

**Exploring Kidwelly Religious past**

## **Exploring Religious Influences in Kidwelly: A Compilation of Research Findings**

This compilation represents my investigation into the rich tapestry of religious influences that have shaped Kidwelly over the years. I invite you to delve into the enlightening discoveries I've made, offering insights into the diverse religious landscape that has left an enduring mark on this community.

### **St Mary's Church**



St. Mary's Church in Kidwelly is a historically rich and architecturally significant place. Situated approximately 50 meters south of the Gwendraeth Fach estuary, the church has a long history dating back to pre-conquest times, believed to be dedicated to St. Cadog in its original form.

During the medieval period, the church was part of the Deanery of Kidwelly. It became a priory between 1107 and 1115, granted to the Benedictines of Sherborne Abbey by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, and the lord of Kidwelly. The priory, despite its location west of the church, remained relatively poor throughout its existence, with only one monk recorded in 1377. After its dissolution in 1539, the patronage transferred to the Crown.

The church itself is an impressive Grade I listed building, recognized as the largest parish church in southwest Wales. Its exceptional features include a striking broach spire and intricate Decorated Gothic detailing. The construction incorporates mixed rubble stone with yellow oolite and Old Red Sandstone dressings.

The original church was reported to have burned down in the thirteenth century. The existing structure, with its distinctive features, such as ballflowers, wave-mouldings, and tablet-flowers, dates primarily to the mid-fourteenth century. The nave was the main parish church during medieval times, and the chancel served as the monastic priory church.

The tower, one of the earliest in the region, dates to around 1400 and is believed to have been added to the existing nave north door. Over the centuries, various additions, alterations, and restoration efforts have taken place, preserving the church's historical and architectural integrity. The church was restored in 1884, introducing elements like the oolite and Portland stone font, free-standing pews, and a new belfry clock.

St. Mary's Church stands as a remarkable symbol of religious and historical heritage, drawing visitors to appreciate its intricate design and immerse themselves in its storied past.

St Mary's Memorial Links. <http://tinyurl.com/StMary-Memorials>



The current parish church stands upon the foundation of its predecessor, likely a temporary structure built after the church, along with the town, was reportedly destroyed by Prince Llewelyn in 1222. A rare exception to the widespread suppression of monasteries, it survived and became the parish church, similar to Brecon and Monkton priory churches in the diocese of St. Davids.

Dedicated to St. Mary, the church exemplifies the Decorated Style in the diocese, featuring a spacious nave, short transepts, and a lofty tower topped by an elegant spire. Described by Archdeacon Bevan as a notable example of Norman influence, Marian dedications were prevalent, especially in towns and near Norman castles or Cistercian monasteries.

Sir George Gilbert Scott's 1854 report, prepared for a potential restoration, notes the church's remarkable characteristics. The nave, with an unusual 33-foot span, lacks aisles, while the chancel, small north and south transepts, tower, and spire form a simple cross. Originally, the tower and porch were midway between the western angles and the transepts, but the nave has since been shortened.

Despite initial impressions, Scott suggests the entire church, except for later alterations, was likely built around the end of Edward II's reign or early in Edward III's. Although the chancel exhibits rich flowing tracery and the tower features severe lancet windows, Scott argues this is a stylistic choice rather than indicative of distinct construction periods. Similarities in the mouldings of doorways, including those in the tower, and the arches into the chancel and transepts support the conclusion that they are all of the same era.

With the absence of window tracery in the nave, an objection could arise, suggesting the nave, along with the transept and chancel arches, predates the chancel. However, two features counter this notion. First, a loophole on the south side of the nave aligns with the style and age of the chancel. Second, a staircase in the tower, featuring an ogee arch, also points to the same period. These findings, coupled with the overall unity of the plan, lead to the conclusion that the entire structure is of one date, and the lancet windows in the tower result from an economy-driven decision.

Despite its severe simplicity, the tower is a grand structure, marked by its considerable size and a plain, unperforated spire. Externally, it combines the typical features of its era with those distinct to the region, notably the high battering basement common in Welsh towers. Internally, the lower story of the tower is vaulted, featuring rough stone facing, creating a uniquely picturesque character.

The nave, both inside and out, maintains a straightforward character. The windows, now reduced to arched openings due to the loss of mullions and tracery, include a late perpendicular west window, a product of the nave's shortening. The remaining internal features include three bold and well-designed arches and simple yet good

doorways. The transepts share a similar condition with the nave, and the south transept contains a window retaining its mullion, likely not from the original date. Several arched recesses for tombs are found in this transept, with sepulchral slabs discovered in both transepts.

The chancel, from the outset, was the most finely finished and retains much of its original beauty. The east window, once boasting five lights, has lost its mullions and tracery. Nevertheless, surviving windows on the south side showcase excellent tracery, while the north side's windows, although blocked, hint at near-perfect preservation. The sedilia and piscina in the chancel remain intact and exhibit very good design.

The vestry has been mostly rebuilt on the old foundation, previously consisting of two stories. The stairs to the upper story remain, featuring a perfectly preserved traceried loophole opening into the chancel. On the opposite side of the vestry door are well-moulded octagonal brackets for lights.

The chancel arch is segmental and very low, not rising above the height of the side walls of the nave. A blocked rood-stair entrance suggests that it might have opened over the chancel arch, possibly extending over it, offering an explanation for the arch's low height.

The roofs are of a later date, with the chancel roof likely dating back to the time of James I, and the nave roof probably from the 18th century, displaying signs of decay in several areas.

Despite the late date of the roofs, the walls, characterized by their massive thickness, remain generally sound. However, the parapet of the tower is mostly gone, and the upper part of the spire has been poorly rebuilt, compromising its symmetry.

After the calamity that struck the parish church in 1884, when lightning struck the spire, causing top masonry to damage the nave roof, restoration work was carried out under the direction of Messrs. Middleton and Prothero, Architects. The spire, previously poorly rebuilt after a similar incident in the 19th century, was restored to its original symmetrical proportions. In 1904, during another renovation, the spire was also pierced. The west window, criticized for its rudimentary style, was replaced with a perpendicular window of superior style and workmanship. The other windows in the nave received new mullions, though not retaining the original tracery. The nave roof, impressively supported by massive walls, stands as a testament to the skill of the designers.

While Sir Gilbert Scott suggested a construction date "about the end of the reign of Edward II, or early in that of Edward III," this view faced challenges. Dr. Freeman argued that the church featured a 14th-century nave added to a 13th-century tower,

while Mr. Edward Laws identified certain chancel elements as early English in style during a visit in 1906. Sir Gilbert Scott, after a more thorough examination, concluded that the entire church belonged to one age, emphasizing the resemblance between the tower doorways' mouldings and those of the chancel and transept arches.

The second point of similarity is observed between the loophole in the south wall of the nave staircase and another in the tower staircase. Both exhibit similar arches, suggesting their contemporaneous construction. The transition from the Early English to the Decorated style is recognized as gradual, making it challenging to establish a clear demarcation between them. The styles are often subdivided into early, middle, and late, with early stages sometimes blending with the previous style and later stages extending into the subsequent one. Given the consensus placing this church in the incipient stage of the Decorated period, around the late 13th or early 14th century, there's reason to believe that Early English elements might have persisted during the transition to the Early Decorated style.

#### Architectural Features:

1. Numerous staircases within the walls.
2. Unusually low chancel arch.
3. Segmental character of the main arches.
4. Broad nave with the absence of aisles.
5. Abrupt terminations of the transepts.
6. Numerous sepulchral recesses.

The building accommodates four staircases within its walls. The south wall staircase in the nave may have served as an approach to a rostrum for reading the Epistle, while the one accessible from the north transept likely led to a similar rostrum for reading the Gospel. A spiral staircase near the chancel and south transept arch pillars likely led to the rood loft. Adjacent to its entrance is a stoup, possibly used for ablution before ascending to the rood loft. Another staircase is situated in the sacristy or vestry wall, starting from what was originally the first floor. The traceried loophole in this staircase served as both a window and potentially a squint, suggesting that the first floor might have been used as an anchorite cell.

Circular loopholes with tracery resembling a wheel were often indicative of anchorages attached to churches. These cells were occupied by anchorites, voluntarily bound by a vow of seclusion, sometimes for life. Female recluses, seeking protection and religious advantages, often resided in such cells. Typically, these cells had three shuttered windows: one to a chamber for the anchorite's attendant, another for necessary communication with the outside, and a third, like the mentioned loophole, offering a view into the church's sanctuary.

The unusual low position of the chancel arch may be explained by the assumption, supported by the height of the spiral staircase, that the rood loft extended above the arch. The segmental formation of this arch, along with other main arches, creates an angle with the pillar abruptly and lacks continuous impostes or capitals to the shafts. The corbels supporting the canopy over the loft remain preserved in the wall. Dr. Freeman notes that the change of mouldings at the junction is rare in England and resembles later French work.

The extraordinary breadth of the nave without aisles is also believed, by Dr. Freeman, to be reminiscent of some South Gaulish churches. The transepts directly start from the nave, not from a central tower as commonly seen in monastic churches. Their unsymmetrical abruptness supports the earlier contention that they are mere annexations to the main building.

There are a total of six arched sepulchral tombs, two each in the chancel, south chapel, and nave. The chancel and nave tombs lack monumental slabs, while one in the south chapel holds a recumbent effigy and another a slab with an incised cross, believed to be from the 15th century. The sepulchral arch in the north wall of the sacarium might have been used as a recess for entombing the rood or Crucifix in the rood-loft during the interval between Good Friday and Easter Day. Additionally, a monument, now placed in an upright position in the south chapel, commemorates a civilian from the 14th century, clad in the tunica talaris.

The church boasts a unique figure of the Virgin in pure white alabaster, crowned and bearing the infant Saviour and a bird. Despite considerable mutilation due to Puritanical times and rough handling, it remains a good specimen of 15th-century art. The figure was once positioned in the niche above the south porch door, where parishioners curtsied to it. Removed in 1875, it is now in the sacristy awaiting restoration, but its original place was likely the niche on the south side of the east end of the nave, beneath the rood-loft and above the spiral rood-stairs' approach.

The Church Plate - The inventory of goods belonging to the church, returned by the Commissioners appointed during the beginning of the reign of Edward VI (1552), listed various items, including 2 chalices of silver, partly gilt, a small cross of silver, partly gilt, a censer of silver, a pyx of silver, and 4 bells, great and small. Additionally, one chalice was noted to be in the possession of Morys ap Rhys, Gent. Unfortunately, there is no current information available about these items. The oldest surviving vessels are a silver chalice and paten, both from the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1574). The chalice, considered by experts to be one of the finest examples of Elizabethan ecclesiastical plate in the diocese of St. Davids, is inscribed in Latin with 'Poculum \* Ecclesie \* de \* Kydwelly \* 15 \* 74.'

The Registers - The parochial records date back to 1626, with apparent extracts from a previous register dating from 1586. All entries until 1733 are in Latin and are presented in bold and legible calligraphy. The systematic registration of baptisms, marriages, and burials was established at the end of Henry VIII's reign. A royal injunction issued by Thomas Cromwell, Vicar-General, on September 29, 1538, mandated every parish incumbent to maintain a register. This register, to be taken forth every Sunday in the presence of the churchwardens, documented weddings, christenings, and burials from the preceding week. Initially, register books were made of paper, but in 1597, a law required each parish to acquire a parchment book for transcribing entries from paper registers. This explains the entries at the beginning of Kidwelly's earliest parchment register, believed to be copies from a prior record book.

One particularly noteworthy entry in the local registers recounts an unfortunate event and reflects an antiquated atmospheric idea. It states:

"On the 29th day of October 1481, the steeple of Kidwelly fell down by lightning and a clap of thunder between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. - From lightning and tempest; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us."

Church Restoration - Following the lightning disaster of 1884, a comprehensive church restoration plan was implemented, costing £1813 8s. 1d.

Church Bells - Kidwelly's parish church belfry has housed a peal of bells for many years, with a local saying that "Kidwelly bells were heard at Swansea." Tradition suggests that the bells intended for Kidwelly were mistakenly taken to Swansea by sea. Despite this, Kidwelly later acquired a splendid pipe organ in 1907 from St. Mary's Church, Swansea. An excerpt from The New Monthly Magazine (March 1820) mentions the revival of church bellringing in Kidwelly after years of deprivation, with new bells replacing broken ones.

The present peal comprises six bells, fixed for chiming only to preserve tower masonry safety. Recast by Charles Carr, Ltd., Bell-founders, Smethwick, in 1902 at a cost of £140, they were dedicated, along with a new altar and reredos, by the Lord Bishop of St. Davids on May 3rd the same year.

Town Clock - Housed in the church steeple, the town clock, which had stopped after lightning damage in 1884, was restored in 1902. The dials were elevated, at the expense of the municipal corporation, in commemoration of the Coronation of King Edward VII.



## *Trinity Methodist Church Kidwelly.*

*This is the copy of the Trinity Church Centenary Brochure 1866-1966.*

### WESLEYAN METHODISM IN KIDWELLY IN 1761

Thomas Taylor, a Yorkshireman, was appointed by the Wesleyan Conference to travel in Wales which at this time formed one, vast circuit. He travelled only in the South-West and was, according to his own testimony, the first of Wesley's preachers ever to enter Carmarthenshire. He did not, however, expend much effort in preaching in this county. He knew no Welsh and the people were in great measure Welsh-speaking. Not surprisingly, he concentrated his labours on South Pembrokeshire and Gower where there were communities who spoke only English.

Here he reported some success in setting up societies. Conference sent him back to Wales in 1762 and he spent the winter, a severe one, travelling between Pembrokeshire and Gower and fostering the growth of his little societies.

To shorten his journey, he made use of the ferries across the Loughor, Towy and Taff rivers, but this route often proved a hazardous one. Unfamiliar with local conditions and travelling alone, he was several times nearly trapped by rising tides. On one occasion, after landing at Llanstephan in darkness, he lost his way but was unable to obtain help from the country people who, he reported regretfully, 'would or could not speak English.' Straying helplessly, he blundered into a deep bog from which he extricated himself and his horse only by the most strenuous efforts. 'Wales,' he wrote to Wesley, 'is not the most pleasing part of the world for a stranger to wander in, especially on the errand which I was upon.'

The following year he was sent to Ireland and Wales knew him no more. Many years later, after a lifetime of itinerancy, he became President of Conference. His valiant, pioneering work was followed up by Wesley himself who in August of 1763 made his first journey into Carmarthenshire entering it by way of the Towy valley. After a brief stop at Carmarthen during which he preached on the Green-an open strip of ground at the end of the castle courtyard-he pressed on to Pembrokeshire where he spent about four days. Intending to include Gower on his return, he was advised to use Llanstephan ferry but found the tide out and made for Carmarthen. After three or four miles he recollected being told of a ford across the Towy and with the willing help of an old man crossed safely.

He had scarcely resumed his journey when his mare dropped a shoe and by the time this was rectified the rising tide made it impossible to attempt the crossing of the sands of the Burry estuary-a route which would have taken him through Kidwelly. He was forced to go inland and after a tedious journey arrived in Swansea at dusk. In the summer of the following year (1764) he was back in Pembrokeshire, having entered it from Cardiganshire. On his return he again made for Gower, the other main centre of his activities in West Wales.

This time he succeeded in using Llanstephan ferry, although enduring much discomfort from the mud, and so came to Kidwelly between one and two on a Tuesday afternoon (July 31st). The road he followed over the hill from Ferryside, 'the Portway,' was an ancient one, used by

the saints of the Celtic church, by Medieval kings and their armies, by pilgrims to the shrine of St. David, and by Arch-bishop Baldwin and Gerald the Welshman seeking recruits for the third Crusade. Kidwelly itself retained much of its Medieval character in Wesley's day.

The original township founded by Roger of Salisbury in the early 12th century as part of the defences of his castle was still enclosed by its fortified walls, gateways, and ditch, although the focus of town life now lay outside it. Just across the river stood the 14th century parish church dedicated to St. Mary and close by it the crumbling walls of the Benedictine priory of Black Monks established by Roger as a cell of Sherborne Abbey. Since the Middle Ages, the town's importance as a trading centre had declined but its prosperity was being revived by several industrial undertakings-A Tin Works, an Iron Works at 'The Forge' and the mining of anthracite in the Gwendraeth valley by Thomas Kymer who two years after Wesley's visit started to build a canal for the more convenient shipment of the coal from a quay at Kidwelly Wesley did not pause to preach here. He was bent on reaching Gower by the short cut across the Burry sands and because he was unfamiliar with the route, he wanted ample time for the crossing.

Thus, although he had eaten nothing since leaving Pembrokeshire and had already endured seven hours in the saddle, he and his companions pressed on, having been assured by 'an honest man' in the town that the crossing offered little difficulty. After using the ford across the Gwendraeth Fawr at a point about a quarter of a mile below the present bridge, he followed a road, now long forgot- ten and buried under many feet of silt, which crossed the marsh, skirted the sand dunes, and brought him close to Penbre village. From here they took to the wide expanse of the Burry estuary. Unaided, they would have been in serious difficulties but a guide who had volunteered his services shortly after leaving Kidwelly skilfully negotiated the treacherous patches of quicksand's and brought them safely to Oxwich between five and six o'clock in the evening.

Of the people of Gower, he wrote warmly that they all spoke English and were 'ready to receive the word with all readiness of heart.' Within a few years of this visit a West Wales circuit was formed which covered Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire. In 1769 Conference stationed the first men, James Dempster, and William Whitaker. The membership was given as 80 in 1770 and 112 in the following year. By 1775 the circuit was called the Pembrokeshire circuit but included Carmarthenshire as before. In their travels through Carmarthenshire Wesley and his preachers paid most attention to Carmarthen and Llanelli. places that they could expect to make headway because they contained small but often influential groups of English-speaking people.

Wesley, who early in his ministry had determined, 'not to strike one blow in any place where I cannot follow up the blow,' received encouragement at Llanelli from Sir Thomas Stepney. The first of his eight visits was in 1768 and in the following year a society was established the leaders of which were Sir Thomas's butler Wilfred Colley and two brothers called Deer. The death of Sir Thomas in 1774 and the departure of Colley threatened to break up the society but fortunately Colley's loss was made good by the arrival of a Lieutenant Cook who came to manage the estates of Colonel St. Leger residing at Trimsaran. In Carmarthen, although his success was not as marked as in Llanelli, Wesley preached several times, once in Peter Williams's chapel, and a society was set up. Kidwelly,

however, did not offer such favourable prospects for success and it is evident from a study of Wesley's journeys that he must, on several occasions, have passed through it without recording the fact in his Journal. It had a tradition of hostility to Dissenters and Methodists alike and Howell Harris in the 1740's had been so roughly handled by the inhabitants that he feared to pass through it and whenever possible skirted its boundaries. None of the local gentry, such as Thomas Kymer and Lewis Rogers, the owner of the Tin Works, offered any encouragement. Many of the members of the Common Council of the Borough were actively hostile and the officers of the Borough courts, by resorting to legal 'technicalities,' made it difficult for Dissenters to obtain licences to register their meeting houses. The Independents finally succeeded in 1775 in securing registration of the house in which they met but had to build 'Capel Sul' (1785) outside the town.

The Calvinistic Methodists encountered the frustration of the 'law's delays' for the registration of their meeting house ('Hen Dy Cwrdd') in the eastern part of the town on land leased to them, so tradition claims, by William Brigstocke of Llechdwnny. Against this background, Wesley's preachers on their rounds of the circuit sought to gain a foothold. Two of them, Samuel Bradburn and James Wood, were destined to become Presidents of Conference. They were all handicapped not only by the prevailing hostility and their lack of Welsh but also by opposition from the Calvinistic Methodists in the town. James Hall, a Manchester man, stationed in the circuit in 1777 and 1778, complained strongly of the secret as well as open opposition from the Preachers of the horrible Calvinian Decrees.

They ridiculously appropriate to themselves the title of Gospel Ministers.' He reported listening to a sermon by one of these preachers at Kidwelly. It was given in English and afterwards in Welsh, the preacher apologising to his Welsh hearers, 'that it was designed to open the eyes of the English present.' Nevertheless, the work of these men bore fruit and Wesley was sufficiently encouraged to pause long enough to preach here to what he described as, 'a very civil and unaffected congregation.'



**BETHESDA WELSH WESLEYAN CHAPEL**  
(View taken shortly before its demolition in December, 1962)

This was in August 1779, fifteen years after his first visit. The third and last, time he came here was in 1788, almost at the end of his long ministry. He reported spending a pleasant night at Carmarthen and preaching at Kidwelly at nine o'clock the following morning (Tuesday, 26th August). Between these widely spaced visits a society had been established but it is a matter of regret that the names of the members have not survived and that the house in which they met cannot be identified. At the close of the 18th Century Wesleyan Methodism in Carmarthenshire was confined to the societies at Llanelli, Carmarthen and Kidwelly. Up to 1794 they still formed part of the Pembrokeshire circuit which in that year had a total membership of 162. In the following year a Haverfordwest circuit came into existence in which they were included until 1805 when a new 'Carmarthen circuit' was created with William Thoresby as Superintendent.

They were mere outposts of the English cause during a large, predominantly Welsh-speaking community beyond the reach of Wesley's preachers owing to the barrier of language, 'the heavy curse of the confusion of tongues,' which Wesley had so often deplored. It was a community too which was, according to one of the missionaries, 'passionately attached to the Welsh tongue, and looking upon the English as a poor, dry, insipid language. But this barrier was soon to be penetrated. In 1801 Dr. Thomas Coke, a Brecon man, persuaded Conference to begin Welsh preaching and under his direction a Welsh mission was created, which within a few years made rapid progress throughout Carmarthenshire. Under the inspiration of Edward Jones of Ruthin and William Davies, destined to end his days at Kidwelly, societies were set up in the Towy valley. By 1808 a Welsh society had been formed at Carmarthen and Edward Jones became Superintendent of a 'Carmarthen (Welsh) Circuit.' The mission spread eastwards.

There was preaching at Penbre, and societies were established in Mynydd Bach (1813) and Llannon and Pontyberem (1814). In Kidwelly a 'Wesleyan Brotherhood' came into existence which, with the older English cause, was soon strong enough for its members to consider building a chapel. On March 20th, 1816, the Common Council of the Borough received a petition from Thomas Jones, William Lloyd, and John Morris, on behalf of the brotherhood, to build a place of worship on Corporation land lying 'between the dwelling house of Mr. Arnold Evans and Bank Shobart,' a site close to the massive main gateway of the castle. The Council received the petition favourably.

The old animosity against Dissenters was passing away and not a few of the new generation of Council men were themselves Dissenters. A committee recommended the letting of the site for a term of 99 years, at an annual rent of one shilling, and a lease was drawn up in the names of Thomas Humphreys of Dan y Lan in the parish of St. Ishmael and William Mansell of Kidwelly, as trustees for the society.

They were men of substance. Humphreys was a merchant and one of the eleven owners of the brig 'Margaret' built at Kidwelly in 1815 by William Raynor a member of the Council. Mansell, a former Mayor, owned property in the town and shared in the ownership of the sloop 'Eliza.' The chapel (Bethesda), a simple, box-like structure was built in about three months and was ready for worship on June 9th, 1816. Some members of the Council contributed to its cost and housed visitors who came for the opening services. The Welsh Wesleyan ministers present were John Davies, John Jones, Morgan Griffiths and Owen Rees

and representatives from the English circuit also shared in the services. The collection came to almost £20. Bethesda greatly strengthened the cause of Wesleyanism in the town, but the English society's seems for a time to have continued to use its meeting house. Within sixteen years the chapel was greatly in need of renovation.

The opportunity was also taken to extend it and on June 6th, 1832, David Gravel, a shopkeeper, petitioned the Council for a new lease to include more ground. It was granted for a term of 999 years, but the rent was increased to 2/6 a year. The work of rebuilding took about 7 months., two new galleries being added. A total of £51/6/10 was collected in the form of contributions to the cost, Carmarthen giving £12/5/0, Llanelli £3/7/2 and St. Clears £1/19/3.

The re-opening services on December 9th, 1832, were conducted by the Revs. John Davies, William Evans, and John Williams (the First). Two Ministers from the English circuit also took part, one of whom was James Bond, Superintendent at Carmarthen. The other was an old stalwart of Methodism, James Buckley, who was then resident at Llanelli as 'Supernumerary' He had been minister at Carmarthen between 1827 and 1829 and had married the daughter of Henry Child, agent to the Stepney estate, who had built the Llanelli society a chapel in 1792. Within the next decade membership rose to about fifty. One of the most revered of them was William Davies (Africa) who with Edward Jones had pioneered the cause in Carmarthenshire.

He had served as a missionary in Sierra Leone between 1814 and 1818, the first Welsh Wesleyan minister ever to go abroad, but had returned much broken in health and settled in Kidwelly where he died in 1851. The Parish Registers reveal that in 1846 he had married Mary Joseph, also a Wesleyan, who lived in Shoe Lane Street the lower end of the present Ferry Road. A Circuit Plan of 1855/56 shows that Kidwelly was one of eight churches in the Carmarthen (Welsh) circuit, the others being Carmarthen, Llanelli, Penbre, Mynydd Bach, Pontyberem, Llanstephan and St. Clears. Welsh Wesleyan membership throughout the county was 458.

The resident minister, Thomas Morgan, was granted a lease of Bethesda in 1857 but in the following year (August 11th) the property was assigned to ten trustees: William John, D. Jones, D. Davies, J. Harries, David Nicholas, William Thomas, D. Harries, J. Morgan, and Francis Randall. A Trust Schedule of 1859 signed by David Nicholas the Treasurer, who held a private school in the chapel, shows that Bethesda had cost a total of £270, including the rebuilding of 1832, and that the annual income was reckoned to be £10/16/9. There was however a heavy debt and the fabric, according to Nicholas, whose correspondence has survived, was in a 'wretched state.'

There is some evidence that the trustees were searching for another site on which to build a larger chapel, but this project was abandoned, and a fund was started to wipe off the debt and put the building in complete repair. This task was now becoming even more necessary because, as Nicholas stated in a letter of July 1860, the prospects for Wesleyan Methodism in the town were better than they had ever been. His optimism was soundly based. In 1858 the Tin Works, which under the ownership of Crawshay Bailey had been idle for some years, was bought by Jacob Chivers, a Herefordshire man and a Wesleyan Methodist. Chivers

took up residence at Velindre house shortly after his purchase and with his partner Thomas Bright started a programme of expansion and alteration. Steam was introduced in place of water drive.

The old puddling and balling furnaces were augmented by a charcoal forge, with hollow fires and a helve hammer, and two new mills were added to the existing one. Work was re-started in 1860 and the local labour force was increased by the arrival of English workers, chiefly from the Forest of Dean, many of whom were Methodists. At first their spiritual needs were met by the introduction of English services once a quarter but as their numbers, and influence, grew the practice developed of holding these services on alternate Sundays. By 1865 it had become clear that Bethesda was too small to accommodate the membership and Chivers declared his intention of building, at his own expense, a more commodious chapel for the Society.

A group of members, headed by David Nicholas, was however becoming dissatisfied with the arrangement of English and Welsh services on alternate Sunday. They welcomed the spread of English influences, a process already started with the coming of the railway in 1852 and believed that closer contact with the language offered the best opportunity for the encouragement of education in the community and for the widening of its horizons of thought and taste. In May 1866 Nicholas, on behalf of this group, wrote to the Rev. John Philp, Superintendent minister at Carmarthen, informing him that it was the wish of most members to join the English circuit at the next Conference. The needs of those few members who preferred Welsh services were to be met by requesting Conference to invite the resident minister, Thomas Thomas, to join the English circuit and then to station him at Kidwelly.

This compromise undoubtedly met with the approval of Chivers who, according to the Rev. David Young in his 'Origin and History of Methodism in Wales,' had no wish to keep the chapel, he was about to build, exclusively for the use of the English members and those Welsh members who preferred English.

Chivers had already found a site for his chapel. In April 1866 he acquired from the Corporation the freehold of a cattle pound near the town bridge, an area occupied in the early years of the century by William Raynor's ship-building yard. At the same time, he obtained a reversion of the Tin Works lease to further extend his operations. For both transactions he paid £200. A condition of the sale of the freehold of the pound was that he had to re-erect it on another site, at his own expense.

Work started on a small reading room, afterwards the schoolroom, in which services were held during the completion of the chapel. Both were designed by T. W. Angell Evans, a Kidwelly architect, who gave his professional services free. Four years earlier he had finished his own Rumsey House named after his mother's home in Wiltshire. The provision of a small, ornamental tower, and porch seems to have reflected the desire of Evans, a prominent Anglican, to give his creation something of the dignity of a church but, these rather spurious features apart, he succeeded in designing a plain Non-conformist preaching house in which the pulpit was the focal point for the attention of the congregation and the simple structure

and decoration emphasised that its function was to provide shelter for those who gathered, primarily, to hear the Word of God expounded by His appointed preachers.

The construction was carried out by Francis Randall, a member of the Kidwelly Society. The building material consisted of Bodmer's patent stone brick, relieved on the side facing the road with red Gloucester brick. The woodwork was stained and varnished, the roof ceiled between rafters, the iron ties and straining pieces painted blue. There was seating capacity for 200 and a gallery was provided for the choir. The estimated cost was given as £650 and the estimated annual income as £18/10/0, according to the 13th Report of the Wesleyan Chapel Committee. The Dedicatory Services were held on Friday, October 19th, 1866, and on the following Sunday.

The Friday Service was conducted by the Rev. W. R. Rogers, Chairman of the District, and on Sunday by the Revs. Joseph Higham, Thomas Thomas (in Welsh), and John Philp of Carmarthen. Higham, an Englishman, had been appointed resident minister some six weeks before the completion of the chapel and had conducted services in the reading room. Chivers supplied him with a house and paid his salary. His appointment meant, however, that Conference had utterly rejected the compromise put forward by Nicholas and his group whereby the wishes of those who preferred services in Welsh might well have been satisfied by the stationing of Thomas Thomas at Kidwelly. A split now took place in the Society. The older members resented English influences and were unable to give up their loyalties to the Welsh cause and the Welsh circuit to which they had belonged for forty years.

They continued to worship in Bethesda. In some instances, families were divided. But the younger members, including nearly all the officers, threw in their lot with the new chapel and the English cause. According to the Rev. David Young who was stationed in the circuit a few years later, it was a split which left a legacy of bitterness not only in Kidwelly but also in the relations between Welsh and English Wesleyanism throughout Wales. He deplored the clumsy handling of a delicate situation and apportioned the blame equally between Conference, the ministers of the circuit, and the members at Kidwelly. The Schedule Book of the Carmarthen (English) circuit which up to 1869 included Llanelli, Carmarthen, Laugharne, Llanstephan, Pont Amman and Penbre, shows that the society at Kidwelly in the last quarter of 1866 consisted of 10 members with 5 on trial.

The smallness of these numbers may have reflected the immediate consequences of the split, but they rose rapidly reaching 32 by 1868. This increase was probably caused by the arrival of more English workers at the Tin Works. The Llanelli Guardian reported in 1867 that the alterations undertaken by Chivers were almost complete and that over 300 men were likely to be employed. A new trustee body was appointed and assigned the land on which the chapel and schoolroom were built by a Deed of Conveyance dated the 25th of April 1867 and costing £50. The measurements were given as 65 feet 4 inches by 29 feet 7 inches. Shortly afterwards Chivers gave the rest of the ground, although no Deed of Gift was executed until after his death.

His son Thomas, who shared in the management of the Works, was one of the trustees. Four of them were employed at the Tin Works; Joseph Tench (Annealer), Alfred Bright (Mill Wright), William Gravell (Packer), and Richard Randell (Washer). The others were: David

Nicholas, who in 1860 had been appointed the first Head Teacher of the new British and Foreign School, William Morgan one of his assistants, John Morgan a Railway Inspector, Richard Chappell a mason, Thomas Thomas a builder, George Smith an Engineer, and John Hughes a Tailor.

Congregations increased and the chapel began to exert a strong influence in the religious life of the town. As the place of worship of the chief provider of employment in the district, it shared in the esteem with which he was regarded and acquired a certain degree of social prestige enhanced by the attendance of influential people such as Astley Thompson of Glyn Abbey who became High Sheriff of Carmarthenshire in 1872 and who owned several industrial undertakings.

But the health of a Methodist society depended not only upon large congregations meeting for worship on Sundays but also upon nurturing a corporate life of fellowship during the week. One of the means of achieving this fellowship, particularly at this period, was the weekly Class Meeting into which members of the Society were divided under Leaders who were expected to give them instruction and advice on spiritual matters. Membership tickets were issued quarterly, and every registered member was expected to contribute one penny a week towards the general funds of the Society and something extra when he received his Class Ticket.



**TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH, c. 1900**

Membership of the class always carried with it membership of the Society. The first Leaders were David Nicholas and John Morgan, the schoolmasters. The former created a 'juvenile



male' class and in 1872 a 'female' class was formed with Mrs. Shrimpton, wife of the resident minister, as Leader. The subject of instruction was generally the Bible, but Nicholas had an interest in music and trained a chapel choir which became one of the best in the district. He and John Morgan were also in charge of the Sunday School.

The scholars, once a year, went in procession through the town and Nicholas refers to one occasion, a Whit Monday, when 112 took part. Their 'treat' took place frequently at Velindre House where the Chivers family entertained them to tea on the lawn. Afterwards they played games in a field on Broadford farm. On July 18th, 1870, they went to Garreg Lwyd on Pembrey Mountain. One item of expense on this excursion was the purchase of an ensign for 15 shillings. Another means of fostering the corporate life of the Society was a function called a 'Congregational Soirée' the first of which was held on Monday, January 10th, 1867.

The Chairman was the Rev. Joseph Higham who gave an address on 'The essentials of a successful Christ. This was followed by speeches from Jacob and Thomas Chivers, David Nicholas, John Morgan, and George Boulter a lay preacher from Llanelli, who was one of the founder members of the Burry Port chapel in 1866. Miss Chivers and Miss Combie, daughter of Hugh Combie a mining Engineer in Kidwelly, sang solos. The meeting concluded with the presentation to David Nicholas, by members of his Singing and Bible Classes, of eleven, large volumes of Biblical Exegesis, Ecclesiastical History, and Poetry. Other popular functions were the public meetings to promote Home and Foreign Missions which were the subjects of a revived evangelistic fervour in Methodism at this period. Charles Prest, the energetic administrator of the Home Mission Fund, came here in 1870 to advocate the cause. Jacob Chivers participated closely in all the activities of the Society, sharing with his son Thomas the office of Chapel Steward, and later becoming a Circuit Steward. Not infrequently he addressed the trustees on spiritual matters.

He was also active in municipal affairs. He had been elected a Burgess in 1864 and Mayor in the year in which the chapel was built, holding the office for three, consecutive years and afterwards from 1872 to 1874. As Mayor and Justice of the Peace he continued the work of his immediate predecessors, Dr. John George Roberts, and Edmund Blathwayt, in bringing firm and wise rule to a governing body which in 1847 had been bitterly attacked by certain prominent townspeople for gross incompetence and corruption. He contributed too in providing the town with a slaughter house, a Town Hall and a piped water supply. The population of the borough had risen from 1600 in 1861 to about 2000 in 1877 and a period of prosperity began much of which was dependent upon the Tin Works. Wage rates in 1874 showed that School and a Town Councillor, and John Jones of Gwendraeth Stores who was an Alderman at the time of his tragic death in an accident in 1909. The year 1891 was the centenary of Wesley's death and it was commemorated by the proposal to build an extension to the school room which was becoming inadequate to deal with the increase in the number of scholars. It was decided to provide an infant school, a classroom, a vestry, and a kitchen, at an estimated cost of £250.

Subscriptions and a bazaar had already contributed £146 towards this. The ceremony of laying the foundation stone was performed by James Hansard of Llanelli deputising for Alderman David Evans of Llangennech Park who at short notice had been called to London on business connected with the Burry Port and Gwendraeth Valley Railway. A stone was also

laid by Charles Blackmore on behalf of the children. Donations received at the ceremony brought the fund to £190. One for £5 was from Daniel Stephens the owner of the Brick Works and a County Councillor. The Methodist ministers present were Neville Andrews, Chairman of the District, and Arthur Aldington and Thomas Kirkby of the Llanelli circuit. All the other Nonconformist ministers in the town attended: W. C. Jenkins of Capel Sul, John and George Reynolds of the Baptists, and William Peregrine Jones and D. Geler Owen of the Calvinistic Methodists. Under the chairmanship of Captain Daniel Harris, manager of the Tin Works, a public meeting was held in the chapel, at which a string band performed 'Jerusalem my glorious home' and 'Bethlehem.' The chapel choir sang the anthem 'Awake.' The remaining years of the century were, however, to be lean ones in the history of the chapel, and the town.

The very year in which the members had shown their confidence in the future by building the extensions to the school room proved to be a turning point in the fortunes of the British Tin Plate industry. The successful establishment of tinsplate manufacturing in the U.S.A. and the enactment of the Mackinley Tariff in 1891 caused the expansion of the home industry to be halted. Prices began to slump, and production fell off. The effects were soon felt at Kidwelly. In 1895 there was work for only three months. In the following year the Works closed, and the men were paid off. The next fourteen months brought many families to the verge of starvation.

The Mayor, E. V. Davies, formed a Relief Committee and opened a fund to which the 'Western Mail' contributed generously. Many of the skilled workers, despairing of the re-opening of the Works, emigrated to the pioneering tinsplate districts of America, and to Glasgow and Italy. Inevitably, membership of the chapel declined sharply, and the cause was threatened with extinction. By 1899 the annual income, which had averaged £18 in the early nineties, had dropped to £6/5/11d. After three years of complete idleness the Works were purchased by a syndicate headed by John Thomas of Llangennech and a company was formed under the name of the 'Kidwelly Iron, Sheet and Tinsplate Company, Limited.' In 1901 this went into voluntary liquidation and the prospects for the chapel and town became bleak.

Hope revived with the purchase of the Works by the 'Kidwelly Tinsplate Company' in 1904. Within a few years about 350 men were employed. Chapel membership began to rise, the gaps being worthily filled by a group of Pembrokeshire men attracted by the prospects of employment. In 1906 it was possible to carry out a renovation of the building and to install Gas lighting, the whole costing £122. By 1914 the annual income had risen to £34. A substantial number of new trustees was appointed between 1909 and 1914. They were: Richard Randall who with his family had left for Barry during the depression, Arthur John, an Annealer, Isaac James, an Annealer, David Davies, a Tinsplate Boxer, Francis Jones, an Annealer, William Phillips, a Store Keeper, Glyn Jones of Gwendraeth Stores, Frederick Northcote, a Millwright, James Palmer, a Fitter, James Rocke, a Baker, Henry Gibbard, a Collier, Frank Evans, a Furnaceman, William Smith, a Collier, David Nicholas, a Doubler, George Crouchman, a Blacksmith, Samuel Bevan, a Chemical Manufacturer of Llanelli, John W. Jones, a Dentist of Llanelli, James Hansard, a commission Agent of Llanelli, and Robert Loosemore of Kidwelly.

The Jubilee celebration was held in October 1916, when the cause was flourishing. A full account was given in the 'Carmarthen Weekly Reporter' and the names of those who appeared in it deserve to be recalled, particularly those who had striven to keep the cause alive in the years of depression. Arthur John was the secretary of the committee entrusted with the arrangements. The ladies in charge of the refreshments in the school Room were: Mrs. T. C. Thomas, Mrs. T. J. Hughes, Miss Nicholas, Headmistress of the Hillfield Girls School and daughter of David Nicholas, Mrs. T. A. Morris, Mrs. Northcote, Mrs. Ted Gower, Mrs. F. Evans, Mrs. H. Evans, Mrs. I. James, Mrs. W. Williams, Miss Bertha Isaac, and Miss Maria Isaac. A public meeting followed under the chairmanship of R. J. Jones of Carmarthen, a well-known figure in the circuit and a popular local preacher, who had held all the leading offices which a lay man could possibly hold.

The memories of some of the speakers spanned more than fifty years. T. J. Hughes of Swansea recalled Mary Williams the chapel keeper in the eighties, whose devotion to her duties was absolute. 'Woe to anyone who showed any dis-respect to the chapel.' He recalled too that he was one of the members who in the years of depression had to leave the town to obtain employment. T. H. Jones of Sketty recollected the period before the chapel was built, when Welsh and English services were held at Bethesda. James Hansard, an acting circuit

Steward, spoke of the pleasure it had given him to lay the foundation stone of the extension of the school room a quarter of a century earlier. The ministers present were, T. C. Hilliard, Superintendent of the Circuit, and Vincent Taylor of Carmarthen who later became a distinguished Biblical scholar. Nearly all the Nonconformist ministers in the town were present:

William Castellau Jenkins who had come to Capel Sul in the year following the erection of the chapel, and D. Geler Owen, and E. J. Herbert of the Calvinistic Methodists. The latter recited a short poem he had composed for the occasion: 'The temple by the sweeping tide Is beautiful and bright, Eternal glories here abide, And Souls filled with delight.

For fifty years the Gospel Bells Pealed forth the heavenly strain God bless the ringers! who can tell How long they'll ring again.?' This was followed by 'Somewhere a voice is calling,' sung by John Evans of Alstred Street. In the same year, centenary celebrations were held in Bethesda.

The Welsh cause, however, had for some time been steadily declining in spite of valiant attempts to keep it alive. It has now become extinct and the last tangible link with early Wesleyan Methodism in Kidwelly vanished when the chapel was demolished in 1962. The English cause too endured its times of depression between the First and Second World Wars. The Tin Works upon which it relied for a large part of its membership was idle for long periods in the thirties and many workers were unemployed or employed on short time. In 1941 the premises were requisitioned for storage purposes.

The end came in 1946 when the Works were dismantled under the Tinplate Redundancy Scheme and the site offered for sale the following year.

Membership in the post-war years has however, recovered and now stands at 78. Judged by the size of its membership, the cause at Kidwelly has always been a small one but this has been a source of its greatest strength. It has produced a closely knit community with keen loyalties and an intense corporate life.

These characteristics are as strongly marked as they ever were in the past. The formidable financial burden of carrying out a complete renovation of the chapel is being borne with determination and courage. It is a splendid act of faith, a generous gesture to a rising generation which, undoubtedly, will be faced with decisions as profound as any the Methodist Church has ever had to take.

W. H. MORRIS

#### ENGLISH CIRCUIT MINISTERS 1866-1966

(In 1866 Kidwelly was in the Carmarthen and Llanelli Circuit but in 1869 the circuit was divided to form two separate circuits, Kidwelly being placed in the Llanelli circuit. In 1902 the two circuits amalgamated to form the Llanelli and Carmarthen Circuit).

1866 John Philp, Arthur Ransom, Joseph Higham (stationed at Kidwelly).

1867-68 Jabez Palmer, Arthur Ransom, Nehemiah Smith (stationed at Kidwelly). 1869-70 Wm. S. Snow, Jabez Chambers (stationed at Kidwelly).

1871 Edwin Thorley, Jabez Chambers (stationed at Kidwelly).

1872 Robert Bond, Joseph Shrimpton (stationed at Kidwelly).

1873-74 John B. Dyson, Joseph Shrimpton (stationed at Kidwelly).

1875 John B. Dyson, Samuel W. Beard (stationed at Kidwelly). Samuel W. Beard, John Turner.

1877 Samuel W. Beard, Enoch Biscoombe.

1876 1878 Enoch Biscoombe, John Taylor.

1880 Enoch Biscoombe, James Etchells. Nathaniel Stevens, James Etchells.

1879 1881 Nathaniel Stevens, Edward Bowman.

1882 Sampson Cocks, Robert W. Pordige.

1883-84 Sampson Cocks, George Gibson.

1885 George Gibson, James C. Brewer.

1886-87. James C. Brewer, J. Hetherington Cleminson. . Arthur Aldington.

1888-90 Thomas Kirkby, J

1891-93 James Shearman, James Picot.

1894 William Hunter, William May.

1895-96 William Hunter, Reuben R. Simons.

1897-98 Thomas Pinfield, F. H. Hooper Labbett.

1899 Thomas Pinfield, A. Perry Gill.

1900-01 Edward A. Wain, A. Perry Gill.

1902 Edward A. Wain, Edwin Owen, Clement A. West.

1903-04 John Crawshaw, Edwin Owen, William J. Hannam.

1905 John Crawshaw, T. Nevison Phillipson, Thomas Roberts.

1906-07 William J. Britton, T. Nevison Phillipson, Thomas Roberts William J. Britton, John H. Newby, Sydney P. Jacoby.

1909-11 John V. Sutton, John H. Newby, Thomas Roberts.

1908 1912-13 James Bryant, Christopher Whitfield, Robert F. Atkinson.

1914 James Bryant, Vincent Taylor, B.D., Robert F. Atkinson.

1915-17 Thomas C. Hilliard, B.A., Vincent Taylor, B.D., William E. Thomas.

1918 Thomas C. Hilliard, B.A., Ernest W. Fitch, William E. Thomas.  
 1919 J. Albert Dixon, Ernest W. Fitch, John B. Lee.  
 1920 J. Albert Dixon, Garnham G. West, John B. Lee.  
 1921 W. Oliver Lake, Garnham G. West, John B. Lee.  
 1922-23 W. Oliver Lake, David C. Griffiths, G. Rowland Owen.  
 1924 Thomas W. Bray, David C. Griffiths, G. Rowland Owen.  
 1925 Thomas W. Bray, William G. Jones, Harold A. Bishop.  
 1926 1927 Thomas W. Bray, William G. Jones, James L. Smith. R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., William G. Jones, Reginald C. Stonham.  
 1928 R. H. Colwell Ph. B., David J. Williams, B.A., Reginald C. Stonham.  
 1929 R. H. Colwell, Ph.B., David J. Williams, B.A., Thomas Metcalf.  
 1930  
 W. R. Roberts, W. Horace Dowling, John R. Peniston, BA  
 1931 W. R. Roberts, W. Horace Dowling, William J. Roberts.  
 1932-34 W. R. Roberts, J. T. Jones, M.A., William J. Roberts.  
 1935 E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., J. T. Jones, M.A., Goronwy Jones-Davies.  
 1936 E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Goronwy Jones-Davies. 1937-39 E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Wilfred Trinder.  
 1940 E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., W. George Griffiths, Goronwy Jones-Davies.  
 1941  
 E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., Donald A. Davies, E. Clifford Hind.  
 1942-43 E. Ivor Humphreys, B.A., B.D., Donald A. Davies.  
 1944 H. Ingamells Powell, Donald A. Davies.  
 1945-47 H. Ingamells Powell, Ivor Trigg.  
 1948-49 G. Stuart Cann, Donald V. P. White.  
 1950-51 Alexander C. Blain, Donald V. P. White.  
 1952 Alexander C. Blain, Donald A. Davies.  
 1953-55 Donald L. Collings, Donald A. Davies. 1956 Donald L. Collings, Maurice Cartledge, B.D.  
 1957 Harold Evans, Maurice Cartledge, B.D.  
 1958-59 Harold Evans, George Lovell, B.D.  
 1960-61 Wilfrid J. Hill, M.C., B.Sc., H.C.F., George Lovell, B.D. 1962-65 Wilfred J. Hill, M.C., B.Sc., H.C.F., Lewis J. Hayward.  
 1966  
 F. Peacock, Hedley Huxtable.

#### CHURCH OFFICERS 1966

Society Stewards: Mr. G. W. Jones, B.E.M.,  
 Messrs F. Menghetti  
 W. L. Watkins, A. C. Morris.  
 Poor Stewards: Messrs. F. Hart, H. Burt, T. Davies.  
 Trustees' Treasurer: Mrs. A. Lewis.  
 Trustees' Secretary: Mr. A. C. Morris.

Sunday School Superintendent: Miss R. James.  
Organist: Mr. W. L. Watkins.  
Class Leaders: Mrs. A. Lewis, Miss R. James, Miss J. Chubb, Messrs G. W. Jones, W. L. Watkins, A. C. Morris, F. Menghetti.  
Chapel Stewards: Messrs. T. J. Evans, W. Johns.  
Guild Secretaries: Miss J. Chubb, Mr. I. Jones.  
Home Missions Secretary: Mr. H. Burt.

#### TRUSTEES

New Trustees appointed on 16th June 1930-

Thomas Arthur Morris; David Randall Hughes; Edgar Harries Stephens; Gerard Wilfred Jones; Bertha Isaac; Lily Ann Walters.

New Trustees appointed on 13th August 1948: -

Ernest Harold Cole; Thomas John Edwards; Frank Hart; Albert Charles Morris; John Pearce; Beatrice Irene Evans; Maria Isaac; Rosalie Margaret James; Margaret Nicholas Morris.

New Trustees appointed on 22nd October 1957: -

Thomas John Evans; Cromwell George Edwards; Margaret Myra Gravell; William Hill Morris; ris; Elizabeth Ann Lewis; Frederick Menghetti; William L. Watkins; Henry William Burt; David William Johns.

#### Tabernacle Chapel Trimsaran.

The Methodists at its height helped other ministers such as in the village of Trimsaran when help was needed in the formation of the new Tabernacle Chapel in 1872.



Carmarthenshire has played a significant role in Methodism since its inception, leaving an indelible mark on institutions, teachings, hymns, and literature within the

Union, particularly in the South. Giants of the movement such as William Williams, Pantycelyn, Peter Williams, Thomas and David Charles of Carmarthen, John Evans of Llwynffortun, and others have shaped the spiritual landscape of this county. It is as if the words of the prophet resonate: "You are among the least of the counties of Wales, for from you came the princes to tend the people of the Lord."

To trace the origins of the Methodist Cause in Trimsaran, we must rewind to 1872. During a Monthly Meeting at Horeb, Mynydd-y-Garreg, it was decided that Reverends David Lewis of Llanstephan and D. Geler Owen of Kidwelly should explore the possibility of establishing a Methodist Cause in Trimsaran. This decision was prompted by the migration of many individuals from Cardiganshire to the region. Wisely, the decision was made to forge ahead immediately. Initially, preaching occurred in Trilwm, the residence of John and Sarah Phillips, as well as at the Plâs, the home of David and Catherine Williams. Soon after, a 'shed' borrowed from the Trimsaran works company, located behind the Post Office, became the venue for Sunday preaching. This 'shed' hosted excellent meetings, featuring prominent preachers like Rev. T. Jones, M.A., Llanelli, and D. Lloyd Jones, M.A., Llandinam, along with other distinguished personalities delivering powerful sermons.

In 1873, land was secured from the Trimsaran works company on a 99-year lease to build a Methodist Chapel. The Monthly Meeting assumed the responsibility for the debt, given the financial challenges of those times. The historical records in the 'Guardian' detail a Grand Eisteddfod in Kidwelly Castle, where contributions exceeding £30 from the eisteddfod committee were donated to the 'building fund' for the new chapel in Trimsaran. The 'Guardian' also published a warning about 'Tenders' for building the chapel on April 30th, 1874, with interested parties directed to Rev. D.G. Owen, Kidwelly, and T. Morgans, Horeb, Llanelly.

Trimsaran witnessed substantial growth following the establishment of the Coal and Iron Works. The Calvinistic Methodists initiated their Cause in the area approximately eighteen months before this expansion. To celebrate, Mr. Combe, the manager of the coal works, generously provided tea for Sunday School children on the lawn in front of his house. The tea was served in a special manner by Miss Combe and other ladies from Kidwelly. Reverend D.G. Owen of Kidwelly expressed gratitude on behalf of the children, and Mr. Combe responded, expressing joy in witnessing the children's enjoyment. The event marked a positive beginning, with Mr. Combe expressing the hope for future encounters. The children enjoyed themselves, and Mr. D. Nicholas of Kidwelly distributed books to them as a delightful conclusion to the occasion.

While the exact date of the foundation stone laying remains unclear, it is likely that the event took place on July 28th, 1874, with Mrs. P. Daniels of Llandry House, the wife of Mr. Daniels, the coal works manager, having the honour of laying the foundation stone. Mr. T. Morgan of Horeb chaired the proceedings, and Reverend

D.G. Owen of Kidwelly commenced the service with the hymn 'Gosod Babel yng ngwlad Gosen.' Following this, Reverend T. James of Llanelli led a prayer of dedication, and Reverend Joseph Evans of Carmarthen delivered an English address.

Prior to the ceremony, Mr. Joseph Evans of Carmarthen called upon Mrs. P. Daniels to lay the foundation stone. Mr. Daniels, on behalf of his wife, expressed his pleasure in witnessing the construction of two chapels and schools near the works, hopeful that the village would experience moral and spiritual improvement. Gratitude was expressed for the honour bestowed upon Mrs. Daniels.

Speeches were delivered by Reverend O. Edwards, B.A., Llanelli; J. Davies, Llanelli; J. Griffiths, Ferryside; D.G. Owen, Kidwelly; W.D. Williams, Penclawdd; and Mr. Stephens, Brynamman. Following the meeting, a delightful meal was served at Llandry House by Mrs. Daniels.

The initial contractor, Mr. Richard Morgan from Kidwelly, faced an unfortunate incident on April 6th, 1875, when the scaffold broke, resulting in injuries to five men, two of them severe. Mr. Morgans, the contractor, suffered a broken leg, while a young man broke his arm. This led to a temporary suspension of the construction work. Reverend John Griffiths of Ferryside assumed charge of the Chapel, with Mr. G. Morgan from Carmarthen serving as the architect.

Numerous concerts and Eisteddfods were organized in the area to raise funds for the Chapel's construction expenses. Notable events included a concert at Morfa, Kidwelly, on October 16th, 1874, chaired by Mr. J. Dudley Thomas, and another concert at Tabernacle, Porth Tywyn, on October 20th, also for the 'building fund' of Tabernacl, Trimsaran, chaired by Mr. J.K. Hand.

On March 7th, 1876, an Eisteddfod in Trimsaran, chaired by Mr. L. Williams, the coal mine manager, featured Mr. D.T. Morris from Ferryside as the conductor. Literary judges were Mr. D. Richards and Mr. T. Williams, while Mr. W.T. Rees judged the music. A subsequent concert raised £15 for the 'building fund.'

On March 26th and 27th, 1876, a notice in the 'Guardian' proudly announced the opening of Tabernacle, a finely furnished and moderately large chapel built at the cost of £1,100 to meet the needs of the Calvinistic Methodists in Trimsaran. The inaugural events spanned Sunday and Monday, featuring a series of services and sermons.

On Sunday morning, a prayer meeting preceded sermons delivered by Reverend D.G. Owen of Kidwelly and John Griffiths of Glanfferris at 10 o'clock. Afternoon sermons were conducted by Reverend T. James, M.A., Llanelli, and Reverend T. James, Hendre. The evening session saw sermons by Reverend D.G. Owen of Kidwelly, Reverend T. James, Llanelli, and Reverend T. James, Llanelli. Monday morning continued with



sermons by Reverend John Evans of Llanelli and Reverend E. Edmunds of Swansea. In the afternoon, Reverend D.C. Lewis of Llandyfaelog and Reverend J. Lewis of Carmarthen, the latter in English, took the pulpit. Evening sermons were delivered by Reverend J. Lewis of Carmarthen and Reverend E. Edmunds of Swansea. Reverend W.C. Jenkins of Capel Sul, Kidwelly, opened the afternoon service, and Reverend H. Curry of Kidwelly concluded the evening. The opening ceremonies successfully raised over £100.

On August 12th, 1876, a delightful 'Tea Party' unfolded for the Sunday School children in the field adjacent to the Chapel, where the Institute was situated. Nearly a hundred children attended the party, enjoying tea and performances by the choir under the direction of Mr. Phill. Phillips of Trilwm. Mr. Tom Phillips' party presented songs, trios, and anthems. Following the musical festivities, children's games continued until eight o'clock, concluding with the distribution of sweets. Reverend J. Griffiths of Glanfferris, Mr. L. Williams, the works manager, and Mr. Phill. Phillips oversaw the entire event.

In 1877, annual meetings of the Chapel transpired on Sunday and Monday, December 16th and 17th. Sermons were delivered by Reverend W.D. Williams of Penclawdd, Mr. D. Jones of Casllwchwr, J. Lewis of Carmarthen, and E. Jones of Llanpumsaint, the probationary minister of the Church. Collections were conducted at each service, contributing to the ongoing 'building fund.'

The first minister of the Church, Rev. Edward Jones, initially worked as a shepherd at Clun Farm for a brief period. The fortunes of the Cause fluctuated until Rev. D. Geler Owen from Cydweli assumed the Pastorate of Tabernacle. The founding members of the Church included individuals such as Messrs. David Williams, John Phillips, Charles Lloyd, John Jenkins, John Morris, Thomas Beynon, Thomas Jenkins, David Lloyd, David Jones Williams, and John Morgan. The Church thrived under the leadership of Rev. Geler Owen.

In 1907, an organ valued at £50 was acquired for the Chapel, and in 1908, a beautiful and practical vestry costing £350 was constructed by Mr. David Williams and Mr. David Tom Williams. The vestry was inaugurated on Easter Sunday, April 19th, 1908, with sermons delivered by Rev. W.W. Lewis from Caerfyrddin and Mr. Jones from Trefeca College.

By this time, most of the debt had been settled, and the Church's report for 1908 revealed significant achievements. The full membership stood at 101, with 200 attendees during services (including members and children) and 120 participants in the Sunday School. Financial contributions included £40-3s-11d for the Ministry, 10s each for Foreign and Home Missions, and a total of £496-8s-2d for all causes.

Unfortunately, the records from 1908 to 1919 are unclear due to the absence of documentation. Rev. Geler Owen retired from his pastoral duties due to illness, and in October 1919, Rev. Richard Lloyd assumed the Pastorate.

The Establishment Meeting for the new minister occurred on the afternoon and evening of Tuesday, November 25th, 1919. The service was conducted by various individuals, including Rev. Thomas Jones from Rhostyllen, D. Geler Owen, E.J. Herbert, D.E. Jones, B.A., J. Owen Jones, H. Pryse Jones, Mr. Jones from Rheoboth, Mr. Williams from Carway, and Mr. Jones from Cydweli, among others. Rev. Richard Lloyd, who also served as the Moderator of the Church at the time, followed the predecessors whose names are not specified in the provided text.

Mr. David Williams of New Houses, Mr. David Tom Williams of Gwynfryn, Mr. Thomas Jenkins of Pleasant View, Mr. Thomas Beynon of Clun Farm, Mr. John Phillips of River's Edge, and Mr. Thomas Morris of London House were notable figures recorded by Mr. Lloyd, responsible for documenting details such as the baptized children, those received into communion, marriages, and burials in the cemetery. Due to the extensive nature of these records, only key information is highlighted.

On December 25th, 1919, a women's choir, led by Mr. Thomas Jenkins, performed the cantata 'Hosanna'r plant,' followed by a repeat performance in January 1920, establishing a tradition that continued for years. Some of the notable cantatas included 'Shepherds of Bethlehem,' 'Rejoice in the Lord,' 'Twelfth Mass,' and 'The City of God.' In 1924, there was a departure from the Christmas cantata tradition, with Mr. T.J. Jenkins's Sons' Party presenting a concert presided over by Dr. Harvey and Rev. G. Lewis, B.A. In 1929, Mr. Haydn Thomas A.T.C.L. assumed the role of conductor for the Christmas concert, featuring the cantata 'Ymgom yr Adar,' with Mr. T.J. Jenkins's son serving as the accompanist.

On September 26th, 1920, new leaders were appointed, including Mr. Archie Griffiths, David Jenkins, William Lodwick, Benjamin Lloyd, Thomas Gomer Lloyd, and David Thomas. Notably, Mr. Benjamin Lloyd declined the position of leader. The list of church officers as of January 1st, 1921, included:

- Leaders: Mr. Thomas Beynon, Mr. John Phillips
- Clerk of the Seats: Mr. David Tom Williams
- Church Clerk: Mr. Thomas Jenkins
- Choir Leader: Mr. Thomas Morris
- Treasurer: Mr. David Thomas
- Order of Service Supervisor: Mr. William Lodwick
- Fellowship Collections Secretary: Mr. David Jenkins
- Caretaker of the Sacraments: Mr. Thomas Gomer Lloyd
- Caretaker of the Ministry's Envelopes: Mr. Archie Griffiths

- Cemetery Supervisor: Mr. Thomas Morris

Other church officers listed were Mr. John Lloyd for Seats and Mr. Haydn Thomas as Organist. Sunday School officers included Mr. Thomas Williams as Supervisor, Mr. Sidney Lewis Williams as Secretary, and Mr. Sidney Griffiths as Treasurer.

On February 26th, 1923, a tragic incident occurred at Trimsaran Colliery, casting a pall of sorrow over the community. As the men were ascending to the surface, the shackles broke, causing the carriage to plummet. In a matter of seconds, ten lives were lost, and fifty others were injured. Among those from Tabernacle Church, Mr. William Jenkins of 'Derlwyn,' aged 44, and Mr. David Tom Davies, son of William and Sarah Davies of New Houses, aged 19, tragically lost their lives. The entire area was shrouded in mourning and sadness, with cherished homes deeply affected by the weight of the tragedy.

On January 27th, 1924, a Savings Bank was established for the Sunday School, and the following officers were elected: Mr. David Charles Lloyd as Secretary, Mr. Gwilym Morris as Treasurer, and Mr. T. Jenkins and Sidney Griffiths as Trustees.

Another noteworthy event was the departure of Mr. Joseph John Joseph, 'Tý'r Onên,' to the United States of America on May 9th, 1927. A Farewell Meeting held at The Tabernacle, presided over by the Pastor, featured addresses by Thomas Jenkins, David Thomas, David Evans, Archie Griffiths, and William Reynolds. Gifts were presented on behalf of the Sunday School, including a Bible from Mr. Sidney Jenkins and a suitcase from Mr. David John Lodwick. Mr. Joseph and his party sailed from Southampton on Tuesday, May 10th, carrying the best wishes of all their friends.

A significant milestone in the history of The Tabernacle was reached on Sunday, December 23rd, 1928, with the installation of electric light in the Chapel for the first time. This marked a notable improvement in the facilities of the church.

On May 5th, 1929, a new set of leaders was appointed, including Messrs. Sidney Griffiths, Thomas Williams, Hector Jenkins, Samuel Lloyd, W.G. Nicholas, John Evans, and Sidney Jenkins. However, Mr. Sidney Jenkins declined the appointment. This change in leadership marked a transition in the ongoing history of The Tabernacle.

Another significant chapter concluded in 1930 when a letter from the minister, Rev. Richard Lloyd, announced his acceptance of a 'calling' to the Peel Road Church in Bootle, Liverpool. He conveyed that he would be concluding his pastoral connection with The Tabernacle at the end of June. In honour of Rev. Richard Lloyd and his wife, a farewell meeting was conducted, presided over by Mr. Thomas Jenkins of Pleasant View. The Church presented a gift to the minister, and Mrs. Lloyd received a 'pearl necklace' from her Sunday School class. As the minister also served as the Chapel secretary, a new secretary needed to be appointed. On August 3rd, Mr. Samuel Lloyd

was selected to fill this role. This period marked a time of transition and change for The Tabernacle congregation.

In August 1930, a decision was made to enhance the beauty of the Chapel through the installation of new windows, ceiling plastering, and overall painting. The culmination of these renovations and cleaning efforts was marked by an inaugural service on October 16th, 1932. Brother Mr. Phill. Phillips of Bryncaerau opened the door, and after an address by Chairman Rev. D.E. Jones of Pembrey, the history of the Achos's beginning was recounted by the oldest member, Mr. Phill. Phillips. In the evening, Rev. Robert Ellis of Tycroes delivered a lecture on the subject 'Zion's Harp.' Rev. Robert Ellis preached both in the morning and evening, while Rev. Morgan Jones of Saron Furnace spoke in the afternoon. A special service on Monday night featured preaching by Rev. D. Rees Jones and Idwal Jones.

In 1931, the Education Committee in Carmarthen applied to borrow the vestry and furnishings for holding a daytime class. The Tabernacle hosted a daytime class for an extended period, with a weekly rent of 15s.

The year 1934 marked the conclusion of an era when Mr. D.T. Williams was released from his position as the Church secretary after serving in that role for 32 years. Mr. Hector Jenkins was chosen to succeed him.

On May 19th, 1935, a memorial service was held for the late Mr. Thomas Jenkins of Pleasant View, addressed by Rev. Christmas Lloyd. In January 1938, a fund was initiated to acquire a new organ, with contributions collected over the following years.

A new phase in The Tabernacle's history commenced in June 1939. The unanimous decision was made to arrange the 'calling' of a new Pastor after being without one for nine years. On July 4th, Mr. William Edwards of Penbrey, representing the Cydweli and Henaduriaeth Sunday School in South Carmarthen, conveyed the voice of the Church regarding the pastoral call. A pastoral committee was formed. On December 31st, 1939, it was decided to conclude having more probationary preachers and to present the names of the four individuals on probation before the Church. These four were Messrs. E.J. Evans, J.M. Mathias, O.J. Evans, and Edward Harries.

In March 1940, Mr. Edward Harries accepted the 'call' to be the minister of The Tabernacle, and the establishment meetings were held on September 19th, 1940. The meetings were chaired by Rev. D.E. Jones, B.A., Penbrey, and the order of the meetings was as follows:

1. Thursday afternoon at 2 o'clock:

- Reading and prayer by Rev. J.V. Thomas, Glanfferi.
- Church history presented by Mr. A.J. Griffiths, Tegfan.

- History of the call presented by Mr. T.G. Lloyd, Doncen, Secretary.
- Representatives from Talsarn Church (Mr. David Evans, Pantglas, Manordeilo), North Carmarthen Association (Rev. Evan Williams, M.A., B.D., Pantglas, Manordeilo, and Mr. David Evans, Pantglas, Manordeilo), and students (Mr. Glanffrwd Harry, Penbre).
- Greetings from South Carmarthen Association by Mr. Ivor Evans, Llanstephen (President) and Rev. W.H. Williams, Llandyfaelog (Secretary).
- Speeches on behalf of churches in the area by Rev. Robert Jones, Sardis, Mr. James Morris, Noddfa, Rev. T.J. Jones, B.A., Llandry.
- Speeches on behalf of class churches by Rev. E.J. Herbert, Cydweli, and Mr. William Edwards, Penbre.

2. Thursday evening at 6 o'clock:

- Preaching service where Rev. J.C. Lloyd, Llanstephen, and Rev. M.P. Morgan, Blaenannerch, preached.

Mr. Harries was ordained in a Carmarthen session in November 1940.

In 1942, Mr. Hector Jenkins requested to be released from his position as Secretary, and Mr. T.G. Lloyd was chosen as his successor.

The effort to collect funds for the 'Organ Fund' concluded in 1949, resulting in the acquisition of a new pipe organ for The Tabernacle. The organ was inaugurated by Mr. D.J. Evans, Llanelli, who delivered an excellent recital.

In 1951, new deacons were chosen: Mr. W.E. Charles, Daniel Evans, Thomas John Jenkins, David Charles Lloyd, and J.J. Thomas. That same year, Mr. Sidney Griffith retired as Treasurer, and Mr. J.J. Thomas was appointed to replace him.

Moving forward to 1952, a decision was made to paint and beautify the Chapel. During the opening meetings in October 1952, the honor of opening the door was given to Mr. David Thomas. The festival was preached by Rev. D.R. Beynon and Rev. L. Jones.

In 1955, a request was received from the B.B.C. to record the Sanctuary's Singing in July, and the broadcast took place in August. More deacons had to be chosen in 1961. In July, five brothers were selected: Mr. Lennard Evans, Gwilym Griffiths, Rees John, Haydn Thomas, and Sidney Lewis Williams. Then, on December 1st, 1963, Mr. T.G. Lloyd retired as the Secretary of the Chapel, and Mr. H.W. Jenkins was appointed as the secretary, with Mr. Samuel Lloyd serving as the Publications Secretary. Mr. Thomas Gomer Lloyd had been the Publications Secretary since 1929 and the General Secretary since 1942.

During the Christmas season of 1966, Mr. Haydn Thomas A.T.C.L. passed away after providing consistent service as an organist for about 50 years. Mrs. B.M. Harries was chosen as the Chapel's organist, with Mrs. Heather Killa as the assistant organist. A new heater was installed in the Chapel in the summer of 1967, and in March 1968, new deacons were chosen: Messrs. Ronald Davies, Wynn Jenkins, James Williams, and Cyril Phillips. Only Mr. Cyril Phillips accepted the call. Therefore, more deacons were chosen in March 1969, namely, Messrs. Hywel Daniels, D.J. Lodwick, and Joseph Lloyd.

On April 5th, 1970, Mr. Hywel Daniels was chosen as the Church Treasurer following the death of Mr. J.J. Thomas, who had served in that role for 19 years. In December 1972, a testimonial was given to Mr. T.J. Jenkins for his 37 years of service as the song leader, and Miss Olive Eynon was chosen to replace him.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, in March 1975, the beloved minister Rev. Edward Harries, B.A., B.D., passed away. Mr. Harries had been a faithful minister for 35 years, and his loss was deeply felt. Mr. Harries had been looking forward to the Chapel's Centenary in 1976 and had started compiling the Church's history, but unfortunately, he did not live to see it. He received a respectful funeral due to the high regard he held in the area.

With the need for another minister and due to a shortage of ministers, the Chapel united with Tabernacl, Pontiets, and Soar, Pontyberem. A deacons' committee was established for the three Churches, and it was decided to issue a call to Mr. W.J. Ambrose, who was completing his studies at the college. The inaugural meetings were held at Y Tabernacl, Trimsaran, on Wednesday, October 26th, 1977. The President was Rev. Samuel Davies, Carmarthen. The service was taken by Revs. Gwyn Davies Jones, Richard Hughes, Wyndham Williams, B.A. B.D., Gareth Davies, Dan Davies, B.A., and Messrs. Dyfrig Jones, Elwyn Evans, W.O. Williams, Samuel Lloyd, Kenneth Treharne, and Goronwy Jones. In the evening, Rev. T. Arwyn Thomas, Haverfordwest, preached. Mr. Ambrose was ordained at a session in Leytonstone, London, in the same year. The following year, new deacons were chosen: Messrs. Alun Killa, David Daniels, Meirion Davies, and John Williams. However, Mr. John Williams did not accept the call.

Capel Sul Welsh Independent Chapel



Capel Sul Congregational Chapel which once stood in Ferry Road.  
The chapel was built in 1785 and was demolished around 1930.  
The chapel house continued to be used as a domestic dwelling until it too was  
demolished in the 1960s.



The history of Capel Sul Chapel in Kidwelly unfolds as a narrative woven through time, marked by successive constructions and architectural transformations. Initially erected in 1787, the chapel underwent a process of rebuilding and enlargement in 1831, adopting the Sub-Classical style with a distinctive square plan.

In a remarkable turn of events, a new chapter in the chapel's architectural saga unfolded in 1862. At this time, a structure named Rumsey House emerged, crafted by the skilled hands of architect T.W.A. Evans in the elegant Italianate style. However, the evolution did not cease there. In 1924-6, under the design expertise of J Harold Morgan of Carmarthen, Rumsey House underwent a metamorphosis, being converted into a chapel. This conversion resulted in the relocation of the chapel to the first floor, above the schoolroom, while the original Capel Sul was sadly demolished.



85B. Capel Sul. Ind. Kidwelly. 1987.

The architectural essence of Capel Sul Chapel, with its Italianate influences, reflects the aesthetic finesse of T.W.A. Evans and J Harold Morgan. The chapel's elevated position on the first floor adds a unique dimension to its presence, creating a space of reverence above the remnants of the demolished Capel Sul. The graveyard, a silent witness to the chapel's evolution, stands as a testament to the passage of time and the enduring spirit of this sacred site.





In summary, Capel Sul Chapel in Kidwelly narrates a compelling story of architectural evolution, from its humble beginnings in 1787 to the Italianate grandeur of Rumsey House, ultimately transformed into a chapel by J Harold Morgan. The blend of styles and the architectural transitions encapsulate the rich history of this site, where the graveyard remains as a poignant reminder of the enduring legacy of Capel Sul Chapel.

Capel Sul Memorials. <http://tinyurl.com/CapelSul-Memorials>

### **Siloam Baptist Church Ministers: A Legacy of Faith**

The Baptist movement in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, has played a significant and enduring role in shaping the religious, cultural, and social landscape of the community. The establishment of Siloam Chapel in 1821, followed by its reconstruction in 1892, stands as a testament to the growing influence and importance of the Baptist community in the town.

Under the ministry of Rev. H. R. Jones, the congregation at Siloam Chapel experienced both numerical and spiritual growth. From a membership of 104 in 1902, the number of worshippers had grown to 200 by 1935. The impact extended beyond mere numbers, as the ordination of local individuals into the Ministry, including figures like Rev. Ben Jones, Rev. Richard Vaughan Jones, and Rev. Glyn Williams, showcased the movement's influence on leadership development and the spread of its teachings.

Siloam Chapel, as a central institution for the Baptist community, has likely played a pivotal role in the cultural and social life of Kidwelly. Beyond its role as a place of worship, the chapel may have been a hub for community gatherings, cultural events, educational initiatives, and social outreach activities.

Family ties within the Baptist movement, exemplified by the active involvement of the Reynolds family in ministry, underscore the importance of generational commitment and community cohesion. These family connections contribute to a sense of continuity and shared identity within the Baptist community.

The continued presence of Siloam Chapel and its ongoing role in the community underscore the lasting impact of the Baptist movement in Kidwelly. The chapel serves as a guardian of Baptist traditions, fostering a sense of legacy that enriches the broader history of Carmarthenshire. In conclusion, the Baptist movement in Kidwelly has left an indelible imprint, shaped the lives of its members and contributed significantly to the town's historical and cultural tapestry.

The history of Siloam Chapel in Kidwelly is intricately woven with the spiritual tapestry of, whose presence and influence as ministers have left an indelible mark on the town's religious landscape.

**Rev. John Reynolds (1798–1878):** The spiritual journey commenced with the esteemed Rev. John Reynolds, born in Kidwelly in 1798. A dedicated minister, he served as a beacon of faith in Siloam Baptist Church. Rev. John Reynolds married Anne Henshaw Reynolds in 1816, and together they raised five children over 14 years. His long and impactful life concluded on 22nd November 1878 in Kidwelly.

Rev. John Reynolds, Baptist Minister to Kidwelly, passionately preached the Gospel of Christ for 60 years. He served as the pastor of Siloam for 44 years and the church at Ferry side for 35 years.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262908823/john-reynolds>

**Rev. George Reynolds (1824–1895):** Continuing the family legacy, two of Rev. John Reynolds' sons followed in their father's footsteps. Notably, Rev. George Reynolds, born in 1824, emerged as a prominent figure in the Siloam Baptist Church. His devotion to ministry was matched only by his commitment to family. George married Margaret Hughes in 1845 and later Mary Edwards Reynolds, with whom he had ten children. Reverend George Reynolds passed away on 29th March 1895, leaving behind a lasting impact on the community.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262909501/george-reynolds>

**Rev George Reynolds**



**Mary Edwards Reynolds**



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262909637/mary-reynolds>

A glimpse into his final moments reveals his unwavering faith, captured in the poignant verses written by him at the time of his passing. Despite a prolonged illness, his spirit remained resilient, finding solace in the lyrics penned during his Room of Affliction.

# PENILLION O YSTAFELL CYSTUDD

GAN Y DIWEDDAR

## BARC. GEORGE REYNOLDS, CYDWELI.

Bu farw Mawrth 29ain, 1895, yn 71 oed. Claddwyd ef yn Mynwent Siloam Ebrill 2il, 1895.

*Yn ei gystudd hir a phoenus, a phan wedi colli archwaeth at fwydydd, methodd ddal yr olyyfa a hir garai mewn iechyd, sef, ei deulu lluosog ar adeg lon y Nadolig wrth y bwrdd gartref. Taflodd gadach dros ei wyneb, a chanodd fel y canlyn.—TALMAI.*

'R WY'N cau fy llygaid rhag i'm weid  
Amrywiol fwydydd bras,  
Rhag imi gael fy nhentio'n awr  
I brofi peth o'u blas.

Pe gwnawn ond profi gronyn bach  
O'r bwydydd mwyaf pur,  
Nid hir y buaswn cyn cael poen,  
A phrofi brathol gur.

Wrth feddwl am fy nghyflwr tlawd  
'Rwy'n wylo lawer tro,  
Am na chawn brofi hyfryd flas  
Danteithion bras fy mro.

Mae'm teulu wrth y bwrdd yn iach,  
Mewn mwyniant eithaf llon,  
A minau'n gorfod cadw draw—  
O ! dyma loes i'm bron.

Pe cawn wybodaeth gan ryw un  
Am gyffér i'm iachau,  
Mi roddwn iddo glod didwyll  
Tra'm dyddiau yn parhau.

Tystiolaeth y meddygon oll  
Nad oes dim ganddynt hwy  
I wella un sydd 'nawr mor wan,  
Ac i iachau fy nghlwy'.

Gan fod meddygon enwog ryw  
Mor eiddil a diwerth,  
Mi drof fy ngwyneb at fy Nuw  
Am adnewyddiad nerth.

Cydweli, Nadolig, 1894.

"O ! Iesu mawr, y Meddyg gwell"  
Na holl feddygon llawr,  
Rho imi brawf ar hyn o bryd  
O'th Ddwyfol allu mawr.

"Os ewyllysi, gelli Di"  
Fy ngwella'n rhwydd a rhad ;  
"O ! d'wed y gair," a digon yw,  
Ac yna caf iachad.

Ond os na cha' fy nghorph iachad  
Yr ochr hon i'r bedd,  
O ! Dduw, cymhwysa'm, enaid tlawd  
I fyn'd i wlad yr hedd.

Lle nad oes gofid, poen, na chur,  
Yn blino neb o'r saint,  
Ond moli'r Oen ag uchel lef  
Am eu rhagorol fraint.

Henffych i'r dydd y bydd y corph  
A'r enaid byth yn rhydd  
Oddiwrth effeithiau pechod blin—  
O ! hyfryd, ddedwydd ddydd.

Fe fydd rhyw dyrfa sawr ddirif  
Yn iach, heb friw na phoen,  
Ac wedi 'u gwneud yn berffaith lan  
Drwy rinwedd gwaed yr Oen.

GEORGE REYNOLDS.

### Poems from the Room of Affliction

By the Late Respected George Reynolds, Conversation

George Reynolds passed away on March 29th, 1895, at the age of 71, and found his final resting place in Siloam Cemetery on April 2nd, 1895.

In the throes of a prolonged and painful illness, during a time when his appetite had waned, George lamented the inability to partake in the cherished view he once enjoyed during the

Christmas festivities with his large family gathered around the table at home. In a poignant moment, he covered his face with a cloth and expressed his feelings through song, which follows:

*TALMAI, I close my eyes so that I don't see various coarse foods, lest I be tempted now to experience some of their taste.*

*If we only tried a small particle of the purest foods, it wouldn't be long before I had pain, and experienced a bitter bite.*

*When I think of my poor state I weep many times, Because I don't get to experience the wonderful taste of my heart's rich delicacies.*

*My family at the table is healthy, In quite happy enjoyment, And I have to stay away- Oh! this hurt my breast.*

*If we should receive information from someone for the purpose of healing me, I would give him sincere credit While my days continue.*

*The testimony of all the doctors That they have nothing to heal one who is 'now so weak, and to heal my disease'.*

*Since some famous doctors are so frail and useless, I turn my face to my God for renewed strength.*

*Kidwelly, Christmas, 1894.*

"Oh! Great Jesus, the better Doctor  
Than all the floor doctors,  
Give me proof right now  
Of your great Divine power.

"If you will, you can"  
Heal me easily and cheaply;  
"Oh! the word says," and that's enough,  
And then I will be healed.

But if my body does not heal  
This side of the grave,  
Oh! God, enable my poor soul to go to the land of peace.

Where there is no sorrow, pain, or beating,  
Tires any of the saints,  
But praise the Lamb with a loud voice  
For their excellent privilege.

Hail to the day when the body and the soul will never be free  
From the effects of grievous sin-  
Oh! lovely, happy day.

There will be a large numberless crowd  
Healthy, without wound or pain,  
And made perfect through the virtue of the blood of the Lamb. *GEORGE REYNOLDS.*

**Rev. John Reynolds (1828–1899):** Born in 1828 in Kidwelly, Carmarthenshire, John Reynolds was the son of John and Ann. His father, John, was 30, and his mother, Ann, was 36 at the time of his birth. In April 1849, he married Anne Morris in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, and they were blessed with six children during their marriage.

John Reynolds, a devoted minister, served as a beacon of faith at Siloam Church for 17 years. Following the passing of his father in 1878, he shouldered the responsibility of ministry for several years, not only at Siloam Church but also at Baptist churches in the vicinity. His unwavering commitment to his faith and community marked him as a pillar of strength.

He departed on November 21, 1899, in Carmarthenshire, leaving behind a legacy of dedicated service. The following words, penned in a moment of reflection, capture the essence of his enduring faith:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262993328/john-reynolds>

**Rev. John Reynolds Memorial Inscription:**

"REV JOHN REYNOLDS SERVED AS A MINISTER AT  
SILOAM CHURCH FOR 17 YEARS.  
AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH IN 1878,  
HE TOOK ON THE MINISTRY FOR SEVERAL YEARS AT  
BAPTIST CHURCHES IN THE VICINITY AND ALSO  
AT THIS CHURCH UNTIL HIS PASSING.  
HE DEPARTED ON NOVEMBER 21, 1899,  
AT THE AGE OF 71.  
'THIS HOUR, O LORD, IS THE LORD'S,  
THE BLESSING IN A SPECIAL WAY,  
OF RECALLING TO MEMORY,  
THE DEAR ONES OF THE PAST  
WHOSE EYES SAW THY SALVATION.  
OH, FOR A FRIEND LIKE JESUS TO STAND BY ME  
WHEN I'M IN NEED.  
IN THE GOLDEN SWEET BY AND BY,  
HE WILL BE MY GUIDE TO SING HIS PRAISES ETERNALLY.'"



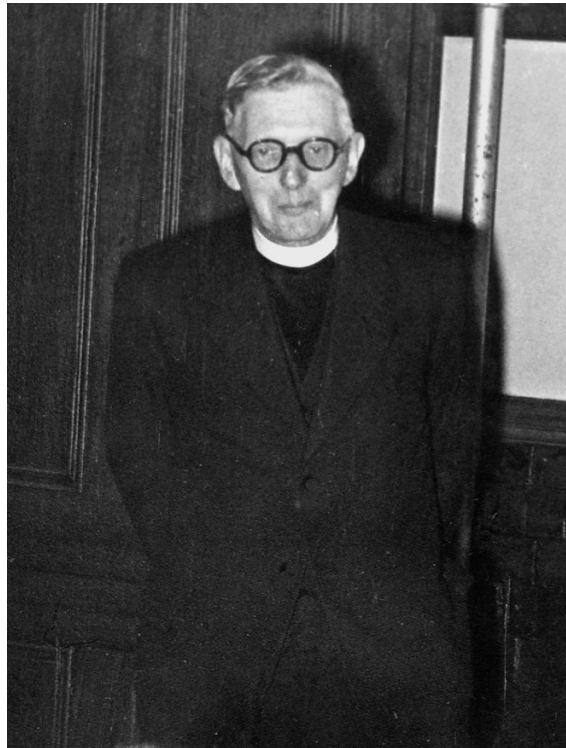
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262993328/john-reynolds>

**Rev. Hugh Robert Jones (1875–1939):** Born in Carnarvon in 1875, Hugh Robert Jones, son of Morgan and Margaret, married Mary Vaughan in 1900. With six children over 14 years, he passed away in 1939 in Kidwelly at the age of 64.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262825121/hugh-roberts-jones>

**Rev. Henry Mostyn Jones (1883–1962):** Born on 10 May 1883 in Ffynnongroyw, Holywell, Flintshire, Rev. Henry Mostyn Jones, son of Evan and Jane, had a son and a daughter with **Emily Kate Reynolds** the daughter of the **Rev George Reynolds (1823 – 1895)**. His ministry concluded on 13 December 1962 at the age of 79.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/262958601/henry-mostyn-jones>



These ministers, through their dedication and spiritual leadership, have left an enduring legacy at Siloam Chapel, shaping the religious fabric of Kidwelly.

### **Memorials**

The documentation of memorials at Siloam Cemetery is an ongoing project, accessible through the following link. Clicking will direct you to the Findagrave website, where names have been preserved for posterity. This resource is invaluable for present and future genealogists seeking information.

<http://tinyurl.com/Siloam-Cemetery-Memorials>



### **LOCAL NONCONFORMIST CHAPELS.**

CAPEL Sul (Independent, originally Presbyterian) was erected in 1785 on a site granted by David Jones of Pistyllgwyn, under a lease for 999 years at the nominal rent of one shilling per year. The interior underwent renovations in 1873 and 1905.

LIST OF MINISTERS 1794-1906:

- David Davies
- John Abel (1794)
- David Jones (1824)
- William Castellau Jenkins (1867)

Morfa Chapel (Calvinistic Methodist) was built in 1830 on a site granted by the Municipal Corporation of Kidwelly under a lease for 999 years at the annual rent of 5/-. It replaced a previous building where the Calvinistic Methodists had worshipped since 1786. Morfa Chapel was rebuilt and enlarged in 1907.

LIST OF MINISTERS:

- David Bowen (1832-52)
- David Griffiths
- John Evans (1860)
- Thomas Lloyd (1869)
- David Geler Owen (1871)
- William Peregrine Jones (1889)
- William Whitlocke Lewis (1906)

Bethesda Chapel (Welsh Wesleyan) was built in 1816 on land granted by Earl Cawdor and the Municipal Corporation of Kidwelly under concurrent leases for 999 years at the annual rents of 2/6. It was rebuilt in 1832 and renovated in 1895.

LIST OF MINISTERS:

- No return available.

Siloam Chapel (Baptist) was erected in 1821 and rebuilt in 1892.

LIST OF MINISTERS:

- John Reynolds (1834)
- George Reynolds (1860, Joint)
- John Reynolds (1861)
- Hugh Robert Jones (1902)

Horeb Chapel (Calvinistic Methodist) was built in 1843 on land granted by the Municipal Corporation of Kidwelly under a lease for 999 years at the nominal rent of one shilling per year. It was enlarged in 1873, with added interior fittings.

LIST OF MINISTERS:

- Thomas Lloyd (1869)
- David Geler Owen (1871)

English Wesleyan Chapel was built and presented to the Wesleyan Conference by Mr. Jacob Chivers in 1866.

LIST OF RESIDENT MINISTERS:

- Joseph Wigham (1866)
- Nehemiah Smith (1867-8)
- Jabez Chambers (1869-71)
- Joseph Shrimpton (1872-4)
- Samuel W. Beard (1875)

## *The Llandyry Church Cemetery Journey.*

Llandyry Church, steeped in the annals of medieval history, stands as a testament to the spiritual legacy of times long past. The exact origin of its dedication remains veiled in the mists of time, lending an air of mystery to its venerable presence. Nestled within an irregularly shaped churchyard, this hallowed edifice maintains a profound connection with the nearby remnants of Llandyrri Chapel, a mere 60 meters to the south-east. The echoes of devotion still reverberate through this chapel of ease once a spiritual refuge and known to have provided solace until at least 1888.

This architectural masterpiece is not merely a building; it's a living relic, bearing the distinction of a Grade II listing. Fashioned from limestone rubble adorned with the elegance of bath stone dressings, its form embraces a cruciform layout that exudes an aura of significance. The very arrangement of its structure tells a story — a two-bayed chancel, a resplendent five-bayed nave, the welcoming enclave of a south porch, a modest single-bayed vestry (nestled north of the chancel's western bay), and the sentinel-like presence of a west bellcote.

Elements of antiquity intertwine with the fabric of this church, whispering tales of bygone eras. The chancel, nave, and transepts stand as testaments to medieval craftsmanship. The chancel and nave, their origins veiled in the mists of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, evoke a sense of reverence. The transepts, added with the passage of time during the fifteenth or sixteenth century, bear the weight of centuries in their stone walls.

A journey through its sacred confines reveals hidden treasures. A simple yet enigmatic square aumbry nestled north of the altar hints at its medieval origins. An ancient northern side window bears witness to the passage of countless seasons. The two-light east window opening, though evoking medieval whispers, wears the visage of 1876. The south door, adorned with a two-centred surround, possibly an echo of restored medieval craftsmanship, beckons the faithful with an air of solemnity.

Restoration, a testament to the dedication of those who came before, weaves another chapter into the narrative. Around 1850, the hands of Mason and Elkington, overseers of the Bury Port Copper Works, brought renewal to these hallowed stones. Yet, the mists of history were not content, and 1876 saw the addition of the vestry and the south porch, as well as a renewal of the roof's embrace. The side wall windows, a dance between single and double lancets,

emerged during this period, etching their mark into the architecture. The bellcote, its tale traced to that era (undeniably present by 1898), may have been a silent witness to these restorative endeavours. Within the nave, the stalls, pews, and wainscot dado, each with its own story, stand as living witnesses to the care bestowed upon this sacred abode.

The march of time continued, as did the legacy of devotion. The octagonal font, a symbol of spiritual rebirth, found its place in the embrace of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. A modernity of sorts, manifested in the mid-twentieth century, introduced the unobtrusive comfort of a hot water system, a juxtaposition of contemporary convenience against the backdrop of tradition.

The narrative of Llandyry Church expands even into the twentieth century, as the west end of the nave stretched its reach in 1907. Here, a three-light traceried west window took its place, a beacon of illumination both metaphorical and literal. The oak altar table, born of the post-war year of 1946, and the oak pulpit, a creation etched in the annals of 1966, stand as markers of evolving reverence and the unending march of time.

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### **The Cemetery**



What an incredible journey this has turned out to be! I've been immersed in a world of discovery and connection, all centered around a local gem – the Llandyry church. It's a place where generations of my family have found their final resting spots. A personal mission to uncover these ties has led me down an unexpected path.

As I've frequented the church in my pursuit to locate and document each family member's grave, fate threw me a chance meeting with a remarkable individual – Declan Owens, the Llandyry Church Warden. Conversations flowed, and I learned that he was deeply involved in a project to meticulously document all those laid to rest in the church cemetery. The dedication to this endeavour was evident in the beautifully maintained grounds that cradled the history of countless souls.

Eager to contribute, I eagerly delved into their existing documentation plan. However, it soon became clear that this system was not as comprehensive and up to date as it needed to be, especially with the constant addition of new graves. Recognizing an opportunity to lend my expertise, I proposed a more efficient approach to memorial documentation.

In the span of just a week, I crafted a new system. Armed with a Word document and grid reference numbers, I meticulously recorded each memorial's details, capturing their essence through photographs of the weathered gravestones. Then, a seamless transition to modern technology occurred as I harnessed the power of Google Lens to transcribe the scanned text information onto the Findagrave Cemetery site. This dynamic duo of Word and Lens, further enriched by Google Translate, bridged the language gap, allowing a wider audience to appreciate the inscriptions, many of which were in Welsh.

This endeavour has sparked an unexpected joy within me. Beyond the act of documentation, it's the harmonious fusion of tradition and technology that fuels my enthusiasm. My system guarantees accuracy, with any discrepancies promptly rectified and preserved. The magnitude of completing this feat is not lost on me; a swell of pride accompanies each entry made.

Although the task ahead is formidable and demanding, I embrace every step with open arms. Yet, I yearn for a local ally, someone well-versed in the intricacies of the app, who could expedite the process. Currently, my routine includes on-site visits to acquire GPS coordinates, ensuring seamless integration with the larger project's framework.

The potential impact of this collective effort is deeply stirring. The preservation of the church's history feels like a sacred duty, and I'm humbled to play a part. With unwavering dedication, I press on, anticipating the day when this project reaches its culmination. In my record-keeping, I've also thoughtfully logged the locations of unmarked graves, providing reference points for the future.

Today has been especially profound. My collaboration with Declan Owens in the Llandry Cemetery memorial documentation has yielded rich rewards. Simultaneously, my exploration of ancestral roots through Findagrave has illuminated a new dimension of my heritage. This venture is not without its challenges; time and weather have left some memorials nearly illegible. In a remarkable twist of fate, I embarked on a mission to restore their stories.

One particularly weathered memorial, cloaked in layers of lichen and moss, caught my attention. Armed with a specialized cleaner, I dedicated myself to revealing its hidden inscription. After meticulous efforts, Edward, and Elizabeth Frater's memorial (Plot PW-C8) names emerged. Their stories, intertwined with the history of this place, stand as a testament to the power of perseverance and the enduring spirit of remembrance.

humbled to discover the location of his burial in Italy.

I felt compelled to preserve this important connection between Edward, Elizabeth, and their beloved son, Leonard, on Findagrave. It seemed fitting to pay tribute to their memory and ensure that others could also find solace in their story.

It is from this inscription I found on their memorial stone led me on a journey of discovery to find out who their son Leonard Frater was who was killed in action in Italy on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1943. This is what I found and his memorial in Italy.

IN MEMORY OF  
OUR DEAR PARENTS  
EDWARD FRATER  
DIED 29TH DEC 1957  
AGED 68.  
AND ELIZABETH FRATER  
DIED 10TH MAY 1963  
AGED 68  
ALSO OF THEIR SON LEONARD  
KILLED IN ACTION ITALY 29TH NOV 1943



From the poignant inscription I uncovered on their memorial stone, a new chapter of discovery unfolded before me – one that would lead me to Leonard Frater, the son of Edward and Elizabeth Frater. Leonard's story, intertwined with the indelible mark of sacrifice, stirred my curiosity. The name etched onto that stone held within it a tale of courage and duty that resonated through time.

Leonard Frater, a Fusilier bearing the service number 14200801, stood among the ranks of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' 6th Battalion. As history unfolded, this battalion played a role in the sweeping North African campaign and later became part of the forces that ventured into Italy, a land embroiled in war.

It was amidst these unforgiving battlegrounds that Leonard's fate was sealed. On the 29th of November 1943, during a daring assault on a ridge that cast its shadow over the Sangro River, tragedy struck. Artillery fire, an indiscriminate messenger of destruction, claimed Leonard's life at the tender age of 20. His youth belied the weight of the responsibilities he bore and the courage he exhibited.

Leonard found his final resting place in the Sangro River War Cemetery in Italy, a solemn testament to the countless lives altered by the tumultuous events of that time. The inscription on his gravestone captures the essence of his sacrifice – a fusilier in the ranks of The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, cut down on the 29th of November 1943 at the age of 20.



Each letter etched into the stone becomes a thread connecting the past to the present, and the sacrifice of a young life to the enduring memory of those who fought for freedom.

As we stand before Leonard's memorial, I'm reminded of the intricate tapestry of history, woven from the threads of countless lives like his. Each name represents a story, a family, and a legacy. Leonard's legacy is one of bravery and selflessness, a reminder that the echoes of war are not just dates and battles, but the lives of individuals who should never be forgotten.

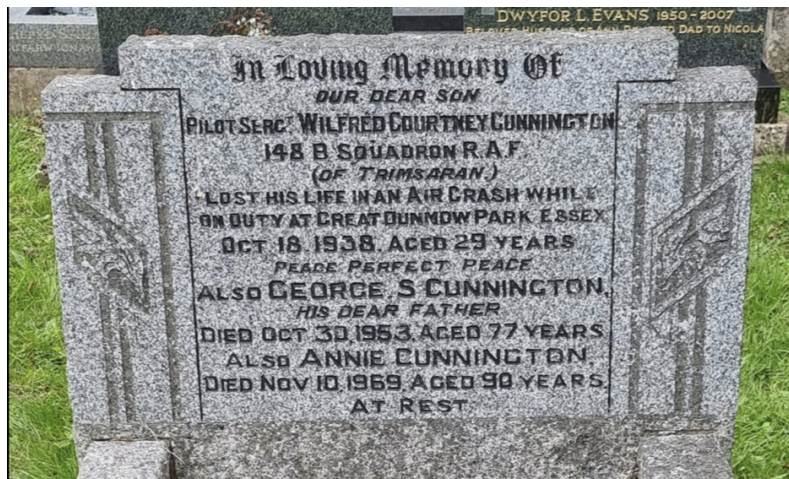
With each day more family history is discovered before I came onto the grave of George & Annie Cunnington with an inscription that mention their son Wilfred Courtney Cunnington with the mention on the headstone of his fate in the WW2.



As the days unfold, the tapestry of family history continues to reveal its intricate threads, each thread representing a story waiting to be told. And in this journey of discovery, I stumbled upon the grave of George and Annie Cunnington (Plot PN-J4), bearing an inscription that spoke of their beloved son, Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, whose fate was intertwined with the tumultuous times of World War II.

The headstone, a silent sentinel of memories, bore witness to Wilfred's sacrifice. It read:

"In Loving Memory of OUR DEAR SON PILOT SERG WILFRED COURTNEY CUNNINGTON 148 B SQUADRON RAF (OF TRIMSARAN) LOST HIS LIFE IN AN AIR CRASH WHILE ON DUTY AT GREAT DUNNOW PARK ESSEX OCT 18, 1938, AGED 29 YEARS PEACE PERFECT PEACE"  
ALSO GEORGE S CUNNINGTON HIS DEAR FATHER DIED OCT 30 1953 AGED 77 YEARS  
ALSO ANNIE CUNNINGTON DIED NOV 10 1969 AGED 90 YEARS AT REST



Driven by the desire to uncover the story behind this brave soul, I delved into the annals of history. The narrative that unfolded painted a picture of dedication and tragedy. Pilot Sergeant Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a member of the esteemed 148 Squadron of the RAF, found himself in the cockpit of a Vickers Wellesley Mk. I, identified by the serial number K7716.



Tragedy struck on the 18th of October 1938, as two aircraft, including Wilfred's Wellesley K7716, met in a devastating mid-air collision. The other aircraft involved, Wellesley K7714, was also from the same 148 Squadron. The collision occurred over the skies of Great Dunmow, Essex. In an instant, lives were forever altered, and the fate of those aboard the ill-fated K7716 was sealed.

The crew of K7716 included:

- Sgt Reginald Prosser (aged 24)
- Sgt Wilfred Courtney Cunnington (aged 29)
- Act Sgt James Crane Irwin (aged 31)

All three valiant individuals lost their lives that day, their spirits forever imprinted on the pages of history. Their sacrifices stand as a testament to the risks and challenges faced by those who took to the skies in service of their nation.

Wilfred Courtney Cunnington, a Pilot Sergeant who had embarked on his duties with bravery and determination, now rests in eternal peace, his memory enshrined in the hearts of those who remember. His age, 29, is a stark reminder of the youthfulness that war often claimed, a poignant reminder that every life cut short was a world of potential and dreams.

As I stand before his memorial, I reflect on the profound impact that a few lines of text can have, capturing the essence of a life and its untimely end. Wilfred's story joins the tapestry of history, a thread woven with the threads of countless others who made the ultimate sacrifice for a greater cause. Their legacy lives on, as does the gratitude of generations who will never forget their sacrifice.

With each passing day, the journey through history brings new chapters to light, unveiling stories that have weathered the sands of time. Among the markers of remembrance, the memorial headstone of Nathaniel and Eliza Hancock (Plot PN-K8) stood as a silent testament to a family's enduring love and sacrifice, with an inscription that echoed through the years:



"PEACE IN LOVING MEMORY OF NATHANIEL HANCOCK DIED JAN. 8. 1937 AGED 59 YEARS. EVER IN OUR THOUGHTS, ALSO HIS DEAR WIFE ELIZA HANCOCK DIED SEPT. 23. 1955: AGED 76 ALSO OF THEIR SON RICHARD GEORGE HANCOCK B.S.M.-R.A. DIED ON ACTIVE SERVICE 1939-1945 EVER REMEMBERED"

This inscription held a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by this family during a time of global turmoil. The mention of their son, Richard George Hancock, who died on active service, ignited a spark of curiosity, driving me to uncover more about his story.

And so, the journey of discovery led me to the remarkable story of Warrant Officer Class II (Battery Serjeant-Major) Richard George Hancock. His service, marked by dedication and courage, unfolded against the backdrop of World War II. Tragically, his life was cut short on the 14th of November 1942, in the sands of Egypt, amidst the fierce battles of El Alamein.

The scroll that commemorates his sacrifice reads:

"This scroll commemorates Battery Serjeant-Major R. G. Hancock Royal Regiment of Artillery held in honour as one who served King and Country in the world war of 1939-1945 and gave his life to save mankind from tyranny. May his sacrifice help to bring the peace and freedom for which he died."

Richard George Hancock's role in the struggle against tyranny is a testament to his bravery and selflessness. He stands as a symbol of all those who served, whose sacrifices paved the path to a better future. The battles he fought were not just on distant lands; they were the embodiment of a collective effort to preserve freedom and humanity.

As I reflect on his story, I am reminded of the interconnectedness of history and how the lives of individuals intertwine with the greater narrative. The inscription on the headstone and the scroll of commemoration stands as a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that Richard George Hancock's memory endures, and his sacrifice continues to inspire. May his legacy be a beacon of hope, reminding us of the price paid for the peace and freedom we hold dear.

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Another sad story which made me think of my family and what I would feel if this had happened to me. I was recording the details of a memorial stone of Mary Anthony (Plot PE2-D1) and took in the enormity of what I saw before me on the inscription.



I N LOVING MEMORY OF  
DAVID  
SON OF DAVID & MARY ANTHONY  
OF AQUEDUCT IN THIS PARISH WHO DIED  
NOV 8, 1880, AGED 6 MONTHS  
MARY ANTHONY  
APRIL 27, 1884, AGED 29 YEARS  
ALSO MARY DAUGHTER OF THE ABOVE  
BORN APRIL 27th, 1884, DIED APRIL 21st, 1901.

Indeed, the inscriptions on the memorial stones hold within them stories of heartbreak, loss, and the fragility of life. As you stood before the memorial stone of Mary Anthony, the weight of the narrative etched into the cold stone must have been palpable – a testament to the profound grief that can touch a family's life.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF DAVID SON OF DAVID & MARY ANTHONY OF AQUEDUCT IN THIS PARISH WHO DIED NOV 8, 1880, AGED 6 MONTHS MARY ANTHONY APRIL 27, 1884, AGED 29 YEARS ALSO MARY DAUGHTER OF THE ABOVE BORN APRIL 27th, 1884, DIED APRIL 21st 1901"

In the span of these few lines, a tale of tragedy and loss is woven, a tapestry of lives cut short, and hearts left shattered. The dates, the ages, and the relationships carved into the stone carry the weight of entire lifetimes condensed into a few words. The stark reality of Mary Anthony's story is heart-wrenching.

To lose a son at only 6 months old, to pass away at such a tender age of 29, and then, a cruel twist of fate, to bring a daughter into the world on the same day she herself would depart – it's a narrative that encapsulates the harshness of life's uncertainties. The story of Mary Anthony and her daughter Mary is a poignant reminder of the delicate balance between life and mortality, the fleeting nature of our existence.

Standing before that stone, the realization must have hit you with a wave of empathy and reflection. It's moments like these that make us pause and ponder our own lives, the lives of our loved ones, and the profound vulnerability that accompanies our journey through this world. Such stories bridge the gap between history and personal experience, making us realize that while time marches on, the emotions and the essence of human experience remain timeless.

As we contemplate the stories etched into these stones, may they inspire us to cherish the moments we have, to hold our loved ones a little closer, and to find meaning and purpose in the face of life's uncertainties. The vulnerability that you sensed in those inscriptions reminds us of the importance of compassion and understanding – for each life, no matter how brief, carries its own weight and significance in the grand tapestry of existence.

I've been dedicating my time and effort to meticulously record the cemetery memorials at Llandry Church. This journey, undertaken in collaboration with the

church warden, has been a profound and humbling experience. Today, I'm thrilled.

to share my reflections on this endeavour, hoping that you will find it as moving to read as I found it to live.

The process of documenting these memorials has been nothing short of overwhelming in the most touching way. Each gravestone represents a life – a story waiting to be uncovered, shared, and remembered. As I've walked among these silent sentinels, the weight of history has settled upon my shoulders, inviting me to honour the lives that once thrived within these hallowed grounds.

The gravestones are more than markers; they are windows into the past. The names, dates, and inscriptions etched into the stone reveal glimpses of triumphs and tribulations, joys, and sorrows. Every name is a thread in the rich tapestry of our shared human experience. The names may be weathered, but they still speak to us, reminding us of the lives once lived and the connections that endure beyond time.

Through this project, I've come to realize the deeply personal nature of remembrance. The act of preserving these memories is a gift to those who came before us and to the generations that will follow. It's a way of saying, "Your stories matter. Your existence is not forgotten." In this age of fleeting digital interactions, there's something sacred about the permanence of these inscriptions, standing as a testament to the lives they represent.

As I reflect on the countless hours spent amidst the stones, my heart is full of humility. The enormity of history and the tapestry of humanity that resides within this churchyard have left an indelible mark on my soul. It's a reminder that life is precious, fragile, and ultimately fleeting. The stories that these stones hold is a reminder to live with purpose, to cherish our moments, and to leave a legacy worth remembering.

So here it is, my attempt to put into words the emotions that have swelled within me during this journey. I invite you to read, to share in this experience, and to join me in honouring the lives that have contributed to the fabric of this community. I hope my words capture even a fraction of the awe and reverence I've felt in the presence of these memorials.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with me. I believe that these stories, these lives, and these moments of remembrance are worth every effort, and I invite you to explore this shared history with me.

Visiting the local Churches and Chapels has been a profound and enriching experience, immersing me in the hallowed grounds that hold the echoes of centuries past. The rich tapestry of history woven into the stones and pews speaks volumes about the faith, resilience, and community spirit that have thrived within these sacred spaces. Each site, with its unique narrative and architectural beauty, has left an indelible mark on my understanding of the cultural and spiritual heritage that shapes these communities.

As I reflect on the stories of founders, ministers, and congregants, a sense of reverence and awe fills my heart. The struggles, triumphs, and unwavering dedication of those who built and sustained these places of worship echo through time, creating a bridge between the past and the present. It's a testament to the enduring power of faith and the human spirit, symbolized by the very structures that have weathered the sands of time.

Beyond the historical significance, the vibrant communities that continue to gather within these walls embody the living legacy of shared values and beliefs. The hymns, prayers, and rituals connect the present generation to the roots of their faith, fostering a sense of continuity and belonging.

In these visits, I have not only witnessed the tangible history etched into the architecture but have also felt the intangible presence of the countless souls who have sought solace, inspiration, and communion within these sacred spaces. The journey through these Churches and chapels has been more than a historical exploration; it has been a spiritual odyssey, leaving me with a profound appreciation for the enduring legacy of faith and the remarkable stories that continue to unfold within these revered walls.

### **The Early Christian Churches**

Cunedda Wledig, a member of the Cymric race, assumed the dual role of a Christian and a key figure in the establishment of the ancient British Church. The foundation of this church, evolving from its predecessor, the Romano-British Church, owes a substantial debt to Cunedda and his distinguished family. St. David, the inaugural Bishop of the see named after him, traced his lineage to Cunedda, being the great-grandson on his father's side.

St. Cadoc, though enshrouded in a somewhat mysterious genealogy, is suggested to be the son of Cuneglasos or Cynlas, lord of Glamorgan, and the grandson of Cunedda's son Einion. St. Teilo, also claimed as a descendant of Ceredig, another son of Cunedda, belonged to this illustrious family, holding the title of a great nephew to

St. David. Historical narratives draw a close connection between St. Teilo and St. David, evident in their shared studies under Paulinus at Ty-gwyn-ar-Dâf (Whitland) and their collective contributions to the British Church.

The parish of Kidwelly bears witness to the dedication of churches to St. Teilo and St. Cadoc, as evidenced by the remnants of Capel Teilo (Teilo's Chapel) and the preserved site known as Llangadog (The Church of Cadoc) and Waungadog (Cadoc's meadow). Maurice de Londres, in an undated charter preserved in the Public Record Office, bestowed twelve acres of land around the Church of St. Cadoc, adjacent to the lands of St. Mary, for the salvation of his soul and ancestors. This transaction, addressed to David, the Bishop of St. David's, likely occurred between A.D. 1147 and 1176 during the episcopate of David (Fitzgerald).

The origin of ancient Welsh churches, named after their founders, rather than departed saints, remains a point of contention. Examining the local ruin of St. Teilo's Church in Kidwelly, with dimensions suggesting a small church or oratory, challenges assumptions of primitive construction. The strategic placement of Kidwelly along inter-tribal roads and the main Roman line of communication implies a higher level of civilization and interaction with the Romans, challenging notions of a backward stage in the local Brython's civilization.

Following the decline of Welsh saint foundations in the 8th century, a shift towards Mihangel or Michael dedications occurred. Tradition speaks of a church named Llanfihangel on the site of Maenllwyd-mawr, with stone foundations and a nearby well named Ffynon Mihangel (Michael's Well). The dedication to St. Michael gained popularity, becoming a Welsh tradition.

All Saints' Church in Kidwelly likely succeeded an earlier church, possibly pre-existing and dedicated to various saints. References to churches in the area, such as

St. Ishmael and Penalt, strengthen the assumption of a pre-existing church. Documentary evidence suggests that Kidwelly's church, merged with the Priory, was taxed around 1291, indicating its annual value.

The Deanery of Kidwelly, as recorded in the Taxation of Pope Nicholas, sheds light on the extensive reach and value of its component churches at the close of the 13th century, encompassing parishes like Llanelly, Dafen, Felinfoel, Llangendeirne, and Llandefeilog.

### **The Priory of Kidwelly**

The Priory of Kidwelly, founded in 1130 by Roger, the Bishop of Salisbury, belonged to the Benedictine order and served as a monastic establishment for a Prior and two



monks. Roger, a notable ecclesiastic of his time, played a significant role in the history of England during the reign of Henry I. Initially a priest in Caen, he later became Chief Justiciary, Treasurer, and eventually the bishop of Salisbury. His involvement in State affairs and capable administration earned him the confidence of the monarchy.

Roger's connection with Kidwelly began with his expedition to Gower and his journey along the coast through Carnwyllion to Kidwelly. Kidwelly, with its unconquered and resistant inhabitants, seemed to hold a special attraction for him. It is suggested that he secured a grant of the district from his sovereign, establishing his possessions at Kidwelly in the early 12th century.

In the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291, it is documented that the Prior of Kidwelly possessed one carucate of land with associated rents and perquisites, valued at £2 10s. The temporalities of the Priory in the 26th year of King Henry VIII were listed in the 'Valor Ecclesiasticus,' indicating a total worth of £38, with deductions for various payments, leaving a clear income of £29 10s.

A document from 1428, preserved in the Public Record Office, reveals an ecclesiastical proceeding where the prior and convent of Kidwelly claimed two parts of the tithes, including those from wool, milk, cheese, and lambs, on specific lands within the parish of St. Mary of Kidwelly. The prior and convent were awarded these tithes as rectors through a legal judgment.

This historical overview showcases the Priory of Kidwelly's foundation, its connection to Roger, and its economic aspects as documented in historical records.

### **THE SITUATION OF THE PRIORY**

Persistent claims have been made suggesting that the ancient ruins at Penallt, located between Kidwelly and the mouth of the river Towy, approximately a mile from the former, are the remnants of Kidwelly Priory. However, this assertion must be regarded as conjecture, lacking supportive evidence. Documents refer to the 'Church of Penallt,' but no mention of the Priory of Penallt is found. The 'Church of Penallt' is consistently distinguished from Kidwelly Priory and its associated churches, such as St. Ishmael and Pembrey. Hence, the actual situation of Kidwelly Priory demands consideration elsewhere.

Thankfully, abundant evidence, both documentary and otherwise, supports associating the priory with the extant ruins on the left bank of the Lesser Gwendraeth, adjacent to the east boundary wall of the present parish churchyard. Historical documents indicate that the monks were granted land by Norman landowners for monastic purposes, usually barren and unfertile tracts. Kidwelly's

monks, however, seem to have received a more generous grant, likely due to the ecclesiastical status of the donor, Roger, Bishop of Salisbury. Roger's careful consideration of the priory's requirements, including proximity to the existing church and access to a stream, speaks to his thoughtful allocation of land.

The religious community's real property consisted of a carucate of land, equivalent to a plough-land ploughable with one team of oxen in a year—a term introduced by the Normans. The present-day gardens in Lady Street were once known as 'the priory fields,' indicating the extent of the priory's holdings. Court Rolls from the Prior's Court held at Kidwelly provide insights into social life, property tenure, and dispute resolution during that era. They also reflect an intermingling of Welsh and foreign settlers.

The records of the Prior's Court in the early 14th century reveal legal disputes and transactions involving tenements in Lady Street. These transactions provide a glimpse into property ownership, fines for entry, and the intricacies of life in medieval Kidwelly. St. Mary Street (now Lady Street) is specifically mentioned, emphasizing its ownership by the prior.

In addition to some priory land remaining under cultivation, parts were let out for tenements, potentially increasing the property's overall value. This income, coupled with the monks' frugality, may have contributed to the construction of the present Parish Church as an expression of their devotion.

A List of the Priors of Kidwelly is provided, offering the names and years of service for eight priors. Although the list covers 236 years, it is acknowledged that Prior Galfridus de Coker likely succeeded others whose details are difficult to ascertain due to the priory's earlier foundation in 1130. The last prior was John Godmyster, serving at the time of the Dissolution.

The Dissolution of the Priory occurred during the suppression of monasteries, resulting in the merging of the priory into the Crown's possession. In 1544, certain individuals leased the monastic properties, as detailed in a document available in the Public Record Office. The leased possessions included the priory's site, buildings, cemeteries, and other features. Notably, a yearly pension of £8 to the vicar was exempted from the lease.

### **CONSECRATION OF AN ANCIENT CEMETERY**

Three days after the execution of the deed through which Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, granted certain lands to Sherborne Abbey, the same benefactor took steps to set aside and consecrate a cemetery in Kidwelly. This action occurred "with the license and consent of Wilfrid, Bishop of St. David's.

While the exact date of the document is unspecified, the inclusion of the bishop's name aids in approximating both the land grant and the cemetery's consecration. Wilfrid, also known as Griffri, Jeffrey, and Gryfth, was the final Welsh bishop of St. Davids before Norman rule, and he appears in the official list under his Welsh name Griffri.

His tenure spanned from 1096 to 1112, and he passed away in 1112, succeeded by Bernard, the first Norman bishop of St. Davids. Consequently, the document and the cemetery's consecration likely predate 1112. Given that Wilfrid held the position from 1096 to 1112, the consecration must have taken place between these years.

Considering that Henry I ascended the throne in 1100 and Roger gained prominence during his reign, these local transactions likely occurred between 1100 and 1112. The cemetery in question likely corresponds to the area numbered 760 on the Ordnance Map of 1880 and 62 on the 1907 map. This site is situated adjacent to the Llansaint road, approximately 300 yards from the castle where the initial land deed was executed. Notably, this enclosure is still commonly recognized as Mynwent Domos or St. Thomas's Cemetery.



St Thomas Chapel was reportedly one of the five chapels of ease serving Kidwelly parish, with the other four identified as Llanfihangel, Coker Cadog, and Teilo.

The cemetery occupied a field to the north of Kidwelly, which retained the name Mynwent Domos into the early 20th century. Human remains were reportedly disturbed in adjacent gardens during the 19th century. It is presumed that the chapel building was situated either within the cemetery or in close proximity to it.

It is plausible that an oratory was established in conjunction with this burial ground, which aligns with the tradition asserting the presence of an ancient chapel on the site.

### **THE VICARIATE OF KIDWELLY.**

The allocation of a yearly pension of £8 to the Vicar points to the existence of a Vicariate at Kidwelly during the priory's dissolution. The ecclesiastical suit mentioned earlier also lends support to the idea of a vicariate, as it can be assumed that the third portion of the tithes, not claimed by the prior and convent, belonged to the vicar.



There is compelling evidence for the existence of the vicariate during the priory's dissolution. It is also likely that the vicariate of Kidwelly was established at the beginning of the 14th century. In a Court Roll an entry from the Court of the Prior of Kidwelly, held on the day of S. Kalixtus, Pope and Martyr, A.D. 1310, reveals an interesting note: 'Nicholas Kyngman excuses himself against Thomas Cas on plea of debt by Thomas, the Vicar.'

While vicarages are commonly believed to have been established in the eighth year of Henry II (A.D. 1162), 'Alwyn' might not have been a vicar according to the general understanding of the term. However, he is specifically denominated as 'the Priest of the town' in the deed whereby a grant of land was made by Roger, bishop of

Salisbury, to Sherborne Abbey, probably within the first decade of the 12th century (see Appendix A).

John Griffith's appointment was made subject to the condition that 'an annual pension of 26s. 8d. be reserved to the previous Incumbent (John Chayny) until he is appointed to a cure' - Bishop's Register.

Roger Prichard was a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford.

Vicarage House: This residence was constructed in 1895, based on plans prepared by Mr. Thomas Arnold, architect, Llanelly. The total cost of the building was £1,804.

The provided information was extracted from the book "A History of Kidwelly" by The Rev. D. Daven Jones, B.A., Vicar in 1908.

Graham Tudor Emmanuel 2024