

LLANFIHANGEL GENAU'R GLYN CHURCHYARDS

The Romans bequeathed us a wealth of well-inscribed tombstones, especially those of soldiers, which tell the story of the men who came to these islands from different parts of the great Empire and who were finally laid to rest here. Prior to that the graves of the great and wealthy only were marked by a large blank stone or a mound of earth and what specific artefacts they contained.

The old churchyard at Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, described by Samuel Rush Meyrick in 1808 as the graveyard that *runs up the hill among the trees and presents an appearance not unlike the oliveyards of Mentone*¹, is a valuable record of the socio-economic history of the people who lived in the parish over the last two hundred and fifty years. The inscriptions are a constant reminder to us of our mortality and that we should make the most of our time here on earth. Each inscription has a story to tell and they are a link between us the readers and the past. The epitaphs, which emphasise the frailty of human life and the great hope of a better existence beyond the grave, tell us how people coped with the constant presence of death, how they viewed life and what they believed lay beyond their career in this transitory world.

A general history

Churchyards are far older than the churches they contain. Many Welsh churchyards are oval or round in shape, which point to the fact that the early Christians buried their dead on the site of the round barrow burial grounds of the Bronze Age. In Llandre the site has expanded of necessity from the flat area around the church up the steep hillside to the north to give it its unique situation. The presence of the ancient yew to the north of the church is evidence of the possibility of a pre-Christian presence on the site. It is believed that in the early post-Roman period a yew sapling was often planted to mark a burial ground as a symbol of the immortality of the soul.

According to tradition in the seventh century St Cuthbert was granted permission by the Pope to establish graveyards around holy places to remind the living of their mortality. In Wales land was set aside within the boundary of the *llan* for this purpose. Until the tenth century the boundary of the churchyard would have been defined by four wooden crosses marking the four corners of the burial ground consecrated by the bishop. In 1267 Bishop Quivil of Worcester issued an edict that consecrated ground should be enclosed to prevent uncontrolled grazing by sheep and cattle. As a result boundary walls and hedges were set up. However, we have evidence that the parish priest continued to graze his livestock there despite the possibility of being fined for doing so. After the Reformation it came to be regarded as a right. The fact that many nineteenth century engravings of churchyards depict cattle grazing within the churchyard boundaries show that the custom prevailed until late Victorian times. In the seventeenth century the Churchwardens became responsible for the maintenance of the churchyard, in particular the boundary walls, and they raised the money from the parishioners to pay for this work. Burial in the churchyard has always been and still is the right of every parishioner irrespective of his or her beliefs or station in life

The idea that churchyards should be places of quiet repose stems from the eighteenth century Romantic Movement. During the Middle Ages the churchyard was a multi-purpose space for the use of the community - a pasture, market place, builders' yard and sports field. Wrestling, ball games and archery were encouraged as suitable pastimes after the Mass and James I, in his *Book of Sports* 1617 gave them his blessing. Organised games, markets and plays were

¹ Samuel Rush Meyrick – The History and Antiquities of the County of Cardigan – Stourport- 1808

performed there to celebrate Saints' days and other festivals. It was the only space available for recreation and this tradition was still being followed in Llandre at the end of the eighteenth century, when we read that football was being played in the churchyard during divine service and, due to the noise, the vicar was forced to request that they stop playing until he finished preaching when he himself would come out to join them. The Statute of Windsor 1285 prohibited the use of churchyards for markets, but we have many records of fees and rents paid for stalls in Vestry minutes to show that this law was rarely applied.

The practice of archery was actively encouraged by royal edict from the time of Edward I to Charles I. An Act of 1466 urges that all able-bodied men should have a long bow and should practice its use on Sundays and Feast days and this would have taken place in the churchyard. This is where the Welsh bowmen of Agincourt honed their exceptional skills. These forms of recreational use, even cockfighting, did not compromise the sanctity of the churchyard. However, if any blood were shed, even just a drop, the whole area would have to be re-consecrated by a priest, an act of spiritual hygiene.

Up to the Reformation all churchyards would have had a large cross that marked the sanctity of the consecrated ground, and prior to the custom of erecting individual tombstones, this would have been the only memorial to the departed of the parish. Where these were of stone some, like the very ancient cross at Llanbadarn Fawr, they survive to the present day. Most, however, were destroyed during the Commonwealth. The churchyard cross would have been the focus of worship, especially on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, and was also the point where all important announcements were made.

The church building would have stood towards the north boundary. The area on the south side of the church was consecrated for burials. These would begin close to the walls of the church building and work across to the boundary wall. When this was reached the process was started all over again. So corpses were buried on top of one another, which is often why the ground level of old churchyards is higher than the church floor. This may well have been the case in Llandre during the late eighteenth century when we have a reference to having to dig the soil away from the church walls to prevent rising damp. There is also a reference to the sexton being paid to rebury bones.²

The graves of the majority of people would be marked by little more than the earth displaced by the body and possibly a small wooden cross. Husbands, wives and children would be buried in the same grave so there must have been some record kept of the location of individual burials.

Up to the nineteenth century the north part of the churchyard would have been reserved for the burial of strangers, criminals, paupers, stillborn and infants not baptised, those who had met a violent death or taken their own lives. The purchase of burial plots and the marking of these plots with permanent tombstones prevented reburial and it became necessary to expand the consecrated burial area around the church.

Burials

Land for burial has always been at a premium so bodies were packed in as tightly as possible with a continuous sequence of exhumation. Shakespeare's audience would have quite understood how the gravedigger in Hamlet when digging the grave for Ophelia came across the bones of Yorick, the king's jester, who had been interred some fifteen years earlier.³ Medieval people held bones in great respect, as they believed they would join together and come back to

² Tarrier - 1373

³ Nicholas Orme – *History Today* Vol 54 (2) Feb 2004 pp 19 - 25

life at the Day of Judgement. Exhumed bones would either be put in a charnel house or reburied. This would be the job of the sexton.⁴

The burial ceremony could be a lavish or simple occasion depending on the means of the deceased's family. The religious ceremony began in the home as death approached. Often the priest would be called to witness the dying person's will and no doubt received a financial benefit in the estate for his troubles. He would administer the last rites, hear confession, pronounce absolution, anoint and commend the dying person's soul to God's keeping in prayer. After death the body would be washed and wound in a clean linen cloth, placed on the bier and taken to church in the company of the grieving family. If death took place at night or early morning the body was buried on the same day. If it occurred later in the day the body would rest in church over night. No funerals were held on Sunday. A requiem mass was celebrated in the presence of the body which would be surrounded by candles. After the service the body was taken to the grave, which might be dug there and then. When the corpse was lowered into the grave the priest blessed it and sprinkled it with holy water, wafted it with incense and sprinkled it with earth before the grave was filled in.

At the end of the fourteenth century Bishop John Mirk, prior of Lilleshall in Shropshire, reflected on the burial service in a sermon for preaching at funerals. *We are buried in holy ground because we come from earth and return there. Our bodies are covered in white sheet to show that we have confessed and been cleanly absolved before we die. We lie with our head to the west and our feet to the east, so that we shall be ready to see the coming of Christ from the east on Judgement Day. A cross of wood stands at our head to remind us that we were saved by Christ's passion on the cross. A cross of wax candles is placed on our breast, as a token that we shall die burning with charity to God and Man.*

A measuring rod was placed in the grave next to the corpse. This may have been used to indicate to the gravedigger the length of the body. Mirk compares it to the staff to help the dead on their spiritual journey like pilgrims. The rod was broken as a sign that there was no means of defence on that journey. Prayers continued to be said for those in Purgatory; those in Hell were past help and money would be paid by the family to the priest to say masses for the departed. The rich would have many more said for them than the poor. Even though death was not far away and was sometimes dwelt upon excessively, when it came it was always a surprise no matter how often it had happened before. Religion offered solace to a considerable number of people. For many, death was not seen as an end but as an awful preliminary to divine judgement and then to everlasting or eternal punishment.

In 1666 Parliament passed an Act instructing that all dead persons should be buried without a coffin wrapped in flannel rather than linen. This was to promote the British woollen industry at the expense of linen, which was imported from abroad. By 1679 this requirement was being enforced strictly with those not complying subject to severe fines. In Llandre it appeared that this custom continued until the Act was repealed in 1814.

Early in the nineteenth century there is also a reference to an objection to the high cost of burial fees in the parish. On one occasion the parishioners objected to the charge, as it was in their opinion too high. The vicar, however, silenced the discontent by referring to the Tarrier and telling them that, that as *they all buried then their dead relatives "in coffins", he would charge 5s. for by it he was entitled to that sum, and 4d. for every grave "in shrouds"*.⁵ All classes wanted a decent burial especially after the passing of the Anatomy Act of 1832, which rendered corpses buried at the expense of the parish liable to the dissector's knife.

From 1538 every Anglican priest was instructed to register all christenings, marriages and burials and hold these records in a chest specially constructed for the purpose and kept in the church. This was the parish chest. Initially these were done as loose-leaf entries until 1558 when

⁴ *Tarrier* 1373

⁵ W. R. Hall - *Bye-Gones* - March 1876 pp. 28,29

an order of Elizabeth I stated that these loose-leaves should be transcribed into a parchment book. Most surviving registers are from this time and up to 1837, when civil registration became law, these were the only held records of a person's existence. An Act of 1733 forbade the use of Latin in parish registers. A further order in 1598 required the clergy, within a month of Easter annually, to send transcripts of the parish registers for the previous year to the bishop of their Diocese. These were known as Bishop's Transcripts. The earliest of these transcripts in Wales date from 1661. After 1837, when civil registration became law, many clergy saw no further reason for doing this.

These early registers were only as accurate as the efficiency of the clerk or clergyman's recording. Rose's Act 1812 was passed to regularise the way in which entries were made in church registers. In respect of burial the ruled page required the date of burial, name of deceased, age, occupation, abode and possibly family details. Before 1813 age at death is not always listed. Entries were not always accurate and errors are frequent with different spellings of surnames and some entries appearing to be changed and falsified.

In the early days of Nonconformism very few chapels had their own burial grounds. All burials were in churchyards, but by the middle of the nineteenth century these were becoming overcrowded as the proliferation of tombstones and private burial plots prevented exhumation and reburial. This was the case in Llandre. The Burial Act 1853 allowed for the provision of civil cemeteries and many chapels also took advantage of this.

Tombstones

A tombstone can be not only an interesting and valuable source of social history and contemporary theology but also it reflects the artistic talent of the poet and the stonemason.

Very few churchyard tombstones date from before the Reformation. Up to the middle of the eighteenth century the wealthy and important clerics and laity would be laid to rest, in a substantial lead-lined stone or oak coffin, within the church building where their resting place would be marked with an inscribed tomb. Ordinary people through the Middle Ages and up to the end of the seventeenth century would have been buried in a shroud tied at the head and foot with no permanent headstone to mark their grave. They simply could not afford to invest in dying while living was such a trial and, with life expectancy a mere forty years and illiteracy was the norm, there probably seemed little point in erecting expensive tombs with epitaphs that few could read. So, at most, only a small wooden cross would have marked their resting place and this would rot and disappear with time. Sometimes small headstones and footstones were used as markers, but these were rarely inscribed. During the eighteenth century, as more people acquired wealth, so they had the money to buy a plot and mark the resting place of their loved ones for posterity. Local stone, slate, was mainly used and it is only later, in the nineteenth century, that we find marble, which was imported from Italy and granite from Cornwall and Scotland.

Table tombs, which mimicked those placed within the church building, were popular with the better off. The oldest inscription in Llandre that of Margaret Bunce of Glanfrêd is such a table tomb. There are several of these on the south side of the church and they mark the resting place of the relatively well-off tenant farmers and local squires of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Another popular style of memorial, which marks a family burial, is the rectangular upright slate headstone fixed into a stone wall, capped with a long slate lintel and divided into three or four inscription bays. There are few examples of granite crosses, some white marble and the odd piece of sandstone in the old churchyard. The only Celtic crosses are those that mark the grave of the Revd. Lewis Evans and his family adjacent to the lych gate.

Individual upright slate headstones mark the majority of the nineteenth century burials. These vary in shape and size. In the second half of the nineteenth century elaborate decoration was added to the inscription surface using various repeat designs, both to the inscription surface

and the shape of the stone itself. The elaboration and the size of the stone reflected the wealth of the dead person's family. However, the majority of people could not afford to live in this world leave alone invest in a permanent memorial to mark their eternal resting place. During the twenty-five year period 1813 to 1827 only seventeen per cent of those buried have a memorial of any description.

Some grave areas were enclosed within cast iron railings or chains and a few still remain in Llandre. Most iron railings in churchyards were taken down in the early 1940s to help with the war effort. Llandre was spared this action. The original purpose of these railings was to foil desecration by grave robbers and to prevent people and the sheep, which were often used to keep the grass clipped, trampling on the grave. Slate grave covers, of which the coffin shaped ones, decorated and inscribed with the initials of the dead person enclosed in a heart or a diamond, served a similar purpose, although they became more of a marker than a protection. Grave areas were also covered with large rectangular slate covers or cobble stone sets and delineated by slate or sandstone kerbs. Some of the headstones and kerbstones have fallen or have been moved or taken over the years for repair work to walls and other graves.

In Llandre the steepness of the land required considerable terracing and many graves had to be supported by high walls. These were either of yellow engineering bricks or stones that were either laid dry or with binding mortar, again depending on the wealth of the family. An interesting support wall is the one of the Gough family grave (G1). Many graves also had artificial commemorative wreaths protected by glass cases. Most of these have now been broken and lost, only one survives on grave (B182)

It is important to note that each tombstone is owned by the person who erected it, or by his or her successors, and anyone who removes or defaces a tombstone can be charged with trespass. In one or two cases in Llandre the name the person who erected the tombstone is recorded in the inscription.

Inscriptions and epitaphs

Inscriptions and epitaphs epitomise contemporary social and religious attitudes. The erection of a tombstone, according to the Revd F. E. Paget, rector of Elfield, Staffordshire writing in 1843, should be: *a Christian act and one that shall benefit the living. The tombstones in the churchyard are, as it were, a book from whence the reader draws his reflections on man's mortality and in which every inscription is a fresh page. A proper epitaph should be characterised by Christian humility, kindness, and by the disposition to say too little rather than too much*⁶.

The format of the inscriptions is fairly standard in both English and Welsh. An introductory statement, which in some cases is adorned in a florid script and decorated, is followed by the name of the deceased and his or her next of kin – widow, son, daughter – the address, parish, date of death and age, ending in most cases with a verse or epigram. This information is a valuable resource for the period before advent of the ten-yearly National Census in 1841. The earlier inscriptions were written in copperplate script and these would have been gouged or scratched into the slate rather than cut. In the early part of the 19th century Roman lettering became common and this would have been cut into the stone either in the mason's yard, or if it was an addition, *in situ*. The guide lines used for the lettering can still be seen on some tombstones. Stonecutters were also skilled at copying each other's styles. In some cases it would appear that the tombstone was not placed on the grave until the last burial.

Stonecutting has a permanence and errors cannot be erased. As a result the stonecutter had to correct a spelling or an omission by placing a letter above the error – an error that once made and corrected remains in perpetuity. In the case of the inscription of Margaret Bunce, the

⁶ F. E. Paget - Tract upon Tombstones - 1843

oldest inscribed burial in the churchyard, the age has been altered from a 6 to a 9, or vice versa. That mistake has been recorded for posterity and was it noticed before the stone was erected or afterwards? The distress that this may have caused the family at the time lives with us to this day!!

When comparisons are made with the burial register there are often differences in respect of name, address and age at death. The spelling of surnames can vary e.g. Morgan in the burial register may well appear as Morgans on the grave inscription. This is sometimes the case on the same tombstone. This may well be due to the fact that tombstones were not erected until some years after burial whilst in the meantime memory faded and so accuracy was sacrificed.

Variation in spelling is greater in Welsh than in English. While there are few errors in grammar or syntax, in either language, there is a variation in the spelling of some words, e.g. *Gorphenhaf*, *Gorphenaf*, for *Gorffnaf*, and *anwyl* for *annwyl*. The vowels *i*, *u*, and *y* are often confused and the written text reflects the sound of the spoken word. The Welsh language, its grammar, syntax and spelling were not standardised until the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the establishment of linguistic scholarship in the newly formed Welsh University Colleges, especially under the leadership of John Morris Jones in Bangor, and the general improvement in literacy as a result of the Education Act 1870. Most English spelling is standard. There is one example of the word *son* being rendered *sonne*. The spelling of place names also varies, sometimes even in the same inscription, as do the surnames of families. Morgan becomes Morgans, Robert becomes Roberts, and David becomes Davies.

Fifty-two percent of the inscriptions are in Welsh, forty-eight in English. One side of a double tombstone may have one person's details in English, the other in Welsh. Most of the eighteenth century inscriptions are in English, and they are often difficult to read as they are inscribed in copperplate rather than cut into the stone. Occasionally the copperplate is interspersed with Roman lettering which became the norm after 1800. During the nineteenth century Welsh became the favoured language and only the wealthier families, the tenant farmers and squires favoured English. Even then, the verses and epigrams, for the greater part are in Welsh, the language of heaven!

Verses and epigrams

In most cases the inscriptions are completed with an appropriate verse or epigram, usually in Welsh, even if the rest of the inscription is in English. Most are verses from the Bible. These would probably have been the text of the sermon preached at the deceased's funeral. We know from a contemporary account of the death and funeral of Edward Lewis in *Yr Haul* that one of the verses quoted in the inscription on his tombstone from Psalm 119 v. 54 *Dy ddeddfau oedd fy nghan yn nhy fy mhereryndod* "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" was the text used by the vicar for the sermon at his funeral.⁷

There are verses of hymns or poems especially composed for the deceased. The *englyn* is a form used in many churchyards and cemeteries in Ceredigion. Llandre is no exception with some fifty-one examples. Bereaved families would have been keen to have some sort of epitaph on the gravestones of their loved ones and would approach the *beirdd gwlad*, rural poets, to compose an *englyn* or a few lines of verse pertinent to their dead relatives. These poets composed by ear and would not expect any payment for their service. They would have had little education and some were illiterate and they would dictate their efforts to people who could write, like teachers and clergy. The stonemason, whose knowledge of language may also have been limited, then copied the written text making guesses where he could not read clearly the letters. This led to errors in spelling, rhyme and *cynghanedd*. Some would also have been taken from a catalogue of verses - usually the work of well-known poets - supplied by the stonemason.

⁷ Yr Haul viii pp.195, 196

The verse and the epigram reflect both the social conditions of the time and the beliefs of the people in an afterlife, an existence that, it was hoped, was to be far better than the one they had experienced in this life. The reader is reminded of the Second Coming and the frailty of human life and hence the need to be prepared for death. Many of the most poignant are dedicated to young children and young adults and reflect the grief of those left behind. Death may have been ever present but this did not make the parting any the easier.

The craft of the stonemason

In the nineteenth century, tombstones were produced in a variety of shapes and many were highly decorated with gothic motifs and sculptured leafage and flamboyantly carved with allegorical scenes. This reflected the highly skilled craftsmanship of the stonemason who would have served a long apprenticeship. Unfortunately, in Llandre he has rarely left any evidence of his identity. One or two stones only have his initials carved at the bottom of the stone. We know that there were two stonemasons working in the immediate area, James Williams of Dolybont, and a J.J., who was probably John Jones, Dole. Stonemasons have become a scarce resource today and we are fortunate to have a family business in Llandre.

These intricate decorations were carved with a hammer and chisel, long before the introduction of sand-blasting and modern technology, and reflect not only the work of a skilled craftsman but also of someone of considerable artistic talent. It would have been a time-consuming and expensive process, so the more elaborate the shape of the headstone and its decoration, the greater the wealth of the deceased's family. The more elaborate decoration often appears on the slate tombstones, for not only was this was the local stone in Wales but, as a material, it lends itself to intricate work. The squared sides might also be carved with a barley sugar motif. The coffin shaped grave covers were also decorated with foliage and had either a heart or diamond cut into the upper part of the stone in which were inscribed the initials of the deceased. After 1850 the more elaborately decorated stones would have been bought in from factories where they were mass-produced.

The Symbols

- The acorn usually adorned the grave of a young person.
- The anchor is the Christian symbol of hope and often the chain is broken. They were popular on the graves of Master Mariners.
- Angels were regarded as the messengers of the Lord, the guides who led the soul of the dead to Paradise. There is also a hint of rebirth and resurrection.
- The book is God's Book of Life in which are written the names of the faithful who will enjoy eternal life. It is also the Bible, the Word of God.
- The circle is the symbol of the unbroken line that depicts eternity and reminds us of our immortality.
- The three-leaved clover leaf stands for Trinity and represents faith, hope and love.
- The column or pillar, sometimes in a barley-sugared pattern on the two upright sides of the stone, signifies strength and the ability to carry a load and also the portals of heaven.
- The cross is the symbol of eternal life and the empty cross is a strong symbol of a triumphant resurrection. Death has no dominion over Christ or his followers.
- The crown, as martyrs are said to have achieved the Crown of Life, suggests that an imperishable and glorious crown awaits Christian souls in Paradise. It represents the glory of life after death, and the deceased has his reward.
- The dove is the symbol of innocence, purity and peace and is often found on the grave of a child or young person.

- The fern signifies sincerity.
- Hands signify the sadness of parting and the prospect of a joyful reunion on the other side.
- The heart is a symbol of trust, love, courage and faithful devotion.
- Holly represents Christ's Passion, the red berries being the blood, the spines on the leaves the crown of thorns.
- Ivy never died and embodies sincerity and faithfulness and the immortality and friendship that clings so tightly that it transcends death.
- IHS is a Christian symbol of the first three Greek letters of **IESUS** or sometimes *In His Service*.
- The labyrinth signifies life's difficult and confusing pathways beyond which Heaven can eventually be reached.
- The lamp implies eternal light and the dispelling of evil.
- The laurel is the symbol of victory over sin and death.
- The lily symbolises chastity, innocence and purity, for death is the ultimate purification after which the redeemed and the forgiven souls progress to Heaven. It is often found on the grave of an infant or young girl.
- Morning glory, which is often found on the grave of the very young, is a flower that is born and dies in one day.
- Oak leaves are found on the graves of the elderly and reflect on their long life.
- An olive branch is the symbol of peace, for the departed soul has made its everlasting peace with God and now resides with him in heaven.
- A palm symbolises the triumphal entry of the soul into Heaven after its earthly death like Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; hence, the triumph of the soul over death.
- The passionflower represents the Holy Trinity and also the Crown of Thorns, which Christ wore so that his redeemed followers could achieve a crown of eternal life. It reflects Christ's Passion and the redemption of mankind.
- A rope, the rope of life is the symbol of helpfulness, which Christ throws to all who ask for his help.
- Rosebuds point to the renewal of life after death and also refer to the silence of eternity.
- A scroll is a symbol of the Book of Life in which the names of the faithful who will enjoy eternal life are recorded.
- The ship carries the faithful to God as truth carried them through life. The sword represents justice and strength. It is often combined with the cross.
- An urn, often with a pall draped over it, is a safe repository for the souls or ashes of the dead preserving them for God until the day of resurrection. The draping with a pall points to the urn being the vessel in which our life was kept in this world, but now it is redundant as we have moved on. It also symbolises the jar of precious ointment with which Mary Magdalene anointed the feet of Christ and hence generous giving.
- The willow traditionally weeps and so it signifies grief and mourning.
- Wings depict spiritual beings on a divine mission transporting the soul of the faithful to Paradise.
- The wreath with its circular form, like the circle, represents eternal life. It also has a connection with the idea of winning an eternal crown of glory in heaven as compared with the fading crown of earthly success.⁸

The Latin and Celtic crosses stand on three plinths that represent faith hope and love.

⁸ Talking Stones – Lionel Fanthorpe & Richard Pawelko - Gomer 2003

The lychgate

The word lych is derived from the Anglo Saxon word *lich* or *lic*, a corpse. The lychgate marked the crossing from non-consecrated to consecrated ground. Many were covered churchyard gateways as it was the requirement of the 1549 Prayer Book that the priest *metying the corpse at the church stile* should there commence the *Order for the Burial of the Dead*. The bearers of the corpse would rest their load on the lych stone, coffin stool or trestle while priest conducted part of the funeral service before proceeding into the church. In the Middle Ages every churchyard would possess one but many were destroyed in the post-Reformation period. Many were restored during the eighteenth century and there was a revival of building wooden ones as memorials to local people or those who died in war during the twentieth century.

The lychgate in Llandre, which is probably a late seventeenth early eighteenth century stone replacement for an earlier wooden one, bridges the stream that forms part of the southern boundary of the churchyard. Originally there was a grid above the watercourse, which would have prevented animals from entering the churchyard. Gates were placed there in the nineteenth century, which were closed and locked except for access to services. A wicket gate was provided to the left of the entrance to allow normal access to the churchyard. The ledges on either side may have provided seating for the chief mourners as the priest read the introductory funeral prayers.

The churchyard would also contain other buildings and furniture, which were of benefit to the community. Village schools were often held in the church porch or even the church itself.⁹ Almost all churchyards possessed a sundial which would have been attached to the south side of the church or have its own column. There is no record of one in Llandre but there could well have been one before the rebuilding of the church in 1888 by which time long case clocks were in more common use. The table tombs of local benefactors in some churchyards were used as dole tables from which, on the anniversary of their death, bread was distributed to the poor.

Many churchyards also had wells, which were believed to have curative powers. Originally these wells may have been used by itinerant Celtic missionaries to baptise converts. In Llandre the well, now restored, lies below the south wall in what was once the yard of the church farm.¹⁰

Flora and fauna

Llandre churchyard is well endowed with several species of trees, most of which are self-seeded. The oak, ash, and yew were among the species held with respect down the ages. They can flourish for in excess of five hundred years, but the yew can survive for much longer. The triple-bole yew in Llandre churchyard is two thousand years old. There are also several mature, beeches, sweet chestnuts and elm saplings. In recent years the woodland in the churchyard has been professionally managed.

Yews are found planted on late Bronze Age burial sites. In the late Iron Age yews were planted to mark a burial and its evergreen foliage and longevity are a symbol of immortality. It was a life symbol and sprigs of yew were placed in the grave at burial. Many were planted in Norman times as they had been in Normandy before the invasion of 1066. Edward I in 1307 ordered the planting of yews in churchyards to protect church buildings from high winds and not, as is commonly thought, to provide wood for bows. The yew for bows was imported from Spain except in emergencies. Churchyard yews were used to store the household goods whilst the

⁹ Randall Evans Enoch – *Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn, A Church History*- 2002

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

owners sought sanctuary in the church and to protect the church buildings from strong winds. In the Middle Ages farmers allowed their stock to graze in churchyards often against the wishes of the priest who planted yew in order to harm the health of the cattle. It is known that cattle will not browse the yew foliage on the tree but will graze it if it is cut and left on the ground.

There is a traditional Welsh saying that recalls that rich and poor alike refer to their demise as *gorwedd dan yr ywen* – “lying beneath the yew”. Another claims *is yr ywen ddu ganghennog dwmpath gwyrddlas cwyd dy ben* – “under the green-leaved branching yew a grassy mound is soon raised”.¹¹

The Causes of death

Before 1880 the chief causes of infant deaths were infectious diseases. Typhus, an acute specific fever lasting about a fortnight, was carried by body lice and rat fleas which were prevalent in homes that were dirty and lacked basic hygiene. Its spread was fanned by overcrowding, lack of personal cleanliness and bad hygiene conditions. The patient at this time either recovered quickly or died. Typhoid, an acute intestinal infection spread by infected water and milk and passed on by carriers due to poor sanitary conditions or the handling of food without basic hygiene, became common in the area 1880. Members of rural families went to the South Wales coalfield in search of work brought it back with them to this area. My great-grandmother died of typhoid in 1896, which she contracted when she went to South Wales to look after a son who had succumbed. My mother who was a young five year old at the time also contracted it and was given up for dead, only to rally and survive ninety-one further years. Those infected often died of dehydration due to diarrhoea.

Several epidemics of scarlet fever, the symptoms of which are a sore throat, high fever and a rash, occurred between 1830 and 1890. Before the advent of penicillin there were often serious complications, like inflammation of the kidneys and infection of the middle ear. Five of the seven children of Dean Tait of Carlisle died in the spring of 1856 and the parents almost broke under the shock. Whooping cough and measles, too, were ever present and killed children with little resistance due to malnutrition.

Pulmonary tuberculosis, or “consumption” as it was known in the early days, was the leading cause of death during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It is a disease that takes from a few months to several years to run its course and it spread insidiously and increased over from the period 1750 to 1840. It is slow killing by nature and was spread by the crowded living conditions and ill-ventilated conditions of the houses of the time. Malnutrition, careless hygiene and close contact with the sputum of those infected also facilitated its spread. Its decrease in the last half of the nineteenth century was due more to improvements in diet and housing rather than advances in medical science. In 1838 it accounted for 16.5% of all reported deaths in England and Wales. It also produces several satellite infections. Originally it was believed to be hereditary until the German scientist Robert Koch isolated *tuberculi bacilli* in 1882.

Between 1800 and 1850 one quarter of infant deaths occurred before the first birthday. An even larger number of children died between their first and fifth birthdays, and this was due mainly to the fact that when the mother stopped breast-feeding the infant lost the natural immunity to infection. The death of the mother in childbirth as the result of contracting puerperal fever or puerperal septicaemia, an infection of the uterus either during or after birth, was high. The diet in many homes was also poor and unbalanced which resulted in rickets and other weaknesses caused by malnutrition. During the second half of the nineteenth century the survival rate of children increased as people became more prosperous and more conscious of hygiene.

¹¹ Kilvert – Diaries – A Selection – Penguin, Robert Bevan Jones – The Ancient Yew – Windgather Press 2002

The maintenance of the churchyards

The maintenance of the Old Churchyard, especially its walls, figures frequently in the Vestry records over the past three hundred years. This is not surprising as Llandre churchyard is situated on a steep slope, which required the building of terraces for burial. The boundary walls on the east side, some four and six feet high and retaining the natural slope of the hillside behind them, were built on a raised mound of earth some two to three feet high. This construction, with its poor foundations, was always liable to landslide after wet weather. We can see examples of this construction today on the road leading up to the farms. On the south side the retaining walls had to be higher and they too supported a great weight of earth behind them.

The first literary reference to burials is made in the Tarrier, written in Latin and dated 12 August 1353. It records that the sexton is to be paid five shillings for digging a single depth grave (4feet); six shillings for keeping the churchyard wall in repair; four pence a year for reburying bones; two shillings for maintaining the churchyard grounds. In a later copy of this Tarrier in English, dated 12 August 1728, and attached to the Vestry minutes of May 1799 only a fee paid to the sexton for grave digging is mentioned and nothing for reburying bones, yet we know that the custom of reburying bones was continued until the churchyard was closed in the early years of the twentieth century.

The first reference to the churchyard in the Vestry minutes appears in the accounts for 1784, when 6d. was paid for repairs to the churchyard wall. At the Vestry that April James Hughes, the clerk, was allowed 2s every Easter from then on to keep the churchyard wall in repair, as a more regular maintenance schedule was becoming necessary. Ten years later the churchyard wall was repaired from north stile (sticil bach y Borth), which was used by those worshippers who walked from Borth, to south porch in a *substantial manner to the height of 4 feet* with stone and clods of earth at a cost of 4s. The churchyard was also to be cleared of briers and thorns at a cost of 6d.

In 1808 a decision was taken to carry out a major repair to the churchyard wall. A specification was drawn up and tenders sought. Money had to be raised to fund the project and £32 was raised, but an additional £17.10s had to be found by the four churchwardens from their respective townships. The stones were brought from Braichgarw and an additional £1 had to be found to pay for moving stones from the place where the carts left them to the site of the wall. Ten years later we find that a John Richard was paid £1.3s., for doing work in the Churchyard.

At a Vestry meeting held on 20 January 1826, arrangements were discussed for an extension of the churchyard by acquiring adjoining land on the hillside to the north and north west of the church. This was eventually purchased from the owner, Revd. Jones Edwards of Tekford in Oxfordshire. A committee was set up to arrange the purchase and it was agreed that *the Churchwardens do pay for the same and for enclosing, fencing, cleaning and forming a suitable surface of the said piece of ground*. In September 1826 a minute records that there was need to build and repair the churchyard wall, probably to support the extension above the road to the north of the stile and *to level (i.e. terrace) the new area to make it fit to bury the dead*. In July 1827 we are told that the churchwarden for Ceulan-y-maesmawr pleaded that his township could not afford to contribute their share towards paying for the new churchyard and the fencing that year, as they needed the money to pay their poor. It was agreed to absolve them, but in future they would have to pay their share like everyone else.

Three years later in 1830 the churchyard wall was again being re-built at cost to each township of £1.2s.10½d. In April 1835 the Vestry ordered that *the churchwardens erect a proper gate at the north stile leading to the church from the Borth road at the churchyard wall leading to the church and erect proper steps of stone so as to make the entrance along the path through the north stile easy and secure to people coming to the said churchyard*. The cost was

2s.9d. per township. By November 1836 part of the churchyard wall had again collapsed and more was threatening to fall *endangering many graves being carried away*. The wall had to be rebuilt anew and the part that was threatening to collapse was to be taken down and rebuilt at the expense of the parish. We also learn that an additional part fell adjacent to the house of John Richards, who either lived in Tanllan farm or Tyddyn cottages to the south of the church. The total cost of repairs was £3.18s.4d. In September 1838 the Vestry again approved money for the rebuilding of the wall around churchyard that had lately fallen down. John Erasmus was given a sum of money for cleaning the churchyard. Again in February 1845 the eight inhabitants and four churchwardens present ordered that the churchyard wall (probably at the east end) should be repaired immediately.

A special Council meeting was called on 15 November 1861 to discuss the repair of the churchyard wall at the east end where it had collapsed yet again. The resolution passed emphasised certain conditions, namely, *care that the wall be built on a firm and solid foundation*, to which William Williams, the mason, consented to agree for a price of £12. The specification comprised: *the wall to consist of stone without any kind of mortar and to be of such height as the ground requires and to be uniform in height and breadth or thickness at the foundation three feet and a half and will (be) faced on both sides with a little sloping therein on the outside of the top but not be less than two feet at the top*. The work had to be completed by the end of that month otherwise the agreement would be null and void. The actual bill together with cleaning came to £16. This section of the wall collapsed in 1952 when a huge ash tree was felled. It was rebuilt by Glyn Jones, Dole only for part of it to collapse again in the 1970s.

By the 1870s burial space was at a premium again. At the October 1877 meeting of the Church Council, as it was now called, it was agreed to collect money *towards a new edition (sic) to the churchyard*. However, a further addition, containing 1 rood and 17 perches, was given by the Revd. E. L. Richards and Mr and Mrs T. L. Richards in December 1876 and consecrated on 10 April 1877. We also have a record of the burial fees, including those of the vicar and the clerk, for the last quarter of the nineteenth century: *graves for those over 12 years old 5s.each, for those under 12 years old 4s.each*. In 1900 the sexton was paid 16s. a year for cutting the churchyard grass and a further 15s.for cleaning the entrance to the church.

The Lower Churchyard

Towards the end of the nineteenth century it again became evident that more land would be needed to accommodate burials in the churchyard. The old churchyard on the hill was full and, despite the development of nonconformist and secular burial grounds at Penygarn and Tal-y-bont and a churchyard in Borth to meet the increase in population, several families from those communities had family graves in Llandre and wished their descendents to rest here too.

The Revd. Z. M. Davies was installed as vicar in Spring 1904. At his first Easter Vestry, held on 8 April he found that his first major project was to oversee the provision of a new churchyard. As all the land on the hillside had been expended, it was not easy to find suitable land at a price that the church could afford. Five days later the Church Council agreed to acquire 1.5 acres of land owned by Mr. W. J. Jones, 38 Lidderdale Road, Sefton Park, Liverpool, and in the occupancy of David Rees, Ty'n parc. Mr. Jones was not prepared to sell part of the land without selling the whole lot. The Church Council then approached the owners of two plots of land adjoining the churchyard, namely David Rees, Ty'n Parc, and Owen Morris, Ty'n llechwedd. They agreed jointly to sell 1.25 acres for £250. As this was regarded by the Church Council as too expensive, they deducted £40 each, so a sum of £165 (sic) was agreed.

This was still too expensive, so the Church Council considered Llwynglas "fields", but the owner would only sell the whole field. In the end Miss Lewis, a wealthy property developer who lived in Borth, came to the rescue by buying all the land for a sum of £800 and promising to

sell to the Church Council one acre or more, as agreed, at a sum of £106.5s. an acre. When this was made known to the Council at a meeting some six months later *the joy of some members was almost unbounded*. Miss Lewis's generous offer was received with considerable relief and gratitude.

Fund raising

As the Church Council had no reserves it immediately set about raising the money to purchase this piece of land, measuring 1.5 acres, which with fencing, would cost £200. The parish was divided into 6 districts with a person responsible for each - from the brook at bottom of Ruel farm to Rhydypennau and Dole to the river Lerry; from Rhydypennau along the turnpike road to Penybont railway bridge and along the Lerry up to Elerch; from Cwncethin bridge, Brynrodin to Lerry (Borth); and the townships of Henllys, Cyfoeth-y-brenin and Ceulan-y-maesmawr. An undertaking was solemnly signed by all members of the Church Council - among who was the author's grandfather, Evan Evans, - that Miss Lewis would be paid and all the work would be completed.

Collecting books were issued and inside was written: *The need of extending the churchyard in Llanfihangel has been felt by all who have had their dear ones buried there, and lately steps have been taken to acquire suitable land for the purpose. The new piece, adjoining the old churchyard will measure fully 1½ acres. The approximate cost, including fencing, will be at least £200. To meet the expenses incurred, a house-to-house canvas of the whole parish has been decided upon and it is to be hoped every parishioner and all who will feel interest will do their level best to help to raise the sum required.*

Signed Z. M. Davies January 3rd. 1905¹²

The Church Council started the fund rolling by pledging £40. The giving was, no doubt generous as was to be proved later in the century during the two World Wars. The response was generous. I know that my grandfather, Evan Evans, Glebe Inn, a smallholder, and miner, gave £1.1s. Unfortunately, there is no record of the success of the appeal but the target must have been met and surpassed for additional works were put in hand immediately. A path was laid above the well in 1904, which involved considerable re-building of the old churchyard retaining wall, so that funerals could process to the new burial ground without having to go a longer way round through the lychgate. Tanyllan farm and its outbuildings demolished and the stones used to build Ivy Bank, Glyncoed and Ffosygrafel Villa. The area vacated by the farm buildings was given to the Church by Miss Lewis and became a little plantation, Parc Bach, where various species of tree were planted, and the bier shed was situated. The trees were felled during WW2. It was consecrated at the same time as the new churchyard. Today, part of it is a car park, the rest a garden around the well.

The Vestry of 1906 set the burial fees and ruled that no interments should take place and no headstones were to be fixed without the consent of the vicar. The land was fenced in and a hawthorn hedge planted. Several Scot pines, Lombardy poplars and yews were planted around the boundary which formed a thick plantation on the south-west side. These were cut down during WW2 and only two pines remain on the east side. Laurels and rhododendrons were planted along the paths but these have been gradually pruned back or removed over the years.

Burials continued in the old churchyard for some considerable time where there was room in family graves. The new ground was consecrated by the Bishop of St David's John Owen in 1905 and the first burial in the new churchyard was that of John Jones of Ty'nrhelig farm (J121) who was buried on the 4 August 1905. He was closely followed by Ann Morgan, the wife of James Richard Morgan, of Blaenwaun farm (J030) who died age 47 years and was buried on 20 August. There are a few inscriptions that relate to earlier deaths. These are of those who were

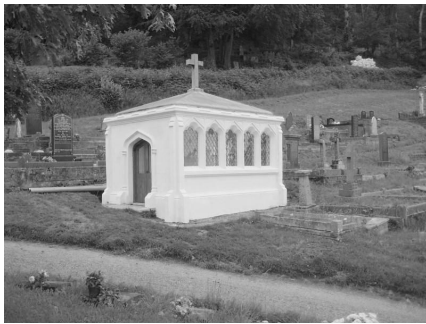
¹² Llanfihangel Genau'r Glyn PCC Minute Book 1904 - 1905

lost at sea or buried abroad, later to be remembered on family memorials¹³.

The Harden Jones Mausoleum

An interesting feature is the mausoleum (J001) built by the family of the parish general practitioner, John Harden Jones, who lived in Butrells, now Llysberw, and died in March 1921. Dr Jones was a well-loved medical practitioner in the area for over thirty years.

Dr. Jones's first wife had a daughter, Elizabeth Annie, from her previous marriage to a Dr Norris. She was a ballerina. Sadly she died aged 34 in March 1906. Her mother was devastated and could not come to part with her body for burial. She lay in state in Buttrells and local people, as was the custom in those days, called to pay their last respects. My mother used to recall seeing her lying in her coffin, embalmed and dressed in her ballet clothes. She was buried on 31 March 1906.



In order to allay his wife's grief Dr Jones had the mausoleum built to protect his stepdaughter's grave from the elements. It was built by two men from Scotland who stayed with my grandparents in Ivy Bank, (now Sanctuary). For many years Polly Oliver, Haulfan, was paid by the family for looking after it. Both Dr Jones' first wife, Mary Anne, who died on 12 November 1913 aged 64 and his second wife, Elizabeth Parry Jones, nee Parry Jenkins of Henhafod, Taliesin, lie buried in the mausoleum. There is no inscription to either his stepdaughter or her mother, his first wife. The mausoleum was recently restored

In 1913 David Hughes, the sexton, was paid 15s. per annum to cut the churchyard grass. Ten years later considerable concern was voiced about the untidy state of the new churchyard. In 1925 John Idris Hughes, the son of David Hughes, was appointed clerk/sexton and his job description entailed the cutting grass in the old churchyard grass and saplings and cleaning the entrance to church that lay within the churchyard area. Four years later concern was being expressed to Cyfoeth-y-brenin Parish Council about the state of the footpath through the old churchyard.

Churchyard Maintenance

The maintenance of the two churchyards has always been a challenge to the churchwardens and Parochial Church Councils down the years. In the 1930s a Churchyard Maintenance Fund was established mainly to provide for the lower churchyard.

In January 1935 the Parochial Church Council discussed the state of the churchyard gates and paths. It was agreed that the gates to the lower churchyard should be high enough to prevent the stonemasons from getting in with memorials without the permission of the vicar. Three years later it was agreed to replace the wooden gates at the entrance to the lower churchyard with metal ones and that they should be hung on substantial posts. The new gates were installed and were dedicated by the Bishop Prosser of St David's on 5 March 1939.

Continued concern was being expressed about the condition of the trees in both churchyards. It was agreed to arrange for those that were dangerous to be cut down. In order to plan funds for the on-going maintenance of the churchyards a Churchyard Maintenance Fund was set up with Edward Pierce, Coedfa, as treasurer. This would enable the churchyard grass to be cut twice a year in June and September. Tom Jones, Llwynderw, the sexton, was

¹³ Cf. The Jones family of Resolute Borth and the Williams family of Eamyn House J113 and J116

responsible for this and maintaining the fences.

In February 1940 two old churchyard walls yet again in need of urgent repair. The responsibility for expediting the repairs was given to Edward Pierce, Evan David Griffiths, Glyncoed, and Tom Jones. Later in the October of that year a request had been received from a scrap dealer to remove cast iron railings from the old churchyard for the war effort. As the old churchyard was now in the hands of the Welsh Church Commissioners permission would have to be sought from them. We do not know what the outcome of this was but no railings were removed. However, the Church in Wales asked that all white gravestones should be covered as they showed up on moonlight nights. This could be of danger to the church from German Bombers. Church was to give fourteen days notice to owners of graves and then take action. During the war years the large trees, pines and poplars which stood to the north of Glyntêg in the new churchyard were cut down to help the war effort as were all except for one maple which stood near the stream, in the little area known as Parc Bach, where the bier shed stood for many years. This area is now the car park.

In February 1944 Evan David Griffiths and Henry Blundell, Ffosygrafel Villa, were thanked for the good work they had done by clearing trees and grass in the old churchyard. Over the next five years various trees in the old churchyard were felled. This caused damage to some graves, and Glyn Jones, Coedgruffydd, who was now the sexton, was asked to repair the table tomb in memory of John Jones, Staylittle.

In July 1947 we are told that the old churchyard wall again needed urgent repair. In 1948 further moves were made to cut down and sell trees, but the Parochial Church Council found it difficult to get what they thought was a fair price for the timber from Jones Builders, Dole. In desperation they gave Edgar Evans, Glyntêg, a tree free of charge! A year later, Tom Evans, Penpontbren, purchased the larch tree in the far northeast corner of the old churchyard. The stump can still be seen. Glyn Jones was given a week off from his County Council work to see to all churchyard paths and the lane up to Ysgoldy fach. During the next half century the maintenance of both churchyards and the retaining walls of the old churchyard caused the Parochial Church Council a great deal of trouble at a time when the finances of the church were very limited. Glyn Jones and then his son-in-law Idris Davies, Tradiddan, did some excellent work keeping the old churchyard free of brambles and saplings.

In 1951 Glyn Jones was asked to clean the graves of Owens family of Penrhyncoch and the Williams family who used to live in Troedybryn and had contributed generously to the cost of the East Window. The churchyard paths were in need of repair. In 1952 the Young People's group got together for a social event during the winter to raise money to pay for the labour to tidy up the old churchyard. We also read that there were problems with stonemasons entering the churchyard with tombstones without the vicar's permission. Lloyds, stonemasons of Aberaeron, were forbidden to take their lorry into the churchyard and Miss Evans, Glyntêg was to withhold the key unless the lorry driver had evidence of the vicar's permission.

In May 1954 we read that the damage caused to the old churchyard wall below the east window, caused by the felling of the ash trees, was to be repaired by a volunteer work force. At the Easter Vestry 1958 the vicar thanked the Young People's group for their work in raising money for the maintenance of the churchyard, but there was an appeal for volunteers to keep the new churchyard in order. The old churchyard wall below the east window was still causing trouble and Glyn Jones, Dole, agreed to repair it for £100.15s. County Council and the Welsh Church Fund declined to help financially. A Gift Day was held to defray the costs and Mothers' Union also helped. A task force from a West Midlands Unemployment Scheme rebuilt it again in 1975.

In 1958 it was decided to cut down some dangerous trees in the old churchyard and which would require the services of a specialist tree-feller. Nothing was done for two years later special meeting was called in July 1960 to discuss the felling of the trees in the old churchyard. There was strong opposition to this on aesthetic grounds. Glyn Jones held that the trees were

healthy and the meeting was reminded that the tree felling in 1953 had left the church with a bill of over £100 to repair a damaged retaining wall. It was left that there should be a quinquennial inspection of trees and those that were deemed unsafe should be cut down. Llandre had won the best-kept village prize and there had been praise for the tidiness of both churchyards.

For many years individuals, usually the current sexton, had been paid to cut the grass twice a year in June and late September. In the 1960s the funds were re-established. Several appeals were launched to raise money to augment it. To reduce the area requiring maintenance the lower part of the new churchyard was fenced off so that the tenant of the adjoining land could graze his sheep on it. In the seventies and eighties every year parties of men and women from the church shared the burden. When this voluntary labour ceased sheep were brought in to graze the area during the summer. This proved affective but it also caused some concern as damage was done to some of the grave furniture. As a result a further appeal was made for money through the Maintenance Fund and for a few years the churchyard was professionally maintained.

In 1961 a gift of £100 had been received to maintain lower churchyard. It was decided to write to others to ask for donations to augment the fund. In November the Churchyard Maintenance Fund was re-established. The estimate for laying tarmac on the path up to the lychgate and beyond was approved. Sadly it was not done properly. An appeal was made to the Pantyfedwen Trust to help financially with the re-building of the churchyard wall. The wall had still not been repaired five years later. In 1962 it was decided to use some of the money to buy a mower from the Churchyard fund to mow the grass in the new churchyard. The churchyard wall was still causing a problem and it was not until 1987 that the Manpower Services Commission were employed to repair the churchyard wall, the Ysgoldy fach and the lych gate. They completed this work satisfactorily in 1988. The Manpower Services were also employed to clear the old churchyard.

Concern was again being expressed in 1990 about the state of some of the trees in the old churchyard and it was decided that some trees should be lopped. In 1996 the grazing by sheep of the new churchyard was allowed. There was some opposition to this and two years later it was discontinued. The Churchyard Maintenance Fund was reopened and James Stonemasons were given an annual contract to maintain all aspects of the lower churchyard at a cost of £1000. In 2006 this contract became unaffordable and was renewed. A wooden bench was placed in churchyard in memory of late Gareth Jones, the son of Glyn Jones, Coedgruffydd.

To reduce the amount of the lower churchyard land to be maintained and a section at the bottom end, which was surplus to requirement, was fenced and gated so that the sheep of the tenant of the adjoining field could graze his sheep. A new path was cut at the bottom end to give better access to the more recent burials and all the paths were re-laid with gravel. Now it is maintained by workers from the Community Service Scheme under the auspices of Treftadaeth Llandre Heritage.

Since 2000 a great deal of work has been done to clear and restore the old churchyard and to publicize the 2000-year-old yew tree. Footpaths, fences and grave retaining walls have been restored and trees managed. All the walls have been rebuilt on an annual basis and it is hoped that they will stand the test of time for at least a hundred years, if not longer. Both churchyards have never been so well maintained. There has been a complete inscription census of the tombstone inscriptions. A Heritage Trail with information boards has been established covering both churchyards.

All this restoration work has been made possible through the auspices of Treftadaeth Llandre Heritage under the inspired leadership of Dr Roger Haggard.

The Dead of two World Wars

There are inscriptions to four men who died in WW1. Griffith Evan Morgan, Blaenwaen, (J30), Ben Williams, Aelybryn, Bowstreet (J29), Edwin Richards, Bronberllan, Llandre (J89) and

Ted Williams, Tanybryn, Llandre whose slate memorial stone stands in his parent's grave (J70). There is also an inscription to Constance Fane Roberts, Brogennau who died on active service (H46). There are inscriptions to two who gave their lives in WW2, David Jones, Brynhir, Llandre (H20) and Ellie Robilliard, a Master Mariner of Borth (H26).

An other inscription commemorates Henry Levi Williams who died in an air raid while on shore leave in Cartagena during the Spanish Civil War (K34).

Tombstones and inscriptions in the Lower Churchyard

There are some interesting decorative designs, especially on the earlier slate stones, which depict the the Victorian symbolism found in the Old Churchyard. Far more use is made of granite and marble and during the last thirty years the memorials tend to be of low polished black or grey granite with standard inscriptions and no graves are marked with kerbs.

While biblical verses in both English and Welsh are common epigrams, there is only one example of a Welsh *englyn* and one of a Welsh stanza.

K81 James Edward Raw Rees DFC, DL, JP Maesawelon, Waunfawr, Aberystwyth d. 1986 (64)

Gwen siriol oedd ei olud – a gweini'n
Ddi-gwyn oed ei wynfyd
Bu fyw'n dda, bu fyw'n ddiwyd
A lle bu ef mae gwell byd.

K74 Gareth Raw Rees MBE, Tynparc, d 1983 (63)

O! Cawr r'wyt heddiw'n gorwedd
Yma'n awr mewn euriad dangnefedd
Tyfaist yn wir etifedd
Tua'r byd tu hwynt i'r bedd. Geraint.

Two English verses are of interest.

H34 Mary Ellen Humphreys, Station House, Llandre d.1929 (45)

He loved her, yes, no tongue can tell
How deep, how dearly and how well.
Christ loved her too and thought it best,
To take her home with him to rest.

H85 Gwendolyn Williams, Ty'n Bedw, Llandre d.1933 (58)

A dear musician on this green hill laid
Lies sleeping here! the dew shine bright on her!
Peerless the music these still hands once made,
And all her life was harmony as fair. L Wynstanley

Some Burials of interest

James Williams, Troedybryn, Llandre was a founder member of the Welsh Church of St David in Paddington, London (H39). Richard Williams, Britannia House, Borth, had the distinction of being the first Dock Master of the Manchester Ship Canal (H49). Rishard Lloyd Jones, Penpompren Uchaf, Talybont, was Professor of Physics at Madras University (J46). Gwendoline and Arthur Williams, who lived in Ty'nbedw, were well-know musicians during the twenties and thirties and were colleagues of Sr Walford Davies when he was Professor of Music at Aberystwyth (J85).

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