

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Cambrians, Georgians and Goths: influences on the restoration of St Davids Cathedral

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Fellow Cambrians. *Gyd Hynafiaethwyr Cymru a gaf i ddweud ar y cychwyn cyntaf pa mor freintus a phleserus yw hi i mi gael cydnabod yr anrhydedd yr ydych wedi gosod arnaf wrth ofyn i mi Lywyddu y Gymdeithas hon yn y flwyddyn sydd ar ddod; a diolch i'r Athro Tony Carr am ei eiriau caredig yn ei gyflwyniad.*

May I say at the outset how sensible I am of the honour you have done me in inviting me to be your President for the coming year; and may I thank Professor Tony Carr for his kind words of introduction. When Heather James, Secretary of the Association, first contacted me to see whether I would consider your request, I was still Dean of St Davids; and I unhesitatingly accepted the presidency of a body of which I had been a member since 1972; although I had, as an undergraduate, attended and much enjoyed that splendid Easter Conference at Aberystwyth in 1968 on the Irish Sea; and where I first met Donald Moore, Lawrence Butler and the late J. D. K. Lloyd who donated this splendid Presidential Badge. So, when I set to considering what I might say in this Presidential Address, I began looking around for interests common to both the Cambrians and myself, threads with which and from which to weave together this address: and the year 1972 might be a convenient place to begin.

1972 happened to be the year of my priesting; and it was also the second year of my time on the staff of St Davids Cathedral, and, what was then, the Parish of St Davids, as Curate and Minor Canon. It was also the time when I started to get a grip on the history and development of that remarkable building and its equally resonant site; and also getting to know the story of its context and hinterland. It was a time when I had not only to absorb the history of the building—and that was a fast learning curve since I had no experience of the history and archaeology of standing buildings; for although I had a degree in archaeology, my interest was and still remains very much firmly grounded in the pre-conquest period where history and archaeology meet and where and how that meeting affected the pre-conquest church in Wales. I was—and remain—focused on the *clas* communities which served the forty or so great mother churches of Wales before the Normans came. Now, *pace* Radford, I did not and do not believe that the *clas* communities, served by mother churches, worshipped in large centrally planned stone buildings. In any case, St Davids has not been a *clas* church since the 1130s, and much has changed since then.¹

That was not my immediate concern in 1972. Instead, I was faced with the task of telling the story of a complex and massive medieval church built over that pre-con-quest site. And I had to do it quickly, because I had to tell the story to the visitors and pilgrims who were standing expectantly before me.

Two things saved me: I possessed a copy of W. B. Jones and Edward Freeman's *History and Antiquities of St Davids* and also a copy of P. A. Robson's *Bell's Guide to the Cathedral* published in 1901.² Both of

those works showed me that St Davids Cathedral was a building of no simple design and construction; that it not had been conceived at a single monolithic entity at a single period; but that it was complex both as regards construction and date. Moreover, major disasters had happened to the fabric and in 1901, as Robson reminded me, most of the eastern arm was open to the sky.³

Because I had to interpret the building, I began to notice differences of construction in the fabric and that parts of the fabric were relatively new. Those differences needed explanation. That in turn led me to take an interest in the great Victorian restoration of 1863 to 1878; and also to become aware that there had been more than one Victorian restoration; and that there had been others previous to it in those lost centuries between 1536 and 1863.⁴ I also became aware that we, the Cambrians, had had an interest, indeed one could say almost a professional interest, in that process of restoration and recovery.

In 1972—my first period on the staff of the cathedral was from 1971 to 1975—I soon became aware that the process of the restoration and recovery of the cathedral fabric was still in train. I found myself being asked by the then Cathedral Architect, Martin Caroe, a fellow Cambrian, to look into the origins of the heraldry on the roofs of the Lady Chapel and the Ante Chapel to ascertain how many of the bosses in the vaults were medieval and how many dated from Oldrid Scott's 1901 restoration; this was in advance of re-rendering, re-colouring and conservation. As I recall, there were a surprising number of late medieval bosses which had been recovered and replaced in the roof.

I also want to draw attention to a third element which has fed into this evening's address. During that same period in the early 1970s, while browsing through the filing cabinet in the Deanery Office, I came across what I thought was an unbound fascicule of Jones and Freeman's *History and Antiquities of St Davids*—it was printed in the same typeface, and although the date was roughly the same—1853 as opposed to 1856—I soon discovered that it was nothing to do with the *History and Antiquities*.⁵ Jones and Freeman were, of course, Cambrians; and both were intimately involved—directly and indirectly—with the Victorian restoration. The title of the pamphlet, which was twenty-eight pages long, was *Notes on the Cathedral Church of St Davids*.⁶ Now that would seem to suggest that its contents would deal with the state of the cathedral, but such was not the case. I found that out when I began to read it; and continued with an increasingly horrified fascination. I was at the time Minor Canon of the Cathedral and was asking myself whether Minor Canons could say things like this—in print—and get away with it?

Although it had something to say about the state of (some) significant parts of the fabric of St Davids Cathedral, it had more, far more, to say about the state of affairs which had brought the fabric of the cathedral and the city walls into the state of which the pamphleteer was complaining. The pamphleteer was the 'Reverend Nathaniel Davies, MA of Pembroke College, Oxford; Prebendary and Minor Canon of the Cathedral, and Master of the Chapter School of St Davids'. He was implicitly, quite explicitly actually, deploring attitudes which expressed themselves in an approach to, or rather a lack of appreciation of, historic fabric. The pamphlet, which was written on 28 June 1853, generated a *Reply to the Rev. N. Davies's Notes . . .*, written on 1 August 1853.⁷ The author was Llewelyn Lewellin MA DCL, Dean of St Davids, so this was serious stuff, especially since Davies was clearly not cowed, though he had waited from 1840 until now to bring the abuses to the attention of the wider world. Moreover, his pamphlet was not unconnected with the work of the Cathedral Commission of 1852–54.⁸ Davies had sent them a copy, clearly frustrated that he had failed in his attempts to get the Dean and Chapter to call a special meeting of Chapter in 1841; and that he had also failed to get the bishop to respond to his memorial of 1844; and had also failed to get anyone to redress the situation in the intervening thirteen years. Dean Lewellin was clearly not cowed either and responded with *Reply to the Rev. N. Davies's Notes*, which in turn generated *Strictures upon a Reply by Davies* which drew forth *Observations on a second paper entitled strictures upon a Reply* from the Dean. I only discovered the rest of the series some years later.

The series of pamphlets was forthright and vituperative, neither party giving way to the other, for there was much at stake and provoked correspondence in the local press from various aggrieved clerics. They were aggrieved because their stipends and the sources of those stipends had been exposed in the press. But it is what lay behind the vituperation and vindictiveness, the clash of generations and the clash of cultures which interests me; and how that was reflected in church fabric, and the approaches to conserving and restoring that fabric, and the involvement of the Cambrians in that process.

For here we have a clash between two ways of looking at life and the church, the Georgian or Hanoverian and the early Victorian. To be more precise it was a clash between reformed or slightly reformed Georgians in the case of Davies and unreformed Georgians in the case of Lewellin, since the process of church reform, the reform of the institution upon which the first pamphlet based its arguments, had started under the late Hanoverians.⁹

What appears at first sight to be a quibble about the minutiae of dinners withheld and sermons not paid for, in reality touched on the very nature and purpose of a cathedral, as exemplified by St Davids Cathedral, and the way it treated its governance and administration, its finances, its ministry and its personnel; and in the context of the Cambrians' interest in the building of how and why those impinged upon the state of the fabric. That was what Davies and Lewellin were in dispute about.

Moreover, the exchange of pamphlets had implications far wider than the situation at St Davids. Light is thrown on the ministry, mission, staffing and fabric of St Davids Cathedral at a crucial period not only in its history but that of the Anglican Church generally. It illuminates not only local personages, rivalries and snobberies but by doing so highlights burning issues within the church of the day nationally. This storm in a teacup, for in hindsight that was what it was, was in microcosm a practical demonstration of what happens when reform and vested interest collide; when two ways of looking at the world and certainly two ways of looking at the church come into conflict; and when one party, Davies, long frustrated in gaining what he saw as justice, took his case not just to the press but to the 'British Public' (his words) and to an official enquiry—a Parliamentary Commission to boot. And, as we noted above, he had sent a copy of his pamphlet to the Commissioners.¹⁰

Now I do not want to go further into the contents of the pamphlets, nor the specific situation at St Davids, since I have done so elsewhere. Though as it happens, it is good that the Cambrians are visiting Rochester Cathedral during this Summer Meeting for the same kind of situation had arisen there at around the same time regarding the cathedral school, and the attitude of the Dean and Chapter towards it, for that was the point at issue, was similar to the attitude of the Dean and Chapter of St Davids, at least in Davies' view. He referred to the Rochester case, and I quote, 'The Master of Rochester School serves as a warning to him, not to enter the Courts of Law, and he has not the means in his power, even if he had the courage, to encounter such an ordeal.'¹¹ And of course the Rochester case, alongside the St Cross, Winchester case, was at the back of the mind of a certain Anthony Trollope as he wrote *The Warden*, which also appeared in the 1850s, in 1855 to be exact, though its gestation lay in one summer's evening in late May 1852, when Trollope was wandering through the Cathedral Close at Salisbury and 'conceived' the novel.¹²

My point is, however, that the St Davids pamphlet war articulated, albeit implicitly, and gave expression to attitudes, very polarised attitudes, which stood and stand for a collision of cultures and a collision of worlds; attitudes which represent the difference, a fiercely contested difference, between the Georgian and the Victorian Church; between Classical and Gothic, or perhaps in the context of the fabric of St Davids Cathedral between Gothick with a k, or even and perhaps more precisely between Churchwarden Gothic and Gothic revival; and the clash of styles which exemplified the clash of cultures and attitudes was not just a matter of pamphleteering but of building, for sections of St Davids Cathedral were being reconstructed or new-built in each style almost contemporaneously.

This point is not of academic or passing interest only, because issues relating to the fabric of St Davids Cathedral were those which were of close interest to this society at that period. Our Association came to gestation at the cusp of the change and took a prominent role in proselytising the principles behind change and moving change on, especially where churches were concerned. The columns of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* give clear and sharp advice as to what was right and was not. Those who were restoring churches should get it right or suffer opprobrium in the columns of our journal. And that was all the more true of cathedrals and St Davids Cathedral in particular. The Cambrians were, I suggest to you, quite significant in monitoring the restoration of medieval buildings like St Davids as well as popularising, exhorting indeed through the pages of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, and managing that cultural change which marks the transition from Georgian to Gothic. The fabric of buildings like St Davids Cathedral was a matter of concern to the Cambrians and many descriptions of the works going on there appeared in the early numbers of our journal.

So, when I was asked to become President, I therefore began to wonder whether in my Presidential Address there was a way to pull together those themes which I have mentioned above, together with others which would serve to highlight matters which were fundamental to the founding of this Association. The first strand embraces my own interest in archaeology and, since my time as Dean of St Davids, in having to be mindful and caring for the archaeology and the historic fabric of standing medieval buildings, as opposed to the early medieval sites on which they stood. It also embraces the experience of daily and professionally caring for a historic building and its site within the context of what happened to nearly every medieval building in the United Kingdom, that is that it would not now be standing without attention during the late Georgian and early Victorian period. That period was also, and not least because of the legislation which brought the Ecclesiastical Commissioners into existence, a time when dioceses and the Church in general were coming back to life; and that new life was reflected in the building or reconstruction of churches. In the case of the diocese of St Davids, for example, the figure associated with this revival is Bishop Samuel Horsley (1788–93), and he was translated to Rochester as it happened in 1793.¹³ He later returned to Wales as Bishop of St Asaph in 1802. But the practical, the concrete, fruits of his stewardship were seen not only at the Cathedral but elsewhere in the diocese. Llanfallteg, my first living, had an inscription that it had been raised again and restored from its ruined foundations in 1788—and the Nash buffs among you will have realised that that was exactly the time when the west front of the Cathedral began to be reconstructed in a Strawberry Hill Gothic Mock-Perpendicular. ‘Mock’ it may have been, but it better suited the style of the Cathedral than its successor—and what the west front represents is also part of what I want to highlight in these remarks.

And may I say that since becoming a bishop, I have begun to appreciate both the dynamic and drive towards expansion and also the ambiguous legacy which that has left me and the diocese and the Church in Wales and the Church in these islands generally. I also appreciate and admire the drive and energies of my Georgian and Victorian predecessors; and that too will feed into what I have to say.

The second strand derives from my own experience as a Cambrian, and I am aware that these days as both a cleric and a Cambrian, I am in a minority, if not an endangered species, as compared to the early days, the time when the Association was founded. I suspect that that was not accidental given the frequency, indeed the accelerating pace of church restoration and the building of new churches in the early Victorian period.

A third strand which reflected the significance of St Davids Cathedral both to me and to the Cambrians—and especially in the context of the underlying conflict exemplified in the *Notes*, the *Reply*; the *Strictures upon a Reply* and the *Observations* of 1853—all that relates to the third strand which involves both the context of the foundation of the Cambrians and therefore what they were founded to

achieve. Compounded with those three is a fourth strand: curiosity about which, if any, of my predecessors had become Presidents of the Cambrians.

Now, when I speak of predecessors, I mean predecessors both decanal and episcopal, and particularly deans or bishops of St Davids (what other bishops or deans can there be!), and I say that in the full knowledge that two of my episcopal predecessors made the journey from far west to far east to this place and became archbishops of Canterbury: indeed, earlier this week, we saw the achievement of arms held by both the diocese and bishops of St Davids emblazoned on a tomb on the north side of the quire of Canterbury Cathedral—that of Henry Chichele (bishop of St Davids 1408–14 and subsequently archbishop of Canterbury), the other being, of course, William Laud (bishop 1621–26), who left his mark not least in his estimate for the reconstruction of Bishop’s Palace at St Davids—£40.¹⁴

And so there was curiosity about which of my predecessors had been Cambrians and had occupied this presidential chair.¹⁵ I set myself the terminal date of 1900 for, given what I have just said, I was thinking in particular of my episcopal and decanal predecessors between 1846 and 1900 rather than afterwards. I knew that D. L. Prosser, whom I just remember seeing as small child, and whose pectoral cross I sometimes wear, had become a Cambrian in 1896 and that he had been President twice, in 1938 and 1948; but that was after the period which I have in mind.

My first thought had been to look for decanal predecessors, but then events took a different turn and I found myself the Bishop of St Davids. And I am not unaware of the irony that sees the 128th bishop of St Davids entering into the Presidency of the Cambrians at Canterbury, which of course was not up and running when my 128th predecessor, Dewi Sant, was founding his community and organising its life and that of his diocese at and from St Davids in the mid sixth century, some decades before 597.

And may I say that when I think of my predecessors, in one sense access to them in whatever capacity—let alone being fellow Cambrians—seems surprisingly easy: the links are tangible and even concrete. They founded, built or in some cases demolished the cathedral; and in other instances restored it; they are physically present in and on their tombs, both in St Davids and in Abergwili as inscriptions and effigies; or they are carved or painted inside and outside the walls of the cathedral; and their grave and judgemental features look down on me, especially those of St David himself, wherever I am in the cathedral. Indeed, the official robes I use and wear are theirs: the official ring is that either of Bishop Jenkinson or Bishop Owen, a Cambrian in 1896, (it depends whether it reads 1827 or 1897); the pectoral cross beside my own and Bishop Prosser’s (and the best mitre was made for Bishop Prosser in 1927) is Bishop Owen’s (it is carved on his cenotaph in the Lady Chapel of St Davids Cathedral), as is the splendid 1885 crozier. I have to say that the medieval croziers recovered in the 1860s restoration of the cathedral from the tombs of my predecessors are now all sealed in their case in the Cathedral Treasury and inaccessible as are the medieval episcopal rings. The 1885 crozier was designed by J. P. Sedding, executed by Barkentin and Krall, and made as the inscription says for Bishop Basil Jones¹⁶ and for the use of his successors.¹⁷ Given that it towers over me, I asked Bishop Basil Jones’ grand-daughter when I spoke to her recently how tall he was: he was five foot five; that was comforting, for I am five foot four and a half. More suited to my height is the equivalent relic left behind by my decanal predecessor Llewelyn Lewellin and now preserved in the library at St Davids, his walking stick carved with his plurality of offices. He, *Y Doctor Bach*, was clearly smaller than I am.

Now, that 1885 crozier is also carved on the outside of the west front of St Davids Cathedral; and it also towers above the carved figure with which it is associated. It is a seated figure, with a book open on its, or rather his, knees. For this is the carved figure of Connop Thirlwall,¹⁸ and set on the west front, which is his memorial; and it is not the Nash west front; nor did he ever use that crozier, nor indeed did he wear a cope and mitre. Rather, he is shown in vaguely classical mode: he was after all, with Grote, the author of *The History of Greece*.¹⁹ And that mode and those accoutrements and the change they represent

is itself part of the story. Now, to my surprise, I found myself getting interested in Thirlwall to the extent of making him one of the figures upon whom I wish to hang these few observations. His figure is, in any case, particularly present to me, for every time I am in the library at Llys Esgob, I see and often sit in his favourite reading chair.

I say surprising because I was preparing myself to speak about the cathedral and aspects of its history not least in the contribution made to its restoration and conservation by deans who were fellow Cambrians, such as that remarkable man James Allen.²⁰ And if not deans and James Allen then surely Bishop Basil Jones would have made an excellent focus, a lens through which to examine issues arising when the Cambrians were founded, given his unambiguous connections to both St Davids and its cathedral and the Cambrians.²¹ The one person upon whom I was not going to focus was Dean Llewelyn Lewellin.²² But it did not work out like that.

For as I looked, especially at the pamphlets and what Dean Lewellin was saying and revealing about himself there, it seemed to me that the strands could be brought together by focusing not on the contrast between Dean Lewellin and his schoolmaster and former pupil Nathaniel Davies, both of whom had been appointed in the same year 1840, but between Bishop Thirlwall and Dean Lewellin, who as it happens were also both appointed in 1840.

So, to explain what I mean and what I want to highlight, I want to go back to the year not 1853 and not 1840 for that matter, but 1846 from the period indeed of the inception of the society, and to a reading party from Trinity College Oxford which came to St Davids for the long vacation. Trinity was the college of a certain William Basil Jones and a certain Edward August Freeman, where they had been undergraduates. Jones had certainly made repeated visits to St Davids, given his interests in ecclesiastical architecture.²³ He encouraged other undergraduates to go as well and in 1846 one of these reading parties was so disturbed by the state of the cathedral that they not only started a fund for the restoration of the rood screen building but sought the help of the architect William Butterfield, who came down to St Davids and set in motion a programme of restoration which embraced, as a glance at the pages of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* for 1848:²⁴

we are glad to report that the spirit of restoration has visited the ancient and metropolitical church of Wales. Considerable improvements have been commenced and are still in active progress. A fine Decorated window, from a design by Mr Butterfield, has been inserted into the large opening at the extremity of the north transept, hitherto blocked up. Two Decorated windows have been placed in the aisles both copied from an original example still remaining there. One of these is due to the munificence of the Rev. N. Davies MA., Prebendary of St Nicholas. The rood screen and loft are also being restored by a subscription raised chiefly among members of the University of Oxford . . . Previously to the restoration it was in a most lamentable condition, being partly supported by heavy timber stays and half blocked up with boarding.

Given that by 1848, Basil Jones was General Secretary of this Association, a post he held until 1851, it is perhaps not surprising that reports on the work were appearing in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*. And of course the 1846/47 restoration by Butterfield not only almost coincided with the genesis of our Association but many of our founder members were involved; and indeed from then on, the pages of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* carried reports of the restoration work which brought the cathedral back to life over the next thirty years.

But, you may ask yourself why is it that the munificence recorded was that of Nathaniel Davies and not that of Dean Lewellin: that of Minor Canon and Master of the Grammar School and not the Dean. Given that *Pigot's Directory* for 1840 speaks of Nathaniel Davies as a gentleman resident in St Davids,

the clear implication is that the Dean was not around to be so recorded. And generally speaking that would be true, even though the report in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 1848 says that ‘Great praise is due to the Dean and Chapter for the zeal for the zeal and activity they have shown in the restoration of this venerable fabric and their readiness to accept and second the efforts of those who have contributed to the repairs.’

That latter phrase, ‘their readiness to accept and second the efforts of those who have contributed to the repairs’, is itself revealing; it seems at best to connive at delegation if not abdication of responsibility. And the fact that the work was carried out following a public subscription is interesting. Nathaniel Davies’ complaint in his first pamphlet was that the considerable revenues of the chapter were being shared between the Canons Residentiary rather than being applied to the school (and the stipend of the schoolmaster: Davies was a Georgian too) and to the city walls or to the cathedral fabric and it is interesting to see what in 1853 is Dean Lewellin’s reply. He begins by saying that he shall:

simply specify a few of the larger sums expended in repairs during the period of my incumbency In the first year of my admission we expended in the article of lead alone, in addition to other serious bills, £150; the organ £700; the new Window in the North transept, £130; The West windows, £100, new windows in the South Aisle of the Nave, five in number, one in the North aisle, and entirely rechiselled and restored the four others at an outlay of £150.

In a footnote to this the Dean says: ‘Some part of these sums was raised by Subscription. It is but just to Mr Davies to say that the first Window in the Nave was done by himself and his friends. A noble example to us, which we have well followed.’²⁵ Somehow, that footnote and those words leave a taste in the mouth. Lewellin then tells his readers and his hearers that ‘we have just completed an entirely new window, very handsome and massive, in the South Transept or Welsh Church, at a considerable expense. The repairs of the Welsh church itself, and the restoration of the Nave have cost us nearly £700’.

He goes in to say two more things: ‘I ought to add, and I do so with deep gratitude, that large sums raised by Subscription at Oxford and elsewhere, have been expended upon Restorations and Improvements under the management of our excellent friend the Rev. Basil Jones, whose name is forever associated with St Davids.’ And then, secondly, given that Davies has spoken of both the leak in the roof of the north transept letting in gallons of water every time it rained and that the response had been to bore a hole in the principal roof timbers so that the water might not lodge in the roof, and the fact that the ‘Tower is in a most dilapidated state, and several architects have pronounced it dangerous, and calling for immediate attention’, the Dean’s Reply was: ‘Mr Davies speaks of the state of the tower with much apprehension, and I fear he is not singular in his view. I do not participate in such alarm.’

Now, given that *Archaeologia Cambrensis* had reported in 1848 that the ‘decayed piers will be restored’, one wonders what was going on in Dean Lewellin’s mind. He goes on to say ‘And with respect to the roof of the North Transept, it is notorious that it has for years been in a dilapidated state. We have caused estimates of the probable expense more than once . . . but they have been of so serious an amount, that with the pressure of more necessary repairs in progress in other parts of this extensive building, we have as yet been obliged to postpone its preparation’ and rebukes Davies for being frivolous. Further, the Dean had told the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1853 that the cathedral was in tolerable repair.²⁶

Contrast Dean Lewellin’s attitude to the tower, and when he uses words like ‘tolerable Improvement and handsome’, he shows that he is a Georgian and not a Gothic Revivalist, or any sort of revivalist but an old-fashioned ‘high and dry’ High Churchman; certainly not a Puginian or even a Camdenian. Contrast his attitude with these words: ‘The present condition of the Tower is in the highest degree alarming, and till it is restored to a state of security, it is quite useless to think of any extensive reparation

of other parts of the building.' This is a statement, as it appears to me, which needs no comment. Nor does it disclose the whole of the case, because, 'besides that danger which threatens the whole of the building from the condition of this Tower, which has been reconstructed in such a way as to leave one portion tending to sink, another danger threatens'²⁷ Those words are those of Lewellin's bishop, Connop Thirlwall, quoting the words of Gilbert Scott who had been called in to report on the state of the cathedral following, it seems to me, an intervention by Thirlwall, who put it like this:

a noble bequest was made to the Cathedral . . . by a clergyman of another diocese, one who could take no interest whatever in the Cathedral of St Davids but that inspired by a love of art It then occurred to me, shall we be really carrying out the intentions of this noble bequest if this £2000 is buried in the foundations of the tower? Therefore it appeared to me that the time had come for making an appeal to the public in Wales and throughout the country on behalf of this great monument not only of Welsh but of national interest . . .

The legacy was of £2,000 and had been left to the Cathedral by the Reverend J. M. Traherne (also a Cambrian).²⁸

The result was the public meeting held in Carmarthen on 28 October 1863, when Thirlwall took the chair. He began by speaking of the remoteness of the cathedral:²⁹

It is by no means a strange or an impertinent question to ask if any one even in the Principality of Wales, I may say even in this diocese, whether he was ever at St. David's. I do not know that one half of those to whom this question might be put would answer in the affirmative; indeed it is likely the greater number would reply in the negative. It is true the old city and the Cathedral receive occasional visitors, but they are comparatively rare. It is an excursion which is often looked upon as a kind of adventure, like the discovery of an Alpine pass. As used to be said of Corinth, it does not fall to every one's lot to go to St Davids; it is not every one who can afford the time to go there; and it is not every one who has the curiosity or wish to see it. And, even of those who go there, and who have seen it, not many are able to give others, or themselves, a very accurate account of what they have seen, or bring away with them an accurate notion of the place. Numbers of ladies who have honoured it with their presence have not failed to say that it is a sweet romantic place, with a curious old Cathedral. (Laughter.) And gentlemen, who may be expected to take a little more interest in such matters, have seldom time to get more than a cursory glance at the cathedral, and perhaps few of them are curious enough to investigate it, so as to form a clear idea of its character and merits. This, I say, places me under a great disadvantage.

Thirlwall makes the point that elsewhere, and in the case of any other cathedral, the meeting would have been held in the vicinity of the cathedral but remoteness did not detract from the quality of the building, for as Scott had pointed out:³⁰

Remote as was the site of your Cathedral from the more active scenes of this great artistic movement, it is most interesting to observe that it in no degree falls short of contemporary structures in the grandeur of its conception, or the beauty and refinement of its details. It lingers in some degree behind many of them in the extent in which the pointed arch has supplanted the round, but this was probably owing rather to a desire to avoid undue height than to any actual want of advancement; for in all the details, and especially in the carved foliage, the skill and taste exhibited is of first-rate order, and the execution of the ornamental masonry could hardly be excelled.

This was the speech which launched the appeal which saved the Cathedral, rebuilt the tower and ultimately replaced the west front with a more academic and more competently built Gothic design as a memorial to Thirlwall; and it is fitting, for it is to him that we owe the survival of the Cathedral, notwithstanding what Mrs Nares says in her somewhat oleaginous memoir: ‘The great work of his life at St Davids was the restoration of the old Cathedral, which when he came there was in a state of great dilapidation and ruin. A great crack had appeared in the tower, which made it liable to come down at any moment, crushing the fabric beneath it . . . Dr. L with his usable energy, never rested till funds were collected, and the work begun: others have had the credit which rightly belongs to him.’³¹

That, to put it mildly, was not the usual view, given that Lewellin was also Vicar of St Davids, Vicar of Lampeter, and Principal of St Davids College, Lampeter, and only in St Davids for three months in the summer vacation—and that, in someone else’s period of residence, as Nathaniel Davies took pains to point out. The Dean was indeed a Georgian and although he had restored and provided the Welsh church in the south transept, it was oriented to the north, broke through medieval fabric and fitted out in ‘Churchwarden Gothic’. Even so, Thirlwall opened it with a service and a Welsh sermon in September 1844.³²

And yet, when Cambrians met in Lampeter on 19 August 1878 and following days the Chairman of the Local Committee was the Dean of St Davids. He was meant to have been the President but as the 33rd President the Lord Bishop St Davids, Basil Jones, said that he had thought that Lewellin would have been a better: ‘nobody could so properly take the chair at Lampeter but he just had his eightieth birthday: he may reasonably be excused from offering his service to the Society on this occasion’. The *Parish Magazine* for the parish of St Davids records the Dean’s death on 25 November 1878. This was three years after Thirlwall’s death: he had retired to Bath in 1874 because of failing eyesight.

Thirlwall and Lewellin were born within a year of each other, in 1797 and 1798 respectively, and both were very able and talented men: but while one was a Tory High Churchman, the other was a Whig Broad Churchman; one was Oxford and the other was Cambridge and originally a barrister. Lewellin was definitely a Georgian, while Thirlwall, a friend of John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle, was a Victorian Liberal. They exemplify two approaches to the conservation and preservation of medieval fabric. Given that the Cambrians (of which Thirlwall was a member since 1847 and a President in 1859)³³ were on his side of the debate it is fitting that we close with words from his ninth charge of 1866, and equally fitting that his memorial over the west door shows him reading from one of his charges. Speaking of the numerous churches which had been restored since he became bishop in 1840 (on average one a year), he says:³⁴

that a new church in the style which would have satisfied those who saw it fifty years ago would now offend all who try it by a higher and more correct standard. But this evil is very slight, when compared with that which we have to deplore, when a venerable monument is irreparably defaced by a misnamed restoration. It must therefore be deemed a happy coincidence, that in the case of some of the most precious remains of ecclesiastical architecture which have been handed down to us, the work has been reserved for our day, and for skilful and tender hands, by which they will be not only preserved from further decay, but renewed in their original freshness.

Among these our Cathedral unquestionably occupies the foremost place, as well for its historical associations, as for its architectural beauties, still surviving all the injury it has undergone through the violence and neglect of ages.

And after giving thanks for Scott’s skill and ingenuity, he goes on to deplore ‘the tardiness of the response which has been made to the appeal of the Dean and Chapter’ and then, in passing, later in the same

paragraph he says ‘At a time when archaeology is so zealously cultivated—in Wales by a special Association (that, of course, was us, the Cambrians) the response should have been better’. But that remark shows whose side he was on: ours; and the right one.

NOTES

1. C. A. R. Radford, ‘The native ecclesiastical architecture of Wales (c.1100–1285): the study of a regional style’, in I. Ll. Foster and L. Alcock (eds), *Culture and Environment* (London 1963), 255–372.
2. I see from the inscription that I was given it by Dean T. E. Jenkins in 1972: it was his spare copy.
3. W. B. Jones and E. A. Freeman, *The History and Antiquities of Saint David’s* (London and Tenby, 1856); P. Robson, *St Davids* (London 1901), 19.
4. J. W. Evans, ‘St Davids Cathedral, the forgotten centuries’, *Journal of Welsh Ecclesiastical History* 3 (1986), 73–92.
5. Although a review of the first fascicule of Jones and Freeman appeared in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 2nd ser., 3 (1852), 224.
6. N. Davies, *Notes on the Cathedral Church of St. David’s* (London and Haverfordwest, 1853).
7. Ll. Lewellin, *A Reply to The Rev. N. Davies’s Notes on the Cathedral Church of St Davids* (London and Haverfordwest, 1853); N. Davies, *Strictures on “A Reply to the Notes on the Cathedral Church of S David’s* (London and Haverfordwest, 1853); Ll. Lewellin, *A Reply to the Rev. N. Davies’s Notes on the Cathedral Church of St Davids (Second Edition) with Observations on a Second Paper lately published by Mr Davies entitled Strictures upon a reply* (London and Haverfordwest, 1853). The succession was rapid: from 28 June for *Notes*; 1 August for the *Reply*; no dates for *Strictures*; and 26 August for *Observations*.
8. *First Report of Her Majesty’s Commissioners into the State and Condition of the Cathedral and Collegiate Churches of England and Wales*, Parliamentary Papers (London, 1854), 752.
9. For changed attitudes to the Hanoverian Church of England see: G. F. A. Best *Temporal Pillars* (Cambridge, 1964); P. Virgin, *The Church in Age of Negligence* (Cambridge, 1989); C. Dewy, *The Passing of Barchester* (London, 1991); F. C. Mather, *High Church Prophet* (Oxford, 1992); J. Walsh, C. Haydon and S. Taylor (eds), *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833* (Cambridge, 1993); P. B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context* (Cambridge, 1994); F. Knight, *The Nineteenth Century Church in English Society* (Cambridge, 1995); A. Burn, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England c.1800–1870* (Oxford, 1999); N. Yates, ‘1780–1850’ in G. Williams W. Jacob, N. Yates and F. Knight, *The Welsh Church from Reformation to Disestablishment 1603–1920* (Cardiff, 2007).
10. Davies 1853 op. cit. (note 10) In his answer, dated 14 January 1854, Davies’ answer to question 4, ‘Has the master a house and are the scholars boarded in it?’, was ‘No; the master has no house, but for full information on this and the preceding question, the master would respectfully draw the attention of the Commissioners to his “Notes on the Cathedral Church of St. David’s” page 10. The ‘preceding question’ related to the payment of the master and his answer included the words, ‘and yet the dean and chapter think 20l 10s a sufficient remuneration for the master of the school, though there is little doubt that the tithes of Sylien or Silian were appropriated for that purpose by Bishop Morgan.’
11. For a comprehensive account of the Revd Robert Whiston’s equally vituperative dispute with the Dean and Chapter of Rochester between 1848 and 1853, see R. Arnold, *The Whiston Matter*

- (London 1961). Whiston's answer to the Commissioners is to be seen on pages 747ff. of the report.
12. A. Trollope, *An Autobiography* (1883), M. Sadleir and F. Page (eds), with introduction and notes by P. D. Edwards (Oxford, 1999), 92.
 13. F. C. Mather, *High Church Prophet* (Oxford, 1992), 163–77 for an account of his work in the diocese of St Davids and 177–81 for his work at Rochester.
 14. Lambeth Palace Library, Court of Arches MS B2, 132/85.
 15. I want to thank David Williams, Heather James, Donald Moore and Frances Lynch (what a heavyweight list of research assistants!), and I am deeply appreciative of their assistance in looking up the lists of previous Presidents in the early numbers of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*.
 16. William Basil Jones, the 'Jones' of 'Jones and Freeman': who was twice President of the Cambrians (in 1875 and 1878), and Secretary in the early days. The crozier is described in J. T. Evans's *The Church Plate of Pembrokeshire* (London, 1905), 91–2.
 17. Ibid.
 18. President 1859, and supporter of the Cambrians from the outset.
 19. See *Dictionary of National Biography* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/articles/27/27185-article.html>) for Thirlwall's biography.
 20. D. W. James, 'James Allen: Master of the Fabric', *Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society* 3 (1989), 28–40, gives a flavour of Allen's significant contribution of the restoration and well-being of St Davids Cathedral.
 21. There is a short biography of William Basil Jones in *Llangynfelin: Enwogion y Plwyf* (http://www.llangynfelin.org/dogfennau/enwogion_mynegiad.html). There is also an entry for him in J. Vyrnwy Morgan's *Welsh Political and Educational Leaders in the Victorian Era* (London, 1908), 149–57. His obituary appears in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 5th ser., 15, 88–9 and is followed immediately (on pages 89–91) by that of Dean Allen
 22. Vyrnwy Morgan op. cit. (note 21), 651–53 also includes an entry on Lewellin. His daughter, E. M. Nares, *Pleasant Memories of Eminent Churchmen with a short memoir of Dr. Lewellin, late Dean of St Davids, Carmarthen* (Carmarthen, n.d.).
 23. See Jones's obituary (note 21, 88).
 24. *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1st ser, 3 (1848), 80–1
 25. Davies 1853 op. cit. (note 7), 10.
 26. Op. cit (note 8), 439.
 27. *Restoration of St Davids Cathedral. Speeches by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese and Geo Gilbert Scott Esq. R.A., at Carmarthen October 1863* (Tenby, 1863), 9.
 28. Ibid. 10–11.
 29. Ibid. 5.
 30. Ibid. 7.
 31. Nares op. cit. (note 22), 5–7.
 32. J. J. S. Perowne and L. Stokes (eds), *Letters Literary and Theological of Connop Thirlwall, Late Lord Bishop of S David's* (London, 1881), 191.
 33. It is only a précis of his address which survives in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 3rd ser., 5 (1859), 321.
 34. J. J. S. Perowne (ed.), *Remains Literary and Theological of Connop Thirlwall,, Late Lord Bishop of St Davids*, 3 vols (London 1887–88), vol. 2, 93 (his ninth Charge, delivered in October 1866).

