

St John the Baptist, Pontyberem (Capel Ifan), Carmarthenshire



**ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, PONTYBEREM (CAPEL
IFAN), CARMARTHENSHIRE**

Dyfed PRN 1690

RB No. 2941

NGR SN 4980 1034

Not listed (1998) Not Listed 2021.

SUMMARY

19th century chapel; 0% medieval core fabric. On site of, and in the same location as?, medieval chapel.

A 2-cell chapel, small. Consists of chancel/nave, without structural division, 2 bays; west tower, 3-storeys; 1894. Vestry (north, over below-ground boilerhouse?), 1 bay, ?1966. Construction is in shale rubble, vestry in breezeblocks. Neo-gothic. Slate gable roofs; vestry with slate lean-to; west tower flat-roofed. All openings are from 1894, including windows, doors, and west tower with crenellated parapet; vestry openings from ?1966.

Roofs, floors and finishes: 1894-1966.

Condition – good.

Archaeological potential – good. No physical evidence for earlier chapel; shallow external drain around 100% of chapel; ?below-ground boilerhouse beneath 15% of chapel; suspended floors over heating ducts in 80% of chapel.

Structural value (pre 19th century) – poor. 5% pre-1894 core fabric.

Group value – low-medium. C19 landmark church with tower.

Phasing:

Phase 1 – Chancel/nave, west tower, 1894.

Phase 2 – Vestry (with boilerhouse), ?1966.

DESCRIPTION

St John the Baptist, Capel Ifan, Pontyberem, is a 2-celled church (properly chapel), of small size. It was entirely (re)built in 1894 on the same site, and in the same location as its predecessor, retaining nothing from the earlier fabric.

The present chapel consists of a 2-bayed chancel/nave, without structural division, a 3-storey west tower and a vestry over a ?below-ground boilerhouse south of the chancel. Construction is in shale rubble; the vestry/boilerhouse is in breeze-blocks, from ?1966. The interior is plastered. Dressings are in sandstone and from 1894; the openings are neo-gothic comprising simple, single-light windows now with UPVC frames (formerly timber). The west tower has a basal batter up to a plain string-course, and a crenellated parapet. The chancel/nave roof is a slated gable, while the vestry/boilerhouse has a slated lean-to roof and the tower has a flat roof. Floors are suspended except in the tower.

The chapel occupies a medieval site. The pre-1894 chapel is shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 First Edition but not clearly on the tithe map (NLW, Parish of Llanelli, Tithe Map, 1842). It appears to have comprised a single-cell chancel/nave, with a long west porch.

The chapel was entirely rebuilt in 1894 (Lewis & Lewis, 1996, 1). The vestry/boilerhouse was added in ?1966 (ibid.).

There is no physical evidence for the earlier chapel. A shallow external drain runs around the chapel. A ?below-ground boilerhouse lies beneath the vestry. The floors are suspended over heating ducts except in the tower.

The church was not listed in 1998. Not Listed 2021.

SITE HISTORY

There is no firm evidence for any pre-conquest religious use of the site.

St John the Baptist, Capel Ifan, Pontyberem, was not a parish church during the medieval period (Rees, 1932), but a chapelry of Llanelli parish in the medieval Deanery of Kidwelly.

No mention of the chapel is made by Lewis, 1833. It had acquired burial rights by 1821 (earliest memorial; 1835 in Carms. R. O., CPR/32). Disused by the early 20th century (Ordnance Survey, Second Edition), the chapel was later restored to use.

In 1998 St John the Baptist, Capel Ifan, Pontyberem, was a chapel in the benefice of Pontyberem (Benefice no. 382). The living was a vicarage in the Archdeaconry of Carmarthen, Rural Deanery of Cydweli (St Davids, 1997-8).

SOURCES CONSULTED

Map Evidence

NLW, Ordnance Survey 1:2500, First Edition, Sheet XLVII.14.

NLW, Ordnance Survey 1:2500, Second Edition, Sheet XLVII.14.

NLW, Parish of Llanelli, Tithe Map, 1842.

Rees, W., 1932, South Wales and the Border in the XIVth century.

Church in Wales Records

Lewis, W., & Lewis, P., 1996, Quinquennial Report, Pontyberem Capel Ifan.

St Davids, 1997-8, Diocesan Year Book.

Parish Records, Carmarthenshire Record Office, Carmarthen

(CPR/32 – Pontyberem Capel Ifan)

Printed Accounts

Allen, E. E., 1947, 'A Timber Landing Stage on the River Towy near White Mill', The Carmarthenshire Antiquary Vol. II.

Lewis, S., 1833, A Topographical Dictionary of Wales.

RCAHM, 1917, Inventory: Carmarthenshire.

Updated: August 2021 – Peter K Rowland