Local Information Sheet 33: Pembroke Dock
Taflen Wybodaeth Leol 33: Doc Penfro

The founding of Pembroke Dock as a royal dockyard in 1810 established a new town on the river Cleddau. Building began in 1814 and the town slowly developed on its characteristic grid-plan, largely complete by the 1880s and by 1890, the dockyard employed 2000. Nonconformity came early. Bethany Baptist chapel was first built in 1818 with a small Wesleyan chapel following two years later. The Congregationalists raised a chapel in 1824, the Calvinistic Methodists in 1838. Not surprisingly in a rapidly growing town, these early meeting houses were replaced by impressively large prominently sited chapels in the later nineteenth century, still in use today. The major casualty was the Gothic Albion Square Congregational Chapel. R. C. Sutton of Nottingham won an architectural competition in 1865 and with a seating capacity of 1600, it was the largest chapel in south-west Wales, costing £6390. After a long period of misuse, it was demolished in 1989.

St Andrew's Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Bush Street

In 1838, members of Westgate, Pembroke, opened a small chapel named Gershom, located in Queen Street. As was often the case in the early nineteenth century, the chapel was designed by a minister, Rev. D. Meyler of Fishguard, seating 500. The chapel was rebuilt 1865-6 by K.W. Ladd, a prominent town architect. The style is Venetian Gothic with matching pyramid-roofed towers flanking a stepped triplet, nicely picked out with polychromic heads and pointed hoodmoulds. The interior is more conventional, the three-sided gallery with panels of cast-iron openwork. The broad arch-braced roof subsided c. 1880 and was rescued by K. McAlpin, surveyor. The fine stained glass window depicting the Prodigal Son was inserted in 1882 by a London firm, donated by Captain Cox. J.P. The new chapel cost £3000, the contractor being Joseph Tregenna.

Trinity United Reformed Chapel, Meyrick Street

The Congregationalists' first chapel, called Tabernacle, stood in Upper Brewery Street, built 1824 and supplanted by Albion Square in 1865. A number of members split from Tabernacle in 1843, obtaining a plot of land for a new chapel in Meyrick Street. The foundation stone of Trinity was laid in February 1851 and the chapel opened in December 1852. The designer was John Road, a Dockyard draftsman. The porch was added in 1889. The façade with its pedimental gable is fairly plain, the glazing altered. The interior is more characterful with plaster ceiling roses, Gothic-panelled gallery and elliptically arched recess behind the pulpit.

Bethany Baptist Chapel, High Street

Bethany is the earliest cause in the town, built 1818 on High Street, the latter so named because of its elevated position , with fine views over the grid-pattern of the town.The joinery was carried out by members employed in the dockyard. The small chapel lay within its own cemetery, bounded by a high stone wall. In the 1830s, the chapel was rebuilt, with further work undertaken shortly before 1859. In 1877 the chapel was rebuilt to the designs of George Morgan in his characteristic Romanesque style, economically detailed in cement and Bathstone. In 1904, the fine range of schoolrooms was added to the rear by Morgan & Son, which are well-preserved, the interior with glazed partitioning. The same architects refitted the interior 1905-06 with arcaded galleries incorporating curvaceous iron balustrades.

A split occured in the early 1840s and a large number of members set up a temporary chapel in a malt-house on the north side of town and afterwards in a billiard room in Meyrick Street before building Bethel in 1845.

Bethel Baptist Chapel, Bush Street

Bethel was first built in 1845 as an offshoot of Bethany. This seated 450, the pews laid out in a semi-circle. In 1873-5, a new chapel was designed by Hans Price of Weston-super-mare. The pedimented exterior is a bold mixture of neo-Grecian and Romanesque detail. The interior is more High Victorian in character, aisled in effect by carrying an angular wooden arcade on the upper of two orders on thin iron columns, the lower carrying the galleries with prettily stencilled panels. The cost, including schoolrooms, vestry and adjacent house was £3000. Services are now held in the schoolroom, due to concerns about the structural integrity of the chapel roof, currently being investigated.

Zion Free Church, Meyrick Street

This was built as Tabernacle Wesleyan chapel 1846-8, probably by John Road, the designer of Trinity. With the loss of Albion Square chapel, Zion is the largest chapel west of Swansea, seating approximately 1300. The Wesleyans had first set up a meeting house at Pembroke Ferry, building a small chapel in town called Ebenezer, in 1820 before moving to the present site. The pedimented stuccoed façade was altered in 1857 and has lost some detail since. The ground floor was originally rusticated, with Ionic pilasters above. The chapel was extended to the rear by 35 feet, complete with (matching) organ gallery, by K.W. Ladd in 1865-67. In 1882-85, a new entrance lobby was created and new pews installed. Fine large interior with plaster ceiling and galleries all around with long panels, supported on painted columns. The superb pulpit stands high on wooden columns; curving stairs each side and veneered panelling. Rescued from dereliction 1986-90 thanks to the dedication of Rev. Hugh Michael and a faithful congregation, against all the odds.