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**Site Name:** CAPEL MAIR WELSH CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL,  
FEIDRFAIR, CARDIGAN.

**PRN:** 57358

**Site File Ref. No.:** CARD/FECM

**Site Type:** Nonconformist Meeting House

**N. G. Ref.:** SN 1798 4611

**Period:** Post-Medieval; Modern

**History:**

The chapel at this site, at the end of Feidrfair near Finch Square, was founded in 1803. It was built to replace a meeting room in the house of the widow Esther Phillips on Pwllhai that had been used from 1792 by Rev. John Phillips of Moylegrove, and the later congregation that met in a loft at No. 39 St. Mary Street. The land at Feidrfair was given to the congregation by David Davies, a merchant. According to Rev. D J Roberts' history of Capel Mair:

*“...The building of the first chapel commenced in 1803. The sacred task was faced with great difficulties from the outset. The members were few in number and those were impoverished. It is also suggested more than once by the church membership registers that most of them were also women. In addition to this they lost the support of Rev. John Phillips, the minister of Bethel, due to his poor health, and a great number of other concerns took their notice. They couldn't have commenced the work under less favourable circumstances. But they succeeded in getting beneath a roof, and began worshipping...concerns spread amongst them of the burden of the planned construction of a chapel and anger about the building caused disagreements among the members themselves. There was discord concerning the building: they did not install a gallery in it as was originally intended, and they didn't put a lot of seating in it either. And one hundred pounds, almost the full cost of the building work, remained unpaid. In the middle of the crisis, as if to strike the fatal blow to the whole goodly design, one member after another left the cause until just a feeble, helpless handful remained, to frequent the shabby new chapel. Things remained in this disastrous state until 1812...when the invitation was sent to the Rev. Daniel Davies, Rhosycae, Denbighshire, a fellow of Moylegrove...to come as an assistant to Rev. John Phillips in Moylegrove and its' branches. In Daniel Davies' register of church members in Cardigan (which he wrote himself after being here for some time), the following appears: No. 10 – Esther Phillips – WIDOW. Certainly, her prayers were answered in getting to see “the comfort of Israel” when young Daniel Davies walked into the unfinished and shabby building in the name of Lord God...”*

Rev. Daniel Davies, the first Minister here from 1812 until 1865, was a leading light in the building and funding of the chapel, which was not completed and paid for until 1812. Daniel Davies was born at Penywern, a farmhouse in the parish of Moylegrove, in the year 1780, the son of John and Mary Davies. Soon after being admitted as a member of Bethel, Moylegrove, he was encouraged to begin preaching. He spent a short period in school in Haverfordwest. In 1809, he went on a preaching tour to the north, and settled at Rhosycae near Holywell, Flintshire for fifteen months, preaching constantly, until his ordination. He was ordained there on July 26<sup>th</sup> 1810, and then founded a chapel in the village. Within two years of his ordination, he was invited to return to his native area as an assistant to the Rev. John Phillips at Bethel church and its' branches. As Rev. D J Roberts later wrote:

*“...When he came here, between some of the villages neighbouring St. Dogmaels and Cardigan itself, he only had about fifteen members in the church, and four of them were godly old ladies receiving assistance from the parish...”*

Because of the demands of the work, Rev. Daniel Davies soon relinquished his other duties, and concentrated solely on Cardigan. Rev. Daniel Davies was formally inducted as the minister of the chapel in 1814. He then went on a preaching tour to the north and raised enough money to pay off the debts of the chapel. Upon his return he founded a Sunday School at Capel Mair. In 1814 a congregation at Tyrhos, Cilgerran, was linked to Capel Mair under the ministry of Rev. Daniel Davies, and largely through his labours built their first chapel in 1815. On June 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> 1817 a large Cymanfa of the South West Wales Congregationalists was held here for the first time. It was a remarkable venture for a church which less than five years before had only a congregation of 17 in heavy debt. The Rev. D J Roberts wrote:

*“...On Wednesday, at 11, the ministers met with the officers of the chapels from different places, for a special private meeting...This was the first recorded incident of the chapel officers in the Assembly conferences...”*

If this is true, the 1817 Capel Mair Assembly was the first to recognise the important role of laymen in the Independent denomination in the south-west! Seven prayer meetings were held, five in Welsh and two in English. Amongst the ministers who officiated, were the Revs. D. Jones, Crugybar; D. Morgan, Machynlleth; J. Davies, Aberhafesp; D. Williams, Builth; D. Peters, Carmarthen; J. Rowlands, Llanybri; A. Shadrach, Talybont; and T. Phillips, Neuaddlwyd. Rev. D J Roberts wrote:

*“...thousands had cause to say that it was good to be here...The Assembly was very successful and influential, and was instrumental in the complete removal of the remains and effects of contentions in which the church had languished for years, and a powerful and blessed Reformation began in that place...”*

In 1826 Rev. Daniel Davies instigated moves for building an Independent Chapel at St. Dogmaels. On February 7<sup>th</sup> 1828 Mary Davies, the wife of Rev. Daniel Davies, died. Rev. D J Roberts, quoting from the minute book of Capel Mair, wrote:

*“...Thursday, February 7, 1828, We hear Mr. Daniel Davies has met with bitter fate – his dear wife has died; after a short affliction she was taken away unexpectedly. What made the circumstances particularly difficult for Mr. Davies was that he had been in London for three months assisting at the Welsh church there. Before he arrived home, she had died. She had been a handsome and useful member of Christ's church for many years, and she was generally respected by a wide circle of religious friends, and, by her acquaintances and all who knew her. Her mortal remains were buried on the following Monday at Ferwig cemetery. In the house, the Rev. J. Evans, Penygroes, Pembrokeshire, read, and the Rev. T. Griffiths, Hawen, preached from the words of Hebrews VI, 2. “...and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement...”*

At the time, the Rev. Daniel Davies was building a new chapel, Capel Degwel, at St. Dogmaels. It was linked to Capel Mair, and Rev. Daniel Davies preached there every Sunday. Within a few years it became independent of Capel Mair, but retained Rev. Daniel Davies as the minister. From 1828 until 1856 Rev. Daniel Davies also acted as the minister of Capel Isaf in Llechryd, having received the call in 1828. In 1830 David Owen and William Miles were ordained to act as the assistants to the minister of Capel Mair – whether they were full assistant ministers, or deacons, is not clear.

David Owen was a member in Capel Mair, and was the assistant to the minister here from 1830 until 1845, when he took care of Siloh Chapel in Tufton, Pembrokeshire. He laboured there for six years, but returned to Cardigan because of the delicate state of his health. He continued to assist until the end of his life. *“...He was a very acceptable preacher and everyone spoke well of him...”* He died on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1854 aged 52 years. His son, Samuel Owen, was later a deacon of Capel Mair.

By 1831 the congregation was too large for the building. Capel Mair was rebuilt in 1831-32. A description of the new building stated that: *“...one side measured close to sixteen yards in length and twenty yards long, with a gallery...”* A new deed was made at this time, dated July 1831, signed by: William Finch, a shopkeeper and Elder of the chapel; Daniel Davies, the Minister; David Owen, a Deacon; George Thomas, clothier of St. Mary Street, a Deacon; David Jones, a weaver; William Jenkins, a mason, of Blaenbarthen, Llangoedmor, a Deacon and the conductor of singing; and John Davies, a joiner, of the ‘*Plough*’ inn, Pendre.

Rev. Daniel Davies oversaw the work. A bottle, serving as a “time capsule”, was placed in the wall behind the pulpit. The building is marked on John Wood's 1834 map of Cardigan as a “*Meeting House*”. In 1834 Rev. Daniel Davies assisted with the rebuilding of the sister chapel at Capel Isaf, Llechryd. In 1836 the South West Wales Congregationalists again held their annual meeting here.

Amongst the ministers who preached in the Assembly, were the Revs. Llywelyn Samuel, Bethesda, and Samuel Roberts, Llanbrynmair; D. Davies, London and David Griffiths, Madagascar, as well as ministers from the Assembly circuit like the Rev. David Rees, Llanelli. *“...We believe that about 17, 000 people gathered in this Assembly...”* It was held on June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of that year. At this time, Rev. Daniel Davies was described by J. Beynon Davies in the following terms:

*“...He was a man of short build...but strong; a long and handsome face, a high forehead, keen eyes, an understanding countenance...he was a preacher of the first order, although advanced in that order. He punctuated all of his sermons with orderliness, clarity, evangelical tones, beautiful taste, easy delivery, and pleasant voice. Grandeur and power were not were not his characteristics as a preacher, but thoroughness, prettiness, clarity and usefulness...”*

In 1836-37 the congregation of Capel Mair assisted with the establishment of Hope English Congregational Chapel on Carrier's Lane in the town. In 1840 Abraham Morgan, a gardener; William Jones, a carpenter of Pwllhai; David Jenkins of Trecefn Isaf, Ferwig, a farmer; John Evans of Treforgan, Llangoedmor, a labourer; and Thomas Griffiths, a draper, became Deacons of Capel Mair. In late 1841 the 21-year-old daughter of Rev. Daniel Davies, died. In 1844 two rows of fixed seats were placed below the chapel gallery for the first time. The rest of the congregation sat on free benches, and the practice continued up to the middle of the floor, with the names of their owners engraved or carved on them. Rev. Daniel Davies was elected on March 19<sup>th</sup> 1845, onto the Congregational Union Council for England and Wales. On July 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> 1848 the local Independents held their quarterly meeting here. According to a religious census conducted in 1851 there were 300 members and 126 scholars attending in the morning and 390 in the evening on a Sunday. 1852 Owen Picton Davies, a clothier, of St. Mary Street, and David Beynon Evans, a glazier, became Deacons of the chapel. In 1854 fixed seats were installed at Capel Mair in place of the benches in the centre of the floor. After losing the benches with the names carved on them, the members continued to sit in the same place on the new seats: and in order to “personalise” them again, they paid to sit on them rather than have their names on them! Other improvements were carried out inside the building at the same time. Rev. D J Roberts wrote:

*“...The whole cost £74. 5s. 10d. Between what was collected, and what was received for the old benches and lamps, that is £42. 10s. 9d., remained a debt of about £30. But the number of members was now over 200 and a large congregation came together to hear the Gospels...”*

On June 28<sup>th</sup> 1854 David Owen, a Deacon of Capel Mair since 1830, died aged 52 years. In 1855 William Miles retired after 25 years as a Deacon. That year, according to Rev. D J Roberts, Rev. Daniel Davies:

*“...was seen in the company of a number of friends from Capel Mair travelling towards Llechryd; this was on Wednesday, February 20. In his meeting in the Hen Capel, there were members of that church and representatives from Tyrhos church. It is perhaps not easy to imagine the scene or sympathise with the sacred feelings that characterised that hour when the old minister dissolved his ministerial care in the two churches. He lost them from his hands, but not from his heart; “was it not his work to give them to the Lord?” Truly he gave counsel beyond his mature wisdom. We have no word of remembrance nor in writing of that meeting. But we do know that the two*

*churches united together in 1856 to send the call to a young man from Brecon College, named Rees Morgan..."*

Back in Cardigan:

*"...It was also arranged to get more assistance for the old minister. He had lost the two who were ordained to the work in 1830. As we have observed, David Owen of Cardigan died in 1854, and William Miles gave up his care of Tyrhos in 1855. With that they selected another David Owen, this time from St. Dogmaels; R. Jones, who came to live here from the Trewen area; a man named Joseph Jones, who was the brother of the Rev. Thomas Jones, Cilcennin; and O. Picton Davies, one of the church deacons in Capel Mair, to be occasional preachers. We are not told whether they had been fully ordained to the full office and position of the ministry..."*

*"...The year 1858 was remarkable for prayer meetings in response to a Religious Revival, and meetings were held here June 7 and on Sunday August 1 throughout the day for that purpose..."*

In February 1859 there were more than forty converts wishing to join Capel Mair, during a great Revival in the town. According to Rev. D J Roberts:

*"...Friday April 22, 1859, united prayer meetings were held in the town – in Capel Mair in the morning, Tabernacle (C. M.) in the afternoon, and Bethania (B) in the evening. The great '59 Revival they had been praying for had begun, and they wanted more of it..."*

*"...Statistics sent to the Congregational Union Meeting at Aberdare, held Sep. 12, 13, 14, 15, 1859..."*

Members at Capel Mair	320
Sunday School	190
Members and hearers	489

*Collections made towards every cause in the year.*

Ministry	£34
Missionary	£20
Bible Society	3
British School	3
Sundries	18

Colleges	4
Seats	<u>10</u>
	92

That year, 1859, Thomas Evans became the precentor in the chapel. In 1862 J. R. Daniel, a carpenter from St. Mary Street, and Thomas Jenkins of Trecefn Isaf, Ferwig, were elected to be deacons. In 1863 the chapel pulpit was replaced. According to Rev. D J Roberts:

*“...in 1863 the old pulpit was pulled down, and a handsome and broad new platform was constructed in its place. It was also arranged to light the chapel with gas, and to beautify the paths and floors with matting and carpets by the women...”*

On April 30<sup>th</sup> 1864 Deacon J. R. Daniel died. On May 27<sup>th</sup> 1864 the following report appeared in the 'Welshman':

*“...CARDIGANSHIRE. CARDIGAN. JUBILEE MEETINGS.*

*The quarterly meetings of the Congregational body in Cardiganshire were held in this town on the 18th and 19th inst., in connection with which was also commemorated, the jubilee of the Rev. D. Davies, the venerable minister of Capel Mair, who had been pastor of the Independent Church upwards of fifty years. The weather being extremely fine, and there being a very large concourse of people, the meetings throughout, excepting the Conferences, were held in the open air, on a very convenient site, adjacent to the river Tivy. Amongst others the following ministers officiated on the occasion: the Rev.. T. Jones, Aberayron, Rev. J. M. Prydderch, Llanarth, Rev. T. Thomas, Glandwr, Swansea, Rev. J. Davies, Cwmaman, Rev. E. Lewis, Brynberian, Rev. J. Williams, Newcastle, Rev. R. Perkins, Pembroke, and Rev. D. Bateman, Fishguard. At the close of the afternoon service, on Thursday, the jubilee presentation meeting was held under the presidency of the Rev. J. Williams, Newcastle. After a very appropriate opening address from the chair, the Rev. W. Evans, Aberayron, was called forward, as the senior minister, to present the Rev. Daniel Davies, in commemoration of his having spent fifty years as a minister in Cardigan, with a handsome testimonial, consisting of some hundred and twenty guineas, which had been subscribed by friends throughout the county generally. Mr Davies, in a few remarks, made a very pathetic acknowledgement; and the meeting having been further addressed by several ministers present, the Rev. L. Jones, Oswestry, terminated the proceedings with a prayer...”*

In 1864 Rev. Daniel Davies, then aged 84 years, retired from his other position as the Minister of Capel Degwel in St. Dogmaels, and advised Capel Mair to look for his successor. Rev. William Rees, an outspoken temperance campaigner from Capel Isaf, Llechryd, claimed that *“...For fifty years he was prominent in the pulpit and the pot house...his long ministry was a marriage of Bible and beer...”* and claimed that he adjourned to the ale-house after every sermon.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> 1865 Rev. William Davies of Brecon College preached here for the first time, and was given the call soon afterwards. He was ordained as the new Minister of Capel Mair on April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> 1865 and remained until 1874. When Rev. William Davies came to Cardigan in the Spring of 1865, he was a young man of 22 years of age (he had been born in 1843. He was accepted as a member of Capel-y-Graig, Trelech, by the Rev. Isaac Williams on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1857, aged 14 years). Capel Mair then had 310 full members according to its' own Membership Register, and he was ordained to the work of the ministry of that church only. The churches of Tyrhos, the Hen Gapel, Llechryd, and Capel Degwel, St. Dogmaels, formed separate entities, under separate ministers. William Davies was also the minister of Ffynnonbedr for five years, until 1871.

In 1865 Thomas Jenkins and eleven members left in order to found Ffynnonbedr Congregational Chapel in Ferwig, with some assistance from Rev. Daniel Davies. On Sunday December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1866 former minister Rev. Daniel Davies preached at Capel Mair. On the evening of January 18<sup>th</sup> 1867 the former Minister Rev. Daniel Davies, died.

The following Sunday evening, January 20<sup>th</sup> 1867, George Thomas stood in the great seat of Capel Mair, to break the news publicly for the first time, of the death of the Venerable D. Davies. George Thomas was the only member of the company at Capel Mair from 1812, when Rev. Daniel Davies arrived, still living at that time.

The funeral was held on the following Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1867, and the weather was harsh, but “...a great crowd of virtuous men...” were in attendance. The service in the house was conducted by the Rev. W. Davies. In Capel Mair the oblation prayer was given by the Rev. Evan Lewis, Brynberian, and the sermon by the Rev. W. Evans, Aberaeron. Addresses were also given by the Revs. Simon Evans, Hebron; J. Davies, Glandwr; and John Williams, Newcastle Emlyn. According to Rev. D J Roberts:

*“...At the end of the service in the chapel, a procession was formed to go to the Ferwig cemetery – a distance of three miles. He was buried with his beloved wife and his only daughter, and the service was under the care of the Revs. Rees Williams, the vicar of Ferwig Parish, and Daniel Jones, the incumbent of the parish of St. Dogmaels. There were three memorial services for him on the following Sunday – one in Capel Degwel, the Rev. Edwin Jones, the minister, preaching, and the others in St. Dogmaels' parish church, with the above-named Daniel Jones preaching...Something new under the sun, a funeral sermon for a Nonconformist preacher in the National Church...”*

With the growth of the congregation, there were frequent calls to extend the chapel. According to the chapel record book, “...In 1868 the church decided to build a larger and more handsome chapel...”

In January 1869 Thomas Thomas, Llandore, measured the chapel site with a view to replacing the building, which was becoming dilapidated. On February 26<sup>th</sup> 1869 extensions were proposed for the chapel and tenders were sought for conducting

the work. On May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1869 the demolition of old Capel Mair began, prior to a complete rebuild which commenced on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1869. During the rebuilding the congregation met on Sundays at the Guildhall, on weekdays at Hope Chapel, and the Sunday School met at the British Schoolroom. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1869 a bottle was found in the chapel wall behind the pulpit, which contained a parchment with the early history of the chapel upon it, entitled "*A True History of the origins of the Independents in Cardigan*" by W. Finch. The bottle had been placed in the wall on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1831. In the month of August 1869, in rebuilding the wall of the new chapel, the contents of the bottle were placed in an iron box, with new documents, namely "*...all information in connection with the present new building, the cause at the time, copies of newspapers and pieces of coinage of the period...*" This box was placed with its contents in a similar place in the wall, - again behind the pulpit.

Involved with the 1869 rebuilding were Messrs. J. R. Daniel, carpenter, St. Mary Street, and D. Davies. The new building, which was designed to seat 700, was completed on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1870. It had been built by J. R. Daniel, a Deacon of the chapel and contractor, at a cost of £1, 400, to designs drawn by the Rev. T. Thomas of Llandore a. k. a. "Thomas Glandwr". An opening ceremony for the new building was held on September 21<sup>st</sup> 1870. On September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1870 the following description appeared in the '*Cardigan & Tivy-Side Advertiser*':

*"...OPENING OF CAPEL MAIR WELSH CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, CARDIGAN.*

*WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 AND 22, 1870.*

*The Opening Services in connection with this place of worship took place on Wednesday and Thursday, the 21 and 22 day of September 1870. The Independent Cause commenced in Cardigan about the year 1792 in a dwelling house at Pwllhay, the Rev. John Phillips, Moylegrove, preaching in the house once a fortnight for a short time. The Cause flourishing, it was thought desirable to provide a more convenient place of worship, and a storehouse near the Angel Inn was obtained, where the congregation remained for some years. This place also became much too small, and a new Chapel was built in St. Mary's Lane in the year 1803, Mr. Phillips being still the minister, a post which he retained until unable to attend from illness, at which time the Cause was unfortunately in a declining state and the chapel not quite finished. At this juncture the Rev. Daniel Davies, also a native of Moylegrove, came forward, by whose exertions the chapel was completed, and under his ministry the church once more flourished, and that to such an extent that the chapel had to be entirely rebuilt and enlarged in the year 1831. From that tie the congregation has been constantly increasing, until at length about two years since it was determined to again enlarge the chapel., the present imposing structure which is quite an ornament, not only to the locality in which it is placed, but to the town at large, being commenced on the 24 May in last year. From that date to the present time the Sunday services have been held at the Guildhall, and the week day meetings at the Hope English Independent Chapel.*

*The following is a rough description of the new building:- The front is entirely new, being built of limestone on the rock principle, with dressings of Bath stone from the Box Ground Quarries, including the plinth course, jambs of entrance door, &c.*



*The side walls and pine end, from the height of the gallery upwards, are also new. The chapel, the extreme dimensions of which are 61 feet in length by 41 feet wide, is approached from the street by wide steps of Kilgerran stone, the interior being lighted by 13 windows – four in each side, three in the front and two behind the platform – the sills of which are also of Kilgerran stone, 4 ½ inches thick.*

*The entrance lobby is paved with encaustic tiles of a neat design, and has two folding doors opening into the chapel, which are covered with crimson baize, with panels formed of gilt moulding. The gallery has been enlarged and at the entrance end is somewhat circular in its construction; the whole of the fronts being framed, panelled and moulded, divided by framed and panelled projecting pilasters with their caps and plinth moulds, terminating at the bottom with a moulded and blocked cornice, also with a moulded cornice at the top capped with mahogany. The pews are open with solid ends, the backs having a fall of two inches from the height of the seats to the capping, which is of mahogany french polished. The depth of the pews downstairs is 2ft 10 in, and in the gallery 2 ft 6 in; each set is numbered on white enamelled plate. The iron columns supporting the gallery are painted in pale green and buff. The orthodox pulpit is not introduced, but in its place a very handsome mahogany platform, easily seen from all parts of the building, and upon which is placed the reading desk. The wall at the back of the platform is richly embellished with ornamental moulded pillars, the space between which is neatly panelled. The ceiling has moulded cornices and pendant moulds, with handsome centre flower surrounded with enriched soffit and mouldings. The ventilation has been well provided for, being fully secured by ventilators placed in the ceiling covered with perforated zinc, and having shutters which can be opened from the gallery floor by means of cranks and twisted wire. The interior has been very handsomely finished and has a most pleasing appearance, the wall between the gas brackets being panelled, with sunken borders, and the whole painted in rich, but harmonious and well blended colours. The gas arrangements are on a very liberal scale; the gallery is lit by a splendid star gasolier pendant from the centre flower of the ceiling, containing 36 lights; the downstairs being lighted by very neat three-light brackets from the walls under the gallery, a very handsome hall lamp is also suspended in the entrance lobby.*

*The new chapel has cost about £1400, exclusive of the old materials, of which £800 has already been received, and about £100 not yet in hand have been promised. The chapel is calculated to seat between 700 and 800 persons.*

*The clock was presented by Mr. H. D. Davies, Trewindsor Mill, chairman of the committee; and three handsome Bibles were also contributed by Mr. O. P. Davies, draper, one of the secretaries.*

*The architect is the Rev. Thomas Thomas, Glandwr, near Swansea; and the contractor Mr. J. R. Daniel, St. Mary-street, Cardigan, under whose personal supervision the work has been carried out, and who deserves the highest praise for the artistic and substantial manner in which the whole has been completed.*

*The following gentlemen constituted the working Committee of the new chapel:- Rev. W. Davies, minister; T. Griffiths, draper; D. Timothy, master mariner (since dead); T. Thomas, ironfounder; E. Jones draper; D. Morgan, carpenter; T. Griffiths, cooper; W. Morgan, carpenter; Chairman, H. D. Davies, woollen*

*manufacturer; Treasurer, Lewis Evans, chemist; Secretaries O. P. Davies, draper, and Samuel Owen, Catherine Row; the whole of whom have exerted themselves to the utmost to bring the undertaking to a successful conclusion..."*

The opening services were very well attended and £900 of the cost of the new building had been raised by the end of the two day opening event. In about 1871 the following account was written:

*"...In 1792 there was an old lady, a member of Penrhiwgaled, named Esther Phillips, came to live in this town and as there was no chapel of her denomination she went to Trewyddel to worship, and was given a promise by Mr John Phillips that he would come and preach in her house. Pwllhai was a small house. Soon Mr Phillips was preaching there fortnightly fairly regularly and Mr Benjamin Hughes, Cilgerran, was preaching there occasionally. Once in a while Mr B Evans, Trewen and Dr Phillips, Neuaddlwyd also came to preach. Some of the local inhabitants were won over to seek religion as a result, they went to Trewyddel to be confirmed as there was no chapel here. In time Esther Phillips house became too small and an old storehouse near the Angel hotel was acquired and adapted for worship. The place was soon full and a church was formed there as a branch of Trewyddel. For some time after the formation of the church the deacons from Trewyddel came here on Communion Sundays to carry the elements, it was probably thought that no one from the new church had the experience to be made a Deacon. Things continued like this while Mr Phillips remained their minister. They felt that the cost of continuing as they were was too high, as they were not a rich congregation, and that it would be better for them to have a purpose built chapel somewhere convenient. Mr David Davies, a responsible and well off businessman in the town, gave a piece of land on Heol Mair (Mary Street) for sixpence a year, without limit, to build a chapel. The land was secured to the Independents while there was water in the River Teify. Building began in 1803, but as the people were few and also poor, the minister Mr Phillips, Trewyddel, due to debility and many other commitments, unable to help. It can be said that the walls were built in sad conditions. After many problems the roof was eventually put on, and despite the fact it had no gallery and few seats the debt was already £500. To make matters worse there was discord among the members regarding some of the building. People left one by one until it was on the edge of tragedy. In 1812 Mr Daniel Davies, Rheycac, originally a member of Trewyddel, became a supporting preacher to Mr Phillips in his ministry. His coming breathed new life into the cause in the town, the chapel was still unfinished and the debt remained.*

*With Mr Davies' efforts the debt was paid fairly soon, and the chapel was fitted with a gallery and seats. From then on the cause did well. In 1831 the old chapel was demolished and a handsome new chapel was built in its place, measuring 48 x 36 feet with an extensive gallery. This was paid for quite soon and it was overfull with members and listeners. The increase in the town was all the more strange as Llechryd and Tyrhos had grown under the ministry of Mr Davies and his helpers, as well as the formation of a new church at Llandudoch, discouraging the country people from swelling the numbers in the town. Things continued to go well until Mr Davies became elderly and he encouraged the church to find its own minister, but promised to back them in any way he could. He was keen to see a minister settle here in order to prevent any problems and both he and the church sent a call to Mr William Davies, a member at Trelech and a student at Brecon. His ordination*

services were held on April 19th and 20th, 1865. The first evening sermons were given by Messrs W. E. Jones, New Quay, and T. Phillips Horeb. Next day at 10 Mr O. Thomas, Brynmair, preached on the nature of a church, the questions were asked and the ordination prayer given by Mr D. Davies, the old minister; a sermon on the duty of a minister given by Mr I. Williams, Trelech, and on the duty of a church by Mr W. Evans, Aberaeron. At 2 in the afternoon Messrs D Jones. Penygroes, and D. Jones, Trewen; in the evening sermons were given by Messrs G Williams, Trewyddel, and E. Lewis, Brynberian. This was the first ordination for the Independent denomination in this town as Mr Daniel Davies was already ordained before he came here. The old minister was very supportive until the end of his life in 1867. In 1868 the church decided to build a bigger and better chapel than the one built in 1831, and on the 20th of May, 1869 the old house was pulled down and the new one started according to the plans of Mr Thomas, Glandwr, by Mr J R Daniel, Cardigan. The work was completed and it was opened on September 21st and 22nd, 1870. Those who officiated were:- Messrs I. Williams, Penygroes; S. Evans, Hebron; E. Lewis, Brynberian; J. G. Morris, Trefdraeth; T. Phillips, Horeb; J. Davies, Gedeon; J. Davies, Glynarthen; T. Davies, Llanelli; D. Jones, B.A., Merthyr; I. Williams, Trelech; T. Thomas, Glandwr, and Dr. W. Rees, Liverpool. The cost was £1,500, by the end of the opening services £900 had been collected. This is one of the most beautiful chapels in the Principality, measuring 61 x 41 feet, and is filled by a cheerful congregation. Things are so different here now compared to when the first chapel was built. The current membership 360, we hope that Mr Davies has a long and useful life ahead of him like his illustrious predecessor. The Western Festival was held here in 1817, and it was very successful. The influence of the atmosphere at this festival chased out all the unpleasant things, and it was the beginning of a strong revival here. A second festival was held here in 1836 which was also very successful.

There have been many characters associated with this cause from time to time, and godly women have distinguished themselves from the beginning. The names of Esther Phillips, Anne James, Trefigan-lodge; Mally William Evan, Betty Finch, Bet Davies, Lleine, and the holy old lady of Clun, are respected and loved to this day, and the day of judgement will tell of their goodness. The following names are remembered with respect: George Thomas, William Finch, Shon, Rhosfach, Shon of Felin-y-dyffryn; Jonah, Rhoshill; David Beynon Eyans, Cadben David Timothy, and others.

The following were raised to preach here:-

- DAVID OWEN -ordained in Llechrydas a supporter to Mr. Davies - see Siloah, Pembrokeshire.
- HENRY JONES - Educated Brecon -ordained Painscastle, Radnorshire - minister at Kingswood, Gloucestershire.
- WILLIAM EVANS -After finishing in Brecon, ordained in Cwmwysg and Trecastle where he remains.
- JOHN BEYNON DAVIES - Educated Brecon now minister at Mount Stuart, Cardiff.
- JOHN PICTON EVANS - After 2 years at Brecon his health deteriorated, advised to take a long voyage to Australia, where he is currently improving.

The current Deacons are Messrs T. Griffiths, Draper; W. Jones, Pwllhai; A. Morgan, O. Picton Dayies, J. R. Daniel, and John Evans.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

*Not fully extracted*

*DANIEL DAVIES – born at Penywern Farm, Trewyddel, Pembrokeshire 1780...”*

In October 1872, at the second anniversary meeting of the new chapel, it was announced that the debt against the building had been reduced to £300. At the same meeting the minister, Rev. William Davies, recently returned from his wedding tour, was presented with an illuminated address. In the autumn of 1874 Rev. William Davies decided to move to Tabernacl, Llandeilo. He left Cardigan at Christmas 1874 after serving in Capel Mair for four months less than ten years. Deacon Abraham Morgan died in 1874. In 1875 there was no Minister here. By September 1875 the debt against the building of the chapel was completely cleared. On May 6<sup>th</sup> 1876 the following article appeared in the '*Aberystwyth Observer*':

*“...CAPEL MAIR.*

*The Rev. T. J. Morris, Saron, has accepted the pastorate of the Welsh Congregational Church, at Capel Mair, which has been vacant since the removal of the Rev. William Davies to Llandilo, a period of nearly eighteen months...”*

In 1876 Rev. Thomas J. Morris became the new Minister of Capel Mair until 1908. T. J. Morris was born on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1846, in Llanelli. He probably spent a time in the Market Street school. T. J. Morris' family were associated with a Mineral works in that town: and after he had finished school, he worked there for some time. Thomas Morris, as he called himself, became a member of Capel Als in 1859 when he was aged just thirteen. He began preaching in Capel Als in 1866, aged twenty. He entered Carmarthen College in October 1867. He was ordained at Saron, Llangeler on February 1<sup>st</sup> 1871. At some time in early 1876, he came to preach one Sunday at Capel Mair, and in April that year, he was invited to become the minister at Capel Mair. His ministry began here on the first Sunday in June 1876. The Installation Meetings were delayed until the month of August, when the Cardigan Union visited the church for their Quarterly Meeting.

The same month that T. J. Morris was installed at Capel Mair, he married Elizabeth, the daughter of James and Elizabeth Herring. This James Herring was a son of the Rev. John Herring, one of the famous ministers of Bethania (Baptist) Chapel, Cardigan (1811-1832). T. J. and Elizabeth Morris had six children – three sons and three daughters. The fourth child born to them, Thomas Picton, died an infant of two years of age. Their daughter, Lily, later married one of the later deacons – E. T. Davies.

*“...His principle feature was his descriptive preaching...”* said the late Rev. E. J. Lloyd (Minister of Capel Degwel). *“...He had a particular skill to paint old Biblical characters into pictures that would live before the audience. There was no danger of anyone sleeping when he was speaking. And he could bring smiles or tears alternately. Everyone loved his kind outlook and his amusing, guile-less words. I have*

heard it said by local people that seeing “Morris, Capel Mair”, and speaking with him was better for them than a doctor's medicine!...” (Llafurwyr Seion, page 28). Capel Mair then had 327 members.

Six new Deacons were ordained in 1878, namely, David Morgan, Pendre, agricultural labourer; Owen Beynon Evans, Pendre; Thomas Evans; Samuel Owen; Lewis Evans, chemist, High Street; and William Davies, tailor. On September 20<sup>th</sup> 1883, Owen Picton Davies, Deacon, died. In 1884 a surprise religious census showed 212 attending the chapel in the morning and 289 in the evening. The increasing membership persuaded Capel Mair to consider building a Vestry. On September 4<sup>th</sup> 1884, three cottages on the corner of Finch's Square/Feidrfafr, to the south of the chapel, formerly the property of the Priory estate, were sold to the chapel for £135. They pulled down the old houses, and built the Vestry and Chapel House in their place. The cost of purchasing the row of houses and erecting the new building cost the sum of £640.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 1885 the Quarterly Meetings of the Cardiganshire Congregationalists were held here. In 1887 average Sunday attendance was estimated to be: - a. m. – 206; p. m. – 280. In the year 1887 the Three County Assembly (as the South-west Assembly was known by then) was held in Capel Mair and the town. It was held on Tuesday and Wednesday, June 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. On June 11<sup>th</sup> 1887 the following item appeared in the 'Aberystwyth Observer':

“...CARDIGAN.

*On Tuesday and Wednesday the great annual meetings, or Cymanfa, of the Congregational Association for the counties of Cardigan, Carmarthen, and Pembroke were held at Cardigan. The proceedings commenced with a conference, which was held in the Capel Mair at ten on Tuesday. The president for the year was the Rev S. Davies, Siloa, Llanelly, but in his absence the chair was occupied by the Rev E. Lewis, Brynberian. A paper was read on the Spirituality of Religion." A resolution was proposed condemning the policy of the present Government and their Liberal Unionist supporters in refusing to grant Home Rule to Ireland, and expressing the continued confidence of the association in Mr. Gladstone, whom they trusted would yet be spared to see his Home Rule policy triumphant. An amendment to this proposal, so far as it approved of the measures of Mr. Gladstone for Home Rule, was moved by Mr. Henry R. Daniel, solicitor. The subject was very warmly discussed, but on being put to the vote the amendment was negatived by a considerable majority*

*. A resolution of satisfaction at the reception accorded Mr. Gladstone at Swansea was also passed.~ On Tuesday afternoon sermons were delivered to a large assembly in the Recreation Ground, where a convenient stage had been erected. In the evening sermons were preached in the Capel Mair Independent chapel, and also in the Baptist chapel. On Wednesday the open air services commenced at seven, and were continued at 10 a.m., two and six p.m. The weather at the early services on Wednesday was very wet, but during the day it turned out favourable, and immense congregations attended all the services, the town during the intervals being filled with visitors and strangers, who were hospitably entertained by the inhabitants...”*

In July 1888 an advertisement sought tenders for erecting a house and vestry at Capel Mair, which were added here at a cost of £640. A row of cottages were demolished in order to accommodate the new vestry. The new buildings were designed by D. Davies of Penrhiwllan. It became necessary to elect deacons again in 1888, and three were chosen – David Jones (Bath House); David Morris, Surveyor; and Daniel Jenkins (Clynyrnys) (the brother of Thomas Jenkins). On 25<sup>th</sup> December 1888 a successful Christmas night concert was held here. On May 26<sup>th</sup> 1890, Deacon Thomas Griffiths died.

At the time of the Census on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1891 Margaret Jesse, aged 70 years, the chapel cleaner, and David Jesse, aged 30 years, her son, a cabinet-maker, may have lived at the chapel house. In 1891 an annual Cymanfa Ganu was established here. In June 1891 improvements at the corner of Finch Square and Feidrfair were completed, enclosing the ornamental garden with a wall and railings. The chapel produced an Annual Report for the first time in 1892. The practice was not repeated until 1905. On April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1893 a son was born at the vestry house to the wife of David Charles, cabinet-maker. Sadly the infant died on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1893. On September 11<sup>th</sup> 1894 another son was born to the wife of David Charles, a cabinet-maker, of the Chapel House. In 1896 Capel Mair joined the North Pembrokeshire Sunday School Union – the Sunday School then had about 160 members. In June 1897 Thomas Evans and others instigated the purchase of a harmonium for the chapel, which was acquired that December. On December 25<sup>th</sup> 1897 the following item appeared in the '*Cardigan & Tivy-Side Advertiser*':

*“...DEATH IN A CHAPEL – On Sunday evening last, at Capel Mair, in this town, whilst the Rev. T. J. Morris, pastor, was conducting the devotional part of the service, an elderly member of the congregation entered the chapel, and when taking his seat fell down, creating great consternation, so that the service had to be discontinued. Deceased, whose name is Thomas Williams, a retired ostler, from Troedyrhiw, Merthyr, aged 75 years, had recently come to reside with his niece at 28, Castle-street, Bridge-end. It transpired at the inquest, held on Tuesday last by Mr. Ivor Evans, coroner for the district, that deceased had had a stroke of paralysis about 2 years ago, from which he never recovered control of his left side. He always used to complain of shortness of breath, and it is probable that death was due by hurrying and exertion to reach the chapel, as he was later than usual in starting. Deceased was removed to the lobby of the chapel, restoratives applied, and a doctor sent for, but before he arrived life was extinct. A verdict of “Died from syncope” was returned in accordance with the medical testimony...”*

On January 16<sup>th</sup> 1898 it was announced that a further piece of land on the corner of Feidrfair and Finch Square now belonged to the church. They planted bushes and small trees on it. At the beginning of 1898, according to Rev. D J Roberts, the church purchased

*“...four cups, four plates, one Flagon, and one silver paten for the Communion service, with the name “Capel Mair, Cardigan” engraved on them, and the date...”*

On December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1898 John James Morris, the 20-year-old son of the Minister, died. Losing his son was a heavy loss to T. J. Morris, and he was himself in perilous health. He had suffered an accident as a youngster working in the mineral

works and remained crippled for the rest of his life. The after effects of that accident had become so serious by this time that he was persuaded to go to hospital in Cardiff for an important treatment in late 1898. Although they had to break part of the right leg, he largely recovered, but he never again enjoyed the same degree of physical strength, but was often frail and in pain for the remainder of his life. He was joyfully welcomed back to the church after a nine month absence by a packed meeting on Sunday evening, August 13<sup>th</sup> 1899. He was presented with an illuminated Address on vellum (which was read to the listening audience by O. Beynon Evans) and a pouch of gold by David Jones, the senior deacon. A handsome clock was also presented to Mrs. Morris by Mrs. Daniel, the widow of J. R. Daniel. Rev. T. J. Morris chaired the 1899 Cardiganshire Conference. In May 1900 the Annual Singing Festival for South Cardiganshire and North Pembrokeshire was held here.

At the time of the Census on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1901 the following persons were living at the chapel house: David Charles, aged 40 years, a cabinet-maker, bilingual in Welsh and English; Mary Anne Charles, aged 32 years, his wife, bilingual; Albert Thomas Charles, aged 6 years, their son, Welsh-speaking; Arthur James Charles, aged 4 years, their son, Welsh-speaking; and Gladys M. M. Charles, aged 1 year, their daughter. All of them had been born in Cardigan. In early 1905 Rev. T. J. Morris suffered a bad affliction, but returned in the Spring of 1905 to steer the efforts for celebrating the centenary of the chapel. Deacon Daniel Jenkins died that year.

On Sunday December 17<sup>th</sup> 1905 the chapel, which was capable of seating 600, re-opened following a refit and repainting and redecoration, celebrating the centenary of the Welsh Congregational cause in Cardigan. Rev. William Davies, the former minister, presided over the meetings. A new harmonium was acquired at about that time. The gallery front was altered during the refit. In 1906 the chapel produced an Annual Report for 1905. The Minister's Report states:

*“...Because it is an exceptional thing for us as a church to publish a Report, it is natural for the scattered children to ask – Why are we doing it this time? The last year was an important one in our history: - the church has reached its' centenary. And I think there is something appropriate in having a meeting to celebrate the event.*

*We decided to refurbish the chapel interior, hold a re-opening meeting, invite the Rev. W. Davies, Llandeilo, the past minister of the church, to preach in the morning and evening, and to have a special meeting in the afternoon. That Sunday is one I shall long remember. It was good to see Mr. Davies looking so strong, and to hear him preaching so powerfully.*

*The meeting commenced at two with Mr. David Jones, and after my giving a short summary of our distinctions as a Denomination, we had a presentation from Mr. O. Beynon Evans on 'The History of the Church in the place' and by Mr. S. Owen on the 'Special Characteristics' he saw here. After that, Mr. Lewis Evans presented the church with a handsome oil painting of the late Venerable Daniel Davies, the first minister of the church. Three ministers have shepherded the church. Two were, present, and a picture of the third; and perhaps he was here himself in spirit. The meeting was again addressed by Mr. Davies...”*

*“...We can see from the Report that everything in the outside circumstances were favourable – the chapel and the vestry had been refurbished internally and externally; and it was good for us to be able to advertise that everything amongst us was as we wished. Hopefully we shall again have the Lord's favour, as when the saint was being built, and many being brought into contact with the salvation that will always be...”*

The chapel has produced such a report annually since that date. There were then 356 members. The 1905 revival saw only five old members returning. In 1906 the Deacons of Capel Mair were named as: Lewis Evans (Treasurer), O. Beynon Evans, Thomas Evans (Treasurer, Precentor), David Jones, David Morris (Secretary) and Samuel Owen (Treasurer). Membership fell that year from 356 to 345. In a Church Meeting, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1907 it was noted that:

*“...O. Beynon Evans proposed the propriety of electing new deacons – he felt that their number should be increased...”*

On Sunday, August 18<sup>th</sup> 1907:

*“...it was decided that everyone, old and young, who is not a member should go out, and that the members who were in the gallery should come down together on the floor...”*

At the same meeting they elected seven fellows to be new deacons, namely David Lloyd (Saddler), Captain David Timothy, John Thomas (Napier Street), William Thomas (Carningli), T. Marsden Daniel, D. Ladd Davies, and Thomas Jenkins (Glen View). Deacon Lewis Evans died that year.

*“...October 13, 1907 – the Rev. T. J. Morris announced that the Rev. T. Eynon Davies had decided to present to the church Collection Plates for the collections, in memory of his parents...”*

This was the last church event that Rev. T. J. Morris undertook. Early in the year 1908, his strength declined again. D. Ladd Davies, a Deacon, left in 1908. After many weeks of affliction and pain, T. J. Morris died on Sunday evening, December 13<sup>th</sup> 1908, having been the minister of Capel Mair for thirty two years, aged 62 years. On Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup> there was a memorial service held in Capel Mair. Conducted by the Rev. E. J. Lloyd, Capel Degwel. Rev. T. J. Morris was buried in Cardigan's public cemetery and the funeral was attended by a great multitude of people.

*“...Following the death of the Rev. T. J. Morris, the church was, for a period, without a resident Minister. They were on the verge of sending the call to a young student from Carmarthen college and a fellow from New Quay; but he met with a fatal accident, and shattered the hopes of the church...”*



On May 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> 1909 Rev. T. Esger James, Maesteg, visited Capel Mair for the first time to preach. The chapel installed a pipe organ at a cost of £709 that year. On November 14<sup>th</sup> 1909, Rev. T. Esger James preached at Capel Mair again, and was asked to become their minister. He said he would if the call was unanimous. A week later the congregation sent him a unanimous “call.” In December 1909 it was announced that Rev. T. Esger James had accepted the invitation to become the new minister. In 1910 David Miles occupied the chapel house. On February 24<sup>th</sup> 1910 Rev. T. Esger James moved to Cardigan and became the new Minister of Capel Mair three days later, remaining so until 1935. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 1910 his installation services were held at Capel Mair.

Thomas Esger James was born on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1869, in Caeglas, Llan Newydd parish, four miles from Carmarthen, as one of the eight children of Benjamin and Hannah James. He was a school teacher in Abernant for a time. He was accepted as a member in Bwlchnewydd on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1885. He delivered his first sermon on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1886. He was, at the time, at Parcyvelvet School, Carmarthen. He served for a time there as an assistant teacher. He was admitted to Carmarthen College in July 1889, and was there for three years. He was ordained as the minister of the churches of Pentretygwyn and Cefnarthen on June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 1892. On New Year's Day 1894, he was installed as the minister of Saron, Maesteg. The church prospered remarkably during his term in Saron. At the time of the Revival he admitted more than fifty new members one Sunday evening in 1904. The chapel was extended during his ministry. In September 1892, he married Miss Mary Anne Cleaver, Abertrinant, Llanfinhangel, Aberbythych, a member of Milo church. While they lived in Maesteg, six children were born to them, three girls and three boys; one girl died young.

*“...The organ opened in 1910, the first year of my Ministry. The organ cost, together with other associated works, £709, and by June 8, 1915, the total had been cleared. The organ was purchased from Messrs. Blackett & Howden, and the architect was Mr. Ruthen Swansea, and the organ chamber was built by Mr. John Evans, Brynteifi...”*

The new organ was unveiled on September 26<sup>th</sup> 1910. A religious temperance booklet of questions and answers for children called “*Grisiau Sobrwydd*” - “The Steps of Sobriety”, was published in 1910 by Rev. T. Esger James. On January 9<sup>th</sup> 1911 the Deacon Thomas Evans died. At the time of the Census on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1911 the Chapel House, containing four rooms, was occupied by David Miles, aged 64 years, a house painter, born in Cardigan, and Elizabeth Miles, aged 48 years, his wife for 10 years, born in Cenarth. Both of them were bilingual in Welsh and English. On May 25<sup>th</sup> 1913 the Deacon Samuel Owen died. On January 5<sup>th</sup> 1914 David Jones of Bath House, the senior Deacon, died aged 91 years. On November 17<sup>th</sup> 1915 a son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Lloyd of Ty Capel Mair. In 1917 Benjamin Lloyd, aged 40 years, occupied Capel Mair House. In 1919 “...the two gardens behind the chapel...” were purchased, “...The gardens and expenses cost £600...”, and were paid for by personal subscription. On July 9<sup>th</sup> 1920 the Deacon Captain David Timothy died. On December 20<sup>th</sup> 1920 the Deacon Owen Beynon Evans died.

On February 6<sup>th</sup> 1921 ten new Deacons were ordained at Capel Mair – William John Sambrook, Nantperchellan, St. Dogmaels; Albert Rees, Belmont; David Charles; James Jones, Y Bryn; Jacob Evans, Rhydyfowch; Maurice Morris, Star Shop, High Street; James Thomas, ironmonger; William Thomas, blacksmith, Brohedyn; David John Jones, Northgate Terrace; and Jonah Edwards.

A new set of Communion Service with individual cups was donated to the chapel by Mr. & Mrs. T. M. Daniel, and Mrs. Daniel's mother – Mrs. Cadle, on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1921. On April 17<sup>th</sup> 1921, Deacon James Thomas died aged 59 years. On July 9<sup>th</sup> 1922 David Morris was presented with an illuminated address commemorating his 25 years of service as the chapel secretary. On March 19<sup>th</sup> 1923 Deacon David Morris died. In 1927 Mr. & Mrs. Davies lived at the Chapel House. The chapel exterior was painted that year. On December 19<sup>th</sup> 1928 the Deacon William Thomas died suddenly. By August 30<sup>th</sup> 1929 the vestry had been renovated at a cost of £42. 3s. 3 ½ d.

In 1930 the Deacons were named as: David Lloyd, Pendre; D. Charles, Lion Terrace; John Thomas, Napier Street; James Jones, Gwydyr; T. Marsden Daniel; Jacob Evans, Rhydyfowch; Thomas Jenkins, Glenview; W. Thomas, Brynhedyn; W. J. Sambrook; David J. Jones, Northgate Terrace; M. Morris, Star Shop; Albert Rees, Belmont; and Jonah Edwards. The Treasurers were Messrs. David Lloyd and J. Arthur Evans. The Secretaries were David Charles (minutes); Thomas Jenkins; and G. J. Morgan, Green Street (financial). Mrs. Anne Davies was the caretaker. There were then 358 members. On June 1<sup>st</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> 1931 the Annual Assembly of the Welsh Union of Independent Chapels was held here. On December 30<sup>th</sup> 1931 Deacon Mr. David Lloyd of Llysteifi died aged 75 years. Membership at Capel Mair fell from 358 to 357 that year.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1932 Mrs. Anne Davies, the caretaker of Capel Mair, was found dead at her home – the Chapel House, aged 52 years. That year Rev. T. Esger James was the chairman of the Independents' Union. In 1932 the membership of Capel Mair fell from 357 to 349. On April 4<sup>th</sup> 1933 the Deacon T. Marsden Daniel died aged 67 years. In 1933 electric lights were installed in the chapel and schoolroom. On June 6<sup>th</sup> 1933 the Deacon James Jones died aged 80 years. Membership at the chapel fell that year from 349 to 337. In 1934 electric heating was installed at the chapel. In 1934 the membership of Capel Mair fell from 337 to 332. From 1934 until 1955 Mr. and Mrs. John and Mary Lloyd lived at the Chapel House. Rev. T. Esger James retired owing to his declining health on March 10<sup>th</sup> 1935. On March 11<sup>th</sup> he was presented with a testimonial and nearly £150. Rev. T. Esger James and his wife moved to Llanstephan where he died on August 16<sup>th</sup> 1941.

In 1935 the membership at Capel Mair rose from 332 to 336. Jonah Edwards, a Deacon, died on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1937, aged 74 years. On February 21<sup>st</sup> 1937 the senior Deacon, John Thomas of No. 1 Napier Street, died here suddenly, just before the Sunday service, aged 78 years. In April 1937 builder John Evans advertised for tenders for redecorating the chapel both inside and out. In 1937 William George, coach-builder; William Griffiths, gardener; Benjamin Lloyd; William Morgan, Arthur H. Thomas; J. Arthur Evans; and E. S. Watts, clothier, became Deacons of the chapel.

During the winter of 1937-38 the Chapel was extensively renovated

*“...by Messrs. Davies & Morgan, Builders, and Mr. Tom Evans, Painter & Decorator, under the supervision of Mr. John Evans, Brynteifi...”*

In 1937 the chapel's membership increased from 329 to 338. On Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1938, the chapel re-opened following a refit which cost almost £800.

*“...Before the morning service, the Rev. T. Esger James offered a prayer; then the key was handed over by Mr. Thomas Jenkins to the Town Mayoress, Mrs. Arthur Thomas, to once again open the Chapel door...Congratulations today on the renovation of the chapel. The renovations cost nearly £800, and the whole has been paid. John Evans, Contractor, William Morgan and Davies, the builders, and Tom Evans, the Painter, deserve every praise for their excellent work. I was overjoyed to see the Great Seat extended, and to see the new Deacons and the old Deacons filling it. After my departure, on Sunday evening, February 21, 1937, Willie George; William Griffiths; Benjamin Lloyd; E. S. Watts; Arthur Evans; William Morgan and Arthur Thomas were chosen as Deacons...”*

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1938 the chapel re-opened following a refit costing almost £800. Deacon David John Jones left in 1938. Rev. David J. Roberts became the new Minister, his installation services being held on February 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 1939 and remained the minister until 1977. He had formerly been the minister of Carmel, Llanllechid and Bethlehem, Talybont, for about three and a half years. On May 31<sup>st</sup> 1939 Albert Rees, a Deacon of the chapel, died. In 1939 William George, a Deacon of Capel Mair, left for London. In the autumn of 1939 the Chapel House was occupied by Mary Lloyd (b. 29/04/1883), a married woman. On April 6<sup>th</sup> 1943, W. J. Sambrook, a Deacon, died. On March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945, Deacon David Charles died.

On May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945 a V. E. Day service was held here. Deacon Thomas Jenkins died in December 1945. On February 17<sup>th</sup> 1946, the following Deacons were elected: Evan T. Davies; Dewi Evans, shopkeeper; and W. R. Jones, Deputy Headmaster of Cardigan Grammar School. In 1946 Deacon Benjamin Lloyd moved to Capel Degwel, St. Dogmaels. Deacon J. Arthur Evans also left in 1946. In 1946 Mr. E. T. Davies, Dewi Evans and W. R. Jones became new Deacons of Capel Mair. In 1946 the membership of Capel Mair fell from 395 to 388. In 1947 W. R. Jones became the Secretary and Honorary Deacon, Rev. Jacob Thomas, died. The membership of Capel Mair rose in 1947 from 388 to 392. In April 1948 new trustees were appointed, including Jacob Evans, Rhydyfowch; Maurice Morris, Star Shop, High Street; E. S. Watts, Pendre; and Alun James, High Street.

On May 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 1948 the Three Counties Independent Cymanfa was held at Capel Mair. On November 15<sup>th</sup> 1949, Deacon Maurice Morris died. In November 1950 Rev. Daniel Adams, B. A., B. D., became an Honorary Deacon. On January 28<sup>th</sup> 1951 Messrs. T. S. Davies, farmer; James Griffiths, Ferwig, farmer; John Lloyd; Sulwyn Phillips; and Alun Rees became new Deacons. On February 13<sup>th</sup> 1951 the Deacon Jacob Evans of Rhydyfowch, died aged 81 years. He had been a Deacon for 30 years. Membership in 1951 rose from 376 to 392. In 1952 the Deacons were named as: Rev. Daniel Adams, William Griffiths, William Morgan, Arthur H.

Thomas, E. S. Watts, E. T. Davies, Dewi Evans, W. R. Jones, T. S. Davies, James Griffiths, John Lloyd, Silwyn Phillips and Alun Rees. There were then 399 members.

In 1953 the membership at Capel Mair increased from 376 to 386. On January 20<sup>th</sup> 1954 the Deacon William H. Griffiths of Short Row died. The membership of Capel Mair that year rose from 386 to 410. In October 1954 Deacon Alun Rees left. In 1955 Rev. David J. Roberts wrote the book '*Capel Mair Aberteifi*'. On November 20<sup>th</sup> 1955 the chapel celebrated 150 years. On October 19<sup>th</sup> 1956 John Lloyd, a Deacon of the chapel and the occupant of Ty Capel Mair, died aged 76 years. He was buried at Bryn Bethel Cemetery, St Dogmaels. In 1957 the chapel membership rose from 391 to 392 and in 1958 from 392 to 398. In 1959 the number of members at the chapel fell from 398 to 397.

On February 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> 1960 there were special services to celebrate the 21<sup>st</sup> year of the ministry of Rev. D. J. Roberts. On September 30<sup>th</sup> 1960 William Morgan, a Deacon, died aged 78 years. The membership of Capel Mair in 1960 increased from 386 to 390. By December 28<sup>th</sup> 1962 the vestry had re-opened following renovations by the congregation members, including installation of a kitchen and washroom. In 1966 Arthur H. Thomas ceased to be a Deacon of Capel Mair. In 1967 the following new Deacons were appointed: D. Huw Emmanuel; D. Melvyn Davies; J. T. Griffiths; D. W. Lloyd; Gwilym Morris; Enoch Thomas and E. O. Watts.

In 1970 E. S. Watts ceased to be a Deacon. In 1970 the chapel was extensively redecorated and services were held temporarily in Hope English Congregational Chapel. In September 1972 Rev. David J. Roberts was elected to be the President of the Welsh Congregationalists Union. In 1972 E. O. Watts ceased to be a Deacon. In March 1975 Thomas James Giles of the Chapel House died. In 1976 E. T. Davies ceased to be a Deacon. In February 1977 Rev. David J. Roberts retired.

In October 1977 Rev. Ieuan Davies, B. A., B. D., became the new Minister of Capel Mair. Formerly of Tumble, he was educated at Cardiff University and Swansea College. He was ordained at Pysgah, Llandissilio, in 1965. In 1969 he had moved to Salem, Caernarfon. His predecessor, Rev. D. J. Roberts, conducted his installation service. In 1978 James Griffiths, J. T. Griffiths and Enoch Thomas ceased to be Deacons. In November 1979 the Manse at Napier Gardens was offered for sale. In 1980 the following were elected as new Deacons of Capel Mair: Alun M. T. Davies; A. Trevor Edwards; Dafydd Wyn Jones; and D. S. Smith. That year membership fell from 391 to 375. The vestry was renovated that year. In 1982 T. S. Davies ceased to be a Deacon. During 1982 repairs and redecoration commenced at Capel Mair to specifications by Llwyd Edwards, architect. Islwyn Bowen Bros. conducted the external painting. The vestry was also significantly altered. In 1982 membership at Capel Mair rose from 375 to 379. In 1983 it was revealed that external repairs had cost £7,369. Upgrading of the central heating in the Chapel House cost a further £1400. In 1983 the chapel membership rose from 379 to 381. In March 1984 Mr. W. R. Jones retired from his position a secretary after 38 years in office. On April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1984 Mrs. Heulwen Humphreys became a Deacon – the first lady deacon at Capel Mair. At the end of April 1984 the Minister, Rev. Ieuan Davies, moved to Tabernacle, King's Cross, London.

On September 9<sup>th</sup> 1984 the chapel re-opened following renovations to the vestry and the organ and a general refurbishment. On September 14<sup>th</sup> 1984 there was a special service to reveal the refurbished church organ. In 1984 W. R. Jones ceased to be the Secretary of Capel Mair, but remained a Deacon. In 1984 the membership of the chapel fell from 381 to 374. On September 20<sup>th</sup> 1985 a special service was held to celebrate Rev. D J Roberts' fifty years in the ministry. In 1985 membership at Capel Mair fell from 374 to 366. On January 14<sup>th</sup> 1986, David John Jones of No. 26 North Road – a deacon, died aged 94 years. In 1986 membership at Capel Mair rose from 366 to 369.

On Saturday October 4<sup>th</sup> 1986 Rev. J. Arwyn Phillips, B. A., B. D., M. Th., of Llanaman, Carmarthenshire, became the Minister of Capel Mair following a short gap with no Minister. His installation was conducted by his predecessor, Rev. Ieuan Davies. Rev. J. Arwyn Phillips had previously been raised to the ministry in Bryn Seion, Glynaman. From 1960 to 1967 he was the minister at Sardi, Ystradgynlais, and in Bethlehem, Rhosllanerchrugog from 1967 and Ebeneser from 1979. In 1987 the Deacon Gwilym Morris died. In 1987 Delwyn Griffiths and Mrs. Annie Thomas became new Deacons. In 1987 the membership at Capel Mair fell from 369 to 356. In 1988 W. R. Jones died and D. S. Smith ceased to be a Deacon. In 1988 membership at Capel Mair fell from 356 to 344. In 1989 Sulwyn Phillips ceased to be a Deacon.

In December 1990 Mr. H. Alun Jones of St. Dogmaels and William Rees Jones, Bryncoed, became Deacons of Capel Mair. In 1990 the number of members fell from 335 to 327. In 1991 Mr & Mrs D O Griffiths lived at Ty Capel. In 1991 membership at Capel Mair fell from 327 to 323. The chapel became a Grade II listed building in 1992. In 1992 the membership fell from 323 to 315. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1993 Rev. J. Arwyn Phillips, the minister of Capel Mair since 1986, died.

Mrs. Heulwen Humphreys ceased to be a Deacon of Capel Mair in 1993. In 1993 Mrs. Nellie James and Miss Beti Lloyd became Deacons. In 1994 Dewi Evans ceased to be a Deacon. In 1994 the membership fell from 307 to 300. On March 20<sup>th</sup> 1995 D. Melvin Davies died – he had been a deacon since 1967. The vestry was painted in August 1995. In September 1995 a special service at Capel Mair celebrated Rev. D J Roberts' 60 years in the ministry. On October 8<sup>th</sup> 1995 D. W. Lloyd, a Deacon since 1967, died. In 1995 membership fell from 300 to 290.

In 1996 H. Alun Jones ceased to be a Deacon of Capel Mair. In 1996 Miss Rhiannon A. Davies and Colin Phillips became Deacons. In October 1996 the former Minister Rev. David J. Roberts died, aged 86 years. In October 1996 Mr & Mrs Ossie Griffiths, Ty Capel, ceased to be the chapel caretakers after 21 years. In January 1997 planning permission was sought and eventually obtained, for the installation of uPVC windows.

In January 1998 Rev. Irfon Roberts was installed as the new Minister here and also at Bethania Baptist Chapel in William Street – the two congregations now being linked for the first time. Rev. Irfon Roberts hailed from Glogue and attended Hermon Primary School before moving to Anglesey in 1954 with his parents. He attended college at Bangor and at Cardiff. His first ministry was at Cao in Carmarthenshire from 1969 until 1972, when he became the minister of Graig Baptist Chapel in Newcastle Emlyn, together with Ramoth in Abercych and Cilfowyr. In 1981 he

moved to Brynamman where he remained until received the call to Cardigan. His official installation at Capel Mair took place on April 15<sup>th</sup> 1998. He was the Minister here from 1998 until 2021. In September 1998 a special service was held here to welcome the new Minister – Rev. Irfon Roberts. On October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1999 Myrddin Owen Phillips of Capel Mair House died aged 65 years. In 1999 the membership of Capel Mair fell from 248 to 239. In 2000 the number of members at Capel Mair fell from 239 to 229.

In 2001 W. Rees Jones ceased to be a Deacon. In 2001 the membership at Capel Mair fell from 229 to 216. The chapel house was redecorated and repaired in August 2002. Planning permission was refused for plastic windows to be installed in the chapel house at that time. In 2002 Mrs. Myra Evans became a Deacon. In 2002 membership of Capel Mair fell from 216 to 202. The outside of the chapel itself was repainted in 2003. In 2003 the chapel membership fell from 202 to 198. On April 4<sup>th</sup> 2004 a special service was held for the re-opening of the chapel following internal redecoration and repairs. In 2004 membership of Capel Mair fell from 198 to 195.

On November 6<sup>th</sup> 2005 a special Cymanfa Ganu was held to celebrate the bicentenary of Capel Mair, conducted by Berwyn G. Jenkins of Carmarthen. In 2005 Mr. D. Huw Emanuel, a Deacon since 1967 and the Secretary, died. In 2005 the membership fell from 195 to 186. In 2006 Mrs. Meinir Jerman; Mrs. Jean Jones; Mr. Eifion Davies and Mr. Gareth Evans were appointed Deacons. In 2006 the membership of Capel Mair fell from 186 to 177. In 2007 membership fell from 177 to 175. In 2008 Mrs. Anne Vittle became a Deacon. In May 2009 a special service was held at Capel Mair to celebrate Rev. Irfon Roberts' 40 years in the ministry. In November 2009 a special certificate was given to Mrs Annie Thomas who had been a faithful supporter of the Sunday School at Capel Mair for 60 years. In 2009 the membership fell from 168 to 166. In 2012 Mr. Dyfed Ellis Griffiths became a Deacon.

In 2018 Rev. Irfon Roberts was the Minister; Wynford Jones was the Secretary; the Treasurers were: Mrs Delyth Thomas and Mr Gareth Evans; Deacons: Mrs Meinir Jerman; Mrs Jean Jones; Mr Gareth Evans; Mrs Ann Vittle; Dr Dyfed Ellis-Gruffydd; Mrs Rhiannon Lloyd; Mrs Delyth Thomas; and Mrs Anne Hughes. The Organists were: Mrs Beti Emanuel; Mrs Valmai Phillips; Mrs Mair Thomas; Mrs Anne Hughes; Mrs Lynne Hughes; and Mr Rhys Griffiths. Mrs Lynne Davies was the Caretaker. In September 2019 Rev. Irfon Roberts celebrated 50 years in the ministry in Wales – the last 21 of them at Capel Mair and Bethania in Cardigan.

### **Description:**

The chapel was described by CADW in 1992:

*“...1870-1 Independent Chapel, by Reverend T Thomas of Llandore (Thomas Glandwr), with house and vestry behind added 1885 by D Davies, Penrhiwllan.*

*Chapel has rock-faced blue lias pedimental front with stucco dressings and arch-headed windows. Long paired windows each side, triplet to centre, all with pilaster jambs, moulded heads and keystones. Centre window of triplet is wider. Sill band under side windows interrupted by stucco doorcase, arched with arched hood*

*between panelled pedestals carried on console brackets. Pedestals have concave square finials. Paired arch-headed doors and crescent overlight. Banded slate roof, 2-storey coursed rubble side walls, 4 windows, the upper ones arched.*

*Forecourt enclosed by cast-iron railings, of intersecting oval pattern.*

*Adjoining 2-storey, 3-window house, stuccoed with cambered headed openings and centre bargeboard gable. Slate roof, brick end stacks. Vestry and Sunday School behind.*

*INTERIOR – 3-sided gallery on painted fluted cast-iron columns, curved angles and front with panelled piers and painted pierced cast-iron panels, added 1905 and echoed in surround to set fawr. Ornate panelled timber pulpit with curving stair each side and canted front. Behind pulpit, broad tall organ arch with console keystone and hoodmould. Organ by Blackett and Howden of Newcastle upon Tyne has recessed keyboard under arch and Gothic detail to case. Plain flat boarded ceiling with centre rose. Margin glazed windows to entrance lobby with etched and stained glass in margins. Gallery and columns attractively painted in green, red and white.*

*Old photographs show earlier chapel in painted stucco with hipped slate roof. Two storey, 4-window range with 12-pane sashes to first floor and small central plaque. Ground floor had two similar windows to middle bays, outer openings both boarded timber doors with rectangular overlights...”*

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### **Images:**

capel Mair

Ca 1910 Capel Mair Cong Chapel\_v2



s-1600 (ca 1910)

IMAG0032 Organ (2010)

IMAG0034 - Ceiling