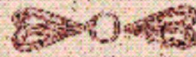


1821

1921

"Mor Hawddigau
yw Dy Bedyll."



CAMRE CANRIF

SEP IANES

EGLWYS Y PANT-TEG

YSTALYFERA



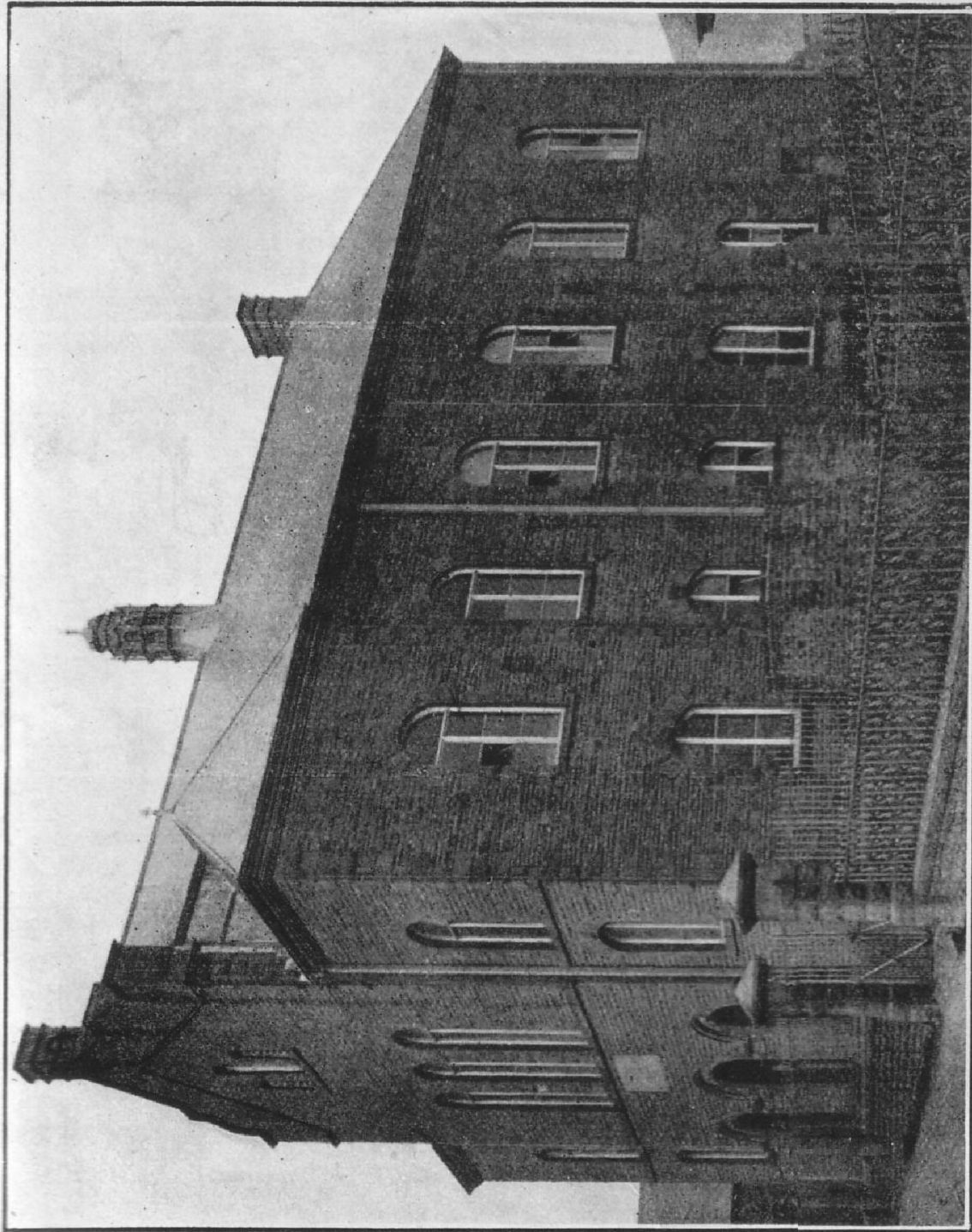
GAN

D. G. WILLIAMS.

YSTALYFERA:

Cwmni
Llais Llafur, Cyl.

1921.



CAPEL Y PANT-TEG.

THE ORIGINAL WELSH BOOK

THE HISTORY OF PANTTEG CHAPEL

The Translation into English

BY

MR. BRYNMOR JONATHAN

(DEACON of PANTTEG CHAPEL)

IN MEMORY OF

MR. DAVID ANEURIN GRIFFITHS B.A.

FOR 53 YEARS

A DEACON and THE SECRETARY of PANTTEG CHAPEL

WHO PASSED AWAY

MARCH 2009.

Transcribed by Val Trevallion

THE HISTORY OF PANT-TEG CHAPEL**YSTALYFERA****By****D. G. WILLIAMS****1821-----1921****FORWARD**

The main purpose, by writing a few words of introduction, is to thank those whom have helped me in the work. My original intention in the beginning was to thank everyone by name but that would entail a very long list of people and I would be in danger of omitting someone's name. Let all those kind friends, near or far, accept my warmest appreciation. I have received a cheerful welcome in many homes and I have witnessed nothing but a willingness to help.

I feel a debt of gratitude more because there is so very little written evidence. The Deacons in Pantteg know, that hardly any records exist, apart from the knowledge that is to be found in the "History of Independent Chapels." I have had to look long and hard for information and I have endeavoured to ensure that the correct facts have been recorded. Some of you may expect the history to be longer but I have tried to keep within a special boundary in order to keep the price affordable. It would have been easy to expand the size of the work but with irrelevant details. No doubt it is possible, for someone to judge, that some persons or some events should have been given more prominence but these defects must be put down to my own lack of knowledge and to the difficulty of getting a 100 years of history suitably compressed. On the other hand, it has been difficult to speak of those who are either still alive or who have recently passed away.

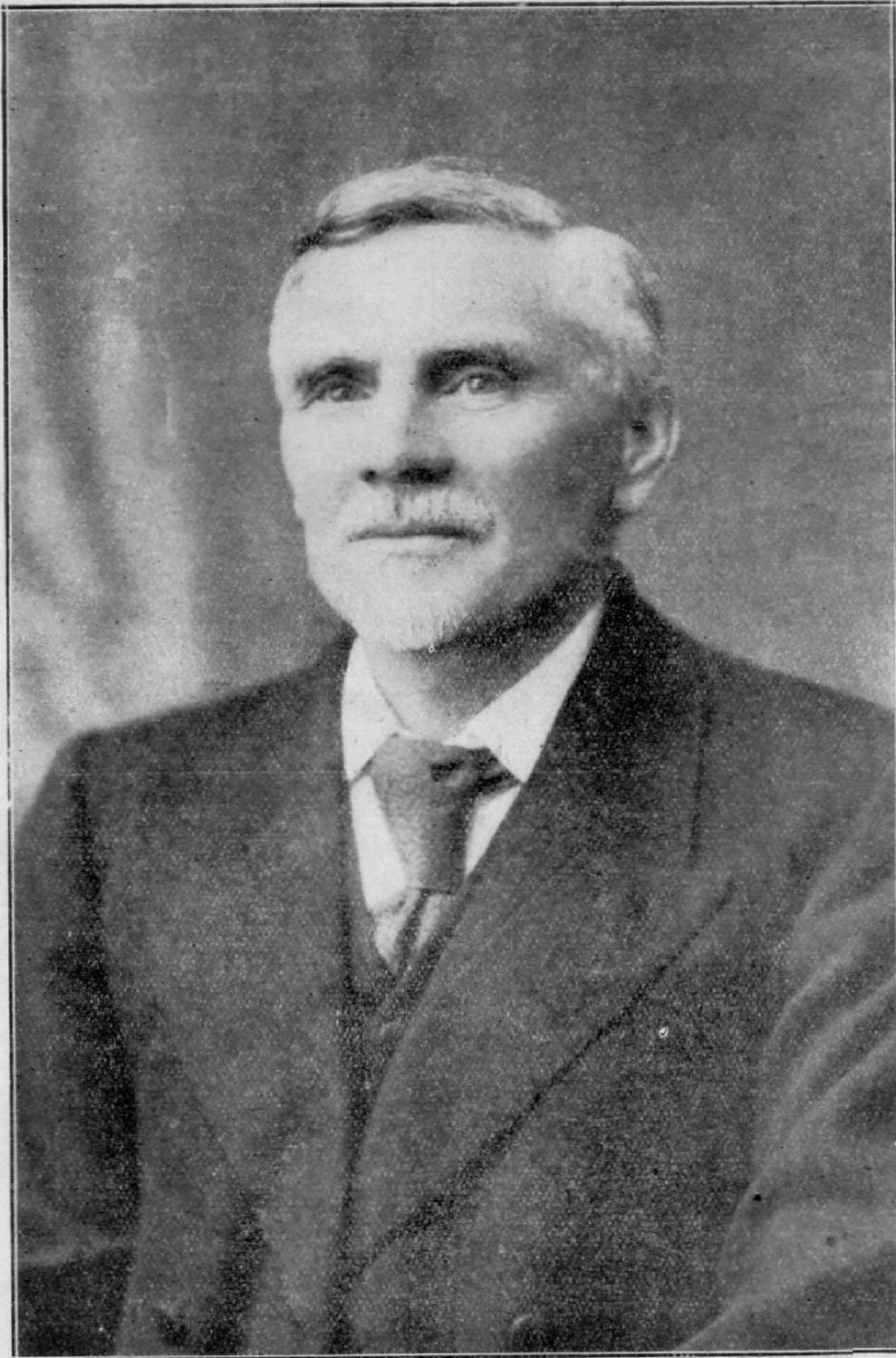
I wish that the work could have been better but despite its defects I hope it will be of benefit and not entirely uninteresting and I especially thank the Deacons and Members of Pantteg for entrusting me with this work.

APRIL30,1921. D. G. WILLIAMS.
(David George Williams)

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Parch. BEN DAVIES.

HISTORY OF PANT-TEG CHAPEL

CHAPTER ONE

The first preaching by the Non-Conformists in these parts, traditionally believed to be held on the Gwrhyd Mountain under the shadow of a white thorn (bush) on a field belonging to the white fountain. We know nothing about the preacher except that his hair had been powdered and he had come from the direction of the rising sun (East -Japan). A family known as the Benjamins, who lived on Alltygrug Mountain, had sent for him. In those days there were no buildings owned by the Non-Conformists throughout the whole land (Wales). It is generally believed that this first sermon was held on a Sunday afternoon, four generations before the coming of the Reverend William Evans, the Minister of Alltwen and Cwmllynfell. Since this Minister lived between 1716-1770, it is reasonable to assume that this first sermon took place somewhere around the middle of the seventeenth century i.e. 1650. If this is so, the evidence concludes that there was not a Non-Conformist place of worship in the country at that time. It would also confirm what is known about the first Non-Conformist building. In other words it is reasonable to accept this traditionally held believe as it has survived from generation to generation until the arrival of William Evans. After that it has been continued to be handed down through his successors, the Reverends John Davies and Phillip Griffiths until our present time. However it is not possible to confirm whether the Chapel at Cwmllynfell or the farm at Fforchegel was the first place to be used. That fact does not actually hold any historical importance today. What we do know is that at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were three fairly strong churches in this catchments area.

Cwmllynfell

Godre'rhos

Alltwen.

It would be fair to assume that Cwmllynfell was formed around 1688 to 1690, Godre'rhos around 1740 and Alltwen around 1750.

Before Pantteg Chapel was built, (100 years ago – when the book was written in 1921) the Non-Conformists of Graig Arw, as the locality was previously named, were members of one of the three, previously named, Chapels. It is most likely that the majority attended Cwmllynfell, as it was the oldest. As far as the Welsh Independents were concerned, the locality was considered to be a part of the area served by the Reverend John Davies, the Minister of Alltwen and Cwmllynfell. However, it is certain that some were members of Godre'rhos, as instanced by Robert Todd and his family. It would appear that the majority of those residing around the Gurnos and Graig y Forest attended Godre'rhos. The Reverend Morgan Lewis, Glynneath, Minister of Godre'rhos between 1800 and 1810 preached monthly at the Gurnos, in Upper Ystalyfera in William Williams' farmhouse, close to where St. David's Church stands today. Sermons were also given, on occasions at Glanrhyd and Phenpont yr Ystrad.

There was not a bridge across the river Tawe to afford access in the direction of Gurnos in those days. It was necessary to take ones shoes and socks off in order to cross the river. The name of one elderly widow who was a faithful member of Godre'rhos is fondly remembered. It is said that Aunty Nel of the Graig, undertook the journey three times weekly, and, considering the distance was three miles each way, it is understandable why her name has been remembered.

It should however be remembered, that having to walk considerable distances to attend a place of worship, was common in those days. Attending Godre'rhos, Cwmllynfell or Alltwen entailed journeys of 3 to 5 miles for the residents of Graig Arw, in those days a sparsely populated

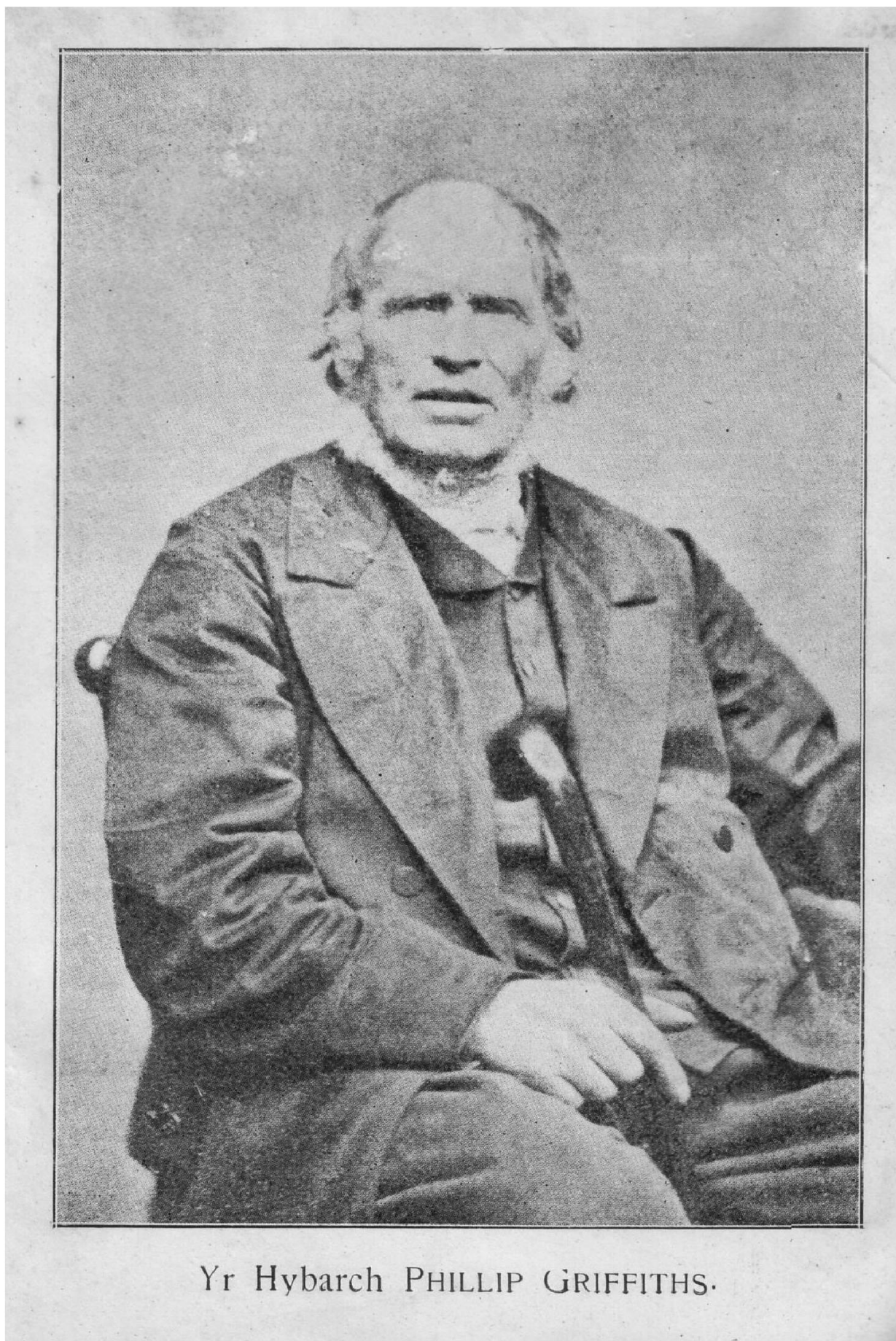
area. There were several farms on the floor of the valley and as many, if not more on the slopes of Alltygrug. At Gurnos there were two corn/wheat mills and a woollen mill.

Doubtless, a few rural craftsmen and a number of miners as coal mining was the main industry. There were at least three working at that time – Cyfyng Level which opened in 1794, Harper Level 1805 and Pwllbach in 1812. Enoch Jenkins, a member at Pantteg, opened the Cyfyng Level and Daniel Harper opened Pwllbach. It is possible that the later also opened the Harper Level as it bore his name but there is no proof of this. Thomas Harper, the son of Daniel, was one of the first trustees of Pantteg.

SMALL BEGINNINGS

Around 1785 the residents built a small house to accommodate a weekly day school, located some 200 yards from the site of the original chapel. The location was known as “school house hill” and has retained its name to the present day. No one alive today remembers seeing the actual building. The school was very popular and attracted children from far and wide and from every denomination. These days the most important historical fact is that the school was the first public building in which religious services were held in the area. It started by holding Sunday schools and later prayer meetings and sermons. This was the original location therefore of the cause which later gave birth to Pantteg Chapel.

Around 1818 the Sunday school became very popular and gave rise to a religious revival amongst those who attended. The prime instigator was a Daniel Griffiths of Melincwrt, Glynneath (who later became the Reverend Daniel Griffiths, Neath). The Reverend Phillip Griffiths is quoted as saying that Daniel Griffiths had been coming to the area as a young, gifted and energetic young man who was encouraged to visit on a monthly basis. The school was revitalised, attendances increased and the schoolhouse and all the other buildings could not accommodate all who wished to attend. Evidence to this effect appeared in the magazine entitled, “The Revivalist” and Phillip Griffiths in his autobiography says, fulsome and prominent tributes to Daniel Griffiths’ endeavours in the early days of the cause at Pantteg. He refers to them constantly, “hundreds of people gathered to listen to Daniel and he preached to them in the open air,” “David’s endeavours established this cause which gave rise to a place of worship,” “his sermons and his teachings in the school house gave birth to the movement.” But although Phillip Griffiths in his enthusiasm ensured that Daniel Griffiths received the praise to which he was entitled, it is only fair to note that he did so to his own detriment in the establishment of the cause. He, like his cousin, walked from Melincwrt to Graig Arw and his popularity was such that he too had to hold open-air services on each occasion. Despite all he said about Daniel Griffiths, it was Phillip who received the call to service as the minister. Both should be remembered for their work in planting and nurturing the seeds that resulted in an exceedingly rich harvest.



Yr Hybarch PHILLIP GRIFFITHS.

THE FIRST PLACE OF WORSHIP

When the members saw that the success of their endeavours resulted in the schoolhouse and all the other buildings becoming too small to accommodate everyone, they began to consider the next steps forward. But times were hard and it was a huge risk with major difficulties to contemplate when building a chapel. The early fathers, like us today, were suffering from the consequences of a major war. It was difficult to establish employment; wages were exceptionally low throughout the country. Poverty caused more suffering than in any other period of the nineteenth century so is it any wonder that some members were fearful of the responsibilities of undertaking the building of a new chapel.

In addition, the Reverend John Davies, Minister of Alltwen and Cwmllynfell opposed the proposal, which caused other ministers and preachers to stay clear. John Davies considered that a new chapel was unnecessary, the locals could walk the four miles or so to Alltwen, Cwmllynfell of Godre'rhos.

Even so, 16 individuals were prepared to face the responsibilities and difficulties with hope in their hearts. The most prominent characters of the 16 were their zeal and self-sacrificial enthusiasm. They represented some 11 families none of them were rich, as the majority being small farmers with farms of poor quality soil. Each contribution to the cause entailed sacrifice and effort. The experience of the members of Holy Trinity Church was totally different. It was built within a few hundred yards of Pantteg, some 24 years later and all paid for by Ystalyfera Iron Works. It is possible that it was not an unmitigated blessing and that the success of Pantteg is attributable, in some measure, to the voluntary effort and sacrificial endeavours of the founding members.

Having decided to build a chapel the first duty was to acquire land. The advice of Mr. John Jones, engineer and manager of the Cwmtawe (Swansea Valley) canal, who lived in Fountain Hall, was sought. He agreed to meet Mr. Fleming Gough, Ynisedwyn, to ask for land on which to erect a new chapel. He succeeded in obtaining "80 perches of sheep grazing land, Alltygrug." The terms of the lease state that the land was given to build a meetinghouse, to hold public worship by persons professing the Christian religion according to the teachings of the Calvinistic Independent Non-Conformists.

The lease dated 25th December 1822, effective from 25th March 1822 for 999 years, which Phillip Griffiths considered an acceptable period during which the Hand of the Lord could work. The rent was sixpence a year- if it was called for. Trustees named in the lease are THOMAS HARPER, Pontardawe Cottages: JOHN JONES, Fountain Hall: EVAN EVANS, Gilfach-yr-haidd: REES PRICE, Ystalyfera Isaf: WILLIAMS EVANS, Cwmnantllici: HEZEKIAH EVANS, Gwrhyd Isaf: and THOMAS MORGAN, Penlanfach.

It is likely that work on constructing the chapel began late in 1819 or early 1820. Contributions towards the cost were collected in 1820. I have seen a document, dated May 4th 1820, written by Evan Evans listing the names of those who contributed and the amount each donated. Despite the difficulties facing the 16 individuals, coupled with some objections, the work continued until it was completed. It was built on the site of the present vestry, measuring 35 feet x 28 feet and 20 feet high with an impressive gallery. Phillip Griffiths observed that "it was no small effort to collect the materials, they were transported by day and by night, in fact stones and other materials were carried under the light of the stars.

Many alive today still remember. Daydd Evans, Pantygwandyd and his son Evan Evans, Gilfach-yr-haidd, describe the sacrifices made during the time when the chapel was being built. In addition to their monetary contributions, tradition has it that many worked extremely hard, on a voluntary basis, collecting and transporting materials as well as working on the building.

These oral traditions are interesting but it is doubtful how much truth is contained in today's version of events. I have not repeated them in this history, some are self-contradictory, some unbelievable in the face of known facts, others, are a mixture of events concerning the building of the first two chapels. Doubtless, at one time each contained an element of truth, which became tarnished by false impressions and imaginations.

Phillip Griffiths paid tribute to some named persons, others not, who generously contributed physically and in kind. In addition, a document exists, in Evan Evans' handwriting detailing the work undertaken on a voluntary basis, with an estimate of the costs if the work had had to be paid for.

1820

An account of the expenses not charged for building the house called Pant-teg.	£	s	d
For lowering the ground	4	0	0
For the lease	6	6	0
For frames for the doors (W. Thomas)	4	4	0
For quarrying stones for jambs, sills and corners and chimney	7	0	0
For 3 loads of lime from Swansea	0	10	0
Tonnage on timber by canal from Swansea	6	0	0
For carrying sand from River Tawe	5	0	0
For carrying the timber from the sawpit to the meeting house	5	0	0
For haulage of stones from Gellibwll	4	0	0
For flagstones and lowering the ground	3	0	0
For steps	1	0	0
For iron round the fire	4	0	0
For working and collecting (R. Price)	15	0	0
For working and collecting (Evan Evans)	15	0	0
For plans, working, Attending the workmen, and every attendance (John Jones)	30	0	0
Total	110		

The document speaks for itself. The date is historically correct. There was no charge for the lease. It is possible that this can be attributed to Fleming Gough's traditional kindness and generosity. We know that he donated the land on which the original schoolhouse was built at no charge so long as there was water in the Tawe. He also donated the land on which the Chapel was built at a rent of sixpence annually – if it was called for. On the other hand it would be easy to assume that John Jones, Fountain Hall, paid for the lease. It is interesting to note that the lime and timber came from Swansea and that the canal transport charges were waived. It is possible that John Jones also paid the canal charges. There was no charge for carrying stones from Gellibwll Quarry, near Pentwyn, Godre'rgraig. This indicates that a substantial quantity of stones came from Shon William Williams' old quarry.

Most of the voluntary work involved the collecting of materials, and was undertaken by Rees Price of Ystalyfera Lower; Evan Evans, Gilfach-yr-haidd and John Jones, Fountain Hall. Other faithful members of the Chapel would have undertaken the remainder of the voluntary work.

Despite the voluntary efforts, the construction costs were between £300 and £400. Mr. Griffiths stated that the members collected the money, apart from some £120, which he himself collected. It would be interesting to know more of the history, of Mr. Griffiths collection journey, but that is no longer possible. We do know that William Hopkin accompanied him on at least one journey. He travelled in William Hopkins cart and they were away for about three months. At that time Mr. Griffiths suffered ill health and Mr. Hopkin was frequently obliged to take responsibility for the initial part of the services (i.e. Reading from Scripture and Prayer). Such was his ability that it was thought that he was the preacher.

THE FOUNDERS

Following on from the story of the building, it is natural to record the names of those responsible for the work. They were elderly people or heads of households. "Evan Evans, Gilfach-yr-haidd: Rees Price and his wife, Ann, Ystalyfera Isaf: Mary Morgan, Penlanfach: William Hopkin Senior and his wife, Mary, Garreg Pentwyn: William Hopkin Junior and his wife Ann: Joseph Jones and his wife: John Rees Thomas: Susannah Gibbs: Ann Hopkin, Pantyffynnon: William John and his wife Mary, Cwmtawe Uchaf: and Ann Morgan, Cilmaengwyn". All these names were at the time, members in Cwmllynfell. Also named were Robert Todd and his wife, members of Godre'rhos: John Jones, Fountain Hall, a member in Neath and also new members who were involved in the work. It may be useful and of interest to add the following names that appeared in Evan Evans' account books for 1820 and 1821. They were listed as regular contributors to the cause and in all probability became members when the cause was later established, "Hezeciah Daniel, William Davies, William Evan, Thomas Eynon, Evan Hopkin, William Hugh, John Herbert James, Enoch Jenkins, William Jenkins, David Jones, David Lewis, Edward Lewis, Owen Owen, John Evan Rees, Rees Morgan Rees, John Thomas, Richard Thomas, John Williams, Lewis Williams and William Williams".

THE OPENING SERVICES

Mr. Griffiths is quoted as stating that the chapel was opened in May 1821. This fact is confirmed by William Hopkin, who was at the time, aged 21. There is an entry in his Bible written by him self,

"May 14th, 1821, opened the new Meeting House in Graig Arw named Pantteg. William Hopkin, Pantteg, his hand".

In addition there is an entry in Evan Evans, accounts book that a meeting was held on 13th May 1821. It is likely that services were held on both days "many ministers were present, amongst them was the Reverend John Davies, Alltwen and at the end of the service he announced that the chapel would henceforth be known as Y Pantteg. The congregation accepted his decision despite his long-standing objection to establishing the cause at Pantteg. The founders had chosen another name but it is not now known. Choosing the name was the only contribution the Reverend John Davies made to the cause in Pantteg, he did not preach there on any subsequent occasion.

ESTABLISHING A CHURCH

It is apparent that, following the building of the chapel the founders did not intend to form a church in the immediate future. Phillip Griffiths wrote " following the opening, various ministers held services, the Methodists proving to be the most frequent visitors. The services were well attended even though a church had not been established." Reverend Davies, Alltwen, died in December 1821 and early in the following year the young worshippers who attended the school began to be concerned about their status as non-church members. They were advised to become members of Cwmllynfell, where the older people were members. The younger element refused to do so by saying that Pantteg was their chapel and it was there that they wished to be accepted as members. As a consequence they beseeched the Reverend T. Edwards, Godre'rhos and the Reverend James Williams to come to Pantteg in order to establish the cause and to accept the young people as members. They were 11 in number, all received into membership on 29th March 1822, to add to the total of 16 previously listed as founders. Several others joined in the following months.

THE CALL TO PHILLIP GRIFFITHS

On October 2nd, 1822 the newly founded church sent a written invitation, signed by all the members, 80 in total to Phillip Griffiths, to become its minister. He accepted the call. He had finished his term in the school some months previously. It is worth noting that Pantteg made the first call to Phillip Griffiths. Subsequently, Alltwen agreed to do the same. This is made manifestly clear in an issue of "The Revivalist", in which Phillip Griffiths wrote, "Following Pantteg's call, Alltwen came to a similar conclusion and agreed with Pantteg that both churches would share one ministry". However it is not true to say that he became the Minister of Pantteg before becoming the Minister of Alltwen. The ordination services were jointly held at both chapels, on 12th and 13th December 1822; the former in Pantteg and the later in Alltwen. The actual ordination ceremony was held on 13th December. The following Ministers took part in the services, D. Davies, New Inn; L. Powell, Cardiff; D. Davies, Sardis; Morgan Lewis, Hermon; D. Evans, Mynydd-bach; R. Howell, Baran; D. Jones, Crugybar; and Thomas Bowen, Neath. At the time with the exception of the 16 original founders, the members of Pantteg were all young. The new Minister was also young, approaching the age of 30.

THE REGISTRATION

A few days prior to the ordination services, Evan Evans Gilfach-yr-haidd, went to the archbishop's court in Abergwili to register the new church. Phillip Griffiths frequently referred to the occasion and Dafydd Evans, Pantygwanyd referred to it as a "real accomplishment. The actual registration certificate commonly referred to as 'the license' was found in the safe keeping of Mrs. C. Jones, the Vicarage New Church who very kindly agreed to its reproduction in this book. (See Document)

To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of St. David's,
and to his Registrar.

I *Evan Evans* of *Gilfachyrhaidd*
in the Parish of *Llangwicks* in the
County of *Glamorgan* Gentleman, do hereby certify, that a
certain Building, called and known by the Name of *Pant-teg*
situate in the Parish of *Llangwicks aforesaid*
in the said County, is intended forthwith to be used as a Place of religious
Worship, by an Assembly or Congregation of Protestants; and I do hereby
require you to register and record the same, according to the Provisions of
an Act passed in the 52d Year of the Reign of his Majesty King George the
Third, intituled "An Act to repeal certain Acts, and amend other Acts, re-
lating to religious Worship and Assemblies, and Persons teaching and
preaching therein," and hereby request a Certificate thereof. Witness my
Hand this *Fourth* Day of *December* 18*22*.

Evan Evans

WITNESS

Rich. Dodd
of *Carmarthen*

Charles Morgan Esq Registrar of the Court
of the Bishop of Saint David's, do hereby certify that a Certificate, of which
the above is a true Copy, was this Day delivered to me to be registered and
recorded, pursuant to the Act of Parliament therein mentioned. Dated this
Fourth Day of *December* 18*22*.

Chas. Morgan
W. P. Pugh

J. Evans, Printer, Carmarthen.

Y "LEISANS."

SOME OF THE FOUNDERS AND TRUSTEES

Pantteg was well served by those who over saw and sponsored the chapel in its early days. They were individuals of the highest quality, brave in faith and deeds, many were of strong character, and were, for the period in which they lived well educated and cultured. They displayed exceptional leadership qualities. Things were very different in Alltwen where Phillip Griffiths was responsible for maintaining the chapel accounts and administration.

Nothing is known about some of the named founding members, but it has been possible to glean some information about some of the most prominent leaders.

EVAN EVANS, GILFACH-YR-HAIDD

A farmer. Born on 1st. of September 1777. One of the most prominent persons in the early days and continued to be so until his death on 17th July 1843. He was a trustee, the first secretary of the Chapel and the first Precentor. His journey to Abergwili has already been noted and it is obvious that he was better educated than the norm, for the time. He had held a government post dealing with taxes and his letters reveal that he was frequently requested to assist with making wills and other legal dealings. One of his grandsons was John Evans, Pantygwanid, until recently the Chapel treasurer. Many of his descendants, living locally or further a field hold important posts in church and worldly affairs.

JOHN JONES, FOUNTAIN HALL

Born in 1766 to Llewelyn and Ann Jones, Old Hall, Ystradgynlais. He became a member of Tynycoed (Abercrave) in the days when Reverend Morris Williams was Minister. He moved to live in Neath when 29 years old and became a member of Maesyrfhaf (Neath) when Reverend Thomas Bowen became the Minister in 1796. In 1806 he was appointed the engineer of the Swansea Valley Canal, a position that he held until his death, on 5th June 1837, aged 71. His body was carried to Pantteg Chapel, for which he had devoted so much effort and work, on the day of his funeral. The Reverend's Phillip Griffiths and J. Walters, Ystradgynlais, officiated at the funeral service.

When the Chapel was built he lived in nearby Fountain Hall. Reference has already been made to the leading part he played in establishing the chapel, obtaining the land, designing the building, overseeing the work of construction and selecting the trustees. He was a very generous gentleman and did all his work for the Chapel on a purely voluntary basis, never charging for his services although he never became a member of Pantteg Chapel.

THOMAS HARPER, PONTARDAWE COTTAGE

Son of Daniel Harper who was responsible for establishing and subsequently owning a number of coal mines locally and in the surrounding area. After his father's death, Thomas Harper continued his fathers' commercial enterprises but he was not as successful. He lived in Abercrave House and then Pontardawe. It is of interest to note that his son was the Right Reverend Dr. Hugo Daniel Harper, Professor of Jesus College Oxford, (1877-1895).

Thomas Harper was one of the original trustees but not a member of Pantteg Chapel. It would appear that he was a member of the established church. It is known that his son, Hugo, was baptised in Cilybebyll and that two of his daughters were baptised in Llangiwig.

HEZEKIAH EVANS, GWRHYD ISAF (LOWER GWRHYD)

His Grandfather was the Reverend William Evan (Cwmllynfell 1716 – 1770), many of whose descendants were associated in founding and establishing religious causes locally. The late Mrs. Caroline Brazell and William Harries (a Deacon in Pantteg many years ago) and the present treasurer, William Morgan all counted amongst them.

Although Hezekiah Evans lived on the Gwrhyd Mountain, he took considerable interest in establishing the cause in Pantteg. This would explain why he was chosen as a trustee as it is fairly certain he was never a member of Pantteg. He died on September 10th 1867, aged 83 and was buried at Gwrhyd Chapel. He was the last surviving member of the original trustees.

WILLIAM EVANS, CWMNANTLLICI

Hezekiah Evans brother, whose life and good qualities mirrored those of his brother William Evans. He died on 4th February 1860, aged 73 and was also buried at Gwrhyd Chapel.

THOMAS MORGAN, PENLANFACH

Commonly known as Thomas Morgan Cwmtawe as it was there that he lived in the latter part of his life. Previously he lived in Ystalyfera Isaf (Lower). His parents were John Morgan (Senior) and Mary Morgan, Penlanfach. Born on 4th July 1796 and died on 2nd October 1861. In addition to being a farmer he was sufficiently well educated to become a metal mining assessor engineer. His son was the well-known musician, Morgan Morgan, (Cwmtawe).

REES PRICE, YSTALYFERA ISAF

His name is the second entry on the list of Founders written by Phillip Griffiths. He was a trustee and figured prominently as a collector and a willing worker in the building of the first chapel. It has not been possible to trace his family of history. There is a suggestion that he and his family emigrated to America.

MARY MORGAN, PENLANFACH

Her husband was John Morgan, who died in 1816. Mary Morgan was thus widowed at the time of the building of the first chapel. They began their married life on a smallholding called “Y Pant” (Valley or Dent) on the Gwrhyd Mountain. Their elder children were born there, which explains why they were known as Morgan from “Y Pant”, Thomas Y Pant, and so on. The family moved to Penlanfach around 1803.

Mary Morgan showed great zeal for the cause in Pantteg from its inception. She raised a large family, many of whose members played a prominent part as the early leaders. Morgan Morgan, Tirgarw; Thomas Morgan, Cwmtawe; and John Morgan, Penlanfach; who built the third chapel were her sons, whilst a daughter Joan, married the Reverend Phillip Griffiths.

Mary Morgan died on 21st January 1849 aged 82. Amongst her grand children alive today are Mrs. Gwenllian Lewis, Danygraig; Mrs. Joan Thomas, Brynderwen; and Thomas Morgan, Ynysgeinon.

WILLIAM HOPKIN (SENIOR), CARREG PENTWYN

A founder member, he was the oldest that we know of. Born in 1747, he was 73 when the first chapel was built. He was 87 when he died in 1834. Amongst his great grandchildren are Lewis Morgan, Wern and two of the present Deacons, D. D. Hopkin and Daniel Hopkin.

JOHN REES THOMAS, COEDCAEMAWR

John was a farmer, born in 1781. Mrs. Joan Williams, Corsyrhlyg is his grand daughter.

WILLIAM JOHN, CWMTAWE UCHAF

His full name was William John David Williams, but he was known as William Shon. One of his grand children is Mrs. Mary Andrews, Zoar Road.

CHAPTER TWO**REVEREND PHILLIP GRIFFITHS – MINISTER 1822 – 1865**

This period saw a great change in the population and character of the Graig Arw.

In 1822 it was a quiet rural area, sparsely populated and remained so, until 1838. This year saw the start of the Iron industry with people flooding into the area and the Graig Arw becoming part of the Industrial Revolution with its benefits and disadvantages.

The first wave of people arrived 1838 to 1840 with the advent of the blast furnace, mainly from rural Glamorgan, Brecon, Carmarthen and Cardigan. These were largely decent, hard working, God fearing people who became pillars of the community. With the setting up of a forge and the growth of the Tin Plate Mills, people arrived from the industrial villages of the South and from Southern England. These people were looked upon as a rougher ungodly lot.

Population greatly increased. By 1865, there were around 4000 workers.

There was also an increase in chapel membership. The two earlier chapels replaced by a third larger building.

1844 Holy Trinity Church built

1847 First Soar Baptist chapel at Twyn Yr Ysgol

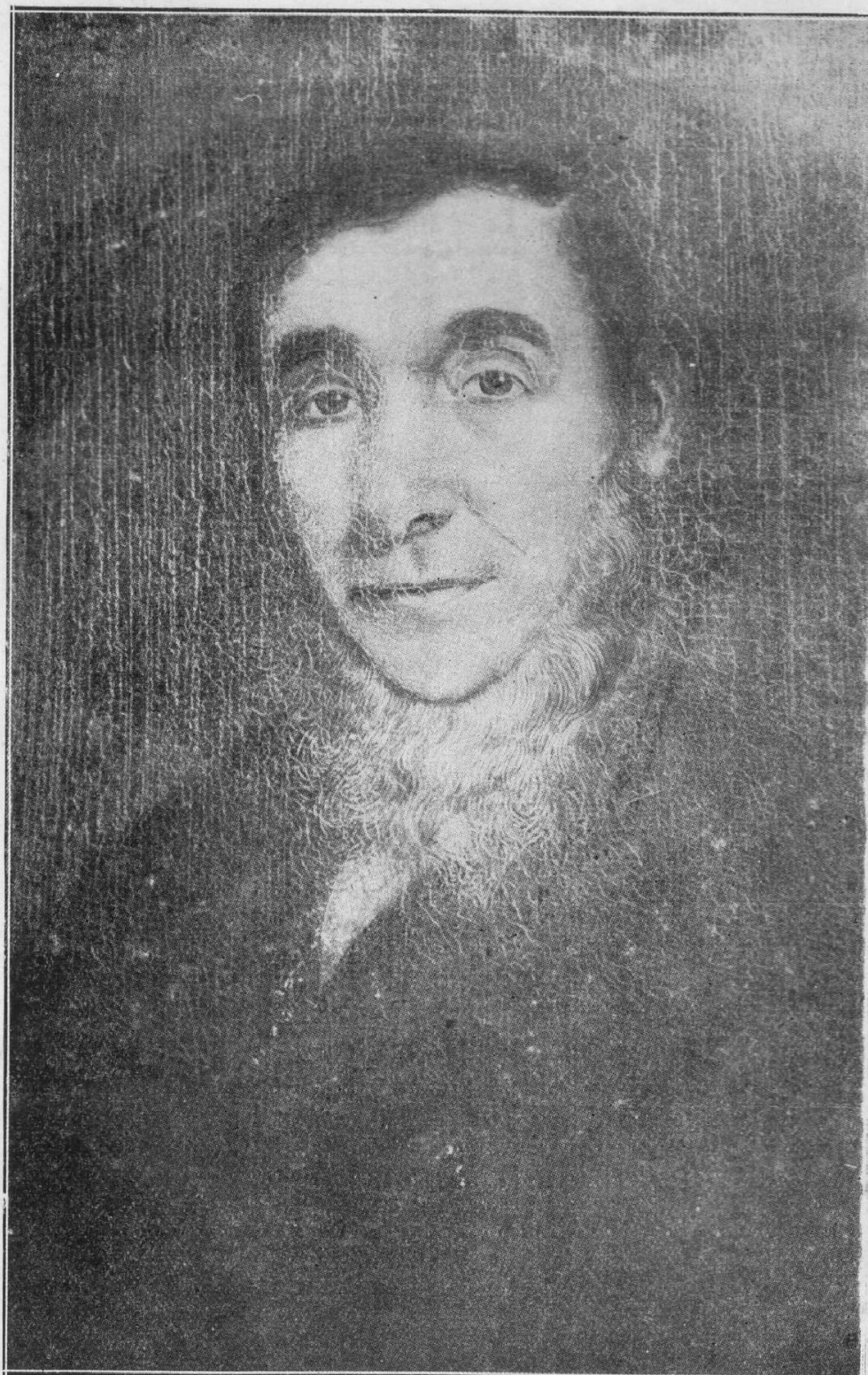
1855 –1864 Caersalem, Jerusalem, Gurnos, Seion and Wern Chapels were built.

THE GRAVEYARD

One of the first tasks undertaken by the Church was to prepare the land around the Chapel for use as a graveyard. Scarce 80 perches of land had been secured under the terms of a lease but it had not been fenced or walled in. On 17th May 1824 one member died. His name was John Evans, or Sion Ifan, Clyn-Mawr. He had expressed the wish to be buried near the new Chapel and although the graveyard had not yet been prepared, he was buried on the eastern side of the Chapel. Faced by requests from the other members to be buried near the Chapel it was decided to clear the land and erect a surrounding wall of stone. Later Sion Ifan's remains were re-interred in the lower part of the graveyard. Following this an additional 10 perches of land were purchased from Pantffynnon Farm and were added to the graveyard. Soon, two shelters were erected on the western side of the Chapel.

BUILDING A SCHOOLHOUSE

Around 1835 – 1840, the Chapel undertook to build a schoolhouse and a house for a schoolmaster to enable local children to continue to obtain an education. It is likely that the small schoolhouse at Twyn Ty'r Ysgol had become too small and the Chapel felt it was its duty to provide a replacement. It appears that the Chapel appreciated the importance of education, prepared to make sacrifices to provide it and this more than 30 years before the State Education Act of 1870. It is also true to say that our fore fathers zeal for Non Conformist principles helped fire their enthusiasm for education, they did not want Church of England schools to unduly influence Non Conformist children. This zeal is manifest in their determination to register their chapels for marriage ceremonies. Pantteg did so in January 1838.



JOHN MORGAN, Penlantach.

BUILDING THE SECOND CHAPEL

The Church flourished during the initial 20 years of its life. Membership rose to some hundreds and the first Chapel became too small. The original intention was to enlarge it but it was finally decided to build a new Chapel beside the old, which was to remain as it was.

Reverend Griffiths spoke thus: "In 1841, a new Chapel was built, large, beautiful and solid, measuring 52 feet by 36feet. It has a large gallery, 61 pews on the ground floor, 2 doors and 14 windows. The building, together with its frontage wall and palisade cost all but £600."

In the December 1842 of the "Diwygiwr" (Reformer) Reverend Griffiths reported on the opening services, "October 19th and 20th, services celebrating the re-opening of Pantteg Chapel, Glamorgan. Sermons delivered by Reverends W. Moses, Libanus; J. Stephens, Brychgoed; D. Evans, Neath; W. Thomas, Cymmer; H. Herbert, Newtown; D. Griffiths, Soar; J. Davies, Cwmaman; W. Morris, Glandwr; D. Davies, New Inn; W. Morgan, Llangynwyd; D. Williams, Llanwrtyd; J. Evans, Maendy; W. Griffiths, Llanharan; and L. Powell, Cardiff.

The first Chapel was built in 1820, but became too small to accommodate its congregation, and the second chapel was built alongside the original. Voluntary principles were invoked, offers were accepted from whomsoever wished to give, no one was asked to give: we did not seek help from outside the locality, we did not darken any doors anywhere in the country: we only asked for voluntary contributions. It was found that the people had hearts to do the work, in accordance with David's plan as recorded in 1st Book of Chronicles, Chapter 29, verse 5, "Gold to gold work silver to silver."

So, one wished for his donation to pay for the sand; another for the stones, the next to pay for erecting the wall, another for the lime, another for the carpenters work, one to pay for the roofing, others to pay for wood, for work and anything that was needed. It's ready, and the school donated a chandelier. (Excellent. It's ready today. Thanks to everybody, but primarily to God.)

The cost of £600 was paid in full within six years. A loft was installed in the old chapel in 1846 in order to hold a school in it and the ground floor adapted to serve as a home and a reading room. A library was established and the young people's society met here. The old school house was converted for use as dwellings.

After serving as its Minister for 25 years Reverend Griffiths spoke of Pantteg:- The Church is not of an age whereby it can claim fame by having notabilities in its congregation but it has welcomed many notable services. It is united in the spirit of peace, among the first to keep the Sabbath holy, to espouse the cause of temperance and to encourage choral singing. The work of the Chapel is divided into four areas in order to hold prayer meetings, Sunday school and religious friendship societies. The four areas are Pantteg, Gurnos, Godre'rgraig and Graig y Fforest.

In the light of sacrifice a zeal displayed at the time of building the first two Chapels, and paying for them, it is very difficult to explain the troubles associated with the debt that the Chapel incurred from 1847 until 1862. Some factors associated with this debt are uncommon in church affairs. Morgan Morgan, Tirgarw, had loaned £150:00 to the Chapel and had promised an additional £6:10:0d. In order to secure the loan, the trustees of the Chapel mortgaged everything to Morgan Morgan. Amongst the clauses was one that empowered Morgan Morgan after giving six months notice, to sell the Chapel and its entire contents in a public auction. The mortgage is dated 6th. November 1847 and was signed by the following trustee: Hezekiah Evans, Gwrhyd Isaf (Lower Gwrhyd); Williams Evans, Cwmnantlliei; and Thomas Morgan, Cwmtawe. These three were the only survivors of the original trustees.

This deed remained in force until 1862 and on 25th. January 1862, a legal writ was issued retransferring ownership to the Chapel on condition that the balance of the debt was paid. The deed

was signed by Morgan Morgan, Tirgarw and the following Chapel trustees: James Palmer Budd, Ystalyfera; Daniel Morgan, Penlanfach; John Evans, Pantygwanyd; Morgan Morgan, Cwmtawe; James Clee, (Junior); Abraham Evans, Lower Gwrhyd; Thomas Morgan, Cilmaengwyn; Abraham Williams and Thomas Owen.

Note: that not one of the old trustees were on this list. With the exception of Hezekiah Evans they were all dead.

The new trustees were all elected on this occasion. However, some aspects remind us of the occasion when the original trustees were elected. They were not all members of Pantteg. James Palmer Budd was a faithful member of the established Church. He was the main proprietor of the Ystalyfera Iron and Tinplate Works and of most of the local coalmines. He was a true gentleman and his willingness to serve as a trustee of a nonconformist chapel illustrates his generous and liberal outlook. Again, it is clear that the more elderly members, who were the leaders at this time, chose young men to serve as trustees and who were the children, grandchildren or close relatives of the original founders.

What is strange about this episode is that a chapel which cleared a debt of £600 within six years in the recent past, allowed a comparatively small debt to mortgage their ownership for 14 years. If we knew all the relevant facts and circumstances then maybe we'd arrive at a satisfactory explanation.

In 1849 when the cholera epidemic claimed thousands of victims across the Country, there was an exceptional increase in Chapel members. 258 were received into membership on one Sunday morning. The total given in a publication entitled "Chapel History" is 209 but Reverend Griffiths diary states that 258 is the true figure. By this time the Chapel was well endowed with members. Reverend Griffiths quotes a figure of "some hundreds" before 1841. It would appear that the total around 1850 was around 500. Thus with the continuing expansion in the population and the strong ministry of the Reverend Griffiths, now at the peak of his powers, it is little wonder that the church decided to form two new churches on behalf of its members.

THE BEGINNING OF GURNOS CHAPEL

The area of Gurnos housed members of the Chapels at Cwmllynfell, Godre'rhos and Alltwen and had done so for some time. They had held Prayer meetings in each other's houses before the building of Pantteg. When the Chapel was built at Pantteg they became members but continued to hold Sunday school and Prayer meetings in their homes. They became known as the "Gurnos Branch".

In 1857, Pantteg bought an old Chapel originally built by the Wesleyans in 1839. The Gurnos branch was incorporated as an Independent Chapel in the same year.

THE BEGINNING OF WERN CHAPEL

The next development undertaken was to establish a cause at the Wern in 1863/4. A Sunday school had previously been held at the home of Thomas Walters, the Grocer. In May 1863 a committee of 30 Pantteg Chapel members was formed in order to plan and arrange the new cause. The first sermon was preached at the new Chapel on Sunday, July 12th. 1864 with a membership of 75, 60 of who came from Pantteg. The Chapel was officially opened on September 6th - 7th 1864.

SCHOOLHOUSE AND CEMETERY IN GODRERGRAIG

Sunday schools had been held in dwellings in Godre'rgraig almost from the time that the cause was started at Pantteg. It was considered as a branch of Pantteg Sunday school. In the April 1841 issue of the DIWYGIWR (Reformer) a report was published of the work undertaken by the school during the previous six months. The Secretary John Thomas of Pentwyn had signed the report. Around 1863-64 a Schoolhouse was built to accommodate an every day school, Sunday school, prayer meetings and where sermons could be heard. But the time was not yet ripe to form a church.

Later in 1864/65, a considerable plot of land was acquired in Godre'rgraig to serve as a cemetery. From time to time this cost the Chapel many hundreds of pounds.

THE THIRD CHAPEL IN PANTTEG

Even following the formation of the Wern and Gurnos Chapels, Pantteg was too small to accommodate hundreds of people who wished to attend and in 1864/65 the old Chapel was dismantled and a third, brand new chapel built. The cost was £700.00 but its size and beauty rivalled other chapels costing £1,200:00. The architect and builder was John Morgan, Penlanfach who was the Chapel secretary. A summary of the opening ceremony appeared in the issue of the "DIWYGIWR" (Reformer) in December 1865, "The opening of Pantteg, Glamorgan. Pantteg was opened on September 24th and 25th, the third Chapel in the history of the cause, the first in 1821, the second in 1840 and the present in 1865. It is a beautiful and well constructed building which is a compliment to its planners and craftsmen, all living in the locality and the majority of who are Chapel members. The total cost was £700. The sum collected prior to its opening was £332 and an additional sum of £71 on the day of the opening. The debt now outstanding is less than £300 and will soon be less than that. The following Ministers took part, Reverends W. Morgan, Maesteg; D. Davies, New Inn; T. Rees, D.D., Swansea; C. Short (Baptist), Swansea (English); H. Oliver, B.A., Pontypridd; D. Evans, Llansawel; W. Roberts, Liverpool; T. Davies, Morriston; J. Roberts, Maesyrfhaf (Neath); W. Jones, Swansea (English); D. Price, Aberdare; B. Thomas, Gurnos; C. Williams, Soar; H. Rees, Ystradgynlais; and Morgans, Carmel....

THE RESIGNATION OF PHILLIP GRIFFITH

The building of the third Chapel was the last important task undertaken during his Ministry because he resigned as the Minister of Pantteg before the end of 1865, the year of the opening ceremony. The entry in "The History of Churches" is incorrect when it states that the Reverend Griffiths resigned at the end of 1866 and that his successor was appointed in the summer of 1867. Proof of the error exists in the Reverend Griffiths account book, in which all monetary transactions were meticulously recorded, reveals that he received his final payment as the Minister of Pantteg on November 5th. 1865.

Reverend Griffiths was the Minister of Pantteg for a period of 43 years. Doubtless the primary reason for resigning was his age, he was now 73 years old. His field of activities was wide, far too varied for a man of his age to be able to cope with. By now Pantteg and Alltwen were big Churches. He considered that Pantteg was able to support its own ministry. In addition to his duties in Pantteg and Alltwen he undertook leading roles in the activities of the Regional and National Organisations of the Welsh Independents.

The relationship, between Reverend Griffiths and Pantteg had on the whole, been a happy one. He had been involved in its birth and up bringing before it became officially designated as a Church. He walked from Melincwrt (Neath area) to teach in and outside, the small schoolhouse at

Twyn Ty'r Ysgol (School House Hill or Knoll). Following its recognition as a Church his love for the cause induced him to spend some part of the summer of 1822 in the area. When Pantteg invited him to become its Minister he agreed immediately although he had previously refused invitations from older, better well known Churches, like Cwmllynfell and Crwys. It is certain that the Church and its Minister loved and admired each other. The young Church was extremely active and enthusiastic and soon its Minister became one of the most popular preachers in South Wales. The DIWYGIWR (Reformer) of 1847 records a glowing recommendation written by the Reverend Griffiths in which he praises the Church. He blessed her in the following benediction: "May the huge sun of justice reside above this place until the sun of this world finally sets, and the blessings of the hills of eternity fall on those who worship here until they reach the dust and bones of my dear friends in the graveyard and then let Him set fire to the place, if He so wishes."

Even so, we have to admit that there is an element of truth in the Reverend S. Thomas, (Newmarket) (Phillip Griffiths' biographer) when he compares Alltwen and Pantteg and asserts, "that it was in Alltwen he received the least trouble."

It appears relations became less amicable during the later years of his ministry and doubtless both parties bore some responsibility. Some disagreement arose from the Ministers opinion that he should govern Chapel affairs, an idea fairly commonly held by the older Ministers. But there were some forceful characters among the congregation who felt that they had the right to govern especially as the Minister - because of his many calls on his service - was frequently absent. Furthermore, many of the members considered the Church was strong enough to support its own minister and it was necessary to have one in such a populated area.

In the latter part of his ministry, he frequently threatened to resign from his pastoral care for Pantteg and complained about his income. He was justified in this, because even in those days of historically low paid ministers, particularly when it is remembered that Pantteg was a strong Church with a large membership.

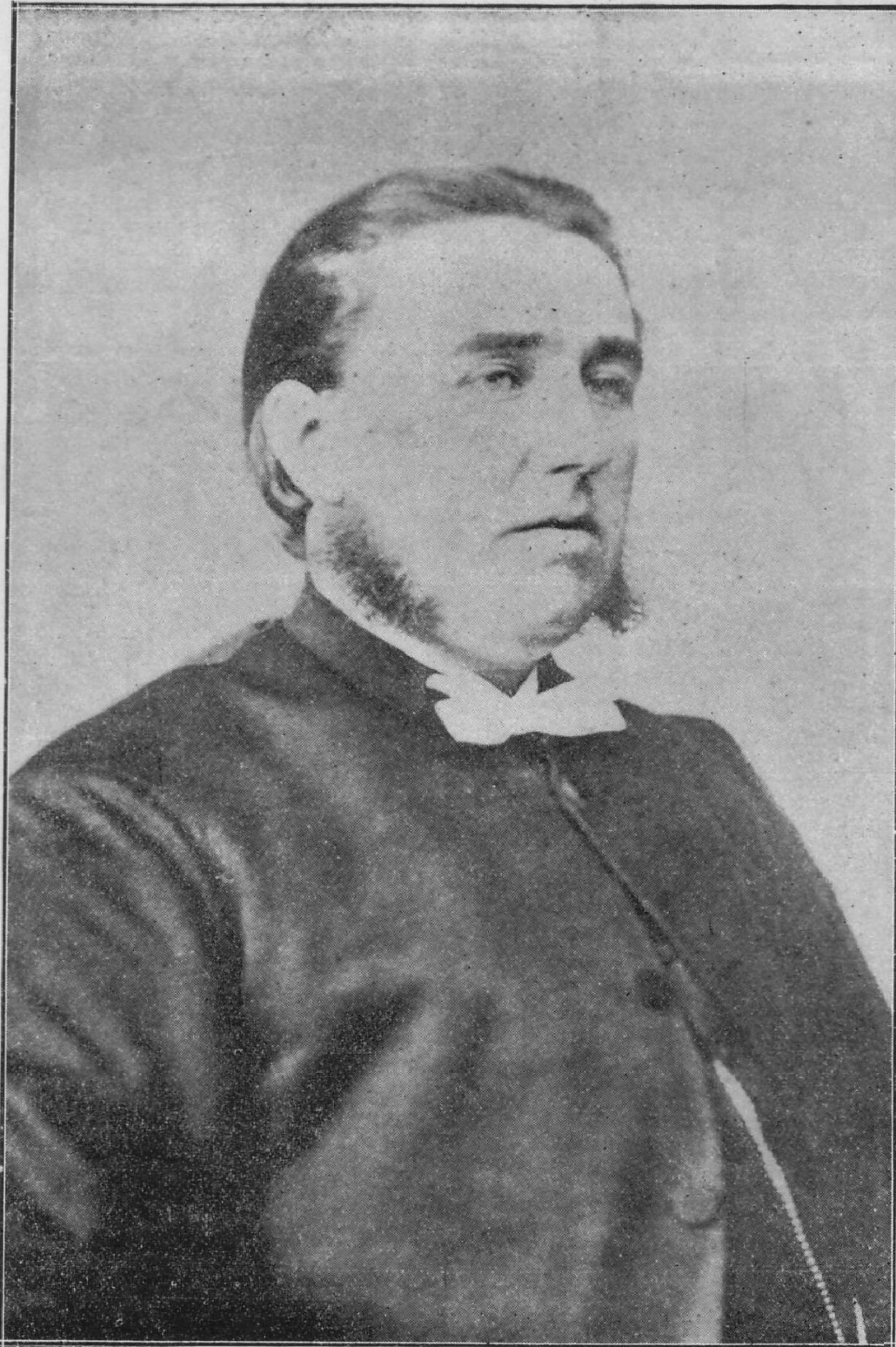
His salaries from Pantteg in the later years are recorded

1860	£47:15:0	1861	£40:7:2
1862	£36:17:0	1863	£36:0:31/2
1864	£33:01:5	1865	£34:18:1

Little wonder that the old Minister, would remark when the collection plates were returned with the silver coins conspicuous by their absence, "I see that the copper works are doing well" or "I've had enough this time to shoe the pony." Proof that it was not the inability of the congregation to pay was responsible when, a few years later, the Reverend R. Trefor Jones' salary was £8:0:0 monthly.

As a preacher, he had been one of the most popular in South Wales for many years. Dr. John Thomas, Liverpool described him as a prince, extolled by the thousands, especially in Glamorgan. He held an honoured position amongst the giants of his generation. He spoke the language of ordinary people, so that they all understood him. It appears that his preaching depended to a large degree on the mood he was in. If he felt inspired he would be gentle, mostly happy, a charming, attractive delivery and emotional. On the other hand, when he did not feel inspired he tended to berate the congregation. He chastised his listeners with nasty, cutting illustrations that would hurt them to the quick.

In the preparatory services prior to the Sunday Communion he would, on occasion, when excluding "sinners" from membership of the Chapel, for their misdemeanours, make the most horrible and hurtful observations. Even when welcoming repentant sinners back to the fold he would say some strange remarks. "Oh Dai, you are here. I thought you had been in hell for some time". On another occasion he said, "You came at last Mari. The Lord had to take your child from



Parch. JOHN JENKINS.

your bosom before you could see your duty. Give thanks to God that He did not take Twm away from you. If He had done so, what would you have done then for food for your flock of children?" The Reverend Griffiths was bettered on one occasion by an Englishman, named Matthew, who had learnt some Welsh, was inclined to drink to excess and had "lapsed his membership" many times. When he let it be known that he was to attend a preparatory service the Minister announced he was going to really set about him. "You have come back once more, Matthew". Matthew replied in Welsh, "Thanks be to God". The Reverend added, "So you should". Matthew continued, "Yes, yes" cutting across the Reverend's words "He is the One I thank, no thanks to you, nor Dai Pantygwanyd, nor Shon Penlanfach, (two of the Deacons), I would never get to heaven if it was up to you. Its God I thank". Reverend Griffiths mellowed, said no more, doubtless feeling that he was the one who had been set about, rather than Matthew.

When the time came for him to resign the Reverend Griffiths could justifiably claim he had done a good job of work at Graig Arw. Despite his tendency to complain, an occasional uncouth and unkind word, he had retained a righteous character, together with his powerful sermons and left a deep impression of goodness on the people he served.

THE DEACONS DURING PHILLIP GRIFFITHS' MINISTRY

Since all the old records are lost it is not possible to confirm the names of the first Deacons. Despite the uncertainty it is considered that the following were included - Evan Evans, Gilfach-yr-haidd; William Hopkin, (Elder) Carreg Pentwyn; Rees Price, Evan Evans, Gilfach-yr-haidd; William Hopkin, (Elder) Carreg Pentwyn; Rees Price, Ystalyfera (Lower); William John, Cwmtawe Upper; Shon William Williams, Upper Ystalyfera; Dafydd Samuel, Gwernllwyn.

It is possible to confirm that the following became Deacons when the second election took place:

Morgan Morgan, Tirgarw; Thomas Morgan, Cwmtawe; John Owen, William Hopkin, Pantteg; William Evans, Penperlyn; John Morgan, Penlanfach; David Evans, Pantygwanyd; Thomas Walters, the Grocer; David Davies, Godre'rgrraig; John Davies, the Moulder; D.G. Thomas, the Grocer; John David Samuel and James Clee.

Some were characters of note and standing. Reference has already been made to some of them being amongst the original founders of the cause, others figure as choir conductors in the Chapel.

SHON WILLIAM WILLIAMS

He was the son of William Williams, Upper Ystalyfera in whose house the Reverend Morgan Lewis, Glynneath preached early in the 19th Century. He was one of the first Chapel members, a farmer who also owned a quarry in Gellibwll from where most of the stones to build the first Chapel were obtained.

JOHN MORGAN, PENLANFACH

John was the son of John Morgan (the Elder) and Mary Morgan also of Penlanfach. Mary was one of the founder members. John the son was a farmer, owned Penlanfach Quarry and was also a builder. He was a pillar of the cause until he died at the age of 85 in 1889. He was the Chapel Secretary for many years and he was also the architect and builder of the third Chapel. He had a strong character, a bit abrupt in his manner but endowed with sound common sense. He was not a great public speaker but his spoken contributions to Chapel discussions were always brief, substantial and to the point.

DAFYDD EVANS, PANTYGWANYD

Dafydd was the son of Evan Evans. Evan has previously been described as one of the main founders. Dafydd was born on March 7th. 1805 and died on May 30th 1897 and for all his long life he was a faithful member of the Chapel. His care and work for the Chapel were a heavy burden but he derived great pleasure from it. He spared no effort to ensure the well being of the cause, he was equally enthusiastic in condemning members he considered to be doing harm to the Church. On the day of the funeral, the Reverend Trefor Jones recalled that in the light of some financial problem in the Church, Dafydd sold one of his farm animals, which he could ill afford to lose, in order to resolve the problem. He was the treasurer for many years.

WILLIAM HOPKIN, PANTTEG

William was a member of an old local family. His father and grandfather, William Hopkin (the younger) and William Hopkin (the elder) are named amongst the founders. He was probably the most talented of the Deacons. Although his talents had not been honed by a scholastic or college education, he had a very cultured mind. He knew his scripture and the books he left when he died showed the breadth of his reading. His library comprised a goodly number of the best Welsh books published in the first half of the 19th Century. He was a unique character on account of his originality, outspokenness and lively imagination. He took an interest in music, acted as the Precentor although it was alleged that he was not always sure of the melody or rhythm. If the words and melody did not match, he would invariably extemporise. When he had his own house built he incorporated a room to accommodate visiting preaches, and he carried out this work for many years.

The following hymn was found amongst his papers, it is thought that he was the author.

I'VE GOT FEET OF CLAY TO WALK
INTO GOD'S CHURCH
I'VE EARS OF CLAY TO LISTEN
FOR THE WAY TO KEEP ME ALIVE
I'VE A TONGUE OF CLAY TO PRAISE
THE SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS-
GIVE ME A HEART TO PRAISE
ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE

Much more could be added about William Hopkin, but I must stop.

JOHN DAFYDD SAMUEL

John was the son of Dafydd Samuel from Gwernllwyn. He was a modest, prudent and peaceful man. He didn't speak a lot but when he did he showed he had an enlightened and mature mind. His modesty was manifest when it required a great deal of persuasion to accept the position of Deacon after he had been elected. No one was better qualified but it still took a great deal of persuasion.

In addition to the Deacons and officials named, many other men deserve recognition, but we can but name them. Doubtless there are others we know nothing about.

John Clee (elder), John Williams, Cwmtawe; Dafydd Shon, William Gibbon, Thomas Gibbon, William Bowen, William Morgan (Cobbler), William Jones (Haulier), John Jones, (Limestone), John Tibbot, William Davies, Pentalwn; Thomas Morgan (Boxer), John Williams (Mason), Rees Jones, Griffith Houses; Abram Williams, Thomas Thomas, James Kenrick, John Harries, Pantteg; Thomas Davies (Baller) and John David Evans.

CHAPTER THREE**THE MIDDLE PERIOD 1866 – 1888**

In the previous chapter reference was made to the business success the area enjoyed during the latter part of the Reverend Phillip Griffiths' ministry. These prosperous times lasted until around 1880. Trade began to slow down. Several coalmines ceased operating and things went from bad to worse at the Ystalyfera Iron Works until it closed down completely on 17th December 1885. That was truly a black day in the lives of thousands of workers and there was considerable poverty and suffering. Scores of families moved away to seek employment and livelihood. Extreme measures were introduced to alleviate starvation. It is known that the Reverend Phillip Griffiths travelled extensively to collect money to meet the needs of his flock. The Iron Works resumed operations about a year later but nowhere near the levels of extent and success previously enjoyed. The time of adversity lasted some years. Then conditions gradually improved when new coalmines were opened in Ystalyfera and the neighbourhood and to this date, industry prospered. One primary reason for including the above mentioned facts are to show how it affected the moral and religious standards of the population. In times of affluence, there was a great deal of godless behaviour: drunkenness, fighting and other corrupt practices were common. On Saturday nights it was a common sight to see a drunken crowd of "puddlers" from Graig Arw fighting a similar crowd of miners from Cwmtwrch or Ystradgynlais. One risked one's life to move past them. Some of the officials at the Iron Works seemed to be determined to reduce the standards of living to those of the "cities of the plain" (ie Sodom & Gomorrah). Despite the terrible conditions endured when the works closed down it proved to be a blessing in moral terms. It put a stop to the residents' sinful behaviour.

I was surprised to the extent when investigating the effects of the recession on the Chapel. Bearing in mind that several families had moved away, one would expect a lesser number of Chapel members. None of the local chapels recorded a reduction in their membership. To the contrary, some recorded an increase. It would appear that very few religious families in fact moved away. They preferred to tolerate the suffering rather than sever their connections with their chapels.

Two ministries cover the period 1866 – 1888. Both were of short duration and shared similarities in their nature so it is of advantage to consider them in the same context. It was a tranquil period, the members possessed a large new chapel and debt incurred in its construction had been halved by the day it was opened. The only building work undertaken during this time was, the Chapel House (Manse) in 1866/67. I do not mean to suggest that the lack of activity encompassed the spiritual side of the church, but there is evidence of disagreement, of various factions being formed and quarrelling. It is of no benefit to go into details but it would also be wrong to deny or cover up its existence.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND JOHN JENKINS 1866 – 1868

Following the Reverend Phillip Griffiths' departure, on November 1865 the Reverend John Jenkins commenced his ministry, in the summer of 1866. The call read as follows:

"To the Reverend Jno. Jenkins, Independent Minister.

We, the Congregation of Pantteg, do hereby agree unanimously to give you a Call to be our Pastor in future for the above Church. Signed on behalf of the above Church, Jno. Morgan, David Evans, David Davies, John Davies, D.G. Thomas, John Dd. Samuel, Deacons. June 21st 1866."

One would have thought that no minister could have wished for a more favourable set of circumstances under which to start his ministry. A large congregation, a new chapel almost clear of debt, the world of business prospered as never before, or since. In addition the scope of his ministry at Pantteg was such that it would give full reign to the ability and resource of a 33 year old. In fact, for the initial few months he was extremely popular with his members. People attended in the hundreds to hear him preach. He was held to be a preacher gifted beyond the ordinary. He was regarded as a very influential Minister. He was described as “being like an angel” in the pulpit.

THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC OF 1866

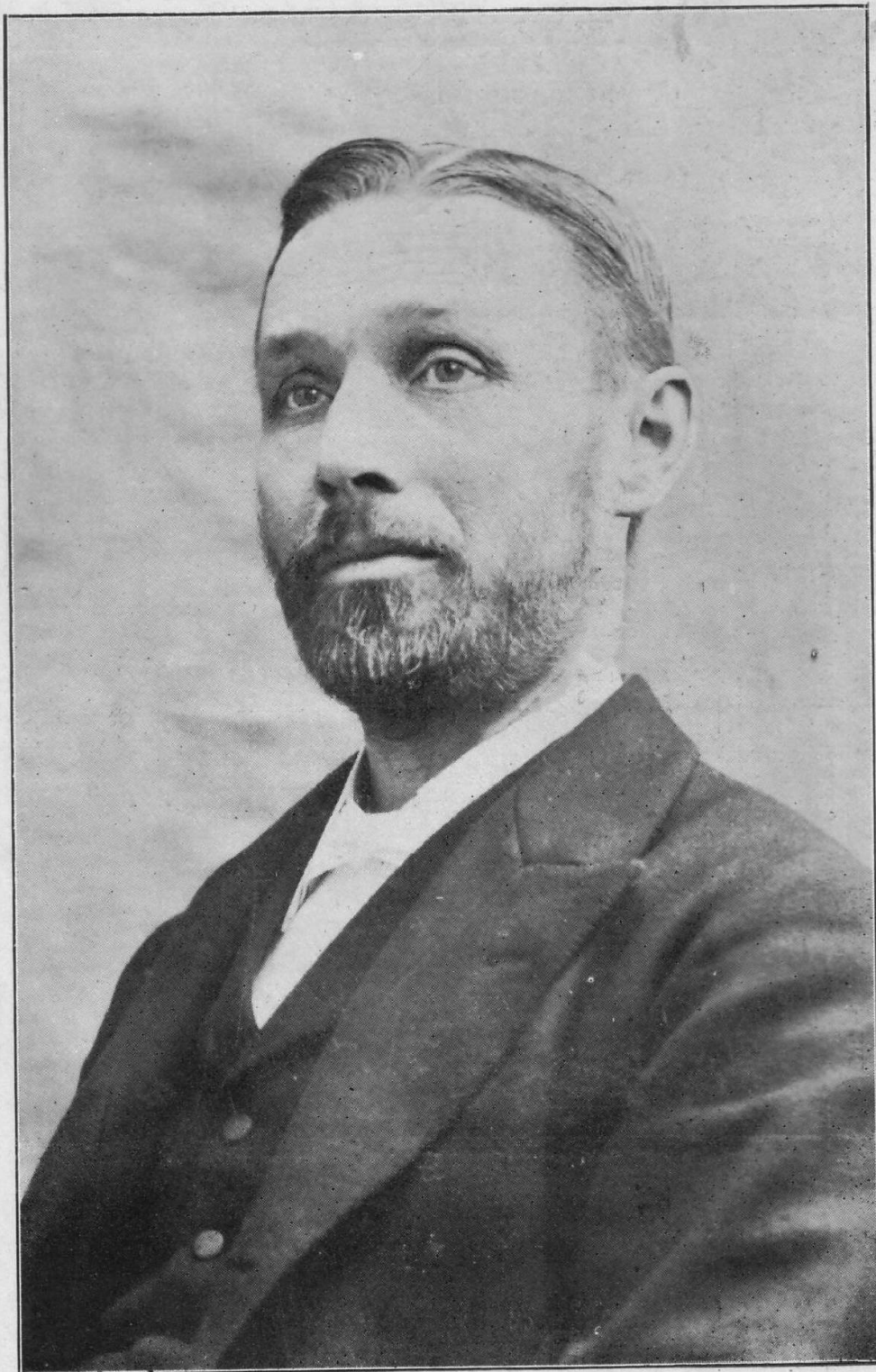
Whatever his gifts and talent as a preacher, the cholera epidemic which occurred in the early months of his ministry and which resulted in the deaths of hundreds in the locality, must have given an added edge to the truth, importance and seriousness of his sermons. People were petrified and shocked at seeing so many of their neighbours dying within hours of contracting the disease. James Clee held prayer meetings during which he moved from row to row urging people to “seek refuge whilst there was still time.” There were huge congregations during the weekday service and the buildings were fully occupied. It is likely that the circumstances that existed had as much impact as the preacher’s ability and influence. Many scores of people became chapel members.

Before long a misunderstanding arose between the Minister and the Church. On occasions Mr. Jenkins absented himself from the pulpit without any apparent reason, when he was due to preach, despite appearing to be in good health. Prayer meetings were held instead of the normal order of service. If the officers went to look for him they were informed that he was too ill to see them. Doubts and suspicions arose. It would appear that the true reason was that he suffered fits of acute depression that rendered him incapable of facing a congregation. On one occasion he and his brother, Reverend William Jenkins, Pentre Estyll, had arranged to exchange pulpits on a Sunday night. When William arrived in Ystalyfera, John insisted that illness prevented him taking William’s place. However, following earnest persuasion John agreed to go to Pentre Estyll and made a good impression on the congregation. Doubtless an attack of depression was the reason for his reluctance.

However, there was further disagreement over Mr. Jenkins’ partiality to strong drink and he did not try to keep this a secret. In the early part of his ministry he openly frequented the local tavern. It is said that on one occasion he was standing on the threshold of the tavern when one of the most zealous of abstainers passed by. The Minister said, “Hello, John, which verse is going to be the subject of deliberation of tonight’s meeting?”

The abstainer answered “The verse which reads, why do you spend money on that which is not bread and labour for that which does not satisfy”.

It is true to say that drinking and frequenting taverns was not uncommon in those days, even amongst preachers. Due to the result of Reverend Phillip Griffiths’ influence, the congregation at Pantteg considered that ministers should be above reproach and this included abstinence. As a consequence, discord arose between the Chapel and the Minister who moved to Seion Chapel, Swansea at the end of 1868 following two and a half years service. It is fair to say that not every member of the congregation was convinced that Mr. Jenkins was guilty of every charge levelled against him.



Parch. R. TREFOR JONES.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND R. TREFOR JONES, 1870 – 1888

Mr. Jones started his Ministry at the beginning of October 1870. He had previously served Meifod, Main and Phontrobert Chapels in Montgomeryshire. His ordination services were held on the 22nd and 23rd of February 1871. His Ministry was largely peaceful and successful, a debt of £300: 00 in respect of the Chapel was cleared and later a further £300: 00 was spent on painting the Chapel ready for opening day. A religious revival at the beginning of 1874 resulted in 173 new members joining on the first Communion Service of that year. On the first Sunday in 1878 a further 73 were accepted. This was a peaceful, harmonious and fruitful period.

Sadly disagreement occurred on whether or not to accept a proposal for a new Church Constitution, The Minister and some members were in favour whilst a number of stalwart members wished to retain the old.

Further discord occurred when some members accepted the teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg. The Minister and the majority of the congregation insisted that an Independent Chapel was not an appropriate society for them. Others maintained that the Chapel did not have the right to expel members because of their theological beliefs.

This caused much bitterness, and, as was a common occurrence in those days, it was brought to the attention of the Welsh journalists. Spurious and pointless doctrinal arguments and attacks on individual opinions and character were common.

One result was that the Minister thought that he had lost the respect and trust of the members and he tendered a notice of his intention towards the latter part of 1887. He became the Minister of Gwernllwyn, Dowlais at the end of February 1888. After tendering his notice Mr. Jones realised just how strong was his connection with the Chapel and it was said that he very much regretted his decision. His final sermon as the Minister of Pantteg was delivered on the last Sunday in February 1888.

He had earned general approval as a preacher but the quality that gained him the most respect was his gentle and faithful manner, in which he performed his duties as the shepherd of his flock. He was a gentle and patient man, a spotlessly clean character and these qualities held him in good stead during the latter troublesome days of his ministry. Only the most zealous members of the temperance movement considered he was lacking in his zeal for the temperance cause.

ELECTION OF DEACONS, THE NEW PROCEDURE

An important change took place during Mr. Jones' Ministry. Previously the Minister and existing Deacons chose the new deacons, they thought fit. However, the members refused to accept the recommendations on the grounds that the system was undemocratic and that the congregation should have the right to elect deacons. The proposal was accepted.

The names of those elected were:

Pantteg

Caleb Jones
David R. Lewis

Heol-yr-eglwys

John Evans

Godrergraig

Lewys Evan Jones
David Jones (Mount)
William Harries

Lewys Evan Jones and Abram Williams led the movement for referral.

CHAPTER FOUR**THE MORE RECENT PERIOD: 1888-1921.**

The Church did not have its own minister for a period of 3 years following the departure of the Reverend R. Trefor Jones. During this time some of the most prominent denominations ministers occupied the pulpit, from time to time there was a lot of discussion about choosing a minister but there was a failure to agree.

THE MINISTRY OF THE REVEREND BEN DAVIES, 1891 –

The Reverend Ben Davies, Bwlch Gwyn, first preached at Pantteg on August 11th 1889. The subjects of his sermons were ‘Come into Me, all who are tired and heavily laden’ and ‘Also written above his head, in Greek, Latin and Hebrew were the words. This is the King of the Jews’. He returned on June 15th 1890 when the subjects of his sermons were ‘That which is impossible with men is possible with God.’ and ‘If your right hand restricts you, remove it’. The sermons were well received and there was a general consensus that he be heard again. He again visited on August 24th 1890 in response to the Church’s express invitation. On this occasion his subject matters were ‘I must be about the matters that belong to my Father’ and ‘There is now therefore no lamination’. By now the members were actively discussing the possibility of ‘calling’ a minister. The Church was not completely unanimous but the majority of the congregation and especially the younger members favoured the Reverend Ben Davies. On the other hand, many of the elder brethren amongst those holding office considered him to be too young and inexperienced – at that time he was not yet aged 26. They favoured another minister from North Wales who was much older. However, the Reverend Ben Davies gained more favour amongst the younger members with each of his three visits and following the third (visit), a Church meeting resolved to issue an official invitation to serve as minister. Some misgivings remained but eventually all the church officials signed the invitation. A copy of the invitation follows;

Sep. 13th 1890

“Invitation or Call”

From: the Church that meets in Pantteg, Ystalyfera. To: the Reverend Ben Davies, Bwlch Gwyn, North Wales.

Having proved your services as a preacher, we wish to “call or invite” you to become our Shepherd in the hope that, if you agree to accept our request, your coming will prove to be a Blessing to the Church and the locality, add to God’s glory and the saving of sinners.

You will be expected to serve as minister each Sunday throughout the year and every year during your term as minister, and if you are called on some Sunday on special occasions to serve elsewhere, you will arrange for a replacement, acceptable to the Church, to fill your place.

You will also be expected to fulfil, as far as is possible the duties associated with the Church’s public and circumstantial activities, such as baptism, funerals, the Sunday school and the week day services and visit members who are ill.

In recognition of your services you will receive the collection arranged specifically and regularly each month for the

benefit of the ministry, freely and voluntarily made by the congregation: your accommodation in the manse rent free for as long as you remain as minister. You will pay all taxes:

Signed: David Evans, treasurer; David Davies, Mason; Caleb Jones; David Jones; John Evans, John Thomas, A. R. Lewis, William Harries, A. G. Thomas, Deacons”

The terms were accepted and the new minister took up his duties on February 1st 1891. The subject of his sermons was ‘O Brothers, pray for me,’ and ‘Woe unto me if I don’t preach the gospel’. At the first Communion service, which followed, nearly 100 people were accepted or re-admitted into membership.

The ordination services were held on the afternoon and evening of Thursday, March 3rd 1891. The Reverend E. Samuels, Swansea presided. The following took part, Reverends J. Rees, Cwmllynfell; R. Rees, Alltwen; Towyn Jones; Watcyn Wyn; J. Thomas (Gurnos) and Trefor Jones, Dowlais. The Reverends Trefor Jones and Lewis Jones, Tynycoed preached in the evening service.

The Minister soon proved, that although he was only 26 years old when he was ordained that Providence lead him to Pantteg, where there was a large membership and provided scope for his activities. Through his powerful and lively sermons, the richness of his beautiful thoughts and his totally new treatment of the Gospel’s ancient truths, all delivered in simple, easily understood words, in a manner which attracted his congregation soon won him the love and admiration of the church. He was seen not only as bright and talented, but his impeccable conduct, earnest attitude, the sincerity of his appeals to the hearts and conscience of his congregation, who realised that the Minister was truly one of Jed’s prophets. The sermon he preached on the occasion of his first evening service, as Minister, will live long in the memory. The strength of his ministry is reflected in membership figures, which were 397 when he arrived.

111 members were added during his first year’s ministry, 52 in the second and 55 in the third. The congregation increased to such an extent, that the old chapel became too small.

The whole of Wales knows of Mr. Davies as a preacher by now, but it is not aware of how successful he has been as a Minister. The older element in Pantteg had good reason to question the invitation to a 25year old man to become the minister of a large chapel where there had been a history of quarrelling and disputes. Mr. Davies’ success as a minister is proof that the invitation was made under God’s guidance. One minister’s patient approach, his unflinching words of wisdom, his peaceful spirit and willingness to work had the effect of unifying the chapel, and this, in turn, won the respect and total trust of the ones who had opposed the original invitation. This created a new ambience, which nurtured a spirit of union and co-operation. Mr. Davies did not attempt to impose decisions, but rather he led his congregation by his loving and peaceful attitude. The chapel has faced many problems during the last 30 years, but Mr. Davies leadership qualities have ensured that there have not been any disagreements.

RENOVATING THE VESTRY

The first important development undertaken during Mr. Davies’ ministry was the renovation of the old building used to house the weekday services and as a school for the youngest children on Sundays. This was the first chapel although it underwent many changes in 1846. Some members of the older generation found it difficult to accept the idea of renovating it. Is it any wonder? Many had strong religious connections, built up over a period of 60 to 70 years, which made the building sacred in their views. However, the work began in 1891, the architect as Mr. Joseph Rees, Godre’rgraig and the work carried out by Mr. W. Rees and Sons. The total cost = £500.

BUILDING THE FOURTH CHAPEL

Next we come to the most onerous task undertaken in the chapel's history, the building of the present Chapel. This followed much thought and consultation during 1896/97. The existing Chapel had become too small to accommodate the numbers who congregated, especially on Sunday nights. It was almost a waste of time to encourage members, who'd become lax in their attendance, to attend more regularly, the usual reply was that there was no room for them to sit down. Many would be attenders, returned home because they were unable to gain admission. Everyone agreed that it was necessary to provide extra accommodation, but there were many doubts and different opinions about which was the best way forward. The majority favoured the building of a new, much larger chapel in Pantteg and to form a new Church and build a new chapel in Godre'rgraig. Another group favoured the expansion of the Chapel and not build a new chapel in either Pantteg or Godre'rgraig. It was finally agreed to let the Chapel members make the decision by means of a vote, which resulted in a huge majority for building a new chapel in Pantteg. Following the decision there was a surge of interest, especially so following a series of sermons, delivered by Mr. Davies, based on the re-building of Jerusalem. The last service in the old Chapel on the night of Sunday, October 10th, 1897, Mr. Davies preached the sermon. The work of pulling down the old Chapel started on the following Monday.

The architect of the new Chapel was Mr. W. W. Williams, Swansea and the building work entrusted to Mr. J. R. Williams, Ystalyfera. The costs totalled almost £4,000. The project inspired zeal, great enthusiasm and a never-ending willingness to help in the task. Mr. Davies collected almost a £1,000 worth of loans, interest free, from within the chapel membership. During the first 15 months voluntary contributions to reduce the debt, totalled £1,038, which increased to £1,567 within the following year.

Membership totalled 397, when Mr. Davies commenced his ministry in 1891. 463 members were received during the period to the end of 1898, but 295 members left to join other chapels, lapsed or died, so that the total membership at the end of 1898 as 565.

The building of the new chapel had an adverse effect on the activities of the church. Services were held alternatively in the morning and evening in Pantteg vestry and the Schoolhouse in Godre'rgraig. Sunday school was held in the afternoon, and a children's service held in the Weekday school on Sunday nights. If the weather permitted this service was held in the School Yard. In addition, many Chapel members attended services in other Chapels.

At last, the new Chapel, so eagerly anticipated was completed. I will not attempt to describe the building. A true and complete description appeared in the "Congregational Year Book" for 1900 and this is now republished (or reprinted).

(PAGE 50/51)

"The new Chapel which has been erected at Pantteg, Ystalyfera, has been formally opened. The style of architecture is Romanesque. The floor contains seating accommodation for 503 persons. The rails are of Burma Teakwood, and are continuous. Behind the pulpit are arranged the pastor's vestry, with suitable cloakroom, and a church parlour or deacon's vestry. Under the large plate form is the arranged and convenient aumbrey. From the deacon's vestry, there is a spiral staircase leading to the orchestral gallery. The gallery, which is planned on the circular style, provides accommodation for 497 persons. Leading from the large entrance lobby, the main gallery is approached by two wide staircases. The whole of the chapel is built of the best local stone, and the dressings consist of the same material. It is roofed with copper coloured Carnarvon slates. The whole of the interior walls are done in stucco plaster, and there is a handsome plaster ceiling, formed into deep moulded panels, and the main angles are covered. The panels are enriched with pendants and relieved in gold leaf. The whole of the enrichments on the ceiling are original and modelled by a skilled artist. All the interior doors and lobby windows are fitted with lead lights,

which give a very cheerful effect. The acoustical effects are exceedingly satisfactory. The ventilating arrangements are of the most recent type, and fitted with regular gear. The lighting is by incandescent gas burners of the latest approved type, and arranged with artistic effect. The chapel accommodates 1,000 persons”.

The first service in the new Chapel was held on the morning of Sunday, August 13th 1899. The text of Mr. Davies sermon was “Behold, this is the law of the House”.

The official opening services took place on the night of Saturday, August 19th. Sunday August 20th and Monday August 21st. The following Ministers took part - Reverends B. Jones (Baptist), Cwmtwrch; W. Jones (Baptist), Soar; J. Davies, Wern; W. James, Swansea and O. R. Owen, Landore.

The first Communion service in the new Chapel was held on Sunday, August 27th, when 39 members were received into membership.

REVIVAL

In common with churches in general, Pantteg experienced the influence of the 1904/05 Revival. There was a huge increase in membership. 129 were accepted into memberships during the last Communion service held in December 1904. In common with other churches, Pantteg also experienced the fact that many of the “new” members languished and their membership lapsed.

One of the lasting effects of the Revival was:

THE FORMATION OF A NEW CHURCH AND BUILDING: GODRE'RGRAIG CHAPEL.

A Sunday school and Prayer Meetings had been held in the locality for many generations, almost as early as the cause was established in Pantteg. They originated on Pentwyn farm, then they were held from house to house until a School Room was built in 1863/64. Many of the locals were eager to establish a new cause in Godre'rgraig, and this desire was fuelled when services were held in the School Room during the construction of the new Chapel in Pantteg. Even after the opening of the new Chapel a certain few held prayer meetings in Godre'rgraig at the same time as the services in Pantteg. Following the Revival, the request to establish a separate cause at Godre'rgraig was considered to be justifiable. A Chapel was erected on the site of the old School Room, and the new Independent Church was formed on January 6th 1906. The number of members who left Pantteg was 58. Mr. Davies preached a sermon on the text “The Church of the New Testament”.

DEACONS

Deacons have been elected on three occasions during Mr. Davies' Ministry. The last of the Deacons who signed the “invitation/call” to Mr. Davies died some years ago. In 1894, the following eight deacons were elected - D. D. Hopkin, Pantteg; John Evans, Godre'rgraig; John William Jones, Pentalwn, Henry Davies, Cwmtawe Uchaf; William L. Lewis, Pantteg; Samuel Evans, Pantteg; Michael Rees and John Evans, Pantygwannd. In 1901, the following were elected - D. W. Davies, Ty Coch; George Caleb Jones; William Morgan, Godre'rgraig; William Davies, Gough Road; David Morgan, Godre'rgraig; David G. Jones, Chemical Row; David Williams, Corsyrhelyg; and David T. Jones, Penywern Road. In 1911, the following were elected: John G. Jones, Chemical Row; William Lloyd, Gurnos; Llewelyn Evans, Pantteg; Abram Jonathan, Daniel Hopkin, Pentalwn, David James, Wind Road; and **D. G. Williams**, Penywern Road – (NOTE Author of this book.)

Following the death of John Thomas, Twyncerdinen, who'd served as the Chapel secretary as D. G. Thomas' successor, William L. Lewis occupied the post for some years; following his death he was succeeded by the present secretary D. D. Hopkin. Similarly, following the death of his father, David Evan's the post of treasurer was held by John Evans, Pantygwanyd. William Morgan, Godre'rgraig serves as treasurer for the time being due to the illness of John Evans.

The Church was gifted a set of individual communion dishes valued at over a £100.00, by the Treasurer, John Evans, Pantygwanyd in 1917.

Chapel membership totalled 633 at the end of 1920, and the sum of £900.00 was collected during the year.

A memorial stone in memory of those members killed on active service during the Great War, 1914/1918, was unveiled on the night of Sunday, February 27th 1921. The inscription reads:

**IN MEMORY OF
MEMBERS and ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF PANTTEG CHAPEL
WHO FELL IN THE WAR 1914 - 1918**

**WILLIAM E CLEE
WILLIAM CHARLES
TOMMY DAVIES
DAVID GEORGE
HENERY J. JONES**

**DANIEL J. DAVIES
JOHNNY MURPHY
EDWARD REES
JAMES THOMAS
DAVID R. WILLIAMS**

“When you go through deep waters, I will be with you”

During his time in Pantteg, the Minister received many ‘invitations’ from other churches to serve as their Minister, some of which he was sorely tempted to accept but the chapels united and earnest desire for him to stay on each such occasion that he felt it his duty to reject each “call”.

In general, he enjoyed good health during his ministry in Pantteg, he never failed to preach on a Sunday because of illness, but as the result of personal tribulations, he suffered a breakdown in health on two occasions, the first during 1910. The Chapel urged him to take a holiday and gifted him £50.00 towards that purpose. He went to Europe for a holiday, recovered his health and strength and resumed his ministerial duties. In 1920 another breakdown in his health prompted him to consider retiring from his ministry. The church decided he should take a six months holiday in an attempt to regain his health. Following a sea journey (cruise?) lasting two months he gradually recovered, and the Chapel was overjoyed to hear that he himself felt better.

It is a pleasure to record that following his long service he is held in higher esteem than ever by the Chapel, and despite his recent illness, his preaching is as attractive and beautiful in our minds, strong in its appeal, convincing and as evangelical as at any time in his ministry.

Having served us for over 30 years, it is unlikely that he will leave us unless his earthly journey ends. And even then it will be seen that the fourth Minister of Pantteg will be the first to be buried in its graveyard.

The Minister has agreed, with his customary kindness, to write his personal recollections of Pantteg during the last 30 years. These appear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE**THE MINISTER: REVEREND BEN DAVIES REVIEWS HIS TIME AT PANTTEG.**

His ministry started on the first Sunday in February 1891. He and his young wife arrived in Ystalyfera on a cold and damp evening of Thursday 29th January. They lodged with William Davies at Manchester House, (his Cousin). The furniture arrived on Friday. The couple were welcomed by a large gathering outside the Chapel. He would not receive a strip-end until the end of the following month, but the Manse had been well stocked with food, every cupboard was full, coal had been stored in the cellar.

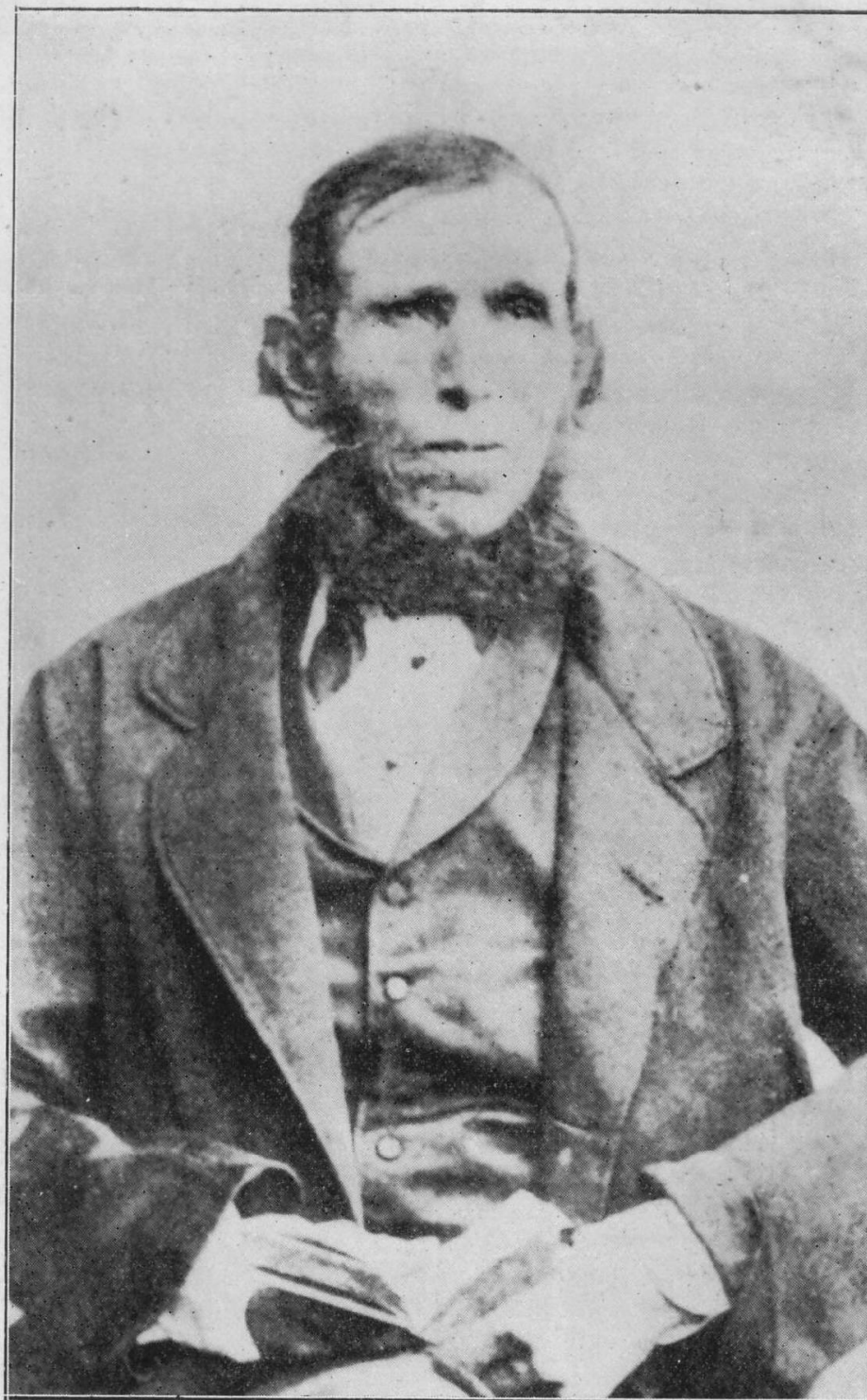
When he first arrived several women were drinking tea in the room that became his study and others similarly employed in the kitchen. His Uncle, Dafydd Evans, Pantygwanyd appeared to be presiding officer, smoking his pipe. His Uncle gave him the names of the ladies, names too original to be repeated, long before the use of the title “Mrs”. Together with their histories and characteristics – “bit simple”, “bit of a gossip”, “Ok as long as she’s the gaffer”. His mother came to visit on the Monday, several ladies called in, he was told the history of his family, previously unknown to him. His father’s first wife was buried in Pantteg, together with her little daughter. The grave was found and he was emotionally touched to realise that a sister had been lying there for many years. His father had worked in the Ystalyfera Works for some years and had lived at the bottom of Clee’s Lane before moving to Dol Gam, Cwmllynfell.

The Chapel was comfortably full for his first service. He notes that the wheels of industry were more still in those days than at present. He lists the names of the Deacons and names the Precentor as Michael Rees and the Organist as John Brazell. He remembers the congregation on the ground floor seemed to be full of old people and now he feels that there are not any old people in the congregation. The reason is simple: to days congregation is made up of young people and children. Previously the congregation was made up of old and middle aged people.

He was 26 years old when he came to Pantteg. The “call” to do so was not unanimous, there was a feeling that he was too young, but the Deacons soon realised he was older than his years, enthusiastic, with no thought of sparing himself. He could not wish to work with a more zealous company of co-workers.

He was just as warmly welcomed and accepted by the members of the congregation. The Chapel attendance on a Sunday evening was excellent, close to being fully occupied until the Chapel was replaced. Old “listeners” and “rebels” flocked to the services; he notes that there was a tendency to keep away when he wrote his notes.

There was no alternative to the Chapel services and the preaching; no other activities disturbed the silence of the Sabbath. There was not even football matches on a Saturday afternoon; no one had dreamt of a cinema; theatres and halls did not exist, there were only Chapels. Only preaching and temperance lectures attracted public attention. Some other lecture, “eisteddfodau”, concerts and political debates at election times took place, but in the main, the public attention was focused on the Sunday morning and evening sermons – the Chapels’ primary institutions. He lists other activities: Sunday school, Prayer Meetings, Fellowship Meetings, Bibles Classes, Band of Hope, and Quarterly Celebrations. There were also occasional literary evenings, concerts and eisteddfodau. Communion was always held on a Sunday morning. The Chapels’ work was more directly religious in those days the fervour displayed during the weekday meetings was often interpreted as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Were the members more religious in those days? Were they better characters? He would not like to comment, but goodness was manifested in



DAFYDD EVANS, Pantygwanyd.

different ways than today. They were far from perfect, but they excelled in their attendance at the weekday services, but deficient in other aspects. Contributions were of a low standard. Collections were made to the religious training colleges, hardly anything to the missionary organisations. Well off people were satisfied to contribute 6 pence a month towards the minister's stipend. The building of the new Chapel spawned the notion of contributing towards the cost, paying became equated with contributing. Some of the elder members spoke disparagingly of other members – even after attending prayer meetings. Temperance was considered an admirable virtue, not that this guaranteed that the temperate souls were kind and gentle. One of the most painful duties was to act as chairman of the “church meetings”. These were held when it was considered necessary, frequently on a weekly basis. Some odd and strange matters were brought up for discussion, which resulted in the members criticizing each other and apportioning blame, adding to the difficulties of the chairman in maintaining an orderly meeting. The church had experienced some difficult times in the recent past and Mr. Davies wished to ensure that those times of discord did not return. He experienced a few instances of disagreement but these gradually resolved themselves. Members of the Sunday school were prone to fall out with each other, which resulted in “family quarrels”. He admits that his attempts to reconcile the various factions by visiting them at their homes were a miserable experience and disheartening. As his ministry continued he was pleased to note that instances of “family quarrels” lessened as the members became more tolerant of the views of other members.

The meetings of the “Representatives of the Sections” were also a source of ill will. The members were divided into sections dependant on their addresses, each section then elected one of their midst to serve as their representative. These held meetings on a monthly basis, on a weekday prior to the Sunday on which the Communion Service was held. At these meetings discussions were held to establish whether or not any member had “trespassed” during the month. If a member were accused of some sin, he/she would be visited “in a spirit of gentleness” and asked to respond. The accused had the right to be told the name of the accuser, thus causing more family friction. Mr. Davies believed that his current members were more generous in thought and deed. Some of the older members harked back to the ministry of the Reverend Phillip Griffiths, sharp of tongue and mind, whose word was law. They believed that the Minister should rule supreme in all Chapel matters. In the election of Deacons, the Minister should announce the names of the individuals he would wish to have as deacons, and let the congregation decide which of those named be elected. However, in Mr. Davies' time, the congregation always elected the deacons of their own choice, and he never experienced any problems with those elected.

In 1895 and 1896 the Chapel was uncomfortably full on Sunday nights although there was plenty of room on Sunday mornings. This led to misunderstandings about the seating arrangements, some members left to join other Chapels, others stayed at home. Mr. Davies was the recipient of harsh words on some occasions when he sought to reconcile the “stay a ways” he was made to feel that it was his fault. An attempt was made to divide the Chapel into two, but this failed. It was then decided to build a bigger Chapel on a site as near the old Chapel as was possible.

It was a big decision, but the enormity of the project served to unite the membership in a spirit of total cooperation and made them realise that their previous “fallouts” were all trivialities. Mr. Davies does not give detailed information about the building or the costs, but praises the enthusiasm and unity of all the members in seeing the building and the costs defrayed. The enthusiasm and unity continued and flourished amongst the membership in the new building.

Mr. Davies intended to stay 4 to 5 years when he initially came to Pantteg but he writes that he no longer has the urge to move from the area. His last resting place has been prepared, his best friends and loved ones lie here. He served many years here – on a comparatively low income but with the freedom to serve other Chapels.



Swyddogion y Canmlwyddiant, 1921.
 Rhestr Uchaf (o'r dde): D. G. Williams, W. Davies, Cnas. A. Morgan, Geo J. Evans, David James.
 Rhestr Ganol (O'r dde): W. Lloyd, D. Hopkin, D. G. Jones, D. W. Davies, Ll. Evans, J. G. Jones.
 Rhestr Isaf (o'r dde): W. Morgan, D. Williams, Parch. Ben Davies. J. W. Jones, D. D. Hopkin.

CHAPTER SIX**THE SINGING AND SINGERS****THE SUNDAY SCHOOL****TEMPERANCE****THE BRITISH SCHOOL****YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRAYER MEETINGS****THE CULTURAL SOCIETY**

Some aspects of the church's history have not been included previously. It was considered best to arrange them in specific sections rather than refer to them sporadically.

THE SINGING AND SINGERS

The Chapel was famous for its singing from its earliest days. Phillip Griffiths remarked in 1847 that there was "great efforts in the harmonious singing". The singing alone proved a steady attraction for people to congregate here, and this has remained true, more or less over the 100 years.

The Church has been blessed with the presence of many talented men as Precentors. Some were famous for conducting choirs in 'EISTEDDFODAU' and concerts others were gifted composers. Others restricted their musical ambition to precenting, but they all remained faithful servants.

EVAN EVANS, GILFACH-YR-HAIDD.

Despite the number of occasions the above named is previously mentioned, it is impossible not to include him once again because he, apart from being one of the main founders, was the Chapels first Precentor.

DAFYDD SAMUEL O'R GWERNLLWYN.

Locally called Dafydd from Gorllwyn, but Gwernllwyn is the correct address. It was a farm on Gellionnen Mountain, and Dafydd walked from there to Cwmllynfell before becoming a member in Pantteg when the latter was formed. He possessed a sweet and charming voice and musical ability and Evan Evans handed over his duties as Precentor so that Dafydd Samuel became the second Precentor. His son, John David Samuel became a Deacon. Two of his great grandsons are Thomas Samuel, Secretary of Wern Chapel and John Samuel, Clare Road.

JOHN DAVIES (CARNHAUNDES)

The third Precentor who was born in a smallholding named Tynyberth in the parish of Llansamlet in 1804. He was a cobbler by trade, and lived in Pantteg around 1835/8. His name, Carnhuandes, Pantteg, appears as a composer, a poet and writer in the publication DIWYGIWR (Reformer). One of his articles was "the History of Melody", his poems included 'The Flood' and 'Judgment Day'. These show he was a cultured and gifted individual. He gained great respect and admiration during his time in Pantteg before moving to Alltwen where he spent the remainder of his life. He was buried in Alltwen Cemetery, his gravestone reads:

"Here lies the remains of John Davies Carnhaundes from Alltwen, the grand son of Sion Howell, Gelligron. Died November 11th 1840, aged 35. The deceased was an eminent poet, a noted musician, a true Welshman and a true friend".

Pantteg Sunday school and many of his friends united to place this stone in his memory.

His chief composition is the anthem "Ystradgynlais" published in "The Welsh Composer" in August 1883.

WILLIAM G. THOMAS

Succeeded John Davies. His son is Thomas Thomas (Prosser), his brother was D. G. Thomas, Clifton Shop, a Deacon and Chapel Secretary for years. Little is known of him. He was an official in the Big Pit, where he met his death on February 10th 1841, aged 31. That morning, during family prayers he recited the verse of a Welsh hymn frequently sung at funerals,

If I had the wings of a dove
I'd fly and wander far.

In view of his death within hours, this was looked upon as a unique coincidence.

LLEWELYN LLEWELYN.

A talented Precentor, but his term was short. The late Mrs. Joan Clee remembered the night he was brought home, dead following an accident in the Cyfyng Level around 1847.

Around this time William Hopkin, Pantteg led the singing. Reference has been made to him previously as a Deacon. After William Hopkin came Mr. Jenkins, of whom we know nothing about him.

JAMES CLEE

The son of John Clee (the elder) and brother to John Clee the overseer of the furnaces. Born in 1820 on Pentwyn Farm, near Llanwrtyd. His father was appointed farm bailiff to the Reverend Fleming Gough, Ynyscedwyn, around 1818 and when James was about a year old the family moved to Ystalyfera. John Clee the elder is remembered as an enthusiastic and warm-hearted member in Pantteg and later in the Gurnos. John Clee the overseer was strong-minded with an adventurous spirit. He invented a device, which proved to be of invaluable benefit in operating the blast furnaces. He was a mechanic and he followed this calling throughout the majority of his

life. In the last year of his life he spent a few months as a superintendent in a works in Newcastle upon Tyne, but it was in this locality that he ended his career.

As a man and as a Christian, James Clee was one of the brightest lights in Pantteg's history. His memory is venerated today although he died 55 years ago. Everyone who knew him is anxious to pay homage to him. He was of impeccable character, his faithfulness to every aspect of the Chapel's causes, his zealous nature, his incomparable ability as a Precentor and general personality, gained the love and admiration of every Chapel member. He was a Deacon for many years.

He was extremely popular with the children and young Chapel members. They flocked to the temperance meetings and choir practices conducted by him. He was blessed with a rich voice and was knowledgeable about music and the singing in Pantteg during his time excelled all previous standards. The songs he taught the children of his time are fresh in the memories of some of the older people today. It is probable that he established the temperance meetings and he remained a committed abstainer all his life.

During the cholera epidemic he visited the victims, despite being warned not to do so, and he fell victim to the disease. He died, true to his faith, stating that, "he was packed ready to go" on September 4th 1866. One of his daughters is Mrs. Jane Thomas (Prosser) and his son was James Clee, Ffestiniog, one of the Chapel's trustees.

Following James Clee, William Evans precented in a very commendable manner.

MORGAN MORGAN (CWMTAWE)

Son of Thomas Morgan (Cwmtawe) previously recorded as being one of the original trustees, and a Deacon. Morgan Morgan followed his father as a trustee. He served as a Precentor for a short term only before he enrolled as a member of the newly formed Wern Chapel. In that short term he conducted performances of "Tiberias' Storm" and the "Messiah". He was a keen competitor and conductor in Eisteddfodau and came into prominence as a conductor of choirs, especially as conductor of Orpheus Glee Society. It would be interesting to research the history of the latter Society, and the other choirs he conducted to see what influence they had on his decision to leave Pantteg. He established Morgan (Cwmtawe) Silver Band, and conducted them for many years. He composed many songs for children and other compositions such as the anthem 'Great is the Lord'.

JOHN WILLIAMS (ASAPH GODRE'RGRAIG)

A brother to David Williams, Corsyrhelyg, and his son is William Asaph Williams, Godre'rgraig.

He served as a Precentor for a lengthy term. In his time, the Stephens and Jones hymn tune book was adopted and around the same time a remarkable hymn singing festival was held under the conductorship of the Reverend E. Stephens, Tanymarian. John Williams also spent a lot of time conducting choirs for Eisteddfodau with a great degree of success.

WILLIAM D. THOMAS

Became a Precentor while still a young man. He diligently studied music from a very young age and developed to become an accomplished musician and a skilful and successful conductor. In addition to his duties as a Precentor, he led the Chapel choir in performing musical masterpieces. He also composed, and led the choir in a performance of "The Salvation of Peter", based on a libretto written by the Reverend Ben Davies. It is interesting, in the light of the recent

revival in Welsh Drama, to recall the religious works, performed in character, and led by him 30 years ago. "Joseph" (Dr. Parry), "The Prodigal Son" (T. Price) and "Esther" were remarkably popular, "Joseph" in particular. These were performed in the old Chapel, in full dress and appropriate scenic backgrounds, exactly like a drama.

Like his two predecessors he conducted the Pantteg choir in many Eisteddfodic competitions, successfully on many occasions. He established, and was the first conductor of the Pantteg Silver Band.

MICHAEL REES

Served as a Precentor for many years. He did not restrict his time entirely to the singing. He was a Deacon, announcer, a leader in young people's meetings, an enlightened Sunday school teacher and a faithful attendant of the weekday meetings. Following a lifetime of steadfast and successful endeavours, enhanced by a pleasant personality, Michael Rees was called to the "beautiful land" just over a year ago.

DAVID G. JONES

Occupied the post faithfully for some years. He was also elected a Deacon. He resigned as a Precentor but remains a faithful member.

RICHARD I. GREGORY

Established a new chapter in the history of the singing in Pantteg. He was a gifted musician, possessing a cultured mind and one of the brightest characters to serve the Chapel. Soon after taking the post, in 1901, he concentrated all his energy in teaching the compositions of famous composers. The Chapel choir performed concerts of a very high standard, which included "Messiah" "Elijah" "Creation" and similar works. He prepared to study for the degree of Mus.Bac., but his health failed him. He went to a sanatorium near Bournemouth in an attempt to cure T.B. Unfortunately he succumbed to the disease. He was aware that his life was in danger, but in a letter to a friend wrote that even under those circumstances he felt a degree of happiness.

He died a young man, 35 years of age, on October 25th 1912. He'd started on what promised to be a brilliant career, and had he lived, he would have become one of Wales' foremost musicians.



JAMES CLEE, Arweinydd y Gân.

GEORGE J. EVANS

The present Precentor is George J. Evans. He has already proved himself, in many circles, to be a talented Precentor and musician. He led a children's choir to success in the National Eisteddfod in Swansea. He subsequently led performances of "Samson", Mozarts "Twelfth Mass", "Mount of Olives" and "Revenge of Hiawatha", with great success. He was very active in leading the children attending Sunday school and The Band of Hope.

JOSEPH JONATHAN

Hundreds of the Chapel's children cannot fail to remember Joseph Jonathan's service to children's singing. He was exceptionally active, in leading the children who attended Sunday school and Band of Hope for many years. They held numerous concerts, which were very popular and successful.

THE ORCHESTRA

Established in 1896 under the leadership of Charles A. Morgan. He has given notable service to the congregational singing and church concerts.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The cause at Pantteg originated as a Sunday school in the small schoolhouse at Twyn ty'r ysgol and which sparked the wish to build a chapel.

The school was remarkably successful and popular in the early years of the church, perhaps more so than it is now, but it was never at a low ebb. Branches flowered in Godre'rgraig Arw, Gurnos and Craig y Forest. These grew in stature so that they were able to support weekday meetings, and subsequently churches were formed in Godre'rgraig Arw and Gurnos.

The predominant feature of the teaching at that time was to memorise parts of the Bible and it was common practice to hold sessions of catechism on Bible stories and subjects. The success of a school was measured in terms of the total number of chapters and verses learnt. This method of teaching was the foundation of the detailed knowledge of Scripture displayed by many of the older members. It was said that William Hopkin, Pantteg could quote the name of the book and the number of the chapter and verse of any Biblical sentence quoted to him.

It is of interest to quote a report, printed in June 1825, of a question and answer session held in Pantteg on December 12th 1824:

"A Schools' Assembly was held in Pantteg, Glamorgan on December 12th 1824. In the morning session, Alltwn School was questioned by the Reverend Daniel Griffiths, Neath, and Pantteg School, by Reverend Phillip Griffiths on a catechism prepared by the Reverend Thomas Phillips, Neuaddlwyd. At 2 o'clock Cwmbach School (became Carmel, Gwauncaegurwen) was questioned by the Reverend Phillip Griffiths. A sermon was delivered by the Reverend Daniel Griffiths following which a report on the activities of the schools for last year was announced. Pantteg had learnt and recited the whole of the New Testament and 33 chapters of the Old Testament; Alltwn parts of the Old Testament; and Cwmbach parts of the Old and New Testaments. In statistical terms the results were:

Pantteg 299 Chapters 8,859 Verses
Alltwen 292 Chapters 4492 Verses
Cwmbach 447 Chapters 9437 Verses

Subsequently, services were held at the end of every quarter in the year. These comprised Bible readings, religious and moral debates and hymn singing. At one time, after holding such a service in the "home Chapel" the members would hold the same service in other Chapels in the neighbourhood.

TEMPERANCE

The Chapel has been served well by individuals who supported the cause of temperance. The Reverend Phillip Griffiths was an enthusiastic supporter, as is our present Minister. Pantteg was one of the earliest churches to embrace the concept of temperance. There is a record of a public meeting in 1837 chaired by the Minister.

It is uncertain when temperance meetings for children started, but they were very popular in 1850 under the leadership of James Clee and John Williams, Mason.

The Reverends John Jenkins and Trefor Jones were not very enthusiastic and the cause suffered as a result. The children's meetings continued but without a degree of consistency. One of Reverend Ben Davies' first objectives was to re introduce the "Band of Hope" and it has flourished each winter over the last 30 years.

A branch of "The League of Good Templars" existed between 1870-1880.

THE BRITISH SCHOOL

Was of enormous service in the old days. It has already been noted that the Chapel built a Schoolhouse and a house for the schoolmaster and later adapted the old Chapel as a school. Phillip Griffiths is quoted as saying "that about a hundred children were being educated, that the Chapel was solely responsible for its running, there was no other assistance and no grants from any other service. It has a treasurer, secretary and a committee comprised of Chapel members, and the Chapel owns all the school books". The old Minister and the church were proud of the school. A children's "Reward Day" was held in 1848.

Amongst those who have served as teachers were Rees Williams, Lloyd Davies, Benjamin Thomas, Thomas Evans, John Morgan from the Pant, William Morgan and Richard Morgan.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRAYER MEETING

Originated during the Reverend R. Trefor Jones' ministry and was held on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings but subsequently on Sunday mornings only. It became one of the best institutions in the Chapel's history and it would be difficult to over state its beneficial influence. It enjoyed great popularity for many years and successfully groomed young men to become the public face of the Chapel, who were versed in the art of public speaking. It appears that the meetings were sources of inspiration from the very beginning. Some of them will never be forgotten. Wondrous influences were felt in these meetings before the Revival. For young people especially, the Chapel has not seen a more effective way to foster enthusiasm for religious matters, to deepen spiritual life and urge complete commitment to the ideals and duties associated with Christianity. The founder and first leader of the Young Peoples' Prayer Meeting was -

JOHN THOMAS, TWYNCERDINEN

About 100 years ago a Sunday school class of young boys used to sit in the gallery to the right hand side of the pulpit. Their teacher was John Thomas. Early in 1873, in a Sunday morning Communion Service, every member of the class was accepted as fully-fledged members of the church. At the behest of their teacher they also agreed to establish the Young Peoples' Prayer Meetings and were amongst the most faithful of members for many years. The author is grateful for the opportunity to record the indebtedness of the Chapel to John Thomas for establishing the movement. He possessed outstanding personal qualities, which enabled him to lead the meetings. No one else could compare the same interest and concern for the young people. He cared for them as a father would for his children and encouraged and supported them in their good deeds. He was the spiritual father of the Reverend Bowen Rees and Reverend William Morgan. It is recalled that he always taught classes of young boys.

He was a Deacon and Secretary of the Chapel for an extensive period. He was the secretary during the time the present Chapel was built, and his enthusiasm and diligence were of great service to the church. In truth, although quite elderly he undertook his duties with the energy and spirit of a young man. His diaries for 1897 and 1899 are remarkably interesting and reflect events concerned with building the new Chapel. The first reference is dated Monday, March 29th 1897:

“Working at the quarry. Church meeting, at 7.30pm, Pantteg”. Then the following entries for May 28th 1897:

“Meeting the Architect about the Chapel”,

October 10th 1897:

“Last service at the old Chapel”,

October 11th:

“Beginning to take Pantteg Chapel down”.

After reading these entries one can imagine him walking up to the quarry that morning. Looking down, tears on his cheeks, as the workmen dismantled his beloved Chapel. There are many other interesting entries in these old diaries but I cannot expand on them at this juncture.

He was a great believer in “indebtedness” (that which is obligatory) and the “work” ethic, but they were more than words and ideas to him, they were part of his life and being. He was capable of making cutting remarks on occasions. At the beginning of the present ministry he wrote an address, to be published in the Chapel’s annual report, on the responsibility of members to contribute honourably towards the cause.

He had a cultured mind. In addition to his daily paper, he read the denomination’s publications and was well informed on developments in the secular and spiritual worlds.

He came from a well-known family. His brother was Gwilym Marles, an author, poet, schoolmaster and a well-known preacher in Unitarian circles some 40 or 50 years ago. Another leader of the meetings was -

CALEB JONES

He was a strong-minded man, deliberate and studious, whose religion meant everything to him. No one else possessed his expansive knowledge of scripture and its attendant topics of debate and religious orders and systems. He delighted in listening to explanatory sermons or ones that dealt with certain aspects of divinity. When so moved by hearing a preacher’s observation, or that of a fellow member during a church meeting, he would, strongly and warmly, express his commendation by the use of the Welsh word “Felly”- translated as “so” or “thus”. Hearing the word would no doubt be a source of succour and encouragement to the individual concerned.

However, he would be unimpressed by a flow of words that contained little substance. He was not a shallow vessel which boiled over without due cause.

It was a pleasure to listen to him introducing the verse that was to serve as the subject of debate at a Fellowship Meeting. His leadership established a path that led to the riches of the truth contained in the chapter and verse. He would be equally at ease explaining some complicated teaching, as he would deliver a simple sermon. He would use the phrase “you see” very often, one felt that he was anxious his listeners were following his train of thought. In his view, seeing and understanding were important qualities. In church meetings he expressed his opinions succinctly and clearly but always with a degree of wisdom and deliberation. He hated disagreement and strife.

When visiting the homes of Chapel members he would ask questions of the children which were typical of his personality. They were invariably based on the Bible. An even more salient fact was that the book he recommended one little boy to read was entitled “Theology for children”.

His respect for religious affairs was exceptional even for those days when the respect was more generally held that it is these days. Some families were difficult, in some cases, smarter clothes than the one they wore on other Sundays or Communion Sundays. There was no danger of Caleb Jones being a follower of fashion as such, but he did own one black coat that was only worn on Communion Sundays.

He held the ministry in very high regard. No other office or calling could compare with it. His very high and genuine esteem of the Reverend Ben Davies’ qualities, or perhaps, as a result of his regard, he did not support Mr. Davies when the latter sought election for membership of the School Board. He considered and expressed his opinion to the Minister in a completely honest and kindly fashion, that the ministry risked being degraded by being involved with such activities.

He was one of the six original Deacons elected following the first election that allowed the whole church to express their opinion. He died in the home of his son, John Caleb Jones, in Ammanford. The Chapel lost a true and enlightened Christian – “A true Israelite in whom there was no deceit”.

LEWYS EVAN JONES

A different type of person in some matters to the previous pair, but a worthy individual who excelled as a leader in the young people’s meetings. In comparison to Caleb Jones it could be said that Caleb was a “man of thought” and Lewys a “man of action”. The comparison should not be taken too literally, Caleb was industrious and Lewys quite thoughtful, but there was a measure of truth in the comparison. Lewys was middle aged when he first took his Chapel membership to heart and he gave the impression that he was trying to make up in the present for his previous lack of interest.

It could be argued that to him, life was more or less a battle. At least he seemed to see things to fight for or battle against everywhere. Some good cause always needed support, some wrongs needing to be put right, and he was always in his element, fighting for the good against the bad. Such a man could upset other people but whatever was said about him it must be acknowledged that he was not selfish. He fought for other people and he fought for principles he believed in with all his might. These causes were his battles.

He was a sharp and incisive speaker, not afraid to speak his mind although suffering a speech impediment. In one meeting of representatives of various Chapels, Lewys felt that the representatives of one Chapel were more concerned with arranging procedures rather than offering practical assistance. He addressed the meeting “You people inChapel have a legion of generals but I would think, very few private soldiers. Less talk and more work boys”.

He was not afraid of anyone, and this was of advantage to the church in some directions. Some of the old leaders, when Lewys was comparatively young, had been to the fore for many

decades. They were accustomed to getting their own way and possibly a little conservative in their approach. It took courage to request that the voice of the congregation be heard in the running of the Chapel, as Lewys did on many occasions. For example he was chiefly responsible for protesting against the Deacon's right to choose new deacons, arguing that the congregation should decide. His campaign was successful and it cannot be denied that he was instrumental in introducing a more democratic element into the governance of the church. The fact that he was elected as a Deacon in the first election held under the new order is proof of the esteem with which was held the majority of the members.

He was an abstainer, and an active and enthusiastic supporter of the cause. His heroes in the fields of administrative systems be they the local church, denominational or nationally, were the brothers of Llanbrynmair and Michael D. Jones of Bala. His brother was the Reverend David Evan Jones, a very popular Minister in the USA.

THOMAS DAVIES

A popular and well-loved man, Thomas Davies (Baller) was the most popular leader of the young people's meetings, a gentle and caring character. There is no doubt that he was the leader when the meetings were most successful and popular. His well-chosen words of advice and counsel were listened to and respected.

Later, other leaders, such as William L. Lewis, Michael Rees, George Caleb Jones, D. D. Hopkin and D. T. Jones earned equal approval and recommendation. No other members were more worthy in terms of character and effort but printing restrictions militate against including details of each individual. It should be noted the Young Peoples Meetings, under the leadership of George Caleb Jones, established the Chapel library.

THE CULTURAL (OR LITERARY) SOCIETY

Established by a number of the younger members in 1905/06 at the behest of the Chapel Secretary, D. D. Hopkin. It proved to be of great benefit to the younger generation although people of all ages attended. It created great interest in reading, studying, composing and the art of public speaking. The members were introduced into many fields of study including, literature, music, history and religion, by some of the most gifted and influential individuals of the time, such as Sir Edward Annwyl, Sir Marchant Williams, Dyfed, Professors T. Lewis, Brecon and Thomas Rees, Bangor.

The Minister presided from its inception; he took great interest in its activities and was responsible for much of its success. Under his leadership literature figured prominently, particularly Welsh Poets and their work, but not exclusively. He also delivered a lecture to celebrate the season's initial meeting, a practice that has continued to the present day.

D. D. Hopkin and David T. Jones are worthy of mention for their loyalty and active participation in the society's activities.

The Society sponsored a Dramatic Society that was very successful in the years 1914 and 1915, when it performed two dramas, written by Reverend Ben Davies. "Darkness and Light" and "Old House and the New House".

CHAPTER SEVEN : THE MINISTERS**THE REVEREND PHILLIP GRIFFITHS.**

He was born on 23rd January 1793 in the Girls' or Maidens' Woodfield, near Melin cwrt (Mill Court), Neath Valley. He received some schooling in Melin cwrt, but he was obliged at a very early age to work under ground. He worked at Benwaun Marchog, Blaen Cwmnedd (top of the Knights or Riders Meadow (Moor) at the Head of Neath Valley) for 12 years. He became a member of Melin cwrt Chapel at the age of 13. He was encouraged to start preaching because it was considered that he possessed the potential to do so. His first sermon was on the subject "who is worthy of these duties". In the summer of 1821 he went to NEUADD LWYD School under the tutelage of the Reverend Doctor Thomas Phillips. Due to ill health and the number of "calls" he was already receiving from various churches, such as Cwmllynfell, he left Neuadd Lwyd during Easter 1822. It follows that he only received some nine months teaching. Although he received his first calling from Pantteg, because he chose to live in Alltwen, he was known as Griffiths Alltwen throughout his life. He married Miss Joan Morgan, Penlanfach, (the daughter of one of the founder members of Pantteg), on November 7th 1826. He was the Minister of Alltwen, Pantteg and Carmel, Gwauncaegurwen until 1847. He resigned from Carmel in 1847 but continued to serve Alltwen and Pantteg until 1865, and from then on, until his death on 2nd January 1882, he ministered to Alltwen and Ynysmeudwy, and partially to Gosen, Trebanos. He died at the age of 89.

He became one of the most popular preachers in South Wales. He wrote a considerable number of articles to the "Diwygiwr" (Reformer/Revivalist) under his own name and that of Daniel Dafydd Amos. He also published a number of booklets, but his best literary effect was his tribute to the memory of his cousin, the Reverend Daniel Griffiths, Neath.

REVEREND JOHN JENKINS

Raised to the Ministry in Rehoboth, Brynmawr. His brother was the Rev. William Jenkins of Pentre Estyll. He proved to be a talented and hard working student in Brecon College. He was ordained to the ministry in 1858 in succession to the Rev. E. Stephens (Tanymarian) in Horeb, Dwgyfylchi, near Caernafon. During his ministry a powerful revival happened. At the end of 1860 he moved to Treffynnon, Flintshire, but his ministry there was not so successful. He ministered to Pantteg from the summer of 1866 until the end of 1868 when he moved to Seion, Swansea for a period of 18 months; after which he did not serve as a full time minister. He died in Deri, on October 6th 1873, at the age of 40 and was buried at Sketty, Swansea.

REVEREND R. TREFOR JONES

He was the eldest child, born January 14th 1843 in Ebenezer, Caernarfon, and was aged 6 or 7 when his father died. As a result he was forced to work at a very early age in Llanberis slate quarry. His Minister, the Reverend T. Edwards, when he lay on his deathbed, earnestly entreated him to enter the ministry and the young man pledged to do so. He delivered his first sermon in March 1864, on the subject: "I have to do the work of the one who sent me whilst it is still light." He was educated in the grammar school established by John Evans, M.A., Caernarfon and in Bala College. He was ordained the Minister of three Chapels, Meifod, Main and Pontrobert, Montgomeryshire, on July 27/28th 1869. He was there for about one year. He was in Pantteg from October 1870 until February 1888. He commenced his ministry in Gwerllwyn, Dowlais on the first Sunday in March 1888. He remained until his death in April 24th 1902 at the age of 60. He was

buried in Pant Cemetery, Dowlais. His son is the Reverend Maldwyn Jones, BA, Blackheath, London.

REVEREND BEN DAVIES

Born October 11th 1864, at Dolgam which was a small holding on the slopes of the Black Mountain near Cwmllynfell. His parents were David and Sarah Davies. Raised on an old religious hearth, his maternal grandfather, Dafydd William of Dolgam, was a leading and faithful member of the cause at Cwmllynfell during the ministry of the Reverend Rhys Pryse. He was comparable as a man gifted with outstanding qualities in the art of praying. As such, his name appears in a book, "Church History" in which Dyfnallt writes of Ben Davies that he was brought up in a family that possessed all the qualities of the beautiful Welsh Life. There, the mother was like a queen on her throne. There too, the father served many times at the family altar. Another son, William, had prepared to enter the ministry, but he died at a young age, before the end of his studentship.

Mr. Davies received very few educational benefits as a child. They were in short supply in the British School he attended, apart from which he was obliged to miss schooling in order to work on the small holding for weeks at a time. He started working under ground between the ages of 11 and 12 and about the same time, he was also received by the Reverend J. Rees as a member of the old and famous Chapel of Cwmllynfell. Despite the lack of opportunity he insisted on devoting time to read and write, to cultivate his mind and in a locality steeped in the traditions and culture of religion and literary attainments like Cwmllynfell, with very many famous preachers, bards and writers, it is not surprising that his thoughts aspired to follow a similar path.

He went to Llansawel (Carms) Grammar School in March 1885, to prepare for the ministry. He delivered his first sermon in a Preparatory Service in Cwmllynfell on the night of Saturday June 6th 1885. The text of his sermon was "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God", at the behest of the Sunday school teacher, William Price. After spending a year in Llansawel he was accepted by Bala College under the tutelage of the Professor Michael D. Jones. Mr. Davies spoke of the respect and admiration in which he held that famous man and considered the opportunity he received of studying under Mr. Jones' guidance as one of his biggest blessings. Mr. Davies' lecture on Michael Jones of Bala is one of the best he's delivered. Mr. Davies was at Bala for just over 2 years.

After being at Bala for some 18 months, aged 23, he received a "call" from Nebo Chapel, Bwlchgwyn and Pysgah, Llandegla Denbighshire. He started his ministry on May 13th 1888 and was ordained on 30th of that month. Those taking part in the services included Michael D. Jones, and Reverend J. Rees, Cwmllynfell. He preached three sermons each Sunday, one Chapel in the morning and the other in the afternoon and evening and the Chapels were located four miles away from each other. He subsequently moved to Pantteg.

Early in his ministry in Pantteg he gained praise for his sermons from all areas of Wales. It is doubtful if there is a village in Wales in which there is an Independent Chapel in which he has not preached. Dyfnallt is quoted as saying that his talent for preaching is given to very few. No other preacher has the gift to read, research, enlighten and convince the hearts of people to follow the paths of righteousness, and this aspect of his ministry has grown enormously in these later years.

In 1899 he addressed a public meeting of the Congregational Union in Llanelli on the subject "It is right to have hours of leisure", and in 1910 he preached a sermon during the Congregational Union meeting in Llanbedr on the subject "Your father who sees in secret will pay you openly". He was chosen to preach in the City Temple, London in celebration of St. David's Day.

He was very popular as a lecturer. He lectured in all parts of Wales on subjects like, “The Land of Hills”, “Michael D. Jones Bala”, “Twm o’r Nant”, “Emmanuel Hiraethog”, “Ann Griffiths”, “The Narrow Porch”, and “The Poetry of Watcyn Wyn”. He addressed the Literary Society of Pantteg on many subjects, such as “St. David”, “Francis of Assisi”, “David Livingstone”, “Hedd Wyn”, and “The Holy Grail”.

He was acknowledged as one of the leading bards of his time. His success at the Eisteddfods, are too numerous to record. He won first chair in Tredegar in 1885 at the age of 20. He won chairs on three successive occasions at Meirionydd in 1890, 1891 and 1892, and he shared the crown at the National Eisteddfod 1892. He won the crown at the National Eisteddfods held in Pontypridd and Caernarfon in 1893 and 1894 and the chair in the National Eisteddfod at Llandudno in 1896.

(One of the 3 Meirionydd Chairs forms part of the “big seat” in Pantteg Chapel today)

The author forbears from commenting on Mr. Davies as a hymnist, believing that his hymns will stand the test of time, as they combine the varied experiences of the heart with the art of a true poet.

He helped to edit the New Congregational Hymnal. In addition to his work in the field of literature and as a Preacher and Minister, he took great interest in the education of the local children. He serves as a member of the School Board at Pantteg for many years as well as being a Governor of the County School in Ystalyfera.



Swyddogion y Canmlwyddiant, 1921.

Rhestr Uchaf (o'r dde): D. G. Williams, W. Davies, Cnas. A. Morgan, Geo. J. Evans, David James.
 Rhestr Ganol (o'r dde): W. Lloyd, D. Hopkin, D. G. Jones, D. W. Davies, Ll. Evans, J. G. Jones.
 Rhestr Isaf (o'r dde): W. Morgan, D. Williams, Parch. Ben Davies. J. W. Jones, D. D. Hopkin.

CHAPTER EIGHT**PREACHERS NUTURED IN PANTTEG****BENJAMIN THOMAS, GURNOS**

Born in Cefnllwynhir, in the parish of Llancrwys in 1814. He was a cobbler by trade. At the age of 16 he became a member of the Baptist Caersalem Chapel in Dowlais. Around 1836/7 he moved to Graig Arw and became a member of Pantteg Chapel. At the age of 31 he was encouraged by his Minister, the Reverend Phillip Griffiths to prepare a sermon on the text, "Behold, my servant will succeed, he will be raised and exalted", at a fellowship meeting. Soon after that, he preached in the Chapel on a Sunday night in the presence of the Minister. Pantteg Chapel supported him to be taught at Swansea Normal College under the tutelage of Dr. Evan Davies. He then attended a school near Beulah, Cwmtwrch and preached when called upon. In September 1855 he was ordained as a Minister in Walker, Newcastle on Tyne. The Reverend Thomas Jones of Morryston and Reverend Phillip Griffiths took part in the services. One who witnessed his ministry stated -

"He was here for a year. He was a good preacher, refined in his manner, a gentle and kind man, very commendable. We were very sorry to have to part company and believe that he felt the same way. Ill health caused him to leave. He returned to Pantteg to take care of the "British School".

On Whit-Sunday and Whit-Monday 1858, he was inducted as Minister of the newly formed church at Gurnos. He served for 26 years before resigning as a Minister on July 6th 1884. He died on November 3rd 1890 and was buried at Ystradgynlais Graveyard. He was a powerful preacher and a worthy poet.

THE REVEREND THOMAS EVANS, TALGARTH

He was the son of William and Margaret Evans of Penperlyn and a grandson, on his mother's side of John and Mary Morgan (the Elder), Penlanfach. He was born on March 27th 1831. He became a member of Pantteg at a fairly young age and it was at Pantteg that he started preaching. He became a teacher in the British School a Pantteg. He was accepted by Brecon College in 1854 and ordained as the Minister of Bethania Chapel, Talgarth on 11th and 12th of August 1858. The following took part in the services: Reverends John Davies, Aberaman; E. Watkins, Llangatwg; C. Guion, Brecon; Phillip Griffiths and John Stephens, Brychgoed. He gave commendable service until 1883 when ill health obliged him to resign. He served as secretary of the local Congregational Union for many years and took a prominent part on behalf of the Liberal Party in election campaigns in Breconshire. He spent his retirement years in Swansea and in the locality of his early years – Ystalyfera. He died on February 7th 1908 and was buried in Pantteg Graveyard.

THE REVEREND BOWEN REES, AFRICA

The Chapel was privileged to nurture one missionary, the Reverend Bowen Rees. Born in Llandybie, Carmarthenshire on March 16th 1857. The family moved to Ystalyfera when he was aged 3. He started work at a very early age. He, like many of his boyhood fiends, were faithful members of the Band of Hope, Sunday school and “Competitive Meetings”, which were very popular in those days. It was there that he and William (see next paragraph) Morgan honed their talents.

He continues to speak respectfully about John Thomas of Twyn Cerdinen, his Sunday school teacher and acknowledges his debt to Mr. Thomas. He became a Chapel member at the age of 17, but he considered the calling to become a missionary prior to becoming a member, when “Thomas Africa” visited the area. Bowen Rees and William Morgan preached their first sermons at one of the weekday services in March 1879.

Faced by a shortage of money and books, it was difficult to gather knowledge and cultivate the mind, but he, together with many other young men benefited from the generosity of one of the most cultured men in the locality – John Davies, The Bridge, a very literate individual, who allowed the young men to utilise his library at all times.

Helped by the local schoolmaster and a term in Llangadeg Grammar School he gained admittance to Bala College in March 1880, and studied there for four years.

The directors of the Missionary Society recommended his acceptance and chose his field of operation – Central Africa. He was ordained in Pantteg on May 22nd 1884. Amongst those who took part in the service were Professor Lewis, Bala; Dr. Rees, Swansea; and the Reverend B. Williams, Canan. In June 1884, he and two other missionaries left for Lake Tanganyka and although all three arrived safely, only Mr. Rees survived. I will not describe his trials and the perils he faced there. He returned to recuperate, during which time he studied medicine and surgery in Edinburgh University. In 1887 he worked in Matabeleland and with much success in troubled times. He married Miss Susannah Wesley Davies, Ystalyfera in 1890 and she subsequently shared in his efforts and perils.

REVEREND WILLIAM MORGAN, JEFFREYSTON

Born in 1859. As a young man he was a devotee of all chapel activities and in particular, the singing. He went to Brecon College in 1880 to undergo training as a minister. He was ordained in an English Chapel in Saundersfoot, Pembrokeshire in 1885. He moved to Mold and Northop in 1890, where he remained until 1912, when ill health compelled him to resign. He spent two years in a London hospital, after which he lived in Jeffreyston until he died on May 5th 1919 at the age of 60. He was highly respected as a strong character, a good preacher and a faithful friend. Two of his sons were killed in the War.

REVEREND D. T. REES, GODRERGRAIG

Mr. Rees is an Ordained Minister but has no pastoral care. He is the son of Thomas and Catherine Rees, Godre’rgraig. He was educated at Gwynfryn School and Carmarthen College. He is a good preacher of impeccable character.

REVEREND BENJAMIN J. WILLIAMS

The son of Griffith and Mary Williams, of Godre'rgraig. He delivered his first sermon on July 1st 1897. Educated at Gwynfryn School, he immigrated to America. At present he is a Minister in Chatham, Ohio.

HENRY JOHN LEWIS

The son of Henry and Mary Lewis of Godre'rgraig. He started to preach in 1920 and is at present at the Old College, Carmarthen preparing to become a minister.

REVEREND DAVID EVAN JONES

It is difficult to decide whether or not to include this gentleman as one who was raised in Pantteg. Very little is known about him as a young man before he immigrated to America. He was a member of Pantteg but it is uncertain if he applied to become a minister and was accepted as such by the chapel. Mr. T. J. Davies, Mus Bac. Pittsburg is his nephew and he believes Reverend David Evan Jones delivered his first sermon in Pantteg, but there is no element of certainty. From the fact that he was educated at Swansea Normal College – an uncommon occurrence for a worker's child in these days – one may assume he was being prepared for a calling, which required education over and above the ordinary standard. However, because of his close connections with Pantteg, an outline of his life appears below,

Born in this locality on January 1st 1840, his brother was Lewis Evan Jones, previously referred to as a Deacon, and one of his nephews, his sister's son, is the Reverend D. T. Rees, Godre'rgraig. He immigrated to America in 1867 and entered Yale Theological College from where he graduated in 1871. He became a Minister in Roxburg (Conn.), Broad Brook and Ellington (Conn.) and served as a minister for 50 years. After about 40 years he returned for a visit to the locality and preached in Pantteg. He died on December 9th 1920.

CONCLUSION

The wish to point out lessons we can learn from the past is not the reason why I add a few more words. Should he so wish, the reader, can do that for him/herself, but certain aspects are obvious when one looks back over the history of the cause.

It started with a zeal and self-sacrificial enthusiasm but in the face of some indifference and objections. Probably this is true of every new cause, but similar circumstances prevail every time an attempt is made to move forward or envisage change. Looking over the history of the past 100 years it is clear that the ones who wished to move forward in faith were the ones who possessed the vision to see the needs of the cause at that particular time and for the future. Does this not suggest that it is not fear, but the spirit of adventure, not timidity, but daring which is most likely to succeed with the work of the church?

The church has done well in paying for its chapels. Four chapels have been built and paid for within a short period on each occasion, but it has not been anywhere near as generous in the wages of its ministers. Apart from Phillip Griffiths, bitter complaint, when one considers the size of the church, the current minister receives a poor wage. The church paid the debt of £4,000:00 for the new Chapel within 12 years, which shows that the poverty of the membership is not responsible for the minister's low wage. Phillip Griffiths commented often at ordination services

that many churches had never experienced the privilege of burying one minister, they forced the latter to flee to other churches either by paying low wages or behaving nastily towards them.

It would be interesting to analyse how many descendants of the original members of the church are present day members. Many of them are scattered all over the world. Even so, a considerable number are faithful members of the church today. The names of some descendants have already appeared in this history of the church. It is not the intention to raise the old saints who established Pantteg to some exalted historical positions, but they are more worthy of exaltation than has been accorded to those who have occupied more worldly thrones.

On the other hand, it is sad to note how the religious zeal and loyalty has faded and died in some families descended from the founding members. If the Israelites over valued the ancient traditions of their forefathers, our danger is that we under value and neglect ours. After all, to remember God as “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” was an aid to keep the ancient nation faithful to Him. Many in Wales, and our locality can sing, with propriety:

“Oh Lord God of our Fathers
You are our Rock and Tower “.

It would be wonderful if the occasion of the centenary could inspire these kind friends to renew the zeal and enthusiasm displayed by their fathers.

What about the future? It is probable that the present chapel is big enough for the major part of the second century, but other duties and tasks await. Our duty, if the cause is to succeed, is to face them with the faith and courage displayed by our fathers. It would appear that our churches must consider the needs of the children and young people in the design of our chapels in the future, because it becomes more and more obvious that it is with the younger element in our society that our work has, and will continue to harvest the best results.

Some changes are inevitable but the essentials remain. Today’s emphasis on certain aspects of the truth differ from those emphasized thirty years ago, but if the same truisms do not appeal to us today, it would be a great blessing if we, and the next generation, could repossess the unshakable faith and deep convictions of our fathers. Even their disputes were based on arguments about religious matters. Whatever changes occur, no matter what our articles of faith, we can be sure there will be room for honest endeavour, for pure characters and for faith in Jesus Christ as the true revelation of God and as the Leader of man kind.

EMYN.

*Ton : HOSANNA (M.C.)**M. 7787 (Rhaglen).**I*

Moliannwn Dduw yr oesoedd,
 A Thad yr holl ganrifoedd,
 Am amddiffyniad ar ei waith
 Ar hyd y maith flynyddoedd.
 Diolchwn o un galon,
 Am y Secina cyson,
 A rhodded Ef ei Ysbryd Glan,
 A'i fedydd tan yr awrhon.

II

Er newid yr ysgwyddau
 Yn gyson drwy'r blynyddau,
 Bu rhywrai'n ffyddlon ddwyn yr Arch
 A'u parch i Dduw eu Tadau.
 Aeth cenedlaethau heibio,
 Mae'u beddau yn blodeuo,
 Ond gyd a gwaith eu Ceidwad eu
 Maent yn llefaru eto.

III

Mor sanctaidd yw'r atgofion
 Am hen anwyliaid Seion,
 A bydded plant y newydd oes
 I Grist a'i groes yn ffyddlon.
 Boed eto hedd a phurdeb
 A gwenau anfarwoldeb,
 A'r awel nefol fo'n parhau
 O fryniau tragwyddoldeb.*

*Pant-teg.**BEN DAVIES.*

*Rhan o fendith y Parch. Phillip Griffiths.

