

# Trefonen, Treflach & Nantmawr Village Design Statement

## *Part 2* *The Present*

Updated 2016



**Building our community and heritage**

**Community led planning**

**October 2006 - updated 2016**

**Part 2**

FOR CONSULTATION

# Part 2 – The Present

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# Part 2 – The Present

## 2 Part 2: 2006 the present.

The characteristics of the settlements and their communities

### 2.1 The natural environment – why people live here

The Oswestry Rural Parish questionnaire summary, published in autumn 2005, recorded that the most frequently given reason for living here was *love of country life*. And the two highest number of responses to what people liked about living here were: *enjoy the peace and quiet* and *enjoy the rural views and country location*. . In the 2014 questionnaire<sup>1</sup> the highest number of responses to the question: “What do you believe to be of significance in giving your ward identity and what should be preserved or improved?” were:

Open countryside, woodland, landscape and wildlife  
Small local village feel

The landscape of hills and many trees and the traditional pastoral scene contribute significantly to this area of Special Landscape Character, greatly treasured by local people.

The area mostly comprises farmland, surrounded by hedges and shrubs that are punctuated by mature trees. These can be oak, sycamore, beech, chestnut, elder and ash. The latter abounded in the area at one time as Trefonen's name is derived from these, Onnen meaning ash tree and Tref meaning town. There are numerous veteran trees in hedgerows and pastures everywhere. There are several patches of mixed deciduous woodlands of antiquity, such as Givern Treflach and the Jones's Rough reserve. Bwlytai Wood, on the southern slope of the Trefonen Brook valley very near to the village, is held in trust by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust donated by the wife of a former Rector of All Saints' Parish. The wood is used occasionally for educational purposes by the pupils of Trefonen Primary School.



Fig: 1 Globe Flower



Fig: 2 Paris Quad

<sup>1</sup> See [Final Document](#) Q22 on page 32

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Old wood pasture and unimproved grassland<sup>2</sup> (i.e. undisturbed), species-rich hedgerows, banks and verges, scrub habitat and wet meadows are all in evidence. Native plant species include wood sorrel, wood anemone, cowslip, golden saxifrage, stichwort, moschatel and crosswort, all indicators of an ancient and relatively unimproved landscape. Lichens can be seen in the hawthorn hedges in winter. Lichens growing on the old trees also indicate that the local air is fairly unpolluted. In the hedgerows wild gooseberries and raspberries can be found and strawberries in Middle Forest. Frog orchids, autumn lady's tresses, pyramidal orchids, stinking hellebores, spurge laurel, and *Carex muricata* ssp *muricata* (a rare sedge growing in only about six locations in the U.K.) are all reported.

Wild life abounds and the quarries, streams and brooks are important habitats. Rabbits, hedgehogs, stoats, badgers and foxes can be seen and occasionally polecats. Slow worms and glow worms are sometimes seen by patient and sharp-eyed naturalists who go out at the right times. Bird species are numerous and the plaintive cry of curlews can sometimes be heard. The curlew is on the Red Data List in Europe and has just been put on the UK list, classed as the most pressing bird conservation priority in the UK due to its decline (November 2015). Red kites have been seen and buzzards nest in the huge oak trees surrounded by sycamores. Hunting owls swoop over the fields at dusk and summer sees the return of the swallows and swifts. Many gardens are home to families of house sparrows, several species of tits and finches, wagtails, blackbirds and robins and woodpeckers, nuthatches, siskins, treecreepers and sparrowhawks are not infrequent. A heron can often be seen wading along Trefonen Brook

Nantmawr has a quarry, now mostly left to become overgrown where orchids and quaking grass flourish. Peregrine falcons and Grayling butterflies (normally a coastal species) breed there. Treflach Quarry, although closed to the public and somewhat overgrown, is still an important site for nature and wildlife and also has a pool. A link to a recent Shropshire

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<sup>2</sup> 'Unimproved grassland' means land used for grazing or mowing which is not normally treated with mineral fertiliser or lime and does not constitute either improved grassland or rough grazings. Unimproved grassland contains a significant presence of sensitive plant species indicative of native unimproved grassland for more click [here](#)



Fig: 3 Broad Bodied Chaser



Fig: 4 A Hay Meadow

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Council and Natural England ecological report can be found in Section 5. The roadside hedge is particularly species rich with trees and shrubs, including some rarer species, such as dogwood, spindle and buckthorn. The roadside verge is a linear strip of excellent limestone grassland – a joy for everyone to see. Ancient boundary stones are reported in the quarry.

There are significant wetlands in the area, including pools, streams, marshes and fens- all of which are important for their flora and fauna. Great Crested Newts are found in most of the local pools and there is a good wildlife rich pool adjacent to Sweeney Fen reserve near Treflach. The pool at Trefarclawdd is the only large area of still water, a home for water birds, frogs, amphibians, dragon flies and others. Trefonen Brook and its tributaries constitute an important corridor for wildlife, including the aquatic.

Throughout the year there is a continual showing of wild flowers in the lanes, naturalised patches of snowdrops on banks in the spring, followed by primroses and violets. As spring continues into summer Queen Anne's Lace (cow parsley), ox eye daisy, vetches, campion, knapweed come into flower.

The Oswestry Uplands have one of the highest concentrations of Local Wildlife Sites in Shropshire<sup>3</sup>, in particular areas of limestone grassland, which are very important for plants and butterflies. A valuable conservation project for the area has been established by Shropshire Wildlife Trust, known as the Oswestry Hills Butterfly and Grasslands Project, which has been financially supported by WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd). Helping and advising local landowners to manage their grassland appropriately and creating wildlife corridors and stepping stones will, in turn, support a rich diversity of butterflies, including Dingy and Grizzled Skippers and Pearl Bordered and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, which have disappeared from many places.



Fig: 5 Comma 3 Butterfly



Fig: 6 Buzzard in flight

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<sup>3</sup> For more information [Click here](#)

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## 2.1.1 Map showing places of Environmental Interest<sup>4</sup>

- 1** Pool at Trefarclawdd with breeding water birds, frogs, probably amphibians and dragonflies present
- 2** Stream and tributaries through Trefonen. Important wildlife corridor including occasional dippers
- 3** Wet meadowland fairly unimproved, good for plant diversity. Extensive damp grassland and pools for wildlife
- 4** Unimproved species-rich grassland with Frog Orchids and Autumn Lady's tresses
- 5** Old wood pasture and unimproved grassland
- 6** Old species-rich hedgerow and hedge bank sheltering a good diversity of wild flowers
- 7** Mixed deciduous patches of woodland of antiquity (with some coniferous planting)
- 8** Verges with good plant diversity abound, topped with mixed hedgerows
- 9** Extensive scrub habitat



- 10** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - 11** Great crested common and palmate newts and slow worms
  - 12** Dry species-rich grassland and marsh
  - 13** Old quarry with pool
  - 14** Toad crossing
  - 15** Important unimproved species-rich hill pasture
  - 16** Old quarry, species-rich grassland, stream and good verges
  - 17** All the fields at this junction are excellent unimproved species-rich limestone grassland
- There are numerous veteran trees, fields and hedgerows everywhere. Roadside verges and hedgerows are species-rich. All streams and brooks are important

<sup>4</sup> To download a printable version of the map click [here](#)

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## 2.2 The main communication networks

### 2.2.1 From Oswestry to the Tanat Valley

Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr are joined by the main thoroughfare from Oswestry to the Tanat Valley. This is an unclassified road, which in addition to carrying local traffic acts as a short cut, or rat run, to and from Oswestry to the Tanat Valley, avoiding the longer route via Llynclys. It runs first through the middle of Trefonen. A mile further on Treflach sits astride the road and the right hand fork on the way out of the village leads down the steep lane through Nantmawr to a T-junction with the B4396 over a mile further on. On leaving Oswestry the road is single carriageway with a continuous footway on one side to Trefonen.

On leaving Trefonen the road appears to become narrower, there being no footway and the verges being steep in places. Over recent years the verges have been significantly eroded by passing vehicles putting pedestrians greatly at risk. There is a single footway through part of Treflach, but Nantmawr has no such facility and as the road is narrow and steep, bounded in many places by walls and hedgerows, residents feel very exposed to accident. In 2005 the modification of speed limits through the short stretches of Trefonen and Treflach should have eased the situation, but this is a country road and concerns for people's safety and the protection of the verges are still very real issues locally. The only other road of any importance is Blodwel Bank, a left-hand fork when leaving Treflach and going south, which leads to the A495. As its name suggest, it is steep, and local people know it must be avoided when there is snow or ice. It is, however, extremely popular with cyclists and athletes, and regularly included in competition routes. There are no east-west routes.



Fig: 7 Trefonen "The Cross"



Fig: 8 Into Nantmawr

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## 2.2.2 Our footpaths

The rich network of footpaths, a particular and greatly valued feature of the area, contributes daily to the life of local people and constitutes a significant tourist attraction.

In many cases they give an indication of the historical local industrial scene. For example, footpaths leading to and from the old coal mining sites on the eastern end of the Trefonen playing fields from Coed-y-go and Gronwen, and Sun Hill on the western aspect. Footpaths and bridleways were used by industrial workers to walk from their homes to their place of work. In addition the old Drovers' Road to the east of Treflach, now a green lane, was the route used for taking prisoners between Shrewsbury and Chester.

Farming has always been a mainstay of the area and employed many local people, hence the number of footpaths crossing farmland and leading directly into the farmyards. In some cases the importance of a farm, i.e. its acreage and number of tenant farmers, can still be determined by the number of footpaths and / or bridleways converging in the farmyard, usually from north, south, east and west.

The footpaths are greatly appreciated and much used by local people. Visitors and walking groups come some distance to enjoy them particularly the Offa's Dyke long distance path. Many foreign visitors walking this take B & B in the villages, use the local shop and pub, bringing some revenue into the local economy. The local area of Open Access land is on the southern side of the Moelydd. Offa's Dyke Path (Fig: 10 Fig: 10 Map of Offa's Dyke)<sup>5</sup> allows access to the summit, from which superb 360° views can be enjoyed.

In September 2013 the Trefonen Heritage Group published a booklet of six walks, starting from the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Field in Trefonen and giving



Fig: 9 Typical Tourist Information Sign

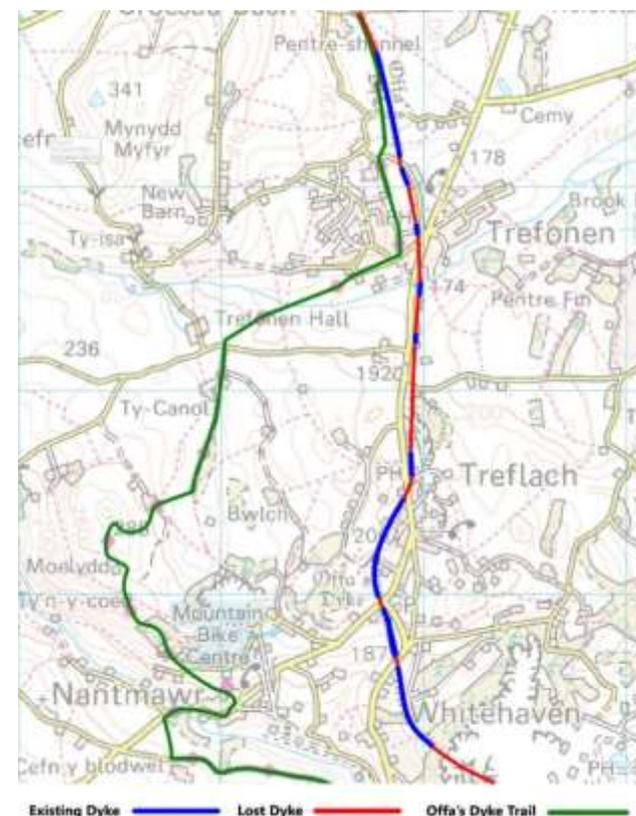


Fig: 10 Map of Offa's Dyke

<sup>5</sup> For larger printable copy of the map click [here](#)

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the chance to explore the industrial heritage. The green environment of Trefonen was once tinged with the black of coal. Download a copy at [www.trefonen.org](http://www.trefonen.org) or collect one from the Village Shop.

The work of footpath monitoring and maintenance has in 2015 become the work of local 'Parish Path Partnership' (P3) groups, volunteers, including members of The Ramblers, supported by Shropshire County Council. Trefonen and Treflach P3<sup>6</sup> group has recently completed a survey of rights of way in the area and is ensuring that all are open and accessible for use by carrying out tasks such as vegetation clearance, way marker and stile replacement and repair.



Fig: 11 Footpath style and sign

<sup>6</sup> See <http://ttp3.co.uk/path%20status.html>

## 2.3 The built environment

Shropshire Council's Core Strategy (2010) and SAMDev (Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan, 2014)<sup>7</sup> give the framework for development to 2026. Oswestry Rural Parish Council decided that the three settlements did not constitute a community hub or cluster, and they are therefore now considered as 'open countryside'<sup>8</sup>

### 2.3.1 Trefonen Village – Has it been over-developed?

The settlement of Trefonen nestles on a south easterly facing hill and the slopes at its foot. It hugs the landscape, being built on layers of rock and away from the flooding Trefonen Brook. (Fig: 12)<sup>9</sup> With the exception of the Oswestry to Nantmawr road, only Old Post Office Lane and Chapel Lane lead anywhere. There are no through roads; narrow roads and lanes characterise the settlement.

To the west they fan out up the hill, changing almost immediately from two car to single car width, on to un-metalled track and finally into footpaths where stout footwear is required. These lanes have no footways and all have steep banked grass verges topped with walls of local stone – visually attractive and historically important, but difficult for pedestrians if there is any traffic. To the east, the roads end abruptly as sharp drops in the rock are encountered or meadows liable to flooding are approached. Although School Lane, Brooklea Close, the beginning of Martins Fields and the short new link road extension to Chapel Lane have been constructed to enable two way passage of traffic, the lack of



Fig: 12 Trefonen and its Development Boundary 1999 (indicative)

<sup>7</sup> See [SAMDev Core Documents](#)

<sup>8</sup> See [Oswestry Rural District Council Document](#) paragraph 2, [SAMDev Document](#) pages 169 to 175 where settlements are not included

<sup>9</sup> For a definitive Development Boundary Map, Click [here](#), to get a printable copy of the indicative map click [here](#)

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off-road parking in School Lane, and the access to the primary school, in effect reduce this to a single carriageway. The majority of the public roads are single track with passing places (Fig: 13)<sup>10</sup> and there are several un-adopted lanes. Throughout the village there are footpaths leading across the fields and open spaces, often a reminder of previous industrial activity, such as the coal mine or the quarries. The existence of four chapels or churches in the village is a strong reminder of the former Welsh Borders community.

The village has far and rural views. From all points there is a vista, and houses and gardens are often orientated to take advantage of this. The rural setting is emphasised by the evidence of small holdings, as well as farms, everywhere. This is not a dormitory village.

Trefonen is not perhaps a chocolate box view, but it is still a visually pleasing one. Viewed from the Treflach Road, the hillside appears a densely packed hotchpotch of trees and old cottages with newer houses shoehorned between. No single style predominates and, with one or two notable exceptions, they nestle comfortably together. Density peters out to the west as the hillside becomes steeper and more thickly wooded. The outstanding feature is the great variety: the houses differ in age, style and construction materials, although white rendered walls are very evident. The layout is the result of a natural evolutionary process. Since the 1980s, with significant development in Woodland View, Martins Fields, Brooklea Close and Chapel View, there has been much expansion of the housing stock. While the variety and relatively low density are appreciated, the imposition of open plan features on much of these recent developments is the subject of adverse comment. since it is very much in contrast with the

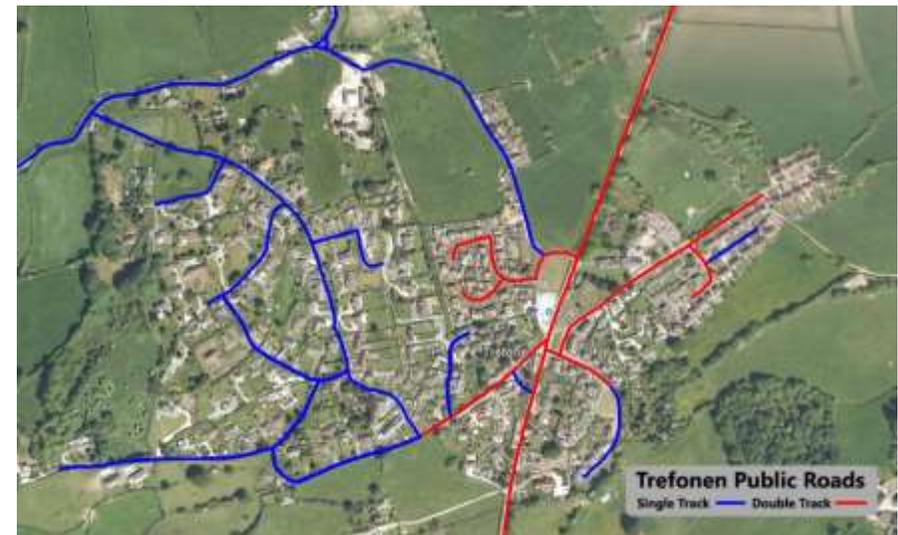


Fig: 13 Trefonen's adopted public roads

<sup>10</sup> To download a printable version of this map, click [here](#)

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dwelling on School Lane, whose gardens are enclosed by hedges and fences, more obviously characteristic of the Borders identity and rural nature of the village. However, it must be recognised that the new developments have matured and softened to a point where many are now blending more harmoniously with their environment. Open plan design (Fig: 15 Open Plan housing is seen as inappropriate, detracting from the Borders identity and rural nature of the village.

As in many villages in England, the number of dwellings has exploded in recent decades. The maps of 1881<sup>11</sup>, 1954<sup>12</sup> and the present day<sup>13</sup> show these changes dramatically. However, unlike many parts of the country, this village enjoys a very well balanced housing stock. There are small and large dwellings, houses and bungalows. They are privately owned, shared equity, let through housing associations and the council, or let as holiday accommodation. Responses to the 2004 Rural Parish Council questionnaire showed an overwhelming view that there should be no further development. That view has been substantiated in the Analysis of the 2014 Rural Parish questionnaire, with a significant number of comments that there has been too much development and that the infrastructure cannot cope with more development. The rapid expansion of the village in the 1990s led to many believing it to be over-developed. .

This thinking underpinned the high volume of very strong objections to planning applications in 2014/15 for three developments which would between them have added over forty dwellings (although as they were outline applications only the number could easily have increased). The intrusion into open countryside, the encroachment onto and possible threat to Offa's Dyke and access issues all figured highly in representations. The vast majority of



Fig: 14 Cul de sac and narrow lanes



Fig: 15 Open Plan housing

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<sup>11</sup> | will add links

<sup>12</sup>

<sup>13</sup>

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people struggle to see any evidence for increases in dwellings on this scale when a significant number of existing properties are on the market, house prices in this area have hardly risen in a decade and there are still infill and renovation opportunities.

A large scale aerial photograph of the village (Fig: 12)<sup>14</sup> shows clearly that the present settlement has a well-defined physical boundary which fits well with the surrounding landscape. The village has expanded to its boundary and it is now difficult to avoid the conclusion that Trefonen should not spread any further.

## 2.3.2 The village centre: Where is it and what characterises it?

The centre is the area on either side of the main road through the village which includes All Saints' Church, the Barley Mow public house (Fig: 16) and its micro-brewery, the Band Box / hairdresser's, the war memorial and grass beside it, the surrounding houses and the shop and post office. It is characterised by a mixture of community buildings and houses, a mixture of white rendered and slate roofed and the more recent brick. It is made particularly attractive by the older white rendered buildings, the stone walls, the tall, mature trees and the sense of purposeful space.

All the roads and lanes running off the main road are at different angles, enhancing the attractiveness of the centre and avoiding the harsh impact of a crossroad. The eye is taken to small roads which curve away and limit the view. While the immediate centre appears flat, it is visually attractive because the land rises and falls around it. The road now has speed restrictions on it, but speeding is still a matter of considerable public concern. At the moment the road is not really seen as just a road through a village. The risk of its being seen as splitting the village, particularly socially, must be minimised at all costs. The pub, the shop and the post office are well established parts of the rural



Fig: 16 Barley Mow Inn



Fig: 17 War Memorial

<sup>14</sup> To see a detailed view, click [here](#)

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community and valuable assets to the retention of its identity. They are also a focus for tourists.

## 2.3.3 Housing - and its characteristics

The outstanding feature of the houses of Trefonen is their great variety, in age, style and design, and construction material. Diversity is the predominant, strong feature.

Although there were a few farms and isolated dwellings in the area where the village now stands, for example the 250 year old part of the house known as The Carven (Rectory Close) and Dingle Cottage (Bellan Lane), which is of similar age, the village as an integrated community is relatively young. There are a few old houses of exposed stone, but most are rendered and painted white.

Some recent development has continued this trend, a move which is welcomed. Newer brick houses are of varying colours, and there is, sadly, nothing to show of the locally made bricks. Roof lines, both slate and tile, are well broken with a fair proportion of gable ends and dormer windows on view. The brick corbels which feature on quite a number of the more recent houses are a small detail which enhances properties. The same is true of some other recent development, with detail in brick work, or around windows, lifting design and adding interest. Only the development on the car park of the former Efel Inn defies these trends, particularly in its unrelieved mass and roof line. However, householders have improved the appearance of the frontages by their imaginative floral displays and well-maintained gardens. With the exception of three recently developed areas, properties are enclosed by low walls, built of local stone (usually found in the garden), or by hedges. Even where there is open plan development, it is possible to see how some residents have sought to use the local stone in their gardens, thus stamping a local feel on their homes. The two pairs of semi-detached houses built on an overgrown site in School Lane reflected the policies adopted in the 2006 Design Statement. They were



Fig: 18 Wulfruna Cottage



Fig: 19 Attractive detail of Church Cottages

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asymmetrical but complementary in style, and instead of being open plan had local stone walls at the front.

Gates, driveways and pathways are generally well maintained and fit well into the rural environment. There appear to be many keen gardeners in the area and one of the features of the gardens is the exploitation of the outstanding views.



Fig: 20 Semi-detached houses on School Lane



Fig: 21 Trefonen Village Shop and PO

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## 2.3.4 Services

The village has one shop, which includes a post office (open five days a week), and which is advertised as a tourist information point. It is open seven days a week. After a year when the shop was closed it re-opened early in 2015, with the business under new ownership. Its importance as a community service and hub has been more than apparent. When, in September 2015, there was a risk of its hours being threatened because of a family emergency, a rota of sixteen volunteers emerged within hours, and more offered to help.

There is one public house, the Barley Mow (Fig: 16), (which benefits from a mini-brewery in a small barn beside the pub). It sits on Offa's Dyke, being to the best of our knowledge, the only pub actually on the Dyke. The planned building of a function room has not yet been completed, but we are told it is imminent! However the evening and Sunday lunchtime restaurant is popular and walkers and visitors to the area assure us the welcome is most warm – and the locals most lively. The further promotion of tourism could be focussed on these two facilities.

There is a hairdresser's situated in the old Band Box, next to the church and graveyard.

Trefonen Church of England Primary School<sup>15</sup> (Fig: 22) is situated in School Lane and currently has 125 pupils aged 4 to 11. It has been extended from the original building in various phases and its roof line constitutes an interesting architectural feature. The school occupies a roughly triangular site, wedged between All Saints' Church and the Village Hall. It has no car parking, a serious consideration, but enjoys an informal arrangement with the Village Hall. Clearly there could be times when there would be a conflict of interests. There is a lay-by outside the school. The Pre-School now occupies a building in the School



Fig: 22 Trefonen Primary School



Fig: 23 All Saints' Church



Fig: 24 Playing Field

<sup>15</sup> See: [www.trefonenschool.co.uk](http://www.trefonenschool.co.uk)

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grounds and runs the After School Club, open from 8 am to 5.45 pm for children aged 2 to 11<sup>16</sup>.

All Saints' Church (Fig: 23), in the centre of the village, is now part of the Border Benefice of four parishes. The range of services and activities has been widened, with Messy Church attracting families and the Community Café, run in the Village Hall every Tuesday morning, proving popular<sup>17</sup>.

Carneddau Chapel, in Old Post Office Lane closed in 2014 as a place of worship

Trefonen and Sychtyn Village Hall, next to the school, has gone through significant change and improvement. It is a modern, well equipped and well used facility. There is a recycling facility in the corner of the car park, operated by Shropshire Council, who own and maintain the adjacent playing fields.

The hole in the wall type of post box at the corner of Bellan Lane (Fig: 25), in the centre of the village, is a local landmark - and the only public post box in the village. It is a Victorian box, much treasured, although its opening is too small to take some modern envelopes. Most people hand these in for collection at the village shop/post office.



Fig: 25 Victorian Post Box

<sup>16</sup> See: [www.trefonenpreschool.org.uk](http://www.trefonenpreschool.org.uk)

<sup>17</sup> See [www.borderparishes.org.uk](http://www.borderparishes.org.uk)

## 2.3.5 Treflach Village – Is it losing its services?

Unlike Trefonen, which can be seen from a considerable distance, the settlement of Treflach is not readily visible until driving into the village from its northern or southern approaches on the main road, although the public house can be seen from the hillside area of Trefonen. (Fig: 26) for an aerial view of the settlement with an indicative layout of the 1999 Development Boundary<sup>18</sup>

Exceptional outward views over the Welsh mountains and the Severn – Vrynwy – Tanat and Cain valleys are gained from the south west. After passing the entrance to Treflach Quarry, Offa's Dyke is clearly visible as the village is approached from Trefonen. It is set back a few metres from the road and crosses the field, being cut off at the entrance to Oak Lane.

There are significant trees which protect the village from being seen from many aspects. Indeed, they almost totally obscure the view during summer months, and they constitute an important feature of the settlement. As is common in this area of special landscape value, groups of trees are common and special. This has been enhanced in recent years by tree planting on the Big Bellan Covert near Ty Tegwch.

The impression is that the majority of homes are strung out along the main road, with glimpses of a few lanes and private roads leading to individual properties set further back. There is a focal point, the Green (Fig: 28 Treflach Green), at the cross roads with Gibraltar Lane and Stoney Lane. The Green was formerly the site of the village meeting room; a seat and phone box are now provided here, although the phone box is scheduled for removal. In April 2006, on the closure of the post office, the village post box was moved to the Green. While this old box is visually attractive and local people wish to keep it, it does not accommodate some of today's larger envelopes and it is the only such

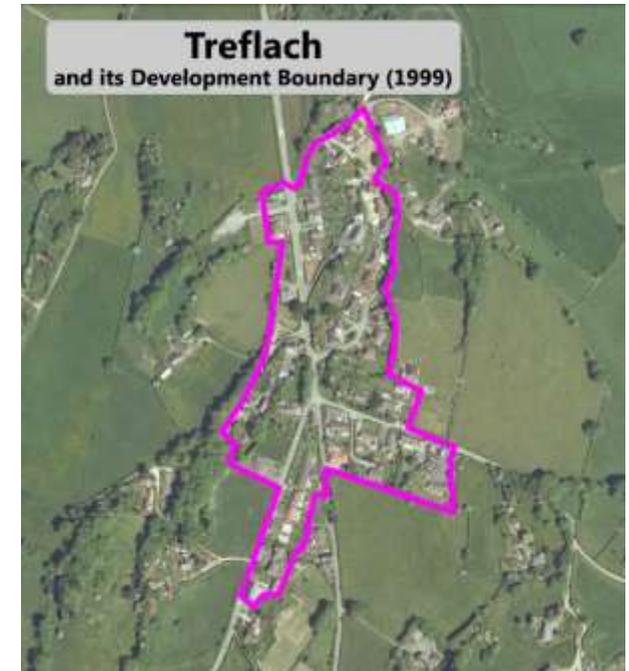


Fig: 26 Aerial View of Treflach



Fig: 27 Ty Gwyn Cottage

<sup>18</sup> For a definitive map, click [here](#) and for a detailed aerial view click [here](#)

facility in the village. The old chapel, now converted into a house, sits on the corner. Set back from the main road, on the west side, is a row of three cottages. These and the cottages outside the village at the end of Stoney Lane, Bwlychgywynt, were local quarry workers' homes. Offa's Close, a development of nine houses on a brown field site, follows the line of a former limestone quarry face.

## 2.3.6 Housing - and its characteristics

There is a mixture of old and new properties in Treflach and of houses, cottages and bungalows. Outside the settlement boundary are isolated properties of some significance, being the former dwellings of farmers or agricultural workers, or of quarry overseers. These include the old properties of Wern Cottage, Thornhill and the very old Ty Gwyn (Fig: 27 Ty Gwyn Cottage), with its special windows and bread oven feature to the north west, and Underhill and Pleasant Grove to the south east. Two of the older properties are particularly important because of the building materials used in their construction. Some way from the village is Ty Tegwch (beautiful house) built of Trefonen bricks with blue brick features. Within the village are Wyddn House and Wyddn Cottage built of Welsh stone, dressed and carted from the village of Llanwyddn, now below Lake Vyrnwy.

The houses and bungalows of Treflach are all individual and they sit comfortably within their plots. There are no examples of recent development of rows of houses of the same design, which can blight the landscape in some rural areas. This diversity is not characterised by the predominance of any particular building materials. Nevertheless, local people appreciate the sensitive way in which some owners have sought to extend older properties, blending old stone with brick and using wooden window frames. Residents also seek to continue the local feature of properties being hidden by trees and take advantage of any naturally occurring slopes to enable a property to be well



Fig: 28 Treflach Green



Fig: 29 Treflach Public House

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sited in its garden.

The overall impression is of a rural hamlet, with quite a lot of recent development, which nestles in its surrounding countryside. There are some outstanding planning permissions, for example behind the public house, and a few sites within or adjoining the current hamlet which some residents consider could be usefully allowed for houses, particularly if they would replace the rather unsightly present activity on them. The issue is access, particularly from Oak Lane, where the junction with the main road and the proximity of Offa's Dyke have to be accommodated.

Treflach now has the former Royal Oak public house (Fig: 29 Treflach Public House), currently the Smokehouse Grill, as its only permanent public service. Land adjoining the pub is designated for car parking. Three building plots behind the pub are yet to be developed.

## 2.3.7 Nantmawr Village – Are dark clouds gathering?

Nantmawr is a hamlet (Fig: 30 Aerial view of the Nantmawr Hamlet ) which one comes across almost unexpectedly, on following the road south from Treflach. It is situated mainly in a deep valley (hence its name) with most dwellings on the southern facing slopes benefiting from sunshine most of the day, but from spectacular views all the time! Historically the village was based on a combination of agriculture and quarrying. Quarrying ceased around 1980 and farming now dominates, although most farmsteads are relatively small units with cattle and sheep being the main income producers. The core of the village is now purely residential.

The road through the village increasingly feels like a lane and as it falls away the houses on each side appear to cling to the hillside. This unclassified road is clearly rural, narrow, in many parts steep and with a few potentially dangerous bends. There are no pavements and the steep verges and stone boundary walls



Fig: 30 Aerial view of the Nantmawr Hamlet



Fig: 31 Views of Nantmawr

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mean that pedestrians feel particularly exposed to risk. The road is reported to carry some 1,000 vehicles per day and has no speed limit, other than the national 60 m.p.h. for single carriageways. The angle of the disused incline plane (Fig: 32 Inclined plane crosses the road in Nantmawr) from the quarry with its bridge over the road emphasises the impact of the depth and gradient of the road

Disused lime kilns and the quarry are reminders of the past<sup>19</sup>. The future use of the quarry is of very real concern to local residents. For many, a dark cloud hung over the village and its neighbouring settlements a few years ago, in the form of a threat of a planning application lodged to Shropshire Council to transport 150,000 tons of waste material into the quarry, turning it into a major landfill site. The adverse impact on the roads, verges and surrounding countryside is easily observed when there are motorised events in the Quarry since its closure as a mountain bike centre. Whatever its future, sensitive development and appropriate arrangements for traffic management in the narrow lanes will be needed. Rigorous consideration of environmental impact and noise abatement strategies are considered essential.

Offa's Dyke Path passes through the village, with the Dyke itself being clearly visible just to the north. Tanat Valley Light Railway now operates a small railway and country park in Nantmawr running along the Old Potts Way<sup>20</sup>. Visitors to this line and walkers bring additional tourists to the area.

## 2.3.8 Housing - and its characteristics

Many dwellings are strung out along the main road in a ribbon development, with a few other dwellings on the two or three lanes off the main route. Quarry Lane also has some sixteen dwellings along its length. It is notable that many



<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.nantmawrvisitorcentre.co.uk/nant-mawr-lime-kilns/>

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.nantmawrvisitorcentre.co.uk/tanat-valley-light-railway/>

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of the houses along the main road are built close to the road with little or no garden between them and the carriageway. These are clearly affected by any increase in traffic.

The houses are predominantly older houses, many refurbished, with only eight houses built since the 1970s. All houses are different with the exception of two new houses which are a mirror image of each other and a row of six ex-quarry workers' cottages. There are only three bungalows and all properties are owner occupied, with the exception of the row of cottages and one other, which are rented. Two houses are owned by 'weekenders' with the remainder being occupied full-time.

Building materials vary considerably. There is some brick, including yellow, many rendered walls and a few houses of stone. Slate is almost exclusively used for roofing. Some stone walls exist, but hedges predominate as boundaries.

## 2.3.9 Services – an issue

Since the 1990s Nantmawr has lost its school, chapel, shop and post office and, even further back, its public house. There is no building which constitutes a focal point in the village and this, together with the fact that dwellings are quite widely scattered means that there is a real risk of it losing its identity. However, a community spirit exists; many local residents know each other well and share in activities. Some local people wonder whether a limited amount of new development would inject further life into the community.



Fig: 34 Approaching Nantmawr

Fig: 33 Nantmawr Village

# Part 2 – The Present

## 2.4 Walls - A major characteristic throughout the settlements

The predominant boundary markers - and news of a great discovery: the stone hedge

The most frequent style of property boundary is the stone wall (Fig: 35 Typical Stone Walls in the settlements), built using the distinctive local sandstone or limestone. In fact, almost every house in the higher part of Trefonen, whether modern or old, has a stone wall of some sort, as part or all of its boundary. The older walls are of dry-stone construction, whereas many of the newer ones are mortared. Properties which do not have walls inevitably have hedges, either mixed or the more recently planted conifer.

Many of these walls appear to have hedges growing on top of them. Closer examination reveals that these are retaining walls built against a bank, presumably to help prevent erosion where the level of the road or path is lower than the property being enclosed. The term *stone hedge* is used for these free standing stone-faced earth banks, with hedges on top. They are most common in Cornwall<sup>21</sup> and Devon and the coastal areas of Wales, and to a lesser degree in Cumbria. In North Wales stone hedges are known as *clawdd* (singular) or *cloddiau* (plural). Authorities such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) suggest that examples in good condition are few and far between.

*One of the more important aspects of stone hedges is their wildlife role, as their earth core can be a haven for small mammals, and their faces an important habitat for plants and invertebrates. Stone hedges are more valuable than dry stone walls as habitats, as the earth core helps sustain a wider range of plants and animals.*

*BTCV Dry Stone Walling<sup>22</sup>*

Many of the older field boundaries are, or were originally, stone hedges. They have



Fig: 35 Typical Stone Walls in the settlements

<sup>21</sup> See [www.cornishhedges.co.uk](http://www.cornishhedges.co.uk))

<sup>22</sup> ISBN: 0-95467521 9 2 See <http://www.dswa.org.uk/books-dvds.asp>

# Part 2 – The Present

degraded over the years until they now look like a hedge on top of a bank, but in many cases the stones are still there.

These walls are a fundamental characteristic of the settlements, possibly more than any other single feature. However, it is noticeable that in some parts of Trefonen and Treflach there are open plan front gardens, so beloved of modern developers or planners. The houses in the Martins Fields area of Trefonen are an example. If these are compared with the older, although still recent, housing in School Lane it is striking how the latter have a much more 'village' feel to them. Their boundaries are an attractive, haphazard mixture of hedging, fences and low brick walls, blending well together to give the feeling of a distinct community. Open-plan gardens on the other hand, which were originally designed to help knit a group of houses into a whole, actually can have the opposite effect, with each house standing isolated from its neighbours. The most recent significant development in Trefonen is Chapel View. These houses, while owing little to the vernacular architecture of the village, sit well in their location. However, the open-plan front gardens work against the village identity and are reminders of the sort of development which can be found in many parts of England. Owners of some of these properties have expressed real enthusiasm for adding low, local stone boundary walls.



Fig: 36 A Stone Hedge in Trefonen

## 2.5 Facilities and infrastructure

### 2.5.1 Library and refuse collection services

Shropshire County Council mobile library service now stops only at the Barley Mow pub in Trefonen, on alternate Tuesdays, 9.00 a.m. to 9.35 a.m. There are several arrangements for refuse collection and re-cycling, depending in particular on the ease of vehicular access for the Council's vehicles.

### 2.5.2 Sewerage provision

Trefonen and Treflach have a mixed system of combined and separate foul/surface water sewers. Surface water from roofs and lanes is largely shed to soakaways and ditches. The majority of properties are on mains sewers but there are still some septic tanks. There are no mains sewers in Nantmawr.

### 2.5.3 Electricity – and telephone supply

Many of the supplies are from overhead wires, which means a considerable number of poles exist. In Trefonen, for example, there are 91 poles and 6 pole-mounted electrical transformers. The electricity poles also carry Openreach (part of BT) distribution connections in some places. Openreach is in the slow process of removing these connections onto their own poles, which will result in an increased number of poles. However, Openreach is also providing ducts between the poles for telephony connections, which will reduce the amount of visible wiring. A mobile phone mast is located off Pit Lane.

### 2.5.4 Broadband access

Broadband provision has improved over the last decade but is still very unreliable in Nantmawr, a subject of considerable concern. There is now a fibre optic connection between the Oswestry telephone exchange and the cabinet in Trefonen providing "Fibre to the Cabinet" (FTC) facilities there and in Treflach. The final loop of conventional copper cable to the properties means that dwellings with connection longer than 2.5Km are unlikely to benefit from the improved download speeds and remain on the lower rates

### 2.5.5 Public transport

Treflach and Trefonen are provided with a regular, daily bus service, but if buses are not available at the times people want to travel, there is increasingly less use made of them. However the only bus service in Nantmawr is the school bus to Trefonen and Oswestry in the early morning, returning mid-afternoon. This means that all residents must have access to alternative transport. Some more detailed study should be made of the availability of public transport and its use promoted.

## 2.5.6 Lighting and street furniture

There is considerable concern about lighting, focused on how inappropriate it is in a rural area and how intrusive it is when kept on all night.

The majority of Trefonen's public highways have street lighting. There is limited lighting in Treflach and Nantmawr. Most of the lighting, particularly in areas of recent development, is from stand-alone lamps. Older areas are served by lamps sited on electricity poles

Two authorities supply the lighting. Shropshire Council supply all the main road and Trefonen east of the main road with dusk to dawn low-pressure sodium light (amber light which spreads in all directions from the lantern). However on the Chapel Lane link road and in Chapel View they have installed high pressure sodium with a shallow dish lantern, providing less light pollution and brighter light under the lanterns.

Oswestry Rural Parish Council is responsible for the rest of Trefonen and installed time clock controlled lights in most places. It was the first to pilot the high pressure sodium light within the village and its success has meant that all lantern head replacements under its control follow a similar specification to reduce light pollution

The rural nature of the settlements and people's appreciation of the night sky mean that there is strong objection to night lights. Additional lights are now visible from across the Shropshire plain and from the Oswestry area. This is intrusive and serves as a reminder that we all have an impact on the wider environment. Light pollution is becoming increasingly recognised as undesirable in a modern, caring society as legislation covering security lights attached to houses has shown.

FOR CONSULTATION

## 2.6 Employment

The countryside and rural situation are reflected in economic activity and potential employment opportunities. Agriculture, mainly livestock, abounds and is a characteristic feature of the area. However, the rural situation also explains much of the activity which focuses on tourism, be it because of the very attractive, woody and hilly countryside, or more specifically the Offa's Dyke Path.<sup>23</sup>

Those in active employment follow similar patterns of activity to those in other rural situations. If not engaged within the immediate village area, they tend to be working for services (education, health, public services) or local employers based in the nearby conglomerations. The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, offering regional and supra-regional services, employs some 1,000 people. Oswestry, a significant market town with a livestock market (which was subject to a major refurbishment in 2014) and an important and generally thriving industrial estate, is the place of work for many, where Openreach and BT are major employers. There is a very wide variety of jobs and professions undertaken by the people who live in the three settlements, whose expertise and specialisms continue to surprise.

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<sup>23</sup> See: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/offas-dyke-path> or <http://www.offasdyke.demon.co.uk/>