

A tiny church, overlooking a tiny village

For the next in her series of little gems, Caroline Evans, in lockdown, writes from memory about a nearby church she knows well

Abergorlech in Carmarthenshire is a small settlement nestling in a steep-sided valley where the River Gorlech meets the Cothi, on its way to join the Tywi, and is spanned by the 16th century Grade II Pont Cothi.

Abergorlech is a remote, rural, hamlet with the narrow road through it bordered by houses, a chapel and the one public house, the Black Lion. Up on the slope above the pub, seemingly watching over its flock, is the small church of St David.



St David's was a chapelry to the parish of Llanybydder during the post-conquest period, belonging to the medieval Deanery of Carmarthen. It was rebuilt on the site of the preceding building [maybe a wooden structure] in 1834, with the chancel, nave and east bay dating from that time. The church was called St Mary's when it was extensively restored in 1885, but by 1906, when the south porch and other additions were made, it was being called St David's.

The church played an important role in the spread of early Methodism in the county. St David's Chapel of Ease allowed Carmarthenshire Methodists to avoid celebrating the Lord's Supper in meeting houses or private dwellings and there was a Methodist Society at Abergorlech by 1743. Two leading figures in the Welsh Methodist revival are associated with this little church: William Williams Pantycelyn (1717-1791) was curate there and Daniel Rowland Llangeitho (c1713-1790) brought the teaching of Christ to the area.

One little known fact is that the churchyard is a Site of National Importance as twenty types of waxcap fungi have been recorded there, more than any other site in the county.



Unlike many Victorian builds/restorations, the church has not been blighted with heavy gothic design. On entry, the dark roof beams carry the eyes upward and give an airy and light feel. The simple layout is enhanced with the truly beautiful brass lamp. It is a wonderful place for quiet prayer and contemplation but shows evidence of being a much-loved centre of community life.

Normally I write about churches that are open for visitors and that used to be the case with St David's. Now it can be opened by arrangement – contact the People's Warden, Nadine Sheppard, on 01558 685649. The church is located at SA32 7SN.