

**Site Name:** CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS.

**Site File Ref. No.** MON/CHUR

**Site Type:** Church

**N. G. Ref.:** SN 1353 4381

**Period:** Medieval; Post-Medieval; Modern

**History:**

The Welsh name for Monington is “Eglwys Wythwr”. The common explanation of the name, which is that there were originally eight freeholders in the parish, smacks of Victorian inventiveness, and the church may originally have been dedicated to Saint Gwythyr – derived from the name 'Victor'. The church stands in an oval churchyard which may well indicate early medieval origins, although it was first recorded by documentation in 1222 as 'Eglois Goethir'. On May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1399 the Bishop ordained Philip ap Ieuan ap Rhys, the Rector of Monington, as a Deacon. He was also granted a dispensation for one year. He was referred to as the Rector again on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1400. On September 20<sup>th</sup> 1496 Hugh ap Thomas became the Vicar, replacing Thomas William. In 1513 the church was exempted from payment of the King's Tithes. On November 17<sup>th</sup> 1534 the Act of Supremacy was passed and King Henry VIII became the Head of the Anglican Church. The church here was valued in 1537, together with Llantood Church, at £6. 13s. 4d.

In 1539 the Six Articles affirmed the surviving Catholic dogma in English and Welsh churches. The Great Bible was distributed to English and Welsh churches and the services were modified for the new Anglican Church. In 1547 Edward VI became the King and the Six Articles were repealed. English replaced Latin in English church services. On January 15<sup>th</sup> 1549 the first Act of Uniformity made the Catholic Mass illegal. The first Book of Common Prayer was published in June of that year. In January 1550 Parliament encouraged iconoclasm – the destruction of Catholic icons, and the persecution of Catholics and heretics. In January 1552 the Second Act of Uniformity was passed and the Second Book of Common Prayer was published. On July 15<sup>th</sup> 1553 Mary became the Queen and that September Protestant Bishops were arrested and Catholic replacements appointed. On November 30<sup>th</sup> 1554 Parliament supported a return to Roman Catholicism and the Heresy Acts were revived. The following year many Anglicans and Protestants were burned for heresy. After Elizabeth became Queen, on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1559 the Third Act of Uniformity and Act of Supremacy settled the religious question. In 1563 the Anglican Church was officially founded. That year an Act of Parliament sought that all Welsh churches should be provided with a Welsh Bible and a Book of Common Prayer by March 1<sup>st</sup> 1567.

In 1603 the church was again valued together with Llantood at £6. 13s. 4d. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1624 Edward Provand was the Vicar of St. Dogmaels, Monington and Llantood – perhaps the first incumbent to hold all three parishes. Christmas Day 1644 was a fast day enforced by Parliament. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1645 the Directory for Public Worship replaced the Book of Common Prayer. It omitted Christmas, which was not observed that year. In October 1646 the Anglican episcopacy was abolished. In June 1647 the observance of Easter, Whitsun and Christmas was outlawed. In 1650 the church was stripped of decorations following an Act of Parliament favouring Puritanism. In 1654 it was decreed that all vacant Anglican positions were to be taken by Puritans. In November 1662, following the Restoration, the Vicar of the aforementioned three parishes was ejected from his post and his churches sequestrated because of his Nonconformity. Religious holidays were reinstated and a new Book of Common Prayer was published. In 1674 the Revd. Thomas Howell was the Vicar. In 1675 Rev. Thomas was the Vicar of St. Dogmaels, Monington and Llantood. Between 1681 and 1684 the Vicar for the three churches was Rev. Owen Evans.

In 1687 the Revd. John Evans succeeded Rev. Owen Evans as the Vicar. In May 1688 the Declaration of Indulgence was read out in the church, permitting Nonconformity. From at least 1699 until 1719 the Revd. David Evans was the Vicar. On July 24<sup>th</sup> 1728 the Revd. David Lloyd was the Vicar of Monington, St. Dogmaels and Llantood and remained so until 1737. From 1738 until 1748 the

Revd. Morgan Gwynne was the Vicar of the three parishes. From 1748 until 1768 the Revd. John Davies was the Vicar. In 1769 Rev. L. Walters became the Vicar until 1772. From 1772 until 1774 the Revd. William Jones was the disreputable Vicar. On March 30<sup>th</sup> 1776 the new Vicar of the three churches was the Revd. William Jones, the former Curate of Newport. A Bier House was built here before 1796 to house the bier for carrying the dead at funerals. On December 18<sup>th</sup> 1818 Rev. John Morgan, the late Rector of Monington, was buried at Llantood Church, having died aged 55 years. He was described as being “...a truly pious man...” in the parish records. Rev. William Jones died on October 31<sup>st</sup> 1825 aged 76 years. He left sons Thomas Morgan Jones, William Jones, Rev. John Jones, Daniel Jones and Rev. James Jones, and a daughter called Margaretta Catherine Jones. On August 1<sup>st</sup> 1826 the Revd. Henry James Vincent became the Vicar. By November that year, David Morgan was the Curate. In August 1859 a pewter flagon from the church was displayed at a temporary museum in Cardigan for the Cambrian Archaeological Association. At about that time Rev. Henry James Vincent wrote the following notes:

*“...An Archdeacon once told me the Church was dedicated to the Eight men in the ark, if this be true its' patron saint is older than any in the Calendar. Could it have had any relation to Gwrtheyrn – a Saint of the Sixth Century (this is mere conjecture), or to Gwythyr, a distinguished character in Welsh romance and therefore well qualified to fraternise with many of the Gentlemen who can lay claim in no inconsiderable degree to this kind of distinction. Gwythyr, like Tydoch, is a conventional term, the name in the King's Book and the Parish Register being Monington. This name seems to have puzzled Fenton. Could it be Moaning Town? There is a place in the neighbourhood called Dyffryn lobain – The mourning Valley, and the adjoining Parish is Moylegrove (the grove of trouble). The church is beautifully situated on the brow of a hill surrounded by trees planted by David Lloyd of Tygwyn, a descendant of the Trevigin family for which he was never paid, having undertaken the work without orders from the Parish.*

*Mr & Mrs James of Pantaision, the only resident landed proprietors in the Parish, have for some months, in consequence of a domestic bereavement, been anxious to have the Church rebuilt, to which I, for some time demurred on archaeological grounds. The little unpretending Church, or rather the Chancel, is supposed to be of the Twelfth Century with remains of a credence table, almeries, brackets for candles, vestiges of a rood loft and other marks of undoubted antiquity, all of the rudest form, which is probably the reason why they have so long escaped the hands of the spoiler.*

*My plan was to have the church new-roofed according to the type and pitch of the original roof, specimens of which may still be seen in the Chancel, to have two or three new windows put in as well as a new doorway and porch, to have the whole of the inside nicely plastered and refitted, to make excavations around the external walls and cover them with ivy. If these improvements were effected it would be one of the most interesting objects in the neighbourhood, and attract the notice and admiration of many a rabid antiquary who would scarcely deign to look at any of our fine modern fabrications of which we think so much. The cost of carrying out this plan would not exceed £150 and Mr James had kindly promised to supply all the materials at his own expense.*

*A London Architect has, however, condemned the walls of the Nave. He said they might last a few years, but that they would not bear to be built upon, and to cover them with a new roof would be a mere waste of money. His opinion has been supported by a good, practical stone mason who certainly ought to be as good a judge of a plain wall as any architect in existence. He says he can perceive unmistakable symptoms of decay both in the Church and Chancel. If the church is to be taken down, the chancel must follow for the one half of it is now underground and if it could be kept up, which is somewhat problematical, its connection with the nave, the floor of which will have to be lowered several feet, would have a most grotesque appearance. So that Delessa est Carthage has been pronounced over the whole pile and Mr Withers, Architect, 5 Doughty Street, London, has been requested to prepare designs for a plain new Church (suitable to the congregation, that, with one or two exceptions, consists of small farmers, labourers and domestics). The cost of which he estimates at £500, which, if sufficient funds can be raised, will be built in the course of this or the following year...”*

Apparently the Bishop preferred the idea of demolishing Monington Church altogether and moving the Parishioners to worship at Llantood. The rebuilding of the church began in 1860 to plans by Robert Jewell Withers, a London architect. In 1862 Rev. John Jones became the Curate. In 1865 Rev. B. Shadrach became the Curate. In 1865 Rev. Henry James Vincent died, and, on September 11<sup>th</sup> 1865 the Revd. Daniel Jones became the Vicar of St. Dogmaels, Monington & Llantood. In 1866 Rev. John Williams became the Curate. On August 20<sup>th</sup> 1868 the Revd. Henry Jones became the Vicar of Monington, St. Dogmaels & Llantood. On March 15<sup>th</sup> 1878 the Revd. Edward Thomas Jones became the Vicar of Monington, St. Dogmaels & Llantood. In 1879 a new 3-panel oak reredos was installed, with paintings by Miss James of Plas Pansaeson. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1883 the Curate, Rev. John Price Evans, married Rebecca Lloyd, the daughter of the late Richard Lloyd of Panteg, St. Dogmaels. Rev Edward Thomas Jones, the Vicar, presided. The church was refurbished in 1884. Rev. Edward Thomas Jones left in November 1884 and his successor as Vicar was the Revd. Thomas Jones. Rev. Thomas Jones died on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1895.

In March 1895 the Revd. J. Myfenydd Morgan was named as the new Vicar. In 1896 Rev. T James became the Curate. In 1899 William Edward Yerward James of Cardigan postulated that the Welsh name of the parish was derived from there having been eight freeholders in the parish at the time of its establishment. On March 17<sup>th</sup> 1899 Rev. J. Myfenydd Morgan became a member of the new "Pembrokeshire Association for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments". In 1899 Rev. John Williams became the Curate. In 1902 Rev. T. Pugh became the Curate. In 1906 Rev. William H. Davies became the Curate. In 1907 William Phillips of Hendre, St. Dogmaels, had the church roof repaired at his own expense. In 1907 Rev. Daniel Williams became the Curate. In January 1915 the Curate, Rev. W. Edwards, announced his impending departure. On November 16<sup>th</sup> 1916 Rev J. Myfenydd Morgan died aged 64 years. On November 24<sup>th</sup> 1916 his replacement was announced as the Revd. Jenkin Griffith Hughes (b.1877). Rev. Jenkin Griffith Hughes was installed on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1917. In 1926 the church was described:

*'...The church of St Nicholas, rebuilt in 1884, is an edifice of stone in the Gothic style, consisting of chancel, nave, porch and a belfry containing one bell: there are 77 sittings. The registers date from the year 1784. The living is a vicarage, annexed with that of Llantood to the vicarage of St Dogmael's, net yearly value £325, with residence, in the gift of the Bishop of St David's and the Board of Patronage, and held since 1917 by the Rev. Jenkin Griffith Hughes B A of St David's College, Lampeter, who resides at St Dogmael's...'*

On April 20<sup>th</sup> 1928 it was reported that a vault and the church door here had been vandalised. In 1931 the Revd. James Lewis Davies, the former Curate of Cardigan, became the Vicar of Monington & Moylegrove until at least 1940. At Easter 1939 there were 14 communicants. Reference was made to the stable/bier house here on October 11<sup>th</sup> 1940. Rev. James Lewis Davies claimed it belonged to the church, but John Jones of Lawrence Villa, St. Dogmaels, claimed it belonged to Plas Lawrence Farm. The church is marked on the 1951 OS map and others.

On September 12<sup>th</sup> 1952 the church saw its' first wedding in 21 years! In July 1955 the church re-opened following a refit which included a new window and a new altar. In May 1959 there was ill-feeling amongst the congregation following remarks made by the Curate-in-Charge, Rev. Hugh Thomas, against parishioners who were members of a local skiffle band! The church was made a Grade II listed building in 1992. In 1998 the Revd. Dorrien Davies became the Vicar and remained so from 1998 until 2010. He left in April 2010. In 2010 the Revd. Aled Thomas became the Vicar until 2012. The church was threatened with closure in 2011, but was saved by the intervention of an anonymous benefactor. By 2015 the building was being used only for occasional services and in 2017 it appeared rather neglected. It was repaired and re-opened for services in October 2017. With the parishes of St Dogmaels and Monington being absorbed into St Mary's, Cardigan, Rev. John Bennet became the new Vicar at about this time.

### **Description:**

The church was described by CADW in 1992:

*“...1860 Anglican parish church designed by R J Withers, architect of London, in tooled blue lias ashlar with slate roof and red tile cresting. Nave, chancel, N porch, SE vestry and W bellcote. Small Gothic church with cusped lancet windows, one pair to each side of nave, 2-light with quatrefoil head to chancel N, 2-light with sexfoil head to E and single lancet to S chancel. Lean-to S chancel vestry with shouldered head to W door, 2-light E window and fine chimney stack on chancel S wall, battered with three steps and with square smoke vents under hipped stone cap. N porch is gabled with roll-moulded pointed doorway and similar inner door with wrought-iron hinges. W front has projected centre, 2-light plate traceried W window with trefoil head, the projection shouldered at springing level of window and then continuing up, first battered and then straight, to base of Douling stone bellcote; battered sides and then pointed arch with chamfered piers, coped gable and weathercock.*

*INTERIOR – 3-bay nave roof with arch-braced collar trusses, octagonal stone font and timber pulpit. Plastered walls and chancel arch. Scissor rafter roof to chancel, timber reredos and altar rails. Two strips of painted decoration in tones of brown on chancel side wall, cherubs and angels.*

*Churchyard is roughly circular with gates at NW. Iron railed enclosure for tombs of James family of Pantaeson.*

*BIER HOUSE IN CHURCHYARD – Probably early C19 bier house in rubble stone, squared with tooled corner stones and grouted slate roof. W door with stone voussoirs. Three bay roof with pegged trusses. In 1991 it contained a pine bier dated 1796...”*

#### **Sources:**

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