



Cyfeillion Eglwys Santes Julitta
Friends of St Julitta's Church

Grŵp hanes a chadwraeth lleol
A local history and conservation group

Yr Adroddiad Blynyddol a
Chylchgrawn y Gwanwyn

The Annual Report and
Spring Journal

2026



Rebuilding the Damage



Cover photo Peter Smith

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Annual Report/Editorial/News 2025/26

Dare I suggest that Spring is beginning to stir in Capel Curig and I expect other parts of Wales too? Winter has not been bad – but very wet! Snowdrops in the churchyard are putting on a show – and the daffodils soon followed them – I hope that the threat of snow showers does not frighten them away. Soon the longer light evenings will be with us, followed by plenty of action which will then start in the churchyard. I wish you all a ‘Spring’ welcome to our latest edition of our Annual Report, Journal and Newsletter 2026.

I am pleased to say that the laying the new slate floor has come to an end and only the finishing off stages of the project have to be sorted. Fantastic. Frances has written a long piece in this Journal about the journey that we have travelled, fortunately we had Hefin Huws, a fantastic tradesman in charge and overseeing the practical work of restoring a 16th century building. It certainly has been large-sized undertaking for a small charity. The team involved, including Matt the electrician, have shown a great commitment to bring everything together. Matt is now bringing our electrical circuits up to date and has agreed to give us a reduction of £500 as we are an enthusiastic heritage group. Yes it is ‘Many Thanks’ to all who have been at the sharp end, including our architect Martin Michette, a lecturer from Oxford University in Heritage building planning who gave all his time and knowledge free. We hope he will visit us shortly.



Some of the finished slate floor

Of course the volunteers too have shown a great deal of commitment. I will pick out Peter Smith, who lives nearest to the church, for always being willing to help in many ways, including answering the call for ‘*Will you...*’ or ‘*Can you...*’ which has happened many, many times. His photographs again are spread through this Journal. ‘*Thank you so much, Pete.*’ Another person who certainly should have a pat on the head is Frances, who became known as the Project Manager; she earned the title through her past building project experience! Yes, Frances has fitted into the project despite the state of her overloaded diary commitments – and her nature of being a perfectionist has shone through as the restoration progressed.

At this time we must not forget the late Liam and Kate Tiller, and their generosity for without their donation of £18,000 from their estate to the Friends of St Julitta’s Church towards the floor restoration, this work would not have taken place. It is so sad that Kate’s arranged visit in the early stages of the work in May 2024, was not possible due to her being too ill to make it.

This of course does not mean that as I write this that the work is finished. I have hopes that, although the skip may be outside the church over Easter and on the AGM day, Saturday 11 April, by the official opening on the 13 June most of the cleaning and sorting will be a thing of the past. All being well, and if we can afford it, we will purchase a new bigger and better generator – which will be one that starts by pushing a button – no more cord starts for the source of electricity! Also we hope to have better wheel chair access at the church front door.

Despite the renovation we still operated our Diary of Events during 2025, one or two went a little pear shaped, but by showing a little bit of determination we went ahead with the Alice and Hilda music and poetry evening in the church – which had a close resemblance to a building site! A few pews were re-arranged and the evening ran like clockwork – with a very fine buffet in the Tyn y Coed Hotel to round it off. The Village Fete early in July was again a fine gathering, the plants did not sell so well, but our exhibition boards drew a lot of interest. In August, Jonathan Richards also treated us to a fine recital of guitar music ancient and modern.

It's good to report that the stone wall group did a fine job at the church repairing a section of the dry stone wall that had been damaged during Storm Darragh in late 2024. Although they did not have time to finish off the section of wall, they have done wonders. Many thanks to Robin for bringing it together, the report I had from him was that they had an enjoyable day and are looking forward to finishing it off in the Spring of 2026.



We held a busy but very pleasant weekend in November when Kenneth Brassil gave us an illustrated talk on *Charles Darwin's early exploration of North Wales*. As I knew little about Darwin's exploration in Wales the story he told was really interesting; Kenneth had obviously studied the subject at some depth. Darwin, born in Shrewsbury is very much known for his evolutionary theories, and of course his five year long trip 1831 - 1836 in the HMS Beagle, which established him as an eminent geologist and, by publishing the details of his voyage, he became famous as a popular author. Following this, on the Saturday a good sized group came together for lunch at the Royal Oak Hotel, Betws y Coed. It was really nice to have Hefin (our building contractor) and his wife and members of the family join us too.

As the church was out of action Alice Douglas hosted a carol service at St Curig's before Christmas. Reports of the evening said how it was appreciated by those who attended. Everyone enjoyed an evening of joy and music.

The Diary of Events 2026 is now in circulation – get a copy from my email if needed – and the AGM will be at 11 am on Saturday 11th April at the Capel Curig Community Centre, followed in the afternoon by a visit to three Anglesey churches restored by the Friends of Friendless Churches which also retain their Georgian style box pews, pulpit and reading desk. And of course our Grand Opening of the restored church will be on June 13th, and following this more open days to welcome visitors during the summer as long as we can recruit stewards – will you volunteer? Shortly after our opening we will be again having our Alice and Hilda evening, brought to us by our very generous member, Richard Douglas Pennant, when The Hollow Log group move north from Aberystwyth to Capel Curig to entertain us in a very grand and professional way on 20th June – don't miss it! Jonathan Richards has again volunteered to give us a guitar concert on 8th August and Peter Smith will this year reintroduce the Carols by Candlelit at the church on Saturday 12 December at 6 30pm, another event not to be missed. Yes there is plenty of entertainment in Capel Curig, all you need to do is come along and enjoy it.

One of my projects, that I have been working on since 2006, or earlier, has been the translation of the Churchyard monument inscriptions from Welsh into English. I can now report that a draft is in print, following a great deal of effort to get it off the ground with some help and enthusiasm from Lesley. I hope that now it will move from draft to finished document and help people studying their family history in Capel Curig. It does extend to over 40,000 words, so perhaps that has been one of the problems that I faced. Thank you Lesley!

At the age of 95, Sylvia Disley, one of our honorary members, has published a fascinating book *The Bluebell Story: a Tale of Grit and Glamour*. In the book you can join Sylvia, a former Fleet Street journalist, as she celebrates a true pioneer of dance Miss Bluebell and the vibrant world she created, proving that, with grit and glamour, anything is possible. The review of the book states: 'Get ready to embark on an enchanting journey through the life of Margaret Kelly, the indomitable founder of the iconic Bluebell Girls dance

troupe. From the glittering stages of Paris to the hearts of audiences worldwide, Margaret Kelly's journey is a captivating blend of ambition, artistry, and resilience. Discover how she overcame adversity, broke barriers, and created a legacy that continues to inspire generations. With rich anecdotes and vivid storytelling, *The Bluebell Story* not only chronicles the rise of the Bluebell Girls, but offers a poignant reflection on the power of dreams and the glamour of show business.

So that's about it for this report. Please do your best to support our activities and our group, try hard to have a look at our restored medieval building, and don't forget our website if you want to know what is happening. I am sure it will be both interesting and enjoyable. An extra donation at these restoration times will be more than gratefully accepted. Thank you to all that do get in touch and support us, it is always a treat to receive a direct contact.

Harvey Lloyd



Carwen Huws

The officers and the committee of the Friends were shocked to receive the news that the friends and supporters of one of our group lost their son in a traffic accident in 2025. A huge shock and absolute tragedy occurred in Capel Curig on May the 10th, when Carwen Huws, the son of Geogina and Hefin Huws, was involved in as fatal accident on the A5 in Capel Curig. Carwen lived in Bethesda and was noted by all who knew him as a kind and loving person, always helpful to all.

Hefin Huws is a skilled worker on medieval buildings. He is the builder in charge of the work at our church and very well known to Harvey and Frances.

Grave Matters (Part 3)

In the last Journal issue, *Grave Matters (Part 2)* the family history of Rowland and Dorothy Owen from Llanllyn Ogwen unfolded through the generations of their son Griffith Rowland who farmed at Cwm Clorad. This issue's story is another historical adventure through time, on this occasion through the story of Griffith's older brother Owen.

Owen Rowland was the patriarch of a huge family living at Bodesi farm. His nine children, Rowland, Howel, Gruffudd Edward, Anne, Catherine, Owen, Dorothy, Jane and Sidna, produced at least 17 grandchildren, 75 great grandchildren, 130 2xgreat grandchildren, 135 3xgreat grandchildren, 154 4xgreat grandchildren, 48 5xgreat grandchildren and at least 4 6xgreat grandchildren. There are likely to be very many more as a high percentage of the family is difficult to research due to the recurrence of 'common' surnames such as Owen and Williams.

The records which do exist are largely American and Australian as at least three of Owen's great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren and five of his great, great, great, grandchildren chose to emigrate. As a consequence there are extensive living relatives in Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Victoria in Australia and they seem to have set out to populate America single-handedly, settling in California, Washington, Missouri, Michigan, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, Oregon, Montana, Minnesota, Nevada, Wisconsin, Illinois, Idaho, Virginia, Seattle and Iowa. This little booklet is not big enough to contain all their histories but a few of his descendants have stories well worth the telling.



Son Howel's grandson John John Owen (1858 – 1914) was just one year old when his own father John died. In the 1881 census, aged 22, he is listed as a scholar - evidently John had ambitions beyond farming and slate quarrying. He emigrated to Australia sometime before 1892 when he married Emily Margaret Roberts, the daughter of the Rev Robert Thomas Roberts of Williamstown, Melbourne and shortly after that he became a minister of the Welsh Church in Victoria.

Of this couple's four children, the Right Rev John Evan Eric Owen (1901 – 1965) really distinguished himself. Following his father's death, John Evan had worked for the Victorian Railways to help to provide for the family. He also studied theology at the University of Melbourne, met his wife Mary and went on to become the Moderator Elect of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. He was a Christian pacifist and had a passion for the mission of the Church. There is a vast biography of his work on-line.

Not that far away in Melbourne, great, great, great, great grandson Thomas Roberts Taylor (1919 – 2011) served for many years in the South Australian Police Force, reaching the rank of Assistant Commissioner. He received the Queen's Police Medal for his service.

If those aren't enough of a success story, that of the next member of Owen and Jane's family takes some beating. Although he didn't emigrate, grandson Gruffudd (1818 – 1902) created a life for himself and his family which was totally alien to the experience of other family members. His father Gruffudd Edward Owen (1779 – 1852) was a hill farmer at Penrallt, Llanrhychwyn, his brother Edward was a farmer, his sister Jane became a farmer's wife and Gruffudd was ... a clockmaker. Now you might be forgiven for doubting that. How does a lad from a farming background through and through become a clockmaker, when it was rare at that time to even have a clock in the house? How did he generate an interest in clocks and how did he examine clocks in enough detail to practise and be able to make his own?

The answer lies in his address, which was Llanrwst – a town renowned for its clock and watchmakers. John Owen of Llanrwst was the most prolific and best known clockmaker in Wales, producing clocks of high quality and reliability. Son Watkin Owen (1755 – 1809) took over at the age of 21 when his father died. There is no apparent link between the two families so we can only assume that our Gruffudd Owen undertook an apprenticeship with one of the many businesses in the town.

Gruffudd is listed as a clockmaker living with his brother Edward, then an agricultural labourer, in the 1841 census in Llanrhychwyn, but started up his business in Llanrwst about 1842. By 1851 he was a clock and watch maker, living in Denbigh St, Llanrwst together with wife Grace and five of his children. In 1871 business was obviously going well, supporting six members of the family in work; they had two servants - and Gruffudd and wife Grace now had fourteen children. They lived at Greenwich House, an imposing three storeyed building on the High Street, with a shop on the ground floor.

Business would have played a large part in this family's life. It's easy to imagine how manufacturing, retailing and residence intermingled, the daily chores probably cheek by

jowl with a casting or forge shop where parts for the clocks were made and a workshop, though I doubt that Gruffudd's apprentices, his sons mostly, had to sleep downstairs with the valuable stock as Oliver Twist did in his apprenticeship to coffin-maker Sowerberry in Dickens' tale.

On 21 May 1898 an article in the North Wales Times informed the general public that Gruffudd Owen of Llanrwst was not in good health. In his 80th year he was not only one of the oldest but one of the most respected tradesmen in the town, a faithful Deacon of the Calvinistic Methodist church and a staunch supporter of temperance. Gruffudd is also recorded as a jeweller and silversmith in 1901, so it seemed he had little retirement as he died in 1902.

Despite being apparently affluent for the day, four of the couple's children died young, Benjamin in infancy, Anne aged 10, Edward Griffith at 18 and Mary at 22. However, Gruffudd's standing in Llanrwst enhanced the marriage possibilities and career prospects for the rest of the family. Daughter Catherine married a successful builder from Liverpool, Elizabeth married a banker while Maria married a coal factor and carried on the business as a widow. Jannett remained single and became a housekeeper.

Gruffudd & Jane's daughter Jane (1850 – 1931) was another Owen who emigrated to America. After marrying Owen Jones in 1875 the couple had four of their children before sailing off in 1887. They settled in Seattle, King County, in Washington where daughter Grace Owen Jones married the Rev Mark Allinson Matthews in 1904. Mark had experienced a religious conversion at the age of 13 and began to prepare for a career in ministry under his local pastor's tutelage. He was something of a controversial character, supporting Prohibition and opposing women's suffrage but after a career spanning thirty years his Presbyterian Church in Seattle had a congregation of 8,500, the largest congregation in the whole of the nation.

William was the only one of this couple's sons who had 'itchy feet'. He studied in Liverpool, Edinburgh and Chicago before emigrating to Escabana, Michigan in 1887 to set up practice as a doctor. Their other sons stayed closer to home, John as a corn dealer, Robert Griffith a jeweller and optician and Thomas as a consulting mechanical engineer.

The eldest son Hugh (1845 – 1933) did travel a little further however - all the way to Bangor High Street! After serving his apprenticeship and working with his father in Llanrwst for many years, in 1881 he is recorded as a watchmaker at Union St., Bangor, moving on to 337-339 High St, which he named Greenwich House, in the 1891 census. In later life he moved into the furnishings business till his death.

Gaynor Hughes was an absolute contemporary of Hugh, also born in 1845 and dying in 1933. Gaynor, another of Owen and Jane Rowland's great grandchildren, married Thomas Taylor in 1874 and the couple ran the Queens Head Tavern in Brighton. Brighton was full of pubs at that time. The beer houses – small and bare, with no tables or chairs – offered cheap beer to the working classes, while the more ornate and ostentatious gin palaces,

boasting glazed tiles, marble counters and seating, were partitioned off to segregate; different classes and types of drinkers. From photos online, the Queens Head Tavern on Steine Street looks as if it probably belonged to the former category.

Gaynor and husband Thomas took on the tenancy of the pub in 1890 but when Thomas died in 1893 and with six children to support, Gaynor became the landlady. One of Gaynor's children became a swimming instructor, another a sign writer. As might be expected in a town where hospitality was king, her grandchildren were confectioners, pastry cooks, a wine and spirits merchant, a chauffeuse and a motor mechanic, all a far cry from the schoolmaster, ophthalmic optician and other professionals of the same generation of the last family. And equally far away from the farmers and slate quarry workers of Capel Curig.

There are very many more stories to tell for this family and those included bring up a bit of a paradox. I hinted earlier that many of the stories can only be told because of the links with America and Australia and the comprehensiveness of their records. Thankfully the Owens of Llanrwst are similarly well recorded, bringing at least one other line of the family's history in Britain down to the current generation.

If only the same could be said for my final Capel Curig family, that of a second Griffith Rowland but of Gelli farm this time. When I first came across him in one of Frances Richardson's articles my heart sank and I had to double-check my research as I feared I may have been tracking the wrong person. But no, all was well - the two Griffith Rowlands of this article are exact contemporaries even to the point of having their children baptised in the same years. Sadly this little family at Gelli disappear from local records after 1836 and do not appear in my searches of the early census so far.

That is the fate of family research. For some families it's possible to really dig deep in records but for others records just don't seem to exist. Researching becomes a cross between detective work and treasure hunting so I'm hoping there are more treasures to discover as we uncover more and more gravestones in the church yard. Fingers crossed!

Lesley Evans

Restoring the church floor

The restoration of St Julitta's church floor is nearing completion, two years after we started the project. Delays have largely been down to getting listed building consent for various stages of the work, obtaining new slate slabs, and the weather.

Our original aim was to restore the floor to something as close as possible to its appearance after the 1839 restoration by G D H Pennant Esq., owner of the Penrhyn estate. This moved the entrance door from the north wall to the west end, installed the current barrel vaulted ceiling, Georgian style box pews, pulpit and reading desk on a raised wooden floor, a wooden altar dais, and tiered seating in the south chapel.

This style of church furnishing is now fairly rare in Anglican churches, as most churches were further restored or reordered in the Victorian period. Box pews, designed to keep out draughts, were swept away, especially if heating was installed in the church. Dominant pulpits from which the clergyman proclaimed the word of God through sermons atop reading desks where the service was read were swept away as services became more focused on the altar, especially as communion became more frequent. The building of a new church in Capel Curig in 1883, which incorporated the latest fashions in church furnishing, meant that St Julitta's retained its Georgian furnishings until 1963. A disastrous restoration then scrapped the south chapel tiered seating, two large box pews beside the altar and at the front of the nave, and the wooden altar dais and floorboards beneath the remaining box pews. The old slate floor was covered with concrete paving slabs, and the pulpit and reading desk moved to the east wall.



St Julitta's interior in 1949, much as it was after the 1839 restoration

When we first applied for listed building consent to restore the slate floor and reinstate wooden floorboards under the box pews, pulpit and reading desk, and provide a new wooden altar dais, the Eryri National Park planners asked the Friends of St Julitta's to raise the concrete paving slabs installed in 1963 before submitting a second application about our restoration plans for the floor. When the paving slabs were removed, we discovered that the 1839 slate slab floor only covered the visible areas of the floor, and that the wooden floorboards under the pews, pulpit, and tiered seating had stood on bare earth. These areas were in-filled with concrete in the 1960s.



The concrete paving slab floor installed in 1963

We therefore proposed to build the raised pew floorboards and altar dais on top of the concrete base. Due to the risk of disturbing any archaeology, the planners were not keen on us digging out the concrete base in the side chapel to enable new slate slabs to be laid at the same level as the old nave slabs. We therefore proposed to install the new floor on top of the 1960s concrete base, resulting in a small step up from the nave. It is no longer possible to obtain slabs as large as those used in the 1839 floor, so we agreed on a contrasting floor with a more modern appearance but still using Penrhyn slate.

We received the second listed building consent in August 2025, subject to submitting samples of the slate and reclaimed floorboards we proposed to use, and a detailed schedule of repairs to any timber elements, supported by photographs. After a visit to a timber reclamation yard near Chester, we decided to use pine floorboards made from reclaimed Victorian purlins under the pews, and new oak for the altar dais, matching the 1960s altar table. Our builder Hefin Huws drew up a method statement which the planners approved, together with our proposed materials, in September. Our sincere thanks go to our architect Martin Michette, who managed the complex listed building application process on a volunteer basis.

Approval of the floor plans meant that we could finally place an order with the Penrhyn quarry for the slate slabs and work could begin on constructing the raised pew floorboards and altar dais. Fitting the pews back on top of the raised wooden floor proved a complex operation because the church walls are far from straight, and are now thicker than in 1839 as a result of re-plastering. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented the quarry from completing our order for large slabs until January and our builders were then unable to lay them during the ensuing cold weather because of problems bonding the slate to its limecrete bed. However, we expect the slate floor to be finished by early March, and it is looking stunning.

Because the areas of slate floor are lower than the 1960s paving stone floor, the base of the walls will need to be re-plastered and the steps down into the church reconfigured. Painting the skirting boards around the pew platforms also has to wait until the temperature is above 10 degrees. The electric wiring from the generator is being updated to comply with modern standards.



The pulpit and reading desk back in position on the north wall, awaiting full restoration and a new pew door.

A detailed examination of the pulpit and reading desk revealed that they are suffering from dry rot, had been altered and damaged when they were moved to the north wall in the 1960s, including truncating the stairs leading to the pulpit, and are structurally unsound. They clearly require considerable restoration by a skilled carpenter, which will need to be undertaken in the carpenter's workshop. We were very fortunate when Iwan Roberts, who runs a heritage woodwork company in Bethesda, volunteered to draw up a method statement identifying the repairs needed and how these would be undertaken, which the planners have now approved. As the cost will be more than originally budgeted, we have applied for a grant from the William and May Morris Fund administered by the Society of Antiquaries, which makes grants for the restoration of historic church furnishings. The outcome will be known by the end of June, so restoration of the pulpit and reading desk together with the front pew is on hold until we hear whether we have been successful.

Frances Richardson

Gwyndaf Evans ('Gogs')

It is unusual for us to have funerals in our churchyard, but sadly in 2025 we had a long term resident from Capel Curig being buried in a existing family grave. Gwyndaf Evans was very well known in the village. He was buried on 21 May 2025. Below, by permission of his family we publish his eulogy.



Gwyndaf Evans was born on the second of July, 1936, son to William John and Mary Evans.

He was brought up in 3 Glanrafon Terrace, Capel Curig and attended the village school as did his sister Megan and brothers Aneurin and Arthur. His father passed away at the young age of 43 in 1947, his brother Gwilym at 56 years old in 1982, and his mother in 1984 at 78 years old.

After leaving school, Gwyndaf went to work in a quarry in Betws y Coed as a trainee capstan lathe turner. He had to wear goggles to do this, and so they nicknamed him 'Gogs', a name he carried throughout his life. After five years there he left and joined the RAF. He was stationed at RAF Bridgnorth, RAF St Mawgan in Cornwall, and RAF Valley as a fitter of GNAT Jets.

Following this, he went to work at Trawsfynydd Power Station for three years, where he used to ride his little Vespa bike to get there. One day, however, he did collide with a stray sheep on the Crimea Pass and then had to catch the works bus. On the first day, coming home on the bus, the bus only slowed down, and he stepped off the bus and landed straight on his face.

When Gwyndaf left Trawsfynydd, he worked as a bar manager at the Bryntyrch Hotel Capel Curig for many years and the Tyn y Coed for a while as well. Gwyndaf's interests were walking around the area of Capel Curig, he loved taking pictures and looking out for the aeroplanes flying overhead especially military ones. He also enjoyed collecting stamps, coins and watches, playing snooker and having a small flutter on the horses.

He moved to the flat in Maes y Mor, Tremadog in 2018, and spent nearly six happy years there till he was taken ill and taken to hospital in August, 2024. No one thought then at the time that that it would be the last time and that he would not return to his home.

The words of the eulogy read at the funeral by Stuart the vicar from Betws y Coed.

The service was attended by Pat Yates and and Lesley Evans, two of our Committee Members. An excellent buffet was held at Tyn y Coed Hotel afterwards.

The Grand Reopening of St Julitta's Church, Capel Curig

June 13/14, 2026 – Open to All

As we approach the reopening of St Julitta's after a two-year restoration of the floor, it is interesting to turn back the clock nearly 500 years and consider the first opening of the building about 1540, and its later restorations. What reception did the new Capel Curig chapel generate? Local people would have seen a simple medieval church, the smallest in Eryri, built in an remote mountain area to provide a service for scattered agricultural families and workers who had scant resources. Now it sits in the western part of the parish of Capel Curig, the Glyderau and the Carneddau mountains, the lands of which came progressively into the ownership of the Penrhyn estate between the 15th and the 19th centuries. Of course even our imagination can only open up the picture in a very limited way. One would have expected the Bishop to travel from Bangor to consecrate the chapel, extending an invitation to other clergy and local landowners who probably contributed to the building costs. Key among these were Sir Rees Gruffith, owner of the Penrhyn estate who nominated the first clergyman, and his sister Margaret, who with her first husband Piers Mutton Esq., of Rhuddlan, held a long lease on Gelli'r Mynach farm on which the church was built. Certainly the farming community would have turned out in force, families and children, to celebrate a big day.



John Sell Cotman, an interior painting before 1838

An 1803 painting by John Sell Cotman gives us some idea of what the original church may have looked like - though the gallery in the side chapel probably dates from a 1776 restoration funded by the parishioners of Llandegai, the mother parish, at a cost of £8. This restoration also built a porch over the north doorway, rendered the exterior and re-plastered the interior walls.

The Capel Curig weather has never been kind, and maintenance has been a constant problem. A visitor in the late 1700s commented on the church's poor condition. In 1838, a major restoration by the Penrhyn Estate transformed the church by insertion of a barrel-vaulted ceiling and the installation of Georgian style box pews, a pulpit and reading desk, while tiered seating replaced the gallery in the south chapel - much of which we still have today.

The period that some of us have lived through in the mid 1900s was not generally kind to old buildings, indeed the Bangor diocese formed a committee to consider the demolition of St Julitta's as the village had a much larger and more modern church. Fortunately this was not agreed but plans to 'restore' the interior in the 1960s at a cost of £3,000 included replacing the old slate floor and raised wooden floor under the pews with a brick floor, inserting a concrete altar dais, and replacing the tiered seating and box pews with modern chairs. Luckily for posterity, the builder was declared bankrupt so the Georgian style pews and pulpit were largely retained, but wooden floorboards were removed and a very unsightly concrete paving slab floor was laid throughout the church. The reopening celebrations in 1968 included the consecration of a new altar by the Bishop of Bangor, Dr G. O. Williams, who also celebrated holy communion and dedicated new altar linen gifted by Mrs John Hughes of Bryn Twrch Farm and a small organ. The sermon was given by the Venerable E. G. Wright, archdeacon of Bangor. The rural dean of Allechwedd also attended and the church was full with people from Capel Curig, neighbouring parishes and local chapels.

So we arrive at modern times when the Friends of St Julitta's took over the care of this ancient building in 1996 and in 1998 formed a charity to restore it to the interior as near as possible to its 1838 design. In the same style that the generations of people who lived and worked in Capel Curig had known during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Over the last 25 or so years, our small group of friends has raised funds and slowly restored the church including replacing the gable on the bell cote, repointing the exterior stone work, installing cast iron guttering, improving the drainage, replacing windows, and replastering the interior. It is pleasing to note that a great deal of the work has been undertaken by volunteers. This of course does not belittle the professional craftsmen who have achieved wonders in a very difficult working environment. During the latest major restoration, Hefin Huws and his team have brought together all the ideals that the volunteers had hoped for, and we thank him for his energies and skills. The original Penrhyn slate slabs have been uncovered and restored, with a new Penrhyn slate floor laid in the side chapel. The pews, very carefully removed, are now repositioned standing on Victorian pine decking. The pulpit and reading desk are back in their original 1838 position - many, many congregations

would have listened intensely to the preacher, standing on the pulpit, above them, and being warned of the power of the Devil! The oak altar table and rails, probably dating from the 1960s have been retained, complemented by a new oak altar dais.



'I am in charge!' Hefin Huws



The Penrhyn Slate is laid

Summing up, on completion of this restoration people walking into the church will see the nave much nearer to its appearance in 1838 – a fairly rare survival of a Georgian style interior in an Anglican church. And please note it is free to visit, all are welcome, and we look forward to seeing you soon at our **GRAND REOPENING!**

Harvey Lloyd



Churchyard Chat

All in all it's been a busy year in the churchyard so far. Harvey has already updated on the tree felled in the storm in December 2024 and following this there have been many hours for the stalwart crew have put in simply reducing its mass. A large stump still remains but we are getting there! Considering the height of the pile of branches removed, a most satisfying but contained fire disposed of the debris efficiently. The area has been tidied up as best we can for the moment with an unexpected bonus : two large unengraved slate slabs were exposed which we think we are able to use in the church interior when work there begins.

Another unexpected bonus resulted from the break in the churchyard wall which was caused by the tree's fall. This allowed neighbouring sheep access to a huge amount of grass which they happily munched their way through – and manured – vastly relieving Harvey and Ken's mowing sessions. Their efforts were re-directed to uncovering pathways which had become overgrown over time so now we can freely access most of the graves to work on them. This proved very timely as there was a funeral at St Julitta's, the first for some time, that of a colourful local known as Goggs. Opening up the church for the occasion led to profitable conversations regarding other members of the family who are also buried in the churchyard.

A small group of us have begun to work on the memorials in the very oldest part, just outside the original door of the church.



A general view of the churchyard, showing the picnic table and lots of maintenance to sort out.

We still don't really know why the position of the door was changed but at least we can roughly work out when it happened by the dates on the stones. Three of the older flat stones have been released from complete grass overgrowth but in the process we identified several more which need the same attention.

We also unveiled some beautiful white bordering around a group of memorials, possibly suggesting a family unit – a future genealogy project. Those memorials are now released from ivy, lichen and moss and some careful weed-killing should delay regrowth we hope.

Moving on, we decided to work on three more traditional grave sites close to the footpath which really needed a thorough clean-up. Several hours later we had removed the overgrowth, then later we dug down to the slab covering and removed dirt, roots, rubbish, slate chipping, gravel and stones, salvaging what we could to reuse. However, a small outlay will return the final resting places of Mary Davies (B118), Evan J Roberts (B119) and John Johnstone (B117) to their former glory. Mary, born 9th August 1864, was a widow living at Snowdonia, Capel Curig when she died in 1941. Married to David E Davies, a slate quarrier, she had at least three daughters, Ellin, Mary and Nellie. The couple had previously lived at Llanddeiniolen, the public house at Gerlan, Bethesda before Mary moved to Capel Curig. The 1939 Register records her as a widow, age 67, a confectioner and tobacconist at The Van, Snowdonia. Evan J Roberts was born in Dolgelly on 8th July 1878 and died 10th January 1943.

He had retired to the Old Tollgate, Capel Curig from Wavertree, Lancashire after a lifetime working on the railways, recorded initially as an engine cleaner till 1901, a stoker from 1911 to 1921 then as a driver on the L and NW Railway from 1939. His widow, Catherine J Hughes was still living there on her death in 1951. The couple had three children, Myfanwy born in 1907, Eluned born 1916 and Idwal Meirion born 1920 in addition to a child who died in infancy. Myfanwy is difficult to research as her name is found on numerous records all over Wales, but there is evidence that Eluned married and had three children and Idwal was a commercial traveller.

And finally John Johnstone, born in 1840 in Liverpool. John was a cabinet maker who lived for years in the Porthmadog area where he met and married Jennet Davies and raised a family of at least eight children over 25 years. Three of his children, two sons and a daughter, emigrated to America while the rest remained locally, either marrying or becoming workers in slate or coal quarries.

When Jennet died, John remarried Jane Jones, herself a widow with two children of 7 and 5, living at 4 Glanrafon Terrace, Capel Curig. Jane, 29 years younger than John, had step-children older than herself. The couple had an additional three children, Grace Louise born in 1903, Kathleen born in 1909 and Ernest born in 1910, who was only five years old when his father died. Thus Jane had the potential responsibility for the thirteen children of the combined families, albeit some having families of their own by then.

So slowly but surely we are bringing to life some of the villagers who would otherwise be forgotten but if anyone has additional information regarding any of them we would be very interested to receive it.

Thanks to Harvey, Ken, Peter, Robin, Hefyn, Pat, Gill, Sue (visiting volunteer) for a good season's work and Frances for doing all the paperwork. Apologies to anyone I've forgotten.

Lesley Evans

Three Anglesey churches

On a sunny day in summer 2025, Harvey and Frances explored three Anglesey churches now cared for by The Friends of Friendless Churches. Like St Julitta's, they all had box pews and other furnishings from the early nineteenth century, rare survivals before these were swept away in most places by the Victorian gothic revival. So we had the opportunity both to compare their furnishings and to look in detail at various aspects of their construction to inform our floor restoration at St Julitta's.

The first church, St Twrog's, Bodwrog, sits on a hill north of the A55 near Llangefni, with views to the mountains of Snowdonia. The small single-cell church was built of rubble during the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509). In 1500, Richard Bulkeley was Archdeacon of Anglesey and is thought to have contributed to the cost of building, which accounts for the lovely decorative gothic windows and doors.



A mix of old and new floorboards at St Twrog's

The church was refitted in the 19th century with timber dado panelling, pulpit and reading desk, box pews, a simple communion rail and a new roof. It was adopted by the Friends of Friendless Churches in 2024 and has just been renovated, which gave a good opportunity to see how the work had been carried out.

Damp from defective drains and very high external ground level had rotted much of the timberwork. The Friends first installed better drainage to reduce moisture levels before renovating timber elements and redecorating. The church is now light and airy, with woodwork painted pale grey-blue. Several details caught our interest. The pews sit on raised floorboards – a feature we are now reinstalling at St Julitta's. Many of the rotten floorboards were replaced with new pale larch boards, a stark contrast with the remaining original boards which have darkened over time. Traditional cut clasp nails were used to attach the floorboards to the joists. We also noted the construction of a lightweight disabled ramp at the steps down into the church, which we may take as a model for a new ramp at St Julitta's.

The rectangular, single-cell church of St Bigail's, Llanfigael, dates from the thirteenth century though the building we see today is part of a comprehensive rebuilding by eighteenth-century local squire William Morris, and a refit of the interior in 1841. Its complete Georgian interior includes box-pews filling the east end, while to the west, the poorer of the parish sat on backless benches with paddle-board ends. The pulpit and reading desk sit side by side in the centre of the church.



Finding our third church, the Old Church of St Afran, St Ieuan & St Sannan, Llantrisant, was so hard we nearly gave up. Our satnav took us to a farm on a minor road north of Valley but there was no sign of any church. The OS map showed 'Church (remains of)' about a quarter of a mile from the road, but as the church we were looking for had been restored this didn't seem to fit. We discovered the new Llantrisant Church about a mile away, then drove down a bumpy track to find ourselves in the middle of a farmyard, though again with no church visible. But as we drove away in disappointment, we caught sight of a small signpost in the hedge to Hen Eglwys Llantrisant, which took us across some muddy fields to a church on a small knoll, surrounded by a high wall and with a very overgrown graveyard.



The old church of Llantrisant dates from the fourteenth century but was supplanted by a new Victorian church in 1899. The old church struggled on, but after falling into serious disrepair became the first Welsh vesting with the Friends of Friendless Churches in 1978. The nave contains a number of box pews, while narrow paddle-ended seats in the couth chapel are carved with the names of former churchwardens. Unusually, there was no pulpit or reading desk. The old church did feel rather abandoned and in need of some local friends to look after it and its churchyard.

Frances Richardson



Boy Scouts they weren't!

Our remit was, we thought, to receive a group of boy scouts based at the nearby army camp, who were out on a trek and wanted to call in at our lovely medieval church for a visit. What do you say to a group of youngsters of that age which would be of interest? That's what was going through my mind as I drove through the Ogwen Valley towards St Julitta's to meet them. It had been a long time since I had stood in front of a classroom of children of that age and I was avidly hoping that I hadn't lost my touch, that I would be able to engage with them and find something which would appeal to their imaginations.

As I approached the church itself I could see Pat already in action but, far from being teenagers, the group consisted of men, grown up men, and one woman. At least I had that few minutes to gather my thoughts together before joining the group, whereas Pat had been literally 'thrown in at the deep end' when they arrived earlier than expected.



Pat was using her personal knowledge about the saints, local and countywide, to start her talk. Standing outside in the sunshine on a lovely warm morning we heard the tales of saints such as St Cybi and Saint Seiriol who regularly walked from Holyhead and Penmen respectively to meet at Clorrad holy well on the Llanerchymedd road to maintain their bond of friendship. Today the Anglesey Saints Way follows their ancient path as a pilgrimage route. We learned about St Deiniol who it is traditionally said set up his wattle cell in the year AD 525 and went on to become the first Bishop of Bangor and also of course our own St Julitta and her son Curig, after whom the village was named.

We then looked around the graveyard, the final resting place of locals over centuries – Robert Evans, a horsekeeper, Richard Williams, a butcher and John Jones, a blacksmith. Evan Jones, a harper, as well as Catherine and Jonathan Jackson, Jonathan being known ‘for forty years, a most confidential waiter’ at Capel Curig Inn. Robert Edward Roberts and his wife Margaret, Harry Roberts, his wife Liz and their beloved daughter Margaret, all from the now named Royal Hotel. Each got a mention, every story contributing a snapshot in the album of lives lived during the history and development of the hamlet.



Lady Alice's grave. Edmund Wigram's grave is near by.

We located the Celtic cross of Lady Alice Douglas Pennant, daughter of George Sholto Gordon, 2nd Baron Penrhyn with the epitaph ‘She faithfully defended the Ancient Church in Wales’s’ and the haunting memorial to Lady Arabella Ward, ‘relict of the Honourable Edward Ward of Castle Ward, Ireland, who had died on her journey from Ireland back home to Bath.

But what the group were really interested in were the memorials to climbers who had perished locally, so we set off on a gravestone hunt with the help of Peter Smith whose wealth of local knowledge aided the search. The imposing monument to Leonard Spencer Salt, erected by friends and the workmen of his firm was the first to catch our attention. He had come to grief on Lliwedd on Easter Monday March 28 1910. Next we found Edmund Wigram ‘dearly beloved husband of Kit and father of

Peter and Bill Wigram’ whose climbing accident occurred December 2 1945, but sadly we were unable to immediately locate the memorial to two friends, who had died together while climbing on the Glyders, which they were looking for. We promised to do a little homework and to have the information ready for them if they called back again. Returning to the building, conversation revolved around the reconstruction work being carried out in the church itself. The group were keen to know when we thought it would be completed but all we could give them was a very conservative guess, bearing in mind the necessary planning permissions and the workload of our construction crew.

It was at this point that we discovered our ‘boy scouts’ were attached to the MOD and arranged important events. One, a guardsman, offered to show us around London when next we were there. Another, a bandsman, responded to our cordial suggestion that they could maybe provide a bugler to attend the opening of the renovated church, by leading us in an impromptu hearty rendering of “We’ll meet again, don’t know where, don’t know when”, to test out the acoustics of the church.

All in all it was a surprising morning, with new contacts formed and new friendships made. Here’s to many more.

Pat Mowday Yates and Lesley Evans

The Diary of Events 2026

Please put these dates in your Diary!

EBRILL/APRIL:

Easter Weekend,

Good Friday 3rd – Monday 6th April.

The Church will be open 10am – 4 30pm over the weekend. It will perhaps look a little sad, but hopefully the restoration will be drawing to a close. Stewards needed, please volunteer! Come and see our church and churchyard, the daffodils should be in full flower. Also some church and churchyard maintenance will be in swing on **Saturday & Sunday 4th & 5th**. Harvey will be at the church on Monday

Dydd Gwener/Friday 10th

Pre our AGM day, 11am, at the Churchyard, come along and see what has happened, and tidy up!!

AGM Dydd Sadwrn/Saturday 11th

The Annual General Meeting 2026 of the Friends of St. Julitta's Church, Capel Curig will be held at The Capel Curig Community Centre, Capel Curig at 11am. *If you live away why not make this a reason to have a weekend in Capel Curig?* Note separate details of the meeting and a social gathering following and dinner in the evening. it will be circulated. The Publication of the Annual Report & Journal will be circulated .

Taith prynhawn/Afternoon excursion 1:45pm

We will have our usual afternoon drive/walk based on three medieval churches on Anglesey, St Twrog's Bodwrog, St Bigail's, Llanfigael, and St Afran, St Ieuan and St Sannan Church, Llantrisant all looked after by The Friends of Friendless Churches. It will take about 2/3 hours plus or so. Tea will be taken in a suitable venue, which will be chosen because of its supply of cream teas!

Dinner this year will be either at the Tyn y Coed Hotel or Royal Oak Hotel, Betws y Coed, 7 30pm. Ken Smith will be in charge! Names in advance are needed The cost will be variable – it depends what you order and eat!

Byddwn yn aros am banad o de mewn man delfrydol. Bydd y bwyd nos yn Westy Royal Oak, 7:30pm. All are welcome.

Dydd Sul/Sunday, 12th 10am. We will continue the tidy up day. Come along if you are free, be involved and discuss plans for the future.

MAI/MAY:

Saturday 2nd May is part of the bank holiday weekend, so we be calling on our volunteers to volunteer over the weekend! Later a picnic tea on the Picnic table? Book the date now, more details to follow. Can we do some churchyard maintenance and have a local walk, developing on the theme *A Living Churchyard*.

Monday 25th May is also a bank holiday, do you have any free time, let us know if you want a pleasant social get together, over the weekend in Capel Curig?

MEHEFIN/JUNE:

Dydd Sadwrn/Saturday 13th June.

A very Grand reopening of the Church, following the restoration of the interior, in all its new GLORY! Details to follow.
Also Sunday 14th.

Dydd Sadwrn/Saturday 20th June.

Our Alice and Hilda Evening, 7 30pm at the church, Watch our web site for further details. A jolly evening of a mixture of poetry, song and blues music, capped off with a glass of wine, with Richard Douglas Pennant in charge, and *Hollow Log*, a blues duo, will be on the stage! A very unique evening, come along and enjoy it! Details from Ken Smith 07960 722529.

GORFFENNAF/JULY:

4th Dydd Sadwrn/Saturday.

Capel Curig Fete/Show, again no details available at present. Watch the website. This year our plant sale stall will not be prominent – but your stall will have lots of tales to tell about the local history of Capel Curig, together with a selection of booklets to sell about the village and the immediate area .

Gorffennaf/July 25,

Dydd Sadwrn/Saturday work days at the church, by now we hope that all the restoration is finished! Saturday will be based on a social/local history gathering, Although we missed out in 2025 following previous success events we will again try a **Tea and Cake day**, Ken who came up with the idea, will give the event another go. Members and friends are asked to bring along new information about Capel Curig and district to share, e.g. new pictures, books, documents, pictures of the church and the area, and other related artefacts. Ken to organise the event, committee and members to bring pictures and documents to share. All welcome. It is hoped that we will set up a copying service at the church. We will close the day with a picnic on the picnic table.

Also we will be hoping to open our **Summer Exhibition in the church on about the 26th July til about Sunday 6th September.**

The proposal is to have limited opening days, Friday/Saturday/Sunday through the normal exhibition period August into early September, with extensions when stewards are available. If you feel able, please volunteer to steward for a day. We intend to kick things off with a semi formal gathering on **25th July 2pm** our opening day, and also show off our new slate floor to the public. **In the evening, perhaps a lecture and presentation will reflect on our local history aims. Watch the website for more details.**

AWST/AUGUST:

8th Dydd Sadwrn/Saturday 7:30 pm.

An Evening with Jonathan Richards, Classical Guitarist, entitled 'Ancient and Modern', (look him up on the web!) Our annual evening with Jonathan Richards, again a very special evening at the church. The church by candlelight is a wonderful venue – and the acoustics make it even more so! Candle light and a glass of wine will add to the unique evening. Jonathans C D's available!

MEDI/SEPTEMBER:

4th/5th/6th

Our usual **Get Stuck in Weekend** early in September. Watch for further details. The Summer open period closes on Sunday 6th September, however this is our weekend for involvement with the Open Doors Festival.

TACHWEDD/NOVEMBER:

Sunday/Dydd Sul 7th (???)

Remembrance Day at the War Memorial, Capel Curig. 10 30am, and other venues!

Friday/Saturday/Dydd Gwener/Dydd Sadwrn 21/22nd.

On the 21st we will hold our **Annual Local History Autumn lecture** in the Community Centre Capel Curig, and on **Saturday 22nd** we will bring together our 'Thank You' **Medieval Dinner**. Perhaps at the church following on from our successes in previous years, a very special evening. Details from Harvey/on the website.

RHAGFYR/DECEMBER

Saturday 12th December at 6 30pm

Village Carol Evening. at St Julitta's Church, A return of the Carols by Candlelight to the village church is good news! Brought together by Peter Smith and other residents in the village. A village celebration of Christmas.

Additional events may be added to the Diary as the year progresses, please note the website.

Also more details:

H Lloyd BEM, 37 Stockley's Rd., Headington, Oxford, OX3 9RH, 01865 750067

Or in Snowdonia:

Hafod y Gwynt, Nant Gwynant, Caernarfon, LL55 4NS. 01286 872456

harveyrichlloyd@gmail.com

or on our web site **www.stjulittas.org**

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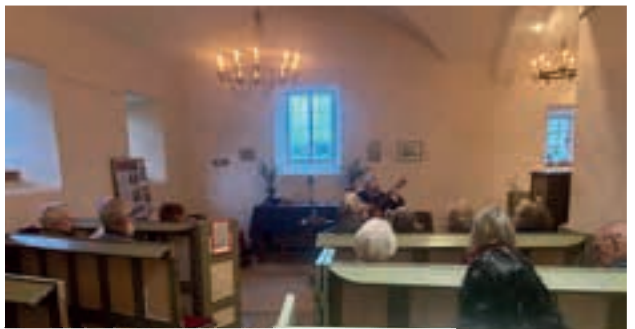
Gweithio i Achub Eglwys leiaf Eryri/Working to Save Snowdonia's Smallest Church

The Friends of St. Julitta's Church is a small conservation charity with around 120 Friends in the local area and worldwide, dedicated to renovating and maintaining the medieval church of St. Julitta's, Capel Curig and using it for community events. St. Julitta's is a grade 2* listed building/redundant church, the smallest of the simple medieval churches of Snowdonia. The Friends have been restoring the building for over 20 years and have organised annual exhibitions, freely open to both residents and visitors, which aims have been to bring to light previously unknown or neglected aspects of local culture, history and the environment.



*Inside the church
in the 1950's*

*Improvise
seating for
the music
evening 2025*



*The builders
yard outside
the church*