

All Saints' Church , Oystermouth

**A GUIDE TO SOME OF THE MANY
POINTS OF INTEREST IN OUR CHURCH**



Welcome

We hope you enjoy your visit today

***Would you please leave this guide
in the church for others to use.***

All Saints' is an ancient and modern church and has been a place of Christian worship for over 1500 years.

It's quite likely that there was a Christian presence here sometime toward the end of the Roman occupation of Britain. The Church itself is built on the site of an earlier Roman



settlement. This could have been a villa or, more likely, a mansio [a military or naval inn]. In the 1690's a Mr Isaac Hamon noted that the Churchyard was "paved with small discs of divers colours as red, white, yellow.. the people called it the 'Saints Pavement'". Fragments of Roman mosaics are now preserved in the west corner of the south aisle.

Like many other ancient Welsh Churches All Saints' probably began its life as a Celtic *Llan* [hermitage]. Tradition claims a link to the celebrated 6th century Abbot, St Illtyd, of Llantwit Major fame. A Welsh monk, *Nennius*, writing in the early 8th century, records a legend involving Illtyd and a miraculous altar at a place called Loyngarth in Gower. This could be an early version of the Welsh name for Oystermouth - *Ystumllwynarth*.

The earliest recorded reference to the Church dates from 1141 when the Norman Lord, Maurice de Londres, granted the Parish of "Ostemuwe" to the Benedictine Priory of Ewenny. It was

during the Norman occupation of Gower that much of the original Church was built.

The Lady Chapel is thought to be 12th century and the tower dates from the early 13th century [predating Oystermouth Castle].

In 1367 the Church lost its connection with Ewenny Priory and became linked to the Hospital of St. David in Swansea [*now the Cross Keys Inn*]. During the dissolution of the monasteries the Parish came into the possession of Sir George Herbert of Plas House, Swansea, and remained in private patronage until the disestablishment of the Welsh Church in 1920.



The Reformation of the following centuries were turbulent times for this and other parishes in Wales. During the 17th and 18th All Saints was at times neglected , notoriously poor and served by a series of perpetual curates rather than Vicars.

In the 19th century, the fortunes of the parish changed. As Mumbles grew as a trading and tourism centre so the church itself grew. In 1860 the north wall of the mediaeval church was pulled down and replaced with an arcade of five bays and a side aisle was built. In 1915 the Victorian extension was itself demolished to make way for the present nave and chancel. The work was completed in 1937.

During the 20th century, many gifts were presented to the church among them the Rood screen, the Reredos, the East window and the lifeboat memorial windows.

All Saints stands as a reminder of the faith of earlier generations and is home to a lively and growing Christian community today. Prayer is offered here daily. God's Word is proclaimed and the Christian Sacraments celebrated.

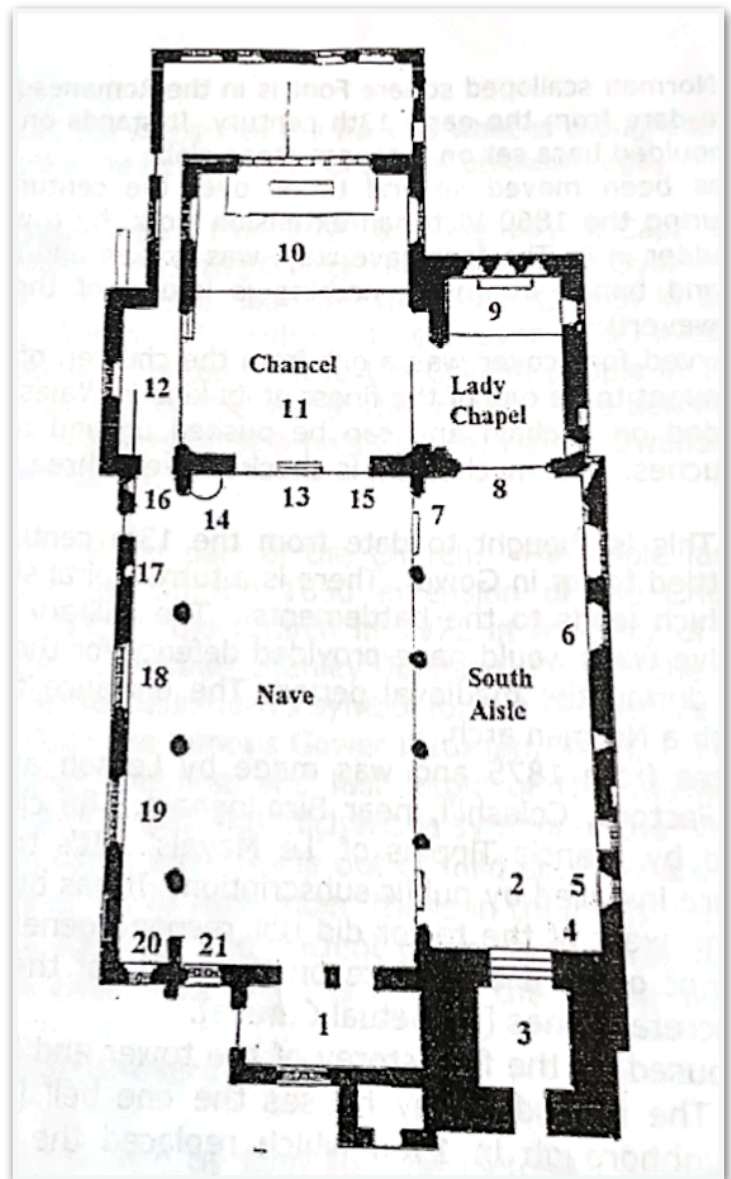
Through its history All Saints has been served by a succession of faithful priests and people. It has also nurtured a vocation to the ordained ministry in those who have gone on to serve the Church elsewhere. One of the most famous 'sons of the parish' is the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Williams of Oystermouth, who was a chorister and server here.



We very much hope that those who visit the Church for services or to have a look around, will feel something of the joy and peace of God's presence in this place.

Church Trail

A plan to
accompany the
following notes



1. The new porch

The Porch was rebuilt in 2016 [at a cost of £200,000] It replaced the original Victorian entrance dating from the 1860 extension of the Church.

The modern design incorporates some of the original features, including the medieval stone heads on the external door arch [thought to be of a male with close cropped hair, and a woman].

The Victorian window depicts Christ blessing the little children and includes the inscription 'In memory of a deeply regretted

parent'. The deceased parent was Martha Lucy Strachan of Castleton, who died on 27th October 1879.

The new porch was designed by the Church Architect, Dewi Evans, and features a zinc clad roof, clerestory windows [to let in natural light, and was constructed of Forest of Dean sandstone [which forms the outer cladding of the 1915 nave and chancel]].



2. The Font : Norman scalloped square Font is in the Romanesque style and is thought to date from the early 13th century. It stands on a cylindrical shaft on a moulded base set on a square stone slab. The font has been moved several times over the centuries and was damaged, during the 1860 Victorian extension work by a workman who placed his ladder on it. The font gave way, was broken and later repaired with wood and bands of iron - nothing is known of the fate of the workman however!! The richly carved font cover was a gift from the children of the parish in 1916. It's thought to be one of the finest of its kind in Wales.



It is suspended on a chain and can be pushed up and down with the lightest of touches. The mechanism is checked every three years!

3. Tower : This is thought to date from the 13th century and is the largest embattled tower in Gower. There is a turret spiral staircase on the south side which leads to the battlements. The military type structure with its massive walls would have

provided defence for the inhabitants of Oystermouth during the medieval period. The entrance from the south aisle is through a Norman arch.



The clock dates from 1875 and was made by Leeson and Sons of the Steam Clock Factory, Coleshill, near Birmingham. The clock mechanism was presented by Francis Tippins of 'Le Mayals'. It's thought that the clock faces were installed by public subscription. It has been told that the residents to the west of the tower did not respond generously and were subsequently not given a clock face on their side of the Church by the Revd David Secretan Jones [Perpetual Curate].

The clock is housed on the first storey of the tower and has to be wound once a week. The second storey houses the one bell [note G] cast by Taylor's of Loughborough in 1964 which replaced the historic 'Bells of Santiago' (which in turn replaced earlier bells)

4. Saints' Pavement The plaque to the south of the tower arch contains fragments from the Roman tessellated pavement [mosaic floor] found during the 1860 enlargement of the Church. Roman fragments, tesserae and bricks have often been unearthed during excavations in the churchyard. In the 18th century those remains of the mosaic floor, unearthed during the digging of graves, were referred to as the "Saints Pavement." They suggest that the Roman building which stood on the site was a substantial one - a 'villa' or 'mansio' [military or naval inn]

5. Window to the Senses in memory of Mac Bihari. The window depicts the five senses and of those things we often take for granted - the caring love, devotion and companionship

of our spouses. The window was the gift of Julian Bihari an E.N.T. surgeon in Swansea.

6. Dylan Thomas Window on the theme of Fern Hill in memory of Elsie Noel.

7. Capstone. near to the steps into the nave is what is thought to be an old Capstone from the mediaeval village cross (of unknown age).



8. Lady Chapel Screen Dating from 1927 & in memory of Capt. Strick of Lianfair House, Norton. He led the Church Lads' Brigade at Oystermouth.

To the side of the screen is a bell from the Jesuit Church in Santiago, Chile, destroyed by fire in 1863 with the loss of over 2,500 lives. Three other Santiago bells were gifted back to the Chilean people in 2010 and now form a new memorial on the site of the tragedy. The bell was gifted to All Saints' by parishioners of St John's Church, Hafod, Swansea, when their Church was reordered.



9. Lady Chapel The oldest part of the Church. The triple lancet east window was restored during the 1860 extension of the Church. The Stained glass was a gift to the Church in 1972 in memory of Archibald Johnson and his son, Campbell Stanley Johnson. It has the CHI

RHO symbol for Christ and the fleur-de-lys symbol for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The altar was carved by the famous Gower historian, Revd. J.D. Davies of Llanmadoc. It features the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet [Alpha & Omega] together with the Eucharistic symbol of the 'Vine'.

The cross and candlesticks were made out of mild steel by students from the Swansea College of Art to remember 'those in their day served God in the fellowship of the Church'. The ancient pillar piscina was found in the Churchyard in 1849 and restored [it is one of the oldest objects in the Church].

The Blessed Sacrament is reserved here.

10. High Altar Usually hidden by frontals, the Victorian oak altar is richly decorated with painted panels representing the Epiphany, the Annunciation and the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

The Reredos [triptych] is one of the most striking features of the Church. It celebrates the Epiphany and was a gift from the Ladies Working Party in 1951. It was made by the Faith Craft Workshops in St Albans and celebrates the 'Epiphany' -



the coming of the wise men with their gifts of mystic meaning. They are followed by a procession of people through the ages [including a Roman officer, St David, and a Welsh miner] who are also coming to worship the Christ. The door panels also feature Epiphany[revelation moment] from the New Testament - 1. The Presentation in the

Temple [top left], 2. The Baptism of Jesus [bottom left], 3. Jesus before Pilate who says 'Behold the man' [top right] and the risen Lord's appearance to Mary of Magdala [the first witness of the resurrection] [bottom right]. The doors of the

Reredos [triptych] were originally designed to be closed during Advent & Lent. However, they are so heavy that they had to be fixed to the east wall.

The magnificent East window depicts Christ the True Vine with all the saints and was dedicated in 1930 in memory of Col. David Lewis, Churchwarden. It features the 'Christus Rex' [Christ in Majesty] with the Blessed Virgin Mary & St John on either side [as in the figures of the rood screen]. The figures in the six side lights are the patrons of the six Welsh Dioceses - Sts Peter & Paul [Llandaff], St Asaph, St John the Baptist [Swansea & Brecon], St David, St Deiniol [Bangor] and St Woolos [Monmouth]



The 'Faith, hope & love' window above the sedilia is in memory of Isobel Crawshay [1863] member of the famous Merthyr Tydfil industrialist family.

Sedilia : On the south side of the sanctuary is the elaborately designed 'Sedilia' - three seats set into the wall - where the celebrant, deacon & subdeacon would traditionally sit.

11. Choir stalls These have richly carved fronts and standards [popp head finials] and can accommodate up to fifty choristers]

12. Organ The magnificent three-manual organ was originally built by Conacher & Co of Huddersfield. It was rebuilt by Daniels of Bristol in 1998 and enlarged in 2010 with digital pedal organ stops. It has over 2,500 pipes - the largest is 16 feet high and the smallest just 2 inches.

13. Rood Screen In memory of the 98 men of the parish who died in the Great War [1914-1918]. Unusually, the names are

carved in relief. The screen supports the rood [crucifix] with the attendant figures of the Blessed Virgin Mary [on the left] and St John the Beloved Disciple [on the right]. Below the rood figures are carved angels who hold a shield with the sacred monogram 'IHS' [Iesu Hominum Salvator - Jesus, Saviour of mankind]

On the west side of the screen are the regimental badges representing some of the regiments the fallen sons of Oystermouth served in. On the east side are the symbols of



our Lord's passion - the three nails, the lantern, the sword & torch, the scourges, seamless robe, crown of thorns, the cross, the sponge on a spear, the hammer and pincers, the ladder, and the three dice.

The screen is regarded as the finest in Wales and was designed by the famous Church architect, William Douglas Caroe [1857-1938], who also designed the rood figures at St David's Cathedral.

The screen was dedicated on 20th August 1920. However, as it was erected within two years of the end of the First World War it did not record all the names of those who died from Oystermouth or who died because of their wounds after the war. On Remembrance Sunday 2016 two plaques were fixed and dedicated on the east facing base of the screen to

remember fifteen other sons of Oystermouth who lost their lives in the Great War.

14. Pulpit On a base of Caen Stone dating from 1902 - placed on the north [Gospel side] of the screen. It is in memory of George Alfred Phipps [Churchwarden]

15. Brass Victorian Lectern Dating from 1887

16. 1903 Lifeboat Disaster Plaque below the window depicting the risen Lord's meal on the shores of the sea of Galilee with the disciples. It is in memory of Edith Mary Catherine Richards [dating from 1951]



The brass memorial commemorates the 1903 Mumbles Lifeboat disaster and those who lost their lives when the lifeboat capsized off the entrance to Port Talbot Harbour in February 1903. Their names are Thomas Rogers [Coxwain], Daniel Claypitt [2nd Coxswain]. George Michael, James Gammon, Robert Smith & David John Morgan.

17. 1883 Lifeboat Disaster Window The gift of Roger Beck. The window commemorates the loss of four crew members of the Mumbles Lifeboat, The Wolverhampton, on 27th January 1883 near the Lighthouse rocks while attempting to rescue the crew of the Prussian Barque, Prinz Adalbert. The lifeboatmen were John Jenkins, William Rogers, William Jenkins and William Macnamara.

The crew were assisted by the famous 'Women of Mumbles head' - Jessie Ace and Margaret Wright, who were the daughters of the lighthouse keeper, Abraham Ace. Their bravery was immortalised by Victorian writer Clement Scott and the sister's fame spread across the world.

18. Lord Glantawe Window dating from 1920. It celebrates 'Putting on the whole armour of God' [Ephesians 6]. Interestingly, the face of the Archangel Michael is the likeness of John Jones Jenkins [Lord Glantawe]. It features the sword of the spirit, the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation and the gospel of peace.

19. 1947 Lifeboat Disaster Window in memory of the crews of the Mumbles Lifeboat & the SS Samtampa who lost their lives off Sker Point, Porthcawl. 47 crew on the Samtampa and 8 lifeboatmen perished in a hurricane force storm. The window was designed by Timothy Lewis [Glantawe Studios] & was erected by public subscription in 1977.

The window features familiar scenes in Mumbles; fishermen's cottages, the castle, cliffs, fishing boats, fishermen's cottages, the lighthouse & the lifeboat house.



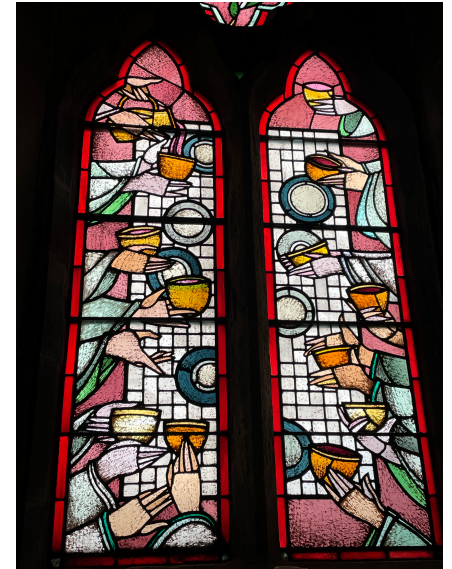
The upturned hull of the Mumbles Lifeboat [Edward Prince of Wales] is shown where it was found on the rocks off Sker point. The broken hull of the SS Samtampa is nearby.

It also shows the eight lifeboatmen who stand defiant amidst the tempest - William Gammon [Coxswain], William Noel [Second Coxswain], Gilbert Davies, Ernest Griffin, William R S

Thomas, William L Howell, William Ronald Thomas, Richard Smith, Crewman

In the tracery of the window above eight jewelled discs representing the souls of the lifeboatmen ascending into heaven.

20. Remembrance Corner Window & Memorial Book in memory of the 69 men and 2 women from the parish who died in World War 2. The window was designed by Timothy Lewis and celebrates the Last Supper. The hands of the disciples are stretched out in prayer. Purple and deep pink colours were chosen to represent 'remembrance'.



A Book of Remembrance names those whose cremated remains are interred in the Churchyard.

21. St. Christopher Window

commemorating the Mumbles' Railway - the first passenger railway in the world. [erected 1982] The design shows St Christopher [the patron Saint of travellers] against the background of Swansea Bay [with Swansea Castle on the left and Mumbles Head on the right]. The three forms of transport [horse drawn, steam and electric] are shown in three discs.



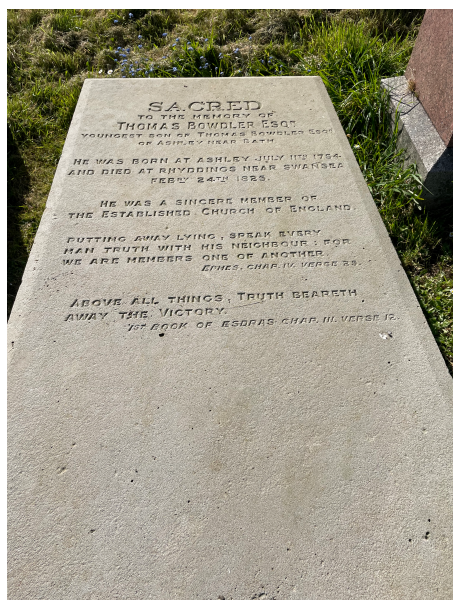
Churchyard : The Church grounds have been a place of burial since the early years of the Church in Oystermouth [from the 6th century on]. It was closed

A guide to All Saints'



for burials in the 1870s - when Oystermouth cemetery was opened.

The most famous person interred in the Churchyard is Dr. Thomas Bowdler [1754-1825]. He trained in medicine but



devoted himself to prison reform. He made his name in publishing censored editions of Shakespeare. In 1818 he published a ten volume set of books in called 'The Family Shakespeare'. He eliminated those words which cannot with propriety be read aloud to the family.' He applied the same criteria to his re-writing of Gibbon's 'History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.' Thomas Bowdler on the north side of the Churchyard in a horizontal block

tomb with pink granite monoliths on either side. Bowdler's well-intentioned ideas were widely ridiculed and gave rise to the word, 'Bowdlerism'.

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