

7.6 Betws y Coed, St Mary's Church

7.6.1 Description and Statement of Significance

History

The church was built in 1873 at a cost of £5,000 to replace the Medieval church of St. Michael, which had by then become too small to accommodate the fast-growing parish; the tower was completed in 1907. It was designed by E G Paley and J H Austin, architects of Lancaster and was built by O Gethin D Jones, building contractor of Penmachno; the land and some of the building stone were given by Lord Willoughby De Eresby of Gwydir Castle.

Exterior

Large Transitional-style church of cruciform plan, with crossing tower and organ chamber to S. Of rubble with grey stone facings and red sandstone dressings, the latter apparently from the Ancaster estate quarries in Lincolnshire; steeply-pitched roofs of small slates and gable parapets, and a pyramidal tiled roof to the tower. Tall E end with angle buttresses and grouped 5-light plate tracery window, the taller central light flanked by cusped oculi; 2 small lancets above. Large lancets to upper N and S chancel walls, with cill bands and continuous labels. 4-stage projecting stair turret to N side of crossing tower, the lower square and the upper semicircular, terminating in a conical stone roof. Entrance with chip-carved tympanum and engaged flanking shafts with waterleaf capitals; returned, moulded label and boarded door with decorative iron hinges. Lancets to first floor and belfry level, the latter flanking clock faces; buttressing as before. Sandstone parapet stepped-up at the corners, with moulded cornice below; decorative iron weathervane to roof apex.

Tall nave with 5 squat lancets to N and S clerestory, with double chamfers and returned labels. Single-storey aisles with 5 plain lancets; the eastern-most is, on the S side a double, and on the N side a triple window. Large gabled porch to N aisle at W end, with timber upper section on rubble lower walls; simply-cusped tracery bargeboards and framed gable with curved braces. Plain entrance with paired glazed flanking lights; similar to returns. Buff brick floor to porch, laid in herringbone pattern; stone wall bench to E side. Triple-arched main entrance with hollow sunk and keel-moulded detail; chamfered and broach stopped outer jambs, decorative ironwork to boarded door. Modern connecting bay to church hall addition at right-angles at the NW corner. Large plate tracery rose window to buttressed W end as before, with cusping and punched trefoils; chamfered and keel-moulded detail, plain lancet above. Long catslide roof to gabled and buttressed organ chamber with large twin lancets and an entrance below to R. This with double chamfer and returned label; external stepped access with stepped sandstone parapets. Bold blind arcading to central S side of tower, with chevron moulding, continuous labels and shafts with waterleaf and scalloped capitals.

Interior

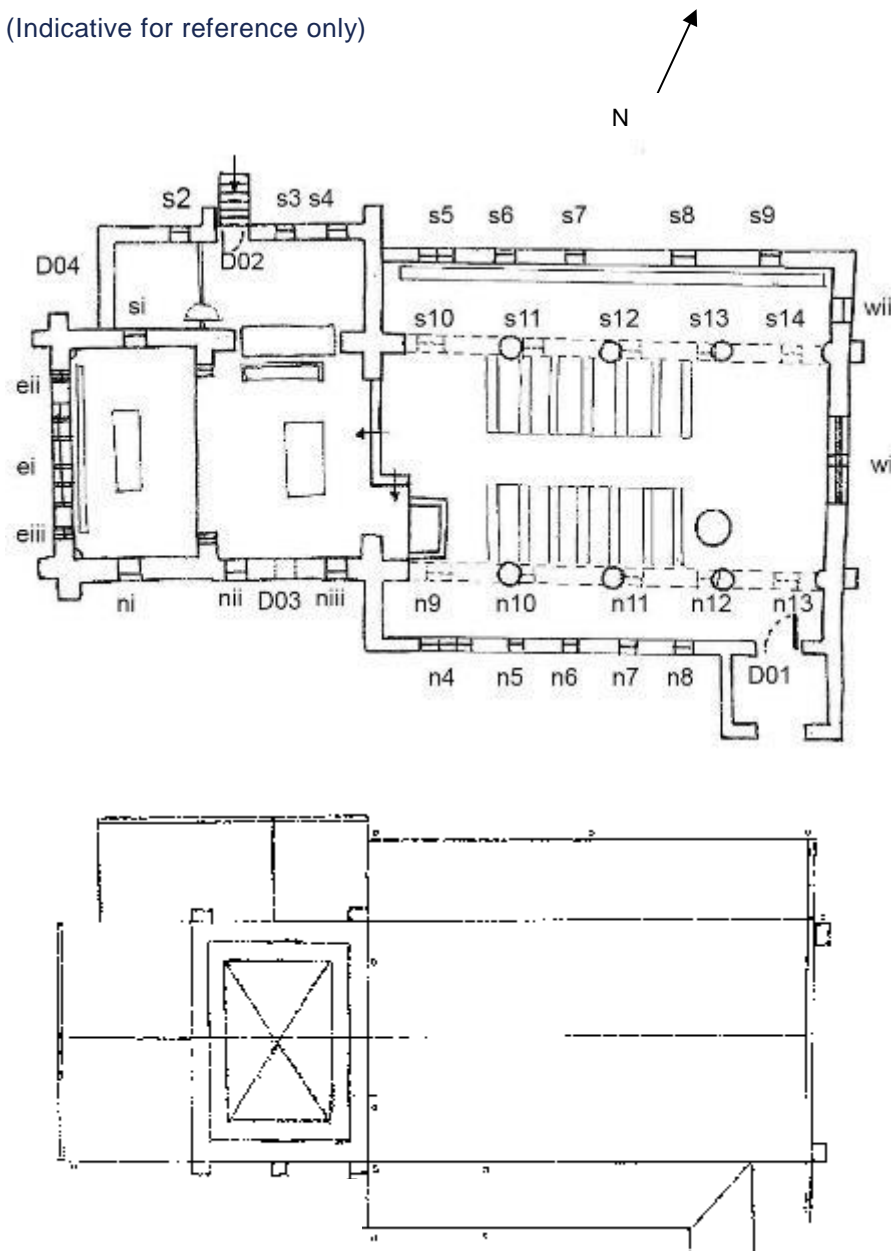
Unrendered walls; buff brick floor in herringbone arrangement. 4-bay nave with clustered scissor truss roof with tie-beams at the bay divisions. Pointed-arched arcades to shallow aisles with plain roofs. Large columns with plain bases and alternating scalloped and waterleaf capitals; wide splays to rear arches of clerestory windows. Early English black and burgundy marble font on plain base, simple softwood pews. Early English pulpit of sandstone with blind arcaded sides and foliate decoration to the spandrels; pink marble parapet and black marble corner-shafts with shaft rings. Large crossing arch with keel-moulded outer and plain inner arches, the former with waterleaf capitals; stiff-leafed carving to corbelled inner arches above stall level. Stepped-up crossing with rib vault and angle shafts; decorative brass altar rails. Organ of 1870 by Gray and Davison of London. Chancel arch and vault as crossing; stepped-up chancel with arched recess to S side and aumbry to N. Simple decorative tiled pavement and Arts and Crafts oak choir stalls and reading desks, the latter with copper repousse panels. Reredos of Italian alabaster depicting scenes of Christ's Passion, in shallow niches; this was inserted in 1929.

Good painted and stained glass windows to nave, aisles and chancel, mostly by Shrigly and Hunt of Lancaster; one designed by Carl Almquist. Further glass by Jones and Willis of London and Birmingham, and after designs by Sir E. Burne-Jones.

Reason for listing

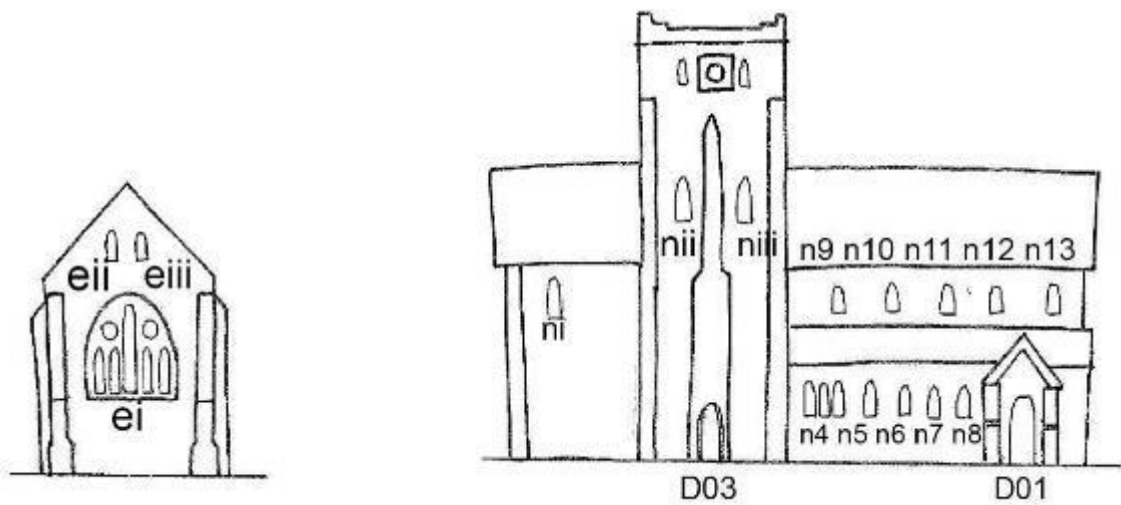
Listed grade II* as an impressive and largely unaltered commission in bold Transitional style by Payley and Austin of Lancaster.

7.6.2 Church Plan (Indicative for reference only)

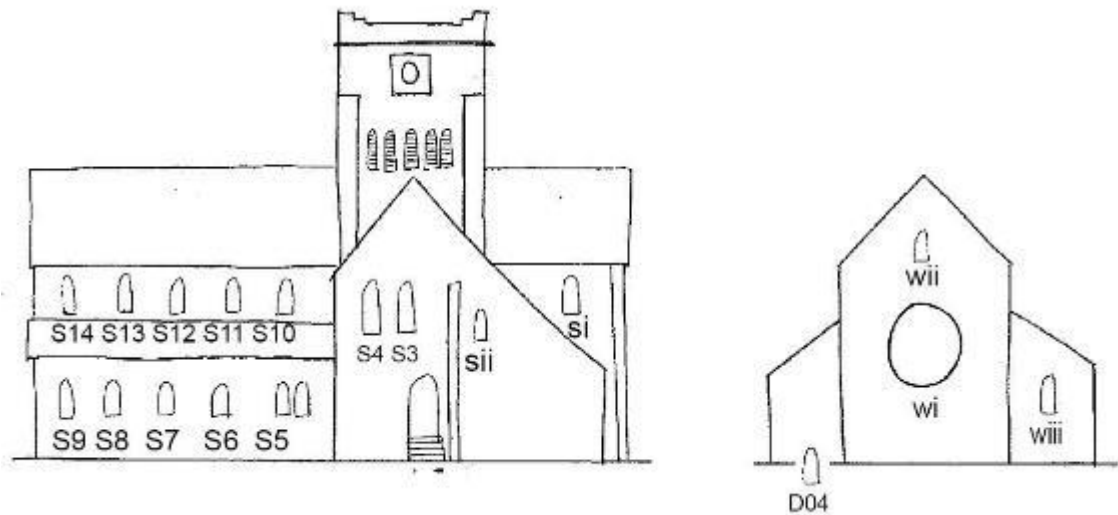


7.6.3 Overview Sketch Elevations (Indicative for reference only)

East and North Elevations



South and West Elevation



Revision note: Position of D04 needs to be moved to East.