



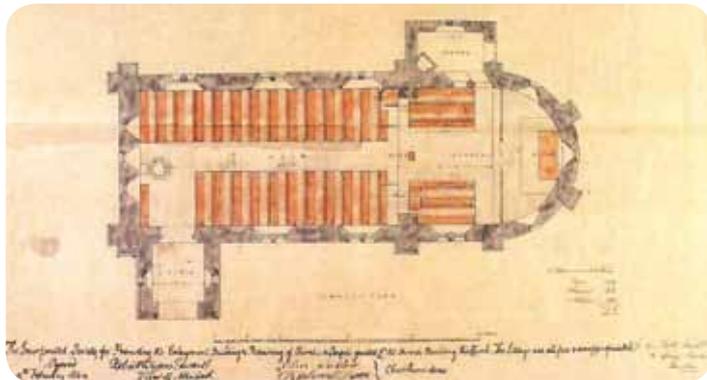
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Christ Church

Christ Church was built between 1862 and 1864 and was designed by the architect, George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878). Scott was a leading name in the gothic revival and is famous for restoring a lot of significant churches and cathedrals, including Westminster Abbey. His practice was responsible for many famous Victorian buildings including the Albert Memorial (1864), St Pancras Station (1865), and government offices in Whitehall (1861).

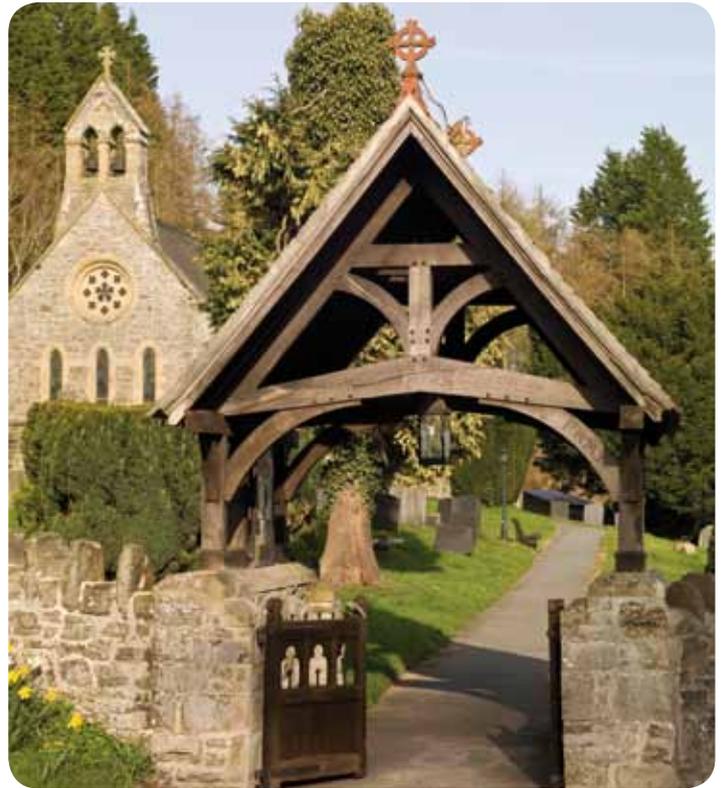
The building

The land for the church and adjacent school was given by Martin Williams of Bryngwyn Hall. After his death in 1856, the project was financed and promoted by his widow, Mary. The church was originally built in the parish of Meifod and became a distinct parish in its own right in 1865.



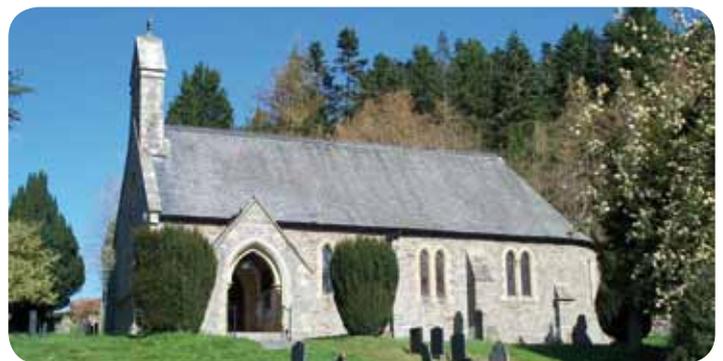
Gilbert Scott's plan of the building from 1864, included in the 2007 NADFAS Report on the church.

An original Gilbert Scott plan of the building from 1864 shows that 'The Incorporated Society for promoting the Enlargement, Building and Repairing of Churches and Chapels' gave £150 towards the building of the church on condition that "all sittings are free and inappropriated". It seems strange to us now that pews could be bought and retained for individual use, but this was the norm in most churches at the time.



Exterior

The church is sited near the brow of a small hill. There is no separation between the nave and chancel (the main part of the church and the altar), so the semi-circular apse forms a simple curved end to the building. Viewed from the south side, this gives it an almost organic feel.



There is a confident simplicity to the external design. The building is based on Early English Gothic, rather than the Decorated style (which was favoured by many Victorian architects), and has random stone walls and buttresses, with dressed sandstone to the windows and doors. The only addition to the building is the vestry in the northwest corner, added in 1895, when the original vestry became the organ chamber.

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Interior

Gilbert Scott's designs usually extended to the detailed fitting out of the interior, and Christ Church is no exception. There is a sense that every object fits into a larger picture, which gives the interior completeness and balance. The 1860s was the time when Victorian optimism was at its peak. As a result, this is a showpiece demonstrating the skill and craftsmanship that the Victorians could apply to a whole range of materials. The quality of the ceramics, metalwork, glazing, stone and timber bears testimony to the skill of both industrial processes and crafts of the time. On entering the church, the eye is drawn straight to the semi-circular east end. The close set rafters of the roof form a semi dome above five lancet windows, and there is a real sense of the altar being the focal point of the design. Most of the interior fixtures and fittings date from when the church was built. Later additions include the memorial stained glass in some of the windows, the stone carving around the vestry door, and probably the tiles around the back of the curved sanctuary east wall.



Tiles



The tiles play a decorative as well as practical role in the interior design of the church. The floor is covered with patterned red and buff encaustic clay tiles and plain red and black geometric tiles. The patterned encaustic tiles were made by firing different coloured clays, which made them more expensive than plain tiles. As a result, in many churches their use is confined to the chancel. The lavish use of decorative tiles throughout the nave, chancel and sanctuary at Christ Church shows the church had a generous benefactor to pay for Gilbert Scott's grandiose scheme.

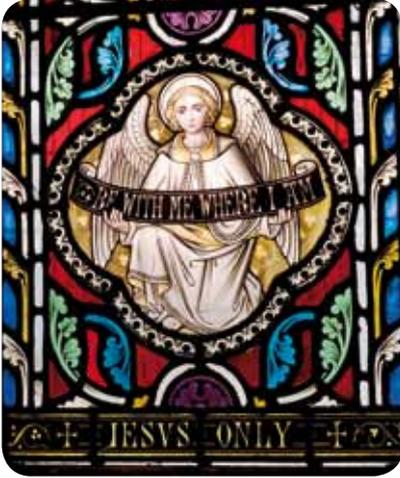
Metalwork

Almost all the plate and brass in the church dates from the church's consecration and was donated by individual benefactors. The medieval style brass candelabra was popular with gothic revival architects such as Gilbert Scott.



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Glazing



Glass from the lancet window dating from 1873 by William Wailes

Gilbert Scott's original design of the sanctuary windows in the apse shows three separate lancet windows, not the present triple lancet window. The original stained glass in these windows is thought to have been moved in 1873 when glass by William Wailes was inserted in its place. The rose window at the west end contains original glass.

Stonemasonry

Most of the finely carved stonework in the church is Cefn sandstone, which came from a quarry near Llangollen. Examples of the high quality of workmanship include the carved corbels supporting the chancel arch, decorated with a rose and leaf design, and the octagonal carved pulpit. The carving above the door to the vestry is by David Edwards of Llanfechain and dates from the 1895 extension.



Pipe Organ

The organ is a two-manual, tracker action instrument built by Peter Conacher and Co. (the old firm) of Huddersfield. It was rebuilt by Messrs. Robert Edwards and Co in 1990. The inscription reads "This organ was erected in commemoration of the Coronation of King Edward VII 1903".



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Churchyard

Visitors enter the churchyard through a charming lychgate and look up towards the church which sits tucked into the side of the hill. The lychgate has memorial inscriptions inside the roof relating to members of the Mackeson-Sandbach family.

The churchyard is an irregular shape, but follows the curve of the road on the west and south sides. The east side backs on to the grounds of the old village school, which predates the church as it was built in 1854 and extended in 1911. A plan of the burials in the churchyard is on the vestry wall and a copy is available at the back of the church.



Sketch of Christ Church from the southwest, less than ten years after it was built. Montgomeryshire Collections, Volume 5.

Yew trees were planted around the edge of the churchyard, probably dating back to the early 1860s. They have recently been cut back and have low, flat tops, so the churchyard has a sense of openness and light. A sketch by Thomas Hancock in 1872 shows how different the church looked when surrounded by deciduous trees.

There are two bells in the bellcote dating from 1959. They were recast and dedicated on Ascension Day 1960, and replaced the original bells cast in 1863. The reason for the recasting is not known, but both sets were made by Mears & Co of London.

Further information

A copy of the report made by The National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) in 2007 is available for perusal at the back of the church.