

Colva

SO 200521
16126

Introduction

Colva is a remote place in the hills of south-east Radnorshire, which but for its church would not even merit the term 'hamlet'. Colva Hill overshadows it on the north, the steep slopes providing some protection, and there is a gentle slope to a stream several hundred metres to the south, which like many others feeds into the infant River Arrow. Kington (Herefordshire) is about 10km to the north-east, and Colva is served by a lane leading westwards to Glascwm, one of several other small settlements in the area.

This brief report examines Colva'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).

History of development

Colva is documented as *golua* sometime between 1447 and 1489, and appears as *cholva* n about 1541. The explanation for the name is difficult. It could reflect a place littered with branches or perhaps a well-wooded area, but neither is certain.

It was originally only a parochial chapelry within the ecclesiastical parish of Glascwm. By the early 19th century it was still associated with Glascwm but in civil matters it was independent. Its origins as church or settlement, however, remain obscure. An ancient tradition articulated in Rhigyfarch's late 11th-century *Life of David* attributes its foundation to St David himself, though this is highly unlikely. There have also been claims of an early medieval ecclesiastical establishment here from at least the 8th century, but this too cannot be verified.

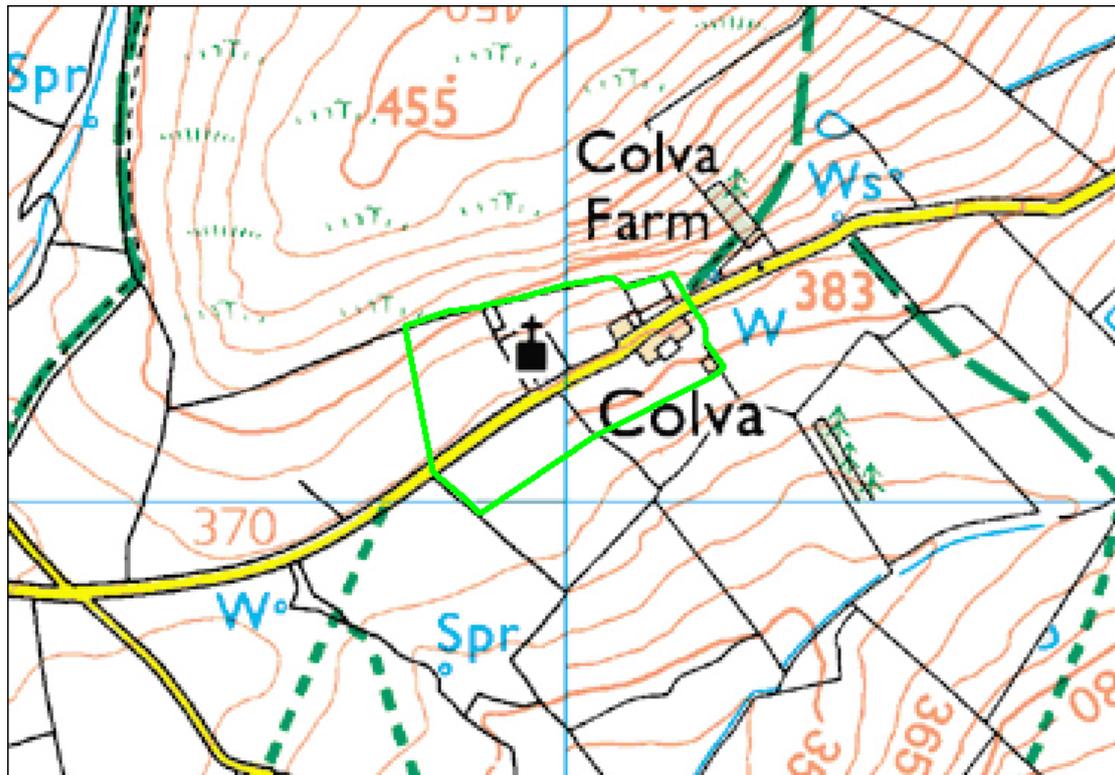
There is no evidence whatsoever for a settlement growing up around the church in the medieval period. No earthworks have been noted in the enclosed ground around the church, and only a single platform on the open hill above. The mid 19th-century Tithe map shows the church and just a small number of other buildings within several hundred metres of each other below the open expanse of Colva Hill. Colva Farm was formerly 'The Sun' inn on a drovers' route that presumably was in use in the late Middle Ages and continued perhaps into the second half of the 19th century. Its presence does not imply, however, that there was anything more here than the church and inn.

The heritage to 1750

St David's Church (16055) has a single chamber dating back perhaps to the 13th century though it has seen much rebuilding, presumably in the 19th century. There is a timber bell-turret at the west end and a 15th-century timbered porch. The font dates to around 1200.

Colva churchyard (16304) is small and rectangular with few features of interest, except perhaps for the massive revetment slabs on its western side.

The surrounding fields include terraced trackways traversing Colva Hill, quarry areas, and perhaps faint ridge and furrow in a field to the south of the road. There are no obvious signs of settlement earthworks around the church, and nothing to suggest this is anything other than a church settlement.



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