



Pilgrimage for Preservation



Continuing our look at some of our own hidden church gems, Debbie Sawyer from the Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area Pilgrimage Committee explains how they are promoting the ancient beauty of their landscape and churches to create a modern-day pilgrimage.

Wales A land bathed in mysterious legends. A land with Celtic origins of saints and stones. A land where around almost every corner is a snippet of history. The Clwydian Range, traversed by the Offa's Dyke Path, with the sharp outline of Snowdonia's mountains filling the horizon, rise to provide a perfect natural boundary with England. These soft, rounded hills fall sharply into the Vale of Clwyd where ancient villages sit between rivers winding their silvery trails. This beauty is enticing enough, but far below these heathery hills hides many a secret.

It's here, visitors discover the precious gems of our Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area, each with a story to tell. Those ancient wells carrying saintly names such as St Beuno's and St Dyfnog's, and the smallest of churches whose wooden wheels creak to ring a single bell, calling to the space within.

Ancient Pilgrim Ways are many throughout the world, but these will be new; these will be exciting journeys for the clean, well fed modern pilgrim whose imagination may connect with that weary soul of long ago as he washed away grime and drank waters from our holy wells; where he sheltered from the wind in the stone-cold calm of a tiny church, heart warmed in the comfort of God's protection.

Inviting places of uniqueness

Each well, each church is sacred with origins as early as the 5th century. What are those iron tongs in St Mary's, Cyffylliog, those rounded stones in St Michael's of All Angels, Efenectyd? Why are there steps outside St Saeran's, Llanynys and who painted that St Christopher?

The intricate carpentry of St Meugan's, Llanrhydd demonstrates such affluence in a hamlet of so few; St Garmon's, Llanarmon had pilgrims flocking until Tudor times, where did they all go?

The future of our 12 churches is fragile in terms of Sunday Worship. It's not enough that God waits to receive the faithful few who worship according to tradition. New ways, every day are needed to entice the curious visitor into His space to witness the treasures within, both tangible and spiritual. In some ways this is an exciting 'crisis' giving vigour to our ideas for the future instead of lamentations over a past long lost. We're restoring, enhancing, and focusing on inviting places of uniqueness. Treasures to seek, cottages to sleep, a café or two, we hope. There will be afternoon strolls from well to well, a tour in the car, and a trek for a week enjoying some wonderful Welsh hospitality along the way.

Our Dyffryn Clwyd Mission Area 'Pilgrimage Product' will let all our Sacred Places tell their quirky tales of times past through voices of today as they link together in a unique compilation of Pilgrim routes appealing to visitors from far and wide as well those close to home...and just maybe, as these new Pilgrims journey from place to place, their hearts may be touched by His Holy Grace leading them back to those pews of long ago.



Is your church a hidden gem? Do you have plans to entice curious visitors? Teulu Asaph will be featuring these inviting places of uniqueness across the diocese in future editions. Contact the editor to offer your church or Mission Area.