

Capel



CYMRITHAS TREFTAADAETH Y CAPEL
THE CHAPELS HERITAGE SOCIETY

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Cylchlythyr 66 Hydref 2015

Bridgend

We started off the day at Bridgend URC where there was a warm welcome from Rose Warden. Neville Granville then gave an in depth introduction to the history of Nonconformism in the Bridgend area, starting with the points that the word Nonconformity is a negative used to describe a positive, that Welsh words for Nonconformity don't start to appear until the second quarter of the 18th century and that while Nonconformity is a Welsh phenomenon, its UK origins were in England.



We were then taken through the history of the Bridgend area starting at the Baptist preaching centre at North Nottage, Samuel Jones's school at Brynllwyarch (the 'First Dissenting Academy in Wales') and the school at Coytrahen to the establishment of the early Baptist and Independent chapels and the growth of Unitarianism.

After the talk, which was held in a meeting room created at gallery level during

remodelling of the church, we looked at the ground level church which mixes modern layout with the survival of the 19th century pulpit and organ.

At the Quaker Meeting House we were met by Christine Trevett. She gave us an extremely interesting background to Quaker beliefs and the history of the Quakers in Wales. Although the first Quakers in Wales were recorded in 1654, the first Meeting House in Cardiff was not built until 1830, indicating of how little importance the buildings are in their worship. Conversely, the Quakers have their own burial grounds early on – for instance one in Swansea registered in 1650's although no one was ever buried there. She also explained how Quakerism has changed and modernised in the 20th Century and the differences with the American Branch. Particularly interesting was the diversity of backgrounds and beliefs of modern Quakers and the focus on the provision of a space for anyone to learn and grow.

From the late 1670's numbers of Quakers in Wales declined steeply as they left to join the community in Pennsylvania. The main community around Bridgend was at Pencoed, Tonyefail where a Meeting House was built on land left to them in 1684; by 1823 it was used by small numbers and was sold as a private house, which has since been demolished. In the 1960's meetings were held in the Deaf and Dumb Institute, but as numbers grew they were given permission to seek their own building. They have been in this building (originally built as a house in the 1930's) since 1968, and particularly important is the garden as a space. There are now some 650 Quaker members, with another 350 or so non-members who worship regularly across Wales.

After lunch we went to Emmanuel Christchurch Assemblies of God. The original cause for this chapel was formed in 1906 with the foundation stone for the church laid on the 30th December 1908 and opened in 1909. At this time there was no affiliation to a particular denomination but it became attached to the Baptist Union in May 1914. Under the same minister, D S Jones, until 1948 the chapel prospered. In 1981 however the chapel was secured by the Assemblies of God and in 1983/4 the interior was completely refurbished to provide a modern space. There has recently been recognition of the loss of some of the historic features and the baptismal pool has recently been reopened. The church is very active with several services a week and a range of outreach work, international mission work and local support groups.



Hope Baptist Chapel (NPRN 10006) © Crown Copyright RCAHMW

Hope Baptist Chapel on Station Road took two years to build at a cost of £8,800. It opened in 1908 after the original chapel on Queen Street became too small for the expanding congregation and the wonderful interior can be seen as a fitting result of the time and money spent. There are two particularly splendid features: the first is the unusual sweeping, three sided gallery which

is cantilevered and therefore has no gallery columns allowing a sense of spaciousness and granting all a clear view. The second is the grand open baptismal pool. This is constructed of alabaster and marble with the inscription “Buried with him in baptism”.



Sadly we also heard that there are concerns for the future of the chapel as people move away from the area and maintenance and repair bills are rising.

Hope Baptist Chapel (NPRN 10006): Detail of the open baptism pool © Crown Copyright RCAHMW

We ended the day at the modern Tabernacle Independent Chapel, now the only Welsh language chapel surviving in Bridgend. Due to this the chapel has a wide catchment area with 200 members and an active Sunday School.

The chapel was opened on May 6th 1989, replacing the previous Tabernacle on Adare Street. This had become inconvenient due to pedestrianisation of the road and increasingly in need of repair. An offer to buy from developers led to the difficult decision to relocate and on September 21st 1986 the last service was held in the old chapel. The new chapel is striking, but also has features from the Adare Street chapel such as the pulpit panels, panels of the cast iron gallery front and the plaster ceiling rose which are successfully incorporated into areas of the building as a reminder of its history.



Tabernacl Independent Chapel (NPRN 506090) © Crown Copyright RCAHMW

Once again the day was rounded off by a spectacular tea provided by the ladies of the chapel.

G.Cooke

Planning Applications & Closures

Calfaria Baptist, Maesteg, Bridgend (NPRN 10043) SS8622689780: c.o.u to dwelling. Proposal retains character of unlisted 1877 chapel externally. Support subject to recording condition.

Tabernacl, High Street, Harlech, Snowdonia (NPRN 8436) SH58143101: removal of condition re. upvc windows. Recommend refusal due to adverse impact on character of the building

Bethania, Cynwyd, Denbighshire (NPRN 8505) SJ05744104: Application unclear as to impact on façade, which should be retained as existing.

Soar, Penderyn, Aberdare, BBNPA (NPRN 6150) SN94820888: c.o.u to dwelling. Support subject to recording condition

Gloddaeth United, Llandudno, Conwy (NPRN 11568) SH77998241: Proposal retains building in existing use and while there would be some loss of internal fabric, the scheme retains the overall character of the chapel. Support

Woodhill Baptist, Colwyn Bay (NPRN 7463) SH85007875: c.o.u. to martial arts centre etc – support – no change of external elevations of 1902 chapel

Tabor, Llysfaen, Colwyn Bay, Conwy (NPRN 7058) SH8931076793: c.o.u to dwelling. Support subject to retention/replication of timber windows, and recording condition

Closures:

Carmel URC, Nantmel, Powys (NPRN 8297) SO05426657

Losses:

Capel Aberfan, Aberfan (NPRN 97077) SO07050011: gutted by fire July 2015

Park St English Congregational, Llanelli (NPRN 6424) SN50660015: gutted by fire August 2015

Dathlu'r Hen Gapel 'newydd' Celebrating the 'new' old chapel

Mae un o'r "capeli pwysica' yn hanes anghydfurfiol Cymru" wedi cael ei achub, meddai'r darlledwr Huw Edwards wrth ailagor Hen Gapel Llwynrhydowen ger Llandysul yng Ngheredigion.

Fe ailadroddodd ddiwyddiad hanesyddol yn 1879, trwy drosglwyddo allwedd y capel ar ei newydd wedd i'r gweinidog, Wyn Thomas.

"R'ych chi wedi cyflawni rhywbeth arbennig, arbennig iawn," meddai wrth annerch yn ystod y seremoni ffurfiol, ddydd Gwener 10 Gorffennaf.

Y seremoni ailagor dan adain Ymddiriedolaeth Addoldai Cymru oedd diwedd blynyddoedd o waith gan yr Ymddiriedolaeth a Chyfeillion yr Hen Gapel – fe ddechreuodd gydag atgyweirio'r to a diddosi'r adeilad cyn ei adfer fwy neu lai i'w gyflwr gwreiddiol.

Roedd cynrychiolwyr o 13 chapel Undodaidd y Smotyn Du – ardal gryfa'r enwadyng Nghymru – ymhlith y gynulleidfa ar gyfer y seremoni, ychydig anerchiadau dan arweiniad Ymddiriedolaeth Addoldai Cymru, David Lloyd, a gwasanaeth arbennig dan arweiniad y Parch Wyn Thomas, gyda chyfraniadau gan aelodau.



Mae'r capel hefyd yn bwysig yn hanes gwleidyddol Cymru oherwydd digwyddiadau 1876-79 pan gafodd y gynulleidfa ei chau allan o'r capel a'r fynwent gan y landlord Toriaidd, oherwydd radicaliaeth y gweinidog, Gwilym Marles..

Roedd Addoldai Cymru wedi ennill dau becyn o gyllid at y gwaith:

- Ar gyfer yr adeilad - £65,650 gan Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri, £50,000 gan Cadw, £25,000 gan Gyngor Sir Ceredigion, £10,000 gan Gyngor Cymuned Llandysul a £2,800 trwy apêl leol.
- Ar gyfer adnoddau digidol i ddweud hanes y capel ar y cyd gyda'r Comisiwn Brenhinol ar Henebion Cymru - Gronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri (£18,607) a Croeso Cymru (£85,607).



©celcalon

One of the “most important chapels in the Nonconformist history of Wales has been saved, said broadcaster Huw Edwards during the reopening ceremony for Hen Gapel Llwynrhydowen near LLandysul in Ceredigion.

He repeated an historic event of 1879, by returning the keys to the refurbished chapel to the minister, Wyn Thomas.

“You’ve achieved something very, very special,” he said during the formal reopening on Friday 10 July.

The ceremony, organised by the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust, was the culmination of years of work by the Trust and Cyfeillion Yr Hen Gapel (Friends of the Old Chapel) that involved securing the roof and returning the Grade II* listed chapel to its original condition.

Representatives from the 13 Unitarian chapels in the denomination’s Welsh stronghold were in the congregation for the ceremony which included speeches, under the leadership of David Lloyd, Chair of the Trust, and a special ceremony led by Rev Wyn Thomas.

The chapel is also important in Welsh political history because of the events of 1876-9 when the congregation were locked out of the chapel and cemetery by the Tory landlord, because of the radicalism of the preacher, Gwilym Marles.

The Trust secured two packages of support for the scheme:

- For the building - £65,650 (Heritage Lottery Fund), £50,000 (Cadw), £25,000 (Ceredigion County Council), £10,000 (Llandysul Community Council) and £2,800 through a local appeal.
- For a digital display on the chapel's history, created in cooperation with the Royal Commission on the Historic and Ancient Monuments of Wales - Heritage Lottery Fund (£18,607) and Visit Wales (£85,607).

Iorwerth Jones

Books/Llyfrau

Huw Edwards, City Mission: The Story of London’s Welsh Chapels (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2014), 368pp., hardback, ISBN 978 1 84771 905 8, £24.95.

The broadcaster Huw Edwards is a man of great ability and charm and enormous industry. He is a passionate lover of London, Wales and chapels. This handsome book neatly combines all three passions. It outlines the history of the Welsh in London from the sixteenth century onwards and documents

the stories of the Welsh-speaking Nonconformist chapels which played a central role in the life of the Welsh community from the eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. Although chapels are the primary concern of the book it also includes a chapter on the few Anglican Welsh-speaking churches in London.

As someone who feels little attraction to London I wondered how I would respond to what is essentially a volume of local chapel histories. I need not have worried. Huw Edwards' account is always lively and thoughtful. He has a real ability to bring places and people to life. He also enriches his story with glimpses of his personal life. Although he settled in London in 1984 he did not attend a chapel regularly until 1996 when he joined worshippers at Beauchamp Road, Clapham Junction. His warm feeling for the congregation and the chapel where he plays the organ is very evident. The book also reflects his personal preoccupation with the question of how one can be both a Londoner and Welsh: 'the effort required to maintain a Welsh life in London is not slight. The results are sometimes not ideal, but no one should doubt the commitment and sincerity of those who try' (p.215).

He is not afraid to raise difficult questions such as the tension between the needs of local congregations and the central connexional structure of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, which has always had considerably more chapels in London than any other denomination: 'Tight denominational control minimises the freedom of congregations to use the money that they and their forebears have raised and contributed... Chapels begging to access their own money to pay essential bills are struggling to understand the motives for these rules' (p.268). He frequently voices his frustration at the failure of congregations to face up to reality and unite in order to make better use of their resources: 'It is a fact that Cymry Llundain – with a few exceptions – have been singularly unwilling to make bold, radical, sensible decisions about their places of worship' (p.344); 'the Welsh congregations in London have proved remarkably stubborn and resistant to plans which would have safeguarded both religious causes and buildings...One day, probably too late, common sense will prevail' (pp.211-12).

The book is a wonderful celebration of the buildings, ministers and congregations. The text is supported and enhanced by many illustrations. Some of them are striking, such as the serried ranks of children outside Jewin for the anniversary service in 1935. There are fine pictures of chapel exteriors.

There are also excellent photographs of chapel interiors, including the recently renovated Castle Street and the 1909 memorial window to the 17 year old Mair Lloyd George in Clapham. Changes in society are clear in the photographs of chapels which have closed and are now used for other purposes such as Hammersmith (mosque), Falmouth Road (Nigerian Brotherhood church) and Charing Cross (arts centre).

One of the highlights of the story of the Welsh in London is surely the day in 1917 when the prime minister, David Lloyd George, led his daughter Olwen down the aisle in Castle Street chapel on her wedding day. The bridegroom was a Welshman and the service was conducted in the Welsh language. Two photographs in the book record the occasion but its significance was well summed up by a contemporary journalist: 'Here was the prime minister of Great Britain, a world leader, a war leader, attending a Baptist chapel to give away his beautiful daughter to be married to one of Wales's best sons, and doing so in the Welsh language, without a shadow of shame about their culture, their language, their religion, their nation' (p.215).

The future does not look bright. In 1939 there were 31 Welsh-speaking chapels and churches in London. Although dramatic decline did not make itself felt immediately after the war it became increasingly apparent during the 1960s and 1970s and today there are only seven chapels still functioning and they face a very uncertain future. The overwhelming reasons are the collapse in Christian observance, which is common throughout Britain, and the changing nature of London. The 2011 census showed that the Welsh community is now a tiny proportion of a very diverse London population of whom only 44.9% belong to the 'White British' ethnic group. Among the Welsh community less than 500 now attend Welsh chapels or churches.

City Mission is a labour of love to set beside Huw Edwards' earlier substantial study of chapels in Llanelli, *Capeli Llanelli: Our Rich Heritage* (2009). The warmth of his affection for chapels shines through both books and reminds us of the important place they have occupied in the visual, intellectual and emotional life of the Welsh people.

Lionel Madden

D. Huw Owen, Hanes Cymoedd y Gwendraeth a Llanelli : A History of the Gwendraeth Valleys and Llanelli (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2014), 126 tt/pp, clawr papur/paperback, ISBN 978 1 84771 900 3, £5.95.

Mae'r gyfrol atyniadol hon yn adrodd hanes cymdeithasol, diwylliannol, diwydiannol a chrefyddol ardal dyffrynnoedd y Gwendraeth Fawr a'r Gwendraeth Fach a thref Llanelli sydd â chysylltiad agos â hwy. Cynhwysir map defnyddiol ar gyfer y rhai nad ydynt yn gyfarwydd â'r ardal. Cyflwynir y testun mewn fersiynau Cymraeg a Saesneg gydag adran o ffotograffau lliw, yn cynnwys lluniau o rai o'r capeli, yng nghanol y gyfrol. Mae gan y ddau fersiwn lyfryddiaethau, un yn rhestru eitemau Cymraeg a'r llall eitemau Saesneg. Mae hyn yn golygu bod angen i'r darlennydd dwyieithog edrych yn y ddwy lyfryddiaeth er mwyn gweld yr holl eitemau perthnasol.

Bydd gan aelodau Capel ddiddordeb arbennig yn yr hyn sydd gan yr awdur i'w ddweud am anghydfurfiaeth. Sefydlwyd rhai cynulleidfaoedd o'r Bedyddwyr a'r Annibynwyr yn y 17eg ganrif a dechrau'r 18fed ganrif. Disgrifiwyd plwyf Llan-non yn 1705 fel 'thick with Dissenters'. Mae'r llyfr yn amlinellu hanes yr achosion cynnar hyn a llwyddiant y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd yn yr ardal yn dilyn ymweliadau gan Howel Harris, Daniel Rowland ac arweinwyr cynnar eraill y mudiad. Datblygiad pwysig yn y blynyddoed ar ôl Diwygiad 1904-5 oedd sefydlu'r Eglwys Apostolaidd ym Mhen-y-groes. Arhosodd Pen-y-groes yn ganolfan ar gyfer cynadleddau blynyddol y mudiad byd-eang hwn hyd 2002.

Cyhoeddwyd y llyfr awdurdodol a darllenadwy hwn adeg Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2014. Mae'n fersiwn newydd o gyfrol gan yr awdur a gyhoeddwyd ar gyfer Eisteddfod yr Urdd yn Nghefnethin yn 1989. Mae Huw Owen yn frodor o Cross Hands ac mae'n amlwg bod yr ardal arbennig hon yn aros yn agos at ei galon.

This attractive volume surveys the social, cultural, industrial and religious history of the area covered by the Gwendraeth Fawr and Gwendraeth Fach valleys and Llanelli which has close ties to them. For those not familiar with the area there is a useful map. The text is presented in Welsh and English versions with a section of colour photographs, including pictures of some of the chapels, in the centre of the volume. Each version has its own bibliography listing works in the language of the essay. The bilingual reader therefore

needs to refer to both bibliographies in order to have access to the full range of references.

Members of Capel will be particularly interested in what the author has to say about nonconformity. Some Baptist and Independent (Congregationalist) congregations were established in the 17th and early 18th centuries. In 1705 the parish of Llan-non was described as 'thick with Dissenters'. The book outlines the history of these early causes and then traces the success of Calvinistic Methodism in the area following visits by Howel Harris, Daniel Rowland and other early leaders of the movement. Another significant force in the years following the 1904-5 Revival was the foundation of the Apostolic Church in Pen-y-groes, which remained a centre for annual conventions of the world-wide movement until 2002.

This authoritative and readable book was published to coincide with the 2014 National Eisteddfod. It is a new version of an earlier work by the author which was published on the occasion of the Urdd Eisteddfod in 1989 in Cefneithin. Huw Owen is himself a native of Cross Hands and this special area clearly remains close to his heart.

Lionel Madden

Survey of 'George' Family Interments in North Pembrokeshire, Wales, from 1654-2012 prepared by Leonard H Urwin, third edition January 2015

This privately published soft-covered booklet of 63 pages is obviously aimed at the family historian but more than a cursory glance reveals its usefulness to the local historian also. The survey itself accounts for about 40 of those pages and consists of 138 graveyards listed by the author in the order he visited them. The burial grounds belong to chapels and churches in the county as well as council cemeteries and list all the gravestone inscriptions of those with the surname 'George' buried there. Some entries are supplemented by additional information from church/chapel registers and websites. In all some 1,622 burials are recorded. There is also a map provided in pull-out form at the back of the booklet showing the location of each graveyard and, in this third edition, the survey is extended beyond that previously published to cover an area further south and east.

The remainder of the booklet, and that which is of interest to the local historian, is commentary and the author's notes on the background to, and the methodology of, the survey. In addition there is a full list of the author's abbreviations, a section about the author (who interestingly is unrelated to any 'George' family), acknowledgements to official bodies and to those who assisted and a bibliography. The hope of the author is 'that this survey will be of value to future generations of 'Georges' and their relatives and that perhaps, someday, someone will extend the survey to include all of south Pembrokeshire.' Capel is grateful to receive this volume, which has also been distributed by the author to institutions and relevant societies throughout Wales and the wider world and is available in online searchable PDF format at: www.dyfedfhs.org.uk/uploads/george_survey.pdf and <http://peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/items/380695>

Other

Darlith yr Eisteddfod 2015/ Eisteddfod Lecture 2015

Traddodwyd Darlith CAPEL yn yr Eisteddfod ar Ddydd Gwener 7 Awst gan Nia Rhosier, a fu'n bennaf gyfrifol am adnewyddu'r capel hanesyddol. Wedi iddi gyfeirio at y cysylltiad pwysig gyda'r emynyddes enwog, Ann Griffiths, amlinellodd y gwaith a wnaed eisoes i ddiogelu'r capel a gaewyd yn 1865 ond sydd bellach yn leoliad Canolfan Undod ac Adnewyddiad Cristnogol; a hefyd y cynlluniau presennol i adfer y capel.

Cadeiriwyd y cyfarfod gan Dr. D. Huw Owen. Wedi iddo ddiolch i'r darlithydd tynnodd sylw at y drefn i ddsbarthu fersiwn ddwyieithog o'r ddarlith i aelodau'r Gymdeithas.

The CAPEL Eisteddfod Lecture was delivered at Meifod on Friday, 7 August by Nia Rhosier, who has been largely responsible for the renewal of the historic chapel. Having referred to its significant association with the renowned hymn writer Ann Griffiths, she outlined the work already undertaken to ensure the preservation of this chapel, which was closed in 1865 and is now the Centre for Christian Renewal and Unity; and also the current plans to restore the chapel.

The meeting was chaired by Dr. D. Huw Owen. Having thanked the lecturer, he drew attention to the arrangement to distribute to members a bilingual version of the lecture.

Weekend School: Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland, 1829-1929

Oxford University Department of Continuing Education will be holding a weekend school on 'Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland, 1829-1929', running from Friday 29th to Sunday 31 January 2016. 'More places of worship were built in Britain and Ireland in the 19th and early 20th centuries than in any comparable period. Part of the reason was the vast increase on population, but building was also stimulated by greater religious freedom, opening the way for Roman Catholics and Nonconformists to build on a new scale. Particularly within the Anglican communion and the Scottish Presbyterian Church, changes in modes of worship led to new forms of church building and of interior ordering. This weekend sets to identify and illuminate the main developments in a rich and diverse period.' More details regarding the programme and booking can be found at <https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/K900-119>

Borth chapel to become Boutique Cinema

The new owner of Gerlan chapel in Borth, Ceredigion has been granted planning permission to turn the building into a boutique cinema, theatre and restaurant.

Gerlan was built in 1877 as Libanus Welsh Calvinistic Methodist chapel and designed in the Gothic style by architect David Williams of Cemmaes. Rebuilt in 1892, during the later 20th century it absorbed the congregations of other chapels closing within the village and was subsequently renamed Gerlan in 1969 to reflect this. In 2010 Gerlan too closed.

The new plans will allow the structure of the chapel to be restored and items such as the pulpit arches to be retained, though pews and pulpit have had to be removed. Libanus 1877 will offer a boutique cinema and theatre on the ground floor and a first floor restaurant.

Irish Welsh Chapel granted protected status

The only Welsh Nonconformist chapel to be built in Ireland has been given protected status after a campaign by Dublin's Welsh Society. Bethel, located on Talbot Street, was built in 1838 to serve the small number of Welsh speakers living or visiting in the city. It was prompted by the hundreds of Welsh sailors who had previously held services aboard ship while in port, and on opening the gallery became known as the "quarter-deck" where only these sailors could sit. Meanwhile on the ground floor men sat "starboard" and women "port-side". Known as "an island of Welshness" the community experienced some animosity after Ireland's failures to achieve self government and the feeling that Protestant opposition had played a part. By 1944 the chapel had closed due to a shrinking congregation, subsequently becoming a shoe shop, snooker hall and, currently, an internet café. Much of the fabric remains intact however, including the 19th century sash windows, plaster ceiling and a Welsh slate roof and this successful campaign hopefully ensures their survival for many years to come.

New C20 society database of 20th century churches and chapels

The C20 society has compiled a new database of 20th chapels in England and Wales. Part grant-aided by Historic England, the work is aimed at aiding planning and conservation work but will also help draw attention to these innovative and inspirational buildings. Hopefully this may lead on to a rectification of the under representation of these buildings in the listing designations across the UK.

The database can be found at <http://www.c20society.org.uk/churches/>. Coverage for Wales, and for Nonconformist chapels, is by no means comprehensive and the C20 Society says that it will welcome further corrections, comments and contributions.

Newsletter

Due to the rising costs of postage, Capel would be interested in hearing from those who may prefer to receive the newsletter and booking forms digitally via email. If you would like to receive future correspondence in this way please contact the newsletter editor at susiefielding@yahoo.co.uk

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