



The Celtic Circle

- In The Footsteps Of Saints And Princes -

7. St. Maelog - Llanfaelog



Introduction

When you talk about church architecture, especially when you're dealing with very old or important buildings, there's a word that provokes an almost instant sinking feeling. That word is 'modernised'. The spectre of 1960s concrete and adoption of fads and fashions that rapidly fade have ruined many fine buildings.

St. Maelog's has been modernised. A deft hand has produced a church that is striking, joyous (yet still reverential), beautiful and incredibly warm. This is modernisation as it should be. This

A Visit

Look for the blue 'P' signs for a small car park just off the junction outside the church. You can park on the roadside, but this is possibly safer. You can enter the churchyard by either the small gate immediately opposite the car park entrance (which involves a flight of steps), or from larger gate to your left which is ramped and affords a wonderful view of the exterior as you enter.

The original church on this site was built in 605 AD, and was a chapel of ease associated with Llanbeulan. It's an interesting shift in demographic that Llanbeulan is now a quiet backwater whilst St. Maelog's is thriving. The current church was built in 1848 utilising funding from the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company who were building the railway to the port at Holyhead (the railway ran across church land). The architects were Henry Kennedy and Richard Kyrke Penson. (This must have been a fairly bold choice as he was only 33 and was better known as a painter (even founding the Watercolour Society). He went on to have a very distinguished career as a church architect in Wales, so was actually a shrewd



Shrewdness in choice of architects seems to have been a speciality as North Wales (Tremadog) architect Adam Voelcker was chosen to refit the church in 2001. Working with the specialist skills of a local craftsman, cabinet maker Colin Pearce, the concept of what has become the 'new' St. Maelog's was born. The theme of the 'Tree of Life' is rolled across altar fittings, including a startlingly beautiful setting for a 12th century font brought from St. Mary's Tallyllyn (top left), to a large etched glass screen (by Bill Swann of Porthmadog) that partitions off the Juniper Gallery above the Nave. It's bold, it's modern, and it works.

The whole church is carpeted throughout and the seating is comfortable and spacious. Among several notable stained glass windows the very recently restored depiction of the Last Supper that overlooks the Chancel is magnificent. Smaller in size, though not in beauty, and certainly fitting in its context is a modern piece in the Chancel. Designed by a local woman who sang in the choir here from the age of nine, the 'music window' (left) is the work of Tiffany Tate.

Take a moment to look up and admire the grey-painted roof beams.

The churchyard has some notable features including a 'barrel mortuary' which was designed to hold remains awaiting identification to shipwreck graves to the graves of victims of a 1941 air crash.

This is a fascinating church, beautifully conceived, wonderfully executed and if you want to see how a building can be restored with sympathy and affection, very well worth visiting.



Llanfaelog

Location



NGR: SH 337 730: The church is situated on a road junction in the centre of the village. Coming from Aberffraw it is on your right as you enter the village with a car park signposted to your left

Access: Open daily from 9am to 5pm

Wheelchair access: Purpose designed disabled access, though care should be exercised on the ramp into the churchyard in wet weather.

Service Times: Posted inside the church

Local Amenities: There is a very well stocked village shop immediately opposite the church gates. Shops, cafes and accommodation are within easy reach at nearby Rhosneigr.

