

Capel

CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



Tabernacle

This year's Annual General meeting at Machynlleth is held in the Museum of Modern Art, which was set up in Tabernacle, the Welsh Wesleyan Methodist chapel after it closed in the late 70s. Machynlleth is a small market town of some two thousand inhabitants in the lower Dovey valley, surrounded by hills - Aran Fawddwy and Cader Idris to the north and Plynlimon to the south. It is best known as the town where Owain Glyndŵr held a parliament in 1404 and is said to have been crowned Prince of Wales. In recent years three interesting and unusual tourist attractions have been established in the area - the Tabernacle Art Centre, *Celtica*, with its display of Welsh and Celtic history and, a few miles to the north, the Centre for Alternative Technology.

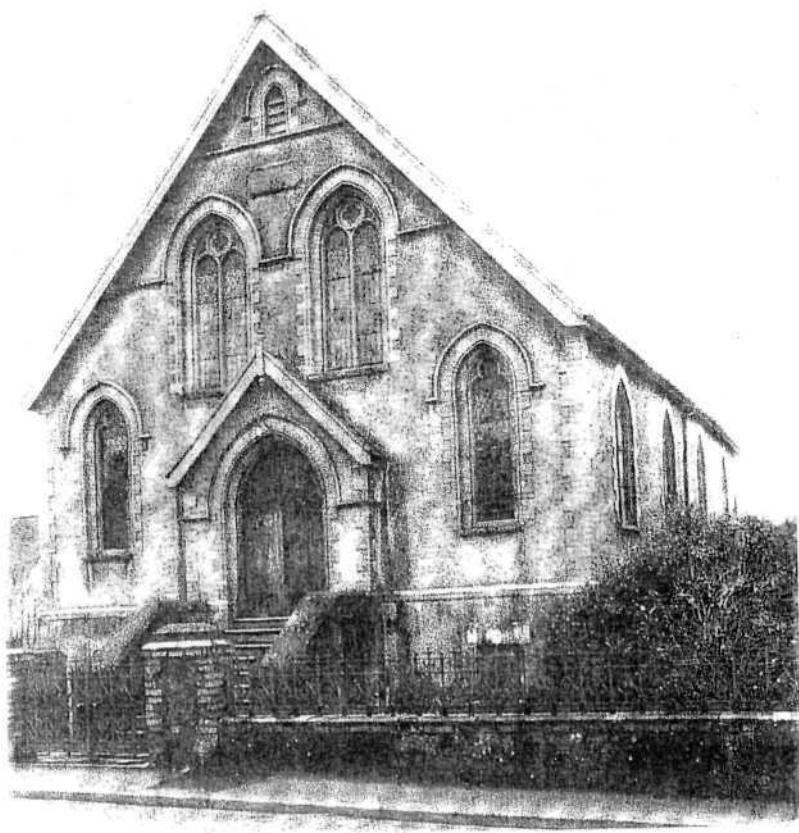
John Wesley passed through Machynlleth in 1747, 1750 and 1755 but there is no record of his having preached in the town. At that time it would probably have been too dangerous: Howel Harris was attacked during his visit in 1740 as was John Thomas of Rhayader in 1753. In 1804 however, following a Wesleyan Conference decision of 1800, Edward Jones, Bathafarn, and W Parry preached in the town. In 1806 the Wesleyans met for worship in an old barn in Doll Street and the following year saw the opening of a chapel in Graigfach. William Owen (1779-1850), who had from 1807 ministered to several North Wales circuits, came to take charge of the Machynlleth chapel from 1821 to 1823, returning in 1844. By then the Graigfach chapel had become too small and during the ministry of the Rev. Lot Hughes it was renovated and a gallery was added, the enlarged chapel being reopened in October 1843. About the same time a chapel was built for the English-speaking Wesleyans, led by a local bank manager W H Larkin. This building still stands, at the eastern end of Maengwyn street, converted into two dwellings.

Wesleyanism continued to prosper, and following a meeting of the trustees in 1878 under the Rev. John Hughes, Glanystwyth, (1842-1902) it was decided to erect a new building on a site adjoining the existing Welsh chapel. This new chapel, Tabernacle, with its fine neo-classical façade, was opened in June 1882.

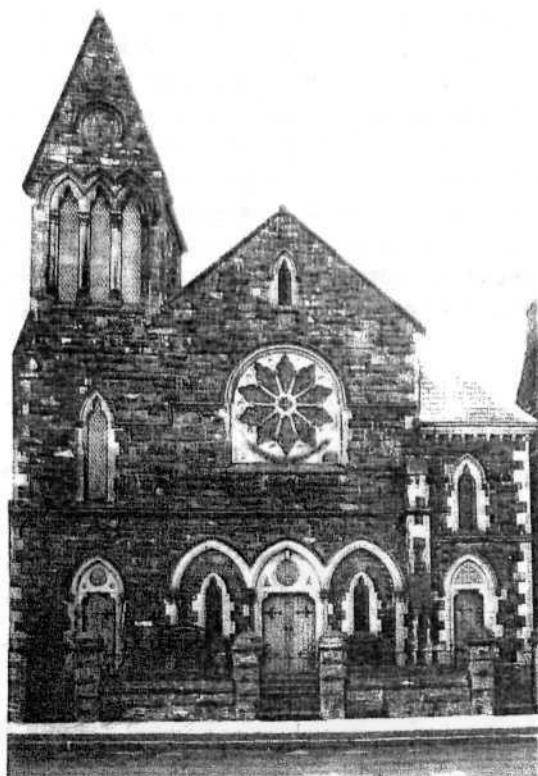


English Wesleyan Chapel

The Baptist cause in the town has its roots in the first decade of the nineteenth century but at that time meetings were held in the houses of members, such as John Blayney and his wife, who converted the upper storey of their house in Pentre Rhedyn Street for use as a chapel, and David Pugh, who placed the loft of the White Horse Inn at the disposal of the church. By 1838, however, a chapel had been built in Dovey View, a back lane near St Peter's Church. The debt of £200 which they incurred remained a burden on the members for many years but nevertheless in 1893 the new pastor, the Rev. D H Hughes, undertook the project of erecting on one of the town's main thoroughfares, Doll Street, a new chapel which was opened at the end of 1896. The building had cost £900, towards which the members had already collected £560, though their numbers were never more than 70.



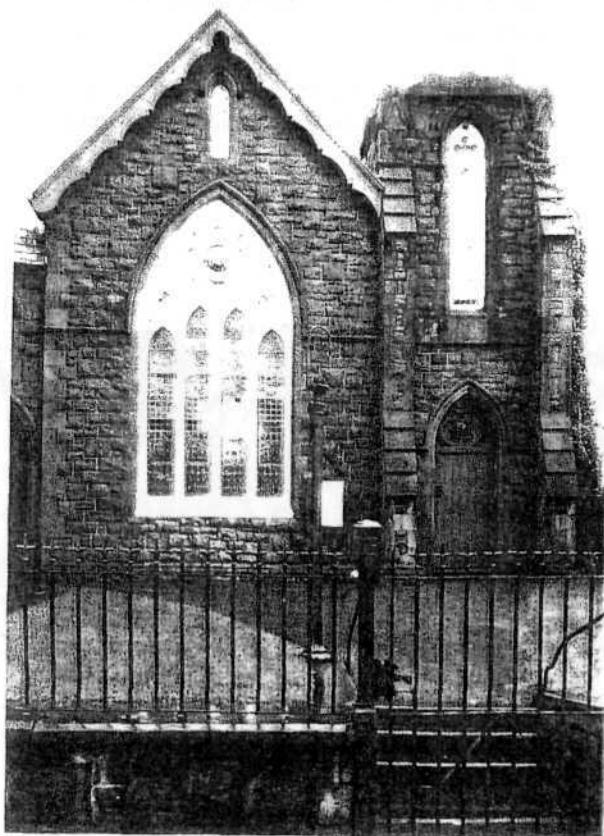
Bethesda Baptist Chapel



Maengwyn Chapel

The first Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Machynlleth was erected in Llynll{o}edd Lane in 1784 and was known as Capel Norton. It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1823 and the building still stands, though the congregation moved to a new building in Maengwyn Street as long ago as 1867. Because of the increase in membership the need for a new building had become evident in the 1850s and in 1856 land was purchased for £500 in Maengwyn Street with the aim of erecting a new chapel. In 1865, under the ministry of the Rev. John Foulkes Jones, a public meeting was held to start collecting the £1600 which it was estimated would be needed to build the new chapel. It was designed in a neo-gothic style by W H Spaull of Oswestry and eventually built -at a cost of £3500 - by Griffith Ellis of Dolgellau. Much of the stone for the building came from the Talerddig railway cutting, which had been opened in 1863 and it was faced with sandstone from Cefn, Ruabon. The completed building had seating for 700 and was opened on November 1st 1867.

With the development of the railway in mid-Wales there was a great influx of English speakers into the area in the 1860s and from 1864 the Presbyterians began holding English language services . After the opening of the Maengwyn Chapel, the services in English were held in Capel Norton, but before long it was decided to build another chapel more centrally situated and a site was found in Penrallt Street.. The architect appointed was David Owen, a founder member of the chapel, the total cost was £1350 and the memorial stone was laid in June 1876, appropriately by David Davies, Llandinam, whose construction of the railway was an important factor in the emergence and development of an English congregation. The two chapels shared a minister for ten years but in 1877 a separate minister was appointed for the English cause, though the links between the two chapels have remained strong.



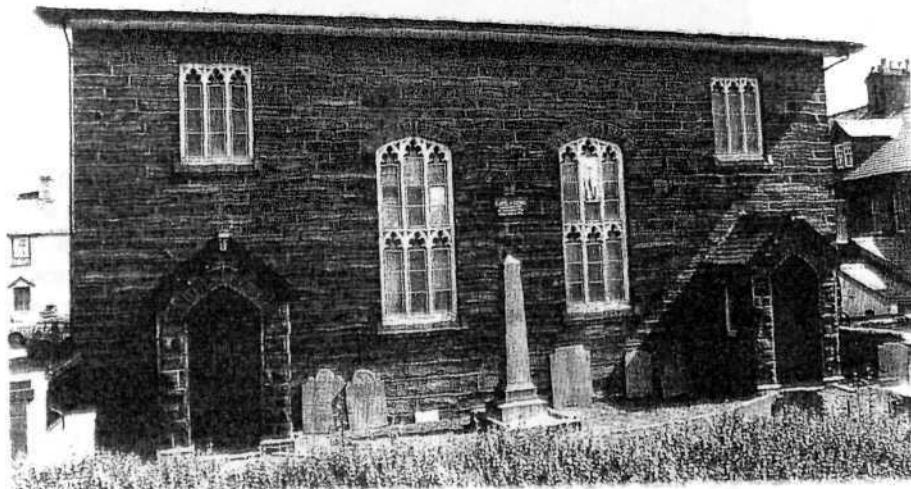
English Presbyterian Chapel

Capel y Graig

The history of the Independent church at Machynlleth goes back at least to 1787, when Richard Tibbott, the minister at Llanbrynmair, came to the town to incorporate 'the few members' who were there into a church. This took place probably in the home of someone from Llanbrynmair, possibly a house named Y Doll. There were fourteen at the meeting, seven from Machynlleth and seven from Llanbrynmair.

By 20 May 1789 the new church had acquired land on which to build a chapel and by 30 May the new chapel had been officially registered. It flourished remarkably and the building was soon too small for the congregation. A new chapel was built in 1824 at a cost of £1,200 and in 1874-5 this was renovated at a further cost of £1,100. At the same period £400 was paid for rights over the land on which the chapel stood, £90 for land on which to build a schoolroom and £90 for land for a substantial house (Maenllwyd) for the minister.

Between 1837 and 1855 a group of members of the Graig church worshipped in Salem, a small chapel built at a cost of £500 which was opened officially in June 1840.



Graig Chapel

Capel y Graig is a good example of the early period of Nonconformist chapel architecture, with two doors on one of the long sides of the rectangular building and the pulpit located between the two entrances. Worth noting is the small graveyard on the site, an early example of the provision of a separate burial place for Nonconformists. The oldest gravestone is dated 1826.

The chapel is still open, with services on alternate Sundays.

* * * * *

[We are grateful to Mr David Wyn Davies for permission to use material and photographs from his book *The Goodly Inheritance Yr Etifeddiaeth Deg* (Machynlleth: Y Tabernacl, 1988) and to the Rev. Richard H Lewis for the notes on Capel y Graig].