

# LLANBLETHIAN CHURCH



## A WELCOME TO ALL VISITORS

Please find a seat and read this introduction. Thank you.

We welcome you to this church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to his praise that this church was built and continues its ministry today. A church is not a building: it is a people committed to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Lord of all.

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem a little more than 2000 years ago, and for 30 years he shared the daily life and work of an ordinary home and workplace. During the following three years he travelled around his part of the Holy Lands, healing sick and troubled people, teaching those who would listen and often upsetting others! He had little money. He wrote no books. He commanded no army, and wielded no political power. In the end, he was put to death by powerful enemies - a brutal death by crucifixion - but within three days he was raised to life.

continued overleaf

Today Jesus Christ is worshipped as Lord and God by over 900 million Christians throughout the world. The record of his life and teachings is found in the Bible, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are celebrated wherever Christians gather. The carved reredos of the recognition of the risen Lord by the unknown disciples at Emmaus sums up the Church's continuing ministry.

It is the empty cross, emblem of Christ crucified and risen, which gives meaning to this building.

We hope that you will enjoy your visit. Join us for worship if you can, and pray for the mission of God throughout the world.

Almighty God,  
to whose glory is dedicated this house of prayer;  
we praise you for the many blessings  
you have given to those who worship here, and pray that all who seek  
you in this place  
may find you,  
and, being filled with the Holy Spirit,  
become a living temple acceptable to you;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen

## A brief guide to LLANBLETHIAN CHURCH



Llanblethian Church

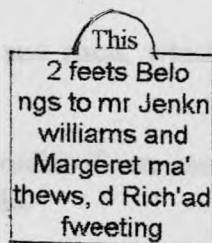
The date on which the church was built is not known, nor is it known whether there existed on this site an earlier, possibly wooden, church building. The earliest reference to a church at Llanblethian is in an undated confirmatory charter of Nicholas ap Gwrgant who was Bishop of Llandaff 1148-1183. This charter shows that Llanblethian Church, with its chapels, was, by that time, in the possession of St. Mary's Abbey, Tewkesbury

Until 1994 Llanblethian was the ancient parish church of the benefice of Llanblethian with Cowbridge. As a mother church it served a large area and had chapelries at Cowbridge (Holy Cross), Llanquian, Llansannor and Welsh St. Donat's.

Llanblethian Church is dedicated to St. John the Baptist. In the 12th century charter the church was referred to as 'St John's', although at a later date it is also found recorded as 'St Bleiddan'. Bleiddan is the Welsh for 'wolf' and is probably a translation of Lupus, the Latin for wolf.

The church is built of lias rubble stone, probably from the Sutton quarry, near Ogmores; Victorian dressings are of Bath stone. The church consists of a chancel, nave, south chapel with crypt below, a south porch and a western tower.

The main entrance to the church is through the south porch. This is a later addition to the church, replacing an earlier, smaller porch and it is, unusually, not in line with the door. It is built in the Perpendicular style, decorated with pinnacles and fronted by old, well-worn gargoyles. Inside the porch is a number of interesting memorial stones, the earliest dating back to 1666.



(memorial stone in porch)

At the entrance to the church are several deep grooves in the jamb, said to result from gentlemen sharpening their swords, but more likely from farmers and workmen sharpening their scythes and tools on a convenient and suitable piece of stone.

The most distinctive feature of the church interior is its grey stonework. This had been covered with plaster and painted. As part of a major reconstruction in 1896/97 the plaster was removed and the existing snail creep pointing applied. Sadly, the remains of a medieval wall-painting, even though of poor quality, was destroyed. There was evidence of a saw, a sword, and a scourge in red and yellow with drops of dark red (blood) below them.

The restoration was undertaken because the church had become in a 'dilapidated condition'. New floors were laid, the south chapel was opened out, and the late medieval oak roofs were exposed and restored. The original low chancel arch was replaced by a plain 'Perpendicular' arch and the height of the whole chancel was raised by two feet, (a classic Victorian Gothic refurbishment).

Turning left, towards the west, there is on the nave wall a hatchment, intended to show a deceased person's armorial bearings. It is not clear who is being commemorated here; the arms are identified in part as of the Bourne family and in part as the Spurling/Stanford family. The motto 'Nosce te ipsum' means 'Know thyself'.

Entry into the tower space is overseen by two 15th century carved figures in the form of jacketed peasants. Within this space is a magnificent Norman tub-shaped font, solidly carved in Sutton stone. The west window, depicting figures of St David, St George and St Bleddian(sic), was installed in 1920 as a memorial to parishioners who had lost their lives in the Great War of 1914-1918. Their names are listed on the marble tablet near the tower entrance. More recently, a further memorial has been added to commemorate those who were killed in the world war of 1939-1945.



The north wall of the nave holds a number of memorials as well as a large benefactions board which records several donations made to assist the needy of the parish. Prominent among the benefactors and memorial stones is Sir Leoline Jenkins, one-time Secretary of State to King Charles II and Principal of Jesus College, Oxford. He also donated the tenor bell.

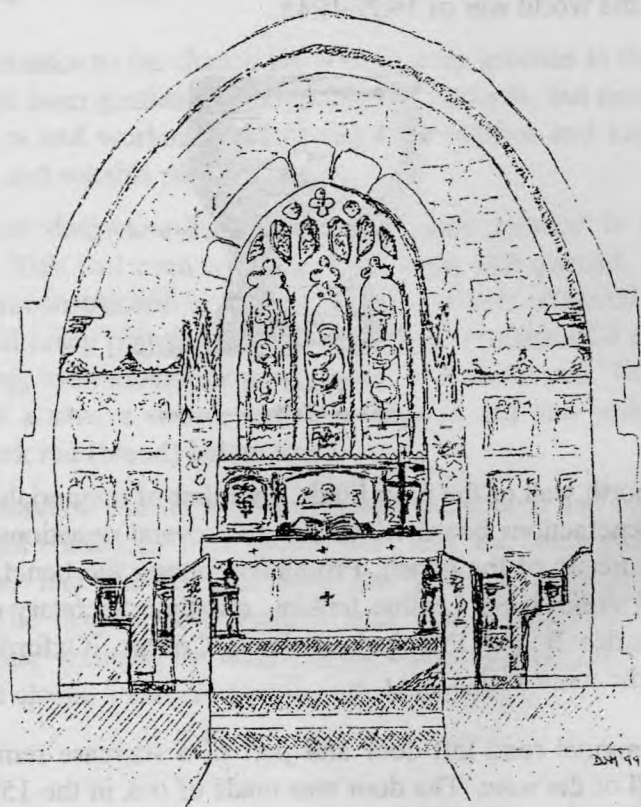
The original rood loft door and part of a staircase remain in the north wall of the nave. The door was made of oak in the 15th century and has recently been repaired with new oak.



The pulpit which was installed in 1896 as part of the church restoration is of an unusual design (and not to everybody's liking). It is made of Penarth alabaster, red Forest of Dean stone and Quarella stone from Bridgend. The columns are of red Irish marble.

The brass eagle lectern was donated in 1907, as also was the two-manual organ, given by Lord Aberdare in memory of members of his family who had lived in Great House, Llanblethian, shortly after the 1745 Rebellion.

The chancel has a fine, simple reredos carved out of Austrian oak by William Clark of Llandaff in 1911. The centre piece portrays a scene from the Supper at Emmaus (Luke 24.13-35). Above it, the east window shows Jesus giving Simon Peter his commission 'Feed my sheep'.



THE CHANCEL

The internal stonework of the north window of the chancel is original. It is of the 12th century and is the oldest remaining part of the church.

The south chapel, now used partly as a vestry, was opened out during the Victorian restoration. It was discovered that the crypt below the chapel was filled with the remains of about 200 human skeletons. The crypt may have been used as an ossuary for bones removed from the churchyard to allow later burials, although one suggestion is that the bones are those of soldiers who were killed during the battle of Stalling Down in 1405. All these remains were reburied in a large single grave in the churchyard.

A priest's grave was discovered close to the entrance to the crypt. The grave contained a pewter chalice and chalices of this type were used only as late as the 14th century. Portions of several early 13th century sepulchral slabs were used in building up the chapel and the priest's grave was covered by one inverted slab pertaining to an early 14th century lady. This slab, together with others found around the church, has been placed in the tower space.

The 1896 restoration also revealed that a carved stone effigy had been used to support a buttress of the tower. The effigy had been defaced to provide a flat surface for the foundations. It is of a layman, dressed in 13th century style and with a greyhound at the feet. This effigy has now been placed within the arch of the south wall of the side chapel.

The tower was added in 1477. It was built, similarly to that of St. John's Church, Cardiff, in the Somerset style, by the gift of Anne Neville, wife of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later King Richard III. It is built of three stages reaching about 80 feet in height. These are separated by stringcourses and the lead-covered roof is surrounded by a battlement with pinnacles at each corner and gargoyles on the southern corners. There is an external entrance (normally locked) in the north-east corner allowing access to the ringing chamber by a spiral stone staircase.

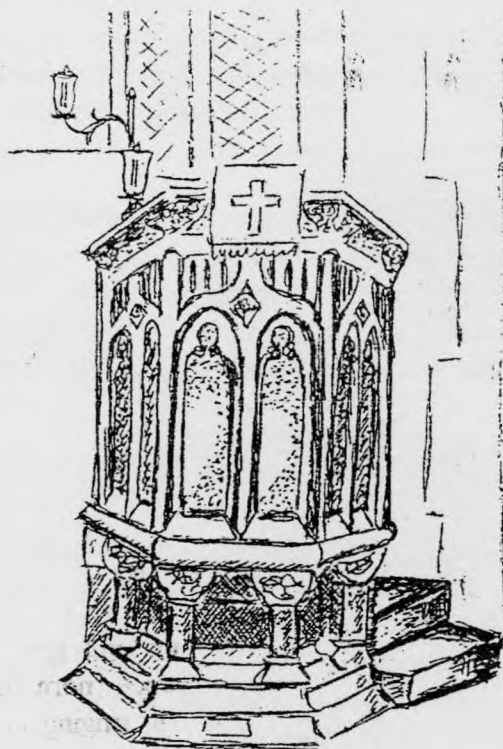
The ring of six bells was restored and rehung in a new frame by Messrs Eayre & Smith, of Derby, in 1994. The bells were cast as follows:

Treble	Originally in 1769, recast in 1907
Second	In 1994 to replace an earlier bell cast in 1769. (The old bell has now been placed near the font)
Third	In 1769.
Fourth	In 1726.
Fifth	In 1746
Tenor	In 1685 inscribed " Anno Dom 1685 by Sr Leoline Jenkins this bell was given and now maintained by his brother Evan Evan Evans"

J.L.S.M.

J.A.H.

March 2000



LLANBLETHIAN PULPIT

DA.