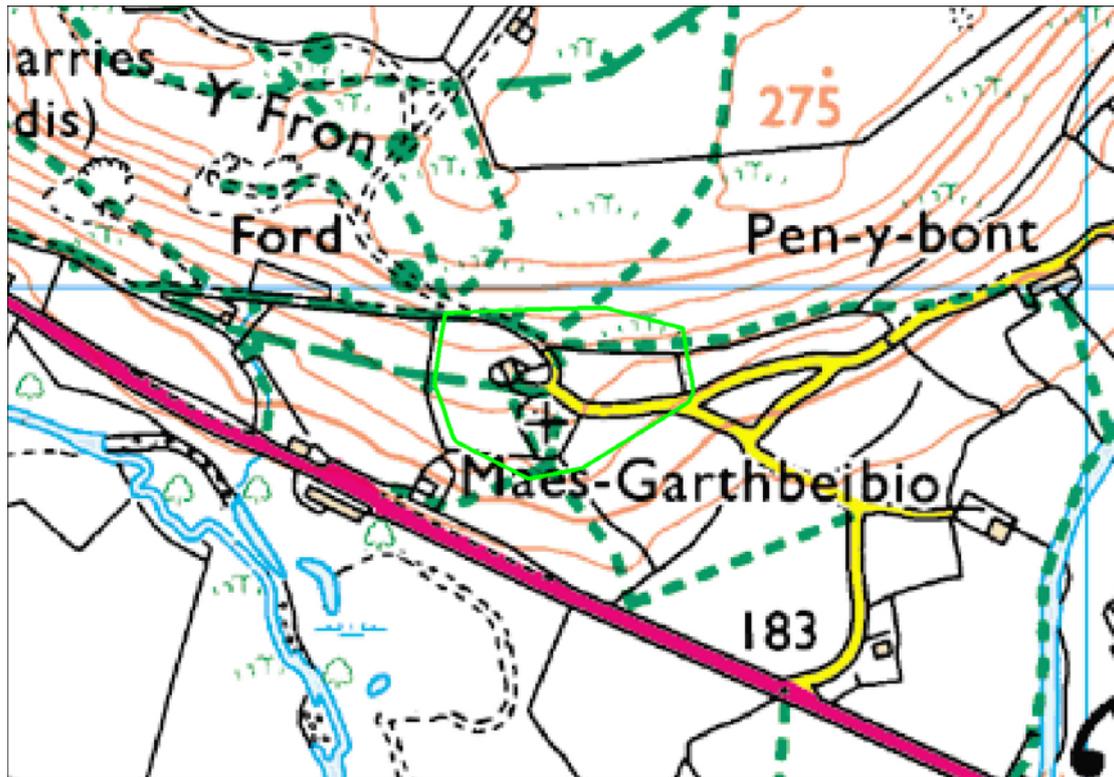
The name, first recorded in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 as Garthbey boau, is derived from 'garth' meaning a hill, promontory or ridge and the personal name of the otherwise obscure Peibio. By 1535 it was referred to as Garthbibio, but Richard Morgan, the leading place-name specialist, has also drawn attention to a papal licence of 1400 granted to penitents for the collection of alms to conserve the parish church of St Thledachus, abbot, in Garthbibio.

The heritage to 1750

The small single-chambered church, dedicated to St Tydecho, retains some medieval fabric but was partially rebuilt and heavily restored in 1862 (7579). The Perpendicular east window has survived, and internally, there is a 15th century font, though little else of any age.

The churchyard is distinctively polygonal in shape, but a scarp bank within the present enclosure suggests that originally its boundary was rather more curvilinear (7580). Ty'n-y-llan is the only occupied dwelling in the vicinity of the church, and is a 17th or 18th century vernacular farmhouse. Other buildings such as Maes-Garthbeibio lie at a lower altitude toward the valley floor. Several further buildings (e.g 7581) can be recognised on 19th century maps though none is necessarily earlier than the post-medieval era. However, there is absolutely no evidence of a nucleated settlement here.

Two holy wells, one known as St Tydecho's Well (1217), the other as Fynnon Ddu (1218) were located within a few hundred metres of the church. A third, Fynnon Rhigos (3883) seems to have existed near Maes-Garthbeibio. Their presence tends to emphasise this as a sacred spot.



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