

Alexanderstone

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Introduction

Alexanderstone consists of little more than a small group of houses lying at the western foot of Pen yr Allt hill, immediately above the A470 trunk road and some 1.5km to the north-east of Brecon.

This brief report examines its 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

Alexanderstone while having a tangible medieval presence, has little recorded history, and although the name is mentioned in medieval documents they shed little light on the settlement's past. It is focused on the medieval castle motte and the later farmhouse adjacent to it. As it has no known church it is unlikely to have an early medieval component, but instead is a settlement that emerged in the wake of the Norman Conquest. The earliest reference that has been identified is from 1373 when it was termed *Alisandreston*, meaning 'Alexander's farm or settlement', though this was probably more than two centuries after the construction of the castle.

The heritage to 1750

The central feature of the settlement is the small medieval castle, which is a scheduled ancient monument (480/SAM B45), lying behind Alexanderstone farmhouse. This earthwork comprises a motte some 20m across and 4m high with what should be the remains of a rather small bailey enclosure attached to it on the north-west.

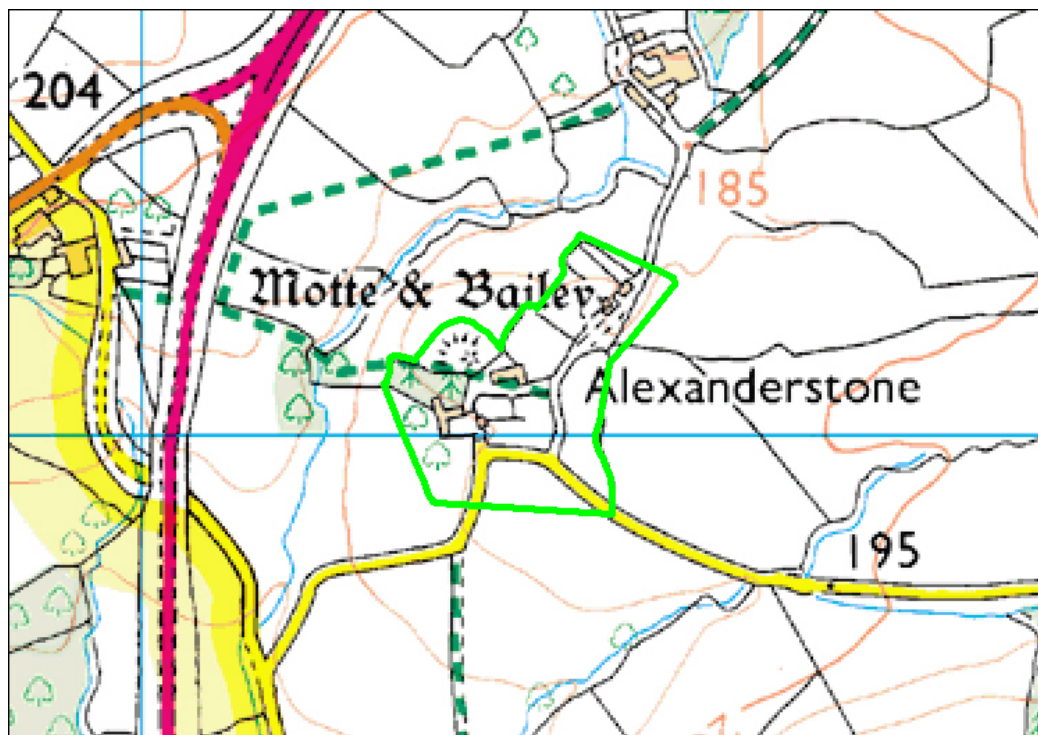
The field to the south of the castle is now occupied by Alexanderstone farmhouse (6949), a two-storied, 17th-century gentry house developed from a longhouse of putative medieval origin. Further medieval buildings may once have occupied this area. The adjacent barn dates to around 1700. The field immediately to the south of the farmhouse contains earthworks representing formal gardens associated with the house, and it has been suggested that the motte then served as a viewing platform.

The settlement that emerged around the motte can be seen to have been larger than today as the remains of two building platforms (6770) and associated plots survive in fields to the east of the castle; known locally as Lower Alexanderstone, a dwelling or farm under the name of Lower Alexander was still occupied there in the mid-19th century. These presumably

represent a now deserted part of the medieval settlement. Further to the north, Wern Cottage and Alexanderstone Cottage had long narrow plots behind them which are reminiscent of medieval holdings and they also fronted, in the 19th century, onto a small open 'green' or common, which might also signal a settlement focus.

Traces of possible ridge and furrow (2933) survive to the south of the castle, but signs of an associated open-field system are difficult to detect here.

In summary Alexanderstone appears to be a small settlement established around a motte and bailey castle. A gentry house emerged beside it at a later date, and there are traces, albeit it limited, of some associated settlement in the medieval period. The dwellings and their holdings, however, did not last into the modern era.



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