

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ST. CATWG'S CHURCH, PENTYRCH



PARISH OF PENTYRCH AND CAPEL LLANILLTERN

1. BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

1.1 History

The Church was built in 1857 and is one of the best churches designed by Prichard and Seddon on an early medieval foundation dedicated to the Celtic Saint Catwg. The site was reputedly chosen for its proximity to a holy spring to the south of the churchyard and an offshoot of St Catwg's monastery at Nant Carban (Llancarfan). It is now the only church in the village of just over 2,000 people.

The date of Designation of St. Catwg's as a Grade II Listed Building was on **31st January 2000**. Its reference number on the CADW Full Report for Listed Buildings site is **22814**, the detail of which can be found here:

[St. Catwg's Church Listing on CADW Website](#)

1.2 Exterior

The exterior of the church is comprised of coursed rubble sandstone, with some coloured banding with red sandstone, ashlar dressings, again decoratively coloured, and banded steep pitched Welsh slate roof with apex cruciform finials.

It has a tall nave with slender south-west turret, shallow south porch, slightly lower, narrower chancel, wide extended north vestry turret is octagonal and is decorated with canopy work, blind and in the form of gabled buttresses to the lower stage which also has a deep battered plinth, open above, with a tall slender spirelet incorporating small pierced cinquefoil and lancet openings. The south porch also with steep-pitched roof, has a high pointed-arched moulded doorway with decorative voussoirs and buttresses with offsets and reset monuments either side. The nave and chancel have mostly 2-light pointed arched windows with curvilinear tracery; prominent diagonal buttresses with stepped coping at corners. Fine large east and west windows with elegant curvilinear tracery. Churchyard contains several early- mid 19th century chest tombs especially to SE.



Figure 1: Listed Lych Gate

The Lych Gate (**Figure 1**) of St. Catwg's was installed in 1944 and it mirrors the steep roofs of the church. It is also Listed (reference 22815), the detail of which can be found here:

[St. Catwg's Lych Gate Listing on CADW Website](#)

1.3 Interior

The interior has painted rendered walls with exposed ashlar dressings and dark stained boarded roof; five bays to nave with arch-braced trusses and 3 to chancel with two tiers of windbraces. It has a high and wide lightly moulded pointed chancel arch without capitals; carved corbels in chancel depict local ecclesiastics and were introduced in 1910.

The beautiful three light stained-glass East Window (**Figure 2**) dates to the early 1900s and is by R J Newberry. It was erected and endowed in 1906 by Mrs Mary Jenkins, in memory of her ancestors in the Morgan family, who had been connected to the church in Pentyrch since 1700 or earlier.



Figure 2: East Window

The south wall to the west of the door now has the stone monuments to the Morgan family which had originally been sited on the floor of the Sanctuary. They were then moved to the east wall, followed by a move to north wall to the west end and in the 20th century refurbishment of the church moved to their present position. On the west wall to the south of the window, there is a medieval grave slab with incised floriated cross with Latin inscription reputedly commemorating a member of the Mathew family of Castell-y-Mynach. It is thought that this is the only one in South Wales outside of Tintern Abbey. These have now been installed in the south-west wall. A Holy water stoup from former church is sited within the porch and is thought to be 12th century.

A medieval round pedestal font (**Figure 3**) was found in a neighbour's garden, being used as a planter and was returned to the Church. It was subsequently installed in the round bell tower in the early years of the 20th century. Until recently, it was visible through a glazed pointed doorway, but has now been re-sited to the south of the Chancel steps and is currently being used for Baptisms. The 19th century octagonal font on clustered marble columns (**Figure 4**) has been re-sited to the east of the south door of the Church.



Figure 3: Medieval Font

Originally the church had a 19th century wooden altar which has now been removed to the Vestry. It has been replaced with a beautiful oak

altar presented by Thomas Llewellyn, a long-time member of the church, in memory of his wife Joan. The Church is also recorded as having two bells, one of which is pre-Reformation, engraved 'Sancta Catrina', and the other engraved 'Willia Howard 1700'.



Figure 4: Octagonal Font

A Wedding Cannon, (**Figure 5**) made in Pentyrch Ironworks by Thomas William Booker is now sited in the porch. It is stamped with the letters 'T W B – Thomas William Booker', a member of the family who owned the works.

In 1900, T.M. Sparks of the Gocyd, Pentyrch drew up plans to extend the vestry. The original vestry was a small room, 13ft 6 inches long by 6ft 10 inches deep, with a sloping roof. It had to be redesigned and enlarged so that an extended chamber could be developed for a new pipe organ. The new vestry and housing are 13ft 6 inches long by 16ft 3 inches deep. A sketched (current) layout of the church is provided in **Figure 6** overleaf.



Figure 5: Wedding Cannon

In 2012, the congregation started to address how better the church buildings could be utilised and to engage more fully with the community. After careful planning, a refurbishment was completed in 2018, which resulted in the addition of a kitchen and moveable chairs (instead of pews), improved lighting, cleaning and staining of the floor and the removal of impediments that could be a danger to children and the elderly. It was at this point that both fonts were moved to their present positions.

The effect these changes have had, has resulted in considerably greater footfall into the Church: the establishment of a Sunday evening Youth Club; a weekly Mother & Toddler Group (with regularly 30+ children); the monthly 'Bacon Buddies' for children up to 5 years old with their parents; the establishment of Coffi Catwg (after the Wednesday Eucharist service) where the old and infirmed are taxied into church (with regularly 30 people present). Regular concerts are held by Sine Nomine

singers and concerts by Ystradivarius Chamber Orchestra and other small group instrumentalists and even the full Cor Meibion Pendyrus.

The Vision of **'Opening up at the heart of the community: changing times, changing needs, a place for all'** is being achieved.

1.4 Reason for Designation

The reason for St. Catwg's Listed designation is that it is a well-designed mid-19th century Gothic Revival church, with eye-catching south-west turret, described by Newman as one of the best churches designed by Prichard and Seddon. On an historic site (thought the foundation of Christianity in Pentyrch in the 6th century) and in a prominent village position, the church has group value with its lychgate and the King's Arms pub nearby, all being listed in the area.

1.5 Heating

The Church is heated by a Worcester wall mounted gas boiler situated in the Vestry and is in good working order. There are radiators for the heating system throughout the church. There is a water supply and WC facility within the Church Room together with an ancillary kitchen. Hot water is provided by hot water heaters, rather than the boiler.

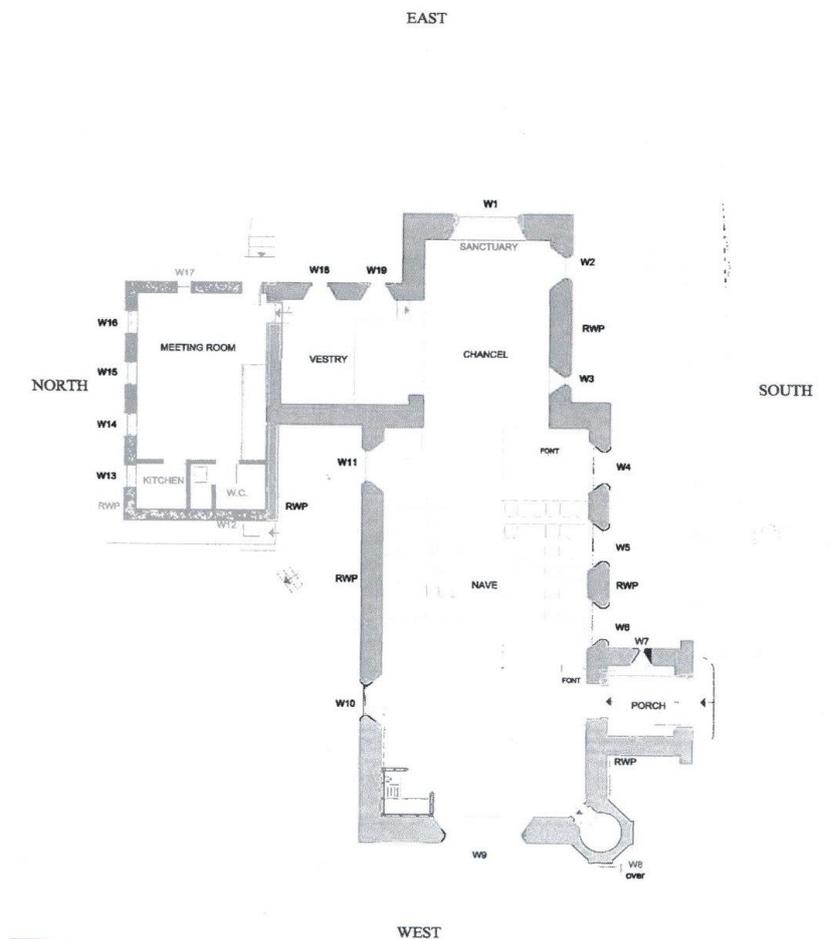


Figure 6: Architect's Sketch Plan of St. Catwg's Church

1.6 Electrical

The electrical installation in the Church Room area (which complies with current regulations). It was assessed by an Architect in the 2018 Quinquennial Review.

1.7 Churchyard

The Churchyard is home to a Yew tree (**Figure 7** overleaf). Recently measured, the trunk of the Yew tree is 1.5 metres above ground level and had a reading of 5.80 metres (19 feet). It is estimated that



Figure 7: The Yew Tree

the tree will be between 500 and 1,000 years old. The Churchyard is maintained by a local gardener and the Parishioners also play an active role in ensuring flowerpots have seasonal plantings.

There are three war graves in the Churchyard: one World War I; two World War II and other graves dated from the 17th century. The graveyard also houses a Monolithic Socketed Base-block for a Cross which dates to the 13th or 14th century. Presumably for many years the cross would have been a major feature in the front of the church.

In recent years the Church has had handrails installed for the west door and the Church Room, so that there is more security to parishioners when walking up the steep path to the front of the church. In addition, a disability ramp is deployed for services and when the Church is open to the public.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH

The stone pulpit to north has relief carvings of Saints David and Catwg (**Figure 8**), This was also designed by Prichard and Seddon executed later by Clarke of Llandaff. It depicts St. David as a young man and later in life and St. Catwg with a mouse and a bell. It was completed in 1901.

The vestry houses a carved reading desk shown in Great Exhibition of Paris in 1851. It is richly ornate and was presented by John Pritchard, the Architect of St. Catwg's. The reading desk is listed in the 1855 Paris Exhibition Catalogue under Section 10 Church Furniture and Decoration, No. 1721.



Figure 8: Stone Pulpit



Figure 9: St Catwg's Liddiatt Organ

The Church Organ (**Figure 9**) was built by Liddiatt & Sons of Leonard Stanley, Gloucester and was installed in 1910. It has lasted well, with some updating over the years (e.g. a water pump was installed to replace the original hand pump and that was itself replaced some time ago).

A further updating took place in the mid-1980's by a Member of the Institute of Organ Builders (MIOB), which included the electrification of the action and the adding of a mixture stop to the Great.

Many good organists have played it and have commented favourably. For example, a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists (a regular performer and broadcaster)

described it as 'a very good organ for a church of this size'. Several experienced organists have played at weddings and commented favourably.

2.1 Its special architectural and historical interest

The architecture of the small parish church of St. Catwg's, with its Gothic Revival style is regarded as Moderate in historical interest. Geoffrey R Orrin in Church Buildings in Victorian Glamorgan said:

“At St Catwg’s John Pritchard seems to have embraced the Decorated period rather more enthusiastically than usual, particularly in the light west window with its rich, flowing tracery, where he placed his personal stamp on the ornamentation. Pritchard’s design of the windows of the church demonstrate his desire to deviate from the strict Geometrical style. It was in this spirit of restrained freedom that the design of the southwest corner of the church was conceived. The turret with its spire rising to a height of 80 feet from the ground is the outstanding feature of the church and contributed to Pritchard’s growing reputation as the leading architect in South Wales.”

Although the present building is Victorian, the site has a history back to the 6th century, and with listings in Papal Bulls of 1128 and 1129, Pope Honorius 2nd confirmed to Urban, Bishop of Llandaff, the Church of Llandaff and its possessions: the list includes “Ecclesia Pentirch”, confirming its place as one of the oldest parishes in the Diocese of Llandaff.

2.2 Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest

No expert advice has been taken as to the artistic or archaeological interest of St. Catwg’s apart from the detail held as part of its Listing and that provided by the Architect who carried out the Quinquennial Review in 1981.