

Clyro

SO 21314376
16125

Introduction

Clyro is situated in the extreme south-east of Radnor District less than 2km from the Brecknock town of Hay-on-Wye on the opposite side of the River Wye and a similar distance from the English border. The main A438 from Hereford to Brecon clips the edge of the village.

This brief report examines Clyro'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).



Clyro village, photo 00-C-0079 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

The Wye here loops around a broad peninsula of higher ground projecting eastwards but narrowing where it merges with the uplands edging the river. The peninsula supports both a Roman fort and Clyro Castle. Clyro village, several hundred metres to the north-west, developed where the small Clyro Brook emerges from its steep hillside valley to the relative flatness of an inlet from the Wye valley. With a now dry hollow on its south-east side separating it from the castle, the church is on a spur, albeit a low-lying one.

The first documented appearance of the name is a late one, as *Cliro* in 1482. It is derived from the river name *Cleirwy* which is said to an earlier term for the Clyro Brook. It is believed that *Ruyll* recorded in 1232 (and *Royl* in 1283) is an earlier name for this place, and this incorporates the Welsh *rhwyl* meaning 'court' or 'palace'.

The origins of Clyro, as with so many other Radnorshire villages, are uncertain. Possibly the church is an early medieval foundation but the evidence is equivocal. The earliest date for a church on this spot is in the 12th century. Alternatively the settlement might have developed as an adjunct to the post-Conquest castle whose own history is little documented.

Furthermore the Cistercian abbey of Cwmhir owned a grange in the neighbourhood of Clyro during the Middle Ages and this has been associated, reasonably convincingly, with Court Farm, 500m to the south of the village

The mid-19th-century picture as presented on the Tithe map is of houses clustered around the churchyard, giving the impression, albeit at a late date, of a nucleated settlement. New housing is now markedly altering the appearance of the village.

The heritage to 1750

St Michael's Church (16008), with nave, chancel, north aisle and west tower, was largely rebuilt in 1853, leaving only the 15th-century tower which itself was heightened in 1894. There is little of interest internally. A possible lintel of late 11th- or early 12th-century date (and now in Hay Castle) presumably came from the church and probably provides a broad date for the earliest stone church on the site.

Its churchyard (16202) is of irregular shape: this might suggest enlargement in the past but it is difficult to identify any features that could confirm it. Immediately to the east of the chancel wall and curving round the south side of the building is a scarp bank more likely to be a rubble platform derived from the earlier church than a former churchyard boundary.

Clyro Castle (435; SAM Rd066) lies some 200m south of the church. A scarped natural knoll, it is encompassed by ditch and outer bank, has an entrance on the south-west. Substantial stone building foundations remain, with perhaps a shell keep on the crest. Overgrown, the castle mound is nevertheless an imposing monument, though there is no trace of a bailey. A date as early as the 1270s has been suggested for its construction and it was still defensible in 1403, but little is known of its history between those dates.

No. 21 The Village (42375) on the west side of the churchyard and nos 4-6 (16075) on the south side are former 15th-century cruck-framed hall-houses, altered in the 19th century. 17th-century cottages also lie close to the church as with 16-17 The Village (16204) while Rose Cottage (16076) and Sacred Cottage (16203) are 18th-century, the latter set on a lane further back from the churchyard and reputedly the priest's house. On the north side of the stream nos 25 and 26 are also 18th-century cottages.

With the exception of Sacred Cottage all of these buildings are set around the churchyard, and the signs are of a late medieval nucleated settlement developing here, focused on the church. The settlement emerged at what in the medieval era was a potentially important crossroads. The main route along the north side of the Wye valley ran around the south side of the churchyard; less obvious is the track running down from the north linking the major lordship centre of Painscastle with the crossing of the river to Hay.

There are traces too of medieval strip fields (rather than fossilised tenement plots), immediately to the south-east of the village, running past the castle site.

There are a number of more recent buildings with a Grade II listing, the most noteworthy one being the mid 19th-century Ashbrook House (16205), once the home of the diarist, the Reverend Francis Kilvert.

At the south end of the village, Court Farm (437; Grade II* listing) is believed to have occupied the site of a grange of Cwmhir Abbey. Survivals appear to include a 14th-century arch and other parts of a stone-built range incorporating a cowhouse and stables which are of medieval origin. An evaluation in 2004 favoured a 15th-century date for one of the buildings, yet a recent reassessment by the Royal Commission suggests that this was the court of the Vaughan family and was probably built around 1575.



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