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## Haverfordwest area news

# Lottery preserves 160 years of local history

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ALMOST 160 years of local history have been preserved for future generations, thanks to lottery funding.

After a year of essential building work, Nolton Haven United Reformed Church has re-opened to the public.

Founded in 1858 by local farmers and mining families, this unique chapel was under threat from the elements, with parts of its stonework wearing away.

But thanks to £100,000 of Heritage Lottery funding, and local fundraising efforts totalling almost £40,000, it has been saved.

As well as its regular services, the chapel is home to various crafts groups, a junior church, community meetings, and - as part of its grant - the vestry has now been transformed into a permanent museum that tells the story of mining, chapel, military, tourism and village life.

"The chapel is architecturally unique, with some of the stonework based on that at St Davids Cathedral," said Rev Martin Spain.

"We're bordered on three sides by the coast path, and the effect of the elements over the years meant that if we hadn't been able to repair it, we would have had to close."

Asked what makes the chapel such an important part of the community, Rev Spain said: "We've still got members whose family were founding members."

"It's the family links that have kept us going."

He said visitors were also drawn back year after year, with many becoming friends of the congregation.

"The gap between heaven and earth isn't that prominent here, you can feel there's something special about it," he said.

In 1871, it was recorded that "although it could not be expected that here would be a large congregation in a thinly populated area, a small successful cause could continue here with the Lord's blessing".

Today, the chapel is much the same as when it was first built.

Nolton Haven continues to be a small but faithful



The coastal community of Nolton Haven is celebrating its chapel being open again.



The coastal community of Nolton Haven is celebrating its chapel being open again. BACKGROUND IMAGE: Sjaak Kempe



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congregation, and with the Lord's blessing continues its cause in the community.

"But like any chapel in Wales, we could always do with more help," added Rev Spain.

"I would say to anyone to come along, find out what we're about and have fun."

"And if you can't sing, it doesn't matter!"

To celebrate the re-opening, a service of dedication and communion took place, followed by celebration and song.

The afternoon service saw the church full to the rafters, with a song written and performed for the occasion by Charlie Canton Smith appreciated by all.

The organist for both services was Shirley Williams.

Following the service, a wonderful tea with ample homemade cakes was served in the vestry and in a marquee erected in the grounds.

Much chatting and catching up was done by friends travelling many miles to

attend this memorable and special event.

During the summer weeks a Welsh tea is served in the chapel grounds every afternoon - with a 'bargain table' offering a range of items for sale.

On Friday, August 18, at 7.30pm a cheese and wine evening is planned, to include a silent auction.

On August 20, a songs of praise will take place at 7.30pm, with Shirley Williams conducting and organist Anne Evans.