

Historic Wales Report

Dataset	Cadw Listed Buildings
Title	Church of St Brothen
Type	Listed Building
Dataset UID	4804
Community	Llanfrothen

Location

Located on a sloping site at the SW edge of the small village of Llanfrothen; accessed via a footpath leading S from a lane running S to the Village from the B4410 Garreg to Rhyd road; set within a rubble-walled graveyard.

Date Listed	11/30/1966
Last Amendment	5/14/1998
Grade	I

History

Located on the old shore-line of the Glaslyn estuary, the church marks the site of a late C6th foundation by St Brothen, a contemporary of St Beuno; the circular Llan, typically found in such Celtic foundations is still apparent in the churchyard. The present church is largely of C13 date and is an unusually long example of a single-cell, continuous nave and chancel plan. A fine lancet group at the E end seems earlier rather than later C13 in style, though an allowance for remoteness and stylistic conservatism makes a late date possible. Perhaps of greatest significance is the primitive and fragmentary Rood screen which, given its Transitional /early Gothic style and its obvious disassociation from the finer C15 work should probably be regarded as original; if so it represents an exceptionally early survival with no known parallel in Wales. The church was re-roofed in the mid-late C15, and although there is no visible evidence that the walls were raised at this date, their scale, if primary, is impressive. A South porch and twin bellcote are later additions, seemingly of C17 date and perhaps contemporary with the reading desk and other internal elements, dated 1671, or alternatively a dated bell of 1692. The church was restored in 1844 and again in the later C19, when new twin-light windows were inserted in the nave and the floors were tiled.

Reason for Listing

Included at Grade I as a fine Medieval church retaining much of exterior and interior interest.

History

RCAHMMW Merioneth, 1912;
M Slater, The Old Parish Churches of North Wales, 1993, 38;
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust: Welsh Historic Churches Project.

Interior

Long, continuous nave and chancel with fine second-half C15 eight-bay arched-braced collar-truss roof; 2 tiers of small, double-cusped windbraces and chamfered principals, C19 rafters. The ground level slopes noticeably from W to E and has a Victorian quarry tiled floor, counter-changed red and black. C19 grained boxed pews to nave with earlier pews at the W end: these are made up from C17 and C18 box pews and were presumably re-justified and relocated in the C19; arcaded and turned baluster backs, and some panelled with ball-finial newels. Also relocated are the late C17

bobbin-turned altar rails, which now enclose a small vestry space at the SW corner. Immediately to the E of the entrance, a post-type, iron-banded poor box, probably C17. C15 octagonal stone font of simple, conventional Perpendicular type, with C17 conical oak cover; iron banded base and double ball-finialled top. Simple C17 octagonal oak pulpit (door missing) and a similar reading desk dated 1671 with initials TW; plain trefoil finials to ends. Primitive and unusual medieval oak rood screen with central entrance and four flanking openings to each side. Compound-pier type posts with simple capitals and bases, of Transitional or early Gothic character. This includes stiff-leafed and dog-tooth derivative carving with cable-work decoration to L-hand main post; crude geometric piercings to dado section. Moulded beam, the top a C19 replacement. Set between the principals of the third truss from the E, and above the screen at wall plate level, a primitive rood beam; this does not appear to be associated with the screen, which it post-dates. It has multiple shallow, triangular arches and is primitively carved. At the centre, 3 spaced dowel holes are discernible, which probably relate to the former (pre-Reformation) attachment of a sculpted rood group.

Further C18 enclosed pews to stepped-up chancel, 4 to each side, and again with turned baluster backs. Stepped-up altar with reredos consisting of a pair of late medieval newel posts supporting a carved beam; C15, relocated and possibly by Clough Williams-Ellis whose local church this was. The newels have octagonal finials and the beam is carved with a vinescroll motif in relief; there are grooves for attachments to its underside, suggesting an alternative original context. Slate mural tablets to the Jones family of Ynysfor, including one by Laurie Crib, 1940, and another commemorating the children of John Jones, d.1797 and 1798; this in a wooden frame with crude fictive marbling. Similar tablet to Andrew Poynter, 'late Officer of ye Custom House', d.1802. Further engraved slate tablets to John Isaak of Parc (d.1733) and John Edmunds, Farmer, of Parc, d.1800.

Exterior

Parish church of rectangular, single-cell type. Well-constructed of large roughly-squared blocks of local stone, with snecking and levelling courses; on a slightly splayed stone plinth. Fine old roof of heavy, graded slates, with slab-coped gable parapets and large, primitive kneelers. The oak wall plate is visible externally on the S and N sides. Twin-arched bellcote to W gable, with slab-coped and kneelered gable and projecting cill-course. Large pointed-arched lancet as W window, with deep, rendered outer splay. Single-storey porch, gabled and roofed as before, with pointed-arched opening; slatted outer door. C19 boarded front to main door in arched opening; medieval or sub-medieval plank structure visible on its inner face. Paired C19 arched, leaded windows to S side, with a plain rectangular window towards the E, probably C15; original iron grille, leaded glazing. Further, similar window to N side, with two paired C19 windows as before. Blocked N entrance with pointed arch, the voussoirs of which are formed of long, thin slate stones, giving an unusual and striking effect. Original triple lancet group to E end, the central one the larger; wide, deep outer splays and early (probably original) iron grilles, leaded glazing.