

St Michael, Llanfihangel-ar-arth, Carmarthenshire (PRN 1793)



ST MICHAEL, LLANFIHANGEL-AR-ARTH, CARMARTHENSHIRE

Dyfed PRN 1793

RB No. 2722

NGR SN 4560 3991

Listed Building No. 15631

Listed Grade II* (1998)

First Listed in 1967. Last amended in 2003.

Reasons for listing: Listed grade II* as a substantially medieval church with post-medieval additions, retaining much of its early character and detail.

SUMMARY

Medieval church; 80% medieval core fabric.

A multicell church, medium-sized. Consists of chancel, 2 bays; nave, 2 bays; south aisle, 4 bays; medieval. South porch; mid 19th century. Boilerhouse (north of chancel), later 20th century. Mudstone rubble construction. 90% of internal walls with render/plaster. Slate gable roofs; boilerhouse with asbestos sheeting roof. Chancel arch, arcade, altered windows, blocked rood-loft stair and bellcote, medieval. Western single bellcote, early post-medieval?. All other openings from the mid 19th century and neo-gothic including windows and (rebuilt) doors; yellow oolite dressings.

Roofs and floors: mid 19th century?. Finishes: 20th century.

Condition – good.

Archaeological potential – excellent. Shallow external cutting around 60% of church; no evidence for floor level changes; no underfloor void; external memorials significantly close to 25% of church

Structural value (pre 19th century) – very good. 80% medieval core fabric; medieval arcades, altered openings, blocked rood stair; ?early post-medieval bellcote.

Group value – high. Medieval landmark church in hilltop location; central within village; scheduled ECMs, SAM Cm 071.

Phasing:

Phase 1 – Chancel and nave, C13?

Phase 2 – South aisle east bays, c.1500.

Phase 3 – South aisle west bays, early C16?.

Phase 4 – Restored mid C19, medium impact; south porch built.

Phase 5 – Boilerhouse, later C20.

DESCRIPTION

The present church

St Michael, Llanfihangel-ar-arth, is a multicelled church, of medium size. It retains approximately 80% medieval core fabric.

The present church consists of a 2-bayed chancel, a 2-bayed nave, a 4-bayed south aisle, a south porch and a boilerhouse north of the chancel west bay. Construction is predominantly in Silurian

mudstone rubble (Clive-Powell, 1996, 2); dressings are mainly yellow oolite and from the mid 19th century. Pointing is ribboned and 20th century; the interior is plastered except in the south porch. Roofs are slated gables; the boilerhouse has a lean-to 'asbestos' sheeting roof.

The chancel side walls are battered. The 3-light chancel east window has simple cusped tracery from the mid 19th century and a concrete hoodmould from the 20th century; there is a single cusped lancet in the north wall, also mid 19th century, to the west of which is a high, blocked opening, window? Post-medieval?. The plain, 2-centred chancel arch is medieval, 13th century?. A plaster ceiling from the mid 19th century follows the 3 cants of a collar-rafter roof – date?. The floor is of quarry-tiles from the mid 19th century with 20th century artificial flags in the sanctuary.

The nave walls are battered like the chancel. In the north wall is a square external projection that formerly housed a rood-loft stair; all medieval openings are now blocked but it is pierced by a 2-light window with 'Y'-tracery from the mid 19th century; there is a similar window to the west and there may be a blocked opening low down between the two. The double-lancet west window may be medieval but the dressings are mid 19th century. There is a blocked medieval door with a plain, 2-centred head below, and the openings for a former double-bellcote are fossilised within the present upstand. The nave is ceiled as the chancel, mid 19th century. The quarry tile floor lacks a void and is mid 19th century.

The south aisle walls are unbattered. The aisle is separated from the chancel by a 2-bayed arcade of depressed, semicircular arches with chamfered voussoirs in octagonal piers with chamfered imposts, from c.1500. The nave arcade is similarly 2-bayed but the arches are segmental, lack imposts, and may be later, early 16th century?. The east wall window is a triple lancet like the nave

west window, also largely medieval. The two south wall windows are like the nave north wall windows but the 2-centred openings have brick heads (cf. Llangynwr), all mid 19th century?. The semicircular-headed south door is all from the mid 19th century. On the west end is a single gabled bellcote on a plain corbel-table, with a segmental-headed opening, crude, early post-medieval? (post-1552?, see below). The aisle is ceiled and floored as the nave and chancel, mid-19th century.

The south porch is all from the mid 19th century and has an external oolite offset and a chamfered oolite door-surround. The softwood gabled roof lacks trusses and is contemporary?; the floor is tiled like the nave and lies directly on the substrate, also mid 19th century.

The boilerhouse is later 20th century and of breeze-blocks. There is a simple square doorway in the east wall and a similar window in the north wall. The lean-to roof has an artificial, 'asbestos' sheeted covering. It houses the boiler for a hot-water system

There is a shallow, earth-cut external cutting around the north, west and east walls. There is no evidence for changes in floor level. There is no underfloor void. External memorials lie significantly close to the east walls and areas of the south wall.

Structural development

The chancel and nave are similar, are both battered externally and may be contemporary; the style of the chancel arch suggests an early date, 13th century? The chancel and nave arcades into the south aisle are stylistically different and the former may be from c1500 (as a south chapel arcade) and the latter from the early 16th century. The south porch is mid 19th century while the boilerhouse is later 20th century.

There were 2 bells in 1552 (Wallcott, 1871, ii), and the outline of a former double bellcote can be seen in the nave west wall; the present bellcote is ?later.

In 1705 the church roof and windows were described as 'in no good repair' and the floors were unpaved (Evans, 1917, 83), while in 1720 the chancel was to be repaired by the impropriator of the tithes (Evans, 1921, 12).

The church was restored in the mid 19th century. The restoration was medium impact; the south porch was added (and south door inserted?), the church was refenestrated and refloored, and may have been reroofed; it was certainly given its present plaster ceilings.

The free-standing, softwood poppy-head stalls are later 19th century, as are the freestanding, softwood pews and pulpit. The sanctuary fittings are all 20th century. The vestry screen in the south aisle east bay was inserted c.1900.

The limestone font has an octagonal bowl and stem, and a square base; it is from the 14th-15th centuries.

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There is a Latin-inscribed stone in the south aisle (Dyfed PRN 1794; SAM Cm 071), and a cross-incised stone, possibly a post-Conquest altar-table? (Dyfed PRN 1795; also SAM Cm 071); both are scheduled and formerly lay within the yard (RCAHM, 1917, 135).

SITE HISTORY

There is some evidence for the pre-conquest religious use of the site:-

ECM(s); pre-conquest Latin dedication?.

Evidence for the pre-conquest church has the separate PRN 12860.

St Michael, Llanfihangel-ar-arth, was a parish church during the medieval period (Rees, 1932), of the medieval Deanery of Stradtowy. It was granted to the Augustinian priory of St John at Carmarthen by Edward, the Black Prince, in 1360 (Anon., 1915, 35).

At the dissolution, the advowson fell to the crown but found its way into private patronage; in 1833 the living was a discharged vicarage in the alternate patronage of the William Lewis and J. R. L. Lloyd Esq., rated in the king's books at £6 6s 8d and endowed with £200 royal bounty (Lewis, 1833).

In 1998 St Michael, Llanfihangel-ar-arth, was a parish church. The living was a vicarage, held with Capel Dewi (Benefice no. 188) in the Archdeaconry of Cardigan, Rural Deanery of Emlyn (St Davids, 1997-8).

SOURCES CONSULTED

Map Evidence

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St Davids, 1997-8, Diocesan Year Book.

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Printed Accounts

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Updated: August 2021 – Peter K Rowland