



The Celtic Circle

- In The Footsteps Of Saints And Princes -

5. St. Cwyfan - The Church in the Sea



Introduction

With its stunning location, its isolation and its extraordinary stone-walled island St. Cwyfan is possibly the iconic Anglesey church.

Its image is frequently used to promote the island to tourists and is instantly recognisable by almost everyone that lives here. Yet, so few have actually visited it. A combination of isolation and the fact that it involves effort, time and a bit of research to visit it means that it remains peaceful. Pick your time carefully and enjoy a walk out to this enigmatic island church.

A Visit

NB: This church is only accessible at low tide. When you visit

keep a watch on the sea or your visit may be longer than you anticipated!

A narrow lane with lots of passing places leads almost from the gates of St. Beuno in Aberffraw to a small parking area with a slope down to the beach. On a sunny day the view across the bay to the church is stunning. Keep to the beach that curves round to the church island and access the island by climbing a flight of stone steps. There is a handrail, but be careful if the steps are wet.



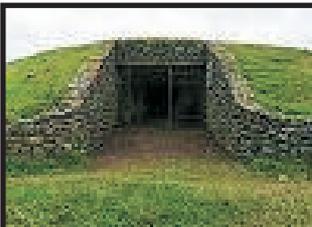
St. Cwyfan established his church here in the 7th century though the present church is from the 12th century. There was extensive reconstruction in the 14th century and much of the church you see today dates back to then. There was also a northern aisle and arcade added in the 16th century. The roof beams, although much repaired, date back to the late 16th century and have well-preserved arch-braced trusses.

Inside, the floor is plain concrete and both sides of the central aisle are lined with rows of neat wooden chairs. The simple altar is flanked by a high wooden pulpit and a superb organ. The natural light from the simple leaded windows gives the whole place a very pleasant 'airy' feel which was helped by fresh flowers. The plain turned candlesticks and simple

wooden cross look exactly right in this setting. Make sure you take a look behind the door, next to the brushes and cleaning kit is the church bell mounted on a wooden stand.

Until the 17th century St. Cwyfan stood firmly on dry land. Rapid erosion from late in that century formed the island on which it now stands. The erosion was so severe that even graves were swept away. When the tides didn't allow access services were held at nearby Plas Llangwyfan and by 1871 the church had been replaced by St. Mary's, Llangwyfan (No. 6 on the trail).

At the end of the 19th century the church was roofless and in a poor state. Enter Harold Hughes, the architect and archaeologist from Llanfairfechan. He raised the sum of £82 to restore the roof, money was also raised to build the retaining wall that arrested the erosion and makes the church so striking to this day. Rubble from the collapsed North aisle was used to fill the arches of the arcade (above left) and they remain an important interior feature.



While you're in the area

Llys Llewelyn is a new community development with quality accommodation, cycle hire and local crafts for sale just off the A4080 in Aberffraw itself. The signboard at the church gate gives directions to the historic site of the royal court of the Princes nearby. Barclodiad y Gawres burial chamber is a short drive West. Famed for its ancient rock art it is one of the most important prehistoric monuments on Anglesey. Reached by a dramatic headland walk.



St. Cwyfan

Location



NGR: SH 344 710: With the gates of St. Beuno, Aberffraw behind you, there's a small signposted turning to the right immediately in front of you. Take this road until it runs out!

Access: Phone 01407 810412 Or 810448

Wheelchair access: Extremely difficult, access is via a long-ish walk across a beach/rocks and there is a steep flight of stone stairs to reach the church.

Service Times: Occasional in Summer months.

Local Amenities: Aberffraw has a 2 very well stocked and friendly village stores one with a Post Office and free-to-use ATM. It also has a popular local pub, Y Goron- 'The Crown'. There is also cycle hire, cafe, shops and accommodation available at the new Llys Llewelyn development