



# The History of Ewyas Lacy: Clodock Church

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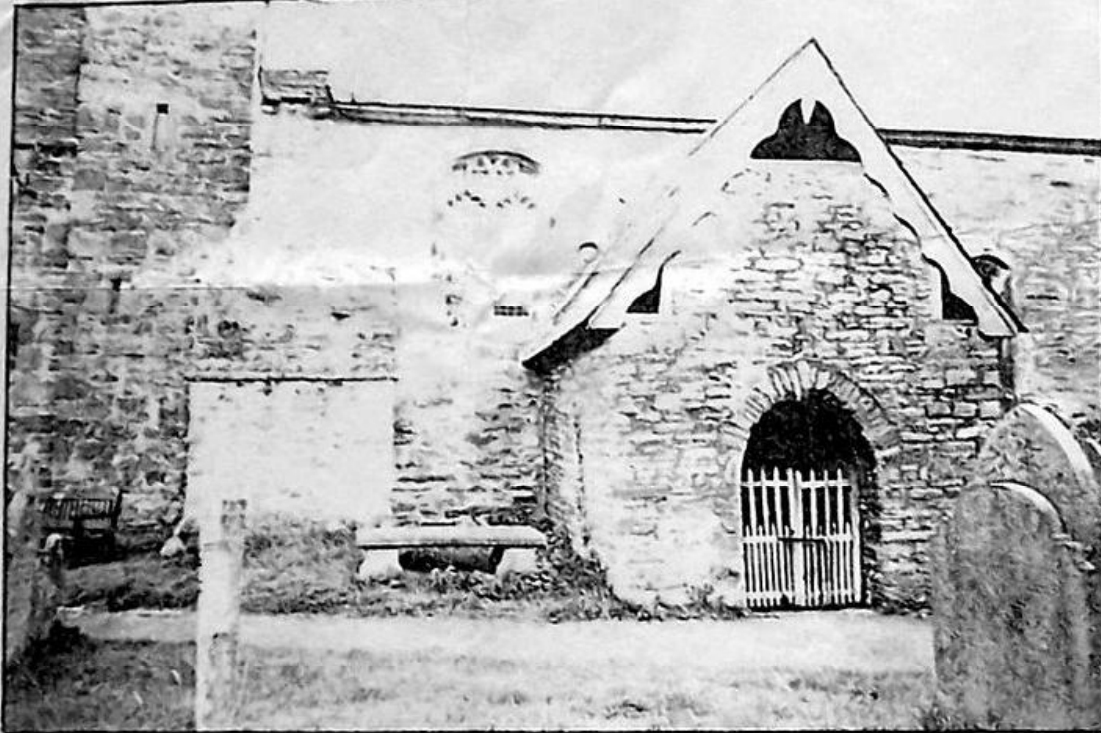
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Photograph of a magazine article about the origins and legends of Clodock Church.

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The ancient Clodock Church, dedicated to Clydawg.

A fascinating church dedicated to a

## MARTYR KING

Tourists who visit Clodock Church are surprised to learn that the peaceful Vale of Ewias, in which it stands, is associated with the Battle of Agincourt.

The Welsh name for Ewias is YW-YS meaning "a place of yew trees" and it is said that the Archers of Gwent went into battle with yew bows, and made their name renowned at Agincourt in 1415 A.D. with weapons made from trees grown in this valley.

The church lies at the foot of the Black Mountains, about 15 miles from Abergavenny, and approximately the

His father was one of 49 children

same distance from Hereford. It is possible that a place of worship has stood there for about 1,400 years.

The earliest church would have been about the size of the present chancel, and built of timber. The roof would have been thatched or boarded, the walls composed of mud, and the opening for light covered with cloth for want of glass. Could it

Augustine brought Christianity to England? If so, it is older than many cathedrals and churches now regarded as ancient in this part of the world. It is dedicated to Clydawg, a fifth century ruler of the kingdom of Ewias. Historians tell us that he came from stock in which kingliness was to be found united with ability and saintliness. His father was one of the 49 children of Brychan, King of Breconshire. Most of the male members of the family became missionaries of Christianity in Wales and beyond.

The story of the Saint of Clodock is related in the 12th century Book of Llandaff, and we are told that the young king was noted in those wild times because of his exemplary

EIGHTEEN



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## KATE WILLIAMS visits the Vale of Ewias

character and good morals. It is not surprising, therefore, that a young lady of noble birth wished to marry him, and refused all other offers of marriage. Was this the reason that he was murdered by a companion while out hunting?

To reach the burial site on the day of the funeral it was necessary to cross the river at the ford. The traces broke in the crossing and, when yoked up, the oxen refused to move. This was taken to be a sign that the king should be buried at this spot. This took place in the fifth or early sixth century and in the Book of Llandaff we are told "a column of fire was seen on his tomb on the night following his sepulture as being pleasing to God." Immediately, by the advice of the Bishop of Llandaff and clergy, an oratory was there built and consecrated with the sprinkling of water in honour of the Martyr Clydawg. (We should speak of it today as a murder, but the old chronicler calls it a martyrdom because of the pure life of the murdered king). In any case, we are told, "the blood of this upright may prove to be the seed of the church, and for 15 centuries a church has stood in this hallowed spot." The seats in Clodock are interesting - some from Tudor days having Elizabethan dragons carved thereon, and some are as recent as the early part of the 19th century. But one of the proudest possessions in the church is the holy communion table and three-sided communion rails of the Laudian style and period 1634-1640.

Campanologists tell us that the splendid peal of six bells is outstanding in tone and considered to be the finest in many countries. In 1953 parishioners organised a collection of donations towards the cost of re-casting and re-hanging the bells.

In the place of the side chapel stands one of the finest three-decker pulpits in the whole of the country. It dates from around 1650-1680. The

top deck is eight-sided, and has a sound-board of equal sides. This sound-board has fine mouldings around, with a cushion-like freeze, the cornice patterned, the underside panelled, and a delightful centre boss as flowers in the Grinling Gibbons style. The pulpit itself has fine panelling, a door with original hinges, and approached by a middle deck, having fine hand-rails. The middle-deck has two book-rests: the one facing North to conduct the service,



Inside the church.

the other facing West from which the lessons are read. Lower-deck is the clerk's desk, with book-rest. The section holding the book-rest was originally the door; the clerk entering the pulpit last and assisting the incumbent in many ways.

Just a little distance from the church may be seen St Clodock's Well with its perennial flow of crystal water. At times of drought the spring has never been known to fail, even though as many as a dozen people came to draw water. The wall frescoes and murals, the coat of arms, the Ten Commandments (recently restored) and the Lord's Prayer (painted on the walls of many churches in the 15th and 16th centuries) are still seen in Clodock.

## QUEST QUAINT QUOTES

### NO MAN

The man that dares traduce because he can  
With safety to himself, is not a man. -Cowper

### ILL SPENT

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? -Old Testament

### DISTRUST

Be sober and remember to distrust; these, my friend, are the very mainsprings of understanding. - Epicharmus.

### OBJECTIVES

Our object is to admonish, not to attack, to profit not to injure; to prescribe for men's diseases, not to obstruct their cure. -Erasmus.

### FOR LIVING

The care of funeral, the manner of burial, the pomp of obsequies, are rather a consolation to the living than of any service to the dead. -St Augustine.

### FATAL SHADOWS

Man is his own star, and the soul that can,  
Render an honest and a perfect man,  
Commands all light, all influence, all fate,  
Nothing to him falls early, or too late  
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,  
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.  
-John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont

### DRIVEN TO DESPAIR

No-one may now drive a motor car himself unless licensed, or employ an unlicensed person for the purpose; but, as such licence is granted as a matter of course to anyone over the age of 17 years in the case of a car, and 14 in case of a motor-cycle, little or no protection is afforded to the public, save that such licence may prove useful as a means of identification.  
-Country Gentlemen's Estate Book, 1904.

NINETEEN