

# Capel



CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPEL  
*THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY*

Newsletter 63 Spring 2014

Cylchlythyr 63 Gwanwyn 2014

## Capel in Oswestry.

### Capel Autumn Meeting, 12th October 2013

Saturday, October 12th 2013, saw Capel's first visit to Oswestry for an interesting and musical day. Oswestry still has two Welsh language congregations, a Welsh bookshop, bilingual signs in the banks and Welsh can be heard frequently on the streets especially on market day. Until recently *Y Cymro* was published in the town.

Our day started at Seion Welsh Presbyterian Church where we were warmly welcomed by the minister, the Rev Gwilym O Jones. Richard Gareth Jones, our leader for the day (assisted by wife Bethan) gave a well-researched talk "Oswestry and the Welsh" which was supplemented by a talk by Geraint Pritchard, Seion's secretary. Old

Oswestry is the site of a large Iron-Age hill fort dating back to the 550s BC, while during the medieval period the town sat in the Welsh Marches. It therefore had a turbulent history; in 1233 it was attacked and burned by Llewellyn and subsequently changed



hands several times between the English and Welsh. Henry VIII's Act of Union in 1534 finally placed it in England and so now it sits three miles from the Welsh border. Despite this the town continued to have a bilingual population and the parish church continued with Welsh language services until 1814. Provision was then made for Welsh services in various locations until the early twentieth century when St David's Church was built for Welsh speaking Anglicans

The cause of the Welsh Methodists in the town goes back to the eighteenth century, and Howel Harris visited Oswestry on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1751. Modryb Susannah (Evans) was instrumental in getting preachers to the town and had to move at least five times because of her perseverance, faithfulness and dedication to the Methodist cause. In 1813 a small chapel was built in Castle Street, later land was bought in Gatacre Place and a larger chapel opened in 1837. This was razed to the ground in 1869 and in the early 1870s the present Seion was built and it is considered to be the mother church of several other chapels in the area, including Carneddau which still conducts services. Although no longer represented in the town the Welsh Baptists established themselves in 1806 and in 1872 bought the old Castle Street Methodist chapel. In 1889 they built Penuei chapel which still stands today in Castle Street, though it closed for services in the mid 1970's.

We ended our visit with the chapel organist playing the Conacher 'The Old Firm' 'Huddersfield organ, the first of three organs in the town built by the company.

On our way to lunch at the historic Wynnstay Hotel, we walked along the Broad Walk, laid out as an avenue of lime trees around 1710 and had the opportunity to visit the now closed semi-Gothic St David's Church, a sad visit as all the internal fittings have been removed. At the end of the walk we saw the memorial to one of Oswestry's most famous sons, Wilfred Owen, the first World War poet who was killed a week before the end of the war

After a delicious lunch there was the opportunity to visit St Oswald's Parish Church. In 1599 William Morgan, well known for his translation of the Bible into Welsh, was appointed Vicar of St Oswalds and in 1747 the famous poet Goronwy Owen of Anglesey was a curate here. The first reference to a church dedicated to St Oswald is in 1086, while the present church was extensively rebuilt after damage during the Civil war in 1670s.



Our second visit was to Horeb Wesleyan Chapel where we were welcomed once again by the Rev Gwilym O Jones who ministers it jointly with Seion and where we were addressed by Dewi Lloyd. The history of the Welsh Wesleyans goes back to the late eighteenth century. They worshipped in various buildings in the town until they built their first

chapel in Penylan Lane in 1856, replaced by the larger Horeb in 1878. The chapel flourished, the first ordained minister appointed in 1883, and the Conacher organ was bought in 1903. One minister of Horeb was Cadfan who became Archdruid of Wales and composed his famous hymn in Horeb Manse

*Mae llais efengyl fwyn  
Yn galw arnaf fi.*

Our leader gave us a short recital and we all sang the hymn tune Gwahoddiad.

We were not able to visit Hermon, the former Welsh Independent Chapel. The cause closed in 1996, and the present owner (who has altered the interior) was unfortunately ill and unable to escort us. The building was designed by the Rev Thomas Thomas of Llandore, Swansea, one of the most prolific Welsh chapel



architects. It was built in 1862 and was an anniversary chapel to commemorate the ejection of non-conformist clergy in 1662. Its style is classical with a three bay Tuscan pilastered facade under overall pediment.



We had a warm welcome at Oswestry Methodist Church. There were both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist chapels in the town and eventually both united at the chapel in Castle Street. Old schoolrooms have been demolished and new premises built, with some alterations also made to the church. Once again we had the opportunity to hear the organ.

The musical highlight of the day took place at Christchurch, built for the Independants but currently the joint chapel of the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church of Wales. We firstly were taken outside to see the recently completed memorial to one of the children of the Church, Sir Walford Davies, Master of The Kings Musick.

The chapel was designed by the Oswestry based architect W H Spaul, and completed in 1872 it is an excellent example of the more relaxed style that followed the purism of the Gothic revival earlier in the century. The church has a commanding position facing the small square at the foot of the castle motte and bailey. The facade is impressive and the north-west tower and the broache spire are in perfect proportion to the rest of the building. The interior is spacious and well-proportioned with a very Anglican stone and marble pulpit and on the other side a Conacher organ. Thomas Trotter, organist to the City of Birmingham and St Margaret's Church, Westminster, had just finished rehearsing for a recital that evening but returned to give us a private recital which was much appreciated.



The members of the chapel then very kindly provided us with a most welcome 'Chapel tea'. Meirick Lloyd Davies thanked everyone, especially Richard, who had made the day so memorable

## Digital Dissent: The Story of Welsh Chapels

*"But the singing in the chapel is never grim or grey. The voices of the quarrymen, or shepherds, colliers or small farmers, tradesmen from the scorched valleys, or ploughmen from the long fields, the voices of children brought up to play Indians on the slag heaps, or pirates in the cattle-voiced meadows, are sweet and powerful, wild and gentle"* Dylan Thomas

Addoldai Cymru (The Welsh Religious Buildings Trust) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales have been granted £67,451 from the Digital Tourism Framework Programme by Visit Wales for the development of a virtual museum of religious dissent and the chapels which represent over 300 years of Nonconformity in Wales.



Hen Gapel, Rhydownen: NPRN 11594 © Crown Copyright RCAHMW

Part of a larger Addoldai Cymru project to restore and interpret Yr Hen Gapel, Rhydownen, which is also supported by £84,100 of Heritage Lottery Funding and £50,000 of Cadw grant aid, the project aims to use digital interpretation to

tell the story of Nonconformity in an engaging, meaningful and informative way. The resources will include the creation of virtual access to chapels in the care of the WRBT through laser scanning, gigapixel photography and computer visualisation and making available interpretative analysis and GIS mapping of the Royal Commission database of over 6400 Nonconformist chapels across Wales via a new, interactive, WRBT website. The project will also work with communities around the WRBT chapels to hold survey training days, community history days and a series of lectures.

This project will build on the long running work of the Royal Commission in conjunction with Addoldai Cymru and Capel in highlighting the importance of one the most distinctive and iconic building types in Wales, one which contributes heavily to both our urban and rural landscapes. This project has identified a wealth of variety in chapel building, ranging from the small and simple vernacular chapels commonly associated with the Welsh countryside, to the grandiose architect designed 'show facades' of our towns and cities which are now recognised as being on a par with the other great public buildings of the later 19th and early 20th century.

Today chapels are one of the classes of building most at threat of closure in Wales and, in repose to this situation, the Royal Commission has created a database of some 6429 chapels holding information on architecture, denomination, dates, architects, language and cost among other things. The database is been supported by a programme of survey and photography and there is an ever increasing archive held within the National Monuments Record of Wales, with nearly 1300 digital images available on the Royal Commissions on-line database Coflein ([www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk) ).

## The Faith Tourism Action Plan for Wales

On Friday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013 Edwina Hart, Minister for the Economy, Science and Transport launched the Faith Tourism Action Plan for Wales at St Asaph Cathedral.

The plan aims to *identify ways in which this significant part of our heritage can be enhanced as an attraction to visitors and locals alike* with the end vision that *'By 2020 Faith tourism is recognised as an integral component of the*

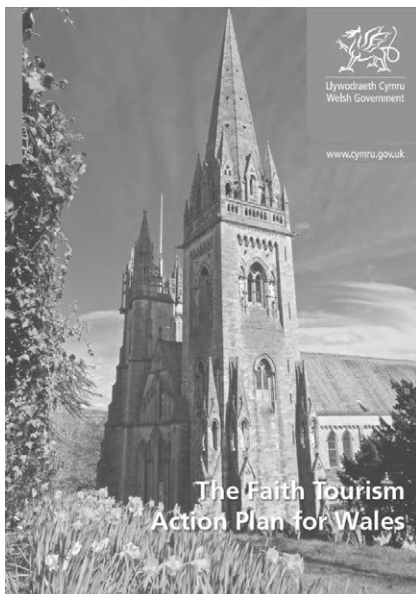


*visitor experience in Wales, adding significant value to the destination offer, contributing to the well-being of the visitor and host community and enhancing local, regional and national 'Sense of Place'.* While the main focus will be on heritage tourism for a general market, it will also provide opportunities to develop more niche markets for those travelling purely with a religious purpose in mind.

The plan builds on research which identifies that visiting historical attractions is the most commonly quoted incentive by overseas visitors for visiting Wales, and places of worship as among the most popular visitor attractions in the country. While the five most commonly visited sites are St David's Cathedral, The Norwegian Church, Brecon Cathedral, Tintern Abbey and Llandaff Cathedral, the story of Nonconformity and chapels within the social, cultural and built heritage of Wales is clearly identified as a strength within the plan.

A short term committee, which includes representatives of Capel, Addoldai Cymru and the Royal Commission, will discuss how the plan may be taken forward.

Full details of the Faith tourism Action Plan can be found at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/tourism/development/1/faithactionplan>



# Chapels reported to Capel

## Applications

Bryn Seion, Sychdyn, Mold, Flintshire – proposed demolition and replacement with dwelling. No objection subject to full photographic survey to be submitted to RCAHMW.

Staylitle Baptist Chapel, Staylitle, Powys – conversion to dwelling. Sympathetic proposal preserving exterior character and railed forecourt. Support subject to full photographic survey to be submitted to RCAHMW

Marine Presbyterian Chapel, Pensarn, Abergele (Grade II listed) – conversion to shop and café. Sympathetic proposal, retaining some internal detail (pews, pulpit and organ) and inserting reversible floor. Support subject to full photographic survey to be submitted to RCAHMW

Gritt Methodist Chapel, White Grit, Powys – conversion to dwelling. Support subject to full photographic survey to be submitted to RCAHMW

Capel Seion, Talywern, Machynlleth, Powys – conversion to dwelling. Support; character of chapel preserved.

Hen Gapel, Llechryd, Cardigan – amended scheme to convert chapel and vestry to dwelling approved 23/12/13

Cysegr Chapel, Rhewl, Holywell, Flintshire – conversion to dwelling. Sensitive proposal supported.

Capel Dyffryn, Manordeilo, Carmarthenshire – conversion to two dwellings. No adverse comment.

Troedriw Baptist Chapel, Cwmdud, Carmarthenshire – conversion to dwelling. Sensitive scheme (interior already stripped) supported.

Former chapel, Stow Hill, Newport – retention of façade and provision of 23 apartments (listed Grade II) – apart from the façade, there is little historic



detail surviving. The proposal seeks to reinstate lost detail to the latter but careful attention is required for the window openings; full details required of joinery, fenestration and railings. In the absence of the latter, CAPEL objects to the proposal.

Hermon Wesleyan Chapel, New Brighton, Minera, Wrexham – conversion top dwelling. 1890 tin tabernacle effectively destroyed by proposal – objection.

## **Closures**

St Andrews Presbyterian Chapel, Pembroke Dock



St Andrews Chapel, Pembroke Dock: NPRN 11016 © Crown Copyright  
RCAHMW

# Islwyn Jones

Members of Capel will be saddened by the news of the death of Islwyn D. Jones in December 2013. He had attended the Society's meetings regularly until the deterioration of his health in recent years. We remember with affection his genial and friendly personality, and also with admiration the immense care taken by him to photograph the chapels visited on those occasions.

A skilful and proficient photographer he was one of our members who had responded positively to the invitation to participate in the Royal Commission project which involved the production of a photographic record of chapels in selected areas. As a result a number of his photographs now form part of the Royal Commission archive. Also, a large collection of his photographs has been presented to the National Library, and constitute an exceptionally-valuable resource for chapel historians. Some of these photographs illustrate chapels in various areas of Wales, but most concentrate on the Rhondda Fawr valley to which he was deeply attached.



He had worked as a coalminer at the Cambrian Colliery, Clydach Vale and at the Park and Dare Colliery, Treorchy, and also as a carpenter on several construction sites. He had also served as an armourer in the Royal Air Force. In addition to his passion for photography, his interests also included choral singing, and he had been a long-serving member of the Cambrian Male Voice Choir.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his widow Eileen, and his family.

## News and Events

Dear Editor

Members may be interested to know that Capel Carmel in Pennal which was chosen to decorate our CAPEL mug in 2005, is featured in the 2013 Winter edition of CADW's *Heritage in Wales* magazine. When we visited the chapel in 2005 it was in a sorry state and awaiting confirmation that it would receive Big Lottery funding and a conservation grant from CADW. With the aid of this funding the vestry has been extended and a new link built to the original chapel. The removal of the original pews has made for a more flexible space. Canolfan Pennal, as it is now known, is still used for worship, but is also used by the local groups in the community and even houses the post office for several hours each week. It is good that this 1871 chapel by the architect Reverend Thomas Thomas of Landore, has been so sensitively restored, and looks set to serve the community in the future.

Yours faithfully

Peter Mason (Former Hon. Sec.)

Capel Spring meeting: 10th May 2014 North Pembrokeshire and Llangloffan,

Capel Autumn meeting: 11<sup>th</sup> October, location tbc

Thomas Coke Commemorative Weekend: 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> May 2014, Brecon. This event will commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Revrd Dr Thomas Coke. Further details at [www.methodistheritage.org.uk](http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk)

Methodism and Conflict: 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014, Hoddeston, Hertfordshire. To mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, the theme of the Wesley Historical Society 2014 conference explores Methodism's response to conflict. As well as exploring how Methodism responded to both world wars, the conference will also examine the challenges and impact of conflict on the theology and pastoral life of the Methodist people

# CCB/AGM 2013

## Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol, Rhydaman, 11 Mai 2013.

### 1 Croeso'r Llywydd:

Y Llywydd, sef y Dr Lionel Madden oedd yn cadeirio ac fe groesawodd yr aelodau i'r Cyfarfod. Tynnodd sylw at y ffaith drist nad oedd Stuart Rivers yn bresennol oherwydd bu farw yn fuan wedi'r Cyfarfod Blynyddol diwethaf. Safodd y cyfarfod am foment mewn distawrwydd i gofio amdano.

### 2 Ymddiheuriadau:

Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau gan Mrs Rosemary Ann Davies, Miss Muriel Bowen Evans a Mr Andrew Mathieson.

### 3 Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Diwethaf:

Derbyniwyd a chadarnhawyd cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd yn y Trallwng ar 12 Hydref 2012.

### 4 Materion yn Codi:

Nid oedd unrhyw faterion yn codi.

### 5 Adroddiad yr Ysgrifennydd:

Adroddodd yr Ysgrifennydd ei bod wedi bod yn flwyddyn weddol nodweddiadol, gyda'r ymholiadau arferol ynghylch cofnodion capeli a theuluoedd. Roedd ymholwyr o'r Unol Daleithiau wedi bod yn awyddus i gael gwybodaeth am gapeli cyn ymweld ac roedd gan y Comisiwn Brenhinol sgiliau rhyfeddol i olrhain capeli, rhai ohonynt wedi eu dymchwel ers amser maith. Roedd swyddfeydd canolog yr enwadau wedi bod yn barod eu cymorth er mwyn olrhain cofnodion am gapeli a'u mynwentydd. Nododd yr Ysgrifennydd ei ddiolch arbennig i ymgynghorwyr y Gymdeithas, Norman Chang a Jonathan Jones, ac i Rob Scourfield a roddodd gyngor ar geisiadau cynllunio.

### 6 Adroddiad y Trysorydd:

Cyflwynodd y Trysorydd gyfrifon a oedd wedi'u harchwilio, am y flwyddyn a ddaeth i ben ar 31 Awst 2012. Roedd digwyddiad CAPEL ym Mangor wedi gwneud colled fechan, oherwydd costau argraffu lliw. Roedd y balans presennol bron yn £14,000 gyda £10,000 yn y Bond Buddsoddi a £3,990 yn y cyfrif cyfredol. Roedd cost unwaith-ac-am-byth wedi dod i ran y Gymdeithas, ar gyfer ailargraffu taflen "Darganfod Capeli yn Llangollen" ac roedd yr hawlfraint wedi'i rhoi i gapeli Llangollen fel y gallent argraffu copïau ychwanegol ar gyfer yr Eisteddfod Ryngwladol, pryd bynnag y byddai angen. Tynnodd y Trysorydd sylw hefyd at y ffaith fod yswiriant ar gael am gost isel i Gymdeithasau Hanes Lleol.

7 Adroddiad y Cadeirydd:

Diolchodd Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Gwaith, y Cynghorydd Meirick Lloyd Davies, i swyddogion ac aelodau'r Pwyllgor Gwaith am eu cymorth a'u hanogaeth, eu gwaith caled a'u hymroddiad drwy gydol y flwyddyn. Diolchodd yn arbennig i'r Dr a Mrs Huw Owen am eu trefniadau yn Rhydaman a'u trefniadau blynyddol ar gyfer Darlith CAPEL yn yr Eisteddfod. Roedd y Gymdeithas hefyd wedi cael ymweliadau llwyddiannus â'r Trallwng a Llanelwy a bu'n ofid i'r aelodau glywed wedyn am y llifogydd a drawodd dref a phobl Llanelwy.

8 Ethol Swyddogion ac Aelodau i'r Pwyllgor:

Roedd y swyddogion wedi cytuno i ddal ati am flwyddyn arall a chawsant eu haillethol. Nid oedd unrhyw newidiadau yn aelodaeth y Pwyllgor a chafodd yr aelodau eu haillethol gan ddiolch iddynt am eu blwyddyn o wasanaeth. Yr aelodau a etholwyd oedd: Mrs Marlies Cope, Mrs Rosemary Davies, Miss Muriel Bowen Evans, Dr Lionel Madden, Mr Andrew Mathieson, Dr Huw Owen, Mr David Puleston Williams a Golygydd y Gymdeithas, Ms Susan Fielding. Roedd gan y Pwyllgor le gwag o hyd ar gyfer Ymgynghorydd Enwadol o Eglwysi'r Bedyddwyr.

9 Unrhyw Fater Arall:

Gan nad oedd unrhyw faterion eraill, diolchodd y Cadeirydd i'r aelodau am ddod a chaeodd y cyfarfod. Byddai'r cyfarfod nesaf yn y Canolbarth – yng Nghroesoswallt ym mis Hydref 2014.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Ammanford, 11 May 2013.

1 President's Welcome:

In the chair, The President, Dr Lionel Madden, welcomed members to the Meeting and drew attention to the sad absence of Stuart Rivers who had died shortly after the last AGM. The meeting stood for a moment's silence in memory.

2 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Mrs Rosemary Ann Davies, Miss Muriel Bowen Evans and Mr Andrew Mathieson.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held in Welshpool on 12 October 2012 were accepted and confirmed.

4 Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

5 Secretary's Report:

The Secretary reported that his had been a fairly typical year with the usual enquiries about chapel and family records. Enquirers from the USA had wanted to trace chapels prior to visits and the Royal Commission were amazing in their skill of tracing, in some cases, long-demolished chapels; denominational central offices had been helpful in tracing records of chapels and their burial grounds. The Secretary recorded his special thanks to the Society's advisers, Norman Chang and Jonathan Jones, and to Rob Scourfield who advised on planning applications.

6 Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer presented audited accounts for the year ending on 31 August 2012. The CAPEL event at Bangor, owing to colour printing



costs, had incurred a slight loss. The current balance was almost £14,000 with £10,000 in the Investment Bond and £3990 in the Current account. There had been a one-off expense for the reprint of the "Discovering Chapels in Llangollen" leaflet and its copyright had been made over to the chapels of Llangollen so that they might print extra copies for the International Eisteddfod, whenever necessary. The Treasurer drew attention, in addition, to the availability of inexpensive insurance available to Local History Societies.

7 Chairman's Report:

The Chairman of the Executive Committee, Cllr Meirick Lloyd Davies, thanked the Officers and members of the Executive Committee for their support and encouragement, for their hard work and commitment throughout the year. He thanked especially Dr and Mrs Huw Owen for their arrangements for Ammanford and their annual arrangements for the CAPEL Eisteddfod Lecture. The Society had had successful visits to Welshpool and to St Asaph and had been distressed to learn subsequently of the flooding which had struck the town and people of St Asaph.

8 Election of Officers and Committee Members:

The Officers had agreed to continue in office for a further year and were re-elected. There were no changes to the membership of the Committee and members were re-elected with thanks for their years' service. Members elected were: Mrs Marlies Cope, Mrs Rosemary Davies, Miss Muriel Bowen Evans, Dr Lionel Madden, Mr Andrew Mathieson, Dr Huw Owen, Mr David Puleston Williams and the Society's Editor, Ms Susan Fielding. The Committee still had a vacancy for a Denominational Adviser from the Baptist Churches.

9 Any Other Business:

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting. The next gathering would be in Mid Wales – in Oswestry in October 2014

# Swyddogion / Officers

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