

Capel

CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



CYLCHLYTHYR / NEWSLETTER

33

GWANWYN / SPRING 1999

Church Buildings: Sure Foundations or Stumbling Blocks

Conference at Coleg Trefeca, 24-26 November 1998

Coleg Trefeca provided an ideal setting for this conference. As the home of Howel Harris (1714-1730) who, with Daniel Rowland and William Williams, led the evangelical revival in Wales, it positioned the debate at the very root of many of the present day problems which chapels are facing. For, with revivalism came a renewed fervour in chapel building and this is the decaying legacy left to present day congregations. The Rev. Gethin Rhys, the conference organiser, had gathered speakers from a variety of backgrounds - conservation architects, representatives from local authorities, Cadw, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and ministers from all denominations - to



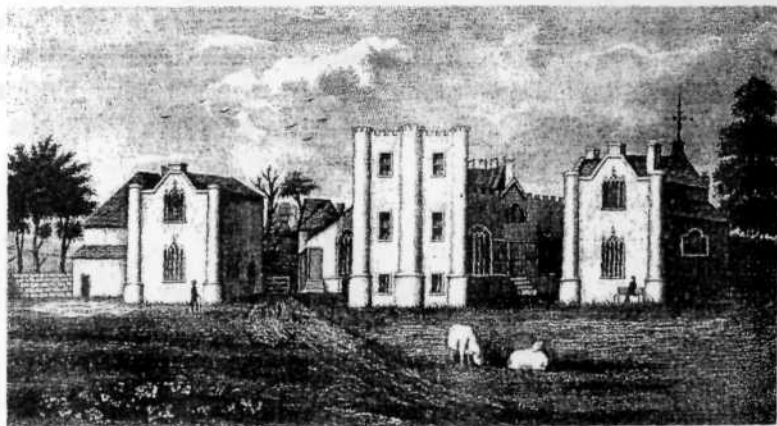
Trefeca college (facing the West)

discuss the issue of what do with chapel buildings now that congregations have dwindled.

Mr Rhys opened the conference with an explanation of why he felt it was so important to call together people from these varied backgrounds to discuss this issue at this particular time. The problem is not an isolated one. It affects all denominations, it affects all local authorities, it affects all communities. Discussion and debate is vital if we are going to find a solution to this problem.

Trefeca's Historic Buildings and Plans for the future

Alwyn Jones, the architect currently in charge of both the restoration work and future developments at the College, invited us on a tour of the buildings, explaining the many difficulties faced when managing such an old listed property. Unfortunately the Howel Harris Memorial Chapel, which until recently had been used as a museum, was closed due to the very thing we had come to the conference to discuss - the poor state of repair due to lack of funds.



Trefeca college in 1842

A Sustainable Conservation Policy for Places of Worship

Mr Chris Samuel spoke of the problems faced by the Church in Wales when dealing with their buildings. Two thirds of their churches are under the control of listed building legislation, which

has created huge difficulties when alterations and repairs are needed. Particular building conditions and materials are laid down as a prerequisite of grant aid by Cadw and tie the church to spending more. Mr Samuel expressed a desire for Cadw to have a more individual and flexible approach to each building and thus get rid of the mistrust felt between the bodies. He called for a united approach to be developed across all denominations. A forum should be set up to discuss conservation problems and a representative sent to the Assembly. He felt that we need to identify those churches that must be preserved at all costs, but this should be firmly limited. For redundant churches a decision about their future needs to be made quickly. It is essential to have discussions as early as possible between the denomination and the local planning authority in order to prevent vandalism and lift the burden from the church as quickly as possible.

Thematic Listing of Chapels

Mr David McLees, representing Cadw, explained the purpose of listing - to ensure that the architecture and historical importance of a building is recognised and put under statutory protection. To do this it is necessary to have a method of quality control in order to maintain consistency. Therefore, Cadw is now carrying out an accelerated resurvey of chapel buildings which should be completed by the year 2000. By then Cadw investigators will have examined every chapel of importance in Wales and made a decision on its historical and architectural merit. The number of listed chapels should thereby increase dramatically over the next year.

A New Trust for Chapels in Wales

Mr Gruff Owen of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action described the work he had been doing over the last year in setting up a new Chapels Trust for Wales. As coordinator he had been contacting and liaising with all the bodies in Wales that deal with chapel issues to find out exactly what was needed. His conclusion was that a 'sign-posting organisation was needed to help denominations and individuals with advice on matters such as how to find funding.

The 'Strategy' in Action

The Rev. Dafydd Owen and Mr Bleddyn Davies of the Presbyterian Church of Wales described how in the early 1990s the Church carried out a survey of their buildings. It found that £1.5 million was spent by the Church on building maintenance each year. This was just to patch and mend the fabric of the buildings rather than renovate or renew. The amount of money spent on the buildings far exceeded that spent on the actual work of the Church. The purpose of the 'Strategy' was therefore to make better use of the Church's resources. It was decided that there should only be one place of worship per community and this should be served by one ordained minister of whatever denomination. (It is felt amongst Presbyterians that unity amongst the denominations is necessary for survival.)

The Presbyterian Church has set up a housing association called Aelwyd to deal with the land and redundant buildings owned by the Church in order to convert them to dwellings. The Church attempts, by setting up covenants of sale, to restrict conversion / change of use to those which are deemed 'suitable'. At present the Church is carrying out a study of chapels in Bridgend where meetings are held with congregations, valuers, architects, surveyors and social work advisors in order to build up a full picture of the needs of the community. The team will then write a report on the condition of the buildings and make recommendations on the options available.

Promoting the Survival of Chapels

Dr John Thompson of the Chapels Society told the conference of the work carried out by the Historic Chapels Trust in England and how they have already saved ten chapels of architectural and historical importance.

Conservation and Conversion of Chapel Buildings

Mr John Hilling, representing both Cadw and CAPEL threw three main questions into the arena: 1) What do we do with chapels we no

longer require for worship but **must** be preserved? 2)What do we do with those of no great architectural importance? 3)What do we do with chapels that are unviable for change of use? The ideal use for a chapel is of course as a place of worship but if this is not possible it is then necessary to find a use that is similar. A chapel is basically an auditorium; therefore the best use for a redundant chapel would be a lecture theatre. Mr Hilling argued that the conversion should be sensitive to the architectural quality of the building and that conservation must go hand in hand with conversion, i.e., we must conserve what is already there. All work that alters the building should be reversible or at least show what was there before. He presented a list of conservation do's and don't's when converting a chapel. (This would be a basis for a publication which Mr Hilling was writing for Cadw and is to be issued this year.)

A Minister's Experience

The Rev. Eric Jones gave the conference an account of how, as a minister, he was putting the Presbyterians' 'strategy' into practice. He showed slide after slide of chapels in poor state of repair and told us of the congregations that could not afford the upkeep of their buildings, of dwindling congregations, of young people who were not interested in worshipping in old decaying chapels. The solution, it was felt, was to sell off the land, the chapel houses and eventually the chapels themselves and in their place erect new purpose-built chapels that would attract new members. Mr Jones proudly announced that through this method he had helped to get rid of twenty chapels in nine years in Arfon.

The Work of the Pantyfedwen Trust

Mr Richard Morgan described how the Trust splits its annual income between church buildings, student research grants, ministerial grants and registered charities. It particularly encourages those applicants who are willing to share buildings with other denominations, churches and congregations. It sees the work of the Church as paramount rather than the material fabric or historical or architectural value of its buildings. For an applicant to

be considered for funding he must show that the building will be used by a wide range of the community. The Trust has sent out a pamphlet entitled 'Sharing Church Buildings' to every church and chapel in Wales. Through this it is trying to make churches aware of the different possibilities open to them.

Managing 'Heritage Assets' for the Community

Mr Richard Dean, an architect who has specialised in chapel buildings, both their conversion and renovation, argued that the demolition of a chapel in an urban area leaves an ugly gap in the landscape. Re-use is always the most desirable solution. Serious problems can however arise when builders begin to tamper with the old fabric of the building. Internal walls are frequently not tied to outer walls and buildings can just fall away once work begins. It is therefore always essential to get an architect who is listed on the Conservation Register to carry out the work. As an architect Mr Dean has found that more and more he has had to become a facilitator of funding rather than an architect. He must know how to get financial backing from the various charities and funding groups. In the chapels he has worked on he has tried to reuse materials from other buildings, but, he said, it is important to know the provenance of each item. Ideally there should be a place where denominations store building parts from demolished chapels for reuse. When altering a chapel for a change of use, many problems arise with the physical rearrangement of the building. Problems of fire exits, floor loadings, disabled access and safety regulations manifest themselves and can become very expensive to solve. Mr Dean ended his talk with a request for a survey to be carried out of all chapels in Wales so as to evaluate their present condition. Only then can a long-term plan be set up to save some of these buildings before it is too late.

The Experience of St Paul's Methodist Church, Aberystwyth

Dr Geoffrey Brown described the work of planning, designing and building the new St Paul's Methodist Centre, showing the architects' plans and explaining the reasoning that lay behind them.

'Ecclesiastical Exemption' in Practice

Mary Ede of the Chapels Society explained that the United Reformed Church, one of six denominations to opt for Ecclesiastical Exemption, had set up twelve provinces, each with a Property Committee which takes all the planning decisions. The Church must be seen to provide independent advice from the congregation. The URC procedure is based on that used by the Anglican Church. When an application comes in, it must be advertised in the local paper, a site visit must be undertaken by the committee and then a recommendation made. This then goes to the provincial planning committee to make a final decision. In the Newman Report it was suggested that these procedures should be streamlined, but as yet they still stand.

When we had heard all the speakers, a discussion was then held and it was overwhelmingly agreed that more such conferences / forums were needed so that such subjects could be debated informally and possible answers found.

Conclusion

As can be seen from these widely varying perspectives, there is an ever increasing gap between the denominations who battle on trying to make ends meet and the conservationists who lay down idealistic advice on how best to maintain their chapels but offer no financial help to back up these words. At the end of the day money seems to be the only solution. It is however a dreamer's solution. We all know there will never be enough money to maintain all the chapel buildings in Wales. Therefore alternatives need to be investigated. Discussion needs to be held between denominational groups and outside bodies. All avenues must be searched before chapels are simply demolished. A sense of custodianship seems to be missing from any discussion concerning chapel buildings. They are a major facet of the Welsh landscape. Their presence affects us all and their demise would result in the loss of not just the denominational heritage but also that of the nation as a whole.

Penny Icke

Meeting-House

This was the title of an international conference on Protestant Dissenting architecture and culture held at Aberystwyth from 14 - 16 April 1999.

The visual character of the Protestant meeting-house and chapel was influenced by a complex of interrelated factors. These include items such as vernacular building methods and materials, prevailing architectural styles and tastes, theological restrictions, liturgical requirements, economics, social structure, and national, geographical and historical contexts. The conference, organised by Professor John Harvey, Head of the School of Art, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, dealt with the visual and religious significance of the meeting-house and chapel and covered a wide range of disciplines and methodologies. It consisted of contributions from distinguished speakers from Great Britain, USA and Europe. Together the papers covered the relationship between the architecture and the themes of : religion, theology, liturgy and church history; art and taste; utility and preservation, congregations and communities; nations and countries. The papers will form the basis of a book on the subject and we hope to be able to include some further details in the next issue of our *Newsletter*.

Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol

Cynhaliwyd Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol y Gymdeithas ym Machynlleth ddydd Sadwrn 17 Hydref 1998.

- 1) Croesawodd y Cadeirydd yr aelodau i'r cyfarfod, a gynhaliwyd yn Amgueddfa Gelfyddyd Fodern y Tabernacl a diolchodd i Mrs Dilys Glover a Mrs Lambert am drefnu'r diwrnod.
- 2) Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau am eu habsenoldeb oddi wrth y Parch Richard Williams, Dr a Mrs D Huw Owen, Mr Neil Sumner, Mrs Margaret Hughes, Mr Donald Moore, Mrs Patricia Moore, Miss Susan Beckley, Ms Elizabeth Evans, Mr Meirick Lloyd Davies a Mr Bill Rosser
- 3) Derbyniwyd ac arwyddwyd cofnodion y 12fed Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol a gynhaliwyd yn Llandudno ar 11 Hydref 1997.

4) **Materion yn Codi**
Cytnwyd i beidio â dosbarthu tocynnau aelodaeth bellach. Ond fe anfonid tocyn i unrhyw aelod a oedd yn dymuno cael un.

5) **Adroddiad y Cadeirydd**

i) Cyfarfu'r Pwyllgor Gwaith bedair gwaith y ystod y flwyddyn a diolchodd y Cadeirydd i'r swyddogion ac aelodau'r pwyllgor am eu cefnogaeth.

ii) Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i'r Llyfrgell Genedlaethol am ganiatáu i'r Pwyllgor gyfarfod yno ac am roi cymaint o help i'r Gymdeithas yn ystod y flwyddyn.

Estynnodd longyfarchiadau i'r Llyfrgellydd, Dr Lionel Madden, ar ei ymdeoliad a dymuniadau gorau am y dyfodol.

iii) Rhoddodd y Cadeirydd adroddiad am y camau a gymerwyd gan Cadw a Chyngor Cymru dros Weithgareddau Gwirfoddol (WCVA) i sefydlu Ymddiriedolaeth Capeli yn ôl argymhelliad y Gweithgor dros Gapeli Segur o Ddiddordeb Hanesyddol a'r unigolion a sefydlodd CAPEL. Penodwyd Mr Gruff Owen gan y WCVA yn gydllynydd dros yr Ymddiriedolaeth yn y cyfnod dechreuol.

iv) Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Elizabeth Evans am yr holl gymorth a roddodd fel ymgynghorydd ar faterion cynllunio ac adroddodd y byddai CAPEL nawr yn cymryd rôl mwy gweithredol trwy gysylltu â'r awdurdodau cynllunio lleol a'r cyrff enwadol yn y gobaith y byddant yn y dyfodol yn rhoi gwybod i CAPEL am unrhyw ceisiadau adeiladu a fydd yn effeithio ar gapeli.

v) Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Gomisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru am gynnwys tudalen CAPEL yn eu safle ar y Rhyngrwyd.

vi) Y mae Arolygon Sir Gaerfyrddin a Sir Fôn yn tynnu at eu terfyn a diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Ray Caple, Cydlynnydd Arolwg Sir Gaerfyrddin ac i'r holl wirfoddolwyr a gymerodd ran yn y gwaith am eu help. Apeliodd i unrhyw ffotograffwyr brwd ymhlith yr aelodau a fyddai'n barod i helpu Comisiwn yr Henebion i gofnodi capeli mewn ardaloedd eraill i gysylltu â David Percival yn swyddfa'r Comisiwn yn Aberystwyth.

Diolchodd Mr Percival ar ran y Comisiwn i'r gwirfoddolwyr am y gwaith a wnaethant dros y prosiect.

- vii) Beth ddylai'r Gymdeithas ei wneud nesaf? Apeliodd y Cadeirydd i'r aelodau am awgrymiadau am brosiectau'r dyfodol. Gellid efallai sefydlu 'gwobr am ddilyn arferion da'. Nododd y posibilrwydd o gynnal cystadlaethau, gosod placiau ar gapeli o ddiddordeb arbennig, llunio teithiau capeli, etc.
- viii) Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Mr Alun Jones am ei waith fel Golygydd y *Cylchlythyr* ac apeliodd am gyfraniadau i'r *Cylchlythyr*.
- ix) Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Ann Rhydderch am ei gwaith fel Swyddog y Wasg ac i Penny Icke yr Ysgrifennydd.
- x) Apeliodd y Cadeirydd i'r aelodau i hyrwyddo a hysbysu gwaith CAPEL er mwyn chwyddo'r aelodaeth.

6. Adroddiad yr Ysgrifennydd

i) Cynhaliwyd Cyfarfod y Gwanwyn yn 1998 yng ngogledd Sir Benfro lle y gwnaed taith o gylch capeli yn ardaloedd Cilgerran a Henllan Amgoed. Diolchodd yr Ysgrifennydd i'r Parch Richard Williams am drefnu'r diwrnod ac i'r siaradwyr, y Parch Ddr.Eifion Evans a Mrs Eleri Roberts am eu sgysiau. Diolchodd hefyd i aelodau capeli Bwlch-y-Groes a Henllan Amgoed am eu lletygarwch rhyfeddol i'r Gymdeithas.

ii) Bwriedir cynnal Cyfarfod y Gwanwyn yn 1999 yn Llanelli ar 15 Mai.

iii) Lansiodd CAPEL ar y Rhyngrwyd yn ystod yr haf a gellir ei ddarganfod ar safle'r Comisiwn Henebion ar y we ar

www.rcahmw.org.uk/capele.html

neu www.rcahmw.org.uk/capelw.html

Y mae'r Gymdeithas yn trafod gyda'r Llyfrgell Genedlaethol er mwyn gallu rhoi rhai o ddarluniau'r Cmr. Mortimer ar dudalennau'r We. Dylai hyn ddigwydd yn y dyfodol agos.

v) Bydd CAPEL yn darparu arddangosfa yng Nghynhadledd Trefeca ar *Adeiladau Eglwysig; Sylfeini Cedyrn neu Feini Tramgwydd* a gynhelir o 23 i 26 Tachwedd. Y mae Mr John Hilling wedi cytuno'n garedig i siarad dros CAPEL yn y gynhadledd.

7. **Adroddiad y Trysorydd**

- i) Cyflwynodd y Trysorydd ddatganiad y cyfrifon am y flwyddyn hyd 31 Awst 1998.
- ii) Bydd y Trysorydd yn chwilio i mewn i'r posibilrwydd o symud y cyfrif buddsoddi i gyfrif a fyddai'n talu llog uwch.
- iii) Daliodd rhif yr aelodaeth yn eithaf cyson o gwmpas 276. Apeliodd y Trysorydd i'r aelodau i ddsbarthu taflenni'r Gymdeithas pan allent ac i ddefnyddio archebion banc i dalu eu tanysgrifiadau blynyddol.
- iv) Diolchodd y Trysorydd i'r Cadeirydd ac i staff Archifdy Sir Ddinbych sy'n helpu i gynhyrchu'r fantolen. Diolchodd hefyd i'r Dr Huw Owen a'r Ysgrifennydd am eu help ac i Mrs Naomi Hughes am wirio'r cyfrifon.

8. **Ethol Swyddogion ac Aelodau'r Pwyllgor**

Ail-etholwyd y Cadeirydd, Mr Kevin Matthias, y Trysorydd, (Mr Geoffrey Veysey, a'r Ysgrifennydd, Ms Penny Icke, am flwyddyn arall.

Yr oedd Mr Glan Roberts, cynrychiolydd Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg, wedi ymddeol o'r Pwyllgor yn ystod y flwyddyn ac etholwyd Mrs Muriel Bowen Evans yn ei le. Bu rhaid i Mr Wyn Jones hefyd ymddiswyddo a chytunodd Mr Robert Scourfield gymryd ei le yntau. Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Mr Roberts a Mr Jones am eu gwaith dros y blynyddoedd.

9 **Unrhyw Fater Arall**

Codwyd y cwestiwn o gael incwm i'r Gymdeithas. Awgrymwyd y gellid gwerthu cardiau neu bapur gohebu, bathodynau, teis neu grafatiau. Cytunwyd y dylid rhoi'r mater ar agenda cyfarfod nesaf y Pwyllgor.

Ar ran yr aelodau diolchodd Mr I D Jones i'r Pwyllgor am eu gwaith dros y flwyddyn.

Wedi'r cyfarfod cafwyd darlith gyda sleidiau gan Mr Cefyn Burgess ar *Textiles and illustrative collages inspired by Welsh nonconformist chapels* a sgwrs gan Mr David Thomas ar *Completing the transformation of the chapel*.

Penny Icke
Ysgrifennydd

Dilynwyd y Cyfarfod Cyffredinol gan ddwy ddarlith. Yn gyntaf, rhoddodd Cefyn Burgess, un o brif gynllunwyr tecstilau'r wlad, sgwrs gyda sleidiau ar *Textiles and illustrative collages inspired by Welsh nonconformist chapels* yn dangos sut mae pensaernïaeth y capeli wedi dylanwadu ar ei waith. Yn ystod ei deithiau mynych rhwng y Gogledd a'r De y mae Mr Burgess wedi gweld a chofnodi nifer fawr o gapelli; pwysleisiodd gymreigrwydd y profiad capelyddol a'r ffaith fod cynifer ohonom wedi'n gwreiddio yn y traddodiad.

Yr oedd yr ail ddarlith, gan y pensaer David Thomas o Landysul ar y testun *Completing the transformation of the Chapel* yn dangos sut yr oedd wedi mynd ati i droi Capel y Tabernacl yn ganolfan gelf a gweithgareddau cymunedol. Yr oedd Mrs Ruth Lambert ar ddechrau'r cyfarfod wedi siarad am y weledigaeth a arweiniodd at y trawsnewidiad.

Yn ystod y prynhawn bu'r aelodau yn ymweld â nifer o gapeli'r dref - Bethesda, (Eglwys Bresbyteraidd Saesneg), Capel y Graig (Annibynwyr Cymraeg) a Chapel Maengwyn (Eglwys Bresbyteraidd Cymru). Ym mhob un cafwyd sgwrs ragarweiniol gan y gweinidog neu flaenor, ac yr oedd gan bob un stori ddiddorol, nid yn unig am hanes yr achosion unigol ond hefyd am hanes gymdeithasol Machynlleth. Paratowyd te hyfryd i ni gan aelodau Capel Maengwyn a gwerthfawrogwyd yn fawr y croeso cynnes a gafwyd ar ddiwrnod llawer mwy glawog nag y mae CAPEL wedi mwynhau yn ei gyfarfodydd blaenorol.

Annual General Meeting

The 13th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Machynlleth on Saturday 17 October 1998.

- 1) The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, held at the Tabernacle Museum of Modern Art, and thanked Mrs Dilys Glover and Mrs Lambert for organising the day.
- 2) Apologies for absence were received from the Rev. Richard Williams, Dr & Mrs D Huw Owen, Mr Neil Sumner, Mrs Margaret Hughes, Mr Donald Moore and Mrs Patricia Moore, Miss Susan Beckley, Ms Elizabeth Evans, Mr Meirick Lloyd Davies, Mr Bill Rosser.

3) The minutes of the 12th AGM, held at Llandudno on 11 October 1997, were accepted and signed

4) **Matters Arising**

It was agreed to discontinue membership cards. If however any member would like to have one it will be sent on request.

5) **Chairman's Report**

i) The executive Committee had met four times during the year and the Chairman thanked officers and committee members for their support.

ii) The Chairman thanked the National Library of Wales for allowing the Committee to meet there and offering us so much hospitality and help over the past year.

He extended congratulations to the National Librarian, Dr Lionel Madden, on his retirement and best wishes for the future.

iii) The Chairman reported on the progress made on the setting up of the Chapels Trust by Cadw and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, which has been prompted by the Redundant Historic Chapels Working Party and the founder members of CAPEL who have acted as a catalyst. Mr Gruff Owen. has been appointed by the WCVA as co-ordinator for the Trust while it is in its initial stages.

iv) The Chairman thanked Elizabeth Evans for all her help as CAPEL's planning consultant and reported that CAPEL will be taking a more active role in contacting the local planning authorities and denominational bodies in the hope that they will inform CAPEL of any building applications that affect chapels in the future.

v) The Chairman thanked RCAHMW for housing CAPEL's Web page on their Internet site.

vi) The Carmarthenshire and Anglesey Surveys are coming to a close and the Chairman thanked Ray Caple, the Co-ordinator of the Carmarthenshire survey, and all the volunteers who had participated in the project for their help. He appealed to any keen photographers in the membership who were willing to help the RCAHMW record chapels in other areas to contact David Percival at RCAHMW.

Mr David Percival, on behalf of RCAHMW, thanked the volunteers for all the work they had put into the project.

- vii) What should we do next? The Chairman appealed to members for ideas on future projects. Possibly a 'reward for good practice' could be set up; competitions, plaques for chapels of special interest, chapel trails etc.
- viii) The Chairman thanked Mr Alun Jones for his work as Editor of the *Newsletter* and appealed for contributions to the *Newsletter*.
- ix) The Chairman thanked Ann Rhydderch for her work as Press Officer and Penny Icke as Secretary.
- x) The Chairman appealed for members to actively promote and advertise CAPEL in order to increase the membership.

6 Secretary's Report

- i) The 1998 Spring Meeting was held in North Pembrokeshire and consisted of a tour of chapels in the Cilgerran and Henllan Amgoed areas. The Secretary thanked the Rev. Richard Williams for organising the day and the speakers, the Rev. Dr Eifion Evans and Mrs Eleri Roberts, for their talks. The Secretary also thanked the members of Bwlch-y-Groes and Henllan Amgoed chapels for the wonderful hospitality they showed us.
- ii) It is intended that the Spring Meeting in 1999 will be held in Llanelli on 15th May.
- iii) CAPEL has been consulted on a great many planning applications this year, mainly from Glamorgan Gwent and Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trusts. Elisabeth Evans and the Secretary have responded to the majority but hope to be contacting the local authorities direct in the future.
- iv) CAPEL was launched on the Internet in the summer and can be found on the Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments website at
www.rcahmw.org.uk/capele.html
and www.rcahmw.org.uk/capelw.html

We are now having discussions with the National Library to allow us to illustrate our pages with some of Commander Mortimer's drawings. These should be on in the near future.

- v) CAPEL will be displaying an exhibition at the Trefeca Conference on *Church Buildings: Sure Foundations or Stumbling Blocks* which is being held on 23-36 November. Mr John Hilling has kindly agreed to represent CAPEL as our speaker.

7 Treasurer's Report

- i) The Treasurer presented the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 August 1998.
- ii) The Treasurer will be looking into the possibility of moving the investment account into one that pays more interest.
- iii) The membership has remained fairly constant at about 276 members. The Treasurer appealed to members to use standing orders for payment of annual subscriptions and to distribute leaflets whenever possible.
- iv) The Treasurer thanked the Chairman and the staff of Denbighshire Record Office who help in the production of the balance sheet. He also thanked Dr Huw Owen and the Secretary for their help and Mrs Naomi Hughes for checking the accounts.

8 Election of Officers and Committee Members

The Chairman (Mr Kevin Matthias), the Treasurer (Mr Geoffrey Veysey) and the Secretary (Ms Penny Icke) were re-elected for a further year.

Mr Glan Roberts, representing the Union of Welsh Independents, had resigned from the committee during the year and Mrs Muriel Bowen Evans was elected to fill the vacancy. Mr Wyn Jones also had to stand down and Mr Robert Scourfield kindly agreed to take his place. The Chairman thanked Mr Glan Roberts and Mr Wyn Jones for all their hard work over the years.

9 Any Other Business

Questions of fund raising were brought up: selling notelets, badges, ties etc was suggested. It was agreed that this should be put on the agenda for the Committee's next meeting.

Mr I D Jones expressed his thanks to the Committee on behalf of the membership for all their work over the last year.

Penny Icke
Secretary

The AGM was followed by two lectures. Firstly Cefyn Burgess, among this country's foremost designers, gave a talk, illustrated with slides, on *Textiles and illustrative collages inspired by Welsh nonconformist chapels*, showing how chapel architecture had inspired his work. On frequent journeys from north to south Wales Mr Burgess has observed and recorded numerous chapels; he stressed the 'Welshness' of the chapel experience and how so many of us are rooted in the tradition.

The second lecture, by the architect David Thomas of Llandysul, on *Completing the transformation of the Chapel*, showed how he had tackled the conversion of Tabernacl into an arts and community centre. The vision behind the centre had been explained to members by Mrs Ruth Lambert.

During the afternoon CAPEL members who had travelled to Machynlleth from all parts of Wales and from many parts of England, visited the following chapels: Bethesda (English Presbyterian), Capel y Graig (Welsh Independent) and Capel Maengwyn (Presbyterian Church of Wales). In each, informative introductions were given by the ministers or deacons. All had fascinating stories which threw light not only on the history of the individual causes but on the social history of Machynlleth. The members of Maengwyn Chapel prepared an excellent tea and the warm welcome was much appreciated by Capel members on a day when we were not blessed with the fine weather we usually enjoy for our meetings.

Planning Applications Jan.1998 - Mar. 1999

Between January 1998 and March 1999 CAPEL was notified of planning applications made concerning the following chapels. Most of the information was received via the various archaeological trusts. We should be glad to receive details of other planning or development applications known to members, particularly if they have information concerning the outcome of the applications.

Rehoboth, Kenfig Hill
Griffithstown Methodist, Pontypool
Sion, Pentre Halkyn
Methodist Chapel, Old Churchstoke, Montgomery
Horeb, Leeswood
Ebenezer, URC, Hay-on-Wye
Bwlch y Ddar Chapel, Llanfyllin

Ebenezer, Llysworney
Wesley Memorial Church, Llansannan
Antioch Church Vestry, Crymych
Soar Chapel and Vestry, Lampeter
Caersalem Chapel and Vestry, Llanelli
Corporation Road Baptist Chapel, Newport
Beulah Chapel, Tylorstown
Danygraig Congregational Church, Swansea
Tabernacl, Talybont
Penuel Chapel, Llanfynydd
Morfa Chapel, Borth
Grenig Road Chapel, Glanamau
Bethel Welsh Baptist, Llanfyllin
Horeb, New Cross, Presbyterian

Photographing Chapels in Anglesey

[I am sure that you know from previous issues of this Newsletter that CAPEL has taken part in surveys of nonconformist buildings on behalf and with the assistance of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth. The latest two were of chapels in Carmarthenshire and Anglesey. The Carmarthen survey was coordinated by Mr Ray Caple who has already written on its progress in the Newsletter. Individual Capel members also volunteered to undertake a survey in Anglesey, and I am pleased to say that the results of their work have been finding their way to the Commission over the last few months. I am sure that you would wish me to thank them for all their efforts.

One of the volunteers is Mrs Naomi Hughes, who has been undertaking survey work for some time, and she has greatly added to the knowledge available on our nonconformist heritage. She also says she actually enjoys the work, as I hope the following comments from her will prove. If her experiences encourage you to volunteer to do some work in your own locality, I am sure that Mr David Percival at the Commission, Plas Crug, Aberystwyth, will be pleased to hear from you.

Kevin Matthias]

I was invited to a meeting with several other like-minded people at the Record Office in Caernarfon and the outcome was that I had promised to photograph twenty-six chapels in the south west corner of the Isle of Anglesey. I left the meeting armed with sheets of paper with OS references and some chapel names, others requesting the full address, description, denomination and numbers for the specific shot to be entered against and yet more sheets for more detailed information, together with the most important item - FILM.

Being unable to draw or measure buildings in any way, my sole contribution to the project would be photographic. Sometimes taking pictures of the back or sides of buildings can prove very difficult but in most cases I was able to lean over walls or stand on gates etc. This was all done without danger to myself.

I was already involved with photographing Gwynedd but had more or less made my own rules and patterns of work. - such as parking the car and walking around just looking at the village or town. I thus enabled myself to get the feel of the place and look for the chapel down a side street or one that has been converted after the Royal Commission had printed their lists.

This was something else! Undaunted (just a few butterflies) I set off one overcast day with my reams of paper, flask and OS map to my allotted area to find that over the Straits the rain was pouring down. Not a total disaster as I was able to get my bearings, pinpoint some of the chapels, find parking spaces and work out whether that house over there could have been a chapel or not.

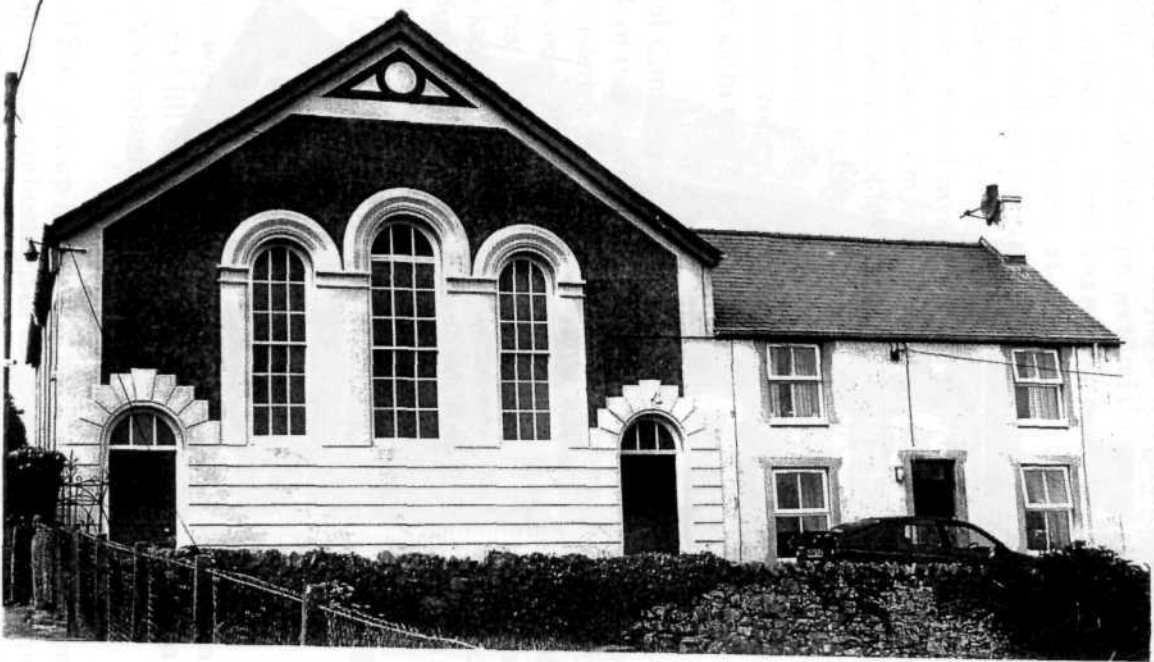
On my second attempt I made sure the sun was shining at home and on Anglesey and with my trusty flask and camera and reams of paper I set off into the countryside, windows down, listening to the sound of the birds. When you arrive and start walking up and down in front of a chapel wondering how to fit the front into one frame and then deciding that it would perhaps be better to take left front, right front, upper centre and lower centre, I find that people will come



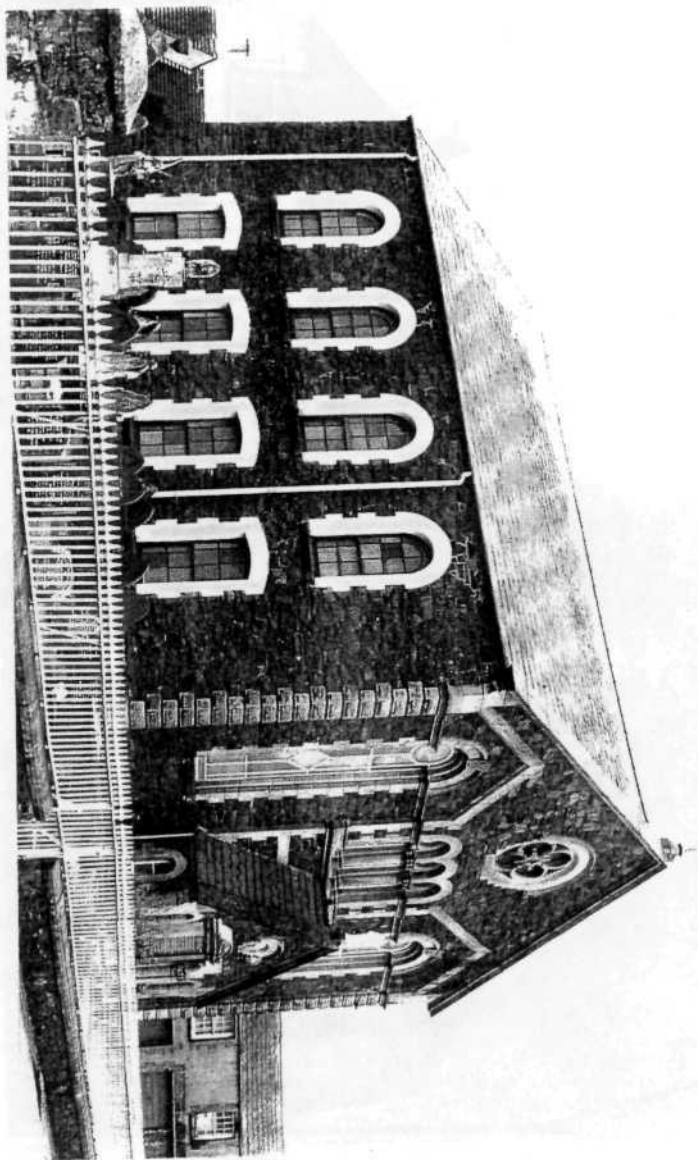
Pensarn Berw, Gaerwen
(Due for demolition when a new road is made)



Pensarn Berw, Gaerwen
(Due for demolition when a new road is made)



Berea Gaerwyn, (Independent)



Capel Dwyran, (Independent)

and talk to you. This is the way you find out a lot about the area and the chapel in particular. They can usually tell you the name, the denomination and whether the chapel is in regular use. It took me six Saturdays in all to finish the project and they were all as good and joyful as one another. My time was not all spent in taking pictures of chapels. I spent time looking at churches and houses. I took my lunch down to river banks and sea shores. I meandered down lanes, sometimes taking the wrong turning, then taking ages to find turning space or I found myself in a farmyard with the inevitable dog chasing the wheels. On reflection this was part of the fun of it all. Five years ago I would not have anticipated that I would have been given the opportunity to be taking part in such an important project. I am a very amateur photographer and was inexperienced in the history and architecture of chapels. But I have loved every minute of the time spent gathering information.

Yes, the Royal Commission must have been in despair at my log sheets or lack of them, my misnumbering of the individual frames and the inconsistency of my photographs, but I did improve and so did my knowledge. My pleasure and enthusiasm (even when a passing motorist soaked me from head to foot) have never waned and I am now looking forward with anticipation to the warmer days so that I can dust off my camera and flask and set off once again into the hills to photograph CHAPELS.

Naomi J Hughes

Burnetts Hill Chapel - Update

In our last issue we published an article by Robert Scourfield on the future of Burnetts Hill Calvinistic Methodist Chapel situated in the heart of rural Pembrokeshire.

The chapel had been put up for auction but, due to the uniqueness of the building and the enthusiasm of the local community a move has been made by the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park authority to purchase the building, undertake repairs and then pass the future

maintenance and management to a local trust. A grant offer towards the cost of the purchase has been made to the Park Authority from Cadw and a purchase price has now been agreed.

As a result of this, a meeting was arranged between myself as the National Park's Building Conservation Officer and interested people. This was well attended and it is likely that a trust will be set up to take on a leasehold of the chapel once the initial repairs have been undertaken by the Park Authority. If further information is required or if you are interested in the proposed trust, please contact either Robert Scourfield (regarding the trust itself) or myself at the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Winch Lane, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 1PY.

Claire Deacon

Cyfarfod Blynyddol 1999 *Annual General Meeting*

Cynhelir Cyfarfod Blynyddol eleni yn Abergele ar 23 Hydref.

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held at Abergele on 23 October.

Argraffwyd gan Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru

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