

SOME CHURCHES OF GWYNEDD

by Ivor Bulmer-Thomas

The religious life of Môn, anglicized as the Isle of Anglesey, was dominated in the sixth century of the Christian era by two holy men, St. Cybi at its western extremity where Holyhead now stands, St. Seiriol at its eastern at Penmon (= head of Môn). Legend has it that they used to meet in the middle of the island for pious conversation, and as a consequence St. Cybi was bronzed because he had the sun in his face both going and returning, while St. Seiriol was pale because he had the sun behind him both ways¹.

Whatever the truth in this story, both men have left their mark on the island in remarkable churches.

Cybi was the son of a Cornish King named Selyf and his Queen Gwen, who was the sister of Non, the mother of St. David². David and Cybi were thus cousins. Cybi led a turbulent life, but after much wandering he settled in what is now Holyhead, i.e., the head of Holy Island. There, overlooking the harbour, he found the walls of a Roman fort built in the late third or fourth century to keep out sea raiders, just like the forts of the Saxon shore in south-east England, and deserted when the Roman legions left Britain in 410. It was a small rectangular enclosure with circular towers at the corners. The original north, west and south walls are largely intact; the upper part of the north-east tower has been largely rebuilt, probably in the eighteenth century, and the south-east tower was wholly rebuilt in the late nineteenth century, but it is a remarkable relic of the Roman occupation, and when Cybi came upon it about 550 A.D. he decided to make his cell within the walls. For that reason the place has always been known in Welsh as *Caer Gybi*, the camp of Cybi.*

There has since been a continuous ecclesiastical history on the site but no details are known until some time in the twelfth century³. St. Cybi's church was endowed by Hwfa ap Cynddelw and Llywarch ap Bran, two Anglesey chieftains, as a portionary college served by twelve canons or prebendaries. For that reason it is still called the collegiate church of St. Cybi though now served by a rector in the usual parochial way. The church was rebuilt in the thirteenth century, and to this period belongs the present chancel, though partly rebuilt. It then consisted in all probability of a chancel and nave only, but in the late fifteenth century it was extensively enlarged. North and south transepts were added about 1480 and about 1500 a north aisle with its arcade of three bays was built, the three arches of the crossing were made, and the chancel arch was reconstructed. This chancel arch though made in the thirteenth century, when the Gothic

style was well advanced in England, is almost semi-circular in shape; the two chamfered orders retain their thirteenth century voussoirs. A south aisle with an arcade of three bays was added about 1520, and about the same time a stair-turret was made where the south wall of the south aisle abuts on the south transept, a south porch was made, and in all probability the decorated parapet was added to the south transept.

The decorations of this parapet and the decorations above the south doorway inside the porch are glorious work, worth going to Holyhead to see for that reason alone. On the east face of the parapet are represented an angel, a dragon, a griffin, and a horse or ass, on the south face a grotesque human figure, a man driving a beast, two lions flanking a tree, a mitred head with a kneeling figure on either side, a crowned shield supported by a lion and a cockatrice and another mitred head between two foliated designs, on the west face a winged amphisbaena. Inside the porch flanking the south doorway are niches with canopies of ogee arches and crockets. The wall above the doorway is wholly decorated with carvings. The central position is occupied by a canopied niche containing a representation of the Trinity—the Father seated and crowned with right hand raised in blessing, a crucifix with the Son between his knees, and the Holy Spirit above in the form of a dove. On either side is a shield with the arms of Llywarch ap Bran—a chevron between three crows (*bran* is the Welsh word for “crow”). The rest of the wall is filled with traceried designs within an arch of trefoil cusping. The detail of all this decoration is marvellously preserved. In recent years there has been much renewal of stonework in the porch itself, but the porch has no doubt helped to protect the carvings.

In the early fourteenth century a chapel was built in the south-west corner of the churchyard. (Today we find it odd, but such was their custom.) It is generally known as Eglwys-y-Bedd (Church of the Grave = Graveyard) but has the alternative name Capel Llan-y-Gwyddel. Only the nave now survives, and it is thought the chancel was demolished because it obscured the view of the noble porch. Though it has been much altered, the original chancel arch and other early features remain. In 1748 the building was converted into a school. It has since been used as a vestry and for a variety of other functions.

To return to the main church, a west tower of two stages was added in the seventeenth century and a vestry in the north west angle in 1817⁴. (Controversy is raging as these words are written over a proposal to demolish it as vandals use it to climb on the lead roofs⁵.) Sir Gilbert Scott was let loose in the church in 1877-79, and rebuilt the north and south arches from the crossing

and refenestrated the north and south walls of the chancel. The fifteenth century east window survived his attention. In 1896-97 the Stanley chapel to the south of the chancel was built as a memorial to William Owen Stanley, of Penrhos (which adjoins Holyhead), and his wife. (This is the family to which Asquith's pen-friend, Venetia Stanley, belonged, but it is unlikely that he was ever found at prayer here.) The chapel was designed by Arthur Baker, but carried out after his death in 1896 by his son-in-law, Harold Hughes. The elaborate monument was designed by Hamo Thornycroft; the stained glass windows were made by William Morris's firm to the design of Burne-Jones.

There are many details over which a visitor could linger. On the east wall of the north transept a small fresco displaying the Tudor rose has been exposed. Would uncovering reveal more? The organ has migrated from Eaton Hall. The octagonal bowl of the font bears the date 1662, and this might indicate that it was a new font made at the Restoration to take the place of one destroyed by the Puritans, but it could mean that it was replaced after being hidden during the Commonwealth, as happened at Sandwich St. Mary at the other end of the country, where the font is clearly of the 15th century. The feature that most fascinates me is a stone high up in the north gable of the north transept with an inscription in Gothic letters. On account of the height and weathering it is difficult to read, and there are variant readings. but I make it to be *Sanctus Kybi ora pro me*⁶. In this unusual position could it be the spontaneous work of some 15th century mason? If meant to be an invocation it is slightly ungrammatical, but perhaps he could not distinguish between the vocative and the nominative.

Let us now follow the footsteps of St. Cybi to the middle of the island and then those of St. Seiriol to a point on the coast beyond Beaumaris, not stopping to admire its famous castle but recollecting that in a plain rectangular stone coffin in the south porch of the parish church lie the mortal remains of Joan, illegitimate daughter of King John and wife of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth (Llywelyn the Great), who died in 1237⁷. She had been buried in the Franciscan friary near Llywelyn's manor of Llanfaes when that prince brought the order into Anglesey in the year of her death but in the 1930s her coffin bearing her effigy on the lid was removed to Beaumaris. We go a little beyond our destination to get a view of an island variously known as Ynys Lannog or Glannauc, Ynys Seiriol, Priestholm and Puffin Island. We cannot cross the narrow channel through which shipping passes into the Menai Straits to see its partly ruined twelfth century church and the foundations of early monastic buildings⁸ unless we get permission because the island is now a bird sanctuary; and

although the beauty of the scenery is such as to make it tempting to linger near the lighthouse we must retrace our steps a few hundred yards to the object of our visit, the priory church of St. Seiriol and the remains of the monastic buildings he founded⁹.

There are few places in the United Kingdom so evocative. The church was founded in the first half of the sixth century by Cynlas, who placed it in charge of his brother Seiriol¹⁰. Like St. Cybi's at Holyhead it was probably rebuilt several times¹¹. Viking raids on Anglesey were frequent from the eighth century, and Holyhead is known to have been attacked in 961 and Penmon in 971. The earliest part of the existing church is the nave, which was built in the middle of the twelfth century soon after Owain Gwynedd began to reign. A little later, about 1160-1170, a central tower and north and south transepts were added. Nothing of the original chancel now survives, but it appears to have been built in the reign of Llywelyn the Great about 1220-1240. It was rebuilt in the fifteenth century and again in 1855, when the walls of the first chancel were found beneath those of the fifteenth century rebuilding. The chancel as rebuilt in 1855 is the only part now used for worship. In 1855 also the north transept was rebuilt and the east wall of the south transept.

The nave and south transept are therefore the only parts of the mediaeval building to survive, but what a wealth of treasures they contain! Pre-eminent among them are two free-standing crosses and the font, of date about 1000. The font, which tapers to the top and has three of its sides decorated with fret, diaper, key pattern and triquetra knots, was originally the base of the cross now standing in the south transept. The other cross stood until recently in the Deer Park in the village, and remains exceptionally in the care of the State though now inside a church in use. Both crosses belong to a small group with its centre in Cheshire. Their special characteristic is the circular head interrupting the outline of the arms, which then jut out beyond the circumference. The head and shaft of that in the south transept are made of one stone; between the arms of the cross are triquetra knots, and the faces of the shaft are decorated with key patterns terminating in beasts' heads. The cross in the nave has similar patterns of decoration on the shaft, but the most interesting feature is a representation of the Temptation of St. Anthony, with beasts whispering into the saint's ears.

What they were whispering we may guess from a crudely carved nude female figure with legs wide apart on the west wall of the south transept. It belongs to the class of figures known as "Sheila-na-gig". It probably dates from the 12th century. There are only a few examples in Wales, and it was broadminded or

innocent of the rude forefathers of the hamlet to introduce this one into the church. Near it is another mediaeval carved stone representing the head and shoulders of a bearded man holding an axe in his right hand. In the modern east window of the south transept there have been re-set seven fragments removed from the 15th century east window. Completed by modern work, they represent St. Christopher and St. Seiriol. Among the many other features that might be listed we confine ourselves to a bronze plaque of Limoges enamel which was found near the altar when the chancel was rebuilt. Dated to the 13th century, it shows a demi-figure of Christ with a red nimbus, his left hand holding a book and his right raised in blessing.

St. Seiriol built a monastery around his church, and no doubt the monastery, like the church, was rebuilt before Llywelyn the Great in 1237 gave them to the Prior and Canons of Priestholm. These did not belong to any of the great western orders but formed a *clas* on a familiar Celtic pattern comprising men and women and allowing marriage. With this grant the Prior of Priestholm seems to have transferred his seat to Penmon. He was presumably responsible for the rebuilding of the church that took place about that time, and the community became a body of Canons Regular according to the Augustinian rule, that is, Austin canons. It would appear that St. Seiriol himself had little or nothing to do with Priestholm, and Ynys Seiriol is a misnomer.

The remains of the monastery adjoin the church¹². The surviving buildings formed the south range of the cloister adjoining the chancel. The roofless three-storeyed ruin dating from the 13th century was the refectory with the dormitory over and a cellar beneath. At the east end is a two-storeyed addition to the early 16th century, with attics, which contained the warming house on the ground floor and the kitchen on the first. The west side of the cloisters, and therefore a prolongation of the south transept, is the site of the Prior's House. This has been so much altered, especially in 1923, that its date is uncertain, but some of the walls may be contemporary with the refectory, though the general appearance suggests a date in the 16th or 17th centuries. The crude rendering on the two sides that are most visible gives the visitors an unfortunate impression that is forgotten when he sees the third visible side. (The fourth is concealed by the south transept.)

All these buildings, however fascinating in themselves, are much later than St. Seiriol. But wait! We have only to walk along a short path and there before us lie the remains of St. Seiriol's cell and the well in which he baptized his converts. A small

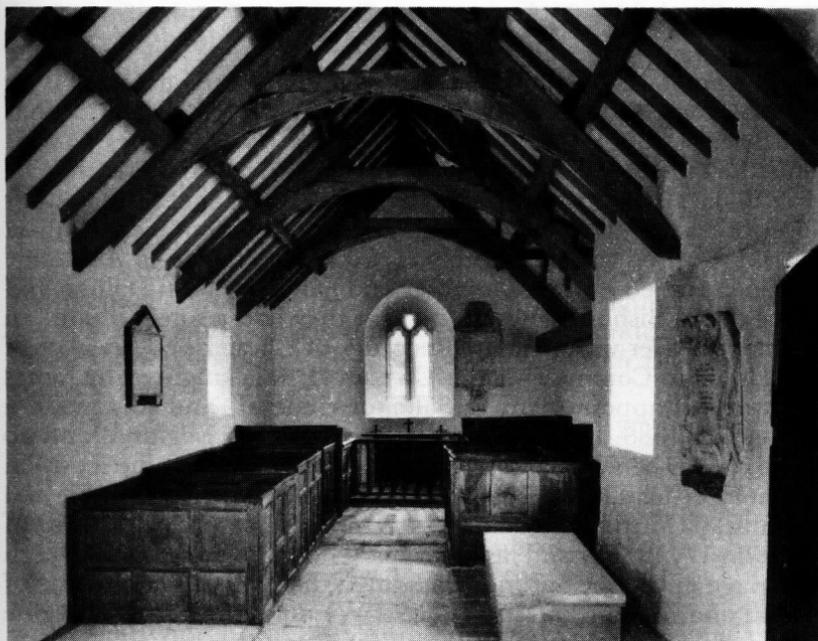
rectangular chamber covers the well, and although the upper part appears to date from the 18th century the lower part is thought to incorporate remains of St. Seiriol's chapel. Adjoining these remains are the foundations of an oval hut believed to be his cell. "Take off thy shoes", we may rightly think, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground".

With many memories we prepare to leave Penmon, but first glance at a dovecot made about 1600, perhaps by Sir Richard Bulkeley whose house, Baron Hill, was completed in 1618. Square in plan, the dovecot has a domed roof with a cupola. In the centre is a stone pillar with corbelled steps which would have carried a ladder for access to the nests. There are about a thousand nests in the walls, and this must surely be the grandest dovecot in the whole country. As we leave Penmon we inquire about a big building on the hillside, and learn that these were the buildings attached to a quarry, now exhausted, from which notable buildings have been made¹³.

After such a feast it is well to turn to something simpler. And where better than to Llantrisant Old Church in the north-west part of the island? If we had the time we could stop and look at the Llynon windmill in the adjoining parish of Llandeusant, which is the subject of another article in this volume, or the working water mill in the same parish, but we must hasten down the public footpath or the farm track that leads to the old church, now standing isolated with nothing but the farmhouse, Ty Mawr, near. As we approach we see two beautifully written inscription, one in English and one in Welsh, on either side of the entrance gate, telling us that the church was built in the 14th century, that the south chapel was added in the 17th century, and that it is now in the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches. It is not surprising that the inscriptions are a work of art as they were written on slate tablets by that great Welsh artist, Mr. Jonah Jones. Beside the entrance is a mounting block for horses.

To enter the churchyard now is a different experience from what it was in the late 1960s, when Lord Anglesey introduced me to the church. Then we had to hack our way through vegetation as high as our heads, and I must testify that his lordship wielded the slasher as well as any agricultural worker. It has subsequently been one of my tasks on my annual visit to Anglesey to subdue the vegetation, and the task has become easier every year so that now no visitor need be deterred. The churchyard is full of beautiful slate table tombs with Welsh inscriptions. They nearly all begin "Er cof am", "In memory of", but one appears to be written in Greek, and it would puzzle even a good Greek scholar until he realized that what the memorialist has done is to write Welsh words in Greek characters.

When Lord Anglesey and I eventually slashed our way into the church we found that it was in a ruinous condition. A tree that had taken root at the west end had forced its way through the roof and had scattered the tiles. The church had been abandoned when a new church was built a mile away by P.S. Gregory in 1899,¹⁴ and already in 1937 its condition was described by the Royal Commission as "Poor"¹⁵ Lord Anglesey and I decided that every effort must be made to preserve the building, and the Representative Body of the Church in Wales agreed to give a lease of 999 years to the Friends of Friendless Churches. We issued an appeal leaflet with a charming drawing made by John Piper, raised the necessary money (including a grant by the Anglesey County Council from the Welsh Church Fund, money made available by disestablishment in 1920), appointed Mr. P.M. Padmore of Bangor as our architect (and after his retirement Mr. N. Squire Johnson, who had been with the Anglesey County Council until local government was reorganized) and Messrs. Beretta (now Beaufrette)¹⁶ of Rhosneigr as our contractors, and in 1980 could say that the old church was once more in sound condition, as it still is today though parts of the boundary wall need rebuilding.



Llantrisant Old Church from a photograph by Christopher Dalton

Llantrisant means "the church of three saints", who are, in fact, SS. Afran, Ieuan and Sannan. There is much that might be said about these three, but it must be left to Baring-Gould to say it¹⁷. The church is very simple in structure, and is typical of many churches in North Wales. Even in this article we shall come across three churches with the same plan—nave, chancel, south chapel and western bell turret.

Simple in structure, we said, but as we enter by the north door we are struck by the beauty of a monument on the south wall of the nave opposite. It would not be out of place in St. Helen's, Bishopsgate or even Westminster Abbey. It is a draped marble cartouche with winged cherubs' heads and a crest above, of date c.1670. The only reason why it had escaped removal from the church must be that it had so deteriorated that its importance was not recognized. We took it to London to be repaired and the arms repainted (they had already faded by 1967) by Mr. Arthur J.J. Ayres, who has done such excellent work at St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe, St. John's Smith Square and Westminster Abbey, and it is now resplendent. The Latin inscription tells us that the person commemorated is the Revd. Dr. Hugo Williams:

Heic jacet / Hugo Williams de/ Nantanog in Comitatu/
Anglesey Theologiae/ Doctor/ Decessit 28 Die/Septembris
Anno/ Domini 1670/ Anno aetatis Suae/ 74/ Respice finem.

A large plain slab just above the floor near the cartouche marks the place where he was buried and adds the detail that he was Rector of Llanrhyddlad and Prebendary of Vaynol. What neither inscription tells us, though *Burke's Peerage* does¹⁸ and it must be true or he would not have been buried there is that he was Vicar of Llantrisant; and, far more important, what neither inscription tells us is that he was fifteenth in descent from Cadrod Hardd (Cadrod the Handsome), Lord of Talybolion in Anglesey, that he married Emma, daughter and heiress of John Dolben and niece of the Bishop Bangor, and that they had a son William, an eminent lawyer who became Recorder of Chester and Speaker of the House of Commons under Charles II, was knighted by James II upon his appointment as Solicitor General, and was made a baronet in 1688. His life is part of the history of England, and no doubt it was he who caused the splendid cartouche to be set up in memory of his father. His grandson, the 3rd Baronet, inherited Wynnstay (formerly Watstay) in Denbighshire under the will of Sir John Wynn, 5th and last Baronet — he was a grandson through marriage of the 1st Baronet — assumed the additional surname of Wynn and, as Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, is the ancestor of one of the most illustrious of all Welsh families.

The other surviving memorials are not comparable but are

worth notice. On the east wall adjoining the window is a marble plaque in memory of John Wynn of Bodewrid, died 1669, his wife Ellen (Lewis) d. 1650, and their eldest son John Wynn, Ll.B., died 1660, erected by their second son, Robert, Rector of the parish, "out of duty to his parents and affection for his brother"; above it displays in a cartouche flanked by swags of flowers the arms of Gweirydd ap Rhys Goch borne by the Wynns of Bodewryd as well as by Hughes of Beaumaris and Lloyd by Lligwy (*argent on a bend sable three leopards' faces of the first*) impaling those of Hwfa ap Cynddelw as borne by Lewis of Chwaen wen and seven other families (*gules a chevron between three lions rampant or*), with a winged skull beneath. On the west wall is an oval slate memorial to the Revd. Morgan Ellis, Clerk Ll.B., "late Vicar of Llanbedrig and for many years Curate of this parish", died 1789, aged 56. On the north wall of the chancel is a memorial to Owen Perry, born 1831, died in Australia 1855, erected by his brother.

The building itself calls for little comment. Nave and chancel are structurally undivided. The east window of the chancel, late 14th century, consists of two trefoiled lights set in an irregular rounded head with a crudely moulded label. (This is a simple rural church.) The slate altar beneath it was provided by the Friends at the restoration but the communion rails with their turned balusters are 18th century work. The north wall has been rebuilt, probably in the nineteenth century, but a 17th century window has been re-set in it with a modern head. There is another 17th century window of two lights in the south wall near the chapel. The south doorway (not now opened) dates from the 15th century and has casement moulded jambs: it has a round head in a square frame with a moulded label. West of it is a modern window. The north doorway, the one in use, is modern. The west bellcote dates from the 17th century; it has lost its bell and our efforts to find another have so far proved abortive. The south chapel, added in the 17th century, has original windows in the east and south walls and in the west wall a modern window set in an earlier opening. The box pews date from the early 19th century.

The church had a notable font of date c.1200; the circular bowl had a chamfered base and the surface was carved with an intricate leaf pattern. When the church was abandoned this font was given to a modern church at Maesgirchen on the outskirts of Bangor. It so happened that the Friends of Friendless Churches had undertaken to find a new home for the Norman font at Grove in Buckinghamshire (near the scene of the Great Train Robbery) when that church was sold for a house. We offered to give it to Maesgirchen if we could have Llantrisant's own font back. Our pleas did not succeed, and we put the Grove font in Llantrisant

and had a cover made; it looks as though it has always been there.

Let us now go to another isolated church in which Lord Anglesey again first engaged my interest. It is Tal-y-llyn,¹⁹ a few miles east of Rhosneigr and south of the A5. The name means "end of the lake", and there is indeed a small lake nearby. Here we had no difficulty of access as the church adjoins a small road and grass has remained in possession of the churchyard. This is enclosed by an almost circular wall, usually regarded as evidence of a pagan site. There is a stable in the churchyard. The church, dedicated to St. Mary, has the same form as Llantrisant—undivided nave and chancel, a later south chapel and a western bellcote, and like Llantrisant it needed immediate repairs if it was not to collapse. These the Friends took in hand, but in this case the church has remained in ecclesiastical ownership and a monthly service is held there in the summer. It used to be a chapel of ease to Llanbeulan but is now in the parish of Rhosneigr. Mr. Padmore was again appointed our architect, and was succeeded by Mr. Squire Johnson when he retired; the contractors were again Messrs. Beretta (now Beaufetta). The main work was re-covering of the roof with Welsh slates. There are no tombs in the churchyard and some excitement was caused when the builders found a human skeleton just in front of the west door; the police were called, but decided to regard it as a shallow burial.

This west doorway appears to date from the 14th century, and this is probably the date of the masonry of the whole nave. A stone bench runs along both the north and the south well—for the weakest, no doubt. Two modern windows have been inserted into the north wall, and the bellcote above the gable is also modern. The nave roof is supported by two huge trusses of the 15th century and one of the 17th.

The stops in which the chamfered jambs of the chancel arch terminate on the west side are of a type common in the 13th century but the arch is four-centred, and was probably reconstructed in the 16th century. The whole chancel would appear to have been re-made late in that century, but a 15th-century truss was retained. The chancel has also a truss of the 17th century, and there is another 17th century truss over the entrance to the south chapel. This would appear to be the date when the south chapel was added. There is a stone bench round the south and west walls.

Later worshippers demanded seats, and a number of narrow benches without backs were provided; one bears the date 1786, and this presumably goes for all of them. The communion rails with their turned balusters also bear a date—1764. The altar

table is also of 18th century workmanship, but has been re-made.

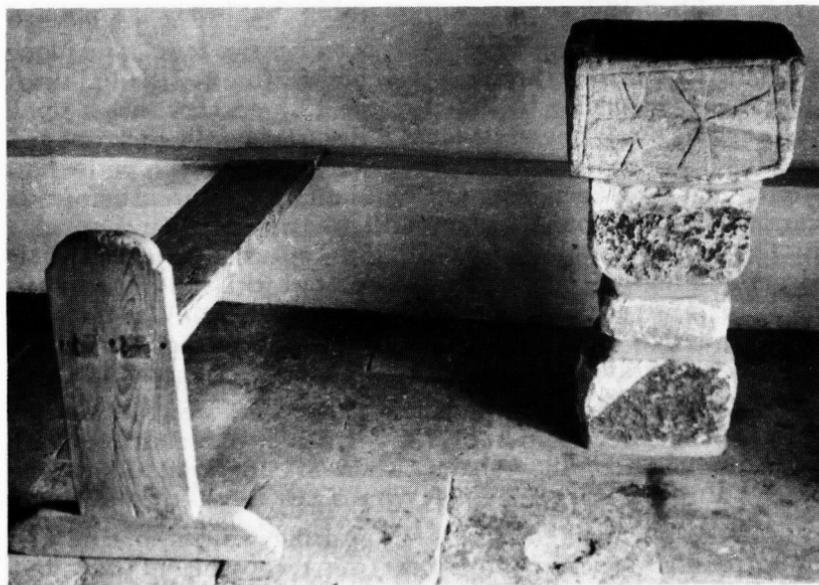
Small though the church is, it possesses two fonts, and along with the roof trusses these are the chief features of the building. The first, which may be dated to the 12th century, has a small rectangular bowl; one of its faces is decorated with chevrons and another with two crosses of the expanded-arm type with short shaft. This had been removed to Llanfaelog church before we carried out our repairs, but no difficulty was made in returning it. The second font dates from the 15th century; it is considerably larger and has an octagonal gritstone bowl with roll moulding at its base, and an octagonal stem with necking. We can only conjecture that in the 15th century the church authorities wanted a larger and grander font but happily retained the original.

We all have special memories of churches we visit, and my most delicious recollection of Tal-y-llyn is of the service to mark the completion of the repairs, when Mr. Beretta, despite his Italian ancestry, sang the Welsh hymns as lustily as the next man.

Let us now pass through Llanfairpwllgwyn, without turning aside to Plas Newydd, cross over the reconstructed Britannia Bridge described by Elisabeth Beazley in this volume, take the road out of Caernarfon leading to Pwllheli but almost immediately turn right to the modern village of Llanfaglan, and, leaving it behind, turn right to the coast. There, overlooking an arm of the Menai Straits called Foryd Bay near its south-western entrance with views of Newborough Warren on the Isle of Anglesey (the only genuine desert in the United Kingdom), in this most dramatic situation we see what we have come for—Llanfaglan Old Church²⁰.

It was, curiously, not Lord Anglesey but Sir Denys Buckley (Lord Justice Buckley), whose home is near by, who first drew my attention to its needs, but Lord Anglesey and I have visited it so often together and pondered together on what the Friends of Friendless Churches can do that it deserves a place here. So far we have done little beyond obtaining reports and carrying out minor repairs, but the church is high on our list of priorities, and in the meantime we are keeping watch on it.

This churchyard also is almost round, and burials are still taking place in an extension. Borrowing from Shelley we could say, "It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." We enter through a stone lych gate with slate roof inscribed HL/IH/Warden/1722—where HL probably indicates Hugh Lewis. Adjoining it is a stable. The church, as the name implies, is dedicated to St. Baglan. Like the last two churches we have visited, it consists of an undivided nave and chancel with a south chapel and western bellcote, but it has



Tal-Y-Llyn: 12th century font and 1786 bench from a photograph
by Elisabeth Beazley

also a north porch. This is not so old as it looks, about 1880, and the chancel was rebuilt about the same time, but the nave is of the 13th or 14th century and is completely unrestored with its 18th century benches and box pews. The pulpit with reading desk attached bears the date 1767. The south chapel was added in the late 16th or early 17th century. Though the chancel has been rebuilt, it retains its 18th-century altar table and communion rails. The font is a simple heptagonal bowl of gritstone—did its maker have it in mind to depict the seven sacraments as in East Anglia?—and can be dated to the 13th century. In the north porch two 13th century gravestones have been used as the head and sill of a long east window; one of them has an incised cross pattée on a long stem displaying a ship with mast on the dexter side, the other is similar but without the ship. The memorials inside the church include one to Hugh Lewis of Plas yn Llanfaglan, dated 1731, which is the evidence for the ascription of the initials on the lychgate above.

The church is obviously one that must be preserved. The main problem is that of the roofs over the nave and south chapel. They are very “wavy”, but at the present time do not appear to be allowing rain to enter.

Crossing to the road from Caernarfon to Porthmadog (A487)

we turn left at Dolbenmaen, and then left again (though rather ashamed to pass its ancient church without entering) and make our way up the valley of the Afon Dwyfor. This is the river from which David Lloyd George took his title (Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor) when he accepted membership of a house that he had scorned most of his political life; and on the banks of the river near Llanystumdwy, where he was brought up, is a moving memorial to him created by Clough Williams-Ellis. This is, however, behind us and as we press on along the narrow road we find ourselves in Snowdonia (Eryri), and above us the mountain known as Moel Hebog and beyond the great mass of the twin peaks of Snowdon itself (Yr Wyddfa). We have come to Cwm Pennant, a place of almost incredible natural beauty, and we are reminded of the lament of Eifion Wyn, "Why, Lord didst thou make Cwm Pennant so beautiful, and the life of an old shepherd so short?"²¹ It was to this place that Lord Anglesey introduced me, and it is one of my many debts to him.

On the right hand side of the road, before it terminates in the mountainside, we see below us a house and a church set in its churchyard. We go down and find a small and simple church, consisting only of an undivided nave and chancel, with the Dwyfor sweeping around it²². It must have been built after 1837 as the terrier of that date does not indicate the building at which we are now looking. There was an earlier church dedicated to St. Michael and formerly the parish church of Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, but now it is a chapel of ease to Dolbenmaen and usually known as Cwm Pennant church. The Royal Commission dates it c.1840, Elisabeth Beazley and Peter Howell say it was "rebuilt in 1850, but looking more like 1830"²³. Though it has fittings and memorials from the earlier church, it cannot be claimed as being of great architectural significance. But in such a situation it could not be left to collapse, as it would soon have done. The Friends of Friendless Churches undertook the necessary repairs which were done by Mr. A.V. Pritchard of Garndolbenmaen under the supervision of Mr. Squire Johnson, and we hope it may survive for ages to come even though services can never be frequent.

Our last churches have been simple, but in order to show that not all churches in North Wales have been simple let us, before we return to Caernarfon, cross over to the coast of the Llyn peninsula to Clynng Fawr. The Friends of Friendless Churches have had nothing to do with Clynng, nor does it need our help, and my excuse for referring to it must again be that Lord Anglesey introduced me to it. And what a place! Clynng has almost everything that a church could desire²⁴. In the first place it has a magnificent situation overlooking Caernarfon Bay,

betwixt the mountains and the sea. Its stones encapsulate history. Here St. Beuno²⁵ had his monastery in the 7th century and here he is buried, under the detached chapel connected since the early 17th century by a passage with the main church. The church is a magnificent composition—west tower, nave, crossing, north and south transepts, chancel, north porch and vestry adjoining the north wall of the chancel. It is a unity, almost all built in the late Perpendicular style between 1480 and 1530. It has beautiful sedilia and the finest choir stalls (with misericords) in North Wales. The rood screen with loft over is delicate. The oak pulpit, c.1700, is later than these fittings, but worthy of the church. The octagonal wooden bowl of the font is modern but the base and pedestal are part of the original 15th century furnishings. The memorials are too numerous to list in an article such as this. The miscellaneous objects include collecting shovels and dog tongs. Beuno's chest may not be as old as the saint but it is mediaeval and there are two other ancient chests. The roughly shaped boulder with an incised cross known as Maen Beuno is not original to the church, but goes back nearly to the saint, 7th to 9th century. Only one thing is lacking to make Clynnog ideal for lecturing on "What to look for in a church"; nothing now remains of the painted glass which was recorded in the 18th century.

And why should there be all this magnificence in a small town on the Caernarfonshire coast? The rise of the Tudors, who sprang from Penmynydd in Anglesey, has been invoked as a cause of the rebuilding and enrichment of churches in this area in the closing years of the 15th and the early years of the 16th centuries, and it could help to explain what took place at *Caer Gybi* and *Penmon*, but the main explanation at *Clynnog* appears to be that it lay on the pilgrims' route to *Bardsey Island*. Twenty thousand saints were reckoned to be buried on *Bardsey*, the cult became prodigious, and the offerings of the pilgrims in the latter part of the 15th century prompted the noble rebuilding and grand re-furnishing that we see today.

No account of religious building in Wales would be complete without reference to the great rise of Nonconformity in the eighteenth century and its dominating influence until at least the end of the First World War. The Nonconformist churches and chapels of Wales are not in general beautiful structures, but there are some lovely survivals from the 17th century and a few excellent examples from the 19th, and when the Friends of Friendless Churches received a request in 1979 to help *Horeb* church, *Penmaenmawr*, it seemed sufficiently attractive to deserve consideration. Lord Anglesey visited it on our behalf, and agreed that it was worthy of help. We made a grant, and when the work was completed Lord Anglesey represented the Friends at

the re-opening.

We must bring this tour to an end, and where more fittingly than at the mother church of Gwynedd, the Cathedral Church of Bangor (*Eglwys Gadeiriol Bangor*)^{26?} There are two other Bangors—the name means a wattled enclosure—in Ireland and Flintshire, but the Caernarfonshire Bangor is the oldest, and the see of Bangor is the oldest in England or Wales, founded two generations before Augustine came to Canterbury. Its first bishop was St. Deiniol (Daniel)²⁷. His grandfather Pabo belonged to a North British reigning family, but he accompanied Cunedda, grandfather of King Maelgwyn Gwynedd, into Wales, helped to expel the Irish immigrants, and was rewarded with lands in North Wales. Deiniol founded a monastery at the Caernarfonshire Bangor about 520. At that time there was only one see in the whole of Wales ruled by St. Dubricius,²⁸ but when he retired in 546 he was succeeded by three bishops—St. Deiniol in North Wales, St. Padarn in Mid Wales and St. Teilo in South Wales. The see of Llanbadarn disappeared, that of St. Teilo was moved to Llandaff, but Bangor has had a continuous history.

The early churches on the site would have suffered the usual vicissitudes—we know the cathedral was destroyed by Vikings in 1073 and damaged in the rising under Owen Glyndwr in 1402. The oldest parts of the present building are a round-headed window (filled in) and a plain buttress in the south wall of the presbytery built in the time of Bishop David (1120-39), but in the main it dates from the 13th and 14th centuries. It was then that the presbytery, nave and transepts were built. Under Bishop Skevington (1509-34) a new nave arcade of six bays (instead of the former seven) was made, a clerestory added, and a western tower erected (the Latin inscription somewhat inaccurately gives him credit for building the whole church as well as the bell tower).

The cathedral has been so often described that it is not necessary to go into further detail here. Let us confine ourselves to something of special interest to the Society. Sir Gilbert Scott and his son Oldrid carried out an extensive restoration in the years 1870 to 1880, and he proposed to give the cathedral a lofty central tower and spire. The tower never rose above the roof ridge. After a few years it was noticed that the joints at the apices of the tower arches had opened, and an engineer's report was sufficiently discouraging for the chapter to abandon the project, for which in any case they had no funds.

By 1966 substantial repairs had become necessary, and Lord Anglesey agreed to become Chairman of the Appeal Committee. He was no figurehead, but took an active part in raising the money needed, £125,000, a substantial sum by the pre-

inflationary standards of those days. New roof coverings were needed for the chancel and north transept, a host of long-neglected interior improvements were essential, and it had become necessary to take major decisions about Scott's truncated tower. The completion of his design was finally abandoned and the tower was given battlements and a pyramidal cap. We may be grateful that Scott's intentions were never carried out, for his tower and spire would have been out of proportion with the rest of the building.

As it is, the pyramidal cap and battlements are in keeping with what is, architecturally, a modest building, far exceeded in grandeur by many an English parish church. But it has atmosphere and is redolent of history. I have said that we all have our delicious stories of churches we have visited. My special delight is the diminutive Welsh priest who mounted the pulpit at Bangor, his head scarcely visible above the reading desk, and announced as his text, "It is I, be not afraid".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baring-Gould, S(abine) and Fisher, John. *The Lives of the British Saints*. Four volumes. London, The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion. Vol. I, 1907. Vol. II, 1908. Vol. III, 1911. Vol. IV, 1913. Cited as Baring-Gould.

Beazley, Elisabeth and Howell, Peter. *The Companion Guide to North Wales*. London, Collins. 1975.

Clarke, M.L. *Anglesey Churches in the Nineteenth Century*. Anglesey Antiquarian Society, *Transactions*, 1961.

Clarke, M.L. *Bangor Cathedral*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press. 1969.

Craster, O.E. *Ancient Monuments in Anglesey/Cyfarwyddyd i Henebion Môn*. London, H.M.S.O. 1953, 10th impression 1977.

Friends of Friendless Churches, Archive. London, St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe. (for the repairs to Llantrisant Old Church, Tal-y-llyn Church, Llanfaglan Old Church, Cwm Pennant Church.)

Hughes, Harold and North, Herbert L. *The Old Churches of Snowdonia*. Bangor, Jarvis & Foster. 1924. (Reprinted 1984.)

Paul, Leslie D. *Music at Bangor Cathedral Church*. Bangor, Bangor Cathedral Monograph No. 1. Reprinted from *Welsh Music*, the journal of the Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music. 1971, reprinted 1975. (For the specifications of the organs.)

The Times, "The Church in Ancient Britain: Fourteenth Centenary of the See of Bangor." From a Correspondent. London, Printing House Square, 31st May 1952.

Willis, Browne. *A Survey of the Cathedral Church of Bangor.* London, 1721.

The following official guides are useful:

Bangor Cathedral/Eglwys Gadeiriol Bangor. Bangor, Dean and Chapter. Undated.

The Story of Bangor Cathedral. Gloucester, The British Publishing Company. 3rd edition. Undated.

Holyhead Parish Church: Collegiate Church of St. Cybi. Some brief notes for visitors. Obtainable at the church. Undated.

Eglwys Cybi/The Church of St. Cybi. Obtainable at the church. Undated.

NOTES

1. The story rests on oral tradition rather than on manuscript sources. See S. Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *The Lives of British Saints* (cited henceforth as Baring-Gould), Vol. II, p.209. The traditional meeting place was Clorach in the parish of Llandyfydog. Two wells on opposite sides of a neighbouring road were named Ffynnon Gybi and Ffynnon Seiriol. Could that be the origin of the legend of their meeting? But I should hate to demolish a good story. The two saints became known as Seiriol Wyn (the Fair) and Cybi Felyn (the Tawny). George Borrow, in *Wild Wales*, c.xxxvi, only half understood the story he had heard (Cybi "was called tawny because from his frequent walks in the blaze of the sun his face had become much sunburnt"), and Matthew Arnold in his sonnet "East and West" (1867) misunderstood it completely, making Seiriol walk into the evening sun and Cybi away from it.
2. For St. Cybi see Baring-Gould, Vol. II, pp.202-215.
- * Those readers who do not know Welsh should appreciate that the initial letter of a Welsh word, or part of a word, may change (suffer mutation) according to the final letter of the preceding word or part of a word.
3. See Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire (cited henceforth as R.C.A.H.M.), *Anglesey*, pp.28-31; *Holyhead Parish Church: Some Brief Notes for Visitors*; and *Eglwys Cybi—The Church of St. Cybi*, on sale at the church.
4. Vestry minutes in the University College of North Wales; see M.L. Clarke, *Anglesey Churches in the Nineteenth Century*, pp.57-58.
5. See *Holyhead & Anglesey Mail*, 26th July 1984.
6. R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, p.31 reads it as *Sanctus Kybius ora pro nobis*; *Some Brief Notes for Visitors*, p.4, as *Sanctus Kebius ora pro nobis*. I do not think *nobis* fits the space.
7. R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, pp.cxxxi, 5.
8. R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, pp.141-144
9. R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, pp.119-123
10. For Seiriol see Baring-Gould, Vol. IV, pp.177-180.
11. For the church and monastic buildings see R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, pp.119-123, cited above, and for the monastic buildings O.E. Craster, *Ancient Monuments in Anglesey*.
12. See R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, pp.122-123; O.E. Craster, *Ancient Monuments in Anglesey*, pp.33, 34, 35-36, 39-40.

13. Elisabeth Beazley and Peter Howell tell us that "limestone was quarried at Penmon for Beaumaris Castle and both Telford and Stephenson opened big quarries here for the bridges". (*The Companion Guide to North Wales*, p.203.)
14. M.L. Clarke, *Anglesey Churches in the Nineteenth Century*, p.65, citing *North Wales Chronicle*, 13th August 1898.
15. R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, pp.113-114.
16. The name was changed when Mr. Clement Beretta, son of an Italian immigrant retired. For a sketch of Mr. Beretta and his many houses see the *Daily Mail*, 8th June 1984.
17. The three saints do not appear to have had much to do with each other. Afra appears to be a mistake for Afan (early 6th century), for whom see Baring-Gould, Vol. 1, p.116. Ieuan was a disciple of St. Patrick — and hence known as St. Ieuan Gwas Padrig, see Baring-Gould, Vol. III, pp.293-398. Sannan, a close friend of St. David, gets a long entry in Baring-Gould, Vol. IV, pp.182-194, as S. Senan.
18. S.v. Williams-Wynn, see Wynn.
19. See R.C.A.H.M., *Anglesey*, S.v. Llanbeulan, p.41.
20. See R.C.A.H.M., *Caernarvonshire*, pp.198-199; Harold Hughes and Herbert L. North, *The Old Churches of Snowdonia*, pp.246-250; Elisabeth Beazley and Peter Howell, *The Companion Guide to North Wales*, p.167.
21. The words translated are the closing couplet of the shared First Prize Poem at the National Eisteddfod at Pont y Pwl (Pontypool) in 1924. The bard, Eifion Wyn, was Elis Williams of Portmadoc. I owe this information through Miss Elisabeth Beazley to Mr. Colin Gresham — though I might have known it as I was a steward at that eisteddfod.
22. R.C.A.H.M., *Caernarvonshire*, pp.63-64. There is a good illustration of the church and its setting in *Country Life*, 12th May 1983.
23. *Loc. cit.* p.168.
24. R.C.A.H.M., *Caernarvonshire*, Vol. II, pp.36-42; *Old Churches*, pp.262-278; Beazley, p.175; H.L.(ongueville) J(ones), *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1848, pp.247-257, 1849, pp.118-121.
25. For St. Beuno see Baring-Gould, Vol. 1 pp.208-221
26. See R.C.A.H.M., *Caernarvonshire*, Vol. II, pp.1-9; M.L. Clarke, *Bangor Cathedral*; Browne Willis, A Survey of the Cathedral Church of Bangor.
27. For St. Seiniol see Baring-Gould, Vol. II, pp.325-331.
28. For St. Dubricius (Dyfrig in Welsh), see Baring-Gould, Vol. II, pp.359-382.