

# **St Curig Travels in Celtic Lands**

**By Rosie Jones**

## **An update in February 2013**

The story of St Curig came out in January 2013. It was distributed to all the churches in Wales and The West Country that have been identified as having a possible Curig connection, with a request for comment, criticism and new information. The churches have responded with queries and information, which will lead to a revision of the original text. In the meantime, I have listed below everything that has come in to date.

*Canon Roger L Brown: February 2013*

Before becoming Vicar of St John the Baptist Glyncorrwg, Roger was a curate in Cardiff. He tells me that the name 'Coryton' in Cardiff comes from the name of a local landowner Sir Herbert Cory, who was the Conservative MP for Cardiff. This would indicate that the old church in Whitchurch is not a Curig church, and may have implications for the link with St Andrews, Coryton in Devon. Disappointing, as they both fitted in so neatly with my map.

*Elizabeth Davies: Churchwarden of St Curig's, Porthkerry in the Vale of Glamorgan*

Elizabeth has found a reference to 'St Curig's staff' in a novel of mediaeval times, and asks what is the connection.

The story appears in Sabine Baring Gould's 'Lives of the British saints' (available free on line). The staff was described by Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales) as being covered in gold and silver and precious jewels. It was kept in St Garmon's/St Harmon's monastery in Radnorshire. The monastery was destroyed during the reformation, and the staff was lost, probably to King Henry VIII's coffers. It was reputed to have healing properties, particularly in the case of boils and sores. There is also reference to a magic coat of mail belonging to Curig, which links to the reference in his history as an ex military man.

I have to admit that in a effort to appear scholarly and convincing about this sixth century history, I deliberately left out the more miraculous tales, but they are mentioned in a number of accounts,

and he does have a reputation as a healer. For the record, here they are:

### ***The sticky fingers miracles***

The first of these occurs in Llangurig, when Curig's offering of food was stolen by thieves. Curig magically caused the hands of the thieves to stick to the bags and baskets of food so they were fingered for their crime. Once the food was returned, they suffered no further harm.

The next sticky fingers story occurred in Brittany, when Curig noticed a man cutting rushes on a Sunday. Curig was particularly severe about people breaking the Sabbath. In this case, the rushes all stuck to the man's face and body. He was not released until he had made his penance.

### ***The disability miracles***

In Llangurig, Curig is recorded as turning a man blind as a punishment for theft. Again, once he had repented, his sight was restored.

In Brittany, he noticed a young woman doing her laundry on a Sunday, and caused paralysis in her limbs. As a penance, she gave him a plot of land on which to build a church. She was miraculously cured, and he built his church at St Pol de Leon, which was later demolished by the Normans to build Chappelle Kreisker. Remember this story when you peg out washing on a Sunday morning before church.

### ***Vision of Holiness***

When St Pol de Leon (Paul Aurelian) visited Curig at Chappelle Guevroc to invite him to join his ministry, he noticed 'a radiance of supernatural light around his head'. This convinced St Paul that Curig was the right man for the job. The sunlight on the sand dunes at Ker Emma is certainly radiant.

On the whole, Curig's miracles appear to cause more harm than good, but eventually, after suffering for sin, everyone was healed.

### ***Wikipedia***

Suggests that Capel Curig in Snowdonia was a sixth century church, and therefore likely to be a Curig church before the Julietta

dedication. This warrants a visit. The church is now a Bed and breakfast hotel, but the owners have retained the stained glass, font and other parts of the church. I have sent a copy of the book to the present owners, to ask if they have any further information.

*Rosie Jones : February 2013*

### **St Brychan**

There was once a chapel of St Curig at Cray, near Brecon. I have been unable to find anything about it through the Church in Wales website, but it adds to the evidence of a link between St Brychan, and his many offspring, and St Curig.

I have recently come across a reference to a St Brynach, who is the saint of Nevern Church in the Prescsli hills of Pembrokeshire. He is also cited as a beneficiary of the charity of Maelgwyn of Gwynedd. There is a nearby village called Llanfyrnach (Brynach's cell). There is a village in Brecon called Llanfrynach (Brychan's cell), which is also associated. I checked them out and found the following:

St Brynach (Irish Brannoc), came from Ireland in the sixth century, possibly with St Brychan. Churches associated with Brynach are mainly in Pembrokeshire, and most have Ogham inscriptions. He spent time in Rome and in Brittany.

St Brychan (Irish Broccan) was also Irish and may have been slightly earlier. He is recorded as King of Brychionig. He had more than one wife, but of his eleven children by his wife Gwladys, he had one son or daughter) named Curig or Keri. I have to wonder whether Maelgwyn endowed Brychan's church, Brynach's church or both, or whether Brychan and Brynach were the same person.

And finally, we now have a website up and running. If you put in [www.glyncorrwgchurch.co.uk](http://www.glyncorrwgchurch.co.uk), and go to the Curig page, identified by a Celtic Cross, you will find any new information.

Rosie Jones 24.02.2113