

Capel

CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



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LLOYD GEORGE AND NONCONFORMITY THE CHAPELS OF LLANYSTUMDWY AND CRICIETH



Rear view of Moriah C.M Chapel, Llanystumdwy

Our Spring Meeting this year, held on 14 May in Llanystumdwy and Cricieth, was largely centred on one of the most famous Welshmen of the twentieth century. Lloyd George is no doubt better known for his political achievements than as a pillar of Christianity but his background and upbringing shed interesting lights on some aspects of Welsh Nonconformity.

We met in the Lloyd George Museum in Llanystumdwy, a monument to the village's most illustrious son which had been set up by local initiative in 1960, transferred to the County Council in 1980 and opened in a new building in 1990.

The main speaker in the morning meeting was Mr Rufus Adams, Director of the WEA in North Wales. He took as his subject 'Lloyd George - the formative years', pointing out how important for L.G.'s career had been his upbringing by his Scotch Baptist shoemaker uncle Richard Lloyd. Richard was ambitious for his nephews and made sure they read enough to fit themselves for one of the professions. But which profession? The ministry of course was not a possibility as Scotch Baptists do not have a paid ministry; teaching would be difficult as the village school was Anglican and the headmaster would not accept Baptist pupil teachers; Lloyd George was said to be 'hopeless with his hands' and so could not become a doctor. In retrospect, it seems almost inevitable that he should train as a solicitor.

In addition to instilling in him a sense of discipline, Lloyd George's Scotch Baptist background encouraged him to take the side of the underdog. It seems that even within Nonconformity there was a stratification in nineteenth century Welsh society. The Scotch Baptists were outsiders and the parents of Margaret Owen were not happy when they learnt that their daughter was interested in one of them. Our present social security system perhaps owes more than we realise to the fact that Lloyd George was a Scotch Baptist.

Following the lecture we crossed the road to view Moriah, the Calvinistic Methodist chapel built in 1936 to the designs of Clough Williams-Ellis. This is an attractive building of its time but with an exterior resembling a school rather than a chapel. Its longer side faces the street but its entrance is in one of the two semicircular apses on the gable ends. The interior is particularly sparse in its furnishing. Mr Vernon Hughes drew attention to the interesting window arrangement to achieve a balance of light and to the proscenium arch which replaces the traditional imposing pulpit.

After a buffet lunch in the open air and a visit to Lloyd George's grave at the riverside, the company drove on to Cricieth to visit two chapels associated with the Lloyd George family. The first was the Campbellite Pen-y-maes, where Richard Lloyd and his father Dafydd had served

as pastors and which is now a private house. The conversion appeared to have been carried out sensitively and one can still see in the garden the stream which could be dammed when required for baptism. The second was the much larger Berea which dates from 1886 and which joined the mainstream Baptists in 1939. There we were addressed by Lloyd George's nephew Dr W R P George who related a little of the chapel's history, including the occasion when Cricieth castle was struck by a thunderbolt and one of the stones was thrown as far as the chapel, some 200 yards away. Mr Vernon Hughes drew our attention to the way in which the round heads of the windows were reflected in circle motifs throughout the chapel -in the elegant but restrained plaster decorations of the ceiling and in the woodwork of the pulpit and the pews.



Capel Pen-y-Maes, Pwllheli



Interior of Berea Baptist Chapel, Pwllheli

Our last visit was to Seion, the large Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church which originated in the walk-out from Capel Mawr of the Rev. John Owen, four deacons and 120 members in 1889. They met originally in the English chapel but by 1895 a new chapel had been built, seating about 650 and costing £2040. Today it returns the hospitality of its early days by providing accommodation after the Welsh Sunday morning service for the worship of the English Presbyterian church.

CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL BLYNYDDOL

Gyda'r rhifyn hwn dosberthir rhaglen y Cyfarfod Blynyddol, a gynhelir eleni yn Aberystwyth. Cyfarfu'r Gymdeithas yn Aberystwyth saith mlynedd yn ôl, ac felly penderfynwyd eleni amrywio ychydig ar ein patrwm arferol. Wedi'r Cyfarfod Blynyddol yn y bore yn y Ganolfan Fethodistaidd newydd (gweler Cylchlythyr 14) fe geir sgyrsiau ar hanes yr achosion Wesleiaidd Saesneg a Chymraeg yn y dref a'r modd y daethant at ei gilydd mewn adeilad newydd. Yna bydd cyfle i fynd o amgylch yr adeilad (y tro cyntaf, y mae'n debyg, i'r Gymdeithas ymweld â chapel newydd). Yn y prynhawn yn lle mynd o amgylch capeli'r dref byddwn yn ail-gyfarfod yn y Llyfrgell Genedlaethol i glywed nifer o siaradwyr yn sôn am y cynlluniau a weithredwyd neu a ddechreuwyd mewn gwahanol ardaloedd i sicrhau bod capeli Cymru yn cael eu cofnodi'n llawn. Bydd Dafydd Ifans yn siarad am gofnodion capeli yn y Llyfrgell Genedlaethol, Cmr A F Mortimer yn sôn am arolwg CAPEL ym Meirionnydd, un o staffy Comisiwn Henebion yn siarad am brosiect ffotograffig y Comisiwn, Kevin Mathias am brosiect Clwyd, Neil Sumner am brosiect Morgannwg Ganol, ac Evan L James am waith y Gymdeithasau Hanes Teuluol. Bydd cyfle hefyd yn y Llyfrgell i weld yr arddangosfa barhaol ar hanes Eglwys Bresbyteriaidd Cymru a detholiad o ddarluniau a wnaed gan Cdr Mortimer o gapeli Maldwyn a Meirionnydd a ffotograffau a dynnwyd o dan gynllun y Comisiwn Henebion.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Enclosed with this issue are details and registration form for this year's Autumn Meeting which is to be held in Aberystwyth on October 15. CAPEL has visited Aberystwyth once before, so this year it was decided to make some changes in the day's programme. The AGM will be held in the new St Paul's Methodist Centre (see Newsletter 14) and will be followed by a tour of the building (the first new chapel we have visited as a society) and talks on the history of Methodism in the town and the creation of the Centre. In the afternoon, instead of visiting the town's older chapels we shall assemble in the National Library to hear and to talk to representatives of a number of bodies, presenting reports on the various chapel recording projects which have been undertaken in different areas. Among the speakers will be Dafydd Ifans of the N.L.W., Cmr. A F Mortimer of CAPEL, a member of staff of the Royal Commission, Kevin Matthias of Clwyd, Neil Sumner of Mid Glamorgan, and Evan L James of the Family History Society. In the Library too there will be an opportunity to view the permanent exhibition of the history of the Presbyterian Church of Wales and a selection of Cmr Mortimer's chapel plans and drawings and also some of the photographs taken as part of the RCAHM project.

RECORDING WELSH NONCONFORMIST CHAPELS

Introductory:

The sub-committee of CAPEL set up to pursue the systematic recording of all nonconformist chapels in the Principality decided in January 1992 to select one county in which to conduct a trial. Clearly, to avoid wasteful duplication it was preferable to select a county for which little or nothing had already been done, while geographical considerations of accessibility to a majority of sub-committee members had to be considered.

Eventually, the old county of Merionethshire was selected. Not only did it satisfy the criteria already mentioned, but it had the virtue of providing a very wide variety of districts, industries and farming styles. Additionally the county had a relatively high proportion of its chapels still open and in use, and lastly the county had suffered a minimum of needless upheaval as a result of Redcliffe-Maud in 1974.

Method

A good starting point for setting the scope of the survey and estimating the magnitude of the task was examination of the information contained in the Merionethshire section of the Appendix to the report of the 1905 Royal Commission on the Church of England and Other Religious Bodies in Wales and Monmouthshire and comparison with details contained in the modern year books of each denomination. (The report of the 1851 Religious Census was of little use as returns for a considerable part of the county are not available.)

It was decided that the initial recording would be best carried out by chapel officers themselves in answering a standard questionnaire to be prepared by the sub-committee and sent out by CAPEL to the appropriate officers named in denominational year books. The form of the questionnaire and the details requested were devised by the sub-committee's architectural experts and the need for a bi-lingual approach meant that the chairman was required to provide an equivalent Welsh translation (not a simple task when technical terms are involved.)

Results

Replies came in steadily in the following months and were often accompanied by either gifts or loans of much invaluable information in the form of commemorative booklets and hand-written notes amplifying the replies to

questions posed in the questionnaire. Throughout this period valuable translating of completed questionnaires was carried out by a CAPEL member not on the sub-committee. Completed questionnaires were photocopied so that they are now available both in the Merionethshire Record Office at Dolgellau and in the National Library of Wales (Department of Manuscripts and Records) at Aberystwyth. (A page from one completed questionnaire is shown on p.8.) Meanwhile, the acting draughtsman of the sub-committee was following up replies by making personal contact with chapel officers and ministers in order to produce plan and elevation drawings at a common scale for deposit in the National Library of Wales (Department of Pictures and Maps), to establish National Grid references for each chapel and, where necessary, to clarify and expand responses to the questionnaire.

At the same time, personal contact helped to fill gaps where chapels had been missed in the original despatch of questionnaires, when chapel officers had changed and when chapels were recently closed. In the latter part of the trial when suitable arrangements had been made these visits were also used to take black and white photographs on behalf of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments (National Monument Record) in Aberystwyth.

Of a total of 273 chapels operating in 1905 plus two causes instituted since then, a total of 127 remained open and in use in August 1993. All these chapels still open have recorded and have been drawn up, while seven recently-closed chapels have been drawn up also. At the same time, the location and present condition of 95 of the closed chapels has been determined and recorded.

Over a period of some twenty months, a survey of the surviving chapels in one county has been completed, resulting in the preparation of the following records:

- (a) Completed questionnaires recording in standard form the history, construction and condition of each chapel together with its exact location.
- (b) A plan and at least one elevation drawing at a scale of 33mm to 1 foot of each chapel.
- (c) Black and white photographs of the majority of the chapels.
- (d) Additionally, the exact location and present state of a large number of the closed chapels has been recorded.

Received 4.6.92.

<p>Comment The first Independent chapel at Britford was opened in 1801. Now a private house - Noddfa. When this became too small a gallery was CAPEL - Cymdeithas Treftadaeth introduced y Capeli</p>		<p>3/3</p>	
<p>HOLIADUR</p>		<p>Cyfeirif <u>XIII</u> / 78</p>	
		<p>NLW 2335</p>	
		<p>Nat. Arch Ref: (Rhif) SH 768187</p>	
1.	ENW <i>Britdir Britford</i>	<p>Cyfeiriad os Rhestrwyd CADW</p>	
2.	ENWAU BLAENOROL <i>Independent Chapel Erected 1860.</i>	<p>SYLW</p>	
3.	CYFEIRIAD <i>Britdir, n.s. Dolgellau</i>	<p>cod post <u>LL40</u></p>	
4.	CYNGOR DOSBARTH <i>Britdir a Nuffachet.</i>		
5.	ENWAD - PRESENNOL GWREIDDOL <i>Amibynwy.</i>		
6.	ARDAL neu GYLCHDAITH <i>Britdir.</i>		
7.	DYDDIAD YR ADEILAD <i>1860.</i>	8.	DYDDIAD SEFYDLU OS YN WAHANOL <i>1794.</i>
9.	DYDDIAD YCHWANEGIADAU - manylion <i>Dim.</i>	13.	There is a photograph of the SYLWADAU chapel on page 73 in the book by Edward Roberts Cwm Afon <i>Verbury Maxine. 1904</i>
10.	ENW'R PENSÆR <i>William Jones Medealed, Dolgellau.</i>	11.	<i>Rees Owen, Dolgellau (Merion), William Thomas Dinas Woddy. C. (Britdir) ENW'R ADEILADYDD Evan Morris, Dolgellau, 1860. Ceir llun o'r Capel yn yr orchodant Britdir.</i>
12.	CYNLLUNIAU/DARLUNIAU ar gael <i>yes. Separated in N.L.W. (plans 2x6w @ 3mm to 1 foot)</i>	13.	FFOTOGRAFFAU <i>Edward Roberts, Cwm Afon ar gael (Verbury Maxine). Ind. 73. 1904.</i>
<p><u>SYLWADAU</u> Agorwyd y Capel Amibynnol cynta yn y Britdir yn 1801 sydd bellach yn de preifat sef Noddfa. Dedi i'r capel hwn fynd yn rhyfach i'r cymuned. <u>Britdir</u>, Ceisiard rhai oriel yddo (see above)</p>			

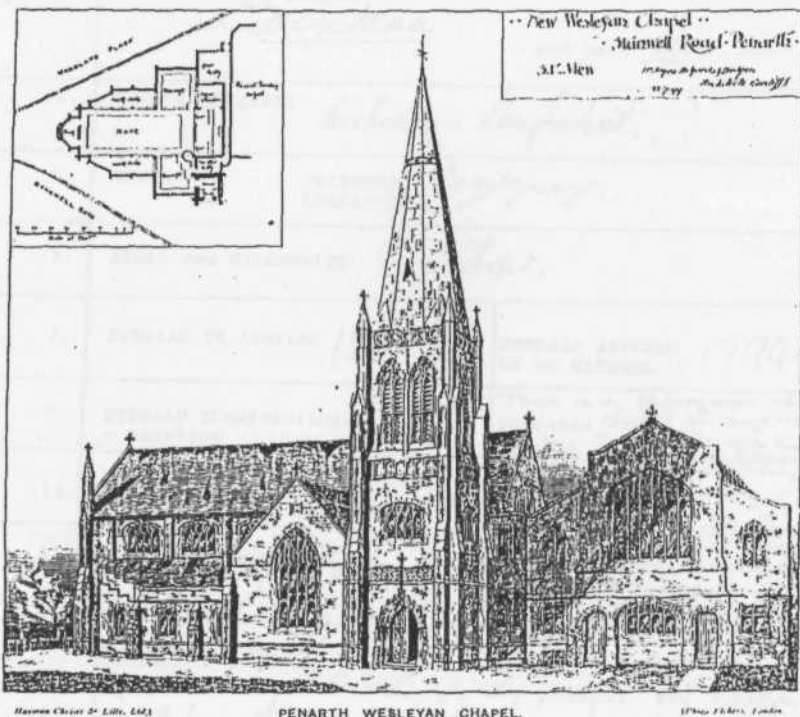
Almost without exception, chapel members and officers and their ministers have co-operated and shown much kindness during the study - so much so that it would be invidious to mention any by name.

In 1905, chapels provided 81,505 sittings for a 1901 population of 48,852 while it is calculated that church seats numbered about 12,000. By 1993 sittings had fallen to 43,172 for a population not substantially different from that in 1901.

A.F.Mortimer

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Trinity Methodist Church, Penarth: A Portrait by John and Sheila Gibbs is a detailed history of a local Methodist church written by a couple who are not only staunch members of this church but also well known as benefactors and supporters of Methodism in its wider context. But this book is more than an expertly written history; it is also a documentation of the social and economic changes that have affected Penarth and Britain at large in the twentieth century and how these have been reflected in the corporate worship and individual lives of people connected with Trinity Church.



Trinity Methodist Church, Penarth, opened in 1901 at a cost of £7,500 with a grandiose design "very much more elaborate than most nonconformist churches" according to a contemporary account in *The South Wales Echo*. Indeed, in many respects, the building resembles an Anglican church rather than a Nonconformist chapel. Dr Gibbs explains that this design was adopted to capture the particular ethos of Methodism at the turn of the century, with its wish to claim a rightful place in the mainstream of British church life. Following introductory chapters on the town of Penarth, Methodist beginnings in the area dating from 1860, and the building of Trinity Church, each chapter is headed by a minister's name and covers the period during which he was stationed at Trinity. This personal progression highlights the thesis which is emphasised throughout the book that God works through his people.

The reader is also made aware of the larger church of which this local church is a part. For example, a separate chapter is devoted to the Anglican-Methodist 'conversations' which began in England in 1955, and in Wales (separately) in 1963. John and Sheila Gibbs played prominent roles in the discussions with the Church in Wales and the Penarth Methodist Circuit voted strongly in favour of unity. The scheme floundered nationally, as is well known, on account of the Anglican Church failing to obtain the required 75% majority. An altogether readable and well-written book, with a stamp of authority on it, although perhaps over-detailed in some respects. At 294 pages and a price of £6.50 from the Methodist Publishing House, it represents remarkable value for money.

**COFRESTRI ANGHYDFFURFIOL CYMRU:
NONCONFORMIST REGISTERS OF WALES:**

Golygwyd gan / Edited by Dafydd Ifans

(Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales and the County Archivists' Group, 1994.) £14.50

Yn wyneb y chwalfa fawr sy'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd wrth i gynifer of gapeli gau yng Nghymru, mae'r gwaith o ddiogelu cofrestri a chofysgrifau yr enwadau anghydfurfiol yn waith o'r pwysigrwydd mwyaf. Bwriad y gyfrol hon yw rhestru'r cofrestri hynny sydd wedi'u diogelu mewn sefydliadau cyhoeddus yng Nghymru neu Loegr. Bwriedir y gyfrol i fod yn chwaer i'r gyfrol Cofrestri Plwyfi Cymru a dderbyniodd groeso brwd pan gyhoeddwyd hi yn 1986. Ceir ynddi luniau enghreifftiol o wahanol fathau o gofrestri anghydfurfiol o 1640 ymlaen. Cynhwysir hefyd ragymadrodd manwl a mynegai cynhwysfawr o enwau lleoedd.

At a time when so many Welsh chapels are closing their doors, it becomes ever more imperative that nonconformist chapel registers should be preserved. This volume aims at listing all those registers which have been deposited in public and national libraries and record offices in England and Wales, and is intended as a companion volume to *Parish Registers of Wales* which received such a warm welcome when it was published in 1986. Illustrations are included of various types of Nonconformist registers from the earliest in 1649 and there are also a detailed introduction and comprehensive index to place-names.

Chapel history is being lost forever

By STEVE DUBE

FIFTY CHAPELS are closing every year in Wales, and archivists fear that a vital element of Welsh heritage could be buried forever amid their ruins.

The Welsh chapel heritage society, Capel, says that more often than not the records and registers of dissolved chapels disappear with the congregations.

At the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, historians are aware of the existence of 5,500 chapels, many of which have already closed, but so far only 1,350 registers have been deposited in public libraries or record offices.

These are listed in a new book, *Nonconformist Registers of Wales*, edited by Dafydd Ifans and published by the National Library and the Welsh County Archivist Group.

"With chapels closing at the rate of one a week it has become even more imperative that non-conformist chapel registers and



"MYSTERIOUS PAST... The Old Chapel at Bonwen

records should be preserved," said Mr Ifans.

He appeals to all chapel secretaries to place their documents in the safe keeping of libraries or record offices as they are invaluable sources of information for historians and for people compiling family records.

Mr Ifans encountered numerous problems during research for his book. He located one lost chapel under a reservoir in the Brecon Beacons.

Another at Ruabon had been

turned into a British Legion club — which had also closed.

Groes Chapel at Port Talbot was relocated when the M4 was built but closed before mapmakers were able to record its presence as the new site was too remote for the congregation.

The site of another lies under an out-of-town store car park at Wrexham.

"The problem is that chapels don't have such a solid administrative back-up as churches," said Mr Ifans.

"The Church in Wales has given strict orders about how and where to deposit their registers and both they and the Calvinistic Methodists have been doing it since 1844, but with the others it's up to the individual chapel office holders to do something about it, and we find that registers and records are often held in private homes where they can be easily lost."

Even when they are kept in the chapel, the records can still go missing.

"You hear of chapels being knocked down with the records still inside the building," said Mr Ifans.

Chapel secretary Susan Beekley said, "It's really important that the secretaries hand over any archival material for safe keeping and we try to encourage them as far as possible, but it's sometimes quite difficult to find out if a chapel is closing or where the records might be."

One chapel she would like to know more about is the Old Chapel at Barwen.

"Chapels were such an important part of the history of Wales it would be tragic if the records are lost forever," she said.

ON THE RECORD

■ Henry VIII's Chancellor Thomas Cromwell ordered all churches to keep registers of births, deaths and marriages in 1538, but the only Welsh register surviving from that period is a copy, made in 1598, from the parish of Gwersyngor, Flint.

■ Only 70 parish or chapel registers survive from the 16th century.

■ The Quakers were the first nonconformists to organise detailed registers of births, deaths and marriages.

■ The earliest nonconformist register is that for the Baptist Chapel in Liston, Gower, dating from 1648 and now housed in Brown University Library in Providence, Rhode Island — the first Baptist fled from persecution to Massachusetts.

■ Scores of chapels were demolished during the construction of the M4.

■ *Collected Anghydffurfiol Cymru Nonconformist Registers of Wales* is available from public records offices and the National Library, price £14.50.

Give the little chapels a chance

SIR — I must answer Mr Morgan D Jones of Maesteg.

I am one of such a "dwindling" congregation that has had its church building closed and "sold over our heads".

A few other chapels in the area have suffered the same fate and have been turned into houses — into private ownership.

Our church here had four or five cottages attached and these were let out to the needy — but lately the rent was not paid or else paid to the occupier by the social services.

Members of our chapel — there were six good and true and their families of course — have continued to worship, but the old fellowship is not there.

We were members for well over 30 years and most had been in the chapel all their lives — over 60 years.

It seemed to the trustees, members of other chapels, a "God-given opportunity" to shut the church and put it on the market as "redundant".

This was a church whose origins went back to the time when Baptists and Annibynwyr were thrown out of the local church of England in 1662. (The vestry is the old 17th century chapel).

I must be a traditionalist — I realise unbelievably that I have lived my three score years and ten — but Christ himself did not choose the easy way of "big business" when he was facing his temptations.

By all means amalgamate and

work together but give the little communities a chance to survive, where individuals matter not just mega companies, multiple stores, big schools and "bold imaginative" church decisions.

ELLDAR THOMAS BEVAN
(Mrs)

Ryeford, Weston-under-Penyard,
Ross on Wye, Herefordshire.

Glimmer of a new order

27. 7. 94

SIR — Having witnessed the demolition of my boyhood chapel and the recent closure (though at the members' own request) of my spiritual home for over 40 years I can readily understand the feelings and can respect the viewpoint of your correspondent from Ross-on-Wye who took issue with me over the proposed closure of so many chapels.

Nevertheless, however unpalatable and indeed draconian, the decision may be, it must surely be preferable to the alternative, namely the depressing prospect of seeing more chapels in the same neighbourhood abandoned and falling into disrepair, presenting a squalid eyesore to the casual passer-by and a painful reminder to the devout Christian of the Church's desperate plight.

With the Christian Church in this country fighting for its life and trying to preserve a vestige of its influence on society, the time has surely come for it to get its priorities right.

Of infinitely greater importance than the costly preservation of its buildings is the spiritual welfare of its members, the

breaking down of old barriers, the burial of ancient prejudices, and above all a concerted effort to pool all its available resources in order to present a united front under the banner of Christ who called us all to be one in Him.

What we are witnessing is not the end of the Church, the real

Church, but that of an over-institutionalised Church, bound and fettered dogma, and more concerned with the preservation of its own identity and well-being than with the execution of its proper role, namely that of providing a loving ministry to a needy world.

But through the eye of faith we can already see the first glimmers of a new order.

I feel that Tennyson's lines are relevant here:

The old order changeth,
yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in
many ways,
Lest one good custom should
corrupt the world.

MORGAN D JONES
Brynawr Place,
Maesteg, Mid Glamorgan.

The two letters to the *Western Mail* reproduced above are examples of the reactions within the Presbyterian Church in Wales to the 'Strategy' for redundant buildings recently adopted by the Denomination and described by the Rev. Dafydd Owen in our *Newsletter* 19.

Demolition sparks anger

THE decision to demolish one of Llanelli's oldest landmarks to make way for new homes has been slammed by the business man who wanted to restore the building to its former glory.

A bitter row erupted last year over plans to turn the derelict Lloyd Street Chapel into a wine bar.

But now Llanelli borough council has ordered the demolition of the existing chapel and Sunday School building so that seven terraced houses can be built on the site.

Businessman Tony Quaglio, whose controversial plans sparked uproar among churchmen and were thrown out by the council last year, has attacked the decision.

He told the Star: "I would have brought that building back to its former glory. What do these people know about business? Now at the end of



Demolition plans . . . for the Lloyd Street Chapel.

the day the church is not going to be there any more.

"A lot of people wrote in and attacked my plans, it is these people who have in the end caused the building to be demolished."

Resident Graham Williams, of Queen Victoria Road, also criticised the council decision.

"I myself would have preferred to have seen the building remain restored to its former glory and no doubt improved, and what is the difference if it had been a wine

bar it would still have remained a feature," he said.

"Now we will lose an historic part of the town forever. This building is irreplaceable when it is demolished it will be lost."

The proposed development involves the demolition and clearance of the building to be replaced by a staggered terrace of seven three bedroomed houses and the formation of a rear lane service facility with individual car parking spaces in the rear garden of each property.

Borough mayor Coun. Wynn Jenkins said: "It's a sad reflection on society today that we are losing a building of this nature, but it's better that it's being put for housing use."

Borough development director Clive Davies added: "The chapel and Sunday school have been vacant for some time, they are becoming vandalised and are of increasingly poor condition. The new properties are of attractive design and the proposal is wholly suitable in this location."

SELF-builders who want to save money and add character by using old stone and slates may be interested in buying a Pontrhydyfen chapel for around £2,000.

Sardis Chapel on Sardis Hill, just over the brow from Cimla, has been vacated by the congregation because of constant vandalism and falling numbers.

Under the Charities Act solicitors acting for the trustees must get the best possible price and three weeks ago placed an advertisement in the Evening Post saying an offer of £2,000

By Evening Post property correspondent Mary Rees

had been received for the chapel. If no higher offer is received within 28 days the chapel is likely to be sold for that price.

Estate agents confirmed that no planning application has been made to convert the chapel or demolish it and use as a building plot.

There's been considerable

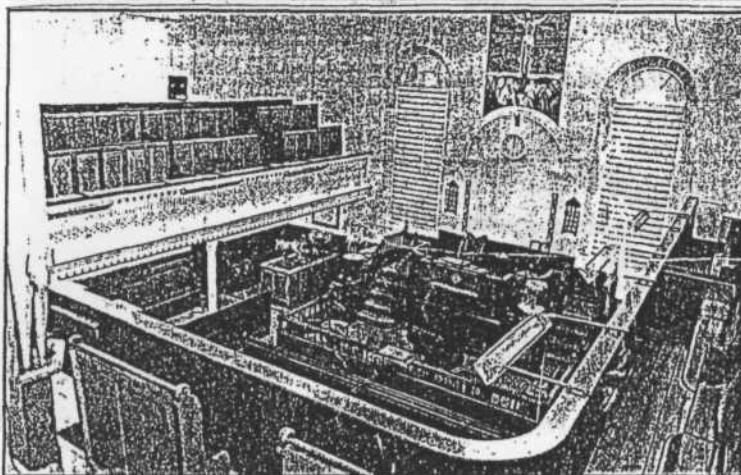
interest in the property but none in converting the chapel or building a home on the land.

It is on a difficult site and next to the main road between Pontrhydyfen and Neath on a hill but an inventive architect could probably come up with a design which would take this into account.

And if planning approval can be obtained for a home at around £2,000 it would prove a very cheap building plot.

If a Property Post reader decides to take up the challenge either to convert the chapel or build a new home on the site let us know.

150 years of history to come tumbling down



The interior of Aberdulais Baptist Church, built in 1849, soon to be demolished to make way for the new A465 road.

Demolition as new road work starts

DEMOLITION men will bring almost 150 years of history crashing down in a week's time to make way for the long-awaited new A465 Neath Valley road.

Aberdulais Baptist Church was built in 1849. But on Sunday, the congregation will worship there for the last time before the contractors move in on January 17 to start clearing the church and several other buildings which stand in the path of the new road.

Former minister, the Rev. Joshua Thomas, says the Baptist links with Aberdulais go back to the beginning of the 18th century. In July 1710 transfer letters were issued by Iston Church in Swansea for members living in Aberdulais to become members of any Baptist Church in Pennsylvania.

Many workers in the copper and tin works in the Neath area attended Bethania Church at Neath, but in August 1825 several members moved to Cwmanon and this effectively slowed down the development of the Baptist movement in Aberdulais.

By Malcolm Rees

Prayer meetings were held at homes in the area until 1841 when regular preaching took place at the old works schoolroom at Aberdulais and in 1842 Aberdulais became a branch of Bethania.

Moonlight

In 1849 special meetings were held to establish the church and within a year construction started.

The men in the small congregation worked long hours often quarrying rock by moonlight with their wives helping to carry materials to the site of the new church. The rock was given free by Mr Tennant who lived at Cadoxton and the church was eventually completed at a cost of just £300.

Worship began in the

church in 1851 and the building was consecrated in May 1851. The final service will be conducted by the Rev E.G. Phillips on Sunday and the church is expected to packed for this final farewell.

A new church will be built for the congregation on the site of the old Tonns School but until work is carried out the church will hold services on Sunday afternoons at Nazareth Chapel in Tonns.

In addition to the church, the nearby petrol station and adjoining house, together with the old Aberdulais post office will also have to be cleared for the new road.

The area will also lose the tourist information caravan and the small car park currently used by visitors to the National Trust property opposite the church.

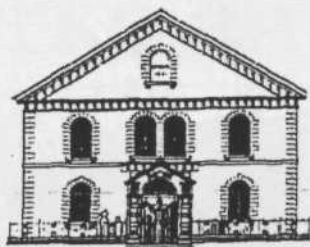
Aberdulais—On July 3, 1710, Arthur Melchior of Aberdulais, and Hannah his wife, received letters of dismission from the Swansea-Iston Church to the sister assembly planted by John Myles in Pennsylvania. Hannah was a daughter of Robert Morgan of Fountains—one of the notable men of the post-Cromwellian period of religious persecution. See Jos. Thomas, *Hist. of Bapts.*, 1777, p. 223. The Neath church of Bethania drew several members from this area in its sister the late 18th cent. Services were commenced in the school-house belonging to the Tinworks about 1838; a separate church was formed in 1849; and on May 5-6, 1851, the new Baptist chapel (Noddin) was opened (Jones MS.). Up till 1865 the successive ministers of Bethania, Neath, held the oversight of the congregation and occupied the pulpit. A separate pastor was then appointed. 1865-8: J. R. Jones. 1872-4: J. D. Williams died Aug. 21, 1874; buried at Llan Gatwg. 1884-c. 91: Benjamin James. 1892: Edward Parry, the veteran minister who is still labouring there. It is to be noted that the Baptist handbook dates the formation of the church of 1851. The main text



Church elder Iorwerth Thomas outside the Church.

Pontypridd

Historical and Cultural Centre



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Tourist Information Centre

Open: Monday - Saturday (inc. Bank Holidays) 9am - 5pm

Evening group visits by arrangement

Admission: Adults 25p Children & O.A.P.'s 15p

Bridge Street, Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan CF37 4PE
Telephone (0443) 409512

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

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