

Halkyn

19938
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Introduction

Halkyn overlooks the Dee Estuary from its position on the north-eastern flank of Halkyn Mountain. The church and the early village are set on moderately sloping ground but at a lower altitude than the modern settlement which spreads densely across the slopes immediately below the plateau top.

The A55 trunk route runs along the coastal strip just below Halkyn. Flint is 4km to the north-east, with Holywell 6km to the north-west.

This brief report examines the emergence and development of Halkyn 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).

History of development

Domesday Book contains an entry to *Inglecroft, Brunfor [Brynford] et Helchene* or *Alchene* in 1086. The church is documented as *Helegen* in the Taxation of 1254, and as *Heleng* in 1291, while *Alkyn* appeared in 1284, and *Halkyn* in 1360. The most recent, authoritative work on Welsh place-names suggests that while the element *halc* normally means 'nook' or 'corner', here it could mean 'cavity', an obscure pointer to the early mining shafts on Halkyn Mountain.

Domesday Book also referred to a church with a resident priest; of the three manors the most likely location for the church is Halkyn. Thus a late Saxon origin for the church if not the settlement seems assured, but how much further back into the early medieval period it can be taken remains unknown.

The development of the settlement during the Middle Ages is not recorded. At the end of the 17th century, Edward Lhuyd noted that Halkyn was a village of 8 or 9 houses.

Halkyn Castle was added to the local landscape in the years 1824 to 1827, and gardens were laid out around it. In 1878, the old church was taken down and a new one built on a different site by the first Duke of Westminster. These developments resulted in considerable modifications to the form of the village.

The heritage to 1750

St Mary's church (19909) was built on a green-field site in 1877-8. Claimed as one of the best Victorian churches in north-east Wales, it contains some 17th century furniture. The crucifixion panel probably from the 14th century churchyard cross (102486) has been set in one of the southern buttresses.

The site of the old church at Halkyn (100345) lies 150m to the south of its successor. It is known to have been rebuilt in either 1745 [Lewis] or 1776 [Thomas], but was abandoned in the 1870s as noted above. Its position can be determined from the platform within the old churchyard (19910).

The churchyard itself now displays an irregular shape, although early 18th century maps show it as D-shaped, and on the east and south-east it is possible to make out an earlier circuit as an earthwork, within the stone wall of the 19th century graveyard. Tree-covered, it contains many surviving gravestones of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Ffynnon Fair (100344), a holy well mentioned by Lhuyd in 1699, is represented by an overgrown hollow in the south-west corner of the old churchyard.

Halkyn (Old) Hall lies to the north-west of the village (40945) and is of 18th century date. Just over 100m to the south-east is Old Hall (44204), an 18th or early 19th century house, though another reputable source notes that the earlier hall was demolished in 1816, and the present hall was converted in the early 20th century from the Grosvenor racing stables which were built in 1760. Confusion is increased by the late Peter Smith's record of structural brickwork here and a date of 1674. There are no other buildings in the village that pre-date Halkyn Castle (see below), other than perhaps the Britannia Inn, which was a coaching inn. This strengthens the argument that much of the earlier village was swept away at the time the castle was constructed.

Halkyn Castle on the north-eastern edge of the present village was built in the early 19th century for the Grosvenor Family. The grounds (Grade II in the non-statutory Cadw/ICOMOS register) were laid out at about the same time and, as noted above, incorporated the old church and churchyard, and removed some of the old village.



Halkyn Castle, photo 95-c-0093, © CPAT, 2012

Formerly, a lane with cottages beside it ran upslope to the church, other lanes joining it from the north-west and south-east. These all survive into the present although the lane from the south-east is now no more than a footpath, its course surviving as a distinct terrace way. By the old church the main lane broadened into an irregular open space, again with dwellings around the perimeter. Some of the houses were still occupied into the middle of the 19th century, but much of this was incorporated and perhaps destroyed by the construction of Halkyn Castle and the creation of its grounds. Badeslade's small-scale map of 1738 shows the village in outline plan revealing a nucleated village street in place by the early 18th century, but as yet no one, as far as we are aware, has attempted to plot the layout of the old village against the modern landscape.

Open fields which were certainly in use in the Middle Ages covered much of the area around the village, and many subsequently were enclosed to create patterns of strip fields. Some show on 19th century maps but only occasional boundaries remain today.



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