

Rhos-on-Sea

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Introduction

The modern settlement of Rhos-on-Sea is situated on the North Wales coast a short distance to the west of Colwyn Bay. In the early 19th century there was nothing here but a few isolated farms and cottages. Since then, with the appearance of the railway and the consequent development of Colwyn Bay as a resort, housing developments have spread to cover the whole of the area from Colwyn Bay and Llandrillo-yn-Rhos to Rhos-on-Sea and the settlements have effectively merged. Rhos-on-Sea is spread over land sloping gently north-eastwards below the limestone hill of Bryn Euryn. The land edging the coast rises slightly to form a small promontory at the north end of the resort.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Rhos-on-Sea 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

Rhos-on-Sea is a name created in the 19th century to highlight this as a resort. There are no early place-name forms, those that do exist referring to nearby Llandrillo-yn-Rhos.

There is a tradition of an early monastery here, a community of canons under an abbot, founded probably in the 9th century and dissolved sometime after 1137. This is believed to have been established at Rhos Fynach, but the source of the information is elusive and the reliability of the evidence remains to be assessed. The earliest known mention of Rhos Fynach occurs in a recital dated 1230 by Llewelyn ap Iorwerth: it states that Ednyfed Fychan, his seneschal, had purchased all rights in the land of *Ros Veneych*, with all easements, etc, on sea and land. This was land that was later to be transferred to the monks of Aberconwy, an abbey that Llewelyn had founded some years previously.

Many centuries separate this putative activity and the appearance of the place on mid-19th-century maps. At the time of the 1847 Tithe survey the whole of the area of the modern settlement was arable and pasture fields with a few scattered farms and cottages. Rhos Farm, now Rhos Fynach, and a small cluster of dwellings by the seashore at the end of Rhos Road still survive to the present day. Rhos appears to have functioned as a small port in the past; a plan survives showing Rhos Quay as it was in 1855.



Rhos-on-Sea, photo 95-C-0235 © CPAT 2014

The heritage to 1750

St Trillo's chapel (100500) is situated at the base of a small promontory, on the foreshore below Rhos promenade. The tiny chapel, architecturally undistinctive, is built of boulders over a spring. Past estimates of its age have ranged from the 6th to the 16th century, but it is now generally accepted that the present structure is not much earlier than the start of the 16th century, built by the monks of Aberconwy Abbey. It is probably, though, built on the spot where there was an earlier, perhaps much earlier chapel. It was restored and re-consecrated in 1935.

Rhos Fynach fishing weir (100501) is an A-shaped structure, consisting of stone banks standing up to 0.7m in height, in which were set wooden posts, with wattling between. The main arm, constructed of compacted cobbles, begins at the high tide line on the foreshore and extends in a north-easterly direction, terminating at the low tide line. The banks comprising the arms of the 'A' point shoreward. The main arm is approximately 440m length and 30m in width. The earliest documentary reference to the Rhos Fynach Weir, is in a 1230 charter, identifying fisheries that were said to have been subsequently transferred to the Abbey of Aberconwy, a view dismissed by Rhŷs Hays who made a detailed study of Aberconwy. In 1550 the fish trap had fallen into disrepair and its wooden posts had been removed to render it unusable. A document of 1767 refers to two weirs. Excavation provided a radiocarbon date centred on AD 1660.

Rhos Fynach (105549) was a single-storeyed building with attic. While a date of 1717 has been given to it, it probably originated at an earlier date, perhaps in the 15th century, and reputedly a grange of Maenan Abbey, the successor to Aberconwy. Traditionally, it has been known as Rhos monastery, presumably a link back to the putative history mentioned above.



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