

St Teilo's Church (32)



What is it?

- This is a Catholic church that was originally built near Pontarddulais, outside Swansea.
- The oldest parts of the building come from around 1150, but it was extended and changed over the years.

Who used the church?

- Historians estimate that it would have served around 250 people in 1520.

Points of interest

- The way it is presented today is how it may have looked in 1520, during the reign of Henry VIII.
- There are no pews or chairs, because people would have been expected to stand through the service. The expression 'gone to the wall' is used today to describe something that's broken down or weak. It comes from church tradition: those who could not stand due to illness or exhaustion could 'go to the wall' and lean on it.
- This church would have been a social centre in 1520. People were required by law to come to church at this time, and so they made the most of it. On special occasions, the local community held festivals and celebrations around the churchyard.
- Later in its life, the church fell out of use as the area was remote and sometimes flooded. People made a special effort to hold three services every summer, when the tide was low and the church was accessible. The fact that the community still looked after the building is the reason the beautiful paintings survived under the plaster.

St Teilo's Church (32)

Points of interest

- The paintings on the wall are unusual, as they have been freshly painted with natural paint. About half the paintings are exact copies of what we found hidden in the walls of the church before it was moved. The rest come from designs we found in other churches and prints from the period.
- All the carvings and sculptures are new, and have been made by hand and decorated in the late medieval style. In the 1970s, the church was vandalised, and so there were no sculptures or furniture left for us to examine.

Where can I find more information?

- Penrhiw Chapel is an example of a typical Protestant place of worship from Wales, and is strikingly different from St Teilo's Church, which is presented as a Catholic church.
- You can see an original painting of St Catherine in the 'Beliefs' area of Oriel 1. It was painted around 1400. Other original paintings are on display in National Museum Cardiff.