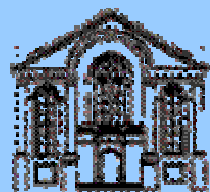


# Capel

CYMRITHAS TREPTADAETH Y CAPELI  
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



Newsletter 55 Spring 2010

Cylchlythyr 55 Gwanwyn 2010

## A Visit to Holyhead

Our visit to Holyhead began at Y Parlyrau, the vestry of Tabernacle Congregational Chapel, where we gathered for the AGM. Dr Lionel Madden took the Chair for the final time, and thanks were given on behalf of the Society by Dr Huw Owen to both Lionel and his wife Mary for their untiring work for Capel during his period of Chairmanship.

The AGM was followed by a fascinating talk on early nonconformity on Anglesey by the Revd. Dr. Dafydd Wyn Wiliam. A native of Ynys Mon and minister at Tabernacle and two other chapels, Revd. Dr. Wiliam has published extensively on the literature and history of Anglesey. He spoke of the early efforts to establish nonconformist chapels on Anglesey during the late-18<sup>th</sup> century, which led to the licensing of several meeting houses during this period under the lead of William Pritchard. Pritchard suffered great persecution as a result, and the violence and intimidation he faced, along with legal action in the civil and ecclesiastic courts, was discussed. The efforts to establish nonconformity on the island through the use of literature, especially the publication of poetry and tracts, was explored.

Revd. Dr. Wiliam then spoke on the development of nonconformity in Holyhead, and in particular the establishment of the cause at Tabernacle. Following some early instances of open air preaching in the town, a disused building some 300 yards from the current Tabernacle was registered as a meeting house by William Griffith. A minister from Carmarthenshire, he agreed to preach at this building, known as 'Y Parlyrau' (The Parlours), to a congregation of only 13 people. He was asked to stay on as minister, and he agreed. The congregation worshipped at Y Parlyrau until



*Tabernacle Congregational Chapel*

1822, when a chapel was built on what is now the site of Tabernacle. A map of Holyhead from 1846 shows an almost square building on the site. William Griffith spent his life at Holyhead, serving as minister at Tabernacle for almost 60 years. He, his wife and daughter are buried at the entrance to the chapel. Under his ministry, the cause flourished, and the chapel was extended over the years with a theatrical roof added – a very rare example and unique in Anglesey. Daughter churches developed from Tabernacle, namely Tabor (est. c.1847) and Tabernacle Newydd, which unfortunately no longer exists. Following a split, the cause at Brynhyfryd was established, which is now a Pentecostal Church.

The organist at Tabernacle then spoke briefly on the organ's history. The organ was installed in 1913/14 at a cost of £650 and the pulpit, previously at the gable end, was moved forward to allow for its addition. £325 of the cost was obtained from the Carnegie fund, and contributions were also received from John Prysor Griffiths and others including the Sunday School. The current organist is the 7<sup>th</sup> to serve the chapel, and he was taught by his predecessor who was organist for 39 years. In 1980, the organ was taken apart for cleaning and the cost of £2800 to cover this was collected together by members in a matter of months.

Following a brief look around Tabernacle, we moved on to view the former Brynhyfryd Congregational Chapel, now Elim Pentecostal Church. The interior has been renovated and painted a striking yellow and gold, and a youth area has been added at the rear.

A wonderful lunch at the Anchorage Hotel, Bontrhydybont, was followed by a visit to Bethel Baptist Chapel. A Baptist meeting house was established at Holyhead in 1790, with the first chapel following in 1807. With the development of the harbour in 1818, the population of the town grew and a second chapel was built with accommodation for a congregation of 200. Built by the members, it was initially a branch of the Baptist cause at Llangefni, but William Morgan became its minister in 1825 and the following year it became a separate chapel. Following the revival of 1831, a third chapel was built with a gallery added. The woodwork from the second chapel was taken to build the chapel at nearby Llaingoch. In 1919, Bethel was in good health with 365 members and 270 attending Sunday School. By 2009, membership had fallen to 39 and there is no longer a Sunday School.

We then paid a visit to Bethel Glanymor Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The cause now meets in the old schoolroom, as the original chapel building was sold and converted to flats. Part of the chapel was formerly a pub, and was taken over in 1903/04. The chapel was situated adjacent to the railway line. During the war, trains filled with ammunition from a Canadian ship were targeted by bombers. Luckily they missed the trains, but Bethel took a direct hit and was gutted.

Members then visited Ucheldre, formerly a convent church and now an arts centre. It was interesting to see the change in use of the building, and how features such as the acoustics have been put to best use.

The final stop of the day was Hyfrydle Presbyterian Chapel. Originally, the chapel building faced the side street, but members wanted more prominence and so the chapel was turned around so that the entrance faced the main road. The chapel was built by local builder William Williams, a renowned perfectionist, who used wood brought to Holyhead from Canada in the construction. Built during the period 1886-1888, only one window is no longer original, which shows the quality of the workmanship and of the wood used. In recent years, the vestry has been re-roofed and the organ machinery has been serviced by specialists. This led to the replacement of the walls beneath the organ. The chapel is due to be painted during 2010.



*Hyfrydle Presbyterian Chapel*

Our day finished in fine fashion with a delicious chapel tea kindly provided by the members of Hyfrydle Chapel. Many thanks to David Williams for organising such an interesting visit to Holyhead – diolch yn fawr.

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Holyhead, 10 October 2009

### 1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman, Dr Lionel Madden, welcomed members to the Meeting

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from five members

### 3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held in Newtown on 11 October 2008 were accepted and confirmed.

### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

### 5. Secretary's Report

The Secretary paid tribute to and thanked past and present members of the Executive Committee for their immense knowledge and experience which made the Secretary's job possible. The long-running saga of the chapel at Hay-on-Wye which had been developed as an Arts Centre, Café and Bar with the removal of graves and headstones and with scant reference to the planning authority was still exercising our architectural and planning advisors. Capel had had enquiries about ministers, records and archives from Australia and the USA and had even been asked to identify, from a 1920 anniversary photograph, a chapel "somewhere in South Wales"! From further afield, news came that Grahame Davies, the prominent poet and journalist, would be visiting the Welsh Congregational Chapel in Lansford, North-east Pennsylvania. The chapel has been damaged by fire and its story has been carried on the BBC Wales website. With keen and committed local help, Capel was monitoring the sad story of chapels closing in the Cynon Valley. The Secretary was particularly grateful to the Royal Commission for their invaluable help, incredible knowledge and for their archive. In addition, the Secretary recorded his special thanks to Norman Chang and Jonathan Jones and Rob Scourfield who advised on planning applications. The Chapels Society, Capel's English sister-organisation, had had to cancel its projected joint visit with Capel to Liverpool but was hoping for a possible joint visit in October 2010 with Capel in Wrexham.

### 6. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presented audited accounts for the year ending on 31 August 2009. There had been reduced expenditure on the Capel Website but printing costs remained significant with the publication of more Chapel Trails. The Capel events at Newtown and Cwmbran had, unusually, produced a slight surplus. The current balance was a little in excess of £13,700.

### 7. Chairman's Report

The Chairman thanked the Officers and members of the Executive Committee for their hard work throughout another busy year. In this, his final report, he said how much he had enjoyed his period as Chairman of the Society during the last ten years and thanked all the members for their support and encouragement. He thanked Mr David Williams for all the arrangements for the Holyhead visit.

Dr Huw Owen expressed the thanks of the whole Society for all that Dr Madden had done during his decade in office. The meeting responded most warmly.

### 8. Election of Officers and Committee Members

The Executive Committee brought the name of Cllr Meirick Lloyd Davies to the Meeting for election to the office of Chairman. Councillor Davies was elected with acclamation and accepted the honour. The Officers and members of the Committee had agreed to continue in office for a further year. Their offer was warmly accepted by the membership who re-elected the team en bloc.

### 9. Any Other Business

Mr Stuart Rivers referred to Anthony Jones' book, *Welsh Chapels* (1984; 2nd ed. 1996) and noted particularly the list in the first edition of chapels that 'should be saved

at all costs'. He suggested that a joint meeting of the Civic Trust for Wales, RCAHMW, the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust, CADW and Capel might look at Wales, county by county, to investigate whether there might be other uses for endangered chapels as concert halls, conference centres, museums and exhibition halls and galleries. His suggestions were referred to Capel's executive committee.

## Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol, Caergybi, 10 Hydref 2009

### 1. Croeso'r Cadeirydd

Croesawodd y Cadeirydd, Ddr Lionel Madden, yr aelodau i'r Cyfarfod.

### 2. Ymddiheuriadau am Absenoldeb

Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau gan bump o'r aelodau.

### 3. Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Diwethaf

Derbyniwyd a chadarnhawyd cofnodion y cyfarfod diwethaf a gynhaliwyd yn y Drenewydd ar 11 Hydref 2008.

### 4. Materion y Codi

Nid oedd unrhyw faterion yn codi.

### 5. Adroddiad yr Ysgrifennydd

Talodd yr Ysgrifennydd deyrnged i aelodau'r Pwyllgor Gwaith, yn awr ac yn y gorffennol a diolchodd iddynt, am mai eu gwybodaeth a'u profiad aruthrol hwy oedd yn galluogi'r Ysgrifennydd i gyflawni'i waith. Roedd ein hymgyngorwyr ym maes pensaerniaeth a chynllunio yn parhau i roi sylw i'r trafferthion a gafwyd ers amser maith yn y Gelli Gandryll, lle roedd y capel wedi cael ei ddatblygu yn Ganolfan Celfyddydau, Caffi a Bar a beddi a cherrig beddi wedi'u symud heb ymgynghori rhyw lawer â'r awdurdod cynllunio. Roedd Capel wedi derbyn ymholiadau am weinidogion, cofnodion ac archifau, o Awstralia a'r Unol Daleithiau a chafwyd un cais, hyd yn oed, yn holi pa gapel "rywle yn Ne Cymru" oedd mewn llun o ddatliad ym 1920! Daeth newyddion o bellafoedd daear, sef bod Grahame Davies, y bardd a'r newyddiadurwr amlwg, am ymweld â Chapel yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg yn Lansford, Gogledd-ddwyrain Pennsylvania. Cafodd y capel ei ddifrodi gan dân ac mae ei hanes wedi bod ar wefan BBC Cymru. Gyda chymorth parod ac ymroddiad gan bobl leol, roedd Capel yn monitro hanes trist y capeli oedd yn cau yng Nghwm Cynon. Roedd yr Ysgrifennydd yn arbennig o ddiolchgar i'r Comisiwn Brenhinol am eu cymorth amhrisiadwy, eu gwybodaeth anhygoel ac am eu harchif. At hynny, nododd yr Ysgrifennydd ei fod yn arbennig o ddiolchgar i Norman Chang a Jonathan Jones a Rob Scourfield a roddodd gyngor ar geisiadau cynllunio. Roedd y Chapels Society, sef chwaer-fudiad Capel yn Lloegr, wedi gorfod canslo'r ymweliad y bwriadent ei gynnal ar y cyd â Capel i Lerpwl ond gobeithient gynnal ymweliad ar y cyd â Capel ym mis Hydref 2010 gan ymweld â Wrecsam.

### 6. Adroddiad y Trysorydd

Cyflwynodd y Trysorydd gyfrifon wedi'u harchwilio, ar gyfer y flwyddyn a ddaeth i ben ar 31 Awst 2009. Bu llai o wariant ar wefan Capel ond roedd costau argraffu yn parhau i fod yn sylweddol gan fod rhagor o Lwybrau Trywydd Capeli wedi'u cyhoeddi. Yn groes i'r arfer, roedd ychydig o arian dros ben yn sgil y digwyddiadau a gynhaliodd Capel yn y Drenewydd a Chwmbwrân. Roedd y balans presennol ychydig dros £13,700.

### 7. Adroddiad y Cadeirydd

Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i'r Swyddogion ac aelodau'r Pwyllgor Gwaith am eu gwaith caled trwy gydol blwyddyn brysur arall. Yn yr adroddiad hwn, sef ei adroddiad olaf, dywedodd ei fod wedi mwynhau ei gyfnod fel Cadeirydd y Gymdeithas yn fawr yn ystod y deng mlynedd diwethaf a diolchodd i'r holl aelodau am eu cefnogaeth a'u hanogaeth. Diolchodd i Mr David Williams am yr holl drefniadau ar gyfer yr ymweliad â Chaergybi.

Mynegodd Dr Huw Owen ddiolch y Gymdeithas gyfan am bopeth yr oedd Dr Madden wedi'i wneud yn ystod y degawd y bu'n swyddog i'r Gymdeithas. Cafwyd ymateb cynnes iawn gan y cyfarfod.

### 8. Ethol Swyddogion ac Aelodau o'r Pwyllgor

Awgrymodd y Pwyllgor Gwaith enw'r Cyng Meirick Lloyd Davies i'r Cyfarfod, i'w ethol yn Gadeirydd. Fe etholwyd y Cyngorydd Davies â banllef a derbyniodd yntau'r anrhydedd. Roedd y Swyddogion ac aelodau'r Pwyllgor wedi cytuno i barhau yn eu swyddi am flwyddyn arall. Derbyniwyd eu cynnig yn gynnes gan yr aelodau ac fe'u hail-etholwyd i gyd.

### 9. Unrhyw Faterion Eraill

Cyfeiriodd Mr Stuart Rivers at lyfr Anthony Jones, *Welsh Chapels* (1984; 2il argraffiad 1996) a nododd yn arbennig y rhestr yn yr argraffiad cyntaf o gapeli 'y dylid eu hachub costied a gostio'. Awgrymodd y gellid cynnal cyd-gyfarfod rhwng Ymddiriedolaeth Ddinesig Cymru, CBHC, Ymddiriedolaeth Addoldai Cymru, CADW a Capel er mwyn edrych ar Gymru fesul sir ac ymchwilio er mwyn gweld a oes defnyddiau eraill posibl ar gyfer capeli sydd dan fygythiad, i'w troi'n neuaddau cyngerdd, canolfannau cynadledda, amgueddfeydd a neuaddau arddangos ac orielau. Cyfeiriwyd ei awgrymiadau i sylw pwyllgor gwaith Capel.

## Conservation Bulletin

Members may be interested to note that English Heritage's *Conservation Bulletin* no.61 (Summer 2009) is devoted to places of worship in England. It can be ordered in hard copy or viewed on-line at

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.11241>.

Many thanks to Capel member Stephen G. Morgans of Paisley for drawing this to our attention.

# Chapels Reported to Capel

## Building applications:

- Capel Bodoryn, Abergele, Conwy: change of use from 1 to 2 residential units. No objection (no external change).
- Bethabara, Llangernyw, Conwy: proposed schoolroom. Proposal welcomed, supported with suggestion that a timber window be used on front elevation.
- Capel Soar, Cwm Lliniau, Machynlleth, Powys: conversion to dwelling. Sympathetic scheme supported.
- Copperas Methodist, Afoneitha Road, Penycae, Wrexham: demolition and replacement with dwelling; refused due to lack of bat survey.
- Capel Bethel, Capel Dewi, Llandysul, Ceredigion: application for office/light industrial use, refused.
- Moreia, Llanfyllin, Powys: conversion to 3 units. Sympathetic external treatment. Support subject to reuse of some internal detail.
- Horeb, Llansannan, Conwy: conversion to 1 unit. A reasonable proposal, but greater attention required to junction of proposed floor with front windows.
- Penuel Vestry, Graig, Conwy: change of use; building to remain unchanged. No objection in principle.
- Mission Hall, Caerleon, Newport: conversion to 1 unit. Support in principle, further to previous comment.
- Mill Terrace Methodist Chapel, Cwm, Ebbw Vale, Blaenau Gwent: demolition and replacement with 2 dwellings. Refusal recommended plans due to loss of striking Art and Crafts façade of 1908 on prominent site. Redevelopment retaining the façade would be preferential as a last resort. RCHAM notified.
- Capel Maethlon, Tywyn, Snowdonia: conversion for holiday let. Sensitive scheme. Recommend approval subject to elements of internal detail being retained and front elevation to remain unaltered.
- Salem, High Street, Blaina, Blaenau Gwent (Grade II listed): repairs and alterations. Ongoing use of the prominent chapel supported; some internal features removed, but retention of gallery, central pews, pulpit and organ is welcomed.

- Zion Baptist Chapel, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire (listed): redevelopment scheme. The chapel is to be preserved largely intact and the loss of the ground floor pews, while regrettable here, is an acceptable compromise. The scheme will keep both chapel and schoolroom in their original use and ensure the retention of these prominent landmarks.
- Bwlchgwynt Baptist, Cyffig, Carmarthenshire: conversion to 1 unit. Sensible and thoughtful scheme. Retaining exterior as well as pulpit, gallery front and a pew. Support in principle.
- Bausley Chapel, Crew Green, Powys: conversion to 1 unit. Support in principle. Exterior to remain little-changed; interior already stripped.

## Closures / sales:

- Bethel, New Quay, Ceredigion
- Unitarian, New Street, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion (Listed Grade II)
- Moriah Baptist, Aberycynai: for sale, August 2009
- Siloau, Bontnewydd, Gwynedd (Listed Grade II): for sale, August 2009
- Capel-goch (CM), Llanberis (Listed Grade II\*)
- Wesleyan Chapel, Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tydfil: on market for rental as commercial premises, September 2009
- Soar, Bedlinog, Treharris: auctioned, 6 September 2009
- Rhosybol, Anglesey: for sale, August 2009
- Ebenezer (Independent), Goodwick, Pembrokeshire: closed, November 2009
- Park Street, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire: for sale again and being vandalised
- Ebenezer, Llanelli: future uncertain, December 2009

## Dr Lionel Madden

Ar ran y Pwyllgor ac aelodau Capel, mae'n bleser mynegi ein gwerthfawrogiad o waith Dr. Lionel Madden fel Cadeirydd y Gymdeithas dros gyfnod o ddeng mlynedd. Yn ogystal â chadeirio nifer o gyfarfodydd llwyddiannus mewn gwahanol rannau o Gymru, yr oedd ei gyfraniadau i'r *Cylchlythyr* yn cynnwys 'How many chapels?', sef ei amcangyfrifon o'r nifer o gapeli yng Nghymru a ddefnyddir heddiw, a graddfa cau capeli ar hyn o bryd. Lluniwyd ganddo hefyd y llyfryn hynod ddefnyddiol, *Arweinlyfr i'r Enwadau*.

Yr oedd y camau newydd pwysig a gyflwynwyd yn ystod ei ddeng mlynedd yn cynnwys cyhoeddi cyfres o daflenni *Darganfod Capeli*, a datblygu gwefan Capel: yr oedd yn dda iawn gan y Pwyllgor ddeall am barodrwydd Dr Madden i barhau ei ymrwymiad gyda chynnal y wefan. Cynhyrchwyd casgliad newydd o gardiau Nadolig yn seiliedig ar gynlluniau Xia Lu a Catherine Masterman, ac rydym hefyd yn croesawu'r cyfle i ddiolch i Mary Madden am drefnu dosbarthu'r cardiau.

Diolch Lionel.

On behalf of the Committee, and the members of Capel it is a pleasure to express our appreciation of Dr. Lionel Madden's work as Chairman of the Society over a period of ten years. In addition to chairing successful meetings in various parts of Wales, his contributions to the Newsletter included 'How many chapels?', which presented his estimates of the present number of chapels in use, and the current rate of closure. He also compiled the extremely-valuable booklet, *A Guide to the Denominations*.

A number of important initiatives introduced during this ten-year period included the publication of a series of *Discovering Chapels* leaflets and the development of the Capel website: the Committee was very pleased to learn of Dr Madden's willingness to continue his involvement with maintaining the website. A new range of Christmas cards based on the designs of Xia Lu and Catherine Masterman was produced, and we also welcome the opportunity to thank Mary Madden for organising the distribution of the cards.

Thank you Lionel.

D. Huw Owen

## New Chairman / Cadeirydd Newydd

Meirick Lloyd Davies has been elected Chairman of Capel. Meirick is an active member of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. He serves as Secretary and Deacon of his local chapel in Cefn Meiriadog, and is a past President of the Presbytery and a member of committees of the Presbytery, the Association and the Connexion.

A carpenter by training, Meirick worked in local government from 1970, retiring in 1996 as Chief Buildings Management Officer for Glyndŵr District, Ruthin. He has been a Councillor on Denbighshire County Council since 1996 and has been a past Chairman and Vice-Chairman. He will be Chairman of Council again in 2010-11.

He is interested in local history and has been Chairman of both the Denbighshire Historical Society and the Cefn Meiriadog Historical Society. He is also a member of the Flintshire Historical Society and the St Asaph Archaeological Society. He has served as a member of the Council of the Welsh Books Council, and the Court and Council of the National Library of Wales and the University of Wales.

Welcome Meirick!

Etholwyd Meirick Lloyd Davies fel Cadeirydd Capel. Mae Meirick yn aelod weithgar o Eglwys Bresbyteriaidd Cymru. Mae'n gwasanaethu ei gapel leol yng Nghefn Meiriadog fel Ysgrifennydd a Blaenor, ac mae'n cyn-Lywydd yr Henaduriaeth ac yn aelod o bwyllgorau yr Henaduriaeth, y Gymdeithasfa a'r Cyfuniad.

Wedi ei hyfforddi fel saer, bu Meirick yn gweithio'n llywodraeth lleol o 1970, yn ymddeol ym 1996 fel Prif Swyddog Rheolaeth Adeiladau ar gyfer Rhanbarth Glyndŵr,

Rhuthun. Bu'n Cynghorydd ar Cyngor Sir Ddinbych ers 1996 ac y mae'n cyn-Cadeirydd ac Is-Gadeirydd. Bydd yn Cadeirydd y Cyngor unwaith eto yn 2010-11.

Mae ganddo ddiddordeb yn hanes lleol a bu'n Cadeirydd Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Sir Y Fflint a Cymdeithas Archeolegol Llanellwly. Mae wedi gwasanaethu fel aelod o Gyngor y Cyngor Llyfrau Cymru, ac o Lys a Cyngor Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru a Prifysgol Cymru.

Croeso Meirick!

## The Chapels of Cefn Mawr between the Wars

The Autumn 2009 issue of the Capel newsletter included an interesting article by Marlies Cope on the conversion of the former Ebenezer Baptist Chapel in Cefn Mawr into a community centre. This development is part of a Township Heritage Scheme intended to breathe new life into the centre of an industrial village in serious decline. Such schemes, offering new hope to Cefn Mawr and similar declining industrial communities across Wales, deserve support. They also need careful design if they are to meet the needs of their communities.

As Marlies Cope points out, the widespread demolition of stone cottages in the centre of Cefn Mawr has left unfilled gaps in the streets which, together with the closure of large numbers of shops, has knocked out the heart of the old village. The decline is echoed throughout the villages and townships of the industrial areas of north and south Wales. The industrial revolution created these once vibrant communities and the collapse of heavy industries like coal, iron and steel has dealt them a body blow.

I regard myself as fortunate to have been born and brought up in the parish of Cefn Mawr, long the home of my mother's family, both sides of which moved into the village from rural Wales in the mid-19th century. Born over 80 years ago, I feel privileged to have known Cefn intimately when it was a lively and stimulating community throbbing with life. I recognise that elderly people are prone to view the past through rose-tinted spectacles and I realise that Cefn between the wars may have seemed to others an ugly, overcrowded place crammed with houses lacking the amenities taken for granted today. That was not my youthful perception of Cefn. I was aware only of the vigour and dynamism of the community in those days and of the host of activities which made up village life.

Central to the life of the village in those days were its chapels. If the outlying communities of Garth, Pontcysyllte and Penybryn are included there were 22 chapels and 2 churches in the village. 13 of the chapels were Welsh. The 9 English chapels catered for those whose command of Welsh was limited and for migrants from England attracted chiefly by the opportunities offered in the area's extensive brick and tile industry, which exported its products across the United Kingdom and widely across the world. The village was typically Welsh in its life and attitudes. The number of chapels was matched by the number of pubs but there was little overlap between those who frequented the pubs and those who attended chapel regularly. Such was

the power of the nonconformist lobby that a road in the parish of Acrefair named after a local pub, the Black Lion, was renamed Bethania Road in the 1930s after a local chapel!

Each chapel held two services each Sunday as well as a Sunday School. There were week-night prayer meetings or Cyfarfodydd Gweddi as well as Bands of Hope for the children; in addition chapels organised a range of social activities for their members. For many people their chapels provided for most or all of their free time. I remember that my parents curtailed my week-night attendance at chapel when I became 11 to enable me to cope with homework from school. Numerically, the most powerful denominations in Cefn Mawr were the Baptists and the Presbyterians. Tabernacl and Seion were large and imposing Welsh Baptist chapels which traditionally had secured giants of the pulpit as their ministers. In the 1930s and 1940s the legendary Dr E. K. Jones was the minister at Tabernacl where members of a single family, Twm Davies Cantwr and his descendants, were the 'codwyr canu' (or leaders of the singing) for generations. Bethania, the tiny Baptist chapel in Acrefair, is famous, amongst other things, as the chapel where the renowned tenor, David Ellis, was the first 'codwr canu'; David Ellis is commemorated in the 'rhuban glas' (blue ribbon) prize, 'Gwobr Goffa David Ellis' (David Ellis Memorial Prize), the principal musical prize of the National Eisteddfod. The Presbyterians or Calvinistic Methodists also had several chapels in the parish, including the mother church, Bethel Acrefair, which my 'Hen-Hen Daid' (Great-Great Grandfather), Morris Hughes, was a leading 'blaenor' (deacon). Another CM chapel was Hyfrydle, where a 'blaenor', the hymnist Griffith William Hughes, another member of my family, became one of the very few salaried 'Arweinyddion y Gân' (leaders of the song) in Wales, first for three years in Capel Mawr Rhos and then for fifteen years in Princes Road, Liverpool, sometimes described as the cathedral of nonconformity in north Wales.

Natives of Cefn Mawr like me, were very proud that when the life and work of William Williams Pantycelyn were celebrated in 2009 in an hour-long edition of S4C's Dechrau Canu Dechrau Canmol from the Afan Lido in Port Talbot, two of the ten hymn tunes selected for the programme by the Welsh public were written by men from Cefn Mawr. The first was the renowned tune Rhosymedre by J. D. Edwards and the second the rousing Buddigoliaeth by G. W. Hughes, of whom mention has been made already.

Politically, Cefn was a lively place between the wars and for large numbers of people active in politics the driving force behind their political activities was their religious conviction. At election times there was little of the apathy seen today. Election meetings were well supported and the performances of local and visiting politicians were almost as eagerly debated as those of the preachers in local pulpits. Indeed, some of the ministers were as keenly involved in political life as their congregations.

Culturally Cefn was a lively place in the 1920s and 1930s and here again the chapels played a major part. Music was the principal activity, as might be expected of a Welsh village, but dramatic activities were also popular. In the field of music, soloists practiced and performed and small groups of all sizes flourished, but the core of the village's musical activity, as in most Welsh communities, was its long established choral tradition. In earlier periods the parish had sustained many choirs but between

the wars the Cefn Male Voice Choir, under the baton of Wilfred Butler, was the pinnacle of musical activity in Cefn.

Cefn Mawr was a good place in which to grow up during the 1920s and 1930s. With its small houses piled up in confusion on the ridge from which the village takes its name, sociologists and statisticians may well have regarded the parish as a deprived area and in one sense perhaps they were right, but the people of those days were more aware of their religious and cultural heritage than of their physical circumstances. It is sad to record that most of the chapels, like Ebenezer, have closed. Some have been razed to the ground and others have been given over to secular purposes. Two small Welsh congregations still survive. It is also good to record that a Welsh medium school works to preserve 'yr hen iaith', the old language, in Cefn Mawr.

Geoffrey Crump

## The Welsh Congregational Church Lansford, Pennsylvania

Capel members may have heard of the sad news of the damage by fire to the Welsh Congregational Church, Lansford, Pennsylvania, in September 2009. The Welsh community in Pennsylvania dates back to the late-17<sup>th</sup> century, when Quakers from Wales emigrated and formed a settlement there. The Welsh presence grew again during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when coal miners emigrated to work in the Pennsylvanian coal industry.

The Welsh Congregational Church at Lansford was the oldest Welsh church in the region. Built in 1850 by coal miners from Wales, the building fell into disuse during the 1930s, but was carefully restored in 1985. It formed a focal point for Welsh culture in the area, hosting Cymanfaoedd Ganu (singing festivals) and Eisteddfodau.

If anyone knows of the fate of the Chapel since the fire in September, we would be interested to hear from you. Any updates will be gratefully received by the Editor.

## Dates for your diary

The Spring Meeting of Capel will be held in Fishguard on Saturday 8th May 2010. Information on the day, along with a booking form, should be enclosed with this newsletter. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Fishguard.

The Autumn Meeting will be held in Wrexham on Saturday 9th October.

## Darlith yr Eisteddfod 2010 / 2010 Eisteddfod Lecture

**MWY NA BRICS A MORTER: Gwarchod ac Addasu ein Capeli  
gan Alwyn Harding Jones.**

Bydd Darlith Eisteddfod Capel yn cael i'w draddodi yn yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol ar Ddydd Gwener 6 Awst am 12 y.h. gan Alwyn Harding Jones. Thema'r darlith bydd amddiffyniad ac addasiad capeli. Bydd y darlith yn cael i'w draddodi yn y Gymraeg, ond bydd offer cyfieithu ar y prys yn cael i'w ddarparu.

Mae'r siaradwr wedi bod yn ymwneud â chadwraeth adeiladau yn broffesiynol ers dros 25 mlynedd. Yn ystod y cyfnod hwn llwyddodd i gynnal ei frwdfrydedd dros ddeall hen adeiladau, gan gydnabod eu harwyddocâd arbennig a datblygu ateb ar gyfer y defnydd gorau ohonynt. Sefydlodd gwmni Penseiri Alwyn Jones ym 1992, yn dilyn cyfnod pan fu'n Bensaer Cadwraeth i bractis pensaernïol yng Nghaerdydd.

The CAPEL Eisteddfod Lecture will be delivered at the National Eisteddfod on Friday 6 August at 12 p.m. by Alwyn Harding Jones. The theme of the lecture will be the safeguarding and adaptation of chapels. The lecture will be delivered in Welsh, but simultaneous translation facilities will be provided.

The speaker has been involved with building conservation in a professional capacity for over 25 years. During this period he has maintained his enthusiasm for understanding buildings, recognising their particular significance and developing a solution for their best use. He established Alwyn Jones Architects in 1992, having previously worked as Conservation Architect for a Cardiff-based architectural practice.

## Ebeneser Dysgu Diwinyddiaeth trwy Ddaeareg

Saif capel Ebeneser ers 1855 ar Heol Siarl yng nghanol Prifddinas Caerdydd, ergyd bwa o ganolfan siopa newydd sgleiniog Dewi Sant 2. Adeiladwyd y capel Gothig hwn gan y pensaer R. G. Thomas ar gyfer eglwys Gynulleidfaol Saesneg ei hiaith. Y mae'n adeilad hardd a chymen ac un o'i nodweddion amlycaf yw'r balwsterau sydd ar bob ochr. Ychwanegwyd y rhain yn ddiweddarach na phan adeiladwyd ef yn wreiddiol. Y mae coel gwrach i R G Thomas ysgrifennu at arweinyddion gwledydd y byd yn gofyn am garreg ganddynt i'w gosod ar flaen y capel, er mwyn dangos Arglwyddiaeth Iwyr Duw dros y cenhedloedd. Dywedai fod y blaen yn "lesson in theology and geology". Ond fwy na thebyg mai cerrig balast osodwyd yno a gariwyd mewn llongau gweigion i Gaerdydd o bedwar ban byd.



*Ebeneser Caerdydd*

Yn y saithdegau fe symudodd yr Eglwys Gynulleidfaol Saesneg i addoli yn City Church, Windsor Place. Ar yr un pryd gorfodwyd aelodau Eglwys Ebeneser, (Annibynwyr Cymraeg) i werthu eu hen adeilad ym Mharadise Place, er mwyn i Gyngor y Ddinas ddatblygu Canolfan Siopa Dewi Sant 1. Dymchwelwyd yr hen Ebeneser ac ailddaarwyd y gweddillion oedd yn y fynwent yn y Waen Ddyfal. O ganlyniad, ailgartrefodd eglwys Ebeneser yn yr adeilad ar Heol Siarl ym 1978.

Yn ddiweddar oherwydd nifer o resymau, nad ymhelaethaf arnynt yma, teimlodd y gynulleidfa fod y lleoliad a'r adeilad bellach yn anaddas ar gyfer tystio i Efengyl Iesu Grist yn awr ac i'r dyfodol. Penderfynwyd gwerthu'r capel er mwyn sefydlu canolfan Gristnogol amlbwrpas newydd a fyddai'n hwyluso ein gweithgareddau a'n tystiolaeth ar gyfer yr unfed ganrif ar hugain ac yn gwasanaethu'r gymuned yn well. Nid oes rheidrwydd arnom i symyd, dewis gwneud hynny yr ydym. Galledd aros yn y fan lle rydym am flynyddoedd maith. Ond gobeithiwn, os Duw a'i mynn, adael yr adeilad presennol ym mis Gorffennaf. Ni wyddom ar hyn o bryd beth fydd diwedd y daith. Teimlwn fod Duw yn ein galw i fentro ac i anturio gydag ef i'r dyfodol er mwyn rhannu ei gariad yn Iesu Grist yng Nghaerdydd. Nid adeilad yw eglwys ond pobl.

Alun Tudur

The above article details the planned move by the congregation at Ebeneser Welsh Congregational Church, Cardiff from their present chapel building on Charles Street in the City to new premises. The move is by choice, and should have taken place by July 2010.

## Cyfraniadau i'r Cylchlythyr Contributions to the Newsletter

Croesawyd erthyglau neu awgrymiadau ar gyfer cynnwys cylchlythron i ddod. Os hoffech gyhoeddi rhywbeth yn y rhifyn nesaf o'r cylchlythyr, bydd rhaid i'r eitem cyrraedd y Golygydd cyn Dydd Llun 23ain Awst 2010.

Articles or suggestions for content for future newsletters are always welcome. If you would like to publish an item in the next issue of the newsletter, it will need to reach the Editor by Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2010.

## Book Reviews

### Huw Edwards, *Capeli Llanelli: Our Rich Heritage* (Carmarthenshire County Council, 2009)

Huw Edwards, *Capeli Llanelli: Our Rich Heritage* (Carmarthenshire County Council, 2009), 547 pages, many illustrations, ISBN 978-0-906821-77-0 (paperback - £15) & ISBN 978-0-906821-78-7 (hardback - £25).

Any visitor to Llanelli is aware that this was, and still is, a townscape dominated by some of the largest and grandest nineteenth-century nonconformist buildings in Wales. Yet this is a critical time for the survival of the outstanding monuments of Tinopolis, as Huw points out in his introduction. At the end of World War there were 22 active chapels in the town centre yet soon there will be no more than 2 or 3 still in use for worship in the heart of Llanelli. What prompted the start of the writing of this book four years ago was the demolition of Lloyd Street Chapel, a building that the author had attended to play the organ in his youth. The detailed history of all these congregations, are given a chapter written in English, bringing alive the main characters who were central to the life of Llanelli. In addition twelve of the Welsh language congregations are given a further chapter in Welsh, strengthening the account of the people who formed these influential fellowships.

The main players have their significance evaluated in a wider context notably David Rees who is rescued from present obscurity with the observation that his contribution to Wales and Llanelli has never been properly recognised. The rich contemporary influence of chapel life is re-evaluated and Rees' wider role as 'social reformer, political campaigner, propagandist, chapel-builder, formidable preacher, businessman and entrepreneur, journalist & editor' is explained.

Documentary evidence in local papers and sources has been followed-up to bring to life again such events as the 1919 war memorial service in Park Chapel to 16 young men from the congregation and to whom a window was dedicated in 1920. The stained-glass windows at Park are strikingly illustrated within the copious fine pictures in the book. Huw is keen that this volume should awaken the conscious and awareness of the town's population to the richness and significance of this heritage before the several presently empty chapels have their windows further vandalised or their buildings fired. Llanelli does have some very good examples of re-use of chapels for community and nursery purposes. This fine volume deserves to be successful in raising the will to retain this characteristic Welsh building-landscape. It resonates with a lost society so eloquently revived.



The buildings themselves are amply illustrated and include several examples each from among the leading chapel architects in Wales: Thomas Thomas, George Morgan, John Humphrey and Owen Morris Roberts and also the locally important Henry Rogers. The wider significance of these outstanding chapels is evaluated in quotes from Robert Scourfield and myself. As a representative collection of Welsh nonconformist buildings they are probably unrivalled and these large Italianate and Lombardic temple-designs, soaring gothic churches and Edwardian Baroque interiors are readily appreciated from this volume.

The author and Carmarthenshire County Council are to be commended for producing such a fine and informative publication at such a reasonable price. Perhaps another edition could include an index making more accessible these greats of Llanelli and Welsh nonconformity.

Stephen Hughes

Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth

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