

Basingwerk Abbey

We travel some 30 miles (48 km) from Conwy to Basingwerk Abbey, and only 1 mile (1.6 km) from St Winefride's (Winifred's) Chapel and Holy Well which has been a place of pilgrimage since 1115. The Holy Well is said to spring from the place where St Beuno (Bono) restored his niece Winefride to life.



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Savignac Order

The order started in 1105 in the abbey of Savigny where Vitalis of Mortain built a hermitage in the nearby woods.

In 1147 the Order was experiencing financial difficulties and was brought under the rules of the Cistercian Order.

Founded in 1132 by the Earl of Chester, Ranulf de Gernon Basingwerk Abbey did not have a conventional beginning. Monks from the Savignac Order were invited by the Earl of Chester to establish an abbey. The first site was at Hen Blas, overlooking the Dee Estuary, the present day name is Bagill, a village between Holywell and Flint.

As a border abbey, Basingwerk was caught between the English and the Welsh with the Earl of Chester wishing to confirm his authority of the area. The new site was in Tegeigl, English Englefield an administrative area in north-east Wales, a cantref. The relocation took place in 1157; the new site was in Greenfield (Welsh; Maes-glas). Henry II's charter (1157) granted Basingwerk more land, including the Manor of Glossop, in modern High Peak, Derbyshire.

Over the centuries the conflict between the Welsh and the English impacted on the Abbey. The political authority over the region changed as did the relationship between the Abbey and those in power. The Abbey was also to have suffered from conflict over the leadership within the Abbey itself. There seems to be little record of how the monks coped with both the internal and external conflicts.

If you click the link below you can get a fuller illustrated history of the Abbey.

The date of the Dissolution of the Abbey is unclear but monastic life stopped in the spring 1537. Curious Clwyd gives an account of how the Abbey was systematically demolished.

The Abbey itself was quickly stripped of its valuables. In 1538, lead from the Abbey roof was shipped off to Dublin for use by the castle and a number of other Crown possessions in the city, whilst lead was also packed off to Holt Castle in what is now Wrexham County. The Church of St Mary on the Hill at Chester took possession of the choir stalls, and there they remain. And as ever the case, any piece of parish church architecture or furniture or fitting within 40 miles of Basingwerk, which seems in any way incongruous in its setting has been attributed to have been originally of Basingwerk, whether it be the glorious [Jesse Window](#) at Llanrhaeadr-yng-Nghinmeirch, or the rather wonderful roof at St Mary's in Cilcain. The veracity of these claims are still a matter of debate. What is more certain is that an awful lot of the dressed stone of Basingwerk Abbey found its way into the later industrial buildings of the Greenfield Valley.

As we look at the photographs below imagine walking through the grounds of the ruins, the stones. As you walk around put to the back of your mind the conflicts the Abbey and the monks experienced and think about those who walked around the Abbey, prayed, studied and worked. Try to imagine the stillness and pray for those who live and work in the area around the former Abbey.

Prayer from the Anglican Order of Cistercians web page



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*This is my prayer to thee,
my Lord;
Give me strength lightly to
bear my joys and sorrows;
Give me the strength to
make my love fruitful in
service;
Give me the strength never
to disown the poor or bend
my knees before insolent
might.
Give me the strength to
raise my mind high above
daily trifles.
And give me the strength
to surrender my strength
to thy will with love.*

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)



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Left
South transept

Below

West wall of refectory.



Below

East wall of kitchen. A hatch gave access to the refectory behind the wall.



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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)