

Michaelchurch-on-Arrow

SO 247506
16177

Introduction

Set in the rolling hills of the borderland some 8km south-west of Kington (Herefords), Michaelchurch lies in the shelter of the shallow Arrow valley, occupying a narrow peninsula of Wales jutting into England, with the border less than one kilometre away.

This brief report examines Michaelchurch'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

Michaelchurch appears as *Michaeleschirche* around the year 1257 and *Mihelescruch alias Mihellescherch* in 1309, the name referring to the church here. The Welsh form is Llanfihangel Dyffryn Arwy, first referenced as *ll. V'el dyffryn arwy* in about 1566 and reflecting its riverine location.

Little is known about the village's earlier history. There is nothing here to suggest that this could have come into existence prior to the 11th century, and until archaeological evidence to the contrary appears it will be better to consider this a post-Conquest foundation. Certainly there has been little change in its layout over the last century and a half. Today it consists of only the church, a farm and one other dwelling, and though a few earthworks may mark the positions of earlier dwellings there is nothing to suggest that this was a settlement of any size or significance.

The heritage to 1750

St Michael's Church (16040) consists of a nave and chancel from the 13th or 14th-century, and a west tower which is 13th century, the whole building much restored in 1869 with a completely new set of windows. Internally there is a late Perpendicular screen, and the sanctuary has the remains of a 'ciborium' or canopied shrine, perhaps unique in Wales.

The churchyard (19011) is irregularly rectangular, formerly surrounded by a stone wall and now reduced in size by sub-division. There is no evidence of an earlier curvilinear enclosure.

Church House Farm (16041) to the south-west of the church is box-framed and has a 17th-century parlour wing with a compartmented ceiling.

Three field-names in 1844, 'Castle Orchard', 'Castle Meadow' and 'Castle Wood', now OS plots 9179 and 9873, are suggestive. No earthwork traces of a castle have been recognised, but this is an area where such fortifications are numerous, and a site now totally levelled is a distinct possibility.

Earthworks, perhaps representing former house sites, are discernible to the east (16308; OS plot 8678) and west (16309; OS plot 6360) of the churchyard.



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