

THE EAST WINDOW

In the central panel, the window depicts the Ascension of Christ, with His Mother, Mary, and St John kneeling at His feet. At the right, St Peter is shown, carrying a large key. St James can be seen in the left panel, with the traditional pilgrim staff, hat, cloak, scrip and shell. The church is dedicated to St James the Great, the Apostle, who is also the patron saint of pilgrims. The dedication is not common in West Wales. There are only three others, one being at Walwyns Castle. (In Norman times, the Manor of Dale was a fief of the Lordship of Walwyns Castle). The association of the saint with fishing and scallop shell, may also have made the dedication attractive to our forbears. The window, made by A. Savell & Co. of London, was donated in 1893 by Mrs Lloyd Philipps, of Dale Castle, in memory of her son, Walter, who died in his teens. Decorative details in the window are evocative of contemporary artistic fashion.

ALL SEATS TO BE FREE

By 1903 the tower had developed more defects, possibly stemming from the earlier lightning strike, and a grant for its repair was obtained from the Incorporated Church Building Society on condition that all seats be free.

A GIFT FROM THE NAVY

The inverted ship's bell in the niche of the former doorway on the south wall was used as a font for the chapel of HMS Harrier, the former Royal Naval Radar and Meteorological Training Station at Kete, two miles to the south of Dale village. It was presented to Dale Church when the base closed in 1960.



THE CHURCHYARD AND CEMETERY

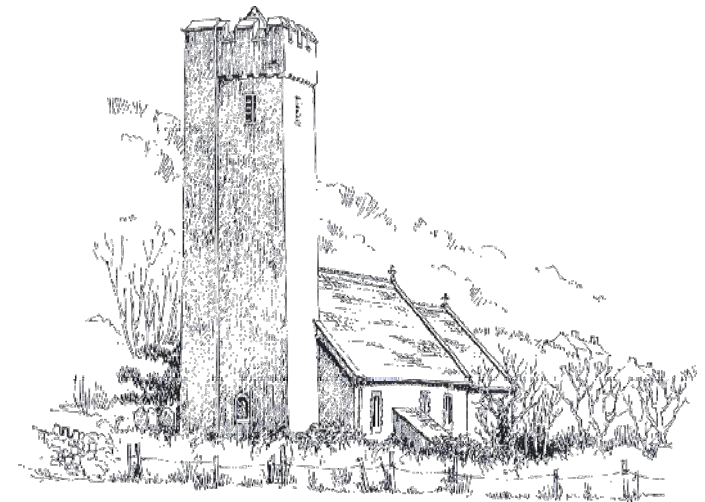


The brick-capped gateway has an interesting inscription, "MEMENTO MORI.....MORS IANUA VITAE". (Remember you are mortal.....death is the gateway to life). The south side of the church yard contains the unmarked graves of the many unknown victims of shipwreck who were washed up on the local beaches. Between 1820 and 1918, more than fifty burials of "unknowns" were recorded in the church register. Twelve of these perished in the Great Storm of November 1868, when there was a multiple shipwreck off Mill Bay. The churchyard had become too small by 1890, and a new cemetery was consecrated a little way to the south. Among its graves and memorials are several honouring those who died serving at local military bases or during the two world wars.

Do take time to look around the church and sit for a while. God is here and with you now: rest in Him and then ask Him to bless you and yours. Please pray for our congregation and community.

Vicar: The Reverend Dennis Wight B. Th.
The Vicarage, 172 Castle Way, Dale SA62 3RN

ST JAMES CHURCH DALE



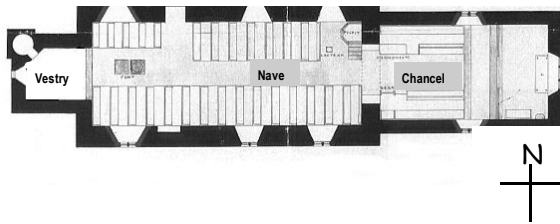
FOUNDATION AND EARLY HISTORY

Although there may have been an earlier religious settlement here, it is probable that the Anglo Norman Lords of the Manor of Dale, the de Vale family, established a church, on the present site. The de Vales were recorded as landholders in the area from the 12th to late 13th centuries.

The earliest recorded mention of the church is as "Ecclesia de Valle" in 1291, when its status was a "Perpetual Curacy".

At some point in its early history, the church became part of the property of the Augustinian Priory of St Thomas, Haverfordwest, and remained so until the Reformation in 1538, when the Priory and its possessions came into the hands of the crown.

CHURCH PLAN



The building style and plan of the church are thought to be medieval and the present chancel and nave may date back to 13th or 14th century.

The alignments and style of the doorways also suggest an early building style. The south doorway has been blocked; this was often done at the time of the Reformation when the custom of processing round the church was stopped.

THE CHANCEL ARCH

The pointed arch of the chancel is 14th century in style. The “shelves” on the inner sides of the arch may have been stops supporting a rood screen.

THE TOWER

This was probably added to the church in about 1500 and may have been used as an aid to navigation for vessels approaching the harbour and anchorage of Dale. On the other hand, many church towers in Pembrokeshire were built or enlarged around this time, their height and large belfry windows, enabling the sound of the bell to carry further.



TREASURES

A silver chalice, dated 1587 and inscribed with the church's name is the oldest remaining artefact.

AN EPISCOPAL VISITATION

A report, dated 1688, has survived and states that the parish church was in good repair, “only of windows not well glazed”. There was a pulpit, “but noe cushion”. The minister “lives not in this parish” and was “a good, honest man.... But has noe time to catechise children, by reason he lives too far off”. Sadly, the clerk could not read nor write, but “in all other things he is careful in doing his duty”.

JOHN ALLEN'S BENEFICENCE

Another mention is made of the church in 1761, when it was rebuilt at the sole expense of John Allen Esq. (He was the owner of Dale Castle and Estate, and also patron of the living at that time). He was the donor of the “elegant font of marble”, which can be seen at the west end of the church. The font cover, crafted in larch, is thought to be early 19th century.



John Allen's daughter, Elinor, the heiress to the estate, became the patron of the living in the early 19th century. She donated the marble altar top in 1818. Elinor and her husband, John Lloyd, are commemorated on the plaques in the chancel. There are also memorials to other members of the family, as well as to the Paynter family, who were previous owners of the Castle

JOHN WESLEY'S VISIT

The evangelist visited Dale on August 2nd 1771, and recorded that ...”our preachers had bestowed here much pains to little purpose. The people, one and all, seemed as dead as stones..... I told them just what I thought. I went as a sword to their hearts. They felt the truth and wept bitterly”. We do not know whether he preached in the church or out of doors.

19TH CENTURY

A photograph, dated 1887, shows the church looking tidy and in good repair. There was gallery at the west end, with a dormer window and a porch entrance. Anecdotaly, the gallery was for the sole use of the Squire and his family and household. It may earlier have been a gallery for the choir or musicians. The tower, which was “mantled with ivy to its topmost stone” a few years earlier, has been cleaned and pointed

THE BELL

The new single bell may have been re-hung in the belfry at this time. It was cast in 1874 by Llewelin and James of Bristol, according to its inscription. Interestingly, the bell also bears the Welsh words, AR DDUW Y GYD. It is difficult to translate that into English; an approximation may be GOD IS ALL. Alternatively, there may have been an omission by the makers.

INTERIOR RENOVATION

Shortly after the work was done, a disaster befell the church. It was struck by lightning in 1889. This necessitated more rebuilding and some alterations. The present interior of the church dates back to this time. The church was stripped completely down to its shell. All the woodwork was replaced with that seen today. It is mostly red deal.

Although “all features of antiquarian interest, which the church may have contained, were removed”, according to the 1920 survey report of the Royal Commission of Ancient and Historic Monuments, the restoration is harmonious and reflects the current styling of the late Victorian era. It is now thought a period piece in “its own right”.

The tiled floor, pulpit with its brass desk and candlestick, and the communion rail all have features typical of the period.

A newspaper account of the re-opening services in November 1890 mentions the “simple elegance of the little church”.