

## Meliden

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### *Introduction*

Meliden lies on the A547 road, 4.5km to the east of Rhuddlan and 2km south-west of the centre of Prestatyn; it now appears to be virtually a suburb of the latter, though historically Prestatyn was a township within Meliden. The old portion of the settlement occupies rising ground above the coastal plain, though it is almost 3km from the coast itself, and lies just below the steep slopes of a prominent hill known as Graig Fawr. Meliden still contains a number of stone-built, 18<sup>th</sup>- or 19<sup>th</sup>-century miners' cottages in the vicinity of the church, but a large part of the settlement today consists of modern housing estates.

Meliden is one of several parishes which were in the historic county of Flintshire until 1974, but with the disbandment of Clwyd, it was transferred to the local authority area of Denbighshire.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Meliden up to the year 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it might be necessary to look at other sources of information and in particular 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](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).

### *History of development*

Meliden is an Anglicised form of the Welsh name *Gallt Melyd*, translated as the 'hill of Melyd or Melydn'. St Melyd, the patron saint of the church, has in the past been thought of in the alternative guise of Mellitus, the first Bishop of London, who lived in the late 6<sup>th</sup>/early 7<sup>th</sup> century. This, now, seems highly unlikely, a clear antiquarian attempt to link early names to known historical individuals (*cf* Garmon and Germanus).

Various forms of the name, sometimes referring to the church here, are known from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In 1241 we read of *Estradmelened*, in 1256 *Altimeliden*, between 1346 and 1353 *Alltmelydyn* and in 1413 *Moledyne alias Allthmelydyn*. *Gallt Melydon* was recorded in a document attributed to the period 1586 to 1613.

Thus, while an early medieval origin for the church seems assured on the basis of the church dedication and also the churchyard morphology, the time at which a settlement began to emerge here is unknown. We can only speculate that there was a small nucleated settlement here in the Middle Ages and it is not until right at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that Edward Lhuyd's correspondent revealed a small village here with twelve houses lying close to the church.

In 1833, Samuel Lewis described the parish as 'an extensive tract of rich arable and pasture land, which is in a high state of cultivation...the soil is favourable for the growth of all kinds of grain, but more especially for wheat..'

The Tithe survey of 1839 shows a very small, compact settlement at Meliden, consisting of the church with a small cluster of houses adjacent to it, and a further cluster of half a dozen buildings opposite the access road to Llys Farm, a short distance down Ffordd Penrhwylyfa. At this date most of the land around Meliden was divided into small fields, though further west larger fields, divided into strips, are depicted on the tithe map. The main road through Meliden from Dyserth to Prestatyn took the course of the present Talargoch Road; the more southerly course of today's A547 is a new road. Tyn-rallt, to the south, was then a quite separate settlement.

It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the village began to grow in size, spreading southwards from the original core at the church. This growth was surely related to the fortunes of the Talargoch lead mine, which from 1807 was beginning to show a profit. Miners formed a large proportion of the population of Meliden at this time – a fact reflected in the earlier name of the Melyd Arms public house, formerly the Miners Arms – even though the Talargoch vein was being exploited in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and documentary evidence suggests that workings may date back to late Tudor times.

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

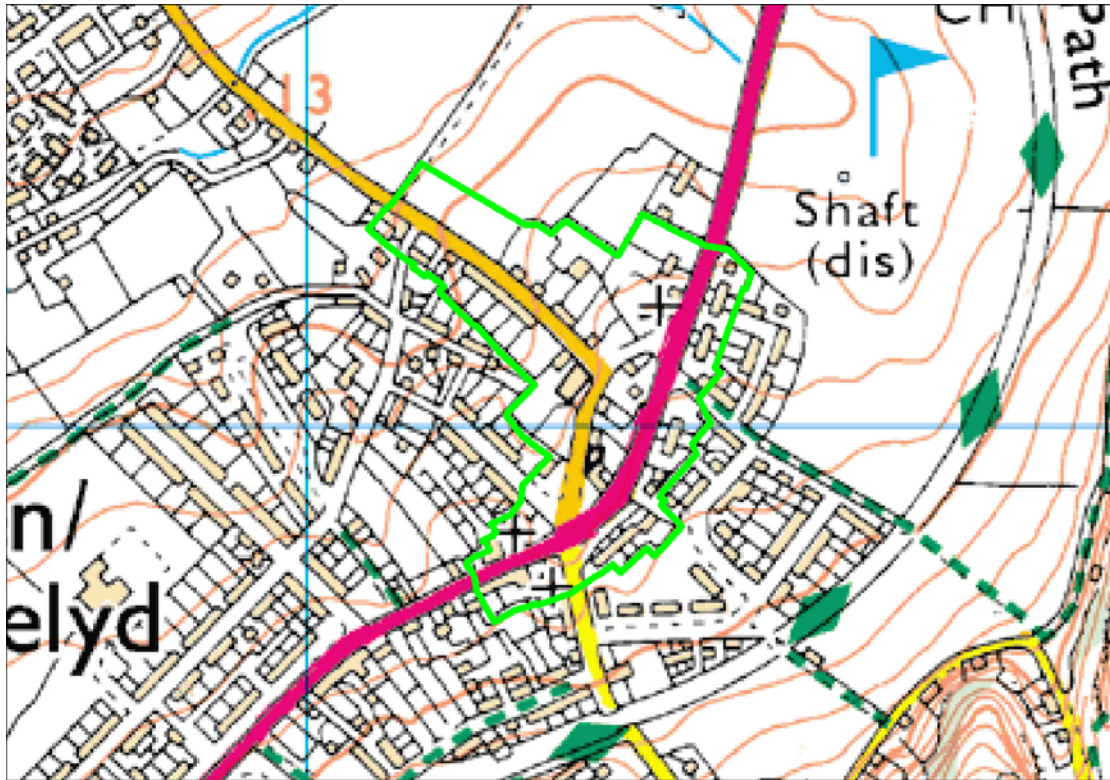
St Melyd's church (16938) is probably 6<sup>th</sup>-century in origin, though nothing of course remains from this time. Its single chamber may be 13<sup>th</sup>-century, and was extended eastwards in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as indicated by the Perpendicular east window. The church was described in 1839 as 'small, with a nave and chancel and large rude, south porch but with a great want of ancient features and very modern in appearance'. It was restored in 1884-5. Internally there is an arch-braced roof of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a font that appears to be late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century, part of a 14<sup>th</sup>-century sepulchral slab and, perhaps surprisingly, a 15<sup>th</sup>-century misericord.

The churchyard (105829), small, curvilinear and with a raised interior, was extended on its northern side in 1862.

There are no houses of any age close to the church. The tone is set by Mountain Ash, a small stone and brick cottage typical of the miners' cottages that proliferated in this area in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It appears on the Tithe map of 1839 but the date of its construction has not been established, though it is perhaps unlikely to be before 1750. At a greater distance is Llys Farmhouse (102202) which lies amongst fields about 350m to the north of the church. The L-shaped stone building occupies the site of a much earlier building, possibly dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Llys in Rustock, as it was known in the past, was one of the medieval manors of the bishops of St Asaph and reputedly became a popular residence for them.

The layout of the village is uninformative. Three roads converge here, but other than the church, there is nothing to indicate a specific village core that reflects a long history, and dwellings, if John Evans' map of 1795 is anything to go by were spaced out along two of the roads, coming in from the south-west and the north-west.

The mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Tithe map shows the distinctive remains of open-field agriculture to the south of the settlement, presumably medieval in origin. All of this has disappeared under modern housing.



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