

News

Chapel with a rich history

WATER Street Chapel has a long history in Carmarthen.

There were Calvinistic Methodists in Carmarthen from about 1740.

Among those associated with the chapel was the renowned Peter Williams (1723 - 1796). In around 1765 after joining the Methodists he embarked on the ambitious project of publishing a Welsh bible with explanatory notes.

This became the first Welsh printed bible in Wales and known as the Peter Williams bible.

He knew bibles were financially beyond the reach of many families.

Therefore he issued the bible in parts, costing one shilling. In this format 8,600 of Williams's bibles found their ways into Welsh homes between 1767 and 1770.

He leased a house in Water Street to be near a publisher in Lammas Street and in 1771 built the first Water Street Chapel in his garden.

The present chapel was built for £2,000 in 1813.

The Sunday school was founded in 1803 and the books show that in 1810 around 1,000 children attended.

A blue plaque commemorates Williams outside the chapel — placed there by the Carmarthen Civic Society.

Chapel could close as costs rise and congregation falls

ANOTHER place of worship in Carmarthen is at risk of being lost.

by IAN LEWIS

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Water Street Chapel (Capel Heol Dwr) is on the brink of closure with a dwindling congregation and running costs proving too costly.

Three have already closed and are now on the market — Zion Chapel in Mansel Street, Bethania Chapel in Priory Street and Union Street's chapel.

A working group has been set up by the Carmarthen Civic Society to look into the issues surrounding the closure of churches and chapels in the town.

Deacon and secretary of Water Street Chapel, Marina Thomas said the listed building is facing closure and sale if no use can be found for it outside of worship.

She has been a member for 57 years and is eager for it to be saved, adding: "It seats 1,200 people and is the largest chapel in Carmarthen."

"As a Methodist chapel it was the mother of Babell in Llangunnor, Bethania in Priory Street and Zion in

Mansel Street. We are down to a congregation of about seven people and don't have a reverend anymore, we have visiting ones every week."

Mrs Thomas went on to say: "It would be wonderful if this historical chapel with its large vestry would be kept open for religious and cultural activities for the benefit of the town."

The Methodist Union has told the chapel goers that it is likely to close at the end of the year.

"It would be such a loss to the town's history if it closes and for that reason I want to see it put to use. We have music exams there but more use us needed by the community to save the building."

Chair of the civic society Linda Jones said the number of religious sites closed and now for sale was a concern.

Speaking last week she said: "Speaking about places of worship as a whole in the



Water Street Chapel (Heol Dwr) which is facing closure at the end of the year unless it can be saved.

town, Mrs Jones said: "The aim of the working group is to keep a watchful eye on the future of our chapels and churches as congregations, in many cases, decline and these

historic (architecturally and religiously) buildings are threatened with closure or high maintenance bills.

"In some cases, it is a very small number of people who

are now responsible for the upkeep of these important buildings."

Following the situation facing Water Street Chapel she said: "