

# Capel

CYMRWYLLAS TRIFEDLWYLLY CAPELL  
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER / CYLCHLYTHYR

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MAWRTH/MARCH 1988

## EDITORIAL :

The 5th meeting of the South Glamorgan Group was held at the Historical and Cultural Centre, Pontypridd on the evening of Monday, 22 February. In place of the usual business meeting, members were treated to a formal lecture entitled 'William Morgan: translator of the Scriptures into Welsh' by Dr. Gwynfor Jones of the Department of History & Welsh History, University College Cardiff. This meeting, although organised by the South Glamorgan Group, was in effect a joint project with members from Mid Glamorgan and it is hoped that this will have served as a catalyst to encourage the establishment of either a Mid Glamorgan Group or possibly a joint Mid/South Glamorgan Group. The lecture was well received and Dr. Jones is to be congratulated on his scholarly presentation of William Morgan, within the context of the traumatic and exciting times in which he lived.

## Gwent Group :

A Gwent Group is to be established this Spring. Arrangements are in the hands of Martin Culliford, who is hoping to organise the inaugural meeting at Newport Museum, the provisional date being Friday, 8 April 1988. Details can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary or from Mr. Culliford tel. no. Newport 211297.

SPRING MEETING : This year's Spring Meeting will be based at Newport, Gwent; the venue being the Newport Conference Centre and the date, Saturday 7 MAY. The meeting will include a lecture and visits to chapels of interest in the town. Full details will be sent to members in due course.

**MEMBERSHIP** : If you have recently joined or renewed your membership for 1988 a membership card will be enclosed. If not, please complete and return the enclosed membership application form as soon as possible.

THE CALL OF ZION : THE STORY OF THE FIRST WELSH MORMON EMIGRATION

by Ronald D. Dennis, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1987; 243pp.

This work forms volume two of the Specialized Monograph Series currently being produced by the Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University. It is a statement not just of the courage and determination of those early Welsh Mormon emigrants whose story it relates, but also of the erudition of its author and of his devotion to his subject.

Dr. Ronald D. Dennis was born in California and received his doctorate in Brazilian history and Portuguese from the University of Wisconsin in 1972. He is currently an associate professor of Portuguese at the Mormon Church's Brigham Young University at Provo in the Latter-day Saint heartland of Utah. Lest anyone puzzle how a title such as this came to be written by an academic with a background apparently so unrelated to his subject, it must be added that Dr. Dennis is also a great-great-grandson of Captain Dan Jones, father-figure of the early Mormon mission to Wales during the mid-19th century. Dr. Dennis set out more than ten years ago to master the Welsh language and has visited Wales regularly since the sabbatical he spent at Aberystwyth in 1976. The result of this application is his effective fluency in the modern language and his close comprehension of the more ponderous, even contorted, language in which religious journals of the last century are often set.

Prime among such journals from the Mormon standpoint are the little-known and by now very scarce periodicals, Prophwyd y Jubili (published at Merthyr Tydfil between 1846 and 1848, though printed at Rhyd-y-bont and Carmarthen), and its successor Udgorrn Seion. The latter was the main Welsh Mormon publication. It appeared first at Carmarthen in early 1849 and thereafter at Merthyr from 1849 until 1854, at Swansea between 1854 and 1861, and at Liverpool until its demise in April 1862. Between them, the Prophwyd and the Udgorrn accounted for 17 volumes, 499 whole numbers and 8,372 pages in Welsh Mormon faith and doctrine; of early Church history pertinent to both Wales and America; and of vigorous propaganda for the faith in the adversarial circumstances of a Wales in which public life was increasingly dominated by the mores of an historic nonconformity bitterly opposed to Mormonism.

Dr. Ronald Dennis has made himself the unprecedented master of this material, as of the one hundred plus other titles produced by the initial Welsh mission between 1844 and 1857 which he has identified and described during his research into the early history of the Latter-day Saints in Wales.

This mastery is evident in the present volume wherein Dr. Dennis tells the story of the first organized party of Mormon converts from Wales to emigrate in pursuit of the Saints' vision of a restored Zion in the American West. The first third of the book contains Dr. Dennis' narrative of their journey in 1849 from Swansea to Liverpool; of the

ocean crossing; of arrival at New Orleans; of the emigrants' journey from New Orleans up the Mississippi-Missouri Rivers to Council Bluffs, Iowa; and from there of a thousand mile trek across the open plains to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

This epic journey began in February 1849 when south Wales emigrants assembled at Swansea before sailing to join others from the north at Liverpool. It ended in September 1852 when the last of the Welsh party reached the Great Salt Valley. In between these dates there unfolds a perfectly factual story of how Dan Jones led the emigration of the 326 Welsh Saints aboard the vessels Buena Vista and Hartley in response to Brigham Young's exhortation that the Saints should 'gather unto Zion'. The Buena Vista carried 249 Welsh converts, and the Hartley 77. It is a story propelled by the idealism and vulnerability of its characters; a story of immense faith and of some apostasy; and of every emotion that may be found between joy at the birth of Robert Dan Parry to widow Ann Parry on the prairie and grief at the death of her husband, amongst others, from cholera on the Missouri River some months before. Despite Dan Jones' unswerving loyalty to the Mormon faith and his unique contribution to its success in 19th century Wales, we learn also that he was not averse to questioning Brigham Young's attitude towards the Welsh settlers when he perceived discrimination; and that he even suggested at one point the establishment of a separate and independent Welsh Mormon nation in the American West with Elizabeth Lewis of Kidwelly (a major financier of the journey) as its queen.

In recounting the story of this emigration, Dr. Dennis draws upon detail to be found in letters sent by the emigrants to their co-religionists at home in Wales and particularly to John S. Davis, the talented and pugnacious editor of Udgoron Seion. From more than two dozen such accounts which appeared in the Udgoron, in Prophwyd y Jubili and a few other titles published between 1848 and 1853, Dr. Dennis has produced a lucid text that never lurches towards unsettling partisanship despite his obvious sympathy and admiration for those of whom he writes. Although a committed work, this is a book in which scholarship is pre-eminent, and one with which the non-Mormon reader as much as the Mormon may feel at ease.

The remaining two-thirds of the book contain appendices of great value to both American and Welsh readers, and particularly to those who have little knowledge of Welsh. These appendices contain an alphabetical checklist of all passengers aboard the Buena Vista and Hartley; a ship-by-ship company list with biographical allusions to all 326 emigrants; further detailed biographical sketches of 73 emigrants or supporting figures; and most evocatively, photographs of 47 and a painting of one of the party. This photographic section brings alive the earlier narrative in a compelling way by revealing the faces of those who sailed an ocean, risked cholera, trudged in sand and sheltered from blizzards 7,000 feet up in the Rocky Mountains while on their way to 'Zion'. These faces, some serene, others still radiating determination, reinforce the text with a powerful sense of character. They are a vivid testimony to the cultivation of family history (for theological reasons) within the Mormon community.

Here may be found resolute Isaac Nash from Kidwelly, who spent three months in prison in 1885 for polygamy and who died in 1907; also the ghostly image of William Lewis from Fishguard and Pontypridd, bardd of the emigration who wrote englynion halfway across the prairie in 1849 comparing Dan Jones to Moses leading his people through the wilderness towards a Promised Land. Here too is patriarchal John D. Rees of Merthyr Tydfil, who had 27 children by four (plural) wives; and Mary Rees, his first wife, who gave birth to a stillborn child at St. Louis half-way through their journey along the Mississippi-Missouri River system. It is astounding to realize that Rees' third wife, Zillah Mathias, a child of ten aboard the Buena Vista in 1849, died as late as 1923. Surprisingly, perhaps, her photograph does not appear here.

A real tour-de-force by Dr. Dennis in this volume is his final appendix forming almost a half of the whole work. This contains his accomplished translations from Welsh into English of thirty texts by which the emigrants told their own stories, largely in the column of Udgoron Seion. Here, Dan Jones, Thomas Jeremy, William Morgan and Elizabeth Lewis, leading figures of the 1849 venture, speak once more for themselves albeit in a language they knew less well than their own; a language of which many others in their company probably had but a vague knowledge. These 115 pages of translated text provide the reader, especially one of Mormon persuasion, with almost direct access to some of the fascinating material which lay largely unexplored until Dr. Dennis began his labours in this field.

There have been previous pioneering contributions towards the study of early Mormonism and Wales. Chief among these is T. H. Lewis' admirable outline history Y Mormoniaid yng Nghymru (Cardiff, 1956), and the brief Mormon section in Alan Conway's The Welsh in America: Letters from the Immigrants (Cardiff and Minneapolis, 1961). Yet, in relation to the large corpus of literature to which the early Welsh mission gave rise, and considering the full extent and complexity of the story to be told, these amount to little more than an intriguing hors d'oeuvre.

It is the good fortune of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that they have in Dr. Dennis a scholar not just keen on his subject but one singularly well qualified by background and skill to search out, discover and make known the rich and rewarding history of its first adherents in this corner of Europe. Equally, it is our good fortune as Welsh people to have in Dr. Dennis a Welsh-American of the fifth generation who is sufficiently informed in the language and history of his antecedents to be able to interpret their sometimes foolhardy and often heroic story to us in our near total ignorance of their cause and often of the language in which they pursued it.

This present monograph is Dr. Dennis' latest contribution towards telling the full story of the Mormons' pioneering mission to the Welsh during the middle years of the 19th century. Previous articles by him have included a general summary of Dan Jones' career where it is confirmed that Jones died on the 3rd January 1862 and not in

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1861 as maintained by the Dictionary of Welsh Biography. Dr. Dennis has also produced essays relating to Jones' interest in the supposed Welsh-speaking Indians descended of Prince Madog and on Jones' knowledge of events surrounding the murder of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith at Carthage in 1844. To date, Dr. Dennis' prime published additions to the story of early Welsh Mormonism have been his study of William Howells of Aberdare, first Latter-day Saint missionary to France (in Supporting Saints: Life Stories of 19th Century Mormons, Religious Studies Center, B.Y.U., 1985), and an outline history of the Welsh mission entitled 'The Welsh and the Gospel' (in Truth will Prevail, official history of the L.D.S. Church in the British Isles published by the Church at Solihull, Birmingham, in 1987 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Church here).

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All those interested in the history of religion and society in 19th century Wales must await with anticipation Dr. Dennis' final draft of a definitive bibliography of Welsh Mormon publications between 1844 and 1862. This will be an indispensable tool not just to the study of early Welsh Mormonism but also for gaining a fuller understanding of the period through knowledge of that widespread and fierce reaction which Mormonism caused among the traditional nonconformist bodies. For the non-Mormon social historian, this is one of the most rewarding aspects of Dr. Dennis' copious work. Hopefully, we will also one day see published Dr. Dennis' edition of William Howells' letters which are another rich source of information concerning the planting of the Mormon faith in Wales and Brittany.

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By this present study, Dr. Dennis has placed his co-religionists and all 19th century Welsh historians further in his debt. There are, however, a number of minor points one might raise by way of criticism. There are technical errors, for example, in referring to William Lewis' englynyon both as translated on document no. 21 and as no. 22; and it is unfortunate that proof-readers did not amend on p.86 the third listed biographical allusion which notes that some 64 of the emigrants died en route from Wales to America not between March and June 1849 but in 1949. In relation to Dr. Dennis' intended substance, it might be said that he is stretching to the furthest limits of sustainability a definition of Welsh 'protestants' as those who were in opposition 'not only to the Catholic church but to the Anglican church as well. Consequently, they referred to themselves as "nonconformists" or those who refused to conform to the religious policies of King Henry VIII'. It is likely the work and its readers, whether American or Welsh, would also have benefitted from the inclusion of a map of Wales showing the localities from which the 326 emigrants were drawn; thereby indicating also centres of Mormon missionary activity in the Wales of the day.

Such considerations aside, The Call of Zion is an excellent book. It combines the careful construction and sober assessments of a learned work with qualities not misplaced in an adventure story. That after all is how one may properly describe the kind of venture upon which these humble Welsh folk, mostly peasants and artisans, embarked when they set out to answer the call of 'Zion's Trumpet'.

It is a book which fully deserves to be published in a British edition; and one would urge the University of Wales Press or some other appropriate body to consider such a step. Dr. Dennis' work in interpreting this little-known but rich vein of our history has not yet begun to receive the appreciation due to it on this side of the Atlantic. This is an oversight which badly needs to be put right.

D. L. Davies

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CAPELI gan Gwenllian Jenkins, ar ran Awdurdod Addysg Morgannwg Ganol; dim dyddiad, dim pris; 28tt. (maintioli A4).

Dyma lyfryn bach gwerthfawr. Mae'n un mewn cyfres yn dwyn yr enw 'Ein Treftadaeth' a gynhyrchwyd ar ran Awdurdod Addysg Morgannwg Ganol gan Gwenllian Jenkins, athrawes bro yn y sir. Cyhoeddwyd y gyfres at ddefnydd plant hŷn ysgolion cynradd Cymraeg y dalaith honno, a chafwyd cymorth ariannol gan y Swyddfa Gymreig at y diben. Hyd yma, ymddangosodd dau deitl pellach yn y gyfres sef Ffermio a Tollbyrth.

Mae'r llyfryn yn ymwneud â chapeli a'u dylanwad cymdeithasol o fewn ardal gyfrifoldeb y cyngor sir dan sylw. Ceir lluniau adeiladau, nodweddion pensaernïol a gweithgaredd capelaidd o wahanol barthau'r sir, ac fe lwydda'r llyfryn i gyfleu i oedolion yn ogystal ag i'r plant bwriadedig rywbeth o eangder a chyfoeth y gymdeithas anghydfurfiol yn nyddiau ei bri. Cyfeirir at fawl, cerdd, addysg, cyllid, ymgyrchu a chymdeithasu oddi mewn i 'Breswylfeydd y Goruchaf'.

I archwilio'r themâu hyn yn fanylach canolbwyntir trwy lawer o'r llyfryn ar un achos yn arbennig. Tabor, capel y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd ym Maesteg, a sefydlwyd ym 1840, yw'r achos hwn. Ceir nifer o luniau a chynlluniau pensaernïol sy'n arddangos patrwm nodweddiadol llawer o gapeli tra'n ystyried Tabor yn neilltuol. Rhydd y llyfryn sylw felly i'r garreg ac i'r gair wrth gyflwyno'r dreftadaeth anghydfurfiol; a rhaid dweud ei fod yn gynhwysfawr iawn wrth drafod mewn 28 tudalen cynifer o agweddau ar y testun.

Yn ogystal â chefnidir ffeithiol fel sail i'r llyfryn, fe gynigir llawer o syniadau y gall y plant eu datblygu ar eu pen eu hunain: holi'r henoed, casglu manylion, tynnu lluniau, llunio âch, dechrau llyfr lloffion ag ati. Yn addysgiadol, dyma un o nerthoedd y llyfryn, ei fod yn ysgogi plant heb wneud y cyfan drostynt.

Cyflawna'r gwaith hwn dipyn o fewn ffiniau agos; ac er mai i blant y'i bwriedir, bydd oedolion hefyd ar eu helw o fwrw trwyddo. Yn wir, o fewn terfynnau un sir, gellir ei ddisgrifio fel arweiniad. têt at destun eangach. Gresyn na ddaeth mwy o bobol ar ei draws hyd yn hyn. Mae'n haeddu darlenniad cyffredinol. Ni ddyfynnir na phris na dyddiad wrtho, ond yng Ngwanwyn 1987 y'i cyhoeddwyd, a thybiaf mai trwy law'r cyngor sir (d/o Neuadd y Sir, Parc Cathays, Caerdydd) y gellir archebu copiau.

D. L. Davies

This is a work of 150pp. produced by Mr. A. V. Jones of Aberdare to mark the 75th anniversary of rebuilding Providence Church, Mountain Ash, in 1912. Providence is now part of the United Reformed Church, but was originally an English Congregationalist cause; and Mr. Jones is an officer of the church.

In addition to the history of the congregation over a period of 118 years, Mr. Jones outlines something of the social background against which that history is properly set. At £3.50 per volume (+ 50p postage and packing), it is a worthwhile purchase to anyone interested in the denomination or in the district concerned. Copies may be obtained from Mr. A. V. Jones, 2 Laurel Close, Cwmdare, Aberdare, CF44 8RS (tel. 879731).

## Prussian gold medal invitation

ENTRIES are invited for the 1988 King of Prussia's Gold Medal competition, run jointly by the Historic Churches Preservation Trust and the Incorporated Church Building Society.

The medal goes to the architect submitting the best church repair scheme aided by a grant or loan from either charity in the last three years.

Architects can nominate themselves or be nominated by anyone concerned with the charities or the repaired church.

The award was revived recently following nearly a century of disuse. Nominations to Major Iain Radford, The Secretary, HCPT and ICBS, Fulham Palace, London SW6 6EA, by March 31.

## Pub plans for church thrown out

A CONTROVERSIAL proposal to turn a Cardiff church into a public house has been thrown out after strong opposition from local residents and councillors.

Courage Ltd applied to turn the Welsh Presbyterian Church in Crwys Road into their fifth pub in the city.

Planning officer Mr Roger Knight recommended refusal, saying the scheme would lack any off-street parking and would affect people living nearby.

takeaway and restaurant.

They also argued that the scheme was not needed and could result in public disorder.

Mr D. Gwyn Jones, the church secretary, said there was a restrictive covenant forbidding the sale of alcohol and he deplored plans for a public house.

The brewers stressed their scheme would be of high quality and also pointed out that the church was of great charm and character and in need of preservation.

### Deplored

Residents said they already suffered nuisance from parking at the nearby Royal George public house, a

THE CARDIFF POST • Thursday 12th November 1987

MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF CAPEL -THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY,HELD AT ABERYSTWYTH, DYFED, ON SATURDAY,17 OCTOBER 1987ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes : The Second Annual General Meeting of CAPEL - The Chapels Heritage Society, was held on Saturday, 17 October 1987 at Bethel Baptist Chapel, Baker Street, Aberystwyth, Dyfed. Twenty-seven delegates were present.

Apologies : Rev. Roger Brown, Tongwynlais; H. Godwin Arnold, Reading; Mrs. Valerie Bird, Penarth; Howard Llewellyn, Cardiff; Mid Glamorgan C. C. Planning Dept.; Mrs. Patricia Moor, Glamorgan County Archive; Mr. Moelwyn Williams and Dr. Brynley Roberts, National Library of Wales; Donald P. Raine, West Yorkshire; Mrs. Muriel Bowen Evans, Trelech; Prof. Anthony Jones, Chicago, USA.

Minutes of the previous AGM : The minutes of the First AGM held at Llandrindod Wells on 8 November 1986 were accepted as correct and approved and signed as a true record. Proposed by Graham Rosser.

Chairman's Address : In his address, Dr. Prys Morgan noted that CAPEL was now 'finding its feet'. Charitable Status had been awarded and the Society even boasted headed notepaper. Regional groups had been established in most of the Welsh counties and most of these had met at least once. Two newsletters had been published during the past year as had the Society's first Information Sheet on Grants for Chapels. There had been a considerable demand for the latter, and CAPEL was now preparing more leaflets on such subjects as photographing chapels, recording gravestones and graveyards, and chapel archives. It was also reported that a design guide was proposed to assist contractors who were converting former chapels to dwellings. Much work was being done or was proposed, in the field of Nonconformist chapels and archives. For instance, Miss Beryl Griffiths of the National Library of Wales was compiling a catalogue of nonconformist archives and Mr. David Boorman of Swansea was hoping to start on a survey of chapels in the Lliw Valley. Several books and bibliographies had been published during the past year including Eglwysi'r Bedyddwyr yng Nghymru by Gareth O. Watts (NLW); The Parish Churches and Nonconformist Chapels of Wales Vol. I (Dyfed) by Bert J. Rawlins and the recently published report entitled Churches - A Question of Conversion by SAVE Britain's Heritage. One of the fears, when CAPEL was established, was that few people were interested in the subject of nonconformist architecture and archives, such publications and studies were an indication that this was not necessarily so. CAPEL had campaigned to save several chapels in Wales during the past twelve months, though not always successfully. It was apparent that many congregations still did not know of CAPEL's existence and this meant that the Society's aims needed to be publicised more widely and effectively.



5. Treasurer's Report : The Statement of Accounts showed that CAPEL had a balance of £213.69 in its General Account and £251.51 in its Membership Account as of 30 September 1987. The generous donations of Prof. A. Jones, Chicago, were noted. Membership stood at about one hundred, a figure the Treasurer considered to be too low. He felt that members should work harder to promote the Society. It was hoped that membership cards would be available next year. Covenant forms would be included with the next newsletter. The accounts as audited (by Mrs. Valerie H. Bird, Penarth and Rev. Roger L. Brown) were accepted following a proposal by Donald Moore, which was seconded by Graham Rosser.
6. Election of Officers : In accordance with clause 5 of the Constitution, the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer retired at the meeting. All announced that they were willing to serve for another year. No other names were proposed and the previous year's officers were re-elected unanimously.
7. Election of Committee : In accordance with clause 4 of the Constitution, two members of the Committee (Warwick Butler and Graham Rosser) announced their retirement. The other 4 members of the Committee were re-elected, proposer Prof. I. G. Jones. Two vacancies remained, it was felt that representation from Powys and Gwent should be sought. Committee to approach possible candidates and invite to serve on the Executive.
8. Appointment of Auditors : Proposed that Mrs. V. Bird, Penarth and Rev. R. L. Brown, Tongwynlais be re-appointed as auditors.
9. Any Other Business : The Chairman noted that copies of nonconformist books catalogue from Donald P. Raine, West Yorkshire, were available at the meeting.  
  
J. B. Rowlands, Aberystwyth, requested clarification of the clause in the Constitution referring to co-opted committee members - explained by the Chairman.

This concluded the formal business of the Annual General Meeting.

## B. REPORT

### 1. Lecture :

Following the AGM, the Chairman, Dr. Prys Morgan, introduced Mr. Rhidian Griffiths, M.A., M. Litt., who delivered a particularly eloquent lecture on Music in Chapels. In his talk, Mr. Griffiths identified some of the milestones in Welsh chapel music which really only became a significant feature of chapel activities after the second quarter of the 19th century. The publication in 1838 of John Mills of Llangamarch, Gramadeg Cerddoriaeth proved to be one of the single most influential factors in explaining musical composition to Welsh renders. It ran to six editions, He identified three categories of music : 'National Music', favourite aires etc.; 'Moral Music', eg concert music; and 'Religious Music', which he described as 'the ultimate in music', music which served to 'raise feelings, to edify listeners to the greatest height of spirituality'. Mills also advocated the formation of musical societies and the teaching of the rudiments of music and how to sing.

Other developments followed the influence of e.g. the temperance movement - temperance choirs, and a general community involvement in singing, with singing on a 'large scale' being a feature.

John Roberts of Penllwyn, nr. Aberystwyth (Ieuan Gwylt) was probably one of the most effective advocates of hymn singing in Wales during the 19th century and his book Llyfr Tonau Cynulleidfaol (1859) increased the range of tunes available to Welsh congregations, even though the harmonies were rather strict and unadorned. Similarly, the publication of Y Cerddor Cymreig from 1861 extended the musical vocabulary of chapels. The 1860s saw the emergence of 'Sol-ffa' and also the 'Cymanfaoedd Ganu', which were meant originally as a means of education (learning new hymns) rather than being a singing festival, which they later became.

The Religious Revival of the 1870s brought with it the music of Sankey and Moody, which Ieuan Gwylt translated and published under the title Sŵn y Jiwibili, and the revivalist atmosphere caught on. A much wider range of music was sung in chapels and at 'Cymanfaoedd Ganu', though big anthems were restricted to the latter. There was a reluctance to progress beyond the set number of known hymns during a service and Rhidian Griffiths argued that chapel culture, of which music was a part, reached a plateau in 1914 beyond which it did not develop. By today, the wheel has turned almost full circle, and in some chapels the congregation read rather than sing hymns as nowadays there is often no organist available, the result being that music in chapels is on the decline.

#### Tour of Chapels in Aberystwyth :

Following a lunch break, members assembled at Seion (Cong.) Chapel, Baker Street, for a guided tour of some of the town's chapels, led by A. J. Parkinson, an Investigator at the R.C.A.H.M. A well-researched pamphlet describing each of the chapels to be visited was presented to delegates and this proved to be a most useful source of reference during the afternoon. Seven chapels were visited, namely Bethel (B) Baker Street; Seion (C) Baker Street; St. Davids Church (URC) Bath Street; Portland Street (C); Salem (Presb) Portland Street; Seilo (Presb) Queen's Road; and Skinner Street Sunday School. Two of the buildings have now been converted for new uses namely Portland Street Chapel which is now a doctor's surgery and the Skinner Street Sunday School which is now used as a Chapel of Rest by a local undertaker.

Aberystwyth once boasted 20 places of worship (14 Nonconformist chapels, 4 Anglican or R.C. and 2 Sunday Schools) and these ranged considerably in terms of size and design, some being very large and elaborate whilst others were much smaller and simpler in appearance. On the whole, the Welsh denominations tended to favour classical designs whereas the English churches used Gothic features.

At the end of the tour, Dr. Prys Morgan thanked Mr. Parkinson for a most interesting and informative guided tour of the chapels (36 were present for the tour of the chapels).

Newsletter No. 5 : Closing date for receipt of articles is 24 May 1988

- CAPEL -

Ysg. Anrhydeddus, Gerallt D. Nash, Amgueddfa Werin Cymru, Sain Flagan, CAERDYDD, CF5 6XB  
 Hon. Secretary, Gerallt D. Nash, Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagan's, CARDIFF, CF5 6XB ☎ (0222) 569 441  
 Registered under the Charities Act 1960. Reg. No. 51841



● Deacon Mr Ben Owens (left) and the Rev Peter Thomas outside Bethel chapel with the minute book.

## Chapel ledger found after century hidden

AN OLD ledger, which has been hidden for almost a century, is filling in gaps in a Welsh chapel's history.

The minute book for Aberystwyth's Bethel Baptist Chapel was discovered among piles of old belongings.

It is a valuable find for chapel leaders, who didn't even know the 100-year-old records existed.

And the windfall comes just in time for the Baker Street chapel's centenary celebrations this summer.

The ledger records meetings of the Bethel Building Committee, set up in 1886 to oversee the construction of a new chapel for the Baptist congregation.

There are snippets of information about the church building.

Now a chapel deacon is leafing through the pages to glean as much church history as possible.

"The minute book is a valuable find for the chapel," said

deacon Ben Owens. "It is full of little details about the building of the chapel that we didn't know before.

"We didn't even know about the book's existence. It came as a complete surprise when it was returned to the chapel anonymously.

"And the ledger couldn't have been found at a better time," added the deacon.

### FOUNDATION

"In summer we will be celebrating not only the centenary of the laying of the chapel foundation stones, but also the bicentenary of the launch of the Baptist cause in North Cardiganshire."

The minutes have at last given chapel leaders proof that the Bethel architect was Thomas E Morgan, of Aberystwyth. Some experts had attributed the building design to a Rev William Jones.

Members have also discovered that building material from the former Baptist chapel

was used to construct the new meeting place.

"We have also learned that the original tenders for the building of the chapel were all rejected by the building committee as too high.

"A revised tender of £2,710 from Liverpool contractor Mr W.J. Hughes was eventually accepted."

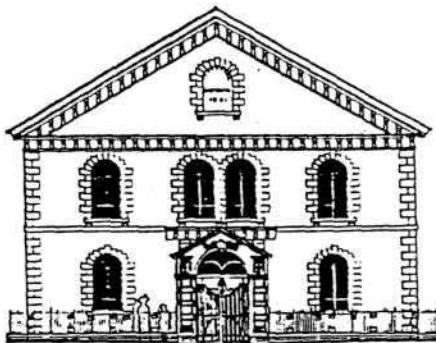
The old buildings committee had to ask the town council for 15 inches of land so they could place railings around the chapel. And the rates for the building were determined by the number of windows.

"The minutes only span three years from July 1886 to November 1889," added Mr Owens. "The committee was disbanded after the building had been completed.

"But the book tells us so much about the chapel building. It is a very welcome addition to our other records."

The minute book will be kept in the chapel safe, along with other important historical manuscripts about Bethel.

# Pontypridd Town Council



## Historical & Cultural Centre

Pontypridd new Historical Centre lies next to the town's famous OLD BRIDGE. The building itself, Tabernacl, was built in 1861 and ceased as a place of worship in 1983. The centre has a wealth of interest for the visitor, with regularly changing exhibitions on Chapels in Wales, local and regional history, and the creative work of local residents and school children. There is also a substantial collection of miner's lamps.

### EXHIBITIONS

April - Exhibition 'Wave Motion'

April & May - The work of artists from Chapter Arts Centre

June - 'Physics in Music'

- Gwynfa Camera Club Annual Exhibition

ADMISSION: ADULTS - 20P CHILDREN - 10P

A TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE IS PROVIDED ON THE GROUND FLOOR

### OPENING TIMES

TUESDAYS TO SATURDAYS 9am to 5pm

(and Bank and other Public Holidays)

Light refreshments are available daily between the hours of 10.30 a.m and 3.30 p.m. During summer months, and weather permitting, teas are served on the garden terrace where one can enjoy the view of the OLD BRIDGE.

### HOW TO GET THERE

The Centre is about 500 yards from the main A470  
(the B4237 Ynysybwl exit)  
...6 miles from the M4 junction 32...

*For further information please write to:*

The Cultural Services Officer, Pontypridd Historical and Cultural Centre,  
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