

Strata Florida Abbey

(Ystrad Fflur)

Vale of Flowers

In our imaginative pilgrimage we travel about 60 miles from Whitland to Strata Florida from the Latin Ystrad Fflur, the 'vale of flowers'.

The abbey was founded in 1164 by monks from Whitland Abbey, under the patronage of an Anglo-Norman lord Robert Fitz Stephen on the banks of the Afon Fflur River. The community was to move to the current site in 1184.

Rhyrs ap Gruffydd and his family became generous patrons of the abbey. Many of the family were buried at the abbey as was Dafydd ap Gwilym, the medieval Welsh language poet. These close bonds between the Welsh patrons brought opposition of the English crown The wars with the English under Edward and the revolt of



West door

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Owain Glyndŵr,(Owen Glendower) led to considerable damage to the Abbey.

It had become an imposing medieval abbey, the remains of the elaborate archway over the west door and the floor tiles give some idea of the driving skill of those who built the it. Strata Florida became one of the most famous of Welsh religious

abbeys, second only to St Davis's Cathedral.



There are those who seek to inform our knowledge of these religious sites through archaeology and university based research. There are others who use modern techniques to offer an accessible view of the past.



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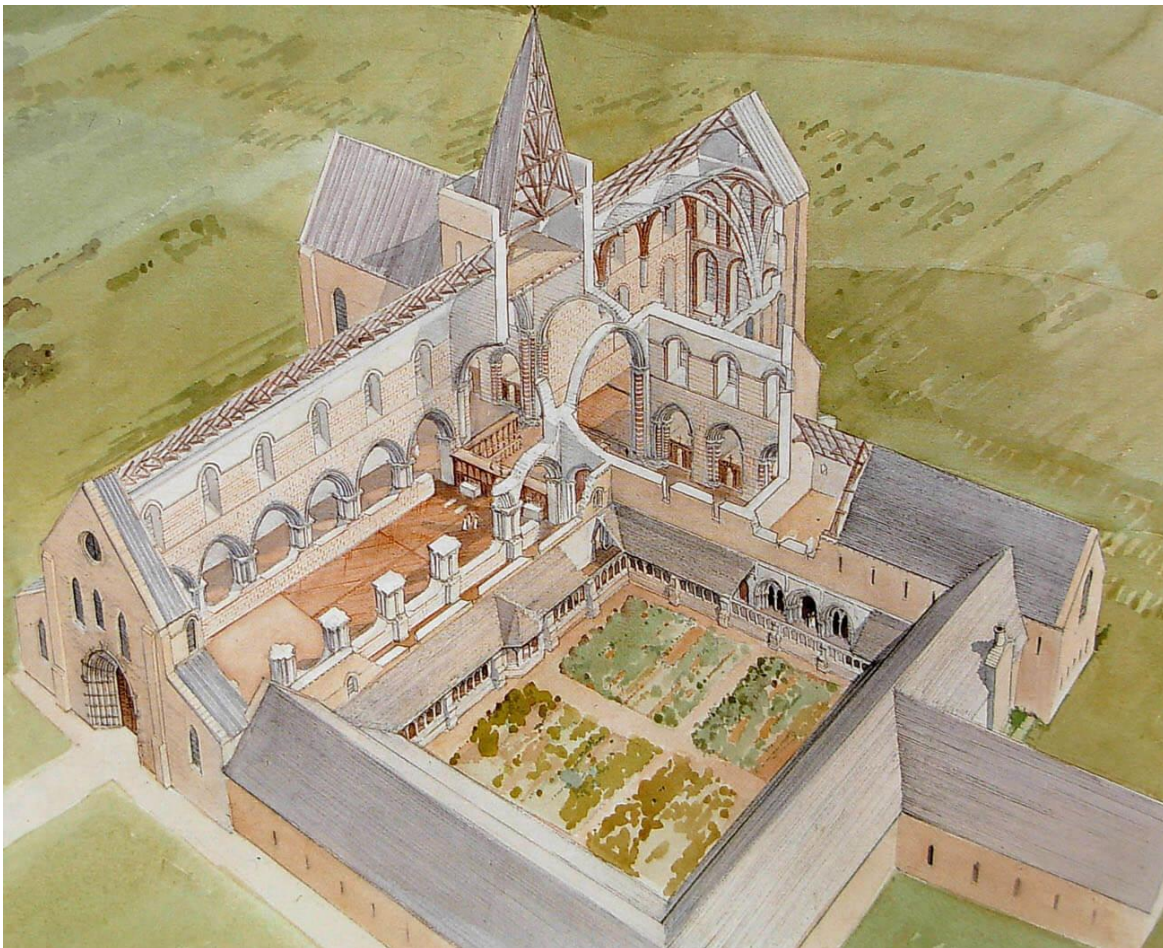
One such resource is Janusz Michalew and his website [Strata Florida - Cistercian Abbey - Ancient and medieval architecture](#). He provides a more detailed account of Strata Florida history with artist impressions by Bell. Michalew's purpose in creating this website 'was to give you an insight into the architecture in the past. From here I will try to include all kinds of plans, reconstructions and archival drawings.'

Below are two illustrations of the Abbey around the time of **the ...**
If you

Click [Strata Florida - Cistercian Abbey - Ancient and medieval architecture](#) to get the full article.



Artist impression 15th century



Time Line - Some of the keys incidents 12th-16th century

1186: Monks from Strata Florida establish a daughter house (Abbey) in Aberconwy.

1201: The new abbey church was completed

1212: King John ordered the abbey's destruction as the monks were seen as enemies.

1276-1277: The abbey suffered during Edward I's Welsh wars.

1282-1283: Further damage due to Edward I's Welsh wars.

1284: The Abbey receives compensation of £78 (today around £54,000 national archives currency-converter) for damage caused during the second campaign.

c.1284: The belfry was struck by lightning and fire destroyed the entire church save for the presbytery.

1294-1295: The abbey was burned by royalists in a local uprising.

1401-1402: Henry IV and his army occupied the abbey, and the monks were temporarily evicted.

1407: During the Glyn Dŵr, (Owen Glendower) revolt royalist troops occupied the abbey.

c.1442: The abbey was in a state of desolation.

1539: The Abbey had survived the first wave of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1534 was finally suppressed on 21 February 1539.

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In the 21st century, people still make pilgrimages to these Cistercian sites making their own connections to the religious heritage and spirituality of the place. They perhaps walk through the archway of the west door of the abbey and across the grass to the ruins, walking among what remains of walls, sensing the stillness of this sacred place.

Let us in our imagination do what pilgrims do and in the words of Anselm

Come now, turn aside for a while from your daily employment, escape for a moment from the tumult of your thoughts.

Put aside your weighty cares, let your burdensome distractions wait, free yourself for a while for God and rest awhile in him.

Enter the inner chamber of your soul, shut out everything except God and that which can help you in seeking him, and when you have shut the door, seek him.

Now, my soul, say to God, 'I seek your face; Lord it is your face that I seek.' Amen.

Anselm (1033-1109)

Acknowledgements.

Monastic Wales, <https://www.monasticwales.org/> click browse 'List of sites'

Cadw (Welsh Government historic environment service)

Coflein is the **online database for the National Monuments Record of Wales** (NMRW) – the national collection of information about the historic environment of Wales. The name is derived from the Welsh cof (memory) and lein (line).

While I seek to use only reliable sources when using websites, I cannot guarantee that the content on these websites is or will remain accurate or appropriate. I also have no control over the advertisements that accompany the YouTube link, these do seem to be on the increase.

(Derek is an Honorary Associate Priest (All Saints & St James and St Stephen's, Elton) Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

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The dual Parishes of Kirklees Valley, Bury, (All Saints, Elton & St James, Woolfold) and St Stephens, Elton are in the Diocese of Manchester.

Vicar of the two parishes - Fr. Samuel Eccleston O.P. (Anglican Order of Preachers- Dominicans)