

History

Llanfaglan has been a sacred site for more than fifteen hundred years. The presence of a Holy Well nearby (filled in during the 19th century), the large surrounding churchyard, the presence within the building of a pillar-stone confidently dated to the 5th or early 6th century, and the church's dedication to St Baglan, all attest its early, and possibly pre-Christian origins. The pillar-stone, discovered in 1855 built into the fabric, marked the burial place of one Anatemor, son of Lovernius, the inscription being in well-cut Roman capitals.



5th or 6th century inscription

The church's patron is Baglan ap Dingad, a 6th century saint associated with Bardsey Island, and not to be confused with the Breton Baglan ab Ithel, whose cult is located in south Wales. A saying of St Baglan is *Ffordd ylanfaglan yd eir y nef*, which has been translated as 'The way of Llanfaglan goes to heaven.' The body of the church dates from the 13th century, though the presence of two incised grave-slabs of the 12th century – one bearing a carving of a single-masted ship, of a kind then familiar in the waters of Caernarfon Bay – are evidence of an earlier structure. There was much refurbishing in the 18th century, though the south chapel may be earlier; the massive lych-gate dates from 1722, the north porch, incorporating a medieval truss, is probably of similar date, and certainly the furnishings can be confidently ascribed to 1767, the date carved on the pulpit. The bell, dated 1790, was refitted in 2003. The church's Communion plate, a chalice of 1723 and salver of 1752, now in safe-keeping at Bangor Cathedral, are also evidence of flourishing church life here in the 18th century. The building of a new church for the parish in 1871 meant that St Baglan's escaped the hands of Victorian restorers. It was vested in the Friends of Friendless Churches in 1991.

Interior

The church has a light, limewashed interior. The medieval font is unique in Wales, having seven sides, now plain, but perhaps originally painted with depictions of the seven sacraments. The 18th century seating, of box pews and benches, is laid out in what is known as a 'T' or 'L' plan, every seat facing the pulpit. Only one other example of this 18th century arrangement now survives unaltered in Wales.

A large wall-tablet above one pew records members of the Jones family, who had occupied it, including William, who fought in the army of the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsula War, and died at the siege of Badajoz.

Other pews bear inscriptions and dates indicative of ownership, including Sir William Owen of Presaddfed, Bodedern, on Anglesey, and, like the 12th-century carving of a ship, are evidence of the close links between Anglesey and the mainland of Wales.



Pew end



One recent burial in the churchyard is that of Anthony Armstrong-Jones, 1st Earl of Snowdon, notable photographer and designer, and formerly husband of HRH the Princess Margaret, sister of HM Queen Elizabeth II. His family has close associations with the area.



Other Friends' churches near St Baglan, Llanfaglan

St Bigail, Llanfigael 18th century church rebuilt in 1841 with a complete Georgian interior and three fountains, the earliest of them 14th century (church open).

St Afran, St Ieuan and St Sannan, Llantrisant The present building dates from the 14th century but is on an earlier site, with a 17th century south chapel. One of our most remote, but most frequently visited, churches (church open).



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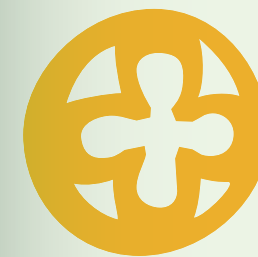
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Church of St Baglan Llanfaglan

a guide to its history

St Peulan, Llanbeulan The carved font in this medieval church is an extraordinary work from the first half of the 11th century (church open).

St Mary, Tal-y-Llyn Originally a chapel of ease to Llanbeulan, built to serve a community all but destroyed by the 'Black Death'. The church retains its medieval stone benches and octagonal 15th century font (church open).

