

# Capel

CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI  
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



---

CYLCHLYTHYR/NEWSLETTER 35 GWANWYN /SPRING 2000

---

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY MORMON CHAPEL IN ABERGELE

The first missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, otherwise known as Mormons, arrived in North Wales during the summer of 1840. Edward Parry, of Newmarket (Trelawnyd), together with his two sons and others from the Trelawnyd area, had been engaged in building the new docks in Liverpool and it was there that he and his eldest son, also called Edward, were



converted to the Mormon faith and baptized by the missionaries in the river Mersey. Edward Parry senior later became the founder and first conductor of the world famous choir of the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.

He and his son Edward came to Abergele to spread the new gospel as they had there, and in nearby St George, a large extended family, who received

them kindly. Converts to the cause were soon baptized and the little congregation was, by 1849, strong enough to erect a stone built meeting house for themselves. This purpose built chapel, now much altered, is attached to the Bull Hotel in Chapel Street, Abergele. The builder was John Morris, one of the first converts, who was a well-established building contractor employing some twenty men on building contracts throughout Denbighshire and Montgomeryshire for the County Surveyor, Thomas Penson. He almost certainly used Mormon masons to erect the building, thus keeping costs to a minimum.

This largely Welsh-speaking church achieved a membership of over 80, but members were encouraged and expected to emigrate to the New Zion beyond the seas in Salt Lake City. It is known that 55 persons in all emigrated from Abergele, and only two of these were to perish during the arduous journey to Utah. The first group of eight persons left Abergele in 1852 and these were followed by seven further groups, the last sailing in 1864. We tend to think of emigrants in the last century as poor, down-trodden people who were desperately seeking to better their earthly condition in a new country beyond the seas, but this was not completely true of these Mormon emigrants from Abergele. They were almost all skilled craftsmen, some were employers of labour, and Edward Parry described himself as 'a well-to-do stonemason'. We have on record the names, addresses, ages and occupations of all these emigrants and have also been able to trace their later lives in Utah.

Paradoxically, the very success of the Mormon Church in Abergele led to its decline. Emigrations deprived the young church of its more able and enthusiastic leaders and members, and this resulted in the decline and eventual demise of the congregation. The purpose-built stone chapel was taken over by the Baptists in 1856 and was used by that denomination as a place of worship until the new Baptist chapel was erected in 1863. The old Mormon chapel then became a warehouse, later a cottage, a spirits store and finally part of the restored restaurant of the Bull Hotel.

Edward Lloyd Parry and his family from St George, Abergele,

Denbighshire, spent some twelve years in St George, Washington County, Utah. Other members of the family appear in the census returns for St George, Utah, during this period. It is certainly remarkable that so many members of the family from the Denbighshire St George should find their way to the Utah St George, and that the chief mason for many of the prominent buildings in that city should be a native of the Denbighshire place of the same name. A spokesman at the Historical Department of the Church in Salt Lake City states that St George was named after a prominent Mormon of the period, but he does concede that it is 'a real coincidence' that so many natives of St George Denbighshire appeared in St George Utah during the early days of that settlement. It is intriguing and even tempting to think that the American city may have taken its name from this little village in Denbighshire, Wales.

R Fred Roberts

---

---

### **THE CHAPEL IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE CHAPEL : Tabernacl, Llandudno: a Case History**

It's official! The chapel is dying and CADW have accepted the dual fact that chapels are important and at risk. For many people chapels have ceased to have a meaningful existence. Whilst others understand their significance, they would probably not understand the significance of their loss in the same way as Capel members. A common perception is that there are probably too many chapels anyway, and many of the denominational leaders see consolidation as the only way forward<sup>1</sup>.

The CADW response has been to join with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and set up an arms-length trust to which it will contribute 75% funding for the preservation of Welsh chapels. Ah well! At least the 129 chapels on the 'must preserve' list are safe! Not so. According to Gruff Owen, of WCVA, the Trust's Secretary and also a Capel member, the Trust will be lucky to preserve three or four per year. When you think about the enormous task of taking over even that many per year, spread over Wales, a country with difficult physical

communication, it will be surprising and welcome if they can achieve that.

It is not suggested that the CADW/WCVA plans should be denigrated. Far from it because that is probably the most important lifeline that we have for the future of the Welsh chapel. It is just not sufficient, so other ways need to be found.

The 129 figure is probably a tongue in cheek one. For whilst some towns (e.g., Caernarfon) are well represented, others (e.g., Llanrwst) are totally absent. The whole of Flintshire is reckoned, on that list, to have only one chapel worthy of preservation for future generations. Anglesey has only five and Merioneth three!

Current thinking seems to be that most damage, i.e., loss, will be done in the next ten to twenty years, so presumably after that the position is going to be bleak.

Not everyone has thrown in the towel, however. One man determined to stand his ground against all comers is an elder of Tabernacl Chapel, Mostyn Street, Llandudno, Gwilym Williams. After a protracted romance with some local businessmen who wanted to gut out the 1875 gallery, he persuaded his chapel trustees that a heritage lottery application was the way forward. This was a bold move in an organisation that really didn't approve of gambling but he argued that the end justified the means. Everything in this case supported the application. Tabernacl was one of the famous 129: it was listed and in a conservation area. By great fortune it was also in the area of the Llandudno Town Scheme, a scheme that favours and funds historic building renovation. The recently formed Conwy County Borough Council has appointed a Conservation Architect, the first in the area, and his assistant is working quite assiduously through the town facilitating schemes to renovate façades.

This was all very fortunate for Tabernacl, and many chapels might not be so lucky. Sadly, the budget was not quite sufficient and one or two elements, such as the garden and kitchen were not completed within the HLF project. Subsequent lettings, however, have now paid for the kitchen.

Phase 2 of the scheme has been to quietly make Tabernacl available to suitable sympathetic users. The first such user was a local concert pianist

looking for a venue to entertain the public with light classical concerts. Overlapping this was a major exhibition spread through the eight sites in the town and centred on Tabernacl. This looked at the art and innovation in the development of this unusual seaside resort, including the development of the chapel. Another unusual but sympathetic use has been a number of meetings of a local building preservation trust (BPT) attempting to preserve the local 1846 National School. The early trustees of the chapel (founded 1813) would surely have found it strange if not unacceptable to be supporting a National School which would almost certainly have been seen as the enemy in 1846. However, it is a measure of Gwilym Williams' generosity and the movement of society generally that denominations now work far more closely together.

The latest event, the evening before Millennium Eve, was a moving *Cymanfa Ganu* by the BPT, aimed at raising funds. The local Plaid Cymru Assembly Member, Gareth Jones, opened the event and spoke about the heroes of all political parties whom he pleaded we should remember. He referred to a plaque on the chapel exterior to Lewis Valentine, one of the founders of Plaid Cymru and its first parliamentary candidate. Valentine had once been the minister of Tabernacl and the event attracted his granddaughter Gwerfyl to the meeting. That moving event reminded us all how small a country is Wales but how large a contribution its chapels have made to her past and her present.

Gwilym Williams has been determined to demonstrate how one man can make a difference. Tabernacl Llandudno is a monument to his efforts. Tabernacl is now showing a new confident exterior in the Llandudno town centre. Whilst its future may never be fully secure, it is learning how to face the future and maintain its presence. The modest but increasing stream of people entering its doors may even mean addition to its membership. Who knows?

Stuart Rivers

1. A major 'consolidation' of Welsh language chapels is being tried in Llandudno, despite the fact that no less than three of them are on CADW's 'must preserve' list

The current position (2 March 2000) appears to be that against all the odds Tabernacl Chapel may be the preferred chapel for the proposed 2000 consolidation, despite its having

no car parking. Seilo in Arvon Avenue is marked as having some movement in the front left corner, though it is not known whether a structural engineer has looked at it. The congregations are currently visiting each chapel for a month at a time to get the feel of each place. Presumably a decision will follow after a few visits and the remainder will be put on the market. Locally we are determined that Seilo will also survive.

*[Some of the matters raised by Mr Rivers in his article have received attention in the Welsh denominational press. An article in the February issue of Y Gwilydydd describes the steps towards unification which have been taken in Llandudno since the decision, some eight years ago, to work towards the establishment of one Welsh Nonconformist chapel in the town.*

*Another press report states that a similar 'consolidation' is to be undertaken in Penmaenmawr.*

*Letters in Y Goleuad have argued for and against the use of Lottery grants for chapel repairs and renovations and asked for information regarding other grant sources. As noted in the minutes of our last AGM, CAPEL is intending to bring out a revised edition of the Information Leaflet we produced on the subject some years ago. Ed]*

---

## CHAPEL PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

Recent acquisitions of photographic collections by the National Library of Wales include one recording chapels in Monmouthshire and two relating to the Tabernacle Welsh Congregational Church, King's Cross, London. The photographic survey of chapels in Monmouthshire was started by the late Harry Owen, Penperlleni (Goytre), assisted by Councillor Robert Gulliford, Blaenavon, and then continued by R. Gulliford with Capel member John Freer, Panteg, Pontypool. The survey was finally completed by John Freer, whose photographs have also represented an important contribution to the Chapels Survey of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales. The Monmouthshire chapel collection has been augmented by additional photographs of various buildings, including schools, hospitals, bridges, tollhouses, mile markers, boundary markers, fountains and drinking fountains, police stations, drill halls and workmen's halls, a number of which have now been demolished.

Photographs of the King's Cross Chapel were taken as part of a co-operative venture with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. Also, a set of 248 colour transparencies, accompanied by explanatory notes and a fully annotated list, taken by the late D Gethin Griffiths, a former deacon and treasurer, and former headmaster of a school in

Edmonton. These slides depict various chapel activities, including services and various social functions held in the period 1957-1976. These two collections complement the documentary and printed material held by the Library relating to this chapel.

---

## CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL BLYNYDDOL

Cynhaliwyd 14<sup>es</sup> Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol y Gymdeithas yn Abergele ddydd Sadwrn 23 Hydref 1999.

1. Croesawodd y Cadeirydd yr aelodau i'r Cyfarfod, a gynhaliwyd yng nghapel Mynydd Seion, a diolchodd i Mr Vernon Hughes am drefnu'r diwrnod.
2. Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau am eu habsenoldeb oddi wrth Miss Susan Beckley, Mr Peter Saunders, Mr David Barton, Mr David E Gillman, Mr Donald a Mrs Patricia Moore, Ms Nia Rhosier, Mr David Percival, Mr Neil Sumner a Mr Malcolm Jefferies.
3. Derbyniwyd ac arwyddwyd cofnodion y 13<sup>es</sup> Cyfarfod Blynyddol, a gynhaliwyd ym Machynlleth ar 17 Hydref 1998.
4. **Materion yn Codi**  
Ni chodwyd unrhyw faterion o gofnodion cyfarfod 1998.
5. **Adroddiad y Cadeirydd**
  - i) Cyfarfu'r Pwyllgor Gwaith bedair gwaith yn ystod y flwyddyn a diolchodd y Cadeirydd i'r swyddogion ac i aelodau'r Pwyllgor am eu cefnogaeth.
  - ii) Diolchodd y Cadeirydd i Lyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru am ganiatáu i'r Pwyllgor gyfarfod yno ac am roi inni gymaint o groeso a chymorth yn ystod y flwyddyn.
  - iii) Mae'r Pwyllgor Gwaith yn ymwybodol iawn o'r angen am gyhoeddi taflen am y grantiau sydd ar gael i gapeli i'w cynorthwyo ac efallai hefyd llyfryn mwy cyffredinol ar gyfer yr enwadau ac awdurdodau cynllunio lleol. Byddwn yn edrych i mewn i'r mater yma yn ystod y flwyddyn nesaf.
  - iv) Yr oedd y Cadeirydd wedi cyfarfod â Mr David Percival, Rheolwr Prosiect y Capeli, yn swyddfa Comisiwn Brenhinol

yr Henebion a buont yn trafod y camau nesaf i'w cymryd yn yr arolwg capeli. Adroddwyd bod y pwyslais wedi newid rywfaint am nad yw'r Comisiwn bellach yn gwneud arolwg cyffredinol cenedlaethol ond yn hytrach yn arolygu capeli yn ôl anghenion a rhinweddau unigol. Efallai y gofynnir am help gwirfoddolwyr o blith aelodau CAPEL i weithredu'r cynllun.

- v) Cyflwynodd y Cadeirydd adroddiad ar yr ymgais a wneir i ail-ddiffinio amcanion y Gymdeithas a dywedodd fod gwahanol syniadau yn cael eu trafod. Bydd rôl CAPEL yn y dyfodol yn dibynnu ar sut y bydd yr Ymddiriedolaeth newydd i gapeli Cymru yn datblygu. Ond byddai CAPEL fodd bynnag yn dymuno cynhyrchu pecyn addysgol am ein treftadaeth anghydfurfiol.
- vi) Adroddodd y Cadeirydd ei fod ef a Ms Ann Rhydderch wedi eu cyflweld ar gyfer rhaglen radio ar gapeli.
- vii) Diolchodd i Mr Alun Jones am ei waith fel golygydd y *Cylchlythyr* ac apeliodd am ragor o gyfraniadau i'r cyhoeddiad.
- viii) Diolchodd i Ms Ann Rhydderch am ei gwaith fel Swyddog y Wasg ac i Ms Penny Icke am ei gweithgarwch fel Ysgrifennydd.

Codwyd y cwestiynau canlynol o'r llawr.

- Gofynnodd Mr Michael Passmore am eglurhad o'r gwahaniaeth rhwng CAPEL a'r Ymddiriedolaeth Capeli newydd. Atebodd Mr Gruff Owen trwy amlinellu'r angen am fwy o bendantwydd ynglŷn â phwy sydd i wneud beth. Prif waith yr Ymddiriedolaeth fodd bynnag fydd perchnogi capeli nad oes defnydd iddynt bellach. Mae gan CAPEL faes ehangach - hybu treftadaeth bensaernïol capeli a'r pwysigrwydd o'u cadw'n fyw a gweithgar. Disgwylir, fodd bynnag, y bydd gwaith y ddau gorff yn cydreddeg a'r naill yn helpu'r llall.
- Gofynnodd Mr Stuart Rivers a oedd modd gwybod pa gapeli sy'n dal mewn bodolaeth. Rhoddodd yr Ysgrifennydd wybodaeth i'r cyfarfod am Brosiect Capeli Comisiwn yr Henebion ond pwysleisiodd nad oedd yn y bas-data a gynhyrchir fanylion am statws presennol pob capel. Yn wir, o achos statws



annibynnol capeli mae'n anodd cael gwybodaeth gyfredol am eu statws. Yr ydym yn dibynnu ar unigolion i hysbysu cyrff fel y Comisiwn a CAPEL pan fydd capeli yn cau. Apeliodd yr Ysgrifennydd i unrhywun a glywai fod capel ar fin cau neu gael ei dynnu i lawr gysylltu â hi yn swyddfa'r Comisiwn.

• Gofynnodd Mr M Davies a oedd cymdeithas CAPEL yn rhoi cyhoeddusrwydd iddi'i hun yn y papurau cenedlaethol a lleol. Atebodd y Cadeirydd ein bod yn gwneud hynny yn achlysurol ond y byddwn yn chwilio ymhellach i'r posibilïadau.

## 6 Adroddiad yr Ysgrifennydd

- i) Bu Cyfarfod y Gwanwyn yn llwyddiant mawr eleni, gyda dros 50 o aelodau CAPEL a thrigolion lleol yn bresennol. Fe'i cynhaliwyd ar 15 Mai yn Llanelli, gan ddechrau gyda darlith ddiddorol yng Nghapel Als gan y Parch. Maurice Loader ar *Anghydfurfaeth yn Ardal Llanelli*. Ar ôl cinio yng Ngwesty Stepney, fe'n harweiniwyd gan Mr Vivian Williams ar daith o gwmpas pedwar capel arall trawiadaol iawn yn y dref: Seion, Capel y Bedyddwyr; Capel Diwygiedig Unedig y Parc; Moreia (Bedyddwyr) a'r Tabernacl (Annibynwyr). Terfynwyd y daith yn y Capel Newydd, (Eglwys Bresbyteriaidd Cymru), lle y darparwyd te arbennig iawn. Diolchodd yr Ysgrifennydd i bawb a gyfrannodd at lwyddiant y diwrnod ac i'r rhai a roddodd inni groeso mor gynnes i Lanelli.
- ii) Derbyniodd CAPEL ohebiaeth sylweddol iawn eleni a'r cynnwys yn amrywio'n fawr. Cafwyd nifer fawr o ymholiadau oddi wrth gapeli sy'n cael anhawster i gadw'n fyw ac sy'n chwilio am ffyrdd i gyllido gwaith adnewyddu ac atgyweirio. Nifer o flynyddoedd yn ôl fe gynhyrchodd CAPEL daflen wybodaeth yn rhoi cyngor am ble i chwilio am grantiau ond erbyn hyn mae'r wybodaeth lawer yn rhy hen. Fe hoffai'r Pwyllgor Gwaith gyhoeddi fersiwn ddiwygiedig ond ar hyn o bryd rydym am aros i'r Ymddiriedolaeth Capeli newydd sefydlu ei rôl er mwyn i ni osgoi dyblygu gwaith. Y mae'n amlwg bod angen corff i roi cyngor i gapeli sy'n dal i fod yn fannau addoli a hefyd i rai sy'n cael eu trawsnewid i bwrpasau eraill.

Tynnwyd sylw CAPEL at ddwy enghraifft o gapeli sy'n derbyn cymorth. Y cyntaf oedd capel Burnet's Hill, Martletwy, adeilad cofrestredig, graddfa II, a oedd dan fygythiad o gael ei werthu a'i drawsnewid ond sy'n awr yn cael ei brynu gan Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Sir Benfro i gael i adnewyddu a'i ddefnyddio gan y gymuned fel lle o addoliad a chanolfan gymunedol. Enghraifft arall o gymuned yn cymryd camau gyda'i gilydd i achub capel yw Maes Hafn yn Sir Ddinbych, lle mae'r gymuned wedi sefydlu Cymdeithas Wledig Maes Hafn ac yn ceisio prynu'r capel Presbyteriaidd lleol er mwyn ei ddefnyddio fel lle i addoliad (cydenwadol) gan ddefnyddio'r ysgoldy fel neuadd gymunedol.

- iii) **Ceisiadau Cynllunio.** Bu lleihad eleni yn nifer y ceisiadau cynllunio lle y gofynnwyd am gyngor oddi wrth CAPEL ond unwaith eto penderfynodd y Pwyllgor Gwaith i ohirio cysylltu â'r holl awdurdodau cynllunio lleol tan ar ôl sefydlu rôl yr Ymddiriedolaeth Capeli. Diolchodd yr Ysgrifennydd i Ms Elizabeth Evans am y gwaith caled a wnaeth fel Cynghorydd Adeiladau CAPEL.
- iv) Derbyniodd yr Ysgrifennydd nifer bychan o ymholiadau e-bost gan bobl a welodd ein safle ar y We Fyd-eang ac a oedd yn chwilio am fanylion pellach am gapeli arbennig neu am wybodaeth gyffredinol am waith y Gymdeithas. Ymddengys mai myfyrwyr sy'n defnyddio'r ffordd hon o ohebu fwyaf. Y mae'n safle ar y We yn awr yn gyflawn a gweithredol ac arno mae'r llun a wnaeth Commander Mortimer o gapel St Paul, Aberystwyth, sy'n addas iawn i ddangos cyflwr ein capeli heddiw, gan fod y capel yma wedi'i droi yn ddiweddar yn dŷ tafarn o'r enw Yr Academi. Mae'r safle ar y We yn cael ei adnewyddu'n gyson gyda rhestr gyflawn o ddigwyddiadau sydd ar ddod.
- v) Cyhoeddodd yr Ysgrifennydd ddyddiadau cyfarfodydd y flwyddyn sy'n dod: cynhelir Cyfarfod y Gwanwyn yn Aberhonddu ar 13 Mai 2000 ac i nodi'r Milflwyddiant cynhelir cyfarfod ar y cyd gyda'r Chapels Society yng

Nghaerdydd ar 21 Hydref. Bydd y cyfarfod hwn yn cynnwys ein Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol.

Codwyd y cwestiynau canlynol o'r llawr:

- Gofynnodd Mr Islwyn Jones i'r Ysgrifennydd anfon at Awdurdod Cynllunio Rhondda Cynon Taf i holi ynglŷn â chynlluniau'r awdurdod ar gyfer Capel y Cymer.
- Rhoddodd Mr Stuart Rivers adroddiad ar arbrawf atgyfnerthiad capeli Llandudno, lle mae pedair cynulleidfa yn rhannu un capel. Gofynnodd a oedd hyn yn digwydd ar draws y wlad. Atebodd y Cadeirydd fod cynlluniau o'r fath mewn nifer o fannau yn arbennig yn Eglwys Bresbyteraidd Cymru lle y gwnaed arolwg o'u holl gapeli ac yna datblygu strategaeth o gau llawer o gapeli o achos y gost enfawr o'u cynnal.

## 7 Adroddiad y Trysorydd

- i) Cyflwynodd y Trysorydd gyfriflen am y flwyddyn yn diweddu 31 Awst 1999
- ii) Y mae rhif yr aelodaeth wedi aros o gwmpas 276. Apeliodd i'r aelodau ddefnyddio archebion banc parhaol i dalu eu tansysgrifiadau blynyddol a gofynnodd iddynt ddsbarthu taflenni aelodaeth pan gaent gyfle.
- iii) Cynigiodd fod y Gymdeithas yn codi'r graddfeydd tansysgrifio i :-

£7.50	Aelodaeth unigol
£10.00	Aelodaeth teulu
£60.00	Aelodaeth oes

Derbyniwyd y cynigiad yn unfrydol gan y cyfarfod.

- iv) Diolchodd i'r Cadeirydd ac i staff Archifdy Sir Ddinbych am eu help i gynhyrchu'r Fantolen.  
Diolchodd hefyd i'r Dr Huw Owen a'r Ysgrifennydd am eu cymorth ac i Mrs Naomi Hughes am archwilio'r cyfrifon.

## 8 Ethol Swyddogion ac Aelodau'r Pwyllgor

Ymdeolodd y Cadeirydd, Mr Kevin Matthias, ac etholwyd Dr J Lionel Madden i'r swydd. Ail-etholwyd y Trysorydd, Mr Geoffrey

Veysey, a'r Ysgrifennydd, Ms Penny Icke. Diolchwyd i Mr Matthias am yr holl amser a'r gwaith mawr a wnaeth i'r Gymdeithas dros y chwe blynedd y bu'n Gadeirydd.

**9 Unrhyw Fater Arall**

Holodd Mrs O Passmore am y modd y gellid cynyddu cyhoeddusrwydd i'r Gymdeithas. Dywedodd y Cadeirydd fod hyn yn fater y byddid yn edrych i mewn iddo.

Yn dilyn y Cyfarfod Blynyddol cafwyd darlith gan Mr Fred Roberts ar *Anghydffurfiaeth yn Abergele*.

Penny Icke  
Ysgrifennydd Mygedol

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 14th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Abergele on Saturday 23rd October 1999.

- 1) The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting held at Mynydd Seion Chapel, Abergele and thanked Mr Vernon Hughes for organising the day.
- 2) Apologies for absence were received from: Miss Susan Beckley, Mr Peter Saunders, Mr David Barton, Mr David E Gillman, Mr Donald and Mrs Patricia Moore, Ms Nia Rhosier, Mr David Percival, Mr Neil Sumner, Mr Malcolm Jefferies.
- 3) The minutes of the 13th AGM held in Machynlleth on 17th October 1998 were accepted and signed.
- 4) **Matters Arising**  
No matters were raised from the minutes of the 1998 AGM.

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.
- iii) The Executive are very conscious of the need to publish a booklet on grant aid for chapels and possibly a more general booklet for denominations and local planning authorities. This will be looked into in the forthcoming year.
- iv) The Chairman had met with the Project Manager of the Chapels Project, Mr David Percival, at the RCAHMW where they had discussed the next step to take on the chapels survey. It was reported that the emphasis had changed slightly in that the Commission is no longer carrying out a countrywide survey of chapels but rather surveying chapels on individual needs and merits. Capel volunteers may be called on to carry this out.
- v) The Chairman reported on the progress of Capel's new aims and objectives saying that different ideas were still under discussion. Much of Capel's role in the future will be dependent on how the new Welsh Chapels Trust develops. Capel would, however, like to produce a Nonconformist heritage education pack.
- vi) The Chairman reported that both he and Ann Rhydderch had been interviewed for a radio programme on chapels.
- vii) The Chairman thanked Mr Alun Jones for his work as Editor of the *Newsletter* and appealed for contributions to

the *Newsletter*.

- viii) The Chairman thanked Ann Rhydderch for her work as Press Officer and Penny Icke, as Secretary.

The following questions were received from the floor:

- Mr Michael Passmore asked for clarification on the difference between the new Chapels Trust and Capel. Mr Gruff Owen replied, outlining the need for consolidation on who does what. The primary role of the Trust will, however, be to acquire redundant chapels. Capel has a broader agenda, promoting the architectural heritage of chapels and the importance of keeping them active. The two bodies will, however, overlap but hopefully complement each other.
- Mr Stuart Rivers asked whether there was any way of knowing which chapels are still in existence. The Secretary informed the meeting about the work of the Chapels Project at the Royal Commission but pointed out that the database being produced did not hold the current status of every chapel. Indeed, because of the independence of chapels it is very difficult to get up to date information on their status. We are dependent on volunteers informing bodies such as the Royal Commission and Capel of any chapels that are closing. The Secretary requested that if anyone should hear of a chapel closing/being demolished they should contact her.
- Mr M Davies asked whether Capel publicised itself in national and local newspapers. The Chairman replied that we did occasionally, but we would look into this further.

6) **Secretary's Report**

- i) The Spring Meeting this year was a great success with over

50 Capel members and local residents attending. It was held in Llanelli on 15th May and began at Capel Als with an interesting lecture by Rev. Maurice Loader on *Nonconformity in the Llanelli Area*. After lunch at the Stepney Hotel we were taken on a tour by Mr Vivian Williams, of four other most impressive chapels in the town: Seion Baptist Chapel, Park United Reformed Church, Moriah Baptist and Tabernacle Independent Chapel. The tour ended at Capel Newydd (Presbyterian Church of Wales), where we were provided with a wonderful tea. The Secretary thanked everyone who helped make the day a success and all those who showed us such warm hospitality in Llanelli.

- ii) Capel has had a great many items of correspondence this year which have been quite wide ranging in their content. There have been many enquiries from chapels struggling to survive, needing funding for renovations and repairs. Many years ago Capel produced an information leaflet that gave advice on where grants could be sought but this is now terribly out of date. The Executive would like to produce an updated version but at present we are waiting for the new Chapels Trust to settle on its role so that we can avoid duplication of effort. There is obviously a great need for an advisory body both for chapels still in use as places of worship and those that are being converted to other uses.

Two particularly positive examples of chapels receiving help have been brought to Capel's attention. The first being Burnett's Hill Chapel, Martletwy, a grade II listed building, which was under threat of being sold off for conversion but is now in the process of being purchased by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park with the intention that it will be renovated and used by the community both as a place of worship and as a community centre. Another example of a community stepping in collectively to save their chapel is in

Maes Hafn, Denbighshire, where the community have formed themselves into Maes Hafn Rural Association and are seeking to buy the local Welsh Presbyterian chapel, in order to retain its use as a place of worship (in an inter-denominational form) and convert the school room into a community hall.

- iii) **Planning Applications** - There has been a reduction in the number of planning applications Capel has been consulted on this year but the Executive have again decided to delay contacting all the local planning authorities until after the new Chapels Conservation Trust has settled on its role. The Secretary thanked Elizabeth Evans for all her hard work in acting as Capel's Building Adviser.
- iv) The Secretary has received a small trickle of e-mails from those who have seen our website and are seeking further information on specific chapels or general information on the work of our Society. Students in particular seem to use this mode of communication.

Our website is now fully up and running and is illustrated by Commander Mortimer's drawing of St Paul's Chapel, Aberystwyth which illustrates the modern plight of chapels rather aptly as this chapel has recently been converted into a public house and is now known as The Academy. The website is kept updated with a full list of forthcoming events.

- v) The Secretary announced the dates for the meetings in the coming year:  
the Spring Meeting next year will be held in Brecon on 13th May 2000 and to mark the Millennium we will be holding a joint meeting with the Chapels Society in Cardiff. This will be on 21st October 2000 and will include our AGM.



The following questions were received from the floor:

- Mr Islwyn Jones requested the Secretary to write to Rhondda Cynon Taff Planning Authority to enquire on what plans the Authority have for Cymmer Chapel.
- Mr Stuart Rivers reported on the consolidation exercise of chapels in Llandudno where four congregations will be sharing one chapel. He asked if this was happening across Wales. The Chairman reported that it was, especially in the Presbyterian denomination where they have carried out a survey of all their chapels and as a result have formulated a strategy to close many of their chapels due to the vast expense of their upkeep.

#### 7) Treasurer's Report

- i) The Treasurer presented the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st August 1999.
- ii) 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 distribute leaflets wherever possible.
- iii) The Treasurer proposed that the subscription rates should be increased to:

£7.50	Individual membership
£10.00	Family membership
£60.00	Life membership

Members voted in favour unanimously.
- iv) The Treasurer thanked the Chairman and the staff of Denbighshire Record Office who helped in the production of the balance sheet. He also thanked Dr Huw Owen and the Secretary for their help and Naomi Hughes for checking the accounts.

## 8) Election of Officers and Committee Members

The Chairman, Mr Kevin Matthias, stood down and Dr J Lionel Madden was elected in his place. The Treasurer and Secretary were re-elected:

Chairman: Dr J Lionel Madden  
Treasurer: Mr Geoffrey Veysey  
Secretary: Ms Penny Icke

Thanks were given to Mr Kevin Matthias for all the time and hard work he had given to Capel over the 6 years he had been Chairman.

## 9) Any Other Business

Questions of further publicity for Capel were raised by Mrs O Passmore. The Chairman said that this would be looked into.

The AGM was followed by a lecture by Mr Fred Roberts on *Nonconformity in Abergele*.

Penny Icke  
Honorary Secretary

---

Following the lecture and lunch in the Bull Hotel, which had once housed the Mormon chapel, the members were conducted by Mr Vernon Hughes on a walking tour of three of the town's other chapels, the Methodist St.Paul's, Baptist Salem and Independent Eglwys Crist.

## Chapels under Threat

The chapels in the following list have been brought to the Secretary's attention as examples of chapels under threat. CAPEL has been consulted officially on some of these closures / changes of use, but for the vast majority we rely on our members to inform us of chapels closing or deemed to be under threat. If you know of any chapel that has closed, is about to close or is under threat in any way, please let the Secretary know. We are

attempting to construct a register of such chapels and would greatly appreciate input from any interested parties. We would also find any extra information on the outcome of these chapel closures very useful. How is the chapel building now used? Is it a 'good' conversion? Has the building been demolished or neglected since closure? Please send all information to Penny Icke, RCAHMW, Plas Crug Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 1NJ, Tel: 01970 621210, e-mail: penny.icke@rcahmw.org.uk

**October 1999 - April, 2000**

**Barham Independent Chapel, Ebbw Vale, Monmouthshire.** To close in the near future.

**Bethania Congregational Chapel, Derwen-las, Montgomeryshire.** Closed 12 December, 1999.

**Bethania Baptist Chapel, Cleveland St., Ruabon Wrexham.** Application to demolish this disused chapel has been proposed in order to build a pair of semi-detached houses.

**Bethel Wesleyan Chapel, Pont-rhyd-y-groes, Ceredigion.** Closed and on the market.

**Bethesda Baptist Chapel, Prince of Wales Rd., Swansea.** Grade II listed building. Disused for about 20 years but an application has recently been received to use the building to house a climbing school.

**Bethlehem Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Bryn-teg, Porthmadoc.** On the market.

**Capel Bethania, Calvinistic Methodist, Nantgwynant, Caernarfonshire.** Held its last service on 5.12.1999.

**Capel Grianfryn, Mission Chapel, Llanwnda, Carmarthenshire.** Demolition proposed.

**Capel Seion Baptist Chapel, Caerwys, Flintshire.** Closed and pews removed.

**Congregational Church, Glendower St., Monmouth.** Grade II listed building. Disused.

**Cymmer Independent Chapel (Hen Gapel y Cymer), Porth.** Grade II listed building. Disused, vandalised and in a very poor state.

**Ebenezer Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Tumble, Carmarthenshire.** To be demolished imminently.

**Engedi Chapel, Calvinistic Methodist, Caernarfon.** Grade II listed

building. Closed and put on the open market

**Fronwen Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Llanarth, Ceredigion.** Closed 1974 and still disused.

**Hodley United Reformed Chapel, nr. Abermule.** Closed 23 January 2000.

**Lavister United Reformed Chapel, Rosset, Denbighshire.** On the market  
**Llanfor Presbyterian Chapel, nr Bala.** Closed.

**Mount Calvary Baptist Chapel, Ysgol St., Swansea .** Grade II listed building. An application has been submitted to convert the chapel into nine dwelling units for the Family Housing Association (Wales).

**Pisgah Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, Penygraig, Glamorgan.** Closed 11 December 1999.

**Salem Wesleyan Chapel, Denbigh.** Closed in October 1999.

**Shiloh Welsh Wesleyan Chapel , Merthyr Tydfil, (former Miners' Hall).** A feasibility study has recently been carried out by Community Enterprise Wales for the refurbishment of the hall as a Youth Enterprise Centre including 15 office units and a range of other facilities.

**Ysbyty Ystwyth Presbyterian Chapel, Ceredigion.** A proposal has been made to put the main chapel on the market and move the congregation to the old chapel, Maesglas.

**Zoar Independent Chapel, Tretower, Breconshire.** Closed.

---

---

### GŴYL CAPELI / CHAPELS FESTIVAL

A Llansteffan area Chapels Festival, part of a programme of Millenium celebrations, is scheduled for Saturday - Sunday 10-11 June 2000. Chapels in Llansteffan, Llanybri, Llangain and Llangynog will be open from 1.30 to 6.00 p.m. on Saturday and 2.00 to 4.00 p.m. on Sunday. They will display exhibitions and serve cups of tea and biscuits.

The Festival concludes on Sunday evening with a Cymanfa Ganu held at Capel Newydd, Llanybri at 7.00 p.m.

---

---