



## **Capel**

**CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI**

***THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY* Taflen**

**Wybodaeth Leol Bae Colwyn**

**Local Information Sheet \_\_\_\_\_ 32**

### **Colwyn Bay**

Colwyn Bay is the youngest of the main seaside resorts on the North Wales Coast. The area it covers was part of the Pwllcrochan estate and the early nonconformists started in the townships nearby such as Mochdre, Llanelidan, Llandrillo, Llanddulas, Llysfaen, Colwyn. Many of these were Calvinistic causes which seem to date from about 1770. The earliest name for the estate is "Riw" (Rhiw) and a tombstone in Llandrillo Church commemorates a Robert Conway of Pwllcrochan who died in 1693. The estate passed through many members of the family and in 1799 when the squire Holland Williams died without issue the property devolved on his younger brother the Rev Hugh Williams of Conway who died in 1809. He left the estate to his daughter Jane Silence Williams who in 1821 married Sir David Erskine of Cambo, Fifeshire who died in 1848. It was incumbent on the new baronet, Sir Thomas Erskine, to dwell for part of the year in his northern home and it was eventually decided to sell the Welsh estate

The sale took place on September 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> 1865 and the mansion and adjoining land was bought by Mr (later Sir) John Pender who we will hear of later. New Colwyn developed on the other land sold. None of the religious causes in what is now Colwyn Bay started till about 1870, it was not created a separate parish until 1893. It may be of interest to note that an incident took place at Colwyn

Bay during The Tithe Wars. The Rev Venables Williams at Conway had received a threat to blow up the Vicarage with dynamite if he did not agree to a reduction and the Mission Church at Colwyn Bay was burned down on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1886.

Rhyl seems to have played an important part in the establishment of a number of the chapels in Colwyn Bay with many of those involved coming from the town.

### **St. John's Methodist Church, Colwyn Bay.**

One of the principle landmarks in Colwyn Bay is the handsome spire of St. John's and since the opening of the A55 coastal expressway in the early 1980's it is the focal point to all travelling in a westerly direction.

The English Methodist cause along the North Wales coast was spearheaded in the 1870's by the Rev. Dr. William Morely Punshon, who at the time was regarded as one of the foremost figures in the Methodist Church. He had a great ambition to build chapels in the new seaside resorts which were springing up during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dr. Punshon created a fund and raised £10,000 over a 5 year period and St. John's was one of the proposed chapels that would benefit from the fund.



Following Dr. Punshon's death, the missionary zeal was continued by the Rev, Frederick Payne, appointed in 1879 by the Wesleyan Conference to be minister at Rhyl and "North Wales coast missionary". By the 1880's English Wesleyan Churches had been established in these resorts with the exception of Colwyn Bay. The project had by now the backing of the Conference and the Rev. Payne set about organising the building of a Church, School and Manse. During this period he was also involved in the establishment of Rydal School (a Methodist Foundation) which has continued the strong links with St. John's since its inception. By 1881 plans were approved for a Church to be built in the gothic style to hold 625, the builder was T. Foulkes whose son the late S. Colwyn Foulkes was the celebrated Welsh Architect. Firstly, the Manse and boundary walls were constructed and excavations for the schoolroom prepared when the funds ran out. The half completed project being referred to by locals as "Wesley's folly", they had considered it mad to try and build a Church so large and majestic. The costs had already consumed £5,700 and a further £4,750 was required to complete the scheme. This was not achieved until several years later and the first service was held in the completed Church at Easter 1888. A further extension was constructed in 1908, adding a link corridor, Ladies Parlour (meeting room for Ladies no provision for women !) and a kitchen.

The external envelope of the structure is an amalgam of granite, limestone and sandstone (the latter are not suited in close proximity, due to the acid from the limestone eroding the sandstone) and capped with a Welsh slate roof.

Over the years St John's has been a focal point in the life of the town and also for the Colwyn Bay and Llandudno Methodist Circuit and in many ways regarded as the Cathedral of English Methodism on the North Wales coast.

Reference must be made to the late Rev John II Davies, Superintendent Minister of the Colwyn Bay and Llandudno Circuit and first Chair of the North Wales English Methodist District (now amalgamated with South Wales) and the late Geoffrey Mayall an

Old Rydalian and member of St. John's, who jointly carried out much of the original research into the history of St. John's Methodist Church, Colwyn Bay.

### **Horeb Welsh Methodist Chapel**

The first Wesleyan Chapel to be built in the area was at Bronynant in 1809, nine years after the denomination started its mission in Wales, a chapel was started at Pen-y-bryn in Old Colwyn in 1832. The first chapel in Colwyn Bay was built in Greenfield Road in 1876, enlarged in 1888.



After the opening of Horeb in 1900 the building" was used by the English Wesleyans pending the building of Nant-y-glyn in 1905, the building was then sold. The new site comprised the chapel, schoolroom and two houses. In 1950 the Rev. Gwilym Tilsley took charge.

Nant-y-glyn chapel can be seen on the road towards Old Colwyn and is described by Hubbard as being "the reddest building imaginable - brick, roofing tiles, terra-cotta tracery and all"

## English Presbyterian Church

One of the oldest Calvinistic Methodist causes was in Mochdre, to the west of Colwyn Bay, established about 1772. Colwyn Bay did not exist as a name or a place until about 1866-68, was an area of small houses in the middle of fields. Mochdre established a Sunday School at



Ty'n y Ffordd, in Abergele Road, in 1847 there were 47 scholars on the books. This was the first religious meeting place in the area. Thomas Hughes (1819-1891) who was for some years an Elder of the Calvinistic Methodist Church at Bettws, Abergele moved to Brynhyfryd, Colwyn and bought land where St Paul's Church now stands he built the first stone house to be erected in what is now Colwyn Bay and named it Ivy House, a deeply religious man he held prayer meetings every Monday evening at his house and later at the request of a number of workmen meetings started to be held in the carpenter's workshop in Ivy Street These carried on for some years but there was a call for a chapel.

A fund was commenced and Sir John Pender of Pwllcrochan presented land for the chapel to be built on the condition that English services should be held in the new chapel. This opened in 1873 in Conway Road and the meetings at Ivy Street ceased. This was a joint Welsh and English speaking cause but this caused

inconvenience and eventually the Welsh speaking congregation felt strong enough to have their own chapel and Engedi in Woodland Road was built and opened in 1879 (now closed but the building still stands).

In 1890 another site was bought in Con way Road and the present chapel was built at a cost of £3,700. Once again as with other Calvinistic 'English Causes' in North Wales the Davies Family of Bodlondeb made a generous donation of £1,300. The church opened January 1<sup>st</sup> 1891. The organ was added in 1896.

It is built in red brick, terra-cotta and tile, with an octagonal tower and spirelet, plate tracery and heavily cusped lancets.

### **Antioch — Capel Salem**

The birth of Congregationalism in Colwyn Bay resulted from a joint effort of Welsh and English pioneers. A piece of land was bought in 1874 but it was not until 1878 that an iron structure seating 200 was dedicated. Services were held in both languages but the arrangement was not satisfactory and in 1882 the English formed a separate church but both congregations still used the same building.



Eventually the English church bought the Welsh church out and took possession of the land on which the now closed Union Church stands. It was called the Union Church from 1946 because the English Baptists united with them. The building of 1885, gothic

with two big gables to the street at the side was designed by Owen Edwards of Rhyl., he also designed Saint Thomas Presbyterian Church, Denbigh and Christ Church URC, Rhyl The Welsh church was built nearby and Capel Salem was opened 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 1885. It was altered or rebuilt in 1903 and has a free and debased front, with square corner pilasters ,ogee capped.

About 2001 a group of 12 Baptists started using the building jointly with the Welsh congregation. The building was however in a sorry state and eventually the building was bought in 2004 by the now Independent Church Fellowship as the new congregation is now known who have put great effort into bringing the church back to it's former glory. It has been re-roofed and re-rendered, internally the ground floor pews have been removed but the Set Fawr was retained as a portable feature and can be put back in place. The organ workings have been removed to facilitate new rooms behind but the facade pipes are still in place. There is no baptistery and a portable font is used.



## Tabernacl Welsh Baptist

The Baptist cause in Colwyn Bay had its origin in Old Colwyn where the Welsh Baptists had a chapel, a small building, accommodating about 50 people then situated in Church Walks. In 1884 they were approached by a few English speaking people with a request that they be allowed to hold English services which was agreed so Welsh services were held at 9.45am and 6.0pm and English services at 11.0am and 7.30pm.



The move to Colwyn Bay was made in 1888 when Tabernacl Chapel was built. The architect was S. Colwyn Foulkes, whose father had built St John's, both congregations continuing to share the chapel. In April 1891 the English worshippers began to raise funds for their own premises, and in 1893 they purchased a site on Abergele Road, near Erw Wen Road and a temporary corrugated iron church was erected there. In 1913 the site was sold and a new chapel was opened in Princes Drive. This is the congregation which joined with the Congregational Church in 1946 to form the Union Church. The first minister at Tabernacl was the Rev William Hughes who had been a missionary in the Congo. He returned to Wales with two Congolese boys and after a short time in Wrexham moved to Colwyn Bay.

During his ministry at Tabernacl he founded The Congo Training Institute which lasted until 1912, it is estimated that 87 young people from Africa children-received their education there, some of them later becoming political leaders in their own countries In 1928 a pulpit was built and a schoolroom was added in 1932 One of the glories of Tabernacl is it's organ. In the 193(Ts Mr J Eryl Owen-Jones was a Solicitors Clerk at a local company. One of his duties was to close and complete the estate of Mr Edward Blackburn, Bryn Eisteddfod, Glan Conway, a retired cotton manufacturer from Manchester In 1924 Rushworth and Dreaper built an organ for the music room at Bryn Eisteddfod. Mr Owen -Jones took his father and Mr Tl.R.Davies to see and hear the organ. All three were so impressed by the look and sound of the organ that they made sure that the organ would find a home at Tabernacl, the first recital being given by Dr Leslie Paul, Organist of Bangor Cathedral on June 9<sup>th</sup> 1937.

### **Acknowledgements**

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