

Ref:	2020-005888	Church:	St Mary, Aberavon
Diocese:	Llandaff	Archdeaconry:	Margam
Church code:	3790	Created By:	Mrs Amanda Needham
Status:	Awaiting DAC recommendation	Contact Tel.:	07908 960670

Statement of Significance

1) Section 1. Brief history and description of the church building(s), contents, churchyard and setting

The site of St Mary's is the oldest recorded Christian site in Aberavon. The original building was demolished in the 19th Century when its foundations were undermined by the constant flooding of the River Afan.

The present building, enlarged to meet the demands of the ever growing population of the area in 1858-9 by Prochard & Seddon, contains items of great interest: an 18th Century credence table, an Elizabethan chalice, a tomb stone believed to be that of the first Rector of Afan from the 14th Century, a bell dated 1505 and inscribed in Latin "My name is Mary", and a 12th century piscina. Together with exquisite stained glass windows, a fine grand piano and pipe organ, there is much to celebrate in historical terms. The top stage of the tower was probably added or altered circa 1870, while the North aisle was added in 1898 by G.E. Halliday.

The churchyard is the burial place of a 19th Century man executed for his part in the Merthyr Riots of 1831. Richard Lewis, better known as Dic Penderyn, was arrested and charged with riotously assembling at Merthyr Tydfil and feloniously attacking and wounding Donald Black, of the 93rd Regiment, while in the execution of his duty. Although Lewis always denied any responsibility, he was found guilty and hanged at Cardiff goal on Saturday, 13th August 1831. For whatever reason, his body was not welcome back in Merthyr, and the incumbent of Aberavon agreed to bury him in the churchyard at St Mary's on Sunday 14th August - but with no service in the church itself. Today it is widely believed that Lewis was innocent, and he has become a folk hero of the trade union movement.

2) Section 2: The significance of the church (including its contents and churchyard) in terms of:

i) Its special architectural and historical interest

ii) Any significant features of artistic or archaeological interest

As noted in section 1 there are specific features which add to the architectural significance of the building. There is also a great wealth of social significance due to the relationship with Richard Lewis, better known as Dic Penderyn, where he is laid to rest in the churchyard.

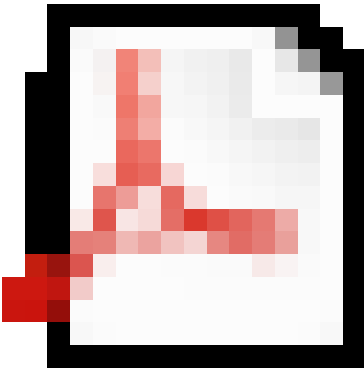
It is understood that the origins of a medieval window was reset into the North aisle, but the arrangement of tracery is not original.

3) Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the significance defined in Section 2

Some elements of the building envelope has slowly headed towards a poor state of repair over a period of years which now require replacement or repair. Whilst these repairs may constitute a loss in materials, the repair will be carried out with natural materials to match the original fabric. In this regard the proposals will not impact the significance of the fabric.

The building fabric has also been subject to modern man-made materials being added to the building. The proposals look to replace these elements with natural materials which are more akin to the original design intent. In this regard the proposals will improve the fabric which will have a positive impact upon the significance of the building.

Plan



Interior

Exterior

