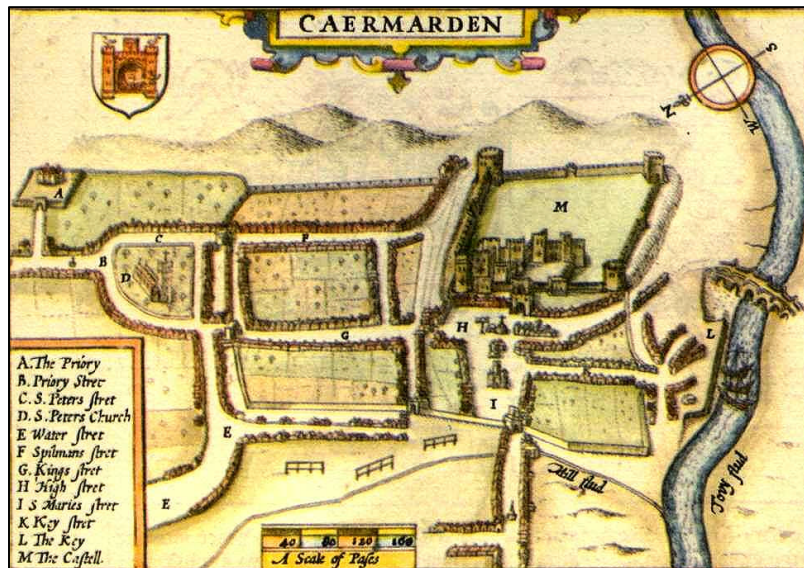


- 1729 Sir Richard Steele (b.1671) was buried in St Peters (memorial near his grave on the S wall). Together with Joseph Addison, he founded *The Spectator* in 1711. He met his second wife, Mary Scurlock of Carmarthen, at his first wife's funeral. Their relationship was affectionate (he wrote her over 400 letters) but stormy (she was considering separation when she died in 1718). Steele moved to Carmarthen after falling out with Addison in 1719. His skull, preserved in a casket, was located during the restoration work in 2000.
- 1751 A three-decker pulpit was built against the South wall. The pews were aligned to face South.
- 1785 A new roof and a plaster ceiling were built by John Nash, but had to be replaced after a piece of ceiling weighing several tons fell onto the pews one Saturday night in 1860.
- 1855 The major Victorian reordering of the interior. The three-decker pulpit and the existing pews were removed and the seating redirected to face East (to the Communion table) instead of South (to the pulpit).
- 1954 Church Street was widened to ease traffic problems, and part of the S side of the churchyard was removed.
- 2000 The chancel and consistory court area were excavated as part of a project to stabilise the floor and renovate the building.



ST PETER'S, CARMARTHEN

A Guide

Nearly two thousand years of history surround the ancient parish church of St Peter's. It stands within the walls of the Roman town of Moridunum, and it is the parish church of the oldest, and once the largest, town in Wales.

But its most important feature is what it does today. Today it is the home of a church community which worships the same God worshipped here for a millennium, and serves the same Christ in the power of the same Holy Spirit.

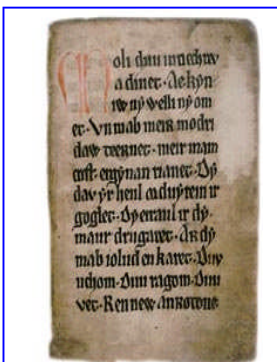


As a church, we hope that your visit to St Peter's will not only help you discover something of its fascinating history, but something, too, of the God we are here to serve.

Lord, we commit to you the work of this parish church and all those who come within its walls. May we find you here as the Way, the Truth and the Life, and go from this place joyfully to serve you in your world; for your honour and glory.

Wales' oldest town

The site on which the church stands has been occupied since the second century AD, when it was just within the western wall of the Roman town of Moridunum, and lay to the immediate south of the west gate.



A religious poem from the 'Black Book of Carmarthen', written in the 13th century, probably at the Priory of St John

Much of the east end of the church was excavated during renovations in 2000/01. Some Roman material (pottery and metalwork) was uncovered, but the investigation gave no sign that the site was used or occupied during Roman times.

At the other end of the former Roman town a Christian community grew up in the early Middle Ages (probably from the sixth century onwards). This was a *clas*, a Welsh religious community, dedicated to a local saint, Teulyddog. After the arrival of the Normans in the twelfth century the *clas* was turned into a Augustinian Priory dedicated to St John the Evangelist. The only surviving part of that monastery today is the gatehouse, now incorporated into the houses spanning the lower end of Old Oak Lane. It was at the point marked *A* on the map on p.4

How old is the church?

The first written reference to the church dates from 1107-15, when King Henry I donated St Peter's to Battle Abbey in Sussex. But it is very probable that St Peter's had existed for many years before that date: the churchyard was (before road realignment in 1954) of the oval shape typical of cemeteries of the early Welsh church, (6th or 7th centuries?).

A few years after the donation to Battle Abbey, in 1125, Bishop Bernard of St Davids was able to give St Peter's to Carmarthen Priory, to whom it continued to belong throughout the Middle Ages.

The present building is difficult to date, but the north aisle of the nave, the chancel and the north transept (Lady Chapel) are probably from the 13th century, the tower late dates from the 15th century, and the south aisle from the 16th century.



Some events in the church's story

1330 Walter Wynter, Archdeacon of Carmarthen, donated lands to the Priory of St Johns, on the condition that they employed a priest to celebrate Mass daily in St Peter's for Walter, his predecessors and all the faithful departed.

1340 A felon named Thomas Satan claimed sanctuary in the St Peter's, then fled from justice by escaping from the church.

1538 The tomb of Sir Rhys ap Thomas was moved from the dissolved Franciscan Friary to St Peter's.

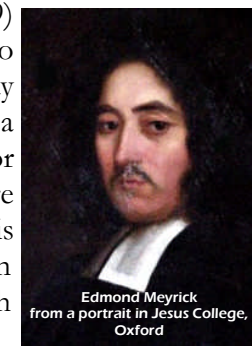


1555 Bishop Robert Ferrar was tried in the Consistory Court in St Peter's and condemned to be burned as a heretic for his adherence to Protestantism. The sentence was carried out on March 30th in Carmarthen market place to the south side of the market cross (shown beside the letter H in Speed's map on p.4). He was one of five martyr Bishops in the reign of Mary, and the only one in Wales.

1576 Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex, was buried in St Peter's. His body had been brought from Ireland, where he was serving Elizabeth I as Earl Marshal. His wife, Lettice, was a granddaughter of Anne Boleyn's elder sister, Mary (played by Scarlett Johansson in the 2008 film 'The Other Boleyn Girl'). His son, Robert, was a favourite of Elizabeth I (Robert was played by Errol Flynn in the film 'The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex', 1939).

1658 Tennis and Fives were played in the church and churchyard. The offenders were punished by a time in the stocks (*H* in the map on p.4).

1713 Edmond Meyrick (born 1636, Vicar 1672-1689) died in this year. In his will he left benefactions to St Peter's for sermons to be preached on the day of his baptism and ordination, and funds for a charity school in the town. He was also a major benefactor of Jesus College, Oxford, where 'Meyricke' scholarships are still awarded today. His elegant monument, with a Latin inscription, is in the chancel. His wife is buried in the Vestry which may also be his burial place.



Edmond Meyrick from a portrait in Jesus College, Oxford