

Potted History

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Local historian Keith Parker charts the trials, tribulations and triumphs of Presteigne - once the county town of Radnorshire.



The town probably began as a small settlement around a Minster Church dedicated to St Andrew (hence the town's Welsh name - Llanandras) and at the time of the Domesday Book (1086), formed part of the manor of Humet.

By the mid-12th century it was known as Presthemedde or 'the border meadow of the priests'. A century later, it passed into the control of the Mortimers, powerful Marcher lords, and on their fall passed into the hands of the Crown.

At the end of the 13th century, the majority of the town's inhabitants, mainly English, enjoyed some prosperity but the Black Death and the Glyndwr rebellion destroyed this and at the end of the 15th century, the now largely Welsh population lived in a struggling village.

The development of a thriving cloth industry in the Tudor period brought a short-lived prosperity, ended by three epidemics of plague in three successive generations. Thereafter it made a living as a market town and, until the later 16th century, by processing locally grown barley into malt.

By the Acts of Union, Presteigne - at first jointly with New Radnor - became the county town of Radnorshire and its administrative and judicial centre, housing the county gaol and the shire hall.

By the end of the 19th century its newer and larger neighbour, Llandrindod Wells, had usurped the role of administrative centre, but Presteigne remained the venue for the Assizes until these were abolished in 1971.

After a period of stagnation in the first half of last century, the town has developed a diverse manufacturing base and has begun to exploit its tourism potential while its unique environment and the development of its social, cultural and leisure facilities have helped to attract people to settle in the locality.

Written by local historian Keith Parker.

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