

= St Mary 's Church , Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf =

St Mary 's Church , Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf is a small medieval church in Anglesey , north Wales . The earliest parts of the building , including the nave and the north doorway , date from the 14th century . Other parts , including the chancel and the east window , date from the 15th century . It is associated with the Welsh poet and clergyman Goronwy Owen , who was born nearby and served as curate here . He later travelled to America to teach at The College of William & Mary , Virginia .

The church is still in use for worship , as part of the Church in Wales , as one of three churches in the combined parish of Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf with Llanbedrgoch with Pentraeth . It is a Grade II \* listed building , a national designation given to " particularly important buildings of more than special interest " , because it is a " good rural church retaining substantial medieval fabric . "

= = History and location = =

St Mary 's Church is situated near the east coast of Anglesey , north Wales . It is by the side of a country road near the village of Brynteg . The parish includes the coastal resort of Benllech . The parish takes its name in part from the church : the Welsh word llan originally meant " enclosure " and then " church " , and " -fair " is a modified form of Mary ( Mair in Welsh ) . " Mathafarn Eithaf " translates as " area ( or field ) of the tavern " .

It is a medieval church , and the oldest part of the building is the nave , which dates from the 14th century . The chancel and the arch between nave and chancel were added in the following century . The architect of the Diocese of Bangor , Henry Kennedy , carried out work on the church in 1847 . He added a vestry on the north side and a porch to the south , as well as making some other alterations and additions , such as the re @-@ roofing of the chancel .

The church is still in use for worship , as part of the Church in Wales . It is one of three churches in the combined benefice of Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf with Llanbedrgoch with Pentraeth . It is within the deanery of Tindaethwy and Menai , the archdeaconry of Bangor and the Diocese of Bangor . As of 2012 , the position of rector is held by the Venerable R P Davies , Archdeacon of Bangor . Services are held on a Sunday morning , alternating between Holy Communion and Morning Prayer .

The Welsh priest and poet Goronwy Owen , who was born in the parish on 1 January 1723 , served for three weeks as curate of St Mary 's . He later travelled to America to teach at The College of William & Mary , Virginia , and remained in Virginia until his death .

= = Architecture and fittings = =

St Mary 's is built from rubble masonry , with buttresses at the eastern ends of the nave and chancel , and it has a slate roof . The timbers of the roof can be seen from inside the church . There is a bellcote at the west end of the roof , containing one bell dated 1849 . The church has a gallery at the west end , reached by climbing a spiral staircase . The nave is longer and higher than the chancel , with one step and a simple 15th @-@ century chancel arch between them . The nave measures about 52 feet 6 inches by 16 feet 3 inches ( about 16 by 5 m ) , and the chancel measures about 18 feet 6 inches by 13 feet 6 inches ( about 5 @.@ 6 by 4 @.@ 1 m ) .

Entrance is through the porch in the middle of the south wall of the nave , which houses a round @-@ headed doorway from the 15th or 16th century . There is a trefoil @-@ headed single window on the south wall of the nave to the left of the porch , and two windows , each with three trefoil @-@ headed lights ( sections of window , separated by mullions ) , to the right of the porch . The south wall of the chancel has a similar window , with only two lights , which was inserted in 1847 ; it adjoins a blocked window from the 17th century . The north wall of the church , which was rebuilt in 1847 , has a 14th @-@ century doorway with a pointed arch , and windows on each side similar to those on the south side . The east window , which dates from the 15th century , has three lights headed with cinquefoils set within a pointed arch . There is a hood mould on the outside .

A 1937 survey by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire noted a wooden communion table , dated 1667 , and some interior memorials dated

1724 and 1731 . It also recorded that the churchyard contained an 11th @-@ century churchyard cross , which had at one point held a sundial . Most of the fittings inside the church date from the mid @-@ 19th century . The pulpit has two carved panels , one depicting Christ and the other a Madonna and Child . It was installed in 1969 , marking the bicentenary of Goronwy Owen 's death . The reredos behind the altar is in memory of those who died during World War I.

= = Assessment = =

The church has national recognition and statutory protection from alteration as it has been designated as a Grade II \* listed building ? the second @-@ highest of the three grades of listing , designating " particularly important buildings of more than special interest " . It was given this status on 12 May 1970 . Cadw ( the Welsh Assembly Government body responsible for the built heritage of Wales and the inclusion of Welsh buildings on the statutory lists ) states that St Mary 's has been listed because it is " a good rural church retaining substantial medieval fabric " .

Writing in 1847 , the clergyman and antiquarian Harry Longueville Jones said that St Mary 's , which he called " a rather long and low building " , was situated " in an uneven , rocky , and exposed locality " within a parish that had a " peculiarly bleak and desolate appearance " . He also thought that the roof of the church was " remarkable for the quantity of good , but light , timber used in its construction . "