

Local Information Leaflet 78: Llanuwchllyn Taflen Wybodaeth Leol 78: Llanuwchllyn

Saturday/Sadwrn 10 Hydref/Hydfref 2015

AINON NPRN 8532

Early Baptist activities in the parish of Llanuwchllyn seem to have taken place in the late 18th century, with the first service believed to have been held on 19th August 1776. Aion chapel was built for the Primitive Baptist cause on leasehold tenure in 1840 on the land of Sir Watkin Wynn. The first minister, Rev. Edward Humphries, a local man, was invited to become the minister in 1847 and he was named in the 1851 Religious Census as the minister of the 'Primitive Baptist' chapel. This Census recorded that the chapel, measuring nine by six yards, contained 68 free seats and 64 others, and that whilst, on 30 March in that year, 12 persons attended the Sunday School in the morning, 34 the afternoon Sunday School, and 20 persons the evening service, the average congregation numbered 45.

A decision was made in 1858 to renovate the chapel, and following the completion of this work, the Rev. J. Jones was installed as minister; by this time the Rev. Edward Humphries, had emigrated to the United States. The ministry of 'Jones Llanuwchllyn', as he was known, proved to be extremely fruitful, and ten preachers addressed the very successful Gymanfa

[Assembly] of Merioneth, Denbighshire and Flintshire held in the chapel in 1859. However, the membership remained at a comparatively low level throughout its existence and there was therefore little need to alter or extend the original chapel; the main improvements made during its history were re-roofing and the installation of gas lighting c. 1939-40.

In 2001 the chapel was listed as Grade II* as a 'particularly well-preserved, dated mid-c.19th century, Baptist chapel retaining its largely unaltered exterior and interior character'. Aion joined the local area pastorate in 1993 [see Yr Hen Gapel] but is in the process of being transferred to the care of Addoldai Cymru: The Welsh Religious Buildings Trust.

YR HEN GAPEL NPRN 8528

The history of this church, which to a considerable extent may be regarded as the mother church of Independent causes in Merioneth, may be traced to the visit to this area in 1739 by Lewis Rees, a native of Glamorgan and the minister of Llanbryn-mair, Montgomeryshire. The first chapel was built in 1746, half a mile from the village of Llanuwchllyn, and those who contributed to the costs included Mr. Twomley, a miller in Kidderminster, Worcestershire who used to come to the Llanuwchllyn fair to buy cattle. The chapel was known as Yr Hen Gapel [the Old Chapel], but the names Ebeneser and Rhosyfedwen were also used occasionally. The chapel house besides the chapel dates from this early period.

The chapel was rebuilt in 1810 following a revival in the previous year and the Rev. Dr. George Lewis, the minister from 1794 until 1811, is reputed to have accepted 200 members. On 30 March 1851 90 were present in the morning Sunday school,



Ainon Baptist Chapel



Yr Hen Gapel



St Beuno's Church

300 in the afternoon and 150 in the evening services and there were reported to be 350 free seatings in the chapel which was also used as a day school. By 1868 the chapel was in a poor condition and Morris Roberts, Remsen, expressed his disappointment when he saw the chapel of which he had heard glowing reports in the United States from those who had emigrated there from Llanuwchllyn. The chapel was taken down in 1871 and rebuilt to the same plan. The chapel and chapel house have been listed as Grade II by Cadw.

Dr George Lewis had been succeeded as the minister in 1814 by the Rev Michael Jones. In 1842 he became the principal of the seminary established at Bala for the training of candidates for the ministry, and which later developed into the Independent college. Following his death, in 1853, he was succeeded as minister and principal by his son the Rev. Michael D Jones. He was a leading figure in the movement to establish a Welsh colony in Patagonia, and inhabitants of the colony presented the tablet commemorating him which is located near to the pulpit in the chapel. Both father and son were buried in the graveyard besides the chapel.

In 1984 a gofalaeth fro [area pastorate] was formed which included Yr Hen Gapel and its three branches, and also three local Presbyterian chapels, and in 1993 Aion joined this pastorate. The condition of Yr Hen Gapel deteriorated again in recent years, but it has recently been renovated and was formally re-opened on Palm Sunday, 2015.

ST BEUNO (BYD MARY JONES WORLD) NPRN 43858

The new visitor and education centre, which opened in 2014, is housed in the redundant and renovated church of St Beuno at

Llanycil, Bala, a Grade II-listed building bought by the Bible Society in 2007 with an adjoining field acquired in 2009. The centre presents, through multi-media and interactive displays, exhibits and activities, the story of Mary Jones, and the influence of her journey to Bala on Thomas Charles, leading to the formation in 1804 of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Mary Jones, whose father, a weaver, and mother were Calvinistic Methodists, was born on 16 December, 1784 and brought up in Llanfihangel-y-pennant, Merioneth, near the foot of Cader Idris. Having learned to read in local circulating schools, and aware that the nearest copy of the Bible was located two miles away from her home, she became determined to possess her own Bible. Aware that the nearest copy for sale would be available from the Rev. Thomas Charles, 26 miles away at Bala, and having, over a period of six years, saved enough money to pay for the Scriptures, she walked barefoot at the age of 15 to Bala in 1800. Two versions then presented different accounts; one recounted that when Mary Jones heard that all the copies held by the Rev. Thomas Charles had been sold or promised to a prospective buyer, she was so upset that he eventually found her a copy. The other version referred to Mary Jones having to wait two days for a further supply of Bibles to arrive at Bala, but that she was then able to buy a copy for herself and also two other copies for members of her family. The impression created by Mary Jones's efforts to secure a Bible led to the foundation in 1804 of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which has inspired people throughout the world as a result of its actions over the years in publicising the Mary Jones story.