

Bleddfa

SO 20696835
16117

Introduction

Bleddfa lies in the deeply cut valley of a tributary of the River Lugg with the heights of Glog Hill to the north and Radnor Forest to the south. The turnpike road from Penybont, now the A488, passes through the village on its way to Knighton, 9km to the north-east.

This brief report examines its 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).

History of development

Alternative interpretations of the place-name have been proposed. Locally favoured is the derivation from *blaidd* and *bach* meaning 'place of the wolf' or 'wolf's nook'. The alternative is that *Blaidd* is a personal name. The earliest appearance is as *Bledwach* in 1195/6 and as late as c. 1600 it was still *Bleddfach*.

Traditionally the church at Bleddfa was founded by the Irish saint Brendan in the 6th century AD, though there is nothing to corroborate this belief. The church was established on one side of the stream, a motte and bailey on the other, but which was the earlier cannot be determined.

During the Middle Ages Bleddfa was an isolated manor belonging to the Fitzosberns, lords of Richard's Castle in Shropshire. An inquisition in 1276 refers to a watermill as well as the castle here, but there is little documented information on the development of the village.

The turnpike road was constructed in 1836 and affected the layout of the village for it appears to have cut through a village green. The Tithe survey four years later reveals that there has been very little expansion in the settlement in modern times.

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Mary Magdalene (281; Grade I listing) consists of a nave and chancel, a south porch and a west bell-turret of c.1711. A 14th-century west tower, destroyed by fire in the 15th century, was partially excavated from the mound of rubble in 1960-63. The western part of the nave could be early 13th century, the rest from later in the century. The roof is typically 15th century, and the font may be from the previous century.

The churchyard (16273) reveals a limited degree of curvilinearity, but probably not enough to argue convincingly for an early medieval origin..

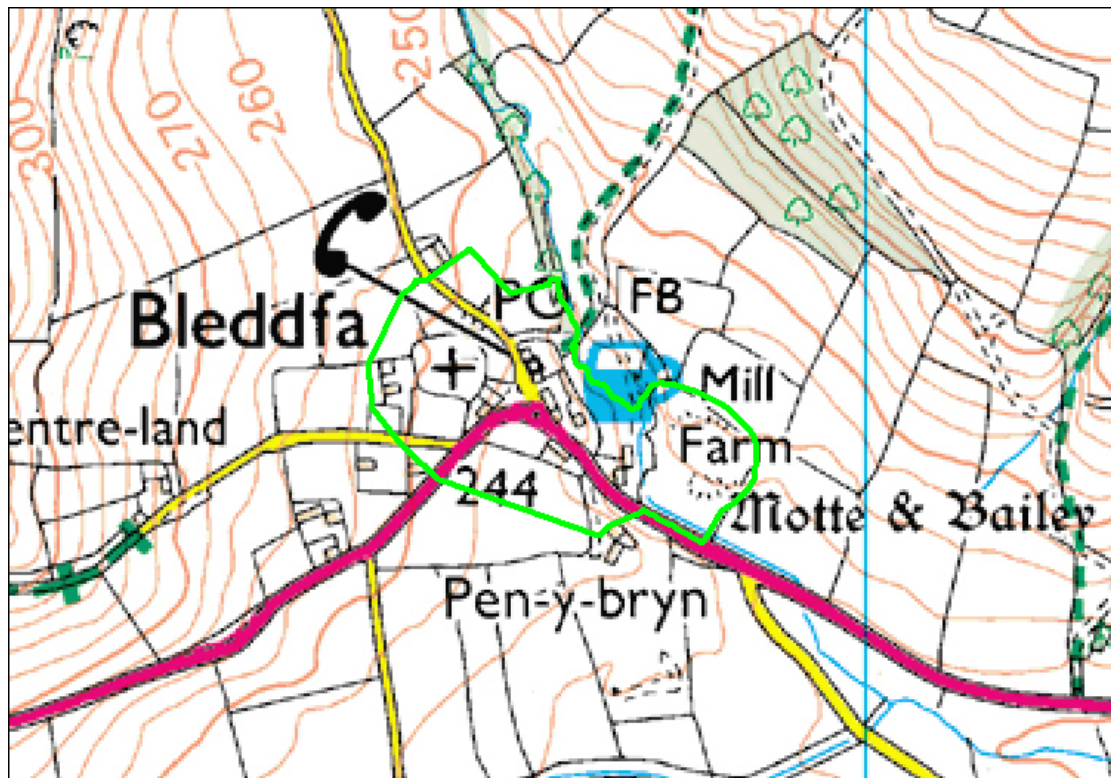
The motte known as Bledewach Castle (280; SAM Rd061) lies 150m to the east of the church. The mound, over 9m high but mutilated on the west, is surrounded by a partially infilled ditch. To the north was a rectilinear bailey, the bank of which can still be seen on the west although it is much degraded. Fragments of a square tower occupying the summit of the mound are thought to date from 1195, when a grant for the repair of the castle is recorded in the Pipe Rolls. The castle was still functioning in 1262 when Llewelyn ap Gruffydd captured it from the Mortimers, but an inquisition of 1376 implies that the castle had not been rebuilt.

The church apart there do not appear to be any buildings of any great age in the village. Hundred House Inn, opposite the church is 18th-century in date. Mill Farm is a converted mill beside the stream, and it can be inferred from its level well below the modern road that it pre-dates the construction of the turnpike.

An open patch of common ground lay to the south-east of the churchyard. In England this might have been termed a village green, but there is no hint of such a name on early Ordnance Survey maps and the appellation, Green Cottage, is a very modern one. The 18th-century turnpike road ran across the common and earlier lanes converged on it. A small settlement might have developed around it, but there is as yet nothing that is obviously pre-18th century in origin.

Earthworks (16274; OS plot 6334) in the form of low lynchet banks edging terraces, occupy the small field to the south of the church.

Strip fields, probably the remnants of medieval open-field agriculture, survive to the south of the church.



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