

Capel

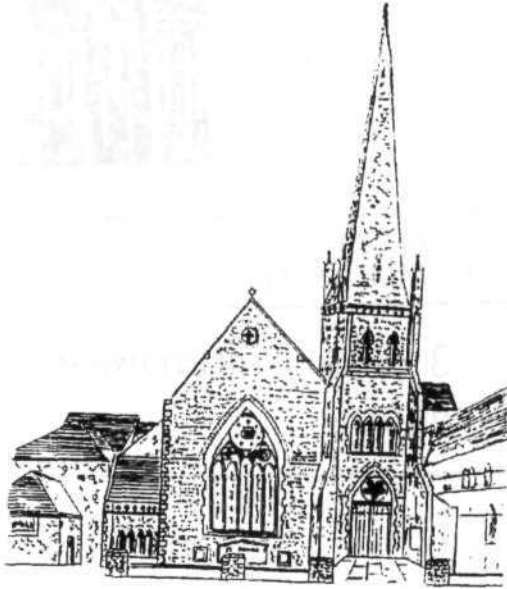


CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY

TAFLEN WYBODAETH LEOL 13 *LOCAL INFORMATION SHEET*
LLANDUDNO

Llandudno, Queen of the Welsh resorts, is renowned for the Great Orme, ancient copper mines, the Victorian tramway and pier, the fine promenade and many other things, but how often is it mentioned as the home of some of the finest chapels in the country, three of which – Ebeneser (Emmanuel), Seilo and Tabernacl – are listed by Anthony Jones as deserving to be ‘saved at all costs’? Taking its name from the tiny church of St. Tudno on the Great Orme, the Victorian town of Llandudno is built mainly on the Mostyn estate lands, of which the chapels were leaseholders. This fact has had an important impact on the history of the chapels as leases expired and came up for renewal. As the resort mushroomed and the population increased rapidly in the nineteenth century, chapels were built to accommodate the large congregations. In addition, the influx of summer visitors swelled the congregations and even today it is not uncommon to find 500 worshippers in some of the town centre Sunday morning services in summer.

ST. JOHN'S (ENGLISH METHODIST: 1866)



The Wesleyan Methodist cause began in 1859 following earlier efforts by a Captain Vivian from Cornwall. A temporary chapel was built in Lloyd St. in 1861 and the present building was constructed in 1866 at a cost of £4102. There were 33 members at the time and they were aided by a grant from the 'Watering Places

Fund' which was established to help build churches in new holiday resorts. An adjoining manse cost £1187.

The church is a Grade 2 listed building in a conservation area and the lease was bought out in 1981. A plan to demolish and build a smaller church was rejected because of its status and it has been extensively renovated. New pews were fitted in 1966 (the centenary year) and subsequently the church was re-roofed, some land was disposed of for redevelopment and the organ was renovated and moved. The window behind the altar had been bricked up and this was re-opened and fitted with stained glass, along with the two windows in the transepts – particularly noteworthy is the Wesley window in the west. The glass was produced by the Halkyn stained glass studios. The hammer-beam roof is original. Having overcome the threat of demolition, this church benefits from its prime location.

ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (1891 : T.G. WILLIAMS)



The first church on this site was a corrugated iron building (1880) originated by an Anglican minister who had retired to Llandudno with ill health and joined the Welsh Presbyterian chapel across the road at Seilo. He was urged to open an English Presbyterian Church for the English visitors and began meetings in the Masonic Hall in Mostyn Street before transferring to the site here in May 1880, with financial help from Seilo.

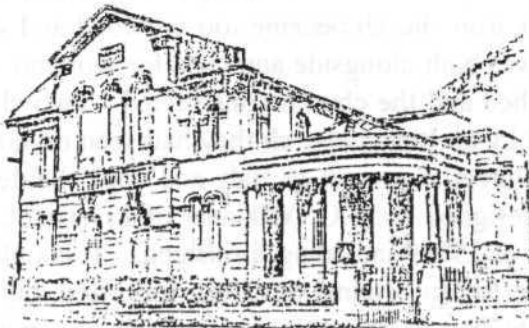
As numbers grew and the iron church became too crowded and stuffy the present schoolroom was built alongside and used for worship while the iron hut was demolished and the church constructed. Two church elders were so impressed by an Italian church they had seen on holiday that they paid for the architect to go out to Italy and copy the design. The resultant building, designed by T.G. Williams of Liverpool, was opened in 1891 at a cost of £5819 including furnishings. It is unfortunate that the name of the Italian original has been forgotten, but it is certainly unusual if this building is an exact copy. Built of sandstone from Wyddfydd quarry with dressings of Cefn stone, the church is a remarkable structure, which is more obvious inside than out. The 58' by 55' space beneath the massive conical-shaped roof, which is spanned by interior beams in cartwheel formation, is uninterrupted by any supporting pillars. It was re-roofed in 1992 at a cost of £90,000. Noteworthy inside the church is the extraordinarily large pulpit, the 'circular pewing fixed in an acoustic curve', the old (not original) organ and the strongly raked floor. A fine gas candelabra (Scott-Thorp

corona light) was removed 15 years ago. Behind the pulpit are three enigmatic carved panels bearing the inscription 'Carved by Emma Ridge, January 1891' – who was Emma Ridge ?

The schoolroom with its inconveniently raked floor from its chapel days, maintains magnificent wooden roller shutters which can be opened to connect it to the church for overflow space. The vestry contains interesting items including a picture from the first English Presbyterian conference in Llandudno in 1900. The architect's plans for the church are available for viewing.

Outside, on Gloddaeth Avenue, the stone is badly worn by the sand which sweeps along the road in winter storms. This remarkable building remains unlisted.

TABERNACL (WELSH BAPTIST, 1875 : G.A. HUMPHRIES)

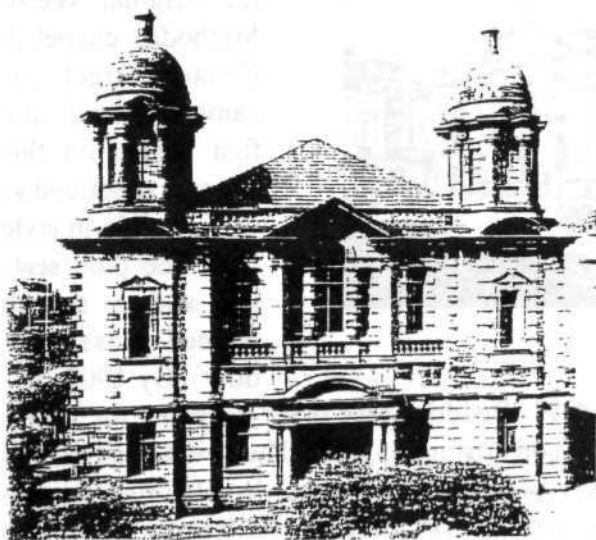


The Baptist cause was established in Llandudno in 1813 although there are meetings recorded here as early as 1776. The Welsh Baptists were the first nonconformists to build a chapel in Llandudno in 1813 and

by 1835 numbers had increased so much that a new chapel was built on this site. The present Tabernacl was opened in 1875 and was altered and extended in 1902 by G.A. Humphries to incorporate the schoolroom, the ionic pillared portico and new main entrance. This splendid classical sandstone chapel dominates its corner site and claims several firsts for the town – the first registered to solemnise marriages, first resident minister and first Sunday school. The interior is unusual in having galleries that continue into two “transepts” above domestic

offices. The baptismal tank too, occupies an unusual site on an upper level above the set fawr. An organ purchased from Christ Church in 1902 more than fills the original organ recess. The schoolroom on the north side is presently being renovated and on the other side there appears to be a remarkable "drainage area" in a dressing room for use by the baptismal candidates after their immersion. One illustrious former minister was the Rev. Lewis Valentine, a founder member of the Welsh Nationalist Movement and remembered as one of the 3 activists who set fire to the contractors' stores during the building of an RAF bombing school near Pwllheli – an act for which all 3 were sent to gaol in 1936.

SEILO (WELSH PRESBYTERIAN, 1905 : G.A. HUMPHRIES)



Seilo, with its huge sandstone cupolas, rises like a great baroque cathedral over the surrounding buildings, although it is not actually much taller. It is the fourth chapel built by the Welsh Presbyterians and the

second on this site. The first chapel here was opened in 1855. It was a very simple building in keeping with the tenets of the denomination but the finest materials were used and it was extended with a gallery in 1874 and with a chapel house and schoolroom in 1884. A request by the younger members for an organ to be installed resulted in a decision to build an entirely new chapel and the present Seilo was built in 1901-5 by G.A.

Humphries at a cost of £8779. The interior is of traditional design with a magnificent gallery giving a total seating capacity of over 1000 and as the largest chapel in town, it is popular as a venue for large gatherings. The set fawr is removed in the summer to accommodate visiting choirs. The main schoolroom retains some original benches and there is a further small schoolroom beyond. A former minister, the Rev. E.O. Davies (1910 – 1925) was involved in setting up a constitutional commission which began the long process of having the denomination formally recognised by Act of Parliament – an aim which was finally achieved in 1933.

EMMANUEL CHURCH (FORMERLY EBENESER WELSH METHODIST CHAPEL 1909. W.BEDDOE REES)



Built 1873 - 5 when the original Welsh Methodist chapel in Cwlach Street became too small, the first chapel on this site was described as early Gothic in style with fine pine seating and a superb stained glass window. By 1905, this

chapel was too small and W. Beddoe Rees drew up plans for a new circular chapel seating 400 and costing £5,657. The new Ebeneser was opened in 1909. However beautiful it was, the chapel suffered problems from the start with woodworm, draughts, a leaking roof and pillars obscuring the view for some members of the congregation.

The chapel was always in demand for meetings of outside organisations because of its strategic position in the town centre, but its recent history as a chapel had been problematic. Its lease from the Mostyn Estate expired in 1972 and the Trustees were unable to buy the freehold. The congregation eventually moved out to a smaller building in Lloyd

Street and the vacated Ebeneser became a target for vandals and squatters. A local businessman arranged a 20-year lease and began to refurbish the building as a multi-purpose cultural centre in 1992. The inside was gutted and a stage replaced the former dais and organ platform. The main purpose appeared to be to save the building from collapse and after a short time the lease was offered to the Emmanuel Pentecostal Church, who are the present leaseholders.

The inside of the chapel retains its original pillars, circular dome and circlet of round windows but the fine, shaped pews were removed in 1972 when the Welsh Methodists moved out. Of special mention still is the interesting use of space with a circular chapel inside a square exterior giving several angular spaces to be used as passage-ways, meeting rooms and kitchen. This is one of only 2 such chapels remaining in Wales. The stained glass windows of the 'Light of the World' and 'The Good Shepherd' are by Jones & Willis 1908.

The schoolroom at the back is part of the previous building slightly altered and now newly renovated by the present congregation themselves. Remnants of the old roof are still visible.

The chapel is currently being extensively renovated outside and a solution is being sought to the fundamental design fault which resulted in continual roof leaks.

Also noteworthy in Llandudno is the United Reformed Church (Christ Church 1858) in Tudno Street. Built originally for Welsh Congregationalists, it was first shared with and then relinquished to English Congregationalists when a Welsh chapel was built in Deganwy Avenue. It is an imposing Gothic style building with 18 very beautiful stained glass windows. Its spire was removed after storm damage.

A little further uphill in Cwlach Street is the original Welsh Methodist chapel, Caersalem (1837). It later served as a grammar school and a plaque records the fact that William Morris Hughes, Premier of Australia 1916-23 was educated here. The building

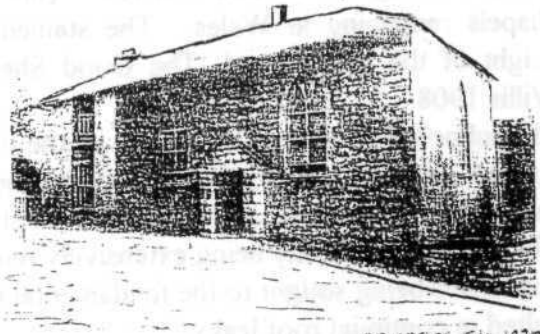
reverted to the Methodist cause in 1889 and was bought by the Methodist Holiday Homes in 1946 as an annexe to Bodlondeb, an extraordinary castellated edifice, constructed by a local builder for an apparently unnamed celebrity who rejected it as having too little land around it. The whole complex is now part of the Epworth chain of hotels.

Almost opposite St. John's Methodist Church in Mostyn Street once stood the English Baptist Chapel, Zion (1862), said to have been one of the most beautiful and oldest churches in town. Designed like a classical Greek temple with steps rising up from street level to the portico, this chapel also occupied a prime location in the main street. For some reason, the lease was not bought out when it expired and the congregation moved out to shared premises elsewhere. The chapel was demolished in 1965 to make way for shops.

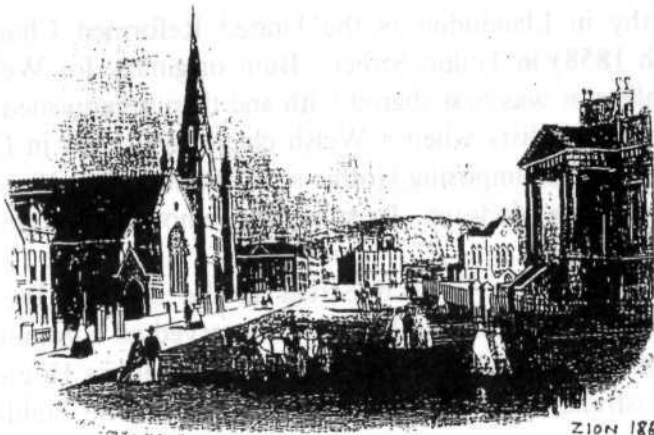


1858

CHRIST CHURCH



CAERSALEM 1837



ZION 1862