

Hundred House

SO 113544
16127

Introduction

Hundred House in central Radnorshire has developed where one of the very few east to west turnpike roads (now the A481) cuts across the River Edw. The settlement occupies the river terrace on the western edge of the Edw. Colwyn Castle is set on an eminence to the south-west, beyond a tributary of the Edw, the Colwyn Brook. Builth Wells is about 8km to the south-west.

This brief report examines Hundred House'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.

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

Of the two foci considered here, Colwyn is by far the earlier. The earthworks at Colwyn Castle reveal a Roman fort which centuries later was adopted as a Marcher stronghold which was the caput of the lordship of Elfael and the centre of the hundred of Colwyn. The date when the castle was first constructed has never been determined. It was certainly present by the end of the 12th century, but perhaps far earlier. A stone castle was erected on the mound for the de Tony family in 1240. From the late 13th century it was owned by the Earls of Warwick, but fell into disuse perhaps in the following century.

There is no firm evidence for earlier settlement around Colwyn Castle.

Hundred House, on a drovers' route in the post-medieval era, consisted of no more than an inn, a chapel, a farm and perhaps a single house in the mid-19th century, developing around an area of common land. In that respect it was similar to some other common-side settlements, with little documented history, but presumed origins which might stretch back at least a further hundred years or so. The Colwyn Sessions were moved from there to Builth Wells in 1884. Because of these uncertainties, it is not realistic to define an historic core for the settlement.

The name itself is not attested until about 1817 and reveals that this was the meeting place for the administration and dispensation of justice for Colwyn hundred. In some circumstances this could take the date of origin back into the medieval period, but possibly in this case it could have occurred after Colwyn Castle fell out of use. The Colwyn name has a much longer pedigree with *castell Colwyn* appearing in 1144.

The heritage to 1750

South-west of Hundred House is Colwyn Castle (337; SAM Rd035), a motte with a bailey, the latter a re-used Roman fort (50273). Some archaeological work was conducted here in

1975 and again in 1982, producing small quantities of Roman and medieval material. It is now recognised as one of the more important archaeological survivals in the county.

Aerial photographs show faint earthworks adjoining the south-east corner of the fort (16262; old OS plot nos 327 and 328) bisected by a recently removed field boundary. These may be quillet (strip field) boundaries. A terraced track that probably preceded the turnpike road (the A481), bounded them on the south.

Traces of ridge and furrow (16263) cover a field (old OS plot 334) to the north-west of Colwyn Castle.

Fforest Farm (19008; Grade II listing) on the motte was built just prior to 1629. It incorporates stonework of the castle and has two fireplaces of medieval appearance.

A further motte and bailey, The Mount (334; SAM Rd 036), lies a few hundred metres to the south-east of Hundred House. It, too, has ridge and furrow surrounding it.

Another farm, Bryn-crach (16077), near to the former common, has a cruck-framed hall-house at its core which could be 16th-century or perhaps earlier. However, no early buildings have been identified within the settlement of Hundred House itself.