

S. Catharine's Church,

BAGLAN

(1882 - 1932)

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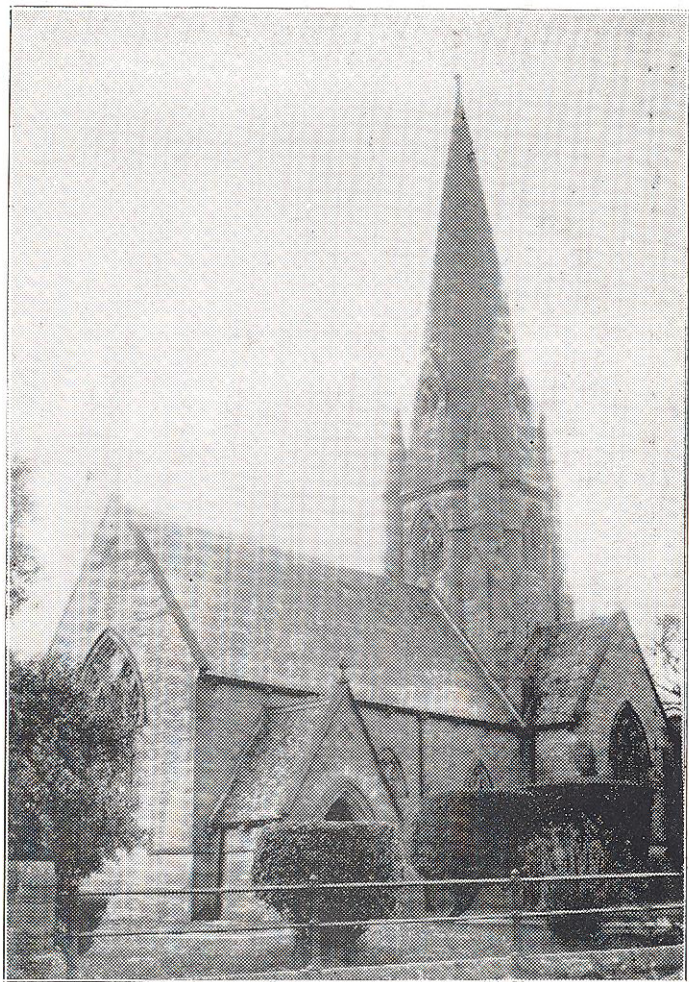
BAGLAN

(1882 - 1932)

THIS little Guide Book, dedicated to my Parishioners, was written to commemorate the Jubilee of S. Catharine's and to help visitors to a greater appreciation of one of the most beautiful churches in the Principality.

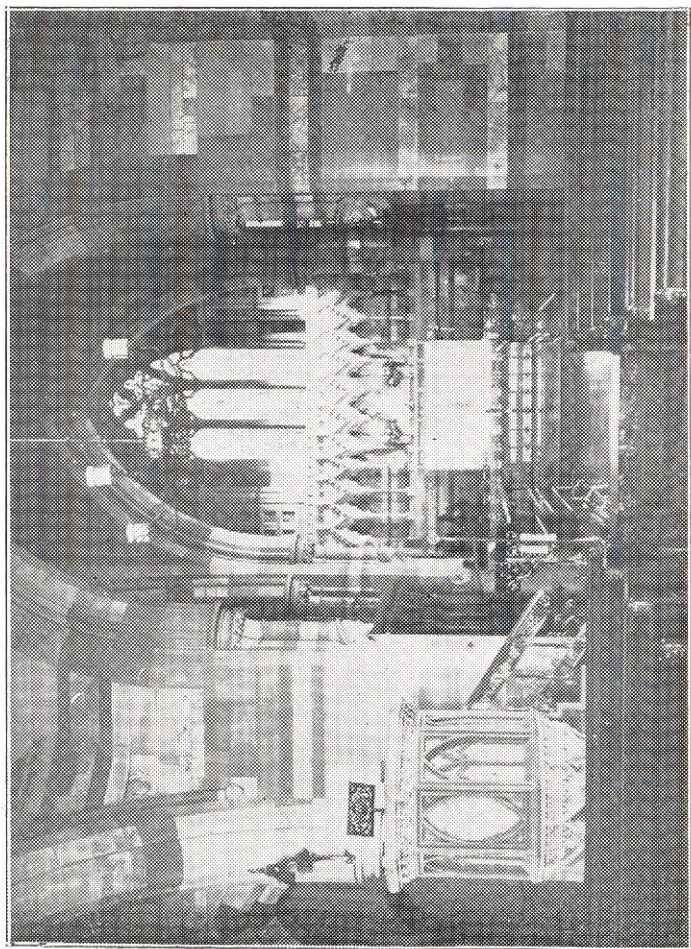
HOWARD C. MORTON,
Vicar.

7th March, 1932.



(Photo, Harry Jones, Neath)

S. CATHARINE'S CHURCH, BAGLAN.



(Photo, Harry Jones, Neath)

THE INTERIOR OF S. CATHARINE'S CHURCH.

St. Catharine's Church

Baglan



THE Foundation Stone of this Church—the munificent gift of Mr. and Mrs. Griffith Llewellyn, of Baglan Hall, and dedicated to St. Catharine of Alexandria—was laid by Mrs. Llewellyn, on 26th June, 1875, and consecrated by Dr. Ollivant, Bishop of Llandaff, on 7th March, 1882.

At that time Baglan formed part of the parish of Aberavon and was under the charge of the Reverend Daniel Lewis. Some ten years later it was formed into a separate parish, and the Reverend E. G. E. Richardson, at that time Curate of Boston, Lincs., was appointed the first Vicar.

St. Catharine's—frequently called the Alabaster Church—is in the “Decorated” style and was built according to the plans of Mr. John Pritchard, the Diocesan Architect. Cruciform in shape, it measures 79 feet from east to west, and 45 feet in its widest part, and has seating accommodation for just over two hundred people.

A SHORT TOUR OF THE BUILDING.

Just before we enter the Church we notice two sculptured heads, one on either side of the Main Door—these represent the Founder and the Consecrator.

Inside the building we will proceed at once to the Chancel, where we are struck by the beautiful East Window. It is by Sir Edward Burne Jones, and consists of three lights. In the centre is the Crucifixion—notice that the Christ is beardless and that He hangs on a tree, the broken trunk of which can be easily seen (*Acts V. 39*). The other two figures are the Blessed Virgin Mary and S. John. Above are represented the Angelic Host and on either side, high up in the wall, are eight Italian Tiles.

The Reredos, Sanctuary Walls and the little pink ribbon running round the building are of Penarth Alabaster—the dark stone is Forest of Dean, and the light is from quarries at Bridgend. Notice the Mosaic work of the floor and the eight steps of marble up to the Altar.

The Memorial let into the north wall of the Sanctuary is considered by many to be the finest piece of work in the Church. It bears a plate with the following inscription :—

“ Griffith Llewellyn of Baglan Hall,

Founder of this Church,

was born August 27, 1802, and died December 9, 1888.

Madelina Georgina, His Wife,

born February 12, 1826 and died May 2, 1903.”

The Marble Slab behind the Altar depicts the Resurrection—our Lord rising out of the tomb, holding the flag of Victory, “one Angel at the head and the other at the feet where the Body of Jesus had lain,” two Roman Soldiers struck to the ground by fear, in the foreground, their shields

and spears in the left hand side and the Arms of the Roman Army on the right ; (S.P.Q.R. stands for Senatus Populusque Romanus and means The Senate and People of Rome).

THE CHANCEL.

The Choir Stalls are of oak cut from the Baglan Estate—the carved figures which form the terminals represent S. Catharine and were the gift of Mr. R. W. Llewellyn. On the south side she appears with her well-known symbol, a wheel, on which she was condemned to suffer martyrdom by order of the Emperor Maximim, escaping death by this instrument, she was shortly afterwards beheaded. On the north side therefore she is seen with the sword in one hand and in the other a book—the emblem of her learning. In both, she is crowned, being, it is supposed, of royal descent (c. A.D. 290).

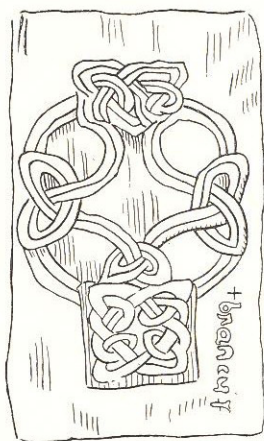
Above are four heads representing the Evangelists, with their Apocalyptic symbols underneath (*Rev. IV., 6-7*), and behind the Choir Screens may be seen four more heads—on the one side those of a King and Queen, and on the other those of a Bishop and a Knight.

THE NORTH TRANSEPT

is used as a Choir Vestry and contains the Organ. This has two manuals and eighteen stops, and is by Willis, of London. When the Church was consecrated it stood on the floor, but in 1899, when the transept was extended, an organ loft was built, the instrument taken to pieces, thoroughly cleaned

and re-erected therein. The whole work was completed by 29th January in the following year. A further addition of three stops was made to the organ in July, 1910, at a cost of £120, which was defrayed by special subscription. The Re-opening and Dedication took place on 11th August, 1910, and the sermon was preached by the Reverend Edward Davies, Vicar of Aberavon. Following the service there was an Organ Recital, given by Mr. D. J. Thomas, of Margam.

Here too is *THE BRANCUF STONE*, our great Archeological treasure. The following description of it is taken from "*Lapidarium Walliae*":—" Previous to the res-



toration of the little Church of Baglan, near Neath, this elegantly carved stone was used as one of the coping-stones of the Churchyard wall, close to the stile forming the southern entrance to the churchyard. During the repairs it was, by the care of Col. G. G. Francis, removed thence and affixed upon the wall of the tower of the Church.

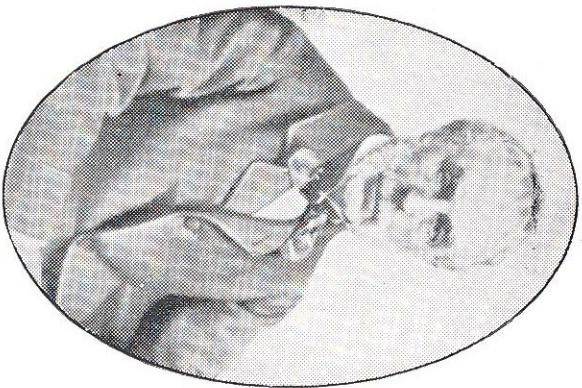
The stone is about 30 inches long and 16 wide, being of an oblong form, with the ornamental design and name incised. The ornament is formed by the regular interlacing of an endless double ribbon into a Greek \boxtimes , the arms being united by double ribbons, so placed as to give the head of



Mr. R. W. LLEWELLYN
for twenty-one years People's Warden
of this Church



Mrs. R. W. LLEWELLYN
The present Warden




MR. GRIFFITH LEWELLYN




Mrs. GRIFFITH LEWELLYN



The donors of S. Catharine's

the cross a circular outline, very much in the style of some of the fine Irish crosses. The lower limb of the cross is smaller than the others, resting on a square base, also ornamented with an interlaced design, the ribbon being double in four of the interlacements, so as to give a more symmetrical idea to the figure. I do not recollect to have met with a more simple and elegant design in any of the numerous carved stones which I have examined.

The inscription is equally simple and perfectly legible, the name being  *brancuf*.

All the letters are minuscules of the form to which the term Anglo-Saxon has ordinarily been applied, but which might, with equal propriety, be termed Irish or British, and which is found on many of the inscribed stones both of Ireland and Wales. The rounded form of the *b*, the p-like form of the *r*, the *y*, or rather q-like form of the *u*, and the F-like form of the very distinct terminal *f*¹, are all especial forms of these different minuscule letters. The invocation of the Saviour, indicated by the prefixed , is by no means common on the monumental stones of Wales, although it occurs twice on the stone of St. Cadfan, and several times on the cross of St. Samson, at Llantwit.

Of the age of this stone it is not easy to give a decided opinion without more information respecting the person

(¹) It has been incorrectly suggested (Arch. Camb. 1876, p. 224) that the inscription "should be read  *brancu* , in which case the name would be an early form of Brengi."

commemorated thereby. At all events, I do not think I shall be far wrong in assigning to it a date not earlier than the ninth, or later than the tenth century. The absence of Roman capitals removes it from the earlier period of some of these stones. Dr. Petrie informs us that he had met with no carved stones in Ireland bearing the triquetra later than the tenth century¹, and it will be seen that the two sides and lower knot of the cross in Brancuf's stone are formed precisely on the plan of the triquetra, the only difference being that the ends of the ribbon forming the apex of each of the triquetrae, instead of being joined together so as to complete the figure, here extend obliquely outwards, so as to form parts of the adjacent triquetrae. The inscription itself bears great similarity to that upon the tombstone of Blaimac, Abbot of Clonmacnoise †896, a figure of which is given by Dr. Petrie², which, like the one before us, simply bears the name of the deceased.

THE SOUTH TRANSEPT.

A Copper Plate records the fact that it was re-seated by his wife, in October, 1913, "In Memory of Robert William Llewellyn, of Cwrt Colman and Baglan Hall, for 21 years Churchwarden of this Church." The window is in memory of a Mr. Hall and his two sons, who at one time lived in Baglan House, now the residence of the Earl of Jersey. It will be observed that each figure is holding a different musical instrument.

(1) Essay on the Round Towers, p. 322.

(2) *Ib.* p. 323.

THE PRIEST'S VESTRY

contains an interesting Board, giving details of a Charity belonging to the Parish. It reads thus—

PARISH OF BAGLAN.

	Interest					
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Money at interest belonging to Parish of Baglan on security of the Turnpike Tolls of Neath District in the hands of Thomas Hopkins, Esq., Tynyrheol, in the hands of David Bateman, Executor of Lewis John, of Michaelstone.	20	0	0	2	0	0
	5	0	0	0	5	0
	2	10	0	0	2	6
	27	10	0	2	7	6

How the above was given.

Donation of £12/10/-	{	being part of the above by George Williams, of Blaen-Baglan, Esq., for the use of the Lower Hamlet poor.
Part of do. of £5	{	by Rev. Leyson Thomas, for the use of the poor of the whole parish.
£30	{	by Richard of Bwlch, for the use of the poor of the whole parish.

£40 still remains secured upon the Neath Turnpike Trust and £2 the interest is divided between the two Hamlets in the proportion of £1/6/8 to the Lower Hamlet and 13/4 to the Higher.

Dated September 4, 1786.

Rev. Wm. Thomas, late Vicar.

Extracted March 4, 1842.

David Rees, Vicar.

Howell Jones, Churchwarden.

THE PULPIT

is of stone-work inset with Penarth Alabaster and with a crown of the same, and empanelled on its front is an "Ascension." This is evidently by a great artist and should be carefully inspected.

Above the preacher's head and in the corresponding corner on the south side, where Nave and Chancel join, are heads representing "Life" and "Death."

THE FONT

following the design of the pulpit is a frame-work of stone inset with Penarth Alabaster. It is supported by marble columns similar to those that bear up the canopies of the Reredos.

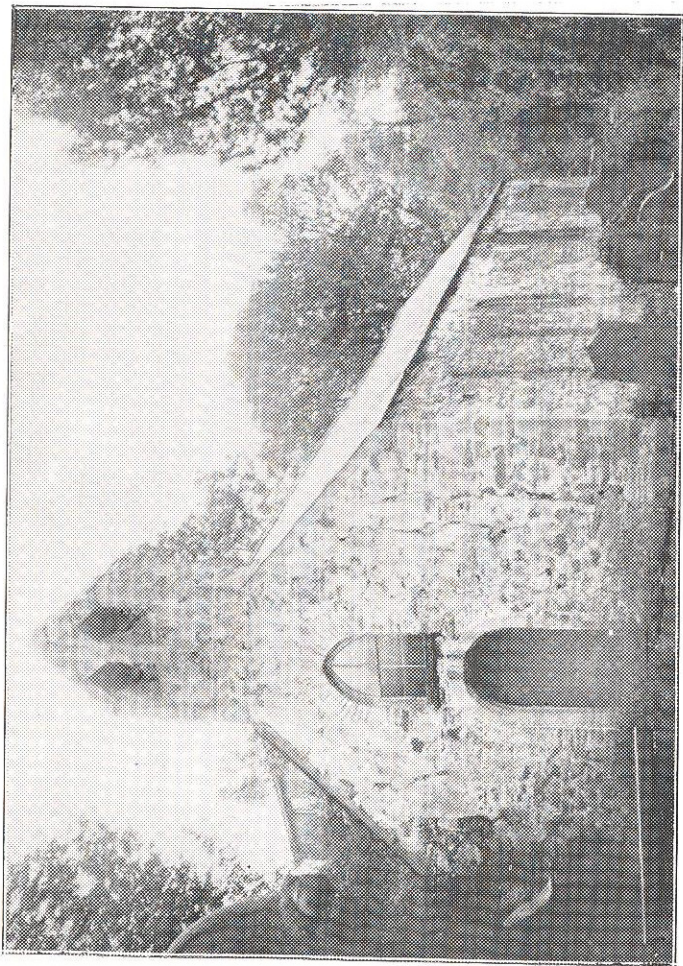
At the west end of the Church, in the north corner, is what appears to be an old stone font, but the history of it is wrapped in obscurity, though it is said to have come from Aberavon.

A TABLET

in memory of parishioners who gave their lives in the Great War, 1914-1918, adorns the north wall of the Church. It was unveiled by Major R. G. Llewellyn, M.C. and dedicated by the Bishop of Llandaff on 7th March, 1923.

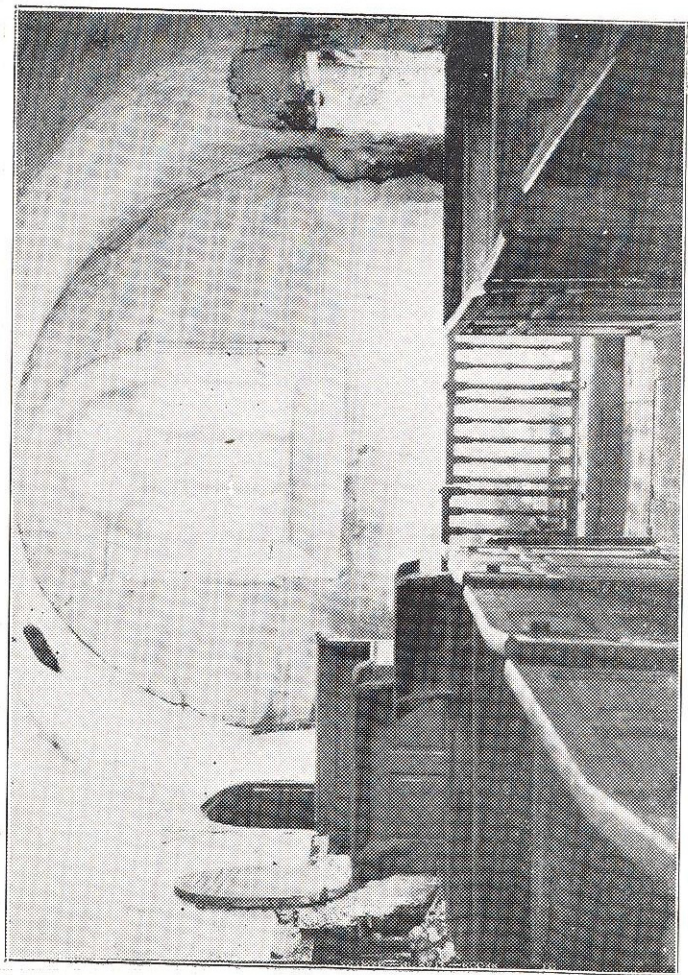
ANCIENT CHALICE.

The Church possesses an Ancient Chalice, the particulars of which, taken from the Catalogue of the Loan Collection, Church Congress, Newport, 1930, are as follows :—



(Photo, Harry Jones, N. Cath)

THE OLD NORMAN CHURCH.



(Photo, Harry Jones, Neath.)

THE INTERIOR OF THE NORMAN CHURCH.

BAGLAN. ST. CATHARINE'S SILVER CHALICE. The cup is inscribed "Baglond" in dotted line, Hall-marked 1624. The maker's mark is *F*, springing from *W*, surrounded by a shield. O.E.P. gives this mark to a cup and cover dated 1611, belonging to Barford St. Martin, Wilts., also to a Communion Cup "*ex dono Ferris*" 1612 Holy Trinity Hall.

THE REGISTERS

of the Church date back to 12th September, 1769.

THE BELLS

are six in number, and were cast by Taylor & Co., of Loughborough. The treble and large bell (weight 13-cwts, 1 qr., 9 lbs.), were cast in 1882 when the Church was built. The treble was re-cast in 1899, when the remaining four were given by Mrs. Griffith Llewellyn to complete the peal.

Bell No. 2 has cast on it—

M. G. Llewellyn, Donor.

Rev. E. Richardson, Vicar.

R. W. Llewellyn & G. H. Davey, Churchwardens.

The four smaller ones have the names of Mr. R. W. Llewellyn's sons cast on them, who were living at the time. The tower also contains a chiming apparatus and an eight-day clock, by J. Smith & Sons, Derby.

29th Jan., 1900—The Peal of six bells was dedicated this day by the Bishop of Llandaff.

THE CHURCH CLOCK AND CAMBRIDGE CHIMES

The above were presented by Mrs. Griffith Llewellyn, and were made and erected by John Smith & Sons, of Derby. The clock was set in motion on Christmas Day, 1902.

THE OLD NORMAN CHURCH

is in thorough repair, being re-slatted and timbered, where required, in 1901, and stands on the highest portion of the Churchyard. It is dedicated to S. Baglan and thus a link is forged between these days and the days of Illtyd and Cattwg, the Celtic Saints of the Sixth Century, for S. Baglan was, so we are told, a disciple of S. Illtyd. The following legend of the founding of this Church is interesting—it is contained in a book in the Bodleian Library at Oxford :—

“ S. Baglan was once discovered carrying fire from St. Cattwg in the skirt of his garment without singeing it in the least,” and St. Illtyd “look’d upon it to be a miracle that was worthy to prefer the worker ; and gave him a staff (the head whereof, being of brasse, was preserv’d till of late years, a sacred relick, wch had wonderful effects upon the sick, etc.) and bid that he should let that guide him till he should come to a place where he found a tree that bore three sorts of fruite, and there erect a church for him selfe.” In a short time St. Baglan arrived at the place where this church now stands, where “he found ye tree that had a litter of pigs nere the rootes below ; a hive of bees in the body, and a kite’s or a crow’s nest at the top. He appears not to have approved of

the site, "being upon a proclivity" and attempted to build on the plains below, "but what was built there by day was removed in the night," and "at last discourag'd it was built where it now stands."

The present Church has, at some time, been enlarged. The western-most portion is assigned to the twelfth century, but the east window, with its cusp tracery is certainly early English. There still remain the stone on which the Altar stood, the Altar rail and the old box seats. A doorway in the north wall—now bricked up—led to the vestry, which has disappeared.

In the Churchyard, beneath the east window, are four tombs of considerable interest. Notice that the dates on two of them are 1662 and 1681. Close by are two table tombs on which are Armorial Bearings belonging to the Blaen-Baglan family (surname Williams), the three Chevrons showing descent from Jestyn ap Gwrgant, Lord of Glamorgan. The double crest—the Paschal Lamb and the Cock—was used by the Knight Templars, the Lamb by itself by families whose ancestors took part in the Crusades. This is still used as the Crest of the Williams family of Aberpergwm.

The presence of the cock on one of the shields leads one to suggest that a member of, or someone connected with, the Mackworth family lies buried beneath the stone (the Mackworth family use it as their crest), possibly through the marriage of Sir Humphrey Mackworth with the daughter of

Sir Herbert Evans, of Gnoll, whose family is another branch of the Jestyn ap Gwrgant lineage. This is, however, very unlikely, as the marriage did not take place till 1686, which appears too late a date for the tomb.

[I am indebted to Glen. A. Taylor, Esq., F.S.A., for much that is in this Article].

The following note on Baglan will no doubt interest our readers; it has been taken from Carlisle's "Dictionary of the Dominion of Wales"—

BAGLAN, in the Cwmwd of Rhwng Nedd ac Afan, Cantref of Cron Nedd, (now called the Hundred of Neath), Co. of Glamorgan, South Wales; a Curacy, not in charge, to the V. of Aber Afan, Patron, Lord Vernon: Church ded. to St. Baglan. The Resident Population of this Parish in 1801, was 251. The Money raised by the Parish Rates, in 1803, was, *viz.*,

For the Upper Hamlet, £3 1 10 at 2/- in the pound
For the Lower Hamlet, £108 17 4½ at 9/- in the pound

£121 19 2½

It is 4 m. S. b. E. from Neath. According to the Diocesan Report, in 1809, the yearly value of the Benefice, arising from Tythes and Augmentation was £52. This Parish contains about 3,000 acres of land of which 2,200 acres are inclosed and cultivated, and the remainder is Common.

The Right Honourable Lord Vernon is the principal Proprietor.