



# The History of Ewyas Lacy: Clodock Church

Document Record

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Photograph of leaflet appealing for funds for restoration of the church.

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## CLODOCK CHURCH

IN THE BLACK MOUNTAINS



### THE ORIGIN OF OUR CHURCH

It is known that a Church has stood on this very spot since about the year 500 A.D.

It so happened that **CLYDAWG**, son of **CLYDWYN**, who was the King of his land of streams, or **EWIAS** as it is called, was murdered by a Pagan Saxon whilst hunting on the mountains and his body was brought down in an Ox cart or sledge.

On reaching the ford across the River Monnow, which is to be seen just below the present bridge, the yoke broke and since the oxen refused to be goaded any further, the body was buried where our Church now stands.

That night a column of fire was seen to rise from the grave and when this was reported to the Bishop, he ordered an oratory to be built over the grave and this was duly consecrated.

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It seems probable that a stone Church had been built by at least the year 800 for on a plinth behind the pulpit you will see a portion of a tombstone, found under the Nave in 1917, which shows signs of having once been attached to a wall. It is of much interest because the Society of Antiquaries is of opinion that it dates from the 9th Century and it is therefore the earliest inscribed monument in Herefordshire, since Roman days.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING

The Church consists of a Chancel, Nave, West Tower and South-West Porch. It measures 117 ft. overall and is 26 $\frac{3}{4}$  ft. wide. The **CHANCEL** appears to have been rebuilt some time in the 13th century and the two small lancet windows, one of which has been built up and also the mullions of the East window are of that date. It appears obvious, from a glance outside, that there was originally an apse at the East end.

It will be noted that the arch is edged with Tufa stone, a substance formed by the action of water on lime stone, and it is surmised that it came from Moccas some 15 miles distant. The Chancel arch dates from the late 12th Century and was later strengthened by a pier on either side. It is possible that there was once a rood screen, but the only proof of this is the irregular tooting on the East side.

The Communion Table, rails and ousel bench are original and were placed there about 1640 when Archbishop Laud ordered the Holy table to be moved to the East end and railed in. Previous to that date the table used to be brought into the Chancel, where it was often the receptacle for hats and also used as a seat.

The oak seats are of much interest and bear dates from 1657 to 1701. Some in the chancel are supposed to have been carved by the monks of Llanthony, the Prior of which Abbey appointed the Vicar of Clodock for at least 200 years up to 1540.

The **NAVE** was completed about 1180 and the northern windows date from that time. The second window from the east on the south side is *circa* 1340, the third *c.* 1540 and the westernmost, which appears to have been reset to light the gallery, is *c.* 1540.

Behind the pulpit one can see the marks on the wall where the original stone altar stood and close at hand is a piscina.

Above on a plinth stands the 9th century tombstone and on the pulpit base hangs a photograph showing the pews as arranged prior to 1917. It is known that the Church once possessed a pair of dog tongs in order that the sexton might deal with unruly canines, but these disappeared about 70 years ago.

The **PULPIT**, which is said to be one of the best examples of a 3-decker in existence, dates from about 1700, but incorporates some earlier panelling.

In the South wall is an arched recess; these usually denoted a tomb, perhaps that of Clydawg, our patron Saint.

**FRESCOES.** Both North and South walls bear traces, the earliest dating from the 15th Century. The coat of arms was probably



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painted by an injunction of Charles II. Our records show that the Decalogue, 17th century, was last repainted in 1799 at a cost of 2½ guineas.

**CHESTS.** The oldest is that under the bier and was hollowed out of a solid log, without the lid it weighs nearly 3 cwt. Perhaps the Scots burst the lid off when they pillaged the valley in 1645 and doubtless stole the communion plate, for we are now left with a cup dated 1732. The chest bearing the date 1695 has three locks and each would have had a different key, thus the three holders had all to be present before it could be opened. The large iron box in the vestry was purchased in 1837 at a cost of 72/- because of an Act passed in 1812 in the reign of George III.

The **FONT.** This dates from about 1280 when the Nave was finished, but the cover is 17th century.

**GALLERY.** This was built about 1715 to accommodate the choir and musicians, whose seats, one of which bears the date 1731 will be seen at the south end.

One may assume that the large hooks above on the west wall were used for hanging the ladder and fire hooks, which latter could be used for pulling down burning thatch.

The **TOWER** was built not long after 1400. It used to have several floors and was obviously a place of refuge. Its walls are 4 ft. 9 in. thick at ground level whilst the massive door can be supported by an oak bar which slides back into the wall.

As is usual the stairway to the belfry winds to the right to enable the defenders the free use of their sword arm.

The **BELLS** were recast in 1953 and we now have a beautiful peal of six, visited by ringers from all parts of England. Of those they replaced, all but two were cracked. The oldest bell bore the date 1624, and the words "FEARE GOD: HONNOR THE KING", whilst another was cast in 1649, the year in which King Charles the First was executed. All the original inscriptions have been reproduced.

**SOUTH-WEST DOOR.** This dates from the 16th century and is fitted with a sanctuary ring to be grasped by a fugitive, who by our charter, was entitled to remain in safety, without limit of time, according to his will.

The **EXTERIOR.** The stone work of the porch is said to be 13th century like the Chancel. The weathering on the East face of the Tower shows that the roof had originally a steeper pitch and it may well have been thatched. The next roof of a lower pitch was of stone tiles, which lasted until 1875 and they still roof the Tower, on which you will notice one quaint gargoyle.

Close to the Priest's door, which leads into the Chancel is the tombstone of a Mrs. Jones, who was poisoned by her husband in 1790. The epitaph begins: "My blood was shed by cruel hands".

The husband was the last man hung on the Castle green at Longtown.

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**OUR RECORDS.** Unfortunately our earliest register of Births, etc., only commences in 1703 and is but fragmentary.

It was not until after the passing of an Act of Parliament in 1812 that they began to be properly kept.

There are 17 Wardens' books and registers in existence and some of the items are of interest.

During the Napoleonic wars a number of SAYLERS passed through and it is noted that they were given the sum of 1/-, but had to be in possession of a BRIFF.

As late as 1837 the sum of 4d. was paid for killing a hedgehog, the entry usually being URCHIN or HEDGGOCK, and 1/- for a fox.

1812. Paid for washing a SHURTPLACE at Llanveynoe.

1820. LED to the Tower 7/8.

1820. Sarah Davis given a shift of calico.

1826. The wardens ordered to provide a place for Hanah O'Connor and likewise to apply for MEDSON'S to try for a QUERE for her.

1828. RELIVD a WOAMAN with a BRIFF her property being destroyed by FIER. 1/-.

1830. A number of the poor to be given a peck of FLOWER.

1847. The wardens authorised the expenditure of 6/- for a new pair of handcuffs for the constable.

1877. The Sexton gave notice and demanded a fee of 7/6 for digging a grave instead of the usual 5/-.

## THE REASON FOR OUR APPEAL

A considerable sum is still required for restoration, particularly for the eradication of the death watch beetle in the roof.

In this valley we believe in helping ourselves but are unable to raise all the money required in our parish district of Clodock because there are now so few inhabitants, only 514 according to the last census.

Despite the distances, our services are remarkably well attended, we have a large Sunday School and an excellent team of ringers, some of whom are ladies.

The cost of repairs to a Church, so far from any town, is high and we shall be most grateful for any donation placed in the box or sent to

**" THE HON. TREASURER ",  
CLODOCK CHURCH FABRIC FUND,  
GLAN-NANT, CLODOCK,  
HEREFORD.**

**PLEASE GIVE WHATEVER YOU CAN AFFORD TO HELP  
US TO PRESERVE THIS ANCIENT CHURCH ?**