

ST BRYNACH'S CHURCH, LLANFRYNACH

NGR: SS 9795 7461
PRN: s1292
NPRN:
CADW REFERENCE: 13164
COMMUNITY: Penllyn
DEANERY: Llantwit Major & Cowbridge
CHURCH IN WALES REFERENCE: L706 4454; 4457

SUMMARY

A church at Penllyn is mentioned in 1254 (Lunt (ed) 1926, 323); this is probably the church of Llanfrynach which was later regarded as the mother church of Penllyn parish. The Celtic dedication suggests that it is probably a pre-Norman foundation, and the fact a Romano-British settlement (PRN 313s) lies immediately to the S, possibly overlapping with the churchyard, raises the possibility that there may be continuity from the Roman into the medieval period, as at Llandough-juxta-Penarth (Parkhouse and Robinson 1982, 44). The churchyard as depicted on the tithe map of 1840 (GIRO P/101/1-2) is square, though it has now been reduced in area by the erection of a wire fence immediately N of the church; its original extent is considerably larger than other churchyards in the vicinity (Parkhouse and Robinson 1982, 46). The steps and socket stone of the churchyard cross survive to the S of the church and have been surmounted by a small Norman column similar to those at Ewenny. A further architectural fragment of similar date was found when two buildings were partially excavated in the churchyard in 1982 (PRN 1965s; Parkhouse and Robinson 1982, 37); one of these buildings appeared to be residential and one agricultural, and suggestions as to their purpose are as priest's house, church house, or building associated with the tithe barn known to have been maintained at Llanfrynach by Margam Abbey. In addition to these known buildings, turf had been stripped at the time of the field survey from a number of small areas to the N of the fence dividing off the N side of the churchyard, revealing spreads of rubble including dressed stone.

The church consists of nave, separate chancel, W tower with outshot stair turret, S porch and rood stair to the N of the nave. It is constructed from coursed rubble in the local lias limestone, mainly without separate quoins, and with dressings to the openings in sandstone and Sutton stone.

The church contains little dating evidence from the medieval period. There is a straight joint at the W end of the S wall of chancel, suggesting that some sort of major alteration has taken place here, possibly the addition of the nave to an earlier chancel; it is not however possible to determine why the E end of the S wall of the nave is battered for a short distance only. The internal batter to the long walls of the nave and chancel suggest an early origin, as does the chancel arch, which is relatively low and narrow with an irregularly pointed head carried on rudimentary impost bands, and is possibly Transitional. The tower arch is similar, but more regular in form, and has probably been rebuilt. The other fairly early feature is the late 13th or early 14th century piscina in the chancel. Thomas and Parkinson (1989) suggest that the church was rebuilt in the 15th century, and that the nave roof is contemporary with this rebuild; however its trusses, which are marked with assembly numbers, are out of order indicating that the roof has at some stage been taken down and re-erected (NMR NA/GL/89/31 1989, 1), probably in the first half of the 16th century when a ceiling seems to have been added in the E-most bay, presumably over the rood loft. To this phase they also date the tower, the porch, the rood stair and the SW window of the tower, as well as the painting in the chancel. Newman (1995, 382) considers that the door between the porch and nave is of 14th or 15th century, but doors of this form were being constructed in 16th century towers elsewhere in this area (cf Newcastle). The present W window appears to have been cobbled together from fragments of the dressings of a 15th or 16th century window, inserted within the blocked opening of a larger window, possibly (though not necessarily) contemporary with the W door; if the tablet set in the blocking and commemorating a restoration in 1629 is in its original position, it is possible that this was when the alteration was made. It is not known when the E window was blocked. It seems originally to have had four lights (not three, *pace* Newman 1995, 382), since the bottom of a central mullion can be seen, and the sill is too wide for just two lights, unless they were of 18th century casement type.

The church was restored in 1848 (Orrin 1988b, 204) but there is now nothing which can readily be attributed to this restoration. Further work took place in 1932, 1968 and 1989, all commemorated by tablet on the W

wall of the tower. The 1968 restoration (architect A Caroe) was responsible for the present appearance of the NE and SE windows of the nave, with their close-set wooden mullions based on medieval/early post-medieval examples from the eastern part of Glamorgan.

There are a number of post-medieval wall tablets, one of Regency date with figure sculpture, and a number of grave slabs included medieval with floriated cross (Orrin 1988b, 206). The interior of the church is unusual in that the only Victorian-style piece it contains is the pulpit. Probably the most important of the internal fittings is the medieval stone wall-benches which have been retained in the nave; there are also traces of wallpaintings, presumably pre-Reformation, though little detail can be made out (NMR NA/GL/89/31 1989; Thomas and Parkinson 1989). There is an 18th century font. Orrin (1988b, 208-9) notes a single bell of 1430.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published and printed

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- Crossley, F H, and Ridgway, M H, 1958, Screens, lofts and stalls situated in Wales and Monmouthshire. Part nine, Section XII: Glamorganshire, *Archaeol Cambrensis* 107, 72-108 (92)
- Green, C A H, 1906-7, *Notes on churches in the diocese of Llandaff*, 81-2
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- Newman, J, 1995, *The buildings of Wales: Glamorgan*, 44, 45, 382
- Orrin, G, 1988b, *Medieval churches of the Vale of Glamorgan*, 203-9
- Parkhouse, J and Robinson, D M, 1982, Excavation and survey at Llanfrynach, near Cowbridge: A preliminary report, *Glamorgan-Gwent Annual Rep 1981-2*, 36-47
- Thomas, H J and Parkinson, A J, 1989, Llanfrynach Church, *Morganwg* 33, 74

Documentary and manuscript

GIRO

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|------------|---------|----------------------|
| P/101/1-2 | 1840 | Tithe map |
| P/101/CW/1 | 7c 1850 | Lithograph of church |

NLW

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|------------------|---------|--|
| LL/F 642 | 1776 | Faculty: Sale of bells to meet costs of repair of church |
| Parish record 1 | 1945-83 | Accounts, including restoration work |
| Parish record 5 | 1978-79 | Papers re renovation |
| Parish record 6 | 1979 | Collection of photos of church |
| Parish record 7* | 1982 | Excavation of medieval building in Llanfrynach churchyard (GGAT) |

NMR

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|---------------------|----------------|---|
| Kay (various dates) | 2 ser IV 723-4 | |
| NA/GL/89/31 | 1989 | Description of roof made during restoration, with drawings (AJP); description of wall paintings (HJT), for RCAHMW |

* This record is in the Penllyn parish collection

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13 September 2001

Llanfrynach Church Penlline

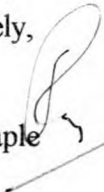
Dear Jeff,

Following our recent conversation regarding this church I attach a copy of the draft notes I have prepared. From the enquiries I have made it is evident that from the Qinquennial examination of the fabric it is found that urgent repairs are required to the Tower walls and roof. John Homfray (Penllyn Estates) and church warden has undertaken with the Church Architect Alwyn Jones to prepare a scheme of both repair and protection as well as introducing descriptive signs and has put the whole scheme up for a Heritage Lottery Grant. The scheme has received Diocesan approval in principle and encouragement from the Listed Building Administration

For HLF grant is required evidence that 'local community' supports the scheme and because I was known to Homfray to have been working on the Local History he approached me.

As a member of the Cowbridge History Society I would like to put the enclosed statement to the HLF with a covering note from the committee of the Society indicating that they are aware of the project and indicating their evaluation of it I enclose a copy of the Listing to help in your assessment and save you scrambling through your records. I am also making a similar request to GGAT.

Sincerely,


Ray Caple