

# **Cyfeillion Eglwys Santes Julitta** **Friends of St Julitta's Church**

Grŵp hanes a chadwraeth lleol  
A local history and conservation group

## **Yr Adroddiad Blynnyddol a Chylchgrawn y Gwanwyn**

## **The Annual Report and Spring Journal**

**2025**





## A work day in August 2024



*Staff Training - 'You do it this way!'*



*The results after 10 minutes*



*Happy workers*



*Mechanisation arrives at Capel Curig*



*Culling the grass!*



*Nearly finished!*

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**The Annual Report and Spring Journal 2025**

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## **Friends of St Julitta's Church, Capel Curig Annual Report / Editorial / News 2024/25**

### **A Happy New Year to all our members and readers!**

A Happy New Year to all our members and readers and welcome to our latest edition of our Annual Report, Journal and Newsletter.

Looking back on our past year, plans have not quite run as smoothly as hoped. This time last year we were looking forward to achieving a long-held ambition to renovate the church floor – relaying the church floor – bringing the church nave as closely as possible back to its original 1839 architecture and fittings. Obtaining the necessary listed building consent has proved both time-consuming and frustrating, as described in an article later in the Journal. The concrete slabs overlaying the old slate floor have been removed and the old floor revealed, showing that sadly, not a great deal of it is slate. However, things are now moving, and I have every hope that by early summer the light will be shining on the newly renovated floor.

As spring approaches and the AGM marks the beginning of the Friends of St Julitta's year – it is worth recapping on our AGM meeting in 2024. The meeting certainly kicked us off in the right direction. On the Friday before the meeting, we had Dr Martin Michette, staying with us; he a lecturer in heritage buildings at Oxford University, who volunteered to front our application to Eryri National Park for listed building consent to the renovation of the church floor. We all met at the church on 8th March and had a lively debate with the planning officer – who explained about the road that we had to travel – I did not think at the time that it sounded likely to be a smooth one.



*St Julitta's pre 1950*



We had a respectable attendance at the formal meeting on Saturday morning, at Plas y Brenin, and welcomed three new committee members, Malcolm and Theresa Griffiths and Jill Jones. Following the meeting Malcolm gave us a fantastic slide presentation of the sea bird population on Skomer island, off the coast of Pembrokeshire. The pictures of the puffins and other sea birds were brilliant and fascinating. After lunch we drove to Bangor where our committee member, Pat Yates gave us a very informative tour of St Deiniol, Bangor Cathedral. You can read about this fascinating building brought to life by Pat later



in the Journal. The visit was followed by coffee and cakes in the Storiol Museum, the county museum for Gwynedd, but sadly we ran out of time to visit the displays. Home followed and a quick change and a dash to the Waterloo Hotel, Betws y Coed for dinner, the company was great, but the service was rather disappointing.

Sunday followed with a session in the churchyard – April is a good time to visit the churchyard as the daffodils really do make a grand display – as do the snowdrops earlier on and then the primroses a little later. We again beavered away at both the Church and Churchyard, Ken Smith and Peter Smith brought the Church notice board up to 2024 standards. A nice morning - as we smiled at all the daffodils in the churchyard, they all smiled back at us.

The continued disruption to the floor did not allow us to hold several of our summer events in the church, but did allow a little more attention to be aimed at the churchyard, the footpaths and the grass. Generally, we kept the grass around the church to be kept



*Peter Smith*

under control – but we could not say the outer reaches had much attention. Thank you so much to all that contributed. We did pay for the grass to be cut twice in the season. Our busy working parties often close with a fine picnic tea on the picnic table, a lasting memorial to Peter Hutton who did so much for the Friends in the early days.

Sadly, I could not make our music and poetry evening on 21st June to celebrate Alice and Hilda Douglas Pennant, always a very special evening to remember two special people. Theresa Griffiths tells us in this Journal about the evening which is always overseen by Richard Douglas Pennant, who brings together another of our unique gatherings. The Friends contributed to the very successful village summer fete, and a longer report on this is published separately in this Journal.

Jonathan Richards and his classical guitar again made his annual visit to Capel Curig on Saturday, August 10th. This year, the 24th year of a visit from Jonathan, we used the community centre for the concert as the church was unusable due to work on the floor. Again, a very special evening, real live unique music in a venue that is also special in the village. Book the date now for 2025 – it is always the 2nd Saturday in August.

We again supported the Open Doors project in early September and kept the flag flying in Capel Curig for this national event. Our streamers attracted a fair number of visitors – I was never quite sure how they felt about visiting a building site, though some were very interested in the renovation work taking place.





Of course, the year ended with a bang – Storm Darragh on December 7th will be remembered for years to come. Another report in this Journal gives more detail of the damage and work so far to rectify it. Fortunately, the damage to the building itself was largely covered by insurance, but we are still waiting for an offer about rebuilding the churchyard wall.



*The tree on the left before the storm*



Our year drew to a close in November when we held our Thank You Dinner for volunteers, which was held this year in the Royal Oak, Betws y Coed, rather than in the church. The hotel looked after us very well, and we enjoyed a lovely gathering in a first-class venue. After lunch we visited and explored St Mary's Church, Betws y Coed Church. Read all about it in an article in this journal, and I would encourage you to visit too, it is a fine church.

So that just about calls it a day for 2024 – we now have 2025 to sort out. Being optimistic, we are going ahead with a planned Diary of Events for 2025. The agenda and programme for our AGM to be held in Plas y Brenin's main lecture room has been circulated. Ken Jones, an old friend of mine, will be our guest speaker, telling us about the history of Dolbadarn Castle and Llanberis. So come along on the 29th March 2025 and be part of a jolly sociable gathering.

As we approach our 30th year of founding it would be good to hear more from our far-flung members. I do get an occasional letter from one or two longstanding members, but as the years tick by, now is the opportunity to tell us about your connections with St Julitta's and any memories of Capel Curig. Thank you and best wishes to you all,

*Harvey Lloyd, Chair*



## The story of Agnes Sarah

### An enslaved worker on the Denbigh Estate in Jamaica

Before Christmas it was exciting at St Julitta's to receive a circular from Bangor University giving details of a talk to be delivered on 13 November 2024 by one of our active committee members, Lesley Evans.

Lesley is an active member of the North Wales Jamaica Society, and she had volunteered to speak on 'The Story of Agnes Sarah, an enslaved worker on the Denbigh Estate in Jamaica, Penrhyn Estate in Jamaica', as told by the Pennant papers. Pat Yates reported on the lecture, 'It was well attended, in the Shankland room of Bangor University. Lesley held the audience with her detailed knowledge of the archive material and her very recent visit to Jamaica as part of the Learning Links International initiative. The Archivist had introduced Lesley as a dedicated and meticulous researcher who had discovered and developed the storyline over five generations of enslaved women on the Denbigh Estate in Jamaica. Lesley wove the story of slave ships' conditions, illustrated by detailed prints of the cramped and fetid conditions, which the shackled slaves endured.

We followed how the enslaved people were 'chosen' for their strength, lack of injury, and state of health, in a brutal scramble by their new 'owners' once they landed in Jamaica. By fathoming the details in the archived lists of enslaved workers, and their occupations over a number of years, she had uncovered links by their 'names' and ages. Lesley had indeed brought these women's stories through the decades right up to date and her current connections to people living in Jamaica today who were their descendants gave a depth and validity to their recorded 'enslaved' history. We all wanted to hear more.... and Lesley has more to tell us.... next time!

Pat Yates

*List of Slaves on Pennant Estate this 31<sup>st</sup> December 1812.*

No.	Names	Occupation	No.	Names	Occupation	No.	Names	Occupation
	Grace Innes	Quaker	65	George Piggay	Butcherman		Daphne	Wife to Innes
	Fanny Innes			Bob		90	Maria	
	William James			Innes			Leticia	
	Johnny	Waggoner		Sarah			Angry	
5	Archer	Butler		Bono			Catalina	
	Rachay		30	Yanta			Grace Richards	
	Anas Spiggle	Field		Guba		95	George Innes	
	Henri			Leah			Oliver, Lady	
	Dr. Cuffie			Isaac			Isaac	
10	Samuel Innes			Isaac Belia			Agnes	
	Samson		35	Milly			Isaac Lady	
	Grace Cuffie			Fanny		100	Isaac	
	Angus Cuffie			Isaac Innes			Barth	
	Isaac			Sybil			Mary Johnson	Great House
15	Isaac Innes			Isaac Innes			Isaac Innes	



## Music at the Church

### Our Annual Alice and Hilda's Birthday Celebration

Peter and Pat were waiting at the door to meet and greet everyone and show them to the seats in the church including a few passersby who were lucky enough to join those of us who had arrived by invitation.

The Church itself was looking a little denuded, stripped as it was for the work on the new flooring which had already begun but was made safe for the evening's entertainment. With bare walls it could have looked a bit sad but the people in the church completely changed the atmosphere with lots of chatter and an air of excitement. The candles burned above us and cheered everything up. Pat introduced me to Richard Douglas Pennant, the lead poet who was ready and waiting for proceedings to begin, she then took me out into the graveyard to show me Alice and Hilda's graves. Such a beautiful spot and a fitting start to the evening.

When everyone was settled in their pews Pat introduced Richard who talked about Alice and Hilda's lives and their contribution to society as passionate, thoughtful and caring Victorian women. His love and respect for his maiden aunts was loud and clear. He also gave us an insight into his own childhood in another piece about his uncle.

Richard then introduced John and Dilwen, the duo part of the Hollow Log Blues Music Group, who soon transported us to the Deep South of America or at least to the Ystwyth Delta near Aberystwyth with their wonderful blues playing on resonator guitar and harmonica. They play blues from the 1930s to 1960s, influenced by R. L. Burnside, Lightning Hopkins, Johnny Shines, Robert Belfour and Howling Wolf. The session opened with their own composition *Flying Geese* and made reference to their favourite blues musician, Henderson. I couldn't see other people's reactions because I was lucky enough to be sitting in the front pew with Jacky and I was soon rocking and rolling in my seat, just my kind of music, my kind of blues, I was thinking and wishing that my husband was there to share it, I kept thinking how much he would have loved it.

John Barnie is not only a stunning blues guitarist but studied English Literature, taught at Copenhagen University and has published 20 collections of poetry as well as fiction, memoirs, and a book on the blues. He introduced his first poem Mrs Mountjoy in the context of his student days renting a cold-water garret in a freezing house, which resonated with my own early experience of living here in Wales as a student.

When the poetry and music was over and thanks given, the most amazing feast appeared, provided by Richard. It was a great opportunity to meet and socialise I am quite sure that everyone enjoyed the evening. The young passers-by couldn't believe their good fortune

Thank you to everyone involved in arranging and participating in the event. An evening to remember, - what a wonderful evening!

*Theresa Griffiths*

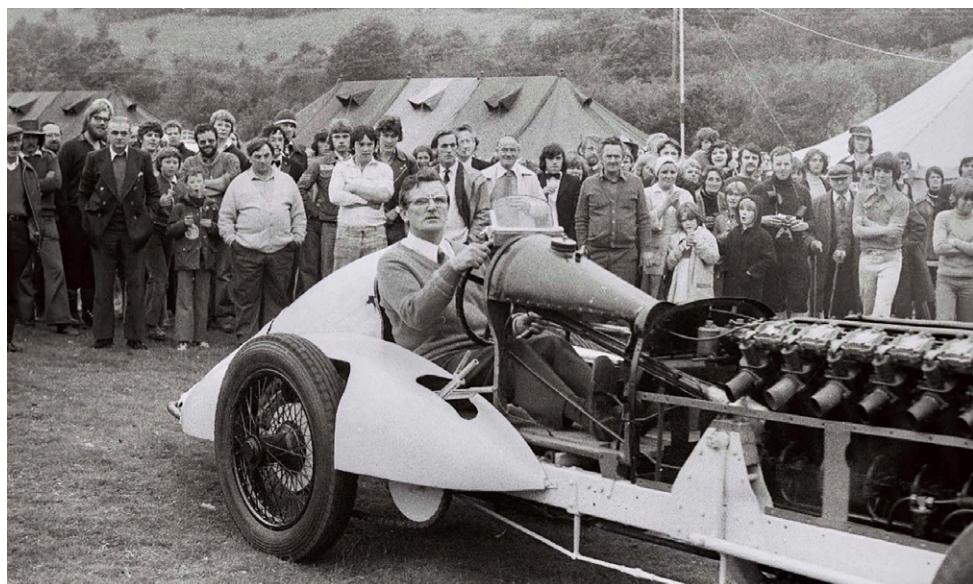
## Capel Curig Carnival, July 2024

Again, Capel Curig Carnival Day brought plenty of action to the village in early July. Peter Smith and others spent Friday evening erecting tents and marquees and although the carnival day started rather damp and unpromising, the sun did bless the many visitors who turned up on Saturday and it turned out to be a very happy and successful day. A wonderful collection of plants for sale where on display in St Julitta's stall was brought together by Gill Richards and Ken Smith, with support from Mathew Wynne and the plant nursery in Betws y Coed. They brought together a fine show and created a lot of interest, and income for our charity, all told we raised about £105 and as this was based on donations, we can reclaim gift aid on this amount – about 20% extra. The action in the carnival was very well organised, and Shan Ashton was a very good MC for the proceedings.

This year we also brought together a photo exhibition, using photographs taken by Peter Smith at the very early 1977 carnival – he had taken two films of the people and the activities on 2 July 1977 – a fascinating collection of images illustrating the village and its residents fifty years ago.

About 50 black and white prints arranged them on seven professionally produced A1 panels certainly created a lot of interest in the marquee. Many thanks to Peter for the idea and all his lovely, interesting pictures - I am sure the village will be happy to again see the display when we next bring the pictures together - perhaps in the church and in other venues in the village.

*Harvey Lloyd*



*Owen Wyn Owen at the wheel of Babs*



## Restoring the church floor in St Julitta's

Ever since the Friends of St Julitta's adopted our first plan for restoring the church, one of our major ambitions has been to remove the unsightly concrete paving slabs installed in a 1960s renovation, and restore the old slate floor beneath as closely as possible to its original appearance. Work is now well under way on this project but has proved much more complex and is taking longer than we ever expected.

As the church is a grade II\* listed building, we need listed building consent to restore the floor. Following a generous donation from two Friends, Kate and Liam Tiller, we hoped we had sufficient funds to undertake the restoration work but needed the listed building applications to be done on a volunteer basis, rather than employing expensive professional advice. We are very grateful to Dr Martin Michette, an architect and lecturer in building conservation, for his advice on historic building conservation and help with drafting applications for listed building consent. Our builder Hefyn Huws, who is a Friend of St Julitta's, has helped with technical proposals, while another Friend, Kathy Laws, has kindly exercised an archaeological watching brief. Elgan Jones, a conservation architect at Donald Insall Associates in Conwy volunteered helpful advice on the Heritage Impact Statement which has to accompany our listed building application to Eryri National Park.

### Previous restorations

St Julitta's was restored in 1839 by the owner of the Penrhyn estate, G. D. H. Pennant, but no plans or accounts of the work have been found. Our only information, from a contemporary newspaper article, was that the work was directed by a Mr. Baxter. Mr. Baxter, we discovered, was the manager of the Penrhyn slate works, and was working at the same time on the interior of the rebuilt Penrhyn Castle, including supplying slate washstands.

This left no doubt that the slate floor installed in the 1839 restoration of St Julitta's was Penrhyn slate. The restoration also installed the current barrel vault ceiling, and the church was furnished with box pews in the nave, a pulpit and reading desk on the north wall, a wooden altar dais, and three rows of tiered seats in the south chapel. The nave furnishings are seen clearly in a Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales photograph taken in 1949.



*Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales, St Julitta's in 1949*

By 1963, the church had not been used for several decades except for weddings and was once again in poor condition. The Capel Curig Church Council then commissioned a further restoration, using funds raised by the sale of St John the Baptist's mission church near Pont Cyfyng. They planned to install a brick floor, and destroy the box pews and other wooden furnishings, which were said to be suffering from dry rot. The tiered seating in the south chapel was removed, together with two large box pews at the front of the nave and beside the altar. But after the project builder went bankrupt, the original plan proved unaffordable, and concrete paving slabs were laid on top of the old floor. The remaining box pews in the nave were restored but were replaced directly on the paving slab floor, rather than the original raised wooden floor being restored. A large concrete plinth replaced the former wooden altar dais and the pulpit and reading desk were moved from the north wall to the east wall.



*1963 concrete paving slab floor in the south chapel*



*Slate slabs revealed below the concrete paving slab floor in a 2009 archaeological excavation.*

## Initial ideas

When we started the current restoration, we did not know exactly what lay underneath the 1960s concrete paving slabs. In 2009, the Friends of St Julitta's commissioned an archaeological survey which revealed large slate slabs from the 1839 restoration underneath the paving slabs at the junction of the nave and south chapel. Below this was a demolition layer including pebbles and broken roofing slates. Below this was the original ground level with some human bone fragments, likely evidence of burials under the church floor. The excavation confirmed that substantial parts of the old slate floor remained in good condition, but in some places where slabs were missing an area of modern concrete infill intruded into the demolition layer. We therefore assumed that parts of the old slate floor must either be in poor condition or had been removed.



Our original idea was to remove the concrete paving slab floor, lift the remaining nineteenth-century slates and insert a membrane and insulating layer underneath, before replacing the usable old slate slabs and filling any gaps with matching modern Penrhyn slate. We proposed to reinstate the original raised wooden floorboards under the remaining box pews, and return the pulpit and reading desk to their original position on the north wall. We asked for a pre-planning advice meeting with the National Park before submitting a formal listed building consent application. We were advised to ask for approval to lift the concrete paving slabs as a first step in order to find out more fully what lay underneath, before seeking further planning approval for our restoration plans.

## The floor below the 1963 concrete paving slabs

What we found came as a complete surprise. The 1839 slate floor only went down the middle of the nave between the box pews and across part of the east end. The slabs were enormous, about 1.2m wide and of varying lengths up to 1.2m, but only about 25mm thick. They were in fact very similar to the slabs used as end panels of the slate tombs in the churchyard. The floor beneath the 1839 box pews, wooden altar dais and tiered seating, turned out to be 1960s concrete, while there was bare earth beneath the original site of the pulpit and reading desk against the north wall. It appeared that Mr. Baxter had only used slate on the visible parts of the floor, and that the wooden floor under box pews, pulpit and reading desk, tiered seating in the south chapel, and the wooden altar dais had all been constructed over bare earth.





*1839 slate slabs and 1960s concrete infill revealed at the east end*

## Revised plans

These findings, and a further site visit with the National Park's historic buildings consultant, prompted a complete rethink of our plans. The planners were not keen on our original idea of lifting the old slate slabs, and indeed this would have risked damaging them, given their size, thinness, and the fact that the 1960s concrete infill abutted the slate. As we are planning to restore a raised wooden floor under the remaining box pews and reinstate a wooden altar dais, there is no problem with these being constructed on top of the concrete floor.

This left the question of what to do with the concrete floor in the south chapel. The planners did not like our idea of digging it out so that a new slate floor could be laid at the same level as the old slabs, due to the risk of damaging any archaeology underneath and possibly disturbing burials. It is not possible today to source slate slabs as large as those used in 1839, so the planner's suggestion was to have a contrasting floor in the chapel, either of wood or of modern Penrhyn slate. Either option involves a step up from the nave, but the committee decided on a new slate floor, both because it would involve a lower step and would also be much longer lasting than wood. As the floor is now 7.5cm below the level of the 1963 concrete paving slabs, an additional step will also be needed inside the west doorway.

There has been some delay while we sorted out damage from Storm Darragh, but we will shortly be submitting a revised listed building application for our revised plans. We are really looking forward to seeing the nave restored to something much more like its appearance after the 1839 restoration, while the south chapel will present a contrasting appearance suitable for community and other events.

*Francis Richardson*



## Grave Matters (Part 2)

This is the story of one family and three Capel Curig farms, Cwm Chlorad, Bodesi and Tan Llyn Ogwen. It's a back to front story requiring a lot of detective work and on the way we'll meet Morris 'Old Prophet' Jones, his son a Welsh geologist and another Calvinistic Welsh Minister and some of his family, amongst others, who found their fame and fortune in America. It's a long story as it's a big family spanning several generations, and the story starts at the isolated farm of Cwm Chlorad. Historically it doesn't but we need to start from known facts, so Cwm Chlorad is our starting point. In the words of a very old radio programme, if you are sitting comfortably, I'll begin.

In the time we are talking about, Cwm Chlorad sat high in splendid isolation. Griffith Rowland who farmed the land in 1758 must have really thought he was 'king of his castle' as he looked down over an empty valley with nothing but mountains and his animals to view. Today, if you take the A4086 from St Julitta's church and go down the road towards Llanberis Pass for about four miles, you will see that nothing much has changed. Looking up on the left, Cwm Chlorad - known as Cwm Uchaf (Upper Cwm) after 1762 - lies in ruins and is masked from the road by a thicket, but you can spot Cwm Isa (Lower Cwm) which is now a rented self-catering cottage.

Records show that Griffith Roland was a mason. His wife Ann would have had the responsibility of looking after the farm as well as raising their brood of children – Rowland, Evan, Owen William, Mary, David, Dorothy and Jane Griffith, all born between 1758 and 1772 and documented in the Bishops Transcripts. David died as an infant and there is not much reliable evidence for Rowland or any of the girls apart from their baptisms recorded in the Bishops Transcripts. That leaves sons Owain William and Evan to continue the family story.

Owen William (1756 – 1792), third in line to inherit the farm, married Margaret Thomas of Llanberis and their two children were born there. Daughter Elinor died in infancy and sadly Owen William never saw his son Owen Owens who was born shortly after Owen Snr died, in 1793.

Presumably Owen had made the move to Llanberis where the newly opened Dinorwic quarry offered work - dirty, dangerous work with a five year apprenticeship before becoming an experienced quarry worker. Rockmen dangled on ropes wrapped around their legs and body to leave their hands free to work in all weathers. Slate was slippery and ropes broke. There was always the danger of rockfall, and rock dust was an eventual killer.

Even for the experienced men it was poorly paid work, on monthly contracts. Quotas had to be reached to achieve their end of month profits and bonus, with three weeks' subsistence pay in the meantime to feed the family. Out of their pay came everything they might have needed to do their job – explosives, tools, even air for pneumatic drills at a later date.

That probably explains the huge number of child and early adult deaths. In one family alone, that of Owen Owen's son, Owen O Owens (1839 – 1916) and his wife Winifred Jones, all their children died, four in early childhood with the eldest of the remaining children only reaching 26 years old.

All of Owen Owen's daughters married quarry men and his sons followed him into the slate quarry, toiling six days a week on the block-quarried galleries on the side of Elidir mountain or hand splitting and dressing the slates to roof the houses of the newly industrialised towns across the country.

The situation was the same for Owen Owen's brother Thomas (1839 – 1926). His family was a slate quarrying family with one notable exception, son Owen Thomas Owens. He and his wife Margaret Morris emigrated to Slatington, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania in 1888. Thomas and some of his sons exchanged a life of slate quarrying for a life in the steel industry, indoors but with similar hazards, while one son and all his daughters worked as weavers in the woollen mills.

It was interesting that Thomas and Margaret chose to go to Slatington when they emigrated as it was a slate quarrying community. Although there had been small-scale shallow quarries there for a long time, an enterprising Welshman was responsible for establishing the industry proper. He was Robert Morris Jones, an experienced slate worker and geologist who had emigrated from North Wales in 1848. He was actively searching for an area to develop when he spotted terrain he recognised as slate layers. The story goes that he hastily found the owner of the land and persuaded him to sell it to him. He renamed it Slatington and went on to found and become the first mayor of the town which developed around it. That town was Bangor, Northampton County, Pennsylvania.

Robert Morris Jones thought that Slatington reminded him of home for he had grown up in Bethesda, the son of Morris 'the Old Prophet' Jones and his wife Catherine. Father Morris was a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist preacher as well as a quarryman, but he was clearly more ambitious for his son when he sent him off to university. Robert's education paid off as he became a very rich man although it's noticeable on census records, he only ever referred to himself as a quarryman or farmer. So modest too. He enlisted in the Civil War on the Confederate side and fought at the Battle of Gettysburg. I wonder what he would have made of the huge statue erected in his memory outside the museum in Slatington town square.

Meanwhile, back at Cwm Chlorad - now Cwm Uchaf - both Ann and Griffith Rowland had died. The inscription on his flat stone (B050) notes Griffin was 51 when he died in 1777. Another inscription states simply 'A.E. 40 1775' which matches information in the Bishops Transcripts' burials for 9 Oct 1775 for Ann, wife of Griffith Rowland, confirming online records that her maiden name was Ann Evans.

Standing at the head of their grave is an upright stone, B049, in memory of their other son Evan Griffith (1759 – 1850) and his wife, another Margaret Thomas. Evan took over Cwm Uchaf after his father's death which makes me suspect that his older brother Rowland had either died or established a farm elsewhere, as there are no more records for him in Capel Curig.

Evan and Margaret Griffith raised eight children, in very hard conditions, at Cwm Uchaf. For sons Owen, Thomas and Evan there are few records to tell us anything about their lives, but we do know that sons Griffith and Abraham worked the farm with their father. Abraham was still at the farm at the time of the 1851 census but some time between then and 1861 he had moved to Llanrhychwyn where he farmed 150 acres and provided a home for his sister Ann. Abraham and Ann are both buried in churchyard grave plot C172.

Evan Griffith's son Robert, a carpenter, had already left home. He and his wife Eleanor Davies had the farm at Cors y Geffylau where they raised their ten children. Son Griffith died at the very young age of 23, David followed his father in the trade, becoming a joiner, while John, Robert, Moses and Owen all went off to work at the slate quarry. William started off in the quarry, achieving the role of Quarry Manager before he had a career change and became a Postmaster.

William's children led very different lives in the early twentieth century, to those of their father's generation. His daughter Hannah originally assisted in the Post Office as a clerk before marrying husband Richard, an accountant and emigrating to Canada. She was often visited by sister Mary Dilys who remained single, as did sibling Gwilym Gordon, a bookkeeper, who became a citizen of the United States. He in turn was joined by brother John Griffiths. Having been a quarry manager in Penmachno, John was employed for several years in the USA as a Treasurer before returning home, despite all the opportunities that America had on offer.

Remaining at home were Robert Norman who would eventually become a bank cashier and daughter Gladwys who had married but settled in Penmachno, close to her parents. The remainder of Robert's children worked on the farm until their father passed away, Evan as an agricultural labourer and Margaret Roberts Evans keeping house after her mother's early death. She then took over a farm in Penmachno which provided a home for Moses and younger sister Ellen until she married. So even within one generation there was a vast difference opening between opportunities and lifestyle.

For this family, American census records show us that initially they lived in rented accommodation, but before long they owned or had built their own homes. There was plenty of land and it was cheap. Having the stability of a regular job with regular pay also allowed folk to become upwardly mobile. In time they could move away from the manual labour sector and took opportunities in education to move into white collar jobs or even become professional people.



For Catherine Evans, the last of Evan and Margaret Griffith's children this was not the case. In 1826 Catherine married William Morris of Llanberis and they had six children before emigrating to the USA in 1845. Two of their children chose to stay behind, son William who died at a very young age and daughter Margrett marrying a slate worker. All her sons went into the quarries.

Catherine and William settled in the delightfully named Peach Bottom Township in Pennsylvania. It was close to a slate mine, the first of its size, which had been founded by two Welshmen, William and James Reese in 1734. Working conditions were no better in America and sadly for the family father William was killed when a mass of earth caved in on him. By then the children ranged between 14 and 25 years old and life must have been a struggle for Catherine.

The 1851 Census shows eldest son Evan Griffith Morris working as an odd job man and by 1910 he was still working as a labourer. Two of his children died in infancy, one of cholera and the other through severe malnutrition. Others were working in the spinning mill, one as a bartender. Younger brother William Morris had bought a plot of land in Frankfort Town, New York which appears not to have been developed. William disappears from the records thereafter.

Catherine and William's daughter Alice married William Davies, a slate dresser. Their son David is probably the one success story for the family. He ran a successful farm and brought up four children but none of them seemed ambitious, marrying labourers, working in building insulation and the sugar factory. Alice's sister Catherine Morris was widowed early and went back to the mill to support her family. They in turn chose jobs in mechanical engineering, in a power plant and as salesmen.

And that might have been the end of the story of the Griffith and Ann Rowland family had I not got curious one day while in the churchyard. I was just checking that there were no details that I might have missed on the stones, when I spotted another very early one with names which were really familiar - Griffith, Owen, Rowland. The inscription was quite hard to decipher so I checked my copy of the St Jullita's Gravestones Memorial Inscriptions booklet produced by Gwynedd Family History Society when I got home.

A friend translated the inscription, and the detective work started. The stone says 'Here lies the body of Dorothy Griffith formerly of Llanllyn Ogwen who was buried 28 August 1746, aged 49. And also, here buried are two of the daughters of Owen Rowland of Bodesi and Jane his wife, Anne Owen ... who was buried 1 December 1797 aged 16 and Jane Owen buried 12 March 1800 aged 10'.

Could Dorothy be the family matriarch, was there a link between Bodesi and Llanllyn Ogwen farms? Could Owen Rowland be brother to our Griffith Rowland and how to prove it? And could their father be found? Well, I'm 99% convinced the answer to all those questions is 'Yes!' thanks to Eddie Naylor's work on the Bishops Transcripts.

Consulting the map of Capel Curig farms which Eddie produced, the two farms are adjacent to each other at the far end of the valley near to Llyn Ogwen. A quick search in the transcripts showed that Owen and Jane Rowland's children were all born at Bodesi between 1783 and 1804, including the two girls who were noted on the Dorothy Griffith's gravestone. And the real gold nugget was finding out that Rowland Owen, Dorothy's husband, a yeoman of Llanlllyn Ogwen had been buried 10 January 1774 at St Julitta's. His flatstone (B057) is simply inscribed 'R O 77 1774'.

Double checking dates to confirm, Rowland Owen was born in 1697 and Dorothy Griffith in 1697 also. Griffith Rowland was born in 1726 and Owen Rowland in 1730. In fact, there were two other children, Sioned born and baptised on 28 May 1728 and Alice born in 1733. So, it looks like we have a couple and their family of children born, more or less, at conventional two year intervals. It's possible they started out at Llanlllyn Ogwen with the two boys moving to their own farms on their marriages.

There may have been other children, but I can't prove that at the present time. Records for Sioned and Alice cease after their baptisms but there are plenty for Owen Rowland and a whole new story to tell.

*Lesley Evans*



*Cors y Ceffylau Farm, Cwm Chloraad*

## Storm Darragh, 6 to 7 December 2024

The Met Office issued a red warning for wind covering west Wales for Storm Darragh, the fourth named storm of the 2023/2024 storm season. The main storm hit Snowdonia on Saturday 7th December, with over 2.3 million households losing power for a number of days, including in Capel Curig. The damage wreaked by winds which reached 92mph and more in the area was far more serious than any other storm in living memory.

Three areas were affected at St Julitta's. Several rows of slates were blown off the roof at the west gable, and the churchyard wall was demolished in two separate sites overlooking the Afon Llugwy. One large conifer was uprooted, knocking down the wall and damaging several memorials, and further east two mature trees swayed on their roots, tumbling a section of dry-stone wall down the river bank. The doors were also torn off the notice board.



*Slates blown off gable end of roof*



*Roofers battling the weather before the snow returned*

The roof damage was tackled quickly to prevent more water getting into the church. We were lucky that it did not rain during the week after the storm, and that a local roofing company was able to make the roof watertight before Christmas, working in snowy weather, before finishing the job in the New Year. This involved replacing wooden battens which had rotted, unbeknown to us, probably from rain driving in previously. The insurance company will be covering the cost ((£4,560 less £500 excess). A damp patch on the ceiling should dry out in time, but we do need to get the paint pots out, possibly at Easter – volunteers needed!



The trees present a longer-term problem, although some of the work is not too technical. Initially we have prioritised removing the big tree which damaged the wall and the memorials. Peter Smith, with Malcom Griffiths and Tim Lloyd had a huge job cutting the trunk into sections, which they tackled very skilfully and competently - a very fine collective effort which will have saved St Julitta's at least £2,000. Following this, a larger group assembled over the following weekend, and we can now see the ground for the trees. The rain kept off, but it was a cold winter day, definitely requiring woolly hats. We now need to reduce the trunk into moveable sections, dispose of a huge pile of branches, infill an enormous hole around the tree root, and decide what to do about restoring the broken memorials. Robin, one of our helpers has contacted the Dry-Stone Wall Association, who have volunteered to help with rebuilding this section of the churchyard wall.



The two trees which rocked on their roots during the storm but did not fall pose a different problem. We are concerned that they could pose a further danger to people and graves in another storm, and there seems no point in rebuilding the wall with a risk that it could be toppled if the roots move again. Felling the trees would need to be done commercially, but because they are within the curtilage of a listed building, this requires listed building consent. Several attempts to obtain advice from the National Park or to get an arboriculturist on site to provide a written recommendation on whether the trees need felling have not yet born fruit, but we continue to try.

Many thanks to all who have been involved in rectifying the Storm Darragh impact – to our treasurer Frances Richardson for sorting out the roof repair and dealing with the insurance company, to the volunteer chain saw operators, Peter, Tim and Chris, and the helpers for shifting the tree, and to Peter and Jill for the pictures.

We hope to continue the work over the Easter holiday, starting on Saturday – volunteers welcome.

*Harvey Lloyd*

## Betws-y-Coed and St Mary's Church

### Followed by a short introduction to the Bangor Cathedral

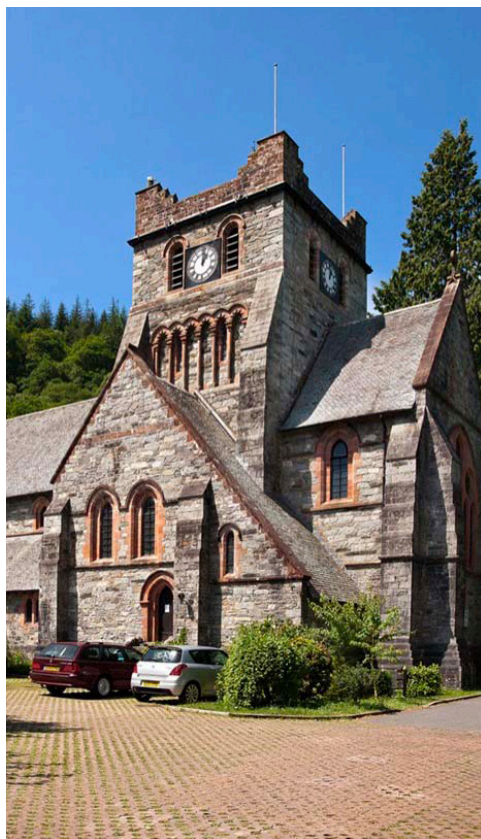
St Marys Church is an interesting building that is very well looked after and well managed.

I include this in our Journal to encourage visitors to Capel Curig to also visit the church in Betws y Coed. A small group of the persons at the November dinner did this and were very impressed. I hope that the people of Betws y Coed are proud of it. I have put together a short history of the building, it is not a history of the church, but it does fill in a few gaps about what an extremely interesting building. There is more to add, but it requires some more research.

For those who find some time to visit the church you will find it to be a wonderful building. We thank the Rev. Stuart Elliot for ensuring the church is open during the daytime. St Mary's Church, Betws-y-Coed is an active Anglican parish church of the Church in Wales, in the deanery of Arllechwedd, the archdeaconry of Bangor and the diocese of Bangor. Services are held on Wednesdays at 2pm and Sundays at 2pm. The church is designated by CADW as a Grade II\* listed building.

R W Soden, in his book *A Guide to the Welsh Parish Churches* describes St Mary's as having 'a rich and splendid interior', and I think he gets it right. The church was built between 1870 and 1873 to accommodate the increasing numbers of summer visitors. St Marys replaced the medieval church dedicated to Saint Michael. It was designed by the Lancaster architectural partnership of Paley and Austin, the commission being gained as a result of a competition won by Hubert Austin. Fortunately, a new site was chosen for the church, it is built on land donated by the descendants of the Wynns of Gwydir estate – the Ancaster family, so the medieval church still exists today.

St Marys interior of local grey and warm pink Ancaster stone floor with a vaulted chancel. The principal benefactor was Liverpool businessman Charles Kurtz. It was built by Owen Gethin Jones, a local builder who was also involved with the railway and other major constructional projects in the area.



The church was consecrated in July 1873 and provided seating for 150 people and cost £5,000 (equivalent to £560,000 in 2023). The tower was completed in 1907.

## Interior

Inside the church are arcades with pointed arches. The font and parts of the pulpit are constructed of polished Cornish serpentine and the floor is of pink Ancaster stone, the pulpit is mainly of sandstone, insert with Cornish serpentine; both are in Early English style. In the south wall of the chancel is a recess, and in the north wall is an aumbry. The chancel is floored with tiles and has several Art and Crafts copper panels set into the oak choir stalls and reading desks. The reredos, the ornamental screen covering the wall at the back of the altar is rather brash and was inserted in 1929, and is in Italian alabaster, and depicts the Passion of Christ. Most of the stained glass was made by Shrigley and Hunt of Lancaster. Other windows were made by Jones and Willis, based on designs by Edward Burne-Jones. The two-manual organ was built in 1870 by Gray and Davison. It was enlarged in about 1913 and again in about 1920 by the same firm. In 1969 the organ was rebuilt by the famous organ builders from Leeds, Wood Wordsworth and Company.



## Architecture: Exterior

St Mary's is constructed in rubble stone with sandstone dressings, and it has slated roofs. Its architectural style is Transitional Norman, (early English style). The plan is cruciform with a tower at the crossing and an organ chamber to its south. To the west of the crossing is a four-bay nave with a clerestory windows, north and south aisles, and a north porch. The north aisle has capitals of which are all differently carved. To the east of the crossing is a chancel. On the north side of the tower is a four-stage stair turret with a conical roof. The middle stage of the tower has lancet windows, and in the top stage are louvred lancets flanking the clock faces. On the south side is blind arcading. The parapet is stepped at the corners. Along the sides of aisles, clerestories and chancel are more lancet windows. At the east end is a five-light window with plate tracery, and at the west end is a rose window, also with plate tracery.



## Modern History

The Church Hall, built as an extension in the late 1960s is tastefully built into the existing building. The provision of a car park in the spare land to the east of the church has brought wealth to the site, it earned the church £17,000 in 2023, but visitors beware if the correct fee is not paid at least a £60 fine awaits the visitor. The regular musical concerts are held on Sunday evenings during the summer months.

It was largely the railway, opened in 1869, that attracted and led to vast numbers of visitors to the area, particularly artists, poets and writers who were drawn to the clean air and wonderful scenery. As a result, Betws-y-Coed became home to Britain's first artists' colony. Although visitors to the area had been drawn to the hills and mountains from the late 18th century through both the publicity of guidebooks and the establishment of Telford's A5 road (his bridge, the Waterloo Bridge is dated 1815), through the villages of Caernarfonshire, the establishment of the railway from Llandudno to Betws certainly led to building of hotels and other development in the village.

Although the railway brought visitors to the area, the area has a history that goes back many centuries. It is mentioned in the *Record of Caernarvon*, which is the Welsh version of the English Domesday Book (1086) which did not cover Gwynedd, Anglesey and Merioneth. The first of two sections of this manuscript, the 'Extent of Anglesey and Caernarvon' were compiled by John de Delves, the deputy-justice of north Wales, in 1352. The manuscript is more commonly known as the 'Record of Caernarvon' as the folios relating to Caernarfonshire were edited and translated by Sir Henry Ellis and published in Latin in 1838.

Interestingly the church's next-door neighbour is the Royal Oak Hotel, was originally known as the Swan Hotel – when David Cox, the master painter visited the village in the early 19th century. at a time when only St Michaels Church was the parish church.

Church Address Holyhead Rd, Betws-y-Coed LL24 0AA

The vicar is Rev. Stuart Elliot. Open am, closes 5 pm Phone: 01690 710313

*Harvey Lloyd*

## Bangor Cathedral, Eglwys Gadeiriol Bangor, visited on the AGM meeting

Bangor Cathedral is dedicated to its founder, Saint Deiniol. The site of the present building of Bangor Cathedral has been in use as a place of Christian worship since the sixth century, AD 525, this is the oldest Cathedral foundation in the UK.

**Address:** Cathedral Close, Bangor LL57 1LH. **Phone:** 01248 354 999.

**Open:** A.M, Closes 6:30 pm

**Architect:** George Gilbert Scott, Architectural styles: Gothic and Romanesque architecture

**Bishop(s):** David Morris, Bishop of Bardsey and Assistant Bishop of Bangor

**Organist(s):** Martin Brown

**Canon Chancellor:** Emlyn Williams

Deiniol established his cell on the site of the present cathedral in 525 AD and when he was consecrated Bishop in 546, his church became a cathedral. The site took its name from the wattle enclosure surrounding it, 'bangor'. Since then, the Cathedral has been destroyed and rebuilt several times.

The site of Bangor Cathedral was originally occupied by St Deiniol's Monastery, established in the sixth century around 530 on land given by the king of Gwynedd, Maelgwn Gwynedd. Deiniol is said to have been consecrated as a bishop by Saint David making him the first Bishop of Bangor. This monastery was sacked in 634 and again in 1073. Nothing of the original building survives.

The Synod of Westminster in 1102 is recorded as taking measures to restore Bangor Cathedral, but the earliest part of the present building was built during the episcopate of Bishop David (1120–1139) with the assistance of the king of Gwynedd, Gruffudd ap Cynan, who donated money towards the project and was buried by the high altar on his death in 1137. This was a cruciform building in the Norman style, about 44 yards in length. Gruffudd's son, Owain Gwynedd, was also buried here, as was his brother Cadwaladr. Giraldus Cambrensis describes a service held here in 1188 when the Archbishop of Canterbury celebrated Mass.

In 1211, the cathedral was destroyed by King John's army, on a raid into Gwynedd.

In the 13th century the original apse was removed, and the choir was extended to its present length. The church was badly damaged when King Edward 1 invaded Gwynedd in 1282, and in 1284 the dean and chapter were given £60 in compensation for the damage. There was extensive rebuilding in this period, under the first Bishop Anian, with the transepts and crossing rebuilt. The nave was rebuilt in the late 14th century.

The cathedral was said to have been burnt to the ground in 1402 during the rebellion of Owain Glyndwr, but there is no contemporary evidence for this, though it may well have been damaged. There certainly was extensive reconstruction from the end of the 15th century, completed in 1532. There is a Latin inscription over the tower doorway recording that Bishop Skevington built the tower in 1532, though it was not complete when Skevington died in 1533. Some work was done during the 18th century and £2,000 was spent on repairs in 1824, followed by the altering and refitting of the interior in 1825 at a cost of a further £3,252.

Rowland Meyrick, the second son of Meyric ap Llewelyn, was the first Bishop of Bangor following the Reformation and is buried under the cathedral. Meyric ap Llewelyn was High Sheriff and Captain of the Guard at the coronation of Henry V 111 on 26 April 1509.



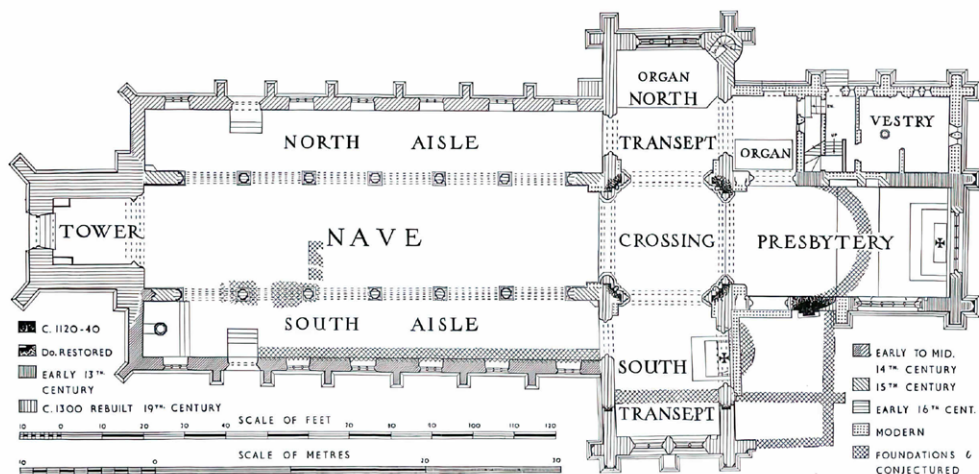
*Statue of Deiniol at Bangor Cathedral*

From July to September 2021 the cathedral was used as a Covid -19 vaccination centre for five days a week, and for socially-distanced worship.

The present arrangement of the interior dates from Sir George Gilbert Scott's restoration 1870-1880. The wooden Chancel vaulting is by Gilbert Scott and is said to be a copy of the lieme vaulting of a transept in York Minster, with carved bosses of foliage. The beautiful wood carvings in the choir stalls date from Gilbert Scott's time; angels, mythical creatures, Green Men, a pelican feeding its young (a Eucharistic symbol). On the floor in the south aisle is a stone commemorating two rulers of Gwynedd: Gruff ap Cynan (died 1137) and his son Owain Prince of Gwynedd (died 1170). The arched tomb in the Lady Chapel has been provisionally identified as that of Owain.

The tiles on the floor of the chancel and the Lady Chapel are copies of the 14th century tiles found during Gilbert Scott's restoration. Some of the original tiles can be seen on the floor of the shop. Eva Stone, a sepulchral slab dating from the 14th century found during the restoration hangs on the west wall. The effigy depicts a lady whose identity is unknown. In her left hand hangs a rosary to which are fastened two Pilgrim brooches.

Two striking modern paintings by the Anglesey artist John Gregory hang in the south aisle. These are reworkings of paintings by Caravaggio. The Mostyn Christ dates from the late 15th or early 16th century and represents the last moments before the crucifixion; examples of this type known as the Bound Rood are extremely rare in Wales. The almost life-sized figure wears a crown of thorns, and the attitude and expression reveal extreme weariness. There are five wooden mice carved by Robert Thompson from Yorkshire. The Cathedral is on the North Wales Pilgrims Way from Basingwerk Abbey to Bardsey Island.



*Plan of the cathedral with a chronological stratification according to the Royal Commission on The Ancient and Historical Monuments*



## Obituaries

**Liam Stewart Tiller, 1946 - 12 April 2024**

**Dr Kate Tiller, OBE, 1949 - 30 May 2024**

It is with great sadness that we report the deaths on 12 April 2024 of Liam Tiller and then his wife Dr Kate Tiller on 30 May 2024, both of whom were very kind and generous to us over the last ten or so years. After a long illness, battling with cancer he died in April and only a few weeks after the death of her beloved and inseparable husband she also passed away at the end of May. Liam, whose passion for nature, wildlife and the countryside was boundless, and being a skilled photographer, he was able to pass on his extensive interest to others. We honour his spirit and dedication to the world's winged wonders.

Following their marriage in 1969, they came to Oxfordshire, where Liam eventually became the county's chief planning officer.



Kate was born in 1949 and grew up near Leigh in south Lancashire. Her father was an Anglican priest, and his family had been involved in the area's important engineering industry. With her death we lost one of the most influential and eminent local and regional historians of our time. After the University of Birmingham, where she took her doctorate (on post-Chartist working-class politics), in 1979 Kate took up a position at Rewley House, the centre of Oxford University Department of Continuing Education. Kate was a founding fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford, and a distinguished historian, who amongst her myriad activities chaired the VCH Oxfordshire Trust for nearly 20 years from 2003 to 2021. Liam served as the Trust treasurer for much of the same period, alongside supporting several other local history groups and pursuing his own local history interests – he wrote a learned article on the local church, in which his burial service took place.

During the 1990s, Kate masterminded the launch of master's and DPhil degrees in local history, and her vital role in continuing education was recognised when in 1997 she was appointed Continuing Education's first female academic dean. Recently she was research director for the project on *Communities of Dissent* (the significance of Nonconformist chapels and chapel life in English and Welsh communities), to which Harvey and Ken Jones contributed some of the research on the Welsh section and Frances wrote a chapter. The Family and Community History Research Society published the work. She published numerous books and papers and edited the Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire. They donated, from their estate, £18,000 to the Friends of St Julitta's Church, allowing us to go ahead with the restoration work which is now proceeding. We had arranged to see her at Hafod y Gwynt on 12 – 14 May, but sadly she was too ill to make it.

