

**U**rishay does not feature in Domesday Book (1086) but a later owner was Urri, who gave his name to the settlement – Urri’s Hay – hay meaning an enclosure. Urri probably erected the castle in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century to defend the border with Wales, and is also likely to have built the chapel to serve his family and the garrison. It stands within what was the bailey or courtyard of the castle. The castle consisted of a sizeable motte, perhaps surmounted by a stone keep, and the bailey. What can now be seen are the ruins of a 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century house, still inhabited in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but mostly demolished in 1921.



North door of the chancel

## History

The chapel is a single cell building, formerly covered with a continuous stone-slated roof, but now divided into a nave (ruined) and chancel. It is built of the local sandstone rubble.

The chapel had a precarious existence for much of its life. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century it was being put to other uses, such as a blacksmith’s shop and even a dog kennel. In 1914 it was purchased with plans to restore it as a chapel-of-ease for local people, a service of re-dedication being held on 29<sup>th</sup> June of that year. Although some work was done, it was closed again in 1923. By 1950 it was virtually a ruin, and in 1978 passed to the Friends of Friendless Churches, who started a programme of repairs and consolidation of the fabric. The south wall of the nave was made safe, and a new cross-wall inserted to support the remaining parts of the building. Now just the chancel and eastern part of the nave are roofed. Much of the north wall of the nave was demolished in 1991, as it was about to collapse onto the road below.

Several periods of building have been identified, the earliest of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when the chapel was a simple rectangle with an apsidal east end. Later the apse was demolished, the chancel extended, the chancel arch reconstructed, and the south doorway inserted. Later, nave altars were introduced, and a window inserted into the south chancel wall. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century a large east window was provided, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> the west wall rebuilt, windows enlarged, and a stone-flagged floor laid.

With the chapel falling into ruin, most furnishings and fittings disappeared or simply rotted.



View of the chapel from the north



Ruined nave



West wall of the nave

## The chapel today

Above the chancel arch is a massive oak lintel, which once supported the rood. The stone off-sets below served as the nave altars, against the now vanished rood screen. In the 1980s a number of infant burials were found in front of them. As the chapel had no burial ground, such intramural burials are interesting and intriguing. In the chancel the original stone altar table survives. The stone ledge on the east wall originally supported a statue, probably of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The chapel possessed no font, a stone mortar served the purpose when it was used by the parish.

## Other Friends churches near Urishay Castle Chapel

**St Ellyw, Llanellieu** In deepest Breconshire. Renowned for its huge 14<sup>th</sup> century screen, with loft painted blood red. Numerous traces of medieval wall painting.

**Llancillo** Remote church on the Herefordshire side of the border. The bell is late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century and there is a 13<sup>th</sup> century font. The pulpit has arabesque carvings with the dates 1632 and 1745.



**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.

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

(Llancillo and Llangeview are open. The key to Llanellieu is on site. For Llanfair Kilgeddin please ring the office)



### 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 roofs 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](http://friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk). Your membership helps us to save churches. In addition, you will receive two beautiful newsletters, full of information about conservation projects, talks, meetings and books.

**Donate**  
Send a cheque, payable to 'Friends of Friendless Churches' to FoFC, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ.  
Or go to our website.

We take great pride in spending only small amounts on admin. Donations go directly towards saving and repairing churches. A legacy could make an even greater difference. Do speak to the Director on 020 7236 3934.

[friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk](http://friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk)

Find us on social media     
Registered Charity No : 1113097



*Urishay*  
*Castle Chapel*  
a guide to its history