

Disserth

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16133

Introduction

A loop in the River Ithon, 4km downstream of Llandrindod Wells, is the location for Disserth church and the houses that accompany it. The church lies on the valley floor to the east of the river, overshadowed by the hill to the west. A minor road linking Newbridge-on-Wye and Howey passes less than 100m to the north.

This brief report examines Disserth'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).



Disserth village, photo 95-C-0610 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

The name derives from Latin *desertum* signifying a wild and deserted place, but can also be applied to a monk's retreat or hermit's cell. Both *Dyssard* and *Dysserch* appear as forms of the name at the end of the 13th century.

It is said that St Cewydd lived in the 6th century and at least one other Radnorshire church, Aberedw, is dedicated to him. This is not to claim that he founded this church though that remains an unverifiable possibility. It seems likely however on the basis of the dedication and the riverside location that a church was established here in the early medieval period.

Any subsequent development at Disserth remains undocumented. There was reputedly a big fire here in 1721, but the effect that it had is not known. The appearance of the settlement in the first half of the 19th century was much as it is today. There is no reason to think that the church was ever the centre of a nucleated community.

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Cewydd (20110) is significant because it remains largely as it was in c.1700, untouched by Victorian restorers. The tower is of c.1400, the nave and chancel of the mid-15th century. The roofs are 15th-century, the surviving part of the rood screen from the same period; there are box pews from the later 17th-earlier 18th century and a pulpit of 1687.

The churchyard (16220) is rectilinear in shape; it is not raised and there is nothing to suggest the presence of an earlier curvilinear enclosure

A small earthwork 'enclosure' of rectilinear outline abutted the churchyard wall on the north-west side. This may have been no more than a croft associated with Disserth Farm but the expansion of the adjacent caravan park has ensured that this cannot now be confirmed. No significant earthworks have been recognised in the vicinity of the church.

Two furlongs of ridge and furrow (16221) at right-angles to each other cover ground to the south-west of the churchyard.



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