

Crickadarn

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Introduction

Crickadarn is a small settlement, focused on its church. It is sited above the southern lip of the Wye valley some 10km south of Builth Wells.

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).



Crickadarn village, photo 95-C-0354 © CPAT, 2011

History of development

Remarkably little is known about the past history of this small settlement, but there is no evidence that Crickadarn had a more extensive layout than is visible today. The earliest documentary reference is to *Crukadan* in 1443 and reflects the elements *crug* and *cadarn* meaning 'mighty mound'.

The sub-circular churchyard may indicate an early medieval origin for the church, though there is nothing to corroborate this idea.

The earthwork castle may have been built here in the 12th century before the surrounding area was granted to Dore Abbey, though it is possible that the Clifford family maintained a stronghold at Crickadarn even after 1170. Crickadarn has, however, also been claimed as one of the marcher lords' demesnes (or manors reserved for the lord's own use) in the 14th century, and at present these conflicting views cannot be reconciled.

In the 18th century and probably earlier, Crickadarn lay on one of the main cattle drovers' routes, this one running from Cardiganshire over Epynt and into England.

The heritage to 1750

The church of St Mary (2923) probably dates from the 13th or 14th century, and comprises a large nave and chancel with a western tower and a separate stair turret. Interestingly and unusually, Crickadarn church is recorded in a 15th-century manual of daily offices now housed in Hereford Cathedral Library.

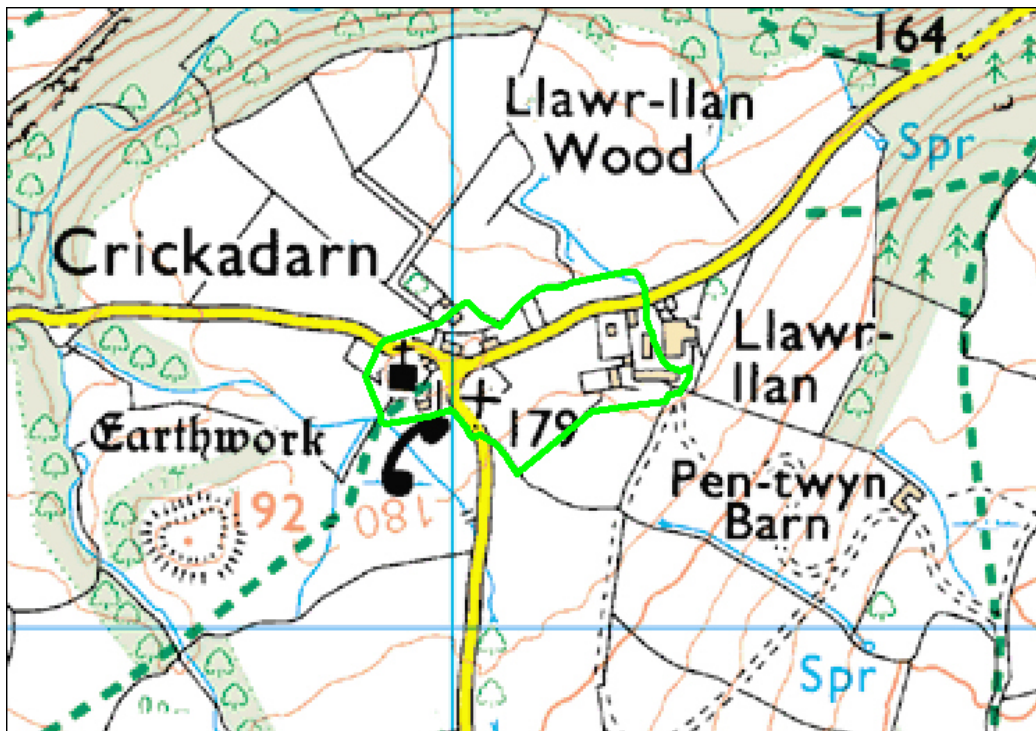
The church is set within a sub-circular churchyard (2924), only some 40m, across with a small modern extension on its north-west side.

Some 100m to the south-west of the church, on a hill overlooking the village, lies a small oval earthwork, which is a scheduled ancient monument (952/SAM B33). This is normally held to be some form of a medieval castle, but it is of atypical form, and the possibility that it is of a rather earlier date, perhaps a late prehistoric enclosure, cannot be dismissed entirely. There is now no obvious link between the village and this earthwork, despite their proximity, but if the earthwork is medieval, some form of settlement remains could potentially exist between them.

Llawr-llan farm (6987), two hundred metres to the east of the church, has an earlier 17th-century building, later modified, and then converted to a farm building when a new house was built in the 18th century. It is the oldest surviving domestic building in the village. The other buildings including what was, in the late 19th century, the Firtree Inn, are more recent.

The field lying between the church and Llawr-llan contains a set of low earthworks (4931), possibly the remains of a now almost vanished part of the settlement. There is one probable platform, though curiously it is not close to an existing lane, and the sparse remnants of a field system.

In summary, there is little convincing evidence of a nucleated settlement here before perhaps the 18th century. This could perhaps be a fairly typical church-settlement where the church was accompanied by just one or two houses and even these might not have had their origins as far back as the medieval era.



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