

THE NEW CHURCHYARD

Towards the end of the 19th century it became evident that more land would be needed to accommodate burials in the churchyard. The old churchyard on the hill was full and despite the development of secular burial grounds at Penygarn and Tal-y-bont, and a churchyard in Borth, to meet the increased population several families from those communities had family graves in Llandre and wished their descendents to rest here too.

The Revd. Z. M. Davies was installed as vicar in Spring 1904. At his first Easter Vestry, held on April 8th, he found that his first major project was to oversee the provision of a new churchyard. As all the land on the hillside had been expended, it was not easy to find suitable land at a price that the church could afford.

Five days later the Church Council agreed to acquire 1.5 acres of land owned by Mr. W. J. Jones, 38 Lidderdale Road, Sefton Park, Liverpool, and in the occupancy of David Rees, Ty'n parc. Mr. Jones was not prepared to sell part of the land without selling the whole lot. The Church Council then approached the owners of two plots of land adjoining the churchyard, namely David Rees, Ty'n Parc, and Owen Morris, Ty'nllechwedd. They agreed jointly to sell 1.25 acres for £250. As this was regarded by the Church Council as too expensive, they deducted £40 each, so a sum of £165 (sic) was agreed.

This was still too expensive, so the Church Council considered Llwynglas "fields", but the owner would only sell the whole field. In the end Miss Lewis, a wealthy property developer who lived in Borth, came to the rescue by buying all the land for a sum of £800 and promised to sell to the Church Council one acre or more, as agreed, at a sum of £106.5s an acre. When this was made known to the Council at a meeting some six months later *the joy of some members was almost unbounded*. Miss Lewis's generous offer was received with considerable relief and gratitude.

Fund raising

As the Church Council had no reserves it immediately set about raising the money to purchase this piece of land, measuring 1.5 acres, which with fencing, would cost £200. The parish was divided into 6 districts with a person responsible for each - from the brook at bottom of Ruel farm to Rhydypennau and Dole to the river Lerry; from Rhydypennau along the turnpike road to Penybont railway bridge and along the Lerry up to Elerch; from Cwncethin bridge, Brynrodin to Lerry (Borth); and the townships of Henllys, Cyfoeth-y-brenin and Ceulan-y-maesmawr. An undertaking was solemnly signed by all members of the Church Council, among whom was the author's grandfather, Evan Evans, that Miss Lewis would be paid and all the work would be completed.

Collecting books were issued and inside was written: *The need of extending the churchyard in Llanfihangel has been felt by all who have had their dear ones buried there, and lately steps have been taken to acquire suitable land for the purpose. The new piece, adjoining the old churchyard will measure fully 1½ acres. The approximate cost, including fencing, will be at least £200. To meet the expenses incurred, a house-to-house canvas of the whole parish has been decided upon and it is to be hoped every parishioner and all who will feel interest will do their level best to help to raise the sum required.*

Signed Z. M. Davies January 3rd. 1905¹

¹ Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn PCC Minute Book 1904 - 1905

The Church Council started the fund rolling by pledging £40. The giving was, no doubt generous as was to be proved later in the century during the two World Wars. The response was generous. The author's grandfather, Evan Evans, Glebe Inn, a smallholder gave £1.1s. Unfortunately, there is no record of the success of the appeal but the target must have been met and surpassed for additional works were put in hand immediately. A path was laid above the well in 1904, which involved considerable re-building of the old churchyard retaining wall, so that funerals could process to the new burial ground without having to go a longer way round through the lychgate. Tanyllan farm and its outbuildings demolished and the stones used to build Ivy Bank, Glyncoed and Ffosygravel Villa. The area vacated by the farm buildings was given to the Church by Miss Lewis and became a little plantation, Parc Bach, where various species of tree were planted, and the bier shed was situated. The trees were felled during WW2. It was consecrated by the Bishop of St David's at the same time as the new churchyard. Today, part of it is a car park, the rest a garden around the well.

The land was fenced in and a hawthorn hedge planted. Several Scot pines, Lombardy poplars and yews were planted around the boundary which formed a thick plantation on the south-west side. These were cut down during WW2 and only two pines remain on the east side. Laurels and rhododendrons were planted along the paths but these have been gradually pruned back or removed over the years.

Burials continued in the old churchyard for some considerable time where there was room in family graves. The new ground was consecrated by the Bishop of St David's John Owen on December 14th 1905. The first burial in the new churchyard, that of John Jones of Ty'nrhelig farm (J121) had taken place on August 4th. He was closely followed by Ann Morgan, the wife of James Richard Morgan, of Blaenwaun farm (J030) who died age 47 years and was buried on August 20th. There are a few inscriptions that relate to earlier deaths but these are of those were lost at sea or buried abroad but later remembered on family memorials².

The Vestry of 1906 set the burial fees and ruled that no interments were to take place and no headstones were to be fixed without the consent of the vicar.

The Harden Jones Mausoleum

An interesting feature is the mausoleum (J001) built by the family of the parish general practitioner, John Harden Jones, who lived in Butrells, now Llysberw, and died in March 1921. Dr Jones was a well-loved medical practitioner in the area for over thirty years.

Dr. Jones's first wife had a daughter, Elizabeth Annie, from her previous marriage to a Dr Norris. She was a ballerina. Sadly she died aged 34 in March 1906. Her mother was devastated and could not come to part with her body for burial. She lay in state in Buttrells and local people, as was the custom in those days, called to pay their last respects. My mother used to recall seeing her lying in her coffin, embalmed and dressed in her ballet clothes. She was buried on 31st March 1906.

² Cf. The Jones family of Resolute Borth and the Williams family of Eamyn House J113 and J116



In order to allay his wife's grief Dr Jones had the mausoleum built to protect his stepdaughter's grave from the elements. It was built by two men from Scotland who stayed with the author's grandparents in Ivy Bank, (now Sanctuary). For many years Polly Oliver, Haulfan, was paid by the family for looking after it.

Both Dr Jones' first wife, Mary Anne, who died on 12th November 1913, aged 64 and his second wife, Elizabeth Parry Jones, neé Parry Jenkins of Henhafod, Taliesin, lie buried in the mausoleum. There is no inscription to either his stepdaughter or her mother, his first wife.

The Dead of two World Wars

There are inscriptions to four men who died in WW1. Griffith Evan Morgan, Blaenwaen, (J30), Ben Williams, Aelybryn, Bowstreet (J29), Edwin Richards, Bronberllan, Llandre (J89) and Ted Williams, Tanybryn, Llandre whose slate memorial stone stands in his parent's grave (J70). There is also an inscription to Constance Fane Roberts, Brogennau who died on active service (H46). There are inscriptions to two who gave their lives in WW2, David Jones, Brynhir, Llandre (H20) and Ellie Robilliard, a Master Mariner of Borth (H26).

An other inscription commemorates Henry Levi Williams who died fighting in Cartegena during the Spanish Civil War (K34).

Tombstones

There are some interesting decorative designs, especially on the earlier slate stones, which depict the Victorian symbolism found in the Old Churchyard. Far more use is made of granite and marble and during the last thirty years the memorials tend to be of low polished black or grey granite with standard inscriptions and no graves are marked with kerbs.

While biblical verses in both English and Welsh are common epigrams, there is only one example of a Welsh *englyn* and one of a Welsh stanza.

K81 James Edward Raw Rees DFC, DL, JP Maesawelon, Waunfawr, Aberystwyth d. 1986 (64)

Gwen siriol oedd ei olud – a gweini'n
 Ddi-gwyn oed ei wynfyd
 Bu fyw'n dda, bu fyw'n ddiwyd
 A lle bu ef mae gwell byd.

K74 Gareth Raw Rees MBE, Tynparc, d 1983 (63)

O! Cawr r'wyt heddiw'n gorwedd
 Yma'n awr mewn euriad dangnefedd
 Tyfaist yn wir etifedd
 Tua'r byd tu hwynt i'r bedd. Geraint.

Two English verses are of interest.

H34 Mary Ellen Humphreys, Station House, Llandre d.1929 (45)

He loved her, yes, no tongue can tell
 How deep, how dearly and how well.
 Christ loved her too and thought it best,
 To take her home with him to rest.

H85 Gwendolyn Williams, Ty'n Bedw, Llandre d.1933 (58)

A dear musician on this green hill laid
 Lies sleeping here! the dew shine bright on her!
 Peerless the music these still hands once made,
 And all her life was harmony as fair. L Wynstanley

Some Burials of interest

James Williams, Troedybryn, Llandre was a founder member of the Welsh Church of St David in Paddington, London (H39). Richard Williams, Britannia House, Borth, had the distinction of being the first Dock Master of the Manchester Ship Canal (H49). Rishard Lloyd Jones, Penpompren Uchaf, Talybont, was Professor of Physics at Madras University (J46). Gwendoline and Arthur Williams, who lived in Ty'nbedw, were well-know musicians during the twenties and thirties and were colleagues of Sr Walford Davies when he was Professor of Music at Aberystwyth (J85).

Churchyard Maintenance

The maintenance of the two churchyards has always been a challenge to the churchwardens and Parochial Church Councils down the years. In the 1930s a Churchyard Maintenance Fund was established mainly to provide for the new churchyard. For many years individuals, usually the current sexton, had been paid to cut the grass twice a year in June and late September. In the 1960s the funds was re-established. Several appeals were launched to raise money to augment it. To reduce the area requiring maintenance the lower part of the new churchyard was fenced off so that the tenant of the adjoining land could graze his sheep on it. In the seventies and eighties every year parties of men and women from the church shared the burden. When this voluntary labour ceased sheep were brought in to graze the area during the summer. This proved affective but it also caused some concern as damage was done to some of the grave furniture. As a result a further appeal was made for money through the Maintenance Fund and for a few years the churchyard was professionally maintained.

In 2006 this contract became unaffordable and has not been renewed. The work is again being done by one person. However, it has been again decided to reduce the amount of land to be maintained and a section at the bottom end, which is surplus to requirement at present, has been fenced and gated so that the sheep of the tenant of the adjoining field can graze his sheep. A new path has been made at the bottom end to give better access to the more recent burials and all the paths have been re-laid with gravel.

In 1935 the Parochial Church Council were faced with stonemasons still trying to set up

memorials without the consent of the vicar as they had back at the beginning of the century. It was agreed to purchase iron gates of sufficient height to prevent this. The new gates were installed and were dedicated by the Bishop Prosser of St David's on March 5th 1939.

Randall Evans Enoch

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