

## CARNE MEMORIAL IN COWBRIDGE CHURCH

Men, women and children of the town have worshipped in Cowbridge Church for well over seven hundred years. When we sit quietly in the church today, we can think of the thousands of people who have been there before us; it is wonderful to feel the continuity of worship, and to realise the importance the church has had for Cowbridge. For most of its existence, it was known as the church of the Holy Cross, or Holy Rood, though for much of the nineteenth century it became known as St Mary's.

Who were the people who worshipped here? Information comes from a list of the 'owners' and occupiers of pews in 1850, and graffiti - the carvings on pews and choir stalls - give some indication of the names of the schoolboys from the Grammar School who sat in the church so regularly. I wonder if hidden away there is an AH, the graffiti of a certain actor?

The wall memorials and floor slabs, however, give much more information about some of the dignitaries of the town and our part of the Vale of Glamorgan, and in the forthcoming months I intend to describe a selection of these.

Certainly the most spectacular of our wall memorials is the Carne memorial in the Llanquian or south aisle, though much of the decoration - the painted coats of arms as well as the figures - has sadly faded. This large pink marble (or is it alabaster from Penarth?) monument dates from the early-seventeenth century and depicts the kneeling figures of William Carne and his wife Elizabeth. Beneath are shown the smaller kneeling figures of their three sons and three daughters as 'weepers'; then comes a sizeable inscription in Latin, followed by a skull with wings, the latter suggesting the soul's passage towards immortality.

William Carne lived both at Nash Manor, the family seat, and at Great House in Cowbridge, which was the family's town house. The Carnes were a family of regional and national importance, who in the sixteenth century frequently showed their strength by clashing in the streets of Cowbridge with other significant families. In the 1530s, Sir Edward Carne had been the last English Ambassador to Rome before Henry VIII broke off relations with the papacy, while William's son, another Sir Edward, was responsible for erecting the monument to his parents in Holy Cross and perhaps for a piece of self-glorification, for the Latin inscription on the wall memorial states that he was Receiver-General for South Wales.

Just visible among the various coats of arms shown on the monument is that most associated with the Carne family, "a pelican in its piety" on a background of gules, or red. Inn names are often derived from the coats-of-arms of local gentry families; Cowbridge once had two Pelican Inns, and of course the Carne Arms is at Llysworney. The *Guardian* newspaper recently, while praising the pub food, raised a metaphorical eyebrow at the unusual name of the inn near Ogmores Castle; now you know where the name, "The Pelican in its Piety" comes from.

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