

Cerrigydrudion

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Introduction

Cerrigydrudion lies on the A5, five miles south-east of Pentrefoelas and nine miles north-west of Corwen. A number of roads converge on the A5 at Cerrigydrudion: the B5105 Ruthin road from the east, the B450 Denbigh road from the north, and a minor road from the south. The village lies immediately to the south of the upland plateaux known as Mynydd Hiraethog or alternatively the Denbigh Moors uplands. It is situated on gently rising ground on the north side of the valley of the little Nug, a tributary of the River Ceirw.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Cerrigydrudion up to the year 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 only 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 will require modification 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. The HER can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

The earliest reference to the place is as *Kerricedrudeon* in 1199 (in a document of 1232). The Norwich Taxation of 1254 has *Kericdrudion* and Pope Nicholas' Taxation of 1291 corrupts it into *Kerrye Edrudeon*, both relating to the church. Minor variant forms appeared throughout the Middle Ages and in Tudor times, while the modern version of the name, as *Cerrig y Druidion* was recorded in 1673. Modern place-name authorities translate the name in English as 'stones of the heroes', and Samuel Lewis glossed this in 1833, claiming that the name was 'an allusion to a vast heap of stones which several persons now alive remember to have seen on the west side of the church...but now entirely dispersed.' Perhaps inevitably, too there was antiquarian speculation of a tie in with the druids, hence the spelling of 1673. Archdeacon Thomas at the end of the 19th century further claimed that the church had also called *Llanfair Faellen*, but no confirmation of this has subsequently come to light.

Thomas also mentions but without commenting on its historical accuracy, that an early annotation in the parish register stated that *Evan ap Llewellyn of Kinmeirch, surnamed [sic] Gwas Patrige ...was the first founder of the church of Caerydruidion, the year of Our Lord 440, and dedicated it to Mary Magdalen*. It should probably go without saying that there is nothing that supports this antiquarian speculation.

Whether the presence of the church at Cerrigydrudion attracted settlement in the Middle Ages or even in the Tudor era has yet to be determined. But it is worth recalling that anyone wishing to travel from the valley of the Clwyd westwards to the Conwy had to avoid the wastes of Hiraethog, which probably meant having to follow either a coastal route or the valley of the Ceirw, so Cerrigydrudion may not have been quite as remote as it initially appears. That the trackway along the valley looped to the north of Cerrigydrudion and continued on to Cefn Brith rather than going through the village itself, is probably not

significant in terms of settlement development. In 1699 in a response to Edward Lhuyd it was reported that there were seven or eight houses around the church, a larger number than some other villages in the region at the end of the 17th century.

When Telford constructed the Holyhead Road in the early 19th century, he constructed a new section of road to the south of the village, an instance of an early by-pass. Samuel Lewis in 1833 recorded that the village was small and the inhabitants occupied themselves in the breeding of cattle and sheep, the digging of peat for fuel, the spinning of woollen yarn and the knitting of stockings. The village had a church, and a number of other places of worship, the Royal Commission recording four chapels.

At the time of the Tithe survey in 1848, the village was a small compact settlement, with most of the houses congregated around the junction of roads at the centre. Buildings included the church, Lion Inn and King's Head Inn. The plan of the roads has remained unchanged since that time. To the south of the village centre, in the valley bottom, was another cluster of buildings - houses, cottages and barns.

The heritage to 1750

St Mary Magdalene's church (100697), standing high above the surrounding fields and road is single chambered with a south transept (the Giler Chapel) at the east end, a double western bellcote and a large south porch which is of the 16th century. Repair and enlargement in 1503 are recorded, and some of the surviving fabric may be of the 16th century, but there is an earlier foundation course and a re-used 14th-century window. Inside, the roof is late medieval (from 1503?) and there is a limited range of fixtures and furnishings: a chest of 1730, a benefaction board of 1737 and a few wall memorials from the early 18th century.

The walled churchyard (105523) is polygonal, extended in 1883 on the north-western side. There are convincing signs that it was ever curvilinear.

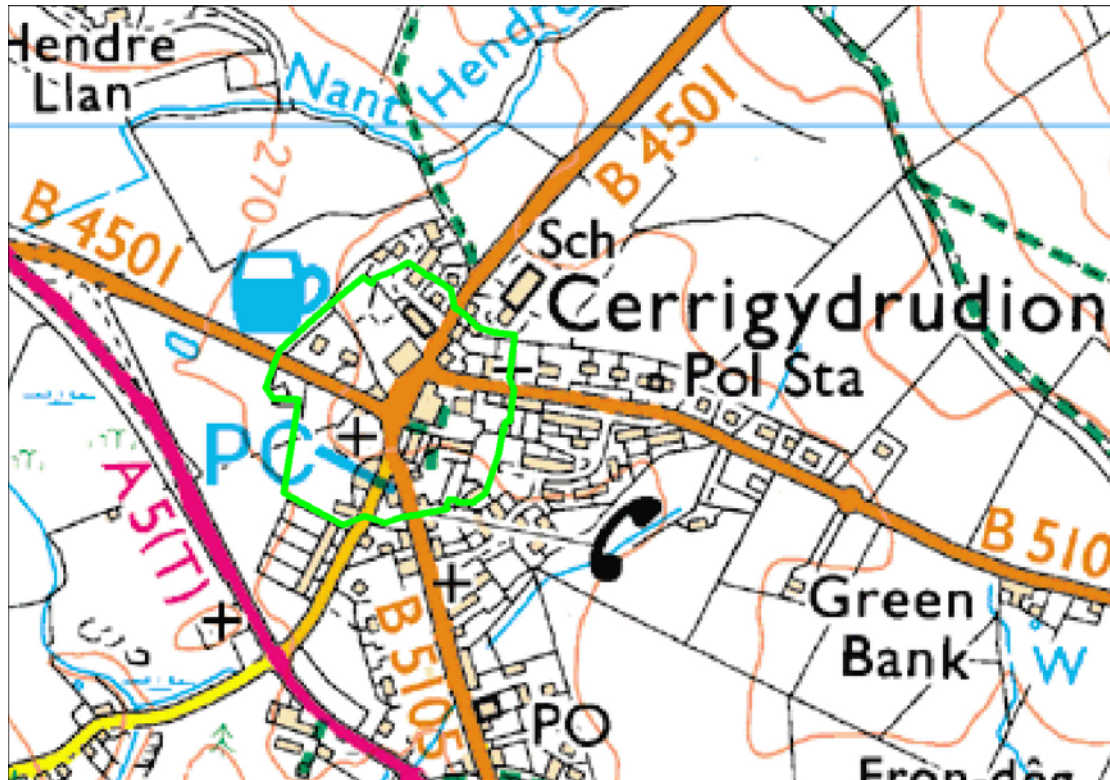
At the centre of Cerrigydrudion is a triangular open space on which the various lanes and roads converge, with the church positioned on its western edge, and in the earlier 19th century virtually all the dwellings in the village set around its edge. There is no evidence that Cerrigydrudion ever boasted a market, though a small market place is what it looks like. An alternative, a village green or common, is a further possibility.

The Queen's Hotel building (105482) is claimed, rather unreliably, to date from 1417, though there is no suggestion of this from the external appearance of the standing building. It was apparently largely rebuilt in about 1900. The Hafan Prys almshouses (105565) are stone-built, dating to the 18th century, According to Samuel Lewis they were founded by Baron Price in 1716, or in 1717 according to a more recent assessment.

A former stone rectory of 1790 has now been replaced by a modern building. None of the remainder of the standing buildings in the village appears to date earlier than the 19th century. There may well have been earlier buildings accompanying the medieval church, the sites of which are now occupied by later buildings.

Ffynnon Fair (100696) lies close to the little stream known as Nant Hendre-bach a couple of hundred metres to the north of the church, and was recorded in Edward Lhuyd's *Parochialia* in about 1698. There appear to be no traditions that point to it having a reputation as a holy or healing well, other than the name. A former spring of water, enclosed on three sides by rough masonry, and on the fourth by upright slabs, it appears now to be dry and filled with rubbish and leaf mould.

A grassy mound in the field opposite the school is not a natural landform, and may be dumped material, though there is no indication of its age.



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