

Invention, tradition and a sense of place – John Coates Carter and the church of St Eloi, Llandeloy

by

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The church of St Eloi or Teilo,¹ Llandeloy, Pembrokeshire, is one of a mere handful of first-rate Arts and Crafts-influenced churches in Wales,² of which by far the best-known is Henry Wilson's St Mark, Brithdir. Two of the finest have already disappeared: the extraordinary St Dyfrig, Cardiff³ by J. D. Sedding and Arthur Grove with fittings by Wilson, was demolished in the 1960s – to make way for offices for the City Planning Department – and Herbert North's masterpiece, St Winifred's school chapel, Llanfairfechan, was demolished almost unnoticed in 1970.⁴

The cultural resonance of these losses is much greater than their number might suggest, for it is in the nature of good Arts and Crafts work that it strives to exploit local materials and respond imaginatively to the local landscape, vernacular and material culture – to be specific and unique. It is through buildings like these that some concept of the *genius loci*, and some idea of how Welshness might sensitively be expressed and understood through fine, contemporary architecture, was being explored in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the wake of modest devolution and an increasing awareness of the huge twentieth-century loss of Welsh vernacular buildings (rural and urban) this is once again a subject of serious concern.

At a time when issues surrounding identity and local distinctiveness in Wales are being intelligently debated in terms wider than the merely picturesque, how ironic it is that these buildings – and others in the same tradition – are still

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comparatively unregarded and little discussed. Meanwhile the civic buildings of Cathays Park in Cardiff, which helped to define the Imperial Baroque idiom as the architectural *lingua franca* of empire at the expense of local character, are widely admired as icons of cultural sophistication.⁵ Cathays Park is undoubtedly an astounding ensemble, fully deserving of admiration, but it must be admired in context. It represents one aspect of a wide and varied range of architectural achievement in the Principality, much of which is not concerned with the timeless, abstract vocabulary of Classicism or the symbolism of government and state or even with urban monuments. It is concerned with a sense of daily life lived at the local level and the modest poetry of ordinary things, well made.

Llandeloy church, which stands some seven miles east of St Davids,⁶ was substantially re-invented in 1924-6 by John Coates Carter, from fragmentary medieval remains. Coates Carter (1859-1927) was by far the most distinguished architect in the Arts and Crafts tradition to base his practice in South Wales. Born in Norwich, he was articled to J. B. Pearce and became successively pupil and assistant to J. P. Seddon (1827-1906) at about the same time as C. F. A. Voysey. Between 1885 and 1904, he was in partnership with Seddon, and controlled the Cardiff office of this significant and prolific firm. Coates Carter's early works, such as St Paul, Grangetown (1888), and the eastern parts of St Mary, Chepstow (1890 onwards), represent a tough, personal version of 'modern Gothic'. Strongly influenced by Seddon and his contemporaries, they often reveal an early, adventurous interest in the possibilities of concrete.⁷

From the mid-1890s his architecture becomes strikingly - even startlingly - more original: a Gothic structural sensibility, tempered by Arts and Crafts principles and seasoned with more than a dash of Art Nouveau eccentricity. Coates Carter was one of the few British architects active around 1900 whose work is clearly influenced by recent or contemporary developments in America and Europe, where he is known to have travelled extensively. In buildings like All Saints' Hall, Penarth (1906), his various schemes for Caldey Abbey (1907-13) and many designs for private houses in South Wales, including his own of 1901,⁸ he comes close to a kind of Arts and Crafts expressionism with a distinctly international slant. This is unusual at a time when influence was generally regarded as flowing in the opposite direction and British architecture, design and theory were more fashionable, influential and imitated abroad than they have ever been. In this he has something in common with designers like Edgar Wood and Henry Sellers, though they did not always share his vernacular enthusiasms.

After the First World War and his formal retirement to The Manor House, Prestbury, near Cheltenham,⁹ his practice - carried on from home - entered a kind of Indian Summer, stimulated by the melancholy demand for war memorials and by his friendship with the archdeacon of St David's, the Revd Prosser.¹⁰ The work of this final phase, well-represented in Pembrokeshire, is simpler and more timeless: gradually stripped of mannerism and historicist trappings. During his last decade, he designed pure, pared-down buildings - often intended as settings for jewel-like, coloured and gilded furnishings.

In the last four years of his life he conceived several exceptional churches employing indigenous materials and identifiably Welsh vernacular motifs. Three of these were begun before his death. They survive, but in varying degrees of completion and currently under varying degrees of threat. One is on a magnificently dramatic site above an industrial community in the South Wales valleys, another is in suburban Newport and the third is in rural West Wales. Although they are entirely dissimilar in form, each manages to achieve a sense of rooted-ness in the varying physical and emotional landscape of Welshness.

The first of these, St Luke, Abercarn, is constructed almost entirely of two materials – beautifully laid stone and concrete – on a site so precipitous that there is room for a substantial hall and concrete-vaulted chapel beneath the west end of the nave. Externally, its austere, squared-off forms, perfectly calculated texture and understated references to local archetypes come as close to the great American architect H. H. Richardson’s ideal of ‘quiet and massive’ architecture¹¹ as anything in these islands (Fig. 1). Internally, an ingeniously contrived concrete staircase (a continuation of the sensational approach to the west front) emerges into a forest of concrete arcades as dense as a Welsh oak-wood. The magnificent integrity of this building survives, despite its abandonment to the vandals some twenty years ago

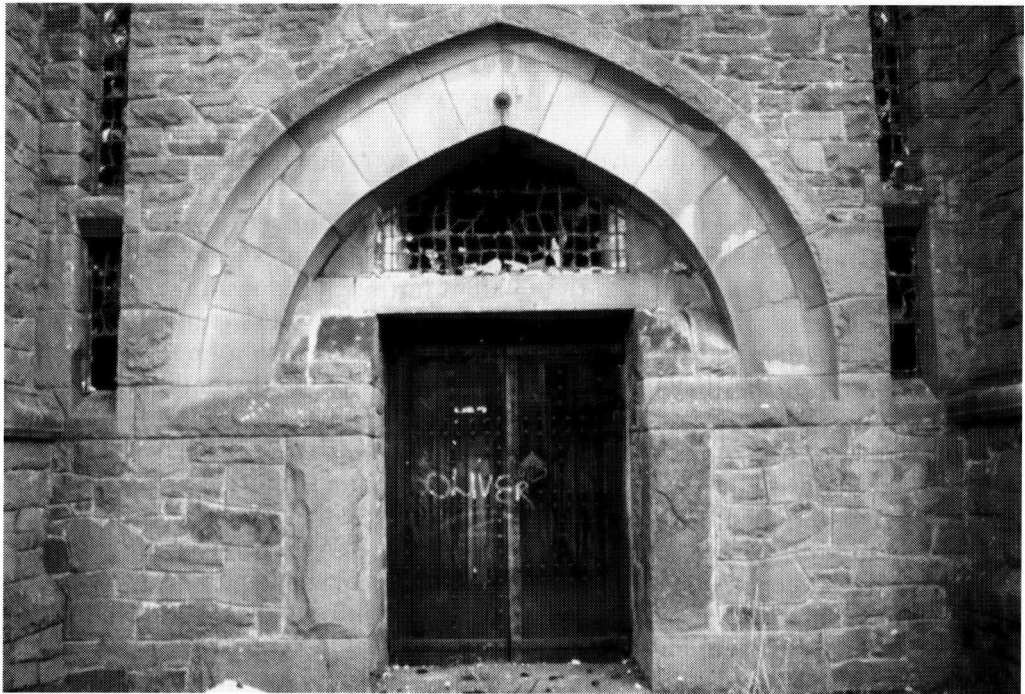


Fig. 1

The long-abandoned St Luke's church, Abercarn, c. 1923-6.

The west door to the undercroft of what may be the finest twentieth century church in Wales

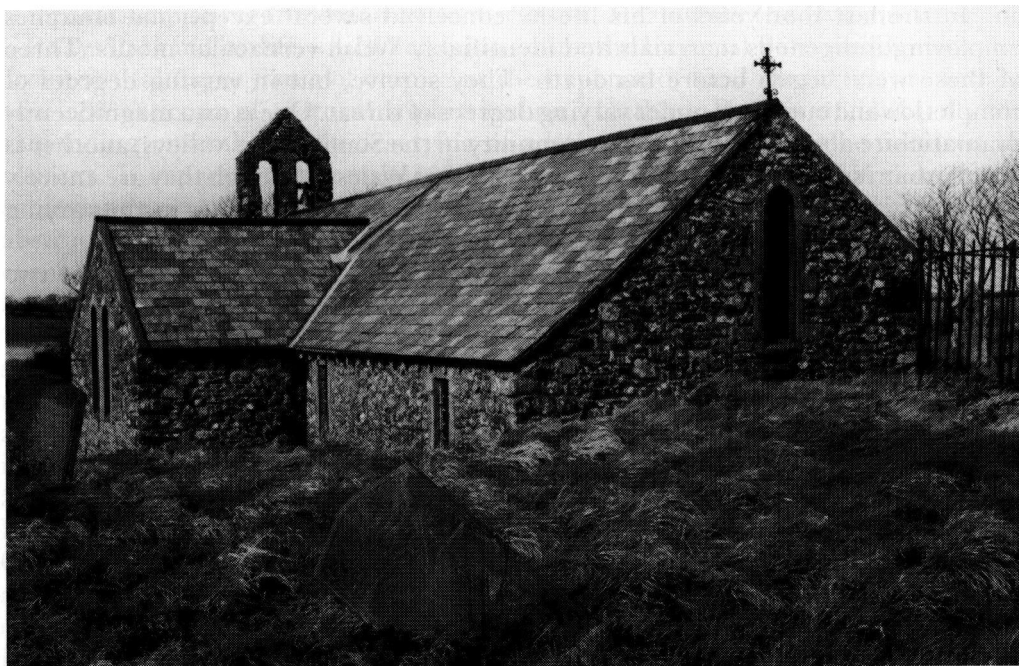


Fig. 2

Llandeloy church from the south-east

and the subsequent comprehensive destruction of everything that could be wrecked, smashed and burned.

Post-First World War economies no doubt lay behind the setting-aside of Coates Carter's spectacular 1917 proposals for Ss Julius and Aaron, Newport – the second of these swan-song churches. Less than half of his much reduced, revised scheme had been completed when the architect died and building work came to an abrupt halt in 1927. Missing both lady chapel and vestries, and with a hugely truncated nave, the church makes little sense from the outside, notwithstanding the grand sweep of its roof and a fine 'temporary' west front. However, the inside – a great aisled barn with tall concrete columns supporting a striking open timber roof – still manages to be impressive, even without its intended painted furnishings.

Lovingly re-created from long-abandoned ruins, Llandeloy is Coates Carter's humble and moving evocation of a modest, medieval Welsh church, handsomely furnished. From the outside it crouches low against the wind and weather (Fig. 2). Within it has something of the intense, sheltering stillness and mystery of a cave or rock-cut shrine, dominated by a magnificently simple screen, loft and pulpit. Llandeloy is also the only one of Coates Carter's mature churches to survive with its complete complement of original fittings and furnishings intact. It is a most remarkable performance, with a powerful sense of place.¹²

HISTORY

Papers connected with the estates of St David's cathedral make occasional mention of Llandeloy from the early fourteenth century onwards, but make no reference to the church itself, which is almost certainly a good deal older. Its location, and proximity to a reliable freshwater spring, are similar to a number of Celtic Christian sites and suggest an early date.

A building fund appeal leaflet issued in 1925¹³ includes the following observations: 'Mr Coates Carter says "the original church would appear to be of an early date, perhaps even of the twelfth century. The western [south] transept would appear to be of that date. There may have been a similar transept on the north side, where the passage to the rood stair (which as far as can be judged was built as late as the early part of the sixteenth century) now stands. The chancel also would appear to be of the date of the original building; but it is difficult to assign dates in a building that has no architectural details."' Apparently he conjectured that the squint in the south-east corner of the nave might be a survival from a church of the Celtic period.

Llandeloy church had probably been ruinous since the 1840s, and had been in use as a school for many years before that. By the 1920s, according to contemporary comments and illustrated by photographs hanging in the church, the west wall and bellcote still stood to their full height (though leaning outward precariously). The chancel arch and screen wall, the arch to the south transept and the greater part of the rood loft stair were more-or-less intact, and sufficient remained of the other walls for the plan to be quite apparent, including such details as the fragmentary bases of the font and transept altar.¹⁴

There had already been two attempts to rebuild the church. In the 1890s a 'temporary' church of zinc or corrugated iron was constructed (presumably the structure still standing beside the churchyard gate) and materials for a permanent stone structure were gathered on site before being abandoned. Later, during the incumbency of Revd J. Lloyd (1907-22), over £600 was collected towards a building fund before 'the eruption of the Great War' made it impossible 'to carry on with the noble work'.¹⁵

At a special vestry meeting on 12th November, 1924, it was finally agreed that a faculty should be obtained 'for the re-building of the Llandeloy Parish Church, according to the plans produced' by Coates Carter. The Archdeacon of St David's suggested that the entire deanery should give help with fundraising in view of the poverty of the parish, and in February, 1925, a tender of £758 submitted by T. Harries and Sons of Neyland was accepted. It was also announced that the 'big' screen would be donated by Mrs Thomas of Trehale (a nearby farm settlement) in memory of her son killed in the Great War and that the archdeacon would present an altar.¹⁶ At that stage there were to have been two screens, the second of which would have separated the nave from the south transept.

Building work began in May, 1925, and the new church was formally re-opened by the Bishop of St David's at three in the afternoon on 10th June, 1926. After the service Mr S. G. Griffiths of Haverfordwest took several photographs of the new

interior.¹⁷

In the draft minutes of the chapter meeting of the Rural Deanery of Dewisland, held on 12th February, 1925, it is touchingly recorded that 'the Parish of Llandeloy is greatly indebted to Mr Coates-Carter for all he is doing and has done for the re-building of the Church. His thoughts and works he gives free, neither does he demand pay for the time that he has spent in preparing the plans etc.'. An old guide to the history of the church¹⁸ records the architect remarking 'that the great interest of this work more than repaid him'.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In the appeal leaflet already referred to, Coates Carter set out the admirably cautious principles governing his approach to the re-building of Llandeloy. 'The rebuilding will be on conservative lines; care being taken to preserve every vestige of old work in its original position; and while building the new in harmony, to make it clear where the old ends and the new begins. The old Norman font, now in the temporary iron church, will be restored to its old base still existing. The old floor levels so far as they can be traced, will be restored; the high altar will be put exactly in its own position if that can be traced; and all will be done in such a way as to bring back the church to what it most likely was at the beginning of the sixteenth century'. The choice of early sixteenth century is not arbitrary, of course. It is Coates Carter's conjectural date for the latest surviving medieval feature, the rood stair passage, and gives him the excuse to equip the church for his preferred, pre-Reformation ritual within the framework of an advanced, ethically defensible, SPAB-based attitude.

Llandeloy church lies across a gentle south-west facing slope (Fig. 3), seemingly battened-down against the wild Pembrokeshire weather, with its north-east corner deeply embedded into the hillside. From the foot of the churchyard, where a still-vigorous, clear-flowing spring formerly supplied the village with all its water, its lowness and the even, unbroken line of the roof-ridge make the church appear longer than it really is. Indeed, some observers of the newly rebuilt church mocked Coates Carter's roofline as monotonous, so the vicar prevailed upon him to design a cross for the east gable – which he did. Just half a mile beyond the churchyard spring is the end of the runway at Brawdy air-base and for most of its existence Llandeloy has suffered from the continuous thunder of aircraft low overhead. Long-deserved quiet has recently returned with the departure of the American Air Force.

The body of the church has a simple two-cell plan (Fig. 4), the nave and chancel being markedly out of alignment. They are separated by a thick screen wall, which rises no higher than the wall-plate and is pierced by a very modest, almost semi-circular-headed chancel arch and a tiny squint. To the north side of the nave has been added an irregular out-shoot containing the rood stair, approached by a narrow passage which also gives access to the pulpit. To the south there is a small transeptal chapel, open to the nave through a medieval arch and to the chancel by a characteristically huge, diagonal squint passage not expressed externally – a fairly typical Pembrokeshire plan.



Fig. 3
Llandeloy church from the south-west

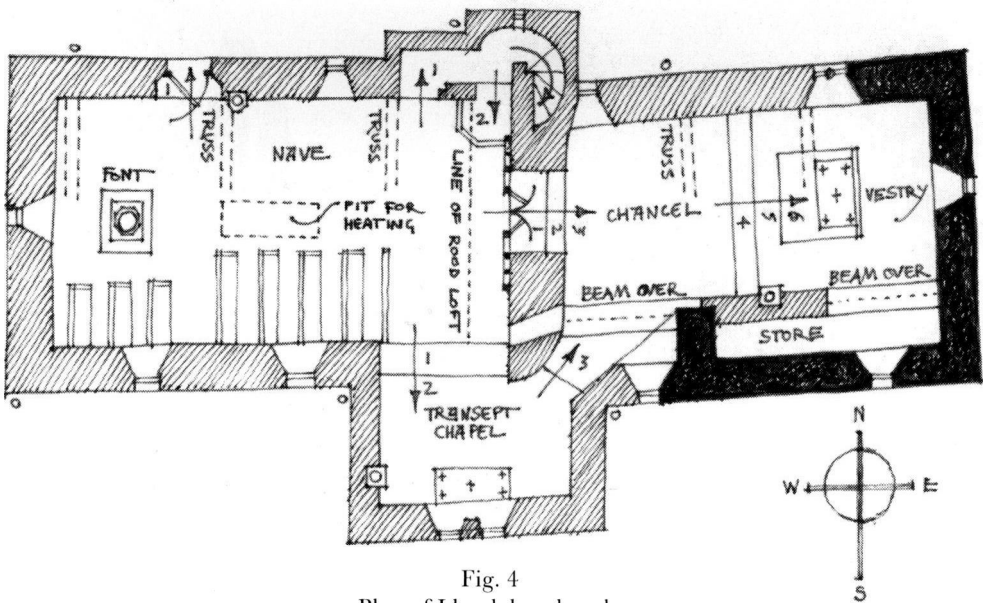


Fig. 4
Plan of Llandeloy church.
Coates Carter conjectured that the walls shaded in black represented the chancel of the original, early medieval church

The ruins of the old church were several yards shorter at the east end than the present building, but Coates Carter had the remains of the (later) east wall taken down and rebuilt further out, apparently on much older foundations. These rebuilt walls are shown in black on the plan. Several old graves, formerly in the churchyard but now within the area of his lengthened building, were concreted over and their stones were re-set in the floor behind the altar.

A more undemonstrative exterior could hardly be imagined: beautifully textured walls of dark, roughly pointed, local rubble-stone under a slate roof. By running an unbroken roof-ridge from end to end of the building and introducing no new materials, Coates Carter has achieved an appropriate sense of humble repose. The ancient west wall and typically plain, massive bellcote, which were 'cleverly pushed back to an upward position by the contractor and his helpers' on to new concrete foundations, seem remarkably untouched.¹⁹

Seen from the north and west, the church is distinctly primitive – a timeless, holy barn, now relieved only by a break in the eaves-line where the roof trickles down over the projecting rood stair (Fig. 5). Originally, a sturdy chimney stack stood on the wall-head immediately west of this projection, but it has been demolished. This is greatly to be regretted, because the chimney was carefully calculated not only to break up the low mass of the building, but also to create a deft moment of counterpoint between the roof and a series of stepped north- and west-facing wall planes.

From the south, the view is dominated by the gable of the transept chapel, and by its prominent two-light window – a typical Coates Carter duality designed to

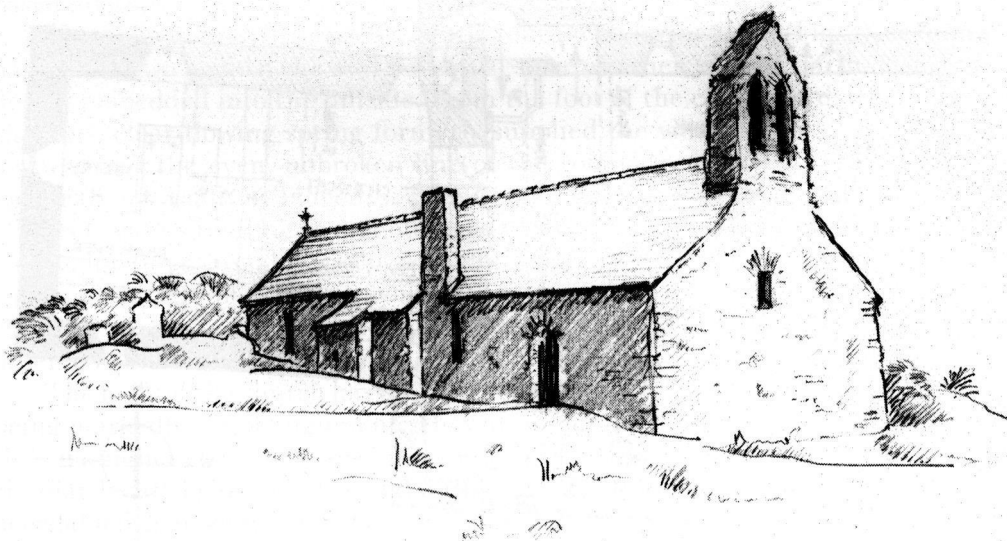


Fig. 5

Perspective of Llandeloy church from the north-west, with Coates Carter's chimney stack conjecturally restored

emphasise that, internally, the transept is open to both the nave and the chancel and stands on no significant cross axis. The roof of the transept neatly disguises the difference in eaves heights and the change of alignment between the nave and the chancel.

The composition of the building is at its most relaxed and forthcoming from the north-east (Fig. 6). From this aspect, thanks to the lie of the land and a little artful contrivance, Coates Carter's roofs sweep down nearly to ground level, and the iron cross on the east gable adds a light, almost frivolous touch in contrast to the prevailing tone of un-showy solidity.

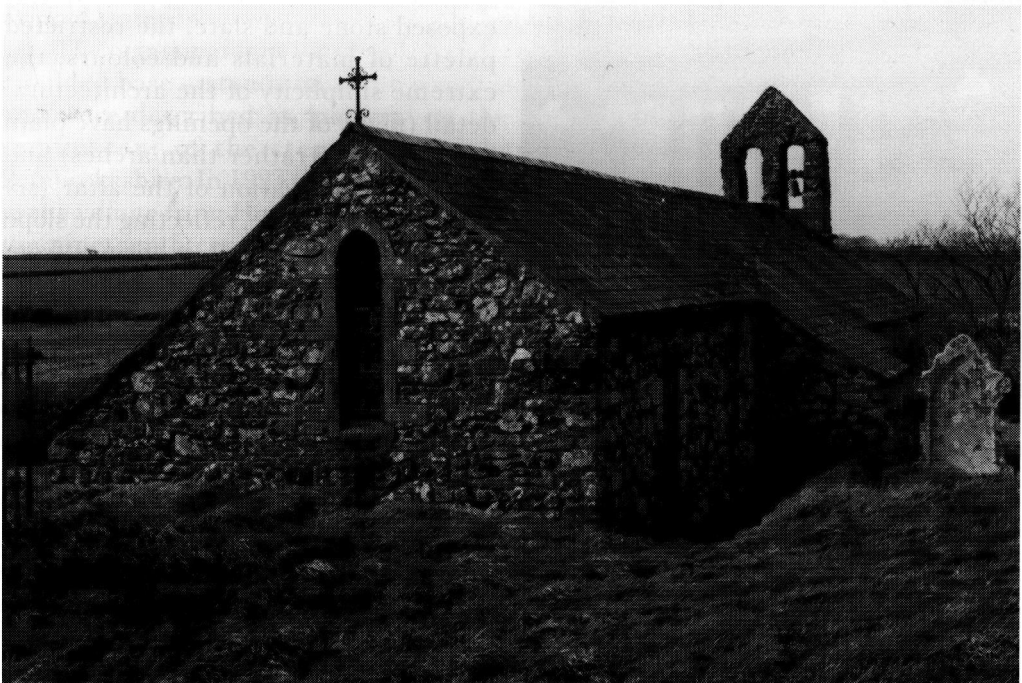


Fig. 6
Llandeloy church from the north-east

Where old openings survive, on the west and south sides of the nave, they are punched straight through the walls without dressings of any kind, though there is the hint of a relieving arch above the tiny west window. All other window openings are obviously new, their stone dressings and plain glazing freely, but simply, detailed in an Arts and Crafts way. Coates Carter has indeed made it 'clear where the old ends and the new begins'. The detailing of his two-light window on the north side of the chancel, which has a detached octagonal shaft visible externally and internally, is especially good.

Entering by the only door – on the north side toward the west end of the nave – one is suddenly remote, protected and entirely withdrawn from the world. This is



Fig. 7

Interior of Llandeloy church, looking east from the west end

Coates Carter's last and most complete surviving original church interior, and it is a beautiful performance (Fig. 7). One might be in a cave, but for the dense mesh of joinery overhead and the intricate wall of bright timber above and about the chancel arch. The intense, shrine-like atmosphere is generated by the careful conjunction of a few, well-chosen elements: the rough textures of exposed stone and slate, the restricted palette of materials and colours, the extreme simplicity of the architectural detail (many of the openings have plain wooden lintels rather than arches) and the striking elevation of the altar (six steps above the nave, reflecting the slope of the land). Above all, it springs from the surprisingly intimate scale of the interior and the smallness of the windows in the nave, from where most of Coates Carter's new windows are invisible.

Despite its scale, Llandeloy church is spatially quite complex. The triangular relationship of both altars to the nave and to each other is particularly rich, and there is subtlety and wit in the

way the alternative journey from the nave to the chancel via the south transept chapel is echoed in miniature by the approach to the pulpit along the rood stair passage.

Nave and chancel are spanned by a total of five substantial, slightly cambered tie-beams, above which are single framed roofs of scissor-trussed rafters, closely enough spaced almost to suggest a six-plane wagon roof. Over the chancel screen wall is the only complex truss. It too has a tie beam, but also a collar, crown post, pseudo-queen posts (meeting the rafters below the level of the collar) and two bold raking struts connecting the 'queen posts' with the crown post. This unusual structure extends the vertical rhythm of the screen up into the roof space and acknowledges the difference in width of nave and chancel. Collar purlins threaded through the scissor trusses are jointed into the crown post. The chamfered edge of the wall-plate is carefully detailed to match the irregularities of the masonry and neatly stopped at the head of the rood stair. The transept has the simplest possible single framed roof with a diagonally set ridge beam.

Both altars are of stone (an appropriately pre-Reformation touch), the one

against the south wall of the transept being built up from a few ancient stones discovered during excavation and preserved *in situ*. The altar mensae, simply chamfered like the wall-plate, came from the Glogue quarries²⁰ and were each carved with five crosses at the request of the vicar. A delightful stoup beside the door and two matching piscinas are carved from the same grey slate, perfectly detailed to suit the character of the material, and 'placed in the church by Mr Coates-Carter the architect.' According to the Revd Williams, the plain chancel arch in its unusually thick wall and the arch to the south transept 'were in a very good state of preservation when the rebuilding started' and are 'to be seen today exactly as they were during the past centuries'. Coates Carter's floors are of roughly worked slate slabs that vary in length, but are all approximately ten inches wide.

The octagonal font – its bowl chamfered into a thick, circular shaft and crudely moulded base – stands on three rough steps that are for the most part medieval and were described as 'perfect' on the north side when uncovered. They are reminiscent of the steps of a number of medieval churchyard crosses in Pembrokeshire. In 1923 the ancient font was returned to the 'temporary' iron church in the village from Hendre Cross school where occasional services had been held in the nineteenth century. After repairs to the bowl, which had at some stage been broken, Coates Carter had it re-set in the church in June, 1926.²¹

In his late churches and church furnishings, Coates Carter often introduces an element of architectural metaphor. At Llandeloy this is concentrated on the strong sacramental axis between stone font and stone altar which, at low level, is fiercely channelled through the cleft of the chancel arch, in delicate contrast to the unrestricted east-west flow of space high in the timbers of the roof, above the rood cross of sacrifice. Thus a floor of slates won from the earth, and a roof of trees whose branches once reared skyward, become symbolic of the earth and the heavens between which the Pilgrim's upward toil from baptism to full communion – from original sin to Celestial City – can only be achieved through a narrow way of pain. At the mid-point of his journey, the wider arch and more generous window of the transept chapel offer Christian the temptation of an easeful bye-way – though it has at least an altar, and therefore the promise of forgiveness and of redemption. It can be no accident that the entertaining finials on the riddel posts of the chancel altar refer back, in miniature, to the shape of the font bowl where the Pilgrim's spiritual journey began.

The interior of the nave is dominated by the splendid rood loft, screen and pulpit, all standing against the west face of the mediaeval screen wall. They were made of fumed English oak by Pearce, Bunclark & Company of Cheltenham, presumably because Coates Carter, living near by at Prestbury, could see the work carried out to his satisfaction.

The screen consists of eight closely-spaced, unmoulded uprights – four either side of the central opening – with the outer pair of bays on either side set against the stonework of the screen wall and the inner three standing before the archway (Fig. 8). Projecting from the first, third and fourth uprights on each side (working from the outer edges) are narrow, fin-like buttress strips rising from the floor,

their exaggerated offsets and profiles are a characteristic Coates Carter detail, but similar profiles also occur on furniture and joinery by Voysey. The panelling of the wainscot and the central doors is absolutely plain. Cut into the full length of the middle rail and across the doors is an inscription in the elegant, slightly mannered, lettering Coates Carter often used on his war memorials, recording the death of 2nd Lieut. Lionel Thomas in the Great War.

Running the entire width of the church across the top of the uprights, and actually forming the lowest element of the handsome soffit and loft, is a board prettily carved with very shallow, pendant ogee arches with leafy spandrels. The arches are sub-cusped with tiny 'hook' shapes – a motif which seems to be unique to Coates Carter. Above the almost flat soffit of square panels in two tiers, the bressumer of the loft is decorated with running pendant arches – trefoils without sub-cusping – and stylized, *c.*1900 crenellations. This decoration breaks out into three-sided brackets to support the rood figures, although only the crucified Christ is present. Presumably figures of the Virgin Mary and St John were never provided. The irregularly-spaced panels of the loft parapet – each solid only in its lower part and crowned with a stilted, trefoil head with sub-cusping – are separated by more of the narrow, fin-like buttress strips. Those which line-up with the principal divisions of the screen below also have similar, square mullions behind the buttresses. The top rail is simply crenellated.

Llandeloy screen is an affectionate homage to those surviving medieval screens and lofts that are most strongly Welsh in character. The flat soffit and dominating, boxy scale of the loft – heavy and closed compared to the fragility of the screen – are borrowed from Llanegryn, Patrisio and the like. Details like the buttress strips have been adapted and refined from those at Llandefalle and Llananno. Even the absence of a continuous bottom rail is a Welsh trait.²² But where the ancient lofts tend to be dense with fretty, carved tracery, Coates Carter has made a virtue – a typically Arts and Crafts virtue – of plainness and sound construction.

He has also taken another distinguishing characteristic of his medieval Welsh exemplars – their vertical disjunction – and turned it neatly to his own account.



Fig. 8

Llandeloy screen and pulpit seen from the transept chapel

Although the Llandeloy ensemble is formal, balanced and symmetrical in general effect, it sparkles with small asymmetries, syncopations and cross-rhythms. Each major element – screen, soffit, bressumer, and loft – has its own horizontal or vertical logic, but its rhythms are rarely shared with the elements immediately above or below. Thus the screen has seven irregular divisions, the soffit seventeen regular ones, the bressumer twenty-two and the loft sixteen, again irregular. The main vertical divisions of the screen reappear in the central section of the loft, but not on the soffit or bressumer, and the three rows of small arches which cross from side to side (under the soffit, on the bressumer and on the loft) are all related, but each is to a different scale and marches to a different rhythm. Because the number of motifs is kept to a minimum, and because a few bold horizontal and vertical lines dominate the overall composition, the effect is consistent and unified. True to the spirit of its models, it is dignified and calm, yet lightened with small freedoms and quick with the joy of controlled improvisation.

The pulpit, being extremely simple and integrated into the screen, is easily overlooked, but it too is remarkable in its refinement and pared-down elegance (see Fig. 8). Entered from the rood stair passage, it needs no steps and is therefore neatly tucked into the corner of the nave. It is three-sided, with plain panels, typical buttress strips at the corners – carefully adjusted versions of those on the screen – and sensitively reduced mouldings.

When the resources were available and the right opportunities presented themselves, Coates Carter was able to abandon all restraint and to design woodwork of breathtaking virtuosity and richness, such as his huge coloured and gilded reredoses at Chepstow, Cricklewood and elsewhere.²³ Yet this screen, loft and pulpit at Llandeloy, despite (or perhaps even because of) their humility, are the best he ever designed, and the interior would hardly make sense without them. Here, in a lovingly re-invented church, they demonstrate the intelligent, creative re-interpretation of an important aspect of Christian history and ritual, and the last incandescence of a magnificent Welsh tradition. Their great refinement is the distillation of a lifetime's experience and a deep understanding of the ancient models and heritage to which they refer. Yet in many points of detail and in their general spareness and lack of surface elaboration, they are just as obviously products of their own time. They are the logical summation of Coates Carter's career as a distinguished, Arts and Crafts ecclesiastical designer and the climax of his work in Pembrokeshire. They are the finest twentieth-century furnishings of their kind in Wales.

The reredos, accompanied by Coates Carter candlesticks, and carefully sited in relation to the new, two-light window in the north wall, is one of a group of similar painted dossals he designed for churches in Pembrokeshire. Six have so far been identified, at Angle, Carew Cheriton (the finest of the series), Johnston (more elaborate, but not executed), Llandeloy, Narberth and Walwyn's Castle. They are all variations on the same basic theme – in this case a rectangular wooden panel, painted with gesso and coloured with tempera, in a moulded frame crowned with elaborately carved cresting which incorporates more of Coates Carter's 'hook' sub-

cupping. The sides extend upwards to become riddel posts carrying iron bracket candlesticks from which riddel curtains may be hung.

The iconography of these Pembrokeshire dossals is unusual, frequently incorporating local motifs of surprising immediacy. In the fisherman's chapel at Angle, for example, a painted view of the foreshore beyond the adjacent churchyard wall becomes the setting for Christ's intercession on behalf of mankind. At Llandeloy, representations of the church at Pembroke Dock (for the donor) and St David's cathedral (for the diocese) are linked by the sun, the moon and a rainbow, symbolizing the splendour of God and his covenant with creation. Rays of glory flame out from the central figure of *Christus Rex*, typically carved in three dimensions and adored by angels kneeling in a field of Welsh flowers. Although the painting has deteriorated over the years, its colourful naïvety is still a perfect foil to the rough, dark masses all around and it remains the well-calculated climax of an outstanding interior. According to the Revd Williams, the reredos was also made in Cheltenham, so it is possible that Coates Carter might have carried out the gesso-work or colouring himself – certainly the style of draughtsmanship is very like his own. In contrast to all this care and expense, the open-backed bench pews could scarcely be more humble, or more appropriate.²⁴

Coates Carter was a most accomplished designer of church furnishings, and superb examples are scattered across South Wales, the Cotswolds and, very occasionally, further afield. For him, design and craft were surely forms of worship – sacramental acts symbolizing God the creative spirit at work in the life of man the maker. His extravagantly winged reredoses, speaking of a Church Triumphant stretching wide its arms to embrace and shelter; the local and personal iconography of his painted Pembrokeshire dossals; the shining glamour of his densely reticulated, gilded altar fronts – these he would have considered statements of faith as well as the essentials of any properly equipped, high Anglo-Catholic church interior. Llandeloy was one of the very few opportunities he was given completely to furnish a church of his own designing, and is the only one to survive. It is therefore a most precious document of Arts and Crafts ecclesiology, design and craftsmanship in a Welsh context.

Other than Brithdir and the post-1900 works of Coates Carter, the most significant Arts and Crafts church buildings still extant in Wales can be catalogued in a paragraph: a handful of John Douglas's many churches in the north (though most of his work belongs to a more mainstream, late Gothic Revival tradition), Arthur Grove's contributions to the little medieval church at Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili, Carmarthenshire, the similar work executed by H. L. North in the few places where it has been allowed to survive un-compromised (at Cellan in Cardiganshire for example) and the atmospheric repairs, restorations and furnishings carried out by W. D. Caröe, including his only entirely new church in Wales at Llangammarch Wells, Breconshire – alas, incomplete. Of these, only the churches by North and Coates Carter were designed by architects actually based in the Principality who strove consciously, and in very different ways, to discover how some sense of Welshness – of belonging – might be expressed honestly in the architectural language of their times.

NOTES

1. The dedication is not entirely certain. Officially to St Teilo, it is far more likely on etymological grounds to be the sixth century Breton St Eloi than to the Welsh St Teilo, who is first mentioned in connection with Llandeloy as late as the early eighteenth century. There were significant and well-documented religious links between the early Christian churches of South Wales and northern France.
2. This essay is concerned only with buildings for the Anglican communion in Wales, now the Church in Wales. Nonconformist chapel building in the Principality has, of course, its own rich and fascinating, but often quite separate traditions.
3. Unpublished paper on the *Architectural History of St Dyfrig's Church, Cardiff* by Philip Thomas, sent to CADW, 1983. St Dyfrig's was built in 1889, extended and completed by Arthur Grove c.1905 and demolished c.1970. A gesso relief by Henry Wilson and an iron screen by Cecil Hare from St Dyfrig's are now respectively in St Samson's and St Mary's churches, Cardiff. Work by Grove and W. Bainbridge Reynolds was probably destroyed.
4. Herbert North's involvement with St Winifred's School, Llanfairfechan extended from 1922 until at least 1937. It included building a new chapel, hall, music wing and alterations at Plas Gwyn in the town, and a substantial new hall, music wing, classroom wing, hospital and (North's *magnum opus*) a large chapel with all fittings and furnishings at Plas Llanfair, his old family home. St Winifred's was closed and sold in the late 1960s, after which all the buildings were swiftly demolished to make way for feeble, speculator's bungalows.
5. For a more detailed discussion of this idea see *Imperial Splendours? A tale of far Cathays* by Philip Thomas in *Architecture 1900* edited by Peter Burman (1998).
6. Map reference SM 857267
7. Seddon's influence on Coates Carter is apparent not only in the idiom of some early works, but in his continuing fascination with concrete and his unusual (unusual to Wales, that is) imaginative attitudes to repair and conservation. For his obituary of Seddon see the *RIBA Journal*, 13, (1905-6), 221.
8. The Red House, Victoria Road, Penarth, Glamorgan. This ingenious, innovative and eccentrically detailed house is surprisingly intact, despite unfortunate alterations in the 1980s. The internal doors are still furnished with the architect's own collection of antique locks and hinges.
9. The Manor House, Burgage, Prestbury, Gloucestershire, is an old cottage greatly enlarged and altered by Coates Carter c.1908. Like the Red House it has survived with much remarkable detail intact.
10. Archdeacon Prosser was vicar of St John the Divine, Pembroke Dock, where between 1919 and 1921 Coates Carter fitted-out a parish war memorial chapel and designed the town war memorial cross. He was appointed bishop of St Davids in the year of the architect's death. Among Coates Carter's drawings in the National Library of Wales are sketches for a cope and morse for the new bishop.
11. Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-86) quoted in *Three American Architects* by James F. O'Gorman, (1991), 37.
12. Llandeloy church is described in the statutory lists as 'a rare example in W Wales of a church built according to Arts and Crafts principles, that uses the simplest available local materials without attempt at period styles'.
13. Copy at Pembrokeshire Record Office, Haverfordwest: HPR/82/1.
14. A negative blueprint copy of one Coates Carter drawing has survived (SD/F/255 Church in Wales Records, National Library of Wales). This shows an 'eastern transept' projecting from the south side of the sanctuary. His intention to rebuild it was probably abandoned when the ancient foundations of the chancel south wall were discovered.
15. This quotation, like many others in this account, is taken from a manuscript notebook kept by the Revd John Williams, vicar of Llandeloy at the time of Coates Carter's rebuilding, now in the Pembrokeshire County Record Office, Haverfordwest: HPR/82/14. Although quite a lot of written documentation has survived, none of Coates Carter's drawings for the church have yet come to light.

16. The following breakdown of contract costs and extras is adapted from the papers of the Llandeloy Church Restoration Committee in the Pembrokeshire Record Office, Haverfordwest: HPR/82/15.

	£	s	d
To contract	758	0	0
107 yards of concrete @ 12/-	64	0	0
Window Hoppers	7	0	0
Ladder bars	7	0	0
Oak floor complete as per quotation	25	0	0
76 yards of pavement around the church @ 6/-	22	10	0
Iron framing and fixing bell in belfry	4	10	0
Rinnet's bill for cross [blacksmith's work?]	3	16	0
Carriage of same		6	0
Fixing of iron cross [to east gable]		10	0
Communicant's form	1	6	0
Book rests	3	0	0
Stand		18	6
Carriage from Haverfordwest	1	0	0
Joiner's cutting and fixing pews	2	15	0
Smith's ironwork for High Altar [riddel curtain brackets]		12	0
1 cwt 'Pudlo' for heating pit	5	10	0
1 oak plate over arch	1	0	0
TOTAL:	907	2	6

To this list must be added the screen, loft and pulpit (£250), the unknown cost of the high altar, reredos and candlesticks borne by Coates Carter's friend the archdeacon and the stained glass donated for two windows. The final cost of Llandeloy church, fittings and furnishings in 1926 was probably a little over £1,300. The stained glass in the east window and transept window – probably by R. J. Newbery who did so much work in South Wales – was given at the time of the rebuilding by Mrs Francis of Carmarthen (daughter of Mrs Thomas of Trehale) in memory of her brother and father respectively. A window in memory of Mrs Thomas, showing a view of the church from the north-west still with its chimney stack, was installed in 1938. The oil lamps presently in the nave are the survivors of a set once hanging in St David's cathedral, presented to Llandeloy by the Dean when the cathedral was electrified.

17. Now in the Pembrokeshire Record Office, Haverfordwest: HPR/82/16.
18. *Some Notes on the History of Llandeloy Church* by Mrs M. Buckland. Undated, but perhaps 1960s. An excellent booklet containing useful information on the early history of the parish.
19. The technically complex undertaking of rescuing the mediaeval west wall *in situ*, rather than demolishing and rebuilding it, is reminiscent of Seddon's celebrated rescue work at Grosfont, Monmouthshire and Llanbadarn Fawr, Cardiganshire in the 1860s and 1870s.
20. The Glogue quarries, now closed, were just north of Llanfyrnach, in north-east Pembrokeshire. They produced a fine bluish-grey Ordovician slate.
21. Coates Carter considered it to be Norman. CADW ascribes it tentatively to the thirteenth century.
22. Ironically, but unsurprisingly, the best sources of information on Welsh screens are still: *Screens and Galleries in English Churches* by Francis Bond, (1908), *English Church Woodwork* by F. E. Howard and F. H. Crossley, (1917), *English Church Screens* by Aymer Vallance, (1936), *English Church Fittings Furniture and Accessories* by J. Charles Cox, (1923), *English Church Craftsmanship* by F. H. Crossley, (1941).
23. Some of the most spectacular are to be found in St Gabriel, Cricklewood, London (two reredoses, 1913); St Mary, Nolton, Glamorgan (1919); St Mary, Chepstow, Monmouthshire (1922, formerly in St Luke, Newport) and St Andrew, Woodville Road, Cardiff (1924). Equally characteristic, but less showy, are St John the Divine, Pembroke Dock (1919); St Thomas, Haverfordwest (1921) and Herbrandston (1927) all in Pembrokeshire.
24. There are very similar benches and an excellent, slightly more elaborate pulpit of 1927 by Coates Carter at Hayscastle church, two miles east of Llandeloy.