

St Mary's Church, Cilcain

This leaflet is designed to help you, our visitors, to explore our Church. Please join us in worship, if you can: and pray for us. If you would like to help us in preserving this Church for future generations, you may wish to leave a gift, or join us in our annual Village Show (which supports the Church) each August Bank Holiday.



Though there has been a Church here since Norman times, the earliest features you can see in this building date from the 14th and 15th centuries.

The interior is dominated by the great Nave roof, with its winged angels and rich carvings and moulding. It has recently been dated to the early Sixteenth century: it is a glorious structure.

Our Church, like many in Wales, has two Aisles. The North Aisle stood roofless and derelict for over 200 years after a disastrous fire during a Christmas morning Carol-singing in 1532. Re-roofed at the Vicar's personal cost in 1746, it was unused, except for storage, until 1889. The current restoration for the benefit of the Parish and community was completed in 2001 and it is now used for meetings and worship.

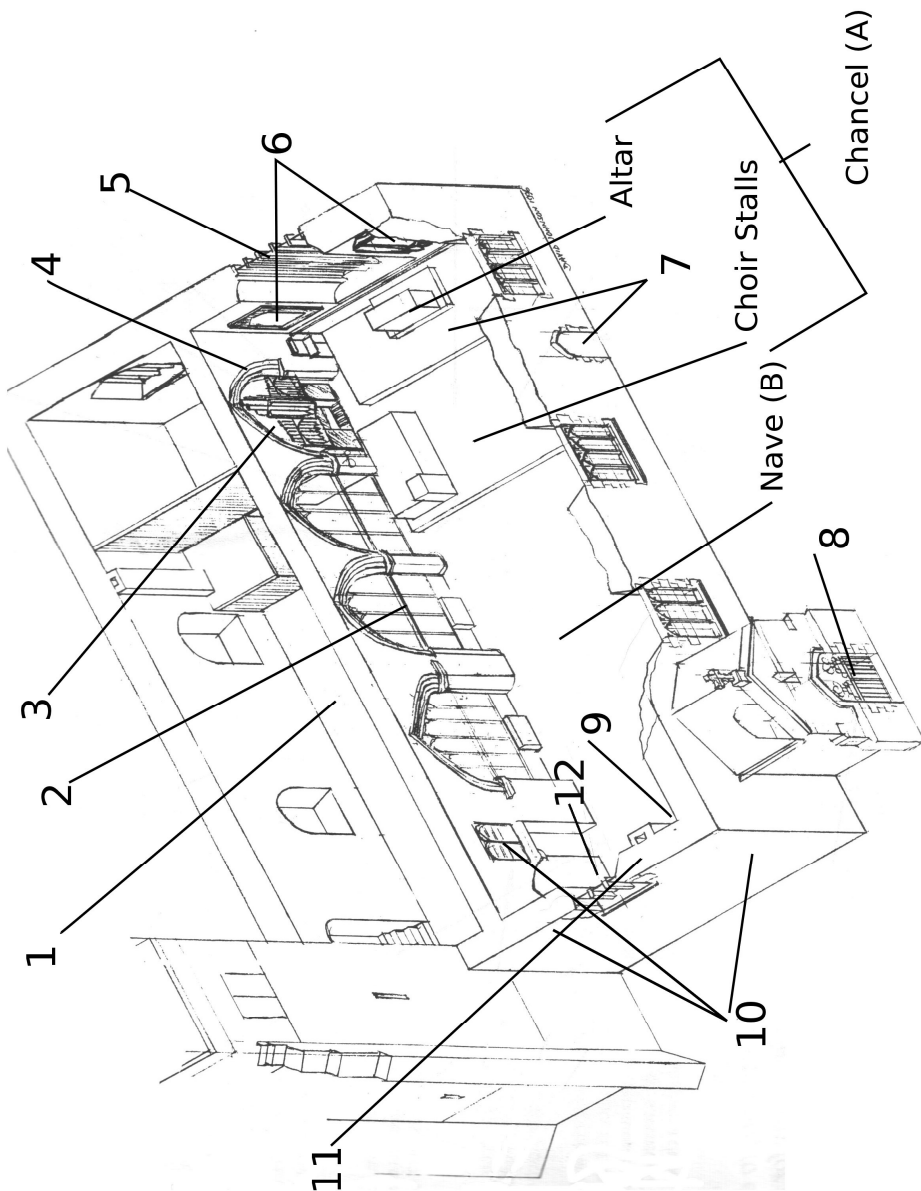
In 1887, William Barber Buddicom, a successful railway engineer, died just as his plans for the restoration of the Church neared fruition. His widow completely restored and transformed the Church in her husband's memory, in 1888. The family lived at the (now demolished) mansion of Penbedw near Nannerch, and also rebuilt Nannerch Church and gave its Village Hall.

The architect for the restoration was John Douglas, nationally known for his work in Chester and North Wales for the Duke of Westminster, and for his

building of mansions and churches in Cheshire and North Wales. The Church as you see it outside is largely his work: Douglas rebuilt the tower, adding the top storey and buttresses and adding the porch and Nave windows. Inside, the old pews, gallery and wall-plaster were removed, and the North Aisle screened off. The Church was transformed in line with late Victorian fashion, reduced in capacity but brightened and heated , and given chancel choir.

Please enjoy some of the features highlighted below

1. The **North Aisle** is currently a kitchen and communal area with a clergy vestry. The small Mediaeval East window is the only remaining feature of the original Aisle which burnt down during an early Christmas morning carol service or 'Plygain' in 1532'. It apparently stood roofless and derelict for over two hundred years – in 1746 the Rector re-roofed it with a simple open-timber roof. We have a plan (p.7) of how of how the Aisle looked between 1746 and 1888, when it was occupied by family pews. The visual focus of the Church as this time, rather than the altar, would have been a pulpit, possibly a 'three decker' incorporating a reading desk and clerk's seat, standing somewhere in front of the present choir steps.
2. The **glazed screens** separating the Aisles drop down like sash windows to allow the use of both Aisles when the Church is very full. The view of the chancel from the North Aisle is very limited. The bottom panels of the screen - which are all a little different – seem to have been made from wainscoting from the old oak box pews. Throughout the Church are panels of re-used **carving** from old pews: some are also in the choir.
3. When the **gallery** was removed in 1888, a small **organ** (bought from Llandurnog Church) was placed behind a screen in the Eastern arch of the arcade, with a door to the Vicar's vestry beside it. In 1912 it was replaced by a new mechanical action machine made by the respected Liverpool builders Rushworth & Dreaper. The former organ screen was built into the new case, and the vestry door was blocked: the vicar now has to reach his vestry down the length of the North Aisle. The organ was hand-blown until 1965. The oil lamps, suspended on wrought ironwork made by the local smith, were converted to electricity when it come to the village in 1957-9.
4. The East end of the Aisles is divided by a row of **three Decorated arches**, which seem to have been cut through an existing wall and which are not completely finished at each end, while at the back of the Church is a wider, and less well made **Perpendicular 'four centred' arch**. The windows of the North wall are crude local versions of round-headed classical windows: there is no evidence of any Mediaeval windows in this



wall. It is possible that the North Aisle represents the original early Mediaeval Church, and that the present South Aisle was added, such a major change of the emphasis would explain why the Parish allowed the North Aisle to stand roofless and neglected for two hundred years.

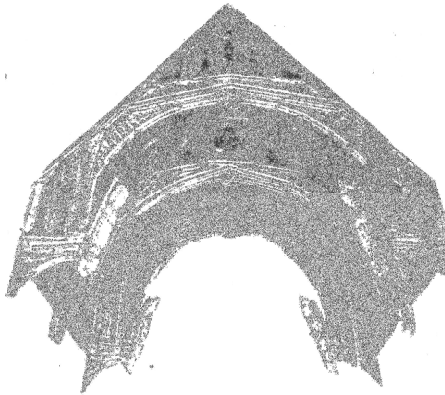
5. The great perpendicular (late gothic) **East Window** contains five panels of Mediaeval glass, on a much later background. In the centre, the crucified Christ, on the left, the Virgin Mary- note the tears on the left side of her face – and on the centre right St. John, with his book (Gospel). St. Peter, with his keys, is on the extreme right. Though many writers identify the left hand figures as St. George, he is clearly the Archangel Michael, since he is feathered. He wields a curved sword above his head. The variable scale of the figures suggests that they may come from different windows, or different tiers of an original window. Originally these panels would have been surrounded by further designs: there is a tradition they were brought to the Church in 1546, but no remaining evidence. We do not know whether the panels were made for the Church and are now the surviving remains of a complete window, (perhaps removed, stored and then replaced when it was thought safe to do so at some point in the religious disturbances of the Reformation), or whether the panels were brought from elsewhere.
6. Around the Chancel, in particular beside the East window, are a range of **memorials** which show changing fashions in the last three centuries. Compare the great baroque Mostyn monument of 1731 to the right of East window, with its cherubs, urns, and stylish but fulsome inscription, with the neo-classical severity of its partner (to Thomas Mostyn Edwards, 1832) to the left of the window. On the South wall, the nineteenth century Gothic Revival takes a number of monumental shapes.
7. The brass plug mounted on the right-hand post of the **alter-rail** is to carry an alms dish for offerings, at funerals. Behind the old carved panels mounted at the back of the right-hand choir-stalls is hidden the old **Priest's Door**, which was blocked up in 1788. Its outline is clearly visible outside.
8. The **porch**, added by Douglas in 1888, contains a pair of **wrought iron gates**, rumoured to be by the Davies brothers but on the evidence by Thomas Cheswise. It is believed that they once formed part of the south aisle chancel gates at Mold church and carry the Wynne family (Leeswood) crest of the Dolphin naiant. They were removed in the 'Gothicising' restorations at Mold in 1856-7.

9. At the back of the Church, by the entrance is a collection of **carved stones and slabs**, many of which were found built into walls during the restoration of 1888. Some are tomb slabs, others are bowls and carvings. (Notes on the wall tell more about them).
 10. The **painted panels**, with creed and the Lord's Prayer, on framed canvas, were painted by Robert Jones in 1809. His name has been painted over, subsequently: perhaps it was thought to prominent? No trace remains of the Royal Arms which would also have been displayed in the Church.
 11. The greying 'Cilcen for God and Church' **Banner** on the back wall was carried by Parishioners marching in Mold and Wrexham to demonstrate against proposals to 'disestablish' the Church of Wales. Such protests were unsuccessful, and the Church subsequently became the Church in Wales.
- A. The Chancel roof** is what is know as a *Wagon Roof*, covering that part of the Church whose repair and decoration would have been at the expense of the Parish priest. Some traces of colour survive on the carved panels at the top of the walls, and until the restoration of the roof thirty years ago, it was decorated with gold fleurs-de-lys. There is no remaining evidence of a rood-screen dividing Nave and chancel. The East wall is the only remaining plastered wall in the Church: this wall was painted with coloured patterns in the 1888 restoration, but has been painted white since. The entire Church – except the dressed stonework of arches and windows – would almost certainly have been painted in the middle ages. The intrusive 'crazy paving' of raised pointing dates from 1888, and replaces plaster.

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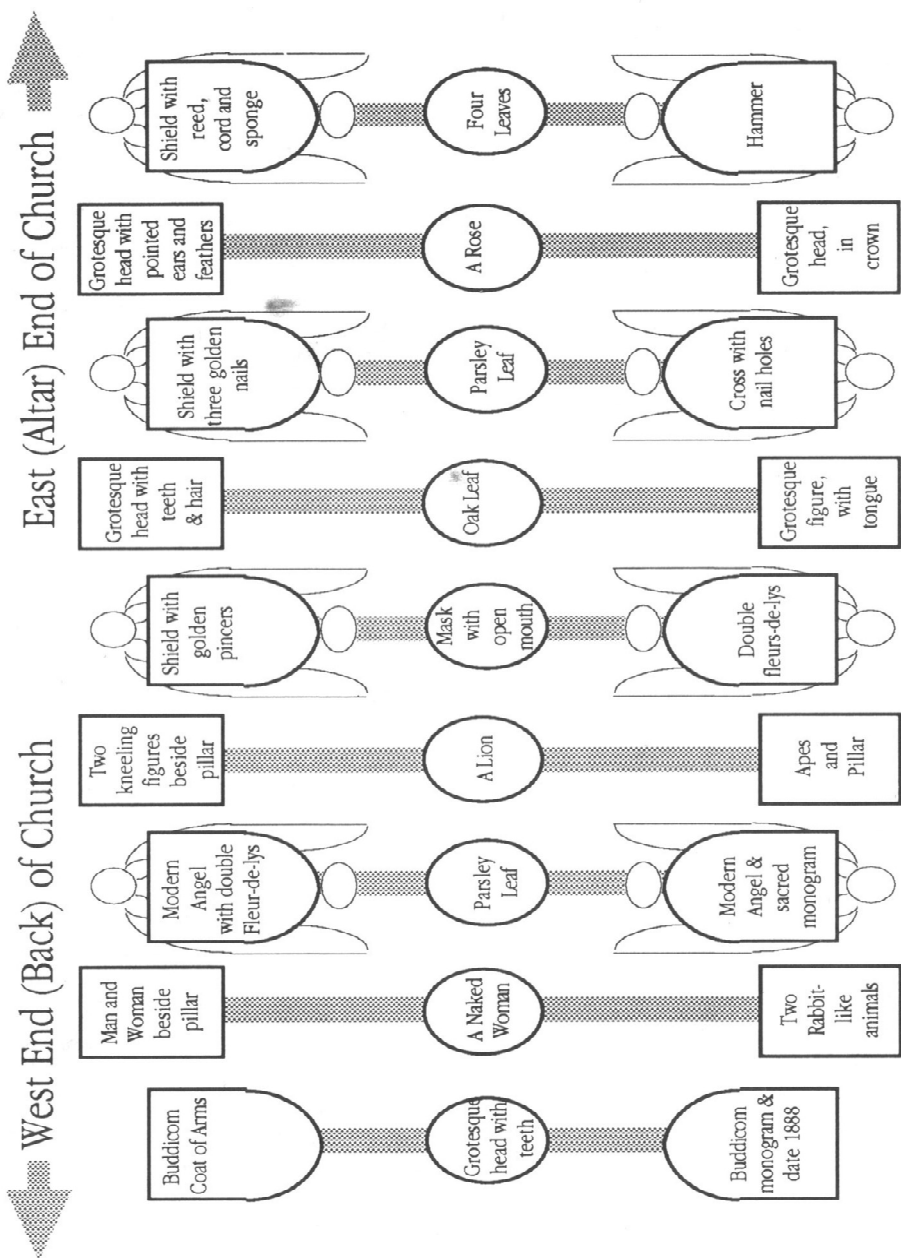
The Great Nave Roof

The Nave Roof is a rare and spectacular piece of late medieval carpentry, a complex and deeply carved wooden structure, decorated with carvings of figures, plants and faces. In 2015 during some work to eradicate Death Watch Beetle an archaeologist was brought in to examine the timbers and he concluded that the roof was made for this church. One possible suggestion being that after the fire in 1532 the parish had built the south aisle and roof.



The Western- most shields, and the two angels nearest the West end are copies made in the last century: the other older angles, some with attractively serene faces, carry shields on which are instruments of Christ's passion. The shields bear traces of gilding, and the angels – and probably much of the roof – would originally have been painted. A fuller account of the roof may be read in a file at the back of the church. The diagram on the back page shows the carvings.

On top of the pillar above the wooden screens there is a coal candle stand and a miners lamp. These were given by Herbert and Maud Jungriesch to celebrate their Golden Wedding in 1995. The story is that Herbert was a prisoner-of-war at the end of the Second World War. There were regulations preventing them from marrying local girls, but Herbert and Maud formed an attachment and wanted to marry. The military authority heard about it and sent two privates and a lieutenant to guard the gates of the church. Herbert climbed over the wall and the vicar, who was inside the church with Maud, let him in the back door. They were married, and went out and told the soldiers. These details are from Herbert himself, who was a coal miner when they returned to Germany.



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