

## Forden

SJ 2271 0104  
15658

### *Introduction*

Forden lies just off the B4388 road linking Welshpool and Montgomery, some 7 km south of the former. The church and the surrounding dwellings lie on a flattish spur between the twin branches of a stream which run down westwards to the Camlad, itself a tributary of the Severn less than 2 km away. The church is perched on the lip of the more northerly stream.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of the settlement 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](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).

### *History of development*

Forden is one of those rare places in Wales that features in Domesday Book (1086). There it was distinguished as *Furtune*, incorporating the Old English elements *ford* and *tun*, though because of its position away from any river, experts consider that the first element means 'route' or 'road'. Thus Forden is interpreted as the 'settlement' by a road', the road being of Roman date. Local suggestions about crossing points of the River Severn may be wide of the mark. In 1292 it was *Forton* and in 1570 it appeared in its present form for the first time.

Its appearance in Domesday Book points to the presence of a late Saxon estate here and this has been tentatively linked to Nantcribba, a farm complex about one kilometre to the east on the far side of the B4388 and more importantly also Offa's Dyke. Nantcribba has been seen as a manorial centre with a demesne. But this was referred to as *Wropton alias Nantcribba* in 1596 which in turn has been associated with the *Wropton* of 1292 and the *Vrbetvne* of Domesday Book, (and the name of a township). This points to an estate or settlement, separate from Forden.

The church, though outwardly with little to suggest that it had a long history, could conceivably be an early medieval foundation. It is the shape of the churchyard as shown on an estate map of 1783 which hints at this, though the accuracy of the map has not been assessed, and the picture it presents is clearly different from the outline of the churchyard today.

The post-Conquest nature and appearance of Forden remains uncertain through subsequent centuries, but there must be some doubt as to whether a settlement ever grew up around the church. For much of its time it was a chapel attached to the mother church at Chirbury. An estate map of the 1780s shows the church in a circular churchyard on a common, with two or

three houses set in their fields as separate but detached enclosures. While it is conceivable that a nucleated settlement of the Middle Ages might be gradually abandoned and ultimately revert to open common, it is not at all likely.

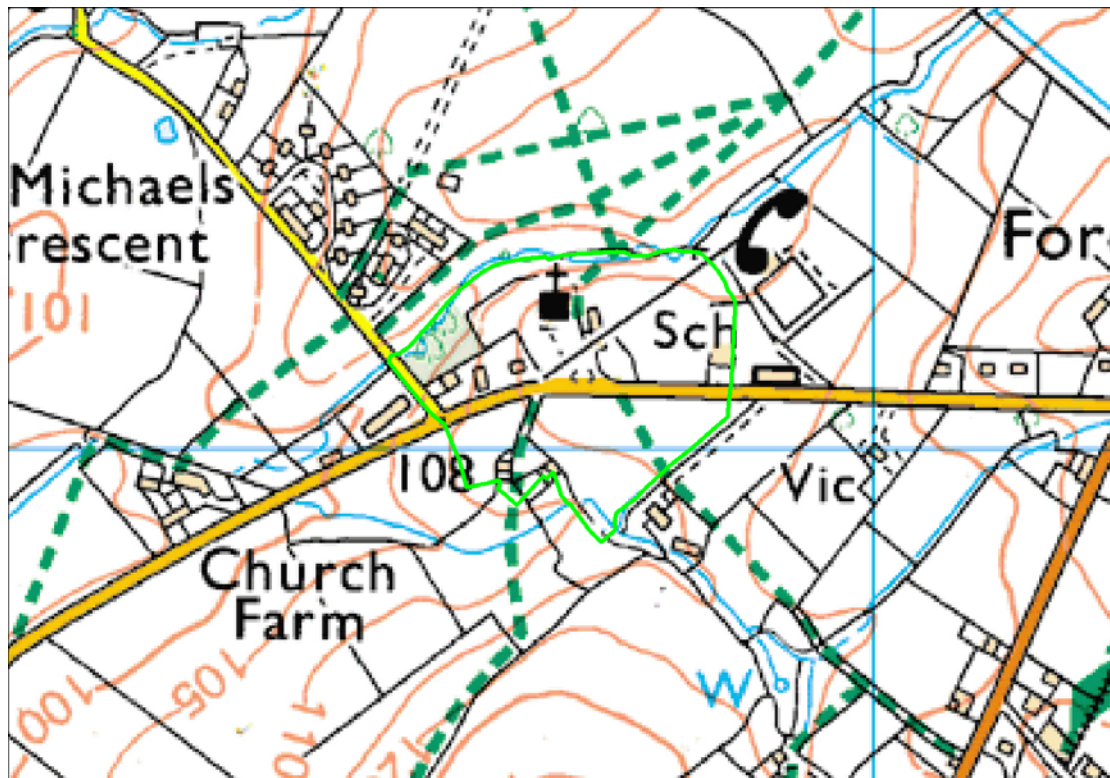
The pattern represented on the late 18<sup>th</sup> century map, and the later Tithe survey map of 1843 where the church was accompanied only by Church House, a farm called Quabb and one or two post-enclosure cottages, suggests that Forden was generally a dispersed settlement, its individual elements spread intermittently around extensive tracts of common land, and that only in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century did it take on a nucleated appearance. At present there is nothing to suggest that Forden was anything other than a church settlement.

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

The church of St Michael (16417) was rebuilt in its entirety in 1867 to the north of the old building. Of its medieval predecessor, nothing remains, nor do any furnishings or fittings. Its churchyard now has a decidedly rectilinear appearance, at odds with its more curvilinear depiction in the eighteenth century.

There are no known buildings of any age in the vicinity of the church and a few sparse earthworks (7589) on the opposite side of the road through the village are of uncertain age and function.

Additionally, there is a wide range of historic sites in the neighbourhood including the Roman fort at Forden Gaer, numerous Iron Age and Romano-British farmsteads showing as cropmarks, several features of different periods at Nantcribba and Offa's Dyke, and a motte on the bank of the Severn at Lower Munlyn, but geographically none of these is directly relevant to the settlement at Forden.



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.