

Battle

SO 009310
2554

Introduction

Battle is a linear, road-side settlement, running eastwards from its church. It is sited on the north-eastern lip of the steep sided Ysgir valley some 3km from Brecon.

This brief report examines its 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).



Battle village, photo 05-C-0143 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

History and tradition suggest that this was the location of the decisive battle between the local forces of Bleddin ap Maenarch and the invading Norman forces of Bernard de Neufmarche in 1092. The latter's victory led to the subjugation of much of Brecknock. The exact site of the battle (474) is not known, although it is generally ascribed to an area south-west of Battle village, near the large standing stone (467) which local tradition holds to mark the burial of

the slain. However, the more prosaic explanation of the name which first appeared as *Battle* in 1527, but was *Bello* in 1222-24 is that it was named after Battle Abbey in Sussex which held the advowson (or rights) of the church here after the Conquest.

The church dedication and the vestigial circular churchyard (see below) may indicate an early medieval origin for the church although the name of the village obviously derives from its later history. The parish of Battle was formerly an integral part of the parish of St John the Evangelist in Brecon.

Despite its medieval pedigree the village has the most modern character of any studied in the original survey of 1993, and is little more than a conglomerate of new housing.

The heritage to 1750

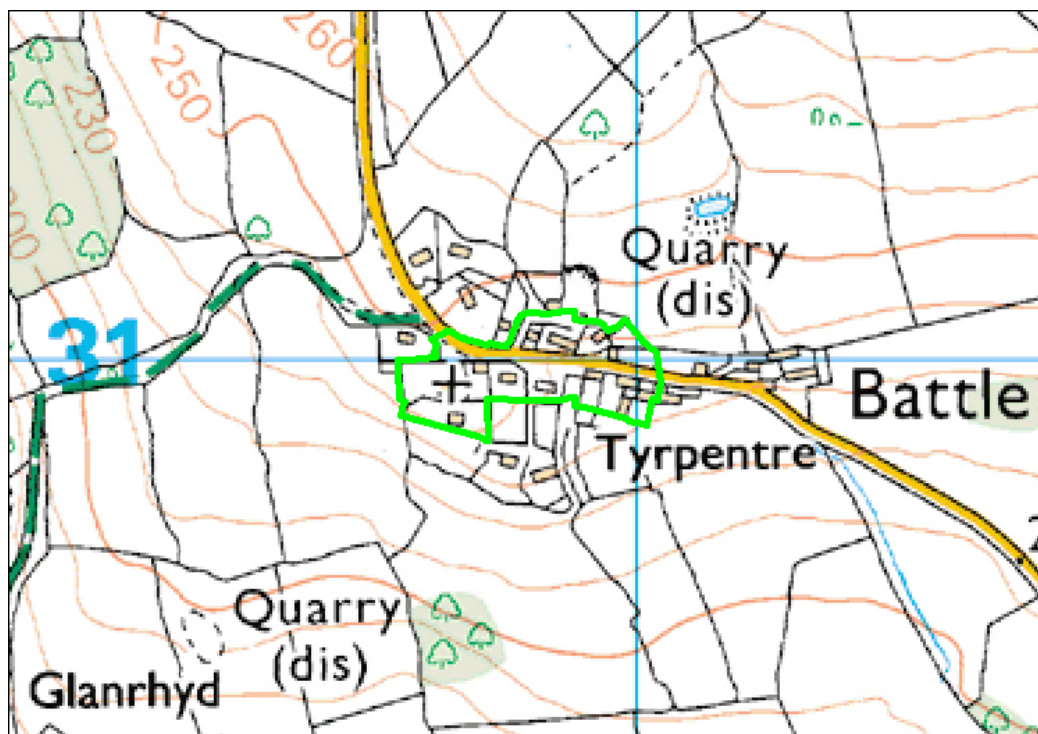
Battle Church (2952) is a single-chambered building, dedicated to St Cynog. Although largely rebuilt in 1880, it retains a barrel-vaulted roof of about 1500.

The church lies in a roughly rectangular churchyard (2953) perched on the edge of the Yscir valley. This yard appears to be a relatively modern creation, although it is depicted in this form on the tithe survey of 1847. However, the line of a former sub-circular enclosure survives as a low bank in the gardens of the adjoining Bryn yr Hal and Y Dderwen, as well as within the churchyard. This sub-circular churchyard (2954) would have been 60m across and centred on the site of the present church, and this appears to be confirmed by an early estate map of the area.

The present village comprises little more than new bungalows set in large regular gardens. Nineteenth-century cartography reveals that Battle formerly comprised about eight buildings ranged around an open space to the east of the church, probably a small tract of unenclosed common land (2955). This landscape feature (which has now disappeared) comprised the field now occupied by Panteg, Crud y Arwel and Morwell, and was encompassed by a wide road occupying the area in front of School House, what is now Hoel y Garreg and the plot now occupied by Oakleigh. It originally extended north of the church (where it was still called Battle Common at the end of the 19th century), but even by the time of the tithe survey in the middle part of that century, parts of it had been enclosed as small fields.

Some of the dwellings shown on the map look to be on the common rather than around its perimeter and thus hint at later 18th-century squatters taken up residence, rather than earlier houses. Certainly there are no recognised early buildings in the settlement. The farm of Ty'r Pentre is 18th-century, though later in that century rather than earlier.

Battle is atypical of the settlements studied here, as it appears to be primarily a late development around the edge of a small common which remained unenclosed at the convergence of two trackways. In the medieval period it is entirely possible that there was only a wayside chapel here, though this will be demonstrated only by excavation.



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