

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

LISTED BUILDING	Church at St Illtyd, Oxwich, Swansea
Grade:-	II*
Date of Notification:-	06.03.64 amended 29.10.99
National Grid Reference:-	SS 5042086122
O.S. 1:10,000 Sheet No.:-	SS 58 NE
CADW Reference No.:-	11536
C & C of S Reference No.:-	LB:036

Notes:-

Location:-

1km from Oxwich village, on a site overlooking Oxwich Bay and reached by the coast footpath. Square churchyard with a stone wall; modern gate.

History:-

The Norman arch indicates a C12 origin for the nave and chancel, but the unusual smallness of the chancel raises the possibility of an earlier structure being incorporated. The nave is evidently of two builds, with a marked change in width at the centre, which is only apparent externally, the east part of the nave walls being much thicker than the west part. The nave may have been extended west at the time the tower was added, perhaps C14; another probably C14 feature is a tomb inserted in the chancel, thought to be of a member of the de la Mare or Penrice families, with his lady, an heiress. A small north window was later added to the chancel, destroying one of the tomb finials. A stone beside the west window of the south side records the names of Henry Lucas and John Tyler, Ward(ens), 1699; this might be the date of a partial rebuild or rendering. The church underwent much C19 restoration; the decorated style east window was described by Glynne in 1848 as 'modern'. In 1850 Freeman described the church as grievously disfigured by the insertion of broad staring square-headed windows, of a mean type of Perpendicular. Four C19 windows of Tudor form appear to be those referred to in 1850, as they are repaired in similar oolitic stone to the large window known to be part of the 1892 work costing about £1000 at the expense of Miss Talbot of Penrice Castle; this also included a large central window in the north side of the nave, the re-opening of a small window in the chancel, re-roofing and re-flooring, and the addition of the vestry, to the design of J Waller of Gloucester. The altar was carved and donated by the Rev J B Davies. In 1890 the present font was extracted from the position where it had been built into the walling in the south west corner of the church, and set up on a shaft. It was re-set on three blocks in 1929. Two C14 graveslabs were recovered from the church floor in 1891 and displayed in the porch. Above the chancel arch is a fine modern carved and painted rood with Corpus Christi, St Mary and St John. The rood was carved and painted in 1926 to the design of Gerald Cogswell as a memorial to the Rev S W Jenkins, rector from 1879-1918; an original rood beam slot was re-used. The chancel ceiling was painted in 1931 by Leslie Young, Sadler's Wells scenic artist, as a donation by Dame Lilian Baylis.

Exterior:-

West tower, nave and chancel, plus a small C19 vestry at the south side of the chancel. Rubble or axe-dressed masonry with original features in the tower, other openings restored. The wall thickness of the nave reduces externally on both sides at mid point, and there are battered buttress to the both sides where the nave abuts the tower. The north side of the nave is rendered; there are also eroded render on the south side. C19 restored slate roofs with tile ridges; bargeboards at verges. The vestry and the external projection of a tomb recess in the chancel are both roofed as catslide extensions of the chancel roof. Cast-iron rainwater foods, replaced in plastic on the north side. The tower is of five storeys, slightly battered at the foot, and has a thickening on the south side for the stairs. The parapet projects on corbels and carries restored crenellations. Above the corbel course are multiple small openings on three sides. Belfry openings on three sides with stone louvres. Two string courses, one at door arch level and another at mid height. Above the corbel course are multiple small openings on three sides. Belfry openings on three sides with stone louvres. Two string courses, one at door arch level and another at mid height. Above the door is a small square-headed light and above that a two-light window with trefoil heads. The base of the tower is the porch, the door being slightly off centre; simple segmental arch. Slit lights to the stairs on the south side. There are bondstones at intervals across the hollow south west corner, and numerous putlog holes are an interesting constructional feature. Very irregular fenestration to the nave. To the north side at left is a simplified Tudor style three-light window with a small label. The label ends are everted and given saltire terminations (a motif also used in C19 work at Oxwich castle). Centrally a deep-set two-light square headed window with foiled light-heads, in oolitic limestone with a label terminating in heads: to right a two-light Tudor-style window without label. To the south side there is a two-light window similar to the last-mentioned at left, with remains of external shutter hooks, then a small rectangular light which might be a reduced lancet, another two-light Tudor style window without label, and at right a wide lancet with a depressed pointed head. Several small two-light east window with Y tracery; cinquefoil heads to the lights, quatrefoil above; small label of scroll profile with averted ends. Rectangular window in the north side. East doorway to the C19 vestry with a Caernarfon arch: chamfered. Two-light south window to the vestry.

Interior:-

The church entered by a porch which is the base of the tower. Stone bench each side, with a small access doorway to the tower stairs on the south side. Two mediaeval grave-slabs displayed on the walls: Lombardic lettering, formalised incised interlace pattern as a cross on a long shaft. One is to Hugo, the other to William de la Lake, rector 1320-1323. The door to the nave opens into a floor recess as the nave floor has been raised by two steps. The nave is a rectangle, not showing the change in nave width at its mid-point. The nave is roofed in four bays with C19 arch-braced high-collar-beam trusses with V struts. Small semi-bay end. A single purlin each side, strutted from the principals. The braces of the trusses descend on the walls, and have decorative spandrels each side. There are no pews, but the central passage is paved in encaustic and plain tiles. Octagonal pulpit at left of chancel arch; moulded top-rail, white limestone base with four steps. Chancel entered by a narrow Norman archway, only 1.3m wide. One step up within the archway. Carved teak altar, plain panelled reredos. Alter steps edged in limestone, paved in encaustic tiles. Round altar-rail on twisted iron standards. C14 tomb at left, under an agee canopy; a knight and lady, his feet resting on a lion; damage suggests the effigies have been removed from elsewhere. The canopy arch has crockets, elaborate trefoil scolloping, and a floral finial. Terminal finials diagonally at left and right, the latter partly lost to the window above.

The east window (1893, donated by Miss Talbot) depicts St David and St Illtyd, with decorative margins; HIS on shield top. A small window at the right of the nave depicts St Francis (in memory of members of the Fry family 1967). The nave monuments include a plain marble slab to Joan Bevan (d1748), to the right of the chancel arch: carved fleur-de-lys features at the corners. On the right wall a pointed tablet to Francis Bevan (d1707), with two incised cherub heads: below this a tablet to his son Thomas(d1708).

Listed:-

Listed at Grade II* as a well-preserved mediaeval church with a fine tower and interesting monuments.

Reference:-

Sir S Glynne. Notes on the older churches (19=848), Archaeologia Cambrensis (1897) pp. 300-301;

E A Freeman. Antiquities of Gower, Archaeologia Cambrensis (1850) p.55;

J Newman. Glamorgan (Buildings of Wales, 1995) p. 481;

G R Orrin, The Gower Churches (1979), pp. 53-56;

NMR File Eccles. SS58NW.