

Darowen

SH 8298 0180
15652

Introduction

Darowen lies in the hills south of the Dovey valley in western Montgomeryshire. It is some 9km east of Machynlleth. The settlement occupies a saddle with higher ground to east and west and the church perched above the steepest slope which drops to a secluded valley. Very little growth has taken place here during the last one hundred and fifty years - only a single new house had been added to the village in the 1980s for instance.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Darowen 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).



Darowen, photo 03-c-0734, © CPAT, 2012

History of development

The shape of the churchyard and the dedication suggest an early medieval foundation, but there is yet no direct evidence to corroborate such an early origin. St Tudyr, an obscure Welsh saint, is said to have been interred here in the 7th century. It is also worth noting that Lewis in the earlier 19th century remarked on the fact that the church lay within the township of Noddva, a term that sometimes referred to an area of sanctuary around an early medieval (and perhaps later) church.

Unusually, the church does not carry the name of a saint. The church name appears in the form Dareweyn in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 and refers to 'Owain's oak tree'. Darowen is recorded in 1545.

At the time of the Tithe survey in 1846, the village was not dissimilar in appearance to the present, and there is nothing to suggest the growth of a nucleated settlement in the Middle Ages or after.

The heritage to 1750

St Tudyr's church (7694) was completely rebuilt in 1864 and apart from a brass plate of 1627 there is nothing internally that has been preserved from the earlier church or churches on the site.

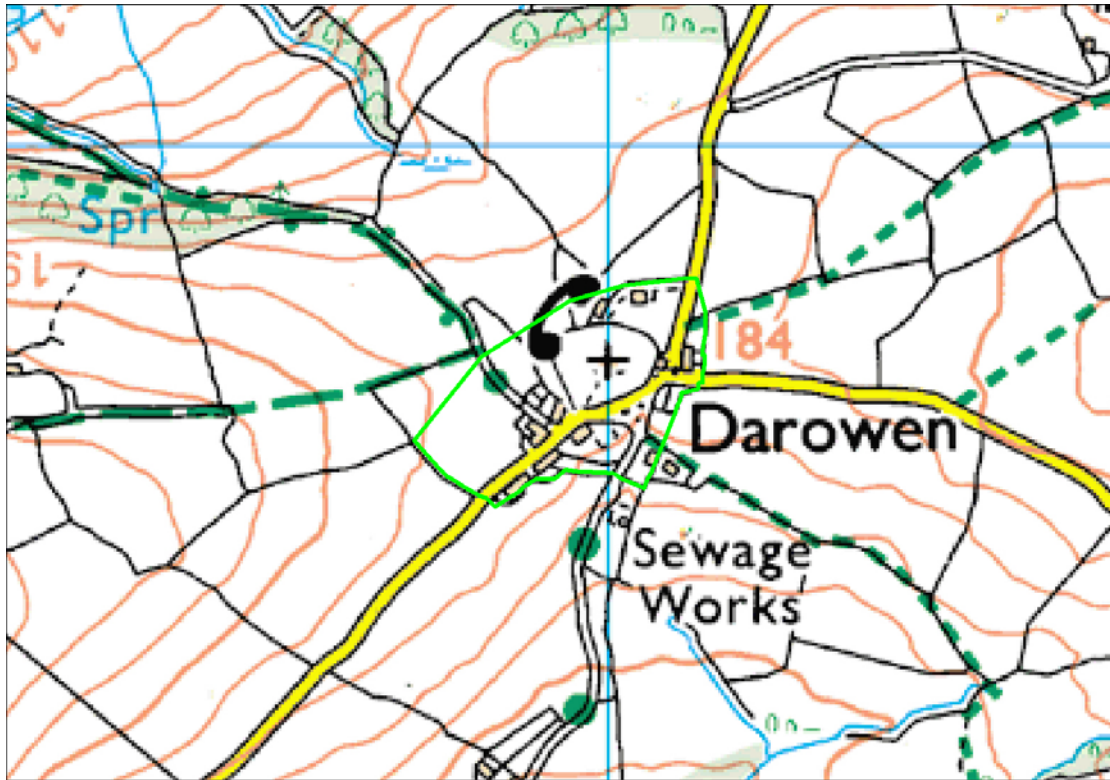
The oval churchyard (7695) appears to have remained largely unaltered over the centuries, though a section may have been sliced off the southern edge during road modifications. There is also at least one anomaly in the north wall. Nearly a quarter of the churchyard is overgrown testifying to the changing circumstances of this hill-top village. The church itself rests on a platform, definable on three sides, and though wide, it seems reasonable to interpret this as rubble from the previous church rather than the position of an early churchyard.

Ffynnon Dadur (1725), an alleged holy well though not classified in the published work of Francis Jones, the leading expert on the subject, lies just beyond the northern churchyard wall.

What may be noted are the number of lanes converging on the settlement. There are at least six although at least one serves only a single farm. Immediately to the south of the churchyard is a small triangular 'green' or patch of common land, a feature not uncommon in some upland parishes.

There are no listed buildings or any of significant age in the village. However, the Old Rectory, though a building of the early 19th century, is said to be on a site first used in 1545.

Minor earthworks on the south-west of the village do not appear to be of archaeological interest but do require further examination.



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Welsh Assembly Government. Licence number 100017916.