

The earliest known reference to Llanfihangel Rogiet is in the twelfth-century Book of Llandaff: 'Tref Perin id est Lann mihacgel maur'. Legend says that Brochwael, King of Gwent, gave the land to the church to avoid being excommunicated. He had been ordered to pay a 'piece of gold the size of his face' to the bishop, but couldn't deliver and so gifted Llanfihangel instead. The population of Llanfihangel has never been great in number; the church was originally little more than a chapel to the adjacent castle, court house and a few farms. Archaeological evidence of the site of the castle has been located immediately to the west of the church. Two impressive, (although badly damaged) tombs within the church are thought to be John and Anna Martel, who died c. 1270. The Martels were Lords of the Manor of Llanfihangel, but later a marriage between the Martel and the Gamage family of Rogiet, brought the previously separate manors together; hence 'Llanfihangel' thereafter became 'Llanfihangel Rogiet'. Among those associated with the church are William Wroth, pioneer of Welsh nonconformity, and Henry Jones, inventor of self-raising flour, married here in 1838.

Description

A chapel, burial place of the Martel family, was formerly attached to the north side of the chancel; the arcade between the nave and aisle reveals part of a former archway which continued into it. It is thought that the chapel fell into disrepair and was demolished c. 1704. Other points of note within the church, include a very large font (date unknown), a staircase and doorway to the former rood loft (also note the corbel stones on which the loft was supported), some interesting floor grave slabs within the chancel, and a rare fifteenth-century bell, cast in Gloucester.

Fortunately, Victorian restorations of the church were mercifully 'light'; constrained by lack of money. Indeed, the church was closed for regular worship for some years until 1897, when the roof was properly repaired, having previously been simply 'patched' in 1891. However, in 1904, through the enthusiasm of the then Rector, Archdeacon Conybeare Bruce, the north aisle to the nave (which had previously collapsed and the ancient arches blocked up) was rebuilt, under the direction of Henry Prothero, architect, of Cheltenham.



Tomb of Anna Martel



The church today

For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, regular worship was shared with Rogiet church. By 1973, dwindling attendance, and the difficulty of walking to Llanfihangel from Rogiet (now the main centre of population), along an increasingly busy and dangerous road, led to a decision to go for closure. Baptisms and weddings were occasionally still held in the church until 1976, but after this time the church remained empty and largely unloved for over thirty years, falling into an increasing state of disrepair. In 2008, St Michael's church was vested with the Friends of Friendless Churches, who spent substantial sums on essential repairs. Today the church is a centre of activity by the Caldicot Local History Society, a focus for learning, occasional worship, music and friendship. It is open every day.

Other Friends churches near St Michael, Llanfihangel Rogiet

St Mary, Llanfair Kilgeddin

Walls filled with glorious, complete, unique scheme of colourful Arts & Crafts sgraffiti panels by Heywood Sumner depicting verses from the Benedicite in a local setting. (for access please ring the office).

St Jerome, Llangwm Uchaf

A substantially medieval church restored by J.P. Seddon 1863–9. Important for the spectacular screen of c.1500, its Arts and Crafts glass and the elaborate floortiles (church open).



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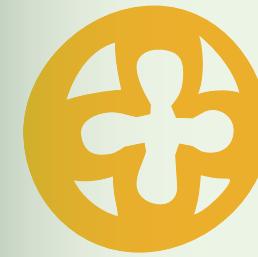
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Church of St Michael Llanfihangel Rogiet

a guide to its history

St David, Llangeview

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).



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