

Monastic Wales

Kidwelly Priory, Carmarthenshire, Affiliated to Sherbourne Abbey, Dorset Benedictine. St Benedict established the rule for communal worship and living.

Religious orders were founded by Sts or religious men or women who wished to found religious institutions where members would serve God in many different ways. They needed incomes and were endowed by the nobility and sometimes affluent burgesses or landowners. Kidwelly Priory was a small cell dependent on its mother institution. It comprised of a church and lodgings for the Prior and Monk. The Prior and Monk would serve the church and the local population of Kidwelly. They had land which would be farmed by local people or servants. Kidwelly Church had a chapel that was not in constant use, the Lords would possibly have brought their own priests who would hold masses in it when the Lord was in residence.

St Benedict established the rule for communal worship and living.

1110 Founded as a cell of Sherborne Abbey, Dorset (a small religious house dependent on another religious institution) by Bishop Roger of Salisbury who also became Chief Minister of Henry I of England. The guidebook to Kidwelly Castle suggests that the foundation charter for the priory was issued from the castle between 1107 and 1114. (1)

The site is significant for the following reasons, Roger de la Pole Bishop of Salisbury built the castle of Kidwelly and in 1106 gained control of South Wales and recognised it as the Marcher lordship of Kidwelly. The priory foundation was part of the Norman consolidation of Wales. It has been suggested that the site was previously associated with 2 Celtic era Saints, Teilo and Cadog (2) The church was dedicated to St Cadog. It is on the other side of the river from the castle.

Recorded events in the history of Kidwelly Priory

1135 Maurice des Londres, an Anglo Norman nobleman, supplemented Sherborne's endowment at Kidwelly— significant as he elevated the status of Sherborne Abbey and gave 12 acres around the church of St Cadog which were adjacent to Kidwelly Priory's lands

1223 Priory burnt by Gruffyth ap Llwelyn - significant as the Kidwelly Castle and Priory were regarded as Anglo Norman and open to attack from the Welsh

1284 Visitation of the house under the orders of Archbishop Peckham – significant as the visitation caused a dispute over the Priorship between the Archbishop and Sherbourne Abbey

1291 Wealth assessed for Pope Nicholas IV as £16 – significant as it allows historians to understand how much land the priory owned and to possibly plot it onto a map.

1377, 1379 poll taxes - significant as only the Prior is listed

1403 Glyn D'Apur rebellion – major damage to the town and buildings in 1404 the town was set on fire by the rebels (3) - significant as it highlights the struggles between the Welsh and Anglo Normans

1481 Church struck by lightning significant as it highlights the struggles between the Welsh and Anglo Normans – suggested that it caused or contributed to ruination of the west end of the Chapel. It led the Bishop of St Davids (1523-36) to sequester the revenues of the house to pay for repairs

1534 Prior and monk took the Act of Supremacy – significant as it shows the Prior and Monk were not rebelling against Henry VIII's right to be supreme head on earth of the Church of England

1535 wealth assessed by Valor Ecclesiasticus, gross annual income £38 – significant as it shows the income prior to dissolution

1539 Dissolved with Sherbourne Abbey

(1) Kidwelly Priory, Kenyon, J.R. (2002) Cadw

- (2) Kidwelly history.co.uk Kidwelly Priory, Williams, Glamour (n.d.)
- (3) The castle at war in Medieval England and Wales,Kindle ed. , Spencer D, (2018)