

## **Hen Gapel John Hughes/ John Hughes Memorial Chapel, Pontrobert.**

### **The History**

Built in 1800 as a chapel, the building was used at different times as a wheelwright's workshop and as a school when John Hughes came there as a teacher. He received his licence to teach from The Rev'd Thomas Charles of Bala, and up until the year 1805, when his soul friend, Ann Griffiths, Dolwar Fach, died, John Hughes' involvement with the local Methodists deepened, and, in 1814, he was considered to be 'ripe for ordination' as a Methodist minister. The building became a chapel once more when John, and his wife, Ruth, came to live in the adjoining cottage that year, raised six daughters and became the centre of Methodist Revivalist activity in the area and famous throughout Wales. John Hughes died in 1854 and following the gradual diminishing of the religious fervour of the revival, the chapel was closed eleven years later and a new one built closer to the village centre. Despite many efforts on the part of the Methodist Connexion to sell the building this was not achieved until 1927 when the local wheelwright bought it and proceeded to alter it to accommodate the carts. However, he was not allowed, by virtue of a clause in the deeds, to touch John Hughes' pulpit. And, gradually, both pulpit and building deteriorated to such an alarming degree, that in 1983 a group of local people from across the denominations decided to launch an appeal for the restoration of both. This project initially caught the imagination of believers throughout Wales and beyond, and the funds to purchase it from the owner- a direct descendent of the wheelwright- quickly materialised. However it took eleven years to raise the £50,000 needed, and during that time the custodian and spiritual guide, Nia Rhosier, came to live in the cottage so as to expedite the restoration of the Chapel and begin her ministry.

### **Front Page**

The old chapel was opened as a CENTRE FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY AND RENEWAL FOR WALES in April 1995, with John Hughes' pulpit suitably and sensitively restored as a worthy focus and link with the past. Public toilets and an office were added in 1998 following the raising of a further £25,000.

This is a place where the true nature of Christian spirituality is reflected in daily prayer, soul-friending and pilgrimage and where today's Christians and seekers may find rest, share insights, fears and hopes.

Enquiries concerning visits and arranging retreats are warmly welcomed by the Custodian, Nia Rhosier, who can be contacted by telephone or FAX on 01938 500631 or through a friends email: [david.roberts24@which.net](mailto:david.roberts24@which.net).

### **Directions**

Having travelled along the 2mile straight into Pontrobert village, turn right at the Parish church gates, up a short hill, and take the second lane on the left. The Chapel is the first of two buildings on the left, with John and Ruth Hughes' grave and Memorial stone in the cemetery opposite. There is no access for large buses but these can be parked at the bottom of the lane, known as the ANN GRIFFITHS WALK. Parking for cars and mini buses is available in front of the Centre. Provision of tea and coffee for individuals and small groups can be made by prior arrangement with the Custodian. Day visitors are asked to bring a packed lunch. There is an Inn in the village, an Inn and a Café in Meifod (4 miles) and three Inns and two Cafes in Llanfair Caereinion (6 miles).

## **Worship**

Daily prayers are said throughout the year and a PLYGAIN (traditional Welsh Carol Service) takes place at 6.00am Christmas morning. There are occasional Christian Unity prayer meetings and services, and the ANN GRIFFITHS DAY, August 12<sup>th</sup> is celebrated annually in various ways.

The Centre is 'twinned' with the Corrymeela Centre in Northern Ireland, and in 2000, CWLWM CYMOD CYMRU-CORRYMEELA ('Cwlwm' means Knot, as in Celtic, and 'Cymod' is reconciliation) was established for the furtherance of dialogue and exchange between our two Celtic nations. Wales' first Corrymeela Sunday is on St. Patrick's Day, March 17<sup>th</sup> 2002 at St. Asaph Cathedral at 3 p.m. All are welcome. For more information please consult our diary.

## **PILGRIMAGES TO HEN GAPEL JOHN HUGHES, PONTROBERT**

### **MISSION MINISTRY AND RECONCILIATION**

We live in very important times in the life of the Christian Church. People need help in discovering their spirituality and in acknowledging responsibility for their relationship with God as well as belonging to a group or church. People have a deep longing to discover what is missing in a group or church. People have a deep longing to discover what is missing in their lives. Often, they do not have the words or experience to describe it, but they long to find that 'missing dimension' in themselves. Embarking on a pilgrimage to the Centre for Christian Unity, Renewal and Reconciliation at Hen Gapel John Hughes, Pontrobert, enables one to observe in silence, and in a non-threatening environment, how God works through people, to learn more about the Creator and his creation, and about oneself, so that the healing power of Christ can become a living presence within and a real part of everyday life. Ministry to visitors and tourists is vital in this age, and who knows how many tourists turn into pilgrims and continue their journeys with renewed purpose, having understood a deep truth within themselves: that they matter and have been ministered to in a very real way.

Pilgrimage and visits to Holy Places by tourists are all about 'being' not 'doing'. It's not about being talked at, but being listened to. It concerns having access to a place which feels different, and of being able to explore feelings and use words which are rather different from the usual vernacular.

The inner and outer journeys come together, or converge, in pilgrimage, and for many thousands of tourists and visitors, the chance to step from the familiar to the unknown is more easily achieved when one is on holiday – relaxed and with time to spare – just standing and sensing something which is beyond the pressure and stress of everyday life. Also, for groups of believers, an organised pilgrimage to a holy place can inspire and open new channels and ways of being ‘the Church’. This is particularly relevant to the Welsh-speaking churches and chapels in Wales today, whose members are inclined to become depressed at the sight of half empty places of worship, and feel at a loss to know what to do, so the welcome (croeso) to them is particularly warm. People of faith in the face of great obstacles and difficulties set up this ecumenical Centre, and it is here to be use as a meeting place for believers, searchers and doubters alike.

### **HEALING AND RECONCILIATION**

A network of pilgrimages is in operation across Wales these days, mainly using ancient churches, monasteries and wells, because they are seen as places of healing and reconciliation where people with deep hurts can come for solace and inner peace. This nurturing and care for the whole person can be found within the walls of Hen Gapel John Hughes too, so WELCOME to the Website of the Centre for Christian Unity and Renewal at Pontrobert. The Custodian, Nia Rhosier, will be delighted to arrange personal and group retreats on receiving your requests, and prays that you may find a peace and strength here which will give you fresh purpose and new hope for your life’s journey.