

Capel

CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



CYLCHLYTHYR / NEWSLETTER

34

HYDREF / AUTUMN 1999

Cyfarfod y Gwanwyn yn Llanelli

Cynhaliwyd Cyfarfod y Gwanwyn eleni yn Llanelli ar 15 Mai. Daeth cynulliad da o dros hanner cant o aelodau'r Gymdeithas a thrigolion yr ardal at ei gilydd yng Nghapel Als i glywed darlith gynhwysfawr gan gynweinidog o'r eglwys, y Parch. Maurice Loader, ar *Anghydfurfiaeth yn ardal Llanelli*. Yna, wedi edmygu a rhyfeddu at ysblander adeiladwaith y capel a chiniawa yng ngwesty Stepney, aethom am dro o dan arweiniad Mr Vivian Williams o gwmpas pedwar o gapeli mawreddog eraill yng nghanol y dre - Seion (A), Capel y Parc (URC), Moreia (B) a'r Tabernacl (A). Aethpwyd ymlaen wedyn i Gapel Newydd (Pres) ar gyrion yr hen dref lle y mwynhawyd te hyfryd i orffen y daith.



Capel Als - the second building as it was ca. 1870

The spring meeting was this year held at Llanelli on 15 May, when over 50 members of CAPEL and local residents gathered in Capel Als to hear a talk by a former minister of the church, the Rev. Maurice Loader on Non-conformity in the Llanelli area. Then, after viewing and wondering at the splendour of the building and lunching at the Stepney Hotel we went under the guidance of Mr Vivian Williams on a walking tour of four other majestic chapels in the centre of the town - Zion (B), Park Church (URC), Moriah (B) and Tabernacle (Ind.). We then moved on to the outskirts of the old town to see the Welsh Presbyterian Capel Newydd where we were provided with a delightful tea to end the tour.

Cyfarfod Blynyddol Annual General Meeting

Cynhelir y Cyfarfod Blynyddol eleni ar 23 Hydref yn Abergele, lle byddwn yn ymgynnull am 10.30 yng Nghapel Presbyteriaidd Mynydd Seion. Yn ystod y cyfarfod bydd ein Cadeirydd presennol Mr Kevin Matthias yn ymddeol a bydd yn rhaid ethol Cadeirydd newydd. Gobeithiwn felly am bresenoldeb cynifer o'n haelodau ag a all ddod i'r cyfarfod.

The Annual General Meeting this year will be held on 23 October at Abergele, where we shall assemble at 10.30 at Mynydd Seion the Welsh Presbyterian chapel. During the meeting our present Chairman Mr Kevin Matthias will be standing down and we shall need to elect a new Chairman. It is hoped therefore that as many members as possible will attend the meeting.

Nonconformity in the Llanelli Area - an Introduction by Maurice Loader

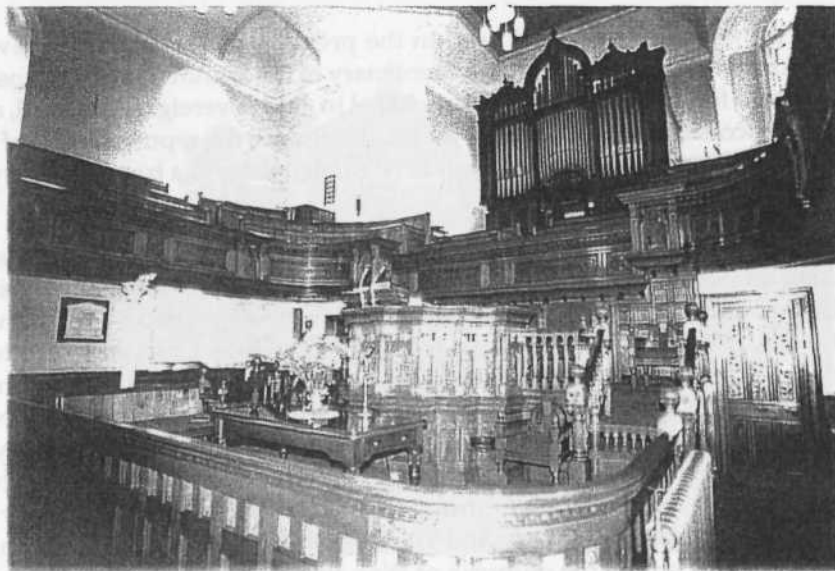
I have divided my talk into three sections:- 1. The Capel Als building 2. The beginnings of Nonconformity in the town and district of Llanelli, leading to the establishment of churches by the mainstream denominations 3. The continuing story of the church at Capel Als, particularly the ministry of the Rev. David Rees.

Capel Als: the building

The name *Capel Als* may require some explanation. Tradition relates that on this site there formerly stood a cottage inhabited by a lady called Alice, and nearby was a well used by the inhabitants of the surrounding area. In 1794 it was recorded that the Revs. David Peter and William George 'preached at Capel Alice'. In 1852 the well was filled in, probably because there had been an outbreak of cholera in the town and all the town's wells were suspect,

particularly the one at Capel Als. since it was positioned near a cemetery where persons who had died of cholera had been buried. The cemetery is now grassed over. When the present building was erected the gravestones were removed and used as paving stones behind the building. Unfortunately, the stones have been eroded by the elements and many of the inscriptions are now undecipherable.

The original chapel must have been small and unassuming. When the present building was erected on this site in 1894-95 an unknown author wrote a brief outline of its history. Of the original building he wrote, 'No-one has furnished a portrayal of that first chapel, built in 1780. It is right to suppose that it was a dwelling-house consisting of one room along its length, with the door at one end, for when it was extended in 1797 it was as though two dwelling houses had been joined together with two doors, one at each end. This [i.e., the 1797 building] was but a simple and unadorned structure, rectangular in shape, lying opposite to its present form. It had a gallery at one end, with steps leading to it from the cemetery'. The chapel was further extended in 1827. The extended building had a gallery on three sides, entrance to which was by means of an exterior staircase, and the seats were described as 'large and deep'.



The interior of Capel Als

Two years after the Rev. David Rees arrived, the building was too small to house the congregation which at the time numbered some 250. Although £300 was still owed for the existing chapel the erection of a new building was undertaken at a cost of £850. There were those who warned that it would never be paid for and its seats would not be filled. The new chapel was opened on the last day of May 1831. It was a square building, measuring 50ft by 50ft, and its roof was crowned by a sizeable sphere visible from a fair distance. A porch supported by two pillars provided the front entrance. There were no railings, and people still came to draw water from the well which was situated almost at the door of the chapel. In 1852, the chapel was lengthened by 20ft, a feature of the new building being its wooden ceiling, 28ft high. It was at this time that the well was filled in.

The present building is the third on this site and was erected in 1894-95 at a cost of £4995. One can only guess what such a sum would amount to if translated into today's financial values. The architect was Mr Owen Morris Roberts of Porthmadog, a ship's carpenter who trained himself to become an architect and also built chapels at Holyhead, Llangefni and Porthmadog. Though the architect was imported from North Wales, the craftsmen, carpenters, masons and creators of fine plasterwork were all local.

The Bishop organ was first used in the previous chapel building, having been installed in 1880 to mark the centenary of the founding of the chapel. It was paid for by the treasurer of the chapel in gold sovereigns, 200 in all, and on the occasion of a subsequent visit to the chapel, the representative of the Bishop firm told of his trepidation as he carried them in a bag all the way to London.

Two architectural features reflect the fine musical tradition for which Capel Als was noted when the present building was erected: firstly the musical instruments depicted in the windows at the front of the chapel and secondly the stained glass windows at the rear of the building. One was a tribute to three fine musicians associated with the church, William Richards, conductor of the orchestra, and Seth Jones and Tom Daniel Jones, both organists and precentors. The second window was erected in memory of David Harries, a long-serving secretary of the Chapel and the third commemorates the work of former ministers of the church, Evan Davies, Howell Williams, David Rees and Thomas Johns. The windows were put in place in 1939 but on the outbreak of War, they had to be removed and put into safe storage until the end of hostilities.

The Origins of Nonconformity in Llanelli and District

Capel Als was not the earliest Nonconformist chapel to be erected in the Llanelli area. That distinction belongs to Adulam, Felin-foel, built in 1709, which is regarded as the mother-church of other Baptist churches in the area. The origins of the Baptist cause in the Llanelli area can be traced to the work of the Rev. John Miles of Ilston on the Gower peninsula. Miles engaged in missionary activity over a large area stretching from Carmarthen to Hay-on-Wye. In 1656, during Cromwell's rule, he was paid an annual salary of £40 for preaching in Llanelli Parish Church, and was thus able, with the sanction of the government, to engage in the spread of Puritan ideas. After Charles II reclaimed the throne in 1660, however, Miles was divested of his living and exiled to Massachusetts. His ideas, however, persisted in the hearts and homes of his adherents, some of whom are mentioned in the Llanelli area. They include Hugh Mathews at Felin-isaf, Llanelli, as early as 1653, Jenkin Franklen at Llwynifan, Llangennech, in 1657, and Morgans, Allt-fawr, Llan-non, in 1672.

After 1689, however, once persecution was ended, it was the practice to use certain homes as meeting-places for worship and there is evidence of this in certain homes at Llan-non, such as Allt-fawr.



Zion Baptist Church and its Schoolroom

A third stage was the erection of a chapel or meeting-house specifically for the purpose of worship. The first such *ty-cwrdd* erected in the Llanelli area was at Adulam, Felin-foel opened in 1709. Soon, the Baptists of Adulam set apart one from their midst, David Owen, to minister to their spiritual needs. And when he became too infirm to continue, two persons, John Duckfield and Morgan Rees, were ordained to take his place. Later two others were ordained and in 1777 the two ministers preached on Sundays at four separate locations - including Adulam itself, and also the home of David Roberts at Spring Gardens near the present Town Hall. Other chapels followed - Zion (1823), Bethel (1814), Greenfield (1858), Moriah (1870), Calfaria, Bethania and Caersalem.

The **Independents** also trace their origins to the pioneering work of an ejected minister, the Rev. Stephen Hughes of Meidrim, who lost his living in 1661. By his preaching activities throughout Carmarthenshire he won for himself the accolade 'Apostle of Carmarthenshire' and established groups of like-minded persons who met for clandestine worship in remote places, risking imprisonment, fines or confiscation of property. Sometimes worship would take place in the homes of adherents and later churches were established. An early example of such a home was Wern-chwith near Hendy and the nearby chapel of *Tŷ-newydd* (later named 'Hen Gapel') in the parish of Llanedi, built in 1712. The chapel still stands and reflects the early Nonconformist architectural style, with the pulpit centrally placed between two windows in one of the longer walls.

Hen Gapel was the mother church of Capel Als. It had been the practice for the independents of Llanelli and the surrounding villages to walk the four miles to Hen Gapel for Sunday worship, and even after Capel Als was built, the members would return to Hen Gapel for the monthly communion service. The early history of the cause at Capel Als is related by Dr Huw Owen in the opening chapter of the history of the chapel published in 1980, the year of the church's bicentenary.

One Llanelli home used for worship before 1780 was Llwynhwilwg, the home of Thomas Howell, registered as a place of worship in 1749. But the vision behind the founding of Capel Als itself must be credited to Evan Davies, minister of Hen Gapel from 1775 to 1806. David Davies the minister of Pant-teg later paid tribute to him in these terms:

He had not long been there [Llanedi] before raising his sights and noting that the fields were ripe for harvest; he looked toward Llanelli, gradually gaining

in eminence and increasing in population, and he forecast that Llanelli would be one of the flourishing centres of trade and commerce in the Principality.

To summarize: the growth of the Baptist and Independent churches shows three stages of development common to both denominations - the pioneer work of certain charismatic leaders such as John Miles and Stephen Hughes; meetings held by groups of like-minded persons in the homes of adherents, visited periodically by the pioneering leaders; the registration of certain homes as places set apart for worship.

The same three stages can be traced also in the story of the setting up of the Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodist churches of Llanelli.

Calvinistic Methodism in the area can be traced to the pioneering work of Howel Harries, who visited Llanelli on several occasions between 1738 and 1766 when he made contact with groups of adherents who met in the homes of the area, one of which was Llanddafen.

A Calvinistic Methodist chapel, 'Gopa Fach'. was built in the Allt Iago area of Pontarddulais in 1775. In 1780 two members of Adulam, were expelled for visiting Gopa Fach after evening service to hear David Jones of Llan-gan. The two men concerned then joined the church at Gopa Fach and proceeded to hold services at the home of a sympathizer named Martha who lived at Llanelli. Her home soon proved too small to hold the congregation (*teulu Martha* as they called themselves) and so they leased premises at Gelli Onn. Thomas Charles visited Gelli Onn and founded there the first Sunday School in Llanelli.

One of the early worshippers there was Henry Jones who worked at Alexander Raby's furnace at Cwmddyche (the present-day 'Furnace'). As the local black-smith, he would also tend the horses of Squire Mansel of Stradey Castle, and managed to persuade the squire to lease a parcel of land at Cae Halen (otherwise known as Cae Watch) to the Methodists of Gelli Onn so that they might build a new meeting-house. The names Cae Halen and Cae Watch relate to the days of the plague when the field was used as a market-place, its position on the outskirts of the town ensuring that strangers would not bring the plague into the town itself. Receptacles were strategically placed where money could be washed in salt water for purposes of decontamination. After Henry Jones, the Methodist had persuaded the Anglican Squire Mansel to lease the land, Capel Newydd was built in 1809. Other chapels followed, Trinity (1858), Nazareth (1865), honest

English Presbyterian (1870), Salem, Felin-foel (1876), Siloh (1876, now demolished), Saron (1879), and Glenalla (1909, now converted into a community centre).

The **Wesleyan Methodists** owe their origins in Llanelli, as elsewhere, to the pioneering work of John Wesley who visited the town on several occasions. A plaque commemorating a preaching visit by Wesley is sited on the outside wall of the Town Library.

Wesley's work was taken a stage further by John Deer and his family and also by John Child, agent to the Stepneys. Child, a prominent religious leader, landowner and industrialist opened the first Wesleyan chapel, known as Jerusalem, in Wind Street in 1792. His son-in-law was James Buckley, a Methodist minister, born in Lancashire and remembered in Llanelli as founder of the Buckley Brewery in the town. It was he who preached the sermon at the re-opening of Jerusalem in 1828. Jerusalem, which stood near Gelli Onn was demolished in 1966 and was in fact the first purpose-built chapel to be erected within the bounds of the town itself. Originally it had been built for the English-speaking Wesleyans in the town, but when Hall Street was erected in 1856 Jerusalem became a Welsh Wesleyan chapel. Their Anniversary services were often held at Capel Als, and one or two older members of Capel Als still remember the visits of famous Wesleyan preachers such as Tegla Davies, Tecwyn Evans and John Roger Jones.

The Continuing Story of the Church at Capel Als

The Rev. Evan Davies had prophesied that Llanelli would soon become a principal centre for trade and commerce. Thanks to the rich coal deposits which lay below ground, his judgement was fully vindicated, for this rich resource soon attracted both industrialists and workers to the area and the population of the town increased considerably, (see Dr Malcolm Symonds book on *Coal Mining in the Llanelli Area*). Capel Als was located at the very hub of this industrial activity, near the waggon-way from the pits of St David's at Y Bryn and the Box and Bres collieries to the Docks near Glan-y-môr.

Initially, the connection between Capel Als and the mother church at Llanedi was maintained, even after the death of Evan Davies. But the tempestuous ministry of his successor Thomas Edwards brought this arrangement to an end and the next minister, Howell Williams, who was

inducted in 1813 ministered initially only at Capel Als. Later, however, he took the newly established churches of Nazareth, Pontyates, and Jerusalem Pen-bre, under his wing. Sadly, he died at the early age of 38 in 1827.

His successor, David Rees, was one of the giants of his day. He commenced his ministry in 1829 and by the time of his death in 1869 the town of Llanelli had been transformed and he himself had become a national figure. Even before he began his ministry proper, he gave some intimation of his commitment and vision. Two months previously he had secured the land on which the chapel is built, together with the surrounding graveyard, for the benefit of Capel Als. The land was secured from Pemberton, the coal-owner, for the princely sum of £65 for the purposes of the 'society of Protestant Dissenters called Independent Calvinists'. Two years later, he instigated the building of a new chapel at a cost of £850. During his ministry at Capel Als, four other chapels were built without rancour or dispute and at his instigation: Park Church (1839), Siloa (1841), Bryn (1842) and Dock Chapel (1867, a joint venture by Capel Als and Siloa).

The building of Park Church was an interesting venture. The original church was erected in Park Street (hence the name) in 1839. The building still stands, and at the rear and side of the building one can still see traces of the chapel architecture. The present Park Church was built in 1864 and has a tall spire which David Rees insisted should be the tallest in the town, though initially he had objected to the idea of a spire. Park Church was established for the benefit of the two dozen members of Capel Als who hailed mostly from Staffordshire and were provided with an English service after the morning service at Capel Als. David Rees asked some 80 members of Capel Als, among them his own wife, to serve as founder-members of the new church. In this he himself became a pioneer of what was later called 'The English Cause' in Wales. The move to found an English church was providential, for soon pottery workers and their families and others who had come to Llanelli to seek work were added to the congregation.

David Rees also gained renown as a result of his editorship of the denominational monthly *Y Diwygiwr*, first published in 1835. Soon he crossed swords with David Owen 'Brutus', editor of a rival publication *Yr Haul*, reflecting an Anglican viewpoint. R T Jenkins commented: 'Witnessing a battle in which no quarter was given between thee two able contestants would provide the chief vehicle of political education for monoglot Welshmen from 1835 to 1865'. David Rees wrote monthly articles on politics in which he disseminated the broad principles of justice and

dealing. In particular he fought for religious freedom for Nonconformists and opposed all attempts to enforce religion by means of the law of the land, being very wary of too close a relationship between Church and State.

He was highly critical of the indiscriminate tithing which was the order of the day, even in parishes where Nonconformists were in the majority. 'We do not propose', he wrote 'to pay for washing the white shirt, for tolling the bells, nor for building and furnishing churches in which we do not worship'. In 1836 a petition was presented to the House of Commons signed by over 900 Llanelli Nonconformists calling for the repeal of church rates. Soon afterwards ten of the parishioners who had signed the petition were brought before the magistrates for non-payment. All this led to skirmishes between David Rees and Ebeneser Morris, the vicar of Llanelli, over e.g. the imprisonment of two Nonconformists, John James and David Jones, who had been elected churchwardens but refused to attend church.

At the time of the Rebecca riots, David Rees's ideas were brought to the attention of the authorities in London and *The Times* sent a correspondent to investigate, insinuating that the Nonconformists were the root cause of the unrest. David Rees's monthly *Y Diwygiwr* was named as 'a publication that advocated and fomented the disturbances'.

Rees was a firm believer in the benefits of education and laid great stress on reading. He was one of the founders of the Llanelli Public Library, which had its origin in the Llanelli Mechanics Institute. In fact, David Rees was a member of its first committee and was the first to present books for the use of the library.

A public meeting was held at Llanelli on 14 May 1845 under Rees's chairmanship when it was decided to build a school in Market Street on sound biblical foundations. He founded the school on the basis of self-help and each denomination arranged lectures to defray further costs. Because of lack of funds, however, the committee was forced, much against David Rees's principles, to go cap in hand to appeal for State aid.

As well as being a minister, Rees was a gifted businessman. He was one of the founders of the first savings bank in Llanelli, and of the first five accounts opened four were in the names of his children. Being an early champion of the cause of temperance, he hoped by means of the bank to encourage workers to put away some of their hard-earned wages instead of frittering them away in public houses. He was also one of the instigators

of frittering them away in public houses. He was also one of the instigators of the Llanelli Gas Company and had interests in two local collieries. He was a member of the Chamber of Trade and owned several houses in Oxen Street, near Goring Villa where he lived at the end of his life. However, he lost a great deal of money, in business ventures. His first, on which he spent £500, was the setting up of a printing press in Llanelli which he used for the publication of various items for the use of the churches, as well as books and periodicals.

He died on 31 March 1869. By then the church which numbered 250 at the start of his ministry had grown to 800 members and the four other churches set up through his efforts were flourishing. His ministry had lasted 40 years and he lies buried in the Llanelli Public Cemetery, though few townspeople know the location of his grave. To anyone who wishes to know more of his work I can do no better than commend Iorwerth Jones's fine study *David Rees y Cynhyrfwr*.

Ymddiriedolwyr Ymddiriedolaeth Capeli Cymru

Eleni cymerwyd cam pendant ymlaen tuag at sefydlu'r Ymddiriedolaeth a ddisgrifiwyd yn rhifyn 32 ein *Cylchlythyr*. Lluniwyd trefn i wahodd unigolion a fyddai â diddordeb mewn bod yn ymddiriedolwyr y corff newydd, gan ddilyn canllawiau arfer da y sector gwirfoddol ynghyd ag argymhellion Grŵp Cyfeirio Ymddiriedolaeth Capeli Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru. Yn ystod misoedd Mawrth ac Ebrill trwy hysbysebion yn y wasg, datganiad i'r cyfryngau ynghyd â chylchlythyru a chysylltiadau eraill daethpwyd â'r broses i sylw rhai a fyddai â diddordeb mewn bod yn ymddiriedolwyr. Mewn ymateb i'r llu o ymholiadau a dderbyniwyd, gyrrwyd 87 pecyn gwybodaeth at rai a fynegodd ddiddoddrdeb mewn bod yn ymddiriedolwyr ac fe dderbyniwyd ceisiadau gan 40 o bobl. 'Roedd hyn yn ymateb calonogol iawn ac yn arwydd o'r gefnogaeth, y diddordeb a'r ewyllys da tuag at y syniad o sefydlu Ymddiriedolaeth.

Ym mis Mai daeth pwyllgor ynghyd dan gaderiryddieth Marjorie Dykins (Cadeirydd pwyllgor gwaith CGGC) i geisio dewis pwy i'w gwahodd o blith y 40. Gwahoddwyd naw person i'r cam nesaf yn y broses o sefydlu'r Ymddiriedolaeth, sef: **Susan Beckley** (Archifydd Sir Gorllewin Morgannwg, aelod o Bwyllgor Gwaith CAPEL); **Alun Daniel** (Cyfarwyddwr Fforwm Gwledig Cymru, gynt o'r WDA); **Hywel Davies** (Cyfreithiwr yn y Bala); **David Glannester** (Maintfesurydd Siartredig gyda Pembroke Design Ltd., gynt Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr y Wheeler Group Consultancy); **John Hilling** (pensaer a chynllunydd trefol, un o sylfaenwyr CAPEL yn 1983); **Gwilym Hughes** (Prifathro Ysgol Eifionnydd, Porthmadog); **Tecwyn Vaughan Jones** (Cyfarwyddwr Canolfan Celtica, Machynlleth); **D Huw Owen** (Ceidwad Darluniau a Mapiau Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, aelod o Bwyllgor Gwaith CAPEL); **Neil Sumner** (Arweinydd Grŵp Gweithredu ac Amgylchedd,

Adran Gynllunio Cyngor Pen-y-bont-ar-Ogwr ac aelod o Bwyllgor Gwaith CAPEL). Mae llawer o waith o'u blaen, gan gynnwys datblygu cynlluniau ar gyfer gwithgareddau'r Ymddiriedolaeth, cynllunio ar gyfer y flwyddyn ariannol nesaf a sefydlu perthynas â'r lluo o gyrff sy'n weithredol yn y maes, gan gynnwys meithrin a datblygu perthynas gref â CAPEL.

Fe ddaw rhagor o newyddion yn y man wrth i'r Ymddiriedolaeth ddatblygu ac fe gyhoeddir taflen wybodaeth a chylchlythyr i ledaenu'r wybodaeth am y gweithgareddau. Yn y cyfamser, os ydych am gael rhagor o wybodaeth am yr Ymddiriedolaeth newydd, cysylltwch â mi, Gruff Owen, yn Swyddfa CGGC, 13 Ffordd Wynnstay, Bae Colwyn LL29 8NB.

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Trustees of the Welsh Chapels Trust

Work is proceeding on the task of establishing the Welsh Chapels Trust as described in CAPEL's Newsletter 32. A process was devised to invite individuals who would be interested in becoming trustees of the new body, following good practice guidelines for the voluntary sector, along with the recommendations of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action Chapels Trust Reference Group. During March and April through press advertisements and media releases, along with other contacts and correspondence, the process was drawn to the attention of those who might be interested in becoming trustees. In response to the many enquiries 87 information packs were sent out and 40 completed application forms were received. This was a very encouraging response, a sign of the support, the interest and the goodwill towards the idea of setting up the Trust. In May a small committee met under the chairmanship of Marjorie Dykins, chairman of the WCVA Executive Committee to draw up a short list. Nine were invited to the next step in the process of setting up the Trust and they were:

Susan Beckley (County Archivist of West Glamorgan, member of the Executive Committee of CAPEL); Alun Daniel (Director of Wales Rural Forum, formerly of the WDA); Hywel Davies (Solicitor in Bala); David Glannester (a chartered quantity surveyor with Pembroke Design Ltd., formerly Managing Director of Wheeler Group Consultancy); John Hilling (architect and town planner, and one of the founders of CAPEL in 1983); Gwilym Hughes (Headmaster of Ysgol Eifionnydd, Porthmadog); Tectwyn Vaughan Jones (Director of Celtica, Machynlleth); D Huw Owen (Keeper of Pictures and Maps, National Library of Wales, member of Executive Committee of CAPEL); Neil Sumner (Group Leader, Implementation and Environment at Bridgend County Borough Council Planning department, member of CAPEL Executive Committee).

They have a great deal of work in front of them, including developing the future programme of the Trust, planning for the next financial year, and forging links with other bodies active in the sector, including establishing and developing a strong relationship with CAPEL. As the Trust develops there will be more news and an information sheet and newsletter will be published to spread the word about its activities. Meanwhile, should you require any further information regarding the new Trust, please contact me, Gruff Owen, at WCVA's Colwyn Bay office, 13 Wynnstay Road, Colwyn Bay LL29 8NB.

(Tel. 01492 539800, Fax 01492 539801, e-mail GOWen@WCVA.org.uk)

West Wales Historic Churches and Chapels Trust

For the past two years Mr Malcolm Jefferies has been working hard to form a non-denominational charity to raise funds and make grants for the repair of churches and chapels which are open for regular public worship. It was decided to link the three counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire with a total population of 350,000, large enough to raise the necessary funds and West Wales was adopted as a conveniently short name for the three counties. Mr Jefferies has now reported on the work he has done in order to set up the Trust.

"In order to establish the Trust the first action was to carry out public consultation throughout the three counties. Six public meetings were planned to tell people about the proposed Trust and seek their support. Once sufficient public support had been obtained an Interim Committee would be established to make the Trust operational.

"For the Spring 1998 edition of the *Newsletter*, I wrote a detailed article about the proposed trust and the first public meeting, which was held in April 1998 at the University of Wales, Lampeter. I also mentioned briefly future public meetings and how I envisaged the proposed Trust would operate, but it was far too early to stress the importance of getting the Trust started and so there was no mention of the Interim Committee.

"In June 1999 a newsletter was sent to all those who wished to support the proposed Trust, informing them that public consultation was complete and inviting them to a special meeting about getting the Trust started, by forming the Interim Committee.

"Public Meetings had been held in Lampeter, Haverfordwest, Llandovery, Carmarthen, Cardigan and Aberystwyth. Over 400 people had expressed a wish to support the proposed Trust by becoming subscribing Founder Members once the Trust was established.

"Getting the Trust started is proving more difficult, simply because only a few have volunteered to play a part. There can be no Trust without first establishing the Interim Committee to do all the work to get it started. I am indebted to Professor Keith Robbins, Vice-Chancellor, University of Wales, Lampeter for agreeing to host a special meeting to establish the Interim Committee, to be held at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday 23 September 1999 in the Vice-Chancellor's office at the University.

"The Interim Committee would need a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Grants Secretary, Publicity Officer and an Organiser for an annual Sponsored Bike Ride or Walking Event - seven people drawn from the three counties - and would need to be supported by 15 people representing local

communities throughout the three counties. Once established, it would draft the Trust Deed, prepare operational policies, extend the membership establish the Executive Committee and Council, get Patrons and Presidents, plan the launch of the Trust, register the Trust, finalise grants policy and procedures and organise fund raising with the aim of introducing a programme to enable the first grants to be made to churches and chapels by December 2001."

Mr Jefferies believed that people could be found to fill the positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer but it was important to fill the remaining positions on the Interim Committee and especially encourage representatives from Pembrokeshire. He therefore invited people to contact him at Plas Bach, Heol Llanfair, Llanfair Clydogau, Llanbedr Pont Steffan, Ceredigion SA48 8JZ (Tel. 01570 - 493558) with offers of help, about attendance at the special meeting at Lampeter or requiring further information.

Unfortunately, few people responded to Mr Jefferies's invitation and he felt he had no alternative but to cancel the proposed meeting and has decided he can take no further action to form the Trust. This seems a very great shame, in view of the evident need for financial help for the chapels in West Wales, the enormous efforts Mr Jefferies has put into the task of organising a trust and the fact that over 400 people have already expressed their willingness to become subscribing members.

Is it too much to hope that some member or members of CAPEL can suggest some way of remedying the situation?

Rhestr Aelodau / List of Members

Ychwanegiadau at y Rhestri a gyhoeddwyd yn Cylchlythyrau 29-32 Additions to the Lists published in Newsletters 29-32

Aelodau Newydd / New Members

Archaeoleg Cambria Archaeology, Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo SA19 9AF
Alan Dolben, 39 Stonelea Court, Meanwood, Leeds LS7 2UH
David John Evans, 66 Nant Eirin, Tynybryn, Tonyrefail, Porth, Mid-Glamorgan CF39 8DP
W E Hughes, Abernant, Llwynhendy Rd. Llanelli, Carm. SA14 9BN
Ian Robert Hunt, Ash Lane, Costock, Loughborough CE12 6UX
Mrs Olwen Jenkins, Tawel Fôr, 1 Belle Vue Terrace Aberaeron, Ceredigion SA46 0BB
Jonathan Jones, 27 Conybeare Rd. Victoria Park, Cardiff CF5 1GB
Ken Lewis, FRICS, Borthwen, Ffordd Penmynydd, Llanfair-pwll, Ynys Môn LL61 5JH
Neil Floyd Marchant, 38 Chesterfield Rd., Bishopston, Bristol BS6 5DL
Gruff Owen, Garn Bach, Pontllynfi, Caernarfon LL54 5EU
M H Passmore, 18 Northumberland Ave., Reading RG2 7PW
Mr G E Rowlands, Nant y Bugail, 1 Maes yr Efail, Penrhyn-coch, Aberystwyth SY23 9PE
Keith F Stone, 341 Rochester Rd., Gravesend, Kent DA12 4TH
Dora Thomas, 13 Greenhill Ave. Copthorne, Shrewsbury SY3 8NR
Mrs Margaret Waide, 2 Woodfield Court, Woodfield Rd., Shrewsbury SY3 8HD
Mr & Mrs C Yewlett, 74 St Fagan's Rd. Fairwater, Cardiff CF5 3AL

Tanysgrifiadau / Subscriptions

Yn y Cyfarfod Blynyddol yn Abergele ym mis Hydref, bydd y Pwyllgor Gwaith yn argymhell codi'r tanysgrifiadau aelodaeth yn y flwyddyn 2000. Argymhellir codi'r tanysgrifiad unigol o £5.00 i £7.50 a'r tanysgrifiad teuluol o £7.50 i £10. Codir pris Aelodaeth Oes o £50 i £60.

Ni bu codiad yn lefelau ein tanysgrifiadau ers 1955 ac y mae'n mynd yn fwy anodd bob blwyddyn i redeg y Gymdeithas yn effeithiol ar yr arian a geir oddi wrth y tanygrifiadau presennol, yn arbennig gan ein bod yn gobeithio ehangu ein gweithrediadau yn y dyfodol.

At the Annual General meeting at Abergele in October, the Executive Committee is to recommend an increase in subscriptions in the year 2000. The Committee will recommend that the annual subscription be raised from £5.00 to £7.50, with a figure of £10.00 for a family subscription. The subscription for life membership is recommended to be raised from £50 to £60.

The only previous rise in the subscription rate was in 1955. It is becoming increasingly difficult to manage the society on the money raised from the present subscription of £5.00, especially as more activities are planned in future years.

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Cefyn Burgess

The cutting on p.16 taken from a recent issue of the *Western Mail* refers to the exhibition of Cefyn Burgess's collages and drawings, organised by the Ruthin Craft Centre and mounted at the Turner House Gallery, Penarth until 31 October.

Members of CAPEL will be reminded of the lecture *'Textiles and illustrative collages inspired by Welsh Nonconformist chapels'* delivered by the artist at the Annual Meeting held at Machynlleth on 17 October 1998.

Twelve illustrations of Welsh chapels by Cefyn Burgess are held by the National Library of Wales. Nine were acquired in 1994 and had originally been prepared for a dissertation submitted at the Royal College of Art. The other three depicting Jerusalem and Salem, Penmaenmawr, and Peniel Mallwyd were shown at the exhibition mounted last year at the Ruthin Craft Centre, and represent important additions to the Library's extensive collections of items relating to Welsh chapels.

CEFYN BURGESS: Exhibition of work at Penarth

Collages catch our closing chapels

KAREN PRICE

ARTIST Cefyn Burgess has always been intrigued by Welsh chapels.

He would visit those set alongside the A470, from Penmaenmawr in North Wales, to Penarth in South Wales, and make sketches of their striking architecture.

But he is concerned they may soon become a thing of the past.

There used to be 5,000 chapels in Wales and last century they were opening at the rate of one a week. Today one chapel closes each week.

Burgess has turned his sketches into a series of thought-provoking works, which are currently on display at the Turner House Gallery in Penarth.

The exhibition coincides with the imminent launch of the Wales Chapels Trust, which aims to restore and reopen redundant chapels.

Burgess hopes his work will show people how important the buildings are to Welsh heritage.

The collages of chapels have been compiled using a mixture of paper, textiles, pen and ink.

"It is high time that we were reminded that our temples, with their Corinthian columns and geometrical aspects, are just as graceful as any found in Greece," said 38-year-old Burgess, who lives in Penmaenmawr.

"Because they have always been there we are blind to the beauty hiding round every corner of our countryside."

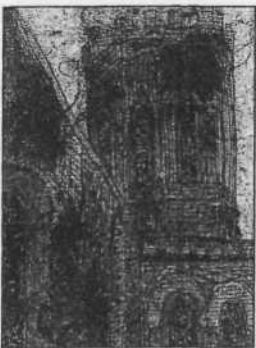
Burgess's works also show there are varying forms of chapels - from magnificent buildings at the seaside to the more richly extravagant chapels found in towns and cities.

To Burgess, chapels represent Welsh vernacular architecture at its best, with fine examples of arches, elegant spires, stained glass windows and decorative frontages.

He is also keen to illustrate the harmony between chapel exteriors



SHOWING: Chapel Series - small collages - pen and ink



DETAIL: Jerusalem (MC) - Penmaenmawr - handmade paper and textile collage

and their warm interior colours.

Wales Chapels Trust officer Gruff Owen has already viewed Burgess's work.

"I think the exhibition is excellent - I really like his work," said Mr Owen. "It certainly reflects how chapels are a part of our history, whether we attended them or not."

Textiles at the heart of art

CEFYN Burgess's exhibition, entitled *New Textiles*, runs at the Turner House Gallery, Penarth, until October 31.

Although the main display shows the collages of chapels, Burgess, who studied at the Royal College of Art in London, is also exhibiting textile designs including blankets, quilts and carpets.

Burgess works as a designer and manufacturer for furniture fabric and helped with the refurbishment of Cyfartifa Castle in Merthyr Tydfil.

The Wales Chapels Trust is being set up by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

A meeting of the trustees is due to take place on September 28 to finalise details before it is officially launched.

It has two main aims: to acquire the redundant chapels in Wales, restore and reopen them and to encourage community groups to use them.

Mr Owen said social changes had led to the closure of so many chapels.

But he said the denominations had worked hard to maintain them for community use.

The trust will apply for funding from a number of bodies, including Cadw and the Heritage Lotteries Fund, to help pay for its work.

As they are mainly listed buildings, they will have to be restored to their original specifications.

The trust hopes they will then be used by community groups.

"They were built as community assets so we want to encourage people to recognise the value of these buildings in communities," added Mr Owen.

Argraffwyd gan Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru
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