

VALE OF GLAMORGAN
AMBASSADOR



LLYSGENNAD
BRO MORGANNWG

Vale of Glamorgan Heart & Soul

'The Vale of Glamorgan & Glamorganshire'

Not surprisingly, historical records about the Vale of Glamorgan, often refer to just 'Glamorgan' or Glamorganshire' and each will be mentioned in this account.

Glamorgan or, sometimes, *Glamorganshire* was one of the thirteen historic counties of Wales. It was originally an early medieval petty kingdom of varying boundaries known as Glywysing until taken over by the Normans as a lordship. In later years, Glamorganshire was represented by the three counties of Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan and West Glamorgan. The name now survives in Vale of Glamorgan, the most southerly county in Wales, neighbouring those of Cardiff, Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taff.

Introduction

The Vale of Glamorgan's spiritual history is as layered as the liassic limestone of its coast. Neolithic farmers who first established settled communities here marked the landscape with their sacred and ritual places: standing stones, causewayed enclosures and burial chambers. Later, during the Bronze Age, the tradition of honouring wells and springs was part of the spiritual zeitgeist of the day, each source assigned its own guardian spirit, its own mystical properties of healing and divination.

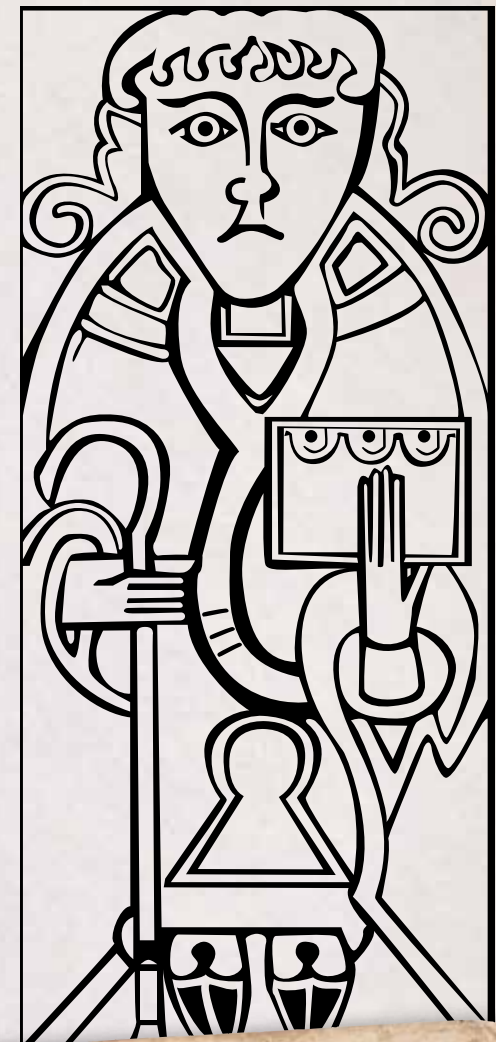
Many of these traditions trickled through the Age of Saints which saw a greater flourishing in the Vale of Glamorgan than perhaps anywhere else in Wales. They flowed down through the Middle Ages and through the Tudor period, that did much to silence our monasteries songs and chants, through the arrival of the Normans, who marked this land as their own, claiming old Celtic churches, building grand new stone churches and monasteries of their own.

Those water borne traditions were still whispering when Iolo Morgannwg sat down to listen and collected some of them to glorify Glamorgan. No doubt he drank inspiration from those waters when he compiled his version of the ancient Druid faith and shaped the first Gorsedd rituals.

They are still singing gently in deep almost forgotten pools at field edges, in the shadow of churches and villages across the Vale.

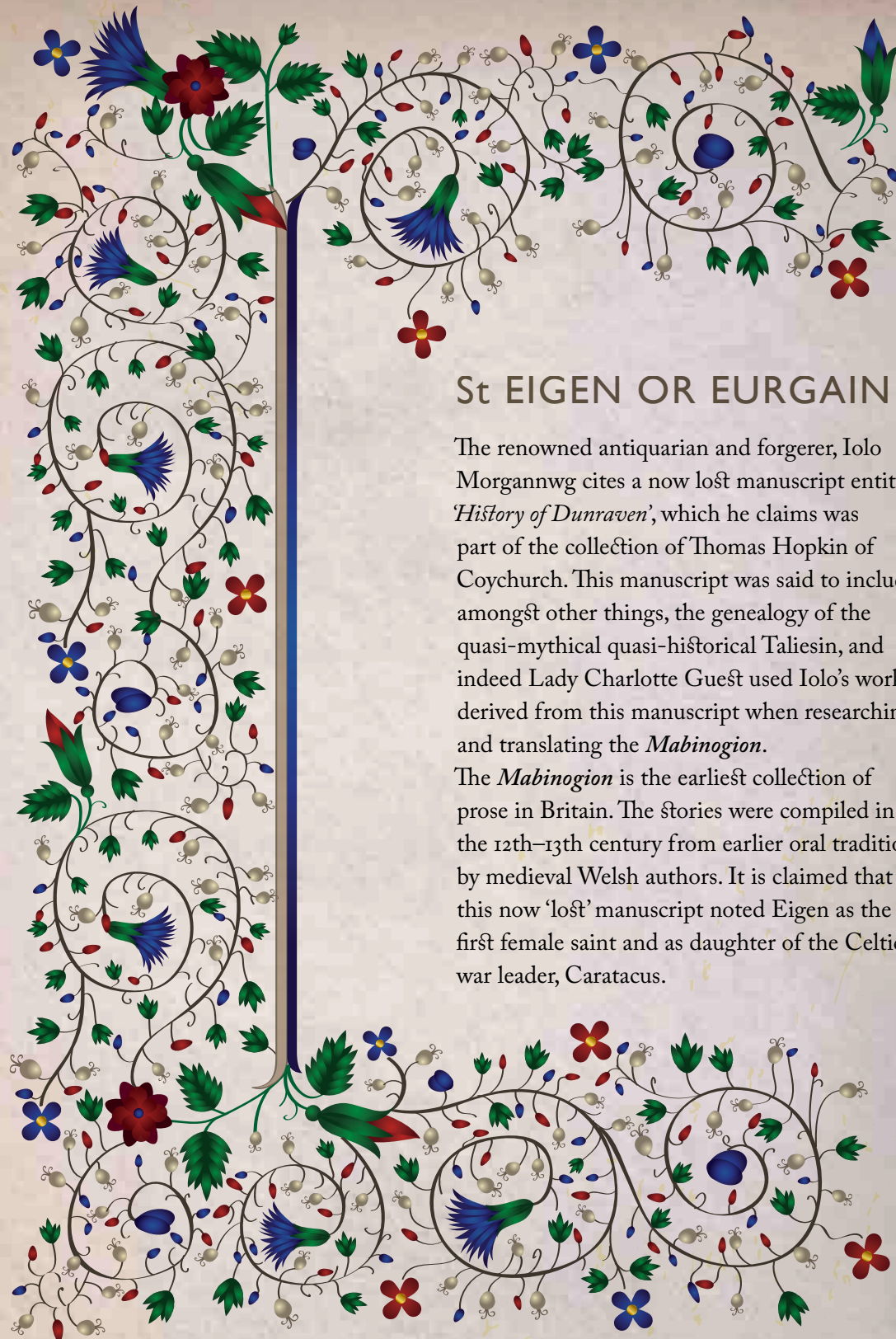
Saints And Scholars

The Vale of Glamorgan, with its three major early monasteries, St Illtud's in Llantwit Major, Llancarfan and Llandough, is teeming with the histories and stories of Saints. It is also renowned for its colourful scholars. Here are a few you'll likely come across during your visit.



HEART AND SOUL Words

ENGLISH	WELSH	PHONETICALLY
College	Coleg	Co-leg
Stone	Carreg	Car-egg
Book	Llyfr	Klyv-urr
Prayer	Gweddy	Gweb-thee
Abbey	Abaty	Ah-batty
Church	Eglwys	Egg-luis



St EIGEN OR EURGAIN

The renowned antiquarian and forgerer, Iolo Morgannwg cites a now lost manuscript entitled *'History of Dunraven'*, which he claims was part of the collection of Thomas Hopkin of Coychurch. This manuscript was said to include, amongst other things, the genealogy of the quasi-mythical quasi-historical Taliesin, and indeed Lady Charlotte Guest used Iolo's work derived from this manuscript when researching and translating the *Mabinogion*.

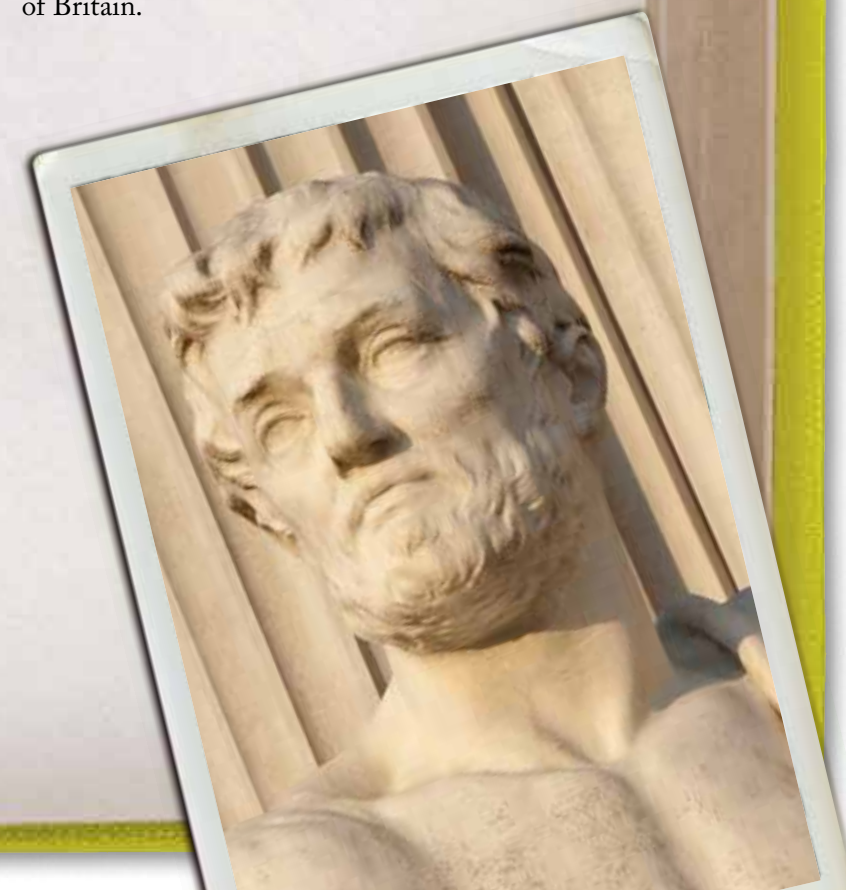
The *Mabinogion* is the earliest collection of prose in Britain. The stories were compiled in the 12th–13th century from earlier oral traditions by medieval Welsh authors. It is claimed that this now 'lost' manuscript noted Eigen as the first female saint and as daughter of the Celtic war leader, Caratacus.

A similar reference is found in the family records of Iestyn ab Gwrgan, the last Welsh ruler of Morgannwg. In this it is said that Eigen *"lived in the close of the first century, and was married to Sarllog, who was a lord of Caer Sarllog"* or the present Old Sarum. The manuscript claims that Eigen returned from Rome along with saint Cyllin and Saint Ildid (here referring to Joseph of Arimathea) and formed a religious college of twelve, named Cor Eurgain. Furthermore this manuscript states *"the Cymry embraced the faith in Christ through the teaching of the saints of Cor-Eurgain."*

The Roman chronicler Tacitus does mention that Caratacus' daughter was with him when he was famously brought before the Emperor Claudius c 53 AD, locating her in Rome during this period, though she is not named. Neither is Eigen named in Tacitus' record of the pardon by the Emperor, though it does formally mention that her mother, father and uncles.

Much later, Edward Elgar featured Eigen in his cantata inspired by the defeat and capture of Caratacus by the Romans. It was first performed at the Leeds choral festival in 1898.

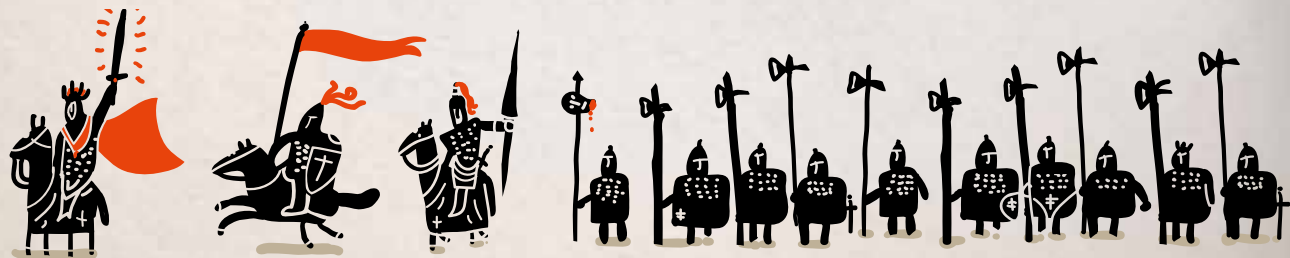
As with so many of these early characters, the veil between myth and history is thin, and the fog of time is dense, making it very difficult to ascertain what might have been historic fact. Nevertheless, if we believe that there can be no smoke without fire then perhaps there is a kernel of truth surrounding Eigen who might well have been the daughter of Caratacus, that links her to playing a significant role in establishing a small early Christian community here in Glamorgan. Whether she was responsible for founding an early Christian centre of learning at Llantwit is debatable, certainly the dates do not make sense, however, that her memory was honoured in its naming may well attest to the important role she played in the very early Christianisation of this corner of Britain.



ST CADOG

Saint Cadog was born about 497. He was reputedly a son of Gwynllyw, King of Gwynllwg in South Wales, who was a brother of Saint Petroc. His mother, Gwladys was the daughter of King Brychan of Brycheiniog. She was allegedly abducted in a raid, during which - according to *Vita Cadoci* (the Life of Cadog) written c. 1085 - King Arthur involvement was called upon to act as mediator to negotiate her return. Cadog's father - who though a king, had a less than favorable reputation - later stole a cow from the Irish monk, St. Tathyw (or Tathai). When the monk came courageously to demand its return, the King decided as compensation to surrender his son to his care. As the date of the compiling of the *Vita Cadoci* is so late (11th century), it is unlikely that it provides a reliable source of historic information, but rather a romanticisation of this Saint's story.

He proselytized over a large area of Wales to Ystrad Clud in Scotland and south into Brittany, the numerous churches bearing his name evidence his fame and influence. He built a church and monastery at Llancarfan. According to legend, during its construction, two stags came forward and Cadog was able to yoke them to a cart to help with the building works. Cadog is therefore, often pictured with a stag, and the current church at Llancarfan boasts a weathervane in the shape of one.



What is certain is that Llancarfan grew into one of the most important monasteries in Wales where many holy men and possibly women were trained. Cadog visited several of the famous religious houses and colleges in Ireland, and undertook a pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem. He died at Benevenna (Weedon) in Northamptonshire, leaving Ellenius his successor as abbot.

One manuscript refers to '*The College of Cattwg (Cadog) in Llancarvan with three cells (halls or subject houses) and a thousand saints (monks), together with two cells in the Vale of Neat (Neath)*'. Llancarfan did not survive the incursion of Norman power into South Wales, being dissolved about 1086. The hillfort on the outskirts of Llancarfan, known as Castle Ditches was reputedly used by Cadog to keep 100 men at arms, on hand to defend the Abbey should the need arise.

St Cadog remains one of Wales' most important Saints. He is patron of famine victims, deafness and glandular disorders. According to church calendars, his fest day is celebrated on September 25th

Cadoc's Bell and Book

Gildas and Saint Cadog were contemporaries and Gildas would, according to the legend, visit Llancarfan monastery every now and then. He stayed there once whilst on his way to Rome and on that particular occasion, he had a large bell to give the Pope as a gift. Cadog took a great liking to the bell as its sound was so lovely, but Gildas was determined to take it to Rome. There, having presented it to the Pope, no sound came from it. Gildas told the Pope some of the bell's story, mentioning how Cadoc was infatuated by its special sound. When the Pope heard this he told Gildas to take the bell back to Wales and give it to Cadog. That is what was

done and the bell was placed in the monastery tower at Llancarfan, and crowds of people came to hear its song. There it remained for many years until a young boy became captivated by its sound, and undertook to steal it. He climbed to the top of the tower and when he was about to untie the rope which held the bell, it came loose in his hand. He and the bell fell to the ground from the top of the tower. The young boy was killed and the bell sunk deep into the ground, so deep that it disappeared entirely, and there it remains to this day. If you put your ear by the ground near Llancarfan church, you may hear the bell ring from the bowels of the earth.



ST ILLTUD

The 7th century 'Life of Saint Samson' claims that Illtud was a disciple of Germanus of Auxerre, that he was the most learned Briton in the study of scripture and philosophy. It also states that he was the abbot of a monastery in Glamorgan, believed to be the site of St Illtud's at Llantwit Major. He appears to have been married at some stage and may well have had a military background

The earliest *Life of Illtud*, is full of implausible but rather wonderful legends. It was written about 1140 and claims that Illtud sailed to Brittany with some corn ships to relieve the famine. Some Breton churches and villages certainly bear his name. In the *Vitae* or 'Life of', Illtud, he is the son of a minor Breton prince named Bican Farchog, who begins his career as a skilled warrior, serving his maternal cousin, King Arthur, and others until his wild ways brought him into conflict with Saint Cadoc at Llancarfan monastery. Illtud's warband raided the monastery, but the monks pursued them into a bog where the earth swallowed all of them except Illtud. Cadoc reminded Illtud of his religion, and the humbled warrior took up the monastic life.



In an age when schooling was available only to a very few privileged people, perhaps Illtud's monastic school at Llantwit Major was the closest approximation in existence to an institution of higher education.

In the current Roman Catholic liturgical calendar for Wales, St Illtud is commemorated on November 6.

Llantwit Major's church also houses within the Galilee Chapel an ancient stone cross, probably of the ninth century which bears the inscription

'SAMSON POSUIT HANC CRUCEM PRO ANIMA EIUS ILITET SAMSON REGIS SAMUEL ERISAR - "Samson placed his Cross here for his soul, for the soul of Illtud, Samson, Rhain, Sawyl and Ebisar".

While there is no formal evidence for a cult of Illtud surviving from before the 11th century, his monastery, reputed to contain hundreds of monks, was one of the most influential in South Wales, and many churches in Wales are dedicated to him.

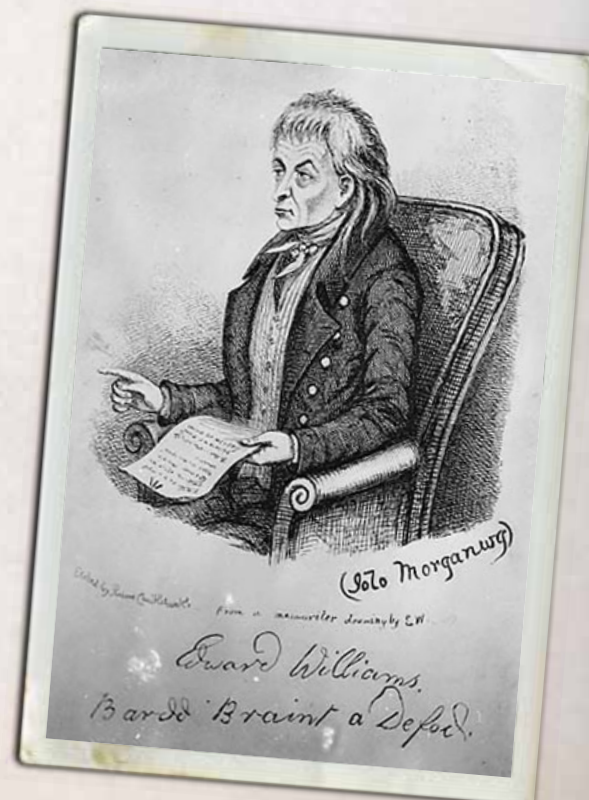
IOLO MORGANNWG

Edward Williams, better known by his bardic name Iolo Morganwg (10 March 1747 – 18 December 1826) was an influential Welsh antiquarian, poet, collector, and literary forger. He had a lasting impact on Welsh culture, seen most notably in his foundation of the *Gorsedd* tradition, which continues to be a central part of Wales' Eisteddfod today. The philosophy he developed and the rituals he practiced have had a huge impact on the neo-druid movement of the past thirty years and as such there has been a renaissance of interest in his writings and ideas. The name, Iolo Morgannwg by which we know him today, is in fact his bardic name. It is Welsh for 'Iolo of Glamorgan'.

Iolo was born at Pen-onn, near Llancarfan in Glamorgan, and raised in the village of Flemingston. He followed his father into a career as a stonemason.

From an early date - in-keeping with the antiquarian movement of his day - Iolo was concerned with preserving, and maintaining, the literary and cultural traditions of Wales. To this end he produced a large number of manuscripts as evidence for his claims that Britain's ancient druid tradition had survived the Roman conquest, the conversion of the populace to Christianity, the persecution of the bards under King Edward I, and other adversities. In his forgeries he developed an elaborate mystical philosophy, which he claimed represented a direct continuation of ancient druidic practice.

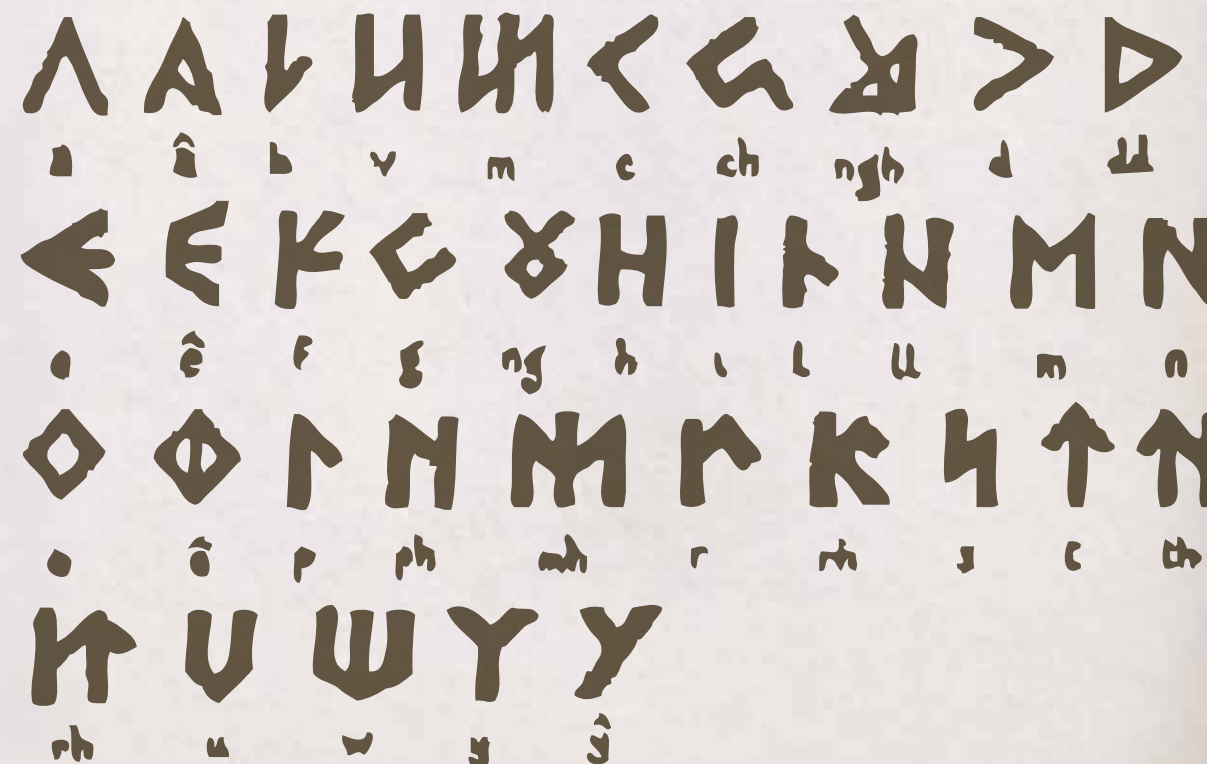
In 1791 he founded the *Gorsedd*, a community of Welsh bards, at a ceremony on 21 June 1792 at Primrose Hill, London. He organised the proceedings, which he claimed were based on ancient druidic rites, using pebbles to represent the stone circle now associated with the *Gorsedd*. Three years later he held the first Gorsedd meeting in Wales on Stalling Down near Cowbridge, and 24 years later succeeded in merging the *Gorsedd* with the Eisteddfod. Today it forms an integral part of the Eisteddfod's ceremonial, with its colourful ceremonies conducted by Welsh poets, writers, musicians and cultural leaders in flowing druidic robes, and the use of a ceremonial sword to invest the chaired or crowned poet as 'peace' is called for three times. Arguably, it is among Iolo's greatest and most lasting legacies.



Iolo also developed his own runic system, in Welsh Coelbren y Beirdd ('the Bardic Alphabet'). It was said to be the alphabetic system of the ancient druids. It consisted of 20 main letters, and 20 others 'to represent elongated vowels and mutations.' These symbols were to be represented in a wooden frame, known as *peithynen*. A commemorative plaque outside his old shop in Cowbridge (now Costa Coffee), possibly the first fair trade shop in the world, includes a line in Iolo's bardic alphabet. Deciphered, it reads 'Truth against the world'.

There is a walking route and guide to help visitors walk in the footsteps of this colourful local character. Iolo's circular walk is 6.5 miles / 10.5km long starting and ending at Cowbridge. A wider trail includes an additional seven sites relating to his life in the Vale of Glamorgan. They are available for download here:

<http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/walking>



Spirit Spaces and Holy Places

The Vale of Glamorgan is teeming with places that have some potentially ancient spiritual significance and many wonderful historic churches of note. Here are just a few we suggest you add to your itinerary.

TINKINSWOOD BURIAL CHAMBER

Tinkinswood burial chamber, also locally known as Castell Carreg (the Stone Castle) was constructed during the Neolithic period around 3000 BC. It is a dolmen type structure that is typical of those built to the east of Glamorgan towards Gloucestershire, hence it is considered to be of the Severn-Cotswold tomb type.

Its huge limestone capstone weighs approximately 40 tons and measures 7.3m x 4.3m, making it among the largest in Britain. Archaeologists believe that the task of moving the capstone into position would have required some 200 people – a vast undertaking at the time. The ‘mudstone’ used to form the chamber probably came from a place nearby known as ‘The Quarry’.

Beneath the capstone is a chamber where 920 human bones from over fifty people of mixed ages and sexes were buried there during the Neolithic period. Almost all the bones found were broken, possibly because corpses at this time were left exposed, the bones being picked clean by the elements and wildlife. Originally both the chamber and capstone would have been completely hidden beneath a large earth mound.

From Tinkinswood burial chamber, two parallel lines of stones form an avenue leading to the

south-east. A second avenue leads away to the north east, and again, many stones lie along this pathway. A large single stone stands due east and two parallel, flat standing stones point to the top of nearby Coed Sion Hywel.

The effort invested by the communities who constructed these great tombs, the interaction between the living and the remains of their ancestors within the tomb and the length of time – many generations – for which these places remained sacred, all point to ‘the ancestors’ of the tribe playing a very important and quite central role in these Neolithic people’s belief systems and culture.

Local folklore surrounding Tinkinswood chamber tells that anyone who spends a night there on May Day eve or the eve of St John’s Day (23 June) or Midwinter Eve, will either become mad, a poet or die.

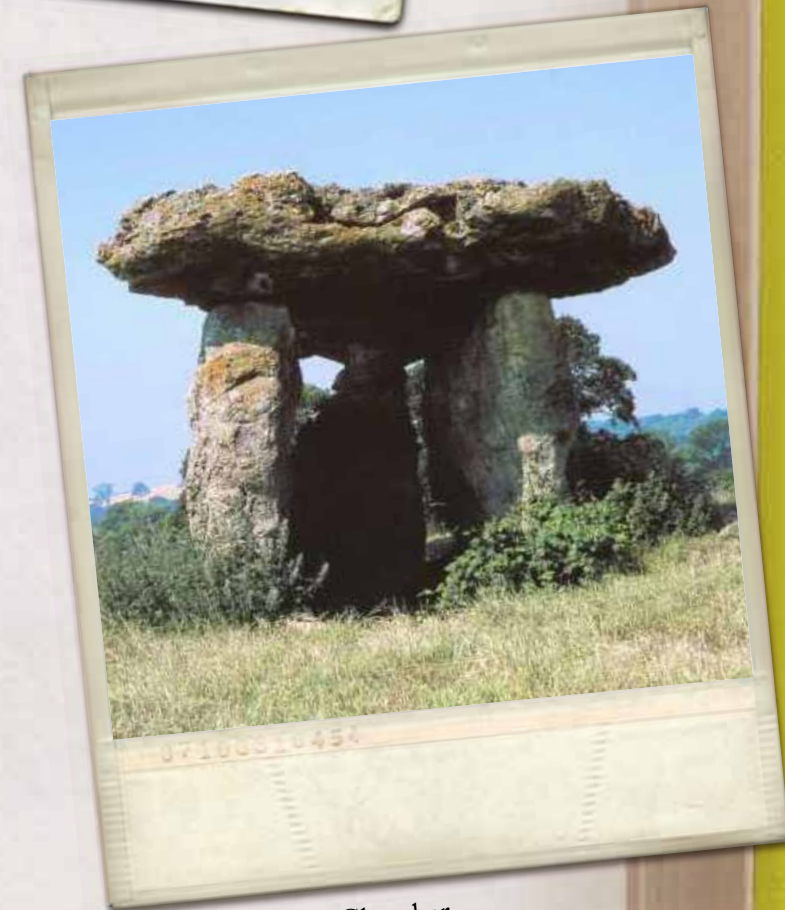


Tinkinswood Burial Chamber

Another local folk tale tells that the group of boulders to the south east of the burial chamber are women turned to stone for dancing on the Sabbath.

Today, the site can be seen in its reconstructed form, following the 1914 excavations. A pillar now supports the capstone above the chamber and the external walls around the entrance have been re-clad in interpretative herringbone pattern.

About a mile to the east is another burial chamber known as St Lythian’s. This was probably built a few centuries later, possibly by the descendants of those who constructed Tinkinswood. It’s well worth a visit.



St Lythian's Burial Chamber

ST CADOG'S CHURCH, LLANCARFAN

The early Christian missionary, Cadog established an important monastic centre of faith and learning at Llanccarfarn about 518AD. It was to become an important focal point for the early Celtic church, where among others, Cainneach of Aghaboe one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland, were educated.

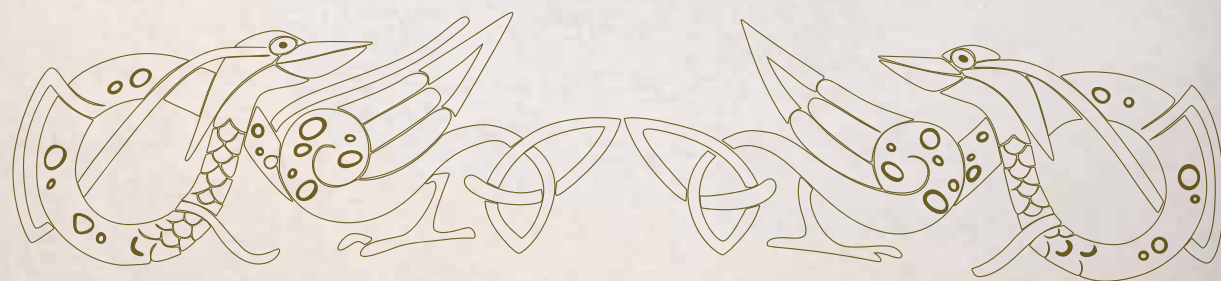
According to legend, Cadog was wandering through the kingdom of Penychen when he inadvertently disturbed some pigs and was reported to his uncle King Pawl. For his trouble, the swineherd might have expected some compensation, but instead, found the land given over to Cadog for the founding of a monastery.

It was to become one of the most celebrated of all Welsh monasteries, and was considered as important as nearby Llanilltud Fawr as a centre of learning. Among its Abbots was the writer St Gildas. It's influence spread throughout south Wales.

Though Cadog died in Northamptonshire, his body was returned to the Monastery for burial, where it became the focal point for pilgrims from far and wide.

By the 9th century, Llanccarfarn had become a renowned centre of learning. The monastery came under attack from Vikings in the last decade of the 10th Century and the buildings were destroyed. Traces of the monastic buildings of this period might lie in Culvery Fields just south of today's church in the village. Nevertheless, the monastic community continued its work and Llanccarfarn proved 'the most powerful ecclesiastical community in Glamorgan'. The monastery however, did not survive the Norman invasion, and following early dissolution, Llanccarfarn was taken under the guardianship of the Abbey of St Peter's in Gloucester.

The church's simple chancel arch suggests a foundation of about 1200, although remains of a 9th century pillar cross currently sit in one of the church's window surrounds, a powerful symbol perhaps connecting the prestige and heritage of St Cadog's monastery with the new church.



In 2008, architects restoring the church discovered Medieval wall paintings under layers of whitewash. These include one of only three depictions of St George to be found in churches in Wales, and possibly the oldest surviving Welsh depiction of St George slaying the dragon and the seven deadly sins. Also depicted is an unique mini 'Dance of Death', known as 'Death & the Gallant'. Work to excavate further murals from beneath the whitewash and conserve them continues.

In 2013, a four-year restoration project on an intricate and beautifully coloured rood screen within the church was completed. Conservators believe it was probably moved to Llanccarfarn church from another site being carved from oak dated to about 1510.

Today, St Cadog's church in Llanccarfarn continues its 800 year-old tradition of serving the local community, and also welcomes visitors to this historic and wondrous church.

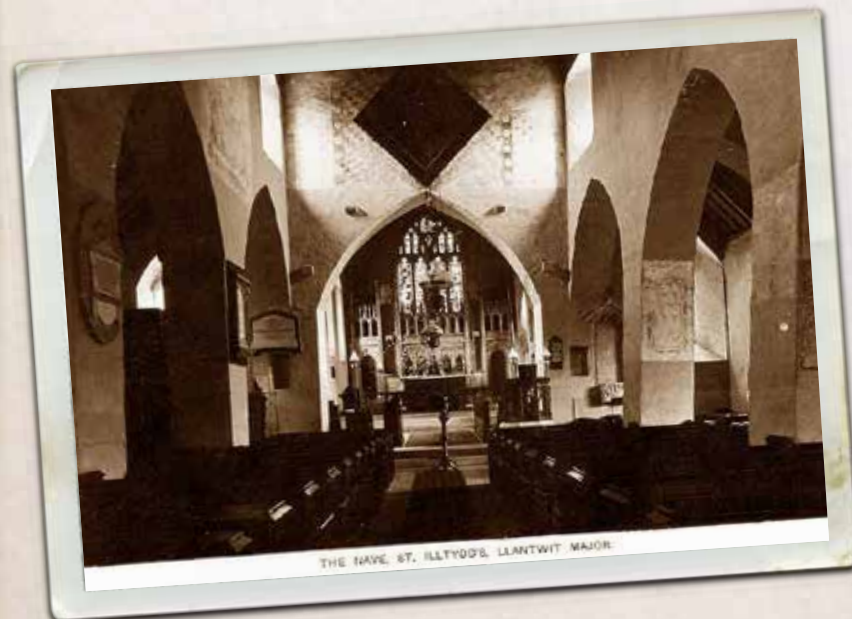


ST ILLTUD'S CHURCH

The church complex of St Illtud's in Llantwit Major has a history stretching back as far as the fall of the Roman Empire in Britain, when Cor Eurgain or Cor Tewdws, an early religious college establishment was reputedly established here, that would make it the oldest college in the United Kingdom and possibly northern Europe.

Some years after the early college was destroyed in an attack by raiders, St Illtud founded a new centre here. According to The Book of Llandaff, Illtud's monastery was founded on the site in 508 AD, after Illtud commissioned by St Dubricius the Bishop of the time, to do so. The place became known as Llan Illtud Fawr, meaning Illtud's Great Church. This early complex of buildings would have been primarily of wood, wattle and daub, nevertheless, simple though it may have been in construction, a number of Celtic saints are said to have studied there, including St David, St Patrick, St Samson, St Paul Aurelian, (although the evidence is sketchy) as well as Gildas the

historian who later became Abbot of St Cadoc's Monastery in Llancafan. While the dates make it quite certain that not all of these could possibly have studied here (some being aged or deceased by the time the abbey was founded), it attests to the importance and prestige given this site by contemporary writers and those since. At one time, the college reputedly had seven halls and over 2000 students (though we must treat these claims cautiously as their source is the 'Iolo MSS manuscript' created by the famous and somewhat infamous local character, Iolo Morgannwg who is proven to have fabricated and forged a number of manuscripts and documents.)



While St Illtud's early religious centre survived attacks by the Danes in 987, it was destroyed during the Norman conquest led in this area by Robert Fitzhamon in c. 1093. St Illtud's endowments were transferred to Tewkesbury Abbey, and for a while, the remaining church even lost its right of sanctuary, only to be restored by the Bishop of Llandaff in 1150.

The current church building was constructed by the Normans during the 11th century, supposedly upon the ruins of the old college, but it was greatly diminished in size and importance. Further portions were constructed in the 13th and 15th Centuries to house the swelling monastic community, but the dissolution of the monasteries disbanded the monastic community and the East chapel was adopted as the parish church.



At the western end of today's church stands the Galilee Chapel. Originally this was built during the 15th century, and is described in Henry VIII's survey of monastic possessions as the 'Lady Chapel'. Over the past few years, the Galilee Chapel Project has successfully fundraised and received funding from CRC (Creative Rural Communities, Vale of Glamorgan Council), Heritage Lottery Fund and others, to restore this building as a visitor's centre to interpret the early origins of Celtic Christianity. It also houses one of the most important collections of Celtic Christian stones in Britain. Some of these are early inscribed stones dating from the 9th and 10th centuries, and others are beautiful Celtic crosses such as the Houelt Cross, which is a superb example of a Celtic wheel cross carved as a memorial to Hywel ap Rhys, ruler of Glamorgan in the 9th Century; the Samon Cross which is inscribed in Latin, and possibly commemorates St Samson who succeeded Illtud as abbot at Llantwit and the tall Samson Pillar which commemorates Samson the Abbot, Artmail (another abbot) and Ithel, a 9th century king of Gwent.

For further information about visiting the Galilee Chapel Visitor centre and St Illtud's Church, see www.illtudsgalileechapel.org.uk

EWENNY PRIORY

Ewenny's Priory site dates back to the early 12th century when William de Londres built a church here. The priory was founded a little later in 1141 by his son Maurice de Londres, as monastery of the Benedictine order, linked to St Peter's Abbey in Gloucester. At this time, the Priory would have been home to an Abbot, and between 10 and 15 monks.

At the time when Ewenny was constructed, Glamorgan was a violent place with regular skirmishes between the Welsh and the incoming Normans, and disputes between rival marcher lords. Ewenny Priory's military-style defenses were probably a necessary precaution at the time of its founding, nevertheless they are unusual. Ewenny Priory is now regarded as one of the finest fortified religious buildings in Britain.

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Priory, like many of its kind was dissolved leased to Sir Edward Carne in 1545. He soon purchased the priory along with its lands and converted the Priory building into a private house. However, the Priory's church remained in use as the parish church for the growing village of Ewenny – as it is to this day.



Ewenny Priory, painted by Turner



Gatehouse

During the early 18th Century the Carne family's male line seems to have ended. Richard Carne (c.1669-1713) was succeeded by his two sisters. One of these, Frances was the wife of Edward Turville of Sutton. This was the beginning of a long association with the Turberville family, which continued until very recently.

The Priory church, famously the subject of a painting by Turner c. 1797, is still in use and has recently undergone some restoration by Cadw. It is regarded as the best-preserved example of a Norman priory church in South Wales.

LLANGAN CELTIC CROSS

This glorious carved Celtic cross from the fifteenth century is located near the west wall of St Canna's Church in Llangan. It is a disk-headed slab, 1.3 m high depicting the crucifixion. Another cruder Celtic cross belonging to the ninth or tenth century can be found here too.

Nearby is a well dedicated to the female saint and mother of saints, Canna. It was a popular place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages.



Celtic Cross, Llangan

HOLY WELLS

The reverence of springs and wells dates back to pre-Celtic times here in Britain. In some places, stone heads dating from the Bronze Age have been found at water sources. These are often interpreted as being the guardian or the deity of the water source. Down the ages, wells and water sources have been the focus of divinatory and healing practices and have often been spiritually revered or attached to stories of Saintly miracles. Here is a handful of Holy Wells in the Vale and some of their associated traditions.

THE SILVER WELL, COWBRIDGE

A tradition of testing the fidelity of young lovers is associated with this well. Points of the blackthorn were gathered by breaking rather than cutting them from the bush. They were then thrown in the well. If the point floated, the lover was faithful. If it whirled around, it was an indication that he or she was of a cheerful disposition. However, should it sink, the lover was likely to be unfaithful. If a number of points sank, it was an indication that their partner was a great flirt!

To find this well walk through Arthur John's car park in Cowbridge. Go through the pedestrian gate and into a small park with a lake at the centre. The well is to your left as you walk through the gate.

MARCROS HOLY AND HEALING WELLS

Another well, north of Marcros is renowned as a wishing well. Deposits of pins cast into it to make good the wish have been found here. The folklorist John Rhys visited Marcos Well in 1893 and wrote: *"Marcos Well had its deposits of pins for wishing purposes, and offerings in the form of old rags were fastened to the trees in the close vicinity."*

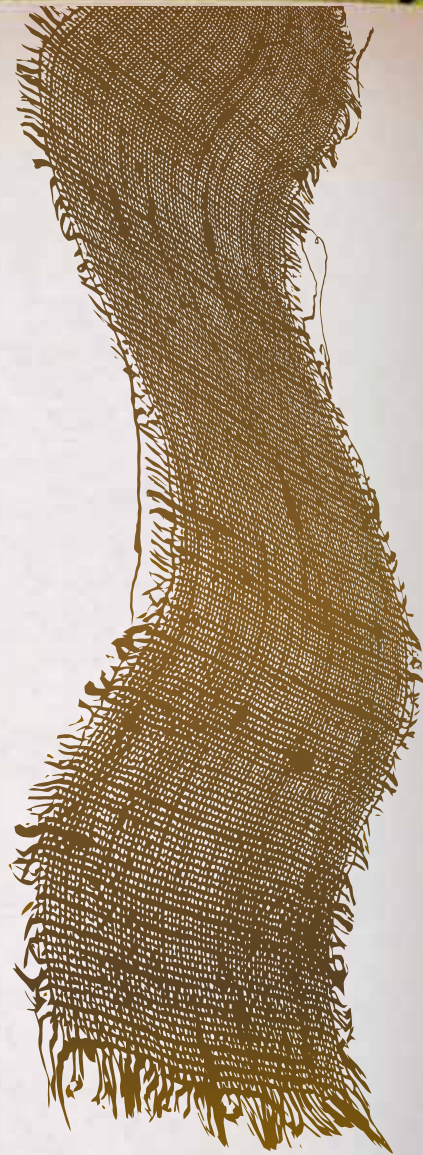
In 'The History of Glamorgan', written by Mr DW Jones in 1847, or 'Dafydd Morganwg' to use his literary name, further traditions relating to Marcos well are related, *"It is the custom for those who are healed in it to tie a shred of linen or cotton to the branches of a tree that stands close by; and there these shreds are, almost as numerous as the leaves."*

These wells are clearly marked on OS maps. Another well near Nash Point was renowned for healing wounds and eye infections.

FFYNNON Y FFLAMEIDDAN - LLANCARFAN

Glamorgan had a strong tradition of rag wells. The last recorded evidence for the use of a rag well comes from Glamorgan. It was visited by Mrs Aileen Fox, wife of archaeologist Sir Cyril Fox in 1935. She wrote "A small spring rising from the woods on the south side of Cwm Y Breach, S.E. of Llanccarfan village, is marked by the O.S. as Ff-y-Flameiddan - the inflammation spring....When visiting the large contour hill for Castle ditches, on the opposite bank of the Cwm, it was pointed out to me as place of local interest by a local farmer, Mr Williams of Ford Farm. His wife had been cured of erysipelas [an acute skin infection usually caused by streptococcus bacteria] by its water. The spring, known locally as Breach Well, rises about 30ft above the level of the small tributary of the river Thaw, which runs down Cwm-y-Breach. (The underlying soil is lower lias). During the dry summers of 1933-35 it was unaffected by the drought. When I visited the well in August 1935, three old rag-pieces of dish cloth and calico and a piece of brown wool were tied to the overhanging branches, by the source. The treatment as described by Mrs Williams consisted in using the water for drinking to the exclusion of all other fluids, in applying the affected part and in tying a rag preferably from the under clothing by the well. Erysipelas, I was told, was not uncommon in the parish. The well was resorted to especially when medical treatment failed. The rags at the well, however, were becoming less numerous."

Unfortunately the well is on private land and not accessible.



FFYNNON Y CLWYF

This well, also in the lee of the hillfort near Llanccarfan was also renowned as a healing well. It was reputed to be particularly good for healing 'the king's evil', or scrofula, an infection of the lymph nodes that is often associated with tuberculosis. It appears that a paste was made of the clay earth of the well and spread over the areas suffering various ailments. Rags were wetted with the well water and touched to the affected parts and then tied on a nearby tree or bush. It was said that the cows would not drink the water from these wells and that the water cannot be used to prepare foods or wash the kitchen dishes nor the dairy's.

A public footpath, marked on OS maps will lead you to this well, though it is not easily found.





HIGH DAYS AND HOLY DAYS

A notebook filled with stories and accounts of life in Glamorgan was published posthumously in 1839 under the title *'The Vale of Glamorgan, Scenes and Tales among the Welsh.'* It describes life and times in Glamorganshire during the early 19th Century.

EASTER EVE

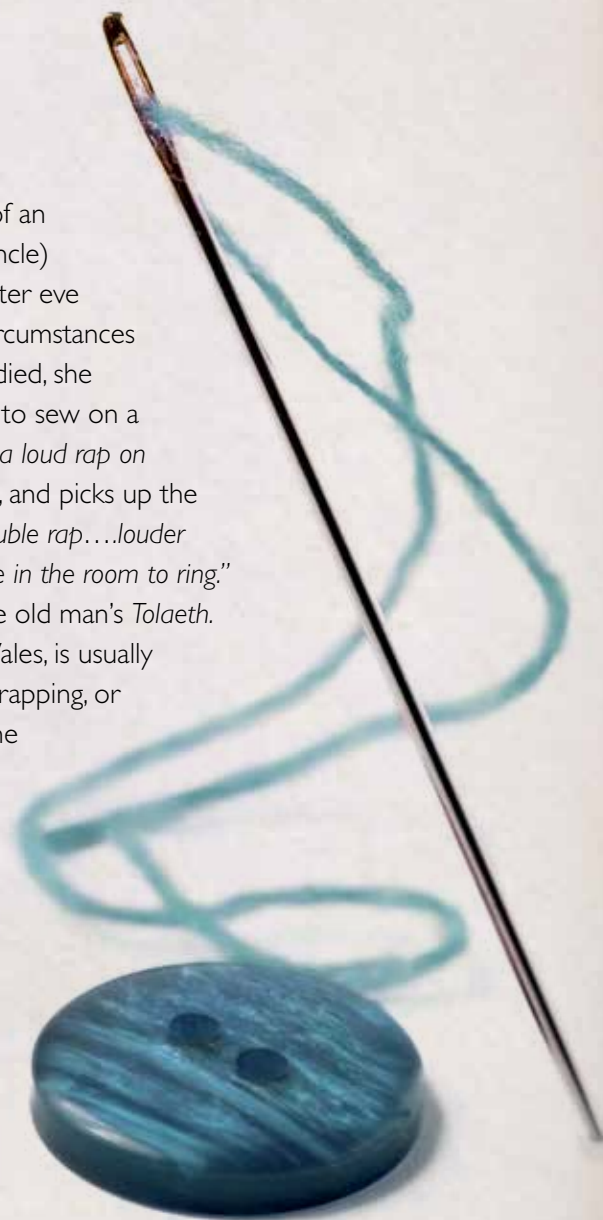
A chapter in the notebook entitled Easter Eve opens with the author recalling the scene in a local churchyard. He describes the tradition of dressing graves and ensuring that churchyards are full of flowers in the lead up to Easter; *"All the village were there, engaged, after the old custom, in trimming and adorning the graves of their deceased relatives. Some were raising the sides with fresh turf, and putting fresh earth upon the surface; and others whitewashed the stones at the ends; while the women planted rosemary and rue, and the girls brought baskets of spring flowers, crocuses, daffodils and primroses, which were planted in somewhat fantastic figures upon all the graves."*

In Welsh, Palm Sunday is known as *Sul y Blodau* – the Sunday of flowers. On this day it is still customary to decorate family graves with flowers in preparation for Easter. After the darkness of winter and the solemnity of Lent, graveyards are decorated with flowers, and traditionally new clothes are worn to Church or Chapel. Family graves are rigorously cleaned, washed, weeded and beautified in readiness for Palm Sunday, and it is considered a disgrace for family graves to be untidy and unadorned on this day.



This chapter also relates the story of the death of an old yeoman. Gwenllian, described as "Ewythr (Uncle) Jenkins's daughter" was dressing his grave on Easter eve and she tells the author about the mysterious circumstances surrounding her Uncle's death. On the night he died, she had taken the sick old man's breeches from him to sew on a button; *"as she was going to sit down, there came a loud rap on the table, that startled her quite."* She settles again, and picks up the breeches to begin sewing when she hears *"a double rap...louder by far than the first, and that made all the furniture in the room to ring."* Gwenllian and her maid deduce that this was the old man's *Tolaeth*. This supernatural death portend, particular to Wales, is usually described in records and folklore manifesting as rapping, or knocks, or heavy thuds either just before or at the point of someone's death.

There are a number of other accounts of the *Tolaeth* in Glamorganshire, suggesting that it was a widespread belief and part of a rich tapestry of superstitions surrounding death and the foretelling of it in this area.



THE MABSANT

Another entry in the notebook recounts a celebration of *The Mabsant*. Every *llan* or parish in Wales once celebrated its own Mabsant or Saint day. While it was based on church tradition, its celebrations latterly took on a colorful and very secular nature. The author of the notebook describes local Glamorganshire occasions: *"The Mabsant is the celebration of the holiday of the tutelary Saint of the village, after whom the church and the place are generally called, and is an occasion of great gaiety in the villages of our neighborhood. Profuse is the finery then displayed by the country maidens, and many the arts they practice to captivate the attentions of the rustics. The chief amusement is dancing; but it is, beside, a time of great carousing, - of ball-playing, and sometimes fights and uproar."*

He goes on to relate in some detail an occasion of the Llantwit Mabsant, which would have been dedicated to St Illtud and probably celebrated around his feast day of 6 November. The evening entertainment for such occasions usually took the form of a *Noson Lawen*, a mixture of Welsh folk singing, harp playing, music making and dance. In this instance, the evening begins with a harper who is noted as playing the old Welsh air 'Ar hyd y nos'. Later, the dance begins in "the 'church-loft', which in the times of the Lords Marchers, was a place for holding courts of law," This building is today known as Llantwit's Old Town Hall.



He paints a picture of young courting couples dancing sprightly, watched, and occasionally joined, by other rustics and some of "better degree". Beer was provided, and sweethearts, resting from the dance would share a mug. He tells how a couple of old women sold gingerbread from baskets; *"These wily crones passed along from one to the other of them as they sate on benches, complimenting the vain girls on the prettiness of their dress, or of their persons, and the young men on their good dancing; and this coaxed the simple-hearted creatures into a purchase.Great was the delight of the rustic lovers at treating their sweethearts to a pennyworth of gingerbread!"*

The date of Saint Days are, in the main, relatively easy to find out through Church calendars. Some of the Mabsant dates that relate to the Vale of Glamorgan include St Cadog's Mabsant on 25 September, and St Illtud's Mabsant on 6 November.



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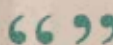


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