

*Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Tyddewi a Phebidiog
St Davids and Dewisland Historical Society*

St Davids Cathedral Shrine & Armenian Memorial

Following the canonisation of St David by Pope Calixtus II the growth in the number of pilgrims visiting his shrine in the Cathedral of St Davids grew – resulting in the erection, in 1275, of the present shrine. The bones of St David may have been encased in the original shrine and the ‘myth’ is that during the restoration of the cathedral some bones were found ... and the Dean at the time hid them in a cardboard box under his bed for safe-keeping until he needed to ‘re-discover’ them!



Pilgrimages ceased at the time of the Reformation and the shrine was destroyed by ‘Wicked’ Bishop Barlow (at least in part to support his desire to move the cathedral to Carmarthen) but this was forestalled by ‘acquiring’ the tomb of Edmund Tudor (Grandfather to Henry VIII) from the recently dissolved church of the Greyfriar’s

of Carmarthen.

The vision for the Shrine was to make it a clear focus for visitors so they in turn could become the New Pilgrims. Rather than an ‘old bloke with a beard’ the vision of the artist Sarah Crisp (whose family have had a long connection with the cathedral) was to create a new and young monk, with the tonsure and garb of the Celtic Monk he was - with the choice of colourful icons reflected how the cathedral would have looked in the Middle Ages ... filled with bright colours. There is no record of what had been on the reverse of the shrine but the painting of St Non, St David’s mother, is a striking image



There is another striking image of a mother and child in the Cloister Gardens – but representing a much more modern event – that of the first recorded Genocide of the C20th, the annihilation of one and a half million Armenians, systematically slaughtered during WW I. The Armenians were amongst the first Christian nations but constant persecution by the Ottoman Turks culminated in one of biggest slaughters of Christians ever – even war-hardened Germans during WW I were horrified by the extent of the shooting of the men and Death Marches into the desert of the women and children. 50 years after the events in 1915 movements began to establish a Genocide Memorial in the Armenian capital and then in other centres of pilgrimage – with April 24th recognised as Armenian Genocide Memorial Day. At the foot of the image of Mary and the Christ Child is the Church of St. Gregory’s – a symbol of hope and reaching heavenwards for pilgrims.

