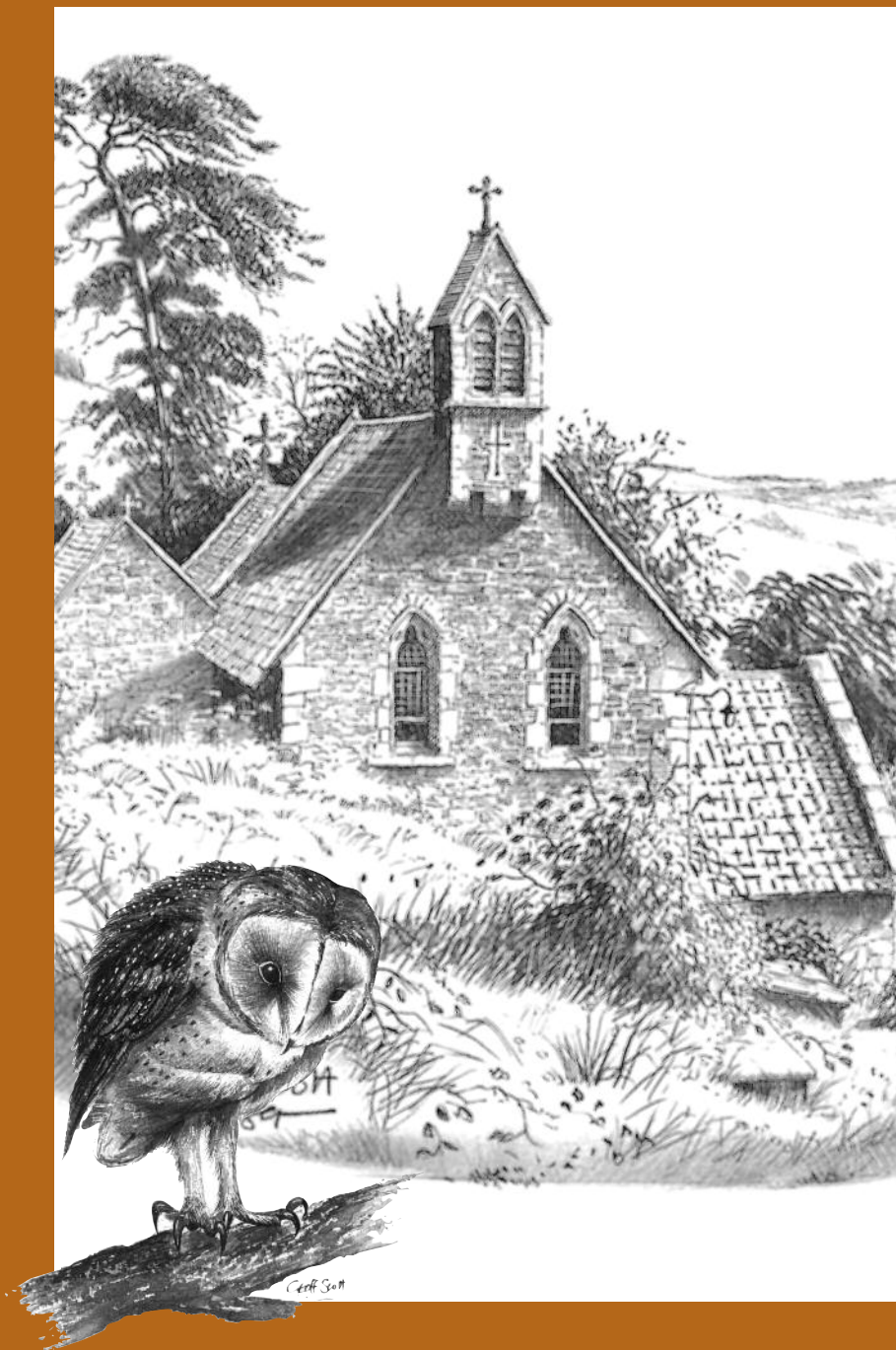


LLANDEWI VELFREY



*Naws am Le
Sense of Place*

Origins

The name reinforces the pre-Norman origin of the present community. The 'Llan' or 'church' is dedicated to St. David (Dewi Sant - the patron saint of Wales). 'Velfrey' derives from the commote of Efelffre, a pre-Norman territorial unit which also covered neighbouring Lampeter Velfrey and Crinow.

Early History

Finds of stone axes testify to activity in this area perhaps as early as 2500BC and while Bronze Age burial and ritual sites are rare, several mounds of burnt stone may indicate settlements during this period. Visible early settlements are those of the Iron Age. The best preserved, Caerau Gaer and Llanddewi Gaer, have substantial defences. Whether or not they were occupied in the Roman period and after is unknown, but it can be no coincidence that the later church of St. David's is sited at the foot of the scarp on which these significant centres of early power and influence stand.



Llanddewi Gaer

The Development of Llanddewi Velfrey

The road past Scapin Farm and Henllan would have been an obvious ridge route, which may have been replaced by the route now taken by the A40 on the other side of the valley. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries the present main road was governed by the Whitland Turnpike Trust. The newer part of the village became known as

'Commercial' after the public house of that name. There was reputedly a forge close to Penblewin Cross and nearby the Speculation Inn provided a resting place. Other forges also existed next to the Parc-y-Lan and the old post office. The Wheelabout Inn (now Glenfield), near Bethel Chapel, was originally a coaching inn and reputedly the site of the last cockpit in Wales. The Commercial Inn (now Commercial Cottage) stood in the centre of the village until the 1880's when the licence was taken over by the Parc-y-Lan Inn and the Commercial became a post office and shop. There was also an alehouse near Ffynnon which was the scene of a manslaughter in 1670!

Llandaff Row was built early in the twentieth century in memory of Richard Lewis of Henllan, Bishop of Llandaff.

The War Memorial was unveiled by Sir Wilfrid Lewis in 1920. This was probably the first war memorial in Pembrokeshire.

Local Gentry

The Lewis family have farmed in the parish for generations and have featured significantly in its history. Even in 1774 their estates stretched beyond Llanddewi and included Glanrhyd Farm (Castell Dwyran). Unfortunately Glanrhyd was later lost to Trewern Estate while gambling!

In 1817 John Lewis married Elisa Callen and acquired additional land at Templeton. John and Elisa had two sons and when their father died in 1834 the eldest, John, inherited the estate while Richard became a clergyman.

John Lewis in 1854 demolished the family home at Henllan and built a mansion in its place (completed in 1856). The following year John married his cousin, Katherine Callen, and inherited Molleston Estate, Templeton. As Katherine was the last in the line of the Poyer family all male members of the Lewis family now have Poyer in their name. Colonel Poyer gained fame in the Civil Wars, and met his fate when he was executed at Covent Garden. Henllan Mansion was demolished in 1956.



Richard Lewis (1821 - 1905)

Richard Lewis was presented to the parish of Lampeter Velfrey in 1851. However, as he spoke little Welsh the Bishop of St. David's refused to institute him and a legal battle ensued. Richard took a Welsh examination but failed and it was only after an appeal to The Archbishop of Canterbury and another examination that he was finally instituted as Rector. He became Rural Dean of Lower Carmarthen (1852), Canon of St. Davids (1865), Archdeacon of St. Davids (1874) and in 1883 Bishop of Llandaff. During his distinguished episcopacy Bishop Richard Lewis established The Bishop of Llandaff Fund which had reached over £60,000 at the time of his death in 1905. He was laid to rest at St. David's Church, Llanddewi Velfrey. His grandson, Sir Wilfrid Lewis, became a high court judge.

Llanddewi Velfrey's Mansions

Historic houses included Henllan, Plasrwn, Trewern, Hendre, Panteg and Fron.

Schooling

Llanddewi probably had a school as early as 1748 and circulating schools existed in the parish from 1755. According to Lewis's 'Topographical Dictionary' a schoolhouse was built in the churchyard at Llanddewi in 1828 at the expense of the parish. This later became a National school. In 1797 Ffynnon Chapel established a school which probably continued until the end of the 19th century. At one time there were three Sunday schools in the parish.

On the 7th August 1876, a new school building was opened by Rev. Richard Lewis on land donated by Henllan Estate. Llanddewi Velfrey School was closed in July 1988.

Wildlife and Country Walks

If you walk towards the church you are likely to see woodpeckers; at dusk you may hear tawny and barn owls, and in the spring this walk is bordered with beautiful wild daffodils. During the spring Llanddewi Gaer is covered with bluebells.

On this walk you will no doubt spot the buzzards and kestrels which nest in the area. If you stroll further past the church towards White Mill you may catch a glimpse of herons and mallards. During the spring and summer this path is ablaze with wild flowers.



Bluebells



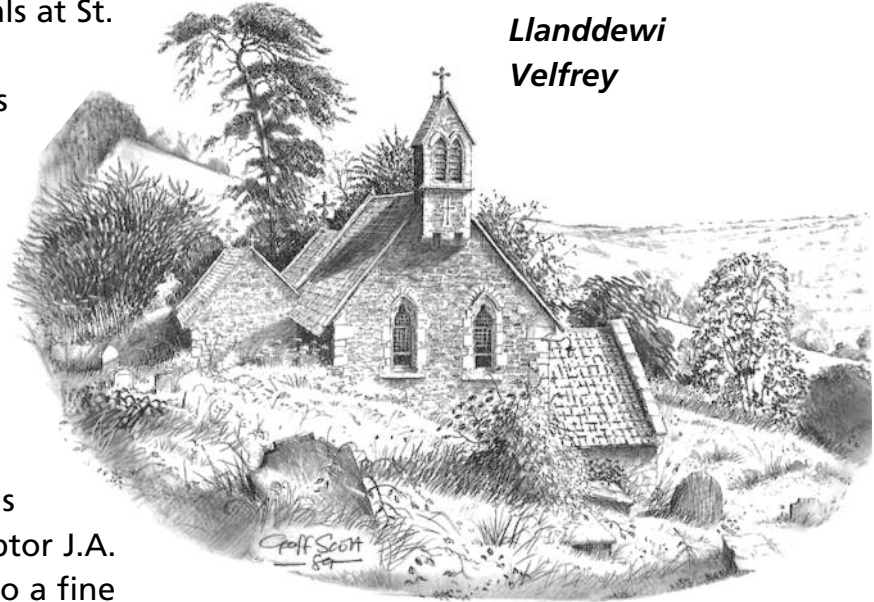
Early purple orchids

Religion

St. David's Parish Church was known between 1282 and 1517 as Llanddewi Trefendeg although nobody can explain this name. A curious feature was that more than one priest shared the living; originally these were called portioners but by 1596 they were known as rector and vicar. Soon the rectorship became a sinecure held by an absentee who was often very distinguished. From 1832 to 1941 the rectors were professors or vice-principals at St. David's College, Lampeter.

Inside the cover of a baptism register is written: 'The church of Llanddewi Velfrey having been repaired and restored at an expense of £700 was re-opened on Tuesday 7th day of May 1861'. In 1893 the belfry and west wall were rebuilt. The church contains some fine medieval carved heads and interesting 19th century memorials, including those to the Lewis family by the well known London sculptor J.A. Smith and his son C. Smith. There is also a fine memorial to Bishop Richard Lewis, whose heraldic arms are incorporated in the floor tiles of the church. St. David's Church was grouped with Lampeter Velfrey in 1974.

*St David's
Llanddewi
Velfrey*



Ffynnon Baptist Chapel was named after a local well known as 'Ffynnon well na buwch' meaning a 'well which surpasses a cow'. Supposedly the well produced the purest water and never dried up. The site on which Ffynnon stands was leased in 1723 and the chapel is recorded as being 'lately built' in 1725; previously meetings took place in a private house nearby which was known as Ffynnon. In 1787 the building was extended and in 1794 Ffynnon became a church in its own right. The first minister, Benjamin Davies, was appointed in 1797 and by 1799 he was also preaching at Princes Gate and later established Glanrhyd Chapel near Lampeter Velfrey. Ffynnon Chapel was rebuilt on new ground in 1832. In 1844 Blaenconyn Chapel was established in Clynderwen with 90 members being released from Ffynnon. Later during the ministry of John Rees (1910-1923) Rhos Chapel in Llanfallteg was established.



Ffynnon Chapel

Trefangor Burial Ground.

About 300 years ago all burial grounds were owned by the Church and Baptist burial services were not permitted. Therefore for those Baptists living in Pembrokeshire in the late 17th century it was fortunate that one of their leaders, Griffith Howell, donated land for a burial ground at Trefangor Farm. Griffith Howell was born in Narberth in 1640 and was a founder of 'Rhydwylym', established in 1668.

The first burial at Trefangor was John Howell, Griffith's son, and in 1705-06 Griffith Howell himself was laid to rest.

Trefangor burial ground



Bethel Independent Chapel began as a school room in 1824. The mother chapel is Henllan in Henllan Amgoed, one of the first chapels to be built in the area (in 1697). Interestingly Bethel did not hold a licence to carry out marriages until 1921 and worshippers were married at Henllan. Bethel was rebuilt and enlarged in the 1840's and restored in 1912. Today the services are still conducted in Welsh. The interior contains memorials to some past ministers.

Bethel Independent Chapel



Quakers probably met at Trewern Farm or a cottage nearby in the 1660's. Unfortunately they were persecuted for their beliefs. Their most prominent member, Lewis David Richard, eventually bought land in Pennsylvania and crossed the Atlantic in 1690. He called his property Haverford; it is now the site of a famous Quaker college. The Quakers also had a graveyard at Trewern known as The Friends Burial Ground or Machpelah.

Country Code

Respect • Protect • Enjoy

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Text researched and written by Llanddewi Velfrey residents
in conjunction with Cambria Archaeology.

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