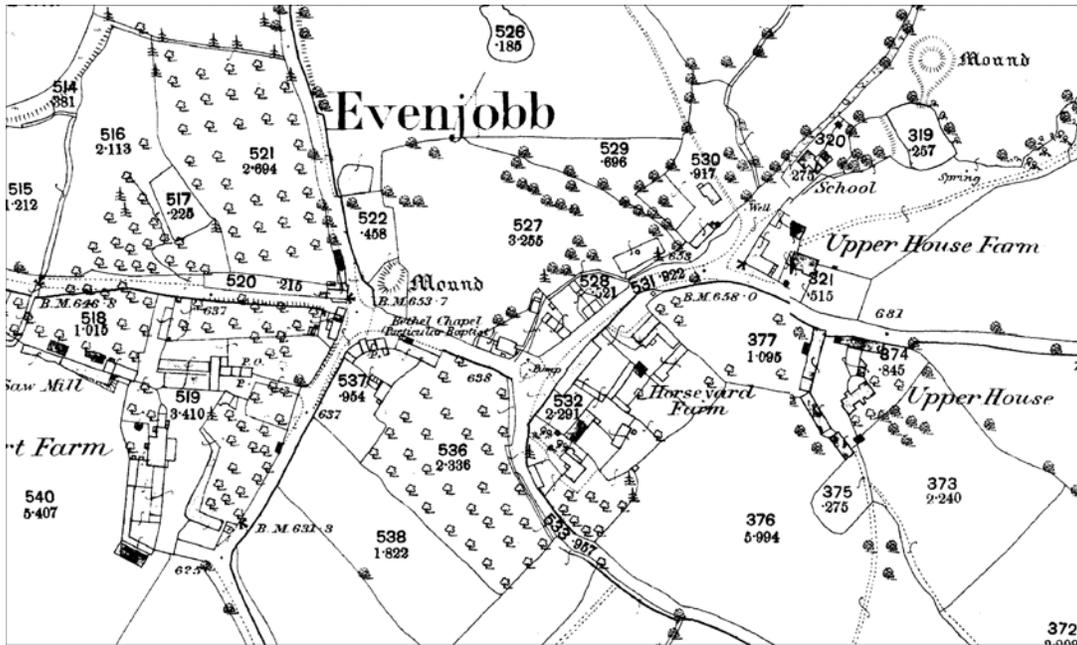


# CPAT Report No 1088

## Historic settlements in Radnorshire



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

**CPAT Report No 1088**

# **Historic settlements in Radnorshire**

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Report for Cadw

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## **The historic settlements of the former county of Radnorshire**

### ***Background***

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust originally compiled an assessment of the historic settlements of Radnorshire in 1994, on behalf of Cadw and the then Radnorshire District Council. It was one of several such assessments for the local authority areas of eastern Wales and ultimately ten reports were completed between 1992 and 1995, embracing the entire region for which CPAT had a remit.

The imperative underpinning these surveys was laid out at the time of the first Brecknock Borough study in 1993 in the following terms:

It has long been recognised that development within town and village alike [might] disturb or obliterate significant information about the past, but a suitable response to a specific building development or other permanent land use change has usually been instigated, if at all, on an *ad hoc* basis. A more structured approach to the understanding of historic settlements and the preservation and management of this fragile resource is required. This has been given a greater urgency by the publication in 1991 of the Welsh version of the *Planning and Policy Guidance Note: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16 Wales). This emphasises the responsibilities of Local Planning Authorities in the conservation of the archaeological heritage and confirms that archaeological remains are a material consideration when determining planning applications (Martin and Walters 1993, 3).

Three principal objectives of the study were defined at that time:

- i) to produce a general picture of historic settlement in the area,
- ii) to identify, in as far as the evidence allows, those areas within the historic settlements that could be termed archaeologically sensitive, in order to assist in the day-to-day and long-term planning processes initiated by the local authority, and
- iii) to define areas of potential archaeological significance where developers might be required to undertake an archaeological evaluation as part of the planning process.

It hardly needs to be stated that in the seventeen years since that report was circulated, there have been changes, and we would hope improvements, to our perception of the emergence, development and collapse of settlements in the border counties and in Radnorshire more specifically.

Firstly, a series of Cadw-funded studies have appeared which directly or indirectly have had a bearing on settlement studies. The historic churches survey (1995-99), the early medieval ecclesiastical sites survey (2001-04) and even the deserted medieval rural settlement survey (1996-2001) have all played a part in enhancing our understanding of settlement development in eastern Wales, as have some rather more specific and detailed ground surveys such as those of village earthworks in Brecknock (1993) and Radnorshire (1996), and an analysis of one of the best deliberately planned towns in the country, New Radnor (1994).

Secondly, there are the results that have accrued from developer-funded works – whether excavation, evaluation, watching brief or building recording – as a result of local authorities implementing PPG16 and, from 2002, Planning Policy Wales.

Thirdly, there are recently published studies which have transformed our thinking on certain topics. Most notable in this context are the place-name investigations by Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan (2007), the first volume of the early medieval inscribed stones corpus prepared by Mark Redknap and John Lewis (2007) and Richard Suggett's *Houses and History in the March of Wales. Radnorshire 1400-1800* published by the Welsh Royal Commission in 2005.

And finally but in some ways the least tangible of the inputs is the ever-improving perception and appreciation of settlement in east Wales, as a result of accumulated expertise, and the accessing of research from other regions of Wales and England. This doesn't normally manifest

itself in publications, although the writer's paper, co-authored with Wyn Evans (2009) on *clas* churches and their landscapes is an exception.

CPAT thus felt that it was an appropriate time to examine the picture of historic settlements, more than a decade and a half after the initial studies were completed. Various questions had been raised. Had developer funding in advance of the potential destruction or damage to the cultural heritage had much of an effect and if so where? Had our knowledge and appreciation of the historic settlements marked improved in the last fifteen years? And in a departure from the practice in the early 1990s when the Internet was little more than an unfulfilled dream, could we successfully disseminate that information authoritatively so that it could be accessed digitally to satisfy the increasing number of people who search our website? There are several hundred historic settlements in eastern Wales and it was not possible to examine them all in a single exercise. The former local authority areas of Brecknock Borough and Radnorshire were selected to initiate the programme and it is hoped to be able to follow with the other areas over the next two to three years.

### ***Methodology and presentation***

A pattern for each report had been established in 1993 through to 1995 comprising a report which covered a minimum of an A4 page of text and in some instances, depending on the size and interest of the settlement involved, three or four pages. The report considered, under four sub-headings, the geographic location of the settlement, the known history of its origins and development, the buildings and archaeology that were integral element of the settlement, and finally a set of recommendations for further work.

Accompanying each settlement study was an Ordnance Survey map-based depiction of the settlement showing scheduled ancient monuments, known archaeological features and earthworks buildings or structures considered in the text, areas which it was felt at the time should be preserved in situ, areas that should be evaluated in advance of development, and a boundary line drawn around the historic settlement as it was then recognised, in other words the historic core.

The early reports also contained as annexes a copy of the descriptive brief for the preparation of the study and another of a draft paper on archaeology and the planning process in Powys

After various discussions the modelling of both the text layout and the accompanying map have been revised, to take account of changing circumstances and current requirements.

The baseline information – the settlement name, the national grid reference and the primary record number that links the settlement (as well as its individual elements) to the Historic Environment Record – have necessarily been retained, although the height above sea level and the prefix PRN have been dropped.

The geographic location has been retained, as has the section on history, now renamed 'history of development'. More change can be seen in the section formerly headed 'buildings and archaeology' which has been altered to 'the heritage to 1750'. This alteration results from two considerations. Firstly, it is becoming increasingly commonplace to refer to the cultural heritage and cultural heritage assets, convenient collective terms that embrace not only below and above-ground archaeology, and buildings, but also historic landscape (and townscape) elements that did not necessarily get the recognition that they warrant in the former terminology. Cultural heritage is seen as a useful shorthand descriptive term for everything that we are concerned with here. Secondly, a decision was taken to end the study at 1750, bringing it into line with Cadw's terminal date for the concurrent scoping programme of medieval and early post-medieval monument scheduling enhancement. 1750 to 1760 is often seen as a starting date for the Industrial Revolution, even if its full 'flowering' did not occur in Wales for another fifty years. Equally importantly, however, it was during the later 18<sup>th</sup> century and a little beyond that some settlements saw marked development with a concomitant increase in the number of buildings, and the diminishing significance in the forms of evidence that are significant to the archaeologist. Llandrindod Wells, the leading settlement in old Radnorshire and the home to

Powys County Council, offers an instructive example. This is not to downplay the significance of the buildings that date from the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, nor to infer that settlements that contain large numbers of such structures are not historic, rather it is a commentary on the shift in the nature of the evidence that is available to us.

This report has also tried to adopt a more rigorous approach to the presentation of the data, whether it be on archaeological sites, buildings or the townscape (or should that be villagescape?). It would be easy to write protracted descriptions of some buildings such as churches or earthwork complexes, or even in some instances the discoveries from development-led evaluations. The regurgitation of much detail, it was felt, would not necessarily be particularly useful to the general reader, and indeed might act as a deterrent. The inclusion of PRN numbers will allow the researcher or enthusiast to follow up individual leads should they wish, but what is offered here is a concise text covering as many issues as are currently known without over-elaboration on any one of them.

Finally, the section of recommendations has been removed. This, it should be admitted, is in part a pragmatic decision based on the realisation that some of the original recommendations covering standard issues such as the importance of consultation with the archaeological curator, the need for watching briefs and evaluations, and the like were compiled at a time when PPG16 was new, consultation practice was yet to be regularised, and the importance of the cultural heritage resource in our towns and villages had in some areas yet to be appreciated by at least some local authority planners. This situation has changed, and the importance of the cultural heritage is now largely accepted at local government level. It is pragmatic, however, for less satisfactory reasons. In an ideal world the recommendations for Cefnlllys that the relict earthworks to the north-east of the church should be surveyed or that the putative town defences at Rhayader ‘need to be assessed through more detailed research’ would have been followed up and completed in the intervening seventeen years. That these aims have not been achieved is less a comment on the integrity of the recommendation, more on the limited resources that are available for surveying and research. It is unrealistic to assume that this is going to change, and perhaps equally unrealistic to assume that this is the best way to present a set of recommendations for future action. The writer would argue that it would be better to have a separate, prioritised ‘hit list’ combining all the survey targets, so that if resources were to be made available in Powys, decisions could be made on the basis of comparative need and significance.

There have also been some modifications to the plans that accompany the texts. The depiction of designated archaeological sites (scheduling) and buildings (listing) has been dropped, for we are conscious of the fact that it is entirely the prerogatives of Cadw and the local authority to define these sites in cartographic form, and that the reader requiring information on the extent of a designation should approach the appropriate authorities. Furthermore, the number and extent of designated sites within any given settlement may change at any time, and assuming that these maps have a currency of several years, there is the potential for misleading a reader because the situation could have changed.

The definition of the historic core has also been modified, taking more account of existing boundaries in order to lessen any potential contention over whether a particular spot lies inside or outside the historic core, whilst also stressing that the core boundary as defined is not an immutable perimeter, but is simply an estimate and a guide based on an assessment of the existing evidence by the writer as to where earlier settlement may once have existed.

Dropped too is the zonation of areas for evaluation in advance of development. In 1993, defining such areas was a useful guide to planners as to where archaeological intervention was most needed, but there is a potential conflict between the depiction of one or two such areas on a map on the one hand and the definition of the historic core on the other. If for whatever reason, an area within an historic core envelope is not highlighted for evaluation, this could be taken as an indication that the area would not require further assessment in the event of a proposed development. Rather we should be working on the assumption that any development within an historic core should be a candidate for an evaluation, depending of course on the nature of the development itself, but that it should be the development control officer who makes that decision on the basis of his professional judgment.

More contentious perhaps is the decision to omit the identification of blocks of land defined as ‘areas for preservation in situ’, another facet of the 1993 survey. Where such areas are already statutorily designated within an historic settlement, their preservation is a given and no problem arises. However, in some cases in the past a decision that an area ought to be preserved has been taken on the basis of a rather superficial assessment of its worth, rather than on a detailed analysis of what is there. Yet if at a planning level a field containing earthworks is going to be preserved it needs to be based on rigorously defined evidence that will stand up to scrutiny.

One final aspect to clarify is that the historic core envelope now defines only those areas within which there is the likelihood of settlement, by which we mean dwellings and their curtilages. The setting of any settlement will have been the surrounding landscape that was farmed and utilised from it, and potentially could spread over several square kilometres. Defining its fields, its pastures and its woodlands will be a considerable task, and its success cannot be guaranteed. Vital though it is to an understanding of that settlement, the inclusion of the setting within the historic core cannot be advocated. It requires a different level of zoning.

The original study of Radnorshire listed 88 settlements. The current survey covers 62. Omitted are several settlements which reflect only post-1750 developments such as Newbridge on Wye, Elan Village and Crossgates, places such as Monaughty which is a gentry house rather than as settlement, and some others such as Ffynnon Gynydd where the nature of the human activity does not fit comfortably within the scope of this report.

### *An overview of Radnorshire’s historic settlements*

The 1994 study provided a thorough assessment of the settlements in what was the historic county of Radnorshire. Attention was paid in the overview to the differing concepts of dispersal and nucleation, to the theories of the late Glanville Jones on nucleated bond settlements, to the prevalence of settlements where the term *llan* was incorporated into the name, to the primacy of sub-circular churchyards, to mottes where settlements were attached, to those settlements displaying English (or more properly Anglo-Norman) influences and so on. It is not proposed to repeat all of this here, but as with the previous report on Brecknock Borough rather to look at the various forms of settlement to identify what patterns emerge.

### *Church settlements*

In terms only of numbers, it is the church settlements that come at the top of the list, accounting for around 45% of the historic settlements examined here. ‘Church settlement’ is a useful collective term, although it is one that doesn’t figure in the classic texts on historic settlement. In that some degree of grouping or nucleation might be assumed in the definition of a settlement, the term is indeed almost a paradox. For the morphology of a church settlement hinges on the fact that the church appears to be isolated by itself or perhaps with no more than a single farm, an inn or a rectory for company. The church, then, is the settlement – it is a concept rather than a physical manifestation of what we would consider a settlement or consist of, namely dwellings.

In some instances it might be suspected that former dwellings have been abandoned or swept away leaving few if any visible traces. Putative bond settlements of earlier medieval date could be candidates. But some churches almost certainly never attracted more than a solitary dwelling around them, for they served a community dispersed in landholdings around the parish, Cascob, Disserth and Heyope being good examples. Archaeological work may demonstrate in years to come that some of those in the list below were accompanied by dwellings in earlier centuries, and this is where developer-funding could be critical. For the present in terms of nucleation these occupy the bottom rung of the ladder.

Beguildy	Cascob	Ednol
Bettws Clyro	Colva	Heyop
Bettws Disserth	Cregrina	Llananno
Bleddfa	Discoed	Llanbadarn Fawr
Bryngwyn	Disserth	Llanbadarn Fynydd

Llanbadarn-y-garreg  
Llanddewi Ystradenni  
Llandegley  
Llandeilo Graban  
Llanfihangel Helygen

Llanbedr  
Llanfihangel Rhydithon  
Llanstephan  
Nantmel  
Rhulen

Llanddewi Fach  
St Harmon  
Whitton

### ***Common-side settlement***

A variant of the church settlement is what in some cases might be termed the common-side settlement. In a few instances churches and chapels (and there may be a bias towards chapels-of-ease rather than longer established parochial churches) lie beside what were once small patches of open land, perhaps where tracks met or some other good reason prevented the encroachment of enclosed fields. Only in recent centuries have dwellings tended to accumulate around or even on this common land, emphasising a relatively modern move to nucleation, while the common itself has gradually disappeared. How significant a trait this is remains to be established. Llanyre is included here, though arguably it could equally be termed a church settlement.

In other places settlement incorporated the equivalent of a green, a feature that might well go back into the Middle Ages. Frequently, there was also a pre-existing castle mound which must be seen as significant, part of a package of settlement elements that appear together. Glasbury, Kinnerton and Painscastle fall into this category.

Comparable with common-side settlements are those that emerged where roads converged such as Evenjobb but where there is less evidence of a tract of common. What of course is not apparent is whether the build up of settlement resulted in more tracks or lanes being created, and that the original catalyst for settlement was the presence of the motte at Evenjobb.

Boughrood Brest  
Evenjobb  
Gladestry

Glasbury  
Hundred House  
Kinnerton

Llansantffraed in Elvel  
Llanyre  
Painscastle

### ***Non-nucleated village settlements***

There are very occasional settlements across east Wales where there is archaeological evidence for earlier dwellings, these not being concentrated in a true nucleation, but spread out, giving a non-nucleated pattern, yet sufficiently close to avoid any suggestion that the settlement pattern was a dispersed one. In reality it may be that our evidence is currently so imperfect that we simply cannot recognise the nucleated settlement that was once here, or alternatively that the evidence that we do have is open to other interpretations and these were church settlements of the sort noted above. The only such village which I would specifically categorise here is Old Radnor, but Glascwm and perhaps Llanfaredd might also be considered candidates.

Old Radnor

### ***Nucleated village settlements***

Nucleated settlements are well attested in southern Powys, primarily because of the survival of earthworks that point to dwellings and their crofts. There are though few of these in Radnorshire except where the Anglo-Norman takeover of the Usk and Wye valleys has left a mark. Boughrood is included here because the farms and dwellings surrounding the church do have early origins, Llanfaredd because of the platforms on the slope above the church, though their function remains uncertain. The topography of Llangunllo is suggestive, but no more than that.

Boughrood  
Cefnlllys

Clyro  
Glascwm

Llanfaredd  
Llangunllo

### ***Planned settlements***

There are only five settlements which reveal elements of deliberate planning, and it will not escape attention that they include most of Radnorshire's historic towns. Knighton looks to have a planned layout on the lower ground towards the church, yet archaeological work has not succeeded in confirming this unequivocally, and for Rhayader the evidence is even more elusive. Norton though much smaller looks to have planned elements embedded in it. New Radnor is one of the most distinctive and archetypical plantations in Wales, and would also classify as a castle settlement (see below).

Knighton  
New Radnor

Norton  
Presteigne

Rhayader

### ***Castle settlements***

It could legitimately be argued that Cefnlllys is not only a nucleated settlement but was a castle settlement, dependent on the stronghold above it. Boughrood could come into this category, as might Clyro though the focus of the latter seems to lie away from the castle and is closer to the church. Colwyn is also included in its own right, although it can be argued that it is Hundred House a short distance away which is the settlement. Knighton appears to have an earlier phase of nucleation around the castle and putatively a later planned layout. Indeed most of the castle settlements could well be classified under other headings, a demonstration that original impetus and settlement morphology are not mutually exclusive.

Boughrood  
Cefnlllys  
Colwyn

Knighton  
Llansantffraed  
Cwmdeuddwr

Paincastle

### ***Settlements of uncertain nature***

There are some settlements that currently defy categorisation: the evidence that is available to us is insufficient to place them in any of the groups already discussed. It seems improbable that further documentary research or topographic analysis will resolve the problem; only archaeological excavation will throw any light on the matter. Aberedw for instance could be a typical church settlement, but there is just a suspicion that there may have been more to the settlement than this. Insufficient evidence for Llanelwedd is available to attribute its origins with any certainty, and perhaps its location opposite the town of Builth might have resulted in settlement which has yet to be identified.

Aberedw  
Knucklas  
Llanbister  
Llandrindod  
Llanelwedd  
Llanfihangel Nant Melan  
Llowes  
Michaelchurch-on-Arrow  
Newchurch  
Pilleth

### ***Post-medieval settlements***

No one can doubt that Llandrindod Wells as seen today is a post-medieval and essentially Victorian nucleation. Its predecessor, for which the term Old Llandrindod has been coined, is some distance away and but for the exploitation of the spa resources would have been classed as a small medieval settlement. There is however at least one other more clear-cut example of post-medieval origins in Abbeycwmhir where it is likely that there was a clean break between any medieval settlement that grew up around the abbey and was dependant on it, and the emergence of the gentry family who acquired the abbey ruins after the Dissolution and who gradually promoted the village.

Abbeycwmhir

### ***Developer funding and archaeology***

As with Brecknock Borough, we can briefly examine how useful developer-funded works have proved to be since the first study in 1994. The old local authority area of Radnorshire is a largely rural one, with only a few relatively small towns falling within its boundaries. Many of the 62 settlements studied here have witnessed little development since that time, and indeed, more than half of the settlements have seen no developer-funded work of any sort.

There have, however, been some notable successes. New Radnor lies at the top of the list; of fourteen interventions, eleven have been positive and have resulted in new scheduled areas, good archaeological returns and an enhanced appreciation of the medieval layout of the town. More is known about Presteigne than it was fifteen years ago, but it is the non-church settlements such as Kinnerton and particularly Evenjobb where results have been exceptionally valuable. There has too been a lack of success in some places. We don't seem to be much further forward in understanding how Knighton expanded and whether there was a medieval planned phase around the church, while Rhayader's urban development is if anything even less clear and the presence or absence of town defences there still a mystery.