



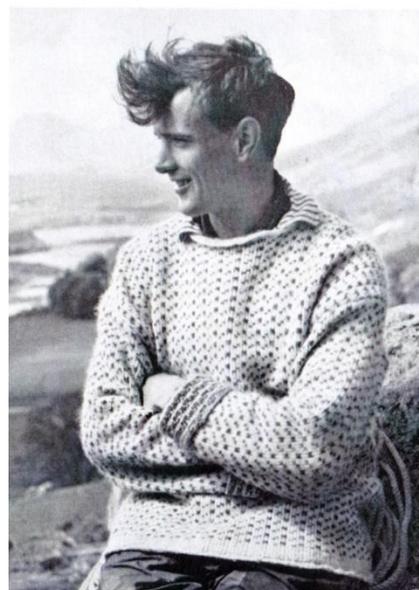
Cyfeillion Santes Julitta's Capel Curig Friends of St Julitta's Capel Curig

2016 Newsletter

From our Chairman

Thank you for your support over the last twelve months as we move forward with our exciting project to renovate the church and use it for local events. Welcome to our new members, I do hope that you feel your membership and support is worthwhile.

However, the year has not brought all good news. Again, we have to report on the sad loss of some stalwort supporters of the Friends. In June we lost a close friend and practical supporter Peter Hutton. Walking through the church, Peter's contribution is everywhere. In the autumn Mrs Jean Owen of



Betws-y-Coed passed away; she was born and lived in Capel for much of her life and supported St Julitta's for many years. Robert Adamson, who was a long-time supporter of the Snowdonia Society and the church was often seen in the churchyard with his sickle

attacking the long grass, when he was able to get relief from supporting his invalid wife. And of course more recently, our President John Disley,

who supported us in so many ways from the earliest of days. We plan to feature John's life and contribution to sport, Snowdonia and St. Julitta's in our 2016 summer exhibition.

We have had an active 2015 year, with significant improvements which have brought the church to its present well looked-after condition. Many thanks to all those who have contributed, particularly to Ken Smith, our building project manager who keeps pushing forward. It is a real pleasure to recognise the continued support of Barry Fox and his contribution to the churchyard. We still have lots to go at in 2016!

Harvey Lloyd

The church fabric and graveyard

It took nearly two years for the new lime plaster on the interior walls to dry, but early June 2015 saw the painting completed, using two coats of light cream clay paint. In September, we purchased sisal matting to cover the nave and south chapel floors, as shown in the 1950s photographs of the church. The overall effect is very much in keeping with the building. A four door oak cupboard donated by one of the Friends has now been fitted to the left-hand bank of pews to provide some much-needed storage space. Last year an antique lantern was mounted over the church entrance and connected to our lighting circuit. An electric cable has also been channeled to the churchyard gate to be connected to a wrought iron arch which will support an identical lantern,

which we hope to see completed soon. This will give added light to the entrance for evening events.

The old generator was replaced last August with a much more user-friendly key-operated electronic model. This means that our volunteer stewards will no longer need to wrestle with chokes and pull-cords to bring light to the church – a big improvement. And of course, general maintenance of the churchyard continues, including wall-building, laying paths, shrub-pruning and grass-cutting.

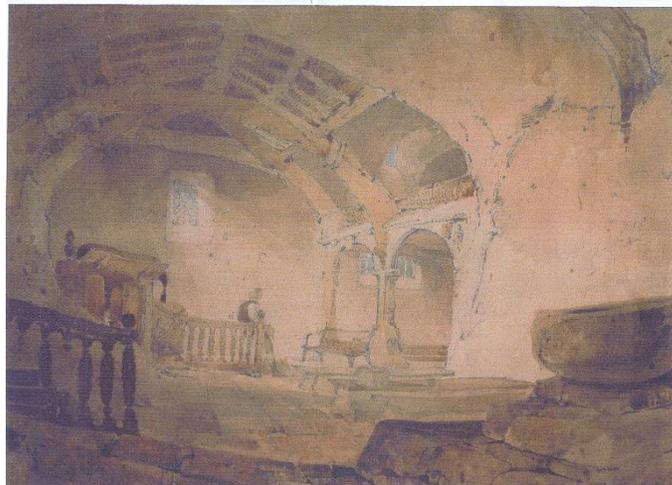
Events in 2015-16

Tuesday 23rd June 2015. The church played host once more to Richard Douglas-Pennant and friends in honour of the birthday of his aunt, Lady Alice Douglas-Pennant. After laying a fine bouquet of flowers on Alice's grave, Richard and a couple of fellow-performers from Cegin Productions entertained the invited audience with readings of poetry and prose. Following the performance, the gathering adjourned to the Bryn Tyrch Inn to enjoy a buffet supper. Richard told us more about his aunt and some of the amusing family anecdotes surrounding her and her many sisters. A delightful evening was drawn to a close by cutting a birthday cake and raised glasses to Lady Alice's memory.

Capel Curig carnival, 4th July. A storm the night before once again threatened the carnival going ahead. But our trio of booksellers, Trish, Maureen and Jean, were made very welcome in the carnival marquee to run the St Julitta's bookstall. By Saturday afternoon when the event was in full swing, the weather had brightened to a lovely summer's day and a good gathering were able to enjoy a range of traditional events.

2015 summer exhibition. The summer exhibition 'A glimpse at the fabric' co-ordinated by Ken Smith was based on images of the church. This featured a range of images from eighteenth-century paintings, nineteenth-century sketches and photographs, and mid-twentieth century photos from before and after the 1960s restoration. These showed clearly the change in the church fabric over the years. The

opening in late July was a pleasant gathering of friends old and new who enjoyed sunshine, strawberries and cream and a glass or two of sparkling wine. The exhibition lecture was given in St. Julitta's by Ken Smith, who brought to life the evolution of both the building and its furnishings, and suggested how these might have been influenced by changes in liturgical practice over the church's five hundred year history.



In addition to thanking the many volunteers who stewarded the exhibition, it was a real pleasure to welcome Petula Watson from Bethesda, who came along to play her classical guitar on a number of Saturday afternoon during the summer.

Classical guitar concert. In August we welcome back Jonathan Richards to give a superb concert of 'Music from the Old and New Worlds', a mix of the familiar and new music spanning the sixteenth to twentieth centuries.

Annual thankyou dinner. On Saturday 21st November, sixteen Friends sat down to a sumptuous four course dinner by candlelight in the festively-decorated church, accompanied by wines and followed by cheese and biscuits, coffee and port to celebrate the work of all our volunteers.

Pre-Christmas choral evening. Some three years ago our chairman was approached by a member of the Mynydd Llandegai Choir with a request to use the church occasionally for singing practice. The

mixed choir of over twenty singers which now has a chorus-master snag a medley of pieces to an appreciative audience on 4th December, with minced pies and mulled wine at the interval adding to the festive spirit. A really lovely evening.

Carols by candlelight, 22nd December. After a year's break, St Julitta's hosted a village carol concert organised by Shan Ashton and her committee and led by the Rev. Stuart Elliot, the new vicar of Betws-y-coed and Capel Curig, Dolwyddelan and Penmachno, with solos by Hero Douglas and Jane Wainwright. The church was full; Haf Roberts had decorated it beautifully as always and all enjoyed the excellent singing and playing and wonderful readings. The Tyn y Coed and Bryn Tyrch Hotels provided the gluwain and mince pies, with surplus mince pies going to Ex-Military Homeless Christmas Dinner in Rhyl.



New light on the origins of St. Julitta's

We have recently sold out of the first edition of our guidebook on 'The Churches of Capel Curig', and used the opportunity of a reprint to add new information which came to light while exploring the history of nearby Dyffryn Mymbyr farm as part of the Dating Old Welsh Houses project.

When we first researched the history of St. Julitta's for our 2009 exhibition and guidebook, we set out to answer a number of questions. What was the origin

of St. Julitta's church – originally Capel Curig/Curig's Chapel? When was the chapel, or indeed the place-name Capel Curig, first mentioned? Even negative information might be useful – were there any records where we might expect the chapel to be mentioned if it existed? We also wanted to find out who sponsored the construction, and whether there was any truth in the tradition recorded in 1814 by the local antiquarian William Williams of Llandegai, that 'a gentlewoman residing in the neighbourhood was troubled with a cancer, but was advised to wash the parts with the water of a spring on the farm of Gelli'r Mynach, and that she was cured, and in thanksgiving to God she built this Chapel'.

In the original research, three pieces of information came together to suggest a building date between 1535 and 1543 for the chapel. Looking first for references in Church records, there was no mention of Capel Curig in the 1395 lay subsidy list of ecclesiastical property taxed by the king, though Llanllechid and Betws-y-coed were recorded. Nor was there any reference to Capel Curig in the Register of Benedict, Bishop of Bangor from 1408 to 1417, or in a 1504 return made to the Archbishop of Canterbury when the clergy serving the churches of Llandegai and Dolwyddelan were detailed.

Crucially, the chapel was also absent from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, a survey of all church property and revenues in England and Wales made in 1535 on the orders of Henry VIII after his break with the Pope. Detailed income figures were included for all other parish churches and chapels in the area, including Llandegai, Trefriw, Llanrhychwyn, Betws-y-coed, Dolwyddelan and Penmachno. But in 1543 when the king collected the first church tax based on the new valuation, the 'chapell of Gurike' was included at the bottom of the list. This strongly suggested that the chapel had been built between 1535 and 1543.

The first known mention of Capel Curig as a place-name comes in the *Itinerary of John Leland*, King's Antiquary to Henry VIII: 'The best wood of Cairarvonshire is by Glynne Kledder [the Lledr valley], Glin Llyghy [the Llugwy valley], and by

Capel Kiryk, and at Llanperis'. The *Itinerary* is a collection of notes from Leland's travels between 1536 and 1545 and information supplied by his correspondents. He is thought to have made two journeys to Wales between 1536 and 1539, including travelling from Traeth Mawr round the Llyn peninsular to Caernarfon, but much of his drafts about inland areas probably came from other sources. So we can only be sure that the place-name of Capel Curig was in use at some point between 1536 and 1545.

Our third line of inquiry concerned links with the Griffiths of Penrhyn, who had owned the lands of Gelli'r Mynach (Gelli Manach) on which the church was built since the fourteenth century. A connection was confirmed in a 1545 lease when the owner of the Penrhyn estate, Rees Gruffith, leased Kelly yr manach and Bwlch Orlyne to someone called Tudur ap Grono ap Rees, together with Dôl y Capel (chapel meadow) and other lands now comprising Royal Farm. The lease contained explicit provisions that Rees Gruffith and his heirs should continue to enjoy the chapel of St. Curig built on the Gelli lands, and to have the gifts and presentations of the chapel, that is, the right to nominate the clergyman. In the first Church guide, we speculated about the possible involvement in building the chapel of Rees's sister, Margaret Griffith. Margaret was known to have leased Dyffryn Mymbyr farm a mile down the valley in the 1540s, and was the only 'gentlewoman' to live in Capel Curig before 1814, providing a tantalizing possible explanation for the tradition recorded by William Williams.

New research has now confirmed a more direct link between Margaret Griffith and Gelli farm. In 1540-41, Margaret married Piers Mutton (Mytton) Esq., of Rhuddlan, Flintshire, who was Serjeant-at-Arms to Henry VIII. Piers Mutton had benefited from the dissolution of the monasteries by acquiring the House and lands of Black Friars in Rhuddlan, on which he built a new mansion, Plâs Newydd as a dower house for Margaret in the event of her outliving him. Margaret brought a dowry of £40 to the marriage, mainly in cattle. The following year, Piers Mutton took a four year lease of Gelli, comprising land from Kelly yr manach to Bwlch

gwrydd (probably Bwlch Goleuni) from his brother-in-law Rees Griffith of Penrhyn. However Piers and Margaret left Gelli after leasing the larger neighbouring farm of Dyffryn Mymbyr as a mountain cattle ranch in 1544.



It therefore seems quite likely that the chapel was built between 1541 and 1544 while Piers and Margaret held the lease of Gelli. They clearly had money available to build what was probably the first stone building in the area. It is also telling that the meadow of Dôl y Capel was named in the 1545 lease but not in the 1541-2 lease. After Piers' death, Margaret's second and third husbands continued to lease Dyffryn Mymbyr farm, where a new Snowdonia-style stone gentry house was built around 1553-5. The farm eventually passed into the ownership of husband number three, Symon Thelwall of Plas y Ward, Ruthin. Margaret Griffith therefore retained her association with Capel Curig throughout her life, though she probably spent most of her time in her manor houses at Rhuddlan and Ruthin.

For more on the history of Dyffryn Mymbyr farm, see <http://datinggoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library-h/house-history.html>.

Copies of the new Church Guide are available price £3.95 including postage from Harvey Lloyd, (harvey@richlloyd.fsnet.co.uk)
37 Stockleys Rd.
Oxford
OX3 9RH