

St David, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire





ST DAVID, LLANARTHNE, CARMARTHENSHIRE

Dyfed PRN 728

RB No. 3079

NGR SN 5344 2025

Listed Building No. 18982

Grade II listed (1998)

Listed Grade 11. First Listed in 1997. Last Amended in 1997.

Reason for Listing: Listed as a church retaining its mediaeval form and much of its early fabric.

SUMMARY

Medieval church; 60% medieval core fabric.

A multicell church, medium-large sized. Consists of a chancel, 2 bays; nave, 3 bays; south chapel, 1 bay; south aisle (united with nave), 3 bays, west tower, 3 storeys; all medieval. Boilerhouse, east of south chapel, later 19th century. Limestone and ORS rubble construction. External walls with render/plaster from the late 18th – early 19th century. Slate gable roofs; boilerhouse with a slate lean-to roof; tower roof not seen. Medieval arcade gone. West tower including openings, chancel arch and blocked chapel arches, medieval. Blocked chapel window, 17th century. Ceiling, 1826. All other openings mainly later 19th century.

Roofs and floors, 1826 – later 19th century. Finishes, 18th – later 19th century.

Condition – fair-good. South wall ivied.

Archaeological potential – very good. No external cutting or drain around church; suspended floors over heating ducts; ?below-ground floor in 5% of church; external memorials significantly close to 30% of church.

Structural value (pre 19th century) – good. 60% medieval core fabric; medieval west tower, chancel arch, blocked arcades; 17th century window.

Group value – high. Medieval landmark church with tower; central village location; ECMs? and/or prehistoric stone?; large churchyard.

Phasing:

Phase 1 – Nave, C13-14?

Phase 2 – South aisle, C15.

Phase 3 – West tower, late C15.

Phase 4 – Chancel and south chapel – earlier C16.

Phase 5 – Restored 1682, south chapel window inserted?.

Phase 6 – Restored 1826, high impact; arcade removed, chapel arches blocked.

Phase 7 – Restored later C19, medium impact; boilerhouse built.

DESCRIPTION

The present church

St David, Llanarthne, is a multicell church, of large size. It retains approximately 60% medieval core fabric.

The present church consists of a 2-bayed chancel, a 3-bayed nave, a single-bayed south chapel (now vestry), a 3-bayed south aisle, a boilerhouse between the chancel and south chapel, and a 3-storey west tower. Construction is in limestone and Old Red Sandstone rubble throughout. There are extensive remains of late 18th-early 19th century external render (pre-1826), limited later 19th century pointing and there has been some 20th century cement repointing. The interior is plastered. The arcade between the nave and south aisle was removed in 1826. Roofs are slated gables, the nave and south aisle roofed as one unit; the boilerhouse has a slated lean-to roof; the west tower roof was not seen.

The chancel has an external basal batter up to a plain string-course, medieval. The 3-light east window has Geometric tracery inserted, with infill, in the later 19th century, and there is a single

cusped lancet of similar date in the north wall. The plain 2-centred chancel arch is medieval. The softwood 'wagon-roof' ceiling appears to be later than the 1826 restoration, and, like the tiled floor may belong to the later 19th century restoration.

The nave eastern gable, above eaves level, was entirely rebuilt in 1826 when the south aisle was absorbed and the former arcade was removed. The north wall has 3 windows like the chancel east window but with 2 lights and string-courses which were inserted, with infill, in the later 19th century. The nave west wall is battered externally, and has a door with 2-centred surround, late 15th century but partly rebuilt in the later 19th century.

The nave and south aisle are roofed as one; the roof structure is not known, but is from 1826 and lies above a flat plaster ceiling with decorative panelling and medallions, from 1826. The passages are flagged, from 1826?, with suspended board floors from the later 19th century.

The south chapel has an external batter and string-course like the chancel. It formerly communicated with the chancel west bay through a segmental-headed arch into the south chapel which is medieval but has been blocked, probably in 1826; a doorway was inserted through the blocking. The simple 2-centred arch from the chapel into the south aisle is also blocked. A window in the east wall is like the nave windows and also later 19th century, and there is a blocked window in the south wall with a square ORS surround of possible 17th century date (1682?); the blocking is interrupted by a door, probably from the later 19th century. There is a chimney in the east wall, with a square brick stack, shared with the boilerhouse flue and late 19th century. The chapel is now used as a vestry.

The south aisle has 3 windows in the south wall like those in the nave and also later 19th century. The west wall is battered like the

nave west wall and pierced by a door with a 2-centred surround from the 15th century. The aisle is floored as the nave.

The west tower is from the late 15th century and comprises 3 storeys. A spiral rises in the thickness of the south wall, entered through a 4-centred, 15th century doorway in the nave west wall and lit by simple square slits of similar date. There is an external batter up to a string-course. The west door is a plain 2-centred arch, late 15th century. The ground floor formerly had a barrel-vault with a segmental profile, the remains of which can be seen; it is flagged as the nave passages. There are 15th century loops in the north, south and west walls of the second storey. The belfry stage has large, cusped, 2-light openings in the north and west walls (the latter mullion gone) from the 15th century, and a similar single light in the east wall. The large opening in the south wall, with a segmental brick head, is probably from 1826. A string-course lies below a crenellated parapet, which displays a 15th century gargoyle.

The lean-to boilerhouse is in brick and from the late 19th century. It has a slated lean-to roof. An external oil-tank, from the later 20th century, lies adjacent.

There is neither an external cutting nor a drain around the church. The floors are suspended over heating ducts. The boilerhouse floor may be below-ground. External memorials lie significantly close to the south walls.

Structural development

The nave is medieval, but cannot be closely dated; the original chancel may have been shorter. The south aisle exhibits 15th century detail. The west tower is from the late 15th century; it contained 3 bells in the 16th century (Wallcott, 1871, i). The chancel and south chapel share an external batter and string-course, and

the arch from the south aisle into the chapel arch is similar to the chancel arch; they appear to share the same, ?early 16th century date. The boilerhouse is from the late 19th century.

There appears to have been a restoration in 1682; a stone bearing that date is set in the nave north wall. The chancel had been 'out of repaire' in 1678 (Anon., 1919, 211) but was in good order in 1705 (Evans, 1917(i), 66); a (blocked) south chapel window may be from the 1682 restoration. In 1720 the chancel roof was again 'out of repair, the floors and seats out of order and the wheel of one of the bells decay'd' (Evans, 1921, 10). A west gallery was present by 1802 (Evans, 1914(ii), 65), and the roofs were 'tiled'. The chancel east wall was (partly?) rebuilt in 1806 (Evans, 1914(i), 59). The old 'oak' seats were removed in 1807, and the following year the church is described as 'seated and flagged', and whitewashed within (ibid.). The church door was repaired and 3 new window frames, presumably of timber, were made (Evans, 1914(ii), 65); the 'fireplace in the church' was also repaired – a pew fireplace?

The church was restored in 1826 (Yates, 1974, 71); the restoration was high-impact and in the Non-conformist idiom, and cost £324 17s 5d (Evans, 1914(ii), 65). The nave and south aisle were united by the removal of the arcade (cf. Llannon). The existing west gallery was presumably removed. The west tower was mentioned by Lewis in 1833 who otherwise described the church as 'a plain neat edifice' presenting 'no architectural details of importance' (Lewis, 1833).

Most of the present fenestration dates to the later 19th century, as do the present flooring arrangements (if not materials), and the chancel and south chapel roofs. The softwood pews are from this restoration, as is the pulpit; there are no stalls. There is an organ in the south aisle from c.1890.

The limestone font is octagonal and one-piece, from the 13th-14th century.

In 1906 a broken, cross-incised stone altar table lay in the porch (Jones, 1906, 66) – now represented by a fragment in the chancel?.

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The 'Cross of Elmat' (PRN 761), a large 11th -12th century wheel-cross within the tower ground floor, is not in situ, having apparently been brought from the nearby promontory fort of Cae'r Castell. A 'perforated and grooved stone' (prehistoric? ECM?) was apparently found in the churchyard during a grave excavation (Jones, 1906, 77). Fragments of ECM(s) are apparently built into the churchyard wall (PRN 733).

SITE HISTORY

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

Celtic dedication; ECMs? and/or prehistoric stone?; 12th century documentary reference.

St David, Llanarthne, was not a parish church during the medieval period (Rees, 1932), but a chapelry of the medieval Deanery of Stradtowy. It was a possession of the Bishop of St Davids as a prebend of the collegiate church at Brecon, rated in the king's books at £15 (Lewis, 1833). The prebend was appropriated to the Prior of the Knights Hospitaller in England by Bishop Bek in 1290 (Evans, 1907, 183), confirmed by Edward II in 1328. There were formerly two chapels-of-ease in the parish (Lewis, 1833).

The patronage was unchanged in 1833, when the living was a discharged vicarage rated in the king's books at £8 and endowed with £200 royal bounty (ibid.).

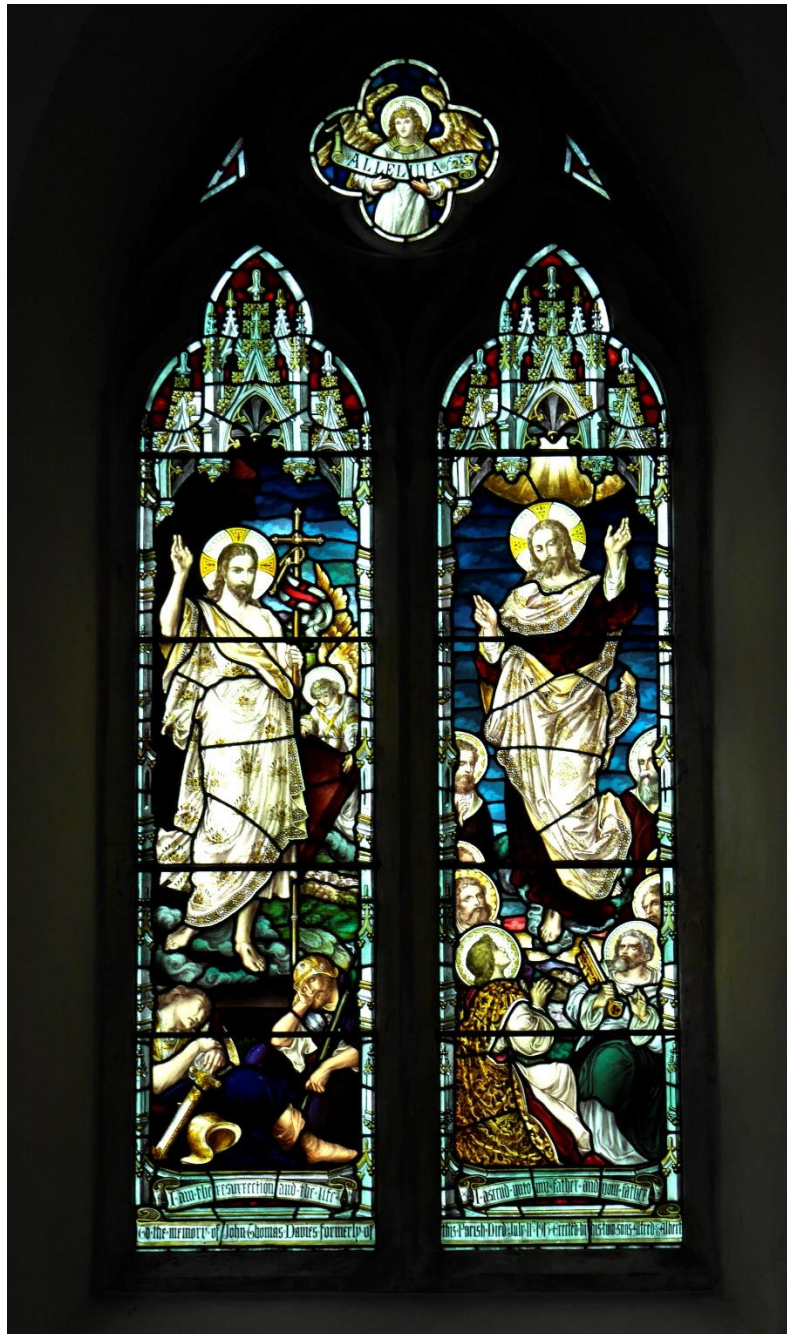
In 1998 St David, Llanarthne, was a parish church. The living was a vicarage, held with Llanddarog (Benefice no. 593) in the Archdeaconry of Carmarthen, Rural Deanery of Carmarthen (St Davids, 1997-8).

Llanarthne may be the 'Llanadneu' mentioned as a 'Dewi' church in the 12th century 'Poem to Dewi' by Gwynfardd Brycheiniog (RCAHM, 1917; Anon., 1925, 463). The dedication is given as St David in 1833 (Lewis, 1833) but the later Ordnance Survey First Edition gives 'St Arthen'.

Stained Glass:



East Wall.



South Wall.

Left-hand light – I am the resurrection and the life.

Right-hand light – I ascend unto my Father and your Father.

Memorial window in memory of John Thomas Davies formerly of this parish – Died July 11 1913. Erected by his sons Alfred and Albert.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Map Evidence

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NLW, SD/F/235, Faculty – Stained glass window, 1913

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CPR/35 – Llanarthne:-

CPR/35/1 – Churchwardens' Accounts, 1801-2; 1836-48.

CPR/35/2 – Churchwardens' Accounts, 1802-29.

CPR/35/3 – Churchwardens' Accounts, 1830-65.

CPR/35/4 – Churchwardens' Accounts, 1830-50.

CPR/35/5 – Churchwardens' Receipts and Bills, 1823-49.

CPR/35/14 – Vestry Book, 1800-1812.

CPR/35/15 – Vestry Book, 1835-72.

CPR/35/16 – Vestry Book, 1866-1931.

(Museum 389 – Vestry Book, 1812-35.)

Printed Accounts

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Anon., 1893, 'Llandeilo Fawr – Report', Archaeol. Cambrensis, Vol. X, Fifth Series.

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Updated: July 2022 – Peter K Rowland