

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

LISTED BUILDING	Church at St Illtyd, Ilston, Swansea
Grade:-	II*
Date of Notification:-	06.03.64 amended 19.07.00
National Grid Reference:-	SS 5566090325
O.S. 1:10,000 Sheet No.:-	SS59SE
CADW Reference No.:-	11524
C & C of S Reference No.:-	LB:028

Notes:-

Location:-

In the village of Ilston, east of the stream, reached by a footbridge. Rubble graveyard wall without coping, opened at south to extension graveyard. Oak gate with adjacent stile at main entrance, two other gates. Low retaining wall to yew tree mound.

History:-

There is reference to an Ilston church in 1119 and 1221, at the latter date it was donated to the Knights Hospitallers. In 1540 the patronage passed from the Crown to Thomas Penrice of Kilvrough.

According to an old drawing (1847), the chancel arch was rounded and low, indicating that nave and chancel probably existed in the C12, the blocked north door of the nave is also round arched. Their relationship seems to suggest an earlier lost structure to their south, to which they may have been added, but the tower now in this position was probably considerably later than the nave. The awkward relationship of the tower perhaps results from the desire for a separate, stronger foundation. There is also a blocked east window to the tower, suggesting the original form of the vestry is still later. There is a blocked north door to the nave.

In the C18 the roof was renewed. The space to the south of the chancel was then in use as a school, said in 1769 to be ruinous, described as the Gellyhir Chapel it was still adjudged ruinous in 1804. The church was extensively restored in the C19. In 1832 £20 was spend on a new porch roof. In the following year the rector, the Rev John Collins, stated that he had only 100 seats in the church, mostly belonging to the farmhouses, and proposed adding a gallery at the west end for a choir additional free seats, this appears to have come to nothing. Some work was done on re-roofing the nave and paving. By 1847 Mr Collins was able to state he had completed re-roofing, re-pewing with free seats, installed a ceiling, windows, and formed an arch from the tower base to the nave, to make it available for additional seats, all at a cost of £150 from church rates and subscriptions. The same date appears on a stone above the porch arch.

Exterior:-

The church stands on steeply rising ground, forming a picturesque mass with its unusually positioned tower (as at Llangennith). It consists of nave with chancel, small vestry to the south of the chancel, south porch, and the tower on a slightly different alignment standing in the space between the vestry and the porch.

The masonry is uncoursed axe-dressed limestone throughout, except that of the tower which is in smaller stonework and slightly coursed. The west wall, on the low ground, is strongly battered. Slate roofs throughout, with Bath-stone coped gables to the east and the west of the nave, to the chancel and porch. The apexes of the gables to the chancel, the porch and the west of the nave carry small stone cross finials, but the vestry gable is a plain verge. A parapet wall links the east side of the tower to the nave east gable.

The tower is low but massive, with one small window to south, numerous putlog holes, belfry slits to east and west and roof vent slits to north and south. Its parapet is crenellated and rises to a gable on the north and south sides. These gables cover the ends of the saddleback roof, which is an important feature as one of a small number of such loyally characteristic roofs on Gower churches. The east and west sides of the parapet are carried on billet corbels.

The windows are all restored. East window of three lights in Early English style, under an equilateral pointed arch with crowned heads as label terminals. There is a single lancet and a blocked square opening with timber lintel in the north wall of the chancel. The east wall of the vestry has a high level opening blocked in brickwork, and its south wall has a buttress with door and window. The west window is of two trefoil-headed lights and a quatrefoil top light, with an ogee head and label carried vigorously up to a finial, plain terminal blocks. The nave has a single tall trefoil-headed but otherwise featureless lancet to south and north. To its north is a blocked central doorway with a rounded head and a two-light window with trefoil heads and a top quatrefoil, under an unshaped extrados. The porch has a segmental outer arch with rendered reveals and wrought iron gates, and the date 1847 appears in the gable apex. To the south of the vestry is the Pryce vault, with Regency style railings with urns on the corner and centre bars. There are two stones commemorating Joseph Pryce of Gellyhir [1785] built into the south wall.

Interior:-

A plain interior unusually free of Victorian pretensions. Fine oak south door, boarded and counterboarded, with moulds on the face. The interior consists of the nave, the chancel three steps higher, and a side chapel in the base of the tower the floor of which is also raised. The nave has a roof of seven bays, with principals and small, curved high collar beams chamfered beneath, probably C19. Similar three-bay roof with straight collars in the chancel. Pews in four blocks, restored octagonal font at west, pine pulpit carved in Gothic style. C19 chancel arch with timber decoration on nave face. In the chancel is the recess of a wall tomb at the north. Simple reredos of three carved panels under a timber rail. Plain Communion rail on decorative iron standards.

The tower chapel is very plain, with rubble stone vault and a flagged floor. It is entered by an irregular arch. Stone altar, rendered, with slate slab. Small aumbry in chapel wall to right, and a window recess corbelled at the head. Blocked east window and east doorway. In the south west corner of the chapel is the door to the stairs vice, leading to the belfry, triple oak bell frame, with two bells hung to toll.

To right of the altar in the chancel is a classical memorial to Jane Mansel [1769], probably reconstructed, pedimented with a swag in the pediment, and with an unpainted shield below the sill. Plain C18 memorials in the nave, except one at south with incised seraphs.

Modern art-glass west window with abstract design, grey with white surround, in the sill are panels of C19 plain coloured encaustic tiles.

Listed:-

Listed as II* as a complex mediaeval church, restored with restraint and retaining much original fabric including an exceptionally fine south tower.

Reference:-

P R Davis, Historic Gower (1997), pp. 45-46

S Glynne, Notes on Welsh Churches [written 1851], Archaeologia Cambrensis (1879) p.293

J Newman, Glamorgan (Buildings of Wales, 1995), p. 366-7

G Orrin, The Gower Churches (1979), pp. 34-37

M Walker, Ilston Church and its Clergy, Gower L (1999)

Lambeth Palace Library:ICBS files 1546 (1835) & 3988 (1847)

NMR: File Ecclesiastical SS59SE

Painting of interior, 1847, in church