



We are moving! Our main office is now at the vestry at Capel Peniel in Tremadog.

Although the building does require major repairs, its condition is such that we can safely and happily use the old schoolroom as our office. It also signals our intention to increase our activity within the local communities where our buildings are located, work that Christine Moore our new Development Officer is progressing with the Trust. It is also unfortunately a time of uncertainty for the Trust as funding gets tighter and every pound is made to work that little bit harder. Thank you for your support - it is appreciated! We welcome local friends and supporters at all our various projects!

If you are not already a Friend of the Trust – would you like to support us and help us with our work?

Membership of the Friends is open to all and costs £10 a year: a membership form and bank standing order form are enclosed with this newsletter. Alternatively, contact the Trust's office. To those of you who are already members – why not pass on the membership form to someone you think might be interested?



Hen Dŷ Cwrdd following repairs

Major repairs at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd

A first phase of repair works to Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, the Trust's grade II Unitarian meeting house in Trecynon, Aberdare, was completed in April 2010. The works included fitting a new Welsh slate roof, completely overhauling all the windows and doors, and stitching cracks in the external walls. Funding came from Cadw, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, and private donations. The contractor was Stafford Construction Ltd., working under the supervision

of our architect Richard Spencer Dean. The completion of phase one coincided with the installation at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd of a Blue Plaque by Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC. It is one of 30 key sites selected in the county which commemorate famous people, events and landmarks. The sites will eventually form a heritage trail.

The Trust is optimistic that it will be able to proceed with a second phase of repairs during the coming year, concentrating on the interior.



Peniel pulpit

Peniel Tremadog transferred to the Trust

The finalisation of the transfer of Peniel, Tremadog, from the Presbyterian Church of Wales to the Trust in February 2010 resulted in the addition of one of the small number of grade 1 chapels in Wales to the buildings held by the Trust.

The crucial factor in the background to the building of this chapel was the construction by William Alexander Madocks, Member of Parliament for Boston, of the embankment, the Cob (1808-1812), which succeeded in reclaiming land from the sea in Cardigan Bay. This resulted in the draining of Y Traeth Mawr and the establishment of the towns of Tremadog, and then later Porthmadog. Services were held in local houses by Calvinistic Methodists who had been attracted to Tremadog, and, encouraged by Thomas Charles,

Bala, a Sunday school was established in 1805. The increase in the local population led to a realisation of the need for a chapel, and a petition signed by Methodist leaders requesting land for the construction of a chapel was submitted to Madocks. His grant of a plot of land on a 99-year lease and peppercorn rent was bitterly criticised by the Bishop of Bangor, but he responded by stating that he had built a church with its foundation on a rock whereas the land provided for the chapel on the other side of the road was on the sand. However, both church and chapel were envisaged as integral features of the public buildings for Madocks's new planned town of Tremadog.

The work of building the chapel commenced in 1808. At the opening of the chapel in 1810, the persons seated prominently in the front included Madocks and several members of his family; the Methodist leaders, Thomas Charles and John Elias;

and the poet and dramatist Twm o'r Nant, who worked as a mason in the construction of the embankment. The chapel was registered as 'Peniel' on 14 March 1810. The total cost of £ 858 10s 6d included payments of £264 for wood, £150 to the masons and £121 to the carpenters.

Following an increase in the membership a gallery was built on one side in 1840, and in 1849 an open portico in Classical style, supported on circular Tuscan columns, was added. The work was supervised by John Williams, steward of the Tremadog estate, and he contributed £10 towards the costs as the inclusion of the columns had been part of the original plan. The original chapel had seats along the two sides and benches in the middle of the floor. Additional seating was provided in 1860, and in 1905 there were 600 seats in the chapel and 100 in the schoolroom, built in the late nineteenth century. The gallery had been extended to the three sides of the chapel in 1880, a new pulpit and elegant sêd fawr were installed in 1898, and in



Peniel decorative plasterwork and gas lighting fitting

1908 the present ceiling was provided. Gas lighting had been provided in 1857, and electricity was introduced in 1953.

The account in the Newsletter 3 (Summer 2009), based upon a report from John Hilling, the Trust's Architectural Adviser, emphasised the architectural significance of the Grade I chapel, described as 'an iconic gem'. The unusual qualities of this Classical building, possibly influenced by Inigo Jones's St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, London (1638), included a generous scale and gable-ended front, in contrast to the contemporary trend of small chapels with long wall facades and the pulpit located between the two entrance doors. Gradually, this style was generally adopted in Wales, and Peniel is regarded as having been of critical importance in the process with congregations appreciating the advantages of an auditorium experience.

D. Huw Owen

Further reading

Beazley, Elisabeth, *Madocks & the Wonder of Wales* (1967, 2nd ed. 1985)

Haslam, Richard, Orbach, Julian, Voelcker, Adam, *The Buildings of Wales*, Gwynedd (2009)

Jones, R. G., *Hanes Cychwyn yr Achos yn Nhremadog, Peniel M. C.* (1960)

Owen, D. Huw, *Capeli Cymru* (2005)

Capel Peniel handed over

A meeting was held on 18 February 2010 by Peniel church to celebrate 200 years to the day since the opening of Peniel chapel. This was also the date the building was legally transferred to the Trust - for the nominal sum of £100. A further meeting was held on 30 March 2010 to formally hand over Peniel to the Trust. The congregation of Peniel Church continues to worship and has moved to the Memorial Hall on the square in Tremadog.



Rev Gareth Edwards, minister of Peniel, handing over key of Peniel to Rev Dafydd Owen, chair of WRBT



Aberystwyth University students cataloguing Bethania Papers

Working with Aberystwyth University

Papers and documents acquired by the Trust along with Bethania Chapel, Maesteg, are the subject of a cataloguing project undertaken by Archives and Records Management students of the Department of Information Studies at Aberystwyth University. The project is being undertaken at Ceredigion Archives, and the papers will be deposited at Glamorgan Record Office.

Updating Chapels database

Can you help the Royal Commission to record the current status of your local chapel? The RCAHMW holds a database of some 6,626 Welsh chapels and has data on nearly 3,000, but current information is still required on the remaining 3,600. If you would like to help with the project please contact Susan Fielding at susan.fielding@rcahmw.gov.uk or RCAHMW, Crown Building, Plascrug, Aberystwyth, SY23 1NJ

Vandalism at Bethania

Bethania, the Trust's grade II* chapel in Maesteg, continues to be vulnerable to vandalism. At the end of 2009 a large area of lead sheeting covering a flat roof which connects the large vestry to the rear of the main chapel was stolen, exposing the roof decking to the elements. Unfortunately it was a period of heavy rain so the few pounds which the thieves would have received needs to be compared with the extensive damage caused to the chapel library books stored in the room below. The lead sheeting was subsequently replaced with a short term non-lead alternative, an expense the Trust could ill afford. Unhappily, over this last winter thieves have returned, this time to steal any remaining roof lead and flashing. Chapels and churches all over Wales are vulnerable to this behaviour where the consequences to the building owners far outweigh the meagre benefits to the thieves. It is a pity that scrap metal dealers aren't more enquiring.



Christine Moore,
WRBT Development Officer

New Development Officer

Following the retirement of Neil Sumner (who continues as a trustee), the Trust has appointed Christine Moore as its new Development Officer. Christine, who started working for the Trust in September 2010, has had various roles in the voluntary sector and brings considerable experience in community engagement, fund-raising and project management. She is familiarising herself with our five chapels in south and west Wales and their manifold problems, meeting supporters and stakeholders, and working hard at finding that rapidly diminishing resource, funding. Trustees are delighted with the progress she has already made.

Faith Tourism in Ceredigion

As guardians of Yr Hen Gapel Llwynrhydowen, the Trust is a supporter of the Faith Tourism in Ceredigion project which is being led by Ceredigion County Council and funded by the European Union Rural Development Plan Axis 4 initiative. The project aims to promote inter denominational multi faith tourism in Ceredigion by telling the story of the development and expression of faith in the county from the earliest times and how that faith is celebrated today. Themes and focal points have been identified and these include the "Black Spot" of Unitarianism which developed and thrives in Ceredigion. Key Unitarian sites in Ceredigion, including Yr Hen Gapel Llwynrhydowen, will benefit from coordinated interpretation material which has been commissioned from heritage consultants Trysor. These in turn will be linked to other important religious sites in the county such as Cilgwyn, Llangeitho, the National Catholic Shrine in Cardigan, Llanddewi Brefi, and Strata Florida. The project will be supported by promotional material and a dedicated website www.ceredigionfaithtrail.com.

Welsh Historic Places of Worship Conference

The Church in Wales is holding a one day conference to promote knowledge and discussion on all matters relating to the care of historic places of worship in Wales on

Tuesday 17 May 2011 at Llandaff Cathedral and St Michael's College, Cardiff. The conference includes a number of workshops. For more details contact Tina Andrew, Church Heritage and Conservation Officer, tel: 029 2034 8226, email: tinaandrew@churchinwales.org.uk

Open Doors 2011

The Trust intends to open the doors at Hen Dŷ Cwrdd, Hen Gapel Llwynrhydowen and Peniel this September as part of Open Doors European Heritage Days that take place throughout September and offer the public free access to places and buildings of historic and architectural interest. If you think you can help us please get in touch with the Trust!



Open Doors is organised by the Civic Trust for Wales
Tel. 029 2034 3336
www.civictrustwales.org

The Trust receives grant aid from Cadw, the Welsh Assembly Government's historic environment division, to support a significant part of its day-to-day running costs.

For more information about the Trust please contact us. We would be very pleased to hear from you!

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