

Fig. 6.—Newborough Church Interior, South side. One-light window behind Reading Desk. Similar window on north side (opposite).



Fig. 7.—Newborough Church Interior, South Side Vestry Door.

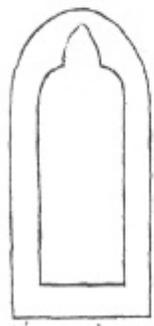


Fig. 8.—Newborough Church Interior, Vestry Window.

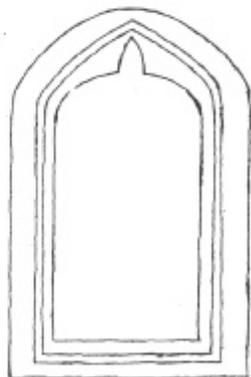


Fig. 9.—Newborough Church Interior, Window on North and South Sides (near Bell).

## 12 St. Peter's Church, Newborough

[The following extended English version of this chapter appeared in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 6<sup>th</sup> Series vol.xix. Only illustrations not in Welsh version are included]

*St. PETER'S CHURCH, NEWBOROUGH, ANGLESEY* by HUGH OWEN, Esq., M.A., F.R.Hist. S.

The parish church of Newborough, Anglesey, dedicated to St. Peter, is a small structure standing about 140 ft. above the sea-level in a bleak exposed situation near the southern end of a long dorsum or ridge of land which extends from Mynydd Llwydiarth through Newborough to Llanddwyn Point, and separates Malldraeth Sands on the west from the Menai Straits on the east. The building thus commands a very extensive view, and is considered quite a landmark in the south-eastern part of the county. Its orientation is north-east by east.

The existing structure is 100 ft. long externally but only 22 ft. wide; its walls are 2½ ft. thick and the ridge of its roof does not exceed 24 ft. in height, so that the building presents a singularly elongated appearance (see Fig.15). It consists of a nave and chancel forming a single aisle, with a screen at the junction (see Fig.16), together with a porch and priest's vestry on the south side. The structural division between the nave and chancel is strengthened by clumsy external projections and is further indicated by a difference of a few inches in the respective heights of the ridges of the nave and chancel roofs (see Fig.15). It is stated <sup>1</sup>that the name "Rhosfair" was substituted for "Rhosyr" because the Royal Chapel was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. This chapel now constitutes the chancel of the church which accounts for the exceptional length of the whole structure. The (St. Peter's) Church and (St. Mary's) Chapel were originally separate and distinct,<sup>2</sup> but later were combined into one building. How this was done is not definitely known.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Camb.*, Series IV, Vol. iv, p. 271

<sup>2</sup> cp. the following:- "Llys, i.e., Aula dicitur, atque ab Ecclesia Novo-Burgiana (sancto Petro dedicate) Austrum versus non multem dissidet, sed eam fere ad limina habet; ideoque vix ambigendum puto quin haec Ecclesia olim, his reglls aedibus, quibus proxime adstat, pro capella domestica usui erat, talemque capellam alicubi has aedes coluisse in Extenta legimus; et quo quaeso verisimilius loco, suam has regias aedes habuisse capellam, quam ubi hsec Ecclesia est, quae cum desierat esse domestica, protinus ut jam pridem nota est, parochialis evaserit." *Antiq. Paroch.*, *Arch. Camb.*, 1846, I, i, 308.

<sup>3</sup> The antiquarian Mr. Wynn Williams, believed they were distinct from each other and that it was necessary to build about 14 ft. of wall to connect the respective north and south walls; he said this portion was of ruder workmanship than the older walls. Even today five rafters in this part of the roof, each about one yard apart, have a more "recent" appearance than the remainder. Others consider [that] the east wall of the former St. Peter's Church was also the west gable of St. Mary's Chapel, so that it only required the removal of this intervening wall to form one large structure (see "Hanes Niwbwrch" by Owen Williamson, p.62). This second suggestion may be dismissed as highly improbable. Possibly there

The chancel and nave are 32 ft. and 65 ft. long respectively and both are 16½ ft. wide, so that the length of the chancel is approximately twice its own width and the nave four times as long as it is wide. A 4½-in. step leads from the nave level to that of the chancel, the altar level being 4½-in. higher still.

In the entire building the only ancient features apparently remaining are the chancel windows,<sup>4</sup> the chief of which is a large and well proportioned three-light window of the "Perpendicular" period (see Fig.18), containing six coloured glass figures, viz., of Elijah restoring the widow's son, of Elias ascending to heaven in a chariot of fire, of Jesus' disciples in a storm at sea, of Abraham going to offer up Isaac, of Moses and the serpent in the wilderness, and of Pharaoh's daughter finding the babe Moses. From the sketch (Fig.18) of this window it will be noted that the chancel walls were then - 1846 - of finely dressed stone; subsequent considerable but injudicious "restorations" (in 1850 and 1886 respectively) have caused these walls to be cemented over; the stone bracket heads on either side of this window have also disappeared;<sup>5</sup> but those attached to the *exterior* of the window have not been interfered with. Close by are two two-light windows (Fig.19) both of similar design and over 7 ft. high in the north and south walls respectively, and each with their external stone bracket heads intact; two more windows of nearly the same height, but of one light each, are to be found on either side of the chancel near the screen (Fig.25a No. 6).

In the south wall of the chancel is a plainly pointed doorway (Fig.25a No.7) a yard wide but now low in elevation,<sup>6</sup> leading to the priest's vestry which is about 7 ft. square and lit up by a one-light window (Fig.25a No.8) nearly 5 ft. in height.

The windows of the nave, seven in number, are more modern in design than those of the chancel, but no two of them are placed exactly opposite to each other as in the chancel excepting the pair of one-light windows (Fig.25a No.9) near the western gable; while the window-sills in the south wall are all 3 ft. from the nave floor level, each of those in the north wall is 3 or 4 in. lower.<sup>7</sup> Between the chancel screen and the porch in the south wall of the nave are two two-light windows (Fig.25b No.10) of like design, each 6 ft. high and 5½ ft. wide; a similarly designed window, but about 1

were transepts originally to this church which may have been subsequently removed owing to a decrease in the number of parishioners and worshippers.

4 "The choir presents an example unequalled in Anglesey for pure and beautiful design, excellent material and beautiful workmanship." *Arch. Camb.*, 1846, I, i, 426.

5 Only one bracket head is now to be seen *inside* the church, and that is on the north wall of the nave by window (see Fig. 10a).

6 The highest point of the doorway appears to have been originally 8½ ft. from the ground; now it is barely 5½ ft. and is guarded by a 2-in. thick door of oak. "The door of St. Mary's Chapel leads into the new (priest's) vestry which was built in 1886. In that year the church was repaired and renovated in the most substantial manner, entailing great expense, the most prominent and generous subscriber to this good work being the Hon. Lord Stanley, of Penrhos, Holyhead; but this in no way detracts from the self-sacrifice of local workers," see *Hanes Niwbwrch* by Owen Williamson, p.63.

7 This difference is possibly due to the wind-exposed north side of the church as contrasted with the sunny aspect of the south wall.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, NEWBOROUGH, ANGLESEY

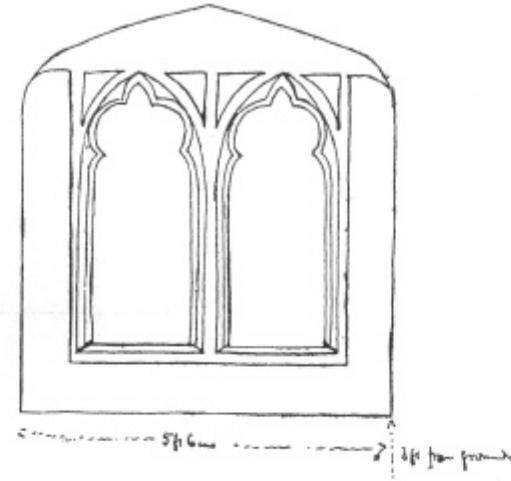


Fig. 10.—Newborough Church Interior. South Side of Nave. Two-light window, two such. Also one on north side of nave (near pulpit).

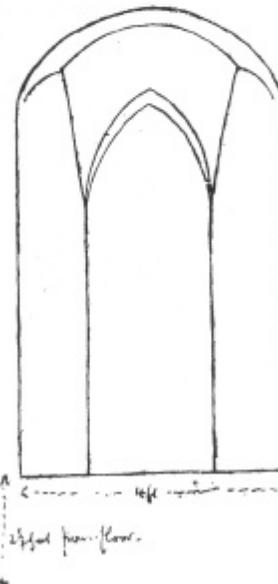


Fig. 11.—Newborough Church Interior. Window on North Side, nearly opposite porch.



Fig. 10a.—Newborough Church Interior. North Wall of Nave. Stone Bracket Head.

ft. narrower, is situated in the north wall near the screen, which wall contains two (other) one-light windows<sup>8</sup> (Fig.25b No.11).

On the south side of the nave; and but 4 yds, from the nave gable, is a doorway under a small porch (12 ft. long and 5 ft. wide) now constituting the only entrance to the church; the outer and inner porch doorways are similar in material, design and dimensions (Fig.25c No.12). In the recess on each side of the porch interior is a stone seat 9½ ft. long and about half-a-yard wide; a broken stoup (Fig.25c No.13) occupies its place in the wall on the right and on a level with the top of the stone seat. The porch roof, on its inner side, is now evidently the oldest roof in the entire church structure, consisting of closely set and somewhat slender rafters.<sup>9</sup> Midway between the porch and chancel, but in the north wall of the nave is an arched doorway, 5 ft. high and nearly a yard wide, now closed up<sup>10</sup> (Fig.25c No.14).

At the - presumably - last "restoration" of the church the exterior of the walls was cemented and "whipped" with gravel, no doubt to render it more "rainproof" in view of the church's exposed position. Outwardly the west (i.e., the nave) gable has a bellcote with two openings, each containing one bell (Fig.25d No.15). The difference in height of the ridges of the nave and chancel roofs has already been mentioned.<sup>11</sup>

Almost at the eastern end of the south wall of the chancel is a plain piscina<sup>12</sup> (Fig.25d No.16), the position of which indicates clearly that the church has not been extended eastwards. Placed in a recess 1 ft. in depth, it is 2 ft. wide and 29 ft. high, with a 3-in. deep cavity, and is 20 in. from the encaustic-tiled chancel pavement. The wooden furniture of the church is quite modern and all of solid oak. The oaken altar table is 6 ft. long and a yard wide, its top resting almost level with the sill of the east window. Two and a half yards in front of the altar table and extending across the chancel (excepting a 2½-ft. gap in the centre) is the altar rail. The reading desk, lit up from the rear by a window (Fig.25a No.6) stands between the priest's door and the chancel screen, the lectern being just on the other side of the screen and in the middle of the aisle.

In the chancel are three pairs of pews for the church choir (Fig.17), arranged with their length parallel to the north and south walls, two pairs being attached to the north wall and the other to the south wall between the altar rail and priest's vestry. These pews are each 7 ft. in length, and are identical in design with those in the nave: the sketch of a pew end is shown in Fig.25d No.17. A very elaborate and beautiful chancel screen 9 ft. high divides the chancel from the nave (Fig. 18).

8 With this account, compare the following - written in 1846:- "In the north wall of the nave are two single-light trifoliated windows one of which is placed unusually low, while two others occur in the south side." *Arch. Camb.*, 1846, I, i, 247. [by Rev. Henry Longueville-Jones Ed.]

9 "Making a circular arch under the tie-beams." *Arch. Camb.*, 1846, I, i, 247.

10 Can *this* have been "the unusually low window" referred to above in note 8 ?

11 See [original] p.114

12 A piscina is a perforated stone basin affixed to or let into the sanctuary wall, and was anciently used to carry away water after the celebrant had washed his hands during the Communion Service. (The "Lavabo.")

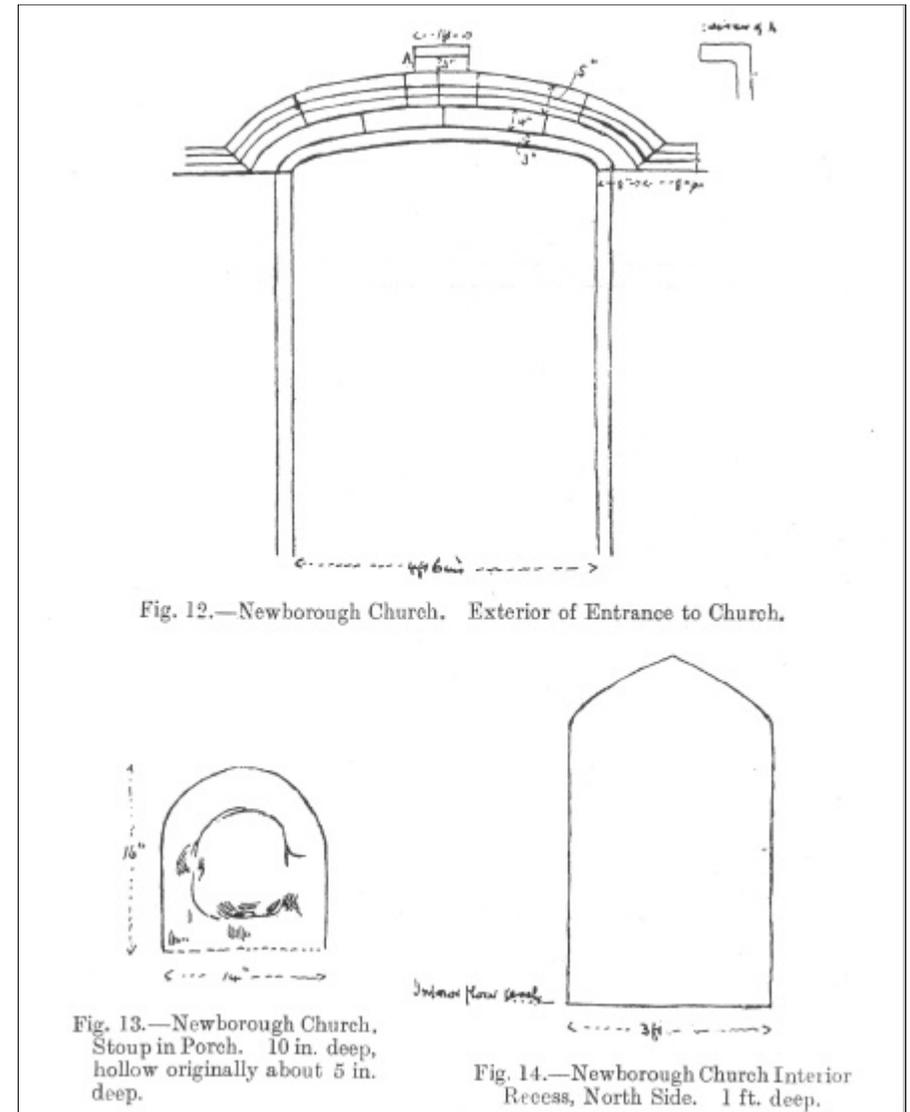


Fig. 25c

The pulpit is entered from the left by three low steps, its right side resting on the north wall of the nave; the rear portion of it is square, the front part of it being semi-octagonal. A large harmonium has been placed immediately in front of, but below, the pulpit. The church will comfortably accommodate 280 adult worshippers.

An ordinary wooden box does service in the priest's vestry for the usual parish chest; the alms box is attached to the south wall on the immediate right of the door leading out of the church.

In an open space 6 ft. square, on the left side of the church entrance stands the ancient font.<sup>13</sup> Its plain rectangular base is 10 in. thick, 25 in. long and 22 in. wide. The bowl itself stands 18 in. high and has interlaced ornaments on two panels (Fig.25d Nos.18,19), a third panel has evidently been marked aimlessly (Fig.25d No.20), while the fourth is blank; the external and internal diameters of the bowl are 20 in. and 16 in. respectively; its depth is 7 in., and the circular cavity is covered by a modern wooden lid of the shape of a low hexagonal pyramid.

Under each of the two-light windows in the chancel is an arched recess 6½ ft. long and nearly 2 ft. in depth. The one in the north wall contains a slab (Fig.25e No.24) with a cross fleury “recently found under the flooring at Newborough church.”<sup>14</sup> The head of the cross is very elegantly designed, forming a wheel, and the sides are enriched with flowing foliage.”<sup>15</sup> Down the centre of the shaft may be deciphered the following inscription:-

+ HIC . JACET : DD : BARKER : CV : A'E<sup>16</sup>: PPICIET' : D[S]<sup>17</sup>.

And presumably in full reads thus: *Hic· jacet· David· Barker<sup>18</sup>· cuius· anime· propicietur· Deus.*

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13 “The font is not of much interest so far as its sculpture is concerned. Westwood, in his *Lapidarium Walliae* says of it (pp. 198-9) that it is pre-Norman, but I should much doubt that. It seems to me to be not really early mediaeval.” - Communicated by letter to me by Right Rev. Bishop G. Forrest Browne, D.D., D.C.L., formerly Bishop of Bristol.

(ii) “The style of the ornament in this might as well be Norman as pre-Conquest. Both the knot-work pattern and the other running pattern can be paralleled in rude post-Conquest work in which Saxon traditions lingered. I think this is especially the case in regard to Anglesey. It is unfortunate that the third panel is so vague; it might have decided the question of date; if, for instance, it was zoomorphic in character.” - Communicated by letter to me by Philip M. Johnston, Esq., F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

14 “The actual condition of this (i.e. Newborough) Church (in 1846) reflects no credit on the parishioners and parochial authorities; it requires and deserves a thorough restoration by a competent architect.” - *Arch. Camb.*, 1846, I, i, 248. Apparently effect was given to this recommendation about four years later, when the above-mentioned slab was unearthed. The last “restoration” took place in 1886 ( *see note [original]* p.118)

15 *Archaeological Journal* (1851), viii, p.101

16 Recte AĪE

17 Recte DS

18 “The name, being English, suggests that this person was an officer of the Crown - probably a mayor and Crown steward, for no native could hold the office of mayor.” “Ita tamen quod idem maior semper sit homo Anglicanus et non alius ” (*Rec. of C'von* p.177). *Arch. Camb.*, IV, iv, 271. David le Barker (W. *barcer* = Eng. tanner. - Acts ix, 43) is mentioned in *Rec. of C'von* p.85).