

Capel



CYMDEITHAS TREFTADAETH Y CAPELI
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY

Newsletter 60 Autumn 2012

Cylchlythyr 60 Hydref 2012

Welshpool Chapels

Capel's 2012 Spring Meeting was held in Welshpool, Powys on the 12th May and was hosted by The Welshpool Methodist Church. A warm welcome was received by all, hinting at the amazing hospitality that would be extended to our members over the course of the day.

The Welshpool Wesleyan Methodist mission was established c.1790 with early worshippers meeting in members' houses. In 1818 the Faithful were able to build their first chapel near Ballard's Garage and by 1864 the thriving church had outgrown these modest premises. A parcel of land on Welshpool High Street was purchased from the Earl of Powys and the imposing stone building that we visited was completed in 1864.

The day began, as ever, with a welcome helping of tea, coffee and biscuits and once the visitors were suitably refreshed the committee was able to attend to its Annual General Meeting business over which Dr Lionel Madden, the Society's President, duly presided. This was quickly proceeded with and the day was begun in earnest with an informative talk on the history of early Wesleyan Methodism in Eastern Montgomeryshire, eloquently delivered by the meeting organiser Mr Andrew Mathieson.

The concentration of chapels in Welshpool was rivalled only by its concentration of pubs and CAPEL Members were treated to a short, flat walk which I'm sure was a welcome relief after the epic march up and down the hill in Bangor!

Our first stop was at the delightful Chelsea Lane Baptist Church hidden away at the side of the Methodist chapel. This simple stone structure was in stark contrast to the grand chapel we had just left and was architecturally more akin to the simple origins of the barn chapel. An unconfirmed date of 1811 has been attributed to the chapel although doubts have been raised as to the Baptist associations with the building prior to 1837. The traditional exterior hides a chapel moving with the times and Capel members were somewhat bemused to find a basketball net in the chapel!!! The pews and pulpit have been removed to allow more flexible use to be made of the building

and it was a welcome change to hear the story of a thriving and growing congregation.

A brief history of the church and the recent story of innovative new ways that worshippers are being encouraged into the congregation was provided by a somewhat surprised Mr Derek Simms, the Chapel Secretary, (and one of Capel's own visitors, Revd Michael Collis) who had valiantly stepped in at short notice to give a talk to some thirty people more than the one or two people he was expecting! It was heartening to hear how the numbers had grown to such an extent that the church is considering moving to much larger premises.

CAPEL members lingered a little longer than planned at Chelsea Lane following an incident with a jammed door at The Welsh Independent Chapel. Mr "J R" Jones delivered a fascinating talk on the Welsh Independents in Welshpool and discussed interesting issues of language and identity affecting congregations in a border town. Members then made the short trip across the road to visit the visually stunning brick chapel built in 1876. As CAPEL members were delighting in the innovative use of tri-colour brickwork and exploring the chapel exterior (finally seeing a chapel with as much effort put into the sides of a building as the front) Mr Jones' perseverance was rewarded and we were able to be invited into the building. Inside the building has retained much of its original fittings and it was refreshing to see such a well maintained Victorian interior.

A short walk away, hidden down a side street, was the New Street United Church. An educational talk by Mrs Ruth Henriksen gave us the chapel history and we discovered that the unusual yellow brick chapel was originally the Sunday School for the neighbouring Presbyterian Church of Wales. When the larger building became too big for the shrinking congregation to manage they were able to move into this smaller space. The main building next door is now occupied by an Evangelical Church.

The United Church was formed in 1987 with the union of the United Reform Church and the Presbyterian Church of Wales. The open Sunday School building provided an adaptable space to meet the needs of worshippers and a number of community groups meet in the building providing a steady source of revenue to ensure the continuation of the cause. Of particular interest in this chapel was the fine collection of naïve Welsh art allowing us the unusual opportunity of coming face to face with the chapel founders and descendants.

This concluded our morning visits and it was back to Welshpool Methodist Church for a fantastic lunch before taking to the road for an afternoon exploring some of Welshpool's outlying chapels. Inevitably there was some slight confusion when a few of us arrived a little later than planned at the delightful little ex-Primitive Methodist Chapel at Cefn. Cefn was built in 1881 and is the last surviving (ex-)Primitive Chapel in the Methodist Circuit. In common with other chapels visited it was predominantly

built of red brick with an interesting arrangement of blue and yellow brick used to highlight architectural features. Dr Eileen Jobling shared the history of the chapel and the struggles that the Primitive Methodists had in trying to establish themselves in Wales. There was another tiny ex-“Prim” chapel at Bausley, about ten miles away but that like many other tiny chapels had been forced to close. Cefn, however, had an active present and was planning an expanded future – including – most important in tiny isolated rural buildings – a *toilet!*

The Welshpool chapel visits were concluded at Pentre Llifior Wesleyan Methodist Heritage Chapel, Berriew. Pentre Llifior is the first Wesleyan Chapel established in Northern Wales and a society was established at nearby Pentre Farm in the early 1760's. The current structure was built in 1798 and is a Grade II listed building. It is a simple, elegant red-brick chapel but it is the interior which was truly breath-taking. In a time when so many chapels have been adapted to meet the changing needs of the congregations Pentre Llifior stands as a unique time capsule. The interior has been painstakingly restored allowing us a glimpse of how its Georgian founders and worshippers intended the building to look with its original box pews, gallery and pulpit.

Rather than changing the building to meet the needs of visitors and in the process losing the heart and soul of the building an innovative approach to preservation was taken. Some land over the road was purchased to provide parking spaces and the Chapel's stable across the road was restored to house a kitchen, toilet and meeting room allowing the chapel interior to be maintained as it would have originally looked. I think I speak for all who attended when I say that it was truly inspirational to visit this chapel and it stands as a beacon of hope at a time when we are losing so much of our Non-conformist Heritage. The project demonstrates just what can be achieved when lateral thinking, creativity, commitment, passion and drive are combined to bring a project to fruition.

It was on this high that we returned once more to the Welshpool Methodist Church for a splendid chapel tea. The chapel ladies had truly outdone themselves with the fine spread which awaited us and we were all extremely grateful for their hard work throughout the day. Our visit to Welshpool was surely summed up best by the Pentre Llifior choice of readings “Let brotherly love continue and be not forgetful to entertain strangers” (Hebrews 13: 1-2) and nothing could have been done to have made us feel any more welcome or cared for. Thank you to the organiser Mr Andrew Mathieson for a fascinating day, Welshpool Methodist Church for being the perfect hosts and all the chapels who opened up their doors and shared their stories with us.

Minutes of the Capel AGM 2012

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, Welshpool, 12 May 2012.

1 President's Welcome:

In the chair, The President, Dr Lionel Madden, welcomed members to the Meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from five members.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held in Wrexham on 9 October 2010 were accepted and confirmed.

4 Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

5 Secretary's Report:

Through the year, the Secretary had had the usual enquiries about chapel and family records and hopes of the tracing of archives relating to burial grounds from as far afield as the USA and Australia as well as from the UK. The Secretary was particularly grateful to the Society's specialist members – the Royal Commission for their invaluable help, incredible knowledge and for their on-line archive. In addition, the Secretary recorded his special thanks to former officers and the Society's advisers, Norman Chang and Jonathan Jones, and to Rob Scourfield who advised on planning applications.

6 Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer presented audited accounts for the year ending on 31 August 2011. The CAPEL events at Lampeter and Bangor had produced slight surpluses. The current balance was a little in excess of £14,000. The Treasurer had placed the monies which had been held in National Savings into an Investment Bond where interest rates had produced a more substantial income. There had been a one-off expense for the reprint of the revised and updated version of Dr Lionel Madden's "Guide to the Welsh Denominations".

7 Chairman's Report:

The Chairman of the Executive Committee, Cllr Meirick Lloyd Davies, thanked the Officers and members of the Executive Committee for their support and encouragement, for their hard work and commitment throughout the year. He thanked especially Dr and Mrs Huw Owen for their arrangements for Lampeter and the Revd Eric Jones and Miss Catherine Rees for their work on the Bangor visit.

8 Election of Officers and Committee Members:

The Officers had agreed to continue in office for a further year. There were changes to the membership of the Committee since some members wished to step down after significant service. Members elected were: Mrs Marlies Cope, Mrs Rosemary Davies, Dr Lionel Madden, Dr Huw Owen, Mr David Puleston Williams and the Society's Editor (when confirmed). The Committee still had a vacancy among co-optees for a Denominational Adviser from the Baptist Churches. The Secretary reported that the potential Patrons had not yet been invited, pending a redesign of the Society's stationery.

9 Any Other Business:

Mr Stuart Rivers asked the meeting to record their thanks for the work that the Committee had done through the year to meet the challenges that Heritage organisations in Wales had to face.

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting. The next meeting would be in South Wales – probably at Ammanford / Rhydaman in May 2013.

Cofnodion CCB Capel 2012

Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Blynyddol, Y Trallwng, 12 Mai 2012.

1 Croeso'r Llywydd:

Y Llywydd, sef y Dr Lionel Madden oedd yn cadeirio ac fe groesawodd yr aelodau i'r Cyfarfod.

2 Ymddiheuriadau:

Derbyniwyd ymddiheuriadau gan bump o aelodau.

3 Cofnodion y Cyfarfod Diwethaf:

Derbyniwyd a chadarnhawyd cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd yn Wrecsam ar 9 Hydref 2010.

4 Materion yn Codi:

Nid oedd unrhyw faterion yn codi.

5 Adroddiad yr Ysgrifennydd:

Trwy gydol y flwyddyn, roedd yr Ysgrifennydd wedi cael yr ymholiadau arferol ynghylch cofnodion capeli a theuluoedd a phobl yn gobeithio cael hyd i archifau perthynol i fynwentydd, o fannau mor bell â'r Unol Daleithiau ac Awstralia yn ogystal ag o'r Deyrnas Gyfunol. Roedd yr Ysgrifennydd yn arbennig o ddiolchgar i aelodau arbenigol y Gymdeithas - i'r Comisiwn Brenhinol am eu cymorth amhrisiadwy, eu gwybodaeth anhygoel a'u harchif ar-lein. Nododd yr Ysgrifennydd ei ddiolch arbennig hefyd i'r cyn-swyddogion ac ymgynghorwyr y Gymdeithas, Norman Chang a Jonathan Jones, ac i Rob Scourfield a roddodd gyngor ar geisiadau cynllunio.

6 Adroddiad y Trysorydd:

Cyflwynodd y Trysorydd gyfrifon a oedd wedi'u harchwilio, am y flwyddyn a ddaeth i ben ar 31 Awst 2011. Roedd ychydig o arian yn weddill yn dilyn digwyddiadau CAPEL yn Llanbedr Pont Steffan a Bangor. Roedd y balans presennol ychydig dros £14,000. Roedd y Trysorydd wedi rhoi'r arian â fuasai yn y Cynilion Cenedlaethol mewn Bond Buddsoddi lle roedd cyfraddau llog wedi rhoi incwm mwy sylweddol. Cafwyd cost unwaith-ac-am-byth er mwyn ailargraffu fersiwn wedi'i ddiwygio a'i ddiweddarau o "Arweinlyfr i'r Enwadau" Lionel Madden.

7 Adroddiad y Cadeirydd:

Diolchodd Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Gwaith, y Cynghorydd Meirick Lloyd Davies, i swyddogion ac aelodau'r Pwyllgor Gwaith am eu cymorth a'u hanogaeth, eu gwaith caled a'u hymroddiad drwy gydol y flwyddyn. Diolchodd yn arbennig i'r Dr a Mrs Huw Owen am eu trefniadau yn Llanbedr Pont Steffan ac i'r Parchedig Eric Jones a Miss Catherine Rees am eu gwaith ar yr ymweliad â Bangor.

8 Ethol Swyddogion ac Aelodau i'r Pwyllgor:

Roedd y swyddogion wedi cytuno i ddal ati am flwyddyn arall. Cafwyd rhai newidiadau yn aelodaeth y Pwyllgor gan fod rhai aelodau yn dymuno rhoi'r gorau iddi ar ôl rhoi gwasanaeth sylweddol. Yr aelodau a etholwyd oedd: Mrs Marlies Cope, Mrs Rosemary Davies, Dr Lionel Madden, Dr Huw Owen, Mr David Puleston Williams a Golygydd y Gymdeithas (pan fydd wedi'i gadarnhau). Roedd gan y Pwyllgor le gwag ymhlith y rhai a gyfetholir, ar gyfer Ymgynghorydd Enwadol o Eglwysi'r Bedyddwyr. Dywedodd yr Ysgrifennydd nad oedd y darpar noddwyr wedi'u gwahodd eto, nes i bapur ysgrifennu'r Gymdeithas gael ei ailgynllunio.

9 Unrhyw Fater Arall:

Gofynnodd Mr Stuart Rivers i'r cyfarfod gofnodi eu diolch am y gwaith a wnaeth y Pwyllgor yn ystod y flwyddyn er mwyn ymateb i'r heriau yr oedd mudiadau treftadaeth yng Nghymru yn gorfod eu hwynebu.

Gan nad oedd unrhyw fusnes arall, diolchodd y Cadeirydd i'r aelodau am ddod a chaeodd y cyfarfod. Byddai'r cyfarfod nesaf yn y De, yn Rhydaman mae'n debyg, ym mis Mai 2013.

Chapels Reported to Capel

Building applications

- St John's Methodist, Llandudno – extensions. Support, the proposal being and honest and 'readable' extension to the chapel.
- Siloah, Llanelli – alteration considered acceptable, which retains the chapel in use. Supported
- Gilgal, Bodedern, Anglesey – demolition of the prominent and attractive chapel opposed

For sale

- Peniel, Mallwyd

New Books / Llyfrau Newydd

Tim Rushton, *Capeli - Chapels* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2012), 137pp., ISBN 978-1-84771-465-7, £14.95

In the early 1990s Tim Rushton, an artist and designer by profession, began to photograph Welsh chapels. He concentrated on buildings still in use as places of worship, though from the beginning the frequent closures of chapels was to make this an elusive goal. This beautifully produced bilingual book, published by Y Lolfa in association with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, represents the fruit of that project.

The 120 superb photographs of a wide variety of Welsh chapel exteriors presented here are surely the perfect answer to those who say that nonconformist buildings are uninteresting, have no visual appeal and are not worth preserving. The photographs are arranged in no particular order except that the chapels on each double page spread are chosen to make a pair. According to Tim Rushton this pairing 'can be architectural, scenic, compositional or merely based on similarity of colour scheme'. This certainly makes for some interesting juxtapositions. It also highlights the fact that the photographer's interest is primarily in the visual impact of the buildings.

For those of us who are fascinated by the evolution of chapel history and worship, and the ways in which these are reflected in the buildings, there is an excellent background essay by Susan Fielding of the Royal Commission outlining the historical development of nonconformity in general and of chapel architecture in particular. The Commission has also provided a checklist of the chapels in the order of their appearance in the book. The list has been compiled from the Commission's online database, Coflein, and gives the name, denomination and location of each chapel followed by the Coflein number and the Ordnance Survey map reference. The checklist is described misleadingly as an index. In fact, surprisingly, the volume lacks an alphabetical index of chapel names, locations and denominational affiliations which, given the random arrangement of the photographs, would certainly have made it more valuable for those who wish to use it as more than a picture book.

A map at the end of the volume reflects clearly the fact that Tim Rushton is based in Manchester. The chapels photographed are heavily concentrated on the northern counties (though strangely there are none from Flintshire) with only a tiny sprinkling from central Wales and none at all from areas south of north Pembrokeshire and north Carmarthenshire.

In his foreword Huw Edwards hopes that the photographs presented here will convince local and national authorities of the need to take more rigorous action to safeguard our rapidly diminishing chapel heritage. It is a hope which will surely be echoed by all members of Capel.

Lionel Madden

Eirwyn George, *Cynnal y Fflam: Golwg ar Weithgareddau Annibynwyr Cymraeg Sir Benfro* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2012), 127tt., ISBN 978-1-84771-471-8, £6.95.

Gan fod Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg yn cynnal ei Gyfarfodydd Blynyddol yn Sir Benfro yn 2012 aeth Eirwyn George ati i baratoi'r casgliad hwn o ysgrifau a lluniau amrywiol o Annibynwyr ac Annibyniaeth yn y Sir.

Brodor o ardal y Preseli yw'r awdur. Mae'n Brifardd a enillodd y Goron yn yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol yn 1982 a 1993. Ac eithrio cyfnodion mewn Coleg Harlech a Phrifysgol Aberystwyth treuliodd ei fywyd i gyd yn ei Sir enedigol. Mae ei wybodaeth o'i Sir a'i enwad yn amlwg iawn yn y llyfr hwn.

Mae'r gyfrol yn cynnwys cofion a lluniau o Annibynwyr nodedig sydd wedi bod yn gysylltiedig â Sir Benfro. Yn eu mysg mae gyn-Lywyddion yr Undeb, unigolion a dderbyniodd y Fedal Gee, Prifeirdd, cerddorion ac awduron. Ceir hefyd gerddi am rai o'r capeli, cerddi crefyddol ac emynau. Yn bersonol, cefais bleser arbennig o ddarllen y cerddi am gapel Bethel gan D.J.Thomas, Llwyn-yr-Hwrdd gan Tomi Evans, a Phenybont a Brynsalem gan Eirwyn George.

Ymysg y cyfraniadau eraill mae dau sy'n trin pynciau braidd yn annisgwyl ac yn wahanol i weddill y cynnwys. Yn 'Y Triawd Cyfoes' mae'r awdur yn sôn am ei hen hen dad-cu, Y Parch. Rees Perkins, a'i wraig Mari a gafodd tri o blant. Tra oedd yr awdur yn hel achau'r teulu fe sylweddolodd fod un o ddisgynyddion uniongyrchol pob un o'r plant hyn yn weinidog o'r efengyl heddiw, sef y Parchn Glyn Owen (MC), Geoffrey Eynon a'r Dr Cerwyn Davies (Ann.). Mae'r cyfraniad annisgwyl arall, gan Dr Cerwyn Davies ei hun, yn disgrifio sut y daeth yn 'Gaplan (answyddogol) Angylion Uffern' yn Ontairo. Mae'n hanes difyr sy'n werth ei ddarllen.

Dyma lyfr atyniadol iawn sy'n sicr o roi pleser i bawb sydd â diddordeb yn hanes capeli a phobl yr Annibynwyr yn Sir Benfro - ac i lawer eraill ohonom hefyd.

(This is a review of a collection of articles, poems and pictures about people and chapels associated with the Independents (Congregationalists) in Pembrokeshire.)

Lionel Madden

Dates for the Diary

The Autumn meeting for 2012 will be held in St. Asaph and will take place on Saturday 13th October. A programme and booking form are enclosed with this newsletter.

The Spring 2013 meeting will see Capel visiting Ammanford on Saturday 11th May. This visit will include the AGM for 2013.

I'r Dyddiadur

Bydd cyfarfod yr Hydref ar gyfer 2012 yn cael i'w chynnal yn Llanelwy ar Ddydd Sadwrn 13 Hydref. Amgawyd rhaglen a ffurflen bwcio gyda'r cylchlythyr yma.

Bydd cyfarfod y Gwanwyn 2013 yn ymweld a Rhydaman ar Ddydd Sadwrn 11 Mai. Bydd yr ymweliad yma yn cynnwys y CCB ar gyfer 2013.

Swyddogion / Officers

Cadeirydd / Chairman:

Mr Meirick Lloyd Davies, Gwelfryn, 1 Ffordd Glascoed, Cefn Meiriadog, Abergele, Conwy, LL22 9DW

Ysgrifennydd / Secretary:

Rev. Peter Jennings, 5 Cuffnell Close, Liddell Park, Llandudno, LL30 1UX
Tel / Ffôn: 01492 860449 E-mail / E-bost: obadiah1@btinternet.com

Trysorydd / Treasurer:

Mr Richard O. Thomas, 6 Fforddglas, Rhyl, Denbighshire, LL18 2DY
Tel / Ffôn: 01745 350063 E-mail / E-bost: richardothomas@tiscali.co.uk

Golygydd / Editor:

Gwag / Vacant