

= Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Winefride , Amlwch =

Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Winefride , Amlwch is a Roman Catholic church in Amlwch , a town on the island of Anglesey , north Wales . It was built in the 1930s to a design by an Italian architect , Giuseppe Rinvulcri , using reinforced concrete . The church is in the shape of an upturned boat , reflecting Amlwch 's maritime heritage , and is dedicated to Our Lady , Star of the Sea (a title of St Mary) and St Winefride , a Welsh saint .

The church is a Grade II * listed building , a designation given to " particularly important buildings of more than special interest " , because it is a " remarkable inter @-@ war church " , built to " a highly unusual and experimental design " . The Twentieth Century Society has called it " a rare and unique church " , and it has also been called " one of Britain 's most avant @-@ garde churches " .

= = Location and history = =

The church is on the A5025 road , about 0 @. @ 5 miles (0 @. @ 80 km) to the west of Amlwch , a town on the north coast of Anglesey , Wales . It is dedicated to St Mary (under the title Our Lady , Star of the Sea) and to St Winefride , a 7th @-@ century Welsh noblewoman who is also venerated at St Winefride 's Well , Flintshire . Construction of the church began in 1932 , when the foundations were excavated . It was completed in 1937 , and the church was consecrated in the same year . The architect was Giuseppe Rinvulcri , an Italian engineer from Piedmont , who settled in Conwy , north Wales , because his English wife was suffering from tuberculosis . His specialist field was the design of Roman Catholic churches , and other ? more conventional ? examples of his work can be found in Abergele and Porthmadog , also in north Wales .

The church is part of Caernarfon Deanery within the Diocese of Wrexham . As of 2012 , the parish priest is Father Michael Ryan , of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate . The parish of Amlwch also includes the churches of St David , Cemaes Bay , and Our Lady of Lourdes , Benllech .

Damage from the weather and deterioration in the concrete meant that the church closed for worship in 2004 , requiring worshippers to attend services elsewhere on Anglesey . Demolition was a possibility in 2006 . An appeal launched raised the estimated £ 1 @. @ 2 million to £ 1 @. @ 4 million necessary for repairs , which included replacing the roof coverings , redecorating internally and externally , and repairing the steps . An application for planning permission for the work was submitted in May 2008 to the Isle of Anglesey County Council . An application for a grant of £ 840 @, @ 000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund was rejected on 18 March 2009 , with the committee concerned about the proposed new extension (terming it " inappropriate ") , although recognising the " high heritage merit " of the proposal . Cadw (the Welsh Assembly Government body responsible for the built heritage of Wales) made a grant of £ 150 @, @ 000 in 2007 ; the National Churches Trust made a grant of £ 10 @, @ 000 in June 2010 ; and other bodies and individuals made donations to the appeal . The church reopened after its restoration on 1 May 2011 with a Mass celebrated by the Bishop of Wrexham , Edwin Regan .

= = Architecture and fittings = =

Built of reinforced concrete , the building is designed in the style of an upturned boat , and the design has a " nautical theme " with elements such as porthole windows . This is a deliberate reference to Amlwch 's history as a port town and its position on the coast . The church has six concrete parabolic arch " ribs " along the outside , with portholes on the base plinth between each rib .

The main entrance is at the south end of the church at the top of some stone steps on either side . A window (shaped , like all the others in the church , like a star) set in mosaic is positioned above the door , and there is a stone cross at the top of the facade . The concrete of the church is dressed with stone on the south side , nearest the main road . The ribs on the outside are visible inside the building ; in between them , there are patterns of lights and coloured marble panels on the lower

parts of the interior walls . The vestry is to the rear of the church , and there is a parish hall , built from masonry , underneath the church . The altar was replaced in 1995 and again on the reopening of the church in 2011 , when a carved crucifix , which was brought to Amlwch from a former convent in Liverpool , was also dedicated . The porch houses a sepulchral slab , dating from the latter half of the 13th century .

= = Assessment = =

The church is 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 December 2000 , and has been listed as " a remarkable inter @-@ war church " . Cadw describes it as " striking and individual " , and " a highly unusual and experimental design which exploits the plastic qualities of its constructional material to create a powerfully expressive religious building . "

A 2006 guide to the churches of Anglesey describes it as " a very impressive building " , that " must surely be the most unusual church in Anglesey . " A 2009 guide to the buildings of north Wales describes it as " a piece of Italian architectural daring " . Referring to the French structural engineer Eugène Freyssinet , who worked with concrete , the guide rhetorically asks , " What inspired this Futurist church , closer to Freyssinet 's 1920s airship hangars at Orly , Paris , than to Catholic church design , and so unlike the conservatism of Anglesey building ? " Writing before the church reopened , the heritage writer and journalist Simon Jenkins has said that the church was worth a visit for the exterior alone , even though it was closed . He noted the " sweeping parabolic arches , perhaps inspired by airship hangars or by upturned boats in Amlwch harbour " , as well as the " bold gable with sloping sides " at the west end , concluding " This church must be saved . " It has also been described as " one of Britain 's most avant @-@ garde churches " . The Twentieth Century Society has said that it is " by far [Rinvoglucris 's] best work " , calling it " a rare and unique church " . It noted the " highly individual interpretation of its seaside setting " , with a " strikingly modern " parabolic design and a " monumental almost pyramidal aesthetic " at the entrance . A 2011 guide to religious buildings in Wales (written before the church reopened) described it as " most unusual " , but added that the fittings were " not worthy of the building " . It also noted one writer 's words that " no Catholic church (nor any church of another denomination) built in Britain between the wars has the frankly radical character of Amlwch . "