

Capel



CYMRITHAS TREPTADAETH Y CAPELL
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter 58 Autumn 2011

Cylchlythyr 58 Hydref 2011

The Chapels of Lampeter

Members gathered at Brondeifi Unitarian Chapel, Lampeter, and began the day with an introduction to the chapel from Revd. Goronwy Evans. Although the cause at Brondeifi was established in 1874, Revd. Evans is only the third minister to have served at the chapel! The first minister, Rhys Cribyn Jones, came to Brondeifi on its inception in 1874 and continued at the chapel until his death in 1915.



Brondeifi © RCAHMMW

The cause at Brondeifi has its roots in Caeronnen Chapel, Cellan, which was established in 1654. It drew worshippers from Lampeter, and by 1874 it was decided a chapel was needed in the town. Rhys Cribyn Jones travelled across England and Wales to raise the funds needed for the building, and the first chapel was built for £1000. In 1899, cracks began to appear in the walls. An architect had not been employed when the chapel was built, and it was found that the cause of the cracks was a combination of a roof that was too heavy and foundations which weren't deep enough. The chapel was rebuilt with foundations that go as far down through the earth as the chapel rises above the earth! It opened in 1904.

The organ was acquired in 1936 from the Aberavon area, and a memorial plaque in the chapel pays tribute to the organist of 70 years, Rose Evans, who received an MBE for her services. In 1906 a new vestry was built after several renovations to the old vestry. The old building was demolished and the new one built all within a year.

Rhys Cribyn Jones was followed as minister in 1915 by T. Oswald Thomas, an academic who wrote the history of the Unitarian denomination in Wales. He stayed with the chapel until 1964, when Revd. Goronwy Evans arrived.

Lampeter is within the famous 'Smotyn Du', or 'Black Spot' of west Wales, where Unitarianism thrives. The triangle, which the Methodist Revival failed to break through, stretches between Llandysul, Lampeter and Ciliau Aeron and includes 13 Unitarian causes. Lampeter is the home of 'Siop y Smotyn Du', an Unitarian shop which is now run by volunteers from Brondeifi.

We were then treated to a delicious morning tea in Brondeifi's vestry, and thanks must go to the ladies who had worked so hard to provide for us.

Following tea, we moved on to the campus of Trinity St. David's University where we were welcomed by Professor Densil Morgan. Peter Austin from Ceredigion Council spoke on the Ceredigion Faith Trails initiative, which was featured in the last edition of the Capel newsletter. He explained how global faith tourism is now worth an estimated \$18 billion, has a huge potential for exploitation at even a small scale, and can include pilgrimage, missionary work and leisure tourism.

Ceredigion received 2.7 million from visitor spending during 2009, with tourism supporting c.6000 jobs and creating around 10% of the county's wealth. 18% of visitors were interested in heritage, and 58% looked around the local towns and villages – and faith tourism links into both these areas. It is a growing market across the UK which involves the local community and improves the local economy.

Various areas could be exploited in Ceredigion, including links to St. David, Strata Florida, Llangeitho, Soar-y-Mynydd, various other chapels and churches, and genealogy (especially through the National Library of Wales). People are also

attracted to faith sites to see the architecture, experience the music, investigate genealogy, as places of welcome and as places of pilgrimage.

Ceredigion Faith Tourism steering group includes representatives from various denominations along with interested groups such as Capel and the RCAHMMW. A short-term development programme was agreed, along with plans to sustain the project in future. Interpretation panels are being developed for sites of note along with detailed leaflets for some sites. Further details can be found online at ceredigionfaithtrails.com or at llwybrauffyddceredigion.com.



Susan Fielding of the RCAHMMW then spoke on the Commission's Chapels Project, which also featured in an article in the last Capel newsletter. The initial aim of the project was to gather basic information on, and a photographic record of all the nonconformist chapels of Wales. This work is now complete and available digitally via Coflein on the RCAHMMW website.

The database records 6626 chapels in Wales. Each chapel building (not each cause) will have its own entry which includes any alternate names for the chapel; a grid reference; a short text summary of the history of the chapel and its architecture and, for the more significant chapels, a fuller history; current and previous denominations; people involved with the chapel, mainly on the architecture / construction side; detailed architectural information; current status; cost and capacity.

Susan showed how the data collected can now be exploited to show various trends in chapel building in Wales. For example, the number of buildings constructed by each denomination; the variation in chapel names; an analysis of cost per seat etc.

The current focus of the Chapels Project is to ensure that the status information is up-to-date by noting if a chapel is open, closed, demolished, converted etc. They are looking for volunteers to help obtain this data, and would welcome contributions from Capel members.

Following the talks, we moved on to visit the Trinity St. David's college chapel. Denis Morgan gave an introduction to the chapel based on notes provided by the College Chaplain, Matthew Hill. The chapel was consecrated in 1827 by the Bishop of St. David's five years after the establishment of the College in 1822. Initially services were held daily, with longer services on Sundays and communion once every month. Approximately half the services were held in Welsh. In the 1870s it was one of the first places to introduce weekly communion.

The chapel was rebuilt in 1877 to mark the College's Golden Jubilee. It was designed by T. G. Jackson, and the wood for the stalls was obtained from New College, Oxford. The new chapel was consecrated in 1880. A pulpit was installed in 1901, but was later removed. From 1879, full services began to be held each day and the number of Welsh language services was reduced. By 1925 communion was being held daily. In 1939 another new chapel was proposed. Plans were drawn up by Ben Roderick of Aberdare, but the chapel was never built. It is now considered adequate for the needs of the College, and it is also felt that it would be a shame now to change it.

Following lunch at Trinity St. David's University, members began the afternoon tour of chapels at Noddfa Baptist Chapel. We were greeted by Revd. Jill Thomas, who spoke to us about the chapel. The chapel has its roots in the church planting work of David Hussey from Swansea. A Sunday School was established in the town in 1897, at a house on Victoria Terrace. Later that year the chapel was established and the first minister, David Jones, served from 1898-1946. Memorial stones to the main contributors towards the building can be found at the front of the chapel. An organ was added at a later date, a gift from the family of J. T. Morgan of Swansea, but by now it is difficult to find anyone to care for and repair it, especially at an affordable cost. The baptistery is located under the Set Fawr, but hasn't been used in some time. The Sunday School continues, and is thriving since being moved from a Sunday to a Friday evening.

We then moved on to visit Soar Independent Chapel. Soar has its roots in the local dissenting groups of the 17th century, but it wasn't until 1841 that the chapel ordained its first minister. Renovations to the building have taken place over the years, including an extension and the addition of a gallery during the late-1840s, the building of a vestry in 1900, and the purchase of an organ in 1904. Interestingly, the vestry of

the chapel is now used by Lampeter's Greek Orthodox Church to hold Sunday morning services.

The next stop on our tour was St. Thomas Methodist Chapel, the first Wesleyan Methodist cause in Lampeter. Although an old cause, the current St. Thomas Methodist Chapel is a modern building. Designed by the Owen Davies Partnership of Aberystwyth and funded by the members, it opened in late-1992.

Our final visit of the day was to Shiloh Presbyterian Chapel. Another old cause with roots can be traced back to the mid-18th century, Shiloh Presbyterian Chapel itself opened in 1874. Renovations have continued over the years, which have ensured that the building remains in a good state of repair. We were served a delicious tea at Shiloh which brought our day in Lampeter to a fitting close.



Soar © RCAHMW

Chapels Reported to Capel

Building applications

- St John's Methodist, Llandudno :
New foyer, toilets, office etc. Proposed extensions in a modern but respectful style. Application supported.
- Bethania CM, Mostyn Avenue, Llandudno:
Conversion to dwelling. Minimal impact. Application supported.
- Pandy Chapel, Llanbrynmair, Montgomeryshire:
Conversion to dwelling. Application supported.
- Bethel, Old Colwyn, Conwy:
Conversion to dwelling. Front elevation not adversely affected. Application supported.
- Calfaria B, Penrhynside, Llandudno:
Conversion to dwelling. Support subject to retention of render to front elevation.

Sales / Closures

- Carmel Independent, Ebbw Vale (Grade II, Thomas Thomas)
Auction advertized for 9/06/11.
- Bethania, Philip Street, Mountain Ash (Grade II)
For sale May 2011. FOFC and WRBT contacted.
- Trinity CM, Defynnog, Breconshire.
For sale May 2011
- Salem, Rhandirmwyn, Carmarthenshire (Grade II)
For sale
- CM Chapel, Bronllys, Breconshire
For sale - auction advertized 28/04/11

Hen Bethel, Cwmamman



Capel members will be interested to learn of an initiative underway in Cwmamman, Carmarthenshire. Hen Bethel Independent Chapel was established in c.1773 and stands on the hillside overlooking the village of Cwmamman. It is a Grade 2 listed building, which for many years has held a Christmas morning Plygain service which has become renowned in the locality.

Bethel was the first Independent cause in the area. Two additional Independent chapels were established in later years further down the valley, Bryn Seion and Bethel Newydd. Today, only Bethel Newydd remains open. Like many chapels, it has in recent years seen its congregation dwindle and age. The responsibility for Hen Bethel has recently become too great, especially as the cemetery was still in use and the building was quickly falling into a state of disrepair. As a result, the members of Bethel Newydd asked the Town Council for assistance in caring for both the building and the cemetery.

Cwmamman Town Council, in association with the Deacons of Bethel Newydd, decided to establish a charitable trust to take responsibility for Hen Bethel. This will take the form of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, a new type of charity currently being approved by parliament which offers greater flexibility than the current charitable trusts. A steering group of interested parties was established and on 13 April 2011 a public meeting was held at the Glanamman Community Centre to gauge local interest. Once the charitable trust is fully established they aim to apply for funding which, together with donations (in cash or in kind) and volunteers locally, they will use to renew the building and secure its future.

The Trust have recently been allowed to compete for funding in the NatWest Community Force Awards. They need to collect as many votes as they can through the Community Force Awards website. For more information, and to cast your vote, visit: <http://communityforce.natwest.com/project/2129>

It's good to hear of a positive initiative being undertaken by a local community to save a significant chapel building. The Steering Group have agreed to keep Capel informed of their progress, and updates will be included in future newsletters.

Bethania Welsh Baptist Chapel Maesteg

The Welsh Religious Buildings Trust takes into its care a representative selection of non-Anglican redundant religious buildings that are of particular historic or architectural interest. One of the first buildings taken into the care of the Trust was Bethania Welsh Baptist Chapel, Maesteg.

Bethania in Maesteg was built in 1908. A large and architecturally important chapel, it is the work of the renowned Welsh architect William Beddoe Rees, and is a Grade II* listed building.

A wealth of interesting documents relating to the chapel had been carefully looked after by secretaries of Bethania. These include minute books, correspondence and architectural drawings. These documents formed the basis of a cataloguing project for students studying for a Masters qualification in Archive Administration at Aberystwyth University during the 2010/11 academic year. The records were catalogued to a high standard by the students, and in July 2011 they were placed on deposit by the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust at Glamorgan Archives where they are now available for consultation by the public.

To contact Glamorgan Archives regarding the papers, please e-mail glamro@cardiff.gov.uk or write to Glamorgan Archives, Clos Parc Morgannwg, Leckwith, Cardiff, CF11 8AW.

Open Doors 2011



September will see Open Doors 2011: European Heritage Days in Wales being held across the country. Organised by the Civic Trust for Wales, Open Doors Days take place throughout September and offer the public free access to places and buildings of historic and architectural interest. Buildings which are normally free to visit put on something very special. This year there are over five hundred events at more than three hundred sites across Wales. Those buildings normally closed to the general public but opening their doors as part of the scheme include several

chapels and churches which Capel members may well wish to take the opportunity to view. A full diary of Open Doors events can be found on-line at:
<http://www.civictrustwales.org/ehd/index.htm>

Dates for your Diary Dyddiadau i'w Nodi

Capel's Autumn Meeting for 2011 will be held in Bangor on Saturday 8th October. Full details of the day and a booking form are enclosed with this newsletter.

Our Spring Meeting and AGM for 2012 will be held in Welshpool on Saturday 12th May.

Bydd Cyfarfod Hydref Cael ar gyfer 2011 yn cael i'w chynnal ym Mangor ar Ddydd Sadwrn 8fed Hydref. Ceir manylion llawn ynghyd a ffurflen bwcio yn ymgaedig a'r cylchlythyr yma.

Bydd ein Cyfarfod Gwanwyn a'r CCB ar gyfer 2012 yn cael i'w chynnal yn Y Trallwng ar Ddydd Sadwrn 12fed Mai.

Chapels: A Guide to Denominations in Wales

The Capel booklet 'Chapels: A Guide to Denominations in Wales' by Lionel Madden has been revised and reprinted. It gives concise information about the history and faith of the different nonconformist denominations in Wales. It answers some frequently asked questions - e.g. what is the difference between the Calvinistic Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists?

Copies are available for £3 (postage included) from the Secretary, Rev. Peter Jennings, 5 Cuffnell Close, Liddell Park, Llandudno LL30 1UX email: obadiah1@btinternet.com

Capeli: Arweinyfr i'r Enwadau yng Nghymru

Mae'r llyfryn 'Capeli: Arweinyfr i'r Enwadau yng Nghymru', gan Lionel Madden wedi'i ddiwygio ac ail-arraffu. Mae'n rhoi gwybodaeth gryno am hanes a ffydd y gwahanol enwadau anghydfurfiol yng Nghymru. Mae'n ateb rhai cwestiynau sy'n cael eu gofyn yn aml - e.e. beth yw'r gwahaniaeth rhwng y Methodistiaid Calffaidd a'r Methodistiaid Wesleidd?

Mae copïau ar werth am £3 (yn cynnwys cludiad) oddi wrth yr Ysgrifennydd, Y Parch. Peter Jennings, 5 Cuffnell Close, Liddell Park, Llandudno LL30 1UX ebo: obadiah1@btinternet.com

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