Gladestry

SO 231551
16143

Introduction

Gladestry is located where several small valleys converge. Hergest Ridge rises steeply to the east, Cefn Hir is equally steep but even higher to the west. To north and south the hills are gentler. The village itself shelters at the base of these hills, on flattish ground just above the Gladestry Brook. A few houses lie to the south of the stream, but most together with the church are on the north bank. Kington is 6km to the east beyond the bulk of Hergest Ridge, the English border running across its top. The B4594 runs through the village and four other lanes converge here.

This brief report examines Gladestry'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).

Gladestry church, photo 3247-0074 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

Gladestry appears as Claudestre around 1250, and Glaudestrie nearly a century later. The meaning appears to be 'Claud-'s tree'. The Welsh name of the manor was Llanfair Llythynwg, documented as Lanfeyr Lonthonnok in 1291, and indicating the 'church of Mary in Llythynwg', a district here in the Middle Ages.

Whether as has been suggested the place-name can be taken to indicate that there was a pre-Conquest Welsh settlement here is a debatable point. While the date of origin of the village cannot be assessed, it has grown up at a place where tracks cross probably with a small green or common at its heart, and this may have been instrumental in its development. Even before the construction of the turnpike road, the village may have developed into a nucleated settlement, perhaps in the medieval period.

The heritage to 1750

St Mary's Church (16014) has a nave, north aisle and chancel, a south porch and a west tower with spire. The nave is 13th century, enlarged in the late 14th century and its lower stage predates the aisle. Aisle and chancel may be 14th century, the nave roof and porch 15th century, and the chancel windows and roof 16th century. The font is 13th century and the decorated piscina may be from around that time too.

The churchyard (16305) is rectilinear, and there are vague hints of curvilinearity in its present appearance, but not significantly so. Tithe maps are not necessarily reliable indicators of layout, but that for Gladestry points to a continuation of the original churchyard enclosure as far south as the stream, with a distinctively curvilinear boundary on the west. Regrettably there are no other early depictions that can be studied so the accuracy of the tithe map drawing cannot be assessed.

A restored churchyard cross sits on its original base (366) in the south-east corner of the yard.

The former White Hart Inn (36650) on the south side of the churchyard is believed to have been a drovers' inn which was built in the 16th century and functioned briefly as a village shop in the 19th century. Corner House (16015) is a late 16th-century timber-framed jettied cross-wing, the main late medieval hall-house having been demolished. Gladestry Court (362; Grade II listing; formerly Great House) - not to be confused with the Court of Gladestry nearly 2km to the north-west - is reputedly built on the site of the medieval manor house. The walls appear to be 17th century and there is a datestone of 1689 incorporated in the modernised building. Just to the south-west, a structure behind Church House that now functions as a barn contains blocked windows of uncertain date (16306). At the eastern end of the village opposite the Royal Oak Inn is a former meeting house that may have 18th-century origins, and implies the extension of the settlement in this direction at a late date.

Earthworks of uncertain character survive in pasture opposite Gladestry Court (OS plot 1516), while the terracing around farm buildings to the north of the church is assumed to be modern (OS plot 0119).

The three buildings of late medieval or early post-medieval date – White Hart Inn, the Corner House and the Great House – congregate around a triangle of land to the south-east of the churchyard which has the appearance of a small common or green. Now partially infilled by more modern buildings this could well have formed a focus for settlement in the late medieval period with several tracks and lanes converging on it. Evaluations over the last decade seem to have demonstrated that medieval settlement did not spread around the northern side of the churchyard.

A 19th-century source refers to 'the remains of a camp surrounded by a strong rampart or breastwork' on ground contiguous to Gladestry Court, which in 1811 had been given over to a garden. This, however, appears to be a reference to the Court of Gladestry noted above.