

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

LISTED BUILDING	Church of St John, Church Street, Gowerton, Swansea
Grade:-	II
Date of Notification:-	12.06.99
National Grid Reference:-	SS 5901096430
O.S. 1:10,000 Sheet No.:-	SS 59 NE
CADW Reference No.:-	22768
C & C of S Reference No.:-	LB:339

Notes:-

Location:-

Set back from Church Street, where it changes angle.

History:-

By J Bacon Fowler of Brecon and Swansea, and built in 1880-2 as a chapel of ease to the parish church of Loughor. The land for the church was donated by Sir John Dillwyn Llewelyn of Penllergaer. A grant of £150 was received from the Incorporated Society for the Enlargement, Building and Repair of Churches towards its construction which was undertaken by Thomas, Watkins and Jenkins of Swansea. The chancel was refitted in 1900 when the walls were fully lined in Italian marble, and a matching alter and reredos were installed. This was the gift of Colonel J R Wright, proprietor of the Elba Steelworks in Gowerton, who had set up a new steel making plant in Italy and brought the marble and workmen back with him.

Exterior:-

Nave with bellcote, chancel, S porch and N vestry in Gothic style. Constructed of snecked rock-faced stone with prominent Bridgend stone dressings, under slate roofs and with a dressed plinth. The bellcote at the W end is supported by a projecting arch carried on 2 narrow buttresses. Above apex level, the bellcote steps in slightly, and contains 2 louvre openings to the W and E sides, and a single opening to the N and S sides, all with cinquefoiled heads. The bellcote is gabled to each side, with a cinquefoiled vent to the W and E sides. Underneath the projecting arch is a 2-light window in heavy chamfered surround, each light with a cinquefoiled head and a quatrefoil.

The gabled S porch is to the L of centre and is fronted by large clasping buttresses with offsets. Pointed arched entrance with 2 orders of roll mouldings. Planked door with iron strapwork. Inside the porch is a further pointed doorway with double boarded doors under a plain planked tympanum. In the apex of the porch is a recess with trefoiled head and sill band. It contains a statue, a memorial to Viola Dyer. The windows of the nave have dressed chamfered surrounds, flat heads and square hoodmoulds with stops bearing cross motifs. Each light has a cinquefoiled head. Single lights flanking porch, with a 2-light window to the R and single light to far R, beyond which is an angle buttress. The chancel windows have similar flat heads, with pendant stops to the hoodmoulds. The lights have ogee heads. Three-light window to L and single light to R. The E end has large clasping buttresses

which terminate below eaves level. The E window has 3 stepped cinquefoiled lights under a shallow pointed relieving arch, and a moulded sill band. Lean-to vestry to N side of chancel with shallow pointed arched doorway to E end containing a planked door and reached by 4 steps. Small flat headed 2-light window to N side, each light with a shouldered head. A tapering stack rises from the eaves of the chancel. The N side of the nave has 1- 2- and 3-light windows, from L to R, in the same style as the S side.

Interior:-

Seven-bay nave with arch-braced roof, the braces supported on scalloped corbels. Pointed chamfered chancel arch of 2 orders, the inner order supported on pendant corbels. The chancel is of 3.5 bays, with high arch-braces supported on hollow decorated corbels, with low arcading rising from the wall plate. The roof members, underside and wall plate are painted and gilded. The chancel walls are fully lined in marble, grey and red bands and a decorated coloured frieze to the tops of the side walls. The floor is also of decorated marble, in red, white and black. Surrounding the sanctuary is an ornate red marble reredos with blind arcading. The trefoil-headed arches are supported on black columns. Behind the altar, the reredos is 2-tier and flanked by pilasters. The upper tier has blind trefoiled arches under gables, flanking a wide trefoil-headed ogee arch on black columns, immediately behind the altar. It is surmounted by a cross and has foliate decoration in the spandrels.

A pointed arched doorway leads N to the vestry, with planked door under a recessed trefoiled tympanum. To its L is the organ of 1962. Gilded alter rail with barley twist uprights supporting large scrolls. Two rows of choir stalls with panelled fronts surmounted by friezes of crosses in open circles. Wood panelled polygonal pulpit to L front of nave with narrow open lancets and foliate motifs. The pews are in a similar style with angular bench ends with ogee decoration. Painted octagonal font at W end tapering down to a circular stem on a low plinth. Small incised crosses in circles to the quadrant faces. Two church bells dated 1999 by Taylor, Loughborough, lie next to the font.

The E window has stained glass depicting the Ascension, donated by the Elba Steelworks Company, c1885. The chancel S windows also contain stained glass; the single-light sanctuary window depicts St John the Divine writing the last book of the bible, and is probably contemporary with the lining of the chancel with marble c1900. The 3-light window to the R depicts the Transfiguration of Christ in the centre; the Last Supper to the L and the call of James and John to the R light. Attached to the raked sill below are 3 marble memorial tablets to John Dillwyn Llewelyn (d 1882); Jessie Eliza, wife of Colonel J R Wright, who was a benefactor and 1st organist at the church (d 1896); and to William Greener, 1st choirmaster (d 1895).

Two of the S nave windows contain stained glass. The single light E window of 1953 is in memory of steel maker Sir William Charles Wright, 1876-1950, and was dedicated by his sister. The stained glass is by Lawrence Lee (who also designed windows at Coventry Cathedral). It depicts Jesus, the Good Samaritan, offering a cup of nourishment to a man in need. In the background are blast furnaces, whilst 3 roundels at the bottom show steel-making scenes; furnaces, a rolling mill and a bar mill. A marble tablet to Jessie Ethel, the sister of William Wright (d 1955), was placed on the sill beneath the window. The 2-light window to the R bears a depiction of Peter with John healing the lame man at the gate of the temple. It is dedicated to Sir John Roper Wright (d 1926) and his wife Jessie Eliza (d 1896). The remaining windows have pink and green quarries.

The N wall bears 2 war memorials. Ornate WWI memorial to L consisting of cream marble surround with pilasters, plinth and flat head. Inside is an ornate trefoil-headed arch surmounted by a large cross, under which is a list of the men to died. Plainer grey marble on black background to R, the cornice reading "1939 Our Glorious Dead 1945".

Listed:-

Listed as a well-designed Victorian church founded to serve a growing industrial community, the marble furnishings and stained glass being of additional interest and reflecting the patronage of leading local industrialists.

Reference:-

Newman. John. Buildings of Wales series: Glamorgan, 1995, p 363;
Church guide, 1995, by Hywel Rees, with commentary on stained glass by Rev C J Colebrook.