

Pilleth

SO 257681
16189

Introduction

Set into the steep eastern slope of Bryn Glas, Pilleth church looks eastwards and southwards across the Lugg valley. A stream edges the hill below the church, passing beside Pilleth Court, and in its higher reaches has incised a deep V-shaped valley to the north of the church. The B4356, to the south of the church, follows the Lugg valley to Presteigne 7km to the south-east.

This brief report examines Pilleth'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).



Pilleth church, before its coat of limewash, photo CS95-061-0006, © CPAT, 2011

History of development

Meaning the 'slope by the pools' Pilleth is derived from Old English *pyll* and *hlið*. In Domesday Book (1086) it appears as *Pelelei*, and in its current form it is documented in 1573.

Until the end of the 19th century the parish church was a chapel attached to Llangunllo, For a brief period at the end of the 12th century it belonged to Llanthony Abbey. The date of its foundation is not known. The dedication to the Virgin Mary might reveal a Norman origin, but the parish's feast day is that of St David which could conceivably point to an earlier association, though there is nothing else that immediately reveals an early medieval beginning.

Pilleth has a significance in the political history of the Middle Ages: Bryn Glas hill was the site of a battle (13196) where Owain Glyndŵr won a decisive victory over Sir Edmund Mortimer in 1402. The church was burnt at this time.

Today, Pilleth consists of the remote church and, below it, Pilleth Court, 150m away. A similar pattern is shown on maps of a century and a half ago. Earthworks around the church suggest that there may once have been more dwellings around it than today, although these have yet to be properly surveyed and evaluated.

The heritage to 1750

St Mary's Church (16047; Grade II* listing) occupies a terrace cut across the contours. Its 15th-century tower reveals a complicated history, the nave and chancel are attributed to the 14th century on the evidence of a door and window tracery, a stoup of the early 13th century, and a piscina and font from the following century. Badly damaged by fire in 1894, it was restored in 1911, and has undergone further extensive works in recent years.

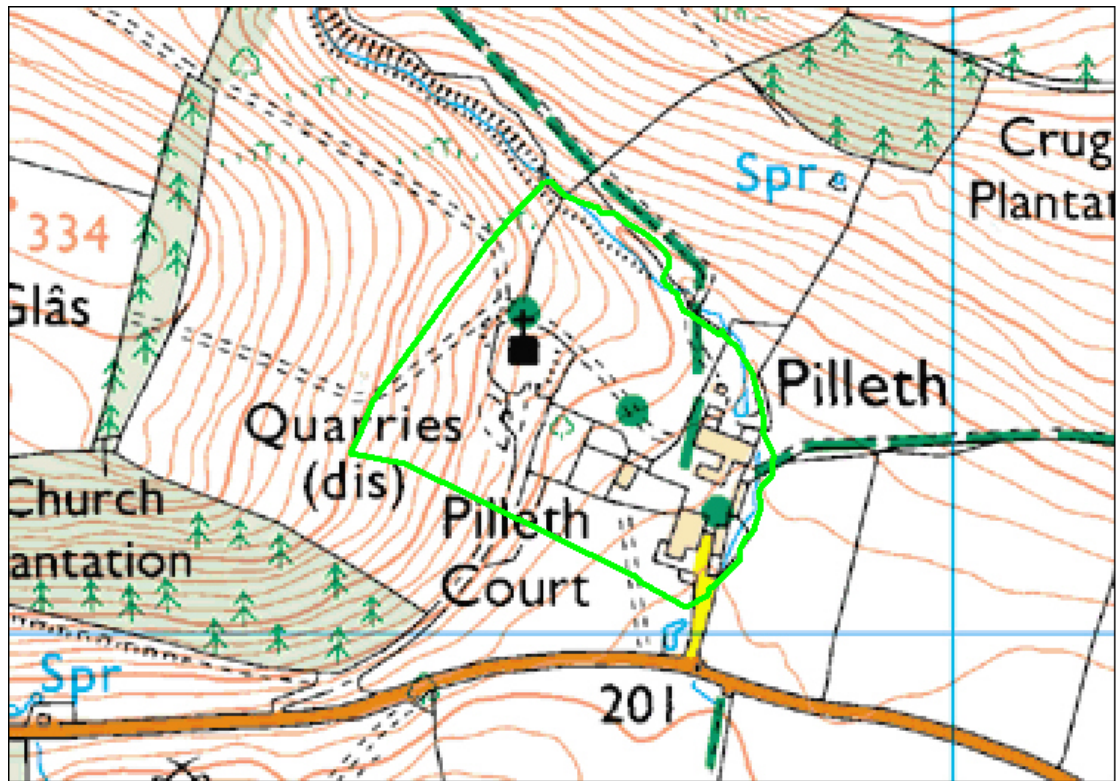
A holy well (287) exists a few metres to the north of the church and was reputed for its healing qualities in the Middle Ages. It is rhombic in shape, stone-lined and a flight of five steps leads down into it.

The churchyard (16259) is rectangular. It shows some evidence of an extension on the east, but displays no element of curvilinearity.

Earthworks (4432; OS old plot 279), including platforms and banks to the north, east, and south-east of the churchyard appear to be the remains of a deserted medieval settlement. There are also earthworks in the small field (OS old plot 278) immediately behind the Court, but these may be the relics of a former orchard or gardens associated with the house. A further platform (16258; OS old plot 256) terraced into the slope just beyond the western edge of the churchyard is more likely to be the site of an earlier dwelling. The full extent of these earthworks has not been satisfactorily assessed and a thorough survey is required before any more specific deductions are made.

Abandoned quarries on the western edge of the churchyard and a few metres to the south were presumably exploited in the construction of Pilleth Court and its outbuildings, and perhaps too at an earlier period when the church was built.

Pilleth Court (16048; Grade II listing) has external chimneys and chamfered stone fireplaces suggestive of an origin around 1600. The hall and crosswing are attributed to the late 16th century and there are 19th-century additions. It is of particular interest because of its early brickwork.



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