

The doorway is C16 and the door is contemporary. The **threshold** is a reused C14 tomb slab, with a low-relief cross in a recessed circle - tradition has this as the tomb of the [not proven] St. [G]ofor.

The W. tower has C14 origins. There is a **sundial** on the S. wall. The original peal of 5 bells were by John Rudhill of Gloucester, cast in 1784, later recast.

The C6 **preaching cross in the churchyard** has the top missing - many of the stones at the base having formed part of a pre-Christian stone circle at one time. The wall around the churchyard was formerly repaired by the Freeholders; to each was allotted a certain length according to the size of their estates. Much effort is put into maintenance, and gives the building a contented air.

In 1797 Sir Benjamin Waddington, from Lincolnshire, purchased Ty Uchaf. His younger daughter Augusta (born 1802) married Benjamin Hall III, who became an MP (1831), Baronet (1838), Baron Llanover (1859) and Lord Lieutenant of Monmouthshire (1861).

Benjamin Hall engaged in bitter controversy with the Bishops on the state of the Church in Wales, and championed the right of Welsh people to have religious services in their own tongue. He made attacks on the shameless exploitation of Church revenues, complaining of unbounded nepotism. In 1849 he and his wife demanded that, when the new Bishop was appointed he should be Welsh-speaking and resident in Wales. As First Commissioner of Works in 1855, he was the Minister responsible when a clock was placed in the tower of the Houses of Parliament. It was jokingly nicknamed '**Big Ben**' after him. He died as the result of a gun accident in 1867, and his tomb - designed by himself - dominates the churchyard.

Augusta, his wife, (English by birth) had sympathies which were Welsh to the extreme, and she carried on her own Welsh revival. She gave her servants Welsh titles, dressed them in stylised costumes and insisted that Welsh be spoken. In 1834 Lady Llanover adopted the pseudonym **Gwenynan Gwent** (Bee of Gwent) and in 1867 edited a book containing illustrations by herself with coloured plates depicting Welsh female clothing, thus promulgating the idea that credits her as the 'originator' of the **Welsh National Dress**. She died in 1896 aged 94.

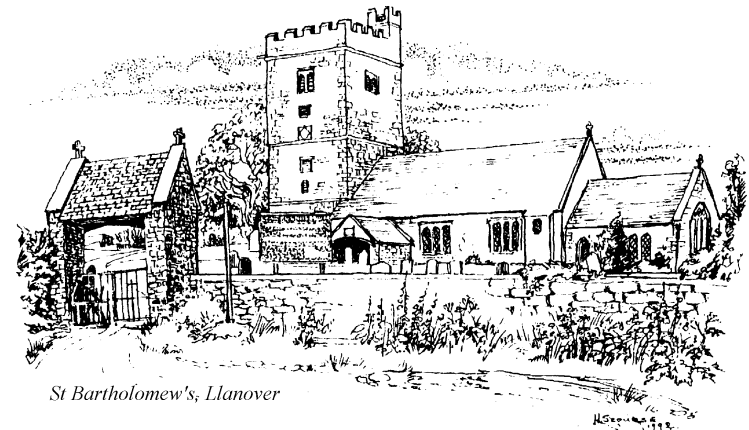
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Diocese of Monmouth

A Short Guide to

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH, LLANOVER, MONMOUTHSHIRE



St Bartholomew's, Llanover

By Friends of Torfaen Museum Trust 1996

For more than 14 centuries worship has continued here, on the banks of the River Usk.

Llanover was the mother church of: Trevethin, Pontypool (separated 1843), Mamhilad (separated 1855) and Capel Newydd (demolished 1893).

The Church of St. Bartholomew (SO 318-094) is located in the secluded hamlet of Old Llanover, on the right of the A4042 road from Pontypool to Abergavenny.

The register of baptisms and burials dates from 1661 and marriages from 1754. Vicars are listed from 1535. In 1851 there were seats for 250 (of which 50 were free) and the average congregation was 100 in the mornings and 56 in the afternoons.

The earliest form of the name Llanover Church is Llanmouor (c1150) Llan Myfor. Llan means church, and it is suggested that Llanover is a corruption of Llanddwfr, the Church of the Waters; as the area abounds in springs and streams. When the Normans came into Gwent, they gave the name of an Apostle - St. Bartholomew. An alternative supposed dedication to St. [G]ofor does not pre-date the C18 and its origin is dubious.

In 1285 John de Hastings, Lord of Abergavenny, gave Llanover Church to the Dean and Chapter of Llandaff. In 1291 the church was valued at £3-6s-8d, the vicarage was established but not valued.

St. Bartholomew's has three different building periods, the **nave being the earliest**.

In the C13 **nave**, the ends of closely-spaced mediaeval **rafters** can be seen below the ceiling. The C13 semicircular **font** is decorated with a band of daisies [a fertility symbol] and wheels with cable moulding.

At the E. end are C14 **rood-loft stairs**, nearby is a low level **piscina** (indicating a **floor-level 3 ft lower than today**, this would have been **considerably lower than the churchyard**).

Surrounding the font is the large enclosed panelled area, reconstructed from sections of two polished C16/17 oak **pews**, with moulded framing, belonging to the Prichard family of Ty Uchaf, Llanover who gave 2 Sheriffs to the County. On the back of the 'pew' is carved their **arms**, in relief, and an **inscription**.

A brass plate commemorates William Prichard and his son Mathew (1610), in armour, with folded arms and pointed beards. A further inscription

recalls Water Rumsey, born 1584 (related to the Prichards by inter-marriage) made a Judge (1631), dismissed by Parliament (1647) and reinstated at the Restoration, just before his death.

An inscription to Walter Cecil (died 1754) whose Shield of Arms marked his affinity to the Earls of Exeter and Salisbury, and whose tombstone lies alongside the Prichards' slab underneath the floor, has disappeared since being described c1800.

Most other pews have the **names of the Farms** in the Parish, carved on them, (perhaps in a local continuation of the 'Family Pew'). Such an ancient church shows building alterations which follow liturgical changes; the rood screen was removed and replaced by a pulpit (the present pulpit was salvaged from St. Bodolph's Church, London in 1988), box pews were put in and the sanctuary railed.

Legend says that there was a **secret passage** from the church to Court Farm - the seat of the Prichards before they moved to Ty Uchaf.

The painted **Royal Coat of Arms** above the chancel arch are unusual:- the Lion and the Unicorn are 'lively', emerging from the Garter Shield which is askew. The shield has the Arms of Hanover on an escutcheon. Probably painted in the time of Lady Llanover - she inherited a title in 1828 - the Arms were exposed c1933, having been concealed, and restored in 1993. On the N. wall are two hatchments; one for Sir Benjamin Waddington, High Sheriff of Monmouthshire, c1799 (died 1828) the other for Lord Llanover (died 1867).

The original church **ended at the chancel arch**. The chancel has a C15 E. **window**. The **C16 chancel arch**, its small span and the **step down** into the chancel, suggest a previous chancel. There is a piscina in the S E corner. The oak **altar rails** are marked '1700' and on the gate are cut, W M D W C W [church wardens]. Llanover is one of very few churches in which the chancel steps go down instead of up. The downward step was due to the belief that, the nearer you came to God, you should step down and sink to your knees at the communion step. Perhaps the floor of the nave was raised to conform with this belief.

The pre-Reformation **S. porch** contains a **stoup** and the **stone tablet** (1750) over the porch entrance, listing the two church wardens and Evan Thomas Tyler (tiler?) refers to the re-roofing and not to the original construction.