

Hyssington

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Introduction

Hyssington occupies a secluded spot below Corndon Hill, in the extreme eastern reaches of Montgomeryshire. It is about 10km to the south-east of Montgomery. The village and church are detached. The latter is placed on a low-lying spur running off Castle Hill which is crowned by the earthworks of a motte and bailey. Four hundred metres to the south, the village has sprung up around the intersection of a lane running from north to south and a trackway which now links only farms. Beyond, the ground drops away southwards to the distant valley of the Camlad.

This brief report examines Hyssington's emergence and development 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).



St Etheldreda Church and the motte and bailey, photo 94-c-0161, © CPAT, 2012

History of development

The history of the village remains obscure. The archaeological evidence could be taken to indicate that the church was established next to the castle which functioned as an early, post-Conquest manorial centre. The village as seen today gradually evolved at a more convenient nodal point, and probably at a later date than the castle.

The earliest form of the place-name is Husinton in 1227, and there is Hysington in 1535. The name can be broadly interpreted as 'Hussa's farm' and while the tun element is Old English and could signify pre-Conquest beginnings, it is also found as a suffix for sites established after the Conquest. The omission of Hyssington from Domesday Book in 1086, unlike neighbouring Churchstoke, could well be significant, and we should note too the curious church dedication to Etheldreda and ponder on how a 7th century East Anglian abbess came to be commemorated in the Welsh borderland..

The heritage to 1750

The single-chambered church of St Etheldreda (7540) was heavily restored, perhaps even rebuilt, in 1875 – it is impossible to determine whether any medieval fabric survives. It contains a medieval font and an early 17th century pulpit, but little else survived the Victorian restorers.

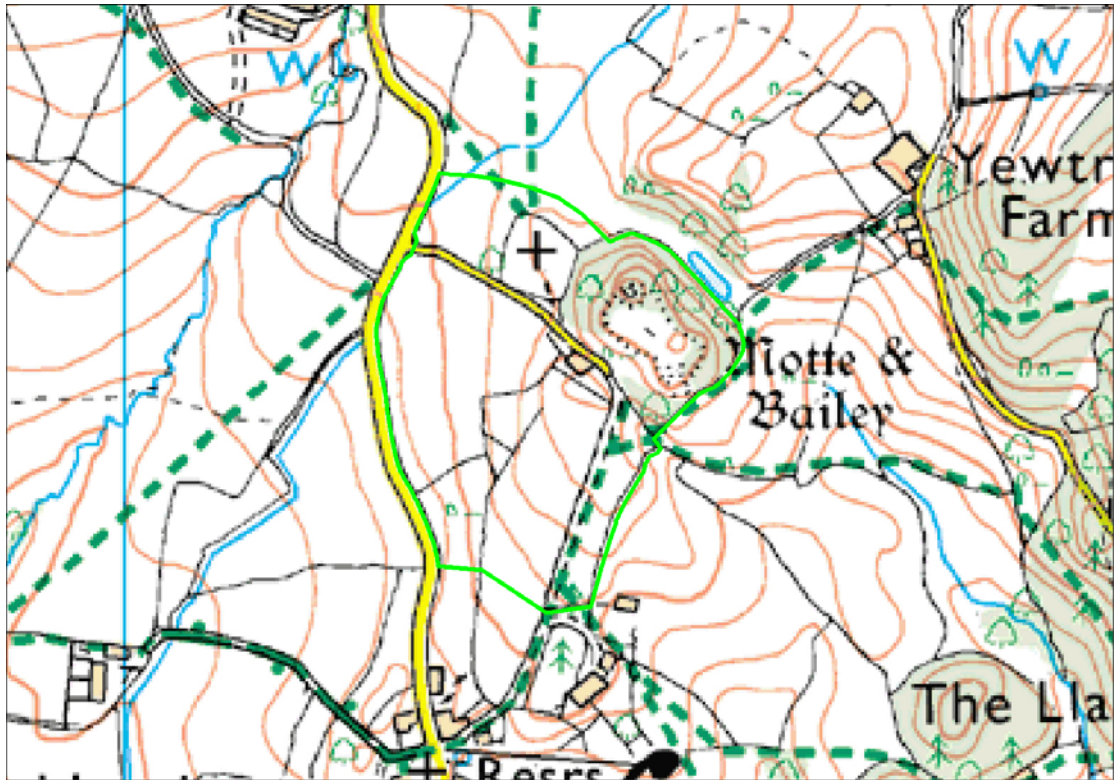
The churchyard is a sub-rectangular enclosure and there is no indication that it has been enlarged at any time.

The motte and bailey on Castle Hill (224) is a well-preserved earthwork conforming to the contours of the summit. Rectangular building foundations and platforms are visible in the bailey, some perhaps post-dating the earthworks, and there are the remains of what may be a stone tower on the motte, though these too could be later than the primary use of the castle. Little information exists as to when the castle was constructed or the duration of its occupation, but it has been claimed as the 'castle of Sned' which was mentioned in documents of the 1230s.

Earthworks (7539) in the field south-west of the church are difficult to interpret, and on present evidence it is not possible to determine whether they result from an earlier, now deserted settlement which logically is where it should be, or have some other, more prosaic explanation. It should be noted, however, that local tradition has it that the village school lay in what is now rough ground just below the west wall of the churchyard, and that Pinfold on the opposite side of the road from the church and castle was originally a pub called 'The Maypole'.

Narrow ridge and furrow (4472) has been noted east of Maypole Bank and to the east of the castle (4556) and further traces of broader ridging may be discernible in the field between Pinfold and the village on the west side of the road. None of this can be dated with any accuracy. A cockpit has also been recorded here (225). The track leading from the church past Maypole Bank may be the original thoroughfare.

The village to the south has a green, perhaps the remnants of a larger area of common land, for the pattern of housing in the second half of the 19th century is outwardly unconventional. There are no buildings of any age recorded in this essentially modern nucleation, except for Brynawel which is thought to be late 18th century in origin, and the timber-framed Hyssington Farm on the south-eastern periphery which is from the early 17th century.



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