

**A LOCAL HISTORY OF ST ANNE'S CHURCH, CWMFFRWD**  
**AND CWMFFRWD HOUSE, BOLAHHAUL ROAD.**

St Anne's Church, Cwmffrwd, was built as a 'Chapel of Ease' under the Parish Church of Llandyfaelog. Two people were mostly responsible for its establishment, they being Mr Francis Green of Oakland's and Col Owen Wilson of Cwmffrwd House in Bolahaul Road.

Mr Francis Green, a solicitor, was the eldest son of the Rev'd George Wade Green, Vicar of Cwrt Henri and brother-in-law to Francis David Saunders of Glanrhydwr Mansion, Cloigyn.

In 1859 Francis Green purchased a part of Llwynyreoos farm, to include a public house and garden called 'Foxhole' for £800. In 1860 he bought the adjoining farm called 'Tynewydd' with ten fields for £467. On this land he built 'Oaklands' mansion.

The Rev'd George Wade Green had been responsible for the construction of the church at Cwrt Henri, so Francis already had the idea of building a local church.

To explain how Col Owen Wilson appeared on the scene it is necessary to first consider Bishop Thirlwall and Cwmffrwd House.

Bishop John Connop Thirlwall was Bishop of the St David's diocese from 1840 to 1874. Born in Stepney, London, in 1797 and of a Northumberland family, he was an infant protegee, and was said to be articulate in Latin at the age of three and Greek by the age of four, he was also a writer of sermons by the age of ten.

After graduation from Trinity College, Cambridge, he studied Law before taking Holy Orders and was raised to the See of St David's in 1840 as Bishop by the then Prime Minister Lord Melbourne. He quickly learnt the Welsh language in order to preach and conduct services in Welsh.

Cwmffrwd House, Bolahaul Road, was situated across the road from the present property - Parcydrisi (see plan below) It was built by Bishop Thirlwall in the 1850's as a large Victorian house. The loft over the stables and coach house was adapted as a 'place of worship' with a nave, chancel and altar. It was licensed for Divine Service and it was here that local people attended church on Sundays, being it was too far to travel to Llandyfaelog church. It was also considered 'sinful' at that time to use any form of vehicular transport on a Sunday.

**Bishop Thirwall, when he lived at Cwmffrwd has frequently assessed the need and desire for a church to be built in the vicinity. He sold Cwmffrwd House to his cousin Annie, widow of John Wilson, Recorder for Carmarthen and their son Col Owen Wilson. On his retirement from military service, Owen made Cwmffrwd House his home . Mrs Annie Wilson died in 1874 and was subsequently buried in St Anne's Churchyard.**

**Bishop Thirwall remained unmarried and retired to Bath in 1874, where he died in 1875.**

**In 1865 Francis Green and Owen Wilson got together to negotiate with the Cawdor Estate to purchase land for the purpose of building a church. They agreed on half an acre of land for a rent of £19 which was conveyed by Lord Cawdor to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners by deed, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1865.**

**The sum of £1,599, 7s 6p was spent on the building which consisted of the sum of £814 in subscriptions and a grant of £965 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.**

**This 'Chapel of Ease' was licensed for Divine Service on the 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1868. On Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1868, St Anne's Church was declared open for Divine Service and Worship by licence from Bishop Thirwall. The first service was held at 11am on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1868 in Welsh and was to continue on alternate Sundays in English and Welsh. The first service before a full congregation was conducted by George Atkins, Vice Principal of Trinity College, Carmarthen.**

**That service was low key compared with the one for the laying of the foundation stone for the local school room ( now the church hall ) carried out on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1872. The service in English commenced at 11am and conducted by the vicar Rev'd R.W. Owen, Llandyfaelog, assisted by Rev'd George Atkins. The County High Sheriff Astley Thompson and his good lady were also present. Following the service Francis Green presented her with a silver trowel and mallet. The foundation stone was laid hermetically and sealed with the inscription placed thereon - 'FOUNDATION STONE. LAID 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 1872'.**

**Following the ceremony the company were entertained to a lavish lunch at Oaklands. At 3pm the same day a Welsh service took place, the preacher being Rev'd Daniel Lewis of Llangennech Church. Collections that day went towards paying for a Curate.**

**The new school room was used daily between 10.30am and 12.30pm to educate both children and adults, and for Sunday school, lectures, etc, to improve the rising generation in religion, morals and all aspects of education.**

**In 1906 Idole British school was built and St Anne's school eventually closed. The school house next door became the parsonage for the Curate and the school itself, a church hall.**

**In 1877 after the death of his wife aged 50 years, Francis Green sold Oakland's to a Thomas William Barker, Registrar for Davids Diocese. His family became faithful church members. He died in 1912.**

**After the Wilson's departed, Cwmffrwd House became the residence of a Mr Edwin Morgan, the son of physician and surgeon Dr William Evan Morgan. Edwin was a dental surgeon in Carmarthen. He held a LDS. RCS qualification from Guys hospital, London, one of very few in the area at that time. His wife was a cousin of Bishop Prosser, who was the Bishop of St Davids from 1927 to 1950. They had five children and resided at Cwmffrwd House until it's complete destruction by fire in the autumn of 1921.**

**What hope is there that St Anne's Church, Cwmffrwd, will see its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the year 2068 ?**

**With acknowledgement to Mr Elvie Evans, Veterinary Surgeon, of Bwlchymynydd, who researched the above facts. He has previously been a Warden at St Anne's Church, where his wife Ann is the current lay preacher.**

**Nigel Williams,  
Cwmffrwd.**

