

Bettisfield

16146
SJ 4595 3550

Introduction

The modern village of Bettisfield is situated on low-lying land, 1.5km south of the A495 Oswestry to Whitchurch road. The land rises gently to the north with the Victorian church and Bettisfield Hall Farm located on the brow of a hill, separated from the present village ribbon development along two minor roads by the Shropshire Union Canal and a disused railway line. Further north still by one kilometre is Bettisfield Park. The land between the village and church is a mixture of pasture and arable farmland punctuated by occasional areas of unreclaimed marshland and shallow ponds.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Bettisfield to around 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it may be necessary to examine other sources of information and particularly for the origins and nature of some of the buildings within it.

The accompanying map is offered solely as an indicative guide to historic settlement in the vicinity of modern Bettisfield. The continuous line defining the historic core offers a visual interpretation of the area within which settlement may have 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 adopted in the HER to provide researchers with information that is specific to the individual sites and features. These can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

Bettisfield is first recorded as *Beddesfeld* in the Domesday Book of 1086 and appears in its present form in 1388. This can be translated as 'Bēda's field', though the identity of Bēda remains a mystery. In addition there is a Welsh version of the name – *Llysvaesbedydd* – which is documented in 1356 and continued in variant form into the early 16th century. The significance of the *llys* element often meaning a court but sometimes a manor has yet to be explained.

The size and nature of the Domesday settlement is unknown but Bettisfield's appearance in the survey indicates that there was a manor here. Subsequently it gave its name to a township in the ecclesiastical parish of Hanmer.

Between the 11th and 17th centuries there is no solid evidence of a settlement here. Bettisfield Hall, the oldest surviving building, dates to the late 16th or early 17th century, the successor to a house first erected on the site around 1540. During the 17th century this structure together with a number of widely separated farmsteads may have been the only settlement within the Bettisfield area.

Bettisfield Park appears to have come into existence around 1640 when the Hanmer family moved there from Bettisfield Hall. Evans (1795) termed this Red Hall and the separate park to

the west, Red Hall Park. Subsequently the road that separated them was re-positioned, hence the New Road of today that runs up to Hanmer village which was in place by 1819, by which time the Ordnance Survey were using the name Bettisfield Park.

An estate map of 1780 shows two settlement foci. The first, centred on what is now Bettisfield Hall Farm, comprised the winged hall with outbuildings to the south, and on the opposite side of the road, where the church and vicarage were later constructed, three other buildings, one a dwelling. This was Bettisfield as far as John Evans was concerned in 1795. Where the present village lies there were only a few widely spaced buildings, and Evans' map adds further detail for these dwellings were sited around open ground which he termed Bettisfield Green. The existence of this green may have been compromised by the construction of the Shropshire Union canal.

The construction of the Whitchurch branch of the canal in 1797 was probably a stimulus to the expansion of Bettisfield. The tithe map of 1839 shows a clustering of dwellings immediately adjacent to the canal side just south of Bettisfield Bridge. Sometime after 1845 the railway linking Oswestry and Chester was constructed and a station with sidings was provided at Bettisfield.

The heritage to 1750

The present church of St John the Baptist (105312) was constructed in 1872/4, replacing a wooden structure of 1851.



Bettisfield, photo 03-c-0096 © CPAT, 2013

The only building of any architectural interest in Bettisfield is Bettisfield Hall (102682). The winged hall of late 16th to early 17th-century date was constructed in brick with ornate mullioned and transomed windows. One of the rooms within the hall is believed to have been a private chapel. The Hall is a Grade II listed building.

The cottages of the ribbon development to the south are no earlier than the 18th century. The only building of any potential interest is the brick house known as The Smithy (104481), documented as the village smithy but now showing no signs of its former usage.



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