

# Capel

CYDDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI  
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



CYLCHLYTHYR / NEWSLETTER

30

HYDREF / AUTUMN 1997

## Joint Meeting with the Chapels Society at Shrewsbury



*St John's Methodist Church Shrewsbury*

This year, in place of our usual Spring meeting in mid-May, Capel members were invited to attend the Chapel Society's Annual General Meeting at Shrewsbury on 14 June. The meeting was held in the Unitarian chapel in High Street, where, following the business meeting, the members were entertained and enlightened by a talk by Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes on *Border Chapels in Welsh and English literature*.

After wistfully regretting the fact that most of the major

'Border' Welsh authors lived well before chapels came into being, Dr Hughes allowed himself to stray from the strict limits of his title to draw attention to the account of the new Bethesda chapel published in *Yr Eurgrawn* in 1873. Written by John Hugh Evans, in its detailed description of the building, it was one of the few

examples of aesthetic criticism of architecture in a nineteenth century denominational journal: 'The chapel is in the Italian style but the Gothic would have looked much better here to correspond to the landscape'.

The nineteenth century English novel was generally dismissive of Dissent and indeed one of Daniel Owen's motives in writing his novels was to right the wrong done to Nonconformity by novels such as those of Dickens, Thackeray and Kingsley. George Eliot however did show rather more understanding, as did two other women novelists more closely associated with the Border country - Elizabeth Gaskell from Cheshire and Mary Webb from Shropshire. Dr Hughes quoted passages from Gaskell's *Ruth* and Webb's *The Golden Arrow* and *Seven for a secret* and then drew attention to the Anglo-Welsh writer Geraint Goodwin's *Watch on the morning*, with its picture of chapel life in Moreton, the fictionalised version of Newtown. He then quoted passages from the best known of Daniel Owen's novels, *Rhys Lewis*, with its portrayal of Bethel chapel in Mold, one of the many chapels in North Wales, from Llannerch-y-medd to Rhos, which have been called 'Capel Mawr'. Daniel Owen loved the chapel but detested chapelosity and theocracy.

Strangely one has to wait for the twentieth century to find works praising the simple whitewashed rural chapel, such as Dyfed's *Fendigaid Ysguboriau* or the portrayal of the deep-seated nonconformist objection to church adornment seen in E Tegla Davies's story *Samuel Jones yr Hendre yn diolch am y cynhaeaf*.

After lunch we were introduced to the history of Nonconformity in Shrewsbury with a tour of half a dozen of the chapels in the centre of the town, beginning with the Unitarian chapel itself, which traces its history to the ejection of two Shrewsbury clergymen, Francis Tallents and John Bryan in 1662. They formed a Presbyterian congregation which met in private houses until they were able to build a chapel in 1691 in a garden behind two houses in High Street. This chapel was enlarged in 1703, destroyed in riots in 1715 but re-built immediately and extended in 1837, and renovated again in 1884 to the plan of a local architect, A B Deakin.

There were Baptists too in the town in the 17th Century who met in various meeting houses in High Street until the 1780s, when a chapel with its own burial ground was built in Claremont Street. This was extended in 1810 and 1841 and in 1877 was taken down and rebuilt to the designs of Richard Owen in the Italian Style of Ruabon pressed brick with Grinnshill Stone dressings.

From Claremont Street we moved on to St John's Hill to see the Methodist Chapel built in 1879 to replace the one which had cost £2000 in 1805. The present chapel was designed by the Burslem architect G B Ford and resembles the Primitive Methodist chapel in Burslem.



*New Methodist Connexion, Shrewsbury (Christian Scientist until 1980)*

From the 17th century the Quakers have also met in various buildings mainly on St John's Hill, though, for some seventy years from the middle of the last century, the Society ceased to exist in the town. It was revived however in 1931, and met in rented rooms until St Catherine's Hall on Coton Hill was purchased and refurbished in 1986. The Independents too met in various houses, legally or illegally, from 1660 on. From 1741 to 1766 they were joined with the Presbyterians in High Street but the congregation again split and the Independents built a chapel with its own burial ground on Swan Hill which served the congregation until 1867/8. It was then replaced by a brick building in Gothic style which is still in use today as an Independent chapel, the congregation having decided in the 1970s not to join the United Reformed Church.

The last chapel visited was the St David's Presbyterian Church of Wales, Belmont, erected in 1936 at a cost of £7000 to cater for the growth of the earlier Calvinistic Methodist chapel on Frankwell Quay, which was itself an offshoot of the original Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Hills Lane.

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# Chapels Society

## Residential Week-end

We have been informed that the Chapels Society is organising a residential week-end at Penzance in Cornwall from 1st to 3rd May 1998. The programme will include talks on the Methodist chapels of Penzance by John Horner and on chapel building in Cornwall by John Probert and there will be a coach tour of West Cornwall including visits to Marazion and St Ives. Members who are interested are invited to contact Mr John Horner, 11 South Terrace, The Promenade, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4DP (Tel: 01736 360554)

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### Streather, George T. *Memorials of the Independent Chapel at Rothwell*

(Rothwell United Reformed Church, 1994) 247p. illus. £9.95

We would not normally review publications relating to individual chapels in England but this book could be of particular interest to members of CAPEL in view of the part played by Welshmen in the history of the Rothwell chapel.

The third minister of the chapel was Richard Davis (1658-1714), born in Cardiganshire, who came to Rothwell after a period as schoolmaster in London. He was a strong Calvinist and exercised a very active itinerant ministry which led to the foundation of church meetings in several neighbouring towns such as Wellingborough and Kimbolton and made him many enemies among the Presbyterians, including his fellow Welshman, Daniel Williams.

His successor too was a Welshman, Matthias Maurice (1684-1738), who was born in Llanddewi Velfrey and had been involved in the schism in the congregation at Henllan Amgoed in 1711. In 1729 Maurice published a history of the Rothwell chapel under the title *Monuments of Mercy* and Mr Streather has naturally made much use of this work and of the history by another minister of the church, Norman Glass, in 1871. But his main source has been the church's own records, preserved in the series of nine Church Books, the earliest dating back to the mid seventeenth century. He quotes extensively from these books, one of the passages quoted being the letter sent from the church at Rhydyceisiaid in 1714, when the Rothwell church wished to install Maurice as their minister.

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## Architectural Heritage Society

Members may be interested in the newly formed **Architectural Heritage Society**, which will hold meetings in Cardiff and is dedicated to the study of buildings, landscape and design in Wales and elsewhere. A stimulating programme of illustrated talks and events has been arranged; monthly meetings are to be held from September to April at the Welsh School of Architecture, Bute Building, Cathays Park, Cardiff. The first year's programme includes the following:

- Monday, 1 December      Judi Loach, Rosemary Clements, *Architecture for Health - the Inter-War Period*
- Monday, 2 February      John Hilling, *Northern Vernacular - the Wooden Architecture of Northern Europe*
- Monday, 2 March         Jeremy Lowe, *Passion Play - Baroque Churches in Southern Germany*

Individual membership costs £12 and subscriptions should be sent to David Lermom, Acting Hon. Treasurer, Beech House, Cotswold Avenue, Lisvane, Cardiff CF4 5TA (Tel. 01222 751017 evenings or weekends)

## Eglwys yr Annibynwyr, Tabernacl Rhostryfan, Gwynedd

Cynhaliwyd Gwasanaeth Datgorffori Eglwys yr Annibynwyr Tabernacl, Rhostryfan ar 15 Ebrill. Yn yr adroddiad am y gwasanaeth yn *Lleu, Papur Newydd Dyffryn Nantlle* (Mai 1997), dywedwyd 'Mae'r Achos yn y Tabernacl (y "capel bach" i bobl yr ardal) wedi parhau ers 1866 pan agorwyd y capel gydag 17 o aelodau. Bu cynnydd yn yr aelodaeth dros flynyddoedd y ganrif ddiwethaf a dechrau'r ugeinfed ganrif a bu cryn lewyrch ar yr Eglwys a'r Ysgol Sul yno hyd ganol y ganrif hon. Fel ymhobman arall daeth difaterwch a lleihad yn y rhai a fynychai'r gwasanaethau ac ers blynyddoedd dim ond un oedfa'r Sul a gynhelid yno'.

Rhoddir mwy o hanes y capel yn *Llawlyfr Undeb Dyffryn Nantlle a'r cylch* (1968). Yn dilyn ei dorri allan o'r seiat yn Horeb, eglwys y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd, ymdrechodd Hymphrey Jones, teiliwr a fu'n gweithio ym Manceinion am flynyddoedd, i sefydlu achos Annibynnol yn yr ardal. Cynhaliwyd gwasanaethau yn ei gartref yn Llwyndyrus a ffurfiwyd eglwys yn 1864. Yn dilyn cyfnod anodd pan gafwyd anhawster i sicrhau lle i adeiladu capel, gyda nifer yn gwrthod gwerthu tir i'r Annibynwyr, llwyddwyd i brynu digon o dir caregog ac eithinog, ond wedi'i baratoi, cwblhawyd y gwaith o adeiladu'r capel ym 1866, ac agorwyd y capel yn ffurfiol ym 1867.



*Tabernacl, Rhostryfan*

Deellir fod nifer o'r capeli a ddisgrifir yn y *Llawlyfr* wedi cau, gan gynnwys Hermon, Moeltryfan, a dynnwyd i lawr, Bwlchyllyn a'r Cilgwyn. Tynnwyd i lawr gapel Soar, Penygroes, gan ddefnyddio'r festri yn gapel a gwerthwyd Moreia, Llanllyfni, i Eglwys Bresbyteriaidd Cymru.

Cyflwynwyd ffotograff o'r capel a dynnwyd ym mis Ebrill 1997 (gweler uchod), ynghyd â gwybodaeth am y capel, gan gynnwys cyfeiriadau at yr adroddiad yn *Lleu* a'r hanes yn y *Llawlyfr* (1968) gan un o aelodau CAPEL, sef Mrs Nansi Owen, The Beeches, West Terrace, Stanhope, Co. Durham, DL13 2PB. Cafodd Mrs Owen ei bedyddio a'i derbyn yn aelod yn y Tabernacl ond fe'i priodwyd yng nghapel Seion Caernarfon oherwydd nid oedd y 'capel bach' wedi'i gofrestru i gynnal priodasau.

## Chapel Records: Denbighshire

The Denbighshire Archives Service has received an important addition to the collections at the Ruthin Record Office which reflects the growth of chapel congregations in the second half of the last century. The records of some twenty-three Wesleyan chapels in an area from west of Ruthin to Llangollen include baptism and

marriage registers, Sunday School minutes and accounts, and temperance society papers. The circuit records also include minutes of a branch of the Rechabites, a friendly society which, before the days of the Welfare State, enabled members to save regularly and withdraw their money when they fell on hard times.

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## EXHIBITIONS

Two exhibitions featuring the work of CAPEL members, Islwyn Jones, Blaenclydach, Tonypany, and Catherine Masterman, Chiswick, London may be viewed during the coming months.

The exhibition *Capeli Rhondda Cynon Taf / Chapels of Rhondda Cynon Taff*, comprising words and pictures illustrating local chapels, by Capel member Islwyn Jones and Rhondda Cynon Taff Community Arts may be viewed at the following venues:-

Historical and Cultural Centre, Pontypridd, 13.10.97 - 7.11.97

Treorchy Library, 10.11.97 - 6.12.97

Tonypany Library, 8.12.97 - 3.1.98

Aberdare Library, 5.1.98 - 31.1.98

Mountain Ash Library, 2.2.98 - 28.2.98

Pontypridd Library, 2.3.98 - 28.3.98

Pontyclun Library, 30.3.98 - 27.4.98

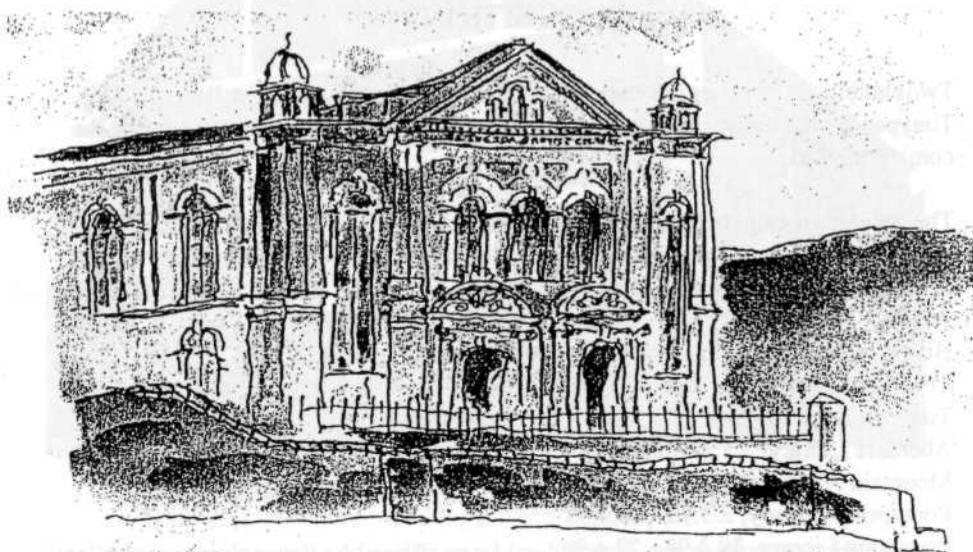
The exhibition has received financial support from CADW.

The exhibition *Chapels and Churches of Gower* displays watercolours by Catherine Masterman of chapels in Swansea, Mumbles and Gower and is mounted at the Swansea Museum from 16 October until 12 December.

The chapels illustrated include Argyle Presbyterian, St Helen's Road; Bethel Independent, Penclawdd; Bethesda Welsh Baptist, Prince of Wales Road; Bethesda, Burry Green; Brunswick Methodist, St.Helen's Road; Brynhyfryd Welsh Baptist, Landore; Capel Newydd, Morriston; Carmarthen Road Congregational, Fforestfach; Castleton, Mumbles; Capel y Crwys, Three Crosses; Dinas Noddfa, Landore; Ebenezer Baptist, city centre; Dunvant Gospel Hall; Libanus, Cwmbwrla and Mount Pleasant, Kingsway.

D Huw Owen

# CHAPELS AND CHURCHES OF SWANSEA & GOWER



WATERCOLOURS BY CATHERINE MASTERMAN  
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM SWANSEA AND MUMBLES  
CAMERA CLUB

*16TH OCTOBER - 7TH DECEMBER*

**SWANSEA MUSEUM, VICTORIA ROAD, SWANSEA.  
TEL. (01792) 653763. ADMISSION FREE.**



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA  
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 12th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Llandudno on Saturday 11 October 1997.

- 1) The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting held at St John's Methodist Church, Llandudno.
- 2) Apologies for absence were received from Ray Caple, Aneurin Davies and family, Meuric Lloyd Davies, Muriel Bowen Evans, The Reverend Tom Evans, R Formby, Professor Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, Neil Sumner, Angharad Waters and John E Wheeler.
- 3) The Minutes of the 11th AGM held at Monmouth on 19 October 1996 were accepted and signed.
- 4) **Chairman's Report**
  - 4.1 The Executive Committee had met four times during the year, and the Chairman thanked officers and committee members for their support.
  - 4.2 The Chairman reported on progress made on the chapels survey funded by the RCAHMW, which was currently focused on Carmarthenshire and Anglesey. The responsibility for the organisation of the Carmarthenshire survey had been accepted by Mr Ray Caple.
  - 4.3 The Chairman thanked Mr Alun Jones for his work as editor of the *Newsletter*, and appealed for contributions to the publication.
  - 4.4 The Chairman referred to the report of the Redundant Historic Chapels Working Party which had been submitted to CADW. To date, no progress had resulted from the report, but a meeting was to be held shortly between the Chairman of the Working Party and representatives of CADW, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the Historic Buildings Council.
  - 4.5 It was intended to send letters to Planning Officers in each of the new local authorities, giving details of the aims and activities of CAPEL.
  - 4.6 Further publicity was being sought for CAPEL through an entry on the Internet.
- 5) **Secretary's Report**
  - 5.1 The Spring Meeting had been a joint meeting with the Chapels Society and had been held at Shrewsbury. Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes had given the morning lecture, and visits had been made to chapels in the town during the afternoon.

- 5.2 It was intended that the 1998 Spring Meeting would be held in the Cilgerran area of north Pembrokeshire, probably on 9 May.
- 5.3 The Chapels Society had notified CAPEL of a weekend meeting to be held in west Cornwall during May 1998.
- 5.4 CAPEL had been consulted regarding conservation matters concerning Bethania Chapel, Penybontfawr and Berachah Presbyterian Church, Goodwick. In addition, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust had begun to notify CAPEL of chapels within their areas which were the subject of planning applications.
- 5.5 The exhibition commemorating the tenth anniversary of CAPEL had been displayed at the 1997 meeting of the Union of Welsh Independents, at Carmarthen, and at the 1997 National Eisteddfod at Bala.
- 5.6 The Secretary thanked Dr D Huw Owen and the staff of the National Library of Wales for their continued administrative support for CAPEL. She also thanked the Editor for his work on the Newsletter, and Elizabeth Evans for her advice on planning and conservation matters.

#### 6) **Treasurer's Report**

- 6.1 The Treasurer presented the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 August 1997.
- 6.2 A grant of £2,500 had been received from the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, to fund the photographic surveys of chapels in Anglesey and Carmarthenshire.
- 6.3 Arrangements had been made for insurance cover for volunteers working on the survey. CAPEL had become affiliated to the CBA for this purpose.
- 6.4 The total membership stood at 266. The Treasurer appealed to members to use standing orders for payment of annual subscriptions.

#### 7) **Election of officers and committee members**

The Chairman and Treasurer were re-elected as follows:

Chairman: Mr Kevin Matthias

Treasurer: Mr Geoffrey Veysey

The Secretary had indicated that she wished to resign from the position she had held for the past seven years, and Miss Penny Icke, of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, was elected as Secretary.

Dr Dilys Quick, Publicity Officer for CAPEL had resigned during the year and Ms Ann Rhydderch, a member of the Executive Committee, was elected as the new Publicity Officer. Miss Susan Beckley was elected to fill the vacancy on the Executive Committee, which resulted from Dr Quick's resignation.

The AGM was followed by a lecture by Mr Vernon Hughes, Abergele, entitled *The Spike on the Chapel Gate*.

Susan Beckley  
Secretary

## CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL BLYNYDDOL

Cynhaliwyd 12fed Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol y Gymdeithas yn Llandudno ddydd Sadwrn 11 Hydref 1997.

- 1) Croesawodd y Cadeirydd yr aelodau i'r cyfarfod, a gynhaliwyd yn Eglwys Fethodistaidd St Ioan, Llandudno.
- 2) Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb oddi wrth Ray Caple, Aneurin Davies a'i deulu, Meuric Lloyd Davies, Muriel Bowen Daies, y Parchedig Tom Evans, R Formby, yr Athro Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, Neil Sumner, Angharad Waters a John E Wheeler.
- 3) Derbyniwyd ac arwyddwyd cofnodion yr 11eg Cyfarfod Blynyddol, a gynhaliwyd yn Nhrefynwy 19 Hydref 1996.
- 4) **Adroddiad y Cadeirydd**
  - 4.1 Cyfarfu'r Pwyllgor Gwaith bedair gwaith yn ystod y flwyddyn a diolchodd y Cadeirydd i'r swyddogion ac i aelodau'r Pwyllgor am eu cefnoogaeth.
  - 4.2 Rhoes y Cadeirydd adroddiad ar y gwaith a wnaed ar yr arolwg capeli a ariannwyd gan y Comisiwn Brenhinol ar Henebion, sydd ar hyn o bryd yn canolbwyntio ar siroedd Caerfyrddin a Môn. Derbyniwyd cyfrifoldeb am y drefniadaeth yn Sir Gaerfyrddin gan Mr Ray Caple.
  - 4.3 Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Mr Alun Jones am ei waith fel golygydd y *Cylchlythyr* ac apeliodd am ddeunydd i'w gynnwys ynddo.
  - 4.4 Cyfeiriodd y Cadeirydd at adroddiad Gweithgor y Capeli Hanesyddol Uwchrif a gyflwynwyd i CADW. Hyd yn hyn ni chafwyd unrhyw ganlyniad i'r adroddiad, ond cyn hir fe gynhelir cyfarfod rhwng Cadeirydd y Gweithgor a chynrychiolwyr CADW, Cyngor Gweithgarwch Gwirfoddol yng Nghymru a'r Cyngor Adeiladau Hanesyddol.
  - 4.5 Bwriedir anfon llythyrau at y Swyddogion Cynllunio ym mhob un o'r awdurdodau lleol newydd i roi manylion am amcanion a gweithgareddau CAPEL.

- 4.6 Bwriedir trefnu cyhoeddusrwydd ychwanegol trwy osod tudalen ar y Rhyngrwyd.

5) **Adroddiad yr Ysgrifennydd**

- 5.1 Trefnwyd i Gyfarfod y Gwanwyn fod yn gyfarfod ar y cyd gyda'r Chapels Society ac fe'i cynhaliwyd yn Amwythig. Rhoddwyd y ddarlith foreol gan y Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes ac yn y prynhawn ymwelwyd â nifer o gapeli'r dref.
- 5.2 Bwriedir cynnal Cyfarfod y Gwanwyn yn 1998 yn ardal Cilgerran yng ngogledd Sir Benfro, mwy na thebyg ar 9 Mai.
- 5.3 Cafwyd gwybodaeth oddi wrth y Chapels Society eu bod yn trefnu cyfarfod pen-wythnos yng ngorllewin Cernyw ym mis Mai 1998.
- 5.4 Gofynnwyd am gyngor CAPEL ynglŷn â materion cadwraeth yn gysylltiedig â chapel Bethania Pen-y-bont-fawr ac eglwys Bresbyteraidd Berachah, Wdig. Hefyd y mae Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Clwyd a Phowys ac Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Morgannwg a Gwent wedi dechrau rhoi gwybod i CAPEL am gapeli o fewn eu hardaloedd sy'n destun ceisiadau cynllunio.
- 5.5 Dangoswyd yr arddangosfa a grewyd i ddathlu degfed pen-blwydd CAPEL yng nghyfarfod Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg 1997 yng Nghaerfyrddin ac yn Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 1997 yn y Bala.
- 5.6 Diolchodd yr Ysgrifennydd i'r Dr D Huw Owen ac i staff y Llyfrgell Genedlaethol am eu cymorth gweinyddol eto eleni. Diolchodd hefyd i'r Golygydd am ei waith gyda'r *Cylchlythyr* ac i Elizabeth Evans am ei chynghor ar faterion cynllunio a chadwraeth.

6) **Adroddiad y Trysorydd**

- 6.1 Cyflwynodd y Trysorydd y Cyfrifon am y flwyddyn yn diweddu 31 Awst 1997.
- 6.2 Derbyniwyd grant o £2,500 oddi wrth y Comisiwn Brenhinol ar Henebion yn Nghymru i gyllido arolygon ffotograffig capeli yn Sir Fôn a Sir Gaerfyrddin.
- 6.3 Gwnaed trefniadau i yswirio gwirfoddolwyr a fydd yn gweithio ar yr arolygon. I'r amcan hwn ymunodd y Gymdeithas â'r CBA (Cyngor Archaeoleg Prydain).
- 6.4 Rhif yr aelodaeth oedd 266. Apeliodd y Trysorydd i aelodau i dalu eu tanysgrifiad blynyddol drwy archeb banc barhaol.

7) **Ethol Swyddogion ac Aelodau'r Pwyllgor**

Ail-etholwyd i'w swyddi y Cadeirydd, Mr Kevin Matthias, a'r Trysorydd, Mr Geoffrey Veysey.

Yr oedd yr Ysgrifennydd wedi mynegi ei dymuniad i ymddeol o'r swydd y bu ynddi am saith mlynedd ac etholwyd Miss Penny Icke o'r Comisiwn Brenhinol ar Henebion yng Nghymru i'r swydd yn ei lle.

Yr oedd Miss Dilys Quick, Swyddog Cyhoeddusrwydd y Gymdeithas, wedi ymddeol yn ystod y flwyddyn, a llanwyd y swydd gan Ms Ann Rhydderch, aelod o'r Pwyllgor Gwaith. Etholwyd Miss Susan Beckley i lanw'r bwlch yn y Pwyllgor Gwaith, a achoswyd gan ymddeoliad Dr Quick.

Dilynwyd y Cyfarfod Blynyddol gan ddarlith gan Mr Vernon Hughes, Abergele o dan y teitl *The Spike on the Chapel Gate*.

Susan Beckley  
Ysgrifennydd

## The Spike on the Chapel Gate

In the 1950s there had long been a dislike of Victorian architecture and Welsh chapels, along with the Albert Hall, were regarded as the most hideous of all buildings. History proves that this was nothing new, for no generation has ever liked the architecture of the preceding one. This is an important part of the make-up of the human personality for it results in all progress and differentiates us from other animals. It applies to all disciplines but few others realise it for they escape by ignoring it. But one cannot escape from architecture.

At all periods, some buildings are works of art, some are awful and most are somewhere in between. Conservationists have the problem of ensuring that the best buildings survive their 'despised period' unaltered and still standing.

Welsh chapels present yet another problem to the conservationist, for, unlike their English and Scottish counterparts, they were often designed by architects who had received no formal training and often broke the basic rules of the grammar of architecture because they were not aware of them. Outside the main stream these buildings are genuine architectural primitives capable of evoking favourable responses, something very very rare and yet they were to be found in every corner of 19th century Wales, something most unusual, anywhere in Europe. Inside, one marvels at the skill of these architects, that they could seat so many people in the space and achieve the maximum effect at the minimum cost. But go inside when there is an eisteddfod and the atmosphere is stifling and thick with excitement; you'll sense something of the mystery of a revival meeting and realise that this is something the building was designed for. And when you come out and look at the gate, look at the

spikes and think how proud the smith was to be making gates for his own chapel. Those spikes were an act of faith and that is what architecture should be all about.

In the 1950s, chapel buildings were still ignored by the many but some painters appreciated their qualities. Two leading artists who started the revaluation before the War were John Piper and Kenneth Rowntree and it was the latter's coloured drawings in a small illustrated King Penguin *Wales* that made many people take a second look. In the darkest days of the War, Britain's premier architectural magazine *The Architectural Review*, edited then by John Betjeman, devoted a whole issue, vol. 88, December 1940, to chapels, with one section on Welsh chapels. It would warrant being reissued and I should like to quote one small but typically perspicacious paragraph (on p.93):

*Despised by architects, ignored by guide books, these variegated conventicles are witnesses to the taste of industrial Britain. They try to ape nothing, they were anxious not to look like the church which held them in contempt; nor like a house, for they were places of worship; nor like a theatre, for they were sacred piles. They succeeded in looking like what they are - chapels, so that the most unobservant traveller can tell a chapel from any other building in the street with unqualified certainty.*

In the 1950s Betjeman founded the Victorian Society and a young schoolboy in Merthyr Tydfil, Terry Jones, produced, with an HMI, a book containing photographs of every chapel in his home town, all with descriptive captions, an invaluable record that should also be reprinted.

All helped slowly, far too slowly, to get people interested in chapel buildings.

Vernon Hughes

## Chapel Tour

After lunch the members reassembled at the English Presbyterian Church for the tour of four of the fine chapels erected in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods on Mostyn Estate lands in central Llandudno. The English Presbyterian Church itself was built in 1891 to a design by T G Williams said to be copied from the plan of an Italian church. The church on which it was modelled has not been identified but though the exterior does not appear at all unusual for a British chapel of its period, the interior is remarkably spacious and it has a most interesting roof construction.

The next chapel visited was the Welsh Baptist Tabernacl, built on the site of an earlier chapel in 1875 and extended by C A Humphries in 1902 to incorporate the schoolroom and a curved ionic pillared portico. The tour then moved to another G A Humphries chapel, the Welsh Presbyterian Seilo, erected in 1905 to replace the

chapel which had stood on the site for fifty years and had been extended in 1874. The new building was needed to accommodate the increase in the congregation and the new organ requested by the younger members. It is now the largest chapel in town with a seating capacity of over 1000 and is popular in summer for concerts and other large gatherings.



*Tabernacl, Llandudno*



*Emmanuel Church, Llandudno*

Finally we visited Emmanuel Church, formerly Ebeneser Welsh Methodist chapel. This is a circular chapel, designed in 1905 by W Beddoe Rees. Vacated at the termination of the lease in the 1970s it became a target for vandals. In 1992, with a new, private tenant, the interior was gutted and refurbished as a multipurpose cultural centre but it has now become a religious building once more as the home of the Emmanuel Pentecostal Church.

## **Rhestr Aelodau**

### ***LIST OF MEMBERS***

**Cywiriadau ac Ychwanegiadau i'r Rhestr a gyhoeddwyd yn *Cylchlythyr 29***  
***Amendments and Additions to the List published in Newsletter 29***

#### **Cymdeithasau a Sefydliadau / Societies and Institutions**

Baptist Union of Great Britain (South Wales Area), c/o Mr J B Gray, 7 Sunnybank Way, Griffithstown, Pontypool NP4 5BD

#### **Aelodau Unigol / Individual Members**

Mrs S C Campbell-Passmore, Bodalaw, Cader Rd., Dolgellau LL40 1RH  
Mr & Mrs G Edwards, Cysgod, Glasfre, Johnson St., Ponciau, Wrexham, LL14 1DU  
Mr C Jacob, Central Library, High St., Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8AF  
Mrs D Elwern Jones, 22 Llys Alafowlia, Denbigh LL16 3HX  
Mr W E Morgan, 87 Dynevor Rd., Skewen, Neath, SA10 6TU  
Mr J H Thomas, 77 Salisbury Rd., Barry CF62 6PD  
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