

**L**lancillo church is dedicated to St Peter, although the name suggests that there might have been an earlier saint. In the Book of Llandaff, compiled between about 1120 and 1140, it is named as 'Llan Sulbiu' (the church of St Sulbiu). 'Sulbiu' is possibly St Kew, a Cornish saint, to whom the adjacent church of Llangua, some 1 ½ miles (2.5km) east of Llancillo was also once dedicated. Although Llancillo is not mentioned specifically in Domesday Book (1086) it formed part of the extensive holdings of the de Lacys and was administered from Longtown castle.

Next to the church is the large *motte* (mound) of a Norman castle with slight remains of a stone keep or tower on its top. Very little is known about the castle; it may have been built by Richard Esketot, a tenant of the de Lacys in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century.

## History

The church is now remote from any settlement save for Llancillo Court - a farmhouse with 17<sup>th</sup> century origins. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the church had become derelict and sheep could often be seen wandering around in the nave. Indeed the Bishop of Hereford, James Atlay (1868-94), advised closure following a collapse of part of the south wall. But the then Vicar of Rowlstone and Llancillo, Revd Robert Whinerey, set up a restoration fund and repairs were soon put in hand by the architect G H Godsell of Hereford and the church re-opened on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1896. St Peter's came to The Friends in 2007.



## The church today

**Exterior** St Peter's is built of the local sandstone with some door and window frames and *quoins* (angle stones) of tufa, a porous limestone with a sponge-like appearance. The chancel is probably 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century in date, altered in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the windows were remodelled. The small, rectangular window in the north wall may be of the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. The nave was re-roofed and the windows altered in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. The south porch was added probably in the 17<sup>th</sup> century; its carved wall-plates (beams) may be part of a former rood-screen. Until about 1850 there was a timber bell turret; it was replaced by the present stone bellcote which contains a late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century bell – one of the earliest in the county.

**Interior** The roofs of nave and chancel are probably 17<sup>th</sup>-century, though much repaired in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The chancel arch was rebuilt at the same time, and the oak communion rails and the reading desk installed. The choir stalls incorporate panelling of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the chancel is a 13<sup>th</sup>-century 'dugout' chest (hollowed out from a large tree-trunk) with remains of clasps and lock-plate. There is also an iron 'register chest' where the church records would once have been kept. It has a female figure on its lid. Many such chests were made at the ironworks at Coalbrookdale, Shropshire in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The font, with its octagonal bowl and curved sides, is 13<sup>th</sup> century. The fine wooden pulpit is richly carved with arabesque (geometrical) panels, one of which has the date '1632' and another with initials and date 'I.G.1745': it seems to have been made up from various pieces of wood with the back panel being part of a former box-pew.



View of the church from the south

The small east window of the chancel depicts Christ in Glory and was given in memory of Joseph Wheatley of Llancillo Hall, c.1900. It is believed to have been made by the Birmingham firm of William Pearce Ltd.

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East window



Memorial by Thomas Brute

On the south wall of the nave hangs an 18<sup>th</sup>-century oil painting *David playing the harp before King Saul*. The artist is unknown as is how the picture came to be in the church.

The churchyard cross, south-east of the porch, is probably of 14<sup>th</sup>-century date although the shaft and cross were replaced about 1893 in memory of Emma Marsh Pertz (see the brass plaque on the north wall of the nave). Near the cross is another memorial by Thomas Brute – to Margaret wife of William Nuell (d.1755).



# Other Friends churches near St Peter, Llancillo

**St Ellyw, Llanellieu** In deepest Breconshire. Renowned for its huge 14th century screen with loft painted blood red. Nearby Llanellieu Court is an enigmatic medieval house which the church originally served.

**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.



**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.



**St David, Llangeview** Not far from Usk. Largely 15th century, with screen and rood loft. Pews, pulpit and indeed large squire's pew are grand eighteenth century work. Remote and tranquil.



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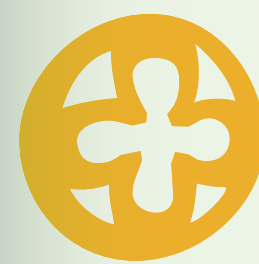
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## Church of St Peter Llancillo

a guide to its history