



The
Pilgrim Ways
of **Wales**



The Pilgrim Ways of Wales

An Exploration of Sacred Landscapes, Faith, and Memory

This article presents a comprehensive and reflective journey through the Pilgrim Ways of Wales, bringing together sacred routes, historic churches, monastic sites, holy wells, and places of long-standing devotion that have shaped the spiritual landscape of the nation. Rather than serving as a simple guidebook, the work explores how faith, geography, history, and personal memory intertwine across Wales, revealing pilgrimage as both a physical journey and an inward experience.

At its heart, the article traces a network of ancient and medieval routes, including the Cistercian Way, St Illtyd's Way, the North Wales Pilgrims' Way, the Penrhys Pilgrimage Route, the Teifi Faith Trail, and other lesser-known paths. These routes connect some of Wales's most important religious sites, from great abbeys and cathedrals to isolated rural churches, ruined chapels, and sacred wells hidden within the landscape. Each location is explored not in isolation, but as part of a wider spiritual and cultural continuum.

The article places particular emphasis on the Cistercian presence in Wales, examining abbeys such as Whitland, Strata Florida, Neath, Margam, Tintern, Cymer, Aberconwy, and Caldey Island. It considers how these monastic communities shaped agriculture, politics, learning, and devotion, while also highlighting their relationships with Welsh princes, Norman lords, and local populations. Alongside this, the article acknowledges women's religious houses, lesser-known foundations, and the complex realities of monastic life beyond the ruins that survive today.

Holy wells form another central theme, with detailed attention given to sites associated with healing, Marian devotion, and early Celtic Christianity. Wells such as Ffynnon Fair, Lady's Well, St Winefride's Well, St Trillo's Well, Ffynnon Elan, and many others are presented as places where pre-Christian reverence, Christian belief, folklore, and community memory converge. These sites illustrate how pilgrimage often continued long after formal religious structures declined.

In addition to major landmarks, the article gives voice to smaller parish churches, grave markers, early Christian stones, pilgrims' graves, and roadside chapels. These quieter locations reveal the everyday faith of ordinary people and preserve stories that might otherwise be overlooked. Anecdotes, local traditions, and historical detail are woven together to bring these places to life.

Overall, *The Pilgrim Ways of Wales* is both a record and an invitation. It documents a rich sacred heritage while encouraging readers to explore Wales with attentiveness and respect—whether on foot, through study, or through personal reflection. The article demonstrates that pilgrimage in Wales is not confined to the past, but remains embedded in the land, the stories, and the enduring sense of place that defines the Welsh spiritual landscape.

Wales Religious Heritage and Pilgrim Ways



This map is a personal and spiritual journey through Wales and a unique resource it is not just a guide to notable religious sites; it reflects a collection of places that hold personal significance for me, which I wish to share with others.

Begin your exploration along the North Wales Pilgrims Way, a picturesque trail that follows ancient paths leading to sacred sites. As you wander through this breath taking region, you'll discover the Beautiful Churches & Chapels of Wales, each a testament to the rich architectural heritage and spiritual history of the area.

Delve deeper into the serene Holy Wells, renowned for their healing properties and often tied to local saints and folklore. These wells serve as a reminder of the age-old traditions of pilgrimage and reverence that permeate Welsh culture.

Discover the mission of the Friends of Friendless Churches Wales, highlighting churches that have been rescued from neglect and revitalized by dedicated communities, ensuring that their spiritual and historical legacies endure.

Your journey continues along the Cistercian Way & St Illtyd, where you can trace the footsteps of monks who shaped the land's spiritual and agricultural heritage. This route connects you to the contemplative life of the Cistercians, inviting reflection and tranquillity. Explore the Interesting Crosses and Grave Locations, where historic markers offer insights into the lives of those who have passed, weaving together the living and the departed through stories carved in stone.

Venture into the Gwent Level Churches, which showcase the distinctive ecclesiastical architecture of the Gwent area, illustrating how the landscape influenced the design and function of these sacred spaces.

Follow the Penrhys Pilgrimage Way Route, a path rich in tradition leading to the revered site of Penrhys, historically significant for pilgrims seeking solace and spiritual renewal. Finally, connect with the Teifi Faith Trail, which links a series of spiritual sites that celebrate the history of Christianity in the region while showcasing the natural beauty of the Teifi Valley.

This interactive map is a deeply personal reflection of my journey through Wales' sacred heritage, inviting you to explore these sites of personal interest. Through this rich tapestry of layers, the map serves as both a resource and an invitation to discover the sacred stories and hidden gems of Wales, encouraging others to forge their own connections with this remarkable landscape.

<https://tinyurl.com/Welsh-Religious-Sites>



Exploring the Sacred Sites Along the Cistercian Way in Wales

The **Cistercian Way** in Wales is a pilgrimage route rich in history and spiritual significance, following the footsteps of the Cistercian monks who shaped the religious landscape of the region. This path connects a remarkable collection of **churches**, **abbeys**, and **holy wells**, each contributing to the region's deep spiritual and cultural heritage.



Along the Cistercian Way, you'll find **churches** such as **St. Asaph Cathedral**, **St. Mary's Church in Llanfair Caereinion**, and **St. Tudno's Church in Llandudno**, which serve as reminders of early Welsh Christianity and the monastic presence that once flourished in these areas. These sacred spaces, some with roots dating back over a thousand years, were once central to the lives of Cistercian monks who sought to live a life of prayer, labour, and contemplation.

The **holy wells** along the route are equally significant, with places like **St. Winefride's Well in Holywell** and **Ffynnon Dyssilio** near **Bryn Eglwys** offering a sense of continuity with the ancient practices of healing and pilgrimage. These wells, often associated with saints like **St. Trillo**, **St. Dyfnog**, and **St. Beuno**, were places of spiritual renewal and physical healing for medieval pilgrims and remain sites of devotion today.

The route also passes near the ruins of important Cistercian monasteries like **Tintern Abbey** and **Strata Marcella Abbey**, where the monks lived and worked. These monasteries, along with other smaller sites such as **Gwydir Uchaf Chapel** and **Aberconwy Abbey**, stand as poignant reminders of the once-thriving Cistercian presence in Wales, marking key points in the monastic journey.

Together, these **churches**, **holy wells**, and **monastic ruins** form a powerful network of sacred sites that embody the spirit of the Cistercian Way, offering insight into the deep religious practices that shaped the region's history. Whether for reflection, healing, or historical exploration, the sites along this ancient pilgrimage route continue to attract visitors seeking to connect with Wales's spiritual heritage.

The Link below will take you to the Map of the Cistercian Way with all the places mention on there to easily locate their position and directions to get there.

<https://tinyurl.com/Exploring-Cistercian-Way>

Llantarnam Abbey: A Strategic and Spiritual Foundation



Founding and Early History

Llantarnam Abbey was founded in 1179 by Hywel ab Iorwerth, King of Caerleon, as a daughter house to Strata Florida Abbey. Its establishment during the high point of the Welsh revival in the 12th century underscores its importance both politically and spiritually. While some early records refer to it as “Caerleon Abbey,” there is no evidence that the abbey was ever located within or near Caerleon itself. This name may reflect its initial ties to Hywel's broader territory.

Strategic Importance

The abbey's placement at the southern and eastern fringes of Hywel's domain likely served multiple purposes. By granting large swaths of contested borderland to an explicitly Welsh monastic foundation, Hywel ensured that these lands remained under Welsh control. The abbey also functioned as a buffer against Norman expansion, an ever-present threat in the borderlands during this era. This strategic positioning exemplifies the dual role of monastic sites as both spiritual centers and tools of political resilience.

Cistercian Characteristics

As a Cistercian house, Llantarnam adhered to the order's principles of simplicity, self-sufficiency, and devotion. Its connection to Strata Florida reinforced its role within the broader Cistercian network, a system integral to the spiritual and agricultural development of medieval Wales.

Later History and Legacy

The abbey's prominence waned following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century, yet its historical and cultural significance remains. Today, Llantarnam stands as a testament to the resilience of Welsh religious and political identity during a period of intense external pressure.

This rich blend of spiritual devotion and political strategy makes Llantarnam Abbey a fascinating starting point on the Cistercian Way, offering insights into the medieval interplay of faith and power.

St Gwynno's Church Llanwonno



St Gwynno's Church is an isolated medieval structure that retains a significant portion of its original fabric, with later additions in the Gothic Revival style during the 19th century. Christian worship has taken place at this site since at least the 6th century, and its founder, St Gwynno, is also commemorated in Llantrisant and Vaynor. The exact date of the church's construction is uncertain, but it is a medieval building of great historical value.

The church underwent a major restoration in 1894, funded by Miss Olive Talbot of Margam. Significant changes included the addition of a belfry and west doorway, as well as larger windows featuring impressive stained glass. A new doorway was also added to the porch, and in a niche above the doorway stands a figure of St Gwynno, inspired by a medieval stained-glass window from Llanwynog in Powys.

Inside the church, visitors can find an ancient font and a fragment of an early Celtic cross, likely dating from the 7th or 8th century. St Gwynno's Church is also located along the Cistercian Way, a long-distance footpath connecting historic Cistercian sites across Wales.

The churchyard features the oldest grave, dating back to 1167, but it is perhaps best known for the grave of Griffith Morgan, the legendary 18th-century runner. Known as Guto Nyth Bran, he died in 1737 after completing his final and most remarkable race—running 12 miles in just 53 minutes. After being congratulated by his sweetheart, he collapsed and died shortly after. His grave, located near the western porch, attracts visitors from around the world to honour his memory.

Our Lady of Penrhys Shrine: A Place of Pilgrimage and Devotion



Historical Background

The Our Lady of Penrhys Shrine, located in the Rhondda Valley of South Wales, is a site of great religious and cultural significance, particularly for Welsh Catholics. The shrine is dedicated to *Our Lady of Penrhys*, a Marian devotion that traces its origins back to the 15th century.

The shrine's history is intertwined with the legend of a statue of the Virgin Mary that was believed to have been placed on Penrhys Mountain in the 15th century. The statue is thought to have been brought to the site by a Flemish or Spanish pilgrim, and over time, the mountain became a place of pilgrimage. The statue was revered for its ability to perform miracles, particularly in healing, which contributed to its growing popularity.

Destruction and Rediscovery

Sadly, the original statue was lost, and by the late 18th century, the site fell into disuse. However, the devotion to Our Lady of Penrhys persisted, especially among local Catholics. In the 20th century, the shrine was revived with the construction of a new statue, which was erected at the site in 1955. This modern statue of Our Lady of Penrhys was designed to resemble the lost original, and it has since become a focal point for pilgrimage, prayer, and reflection.

Pilgrimage and Significance

The Our Lady of Penrhys Shrine is a place where people come to pray, reflect, and seek the intercession of the Virgin Mary. Pilgrim's travel to the site for various reasons, including petitions for healing and spiritual renewal. The shrine has also become a symbol of Welsh

Catholic identity, representing the resilience of faith in a region that has historically been shaped by both industrial change and religious devotion.

In addition to its religious significance, the shrine is set in a picturesque location on Penrhys Mountain, offering stunning views of the surrounding valleys. This scenic backdrop enhances the spiritual atmosphere of the site, making it not only a place of religious devotion but also a place of natural beauty.

Cultural Impact

The devotion to Our Lady of Penrhys is particularly significant in the context of Welsh history. It represents a strong Catholic presence in Wales, where Catholicism had long been in the minority. The shrine continues to be a symbol of hope and faith for Welsh Catholics, and its revival in the 20th century played an important role in the renewal of religious life in the region.

Today, the shrine attracts pilgrims from various parts of Wales and beyond. It holds a special place in the hearts of the local community, and it remains an enduring testament to the faith and devotion of the people of the Rhondda Valley.

Ffynnon Fair (St. Mary's Well), Penrhys: A Sacred Site of Welsh Devotion



Historical and Religious Significance

Ffynnon Fair, or St. Mary's Well, located near the Penrhys Shrine in the Rhondda Valley, holds significant historical and religious importance, particularly for the local Catholic community. This sacred well has long been associated with healing and spiritual cleansing, and it has a deep connection to the Marian devotion of Our Lady of Penrhys. The well is believed to have been a place of pilgrimage for centuries, predating the establishment of the shrine itself.

The well's association with the Virgin Mary is reinforced by its Welsh name, *Ffynnon Fair*, which translates to *St. Mary's Well*. Many locals and pilgrims have visited the site over the years, seeking divine intervention for various afflictions, particularly ailments that are believed to be healed through the blessed waters of the well. Its continued significance in the region is a testament to the lasting influence of Marian devotion in Wales.

Healing Waters and Pilgrimage Traditions

The well has been a site for healing for centuries, with local folklore suggesting that the waters of Ffynnon Fair have curative properties. It was often visited by those seeking miracles or recovery from illness. This tradition of seeking healing at the well is part of a larger European phenomenon of sacred wells, where natural springs were believed to be imbued with special powers. As with many holy wells, pilgrims would approach the site with a sense of reverence and hope for divine intervention.

In addition to its association with healing, Ffynnon Fair holds significance in the wider context of the Cistercian and Marian pilgrimage routes across Wales. The site forms part of a broader spiritual landscape that includes the nearby Our Lady of Penrhys Shrine, strengthening its role as a key stop for those following the Cistercian Way of pilgrimage. The practice of visiting such sacred sites continues in the modern day, attracting both local visitors and tourists seeking spiritual reflection.

Cultural and Community Importance

St. Mary's Well is not only a religious site but also a cultural symbol for the local Welsh community. It represents the enduring faith of the people in the Rhondda Valley and their deep connection to the land and its spiritual history. Throughout history, the well and the shrine have been focal points for the local Catholic community, providing a sense of identity and continuity amidst the changing industrial landscape of the valley.

The well also serves as a reminder of the region's religious heritage, particularly in a time when Catholicism was often marginalized in Wales. Pilgrims visiting the well and the Penrhys Shrine continue to maintain these traditions, making the site an enduring symbol of faith, hope, and the community's connection to its Marian past.

Contemporary Significance

Today, Ffynnon Fair continues to be a place of pilgrimage for many, especially those drawn to the area because of its religious and historical importance. Efforts to preserve the well and its surrounding site help maintain its sacred status, allowing future generations to experience its spiritual significance. The location remains a quiet but powerful marker of the intersection between Welsh culture, Catholic devotion, and the natural beauty of the region.

Margam Abbey: A Norman-Founded Powerhouse of Faith and Politics



Establishment and Patronage

Founded in 1147 by Robert Fitzroy, Earl of Gloucester, and illegitimate son of King Henry I of England, Margam Abbey stands as a testament to the interplay between Norman ambitions and Cistercian spirituality. The foundation marked a significant gesture of Norman consolidation, with its first monks arriving directly from Clairvaux, the house of St. Bernard of Clairvaux himself. This connection underscored Margam's spiritual significance within the Cistercian order.

Land and Strategic Gifts

Robert endowed the abbey with over 5,000 acres of land between the Kenfig and Afan rivers. However, much of this territory remained in Welsh hands at the time. Robert's promise of land—"when I get it, you shall have it"—served as both an incentive for monastic prayers for his military success and a declaration of his intent to assert control over the region. This dynamic showcases the symbiotic relationship between Norman expansionism and ecclesiastical influence.

Welsh Engagement

Despite its Norman origins, Margam quickly gained the favor of local Welsh rulers, who began to make substantial land grants to the abbey. These rulers sought spiritual benefits, including burial within Margam's consecrated grounds, reflecting the abbey's growing prominence as a sacred institution in both Norman and Welsh communities.

Architectural Grandeur and Cultural Impact

Margam Abbey became one of the richest and most influential Cistercian establishments in Wales, known for its impressive Romanesque and Gothic architecture. Its cultural and spiritual influence extended far beyond its lands, bridging Norman and Welsh interactions during a turbulent period.

Legacy

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Margam Abbey's buildings were largely dismantled, though some remnants survive, including the grand abbey church's west

doorway. Today, Margam Country Park preserves the site's heritage, inviting visitors to explore its historical significance.

As an early stop on the Cistercian Way, Margam exemplifies the fusion of Norman ambition and monastic spirituality, a theme that resonates throughout the pilgrimage.

Lady's Well, Margam: A Sacred Spring of the Past



Historical and Cultural Context

Lady's Well, located in Margam parish, near the site of Margam Abbey, is one of the sacred wells in Wales traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary. Its name, *Lady's Well*, places it among a group of wells linked to Christian saints and holy figures. According to Welsh tradition, wells named after saints were often regarded as sources of healing and divine intervention, and this well is no exception. It is part of a broader network of "Class A" wells, a category defined by scholars like Jones (1954) as springs with strong Marian or saintly associations.

Physical Description

The well itself is a spring of fresh water that emerges from below a small drystone wall, measuring approximately 0.25 meters square. The water flows out between two short sections of drystone walling, around 0.2 meters to the north, providing a tranquil spot that retains its historical charm. This layout, simple yet functional, reflects the practical and symbolic importance of these sites in medieval and early Christian Wales.

Geographical and Religious Significance

Lady's Well lies adjacent to the ruins of Margam Abbey, a significant religious site founded in the 12th century. This proximity suggests that the well may have had a connection to the abbey's monastic community, likely serving both as a source of fresh water and a spiritual landmark. Like other Welsh wells dedicated to saints, Lady's Well would have been a destination for pilgrims and local worshipers seeking healing or divine blessings, particularly as the well is situated in an area of historical religious significance.

Modern Relevance

Today, Lady's Well stands as a quiet testament to the spiritual heritage of Margam and the surrounding area. Though its use as a pilgrimage site has faded, the well still holds historical.

St Michael's Well at the Gnoll

St Michael's Well at the Gnoll, near Neath, is a notable historic site located within the grounds of the Gnoll Estate Country Park. The well is part of the rich heritage of the area, which blends both industrial and ornamental history. The park itself, renowned for its 18th-century landscaping, is a place where several significant features have been preserved or restored, including cascades, follies, and a grotto.

While specific historical details about St Michael's Well are scarce, it is likely connected to the long tradition of sacred wells in the region, which were often dedicated to saints and considered places of spiritual significance.

Wells like St Michael's were frequently located near churches or used for religious purposes, adding another layer to the site's historical context visitors to the Gnoll Estate today can enjoy the well as part of a wider exploration of the park's scenic beauty and its importance in local heritage. The site is currently undergoing a restoration to improve facilities and provide better access to the public, ensuring that these historic features are preserved for future generations.

Neath Abbey: A Jewel of Welsh Monasticism



Founding and Norman Ties

Neath Abbey, established in 1130 by Richard de Granville, a Norman knight, stands as one of Wales's most significant Cistercian foundations. Situated in the verdant Vale of Neath, the abbey was strategically located to consolidate Norman influence in South Wales while fostering spiritual growth. The foundation was supported by monks from Savigny Abbey in

France, reflecting the Cistercians' international reach and adherence to the reforming ideals of simplicity, self-sufficiency, and agricultural innovation.

Architectural Splendour

Neath grew into one of the largest and most architecturally sophisticated abbeys in Wales. The complex boasted an impressive church, cloisters, chapter house, and a variety of domestic buildings. The design harmonized with Cistercian principles, emphasizing austerity and utility while maintaining a sense of grandeur that reflected its economic and spiritual importance.

Economic and Cultural Hub

Beyond its religious function, Neath Abbey became a thriving economic and cultural hub. It managed extensive estates, engaged in agriculture, and even operated ironworks. The abbey played a key role in the local economy, employing lay brothers and workers, and interacting with the broader community.

Welsh Connections

Although founded by Normans, Neath gained the support of local Welsh lords, who provided lands and resources. This cooperation highlights the abbey's dual role as both a religious institution and a mediator between Norman and Welsh interests during a time of frequent conflict.

Decline and Legacy

Like many monastic houses, Neath Abbey faced dissolution in 1539 under Henry VIII's policies. Its buildings were repurposed and fell into ruin, though significant remains can still be seen today. The site is managed by Cadw, offering a window into the architectural and cultural achievements of the Cistercians in medieval Wales.

As part of the Cistercian Way, Neath Abbey provides a powerful glimpse into the spiritual and temporal worlds of the Cistercian order, illustrating the lasting influence of these remarkable communities.

Capel y Baran



Baran Independent Chapel was founded following a schism at the nearby Gellionnen Chapel, with members dissatisfied by the growing Unitarian influence at Gellionnen. While the lease for Baran dates from October 1, 1805, the chapel was already built and in use for services by that time.

The original chapel was a single-story building heated by a fireplace, likely situated at the far gable end near the entrance. In 1830, a gallery was added to accommodate a growing congregation, and in 1895, renovations costing around £85 further improved the structure. In 1906, original box pews were removed, and a wooden floor was installed.

The chapel's current layout features a gable-entry design, with two large windows on the left elevation indicating the pulpit's location. To the right of the building, a lean-to schoolroom and vestry were added.

Baran Independent Chapel is situated near the point where both the Cistercian Way and the St Illtyd Way cross paths, making it an important stop for pilgrims following these historic routes.

This location further ties Baran Chapel to the rich heritage of religious and cultural pilgrimage in the region.

St Cyndeyrn's Church



St Cyndeyrn's Church, located in the village of Llangydeyrn, Carmarthenshire, is a medieval church with a rich history dating back to at least the 14th century. It is associated with the Deanery of Kidwelly and was granted to New College, Leicester, in 1355-1356, alongside nearby chapels. Historically, the parish of Llangydeyrn also included several medieval chapels.

Architecturally, the church has undergone significant restorations, especially in the late 19th century. The most notable restoration took place between 1883 and 1888 under the direction of architect J.P. St Aubyn. This included lowering the floors, replacing windows, and extensive renovations to the roof and walls. During this restoration, 497 skeletons were discovered, underscoring the church's longstanding role as a burial site.

The church features a tall, narrow, tapering west tower, a distinctive feature not commonly found in the region. The tower, which was constructed from an earlier 15th-century porch, is characterized by simple slit windows for lighting and a crenellated parapet. Inside, visitors can find a 17th-century font and several memorial slabs dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. A notable architectural feature is the low, panelled screen between the chancel and the north chapel, which dates to 1676.

The churchyard is home to a medieval cross base, further enhancing the church's historical importance. The surrounding landscape contributes to the site's deep historical and cultural significance, solidifying St Cyndeyrn's Church as an integral part of the heritage of Llangydeyrn.

St Peter's Church, Carmarthen



St Peter's Church is one of the largest parish churches in Wales, renowned for its substantial size and impressive architecture, constructed from local red sandstone and grey shale. Its recorded history dates to 1107, when it was conferred by Henry I to Battle Abbey. However, there is evidence to suggest that an ancient Celtic church occupied the site long before this, possibly as early as the 6th century. The circular shape of the churchyard is indicative of early Celtic religious sites, though no structural remains of that original building have been found.

The church's foundation lies even deeper in history, as it stands on the location of a 1st-century Roman gateway, built to defend the Roman fort of Moridunum, the precursor to modern Carmarthen. The presence of this gateway highlights the strategic importance of the site in antiquity, and this long-standing history of occupation and use is a testament to the region's enduring significance.

St Peter's underwent significant changes after the Normans' conquest of southern Wales in the late 11th century. Initially, the church was under the control of Battle Abbey, but by 1125, it was transferred to the Bishop of St David's. In the same year, Bishop Bernard of St David's gave it to the Priory of St John (Carmarthen Priory), and it remained in the hands of the Priory throughout the medieval period. The church continued to thrive during the Middle Ages, and in the late 14th century, a chantry chapel was established, further enhancing its role in the religious and cultural life of the community.

St Peter's Church remains a significant landmark in Carmarthen, rich in historical layers that reflect the transitions from Roman, Celtic, and Norman influences, making it an important site for both architectural and historical exploration.

St Michael's Pilgrim Church



St Michael's Church has medieval origins and is located within a rectangular churchyard approximately 350 meters southeast of Trefenty farmhouse (NPRN 17858). Situated around 400 meters from the River Cywin, which forms the historic boundary between the parishes of Llanfihangel Abercowin and Llandeilo Abercywin, the church was abandoned as the parish church in 1848. At this time, the construction of New St Michael's Church (NPRN 54624) two miles to the north, near the newly developing population center along the A40 turnpike road, shifted the focus of the community.

The church is about 600 meters southeast of Castell Aber Taf (NPRN 304187), a motte-and-bailey castle believed to be the precursor to the nearby Trefenty farmhouse. Local tradition suggests a roofed passage once existed in front of Trefenty, which allowed funerals, weddings, and congregants to pass on their way to the church, though no physical trace of this remains today. The church is also located approximately 370 meters southwest of the Treventy Stone (NPRN 304157), a standing stone that further enhances the area's historical significance.

Six gravestones, locally referred to as 'Pilgrims' Graves,' are located to the south side of the churchyard, dating to the 12th–13th centuries. Two of these stones are in the distinctive hog-back style, while the others are flat and feature depictions of human figures, three of which are female. These slabs are adorned with short, circular-headed stones at both ends, each engraved with an equal-armed cross within a circle and surrounded by intricate patterns such as cable, chevron, or diamond designs. One grave is said to have contained the bones of a youth, along with small shells, before 1938. Local legend claims that neglecting the graveyard would lead to a plague of snakes in the parish.

St Michael's Church is known to have been poorly attended in its early years as a parish church. A local anecdote recounts a time when the congregation consisted only of the vicar, Mr. Evans of Llandilo (whose own church was in disrepair), and his sheepdog. The vicar is said to have prayed, "O Dduw, maddeu i ni ein tri; Ifans Llandeilo a finne a'r ci" ("O Lord, may forgiveness for us three be found; Evans Llandeilo, myself, and the hound"). An almost identical version of this story is attributed to St Teilo's Church in Llandilo Abercowin.

Now a Scheduled Ancient Monument, the church is in ruins, with the south and east walls still standing to roof height, while the north wall remains up to around 1 meter. Visible entrances can be found in the south and west walls, and a modern concrete structure occupies the southwest corner of the nave.

Caldey Island and Its Role on the Cistercian Way



Caldey Island, located off the coast of Pembrokeshire, Wales, has been a place of spiritual significance for well over a millennium, playing a central role in the religious history of the region. It is currently home to a community of Cistercian monks, also known as Trappists, who follow the strict observance of the order. The island's rich religious heritage dates to the fifth century, when it was first established as a monastic site, likely known as Ynys Pyr. According to tradition, Pyro, a disciple of St Illtud, founded the original monastery, marking the start of Caldey's long history as a centre for Christian monasticism.

The island's early monastic life is closely tied to the life of St Samson of Dôl, one of the leading figures in early Welsh Christianity. St Samson sought refuge on Caldey when the bustling and worldly environment of the larger monastic community at Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major) became overwhelming. He attempted to reform the lifestyle of the monks on Caldey but, facing opposition, he was eventually driven out. After retreating to a cave and living as a hermit, St Samson left for Brittany, where he later founded the abbey of Dôl, which became one of the prominent religious centres in the region.

The monastic life on Caldey was disrupted several times over the centuries, notably by Viking raids, which forced the monks to abandon the island for a period. It was during these

raids that the island acquired its present name, "Caldey," though its earlier Welsh name is still debated.

Caldey's deep-rooted history continues to resonate in the present day. In the 12th century, the island became home to a Cistercian community that played a significant part in the spread of the Cistercian movement across Wales and Europe. The Cistercians were known for their strict adherence to the Rule of St Benedict, and their monasteries were founded in remote locations to ensure contemplation, self-sufficiency, and a rigorous monastic life. The Trappist community on Caldey Island today continues this tradition of silence, prayer, and hard work, in keeping with the Cistercian way of life.

As part of the Cistercian Way, which is a modern long-distance footpath linking Cistercian sites across Wales, Caldey Island holds a place of great historical and spiritual importance. Pilgrims and visitors walking this route can trace the footsteps of past monastic communities, following in the traditions of faith, dedication, and peaceful retreat that have shaped the island for centuries. The island's historical and spiritual legacy, coupled with its tranquil and isolated setting, makes it a key site for understanding the spread of Christianity and the Cistercian order in Wales.

St Deiniol's Well



St Deiniol's Well is a significant historical site located beside a lane leading toward the ruins of what is thought to have been St Deiniol's Chapel, situated within the grounds of the former Penally Abbey. This well is notable for its association with the early Christian monastic traditions of the area, although little is known about its specific legends or the traditions surrounding its use.

The well itself is large and has been a source of interest due to its proximity to both the chapel ruins and the wider Penally area, which has a rich history of early Christian activity. Notably, the village of Penally is named after St Teilo, and there is some speculation that the well historically associated with St Deiniol may in fact be the same as the well dedicated to St Teilo, which was located on the village green. This adds an intriguing layer of local legend and significance to the area, as both saints are pivotal figures in the early Christian history of Wales.

Despite the lack of detailed records, the well's location near the ruins of Penally Abbey, which was once a major monastic site, suggests that it may have had spiritual importance for the monastic community that lived there. The well could have been used for ritual purposes or for the daily needs of the inhabitants, continuing the centuries-old tradition of sacred wells associated with saints in Wales.

Though the exact origins and uses of St Deiniol's Well remain somewhat elusive, its connection to the early Christian period and its proximity to Penally Abbey make it an important site for understanding the religious and cultural landscape of the area. As with many sacred wells, it may have been a place of healing or pilgrimage, continuing a long tradition of local devotion.

For those following the Cistercian Way or interested in Welsh history, St Deiniol's Well stands as a quiet reminder of the deep spiritual roots of the region, offering a glimpse into the enduring religious practices of early Christian Wales.

St Lawrence's Church



St Lawrence's Church is steeped in a rich spiritual and historical legacy, built adjacent to three holy wells, each renowned for their healing properties and attracting pilgrims for centuries. These wells were thought to possess unique therapeutic qualities, with each

offering different curative waters: one containing spring water believed to heal ailments of the legs, another rich in chalybeate (iron-rich) water for the hands and arms, and a third with sulphurous water used to treat eye conditions. The presence of these wells highlights the longstanding tradition of sacred sites in Wales, where the natural environment was often integrated into religious practices.

The church itself likely stands on the site of an earlier Christian chapel, with the west porch of the current building believed to incorporate elements of the original structure. The present church, primarily dating from the 12th to 14th centuries, represents the architectural evolution of the region during this period. It is most notable for its imposing, multi-storied tower, which was added in the 15th century, characteristic of the Pembrokeshire style. This addition helped define the church's silhouette and served both religious and defensive purposes during a time of political turbulence in the region.

Over the centuries, St Lawrence's Church has become not only a place of worship but also a historical landmark, encapsulating both the spiritual and architectural heritage of the area. The church's location near the holy wells emphasizes its role as a focal point for healing, both physically and spiritually. Today, St Lawrence's remains a significant site for visitors interested in Welsh religious history and the enduring traditions of sacred wells.

St Elidyr's Church, Ludchurch



St Elidyr's Church is built on the site of a much earlier *llan*, or pre-Norman temple, reflecting the long history of religious significance in the area. The church was granted to the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem in 1150, who had a Preceptory at nearby Slebech. This transfer marked the beginning of a significant chapter in the church's history. The original church was rebuilt in the 13th century and underwent further reconstruction in the late 15th century, likely under the direction of John Elliot of Amroth Castle. According to local

tradition, he built a chantry chapel over his family vault, a testament to the church's importance as both a place of worship and a family memorial.

In 1855, the church underwent another substantial restoration, though it retains many key elements from earlier periods, including the Amroth Chapel, the walls, vaulted roof, and the tower. One of the church's most notable historic features is the late Norman font, intricately carved with a foliage design. This font stands on the inverted basin of an earlier font bowl and is topped by a fine modern cover carved in a late Gothic style, creating a blend of historical and contemporary craftsmanship.

Who Was St Elidyr?

The identity of St Elidyr remains uncertain, and there are several theories surrounding the name. One possibility is that he refers to St Elidur de Stackpole, who is said to have accompanied Archbishop Baldwin on his 12th-century crusade through Wales. Alternatively, he may have been a 12th-century pilgrim known as Elidyr the Courteous. There is also the theory that the name might be the result of a clerical error, originally referring to St Teilo, who was sometimes known as Eluid. Despite the ambiguity surrounding his identity, the church's dedication to St Elidyr reflects the enduring importance of pilgrimage and religious tradition in this part of Wales.

Whitland Abbey: The First Cistercian Foundation in Wales



Founding and Early History

Whitland Abbey, founded in 1140, holds the distinction of being the first Cistercian house in Wales, marking a pivotal moment in the spread of the Cistercian order across the country. Established by a group of monks from the renowned Abbey of Clairvaux in France, Whitland became the mother house for several Cistercian foundations in Wales, including the well-known Strata Florida Abbey.

Strategic Location and Development

The abbey was founded in a fertile valley near the River Taf, taking advantage of the area's agricultural potential. Whitland's early years were focused on establishing a self-sustaining monastic community based on the Cistercian ideals of simplicity, agriculture, and self-

sufficiency. The surrounding land, granted by local Welsh lords, was crucial to the abbey's economic success, allowing the monks to cultivate crops, raise livestock, and later expand their influence.

Spiritual Significance and Influence

Over the years, Whitland became an important religious centre for the region, attracting pilgrims and benefactors. Its status as the first Cistercian abbey in Wales made it a symbol of the order's spiritual and monastic influence. The abbey's wealth grew, and by the 12th and 13th centuries, Whitland had become an influential hub of religious and intellectual activity. Monks from Whitland were instrumental in spreading the Cistercian way of life throughout Wales and beyond.

Decline and Ruin

Like many Cistercian houses, Whitland Abbey suffered during the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII in 1536-1540. The once-thriving abbey was abandoned, and its buildings dismantled. However, despite the destruction, significant archaeological remains still exist at the site, including parts of the church and other monastic buildings, providing a glimpse into the scale and grandeur of the abbey.

Legacy

Today, Whitland Abbey remains an important historical and archaeological site, managed by Cadw, and is recognized for its role in shaping the Cistercian landscape of medieval Wales. As part of the Cistercian Way, it offers valuable insight into the early spread of the Cistercian order and its lasting impact on Welsh monasticism. The abbey's early foundation and its connection to Clairvaux set the tone for the establishment of other key Cistercian sites in Wales, reinforcing its central role in Welsh medieval history.

Geler Holy Well



Ffynnon Geler, located near the village of Llangeler, is close to the route of the Cistercian Way, a long-distance footpath linking the historic Cistercian sites in Wales. Although it is not explicitly stated in most records that the well was specifically part of the Cistercian pilgrimage routes, its proximity to the Cistercian Way strongly suggests that it could have been a point of interest for pilgrims traveling this path.

The Cistercian monks, known for their monastic traditions of prayer and pilgrimage, often set up their abbeys near significant natural landmarks such as healing wells, and these sites were frequented by both locals and pilgrims alike. Given Ffynnon Geler's healing reputation and its location near the well-established Cistercian Way, it is plausible that pilgrims on their journey may have visited the well for its reputed curative powers. The site's role as a place of healing, combined with its location near other notable Cistercian abbeys, adds to the likelihood of its use by those traveling along the Cistercian Way.

Additionally, local traditions, such as the belief in the well's medicinal powers, might have also attracted pilgrims who were seeking physical healing or spiritual benefits, which would align with the Cistercian practices of integrating natural and sacred spaces for worship and healing.

In short, while no direct evidence connects Ffynnon Geler to the specific rituals or practices of the Cistercian monks, its location close to the Cistercian Way and its association with healing strongly suggest it may have been visited by those traveling the route.

St Michael's Church Rhos y Corn



St Michael's Church in Llanfihangel Rhos y Corn, Carmarthenshire, is a significant medieval church with origins dating back to at least the 13th century. Set in a picturesque, elevated location, the church is surrounded by a stone-walled churchyard and is a Grade II listed building. Its historical importance is not only due to its architecture but also because of its

proximity to the Cistercian Way, a medieval pilgrimage route linking various Cistercian monasteries across Wales.

Initially a chapel of ease for Llanllwni, St Michael's became a parish church by 1833. The church retains much of its medieval character, including a simple nave and chancel, as well as a late medieval south aisle. The 15th-century bellcote and the overall layout reflect the region's architectural heritage. While the church underwent restoration in the mid-19th century, including significant work in 1907, it still preserves many original features, such as the octagonal font and the 18th-century pulpit.

Though not a primary Cistercian site, Llanfihangel Rhos y Corn's location along the Cistercian Way places it within the historical framework of religious and cultural exchange that shaped the development of the region. The church's rural and elevated setting, combined with its medieval architecture, makes St Michael's an evocative stop for pilgrims and visitors exploring the spiritual landscape of Carmarthenshire.

St Peters Church, Lampeter



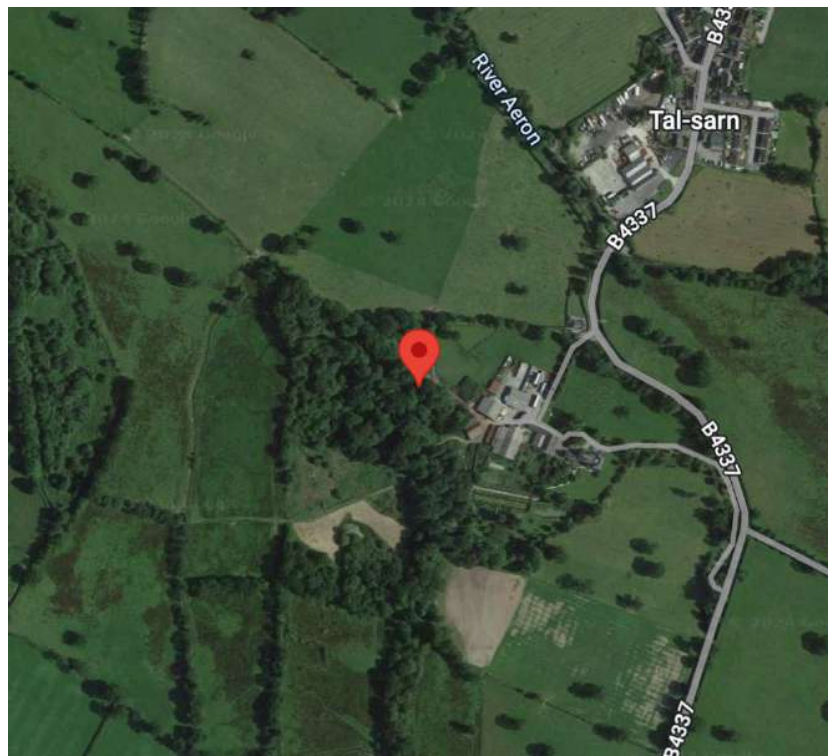
St. Peter's Church is situated on an elevated site at the top of Church Street, surrounded by an extensive churchyard that serves as a cemetery. This church was constructed between 1867 and 1870, replacing an earlier structure built in 1821-22, which itself had replaced a medieval church first documented in 1291. Remnants of these earlier buildings can still be seen in the graveyard immediately south of the current church, which occupies a historically significant enclosure approximately 40 meters in diameter, noted by Meyrick and illustrated on the 1843 Tithe map. This site may have once housed the rectory or vicarage.

Regarded as the finest Victorian church in the county, the current St. Peter's Church was designed by architect R.J. Withers and is built in the High Victorian Gothic style, characterized by its geometric plate-traceried windows. The church is constructed from grey, brown specked rubble stone with ashlar dressings and features green slate roofs, terracotta ridge tiles, and coped gables topped with stone cross finials.

The layout includes a nave, a three-bay lean-to south aisle, a tall three-stage south-west tower capped with a pyramidal roof over the porch, a lower chancel, and a lean-to south vestry. The interior maintains a simple yet tall proportionate High Victorian Gothic aesthetic, with significant kingpost and collar trusses in the nave and denser scissor-rafters in the chancel. Notable furnishings include an original carved circular stone font, a pulpit, and a stone reredos adorned with mosaic panels.

The church boasts an extensive collection of stained glass, created between approximately 1875 and 1950, including distinguished works by artists such as Wilhelmina Geddes, who was influenced by the style of Harry Clarke, as well as by Kempe & Tower and R.J. Newberyation.

Llanllyr Abbey



Llanllyr Abbey, a Cistercian house for women, was founded in **1190** by the powerful **Lord Rhys**, the ruler of **Deheubarth**, a kingdom in southwestern Wales. This abbey, located in the beautiful **Ceredigion** region, holds a significant place in Welsh monastic history. As with other Cistercian foundations, Llanllyr followed the strict religious and communal ideals of the Cistercian order, but the involvement of women in this order was always complex and fraught with challenges.

The position of **women's houses** within the Cistercian order was historically **ambivalent**. Unlike their male counterparts, female Cistercians were never granted full status as members of the order. Women were only reluctantly accepted into the order, and they were often seen as subordinate to the male houses. This created a distinctive hierarchy within the Cistercian community, where nuns were considered second-class members, restricted in their activities and roles within the broader Cistercian network. While Cistercian monks were known for their self-sufficiency, living by the principles of prayer, labor, and communal living, the strict enclosure imposed on female members of the order severely limited their ability to participate in the same way.

Unlike the monks, who cultivated large estates and farms to support their communities, the nuns were confined to their abbey grounds and often relied on the charity of others to sustain their livelihood. This dependency contrasted with the order's ideal of self-sufficiency. The women were required to live a cloistered life, with the abbey's buildings designed to ensure that they never left the premises except for rare and special occasions. This strict enclosure meant that, although the nuns of Llanllyr Abbey adhered to the Cistercian ideals of piety and devotion, they were unable to contribute to the physical labour and agricultural success that defined Cistercian male monasteries.

Llanllyr Abbey's community of women was thus restricted both in its physical freedom and in its capacity to fully embrace the self-sufficiency that was central to the Cistercian way of life. The abbey, nevertheless, played an important role in the religious landscape of Wales, offering a place for women to live in devotion and in close community, albeit under difficult circumstances. The nuns of Llanllyr were an integral part of the spiritual and social fabric of the region, despite the limitations placed upon them by both the patriarchal structure of the order and the physical constraints of their enclosure.

The founding of Llanllyr Abbey by **Lord Rhys** also reflected his political and religious ambitions. As a ruler, he sought to cement his power and prestige by aligning with the influential Cistercian order, and his establishment of a women's house at Llanllyr was part of this broader strategy. His support of religious houses, both male and female, was common among medieval Welsh lords who understood the importance of religion in solidifying their rule and legitimizing their authority.

Though the abbey no longer stands in its original form, Llanllyr remains a symbol of the nuanced role women played within the larger framework of the Cistercian order. The legacy of these women, whose contributions to the spiritual life of the community were often overlooked, can still be felt today in the history of the Cistercian Way in Wales.

St Gartheli Church Betws Leucu



St Gartheli's Church, located in the village of Gartheli, is a historical Welsh church dedicated to a local saint named Gartheli. Originally a chapel in the parish of Llanddewi Brefi, this church has deep roots in Ceredigion's ecclesiastical history. By the eighteenth century, it had fallen into disrepair but was subsequently rebuilt in 1810. The present structure, however,

dates from 1875, reflecting a simpler design that mirrors many rural parish churches built in Wales during this period.

One of the church's most notable interior features is a stained-glass window from 1950 by Celtic Studios. This window, which depicts the Risen Christ, adds a unique touch of modern Welsh artistry to the church's historical ambiance, celebrating the continuity of faith through art. Celtic Studios, a well-known Welsh stained-glass studio, incorporated vibrant colours and symbolic detail to add depth and reverence to the piece. The churchyard and structure, while modest, offer insight into the changing architectural styles and devotional practices over centuries in this rural community.

Given the church's proximity to Llanddewi Brefi and its historical context, one might wonder if St Gartheli's Church shares any connections with the Cistercian way, which had a strong influence in the region. While there is no direct evidence of the church being part of the Cistercian tradition, its location near Llanddewi Brefi, a place with its own ecclesiastical significance, suggests potential indirect ties to the broader religious and monastic landscape of Wales during the medieval period.

The church's history, including its dedication to a lesser-known Welsh saint and its connections to Llanddewi Brefi, contributes to its cultural and historical significance within the region.

St David's Church Llanddewi Brefi



St. David's Church, located near the Afon Brefi, has a rich history that intertwines with early Christian heritage in Wales. It is believed that the church stands on the site of an ancient Bronze Age barrow and may have originally been an early monastic settlement. The oldest inscribed stone associated with the church, Llanddewibrefi 1, dates to the sixth century, marking its significance in early Christianity.

The church is first mentioned in the 11th century when it was noted by Rhygyfarch as the site of the Synod of Llanddewi Brefi around 550 AD. At this synod, St. David is said to have vanquished St. Cadoc's revival of Pelagianism, with the church's location supposedly elevated miraculously to aid in this victory. This historical synod highlights the church's importance in theological debates of the time.

St. David's Church boasts a remarkable collection of Early Christian carved stones, with six notable examples, making it the largest concentration of such stones in Ceredigion. These include Llanddewibrefi 2 to 6, ranging from the seventh to ninth centuries. The church served as a parish church in the medieval period and was part of the Deanery of Sub-Aeron, holding patronage under St. David's. In 1287, Bishop Bek re-founded a college of secular canons at the church, which lasted until the Reformation.

The church structure is a Grade II listed building*, made primarily from Llanddewi Brefi rubble stone and features yellow oolite and grey sandstone dressings. Architecturally, it consists of a three-bayed nave, a two-bayed chancel, and a prominent three-storied central tower added in the 15th century. The original medieval layout was cruciform, like the monastic church at Llandadarn Fawr.

Several significant restorations have taken place over the years, including major reconstructions in 1832 and 1874, led by architect R.J. Withers. The 1874 restoration introduced an octagonal oolite font and included substantial updates to the nave and chancel, reflecting the non-conformist tradition. The church was further restored in 1913, with enhancements that were largely superficial, although a boiler house may have been added at this time.

St Caron Church Tregaron



St Caron's Church stands in an elevated, central position in the town, occupying a site that is believed to rest on an ancient Bronze Age barrow. Enclosed within a roughly circular churchyard, the church grounds once held three Early Christian cross-incised monuments, as well as a 6th-century stone with a Latin inscription that was originally built into the church's south wall. During the medieval period, St Caron's Church was a prominent parish within the Deanery of Ultra-Aeron.

By 1339, a portion of its tithes had been appropriated to Strata Florida Abbey. In 1406, the benefice, under the patronage of the Bishop of St. David's, was assigned as a prebend of the collegiate church at Llanddewi Brefi. At the Dissolution, the Abbey's three bells were sold to St Caron's Church, although only one bell remains today, dating from 1889, with an earlier predecessor dating from 1859.

The current building is a Grade II listed structure, fashioned from local rubble stone with yellow oolite dressings added during an 1877 restoration. It features a five-bayed nave and chancel, a two-story vestry and boiler house to the south of the chancel, and a prominent three-story west tower. The 12th-century heptagonal font, adorned with lobate angles, sits on a circular stem and square base, representing one of the church's oldest surviving features.

The tower, constructed around 1500, boasts medieval openings and a barrel-vaulted ground floor that connects with the nave through a plain, two-centred arch. Evidence of a former 18th-century gallery staircase remains in the form of blocked internal sockets along the tower's south wall.

Throughout its history, the church has seen numerous renovations. In 1805, the roof was rethatched, while a new pinnacle was added to the tower in 1810, and further repairs followed in 1820. Around 1826, the church's windows were replaced with sash windows, and the building was reconstructed in a non-conformist style, though it retained its medieval foundations. During this period, the main entrance was likely situated in the south wall of the nave's west end.

The most extensive restoration took place in 1877, under the direction of architect A. Ritchie of Chester. This renovation included a slight repositioning of the north wall, the addition of the vestry and boiler house, and the blocking of the south door. The tower openings were partially rebuilt, and the church underwent reroofing, reflooring, reseating, and refinishing.

Today, St Caron's Church is a testament to its layered history, blending early medieval elements, such as its ancient font and west tower, with 19th-century restorations that reflect Victorian sensitivities to tradition and design. Its position within the community, enriched by its deep ecclesiastical ties and historical foundations, continues to make it a cherished landmark, reflecting the evolving architectural and religious heritage of the area.

Strata Florida Abbey: The Spiritual Heart of Medieval Wales



Founding and Early History

Strata Florida Abbey, established in 1201 by the Cistercians, stands as one of the most significant monastic sites in Wales. Founded by the Welsh prince, Rhys ap Gruffudd, the abbey was built to rival the powerful Norman monasteries of the region and to provide a spiritual anchor in the heart of Wales. It was originally founded as a daughter house of Whitland Abbey, and it became one of the most prominent Cistercian foundations in the region.

Architectural and Spiritual Significance

Strata Florida is renowned for its stunning location in the picturesque Teifi Valley, which provided the monks with fertile land for agricultural work, a core tenet of the Cistercian lifestyle. The abbey's construction followed the Cistercian model, with an emphasis on simplicity, austerity, and the integration of the natural landscape. The church, cloisters, and other monastic buildings were arranged to facilitate a life dedicated to prayer, work, and reflection. The abbey's architecture blends Gothic and Romanesque elements, with significant remains still visible today.

Role in Welsh Identity and Politics

Strata Florida's role extended beyond spiritual matters—it became a powerful symbol of Welsh autonomy and resistance against English domination. The abbey was closely linked to the Gwynedd dynasty, and several important Welsh figures were buried within its grounds, including members of the royal family. The abbey was seen as a key cultural and political site, reinforcing Welsh identity in a time of intense conflict between the Welsh and the English.

The Abbey's Decline

The abbey faced significant challenges during the English Crown's suppression of monasticism in the 16th century. Strata Florida was dissolved in 1536 during the reign of Henry VIII, marking the end of its spiritual and political influence. However, it remains a remarkable site, with its ruins offering insight into the grandeur of Welsh monasticism.

Legacy and Modern-Day Importance

Strata Florida remains one of the most evocative sites on the Cistercian Way, offering a glimpse into the spiritual and political life of medieval Wales. The ruins of the abbey and its surrounding landscape are now protected as a historical site, drawing visitors interested in the rich history of Welsh monasticism and the Cistercian order.

The abbey is also noted for its connection to Welsh language and culture, with Strata Florida often cited in the poetry of the medieval Welsh bards. In the modern era, it continues to inspire both scholarly interest and cultural pride, embodying the enduring spirit of Welsh resistance and heritage.

St. Mary's Parish Church Strata Florida



St. Mary's Church in Pontrhydfendigaid is a historic site located just 20 meters north of the ruins of Strata Florida Abbey, renowned for its connections to medieval Welsh heritage. This Grade II-listed church is situated in an irregularly shaped churchyard bordered by roads to the north and west, and by the abbey to the south. A distinctive feature of the churchyard is a southern bank, possibly a remnant of an earlier churchyard boundary, as well as a prominent yew tree to the north, which, according to local tradition, marks the grave of the medieval Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, a significant figure in Welsh literature.

The churchyard also houses several intriguing gravestones. On the south side of the church, there is a headstone dedicated to Henry Hughes, a cooper who had his left leg and thigh buried there in 1756 before emigrating to the United States, where the rest of his body was interred upon his death. Additionally, a flat gravestone near the northern churchyard wall marks the burial of an unknown traveller who reportedly died of exposure at Teifi Pools after ignoring local warnings. The inscription poignantly captures his fate: "Unknown; He died upon a hillside drear; Alone where snow was deep; By strangers he was carried here; Where princes also sleep."

The original St. Mary's Church is believed to have functioned as the abbey's chapel, depicted as such in an engraving from 1741. The current church was constructed in 1815, consisting simply of a nave, chancel, and west bellcote, and has since undergone significant restorations, including one in 1875. In 1914, G.T. Bassett led a further renovation, and during the 1960s, four stained glass windows were added, crafted by Powell and Sons, London, and funded by the James Pantyfedwen Foundation. These windows add a modern touch to the church's historical character and reflect the community's ongoing investment in preserving the site's spiritual and historical significance.

St Mary's Well Dolgellau



St Mary's Well, located near Dolgellau, holds a fascinating historical and spiritual significance. Although situated some distance from the town, the well is closely associated with Dolgellau Parish Church. In the early Victorian period, it served as an essential water source for the town, reflecting its practical importance. Beyond this, the well also had a spiritual dimension, being used for bathing by pilgrims who sought its reputed healing and restorative properties.

The discovery of coins near the well, including two Roman coins, suggests that it may have been a site of significance long before the Christian era. Such finds highlight the well's longevity as a place of reverence and practical use, indicating that its sacred or symbolic value may have deep roots in the region's history.

A notable figure, Beti Dafis, spearheaded efforts to repair and enhance the well in the 1840s, showcasing its continued cultural relevance during that time. Her work underscored a local commitment to preserving this landmark, even as urban development progressed. Despite these efforts, by 1890, the well was reported to be in a neglected condition, raising concerns that it might be lost to history.

Given its historical use by pilgrims and its role in the spiritual practices of the area, one might wonder if St Mary's Well was also visited by those traveling along the Cistercian Way. The Cistercian tradition, known for its emphasis on simplicity and spiritual reflection, often valued such sacred natural sites. While there is no direct evidence linking the well to the Cistercian Way, its historical association with pilgrimage, healing, and reverence suggests that it could have been a stop for medieval travellers seeking both physical and spiritual rejuvenation.

Cymer Abbey



The foundation of the abbey in 1158-1159 marked a significant development in the spiritual and cultural landscape of medieval Wales. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the abbey was established under the patronage of Maredudd ap Cynan ab Owain Gwynedd (d. 1212), the Lord of Merioneth and grandson of Owain Gwynedd, one of the most renowned rulers of medieval Wales. Maredudd was joined in this endeavour by his brother, Gruffudd ap Cynan, Prince of North Wales (d. 1200), further cementing the abbey's prominence through its royal connections.

This monastic institution was a daughter house of Abbeycwmhir in Powys, itself a key centre of Cistercian monasticism in Wales. As part of the Cistercian network, the abbey adhered to the order's strict spiritual practices, including an emphasis on manual labour, self-sufficiency, and devotion to prayer. Its dedication to the Virgin Mary reflects the widespread Marian devotion characteristic of the Cistercian order during this period, highlighting the abbey's role in promoting this central tenet of medieval spirituality.

The involvement of such high-ranking patrons not only provided the abbey with land and resources but also ensured its integration into the broader socio-political framework of Gwynedd. The abbey's establishment under these influential figures underscores its importance as both a spiritual sanctuary and a symbol of regional power and prestige during the height of the Cistercian expansion in Wales.

Ffynnon Elan



Ffynnon Elan is a renowned healing well located in the picturesque village of Dolwyddelan. Steeped in local folklore and spiritual tradition, the well has long been reputed for its miraculous properties. It is said to have the power to heal paralysed limbs and restore health to sickly children, making it a significant site of pilgrimage and hope for those seeking physical and spiritual healing.

Situated adjacent to the historic Cistercian Way, Ffynnon Elan likely held a special resonance for medieval pilgrims traveling along this monastic route. The Cistercian tradition often emphasized the sanctity of natural elements, such as water, which was seen as a divine source of purification and renewal. The well's proximity to the Way suggests that it may have served not only local communities but also travellers and pilgrims, offering a place for rest, prayer, and healing.

The well's enduring reputation highlights its importance in the spiritual landscape of the region, blending Christian reverence with older, possibly pre-Christian, traditions of sacred waters. Ffynnon Elan continues to be a reminder of the deep connection between faith, nature, and community in Wales's rich cultural heritage.

Gwydir Uchaf Chapel Llanrwst



Gwydir Uchaf Chapel, located near Llanrwst, is a remarkable historic gem that holds a unique position adjacent to the Cistercian Way. This 17th-century chapel, originally built as a private place of worship for the Wynn family of Gwydir Castle, is celebrated for its exquisite interior and cultural significance.

The chapel's painted ceiling is its most striking feature, adorned with vibrant panels depicting biblical scenes and intricate decorative motifs. This artistry reflects the blend of Renaissance and local styles, making it a rare example of such craftsmanship in Wales. The chapel's architecture, while modest from the outside, embodies the spiritual and aesthetic values of its era, offering visitors a glimpse into the religious practices and tastes of the Welsh gentry.

Situated close to the Cistercian Way, Gwydir Uchaf Chapel would have been accessible to travellers along this historic route. Although primarily a family chapel, its proximity to the monastic trail suggests it may have served as a spiritual waypoint for pilgrims or other wayfarers. The Cistercian Way, known for connecting sites of religious and cultural importance, aligns with the chapel's spiritual heritage and underscores its place in the broader ecclesiastical landscape of the region.

Today, Gwydir Uchaf Chapel stands as a testament to the rich interplay between personal devotion, artistic expression, and the communal faith traditions that shaped Wales's history.

St Grwst Church and Gwydir Chapel



St Grwst's Church and Gwydir Chapel are historical treasures located in Llanrwst, offering visitors a glimpse into Wales's rich ecclesiastical and cultural heritage.

St Grwst's Church is notable for its beautifully preserved **15th-century rood screen**, a fine example of medieval craftsmanship. This screen is intricately carved, with one particularly charming detail featuring pigs eating acorns—a motif that speaks to the medieval connection between art, daily life, and faith. Such carvings served both decorative and symbolic purposes, connecting the sacred with the natural world.

The adjacent **Gwydir Chapel**, built in 1633 by the Wynn family, houses one of its most fascinating artifacts: a massive stone coffin reputed to be that of **Llywelyn the Great**, one of Wales's most revered historical figures. Llywelyn, Prince of Gwynedd and a unifier of Wales in the 13th century, remains a symbol of Welsh resilience and pride. The presence of his coffin in the chapel adds a layer of national significance to the site, attracting visitors interested in both history and legend.

Together, St Grwst's Church and Gwydir Chapel offer a captivating blend of medieval and early modern Welsh history, artistry, and legend. Their location in Llanrwst makes them an essential stop for anyone exploring the region, especially for those traveling along routes like the **Cistercian Way**, which celebrates the deep spiritual and cultural roots of Wales.

Aberconwy Abbey & St Mary's Church: A Site of Spiritual and Political Importance



Founding and Early History

Aberconwy Abbey, established in 1186 by the Cistercians, was one of the most significant religious houses in medieval North Wales. It was founded by the powerful Welsh prince, Llywelyn the Great, in the town of Conwy, a region known for its strategic importance. The abbey was intended as a foundation to strengthen Welsh influence in a time when English domination was expanding. Aberconwy was initially dedicated to the Virgin Mary and served as a spiritual centre for the region.

Strategic Location and Role

Aberconwy Abbey was positioned near the River Conwy, benefiting from fertile land and a prominent location in the kingdom of Gwynedd. It was not just a place of spiritual worship but also a site of considerable political significance. Llywelyn the Great's patronage of the abbey helped solidify his authority in the region, and it became closely linked to his court. The abbey was also a centre for the arts, learning, and Welsh culture, becoming a prominent site of religious practice and a hub for royal patronage.

Architectural Features

The abbey was designed following the Cistercian architectural style, which prioritized simplicity and functionality. While little of the original structure survives due to later destruction, the ruins still reflect the grandeur of its medieval past. The abbey church was built with a large nave, a chancel, and a distinctive layout, typical of the Cistercian monastic plan.

Decline and Dissolution

Like many Cistercian houses in Wales, Aberconwy Abbey faced decline during the 16th century. In 1283, after the conquest of Gwynedd by Edward I, the abbey suffered a significant blow when its land and power were diminished. The final blow came with the

Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, when Aberconwy was abandoned, and its buildings dismantled.

Legacy and Modern-Day Significance

Today, the site of Aberconwy Abbey, now marked by ruins, serves as a poignant reminder of the cultural and religious history of Wales. Though it no longer stands as a functioning abbey, it remains an important historical site, drawing attention from visitors and scholars interested in Welsh monasticism and the region's medieval past. The abbey's connection to Llywelyn the Great adds a layer of historical significance, linking it to one of the most famous and influential figures in Welsh history.

The abbey's role in both the religious and political life of North Wales highlights its integral part in the development of Cistercian monasticism in the region.

St. Tudno's Church



Perched dramatically on the Great Orme in Llandudno, **St Tudno's Church** is a historic site steeped in charm and tradition. Though originally built in the **12th century**, the church has undergone significant restoration over the centuries, leaving little of the original structure intact. Despite these changes, St Tudno's remains a deeply spiritual and picturesque landmark, embodying the enduring legacy of early Christian Wales.

One of the church's most beloved traditions is its **outdoor services**, held on **Sunday mornings during the summer months**. These gatherings are renowned for their welcoming atmosphere, drawing both locals and visitors to worship in the open air, surrounded by breath-taking views of the sea and the Great Orme's rugged landscape. In a delightful touch, even dogs are invited to join the congregation, often lending their voices to the hymns in their own unique way!

The church is dedicated to **St Tudno**, a 6th-century Welsh saint who is believed to have brought Christianity to the area. Its location on the Great Orme, overlooking the bay, makes it a serene and inspiring place of worship, perfectly aligned with the spiritual traditions of early Celtic Christianity, which often celebrated the natural world as part of divine creation.

Whether attending a service or exploring its tranquil surroundings, **St Tudno's Church** offers visitors a chance to connect with the spiritual and cultural heritage of Wales while enjoying the stunning natural beauty of the Great Orme.

The Holy Well and Chapel of St Trillo



Nestled on the picturesque shoreline at Rhos-on-Sea, **St Trillo's Chapel** is a truly unique and remarkable site, celebrated as the **smallest chapel in the UK**. This diminutive yet deeply spiritual place can accommodate just six people on its simple stone benches, yet it continues to serve as a site of active worship and reflection, with services still held here today.

At the heart of the chapel is its ancient **natural spring**, which flows beneath the altar. Covered by a modest piece of wood, this spring has long been regarded as a **holy well**, its waters associated with the blessings of St Trillo himself. The saint, a **6th-century Celtic monk**, is believed to have chosen this site for his hermitage, using the spring as his water source while spreading Christianity in the region.

Despite its modest size, the chapel is imbued with a profound sense of peace and sacredness. Its simple design, set against the backdrop of the sea, offers a glimpse into the humble and contemplative life of early Celtic Christianity. Visitors often find the chapel an inspiring place for quiet prayer, reflection, or simply to admire its historical and spiritual significance.

The **Holy Well and Chapel of St Trillo** not only stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Wales's early saints but also as a reminder of the power of simplicity in connecting with the divine. Whether you visit for its historical importance, its spiritual atmosphere, or its unique charm, this tiny chapel leaves a lasting impression.

St Asaph Cathedral



Commonly known as St Asaph Cathedral, this remarkable building is located in the historic city of St Asaph in Denbighshire, North Wales. As the episcopal seat of the Bishop of St Asaph, it serves as a central place of worship and spiritual leadership for the Anglican Diocese of St Asaph.

With a history stretching back over 1,400 years, St Asaph Cathedral is one of the oldest religious sites in Wales, its origins linked to the early Christian period in the 6th century. The cathedral's original foundation was established by Saint Asaph, a Welsh bishop and scholar who is said to have founded a monastic community at the site.

While the current structure dates from the 13th century, it has undergone several stages of construction, restoration, and expansion over the centuries. The cathedral features a mix of Romanesque and Gothic architectural styles, reflecting the evolving design trends of its time.

Today, St Asaph Cathedral stands not only as a place of worship but also as an important symbol of Welsh religious heritage, offering a space for reflection, music, and community events. Its peaceful atmosphere and historical significance make it a must-visit landmark in North Wales, embodying the enduring spiritual legacy of the region.

St Beuno's Well -1



St Beuno's Well, Tremeirchion

Nestled in the serene landscape of Tremeirchion, St Beuno's Well is a sacred site with deep historical and spiritual significance. A small door in the surrounding wall grants access to a narrow ledge that encircles the well, offering visitors a chance to step closer to the waters that have long been revered for their healing properties.

Steps descend into the well, suggesting that it was not only a site for spiritual healing but also a place for baptisms, likely performed by St Beuno, the 6th-century Welsh saint who is believed to have established a monastic community nearby. This sacred well was known for its association with healing rituals, particularly for eye complaints, with the waters thought to have curative powers for those suffering from such ailments.

The well's waters continue to be a symbol of spiritual renewal and purification, linking the ancient Celtic tradition of sacred wells with the Christian practices brought to the area by St Beuno. The site remains a place of pilgrimage and reflection, where the natural beauty of the landscape enhances the feeling of peace and connection with the past.

St Beuno's Well stands as a living testament to the enduring faith and traditions of early Christian Wales, drawing visitors seeking both physical and spiritual healing in a setting that has nurtured generations for over a millennium.

Ffynnon Beuno -2



Ffynnon Beuno, Tremeirchion

This sacred well, named after **St Beuno**, lies in the village of **Tremeirchion**, approximately a mile north of Bodfari, nestled between the **A55** and the **A541**. Positioned directly on the historic **pilgrims' trail**, Ffynnon Beuno served as an important stop along the route that followed the journey of **St Winefride** from Holywell to Gwytherin, a testament to the enduring connection between these early Christian saints.

Although there is little in the recorded lives of **St Beuno** to directly associate him with Tremeirchion, local tradition suggests that one of his pupils may have established a religious foundation here, continuing the legacy of his teachings. The first recorded mention of a church at Tremeirchion dates to **1240**, though it is highly likely that earlier churches or chapels occupied the site, rooted in the early medieval period when Christian faith flourished in Wales.

Ffynnon Beuno holds deep spiritual significance as part of the **pilgrimage tradition**, with its waters believed to have been used for healing and spiritual renewal. The well and its surroundings invite contemplation, evoking the ancient practice of seeking solace, purification, and connection with the divine at holy wells.

Today, **Ffynnon Beuno** remains a tranquil and evocative site, linking visitors to the region's rich Christian heritage and its role in the spiritual journeys of countless pilgrims throughout history.

Basingwerk Abbey



By the mid thirteenth century, the abbey buildings at Basingwerk conformed to a standard Cistercian plan. The most prominent structure was the cruciform or cross-shaped church, set out on an east-west alignment. To the south, the monastic buildings were arranged around three sides of a large open square known as the cloister.

Elsewhere lay the monks' infirmary, guest houses, and many other structures related to the daily life and agricultural economy of the abbey. The whole monastic complex would have stood within an enclosed precinct. Initially, the church and the east range of monastic buildings seems to have been completed first, and in the middle of the thirteenth century the monk's refectory was constructed on a new north south alignment.

In the later fourteenth century, a new arcade was placed around the four sides of the cloister, and towards the end of the Middle Ages the southern end of the east range was refashioned, most likely being used as a domestic apartment. In the late fifteenth century, the abbey was roofed with lead and ornamented with glass windows, and new houses for guests were built. Following the dissolution, lead from the abbey buildings was taken to repair the castle at Holt, and some was transported to Ireland for use at Dublin Castle. Basingwerk gradually fell into ruin.

St Winefride's Well



Known as the “Lourdes of Wales,” **St Winefride’s Well** in Holywell is one of Britain’s most revered and enduring pilgrimage sites. Its history is deeply rooted in the dramatic and inspiring story of **St Winefride**, a 7th-century Welsh saint whose life and legend continue to captivate believers and visitors alike.

According to tradition, Winefride was the devout daughter of a local Welsh chieftain. She caught the attention of a noble suitor, **Caradog**, who became enraged when she rejected his advances to pursue a religious life. In a fit of fury, Caradog beheaded her. Miraculously, where her head fell, a spring of clear, healing water burst forth from the ground. In some versions of the tale, her uncle, **St Beuno**, restored her to life through divine intervention.

After her eventual death, Winefride was interred at her abbey and quickly venerated as a saint. Her well, which became known as **St Winefride’s Well**, has been a place of pilgrimage and healing for over 1,300 years, making it the only site in Britain with a continuous tradition of public pilgrimage for such a span of time.

The current well structure dates largely from the **late 15th century**, featuring a beautifully preserved **Perpendicular Gothic canopy**, built by Margaret Beaufort, the mother of King Henry VII. The waters of the well have long been associated with miraculous cures, drawing

pilgrims seeking both physical and spiritual healing. The well pool remains a central part of the site, where visitors can immerse themselves in its sacred waters, continuing a practice that spans centuries.

Today, **St Winefride's Well** is not only a shrine to the saint but also a vibrant cultural and historical landmark. Its serene atmosphere and storied past offer a profound connection to the spiritual heritage of Wales, making it a must-visit destination for those seeking inspiration and peace.

Ffynnon Fair – Ysceifiog



Ffynnon Fair (Mary's Well) in **Ysceifiog**, Flintshire, is a site steeped in historical and cultural significance, even if its specific traditions of healing or miraculous cures have not survived in local memory. The well was mentioned by **Edward Lhuyd** in his late 17th-century *Parochialia*, highlighting its importance as a source of freshwater and its likely sacred heritage.

The dedication to **St Mary**, the Virgin, suggests the well's association with an ancient and holy providence. Wells named after Mary are widespread in Wales, with **Francis Jones** documenting at least seventy-six such dedications. While there are no direct legends linking Mary herself to Flintshire, her veneration as a spiritual figure has deep roots in Welsh religious traditions, dating back to the **4th century**.

Francis Jones proposed that wells dedicated to the Virgin Mary were particularly popular in areas of **Anglo-Norman influence**, as is plausible in the region of **Tegeingl**, where Ysceifiog is situated. However, Mary's prominence in Welsh devotion extended far beyond such influences, as evidenced by the enduring reverence for her name and associated sites across the country.

According to **Samuel Lewis**, Ffynnon Fair was highly regarded, even described as being "reverenced," before the disruptions of the **16th-century Reformation**, when many holy wells fell out of active use as sites of pilgrimage or worship. Beyond its spiritual associations,

the well was of practical importance to the village, serving as the principal source of **freshwater** for the community.

Today, **Ffynnon Fair** stands as a quiet reminder of the layered history of Welsh spirituality and daily life. Its enduring name pays tribute to the Virgin Mary's central role in the religious imagination of Wales, while its practical legacy as a village water source connects it to the lived experiences of generations past.

St Dyfnog's Holy Well



Wales's early saints held water in high regard, often attributing sacred and healing properties to springs and wells. Among Denbighshire's many holy wells, **St Dyfnog's Well** stands out as a site of both spiritual significance and natural beauty. Alongside **St Winefride's Well** in Holywell and **Ffynnon Fair** in Ysceifiog, it forms a trio of revered sacred springs in the region.

St Dyfnog's Well is tucked away behind **St Dyfnog's Church**, accessible via a charming woodland path. This serene location is steeped in history and legend. The well itself is

reached by descending steps into the sacred pool, which was believed to have healing properties. However, its icy waters were also associated with penance; according to legend, **St Dyfnog** himself would stand in the freezing pool as an act of devotion and penance.

The church nearby is notable for its stunning **Jesse window**, a masterpiece of stained glass depicting the lineage of Christ. This precious artifact was hidden underground during the **Cromwellian period** to protect it from destruction, a testament to the community's reverence for its sacred heritage.

Visitors to St Dyfnog's Well are captivated by its tranquil setting and the spiritual aura that surrounds it. While the icy waters may offer a bracing experience, they serve as a poignant reminder of the saint's devout practices and the enduring legacy of holy wells in Welsh culture.

Whether seeking healing, history, or a moment of peace, **St Dyfnog's Holy Well** remains an evocative destination, blending natural beauty, legend, and the sacred traditions of Wales.

St Saeran's Church



St Saeran's Church, located in the picturesque village of Llanynys, Denbighshire, is a site of great historical and spiritual significance. Dedicated to St Saeran, a 6th-century Celtic saint, the church has long been a focal point for worship and community life in this tranquil part of North Wales.

The origins of the church are ancient, tied to the early Christian period when St Saeran, one of the lesser-known Welsh saints, founded a religious settlement here. The saint is often associated with healing and teaching, and the church continues to reflect the enduring legacy of his faith and service.

The building itself showcases a blend of architectural styles, reflecting its centuries of use and adaptation. The current structure, which dates largely from the 15th century, retains significant medieval features, including a fine rood screen and carved wooden fittings. These elements highlight the craftsmanship and devotion of past generations.

The churchyard, with its weathered gravestones and peaceful surroundings, adds to the site's timeless charm. St Saeran's Church is more than a historical landmark; it remains a living place of worship, connecting visitors and parishioners to the deep spiritual traditions of Wales. Its tranquil setting, rich history, and ties to early Welsh Christianity make it a meaningful destination for those interested in the heritage and faith of the region.

Ffynnon Dyssilio



Ffynnon Dyssilio located in the parish of Bryn Eglwys, Ffynnon Dyssilio is a holy well associated with St Tyssilio, a 7th-century Welsh saint renowned for his dedication to the Christian faith and his foundational role in spreading Christianity across Wales. The well takes its name from the saint and is closely linked to the nearby church, also dedicated to St Tyssilio, as recorded by Edward Lhuyd in his *Parochialia* of 1690.

Like many sacred wells in Wales, Ffynnon Dyssilio would have been regarded as a source of both spiritual and physical renewal, with its waters believed to hold healing properties. Such wells were often centres of local devotion, visited by those seeking cures, blessings, or a closer connection to the divine.

The church, an important historical feature of the parish, serves as a reminder of St Tyssilio's enduring legacy. As a patron saint, Tyssilio is known for his association with the *Book of Tyssilio*, a medieval Welsh chronicle that contributed to the development of historical and genealogical traditions in Wales.

While details about specific traditions or rituals associated with Ffynnon Dyssilio may not be well-documented, its presence reflects the deep veneration of holy wells in Welsh culture, where saints and springs often became intertwined in both faith and folklore.

Today, Ffynnon Dyssilio remains a poignant symbol of the early Christian heritage of Bryn Eglwys, evoking the enduring reverence for water as a sacred and life-giving force in the spiritual life of Wales.

Valle Crucis Abbey



Valle Crucis Abbey nestled in the idyllic Vale of Llangollen, Valle Crucis Abbey stands as one of Wales's most evocative monastic ruins, offering a glimpse into the spiritual and cultural life of the medieval period. Founded in 1201 by Madog ap Gruffydd Maelor, the prince of Powys Fadog, the abbey was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and became a significant centre of Cistercian monasticism in Wales.

Its name, "Valle Crucis", or "Valley of the Cross," derives from the nearby Pillar of Eliseg, an ancient stone cross thought to commemorate early Welsh rulers.

The abbey's architecture reflects the characteristic simplicity and austerity of the Cistercian order, which sought to create a space for contemplation and devotion. Despite its humble beginnings, Valle Crucis grew into one of the wealthiest monasteries in Wales, supported by extensive landholdings and the labour of lay brothers.

The abbey church, with its soaring pointed arches and beautiful traceried windows, is a testament to the craftsmanship and devotion of its builders.

The monastery thrived for over three centuries, weathering the tumult of Welsh-English conflicts and the political upheavals of the medieval era. However, like all monasteries in Britain, Valle Crucis fell victim to the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII in the 1530s.

The abbey was suppressed, and its lands and treasures were seized, leaving its buildings to slowly fall into ruin.

Today, the abbey's preserved ruins include the chapter house, cloisters, and parts of the refectory, offering visitors a sense of the monks' daily life. The restored west front of the abbey church, with its iconic rose window, is particularly striking and provides a vivid reminder of the abbey's former glory.

The surrounding landscape, tranquil and lush, adds to the contemplative atmosphere of the site. Valle Crucis Abbey remains a powerful symbol of Wales's rich monastic heritage and the enduring influence of the Cistercian order. It invites visitors to explore not only its architectural beauty but also the spiritual and historical legacy of a bygone era.

St Collen's Church, Llangollen



St Collen's Church, set in the heart of the picturesque town of **Llangollen**, is a remarkable site of spiritual and historical significance. Named after **St Collen**, a 7th-century Welsh saint and reputed hermit, the church reflects centuries of devotion, community life, and architectural evolution.

According to legend, St Collen lived as a hermit in a cell near the present church site. His name, derived from the Welsh word "**collen**" (meaning hazel tree), ties him to the natural world and the sacred traditions of early Welsh Christianity. The church was likely established in his memory, becoming a focal point for worship and pilgrimage.

The current building dates primarily from the **13th century**, though it has undergone significant alterations and restorations over the centuries, most notably in the **19th century** under the renowned architect **George Gilbert Scott**. The structure blends medieval elements with Victorian-era enhancements, creating a rich tapestry of architectural styles.

Inside the church, visitors can admire its **hammer-beam roof**, intricate **carved woodwork**, and a **rood screen**—a striking reminder of its medieval origins. St Collen's is also home to **stained glass windows** that tell stories from scripture and local history, adding a vibrant sense of artistry and reverence.

The **churchyard** is equally captivating, with ancient gravestones and a tranquil atmosphere that invites quiet reflection. The church's elevated position offers stunning views of **Llangollen** and its surrounding landscapes, enhancing its connection to the town's heritage.

St Collen's Church remains a living place of worship and a significant cultural landmark, hosting services and events that connect the community with its historic roots. It also serves as a gateway to Llangollen's rich tapestry of history, from the legend of its saintly namesake to the vibrant present-day life of this charming Welsh town.

Strata Marcella Abbey



Strata Marcella Abbey located near the River Severn in **Powys**, **Strata Marcella Abbey** was a significant Cistercian monastery founded in **1170** by **Owain Cyfeiliog**, Prince of Powys, as a centre of spiritual devotion and monastic life. The abbey's Latin name, meaning "Marshy Valley," reflects its location in a low-lying area near Welshpool, where the surrounding landscape once provided a serene environment for contemplation and agricultural labour.

Strata Marcella was a **daughter house** of **Whitland Abbey**, the mother house of Cistercian monasticism in Wales. True to the Cistercian ethos, the monks here lived a life of simplicity, prayer, and self-sufficiency. The order's emphasis on manual labour and agriculture saw the abbey thrive economically, with its lands supporting sheep farming and other ventures.

The abbey became a prominent religious institution in medieval Wales, and its ties to the Welsh princes gave it a unique position in the political and spiritual landscape. **Owain Cyfeiliog**, the founder, was a notable patron of Welsh culture and a poet himself, creating a link between the abbey and the literary traditions of the time.

Despite its importance, Strata Marcella, like other monasteries in Britain, fell victim to the **Dissolution of the Monasteries** under Henry VIII in the 16th century. The abbey was suppressed, its buildings dismantled, and its lands sold off. Today, only scattered fragments of the abbey remain, with its foundations barely visible beneath the grassy terrain.

The site's proximity to the **Cistercian Way**, a modern pilgrimage trail celebrating the legacy of the Cistercian order in Wales, ensures that the memory of Strata Marcella continues to inspire reflection and exploration. Though much of the abbey has been lost to time, its history remains a testament to the spiritual and cultural richness of medieval Wales.

St Mary's Well, Llanfair Caereinion



St Mary's Well, Llanfair Caereinion nestled in the charming market town of **Llanfair Caereinion in Powys**, **St Mary's Well** is a historic and sacred site with deep connections to the local community and the traditions of Welsh Christianity. As its name suggests, the well is dedicated to the **Virgin Mary**, one of the most venerated figures in Christian theology, whose association with holy wells throughout Wales underscores their spiritual significance.

The origins of **St Mary's Well** are shrouded in history, but it is thought to date back to the early medieval period, when wells were often sanctified as sources of healing and divine blessing. These wells served not only as places of spiritual devotion but also as practical sources of water for nearby communities.

St Mary's Well likely played a role in local pilgrimage traditions, with travellers seeking its reputedly healing waters and offering prayers to the Virgin Mary. Wells dedicated to her were particularly popular in areas influenced by Anglo-Norman and early Christian cultures, reflecting her widespread appeal as a symbol of purity, compassion, and intercession.

The well's setting, amidst the rolling hills and serene landscapes of **Llanfair Caereinion**, enhances its tranquil and reflective atmosphere. Although much of its original structure has been lost or altered over time, the well remains a poignant reminder of the sacred traditions that have shaped the region's cultural heritage.

Visitors to **Llanfair Caereinion** can still explore the legacy of **St Mary's Well**, contemplating its historical significance as a site of faith and healing. Whether as a place of pilgrimage or a quiet retreat, **St Mary's Well** continues to evoke the enduring connection between nature, spirituality, and community in Wales.

St Mary's Church, Llanllugan



St. Mary's Church in Llanllugan has a rich history that dates back centuries. Founded before 1188 and closely associated with the Cistercian nunnery established by Maredudd ap Robert, the church may also occupy the site of Llorcan Wyddel's sixth-century foundation.

The existing structure, which is predominantly constructed from grey sandstone with elements of red sandstone and large pebbles, reflects the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The church comprises an undivided chancel and nave, a south porch, and a distinctive overhanging wooden bellcote situated on the west wall.

The late medieval roof structure has been preserved, along with a significant amount of original fifteenth-century-stained glass adorning the east window. The church's south porch appears to have been added during the nineteenth century as part of restoration work, while the wooden bellcote now in place replaced a bell turret that was removed during renovations in the 1960s.

There are intriguing indications that the blocked-in doorways on the north and south walls might have connected to the cloister and claustral buildings of the former nunnery, which remained until the Dissolution in 1536. However, the exact location of these structures remains a subject of debate, as no visible remains exist.

St. Mary's Church, Llanllugan, stands as a testament to the area's historical and architectural heritage, offering a glimpse into the religious and cultural history of the region.

Cwm Hir Abbey: A Quiet Monument to Welsh Monasticism



Founding and Early History

Cwmhir Abbey, located near the village of Abbey Cwmhir in Powys, Wales, was founded in 1143 by the Cistercian order. It was established by the Welsh prince, Madog ap Maredudd, who was a significant figure in the medieval history of the region. The abbey was intended as a spiritual centre for the local community, and like many Cistercian foundations, it followed the order's strict monastic rules, focusing on prayer, manual labour, and self-sufficiency. Cwmhir Abbey was initially founded as a daughter house of Strata Florida Abbey, another prominent Welsh Cistercian site.

Architectural Features and Development

Cwmhir Abbey was originally constructed in the Cistercian style, with a simple, functional design that emphasized harmony with nature. The site featured a church, cloisters, and various monastic buildings arranged around a central courtyard. The church was the focal point of monastic life, serving as the place for daily prayers and religious services. Over time, the abbey expanded its grounds and buildings, though much of the original structure has been lost. Today, the abbey is known for its substantial earthworks and the remaining stone ruins, which provide valuable insight into the layout and scale of the monastic complex.

Economic and Cultural Influence

Cwmhir Abbey was an important part of the local economy during its time, with monks engaged in agricultural activities such as farming and livestock raising. Like other Cistercian abbeys, it maintained a self-sustaining lifestyle, with an emphasis on producing its own food and goods. Additionally, Cwmhir played a cultural role, serving as a centre for religious learning and as a repository for sacred texts. Its location in the Welsh heartland made it a key spiritual site for the local Welsh population, and it gained prominence through the patronage of local Welsh lords.

Decline and Dissolution

The abbey, like many other Cistercian houses in Wales, began to decline after the conquest of Wales by Edward I in the late 13th century. During the 16th century, the abbey suffered further during the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII. In 1536, the abbey was formally dissolved, its assets seized, and its buildings dismantled. However, some parts of the abbey's church and other buildings have remained, though much of the site is now overgrown.

Legacy and Modern-Day Importance

Today, Cwmhir Abbey's ruins are a peaceful and evocative reminder of the Cistercian presence in Wales. Although the site is not as well-known as other Welsh abbeys, it offers a more tranquil experience for visitors interested in Welsh medieval history. The ruins of Cwmhir Abbey, including its earthworks and remnants of its buildings, remain an important historical and archaeological site managed by Cadw.

The abbey's connection to the Cistercian way of life and its role in the Welsh monastic tradition make it an essential part of the Cistercian Way, a route that links the major Cistercian sites across Wales. Today, the site stands as a poignant reminder of the region's monastic heritage and the importance of the Cistercian order in shaping medieval Welsh religious life and cultural value. It serves as a reminder of the deep connection between the Welsh landscape, Christian devotion, and the healing power ascribed to natural springs in medieval Wales.

Church of Holy Trinity, Bettws



St Michael's is a late Victorian church retaining a 14th century roof, medieval carved figures and rood screen. This church was a favourite place of diarist Rev. Francis Kilvert. This remote chapel stands far from its village, on the slopes overlooking the Wye Valley.

The small, simple building, also known as Capel-Bettws, served as a chapel of ease for Clyro, with the village almost 3 miles to the south. It has never been a parish church and still serves as a chapel of ease for the Clyro parish. The first written record comes from 1566, when it is referred to as 'y bettws', or 'the prayer house'.

Church of St. Mary the Virgin (Capel y Ffin)



In the remote and picturesque landscape of the **Black Mountains in Powys**, **Capel y Ffin**, also known as the **Church of St. Mary the Virgin**, is a strikingly serene and historically rich site of worship. The church is renowned for its peaceful, rural setting and its deep connections to both local history and Welsh spirituality.

The **church's foundation** dates to the **13th century**, with later renovations adding layers of history to its structure. The present building is a product of **Victorian restoration**, which preserved its medieval charm while enhancing its structural integrity. The church's simple stone construction and slate roof allow it to blend harmoniously into the natural surroundings, creating an intimate and sacred atmosphere for worshippers and visitors alike.

One of the most remarkable aspects of **Capel y Ffin** is its association with the **famous Welsh poet and clergyman, R.S. Thomas**. Thomas, who spent the later years of his life at the nearby rectory, is known to have drawn inspiration from the remote and tranquil landscape surrounding the church. His presence in the area imbues the site with an added layer of literary and cultural significance, attracting visitors who appreciate both his poetry and the unique atmosphere of the place.

Inside the church, visitors are greeted with a **simple yet beautiful interior**, featuring a traditional altar, pews, and stained-glass windows that filter soft, ethereal light into the space. The woodwork, though unadorned, reflects a deep sense of craftsmanship, with the altar and pulpit evoking a sense of reverence and history. While modest in design, the church's interior exudes a peacefulness that encourages contemplation and spiritual connection.

The churchyard, surrounded by **stunning views of the Black Mountains**, offers a sense of timelessness, where centuries of history and nature converge. The graves of former parishioners rest peacefully on the grounds, adding to the sacred character of the site.

Capel y Ffin remains an active place of worship and a popular destination for those interested in Welsh history, spirituality, and literary heritage. Its tranquil location and rich associations with both faith and poetry ensure that it is more than just a church – it is a living

testament to the enduring spirit of Welsh culture and the power of the natural world to inspire both faith and creativity.

For visitors seeking to connect with Wales's deep spiritual and poetic roots, the **Church of St. Mary the Virgin (Capel y Ffin)** offers a rare glimpse into the heart of a remote yet profoundly meaningful corner of the country.

Llanthony Abbey



Set within the dramatic beauty of the Black Mountains in Powys, Llanthony Abbey is one of Wales's most evocative and atmospheric ruins. Founded in 1108 by William de Lacy, a Norman nobleman, this Cistercian abbey is renowned for its tranquil location, steeped in history and legend. The abbey's name, Llanthony, derives from St. Anthony, the patron saint of hermits, reflecting the early monastic roots of the site as a place of solitude and prayer.

As one of the first Cistercian houses in Wales, Llanthony Abbey was established to follow the austere monastic lifestyle of the Cistercians, focusing on simplicity, self-sufficiency, and contemplation. The abbey flourished in its early years, benefiting from its fertile surroundings and the patronage of local Welsh nobility. Its monks were involved in agriculture, sheep farming, and wool production, which contributed to the abbey's prosperity.

The abbey reached its peak in the 12th and 13th centuries when it became an important spiritual and cultural center. Its influence extended across the region, attracting pilgrims and scholars who sought its quiet retreat and revered its religious significance. The monks also established a significant library and were involved in the preservation of religious texts. Llanthony Abbey also played a role in the early conflicts between the Welsh and English, with its strategic location in the borderlands making it a site of occasional tension.

However, like many other monasteries, Llanthony Abbey suffered during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536 under Henry VIII. The abbey was closed, its wealth confiscated, and its buildings dismantled for building materials. Despite this, the ruins still stand as a powerful testament to the enduring legacy of monastic life in Wales.

The abbey's impressive ruins today reflect its former grandeur. The church, though in partial ruin, retains fragments of its arched windows, tower, and nave, offering visitors a glimpse of

its former majesty. The remains of the cloisters, the chapter house, and various monastic buildings evoke a sense of the daily life once lived within these walls. The surrounding grounds, set against the backdrop of the dramatic Black Mountains, add to the site's profound sense of peace and isolation.

Llanthony Abbey is a popular destination for history enthusiasts, pilgrims, and those seeking to experience the profound beauty of this ancient spiritual retreat. Its remote setting, coupled with its deep historical and cultural significance, makes it a unique place to explore the history of monastic Wales.

Today, the site is managed by Cadw, the Welsh heritage organization, ensuring that this important landmark remains protected and accessible for future generations. Visitors to Llanthony Abbey can walk in the footsteps of monks who once sought solace and contemplation in the beauty of this isolated valley. It remains a place of spiritual significance, attracting those who are drawn to its serene atmosphere and timeless connection to the past.

St. Martin's Church, Cymyoy



In the serene countryside of **Monmouthshire**, Wales, **St. Martin's Church** in **Cymyoy** is a charming and historically rich site that exudes the timeless spirit of rural Welsh ecclesiastical life. Located in a peaceful valley near the village of **Llanvihangel Crucorney**, the church is renowned for its picturesque setting and its deep connection to the history and heritage of the region.

The church dates to the **12th century**, with evidence suggesting that a place of Christian worship has existed at this site even earlier. It's simple yet evocative architecture reflects its long history, with notable features such as a **Norman-style doorway** and **stone construction**. The building's design and the **round-arched windows** contribute to its ancient, humble character, offering visitors a glimpse into medieval religious life in Wales.

A key feature of **St. Martin's Church** is its remarkable **leaning tower**, which has become one of the church's most iconic features. The tower, which tilts dramatically to one side, is the result of centuries of settlement in the valley floor, and its slight angle adds to the church's unique charm. It is often cited as one of the most distinctive church towers in Wales, and its slant gives the church an endearing and quirky quality that sets it apart from other historical buildings in the region.

Inside, the church offers a calm and reflective atmosphere, with simple wooden pews and a traditional altar. The **church's interior** showcases **medieval craftsmanship**, with ancient wooden beams and stonework contributing to the timeless character of the building. The church's **font**, thought to date from the **13th century**, is a particularly noteworthy feature, offering a glimpse into the church's continued role as a place of baptism and faith throughout the centuries.

The churchyard is equally historic, with numerous **weathered gravestones** marking the resting places of local families, many of whom were instrumental in the development of the surrounding area. The tranquil, rural setting, with its sweeping views of the surrounding hills, invites visitors to take a moment to reflect on the generations of people who have worshipped, lived, and passed on in this serene part of Wales.

St. Martin's Church has been a continuous place of worship for centuries and remains an active parish church today, offering services and welcoming visitors from all over the world. The church is part of the **Diocese of Monmouth**, and it continues to serve as a spiritual anchor for the community, despite its remote location.

With its historic charm, strikingly unique leaning tower, and peaceful setting, **St. Martin's Church, Cymyoy** is a wonderful destination for those interested in Welsh history, architecture, and spirituality. The church offers a peaceful retreat for those seeking a quiet place to connect with the past, and its tranquil atmosphere makes it a beloved landmark for both the local community and visitors alike.

White Castle Well



Tucked away near the impressive ruins of **White Castle** in the rolling hills of **Monmouthshire**, **White Castle Well** is a serene and captivating site, rich in both historical and spiritual significance. Set against the backdrop of the majestic **White Castle**, this hidden gem is a quiet, peaceful location that draws visitors seeking reflection and a deeper connection to the land's sacred past.

The well is situated near the **White Castle** site, a medieval fortress built in the late 11th century, which is part of the trio of castles (along with **Skenfrith** and **Grosmont**) that were strategically constructed by the Normans to control the region. Though the well itself may not

have been a central focus of historical records, it is deeply embedded in the landscape of this ancient area, which is rich in legends, history, and spiritual significance.

The **well** is often associated with local folklore and the practice of healing, with many believing that the waters possess curative properties, particularly for ailments related to vision or general well-being. This is not uncommon in Wales, where the healing power of natural springs has long been a cherished part of the cultural fabric. Though the specific history of the well's healing tradition is not fully documented, its proximity to the **White Castle** and the surrounding ancient lands suggests that it could have been used by both locals and travellers alike, possibly even pilgrims journeying to the castle or nearby sites.

The **water** from the well is clear and cold, and while it may have once served a practical purpose for the local community, over time it has also come to symbolize renewal and spiritual refreshment. The **well** is encased in a simple stone structure, with a stone-lined basin that reflects the enduring nature of Welsh holy wells. It stands as a testament to the ancient reverence for natural springs, which were often believed to have protective or healing qualities, both physical and spiritual.

The surrounding area is peaceful and tranquil, with beautiful views of the nearby **White Castle ruins**, which rise dramatically against the landscape. The well's location, slightly away from the main castle site, provides a quiet and reflective space, ideal for contemplation or simply appreciating the beauty of the Welsh countryside.

Although **White Castle Well** may not be as widely known as some of Wales's other holy wells, its location near the historic and scenic **White Castle** makes it a hidden treasure for those who seek out lesser-known gems of Welsh heritage. The well offers a serene retreat for visitors interested in Welsh history, folklore, and spirituality, offering a peaceful moment to reflect on the centuries of human presence in this captivating landscape.

Today, **White Castle Well** remains a cherished part of the local landscape, accessible to all who wish to experience its beauty, peace, and the enduring connection to the sacred natural springs that have long been a part of Welsh tradition.

Penallt Old Church - St. Mary's



In the picturesque village of **Penallt**, near the banks of the River Wye in **Monmouthshire**, **St. Mary's Old Church** is a tranquil and historically rich site, offering a serene escape into the heart of Wales's spiritual past. Surrounded by rolling hills and scenic woodlands, this ancient church is a true hidden gem, steeped in history, local folklore, and architectural charm.

Dating back to the **12th century**, **St. Mary's Old Church** is one of the oldest surviving places of worship in the region. The church is thought to have originally been built as a **Norman-style chapel**, and its enduring presence in the village speaks to the deeply rooted religious traditions of this rural community. Although the church has undergone significant changes over the centuries, much of its early charm remains, making it a wonderful example of medieval Welsh ecclesiastical architecture.

The **stone-built church** is small but evocative, with a **simple nave** and a **chancel**, both of which have been preserved to maintain the church's authentic medieval character. The **timbered roof** and **arched windows** contribute to the historical atmosphere, with their unembellished simplicity providing a stark contrast to the grandeur of later churches in the area. A key feature of **St. Mary's** is its **ancient stone font**, which has been in continuous use for baptisms for centuries, linking the church to generations of worshippers.

One of the most fascinating aspects of **Penallt Old Church** is its **historic graveyard**, where visitors can find several weathered and moss-covered headstones. The gravestones reflect the long history of the village and its surrounding community, with many dating back to the **17th and 18th centuries**. This churchyard, set against the backdrop of the stunning Welsh countryside, offers visitors a peaceful place for contemplation, connecting the past to the present in a timeless way.

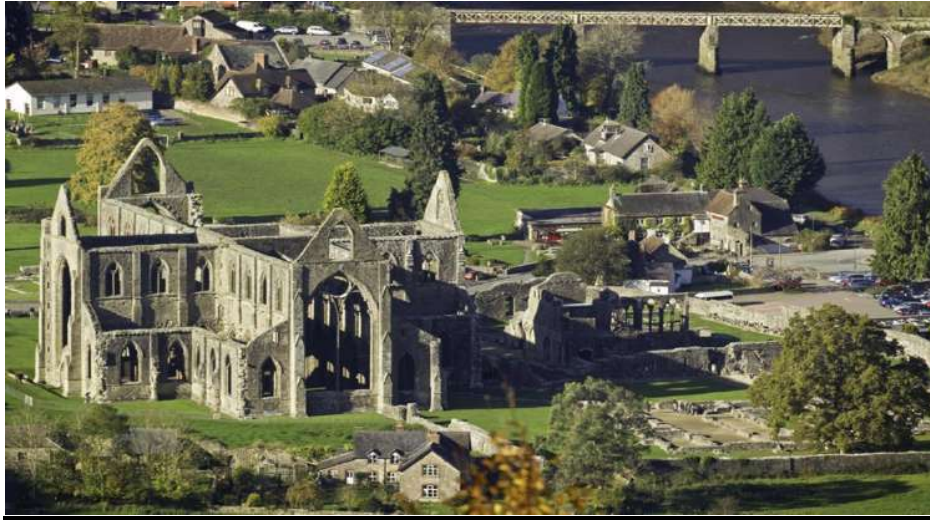
The **chancel** of the church is particularly striking, with a beautiful altar space framed by **intricate stone carvings**. The church retains its connection to the local community, serving as a place for occasional services, seasonal events, and special gatherings, ensuring that its long history continues to resonate with those who visit. While the church is not always open for regular worship, it remains a significant part of the spiritual life of Penallt and the surrounding area.

St. Mary's Old Church is located near the picturesque **Penallt village**, a charming settlement that has retained much of its old-world character. The church's location, amidst the natural beauty of the Wye Valley, adds to its quiet charm and allure. Whether you are visiting to appreciate the **historic architecture**, soak in the **peaceful surroundings**, or simply reflect on the centuries of worship that have taken place here, this hidden sanctuary offers a memorable experience.

Though **Penallt Old Church** may not be as widely known as some of Wales's more famous churches, its **timeless beauty**, **historical significance**, and connection to the **Welsh landscape** make it a rewarding destination for history lovers, those interested in Welsh heritage, or anyone seeking a moment of quiet reflection.

Today, **St. Mary's Old Church** stands as a testament to the enduring power of faith and history in Wales. It remains a place where the past and present converge, offering visitors a chance to step back in time and immerse themselves in the rich spiritual life of this beautiful part of the country.

Tintern Abbey: A Monument of Cistercian Grandeur and Romantic Inspiration



Founding and Historical Significance

Tintern Abbey, one of the most iconic and well-preserved Cistercian ruins in Wales, was founded in 1131 by Walter de Clare, a Norman lord, and his wife, Agnes. The abbey was established as a daughter house to the great Cistercian foundation of Clairvaux in France. Its location on the banks of the River Wye in the picturesque Wye Valley provided both strategic and spiritual advantages. The abbey grew to become a prominent center of monastic life, known for its impressive architecture and significant contributions to the local economy, particularly through agriculture and wool production.

Architectural Grandeur

Tintern Abbey is celebrated for its stunning architectural design, which reflects the Cistercian commitment to simplicity and functionality, yet also incorporates elements of Gothic elegance. The abbey church, with its soaring nave and grand, pointed arches, exemplifies the transition from Romanesque to Gothic styles. The impressive ruins, including the remnants of the church, cloisters, and chapter house, continue to attract visitors from around the world. The abbey's layout adheres to the traditional Cistercian model, focused on providing space for both communal worship and contemplative life.

Cultural and Religious Influence

Tintern Abbey played a vital role in the spiritual and economic life of the Wye Valley. Its monks were engaged in extensive agricultural activities, including the cultivation of land, sheep farming, and the production of wool, which was a key export. The abbey also became a place of pilgrimage, drawing worshippers and benefactors from across Wales and England.

Decline and the Dissolution of the Monasteries

As with many Cistercian abbeys, Tintern Abbey suffered a significant decline in the late medieval period. Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 under Henry VIII, the abbey was abandoned, its lands seized, and its buildings dismantled. The once-thriving monastic community came to an end, and the abbey was left to fall into ruin.

Romantic Influence and Legacy

Tintern Abbey gained worldwide fame through its association with the Romantic poet

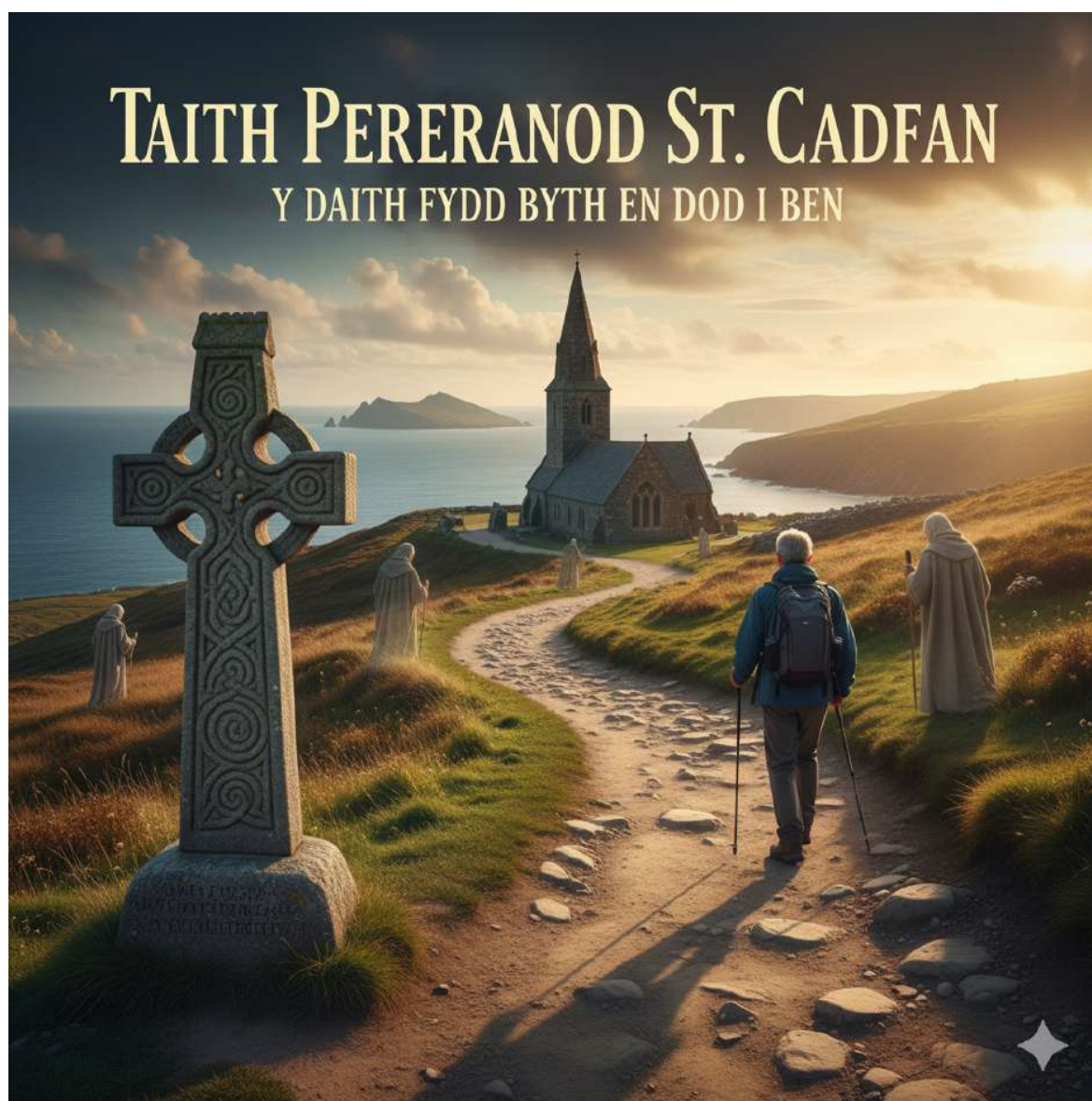
William Wordsworth, who visited the site in 1798. His poem *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* reflects the deep emotional and philosophical resonance the abbey held for him. The abbey's picturesque ruins, set against the backdrop of the surrounding hills and river, became a symbol of the Romantic movement's appreciation of nature, the passage of time, and the search for spiritual meaning.

Today, Tintern Abbey remains a powerful symbol of both Welsh history and the enduring appeal of the Romantic ideal. Managed by Cadw, the abbey is one of the most visited heritage sites in Wales, offering a fascinating glimpse into the Cistercian way of life and the cultural legacy of medieval monasticism.

It has been a genuine pleasure researching and writing the article on exploring the sites along the Cistercian Pilgrim Way in Wales. I hope that anyone who reads it finds as much enjoyment in discovering these remarkable places as I did in creating it.

Graham Tudor Emmanuel 2024

Pilgrimage Journey of St.Cadfan



The Journey Never Truly Ends

The Historical Sites of the St Cadfan Pilgrimage Trail

The St Cadfan Pilgrimage Trail is not merely a scenic walk through the heart of the Snowdonia National Park; it is a linear museum, a 40-mile narrative written in stone, water, and earth. To walk from the Irish Sea to the throne of the giant Idris is to traverse a landscape dense with the layered history of Wales—from its Age of Saints to its Industrial Age. Each site along the way is a chapter in this story, offering a tangible connection to the past. This is a historical guide to the landmarks that give this ancient path its profound meaning.

Tywyn (Tywyn): The Coastal Gateway

The pilgrimage begins where Cadfan himself is believed to have begun his ministry in the 6th century. The spiritual and historical heart of the town is the **Church of St Cadfan**, built on the site of his original *clas* (a early Celtic monastic community). Within its walls lies the trail's most significant artefact: the **St Cadfan's Stone**. This 8th-century inscribed pillar stone is one of the earliest known documents written in the Welsh language. Its Latin inscription, "*Cantenus celt Cu...*", commemorates a later abbot, signalling the site's continued importance centuries after Cadfan's death. The stone stands as a silent sentinel, a physical bridge between the Celtic Christian world and our own.

The Ancient Path to Brynchrug

Leaving Tywyn, the trail follows old tracks towards the hamlet of Brynchrug. This section traces what would have been a vital communication line between coastal communities and the inland valleys. The landscape here is one of dispersed farms and ancient field patterns, evoking the medieval *trefi* (townships) that sustained the post-Roman population. The route whispers of daily life and local travel in the centuries before maps.

Llanfihangel-y-Pennant: The Sacred Valley

Entering the deeply-riven valley of the River Dysynni, the pilgrim arrives at **St Michael's Church** in Pennant. This site represents a classic Celtic Christian settlement pattern: a remote, beautiful valley chosen for contemplation. The current church is medieval, but its foundation is far older, likely a *llan* (enclosure) marking a sacred site from Cadfan's time or earlier. A short detour leads to the haunting ruins of **Cae'r Gwalch** or **Mary Jones's Cottage**. The 1800 saga of the young Mary Jones walking barefoot from here to Bala to buy a Welsh Bible adds a powerful, more recent layer of nonconformist pilgrimage history to this ancient valley.

The Ascent to Cader Idris (Pen y Gadair)

The trail's final, most demanding leg is the ascent of Cader Idris, a mountain steeped in myth as the legendary seat of the giant-warrior Idris. Historically, this climb transforms the journey from a terrestrial pilgrimage to a spiritual quest. The mountain was not farmed or settled but visited for transcendence and challenge. Passing the glacial **Llyn Cau** and the dramatic **Cyfrwy** (the Saddle), the path follows routes used by shepherds, quarrymen, and Romantic-era travellers seeking the sublime. The summit itself, **Pen y Gadair**, offers a breathtaking panorama that has served as a natural cathedral for millennia. To stand here, as pilgrims and travellers have for centuries, is to participate in a timeless ritual of arrival and awe.

A Corridor of Continual Use

Importantly, the trail connects these nodal points through a landscape of continual human use. It passes **Dolgoch Falls**, a picturesque site developed by the Victorians for tourism, and

St. Cadfan's Church in Llangadfan



St. Cadfan's Church in Llangadfan, Powys, stands as a quiet testament to layered history. While its walls speak mostly of the 19th century, its foundations and spirit are rooted in the early medieval *Age of Saints*. This small but significant church is dedicated to Cadfan, the 6th-century Breton saint whose missionary zeal established monastic cells (*clasau*) across Wales, seeding Christianity in the region.

The present structure, largely a product of Victorian restoration, cloaks an ancient origin point. Like many Welsh rural churches, it is a palimpsest—a site of continual reverence where a modern building sits upon hallowed ground consecrated over a millennium ago. The restoration preserved not just stone and mortar, but the enduring spiritual function of this place within the Montgomeryshire landscape.

More than a monument, the church has served as the steady heartbeat of Llangadfan for centuries. It has witnessed the unrecorded lives of the local community, from the medieval parishioners of the *cantref* to the worshippers of today. The surrounding churchyard, cradled by rolling green hills, reinforces this continuity. Weather-worn gravestones, their inscriptions softened by time, chart generations of local families, tangibly connecting the present to a deep past.

As a waypoint on the St. Cadfan Trail, the church's power lies in its resonance rather than its grandeur. It does not boast the monumental archaeology of Tywyn, but instead offers a different kind of historical truth: one of persistence, adaptation, and quiet faith. It marks a point where the legendary journey of the saint solidifies into a lived, local legacy—a humble yet profound link in the chain of Wales's Christian heritage.

St. Cadfan's Church, Tywyn: The Cradle of a Trail



St. Cadfan's Church in Tywyn is not merely a stop on the pilgrimage trail that bears the saint's name—it is the spiritual and historical wellspring from which the entire journey flows. Founded in the turbulent, spiritually fervent 6th century by Cadfan, a missionary from Brittany, the church occupies the hallowed ground of his original monastic *clas* (a Celtic monastic community). This makes it one of the oldest continuously significant Christian sites in all of Wales, a living archive of faith etched in stone and memory.

Within its walls rests the site's crowning treasure: the **Cadfan Stone**. Dated to the 8th or early 9th century, this inscribed pillar is a foundational text of Welsh heritage. Its Latin inscription, commemorating a later abbot, is elegantly framed by some of the very first written words in the Old Welsh language. This stone is far more than an artefact; it is a silent revolution, marking the confident emergence of a native tongue into the sacred, Latin-dominated space of the church, offering scholars a priceless window into the linguistic soul of early medieval Wales.

The church's architecture narrates a later, but no less pivotal, chapter. The robust **Romanesque arches and nave**, predominantly 12th-century, speak of the Norman consolidation of power, yet they were built upon and around the ancient Celtic holy site. This architectural layering—Celtic foundation beneath Norman stone—visually encapsulates Wales's complex history. Subsequent restorations, particularly in the Victorian era, sought to preserve this legacy, ensuring the building's endurance.

The church's significance radiates far beyond its walls. It is historically linked to Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli), the revered "Island of 20,000 Saints," a legendary terminus for pilgrims. This connection positions St. Cadfan's at the beginning of a sacred geography, suggesting the

saint's influence in weaving the early network of Celtic Christianity that crisscrossed the Welsh sea and landscape.

Today, the church remains a vibrant, multi-layered landmark. It is an **active place of worship** for the Tywyn community, a **custodian of profound history** for visitors, and the **essential starting point** for modern pilgrims embarking on the trail. To stand here is to stand at the confluence of time—where the legacy of a Celtic saint, the birth of a written language, and the enduring faith of a community converge, setting the first mile of the path alight with meaning.

St. Mary and St. Egryn's Church, Llanegryn: A Palimpsest of Faith and Craft



Standing within its expanded polygonal churchyard, St. Mary, and St. Egryn's Church in Llanegryn is a profound testament to layered history, where every stone and timber tells a story of continuity and reverence. The site itself is an archive, beginning with the **12th- or 13th-century pillar stone** set into the south wall—its incised cross a silent, powerful marker of early medieval sanctity, anchoring the church to Wales's Age of Saints long before the first documentary mention in 1254.

The church's Grade I listed status is earned by its magnificent **early 16th-century interior**, a masterpiece of late medieval Welsh carpentry. The crown jewel is the **rood screen and loft (c. 1520)**, widely considered one of the finest in Wales. Its intricate arcading, thirteen bays of panelling, and central cross represent the apex of devotional craft on the eve of the Reformation. The tantalizing local legend that it was salvaged from nearby **Cymer Abbey** after the Dissolution of the Monasteries adds a layer of poignant resonance,

suggesting a physical transfer of sacred artistry from a dissolved monastery to a thriving parish church. This sublime work is complemented by the contemporary **arch-braced roof**, its decorative trusses forming a soaring canopy over the nave.

The structure itself is a chronicle of adaptation. The **relocated late medieval lychgate**, moved during the 1883 churchyard extension, retains an architectural kinship with the church roof, preserving a visual harmony. While later restorations in the 19th century—including the addition of the **west bellcote** and the construction of the **vestry and organ chamber (1876)**—introduced Victorian elements, they were layered upon a resilient medieval core. Tellingly, the only original medieval window opening survives, reset and repurposed, a testament to continuous use and respect for the fabric of the past.

Thus, St. Mary and St. Egryn's is far more than a parish church. It is a spiritual continuum: from its early Celtic marker, through its High Medieval font and documented 13th-century life, to its spectacular Tudor-era furnishings that miraculously survived the Reformation's iconoclasm, and into its careful Victorian stewardship. Each era left its mark, not by erasure, but by integration, creating a space where centuries of faith, legend, and peerless craftsmanship quietly coalesce.

St. Celynin's Church, Llangelynnin: A Triad of Healing and Community



The story of St. Celynin in Llangelynnin is not contained within a single building, but across a sacred triad of structures that speak to a deep, centuries-old tradition of faith, healing, and community care. While the **new parish church (1841-43)** serves as the village's enduring

Gothic Revival heart, its story is intrinsically linked to its medieval predecessor and a unique, holistic system of wellness that once operated here.

The Victorian Church: A Beacon of Order and Continuity

Constructed in 1841-43 to designs by Thomas Jones of Chester, the present church is a dignified example of pre-ecclesiological Gothic Revival.

Its clean lines, simple lancet windows, and the purposeful "preaching box" interior reflect the practical piety of the early Victorian era, built to serve a living congregation. The later additions—the bellcote, the polygonal pulpit (1913), the elegant font (1914), and Hardman's-stained glass—chart the community's ongoing devotion and aesthetic evolution across generations.

Yet, its true significance lies in its role as a successor, bringing the parish's spiritual focus from a remote hillside into the heart of the village while maintaining an unbroken link to its ancient patron saint.

The Healing Well and Cae Iol: A Sanctuary for Body and Spirit

The genius of this site, however, is revealed in the symbiotic relationship between the **old medieval churchyard**, its **healing well (Ffynnon Gelynnin)**, and the nearby **post-medieval farmhouse, Cae Iol**. This complex formed a remarkable, self-contained sanctuary.

The holy well, a common feature of Celtic Christian sites, was believed to hold curative properties. Historical tradition holds that after receiving treatment with the well's waters, the infirm—particularly children—were not simply sent home. Instead, they were taken to **Cae Iol**, a nearby farmhouse that functioned as a proto-convalescent home.

This practice underscores a profound understanding of holistic care within the traditional community: the church provided spiritual solace, the well offered physical treatment, and Cae Iol furnished a place of sheltered recovery, warmth, and nourishment. This triad transformed the locale from a simple place of worship into a dedicated centre of healing, where the journey to wellness was physically and spiritually supported.

A Layered Legacy

Together, these elements—the Victorian successor church in the village, the ancient well, and the convalescent farmhouse—weave a rich narrative. They illustrate the transition from the isolated, miracle-associated sites of medieval Celtic Christianity to the more formalized, communal parish structure of the modern era.

The site at Llangelynnin, therefore, offers more than architectural history; it provides a rare glimpse into the social and medical fabric of pre-modern Welsh rural life, where faith, folklore, and practical compassion were seamlessly interwoven in the landscape, anchored by the enduring legacy of St. Celynin.

St. Mary and St. Bodfan's Church, The Norman Sentinel of Cardigan Bay



Perched on a gentle rise above the sweep of Cardigan Bay, St. Mary and St. Bodfan's Church in Llanaber is more than a historic gem—it is a statement in stone. Constructed in the early 13th century, this church represents the deliberate, confident imposition of Norman ecclesiastical order upon the ancient Welsh spiritual landscape. Its dedication pairs the universal **St. Mary** with the local, early Celtic saint **Bodfan**, a fusion that mirrors the building's own essence: a Norman architectural form serving a community with roots deep in the Age of Saints.

As a pivotal stop on the St. Cadfan Trail, Llanaber offers a striking contrast. If Tywyn represents the Celtic beginnings and Llanegryn showcases late medieval flourish, Llanaber is the enduring Norman interlude—a robust, coastal bulwark of faith. Its **Romanesque architecture** is exceptionally pure and well-preserved.

The **distinctive round-headed arches**, the thick, defensive-like walls, and the simple, powerful proportions speak of a period when the church was both a spiritual fortress and a symbol of political authority, its form echoing the great Norman cathedrals on a humble, windswept scale.

Stepping inside reinforces this legacy. The **peaceful, austere interior** has changed little over eight centuries. The **ancient baptismal font**, likely contemporary with the building's foundation, has witnessed the initiation of generations into the faith. The **carved stone windows** filter the coastal light as they have since the 1200s, and subtle **traces of early wall paintings** hint at a once-vibrant interior world of colour and narrative, now faded into poignant fragments.

The church's true context, however, is framed by its **churchyard**. Filled with weathered stones that lean like a congregation listening to the sea, it offers a breathtaking, inspirational vista across Cardigan Bay. This dramatic outlook connects the sacred building directly to the pilgrim's path—a visual reminder of the journey along the coast and the timeless dialogue between land, sea, and spirit that defines this trail.

Thus, St. Mary and St. Bodfan's Church endures not as a relic, but as a continuum. It is a **place of active worship**, a **custodian of formidable Norman heritage**, and a **beloved landmark** whose serene power lies in the harmonious, unchanging marriage of sublime architecture and an untameable, ever-present seascape.

St. Tanwg's Church, Llandanwg: The Drowned Sanctuary



Emerging from the restless sands between Harlech and the sea, St. Tanwg's Church appears not as a built structure, but as a revelation—an ancient, stubborn outcrop of faith slowly uncovered by the wind. Nestled amongst the dunes a mere 20 metres from the high tide mark, this is a place where history is not merely recorded, but actively weathered by the elements.

Its foundations are enigmatically deep. While the present stone structure is recognizably medieval, its origins are submerged in the twilight of post-Roman Britain. The site is sanctified by **5th-century inscribed stones**, silent sentinels that suggest an early Christian settlement here by around 435 AD. According to tradition, it was founded by **Saint Tanwg** himself, a missionary who, like Cadfan, journeyed from Brittany to this wild Welsh shore, planting a Celtic cross where the sea meets the land.

The church is a profound testament to endurance, locked in a perpetual, gentle struggle with its environment. Sand drifts against its walls; the salt-laden air has weathered its stone for

centuries. This is not a manicured ecclesiastical site but an organic part of the coastal ecology, a sanctuary preserved by its very isolation and the shifting dunes that have both hidden and protected it.

Its story encompasses both remote antiquity and poignant human drama. A millennium after Tanwg, the churchyard received a more famous son: the Welsh poet **Sion Phillips**. A contemporary of Shakespeare who lived on nearby Shell Island (Mochras), Phillips drowned in 1620 while crossing the estuary. His burial here connects this primal Christian site to the flowering of Welsh Renaissance literature, layering the silence of the dunes with echoes of poetic loss. His grave is a tangible link to a cultural heritage as rich as the spiritual one.

Today, St. Tanwg's remains a powerfully atmospheric place of worship, its door often left unlocked for spontaneous prayer. It serves as a unique waypoint on the St. Cadfan Trail—not a grand architectural statement, but a humble, elemental chapel. To visit is to stand at a timeless threshold, feeling the grit of ancient sand underfoot, hearing the constant sigh of the sea, and touching stones marked by the earliest Christians of Gwynedd. It is a place where the sacred feels intimately woven into the raw, enduring fabric of the Welsh coastline.

St. Michael's Church: A Testament to Shifting Parishes and Enduring Stone



St. Michael's Church stands as a quiet witness to the slow evolution of community and sacred geography in the region of Penrhyndeudraeth. Its history is one of changing jurisdictions and careful adaptation, beginning as a **chapelry dependent on the mother church at Llandecwyn**, serving the scattered upland and coastal settlements of what was once called Cefn Coch.

The ancient division of its original parish into *Parcel Bach*, *Parcel yr Ynys*, and *Parcel y Penrhyn Deudraeth* speaks to a medieval landscape of dispersed farms and pastoral routes, for which this church provided a spiritual anchor.

Its antiquity is rooted literally in stone. A **12th-century inscribed stone** in the churchyard marks the site's foundation, connecting it to the era of the Welsh princes, while fragments of further early stones discovered during renovations hint at a yet deeper, perhaps early Christian, significance layered beneath the current structure.

The church building itself is a Grade II listed palimpsest of medieval fabric and Victorian reform. The core reveals its age: the **joint in the north wall** indicates a nave older than its chancel, and the **original pointed west doorway** (13th-15th century) still whispers of its medieval form. However, its present character was decisively shaped by the 19th century's drive for order and improvement.

The significant **restoration of 1845** and subsequent works in **1866 and 1884** systematically modernized the interior—replacing the roof, removing the west gallery, adding the vestry and bellcote, and inserting the current windows. The notable lowering of the floor in 1884, ostensibly for ventilation, physically altered the congregation's relationship with the ancient space, creating the brighter, more open atmosphere seen today.

These Victorian alterations coincided with a fundamental shift in its status. With the **creation of the new parish of Penrhyndeudraeth in the 19th century** and the construction of a new parish church in the growing village, St. Michael's transitioned from a central parish church to a cherished, albeit subsidiary, historic chapel within a larger parish structure.

Thus, St. Michael's tells a dual story. It is a site of **early medieval sanctity**, evidenced by its inscribed stones and ancient fabric, and a case study in **Victorian ecclesiastical adaptation**, where medieval simplicity was sensitively yet firmly updated for a new era. It remains a vital touchstone on the St. Cadfan Trail—a place where the layers of administrative change and physical restoration are themselves a poignant part of the historical narrative, marking the enduring, if transformed, role of faith in a changing Welsh landscape.

St. Tecwyn's Church: Inscribed in Stone



St. Tecwyn's Church stands as a quiet but profound repository of early medieval Welsh Christianity, its history not written in records but carved directly into its fabric. While the present structure is of later date, its origins are undeniably ancient, reaching back to at least the 11th century—a time when the Welsh church was defining its own character in the wake of Celtic monasticism and before Norman consolidation.

The church's most extraordinary treasures are two inscribed stones that transform the building into a living document. The first, an **11th-century pillar stone** embedded within the walls, carries a remarkable Latin inscription. Translated, it declares: *'the Cross of St. Tecwyn, presbyter, to the honour of God and the most illustrious servant of God, Heli, deacon, made me.'* This is more than a relic; it is a direct theological statement from the high medieval period. It names the founding saint (Tecwyn), honours a contemporary cleric (Heli), and proclaims its purpose as an act of devotion. The inscription is a rare, tangible thread connecting the modern visitor to specific, named individuals from a millennium past, their faith made permanent in stone.

The second stone is of equal, if more enigmatic, significance. Its pattern—featuring **a linear Latin cross with a distinctive lozenge-shaped ring at its head**—is a masterpiece of early Christian symbolism. This design is so rare it is one of only four definitive examples identified in the whole of Wales. Its precise meaning is lost to time, but its uniqueness marks this site as one of special importance, perhaps a centre of artistic or theological innovation in the early Welsh church.

Together, these stones elevate St. Tecwyn's from a simple medieval church to a site of national archaeological and spiritual importance. They suggest a foundation of considerable status, a place where learned clerics like Heli commissioned significant works of art for worship. The church serves as a crucial, contemplative waypoint on the St. Cadfan Trail, offering not just architectural history, but a direct, silent communion with the language, art, and devout personalities of Wales's early Christian era. Here, history is not told; it is shown, enduring in the cool, enduring surface of the stone itself.

St. Cynhaearn's Church, Ynyscynhaearn: An Isolated Triptych of History



St. Cynhaearn's Church rises from its raised, walled enclosure like an island within a sea of marshland—a place of deliberate isolation that has become a profound repository of Welsh cultural memory. Built in 1832 to designs by the architect John Williams, it replaced the earlier Ystumllyn chapel, yet its relatively plain Georgian-Gothic exterior belies an interior that is a near-perfect **time capsule of early Victorian rural worship**.

Stepping inside is to enter a space suspended in the 1830s. The layout is both practical and hierarchical: **tiered box pews** in the north transept, a commanding **three-decker pulpit**, and a western gallery speak to a structured congregation. The **boards displaying the Ten Commandments and Creed** above the simple reredos reinforce the didactic nature of the service. This is a "preaching box" of remarkable integrity, its atmosphere preserved by its remote location. The elegant, curved staircases and the fine **Gothic organ case**—crafted by Flight & Robson and relocated from Tremadog in 1854—add notes of refined craftsmanship to the otherwise austere setting.

Yet, the true narrative depth of Ynyscynhaearn is found in its churchyard, which forms a powerful outdoor annex to the nation's history. Here, stones commemorate a remarkable cross-section of Welsh life:

- **John Ystumllyn**, whose gravestone marks him as one of the earliest-recorded Black individuals in Wales, telling a story of global connection and local legacy.
- The **bards Ioan Madog (John Williams) and Ellis Owen**, whose pink granite stones attest to the enduring vitality of Welsh poetic tradition.
- **David Owen (Dafydd y Garreg Wen)**, the beloved harpist and composer, whose slate ledger rests at the west end, forever linking this quiet ground to the sound of the Welsh harp.

This convergence—of enslaved individual, revered poets, and a national musician—transforms the churchyard into an unparalleled **open-air archive of diverse Welsh heritage**.

Completing this historic triptych is the adjacent **Hall, designed by Clough Williams-Ellis in 1937**. With its curved stone walls, sprocketed roofs, and Chinoiserie cupola, it is a piece of the Portmeirion architect's whimsical modernism, serving as a pragmatic and stylistic foil to the severe Georgian church. It represents the 20th century's respectful yet innovative engagement with this ancient site.

Together, the **1832 church**, the **multi-layered churchyard**, and the **1937 hall** create a unique chronicle. St. Cynhaearn's is not a single monument but a dialogue across centuries—a remote haven where Georgian piety, poignant personal histories, and 20th-century architectural vision coexist in a powerfully evocative, windswept harmony.

St. Cybi's Well: The Pilgrimage of a Restless Saint



Tucked into the landscape of the Llŷn Peninsula, St. Cybi's Well is more than a simple spring; it is a destination born from the remarkable, peripatetic life of its namesake saint. Cybi's story is one of noble birth, profound pilgrimage, and repeated exile—a narrative that imbues this quiet well with a sense of hard-won sanctuary.

Unlike many Celtic saints who sought remote solitude from the start, Cybi arrived here as a seasoned, perhaps world-weary, traveller. Tradition holds he was a figure of high status: born in **Cornwall to a Roman-British noble family** and, through his mother Gwen, a **first cousin to St. David**, the patron saint of Wales. His early life was one of privilege and extensive travel, including famed pilgrimages to **Jerusalem and Rome**, followed by religious training in **France**. This international education made him a learned and cosmopolitan figure within the early Celtic church.

Yet, peace eluded him. Returning to a Cornwall riven by conflict, the scholar may have been drawn into political strife. Sabine Baring-Gould's research suggests Cybi may have **led a failed uprising**, forcing a desperate flight northward. Rejected by a ruler in South Wales and finding only temporary respite in Ireland, his journey finally culminated on the shores of the Llŷn Peninsula. Here, at last, he was granted the land to find his great monastic *clas* at **Caergybi (Holyhead)**.

St. Cybi's Well, therefore, is intimately connected to this final chapter. Such wells are rarely coincidental; they typically mark sites of settlement, blessing, or daily sustenance for a saint's community. This well likely served Cybi and his followers, becoming a tangible link to his presence. Its waters would have been used for baptism, healing, and ritual, sanctified by the legacy of the restless saint who, after a life of dramatic flights across Britain and beyond, finally found a lasting home in Wales.

Thus, the well is not merely a geographical feature but a symbolic endpoint. It represents the cessation of a lifelong pilgrimage; the moment the traveller's staff was finally planted for good. To visit it is to encounter a place connected to the complex, human story of a saint who was a prince, a pilgrim, a rebel, and finally, a founder—his tumultuous journey crystallised in the perpetual, clear flow of the water.

St. Cawrdaf's Church, Abererch: A Testament to Continuity



St. Cawrdaf's Church in Abererch is a humble yet profound monument to the slow, steady rhythms of faith and community in the Llŷn Peninsula. Dedicated to a lesser-known Welsh saint, its significance lies not in grandeur, but in its enduring presence as a layered record of local life, built upon a site of ancient sanctity.

The church is a subtle **palimpsest of architectural periods**. While the exterior presents a primarily **Victorian restoration** in its dressed stone and neat lines, embedded within its

fabric are the unmistakable bones of a much older foundation. Thicker sections of wall, the proportions of the nave, and possibly the **splayed base of a window** hint at a medieval, perhaps even early medieval, origin that predates the current form. This blend speaks to a history of careful preservation rather than wholesale replacement, where each generation has maintained the sacred shell of its forebears.

The interior offers a serene, uncluttered space for contemplation. The **simply crafted wooden roof** spans the nave, its timbers likely echoing the form, if not the exact age, of earlier structures. The true jewels of the interior are its **stained-glass windows**, which cast a coloured, contemplative light. These Victorian and later additions depict biblical narratives and saintly figures, introducing a 19th-century devotional aesthetic into the ancient space. The **furnishings—the pulpit, altar, and font**—though often from periods of renewal, are executed with a sober, local craftsmanship that respects the building's austere character.

The church's full historical weight, however, is most palpable in its **surrounding churchyard**. Here, amongst yew trees, lie **historic gravestones** with inscriptions softened by centuries of Welsh weather. These markers, some dating to the 17th and 18th centuries, chart the lives of Abererch's families—farmers, mariners, and poets—their names a silent roll call of the community that has sustained this church for generations. The yard is not just a setting; it is the church's deepest archive.

Thus, St. Cawrdaf's Church stands as a **testament to continuity**. It is an active **place of worship** for rites of passage, a **custodian of local memory** held in stone and glass, and a **quiet landmark** on the pilgrimage landscape of Llŷn. It embodies a faith that is not monumental but rooted, having quietly adapted across centuries to remain, steadfastly, the spiritual heart of Abererch.

St. Cawrdaf's Church, Abererch: A Tapestry of Time in Stone and Earth



St. Cawrdaf's Church in Abererch is a profound historical palimpsest, where every stone, boundary, and soil layer narrates a chapter of continual sanctity. Its documented history begins with the **Norwich Taxation of 1254**, confirming its medieval establishment. Yet, the site whispers of a far more ancient origin.

An **inscribed stone from the 6th century** stands sentinel in the churchyard, a tangible link to the early Christian period, while **radiocarbon dating of charcoal** beneath the cemetery wall hints at even earlier, potentially pre-Christian, human activity. This ground has been a focal point for over a millennium and a half.

The **churchyard itself tells a story of expansion and adaptation**. Its earliest form was **curvilinear**, a shape often indicative of an early Celtic *llan* enclosure. This original boundary, now marked by a low bank and a solemn row of yew trees on the east side, was extended in 1895.

The current entrance, a west-side **lych gate**, frames a site bordered by a stream to the south and a road to the west, enclosing a sacred space formally measured in **roods and perches** in the 1900 terrier.

Architecturally, the church is a dialogue between medieval aspiration and Victorian restoration. The core fabric of the **nave may date to the 12th or 13th century**, with **blocked doorways** in its north and south walls silently testifying to lost entrances and earlier liturgical arrangements.

The **chancel was a late 15th-century addition**, its junction with the nave clearly visible in a **staggered quoin joint** on the south wall and unified under **arch-braced collar-beam trusses**. The building's 19th-century transformation was comprehensive: restorations prior to 1852 rebuilt the west wall and renewed the windows, while **H. Kennedy's 1858 intervention** reconfigured the interior, likely adding the **north vestry**, and a later wooden porch completed the west front.

Within, history is personal and devotional. The **octagonal font dated 1638** has witnessed generations of baptisms, while memorials from **1704 and 1780** speak to the enduring local families. The structure, of local rubble with modern dressings and a slate roof, shelters timber floors and carpeted aisles—a functional space for a living congregation.

Thus, St. Cawrdaf's is not a fossilised relic but a **living chronicle**. It is a site where a 6th-century inscribed stone shares ground with Victorian extensions, where medieval masonry supports a renewed roof, and where ancient curvilinear boundaries have been respectfully expanded.

It stands as a powerful testament to the unbroken thread of community and faith in Abererch, its significance layered as deeply as the archaeology beneath its walls.

St. Engan's Church, Llanengan: A Late Medieval Masterpiece



St. Engan's Church in Llanengan stands as one of the crowning glories of late medieval ecclesiastical art in Wales, a magnificent testament to the confidence and devotion of the decades immediately preceding the Reformation. While the site's origins are 13th-century, the church we see today was **transformatively rebuilt between 1520 and 1534**, culminating in a structure that is essentially a glorious Tudor-era creation.

This period of remodelling produced the church's defining treasure: its **pair of exceptional medieval screens, dating from around 1530**. These are not mere partitions but consummate works of carpentry, their designs harmonizing through **elegantly moulded uprights, delicate traceried heads, and base panels adorned with quatrefoils**. The crowning **frieze**, carved with a repeated **waterleaf and fleur-de-lis motif**, displays a sophistication linking Llŷn to wider European Gothic trends. The **survival of the original rood loft** on the south screen is particularly rare and significant, offering a three-dimensional insight into the layered, dramatic sacred space of a pre-Reformation church.

The artistry extends to smaller, evocative details. On the east side of the south screen, two **late medieval bench ends** are carved with enigmatic figures—a **crouching animal and a monstrous bird**—their precise symbolism lost to time but their powerful, folkloric presence undiminished. It is also highly plausible that the loft front was once adorned with **painted panels of saints**, a common feature that would have made the screen a vibrant, polychromatic focus of devotion.

Subsequent centuries saw necessary but respectful stewardship. **Significant 19th-century restoration** and **various 20th-century updates** have ensured the preservation of this heritage while maintaining the building's function as a living church.

Thus, St. Engan's represents a precious, frozen moment in Welsh religious history. Built and lavishly decorated in the final years of traditional Catholic worship, its screens and carvings escaped the widespread destruction of the Reformation, possibly due to the peninsula's relative remoteness. The church is not merely a historic site but a direct portal to the aesthetic and spiritual world of early 16th-century Wales, a majestic and serene culmination of the medieval craftsman's skill, preserved in the quiet of Llŷn.

St. Maelrhys' Church, Mynydd-y-Gaer: A Guardian of the Ancient Hill



Perched on the hill of Mynydd-y-Gaer, St. Maelrhys' Church stands as a weathered sentinel, its presence a testament to the deep and enduring Christianization of the Welsh landscape. This site is not merely a village church, but a vital link in the spiritual geography of the St. Cadfan Trail, marking a place of sanctity that likely predates the stone structure itself.

Dedicated to a 6th-century saint who was a contemporary of Cadfan, Maelrhys embodies the era of the early Celtic holy men who established small monastic cells (*llannau*) across Wales. The church's position on a hill—a *gaer* or fortified place—is significant, often indicating a strategic and spiritually elevated site chosen by these founding saints.

Architecturally, the church is a humble but authentic collection of medieval and post-medieval fabric. Its solid stonework, simple bell turret, and unadorned interior speak of a

functional, rural piety that has changed little in its essential character over centuries. The interior's **serene atmosphere** is deepened by a collection of **memorials and artifacts**—perhaps a worn 18th-century ledger stone or a locally carved font—that chronicle the quiet devotion of generations of parishioners from this hilltop community.

The true narrative weight, however, lies outside its walls. The surrounding **churchyard, filled with weathered gravestones**, slopes with the contour of the hill. These stones, their inscriptions softened by wind and rain, form a communal chronicle of the families who have lived in the shadow of the *gaer*. They ground the church's spiritual mission in the tangible history of the local population, their lives spanning centuries of change in the world below.

As a stop on the St. Cadfan Trail, St. Maelrhys' Church serves as a crucial waypoint. It represents the spread of the early Christian network from its coastal landing points, like Tywyn, into the hinterland hills. Its **tranquil, windswept setting** offers a moment for reflection, not on grand architecture, but on continuity—on the unbroken thread of worship that connects the Age of Saints to the present day. To visit is to stand where countless others have stood, looking out from the *gaer* across a landscape hallowed by ancient footsteps.

St. Hywyn's Church, Aberdaron: The Last Sanctuary Before the Sea



St. Hywyn's Church commands a position of profound symbolic and practical power, its graveyard literally meeting the cliff edge at the heart of Aberdaron's broad, sandy bay. This dramatic, exposed location is archetypal of an early Christian *clas* foundation—a place deliberately set between the security of the land and the boundless spiritual horizon of the

sea. It was not merely a church, but the most important ecclesiastical centre in the Llŷn Peninsula, serving as the **embarkation point for pilgrims** crossing the treacherous sound to the ultimate destination of **Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli)**, the "Island of 20,000 Saints."

Its **monastic community held rights of sanctuary**, a privilege exercised in high political drama when its canons provided a boat for **Gruffydd ap Cynan's escape to Ireland (c. 1094)** and later gave shelter to his rival, **Gruffydd ap Rhys, in 1115**.

The present structure is a stone chronicle of this significance, built upon sacred ground. It is believed to have been **rebuilt by Gruffydd ap Cynan himself in the early 12th century** following his restoration to the throne of Gwynedd, a royal patronage underscoring its status.

The church evolved over centuries, with the **northern aisle representing the surviving 12th-century core**, while the spacious, light-filled interior we see today was shaped by a major **late 15th-century expansion**. This created the elegant **five-bay arcade of pale gritstone**, its four-centred arches and octagonal piers reflecting the Perpendicular Gothic style of the Tudor period, just before the Reformation.

After a long decline that saw a new church built inland, **Henry Kennedy's 1868 restoration** and later **20th-century work by John Williams** rescued the building from ruin. The **refurbished interior (2006)** reveals the powerful **stone walls** and a **restored hammerbeam roof**, while preserving key fittings like the **plain octagonal font (c. 1500)** and a **medieval stoup**.

Thus, St. Hywyn's is a building of immense layered history. It embodies the **early Celtic monastic site**, the **royal church of the Welsh princes**, the **late medieval pilgrim gateway**, and the **painstakingly preserved Victorian relic**. To stand in its nave is to stand at a historic threshold, almost within sound of the tide, feeling the weight of centuries of prayer, politics, and pilgrimage that focused on this last sanctuary before the sea.

St. Mary's Church, Rhiw: The Spirit of the Peninsula in Stone



St. Mary's Church in Rhiw is not so much built upon the landscape as it is a quiet distillation of it—a sanctuary where the rugged, windswept spirit of the Llŷn Peninsula has been given form in stone and limewash. This secluded and unassuming church is a profoundly resonant waypoint on the St. Cadfan Trail, offering not grandeur, but a rare and potent clarity born of simplicity and endurance.

Its architecture is a lesson in austere, adaptive grace. The sturdy stone structure, traditionally whitewashed, appears to rise organically from its ground, a practical and spiritual refuge shaped by centuries of exposure to Atlantic gales. This modesty is its strength, reflecting a Welsh rural piety that values resilience and humble devotion over ornament. The interior completes this ethos: spare, with simple wooden pews, a plain altar, and soft light filtering through arched windows. There is no distracting decoration, only a serene, palpable stillness that draws focus inward and upward, or outward to the timeless landscape framed by the windows.

While the trail commemorates the journey of the 6th-century St. Cadfan towards his monastic foundation on Ynys Enlli (Bardsey Island), St. Mary's embodies the lasting imprint of that Celtic Christian tradition in the peninsula's hinterland. It represents the *llan*—the enclosed sacred space—that followed the age of the founding saints, serving the scattered agricultural community of Rhiw and Bryncroes. Its churchyard, holding weathered stones, charts the generations of this farming community whose lives were bound to this beautiful, harsh terrain.

Thus, St. Mary's Church offers more than a historical stop; it provides an experiential touchstone. In its stripped-back quietude, visitors encounter the essential character of the Llŷn Peninsula itself: enduring, elemental, and deeply peaceful. It is a place where the journey pauses, the modern world recedes, and one is left with the profound quiet of centuries of steadfast faith etched into the very bones of the land.

St. Cadwaladr's Church, Llangadwaladr: A Sanctuary of Kings



St. Cadwaladr's Church on the Isle of Anglesey is a site of foundational importance, a place where early Welsh Christianity and the royal house of Gwynedd converge in a single, hallowed space. Dedicated to the 7th-century prince-saint Cadwaladr, the church is a pivotal link in the St. Cadfan Trail, bridging the legacy of the Breton missionary saint with the dynasty he is believed to have spiritually nurtured.

The church's supreme treasure is the **Cadfan Stone**, an imposing 7th-century inscribed pillar that stands as one of the most significant early medieval monuments in Wales. Its Latin inscription, "*CATAMANUS REX SAPIENTISIMUS OPINATISIMUS OMNIUM REGUM*" ("Cadfan, most wise and renowned of all kings"), is not a religious dedication but a secular eulogy to **Cadfan ap Iago**, a powerful king of Gwynedd and the father of Saint Cadwaladr. This stone transforms the site from a simple churchyard into a royal memorial, directly connecting the sanctity of this ground to the seat of secular power in post-Roman Wales.

Architecturally, the church embodies a venerable continuity. While much altered, its fabric incorporates **robust Norman-era stonework**, a testament to its importance following the conquest. The **simple, atmospheric interior** and the **tranquil churchyard**, with its rolling fields and centuries-old gravestones, foster a profound sense of timelessness.

Thus, St. Cadwaladr's Church represents a unique fusion on the pilgrimage route. It is a **sanctuary of kings**, where the memory of a "most wise" ruler is preserved; a **shrine to a saintly prince**, Cadwaladr, who renounced or transcended worldly power; and a **vital chapter in the St. Cadfan narrative**, suggesting the saint's enduring influence over the kingdom. To visit is to stand at the crossroads of dynasty and devotion, where the ambition of early Welsh royalty was commemorated in stone, and where their legacy was ultimately entrusted to the quiet, enduring hands of the church.

St. Cybi's Church, Holyhead: The Fortress of Faith



St. Cybi's Church in Holyhead is a monumental chronicle in stone, embodying over two millennia of spiritual, political, and architectural history within its unique and formidable setting. It is not merely a church but a powerful symbol of continuity, built within the imposing **stone walls of a late Roman fort** (Caer Gybi), a fusion of imperial military might and Celtic Christian devotion that is unparalleled in Wales.

The site's ecclesiastical prominence began as a major **Celtic clas**, a monastic community founded by the 6th-century saint Cybi. Its status was formalized in 1282 when it was reconstituted as a **college of a provost and twelve canons**, a wealthy and influential institution that governed religious life on Anglesey until the **Dissolution in 1548**. This long pre-Reformation history is etched into the building's fabric. The **13th-century chancel** forms the oldest core, while the ambitious late medieval expansion (c. 1480-1520) added **transepts and aisles**, reflecting the college's wealth. The exquisite **south doorway**, adorned with heraldry and mythical beasts, serves as a triumphant portal from this era.

Later centuries continued to inscribe their mark. The imposing **17th-century west tower** asserts a post-Reformation presence on the skyline, and the **south chapel (1896-97)** represents Victorian piety. Inside, the artistic legacy is profound, from haunting **remnants of medieval frescoes** to the magnificent **monument to W.O. Stanley by Hamo Thornycroft (1884)**, a masterpiece of High Victorian sculpture.

Thus, St. Cybi's Church is a palimpsest of exceptional depth. It is a **Roman military site**, an **early Celtic monastery**, a **late medieval collegiate church**, and a **living parish community**. Each era—Roman, Celtic, Medieval, Tudor, Victorian—has left an indelible layer, creating a fortress of faith where the narrative of Wales itself seems concentrated. To walk within its ancient walls is to traverse time, from the legions to the saints, from medieval canons to modern pilgrims, in a single, awe-inspiring space.

The Enduring Pilgrimage – From Footsteps to Legacy

The journey along the St. Cadfan Pilgrimage Trail is more than a passage through the stunning landscapes of western Wales; it is a walk through the living layers of Welsh identity itself. From the coastal gateway of **St. Cadfan's Church in Tywyn**, with its ancient, inscribed stone marking the birth of the written Welsh language, to the windswept, dune-enshrouded solitude of **St. Tanwg's** at Llandanwg, each site forms a vital stitch in a grand historical tapestry.

We have moved from royal memorials like the **Cadfan Stone at Llangadwaladr**, which whispers of 7th-century kings, to the sublime late-medieval craftsmanship of the **rood screens at St. Engan's, Llanengan**, created on the very eve of the Reformation. This trail reveals a story not of isolated sanctuaries, but of a connected spiritual ecosystem. The **clas church of St. Hywyn in Aberdaron** served as the bustling embarkation point for Bardsey Island, while humble, resilient chapels like **St. Mary's in Rhiw** and **St. Celynin's** in the hills provided sustenance and sanctuary to the communities that sustained the pilgrim way.

We have seen how faith adapted and persisted, from the **Norman solidity of St. Mary and St. Bodfan's at Llanaber** to the Georgian-era time capsule of **St. Cynhaearn's at Ynyscynhaearn**, and how sites like **St. Michael's, Penrhyndeudraeth**, evolved through changing parish boundaries and Victorian restoration.

Ultimately, the St. Cadfan Trail traces a geography of continuity. It connects the **early Christian wells and inscribed stones** that sanctified the land, through the **medieval monasteries and pilgrimage highways**, to the **working parish churches and cherished burial grounds** of today. It shows us a heritage where ancient kings, fleeing princes, local bards, harpists, and generations of farming and fishing families all find their place within the same hallowed ground.

To walk this trail is to understand that the pilgrimage never truly ends. It evolves. The footsteps of the 6th-century saint have been followed by medieval penitents, Romantic travellers, and modern seekers. The legacy of Cadfan and his fellow saints is not frozen in time; it lives on in the **enduring stones of the churches**, the **quiet resilience of the communities**, and the **inviting stillness** that still hangs over these ancient sites.

It is an invitation to not just remember history, but to step into its stream—to find, in the quiet of a churchyard or the lift of a coastal path, a connection to a story that is both profoundly Welsh and universally human: the enduring quest for meaning, solace, and home.

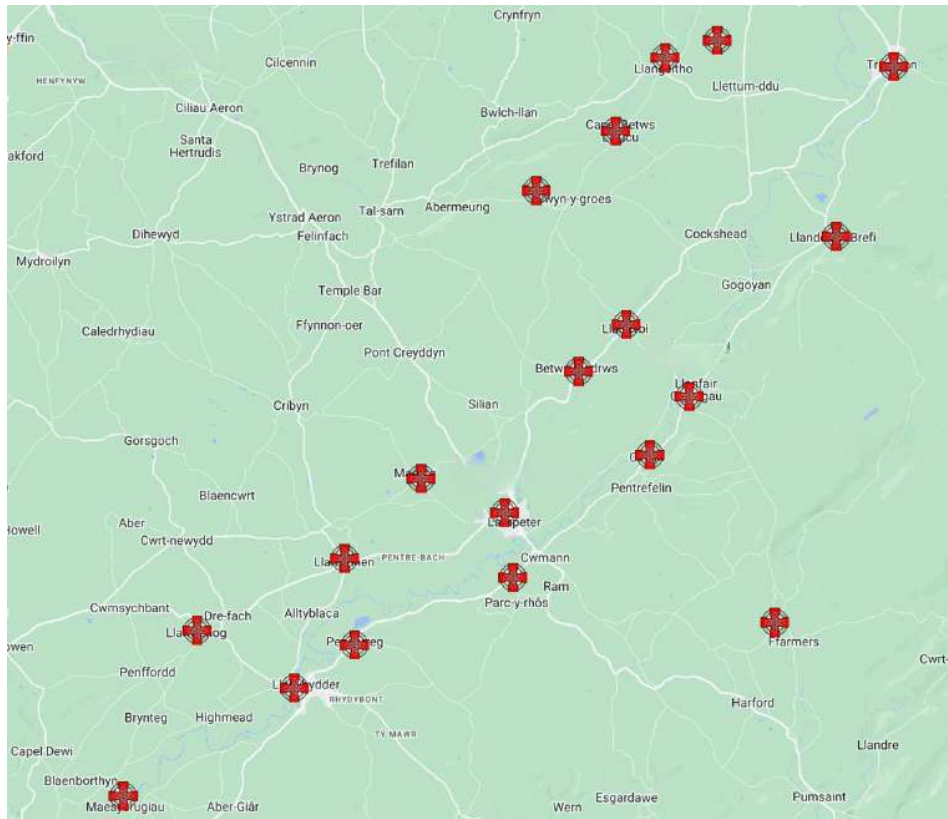
<https://tinyurl.com/St-Cadfan-Pilgrim-Way>



Graham T Emmanuel 2025

Teifi Faith Trail

The Upper Teifi Valley Churches history stretches back to the early medieval period, a time shrouded in mystery regarding the Church's role in Wales. According to the Life of St David, written in the late 11th century, Llanddewi Brefi hosted the synod where St David delivered his sermon and was confirmed as the Archbishop of Wales. However, these medieval writings offer only fleeting insights into the lives of David and other religious figures of the era.



Although few churches in the area can be firmly dated to before the 11th century, features like circular churchyards, early medieval inscribed stones, and ancient yew trees point to a deep-rooted tradition of faith in Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire.

In the medieval period, churches were numerous in the Upper Teifi Valley, and the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida played a prominent role, holding ownership of several of these sites. Notable medieval towers in the region include those at Tregaron and Llanddewi Brefi, which date to the 14th century, as well as the towers at Llanybydder and Llanwenog, constructed between the 15th and early 16th centuries.

The Upper Teifi Valley also became a focal point during the religious revivals of the 18th century. The chapel at Abermeurig, built in 1698 during a time when Presbyterians had to worship in secrecy, marked the beginning of a transformative era. Later, Daniel Rowland, the influential Methodist preacher, served as curate in Llanfihangel during the mid-18th century, drawing thousands to his sermons.

<https://tinyurl.com/Teifi-Faith-Trail-Map>

St Peters Church, Lampeter



St. Peter's Church sits prominently atop Church Street on an elevated site, surrounded by a spacious and historically significant churchyard that now serves as a cemetery. This site has been a center of worship for centuries, with the current Victorian church built between 1867 and 1870, replacing an earlier structure from 1821-22. The earlier church itself had replaced a medieval building, first documented in 1291, showcasing the site's enduring ecclesiastical importance. Visible remnants of these earlier structures remain in the churchyard, particularly to the south of the existing building, offering a tangible link to its rich past. The site, enclosed within a circular boundary approximately 40 meters in diameter, was recorded by Samuel Meyrick and appears on the 1843 Tithe Map, suggesting it may have once included the rectory or vicarage.

Regarded as one of the finest examples of Victorian church architecture in the county, the current St. Peter's was designed by renowned architect R.J. Withers in the High Victorian Gothic style. Its key features include striking geometric plate-traceried windows, characteristic of the style. Constructed from grey brown specked rubble stone with finely detailed ashlar dressings, the exterior exudes both durability and beauty. The church is further distinguished by its green slate roofs, decorative terracotta ridge tiles, and coped gables topped with stone cross finials, lending a refined and picturesque quality.

The church's layout is both functional and elegant, comprising:

- A tall nave and a three-bay lean-to south aisle,
- A three-stage southwest tower capped with a pyramidal roof, cleverly integrating the entrance porch,

- A lower chancel, providing a contrast in proportion to the nave,
- A lean-to south vestry that balances the overall composition.

Inside, the church maintains its High Victorian Gothic grandeur, with an emphasis on vertical proportions and simplicity. The nave is notable for its impressive kingpost and collar trusses, while the chancel features more intricate scissor-rafter roofs, showcasing exceptional craftsmanship. Among its original furnishings are a beautifully carved circular stone font, an ornate pulpit, and a stone reredos adorned with delicate mosaic panels, reflecting both artistry and devotion.

One of St. Peter's most remarkable features is its extensive collection of stained glass, spanning works created between 1875 and 1950. The collection includes pieces by notable artists such as:

- Wilhelmina Geddes, whose work was influenced by the celebrated stained glass artist Harry Clarke,
- The esteemed studio Kempe & Tower, known for their distinctive Gothic Revival style,
- R.J. Newbery, contributing to the church's rich artistic legacy.

This harmonious blend of architecture, craftsmanship, and artistry positions St. Peter's Church as a treasured landmark, embodying centuries of faith, community, and historical continuity. It remains not only a house of worship but also a testament to the enduring cultural and artistic heritage of the region.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/lampeter/>

St Bledrws Church Betws Bledrws



St. Bledrws' Church, nestled within a quaint, roughly rectangular churchyard, offers a window into the ecclesiastical and architectural heritage of the medieval and post-medieval periods. Located just 30 meters from the road, the church exudes a sense of seclusion, bordered by the old Rectory to the east and private gardens to the north. Historically, it functioned as a parish church within the Deanery of Sub-Aeron and was originally dedicated to St. Michael. By 1833, however, the dedication was changed to St. Bledrws, and the church has since remained under the patronage of the Bishop of St. Davids. Among the graves in its churchyard are those of David J. Morgan and his son, builders of the nearby Derry-Ormond Tower, whose story is deeply intertwined with the church's history.

Though the precise form of the original medieval church is unknown, one surviving feature is its small, square 12th-century font, adorned with a delicately incised roundel band. This design is notably like fonts at Henfynyw and St. Ffraid's Church in Llansantffraid, connecting it to regional craftsmanship of the period. In 1831, the church was entirely rebuilt on its original site, likely by architect C.R. Cockerell, who was also responsible for designing the nearby Derry Ormond mansion. This new structure, constructed with local rubble stone sourced primarily from Llanddewi Brefi, comprises a two-bayed nave and chancel, a two-bayed vestry and organ chamber south of the chancel, and a distinctive southwest tower, which became a hallmark of the 1831 reconstruction.

A significant renovation in 1886, overseen by D. Edward Thomas of Haverfordwest, further reshaped the church's interior and furnishings. High-backed seating, arranged in elevated rows and funded by John Jones, Esq., of Derry-Ormond, replaced the traditional pews, giving the space a unique character. The chancel's north wall features a stained-glass window crafted by R. Westmacott Jr. in 1836, dedicated to John Jones. Another notable stained-glass

window, depicting the Nativity, Crucifixion, and Ascension, was the work of artist Thomas Ward. Originally installed in St. Bledrws' Church, this window was later relocated in 1886 to St. Cybi's Church in Llangybi.

Today, St. Bledrws' Church represents a harmonious blend of historic continuity and community patronage. Its 19th-century furnishings preserved 12th-century font, and architectural adaptations reflect the evolving needs and tastes of its congregation. The church's serene location, combined with its enduring architectural and memorial elements, stands as a lasting tribute to its role in the local heritage and spiritual life.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/betws-bledrws/>

Ffynnon Wen



Ffynnon Wen, often associated with St. Cybi, is a sacred holy well located southwest of St. Cybi's Church in Llangybi, Ceredigion. The well is known for its reputed healing properties, drawing pilgrims over centuries for ailments like rheumatism, scurvy, and scrofula.

According to local tradition, visitors seeking cures would bathe in its waters and then spend the night on Llech Gybi, a healing stone, said to have been located nearby. The well is also sometimes referred to as Ffynnon Gybi (Cybi's Well) due to its connection to St. Cybi's legend, which amplifies its historical significance.

The well can be found to the north of the A485, accessed by steps descending from the road near Maesyffynnon Chapel.

The physical structure of Ffynnon Wen includes a shallow pool with rough stone walls and a prominent large flat slate slab over the well, adding to its ancient character. Over time, the

well has undergone modifications, but its association with medieval pilgrimage and local traditions remains central to its cultural heritage.

<https://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=24711>

St Cybi's Church Llangybi



St. Cybi's Church, located near the A485, is set within a curvilinear churchyard with origins tracing back to the medieval period. Historic maps from 1888 and 1905 depict a curvilinear boundary to the east of the churchyard, suggesting the possibility of a larger, now-reduced enclosure. This could indicate an early medieval or even pre-medieval boundary, adding an air of antiquity to the site. Dedicated to St. Cybi, the church was historically a parish church under the Deanery of Sub-Aeron and served as a prebend of the collegiate church at Llanddewi Brefi, under the patronage of the Bishop of St. Davids. By 1833, it was recorded as a perpetual curacy within the Archdeaconry of Cardigan and was later consolidated with Llanfair Clydogau.

A sacred tradition associated with St. Cybi's is the nearby holy well, Ffynnon Wen, located approximately 460 meters southwest of the church. Renowned for its reputed healing properties, the well was part of a unique local ritual. Pilgrims seeking healing would first visit Ffynnon Wen, then spend the night on a stone known as "Llech Gybi". This stone, believed to have been situated near the church and propped on supporting stones, was thought to complete the curative process, blending ancient customs with Christian faith.

The church's architectural features span several centuries, reflecting its historical significance. The nave and two-bayed chancel likely date to the 13th or 14th century and are constructed from local rubble stone. A major restoration in 1850 added a west porch and a north vestry, while the interior saw new ceilings, floors, and fittings. These updates are commemorated on a datestone set above the chancel's east window. Further enhancements in the 1880s introduced the present east window, which originated from St. Bledrws' Church in Betws Bledrws, and a new bellcote that continues to grace the west end.

One of the church's most notable features is its font bowl, a square design crafted in the late 1880s. This relic now rests on a modern brick stem added during the late 20th century, illustrating the church's blend of historical and more contemporary modifications.

St. Cybi's Church embodies the layered history of Welsh ecclesiastical architecture, from its medieval foundations to its Victorian-era restorations. The site's enduring connection to local traditions, such as the rituals surrounding Ffynnon Wen and Llech Gybi, highlights its role not only as a place of worship but also as a centre for cultural and spiritual practices. This unique combination of architectural heritage and sacred lore ensures that St. Cybi's remains a cherished part of Ceredigion's religious and historical landscape.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llangybi/>

St Gartheli Church, Gareli



St. Gartheli's Church, situated in the quiet village of Gartheli, holds a modest yet significant place in Ceredigion's ecclesiastical history. Dedicated to St. Gartheli, a lesser-known Welsh saint, the church began as a chapel of ease within the parish of Llanddewi Brefi, connecting it to one of Wales' most historic and revered parishes.

By the 18th century, the church had fallen into disrepair, reflecting the challenges faced by many rural churches during this period. A modest rebuilding effort took place in 1810, preserving its function as a centre of local worship. The current structure, however, dates from 1875 and exemplifies the simple yet functional design characteristic of rural Welsh parish churches of the late 19th century. Built with local materials, it embodies the architectural restraint typical of the time while maintaining its role as a vital community landmark.

The church interior is anchored by a notable stained-glass window, created in 1950 by the renowned Celtic Studios, a leading Welsh stained-glass workshop active in the mid-20th century. This vibrant window, depicting the Risen Christ, infuses the church with a sense of spiritual renewal and artistic heritage. The craftsmanship of Celtic Studios is evident in the vivid colours, intricate details, and symbolic depth of the window, showcasing a blend of modern artistry with traditional devotional themes. It stands as a tribute to the continuity of faith within this rural community, connecting contemporary worshippers to generations past.

The churchyard, with its tranquil setting and weathered gravestones, further enriches the site's historical narrative. It reflects centuries of evolving devotional practices and the enduring importance of the church within this small, close-knit village. Though modest in scale, St. Gartheli's Church embodies the resilience of Welsh rural churches, preserving a tangible connection to local saints, early ecclesiastical traditions, and regional craftsmanship.

Today, St. Gartheli's remains a quiet yet meaningful testament to the religious and cultural heritage of Ceredigion, celebrating the enduring legacy of faith, community, and artistry in this serene corner of Wales.

St Lucia's Church Betws Lleucu



St Lucia's Church, nestled within a distinctive polygonal churchyard bordered by a road to the north, offers an intriguing connection to Celtic heritage and tradition. Historically, this church served as a chapelry under the parish of Llanddewi Brefi, though it notably lacks burial rights, a distinction that hints at its unique ecclesiastical role within the region. The church's dedication to "St Lucia" is believed to stem from a linguistic evolution of the name of the Celtic god Lleu—a figure closely associated with Welsh mythology, particularly the hero Lleu Llaw Gyffes of the *Mabinogion*. This connection imbues the site with cultural and historical depth, linking it to Wales's rich mythological tapestry.

The original medieval church that stood on this site has left no visible traces, and details regarding its form and materials remain unknown. However, the current church, constructed between 1875 and 1880, was built on the exact footprint of its predecessor, reflecting a

commitment to continuity despite its transformation. Designed in the neo-Gothic style popular during the Victorian period, the building is constructed from locally sourced rubble stone, a material that harmonizes with the surrounding landscape.

The architectural details of St Lucia's Church distinguish it as a fine example of rural Victorian ecclesiastical design. Key features include elegant lancet windows framed with distinctive yellow-brick surrounds, which contrast subtly with the rugged stone walls, and the use of neo-Gothic arches that imbue the structure with a sense of verticality and grace. A charming wooden bell-turret, topped with a pyramidal roof, rises above the chancel, lending the church a picturesque quality. The layout is further enriched by a south porch and a vestry located to the south of the chancel, elements that enhance both the functionality and aesthetic appeal of the building.

St Lucia's Church, with its combination of medieval roots, Celtic associations, and Victorian craftsmanship, represents a compelling blend of tradition and adaptation. The structure's restrained yet elegant design, use of local materials, and integration into the surrounding landscape reflect the harmony between the church and its cultural and geographical context. As such, it stands as both a place of quiet worship and a testament to the layered history of this rural corner of Wales.

<https://teiffaithtrail.wales/betws-leucu/>

St. Ceitho Church, Llangeitho



St. Ceitho's Church, situated within a characteristic curvilinear churchyard in Llangeitho, stands as a prominent historical and religious landmark, with origins tracing back to the medieval period. Positioned along a road on its western boundary, the church once served as a chapelry within the Deanery of Ultra-Aeron, under the traditional patronage of the bishops of St. Davids. This enduring connection underscores its deep roots in the religious history of Ceredigion. The church is perhaps best known for its association with the Rev. Daniel Rowland, a central figure in the 18th-century Welsh Methodist revival. Rowland served as

curate until his expulsion by the established church, yet his influence endured, and he was buried in the churchyard. A stone memorial affixed to the church's external wall honours his memory, making St. Ceitho's a revered site of pilgrimage and reflection.

The original medieval church boasted an exquisite timber double rood screen, a masterpiece of craftsmanship unique to the region. Its three arches featured delicately cusped, ogee-headed panels, embodying the artistic and architectural legacy of medieval Welsh churches. Unfortunately, this remarkable screen was lost during subsequent reconstructions, though its legacy lives on in local lore.

In 1821, the church was entirely rebuilt on its original site, though no elements of the medieval structure were preserved. Constructed from Llanddewi Brefi rubble stone, the new church featured a simple yet elegant layout, consisting of a nave, chancel, and a distinctive semi-circular sacarium at the east end. By the late 19th century, yellow oolite dressings were added, further enhancing the building's appearance. Timber-framed "Y"-tracery windows brought light and a refined touch to the interior, while the addition of a west porch and a gallery provided functional updates to the space.

In 1899, St. Ceitho's underwent a significant restoration and enlargement under the direction of architect William Williams of Brecon. This transformation marked a turning point in the church's history, reimagining its layout and architectural style. The west porch was removed, the west door was blocked, and a new south porch was introduced to provide a more practical entrance. A chancel and chancel arch were constructed above two large family vaults, creating a focal point for worship and emphasizing the Victorian emphasis on liturgical order. The walls were carefully refaced, and the interior was completely reroofed, replastered, and outfitted with new flooring and seating. The restoration skilfully balanced structural integrity with aesthetic enhancements, preserving the church's historical significance while adapting it for modern use.

Today, St. Ceitho's Church is a living testament to its layered history. From its medieval origins as a chapelry to its role as the spiritual centre of the 18th-century revival led by Daniel Rowland, and its transformation during the Victorian era, the church reflects the evolving religious and cultural identity of Llangetho. Its architectural details, historical associations, and the enduring legacy of Daniel Rowland continue to draw visitors and worshippers, making St. Ceitho's a cherished cornerstone of Ceredigion's heritage.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llangeitho/>

St Padarn Church, Llanbadarn Odwyn



St Padarn's Church in Llanbadarn Odwyn is a charming, secluded rural church that commands sweeping views of the upper Aeron Valley. Its setting, close to the historic Roman road Sarn Helen, evokes a sense of timelessness and highlights its likely ancient origins. Sarn Helen, once a vital thoroughfare connecting Carmarthen in the south to north Wales, would have facilitated movement and communication, suggesting the church may have served as a spiritual anchor for a small farming community for centuries.

The church is dedicated to St Padarn, a revered 6th-century saint known for his missionary work across Wales and his establishment of a major monastic community at Llanbadarn Fawr near Aberystwyth. The dedication underscores the early Christian presence in the region, hinting at the site's potential origins in the early medieval period.

While St Padarn's Church underwent significant reconstruction in 1872, its Victorian renovations appear to have respected the simplicity and rural character of the original building. Constructed primarily from local rubble stone, typical of churches in Ceredigion, the structure embodies a blend of 19th-century design and much earlier roots. It is widely believed that the Victorian builders incorporated elements of the medieval church into the existing structure, although definitive evidence of these earlier features remains limited or concealed within the rebuild.

Inside, the church's unembellished interior retains a quiet, atmospheric charm. Though few specific medieval details are documented, subtle architectural clues may hint at its older foundations, preserved under layers of 19th-century adaptation. The church's simplicity is part of its appeal, reflecting a continuity of worship and its enduring role within the rural community.

The isolated location of St Padarn's Church enhances its historical and cultural ambiance. Overlooking the Aeron Valley and standing in proximity to Sarn Helen, the church remains a tangible link to Wales's ancient Christian heritage, as well as to the travellers and settlers

who once walked these ancient routes. Its connection to St Padarn further cements its importance as a site of quiet pilgrimage, steeped in the legacy of Wales's early saints and the communities they served.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanbadarn-odwyn/>

St David's Church Blaenpennal



The former St. David's Church, once a chapelry of the Llanddewi Brefi parish, provides a compelling window into the medieval ecclesiastical history of the Deanery of Sub-Aeron. The church was originally located near the eastern boundary of what is now a significantly larger churchyard. Historical evidence, particularly from the 1889 Ordnance Survey maps, reveals that the original church stood within a compact burial ground measuring approximately 45 meters north to south and 30-40 meters east to west. This smaller, slightly irregular enclosure forms a distinct section within today's expanded churchyard, offering insight into the site's earlier layout.

South of the original churchyard, an intriguing rectilinear enclosure, roughly 16 meters by 40 meters, is also depicted on the 1889 map. Its eastern boundary aligns with the route of the present road, suggesting a possible historical link to the church or local infrastructure, further emphasizing the site's importance in the medieval and post-medieval landscape.

During the medieval period, St. David's Church played a prominent role in the region's religious network as an episcopal grange under the bishopric of St. Davids, which likely explains its dedication to the revered saint. The church remained an active chapelry well into the 19th century, functioning under the patronage of the Perpetual Curate of Llanddewi Brefi

as late as 1883. This continuity highlights its enduring spiritual and administrative significance to the surrounding community.

By the 1890s, the church was completely rebuilt approximately 40 meters to the west-northwest of its original location. The relocation reflected changing needs and priorities within the parish, as communities expanded and adapted their places of worship to suit contemporary requirements. By 1996, all physical traces of the earlier medieval structure had disappeared, leaving only historical records and maps to mark its original presence.

The current St. David's Church, identified as NPRN 418359, now occupies the north-western section of a larger, more rectilinear churchyard measuring about 85 meters east to west by 60 meters north to south. This expanded churchyard is bordered by roads on its western and southern sides, reflecting a natural evolution of the site to accommodate the community's changing spatial and practical needs.

Despite its relocation and subsequent rebuilding, St. David's Church remains a significant anchor of local heritage. Its layered history—rooted in its medieval origins, its role as an episcopal grange, and its later Victorian reconstruction—offers a rich tapestry of continuity and adaptation. The churchyard itself serves as a tangible link to the past, preserving the memory of the earlier structure while embodying the ongoing spiritual and communal importance of the site in the heart of the region.

<https://teififaittrail.wales/blaenpennal/>

St John the Baptist Church Ystrad Meurig



St. John the Baptist's Church is a significant historical site situated within a curvilinear churchyard, bordered by roads to the south and east. The church dates to the medieval period when it served as a parish church under the Deanery of Ultra-Aeron. Its dedication to St. John the Baptist is believed to reflect its connection to the Knights Hospitaller, who acquired the site around 1158. This link adds both religious and cultural significance to its history, reflecting the broader influence of the medieval military order in Wales.

In the early 19th century, the church housed a grammar school, an important educational institution for the local community. By 1803, the school was relocated to a newly built schoolhouse within the churchyard, marking a significant change to the original church structure. By 1833, St. John the Baptist's Church had become a chapelry associated with Ysbytty Ystwyth parish. It eventually regained full parish church status in 1898.

An intriguing historical note concerns the church's original bell, reportedly discovered in Llanwnws bog in 1875. While some local accounts suggested the bell originally belonged to St. Gwnn's Church in Tynygraig, its true origins remain uncertain, lending an air of mystery to the church's story.

Prior to its 1898 rebuilding, the church had undergone significant alterations. The nave was modified for school use before 1803, which included blocking the east window to install a fireplace and chimney. By 1878, the building had deteriorated and was described as ruinous, serving as a playground for the nearby school. Eventually, the original structure was demolished and rebuilt in 1898 on the same site, though no remnants of the earlier church were preserved.

The new church was designed by Arthur Baker of Harold Hughes Architects in the High Victorian Gothic style. Constructed with locally sourced coursed rubble stone, it features red

Forest of Dean sandstone dressings that provide a striking visual contrast. The layout includes a two-bayed chancel, a four-bayed nave, a west porch, and a vestry. The church's furnishings include an octagonal font introduced during the 1898 reconstruction. Another notable feature is the underground heating chamber, with floors suspended above heating ducts, reflecting the period's advancements in church design and infrastructure.

St. John the Baptist's Church illustrates the evolving role of rural Welsh churches, encompassing medieval origins, 19th-century educational use, and architectural innovation. Its connection to the Knights Hospitaller, the grammar school, and its Victorian rebuilding highlights the church's enduring importance as a spiritual and cultural landmark in the region.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/ystrad-meurig/>

St. Mary's Parish Church Strata Florida



St. Mary's Church in Pontrhydfendigaid is a site of great historical and cultural significance, located just 20 meters north of the renowned ruins of Strata Florida Abbey, one of Wales's most important medieval monastic sites. This Grade II-listed church sits within an irregularly shaped churchyard bordered by roads to the north and west, and the abbey's remains to the south. A notable feature of the churchyard is the southern bank, which is thought to be a remnant of an earlier boundary, hinting at a longer sacred use of the land. To the north stands a prominent yew tree, steeped in local tradition as the resting place of the famed medieval Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym, one of the most celebrated figures in Welsh literature.

The churchyard contains several unique gravestones that tell stories of the people connected to the site. On the southern side lies a particularly unusual headstone dedicated to Henry Hughes, a cooper. Local legend recounts that Hughes had his left leg and thigh buried here in 1756 before emigrating to the United States, where the remainder of his body was interred upon his death. Another poignant gravestone is found near the northern boundary, marking the grave of an unknown traveller. According to oral tradition, the traveller tragically died of

exposure at the remote Teifi Pools after disregarding local warnings. The epitaph etched onto the flat stone solemnly records his fate:

"Unknown; He died upon a hillside drear;
Alone where snow was deep;
By strangers he was carried here;
Where princes also sleep."

Historically, the original St. Mary's Church is believed to have served as the abbey's chapel, a function depicted in an engraving from 1741. The current structure was built in 1815, reflecting the modest simplicity characteristic of rural Welsh churches of the early 19th century. The building initially comprised a nave, chancel, and a west bellcote, and has undergone significant changes over time. A major restoration occurred in 1875, with further renovations led by G. T. Bassett in 1914, ensuring the preservation of its fabric and function.

During the 1960s, the church gained four stained glass windows, designed by the renowned Powell and Sons of London. These windows were funded by the James Pantyfedwen Foundation, a charitable organization deeply tied to the preservation of Welsh culture and heritage. The stained glass not only enhances the church's aesthetic beauty but also reflects the community's dedication to honouring its rich spiritual and historical legacy.

St. Mary's Church, with its proximity to Strata Florida Abbey, intriguing local traditions, and historical gravestones, remains a deeply evocative place. It continues to offer visitors and parishioners alike a tangible connection to Wales's medieval past and its enduring cultural identity.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/strata-florida/>

St Caron Church Tregaron



St Caron's Church occupies an elevated, central position in the town, a site steeped in history and believed to rest atop an ancient Bronze Age barrow. Enclosed by a roughly circular churchyard, the grounds once held significant early Christian artifacts, including three cross-incised monuments and a 6th-century Latin-inscribed stone that was originally embedded in the south wall of the church. During the medieval period, St Caron's Church was a prominent parish within the Deanery of Ultra-Aeron. By 1339, a portion of its tithes had been appropriated to Strata Florida Abbey, a reflection of its ecclesiastical importance. In 1406, the benefice, under the patronage of the Bishop of St Davids, was designated as a prebend of the collegiate church at Llanddewi Brefi. Following the Dissolution, the Abbey's three bells were sold to St Caron's Church, though only one remains today, cast in 1889, replacing an earlier bell from 1859.

The current church building is a Grade II listed structure constructed from local rubble stone, with yellow oolite dressings added during a significant 1877 restoration. Architecturally, it features a five-bayed nave and chancel, a two-story vestry and boiler house situated to the south of the chancel, and a striking three-story west tower. Among its oldest features is a 12th-century heptagonal font with distinctive lobate angles, set on a circular stem and square base, a remarkable relic of the church's medieval origins. The west tower, dating to around 1500, retains its medieval character with original openings and a barrel-vaulted ground floor connected to the nave through a plain, two-centred arch. Traces of an 18th-century gallery staircase can still be observed in the blocked sockets within the tower's south wall.

The church has undergone numerous renovations across its long history. In 1805, the roof was rethatched, while 1810 saw the addition of a new pinnacle to the tower. Further repairs followed in 1820, and around 1826, sash windows were introduced, and the church underwent a reconstruction in a non-conformist style, though its medieval foundations were

retained. During this period, the main entrance was likely located in the south wall of the nave's western end.

The most comprehensive restoration occurred in 1877, overseen by architect A. Ritchie of Chester. This restoration involved a slight realignment of the north wall, the addition of the vestry and boiler house, and the blocking of the south door. The tower openings were partially rebuilt, and the church received new roofing, flooring, seating, and internal finishes in keeping with Victorian sensibilities.

Today, St Caron's Church stands as a testament to its layered history, seamlessly blending early medieval elements such as its ancient font and west tower with the 19th-century restorations that reflect a Victorian respect for tradition and design. Its elevated position, enriched by deep ecclesiastical ties and historical significance, makes it a cherished landmark. As a focal point of the community, St Caron's Church continues to embody the evolving architectural and religious heritage of the area, preserving the stories of generations past while serving as a beacon for the present.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/tregaron/>

St David's Church Llanddewi Brefi



St. David's Church, situated near the Afon Brefi, holds a profound historical and spiritual legacy that intertwines with Wales's early Christian heritage. Tradition suggests that the site may have been an early monastic settlement, with even older origins possibly linked to a Bronze Age barrow. The oldest inscribed stone associated with the church, Llanddewibrefi 1, dates to the sixth century, cementing its significance during the formative years of Christianity in the region.

The church is first mentioned in the 11th century in Rhygyfarch's *Life of St. David*, where it is noted as the site of the Synod of Llanddewi Brefi around 550 AD. This pivotal synod was

convened to counter Pelagianism, and tradition holds that St. David miraculously elevated the ground beneath him to preach, symbolizing his triumph over theological dissent and affirming the site's ecclesiastical importance.

St. David's Church is renowned for its extraordinary collection of Early Christian carved stones, comprising six examples, the largest concentration in Ceredigion. These stones, dated from the seventh to the ninth centuries, include inscriptions and intricate carvings that provide invaluable insight into the spiritual and artistic life of the early medieval period.

During the medieval era, St. David's served as a parish church under the Deanery of Sub-Aeron and enjoyed patronage from the Bishop of St. David's. In 1287, Bishop Bek re-established a college of secular canons at the church, which functioned until the Reformation, marking an important chapter in its administrative and religious history.

The current church structure, a Grade II-listed building, reflects centuries of architectural evolution. Constructed primarily from Llanddewi Brefi rubble stone, it features distinctive yellow oolite and grey sandstone dressings. The layout includes a three-bayed nave, a two-bayed chancel, and a prominent three-storied central tower, a 15th-century addition. The original medieval church had a cruciform plan, drawing comparisons to the monastic church at Llanbadarn Fawr.

The building underwent significant restorations over the centuries. In 1832, early reconstruction efforts were undertaken, followed by a major restoration in 1874 led by R.J. Withers. This Victorian-era work included the introduction of an octagonal oolite font and updates to the nave and chancel, reflecting contemporary liturgical needs influenced by the non-conformist tradition. A further restoration in 1913, possibly including the addition of a boiler house, focused on maintaining the church's structural and aesthetic integrity.

St. David's Church remains a testament to the enduring faith and resilience of the communities that have cherished and preserved it for centuries. Its connection to significant historical events and its remarkable architectural and artistic features continues to draw the admiration of visitors and historians alike.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanddewi-brefi/>

St. Mary's Church Llanfair Clydogau



St. Mary's Church, nestled within a curvilinear churchyard bordered by roads to the northeast, reflects a rich tapestry of medieval heritage and ecclesiastical significance. Located near Llanfair-fawr farm, the church is thought to occupy a site of early Christian worship. Aerial surveys conducted in 2002 revealed traces of a possible outer enclosure east of the church, suggesting the site may once have formed part of a larger concentric medieval church complex. Historically, St. Mary's served as a chapelry under the Deanery of Sub-Aeron and later attained parish church status by the early 19th century. Its ecclesiastical living was historically linked with Llangybi and functioned as a perpetual curacy within the Archdeaconry of Cardigan.

Constructed primarily from local rubble stone and accented with yellow oolite dressings, the church's architectural layout comprises a five-bayed nave and chancel, complemented by a west porch, a north vestry adjacent to the chancel's western bay, and a distinctive double bellcote atop the west gable. Architectural elements from the 13th or 14th century endure in the lower sections of the nave and chancel walls, preserving tangible connections to its medieval origins. Particularly noteworthy is the church's font, dating to around 1200, which features a circular bowl adorned with carvings of the four evangelists, showcasing exceptional early medieval artistry.

The church has undergone numerous restorations throughout its history. In 1783, the roof remained thatched, and a timber rood screen was still in place. Renovations began in earnest in 1829, with further updates by 1844 that introduced a west porch and likely a vestry. However, a major restoration carried out between 1886 and 1888 by the architectural firm Middleton, Prothero, and Philpott significantly reshaped the structure. During this period, the upper sections of the nave and chancel walls were rebuilt, the west porch was reconstructed, and a new vestry was added. The interiors were thoroughly modernized, with updated windows, a new roof, flooring, and furnishings, including a new altar rail, vestry screen, and pulpit.

This layered history of medieval craftsmanship and Victorian architectural innovation imbues St. Mary's Church with a unique character, serving as both a place of worship and a testament to the evolving architectural styles and religious practices of the community it continues to serve.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanfair-clydogau/>

All Saints Church Cellan



All Saints' Church, nestled within a roughly circular churchyard, is a Grade II* listed medieval parish church that embodies centuries of history and architectural intrigue. Situated in the Deanery of Sub-Aeron and traditionally under the patronage of St. David's, the church was originally dedicated to St. Callwen. Local legend whispers that the site's origins may stretch even further back, with the foundation possibly concealing a Bronze Age barrow, adding an air of ancient mystique to its storied past.

Built from limestone rubble, the church's structure includes a two-bayed nave, a two-bayed chancel, a south porch, a north vestry, and a distinctive west bellcote. The nave and chancel, believed to date to the 13th or 14th century, are marked by features such as a medieval stoup and the original south door, subtle reminders of the church's enduring legacy. The square limestone font bowl, thought to be a relic of the 13th century, features roll-mouldings on its sides and rests atop a newer stem and base, showcasing the skill and artistry of early ecclesiastical craftsmanship.

The church's architectural evolution is reflected in its details. The south porch, added in the early 17th century, replaced an earlier thatched roof, as evidenced by high weathering stones visible on the chancel's west wall. Over the centuries, restorations in 1668, 1797, and 1799 reinforced the structure, preserving its medieval character. Intriguingly, a rood loft remained in use as late as 1810, a rare survival from an earlier liturgical tradition.

A major transformation occurred in 1908, led by renowned Arts and Crafts architect Herbert Luck North. The project, commissioned by Rev. W. E. Jones, a vicar with connections to North through the Church Crafts League, revitalized the church while respecting its historical fabric. North rebuilt the north wall of the chancel, reinforced the east wall of the porch, and replaced several windows, adding brick surrounds and central piers fitted with simple yet elegant leaded glazing. Inside, he introduced an open rood screen and enriched the ceilings with vibrant floral motifs in blue, green, and red—believed to have been painted by his wife—creating a striking interplay of artistry and devotion.

One particularly curious detail is the font bowl's history. Once removed from its original position, it was repurposed as a dustbin in a niche within the south nave wall before being restored to its rightful place. This anecdote highlights the church's enduring commitment to preserving its medieval elements, even in the face of practical reuse.

All Saints' Church stands today as a testament to the convergence of faith, history, and craftsmanship. Its enduring presence offers a sanctuary not only for worship but also as a cherished monument to the layered stories of the past.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/cellan/>

St David's Church Llanycrwys



St. David's Church, a Grade II listed building with medieval origins, is located within a tranquil, rectilinear churchyard approximately 30 meters southwest of the Nant Clawdd stream, which traces the curvilinear north-eastern boundary of the surrounding field. The church's origins are tied to a post-Conquest ecclesiastical site known as "Lanecros," historically a grange belonging to Talley Abbey. By 1833, it had become a parish church, and as of 1998, it was incorporated into the Rural Deanery of Lampeter and Ultra Aeron within

the Archdeaconry of Carmarthen, highlighting its enduring spiritual and communal importance.

Constructed of local rubblestone, St. David's features a four-bayed nave and chancel, a west porch, a vestry situated on the north side of the central bays, and an adjoining coalhouse. A west-facing bellcote crowns the structure. The nave and chancel, dating to the 14th century, retain original medieval elements, including a square limestone font bowl now mounted on a 20th-century base. Historically, the church had a rood stair and two doorways on the north nave wall, one positioned higher to allow access to a vanished rood loft. Additionally, a carved oak beam found in the vestry, inscribed with the date 1663, hints at post-medieval restorative or decorative efforts, though its original placement remains uncertain.

Over the centuries, St. David's has seen numerous restorations. The 18th and 19th centuries brought significant updates, including the replacement of windows, and concreting of the floors. From 1891 to 1892, noted architect Ewan Christian led an extensive restoration, re-flooring, re-roofing, and re-seating the interior. Christian also re-fenestrated portions of the south nave wall reconstructed the west door, and introduced entirely new internal fittings, blending functionality with reverence for the church's historical character. Around 1900, the west porch was added, followed by the vestry and coalhouse in the 1920s, during which the rood stair was removed.

St. David's Church encapsulates a rich tapestry of medieval craftsmanship and successive adaptations. Its layered architectural history—from the remnants of the rood loft to Victorian and early 20th-century modifications—underscores the community's dedication to preserving this sacred space. As a result, it remains a cherished heritage site, deeply rooted in the history of the Ceredigion region.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanycrwys/>

St James Church Cwmann



St. James' Church, a mission church located in Cwmann, stands prominently northwest of the A485, with its old vicarage across the road to the southeast. Constructed between 1889 and 1890 by architect David Davies from Llanybydder, the church exemplifies the simple, utilitarian design typical of late 19th-century mission churches. It was built to meet the spiritual needs of a rural community, providing easier access for parishioners who found it difficult to attend services at larger, more distant parish churches.

The church's layout includes a nave, chancel, a north vestry, and a west porch crowned by a modest bellcote, reflecting a functional design over ornamental decoration. The vestry, located on the north side, would have been used by the clergy and for the storage of sacred items, while the bellcote, though simple, marks the church's presence within the landscape. The overall design of St. James' Church mirrors the late Victorian mission church movement's emphasis on accessibility and community service, prioritizing practical functionality over elaborate aesthetics.

The church's proximity to the vicarage further highlights its role in community life, with clergy living nearby to effectively minister to the local population. Situated along the A485, St. James' Church serves as a key gathering place for worship and community support, reflecting Victorian ideals of practicality and moral duty within rural settings.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/cwmann/>

St Patrick's Church Pencarreg



St. Patrick's Church, nestled within a distinctive curvilinear churchyard, embodies a rich history that spans centuries of religious and architectural significance. Originally known as St. Michael's Church on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map, the church adopted its current dedication by 1905. It was once a parish church within the Deanery of Stradtowy, with a historical connection to royalty and monastic patronage. The church's advowson, once owned by the Crown, was granted to Strata Florida Abbey by King Richard II, who required the monks to pray for the soul of his father, Edward the Black Prince. Following the Dissolution, the advowson reverted to the Crown before being transferred into private hands, marking the church's enduring legacy.

Architecturally, St. Patrick's Church reflects a blend of different periods, showcasing its layered history. Built with shaly rubble stone, it features a three-bayed chancel and a two-bayed nave, both believed to date from the 13th or 14th century, although they may have been constructed at different times. Later additions include the west porch and a boiler house, with the porch likely dating from the 14th or 15th century. A small 19th-century vestry on the north side of the chancel and a medieval semi-circular stoup near the west door add to the church's architectural character.

Among the church's most striking features is its 12th-13th century font, adorned with four human masks in relief, like fonts at nearby churches such as St. Sulien's in Silian and St. Llawddog's in Cenarth. Another noteworthy element is the low, square-headed doorway at the southern stop of the chancel arch, which once provided access to a now-lost rood loft, offering insight into the church's medieval liturgical practices.

In 1705, the church underwent emergency repairs due to a dangerously bulging north wall, and in 1878, architect R.J. Withers directed a major restoration. This renovation transformed the interior, including the removal of the rood screen and loft, reworking of the west doors, and the removal of the south door. New windows were installed, and the church was reroofed, refloored, and equipped with underfloor heating flues. The addition of a 20th-century boiler house marked the completion of these updates, ensuring the church remains both a historical treasure and a functional place of worship.

St. Patrick's Church stands as a testament to the region's evolving architectural and religious heritage. Its medieval origins, royal connections, and carefully preserved artifacts offer a profound link to the past, underscoring the lasting faith and continuity of the community it serves.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/pencarreg/>

St Peter's Church Llanybydder



St. Peter's Church is located within a curvilinear churchyard in the village of Llanwenog, Ceredigion, and stands as a testament to centuries of ecclesiastical heritage. During the medieval period, it served as a parish church within the Deanery of Stradtowy. The advowson, or the right to appoint the church's vicar, was originally a royal prerogative. In 1362, Edward, Prince of Wales (the Black Prince), granted it to Carmarthen Priory, which also established a subordinate chapel at Abergorlech. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century, the advowson reverted to the Crown, remaining under royal patronage until at least 1833. By 1998, St. Peter's continued its role as a parish church, with the living operating as a combined vicarage with Llanllwni and Llanwenog.

Architecturally, St. Peter's is a Grade II listed building constructed primarily from limestone rubble. Its layout consists of a three-bayed nave and chancel, a four-storeyed west tower, a

south porch, a transeptal vestry, and a coalhouse. The nave and chancel likely date back to the 14th century, while the west bay of the nave was added in the 16th century, coinciding with the construction of the tower. The west tower, with its sturdy medieval design, enhances the church's commanding presence.

Restoration efforts have been a recurring part of the church's history. Repairs were documented prior to 1833, improving the structure and functionality of the building. A more extensive restoration took place in 1884 under the direction of J. Middleton, an architect from Cheltenham. During this phase, the original chancel door was blocked, a new south door and porch were added, and the windows were defenestrated. A vestry was also constructed, contributing to the church's Victorian modernization while preserving its medieval core.

The original medieval font, which had been damaged, was replaced in 1933 by the octagonal font currently in use. This replacement reflects the church's ongoing commitment to maintaining its liturgical elements. In 1990, the church's roofs were re-slatted, ensuring the preservation of the building for future generations.

St. Peter's Church embodies a harmonious blend of medieval and Victorian ecclesiastical architecture, highlighting its historical and cultural significance. Its enduring presence and carefully preserved features make it a vital part of the Llanwenog community and a cherished example of Wales's religious heritage.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanybydder/>

St Llonio's Church Llanllwni



St. Luke's Church, historically referred to as "St. Llonio's Church," is a Grade II listed building celebrated for its medieval character and architectural heritage. Situated near Llanllwni Mount, a historic motte, the church occupies a landscape steeped in history, including its association with prominent local families, as evidenced by the Jones and Lloyd family mausoleums nearby. During the construction of the Jones Family Mausoleum, several cist burials—ancient stone-lined graves—were unearthed, deepening the site's historical significance.

The church's structure is primarily composed of Silurian rubble stone and retains notable medieval elements dating back to the 13th or 14th century. These include the nave, chancel, and a rare medieval stone altar table, which bears three incised crosses and measures approximately 78 inches by 32 inches. Interestingly, this altar table had been repurposed as an outdoor seat before being restored to the church in 1917. Additional medieval features include a square aumbry, a two-centred doorway leading to the now-lost rood stair, and a deeply splayed medieval light in the north wall, which was unblocked during a 1927 restoration.

A significant architectural addition is the four-story west tower, constructed in the early 16th century. This tower, equipped with a square spiral staircase and slit windows, showcases fine stonework and a corbelled parapet, highlighting the church's evolution while maintaining its medieval aesthetic.

Restoration efforts over the centuries have aimed to modernize the church while preserving its historical essence. In 1811, the nave's south wall was rebuilt, and a west gallery was added in 1825, only to be removed in a 1934 restoration under architect W.E. Ellery Anderson. This restoration, influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, sought to harmonize functional updates with the building's historic character. Earlier 19th-century modifications also introduced a north vestry—replacing a former schoolhouse—and included

significant improvements such as new windows, flooring, heating, and pews. The vestry itself features a blocked fireplace and chimney, indicative of its practical use during that period.

The church has undergone various roof repairs, including re-roofing during the later 19th century, ensuring its continued preservation. St. Luke's stands as a remarkable example of a medieval church adapted through thoughtful restorations, blending its original features with later architectural enhancements, and remains a significant historical and spiritual landmark in the Llanllwni area.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanllwni/>

St Gwenog's Church, Llanwenog



St. Gwenog's Church, dedicated to the local saint Gwenog, is a distinguished medieval church located in Llanwenog, Ceredigion. Constructed primarily in the late 14th and 15th centuries, the church exemplifies the architectural and spiritual heritage of the region. Its prominent late 15th-century tower, built after 1485, stands as a testament to the craftsmanship and ambition of its medieval builders. Notable for its exceptional preservation, St. Gwenog's Church is often celebrated as “the most complete medieval church in Cardiganshire.”

A defining feature of the church is its original 15th-century barrel roof, intricately designed with timber framework and retaining its historic character. Complementing the architectural structure are elaborately carved pews and other fine furnishings, many of which were commissioned in the early 19th century under the patronage of Colonel Herbert Davies-Evans of Highmead. This legacy of enhancement continued into the early 20th century when additional exquisite carvings were introduced. Renowned Belgian craftsman Joseph Reubens of Bruges contributed to this work between 1914 and 1919, further enriching the church's artistic heritage.

St. Gwenog's historical significance extends beyond its architectural beauty. The church was designated a Grade I-listed building on March 6, 1964, reflecting its status as an unparalleled example of medieval ecclesiastical design in the region. Its remarkable preservation, including the late 15th-century roof and tower, cements its importance as a cultural and historical landmark.

St. Gwenog's Church remains a focal point for both worship and heritage, offering visitors an immersive glimpse into the medieval and post-medieval ecclesiastical history of Wales.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanwenog/>

St Gwynin's Church Llanwnnen



St. Gwynin's Church, originally dedicated to St. Gwnnen, is located within a roughly curvilinear churchyard bordered on its west by the B4337. This historic church, thought to have been under the possession of the Bishop of St. Davids throughout its history, served as a chapelry within the Deanery of Sub-Aeron during the medieval period. By 1833, the church was part of a discharged vicarage consolidated with St. Sulien's Church in Silian, with its tithes split between the Bishop and the vicar.

This Grade II listed building, constructed from local rubble stone, is notable for its layered architectural history. Its nave, believed to date to the 12th century, is one of the church's oldest features. The chancel, reconstructed in the 13th or 14th century, houses a medieval stoup and a blocked medieval door, hinting at its ancient origins. The church's three-story west tower, added in the 19th century, incorporates a small medieval human figurine in its second stage, reflecting a blend of historical and modern elements.

In 1810, a carved rood screen and visible rood loft steps adorned the chancel arch, though these features are no longer present. The tower's crow-stepped crenelated parapet mirrors the design found at St. David's Church, Blaenporth, and St. Gwynin's Church, Llanarth. Its corbelled parapet and pyramidal slate roof were added during an 1877 restoration led by architect R.J. Withers, who also worked on St. Sulien's Church in Silian. This restoration included partial rebuilding of

the nave and chancel, the addition of the vestry, and the installation of neo-Gothic openings with yellow and grey oolite surrounds.

The church's vestry, with its blocked southeast corner fireplace, and the nave floor—relayed above a disused heating chamber in the early 20th century—reflect later modifications while preserving its historical character. Together, these features emphasize the church's evolution over centuries while maintaining its significance as a religious and architectural landmark in the region.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/llanwnnen/>

St Mary's Church, Maestir



St. Mary's Church, built in 1880 by J.B. Harford, is a charming estate church serving Falcondale Mansion and functioning as a chapel of ease for St. Peter's Church in Lampeter. Designed in a restrained Romanesque style, the church features a nave and chancel with a rounded apse, a hallmark of its understated elegance. Its architectural layout includes a west bellcote partially supported by a descending gable projection, a north-east gabled vestry, and a gabled south porch with a large, inviting arch.

A significant historical feature of St. Mary's is its 12th-century square font, intricately carved with depictions of the four Evangelists. Originally housed at St. Peter's Church in Lampeter, the font's relocation to St. Mary's underscores the historical connections between these two ecclesiastical sites. Another notable element is the stained-glass windows in the apse, created by C.E. Kempe around 1904, which enhance the church's aesthetic and spiritual ambiance.

Interestingly, St. Mary's operates without mains electricity, a rare characteristic in modern times. In 1956, after St. Sulien's Church in Silian installed an electric organ, its former organ was relocated to St. Mary's, illustrating the church's commitment to maintaining and enhancing its musical traditions.

This modest yet significant estate church continues to serve its community, offering a glimpse into the architectural and cultural heritage of the region while preserving its ties to the historic Falcondale estate.

<https://teififaithtrail.wales/maestir/>

A Journey Through Time and Faith

The **Teifi Faith Trail** is more than a route through historic churches and chapels—it's a journey that weaves together centuries of devotion, artistry, and community life. Each site enriches the story of the Teifi Valley, offering a window into the lives of those who worshipped, built, and cared for these sacred spaces. As you conclude your exploration, the trail leaves a lasting impression of the region's spiritual depth and its enduring connection to faith and tradition.

Graham T Emmanuel

The Gwent Level Churches

St Mary the Virgin Church, Nash:



Nestled approximately 3 kilometres south of Newport, Wales, the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Nash stands as a testament to the rich history of the region. Often referred to as "the cathedral of the moors" by Monmouthshire historian Fred Hando, this medieval masterpiece has undergone additions and restorations over the centuries, solidifying its

significance. Designated a Grade I listed building since 3 January 1963, the church's medieval tower with a fine spire has been a beacon for both worshippers and admirers of architectural marvels.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin comprises three distinct parts, each representing a different era in its history. The 15th-century steeple, adorned with an octagonal spire, stands as a unique feature in Southeast Wales, according to architectural historian Newman. This medieval tower, along with its intricate design, played a pivotal role in earning the Grade I listing.

The 18th-century nave and the 19th-century chancel contribute to the church's eclectic charm. Inside, a complete Georgian ensemble of galleries, box pews, and a three-decker pulpit adds to the historical richness. The church's interior was lovingly restored in 2004–2005, ensuring its continued preservation for future generations.

The church's history intertwines with Goldcliff Priory, as evidenced by its ownership in 1349 when Robert Arney assumed the benefice. The Arney family, during the time of Charles II, bequeathed a cottage and 6 acres of land known as "The Poor's Six Acres" to support the parish's impoverished residents. A significant 16th-century rebuilding phase transformed the church, leaving only the North Wall of the chancel and the squint or hagioscope as remnants of the Norman structure.

The unique squint served a peculiar purpose, allowing individuals with contagious diseases like leprosy or smallpox to participate in the service without posing a risk to the congregation. The tower's unconventional location on the north side of the chancel suggests that the church was once much larger, possibly incorporating a North aisle.

St Mary the Virgin Church has witnessed moments of tragedy and resilience throughout history. In the early 20th century, it provided a temporary mortuary for five sailors who lost their lives in a violent storm near the East Usk Lighthouse. During World War II, the church continued to serve its community, accommodating congregations of up to 400.

One of the defining moments in the church's history is linked to the Great Flood of 1607. On 30 January, the Bristol Channel floods claimed numerous lives and wreaked havoc on farmland and livestock. Recent research

suggests that a storm surge was the likely cause. St Mary's church in neighbouring Goldcliff features a memorial plaque to commemorate the tragic event, with a contemporary depiction portraying a church believed to be St Mary's, Nash.

St Mary the Virgin Church, Nash, stands as a beacon of Welsh history, seamlessly blending medieval charm with 18th and 19th-century additions. Its Grade I listing underscores its architectural significance, and its storied past reflects the resilience of a community that has weathered storms, both literal and metaphorical, over the centuries. Today, as Sunday services continue and the church opens its doors to visitors, it remains a cherished piece of Monmouthshire's cultural heritage.

St Mary Magdalene's, Goldcliff:



St Mary Magdalene's Church in Goldcliff, a medieval parish nestled in the Welsh countryside, stands as a captivating blend of history and restoration. Heavily restored in the austere Decorated Gothic style during the late nineteenth century, this church's origins are shrouded in mystery, with suggestions that it may have initially served a more utilitarian purpose as a barn.

The church, traditionally believed to have been constructed in the fifteenth century, underwent significant restoration in the late nineteenth century after sustaining damage during storms in 1424. However, surviving medieval elements within the structure hint at an even earlier origin. The undivided nave and chancel are complemented by a west tower and a medieval south porch, showcasing a harmonious fusion of architectural styles spanning centuries.

The nave, dating back to the twelfth century, exudes historical significance, while the fourteenth-century tower adds a vertical dimension to the church's silhouette. The fenestration of the nave and chancel, though appearing nineteenth century in style, adds a touch of elegance to the overall aesthetic. The castellated tower, with its three stages and plain arched openings, stands as a testament to both medieval craftsmanship and later restoration efforts.

St Mary Magdalene's Church is entwined with the history of Goldcliff, with its roots possibly reaching back to a time when it served a more practical role as a barn. The churchyard, roughly square in shape, is enclosed by drainage ditches, and within its bounds lies the stump of what is believed to be a medieval cross, proudly raised upon a small mound at the main southern entrance.

A poignant reminder of the challenges faced by the community is found in a brass memorializing a disastrous 'flood' in 1606. This event, likely a flood, left an indelible mark on the collective memory of the parish, echoing through the ages as a testament to the resilience of those who called St Mary Magdalene's their spiritual home.

St Mary Magdalene's Church in Goldcliff stands as a captivating narrative of restoration, resilience, and historical depth. From its possible origin as a medieval barn to the storms of the fifteenth century and the subsequent nineteenth-century restoration, the church tells a tale of endurance and adaptation. The blend of architectural styles within its walls, coupled with the medieval remnants in its churchyard, make St Mary Magdalene's a captivating destination for those seeking to explore the intricate layers of Welsh history.

Church of St Mary Llanwern:



Nestled amidst the modern landscape dominated by the sights, sounds, and smells of the nearby Llanwern steelworks, the Church of Saint Mary Llanwern stands as a silent witness to centuries of change. Serving as a "family chapel" to the various owners of the now-distant Llanwern Park, this church, with its diminutive size, reflects a unique historical role. Despite the disappearance of Llanwern Park's mid-18th-century mansion in the 1950s, the church continues to hold a special place in the hearts of those connected to its storied past.

St Mary Llanwern is a single cell, aisleless church boasting an attractive west tower, more elaborate than its local counterparts. Located on the south side of the lane leading from Llanwern village to Bishton, the church is now isolated from the modern village, surrounded by the remnants of a once-prominent steelworks. The west tower, a distinctive feature, houses five bells, restored to working order in the 1990s, offering a harmonious blend of historical charm and practical function.

For centuries, the church served as a 'family chapel' to the residents of Llanwern Park, their staff, and a handful of outlying farms and smallholdings. Despite its diminutive size, the church has maintained a crucial connection to the local community. 'Llanwern,' translated as 'the church among the grove of the alders,' reflects a historical context now overshadowed by the industrial landscape.

The interior boasts a remarkable collection of stained glass, with notable pieces from Celtic Studios in the east window and south nave window. A unique Baroque alabaster memorial, reminiscent of an oval cartouche, decorates the church, showcasing the Salisbury family's historical ties to Llanwern Park. Noteworthy features include a piscina with an elaborate canopy, the circular head of an early stone cross, and a blocked-up former priests' doorway, each adding to the church's historical allure.

Within the churchyard lies the final resting place of Viscount Rhondda, a key figure in Lloyd George's government during World War I and the initiator of food rationing as the 'Food Controller.' The memorial to Viscount Rhondda stands as a poignant reminder of the church's deep connection to historical events and influential personalities.

St Mary Llanwern, once a chapel to the owners of Llanwern Park, now stands amidst the echoes of an industrial transformation. Its architectural charm, historical significance, and unique role in local history make it a captivating destination for those seeking to explore the layers of time in this Welsh community. The church, with its rich tapestry of features and connections to notable figures, invites visitors to delve into the interwoven narratives of family, industry, and resilience that define its legacy.

Langstone Church:



Nestled within the serene landscape of Langstone, the Church bears witness to the passage of centuries and the evolution of architectural styles. With origins dating back to the 13th century, this venerable structure has undergone transformations, extensions, and restoration, creating a harmonious blend of historical authenticity and structural diversity.

The Church's origins trace back to the 13th century, a testament to the enduring spiritual significance of the Langstone community. The nave, with its roots in the 13th century, received an extension in 1622, a nod to the changing needs of the congregation. A South porch, likely dating from the 16th century, adds a touch of historical charm, hinting at an era of architectural craftsmanship.

A significant chapter in the church's history unfolded in 1907 when a comprehensive restoration took place. The result was a rejuvenated structure that retained its historical essence while embracing contemporary sensibilities. The North and South chapels to the chancel, likely added during this period, stand as witnesses to a bygone era's revival.

Constructed from Blue Lias stone and local pink sandstone, adorned with Roman bricks in the porch, the church exudes a captivating blend of textures and colours. The roofs, gracefully clad in natural slate, complete the aesthetic ensemble. The majority of the fenestration, executed in the Perpendicular style, showcases hollow chamfered mullions, cusped heads, and flat hood moulds with simple square labels, all intricately set against sandstone dressings.

The East window, a product of the 19th century, stands as a beacon of craftsmanship with its two-light design, quatrefoil to the head, and a simple hoodmould. This particular window, a product of its time, adds a touch of Victorian elegance to the timeless structure.

Langstone Church, with its roots reaching into the 13th century, stands as a living testament to the enduring spirit of its community. Through centuries of evolution, extensions, and restoration, the church has emerged as a tapestry of time, woven with architectural styles and craftsmanship from various epochs. As it continues to serve the spiritual needs of the Langstone community, the Church invites visitors to explore its historical corridors and appreciate the resilience and adaptability that define its venerable legacy.

Saint Cadwaladr Church, Bishton



Nestled within the embrace of time, the village church of Bishton stands as a silent sentinel, its foundations echoing with history that spans over 600 years. Yet, the full name - the Church of St Cadwaladr - unravels a story that extends far beyond, to the era of Cadwaladr ap Cadwallon, the last Celtic Welsh King of Gwynedd, whose reign and legacy left an indelible mark on both Welsh history and the Christian faith.

In the tumultuous years between 655 and 682 AD, Cadwaladr ruled as the King of Gwynedd, the last to claim the title of King of Britain during a time of warring princedoms and Saxon invasions. A fervent supporter of the early Christian Church, Cadwaladr's legacy extended beyond his earthly reign, and he was later canonized. Today, the Church of St Cadwaladr in Bishton is one of three churches in Wales to bear his revered name.

The original wooden church, a humble structure, witnessed the changing tides of history, particularly the Norman occupation, which prompted its reconstruction in stone. The present-day church showcases architectural features typical of the 14th and 15th centuries, including a majestic 15th-century tower with an embattled parapet. The late medieval octagonal font, a 14th-century two-light window in the

South chancel wall, and a 15th-century inner doorway all contribute to the church's timeless charm.

Over the centuries, St Cadwaladr's Church underwent repairs and restoration, reflecting the resilience of both the structure and the community it served. Extensive repairs in 1760, following the partial collapse of the tower, and the addition of the porch in 1887 are markers of the church's adaptability to the changing times.

The single church bell, dating back to 1663, serves as a tangible link to historical events, likely installed as a thanksgiving for the Restoration of the Monarchy and the Anglican church after the Cromwellian period. As visitors explore the church, they are encouraged to look for the intricately carved stone heads in the chancel arch, representing the priest, the monk, the nun, and the happy man, each offering a glimpse into the past.

The name 'Bishton,' a corruption of 'Bishopstown,' harks back to a time when the Bishops of Llandaff had a palace at Bishton. Unfortunately, the grandeur of the episcopal residence was lost during the 15th-century uprising led by Owain Glyndŵr.

St Cadwaladr's Church in Bishton stands not only as a physical embodiment of architectural splendour but also as a repository of tales that stretch across centuries. From the royal patronage of Cadwaladr to the enduring presence of the church in the face of challenges and reconstructions, St Cadwaladr's Church continues to narrate a story that resonates with the spirit of Welsh history and Christian devotion.

St Mary's Church, Wilcrick



Nestled amidst the picturesque landscape, St Mary's Church in Wilcrick stands as a testament to centuries of history, spirituality, and communal resilience. Dedicated to St. Mary, this parish church has played a vital role in the lives of the local community, historically sharing its minister with the neighbouring parish of Llanmartin.

Throughout its history, the parish church of St Mary's has witnessed a shared ministerial responsibility with Llanmartin. Only two ministers, Peter Ameline in 1535 and Edmond Jones, who was instituted to Wilcrick on 16 July 1631, did not also serve at Llanmartin. Subsequently, the annals of ministerial service reveal a consistent overlap in names and dates, emphasizing the interconnected spiritual destinies of these neighbouring parishes.

A notable feature of St Mary's Church is its bell, a resonant echo from the past cast in 1726 by the Evans foundry of Chepstow. This enduring artifact stands as a melodic witness to the passage of time, calling the faithful to worship and marking significant moments in the community's collective memory.

The name 'Wilcrick,' a Welsh toponym, translates to 'bare hill.' This geographical feature, now adorned with trees, once served as the location of an Iron Age fort. The

hill's strategic significance lay in its panoramic views down the Severn Estuary, providing an early warning system against potential Irish invasions up the estuary. St Mary's Church, nestled on the lower slope of this historic hill, carries with it the echoes of a larger settlement that faded into abandonment during the Middle Ages, mirroring the fate of several neighbouring locations.

St Mary's Church, Wilcrick, stands as both a spiritual sanctuary and a custodian of local history. Its dedication to St. Mary, shared ministerial legacy, and the tangible echoes of the past, such as the bell of 1726, create a narrative woven with threads of faith, community, and resilience. As parishioners gather within its historic walls, St Mary's Church continues to be a living testament to the enduring spirit of Wilcrick and its storied past.

Church of St Thomas, Redwick



Nestled to the southeast of Newport, South Wales, the Church of St Thomas in Redwick is a medieval gem that stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of the local community. With its origins possibly dating back to the twelfth century, this Perpendicular-style church, boasting elements from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was rightfully granted Grade I listing on 3 January 1963. A unique feature,

its central tower standing between the chancel and the nave, sets it apart, contributing to what has been described as an "unusual plan."

St Thomas's Church carries the weight of history within its walls, possibly tracing its roots to the twelfth century. The Perpendicular style, prevalent in its architecture, showcases the craftsmanship of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The central tower, an uncommon feature, stands as a testament to the uniqueness of the church's design, adding a distinctive character to the ecclesiastical landscape.

Endurance Through the Ages: The Great Flood of 1606/7

Like many churches in the Gwent Levels, St Thomas's Church faced the ravages of the Great Flood of 1606/7. The mark on the wall of the porch serves as a poignant reminder, capturing the height reached by the floodwaters during that catastrophic event. The church, resilient against the forces of nature, emerged from this trial as a symbol of endurance.

In 1874-5, extensive restoration work was undertaken by James Norton, breathing new life into the historic structure. This period of renovation not only preserved the architectural integrity but also ensured that St Thomas's Church would continue to stand as a beacon for generations to come. The restoration work by Norton stands as a testament to the commitment to preserving the cultural and historical heritage embedded in the church's stones.

St Thomas's Church in Redwick is more than a place of worship; it is a living testament to the history and resilience of the local community. From its possibly twelfth-century origins to the unique design elements and the challenges posed by the Great Flood, the church has weathered the tides of time. The restoration efforts in the late nineteenth century further affirm the dedication to preserving this architectural marvel. Today, St Thomas's Church stands proudly, inviting visitors to witness not just its physical beauty but the rich tapestry of stories woven into its stones over centuries.

The Church of St Bride's Netherwent



Nestled in the serene countryside, alongside the remnants of a deserted medieval village, the Church of St. Brigid, or St. Bridget, stands as a silent witness to the ebb and flow of centuries. Founded in the 10th century by Brochwael, the son of Meurig of Gwent, this sacred edifice has weathered the hands of time, with its tower dating back to the 13th or 14th century. The 19th-century reconstruction of the church's body, undertaken due to dilapidation, ensures the continuation of its spiritual legacy.

Rooted in history, the Church of St. Brigid in St. Brides Netherwent has its origins attributed to Brochwael in the 10th century. The medieval echoes of this sacred ground resonate through the quiet countryside, connecting the present to a time long past. The tower, a resilient structure, harks back to the 13th or 14th century, a tangible link to the church's enduring heritage.

As the body of the church succumbed to the wear of time, the 19th century witnessed a renewal. Dilapidation necessitated a reconstruction, breathing new life into the sacred space. The endeavour to preserve the essence of St. Brigid's Church ensured that its spiritual significance would persist into the future, creating a bridge between centuries.

Nestled in the heart of Undy, St Mary's Church stands as a silent testament to the passage of centuries, echoing with the whispers of history and spiritual devotion. With its roots reaching back to the twelfth century, this sacred edifice has undergone transformations, restorations, and a continued commitment to preserving its historical and spiritual legacy.

Dating back to the twelfth century, St Mary's Church boasts a heritage that spans centuries. The pointed chancel, an architectural gem from the following century, underwent extensions at an unclear later date. The year 1880 marked a significant chapter in the church's history when John Prichard orchestrated a major restoration. During this period, the north nave window found its place in the structure, seamlessly blending with the older windows that bore witness to times gone by.

In the restoration of 1880, John Prichard left an indelible mark on St Mary's Church. The removal of a small tower that once graced the centre of the structure marked a significant change, replaced by a comparably large bell turret that now adds its own character to the church's silhouette. The meticulous craftsmanship of this period has contributed to the church's enduring charm and continued service as a spiritual haven for the community.

As one explores the church, the porch stands as a carved testament to the community's continuity and stewardship. The names of churchwardens in service in 1790, etched into the stone, bridge the gap between past and present, connecting generations through shared dedication to the spiritual life of St Mary's Church.

In 2001, a second restoration breathed new life into St Mary's Church, ensuring its structural integrity and preserving its timeless allure for generations to come. This commitment to maintenance and restoration speaks to the ongoing reverence and care the community invests in their cherished spiritual home.

St Mary's Church in Undy, with its roots in the twelfth century, encapsulates the evolution of both architecture and spirituality. From the pointed chancel to the transformative restorations of John Prichard and the continued care in the present day, the church stands as a living testament to the intertwining threads of history, faith, and community. As the bell turret reaches towards the heavens, St Mary's Church remains a beacon of continuity and spiritual solace for the Undy community, inviting all to partake in its rich tapestry of time.

St Michael and All Saints Church, Llanfihangel Rogiet.



Nestled within the embrace of time, St Michael, and All Saints Church in Llanfihangel Rogiet stands as a venerable sanctuary, with most of its architectural fabric dating back to the 13th century. This spiritual haven has witnessed centuries of worship, weathered the tides of history, and bore witness to remarkable moments of restoration that have breathed new life into its ancient stones.

The enduring beauty of St Michael and All Saints Church is rooted in its ancient origins, with much of the architectural fabric dating back to the 13th century. This sacred space, shaped by the hands of medieval craftsmen, has stood the test of time, welcoming generations of worshippers through its hallowed doors.

In the following century, the chancel of the church was extended, adding another layer to its architectural and spiritual richness. Each stone and archway tell a tale of the faithful who have sought solace within its walls, creating a timeless connection between the medieval past and the present.

In 1904, a transformative restoration breathed new life into St Michael and All Saints Church, guided by the skilled hands of architect Henry Prothero from Cheltenham. The financial support for this endeavour came from Lord Tredegar, a testament to

the communal commitment to preserving the heritage of this sacred space. The restoration work included the rebuilding of the north aisle, a significant undertaking that would reveal hidden treasures.

As the north aisle was rebuilt, a moment of archaeological serendipity unfolded. Two medieval effigies were uncovered, offering glimpses into the lives of the past. One effigy was identified as Anne Martel, while the other, possibly her husband, John, added a human touch to the historical narrative. Additionally, the restoration revealed a squint, a subtle architectural feature bridging the aisle and the chancel, adding to the layers of discovery within the church.

St Michael and All Saints Church in Llanfihangel Rogiet, with its roots reaching back to the 13th century, stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of faith and restoration. The architectural symphony created by medieval craftsmen has been lovingly preserved through the centuries, and the restoration of 1904 brought new vitality to this spiritual sanctuary. As worshippers enter the sacred space, they are surrounded by not only the echoes of the medieval past but also the stories uncovered during moments of careful restoration, creating a timeless tapestry that weaves together the threads of history, faith, and community.

St Mary's Church, Caldicot:



Nestled on the shores of the Bristol Channel, St Mary's Church in Caldicot stands as a sacred testament to centuries of history, faith, and the enduring spirit of renewal. From its ancient origins mentioned in the Domesday Book to the 19th and 20th-century restorations, this parish has evolved as a spiritual haven for the community.

Caldicot, a parish blessed by the waters of the Nedden brook, has been a beacon of community life for centuries. Its proximity to Portskewett and Severn Tunnel station has made it a focal point in the Southern division of the county, offering solace and spiritual guidance to generations of residents.

St Mary's Church, primarily constructed of limestone with freestone dressings, showcases an architectural journey spanning various periods. The church, predominantly in the Perpendicular style, boasts an embattled tower, a clock, and eight bells that resonate through time. The porch, with a unique staircase leading to a possible parvise, holds remnants of the Blessed Virgin Mary's figure and a rudely cut consecration cross.

The restoration of St Mary's Church in August 1851 breathed new life into the ancient stones. Undertaken by the architect Henry Woodyer, the 15th-century north aisle was rebuilt, and stained-glass windows were replaced, adding a touch of Victorian splendour. A lych-gate, a symbol of modern reverence, welcomes visitors to this timeless sanctuary.

The living of St Mary's is a vicarage, overseen by the Rev. Frederick William Clarke since 1893. The church, with its 450 sittings, not only serves as a place of worship but also as a spiritual and communal hub, nurturing the faith and wellbeing of the parishioners.

Beyond the main church, the mission church of St. Bartholomew at Highmoor hill and the iron church of St. Michael and All Angels at Severn Tinplate works speak to the mission and outreach efforts, providing spiritual support to various corners of the community.

The historical records of a church at this location before the Norman conquest, as mentioned in Domesday Book and King John's charter, weave an intricate tapestry of the church's origins. Augustinian canons from

Llanthony Secunda played a crucial role in building the church atop the older structure, dedicated to St Bride, around AD 900.

St Mary's Church in Caldicot is more than a structure; it is a living testament to the spiritual, historical, and communal fabric of the parish. From ancient roots and medieval construction to the 19th and 20th-century restorations, each chapter in its history has added layers to the rich tapestry that defines this sacred space. As the bells toll, St Mary's Church stands as a beacon, inviting all to partake in its timeless journey of faith, renewal, and community.

St Tewdric's Church, Mathern:



St Tewdric's Church in Mathern, Monmouthshire, Wales, stands as a venerable testament to centuries of spiritual devotion, reconstruction, and Victorian renewal. Believed to be built over the resting place of Saint Tewdrig, the church's roots date back to the 6th century, creating a sacred space that has withstood the tests of time.

The church derives its name from Saint Tewdrig, an esteemed figure whose resting place is purportedly beneath the sacred grounds. Saint Tewdric's legacy, intertwined with the history of Mathern, has fostered a sense of sanctity that echoes through the centuries.

The origins of St Tewdric's Church can be traced back to the 6th century, a testament to the enduring nature of faith in this hallowed ground. The site has served as a spiritual anchor for the community, witnessing the ebb and flow of centuries while remaining a steadfast beacon of devotion.

The Normans, recognizing the significance of this sacred site, undertook the reconstruction of St Tewdric's Church in the Early English style. Their architectural imprint, visible in the structure's form and design, further solidified the church's place as a focal point for worship and reflection.

The Victorian era witnessed a renewal of St Tewdric's Church, as the Victorians sought to preserve and enhance the historical and architectural integrity of this sacred space. This dedication to restoration culminated in the church being designated a Grade I listed building, recognizing its significance on a national level.

St Tewdric's Church stands proudly as a Grade I listed building, a distinction that acknowledges its architectural and historical importance. This designation safeguards the church's legacy, ensuring that future generations can continue to experience the spiritual resonance embedded in its walls.

St Tewdric's Church in Mathern, with its roots reaching back to the 6th century, encapsulates the enduring spirit of faith and community. From the purported resting place of Saint Tewdrig to the Norman reconstruction and Victorian renewal, each chapter in its history has added layers to the sacred tapestry that defines this hallowed ground. As the church continues to stand as a Grade I listed building, it remains an enduring sanctuary, inviting all to partake in its timeless journey of sanctity and devotion.

St Tecla's Chapel at Chapel Rock Holy Well:



Perched on a small island amidst the sweeping tides of the Severn Estuary, St Tecla's Chapel at Chapel Rock Holy Well emerges as a testament to spiritual solitude, resilience, and the enduring quest for healing waters. This sacred site, situated a mile south of the village of Beachley near the Severn Bridge, unfolds a rich tapestry of history and devotion.

St Tecla's Chapel, now in ruin, once stood proudly on this small island, bearing witness to services held during the low tide up until at least the mid-16th century. The chapel, in use during the 14th century, was an oasis of worship surrounded by the ever-changing estuarine landscape. Accessible only during low tide, the perilous journey added an air of reverence to the place.

Navigating the tidal waters to reach St Tecla's Chapel required courage and knowledge of the shifting currents. The chapel's location in the heart of the estuary rendered it an isolated haven for spiritual reflection and solitude. Even today, attempting to reach the chapel without understanding tidal conditions poses significant risks, underscoring the challenges faced by worshippers throughout history.

St Tecla, sometimes spelled Tecia or Treacla, is believed to have been a 4th or 5th-century anchoress who forsook her father's opulent life in Gwynedd to embrace Christian asceticism. The daughter of Requi or Reguli, a Roman of distinction, St Tecla met a tragic end, murdered by pirates. Despite her demise, her legacy lives on in dedications across Wales, including the remote Chapel Rock Holy Well.

Nestled within the ruins of the tiny chapel, St Tecla's holy well or sacred spring is believed to possess curative properties. Pilgrims seeking solace and healing waters have been drawn to this mystical spring, creating a tradition that endures within the chapel's remnants.

A small lighthouse now stands on the island, a modern symbol echoing the navigational significance of the chapel. In centuries past, a chapel dedicated to St Twrog, possibly housing a navigation light, replaced St Tecla's original refuge. However, the ravages of time left it in ruins before the 18th century.

St Tecla's Chapel at Chapel Rock Holy Well emerges from the tidal embrace of the Severn Estuary as a resilient testament to spiritual devotion and the quest for healing. The perilous journey through shifting tides and the isolation of the island adds layers of reverence to this sacred site. As the ruins echo tales of St Tecla's ascetic journey and the curative powers of the holy well, the chapel stands as a beacon, inviting contemplation, pilgrimage, and a connection to the spiritual currents that have flowed through this estuarine sanctuary across the ages.

The Great Flood of 1606/7



The Great Flood of 1606/7, synonymous with the Bristol Channel floods of 1607, stands as a haunting testament to the vulnerability of coastal regions, particularly the Severn Estuary and the Gwent Levels. This catastrophic event, etched into British history, unfolded on January 30, 1607, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape and communities of the time.

While the exact cause of the flood remains a topic of historical debate, consensus leans towards a convergence of factors. A storm surge, possibly intensified by high spring tides and atmospheric conditions, led to the breach of sea defences, unleashing a torrent that engulfed low-lying coastal areas.

The floodwaters surged across the Bristol Channel and Severn Estuary, inundating regions in both England and Wales. The Gwent Levels, characterized by marshes, wetlands, and reclaimed land, bore the brunt of the catastrophe. Coastal communities, farmlands, and settlements succumbed to the relentless deluge, resulting in widespread devastation.

The Gwent Levels, with its marshy terrain and reclaimed land, proved particularly susceptible to the advancing floodwaters. Breached sea defences led to the inundation of vast stretches of agricultural land, causing irreparable damage to crops, livestock, and settlements. Both rural and urban communities along the estuary grappled with the profound impact of the calamity.

The toll exacted by the flood extended beyond the physical landscape. Lives were lost, and communities faced widespread suffering. The destruction of farmlands brought economic hardship to those reliant on agriculture, further compounding the tragedy.

Historical accounts of the flood vary, with some suggesting additional factors like a tsunami or surge induced by underwater landslides. Contemporary records, including diaries, pamphlets, and official reports, provide invaluable insights into the human experience amidst the deluge, capturing the trauma of the affected communities.

The repercussions of the Great Flood of 1606/7 resonated far beyond its immediate aftermath. The disaster spurred conversations about the necessity for enhanced sea defences and flood protection measures. It etched a lasting imprint on the collective memory of impacted communities, influencing local folklore and cultural narratives.

In the wake of the flood, concerted efforts were undertaken to fortify flood defences along the estuary. Sea walls, embankments, and other protective measures were constructed to mitigate the risk of similar catastrophic events in the future.

The Great Flood of 1606/7 serves as a poignant reminder of the precarious nature of low-lying coastal areas in the face of natural disasters. Its enduring legacy

underscores the imperative of robust and adaptive flood management strategies in safeguarding communities inhabiting estuarine regions.

The Great Flood of 1606/7 had lasting consequences for the affected regions. It prompted discussions about the need for improved sea defences and flood protection measures. The disaster also left a lasting imprint on the collective memory of the communities impacted, influencing local folklore and cultural narratives.

In the aftermath of the flood, efforts were made to enhance flood defences along the estuary. The construction of sea walls, embankments, and other protective measures aimed to mitigate the risk of similar catastrophic events in the future.

The Great Flood of 1606/7 stands as a reminder of the vulnerability of low-lying coastal areas to natural disasters and the importance of effective flood management strategies in safeguarding communities in estuarine regions.

Summary

This collaborative article, presenting a concise history of the Churches on the Gwent Levels, is a joint effort by myself and John Gale from the Newport History Society. It aims to shed light on the rich and diverse heritage of these churches, each bearing witness to the cultural and historical tapestry woven across the Gwent Levels.

As we reflect on the individual narratives of St Mary the Virgin in Nash, St Mary Magdalene's in Goldcliff, the Church of Saint Mary in Llanwern, and many others, it becomes evident that these structures are not merely architectural marvels but repositories of centuries-old stories. The tales of floods, restorations, and the intricate details within the churches intertwine with the broader history of the communities they have served.

The Great Flood of 1606/7, a pivotal moment in the region's history, left an indelible mark on the landscape and collective memory. Its impact on these churches underscores the resilience and adaptability of communities as they navigated through times of adversity.

In the aftermath of the flood, the churches played a crucial role in providing solace and a sense of continuity. They became focal points for restoration efforts, symbolizing the enduring spirit of the people. The subsequent centuries saw a continuous interplay between historical events and the

churches' evolution, each chapter contributing to the layered narrative of the Gwent Levels.

This collaborative endeavour between myself and John Gale seeks to highlight not only the architectural significance of these churches but also the living history embedded in their walls.

As guardians of history, these churches stand as silent witnesses to the ebb and flow of time, linking generations and preserving the essence of the Gwent Levels' cultural heritage.

May this collective exploration inspire further appreciation for the Churches on the Gwent Levels and foster a deeper understanding of the intricate threads that bind them to the vibrant history of this unique landscape.

Graham T Emmanuel - 2024



Cydweli – Kidwelly

A Town Built on Honour, Strength, Courage — and Faith



The town's spiritual landscape

Celtic Christianity, Norman monastic foundations, later parish churches and chapels.

- ***Early Christianity (7th–11th century):*** The area was influenced by early Welsh saints like David, Cadoc, and Teilo, who helped establish Christian communities.
- ***Norman Influence (12th century):*** Around 1110, Bishop Roger of Salisbury founded a Benedictine priory, which played a central role in religious life.
- ***Medieval Worship (14th century):*** St. Mary's Church became a focal point, housing a revered alabaster statue of the Virgin Mary, attracting pilgrims.
- ***Reformation & Decline (16th century):*** The priory was suppressed in 1539, but St. Mary's Church remained active as the town's parish church.
- ***Nonconformist Chapels (18th–19th century):*** The rise of Methodism and other nonconformist movements led to the establishment of chapels, reflecting shifts in religious practice.

Through it all, faith has been at the heart of Kidwelly — in St Mary's Church, in the chapels that once filled our streets, and in the everyday lives of those who called this town home. It's that spirit, passed down through generations, that has made Kidwelly the place we know and love today.

The Early Christian Churches

Cunedda Wledig, an influential figure in the Cymric race, played a crucial role in shaping the early British Church, which evolved from its Romano-British predecessor. As both a Christian leader and a foundational figure in Welsh history, his legacy extended far beyond his own time. His descendants further cemented his influence, notably St. David, the revered bishop of the see bearing his name.

Tracing his lineage, St. David was Cunedda's great-grandson on his father's side, reinforcing the deep family connections within the religious and cultural framework of medieval Wales.

St. Cadoc's genealogy, though somewhat elusive, suggests a noble heritage. He is believed to be the son of Cuneglasos (Cynlas), lord of Glamorgan, and the grandson of Einion, a son of Cunedda. Another prominent figure, St. Teilo, descended from Ceredig, one of Cunedda's sons, making him a great-nephew to St. David.

Their intertwined legacies were particularly evident in their shared studies under Paulinus at Ty-gwyn-ar-Dâf (Whitland), where they refined their theological education and contributed to the shaping of the British Church's foundations.

Kidwelly parish holds significant traces of this rich past. The remnants of St. Teilo's Chapel, known as Capel Teilo, and Llangadog,

Capel Teilo.

Capel Teilo is believed to have functioned as a chapel of ease, serving the mountain-dwelling population of the Kidwelly parish. Historically, the parish was known to have five such chapels: Llanfihangel, Coker Cadog, St. Thomas, and Capel Teilo.

The chapel is thought to date from the 12th or 13th century, although the earliest documentary reference to it appears in 1593. The name Capel Teilo continued to be mentioned several times throughout the 17th century but had disappeared from maps by 1750. By 1762, it was reported to be in a ruinous state.

Capel Teilo is depicted on both historic and modern Ordnance Survey maps; however, it is only named on the first edition map of 1888. This depiction is believed to refer to a ruined farmhouse of the same name, noted in 1905 as lying approximately 200–300 yards west of the original chapel site. It has been suggested that a field hedge to the northeast of the chapel may have originally formed part of an enclosing bank.

A holy well, known as *Pistyll Teilo*, is located to the south of the chapel site, and in the 19th century, a flight of steps reportedly led to it.

By 1905, only the south wall of the chapel remained standing, rising to a height of 7–9 feet. The remains of other walls were still discernible. The structure measured approximately 26 feet in length by 15 feet in width. Remarkably, the interior plasterwork was noted to be well preserved at that time.

Between 1966 and 1969, the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society conducted archaeological excavations at the site. These revealed that the building was aligned on an east–west axis, with the ground sloping significantly downward toward the west. Evidence of an earlier structure was uncovered, including a cobbled surface beneath the current floor of irregular stone slabs.

Remains of an earlier wall were found partly overlain by the later north wall. On the south side of the altar, an earlier wall—about two feet thick—ran just inside the course of the later south wall. All walls were constructed of rubble stone and measured around 2.5 feet thick. Outside the east wall, the possible trace of an earlier apse wall was also identified.

Interestingly, no structural division was found between the nave and chancel of the existing building. Remains of a slate roof were discovered and are thought to date from the 13th to 15th century. These were found alongside a crude step of white stones—located approximately 8 feet from the east wall and extending 3 feet from the north wall. This footing suggests an altar width of around 7 feet.

Several burials were also identified during the excavation. The skeleton of a male, approximately 15 years old, was found in a shallow grave east of the chapel, aligned east–west with arms folded across the chest. A single copper button, dated to the 18th century, was found on the chest area.

In the southeast corner of the building, the skeletons of three or more infants were discovered. These were buried close to the surface and without any clear orientation. Since burial outside the main parish church was uncommon prior to the 19th century, it has been suggested that these remains may represent un-consecrated burials.

The Church of Cadoc, serve as historical markers of their contributions. A preserved area called Waunadogog, or Cadoc's meadow, further attests to the deep roots of these figures in the region. Maurice de Londres, a powerful noble, granted twelve acres of land surrounding the Church of St. Cadoc—adjacent to St. Mary's lands—for the salvation of his soul and ancestors.

The undated charter, housed in the Public Record Office, was addressed to David, Bishop of St. David's, likely placing the transaction between 1147 and 1176, during Bishop David Fitzgerald's tenure.

The origins of ancient Welsh churches, often named after their founders rather than canonized saints, continue to spark debate. The ruins of St. Teilo's Church in Kidwelly suggest a modest structure, possibly serving as an oratory, challenging long-held assumptions about its significance.

Moreover, Kidwelly's position along inter-tribal roads and a major Roman communication route suggests an advanced settlement far removed from primitive conditions. This perspective reshapes historical narratives, highlighting a more sophisticated civilization than traditionally believed.

As Welsh saint foundations declined in the 8th century, religious sites transitioned towards parish and diocesan establishments. One such site, Llandydoch, located in

the parish of Maenllwyd-mawr, reportedly featured stone foundations and a well named Ffynnon Ddewi, later known as St. Michael's Well.

Over time, dedications to St. Michael gained prominence within Welsh religious tradition, reflecting broader shifts in ecclesiastical practices.

The Priory of Kidwelly

The Priory of Kidwelly, founded in 1130 by Roger, the Bishop of Salisbury, belonged to the Benedictine order and served as a monastic establishment for a Prior and two monks. Roger, a notable ecclesiastic of his time, played a significant role in the history of England during the reign of Henry I. Initially a priest in Caen, he later became Chief Justiciary, Treasurer, and eventually the bishop of Salisbury. His involvement in State affairs and capable administration earned him the confidence of the monarchy.

Roger's connection with Kidwelly began with his expedition to Gower and his journey along the coast through Carnwyllion to Kidwelly. Kidwelly, with its unconquered and resistant inhabitants, seemed to hold a special attraction for him. It is suggested that he secured a grant of the district from his sovereign, establishing his possessions at Kidwelly in the early 12th century.

In the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291, it is documented that the Prior of Kidwelly possessed one carucate of land with associated rents and perquisites, valued at £2 10s. The temporalities of the Priory in the 26th year of King Henry VIII were listed in the 'Valor Ecclesiasticus,' indicating a total worth of £38, with deductions for various payments, leaving a clear income of £29 10s.

A document from 1428, preserved in the Public Record Office, reveals an ecclesiastical proceeding where the prior and convent of Kidwelly claimed two parts of the tithes, including those from wool, milk, cheese, and lambs, on specific lands within the parish of St. Mary of Kidwelly. The prior and convent were awarded these tithes as rectors through a legal judgment.

This historical overview showcases the Priory of Kidwelly's foundation, its connection to Roger, and its economic aspects as documented in historical records.

THE SITUATION OF THE PRIORY

Persistent claims have been made suggesting that the ancient ruins at Penallt, located between Kidwelly and the mouth of the river Towy, approximately a mile from the former, are the remnants of Kidwelly Priory. However, this assertion must be regarded as conjecture, lacking supportive evidence. Documents refer to the 'Church of Penallt,' but no mention of the Priory of Penallt is found.

The 'Church of Penallt' is consistently distinguished from Kidwelly Priory and its associated churches, such as St. Ishmael and Pembrey. Hence, the actual situation of Kidwelly Priory demands consideration elsewhere.

Thankfully, abundant evidence, both documentary and otherwise, supports associating the priory with the extant ruins on the left bank of the Lesser Gwendraeth, adjacent to the east boundary wall of the present parish churchyard.

Historical documents indicate that the monks were granted land by Norman landowners for monastic purposes, usually barren and unfertile tracts. Kidwelly's monks, however, seem to have received a more generous grant, likely due to the ecclesiastical status of the donor, Roger, Bishop of Salisbury.

Roger's careful consideration of the priory's requirements, including proximity to the existing church and access to a stream, speaks to his thoughtful allocation of land.

The religious community's real property consisted of a carucate of land, equivalent to a plough-land ploughable with one team of oxen in a year—a term introduced by the Normans. The present-day gardens in Lady Street were once known as 'the priory fields,' indicating the extent of the priory's holdings.

Court Rolls from the Prior's Court held at Kidwelly provide insights into social life, property tenure, and dispute resolution during that era. They also reflect an intermingling of Welsh and foreign settlers.

The records of the Prior's Court in the early 14th century reveal legal disputes and transactions involving tenements in Lady Street. These transactions provide a glimpse into property ownership, fines for entry, and the intricacies of life in medieval Kidwelly. St. Mary Street (now Lady Street) is specifically mentioned, emphasizing its ownership by the prior.

In addition to some priory land remaining under cultivation, parts were let out for tenements, potentially increasing the property's overall value. This income, coupled with the monks' frugality, may have contributed to the construction of the present Parish Church as an expression of their devotion.

A List of the Priors of Kidwelly is provided, offering the names and years of service for eight priors. Although the list covers 236 years, it is acknowledged that Prior Galfridus de Coker likely succeeded others whose details are difficult to ascertain due to the priory's earlier foundation in 1130. The last prior was John Godmyster, serving at the time of the Dissolution.

The Dissolution of the Priory occurred during the suppression of monasteries, resulting in the merging of the priory into the Crown's possession. In 1544, certain individuals leased the monastic properties, as detailed in a document available in the Public Record Office.

The leased possessions included the priory's site, buildings, cemeteries, and other features. Notably, a yearly pension of £8 to the vicar was exempted from the lease.

CONSECRATION OF AN ANCIENT CEMETERY

Three days after the execution of the deed through which Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, granted certain lands to Sherborne Abbey, the same benefactor took steps to set aside and consecrate a cemetery in Kidwelly. This action occurred "with the license and consent of Wilfrid, Bishop of St. David's.

While the exact date of the document is unspecified, the inclusion of the bishop's name aids in approximating both the land grant and the cemetery's consecration. Wilfrid, also known as Griffri, Jeffrey, and Gryfyt, was the final Welsh bishop of St. Davids before Norman rule, and he appears in the official list under his Welsh name Griffri.

His tenure spanned from 1096 to 1112, and he passed away in 1112, succeeded by Bernard, the first Norman bishop of St. Davids. Consequently, the document and the cemetery's consecration likely predate 1112. Given that Wilfrid held the position from 1096 to 1112, the consecration must have taken place between these years.

Considering that Henry I ascended the throne in 1100 and Roger gained prominence during his reign, these local transactions likely occurred between 1100 and 1112. The cemetery in question likely corresponds to the area numbered 760 on the Ordnance Map of 1880 and 62 on the 1907 map. This site is situated adjacent to the Llansaint road, approximately 300 yards from the castle where the initial land deed was executed. Notably, this enclosure is still commonly recognized as Mynwent Domos or St. Thomas's Cemetery.



St Thomas Chapel was reportedly one of the five chapels of ease serving Kidwelly parish, with the other four identified as Llanfihangel, Coker Cadog, and Teilo.

The cemetery occupied a field to the north of Kidwelly, which retained the name Mynwent Domos into the early 20th century. Human remains were reportedly disturbed in adjacent gardens during the 19th century. It is presumed that the chapel building was situated either within the cemetery or in close proximity to it.

It is plausible that an oratory was established in conjunction with this burial ground, which aligns with the tradition asserting the presence of an ancient chapel on the site.

THE VICARIATE OF KIDWELLY.

The allocation of a yearly pension of £8 to the Vicar points to the existence of a Vicariate at Kidwelly during the priory's dissolution. The ecclesiastical suit mentioned earlier also lends support to the idea of a vicariate, as it can be assumed that the third portion of the tithes, not claimed by the prior and convent, belonged to the vicar.



There is compelling evidence for the existence of the vicariate during the priory's dissolution. It is also likely that the vicariate of Kidwelly was established at the beginning of the 14th century. In a Court Roll an entry from the Court of the Prior of Kidwelly, held on the day of S. Kalixtus, Pope and Martyr, A.D. 1310, reveals an interesting note: 'Nicholas Kyngman excuses himself against Thomas Cas on plea of debt by Thomas, the Vicar.'

While vicarages are commonly believed to have been established in the eighth year of Henry II (A.D. 1162), 'Alwyn' might not have been a vicar according to the general understanding of the term. However, he is specifically denominated as 'the Priest of the town' in the deed whereby a grant of land was made by Roger, bishop of Salisbury, to Sherborne Abbey, probably within the first decade of the 12th century (see Appendix A).

John Griffith's appointment was made subject to the condition that 'an annual pension of 26s. 8d. be reserved to the previous Incumbent (John Chayny) until he is appointed to a cure' - Bishop's Register.

Roger Prichard was a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford.

Vicarage House: This residence was constructed in 1895, based on plans prepared by Mr. Thomas Arnold, architect, Llanelly. The total cost of the building was £1,804.

The provided information was extracted from the book "A History of Kidwelly" by The Rev. D. Daven Jones, B.A., Vicar in 1908.

Exploring Religious Influences in Kidwelly: A Compilation of Research Findings

This compilation represents my investigation into the rich tapestry of religious influences that have shaped Kidwelly over the years. I invite you to delve into the enlightening discoveries I've made, offering insights into the diverse religious landscape that has left an enduring mark on this community.

St Mary's Church



St. Mary's Church in Kidwelly is a historically rich and architecturally significant place. Situated approximately 50 meters south of the Gwendraeth Fach estuary, the church has a long history dating back to pre-conquest times, believed to be dedicated to St. Cadog in its original form.

During the medieval period, the church was part of the Deanery of Kidwelly. It became a priory between 1107 and 1115, granted to the Benedictines of Sherborne Abbey by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, and the lord of Kidwelly. The priory, despite its location west of the church, remained relatively poor throughout its existence, with only one monk recorded in 1377. After its dissolution in 1539, the patronage transferred to the Crown.

The church itself is an impressive Grade I listed building, recognized as the largest parish church in southwest Wales. Its exceptional features include a striking broach spire and intricate Decorated Gothic detailing. The construction incorporates mixed rubble stone with yellow oolite and Old Red Sandstone dressings.

The original church was reported to have burned down in the thirteenth century. The existing structure, with its distinctive features, such as ballflowers, wave-mouldings, and tablet-flowers, dates primarily to the mid-fourteenth century. The nave was the main parish church during medieval times, and the chancel served as the monastic priory church.

The tower, one of the earliest in the region, dates to around 1400 and is believed to have been added to the existing nave north door. Over the centuries, various additions, alterations, and restoration efforts have taken place, preserving the church's historical and architectural integrity. The church was restored in 1884, introducing elements like the oolite and Portland stone font, free-standing pews, and a new belfry clock.

St. Mary's Church stands as a remarkable symbol of religious and historical heritage, drawing visitors to appreciate its intricate design and immerse themselves in its storied past.

St Mary's Memorial Links. <http://tinyurl.com/StMary-Memorials>



The current parish church stands upon the foundation of its predecessor, likely a temporary structure built after the church, along with the town, was reportedly destroyed by Prince Llewelyn in 1222. A rare exception to the widespread suppression of monasteries, it survived and became the parish church, similar to Brecon and Monkton priory churches in the diocese of St. Davids.

Dedicated to St. Mary, the church exemplifies the Decorated Style in the diocese, featuring a spacious nave, short transepts, and a lofty tower topped by an elegant spire. Described by Archdeacon Bevan as a notable example of Norman influence, Marian dedications were prevalent, especially in towns and near Norman castles or Cistercian monasteries.

Sir George Gilbert Scott's 1854 report, prepared for a potential restoration, notes the church's remarkable characteristics. The nave, with an unusual 33-foot span, lacks aisles, while the chancel, small north and south transepts, tower, and spire form a simple cross. Originally, the tower and porch were midway between the western angles and the transepts, but the nave has since been shortened.

Despite initial impressions, Scott suggests the entire church, except for later alterations, was likely built around the end of Edward II's reign or early in Edward III's. Although the chancel exhibits rich flowing tracery and the tower features severe lancet windows, Scott argues this is a stylistic choice rather than indicative of distinct construction periods. Similarities in the mouldings of doorways, including those in the tower, and the arches into the chancel and transepts support the conclusion that they are all of the same era.

With the absence of window tracery in the nave, an objection could arise, suggesting the nave, along with the transept and chancel arches, predates the chancel. However, two features counter this notion. First, a loophole on the south side of the nave aligns with the style and age of the chancel. Second, a staircase in the tower, featuring an ogee arch, also points to the same period. These findings, coupled with the overall unity of the plan, lead to the conclusion that the entire structure is of one date, and the lancet windows in the tower result from an economy-driven decision.

Despite its severe simplicity, the tower is a grand structure, marked by its considerable size and a plain, unperforated spire. Externally, it combines the typical features of its era with those distinct to the region, notably the high battering basement common in Welsh towers. Internally, the lower story of the tower is vaulted, featuring rough stone facing, creating a uniquely picturesque character.

The nave, both inside and out, maintains a straightforward character. The windows, now reduced to arched openings due to the loss of mullions and tracery, include a late perpendicular west window, a product of the nave's shortening. The remaining internal features include three bold and well-designed arches and simple yet good

doorways. The transepts share a similar condition with the nave, and the south transept contains a window retaining its mullion, likely not from the original date. Several arched recesses for tombs are found in this transept, with sepulchral slabs discovered in both transepts.

The chancel, from the outset, was the most finely finished and retains much of its original beauty. The east window, once boasting five lights, has lost its mullions and tracery. Nevertheless, surviving windows on the south side showcase excellent tracery, while the north side's windows, although blocked, hint at near-perfect preservation. The sedilia and piscina in the chancel remain intact and exhibit very good design.

The vestry has been mostly rebuilt on the old foundation, previously consisting of two stories. The stairs to the upper story remain, featuring a perfectly preserved traceried loophole opening into the chancel. On the opposite side of the vestry door are well-moulded octagonal brackets for lights.

The chancel arch is segmental and very low, not rising above the height of the side walls of the nave. A blocked rood-stair entrance suggests that it might have opened over the chancel arch, possibly extending over it, offering an explanation for the arch's low height.

The roofs are of a later date, with the chancel roof likely dating back to the time of James I, and the nave roof probably from the 18th century, displaying signs of decay in several areas.

Despite the late date of the roofs, the walls, characterized by their massive thickness, remain generally sound. However, the parapet of the tower is mostly gone, and the upper part of the spire has been poorly rebuilt, compromising its symmetry.

After the calamity that struck the parish church in 1884, when lightning struck the spire, causing top masonry to damage the nave roof, restoration work was carried out under the direction of Messrs. Middleton and Prothero, Architects. The spire, previously poorly rebuilt after a similar incident in the 19th century, was restored to its original symmetrical proportions. In 1904, during another renovation, the spire was also pierced. The west window, criticized for its rudimentary style, was replaced with a perpendicular window of superior style and workmanship. The other windows in the nave received new mullions, though not retaining the original tracery. The nave roof, impressively supported by massive walls, stands as a testament to the skill of the designers.

While Sir Gilbert Scott suggested a construction date "about the end of the reign of Edward II, or early in that of Edward III," this view faced challenges. Dr. Freeman argued that the church featured a 14th-century nave added to a 13th-century tower,

while Mr. Edward Laws identified certain chancel elements as early English in style during a visit in 1906. Sir Gilbert Scott, after a more thorough examination, concluded that the entire church belonged to one age, emphasizing the resemblance between the tower doorways' mouldings and those of the chancel and transept arches.

The second point of similarity is observed between the loophole in the south wall of the nave staircase and another in the tower staircase. Both exhibit similar arches, suggesting their contemporaneous construction. The transition from the Early English to the Decorated style is recognized as gradual, making it challenging to establish a clear demarcation between them. The styles are often subdivided into early, middle, and late, with early stages sometimes blending with the previous style and later stages extending into the subsequent one. Given the consensus placing this church in the incipient stage of the Decorated period, around the late 13th or early 14th century, there's reason to believe that Early English elements might have persisted during the transition to the Early Decorated style.

Architectural Features:

1. Numerous staircases within the walls.
2. Unusually low chancel arch.
3. Segmental character of the main arches.
4. Broad nave with the absence of aisles.
5. Abrupt terminations of the transepts.
6. Numerous sepulchral recesses.

The building accommodates four staircases within its walls. The south wall staircase in the nave may have served as an approach to a rostrum for reading the Epistle, while the one accessible from the north transept likely led to a similar rostrum for reading the Gospel. A spiral staircase near the chancel and south transept arch pillars likely led to the rood loft. Adjacent to its entrance is a stoup, possibly used for ablution before ascending to the rood loft. Another staircase is situated in the sacristy or vestry wall, starting from what was originally the first floor. The traceried loophole in this staircase served as both a window and potentially a squint, suggesting that the first floor might have been used as an anchorite cell.

Circular loopholes with tracery resembling a wheel were often indicative of anchorages attached to churches. These cells were occupied by anchorites, voluntarily bound by a vow of seclusion, sometimes for life. Female recluses, seeking protection and religious advantages, often resided in such cells. Typically, these cells had three shuttered windows: one to a chamber for the anchorite's attendant, another for necessary communication with the outside, and a third, like the mentioned loophole, offering a view into the church's sanctuary.

The unusual low position of the chancel arch may be explained by the assumption, supported by the height of the spiral staircase, that the rood loft extended above the arch. The segmental formation of this arch, along with other main arches, creates an angle with the pillar abruptly and lacks continuous impost or capitals to the shafts. The corbels supporting the canopy over the loft remain preserved in the wall. Dr. Freeman notes that the change of mouldings at the junction is rare in England and resembles later French work.

The extraordinary breadth of the nave without aisles is also believed, by Dr. Freeman, to be reminiscent of some South Gaulish churches. The transepts directly start from the nave, not from a central tower as commonly seen in monastic churches. Their unsymmetrical abruptness supports the earlier contention that they are mere annexations to the main building.

There are a total of six arched sepulchral tombs, two each in the chancel, south chapel, and nave. The chancel and nave tombs lack monumental slabs, while one in the south chapel holds a recumbent effigy and another a slab with an incised cross, believed to be from the 15th century. The sepulchral arch in the north wall of the sacarium might have been used as a recess for entombing the rood or Crucifix in the rood-loft during the interval between Good Friday and Easter Day. Additionally, a monument, now placed in an upright position in the south chapel, commemorates a civilian from the 14th century, clad in the tunica talaris.

The church boasts a unique figure of the Virgin in pure white alabaster, crowned and bearing the infant Saviour and a bird. Despite considerable mutilation due to Puritanical times and rough handling, it remains a good specimen of 15th-century art. The figure was once positioned in the niche above the south porch door, where parishioners curtsied to it. Removed in 1875, it is now in the sacristy awaiting restoration, but its original place was likely the niche on the south side of the east end of the nave, beneath the rood-loft and above the spiral rood-stairs' approach.

The Church Plate - The inventory of goods belonging to the church, returned by the Commissioners appointed during the beginning of the reign of Edward VI (1552), listed various items, including 2 chalices of silver, partly gilt, a small cross of silver, partly gilt, a censer of silver, a pyx of silver, and 4 bells, great and small. Additionally, one chalice was noted to be in the possession of Morys ap Rhys, Gent. Unfortunately, there is no current information available about these items. The oldest surviving vessels are a silver chalice and paten, both from the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1574). The chalice, considered by experts to be one of the finest examples of Elizabethan ecclesiastical plate in the diocese of St. Davids, is inscribed in Latin with 'Poculum * Ecclesie * de * Kydwelly * 15 * 74.'

The Registers - The parochial records date back to 1626, with apparent extracts from a previous register dating from 1586. All entries until 1733 are in Latin and are presented in bold and legible calligraphy. The systematic registration of baptisms, marriages, and burials was established at the end of Henry VIII's reign. A royal injunction issued by Thomas Cromwell, Vicar-General, on September 29, 1538, mandated every parish incumbent to maintain a register. This register, to be taken forth every Sunday in the presence of the churchwardens, documented weddings, christenings, and burials from the preceding week. Initially, register books were made of paper, but in 1597, a law required each parish to acquire a parchment book for transcribing entries from paper registers. This explains the entries at the beginning of Kidwelly's earliest parchment register, believed to be copies from a prior record book.

One particularly noteworthy entry in the local registers recounts an unfortunate event and reflects an antiquated atmospheric idea. It states:

"On the 29th day of October 1481, the steeple of Kidwelly fell down by lightning and a clap of thunder between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. - From lightning and tempest; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us."

Church Restoration - Following the lightning disaster of 1884, a comprehensive church restoration plan was implemented, costing £1813 8s. 1d.

Church Bells - Kidwelly's parish church belfry has housed a peal of bells for many years, with a local saying that "Kidwelly bells were heard at Swansea." Tradition suggests that the bells intended for Kidwelly were mistakenly taken to Swansea by sea. Despite this, Kidwelly later acquired a splendid pipe organ in 1907 from St. Mary's Church, Swansea. An excerpt from *The New Monthly Magazine* (March 1820) mentions the revival of church bellringing in Kidwelly after years of deprivation, with new bells replacing broken ones.

The present peal comprises six bells, fixed for chiming only to preserve tower masonry safety. Recast by Charles Carr, Ltd., Bell-founders, Smethwick, in 1902 at a cost of £140, they were dedicated, along with a new altar and reredos, by the Lord Bishop of St. Davids on May 3rd the same year.

Town Clock - Housed in the church steeple, the town clock, which had stopped after lightning damage in 1884, was restored in 1902. The dials were elevated, at the expense of the municipal corporation, in commemoration of the Coronation of King Edward VII.

Siloam Chapel in Cydweli/Kidwelly: A Historical Architectural Gem

Siloam Chapel, nestled in the heart of the picturesque town of Kidwelly, Wales, stands as a testament to the intersection of history, faith, and architectural prowess. Its origins trace back to the year 1821 when the first foundations of this sacred edifice were laid, marking the beginning of a spiritual journey that would endure for centuries.



83A Siloam Bapt. Kidwelly. 1991.

The Baptist movement in Kidwelly traces its roots back to 1796 when an old brewery in Alstred Street became its first meeting place, complete with a pulpit and benches. As the number of worshippers steadily increased, the original brewery became inadequate, leading to the construction of a new chapel at the current site in 1821.

In 1892, the chapel underwent a significant reconstruction, costing £1500, resulting in a spacious facility with seating for 550 people. When Rev. H. R. Jones assumed the ministry of Siloam in 1902, the membership stood at 104. By 1935, under his leadership, the congregation had grown to 200 worshippers. Siloam Chapel holds the distinction of ordaining not only members of the Reynolds family but also three other locals into the Ministry: Rev. Ben Jones (Maesteg), Rev. Richard Vaughan Jones (Aberbargoed), and Rev. Glyn Williams (Aberdare).

List of Ministers:

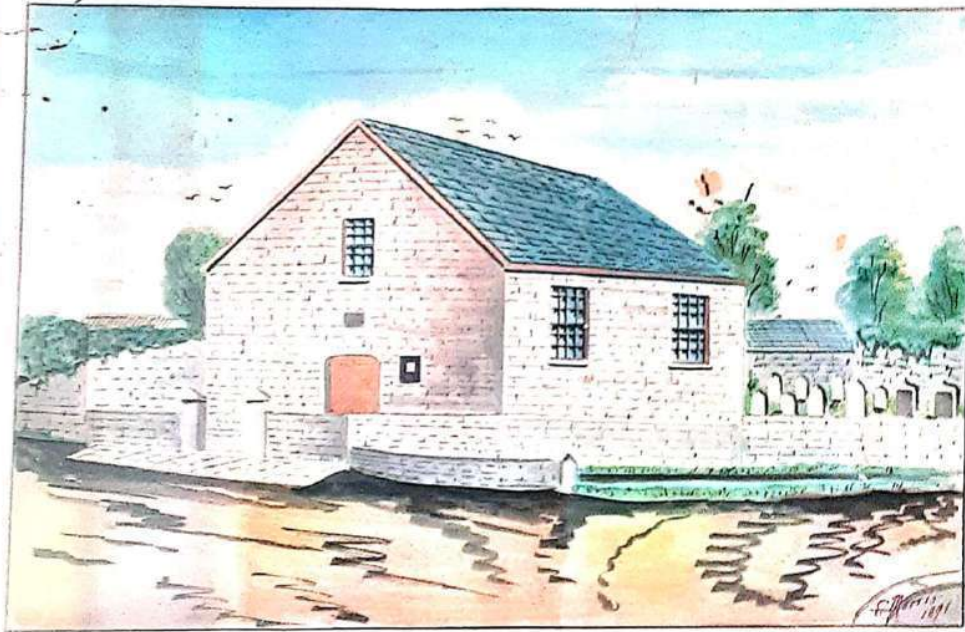
- John Reynolds Sn (1834)
- George Reynolds (1860-1861)
- John Reynolds Jr (1860-1861)
- Hugh Robert Jones (1902)
- W. O. Williams (1941)
- Meurig Thomas (1966)

The present trustees include Mrs. Rosemary Brookman, Mr. Iorwerth Davies, Mr. Dyfrig Evans, Mrs. Eirlys Jones, Miss Mair Jones, Mr. Anthony Lewis, Mr. John Morgan, and Miss Mair.

Original Chapel.

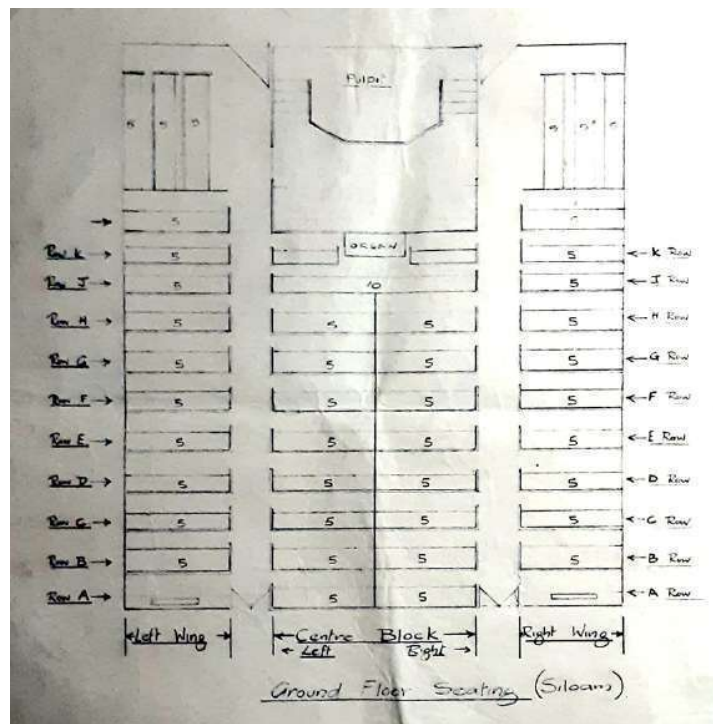


Original proposed Design



Silams & Habliss Papers
Kidney, 1911

Ground Floor Layout



majestic simplicity, beckons all who pass by to witness the sanctuary within. This architectural choice not only serves a practical purpose but also contributes to the chapel's aesthetic allure, defining its presence in the historical tapestry of Kidwelly.

Architect George Morgan's Legacy

The visionary behind Siloam Chapel's rejuvenation was the esteemed architect George Morgan of Carmarthen. His artistry and meticulous planning are evident in every facet of the chapel's design. George Morgan's influence has left an indelible mark on the architectural landscape of Kidwelly, and Siloam Chapel stands as a living testament to his creative genius.

Cydweli/Kidwelly: A Cultural Haven

Situated in the charming town of Kidwelly, also known as Cydweli, Siloam Chapel has been more than a place of worship. It has been a cultural and spiritual epicentre, weaving itself into the fabric of the community. The chapel's walls resonate with the echoes of prayers, hymns, and communal gatherings that have defined the town's history.

In conclusion, Siloam Chapel in Cydweli/Kidwelly stands not only as a place of worship but as a living chronicle of architectural evolution and community heritage. Its enduring presence invites all to appreciate the harmonious blend of history and faith encapsulated within its walls.



Siloam Baptist Choir 1913



Kidwelly Group 1933





POST CARD

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE



Top L > R

Archie McNally, Edna Walters (Hoig), Richard Vaughan Jones (Row)
Doris Harris, ?

Bottom L > R

Robert James, Rachel Nicholas, ? Lloyd (Producer-Transiron)
Elizabeth James (Sins) Ed- Vaughan Jones, Gwen Walters (Doris)

Siloam Baptist Church Ministers: A Legacy of Faith

The history of Siloam Chapel in Kidwelly is intricately woven with the spiritual tapestry of , whose presence and influence as ministers have left an indelible mark on the town's religious landscape.

Rev. John Reynolds (1798–1878): The spiritual journey commenced with the esteemed Rev. John Reynolds, born in Kidwelly in 1798. A dedicated minister, he served as a beacon of faith in Siloam Baptist Church. Rev. John Reynolds married Anne Henshaw Reynolds in 1816, and together they raised five children over 14 years. His long and impactful life concluded on 22nd November 1878 in Kidwelly.

Rev. John Reynolds, Baptist Minister to Kidwelly, passionately preached the Gospel of Christ for 60 years. He served as the pastor of Siloam for 44 years and the church at Ferry side for 35 years.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262908823/john-reynolds>

Rev. George Reynolds (1824–1895): Continuing the family legacy, two of Rev. John Reynolds' sons followed in their father's footsteps. Notably, Rev. George Reynolds, born in 1824, emerged as a prominent figure in the Siloam Baptist Church. His devotion to ministry was matched only by his commitment to family. George married Margaret Hughes in 1845 and later Mary Edwards Reynolds, with whom he had ten children. Reverend George Reynolds passed away on 29th March 1895, leaving behind a lasting impact on the community.

Rev George Reynolds



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262909501/george-reynolds>

Mary Edwards Reynolds



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262909637/mary-reynolds>

A glimpse into his final moments reveals his unwavering faith, captured in the poignant verses written by him at the time of his passing. Despite a prolonged illness, his spirit remained resilient, finding solace in the lyrics penned during his Room of Affliction.

PENILLION O YSTAFELL CYSTUDD

GAN Y DIWEDDAR

BARC. GEORGE REYNOLDS, CYDWELI.

Bu farw Mawrth 29ain, 1895, yn 71 oed. Claddwyd ef yn Mynwent Siloam Ebrill 2il, 1895.

Yn ei gystudd hir a phoenus, a phan wedi colli archwaeth at fwydydd, methodd ddal yr olyyfa a hir garai mewn iechyd, sef, ei deulu lluosog ar adeg lon y Nadolig wrth y bwrdd gartref. Tafiodd gadach dros ei wyneb, a chanodd fel y canlyn.—TALMAI.

'R WY'N cau fy llygaid rhag i'm wel'd
Amrywiol fwydydd bras,
Rhag imi gael fy nhemtio'n awr
I brofi peth o'u blas.

Pe gwnawn ond profi gronyn bach
O'r bwydydd mwyaf pur,
Nid hir y buaswn cyn cael poen,
A phrofi brathol gur.

Wrth feddwl am fy nghyflwr tlawd
'Rwy'n wylo lawer tro,
Am na chawn brofi hyfryd flas
Danteithion bras fy mro.

Mae'm teulu wrth y bwrdd yn iach,
Mewn mwyniant eithaf llon,
A minau'n gorfod cadw draw—
O ! dyma loes i'm bron.

Pe cawn wybodaeth gan ryw un
Am gyffêr i'm iachau,
Mi roddwn iddo glod didwyll
Tra'm dyddiau yn parhau.

Tystiolaeth y meddygon oll
Nad oes dim ganddynt hwy
I wella un sydd 'nawr mor wan,
Ac i iachau fy nghlwy'.

Gan fod meddygon enwog ryw
Mor eiddil a diwerth,
Mi drof fy ngwyneb at fy Nuw
Am adnewyddiad nerth.

Cydweli, Nadolig, 1894.

"O ! Iesu mawr, y Meddyg gwell"
Na holl feddygon llawr,
Rho imi brawf ar hyn o bryd
O'th Ddwyfol allu mawr.

"Os ewyllysi, gelli Di"
Fy ngwella'n rhwydd a rhad ;
"O ! d'wed y gair," a digon yw,
Ac yna caf iachad.

Ond os na cha' fy nghorph iachad
Yr ochr hon i'r bedd,
O ! Dduw, cymhwysa'm, enaid tlawd
I fyn'd i wlad yr hedd.

Lle nad oes gofid, poen, na chur,
Yn blino neb o'r saint,
Ond moli'r Oen ag uchel lef
Am eu rhagorol fraint.

Henffych i'r dydd y bydd y corph
A'r enaid byth yn rhydd
Oddiwrth effeithiau pechod blin—
O ! hyfryd, ddedwydd ddydd.

Fe fydd rhyw dyrfa fawr ddirif
Yn iach, heb friw na phoen,
Ac wedi 'u gwneud yn berffaith lân
Drwy rinwedd gwaed yr Oen.

GEORGE REYNOLDS.

Poems from the Room of Affliction

By the Late Respected George Reynolds, Conversation

George Reynolds passed away on March 29th, 1895, at the age of 71, and found his final resting place in Siloam Cemetery on April 2nd, 1895.

In the throes of a prolonged and painful illness, during a time when his appetite had waned, George lamented the inability to partake in the cherished view he once enjoyed during the Christmas festivities with his large family gathered around the table at home. In a poignant moment, he covered his face with a cloth and expressed his feelings through song, which follows:

TALMAI, I close my eyes so that I don't see various coarse foods, lest I be tempted now to experience some of their taste.

If we only tried a small particle of the purest foods, it wouldn't be long before I had pain, and experienced a bitter bite.

When I think of my poor state I weep many times, Because I don't get to experience the wonderful taste of my heart's rich delicacies.

My family at the table is healthy, In quite happy enjoyment, And I have to stay away- Oh! this hurt my breast.

If we should receive information from someone For the purpose of healing me, I would give him sincere credit While my days continue.

The testimony of all the doctors That they have nothing to heal one who is 'now so weak, and to heal my disease'.

Since some famous doctors are so frail and useless, I turn my face to my God for renewed strength.

Kidwelly, Christmas, 1894.

"Oh! Great Jesus, the better Doctor
Than all the floor doctors,
Give me proof right now
Of your great Divine power.

"If you will, you can"
Heal me easily and cheaply;
"Oh! the word says," and that's enough,
And then I will be healed.

But if my body does not heal
This side of the grave,
Oh! God, enable my poor soul to go to the land of peace.

Where there is no sorrow, pain, or beating,
Tires any of the saints,
But praise the Lamb with a loud voice
For their excellent privilege.

Hail to the day when the body and the soul will never be free
From the effects of grievous sin-
Oh! lovely, happy day.

There will be a large numberless crowd
Healthy, without wound or pain,
And made perfect through the virtue of the blood of the Lamb.

GEORGE REYNOLDS.

Rev. John Reynolds (1828–1899)

Born in 1828 in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, John Reynolds was the son of John and Ann. His father, John, was 30, and his mother, Ann, was 36 at the time of his birth. In April 1849, he married Anne Morris in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, and they were blessed with six children during their marriage.

John Reynolds, a devoted minister, served as a beacon of faith at Siloam Church for 17 years. Following the passing of his father in 1878, he shouldered the responsibility of ministry for several years, not only at Siloam Church but also at Baptist churches in the vicinity. His unwavering commitment to his faith and community marked him as a pillar of strength.

He departed on November 21, 1899, in Carmarthenshire, leaving behind a legacy of dedicated service. The following words, penned in a moment of reflection, capture the essence of his enduring faith:



"REV JOHN REYNOLDS SERVED AS A MINISTER AT
SILOAM CHURCH FOR 17 YEARS.
AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH IN 1878,
HE TOOK ON THE MINISTRY FOR SEVERAL YEARS AT
BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE VICINITY AND ALSO
AT THIS CHURCH UNTIL HIS PASSING.
HE DEPARTED ON NOVEMBER 21, 1899,
AT THE AGE OF 71.
'THIS HOUR, O LORD, IS THE LORD'S,
THE BLESSING IN A SPECIAL WAY,
OF RECALLING TO MEMORY,
THE DEAR ONES OF THE PAST
WHOSE EYES SAW THY SALVATION.
OH, FOR A FRIEND LIKE JESUS TO STAND BY ME
WHEN I'M IN NEED.
IN THE GOLDEN SWEET BY AND BY,
HE WILL BE MY GUIDE TO SING HIS PRAISES ETERNALLY."

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262993328/john-reynolds>

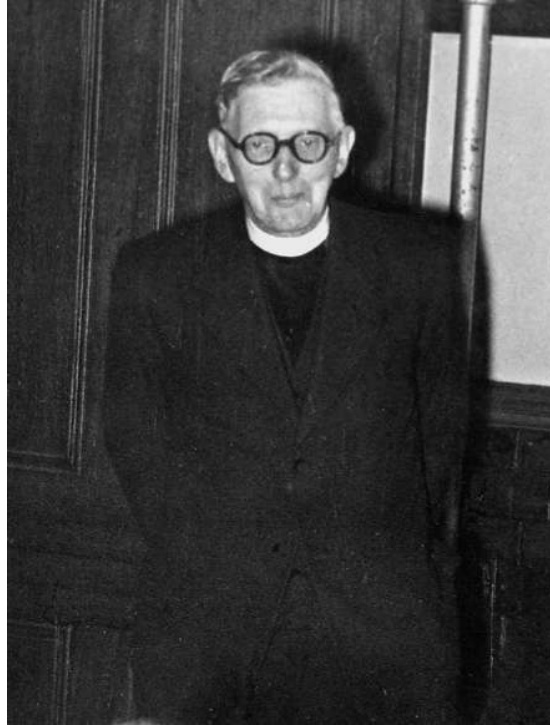
Rev. Hugh Robert Jones (1875–1939)

Born in Carnarvon in 1875, Hugh Robert Jones, son of Morgan and Margaret, married Mary Vaughan in 1900. With six children over 14 years, he passed away in 1939 in Kidwelly at the age of 64.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262825121/hugh-roberts-jones>

Rev. Henry Mostyn Jones (1883–1962)

Born on 10 May 1883 in Ffynnongroyw, Holywell, Flintshire, Rev. Henry Mostyn Jones, son of Evan and Jane, had a son and a daughter with **Emily Kate Reynolds** the daughter of the **Rev George Reynolds (1823 – 1895)**. His ministry concluded on 13 December 1962 at the age of 79.



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262958601/henry-mostyn-jones>

These ministers, through their dedication and spiritual leadership, have left an enduring legacy at Siloam Chapel, shaping the religious fabric of Kidwelly.

Memorials

The documentation of memorials at Siloam Cemetery is an ongoing project, accessible through the following link. Clicking will direct you to the Findagrave website, where names have been preserved for posterity. This resource is invaluable for present and future genealogists seeking information.

<http://tinyurl.com/Siloam-Cemetery-Memorials>

A Time to Remember

By Nesta Thomas

Siloam Baptist Chapel: 1796 to 2021

Regrettably, Siloam closed its doors at the year's end, marking the conclusion of a worship and witness that spanned over 200 years.

The journey began in 1796 when a group of non-conformists gathered in an old brewery on Alstred Street, led by the Reverend Josiah Watkins. This historical note prompts us to acknowledge that many early non-conformist congregations, including Siloam, met in pubs and taverns—well before the mid-Victorian temperance movement, some 50 years later.

Initially, Siloam functioned as a branch of Penuel Carmarthen and Salem St Ishmaels. Its membership flourished, leading to the establishment of its own chapel in 1834. Mr. Harries of Castle Farm generously invited members into his home for worship, eventually donating the orchard land in front of his farm. Contributions from members, in the form of weekly donations of 1p, 3p, and 6p, facilitated the completion of the chapel in 1892 at a cost of £1500. It could accommodate 400 people, and since then, the chapel has been sustained by a succession of distinguished ministers, notably the Reynolds family—John, and his sons George and John—who ministered at Siloam from 1834 to 1861.

In 1902, Reverend HR Jones, hailing from Staylitttle, North Wales, was ordained as a minister at Siloam. The membership at that time was 104, and the chapel was burdened with a £1200 debt. The new minister and the members successfully cleared this debt by 1920. Special services of thanksgiving were held on September 26th and 27th, 1920. In 1928, a vestry seating approximately sixty people was built at a cost of £600, and the membership rose to 200.

During Reverend HR Jones's ministry until 1939, Siloam continued to flourish with performances of dramas every Boxing Night, children's operettas every Good Friday, and well-attended Sunday school sessions. Eisteddfodau were held between various Baptist chapels in Carmarthenshire, and Cymanfa Ganu took place on Easter Monday, shaping much of the town's social life around the chapels.

In 1941, Reverend WL Williams from Merthyr became the next minister and served until 1963, contributing significantly to the life of the borough. In 1966, Reverend Meurig Thomas was ordained, staying until 1973, marking the end of the ministerial line.

Since then, Siloam has welcomed visiting ministers and lay preachers. In 1977, Reverend Richie Vaughan Jones retired to Kidwelly, being the son of HR Jones, and

ministered at Siloam regularly for many years. While we mourn the loss of our chapel, let us also remind ourselves that the earliest members of our congregation found it more important to worship our dear Lord together, wherever that may be.

History of Siloam Baptist Chapel

By Anne (Reynolds) Thomas (1928–2000)

Second youngest daughter of Charles Henshaw Reynolds (1873–1942) and Sarah Matilda (Rees) Reynolds (1884–1966).

Charles Henshaw Reynolds was born on October 12, 1873, in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, to George (50) and Mary (33). In September 1909, he married Sarah Matilda Rees in Swansea, Glamorgan, and together they had nine children over 17 years. Charles passed away on November 26, 1942, in his hometown at the age of 69. Initially employed at the BEN EVANS shop in Swansea, Charles resided in the rooms above, situated in what was known as the "Harrods of South Wales." Unfortunately, this establishment fell victim to a bomb during the Second World War in 1942. Undeterred by adversity, Charles took charge of the draper shop business at Corner House, Kidwelly, which he ran for the remainder of his life, leaving an enduring mark on the local landscape.

The transcription of Anne's notes on the Reynolds family history is provided below.

Following the old Celtic Reynolds tradition of storytelling, the following facts have been gathered by the descendants of John Reynolds (1798–1878) and George Reynolds (1823–1894), corroborated by papers and pamphlets held by the family. They were regaled with the history of Siloam Baptist Chapel from its beginnings in 1797. Descendants gathered in the back kitchen of Mr. Harries of Castle Farm to attend meetings and prayers. When the congregation increased in numbers, Mr. Harries generously donated land in front of the farm, previously his orchard, to erect the First Baptist Chapel in Kidwelly in 1823. We believe the name of the first minister was Mr. Morris, and the second minister was Mr. John Reynolds (1798–1878), who began his ministry around 1830. The congregation grew, and consequently, it was decided to build a larger Chapel. In 1878, a building fund was instituted, with members contributing weekly donations of 1p, 3p, and 6p, which were voluntary.

Reverend John Reynolds had been raised to be a faithful member of the church. However, at about 16 years of age, he heard a dissenter preaching at Carmarthen. When he returned home, he was jubilant in his newfound faith, which horrified his father. His father probably gave him a beating, and in retaliation, he informed his father that in time, he would be converted. John Reynolds became an ardent follower of the Baptist movement and became a minister of the faith around 1830. In those days, it was customary for ministers to pursue another occupation to make a living.

He was a builder and constructed many houses around Kidwelly, which was rapidly expanding in population due to the growth of the tinsplate works and Kymer's Canal. The area around the castle was known as Old Town, and from the bridge, Newtown. Reverend George Reynolds (son) followed in his father's footsteps, and together they ministered at Coed y Brain, Ferryside, Llanstephan, and Trimsaran. Rev. George Reynolds conducted services at Ferryside and Llanstephan, walking to the ferry then crossing the river to Llanstephan, with the times of services depending on the tides. After the death of Rev. John Reynolds in 1878, Rev. George Reynolds administered all the chapels with the aid of his brother David, who was a lay preacher and choirmaster. George Reynolds was the chairman of the Baptist Union in 1893 for the three counties: Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, and Cardiganshire. The foundations of the existing Chapel were laid in 1892. Unfortunately, George Reynolds died before its completion, but his brother David carried on the work.

History of Sioam Baptist Chapel
Anne Thomas nee
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The foundations of the existing chapel were laid in 1892 unfortunately he died before completion, but his brother David continued with the ministry.

In 1902 a new minister was⁶
installed Rev H. R. Jones who hailed
from North Wales.

During his ministry
the chapel continued to flourish -
dramas were performed at the
Town Hall on Boxing Night, a
children's Operetta was performed
every Good Friday, Sunday school
was well attended, Christmas
party held, and an outing
during the Summer.

Eisteddfods were held
between the various Baptist
Chapels in Carmarthenshire,
Gymnaufa Granu on Easter
Monday, so much social life
revolved around the Chapel.

Siloam Chapel First Wedding

The first couple to be married at Siloam were Rev. William Rees, the minister of Caersalem Baptist Chapel in Ebbw Vale, and his wife, Matilda Arthur. Matilda, the daughter of a former local grocer named John Arthur, was born in Carmarthen and raised in Kidwelly. William, originally from Craig Trewyddfa, Treboeth, had been a member of Caersalem Newydd. Their wedding took place on 15th August 1905, officiated by Rev. J. Edwards of Caersalem Newydd, with assistance from Rev. Hugh Robert Jones of Siloam.

Wedding Notice in *The Carmarthen Weekly Reporter* on 18th August 1905

Local Weddings.

REES-ARTHUR.

The inaugural wedding at Siloam Baptist Chapel, Kidwelly, took place on Thursday morning. The Reverend William Rees, the pastor of Victoria Baptist Chapel in Ebbw Vale, Monmouthshire, exchanged vows with Miss Matilda Arthur, the fourth daughter of the late Mr. John Arthur of Pinged Hill, Kidwelly (the original proprietor of the Tynywaun Colliery, Pontyates).

The chapel was adorned with tasteful decorations of flowers and foliage for the occasion. The ceremony was officiated by the Reverend J. Edwards of Caersalem Newydd Baptist Chapel, Swansea, with assistance from the Reverend H. R. Jones of Siloam, Kidwelly, the Reverend Mr. C. Jenkins of Sul, Kidwelly, and the Reverend Rees of Meinciau, Kidwelly.

The charming bride, dressed in a cream silk aeoline adorned with chiffon and Maltese lace, complemented by a matching hat, was given away by her uncle, Mr. T. Arthur of Carmarthen. The bridesmaid, her sister Miss S. J. Arthur, wore a Tuscan hat adorned with roses and foliage. Both the bride and bridesmaid carried bouquets, gifts from the bridegroom. The bridesmaid also wore a gold and pearl brooch, another gift from the bridegroom.

The Reverend J. Evans of Newport, Mon., served as the best man. Following the ceremony, a celebratory breakfast was enjoyed at the bride's home. Subsequently, the joyous couple embarked on their honeymoon, which was slated to be spent in Devonshire and Cornwall.

The information above was kindly donated by Nini Morgan.

Translated Letter to the Bishop of St David's – 7 December 1822

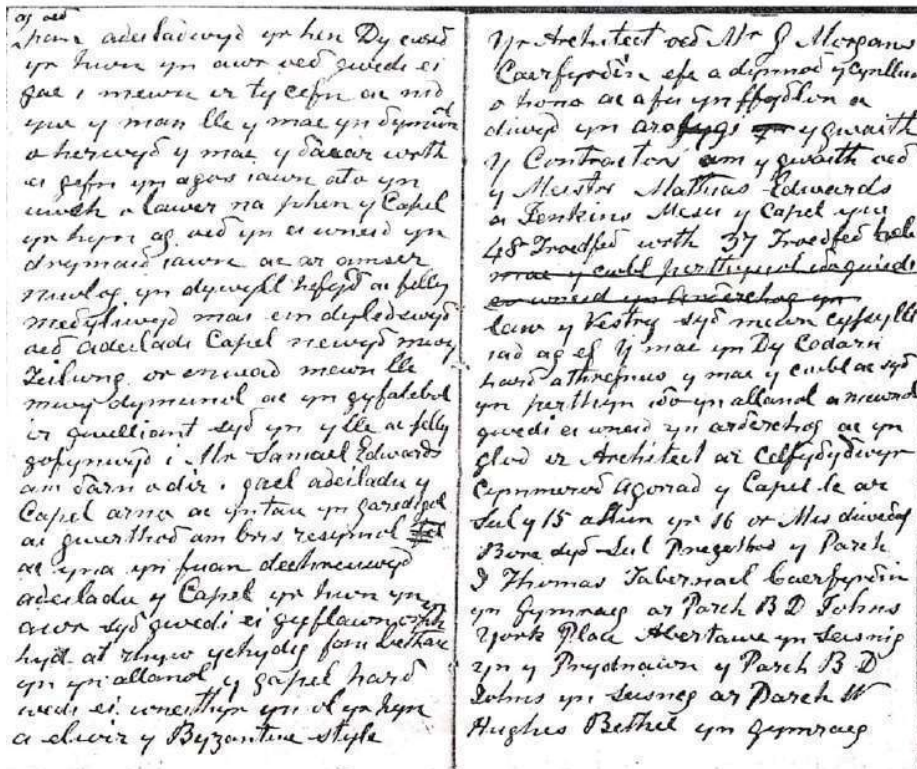
To the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of St David's and His Registrar,

I, James Pritchett, of the borough of Kidwelly in the county of Carmarthen, a gentleman, hereby confirm that a certain building known by the name of Siloam, situated in the parish of Saint Mary's in the borough of Kidwelly in the said county, is soon to be utilized as a place of religious worship by an assembly or congregation of Protestants. I formally request you to register and record the same in accordance with the provisions of an act passed in the 52nd year of the reign of His Majesty King George III, titled "An Act to Repeal Certain Acts and Amend Other Acts Relating to Religious Worship, Assemblies, and Persons Teaching and Preaching Therein." I further request the certification of this matter, as witnessed by my hand on this 7th day of December 1822.

James Pritchett

Witness: John Davis

I, Charles Morgan, Registrar of the Court of the Bishop of St David's, hereby affirm that a certificate, of which the above is an accurate copy, was presented to me on this day to be duly registered and recorded, in accordance with the Act of Parliament mentioned therein. Dated this 7th day of December 1822.



[Link to Letter.](#)

<http://tinyurl.com/Bishop-St-Davids-Letter>

Siloam Baptist Chapel, once a cornerstone of the community in Kidwelly, has left an enduring legacy spanning over two centuries. From its humble beginnings in an old brewery on Alstred Street in 1796, the chapel grew to become a place of spiritual guidance and fellowship for generations of worshippers.

The reconstruction in 1892, with seating for 550 people, marked a significant chapter in its history, symbolizing the congregation's strength and dedication. Under the leadership of Reverend H. R. Jones, the membership flourished, and the chapel became known not only for its worship but also as a beacon of ministry, ordaining several members into pastoral service.

The Reynolds family, along with others like Rev. Ben Jones, Rev. Richard Vaughan Jones, and Rev. Glyn Williams, played a crucial role in shaping the spiritual and social fabric of the town.

Siloam's history is steeped in moments of resilience, devotion, and community spirit. The ordination of ministers from within its congregation and the expansion of its membership through challenging times reflect the unwavering faith that characterized the chapel's mission.

From the early days of gathering in makeshift spaces to the building of a substantial chapel that served the community for over 200 years, Siloam's presence was more than just bricks and mortar—it was a testament to the power of faith and community in Kidwelly.

Though the chapel has now closed its doors, its story lives on in the hearts and memories of those who were part of its journey. The legacy of Siloam Baptist Chapel, with its rich history of worship, ministry, and community, stands as a fitting tribute to all who walked through its doors, reminding us that while buildings may fall silent, the spirit of those who worshipped together endures.

Graham T Emmanuel 2024

Trinity Methodist Church 1761

Foundation & History



Wesleyan Methodism took root in Kidwelly, Wales, in 1761 as part of the broader Methodist revival led by John Wesley. This movement sought to renew the spiritual life of communities through evangelical preaching, personal holiness, and organized societies. Early Methodist meetings in Kidwelly were likely held in homes or simple meeting places, as was common in the movement's early days. Despite opposition from the established Church and local authorities, the Methodist presence grew, with lay preachers spreading Wesley's message of salvation through faith. Over time, a more formal Methodist congregation was established, contributing to the rich religious heritage of the town.



Trinity Methodist Church Kidwelly

Trinity Church Centenary Brochure 1866-1966



This Version of the Trinity Church Centenary Brochure 1866-1966 has been reformatted for clarity, consistency, and readability.

WESLEYAN METHODISM IN KIDWELLY IN 1761

Thomas Taylor, a Yorkshireman, was appointed by the Wesleyan Conference to travel in Wales, which at this time formed one vast circuit. He travelled only in the South-West and was, according to his own testimony, the first of Wesley's preachers ever to enter Carmarthenshire. However, he did not expend much effort in preaching in this county. He knew no Welsh, and the people were largely Welsh speaking. Not surprisingly, he concentrated his labours on South Pembrokeshire and Gower, where there were communities who spoke only English.

Here, he reported some success in setting up societies. Conference sent him back to Wales in 1762, and he spent the winter—a severe one—traveling between Pembrokeshire and Gower, fostering the growth of his little societies.

To shorten his journey, he made use of the ferries across the Loughor, Towy, and Taff rivers, but this route often proved hazardous. Unfamiliar with local conditions and traveling alone, he was several times nearly trapped by rising tides. On one occasion, after landing at Llanstephan in darkness, he lost his way but was unable to obtain help from the country

people who, he reported regretfully, "would or could not speak English." Straying helplessly, he blundered into a deep bog from which he extricated himself and his horse only by the most strenuous efforts. "Wales," he wrote to Wesley, "is not the most pleasing part of the world for a stranger to wander in, especially on the errand which I was upon."

The following year, he was sent to Ireland, and Wales knew him no more. Many years later, after a lifetime of itinerancy, he became President of Conference. His valiant, pioneering work was followed up by Wesley himself, who, in August 1763, made his first journey into Carmarthenshire, entering it by way of the Towy Valley. After a brief stop at Carmarthen—during which he preached on the Green, an open strip of ground at the end of the castle courtyard—he pressed on to Pembrokeshire, where he spent about four days. Intending to include Gower on his return, he was advised to use Llanstephan ferry but found the tide out and made for Carmarthen. After three or four miles, he recollected being told of a ford across the Towy and, with the willing help of an old man, crossed safely.

He had scarcely resumed his journey when his mare dropped a shoe, and by the time this was rectified, the rising tide made it impossible to attempt the crossing of the sands of the Burry estuary—a route that would have taken him through Kidwelly. He was forced to go inland and, after a tedious journey, arrived in Swansea at dusk. In the summer of the following year (1764), he was back in Pembrokeshire, having entered it from Cardiganshire. On his return, he again made for Gower, the other main center of his activities in West Wales.

This time, he succeeded in using Llanstephan ferry, although enduring much discomfort from the mud, and so came to Kidwelly between one and two on a Tuesday afternoon (July 31st). The road he followed over the hill from Ferryside, "the Portway," was an ancient one, used by the saints of the Celtic Church, medieval kings and their armies, pilgrims to the shrine of St. David, and by Archbishop Baldwin and Gerald the Welshman seeking recruits for the Third Crusade. Kidwelly itself retained much of its medieval character in Wesley's day.

The original township, founded by Roger of Salisbury in the early 12th century as part of the defences of his castle, was still enclosed by its fortified walls, gateways, and ditch, although the focus of town life now lay outside it. Just across the river stood the 14th-century parish church dedicated to St. Mary, and close by it, the crumbling walls of the Benedictine priory of Black Monks, established by Roger as a cell of Sherborne Abbey. Since the Middle Ages, the town's importance as a trading centre had declined, but its prosperity was being revived by several industrial undertakings: a tin works, an iron works at "The Forge," and the mining of anthracite in the Gwendraeth Valley by Thomas Kymer, who, two years after Wesley's visit, started to build a canal for the more convenient shipment of coal from a quay at Kidwelly. Wesley did not pause to preach here. He was bent on reaching Gower by the shortcut across the Burry sands and, being unfamiliar with the route, wanted ample time for the crossing.

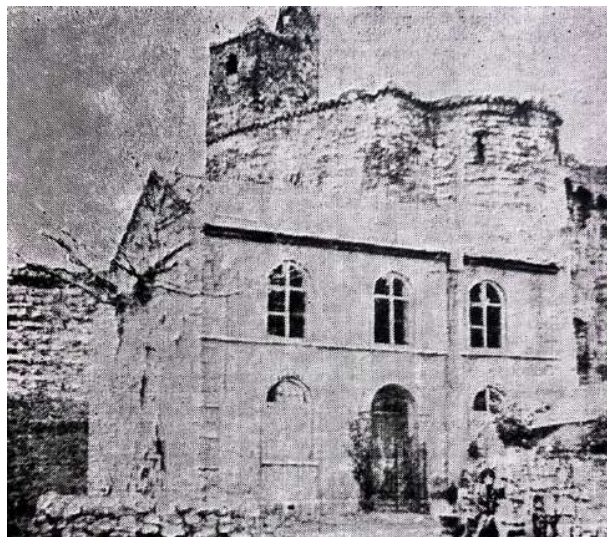
Thus, although he had eaten nothing since leaving Pembrokeshire and had already endured seven hours in the saddle, he and his companions pressed on, having been assured by "an honest man" in the town that the crossing offered little difficulty. After using the ford across the Gwendraeth Fawr at a point about a quarter of a mile below the present bridge, he followed a road—now long forgotten and buried under many feet of silt—which crossed the marsh, skirted the sand dunes, and brought him close to Penbre village. From here, they took to the wide expanse of the Burry estuary. Unaided, they would have been in serious difficulties, but a guide who had volunteered his services shortly after leaving Kidwelly

skilfully negotiated the treacherous patches of quicksand and brought them safely to Oxwich between five and six o'clock in the evening.

Of the people of Gower, he wrote warmly that they all spoke English and were "ready to receive the word with all readiness of heart." Within a few years of this visit, a West Wales circuit was formed, covering Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. In 1769, Conference stationed the first men, James Dempster and William Whitaker. The membership was given as 80 in 1770 and 112 in the following year. By 1775, the circuit was called the Pembrokeshire Circuit but included Carmarthenshire as before. In their travels through Carmarthenshire, Wesley and his preachers paid most attention to Carmarthen and Llanelli—places where they could expect to make headway because they contained small but often influential groups of English-speaking people.

Wesley, who early in his ministry had determined "not to strike one blow in any place where I cannot follow up the blow," received encouragement at Llanelli from Sir Thomas Stepney. The first of his eight visits was in 1768, and in the following year, a society was established, the leaders of which were Sir Thomas's butler, Wilfred Colley, and two brothers called Deer. The death of Sir Thomas in 1774 and the departure of Colley threatened to break up the society, but fortunately, Colley's loss was made good by the arrival of Lieutenant Cook, who came to manage the estates of Colonel St. Leger residing at Trimsaran. In Carmarthen, although his success was not as marked as in Llanelli, Wesley preached several times, once in Peter Williams's chapel, and a society was set up.

Kidwelly, however, did not offer such favourable prospects for success. It had a tradition of hostility to Dissenters and Methodists alike. Howell Harris, in the 1740s, had been so roughly handled by the inhabitants that he feared to pass through it and, whenever possible, skirted its boundaries. None of the local gentry, such as Thomas Kymer and Lewis Rogers, the owner of the tin works, offered any encouragement. Many members of the Common Council of the Borough were actively hostile, and the officers of the Borough courts, by resorting to legal "technicalities," made it difficult for Dissenters to obtain licenses to register their meeting houses. Despite these challenges, Wesley's preachers persevered, and over time, their efforts bore fruit.



BETHESDA WELSH WESLEYAN CHAPEL
(View taken shortly before its demolition in December, 1962)

This was in August 1779, fifteen years after his first visit. The third and final time he visited was in 1788, near the end of his long ministry. He recorded spending a pleasant night in Carmarthen before preaching in Kidwelly at nine o'clock the following morning (Tuesday, August 26th). Between these widely spaced visits, a society had been established, but unfortunately, the names of its members have not survived, nor can the house in which they met be identified.

By the close of the 18th century, Wesleyan Methodism in Carmarthenshire was confined to societies in Llanelli, Carmarthen, and Kidwelly. Up to 1794, they remained part of the Pembrokeshire circuit, which at that time had a total membership of 162. The following year, the Haverfordwest circuit was established, incorporating these societies until 1805, when the new 'Carmarthen circuit' was created with William Thoresby as Superintendent.

These societies remained outposts of the English cause within a predominantly Welsh-speaking community, largely beyond the reach of Wesley's preachers due to the language barrier—what Wesley lamented as 'the heavy curse of the confusion of tongues.' The community was, according to one missionary, 'passionately attached to the Welsh tongue, looking upon English as a poor, dry, insipid language.' However, this barrier was soon overcome. In 1801, Dr. Thomas Coke, a Brecon native, persuaded Conference to introduce Welsh preaching. Under his direction, a Welsh mission was established, which made rapid progress throughout Carmarthenshire within a few years. Inspired by Edward Jones of Ruthin and William Davies—who would later settle in Kidwelly—societies were formed in the Towy Valley. By 1808, a Welsh society had been established in Carmarthen, and Edward Jones became Superintendent of the 'Carmarthen (Welsh) Circuit.' The mission then spread eastward.

Preaching took place in Penbre, and societies were established in Mynydd Bach (1813), Llannon, and Pontyberem (1814). In Kidwelly, a 'Wesleyan Brotherhood' emerged, which, along with the existing English cause, soon grew strong enough to consider building a chapel. On March 20th, 1816, the Common Council of the Borough received a petition from Thomas Jones, William Lloyd, and John Morris, representing the brotherhood, to construct a place of worship on Corporation land 'between the dwelling house of Mr. Arnold Evans and Bank Shobart,' near the castle's main gateway. The Council received the petition favourably.

The old hostility toward Dissenters was fading, and several Council members were themselves Dissenters. A committee recommended leasing the site for 99 years at an annual rent of one shilling. A lease was drawn up in the names of Thomas Humphreys of Dan y Lan, St. Ishmael, and William Mansell of Kidwelly, as trustees for the society. These men were well-respected; Humphreys was a merchant and part-owner of the brig 'Margaret,' built in Kidwelly in 1815 by William Raynor, a Council member. Mansell, a former Mayor, owned town property and had a stake in the sloop 'Eliza.'

The chapel, Bethesda, a simple, box-like structure, was completed in about three months and ready for worship on June 9th, 1816. Some Council members contributed to its construction and hosted visitors for the opening services. The Welsh Wesleyan ministers present included John Davies, John Jones, Morgan Griffiths, and Owen Rees, while representatives from the English circuit also participated. The collection raised nearly £20. Bethesda greatly strengthened Wesleyanism in Kidwelly, though the English society appears to have continued using its original meeting house for some time.

Within sixteen years, the chapel required renovation. The opportunity was taken to extend it, and on June 6th, 1832, David Gravell, a shopkeeper, petitioned the Council for a new lease, including additional land. The Council granted the lease for 999 years, increasing the rent to 2/6 per year. The rebuilding, completed in about seven months, included two new galleries. Contributions totalled £51/6/10, with Carmarthen giving £12/5/0, Llanelli £3/7/2, and St. Clears £1/19/3. The reopening services on December 9th, 1832, were conducted by Revs. John Davies, William Evans, and John Williams (the First), along with two English circuit ministers, including James Bond, Superintendent at Carmarthen.

By the 1850s, Wesleyanism in Carmarthenshire continued to grow. A Circuit Plan from 1855/56 lists Kidwelly as one of eight churches in the Carmarthen (Welsh) circuit, alongside Carmarthen, Llanelli, Penbre, Mynydd Bach, Pontyberem, Llanstephan, and St. Clears, with a total membership of 458. In 1857, the resident minister, Thomas Morgan, was granted a lease of Bethesda. The following year, the property was assigned to ten trustees. A Trust Schedule from 1859, signed by Treasurer David Nicholas—who operated a private school in the chapel—shows Bethesda's total cost, including the 1832 rebuilding, at £270. The annual income was estimated at £10/16/9, but a significant debt remained, and the building was in poor condition.

In 1860, the prospects for Wesleyan Methodism in Kidwelly improved when Jacob Chivers, a Herefordshire Wesleyan, purchased the idle Tin Works and began renovations. His presence attracted English-speaking workers, increasing demand for English-language services. By 1865, Bethesda had become too small, and Chivers decided to build a larger chapel at his own expense.

A faction, led by David Nicholas, favoured the English influence, believing it would enhance education and broaden the community's horizons. In 1866, they requested to join the English circuit. Chivers secured a site near the town bridge and financed a new chapel, designed by local architect T.W. Angell Evans. Construction, carried out by Francis Randall, used Bodmer's patent stone brick with Gloucester brick accents. The chapel, completed for £650, seated 200 and included a gallery for the choir. It was dedicated on October 19th, 1866.

The appointment of English minister Joseph Higham caused a split. Older members remained at Bethesda, while younger members, including most officers, joined the new English chapel. The division, described by Rev. David Young as mishandled, left lasting bitterness between Welsh and English Wesleyans.

By 1869, Kidwelly's English Wesleyan society had grown to 32 members, reflecting the influx of English workers. A trustee body was established, including Tin Works employees and local professionals. Congregations flourished, and the chapel gained influence, attracting figures like Astley Thompson of Glyn Abbey.

Methodist societies thrived not only through Sunday worship but also through Class Meetings, fostering spiritual fellowship. Members contributed weekly to sustain the society, receiving quarterly membership tickets as part of their commitment to the church's mission.



TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH, c. 1900

Membership in the class always carried with it membership in the Society. The first leaders were David Nicholas and John Morgan, both schoolmasters. In 1872, Nicholas formed a 'juvenile male' class, and later that year, a 'female' class was created with Mrs. Shrimpton, the minister's wife, as leader. Instruction primarily focused on the Bible, but Nicholas, with a passion for music, trained a chapel choir that became one of the finest in the district. He and John Morgan also oversaw the Sunday School.

Once a year, the scholars paraded through the town, and Nicholas noted that on one Whit Monday, 112 participated. Their annual 'treat' often took place at Velindre House, where the Chivers family hosted them for tea on the lawn, followed by games at Broadford Farm. On July 18, 1870, an excursion was held at Garreg Lwyd on Pembrey Mountain, with expenses including the purchase of an ensign for 15 shillings. Another key community-building event was the 'Congregational Soirée,' first held on Monday, January 10, 1867.

At that inaugural soirée, Rev. Joseph Higham chaired the event, giving an address on 'The Essentials of a Successful Christ,' followed by speeches from Jacob and Thomas Chivers, David Nicholas, John Morgan, and George Boulter, a lay preacher from Llanelli. The meeting featured solos by Miss Chivers and Miss Combie, daughter of Hugh Combie, a mining engineer in Kidwelly. Members of Nicholas's Singing and Bible Classes presented him with eleven large volumes on Biblical Exegesis, Ecclesiastical History, and Poetry.

Public meetings were also held to promote Home and Foreign Missions, aligning with the renewed evangelistic enthusiasm in Methodism at the time. Charles Prest, an administrator of the Home Mission Fund, visited in 1870 to advocate the cause. Jacob Chivers was deeply

involved in all Society activities, serving as Chapel Steward with his son Thomas, later becoming a Circuit Steward and frequently addressing trustees on spiritual matters.

Beyond his religious contributions, Chivers was active in municipal affairs. Elected a Burgess in 1864 and serving as Mayor during the chapel's construction, he held office for three consecutive years and again from 1872 to 1874. As Mayor and Justice of the Peace, he worked alongside predecessors like Dr. John George Roberts and Edmund Blathwayt to bring order to a town previously criticized for incompetence and corruption. Chivers played a role in establishing a slaughterhouse, a Town Hall, and a piped water supply.

During this period, Kidwelly's population grew from 1,600 in 1861 to approximately 2,000 in 1877, experiencing prosperity largely tied to the Tin Works. However, by 1891, the British tinplate industry faced challenges due to competition from the U.S. and the Mackinley Tariff. This downturn led to declining employment and financial hardship for many families.

The economic downturn had a severe impact on chapel membership and finances. By 1899, the annual income had dropped from £18 in the early 1890s to just £6/5/1d. The Tin Works closed in 1896, forcing many skilled workers to emigrate in search of employment.

A glimmer of hope arrived in 1904 when the 'Kidwelly Tinplate Company' revived local industry, leading to a gradual increase in chapel membership. By 1906, renovations were undertaken, including the installation of gas lighting, costing £122. By 1914, annual income had risen to £34, and new trustees were appointed to support the chapel's future.

The chapel celebrated its Jubilee in October 1916, with a full account published in the *Carmarthen Weekly Reporter*. Speakers reminisced about early days, including T. J. Hughes of Swansea, who recalled Mary Williams, the devoted chapel keeper of the 1880s. The event featured hymns and recitations, reinforcing the community's deep-rooted faith and resilience.

Despite facing challenges during the interwar years and the requisitioning of chapel premises during World War II, the congregation persevered. By 1946, the closure of the Tin Works led to further hardship, but membership later rebounded, standing at 78 in the post-war years.

Though the Welsh Wesleyan cause declined, and the chapel was demolished in 1962, the English congregation endured. The Kidwelly Methodist community, despite its small size, has maintained a strong, close-knit identity, committed to its faith and future. The ongoing renovation of the chapel stands as a testament to their dedication, ensuring that the legacy of Wesleyan Methodism in Kidwelly continues for generations to come.

Church Officers & Trustees Records

1880-1966

1880: Enoch Biscombe, James Etchells, Nathaniel Stevens, James Etchells.

1879-1881: Nathaniel Stevens, Edward Bowman.

1882: Sampson Cocks, Robert W. Pordige.

1883-1884: Sampson Cocks, George Gibson.

1885: George Gibson, James C. Brewer.

1886-1887: James C. Brewer, J. Hetherington Cleminson, Arthur Aldington.

1888-1890: Thomas Kirkby, J.

1891-1893: James Shearman, James Picot.
1894: William Hunter, William May.
1895-1896: William Hunter, Reuben R. Simons.
1897-1898: Thomas Pinfield, F. H. Hooper Labbett.
1899: Thomas Pinfield, A. Perry Gill.
1900-1901: Edward A. Wain, A. Perry Gill.
1902: Edward A. Wain, Edwin Owen, Clement A. West.
1903-1904: John Crawshaw, Edwin Owen, William J. Hannam.
1905: John Crawshaw, T. Nevison Phillipson, Thomas Roberts.
1906-1907: William J. Britton, T. Nevison Phillipson, Thomas Roberts, John H. Newby, Sydney P. Jacoby.
1908: James Bryant, Christopher Whitfield, Robert F. Atkinson.
1909-1911: John V. Sutton, John H. Newby, Thomas Roberts.
1912-1913: James Bryant, Christopher Whitfield, Robert F. Atkinson.
1914: James Bryant, Vincent Taylor, B.D., Robert F. Atkinson.
1915-1917: Thomas C. Hilliard, B.A., Vincent Taylor, B.D., William E. Thomas.
1918: Thomas C. Hilliard, B.A., Ernest W. Fitch, William E. Thomas.
1919: J. Albert Dixon, Ernest W. Fitch, John B. Lee.
1920: J. Albert Dixon, Garnham G. West, John B. Lee.
1921: W. Oliver Lake, Garnham G. West, John B. Lee.
1922-1923: W. Oliver Lake, David C. Griffiths, G. Rowland Owen.
1924: Thomas W. Bray, David C. Griffiths, G. Rowland Owen.
1925: Thomas W. Bray, William G. Jones, Harold A. Bishop.
1926-1927: Thomas W. Bray, William G. Jones, James L. Smith, R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., Reginald C. Stonham.
1928: R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., David J. Williams, B.A., Reginald C. Stonham.
1929: R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., David J. Williams, B.A., Thomas Metcalf.
1930: W. R. Roberts, W. Horace Dowling, John R. Peniston, B.A.
1931: W. R. Roberts, W. Horace Dowling, William J. Roberts.
1932-1934: W. R. Roberts, J. T. Jones, M.A., William J. Roberts.
1935: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., J. T. Jones, M.A., Goronwy Jones-Davies.
1936: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Goronwy Jones-Davies.
1937-1939: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Wilfred Trinder.
1940: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Goronwy Jones-Davies.
1941: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., Donald A. Davies, E. Clifford Hind.
1942-1943: E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., Donald A. Davies.
1944: H. Ingamells Powell, Donald A. Davies.
1945-1947: H. Ingamells Powell, Ivor Trigg.
1948-1949: G. Stuart Cann, Donald V. P. White.
1950-1951: Alexander C. Blain, Donald V. P. White.
1952: Alexander C. Blain, Donald A. Davies.
1953-1955: Donald L. Collings, Donald A. Davies.
1956: Donald L. Collings, Maurice Cartledge, B.D.
1957: Harold Evans, Maurice Cartledge, B.D.
1958-1959: Harold Evans, George Lovell, B.D.
1960-1961: Wilfrid J. Hill, M.C., B.Sc., H.C.F., George Lovell, B.D.
1962-1965: Wilfrid J. Hill, M.C., B.Sc., H.C.F., Lewis J. Hayward.
1966: F. Peacock, Hedley Huxtable.

Church Officers - 1966

Society Stewards: Mr. G. W. Jones, B.E.M., Messrs F. Menghetti, W. L. Watkins, A. C. Morris.

Poor Stewards: Messrs. F. Hart, H. Burt, T. Davies.

Trustees' Treasurer: Mrs. A. Lewis.

Trustees' Secretary: Mr. A. C. Morris.

Sunday School Superintendent: Miss R. James.

Organist: Mr. W. L. Watkins.

Class Leaders: Mrs. A. Lewis, Miss R. James, Miss J. Chubb, Messrs. G. W. Jones, W. L. Watkins, A. C. Morris, F. Menghetti.

Chapel Stewards: Messrs. T. J. Evans, W. Johns.

Guild Secretaries: Miss J. Chubb, Mr. I. Jones.

Home Missions Secretary: Mr. H. Burt.

Trustees Appointments

16th June 1930: Thomas Arthur Morris, David Randall Hughes, Edgar Harries Stephens, Gerard Wilfred Jones, Bertha Isaac, Lily Ann Walters.

13th August 1948: Ernest Harold Cole, Thomas John Edwards, Frank Hart, Albert Charles Morris, John Pearce, Beatrice Irene Evans, Maria Isaac, Rosalie Margaret James, Margaret Nicholas Morris.

22nd October 1957: Thomas John Evans, Cromwell George Edwards, Margaret Myra Gravell, William Hill Morris, Elizabeth Ann Lewis, Frederick Menghetti, William L. Watkins, Henry William Burt, David William Johns.



Capel Sul Welsh Independent Chapel



Capel Sul Congregational Chapel which once stood in Ferry Road.
The chapel was built in 1785 and was demolished around 1930.
The chapel house continued to be used as a domestic dwelling until it too was
demolished in the 1960s.



The history of Capel Sul Chapel in Kidwelly unfolds as a narrative woven through time, marked by successive constructions and architectural transformations. Initially erected in 1787, the chapel underwent a process of rebuilding and enlargement in 1831, adopting the Sub-Classical style with a distinctive square plan.

In a remarkable turn of events, a new chapter in the chapel's architectural saga unfolded in 1862. At this time, a structure named Rumsey House emerged, crafted by the skilled hands of architect T.W.A. Evans in the elegant Italianate style. However, the evolution did not cease there. In 1924-6, under the design expertise of J Harold Morgan of Carmarthen, Rumsey House underwent a metamorphosis, being converted into a chapel. This conversion resulted in the relocation of the chapel to the first floor, above the schoolroom, while the original Capel Sul was sadly demolished.



The architectural essence of Capel Sul Chapel, with its Italianate influences, reflects the aesthetic finesse of T.W.A. Evans and J Harold Morgan. The chapel's elevated position on the first floor adds a unique dimension to its presence, creating a space of reverence above the remnants of the demolished Capel Sul. The graveyard, a silent witness to the chapel's evolution, stands as a testament to the passage of time and the enduring spirit of this sacred site.



In summary, Capel Sul Chapel in Kidwelly narrates a compelling story of architectural evolution, from its humble beginnings in 1787 to the Italianate grandeur of Rumsey House, ultimately transformed into a chapel by J Harold Morgan. The blend of styles and the architectural transitions encapsulate the rich history of this site, where the graveyard remains as a poignant reminder of the enduring legacy of Capel Sul Chapel.

Capel Sul Memorials. <http://tinyurl.com/CapelSul-Memorials>

Though time has worn away many of its sacred sites, the legacy of faith in Kidwelly endures. From early places of worship to the quiet ruins that remain, these institutions reflect a deep and lasting spiritual heritage. Together, they tell the story of a community shaped by belief — a legacy still felt in the spirit of the town today.

<https://tinyurl.com/Kidwelly-Spiritual-Legacy>



Graham T Emmanuel 2025

The Llandry Church Cemetery.

Llandry Church, steeped in the annals of medieval history, stands as a testament to the spiritual legacy of times long past. The exact origin of its dedication remains veiled in the mists of time, lending an air of mystery to its venerable presence. Nestled within an irregularly shaped churchyard, this hallowed edifice maintains a profound connection with the nearby remnants of Llandry Chapel, a mere 60 meters to the south-east. The echoes of devotion still reverberate through this chapel of ease once a spiritual refuge and known to have provided solace until at least 1888.

This architectural masterpiece is not merely a building; it's a living relic, bearing the distinction of a Grade II listing. Fashioned from limestone rubble adorned with the elegance of bath stone dressings, its form embraces a cruciform layout that exudes an aura of significance. The very arrangement of its structure tells a story — a two-bayed chancel, a resplendent five-bayed nave, the welcoming enclave of a south porch, a modest single-bayed vestry (nestled north of the chancel's western bay), and the sentinel-like presence of a west bellcote.

Elements of antiquity intertwine with the fabric of this church, whispering tales of bygone eras. The chancel, nave, and transepts stand as testaments to medieval craftsmanship. The chancel and nave, their origins veiled in the mists of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, evoke a sense of reverence. The transepts, added with the passage of time during the fifteenth or sixteenth century, bear the weight of centuries in their stone walls.

A journey through its sacred confines reveals hidden treasures. A simple yet enigmatic square aumbry nestled north of the altar hints at its medieval origins. An ancient northern side window bears witness to the passage of countless seasons. The two-light east window opening, though evoking medieval whispers, wears the visage of 1876. The south door, adorned with a two-centred surround, possibly an echo of restored medieval craftsmanship, beckons the faithful with an air of solemnity.

Restoration, a testament to the dedication of those who came before, weaves another chapter into the narrative. Around 1850, the hands of Mason and Elkington, overseers of the Bury Port Copper Works, brought renewal to these hallowed stones. Yet, the mists of history were not content, and 1876 saw the addition of the vestry and the south porch, as well as a renewal of the roof's embrace. The side wall windows, a dance between single and double lancets, emerged during this period, etching their mark into the architecture. The

bellcote, its tale traced to that era undeniably present by 1898, may have been a silent witness to these restorative endeavours. Within the nave, the stalls, pews, and wainscot dado, each with its own story, stand as living witnesses to the care bestowed upon this sacred abode.

The march of time continued, as did the legacy of devotion. The octagonal font, a symbol of spiritual rebirth, found its place in the embrace of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. A modernity of sorts, manifested in the mid-twentieth century, introduced the unobtrusive comfort of a hot water system, a juxtaposition of contemporary convenience against the backdrop of tradition.

The narrative of Llandry Church expands even into the twentieth century, as the west end of the nave stretched its reach in 1907. Here, a three-light traceried west window took its place, a beacon of illumination both metaphorical and literal. The oak altar table, born of the post-war year of 1946, and the oak pulpit, a creation etched in the annals of 1966, stand as markers of evolving reverence and the unending march of time.

The building's design is also unique, with the choir and sanctuary is known as a weeping Chancel slightly offset at an angle, symbolizing Christ's head tilted to one side on the cross.

The Llandry Cemetery is a place of beauty, where the natural world meets the man-made where the past and present unite a common purpose.



Llandyry Church, while specific historical records for the church are limited, we can piece together a general history of the church based on available information and the architectural features mentioned in the previous text.

1. **Medieval Origins:** Llandyry Church has medieval origins, with parts of the building believed to date back to the 13th or 14th century. The church's core fabric from this period likely includes the chancel and nave. These structures may have served the local community as a place of worship for centuries.
2. **Transept Additions:** During the 15th or 16th century, it is believed that the north and south transepts were added to the church. These additions expanded the church's layout and architectural significance.
3. **Restorations:** Over the centuries, the church underwent several restorations to maintain and improve its condition. Notably, in the mid-19th century (around 1850), the church underwent restoration work, likely carried out by Mason & Elkington, managers of the Copper Works at Burry Port. This restoration was necessary due to the church's deteriorating state.
4. **1876 Restoration:** A more significant restoration occurred in 1876. During this period, the church underwent extensive changes and renovations. These included the addition of a vestry and south porch, changes to the church's windows, roof and floor renovations, and the installation of underfloor heating flues.
5. **20th Century Alterations:** In the mid-20th century, a hot water system was installed in the church, indicating efforts to modernize its facilities for the congregation's comfort.
6. **Listing as Grade II:** The church was designated as Grade II listed in 2002, indicating its historical and architectural significance.

While specific historical events and anecdotes about Llandyry Church may be scarce, its enduring presence and architectural evolution over the centuries provide valuable insights into the local religious and community history of the area. The church continues to stand as a historical and cultural landmark in Llandyry, serving as a place of worship and a testament to the region's heritage.

What an incredible journey this has turned out to be! I've been immersed in a world of discovery and connection, all centered around a local gem – the Llandry church. It's a place where generations of my family have found their final resting spots. A personal mission to uncover these ties has led me down an unexpected path.

As I've frequented the church in my pursuit to locate and document each family member's grave, fate threw me a chance meeting with a remarkable individual – Declan Owens, the Llandry Church Warden. Conversations flowed, and I learned that he was deeply involved in a project to meticulously document all those laid to rest in the church cemetery. The dedication to this endeavour was evident in the beautifully maintained grounds that cradled the history of countless souls.

Eager to contribute, I eagerly delved into their existing documentation plan. However, it soon became clear that this system was not as comprehensive and up to date as it needed to be, especially with the constant addition of new graves. Recognizing an opportunity to lend my expertise, I proposed a more efficient approach to memorial documentation.

In the span of just a week, I crafted a new system. Armed with a Word document and grid reference numbers, I meticulously recorded each memorial's details, capturing their essence through photographs of the weathered gravestones. Then, a seamless transition to modern technology occurred as I harnessed the power of Google Lens to transcribe the scanned text information onto the Findagrave Cemetery site. This dynamic duo of Word and Lens, further enriched by Google Translate, bridged the language gap, allowing a wider audience to appreciate the inscriptions, many of which were in Welsh.

This endeavour has sparked an unexpected joy within me. Beyond the act of documentation, it's the harmonious fusion of tradition and technology that fuels my enthusiasm. My system guarantees accuracy, with any discrepancies promptly rectified and preserved. The magnitude of completing this feat is not lost on me; a swell of pride accompanies each entry made.

Although the task ahead is formidable and demanding, I embrace every step with open arms. Yet, I yearn for a local ally, someone well-versed in the intricacies of the app, who could expedite the process. Currently, my routine includes on-site visits to acquire GPS coordinates, ensuring seamless integration with the larger project's framework.

The potential impact of this collective effort is deeply stirring. The preservation of the church's history feels like a sacred duty, and I'm humbled to play a part. With unwavering dedication, I press on, anticipating the day when this project reaches its culmination. In my record-keeping, I've also thoughtfully logged the locations of unmarked graves, providing reference points for the future.

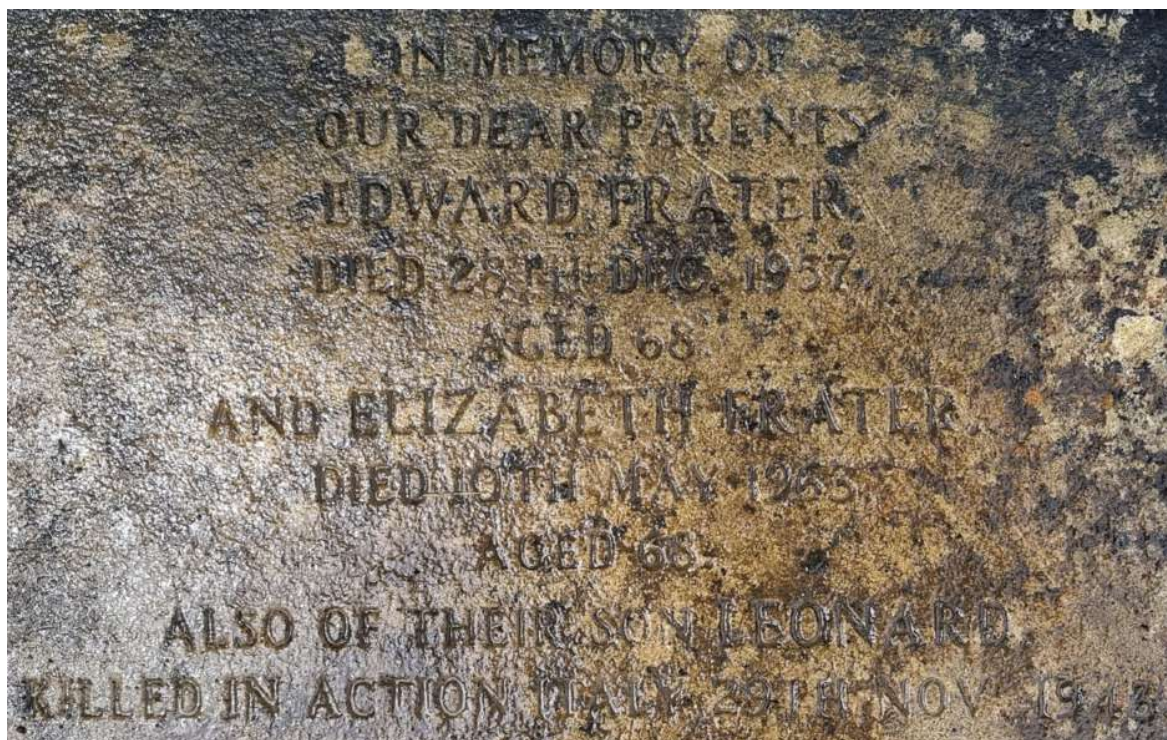
Today has been especially profound. My collaboration with Declan Owens in the Llandry Cemetery memorial documentation has yielded rich rewards. Simultaneously, my exploration of ancestral roots through Findagrave has illuminated a new dimension of my heritage. This venture is not without its challenges; time and weather have left some memorials nearly illegible. In a remarkable twist of fate, I embarked on a mission to restore their stories.

One particularly weathered memorial, cloaked in layers of lichen and moss, caught my attention. Armed with a specialized cleaner, I dedicated myself to revealing its hidden inscription. After meticulous efforts, Edward, and Elizabeth Frater's memorial (Plot PW-C8) names emerged. Their stories, intertwined with the history of this place, stand as a testament to the power of perseverance and the enduring spirit of remembrance, humbled to discover the location of his burial in Italy.

I felt compelled to preserve this important connection between Edward, Elizabeth, and their beloved son, Leonard, on Findagrave. It seemed fitting to pay tribute to their memory and ensure that others could also find solace in their story.

It is from this inscription I found on their memorial stone led me on a journey of discovery to find out who their son Leonard Frater was who was killed in action in Italy on 19th November 1943. This is what I found and his memorial in Italy.

IN MEMORY OF
OUR DEAR PARENTS
EDWARD FRATER
DIED 29TH DEC 1957
AGED 68.
AND ELIZABETH FRATER
DIED 10TH MAY 1963
AGED 68
ALSO OF THEIR SON LEONARD
KILLED IN ACTION ITALY 29TH NOV 1943



From the poignant inscription I uncovered on their memorial stone, a new chapter of discovery unfolded before me – one that would lead me to Leonard Frater, the son of Edward and Elizabeth Frater. Leonard's story, intertwined with the indelible mark of sacrifice, stirred my curiosity. The name etched onto that stone held within it a tale of courage and duty that resonated through time.

Leonard Frater, a Fusilier bearing the service number 14200801, stood among the ranks of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' 6th Battalion. As history unfolded, this battalion played a role in the sweeping North African campaign and later became part of the forces that ventured into Italy, a land embroiled in war.

It was amidst these unforgiving battlegrounds that Leonard's fate was sealed. On the 29th of November 1943, during a daring assault on a ridge that cast its shadow over the Sangro River, tragedy struck. Artillery fire, an indiscriminate messenger of destruction, claimed Leonard's life at the tender age of 20. His youth belied the weight of the responsibilities he bore and the courage he exhibited.

Leonard found his final resting place in the Sangro River War Cemetery in Italy, a solemn testament to the countless lives altered by the tumultuous events of that time. The inscription on his gravestone captures the essence of his sacrifice – a fusilier in the ranks of The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, cut down on the 29th of November 1943 at the age of 20.



Each letter etched into the stone becomes a thread connecting the past to the present, and the sacrifice of a young life to the enduring memory of those who fought for freedom.

As we stand before Leonard's memorial, I'm reminded of the intricate tapestry of history, woven from the threads of countless lives like his. Each name represents a story, a family, and a legacy. Leonard's legacy is one of bravery and selflessness, a reminder that the echoes of war are not just dates and battles, but the lives of individuals who should never be forgotten.

With each day more family history is discovered before I came onto the grave of George & Annie Cunnington with an inscription that mention their son Wilfred Courtney Cunnington with the mention on the headstone of his fate in the WW2.

As the days unfold, the tapestry of family history continues to reveal its intricate threads, each thread representing a story waiting to be told. And in this journey of discovery, I stumbled upon the grave of George and Annie Cunnington (Plot PN-J4), bearing an inscription that spoke of their beloved son, Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, whose fate was intertwined with the tumultuous times of World War II.

The headstone, a silent sentinel of memories, bore witness to Wilfred's sacrifice. It read:

"In Loving Memory of OUR DEAR SON PILOT SERG WILFRED COURTNEY CUNNINGTON 148 B SQUADRON RAF (OF TRIMSARAN) LOST HIS LIFE IN AN AIR CRASH WHILE ON DUTY AT GREAT DUNNOW PARK ESSEX OCT 18, 1938, AGED 29 YEARS PEACE PERFECT PEACE"



Driven by the desire to uncover the story behind this brave soul, I delved into the annals of history. The narrative that unfolded painted a picture of dedication and tragedy. Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a member of the esteemed 148 Squadron of the RAF, found himself in the cockpit of a Vickers Wellesley Mk. I, identified by the serial number K7716.



Tragedy struck on the 18th of October 1938, as two aircraft, including Wilfred's Wellesley K7716, met in a devastating mid-air collision. The other aircraft involved, Wellesley K7714, was also from the same 148 Squadron. The collision occurred over the skies of Great Dunmow, Essex. In an instant, lives were forever altered, and the fate of those aboard the ill-fated K7716 was sealed.

The crew of K7716 included:

- Sgt Reginald Prosser (aged 24)
- Sgt Wilfred Courtney Cunnington (aged 29)
- Act Sgt James Crane Irwin (aged 31)

All three valiant individuals lost their lives that day, their spirits forever imprinted on the pages of history. Their sacrifices stand as a testament to the risks and challenges faced by those who took to the skies in service of their nation.

Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a Pilot Sergeant who had embarked on his duties with bravery and determination, now rests in eternal peace, his memory enshrined in the hearts of those who remember. His age, 29, is a stark reminder of the youthfulness that war often claimed, a poignant reminder that every life cut short was a world of potential and dreams.

As I stand before his memorial, I reflect on the profound impact that a few lines of text can have, capturing the essence of a life and its untimely end. Wilfred's story joins the tapestry of history, a thread woven with the threads of countless others who made the ultimate sacrifice for a greater cause. Their legacy lives on, as does the gratitude of generations who will never forget their sacrifice.

With each passing day, the journey through history brings new chapters to light, unveiling stories that have weathered the sands of time. Among the markers of remembrance, the memorial headstone of Nathaniel and Eliza Hancock (Plot PN-K8) stood as a silent testament to a family's enduring love and sacrifice, with an inscription that echoed through the years:



"PEACE IN LOVING MEMORY OF NATHANIEL HANCOCK DIED JAN 8.1937 AGED 59 YEARS. EVER IN OUR THOUGHTS, ALSO HIS DEAR WIFE ELIZA HANCOCK DIED SEPT. 23,1955: AGED 76 ALSO OF THEIR SON RICHARD GEORGE HANCOCK B.S.M-RA DIED ON ACTIVE SERVICE 1939-1945 EVER REMEMBERED"

This inscription held a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by this family during a time of global turmoil. The mention of their son, Richard George Hancock, who died on active service, ignited a spark of curiosity, driving me to uncover more about his story.

And so, the journey of discovery led me to the remarkable story of Warrant Officer Class II (Battery Serjeant-Major) Richard George Hancock. His service, marked by dedication and courage, unfolded against the backdrop of World War II. Tragically, his life was cut short on the 14th of November 1942, in the sands of Egypt, amidst the fierce battles of El Alamein.

The scroll that commemorates his sacrifice reads:

"This scroll commemorates Battery Serjeant-Major R. G. Hancock Royal Regiment of Artillery held in honour as one who served King and Country in the world war of 1939-1945 and gave his life to save mankind from tyranny. May his sacrifice help to bring the peace and freedom for which he died."

Richard George Hancock's role in the struggle against tyranny is a testament to his bravery and selflessness. He stands as a symbol of all those who served, whose sacrifices paved the path to a better future. The battles

he fought were not just on distant lands; they were the embodiment of a collective effort to preserve freedom and humanity.

As I reflect on his story, I am reminded of the interconnectedness of history and how the lives of individuals intertwine with the greater narrative. The inscription on the headstone and the scroll of commemoration stands as a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that Richard George Hancock's memory endures, and his sacrifice continues to inspire. May his legacy be a beacon of hope, reminding us of the price paid for the peace and freedom we hold dear.

I chanced upon an inconspicuous headstone, Plot (PF-C6) which soon revealed itself to be a poignant memorial that held a deeper narrative.



IN MEMORY OF
PRYCE LLOYD
DIED NOV 26: 1917
AGED 70 YEARS
ALSO GRIFFITH HIS SON THIS SON
KILLED IN ACTION IN FRANCE
MARCH 28, 1918, AGED 28 YEARS

This solemn inscription piqued my curiosity, prompting me to delve further into the story of Pryce Lloyd's cherished son, Griffith. It became evident that Griffith was not laid to rest here, and my curiosity drove me to uncover more details. As I delved deeper, this is what I uncovered.

This is for the memory of Griffith Lloyd, Private, 307171, Lancashire Fusiliers.

Griffith Lloyd, the cherished son of Pryce and Ellen Lloyd. A life intertwined with the land, both Griffith and his father served as Gamekeepers at Trimsaran, residing at the Keeper's Lodge before the world was plunged into conflict.

Answering the call of duty, Griffith enlisted in Kidwelly, joining the ranks of the 2/8th Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers. This valiant unit was affiliated with the 197 Brigade, a crucial part of the 66th (2nd East Lancs.) Division. Their journey led them to the Western Front, a theatre of sacrifice and valour, which they reached by the 16th of March 1917. From there, they ventured to the shores of Flanders.

As the seasons shifted, September of 1917 found them stationed in Ypres, where they steadfastly participated in the harrowing Battle of Poelcapelle. With determination, they then marched southward to the Somme, a name etched in history. On the fateful 21st of March 1918, the tumultuous tempest of the German Spring Offensive swept upon them at the Battle of St Quentin. Undaunted, they held their ground, and in the subsequent westward movement, they engaged in the Actions at the Somme Crossings—a chapter where destiny would unfold for Griffith.



In the crucible of battle, Griffith sustained wounds that would ultimately claim his life. Aged just 28, he passed away on the 28th of March 1918. His final resting place is Namps-Au-Val British Cemetery, France—an eternal abode where his bravery and sacrifice remain forever enshrined.

In humble tribute, we honour Griffith Lloyd, his unwavering courage, and the legacy he bestowed upon history. May his memory be a beacon of inspiration for generations to come.

This marked another chapter in the history of this cemetery.

This another sad story which made me think of my family and what I would feel if this had happened to me. I was recording the details of a memorial stone of Mary Anthony (Plot PE2-D1) and took in the enormity of what I saw before me on the inscription.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
DAVID
SON OF DAVID & MARY ANTHONY
Of AQUEDUCT IN THIS PARISH WHO DIED
NOV 8, 1880, AGED 6 MONTHS
MARY ANTHONY
APRIL 27, 1884, AGED 29 YEARS
ALSO MARY DAUGHTER OF THE ABOVE
BORN APRIL 27th, 1884, DIED APRIL 21st, 1901.

Indeed, the inscriptions on the memorial stones hold within them stories of heartbreak, loss, and the fragility of life. As you stood before the memorial stone of Mary Anthony, the weight of the narrative etched into the cold stone must have been palpable – a testament to the profound grief that can touch a family's life.

In the span of these few lines, a tale of tragedy and loss is woven, a tapestry of lives cut short, and hearts left shattered. The dates, the ages, and the relationships carved into the stone carry the weight of entire lifetimes condensed into a few words. The stark reality of Mary Anthony's story is heart-wrenching.

To lose a son at only 6 months old, to pass away at such a tender age of 29, and then, a cruel twist of fate, to bring a daughter into the world on the same day she herself would depart – it's a narrative that encapsulates the harshness of life's uncertainties. The story of Mary Anthony and her daughter Mary is a poignant reminder of the delicate balance between life and mortality, the fleeting nature of our existence.

Standing before that stone, the realization must have hit you with a wave of empathy and reflection. It's moments like these that make us pause and ponder our own lives, the lives of our loved ones, and the profound vulnerability that accompanies our journey through this world. Such stories bridge the gap between history and personal experience, making us realize that while time marches on, the emotions and the essence of human experience remain timeless.

As we contemplate the stories etched into these stones, may they inspire us to cherish the moments we have, to hold our loved ones a little closer, and to find meaning and purpose in the face of life's uncertainties. The vulnerability that you sensed in those inscriptions reminds us of the

importance of compassion and understanding – for each life, no matter how brief, carries its own weight and significance in the grand tapestry of existence.

I've been dedicating my time and effort to meticulously record the cemetery memorials at Llandyry Church. This journey, undertaken in collaboration with the church warden, has been a profound and humbling experience. Today, I'm thrilled to share my reflections on this endeavour, hoping that you will find it as moving to read as I found it to live.

The process of documenting these memorials has been nothing short of overwhelming in the most touching way. Each gravestone represents a life – a story waiting to be uncovered, shared, and remembered. As I've walked among these silent sentinels, the weight of history has settled upon my shoulders, inviting me to honour the lives that once thrived within these hallowed grounds.

The gravestones are more than markers; they are windows into the past. The names, dates, and inscriptions etched into the stone reveal glimpses of triumphs and tribulations, joys, and sorrows. Every name is a thread in the rich tapestry of our shared human experience. The names may be weathered, but they still speak to us, reminding us of the lives once lived and the connections that endure beyond time.

Through this project, I've come to realize the deeply personal nature of remembrance. The act of preserving these memories is a gift to those who came before us and to the generations that will follow. It's a way of saying, "Your stories matter. Your existence is not forgotten." In this age of fleeting digital interactions, there's something sacred about the permanence of these inscriptions, standing as a testament to the lives they represent.

As I reflect on the countless hours spent amidst the stones, my heart is full of humility. The enormity of history and the tapestry of humanity that resides within this churchyard have left an indelible mark on my soul. It's a reminder that life is precious, fragile, and ultimately fleeting. The stories that these stones hold is a reminder to live with purpose, to cherish our moments, and to leave a legacy worth remembering.

So here it is, my attempt to put into words the emotions that have swelled within me during this journey. I invite you to read, to share in this experience, and to join me in honouring the lives that have contributed to the fabric of this community. I hope my words capture even a fraction of the awe and reverence I've felt in the presence of these memorials.

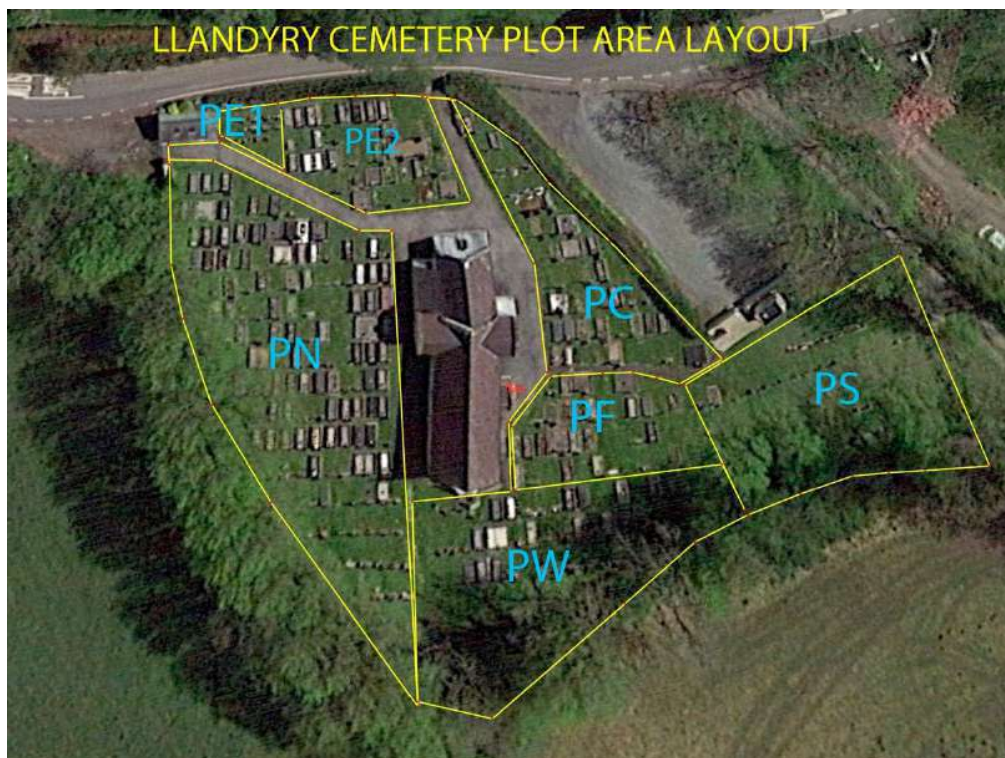
Thank you for being a part of this journey with me. I believe that these stories, these lives, and these moments of remembrance are worth every effort, and I invite you to explore this shared history with me.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Graham Tudor Emmanuel

Acknowledgments: We extend our sincere gratitude to Coflein for providing valuable insights into the history of Llandry Church. Additionally, we would like to thank www.findagrave.com for offering the necessary tools to preserve pertinent data and facilitating our information-gathering process. Your contributions have greatly enriched the content and quality of this project.

Llandry Cemetery Memorial Plot Layout Location



The Legacy of Llangiwg Church

Lizzy the Jug my 4-legged companion and I embarked on a journey to explore Llangiwg Church, nestled near the town of Pontardawe in the Swansea Valley. The expedition commenced with a thrilling drive along a narrow, steep road that wound its way up the solitary mountain where the church stood. Doubts lingered about whether our campervan could conquer the challenging path, but we pressed on and triumphed.



We spent a few hours there talking with the volunteers who made us welcome to the open day run by The Llangiwg Trust (www.llangiwgtrust.org) who's mission is to be the stewards of the former St. Ciwg's Church at Llangiwg, situated near Pontardawe.

This church stands majestically in a serene, picturesque location, perched 700 feet above sea level on Barley Hill in the Upper Swansea Valley. It holds within its walls an ancient legacy, steeped in both historic and architectural significance dating back to the 6th century, known as the age of Celtic saints.

Their goal is to honour this rich heritage by preserving and thoughtfully developing this iconic structure for sustained and meaningful use by the local community. They aspire to provide a hub that serves the greater good, focusing on social welfare, education, culture, and the environment.

By fostering a vibrant and engaging space, they aim to create an invaluable resource that enriches lives and offers a deeper connection to the roots of our shared history and culture.

Upon arrival, our anticipation was met with awe-inspiring reality. Our purpose for visiting was to meet with a knowledgeable guide named John Williams, who graciously offered to give us a detailed tour of the Church. He promised to provide historical insights into why this place of worship was situated in such an isolated locale.

The origins of Llangiwg Church trace back to a Celtic foundation, dedicated to Clwg the Confessor, a revered 6th-century hermit and saint who introduced Christianity to the region between AD 542 and 568 during the era of St. David—the 'Age of Saints.' Initially, structures were made of wattle and daub, and the transition to a stone church likely occurred about four centuries later after the Norman conquest of Britain.



The present-day church structure we admire was rebuilt during the Tudor period around c.1500 and underwent substantial alterations in 1812, as evidenced by a plaque on the southern external wall. The church's tower potentially holds remnants of its Norman roots, though its height had to be reduced to ensure stability. The interior preserves a Norman font, a precious link to the church's earlier construction.



Llangiwg Church proudly holds a Grade II listing, boasting an unusually elongated chancel and nave without a partition. In the 19th century, significant renovations included repaving and reseating the nave, substituting stone roof slates with Caernarfon slates, and introducing new windows. The current roof, as we see it today, was installed by the Church in Wales in 1997.

Intriguingly, a tangible link to the early Christian era emerges from the midst of history—the fragment of an early Christian cross, believed to hail from the 9th century, or quite possibly an even earlier period. This fragment comprises the top portion of a round-headed stone, intricately incised with primitive crosses, potentially once constituting a vital element of a standing or preaching cross, a place for open-air worship in those times.

It stands as a tangible connection to the pre-Norman church and serves as one of the closest artifacts we possess that harks back to Ciwg's era in the 6th century, preserving a glimpse of the religious practices and beliefs of that time.



Additionally, within the churchyard's southern section, not far from the church entrance, lies another significant discovery—a socketed stone associated with the construction or installation of a cross. This socketed stone, expertly dated to the 9th to 12th century range, further corroborates the historical depth of this sacred site and the evolving expressions of faith and reverence across centuries. These artifacts collectively narrate a story of enduring spirituality and the evolving ways in which the community expressed its devotion and connection to the divine.

Historically, Llangiwg began as a Roman Catholic Church, acknowledging the authority of the Pope until the Reformation in 1534 during Henry VIII's reign. In the 12th century, a dispute arose between Bernard, the Bishop of St David's (Pembrokeshire), and Urban, the Bishop of Llandaff, regarding the diocesan boundaries. Ultimately, it was proven that Llangiwg belonged to the diocese of St David's, overturning the Pope's earlier decree.

Through various historical periods, Llangiwg saw changes in patronage and financial endowments. In 1563, it was apportioned to the Hospital of the Blessed David in Swansea. Over the years, the church remained a central

spiritual hub for parishioners, especially local farmers residing in the upland farms of the region. The Maendy Inn nearby provided a post-Sunday service gathering place for churchgoers. Interestingly, remnants of the parish clerk's house, believed to have been Ciwg's cell, lie beneath the ruins of the inn. After the morning service, congregants engaged in ball games against the church tower and other outdoor activities, including local cattle fairs.

As industrialization took root in the valleys, the population shifted to the valley floor, prompting a need for a more conveniently located church. This led to the construction of St Peter's Church in Pontardawe, starting in 1858 and completing in 1860. Additionally, during the cholera epidemic of 1866, the Llangiwig graveyard became a final resting place for victims from distant areas, reflecting the sombre history of the time. Paupers from Pontardawe Workhouse were also interred here during that period.

Within the confines of the Llangiwig Church, dedicated to St. Ciwg, lies a restored well ([51.734534, -3.849899](#)) a historical artifact that has been given new life in recent years.



This well, steeped in antiquity, evokes intrigue, possibly pre-dating the arrival of Ciwg in the fifth century CE.

The notion arises that the well may have existed on this site long before Ciwg established his cell, hinting at a potential pre-Christian origin.

Perched atop the hill's crest, the location offers a panoramic view encompassing the southwestern Mynydd Carn, Llechart and the south-eastern

Mynydd Drumau (Carreg Bica), fostering suspicions of pre-Christian practices tied to the landscape. The church itself retains vestiges from a time preceding the Norman era, preserving fragments of its ancient heritage within its sacred walls.

The Transatlantic Journey of Ezra Whitney Rhodes

During my first visit to Llangiwg Church, I came across a gravestone that caught my attention—that of Ezra Whitney Rhodes. Intrigued by the presence of an American in this quiet Welsh churchyard, I began researching his story and uncovered a fascinating connection between Wales and the maritime world of 19th-century New England.

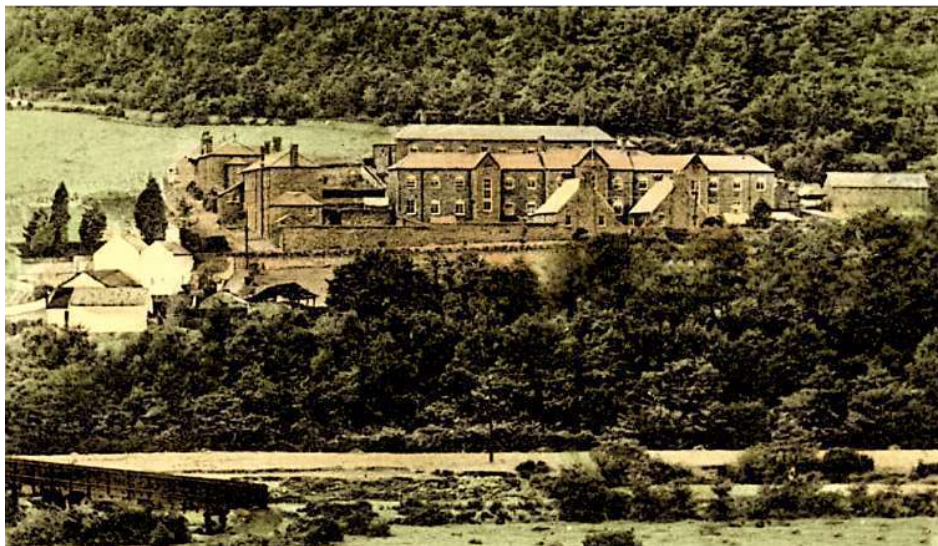
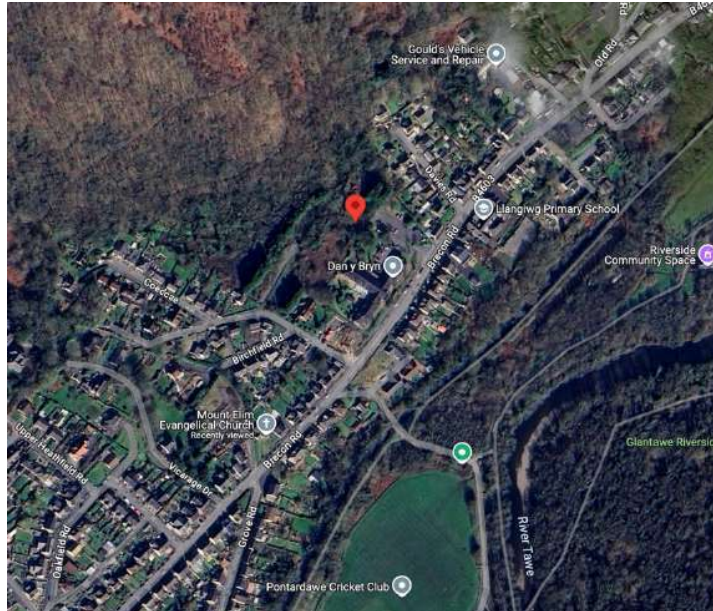


<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/259772316/ezra-whitney-rhodes>

Ezra Whitney Rhodes was born on April 12, 1867, in Rockland, Maine, USA, into a family deeply rooted in the community.

In 1913, while staying in Ystalyfera, he fell gravely ill. With no local doctor available, he was taken to the Pontardawe Workhouse, part of the Pontardawe Poor Law Union, established in 1879. The workhouse served several local parishes, comprised seven parishes that had previously formed part of the Neath and Swansea Poor Law Unions, namely Cilybebyll, Llangicke, Mawr, Rhyndwlydach, Ynysymond, Ystradgynlais Higher, and Ystradgynlais Lower. offering care and shelter for the impoverished, sick, and elderly, with a capacity for 130 inmates.





It was situated at the north-east of Pontardawe, on a sloping site at the north side of Brecon Road it provided essential medical facilities, often serving as the only source of care for those in need. However, conditions were austere, with strict rules and basic amenities. Despite the treatment available, Ezra's condition worsened, and he passed away on September 13, 1913. He was buried in Llangiwg Cemetery, with his family in America funding the burial and headstone. A few years later, a woman from America travelled to visit his grave, preserving his memory.

His father, James Edward Rhodes, was a Civil War veteran who later served as mayor of Rockland from 1904 to 1906.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/188410285/james_edward_rhodes

His mother, Celestia “Lettie” (Whitney) Rhodes, was also an active member of local organizations, including the Woman's Relief Corps, where she served as state president.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/271896772/lettie_a_rhodes

Rockland’s thriving industries likely shaped Ezra’s life and career. The town was known for shipbuilding, fishing, and its renowned sardine and fish canneries, which supplied goods across the United States and internationally. This maritime influence may have drawn Ezra to a life at sea, and it may explain why he found himself in Swansea, Wales—a city known for its own fishing and canning industries—at the time of his death.

Ezra passed away on September 15, 1913, in Pontardawe, Glamorgan, Wales, at the age of 46. He was laid to rest in Saint Ciwg Churchyard, Llangiwg, Neath Port Talbot. Though he lies far from his native Rockland, his legacy lives on with a memorial in Achorn Cemetery in Rockland, Knox County, Maine.



Ezra’s family in Rockland was similarly marked by a spirit of service and dedication. His brother, Albert Woodbury Rhodes, was a respected member of the Sons of Veterans and served as a corporal in the Tilson Light Infantry until his untimely death in 1890.

His sister, Lucie Ellen Rhodes, devoted her life to teaching and civic leadership in their hometown. Ezra’s life, along with his family’s contributions, reflects the ties between Rockland’s maritime heritage and the broader Atlantic world—a connection that spanned oceans and brought him to rest in a small churchyard in Wales.

Also Capt. Orris Rhodes, Ezra Whitney Rhodes's grandfather, was a seasoned mariner whose life exemplified the enduring maritime tradition passed down through generations in the Rhodes family. Known for his skill and dedication, Capt. Rhodes spent his career navigating major transatlantic routes, connecting North America, Europe, and the Caribbean. His leadership and expertise earned him respect in the seafaring community.

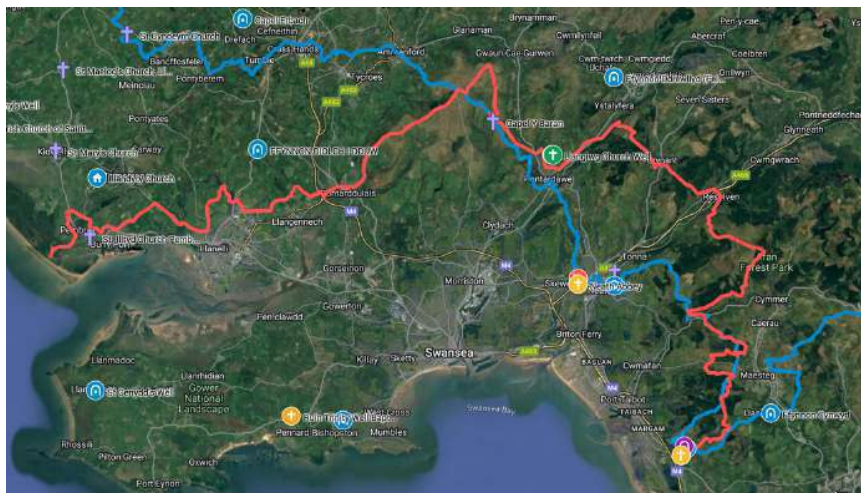
Capt. Rhodes's final journey was aboard the schooner *Aldana Rokes*, where he passed away en route from Belfast, Ireland, to Matanzas, Cuba, at the age of 59 years, 10 months, and 16 days. Following the custom of the time, he was laid to rest at sea. This traditional burial, a common practice for sailors who died at sea, left his resting place in the very waters he had sailed throughout his life.

The legacy of maritime life continued through his grandson, Ezra Whitney Rhodes, whose own life and travels eventually led him to South Wales. Like his grandfather, Ezra was drawn to the sea and the bustling industry surrounding it, connecting the Rhodes family to ports and communities across the Atlantic. This shared calling across generations reveals the deep ties between the Rhodes family and the maritime world—a legacy that spanned continents and left an indelible mark both in America and, finally, in a quiet Welsh churchyard.

The Significance of Llangiwg Church in Welsh Pilgrimage Routes

Llangiwg Church holds a unique place in the network of historic Welsh pilgrimage routes. Its location places it close to two notable paths: St. Illtyd's Way and the Cistercian Way. These routes were historically significant paths for spiritual seekers, connecting holy sites across Wales and offering opportunities for reflection, devotion, and connection with sacred landscapes. Today, these routes continue to draw pilgrims, historians, and those interested in Wales's rich religious heritage.

This map illustrates the network of Welsh religious sites and historic pilgrimage routes, tracing pathways that have guided pilgrims through the Welsh landscape for centuries. The routes connect key sites of spiritual and historical significance, showcasing Wales's rich heritage of faith and devotion. Each path reflects the enduring legacy of pilgrimage in Welsh culture, linking sacred places across the country.



<https://tinyurl.com/Welsh-Religious-Sites>

St. Illtyd's Way

St. Illtyd's Way is named in honour of Saint Illtyd, a revered 5th-6th-century saint known for founding one of Britain's earliest centres of Christian learning at Llantwit Major. This pilgrimage route spans from **St. Illtyd's Church in Pembrey** to the **Church of St. Illtyd in Neath**, passing through a diverse array of landscapes, from coastal stretches to serene woodlands and ancient hillsides.

St Illtyd's Church, Pembrey



<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/2148441>

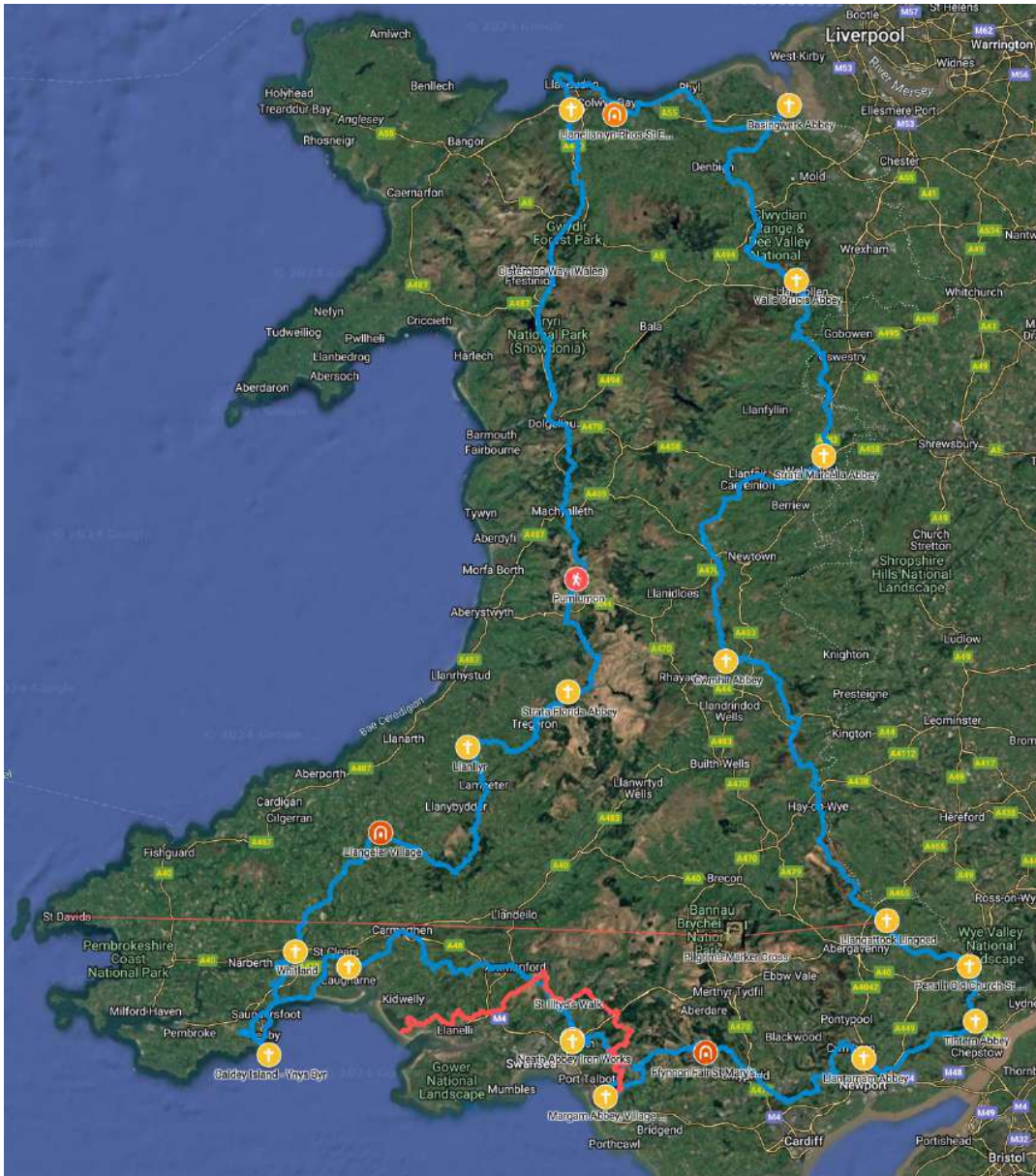
The route celebrates St. Illtyd's legacy of scholarship, faith, and community. Along the way, pilgrims encounter medieval churches, sacred wells, and historical sites connected to St. Illtyd's monastic tradition. This route is part of a larger tradition of pilgrimage paths that highlight Wales's monastic heritage, blending natural beauty with opportunities for spiritual reflection. Llangiwg Church, though not directly on St. Illtyd's Way, lies near enough to this path that many pilgrims visit as a place of prayer, adding a quiet chapter of reflection on their journey through the spiritual landscape of South Wales.

Church of St. Illtyd in Neath



The Cistercian Way

The Cistercian Way is a circular pilgrimage route that traces the Cistercian order's impact on Welsh spirituality and society. This path connects various Cistercian abbeys around Wales, such as **Tintern Abbey**, **Strata Florida**, and **Margam Abbey**, creating a network that explores the rich legacy of the Cistercian monks in Wales. The order was renowned for its devotion to prayer, self-sufficiency, and land cultivation, and the Cistercian Way celebrates these contributions to Welsh culture and spirituality.



Following the Cistercian Way allows modern pilgrims to experience Wales's breath-taking rural landscapes, from river valleys to mountain passes, all while reflecting on the monastic history that shaped these regions. Llangiwnnig Church and its Holy Well, with its proximity to sections of this route, serves as a peaceful resting point for those tracing the steps of the Cistercians. Here, visitors can pause to reflect on the historical and spiritual legacy of the monks who played a vital role in Welsh religious life during the medieval period.

The History of Llangwig Church and Saint Ciwg

Llangiwg Church is an historic and spiritual landmark that has stood the test of time. The church, dedicated to the little-known Saint Ciwg (or Ciw), carries a rich heritage dating back to the early days of Christianity in Wales. Its history weaves together ancient faith, local traditions, and centuries of community reverence, making it a valuable piece of Welsh spiritual and cultural history.

The Legend of Saint Ciwg

Saint Ciwg, the church's patron, is a somewhat mysterious figure, as little historical information has survived about him. He is believed to have been a Welsh saint who lived during the 5th or 6th century, a time of great monastic growth in Wales. Like many early Welsh saints, Saint Ciwg would have been part of the Celtic Christian tradition, which emphasized asceticism, monastic life, and a deep connection with nature.

Although details about his life are scarce, Saint Ciwg was likely a contemporary of other Welsh saints, such as Saint Illtyd and Saint David, who were instrumental in spreading Christianity throughout Wales during this era. His dedication to spiritual life and his influence on the local area were enough to inspire the establishment of a church in his honour, which would eventually become known as Llangiwg, translating to "the church of Ciwg."

Early Christian Roots

Llangiwg Church is believed to have been founded sometime in the early medieval period, likely between the 6th and 8th centuries. This period in Wales was marked by the spread of small monastic communities, where monks lived in simplicity and focused on prayer, study, and manual labour. The early church at Llangiwg would have been a modest structure, possibly a wooden building with a thatched roof, and it likely served as a spiritual centre for residents and travellers alike.

The church's location near ancient pilgrimage routes, including St. Illtyd's Way and the Cistercian Way, hints at its importance as a waypoint for those undertaking religious journeys across Wales. Pilgrims traveling through South Wales would have found a place for rest and reflection at Llangiwg, drawn to its quiet beauty and the sanctuary it provided.

Medieval Developments and the Stone Church

Llangiwg Church is an Anglican parish church with medieval origins, altered in 1812. Located in one of the more remote and picturesque areas of Glamorgan, the church is historically significant, retaining its medieval fabric despite its isolation. The church has long been a focal point for the community of Llangiwg and beyond, remaining a key site despite being declared redundant in 2004. It is now cared for by The Friends of Llangiwg Church. Historically, the church was part of the Lordship of Gower and served as a destination for pilgrims during the late medieval period. The site itself is a rich historical landscape, comprising the church, churchyard, well, and possibly an early Christian platform.



The church's architectural interest is evident in its medieval core, which retains the basic plan from around 1500. The early Christian font and stones provide direct evidence of the earlier medieval structure. According to the Royal Commission's *Glamorgan Inventory*, an important early medieval trackway passes near the church, suggesting that the area held religious significance even before the Norman period. Contrary to common belief, the extent of 19th-century rebuilding has often been exaggerated. Much of the medieval fabric survives, except for a rebuilt section of the north chancel wall. The church follows a typical medieval plan with an undivided nave and chancel, a porch, and a west tower.

The porch and tower are non-liturgical additions. The porch, traditionally used for meetings and agreements, retains stone benches and a holy water stoup. The tower, an embellishment housing a ring of bells, was an extravagant feature for upland churches, though few were able to build such towers. The tower opens to the nave through a rough, pointed arch and appears to be of the same period as the nave. The tower's thick walls are pierced by putlog holes, and it originally had three floors: a ground-floor chamber, a ringing chamber with two small loops (one facing the nave), and a bell chamber that once housed a large bell. The top of the tower is crenellated, and its unusual placement is offset to accommodate a blocked doorway in the west nave wall. This doorway, along with the thick wall, suggests the presence of a stone mural stair, which was likely lit by a surviving Tudor-style window at the upper level. Further archaeological investigation is needed to fully understand the area's architectural mysteries.

Inside the church, most of the fabric dates from the 19th century, likely in two phases. The first phase is marked by an inscription under the eaves of the south wall, reading, "This Church was new roofed and considerably altered. A.D. 1812." This phase included the addition of a Georgian plastered ceiling, which likely replaced an earlier open roof. Other alterations involved the re-paving of the church, re-pewing, and the rebuilding of the north chancel wall. Some of the pews, featuring enclosed benches with raised panels and moulded rails, may date from this period. A later phase of 19th-century work involved the installation of Early English-style windows and the reordering of the chancel.

Although the church has ceased regular use, the font has been preserved. This large circular Norman font, made of Sutton stone and featuring a plain moulding at the base, serves as a precious link to the church's Norman predecessor. The church also contains early Christian stones, including a "disc-headed" cross located in the porch. This cross, dated to the 9th century, is described in the *Glamorgan Inventory*, which also discusses its provenance. Additionally, a socketed stone for small standing slab or cross remains in the churchyard, dating from the 9th to 12th century.

The churchyard, a large quadrangular space rising steeply to the north, is enclosed by a drystone wall, with access points from the west (to the well), south (the main gateway), and north (via steps over the wall). The churchyard is home to a variety of memorials spanning from the 17th to 20th centuries. A concentration of 18th-century altar tombs and other memorials can be found on the east and south sides. On the north side, there are several coffin-shaped graves defined by pitched sandstone slabs. Among the 19th-century burials are those of victims of cholera epidemics, while 20th-century graves include casualties from the World Wars.

The Decline and Restoration of Llangiwig Church

Like many ancient rural churches, Llangiwig faced challenges in maintaining its structure and congregation as communities shifted and modernized. By the 19th century, the church had fallen into disrepair, and its congregation dwindled as people moved to more urban areas or attended larger, more modern churches nearby. Eventually, services ceased, and the church was left largely abandoned.

In recent decades, however, interest in preserving Welsh heritage sites has led to a renewed focus on restoring Llangiwig Church. The Llangiwig Church Trust was established to protect and maintain the church, ensuring that its historical significance is not lost to time. Through the efforts of local historians, volunteers, and conservationists, the church has been stabilized and partially restored, allowing visitors to continue to connect with this remarkable site and the legacy of Saint Ciwg.

Llangiwig Church Today

Today, Llangiwig Church stands as a symbol of Welsh heritage, thanks largely to the dedicated efforts of The Llangiwig Trust Charity. This charity, established with the mission to preserve and restore the church, is working to revitalise the historic site and reintegrate it into the life of the local community.

<https://llangiwigtrust.org/>

The Trust's restoration work focuses not only on preserving the church's physical structure but also on reimagining its role as a vibrant community space. Through careful restoration, the charity aims to make the church a multi-functional venue where local events, educational programs, and community gatherings can take place. By breathing new life into Llangiwig Church, The Llangiwig Trust Charity is ensuring that this treasured landmark remains a living part of the community, accessible to future generations for both historical appreciation and community enrichment.

Llangiwg Church's location along historic pilgrimage routes gives it a special place in the Welsh landscape. Pilgrims, historians, and travellers alike are drawn to its quiet beauty, where they can reflect on the lives of those who came before. The church is both a spiritual sanctuary and a historical site, bridging past and present, Welsh, and American, in a quiet testament to faith, heritage, and resilience.

Darris G. Williams (Inscription Survey)

A special mention to the survey of grave memorials at Llangiwg Church Cemetery, undertaken by Darris G. Williams over multiple visits from 1991 to 2013, reflects his ongoing pursuit of family history.

During the initial visit, the blackberry bushes on the south side near the outer wall had grown wild, and the north side was so overrun with ferns that only a few graves near the northeast corner of the church were visible. Many of the graves were enclosed by iron railings.

Today, the graveyard is beautifully maintained, and most of the iron railings have been removed. It is now a peaceful and well-kept space, where visitors often stop to enjoy the serene surroundings.

<https://tinyurl.com/DGW-Llangiwg-Inscriptions>

Graham T Emmanuel 2024

St Mary's Church Carew

St Mary's Church, located in Carew, Pembrokeshire, Wales, stands as a significant historical and architectural monument. Nestled within a raised, rectilinear churchyard, the site reveals traces of its early medieval origins. The remnants of an ancient boundary are discernible as an earthwork in the north-west corner of the churchyard, hinting at the church's longstanding presence.



Documented references to the church date back to the mid-12th century, with a notable mention in the Taxatio of 1291, when it was assessed at £40. Originally dedicated to St John the Baptist, the church boasts a rich history intertwined with the local nobility and ecclesiastical patronage.

The history of St Mary's Church and the Old Mortuary Chapel from their inception:

St Mary's Church, Carew

Mid-12th Century: St Mary's Church is first mentioned in historical documents.

1291: The church is recorded in the Taxatio, assessed at £40.

14th Century: Construction of the chancel and transept.

15th Century: Addition of the nave, aisles, porch, and the tower (circa 1500).

Tower originally featured angle buttresses, turrets, and a spire.

1311: Death of Sir Nicholas de Carew, who is buried in the chancel.

1598: Death Sir John Carew

Late 15th/Early 16th Century: Patronage by Sir Rhys ap Thomas, likely influencing further construction, including the tower.

17th Century: Relocation of medieval heraldic tiles from Carew Castle to the church chancel.

17th/18th Century: Addition of the vestry.

Early 19th Century: Installation of box pews.

1852: Restoration by George Gilbert-Scott.

1857: Installation of the Crimean War memorial window.

1890s: Further restoration work.

1922: Addition of the boiler house.

Today: The church stands as a Grade I listed building, reflecting a rich architectural and historical heritage.

Old Mortuary Chapel (The Oratory)

14th/15th Century: Construction of the vaulted undercroft, possibly serving as an ossuary.

1625: Referred to as a schoolhouse.

1833: The school educates 50 pupils and hosts 70 Sunday School attendees.

1846: Transition to a national school with up to 116 children.

1872: Village school opens, and the building ceases to function as a primary school.

Post-1872: Use as a mortuary chapel, committee room, store, and residence for paupers until around 1840.

Late 19th/Early 20th Century: Known locally as "The Oratory."

Today: Functions as a parish meeting room and Sunday School, maintaining its Grade I listed status.



Notable Events and Figures

1311: Death of Sir Nicholas de Carew.

Sir Nicholas de Carew was a prominent medieval figure in Wales, particularly known for his association with the Carew family and Carew Castle. His death in 1311 marked the end of an era for the Carew family, which had significant influence in the region during the medieval period. Sir Nicholas de Carew was instrumental in the construction and fortification of Carew Castle, a key stronghold that played a crucial role in the defence and administration of Pembrokeshire.

The Carew family, of Norman origin, established themselves in Wales following the Norman Conquest. Sir Nicholas's contributions to the castle's development included enhancements that reflected the Edwardian style of fortification, blending both residential and defensive features. His burial in the chancel of St Mary's Church signifies his high status and the family's close ties to the church.

The tomb of Sir Nicholas de Carew within St Mary's Church underscores his importance in the local community and the legacy of the Carew family in the area. His death in 1311 would have been a significant event, impacting not only the family but also the broader social and political landscape of Pembrokeshire.

1598: Death Sir John Carew

Sir John Carew, a prominent figure in Welsh history, was born in 1598 and passed away in 1637. His life and legacy are deeply intertwined with Carew Castle and St. Mary's Church, located in the picturesque village of Carew in Pembrokeshire, Wales.

Sir John Carew belonged to the influential Carew family, known for their stewardship over Carew Castle and extensive land holdings in the area. The castle, a symbol of their power and prestige, stands as a testament to their prominence throughout the centuries.

St. Mary's Church, adjacent to Carew Castle, played a significant role in Sir John Carew's life. It was here that he worshipped and, upon his death in 1637, was laid to rest in the St. Mary New Churchyard, situated next to the church. His burial site remains a poignant reminder of his enduring connection to the land and community he served.

During his lifetime, Sir John Carew witnessed significant political and social changes in Wales and England. His family's influence extended beyond local governance to national affairs, reflecting their stature and importance during the early 17th century.

Today, visitors to Carew can explore the rich history associated with Sir John Carew and his family. Carew Castle and St. Mary's Church continue to attract visitors from around the world, offering a glimpse into the past and preserving the legacy of figures like Sir John Carew, who shaped the history of Pembrokeshire and Wales.

1777: Death of John Relly,

Early Calvinist Methodist leader, with a monument erected in the churchyard.

John Relly was a notable figure in the history of early Methodism, particularly within the Calvinist branch of the movement. Born around 1720, Relly became a prominent preacher and theologian who significantly influenced the development of Calvinist Methodism. His death in 1777 marked the loss of a key leader in this religious movement.

Relly was closely associated with the Methodist revival of the 18th century, a period of religious renewal and evangelical fervour that spread across Britain. While the broader Methodist movement was largely shaped by John and Charles Wesley, John Relly's contributions were distinct in their Calvinist theological orientation, which emphasized predestination and the sovereignty of God in the salvation process.

One of Relly's notable contributions was his mentoring of John Wesley's brother, George Whitefield, who also became a prominent figure in the Calvinist Methodist movement. Relly's teachings and writings helped shape the theological foundations of Calvinist Methodism, distinguishing it from the Arminian beliefs held by the Wesleyan Methodists.

John Relly's monument in the churchyard of St Mary's Church in Carew reflects his significance as a religious leader. His legacy continued to influence Calvinist Methodism well beyond his death, as his followers and writings perpetuated his theological perspectives. The memorial serves as a testament to his impact on the religious landscape of his time, marking him as an important figure in the history of Methodism.

1842: Documentation of the tower's turrets and spire, later removed in subsequent centuries.

In 1842, St Mary's Church in Carew was documented to have turrets (or pinnacles) and a spire adorning its tower. These architectural features were relatively uncommon in Pembrokeshire, making the church a notable example of medieval ecclesiastical design in the region.

The presence of turrets and a spire on the tower would have enhanced the church's visual prominence, serving both aesthetic and symbolic purposes. Turrets often

added a fortified appearance, while the spire directed the eye upwards, symbolizing the heavenly aspirations of the faithful and serving as a landmark for the surrounding community.

The documentation from 1842 provides valuable historical insight into the church's architecture at that time. Unfortunately, these features were removed in subsequent centuries, likely due to structural concerns, changes in architectural tastes, or the practicalities of maintaining such elements. The removal of the turrets and spire marked a significant alteration to the church's original medieval silhouette.

Despite these changes, the church remains a Grade I listed building, preserving its historical and architectural significance. The record from 1842 helps historians and visitors imagine the church's former grandeur and understand the evolving nature of its architecture over the centuries. The removal of these features reflects broader trends in the conservation and adaptation of historical buildings, balancing preservation with the realities of structural integrity and changing community needs.

This timeline captures the key events and transformations of both St Mary's Church and the Old Mortuary Chapel, highlighting their significant roles in the historical and architectural landscape of Carew, Pembrokeshire.

The late medieval mortuary chapel, dating from the 15th century, signifies the church's evolving role in the community. Contrary to some beliefs, it did not begin as a grave-chapel (*capel-y-bedd*). Carew parish, a substantial ecclesiastical jurisdiction, includes at least one former dependent chapelry.

Located approximately 1 kilometre south of the pre-Conquest Ilys site and post-Conquest Carew Castle, the church has served the spiritual needs of its community through significant historical periods. During the post-Conquest era, St Mary's functioned as a parish church within the Deanery of Pembroke, its living alternating between the patronage of the Earls of Pembroke and the Carew family.

The church itself is a Grade I listed building, constructed from durable limestone rubble. Its architectural layout includes a four-bayed chancel, a three-bayed nave, a two-bayed north aisle, a three-bayed south aisle, a three-storeyed west tower, a south porch, a vestry, and a boiler house. The church's development during the late 15th and early 16th centuries is often attributed to the patronage of Sir Rhys ap Thomas, Lord of Carew.

The nave's origins trace back to the 13th or 14th century, while the chancel, along with the north (and former south) transepts, dates to the mid-14th century. The

chancel retains its original piscina and sedilia, with its floor adorned by medieval heraldic tiles, traditionally believed to have been relocated from Carew Castle in the late 17th century.

The imposing tower, added around the 15th century, exemplifies the Somerset architectural style. The church houses several early memorials, including tomb recesses with effigies from the 14th to the 17th centuries. Additions to the church in the 17th and 18th centuries include the vestry, while the early 19th century saw the installation of box pews.

Notable restoration efforts were undertaken in 1852 under the direction of George Gilbert-Scott, and again in the 1890s. The church also features a Crimean War memorial window dating to 1857 and a 19th-century font. The boiler house, a more modern addition, was constructed in 1922.

Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of Wales highlights that the church is dedicated to St John the Baptist, though the reasons for this dedication remain unclear. Located in the small village of Carew Cheriton, in the southwest of the parish, St Mary's Church stands as a testament to the region's rich heritage.

The Old Mortuary Chapel in the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Carew, Pembrokeshire, is a significant historical structure that complements the rich heritage of the main church building. Also, a Grade I listed building, the Old Mortuary Chapel is oriented east-west and features two storeys under a slate roof. Constructed from limestone rubble, the chapel is accessed by external steps leading to a vaulted undercroft.

Dating back to the 14th or 15th century, the undercroft of the chapel may have originally served as an ossuary. By 1625, the building was referred to as a schoolhouse and continued in this capacity until 1872. In 1833, it educated 50 pupils, and 70 attended Sunday School.

The chapel transitioned into a national school in 1846, accommodating up to 116 children until the village school opened in 1872. During this period, it may have also functioned as a mortuary chapel, earning its name. After the school moved, the building's large blocked-up window hints at its varied uses over time, including serving as a committee room, store, and residence, housing paupers as late as about 1840. Locally known as "The Oratory," the chapel now serves as a parish meeting room and Sunday School.

An exterior monument to John Relly, an early Calvinist Methodist leader who died in 1777, further enhances the historical significance of the site. In 1833, S. Lewis described the chapel as an ancient building, coeval with the main church, and noted its occasional use as a parochial school, with the master appointed by the vicar.

Overall, the Old Mortuary Chapel stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Carew's ecclesiastical and community life, reflecting its multifaceted roles throughout history.

St. Mary's Church in Carew, Pembrokeshire stands not only as a testament to centuries of religious devotion but also as a cornerstone of local history and architectural heritage. Its enduring presence, nestled within the picturesque landscape of Pembrokeshire, serves as a poignant reminder of the community's resilience and the enduring power of faith. As visitors wander through its ancient walls and tranquil grounds, they are transported back through time, connecting with the past while finding solace in its serene beauty. St. Mary's Church remains a cherished treasure, inviting all who encounter it to pause, reflect, and appreciate the rich tapestry of its storied past."

War Memorials.

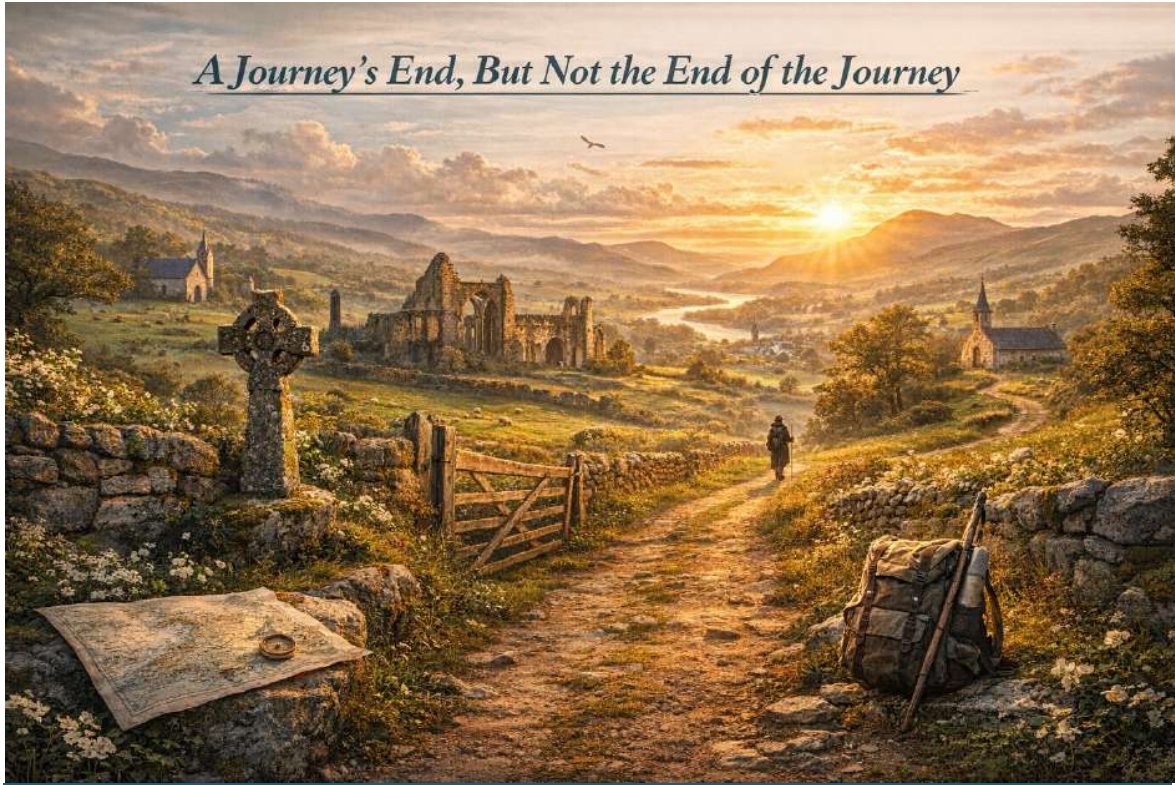
Within the grounds of St. Mary's Church Cemetery lie the resting places and memorials dedicated to honouring the courageous men who sacrificed their lives during World War II and other campaigns.

Their bravery and selflessness have safeguarded the freedoms we cherish today. Though they have passed on, their legacy of valour and commitment to duty endures. We remain deeply grateful for their service and will forever commemorate the profound impact of their sacrifice on our lives and our world.

St Mary's Church Carew War Memorials

The direct link to their graves at the cemetery is below on Findagrave.

<https://tinyurl.com/SMC-Carew-War-Memorials>



As we conclude this exploration of Wales's religious heritage and pilgrim ways, we are reminded that these sacred sites are more than stones, springs, or stained glass they are living fragments of a spiritual landscape shaped by devotion, resilience, and community.

From the solitary wells of the early Celtic saints to the grand Cistercian abbeys, from the humble chapels of the Gwent Levels to the vibrant nonconformist chapels of the Teifi Valley, each site tells a story of faith intertwined with the land and its people.

This collection has been a deeply personal journey one of discovery, reflection, and connection. It is my hope that through these pages, you too have felt the quiet presence of these places, heard the echoes of prayers long spoken, and sensed the enduring spirit of pilgrimage that still moves through Wales today.

May this map and these stories serve not as an endpoint, but as an invitation—to walk these paths, visit these sanctuaries, and find your own moments of peace, reflection, and wonder. Whether you seek history, beauty, healing, or simply a deeper connection to this remarkable land, may you carry something of Wales's sacred heritage with you, and may it inspire your own journey, wherever it may lead.

With gratitude for the paths walked and those still to come,

<https://tinyurl.com/WRHPW-Master>



Graham Tudor Emmanuel 2025

