

Capel

CYMDEITHAS TREFTAADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY



Cylchlythyr / Newsletter 43 Gwanwyn / Spring 2004

Cyfarfod yr Hydref yng Nghaerffili *Autumn Meeting in Caerphilly*

Cynhaliwyd cyfarfod yr hydref y llynedd ar 18 Hydref yn Neuadd y Seiri Rhyddion yng Nghaerffili. Ar ôl y croeso arferol a'r Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol (gweler tud.3) cafwyd sgwrs ar gapeli'r ardal gan Mr David Parry, a oedd wedi paratoi'r Daflen Wybodaeth Leol ar gyfer y diwrnod.



Mynwent Groeswen

Groeswen Cemetery

Yna ar ôl cinio aethpwyd mewn bws i weld dau gapel y tu allan i'r dref a chwaraeodd ran yn nechreud Methodistaeth yn yr ardal tua chanol y

ddeunawfed ganrif, er mai capeli Annibynnol ydynt - Watford, a sefydlwyd ym 1739 gan y Parch. David Williams (1709-84), a Groeswen, a godwyd tair blynedd yn ddiweddarach, y capel cyntaf yng Nghymru a adeiladwyd yn arbennig fel capel i'r Methodistiaid Calffinaidd ond a adawodd y mudiad ym 1752. Ychydig o dai sy'n agos at y capel nawr ond bu'n ganolfan addoli am ardal eang, fel y tystiolaetha'r fynwent eang y tu ôl i'r capel, lle y claddwyd nifer o Gymry blaenllaw yn eu dydd, megis W Caledfryn Williams a C Tawelfryn Thomas. Ychydig iawn o aelodau sydd gan y capel erbyn hyn ond mae'r adeilad wedi'i restru ac mae cynllun ar droed i gasglu arian i sicrhau dyfodol yr adeilad yma a nodi ei bwysigrwydd yn hanes Ymneilltuaeth Cymru.

Ddiwedd y prynhawn dychwelodd y cwmni i ganol y dref i weld capel Bethel, lle y cafwyd te a sgwrs ar hanes y capel, a ddechreuodd fel cangen o Groeswen ond a droes yn eglwys annibynnol ym 1856 ac sydd er 1992 wedi ymgartrefu mewn adeilad newydd, clyd.

Last year's autumn meeting was held in the Masonic Hall in Caerphilly. After the usual welcoming cup of coffee and the Annual General Meeting (see p.6) the members enjoyed a talk on the chapels of the area, given by Mr David Parry, who had prepared the Local Information Sheet for the meeting.

After lunch, we were taken by coach to view two chapels outside the town which had played a part in the early history of Methodism in the district in the mid-eighteenth century, though they are Congregational chapels - Watford, established in 1739 by the Rev. David Williams (1709-84), and Groeswen, built three years later, the first purpose built Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Wales, though it defected from the Methodist movement in 1752. There are few houses close to the chapel now but it was at one time the centre of worship for a large area as is evidenced by the extensive graveyard behind the chapel containing the tombs of several eminent Welshmen of the nineteenth century, such as W Caledfryn Williams and C Tawelfryn Thomas. The chapel has very few members now but it is a listed building and efforts are continuing to collect funds to ensure the future of the building and safeguard its place in the history of Nonconformity in Wales,

At the end of the afternoon, the company returned to the centre of the town to see Bethel, a chapel which started as a branch of Groeswen but was in 1856 recognised as an independent congregation, and which, since 1992, has enjoyed the comfort of a warm, new building.

Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol, 18 Hydref 2003

1. Croeso'r Cadeirydd

Estynnodd y Cadeirydd groeso i'r aelodau i'r cyfarfod a diolchodd i Derrick a Glenys Dean am drefnu rhaglen y diwrnod.

2. Ymddiheuriadau

Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau oddi wrth: Graham Davies, Meirick Lloyd Davies, Katherine Howe, Penny Icke, Dilys Quick, Ann Rhydderch, Richard Thomas, John a Sandra Wheeler a John Winton.

3. Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Diwethaf

Derbyniwyd a chadarnhawyd cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ym Mlaenafon ar 4 Hydref 2002.

4. Materion yn Codi

Ni chodwyd unrhyw faterion o'r Cofnodion

5. Adroddiad yr Ysgrifennydd

Eleni gwnaed ymdrech fawr i wella mesurau asesu anghenion a chynorthwyo capeli sy dan fygythiad. Dechreuwyd drwy geisio defnyddio gweithgor, ond profodd y ffordd honno o weithredu yn rhy uchelgeisiol a chyda help Cynorthwyydd Gweinyddol Ymddiriedolaeth Adeiladau Crefyddol Cymru (YACC) anfonwyd apêl at yr holl awdurdodau cynllunio yng Nghymru i anfon atom fanylion pob cais sy'n creu bygythiad i gapel. Yn anffodus, dim ond 25% o'r awdurdodau sydd wedi cytuno i anfon gwybodaeth ac felly yr ydym yn awr yn gofyn i'r ymddiriedolaethau archaeolegol a phrif swyddfeydd yr enwadau am eu help. Wedi inni golli dau o'n prif gynghorwyr ar faterion adeiladau, yr

ydym fel Pwyllgor yn awr yn gorfod edrych eto ar ein ffordd o weithredu, yn arbennig os tybir bod angen teithio i unrhyw fan yng Nghymru i weld capel arbennig o bwysig yn hanesyddol neu yn bensaernïol. Rhaid cofio hefyd am gyfansoddiad CAPEL ; nid yw achub capeli yn amcan a nodir ynddo ond dyna yw prif swyddogaeth yr YACC. Er mwyn cynorthwyo capeli sydd mewn anawsterau ac ar ôl gweld beth mae rhai enwadau yn ei wneud i helpu eu haelodau, fe baratowyd taflen gynghori. Mae ar hyn o bryd yn cael ei adolygu ac fe'i cyhoeddir wedyn yn y *Cylchlythyr* ac fe'i gosodir ar ein Gwefan.

Eleni cafodd CAPEL ei gynrychioli mewn chwech o ffeiriau'r cymdeithasau hanes teuluol a disgwylir fod hyn yn dod â chryn dipyn o gyhoeddusrwydd i ni. Aethpwyd ag arddangosfa CAPEL i ffair Llandudno a dangoswyd llawer o ddiddordeb ynddi. Ond yn araf iawn os o gwbl y mae rhif yr aelodaeth yn cynyddu. Gofynnir i'r aelodaeth dynnu sylw pobl at fodolaeth ein cymdeithas pan allant a chymell pobl i ddefnyddio ein gwefan ardderchog (cafwyd 1720 o ymweliadau hyd yn hyn). Mae taflenni aelodaeth newydd ar gael i'w gosod mewn capeli neu fannau eraill addas. Cofrestrwyd nifer o aelodau newydd yn yr Unol Daleithau a bu CAPEL yn helpu gyda phrosiect i gynllunio Ystafell Genedlaethol Gymreig yn y Deml Ddysg ym Mhrifysgol Pittsburgh. Mae cynllun yn datblygu sydd wedi'i seilio ar gapel o'r 18fed ganrif a thŷ-hir; y mae'r pensaer yn awr yn ymweld â Chaerdydd a bydd yn cwrdd ag un o aelodau CAPEL ac yn ymweld â rhai capeli addas i'r cynllun. Ceir erthygl ar hyn yn y *Cylchlythyr* pan fydd y gwaith ar yr ystafell wedi'i orffen.

Paratowyd braslun o daflen Taith Capeli Llandudno er mwyn asesu'r galw am y math yma o lwybr tref. Cynhaliwyd cyfarfod ar y cyd yn ddiweddar gyda Rhwydwaith Twristiaeth Eglwysi Cymru ar gais eu Cyfarwyddwr Cenedlaethol, John Winton, er mwyn trafod materion o ddiddordeb i'r ddau gorff. Bydd yn cynghori CAPEL ynglŷn â'r syniad am lwybrau taith capeli. Efallai y byddai eraill o aelodau CAPEL yn hoffi gweithio ar y syniad, gan ddefnyddio gwybodaeth a gafwyd o gyfarfod CAPEL yn eu hardal. Bydd croeso hefyd yn y *Cylchlythyr* i erthyglau ar gapeli newydd yng Nghymru (oes, y mae yna rai!) a lluniau ohonynt.

Bydd yr aelodau wedi darllen am y llyfr newydd y mae'r Athro Anthony Jones yn bwriadu ei gyhoeddi. Anfonir ffurflen i'n holl aelodau yn gofyn iddynt enwebu eu hoff gapel i'w gynnwys yn y llyfr, a fydd yn trafod eglwysi a chapeli Cymru. Deallwn nad *Wales' 1000 Best Churches and Chapels* fydd teitl y llyfr! Caiff ein haelodau gyfle i wneud eu cyfraniad yn gynnar yn y Flwyddyn Newydd.

Trefnwyd i gynnal cyfarfod nesaf CAPEL yn Rhyl ar 15 Mai 2004 a'r un canlynol yng Nghasllwchwr ar 16 Hydref 2004. Gwnaed trefniadau bras hefyd i gyfarfod yn Llanidloes ar 14 Mai 2005 ac yng Ngholeg Trefeca ar 15 Hydref 2005.

Rhodddwyd bathodynnau enwau i'r aelodau gyda'r bwriad o'u helpu i ddod i adnabod eu cyd-aelodau a rhodddwyd bathodynnau coch i aelodau'r Pwyllgor er mwyn i aelodau gael gwybod at bwy y dylent anelu eu cwynion a'u hawgrymiadau. Dychwelwyd y rhan fwyaf o'r bathodynnau ar ôl cinio er mwyn eu hail ddefnyddio yn y cyfarfodydd nesaf.

Gorffennodd yr Ysgrifennydd ei adroddiad gan ychwanegu ei ddiolch i drefnwyr diwrnod diddorol iawn.

6. Adroddiad y Trysorydd

Cyflwynodd y Trysorydd Ddatganiad y Cyfrifon am y flwyddyn yn diweddu 31 Awst 2003. Yr oedd yr aelodaeth wedi codi i 319. Yr oedd £14,301.65 yn y cyfrif cadw a £6,432.05 yn y cyfrif cyfredol. Diolchodd i Mr Kevin Matthias ac Archifdy Sir Ddinbych am gynorthwyo i archwilio ac argraffu'r cyfrifon. Llongyfarchwyd y Trysorydd ar gyflwr iach y fantolen.

7. Adroddiad y Cadeirydd

Talodd y Cadeirydd deyrnged i Elizabeth Hall a Robert Scourfield a ymddeolodd o'r Pwyllgor Gwaith yn ystod y flwyddyn. Yr oedd y ddau wedi cyfrannu gwybodaeth a doniau proffesiynol y gwelir eu heisiau yn nhrafodaethau'r Pwyllgor. Diolchodd yn arbennig i Elizabeth Hall am

ei gwaith dros lawer o flynyddoedd yn adolygu ceisiadau cynllunio.

Wedyn, diolchodd i'r Swyddogion a holl aelodau'r Pwyllgor Gwaith am eu llafur yn ystod y flwyddyn.

Nododd fod CAPEL eleni am y tro cyntaf wedi trefnu darlith yn yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol. Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes oedd y darlithydd, a siaradodd ar y capel yn llenyddiaeth Cymru. Bu'r ddarlith yn llwyddiant mawr a gobeithiwn fedru noddi rhagor yn y dyfodol.

8. Ethol Swyddogion ac Aelodau'r Pwyllgor

Cytunwyd i holl aelodau presennol y Pwyllgor Gwaith ddal at eu swyddi presennol am flwyddyn arall. Yr oedd dau aelod o'r Pwyllgor (Elizabeth Hall a Robert Scourfield) wedi ymdeol ac fe etholwyd y canlynol i wasanaethu ar y Pwyllgor:

Mr Stuart Rivers (wedi'i gynnig gan Peter Mason a'i eilio gan Sheila Mason)

Mr Richard Thomas (wedi'i gynnig gan Dilys Glover a'i eilio gan Geoffrey Veysey)

Mae Ms Ann Rhydderch yn dymuno cael ei rhyddau o'r swydd o Swyddog Cyhoeddusrwydd. Cytunwyd y byddai'r Pwyllgor Gwaith yn argymhell olynidd iddi yn y Cyfarfod Cyffredinol nesaf.

9. Unrhyw Fater Arall

- i) Tynnodd Stuart Rivers sylw at y codiad mawr a fu mewn prisiau capeli a thai capeli, sydd yn adlewyrchu'r codiadau pris cyffredinol. Awgrymodd y gallai aelodau cadw golwg ar fanylion mewn swyddfeydd gwerthu tai er mwyn asesu'r effaith ar gapeli.
- ii) Llongyfarchodd Olwen Passmore y Pwyllgor ar y mentrau newydd, yn arbennig yr awgrym am lwybrau taith capeli, a gofynnodd a oedd ffynonellau cyllid allanol ar gael. Awgrymodd Stuart Rivers CADW a'r ymddiriedolaeth ddinesig leol. Mynegodd amheuan am yr angen am gadw cyfrif cadw mor fawr. Dywedodd y Trysorydd y gallai'r arian fod yn ddefnyddiol pe bai yna ddiffyg yn unrhyw rai o ddigwyddiadau a drefnid gan y Gymdeithas.

- iii) Daeth cais o'r llawr am ystyriaeth i broblemau aelodau a oedd yn dibynnu ar drafnidiaeth gyhoeddus pan drefnid cyfarfodydd mewn mamau fel Trefeca. Addawodd y Cadeirydd y cedwid hyn mewn cof ac ychwanegodd mai un o'r rhesymau dros gyhoeddi rhestr yr aelodau oedd ei gwneud hi'n hwylusach i aelodau drefnu rhannu ceir ar gyfer mynychu'n cyfarfodydd.
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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 18 October 2003

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and thanked Derrick and Glenys Dean for organising the day's programme.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Graham Davies, Meirick Lloyd Davies, Katherine Howe, Penny Icke, Dilys Quick, Ann Rhydderch, Richard Thomas, John and Sandra Wheeler and John Winton.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held at Blaenafon on 4 October 2002 were accepted and confirmed.

4. Matters Arising

No matters were raised.

5. Secretary's Report

This year a major effort has been made to improve procedures for assessing and assisting chapels under threat. An approach using a Working Party proved to be too ambitious and was abandoned, but with the help of the Administrative Assistant at the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust (WRBT), an appeal was made to all the planning authorities in Wales to send us details of all threatened chapel proposals. Only 25%, however, have agreed to forward information and so the archaeological trusts and the head offices of the various denominations are now being asked for their help. Having lost two of its buildings advisors, the Committee now needs to review its

procedures, particularly if a site visit to a major chapel (i.e. one of architectural or historical importance) is deemed necessary somewhere in Wales. CAPEL's constitution must also be borne in mind; saving chapels is not one of CAPEL's stated objectives - that is the main function of the WRBT. In order to assist chapels in difficulty and having seen what some denominations are doing to help their members, an advice leaflet has been prepared and is currently under scrutiny and will eventually be published in the *Newsletter* and added on to the website.

CAPEL was this year represented at six Family History Society fairs, which we expect will provide good publicity. The CAPEL Exhibition was shown at the Llandudno fair and generated a lot of interest. But CAPEL membership grows slowly, if at all, and members were asked to raise awareness of our society whenever they can and encourage people to make use of our excellent website (1720 hits to date). New membership leaflets are available for placement in chapels and other suitable locations. A few new members from the USA have been enrolled and CAPEL has been involved in a project to design a Welsh Nationality Room in the Temple of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. A design is emerging based on an 18th century chapel and longhouse; the senior architect is visiting Cardiff this weekend and will meet a Capel member and visit some relevant chapels. The *Newsletter* will carry an article about this when the Room is finally completed.

A draft Chapel Trail leaflet for Llandudno has been produced to assess the market potential for this kind of town trail. A meeting was held recently with the Churches Tourism Network Wales at the request of the National Director, John Winton, to discuss matters of mutual interest. He will advise CAPEL on the Chapel Trail idea. Other CAPEL members may like to take up the idea, using the information from a CAPEL meeting in their locality. Articles on new Welsh chapels (yes, there are some) and photographs of them would also be welcome for the *Newsletter*.

Members will have read about the new book planned by Professor Anthony Jones. A form will be mailed to all members asking them to

nominate their favourite chapel for inclusion in the book, which will deal with both churches and chapels in Wales. The title will not, it is understood, be *Wales' 1000 Best Churches and Chapels!* Members will have an opportunity to make their contributions early in the New Year.

Future CAPEL meetings are planned for 15 May 2004 at Rhyl and 16 October 2004 at Loughor and preliminary arrangements have been made for 14 May 2005 at Llanidloes and 15 October 2005 at Trefeca College.

Members were issued with name badges in the hope that they would be a help in getting to know fellow members and Committee members' badges were red, so that they could be targeted with complaints and suggestions. Most Badges were returned at the end of the lunch break for reuse at future meetings.

The Secretary ended by adding his thanks to the organisers of what proved to be a very interesting meeting.

6 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presented the Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 August 2003. Membership had increased to 319. The investment account stands at £14,301.65 and the current account at £6,432.05. Thanks are due to Mr Kevin Matthias and Denbigh Record Office for helping to audit and print the accounts. The Treasurer was congratulated on maintaining healthy account balances.

7 Chairman's Report

The Chairman paid tribute to Elizabeth Hall and Robert Scourfield who retired from the Executive Committee during the year. Both had provided professional knowledge and expertise which will be greatly missed in the Committee's discussions. Elizabeth Hall was especially thanked for her work over many years in vetting planning applications.

He then thanked the Officers and all members of the Executive Committee for their work over the past year.

He noted that for the first time CAPEL had this year organised a lecture to be delivered at the National Eisteddfod. The lecture was given by Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes, who spoke on the chapel in Welsh literature. The meeting was a great success and it is hoped to promote others in future years.

8 Election of Officers and Committee Members

It was agreed that all present members of the Executive Committee should continue in their roles for the coming year. Two members (Elizabeth Hall and Robert Scourfield) had announced their retirement and the following were elected to serve on the Committee:

Mr Stuart Rivers (proposed by Peter Mason, seconded by Sheila Mason)

Mr Richard Thomas (proposed by Dilys Glover, seconded by Geoffrey Veysey)

Ms Ann Rhydderch wishes to resign as Publicity Officer. It was agreed that the Executive Committee should bring forward a recommendation to the next AGM.

9 Any Other Business

- i) Stuart Rivers commented on the steep rise in chapel/attached house prices which mirror general price rises. He suggested that members could monitor local estate agent information to assess the effect on chapels.
- ii) Olwen Passmore congratulated the Committee on the new initiatives, especially the idea of chapel trails and enquired whether outside funding might be available. Stuart Rivers suggested CADW and the local civic trust. He also queried the purpose of the large investment account. The Treasurer commented that it could be used to cover any shortfall in CAPEL events amongst other things.
- iii) There was a plea from the floor for consideration to be given to members who had to use public transport when events were arranged in places like Trefeca. The Chairman promised that it would be borne in mind and added that one purpose in publishing the membership list was to assist members in arranging car-sharing for such events.

CAPEL's Architectural Advisors

The Committee is pleased to report that two CAPEL members, who are both active professional architects, have agreed to act as CAPEL's architectural advisors when a major or historically important chapel is threatened.

Norman Chang is London based and will scrutinise chapel plans and proposals and make an assessment based on the information available, leading to a written response to the local Planning Authority when appropriate. Norman is a Conservation Architect with listed building experience who was born in Merthyr Tydfil, is a Welsh Congregationalist and currently works as an Associate with Sidell Gibson Architects.

Jonathan Jones is Cardiff based and will make an on-site inspection and assessment and take photographs of a threatened chapel, if such action is considered necessary. Jonathan is currently a Regional Associate with Parsons Brinckerhoff Ltd working in the Commercial, Health and Conservation sectors. Jonathan has over 15 years working experience in Henley-on-Thames, Oxford and Cardiff. He has worked with many listed buildings including two Welsh Chapels. His Welsh roots are in the Calvinistic Methodist church.

Both Jonathan and Norman are chartered members of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

When details and/or plans are sent via our Administrative Assistant at the WRBT the CAPEL Secretary normally responds to the proposals (see List 2 below). In almost all cases CAPEL is not informed of the outcome of the Planning Application. Very often information is minimal, however, and plans are not available, as is the case with personal reports or press cuttings for example. These chapels are included in List 1 (below). The WRBT is informed when suitable chapels (which may meet their criteria) are closed or come onto the market. CAPEL is aware that full coverage of Wales has not been achieved.

Building Applications and Threatened Chapels (September 2003 to the end of January 2004)

List 1

CAPEL is aware of changes proposed to the following chapels, but has not received detailed plans or further information. A written CAPEL response has not been possible to-date.

Carmel Chapel, Carmel Street, Abertillery
Change of use to a wine bar.

Pensarn Chapel, Caerwedros, Llandysul
Conversion of chapel into holiday accommodation.

Caer Salem Chapel, Mynydd Bodafon, Ynys Môn
Alterations and extension to the chapel.

Moriah Baptist Chapel, Bedwelty Road, Aberbargoed.
Residential development planned.

Christ Church, Church Road, Welshpool (Listed)
Listed building consent for internal alterations. Conversion of part of the church into a dwelling.

Bethel Chapel, Llanerfyl, Welshpool
Erection of dwelling adjacent to the chapel.

Bethel Chapel, Goat Street, St. Davids
Change of use to dwelling.

Soar Chapel, Tan y Graig Road, Bynea, Llanelli
Development on land adjacent to the chapel.

Capel Bethel, Llanfair
Change of use from disused chapel to workshop and store.

URC, Penrhyn Avenue, Rhos on Sea
Demolition of Church Hall and Youth Club building and erection of five dwellings.

Soar (Wesleyan) Methodist Chapel, Tre'r Ddôl (Listed)
Conversion of chapel for accommodation and business use.

Smyrna Chapel, Taibach, Port Talbot
Change of use to nine flats.

List 2

Sufficient information and/or plans were available in the following cases and CAPEL was able to respond to the proposals. In the case of Saron Old Chapel, an unusual Grade II listed building, Norman Chang commented and suggested revisions which were submitted to the Planning Authority.

Hanover URC, Llanover, Monmouthshire (Listed)
Disabled access and amenities. Chapel exterior unaffected.

Croesengen Chapel, Trofarth, Abergele
Conversion and extension to form dwelling.

Danygraig Congregational, Ysgol Street, Port Tennant, Swansea
Replaced by three linked houses.

Bethany Chapel, Station Road, Port Talbot (Listed)
Conversion to bar and restaurant. External appearance retained.

Former Llanfor Chapel, Bala
Conversion to dwelling. Objections raised to unsympathetic window changes.

Capel Nazareth, Penrhyndeudraeth (Listed)
Change of use. Minimal impact on building structure.

Capel Bethel, Llanfair, Harlech
Change of use to store. National Park Authority involved.

Ebenezer (Wesleyan) Methodist Chapel, Ystumtuen (Listed)
Future uncertain. Welsh Religious Buildings Trust notified.

Saron Old Chapel, Rhydyfro, Pontardawe (Grade II listed)
Conversion to dwelling. Plans reviewed and modifications suggested by Norman Chang.

Capel Coffa Gwilym Hiraethog, Llansannan.
Conversion to dwelling.

Howell Harris Memorial Chapel, Trefeca
Jonathan Jones was unable to visit and take photographs because of the unsafe condition of the chapel. All relevant authorities are aware of its imminent demolition.

Jerusalem Chapel, Hillgrove, Bryn, Port Talbot (Listed)
Conversion to dwelling. External repairs to preserve original structure.

Union Church, Abergele Road, Colwyn Bay
Change of use to antique sales room/galleries. No structural alterations.

Capel Seion, Beaumaris (Listed)
Conversion into two residences by vertical division. External appearance to be preserved.

Calfaria, Ann Street, Llanelli (Grade II listed, Architect:George Morgan)
Chapel for sale. Information requested and Welsh Religious Buildings Trust notified.

Pegws o'r Bala

Following our Spring 2003 meeting in Bala, the editor received a letter from Mr Keith Thomas of Ebbw Vale which contained a story which was interesting in itself and as a footnote to our visit to Bala

Margaret Thomas, known familiarly as Pegws, became an ardent Christian during the revival which came to the Bala and Llanuwchllyn district in 1804 and she became renowned for the hymns and hallelujahs which she

contributed to the services . So great was her fervour that, a quarter of a century later, she followed her beloved minister, George Lewis, when he moved to Carmel chapel, Beaufort, where she again became renowned for her fervour. In 1865 she enabled the chapel to meet the costs of its rebuilding by selling photographs of herself dressed in the clothes she had worn as a girl in Bala. The full story is told in Mr Thomas's book *Heritage - a History of Ebbw Vale*.

Calendar of the Trevecka Letters.

Boyd Stanley Schlenther and Eryn Mant White.

(Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 2003. xii, 528pp. £29.95.).

Let no one be put off by the uncompromisingly bibliographic title; a book for professional historians, yes, but an absorbing volume for anyone with an interest in history as it has been produced by the interactions of real people. We, and by that is intended not only the Presbyterians but all students of Welsh religious history, have been fortunate that the Methodist reporting structure of exhorters, societies and Association could not but create an archive of reports and correspondence, but equally crucial was that Howell Harris retained his position at the centre of the movement throughout his life and that he never left his home and base at Trefeca. Much of the Calvinistic Methodist Archive at the National Library is Harris's personal correspondence, official and unofficial, and after his day it was able to be preserved when Trefeca became a college for ordinands in the new denomination.

The collection of Trevecka Letters (officially so termed) has suffered its share of vicissitudes, ranging from mice and dampness to 'borrowing' by well-intentioned but forgetful church historians. Nevertheless, when the Rev. Dr.M.H.Jones, the first curator and designated historian, took upon himself the task of preparing an Inventory, he also energetically sought out as many of the strays as he could. After his death his chronological list of letters, writers and recipients, together with his account of the archive, was published in 1932 as *The Trevecka Letters*. He had hoped to reveal some of the riches of the collection but time was against him. Individual letters

have been published since the eighteenth century and a subsequent curator, the Rev. Gomer M. Roberts, edited and published more than one volume of selections, but the archive as a single entity with its unique character has remained largely unopened. The present *Calendar* changes all that.

Items missed by M.H.Jones have been added and every letter has been summarised in brief paragraphs. These précis are little masterpieces which succeed in giving both the content and the flavour of the letters. As a result, one can read the letters as one might read a family history, from the first letters of Thomas and Joseph Harris anxious for brother Howell's future (and already critical of his handwriting); gradually Howell comes to the centre stage and the 'family' becomes the fellowship of societies and the incipient church and ultimately the Trefeca Family until its dispersion a century later. The interaction of society stewards with one another and with leaders, especially the dominant Howell, are fascinating, as are his remarkable letters to Madam Sidney Griffith and to his wife. And not only on the Welsh stage, for Harris was in regular correspondence with English Methodists, including John and Charles Wesley, John Cennick and George Whitefield, in whose London Tabernacle he ministered for a time, so that there is much here of interest for English Methodism too. Harris spent a great deal of time away from Trefeca but remained in control of life there. There is consequently much in the letters about life, both religious and commercial, at Trefeca and much, too, about personal tensions. A chronological approach, of course, is not the only one to take. The comprehensive Index allows the reader to follow whatever trail he chooses, be they events, issues or people and to follow his own interests. The *Calendar* makes the Trefeca letters accessible as never before and will surely open up new avenues of research. If ever a statement were needed of the importance of church and chapel records, this *Calendar* is a powerful voice.

Brynley F. Roberts

The Buildings of Wales: Pembrokeshire
by **Thomas Lloyd, Julian Orbach and Robert Scourfield**
(Yale University Press. £29.95)

Several members of CAPEL were present at the function held on 25 March at Picton Castle to launch the latest volume in the 'Buildings of Wales' series, *Pembrokeshire*.

The three authors, Thomas Lloyd, Chairman of the Historical Buildings for Wales, Julian Orbach, an architectural historian working for Cadw, and Robert Scourfield, Buildings Conservation Officer for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, are all members of CAPEL. It is therefore not surprising that Nonconformist chapels feature prominently in this comprehensive and authoritative architectural survey whose chronological range extends from the prehistoric to the modern period. Whilst due attention is given to the significance of St. David's Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace, Norman castles and country houses, a wide range of chapels, of varying architectural styles, and located in rural and urban settings, are also examined with a depth of knowledge and expertise. In this respect the volume differs markedly from a number of other volumes in the series, especially some of those produced for English counties.

The original intention was to compile one volume for the whole of Dyfed, but happily the Pembrokeshire volume will now be followed by volumes for Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. In view of the quality of the book on Pembrokeshire these two volumes will be eagerly awaited by everyone interested in the archaeology, history and architecture of the other counties of south-west Wales.

Cyfrol ar y Gweill: *Capeli*

Mae'n fwiad gan Y Lolfa gyhoeddi yn 2005 gyfrol a fydd yn cyflwyno ffotograffau a chofnodion yn cynnwys gwybodaeth am nifer o gapeli Anghydffurfiol. Mi fydd y rhan fwyaf ohonynt yn gapeli Cymraeg yng Nghymru, ond ychwanegir rhai capeli Cymraeg y tu hwnt i Glawdd Offa

ac ychydig o gapeli sy'n defnyddio Saesneg ar gyfer addoliad. Wrth ddewis pa gapeli i'w cynnwys ymdrechir i gyflwyno detholiad cytbwys, sydd yn adlewyrchu gwahanol ardaloedd ac enwadau yng Nghymru ac amrywiaeth yr arddulliau pensaernïol. Rhoddir ystyriaeth i'r cyfraniad a wnaed ac a wneir i gyfoeth y dreftadaeth Anghydffurfiol, bywyd a diwylliant Cymru ac, mewn rhai achosion, i dwf a dirywiad yr iaith Gymraeg. Tynnir sylw hefyd at eitemau a welir yn y capeli sydd yn cyfeirio at ddigwyddiadau nodedig a chysylltiadau gydag unigolion neu gymdeithasau diddorol.

Estynnir gwahoddiad i ddarllenwyr y *Cylchlythyr* i arfon awgrymiadau am gapeli addas i'w hystyried ar gyfer y gyfrol, erbyn 22 Mai, i'r awdur, Dr D. Huw Owen, Gelli-glyd, Ffordd Llanbadarn, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 1EY.

Pwysleisir eto yr angen i sicrhau detholiad cytbwys; yr awdur, mewn ymgynghoriad â'r Wasg, fydd yn gyfrifol am y dewis terfynol. Diolchir ymlaen-llaw i aelodau CAPEL am bob cydweithrediad.

Capeli: volume (in Welsh) on chapels to be published

Y Lolfa intends to publish in 2005 a volume which will present photographs and accompanying commentary containing information on a number of Nonconformist chapels. The great majority of these will be Welsh-language chapels in Wales, but also included will be some Welsh-language chapels beyond Offa's Dyke and some English-language chapels in Wales. The choice of chapels will be influenced by the need to present a balanced selection, reflecting various localities, denominations and architectural styles. Consideration will be given to the chapel's contribution to the wealth of the Nonconformist heritage, the life and culture of Wales and, in some instances, the fluctuating fortunes of the Welsh language. Attention will also be focused on items which may be seen in the chapels reflecting notable events and contacts with interesting individuals or societies.

An invitation is extended to readers of the *Newsletter* to send suggestions of chapels which may be considered for inclusion in the volume, before 22 May, to the author, Dr D.Huw Owen, Gelli-glyd, Llanbadarn Road, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 1EY.

The need to ensure a balanced selection must again be emphasised; the author, in consultation with the Press will be responsible for the final selection. Members of CAPEL are thanked in advance for every assistance.

Falling like Welsh Chapels

It seems as though we are no longer crying wolf about the demise of Welsh chapels: it is now happening everywhere. Not only are the congregations concerned about continually declining attendance but the sites are now in demand for both knocking down and building blocks of flats or houses. Conversion by self-builders - they now have their own major exhibition at the NEC Birmingham - has been a continuing trend certainly in the Conwy county area.

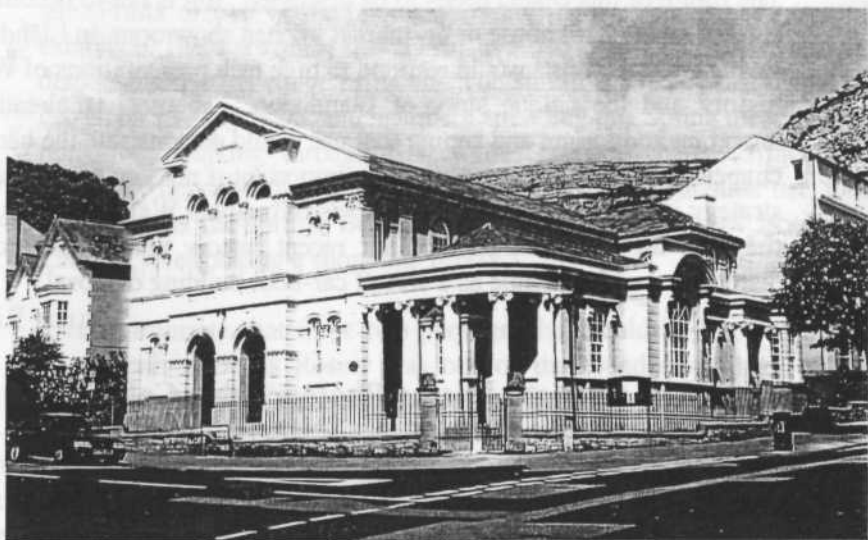
Where this is leading no one seems to know. Certainly, chapels are destined to fall rapidly in numbers. Many of those that remain will become part of the 'Dunroamin' culture, with master bedrooms replacing galleries and smart kitchens replacing the organ or *sêt fawr*. Converting a chapel into a residence is not easy and it is certainly not cheap and a few people have got into financial difficulty in the process. Nevertheless the overriding perception of our chapel heritage in Wales is one of housing or office conversion opportunity rather than continuing spaces for worship or even as places suited for community or even heritage interpretation.

In Llandudno we are beset by the same problems. Indeed the resort is something of a hot spot for housing and retail development. It is a purpose designed seaside resort with wide streets, laid out by the Mostyn family and mostly controlled by strict leases. It still has a considerable collection of

chapels, both Welsh and English. We devised a survey programme, not only to record the chapels in detail, but also to get an understanding of the issues. Those in charge received us with much kindness if not a little amazement at our interest. Much detail was uncovered, including outline histories completed for centenaries and similar occasions.

Our concern was largely for the Welsh chapels, which we saw as the most interesting and most relevant to Welsh culture and Welsh townscape. One chapel, Ebeneser (WM) in Lloyd Street, designed by Beddoe Rees, had already been sold to the Evangelical Church and of the four remaining, two were listed. The consolidation process of the members has been turbulent but, contrary to my note in *Newsletter 35*, it has now been decided to centralise on Seilo (CM). The later Ebeneser, formerly Rehoboth, Trinity Avenue (CM later WM) and Capel yr Annibynwyr, Deganwy Avenue (1884) are likely to be sold. This leaves the Grade II listed Tabernacl, (B), designed by G A Humphreys, rather out in the cold.

Tabernacl is a majestic chapel with classical pretensions externally and towers over the junction of Llewelyn Avenue and the main shopping street, Mostyn Street, with the majestic backdrop of the Great Orme creating added presence. It is safe until late 2005 whilst it deputises for Seilo, which is to be renovated and receive some sympathetic internal alterations. CAPEL members may recall that Tabernacl's secretary, Gwilym Williams, oversaw a major restoration of the chapel, particularly internal features. An outside plaque recalls its most famous minister, Lewis Valentine, one of Plaid Cymru's founders. The Baptists were confident that the restoration would favour Tabernacl and now wish to see the chapel survive as near the present form as is realistically possible. Currently there are eight trustees but only two are active. One suggestion is that local supporters, including CAPEL members, could sustain the chapel and find additional ways of providing income for its future. Surprisingly, this approach might include transfer of trust status to a sympathetic body. At a recent private meeting, CAPEL's Secretary, Dr Peter Mason, reminded me that whereas CAPEL was not set up to rescue chapels, the more recent Welsh Religious Buildings Trust (WRBT) was. Unfortunately, Tabernacl is not on the WRBT short



Tabernacl, Llandudno

list of chapels it wants to preserve or take into care. This is indeed unfortunate because there is clearly some concern among some CAPEL members that CADW, having effectively off-loaded its care responsibility to WRBT, can now stand back and ignore chapel buildings. Early pronouncements suggested that perhaps four chapels might go into care annually. That was a depressing figure when one considers that the number of chapels built in Wales is more than 5000 and perhaps as many as 8000 and that 330 churches and chapels are being preserved in England by just one body, the Churches Conservation Trust. With current resources we appear likely to save perhaps 10 Welsh chapels in our lifetime and our lifetime appears to be a critical time in their life span.

Tabernacl Chapel, Llandudno, offers an alternative approach. The trustees are supportive to careful restoration and the chapel has an excellent situation to create income, for that has to be a key to any solution, considering current costs for insurance and such like.

The future of this chapel needs to be discussed, if it is not to become yet another smart town house or up-market kitchen showroom. In Llandudno we believe that tourists would respond to high tech presentations of Welsh history and the unique story of Llandudno. Tabernacl is already an important auditorium and keeping that use would demonstrate the benefits chapels bring to the community. An important if not key part of such a strategy is to raise the profile of chapels throughout Wales, showing that they are an important part of our recent history and should not be disregarded and available as a sort of car-boot building disposal.

Stuart Rivers

The Graham Rosser Photographic Collection

The Graham Rosser Photographic Collection of Welsh chapels may be consulted in Aberystwyth at either the National Library of Wales or the library of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments. This extremely valuable collection, recording 1,316 chapels located throughout Wales and a few examples in England, was compiled by Graham Rosser of Cardiff.

The chapels photographed in the collection belong predominantly to the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Mr Rosser, a retired careers adviser, is an elder at Tabernacle Church, Whitchurch, Cardiff and a former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. In 1995 he deposited the collection in the Calvinistic Methodist Archive, housed in the National Library. The collection comprises 3,572 carefully indexed slides which, following an agreement with the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church, formed the basis for a collection of archive black and white photographs produced by the Royal Commission, which was engaged in a project to photograph every chapel in Wales. The photographs may now be consulted at both the National Library and the Royal Commission and the slides at the National Library.

The collection is of considerable value as an historical source, especially as many of the chapels have by now been demolished or converted to another

use. Prints of two of the photographs are included in CAPEL's touring exhibition. These are of the closed Princes Road chapel, Liverpool, and the demolished Bethel chapel, Brecon,. The site of the latter was visited by CAPEL on 13 May 2000, and members attending this Spring meeting may remember walking through Brecon past several chapels which had previously flourished but were subsequently converted to another use. One of those was the former Bethel M.C. chapel, which is now Boots the Chemist, overlooking a shopping precinct.

It is appropriate that these two photographs should be featured in the CAPEL exhibition as Rosser was one of the founder members of the Society. He had attended a conference arranged at Gregynog Hall in 1984 by the Extramural Department of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth on the theme 'Nonconformist Chapels in Wales'. Recalling this event, he recently stated that "this conference re-doubled my enthusiasm. I served on a working party set up before it dispersed, to consider the possibility of an organisation to continue exploring the subject. That working party met regularly over a two year period and on 3 May 1986, at an inaugural conference held in Windsor Place United Reformed Church Cardiff, CAPEL was born. I was there. By now I had retired from gainful employment and was able to devote more time to my planned project and the list of captured churches grew substantially".

Early attempts by CAPEL to establish regional groups resulted in the formation of a South Glamorgan Group, largely through the efforts of Rosser and the late Mrs Patricia Moore, and then, in collaboration with the Mid-Glamorgan and Gwent groups, of a South East Wales Group. Graham Rosser was elected Chairman and Patricia Moore Secretary, and several meetings were held at the Historical and Cultural Centre in Pontypridd. Lack of support led to the final meeting being held in September 1995.

Graham Rosser continues to photograph chapels and recently described himself as 'an ecumenical operator. I do not carry around all the heavy equipment as in the past but now use a light-weight APS camera that provides me with coloured prints'.

In view of the significance of the photographs which have already been deposited, members of CAPEL will eagerly await the addition of further items to the Graham Rosser Collection.

D.Huw Owen

Note: Whilst this *Newsletter* was being prepared it was learned that Graham Rosser was unwell, and we extend to him our good wishes for a complete recovery.

Forthcoming Meetings

The next meeting, as you will see from the details on the enclosed enrolment form, will be held on 15 May at **Rhyl**.

The autumn meeting will be at **Loughor** on 16 October.

Provisional arrangements have been made for next year's spring meeting at **Llanidloes** on 14 May.

The **Chapels Society** have informed us of two meetings they are arranging this year and to which they are inviting members of CAPEL. On 4 September they will be visiting the **Hereford** area and will keep ten places for CAPEL members. Then for the beginning of October they are planning a three day visit to the **Waldensian Church at Torre Pelice** in Northern Italy. If any members would like further details of these visits they should write to the Chapels Society's Assistant Secretary, Dr Mary Ede, 12 Springfield Place, Bath BA1 5RA,

The CAPEL lecture at this year's **National Eisteddfod** at Newport will be given by the Rev. Shem Morgan at noon on Friday 6 August. The title of the talk is "Pam Llanfaches?" and there will be simultaneous translation into English for those requiring it.