

Historic Wales Report

Dataset Cadw Listed Buildings

Title	St John's Church
Type	Listed Building
Dataset UID	15467
Community	Barmouth

Location

Prominently located on an elevated site against the steep, rocky slope of the hill, at the end of St. John's Hill.

Date Listed	1/31/1995
Last Amendment	1/31/1995
Grade	II*

History

St. John's Church was built at the inspiration of the Reverend Edward Hughes to the designs of John Douglas, architect of Chester. The parish contributed u3,500 towards the cost, but the majority of the funds, ammounting to u15,000, was donated by Mrs Sarah Perrins of Plas Mynach as a memorial share to her late husband James Dyson Perrins. This latter sum financed the tower, chancel, transepts, bells, clock, organ and the glass and furnishings at the E end.

The foundation stone was laid with great ceremony by H.R.H Princess Beatrice (Princess Henry of Battenberg) on August 27th 1889. Building was almost complete when in September 1891 the crossing tower collapsed, demolishing most of the nave and chancel. Douglas, who faced much subsequent criticism, attributed the collapse to the blasting operations which had been necessary to carve a terrace out of the rock for the siting of the building. Undaunted, the parish set about the task of rebuilding which was made possible by the donation of a further u15,000 by Mrs Perrin; the church was completed in 1895.

Reason for Listing

Listed grade II* as one of the more significant churches by John Douglas in largely original condition both externally and internally.

History

E Hubbard, The Work of John Douglas, Victorian Soc., 1991.

aaaaaaAnon, St. John's Church Barmouth, Centenary of Laying of the Foundation Stone 1889-1989, privately published pamphlet, 1989.

Interior

5-bay pointed-arched nave arcade, heavily-moulded with labels stopped with carved angel figures. Octagonal arcade piers with moulded capitals and simple bases. Fanciful roof with crenellated tie beams, arched braces and 2 tiers of gently-cusped windbraces. The trusses are carried on corbelled wall posts; similar, though plainer aisle roofs. Parquet floor and original oak pews with blind tracery panels to bench-ends; vestement press towards W end of nave with fine Perpendicular style figurative and tracery carving. Marble font withsculpted life-size angel holding a shell; by Davidson and Co. of Inverness, 1894 (after designs by Thorwaldsen of Stockholm), with brass rail supported on decorative iron

balusters. Behind this on the W wall a sandstone relief plaque with names of the Bishops of Bangor; central cross with Perpendicular tracery and foliate forms. Good stained glass W window by C.E. Kempe. Octagonal wooden font with blind tracery, on a corbelled stone base. Entrance to S transept at E end of S nave aisle; simply-moulded round arch with blind pointed arch above and carved angel in spandrel. Deeply recessed boarded door with wrought iron hinges.

Large pointed crossing arch, stepped up and with moulded jambs carried on foliate corbels. Decorative C13 style tiles. Perpendicular style choir stalls with trefoil bench-ends and blind and open tracery. To the S and occupying the whole of the S crossing arch, a large Perpendicular panelled organ. The N transept (Lady chapel) is entered from the N aisle via a wide pointed arch; 2 plain pointed-arched openings to crossing with decorative wrought iron screens. Single bay chancel with large arch as before. Simple piscina on N wall and a 2-seat sedilia on S wall with arched labels to ogee heads; foliate finials. Wooden waggon roof with 3 tiers of tracery panels; decorative tiled pavement as before. Large reredos with central Crucifixion Group and flanking saints, all in complex canopied niches; angel finials and blind tracery dado. Good figurative glass as before in chancel and N transept windows.

Exterior

Cruciform plan in restrained Perpendicular style. Of sneaked, rough-dressed slate-stone blocks with red sandstone dressings and banding; medium-pitched slate roofs with coped and finialed gable parapets. 4-light Tudor-arched tracery windows to nave clerestory with continuous moulded labels and string courses. Shallow stepped buttresses (expressing internal bay divisions). Paired 2-light cusped windows to single-storey nave aisles with exposed rafter ends to slightly oversailing eaves; battered base to S aisle. Complex 5-light W window in Reticulated Decorated style with label and cill mouldings as before; plain buttresses, stepped at the top. Flanking the W front to N and S, and set back, single-storey porches, gabled to the sides and with blind heraldic tracery panels to their W parapets. Stepped access to W entrances; continuously-moulded Gothic arches with returned ogee labels terminating in foliate finials. Canopied niche to the apex of the S porch gable carried on a naturalistic foliate corbel with similar base. The niche contains a figure of St. John the Baptist and is flanked by the inscription: 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' Beneath this, flanking single-light cusped windows with plain labels.

Large crossing tower with stepped angle buttresses, crenellated parapet and squat, pyramidal lead roof with decorative weathervane. The buttresses terminate in crocketed blind tracery finials. Stone-roofed, semi-octagonal stair turret at SE corner with entrance to S; parapeted stepped access leading to ogee-headed entrance with plain boarded door. Two 2-light tracery windows to each upper tower face with 2 small round-arched lights beneath. S transept with sculpted angel finial to gable and complex tracery window with segmental head and returned label. Beneath this, 2 single-light ogee windows with depressed-arched heads. Simplified, similar window beneath, to basement level, with segmental-arched entrance to R; recessed boarded door. Small ogee lights to E return walls of transepts. Large 7-light E window to chancel with flanking stepped buttress; paired 2-light pointed tracery windows to chancel N and S walls with returned labels and shared central foliate stop.