

Capel



TAFLEN WYBODAETH LEOL
LOCAL INFORMATION SHEET

9

METHODISM IN ABERYSTWYTH

This meeting is being held in the new Methodist Church in Aberystwyth, *Canolfan Fethodistaidd St Paul Methodist Centre*, to give it its full title. The building was opened in 1992 and is the culmination of ten years of planning and discussion, aimed at providing modern and greatly improved facilities for Christian witness for both English and Welsh speaking Methodists. The church provides continuity of location for the English cause, being built on the site of the former English Methodist Church, and continuity of name for the Welsh cause, adopting the name "St Paul's" in deference to the mother church of Aberystwyth Methodism.

In the 1870s and 1880s, with the opening of the railway link and the birth of the University of Wales in the town, Aberystwyth was growing as a holiday resort and educational centre, and membership of the churches progressed in sympathy. In the pattern of the times, both Welsh and English causes built large churches with seating capacities far in excess of the immediate requirements and at costs which incurred debts lasting for two decades or more.

The replacement of these two Victorian churches, which had both come to the end of their useful lives, by this modern building is seen as a prophetic sign that the Church still lives and that it has to adapt to changing situations as we approach the 21st century.

**The original St Paul's
Welsh Methodist Church**
(Grade II Listed Building)

The congregation now shares the New Methodist Centre and this building, with the adjacent schoolroom, has been up for sale since February 1989.

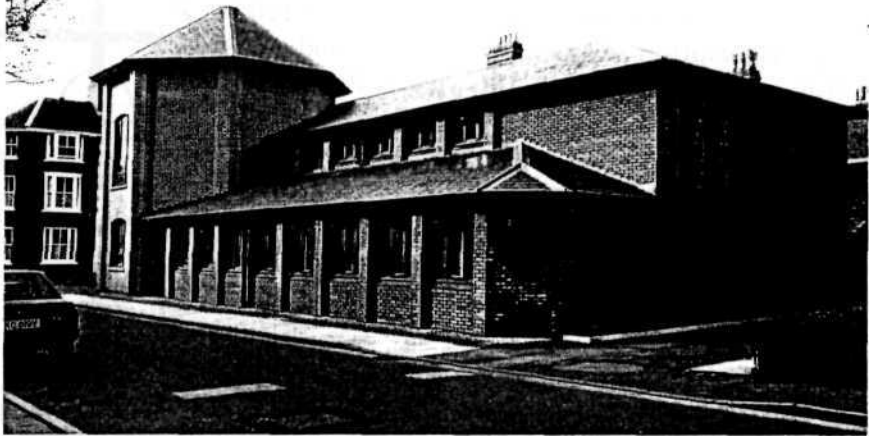
In addition to the church at Aberystwyth, the Welsh Circuit comprises seven other country chapels in Ceredigion.



**Queen's Road
English Methodist Church**

This building was demolished in 1989 to make way for the new Methodist Centre, after removal of the Grade II spot-listing.

It was estimated that more than two million meals were served in the Queen's Road Schoolroom canteen to members of the forces stationed in Aberystwyth during 1940-44. Membership of the English cause, exceeding 150, is currently the highest it has been in its history; there is also an active University Student Society.



The new St Paul's Methodist Centre

The Centre has been designed to make maximum use of the corner site, with a wide splayed entrance in a central octagonal structure having a distinguishing fleche. Ease of access for the disabled has been assured by having the ground floor at street level and no steps, and by the installation of a lift to the first floor.

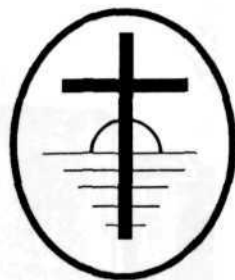
The whole design has been based on multi-purpose use with maximum flexibility. The main worship area / hall has no fixed furniture and it is adjoined by a spacious concourse / circulation area which can be opened into the main hall if desired. A kitchen serves both the hall and the concourse. Other ground floor features include a creche, a church office, and a minister's study.

The upper floor of the two-storeyed wing provides a very pleasant octagonal hall for worship and 'quiet' activities, and several smaller rooms for junior church and other meetings. A unique feature of the design is that it enables simultaneous and separate services to be held in English and Welsh every Sunday.

A coffee bar is open every day, and rooms are in constant demand by outside bodies. In this way the building is fulfilling our original dream that it would provide a base for Christian activity in its widest sense and a focal point from which we can move out to the community, and to which the community may be drawn.

A LITTLE HISTORY

The logo of the Methodist Church in Aberystwyth, symbolising the theme *Today is the time for Christian activity*, may be considered an apt description of the history of Methodism in this area over the last 190 years. From its beginnings in 1804 when the first Welsh Wesleyan 'missionaries' preached in a local inn to the current inception of the first bilingual Methodist Circuit in 1994, the story has been one of progression, of change, and of development. Here are a few landmarks:



- 1807 First Welsh Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (named Salem) opened in a court off Queen Street. The needs of the few English speakers were initially happily catered for within the Welsh society, and this society subsequently helped establish a separate English cause.
- 1844 First English Wesleyan Methodist Church built in Alexandra Road, with an initial membership of 10. This building was the first English Nonconformist church to be built in the Aberystwyth area. It still survives, currently occupied by the Salvation Army.
- 1870 New English Methodist Church opened in Queen's Road, with a seating capacity of 450, although membership at that time was only 60.
- 1880 New Welsh Methodist Church opened (St Paul's) in Great Darkgate Street, with a grandiose design at a prodigious cost of £5900.
- 1952 University Student Methodist Society formed.
- 1954 New English Methodist Church built at Penparcau.
- 1977 Lampeter Methodist Church joined the English Circuit.
- 1992 New Methodist Centre opened on the former Queen's Road site, shared by the English and Welsh societies. This was the first new purpose-built church to be built in Aberystwyth this century.
- 1994 English and Welsh Methodist Circuits united to form *Cylchdaith Ceredigion Circuit*, the first bilingual Circuit in Methodism.