

## Isycoed

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### *Introduction*

The modern settlement of Isycoed lies less than two kilometres off the western bank of the River Dee on the low and vaguely undulating ground that edges that river. About three kilometres to the south is the small town of Holt with which it has been associated in the past. The hamlet is reached via a minor road leading off the B5130.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Isycoed up to the year 1750. For the more recent history of the hamlet, it may be necessary to examine other sources of information and particularly for the origins and nature of some of the buildings within it.

The accompanying map is offered solely as an indicative guide to the modern settlement. No historic core has been suggested as the evidence currently available to us to define a nucleated settlement is too sparse to justify such a delineation. 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 adopted in the HER to provide researchers with information that is specific to the individual sites and features. These can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website ([www.archwilio.org.uk](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).

### *History of development*

As a name Isycoed, meaning ‘below the wood’ or ‘lower wood’ is first encountered as *Iscoet* and *Is y coet* in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the references are to an area or district rather than a specific place.

As a manor Isycoed may have been in existence at the time of the Norman Conquest, but it was not mentioned by name in Domesday Book. And the manor of Isycoed (or Iscoyd) did not cover the same area as the ecclesiastical parish as the Wrexham historian, Alfred Palmer pointed out more than a century ago. Knowledge of the historical development of the settlement at Isycoed is extremely poor. There is in fact no documentary or cartographic evidence for a settlement here before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but a chapel is supposed to have existed by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This became a parochial chapel with baptismal and burial rights sometime before 1577 although Palmer inclined to the view that up until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the inhabitants of the various townships in Isycoed were obliged to worship at Holt church. Isycoed lay within Holt parish and in turn this appears to have originally been a part of Gresford. The position of the chapel is presumed to have been either on the same site as its successor or among the buildings at Chapel House Farm. Isycoed finally achieved parish status in 1826.

Maps from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century indicate that Isycoed was effectively a set of individual buildings loosely grouped together along minor lanes. Significantly perhaps, John Evans termed it not Isycoed but New Chapel on his map of the northern counties of Wales in 1795. In essence, there is no evidence whatsoever that there was ever a nucleated settlement at Isycoed. Even today it barely merits the label.

Recent development in Isycoed has taken place largely to the north of the church along the northern side of the minor road between Elm Villa and the Plough Inn.

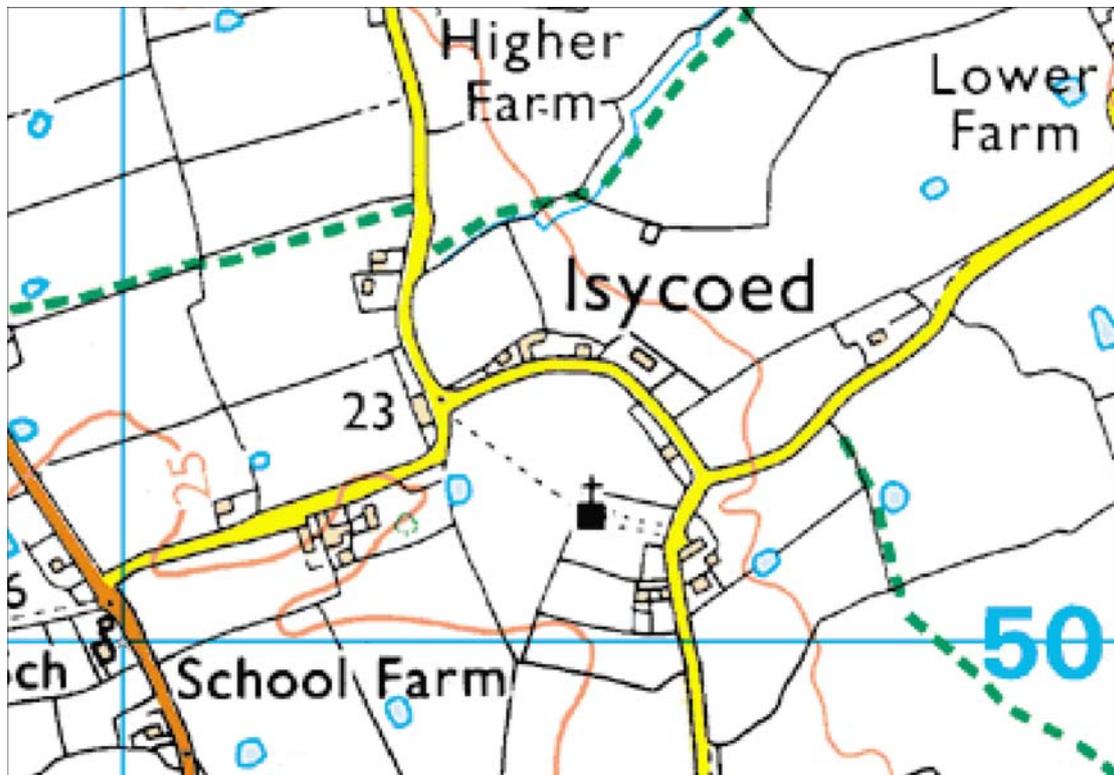
### ***The heritage to 1750***

The present church dedicated to St Paul (105319) was erected entirely of brick in 1829 on the site of a previous church reputedly rebuilt at least twice, the earlier prior to 1718 and again in 1742 (In passing the earliest gravestone in the churchyard is dated 1732). The interior was re-ordered, probably around 1871, and a restoration followed in 1890. It contains little of architectural merit and contains virtually nothing in the way of interesting furnishings and fittings, other than a font which carries a date of 1725 and a churchwardens' chest which is presumably 18<sup>th</sup>-century.

The churchyard is rectangular and was extended to the south at an unspecified date. The distinctive corrugations of ridge and furrow can be seen running through the graveyard extension to the south of the church.

Chapel House Farm has two buildings of interest, the smithy and the Grade II listed old farmhouse building (104296). The latter was perhaps built as a cruck-framed hall house in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century, and integrated as a cross-wing into a later house, perhaps in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Plough Inn (105321) is thought to have been erected in the 16<sup>th</sup> or even the 15<sup>th</sup> century as a cruck-framed building and then remodelled in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Cobham Cottage a little way off to the east was probably built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and then reconstructed in brick in the following century.

Other than extensive remains of former openfield ridge and furrow, indicative of medieval agriculture, particularly in the fields encircling the church, no other archaeological features were noted during the field survey.



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