

Dear Friends,

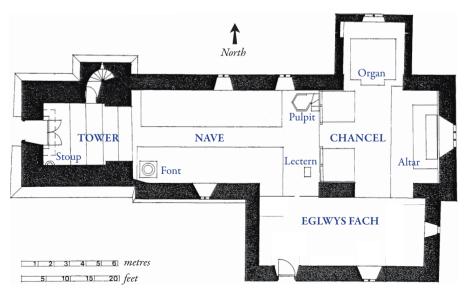
It is a great pleasure, and an honour to write the words of introduction to this volume. I would like to praise the work of the parishioners who have put this booklet introducing Llanwenog Church to all who come to visit it together, and to thank them for the work of keeping the Church in such a wonderful condition. This ancient church is one of the treasures of St. Davids' Diocese, and one of the best examples in all Wales of a medieval Church. Through reading these pages you will discover the history of the Church through the centuries from the tower that commemorates the battle of Bosworth in 1485 down to the important woodwork of Joseph Reubens from the time of the Great War 1914-18. I hope that you will through reading this new booklet and making the most of the opportunity to visit Llanwenog come to share in one of our most beautiful churches.

+ Wyn St. Davids

Annwyl Gyfeillion,

Pleser o'r mwyaf, a braint, yw cael lunio geiriau i gyflwyno'r gyfrol hon. Hoffwn canmol gwaith y plwyfolion sydd wedi mynd ati i baratoi'r llyfryn i gyflwyno Eglwys Llanwenog i bawb sy'n dod i ymweld â hi, a diolch am y gwaith o gadw'r eglwys mewn cyflwr mor arbennig. Mae'r eglwys hynafol hon yn un o drysorau Esgobaeth Tyddewi, ag un o'r enghreifftiau gorau Cymru cyfan o Eglwys canoloesol. Ceir cyfle drwy ddarllen y gyfrol i ddarganfod hanes yr Eglwys dros y canrifoedd o'r twr sy'n goffeb i frwydr Maes Bosworth yn 1485 lawr i waith coed bwysig Joseph Reubens o amser yr Rhyfel Mawr 1914-18. Gobeithio y byddwch trwy ddarllen y llyfryn newydd a manteisio ar y cyfle i ymweld a Llanwenog yn rhannu un o'n Eglwysi mwyaf hyfryd.

+ Wyn Tyddewi



The Parish Church of Llanwenog - an Introduction

Welcome to this beautiful church, the only one dedicated to Saint Gwenog. Christians have been meeting and worshipping God here for some 15 centuries. During the course of each month, services of Morning Prayer and Holy Communion in English and Welsh are held. In Llanwenog Village there is a Church in Wales Primary School. The School holds special services, (Harvest, Christmas) and School Concerts in the Church.

The main building was built in the late 14th century, and the south chapel or Eglwys Fach (little Church) may well have been built on an older foundation, maybe originally 6th century. The church has been Grade I listed, the reason given that it is one of the most complete medieval churches in Ceredigion, with its fine barrel roof and late 15th century tower.

The Church has been restored and undergone building works on several occasions during the 20th century, with the pews, rood screen, pulpit, and lectern being finished just after the end of the First World War.

Church Entrance and Tower

The entrance to the church is through the tower, dating from the 15th century, said to have been built by Sir Rhys ap Thomas to commemorate the victory at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, when the Tudors won the English crown. Sir Rhys played an important part in this battle and by tradition it was he who delivered the death wound to Richard III on the battlefield and thence received his knighthood. The men of Llanwenog would have been amongst his army and longbow men.

If you look up just before you enter through the door, the stone archway has three small carved heads and above the arch is carved a portcullis as well as a plaque bearing the arms of Sir Rhys





ap Thomas. His heraldic shield can be seen over the west window on the outside of the tower. It shows a 'chevron inter three martlets or ravens with legend on a garter'. Over the stone entrance arch there is an escutcheon

bearing a portcullis. Inside the arch there is an inscription in gold script above the double wooden doors which reads:

Ewch i mewn i'w byrth Ef â diolch – Enter his gates with thanksgiving.

Psalm 100:4

Inside two bells hang in the tower. One was recast on the occasion of the marriage of Colonel Davies-Evans' daughter Viola in `1897 to Lieutenant Arthur Duckworth of the Scots Greys. The second bell, Lilla, was named after the Colonel's wife.

The window on this west face which is above the West Door is late 15th century with replacement stained glass designed and made by Colonel Herbert Davies-Evans. The figure in the window depicts Saint Gwenog.



Water Stoup

In the entrance on the right side is an ancient holy water stoup which was found and returned to the church by the local blacksmith. It had been used by local craftsmen for cooling irons according to the stone plaque above. The plaque explains how it was restored to its original place.



Ceiling

As you enter the church through the bell tower and before you walk down the steps into the nave, notice the medieval barrel-shaped ceiling which extends into the chancel and into Eglwys Fach.

The coved roof of the Church with its 72 squares has become 'somewhat askew' and this is more visible towards the west end. The roof had, no doubt, become askew when the western gable of the Church had to be removed in order to build the more massive structure of the tower.

The Font

The font, which is said to be of possible pre-Norman date, is circular in shape and the crude, simple heads probably represent the twelve apostles.

The font bowl has no covering, but at one time evidently possessed one, as there are distinct marks of places where it closed in by means of an iron hasp. Look, and you will find a small carved fish symbol above one of the heads. Does this point us towards Saint Peter?



Bench Ends

Every pew in the nave has a carved end facing the aisle; the front pews on the right hand side also have one on the other end. There are six other pew ends built into the glass doors separating the main church from *Eglwys Fach*. These were formerly on the pew ends of the chapel. There are also carvings on the ends of the choir stalls.

The pews were made during and just after the First World War, 1914-1919, by William Evans, the estate carpenter at Highmead. The carved bench-ends were designed by Mary Davies-Evans, the wife of Colonel Herbert Davies-Evans of Highmead in the parish. They were carved by Joseph Reubens, a Belgian refugee whose photograph is on the wall of the church. He was assisted by the Colonel himself and the Vicar at the time, the Rev'd. John Morris.

The carvings are really worth close inspection. They commemorate historical events in the parish. You will discover beautiful little vignettes like the owl and the church tower with the crescent moon, the Sphinx and the Pyramids

with the camels, or the farmers ploughing the fields. In his book 'Wales's Best One Hundred Churches' T.J.Hughes describes them as "rural diary, connecting events far distant in time and space with the current preoccupations of the parish just after World War One".



The original order they were in is not known, but they do appear to be in deliberate pairs according to their subject matter. Many of them relate to the ancestral families of Colonel and Mrs Davies-Evans, and of other minor gentry in the area. Some of them are concerned with the members of the parish who died in WWI, and some of the sons of local gentry who also died. Others are in memory of the subscribers to the original bench fund that sponsored them. Some of them are about specific local agricultural and musical events and others relate to the history of the Church in Wales and to famous figures like King Arthur and Saint David. Two of them are in memory of the daughter of the Rev'd. John Morris, Vicar at the time, who had died aged 23.

Please refer to the list towards the end of this booklet for the current arrangement.

Rood Screen

A 'rood screen' marked a separation between the congregation and the priest. The name 'rood' was an Anglo-Saxon word for a cross.

This intricately carved screen separating the chancel from the nave was carved by Colonel Davies-Evans and Joseph Reubens in 1915. Notice the unusual sunburst cresting "H.D.E. annodomini MCMXV J.R.".



Wall Paintings

It is believed that the original paintings were whitewashed over during the reformation. Many years ago several layers of whitewash were removed from the walls, and this brought to light wall paintings of the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments. These were possibly 17th or 18th century. There are also some traces of further paintings that can still be seen.









A slate carving of the Pietà can be seen under the window on the south side. This was carved by local master mason, Dennis Jones, Llanybydder and was the gift of his family to the church in his memory on his death in 2015.





The Lectern

This fine carved lectern showing a dragon on coronet, instead of the more usual eagle, was carved by Joseph Reubens. It is said that as a Belgian during WW1 he would not have wanted

to carve an eagle as it was one of the symbols associated with Germany. It has been suggested that he wanted to choose a symbol that was connected to Wales, where he and so many others had been shown hospitality. [It was carved in memory of Evan Thomas who was clerk of Llanwenog Church from 1823 to 1843 and to David Thomas, Pantyclochydd, his wife Mary and their only son, Thomas. It was a gift of their daughter Mary 1922.]

The Pulpit

This was carved by Colonel Davies-Evans. The inscription reads 'Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart.' 1 Kings 3:9 It is a fine example of his skills, and depicts flowers, fruits and nuts.





The Altar

The altar, reredos, panelling, communion rails and Ancaster paving were installed during the restorations of 1959. To the glory of God, the Altar reredos, panelling, communion rails and

Ancaster Paving are the gifts of WW Hughes esq. of Capetown in memory of his grand-parents, Samuel and Mary Davies of Penlanfach, buried in this Churchyard.

The small stone carving on the reredos dates from the 15th century and is very weathered as it was originally built onto the outside wall of Eglwys Fach. It shows the crucifixion and depicts Christ on the Cross with his Mother on one side and Saint John on the other.





Organ

The Organ was donated by Col Davies-Evans of Highmead. He was the organist for 56 years. The organ is a Victorian instrument installed by it's makers Foster and Andrews. Only twelve were purchased by the Church in Wales. Of these some have been sold but Llanwenog organ has survived

and has been completely overhauled repaired and maintained regularly.

Eglwys Fach

In the inner wall of Eglwys Fach, a niche with a step can be seen which would originally have led up to a platform above the rood screen. The priest would have addressed the congregation in pre-Reformation times.

At the time of the most recent renovations (2005) the development of Eglwys Fach as a community room was incorporated in the scheme. The installation of the glass screens and doors facilitated this aspiration.



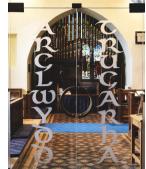
Since that date, Eglwys Fach has been used for meetings of the Community Council, Women's Institute, the Senior Citizens group, the Diocesan Advisory Group, as well as regular Church meetings, working groups and fund-raising activities, such as Quiz Nights, Harvest and a Curry Night.

Eglwys Fach was originally Capel Mair, the Lady Chapel, and at the end of the 19th Century it was turned for a while into a Baptistry by the Colonel. At the same time the John the Baptist window was installed and can still be seen. Turn round and look through the glass doors and see the 'floating reflection' as you look towards the organ.

We were reminded by the Bishop of Saint Davids, the Rt. Rev'd. Wyn Evans of a note in the margins of one of the oldest copies of the Laws of Hywel Dda from the 15th century, where the scribe had noted, 'Gwenog, helpa. When the Glass Doors were installed in 2012 the inscriptions were chosen. One door reads: 'Arglwydd, trugarha. the other, 'Gwenog, helpa.' 'Lord,

have mercy. Gwenog, help us.' It is nice to think that all those centuries ago, the scribe who wrote the copy of the book was from this Parish and he continued in his devotion to our Patron Saint.

In the corner, the Llanwenog Women's Institute Millennium tapestry can be seen, which depicts the life of the parish over the past century. It contains many references along the river Cledlyn including Highmead Mansion, the Church, Llanwenog Sheep, Welsh Hats made in two cottages in Gorsgoch, the School and the arrival of technology etc.



Churchyard

If you take a tour of the outside of the church you can see how the church is situated. The graveyard is nearly circular which tells us that this is an ancient site. It is said that there is no hiding place for the devil in a circular churchyard! To the east are the distant hills of Carmarthenshire and to the west the surrounding hills of Ceredigion which shelter the churchyard.

The gently sloping site is surrounded by trees and meadows. Standing high on the south east corner is a magnificent Monkey Puzzle tree (Aurucaria aurucania) and several mature conifers add distinction to the site.

David Lloyd and David Davies (Dafydd Dafis



Castellhywel) are buried near the west door. They were Unitarian preachers and suspected Jacobins. Dafydd Dafis was the translator into Welsh of Thomas Grey's Elegy in a Country Churchyard. As a parish burial ground, those who found rest here did not have to be members of this Church.

Ogam Stone

To the left of the path just inside the lych-gate is a replica of the Trenacatus Stone. The original of this stone, which is probably some 1500 years old, was found in the foundations of Crug y Whyl at Rhuddlan, not far from Llanwenog. Its origins probably lie in the Irish Deisi tribe who settled in this area. The stone was moved to Llanvaughan House and thence to Highmead Mansion. When the house was sold in the 1950s the stone was taken to the National Museum in Cardiff. It is considered



to be one of the finest examples of an Ogam Stone, showing the primitive Irish lettering along the edge and the Latin inscription. The Latin script reads: 'Trenacatus/(hic) iacit filius/ Maglani'. (Trenacatus, here he lies, the son of Maglagnus) The ogam, running vertically up the left angle and across the top, reads: TRENACCATLO. The sandstone for the copy was quarried from Gwaralltfardre, Pontsian.

This fine replica was carved by the late Dennis Jones, Master Mason on local stone. His son, John is the 7th generation of the family to work on the Church and the Churchyard.

Saint Gwenog

Saint Gwenog is the patron saint and the Church is dedicated in her memory.

Unfortunately very little is known about her. There are several Gwen churches in different parts of the country, but there appears to be only one Gwenog, with only a single church dedicated to her memory. Samuel Meyrick the 19th century antiquarian, even suggested that the church is dedicated to Saint Gwynog, a son of Gildas.

It is quite probable that Gwenog was first known by the name of Gwenllian

or Gwen the Nun, and that it was she who established a preaching station, and erected a cross at Croesgwenllian – the farm-house which is situated only a short distance from the Church. In the past there was a 'Ffair Wenog' which was held on 14th January.

Saint Gwenog and her Well

Closely associated with ancient parishes and especially those with a sacred enclosure where worship used to be held, would be a holy well dedicated to the memory of the patron saint.

Saint Gwenog's Well was famous in olden days for its healing properties. There is a tradition common to many places where there is a holy well, that it was customary to obtain from it water for the rite of baptism, and also for the purpose of cleaning and washing the church. The spring of crystal water which used to fill Saint Gwenog's Well (Ffynnon Wenog), was in a paddock adjoining the churchyard. It was a place of pilgrimage from the 8th century, with parents apparently bringing their children suffering from spinal weakness to bathe them in the waters and, in order that the cure might be effective, these ablutions had to be performed before sunrise.

Legends concerning the Church

There is a local myth that an attempt was made to build the Parish Church on a site known to this day as Bryn-yr-Eglwys, which is situated nearly two miles away from Llanwenog in a northerly direction, not far from the hamlet of Cwrtnewydd. Tradition has it that the building of the Church on this site was allowed to proceed until it was alleged that the devil intervened and its progress was interrupted. What was built in the daytime was being demolished at night and therefore it was considered prudent to abandon further operations on this particular site. The foreman mason, who was angry at being thwarted and outwitted, decided that a new church would be established wherever his hammer landed. So, with Herculean power, he threw his hammer through the air and it landed where the church is now.

Another legend is mentioned by Samuel Meyrick, who published his 'History and Antiquities of the County of Cardigan' in 1809. This concerns 'Philip the Irishman', who it is said lived in the tower of the church and caused much trouble in the neighbourhood. On one occasion when being

pursued he leapt from the church tower and was killed. He was buried at Carn Philip Gwyddyl which is about half a mile from the church.

Cnapan

The game was similar to Pembrokeshire's cnapan and was played long before modern football was codified in 1863. The doors of both churches, which were several miles apart, were used as goals and the aim was to get an inflated pig's bladder through the goals.

The game had very few rules and serious injuries were the norm. It was so physical some participants died playing it.

Cnapan matches used to be held during the old New Year or 'Calan Hen' (January 12th) between the gates of Llanwenog and Llandysul churches in Ceredigion. As many people were killed or injured, the vicar of Llandysul decided in 1833 that the playing of the game should come to an end. He began another competition between the two parishes, a competition to test their knowledge of the Bible. This still takes place every year on January 12th.



Colonel Herbert Davies-Evans

Colonel Herbert Davies-Evans (1842-1925) who lived in Highmead Mansion, a couple of miles to the south greatly influenced and produced much of the art in this church. He was a significant figure in the history

of this church during the Victorian and Edwardian period. He not only designed and made the beautiful stained glass window above the west door featuring Saint Gwenog and the Baptism of Christ in Eglwys Fach (which he made into a baptistry), but was responsible for much of the carving of the church furniture. His daughter, Viola Duckworth, describes him in her diary; 'he was exceedingly musical and very artistic...he was a great student of architecture and design – his versatility was amazing... in later life he took to woodcarving... and at the age of eighty-two he finished the pulpit and choir stall ends in Llanwenog Church'.

The Colonel was also the Lord Lieutenant of Cardiganshire and a Justice of the Peace. The carved wall plaque, near the pulpit, commemorates the Colonel and his wife, and also their faithful servant and friend Catherine Walters. It was carved by Joseph Reubens and erected in 1931.

The close link with the family has remained, down through the generations, up to the present day. The Colonel's Grandson, the late Roger Clive – Powell RIBA has been for over 30 years Architect to St Gwenog church. With the expertise in the care and maintenance of ancient churches, he has overseen the renovations and development of this Grade 1 listed building.

Joseph Edmund Marie Reubens (1881-1966)

Joseph EM Reubens was born in Bruges, Belgium on April 25th 1881. At seventeen years of age, he was a pupil at Bruges Academy of Fine Arts. After five years of study he was awarded a First Prize for historical composition and a Royal Gold Medal.

When WWI broke out he was 33 years old and fled to England from the Netherlands in November 1914.

It is said that a reception was held in England for refugees and on learning that Joseph was sculptor, the ladies of the 'upper bourgeoisie' put him in touch with a Lord from Lampeter in South Wales.

We now believe that this Lord was Colonel Davies-Evans of Highmead Mansion, which is situated two miles from the church. Joseph eventually spent time during the war years at Highmead and using the oak grown from the estate, carved the pew ends in this church.

web info: www.cyngorllanwenogcouncil.org.uk

Pew End List

Pew Order as of August 2015

Pulpit Side from Front to Back:

- 1. Star of the East
- 2. Howel ab Owen Gwynedd
- 3. I am the Good Shepherd
- 4. Craignez Honte Julia Lady Dillwyn Llewelyn
- Lady Williams, Llwynywermod
- 6. Lily of the Valley
- 7. James Alex L Stewart Alltrodyn
- 8. Er Cof 1949-1918 Welsh Guards
- 9. King Arthur Hic Jacet Arthurius Rex
- 10. Year of Ploughing AD 1917

Kitchen Door - Eglwys Fach

- 1. Baldwin, Archbishop of Canturbury
- 2. Ddolwen, Bwlchmawr, Cwrtnewydd
- 3. Duncan a Gwion Lloyd, Waunifor, Gallipoli

Choir Stalls

Left – unfinished – flower? Lily

Lectern Side from Front to Back

- Dutch Lily of Nazareth Lilla Davies Evans* and Herbert Davies Evans Lord Lieutenant
- 2. Virgo Saint Gwenog*
- Sion Llwyd, Cerddor, Cantor a Clochydd*
- 4. Frawd, F.A. Gerwyn Jones o Bantglas
- 5. Isabella Clarissa Davies of Penylan
- 6. Forever with the Lord Evelyn Dorothea Morris
- 7. Resurgam, Frank Arthur Morgan
- 8. Er Cof Liverpool Scottish, other regiments
- 9. Bardd, Athro, Pregethwr Parch David Davies

Altar Door - Eglwys Fach

- 1. Bishop John Lloyd Nidd a lle gellir gwell
- 2. Dewi Sant Llanddewi Brefi
- 3. Archbishop of Canterbury Frederick Temple

Right - Revd John Morris Vicar

The other four choir stall ends were carved by Colonel Davies-Evans as well as the two chairs which would be used for visiting clergy on the other side of the altar rail.

List of Vicars

Sir Maurice ap John	1490	John Morris	1892
Sir John Williams	1500	Canon D. Ayron Jenkins	1922
Thomas Cade	1637	Benjamin Davies	1936
Moses Williams	1715	Samuel Morgan	1942
Meredith Lloyd	1717	Richard E.H. Evans	1964
John Davids	1740	Cyril E. Jones	1973
Thomas Evans	1769	Huw D. Bishop	1979
David Williams	1783	Evan D. Griffiths	1980
Joshua Davies	1804	Delyth Bowen	1997
Hugh Felix	1845	William R. Fillery	2003
Canon B. Parry Griffiths	1890	Susannah Bale	2010

Further Reading

Lloyd, Thomas et al., *The Buildings of Wales, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion* CADW. Newhaven CT Yale University Press 2006

Hughes, T.J. Wales' Best One Hundred Churches. Llandysul Gomer 2005

