

SCETHROG

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Introduction

Scethrog lies beside the A40 trunk road in the community of Llansantffraed, 7km south-east of Brecon. It has grown up on the north side of the Usk, the Tower, its most well-known building occupying a knoll projecting from the flood plain. The rest of the houses straggle up the south-facing hillside that forms the edge of the valley

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Scethrog up to the year 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 only 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 will 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. The HER can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

The name has been taken to mean a 'rough' or 'rocky' settlement derived from the Welsh *sgathrog*. In the early 13th century it was committed to paper as *Skathrok* and there is a steady flow of references throughout the medieval era and into Tudor times with *Skethrog* appearing in 1578 and *skatherogg* in 1583.

The nature of the settlement remains uncertain. That there was something here in the Middle Ages is indicated by the occurrence of the place-names noted above but these could refer only to a manorial centre. It has also been suggested that this could have been the centre of an early sub-lordship centred on the Llansantffraed area. Speed at the beginning of the 17th century, and presumably Saxton before him, included Scethrog on his county map implying that settlement was sufficiently distinctive to merit recording, yet perhaps significantly Ogilby in 1675 failed to mention it on his road map, even though the Abergavenny to Brecon road passed close by it. By the beginning of the 19th century the Ordnance Survey were able to record a concentration of dwellings beside the lane leading northwards from the turnpike road with just a couple of dwellings beside the main road itself, and this is a pattern that has not changed that much up to the present day.

The heritage to 1750

Scethrog Tower to the south of the main road is one of only two confirmed tower houses in Breconshire. On the basis of some of the stonework, it may have originated in the 14th century, although much of the structure is of 16th-century date and there were further alterations in the 18th century. It is set on a mound, probably natural, and within what appears to have been an embanked polygonal enclosure referred to as a moat on Ordnance Survey

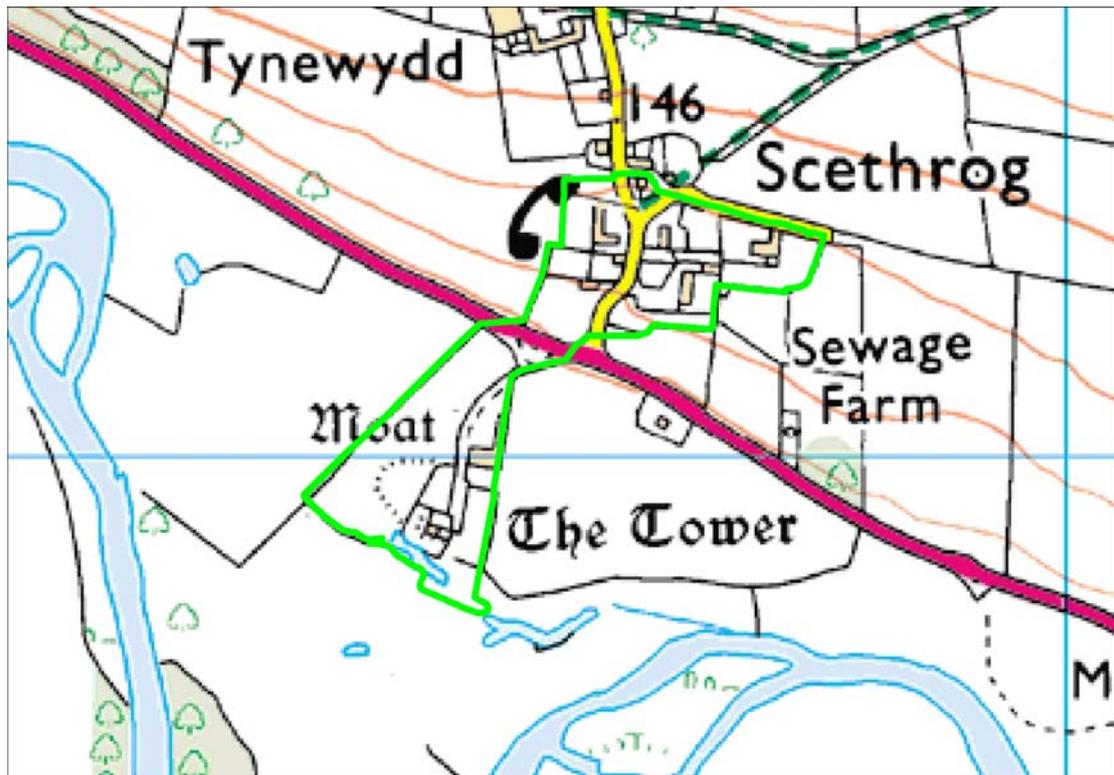
maps, though an alternative view is that the earthwork represent flood defence features. A barn to the north is considered to have been first erected in the late 16th century.



Scethrog, photo 05-c-0103 © CPAT, 2013

Hen Bersondy, also known as the Old Rectory was probably built in the 17th century but was substantially altered in the early 19th century, Scethrog House retains a datestone of 1619 (which is thought to be an error for 1691) and some late 17th-century windows even though most of the structure appears to be of the 18th century, while Neuadd, a longhouse derivative, has yet to have a suggested late 17th-century date corroborated.

Scethrog is not an historic settlement in the conventional sense, lacking a clear focus. The Tower and those dwellings beside the lane to the north are not closely linked either geographically or functionally. Nevertheless the history of the tower house goes back into the Middle Ages, and it is conceivable that this loosely knit group of buildings does have a more complex story to tell than is presently obvious.



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