



The Celtic Circle

- In The Footsteps Of Saints And Princes -

8. St. Mary's - Tal y Llyn



Introduction

To see this remarkable church in its remote and windswept setting you feel that it exists almost in spite of itself. It feels as though there is nothing with a hundred miles that would warrant a church being here, yet here it is.

Using the word 'humble' to describe it's interior is to totally miss the point. This is a profound and rough-hewn gem of a place, confident, quiet, understated and has quietly survived indignity and the years to still be vital. This is a place that you really must visit.

A Visit

Parking is at a premium and may well entail getting muddy shoes. Do not let this put you off. Walking into the empty and windswept churchyard this church look very unpromising. A squat, stone built building, very plain with a bell-less tower it could be mistaken for a barn or outbuilding. The present church was built in the 15th century with additions in the 16th and 17th centuries.



The churchyard is notable in having no monuments. If you walk around the building you can see that it's built on a shallow mound about 120m in circumference, the wall partly following it. It's worth also taking a look at the fine moldings around the West window.

Venture inside and you understand the place. Rough beams support a roof that covers an equally rough flag floor. The ranks of backless pews face a chancel with plain leaded lights. The communion table is adorned only with a plain cross and surrounded by a simple painted rail (dated 1764). (The pews are largely modern, the originals having been stolen and burnt

by vandals in the 1990s. The church became redundant in 1992, but is now in the care of the Friends of Friendless Churches.)



The realisation that you are in place without electricity suddenly places it into a context. Every pew has a jaunty nightlight holder, and flowers spring from the spectacular 15th century font, which looks as though it could have been made yesterday. What could be oppressive is lifted into life. This is a truly beautiful place.

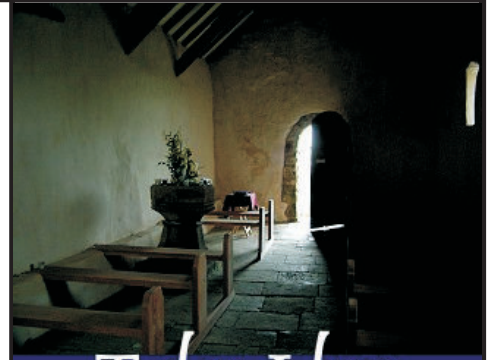
There are so many little details to see, the half-arch between the Nave and Chancel, the candle sconces on the walls, the miniscule choir stall and the splendidly out of proportion pulpit. My guide was a local man who was baptised in this church, in that font. He spoke with a huge fondness for the place, and

huge sadness for those that treated it so unkindly in vandalising it, not a trace of bitterness. Many have lived on Anglesey all of their life and have no idea this place existed, really, go and see it for yourself.



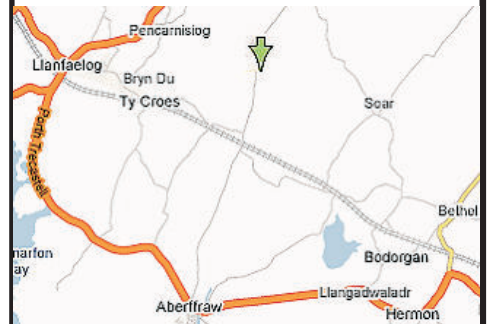
While you're in the area

This area is littered with ancient sites. One of the lesser known is the burial chamber at Ty Newydd with its massive capstone (SH 344 739). Overlooking the ferry terminal in Holyhead, the historic church of St. Cybi sits surrounded by its Roman enclosure. Inside there is much to see including a stained glass window by William Morris and some very fine Victorian statuary. The story of the saints Cybi and Seiriol are very much part of the history of the church in Anglesey.



Tal y Llyn

Location



NGR: SH 367 729: From Llanfaelog, back track until you reach Ty Croes crossroads again and bear left. At the next T junction take the turning to Gwalchmai.

Access:The church is kept locked, though the key can be obtained from 01407 810412/810448

Wheelchair access: To church: very easy, though note the comment on mud (left). The churchyard is rough tussocky grass.

Service Times: Occasional during the Summer.

Local Amenities: Nearby Aberffraw has a well stocked village shop and Gwalchmai has a shop, pub and takeaway.