

# Llansannor Church



We welcome you to this ancient church, built for the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The exact date of the present building is not known, but it is likely that the site of the church was a focal point for religious ceremonies since pre-Christian times. After the Norman Conquest, the church appears to have been built in conjunction with the manor house

opposite, Llansannor Court, and services have been held here for about 750 years. The church is one of only a few in Wales dedicated to St Senwyr, about whom little is known. It was re-dedicated in 1969.

The church was first mentioned as Capella St Senware de la Thawe, belonging to Tenkesbury Abbey (founded in 1108). It was linked

to Llanbleddian Church for many centuries and in 1254 it was valued at only £3.00. During the same decade, the Norman knight, Stephen Bauzan had been granted Brígam manor house in Llansannor after impressing Henry III with his valour, fighting for him first in Gascony, and later in West Wales. Not long after he had settled in Brígam and served as High Sheriff, he was killed in battle at Carmarthen. For years it was thought that the effigy in the church was that of Bauzan, the King of Brígam, but recently doubt has been cast over this theory, as the figure has been dated some 100 years later.

We do know however, that in 1287, Edward I authorised the payment of 105 shillings for a monument to Stephen

Bauzan and another knight in the Welsh Wars thirty years earlier. The motive for this seems to have been the final victory against the Welsh uprising and a special mass was held in the Priory of St John, Carmarthen. This same priory was later in the possession of Richard Gwyn of Llansannor Court. As he was said to have been a descendant of Stephen Bauzan, it is suggested that he may have had an interest in transporting the effigy back to Llansannor in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

## Mysteries of the Effigy

Could it have been a belated monument to Stephen Bauzan?

When, Why and How was it brought to Llansannor?



Who or what is buried underneath it?

Are similar effigies in Hereford, St Athan and Abergavenny linked to Llansannor?

Why is there a dog at the figures' feet?

Could the damage to the right leg have occurred during transfer from Carmarthen?



For the next few centuries Christian worship was based on Rome. Local evidence of this influence is shown in wall paintings uncovered in 1968 when restoration work was being carried out following damage by deathwatch beetle. Work was delayed until specialist advice could be obtained to identify the paintings' origins, extent and the best form of preservation and display. The paintings opposite the south door are thought to depict St Christopher as a blessing for safe travel on entering and leaving the church. They may have been painted in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, and were probably covered over sometime between the death of Henry VIII and the time of Oliver Cromwell, reflecting the change from Catholicism to Puritanism.

Another artefact possibly buried around the same time was a lead ampulla discovered in a field at nearby Church Farm. The tiny shell shaped scalloped flask was in perfect condition and would have contained holy water. Its origins have been traced to the shrine of St James Compostela in Rome.



It would have been used for hanging in the church as a talisman, or could have been buried in the soil as a means of blessing the crops.

The farming community played an important role in church affairs from

the 17<sup>th</sup> Century onwards and the church offers glimpses into the history of the parish by the memorials that are left behind. Although the Gwyn family of Llansannor Court were the major landowners for almost three hundred years, it is interesting that there are no memorials to them in the church, and there is no mention of them within the churchyard. The only evidence of their influence is a fine silver chalice donated by John Frauncels Gwyn in 1795. He was a descendant of the famous politician Francis Gwyn.

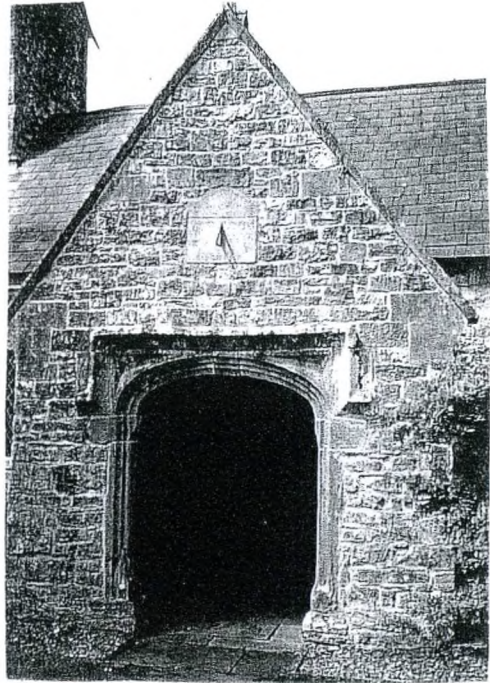
The memorial slab opposite the south door is one of the oldest within the church. It marks the death of a young member of the Eustance family who was born at the time of





the family and inherited Pantylwedd Farm. He was the grandson of a Cromwellian soldier and made his mark on the parish in many ways. He was a monumental stonemason, which probably explains the quality of the two tablets dedicated to his family. He also designed and made a sundial, which can be seen over the South door. It was saved from the ravages of the weather in 1968 by a descendant of his who relocated it inside the church on the west wall, leaving a replica outside in its place.

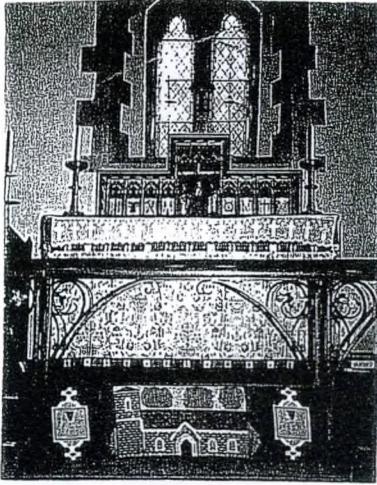
Other memorials are of a different nature. When Rev. George Rees died at the age of 32, his wife arranged for a number of shrubs to be planted in his memory.



These come into flower at different times of the year, bringing the fragrance of witch hazel in January, the brilliance of the orange Azalea in May, and the lovely lilacs to lighten up the sombre yew trees. One of these is by the Lych gate, in an area used as a special burial ground for stillborn babies within the parish.



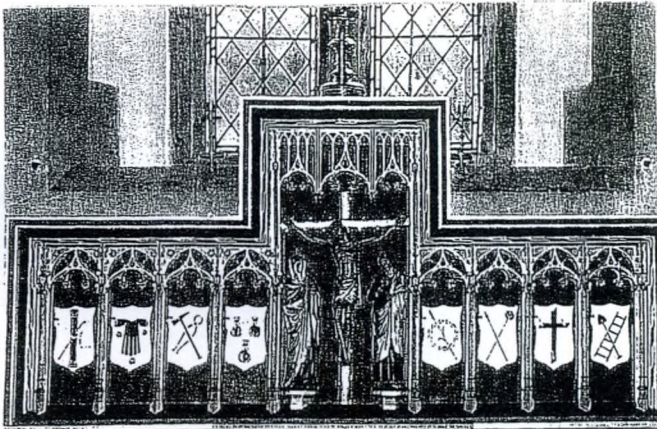
Inside the church, kneelers reflect the skill and patience of the Mothers Union and provide lasting memorial to Iris Davies and Joan Thomas who inspired the other members.



They were also responsible for the churchyard survey

completed in 1984, which is being updated by L.A.M.B.S., our local history group. A copy is available in the pew by the font, along with a copy of 'Llansannor', written to commemorate the Millennium by members of the community making up L.A.M.B.S.

The reredos provides one of the most striking features of the church. It was erected by the longest serving rector, Rev F R Williams in memory of his parents and depicts the events of the passion.



Outside the church, the Lych gate serves the North entrance and a separate gate to the south serves the other entrance linking the church to Llansannor Court.



The large cross by the South gate was restored in memory of Major Watson who lived in the Court in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The base of the cross derives from one of three crosses said to have been used on St Mary Hill for early

Christian worship, and moved to Llansannor, Coychurch and Llangan in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

The angel is a monument to the Griffith family from Llansannor House whose members are buried in a vault underneath. The LAMBS group, formed in the summer of 1999 restored the angel as a starting point for their commemoration of the Millennium.



Price 50p