

St Ellyw's church was built in the 13th century and restored in 1905 by Baldwin of Brecon. It was vested in the Friends of Friendless Churches in 1999 and repairs undertaken in 2000. The church stands at the head of the Cwm Rhyd-Ellywe within an oval, walled churchyard indicative of pre-or early Christian origins. St Ellyw has been tentatively identified with St Eluned, one of the daughters of King Brychan of Brycheiniog in the 5th century AD or even with St Elli, a disciple of St Cadoc, but the arguments are unconvincing. She was most probably a local woman, living a solitary eremitical life in this place.



Exterior

The church is built of sandstone rubble with a slate roof. The north wall has two small 13th century lancet windows; the south wall has three square-headed windows. The east and west walls each have a two-light window, probably 15th century. The gabled oak-framed south porch was added in the 16th century replacing the medieval doorway immediately to its east. Against its west wall are two pillar stones inscribed with crude Celtic-type crosses, probably of 7th–9th century date. Further east of the porch is a narrow 13th century priest's doorway. On the south-west wall is a sandstone sundial inscribed PB WARDEN 1686. The gabled timber bell turret was added by Baldwin in 1905: it contains two bells, one c.1180 and the other c.1300. Their authentic medieval tone was recorded for the television series of *Brother Cadfael*.



Interior

The chief feature is the elaborate 14th or 15th century screen. Painted red, it has stencilled white roses and a central unpainted impression of the now lost rood or crucifix. A second timber screen with stencilled red roses in front of the main screen was boarded either side of the nave passage to enclose nave altars. This screen has been cut back at the south end to insert the steps to the early 18th century pulpit. The altar rail, two rear oak pews and the font cover are late 17th century.

The early medieval wall plaster was extensively decorated but later covered over, though some paintings have recently been exposed. On the west wall, in black line, are Adam and Eve and the Tree of Life with the serpent's head. Other medieval decoration includes 14th century stencilled flower patterns at the east end of the north wall. The large royal coat of arms and various textual panels are late 17th century.



There are several monuments, the oldest being a ledger stone of 1640 in the sanctuary floor. A stone (1773) in the north-east window records the gift of annual monies to poor children 'lawfully begot'. An inscription in Welsh in memory of Thomas Jones (died 1778), who had gone blind, reads:

*Surely propriety and mercy
Was granted him when he lost the
light,
The excellent harpist, tuner of strings,
He received full gifts in its place.*



Church of St Ellyw Llanellieu

a guide to its history



Who are the Friends?

The Friends love unloved churches. Without us, they would be torn down, sold as houses, or abandoned. Since 1957 we have campaigned for redundant churches to be preserved, as "sermons in stone".

In Wales our work is funded by Cadw and the Church in Wales. But in England we rely on the generosity of donors and members.

What do we do?

We preserve these churches for the local community and visitors to enjoy. We make them wind and water-tight, put back roof and windows, repair drainpipes and stonework. And we make sure they are open, or have nearby friendly guardians to keep an eye on them. Friendless no more!

Please, will you join in and help us?

Maintaining and repairing them is a huge challenge. We rely on the generosity of people like you...

Join

Go online to friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk. With membership you receive three Newsletters per year, full of information about conservation projects, talks, meetings, books; and the annual Transactions.

Donate

Send a cheque, payable to 'Friends of Friendless Churches' to FoFC, St Ann's Vestry Hall, 2 Church Entry, London EC4V 5HB. Or go to our website.

We take great pride in spending only small amounts on admin. So money given goes directly on the buildings. A legacy could make an even greater difference. Do speak to the Director on 020 7236 3934.

<http://www.friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk>

Registered Charity No : 1113097



Other Friends churches near St Ellyw, Llanellieu



Urishay Castle Chapel, near Peterchurch, Herefordshire. This early medieval chapel, partly re-roofed by us, was built to serve the castle, represented by the adjacent mound (church open).

St Peter, Llancillo Remote church on the Herefordshire side of the border. 13th century font and pulpit with arabesque carvings dated 1632 and 1745 (church open).



St Mary, Llanfair Kilgeddin By the River Usk. Famous for its colourful 1885 sgraffiti panels illustrating the Benedicite set in the local landscape, by Heywood Sumner. Our most popular church. Attracts hundreds of visitors every year (for access please ring the office).



St David, Llangview Not far from Usk. Largely 15th century, with screen and rood loft. Pews, pulpit and large squire's pew are grand eighteenth century work. Remote and tranquil (church open).

