

# Capel

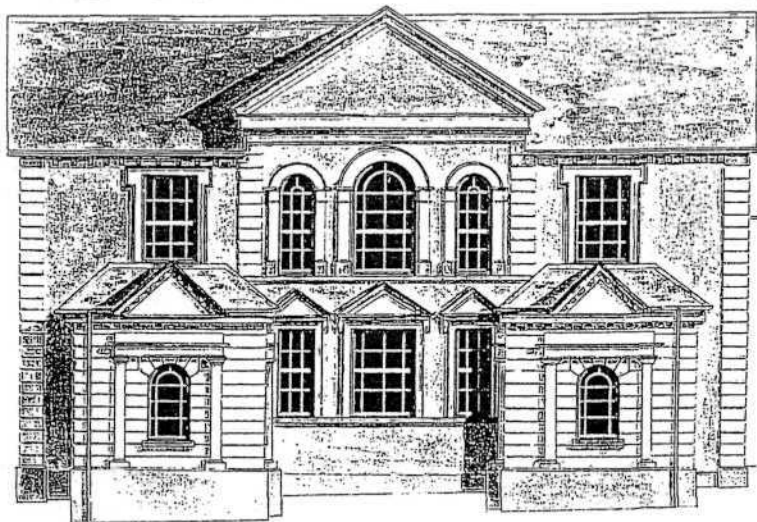
CYMEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI  
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



CYLCHLYTHYR / NEWSLETTER 28

HYDREF / AUTUMN 1996

## TEMLAU ADDOLIAD : *TEMPLES OF DEVOTION*



Members of CAPEL attending the Spring Meeting held at Aberystwyth on 18 May were given the opportunity of viewing the exhibition 'Temlau Addoliad, *Temples of Devotion*' which was mounted in the Central Hall of the National Library of Wales from 20 March to 22 June 1996. The exhibition, which celebrated the tenth anniversary of CAPEL, featured the work of individual artists and photographers and also of initiatives organised by local authorities.

The significance of the work of the late Commander A F Mortimer, former Treasurer of the Society, was emphasised in our *Newsletter 26* (Autumn 1995). In the exhibition, eighteen of his architectural drawings

were displayed. It was appropriate, in view of the venue, that five of the drawings illustrated chapels in Ceredigion, with the three in Aberystwyth including the vacated St Paul's and Seilo, demolished in 1995. Four drawings each depicted chapels in Merioneth and Montgomeryshire, the two counties which had been extensively surveyed by Commander Mortimer, and the remainder related to other areas in both south and north Wales.

A larger group of 20 works by the artist John Smout, who is a member of the Society, focused attention on chapels mainly located in the vicinity of Llangollen, Ruthin and Rhosllanerchrugog. Having studied architecture, John Smout trained as a painter at Birmingham, Stourbridge and Liverpool Colleges of Art. He taught art for many years in Denbighshire and Clwyd and his work has been extensively exhibited in one-man, joint and group exhibitions. He has sought, in his depictions of chapel buildings to pay, in his own words, "a tribute to the ingenuity of the builders and the foresight of the congregations who were responsible for these chapels. These 'temples of devotion' demonstrate a variety of solutions to the problem of providing a suitable structure for worship, with these chapels reflecting the optimism and confidence of the congregations for which they were built".

John Smout was aware that some of the chapel buildings drawn by him had ceased to function as places of worship. Stuart Ladd, a freelance photographer living in Cardigan, his home town, has recorded over 70 converted chapels. He had studied Documentary Photography at the Gwent College, Newport, and it was at this time, following a visit to the Olympus Gym, formerly the chapel in Bridge St Newport, that his interest developed in recycled churches and chapels. The exhibition featured 20 of his photographs, with most of the converted chapel buildings located in south Wales. (The exceptions were St Paul's Abergele [KwikSave], Trinity Acrefair [Border Beds], a chapel in Ffynnongroew [house], Sion Flint [printing works] and St John's Connah's Quay [KwikSave]).

The exhibits also included thirteen photographs forming part of the West Glamorgan project organised by the West Glamorgan Archives Service. These illustrated chapels in Bonymaen, Cymer, Danygraig,

Gowerton, Mynydd Bach, Neath, Penclawdd and Port Talbot. From Mid Glamorgan there were exhibited seven drawings of chapels in Bargoed, Dowlais, Groeswen, Maesteg, Merthyr Tydfil and Treorchy, which had been produced by a survey of all the pre-1918 Nonconformist chapels in the county organised by the Council's Planning Department between 1978 and 1981, using Manpower Services Commission funding. (Further information on this survey may be seen in the *Newsletter*, 24, Winter 1994.)

A touring version of this exhibition, comprising selected items from the main components, is available for display.\* The first showing was at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales held at Lampeter from 15 to 18 July.

D Huw Owen

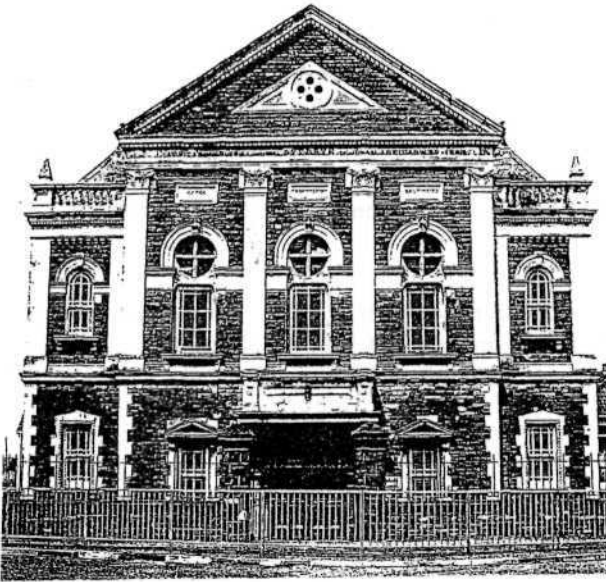
\* Further information is available from D Michael Francis, the Exhibitions Officer at the National Library.

Visitors to the exhibition also welcomed the opportunity of viewing *The Connexion's Heritage*, the permanent exhibition of items from the archives of the Presbyterian Church of Wales housed in the National Library, and also, on video, the two television programmes *On the Chapel Trail*, first broadcast by HTV on 26 November and 10 December 1995. These programmes were produced by Hywel Davies, a member of CAPEL, and presented by Professor Anthony Jones, one of the founder members of the Society.

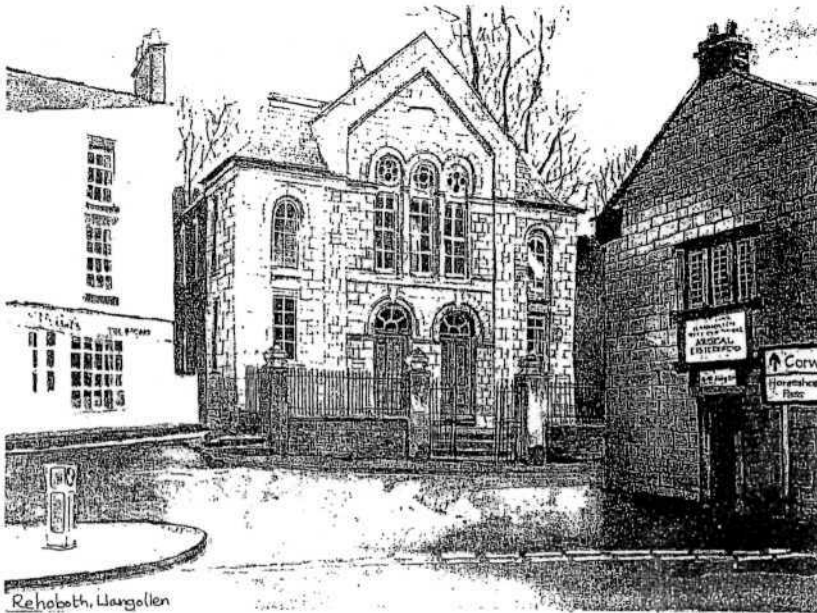
The most notable event of the afternoon was a memorable lecture by Professor Jones, delivered to an invited audience of members of CAPEL and of the Friends of the National Library of Wales to launch the new edition of his book *Welsh Chapels*. The publication is a greatly extended, indeed re-written and re-illustrated, version of the work first published by the National Museum of Wales in 1984, and the lecturer held his audience for two delightful hours of word and picture tracing the history of Welsh Nonconformity through its buildings. (The new edition of the book is published by Alan Sutton in association with the National Museums and Galleries of Wales @£8.99)

*Pictures from the 10th  
Anniversary Exhibition*

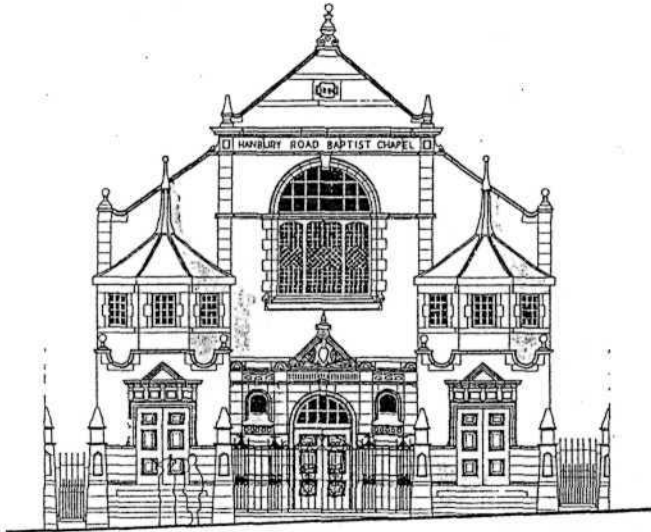
1. Dyffryn, Port Talbot  
(West Glamorgan)
2. Rehoboth, Llangollen  
(John Smout)
3. Hanbury Road, Bargoed  
(Mid Glamorgan)
4. Bethania, Cynwyd  
(A. F. Mortimer)



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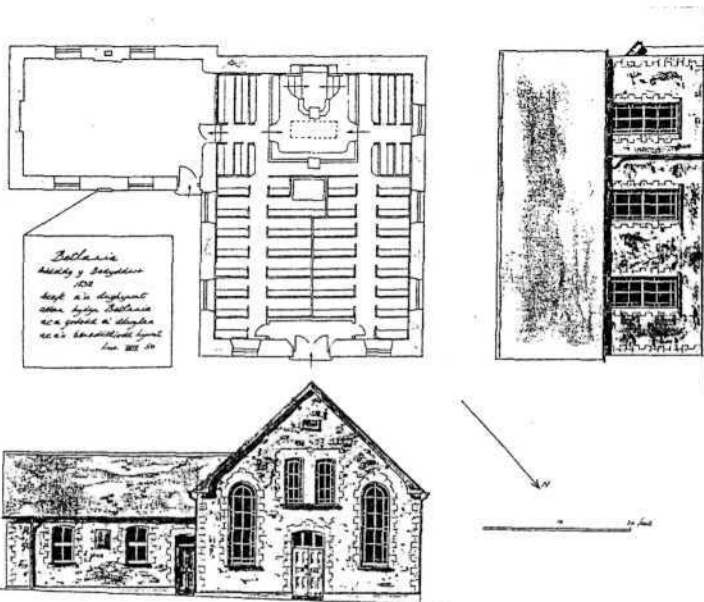


2



Hanbury Road English Baptist Chapel  
August

3



*Ballan's  
hall & school  
1855  
hall a n. school  
class room ballan's  
n. a. school a. school  
see 1855 18*

4

5

For the morning session, members had assembled at Tabernacle Welsh Presbyterian chapel to hear Dr Moelwyn Williams trace the history of the oldest Calvinistic Methodist cause in the town. Dr Williams, whose history of the chapel (*Tabernacl Aberystwyth: hanes yr achos: 1785-1985*) was published in 1986, showed how the church had grown steadily throughout the nineteenth century, had given rise to 'branches', 'schoolrooms' or daughter churches at Tanycae, Ebenezer, Penparcau, Trefechan, and Shiloh, and had been rebuilt three times - in 1819, 1831 and 1880. For this final version, the orientation of the building was reversed and the façade is now in Powell Street, the former main entrance becoming the entrance to the vestry, which is now the basement of the chapel. The only major changes to the building in the present century have been those necessitated by the installation of a three manual pipe organ, which was inaugurated in 1905 with a recital by E T Davies of Dowlais. At the insistence of his audience, Dr Williams closed his talk with an extempore recital which demonstrated the qualities of the organ. Before the session closed, Dr Huw Owen drew attention to the unusual war memorial which had been erected on the chapel forecourt after the First World War, one of a number of works by the distinguished Italian sculptor Mario Rutelli to be found in the Aberystwyth area.

A Jones

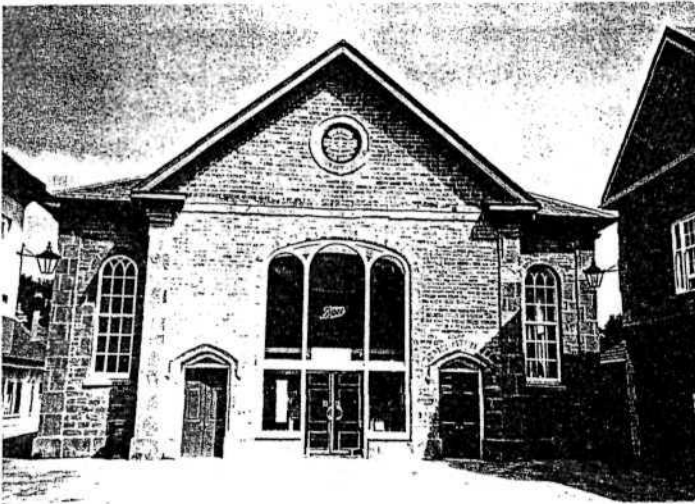
### **CYFARFODYDD I DDOD**

Cynhelir ein Cyfarfod Blynnyddol eleni yn y Capel Methodistiaidd, St James St., Trefynwy. Y flwyddyn nesaf ni chynhelir y cyfarfod arferol ym mis Mai. Yn ei le byddwn yn trefnu cyfarfod ar 14 Mehefin yn Amwythig ar y cyd gyda'n chwaer gymdeithas yn Lloegr, y *Chapels Society*. Caiff yr aelodau fanylion llawn pan fydd y trefniadau wedi'u cwblhau.

### **FUTURE MEETINGS**

The annual General Meeting this year will be held at the Methodist Chapel St James St. Monmouth on Saturday October 19. Next year instead of our usual Spring Meeting in May, we intend to hold a joint meeting with our sister Society the Chapels Society at Shrewsbury on 14 June. Members will receive further information when arrangements have been completed.

## BETHEL, BRECON



Although it is always sad to see the House of God turned into commercial premises, Boots the Chemists are to be congratulated on their very sensitive restoration of Bethel Chapel, Brecon, in which their new store opened in July. The Chapel is approached through a stone arch, which leads into a small square where new shops have been built in keeping with the small town architecture. Dominating Bethel Square, as the new development has been named, is the large square chapel. The stonework has been beautifully cleaned, and the building fitted with new windows retaining the original multi-paned round-headed style of the original. The façade has been altered to accommodate a large plate-glass door and window, but this has been done to blend in with the original quite well. The two original doorways have been retained. A pleasing but heart-plucking feature of the restoration is the retention of the round name plaque, with the lettering unusually picked out in gilt, *Bethel, Addoldy y Trefnyddion Calŷinaidd. Adeiladwyd y drydedd waith A.D. 1852.* (Bethel, House of Worship of the Calvinistic Methodists. Built for the third time 1852) The use of the comparatively rare *Trefnyddion Calŷinaidd* rather than the usual *Methodistiaid Calŷinaidd* is interesting in this area, where the Welsh language has never been especially strong. Once again the people of Brecon and visitors can enjoy this pleasing architectural feature in the centre of the town. Congratulations to Boots and the architects.

Alun Evans



*(Local opinion on the conversion of the chapel and development of the surroundings into an American-style shopping mall seems to have been divided, some letters to the Brecon & Radnor Express lamenting the loss of the town's 'old world character' and labelling an archway erected to the rear of the chapel as 'a tasteless practical joke'.*

*CAPEL commented in 1991 on the listed building consent application for the alterations to the chapel and also made written representations to the Public Inquiry. The Society welcomed the re-use of the chapel but expressed concern at details of the scheme, particularly the alterations to the façade and the changes in the adjoining buildings which directly affect the setting of the listed building.*

## REVIEW

**THE ILSTON Book: earliest register of Welsh Baptists; transcribed and edited by B G Owens. (National Library of Wales, 1966. £19.50).**

This book reproduces in print for the first time the Church Register of the Baptist Church established by John Myles at Ilston in Gower. He opened it on 1 October 1649 and closed it on 12 August 1660 following the Restoration of the Monarchy. When he and some of his congregation later left for New England he took the book with him and its empty leaves were subsequently used to record the affairs of the Baptist Church he founded in Swansea Massachusetts. The survival of the Ilston Book was not known in Wales until the publication of *The History of New England* by Isaac Backus in 1777. When Joshua Thomas, who had just published a history of Welsh Baptists in Welsh based on surviving records of other Baptist churches in Wales, asked him for abstracts of the Ilston Book, Backus gladly agreed and Thomas was able to refer to them in the English edition of his work in 1795, but Welsh readers had to wait until 1885 for the new version in their own tongue. There followed various enquiries between Welsh ministers and Welsh Americans on the subject, but the location of the Ilston Book itself was not constant. It was therefore a great step forward when Swansea Municipal Library obtained a photostat copy of it in 1929, following the unveiling by David Lloyd George in June 1928 of a memorial tablet on the ruins of the chapel of Trinity Well in Ilston Valley, traditionally the meeting place of the Cromwellian church. Another photostat copy was purchased by the National Library in 1934, but these copies were not easily deciphered by



the layman. Real achievement came with the borrowing of the original manuscript, now in the safe keeping of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, by the National Library of Wales, where it formed the centrepiece of an exhibition on the beginnings of Nonconformity in Wales coinciding with the tercentenary of the death of John Myles in 1983. Even more important, B G Owens, who had been for many years Keeper Of Manuscripts at the Library, a prominent Baptist and a prolific contributor to the history of the denomination, was invited to prepare a copy of the text for publication by the National Library press.

This volume is an admirable example of the excellence of the Library's press department, complementing Mr Owens' meticulous scholarship and special knowledge of how to read with understanding a seventeenth century document subjected to many wanderings and varying use at different periods, leading to its inevitable deterioration. In addition to providing us with a reliable and readable text, the editor has given us a history of the book since 1660, together with a summary of all subsequent Welsh enquiries and writings about it. There are three separate Appendices dealing with the Church Books on which Joshua Thomas based his first account, the Irish Correspondence, and the Swansea, Mass. records.

This work of great scholarship and devotion leaves all Baptists greatly in Mr Owens' debt. From the bare bones of the Ilston Register of members, of their baptisms, their disciplining, their expansion in the first three years to Carmarthen, Hay (Myles' own home district), Llantrisant and Llanharan, we see the members though scattered along the coast and across the hills following a regular pattern of devotions in their own area but also attending regularly at Ilston, their zeal matched by Myles' organisational skills.

The original Ilston book was written in English and the Introduction and Appendices here are likewise in English, as befits this scholarly contribution to the history of Baptists in London, Ireland, New England as well as Wales. It is a notable tribute to the quality of B G Owens' achievement that a copy of his printed version is now placed alongside the original document in the library of Brown University at Providence.

Marian Henry Jones

## RHESTR AELODAU / LIST OF MEMBERS

Awgrymwyd i'r Pwyllgor y dylid cyhoeddi rhestr o aelodau'r gymdeithas yn y *Cylchlythyr*, er mwyn i aelodau unigol gael gwybod pwy yn eu hardal sydd eisoes yn aelodau a phwy felly y gellid pwyso arnynt i ymaelodi. Byddai rhestr hefyd yn hwyluso'r gwaith o drefnu cyfarfodydd lleol neu ranbarthol. Cytunodd y Pwyllgor y byddai cyhoeddi'r rhestr yn ddefnyddiol, ond ni fyddwn yn cynnwys enw neu gyfeiriad unrhyw aelod nad yw'n dymuno cael ei gynnwys. Bwriedir cyhoeddi rhestr yn rhifyn Haf 1997 o'r *Cylchlythyr* ac felly byddwn yn ddiolchgar os bydd unrhyw aelod nad yw am i'w enw ymddangos yn y rhestr yn rhoi gwybod i'r Golygydd neu'r Ysgrifennydd cyn diwedd mis Mawrth. Ar yr un pryd a fyddwch gystal a chadarnhau cywirdeb y cyfeiriad yr ydym yn ei ddefnyddio i anfon y cyhoeddiad i chi.

*It has been suggested to the Committee that we should publish in the Newsletter a list of the members of the Society, so that individual members may know who are their fellow members in their area and who should be urged to join us. A membership list would also be a great help to anyone organising local or regional meetings or events. The Committee agreed that publication of a list would be useful but we could not include the name or address of anyone who did not wish to be included. We therefore intend publishing a list in the Summer 1997 issue of the Newsletter and would be glad if any member who does not wish to be included would inform the Editor or the Secretary before the end of March 1997. At the same time it would be useful if every member would check to confirm or correct the address we have been using to send the publication or other communications to them.*

## AROLWG Y CAPELI - APÊL Y CADEIRYDD

Annwyl Aelod,

Erbyn hyn fe ddylai pob aelod fod wedi derbyn llythyr gennyf yn gofyn am wirfoddolwyr ar gyfer arolwg o gapeli Cymru, sy'n cynnwys tynnu ffotograffau o'r adeiladau a llenwi taflenni gwybodaeth amdanynt.

Hwn, gobeithio, fydd cychwyn cywaith rhwng CAPEL â'r Comisiwn Henebion yn Aberystwyth. Mae'r Comisiwn â'r hawl i roi grantiau i gyrff gwirfoddol i'w helpu gyda'u gwaith ac maent am i CAPEL ganolbwyntio, i ddechrau, ar Sir Gaerfyrddin a Sir Fôn, gan fod ganddynt fanylion eisoes o'u gofynion yn yr ardal oedd hynny. Rwy'n falch o fedru dweud bod yr ymateb i'm llythyr yn galonnog iawn, yn enwedig oddi wrth y rhai sydd â diddordeb mewn helpu gyda'r arolwg yn Sir Gaerfyrddin, a gobeithiwn drefnu cyfarfod o wirfoddolwyr yn fuan ac apwyntio cydlynedd i drefnu a dosbarthu'r gwaith.

Mae ein haelodaeth yn llai niferus yn Sir Fôn ac mae'n debyg felly y bydd rhaid i ni geisio cymorth o du allan i'n cymdeithas i helpu gyda'r arolygu. Fel y dywedais, 'rwy'n gobeithio mai'r cam cyntaf yw hwn mewn arolwg dros Gymru gyfan.

Mae nifer o aelodau newydd wedi ymuno'n ddiweddar, hwyrach o ganlyniad i gyhoeddusrwydd degfed penblwydd y gymdeithas, neu ail delediad y rhaglenni *On the Chapel Trail* neu gyhoeddiad ail argraffiad o lyfr yr Athro Anthony Jones *Welsh Chapels*. Ond er hynny, ni allaf ddweud, gwaetha'r modd, fod y gymdeithas yn tyfu mewn aelodaeth ac mae'n rhaid i ni ddenu rhagor o bobl i ymuno â'r gymdeithas. Felly os oes gennych deulu neu ffrindiau a hoffai ymaelodi, yn enwedig rhai fyddai â diddordeb ymarferol yn yr arolwg, buaswn yn ddiolchgar pe baent yn cysylltu â'n trysorydd, Mr A G Veysey, 2 Sandy Way, Wood Lane, Penarlâg, Sir Fflint CH5 3JJ.

Yn gywir iawn

R Kevin Matthias

## ***SURVEY OF CHAPELS - CHAIRMAN'S APPEAL***

*Dear Member,*

*All Members should by now have received my letter asking for volunteers to participate in a survey of chapels which involves taking photographs and recording information on survey sheets.*

*This is I hope the beginning of a joint project with the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth. The Commission is empowered to provide funding for voluntary bodies to assist them in their work and in this project they want CAPEL to concentrate initially on Carmarthenshire and Anglesey as they already have details of their requirements in those areas. I am pleased to say that the response to my letter has been very good, especially from those interested in helping in Carmarthenshire and it is hoped that a meeting of volunteers will be arranged soon and a coordinator designated to apportion the work.*

*Our membership is less strong in Anglesey and it is likely that we may need the help of outside bodies to help us in the surveying. As I mentioned above, I hope this is the first step in an all-Wales survey.*

*A number of new members have joined recently, perhaps with the publicity of our tenth anniversary or the repeat transmission of the programmes On the Chapel Trail or the publication of the second edition of Professor Anthony Jones's book Welsh Chapels. I cannot however say that over-all the society is growing in membership and further new members must be recruited. So if you have any family or friends who wish to join, especially those with an active interest in some surveying work, please contact our treasurer Mr A G Veysey, 2 Sandy Way, Wood Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3JJ.*

*Yours sincerely*

*R Kevin Matthias*