

Penstrowed

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Introduction

Penstrowed lies in a bend of the upper Severn between Caersws and Newtown and beside the trunk road from the latter to Llanidloes and Aberystwyth. The settlement lodges at the base of the slope running down from the prominent hill, variously termed Cefn Lladron and Penstrowed Hill, which is the cause of the river's looping course.

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

History of development

The church at Penstrowed was reputedly founded around 520 by St Gwrhai who, it is claimed, is buried in the churchyard. There is nothing, however, to corroborate such early beginnings. It lay close to the old Roman road from Forden Gaer to Caersws which was less than 100m away.

The earliest form of the place-name comes in the 12th century with *Bennystrywyeyt*, followed by *Penestrewit* in 1254 and minor variations thereafter. *Penstrowde* is referenced in a document of 1559 and the modern spelling of *Penstrowed* in c.1570. The most authoritative statement on its meaning invokes the possibility that the name incorporates *ystrywaid* meaning 'trap' linked with *pen*, commonly 'top'. Antiquarian speculation that it could be derived from *Pen y Street*, referring to the Roman road, has been dismissed.

Clearly the church was in existence in the Middle Ages as its appearance in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 attests, but the nature of its accompanying settlement, if any, during the medieval era is unknown.

Even by the middle of the 19th century when the Tithe survey was drawn up the village still clustered around the church and had spread westwards only as far as The Elms and The Vicarage.

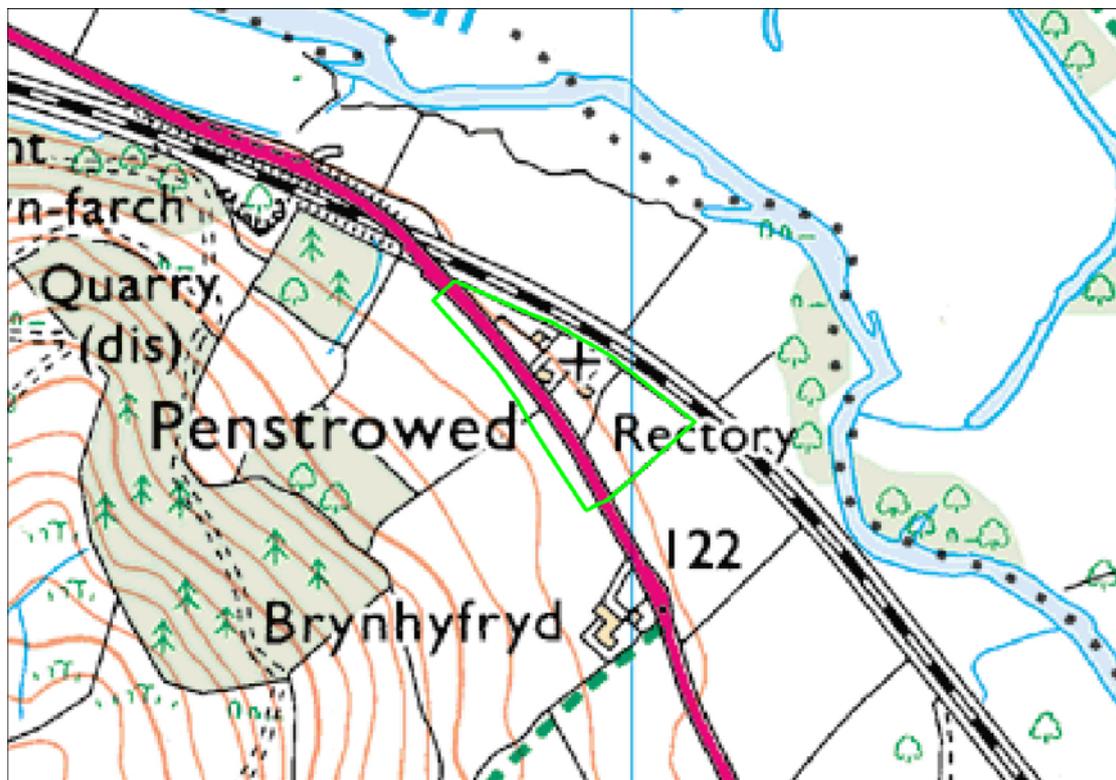
The heritage to 1750

The church (16392), dedicated to St Gwrhai (though the Ordnance Survey have transmuted this to St George), was completely rebuilt in 1863. Of its medieval predecessor, we know absolutely nothing, and the only furnishing that has survived is a worn stoup, loose at the back of the church.

The churchyard (16393) is small and rectangular. If there was ever a curvilinear graveyard here, all traces of it have gone.

There is nothing to suggest that there has ever been a nucleated settlement here. There are no buildings of any great age, and no recognisable earthworks of former dwellings.

Late medieval and early post-medieval pottery sherds (54982) were recovered during pipeline operations from a field close to the church in 2009.



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