



1 St Silin's Church

The first church on the site dates from the thirteenth century. It was a cruciform shape with an aisled nave, giving it a double nave and two chancels, north and south. This church was razed to the ground during Owain Glyn Dŵr's rebellion in the fifteenth century.

The quoin line in the stonework is thought to be the southwest corner of the transept of the original church.



The carved corbel stone to the western most pillar of the arcade is thought to be Early English in style and therefore dates from the original church. Its survival is a vital clue in establishing the design and position of the early church as it tells us there was an arcade on this spot, and therefore there must have been a south aisle.

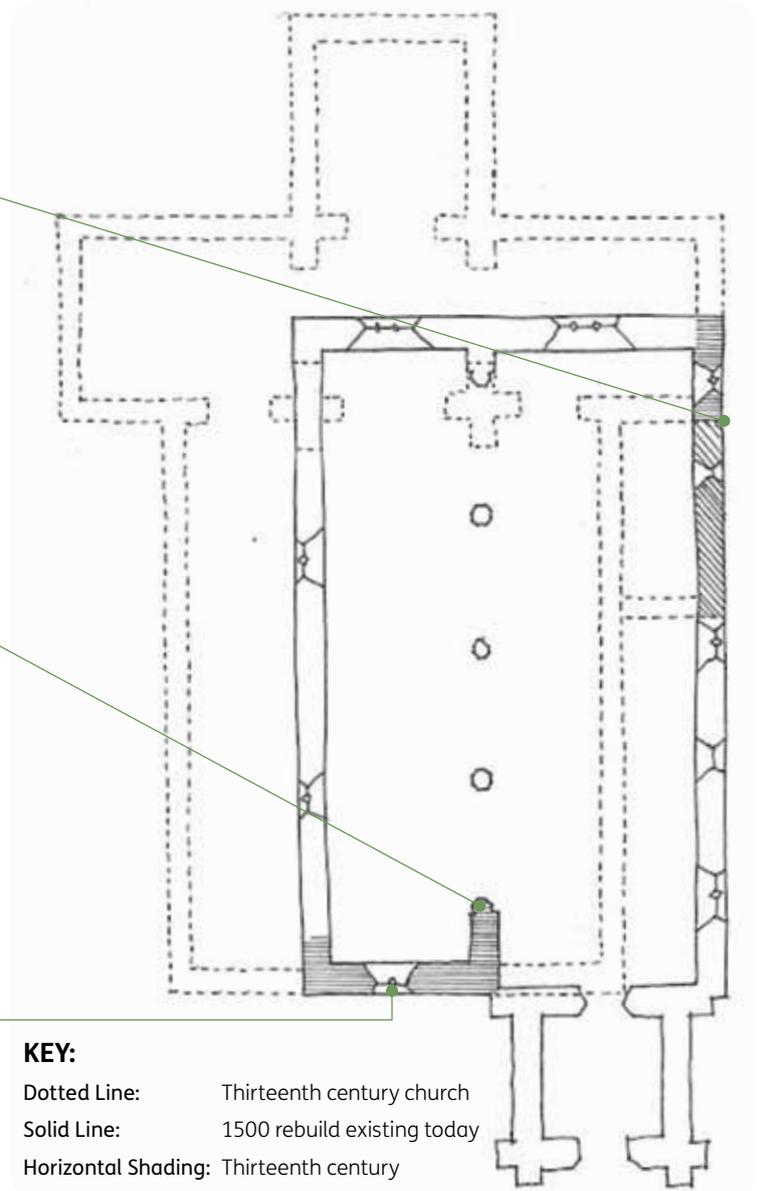


Evidence of a door in the west gable in the stonework below the window suggests this was the main west entrance to the original church. The door was later filled in and the space used as a window.



Rebuilding the church

By 1500 the church had been rebuilt around the remains of the old one. Traces of the thirteenth century church can be seen in the stonework of today's building.



KEY:

- Dotted Line: Thirteenth century church
- Solid Line: 1500 rebuild existing today
- Horizontal Shading: Thirteenth century church in present church
- Diagonal Shading: Early fourteenth century chapel in present church

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Owain Glyn Dŵr

Owain Glyn Dŵr was a Welsh nobleman and experienced soldier who was knighted by Richard II in 1387 for his support against the Scots, but later turned against the English kings when they failed to help him get back land stolen from him by Lord Grey of Ruthin. On 16th September 1400, he had himself proclaimed Prince of Wales and united the Welsh in their last great rebellion against the English.

Solid buildings such as homesteads and churches were often used for refuge and garrisons and many were razed to the ground by the English. St Silin's church may have been one such casualty, especially as it was closely associated with Glyn Dŵr's castle at Sycharth. By the end of the rebellion, only a few walls were standing and these, and the loose masonry, were incorporated into a new church.



The mound at Sycharth today

The seventeenth century

The church fabric was once again affected by national conflict during the civil war. When Parliamentary soldiers tried to fortify themselves inside the church, the east window was destroyed, along with an image of St Silin and figures on the rood loft, when Royalist forces tried to flush them out. Bullet holes from the Royalist forces can still be seen in the timber door on the south side of the church.

After the war, as well as repairing the damage, the community added the impressive octagonal font with oak spired cover and pulley, and increased seating by adding a panelled west end gallery - the balustraded front was added by the Victorians.



Eighteenth century:

Queen Anne Royal Arms

Queen Anne's 'bounty' was created in 1704. It was a fund set up with the sole purpose of supplementing the income of poorer Anglican clergy. Many churches bear the Arms of Queen Anne in recognition of this and St Silin's church has one of the finest examples, in the form of a plaster relief on the north wall of the nave. This is sadly encroached on by a monument to Foulkes.



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Benefactors Board

A Benefactors Board dated 1740 shows a table of legacies left to the poor. It has recently been restored and placed in its current position.



Commandments Board

On the west wall in the gallery is a Commandments Board, depicting the Ten Commandments with Moses and Aaron either side.



Early nineteenth century

On the west wall by the entrance door hangs a sketch of St Silin's in 1832 (drawn in 1975). The church is unrecognisable, not because the sketch is poor, but because the church has a timber spire in place of a stone tower. St Silin's Church today is so dominated by the west tower that it is hard to imagine it otherwise, but the tower was built as recently as 1832 to replace the timber spire, which burnt down in 1813.



Victorian restoration



In 1890 the church was restored under the direction of the Victorian architect Arthur Baker. Unlike many Victorian restorations, this work was done with sensitivity and with little loss to the historic fabric. The most dramatic change was the removal of the plaster ceiling revealing the stunning fifteenth century arch-braced roof in the south nave and the beautiful and intricate wagon ceiling at the east end.

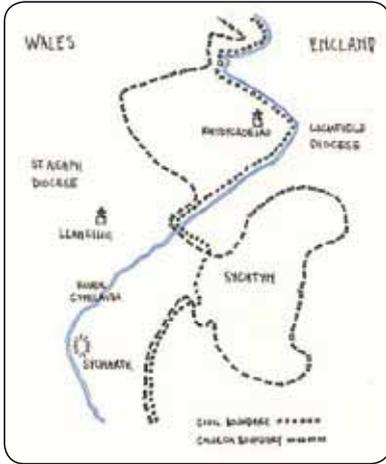


A new floor was put in the church and many of the box pews were removed. A fine display of brasses is fixed to the north wall of the nave. They had been fixed to the box pews to signify their owners.

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Twentieth century

Disestablishment and disendowment of St Silin's



Sketch showing where Llansilin parish fits into the civil and church boundaries of England and Wales.

The Anglican Church of Wales ceased to be the State Church at midnight on 31st March 1920 when the Welsh Church (Temporalities Act) came into force. As a result of boundary changes made by Henry VIII in 1536, most of Llansilin parish was in Wales, but Sychtyn was put in England. This meant the parishioners of Llansilin had to vote on whether to stay with the Church in England

or join the new Church of Wales. 255 voted to stay in Wales, 228 voted to stay in England. So in the end, Wales won the day in Llansilin. The words of Edward I's castle builder, writing to Edward I in 1294, come to mind: "You know well that Welshmen will be Welshmen, even if they appear to be pacified".

For more information on the story of Llansilin and the vote, there is a book on the church bookstall called *State, Church and Chapel* by Charles Stiles.

St Silin's church today

To celebrate the millennium, the bells were re-cast, an extra bell added and the frame strengthened. The bells rang in the new millennium.

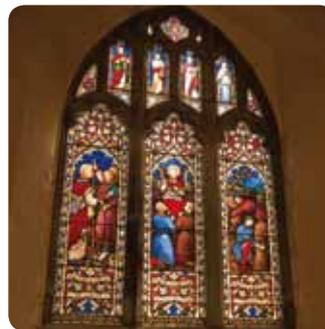
In 2006 a sympathetic stone extension was added to the north side of the church, possibly on the footprint of the thirteenth century church. Inside there is a meeting room, kitchen and toilet. It is well used by the church and wider community.

Churchyard



Some of the yew trees around the north and east sides are very ancient. In 1989 a number of overgrown beech trees had to be removed and twelve hornbeam trees were planted, symbolising the twelve apostles.

On the southeast side of the church is the gravestone of Huw Morus (Morris), a famous poet and song writer. He was born in Llansilin in 1622 and lived through the reigns of six monarchs. He is commemorated in the church with a stained glass memorial in the northeast window.



According to local tradition, those about to embark upon a long journey, or emigrating, would carve around their shoe on a gravestone. Some grave slabs on the east side of the chancel still bear these marks. Similar shoe shapes are on gravestones in the churchyard at St Melangell's church in Pennant Melangell, when pilgrims carved round their shoes at the end of a journey.

Two skull and crossbones grave markers lie on the south side of the church. Similar stones are in the churchyard of St Ffraid's at Llansantffraid.

