

Capel

CYMDEITHASTREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY

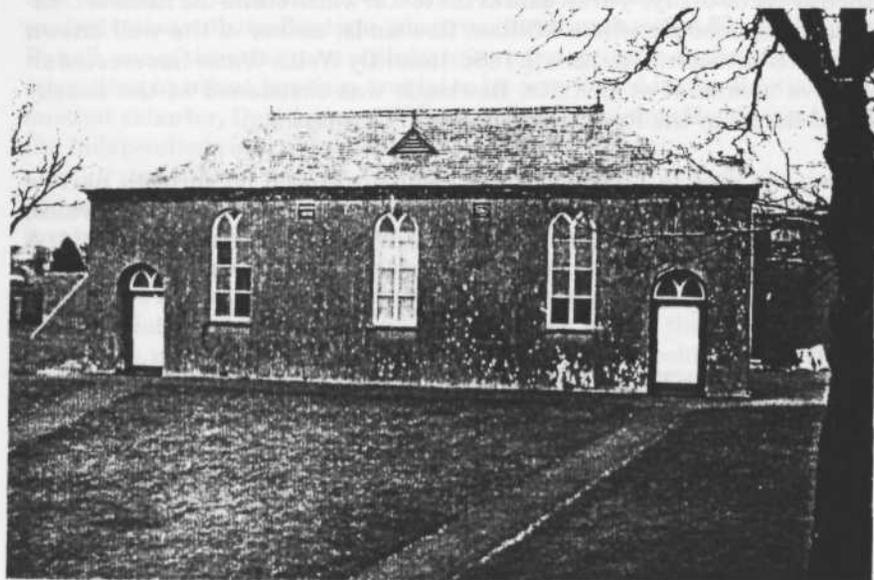


NEWSLETTER / CYLCHLYTHYR 20

HYDREF / AUTUMN 1993

WOODSTOCK AND RHYDWILYM

For our Spring meeting this year we returned after a three year interval to Pembrokeshire, on this occasion to the rural heart of the county. Once more we were blessed with fine sunny weather when we met on Saturday 15 May at Woodstock school, nine miles north of Haverfordwest, where we were given a warm welcome, tea and coffee by the ladies of Woodstock chapel.



Capel Woodstock

The lecture on *Calvinistic Methodism in Pembrokeshire* by the Rev J E Wynne Davies of Aberystwyth followed in the chapel, which is one of the oldest causes of the Calvinistic Methodist connexion, founded by the Rev Howell Davies, the Apostle of Pembrokeshire. Woodstock is remembered as the place communion services were first held by the Methodists outside the parish churches. Indeed, both sacraments were regularly administered here for 56 years before the 'separation' of 1811. The communion service drew vast crowds and is still referred to as *Cwrdd Mawr*. To accommodate the congregations an interesting extension which still exists was built. This was last used for visits of the Rev Martin Lloyd Jones. Built in the centre of the county, Woodstock was the *Tŷ Cwrdd* for a large area rather than a local church. Situated near the Landsker both languages were and still are regularly used in worship. An interesting fact is that the membership today is larger than in 1932.

The next visit was to Walton East chapel, an offspring of Woodstock, founded in 1877. Two young members of the Sunday school, Rosalind Bushell and Siân Corp extended a welcome to the chapel, which also has a larger membership than in 1932. We then moved on to lunch at Clarbston Road village hall provided by the Sunday school at Walton.

We then drove on to Llys-y-frân dam at the foot of which stand the ruins of Dan-y-Coed, the farmhouse where William Rowlands, author of the well known hymn tune *Blaenwern*, was born in 1860. Recently Welsh Water has erected an impressive memorial at the site. Rowlands was christened at the nearby Gwastad chapel by the Rev David Charles of Carmarthen.

Following the visit to Llys-y-frân, the company moved on through narrow secluded lanes to Rhydwylym one of the earliest Baptist churches in Wales, incorporated in 1668, though the present building dates only from 1875. A history of the cause was given by Mr Rhys Adams, a deacon of the church and tea was provided by the ladies of the chapel.

CALVINISTIC METHODISM IN PEMBROKESHIRE

Howell Harris first visited Pembrokeshire in 1739 and during the following decade his itineraries brought him to the county on thirty occasions. 'Fellowships' were established and their supervision was entrusted to 'exhorters', William Richards being responsible for the northern, Welsh speaking, areas and John Harris for the anglicized "down below". The growth of Methodism in the area, however must be attributed to Howell Davies, who was given curacies within the county and in 1744 married Katherine Poyer, the heiress of Henllan Amgoed, who sadly died the following year. His second wife, Elizabeth White

of Prendergast, Haverfordwest, was also a lady of considerable wealth and this gave him the freedom to devote himself to the Methodist cause and to be remembered as The Apostle of Pembrokeshire.

During these early years 'societies' were formed throughout the county; meeting houses were eventually erected, Haverfordwest, Woodstock and New Chapel being served by Howell Davies. Woodstock, built in 1751 became the first centre for celebrating communion in a place not consecrated by a bishop and large crowds of up to five thousand gathered there as in earlier days at Llys-y-frân and St Daniel, Pembroke.

Soon, however, difficulties arose which were to contribute to the comparative weakness of the Methodist presence within the county today. The division between Harris and the other leaders of the Revival, Daniel Rowland and William Williams, brought greater distress to Pembrokeshire than to any other area. In 1750 Harris visited the society at Haverfordwest and sought to rally his followers. John Harris of St Kennox, George Gambold and the brothers James and John Relly supported him and loyalties were severed. There was an anti-Rowland campaign and Howell Davies and the Pembrokeshire societies were soon to encounter a series of secessions.

The coming of Methodism to Pembrokeshire had already caused some confrontation with the Baptists, whose mother church was at Rhydwylym. John Powell, one of the exhorters, withdrew from the societies on the grounds of his opposition to infant baptism and later he was joined in the Baptist fold by another exhorter, David Jones. William and Christopher Mends went over to the Independents and naturally each had his following.

An unhappy episode which further hampered the work was the growing involvement of Moravianism, particularly at Haverfordwest. Two of the leaders of Moravianism in Britain had Pembrokeshire connections and returned to their home areas to further the Moravian cause, John Gambold in 1742 and William Holland in 1746. In 1753 John Cennick visited the area and tension soon arose, particularly after John Sparks, George Gambold, John Harris of St Kennox and John Evans of Nevern, all Methodist exhorters, went over to the Moravian fold.

In the same way as Moravianism had a close affinity with Harris, another intrusion which perhaps can be attributed to the separation between Harris and his brethren was the eventual Wesleyan presence in the area. In 1747 Wesley had given the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists the assurance that he would only visit Wales after the consultation with them and would always exert his influence to prevent secession. Although unable to support Harris, Wesley

had very little contact with Rowland and would have nothing to do with Howell Davies, who worked closely with George Whitefield and was often in England furthering the work among the Calvinists. Wesley was given the perpetual advowson of St. Daniel's in 1772 and referred to it as his Welsh chapel, and the place which had formerly been a centre for celebrating the sacrament amongst the Welsh Methodists now espoused the Arminian teaching and Wesley celebrated communion there.

There remains to be mentioned one other secession, which weakened the Methodist cause in the Jeffreston district. The ground for secession on this occasion was the antinomianism of James and John Relly, who for a period were joined by John Harris of St Kennox, who had been disciplined by Howell Davies. They were able to influence several societies but after the deaths of the Relly brothers in 1777 and 1778 the work ceased.

It is evident therefore that Howell Davies was confronted with considerable difficulty. Most secessions were within the English speaking areas whilst the northern areas remained loyal to Davies, who was supported by John Harris of Ambleston, an able exhorter who led the Pembrokeshire Methodists after the death of Howell Davies in 1770.

In 1776, contrary to all expectations, an even more unhappy chapter in the life of the Pembrokeshire Methodists was to begin. The Rev. Nathaniel Rowland, son of Daniel and a graduate of Oxford, married Margaret, the daughter of Howell Davies. Although a gifted preacher he was autocratic and arrogant. He resisted requests from chapels to administer the sacrament and resisted the building of further meeting houses. Many left the Methodist fold for other denominations and at Haverfordwest Tabernacle Chapel was lost to the cause because of him. Rowland Hill described him as the "proudest devil" he had ever known. In 1807 he was excommunicated at an Association which met at Newcastle Emlyn.

It has been said that Methodism would have disappeared from the face of the county during this time if it had not been for the influence of the Rev. David Jones of Llan-gan, who moved to Manorowen in 1794 when he married Mrs Parry, a rich widow. Indeed the advent of several evangelical clergymen was to redeem the situation particularly in the north of the county. The Rev. David Pugh was in 1770 given the living of St Mary's, Newport (Trefdraeth), by John Thornton, who had previously offered it to Daniel Rowland. One wonders what impact the seraph from Llangeitho would have had if he had accepted the invitation. The Rev. William Jones settled at St Dogmael's (Llandudoch) in 1774 and the Rev. David Davies (1753-1820) at Llanfyrnach and Penrhydd in 1797 whilst in 1784 the Rev. David Griffiths (1756-1834) obtained the living

of Nevern. In addition to the clergy there were able exhorters such as Sampson Thomas of Caerfarchell, Evan Harris of Ambleston, Henry Richard of Tre-fin and his two sons Ebenezer and Thomas Richards, who were to be amongst the foremost leaders of the third generation of Welsh Methodism.

In all this it is worth noting the support received from the Pembrokeshire gentry. In the same way as Howell Harris had been welcomed to the homes of Squire Adams of Whitland, George Rice of Newgale and the Bowns of Clydau, these evangelical clergymen were fortunate in the sympathies of the gentry of their locality. Many owed their benefices to them and the Rev. David Griffiths had married the daughter of his benefactor, George Owen of Llwyngwair. The gentry were also in a position to provide land for the building of chapels and between 1785 and 1805 several were built along the northern coastline. It was not surprising therefore that the Pembrokeshire Methodists chose to show their allegiance to the crown when the French invasion of 1797 was thwarted. The Methodists observed a service of thanksgiving at Goodwick every year and later a chapel was built on the spot called Berachah. Likewise when the Methodists in 1811 seceded from the established church the Methodist clergymen of Pembrokeshire expressed their opposition and as a result of the ordination several chapels such as those at Newport, Nevern, Eglwysrwrw and St Dogmael's were again lost to the Calvinistic Methodists.

The pattern of Welsh Calvinistic Methodism in Pembrokeshire had, to a large extent, been determined by the events which took place during those early years while the movement remained within the established church. It was a story of an early triumph followed by chapters of tragedies as evangelical zeal and sectarian ambitions to build empires blinded them to fact that they were called to establish a kingdom. The nineteenth century saw the continuation of the witness with some notable leaders but the church was never numerically strong and today, as at the beginning, could not support its ministers but for the generosity of her people.

J E Wynne Davies

THE NORWEGIAN CHURCH, CARDIFF BAY

A very pleasant evening was spent by the South East Wales Group when they recently visited the Norwegian Church in Cardiff Bay. The church, which has been resited, is situated in a striking position on the East

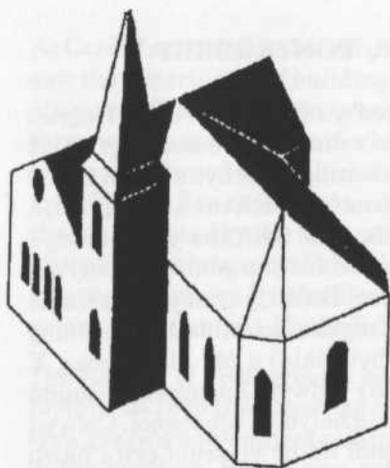
foreshore of the Bay, about a mile from its original position, and it can easily be identified by its white walls and prominent steeple. Inside the church, a permanent exhibition of photographs and drawings traces various points in the history of the church and this was more than adequately complemented by a very informative lecture given by Mrs Ellen Wayne, who is of Norwegian descent and a member of the church community.

In her lecture Mrs Wayne reminded us that the first contact between South Wales and Norway was not too pleasant, in the form of Viking raids, and following these there was only intermittent trade for many hundreds of years. Then in the 19th century as the coal and iron industries expanded, trade between our countries rapidly increased, bringing many Norwegian ships to Cardiff. Due to the large numbers of Norwegian seamen brought thus to the town, it was felt there was a need to establish a Norwegian Seamen's Mission and the church was built in 1868. From records, it appears that the church was prefabricated in Norway, although the cladding was of corrugated iron instead of the normal wood. The original site of the church was alongside the Bute West Dock, adjacent to a fish quay, and no doubt the congregation were soon aware if fishing boats docked!

Mrs Wayne emphasised that besides being a church for Norwegians and other Scandinavians it was also a Seamen's Mission and thus provided social and cultural contacts and activities. It was a place where seamen could relax and no doubt meet friends to chat in their native tongues, as well as read newspapers from home and write home to their families. The opportunity was also taken to socialise with the Norwegian community who had settled in Cardiff and Mrs Wayne was able to recall a number of her earlier memories of this.

On the spiritual side, it appears that pre-war times were very busy as the church pastor was given an assistant to help him with the growing Norwegian community and increasing number of seamen visiting the port. The pastor, it was pointed out, had a manse at the top end of Cathedral Road and although it is now a hotel it still has the name *Prestegaarden* ('parsonage') on the doorway.

Sadly, as shipping and associated trades declined after the war, so did the congregation and the number of visitors to the church. The inevitable result of this was that it was unable to continue solely as a Norwegian church and it was transferred in 1959 to the Lutheran Council of Great Britain for the use of combined Lutheran congregations. This was however only a short respite as the situation continued to deteriorate and the church finally closed its doors in 1970.



Following closure, the church became derelict and was vandalised and eventually, as the Cardiff Bay development scheme progressed, it was in danger of demolition. To prevent this, the Norwegian Church Preservation Trust was set up with Welsh and Norwegian support and in 1987 the Trust dismantled the church and put the parts into storage, with the intention of rebuilding at a later date. With the existence of the Trust, donations of money and materials were made by individuals and organisations in both our countries and when the present site was made

available by Associated British Ports, rebuilding commenced in September 1991. Completion was achieved quickly and the church was formally opened by Princess Martha Louise of Norway on 8th April 1992. It is not intended however to reconsecrate the church and its main use will be as a Cultural Centre and Meeting Place.

Mrs Wayne has been instrumental in re-establishing the use of the building by the Norwegian community of Cardiff and South Wales and she is justly proud of the part played by earlier pioneers of the Norwegian community in the area, especially her father, who was an official of the Norwegian Seamen's Union in Cardiff and other British ports. At the present time the Norwegian community meets regularly on the last Sunday of the month at 4.00 pm and they extend a welcome to everyone.

On a more general note the Trust and the administrator, Mr David Griffiths, are seeking to promote goodwill and friendship between the peoples of Wales and Norway and hope that visitors will call to look at the building, view the exhibition and have a snack in the Coffee Shop. It is hoped that a permanent exhibition to commemorate the life and work of Roald Dahl will be set up shortly. This internationally famous author was not only baptised in the church but became the first President of the Trust set up to ensure it was saved for the future.

Allan Mayne

HEN GAPEL JOHN HUGHES, PONTROBERT

Ar Fai 22^{ain} 1993, cynhaliwyd 'Diwrnod Agored' yn Hen Gapel John Hughes Pontrobert, Maldwyn, gyda'r bwriad o ddiolch i'r rhai sydd wedi cefnogi'r Apêl Adfer ar hyd y naw mlynedd diwethaf, ac yn arbennig i dderbyn sic eam £2500 oddi wrth Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru at y gronfa. Daeth tua 150 ynghyd, a 35 o'r rheiny wedi pererindota o Gapel Coffa Ann Griffiths yn Nolanog i Bontrobert yn gynharach yn y dydd. Buont yn cerdded dan ganu emynau Ann Griffiths a John Hughes o Neuadd y Pentref yn y Bont i fyny at yr Hen Gapel lle y cynhaliwyd oedfa eciwmenaid ddwyieithog dan arweiniad y gweinidog lleol, y Parch. Roger Elis Humphreys (Presbyteriaid) a Mr Idris Jones, Y Trallwng (Annibynwyr), gyda'r Tad Barnabas o'r Eglwys Uniongred Roegaidd a'r Tad John Ryan o'r Eglwys Gatholig Rufeinig hefyd yn bresennol. Cafwyd eitemau cerddorol amrywiol gan blant a phobl ifainc yr ardal cyn i bawb fwynhau te gyda'i gilydd yn y Neuadd.

Codwyd ychydig dros £700 at y gronfa ond y mae angen codi rhai miloedd cyn y medrir cwblhau y tu mewn i'r capel ei hun. Gobeithir gwneud hyn mewn pryd i agor yr adeilad fel Canolfan Undod Cristionogol i'r genedl yn Awst 1994, 140 mlynedd wedi marw John Hughes, gyda thywysydd / arweinydd addoliad yn byw yn y tŷ. Derbynnir rhoddion, bach a mawr, yn ddiolchgar, gan y Trysorydd Mygedol, Mrs Beryl Vaughan, Sychtyn, Llanerfyl, Y Trallwng, Maldwyn SY21 0JS.

Nia Rhosier
Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Llywio
Ymddiriedolaeth Hen Gapel John Hughes

THE HISTORY OF SALEM, CANTON, CARDIFF

In 1981 Mr T J Evans recorded in Welsh, on audio tape, a history and description of Salem Welsh Presbyterian chapel, Canton, Cardiff. The tape is at present in the care of the Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff, thanks to the interest shown by Mr Iorwerth L Rees of Canton. It has been transcribed and translated into English by Donald Moore, and both Welsh and English versions may be consulted at the Record Office. The contents are summarised below.

The first Welsh-language chapel of the Calvinistic Methodist Connexion to be established in Cardiff was Capel Seion, opened in 1827 and located on the Hayes in the centre of the old town.

As Cardiff extended its boundaries in the nineteenth century, the Methodists saw the opportunity of building a new chapel at Canton on the western side of the river Taff. 'Canton' was originally the name of a farm and the lady of that farm was herself a member of the existing Capel Seion. A sympathetic landlord, Edward Priest Richards, gave a site on the corner of Albert Street and Edward Street (the latter being named after the landowner), The new chapel, designed by the Reverend Evan Harries of Merthyr Tydfil, was ready for holding services by December 1856 and it was formally opened in the following January by the Reverend William Evans of Tonyrefail, with a galaxy of the leading Methodist ministers of the time.

The Revival of 1859 greatly helped the cause, and membership increased rapidly. In 1860 the Reverend Edward Matthews of Ewenny moved into the area, playing a prominent role in Salem, and also carrying out improvements to the building. But it was not until 1895 that a full-time minister was installed, the Reverend D C Lewis.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, services were being held in Salem in English as well as Welsh, but some members preferred the English and a group moved out to a chapel in Cathedral Road where all the services were in English. Even so there were still 165 members left in Salem. Their enthusiasm was undiminished and they decided that they wanted a new and better chapel. A building fund was begun, though at first it grew but slowly.

In 1908 a new minister arrived, straight from college, the Reverend Cuthbert Thomas of Llandeilo, and then the project for a new chapel moved forward rapidly. A site was bought on the corner of Market Road and Cowbridge Road and a start was made by building a schoolroom, which was ready in 1910.

This was when Mr Henry Radcliffe came into the story. He was one of Cardiff's great shipping magnates and much of Salem's subsequent success was due to his continuing generosity. He it was who bought the present site for the chapel and later contributed huge sums towards the reduction of the chapel debt, as well as paying for the organ, the chair, the 'sêr fawr', the rostrum and the communion table.

The building itself was designed by a well known Newport firm of architects, Habershon & Fawckner, and built by the brothers James and Alfred Stephens, both active members in Salem. The deacon John Williams, a blacksmith by trade, was responsible for all the ironwork in the chapel, including the weathervane on the spire.

The new Salem was intended to be a splendid piece of architecture from the start, and it became known as the 'Cathedral of the Connexion'. It had a

spectacular coloured window in its main front. A tower with spire was added as an embellishment. The interior was furnished in the best red pine and oak, and much foresight went into designing the seats and other features. There was room to seat a total of 550 persons. In the entrance lobby a war memorial was set up, designed by the well-known sculptor, Sir William Goscomb John.

Because the building was constructed of such high-quality material, little money had to be spent on upkeep for a long while. The original cost of erecting the whole building was some £8,000 but the property was insured in 1981 for half-a-million.

Note by the translator.

In 1993 Salem still flourishes under its present minister the Reverend D Haydn Thomas. Services and meetings are held regularly and the interior is as beautifully kept as the commentator described in 1981. The Gothic Revival style of the exterior, especially its Perpendicular window, is now more than ever admired by students of architecture.

RUMNEY METHODIST CHURCH

On 20 March 1993 the booklet *170 Years of Wesleyan / Methodist Witness* was launched with an exhibition of historic documents and photographs illustrating the history of Rumney Methodist Church, originally called Gilead Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.

Copies of the booklet, for which much of the research-work was undertaken by Margaret and Frances Hobbs, may be obtained from Miss Frances Hobbs, 19 Lynton Terrace, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 9BR (price £3.65 including p&p).

CAPEL NEWYDD NANHORON

This building, unused for worship for the last hundred years, is of particular significance as an early example of a Welsh Nonconformist chapel. It is in fact the earliest surviving meeting house in North Wales. Its origin lay in the puritanism of the seventeenth century nurtured for a time by some of the gentry families of Llŷn and resulting in the establishment of a 'gathered church' based on Pwllheli. Capel Newydd was built in 1769 to serve the Independents of Llangian parish belonging to this congregation who had previously met in private houses. In 1872 Horeb chapel was built a mile or two away in Mynytho to cater for the people living in the new settlement established when the old common was enclosed earlier in the century. The 'new chapel' then became redundant.

The importance of the old Dissenters' meeting house was recognized in the nineteen-fifties by the Caernarvonshire Historical Society which played a leading part in a spirited campaign to repair the fabric of the building. The support of the County Council, the Pilgrim Trust, the Historic Buildings Council for Wales and other bodies was enlisted, and the restored chapel reopened in July 1958 under a re-formed Trust charged with its upkeep.

The unadorned barn-like building has a lateral pulpit and early box pews arranged on either side of a broad earthen-floored central aisle which runs the length of the rectangular interior. It is entered in the traditional manner through two doors located in the long wall on either side of the pulpit. The building is in fact an excellent example of early nonconformist architecture in Wales which should be better known. Its present condition gives rise to concern: an earthen floor is not conducive to good maintenance in an historic building. Some of the pews have been repaired and patched, and one was suitably extended to accommodate the wife of the local squire of Nanhoron who espoused the cause in the late eighteenth century after the death of her husband at sea. The widely acclaimed historical novel *Etholedig Arglwyddes* by Harri Parri, published in July 1993, deals with the mixed fortunes of this lady, and is likely to revive interest in the old chapel and to bring more visitors to see it.

Trefor M Owen

Letter to the Editor

86 Waterloo Road
Cardiff CF3 7BH
15 May 1993

Dear Sir,

A preliminary investigation of sites of *outdoor* immersion in the Cardiff area has led to the feeling that there is need for research on a wider scale throughout Wales (and probably just over the border too).

I should like to ask, in the pages of the *Capel Newsletter*, for assistance in the preparation of accounts of such sites, with any associated memories or anecdotes.

The making of a map and gazeteer is contemplated, for which, ideally, National Grid references are necessary.

There are thought to be many sites on streams and rivers as well as numerous specially built immersion baptistries in the open air. They constitute what may be a particularly Welsh religious phenomenon.

Yours truly,

Peter Leech

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Members may not be familiar with the amendments to classes of membership and subscription rates which were adopted at the Annual General Meetings of 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Life Membership

(i) A class of life-membership has been introduced for a single payment of £50, and this sum has been reduced to £30 for those over the age of 60.

(ii) Following the example of other societies, a scheme has been arranged to allow for payment of life membership dues by instalments as follows:

- a) For the younger members, four annual payments of £14
- b) For those over the age of 60, four annual payments of £8.50.

Members interested in life membership may obtain full details from the Treasurer.

Standing Orders

Even for those not wishing to become life members, the use of a bank standing order to pay the annual subscription is highly recommended as being convenient both to members and to the Society's officers. The appropriate form is obtainable from the Treasurer.

Members should note that their names will be deleted from the list of members if their subscriptions remain unpaid for more than a year despite the reminders they will have received with issues of the *Newsletter*.