

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ST. ELLTEYRN'S CHURCH, CAPEL LLANILLTERN



PARISH OF PENTYRCH AND CAPEL LLANILLTERN

1. BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

1.1 History

Just to the north-west of Cardiff stands the rural village of Llanilltern. On the side of the A4119 stands the tiny church of St. Ellteyrn's. There was a church on the site prior to 1862 but apart from the statement in Lewis's Topographical Dictionary that it was "small", we have no knowledge of its structure or design.

The existing Church was built in 1862 and was originally a Chapel of Ease for St. Fagans, and hence the Earl of Plymouth, Robert Clive-Windsor (**Figure 1**) who owned St. Fagans Castle at the time. It was an Anglican chapel situated for the convenience of parishioners living a long way from the Parish church. It is one of the smallest places of worship within the Diocese of Llandaff.



Figure 1: Robert Clive-Windsor

In the late 1990s, the church at Capel Llanilltern became the responsibility of the Vicar of Pentyrch.



Figure 2: G E Street

St Ellteyrn's church is a Grade II Listed building and is included on the designated list as "a small distinctive church, designed by the greatest of the High Victorian architects in Britain". The church was designed by George Edmund Street in the decorated Gothic style, which it retains to this day.

George E. Street (**Figure 2**) was born on 20th June 1824 in Woodford, Essex and was mainly an ecclesiastical architect. Around 1855, he entered a competition to design the new cathedral at Lille, France – he won second prize behind a design by Henry Clutton and William Burges (who went on to design Castell Coch and Cardiff Castle). G E Street had also previously restored St. Fagan's Church.

The date of Designation of St. Ellteyrn'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 **22832**, the detail of which can be found here:

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

The original church after which Capel Llanilltern is named would probably have been the oldest specifically 'religious' building in the area. The word "Capel" is Welsh for chapel, whilst "Llan" is the Welsh word for church. "Illtern" (believed to be a corruption of "Ellteyrn") is the name of a 6th century Celtic monk who established a church on the main route between Llandaff and Llantrisant. Therefore, a literal translation would be "Chapel Church of St. Ellteyrn".

According to Nicholas Carlisle's 1811 'Topographical Dictionary of the Dominion of Wales', there had been two services each Sunday here in the first part of the nineteenth century, and the services had all been in Welsh. At the time the 1811 Topographical Dictionary (TD) was compiled, the church was termed "The Chapelry of Llan Illtwrn" and it states that it chose its own Warden and made its own rates, but it had to pay a third towards the repair of St. Fagan's Church and Bridge. Nicholas Carlisle of London stated that:

This Chapelry is supposed to have been separated from the Parish of St. Fagan's, about the reign of Queen Elizabeth: it has a Register, and chooses its Warden, and makes its own Rates; but pays to the repairs of St. Fagan's Church and Bridge; and when the Rate for them is made, it pays the third Penny. The Duty of this Chapel is once a day, Morning and Evening alternately, and generally in the Welsh language. "St. Illutus founded a Monastery here, A. D. 508, and made it a place for Education in human Learning as well as Religion: so that many worthy Men are said to have been brought up here."

Another excerpt from the Topographical Dictionary states that:

The chapel, dedicated to St. Illtyd, is a very small building, with a curious inscription, not wholly legible, at the southwestern angle of the exterior wall, said to be to the memory of the wife of the renowned King Arthur. There is a place of worship for Independents. At Llanvairvawr, an ancient farm-house belonging to the Earl of Plymouth, lately destroyed by fire, are the ruins of a religious house, founded about the year 508, by St. Illtyd, as " a place for education in human learning, as well as religion : " the chapel is entire, and has been converted into a barn. The average annual expenditure for the support of the poor is £157. 13. "

So, this little church is steeped in history.

1.2 Exterior

The current church is small and comprises of a single-cell Nave, narrower chancel, and west bellcote. The bellcote is constructed in sandstone with ashlar joints. The external bell is made of metal (**Figure 3**).

It also has a banded steep pitched Welsh slate roof with terracotta ridge tiles and apex cruciform finials.

St Elltelyn's masonry is comprised of coursed rubble sandstone: in different hues, the red sandstone contrasts with blue lias and golden limestone dressings, a modest polychromy.

There is a pointed arch lightly moulded south doorway up three steps to a boarded door with decorative hinges. The church has trefoil-headed nave windows and similar smaller windows to the south chancel with a quatrefoil west window.



Figure 3: West View



Figure 4: Plaque

The east window has three lights with trefoil tracery flanked by carved shields in rectangular frames. There are buttresses at the south west, south east and north east of the nave.

Attached to the south wall is a plaque to Ann Thomas (who died in 1845) (**Figure 4**) and to the chancel, a plaque to Elizabeth Miles (who died in 1764) in inscribed in English.

Several table tombs roughly contemporary with the rebuilding, stand near the church; outside the churchyard at the west is a small parish hall.

1.3 Interior

The interior of St Eldeyrn's has unrendered walls and the same colour masonry as the exterior. It has a 2-bay nave (**Figure 5**) with an arch-braced roof with wind braces. The Nave has open pew seating and contains two large hatchments (**Figures 8 & 9 respectively**) to the Bassett family. The church has several important features, for example it accommodates a medieval font from the 13th century with a leaf and flower decoration and broached base.

The Chancel also has a 2-bay roof with decorative cusping. There are three primary trusses supporting purlins on each side of the roof and a central ridge beam. There are sprockets at the bottom of the exposed rafters supported by timber corbels and these are fixed to a timber cornice running along the north and south walls. There are also diagonal braces with a chamfered edge beneath each truss and as reinforcement to the purlins at lower level.

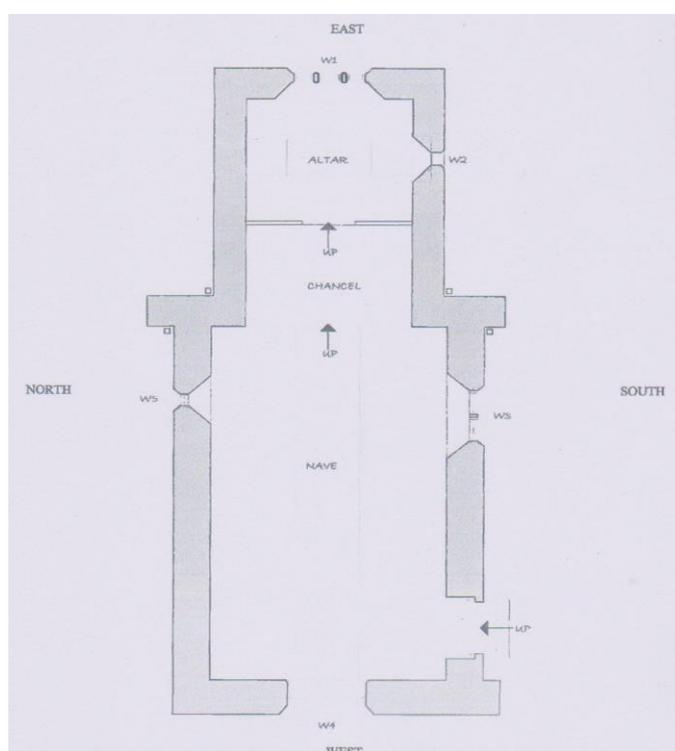


Figure 5: Architect's Sketch Plan of St. Eldeyrn's Church

The church boasts a collection of heraldry from the 15th century.

Fine wall monuments in nave and chancel especially to inhabitants of nearby Park (Parc-y-justice) including the Williams and Price families; some monuments signed E Morgan of Canton.

Chancel and Sanctuary have floor tiles of 3 different designs and three 3 steps up. On the west wall are marble reredos (an ornamental screen covering the wall at the back of an altar) comprising a row of discs with cresting.

1.4 Reason for Designation

Included as a small but distinctive church designed by one of the greatest of the High Victorian architects in Britain.

1.5 Services

There is no water supply to the church and therefore no toilet facilities. There are electric floodlights which have been installed with a surface mounted conduit. There is high-level electric and electric under-pew heating, a modern light switches and distribution board, all of which are in good working order. It was assessed by an Architect in the 2018 Quinquennial Review.

1.6 Churchyard

Along the north boundary of the churchyard, there is a sandstone wall approximately 1 metre high facing the highway. At the north east corner there is a stone stile. Midway along the north wall is a metal gate for pedestrian access. Along the west boundary, the stone wall continues and increases in height to 1.2 metres.

Midway along the west boundary is another pedestrian gate which gives access to the adjoining church hall. On the churchyard side of the south wall, its height is approximately 1 metre. Midway along the south boundary there is another stile with steps giving access into the adjoining private property.

There are several Victorian memorial plots with wrought-iron railings and some tabletop tombs in the churchyard.

1.7 Small Parish Hall

The church hall is constructed in masonry with a rough cast render finish and smooth render surrounds to openings under a slate roof. On the north elevation are two windows and a pair of doors, a timber bargeboard with exposed purlin ends.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH

2.1 Its special architectural and historical interest

Inside the Church is an early Christian stone called a Vendumaghis stone (**Figure 6**) which dates to the 5th century. The Vendumaghis stone is the oldest artefact in the church by many centuries. It is one of a group of seven sub-Roman, early Christian monuments of the 5-7th centuries found in Glamorgan (the others being mainly in the Margam area). The stone in St. Elldeyrn's is the most easterly of the distribution of known artefacts.



Figure 6: The Vendumaghis Stone

The reading is VENVMAGL-HICIACET, which translated is "Of Vendumaglus" meaning "He lies here". When Iolo Morgannwg (1801 – 1805) published the "Myvyrian Archaology of Wales" his notes state that the "Vendumaglus stone was set in the outer wall of the *tower*".

2.2 Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest

The east window (**Figure 5**) was installed in 1938 by Heaton, Butler and Bayne. Clement Heaton (1824 – 82) founded his own stained glass firm in 1852 and was joined by James Butler in 1855. Between 1859 and 1861 they worked alongside Clayton & Bell and were subsequently joined by Robert Turnill Bayne, who became their sole designer and a full partner in the firm in 1862.

The firm was known as Heaton, Butler and Bayne from 1862. Their English firm continued to produce stained glass windows from 1862 to 1953, establishing a studio in Covent Garden, London. They are famous for their stained glass windows in Westminster Abbey, Wimborne Minster, Peterborough Cathedral and St. Mary's Parish Church, Hampton.



Figure 7: The East Window

The stained glass window in St Elteyrn's (Figure 7) is dedicated to the memory of William James a former parishioner, and his family. On the north wall is a marble memorial plaque dedicated to Morgan Williams dated 1763. There is also a painted hatchment (Figure 8) in a diamond shaped frame on the north wall.



Figure 8: Painted hatchment

On the south side of the Nave there is a further plaque in memory of Henry Lewis and other members of the Lewis family dated 1838. Within the Chancel on the south wall there is a plaque by E Morgan of Canton dedicated to John and Jane Price dated 1819. At the south east corner there is an oval plaque in marble dedicated to the Reverend and Elizabeth Phillips dated 1797.

On the north wall of the Sanctuary there is a slate plaque dated 1755 relating to the Williams family surmounted by a crest which is built into the wall. Also on the north side of the Chancel is a further plaque in slate and marble again by E Morgan of Canton dedicated to Catherine Price dated 1806.



Figure 9: Painted hatchment

2.3 Heraldry in the Church of Capel Llanilltern

Fortunately, heraldic memorials from the old church dating from the 17-19th century have been preserved and are mainly in good repair. The two hatchments shown above (Figures 8 & 9) are two of the very few hatchments remaining in Glamorgan.

Heraldry of these and other memorials within and without the church revolve around five families: Williams of Parc; Price of Llandough Castle; Birt of Wenvoe Castle; Lewis of Greenmeadow; and Clark of Talygarn. The earliest heraldic memorial is to be found on the North wall of the tiny chapel, where a memorial tablet displays the arms and pedigree of Williams of Parc (1651 – 1755). The lengthy inscription thereon is as follows:

“Underneath lie the bodies of John Williams of Park, gent., who departed ys life in the year 1651. He was married to Catherine, daughter of William Gibbon of St. Fagan’s, gent., by whom he hd issue, Morgan, Ann and Friswedd. Morgan died in ye year 1706 aged 84 years. He was married to Catherine, ye youngest daughter of Thomas David of Llanfair Fawr, gent., by whom he had issue, John, Rachel and Catherine. John Williams of Llanfair who dies in the year 1719 aaged 63. He was married to Cecil, daughter of Richard Williams of the town of Llantrisant, by whom he had issue, John Morgan, Thomas, Ann and Mary. John Williams of Park Esq., departed this life ye 20th day of January 1755 aged 64. He married Florence, daughter of Gervas Powell of Milton, Gent., by who, he had three children, Morgan, Thomas (who died an infant) and Catherine”