



ST. ILLOG HIRNANT
COMMUNITY
CENTRE

A HISTORY OF ST. ILLOG'S CHURCH

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CONTENTS

The Community Centre	Page 1	The Churchyard	Page 5
Church History	Page 2	The Rectory & Rectors	Page 6
St. Illog and St. Illogen	Page 4	Other Local History	Page 8

Cymdeithas St. Illog Hirnant Community

REGISTERED AS TRUST No: 1050040 - OCTOBER 1995

ST. ILLOG HIRNANT COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Community Centre

In October 1994 the church was declared redundant and closed due to the small congregation, high running costs and the dangerous state of the west wall, but in 1995 St. Illog's was saved from closure by an active team of local enthusiasts who dedicated themselves to ensuring that this important building was saved for the community of Hirnant.

The west end, including the bellcote, was rebuilt in 1996 and after careful restoration the newly equipped St. Illog's Community Centre was opened by Lembit Opik (MP) in June 1999, having preserved the Sanctuary and Choir for the celebration of occasional Christian Services.

The Church has always enjoyed a close link with the local school and in 2010 the pupils designed, made and presented a beautifully crafted Alter Frontal depicting the Phoenix rising from the ashes - commemorating the new life of St. Illog's - and the design has since been adopted as the symbol logo of

A History of the Church of St. Illog

Page 2 of 10

Hirnant Community Centre.

The restoration includes a modern kitchen with a meeting room and ladies and men's toilets above, as well as a toilet for the physically impaired adjacent to the entrance door.

The result is a modern Community Centre which has excellent facilities.

During the years that have followed the Church has been used for regular monthly services, while gathering a reputation as a Community Centre for quality entertainment and activities, and enjoys the gift of a peaceful environment with excellent acoustics making it ideal for making music and as a recording studio.

The Trustees are keen to arrange and encourage the widest range of activities, while encouraging local people and organisations to take the fullest advantage of its unique facilities.

The Community Centre is available for use at moderate cost, for up to 70 people, and the Trustees are willing to consider special arrangements where these might be more appropriate.

Continued

A History of the Church of St. Illog

St Illog's church is located in the remote village of Hirnant about 15 miles north-west of Welshpool.

Hirnant Church is in the Diocese of St Asaph, in the community of Pen-y-Bont-Fawr in the county of Powys.

It is located at Ordnance Survey national grid reference SJ0504422953.

The founder of the church was Illog, the same, probably, with Ellidius of the Scilly Isles, later confused with St. Hilary. His festival fell on August 8th, and he has left several memorials in local place-names, such as Ffynnon Illog, Aber Illog Carnedd Illog and Gwely Illog, but little else is known of him. (See page 4, *St. Illog and St. Illogan*).

The dedication to St Illog, the location, and the morphology of the early church yard all point to an early medieval foundation.

The church is recorded in the CPAT Historic Environment Record as number 16414.

A church at Hirnant was first recorded in the Norwich Taxation of 1254 as 'Ecc'a de Hyrnant' with a value of 10s.

In Pope Nicholas's Taxation of 1291, the name remains the same, but the value was £4:6s:8d.

St. Illog's was built as a single-chambered church, the north wall retaining masonry which is probably medieval, while the south and east walls and all the fenestration are from 1886-1892.

The old church was a small, plain, oblong building, with the west end walled off to form a vestry and a schoolroom, and there was a western gallery. The font was a plain circular one, half inserted into the west wall. The church is aligned north-east to south-west.

When Hirnant was visited in 1869, it was recorded as being "a small narrow church arranged as usual; not rebuilt, but thoroughly uninteresting, and devoid of character". There were no windows on the north side, and those on the south and east were all modern.

continued

There was an original roof, partly ceiled though some of the old timbers were visible. A further source (1880) refers to a gallery at the west end with a school room beneath it. The timber work was covered by a plastered ceiling and was reported to be in a good state of preservation. A sketch of the same period shows segmental-headed windows on the south side and a south doorway of rather similar design, but no porch.

However, the old church was taken down and a new church rebuilt on the site between 1889 and 1892, under the direction of Laurence Booth of Manchester. The 1889 faculty for rebuilding indicated that the church was too dilapidated to repair. The new church was consecrated and re-opened on November 1st. 1892.

The medieval north wall was retained during the rebuilding. The medieval font appears to have been thrown out at some point and was being used as a flower container in the adjoining rectory garden, from which it was later rescued.

A unique feature of the rebuilt building is that some of the stone dressings, the principals and spars of the

roof, the pulpit and altar rails of the old church at Llanwddyn were carted here before it was submerged under the lake and the old oak pews were used as wainscoting round the new church; the new seating was of red pitch pine and a new font was given by Mr. Laurence Booth.

The tablet to Rector John Hughes is of historic interest, and reads as follows:

Subtus jacet Johannes Hughes, Denbighensis, A.B., hujus parochiae per xl an. Hector. Ita fidus ut officii sui pastoralis pessima aetate fuit laudabiliter tenax. Quippe non solum publicis ecclesiae precibus hic summa per pericula interfuit sacros inter ipsos muros hund semel fanatico hoste circumdatus, sed etiam in carcerem malevole conjectus vinculis exultabat heros Christianus. Et cum non potuit usq, voluit suo inservire populo Hirnantiano tandem animam suam lubens efflavit an Dom 1683, post varios casus et longae tedia vitae, an. etat. 83. Sic apud posteros vivat Hueticus nepotibus suis (Da. Edwardo, Cath. Hughes, et in hac ecclesia successori Rob Llovd) neutiquam silendus. P.M.S. 1777.

St. Illog and St. Illogan

Historic genealogies know nothing of S. Illog, Confessor, but his festival, August 8, entered as “Gwyl Illog yn Hirnant” occurs in a good number of the earlier Welsh Calendars. In the Calendar in *Additional MS.* 14,882, written in 1591, the entry is “g. Illoe abban sant,” which includes apparently one of the two Irish Saints of the name Abban.

The Church of Illogan, near Redruth, in Cornwall, is dedicated to S. Illogan, Priest, Confessor.

In Bishop Bytton's Register, the designation is “Ecclesia Sti. Elugani”, also Yllugani, 13,09-10. So also in the Register of Bishop Stapeldon, 13,07-8. In that of Bishop Stafford, the church is that of “Sancti Illogani de Logan”, and “Sancti Illogani alias Illugani”, 1397-1403.; but in the latter year, also “Seynt Luganus”. In that of Bishop Grandisson, 1352, “Sancti Illogani”, also 1360 and 1366. So also in those of Bishop Brantyngham, 1374, 1382, 1383.

St. Illogan may be the same as the Illog of the Welsh Calendars, and Illogan Parish is probably the Landhillok of the Blanchminster Manumissions, but

it will not do to insist on Illog and Illogan being identical. The Feast at Illogan seems against this, as it is on October 18, whereas S. Illog's day is August 8.

But what does seem possible is that Illogan is the same as the Irish Illadhan or lolladhan, a native of that part of Southern Ireland which poured so many saints into Cornwall. His father was Cormac, King of Leinster. His aunts, Feidhlem and Mergain, had been baptized by S. Patrick, as had also his grandfather, Ailill, King of Leinster, at Naas, in 460.

After the death of Cormac, his son, Cairbre the Black, succeeded, reigned eleven years and died in 546.

Illadhan's sisters were Eithni and Derchartain, whom we are disposed to identify with Stithiana of Stythians and Derve of Camborne.

There is no record of the parentage of Illog in the Welsh pedigrees, and it is therefore possible that he may not have been a native,

The Churchyard

The Churchyard is in the ownership of the Community Council of Penybontfawr, and is now an irregular shape, in part because the wall on the north side was inserted, probably in 1749, and the enclosure originally continued beyond it.

Together with the slight earthworks of the former boundary outside the present north-east wall, this implies that there was originally a more circular enclosure. It slopes down from north to south with the church terraced slightly into the slope. It is well maintained.

Boundaries are surrounded by a stone wall, probably rebuilt at the time of the 1889-92 restoration work, except for that on the north-west which may be mid-18th century. On the south-east the back of Church Cottage acts as the boundary.

Monuments are fairly densely distributed on all sides, mostly slate slabs. The earliest dates (from 1768 and 1770) are on slabs laid flat near the south wall, and there are several other 18th century examples.

The main gate is on the south-east side, with a single gate to the old rectory in the north-west boundary.

Yews and firs on the south-west boundary include two old yews on the west (a & b) and one yew (c) to the east, and deciduous trees on the south. As preparation for the commemoration '*Yews for the Millennium*' in 1999 the Yews in the Churchyard were clarified as '*not being ancient*' (1000+ years) but 500 (a), 500 (b) and 300 (c) years old.

In 2010 an oak seat was installed in the churchyard adjacent to the entrance door of the building commemorating the memory of a recently interred parishioner.

St. Illog's holy well, Ffynnon Illog, once much resorted to for its mineral properties, is near the church, and a tumulus on an eminence, called Carnedd Illog, is supposed to cover St. Illog's remains.

Here also are Gwely Illog, his Bed, and a brook, Aber Illog.

The Rectory

The rectory house was partly re-built by Rector Owen Edwards, 1684, again re-built in 1749 by the present Rector, Robt. Lloyd, including the Rectory House, Barn, Cowhouse and Stable, at the charge of hundred pounds and upwards, the glebe being improved by ditching, setting quicksetts, planting trees, &c. ("The glebe before was level with the highway and common, and in short, in a very deplorable condition. I hope that all my successors will improve what I have done.")

It was further improved in 1813, and was attached to 10½ acres of glebe, besides an allotment of 38½ acres on the mountain.

The liberties of common belonging to the Rector of Hirnant are (part of) Brynhedydd in Cefnhirfynydd and Hendre Wen in Fownog Las." It was enclosed in 1907, at a cost of £70 to £80.

Patron, the bishop of the diocese.

Past Rectors of St. Illog Benefice

- 1357 Dns. Llewelyn ap Tudyr ap David appointed by the archbishop, sede vacante. *Lambeth Registers*, fo. 219a, Islip.
- 1537 Dns. Thomas Madock.
- 1542 Dns. Fulco ap Griffith, "Presbiter, residens 1560."
- 1566 Powel, Thomas, A.M., Rector of Llanfechain, 1562-73; Archdeacon of St. Asaph, 1566-73 (i.,p.248). One of the three preachers in the diocese, in 1587 ; died 1589. For his pedigree see *Lewis Dwnn*, i., p. 280.
- 1589 Powell, Thomas, he was buried on the 2nd December, and his widow, Alice, on the 16th December, 1632.
- 1632 Evans, Humphrey, A.M., Rector of Llanerfyl, 1636 (i., p. 472).
- 1637 Spark, Archibald, B.D., Vicar of Corwen, 1638: Prebendary of Llanefydd 1662 (i., p. 339).
- 1638 Lloyd, Hugh.
- 1643 Hughes, John, "Joh'nes Hughes, Rector qui Librum Precum Communium durante usurpatione Cromwelliana constanter legit." - *Register*. Son of Hugh Roberts, Vicar of Llangwm (ii., p. 166).
- 1683 Edwards, Owen, A.B., buried 21st October, 1685.

Past Rectors of St. Illog Benefice, continued

1685 Ffoulkes, John, A.M., Rector of Garthbeibio, 1677-85.

1716 Lloyd, Robert, A.M., Vicar of Eglwysfach, 1680. Translated into Welsh as *Dduwiolder ar Ddydd yr Arglwydd*.

1757 Edwards, John, A.M., Jesus College, Oxford ; Fellow.

1765 Lewis, John. He was at the same time the Bishop's Curate at Llandrinio; great-grandfather of David Phillips Lewis, M.A., Rector of Llandrinio 1881.

1782 Jones, Thomas, Vicar of Pennant, 1757-82; Rector of Llangynog, 1762-82. Translated into Welsh as *Secker's Rheol o Addoliad ac Ymarfer Duwioldebi'r Hwsmon*.

1790. Humphreys, John, Jesus College, Oxford (son of John Humphreys of Caerynwch, Dolgellay).

1796 Clough, Thomas, M.A., Canon, 1794 (i., p. 360).

1807 Williams, Henry Jones, Vicar of Welsh Pool, 1808-17.

1808 Hughes, David, M.A., Jesus College, Oxford; Rector of Llanfyllin, 1813.

1817 Hamer, Ezekiel, Vicar of Pennant, 1788.

1820 Evans, Evan.

1823 Williams, David.

1826 Williams, David (son of the preceding).

1847 Pughe, Thomas.

1850 Williams, William Edmund, B.A., previously Curate of Llanrhaiadr.

1867 Jones, Richard, St. David's College, Lampeter; Rector of Llangynog, 1850-67.

1885 Jennings, Richard, M.A., Oxford ; Rector of Bettws G.G., 1889 ; Vicar of Gyffylliog, 1909.

1889 Jenkins-Menlove (assumed his wife's name), John, L.Th., Durham ; Curate of Berriew, 1874-7; of Llanwddyn, 1887-9.

The names of Incumbents since 1889 are being sought.

Other Local History - and Bats

The earliest notice is that in the *Norwich Taxation*, which gives under the Deanery of Marchia, "Ecc'a de Hyrnant x,s. dec'a." In that of 1291, "Ecclia de Hyrnant taxat. £4:6s:8d, dec. 8s. 8d.;" the *Valor* gives the rectory as worth "£5, clare £4:3s:11d, inde decima 8s. 4³/₄d ; " whilst the Commutation assigned £246 to the rector (and £3 to the parish clerk), to which have also been added the tithes of Ffinffirwd, £6:17s:6d, transferred in 1855.

Among the benefactions to the parish have been -

1. 10s. rent-charge on Cwmmwr farm, by Lewis Jones.
2. Sum of £10, by David Humphreys of Llanrhaidr, 1721.
3. Do. £60, by Thomas Jones of Rhiwsaeth, 1787.
4. Do. £20, by Ellis Jones of Pennant, 1802 (a rent-charge of £1 on Tynyfedw).

Of these, 2 and 3 were expended many years ago for parochial purposes, and interest thereupon paid annually out of the church rates until they were abolished and the interest lost.

To the four townships of Trellan, Trefedw, Cwmllech and Cwmhir, comprising an area of 4,000 acres, (on the re-construction of Pennant), the township of Ffinffirwd was added giving a total area of 4,176 acres and a population of 219.

Other significant local names are:

Ecclesiastical: Croesyforwyn, Croeslwyd and Carreg-y-tair Eglwys.

Civil: Clawdd Mawr. Llwybr Heilyn, Ffordd Goch, Moel Myneich, Tas Eithin.

Resident Bats

St. Illog's is host to a breeding colony of Long Eared Brown Bats, and, under the supervision of the Countryside Commission for Wales, the Loft was recently improved in order to discourage the bats from taking up residence in the recreation area.

*Parts of this History of the Church of St. Illog are sourced from the 1979 publication *The Buildings of Wales: Powys* by Richard Haslam, and the *Montgomery Churches Survey of 1995-6 & 1998.**



Cymdeithas St. Illog Hirnant Community

REGISTERED AS TRUST No: 1050040 - OCTOBER 1995

TRUSTEES

Chairman: The Rev'd C. F. Carter

Mr. T. Crawford (Vice-Chairman, Fabric & Safety Advisor)

Mr. N. Griffiths (Treasurer) Arthur Tyerman (Secretary)

Mr. I. U. Lewis (Founder Member)

ST. ILLOG HIRNANT COMMUNITY CENTRE

FURTHER INFORMATION & ADVICE ABOUT THE TRUSTS ACTIVITIES
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