

## Great Archaeological Sites in Bridgend



### 3. EARLY MEDIEVAL STONES AT MERTHYR MAWR



Merthyr Mawr is now a tiny village on the River Ogmore near the sea, with a manor house and a parish church, but before the Norman Conquest it was to have been something much more important. In the shelter behind the church (SS 8827 7753) is a collection of Early-medieval inscribed stones and sculptured stones that have been found in the churchyard. Another two crosses stood on the Merthyr Mawr estate.

*The Book of Llandaff*, a collection of charters, saints' lives, papal bulls and letters put together by the Bishop of Llandaff in the 12th century, that Merthyr Mawr was granted by King Hywel to Bishop Cerennyrr of Llandaff around AD 862. The name is given as Merthir Miur, *merthyr* meaning a saint's grave or relics and Miur (Myfor) being a personal name. But by the 12th century the church at Merthyr Mawr had been dedicated to St Teilo, as we can tell from a document of 1128.

Stone monuments were put up at some sites, and sometimes in isolation. The earliest Early Christian monuments are grave-markers giving the name of the deceased person, and sometimes details of their families, but no other decoration. They were probably inspired by Roman inscriptions, such as those on milestones. The stone on the right of the photograph below is one of these. The inscription reads 'PAVLI... FILI M' 'Paul(inus), son of M...' A later fashion was to engrave a

cross – fairly plain like the stone in the middle, or a more elaborate ring cross like the one on the previous page. Some had interlace decoration like the one on the left.

Almost all of the examples here are small pieces cut from much larger stones, probably so they could be reused as building stone. In the churchyard close to the road is a rectangular stone with a mortice hole or socket cut into the top, to receive a cross shaft. At least some of the carved stones in the collection may originally have been designed to stand in bases like this.



The Early Medieval monuments are housed in a shelter in the churchyard behind the church (CF32 0LS). There is limited parking space in front of the church, and a larger car park a mile away on Merthyr Mawr Warren. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 170, Explorer Series sheet 151.

**Timeline** (the asterisk indicate the time-span)



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