

Capel



CYMBEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPEL
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY

Local Information Leaflet 77: Bridgend Taflen Wybodaeth Leol 77: Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr

Welcome to Bridgend / Croeso i Pen-y-Bont ar Ogwr

Saturday / Sadwrn 9 May / Mai 2015

In the past thirty years, Bridgend has passed through a period of transition. Formerly a small market town of about 5000 people on the banks of the river Ogwr, it is now a large and thriving industrial centre with a population of about 40,000. Its most significant manufacturing base is the Ford Motor Plant but there are many smaller enterprises on the several industrial estates on the town's periphery. Several ecclesiastical parishes skirt the town including Coety, Ewenny, Laleston and Coy Church (Llangrallo), the church in the latter being referred to as the "Cathedral of the Vale". Two Anglican churches at Nolton and Newcastle serve the town, and an impressive Roman Catholic Church is situated on Ewenny Road. There are a host of chapels representing many denominations including the Baptists, Congregationalists, Wesleyan Methodists, Quakers, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Christadelphians, Presbyterians and Church of Latter Day Saints. Tabernacl Congregational Church, Derwen Road, is the only Welsh language chapel remaining in Bridgend, the churches of Hermon (Presbyterian) and Ruhamah (Baptist) having closed in recent years. Other religious buildings in the locality worthy of mention are the Priory at Ewenny, a castellated Norman Benedictine edifice immortalised in a Turner watercolour, and Margam Abbey.

The era of nonconformity dawned when the Rev Samuel Jones (1629-1697), vicar of Llangynwyd, left his benefice as a result of his non-adherence to the Act of Uniformity to found an academy at Brynlllywarch. It was as a result of his untiring efforts that the first chapel was established in the town. A few miles to the south of

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Bridgend, is the village of Llangan where David Jones(1793-1825) was vicar. A noted preacher he worked tirelessly with the Methodists, especially in Glamorgan, and was responsible for the building of Salem Calvinistic Methodist Chapel at Pencoed. The early chapels at Aberthin, Cowbridge and Bethesda'r Fro near St Athan, (with which hymn writers John Williams of St Athan and Thomas William were associated) are worthy of visit.

10.00 a.m. BRIDGEND UNITED CHURCH

John Wesley first visited Bridgend on 19 August 1746. On that occasion he preached in the open air, however, on his four subsequent visits in 1772, 1777, 1779 and 1781, he was allowed to preach inside local Anglican churches. In 1782, naerly a year after that final visit, the first English Wesleyan Methodist Church was set up in the town. A house and garden in the Newcastle area of Bridgend was given to be used by "The Rev John Wesley and such other persons he should appoint". Shortly after the house was given the first English Wesleyan Church was constructed in the garden. Unfortunately, within fifty years, the English Wesleyan Society in Bridgend had "fallen into the hands of the Welsh" - they rarely allowed an English service to be conducted there.

The resurrection of the Wesleyan Methodists within Bridgend was due, in no small part, to the Price family. Originally from Llantwit Major, Philip and Robert Price moved to Bridgend and by 1834 were partners in Daniel Popkin's tannery (situated where the Rhiw multi-storey car park now sits). The two men understood that there was a need for English Sunday services within the area and also for an English Sunday school. Initially they hired a room near the town hall, but this was soon sold and they began to worship in the dwelling connected to the tannery. By 1841 the group had outgrown the dwelling and a site was acquired on North Street, now known as Tondu Road. John Price joined his older brothers and began to help with their work. The foundation stone for the second Wesleyan chapel in Bridgend was laid on 20 July, 1842, and in the same year a Sunday school was established with thirty scholars. This chapel was completed and dedicated in June 1843. In 1844, Methodism's ruling body, Conference, allocated a minister, Rev John Fletcher, to work in Bridgend.

Things came full circle in 1862, when the now dissolved Welsh Wesleyan group sold the caretakers house and the "ruinous chapel" back to the English Wesleyans. The foundation stone for the third Bridgend Wesleyan Church was
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laid on 14 July, 1880 and in May 1882 the new church was formally opened. Sometime around the First World War, the original choir gallery and organ were removed, and whilst the organ was replaced by one from Exeter, the choir gallery was not. During the Second World War the schoolroom, by now a private house, was used to billet soldiers.

In more recent times the building has undergone considerable remodelling; turned through 90 degrees the choir now sits where the original table would have stood and a glass partition has created a smaller Lady Chapel in the space that would have been at the back of the original sanctuary. What was the gallery is an upstairs hall with a stage, where the original, carved wooden ceiling bosses can still be seen

During the Millennium, the congregation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church joined with that of the United Reformed Church in Bridgend to form a Local Ecumenical Partnership. Since that time, the church has been known as Bridgend United Church and members of both traditions continue to worship there

11.45 FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE- TY CWRDD Y CRYNWYR

The Friends' Meeting House is a detached building dating from the 1920s which became a Meeting House in 1969. In keeping with Quaker witness to simplicity, Meeting Houses are functional and unadorned, and this keeps its original bungalow appearance.

Many of 37 Friends congregations in Wales have no Meeting House as Quakers set relatively little store by buildings. In Bridgend the 1960s however, numbers were rising among the Friends who met at the Deaf and Dumb Institute premises, and at regional Quaker level they gained permission to look for a suitable 'home' Eventually selecting the Park Street house, with its garden and conservatory, work was carried out to remove dividing wall, create panelling to match that which existed, and create doors to the new meeting room - their glass panels allowing latecomers to see a silent gathering for worship inside.

Over time the conservatory was replaced; the building was made disability-friendly and better matched with Quaker concern for the environment. We parted company with loved natural features; the lordly cedar in the front courtyard and a vine, in season heavy with grapes across the conservatory, rendering us of the
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peace and plowshares promise of Micah 4; 3-4. Our building has served the community: from pre-school playgroups via Alcoholics Anonymous and Local Authority staff needing offices. Presently it provides a weekday home for Bridgend Carers' Centre, and in summer there are garden parties for good causes.

Friends from this region were part of the 17th century emigrations to Pennsylvania in search of religious freedom and a just society. The table in our meeting room is an example of Brynmawr furniture-making from the 1930s, when Quakers were active in relieving poverty and providing work. We worship in the same spirit which was in them.

12.45 LUNCH AT ZIA NINA ITALIAN RESTAURANT

2.00 P.M. EMMANUEL CHRISTCHURCH PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

The first formal meeting of the Mission led by the Reverend D.S.Jones was held on October 21st 1906 at the Drill Hall, Quarella Road, Bridgend. The Rev David Samuel Jones had been the Minister at Ruhamah Welsh Baptist Church for some years, but in November of that year he is referred to as "formerly of Ruhamah". It appears he became the Minister of Christchurch at the latter end of 1906 following certain theological disagreements. Subsequent meetings of the Mission were held in the Lesser Town Hall, and at a meeting of the men of the church on 26th August 1908 it was decided to build a new church called 'Christ Mission Church', at an estimated cost of £3450. On December 13th 1908 an open air service was held in Morfa Street together with a consecration service on the proposed site for the church.¹

Mr Philip Gaylard was contracted to erect the chapel designed by Mr H.H.Jenkins of Blackmill.² The foundation stones were laid on 30th December 1908 and a Bible encased in a tin was placed under the cornerstone. The chapel was built in the Vernacular style with a gable entry plan and leaded flat headed windows.

³Seating in the chapel for 250 to 300 people was estimated to cost £600. The building was to be constructed of Forest of Dean, Quarella and Bath stone, the frontage aligned with existing properties and there would be a neat boundary wall

¹ Christ Church records

² Glamorgan gazette 1 January 2009

³ www.welshchapels.org

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of stone with pilasters and iron railings. A three foot passageway on either side would lead to the vestry at the rear. In front of the panelled rostrum of red pine there would be a movable wooden partition to connect the vestry to the main hall. There would be a red pine dado around the interior. Lighting and heating would be by gas. At this stage the church was not connected to any denomination.⁴

The building was formally opened on Saturday 29th June 1909.⁵

At a church meeting held on April 30th 1911 it was decided to make application to the Baptist Union for acceptance into the Union. At the District Meeting of the Baptist Union held at Cefu Cribbwr on May 10th this application was unanimously accepted.⁶ The Rev D.S.Jones continued in the Pastorate until 1948 and passed away on 13th January, 1949.

By 1980 the membership of Christchurch had reduced to such an extent that it was proposed to close the chapel. The Minister of "Emmanuel", an Assemblies of God congregation meeting in a small mission hall on Llynfi Lane, applied to the remaining deacon, Mr Richards, to purchase the building. By his good offices, and that of the Baptist Union, the building passed into the ownership of Emmanuel Church in 1981 and the fellowship became known as "Emmanuel Christchurch. Extensive renovations and repairs were made to the building in 1983/4 when it was found that the beams supporting the wooden floor had decayed. A concrete floor was laid, central heating installed and decorative cladding added to the rear of the new rostrum.

In 1995-6 further works were undertaken to remove a prefabricated annex thought to date from the Second World War which was replaced by new facilities. At this time the baptistery was filled in and the three windows to the southern elevation bricked up. At this time too, the rostrum and the wall decoration incorporating a plaque in commemoration of the 1904/5 Revival was sadly removed. In the last three years extensive work has again been undertaken to restore stonework to the front elevation, reinstate the baptistery, upgrade the lighting and sound/vision systems and redecorate the church throughout.

⁴ Glamorgan gazette 18 December 2008

⁵ Glamorgan gazette 1 June 2009

⁶ Christ Church records

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Services are now held twice on Sundays, the morning service is attended by up to fifteen people while the evening service attracts up to 28 people. A prayer meeting is held on Thursday and Saturday evenings. A "tea and toast" coffee morning open to all on Tuesday mornings and a Mother and Toddlers group on Wednesday mornings. On Sunday afternoons the chapel is loaned to the International Church to enable them to use the facilities to hold their meeting.

2.45 HOPE ENGLISH BAPTIST CHURCH

As early as 1896 the original Hope chapel in Queen Street was struggling to house its growing congregation. In 1901 it was decided to build on its present site, leased from the Earl of Dunraven from May 1906. The decision was providential, because fuelled by the Revival of 1904/6 twenty eight people were baptized in May 1904 alone and consequently the evening services were transferred to the Town Hall.

Plans were drawn up for a new church; the design was to be Gothic with traceried windows in the front, meeting the requisite vision of it being 'of an imposing appearance'. The greatest innovation was the cantilevered balcony in the sanctuary, meaning that no supporting pillars would be necessary. The body of the church accommodates 350 people, the choir 52 and the gallery 290; a total of 692. The total cost of building the sanctuary, schoolroom, rooms below the sanctuary and the caretakers cottage was £8,800. Today the upkeep of such a beautiful building is a source of prayer and good stewardship

The Memorial Stone seen on entering the front porch is of particular interest. In it there is a cavity and a receptacle which contains a small tube in which are sealed a Souvenir of the Association Meetings and an account of the laying of the first stone by Mrs W.Lewis.

Today the buildings are as beautiful as ever. We cherish its sanctity and its structure. The open baptistry, constructed from white marble slabs and a raised front of alabaster and with the inscription. "Buried with Him in baptism" stands central between the pulpit and Our Lord's Table. Preaching the word, our confession of faith, and the coming together at communion are all pivotal to our faith

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Hope is challenged, as are so many churches today by a fairly indifferent society and culture; young people move away to further their careers and the economy challenges us all. However, we maintain true to our inheritance, we endeavour to keep the building in good repair, but most of all its doors open to the people of God to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

3.45 EGLWYS TABERNACL YR ANNIBYNWYR CYMRAEG

The history of the Independent Cause in Bridgend can be traced back to the opposition to the Act of Uniformity of 1662 and the licence given to the Revd Samuel Jones to preach at Cildeudy, Coytrahen in 1672, the Old Meeting Place established at the bottom of Newcastle Hill.

The first Tabernacl, in Elder Street, opened on May 15th 1810 and was the meeting house for the Independents until 1850. Although improved in 1828, its condition was deteriorating when the decision to build a new chapel was made. Work started in 1850 and the chapel in Adare Street, again named Tabernacl, opened for worship in October 1851

The Revd J. Bowen Jones, minister from 1859 until 1874, established a successful Grammar School in the Old Tabernacl. Over a period of ten years about three hundred young men, a number of them intending to enter the ministry, were educated there. During the First World War the original chapel was altered to create a spacious hall with a schoolroom and ten classrooms upstairs. Tabernacl Hall opened in March 1917.

Tabernacl, the chapel in Adare Street, flourished and was well attended. A few years after it opened a number of members left the chapel to establish an English Independent Chapel as the use of the English language grew in the town.

4.30 TE YN Y TABERNACL

Gobeithiwn ichi fwynhau eich hymweliad a Phen-y-bont ac y byddwch yn dychwelyd i'r ardal yn fuan eto.

We hope you will have enjoyed your visit to Bridgend and that you will return again in the near future

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