

# Services at the Shrine Church at Pennant Melangell

## Eglwys Shrin Santes Melangell—the Shrine Church of St Melangell.

Names don't always have a meaning but when I first came to this valley, I was told that the name Melangell might mean dear angel or possibly a thousand angels. The origin and meaning of the name Melangell have been subject to much speculation over the years, as has her Latinised name, Monacella. However, recently going through the archives here, comments have been found from the late Professor Sir Ifor Williams. He was Professor of Welsh Language and Literature at the University College of North Wales, which became the University of Wales, Bangor. The professor had a life-long interest in the names of places as well as people, with his particular academic interest being Old Welsh and he speculated that when Brochwel asked the maiden's name her reply might have been 'Ancilla Domini', meaning maidservant of the Lord. Sir Ivor suggested that 'Ancilla' could then have developed from the Latin into Welsh as 'angell' (Latin *nc* nasalising into *ng* and the ending *a* before fading away, affecting *i* turning it into *e*.) 'Mael' was a well-known Welsh word for 'lord' in early and mediaeval times and so the form might have been 'Maelangell' which, in the course of centuries of colloquial use, may have simplified into 'Melangell'.

Traditionally, Mary the Mother of Jesus was called the handmaid of the Lord when she used this term of herself at the

Annunciation (sometimes also translated as servant in Luke 1:38) and so this possibility may have wider resonances too.

None of this can be proved but these, and other, speculations offer various possibilities regarding the development of this historic site. The archives here are full of fascinating information like this and, for Melangell's Feast Day this year, there will be an exhibition of some of the articles, drawings and poems that have been accumulated over the years. Much centres on Melangell, who is thought by some never to have existed, although the 15th century carving in the church and the heritage here suggests otherwise, but Brochwel is an historical character of great influence, leading to Powys being termed the Land of Brochwel. All this will, in due course, be collated into some form of a Miscellany from St Melangell's but it would be good to highlight this in the exhibition which will be held on 24th, 25th and 26th May this year.

The centre holds a lot of documents, as do other people, and it would be helpful to liaise over this if possible. If you have any information or memories that are relevant to the history of Melangell and Brochwel, the church and centre or would want to be involved with talks about the site, the inherited story of the community here or the exhibition itself, it would be good to know!

With my prayers; pob bendith,  
**Christine, Guardian**



***Meanwhile, the following services will be held here in February:***

Presentation of Christ, Candlemas, **Sunday 2nd February**, 3pm: Service of reflection.

**Thursday 6th**, noon: Holy Eucharist.

**Fourth Sunday before Lent**, 9th Feb, 3pm: Service of reflection for Racial Justice Sunday.

**Thursday 13th February**, noon: Holy Eucharist.

**Third Sunday before Lent**, 16th Feb, 3pm: Holy Eucharist

**Thursday 20th February**, noon: Holy Eucharist.

**Second Sunday before Lent**, 23rd Feb, 3pm: Service of reflection, Creation Sunday.

**Monday 24th Feb**, 10.30am: Julian Group at the centre.

**Thursday 27th February**, noon: Holy Eucharist - George Herbert.

***For further details or to book Shepherd's Hut or the Centre, please ring 01691 860408 or contact [admin@stmelangell.org](mailto:admin@stmelangell.org)***