

Site Name: ABBEY OF ST. MARY.

Site Ref. No.: LLD/A001

Site Type: Abbey

N. G. Ref.: SN 1641 4586

Period: Medieval; Post-Medieval; Modern.

History:

The remains of the Abbey of St Mary lie in the centre of St Dogmaels immediately south of the parish church, which itself lies to the south of the High Street.

When Robert fitz Martin and the Normans took control of the district of Cemais from the Welsh about the year 1109, the invaders took rather a dim view of what they considered to be the eccentricities of the Celtic church. In St Dogmaels a small monastery or “clas” church had existed from the Fifth Century A D. The Normans decided to reduce this site in status to serve as the parish church, and to found an establishment of their own close by. To this end, in 1113 Robert fitz Martin founded a Priory at St Dogmaels, which was located close to the ancient clas church of St Dogfael:

"...A certain Robert, the most noble by birth of holy men came from ocean parts, bringing with him thirteen of his own scholars. He traversed Norman and English territories and reaching the furthest parts of Wales, on the shores of the Irish sea, close to the river Teivi, he established a college furnished with all appurtenances, at the request of the Abbot and the monks...near the ancient cell of St. Dogmael..."

Robert fitz Martin had brought a Prior and twelve monks from Tiron (now Thiron-Gardais) in Eure et Loir, on the South-east borders of Normandy in France, for that purpose. The reformed Benedictine Order of Tiron had been founded at some point between 1106 and 1113 by St. Bernard of Abbeville (1046-1116). The Order believed in a stricter adherence to the Rule of St Benedict, with particular emphasis on physical labour. Many of the monks of St Dogmaels, as at the parent Abbey of Tiron, became stone masons, painters, carvers, joiners and smiths – mastering the skills while engaged in building their own church. Fitz Martin granted various lands to the new Priory, including the estates of Tregent (Torquay?), Wadtre (Rattery) and Cockington in Devon. Tiron Abbey was officially opened in 1114, but its founder, St. Bernard, died soon afterwards on April 14th 1116, aged about 70 years. In 1117 Caldey Priory, which had been established two years earlier by Geva de Burci, the mother of Robert fitz Martin, was granted to St. Dogmaels Priory.

In 1118 Robert fitz Martin paid a second visit to Tiron Abbey and brought back another thirteen monks from Tiron to St. Dogmaels, with permission from Abbot William of Tiron to raise the new Priory at St Dogmaels to the status of an Abbey. The first building phase at St Dogmaels Abbey used sandstone quarried from Ceibwr, a volcanic

material sourced from the Felindre Farchog area, and a grey sandstone, possibly quarried near Nolton – all of the stone being sourced from Pembrokeshire. A small quantity of slate stone was brought from nearby Cwm Degwel, but the quality was very poor and it was used sparingly. In addition, a small quantity of stone was imported from Normandy. This first building phase included the crossing at the centre of the church and the transepts.

The formal establishment of the Abbey of St. Mary in Cemais took place on September 10th 1121, when Fulchard was installed as the first Abbot by Bishop Bernard of St. David's. Fulchard was probably the Prior who had been in charge of the first group of monks to come to St Dogmaels eight years earlier. It is interesting to note that Fulchard is a Saxon or German name. Extensive estates in Cemais and further afield, were granted to the new monastic house by Robert fitz Martin. These included the ancient clas church of St. Dogmael, which the Normans had re-dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle, and the extensive lands associated with it. Also granted to the Abbey at that date were various lands in the Preseli range, including Mynachlogddu; Caldey Island and Moylegrove – the latter having been the former property of Matilda or Maud Peverel, Robert fitz-Martin's wife, for whom it was named – Maud's Grove. Also granted to the abbey at the same date were the estates of Cockington and Rattery near Totnes in South Devon. A later charter from about the year 1290 reproduces part of the text of the original, as follows:

“...I Robert son of Martin thinking of reward in heaven with the consent or rather at the suggestion of my wife Matilda for the glory of Holy Church in my land of Guales commiserating the poverty of the Monks of Tiron established a Monastery in honour of the Holy Mother of God the ever Virgin Mary for the religious brethren there abiding I have obtained an Abbot from the Lord Abbot William and all the convent of Tiron with God's help at length after many entreaties desiring to meet their needs as far as the extent of my resources allowed Henry the illustrious King of England urging and likewise confirming what grants I have made and shall make to the Abbot and his Monks and their successors to be an undisturbed possession forever I have effected that in the same Abbey nothing can be set up by any secular power contrary to canonical authority viz. neither by the King himself nor by any prince of his soever nor by any of their successors I have given to them the ancient church of St. Dogmael with possession of the land adjacent to the same church whose name is Landodog in the Province of Cemaes by the bank of the river Teify. I have also given them all the land situated on the confines of the same aforesaid church and place which at that time I used to hold under my sway whose boundaries are as follows.

From a certain river whose name is Braian which in those parts divides between Emlyn and Cemaes as it descends to the next river the Teify and thence as the same river flows into the nearest sea. Likewise the land from the same aforesaid river towards the south as far as the land of Robert of Languedoch and thence along the land of Roger of Mathone towards the west until one reaches the land of William son of Roger and thence as far as the boundaries of Hugo with the surname Gualensis viz. as far as the river which divides his land and Lanbloden manor which belongs to them. All that land accordingly which lies within these boundaries as well cleared as covert with the trees

belongs to the Monks. I have also given them one of my knights by name Alan with his land which also lies within the aforesaid boundaries and also in the mountain districts the district named Breselech from the land of Hubert de Vaux as far as the source of a certain brook which is called Comb Karo and thence until it flows into a river whose name is Cledi and thence towards the source of the same Cledi until it reaches a fair-sized brook which descends from the summit of the mountain on the right and thence along the summit of the same mountain as it extends lengthwise until one again reaches the land of Hubert de Vaux I to the aforesaid Monastery have granted. Whosoever indeed of my men for the remission of his sins shall have made grants of their land to the same Monastery those grants I altogether allow. Likewise to the same Monks my mother has granted the island of Pyr which is now called by another name Caldey which granted to me by my lord the King I had granted to my mother and this grant I willingly confirm. I have granted them also in addition that wherever in my own woods my swine are fed their swine may also pasture and that they may take without let or hindrance from thence for themselves whatever timber they may wish for building purposes. I have likewise given them the fishery of St. Dogmaels and have granted them all the waters as far as their land extends to use for milling or seine-fishing or any other fisheries or for whatever other purpose they can practise or devise. I have also given them of all the stags or hinds taken in my chase all the skins except those which belong to the hunters. And in England I have given them a certain manor named Ratreu with all its appurtenances.

Accordingly although I may have made these grants at different times nevertheless at the ordination of the Abbot this donation was solemnly made on the day when the first Abbot of the same place Fulchardus by name was enthroned in his seat by the lord Bernard Bishop of the Church of St. Davids with the consent of the same Bishop whatever of my tithes I had given to the same Abbot as well of produce as of animals whether of sheep or of foals or of calves or of any cattle soever of which a tithe ought to be rendered of wool of cheese and butter in Guales. These were accordingly given on the 10 th of September in the presence as witnesses of the same of Bishop Bernard and William lord Abbot of Tiron and also Richard son of G(ilbert) and Humphrey son of Gosmer and Stephen Dapifer the King's Steward of Richard Alfred de Bennevilla the same attesting this Charter..."

The Rule of St Benedict set certain rules which had to be strictly observed by the monks at the new abbey. The monks were Cenobites – that is to say that they lived in a monastery serving under a rule and an abbot. The Abbot was regarded as being the representative of Christ in the monastery and was expected to conduct himself with the appropriate dignity and holiness. He was to maintain discipline by leading through example where possible, by good deeds, and by showing equal favour to all who were in his care. Regular meetings of the monks were to be held in the Chapter House, and part of their business would be to counsel the Abbot in any matter not clearly set out by the Rule. The Abbot could chose to follow or ignore the advice. The monks were to be obedient to the Abbot and to the orders of the Rule, to maintain silence at all times save for the absolute minimum of necessary speech, prayer and song, and to conduct themselves with humility.

The services held in the Abbey church were to be performed in a very specific manner according to the Rule. There would be seven services daily – Lauds at first light; Prime at Sunrise; Terce at the third hour after first light; Sext at the sixth hour; None at the ninth hour; Vespers during the mid afternoon; and Compline in the evening. In addition, at midnight was the service of Nocturne. The ordering of the psalms was also very specifically set out by the Rule. The monks were to sleep in dormitories, each in a separate bed, with a light burning in the chamber, and clothed in their tunics. Punishments for any transgressions committed by the monks were to be strict, if not always overly severe. One of the monks would take the role of Brother Cellarer, and he was to be carefully chosen for his good personal qualities. He would have charge of all of the abbey's supplies of food and drink. The tools and property of the monastery were to be carefully accounted for. The monks were strictly forbidden from having any personal possessions. All necessities were to be provided to the monks in equal measure with no favouritism.

Each monk, unless infirm in health, was to serve in the kitchens when his turn came, for a week. Consideration was to be shown to the elderly monks and to children, and they would sometimes be allowed to take meals outside of the regular hours. A reader would be selected every week to read the Bible at meal-times while the other monks observed silence – sign-language probably developed which was specific to this abbey. There would be one daily meal – usually at the sixth hour after sunrise in the summer, and at the ninth hour in the winter, consisting of two cooked dishes, not including fresh fruits and vegetables. Sometimes supper would be allowed, and in addition each monk was given a small loaf to last them the rest of the day. Young boys were to receive smaller portions than the adults, and only the sick who were weak were allowed to eat the meat of four-footed animals, and then only in the infirmary. There was a daily allowance of wine, which was probably, in later years, replaced by cider or mead. No talking would be allowed after the service of Compline. Anyone who made a mistake in the oration during a service was to be severely punished. The time between the religious services was to be divided roughly equally between religious reading and study, and manual labour. During Lent, extra abstinence and fasting might be observed. Monks who were absent from the monastery were to observe the services at the normal times.

Guests and visitors to the Abbey were to be graciously received, and to be encouraged to share prayers upon arrival, and sometimes this might be accompanied by a ritualistic washing of hands and feet. The guests and the abbot were to have their food prepared in a separate kitchen. Each monk would have a cowl, a tunic and either shoes or sandals. Two tunics and two cowls each were provided in order to allow for washing. Their beds would consist of a rush mattress, a blanket, a coverlet and a pillow. At the Abbot's discretion, other items, such as a girdle, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, or writing tablet, might be provided to the monks. It was a tradition that guests at the Abbey should always dine at the Abbot's table. The craftsmen amongst the monks were encouraged to remain humble about their work. The Rule gave instructions for the reception of new brethren, which included outright rejection for four or five days, followed by a few days in the guest house, and then entry into the novitiate. The novices worked, ate and slept apart from the other monks, and were instructed by a senior monk acting as both tutor and assessor. The process of assessment would take over a year.

Parents might offer up children to the monastery, who would also enter the novitiate until they were old enough to choose the cloistered life or to be released back into the secular community.

The Rule specified that the appointment of Abbots should be by the unanimous consent of the brethren, and in the early years at least, with the approbation of the Abbot and monks of Tiron. Priors were to be appointed by the Abbot. A senior man from outside the cloister should be appointed as the porter at the gate between the monastic enclosure and the community, and he would be provided with a room to dwell in. Within the enclosure of the abbey, a water supply, a mill, gardens and workshops should be provided for the sole use of the monks. A dovecote, tithe barn, stables, brewery and storage buildings would also be found within the enclosure, together with orchards and vegetable gardens. The priests and deacons at the monastery were appointed by the Abbot. Obedience to the Rule and to the authority of the Abbot was absolutely insisted upon.

In 1121 it was agreed that the abbots of St. Dogmaels would visit the mother abbey at Tiron every third year at Whitsun, and that the abbots of St. Dogmaels should be elected by the Abbot and Convent of Tiron. In later years the Abbey may have become more autonomous, with the monks following traditions which were closer to Celtic monasticism than those of Tiron. Although it was not a double house, there may have been an associated smaller female house, perhaps within the abbey enclave. Unlike the normal Benedictines, the monks at St Dogmaels wore long beards and were attired in undyed wool habits. They were bled four times a year in the south cloister. After bleeding they were not allowed to work and were permitted to eat meat. The laundry was done by women as the monks were not allowed to do this. The liturgy of the Abbey was based upon that of Cluny.

In 1136 the district may have fallen under Welsh control for a time, but the abbey was never really regarded as a target of anti-Norman feeling by the Welsh. By the time he recovered his territory, Robert fitz Martin was supporting the Empress Maud or Matilda in the Civil War against Stephen, until at least 1141. It has been suggested that the grave located at the foot of the Lectern in the Presbytery of the Abbey Church may be that of Abbot Fulchard. A fleet of fifteen ships carrying hired Danish mercenaries from Dublin attacked the abbey in 1138, having earlier failed to capture Cardigan Castle. According to the *'Annales Cambriae'*:

"...The heathen despoiled the vill and church of Landedoch, that is, of St. Dogmaels, and carried away great booty to the ships..."

The archaeological excavation of the abbey reportedly revealed some evidence of burning, which may have been the result of this attack. After this date, Abbot Hubert was in charge of the Abbey of St. Dogmaels. At some time between 1135 and 1148, Bernard, the Bishop of St. David's, granted to the Abbey Hugh de Fossar's donation of an estate called Lisprant. Although some commentators have insisted that this was probably Llysyfran, doubt has been cast on that theory. Reference was made at that time to Stephen, the Abbot's steward. A major building programme was underway at the Abbey

from 1150-53, probably due to the damage that had been caused by the raid of 1138. The church probably lost its' aisles at this date and the garth within the cloister was extended on the north side. The west range of the abbey, containing food stores and apartments for the abbot, may have been constructed at that time.

Robert fitz Martin died in 1159 and it is claimed by some that he may have been buried with his wife and parents under the Choir of the Abbey church. In 1161 Abbot Richard was in charge of the Abbey of St. Dogmaels and he was probably succeeded by Abbot Walter who presided here in 1165. It was Abbot Andrew who entertained Gerald de Barri (1146-1223) (a. k. a. Geraldus Cambrensis; Gerallt Cymro; Gerald of Wales) and Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury here in 1188 whilst they were touring Wales recruiting for the Third Crusade. Gerald wrote:

"...We spent the night in St. Dogmaels monastery, where we were lodged very comfortably..."

At some point between 1176 and 1198 Pill Priory was founded near Steynton, north of Milford Haven, as a daughter house to the Abbey of St. Dogmaels. Glascarrig Priory in the province of Ferns in Co. Wexford in south-east Ireland, was granted to St. Dogmaels during the same period. The cloister at St Dogmaels was completed at that time, and was capped with stone brought in from Pill. In September 1198 Walter, the illiterate Abbot of St Dogmaels, was nominated as a candidate for the bishopric of St. David's, and was elected to the see in December 1199. This was merely a ploy to prevent the ambitious and largely unpopular Gerald de Barri from being elected. Gerald called Walter *"...an illiterate monk who could not read his Psalter..."* Walter and Gerald became bitter foes. Reference was made at that time to a monk called Golwen who was excommunicated by Gerald de Barri as a deserter from the Abbey at St Dogmaels. On June 23rd 1201 Abbot Walter was ordered to hand over *"...the houses and lands belonging to the bishopric..."* On July 27th 1201 Reginald Foliot, the proctor of St. Dogmaels, was almost excommunicated for misleading the Church regarding the abilities of the Abbot of St. Dogmaels. Later in the year, Abbot Walter had to account for himself. On April 10th 1202 King John gave his written support to Abbot Walter's candidacy – declaring:

"...We have not assented to the election of Giraldus to the See of St David's; but to that of the Abbot of St. Dogmaels..."

Gerald de Barri's support was dwindling by that time. In 1203 the Pope effectively settled the argument when he rejected both candidates.

In the early 1200's the east end of the Abbey church containing the presbytery was extended over a vaulted crypt and other building works were carried out. The church nave was probably completed, small chapels created at the angles of the North Transept, and the cloisters were rebuilt in stone at that time. The east range with the original Chapter House, parlour, and dormitory above may date from the same period, and a wooden night stair may have communicated from the dormitory into the South Transept of the church. It was during this period that the distinctive technique of building using

alternating bands of local slate and rubble stone to create a strong bond was first adopted, the inspiration having come from the walls of Constantinople. The presbytery and the crypt use some stone imported either from the Bristol area or from Normandy, and also from the south Wales coast.

Attempted encroachments upon the Abbey lands near Cardigan Bridge by Cardigan burgesses were repulsed by the monks in 1242. The King gave a gift of twenty marks to the Abbot and convent "...for the fabric of their church..." in 1246 (about £12,000 at 2017 prices). In 1253 the monks were assigned the Church of St. Thomas at St. Dogmaels, following the death of the Rector. On January 18th 1253 Richard, the Bishop of St. David's, visited the Abbey. In 1268 the estate of Fishguard was granted to St. Dogmaels Abbey. In 1280 Abbot Hubert presided over the Abbey. The Abbey's grants and charter were confirmed in 1290. It was valued the following year at £58. 11s. 4d. (£43,073 in 2017 terms).

The Abbey donated £28 towards the Crusades in 1292 (£29,593 at 2017 prices). By that date the former possession of the Devon estate of Cockington had been transferred from St. Dogmaels to Tor Abbey. The Abbot petitioned the King in 1296 for permission, in view of damages sustained during King Edward I's local Welsh campaign, to receive a gift of 11s. worth of rent annually (£390 at 2017 prices) from a Cardigan property belonging to Elena, the wife of Henry Brazon – a Cardigan burgess. (Ancient Petitions. No. 6880.):

"...To our Lord the King and his Council the Abbot and Convent of St. Dogmaels in Wales shew that as they have been often pillaged of late and are living in great poverty through the war which has been in their country they pray the King for love of God and for the soul of the Queen that they may have help from a lady who wishes to advance them by a rent of eleven shillings in the town of Cardigan if the goodwill of the King will allow it which they pray the King that he will allow and confirm the deed of the lady if it pleases him..."

Permission to accept Elena Brazon's gift was granted by the Crown in 1297. In 1302 Abbot John presided over the Abbey, which reached its peak of importance at about that time. The Abbot complained about the levying of excessive taxes in 1317, which he was unable to pay the following year. In 1320 the Abbot of St. Dogmaels accepted a grant of Llandeilo, Llangolman and Maenclochog churches without first seeking Royal consent. Fortunately for him, the King granted the gift. By this date the western end of the Abbey nave had been rebuilt or re-modelled, the crypt had been vaulted, and extensive additional building work conducted. The new Chapter House and Infirmary probably date from that time, together with the south range of the cloister, containing refectory, kitchens and a day room which may have served as the Scriptorium. In 1325 the Abbey held a Knight's Fee called "Cassia" (the location of this property is uncertain but the former farm name of 'Cawsai' or 'Gawse', now called 'Brynawelon' in the parish of Llantood seems a possibility) and half of the Knight's Fee of "Keven Chymwyrth" – which may have been near St. David's. Brother John le Rede, the Abbot, had died before May 1st 1328. In 1345 Cwm Cerwyn in the Preseli Hills was referred to as part of the Abbey estates. In 1346 John Barrett was said to be a monk of St. Dogmaels. The abbey is

likely to have been severely affected by the arrival of the Black Death which struck locally in 1349.

Before the Black Death struck, the Abbey estates would have been farmed by lay brothers from granges under the guidance of stewards, bailiffs and brothers from the Abbey. After the Black Death left the population depleted, the granges and estates of the Abbey would have been tenanted out, and the Abbey received the rentals. In February 1354 Abbot David was in charge of St. Dogmaels Abbey. From at least June 1364 until at least August 1376 Abbot John presided at St. Dogmaels. On May 4th 1388 the Archbishop of Canterbury was scheduled to visit the monastery. In 1391 the Tironensian Order at the mother Abbey of Tiron was suppressed, together with four of its' daughter houses in England. St. Dogmaels Abbey then seems to have been the main Tironensian house in charge of its' Welsh daughter houses with virtual autonomy. From at least October 1399 until at least 1415 Philip Fader was the Abbot of St. Dogmaels. He had previously been the Prior of Caldey in 1381. In 1401 Henry of Wales, a monk from St. Dogmaels, became the Prior of the daughter house of Glascarrig in Ireland. On January 14th 1402 Guy, Bishop of St. David's wrote to the Abbot with regard to his recent visitations to the Abbey on January 7th and 10th. The letter contained the following passages:

"...Guy etc. to our beloved sons in Christ and religious men, brother Philip Vader, abbot of the monastery of St. Dogmells in Kemmeys of the order of St. Benedict of Tiron, of our diocese, and the convent of the same, subject to our ordinary jurisdiction...Whereas we by our ordinary authority making a visitation in every deed of your said monastery on the seventh and tenth days of the month January lawfully continued, in the year of the Lord 1401-02, and the fifth year of our consecration, found among other things, in our same visitation that first by pestilence then by your neglect the usual number of the canons serving God in the same monastery is so diminished in such excessive number that where there used to be a full convent of honest monks scarcely three monks, professed, are now conversant in the same, consuming the sustenance of a very large number, to the manifest withdrawal of divine worship. For which cause we enjoin on you that you make provision of honest persons to be clothed with you in the habit of regulars, whose conversation in times past may afford a good presumption for the future, so that by the feast of Pentecost next there may be conversant nine in number at the least, in order that by the multiplication of intercessors the gifts of spiritual grace may be increased.

And because we found that from the excessive wandering of the lay brothers among secular persons and dishonourable frequenting of unlawful places, to wit taverns, very great evils and scandals have resulted to the same monastery in persons and things, by necessity of which things we are bound to find a fit remedy for the future, we for this cause enjoin on you under the penalty written below that none of you go to the said town of St. Dogmells into any tavern, nor make drinking bouts with any one, outside the bounds (nor also at Cardigan), except it be for some honest matter and for a cause which can be approved of. Also we enjoin that from the opening of the kitchen of the convent until there shall be six in number, the abbot shall have the usual abbot's portion, and

after that they shall be more than six in number he shall have and take in all the portion of two monks twice a week at least. Also we enjoin that brother Howel Lange, your fellow-monk and confrere, on account of his excess and the evil deeds committed by him, which for a reason we do not now set out, for one whole year from the day of the date of these presents, shall not drink wine, nor metheglin, on which it has been his habit to get drunk, but he shall give away and distribute his portion of wine to the poor in the abbot's presence; and in this year he shall not go out of the bounds of the said monastery unless in the abbot's company.

Also we enjoin on the said monks and lay brothers that none of them shall go out of the bounds of the monastery without the special license of the abbot or in his absence of his deputy, and that such licence shall not be too liberal or too continuous. Also that no women suspected in regard to the monks shall by any means lodge in the town itself but they shall be removed altogether, under the penalty written below: also that no lay-brother there shall have the witness of his iniquity in the monastery aforesaid that the goods of the monastery be not prodigally consumed by the sustenance of such. Also since we have been informed, as found by experience, that brother David Lloyd, your fellow-monk, has culpably lapsed into the crime of apostasy (we say it with grief), going forth from the monastery itself and holding himself aloof among secular persons, neglecting the discipline of his order and deserting the cloister, we therefore, since by the judgement of a strict balance his blood may be required at your hands, enjoin on you under the penalty written below that you diligently enquire for this your brother and when found bring him back to the fold and the cloister itself, so treating him with the charity that leads the way and chastising him according to the discipline of the order, that for his reversion and conversion from error according to the rule of his order you intercede for the same with continual and devout prayers.

And because we found in the same visitation that on account of excessive and continual wandering of secular people in your church and cloister and the too ready means of entrance to the same and exit from the same, at all hours as it were, the silence and contemplation of the religious according to the requirement of their religion, cannot be observed, we enjoin on you therefore that on the north side of your church and monastery, no door and no gate and no means of access to the town be left open by day or night, except from the beginning of the mass of the Blessed Mary until the end of high mass in the choir, and except for a sudden passing of the abbot or the cellarer to view the husbandry in the field on that side, after whose passing they shall be closed at once. Also we have found in the same visitation that on account of the excessive and day and night vigils of the monks in the house of mercy, not for the sake of contemplation, but of idle gossip together and drinking, the bowels of mercy are burst asunder, evil speaking arises and drunkenness reigns, for which cause we wishing to apply a remedy for this disease and take away from among you the occasion of evil, enjoin on you that in the same house of pretended mercy, except in the vigil of All Saints, the week of Christmas and the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Mary, no fire shall be made or kept up, or except at the coming of frost or intolerable cold and while these reign they shall have a fire at the middle hour, by dispensation of the abbot, not for the sake of converse together but of warmth, for a suitable time; and the portion of the monks in drink and candles shall be

diminished according to the discretion of the abbot, since all which is excessive is counted for a vice; and no layman or secular person shall be permitted to be present at the monks' collations except only a servant appointed for these by the abbot. On you all and singular in virtue of the holy obedience etc...In witness whereof, etc. Dated at Carmarthen, 14 January, 1402, etc..."

It may have been after this report that alterations were conducted to the abbey, creating a large pulpitum in the church, a new guest house, and alterations to the cellars in the west range. In 1404 Rice ap Gwilym became the Proctor of St. Dogmaels. An Abbey Proctor was a supervisor of the monks or their activities, other than the Abbot or Prior. On April 14th 1405 brother John Llanglofan became a subdeacon and brother John Lampeter was ordained a priest – both of these men were monks at St. Dogmaels. On June 22nd 1406 the King demanded the payment of 6s. 8d. (£210 at 2017 prices) from Abbot Philip of St. Dogmaels. On January 18th 1408 at a ceremony held at the Abbey in the presence of Abbot Philip, the Bishop made Roger de Botall the new Archdeacon of Cardigan, and Robert Hoper, the Vicar Choral of the Abbey, was made his Proctor. In 1409 brother Philip Nichole, a monk of St. Dogmaels, became a deacon, and was granted letters dismissory by the Bishop – in other words, he was to be allowed to leave the diocese. Philip Fader ceased to be the Abbot at some point after 1415. Royal letters issued in 1417 pardoned the Abbot and monks of any former transgressions and confirmed their privileges. In 1418 John Tor was said to be the Abbot of St. Dogmaels. In 1429 Abbot Walter presided over the Abbey. In March 1438 Pope Eugenius IV sent a Mandate from Florence to

"...The Abbot of St Mary's and the dean and William Ocyrdhudnayn, treasurer of Ferns, to collate and assign to Patrick Occurryn, monk of the Benedictine monastery of St. Mary "de elfiolo", in the diocese of Gubbio (Who without mention of his illegitimacy as the son on unmarried parents has had himself honoured) the Benedictine priory of St Mary, Glascarreg, in the diocese of Ferns, non-conventual, dependent on the monastery of St Dogmaels of the Order of Tiron, of the same order of St Benedict, in the diocese of St David's, by whose monks it is wont to be governed, value not exceeding 40 marks sterling, void by the death of Andrew Occurryn; summoning and removing Thady Obreyn, a secular clerk of the said diocese of Ferns, who has detained it for more than two years without any canonical title. As soon as Patrick obtains possession of the said priory they are to transfer him from the said monastery of St Mary "de elficolo" to that of St Dogmael, and cause him to be received as a monk thereof. He is hereby dispensed to act as a clerk, and be promoted to all – even holy – orders, and hold the priory notwithstanding the said defect..."

On 19th March 1446 David Loyd, a monk at St Dogmaels Abbey, was granted a dispensation for being born the son of an unmarried man and a married woman. In January 1457 and June 1463, Abbot John was in charge of the abbey. Abbot Philip presided over St. Dogmaels Abbey in 1469 and remained here in 1472, when he presented St. Thomas' Church, St. Dogmaels, to John Davy, the new Vicar. In 1486 Hugh ap Thomas ap Henry became a Deacon and David ap Thomas Lloyd became a Subdeacon – both of them were monks here. Prior to 1487 Hugh or Hywel ap Owain, a son of Owain ap Rhys ap Llewelyn and Janet Coll of Parkypratt in the same parish, was

the Abbot of St. Dogmaels. In 1487 David Luce was the Abbey's Prior, and brother David Lloyd was ordained a priest. On 5th April of 1487, following the death of Abbot Hugh ap Owen, Lewis David, one of the monks, was elected to take his place as Abbot. Master Thomas ap Howell read a certificate on the occasion of his installation. On May 31st 1488 Roderic ap David, one of the monks, became a deacon.

On October 13th 1489 David Luce, who was recorded as being the Prior at St. Dogmaels Abbey in 1487 and the Prior of Pill by 1496, was granted a dispensation for having been born the son of a religious man and a single woman, as was Nicholas Williams, one of the monks at the Abbey. Thomas David became a Deacon, John Phillips became a Subdeacon and Roderic ap David, a priest. All of these men were monks of the Abbey. In 1490 brother Willian Gutter of St Dogmaels Abbey became a Priest, and brothers Maurice ap Adam and Philip Mendoss became Subdeacons. In 1491 John ap Reynold, an illegitimate child recently granted a dispensation, became a Priest, as did Maurice ap Adam, Griffin ap Ris and Phillips Mendos. Maurice ap Griffith became a Deacon. All of these men were monks of St. Dogmaels Abbey.

In 1492 David ap Howell, a St. Dogmaels monk, became a Subdeacon. In 1493 Geoffrey ap John, Philip ap Gwilym, Richard ap John, David ap Howell and John Vechan, all monks of St. Dogmaels Abbey, were ordained priests. From about 1494 no further payments were received by the Abbey from Glascareg in Ireland, suggesting that the Irish Priory may have closed at about that time. In 1496 Philip ap Gruffydd ap Ieuan ap Meryck, William May, David Philip, Thomas Harres and William Griffith, who were all monks of St. Dogmaels Abbey, became Subdeacons. In 1497 Thomas Johannys, a monk of St. Dogmaels, became a Subdeacon, as did John Griffith of the same place, the following year.

In 1502 John ap Res and Lewis Robert became Deacons, David John and John David became Subdeacons and Geoffrey ap David, Owin ap William Watkyn and Philip ap Res became Priests – all of these men were monks of St. Dogmaels Abbey. In 1503 Hugh Lewis and David John became Deacons, William ap Thomas Lloyd and William Philip became Subdeacons and John Davy and Lewis Robert were ordained Priests. All of these men were monks of the Abbey.

On July 16th 1504 the Bishop of St. David's visited St. Dogmaels Abbey, and found an Abbot and six monks resident. The Chancel and North Transept had recently been elaborately restored, the latter perhaps as a commemorative chapel to the Lords of Cemais, or possibly as a Chantry. According to his report: “...*All of the brethren were of good and honest conversation and obedient at their free will...*” Lewis Baron was the Abbot at that time, the other monks being named as Philip, Thomas Jevan, William Griffith, Thomas Baron, David and “...*John Howell, precentor of the Cathedral Church of St. Dogmells...*” In 1513 and again in 1517 the Abbot acted as a collector of the King's Tenth, from which the Abbey was exempt. The exemption in 1517 was due to “...*the excessive poverty and ruinous state of the said monastery...*” Legend has it that the Abbot often had custody of a silver harp used in eisteddfodau at Newport in Pembrokeshire, but there is no historic evidence for either the events or the instrument.

In 1520 William Hire, formerly a monk at Pill Priory, became the Abbot of St. Dogmaels until 1537, succeeding the late John Wogan. On July 30th 1534 all of the monks of St. Dogmaels Abbey signed the Act of Supremacy in the Chapter House, accepting King Henry VIII rather than the Pope as the Supreme Head of the Church in England & Wales. William Hire was the Abbot, and the other monks who signed the document were Hugh Eynon, Robert Thomas, Philip Griffith, John David, William Bonne, David William, Lewis Lawrence and David Reys. The document also carried the seal of the Abbey, depicting the Virgin and Child and a monk. Valuations of the abbey's estates were conducted at that time. At the beginning of 1536, eight monks and an Abbot, together with six servants were resident, the Abbey being valued at £200 per annum (£84, 271 at 2017 prices). For the period from September 29th 1536 to February 24th 1537 there were four monks resident, earning total wages of £3. 13s. 4d. (£1, 545 at 2017 prices). Six yeomen and one hind were the servants there, with the wages for the yeomen totaling £3 (£1264 in 2017), and 6s. 8d. for the hind (£140 at 2017 prices). The total expenditure was £18. 5s. (£7690 at 2017 prices). The yearly value of the abbey was estimated at £87 (£36, 660 at 2017 prices). The last Abbot, William Hire, was pensioned off for the annual sum of twenty marks (£13. 6s. 8d. - £5618 at 2017 prices) at the Dissolution. From the Minister's Accounts it appears that he was also given some of the demesne lands worth 64s annually (£1348 in 2017). In 1537 the Abbey was valued at £87. 8s. 6d. (£36, 837 at 2017 prices). The rentals and tithes for 1537 were valued at £140. 8s. 8½ d. (£59, 172 at 2017 prices). The Abbey closed and was sold together with its' estates to John Bradshaw of Presteign for £512. (£215, 735 at 2017 prices) Before the monks left, it seems that some religious texts and manuscripts were salvaged from the Abbey's scriptorium or library.

On March 10th 1537 possession of the Abbey and its' estate was confirmed to John Bradshaw by Royal letter. John Bradshaw pulled down much of the Abbey complex, and built himself a mansion there, probably on the SW corner of the cloistral complex, which was completed in or about the year 1543. A new dividing wall was inserted towards the western end of the nave, and alterations were carried out to the guest house and refectory. Bradshaw and his descendants lived there for over a century. From 1543 until 1567 John Bradshaw lived here. King Henry VIII granted him a charter in 1544, confirming the possession of the abbey site and its associated estates to Bradshaw and his heirs. On July 23rd 1567 Queen Elizabeth confirmed possession of the Abbey and parts of the estates to John Bradshaw. Upon his death in September 1567 the estate passed to his sons, William and James Bradshaw. From 1567 until 1588 James Bradshaw lived here. From 1567 until 1621 William Bradshaw lived here. On 30th November 1569 John Bradshaw was one of three men, including the Sheriff, made responsible for maintaining the King's provisions of armour and weaponry for the County of Pembrokeshire. In 1570 James a. k. a. John Bradshaw of the Abbey, was the Sheriff of Pembrokeshire. On December 16th 1579 Queen Elizabeth confirmed possession of the estate to William and James Bradshaw. On May 31st 1588 James Bradshaw died aged 59 years, and was said to have been buried in the Abbey burial ground, although his memorial stone was discovered set into the floor of the later St. Thomas' Church. This may suggest that the present churchyard equates with the medieval abbey burial ground.

James Bradshaw's widow later married Edmund Winstanley, who was the Sheriff of Pembrokeshire in 1591. In 1591 Alban Owen, the son of George Owen of Henllys, married Joan Bradshaw, the daughter of James Bradshaw of the Abbey.

In July 1592 the estate was re-granted to William and Elizabeth Bradshaw and their son, Edmund Bradshaw. In 1603 George Owen referred to William Bradshaw and to his wife, Elizabeth Tothill of the Abbey, St. Dogmaels. William Bradshaw's mother was named as Elizabeth Gerard, the daughter of Gilbert Gerard of Cheshire. George Owen also remarked that a russet stone was used for the roof of the Great Refectory of the abbey. In March 1604 William Bradshaw became the M. P. for the Borough of Cardigan. The Will of Joan Doogan of St. Dogmaels, dated July 19th 1610, refers to Elizabeth Bradshaw, the wife of William Bradshaw; Marie Bradshaw, the wife of Edmonde Bradshaw; Elizabeth Bradshaw, the daughter of William Bradshaw; Haster Bradshaw; and Rachell Bradshaw – Joan Bradshaw's executor. On April 13th 1613 William Bradshaw of the Abbey became a Justice of the Peace for Pembrokeshire. In 1614 Alban Owen of Henllys married Joan Bradshaw. They had a house in the parish. (Other sources say that they were married in 1591). In 1616 William Bradshaw was briefly removed from the Pembrokeshire Bench for "outlawry"! On July 28th 1619 William Bradshaw leased various properties to John Welshe of Cardigan. In 1620 William, Edmund and John Bradshaw leased properties from Sir John Lewis of Abernantbychan and Coedmore in the parish of Llechryd. Reference was made to William Bradshaw again in 1621, and to his second son, John Bradshaw. In 1643 John and Edward Bradshaw, who were both serving as Captains in the Royalist army, were captured at Pill Fort, and were then executed, thus ending their family's connections to the Abbey.

In 1646 David Parry of Noyadd Trefawr in the parish of Llandygwydd, bought the estate. The family already had a residence nearby at Plas Newydd, and it is possible that the Abbey mansion was never reoccupied. In 1648, following David Parry's death, the Abbey property passed to his son with the rest of his estates. In 1652 the former abbey estates were subject to leasehold sale. In 1670 Thomas Parry was assessed at 6 hearths for the hearth tax – this may have been for the Bradshaw mansion.

In 1695 William Gambold wrote to Edward Lhuyd describing the Fifth Century Sagraanus Stone, which then stood amongst the ruins of the Abbey. On May 8th 1716 a house or messuage (a dwelling house with outbuildings and land attached) "*...attached to the Cloyster...*" was leased for 99 years by Stephen Parry of Noyadd Trefawr to William Davies of Parcypratt in the parish of St Dogmaels, for an annual rent of 6s. 8d. (£38. 70 at 2017 prices). On November 23rd 1719 Stephen Parry of Noyadd Trefawr granted to William Davies of Parkypratt, a piece of land called Isingrug, a slang called Ardd Vaine and a plot – the whole forming a property called Cloyster. Reference was also made to the building of a new house there. On April 5th 1720 reference was made in a lease to "*...the late dissolved abbey in St. Dogmells, its site with house thereon...*" The lease referred to the property called 'Cloyster'. In 1740 the brothers Samuel and Nathaniel Buck produced an engraving of the ruins, which appears fairly accurate. Lewis Morris used the ruins as a landmark on his plan of Cardigan Bay, Bar & Harbour in 1748. In the mid to late 1700's it seems that the Infirmary, which was then intact, was being used as a

Meeting House for the local Methodists and possibly Congregationalist Dissenters. In 1768 reference was made to:

“...all that Messuage or Tenement, with the Appurtenances, situate, lying and being near the Isungrig, and Garden on the other Side of the Common Pound, and a Vault under the Abby, with the Appurtenances; then or then late in the Tenure or Occupation of Thomas Davis, who married Eleanor James...Also all that other Messuage or Tenement on the Isungrig, with the Appurtenances, commonly called or known by the Name of the Cloyster, (but then converted into many Dwelling Houses, with a Stable, divers Gardens, and Slang, Piece or Parcel of Land or Ground, known by the Name of Yr Ardd Vaiene, all of which said premises were held in Fee Farm, granted by Stephen Parry to William Davies, and were formerly in the Tenure or Occupation of Margaret Davies, Widow, but then or then late of Thomas Morris...”

On 20th February 1774 David Lewis of R'Abby was an elector for the Borough of Cardigan. On October 12th 1779 *“...The Abby, Vaults, Cottage, and Garden thereunto belonging, in the Possession of Anne Lewis...”* worth an annual rent of 11s. (£47. 36 at 2017 prices), were sold by auction at Cardigan's 'Black Lion' as part of the former Plas Newydd estate, which was being sold off by the Noyadd Trefawr estate. In 1787 David Evan Lewis lived at the Abbey with his wife. In 1793 Sir Richard Colt-Hoare visited the ruins and made a painting of them. He described:

“...the ruins of the ancient abbey of St. Dogmael, surrounded by some fine old ash trees. Its architecture was Gothic. These ruins are not very picturesque and form the best subject for the pencil when they are seen from a hill behind them with the river and Cardigan at a distance...”

The ruins were then surrounded by ancient Ash trees. The same year H. P. Wyndham described:

“...the dirty village of St. Dogmael wherein most of the abbey buildings had been converted to private use...”

It is likely that the Infirmary ceased to be used as the Methodist Meeting House after the sect received a bequest in the Will of Evan Davies of Cardigan in 1794, and erected a new chapel on the site where the Church Hall now stands. In 1796 an illustration of the North Transept was made by J. C. Varrall. In 1804 Anne John and the widow of David Evan Lewis lived at the Abbey. In 1810 Richard Fenton visited:

“...the small remains of St. Dogmaels Abbey, which, if we may judge by the few fine specimens of arches and ornamental mouldings in the existing remnant of the choir, as well as foundations and other fragments of buildings, everywhere for a great compass to be traced, was a splendid building, and must have covered a very considerable space. The choir occupied the area of the lanthorn or steeple, as at St. David's, but on a smaller scale. Within this area are two canopied recesses, as I find from some additions to Leland, from Edward Llhuyd's MSS. that once enclosed the effigies of the founder and his son. The refectory, a curious structure still perfect, but now used for a barn, is a large

room with a lofty vaulted roof in good preservation, formerly well lighted by a handsome end window, as well as side ones of fine tracery. Over the end window, they say, there is on a stone a date cut, which, on account of the height and the darkness of the place, I could not make out, so as to presume to found any credit on it...

Between 1812 and 1833 David Lewis lived at “Rabby” – presumably here. On June 23rd 1814 Margaret Davies of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 1 year. The former infirmary was said to be in use as a barn in 1815. On November 20th 1818 Margaret Lewis of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 20 years. On February 2nd 1819 William Hughes of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 24 years. On March 20th 1819 Frances Davies of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 2 years. In 1819 Thomas Williams of the Abbey, a mason, died aged 33 years.

On November 9th 1820 John Lewis, the illegitimate son of John Lewis, a mariner, of the Abbey and Ruth George of Singrug, a widow, was baptized by the Vicar of St Dogmaels. On October 24th 1821 Elizabeth Herbert of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 36 years. On December 7th 1823 William Hugh of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 72 years. On December 14th 1830 George Lewis, the son of sailor William Lewis and Mary Lewis of the Abbey, was baptized by the Vicar of St Dogmaels. In 1831 Samuel Leigh, in his ‘*Guide to South Wales & Monmouthshire*’, states:

“...There are but few remains of the building and these have been converted into barns and sheds and into a chapel for the accommodation of the neighbourhood...”

On January 20th 1832 John Griffith of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 63 years. On May 2nd 1832 Margaret Jenkin of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 7 years. On February 17th 1833 David Lewis, the son of William and Mary Lewis of the Abbey, was baptised by the Vicar of St Dogmaels.

The Revd. Henry James Vincent, the Vicar of the parish, purchased the ruins from the Noyadd Trefawr estate in 1833. The same year the Ash trees surrounding the Abbey were felled and oak and elm were planted instead by Rev. Henry James Vincent. On June 6th 1835 David Lewis of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 84 years. On October 4th 1835 David Lewis, the son of William and Mary Lewis of the Abbey, was baptised by the Vicar of St Dogmaels. In 1838 the Tithe Map for St Dogmaels shows a row of cottages linking the Chapter House with the North Transept and the Infirmary still intact – the property known as ‘Cloyster’. The infirmary, formerly called ‘the refectory’, was probably in use as a barn. On May 30th 1845 Ann Evan of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels having died aged 84 years. On April 2nd 1846 Frances Griffiths of the Abbey was buried at St Dogmaels, having died aged 80 years. In 1853 a commentator in ‘*Archaeologia Cambrensis*’, possibly the Rev. Henry James Vincent, wrote:

“...I saw some of the old tomb-stones recently dug out of the ruins of St. Dogmaels Abbey formed of this stone [green porphyritic], which, although very hard, is

capable of being sawn, and takes a good polish. It is almost as fine as the foreign verd-antique, but the ground is not quite so green..."

The Cambrian Archaeological Association visited the Abbey on August 19th 1859 and described the ruins, which were then well maintained, and the various stones and monuments there. On September 9th 1859 the following account appeared in the *'Pembrokeshire Herald'*:

"...FRIDAY. THIS morning the excursionists proceeded on foot, about nine o'clock, to explore the interesting remains of Saint Dogmell's Abbey, the property of the Rev. Henry Vincent, who is also vicar of the parish, documents refer to Martin de Tours as the founder of this institution, who was also the conqueror, and first lord of Cemaes of the Norman line. Although the ruins have suffered much, yet the remains are of sufficient character and importance as to enable a satisfactory plan of the original structure to be made out. The abbey, in its original condition, must have been only second to that of Strata Florida in magnificence, but the principal portions remaining are the west end and transept of the church, and a building which is thought to have been the refectory, although not in its usual place. No portion of the present ruins appears older than the fourteenth century none of the moulding discovered being of early English, in which style, it is generally, but erroneously, stated to have been built. In the transept., which appears to have been used as a chapel, are the remains of what has been a very fine perpendicular or fan tracery. In the northern and eastern walls of the transept are two arched recesses, apparently intended for the reception of sepulchral monuments, although the position of that on the eastern side is very unusual. There are similar recesses in the north wall of the nave—an arch as a doorway, the lower part of what is supposed to be the entrance to the chapter-house from the cloisters, has a series of filetted moulding, which may be early English, though it was used in the transitional and decorate periods. Other fragments of the same moulding are also seen on the ground. Mr Bury kindly pointed out the principal features to the company, and thought that the whole of the present structure was of decorated character, and that no portion of the earlier church remained. Some discussion arose as to the building now called the Refectory; some of the members present conjectured it might have been the Hospitium for Strangers. The roof, of barrel construction, gave way some years ago, so that only a portion of it remains. To avoid increasing the outward thrust, the west window had been built in form approaching the lancet. Additional support having been provided by throwing out a deep recess on the south side, there was probably a corresponding support on the north side. The remains of the dormitory are probably to the west of the refectory, whose vestiges of strain still remain, formed in the thickness of the wall. The slab of the high altar is still preserved in the ground, having four or five crosses.

Nothing can exceed the care with which these interesting remains are protected from further destruction by the respected and venerable proprietor, who has however not forgotten the necessities of the present day; for he has rebuilt, in the early English style, the parish church, at considerable expense. The church is exceedingly well fitted up, and presents a most satisfactory and creditable appearance. In the grounds are preserved the part of a stone cross of the 7th or 8th century. A larger slab, which had formerly served

as a gate-post, on which is incised a most singular termination of the shaft of a cross, thought by competent judges to be unique, but the great object of interest is the celebrated stone of Sagraanus, which was discovered by Mr Vincent some years ago, and carefully removed. The value of this stone is inappreciable, as it contains two inscriptions; one in the ogham, or occult character—the other in good Roman characters of the fifth century. The oghams were read by Dr. Graves, independently of the Latin inscription, and found to be, as it were, a translation of them. The Latin inscription, SAGKANI FILI CUNOTAMI, and that of the Oghams being SAGRAMNI MAQUI CUNATAMI, the MAQUI, i.e. mac, being a well-known Irish equivalent to Filius, a parallel instance of which occurs in the Cilgeran stone. CUNOTAMUS is the Latinized form of Cunedda, a name of historic reality and date, and of the sane age as the Roman letters indicate. At the request of the members of the association, Mr Vincent has most kindly consented to place this invaluable relic in the church, so as to protect it as much as possible from accident; and Mr Longueville Jones gave on the spot a short, but most interesting lecture on the stone and its characters, illustrated by drawings of a large number of monuments, some of which, however, still remain unread, even by Dr. Graves. The company, with great reluctance, were compelled to leave these interesting ruins...”

An illustration of the abbey ruins by J. Hassell, undated, appeared in an article of about 1863. At about that time, Rev. Henry James Vincent wrote the following notes about the ruin:

“...It consists of the western gable, the north wall and the north transept of the abbey church, the south wall of the Chapter House, the Hospitium or chapel and what is supposed to have been a part of the Refectory. The western gable was lighted by a fine two-centred...window and must have been very magnificent if we may judge from its size and from a small portion of the label that still remains, the only one, by the by, in the whole building except a single label termination in one of the windows of the transept. This window is one of the most imposing features of the ruin. The date assigned to it is from end of the Thirteenth Century. The north wall is exceedingly high and had but one window, a part of the jamb of which as yet been left, as well as the north west doorway adorned with a double row of ball flowers, the upper being smaller and more numerous than the lower ones, and both placed in hollow mouldings of trap or Grawacke. The walls are relieved by several discharging arches and perforated by small square holes intended for ventilation, scaffolding or some purpose not yet discovered. In the interior are two recesses or tombs and in one of these was lately found an unusually large human skull which was unfortunately broken by the pick axe before it came to sight. From these recesses there is a kind of...steps towards the east...Between these steps the floor is paved with glazed tiles alternately square and diagonal to correspond with which there is a string course on the outside...”

“...From the admeasurement of the north and west walls the nave appears to have been of the same dimensions as the present Parish Church....The height of the walls proves that it had no north aisle. The North Transept is of a much later period, the corbels from which spring fragments of the fan tracery being of the perpendicular style. Several tourists have endeavoured to make out the figures on the corbels, but not very

satisfactorily, some saying they are the representations of the evangelists, others supposing them to be winged lions, an angel holding a Scutcheon etc. - most probably an emblem of the Gospel. In this transept are two recesses of a curious type which excited the attention of the excursionists at the meeting referred to. Fenton calls this Building a fragment of the Choir and says that the two recesses are the two canopied recesses (mentioned by Leland from Edward Lhuyd's M S S) that once enclosed the effigies of the founder and his son. On the first assertion I would offer no opinion, but the second is not likely to be correct, it being expressly stated that Martin and his son were buried in the middle of the Choir.

On the south west and south east side are parts of two low four-centred arches. What purpose they served it is difficult to determine. Could they have been squinches supporting the tower which the walls above, one of which is grouted, must have abutted. (Low sides they were not, for they have not the appearance of a window, nor are they placed exactly under the transept windows) or could they have been doorways? That on the south west leading to a small chapel from which there was entrance to the nave, as might be inferred from a small portion of the...jamb of a door (probably the Priest's door as at St. Helen's before referred to) in the north wall. That on the south west opening to the stairs of the tower, which, if we may judge from the appearance of the wall was on that side. The church was evidently a Cruciform Building with the tower most probably in the centre as it could not have been at the west end by reason of the window.

The eastern part of the Chapter House was for many years a smithy, the western gable having been destroyed time immemorial. It was a low vaulted building open to the west and flat on top, which perhaps formed a part of the floor of the Scriptorium & Library. I heard an old man say many years ago that when he was young it was deemed a boyish plot to climb to the top of this ruin. In the wall that remains are 2 recesses for tombs. The rest was taken down about 70 years ago together with some fragments of the South Transept consisting of low arches and replaced by the most unsightly cottages built at the instigation of a mercenary mechanic. Soon after these cottages appeared one of the corbels of the Transept said to bear the image of the Virgin, fell down at midnight to the great terror of the Cottagers, thus expressing her disapprobation of the company to which she had been introduced and her determination to be no longer a witness to such desecration. These cottages, after remaining for sixty years accompanied by porcine and vaccine abominations, were removed ten years since, as well as another cottage of a much older date, perhaps coeval with the destruction of the Abbey, as the timber in its roof had every appearance of having once formed principals in some portion of the roof of the Abbey. Under this cottage was discovered a part of a fine doorway with magnificent pier mouldings supposed to be the entrance into the cloisters.

The Building now pronounced the hospitium or Guest Hall, which had a vaulted roof, fell in 5 years ago; indeed it had been gradually giving way for the last fifty years or more in consequence of the removal of the buttresses on which it mainly rested, by some Goths, probably for the purpose of procuring corner stones to their miserable cottages –

although the buttresses were restored about 25 years since and much expense had been incurred from time to time with a view to its preservation. It was all to no purpose. The mischief had been done and though it is not improbable that if less care had been taken of it, it would have remained a little longer yet it is certain that nothing could have preserved it long. Its fall took place in the day time and was like the shock of an earthquake. I have abundant reason to be thankful to a Merciful Providence for sparing the lives of my two servants who were in it about ten minutes before it came down....”

“...It is entered from the west by a Gothic doorway of double chamfered red sandstone found perhaps in the Parish of Moilgrove. The east window is fine. On the keystone of the arch is an angel supporting a bracket on which there was probably once an image. Over this window, someone told Fenton, was, on a stone, a date cut, which on account of the height and the darkness of the place he could not make out so as to presume to found any credit on it. Now that the roof is fallen in there is sufficient light to discover that no date can be found, nor anything like it. On the north are two side windows. On the south east are two niches, one of which was supposed to be a recess for a crucifix, but it is now presumed that they were two almeries and that, therefore, there must have been a small altar near them, which may induce some to think that the building was a chapel or part of the Abbot's house. On the south east is a small transept lighted by a window where probably a monk officiated during mealtime or some occasion. The Building most probably was a chapel.

*The roof was a fine specimen of stone vaulting not exactly wagon shaped but pointed like the west window of the nave – the prevailing type in the whole ruin. It was made with two centres, the joining of which could easily be traced. In the middle was a hook for the suspension of a candelabra. The arch **which** displayed a remarkable provision against external thrusts. The inside plastering of the walls, in some parts not above 6 inches in thickness, still remains, and the angel over the window is done in plaster. Were it not for this one might be inclined to judge for the beautiful chequered work on the south side that it never had been plastered. The walls on the outside are of long and short work, the alternation of dark and light stones proves the antiquity of the building and is purely Italian, which have furnished a type for cottages in the village and have a very pretty effect. The jambs of the windows are of hollow chamfer. The ridge was of embattled freestone as might be inferred from a small fragment picked up....*

“...Some tourists have expressed their indignation at the conversion of this sacred building into a Barn. That it has ever been strictly speaking a barn I do not believe but that corn has been occasionally threshed in it is certainly true, the occupiers probably being determined that as it was ornamental it should also be useful...After the building was roofed with slates with a view to its preservation it certainly in some measure resembled a barn and now after it has fallen in it has a much more beautiful and picturesque appearance than it has borne for many a long year...There is another fact connected with this building which must not be passed over in silence. During the middle and the latter part of the last century when many of the great Welsh reformers flourished

and the Evangelical portion of the Clergy and the Calvinistic Methodists formed one Body, some celebrated lay preachers were in the habit of preaching in this Edifice with much unction...It is a singular coincidence that the Protestants pulpit was erected exactly opposite to the place where the monks' rostrum once stood..."

"...In a fragment of ivy mantled wall, already referred to, which judging from analogy has been considered as forming a part of the refectory, for it occupies the usual position of Refectories in Benedictine Abbeys, are stone steps leading, it is supposed, to the refectory pulpit, entered by a door below which can be distinctly traced although nearly covered with earth. There is a window at the back of the pulpit....These steps, so the contrary tradition says, lead to a vault where there is a golden coffin and a lamp perpetually burning...From the said vault the same veritable authority affirms that there is a subterranean passage not only to but under the Tivy..."

"...The roofless building already mentioned has been heretofore called the Refectory although doubts have been frequently expressed respecting the propriety of the designation. Indeed I have had my doubts myself but it did not seem to me until after the late meeting of the Archaeological Association at Cardigan to inquire how it came to be so called. I can not trace the name further back than Fenton who perhaps was the original nomenitator. This has been generally considered to be by far the oldest portion of the abbey, and it is built of better masonry. No vestiges of the first church remain although some have thought that a few of the mouldings lately excavated must have formed a part of the original building, but this has not been clearly proved.

A South west view of the Abbey was taken by Buck in 1740 by which it appears that little of it has been destroyed since that time for had there been more of it then remaining it would not have escaped the notice of that Gentleman who was blest with extraordinary powers of vision...This observation is only applicable to the bare walls, much of the ornamented part having been subsequently destroyed and the freestone used to decorate private houses, to scour pots and pans and for other useful purposes.

The old man who lived in one of the Abbey cottages during the latter part of the last Century drove a goodly trade by excavating the floor of the Abbey Church and selling the tiles to adorn the parlours of Farm Houses. After a careful search none have been found except a few near the north wall which had evidently escaped from the hands of the spoiler in consequence of the accumulation of rubbish. Those that remain are of different colours, glazed but not figured. They were discovered about nine years ago when the whole of the area was carefully excavated – after having been hid probably for centuries. They become friable by exposure to the atmosphere and had not the precaution been taken of covering them with gravel, not a vestige of them would be left after a short time.

The Abbey was not one of the largest, yet from a collection of beautiful mouldings

of different styles, the result of recent excavations as well as from the extent of the ruins, we may infer that it must have been very magnificent and even now, though small, it has a most imposing appearance....”

The Revd. Henry James Vincent died in 1865, and ownership of the site passed to his heir, John Vincent. In 1866 stone was quarried from the Abbey ruins for building a new Vicarage and Coach-house. On May 13th 1872 John Vincent sold the new buildings and the Abbey ruins to the Church for £2, 400 (£150, 262 at 2017 prices). About the year 1886 the Vicar dismantled part of an old building at the Abbey, in the centre of the vicarage orchard, which measured c.45ft by 30ft. The walls he removed were about 25 ft high, except for the north wall, which was missing. Also standing nearby before this date, were two pillars of wall, c.10-12ft long and 25 ft high – part of another building, plus a low wall linking this with the aforementioned building. The Vicar sold the stone for building Abbey Forge in the village and the “Ship & Bonded Stores” at Pendre, Cardigan. In 1887, supposedly to celebrate Queen Victoria’s Jubilee, the Vicar built himself a new retaining wall at the Vicarage, decorated with carved stones, all of which he had quarried from the Abbey ruins.

On November 23rd 1888 the Vicar was accused of destroying an archway and other features near the crypt, in order to obtain stone to sell for cash, for his own profit. He denied the accusations, and referred to a subterranean passage there which was blocked in 1866 or 1867. On August 5th 1892 John Edwards of Church Street, offered £25 (£2051 at 2017 prices) to anybody who could show him a flight of steps and portion of a building here, which had been plainly visible before the Vicar quarried them.

The ruins are described in the 1899 “*Guide to Cardigan & District*” by W E James. By January 18th 1901 the Revd. J. Myfenydd Morgan, the Vicar of the parish, had located some 12th Century documents relating to the Abbey. An early Christian incised stone found at Manian in 1904, was moved here for safety in 1906. The Abbey ruins are shown on an O. S. map of that year. Emily Pritchard's book “*The History of St. Dogmaels Abbey*”, was published in 1908. On 17th September 1915 the following item appeared in the ‘*Cardigan & Tivy-Side Advertiser*’:

“...THE OGHAM STONE IN ST DOGMAELS ABBEY.

INSPECTED BY DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.

On Saturday last the Right Honourable Sir John Rhys (Principal of Jesus College, Oxford), Mr J T Lewis (solicitor, of Llanarth and Oxford), and the Rev. J T Evans (Rector of Stow-on-the-Wold), paid a visit to St Dogmaels, where they spent some hours at the Vicarage and amongst the ruins of the old Abbey.

It is now intended to have the old Ogham Stone removed to St Dogmaels Church for preservation's sake. Dr Henry Owen, of Poyston, is also greatly interested in the matter, and is likely to come up soon to make the necessary arrangements as regards having the stone removed to the Church. It seems that the St Dogmaels Ogham Stone is

the most interesting of its kind in the whole kingdom. It is also purposed to have one or two of the medieval stones which are in the place removed to the Church. The Vicar of the parish is most willing to have the valuable stones placed in the sanctuary..."

On November 12th 1915 the following item appeared in the 'Cardigan & Tivy-Side Advertiser':

“..PRESERVATION OF INTERESTING ANTIQUARIAN REMAINS AT ST. DOGMELLS.

Thanks to the interest displayed by Dr. Henry Owen, D C L, F S A, of Poyston, Haverfodwest, the eminent historian of Pembrokeshire, and Treasurer of the National Library of Wales, a further step to safeguard some of the valuable antiquities now at St Dogmells has just been carried out. Dr Owen recently visited St Dogmells in company with Sir John Rhys, Principal of Jesus College, Oxford, and after an examination of the ancient stones preserved in the Vicarage grounds, offered, at his own expense, and with the consent of the Vicar (the Rev. J Myfenydd Morgan), to have four of the most important specimens removed to the Parish Church for better protection. The work of removal was entrusted to Mr. Thomas Bowen, mason, of St Dogmells, acting under instructions from Mr. H M Vaughan, F S A, of Llangoedmore; and within the last few days the four selected stones have been duly conveyed from the Vicarage grounds and placed safely within the Church...

These four stones, which are well worthy of a visit of inspection from all who care for the historical antiquities of their native land, consist of the famous tall tapering monolith of porphyritic greenstone, seven feet high, which bears a double inscription in both Ogam and Roman letters, disclosing the words, SAGRANI FILI CUNOTAMI, and is perhaps the most important example of its class in South Wales. This has been placed at the western end of the nave behind the font, so that it can now be well seen in its present prominent position.

In the north transept, below the pulpit, stands another stone with an incised runic key pattern probably of a cross, but much obliterated by time and weather.

In the south transept has been placed the surviving portion of a rather thin flat stone with the pattern of a wheel cross. This stone is traditionally said to have formed for many years a foot-bridge across the neighbouring mill-brook from which ignoble purpose it was rescued and removed to the Vicarage orchard by that celebrated scholar and antiquary, the late Rev. Henry James Vincent, who died as Vicar in 1865.

Between the altar and the south wall of the sanctuary has been skilfully and effectively set up the famous altar stone of the great Abbey of St Dogmells. This ponderous slab, weighing nearly a ton, was till recently to be seen in the Vicarage orchard, half embedded in the soil. On its being dug up and cleaned, it was discovered that a portion of one end was damaged, though all the regulation five crosses are visible on the surface, At the side of the lately disinterred end the altar stone can also be traced some notches which appear to be Ogam characters, and which will doubtless be examined in due course by Sir John Rhys or some other expert in Celtic antiquities. The

altar itself, whose finely bevelled edges are still mostly intact, measures about six feet in length by about three in breadth. It is a real case for satisfaction to see this sacred and interesting relic of the ancient Abbey properly exposed to view in a situation not unworthy of its historical and holy associations..."

In the summer of 1916 the vegetation was removed from the walls of the abbey ruins. In 1917 Herbert Millingchamp Vaughan wrote a booklet about the Abbey. On July 10th 1925 an antiquarians' visit to the site saw reference made to a building which had formerly stood in the Vicarage orchard, until the last remains were quarried in recent times. Captain Rogers of Commercial House recalled the abbey in the 'Cardigan & Tivy-Side Advertiser' dated September 18th 1925:

"...I...distinctly remember a building standing to the North West of the present two ruins (which stand in or about the centre of the Vicarage orchard). The direction of this building was about North West or North North West. The gable end to the North side was missing, but the side walls and the gable end to the South East side were in a tolerably good state of preservation. There was also a small section of roof left to the South East end. This building would be about forty to forty five feet long and about twenty five to thirty feet in breadth. The height of the walls at the sides would be about twenty to twenty five feet. To the south of the ruins above mentioned there stood two pillars of wall about ten to twelve feet in length and about twenty five or thirty feet high. These walls would be about three feet in thickness (I take it that these two pillars represented another ancient building). From the first mentioned building ran a low wall about four feet high extending about one hundred feet in a Southerly direction and towards the two pillars..."

"...If of interest I would say that the Ship Inn, Cardigan, adjoining the Market Buildings, was mainly if not completely built with stones taken from the Abbey during this period; also a dwelling house situated in Cwm Degwel, St. Dogmaels, and known as "Abbey Forge" was built of the same material..."

"...A section of wall enclosing the Vicarage garden in which are set two doors (one a carriage entrance, the other for ordinary foot traffic to and from the Vicarage) over the smallest of which is a small canopy attached to which is a raised crown and embossed on this crown are the letters T J 1887. V. This was erected with Abbey stone to commemorate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. You may follow this wall in the direction of the stables until you come to a slight angle where a distinct division may be seen. That portion of wall next to the stables is not of Abbey stone..."

"...I may also state that during excavation of the wall mentioned, a well was discovered covered over with stone flags. This covering was raised and the well proved to be about five feet square and about twenty feet deep. About three feet from the top there was an outlet for the overflow. The walls of this well were of granite and covered with moss. It was decided at the time that this must be the well which fed the cellar well at the Vicarage. When this well was closed a Mr. Evans who was then Curate of St. Dogmaels, planted a young ash sapling to indicate the spot, but on later investigation I could not find the tree. Further along this wall in a northerly direction a square walled in cavity was discovered full to the surface of cockle shells in a perfect state of preservation

and bleached to a pure white. I remember the Rev. Vicar stating that there must be at least ten tons of shells in this hole. One peculiarity of the digging was found in the adhering qualities of the mortar used by the ancients who built those walls. At times a quantity of masonry would crumble away weighing maybe two or three tons and great difficulty would be experienced in breaking up these solid blocks. I do not know when the demolition would have ended had it not been for a gentleman named Capt. Edwards, then living at Finch Square, St. Dogmaels, threatening to report the matter to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the demolition was shortly brought to an end...”

On March 23rd 1934 H. M. Office of Works was considering carrying out the consolidation of the Abbey ruins. The Representative Body of the Church in Wales had placed the ruins into the hands of the Commission of Works earlier in the year. It seems that little if any work took place until after the Second World War. In October 1947 the consolidation and excavation of the site commenced. In 1949 an early Christian inscribed stone was unearthed in the foundations of the Chapter House. By April 14th 1950 archaeologists had discovered a whalebone here – a 19th Century relic. Reference was made to cottages here which had still been occupied within living memory. By October 2nd 1959 an old oven had been unearthed during excavations, dispelling a local legend of a golden coffin being buried thereabouts.

In 1973 *'The Tempest'* was the first Shakespeare play to be performed at the abbey, by a group of Oxford students. In 1974 *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* was performed at the abbey. On September 23rd 1977 a 12ft whalebone was removed from the Abbey in the mistaken belief that it might be prehistoric. On June 14th 1986 A Medieval Fair was held at the Abbey to mark 'St. Dogmaels' Day' – this later became an annual event. The first annual 'Shakespeare in the Abbey' production was staged in 1987 – *'Twelfth Night'*. On June 11th 1988 another Medieval Festival Day was held at the Abbey. In 1988 *'The Merchant of Venice'* was performed here and in 1989 *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*. Some repairs were conducted in 1989. In 1990 *'The Merry Wives of Windsor'* was performed at the abbey, followed by *'All's Well That Ends Well'* in 1991 and *'The Winter's Tale'* in 1992. In 1991 there were proposals to convert the old Vicarage Coach House into a Visitors' Centre and CADW were that year negotiating to purchase the property from the Church in Wales. In 1992 a geophysical survey was conducted within the present perimeter. It concluded that:

“...a complex of walls and/or stone capped drains has been identified to the south of the abbey, together with possible evidence of a former boundary to the ecclesiastic remains. The results from the east of the abbey are more difficult to interpret, but a few features of possible archaeological interest have been located...”

In 1993 the Shakespeare production at the abbey was *'The Taming of the Shrew'*, followed by *'Macbeth'* in 1994; *'As You Like It'* in 1995, *'Richard III'* in 1996; *'The Tempest'* in 1997; *'Cymbeline'* in 1998; and *'Twelfth Night'* in 1999. In September 1999 It was revealed that the skeletal effigy from the abbey had been temporarily removed to Cardiff. *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* was the 'Abbey Shakespeare Players' production in 2000. An artist's impression of how the Abbey might once have appeared was used in

the 'Pilgrims and Preachers' trail leaflet in 2000. In July 2000 there were further proposals for converting the Coach House into a visitors' centre to plans by Kevin Sutton of Davies Sutton Architects. In August 2000 Cllr Ian Gollop planted a cherry tree at the Abbey to commemorate the 100th Birthday of H R H Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. In 2001 the Shakespeare production at the abbey was *'The Comedy of Errors'*, followed by *'Hamlet'* in 2002; *'Henry V'* in 2003; *'Pericles'* in 2004; and *'Romeo and Juliet'* in 2005. In 2003 the Treorchy Male Voice Choir gave an open air concert at the Abbey. On May 16th 2004 Aled Jones performed in a concert held at the abbey. On May 15th 2005 another concert was held at the abbey. In October 2005 the Heritage Lottery Fund gave a grant of £314, 000 towards the Coach House Visitors' Centre scheme. By May 2006 all of the funding required for the project to proceed was in place. On July 3rd 2006 H. R. H. Prince Charles the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall visited the site. In 2006 *'Much Ado About Nothing'* was performed here, followed by *'Love's Labour's Lost'* in 2007. In October 2007 four early Christian inscribed stones and the skeletal effigy were installed at the Coach House. In April 2008 Nia Siggins was employed as the Manager of the Coach House Visitors' Centre. On May 13th 2008 a concert was held at the Abbey.

The conversion of the former Vicarage coach House into a visitors' centre, which opened in June 2008. On 23rd June 2008 Glen Johnson launched his new book 'Cardigan Uncovered' at the Coach House Visitors' Centre. The Official Opening by First Minister for Wales, Rhodri Morgan. A M, took place on September 11th 2008. The centre had a major impact on the monument's visitors, particularly the display of early Christian stones and other items. In 2008 *'Henry IV'* was performed here, followed by *'Antony and Cleopatra'* in 2009; and *'The Winter's Tale'* in 2010. On July 21st 2009 a weekly Local Producers' Market was established at the Abbey entrance. On 15th August 2009 Glen K Johnson launched the book 'The History of St Dogmaels by Rev. Henry James Vincent' at the Coach House. In October 2009 sculptor Paul Clarke made a reconstruction of one of the decorative corbels of the abbey's North Transept, which was displayed in the Coach House upon completion.

On 30th January 2010 a craft fair was held here – for a time these events were held monthly. In February 2010 a Pancake Race was held here. In March 2010 an exhibition was held at the Coach House to commemorate local suffragettes. On 29th April 2010 Glen K Johnson hosted the first comedy Quiz Night at the Coach House. On 26th June 2010 a 'Fun Day' was held here. On 21st July 2010 an Operatic Concert was held at the abbey. Christmas Fairs were held here on 28th November and 21st December that year. In February 2011 an exhibition of 'St Dogmaels and the Sea' was held at the Coach House. On 30th March 2011 the St Dogmaels Community Archive was launched, but with limited marketing it was not a success. On 9th April 2011 an Easter Fayre was held here. In May 2011 a medieval carved stone head, believed to have been removed from a lost medieval chapel at Hendre elsewhere in the parish in 1859, was returned from Clynfiew, Boncath and placed on display in the centre. The same month a community minibus was acquired – largely through the efforts of the Coach House. In July 2011 it was noted that there had been a spate of vandalism at the abbey. In August 2011 the 25th Anniversary of the Shakespeare productions in the Abbey was celebrated with the performance of *'King Lear'*. In October 2011 a project called 'Estyn Dwylo' was launched at the Coach House –

supporting individuals, community and enterprise. On 21st February 2012 another Pancake Race was held here. In June 2012 a Jubilee Spring Fayre was held here, including the BBC's TARDIS from 'Doctor Who.' In August 2012 '*As You Like It*' was performed at the abbey. On 4th December and 20th December, Christmas Fairs were held here.

In 2013 a number of special events were held to commemorate the 900th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Norman monks at the abbey. These included a special service at the parish church on January 13th, a St Dogmael's Day Service at the St Dogfael Statue on 13th June; a Singing Festival at St Thomas' Church on June 16th; a concert by the Pendyrus Choir at the Abbey on July 21st and performances of '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*' and a larger than usual annual 'Medieval Day' event. Towards the end of the year a portion of the boundary wall to the west of the North Transept, exposing a small chapel for the first time in many years. Some other minor repairs were conducted. In late October a group travelled to Thiron Gardais in France with goodwill gifts from St Dogmaels. On 8th December 2013 the annual Christmas Fair included a skating rink for children.

On 7th April 2014 'The War Years Project' was launched at the Coach House, and continued until 2018. On July 13th 2014 the Duvant Male Voice Choir performed at the Abbey and in August 2014 an exhibition marked the centenary of World War I. From 4th August 1914 a First World War Exhibition was held at the Coach House and a book was launched on the fallen of WWI from St Dogmaels. In August 2014 '*The Merchant of Venice*' was the annual Shakespeare performance, followed in August 2015 by '*The Tempest*'. On 24th August a musical event entitled 'Musical Abbey' was held here. On 13th September 2014 the first Annual Village Show was held at the site. On 7th December 2014 the annual Christmas Fair again included a skating rink. In April 2015 the damage caused by vandalism was causing concern again. In May 2015 a reunion of war-time evacuees was held in the village as part of the 'War Years Project.' On 31st May 2015 a Plant Festival was held at the abbey. In September 2015 members of the Ordre-de-Thiron from Thiron-Gardais visited the site to mark the 900 year connection between the two abbeys. On 5th December 2015 the book 'A History of the Evacuees at St Dogmaels' was launched at the Coach House.

In April 2016 there were calls for the carved stones removed from the Abbey site over a decade earlier to be returned. In May 2016 the St Dogmaels Food Market won the BBC Food & Farm Awards prize for being the best producer's market in the country. On July 17th 2016 Cor Meibion Taf performed at the Abbey. In August 2016 '*Twelfth Night*' was performed at the Abbey. The same month saw the launch of the 'Orchards Project' from the Coach House. On 18th September 2016 an 'Historic & Classic Car Show' was held at the Abbey. In February 2017 a Welsh language library was launched at the Coach House. On 23rd July 2017 the Pendyrus Choir again performed at the abbey. The annual Shakespeare performance was '*Richard II*'. Further minor repairs at that time included the covering over of the nave floor and the former garderobe. On September 9th 2017 'OrchardFest' was held at the abbey. On 30th June 2018 the book 'Monty and the Poppit Dragon' was launched at the Coach House. On 22nd July 2018 a Folk Music afternoon was held here free of charge, featuring Mynediad Am Dim and Lowri Evans. In August

2018 the Shakespeare play performed at the Abbey was 'Macbeth'. On September 8th 2018 another OrchardFest event was held here.

“*The Merry Wives of Windsor*” was performed here in August 2019. A further OrchardFest event took place on 7th September 2019. In March 2020 the Coach House Visitors' Centre was temporarily closed until August owing to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, which also suspended the weekly producers' market until July. The Abbey was closed for maintenance during the same period, and the annual Medieval Day and Shakespeare in the Abbey events were cancelled. The market re-opened, albeit in a limited manner, on July 7th 2020.

Description:

The ruins were described by CADW in 1993:

“...Founded 1115 by the FitzMartin family, Lords of Cemais. Ruins of medieval abbey of the Order of Tiron. Originally built in the earlier C12 as aisled church with apsidal E end and transept chapels, uncompleted; remodelled in C13, aisleless with rebuilt transepts, lengthened E end over a small crypt. Further altered in early C14, when W end was built and NW door added, and in the early C16 when the N transept was given fan vaulting. Extensive monastic buildings were to the S of the abbey, and a detached building of the late C13, possibly an infirmary chapel or infirmary to the SE.

The abbey walls survive to substantial height on the W end, N wall and N transept, and the E end crypt walls survive. Elsewhere low walls or foundations, except for the infirmary which has three walls intact, and part of the rough stone vault. Collected carved stonework in the infirmary, and several of the incised stones formerly in the parish church are collected against the S wall...”

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