

With its finely jointed brickwork and dressed Cefn-Mawr sandstone, St Deiniol's three-storey tower stands proudly on the northwest boundary of the village of Worthenbury. Rich in family history, the interior is airy, elegant and gracefully decorated. An exceptional example of Georgian architecture, St Deiniol's is one of the finest 18th-century churches in all of Wales.



History

St Deiniol's is named after St Deiniol (the Welsh form of Daniel), the son of Dunawd, the first Abbot at Bangor, who founded a monastery in the 6th century. Initially, it was a chapel attached to Bangor-is-y-coed, with St Deiniol's parish later carved out of Bangor-is-y-coed in 1689. There was documented mention of a chapel at this location in 1388, and of a later brick and timber church in 1557, which replaced the previous structure. The current 18th-century church was constructed between 1736 and 1739 to the designs of the architect Richard Trubshaw. The new church cost £810 to build and was financed by the Puleston family of Emral Hall, a local, ancestral family with extensive social and political ties outside of Worthenbury.

As patrons of the church, the Puleston family crest decorates the interior space and several of the family members were buried in the churchyard. The Puleston family were the near-continuous inhabitants and caretakers of the sprawling Emral Hall from 1284 until its sale and subsequent demolition in 1936. At the beginning of the 20th century, the landholding from Emral Hall was divided and sold into numerous farms and parcels, notably including the selling of the advowson of St Deiniol's. In 1849 St Deiniol's was transferred from the Diocese of Chester to the Diocese of St Asaph, where it remains to this day.

The Church

The current church is a traditional red brick construction, notable for the precision of its brickwork on the main elevations and tower. Dressed Cefn-Mawr sandstone is used for the quoins and window heads. During our repairs in 2025, we discovered that some of the masonry to the tower had in fact been replaced with cast concrete at an earlier date. To the east end is a semi-circular apse and a three-storey tower to the west. The roofs are slate, and external ornamentation is restrained – limited to balustrading on the tower and part of the apse parapets. The tower is crowned with urn-shaped pinnacles at each corner.



In contrast to the simplicity of the exterior, the interior is richly decorated. The nave ceilings are plainly plastered but framed with a deep, moulded cornice. The chancel ceiling is far more elaborate, adorned with Rococo plaster flourishes, a golden sunburst, a dove, and whimsical clouds. The east window, a glorious jumble of fragments, contains elements from the Jesse Window from the chapel of Winchester College. Created by Thomas Glazier of Oxford in the late 14th century, it was commissioned by William of Wykeham and depicted the Tree of Jesse, the visualisation of Christ's lineage. It is believed that these fragments were installed in St Deiniol's after a restoration project took place in Winchester between 1821 and 1828, where parts of the original window were dispersed and reused by the firm handling the project.



Text: Alex Egland. Photography: Andy Marshall



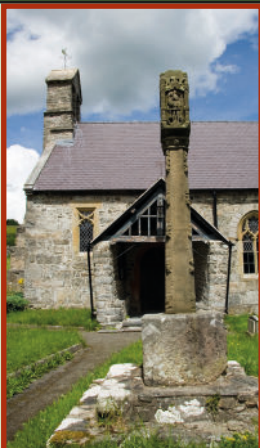
St Deiniol's retains a full set of original 18th-century box pews, complete with painted family crests and brass nameplates of local gentry. A grand triple-decker pulpit dominates the nave, while the wooden west gallery – supported by cast iron columns – features a large painted royal coat of arms. Also at the west end stands the original font, consisting of a small marble bowl atop a stone baluster stem. The church is featured in *Betjeman's Best British Churches* and is described as follows:

A splendid Georgian church in warm red brick by Richard Trubshaw, 1736–39, with a grand W. tower and apsidal chancel. The perfectly preserved interior has two box pews with the Puleston family crest, complete with cast-iron fireplaces. Nearly all the fittings are original, giving a concise picture of the social pecking order in the church.

Not far from St Deiniol's

St Mary's, Derwen, Denbighshire

St Mary's is a charming medieval church within a circular churchyard. It is renowned for its medieval rood screen and loft and medieval arched-braced roof, as well as its fine 15th century churchyard cross. The richly carved rood screen and rood loft are rare medieval survivors and worth a visit (open daily).



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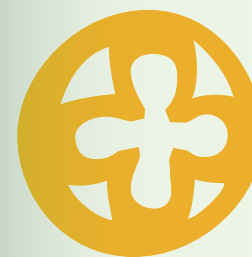
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Church of St Deiniol Worthenbury

a guide to its history