

## **Gwaenysgor**

SJ 0752 8106  
19937

### ***Introduction***

Gwaenysgor has developed almost on the edge of the limestone plateau that edges the Vale of Clwyd, on a gentle south-facing spur. The scarp slope into the vale is less than 500m away and beyond is the mouth of the river with Towyn to the west and Rhyl to the east. The church and houses spread across fairly flat terrain with the ground rising to the north-east and falling away in all other directions.

The settlement is served by minor lanes, with Prestatyn the nearest large town less than 2km to the north-west.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Gwaenysgor 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. 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](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)).



*St Mary's Church, Gwaenysgor, photo Gwaenysgor 01, © CPAT, 2012*

### ***History of development***

Nothing appears to be known of the emergence and early history of the settlement, nor of its later development. A manor is recorded here in Domesday Book, together with a church that at the time was ruined, so it can reasonably be assumed that the church was an early medieval foundation.

The name is given as *Wenescol* in Domesday Book in 1086, and in 1254 the church at *Guenescor* appears in the Norwich Taxation. Place-name authorities suggest that with the elements *gwaun* and *ysgor* the meaning should be 'moorland by a fort' though this means little in the context of the modern landscape.

### ***The heritage to 1750***

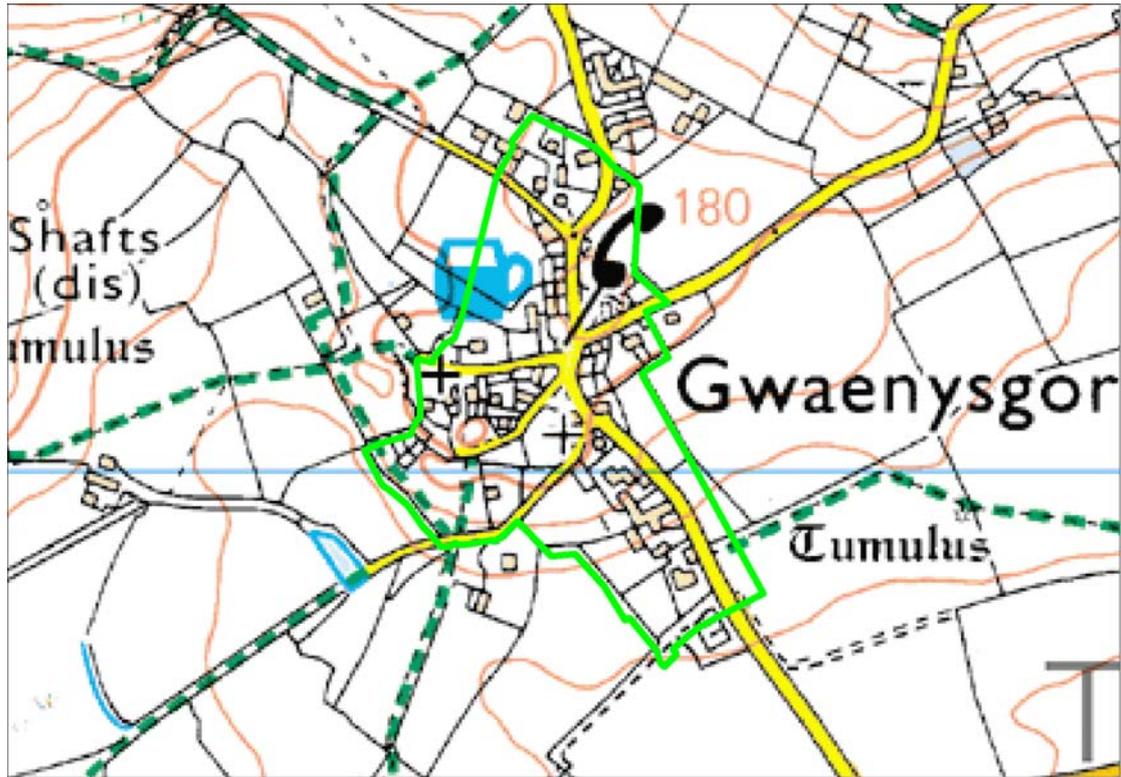
St Mary's church (102248) is a single-chambered medieval structure possibly with some Norman fabric remaining, and a 15<sup>th</sup> century enlargement has been claimed, though without much to support this view. It has a Perpendicular east window, a medieval arch-braced roof, and a curious wooden entrance arch on the south side. The font is early 13<sup>th</sup> century and there are fragmentary 14<sup>th</sup> century sepulchral slabs, and a 17<sup>th</sup> century altar table. Wall paintings recorded in the 1930s have now disappeared.

The churchyard (19919) is small and polygonal - the curvilinearity displayed on the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century tithe map may be illusory. The pillar for a sundial, now gone, survives in the south-west corner, and carries a date of 1663 (102254).

Gwaenysgor forms the focal point of converging tracks and footpaths, some of which have developed into lanes since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The pattern of narrow lanes immediately to the north-west of the churchyard is also a relatively recent development, contrary to what might have been anticipated.

There are few buildings of any age, other than the church, within the settlement. Ty-isaf at the southern end of the village (19920) has a date of 1651 on a stone over an arched doorway, but has seen subsequent alterations. The adjacent farmhouse of Ty-uchaf (19921) is also of 17<sup>th</sup> century date. Bryn-y-ffynnon (19922) on the lane north of the church has a datestone of 1680.

Open fields once surrounded the settlement. Those to the south-east just beyond Ty-isaf were still very much in evidence in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the lane heading due north to Prestatyn looks to have cut through another set of fields, betrayed by the general north-west to south-east alignment of the mapped boundaries in the tithe survey.



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