

Bettws Disserth

SO 116569
16116

Introduction

The focus of Bettws Disserth is the small church on the west bank of the River Edw, about 10km to the north-east of Builth Wells, and about 2km north of Hundred House.

This brief report examines its 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).

History of development

Bettws Disserth was probably a chapel-of-ease within the parish of Disserth, though in 1887 it was annexed to the parish of Llansantffraid. The 'Bettws' element is conventionally interpreted as a chapel or 'prayer house', the term coming from Old English *bed-hūs*. The first documented reference to it is as *The Bettus* in 1546 and it was termed *Betws yn elfel* in c.1562.

It was certainly a medieval foundation, though at what date has yet to be established. Possibly, its origins go back to the early medieval period for the curving line of the churchyard boundary is suggestive, though not conclusive.

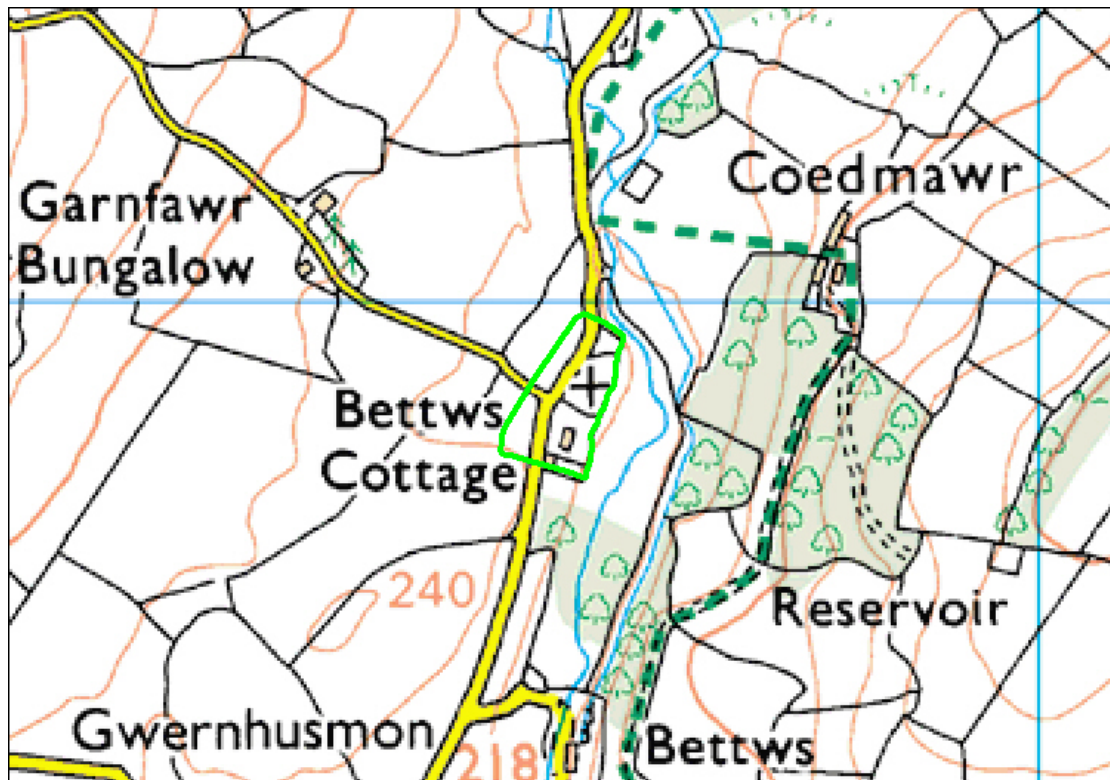
As there are no obvious buildings or earthworks that can be attributed to the period prior to 1750, it appears that this was a solitary chapel unaccompanied by a settlement. The mid-19th-century Tithe survey shows just a single building, presumably a cottage (now gone), immediately to the north of the church

The heritage to 1750

St Mary's Church (16016) was rebuilt in 1883 and the only feature surviving from its predecessor is the Perpendicular font. Its churchyard (16222), adapted to the valley edge on the east, is curvilinear elsewhere, and there are faint traces of an earlier enceinte within the present perimeter at the south-west and south-east corners.

A building (16223) lay against the northern side of the churchyard in the mid-19th century. All that now remains is a raised patch of ground and a short stretch of mortared walling in the otherwise hedged churchyard boundary.

Post-war RAF aerial photography appears to show ridge and furrow in several nearby fields (e.g. OS plots 5100 and 5051). None of this can be discerned on the ground today.



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