



Cowbridge Church

The parish church of Cowbridge is dedicated to the Holy Cross on which Our Saviour died and has often been referred to as the 'Cathedral of the Vale'. The church was formerly a chapel of ease to Llanblethian, which is borne out by John Leland's remark in his *Itinerary of England and Wales* that 'the saying is that Lanlithan is the hed paroch chirch of Cowbridge'. The chapel of the Holy Cross was built sometime in the 13th century. It had no separate endowment and in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 it was probably listed as one of the 'chapels' attached to Llanblethian. Very little is known about the church of the Holy Cross before the year 1473 when Lady Anne Neville of Warwick, consort of Richard, Duke of Gloucester (afterwards Richard III), built the south aisle of the church which was allocated to the Nerber family of Llanquian after the chapel of St. James at Llanquian was either destroyed or ceased to be used in the early part of the 15th century. The south aisle has long been referred to as the Llanquian aisle. In 1484 Richard III as Lord of Glamorgan granted a petition from the townspeople of the borough of Cowbridge for the provision of a chaplain in the church of the Holy Cross. This provision of a chaplain seems to have continued until 1550 when one Richard Eles was in receipt of a salary of £4 per annum.

At this time the church was also served by a chantry priest. The chantry chapel on the north side of the chancel was founded by a burgess, William Prior, who endowed it with land and burgages which in 1546 brought in a rent of £11-5s-11d, of which the chantry priest received a stipend of £6. The chantry was suppressed and its endowment was appropriated to the Crown in 1548. The priest was granted a pension of £5. In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (1535) the vicar of Llanblethian received £2-13s-4d from the chapel of Cowbridge. In 1563 it was described as a 'chapel which hath christening and burying services in it' annexed to Llanblethian. In 1603 it was styled a chapel and in 1835 a 'curacy' of Llanblethian when the patrons and impropiators were the Dean and Chapter of Gloucester. The impropriation afterwards passed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the patronage to the Bishop of Llandaff. In 1966 the benefice of Llanblethian with Cowbridge was grouped with St. Mary Church and Llandough.

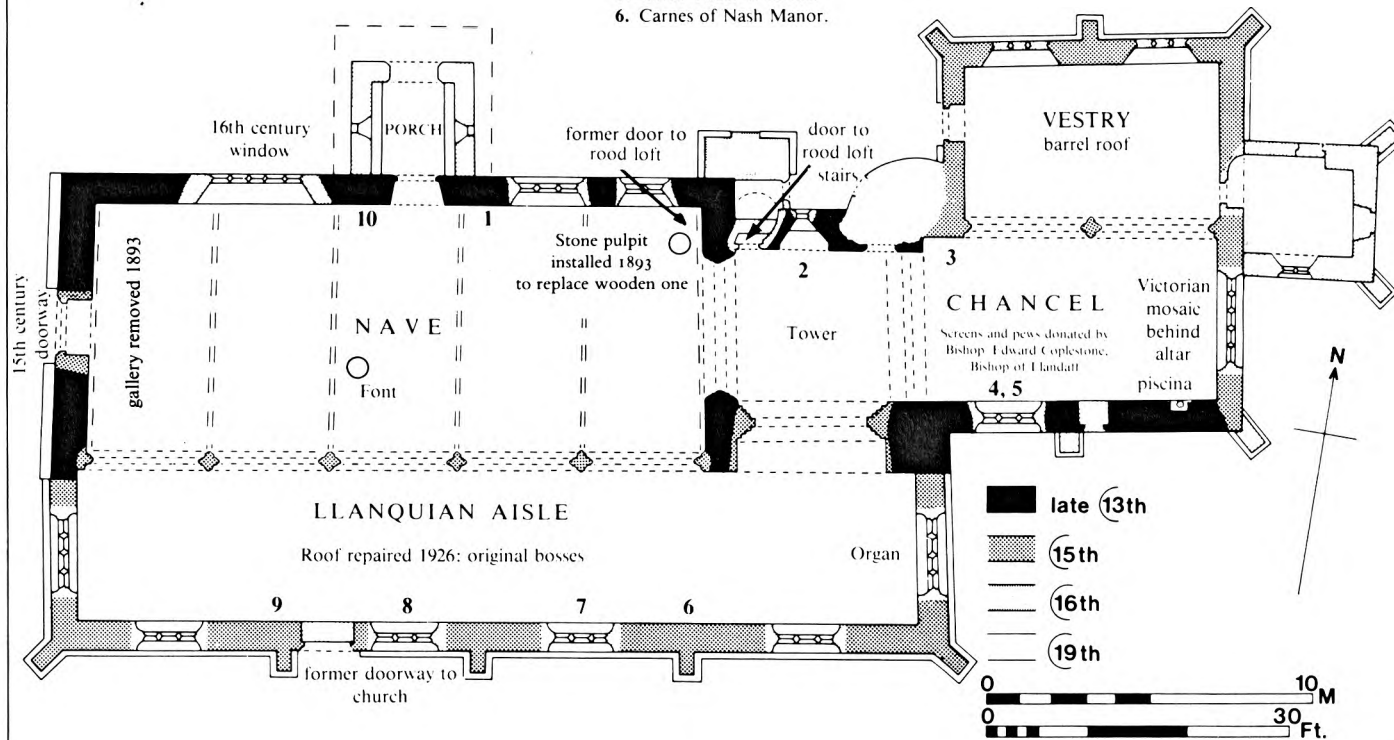
The church consists of chancel with north chapel, a choir under the central tower containing eight bells, a nave with south aisle extending the whole length of the arcade of the nave and choir, and a north porch. The east window is

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KEY

Memorials

1. Bevan.
2. Edmondes.
3. Daniel and Wm. Walters.
4. Benjamin Heath Malkin.
5. Revd. Thos. Williams.
6. Carnes of Nash Manor.
7. Grammar School Coats of Arms.
8. and 9. Grammar School War Memorial window and plaques.
10. David Jenkins of Hensol.



[After R.C.A.H.M.]

basically of 14th-century rectilinear form. It has five cinquefoiled lights in a 2:1:2 arrangement. The two centre mullions continue straight into the head of the window with two trefoiled tracery lights beneath a sexfoil. Each outer pair of main lights is treated as a pointed window, the arches springing from the centre mullions. Again there are small tracery lights beneath a sexfoil of which two are trefoil-headed. The whole window is surmounted by a hood mould which terminates in rectangular stops. The five main lights are filled with Victorian stained glass which is said to have been presented to the church in the 19th century by a member of the Edmondes family of Old Hall. The ten stained glass panels illustrate the birth, life, death and resurrection of Our Lord and depict scenes from the Annunciation, the Visitation of Our Lady, the Epiphany, the Presentation in the Temple, the Flight into Egypt, Jesus with the Doctors in the Temple, the Road to Calvary, the Descent from the Cross, and finally in the centre light, the Crucifixion and Glorious Resurrection.

Beneath the window is a reredos of three panels inlaid with mosaic below an embattled cresting and a row of crosses. The left-hand panel includes two sacred monograms: CHI RHO (the first two letters of the Greek word *XPICTOC* 'The Anointed One' (Christ) and beneath the crown IHS (derived from the first letters of *IHCOYC* (Jesus). The cross with the 'P' is a standard style of medieval consecration cross. The panel also has a Trinity star or Star of David. The centre panel includes a cross pommée within a quatrefoil surrounded by the emblems of the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The right-hand panel has a crown above a fleur-de-lys, a cross pattée formée and the nails of the Passion.

In the south-east corner of the sanctuary is a piscina of Sutton stone under a trefoil-arched recess with octofoil drain. This was uncovered by one of the masons during the restoration of the church in 1893. On the north side of the chancel the composite arches spring above shafts with concave mouldings between, and single rolls following their horizontal outline to give the impression of a capital. The bases of the shaft are similarly treated. The space between each arch is filled by wood and glass partitions with rectangular lights in the head. Below, the panelling is treated as a screen—an embattled cresting on an otherwise plain cornice. Beneath this is a series of panels, plain below, but the top row has applied tracery: cinquefoils in the head with leaf forms on some of the cusping and trefoils in the spandrels. A brass plaque records that the infilling of these arches was a gift from the Cowbridge Grammar School Old Boys' Association 'in memory of Richard Williams, M.C., M.A., headmaster 1919-1938 and of his devoted and inspired service to his school. In memory also of those boys of the school who gave their lives in the Second World War, 1939-1945'. To the north of the chancel stands the choir vestry, formerly the chantry chapel, and the clergy vestry beyond it to the east, which overlaps the chancel and choir vestry. This may have been an almonry since a small blocked opening exists which may originally have been the place where alms in the form of bread loaves were distributed to the poor of the parish.

The east window of the former chantry chapel (now the vestry) is of three

cinquefoiled lights with rectilinear tracery in the head. The window contains stained glass panels depicting coats of arms of various benefactors of Cowbridge Grammar School which were transferred from Seys room and Founders' room in 1978. They include the coats of arms of the Rt. Reverend Dr. Richard Lewis, Bishop of Llandaff (1883-1905), Emily Charlotte Talbot of Margam Abbey (1840-1918), George Thomas Clark (1809-1898) and Sir Thomas Mansel Franklen (1840-1928). The right-hand panel which displays the coat of arms of Cowbridge Grammar School commemorates David Percival Jones, M.A., mathematics master from 1894 to 1912.

Besides the high altar there were once two other altars in Cowbridge church, one in the chapel on the north side of the chancel, which was the altar served by the chantry priest, and the second at the east end of the south aisle, which was probably the altar of St. Nicholas referred to in a clause of a mortgage deed of 1516 which allowed the redemption of the mortgage by repayment in gold marks and groats 'in the Rood church of Cowbridge upon the altar of St. Nicholas between the rising of the sun and the going down of the same'. The present oak altar rails were installed in 1965 in accordance with the design of George Gaze Pace, architect of York. They were given in memory of the Reverend Ewart Lewis, M.A., vicar of Cowbridge from 1949 to 1963.

The chancel is of uncommon length and was furnished on the lines of a college chapel through the generosity of Bishop Edward Copleston when he lived at Llandough Castle. Interest in the choir and chancel is heightened by the fact that for upwards of three and a half centuries the scholars and masters of the Grammar School have sat and knelt there in worship. The chancel is lit on the south side by two Perpendicular windows of three cinquefoiled lights with rectilinear tracery in the head surmounted by a hood mould. These two windows contain stained glass which commemorate two past headmasters of Cowbridge Grammar School. The south-east window illustrates the theme of resurrection and depicts the raising of Jairus' daughter, the raising of Lazarus and the raising of the widow's son. Beneath are the coats of arms of Cowbridge Grammar School and Jesus College, Oxford (which owned the school from 1685-1918) and the Agnus Dei with the banner of victory. This window was erected through the generosity of past and present boys in memory of the Reverend J. C. F. Morson, M.A. (headmaster 1870-1875) shortly after his death. In 1899 this window was removed from the south wall of the aisle to the south chancel. The other window in the chancel to the west of Morson's window is a memorial to his predecessor the Reverend Thomas Williams (1864-1870), though it bears no reference to him. The window depicts Samuel replying to God's voice, the Sermon on the Mount and the figure of Timothy, a disciple of Paul.

The rood-loft staircase doorway, which has a depressed semicircular arch, still remains in the west end of the north wall of the tower. There is no sign of the upper doorway onto the rood-loft but it may be assumed that the loft was entered by a doorway opening westwards into the nave in the north spandrel of the west arch of the tower. The close links which have existed between the

church and school for over three and a half centuries are reflected particularly in the memorials in the chancel and other parts of the church. From its foundation in 1608 till recent times, headmasters of Cowbridge Grammar School were nearly always curates of the parish as well, and the same may be true of many assistant masters. The chancel is full of memorial monuments to members of the Edmondes family and several headmasters lie buried beneath its floor. Between two memorial tablets to members of the Edmondes family in the north wall of the tower is a broad pointed lancet containing a window which depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary captioned by the first lines of the *Magnificat*. On the south wall of the chancel is a memorial tablet to the topographer Dr. Benjamin Heath Malkin (1769-1842), author of *The Scenery, Antiquities and Biography of South Wales* (1804).

The arches to the central tower above the choir are all pointed and treated differently both as regards construction and mouldings. They are equilateral and the mouldings are quite broad and shallow, all of which indicates a late 13th-century date. The arch to the east springs directly from the north and south walls. The mouldings of the compound southern arch—some of which are shallow and concave and therefore typical of the period—are continued unchanged down the jambs with no intervening capital. The inner arch on the west side springs from the round moulded abaci above an engaged pair of slender shafts on a central drum which also has a fillet along its length.

The central tower is a massive fortified structure with four stages of heavy buttresses on the north side and embattled. The embrasures are small and few, the merlons wide by comparison and solid. The tower has an external stair turret which is approached by a doorway with pointed arch. It is battlemented and its upper stage—like that of the tower proper—is corbelled out in typical Welsh fashion. The tower is square, and above all is a castellated octagon which at one time was probably surmounted by a spire. Tradition has it that the spire was struck by lightning and burnt in 1480. The tower has small single and double lights: some square-headed and others trefoiled.

The tower houses a ring of eight bells cast by Evan and William Evans of Chepstow in 1722. At that time the revenues of the borough were mortgaged over nine years to borrow £246 'for new casting the s'd bells and for adding Four New Bells more . . . so as to have a ring peal or sett of eight bells'. Consequently it was only natural that the bells should have the Cowbridge Borough seal impressed on each bell as part of their inscriptions, together with the names of some borough officials as benefactors. The bells, which are now the only complete original Evans' octave surviving, were tuned and rehung in a steel frame by John Taylor & Co. bellfounders, Loughborough in 1935.

The bell inscriptions are as follows:—

Treble in E	EVAN EVANS, Wm EVANS BELLFOUNDERS 1722
No. 2. in D sharp	BENEFACTOR RICHARD GREGORY RECTOR BENEFACTR DANL. DURELL SCHOOLEMASTER 1722



DAVID JENKINS of Hensol Esq;
One of the Justices of Wales.
Died in the Year 1664.
CECIL his wife died 12. Feb. 1671.
DAVID JENKINS Esq; his Son died on Mar. 1696.
MARY his wife died in Sep. 1667.
RICHARD JENKINS Esq; Grandson of the Judge
Died 16. July 1721.
KATHERINE his wife died 19 June 1719.
And lie buried in this Church.



One shilling worth of Bread to be supplied to the Poor every Sunday after Divine service from Charity funds named on a Tablet in the South aisle.

For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat
Matthew 25 Ch. 35 V.

Memorial to Judge David Jenkins of Hensol (d. 1664)
Photograph by John Russell

No. 3. in C sharp	BENE(FACTRESSE)S MRS. MAGT MATHEWS MRS. HESTER WILKINS E.E. W.E. 1722
No. 4. in B	Wm DAVIS IOHN STYDER ALDN. BENES. E.E. W.E. 1722
No. 5. in A	RICH. BATES THOS. BATES ALDERMAN E.E. W.E. 1722
No. 6 in C sharp	THOS. WILKINS, IE(VA)N WILLIAMS GENT ALDERN. BENEFACTS. E.E. W.E. 1722
No. 7 in F sharp	EDWD. CARNE ROG(ER) WILKINS ESQR BAYLIFFS BENEFACTS. E.E. W.E. 1722
Tenor in E.	EDW STRADLING ESQR DEP MAYOR E.E. W.E. 1722.

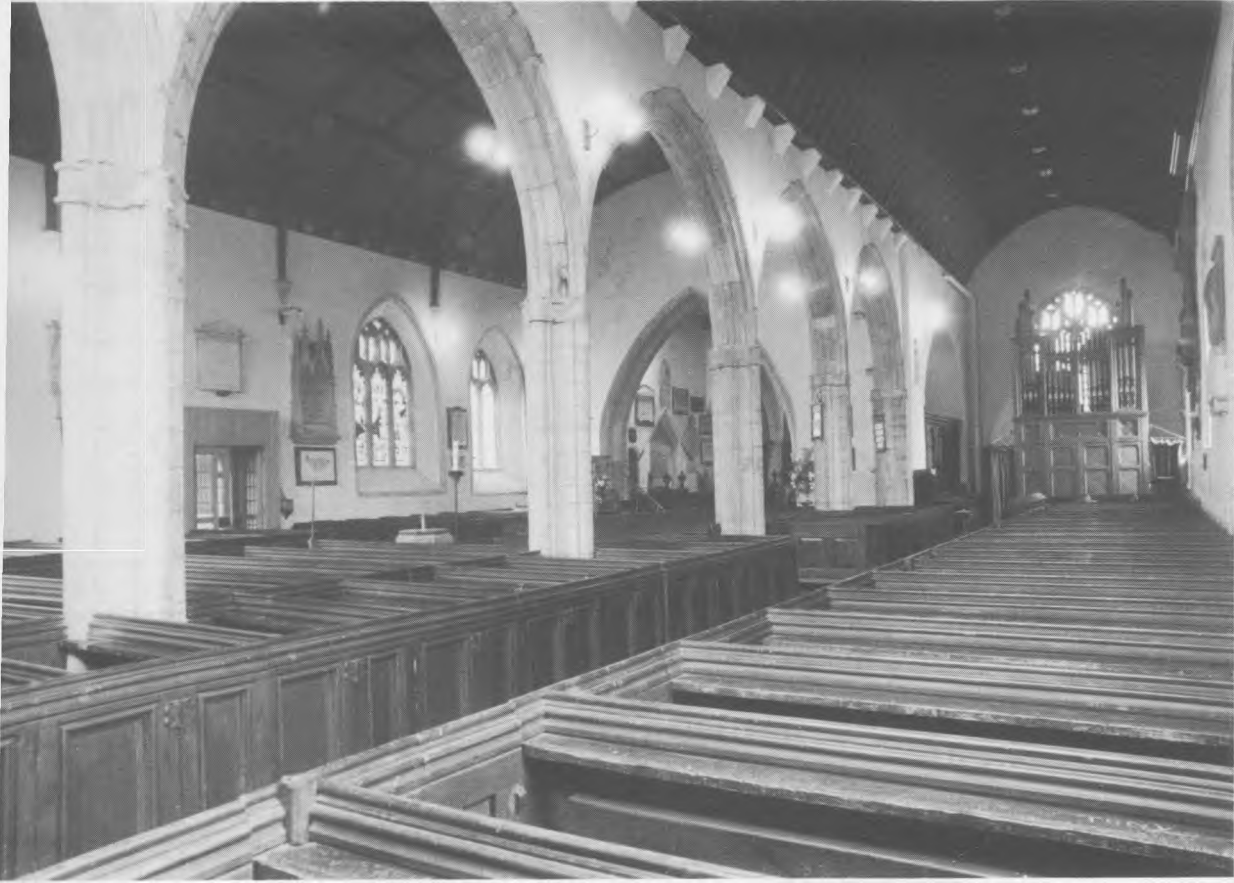
The Reverend Daniel Durel, M.A. (whose name is wrongly spelt on the 2nd bell) was headmaster of Cowbridge Grammar School from 1721 to 1763. The old sanctus bell bears no inscription. It was used as a fire bell and a curfew bell until 1896 and rests at the top of the turret stair leading to the belfry.

The nave has a wagon-truss roof with gilded bosses at the intersections of the purlins and principal rafters. The windows on the north of the nave comprise a two-light and a three-light window with cinquefoiled heads and rectilinear tracery in the heads surmounted by hood mouldings. The stained glass in the three-light window depicts the Sermon on the Mount, Mary Magdalene and the risen Lord on Easter morning, and Christ blessing little children. Beneath in the centre panel is the coat of arms of Cowbridge with the motto 'Awn Rhagom' (Let us go forward). This window was erected in memory of Eva Caroline Tilley (d. 1896), Mayoress of the Borough and wife of Alderman David Tilley, also their children, Herbert David Tilley (d. 1882) and George Eaton Tilley (d. 1888).

The pulpit, which was installed at the restoration of the church in 1893, is a heavy ornate piece between plain moulded top and bottom rails with large leaf forms on the underside of the drum. The stiles between the panels are three stage buttresses with set-offs and double gables surmounted by a finial with foliated crockets. Each panel is treated as a mullioned and transomed window of two cinquefoil-headed lights with a dagger-shaped quatrefoil between and regular quatrefoils below the transom. The head is formed by an ogee arch on slender pink marble shafts with 13th-century-style caps and bases. The arch develops into a finial which rises into the top rail.

On the north wall of the nave to the west of the porch is a marble monument to Judge David Jenkins of Hensol (d. 1664) who lies buried in the church. Underneath is his coat of arms 'Three cocks gules between a chevron gules' with the family motto 'Fe Dal Am Daro' (No one provokes me with impunity). He was incarcerated in the Tower of London for his opposition to Cromwell, but was released in 1656. To the west of this monument is a five-light Tudor window with rounded heads and external square label.

The west window of the nave is similar in design to the East window. It has



South (Llanquian) aisle

five cinquefoil-headed lights in a 2:1:2 arrangement with the two centre mullions continuing straight into the head. All the tracery lights are trefoils and those within the centre mullions are divided vertically by a castellated transom. The outer pair of main lights are treated as pointed windows and have little quatrefoils filling the spaces in the head. The whole is surmounted by a dripstone. The west doorway has a simple typical Tudor arch with concave mouldings which are looking the worse for its weight above. The font is plain octagonal with chamfered rim and a taper down to the moulded necking or string that separates the bowl from the stem. It is set upon a moulded base. The Victorian north porch, rebuilt in 1859, has a depressed outer arch and a pointed inner arch. Inside are the customary stone benches.

The arcade of the south aisle has five bays and the pillars of the arcade consist of four engaged shafts as a central core, separated by a fairly deep hollow and two fillets (which was quite a common arrangement during the early Perpendicular period). The necking follows the shape of the pier below and is plainly

moulded. There is the illusion of a capital even though the shape of the shaft is carried above the neck with the hollow splayed out to meet what almost becomes an octagonal upper moulding. The windows of the south aisle comprise four windows of three cinquefoiled lights with rectilinear tracery in the apex surmounted by hood moulds. The two windows in the middle of the south aisle have stained glass; one window is a memorial to Old Boys of Cowbridge Grammar School who fell in the Great War, 1914-1918, and depicts the warrior saints, St. George, St. Michael and St. Martin. Below are the coat of arms of the school and those of Jesus College, Oxford. The window was designed by Messrs. James Powell of Whitefriars, London. The adjacent window contains stained glass panels displaying coats of arms of various benefactors of the school transferred from the old Cowbridge Grammar School in 1978 by the Old Boys' Association and South Glamorgan County Council Education Committee as a token of the close association between church and school for more than three centuries. The window displays in the centre light the coats of arms of Jesus College, Oxford, Sir Edward Stradling (1529-1609) and Sir Leoline Jenkins (1623-1685); in the left-hand light are the coats of arms of Evan Seys (1604-1681) and Major-General Trevor Bruce Tyler C.S.I. (1858-1893), one of the most distinguished of the School's Old Boys; in the right-hand light are the coats of arms of Frederic W. Edmondes, Archdeacon of Llandaff (1841-1918). Below is a memorial to the Reverend William Franklen Evans, headmaster of the school for twenty-nine years (1890-1918), which consists of three shields. Two above bear the arms of Jesus College, Oxford and Felsted School, and one below displays the coat of arms of Cowbridge Grammar School. The east window of the south aisle has four cinquefoiled lights with the central mullion diverging in the head to form a pointed arch over each pair of lights. The head is filled with Victorian Perpendicular-style tracery lights. The three-manual organ, built by Nicholson & Co. Ltd. of Worcester in 1893, stands at the east end of the south aisle. It was fitted with an electric blower in 1954 and was restored in 1966 in memory of Albert William Morgan, organist from 1947 to 1964 and churchwarden from 1959 to 1964. The south aisle has a cradle roof.

The most outstanding monument in the church is the 17th-century Carne memorial on the south wall of the south aisle. It depicts William Carne of Nash Manor and Great House, Cowbridge with his wife, Elizabeth (daughter of Edward Van of Marcross and Llantwit Major) both kneeling against a prayer-desk bearing an open book while beneath in high relief are his three sons and three daughters as 'weepers'. The monument of pink veined marble displays the heraldic achievement of the Carne family above a plain cornice flanked by obelisks. It has Corinthian capitals and pillars on high bases. The sculpture rests on a marble shelf supported by consoles which display decorative motifs and a shield on which are emblazoned the six quarterings of the Carne arms. Beneath is a rectangular inscription panel in Latin which is decorated with winged cherub-heads and below that an apron with a winged skull symbolizing not death but the passage to immortality through death. Heraldry abounds throughout the piece with the Carne and Mansel arms prominently displayed.



17th-century Carne memorial in the south (Llanquian) aisle

Photograph by John Russell



The nave before removal of the screen which now divides the choir and south aisle

In the centre of the monument between the two principal figures are emblazoned the six quarterings of the Carne arms, once colourfully painted but now sadly faded. The memorial was erected in 1626 by the eldest son, Sir Edward Carne who was Receiver-General for South Wales in the early 17th century.

The south aisle is divided from the choir by a square-framed screen of five bays with embattled cresting which was originally erected across the chancel in 1850. The opening, which is between the first and third bays, has a low pointed arch with leaves and fruit in the spandrels, and springs above plain moulded caps on small shafts. Each bay has two lights and slender muntins which extend into the head with foliage in the cusps between ogee arches. In the pierced tracery above are quatrefoils, mouchette shapes and each pair of lights is covered by a single tracery arch. Below the lights are plain panels. The south wall of the aisle is reinforced by four two-stage buttresses, and in the middle of the south wall is a built-in doorway which was probably the main entrance to the church in earlier times. About a metre from the ground a stringcourse runs along the whole length of the south wall of the south aisle. The west window of the aisle is of four cinquefoiled lights and above, trefoil-headed tracery lights. It does not have moulded jambs and is set well back in the wall.

The church has been restored a number of times. In 1722 the tower was repaired; in 1766 the roof of the north aisle was renewed with timber grown in the churchyard. In 1777 two windows in the south chancel and the east window were blocked up. In the early part of 1848 the tracery of some of the old windows in the chancel which had been blocked up for several years, as shown in a drawing by J. Garsed (c.1840) of the south view of the church, was restored

and partly filled with stained glass. The architect was Edward Haycock of Shrewsbury and the restoration work was due to the Chancellor of Llandaff Cathedral. During the years 1850-1852 when the vicar of Cowbridge was the Reverend Thomas Edmondes the church was restored by John Prichard, the diocesan architect, at a cost of £1,800 of which the Cowbridge Corporation donated £50 'as a subscription towards the restoration of the fabric and rearrangement of the sittings in the parish church of Cowbridge'. A grant of £150 was obtained from the Incorporated Church Building Society for repewing the church 'on condition that 258 of the 645 seats should be set apart and declared to be free (i.e. unappropriated) for the use of the poor of the parish for ever'. The word free was not actually placed on the seats because many of the middle and lower classes, for whose use these 'free' seats were intended, objected to 'sitting in seats which bore any distinctive mark, on the plea of its marking their inferiority of station and their poverty more conspicuous in the House of God where all worshippers ought to be on an equality.' Also the school trustees subscribed £100 towards the restoration of Cowbridge church on condition that the members of the school should occupy their accustomed pews. During this drastic restoration, new windows were inserted in the south aisle and in the west end of the nave. In 1859 the north porch was rebuilt.

In 1893 the church underwent a further restoration when the work included the renovation of the tower and rehanging of the bells, the replastering of the interior, the removal of the gallery at the west end of the nave, the erection of a new organ in the south aisle and the erection of a new pulpit. The cost of this restoration amounted to £800 and the work was carried out by Messrs. Hatherley and Carr of Bristol, under the supervision of Messrs. Bruton and Williams, architects of Cardiff.

In 1913 a start was made to raise funds for the restoration of the tower and nave roof. A sum of £450 was raised which was expended on the renovation of the tower and repairs to the roof. The outbreak of war in 1914 prevented the work of restoration being carried any further. Although attempts were made after cessation of hostilities in 1918 to raise money for further restoration, it was not until 1924 that it was decided to proceed with the work. In 1926 the roof of the nave was completely renewed and the leaning arcade to the south aisle was taken down and rebuilt stone by stone on sound foundations. The work of restoration which was carried out according to plans prepared by Thomas Guy Clarke, architect of Llandaff, amounted to over £4,000. In 1935 the church bells which had been silent for several years due to the poor state of the bellframe, were retuned and rehung in a new steel bellframe by Taylors of Loughborough. On the 7th December, 1935 eight members of the Llandaff and Monmouth Diocesan Association of Change Ringers rang the first complete peal on the bells, consisting of 5,040 changes in three hours and ten minutes.

The church plate includes an Elizabethan silver chalice hall-marked 1576, also a silver flagon donated by Margaret Seys in 1680, a paten cover inscribed on the underside 'The gift of E.S. (Evan Seys) to the church of Cowbridge', hall-marked 1715, another silver paten inscribed 'the gift of Cissell Jenkins' and a



further silver paten inscribed 'In honorem Dei D.D. hanc patinem T.E. hujus parochiae Vicus 1835 to 1883'. The registers date from 1718 but there are gaps in the early years.