

Capel

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THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



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LOCAL INFORMATION SHEET

3

DOLGELLAU

CYFARFOD BLYNYDDOL / ANNUAL MEETING
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SALEM

TABERNACL Independent Chapel

One of the Independents' outstanding figures in the Dolgellau area, without doubt, was Hugh Pugh from Ty-nant Bach, Brithdir. He started preaching in Dolgellau at a place, not far from Aran bridge, called Penbrynglas and in April 1808 he bought the old Calvinistic Methodist chapel with the accompanying buildings at a total cost of £500. The two denominations were to share the premises for a period until Salem, the new Methodist Chapel at Penbryn nearby was ready. Hugh Pugh, therefore, was the first established minister for an area which stretched virtually from Garneddwen to Barmouth and from Oerddrws Pass to Ganllwyd. His successor was Cadwaladr Jones from Deildre Uchaf, Llanuwchllyn. He was ordained as minister in May 1811 after finishing his studies at Wrexham. Under his guidance for a period of 46 years, the Independent cause was to flourish. It was Cadwalader Jones who was responsible for concentrating the Ministry in Dolgellau and Islaw'r Dref. In the wake of this success it became evident that a new chapel was needed in a more convenient situation. Fortunately a site became available between Y Lawnt and Penbryn and the present chapel, Y Tabernacl, was built at a total cost of

£2,800. It was officially opened on June 4 1868 and Evan A. Jones became minister starting in January 1869. Tabernacl also had three 'off-shoot' chapels in the vicinity, namely, Penyresgynfa, Bwlch Coch and Rhydwen; sadly the three are now closed. In 1878 an English Chapel was established on land nearby the Tabernacl at Penbryn. W. E. Hughes from the Theological College at Bala was ordained minister on May 30, 1883.

The present minister is the Rev Hywel Wyn Richards.

This is a large rectangular chapel which is entered from the top of the site. All the furniture is probably original. Some of the windows have been renewed. Below is a large school room. The chapel has hardly been altered in 123 years.

SALEM Presbyterian Chapel/BETHEL chapel/the English Chapel

There is a tradition which states that David Jones, Llan-gan, when preaching the cause in Dolgellau around the year 1787 was disturbed by some local people who rudely attempted to put him off by shaking chains and generally trying to drown his words. David Jones, apparently, was so incensed by this that he was driven to shout that a chapel was to be built in Dolgellau come what may! And, in a short space of time his words were to ring true. Land was bought in a part of the town called Penucha'r Dre from Dr Henry Owen, a local Quaker. This was the chapel that was later sold to the Independents after Salem Chapel was built.

When Salem itself was opened in May, 1809, it was stated that it was the largest chapel in Gwynedd. In 1877, the Methodists were to establish two offshoots of Salem - *Bethel Chapel* in Smithfields St., and the *English Chapel* in Glyndwr St. Bethel Chapel was designed by Richard Owen, Liverpool, and the builder was John Thomas, Dolgellau. The English Chapel was designed by Humphrey Jones, Tanybryn, Dolgellau. Both were built at a cost of £2,000 and were reputed to hold a congregation of 2,000. Bethel now houses the dairy and Siop Glyndwr. The English Chapel has also closed its doors and has been bought by the Dolgellau Amateur Dramatic Society (D.A.D.S.) who are busy turning it into a local theatre.

Salem is located in Penbryn and the present minister is the Rev. Dewi Wyn Williams.

Salem is built on a sloping site and noticeably set back from the road. Steps lead up to a small forecourt on either side of which are small pavilions each containing an entrance to the chapel. A small burial ground is situated to the rear of the chapel. This chapel has been renovated over the years but much of the rear could date from 1809.

JUDA Baptist Chapel

Itinerant Baptist preachers had been visiting the Dolgellau area since 1780 but little is really known about the early period until that eminent minister J.R.Jones, was ordained minister of Ramoth, Llanfrothen in 1789 with responsibility for other areas which included Dolgellau. In 1790 he baptized 13 people by Aran bridge and in 1795 a house called Penbont yr Aran was licensed as a meeting place for the Baptists in Dolgellau.

J.R. Jones then ordained his cousin, Joseph Richards, who became joint minister for the Baptists in Dolgellau. However a rift developed between the two when J.R. Jones threw in his lot with the Scotch Baptists whilst Joseph Richards remained in charge of the original cause in Dolgellau.

The first chapel was built in 1800. This building was re-built in 1838/39 during the ministry of Samuel Williams - a period that saw much growth and development. It is estimated that the chapel cost £600.

In 1928 a house and buildings were purchased in Penbryn with the intention of building a new chapel, but it was not to be. Eventually it was decided to renovate the house and turn it into a manse. The chapel, which is sited in Penbryn behind Idris Terrace and quite near to Salem has the following inscription above the entrance:

Capel Juda
Adeiladwyd A.D.1800
Ail-adeiladwyd 1839

This chapel is probably still basically as it was in 1839 but has undergone 'facelifts' in 1928 and possible earlier in the 1880s. The interior is pleasant with furniture probably dating from the 1880s.

EBEBEZER Wesleyan Methodist Chapel

In May 1802 the Rev. Owen Davies and the Rev. John Hughes travelled to Dolgellau. According to hearsay, John Hughes preached from the mounting-block outside the Golden Lion Royal Hotel but apparently to little avail. In 1804, however, when the Rev. Edward Jones, Bathafarn visited the area the welcome was more forth-coming. As a result of his visit, meetings were held in the house of one Hywel Jones for some months before a house was rented by Aran bridge called Fronheulog. The first meeting was held there in 1805 and Edward Jones himself preached there in the evening. He appealed to those strong in the faith to stay behind afterwards in order to form a Society. By 1806 their number stood at 120.

In May 1806 land was purchased in Penucha'r Dre to build a chapel and a manse. The total transaction cost £1,124. However, as time went by, the cause flourished and the need for a new chapel became evident. In 1874 a site was bought in a central position for £781 and the estimated cost of building a new chapel was £3,300. The foundation stone was laid in 1879 and the chapel was officially opened on October 10, 1880. Successful Jubilee and Centenary meetings were held in 1930 and 1980 respectively. The chapel is located in Skinner's Square between 'Springfields' house and the Post Office. The present minister is the Rev. Patrick Slattery.

Ebenezer is a simple rectangular building designed by Richard Davies of Bangor, one of Wales' leading chapel architects. The interior has stained and varnished pine and elaborate plasterwork. The chapel is almost in its original condition and is a great example of Richard Davies at his best.

