

= St Michael 's Church , Llanfihangel Ysgeifiog =

St Michael 's Church , Llanfihangel Ysgeifiog , is a former parish church in Anglesey , Wales , which is now closed and in ruins . The structure dates from the 15th century and a chapel was added to the north side in the 17th century . A replacement church ( St Michael 's , Gaerwen ) was built elsewhere in the parish in 1847 , and the old church was closed , partly demolished and abandoned . Some restoration work has taken place in the 21st century and some occasional services have been held .

It is a Grade II listed building , a national designation given to " buildings of special interest , which warrant every effort being made to preserve them " , in particular because it is " an important survival , retaining unrestored original late medieval features . "

= = History and location = =

St Michael 's Church is set in a churchyard in the countryside of Anglesey , north Wales , about 1 @. @ 4 kilometres ( 0 @. @ 87 mi ) from the village of Gaerwen . A footpath leads to the church from the nearest road , 200 metres ( 660 ft ) away . The area takes its name , in part , from the church : the Welsh word *llan* originally meant " enclosure " and then " church " , and " ? fihangel " is a modified form of Michael ( Welsh : *Mihangel* ) , the saint to whom the church is dedicated .

The present structure dates from the 15th century and was extended in 1638 when a local family added a chapel on the north side . A decision was taken in the 1840s to build a new church on a different site within the parish ; the centre of population for the area had shifted because of coal mining in *Pentre Berw* and the construction of the A5 road across Anglesey as part of Thomas Telford 's road from London to Holyhead . St Michael 's , Gaerwen , opened in 1847 . The old church then closed . By 1865 , when the Welsh politician and church historian Sir Stephen Glynne visited , only the chancel and north chapel remained , and a new wall had been built at the west end of the chancel where it once joined the nave . Some restoration work has taken place in the 21st century , assisted by funding from the Welsh Government and Cadw ( the statutory body responsible for the built heritage of Wales ) , and services have occasionally been held .

By 1535 , the positions of rector of St Michael 's and vicar of St Ffinan 's Church were combined and held by the Dean of Bangor to increase the dean 's income . Other people associated with the church include Nicholas Owen ( appointed perpetual curate in 1790 ) , the priest and antiquarian John Jones ( better known as " *Llef o 'r Nant* " ; curate 1809 ? 15 ) , and Evan Lewis ( curate 1845 ? 46 , and later Dean of Bangor ) .

= = Architecture and fittings = =

All that remains of the church is the chancel , which is 18 feet 6 inches by 14 feet 6 inches ( 5 @. @ 6 by 4 @. @ 4 m ) , and the north chapel which is 15 feet 6 inches by 13 feet ( 4 @. @ 7 by 4 @. @ 0 m ) ; the nave , south chapel and the roof have been demolished or removed . The walls are built from rubble masonry dressed with sandstone . The church is now entered through a doorway at the west end of the chancel ; the doorway reuses a 15th @-@ century pointed arch . The south wall still shows where there was formerly a chapel on that side . On the opposite wall , there is a window from the late 16th century with three lights ( sections of window separated by stonework ) ; the entrance to the north chapel has been reduced in width . The three @-@ light east window also dates from the late 16th century . An inscribed stone above the window records the date 1598 .

The north chapel has windows in the north and east wall in similar style to those in the chancel . There is an inscription above the north window recording the construction of the chapel in 1638 . The west wall of the chapel has a blocked round @-@ headed window , and there is a blocked @-@ up pointed @-@ arch doorway in the north wall .

The priest and antiquarian Harry Longueville Jones visited St Michael 's in 1845 . At that time , the church was 68 by 16 feet ( 20 @. @ 7 by 4 @. @ 9 m ) internally ; he recorded the north chapel as measuring 12 feet 8 inches by 17 feet ( 3 @. @ 9 by 5 @. @ 2 m ) and the south chapel , which was

separated from the main body of the church by five rotting wooden columns , as 40 by 15 feet ( 12 @. @ 2 by 4 @. @ 6 m ) . The main entrance was through a porch on the south side of the nave , and there was another door on the north side . A bench under the windows on the north side of the nave was inscribed " T. M. 1684 " . The southern chapel , he said , had similar windows to those in the north chapel . On the external wall above the east window , he noted a shield topped by a coronet , apparently that of a viscount , and the date 1638 . On a step by the altar he noted two gravestones that appeared to be those of priests , given that they had each been inscribed with a cross , and a third gravestone , similarly marked , was in use as the lintel above one of the doorways . A survey in 1937 by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire dated one of the gravestones by the altar to the 11th or 12th century .

The churchyard contains some chest tombs from the 18th and 19th centuries , made of slate . The Royal Commission 's survey also noted a fragment of a gravestone from between the 9th and 11th centuries that had been built into the bellcote , and two 18th @-@ century memorials within the church . The bell , church plate , and two benches bearing the inscription " T. M. 1684 " were moved to the new church . South east of the church is a Commonwealth war grave of a Marine from World War II .

= = Assessment = =

The church has national recognition and statutory protection from unauthorised alteration as it has been designated as a Grade II listed building ? the lowest of the three grades of listing , designating " buildings of special interest , which warrant every effort being made to preserve them " . It was given this status on 30 January 1968 , and has been listed because it consists of " the substantial remains of a 15th @-@ century church with 17th @-@ century additions . " Cadw , which is responsible for the inclusion of Welsh buildings on the statutory lists , also notes that because many old churches on Anglesey were rebuilt in the 19th century but this one was not , " these remains constitute an important survival , retaining unrestored original late medieval features . "

Writing in 1833 , before the church was closed , the antiquarian Angharad Llwyd described St Michael 's as " a spacious and ancient structure . " She also noted the " ancient stained glass " in the east window , " of brilliant colours " . Visiting twelve years later , Harry Longueville Jones said that St Michael 's was " greatly dilapidated " but had been " one of the most interesting in the island " . He described the north doorway of the nave as having " singularly elegant though mutilated details " and the bellcote as being " of good design " . The state of the church , he wrote , was such that it was " almost unfit for the purposes of public worship . "

Sir Stephen Glynne noted on his visit in 1865 that the church was now abandoned and presenting " a wretched scene of decay " internally . He commented upon the " good mouldings and spandrels " of the doorway at the west end of the chancel , and also referred to the " debased character " of the north chapel .

A 2006 guide to the churches of Anglesey describes it as being in " a lonely spot " and says that it is " well worth a visit . "