

Penley

16314
SJ 4127 4001

Introduction

Penley is a dispersed settlement in flat open countryside. Situated close to the English border it is 4.5km east of Overton on the A539.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Penley up to 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it will be necessary to examine other sources of information and particularly for the origins and nature of the buildings within it, and here can be recommended Shirley and Derrick Pratt's *A Millennium History of Penley* (2000).

The accompanying map is offered solely as an indicative guide to the modern settlement. No historic core has been defined for Penley as the evidence currently available to us is not sufficiently detailed to justify it. However, this decision might need to be reviewed, were a more detailed analysis of the extent and appearance of the greens at Penley to be completed. The map does not show any 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

Penley is documented first as *Pendeley* in 1292, *Pendele* in 1300 and as *Pendley* in 1333, with the present form of the name being recorded in 1492. An alternative name, Llannerch Banna, is documented as *Lannerpanna* in 1270, and it has been suggested by place-name specialists that Panna may have been a conscious substitution for Penda and *llanerch* for *leah*. The meaning of Penley is usually taken to be 'Penda's clearing', but experts are increasingly seeing *leah* as meaning wood pasture, rather than the more traditional interpretation as a clearing in a wood or the wood itself. The traditional view that the Penda commemorated here was one and the same as the great, 7th-century Mercian king is of course attractive but not really likely.

As a settlement, Penley and its appearance during the medieval period is an unknown, but there are 14th-century records of open fields in the vicinity and two adjacent moated sites. Its ecclesiastical origins are unclear. It was originally a chapelry of Ellesmere, its mother church in Shropshire and remained that way into the 19th century, only becoming a parish in its own right around 1869.

At the time of enclosure at the end of the 18th century, the pattern of settlement was still relatively dispersed. There were at least two foci. Penley chapel (as it then was) lay close to or even on Chapel (or Church) Green, an irregular and elongated patch of open ground at the junction of Hollybush Lane and the A539 that acted as a focus for a group of three houses on the south side of the road and another four beside or close to Hollybush Lane. Three hundred metres or so eastwards was Far Green, now bisected by the main road, with a scatter of dwellings around its edge and Penley Hall and its moats to the north.

Almost one hundred years later (c.1880), the area showed very little further development and it is evident from the cartographic sources that Penley as a village is very much a creation of the 20th century with the hospital being a dominant feature.

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Mary Magdalene (105322) was rebuilt between 1899 and 1901. Nothing survives of its predecessors which lay a little to the south of the present building. A brick church had been built in 1794 but was declared unsafe in the 1880s. In the 18th century there was a church, at least some of which was of lath and plaster, but whether this was the 16th-century building known to have been in existence in the late 1530s has not been determined. At present the Pratts (see above) place the origin of the chapel no earlier than c.1475. Little that pre-dates 1750 remains in the church. Possibly the only survivor is a small memorial brass to a Penley incumbent who died in 1725.

The churchyard, now elongated, was smaller and almost square in outline in the late 19th century, its southern edge flush to the road.

There are no buildings of particular historic interest in Penley itself, other than the 16th-century Dymock Arms (105327) on the eastern periphery of what was Far Green. On the outskirts of the village, Lane Farm at nearby Little Green (the northern portion of Chapel Green) is mid-18th-century and has a Grade II listing, while Old Hall Farm out to the west of Chapel Green is a hall-house listed as Grade II. Recent work at the latter has revealed a late medieval/early 16th-century timber-framed core with a complex series of subsequent alterations still evident in the fabric. Painted decoration of the beams and plaster survives from the earliest phase.



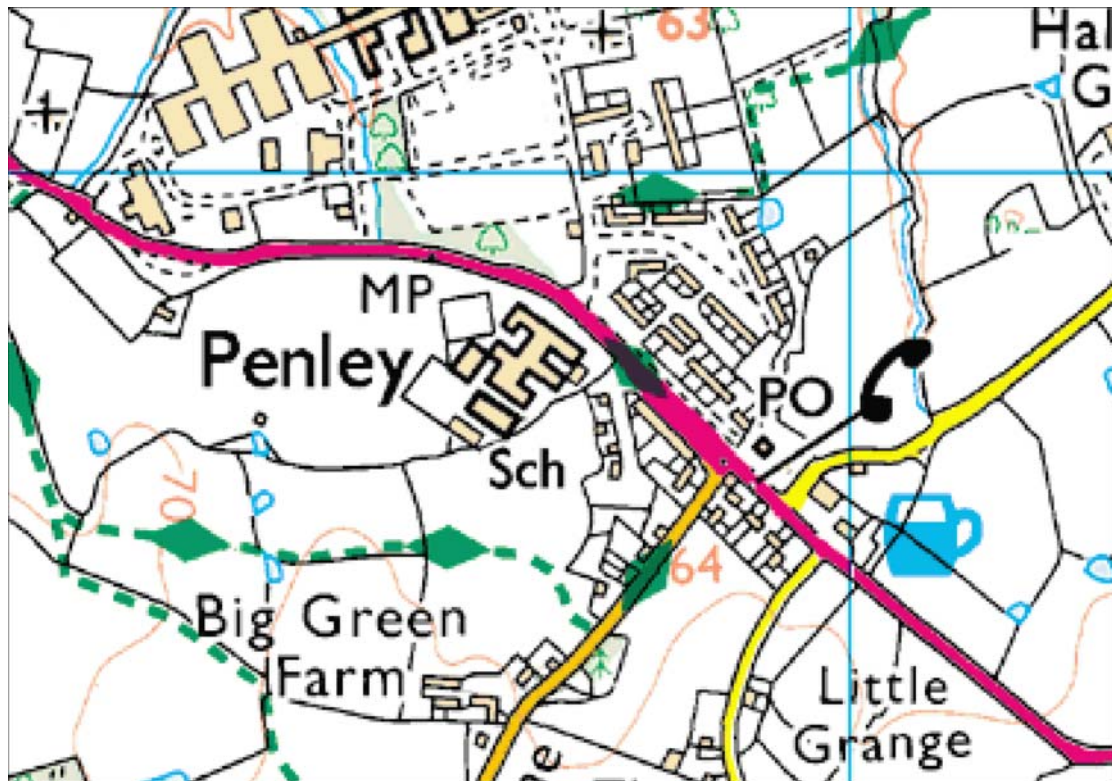
Penley moated site, photo 89-c-0044 © CPAT, 2013

A well-preserved, water-filled moated site (100197) lies behind Penley Hall, almost certainly representing the location of the predecessor of that building. In addition the enclosure and tithe maps depict another moat of rather larger dimensions a short distance to the south of where Penley Hall lay. A L-shaped pond and two other boundaries form a quadrilateral

(105347) which survived into the 19th century. It is claimed that soft ground around the former Polish chapel marks the position of this larger moat, known locally as the ‘Outer Moat’. The presence of two moats little more than 300m apart has yet to be satisfactorily explained.

West of Ellesmere Lane and close to what was once the edge of Far Green, the irregularly shaped field to the north of Big Green Farm exhibits earthworks including holloways and platforms (105323). Other potentially interesting earthworks lie in OS field no.0085 (105324); in front of Old Hall (105325); and in the vicinity of Hollybush Lane Farm (105326).

Extensive traces of ridge and furrow were noted during the survey particularly to the east of Penley in the vicinity of Park Lane. Further ridging has been recorded north of the Penley Hall moat and it has been suggested that this moat overlies some cultivation ridges. However, Derrick Pratt quite rightly points out that the regular straight ridges are more in keeping with 18th- or 19th-century horse or steam ploughing than with medieval cultivation, and RCAHMW records also favour a later date for the ridges.



Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right 2013. All rights reserved. Welsh Assembly Government. Licence number 100017916.