

Capel



CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY

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22

GWANWYN / SPRING 1994

CARMARTHEN ANTIQUARIANS' DAY-SCHOOL ON CHAPELS

On 26 February the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society, in association with the Extramural Department of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, held a most successful day-school in Capel Heol Awst, Carmarthen, on the history, records and architecture of the Welsh chapel.

The speakers were introduced by the present minister of the chapel, the Rev Towyn Jones, who referred briefly to the history of the building in which we were meeting, the third chapel on the site, opened in 1827 and a superb example of the square classical style, with even its interior - pulpit and high, uncomfortable box-pews - going back to the pre-Victorian period.

The first speaker was Emeritus Professor Glanmor Williams, who gave a magisterial, comprehensive and lively account of the history of nonconformity in Wales, noting six stages in its development from the very small beginnings in the 'radical' wing of Elizabethan protestantism. The second stage was the period of Puritan ascendancy after 1640 when its growth in Wales owed not a little to the publication of the octavo *Beibl Bach* in 1630 and its reprinting in 1654. Nonconformists were still few in number in Wales but were sufficient to survive during the Age of Persecution between 1660 and 1689, a survival which Professor Williams attributed in part to the spasmodic character of the persecution, in part to the secrecy and isolated location of the meetings, and in part to the courage and determination of the ministers and members of the churches. After 1689 came a period of Toleration and New Opportunities. Nonconformists still had to obtain licences but they took full advantage of their new legal rights by ordination, by founding academies and establishing funds to support ministers and notably by building chapels. From about 1740 we move into the period of Nonconformist Ascendancy in Wales, resulting from the revival at the

beginning of the eighteenth century within the Anglican church, the impact of Methodism and the defects in the organisation of the Church of England, which was too rigid to respond to the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, the greater use made by the nonconformists of the Welsh language and the more satisfying role they had found for their lay members. The result was an increase in the number of nonconformists in Wales from about 10% in 1751 to about 75% in 1851.

Professor Williams was followed by Miss Muriel Bowen Evans who showed copies of the various kinds of nonconformist documents - seventeenth century church books, registers of births and marriages and licences of places of worship.

After lunch, Mr Julian Orbach, one of the editors of the forthcoming volume on *The Buildings of Dyfed*, showed a wealth of slides of chapels from all parts of Dyfed and beyond and though he lamented the fact that despite the work of Anthony Jones and John Hilling we are still waiting for a standard architectural history of the Welsh chapel, he himself successfully demonstrated the variety of that architecture as he traced and illustrated its development throughout the nineteenth century.

The last speaker was Mr Tony Parkinson, of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, who posed the question 'Why study chapels?' and offered answers as an archaeologist, as an Englishman who has lived twenty years in Wales, and as a Christian. He showed how much one could learn from looking at Welsh chapels, not only of the architectural or religious history of Wales but also of our educational, social and economic history. And, he concluded, "If we really believe that chapels are an important factor in the development of Wales and of Welsh society, we ought to make it possible for our descendants to see them and to experience them as well".

BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUSTS

On Friday 4th March 1994 the Architectural Heritage Fund hosted its first conference in Wales at Llandrindod Wells.

This followed the Secretary of State for Wales's decision last year to offer financial support to the Fund in the form of working capital and programme grants.

The Architectural Heritage Fund is a national charity which makes low interest loans to Building Preservation Trusts and other charities to enable them to acquire and rehabilitate buildings which merit conservation.

The Fund works on the principle of revolving funds, i.e., it is prepared to *lend money to a Building Preservation Trust to allow it to acquire, repair and restore a building that is either listed as being of special architectural or historic interest or located within a conservation area, to establish a new use, then to market the building and return the funding to the Architectural Heritage Fund.*

There are at present in Wales eleven such Building Preservation Trusts, but the Architectural Heritage Fund hopes to see many more in the future.

Particular reference was made at the conference at Llandrindod by Matthew Saunders (Secretary of the Ancient Monuments Society and Hon. Director of the Friends of Friendless Churches) to the help that can be given to redundant chapels in Wales through the medium of a Building Preservation Trust on a revolving trust basis.

Capel welcome the principle and are hoping to help and advise the public on the initial steps necessary to start a Building Preservation Trust. Contact can be made through the Secretary or any member of the Executive.

It is hoped to issue brief guidelines to help and inform members further in the near future.

Elizabeth Hall

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRESERVATION OF CHAPELS IN WALES

In its *Report on the Preservation of Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments*, the Welsh Affairs Committee recommended ‘.. that Cadw co-operate with the Architectural Heritage Fund in encouraging the establishment of more Building Preservation Trusts in Wales’. In its *Response* (Cm 2416) the Government declared that it wished ‘... to explore all opportunities for constructive partnerships between the voluntary and statutory sector. There are many instances of Cadw’s firm commitment to this policy. It has provided increasing levels of financial support, for example through the Civic Initiatives (Heritage) Grant Scheme. In the financial year 1992-93, a grant of £60,000 was paid to the Architectural Heritage Fund to support projects in Wales and on 5 August 1993 the Department offered a further grant of £100,000 for this purpose with a further £11,300 towards the employment of a development officer in Wales. Additionally, Cadw has offered grant aid to Buildings Preservation Trusts towards the costs of restoration in individual cases. Opportunities for greater cooperation and further support will be sought’.

In England too there exists of the Historic Chapels Trust, a registered charity located at 4 Cromwell Place, London SW7 2JJ, which was established ‘to take into its ownership redundant chapels and other places of worship in England of outstanding architectural or historic interest. Its object is to secure, for the benefit of the public generally, the preservation, repair and maintenance of buildings of Non-Conformist, Roman Catholic, Jewish and other religious bodies, together with their contents, burial grounds and curtilages. Anglican churches eligible for care by the Redundant Churches Fund of the Church of England are excluded. All the buildings to be acquired must be no longer in regular religious use and generally graded I or II* on the Statutory List. Once they have been put into good repair, they will be made accessible to the public and it is hoped that occasional services will be held. Alternative uses may also be agreed where appropriate. The Trust will help to foster greater understanding of these buildings by means of research, publications and publicity.

The Welsh Affairs Committee in its Report also recommended ‘the establishment of a Redundant Churches and Chapels Fund for Wales, on a similar basis to that in England (ie 70% funded by Government, 30% by the churches). Since, however, we wish to encourage the inclusion of chapels, we also recommend that the Welsh Office, in consultation with Cadw and the Historic Buildings Council, should have the power in the case of particular chapels, to provide additional funds to make up the chapel’s 30%

contribution'. In its Response the Government noted that Cadw had been discussing with the Representative Body of the Church in Wales the establishment of a Redundant Churches Fund for Wales much on the lines of the Historic Chapels Trust in England. The Welsh Office acknowledged that buildings of other denominations should also enjoy an arrangement on these lines and noted that Cadw was 'discussing with interest groups the way in which this might be approached' and wished 'to facilitate the participation of individuals and voluntary groups both in running and funding such a scheme'.

REGISTER OF CHAPELS

We are at last nearing the end of this long winter and it is hoped that interest can be regenerated in collating information for the Register of Chapels. The Royal Commission's project of recording religious buildings is beginning to roll.

Capel is working with the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales to record all the chapels in the Principality. The work involves the taking of black and white photographs and completion of questionnaires on individual chapels.

The Royal Commission has kindly offered to supply the film (black and white is preferred because it is archively stable) and will also be responsible for its processing. A standard format for the questionnaires has now been agreed and copies are available for members, together with the guidelines for photographic records and the photographic log sheets to accompany individual films.

Help is requested from members of Capel throughout Wales to take part in this work but the following areas are being targeted, as very little information exists:-

- 1) Caernarfonshire
- 2) Montgomeryshire

Other areas of less pressing need are:-

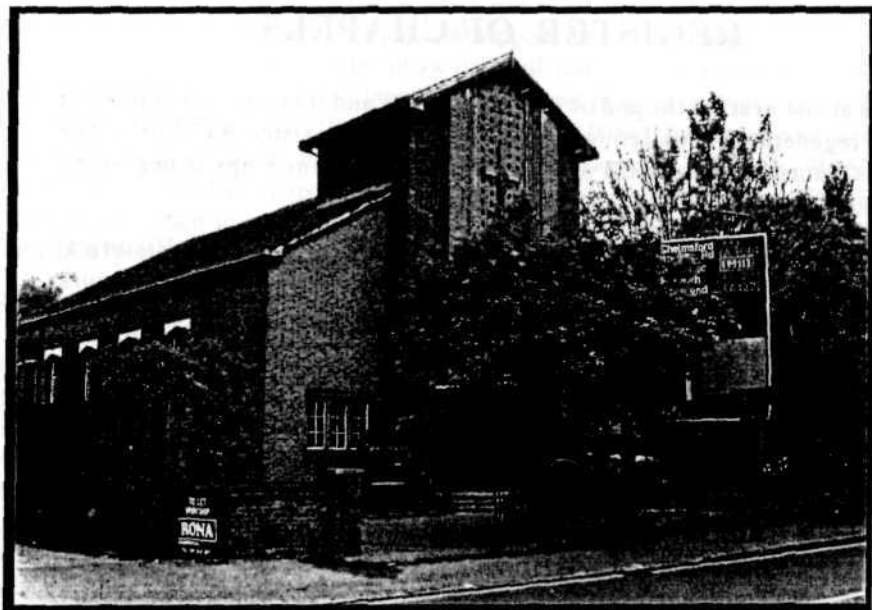
- 1) Anglesey
- 2) Breconshire
- 3) Carmarthenshire

Capel members who are prepared to take part in this important task should in the first instance contact: Mr Alun Jones, Bro Dawel, Coedlan Iorwerth, Aberystwyth, SY23 1EW or any members of the Executive Committee.

Elizabeth Hall

A WELSH ARCHITECT IN LONDON

The March/April issue of the Welsh language ecumenical magazine *Cristion* includes an article by the Rev. Byron Evans on the history and problems of



the Welsh chapels of London. There are 19 of them in central London, mostly Presbyterian, but including the Independent Tabernacl, King's Cross, and the Baptist Castle Street. Their congregations travel many miles to the services but there are also some Welsh chapels in suburban areas such as Harrow, Ealing Green and Sutton, which cater for a more local congregation. One of these suburban chapels, Moreia, Leytonstone, has recently been fearing demolition on account of road building developments. That danger has apparently receded but we publish a picture of the chapel as it is interesting in a number of ways: it is young for a Welsh chapel, having been built after the Second World War to replace the chapel destroyed in the 1941 blitz; it was designed by a Welshman, T Llewelyn Daniel (1891-1967), who was born at Aberdyfi but was brought up, educated and

practised as an architect in London for over 50 years; and his son Huw was, and his daughter Dilys is a life member of Capel. Huw had assisted his father in the design of Moreia and. Dilys has recently arranged a retrospective exhibition of her father's drawings and watercolours, held at the Central Library Galleries, Ilford, for some weeks in April.

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Dates for your Diary

This year's Spring Meeting will be held on Saturday 14 May at Llanystumdwy and Cricieth and a programme and booking form is enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter. As usual a Local Information Sheet will be distributed to members attending the meeting. Arrangements are proceeding to hold the Annual General Meeting at Aberystwyth on 15 October.

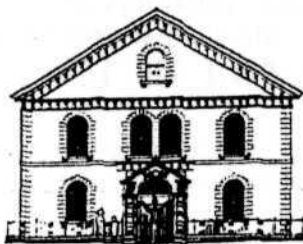
We have received details of a number of meetings organised by other societies which should be of interest to members of Capel.

Our sister society in England, the Chapels Society, is arranging a Residential Week-end Meeting in Bath from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, 23-25 September. Accommodation will be at Bath University and the cost, inclusive of all meals and transport, will be £82. Non-residential participants will be welcome at a cost of £82. (including lunches). To book places on the course or obtain further details of the programme members should write to Dr Mary Ede, 12 Springfield Place, Bath BA1 5RA (Tel.0225-422362)

The Denbighshire Historical Society cordially invite Capel members to join them on their field trips in June. On the 4th they will meet at Worthenbury Church at 2.30 for a visit to Worthenbury and Bangor on Dee churches. On the 22nd at 7.30 pm as part of Wrexham Heritage Week they have a talk at the Arts Centre, Wrexham, by W A Williams on 'Old Wrexham' and on 9th July they visit Gwydir Chapel Llanrwst under the leadership of V Hughes. Looking further ahead to 10th December, the Ven. T W Pritchard will talk on 18th and 19th century churches in Denbighshire at the Wrexham Arts Centre at 2.30 and on 24 January next year the Edeyrnion Historical Society, which meets at the Edeyrnion Council Chambers, Corwen, will be addressed by Ifor Jones on 'Early Quakers'.

Pontypridd

Historical and Cultural Centre



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Working models. Including a model railway and a model colliery.

Objects. Used at work, in the home and in recreation.

Recorded voices. People of Pontypridd telling their own history.

Archive film. Important aspects and moments of the history of the town and the valleys.

The Centre is located in a converted chapel whose pipe organ is still used for recitals. A new audio visual programme explains the origins of the chapels and traces the influence of Welsh religious dissent at home and overseas.

There is also a full programme of visiting exhibitions on historical, scientific and artistic subjects.

Tourist Information Centre

Open: Tuesday - Saturday 9am - 5pm
(& Bank Holidays)

Admission: Adults 25p Children 15p

Bridge Street, Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan CF37 4PE
Telephone (0443) 402077/480786

How to get there: The Centre is about 500 yards from the A470 - Ynysybwl exit (6 miles from M4 junction 32)

At the "Gateway to the Valleys"

Canolfan

Hanesyddol a Diwylliannol Pontypridd

Argraffwyd yn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru
Printed at the National Library of Wales