

# Heritage in ruins



**SAD SIGHT:** John Smith (left) in the ruins and (above) outside the church with farmer Ralph David, of Cyntwell, who owns the land.

By Alison Walker

**ONE of Cardiff's oldest churches has been left to fall into ruin while being wrecked by vandals.**

Brambles have taken over the graveyard and virtually every headstone smashed at St Mary's Church in Caerau, Ely.

It fell into disuse nearly 20 years ago and since then the windows have been smashed, roof pulled out, walls smashed down and fires set alight inside.

John Smith, 67, from South Morgan Place, Riverside, Cardiff, said: "It's an absolute disgrace."

Both his parents are buried in the churchyard, but he has to fight through brambles when he visits their grave.

"The church has practically been demolished and there are times I can hardly get up there because of the burned-out cars and building materials dumped outside," said Mr Smith.

The 13th-Century Norman church is a Grade II listed building owned by South Glamorgan County Council.

Mr Smith said: "They promised to renovate it but nothing was ever done. It used to be lovely up there and I am sure lots of people would go there if they did something about it."

A county council spokesman said: "It was hoped years ago to develop it as a heritage centre, but financial restrictions as well as problems in buying the adjoining land have made this impossible.

"We have taken steps to protect the building from damage and vandalism but because of its isolated position, it is impossible to protect it fully."



## CONTACT

AND  
GLASS  
BOT

from c  
**£49.**

But any pair of S  
lenses from  
and we'll give  
spare pair of  
same presc

ABSOLUT  
**FREE**

