

Prof. Jane Cartwright, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 'The Female Saints of Wales'

image: St Non baptizes St David, stained glass Dirinon photograph Jane Cartwright



J. W. Willis Bund, in the late nineteenth century, claimed that women rarely became saints in Wales and Ireland:

‘for a woman would not be the head of a monastery, the chief of a tribe of a Saint, and so could never become a Saint or entitled to be so called...a woman could never fill the office which certainly among the Welsh entitled a person to become a saint’

J. W. Willis Bund, ‘Some characteristics of Welsh and Irish saints’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 11, series 5, (1894), 276–91 (279–80).

‘It seems difficult to believe that a woman could, in those wild ages, travel so far, and found so many settlements, and St. Keyne may quite well have been a man, in spite of the later universally accepted tradition of *Cain Wry* [Cain the Virgin].’

G. H. Doble, *S. Nectan, S. Keyne and the Children of Brychan in Cornwall*, Cornish Saints Series 25 (Exeter: Sydney Lee, 1930), p. 47.

Oxford Dictionary of Saints, ed. David Farmer assumes that the fourteenth-century Welsh Life of Beuno ‘may contain genuine elements’, but dismisses the Latin Life of Beuno’s niece, Gwenfrewy (or Winefride) as ‘a tissue of improbabilities’.

Place Names – Llan + saint's name

Llanddwyn

Llangain

Llangeinwen

Llanwenog

Llanon

Llanfair

Llangwryfon

Merthyr Tudful

Pennant Melangell

Capel Betws Leucu

Merthyr Enfail

Llandegla

Llansanffraid

Llansanffraid

Llanfaches

Llanelli

Llanfair Clydogau

Llanerfyl

Llandegfan

Llangeinor

Llangwryfon (Church of the Virgins), dedicated to St Ursula

aerial photograph: Coflein, RCAHMW [Sites \(56\)](#) | [Coflein](#)



Llanwenog / Llanwnnen





St Gwenog,
modern stained
glass Llanwenog
photo: Jane Cartwright

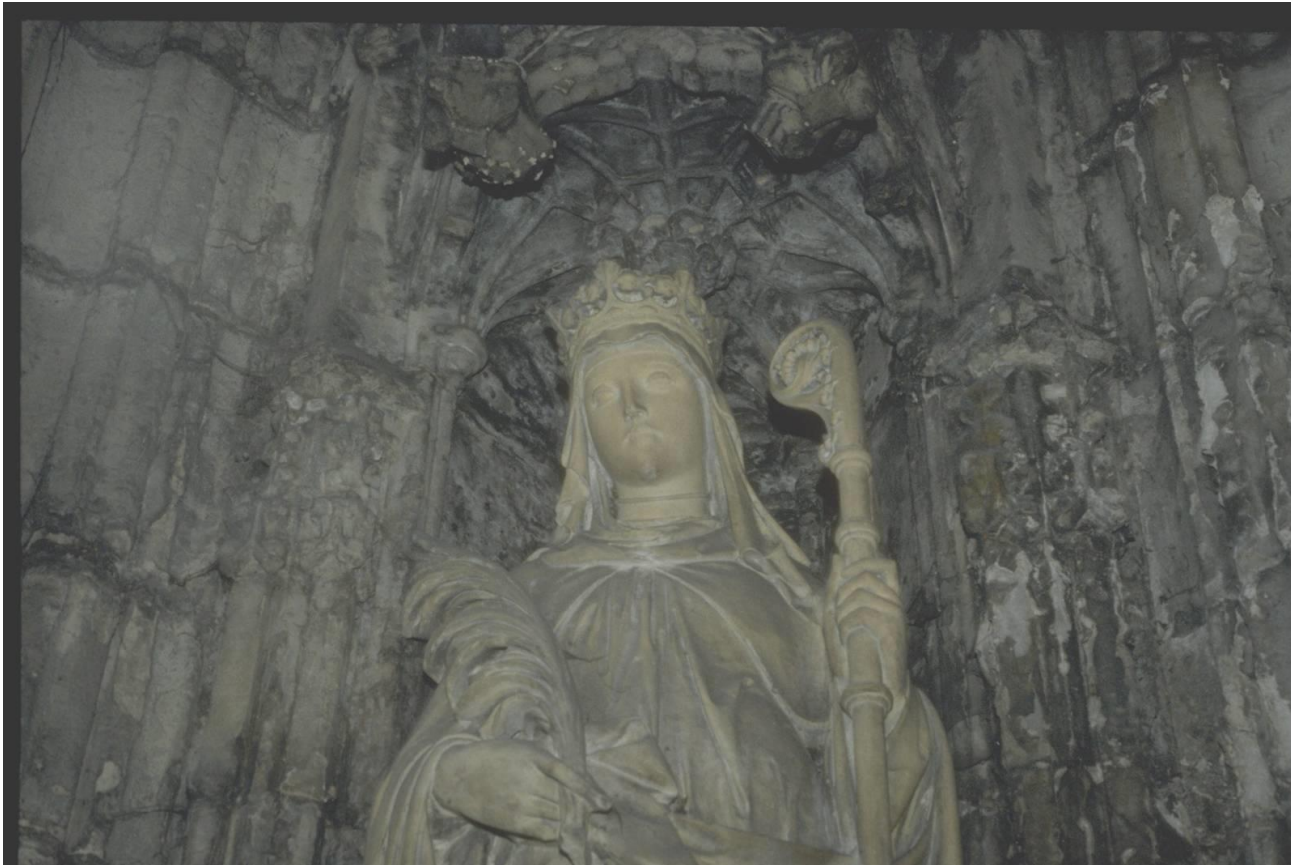
Feastday 3 January

What sources can we use when researching Welsh saints?

- Calendars
- Genealogies – *Bonedd y Saint, De Situ Brecheniauc, Plant Brychan*
- Hagiography – saints' Lives (*vitae, bucheddau*)
- Medieval poetry
- Folklore and oral traditions
- Antiquarian sources
- Placenames, church dedications, holy wells, archaeological evidence,
- Artistic representations: images, stained glass, wall paintings, statues, seals
- Fieldwork!

St Gwenfrewy (Winefride)

statue Holywell photo: Jane Cartwright



The Lives of St Winefride

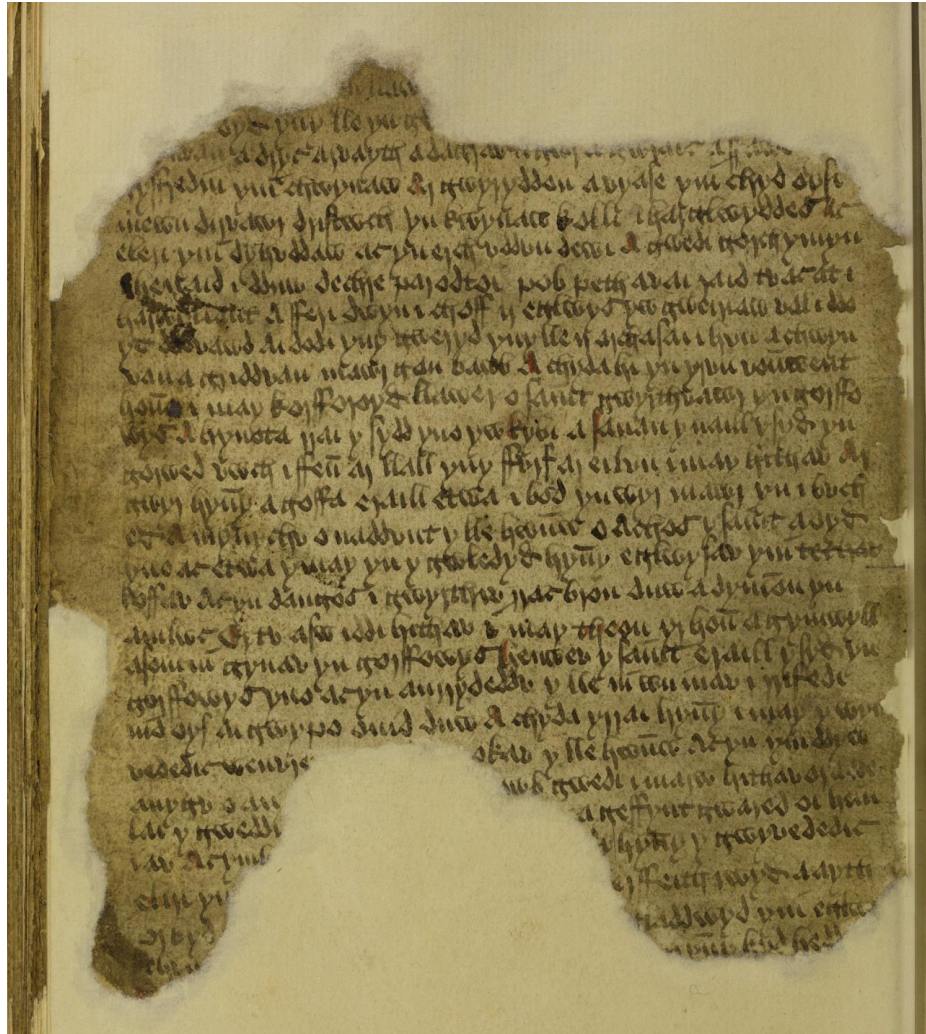
The twelfth-century Latin Lives:

- anonymous *Vita S. Wenefrede* (s. XII) London, British Library, Cotton MS Claudius A.v, fols 138r-145r (s. XIII1)
- Prior Robert of Shrewsbury's *Vita et translatio S. Wenefredae* Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. Misc. 114 (s. XII); Cambridge, Trinity College O.4.42 (s. XIII) and Brussels, e, 8072 (1631)



The Welsh manuscripts:

- Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 27ii, pp. 91-121 (s. XV₂)
- Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Llanstephan 34, pp. 189-249 (1580x1600)
- Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 225, fols 269-302 (1594-1610)
- Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Llanstephan 104, pp. 217-99 (c.1710x1715)
- *Hystoria o Uched Beuno*, Oxford, Jesus College, MS 119 c. 1346 (summary of her legend in the Life of St Beuno), fols 104r-109r



Feast of St Gwenfrewy (Winefride) 3 November

Sites associated with her: Holywell, Gwytherin, Shrewsbury

St Gwenfrewy's well chapel, Holywell and oak coffer formerly at Gwytherin

photos: Jane Cartwright



St Gwenfrewy's martyrdom from *Buchedd Gwenfrewy*, Llŷst 34, pp. 197-8, ed. and trans. Jane Cartwright,
translation:

Thus she attempted to escape from his clutches and, in the end, he allowed her to go to her room, since he assumed that she would return better dressed, without delay. And she went out through a different door and ran towards the church.

And at once the youth knew that she had fled and became enraged with anger and promptly unsheathed his sword and pursued her. And he overtook her easily and harshly said this: 'Before now, I loved you and wanted to embrace you and you fled from me. And now, truth be told, know that if you will not be one with me willingly, your head will be cut off with this sword.' And the maiden turned to the church door and looked carefully to see if anyone was coming to assist her. And when she saw that no one was coming, she turned to face the youth and said, 'I am married to the eternal king and the judge of all men, and I cannot take another and I will not deceive you. I do not wish for anyone except him and I cannot have you without insulting him. And, for that reason, take out your sword and do as you please because I wish for no one other than him. And when that hideous youth heard her belittle him thus, he took out his sword and smote off her head. And there the maiden's head fell to the floor. In the same spot the brightest and most beautiful spring burst forth which from that time forth has flowed continuously and it still flows today healing many sick people via the blessed virgin maiden's miracles. And she was decapitated near the church. The head rolled from there into the church and the body fell outside, because there is a slope between the place where she was killed and the church. And when the crowd of people saw the head appear at their feet, they were greatly amazed and cursed the one who had committed this deed.

E.R. Henken:

‘Tradition pays no, or virtually no, attention to their lives until they are confronted with male sexuality...The encounter with male sexuality is the only major element in the biographical pattern which appears with any consistency for the Welsh women saints.’ (*Traditions of the Welsh Saints*, pp. 13-14)





See R. H. Bloch, 'Chaucer's maiden's head: *The Physician's Tale* and the poetics of virginity', *Representations*, 28 (1989): 113-34 and Jane Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008)

Like Gwenog and Gwenfrewy various female saints were reputedly martyred – most had their heads chopped off by secular rulers or pagan Saxons as they struggled to preserve their virginity and remain chaste. Virginity is almost a prerequisite for feminine sanctity, and the image of the female saint as the bride of Christ, a veiled consecrated nun, is inextricably linked with her physical purity. Only in death does the female saint attain perpetual virginity and eternal salvation, for whilst on earth there is a constant risk that she may be seen, admired and polluted. As Howard Bloch notes 'a certain inescapable logic of virginity, most evident in medieval hagiography, leads syllogistically to the conclusion that the only good virgin – that is, the only true virgin – is a dead virgin'

St Dwynwen, patron saint of lovers

Feast day 25 January

photo: Llanddwyn Island Jane Cartwright



Llanddwyn, Anglesey

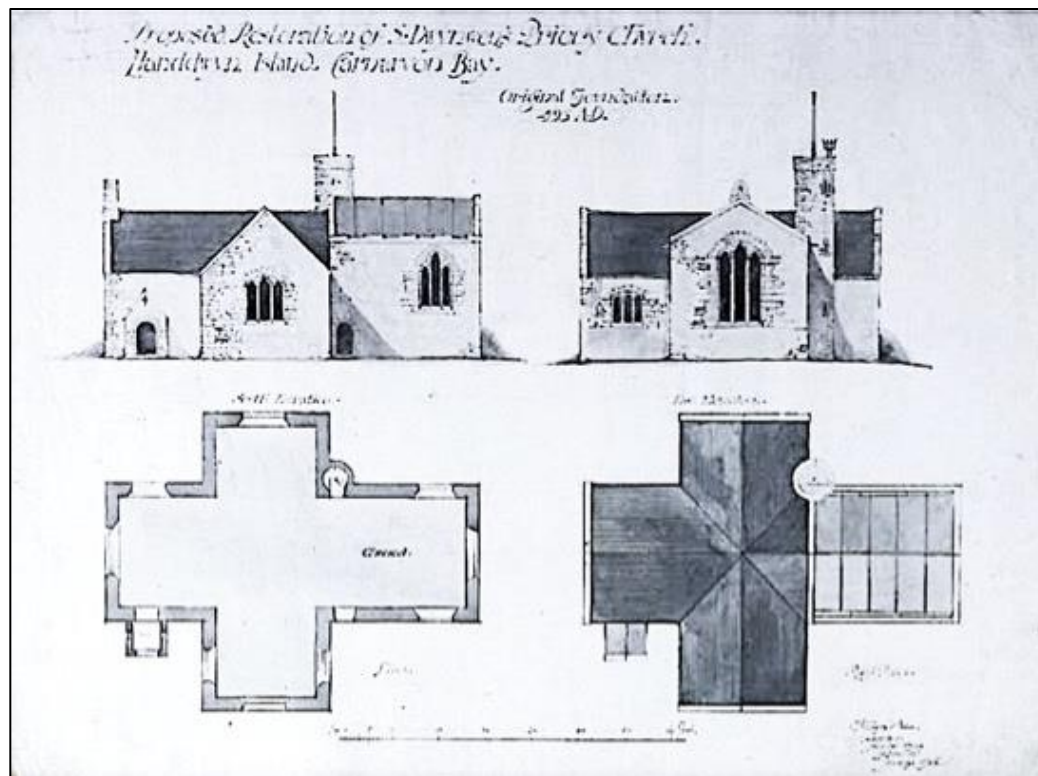
ruined church of St Dwynwen, photo: Jane Cartwright
aerial photograph: T. G. Driver, Coflein, RCAHMW



Spencer Bulkeley Wynn, 3rd baron of Newborough, asked Clough Williams-Ellis (of Portmeirion fame) to draw up a plan for rebuilding the church in 1906.

image: R. Haslam, *Clough Williams-Ellis* (London: Academy Editions, 1996), p. 28

See Jeanne Mehan, 'The Enduring Meme of the Saintry Daughters of Brychan Brycheiniog', 2 vols, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2021)



Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826)

Bangor Missal (1494) Maelgwn = Maelon? 3 Latin prayers added
current ruins – medieval poetry C16th Dafydd Trefor (c. 1460-c. 1528)

Minteioedd ym min tywyn:
Merched o amrafael wledydd,
Meibion fil fyrddion a fydd,
Cleifion rhwng ei ffynhonnau,
Crupliaid a gweniaid yn gwau,
Bronnydd fel lluoedd brenin,
Pobl o'r wlad, pawb ar ei lin,
Taprau cwyr, pabwyr er pwyll,
Pibau gwin, pawb â'i gannwyll,
Crysau'n llawn brychau gerbron,
Miragl wrth godi meirwon!

Crowds on the edge of the seashore:
Girls from various regions,
An innumerable myriad of men are to be found [there]
Sick people, cripples and the weak
bustling between the holy wells,
Hill slopes [covered with people] like a king's army,
People from the countryside, everyone on his knees,
Wax tapers, candle wicks for health of mind,
Pipes of wine, everyone with his candle,
Shirts covered in stains nearby,
A miracle as the dead are resurrected!)

trans. Jane Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality* (Cardiff: UWP., 2008 p. 90-91)

Ffynnon Dafaden Ffynnon y Sais

Merddyn Cul Crochan Llanddwyn

Jeanne Mehan, 'The Enduring Meme of the Saintly Daughters of Brychan Brycheiniog', 2 vols, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2021)



William Williams c. 1800 quoted in Hugh Owen, 'Llanddwyn' *Transactions of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society* (1920): 1-31

There was a spring of clear water, now choked up by the sand, at which an old woman from Newborough always attended, and prognosticated the lovers' success from the movements of some small eels which waved out of the sides of the well, on spreading the lovers' handkerchief on the surface of the water. I remember an old woman saying that when she was a girl, she consulted the woman at this well about her destiny with respect to her husband; on spreading her handkerchief, out popped an eel from the north side of the well, and soon after another crawled from the south side, and they both met on the bottom of the well;

- then the woman told her that her husband would be a stranger from the south part of Carnarvonshire. Soon after, it happened that three brothers came from that part and settled in the neighbourhood where the young woman was, one of whom made his addresses to her, and in a little time married her. So much of the prophecy I remember. This couple was my father and mother.

Dafydd ap Gwilym (c. 1315/20-c. 1350/70)

‘Galw ar Ddwynwen’ (Calling Ddwynwen)

Dwynwen, pes parud unwaith
Dan wŷdd Mai a hirddydd maith,
Dawn ei bardd, da, wen y bych;
Dwynwen, nid oeddud anwych.
Dangos o’th radau dawngoeth
Nad wyd fursen, Ddwynwen ddoeth.

Dwynwen, if you would allow it once
Under May woods on a long, lingering day
Her poet’s gift, [O] fair one, you’d be blessed.
Dwynwen, you were [never] wretched!
With your rich-gifted graces show,
Wise Ddwynwen, you’re not prudish.)

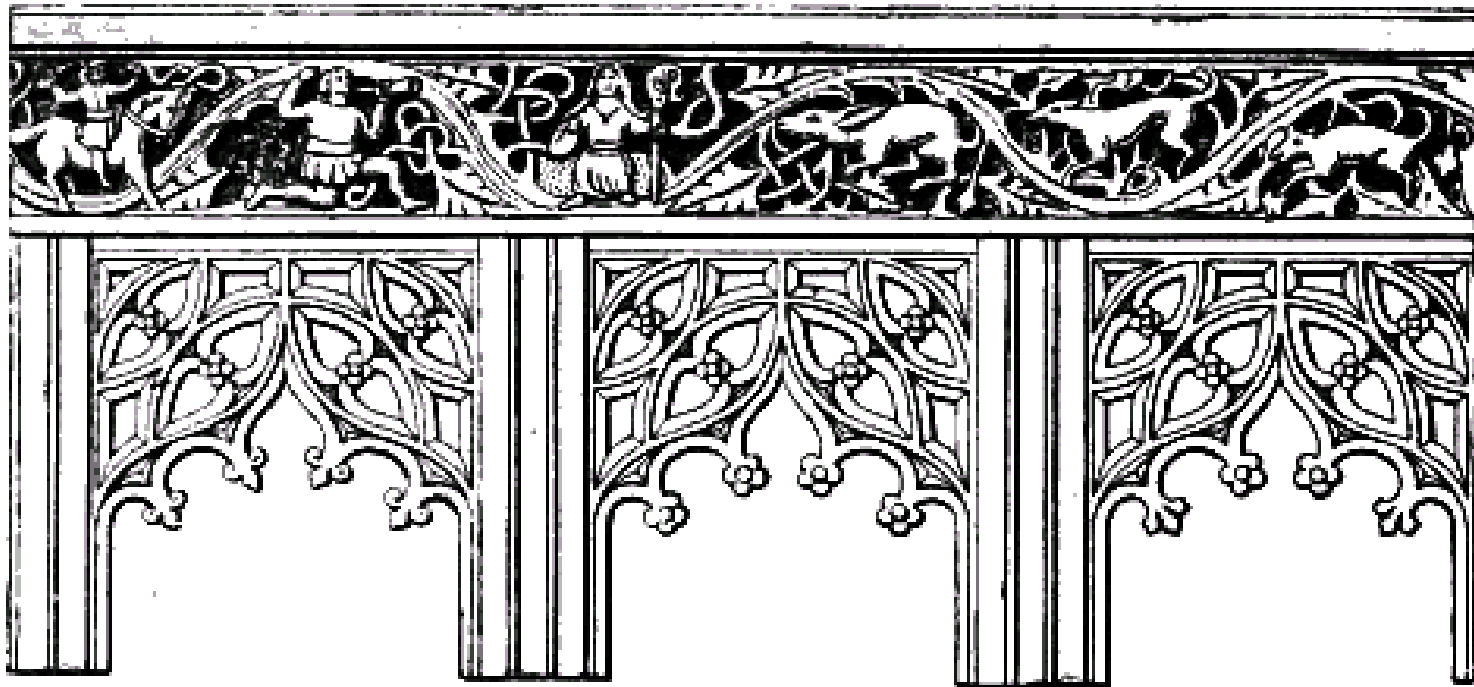
- Quoted in Jane Cartwright, *Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: UWP, 20028), pp. 90-91.

Melangell, patron saint of hares

Church of Melangell, Pennant Melangell photo: Jane Cartwright



Oral tradition? Earliest record – roodscreen C15th
Latin Life *Historia divae Monacellae* – 3 complete copies and
two incomplete copies in manuscripts dating from late C16th
and a printed copy of a C17th manuscript destroyed in a fire.



SCREEN, PENNANT MELANGELL.

...a certain person by the name of Elise, came to Pennant Melangell, who, desiring to ravish, seize and defile the same virgins, came to an end most wretchedly and perished suddenly. Whoever has violated the aforementioned liberty and protected holy place of the said virgin has rarely been said to avoid divine vengeance in this region, as one can perceive every day.

Huw Pryce (ed. and trans.), 'A new edition of the *Historia divae Monacellae*', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 82 (1994), 23-40 (p. 40).



San Ffraid

Feast day 1 February

- Brigid of Kildare d. 524/26/28
- > San Ffraid (composite saint – Brigid/Brigit/Bríd/Bride, Birgitta of Sweden)
- 5 Latin Lives and 3 Irish Lives: *Vita* by Cogitosus c. 675, late C8th/early C9th anon. *vita prima*; Old Irish *Bethu Brigit* C9th; hymns e.g. ‘Brigit bé bithmaith’ and ‘Ní car Brigit búadach bith’; Middle Irish saga *Cath Almaine* (The Battle of Allen)
- Welsh poetry - *Cywydd* by Iorwerth Fynglwyd (fl. 1485-1527)

Elva Johnson, 'The "pagan" and "Christian" identities of the Irish female saint', in *Celts and Christians*, ed. M. Atherton (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), 60-78 (p. 72)

‘It seems indisputable that a goddess named Brigit, or the like, was honoured among Celtic communities. It is another thing, however, to try to match the characteristics of the goddess with the saint...It might be best to view Brigit’s cult as one that grew up around a saint named after a divine figure, gaining many adherents for that reason. The pre-Christian element of the cult was probably particularly important in its early phases and it must have imbued the figure of the Christian saint with extra power. But while the status of Brigit arguably had pre-Christian roots, this is expressed in Christian terms and her essential identity is a Christian one.’

Pádraig Ó Riain, *A Dictionary of Irish Saints*
(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011), p. 124

‘For all her dubious origins, therefore, Brighid’s record shows that she stood alone among the women saints of Ireland, a rival in importance to Patrick and Colum Cille, an abbess whom all other abbesses revered, a bishop in all but name, of such high status that she came to be regarded, possibly as early as the seventh century, as “Mary of the Irish”. The spread of Brighid’s cult, both countrywide and beyond, led to the saint’s localization in many areas...’

Y dydd, y ceisiodd dy dad
wra yt, a'i roi atad,
un o'th lygaid a neidiawdd
o'th ben, hyn a'th boenai'n hawdd;
a thrannoeth aeth yr wyneb
oll yn iach, ni bu well neb.

[The day your father attempted
to find you a husband, and give him to you,
one of your eyes jumped
out of your head, and this inevitably hurt you;
but the next day, all your face healed,
no one had ever felt better.]

Gwaith Iorwerth Fynglwyd (eds) H. L. Jones and E. I. Rowlands (Cardiff:
University of Wales Press, 1975), p. 94; trans. Jane Cartwright



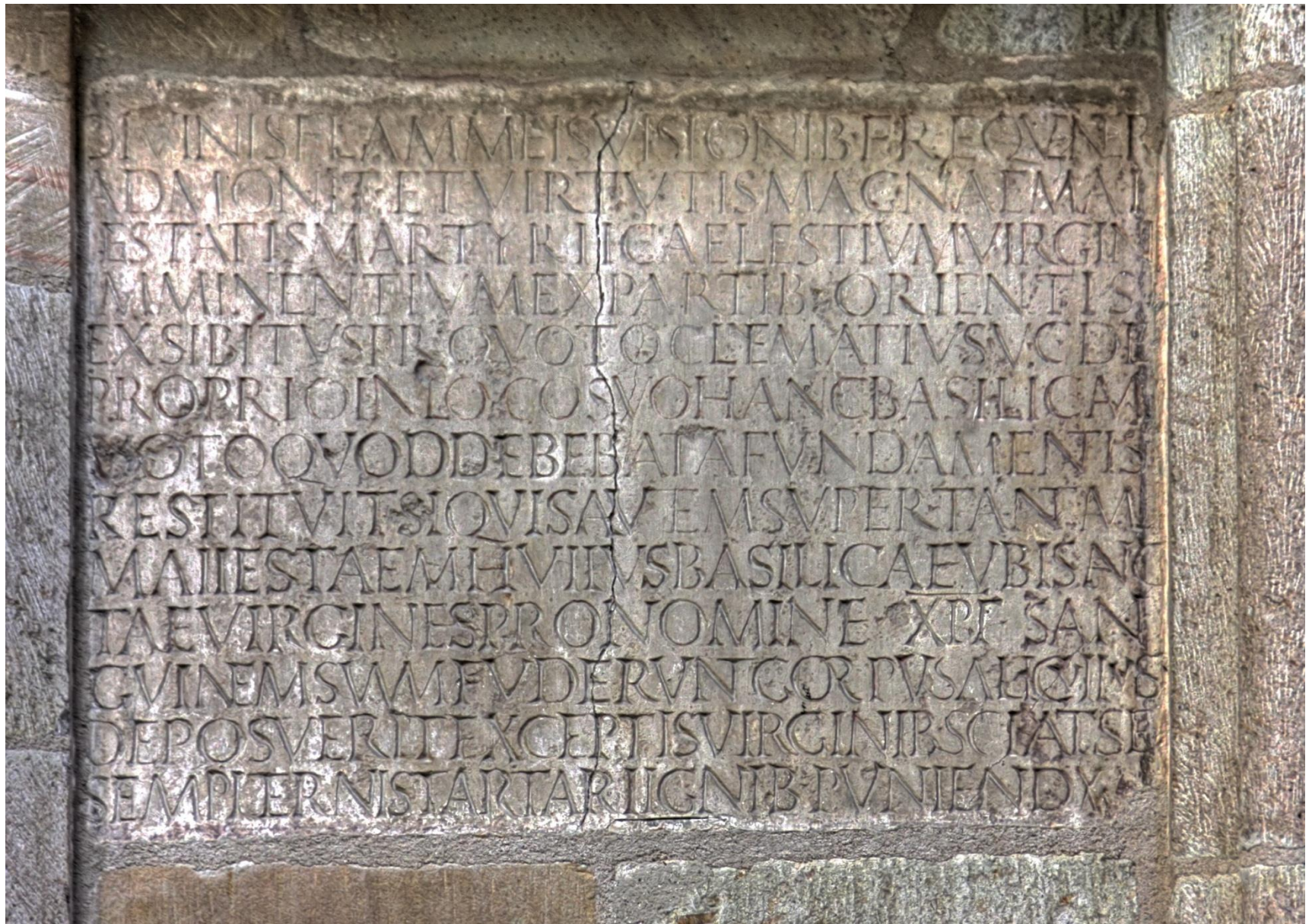
brwyn > brwyniaid
rushes > sparlings (fish)
one fish > many
ashes > butter

photo: St Non's chapel,
Jane Cartwright

‘Beth a ddywedwn am Vrsula Santes a Chymbraes, a hitheu yn ferch i Frenhin y Cymbry a ddioddefodd farwolaeth er cadw ei morwyndod ag vnmil ar ddeg o forynion yn santesol yn dioddef gyda hi? A’r cwbl a ddoethant o wlad y Cymbry.’ Anon. c. 1583
Y Drych Kristnogawl, ed. Geraint Bowen (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p. 2

[What shall we say about Ursula – saint and Welsh woman – the daughter of a king of the Welsh people who suffered martyrdom in order to preserve her virginity and the 11,000 saintly virgins who suffered with her? And they all came from the land of the Welsh.] trans. Jane Cartwright

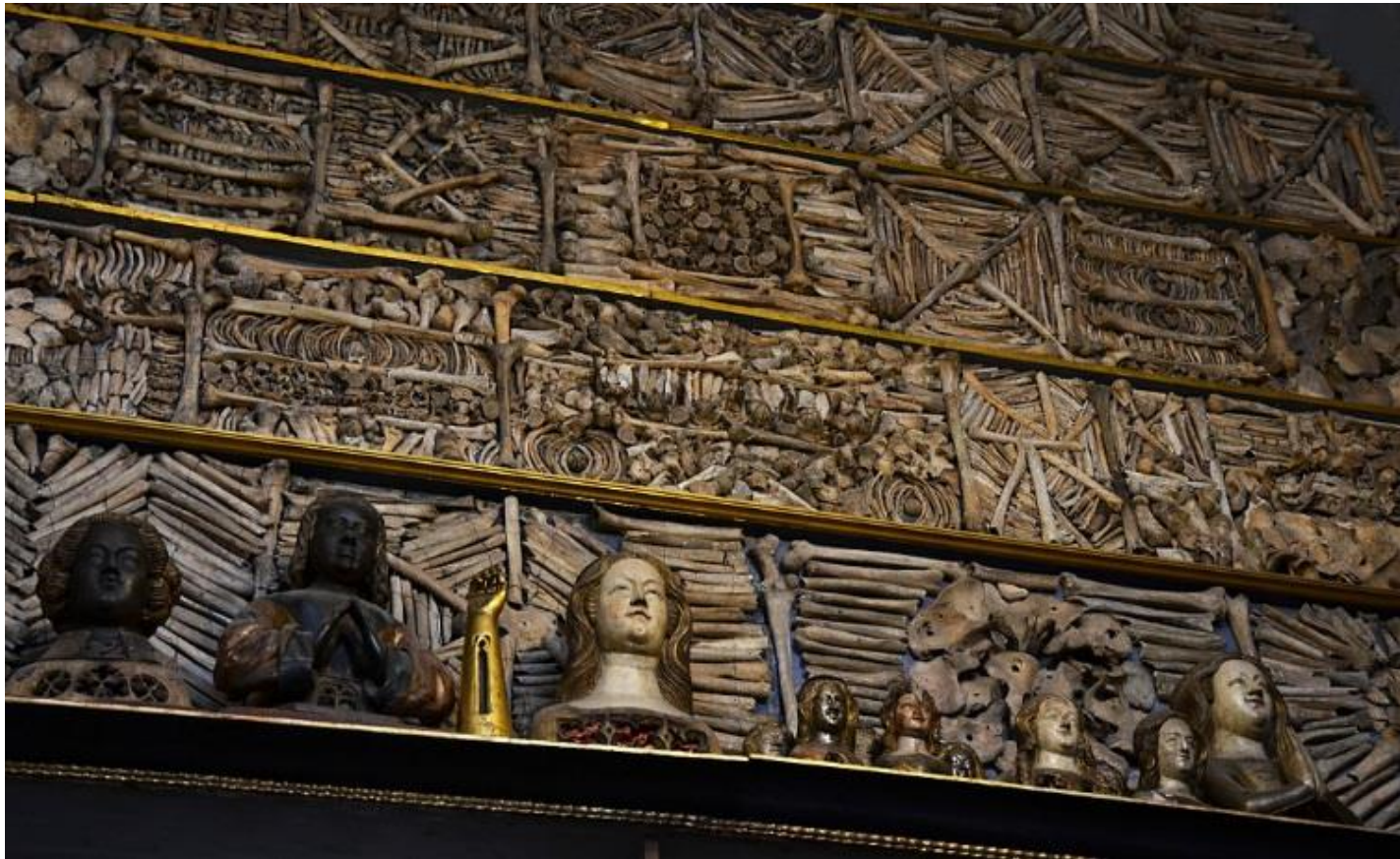
Clematius Inscription, south wall of choir, Church of the 11,000 Virgins,
Cologne ©Raimond Spekking/CC-BY-SA-3.0 (via Wikimedia Commons)



Golden Chamber, Church of the 11,000 Virgins, Cologne

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AGoldene_Kammer_St_Ursula_K%C3%B6ln_29122014_12.jpg

Vassil, Goldene Kammer (the Golden Chamber), made in 1643 in Saint-Ursula church in Cologne.



XX. 261
Dystonia Gweryddon yr
 Almaen: yu yr amser yu
 Amser oedd Gwstennin fab Gwyn
 o Elen by Gwdaſ o gaer fallalwgi
 Iau yu brenni ymrydd yu ac
 yllau i buald hlon a ellid yllau
 Gwddi yu barchor Gwddol ar tordd
 buald oedd Wiclic ſant: yu Kyf
 amſer h yu yr oedd ynt Amraebael
 brenhmedd yu ynyd y kedym.
 Githyr ymplith eraill obrenhmo
 ed y derynad hon yr oedd Gw
 ſantad teillong yu brenni ar i
 duedd yr hlon a han oedd o brenh
 nalol loedd yr hen Gwytameid ar
 llyau ynteb oedd adlophalol a ſant
 Iud C

Ddly bymrae dbyrma lloplaf
 ppydent bym lained bebydd ddyr
 llyddyn ddydder pater aghingam
 aq dnc mama gida hohob pater
 dhyr agloplaf hlf y ghyddon
 Ac velly y tervyna ystoria
 Gweryddon yr Almaen
 hyd y medrodd Syr Huw
 Pennant i thynnu o lla
 ding ynghymraeg
 y gallai rai kerddgar
 i dyall i dyall o huanth
 & hūn

Ac velly y tervyna Ystoria
 Gweryddon yr Almaen hyd y
 medrodd Syr Huw Pennant i
 thynnu o Llading ynGhymraeg
 val y gallai rai kerddgar i dyall
 o'i hiaith e hun.

Translation:

And thus ends *The Story of the
 Virgins of Germany* as far as
 Sir Huw Pennant was able to
 adapt it from Latin into Welsh
 so that lovers of literature
 [literally poetry] could
 understand it in their own
 language.

Beginning of the Welsh Life of Ursula:

Yn yr amser yr oedd Gustennin vab Maxen o Elen v[erch] Eudaf o Gaer Sallawc, i vam, yn vrenin ymPrydyn ac Ywain i vrawd, hwn a elwid Ywain Vinddu, yn varchoc vrddol a'r trydydd brawd oedd Beblic Sant, yn kyfamser hyn yr oeddynt amraevael vrenhinedd yn Ynys y Kedyrn. Eithyr ymplith eraill o vrenhinoedd y deyrnas hon yr oedd gwr sanctaidd, teilwng yn vrenin ar i duedd, yr hwn a hanoedd o vrenhinawl waed yr hen Vrytanieid.

[...] Sef yn y kyfamser hwnnw yr oedd pygan yn vrenin yn Lloegyr a mab oedd i hwnnw yn oedran gwreika.

During the time that Constantine son of Maxen by Elen daughter of Eudaf of Caersallog [i.e. Caernarfon] his mother was king in Britain and Owain his brother, who was called Owain Finddu [Blacklip], was a noble knight and the third brother was St Peblig, there were at that time many kings in the Island of the Mighty. Among the other kings of this kingdom there was a holy, praiseworthy man who was king of his region and he descended from the royal blood of the Ancient Britons [Ursula's unnamed father]

[...]At the same time, a pagan was king in England and he had a son of marriageable age.

Ac yr Maxen hwnnw o Elen i bv dri mab, Pebllic a Chustenin ac Ywain vinddv. [Ywain] a vv varchoc vrddol, a Chustenin a vv dywyssoc yMhrydain a chyff kenedl i bawb yno, a Ffebllic sydd sant anrrydeddus. Ac yn yr amser hwnnw y gollyngwyd i Lydaw o ynys Brydain c mil o lavvrwyr a xxx mil o varchogion vrddolion, a l mil o verched gwyr kyffredin, ac xj mil o verched boneddigion, a rrai hyny a aethant i Gwlen [yn] yr Almaen, ac a verthyrwyd yno yn enw gwir Dduw, a rrai hyny yw Gweryddon yr Almaen.

Macsen had three sons by Elen, Peblig, Custennin and Owain Blacklip. [Owain] was a noble knight, Custennin was prince in Britain and ancestor of all [the princes] there, and Peblig was an honourable saint. At that time a hundred thousand labourers and thirty thousand noble knights, fifty thousand daughters of common men and eleven thousand daughters of nobles were sent from the island of Britain to Armorica. They went to Cologne in Germany, and were martyred there in the name of the true God. They are the Virgins of Germany

‘The Twenty-Four Mightiest Kings’ ed. and trans. P. C. Bartrum

Morwyn hefyd hon a elwid Cristina a'r gwaed heddyw ynghylch i mwnwgl val pe bai y newydd dorri.

(Also a maiden called Cristina and the blood around her neck today as though it had just been cut.)

Morwyn hefyd hon a elwid Clemencia hon a ddrylliesid i phen, eithyr bod y gwaed gwedy ysgrowlingo y gwallt yn kynnal yr esgyrn ynghyd.

(Also a maiden called Clemencia whose head had been severed, although the blood had matted in her hair and held the bones together.)

Merch arall Katrin y gelwid a'r saeth yn i phen a gwallt mawr ar i phen

(Another girl called Catrin with an arrow in her head and lots of hair.)

Skulls, Golden Chamber, Cologne (Kevin Lakhani)



Llangwryfon (Church of the Virgins), dedicated to St Ursula

aerial photograph: Coflein, RCAHMW [Sites \(56\)](#) | [Coflein](#)









George Eyre Evans, *Cardiganshire* (Aberystwyth: The Welsh Gazette, 1903)

First let me tell you in the few brief and pithy words in which it was told some seventy years ago, by an aged Shepherd on Mynydd bach. “You see it was like this, Melga was king of the Picts, and Guanius was king of the Huns, and they got hold of a ship load of these here Welsh girls, who were wrecked near their lands, and they two men killed them all!”

But can we not locate the massacre here in our loved Ceredigion, and on the banks of the brooks Baedog and Wyre? Why let Germany have all the credit of being the scene of our noble Welsh girls’ triumphant last stand? May not the vessels which ‘tis said sailed from river Thames, instead of being wrecked on the Armorican Coast, have been driven ashore at Llansanffraed? Who shall say it no?

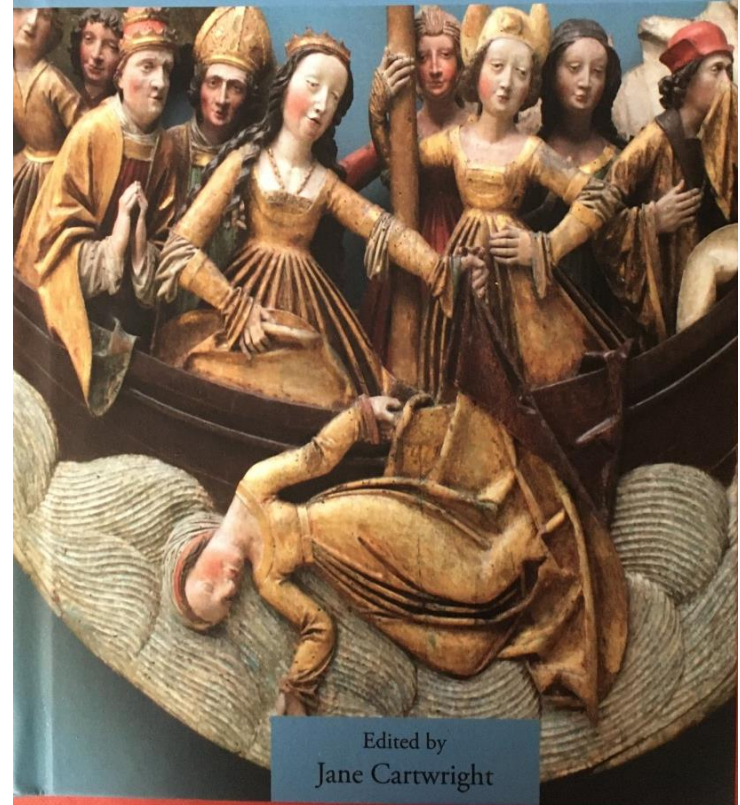
THE CULT OF ST URSULA AND THE 11,000 VIRGINS



Edited by Jane Cartwright

MHRA Library of
Medieval Welsh
Literature

HYSTORIA GWERYDDON YR ALMAEN THE MIDDLE WELSH LIFE OF ST URSULA AND THE 11,000 VIRGINS



Edited by
Jane Cartwright

St Non, mother of St David



- Most of what's known of St Non derived from *Lives of St David – Rhygyfarch Vita Davidis* c. 1095
- One MS copy of *Life of Gerald of Wales' Life of St David* – appendix 5 readings for feast of St Non
- Late medieval Breton miracle play *Buez Santez Nonn*
- Medieval poetry
- Oral traditions
- Photo: stained glass Llanisanffraid, Jane Cartwright



ST. NON'S CHURCH	NAME	SN	56	NW	PARISH	Llanon
CLASS	NGR	Quarter	Sheet of	OS MAP	Scale	1:10,000
CD	51	47	66	84	Country	14 SW

NATIONAL MONUMENT RECORD FOR WALES

Ancient church to be rescued from neglect

Western Mail
12th July 1988

ANCIENT church ruins in West Wales are to be opened to the public for the first time in many years.

The medieval St Non's church in Llanon was left to a local council in an unusual bequest.

It has stood neglected for almost a century, full of mounds of rubble and rubbish.

Now new owners Ceredigion district council plan to give the historic church a facelift.

The tiny church is at least 500 years old, but museum curator Dr John Owen believes parts of the building may date back to the Dark Ages.

A rare Celtic statue of Non and her son David was discovered in the church ruins — battered by the elements.

The 12-inch high stone figure has been taken to Ceredigion museum in Aberystwyth for safe keeping.

It is difficult to date the church because medieval stonework was so basic," said Dr Owen. "But finds like the statue help us to prove that the building

was used as a church."

The church was turned into two cottages at the beginning of this century.

"It has only started to fall into ruin since then," added Dr Owen.

"The walls have been crumbling and a large amount of rubbish appears to have collected in the church."

St Non's church was given to the district council two years ago, along with an old cottage and a plot of land.

All three were owned by former native of Llanon Mrs Elsie Camm.

When she died suddenly, her husband Alex handed over the deeds of the three properties to Ceredigion District Council.

Once the church ruins have been cleared out, visitors will be allowed in.

Workers have made two more important finds at the church.

They have discovered an ancient tomb recess and an ecclesiastical corbel shelf — both of which are thought to date back to the building of the church.



● Dr John Owen among the ruins of the church.









HERITAGE MONUMENT
ST. MICHAEL'S HILL
THE HILL IS THE
SITE OF THE REMAINS OF
A MEDIEVAL CASTLE
WHICH WAS BUILT BY
THE NORMANS IN THE
12TH CENTURY
AND WAS USED AS A
FORTRESS

but the place where the labouring mother was groaning was lit with such serene light that it shone as if God were present, though the sun was obscured by clouds. The mother, in her labour, had a stone near her on which she had leaned with her hands when pressed by her pains, which is why to those who look the rock shows the mark impressed as on wax. It broke in half in sympathy with the mother in her agony; the other part of it jumped over the head of the nun as far as her feet when the mother gave birth. A church has been built in that place, and this stone lies hidden in the base of its altar.

‘Rhygyfarch’s Life of St David’(trans.) Richard Sharpe and John Reuben Davies in *St David of Wales: Cult Church and Nation*, ed. J. Wyn Evans and J. M. Wooding (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 117.



Edudful Dduwsul a ddaw
ar Dduw i wir weddiaw;
bwrw ei phwys yn eglwys Non,
bwrw ei phen lle bo'r ffynnon,
dyrchaf dwylaw yn llawen,
addoli oll i'r ddelw wen,
ennyn y cwyr melyn mawr,
a'i roi oll ar yr allawr;
oddyo heibio'dd â hi
I glos da eglwys Dewi;
offrymu, cusanu'r sant,
iddo gŵyr rhudd ac ariant;

On Sunday Edudful comes
to pray sincerely to God;
She visits Non's church,
puts her head in the well
raises her hands merrily,
worships the holy image,
lights the large, yellow candles,
and puts all of them on the altar
From there she passes to
the good close of St David's
church; makes an offering of
crimson wax and money and
kisses the saint;

Gwaith Lewys Glyn Cothi (ed.), D. Johnston (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), p. 371; trans. J. Cartwright



SAINTE NON

ARRIVAL OF SAINT NON AND SAINT DAVID TO BRITANNY





















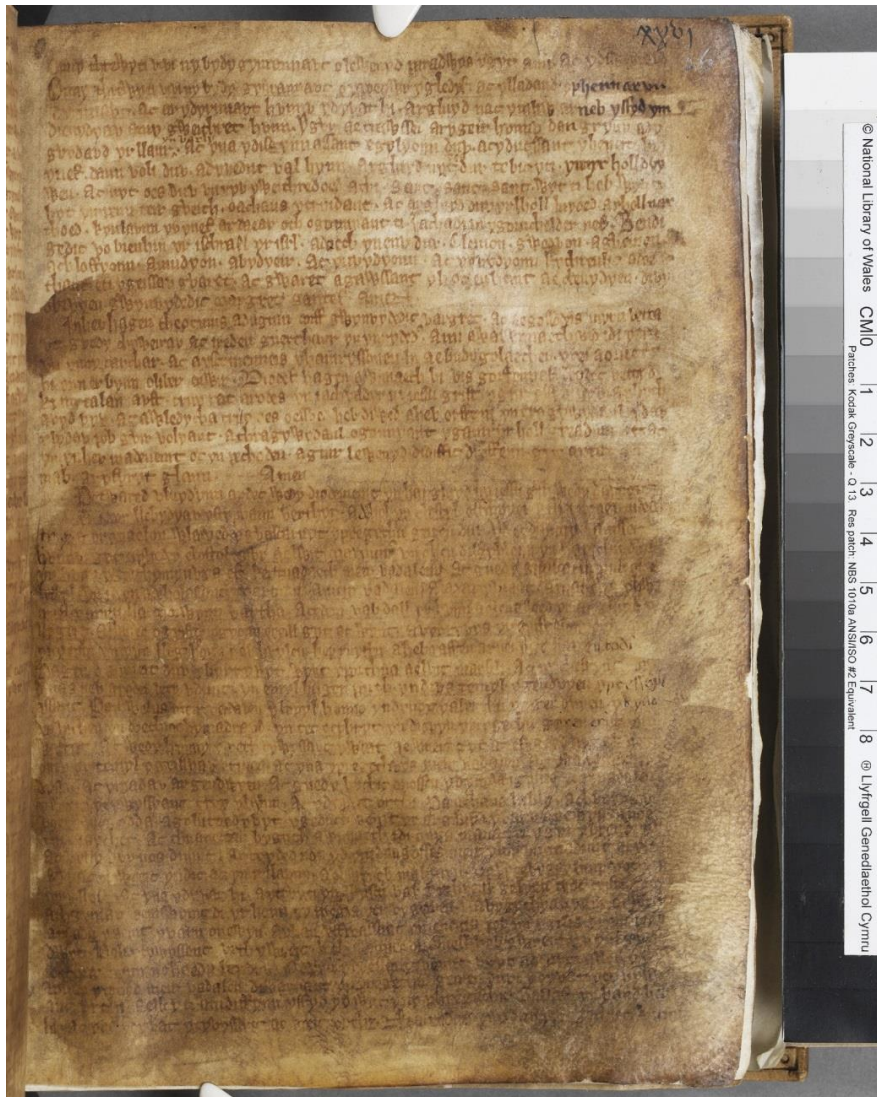




‘What matters is not so much the origin of a particular cult, or whether its saint was “the same” as another, but the expectation in Celtic areas that a saint *should* be local.’

Oliver Padel ‘Local saints and place-names in Cornwall’ in Sharpe and Thacker (eds), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), n. 51.

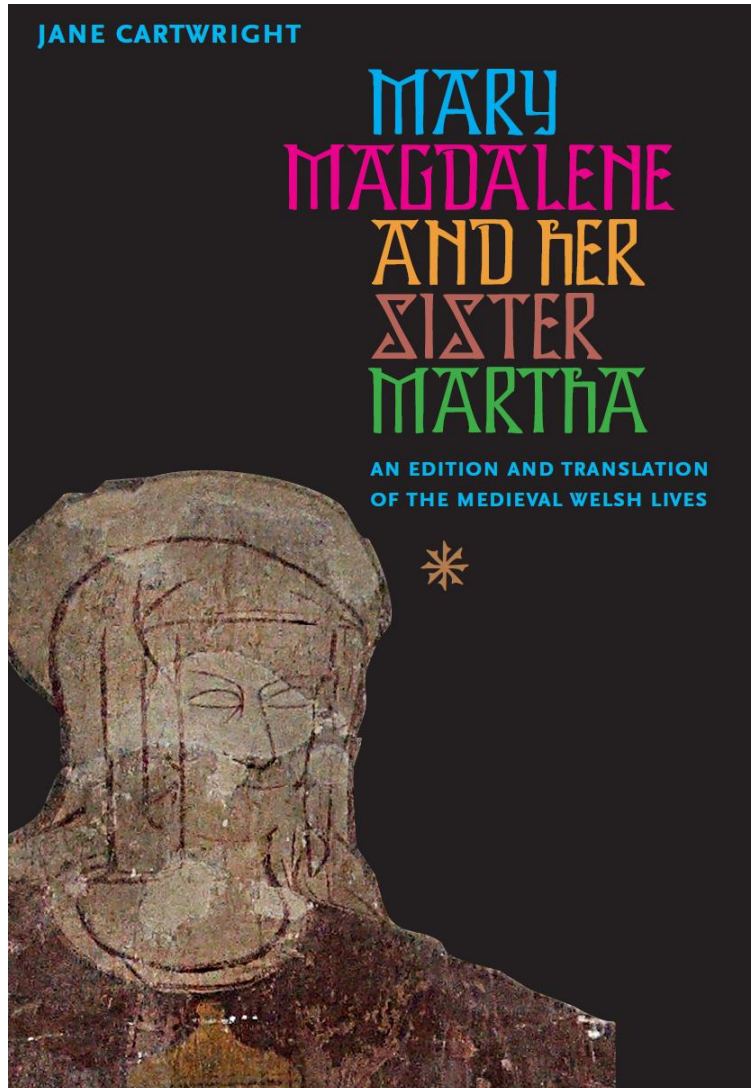
Aberystwyth, LlGC/NLW Peniarth 5, fol. 26r c. 1350 (Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch/The White Book of Rhydderch)



Middle Welsh *bucheddau*/Lives:

- Mary Magdalene
- Martha
- Mary of Egypt
- Margaret of Antioch
- Katherine of Alexandria
- Rhydderch ab Ieuan Llwyd of Llangeithio (and his wives Margred ferch Gruffudd Gryg and Mawd ferch Sir William Clement)

Mary Magdalene /Mair Fadlen



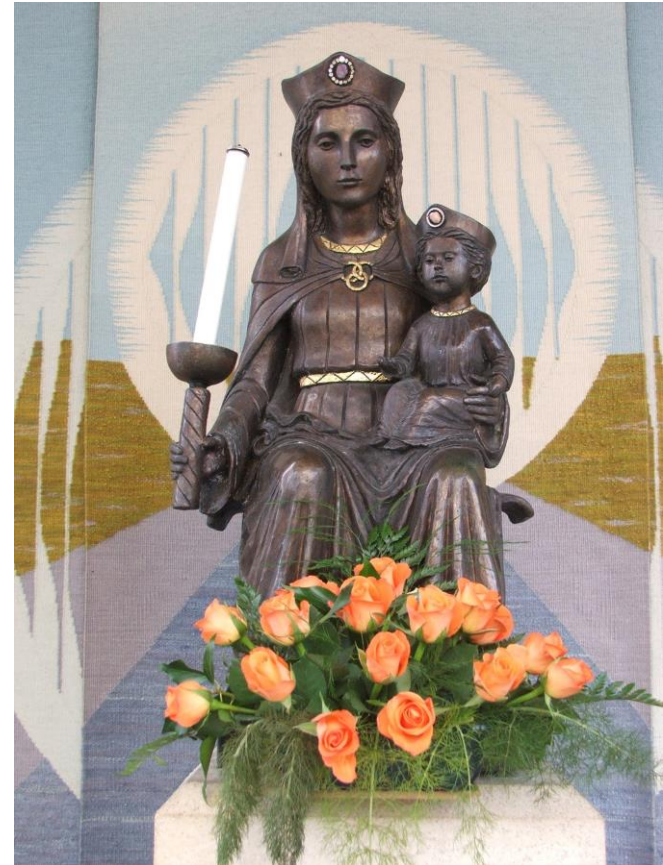
- *Buchedd Mair Fadlen*
- Extant in 12 MSS including White Book of Rhydderch
- Medieval Magdalene – conflation of various biblical characters (Luke 8: 1-12 Christ drives out seven demons from Magdalene; Luke 7: 36-50 unnamed sinner who washes Christ's feet with her tears in the house of Simon; Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha and Lazarus)
- Medieval Life – evangelizes Provence

Universal saints of Christendom – took on a local flavour

Bardic Grammars ‘brenhines nef, daear ac uffern’ (queen of heaven, earth and hell)

Hywel Rheinallt BVM ‘brenhines fro’ (local, regional queen)

- Mary acting through the agency of local images – such as the image of Our Lady and the Taper at Cardigan – became closer to the people and her cult took on a regional significance.
- Taper – sign of Mary’s perpetual virginity
- Images themselves chose their final resting place – emphasized clear ownership, statues refused to be removed.



‘The said ymage was caryed from thens unto Christes church of Cardigan, and the sayd ymage wold not tarry there, but was founde thre or fowre tymes in the place where now ys buylded the church of our Lady, and the taper brunnynge in her hande.’

Thomas Hore (last prior of the Benedictine house at Cardigan)
Three Chapters of Letters relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries, ed. Thomas Wright (London: Camden Society, 1843), p. 186

- Thomas Cromwell had famous statue of Mary removed from Penrhys at night ‘as secretly as might be’ for fear of local revolt.



Catrin (St Katherine of Alexandria) patron saint of students

Buchedd Catrin— White Book of Rhydderch and 15 other MSS including the Red Book of Talgarth/Llanstephan 27



Catrin jabs
Maxentius in the
guts, alabaster
tomb of John Wite
and his wives
Margaret Phelp
and Christina
Einon, Tenby.
Photo: Jane Cartwright



Catrin/St Katherine
medieval stained glass
from Church of St
Cystennin,
Llangystennin, removed
1840 when church was
rebuilt
photo: Jane Cartwright
(Llandudno Junction)



Catrin/Katherine carved in stone, tower of St Giles Church, Wrexham; tower completed 1524 = one of the Seven Wonders of Wales; 27 of 30 niches still contain statues; Peniarth 20 Chronicle steeple at Wrexham fell down on feast of St Katherine 1330



Wallpainting, Church of St Teilo, Llandeilo Tal-y-bont (now at Sain Ffagans Museum, near Cardiff)

photo: Jane Cartwright C14/15









Y Drych Kristnogawl c. 1583

‘Nyd oes wlad yn holl Gred o gymaint o dir a chymaint o saint ynddei ag oedd gynt ymhlith y Cymbry.’

‘There is not a country in the whole of Christendom of the same size that has as many saints in it as there used to be among the Welsh..’

Y Drych Kristogawl, ed. Geraint Bowen (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), p. 4.

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- For details of the distance-learning BA and MA in Celtic Studies, see
- [Celtic Studies \(BA\) | UWTSd](https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/ma-celtic-studies/) <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/ma-celtic-studies/>