

Glascwm

SO157532
16145

Introduction

A remote valley in the hills of southern Radnorshire is the setting for the small village of Glascwm. The Clas Brook flows westwards to join the River Edw, 3km away. The church sites on the south side of the stream, on higher ground projecting forwards from the valley side. The modern village is 200m or so to the east, but also facing north with the ground rising sharply behind it to Glascwm Hill. Builth Wells lies about 12km to the west.

This brief report examines Glascwm's emergence and development 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).

History of development

It is generally accepted that a *clas* community (352) was established here within the cantref of Elfael, possibly as early as the 6th century. His biographer intimated that St David founded the monastery, but this cannot be proved, even though the dedication is to the saint. Nevertheless, this is believed to have been one of the main churches in pre-Conquest Radnorshire, and it was also the location of a miraculous hand-bell mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis in the late 12th century.

The earliest documentary record is in the same biography which dates from c.1090 (although it survives only in a copy of c.1200) where the place is recorded as *Glascun*. Specialists, however, have suggested that this incorporates the elements *glas* and *cwm*, meaning 'green valley', based on the occurrence of *glas* in several other names in the area.

In the late 13th century, Glascwm was one of several places in the region for which Thomas, Bishop of St Davids was granted the right to hold a market and or fair. This could have been at the manorial centre and it cannot be inferred that there was a nucleated settlement here at this date.

John Leland in the mid-16th century recorded 'Glascumbe, wher is a chirche but few houses'. But Glascwm did lie on an important drovers' road through central Wales which functioned during the post-medieval era and probably had its origins in the later medieval era.

The pattern of settlement in the mid-19th century was much as today, with the church and the house known as The Yat separated by a few hundred metres from the group of dwellings that constituted the village.

The heritage to 1750

St David's Church (16018) presumably occupies the site of the earlier *clas* foundation. The present building consists of a 13th-century nave, a 15th-century chancel, and a belfry on the west end. There are some Tudor features and many of the windows were restored in 1891. Internally, the late medieval roofs show considerable variation, the font may be 15th century, and there is a good range of 18th and 19th-century monuments.

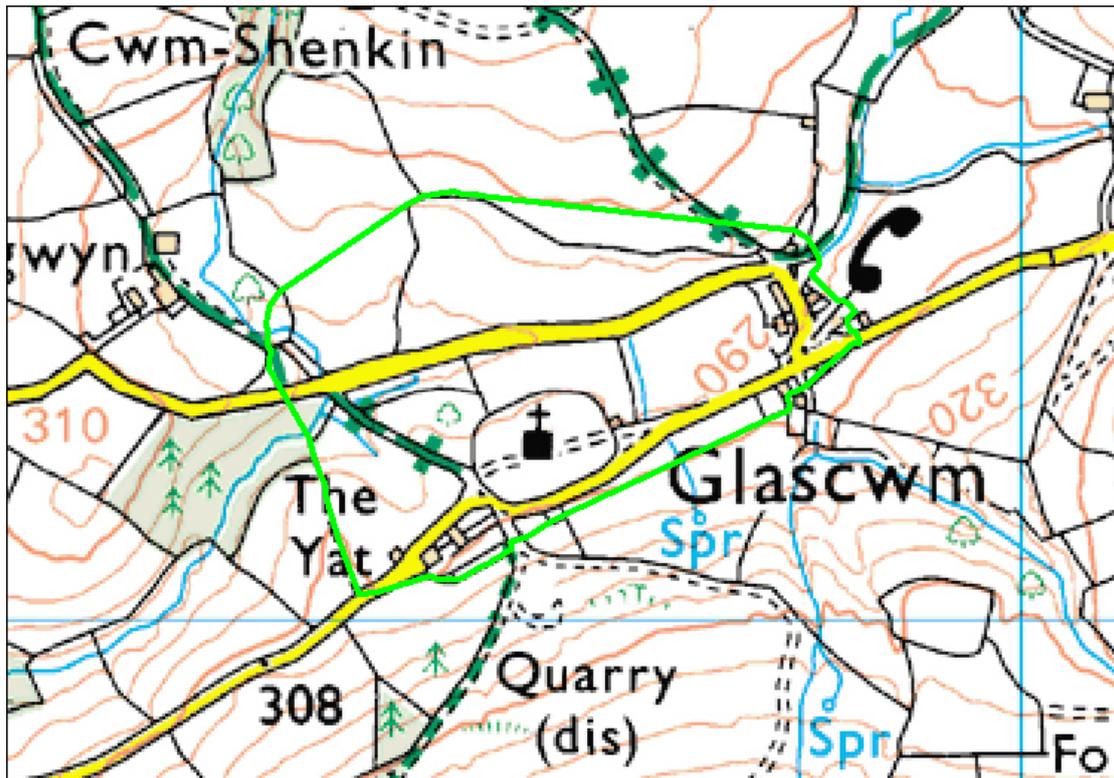
The churchyard (16295) is large and curvilinear, the ground on the north side sloping down towards the stream. The church itself sits on a substantial platform, visible on three sides, which must have been made up deliberately to create a level site.

Traces of earlier, probably medieval, occupation and activity at Glascwm are extensive on both sides of the Clas Brook: earthworks (16288) have been noted in the field (OS plot 7322) between the village and the church, a building platform and possibly other features (16289) in the flat-bottomed valley (OS plot 6121) immediately to the north of the church; at least two platforms (16290; OS plot 7211), presumably for dwellings, to the south of the church on the opposite side of the road and a third (16291) in a small plantation (OS plot 6007); a trackway, the probable precursor of the present lane, and perhaps other earthworks (16292; OS plots 5327 and 6428), on the north side of the stream; another possible platform together with ridge and furrow (16293) in the adjacent field (OS plot 5643) higher up the slope; and linear terraces and platforms (PAR 16294; OS plot 4133). Together these hint at a loosely nucleated settlement here, yet it is also significant that the modern village groups around the road junction to the east.

Ty-gwyn mill (16286; OS plot 3213), 200m west of the church, was apparently constructed in the early 18th century, subsequently fell into ruins perhaps in the 19th century, and had its foundations exposed by excavation prior to 1978. Some walls are still visible, as is a short stretch of the mill leat. A short distance to the east, a fine millpond survives largely intact. A predecessor of the modern lane leads down to it from the west, and a holloway approaches it above the pond.

On the opposite side of the road to the mill an earthwork (16287; OS plot 3821) damaged by track construction, was first noted in 1972. It remains difficult to interpret.

The Yat (16079; Grade II listing) is classed as a 17th-century gentry house. Otherwise, there are no known buildings pre-dating the late 18th century within the settlement.



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